

UNTOLD TALES OF FALMOUTH

from the archives of Museums on the Green

Indispensable Sources

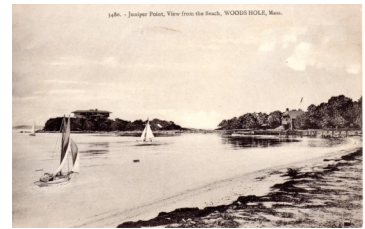
Part Two: *Historic Register* & *W.H. Hewins*

Now we continue our series addressing the top resources for Falmouth history that we couldn't live without. Last time, we steered readers toward [*The Book of Falmouth and Sprintsail*](#). These works cover an encyclopedic range of general topics. But what if your question is more specific—what if you're just interested in one particular building in town? How old is it? Who lived there? There's a good chance you'll find the answers on the Massachusetts Historical Commission's register of historic places.

The "historic register," as it's commonly called, takes up four binders filled with double-sided information sheets on 585 Falmouth addresses. In the mid to late 1980s, Bonnie Hamilton, Candace Jenkins, Susan Abele, Ann Sears, and others, acting on behalf of the Falmouth Historical Commission, compiled this data and submitted it to the state historical commission.

The first side of each information sheet typically includes a photograph of the building as it appeared around 1985, a map showing its street location, and other bullet points such as date built, original use, architectural style, materials used, and major alterations. The second side delves into the significance, both architectural and historical, of the building. Here you will often find genealogical information on the residents and how they contributed to the community, as well as details on transfers of ownership and changes in use over time. Finally, a bibliographical section cites sources, so that anyone can pursue their research further.

The historic register can be consulted at the Falmouth Public Library or here, at Museums on the Green. But many will no doubt prefer to look at the register online,



Top to bottom: The Bowerman House in West Falmouth (1678) is the oldest house in town. The "airplane house" (1912) and the former Dome restaurant (1953) also appear on the historic register. All images are from the Museums' archives.

where it has been digitized by the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS). After navigating to <http://mhc-macris.net/>, click to begin your search, and again to acknowledge their disclaimer. Now you'll see a group of search boxes. Click on "Falmouth" in the first box, then click on "add to list." ("Falmouth" should now appear in the second box as well.) In the boxes below, you can, if you wish, enter a particular village or street, then click "next."

On the next screen, you will be prompted to enter a historic name if you know it (such as "Conant House.") However, since many of these names are not widely known, you can also leave this entire page blank and simply click on "next" once again.

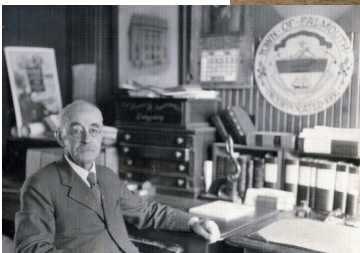
Now the screen should display the results for your search—either one specific building, or many buildings from a certain street or village. Next to the address that interests you, click on the letters INV in a blue square. A PDF will open that displays the historic register entry for this address. All the information available on the paper original is in this PDF. You can print, email, or save the PDF to your hard drive. Although the search process can be cumbersome, it becomes easier as it grows more familiar.

Please note that a building had to exist in the 1980s to be included on the register. The Dwight mansion on Mill Road, for example, was destroyed in the hurricane of 1944 and does not appear. Conversely, some older buildings still visible around town may not appear on the register, either because their entries failed to be digitized, or because they haven't yet made it onto the listing. Any questions about the procedure for registering a property should be directed to the [Falmouth Historical Commission](#).

An honorable mention as an indispensable source must go to W.H. Hewins, Falmouth's town clerk for fifty years. In 1924, aged 84, he wrote a reminiscence of the Falmouth Village of his boyhood. With clerkish precision, he listed homes and stores up and down Main Street, as well as on Shore, Palmer, Locust, and King Streets, telling us who used to live where, and what happened to them ("lost at sea," for example, or "moved to California"). He also names the newcomers who had taken their places by

1924. Hewins is frequently cited as a source in the pages of the historic register, and we've recently begun to update his account with current street addresses that make it easier to follow in his footsteps. You can read his insights into 19th and early 20th century Falmouth on our [archives](#) page.

Right: 20 Hewins Street, also known as the John Jenkins House. It was the home of W.H. Hewins (below), Falmouth's town clerk from 1884-1934.



Meg Castello