

SOUTH CONCORD REDEVELOPMENT AREA

Preliminary Assessment of Historical Resources

Methodology

This preliminary assessment of historical resources is based on a walk-over of the entire study area in October 1996; review of National Register of Historic Places and architectural/historical survey files at the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources; and local histories. To assist further planning efforts for this area, each resource has been placed into one of five categories reflecting its likely eligibility for the National Register:

- National Register Listed or Determined Eligible
- High Potential for National Register Eligibility
- Not Likely to be Eligible (*based on loss of architectural integrity or lack of historic context*)
- Not Eligible (*based on previous determination or age*)
- Need More Information

An accompanying base map identifies each resource and its category. Resources falling into the first two categories are listed and illustrated in this report.

Brief Historical Overview of the Redevelopment Area

The Redevelopment Area includes two of Concord's major eighteenth century transportation routes. South Main Street was part of "Main Street", which was laid out in 1726 as the primary road in Concord's original town plan and lined with proprietors' lots. Water Street was the early route to one of two ferries that were established a few years later. After 1795, it led to one of two bridges in Concord that crossed the Merrimack River. This bridge crossing was of particular importance as it connected to a branch of the First New Hampshire Turnpike, an important stage route to Portsmouth, on the opposite side. At 10 Water Street, the brick home of the Concord Boating Company's manager still stands. A short distance away, 31 Hall Street is the only other residence from this era that survives in the Redevelopment Area.

The spine of the Redevelopment Area encompasses the former Boston & Maine Railroad tracks from Interstate 93, north to the south end of the Capitol Shopping Center, which was the site of the former railroad station.¹ Concord's first railroad, and the second in New Hampshire, was the Concord Railroad, which arrived in 1842, following this same route from the south; for many years the Concord Railroad owned much of the land on either side of the railroad tracks. It provided service between Concord and Nashua, with connections to Boston. Two years later, three additional railroad companies obtained charters, soon linking Concord to Portsmouth, Montreal, and White River Junction. Until the 1880s, a decade of railroad mergers and consolidations, New Hampshire had dozens of companies operating a variety of lines.

¹ Over the course of 120 years, Concord had four depots, all of which stood on this same site.

When the Boston & Maine attained a monopoly on railroading in New Hampshire in 1895, it assumed control of the station then standing, the 1885 passenger station which stood until 1960. It also took over the former Northern Railroad's repair shops, located just north of the station, and much of the land on either side of the tracks throughout the Redevelopment Area.

In 1896 the Boston & Maine replaced those repair shops with a new facility in the Redevelopment Area, between South Main Street and the main tracks, both north and south of Langdon Street. The brick shops covered twenty-four acres and were the largest facility north of Boston devoted to building locomotives, and maintaining passenger and freight cars. With a work force numbering 1,300, the railroad was the city's largest employer in the early twentieth century.

The repair shops included an Erecting Shop for Locomotives (now Steenbeke's), a Wash House (currently vacant), and an Office/Store House (now Nancy Carlisle's Interior Plantings), and a Blacksmith Shop (no longer standing) on the north side of Langdon Street. South of Langdon Street were a Dry House, a Planing Mill with an attached Power House and Boiler House, and a Varnish Shop, all of which still stand. South of these buildings were the Freight and Passenger Car Repair Shop and the Transfer Table, neither of which remain, but the Paint Shop (later used for repairing freight cars) at the south end of the complex remains. On the east side of the tracks was a second Locomotive Shop, which was built ca. 1910 and is still standing. Just north of it were the Turn Table and the Roundhouse, which have not survived. Each of these buildings is distinctive in appearance, with brick dentilwork and corbeling along cornices and above recessed window bays, segmentally arched window and door openings, granite sills, pitched roofs clad with slate, and multi-pane window sash.

Beyond the area occupied by the former Boston & Main Repair Shops, the Redevelopment Area includes several historic industrial and residential buildings. North of the repair shops was the Holt Brothers Manufactory, a brick and frame building at 219 South Main Street and extending back along the south side of Gas Street. The Holt firm made wagon supplies and farm implements; two of its major customers were the Abbot-Downing Company and the railroad, both of which were conveniently located nearby. This building still stands, occupied in part by Sanel Auto Parts.

North of the Holt Brothers factory was the Concord Gasworks; the site is still owned by Energy North/Concord Gas Company. The Concord Gas Light Company was chartered in 1850 to meet the town's increasing demand for gas illumination. It acquired this site from the Concord Railroad Company and constructed a gasworks. Though the plant manufactured nearly ten million cubic feet of gas, it lacked adequate storage facilities to maintain the gas levels the community needed. In 1888 it built the existing Gasholder House, which was capable of holding 125,000 cubic feet of gas. The building remained in service until 1952, when natural gas replaced carbureted water gas. Today, this structure is the most intact enclosed gasholder house in the United States and of national architectural/historical significance.

The neighborhood immediately west of the Redevelopment Area (and south of West Street) developed beginning in the late nineteenth century. Railroad employees occupied many of the houses. South Main Street forms the eastern edge of the neighborhood, and the houses on its east side, within the Redevelopment Area, typify those within the neighborhood. The four two-family houses on the east side of South Main Street, at the foot of South State Street, are examples of a common building type known as the "Concord duplex," a 2-1/2 story, four-bay wide, gable-front building with an entrance in each side elevation accessed by a shed-roof porch.² The Margaret Pillsbury General Hospital, the state's first general hospital and predecessor to Concord Hospital, was located on South Main Street, and within the Redevelopment Area, from 1891 until 1956. Its one surviving building on Pillsbury Street was the nurses' residence.

East of the railroad tracks and within the Redevelopment Area is Hall Street which, with its side streets, was a small and somewhat isolated residential neighborhood that emerged largely in response to the nearby railroad yards. Most of the residents in this area worked for the Boston and Maine Railroad. Though Hammond Street was laid out as early as 1875 as a short street leading east from Hall Street toward the bridge crossing over the Merrimack River, it had few houses on it until the late 1890s. In 1912 the neighborhood expanded when Home Avenue (then known as Homefield Street) was laid out, paralleling Hammond Street. Though that street never realized its potential for fifty-six houselots, some half-dozen houses were erected over the ensuing decade. Undoubtedly the newly laid out streetcar route down Hall Street influenced the growth of this area. (A former railroad depot, relocated to Hall Street from an unknown site in the early twentieth century, is said to have served as a streetcar stop.)

Other than the replacement of the river crossing at the foot of Hammond Street with the bridge at Manchester Street in the early twentieth century, the Hall Street neighborhood remained nearly unchanged until the 1950s. Early in that decade, the state finalized plans for the Frederick E. Everett Highway, which followed the river's shore. By 1954 the section north of Manchester Street was complete, and work was underway to complete the southern section. The highway's path bisected Hammond Street and Home Avenue and severed Hammond from its easterly connection with Water Street. Hammond Street and Home Avenue were terminated at the western highway embankment and connected by newly laid-out Nashua Street.

In the late twentieth century, and particularly after the city re-zoned it, the Hall Street area has evolved from largely residential use to a mixed-use area with several large-scale commercial buildings. Surviving houses date from the 1880s-1920s and are mostly a mix of vernacular bungalows and 1-1/2 story gable-front houses.

² Though an important local building type, these particular examples have undergone some major alterations and thus are not likely to be eligible for the National Register. Within Concord are many less-altered examples.

Preliminary Evaluation of Significance

Several of the resources located within the Redevelopment Area have a high degree of historical significance and architectural integrity and, consequently, have a high potential to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. They are listed below and located on the accompanying base map. The Redevelopment Area also includes eight resources and one area, also identified on the base map, whose potential significance cannot be determined without further research.

(Numbers are keyed to base map)

1. Concord Gasholder House, South Main Street, 1888.

The Gasholder House is the most intact example in the United States of an enclosed gasholder house.

2. Concord Gas Company Buildings, Gas Street, ca. 1870s

A group of attached brick buildings with slate roofs; the earliest buildings associated with one of Concord's oldest businesses.

3. Holt Brothers Manufactory, 219 South Main Street, ca. 1872

Three-story brick factory with attached two-story frame storehouse in rear. Associated with an important local industry.

4. Boston & Maine Store House, off Water Street, ca. 1920

Small, brick structure with slate hip roof. Used by the railroad as a store house.

5. French-Thompson House, 10 Water Street, ca. 1819.

A little-altered Federal residence and probably Concord's only surviving building with direct associations with river freight traffic.

6. Boston & Maine Repair Shops, off Langdon Street, 1896-ca. 1910.

Group of ten brick buildings erected by the B&M for erecting and maintenance purposes. Largest such facility north of Boston. Most significant complex of surviving resources in Concord relating to the railroad era, a highly important local historic context.

- a. Locomotive Shop
- b. Wash House
- c. Office & Store House
- d. Dry House
- e. Planing Mill
- f. Power House
- g. Boiler House
- h. Varnish Shop
- i. Paint Shop
- j. Locomotive Shop

7. 31 Hall Street, ca. 1800.

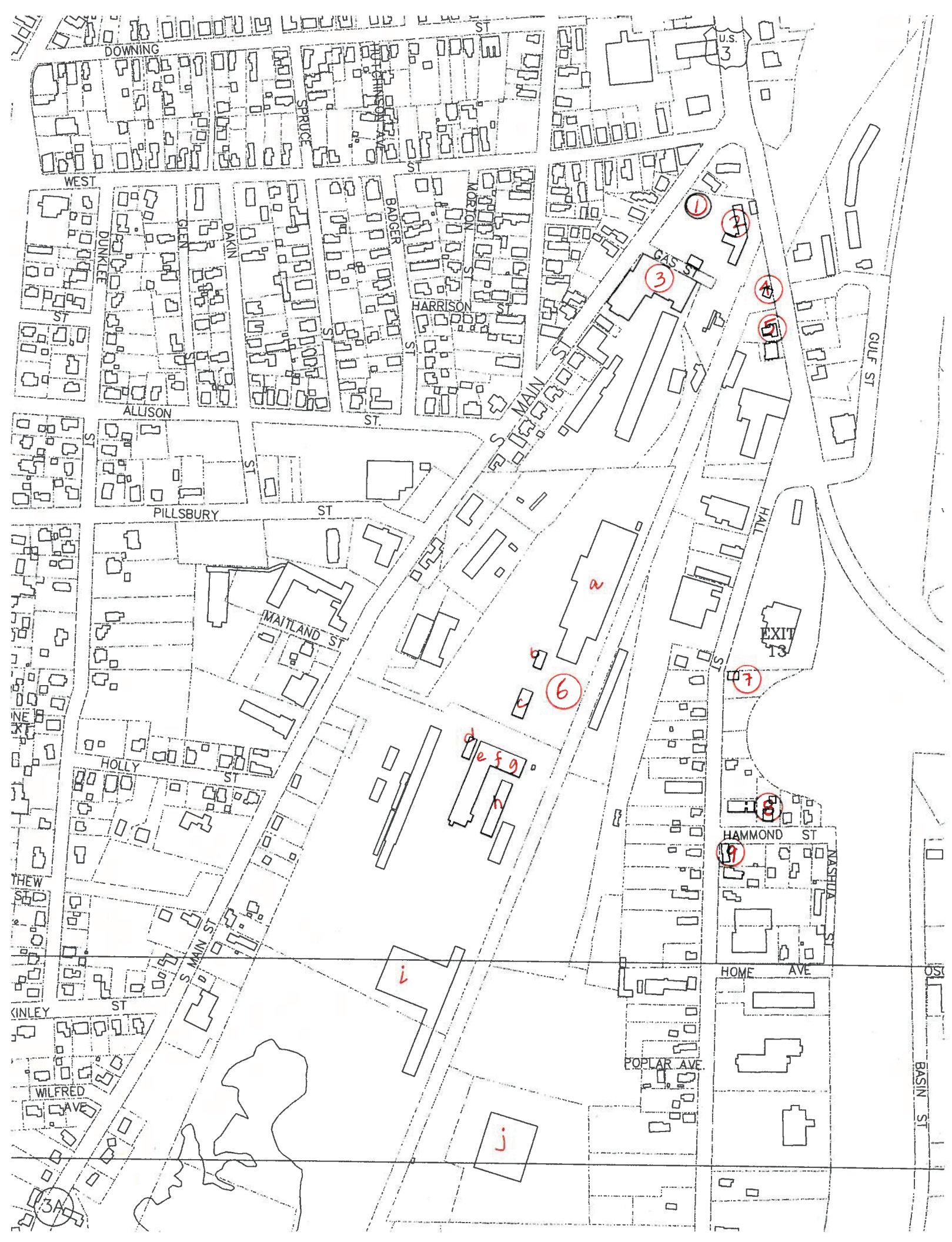
A twin-chimney cape house and possibly the oldest house in this area. Relates to the early (pre-railroad) settlement of this area.

8. 24 Hammond Street, 1911.

A little-altered example of the Foursquare house, a popular early twentieth century house type. Also representative of the housing along Hall Street, occupied in large part by workers at the nearby railroad yards.

9. 49 Hall Street, ca. 1890s

Small railroad depot moved to this site ca. 1915. Said to have been used as a streetcar stop.



**SOUTH CONCORD
REDEVELOPMENT AREA**

October 1996

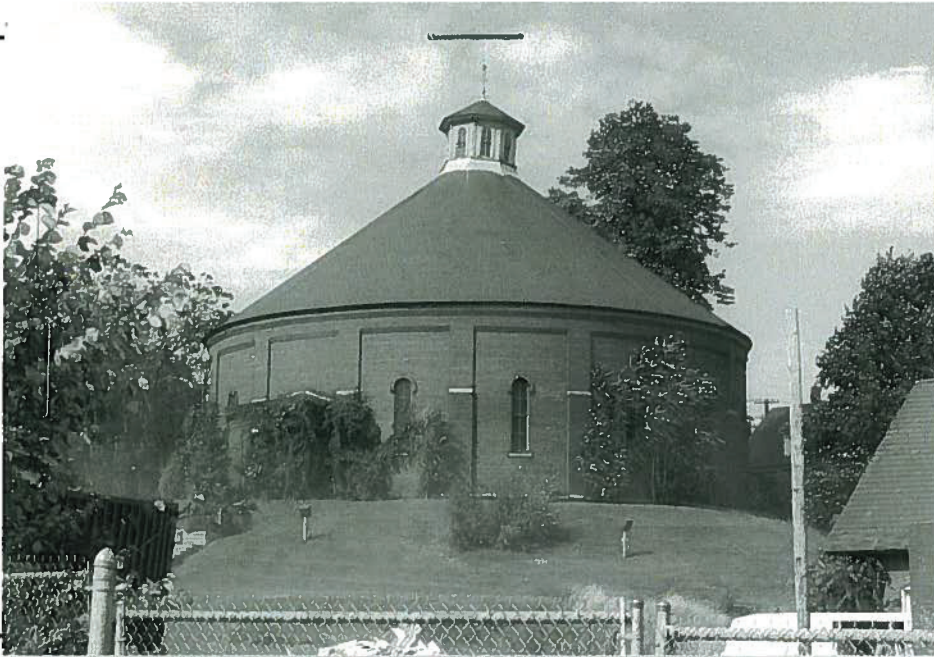


Photo # 1

Subject: Concord Gas Holder House
1888
South Main Street



Photo # 2

Subject: Concord Gas Company
Buildings
ca. 1870s
Gas Street



Photo # 3

Subject: Holt Brothers Manufactory
ca. 1872
219 South Main Street

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Photo # 4

Subject: Boston & Maine Storehouse
ca. 1920
off Water Street



Photo # 5

Subject: French-Thompson House
ca. 1819
10 Water Street



Photo # 6

Subject: Boston & Maine Repair Shops
off Langdon Street

Locomotive Shop (a)
1896



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Photo # 7

Subject: Boston & Maine Repair Shops
off Langdon Street

Wash House (b)
1896



Photo # 8

Subject: Boston & Maine Repair
Shops
off Langdon Street

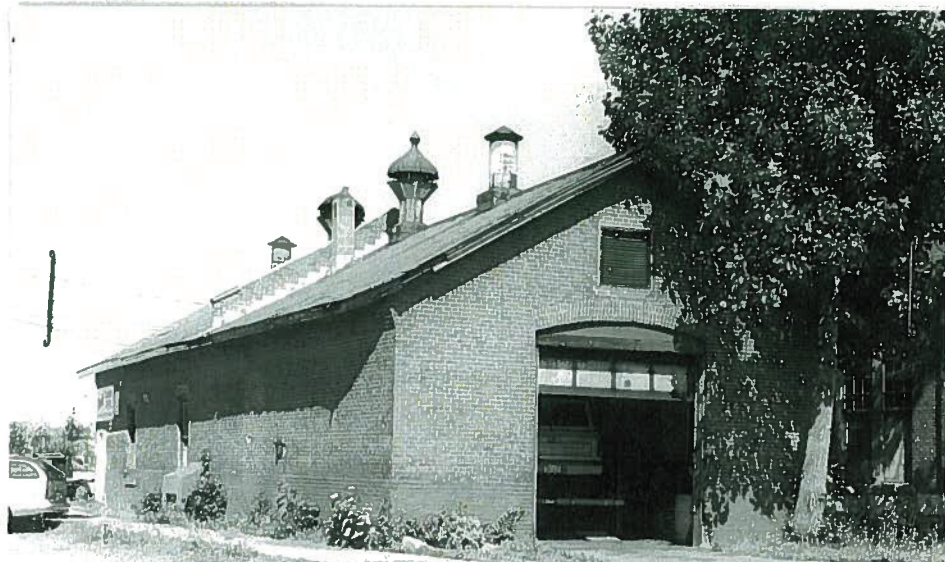
Office & Store House (c)
1896



Photo # 9

Subject: Boston & Maine Repair Shops
off Langdon Street

Dry House (d)
1896





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Photo # 10

Subject: Boston & Maine Repair Shops
off Langdon Street

Planing Mill (e)
1896



Photo # 11

Subject: Boston & Maine Repair
Shops
off Langdon Street

Varnish Shop (h)
1896



Photo # 12

Subject: Boston & Maine Repair Shops
off Langdon Street

Paint Shop (i)
1896

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Photo # 13

Subject: Boston & Maine Repair Shops
off Hall Street

Locomotive Shop (j)
ca. 1910



Photo # 14

Subject: 31 Hall Street
ca. 1800



Photo # 15

Subject: 24 Hammond Street
1911



**SOUTH CONCORD
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Photo # 16

Subject: 49 Hall Street
ca. 1890s



Photo #

Subject:

Photo #

Subject: