**FORM F – STRUCTURE**

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

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**Follow Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey Manual instructions for completing this form.**

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**Town/City:** Milton  
**Place (neighborhood or village):** Blue Hills Reservation  
**Address or Location:** NW of the Intersection of Harland Street and Unquity Rd  
**Name:** Harling’s Mill Dam  
**Ownership:** ☑ Public  
**Type of Structure (check one):**  
- ___ boat or ship  
- ___ canal  
- ___ carousel  
- X dam  
- ___ fort  
- ___ gate  
- ___ kiln  
- ___ lighthouse  
- ___ other (specify)  
**Date of Construction:** ca 1782  
**Source:** Deed references  
**Architect, Engineer or Designer:** Unknown  
**Materials:** Stone, earth, concrete, wood  
**Alterations (with dates):** Mid 20th C a breach in the dam was repaired and the original flume was fortified. In 2017 stones, branches and boulders displaced in the breached dam and river were rearranged to allow for low flow fish passage.  
**Condition:** Ruins  
**Moved:** ☑ no ☐ yes  
**Acreage:** Approximately 1 acre  
**Setting:** A woodland habitat within the boundaries of the Blue Hills Reservation.  
**Recorded by:** Barbara Donohue  
**Organization:** Cultural Resource Consultant  
**Date:** September/2017
The Harling’s Mill site is comprised of the subsurface remains of possibly two mills – one associated with an eighteenth century saw and gristmill and one associated with a nineteenth century cabinetmaking mill. Visible features on the site include dry laid and rubble stone raceway foundations, a breached stone dam, an earthen dam, a stone lined spillway and a mill pond (Figure 1). Salient features of the site are difficult to reach and some are likely covered by the dense vegetation.

In the mid twentieth century waterpower features associated with the site were repaired and fortified by including the addition of a concrete structure in the original flume, placing wood and boulders in an area that was breached, and applying asphalt armorin along parts of the flume and breach area. It is unknown where the breach occurred. Work was conducted by the Metropolitan District Commission (now DCR).

In 2017 a breach in the dam located in the main watercourse of the brook measuring approximately 12’ wide by 12’ long was altered by lowering its elevation approximately 24” to create a channel in the middle of the breach allowing for the passage of fish during low flow conditions. The alterations included moving what appeared to be a railroad tie that lay lengthwise across the brook and was embedded in its banks, removing a 6’ long by 1.5’ quarried granite slab from across the breached section of the dam, and removing small boulders, pieces of concrete and asphalt all of which were likely used in the mid 20th century repair. The work was conducted by the Neponset River Watershed Association under the supervision of the DCR archaeologist.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Explain the history of the structure and how it relates to the development of the community.

The earliest settlement in Milton dates to ca. 1634. Through the end of the eighteenth century the town’s economy relied on a strong agricultural base with new farms spreading across the landscape while commercial, industrial and shipping interests developed in the villages of Upper Falls and Lower Falls (Massachusetts Historical Commission 1981). During this time period farmers often supplemented their income with milling activities. A mill on a farmer’s property was often leased out to others to operate. Generally small-scale mills were erected along small streams, involved low technology, were seasonal operations within an agricultural base, and produced products for a local market. Farmers and mill owners were integral parts of a single and largely undifferentiated economy (Lance 1987).

The Sumner-Harling Period 1782-1810

On August 13, 1782 Jabez Sumner, a yeoman (farmer), conveyed 5/8ths of a stream privilege running through his land to Thomas Harling, a miller, for 3 pounds. The conveyance included a half-acre of land “in the most Convenient part near the place where said Harling and myself shall hereafter erect a Mill or Mills.” Harling was also granted permission to pass and repass Sumner’s land “in the road now improved for that purpose” (Suffolk Deeds 143:103).

Six years later on November 30, 1786 Sumner conveyed his 3/8th interest “of a sawmill and Dam standing on pinetree brook (so called) and all the Land therein they now stand together with the appurtenances belonging to said Mill” to Harling for 27 pounds. Included was the privilege of improving one acre of land on the northeasterly side of the brook, the “liberty to flow as much of my land as shall be for the benefit of said Mills and to dig stones and gravel in any convenient part of my land near the Dam to repair the same . . . to pass to and from said Mill in the road now improved for that purpose . . . . that no obstructions shall be made by Dams or damage done to the Mills by ditches or digging in the Land to be improved by said Harling” (Norfolk Deeds 21:234). While the deed first describes the sawmill and dam, it then mentions “mills” on the property suggesting that as partners

Continuation sheet 1
they did erect more than one mill. In 1799 Harling lost a case in the Court of Common Pleas, resulting in having to pay for damages to and the court costs of Aaron Davis of Quincy. No mention was made in court records or in an associated deed as to what the case was about or what the damages were for (Norfolk Deeds 27:11).

A number of deed transactions occurred in the early nineteenth century some of which though not of the mill property are important for features they mentions as well as relevance to later developments. In 1801 Jabez Sumner took out a mortgage on one of his properties that is bounded on the southwest by the “lane to the sawmill” (Norfolk Deeds 16:74). On May 9, 1804 and then on February 21, 1805 Harling purchased two small parcels of land from Sumner that were located to the northeast of the mill property (Norfolk Deeds 24:172) and in 1805 Harling mortgaged his property and house in Milton Lower Falls for $127 to cousins Jacob Foster, a cabinet maker in Charlestown, and John Vose, a tanner in Concord (Norfolk Deeds 24:128). Then in 1806, as a result of the 1799 court case, Harling’s house that was still under a mortgage was sold at public auction (Norfolk Deeds 27:11). Harling mortgaged the mill property for $122 to the cousins previously mentioned on October 27, 1809. The mortgage describes the property as consisting of all the parcels purchased from Sumner including “a Grist Mill and Dam on Pine Tree Brook in Milton and the land they now stand on, also the privilege of improving an acre of land on the northwesterly side of said brook … a “gorge” [that is a narrow valley between hills or mountains, typically with steep rocky walls and a stream running through it] lying between said land and the road or passageway” (Norfolk Deeds 34:93).

Harling died intestate on May 3, 1810 and his estate was determined insolvent. Among other real estate and personal property his inventory included “a piece of land on pine tree brook so called Containing about one acre more or less with a Grist Mill on the same” valued at $200, a lot of old mill stones valued at $10, one cog wheel and piece of a water wheel valued at $5. Administrative costs included $17 for goods paid for carpenter’s work on the mill. A mortgage of $120 was still outstanding (Norfolk Probate 1810).

In summary Harling’s Mill and dam were constructed ca 1782 as a joint venture between farmer Jabez Sumner, who owned a considerable amount of land in Milton, and miller Thomas Harling, who moved to Milton from England ca 1772. The partners constructed two mills: a sawmill and a gristmill that were in operation from ca 1782 to ca 1809 at which point only a gristmill is mentioned in deed transactions. According to the 1782 deed Harling was permitted to pass through Sumner’s land to reach the mill property over a road that had been recently improved. The 1786 deed further states that Harling could use as much of Sumner's land as needed “to flow” for a mill pond and could take stones or gravel from Sumner's land near the dam if needed to repair the dam; these are important considerations that were given to Harling. Cartographic evidence for this period is a plan of the town dating to 1794/1795. A 1794 resolve by the state legislature required each town to conduct a survey and file a plan that showed specific features in the town, one of which was mills. The location of Harling’s Mill is not depicted on the 1794/1795 (Anonymous) plan of Milton, suggesting that the mill was a seasonal venture and/or not in operation when the plan was surveyed.

It is unclear if Harling was operating or leasing out his mill property. According to Mussey, Jr. (2015) Harling was responsible for the construction of a gunpowder mill at Stoughton supplying powder to Massachusetts Revolutionary forces for which he was awarded 1000 acres of “unappropriated lands” in Maine; he owned a paper mill, saw mill and retail store at Milton Lower Falls; and worked as a millwright for mills in the greater Boston area. His financial problems can be attributed to a number of circumstances: the uncertain economy that followed the Revolution, the court case against him, an unstable physical environment where his mills remained inactive due to streams drying up or freshets damaging the mill and associated water power infrastructure, or his product was no longer economically viable due to the beginning of the Industrial Revolution.

The Interim Period 1810-1851

Following Harling’s death his property was put up for sale at public auction. Jacob Forster and John Vose were the highest bidders becoming co-owners of the mill and the mill property (Mussey, Jr 2015). A survey of the Harling’s Mill property was conducted by Stephen Badlam in 1813. The original notes from Badlam’s survey describe the property's boundary as beginning “upon the side of a mill belonging to Jacob Foster on pinetree brook” then ran “NW downstream by a stake to the middle of a cart path” then “S over 2 large rocks to a heap of stones” then “SW to the brook above the dam.” Badlam further notes that “The dam extends about 9 rods SW over the brook to a heap of stones. It is said there is about half an acre on that side of the brook belonging to the mill besides the lot first measured” (Figure 2). A twenty-first century reconstructed version of the mill property by Robert F. Daylor based on Badlam’s survey notes is helpful in envisioning the mill property (Figure 3) (Mussey, Jr. 2015).
The mill property was transferred several times in 1826: John Vose conveyed his right of stream in the mill property to Jacob Forster Jr. (Norfolk Deeds 85:232) and then Jacob Foster Jr. (still a merchant from Charlestown) conveyed the mill property with the right of stream on Pine Tree Brook to Jacob Foster (a cabinetmaker from Charlestown (Norfolk Deed 85:232). By September of 1826 Jacob Forster (cabinetmaker from Charlestown) had accumulated all the property Sumner had sold to Harling including the “mill site and dam standing on pine tree brook,” which he sold to John Preston (a chocolate manufacturer from Dorchester) (Norfolk Deeds 101:316). In 1829 Preston continued to buy the deceased Jabez Sumner’s property that surrounded the mill property (Norfolk Deeds 101:315). Preston held the property until 1837 when he sold 17 ¼ acres to Asaph Churchill Esq of Milton. The deed noted that the property conformed to a plan of the land dated August 29, 1829 that was delivered by Preston to Churchill (Norfolk Deeds 116:216), apparently the plan was not registered as it could not be located at the Norfolk County Registry of Deeds.

Asaph Churchill, who died in 1841, had a substantial estate valued at over $57,000. Part of his real estate holdings included a 1-acre lot by Pine Tree Brook valued at $75 and the 15-acre “Harlain Mill Lot bought of John Preston” valued at $200 (Norfolk Probate 1841). In February of 1851 Asaph Churchill (son of the deceased Asaph Churchill) conveyed an 8-acre lot to Eliphas Clapp (a yeoman/farmer from Milton) for $1,200 that was part of the lot John Preston sold to the late Asaph Churchill in 1837. The lot was located on the south side of a new road built over the land (Norfolk Deeds 204:268).

In summary following Harling’s death the mill and the dam were on his property until at least 1813 according to Bedlam’s survey. As noted by Mussey, Jr. (2015) the present dam on the property coincides with the length and orientation of the dam described by Bedlam. It must be reiterated that the plan from Massey’s history is reconstructed and therefore may not be an exact replication. None of the deeds from 1826 to 1851 note a mill on the property, but one from 1826 does note the mill site and dam. A second series of maps for all towns was mandated by the state legislature in 1830/31. All the features from the 1794/95 series plus other features were to appear on the maps. Again, mills were supposed to be shown, yet no mill is depicted along Pine Tree Brook on that map (Bates 1830). This would accord with the deed descriptions from 1826 to 1851 that suggest no mill was in operation. The “new road” mentioned in the 1851 deed is associated with present-day Harland Street. During this time period, new roads were needed for a growing town. In 1848 the town began construction of the New Pine Tree Road whose specifications had been established by the County Commissioners (Board of Auditors 1848). In 1850 the road, which had a stone travelway, was completed to Scott’s Wood Road (Board of Auditors 1850), in 1852 willows were “set” along the road (Board of Auditors 1852), and in 1853 Pine Tree Brook Road was renamed Harling Street (Board of Auditors 1853). The County Commissioners office was visited, but no records were available from the 1850s.

The Clapp-Safford Period 1851-1895

In March of 1851 Eliphas Clapp took out a mortgage from Churchill for $1,200 for the “homestead property” Clapp had accumulated through several conveyances that included a barn, cabinetmakers shop, and dwelling house as well as the 8-acre parcel he purchased from Churchill in February of 1851. Evidently Clapp used the money to create a mill complex for in April of 1852 he received another mortgage for $1,000 from the Norfolk Mutual Fire Insurance Company for the 8-acre lot (that conveyed by Preston to Churchill in 1837 and then from Churchill, the son, to Clapp in 1851) with the “Mill privilege Dams and the buildings water wheels and Main Gearing thereon” (Norfolk Deeds 208:299). This was followed in 1854 with an additional mortgage of $500 from the insurance company for the same parcel (Norfolk Deeds 227:38). Clapp was taken to court in 1855 by J. W. Damon of Charlestown as Clapp’s mill pond along Pine Tree Brook flowed over Damon’s meadowland. An arbitrator was appointed by the court to study and resolve the situation. The final agreement between Damon and Clapp, which is both interesting and informative with regard to the mill property, can be found in Norfolk Deeds book 279, page 142 at https://www.familysearch.org/. Finally, in 1856 Clapp received another mortgage for $1,200 from W. H. Davis, a merchant from Milton. This mortgage included a 9-acre parcel with dwelling house, a 6-acre parcel and the 8-acre parcel “with the mill thereon” this being the “dwelling and mill estates & premises of said Clapp” (Norfolk Deeds 245:210).

In September of 1859 Clapp conveyed the lot with the barn, cabinetmaker’s shop and dwelling along, the 6-acre orchard lot, and the 8-acre lot with the “mill erected by said Clapp thereon known as the ‘Harlem Mill’ and the dam and water privilege and rights of flowage” to Nathaniel F. Safford a lawyer from Dorchester for $1,652.39. The mill property was still subject to the mortgage held by the insurance company (Norfolk Deeds 281:318). While Safford sold the 9-acre parcel with the dwelling house, barn and cabinetmaker’s shop to his son N.M. Safford of Milton in 1869 (Norfolk Deeds 379:277), it is unclear what happened to the 6-acre orchard lot and the 8-acre mill lot. The lots were likely included in the land taken from Safford by the Metropolitan Park Commissioners in 1895.
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(1887)
Lewis
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residences of E. M. Clapp and E. Clapp, a Cabinet Shop
or may not have lived at the location).
Along Canton Street at its intersection with Harland Street from north to south are the
residences of E. M. Clapp and E. Clapp, a Cabinet Shop and the residence or other structure owned by L.J. Clapp (Figure 4). By
the 1860 Federal Census Eliphas Clapp, still listed as a farmer, was living with his wife and a 14-year-old boy. Eliphas' son
Lewis still lived in the next listed house and his household consisted of his wife, four children, and two male cabinet makers
(United States Federal Census 1860). Unfortunately for Clapp his foray into the cabinet making industry occurred at a time
when the cabinet industry peaked and then declined due to new technologies and transportation improvements (Massachusetts Historical Commission 1981). While it is unknown how long the mill was operational after it was purchased by Safford, Teele (1887) states that the cabinet manufactory “burnt about twenty years ago,” which would be ca 1867.
The Harling's Mill Dam
A study of small-scale mills in Worcester has revealed that the history of a mill can often contain a “baffling complexity of
investment transactions” (Lance 1987). The study revealed five phases of industrial development, three of which seem to be
associated with industrial activities along Pine Tree Brook. The other two phases were associated with industrial activities along
rivers. Phase One is associated with farmer millers erecting traditional mills along small streams. Phase Four occurred when
a stream associated with early industrial activity was redeveloped with small-scale market-oriented industries. Phase Five
occurred when large corporations consolidated river sites and traditional industries abandoned stream sites for the final time.
The Harlings Mill site and dam is significant as it has the potential to provide information to understand rural settlement and
use as well as rural industrial development along streams that contributed to the industrial development of Milton from the
eighteenth through nineteenth centuries.
The dam at Pine Tree Brook has likely been breached a number of times since it was constructed in 1782. The 1786 deed to
Harling underscores the importance of being able to have access to gravel and stones to quickly repair a dam. As noted by
Mussey, Jr. (2015) the measurements and orientation of the present dam and that in Badlam's 1813 survey provides a clear
association with the 1782 Harling's Mill. It is unclear if Clapp’s “new dam” was one rebuilt at the location of Harling's dam or was
built at a location near Harling's dam. Even though the present dam has been breached and rebuilt in the twentieth century
compromising integrity of materials and workmanship the site and dam as a whole is considered to possess integrity of:

- location: the place where the historic property was constructed,
- design: the conscious and unconscious decisions over time about where areas of land use are located in relationship to
natural features and each other,
- setting: the physical environment within and around a property,
- feeling: the presence of physical characteristics that reflect a sense of past time and place, and
- association: a direct link between a property and the events that shaped it.

Further research is needed to not only understand the possible impact of the development of the roadway system, in particular
Unquity Road, on the mill property, but also to understand changes to the landscape and repairs/changes to features associated
with the mill site that may have occurred during the development of the Blue Hills Reservation. An archaeological survey that
would include the recommended research and document features associated with the mill site would aid in determining the site’s
limits and its eligibility for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.
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Figure 1. Plan of Harling’s Mill Dam.
Figure 2. Stephen Bedlam’s Survey of Harling’s Mill property (Mussey, Jr. 2017).
Figure 3. Reconstructed plan of Harling’s Mill property (Mussey, Jr 2015).
Figure 4. Detail of 1858 (Walling) county map.
Plate 1. Looking southeasterly at breached dam and mill pond.

Plate 2. Looking northeasterly at earthen dam from Pine Tree Brook.
Plate 3. Looking southeasterly towards the breach in the dam.

Plate 4. Looking northwesterly along Pine Tree Brook from the breach in the dam.