

Cape Cod Canal Transportation Study Bourne, Sandwich and Plymouth, Massachusetts

As part of the 2016 Cape Cod Canal Transportation Study, AHS prepared a report that identified and evaluated cultural resources that may be affected by the project. The Cape Cod Canal is located at an eight-mile isthmus separating Buzzard's Bay from the Cape Cod Bay. After a series of attempts to build a canal in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the canal was completed in 1914 as a privately-owned toll waterway. Dredging continued until 1916 to increase the canal depth to 25 feet. Original canal crossings included ferry service, two highway drawbridges, and a railroad drawbridge.



The current Bourne and Sagamore bridges, designed by Fay, Spofford, and Thorndike and architectural firm Cram and Ferguson, were completed 1934-35. The Buzzards Bay Railroad Bridge, a vertical lift bridge designed by Parson, Klapp, Brinckerhoff and Douglas in collaboration with the architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White, was finished in 1935.



The Cape Cod Canal and its associated structures are potentially eligible as a NRHP historic district. The Bourne and Sagamore bridges have been identified as eligible for individual listing in the NRHP. In the towns of Bourne, Sandwich, and Plymouth, the project area contains NRHP-listed and eligible buildings and districts.

The project area is also rich in Native American archaeological and cultural resources. The river, marsh, and coastal resources available on the Cape made the area a prime location for Native American settlement for thousands of years. Archaeological evidence of villages was found during the construction of the canal, confirming oral tradition among the Wampanoag tribes, and subsequent archaeological surveys have identified dozens of archaeological sites. Areas of cultural importance to the Wampanoag tribes are present in numerous locations in the project area. Historic-period Euro-American sites are also likely present, associated with the colonial settlement on the Cape in the early 17th century.

