

**INDIAN FILLING STATION  
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES EVALUATION**

**Wellfleet, Massachusetts**

Stephen A. Olausen

Submitted to:

**National Park Service**

History Program  
Northeast Region  
15 State Street  
Boston, MA 02109

Submitted by:

**PAL**  
210 Lonsdale Avenue  
Pawtucket, Rhode Island 02860



**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**SECTION**

1.0 Introduction ..... 1  
1.1 Authority ..... 1  
1.2 Personnel ..... 1  
1.3 Methodology ..... 2  
1.4 Administrative Background..... 2  
  
2.0 Existing Conditions ..... 4  
  
3.0 Reconnaissance Survey Results ..... 19  
3.1 MHC Inventory File Review ..... 19  
3.2 Field Survey ..... 20  
  
4.0 Evaluation..... 24  
4.1 Integrity ..... 24  
4.2 Historical Significance ..... 25  
  
5.0 Summary Conclusions..... 29  
  
6.0 References ..... 29

**APPENDICES**

- A. Evaluation of “Sousa” Service Station (Tract 19-5127 CACO), Wellfleet, MA
- B. MHC Inventory Forms for Indian Filling Station
- C. Correspondence
- D. MHC Inventory Forms and NR Documentation for Cape Cod Service Stations

**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1. Indian Filling Station, facing northwest from east side of Route 6..... 4  
Figure 2. Lubritorium facade (east elevation) and south side ..... 5  
Figure 3. Lubritorium rear (west) elevation ..... 5  
Figure 4. Lubritorium rear elevation and north side..... 6  
Figure 5. Missing window, door, and exterior shingles in the northern bays of the  
Lubritorium facade ..... 6  
Figure 6. Damaged roof and missing asphalt shingles on the east slope of the  
Lubritorium roof ..... 7  
Figure 7. Overhead door of the Lubritorium service bay ..... 7  
Figure 8. Rear window of the Lubritorium showing damage to sash, trim, and sill ..... 8  
Figure 9. Collapsed floor in main entrance room of the Lubritorium ..... 9

LIST OF FIGURES (continued)

Figure 10. Collapsed ceiling in northern half of the Lubritorium .....	9
Figure 11. Main entrance door remnant and floor damage in north office of the Lubritorium ...	10
Figure 12. Conditions at floor of main entrance to the Lubritorium showing rotted floor joists and fallen ceiling debris.....	11
Figure 13. Men’s bathroom in the Lubritorium.....	11
Figure 14. Lubritorium service bay interior showing the grease pit, poured concrete floor, and overhead service bay door.....	12
Figure 15. Grease pit in the Lubritorium service bay .....	12
Figure 16. Facade (east elevation) and south side of the Office.....	13
Figure 17. South side of the Office .....	13
Figure 18. Rear (west) elevation of the Office .....	14
Figure 19. Hole on the north side of the Office addition.....	14
Figure 20. Main entrance to the Office showing extensive damage and deterioration .....	15
Figure 21. Living room of the Office .....	16
Figure 22. Partially collapsed ceiling in living room of the Office .....	16
Figure 23. Partially collapsed floor in living room of the Office .....	17
Figure 24. Bathroom of the Office .....	18
Figure 25. Kitchen of the Office.....	18
Figure 26. Rear bedroom addition of Office .....	19
Figure 27. Sonny’s Service Station, Route 6 in North Truro .....	21
Figure 28. Punchy’s Service Station (now Grozier Square Automotive), 6 Highland Avenue, Truro.....	22
Figure 29. Punchy’s Service Station Garage .....	22
Figure 30. Nickerson’s Service Station, 4515 Route 6, Eastham.....	23
Figure 31. Nickerson’s Service Station as it appeared in the 1940s.....	23
Figure 32. <i>Gas</i> , Edward Hopper, 1940.....	28
Figure 33: Current photo showing the general perspective portrayed in Hopper’s painting <i>Gas</i> .....	28

## **1.0 Introduction**

This report presents the results of a National Register of Historic Places (National Register) evaluation conducted for the Indian Filling Station (Sousa Gas Station)<sup>1</sup> located at the corner of Pamet Point Road and Route 6 in Wellfleet, Massachusetts. The station is comprised of a former automobile service building that has come to be referred to as the “Lubritorium” and a building that originally served as the station’s office, but was later moved and converted for residential use. In 2007 PAL (The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc.) was hired by the National Park Service (NPS) to evaluate and prepare National Register documentation for four properties, including the Indian Filling Station, Atwood-Higgins Historic District, Truro Highlands Historic District, and Highlands Light, within the Cape Cod National Seashore (Cape Cod NS). The Indian Filling Station was the subject of a previous evaluation conducted by NPS staff in 1998–1999. At that time the NPS determined that the property was not eligible for listing in the National Register because it did not meet integrity requirements. In its review of the documentation submitted by the NPS, the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) disagreed; stating that despite the integrity issues the Indian Filling Station represents a rare surviving example of a typical early century “mom and pop” gas station and possesses significance for its association with Cape Cod’s initial period of automobile tourism. Since that initial review, the two buildings on the property have suffered considerable damage caused by weather and vandalism to the point where they pose a significant threat to health and safety. This report provides a reassessment of the property in light of its current condition and provides additional information pertaining to its historical significance that was not considered at the time of the property’s initial National Register evaluation.

## **1.1 Authority**

This report was prepared to assist the NPS in meeting its obligations under Sections 106 and 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470). Section 106 requires federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties, and afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) a reasonable opportunity to comment. The historic preservation review process mandated by Section 106 is defined in regulations issued by ACHP codified in 36 CFR Part 800. Section 110 requires, among other things, that the heads of all federal agencies assume responsibility for the preservation of historic properties that are owned or controlled by their agencies and that each agency establish a preservation program for the identification, evaluation, and nomination to the National Register of Historic Places under their jurisdiction or control.

## **1.2 Personnel**

The evaluation of the Indian Filling Station was conducted by Stephen Olausen, PAL senior architectural historian. Olausen was assisted in the project by Jenny Fields (PAL architectural historian) and Kim Allegretto (research historian). All staff meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Professional Qualification Standards (36 CFR 61 Appendix A) for architectural history.

---

<sup>1</sup> Over the course of time, the property has been known variously as the Sousa Station, Sousa Service Station, Sousa Gas Station, Indian Filling Station, and Indian Filling Station and Lubritorium. Locals often referred to it by the owner’s name, including the Williams Service Station, after the original owner, or most recently as “Bogsey’s Service Station” after its long-time owner and operator Norman F. (Bogsey) Berrio. For consistency sake, the property is referred to throughout this document as Indian Filling Station, which appears to have been its longest and most enduring business appellation.

### **1.3 Methodology**

The methodology employed in conducting the National Register evaluation for the Indian Filling Station conforms to the guidelines contained in *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (NPS 1991) and *National Register Bulletin 24: Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning*. At the outset, PAL reviewed existing information about the history of the property and the files maintained at Cape Cod NS regarding the administrative history of the property since its acquisition by the NPS in 1993. Additional research was conducted in the files of the MHC Inventory of the Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth (MHC Inventory) in an effort to determine the relative rarity of the property type on Cape Cod. PAL also consulted a number of secondary sources that provide context for the development of service stations in the United States during the early to mid-twentieth century.

PAL conducted two site visits to the Indian Filling Station to document existing conditions. The first site visit was conducted in November 2007 and focused on recording information about the exterior. Because the buildings were inaccessible at that time, a second visit was conducted in July 2008 to inspect the interiors of the buildings. As part of the July site visit, a reconnaissance level survey of comparable historic period service stations in the towns of Lower Cape Cod was conducted. Using information from the MHC Inventory file search and local informants, PAL visited a number of early-twentieth-century service stations that are readily visible along Routes 6 and 6A in the towns of the Lower and Mid Cape. Each of the stations encountered were photographed and notes about their physical appearance and condition were recorded. During the survey, efforts were made to inspect interior service bays and speak with station operators regarding the history of the establishments.

After the completion of the research and fieldwork, PAL reviewed all of the collected information and applied the National Register Criteria for Evaluation and Integrity to the Indian Filling Station. The result of the evaluation is presented below.

### **1.4 Administrative Background**

The Indian Filling Station was acquired by the NPS and incorporated into the Cape Cod NS in 1993. In 1998 NPS historians Larry Lowenthal and Paul Weinbaum and historical architect Richard Crisson conducted the initial National Register evaluation of the property. The work included extensive research in primary and secondary documentary sources and oral interviews with former owners and local residents familiar with the property. A site visit was also made to inspect the property and record existing conditions. Lowenthal served as the primary author of a report titled "Evaluation of 'Sousa' Service Station: (Tract 19-4127 CACO), Wellfleet, MA," which was finalized in July 1999 (Appendix A). The report concluded that the station had historical associations with the early development of automobile culture on Cape Cod, was representative of the evolution of the service station as a building type during the early twentieth century, and may have served as inspiration for *Gas*, an important painting by noted American artist Edward Hopper. The property, however, lacked sufficient physical integrity necessary to convey those associations due to the demolition of one of three buildings that originally made up the complex, the removal of what was purportedly an office building to a different location on the site, and the lack of original ancillary features, such as gas pumps, signage, and lighting, that would serve to demarcate the complex as a historic automobile service station. Subsequently, Lowenthal and Crisson collaborated on the preparation of MHC Inventory of the Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth (MHC Inventory) Form B - Building forms for the two surviving buildings on the lot (Appendix B).

On September 16, 1999 Cape Cod NS Superintendent Maria Burks wrote to Judith McDonough, executive director of the MHC and Massachusetts State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), requesting concurrence with the NPS determination that the Indian Filling Station is not eligible for listing in the National Register (Appendix C). The letter was accompanied by the MHC Inventory forms and included notice that, in the event the MHC concurred with the determination, the NPS intended to demolish the buildings. In a letter dated December 21, 1999 McDonough responded that her staff disagreed with the determination of ineligibility, stating that:

Despite the historic loss of the original cottage on this site, and the historic relocation and conversion of the office to a residence, the Indian Filling Station nevertheless represents a rare intact, survival of the sort of modest mom-and-pop service stations that were a characteristic feature of the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century roadside. Buildings of this type, and this complex in particular, were raised to the level of icons of the American landscape of this era by their representation in the works of artists like Edward Hopper.

The MHC copied the Wellfleet Historical Commission (WHC) on its letter to the NPS. The WHC responded by sending a letter to the MHC dated January 7, 2000 stating that it “recogniz[ed] the historical importance of each of the two stations mentioned in the letter,” and was “only interested in setting the record straight” (see Appendix C). The WHC commented that the designation of the service building as the “Lubritorium” was correct due to the existence of the recessed pit in the floor from which a car’s undercarriage could be serviced and indicated that such pits were used until hydraulic lifts became common. The WHC also noted that it believed the source for the Hopper’s inspiration for *Gas* was Jack’s Gas, a filling station located nearby on Route 6 in Truro. Jack’s Gas was later destroyed by fire in November 2003.

After receipt of the MHC’s opinion regarding the eligibility of the Indian Filling Station, the NPS dropped its plans to demolish the buildings and began exploring alternatives for its stabilization and adaptive use. In 2001, Cape Cod NS sought funding through the NPS’s Cultural Resources Preservation and Protection (CRPP) program to stabilize the Lubritorium by replacing its deteriorated roof with a low maintenance standing metal seam roof. The project was not funded at that point and a repeated request in the following funding cycle in 2005 also went unfunded. In 2003, the NPS was approached by Steven Rose, a local builder and realtor who had grown up near the station and desired to see it preserved. He proposed a leasing arrangement under which he would restore the buildings and in return for permission from the NPS to use the Service Station building to display his collection of automobile memorabilia for public viewing and the Office to house his real estate office. Questions arose about whether such uses were allowed under the General Management Plan for the Cape Cod NS and potential liability issues associated with PCB contaminated soils that stemmed from the station’s history as a dispensary of petroleum products. As a result, the initiative was ultimately abandoned, and although the NPS continued to explore possible adaptive use options, no serious proposals were subsequently developed. The lack of federal funding available for the stabilization of the property has resulted in further deterioration of the two buildings to their current ruinous state.

## 2.0 Existing Conditions

The Indian Filling Station is located at the northwest corner of the intersection of Route 6 and Pamet Road, approximately 500 feet south of the Wellfleet/Truro town line. The property lot is heavily overgrown with scrub oak trees, evergreen trees and bushes, and thick undergrowth. The Service Station is setback from the road at the apex of an arced driveway that comprises the only landscape feature that suggests the property's former use as a service station. The Office is located approximately 50 feet southwest of the Service Station. For a full description of the buildings as they appeared in 1999, please refer to the MHC Inventory forms in Appendix B.

In the nine years since the Indian Filling Station was initially evaluated as eligible for listing in the National Register by the MHC, the Lubritorium and Office buildings have suffered severe deterioration due to vandalism and weather damage to the point where they are in ruinous condition and are beyond repair or rehabilitation. The building exteriors have degraded due to a loss of protective paint, wood shingle siding, and window glass. This has resulted in severe rot of the wood foundation sills; fascia, window, and door trims; and exterior wall sheathing. The roof systems of both buildings have been compromised by the extensive loss of the composition asphalt shingles and there are several large holes in the roofs and exterior walls. Water infiltration has caused serious damage to interior structural members, including roof rafters, load bearing walls, and floor joists. With the exception of the floor in the Lubritorium's service bay, which remains intact due to its robust reinforced concrete and metal post support system, none of the floors are safe to walk on and several sections have completely collapsed. During the inspection of the interior, pieces of trim above the doorway and ceiling plaster fell, nearly injuring the surveyors and several times the plywood underlayment of the floors gave way when weight was put on them. The following photographs taken during the site visits show the extent of the deterioration and the ruinous state that the buildings exist in today (Figures 1–26).



**Figure 1. Indian Filling Station, facing northwest from east side of Route 6.**



Figure 2. Lubritorium facade (east elevation) and south side.



Figure 3. Lubritorium rear (west) elevation.



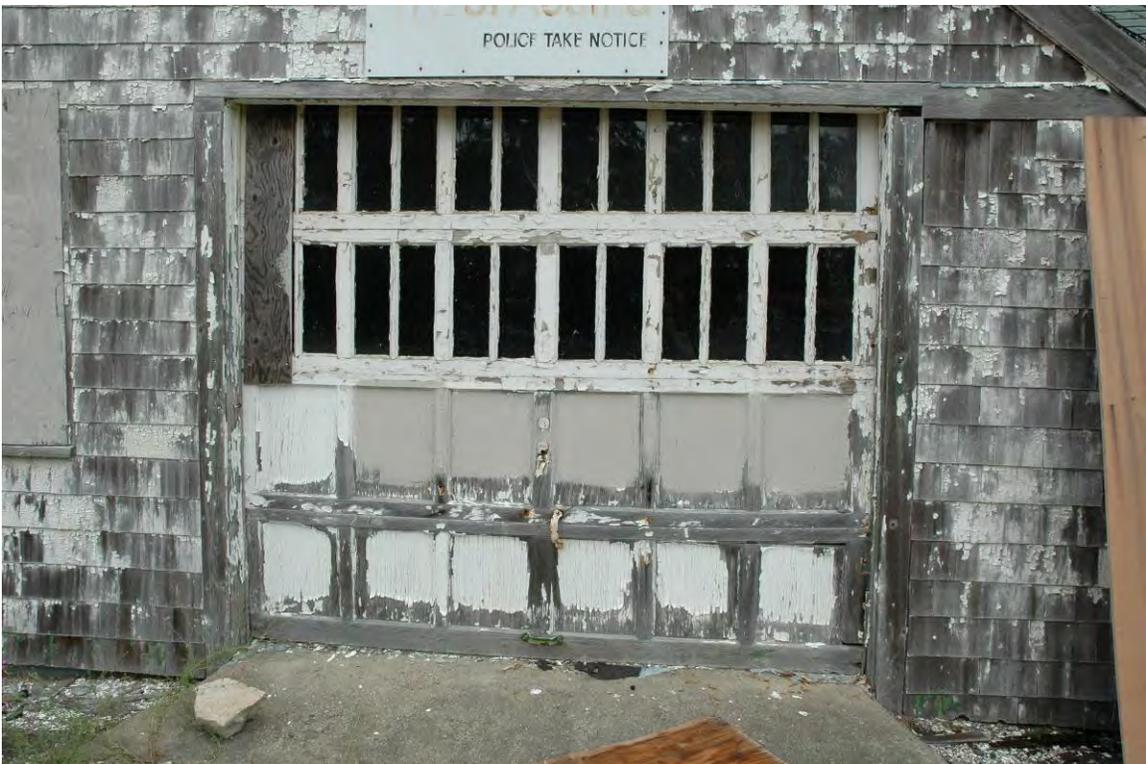
Figure 4. Lubritorium rear elevation and north side.



Figure 5. Missing window, door, and exterior shingles in the northern bays of the Lubritorium facade.



**Figure 6. Damaged roof and missing asphalt shingles on the east slope of the Lubritorium roof.**



**Figure 7. Overhead door of the Lubritorium service bay.**



**Figure 8. Rear window of the Lubritorium showing damage to sash, trim, and sill.**



Figure 9. Collapsed floor in main entrance room of the Lubritorium.



Figure 10. Collapsed ceiling in northern half of the Lubritorium.



**Figure 11. Main entrance door remnant and floor damage in north office of the Lubritorium.**



Figure 12. Conditions at floor of main entrance to the Lubritorium showing rotted floor joists and fallen ceiling debris.



Figure 13. Men's bathroom in the Lubritorium.



Figure 14. Lubritorium service bay interior showing the grease pit, poured concrete floor, and overhead service bay door.



Figure 15. Grease pit in the Lubritorium service bay.



**Figure 16. Facade (east elevation) and south side of the Office.**



**Figure 17. South side of the Office.**



**Figure 18. Rear (west) elevation of the Office.**



**Figure 19. Hole on the north side of the Office addition.**



**Figure 20. Main entrance to the Office showing extensive damage and deterioration.**



Figure 21. Living room of the Office.



Figure 22. Partially collapsed ceiling in living room of the Office.



**Figure 23. Partially collapsed floor in living room of the Office.**



Figure 24. Bathroom of the Office.



Figure 25. Kitchen of the Office.



**Figure 26. Rear bedroom addition of the Office.**

### **3.0 Reconnaissance Survey Results**

The reconnaissance survey of service stations was conducted to provide comparative data necessary to evaluate whether the Indian Filling Station “represent[s] the best preserved gas station complex” from the early twentieth century known to survive on Cape Cod, as posited by the MHC in its initial evaluation of the property. Comparative data was derived from a review of properties currently included in the MHC Inventory and a limited reconnaissance, or windshield survey conducted to inspect the current condition of known historic period stations and others that have not yet been surveyed.

#### **3.1 MHC Inventory File Review**

The review of the MHC Inventory files determined that there are nine previously recorded service stations on Cape Cod that are similar to the Indian Filling Station in terms of its status as an early-twentieth-century “mom-and-pop” type operation and extent of available service facilities (Table 1). Most are currently listed in the National Register as contributing properties in a historic district or are within locally designated historic districts. The available documentation for the properties suggests that they were family run enterprises, vernacular in form and design, and developed before the period during the mid-twentieth century when standardized corporate designs became the norm. Copies of the inventory forms and related portions of National Register documentation for the properties are contained in Appendix D.

**Table 1. Gas and Service Stations on Cape Cod recorded in the MHC Inventory.**

MHC No.	Name	Address	Circa Date	Notes
BRN.1318	Homan, Louis Gas Station and Shop	970 Main St., Barnstable	1931	Constructed as a gas station and later converted to a residence. Listed in National Register as a contributing property in a historic district
BRN.1385	Jenny Family Gas and Service Station	905 Main St., Barnstable	1924	Listed in National Register as a contributing property in a historic district.
BRE.364	Brewster Garage	1726 Main St., Brewster	1910	Early rusticated concrete block gas station. Listed in National Register as a contributing property in a historic district.
CHA.99	Bearse Gas Station	201 Main St., Chatham	1918	Service station converted to “Little Tavern” in 1924. Listed in National Register as a contributing property in a historic district.
CHA.209	Eldredge Garage	365 Main St., Chatham	1904	Former livery stable converted to a service station in the early 20 <sup>th</sup> century. Operated today as a limousine serve.
HRW.189	J. D. Phillips Garage	580 Route 28, Harwich	1880, 1915	Early 20 <sup>th</sup> century service station with earlier converted barn.
PRO.504	Cape End Ford Motor Company Garage and Showroom	238 Bradford St., Provincetown	1930	Early service station later operated as a Ford dealership and service station. Heavily altered, now serves as Provincetown Theater. In Local Historic District.
YAR.148	Marshall’s Garage	472 Hallet St., Yarmouth	1925	Listed in National Register as a contributing property in a historic district. No MHC form available.
YAR.610	Speedway Gas Station	256 Main St., Yarmouth	1918	Listed in National Register as a contributing property in a historic district. No MHC form available.

### 3.2 Field Survey

The scope of the field component of the reconnaissance survey was limited to what a driver might readily see on a trip along major roads (primarily Routes 6 and 6A) in the towns of Lower Cape Cod, including Provincetown, Truro, Wellfleet, Eastham, Orleans, Chatham, Harwich, and Brewster. During the survey a total of 11 service stations that appear to date from the historic period were identified. Some of the stations observed were among those previously recorded in the MHC Inventory, while others have not been previously surveyed. The results of this cursory survey indicate that there are at least three stations within relative close proximity to the Indian Filling and share similar characteristics (Figures 27–31). All continue to function as automotive service stations and, though they have been altered to varying extents over time, they appear to retain a higher degree of integrity than the Indian Filling Station.



**Figure 27. Sonny's Service Station, Route 6 in North Truro, built ca. 1960, large service bay addition (right) added later. While it was constructed at a later date than the Indian Filling Station, the design of its original building is similar, featuring a wood frame, side gable office block and attached, front-facing gable service bay. There is no evidence, however, that the service bay had a grease pit similar to that of the Indian Filling Station Lubritorium.**



**Figure 28. Punchy's Service Station (now Grozier Square Automotive), 6 Highland Avenue, Truro, built 1948, added to in 1952 and 1972.**



**Figure 29. Punchy's Service Station Garage has a grease pit that consisted of a long, narrow, concrete lined trench. It was filled in 1970s for insurance purposes. An associated cottage that housed the owner and his family is located behind the service station.**



Figure 30. Nickerson's Service Station, 4515 Route 6, Eastham, built 1939 with addition in 1959. Nickerson's is a family run service station that is among the oldest and most intact roadside developments of its kind on Lower Cape Cod. The following is from the station's website [www.nickersonservice.com](http://www.nickersonservice.com): "Nellie Nickerson purchased the land and building at 4515 Route 6, Eastham from Clayton Horton in 1924. The property had one gas pump that distributed Socony gasoline (Standard Oil Company of New York). Nellie used the building to run a tearoom and added a second gas pump. She eventually put on an addition to the building, which was used as a grocery store. Nellie's son Arthur built a two bay garage on the property in 1939. A third bay in the back was added on later. Arthur operated Nickerson Autobody from these bays. The gas station changed from Socony to Gulf."



Figure 31. Nickerson's Service Station as it appeared in the 1940s.

## **4.0 Evaluation**

The evaluation of the Indian Filling Station's eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places considered the property's historical significance, integrity, and current condition in light of the research and fieldwork conducted as part of this study. As a result, this evaluation comes to a different conclusion regarding the property's significance and relative rarity as a historic service station than did MHC at the time of its initial review. More importantly, however, is the question of the property's integrity, which was at center of the NPS's initial finding that the Indian Filling Station is not eligible for the National Register and has since declined further due to a loss of historic fabric and structural soundness of the buildings. In its current condition the property is no longer able to convey its historical associations and poses a significant threat to safety.

### **4.1 Integrity**

The integrity of the Indian Filling Station was the primary determining factor in the evaluation that the property is not eligible for listing in the National Register. When it was originally evaluated in the late 1990s, there were questions about the property's integrity due to the loss of one of the major original buildings, the move of the Office, and the removal of all appurtenant features, including gas pumps, islands, and signage. In 1999 the Lubritorium and Office were identified as being in poor, but structurally sound condition. Since that time, the structural integrity of the buildings has dramatically worsened to the point where the property poses a significant threat to safety and appears to be beyond the point where rehabilitation is an option. The significant deterioration of the historic fabric of the property has adversely impacted the station's ability to convey its historical associations. Resource rarity, an issue raised in 1999, is separately considered below.

The NPS provides guidance on assessing integrity in *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (NPS 1991). Integrity is based on significance and is determined by the extent to which a property retains the identity for which it is significant. In assessing integrity it is necessary to define the essential physical features that must be present and whether those features are currently visible enough to convey significance. It is also necessary to determine which of the seven aspects of integrity, including location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, are most important in evaluating the property's significance and whether or not they are currently represented by the physical appearance of the property (NPS 1991:45).

The MHC's opinion regarding the significance of the station was used as the basis for assessing the integrity of the property. The MHC has stated that the station is eligible under National Register Criteria A and C at the local level as a rare survival of a significant property type associated with the development of early automobile travel on Cape Cod. While a period of significance was never established for the property, the presumed start is ca. 1937, which denotes the first documented use of the property as a service station and coincides with increased automobile travel on Cape Cod after the completion of the Bourne and Sagamore bridges in the mid-1930s. By 1941, the filling station, which was then under ownership of the Williams family, consisted of the Lubritorium, Office, a cottage where the owners lived, a shed, two sets of gas pumps, and signage that identified the property as a service station. Given the property's association with early automobile travel on Cape Cod before World War II, this configuration comprises the historic complex at the height of its significance and is used in the further evaluation of the property's integrity as it exists today.

Of the seven aspects of integrity, location, design, setting, materials, feeling, and association apply to the Indian Filling Station. Based on the vernacular and pedestrian nature of the buildings, workmanship is not considered a key element of the station's integrity.

**Location** is defined as the place where a historic property was constructed or the place where a historic event occurred. As a roadside development that catered to automobile traffic, the Lubritorium of the Indian Filling Station retains the integrity of its location. The Office, however, does not convey integrity of location since it was moved from its original location nearer the road to its current site well back on the property. A third building that presumably served as the original cottage has been removed.

**Design** is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property. Design is one of the most important aspects of integrity that is associated with the significance of the Indian Filling Station and it is the one that has been most affected by the alterations that have occurred over time. The form and plan of the complex as it appeared during the historic period bears little resemblance to what exists today. The relationship of the buildings to one another bears little resemblance to its design during the height of its period of significance. One building is missing entirely, the original Office was moved back on the property and converted for residential use, and all of the appurtenant features, including the fuel pumps and signage, that distinguished the property as a service station are gone.

**Setting** is the physical environment of a historic property. The surrounding setting of the Indian Filling Station is the only aspect of integrity that remains relatively intact. No significant physical changes, with the possible exception of the widening of Route 6, have occurred in the immediate environs surrounding the property, and its relationship to the roadway remains intact.

**Materials** are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property. The materials used in the construction of the remaining two elements of the Indian Filling Service Station are wood, asphalt shingle, glass, concrete, and steel. They were arranged to produce simple, utilitarian vernacular structures. With the exception of the concrete and steel grease pit in the Lubritorium, the materials have all been degraded by weather damage to the point where structural integrity has been compromised and they no longer convey their original appearance.

**Feeling** is the property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time. The sense of historic place and time is absent in the Indian Filling Station property due to the significant loss of physical features that convey its function as a historic service station and the degradation of the surviving historic fabric.

**Association** is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property. Without the features that denote it as a service station, the complex no longer conveys its historical associations. The dilapidated Lubritorium as seen casually from the roadside could easily be mistaken for a residential garage, highway maintenance building, or other type of automobile-related structure.

#### **4.2 Historical Significance**

If the Indian Filling Station possessed a sufficient amount of integrity, it would likely be eligible for listing in the National Register. The NPS and MHC agreed at the time of the initial review of National Register eligibility that the station possesses important historical associations as a relatively rare surviving example of an early Cape Cod service station. The work conducted for

this study, however, calls into question several statements made by the MHC that argued that the rarity of the resource and other aspects of its presumed significance overrode the obvious issues concerning its integrity. The evidence suggests that some of the conclusions drawn are misleading due to the information available at the time used to make comparative judgments about the scarcity of the property type and the station's historical associations. The significance of the place, therefore, is not as great as previously suggested and affirms the evaluation that the lack of integrity of the Indian Filling Station precludes its eligibility for listing in the National Register.

In its 1999 letter, the MHC made the following assertions regarding the property's significance under Criteria A and C as a significant representative property type associated with an important era in Wellfleet history:

1. the Indian Filling Station represents a rare intact survival of mom-and-pop service stations that were a characteristic feature of the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century roadside and the complex may represent the best preserved gas station from that era known to survive on Cape Cod;
2. the Lubritorium, in particular, is significant as one of only two such buildings known to survive in Massachusetts;
3. buildings of this type, and this complex in particular, were raised to the level of icons of the American landscape of this era by their representation in the works of artists like Edward Hopper. Hopper's famous 1940 painting *Gas* was largely based on the Indian Filling Station.

The current condition and integrity of the Indian Filling Station, along with the existence of other similar types of resources discovered in relatively close proximity to the property, are the primary arguments against the first assertion. The three historic period service stations, especially Nickerson's Service Station, appear to possess similar associations to the early automobile-related roadside development and retain more of their integrity in terms of their location, design, materials, feeling, and association than the Indian Filling Station.

The second assertion that Indian Filling Station's Lubritorium represents an almost unique resource type in Massachusetts is incorrect and appears to be based on a misunderstanding of the term "lubritorium" as applied to early service stations. In fact, "lubritorium" was a widely used descriptive term and not specific to service stations with grease pits. The Collins English Dictionary defines lubritorium as chiefly a United States term used to describe "a place, as in a service station, for the lubrication of motor vehicles." While generally out of use today, the term was commonly applied during the early to mid-twentieth century to denote any enclosed service bay used for automobile lubrication purposes. In his book entitled *American Gas Station*, author Michael Karl Witzel states that gasoline stations throughout the country began offering lubrication services, primarily engine oil changes and greasing of under carriage parts, in the 1920s as a way of increasing business and supplementing income garnered through fuel sales. By the late 1930s, "the Lubritorium was . . . a basic part of the American gasoline station" (Witzel 1992:85). Any station that had a "grease pit" or hydraulic lift, which was introduced in the mid-1920s, for servicing under carriage components can properly be referred to as a lubritorium. Therefore, the appellation assigned to the Indian Filling Station's service building carries no special significance. The name was never designated by any formal signs on the building as was common for service bays of other period stations. NPS historian Larry Lowenthal likely took the designation from a label of the building on a survey plan filed in the town records by the station's owner Alma Williams in advance of the property's sale in 1941. This was consistent with how

automobile service bays were commonly designated in legal documents at the time and, in fact, the term is still used to designate automotive service bays in Massachusetts state laws. The three service stations included in the photos above, as well as nearly all of the previously inventoried service stations on Cape Cod included in the MHC Inventory, have service bays that could properly be referred to as lubritoriums. A recent search of the Inventory on the use type “Gas Station or Service Station” indicates that there are more than 800 such properties that have been recorded across the state.

The one distinctive feature that survives in the Indian Filling Station’s Lubritorium is its grease pit. Most contemporary service stations pits were narrow slits with side walls that restricted movement. The Indian Filling Station Lubritorium’s reinforced concrete floor supported by metal posts allowed for free movement and storage of tools and materials below grade. The survival of this feature is due to the closure of the station before the late 1970s when insurance companies began denying coverage to station owners who did not fill in the pits because of the inherent danger of explosion due to built up fumes within the low, enclosed spaces. An example of a grease pit that was closed for this reason was Punchy’s Garage at 6 Highland Avenue in North Truro where, according to its owner, the grease pit was filled with earth and concrete in 1979. While the grease pit at the Indian Filling Station is a relatively rare survival of its type, the pit by itself does not possess any significant historical, architectural, or engineering associations that would qualify it for listing in the National Register. Without the service station building, which lacks integrity, is beyond repair, and is in imminent danger of full collapse, the pit would entirely lose its context and would no longer convey its function as an element of the lubritorium.

The final assertion that the Indian Filling Station was the primary inspiration for Edward Hopper’s painting *Gas* is the subject of some dispute. It is generally accepted that Hopper referenced several local service stations in the painting and that he was known to have visited the Indian Filling Station. In its response to the MHC’s comment letter, however, the WHC was definitive in its belief that the basis for the painting was Jack’s Gas, which was located nearby on Route 6 in Truro until it burned down in 2003. This attribution is supported by an article that appeared in the Provincetown Banner after the fire which states that Jack’s was likely the primary source for the painting. The article is accompanied by a photograph of Jack’s in the 1940s and shows the original station layout and buildings were more in keeping with *Gas* than anything that existed at the Indian Filling Station at the time. Given the orientation of the painting, there is some possibility that the building that housed the original gas station office at the Indian Filling Station was similar to the one depicted in the painting. However, the painting depicts a square, hipped roof building more in keeping with Jack’s Gas, while the Office has a side gable roof with two forward facing cross-gable units. It is difficult to imagine that the liberties taken by Hopper extended to a complete redesign of the building. Regardless of the questions behind Hopper’s inspiration, there are no elements contained in the *Gas* that survive at the Indian Filling Station, and no one comparing the painting to what exists today could reasonably conclude that they are related (Figures 32 and 33).



Figure 32. *Gas*, Edward Hopper, 1940. Image downloaded from the World Gallery, Co. website: <http://www.worldgallery.co.uk/art-print/Gas,-1940-6539.html>.

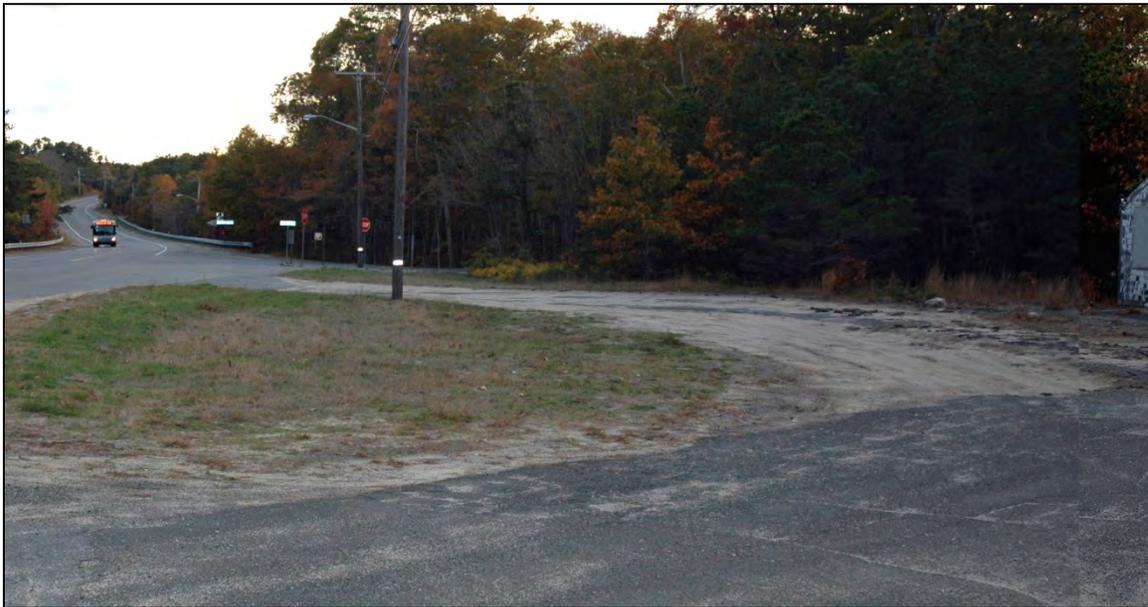


Figure 33: Current photo showing the general perspective portrayed in Hopper's painting *Gas*.

## 5.0 Summary Conclusions

PAL recommends that the Indian Filling Station is not eligible for listing in the National Register. The station is in ruinous condition and does not possess sufficient integrity to convey its historical associations to the period in which it achieved significance. There are also several key issues surrounding the original interpretation of the station's significance when it was first evaluated in the late 1990s. These include the supposition that the station represents a relatively scarce surviving example of a "mom-and-pop" service station from Cape Cod's initial period of automobile tourism, the misinterpretation that the Lubritorium is a rare property type, and the questionable association of the station as an inspiration for Edward Hopper's *Gas*. There are a number of historic service stations on Cape Cod that retain a significant degree of integrity and are better able to convey their historic associations to the early period of automobile tourism. Several are already listed in the National Register and others, like Nickerson's Service Station in Eastham, are worthy of that designation. The term lubritorium was in common usage during the early twentieth century and can be properly applied to any enclosed service bay used for lubrication of car chassis. Therefore, the term carries no meaningful distinction that distinguishes the Indian Filling Station Lubritorium from other service stations of the era. While the grease pit at the Indian Filling Station is a relatively rare survival of its type, the pit by itself does not possess any significant historical, architectural, or engineering associations that would qualify it for listing in the National Register.

## 6.0 References

- Jeffrey, R. Brooks, Kim Barker, and Indu Chakravarthy  
2007 *Historic Structure Report: Fred Harvey Gas Station, Grand Canyon National Park*. Report prepared by Preservation Studies Program, College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, The University of Arizona, in conjunction with the Colorado Plateau/Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit, for Grand Canyon National Park, National Park Service. Retrieved August 5, 2008 from [http://cefns.nau.edu/Orgs/CPCESU/current/documents/FredHarveyGasStationHistoric Structure Report.pdf](http://cefns.nau.edu/Orgs/CPCESU/current/documents/FredHarveyGasStationHistoric%20Structure%20Report.pdf).
- Johnson, Maura  
1993 "A Gas Station on Every Corner." *Archival Chronicle*, December, Vol. 12, No. 3. Retrieved August 5, 2008 from <http://www.bgsu.edu/colleges/library/cac/ac9312.html>.
- Kentucky Heritage Council  
n.d. On the Road: Kentucky's Roadside Commercial Architecture 1920-1960. Retrieved August 5, 2008 from <http://www.state.ky.us/agencies/khc/roadside.htm>.
- Lum, Kaimi Rose  
2003 "Late Night Fire Destroys Local Landmark." *Provincetown Banner*, November 20.
- National Park Service (NPS)  
1991 *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Interagency Resources Division, Washington, D.C.

Spellman, Susan V.

2004 "All the Comforts of Home: The Domestication of the Service Station Industry, 1920–1940." *The Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 37, No. 3. Blackwell Publishing, Malden, MA.

Witzel, Michael Karl

1998 *The American Gas Station*. Motor Books International, n.p.