

MHC RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

DATE: December, 1982

COMMUNITY: Huntington

I. TOPOGRAPHY

This upland town is situated within the southern extension of the Green Mountains of Vermont. Elevations generally range between 900 feet and 1100 feet west of the Westfield River. The uplands east of the Westfield increase in elevation with heights usually extending from 950 to 1300 feet above sea level. Prominent points include Hickory Mountain (1285 feet), an unnamed peak southeast of Norwich Pond (1420 feet), Norwich Hill (1242 feet) and Horse Hill (1202 feet). The only local lowlands are the alluvial floodplains adjacent to the Westfield River and its West Branch. The town is well drained with all streams and minor rivers draining into the Westfield. There are virtually no local marshlands. The Westfield River enters Huntington at the Chesterfield/Huntington line and extends south the length of the town and eventually drains into the Connecticut River at the West Springfield/Agawam line.

II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Originally included within Murrayfield(Chester) plantation in 1762 from several private grants with its eastern boundary at the Northampton West Division (Westhampton) and its northern boundary at the Chesterfield line (1762). It was established as the Norwich district in 1773 and incorporated as a town in 1786 with its western boundary at the Chester line. Southeastern section annexed to Montgomery in 1780 and northeastern portion to Chesterfield in 1794 along the North Branch of the Manhan River. Chester Village along the Westfield River was annexed from Chester and Blandford in 1853 and the name changed from Norwich to Huntington in 1855.

III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Huntington is an industrial recreational hill town on the primary east-west corridor between Springfield and Pittsfield with connections to Northampton. It is located along the Westfield River valley in the western uplands with potential native sites at Norwich Pond and along the fishing locations of Westfield valley. It was settled from Chester by Scotch-Irish during the mid 18th century with a meeting house site preserved on Norwich Hill after the Revolution, including some original houses around the town center. Primary development occurred during the early 19th century, centered around the Westfield valley at Norwich Bridge and Chester Village (Huntington) with several surviving Federal and Greek Revival houses along the Route 112 axis.

Rapid development of Chester Village (Huntington) occurred after the opening of the Boston and Albany Railroad during the Early Industrial period, with paper mills along the Westfield River. Town center retains a full range of suburban and workers' housing of Greek Revival style centered around a miniature

brick business district, although original mills do not survive. Industrial growth continued through the late 19th century in Huntington Center with period Queen Anne churches and civic buildings. Further development was maintained as highway commercial expansion along Route 20, with Early Modern tourist cabins near the Russell line. Increasing use of upland hills as recreational sites with summer cottages at Norwich Lake and several notable bungalows along the Route 112 axis. The upper Westfield River developed as the Knightsville Reservoir before the Second World War, with a monumental Art Deco style concrete dam and similar period highway bridge and school in Huntington Center.

Present growth is most evident as suburban expansion along the scenic vistas of Route 112 to Norwich Pond and Route 66. Huntington Center retains some sense of historic fabric despite the decline of the commercial district and the loss of industrial activity along the Route 20 corridor. The original town center on Norwich Hill maintains authentic character as meeting house hill site, preserved by isolated location.

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500-1620)

A. Transportation Routes

Regional corridor along the Westfield River to the Berkshire hills with connections to the uplands through East Branch valley of Westfield River. Trail route along the Westfield River apparently followed from Woronoco (Westfield) along the south bank as Route 20, crossing to North bank at Pitcher Bridge fordway (intact) and continuing west as Fiske Road. Secondary connectors to Norwich Pond and the upper Manhan River (Westhampton) likely followed along East Branch valley as Route 112 to the fordway at Norwich Bridge, continuing east along the probable route of Country Road to Pond Brook. Other probable trail routes to Norwich fordway are likely as Montgomery Road and North Chester Road.

B. Settlement Patterns

The existing secondary sources and MHC prehistoric site inventory made no reference to any native sites. Native period settlement was most likely restricted to small hunting and fishing encampments scattered throughout the town's uplands and waterways. Period sites were probably established on or overlooking the Westfield River intervals, particularly near the junction of the Westfield and its western branch, in the vicinity of Goss Heights and adjacent to the confluence of the Westfield and Little Rivers. Additional sites were likely situated near Norwich Pond.

C. Subsistence Patterns

Huntington was probably the site of native hunting and fishing during the spring, fall and winter months. Hunting likely occurred throughout local uplands, while the Westfield River, particularly the Westfield River and West Branch confluence,

and Norwich Pond were the focal points of native fishing. The town had minimal horticultural potential. Small native plots may have been established in the Westfield River intervale.

D. Observations

Huntington was probably utilized as a resource area by the Norwottucks centered in Northampton. Period sites are most likely to survive on the Westfield River intervalles and adjacent to Norwich Pond. However, site visibility will probably be low because of the short-term nature of the encampments.

V. PLANTATION PERIOD (1620-1675)

A. Transportation Routes

Regional trail routes were maintained to the upper Westfield River, with a path from Northampton as Country Road to the Norwich Bridge forway and as Route 20-Fiske Ave. from Westfield to Pitcher Bridge fordway.

B. Population

Small native hunting and fishing bands probably continued to occupy Huntington. The area lacked a colonial population until the late 18th century.

C. Settlement Patterns

Native settlement patterns were probably similar to those suggested for the Contact period.

Colonial settlement occurred post-1675, primarily because of the area's absence of good agricultural land and its exposure to native attack.

D. Subsistence Patterns

There was probably little change in native traditional subsistence patterns. However, the establishment of colonial fur trade centered in Westfield and Springfield in the late 1630s and early 1640s likely resulted in native involvement in the English fur trade.

Colonial utilization of Huntington was probably restricted to occasional hunting.

E. Observations

Huntington continued to remain a sparsely populated upland resource area for the native occupants of the Connecticut River Valley. This area may have become a focal point of native trapping of fur bearing animals because of the absence of colonial development. Future research should clarify the Anglo-Indian fur trade occurring in the upland areas of the study unit.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

A. Transportation Routes

There was improvement of regional connections with the opening of Country Road from Northampton in 1762 and the Westfield River highway (Route 20) to Westfield with crossings as Norwich and Pitcher Bridge (Huntington Center). Establishment of the Norwich meeting house in 1781 created a radial road system from Norwich Hill, including Emerson Groham, Barr Hill, Sampson-Tucker, Harrow Clark, Searles and Pisgah Roads. A secondary system developed from the Norwich Bridge to Montgomery and Chester as Woodruff Hill, North Chester and Worthington-Montgomery Roads along East Branch valley with Goss Road extending north over Hickory Mountain. A similar focus developed around Pitcher Bridge (Huntington) with connections to Blandford and Chester as Basket Street.

B. Population

Huntington may have had a small native population well into the 18th century. The sparsely inhabited uplands of the Connecticut River valley study unit provided a refuge to the Connecticut River natives who abandoned their valley habitations during King Philip's War and the French and Indian wars of the late 17th and 18th centuries.

There were no population figures for the colonial population. A large number of the settlement's first settlers migrated from Norwich, Connecticut.

C. Settlement Patterns

Colonial settlement of Huntington was stimulated with the town's inclusion in Township #9, which was sold at a public auction to William Williams for £1500 in 1762. His proprietary rights were transferred to three eastern Massachusetts residents shortly after. Actual settlement probably took place in 1767 or 1768. Between 1767/68 and the end of the period, two small settlement nodes developed in the vicinity of Norwich Bridge on Woodruff Hill Road and Worthington County Road and adjacent to Norwich Hill and the village of Norwich on Worthington County Road. The site of the first node was especially attractive because of the presence of a modest tract of potential cropland and a mill power source (the Westfield River). Scattered homes were constructed in locations such as southeastern and northwestern Huntington. The town lacked a meeting house; residents attended the Murrayfield meeting house in present Chester.

D. Economic Base

Agriculture was the foundation of the local economy. Livestock grazing was emphasized due to the limited amount of cropland. Extensive lumbering was probably undertaken in the town's vast tracts of woodland. This period witnessed Norwich Bridge's development as the town's economic center. Isaac Mixer established

a tavern within the village prior to 1769. Mixer began operation of a gristmill directly opposite the village on the eastern bank of the Westfield River between 1769 and 1773. A late 18th century sawmill was built on Little River, northeast of Hickory Mountain. A late 18th century saw and gristmill complex was constructed further north on the Westfield River approximately 2000 feet south of the Huntington/Chesterfield line.

E. Architecture

There are no extant examples for this period.

F. Observations

Huntington was one of several townships established in the Connecticut River Valley study unit as part of a series of land grants made to King Philip's War and French and Indian wars veterans in the late 18th century. The town's absence of nucleated settlement was largely due to the area's rugged terrain. Huntington was one of the most industrialized upland communities within the study unit. The settlement probably was a major timber supplier for Connecticut River towns such as Hatfield and Northampton. There is an excellent probability of extant archaeological remains of period settlement, particularly the community's three mill operations.

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

A. Transportation Routes

Development of Chester Village (Huntington) secured improvement of the Westfield River corridor as the Eighth Massachusetts Turnpike in 1799, following Route 20 to Pitcher Bridge and crossing as Fiske Avenue to Chester. Local roads system remained focused around Norwich Hill with connections along East Bridge from Norwich Bridge to Knightsville, North Chester and Montgomery.

B. Population

Like other hill towns such as Worthington or Middlefield, Huntington's population peaked in 1810. In that year, the town reported 968 persons. By 1830 the figure had fallen to 795, making a growth rate of 7.1% for the period 1790-1830, the fourth lowest rate in the county.

C. Settlement Patterns

The meeting house center established on Norwich Hill in 1781 with a secondary village at Norwich Bridge on the Westfield River. Local mill sites developed at Falley's Crossroads (Huntington) and at Knightsville on East Branch of Westfield River. Farming expanded on upland vales around Norwich Hill and along the Westfield valley, with lumbering on the hill slopes.

D. Economic Base

Most of the town was rough and hilly, "fit only for grazing," noted Hayward. Large numbers of sheep and cattle were pastured here before being sent to market. The establishment of a store and tavern at Falley's Crossroads (now Huntington Village) by about 1800 was followed there by a small 15-vat tannery, possibly the one operated by Lindsay and Cooley.

Manufacturing in the town was dominated by whetstones and axes. Two scythe stone shops were in operation in 1830 (Elisha Tilden's employed four men), and at Norwich Village Caleb Hannum made axes and other edge tools, a product for which he was "celebrated" between 1815 and his death in 1825. Joseph Hannum had begun making axes in Williamsburg in 1804. By 1832, there were three shops in that town producing \$11,600 worth of axes. The largest recorded business in 1832 was the tannery of Knight and Porter, also at Norwich Village, which produced annually hides valued at \$3,000.

E. Architecture

Residential: Approximately a dozen houses and cottages of the Federal period stand in Huntington. Most of these are located north and east of the present town center, at Norwich and Norwich Bridge. All of the structures observed have center chimney plans; these include both three bay wide and five bay wide, center entrance examples. The Solomon Blair House (ca.1780), a three bay center chimney cottage on Route 66 at Tucker Road, is probably one of the earliest houses standing in the town. Another house, which may date even earlier than its 1801 date, is the Levi Brown House: at present a center chimney five-bay structure, the Brown House has unevenly spaced fenestration on the facade, which may indicate that the house was enlarged to its present size from a half house. One of the finest Federal houses observed is a pyramidal hip roof, center chimney house on Route 20 with finely scaled entrance and window details. Period houses were noted on Route 20, Worthington, County, Searles and Pond Brook Roads.

Institutional: The first meeting house, probably built between 1778 (the parish's organization date) and 1781, was a "rudely constructed" (Sylvester 1879:514) one-story building that stood for only 10 years. It was replaced in 1790 by a two-story structure without porches, steeple or belfry. The 1790 building retained the traditional meeting house plan with the pulpit opposite the entrance. Agitation by women residing at Falley's Corners (now Huntington Village) resulted in the construction of a church there in 1820. Also known to have been built in the period were seven schoolhouses which appear on the 1830 map.

Commercial: At least three taverns operated in the period: the Mixer, Henry (1815-1820) and Hatch Taverns (1825-1840).

Only one survives, a double interior chimney, center hall plan structure on Woodruff Hill Road at Worthington Road.

VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830-1870)

A. Transportation Routes

Continued improvement of the Westfield River corridor from the Connecticut Valley to the Berkshires occurred with the Western Railroad (1842) along the north bank from Montgomery and crossing at Chester Village (Huntington) to the south bank below Pitchers Bridge. Local road system remained focused on Norwich Hill from Norwich Bridge, with construction of Pond Brook Road (Road 66).

B. Population

The arrival of the Western Railroad in 1841 halted Huntington's decline, and with the annexation of Chester (now Huntington) Village in 1853, the town was able to show a 45.4% growth rate for the period, about average for the county, but not at all typical for the hill towns. After the peak population of 1,216 in 1860, however, even the existence of the railroad proved an insufficient attraction, and the number of residents again began to decline. In 1870 the population stood at 1,156.

In 1855 Huntington's immigrant population was 6.3% of its total population -- about half the county average, but not far from normal for the hill towns. Of this number, 72% claimed Ireland as their birthplace.

C. Settlement Patterns

The civic center remained on Norwich Hill with a local farming district on the upland vales and along the Westfield River at Norwich Bridge. Development of Falley's Crossroads as Chester Village (Huntington) occurred after the opening of the Western Railroad in 1842 as a paper mill center. A commercial district formed around the railroad depot with a suburban neighborhood along the south bank of the Westfield River and a worker's area along the north bank hills. The civic focus relocated to Chester Village in 1860 from Norwich Hill.

D. Economic Base

Huntington owed its relative prosperity in the Early Industrial period to the arrival of the Western Railroad in 1841, thus becoming the first town in the county to benefit from the railroad. Although Collins and Wade had built a small cotton mill at Chester Village about 1830, it was not until the railroad's arrival that the village's real prosperity commenced: Melvin Copeland began making planes (employed 16) in 1841; Alfred Copeland made bedsteads beginning a year later (employed 15); and Caleb Hannum's sons moved part of the axe-making business to the village about 1846 (employed 4). But the largest new

employer was the basket factory of Bartlett and Williams, which began operations in 1850. Forty-five persons were employed by the firm, although in 1862 the firm relocated to Northampton where they became one of that city's major industries.

Heavy manufacturing was introduced to Huntington Village with the construction of the Greenleaf and Taylor paper mill in 1852. Three years later its product of news and book paper was valued at \$50,000, more than twice the value of the next largest industry. The paper mill would remain a key feature in the village's development. The mill upgraded its product in 1856 to fine writing paper. "For years," an 1880s gazetteer noted,

the mill has been famous for the uniformly fine quality of its goods, and has run with but little or no interruption . . . for more than thirty years. . . . The mill is probably the oldest in Western Massachusetts now in successful operation.

In the 1860s Little and Stanton operated a woolen mill. German operatives, also employed in Holyoke woolen mills, were said to be instrumental in introducing the first "Marseilles" bedspreads by power loom, though repeated fires limited the life of this operation.

Limited manufacturing diversity was also evident at Knightsville and Norwich Village. About 1840 Porter Knight had taken over an old sawmill at what became Knightsville, initiating a turning works. After his death, probably in the late 1840s, Elkanah and Thomas Ring from Worthington established there an extensive business making children's carriages and wagons with 12 employees and a product worth \$12,000 in 1855.

At Norwich Village were located a tannery (operated by Seth Porter in the 1830s), grist mill, whip stock and wheelwright shops. Sawmills and turning mills proliferated in this period, with turning shops producing a variety of wooden bowls, bedsteads, and other products. (Alfred Copeland's bedstead factory was the second largest industry in town in 1855 in terms of product value.

E. Architecture

Residential: At least two dozen houses of the period survive in Huntington. These include structures at Norwich and Norwich Bridge as well as the present town center of Huntington Village, which was developed largely in the Early and Late Industrial periods. No one plan type predominates and cottages and houses were observed in roughly equal numbers. Central and double chimney cottages and houses in the Greek Revival style were probably being built into the 1850s; the sidehall plan did not appear to have been introduced much before 1855. Most of the center and double chimney, center hall plan structures are located in the northern, early settlement area, while late sidehall plan Greek Revival and Italianate houses and cottages

are concentrated around Huntington Village. Of note are a pair of temple front sidehall Greek Revival houses on Route 20 at Huntington Village, a double chimney five-bay Greek Revival house with fretwork around the door and a pyramidal hip roofed Greek Revival house with wide pilasters across the facade. The temple front and wide pilastered houses all seem to date from the late 1850s. Columns on both temple front houses are vaguely Egyptian Revival in character and are octagonal in plan, tapering to simple lotus-like capitals. In addition to these houses, several three story tenement buildings were built on Blandford Road in the period; both are of frame construction and six or eight bays in length.

Institutional: The third and present meeting house of the First Congregational Church was built at Norwich in 1841; this is a one-story Greek Revival structure with a two-stage square belfry and spire. The focus of institutional construction shifted to Huntington Village in the period. Among the churches built there were a Union Church (1836; cited as 1826 in The Hampshire History, Wikander et al., ed., 1964) and the first (1847 or 1849) and second (1862 or 1869) churches of the Second Congregational Society (organized 1846 or 1849). Other churches organized in the period were the Baptist (1852) and Catholic (first met 1853) churches. Of these, only the Second Congregational Church, a two-story Romanesque Revival structure with a central spire, still stands. It has been a Masonic and Grange Hall since the 1920s. The only school of the period known to survive (there were nine districts in 1857) is a small, two-bay by three-bay side-entered frame schoolhouse on Woodruff Hill Road at Norwich Bridge.

Commercial: Several commercial buildings believed to be of the period survive at Huntington Village. These are a double interior chimney Greek Revival tavern with two story verandas, on Route 20, and two two-story frame Greek Revival/Italianate stores (ca.1870) on Blandford Road.

Industrial: North Hall, a two-story, six-bay long utilitarian building on Searles Raod, appears to have been built as an industrial building.

IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)

A. Transportation Routes

There was continued improvement of the Westfield River corridor with the street railway expansion from Westfield and Russell to Huntington Center along Route 20 by 1904. Further extension of the trolley line to Pittsfield occurred with the Berkshire Street Railway's Huckleberry Route in 1915 with a roadbed up Blandford Hill, still intact (Cummings, Berkshire 1972:119).

B. Population

Huntington's population showed an overall growth rate for the period of 23.4%, about half the county average, but well above

the declining figures of the neighboring hill towns. Virtually all of this growth, however, occurred between 1875 and the early 1890s. After 1900 the population again began falling, reaching 1,427 in 1915.

In 1880 the percentage of foreign-born was less than four points behind the county average, with Irish and French Canadians making up the bulk of the immigrants. Twenty-five years later, the percentage had slipped to 10 points behind the county average, with the same immigrant groups still dominant.

C. Settlement Patterns

There was continued expansion of Chester Village (Huntington) as the civic and economic center with the commercial district around the depot and a suburban neighborhood along the Westfield River axis. Secondary villages were maintained along the East Branch of the Westfield River at Norwich Bridge and Knightsville with an upland farming area on Norwich Hill.

D. Economic Base

The two major manufacturing concerns to prosper in the Late Industrial period were both at Huntington Village: the Highland Mills, built about 1870 on the site of Little & Stanton's earlier woolen mill; and the Chester Paper Company. The former employed 100 hands in making fancy cassimeres; the latter, 75 hands. In 1908 the Highland Mills were sold to William M. Lovering of Taunton, who operated the factory as a worsted weaving and finishing plant until 1929.

Other small shops included an edge-tool factory at the mouth of Butolph Brook by W. P. Williams in 1875. The record of other new industrial activity in this period is scarce.

E. Architecture

Residential: Almost all of the period's construction activity took place at Huntington Village. Several residential blocks north of Worthington Road and just east of the Westfield River bridge were built up with modest sized, well detailed Italianate, Stick Style and Queen Anne frame houses. Most of these are embellished sidehall plan structures with large side ells, porches and bays. Of note is a Stick Style house on Pleasant Street with board and batten siding and gable stickwork. Similar development occurred along Route 20 west of the bridge. Workers' cottages and tenements are relatively few in number and are not confined to a single area or neighborhood.

Institutional: Institutional construction included the building of Saint Thomas Aquinas Church in 1881 and of the Baptist (now Federated) Church in ca.1910. Saint Thomas is a two-and-a-half story Stick Style/Queen Anne structure with a central entrance tower with spire. The Baptist Church is an asymmetrical plan shingled Colonial Revival building with an offset tower with spire. Other activity included the founding of the High School in 1888, the construction of a high school in 1907,

and the building of the first Murrayfield School in 1892; neither building is known to survive.

Commercial: Several large brick and frame commercial buildings were constructed at Huntington Village in the period. These include the three-story Panel Brick Heath Block (1879) and the Victorian Italianate commercial buildings on Worthington Road with three-bay center entrance facades, two-story verandas and bracketed eaves.

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915-1940)

A. Transportation Routes

There was abandonment of trolley routes to Westfield and Lee and improvement of the Westfield River corridor as the primary auto road from Springfield to Pittsfield, designated as U. S. Route 20; a monumental concrete Art Deco design bridge at Huntington (1939) replaced the Main Street crossing lost in a 1938 flood. The development of the Knightsville Reservoir created a north-south highway as Route 112 with bridges over East Branch (1940) and a secondary connector to Northampton along Pond Brook as Route 66.

B. Population

Huntington's population declined from 1,427 to 1,340 persons during the period, a characteristic of most Hampshire County rural towns. This decline was not steady, however: in each of the five-year intervals 1920-1925 and 1930-1935 the town gained over 100 new residents. This pattern was also observed in other towns, including the hill towns of Chesterfield and Goshen, and the valley towns Amherst and Hadley.

C. Settlement Patterns

Huntington (Chester Village) was maintained as the civic and economic focus with commercial expansion along Route 20 to Russell. Recreational development of Norwich Pond as modest summer resort and the flooding of the upper Westfield valley for the Knightsville Reservoir (1942).

D. Economic Base

Until 1929 the Highland Mills, employing 160 hands, remained Huntington's largest industry, producing high-grade fancy men's wear worsted cloth, women's wear, and automotive upholstery fabrics. With the closing of the plant in the summer of that year, local citizens formed the Huntington Manufacturing Company to continue running the plant.

In 1899 the American Writing Paper Company, the giant paper trust that included 16 Holyoke mills, was formed, absorbing the Huntington mill as the Chester Paper Company Division. Apparently after the disaster of the 1921 postwar depression, Chapin & Gould, the pioneer paper makers of Russell, took over operation of the mill. In 1929 the mill still employed 120 men.

Among agricultural products, potatoes, ensilage, dairy and poultry products by 1937 were the chief sources of income.

E. Architecture

Residential: Limited residential construction occurred in the 1920s: one and one-and-a-half story cottages and bungalows for year-round use were built along Russell Road (Route 20) and on Fiske Avenue at Huntington Village, while numerous small summer cottages were built around Norwich Pond. At least one two-story pyramidal hip roof Colonial Revival house (on Pleasant Street) was built of concrete blocks; other pyramidal hip roof Colonial Revival houses were built along Route 20.

Institutional: Very little institutional construction occurred in the period. The first Murrayfield School was enlarged in 1930 to accomodate students of the remaining district schools, all of which were discontinued by 1931. In 1940, the present Murrayfield School, a one-and-a-half story brick Georgian Revival/Moderne building, was built after the first school burned. The present Town Hall was not constructed until 1955.

Commercial: The Diamant Block, a utilitarian brick Georgian Revival building at the town center, was constructed in 1919 and is one of the few commercial buildings of the period. Other small commercial buildings were constructed on Route 20 in the 1920s, most of these automobile-related.

XI. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

General: Huntington's survey is only partially complete. The only inventoried properties are a few of the town's earliest (1780-1830) houses and cottages, primarily those located at the crossroads of County and Tucker Roads and at Pond Brook and Worthington Roads. Remaining to be inventoried are all residential buildings at Norwich, Norwich Bridge and Huntington as well as the town's institutional, commercial and industrial structures.

XII. SOURCES

Bisbee, John Hatch, History of the Town of Huntington in the County of Hampshire, Mass. from its First Settlement to the Year 1876 (Springfield, 1876).

Copeland, Alfred Minott, A History of the Town of Murrayfield, Earlier Known as Township No. 9 (Springfield, 1892).

-----, "History of Township No. 9 . . .," Connecticut Valley Historical Society Papers & Proceedings 2(1904), 41-65.

O. R. Cummings, Berkshire Street Railway (Transportation Bulletin No. 79, 1972).