

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

LONGMEADOW

Report Date: 1982

Associated Regional Report: Connecticut Valley

Reconnaissance Survey Town Reports, produced for MHC's Statewide Reconnaissance Survey between 1979 and 1987, introduce the historical development of each of the Commonwealth's municipalities. Each report begins with an historic overview, a description of topography, and political boundaries. For the purposes of the survey, the historic period has been subdivided into seven periods: Contact (1500–1620), Plantation (1620–1675), Colonial (1675–1775), Federal (1775–1830), Early Industrial (1830–1870), Late Industrial (1870–1915), and Early Modern (1915–1940/55). Each report concludes with survey observations that evaluate the town's existing historic properties inventory and highlight significant historic buildings, settlement patterns, and present threats to these resources. A bibliography lists key secondary resources.

Town reports are designed for use together with a series of town maps that demarcate settlement patterns, transportation corridors and industrial sites for each historic period. These maps are in the form of color-coded, polyester overlays to the USGS topographic base map for each town on file and available for consultation at MHC. For further information on the organization and preparation of town reports, readers should contact MHC.

Users should keep in mind that these reports are now two decades or more old. The information they contain, including assessments of existing knowledge, planning recommendations, understanding of local development, and bibliographic references all date to the time they were written. In some cases, information on certain topics was not completed. No attempt has been made to update this information.

Electronic text was not available for digital capture, and as a result most of the reports have been scanned as PDF files. While all have been processed with optical character recognition, there will inevitably be some character recognition errors.

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MHC RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

Date: March 1982

Community: Longmeadow

Topography:

Longmeadow is located within the Connecticut River valley. The western quarter of the town is part of the fertile Connecticut River floodplain. The remainder of Longmeadow is situated on a plateau that includes a small area of moderate uplands in the southwestern portion of the plateau. Aside from the rich loam of the river bottomlands, the soil is basically sandy. There is limited marshland, the majority occurring in the eastern half of the Connecticut River floodplain. Extensive outcrops of Connecticut River valley red sandstone exist in Longmeadow. Local use is evident in the numerous sandstone grave markers and house foundations. The town is situated in the Connecticut River drainage. The Connecticut River forms Longmeadow's western border while several minor tributaries drain east to west into the river. The only freshwater sources are three manmade ponds.

Political Boundaries:

Originally included as part of Springfield grant called Long Meadow by 1664 and established as Third Parish of Springfield in 1713. Southern boundary with Connecticut established in 1714 adjusted from earlier 1642 Woodward and Saffery survey, and western line of Connecticut River with West Springfield defined in 1774. Incorporate the town of Longmeadow from Springfield in 1783 including East Longmeadow district. Northern boundary with Springfield formed in 1890 as Forest Park annex, and eastern boundary line defined in 1894 with separation of East Longmeadow.

Historic Overview:

Affluent suburban town on primary corridor between Springfield and Hartford. Located along east bank of Connecticut River with suspected native sites in natural flood plain and along crest of alluvial terrace on axis of Longmeadow Brook. Early English settlement from Springfield by mid-17th century with location of homesteads in Longmeadow flood plain, apparently on natural levee, although sites remained undocumented. Serious flooding Connecticut River forces relocation of settlement to Longmeadow Street(Route 5) by early 18th century. Several restored Colonial houses remain intact around town common with mid-18th century burying ground and elements of original meeting house. Agricultural prosperity continued after Revolution with some notable late 18th century houses of stylish design, including impressive end-chimney brick example. Town center remained as extended street village through early 19th century with limited industrial potential, except for local craft production. Increasing expansion of Springfield trolley system and estate district of Forest park continued suburban expansion through late 19th century. Rapid development of residential activity realized during Early Modern period along axis of Longmeadow Street as auto suburb of Springfield with affluent Historic Revival houses along river terrace, and well-detailed Craftsman bungalows on interior plain. Small commercial center retains

Early Modern character with original Friendly's store. Present development most evident in eastern section around high school with extensive suburban tracts, while town center retains historic period character despite traffic flow of Route 5 axis.

IV. Contact Period

A. Transportation Routes:

Located along eastern bank of Connecticut River with primary regional connections north-south along flood plain and secondary access to interior uplands. Location of main Connecticut River trail remains undocumented, conjectured along base of terrace bluff with meadowland, although north-south route across alluvial plain (Route 5) might also be considered. Primary connection to eastern interior appears obvious as Williams Street descending to river along Meadow Brook ravine. Branches north and south include Dwight Street across Pecousic Brook (Springfield) and Shaker Road (Route 193) across Longmeadow Brook.

B. Settlement Patterns:

There were no reported native Contact period sites. The most likely area of native period settlement would be the bottomlands adjacent to the Connecticut River. Evidence of Woodland period occupation and a possible associated native burial ground were discovered in the southern portion of Longmeadow along the riverfront in the 19th century (Longmeadow Centennial Committee 1884: 206). An unidentified native site is situated on the riverfront immediately south of Raspberry Rock. Brook

C. Subsistence Patterns:

Local agricultural land was limited. The most fertile land was situated on the river bottomlands although this area's vulnerability to flooding undoubtedly caused some crop production problems. The general sandy nature of the eastern two thirds of the town would have discouraged agricultural production. An extensive source of freshwater fish was available in the Connecticut River. Limited fishing probably occurred on the town's four small streams. Hunting and gathering would have been most productive in the pine barrens east of Longmeadow Street and the marshland of the Connecticut River flood plain.

D. Observation:

Native period settlement in Longmeadow was probably minimal due to the area's limited agricultural and the proximity to the major settlement of Agawam (Springfield). The likelihood of extant period archaeological sites is good when considering the town's rural nature. The archaeological potential is greatest on Longmeadow's western floodplain.

V. Plantation Period

A. Transportation Routes:

Native trails remained as regional routes with improvement of north-south river path as highway to Springfield in 1647 from Longmeadow settlement in Connecticut flood plain. (Wright, 1940, p.10). Secondary east-west route to upland interior maintained as Longmeadow Path (Williams Street).

B. Population:

There were no figures for the area's native or colonial population. A small native population remained in Longmeadow throughout the Plantation period.

C. Settlement Pattern:

The existing secondary sources make no references to specific native Plantation period settlement sites. The plateau situated east of the valley floodplain were a likely native occupation area since they remained unoccupied by Longmeadow's colonial population until the early 18th century.

Initial colonial settlement took place by the late 1640's although land in Longmeadow was allotted as early as c.1644 to several Springfield residents. Period settlement was linear and confined to the Connecticut River floodplain roughly between West Road and the river-front. All of the house lots provided the towners with immediate access to the Connecticut River (Wright 1940: Map). Initial house lot assignment was based on the settler's location on the Springfield town plot (Ibid: 29). Local residents attended Springfield's meetinghouse for civic and religious meeting since Longmeadow lacked their own.

D. Economic Base:

The native and colonial economies were poorly documented by the secondary sources. The native population appeared to have maintained their traditional subsistence patterns. Local natives probably were involved in the fur trade operation established by William Pynchon in Springfield in the late 1630's.

Agriculture appears to have been the primary colonial economic pursuit, the majority occurring on the meadowlands situated between West Road and the bluff overlooking the meadowlands. Longmeadow lacked commercial and industrial facilities until the last decade of the 17th century. Until then, these were most likely sought in Springfield. Some settlers may have been involved in Pynchon's fur trade business as sub-traders.

E. Observations:

The Longmeadow area during the Plantation period existed as a subsidiary of Springfield primarily because of the absence of industrial, commercial and civic religious facilities. Longmeadow's general lack of fertile agricultural land and mill power sources inhibited substantial commercial and industrial growth during this and succeeding periods. There is an excellent likelihood of extant archaeological remains of the Plantation period settlement due to the limited development in the Connecticut River flood plains.

VI. Colonial Period

A. Transportation Routes:

Primary north-south highway relocated from Connecticut flood plain to river terrace as Longmeadow Street (Route 5) by 1709 with establishment of new town center. Local fords and bridges reported across Cooley, Wheel Meadow, Longmeadow and Raspberry brooks. (Wright, 1940, P. 35 and 36). Improvement of existing highways to town center included Williams Street and Shaker Roads with loop to Mill Street and around Longmeadow Brook.

B. Population:

It is unclear if Longmeadow had a post-1675 native population. At this time of Longmeadow's establishment as the third precinct of Old Springfield in 1713 the settlement consisted of approximately forty families.

C. Settlement Patterns:

It is unclear if the native attack on and destruction of Springfield during King Philip's War included present Longmeadow. Several local residents were killed by native focus in 1676 at the Pecousic Brook Bridge.

This period marked a considerable shift in the community's primary settlement area. By the first decade of the 18th century, the river flood plain had been abandoned in favor of the plateau overlooking the plain. Abandonment of the flood plain appears to have been due to this area's vulnerability to periodic flooding and its marshy nature. Settlement on the plateau took place primarily along Longmeadow Street in the vicinity of the town green. The settlement's first meetinghouse was constructed near the junction of Longmeadow and Williams Streets in c.1716. The town's first cemetery (c.1716) was established on the south side of Williams Street slightly east of the meetinghouse. This area remained the primary focus of settlement throughout this period as attested by the construction of a second meetinghouse slightly west of the first in c.1769. Settlement outside of the Longmeadow and Williams Street focal point was scattered probably because of the poor quality of the soil and the distance from the Connecticut River.

D. Economic Base:

Agriculture appeared to remain the mainstay of the settlement's economy. There was evidence of limited industrial development during the Colonial period. Longmeadow's first mill appears to have been constructed on Longmeadow Brook in c.1693. The saw mill was probably followed by a saw mill and grist mill built on Pecousic Brook (possibly in present Springfield) in c.1694 and c.1695, respectively. Brick production was begun in the vicinity of Wheelmeadow Brook in the 1760's.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Most of the early houses in Longmeadow date from the Federal period. Although the majority of these are located along Longmeadow Street and on the green, houses began to be built in outlying areas of the town as well during the Federal period. In general, the most substantial and stylish houses are located on the green with more modest houses and cottages found in rural areas. Architecturally, Longmeadow's Federal houses are somewhat conservative with post-Georgian styles prevailing into the early 1800s. Despite this, the town's Federal houses are among the finest examples observed in the study unit. Among the most outstanding houses in the town are the Alexander Field House (1794), a double chimney hip roofed house with a shallow pediment crowning an elaborate frontispiece consisting of an entrance surround with Ionic pilasters and a broken pediment with fanlight surmounted by a Palladian window on the second floor, and the Nathaniel Ely House (1785), three-story gambrel roofed brick house with end chimneys, dormers with pediments and a projecting portico (probably Colonial Revival). The only other brick house of the period is the Cooley-Eveleth House (1827), an end chimney double pile plan house with a five-bay center entrance facade with a segmental arched fanlight, three-quarter length sidelights and gauged brick jack arches over the windows. Sidehall plans and gable front orientation were not introduced in Longmeadow until the 1820's. In some instances, the gable front orientation was adopted but the five-bay facade with center entrance was maintained on the long side. The outstanding sidehall plan structure of the period is the Daniel Colton House (1829), an end chimney structure with an early Greek Revival entrance surround consisting of a transom and full length sidelights with corner blocks enclosing a door enframingent ornamented with Scamozzi Ionic pilasters. Characteristic of the use of the gable front orientation was the inclusion of an elliptical or basket arch light in the gable. Federal period houses outside the town center were observed on Shaker Road with cottages noted on Emerson and Converse Streets.

Institutional: In 1828, the Congregational meetinghouse was remodelled. The north wall pulpit and box pews were removed to accommodate a gable front nave plan and slips. Entrance porches on the south, east, and west were also removed. Two-story shed roofed additions flanking the projecting end belfry tower appear in a mid-19th century photograph of the church and were probably co-

nstructed in 1828 to give the appearance of the ten fashionable two story entrance porch with pediment. Also dating from the period was the church's steeple, a three-staged element consisting of two octagonal drums surmounted by a tapered spire, constructed in 1822 to replace the original steeple which blew down in 1821. Subsequent renovations have eliminated all of these features. The only other institutional structure of the period known was a district school at the southern end of Longmeadow Street; that structure constructed in 1789, burned in 1851.

Commercial: The only known commercial structure of the Federal period is the "old Country Store" (1805) on Longmeadow Street, a two-story structure three bays wide with a center entrance.

VIII. Early Industrial Period

A. Transportation Routes:

Improvement of north-south regional corridor along Connecticut River with Hartford and New Haven Railroad in 1844 located across flood plain.

B. Population:

Population figures for Longmeadow are inseparable from those of East Longmeadow. In the combined figures, however, there is little discernable rise. The population of the tow towns in 1870 was less than 100 persons more than it had been forty years previously. However, considering the growth of East Longmeadow, it is likely that during much of this period, the population of "the Street" was actually declining. (In 1895 the town's population was 620 -- less than it had been in 1790).

C. Settlement Pattern:

Longmeadow Street maintained as civic focus with farmland on river meadows. Location of railroad has little impact on settlement except for depot at Emerson Street.

D. Economic Base:

The Early Industrial period represented Longmeadow's only period of manufacturing. Dimond Chandler, born in Longmeadow in 1799, had gone to New York City as a young man to become a silversmith, and there he apparently prospered. Returning to Longmeadow in 1831 he began the manufacture of gold and silver thimbles, a business he sold 16 years later to Coloton and Hollister. By the 1850's, there were four makers of thimbles and spectacles worth over \$45,000. Chandler in the meantime had begun manufacturing cloth-covered buttons with Nelson Newell, a business worth \$30,000 in 1855. (Newell moved the business to Springfield during the Civil War, where he prospered).

By 1845 Longmeadow had also begun growing tobacco. Though by 1865,

the town was growing 83 acres worth, the total in this period never seems to have been more than 8-9 percent of the County total, in 1855 placing it fourth in rank behind the west-side towns of Westfield (30%), West Springfield (21%), and Agawam (10%).

As late as 1865, the town still had one brickyard, employing 13 men, probably on Wheel Meadow Brook. This was then the largest non-agricultural employer in what is now Longmeadow. (The Pecowic Mills, frequently referred to in local histories, are now a part of Springfield's Forest Park.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Although residential construction seems to have continued at a steady pace into the early 1830's, a little construction seems to have taken place between 1835 and 1845. After 1845, however, and through the end of the period, a number of houses were constructed in Longmeadow. This pattern is evident in the presence of a few well-detailed transitional Federal;/Greek Revival houses and a number of stylish Italianate houses, all at the town center. Fully-developed Greek Revival houses are, by contrast, totally absent. As was true for the previous period, substantial and stylish houses of the 1840's and 50's including the Mather House (1856, Calvert Vaus), a two-and-a-half story villa with an asymmetrical sidehall plan with cross gables, the Congregational parsonage (1848), a two-story pyramidal hip roofed house with a square plan, three bays long by two bays wide, and an end chimneys sidehall plan house with a pyramidal hip roof and wide overhanging eaves ornamented with a scalloped valence. In addition to these houses, at least two Gothic Revival houses are known; one, the Stephen Colton House, is of frame construction with a cross-gabled T-plan, double recessed porches and a center chimney cottage of 1845. Simpler sidehall transitional Greek Revival/Italianate cottages and houses are located south of the green on Longmeadow Street, and on Emerson, Shaker and Bliss Roads. Several more traditional Italianate houses with double interior chimneys and three bay facades with center entrances were observed on Longmeadow Road both north and south of the green.

Institutional: The only institutional building built in the period was the Center School (1856), a well-detailed story-and-a-half brick Italianate schoolhouse with a projecting gable roofed entrance bay, bracketed eaves and segmental arched lintels, which still stands.

IX. Late Industrial Period

A. Transportation Routes:

Continued improvement of north-south corridor with extension of electric trolley line from Springfield in 1896 along Longmeadow Street to Enfield, Connecticut.

B. Population:

Population figures for Longmeadow are inseparable from those of East Longmeadow until 1895. In that year, however, Longmeadow's population was 620 -- 28 percent of the combined east and west parishes of the old town of Longmeadow and less than the total population of the old town in 1790. By contrast, the population of East Longmeadow in that year (1895), then at the peak of the quarry business, was 1,591 -- more than double that of "the street".

Longmeadow's desirable residential characteristics (it was noted as the most desirable of all Springfield's residential suburbs in 1917), soon restored its population. After 1910, it grew at an average rate of over 150 persons a year. In 1915, the town had more than doubled its size over the previous 15 years and in 1920 surpassed East Longmeadow.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Expansion of suburban development from Forest Park district in Springfield along axis of Longmeadow Street trolley line to town center.

D. Economic Base:

There were no identified new industries in town. In 1875, the largest manufacturer was a single brick yard producing \$27,000 worth of bricks annually, probably for use in Springfield. The meadowland furnished abundant crops of hay and grain.

E. Architecture:

Residential: While a few well-detailed Stick Style, Queen Anne and Shingle Style houses were built at the town center during the period, for the most part, residential construction was slow during the late 19th century. Little development occurred outside the town center until after the turn of the century when suburbanization began to be reflected in the development of residential neighborhoods around Maple and Longmeadow Streets in the southern half of town, along bliss Road at the town center and along Longmeadow Street in the northern half of town. These neighborhoods are notable for the prevalence of bungalows, Prairie Style and Craftsman houses built around the turn of the century. Most bungalows observed are story and a half structures of frame or

stucco construction with gable roofs, deep overhanging eaves, shed dormers and recessed porches. In addition to these modest houses, more substantial stucco, brick and Prairie style, Tudor and Georgian Revival frame Craftsman houses were built in the northern half of the town and along Longmeadow Street. Most of these probably date from the last 15 years of the period. Undoubtedly, many are architect designed.

Institutional: In 1874, the Congregational church was remodelled for the third time, in this instance, in the Romanesque Revival style and moved back on its site. The only other institutional construction of the period occurred at the end of the period, with the emergence of the town an affluent residential suburb of Springfield. This construction consists of several well-detailed one-story hip roofed brick Craftsman schools (c.1910, on Converse Street and on Maple Street) and two churches, both at the town center. These are a two-and-a-half story brick nave plan Catholic church in a hybrid Gothic/Renaissance Revival style and a two-story stone Gothic Revival Episcopal church, both probably built just after the turn of the century.

Commercial: The most notable commercial construction of the period was the construction of two stucco one-story storefront blocks with shaped Mission Revival parapets at the town center, on Bliss Road and on Longmeadow Street. These probably date c.1915.

X. Early Modern Period

A. Transportation Routes:

Improvement of local highways as regional autoroads with primary north-south axis as Route 5 (Longmeadow Street) through town center and abandonment of streetcar service by 1930's. Secondary auto highways include east-west Wilbraham Street as original Route 21 and southern connector to Enfield as Route 192 (Shaker Road).

B. Population:

Between 1915 and 1940, the town gained over 4,000 persons, nearly four times the town's population in 1910. The largest period of growth was 1925-30, though the average growth rate never fell below 130 persons per year.

C. Settlement Patterns:

Continued expansion of suburban residential development from Springfield along axis of Longmeadow Street with formation of local commercial center at Bliss-Emerson Roads by 1920's. Location of Longmeadow Country Club on Shaker Road created focus for estate district along Mill Road.

D. Economic Base:

No new industries identified in this period. Longmeadow's economic base entirely residential.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Residential construction remained steady through the 1920's with infill of early 20th century suburban neighborhoods all along Longmeadow Street. Most of those in the northern half of the town are fairly substantial Georgian, Tudor or Dutch Colonial style houses of masonry or frame construction; many may be architect designed. In the southern half of the town, smaller and more modest houses were built in the same styles, with Tudor Revival and Dutch Colonial style houses predominating; such construction prevails in the Maple Road area and along Bliss Road. Also of note, is a residential subdivision with picturesque landscaping off Shaker Road adjacent to the Longmeadow Country Club; this may date from the 1920's and includes a number of large brick Tudor Revival houses with slate roofs and elaborate detailing.

Institutional: Almost all of the municipal buildings of the town date from the Early Modern period. These buildings form a major collection of Colonial Revival architecture at the town center at the junction of Longmeadow and Williams Streets. These buildings include the Storrs Library (1923), the Community House (1934, Smith and Bassetts), the Town Hall (1930, Morris Mallony) and the Center School (1928, Malcolm B. Harding). In addition to these buildings, the 1768 meetinghouse was renovated for the fourth time, in 1932. At that time, the building took on its present Colonial Revival appearance. A monumental Ionic portico was added on the facade and the steeple was reworked above the first stage.

XI. Survey Observations:

Longmeadow's survey adequately documents the town's most significant 18th, 19th and 20th century residential and institutional buildings. Generally, these are buildings located either directly on the Green or on Longmeadow Street north and south of the green. While the largest and most elaborate early 20th century houses are inventoried, there is no documentation of Longmeadow's modest but nonetheless extensive early 20th century residential architecture. Since it is Longmeadow's function as an affluent suburb of Springfield which has conditioned the preservation of its Colonial and Federal period houses, it is important to recognize and document that late 19th and 20th century development. Particularly notable are the town's bungalows and its Craftsman style houses and schools. The commercial structures relating to the town's suburban development should also be inventoried. In addition to structures, the "restoration" of the Green to its Colonial character beginning in 1898 should be recognized as an early example of landscape restoration; archaeological site potential of the green (site of Federal period workshops and stores) should also be investigated.)

XII Sources

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