

DATE: 1981

COMMUNITY: Duxbury

I. TOPOGRAPHY

Part of coastal lowlands located on Duxbury Bay. Sandy to gravelly soils Swamp lands dotted through landscape. Drainage to the Bay. Powder Point and the Nook peninsulas on Duxbury Bay. Moderate topographic relief throughout the area.

II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

The town of Duxbury was incorporated in 1637, its bounds were established in 1641. Bridgewater was formed from a part of Duxbury in 1656. Part ceded to Pembroke in 1712. Part ceded to Kingston in 1857.

III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Duxbury is an historic suburban town located on Duxbury Bay. Some native sites reported at North Hill and Millbrook areas. Also at ponds at Pembroke. Early European settlements, while seasonal, did displace native populations westward to Pembroke.

Earliest European settlements were at Island Creek (now Kingston) and on the Nook with pre-King Philips War farmsteads at West and North Duxbury. Early economic development centered around farming and milling. Early 18th century shipyards provided impetus for settlement along Duxbury Bay, scattered farmsteads along Bay Path (present route 53) also continued settlement around Millbrook. In general there were three loci for 17th and 18th century development, the Bay, Mill sites and early roads which included the Bay Path, the Green Harbor Path, Duxborough Path, the Old Pembroke Road and the Nook Road.

Early 19th century development tended to mirror these loci. Post civil war depression slowed growth in the town. This growth did not resume until the Duxbury and Cohasset Railroad came through, then summer developments began around the Nook. The ship yards began to die out in the mid and late 19th century. Late 19th and early 20th century development occurred at Powder Point. Some farming until post World War II suburban development.

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500-1620)

A. Transportation Routes:

Coastal area on Plymouth Bay tangent to primary interior corridor. Main north/south route between Plymouth and Massachusetts Bays documented as Summer St(Route 53) from Pembroke Ponds to Island Creek (Wentworth, 1973 pp.14-17). Complex network of alternate paths to coastal fishing areas of Duxbury Bay, including Toby Garden Street with original loop by Island Creek Pond, Old Meeting House Road, Cross-Vine-Mayflower Streets with original trail intact to Cox Corner and Franklin-West Streets (Wentworth, 1973). Primary north/south coastal trail apparently documented from Island Creek around Mayflower Cemetery with original sections to Marsh-Field as Bow-Tremont Streets (Wentworth, 1973,14) and probable branch to

Powder Point as Alden-St George Sts. Other logical trail routes include Standish St. to Captains Hill, South St. and Park St. to Jones River (Kingston). Some trail remnants apparently survive across Namassachusetts (South River King Philips Brook) as Myrtle-River Sts. and as Congress St. from Pembroke Ponds.

B. Settlement Pattern:

Fourteen reported native sites, majority unidentified. One site probable contact period component, two with probable Woodland period components, two with early-late Woodland components. These and all but three of unidentified native sites (North Hill and Millbrook area) situated along or adjacent to Kingston and Duxbury Bays. Extensive evidence of early-late Woodland settlement on Powder Point. Good access to inland and coastal waterways and marshland providing diverse resource base and transportation routes. Possible native burial ground overlooking Duxbury Bay.

C. Subsistence Pattern:

Diverse inland and coastal resources supported seasonal fishing, hunting, collecting and agriculture. Coastal lowlands (Duxbury and Kingston Bays) and Back River estuary provide excellent environment for shellfish, fowl, fish and marine mammals. Prehistoric shell middens reported throughout Powder Point and High Pines (opposite Duxbury Beach). Good agricultural land south of Duxbury Marsh. Reported native planting grounds immediately south of Nook.

D. Observations:

Good site potential along inland waterways and coastal lowlands due to high likelihood of food resources. Extensive coastline suggests area site of 16th and 17th century European-Indian trade. Possible location of seasonal encampments of European explorers and fishermen, majority of coast well protected. Coastal location suggests site utilization as late spring-summer fishing and collection stations by inland natives. Probable encampments of Mattakeesett concentrated around Pembroke Ponds (see Pembroke report). Regional affiliation probably with Massachusetts centered in Neponset.

V. FIRST PERIOD (1620-1675)

A. Transportation Routes:

Native trails improved as regional highways with primary Boston-Plymouth path as Summer St. (Route 53). Meeting house site in South Duxbury sets radial road pattern from town center with new location of highway (1637) from Bluefish River to Captains Hill, as Station St. with original sections intact near Duxbury Golf Course to Jr. High School (Wentworth, 1973, p.17).

B. Population:

Discreet but small native population, some Christianized by mid-late 17th century. Majority, however, concentrated in Pembroke Ponds area. English settlement of "Old Duxbury" included Pembroke until 1712, majority resided in present Duxbury. 1643-400 inhabitants ("Old Duxbury").

C. Settlement Pattern:

Native displacement from traditional settlement sites with appearance of white settlers. Move inland, Pembroke Ponds (Oldham, Furnace, Great and Little Sandy Bottom and Stetson Ponds, Silver Lake) focal point of settlement. Some pre-1637 English settlement of Captains Nook (peninsula south of South Duxbury). Francis Eaton on Nook by 1627, Elder William Brewster, 1631. Seasonal occupation until 1632, residents lived in Plymouth during winter- accessibility to Plymouth church. Practice ceased with establishment of Duxbury church in 1632. South Duxbury first (c.1637) settlement node. Dispersed settlement centering around Island Creek. Scattered homes on shores of Duxbury and Kingston Bays, north of South Duxbury. First meetinghouse (c.1637?) immediately southeast of first burial ground (Chestnut Street). Post 1637 community growth continues in South Duxbury node and Island Creek. Additional scattered settlement north and west of node. John Alden settles in Millbrook, 1653; Thomas Delano, West Duxbury 1667.

D. Economic Base:

Limited native hunting, fishing, collecting and agriculture due to English occupation of Duxbury coast prime agricultural land, fishing and shellfish collection sites. Probable focus on sparsely populated western interior-present western Duxbury and Pembroke, particularly Pembroke Ponds. Probably increased sedentary lifestyle, greater dependence on Anglo-Indian trade for foodstuffs, clothing, weapons. Agriculture and fishing primary occupations of English settlers. Excellent farmland on Captain's Nook and Clark's Island. Duxbury Marsh source of salt hay for livestock. Livestock included cattle, sheep and swine. Duxbury and Kingston Bays and inland streams abundant sources of fresh and saltwater fish. Fish weir placed in Morton's Hole (Nook) in 1639. Native introduction of clamming to settlers in early 17th century. Close proximity of native population would encourage Anglo-Indian trade. Excellent milling potential due to numerous inland streams. Only reported mill (grist) built in 1639 on Duck Hill River. Prior to 1639 grain ground in Plymouth. Occasional shipbuilding, small vessels built on farms, no formal shipyard.

E. Architecture:

Duxbury retains several houses of the First Settlement period including one end-chimney cottage dated to 1641 (unverified), center-chimney Cape-type cottage with a full five-bay facade, the Alexander Standish House (1666), a two-story, center-chimney house (with an early gambrel roof) and the John Alden House (1653), a two-story house with a three-quarter plan. Also built was a meetinghouse (1632). Grist and fulling mills were established in 1639.

F. Observations:

Duxbury breakoff community from Plymouth. Attractive location and excellent resource base encourages settlement. Emphasis on coastal settlement-accessibility of fresh springs, crop and grazing land, food sources, transportation routes (waterways). Protection from hostile natives (defensive gate built at head of Captain's Nook). Subsidiary of Plymouth despite establishment of community church and gristmill (s).

VI. COLONIAL (1675-1775)

A. Transportation Routes:

Highways remain from 17th century with focus of routes around South Duxbury meeting house. Improvement of coastal route from Island Creek to Mill Brook around town center as Tremont St. (1685) (Wentworth, 1973, p.16). Other period roads include Chandler St. to mill site and Temple St. through North Duxbury.

B. Population:

Continued decrease in native population due to disease, war and resettlement. Substantial increase in white population. 1710-1100 residents (included Pembroke) increased to 1050 residents by 1765. Accelerated growth in next 11 years-16% to 1254 inhabitants. Small black population.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Dispersed native settlement, many of remaining natives living and working in English homes as slaves and servants. Considerable expansion of Duxbury. Move inland with increased scarcity of coastal lands and diminished fear of Indian attacks. Establishment of inland secondary settlement nodes at Millbrook, North and West Duxbury, Ashdod in early 18th century. Development of nucleus at Tinkertown in early-mid 18th century offshoot of earlier Island Creek settlement. Scattered post-1677 settlement at Tarkiln. Continued scattered coastal settlement (excluding South Duxbury and Island Creek) through first half 18th century. Increased coastal settlement in mid-late 18th century with accelerated development of shipbuilding industry and export trade. Settlement node established on Powder Point. South Duxbury, however, remains primary node, construction of 2nd meetinghouse in vicinity of original meetinghouse (Church Street) in 1706. First schoolhouses built on Elm St. and corner of Tremont and Harrison Sts. in 1714 and 1715, respectively. Elm St. and Tremont/Harrison St. schools served western (Tarkiln, Tinkertown, Island Creek) and eastern (Millbrook, S. Duxbury, Duxbury) community village clusters.

D. Economic Base:

Agriculture and fishing remain important economic pursuits. Considerable industrial development in 18th century, close proximity to settlement nodes. Extensive milling with sawmills on Green Harbor Brook, (1700) Island Creek (1702), immediately south of Island Creek Pond, King Philip's Spring (pre-1717), Philip's Brook north of Congress Street (c.1750). Gristmills on junction of South River and Keene's Brook (18th century?), Blue Fish River (tidal. 1764), fulling mill (1746) built on Duck Hill River. Development of iron industry, construction of two iron forges (pre-1710, pre-1728) at junction of South River and Chandler Street and Hall's Brook at end of Winter Street. Maintenance of related bog iron and charcoal industries. Bog iron excavated southwest of Island Creek Pond, Bog Iron Brook (extended west from Island Creek Pond), North Duxbury. Charcoal production primarily in northwestern Duxbury. Establishment of formalized shipbuilding industry. Captain's Hill in 1719. Several yards follow in mid-late 18th century. Also Clark's Island (1745-50). Lumbering supports shipbuilding and iron industry. Extensive export trade

(e.g., iron, timber, fish, charcoal) to Boston, Middleboro, Taunton. Tannery (1732) and several blacksmith shops oriented toward local market.

E. Architecture:

Residential: In keeping with the town's early settlement (1624), it is not unusual that several houses of the Late First Period (1675-1725) remain standing in Duxbury. Most of these are modest structures, either cottages or, in the case of two-story houses, less than the bull five-bays' width. These include a 1708 half-house on Union Street a 1710 center chimney house on Summer Street and a 1716 three-quarter cape. Residential architecture continued to be modest in character through the end of the period. Full and three-quarter cape-type cottages continued to be the norm through the 1770's with full two-story houses remaining the exception (the Soule House at Ashdod, 1757, is one of the very few center-chimney two-story houses constructed in the period). Early houses exist at Ashdod, Tree of Knowledge Corner and South Duxbury.

Institutional: The second meetinghouse of the First Parish was constructed in 1706; a 40'x33'x17' structure, it was demolished in 1787 when the Parish was moved to the Town's geographical center. In 1737, a school was constructed as an addition to a private residence.

F. Observations:

Period of major community growth, self sufficient, no longer subsidiary of Plymouth. Diverse economy with focus on agriculture, fishing, light industry, export trade. Development of several discreet settlement areas, maintained as semiautonomous villages- individual villages had variety of local service facilities (e.g., sawmill, gristmill, shipyard, farmland) permitting limited independence. Border Villages (i.e., West and North Duxbury) develop close economic and social ties with adjacent towns. Ex. North Duxbury intermarriage of North Duxbury and Marshfield families, utilization of Marshfield commercial and religious facilities.

VIII. FEDERAL (1775-1830)

A. Transportation Routes:

Relocation of town center to Tremont St. in late 18th century with new meeting house radial as Depot St. to South Duxbury. Improvement of coastal highway with Washington St. from South Duxbury to Bluefish River with connecting roads to town center as Partridge, Surplus and Harrison Sts. Interior connections of the period include Union, High-Keene Sts. to East Pembroke.

B. Population

Significant growth in population from 1776 (1254) to 1830 (2716), greatest growth occurred between 1800 and 1830. Methodist Episcopal Church established 1821. Universalist Society 1826.

C. Settlement

Settlement spread along existing colonial roads, extensive development of Powder Point along Bay Road, primarily oriented toward residences for shipyard owners and workers as well as sea captains. Other nodes at Tremont St. and Standish St.

D. Economic Base:

At beginning of period, 1794, town surveyor noted: "There are 4 sawmills in the town, but on account of the smallness of the brooks, cannot go but part of the time, two of them only in the winter; & there is [sic] two corn mills which grind but a small part of the time, the corn is the most part of it carried out of town to grind." In the rush to textile manufacture initiated by the Embargo and the War of 1812, two cotton and woolen factories begun. Duxbury Manufacturing Co., probably the longest lived of the two, incorporated 2/23/1813 with wood-frame factory at Millbrook. Several of the incorporators were shipbuilders (Ezra Weston, father and son, and George Loring) whose shipbuilding and maritime activities were sharply limited by the War. Duxbury South-River Manufacturing Co., incorporated three years later, built cotton mill at Cranberry Factory Pond (Chandler Rd.), again, largely with shipbuilding money.

Despite this manufacturing activity, for most of the century, well into the 1860's, Duxbury's principal attention given to maritime activities. Fourteen shipyards located on Duxbury waterfront, though, unlike North River activity, some of the largest didn't appear until 1830's. One of the largest, the "Navy Yard," operated by Benjamin Prior, and later Ezra Weston. General movement of shipyards during this period, particularly after 1820, away from Captain's Hill and the Nook to Bluefish River estuary. Also, substantial cod and mackerel fishing, though figures unavailable for this period; by 1837, the peak year, over 300 men and 46 ships active in fishery. Both shipbuilding and fisheries supported auxiliary industries including coopering, saltworks, and at least one anchor forge (at Bluefish River).

Shoemaking probably also begun during this period, providing winter employment for those at sea during summer months. By 1830's shoe shops produced annually over \$50,000 worth of boots and shoes.

E. Architecture:

Residential: As shipbuilding became established in Duxbury in the 1780's and 90's, a boom began in residential construction; the greatest concentration of houses was built along Washington Street at the easternmost edge of town on Duxbury Bay. There, large numbers of ambitious and well-detailed houses were built through the 1820's. While a few end chimney Federal houses are known, by far the most popular high style house type of the period was the center-chimney, hip-roofed house. The earliest of these were constructed in the early 1790's (the Cushing House, 1792, may be one of the first) and they continued to be common through the 'teens as late as 1822, center-chimney, hip-roofed houses were being constructed at the town center. These houses are unusual in that they appear to derive from Georgian architecture many have pedimented Georgian porches, quoins, molded window caps and relatively steep-pitched hip-roofs. The reluctance to shift from center chimneys to end or interior paired chimneys is a further indication of stylistic conservatism in Duxbury's highstyle Federal period architecture. In addition to the many substantial houses along Washington St., a few substantial houses were also built at South Duxbury; some half dozen center-chimney, gable-roofed houses with ambitious late Georgian detailing were constructed along Standish Street. At least one house with a rear gable-on-hip roof is known at South Duxbury. The most pretentious house of the period is the Ezra Weston ("King Caesar") House at Powder Point north of the town center; the Weston House is a highstyle, two and a half story house with

double brick end-wall chimneys and elaborate and abundant Federal detailing. While the coastal sections of town saw remarkable growth in the Federal period, much of the inland area remained unaffected; there, the modest, one-and-a-half story cottage was the most common house type of the Federal period, with concentrations at Tinkertown, Ashdod and Cox Corner. End-chimney half-plan cottages were also built in some numbers along Bay Road.

Institutional: The third meetinghouse of the First Parish was constructed in 1787; the minister, Dr. Allyn, was noted as an educator and for the Academy which he ran from the Parsonage from 1788 to 1833. A 24'x26' school was constructed at Powder Point in 1800.

VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL (1830-1870)

A. Transportation Routes:

Road system remains from early 19th century with focus of routes along coastal corridor and extension of Washington St. as Bay Road (1834) from South Duxbury to Miramar (Wentworth, 1973, p. 17). No railroads through area during period.

B. Population:

From a high in 1840 there was a steady decline to 1870. Methodist Episcopal Meeting House at Ashdod 1832. Foreign born population 100 in 1855.

C. Settlement

Continued development of existing nodes at Tinkertown, Fordville, Tarkiln and Ashdod during early part of this period. Increase of development at West Duxbury after 1850. Also some development at Cox Corner. Civic center focus at Tremont and Standish Streets in 1840. Depression after Civil War limited the amount of new settlement in the latter portion of this period.

D. Economic Base:

Duxbury witnessed peak of shipbuilding and fishing during this period, with Ezra Weston's "Ten-acre Yard" (1834) and Samuel Hall Yard (1837) among the largest. Between 1832 and '37 Duxbury Yards produced 71 ships and employed 900 shipbuilders. In latter years, 46 ships engaged in the cod and mackerel fisheries. Symptomatic of this great wealth and activity was the formation in 1833 of the Duxbury Bank, chartered by Ezra Weston and several shipbuilding colleagues. (The bank building, built on the Bluefish River, was surrounded by the yards which supplied its capital.) The bank was one of 14 chartered by the state in March of that year, all probably anxious, like others around the country, to take advantage of the imminent dissolution of the Second Bank of the U.S. by Andrew Jackson and the dispersion of its funds to state banks.

After 1840 (Samuel Hall left for East Boston in that year), long decline of Duxbury shipbuilding set in as yards closed and shipwrights moved to location around Boston. In 1845 only four ships launched; in 1865, two.

Last fully-rigged Duxbury ship launched 1869 from Porter Keenyard on Bluefish

River. End of period also marked significantly by the landing, in the same year, of the Franco-American cable at Rouse's Hummock -- a new form of transatlantic communication which ironically took up headquarters in the bank whose shipbuilding interests it now replaced. Key player in this drama, Stephen Nye Gifford, clerk of the State Senate, early Duxbury cranberry grower, and instigator and director of the Duxbury and Cohasset Railroad, whose arrival in Duxbury two years later (1871) became another signal of the end of Duxbury's maritime supremacy.

Boot and shoe manufacture appears to have peaked under small-shop production. Peak census year, 1855, when over 200 men and women produced \$153,598 worth of boots and shoes. Millbrook area alone said to have had 16 shops, with work brought from Rockland and Abington and distributed among the workers for finishing.

E. Architecture:

Residential: As much of the Washington Street area had been built up by the 1830s, comparatively little residential construction took place at the town center in the Early Industrial period. Additional construction at the town center was further curtailed after 1840 as the shipbuilding industry in Duxbury began to decline. Elsewhere in the town, modest center-entrance and sidehall cottages continued to be constructed in small numbers at Ashdod, North Duxbury, Tinkertown, Millbrook and South Duxbury; most of these have Greek Revival detailing, although at least a few sidehall cottages incorporate the bracketted cornices, panelled cornerboards and door hoods of the Italiante style. The only highstyle example of the Second Empire style known in Duxbury (the Wright House, C. 1865) was demolished c. 1970.

Institutional: An outstanding cluster of important Greek Revival institutional structures were constructed on Tremont Street in the early 1840s; these are the fourth church of the First Parish (1840), a large (86' x 30' x 66'), two-story, gable-roofed, highstyle Greek Revival church with a flush-boarded, wide-pilastered facade and two-stage square tower with spire; the Town Offices (c. 1840), a one-and-a-half story Greek Revival building with a facade with Doric columns in antis; and the Partridge Academy, an 1843 one-and-a-half story Greek Revival school with an end cupola and Doric columns in antis on the facade. The Partridge Academy, in operation until 1926, burned in 1933; the present Town Hall is a c. 1975 reproduction of this Greek Revival school. Other Early Industrial institutional buildings include a Wesleyan Methodist church built in 1844 (Pilgrim Church) and a Methodist meetinghouse at Ashdod in 1832 (demolished 1868).

Commercial: The most important commercial building of the period is the Duxbury Bank (1833), a highstyle, two-story Greek Revival structure of domestic proportions; in operation as bank from 1833-1842, the Bank was, from 1869-1952, used as the Cable House for the Franco-American cable which terminated in Duxbury (later Western Union office). The Bank is the most outstanding example of Greek Revival "residential" architecture in Duxbury. Other commercial structures of the period were housed in domestic settings.

