

# MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

## TAUNTON

Report Date: 1981

Associated Regional Report: Southeast Massachusetts

**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.

The activity that is the subject of the MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report has been financed in part with Federal funds from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior. This program receives Federal financial assistance for identification and protection of historic properties. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability or age in its federally assisted programs. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility as described above, or if you desire further information please write to: Office of Equal Opportunity, National Park Service, 1849 C Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., 20240.



MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth  
Chair, Massachusetts Historical Commission  
220 Morrissey Blvd.  
Boston, MA 02125  
[www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc)  
[mhc@sec.state.ma.us](mailto:mhc@sec.state.ma.us) / 617-727-8470

## MHC RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

Date: September, 1981

Community: Taunton

### I. TOPOGRAPHY

Taunton is an industrial city located in the Narragansett Basin. The city possesses generally level terrain with rather gentle slopes leading to the Taunton River. The northern and western portion of the city is marked by an extensive system of swamps. That portion of the city north of Lake Sabbatia remained virtually uninhabited due to the Great Cedar Swamp. Drainage is from west to east via the Three Mile, Mill and Taunton Rivers. The Three Mile and Mill Rivers as well as the Cotley River in the east are tributaries of the Taunton River. Soils are generally sandy to gravelly with clay deposits along the Taunton River.

### II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Taunton (originally known as Cohannet) was first mentioned in Plymouth Colony records in 1639. Bounds were established in 1640. Various parcels of land granted to the town in 1640 and 1672. Assonet Neck (now part of Berkley) annexed in 1682. Norton was established from part of Taunton in 1711, Dighton in 1712 and Raynham in 1731. Part of Taunton was included in the town of Berkley in 1735. Berkley annexed additional parcels of Taunton in 1810, 1842, and 1979. Taunton was incorporated as a city on May 11, 1864.

### III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Taunton is an historic industrial community located in Bristol County at the head of navigation of the Taunton River. Taunton has been the site of industrial activity in the county since the mid-17th century.

Prior to and during the revolution, Taunton Green began developing as a social and commercial node creating the dual nucleation that has characterized the Taunton CBD during the 19th and 20th century. The impetus for the Green's development was provided not only by the construction of the county courthouse in 1772 but by its utilization as an organizational center for revolutionary war activities. The area around Church Green which had served as the religious as well as town government focus retained this function and serves as a secondary nucleus for the CBD. Church Green has also managed to retain a residential core. Bristol Academy (1796-1908) was also located at Church Green. Prior to the turn of the 19th century there were a number of small villages in the town, located on or near primary water sources. They served as the nuclei for the rapid industrialization that occurred during the first three decades

of the 19th century. Also by the turn of the century Weir Village began to grow in importance drawing shipping activity from the Neck of Land as well as expanding its shipbuilding capabilities. By 1810, Whittenton had developed from a small bloemery to a tack factory and cotton mill; a cotton mill was also in operation at Westville by this time. By the late 1820's, a number of specialized industrial villages had developed at Whittenton, Britanniaville, Hopewell, Oakland, Westville and East Taunton. This growth of small villages was a significant factor in the development of settlement patterns in the city. Whittenton, Britanniaville, and Hopewell on the Mill River and Weir Village on the Taunton River expanded to join Taunton Center so that the city's growth during the 19th century was the result of the consolidation of a number of villages rather than expansion of a single core. This consolidation was aided by the construction of the Taunton-South Boston Turnpike (1807) and the Taunton-Providence Turnpike (1826) which connected with the Bristol Path (Tremont St.) at Taunton Green and provided new corridors for settlement. The coming of the railroads in the 1830's and 1840's as well as the introduction of reliable steam power resulted in the development of industrial sites away from traditional water sties and further encouraged nucleation in the town. Industrialization continued throughout the 19th century as did large scale immigration which generated discrete ethnic communities in the city. Introduction of mass transit in the form of horse drawn trolleys in 1871, resulted in the expansion of working class housing. Late 19th century residential districts developed to the south and west of Taunton Green particularly high style districts partly due to the occupation of what would have been prime residential land to the north by the Taunton State Hospital (1854). Although manufacturing in Taunton was highly diversified during the 19th and early 20th century the general exodus of cotton mills from New England in the early 20th century removed one high growth industry from the city. This and the depression of the 1930's, slowed the city's growth considerably. Unlike many of the southeastern study unit towns, Taunton did not experience any noticeable post World War II growth although the construction of I-495 and concomitant growth of industrial parks indicates that the city could experience suburban development during the '80's.

#### IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500-1620)

##### A. Transportation Routes:

The Massachusetts Bay Path, a major native route, followed the present route of Bay Street and possibly continued along Weir Street and Somerset Ave. A possible secondary native trail may have extended east from the Bay Path across the Taunton River at Weir Village and along portions of Plain and Hart Streets and Middleborough Avenue.

B. Settlement Patterns:

There were no reported native Contact Period sites. Most promising were seven sites (five unidentified, two Middle-Late Archaic) clustered about Watson's Pond and Lake Sabbatia and three more unidentified sites concentrated around the Bearhole Pond complex, a pattern common among Late Woodland and Contact Period occupations in the interior uplands. The falls at East Taunton (northwest of the Bearhole Pond complex) is reported to be the site of a native settlement at the time of Taunton's incorporation. The unidentified native sites located north of the junction of the Mill and Taunton Rivers are near Weir Street, the possible location of a Contact Period fish weir.

C. Subsistence Patterns:

Anadromous fish runs on the Three Mile, Mill and Taunton Rivers. Fishing was also possible on the Bearhole Ponds complex and the area's smaller streams. Good hunting and gathering in the uplands and lowlands. Agricultural land adjacent to the Taunton and Three Mile Rivers and the freshwater ponds. A good probability of Anglo-Indian trade due to the area's proximity to Narragansett Bay. Direct access was provided by the Taunton River.

D. Observations:

The Taunton area was capable of sustaining a moderate-large native population mainly because of the presence of several moderate sized freshwater ponds, several rivers and streams and direct access to the coast. Taunton probably fell within the domain of the Pokanokets centered in Sowams (Mt. Hope, Rhode Island) while local control may have rested in the hands of the Titicut natives. Isolated remains of the Contact Period occupants may still survive on the shores of Watson Pond and Lake Sabattia and the banks of the Mill and Taunton Rivers.

V. FIRST SETTLEMENT PERIOD (1620-1675)

A. Transportation Routes:

The Massachusetts Bay Path and the conjectured secondary route which extended eastern Taunton were incorporated into the white settlement's transportation network. Dean Street was probably laid out at the time of Taunton's initial settlement. The "Bristol Path", a route that followed Rocky Woods Street, may predate 1675.

B. Population:

No figures available for the native population. It was probably rather small due to the epidemics of the early 17th century and the early settlement of a sizeable number of English. The only figures for Taunton's pre-war white population was that

of 96 heads of family at the outbreak of King Philip's War. The first settlers hailed primarily from Dorsetshire, Devonshire, and Gloucestershire, England, many of them moving after short stays in Boston, Braintree, Charlestown, Cambridge, Dorchester, Plymouth and Salem.

C. Settlement Patterns:

Native settlement dwindled with the onset of English settlement. The only documented native settlement was the previously mentioned encampment at the East Taunton Falls. Additional native settlement may have occurred around Watson's Pond and Lake Sabattia and the Bearhole Ponds complex, areas that were a considerable distance from the majority of the First Period white settlers. Several sources, however, stated that early settlers reported "hundreds" of Pokanokets journeyed every spring from Mt. Hope to Cohannet (Taunton) to fish for alewives.

Initial white settlement was spurred by the growing population in the Massachusetts Bay area. The first settlers arrived in c.1637 erecting homes in Dean Street. A primary settlement node was centered around the present Taunton common, a location in close proximity to water sources for fishing, mill power and transportation. Additional settlement occurred adjacent to Dean, Summer and Winter Streets. The first meetinghouse was erected in c.1647 slightly west of the junction of Main and Weir Streets. Several pre-1675 garrison houses were built within the town center including one on the corner of Oak and Tremont Streets and a second immediately south of the Cohannet School. Post-1650 settlement is poorly documented although it appears little occurred outside of the core area. Scattered farms were probably established north, south and east of the town center along the Mill and Taunton Rivers.

D. Economic Base:

The native population probably maintained its traditional seasonal subsistence rounds although with some restrictions due to white settlement. Anglo-Indian trade probably expanded as a result of the increased white presence.

The Taunton settlers focused on farming utilizing the riverine lowlands and outlying territory for grazing and crop production. Fishing on the rivers, streams and freshwater ponds provided the community with a valuable food resource. A fish weir was maintained on the Taunton River on or near the site of the earlier native weir. A small industrial base was established by the mid-17th century. A grist and saw mill complex was erected as early as 1639 (some sources claim c.1652) near the junction of the Mill River and Cohannet Street. Shortly after a fulling mill was built on this site (Borden 1899: 260). A second gristmill

was built on Littleworth Brook (probably east of Precinct Street) prior to 1652. James Leonard constructed a forge on the Mill River at the junction of the river and Whittenton Street in c.1666 (operation remained in family until 1805). Iron ore was obtained from the Watson Pond Meadows, Winneconet Pond (Norton) and "Scaddings Moire"(?). William Parker was licensed to run the first documented ordinary in 1644. Thomas Leonard was licensed in 1663.

E. Observations:

Surviving native community poorly understood. The white settlement of Taunton was one of the earliest communities (5th) established in the Southeastern Massachusetts study unit. The inclusion of two major waterways within its bounds provided an excellent base for regional trade routes (i.e., Narragansett Bay) and substantial industrial development. In turn, the relocation of a large number of Massachusetts Bay settlers in Taunton facilitated the establishment of social and economic ties with Massachusetts Bay.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

A. Transportation Routes:

Post-war community growth witnessed the establishment of a transportation network radiating out from the original town center. A series of late 17th century and early 18th century routes branched out into western and northern Taunton. These included Tremont, Glebe and Hodges Streets. Fremont/Bassett Streets extended north to the Watson Pond, Lake Sabattia area and Norton. The scattered homes and industries situated in eastern Taunton were connected to the town center by several late 17th century and early 18th century routes including Summer/Williams Streets, Berkley Street and Caswell/Staples Streets.

B. Population:

No figures for the native population. It is unclear if any natives remained in the area after King Philip's War. There was minimal coverage of the white population. Taunton underwent considerable postwar growth. By 1765, the town had 2735 residents. This figure increased 19% to 3259 in 1776.

C. Settlement Patterns:

Taunton suffered a limited amount of damage during King Philip's War, losing 15 residents and two homes. One source attributed the limited losses to good relations between the Taunton settlers and King Philip. The original town center remained Taunton's primary settlement node with late 17th century and 18th century infill. This area also was maintained as the town's civic center. A second meetinghouse was built on the site of the first structure in c.1720. The first jail was erected in c.1747 on the location of the Bristol County Bank. The Bristol County Courthouse

was constructed on Court Street in c.1746 after Taunton's replacement of present Bristol, Rhode Island, as the county seat. This structure was replaced in c.1772. Additional late 17th century-late 18th century settlement occurred on both sides of the Mill and Taunton Rivers with secondary settlement nodes clustering about the industrial operations established adjacent to Whittenton Street, the Taunton State Hospital and East Taunton. By the early-mid 18th century, a small Episcopal neighborhood was clustered about the Episcopal church (erected c.1740) situated midway between Tremont and Walter Streets. A Baptist church built in North Taunton in c. 1767 serviced the village's Baptist population and those of Norton. An early 18th century secondary settlement node was established at Westville in the vicinity of the Westville furnace. Scattered homes were built adjacent to western Taunton's developing road network.

#### D. Economic Base:

No documentation of the native economy. Agriculture remained the major economic pursuit of the Taunton settlers. Industry underwent considerable post-war development. Three additional iron works joined the already existing Whittington's forge in the early 18th century. John King et als erected an iron works on Littleworth's Brook (probably flowed into Richmond Pond) in c.1723. A second operation was established in c.1738 on the Three Mile River probably at the junction of the river and Fisher Street. Captain Zephaniah Leonard constructed the Hopewell Iron Works in c.1739 near the present Danforth Street bridge.

A brickyard was established in c.1750 on the eastern bank of the Taunton River near the junction of the river and the Hartford, New York and New Haven Railroad. In c.1772, a stoneware pottery was erected on the east side of Ingell Street opposite the intersection of Ingell and High Streets. Local brick, ironware, etc. was shipped down the Taunton River to Providence, Newport and New York during the late 17th century and 18th century. However, the Taunton-Narragansett Bay trade was hurt in the mid-18th century by the Massachusetts government's prohibition of the use of Rhode Island currency in commercial transactions.

#### E. Architecture:

Residential: The earliest surviving structure in Taunton is the three-quarter plan, two-story Willis House (1668) on Tremont Street. Taunton's comparatively prominent position is evident in the presence of several other two-story Georgian houses of the early 18th century; these are vernacular center-chimney plan houses, with pedimented entrance surrounds being the only pretention to style. By the mid-century, at least one

more ambitious hip-roofed end-chimney double-pile plan house had been built (McKinstrey House, 1759) although most two-story houses were more traditional with central chimney plans and modest Georgian entrance detail. Most common are central-chimney cottages, numbers of which survive in all of Taunton's villages as well as at the town center. Shallow end-wall gable overhangs are common on both houses and cottages of the period. One half-plan cottage and several three-quarter plan cottages are known. Institutional: Meetinghouses were constructed in Taunton in 1647 and 1726; standing 56' x 46' x 27', the 1726 meetinghouse had two galleries. A Baptist congregation was established at North Taunton as early as 1747 with a meetinghouse built there in 1767. A very early Episcopal church was established c.1742 in Oakland through the generosity of Thomas Coram, a London philanthropist and one-time Taunton resident. A very small band of Quakers is known to have met in Taunton as early as 1720. The first Bristol County Courthouse, built in 1747, was replaced in 1771 with a 48' square, 24' high courthouse.

F. Observations:

The late 17th century and 18th century marked Taunton's ascendance as both a major industrial (particularly iron production) and political center in southeastern Massachusetts. Taunton's large size contributed to the development of several semi-autonomous villages (e.g., North and East Taunton) within the town bounds.

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

A. Transportation Routes:

Some improvement of colonial highways prior to 1800. Taunton and South Boston Turnpike completed c.1807, ran north from Taunton Green (now Broadway) through Raynham, Easton and the northwest Corner of Brockton. Taunton and Providence Turnpike, constructed 1826, at first ran from what is now the intersection of Winthrop and Cohannet Streets along Winthrop to Dighton border, later extended to Taunton Green along present Winthrop. Taunton River remains an important transportation route for raw materials and goods during this period.

B. Population:

Population during this period remained relatively stable between 1790 (3804) and 1810 (3907) after an initial growth from 1776 (3259). Between 1810 and 1830 there was rapid growth with an end of period total of 6042. St. Mary's Catholic Church was established in 1830 at intersection of Broadway and Washington Streets.

C. Settlement Patterns:

Revolutionary war activity at the Training Green begins to draw commercial and social activity from the Neck of Land area to



what is now Taunton Green and to Main Street so that Taunton Green loses its purely residential character prior to the turn of the century. Taunton Green does however retain its wealthy residential aspect to the end of the period. Industrial development at Whittenton, Britanniaville, and Hopewell on the Mill River and at Oakland and Westville on the Three Mile River as well as at East Taunton result in workers residential areas at these locations. Expansion of Weir Village continues with construction of sailors boarding houses.

D. Economic Base:

Tremendous growth of Taunton in the 19th century initiated by Taunton's pivotal position as inland port at head of sloop navigation on Taunton River, together with valuable mill privileges on both Mill and Three-Mile rivers. By 1800 coasting vessels were freighting out three million bricks annually, 800 tons of ironware, and 700 tons of nails, with trade orientation toward Newport, Providence, and New York.

Most of Taunton's manufacturing concentrated along the Mill River between Weir Street and Whittenton, where by 1790 four slitting mills had been erected at the key mill privileges. Although iron manufacture continued to play a dominant role in Taunton industry throughout the 19th century, as it had in the Colonial period, between 1806 and 1818 each of the four slitting mills were successively replaced by cotton mills--a move almost entirely due to the activities of Samuel Crocker and Charles Richmond, former employees of iron master Samuel Leonard. By the 1820's, Crocker and Richmond dominated most of the manufacturing and real estate interests in Taunton. With Silas Shepard, a pioneer mechanic from the 1797 Wrentham (now Plainville) cotton mill, Crocker, Richmond and Bush in 1806 constructed the Taunton Cotton Mill (the "Green Mill") near the Weir Street bridge, considered the earliest textile mill in the county. The following year their nail works at Whittenton were enlarged to include a yarn mill. The large stone cotton mills at Hopewell were begun in 1818 (Shepard becoming superintendent), and in 1823 the firm built mills at Westville and at Washington Street (the "Brick Mill"), and an extensive calico print works on Court Street. The company incorporated that year as the Taunton Manufacturing Co. with capital of \$600,000, largely made up from Boston men including Edmund Dwight, John McLean, Harrison Gray Otis (father and son), William Eliot, and others. The concern also operated a nail works and shovel factory (begun in the 1820's at Kingsbridge, site of the later Old Colony Iron Works), which by 1832 was producing nearly \$170,000 worth of nails and nail plates, hoops, and shovels. From London, Richmond sent skilled English and Scottish workmen to work in the iron works (introducing the use of bituminous coal), and in the calico print works. The latter was much the largest operation in

town: by 1832 the print works employed over 400 men and women and had an annual product worth \$900,000.

The cotton mills quickly attracted other mechanics, among them Cromwell Dean, inventor with Shepard, of the Dean speeder (patented 1821); and William Mason (afterwards founder of the Hugh Mason Machine Works out of the financial ruins of Crocker & Richmond's own machine shop). Shepard himself patented a power loom in 1816 (not a success). In 1827 Shepard built his own stone cotton mills (perhaps along the lines of the Hopewell mills, where for a decade he had been superintendent) on the Rumford River.

Isaac Babbitt and John Crossman introduced the first successful U.S. Manufacture of britannia ware in 1824. Babbitt himself patented the metal which today bears his name two years later.

Other products of the period included a considerable brick production ("as well known a Taunton product as herring"

Tercentenary ), with an annual value of \$40,000 by 1832. Fire-brick and stove lining, begun as early as 1826 by William and Albert Presbrey, used New Jersey clays, and by the late 19th century had become a major industry at the Weir.

#### E. Architecture:

Residential: Some two dozen two-story Federal houses are known in the town. Of these, a half-dozen are traditional in plan with central chimneys while the remainder are either interior end or brick end-wall chimney houses. Almost all of the period's houses are hip-roofed but a number exhibit the steep-pitched hip of the Georgian period rather than the shallower Federal hip. At least two highly-styled late Georgian houses are known: the Godfrey House (c.1780), a hip-roofed double-pile plan house with double center chimneys and pedimented entrances on two walls, and the Dean-Hartshorn House (1798), a double-pile plan end-chimney house with later Georgian Revival detailing. Some conservatism is evident in the absence of up-to-date Federal style houses: most Federal style houses are comparatively traditional with simple details such as elliptical blind fanlights. By far the most common house form is the cottage; most cottages are traditional in plan with central chimney examples far outnumbering end interior chimney cottages. Many Federal period cottages incorporate comparatively elaborate detailing such as entrance surrounds with leaded elliptical fan and sidelights. Well-detailed cottages survive at Westville, East Taunton and at the town center on Dean, Country and Williams Streets. Significant innovations in workers' housing took place at the end of the period when substantial numbers of brick double cottages were built at Oakland and Hopewell Mills. Brick became an important local building material by 1800,

so many cottages were built entirely of brick. Two-story houses of brick appear to be less common, most houses incorporating brick end walls only. Institutional: Several important institutional buildings were constructed in the period, including the third and fourth meetinghouses of the First Parish. The third meetinghouse (1790-92) was one of Charles Bulfinch's earliest commissions. A conservative two-and-a-half story structure with a two-story projecting pedimented portico surmounted by a two-stage steeple, the Taunton church was notable as several features of the design were later incorporated in Plate 33 of Asher Benjamin's Country Builders' Assistant, a meetinghouse design widely copied across 19th-century New England. In 1829, the Bulfinch building was replaced by the present stone Gothic Revival church, a gable-roofed building with a prominent projecting square tower. The only other surviving period institutional structure is the Westville Congregational Church (1824), a Federal plan meetinghouse with a projecting porch with a square tower and octagonal belfry; among the congregations founded in the period were Universalists (1825), Methodists (1830), Trinitarians (1821) and Roman Catholics (1827). Commercial: Brow's Tavern (c.1780) is one of the few surviving Federal commercial structures: it is a story-and-a-half cottage with central chimney plan and end-chimney half-cottage addition. Taunton is exceptional in that several late Federal period brick commercial blocks, three stories tall with party wall construction and parapeted linked chimneys, survive at the town center.

## VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830-1870)

### A. Transportation Routes:

Taunton Branch Railroad opened 1835 connecting the town to Boston, Providence and New York. New Bedford railroad opened 1840 (ran from the Mansfield depot on the west side of Taunton center). Middleboro and Taunton opened 1853. Taunton River remains important conduit for raw materials and goods.

### B. Population:

Explosive population growth begins during this period with a total population of 18,629 by 1870. Foreign born population was 3381 in 1855 with 2610 Irish, 540 English and 107 Canadian.

### C. Settlement:

Continued growth at Whittenton, Britanniaville and Hopewell in the north and at Weir Village in the south. Taunton Green becomes commercial and county level hub of the town while Church Green becomes civic, religious and high style residential focus, the two are joined by Main Street which acts as a commercial connector. Some fashionable residential districts developed on upper Winthrop Street and on Summer Street and in the triangular area between Main and

and Broadway. East Taunton develops a secondary function as a railroad service town during this period. Weir Village continues high density residential development.

D. Economic Base:

In 1831, at the height of the Taunton Manufacturing Company's success, the group incorporated the Boston & Taunton Railway Co. Its list of incorporators included--in addition to the Taunton Mfg. Co. backers--many prominent Boston industrialists: South Boston's Cyrus Alger, Thomas H. Perkins, David Sears, Solomon Willard, Nathan Hale, William Prescott, James K. Mills (Boston operator of the Whittenton mills), and others. However, no work seems to have been done on the line, possibly because of financial difficulties in the manufacturing company. In 1834 the Taunton Manufacturing Co. was broken up, apparently largely over the deficits of the Calico print works. Crocker and Richmond, however, retained much of the industry, and the following year formed the less ambitious Taunton Branch Railroad, completed to the Boston & Providence's line at Mansfield in 1836. In 1837 the financial panic struck, forcing real estate values to plummet. Crocker and Richmond, forced into bankruptcy, were among the hardest hit, but many other Taunton concerns were also affected. When the dust had settled, many of the former Taunton Mfg. Co. properties were thrown on the market, and with the protective tariff of 1842, gave a strong boost to new manufacturing industries in the 1840's. William Mason's machine works (textile machinery and locomotives) was followed by the equally successful Taunton Locomotive Works (980 locomotives between 1847 and 1889) with W. W. Fairbanks as agent, and both firms made important advances in locomotive design. Other firms from the decade included the Old Colony Iron Works (1844), and the Taunton Copper Mfg. Co., established in Norton in 1824, which in 1845 moved to Weir Village, where they operated a copper smelter and rolling mill, using Chilean ore and English expertise to produce Muntz metal, a cheap copper-zinc alloy used in ship sheathing. By 1855 the latter was the largest single industry in Taunton, with an annual product value of \$500,000. In the \$300-350,000 range were the five cotton mills, two machine works, and four tack factories. Albert Field, originally an employee of the Whittenton Nail Mill, had begun what by the 1870's would be the largest tack factory in the country. (Field, with Samuel Crocker, was also one of the incorporators of the Dighton & Somerset Railroad of 1863, placing Taunton on the line between Somerset and Easton.) The Bay State Screw Works, incorporated 1851, became the first concern to manufacture the gimlet pointed screw. After the failure of their employer, Babbitt and Crossman, in the 1830's, Henry Reed and Charles Barton organized the Reed and Barton Britannia works, probably the oldest of Taunton's present industries.

### E. Architecture:

Residential: Most of Taunton's most innovative and stylish houses were built in the Early Industrial period, especially during the 1850's and '60's. These include a number of unusual Greek Revival and Italianate houses, several of stone and brick. Among these are several very early tenements (1830-40) built as workers' housing at Taunton's mills and factories. Particularly popular was a distinctive broad-gabled two-and-a-half story Greek Revival form with five bays and a central entrance on the gable end; examples of this form in brick, stone and frame construction are known at Weir Village, East Taunton and Whittenton. More common are brick and frame double Greek Revival workers' cottages, some numbers of which survive in Weir Village, Whittenton and Westville. Although cottages were clearly associated with Taunton's growing industries, a number of substantial cottages were built for more affluent citizens; among these are several broad-gabled stone Greek Revival cottages with encircling one-story Doric or Ionic porticos. More common are end interior chimney, central-entrance Greek Revival cottages with well-detailed entrance treatment of transom and sidelights beneath an entablature; examples of this form are known at the town center, at East Taunton and along back roads of the western and northern section of town. Also built in some numbers were sidehall plan cottages and houses, a few with Doric or Ionic-columned verandas. By the 1850's, stylish Italianate houses were being built in the town (at least some of these were probably influenced by the local work of noted architect, Richard Upjohn, who received several commissions in Taunton in the early '50's); these include a two-story, four-square plan store villa with wide eaves, a low hip roof and prominent round-arched window bays. The four-square plan with low, hip roof and square belvedere was popular for Italianate houses of the 1850's and '60's in Taunton, but several asymmetrically-planned Italianate houses with offset towers are also known, including the Upjohn-designed house (Fairbanks House, 1852-3). Mansard roofs were in use in Taunton by the mid-1850's for commercial structures and probably by 1860 for residential architecture; while comparatively few mansard-roofed houses were built in Taunton, a number of well-detailed mansard-roofed cottages with offset towers and elaborate embellishment were built in the 1860's. As the mansard roof is uncommon for the region, its presence in Taunton should be noted as an indication of the city's mid-century sophistication and prosperity. A few Gothic Revival houses, combining elements of the Stick Style, were also built in the 1860's. Institutional: A number of important institutional buildings were built in the period. Among these are the buildings of the State Mental Asylum, established in Taunton in 1851; designed by Worcester architect, Elbridge Boyden, the original hospital consists of an E-shaped three-and-a-half story brick Italianate building with domed cupolas at the cross gables and elaborate cast-iron detailing. Other institutional buildings of the period include the North Taunton Baptist church (1837), a

retardataire story-and-a-half meetinghouse-plan church with blind fans set in pointed arch windows, and two more innovative designs by Richard Upjohn: the Romanesque Revival Pilgrim Congregational church (1852), a two-and-a-half story fieldstone building with narrow round-arched windows and a massive square entrance tower on the facade, and Saint Thomas Episcopal church (1857-9), a basilican plan fieldstone Gothic Revival church with side aisles, articulated chancel and south entrance in the correct Ecclesiological form of which Upjohn was a noted practitioner. Also built in the period were the Gothic Revival Winthrop Baptist church (1862), Victorian Gothic Saint John's Episcopal church (1869) and Saint Mary's Catholic church (1868), a basilican plan fieldstone Gothic Revival church with a square central entrance tower designed by P.C. Keeley. Other institutional buildings include the Bristol Academy (1852, Richard Upjohn; now Old Colony Historical Society), Taunton's earliest school building (the Tremont school, 1854, a Greek Revival building with the three-bay, side-entered, side-gabled plan of Federal schoolhouses), a very early Italianate/Victorian Gothic fire station (Central Fire Station, 1869, A. E. Swasey), the second Bristol County Courthouse (1836) a brick Greek Revival building with Ionic pedimented portico and domed cupola, and Historical Hall (1867), a story-and-a-half stone Gothic Revival building built for the Old Colony Historical Society. The second Town House (1848, E. E. Ryder), a stone Gothic Revival building was refaced later in the 19th century.

Commercial: Many commercial blocks were built in the town center, at Weir Village and at Whittenton during the period. Most of these are of brick, although one two-story frame Italianate store (c.1855) with its three-bay, center-entered storefront intact, is known on Weir Street. The bulk of period commercial structures are located at the town center on the common; these include several traditional party-wall three-story brick rows (one with polygonal Greek Revival dormers) as well as at least one stylish Renaissance Revival block with pedimented window frames and another brownstone Renaissance Revival block. The typical commercial block of the period is a simply-detailed Italianate structure, three or four stories tall, of brick with a bracketted cornice, segmental-arched windows and occasionally a round window in the gable end. One brick Greek Revival commercial structure (with pedimented end gable and pilastered facade) is known (Taunton Market, 1836) along with one advanced mansard-roofed Renaissance Revival bank building (5-9 City Square, 1855).

Industrial: Several well-preserved industrial complexes stand in Taunton, among them the Reed and Barton factory, most of which dates from the 1860's with several three and four story brick blocks of utilitarian construction with segmental-arched windows, corbelled cornices, and cross gables set with round windows, and the Field Tack Company (1868), a well-detailed Renaissance Revival brick building with quoins, cross gables, a high hip-roofed stair tower and entry porch. Other period industrial buildings include portions of the Whittenhouse Mills complex.

## IX.

LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)A. Transportation Routes:

Horse drawn trolley system began 1871 with route connecting Whittenton with Weir Village via Taunton Green (Taunton Street Railway Co.). In 1887 horsecar lines ran from City Hall via Main and Winthrop to Highland and from the Green via Cohannet, High and Oak to Agricultural Avenue. Various extensions of this line were built to the end of the century. The system was electrified in 1893. Intercity lines began appearing in the mid and late 1890's (Dighton, Somerset and Swansea, 1895; Brockton, Bridgewater and Taunton, 1897; Taunton and Brockton, 1897; Providence and Taunton, 1898; Norton and Taunton, 1898; East Taunton, 1898; New Bedford, Middleboro and Brockton, 1899; Bristol Co., 1901). The Old Colony Railroad built the Whittenton Branch from North Raynham to Whittenton Junction in 1882, bringing to three the number of depots in the city.

B. Population:

Population growth continues at a somewhat slower rate than the previous period, population doubled from 18,629 to 36,161. Foreign born population in 1885 totaled 6569 with French Canadian ranking second (1004) to Irish (3334), English third (965) and the beginnings of a Portugese community (276). By 1915 the foreign born population had increased to 10,471. The Portugese population had increased ten fold to 2772, while the French Canadian population had doubled (2253), the English total also increased (1340) and there was a drop in the Irish total (1756). In 1915 there was also a substantial Polish community (964). Most of the immigrants during this period were Catholic and there was a rapid expansion of ethnic Catholic churches in the city indicating viable ethnic communities. Immaculate Conception in Whittenton (1883) served both French and Polish speaking congregations until the dispersal of the Polish population and the construction of Holy Rosary at Bay near Broadway which served the Polish population of the entire city. St. Jacques was built at Whittenton near Bay Street to serve the French speaking population. There were Portugese communities in the central portion of town served by St. Anthony's (1903) at Washburn and School and in the Weir served by Our Lady of Lourdes (1905) which originally served the Irish population of the Weir as the Church of the Sacred Heart (1873). Congregation Agudath Achim was established sometime between 1900 and 1915 to serve the Jewish population of the city.

C. Settlement:

Continued growth at Taunton Green resulting in conversion of the few remaining estates to commercial usage. Substantial residential development along Bay and Whittenton Streets following trolley lines, other residential development consists of infill at Whittenton, Britanniaville, Central Taunton and south along trolley routes on Winthrop and Weir Streets. Wealthy neighborhoods located

on Somerset, Winthrop and Broadway during this period. Late 19th century residential development noticeable south and west of Taunton Green. Last of industrial villages built by Corr Manufacturing Co. in East Taunton consists of worker housing lining Middleboro Ave. Some infill primarily of farmsteads along non-trolley routes outside of the city proper.

#### D. Economic Base:

By the end of the Civil War, Taunton had rail lines in five directions and had become the rail center of the country. Although the post-war period witnessed a gradual decline in her iron industries, on the whole, Taunton's industrial base continued to expand, particularly at the Weir and among the brick yards between Linden Street and the Taunton River. One of the earliest yards there, the Taunton Brick Co., formed in 1868, by the 1880's had become the largest in the city.

Beginning in the 1870's, a new generation of cotton mills were erected including the Cohannet, Elizabeth Poole, Park, and Eagle mills; and much of the expansion of Reed & Barton and the Whittenton mills dates to this and succeeding decades. By 1890, the manufacture of cotton goods (8 firms) led Taunton's industry, with an annual product value worth \$2.7 million. In the same year, foundry and machine shop products, represented by 15 firms, produced nearly \$2 million worth. Among these were machine tool specialities like the new "twist drill", patented by the founder of the New Process Twist Drill Co. The prominence of Reed & Barton encouraged the establishment of several important competitors including Rogers Silverware (1883), Poole Silver (1892), and others.

Taunton's shipping peaked in this period, as the size of vessels gradually outstripped the depth of the Taunton River, but in this and the preceeding period, city shipyards were said to have built not only the largest 2 and 3-masted schooners ever built, but the first 4-, 5-, and 6-masted schooners, and the only 7-masted schooner (Tercentenary). In the 1890's Taunton was said to be the largest grain distribution port on the New England coast with the exception of Boston and Portland (Hutt). Differential railroad rates killed much of this business, and it was largely as an effort to regain a lost commercial position that various schemes were proposed for connecting Taunton with Massachusetts Bay via a ship canal--proposals not put to rest until the completion of the Cape Cod Canal in 1914.

#### E. Architecture:

Residential: Neighborhoods at Whittenton, Weir Village and at Taunton Center were built up in the Late Industrial period with modest single and multiple-family houses in the Stick, Queen Anne and Colonial Revival styles. Tenements, two-families, double houses and, to a lesser extent, three-deckers, were built to house workers in Taunton's industries. Cottages are unusual with most single-family houses being simple sidehall-plan buildings either a full two stories in height or a tall story-and-a-half with kneewall framing. Many of the houses at the town center have been resided but the presence on many houses of jerkin



head roofs suggests that the Stick Style was favored through the 1880's; Taunton is notable for its many Stick Style houses and for the number of somewhat later Queen Anne houses which incorporate Stick Style details such as picket friezes, Eastlake porches and stickwork gable screens. Also notable are the number of early tenements in the Queen Anne style (many dating from the 1880's) which were built in the town. Double houses remained a popular form of workers' housing with a well-preserved grouping of kneewall-framed Queen Anne double houses at East Taunton. After the turn of the century, some industries constructed modest Colonial Revival and Craftsman bungalows for workers; at least a few bungalows were built along back roads as modest suburban housing as well. Less common are Colonial Revival and Draftsman houses; most of those constructed are large and elaborate architect-designed single-family houses, examples of which are located on Church Green and behind Church Green on Ashland, Belmont and Cedar Streets.

Institutional: Almost all of Taunton's period schools and fire stations have been preserved; these include an early Victorian Gothic school (Weir School, 1870-71, Swasey and Hartwell) as well as several Renaissance Revival schools in brick of the late 1880's and 1890's, two brick Queen Anne fire stations of the 1880's, one Romanesque Revival fire station (1889) and several Georgian and Renaissance Revival schools of the early 20th century. More ambitiously detailed institutional buildings of the period include the Bristol County Courthouse (1894, Frank Irving Cooper), a granite Richardsonian Romanesque structure, the Public Library (1903, Albert R. Ross), a limestone Beaux Arts classical Building donated by the Carnegie foundation, and Romanesque Revival alterations to the City Hall (1896, Barker and Nourse). Churches built in the period include several Roman Catholic churches in the Shingle and Lombard Romanesque styles (St. Paul's, 1904, Maginnis, Walsh and Sullivan; St. Jaques, 1906, Wendell Phillips; Holy Family, 1909; Holy Rosary, 1909), as well as one of the study unit's earliest synagogues, Agudath Achim (1913), a double-towered Romanesque building. Commercial: Two and three story commercial blocks were built in the period at Whittenton, Weir Village and around the Common at the town center; these include both brick and frame buildings with Renaissance and Georgian Revivals, Beaux Arts classical and Second Empire styles represented. Most commercial blocks at Whittenton and Weir Village are more utilitarian but those at the town center exhibit some architectural pretention; particularly notable are the one-story Georgian Revival structure at 38 Court Street (c.1885), the Taylor Building (1889) with cast-iron facade, and the neoclassical Taunton Savings Bank (1913, Marcus T. Reynolds). An important survival is the Old Colony Railroad Station (1876), a story-and-a-half brick Italianate building with a hip roof, cross gables and bracketted cornice. Industrial: Most of the industrial buildings of the period are utilitarian structures three and four stories tall of masonry mill construction with broad gable roofs, segmental arched windows and modest Romanesque detailing. These include the Weir Stove company (1902), Old Colony Iron, Poole Silver (1893) and Noone Shoe (1878).

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915-1940)

A. Transportation Routes:

Phase out of trolley lines began in 1919 and continued until July of 1932 when buses took over local runs.

B. Population:

Between 1915 and 1940 the population remained relatively stable; 1925 was an exception with a peak of 39,255, however the other census years show a population hovering at approximately 37,500. The foreign born population in 1930 dropped to 8341 with an ethnic distribution similar to that of 1915. The post World War II population showed a very slow growth with an increase of less than 5,000 between 1940 and 1975.

C. Settlement:

Decline in manufacturing results in little new residential development in the late '20's to the end of the period. Residential development that did occur primarily infill in city neighborhoods and along intercity trolley lines.

D. Economic Base:

Taunton's reputation for stoves, firebrick, and stove lining dominates much of her early 20th-century promotional literature. The Glenwood Range, produced at the new Weir Stove Co. plant after 1902, already had established a national reputation, shared with other local firms like the White-Warner Co. and the Magee Furnace Co., which moved from Chelsea to Taunton probably in the early 20th century.

Taunton appears to have reached her peak of manufacturing in 1920 when the value of her manufactured product reached \$49.1 million. This value declined steadily during the 1920's, reaching a low of \$11.3 million in 1932 (though by 1940 census figures recorded an appreciable gain to \$19.9 million). A good part of this loss can be attributed to the departure of the cotton mills to southern and western states. In 1919 cotton goods produced by 11 firms amounted to 42 percent of the city's total manufactured product and employed 3400 operatives. Fifteen years later only three firms remained, employing 583 with 8 percent of the city's total manufactured product and employed 3400 operatives. Fifteen years later only three firms remained, employing 583 with 8 percent of the city's manufactured product. By contrast, the manufacture of stoves and hot-air furnaces, with 8 percent of the city product in 1919, by 1924 (its peak year) had risen to 21 percent, and as late as 1940, with 15 percent, had a product value only slightly less than the equivalent value in 1919. As it had since the mid '20's, the stove industry led the list of manufacturing industries in Taunton.

### E. Architecture:

Residential: Most residential construction of the period seems to have been of relatively substantial single-family houses: construction of multiple-family and workers' housing seems to have dropped off after World War I. While a few bungalows are known and modest one-story Craftsman and Colonial Revival cottages were built along back roads in the western half of town, most of the houses built are two-story, single-family suburban Colonial Revival and Craftsman style structures located around the center of town in well-established residential neighborhoods (Ashland/Belmont Streets). One unusual house, constructed of rusticated concrete blocks and dating from the mid-1920's, is known, on Winthrop Street. More modest houses of the '20's generally feature a pyramidal hip roof and Colonial Revival detailing. Institutional: Institutional buildings of the Early Modern period include several Georgian Revival schools in buff brick dating from the 1920's, the neoclassical Post Office (1931), a Tudor Revival Police Station (1917, J. E. McLaughlin) and at least one church (Immaculate Conception, 1981). Commercial: In addition to the small one-story commercial blocks of utilitarian frame, brick or concrete construction which were built at Weir Village, Whittenton and Taunton center, two more significant commercial structures should be noted: these are the King Airfield Hangar (1919), a very early and well-preserved hangar with an arched roof, and the Roseland dancehall (1922, remodelled 1951).

## XI.

### SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

The Taunton inventory is one of the most thorough surveys of the study unit and is well-researched and interpreted; most structures of well-preserved architectural character have been recommended for Multiple Resource listing. One possible omission is the King Airfield hangar, probably the earliest air-transportation-related structure surviving in the study unit. Preservation efforts should include attention to a potential arson threat in East Taunton (where several important structures have recently burned) and exploration of re-use potential for Taunton's almost intact collection of 19th- and 20th-century schools and fire stations, at least one of which is at present (9/81) being demolished (Caswell School, 1923). Surviving period landscapes include Middleboro Avenue at Richmond Pond (early 19th-century agricultural) and Glebe Road at South Walker Street (Federal agricultural); other districts are noted in survey.

Industrial: Taunton's survey, conducted in 1979, appears to have identified virtually all of the city's standing industrial resources, as well as many of the more important textile mill sites which retain substantial workers' communities. The survey also made recommendations for NR designations. One observation: the map location and photographs of Cohaneg Mill No. 3 and the adjacent mill at 98 Ingell Street appear to be reserved, both in the survey and in Winter's book, Taunton Architecture. Cohanet Mill No. 3 (120 Ingell Street) is located west of the railroad tracks, while the two-story factory at 98 Ingell Street is on the east side of the tracks.

## XII.

SOURCES

- Atwood, Charles R., Reminiscences of Taunton (Taunton, 1880).
- Cushman, James M., "Cohannet Alewives and the Ancient Grist Mill  
Lincoln's at the Falls on Mill River," Old Colony  
Historical Society, Collections no. 5 (1895), pp.71-93.
- Dean, James Henry, "Taunton," in D. H. Hurd's History of Bristol  
County, Massachusetts (Phila., 1883), pp.728-886.
- Emery, Samuel Hopkins, The History of Taunton, Massachusetts,  
from its Settlement to the Present Time (Syracuse, 1893).
- Hager, Louis P., and Handy, Albert D., eds., History of the Old  
Colony Railroad (Boston, 1893).
- Hall, John W. D., "Ancient Iron Works in Taunton," Old Colony  
Historical Society Collections no. 3 (1885), pp.131-162  
Raynham, Taunton, Norton Sites .
- Kennedy, Edward F., Jr., The City of Taunton, 1864-1964 (Taunton,  
1968).
- Leonard, Elisha Clark, "Reminiscences of the Ancient Iron Works  
and Leonard Mansions of Taunton," Old Colony Historical  
Society Collections no. 4 (1889), pp.51-65. Raynham,  
Taunton, Norton sites, as Hall .
- Luzier, John W., "Taunton and Mason: Cotton Machinery and Loco-  
motive Manufacture in Taunton, Massachusetts, 1811-51,"  
Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio State Univ., 1978 not examined .
- Swank, James M., "The Manufacture of Iron in New England," in W. T.  
Davis, The New England States (4 vols., Boston, 1897),  
v.4, pp.359 ff.
- Taunton, Mass., Old Colony Historical Society, Collections  
(Taunton, 1879-1921).
- Taunton, Mass. Tercentenary Committee, Taunton Celebration of the  
Massachusetts Bay Tercentenary, 1630-1930 (Taunton, 1930).
- Winters, Terry, Taunton Architecture: A Reflection of the City's  
History (Taunton, 1981).