

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

ASHFIELD

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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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
mhc@sec.state.ma.us / 617-727-8470

MHC RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

DATE: October, 1982

COMMUNITY: Ashfield

Ashfield is the third largest town (40.3 square miles) in Franklin County. The town is located in the eastern foothills of the Green Mountains. These uplands are moderate to extreme in their slope. The most rugged hills occur in north central and northeastern Ashfield. Elevations frequently reach over 1500 feet. A number of points exceed 1600 feet. They include Peter Hill (1843 feet) located west of Ashfield Pond, Bug Hill (1774 feet) southwest of the previous hill and the adjoining peaks of Seventy-six Hill (1762 feet) and Brier Hill (1745 feet) situated in south central Ashfield. The uplands are broken by several intervalles and valleys, most notable of which is the South River Valley. Local drainage varies from the marshy uplands of southwestern and southeastern Ashfield to the well drained hills of the northeastern portion of town. Ashfield lacks waterways. Western Ashfield is drained by the Bear and South Rivers. Both of these waterways are tributaries of the Deerfield River. The western portion of town is drained by the Mill River. Ashfield Pond and two mill ponds are Ashfield's only bodies of freshwater.

II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Originally granted as Huntstown in 1736 after Captain Ephraim Hunt of Weymouth with eastern boundary at Deerfield line. Proprietors' lots surveyed in 1739 within approximate six mile square limits later defined by northern boundary with No Town (Buckland), northwest corner with Township Number 7 (Hawley), western boundary with Township Number 5 (Cummington-Plainfield) and southern line with Chesterfield (Goshen) by 1762. Incorporated as town of Ashfield in 1765.

III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Rural recreational hill town on secondary corridor from Greenfield to Pittsfield. Located in Berkshire highlands with native site potential suspected at Ashfield Pond. Early settlement during Colonial Period at Baptist Corner disrupted by French and Indian War with garrison fort sites. Meetinghouse site established on Mill Hill by mid-18th century with agricultural expansion on fertile uplands after Revolution including a few well preserved period farmsteads along Murray Rd. near Baptist Corner. Civic and commercial activities developed at Ashfield Center during early 19th century with survived Federal houses of note and landmark meetinghouse with open belfry on Main Street. Upland farming continued as primary activity through mid-19th century with formation of outlying villages at South Ashfield, Spruce Corner and Watson of period cottages and adjacent barns intact. Important development of summer estates from Boston after Civil War around Ashfield Center with some Victorian suburban housing on Main Street axis. Dairy farming remained active through early

20th century with several well-preserved barns on upland farms. Continued development of recreational attraction with Route 116 auto tourist corridor, including early concrete bridges at South Ashfield and summer cottages and garage at Ashfield Pond. Present growth most evident around Route 112-116 junction at Ashfield Center with preservation of upland farmsteads by scenic resorts and suburban development on secluded roads to Chapel Falls.

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500-1620)

A. Transportation Routes:

Intermediate highlands corridor between Deerfield River and Connecticut Valley. Suspected trails apparently follow east-west axis possibly as Murray Rd. along Bear River (Baptist Corner) and as Ashfield Road along South River to Ashfield Pond with northern connector along Smith Road to Clesson Brook (Buckland). Other suspected trails apparently connected to Bassett Swamp along Swift River possibly as Shafer Road to Spruce Corner. East-West connector from Ashfield Pond to Swift River remains unclear with route likely over Peter and Bug Hill. Other possible trail routes may have followed south to Mill River (Williamsburg) as West Road to Chapel Falls.

B. Settlement Patterns:

There were no reported native period sites. Ashfield's hilly terrain and absence of major water sources suggest native occupation was restricted to small to moderate sized caps. Local settlement probably focused on the plateau that the village of Ashfield is situated on and in the vicinity of Ashfield Pond. Associated sites may have been established in the South River Valley in an area extending between the river's junction with Emmets Road to the Ashfield/Conway line. Additional native period sites were probably located in the moderately sloping uplands of western Ashfield, particularly in the general vicinity of Spruce Corner and those of northeastern Ashfield.

C. Subsistence Patterns:

Some native horticulture may have been undertaken. The most likely locations would have been the Ashfield village plateau, the previously mentioned South River Valley and the Swift River floodplain. Native hunting and fishing probably occurred primarily in the vicinity of Ashfield Pond and the South River valley. Smaller hunting and fishing sites likely were scattered about the town's marshlands, and smaller waterways.

D. Observations:

Ashfield was capable of supporting a moderate native population. The town was probably utilized by the Pocumtucks, centered in present Deerfield, as part of their upland fishing and hunting territory. The greatest potential for extant native period sites would be in the vicinity of Ashfield Pond and the South River Valley. Scattered evidence may occur in the Swift River and Bear River Valleys.

V. PLANTATION PERIOD (1620-1675)

A. Transportation Routes:

Native trails remained as secondary routes from Connecticut Valley to Deerfield River with connections to Ashfield Pond along South River Valley (Route 116 axis) and Bear River (Baptist Corner).

B. Population:

Small to moderate sized native bands from river settlements probably continued to occupy this area seasonally. Ashfield had no colonial population until the 18th century.

C. Settlement Patterns:

Native settlement patterns were most likely similar to those suggested for the Contact Period.

D. Economic Base:

The natives probably pursued subsistence patterns much like those of the preceding period. The development of the Anglo-Indian fur trade in the Middle Connecticut River Valley probably encouraged increased native trapping and hunting of vulnerable furbearing animals.

E. Observations:

Ashfield continued to be utilized solely as a native resource area. Colonial occupation and utilization of local resources was discouraged by the presence of large tracts of higher quality land in the Middle Connecticut River Valley and the western upland's exposure to native attack.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

A. Transportation Routes:

Survey of Huntstown division (1736) establishment orientation of local highway system with primary improvement of east-west axis to Baptist Corner settlement as Mathew's Road (1754) from Deerfield (Howe, 1912, p.75). Establishment of Huntstown meetinghouse on Mill Hill (1767) created radial highway system from Ashfield Pond along axis of Main Street, including Bug Hill Road to Watson, Old Paddy Hill Road, Spruce Corner Road and Cape Street to Goshen (1766). Local connectors included Baptist Corner Road and Murray Road to Main Street axis (Route 116) and Watson-Spruce Corner Road to Goshen.

B. Population:

It is unclear if Ashfield had a native population during this period. The first figures for the colonial settlement listed Ashfield as consisting of 10-15 families and almost 100

individuals in 1754. The settlement had grown to 19 families in c. 1761. The greatest period growth took place between 1761 and 1776. Local population had jumped to 628 individuals, an over 600 percent increase. A large proportion of Ashfield's early settlers were natives of Dublin, Ireland. Many had been former residents of Connecticut River towns such as Deerfield, Hatfield and South Hadley in addition to Easton and the southern portion of Connecticut.

C. Settlement Patterns:

Period settlement was generally dispersed. Period settlers were primarily indigent Scotch-Irish who leased or purchased lots from the original 1735 proprietors of their heirs. None of the original owners occupied their lots. Between 1741 and 1745, Richard Ellis established a home in northeastern Ashfield in the general vicinity of Baptist Corner. Ellis was soon followed by two additional families who also erected homes in this general area. By c.1754, the colonial settlement consisted of scattered homes situated in the vicinity of the present villages of Baptist Corner and Beldingville areas. Protection from native attack was provided by two pallisaded garrison houses built in c.1757 slightly north of the junction of John March and Baptist Corner Roads and approximately 1000 feet south of this intersection, respectively. However, substantial colonial settlement did not take place until the termination of the French and Indian Wars in the early 1760's. By c.1761, a small Baptist community had developed in the general area of Baptist Corner. Local residents organized the town's first church (Baptist) in 1761. A second node had developed on the Ashfield village plateau by the late 1760's. This area was the site of the town's first Congregational Church, built in 1766. The church was moved from its original location northeast of Mill Hill to the cemetery at the base of this hill in c. 1767. The late 1760's also witnessed the settlement of homelots in southeastern Ashfield.

D. Economic Base:

Agriculture was the primary pursuit of Ashfield residents. Local uplands were best suited for livestock grazing. Extensive commercial crop production was restricted to corn and oats. Several scattered mills operated in Ashfield during the Colonial Period; the first was a grist mill built in c. 1743 on the South River at the southern base of Mill Hill. This mill was followed by a sawmill and a gristmill erected on Bear River northeast of Beldingville in c. 1753 and 1762, respectively. Operation of a second sawmill located on the Swift River adjacent to its junction with Spruce Corner Road was begun in c. 1769 by Daniel Williams. At least three taverns served local residents and travellers during this period. The first was established by Joseph Mitchell in c. 1769 by Daniel Williams. At least three taverns served local residents and travellers during this period. The first was established by Joseph Mitchell in c. 1763 and located in Beldingville. A second tavern was opened in c. 1767 on the site of the Moses Cook House. The third operation was established by Timothy Perkins prior to 1773 and was situated in the village of Ashfield.

E. Architecture:

Although a number of buildings are known to have been built before 1775, only one has survived. The number of structures known to have been built suggest that the community was relatively active and strong during the last decade of the period. In addition to the building of the first parish meetinghouse in 1766, three taverns--the Joseph Mitchell Tavern (1763) and two others--operated in the period. Three schoolhouses were also constructed in 1722. In 1761, two years before organization of the Congregational Church, a Baptist Society was formed. Houses of the period are presumed to have been small one or two story structures either with center chimney plans or in the case of half houses, with end chimneys. The only known surviving building of the period is the Ebenezer Belding Cottage (ca. 1760), a center chimney structure with a gambrel roof; the gambrel may possibly date from a late 19th century Stick style remodelling which added incised cornice boards and dormers. Other early structures would be most likely to survive at Baptist Corner and Beldingville on Phillips and Bellus Roads.

F. Observations:

Ashfield underwent some of the most extensive post French and Indian War growth of any of the Connecticut River Valley study unit western upland settlements. The community had one of the largest numbers of mill operations within this sub-region of the study unit. Ashfield's Baptist Church was one of the earliest established in the Connecticut River Valley unit. The lack of any other organized Baptist churches in adjoining communities such as Conway and Buckland suggests the Ashfield church served Baptists scattered about these town. Future research should examine the relations between the town's Baptists and the original Scotch-Irish settlers. Existing secondary sources virtually ignore this aspect of the community. The continued rural nature of Ashfield points to the probability of considerable archaeological remains of the Colonial Period settlement.

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

A. Transportation Routes:

Improvement of east-west axis through Ashfield enter as Main Street from Conway (Route 116) and extension west as Hawley Road (1826: Howe, 1912, p. 110). Local connectors maintained from Baptist Corner to Ashfield Center and to Spruce Corner and Watson.

B. Population:

Ashfield's population grew by 132.3% between 1776 and 1790, sharing with Conway an unprecedented growth rate in this early period. Only Colrain had a greater rate of growth. The town's population peaked in 1810 at 1,809, beginning in that year a gradual decline which lasted for 120 years. The town's rate of growth 1790-1830 therefore, 18.7 %, was about average for the hill

towns of Hampshire County, like Chesterfield (19.6%) or Middlefield (18.4%). In 1830 Ashfield's population stood at 1,732.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Civic focus remained on Mill Hill with development of commercial activities around Great Pond mill site on Main Street (Route 116) and Sanderson Academy on North Hill (1816) at Ashfield Center. Secondary civic focus maintained at Baptist Corner with development of outlying farm villages at South Ashfield Center. Secondary civic focus maintained at Baptist Corner with development of outlying farm villages at South Ashfield on Creamery Brook, Spruce Corner on Swift River and Watson on the Country Road. Upland farming expanded to limits of highland agriculture with axis between South Ashfield and Ashfield Center.

D. Economic Base:

Predominantly agricultural economy with small saw and grist mills. Small one-man tanning operations also established for local needs. The largest operation recorded in 1832 was Thomas White's axe and hoe shop. Probably by the late 1820's small woodworking shops were producing broom handles for Hadley, Hatfield, and other river towns. Joseph Griswold is said to have introduced here the making of sash, doors, and blinds by machinery. About age 20 he made a trip to Detroit where woodworking machinery for the purpose had been established. So fascinated was he that on his return to Massachusetts he started a small plant in Ashfield. Griswold stayed only a short time in Ashfield, however, before moving to Buckland, and finally to what became Griswoldville in Colrain in 1828.

Agriculturally the soil made good grazing land with some large dairies and fine flocks of sheep reported by the 1840's.

E. Architecture:

Residential: In the Federal period, areas of settlement became well defined at South Ashfield, Ashfield, Spruce Corner, Watson and Baptist Corner. In those areas, and also along the town's major roads (Main and Cape streets, Hawley, Buckland and Baptist Corner Roads), a number of two-story houses of varying elaboration were built. Approximately two dozen of these survive. In addition to these, some two dozen cottages were also observed. The majority of the houses are end of double interior chimney, center hall plan structures, indicating a peak of residential construction after 1800. Among the most ornately detailed center hall Federal construction after 1800. Among the most ornately detailed center hall Federal houses are several houses on Main Street at the town center which incorporated second-story Palladian windows and wide entrance surrounds with double pilasters flanking sidelights and supporting a straight entablature. Frame construction predominated but town end chimney brick houses of the period were observed, one on Main Street at South Ashfield and the other at Spruce Corner. Probably among the earliest houses surviving in the town are several structures on

Spruce Corner Road, just south of the town center. These are a center chimney cottage and a center chimney house with Georgian details including pediments. One other house with Georgian details, a center hall structure, was observed on Main Street at South Ashfield. While center chimney cottages were built in some numbers with examples noted along Buckland, Williamsbury, Spruce and Baptist Corner Roads and Main Street, by the end of the period, end chimney plan cottages with gable roofs and five-bay center entrance facades predominated in the town. The majority of the period's extant cottages are of this plan, which probably remained current from ca. 1820 through the 1840's. Houses for which construction dates are known include the Ephraim Williams House (1800) and the Enos Smith House (1800).

Institutional: Two buildings of considerable architectural significance were built in the period, along with several other lesser structures. The present Town Hall was constructed as the town's second meetinghouse in 1812. The building is a well-developed example of the Federal meetinghouse form, with a shallow two-story porch with triple entrances fronting the standard two-and-a-half story auditorium. Of outstanding quality is the church's steeple, with a square base supporting open and closed octagonal stages surmounted by a bell cast dome. The church was the last work of Buckland builder, Colonel John Ames. Also of note is Saint John's Episcopal Church, built in 1829. A two-story gable roofed structure with a square belfry with pinnacles, the church features the Gothic pointed arched windows which typified early Episcopal churches. The parish, founded in 1820, is one of the oldest Episcopal parishes in the region. Other buildings of the period are the Sanderson Academy (1816) a portion of which survives in a house on Main Street, and a brick schoolhouse (1800) at South Ashfield, completely round in plan, which survived as part of the Frederick Hillman House, at least until 1965. A second Baptist Society was founded in 1814 and a library association organized in 1815.

Commercial: At least four taverns operated in the period, of which one was the Field Tavern (1792).

VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830-1870)

A. Transportation Routes:

Local axis to Ashfield Center remained as Main Street (Route 116) from Conway with north-south connectors to Buckland and Goshen. Attempted north-south railroad route proposed from Cummington (1867) to Ashfield Center and Buckland never realized (Howe, 1912, p. 135).

B. Population:

Like the majority of towns in the county, Ashfield's population continued to decline. Between 1830 and 1870 the town lost nearly a third of its population, with the greatest loss occurring in the single decade 1840-1850.

In 1885 Ashfield had 15 foreign born residents (1.1 %, a negligible amount) but more than many of the hill towns. Of the fifteen immigrants, eleven were from Ireland.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Ashfield Center continued as primary commercial and civic focus with relocation of meetinghouse from Mill Hill to Main Street (1856). Secondary commercial center maintained at South Ashfield with outlying agricultural villages at Baptist Corner (NE), Spruce Corner (SE) and Watson (NW). Farming remained primary activity of uplands between South Ashfield and town center with highland districts at Watson and Baptist Corner. Gradual development of summer resort after Civil War with Norton estate (1867) on North Hill above town center.

D. Economic Base:

Economy remained predominantly agricultural, though with an expanding industry in small woodworking shops. By 1855, there were 14 sawmills plus small shops for making broom handles, planes, wooden faucets, surgical splints, and "yankee notions" (mincing knives, pill boxes, etc.). Other small shops included a pottery (Hasting and Belding), employing four persons, and which with a product value of \$4950, represented the largest value of any industry in 1855. Large numbers of housewives that year worked in the home industry of shirts and collars, work put out by Selden & Perkins, Behement and Belding to 38 women. (ten years earlier the business had reported a product worth \$12,000)--much the largest reported product value of any products value of any industry in town.) Sixty women made palm-leaf hats at home.

But it was in agricultural products that Ashfield excelled in this period. For most of the period Ashfield was the leading wool producing town in the county. The tariff of 1828 had brought about a tremendous demand for fine wool, only a third of which could be supplied by existing flocks of the state. A craze developed for raising the Saxony and Merino Breeds of sheep. Although most of the towns in Franklin County reported small quantities of Merino wool in the 1830s, Ashfield reported a total clip of Merino wool i(in 1836) of 24,063 pounds--23 % of the entire county production that year and twice the quantity of her nearest competitor, Colrain. Through the early 1840's the wool growing industry continued to prosper. In 1845, the town Merino clip, though down numerically, now represented a third of the county total. After 1846, however, the business in the region as a whole declined. The tariff of that year reduced the duty on imported woolens, and new fancy worsteds from England began to replace boardcloths in popularity. Nevertheless, Ashfield wool continued to lead the county production. As late as 1865, the town reported 17,445 pounds.

Ashfield, like several of the hill towns, was also a major producer of butter and cheese. In 1855, with 80,150 pounds of butter, it was the leading butter producer in the county, followed by Buckland and Deerfield.

E. Architecture:

Residential: The prosperity of the Federal period seems to have continued into the first half of the early Industrial period, to judge by the number of Greek Revival houses and cottages extant in the town. Most of these are fairly conservative with end and double chimney, center hall plan types predominating. The number of sidehall plan houses and cottages is relatively small. Five bay facades with center entrances are most common. A few houses with double facade gables were observed including a Main Street house with two story projecting gabled bays on the facade (this house is said to incorporate a portion of the 1816 Sanderson Academy). Greek Revival cottages and houses were observed at the town center, South Ashfield, Watson and Spruce Corner as well as on Hawley, Bear Swamp and Watson Corner Roads. Notable structures included the end chimney Elias Gray cottage (c. 1830), the town's only stone house. Comparatively few houses post-dating 1850 were observed; of those noted, most employed center entrance five bay plans or sidehall plans with ells.

Institutional: Major institutional buildings of the period include the present Congregational Church (1856) and the Sanderson Academy (1853-1938). The church is well-detailed two-and-a-half story Greek Revival structure with a Doric portico in antix and a three stage steeple including an octagonal belfry. Since 1856, the town's 1812 meetinghouse has been used as the town hall. As it now stands, the Sanderson Academy exhibits utilitarian Colonial Revival elements apparently dating from a rebuilding after a 1938 fire. As constructed, however, the building was a hip roofed structure with a five bay facade and three bay frontispiece with pediment, quoins and a recessed porch. Other lesser institutional structures are a one-story side entered school at Watson and a center entrance Greek Revival school at South Ashfield. The present Baptist church was organized in 1867. Methodist and Universalist Societies of 1830 and 1831 were shortlived.

Commercial: Several stores of the period survive at the town center including the Crafts Store (1835), a two-story Greek Revival building with two-story gable front building with a later clipped gable roof; both stores exhibit the standard center entrance commercial plan. Also of the period are an Italianate store at South Ashfield and the Cross Tavern (1830), remodelled in 1889 and again in 1943, but still exhibiting some aspects of its original ten-bay-long facade.

IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)

A. Transportation Route:

Ashfield Center remained the focus of the local highway system with east-west connections to Conway from Ashfield Center (Route 116 axis). No railroads or trolley lines constructed through area.

B. Population:

Ashfield's population fluctuated between 1180 and 955, occassionally gaining small numbers of new residents. By 1915, the town had lost only 186 people--15 percent of its 1870 population. Ashfield's foreign born population rose to 7.7% by 1905; though this was made up of a variety of nationalities, Ireland, with 14, predominating.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Ashfield Center remained the focus of civic and commerical activity with development along Main Street (Route 116) to Ashfield Pond and summer estates on North Hill. Secondary villages maintained at South Ashfield and Spruce Corner with outlying farm hamlets at Baptist Corner and Watson. Dairy farming remained as primary activity on uplands from South Ashfield to town center.

D. Economic Base:

By the 1870's much of Ashfield's limited woodworking diversity was already declining. In 1875 the town ranked 22nd among the 26 towns in the county in terms of the total value of its manufactured products that year. In 1878, a flood caused by the breaking of the Great Pond Dam swept through Ashfield Plains and South Ashfield causing considerable destruction. It was reported a "staggering blow to the town's economy" (Ashfield Bicentennial), though it seems likely that many of the shops were already on the wane. In the last decade of the century two shops were begun which in the succeeding period would become major fixtures in the town's industrial economy: in 1892 George Thayer began a shop making apple barrels (later wooden handles), and eight years later Thayer & Harmon began making handles at another shop.

Dairy products remained the major feature of the Late Industrial economy. In 1880 the town reported 121,494 pounds of butter, placing it third among the county towns in butter production. The Ashfield Co-operative Creamery established that year had its peak in 1912 when it produce 797,000 lbs of butter.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Very little residential construction took place except at the town center, where several summer houses and a few other houses were built. Residential construction outlying the town center generally consists of modest and conservative cottages with gable roofs and side or center entered four or five bay wide fronts. Houses at the town center include several Queen Anne, Colonial Revival and Stick Style structure, either with sidehall or center entrance facades and elaborate one-story porches, towers or polygonal bays. Most of these are located on Main Street. Smaller sidehall plan Queen Anne cottages were built on Buckland Road at Ashfield Lake.

Institutional: The most outstanding institutional building of the period is the Belting Library of 1913-1914, designed by Samuel M. Green of Springfield. It is a granite neoclassical structure with a hipped roof. Also built in the period was the William Turnbull Library (1904) at South Ashfield, a small hip roof Colonial Revival structure. Of the fourteen school districts active in 1879, only 9 remained operational in 1910. In 1886, the 1828 Baptist meetinghouse from Buckland was moved to Ashfield and used by the Baptists of Ashfield until 1914, when it was purchased for a Grange Hall.

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915-1940)

A. Transportation Routes:

Improvement of local highways as auto roads with secondary east-west Route 116 from Conway to Ashfield Center, including original early concrete bridges at South Ashfield (1916). Connecting north-south Route 112 from Williamsburg to Shelburne Falls located through Spruce Corner Ashfield Center and north as Ashfield Pond Road to Buckland.

B. Population:

The town's recorded a net loss of 122 residents during the period, though small gains were made in the early 20's and 30's. The town reached it nadir in 1930 with 1860 people. By 1940, the population stood at 872.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Civic and commercial activities remained at Ashfield Center with the focus along Main Street axis (Route 116). Summer estates continued to expand on scenic hills above town center with cottages around Ashfield Pond. Secondary villages remained along Route 116 at South Ashfield and Spruce Corner with farming hamlets at Baptist Corner and Watson.

D. Economic Base:

The wooden products industry had an unusual longevity in Ashfield. Both mills established in the period 1892-1900 were taken over by outside hardware concerns in 1915-17, which as suppliers of hardware handles to Stanley Rule and Level Co., and with the Mayhew Steel Products Co., of Shelburne Falls, prospered for much of the period.

Ashfield's creamery closed in 1927. H.P.Hood & Sons had opened a milk station at Shelburne Falls about 1918, and farmers increasingly found it more profitable to sell their whole milk there. Butter shipped from the west also increasingly cut into the creamery's market.

E. Architecture:

Residential: A fair amount of residential construction took place around the town center in the 1920's as Ashfield developed as a summer resort. In addition to the small, very modest, one-story frame cottages built along the shore of Ashfield Lake, pyramidal hip roof Colonial Revival houses and several shingled Craftsman cottages and houses were built on Main street and on Spruce Corner Road above the town center.

Institutional: District elementary schools were consolidated in 1939 and were housed, along with the high school (after the burning of the Sanderson Academy in 1938) in a \$61,500 school building built by the George H. Reed Company of Greenfield.

Commercial: A frame one-story garage with a stepped false front was built at the town center in the 1920's. Also, additions were made to the Cross tavern (now Ashfield Rest Home) in 1943.

XI. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

General: There is no inventory for Ashfield. Future survey efforts should document all villages, including Baptist Corner, South Ashfield, Ashfield Center, Spruce Corner and Watson. Of particular note are the well-preserved character of the town's Main Street with institutional, residential and commercial structures of considerable architectural quality and the town's collection of Federal and early Industrial residences which includes well-detailed buildings in Georgian, Federal and Greek Revival styles.

XII. SOURCES

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