

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

ATHOL

Report Date: 1984

Associated Regional Report: Central 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.

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MHC RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

DATE: 1984

COMMUNITY: Athol

I. TOPOGRAPHY

II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

"Six-mile square," Payquage plantation is granted in 1733, including part of Zachariah Field Indian purchase of 1720. Established as town of Athol in 1762. Northwest corner is included in district of Orange in 1783. Large eastern tract is included in new town of Gerry (Phillipston after 1814) in 1786, with border adjustment in 1806. Small parts are annexed to Royalston in the northeast along the Millers River corridor in 1799 and 1803. Part of Orange is annexed in 1816. Sections of New Salem are annexed in the southwest in 1830 and 1837.

III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Athol is an urban-industrial center on the Millers River corridor, located along historic highland routes to the upper Connecticut River Valley. Native settlements reputedly existed on the Millers River floodplain near the Tully Brook confluence. Permanent European settlement of Payquage Plantation took place ca. 1735, primarily by Connecticut Valley residents, with some Scots-Irish settlers, and early concentrations developed in the northwest (now mostly Orange) and south-central highlands. The original meetinghouse site was established by Mill Brook by 1737, but a new house is built to the southeast on Pleasant Street in 1741. Payquage remained a garrisoned, frontier community through the French War, with a local fatality from a native attack in 1746. Dispersed upland agricultural settlement followed the cessation of hostilities, with sufficient population for incorporation as Athol in 1762. Meetinghouse site was relocated north in 1773.

A linear, turnpike village developed at the meetinghouse center in the early 19th century, while waterpower sites were subsequently utilized to the northwest on Mill Brook and Millers River to power textile, paper, wood, and iron manufacturing. The meetinghouse center remained the primary focus until the mid 19th century, when railroad connections along the Millers River corridor made the Depot Center in the valley the business and manufacturing focus. The boot and shoe industry assumed major importance, followed by significant developments in the machine tool industry in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Several small textile manufacturing hamlets developed along several tributary streams during the Civil War, and South Athol grew as a small wood products center. Significant late 19th century expansion occurred in the Depot Center, with multistory, brick commercial blocks along Main Street, and residential neighborhood expansion out of the valley and into the highlands to the north and south, where speculative tracts of single- and multifamily houses were built.

By the 1920s, civic and institutional activities had shifted location to the valley downtown area.

A declining industrial base and suburban shopping mall development have led to deterioration and abandonment in the central urban core, although landmark industrial complexes, and the 1895 Pequog Hotel, survive. Functional agricultural landscapes with late 18th and early 19th century farmhouses remain in use on West Hill and Chestnut Hill in the north, but highland suburban residential development continues to threaten existing rural landscapes. Postwar Route 2 (limited access) corridor development has also had an impact on the southern half of town. A good variety of 19th and early 20th century urban and suburban residential neighborhoods survive in and around the central area, with some district potential, and the hilltop Athol Center retains much of its mid 19th century character.

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500-1620)

A. Transportation Routes

Highland tributary area on Millers River corridor. North/south trail from Nichewaug (Petersham) conjectured as Doe Valley Road-Pleasant Street-Main Street to Millers River crossing, with three alternate routes north: Pinedale Avenue, Royalston Road-Old Keene Road, and Royalston Road. Western Millers River trail conjectured as Brookside Road-South Main Street. with northern highland branch west of Tully River (North Orange Road-Brooks Road-Athol Road). Southwest trail conjectured as South Athol Road with west branch on Partridgeville Road-Daniel Shays Highway. Eastern trail inferred as Mohawk Road.

B. Settlement Pattern

The area now Athol was part of the area controlled by the Squakeag, the southernmost group of the Western Abenaki; the settlement focused in the area now Northfield to the west. From this large village, this area was visited by small groups for brief periods. Occupation sites might have been located near the Millers and other rivers, Whites Pond, Lake Rohunta, South Athol Pond, and Lake Ellis in the south, as well as the many brooks.

C. Subsistence Pattern

This area was visited seasonally from the base camp to the west by small family and task groups, primarily for hunting and fishing.

V. PLANTATION PERIOD (1620-1675)

A. Transportation Routes

Established trails continued in use.

B. Settlement Pattern

The pattern established during the Contact period was somewhat modified by trading with colonials in the area during this period. Through their relationship with the more northern Sokoki, the Squakeags were influenced by the French, and ca. 1663 may have begun their northern migration.

C. Subsistence Pattern

Some shift in seasonal activities expected with introduction and growing dependence on fur trade with colonials.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

A. Transportation Routes

Earlier native trails are improved as roads to highland agricultural settlements, and by period's end a radial pattern of roads is established from the East Hill/meetinghouse area to outlying farms and surrounding communities. Early roads leading from the Connecticut River Valley settlements to the southwest area Partridgeville Road-South Athol Road-Chestnut Street along the Millers River-Mill Brook corridor, and Twitchell Road-Batchelder Road north of White Pond. Both lead to the East Hill settlement along Pleasant Street. Other period roads include the route north over Chestnut Hill to Royalston on Chestnut Hill Road-Royalston Road, northwest to Warwick (Roxbury Canada) on School Street-Main Street-North Orange Road, east to Templeton Narragansett Number Six) on Main Street-Petersham Road-abandoned way east, and south to Petersham on Pleasant Street-Doe Valley Road.

B. Population

Sales of Squakeag lands to the west in 1682, and within the town in 1720, are secondary evidence of the Squakeag removal to the north.

The town's first five colonial family heads came in 1735 from Hatfield; three years later there were 25 men; by 1750 there were 20 families and five single men in the eastern settlement and six families in Orange to the west. The total population equalled 359 in 1765, but no figure is available for 1776. Most of the proprietors came from towns east of Worcester County (12), followed by county residents (9), and Connecticut Valley settlers (6); settlers came in similar proportions.

The church was not formed until 1750. Premier Baptist leader Isaac Backus visited the town in 1768, and a minister was installed in 1770.

C. Settlement Pattern

The area now Athol was laid out in 1732 as a six-mile-square town, including parts of the present towns of Orange, Phillipston, and Royalston. The land had been purchased from Pampanoot to Capt. Zachariah Field in 1720. The land was divided among proprietors first in 1734, when houselots of 50 acres were divided into two groups; 33 were placed on East Pequog Hill near Mill Brook and Pleasant Street, and the remaining 30 were located on West Pequog Hill, now in Orange. Divisions of the common lands continued through the 18th and into the first quarter of the 19th century. The town's first meetinghouse was located on eight acres with the burying ground on the north bank of Mill Brook, but after it burned the new building was located in the eastern settlement area. Three garrisons or fortified houses were located near this meetinghouse, in the lower village near the Pequog House, and on West Hill in Orange. More population came to the eastern, present Athol, segment of the original grant to establish their dispersed farmsteads.

D. Economic Base

Like so many northern Worcester County towns, Athol is classified by Pruitt as a Poor Agrarian Town for 1771. In spite of moderate corn production, the town ranked low on agrarian prosperity and high on poverty; low commercial development and community wealth area accompanied by very low propertylessness. The town voted early to establish saw (1736) and grist (1737) mills, but it is not clear if or where these were located; by 1760 a gristmill was located on the Millers River near Freedom Street.

E. Architecture

Residential: Few apparent survivals from this period. One house dated 1746. Most are single-story, center chimney plans. One two-story, five-bay, center chimney plan is recorded.

Institutional: First meetinghouse of log completed ca. 1741. This burned and was replaced, but date of second building is unknown. However, repairs to the second meetinghouse were made in 1769. Third meetinghouse was built on the common at the Upper Village in 1773 (46 x 56 feet).

Town voted to build two schools (16 x 18 feet) in 1766. Four more schoolhouses were constructed in 1770.

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

A. Transportation Routes

Colonial highways continue in use, and several turnpike routes are put into operation, making Athol Village a significant regional transportation center. The Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike is opened in 1800 on Templeton Road-Main Street-Chestnut Street-South Athol Road-and an abandoned road to the Millers River crossing and South

Main Street. A northwest branch is also established to Northfield from Athol Village. At first this follows Main Street-School Street, crosses the Millers River, continues along Pinedale Street, and crosses Tully River to North Orange Road-Brooks Road. After 1815, however, the route is changed to extend west along Main Street, and cross to North Orange Road west of Tully River. A third turnpike is established south from Athol Village in 1809. The Petersham, Greenwich, and Monson Turnpike, financed by Norwich, Connecticut capital, runs along Pleasant Street-New Sherborn Road. Old Keene road, directed north from the Millers River, is also improved as a turnpike during the period. A new road is also laid out to Petersham (Petersham Road-Vaughn Road) from the Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike.

B. Population

Athol's population grew steadily during this period, from 848 in 1775 to 1,325 in 1830. The First Parish Church suffered internal disagreement over the minister's salary and taxes, leading to his dismissal in 1782; the formation of the town of Orange is related to this split. After a five-year period without a minister, the parish called a liberal as its second minister. By the period's end, the difficulty of selecting a minister who will please church and parish, and exchange pulpits with neighboring pastors, causes the withdrawal of the minority to form the Evangelical Congregational church in 1830. Baptists continued in the town during this period though meeting in Royalston; in 1810 the town became a branch of the Templeton church. Methodists made the town part of a circuit early, and members attended in Orange from 1802. A Masonic Lodge was formed in 1803. Students attended select schools and academies in neighboring towns until the establishment of Athol Academy in 1838. A poor farm was established in 1829.

C. Settlement Pattern

Dispersed, upland, agricultural settlement continued, as a village developed along Main Street, and an industrial focus emerged to the northwest along the Millers River Valley. A small commercial-residential center developed near the 1773 meetinghouse after 1800, as the area became the focus of several turnpike routes. The fourth Congregational meetinghouse, built in 1838 after the 1773 structure burned, is relocated to the north on Main Street. The Baptist church (also 1828) is located on Main Street just east of the common. Between these two churches, residential development on Main Street continues. At the Millers River/Mill Brook area, industrial activity intensifies in the early 19th century, as a paper mill (1810) is added on Freedom Street, a cotton mill (1814) is located further east on the north side of Millers River, and a scythe shop (1815) is erected. Elsewhere, dispersed agricultural settlement was most intensive along Pleasant Street south of the village, and on Chestnut Hill north of the Millers River.

D. Economic Base

Agriculture: A very high percentage of the town was unimproved or woodlot in 1784, 81.3%, and an additional 4.5% was classified as unimprovable. A comparatively low amount, 1.4%, was under tillage, with moderate amounts in meadow and mowing land, 5.5%, and pasturage, 7.2%.

E. Architecture

Residential: Predominant surviving house form appears to be the two-story, five-bay, double chimney plan with small number of hipped roof examples. Lesser numbers of two-story, center chimney plans. Center chimney, single-story houses noted as well as a one-story, five-bay, double chimney house. A two-story, nine-bay, hipped roof, double house stands on the common at the Upper Village. Two rearwall chimney houses are recorded.

Institutional: The third meetinghouse (1773) burned in 1827. The fourth meetinghouse (1828) was remodelled in 1847 to accommodate better the town hall which was on the second floor. The building is now a two-story, gable end structure with an advanced three-bay section with pilasters, three roundarched doorways, and a square tower with cupola. Services were discontinued in 1901; the congregation merged with Second Unitarian and sold the building to the city. From 1921-57, it was the Woman's Club building. Since 1957 it has housed the Athol Historical Society. A Baptist church was also built on the upper common in 1928. The building was subsequently purchased by the Roman Catholics in 1853 and by the end of the 19th century it was being used as a residence.

Commercial: In 1830, the Pequog House, formerly a private dwelling, was opened as a hotel and presumably operated until the Pequog Hotel was built in 1894.

Industrial: S. L. Morse Manufacturing and Curry Shop is recorded as having been built in 1827, converted into the center school ca. 1850. With the later addition of a second story, it became a dwelling.

VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830-1870)

A. Transportation Routes

Service on the Vermont and Massachusetts Railroad along the Millers River corridor through the north part of town is established in 1848, with connections north to Brattleboro in 1849.

B. Population

Athol's rate of population growth accelerated during this period, the total more than doubling during the forty years. From a total of 1,325 in 1830 the town grew to 3,517 by 1870, with the largest jump, over 700, occurring during the last five years. A large portion of this growth is due to the expansion of manufacturing in

the town. While agricultural employment remained steady at ca. 175 males, manufacturing exploded, from 80 men in 1840 to 766 in 1875. With this came foreign-born immigrants to the town and as in most towns, the Irish came first and dominated at this time; this group did not expand as quickly as the town total, however, and dropped from 8.4% in 1855 to 6.5% ten years later.

The Congregational societies remained constant during this period, but the denominational proliferation that began late in the Federal period continued. The Methodists became stronger, forming a second society in 1851. The Millerite movement found adherents in the town in the 1840s, drawing membership from Congregationalists and Baptists, and surviving the failure of the arrival of the last day to organize a society in 1863. Some former Millerites formed a communal organization in the town between 1861 and their removal to Petersham in 1864. As immigration brought ethnic diversity to the town, a Roman Catholic Church, St. Catherine's, was formed in 1855, and an Episcopal Congregation, St. John's, in 1866. The revived Baptists reorganized in 1867.

In ca. 1840 a Library was formed in the Depot Village, supplementing those in the district schools. Consideration of establishment of a high school resulted in a recommendation for one in 1853, required by population size by 1855, and location debated in 1856; school districts were abolished in 1868. A Young Men's Christian Association was formed in 1859. Just the year before an Agricultural and Mechanical Society was formed, which was incorporated as the Worcester Northwest in 1867. After the anti-Masonic scare early in the period, several such groups were formed in the 1860s.

C. Settlement Pattern

Growth continues at the Meetinghouse Center, but the focus of development shifts to the manufacturing concentration at the Depot Village after the 1847 rail connection, as industrial activity intensifies along the Mill Brook and Millers River corridors. Elsewhere, smaller scale manufacturing clusters develop at a number of dispersed waterpower sites.

At Athol Village, institutional, commercial, and residential development continues in the first half of the period. The Evangelical Church (1833) is located south of the Unitarian Meetinghouse at the Main Chestnut intersection, which continues to develop as a commercial focus. The Second Baptist Church (1847) is located further east on Main Street at Summer Street. This becomes the Catholic Church in 1856. Industrial development extends from Main Street west along the Mill Brook/Chestnut Street corridor. Intensive linear residential development extends along Main Street from the Unitarian Church southeast beyond Bearsden Road. Residential growth extends west of Main Street on Liberty, Central, and Tremont to High Street. Less intensive development extends to the east in the Grove/Summer Street area. To the south, houses are built on Pleasant, Spring, and Kelton Streets.

The Worcester Northwest Agricultural Fairgrounds (1867) are located to the east on the north shore of Lake Ellis.

Industrial development intensifies along the Millers River corridor northwest of the Center, and by period's end the Depot Village along Main Street has grown to rival the Center as the town's commercial and residential focus. Various manufacturing activities (including textile, boot, machine tool, wood, and paper production) locate along the river between River Street and Main Street in the east, and between Main Street and South Street to the west. Exchange Street, linking Main Street to the Vermont and Massachusetts Railroad depot, becomes the main commercial focus. The Third Baptist church (1849) locates just to the northwest at the Walnut/Church intersection, and the Methodist Church (1861) is built to the east at the Main/River intersection. The high school is located further east on School Street near Main, a location about midway between the Depot and the Center. Residential development concentrates on Main Street east of Canal Street to the railroad, and a residential area is opened to the north ca. 1850 on Walnut, Union, and Church. The Irish immigrant labor force concentrates in the southwest on South Street west of Freedom Street. Residential development extends east on South and Travers Street past the depot. South of the railroad corridor, settlement extends south on Cottage Street and east in the School Street/Main Street area. North of the river, some houses are built along River Street.

A small hamlet develops on the southwest at South Athol, where a Methodist Church is built in 1834, and some woodworking industry develops. Small industrial settlements also develop at Partridgeville near the western border and at Pinedale and Tully Mill along the Tully River in the north.

D. Economic Base

E. Architecture

Residential: The traditional, two-story, five-bay house forms continue to be built. In the center, the "Upper Village" contains the older, traditional buildings, while the "Lower Village" is mid- to late-19th century and early 20th century in character. Greek Revival, gable end, side-passage (three-bay) and center entry (five-bay) houses survive, including a temple front house. Later period dwellings comprise the largest percentage of remaining houses. These are primarily gable end, side-passage plans with Italianate and Second Empire detail, many with monitors. Both side-passage and center entry mansard roofed, Second Empire popular dwellings remain throughout the "lower" end of the center as well.

Institutional: The Evangelical Congregational church was built on the common at the "Upper Village" in 1833. The building was raised and a spire added to it in 1859. The Italianate brick building has a center entry in a rusticated ground floor, quoins, with a projecting central pavillion with pilasters, raised arched

windows with labels, and a modillioned cornice. The South Athol Methodist church was built in 1836 and is now a gable end structure with two entrances and a short, square tower. The Baptists built a second church in the "Lower Village" in 1849. The building was remodelled in the Romanesque style in 1886. In 1861, a Methodist church was built in the center and stood on the corner of River and Main Streets where factories are now located. The 1828 Baptist church building was purchased by the Roman Catholics in 1853.

The first high school building (1856) was a two-story, three-bay, gable end Greek Revival structure with roundarched windows and doors on the main facade.

IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)

A. Transportation Routes

In 1873, the Athol and Enfield Railroad (later extended to Springfield) opens service from the Village south through South Athol. In 1894, electric streetcar service extends west from the Center to Orange and east to the Fair Grounds (Main Street-School Street-Main Street-South Main Street). In 1900, service was extended east through Phillipston and Templeton to Gardner (Main Street-Mohawk Road).

B. Population

The rate of population growth in Athol accelerated even further during this period, nearly tripling over 45 years. From a figure of 3,517 in 1870, the town grew to 9,783 in 1915; large increases occurred between 1885 and 1890 of over 1,500, and 1905 and 1910, nearly 1,400; there was a loss of ca. 300 between 1895 and 1900. Again, agricultural employment remained constant, while manufacturing continued to grow, from 766 males in 1875 to 1,349 in 1905, and 2,013 in 1915; the number of females similarly employed also grew, from 178 to 398 to 463 during those years, the latter accounting for half those working outside the home. The foreign-born portion of the population also grew, though not apace with the total expansion of population or manufacturing, from 8.4% in 1875 to 19.9% in 1915. The most significant growth here occurred with the large influx of Canadians, the French outnumbering the Irish by 1895, but by 1905 they were in turn outnumbered by English Canadians. Other important groups included the Italians, and later the Russians and Poles.

As the population expanded, a second Unitarian society was formed in 1877, but by 1901 the two united. After their revival in the late 1860s the Baptists continued to expand. Christian Scientists met in the town from 1898, and formed a society a year later. In 1903 a Seventh-Day Adventist group began to meet in the town. The Roman Catholics became the parish of Our Lady Immaculate in 1904; Polish Catholics began separate services in 1913. The town's Jewish residents formed the Temple Israel in 1910.

Not surprising, the number of voluntary associations grew with the population to accommodate the groups within an increasingly diverse population. The Agricultural Society was supplemented by the Grange in 1889; among factory workers the United Workmen provided mutual insurance; philanthropic activities were taken up by Associated Charities in 1903, and the Salvation Army a year later; businessmen formed the Board of Trade in 1872; leisure activities were organized in the Reform Club in 1875, the Odd Fellows in 1884, the Sportsmen in 1892, and the Knights of Columbus in 1907. The Women's Christian Temperance Union organized in 1876, and a Women's Club was founded in 1900; a library association was organized in 1878, and became the town's free and public library four years later; a secret society, the American Protective Association, was formed in 1894.

The town's schools were graded in 1875. In South Athol, the Morgan Memorial established a community with industrial work for the needy in 1907.

C. Settlement Pattern

The Depot Village continued to expand, as industrial development intensified along the Millers River corridor, and a regional commercial center grew around the Main Street/Exchange Street focus. New speculative residential neighborhoods of single-family and multifamily housing extended onto the highlands north and south of the river in the 1880s and 1890s, and began to fill in by the end of the period. To the south, these coalesced with the Center Village to form a continuous, extended urban area.

Development continued in the industrial zone south of Main Street and north of the railroad corridor. The most significant industrial growth, however, occurred on the Millers River corridor east of the Chestnut Street crossing, where major machine tool manufacturing facilities area located in the 1880s and the early 20th century. The Main/Exchange area continued as a commercial focus. Commercial infill and replacement, including the landmark 1894 Pequog Hotel, occurred on both Main Street and Exchange Street. The Second Unitarian Church (1880-81) located on Main east of Exchange.

Residential development extended on Main Street from west of the river crossing to the railroad in the east. To the north of Main Street, new residential areas were opened up north of Maple Street and around the "common" (Rindge Street, Newton Street), and east of Exchange Street on Marble Street. By the 1880s residential growth expanded north of the river as residential areas were built east, south, and west of Silver Lake. To the east, residential infill occurred on Chestnut Street and extended north on Chestnut Hill Avenue. South of the lake, the "Lake Park" area is opened along the Wallingford and Qequoid Avenue. To the west the "Intervale" neighborhood is established along Pinedale Avenue on Lenox and Twitchell Streets.

South of Main Street, worker housing is built along the industrial corridor, particularly along South Street south of the ponds. At the west end of Main Street, the "Hillside" neighborhood was laid out on Mount Pleasant.

South of the railroad corridor, extensive residential expansion occurred as far south as Chestnut Street, west of Main Street, and east of the mill pond. Industrial activity continued along the Mill Brook corridor. A new institutional focus develops west of Main Street, with St. John's Episcopal Church (1890) at Park Avenue/School Street, the new High School (1892) on School Street, and Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Church (1904) on Park Avenue.

East of High Street, residential infill continued, while a new area was developed to the west on Allen, Drury, Beacon, and Prospect south to Hapgood Road. Worker housing was built along the south side of Chestnut Street near the Goddard and Manning piano factory, and some extension occurred south of Chestnut along Cottage Street. West of Sanders Street, new residential areas (South Park, Pleasant Valley, Fairview) were laid out around the Lewis Sanders factory in the 1890s, and were developed in the early 20th century.

East of Main Street, a new development occurred on Green, Kennebuck, Highland, and Summer Streets. Intensive residential development extended on Main Street itself past the Center commercial focus along the streetcar line to the fairgrounds. In this direction, residential growth extended east of Pleasant Street in the Spring/Vine/Euclid Street area. Recreational cottages are built on the Ellis Lake islands.

D. Economic Base

E. Architecture

Residential: Houses are generally two-story, gable end, side-passage plans. Some Four Square houses and three deckers are also found in the Center. White Pond in the southwest part of town has some early 1900s cottages around the lake.

Institutional: The Second Advent Christian church was built in the Center in 1873. The building, a one-story, gable end Gothic design with a square corner tower, is now the Grange Hall. The Second Unitarian society completed its church building ca. 1880. It burned in 1912 and was replaced in 1915 with the present gable end brick and stucco Tudor Revival design. St. John's Episcopal church, a low, shingled, Arts and Crafts design, was completed in 1890. Construction began in 1884 on St. Catherine's Roman Catholic church, but the building apparently never advanced beyond a roof over a basement. In 1904, a new church, called Our Lady Immaculate, a late Gothic brick gable end structure with buttresses and a tower, was built.

Several schools were erected during the period: the 1887 Hapgood school, a two-story, three-bay, gable end facade badly

rehabilitated as apartments; the 1889 Main Street school, a two-story, square, brick Romanesque block with a hipped roof; the Highland School of 1890 which duplicated the Main Street School; the 1892 brick Romanesque high school; and the 1894 hipped roof, brick Romanesque Lake Park School. The Colonial Revival, brick Fuller Bigelow School was built in 1912.

The Colonial Revival brick YMCA was built ca. 1910. The Library, also a Colonial Revival design, was constructed at this time.

Commercial: The Pequog Hotel is an impressive four-story brick building with Ionic pilasters dividing the bays. The Millers River National Bank is a three-story, brick Romanesque building. The "Lower Village" section of the Center contains several late 19th century two- and three-story brick blocks with several one- and 1 1/2-story early 20th century commercial buildings.

The 1872 depot is a brick structure with an overhanging bracketted roof and a square tower.

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915-1940)

A. Transportation Routes

By the mid 1920s, the east/west Mohawk Trail auto corridor (old Route 7, then Route 2) is established through downtown Athol (Templeton Road-Main Street-South Main Street). North/south Route 122/32 from Petersham/Barre connects to the Mohawk Trail east of downtown (Petersham Road). In the late 1920s the road through South Athol to North Dana/Greenwich is improved as secondary Route 21 (South Athol Road). By the mid 1930s, new U. S. Route 202 (Daniel Shays Highway) connects southwest through New Salem to the Connecticut Valley. By 1940, a new Route 122 bypassed downtown Athol to connect with Route 202 to the west.

B. Population

for the first time since its founding, Athol's population growth slowed, though the total still increased from 9,783 in 1915 to 11,180 in 1940, with a short-term drop between 1920 and 1925 of nearly 200. Although manufacturing remained predominant, the total number of males employed, as operatives, craftsmen, and foremen fell by ca. 200 between 1915 and 1940; female employment as operatives increased by ca. 100, but decreased from ca. 50% to ca. 33% of the total of women working outside the home. Among the 15.7% foreign-born portion of the population in 1940, the French Canadians returned to the position of most numerous, followed by Lithuanians, English Canadians, and Italians. A Polish parish, St. Francis, was established at this time. More voluntary associations were formed, including the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1920, the Ku Klux Klan in 1921, the Forresters (Catholic) in 1922, the Rotary Club in 1925, and a Rod and Gun Club in 1927.

C. Settlement Pattern

Growth continues in and around the "Depot" Center as commercial and residential development continued, and the civic focus shifts to the valley. Residential growth continues in the northern and southern highlands.

North of the Millers River, development continues in the Intervale area northwest of Silver Lake, with linear extension north on Pinedale Avenue. To the west, additions are made between Silver Lake and Sportsman's Pond. To the east, infill occurs between Silver Lake Street and Crescent Hill Avenue (Royalston Road) and in the Goddard Street area. West of the river development on Mount Pleasant Street continued. In the southern highlands, growth continued to extend south in the South Park, Fairview, and Pleasant Valley areas, and along the Sanders Street/Cottage Street axes.

On Main Street, commercial development continues to intensify around the Main/Exchange intersection, and a new civic focus develops to the east, with a library (1918) and new town Hall (1924). The new Methodist Church (1918) and St. Francis Catholic Church (1920-21) also located in the Main Street area.

Outside the central area, recreational cottage development occurs in the southwest around White's Pond and on the eastern shore of Lake Rohunta.

D. Economic Base

E. Architecture

Residential: No significant development apparent. Four Square plans and some Dutch Colonial designs were noted in the Center. A two-story, brick and stucco Tudor Revival house indicates interest in popular period revivals. Some modest 1920s-30s housing exists north of the Center on Pinedale and Silver Lake roads. Starret Avenue on the east side of the Center is a small 1930s development that appears to have been planned. Three three-story stuccoed apartment buildings dating from the 1930s-40s are located in the Center.

Institutional: The Second Advent church erected a new frame church and meeting center on South Athol Road ca. 1920. The Lithuanian Catholic Church, a brick, gable end, Romanesque design with side aisles and a clerestory, was built in 1921. In 1948, the two-story, Colonial Revival Temple Israel was constructed.

An Art Deco high school was built at High and School Streets. The Lyman Ward School on Main Street was built in 1928. The Memorial Hall is a 1924 two-story, Colonial Revival building on Main Street.

The three-bay, brick Colonial Revival Masonic Temple appears to date from the late 1910s. The Morgan Memorial camp in South Athol appears to date from the 1920s and 30s.

Commercial: The Savings Bank is a "neo-Greek," stone building (1927?). The two-story York Building on Main Street is an Art Deco design. The Main Street Diner is located in the west end of the commercial block.

XI. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

The inventory could be strengthened in the areas of both domestic and public late 19th and 20th century buildings.

XII. SOURCES