

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

CHICOPEE

Report Date: 1982

Associated Regional Report: Connecticut Valley

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

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

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

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

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MHC RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

DATE: APRIL 1982

COMMUNITY: CHICOPEE

I. TOPOGRAPHY

Chicopee falls within the eastern portion of the Connecticut River valley. The westernmost portion of the town consists of the Connecticut River floodplain which extends north into South Hadley and south into Springfield. The remainder of Chicopee is situated on a plateau with a maximum elevation of approximately 260'. A limited amount of marshland is located in the town, primarily adjacent to the northern and southern boundaries of Westover Air Force Base. Local soil is basically sandy and gravelly, excluding the rich loam of the river bottomlands. Chicopee falls within the Connecticut River and Chicopee River drainage systems. Area streams in the northern portion of the town drain into the Connecticut River while those in southern Chicopee drain into the Chicopee River. The town has only a small number of freshwater ponds, none of which are natural.

II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Originally part of Springfield plantation during 17th century called Chicopee Street. Northern boundary of Springfield grant (South Hadley) surveyed in 1685 as part of outer commons. Established as First Parish of Springfield in 1750 with Ireland Parish (Holyoke). Connecticut River established as West Springfield boundary in 1774 and eastern line with Ludlow 1775. Incorporated as independent town of Chicopee in 1848 with south boundary at Springfield line. Established as a city in 1890.

III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Historic industrial suburban city on primary corridor between Springfield and Holyoke. Located on east side of Connecticut at mouth of Chicopee River with native sites reported at Willimansett river bluff and at Chicopee Falls. Early English settlement by the mid-17th century on Chicopee Street along Connecticut River meadows with mill sites and bog iron after King Philip's War. Prime farmland along Connecticut floodplain during Colonial period with meeting house center at Chicopee Street, including several suspected 18th century houses surviving on Route 116 and landmark Federal period church. Important development of Chicopee River waterpower sites during Federal period by Boston financiers with textile mill villages at Chicopee Falls and Cabotville. Original fabric of Chicopee Falls cleared by urban renewal except for Edward Bellamy house and workers district on north side, while Cabotville retains original Lowell style brick row housing around mills in authentic Early Industrial setting with period town center, including several brick suburban houses and Greek Revival Church. Other early suburban streetscapes remain intact on Prospect Street in Willimansett with well-preserved stone Gothic cottage and examples on connecting roads to Springfield from Chicopee Falls.

Increasing suburban industrial development during late 19th century forming complex settlement pattern between urban centers of Springfield and Holyoke. Late Industrial mill complexes expanded at Chicopee Falls and Cabotville with important innovations in machine goods and early bicycle and automobile manufacturing of national significance. Period factories of towered brick plan remain active at Cabotville with remnants of industrial fabric at Chicopee Falls. Residential growth expanded from Springfield along suburban trolley lines with overlap of civic and commercial centers between Cabotville and Chicopee Falls with notable period schools. Cabotville retains well-preserved streetscapes of Victorian business blocks with some period Queen Anne houses on Springfield Street, while Chicopee Falls has several elaborate brick Victorian houses of notable design on Broadway axis at Lincoln Park. Similar suburban residential expansion from Holyoke evident in Willimansett with high density urban apartment blocks at bridge crossing and extensive streetcar tract development to Cabotville and Chicopee Falls with local commercial center at Aldenville, including notable NeoGothic church of early 20th century date.

Significant development of Early Modern period focused around location of Westover Air Base on former pine plains during Second World War. Surviving features include original brick aircraft hangers and Beaux Arts formal plan with period lightposts. Present development centers along Route 33 commercial strip on periphery of airbase with extensive suburban activity to Chicopee and Connecticut Rivers at interchange with Mass. Turnpike. Local industrial centers remain active, although indications of decline evident at Willimansett from Holyoke and effects of extensive urban renewal at Chicopee Falls. Cabotville retains remarkable authenticity of historic fabric although treated by traffic of new Interstate 391.

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500-1620)

A. Transportation Routes:

Important convergence of regional routes across the Chicopee River to the floodplain of the Connecticut valley. Primary north-south trail along Connecticut River documented as St. James Avenue (Springfield) to reported "Indian Wading Place" across Chicopee River opposite Szot Park (Sylvester, 1879, p. 962; Szetela, 1948, map), along north bank to Chicopee Street (Route 116) in Wollomansuk (Willimansett) and north as Prospect-Montcalm Streets. Other possible connectors from Springfield to Chicopee River include East Street to Squannugunick (Chicopee Falls) and Fairview-Springfield Streets to Cabotville. Secondary east-west routes across alluvial plain (Westover AFB) appear as Burndett Road to reported ford across Chicopee at Skipmuck (Robinson Bridge; Szetela, 1948, map), with Pendleton and Prospect Streets to Willimansett. It also seems likely that a connecting trail linked Squannugunick (Chicopee Falls) with Willimansett as portions of House Road-Columbia Street.

B. Settlement Patterns:

There were no reported native Contact period occupation sites. A number of unidentified and Woodland period sites occurred in Chicopee. The sites were concentrated primarily on the bluffs overlooking the Connecticut River, the Chicopee River lowlands and the Chicopee River islands. They included Woodland period sites situated adjacent to the easternmost portion of the Old Ludlow Road, in the village of Fairview west of Montcalm Street and Route 116's junction with the Chicopee River. Additional period occupation probably took place throughout the Connecticut and Chicopee River lowlands, particularly at the mouth of the Chicopee River and Chicopee Falls. Interior settlement was probably minimal due to the abundance of marshland.

C. Subsistence Base:

Agricultural land was restricted primarily to the land immediately adjacent to the Connecticut and Chicopee rivers. Extensive sources of fish were available in the Chicopee and Connecticut rivers. The confluence of these two rivers was reputed to be an especially rich source of fish (shad, salmon). Squannugnick or Chicopee Falls (immediately downstream from the Montgomery Street bridge) was likely an additional primary native fishing site. The extensive interior marsh and wood lands were probably utilized as native hunting and gathering areas.

D. Observations:

Chicopee was probably an important resource area for the Connecticut River valley natives, particularly those situated in the major native population center of Agawam (Springfield). The Chicopee area also was part of the heavily populated Connecticut River valley. Locally, this land by the early 17th century probably fell within territory controlled by the Agawams, a group who were reputed by one source to control land on both sides of the Connecticut River between Enfield Falls (Enfield, Connecticut) to the south and South Hadley Falls (South Hadley) to the north (Everts 1879: I, 20). Regionally, this territory may have been controlled by the Nipmucs, a native group who by the early 17th century reputedly claimed all of the Connecticut River drainage lands (MAS 1976: XXXVIII, 14). The greatest likelihood for surviving archaeological evidence of native period settlement is the land located along the Connecticut and Chicopee rivers, particularly between McKinstry and Roy Streets, the confluence of these two rivers and the Chicopee River islands.

V. PLANTATION PERIOD (1620-1675)

A. Transportation Routes:

Native trails improved as regional highways with primary north-south route from Springfield as Chicopee Street through Willimanset (Route 116). Direct connections from Springfield to Chicopee Street appear to have been made as Springfield Street during 17th century with improved crossing of Chicopee River (Cabotville) in 1665 (Palmer, 1897, P. 6).

B. Population:

Chicopee had small native and colonial populations during this period. However, the existing secondary sources failed to provide specific population figures for either of these groups. The majority of the community's early settlers were former Springfield residents.

C. Settlement Patterns:

The only specific reference to native settlement areas was that in the vicinity of Chicopee Falls.

Colonial settlement was limited and probably did not occur until the 1650's (Szetela 1949: 10). Settlement took place in four riverine locations. The first homes were established in the village of Willimanset adjacent to Chicopee Street and on the south side of the Chicopee River near its confluence with the Connecticut River. Additional homes were built in the vicinity of Chicopee Falls. In c.1660, several families settled in the former native site of "Skipmuck" approximately one mile east of Chicopee Falls (Holland 1855: II, 43). Local residents attended the Springfield meetinghouse for religious and civic functions since Chicopee lacked a meetinghouse.

D. Economic Base:

Local natives probably retained their traditional subsistence rounds. However, there was probably native involvement in the English fur trade operation established by William Pynchon in Springfield in the late 1630's.

Agriculture was the primary economic pursuit of the local settlers. The majority of colonial agricultural land occurred adjacent to the Chicopee River mouth and along the Connecticut River in the vicinity of Chicopee Street. There is no evidence of local industrial development. Local residents probably relied on Springfield for mill facilities.

E. Observations:

Chicopee developed as an outgrowth of Springfield. The community remained closely tied to this settlement throughout the Plantation period primarily due to Chicopee's limited economic base and absence of civic/religious facilities. Chicopee probably also had strong social and economic ties with nearby river settlements such as South Hadley, West Springfield, Agawam and Longmeadow.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

A. Transportation Routes:

Primary north-south highway remained as Chicopee Street through Willimanset (Route 116). Establishment of Chicopee meeting house created local connectors as Meeting House Road across pineplains to Chicopee Falls and ferry across Connecticut River to Ireland

(Holyoke) at Ferry Road. Other period highways across pine plains (Westover AFB) include Granby and Ludlow Rds. Bridge constructed during Revolution across Chicopee River at Cabotville in 1778 (Sylvester, 1879, p. 976).

B. Population:

It appears most if not all of Chicopee's native population had left this area during King Philip's War.

Figures for the settlement's colonial population were limited. Shortly before Chicopee establishment as Springfield's fifth precinct (1749), the Chicopee area had 49 male voters.

C. Settlement Patterns:

There appear to have been several native attacks on Chicopee during King Philip's War in which several settlers and soldiers were killed. It is unclear if there was any property damage during these attacks. The existing sources suggest colonial settlement focused on three of the four Plantation period riverine locations and included the Chicopee, Chicopee Falls and Skipmuck village sites. The only apparent settlement change was the development of a primary settlement node centered in the vicinity of the junction of Chicopee and McKinstry Streets, the site of Chicopee's first precinct meetinghouse (c.1751) by the mid-18th century. Community growth resulted in the division of Chicopee into three school districts in 1716. The districts were designated Upper Chicopee, Lower Chicopee and Skipmuck. There continued to be little or no settlement in the pine barrens and marshlands east of the bluffs overlooking the interior.

D. Economic Base:

Chicopee maintained its strong agricultural base. Considerable fishing took place on the Chicopee River primarily between its mouth and Chicopee Falls. The last quarter of the seventeenth century, marked the establishment of Chicopee's first industrial operations; the Chicopee River was the focal point of this and later industrial development. In c.1678, a sawmill was built at Chicopee Falls. A grist mill was constructed slightly downstream in c.1698. A deposit of iron ore was discovered upstream slightly east of St. Patrick's cemetery in c.1693. However, it appears commercial use of the ore did not occur until c.1788 with the construction of a "hollow ware" furnace in the vicinity of Chicopee Falls. A sawmill was built on "Hyer Brook" (Fuller Brook?) in c.1698. Three sawmills appearing on the 1794 map of Chicopee and Springfield and situated upstream from the Route 116 bridge crossing the Chicopee River may have pre-1775 construction dates.

E. Architecture:

Residential: There is only one period house known to survive in Chicopee. This is the Abel Chapin Homestead (c.1750) on Chicopee Street near the site of the First Meetinghouse. The Chapin Homestead is a two-story, gable roof center chimney house which was heavily altered in this century. Other houses of the period may survive in substantially altered condition but these have yet to be

identified; potential survivals would most likely consist of story-and-a-half gable roof cottages and would be most likely to survive along Chicopee Street. The only period houses recorded were a center chimney cottage at Johnny Cake Hollow at Chicopee Falls and the gambrel roof three-story Chapin Homestead (1785) on Chicopee Street, photographs of which appeared in 19th-century histories. The first meetinghouse in Chicopee (Fifth Parish of Springfield) was constructed in 1750 when the parish was organized; it stood 42' x 33'.

F. Observations:

Chicopee remained essentially a rural settlement despite the development of an industrial base and an expanding population. However, the establishment of industrial and civic/religious facilities indicates the settlement was loosening its economic and political ties with the mother community of Springfield. The survival of extant period archaeological remains appears to be most likely adjacent to Chicopee Street between McKinstry Avenue and the northern bank of the Chicopee River and along the Chicopee River between Chicopee Falls and Bircham Bend.

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

A. Transportation Routes:

Development of mill villages at Chicopee Falls and Cabotville required radial connectors during early 19th century. From Chicopee Falls period roads include Main Street to Indian Orchard (Springfield), Sheridan Street across pine plains (Westover AFB) and Montgomery Street to Willimanset, with local grid of Grove and Broadway to Springfield. From Cabotville period roads include Front Street to Chicopee Falls and Center Street to Springfield. Other secondary highways along Chicopee River include Lombard Street from Ludlow and McKinstry Road to Chicopee ferry. Connecticut River bridge opened to Ireland (Holyoke) in 1783 from Willimanset.

B. Population:

Chicopee's population in the Federal period is inseparable from that of Springfield. It seems likely, however, that until the 1820's, its size remained limited. The construction of mill boarding houses at Chicopee Falls by 1832 had added some 530 women and 244 men and boys to the Chicopee Manufacturing Company roster, many of whom came from neighboring towns.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Development of Chicopee River waterpower sites created mill villages at Chicopee Falls by 1810 and at Cabotville by 1825. Industrial development in both villages set along south bank of river with workers' housing adjacent to textile mills and affluent residential area on upper hills. Chicopee Street maintained as civic center with secondary settlement at Willimanset. Agriculture continued on Chicopee and Connecticut river flood plains.

D. Economic Base:

Between the bridge at Chicopee Falls and the Connecticut River, the Chicopee River falls some fifty feet. Several early Federal-period efforts were made to harness this power with local capital -- among them a 1786 blast furnace at the Falls; a cotton spinning mill, 1801 (?); and a small paper mill, 1806, also at the Falls. The iron works was given an early boost in 1801 when it was acquired by the Easton, MA ironmaster Benjamin Belcher, who established what would later become a successful manufactory of agricultural implements. Despite the short-lived prosperity of these small mills during the War of 1812, it was not until the introduction of outside capital by the Boston Associates that Chicopee became more than an agricultural district of Springfield. In 1822, Edmund Dwight of Springfield, on the urging of Joseph Hall (then mill agent of the Monson & Brimfield Mfg. Co. and later Boston & Springfield mill agent) and Joseph Brown (later guiding spirit behind the mills at Monson), established the first company town in western Massachusetts at Chicopee Falls. The Boston & Springfield Manufacturing Company, incorporated to build the cotton mills and town, was backed by the same Boston merchant capital that had financed the first integrated textile mill at Waltham eight years earlier and was then building the first great cotton mills at Lowell. The company's name was changed to the Chicopee Manufacturing Company in 1828. Even before the establishment of its sister mills at Cabotville in the 1830's, it had called into being a wide variety of related manufactures which would characterize Chicopee's small industry for half a century. Among them was the Willimansett Card Mfg. Co., founded in 1829 by Steven Bemis of Harvard, MA, who became the pioneer hardware maker of the valley. Others included makers of bobbins, reeds, loom harnesses, etc. The company also gave a major boost to Belcher's Iron Works, which in the 1820's began making textile machinery castings. In 1829 Dwight personally induced Nathan Ames to relocate his edge-tool business from Chelmsford to Chicopee.

Other products included boots and bricks. Although the production statistics are inseparable from those of the parent Springfield, Chicopee brick production in the Federal period may well have been substantial. (By 1855 the town produced 74% of the county production, while Springfield accounted for only 17.5%.)

E. Architecture:

Residential: Approximately a half dozen Federal period residences are known to survive in Chicopee. Of these, most are two-story houses with only two cottages dated to the period. Period houses include center and double chimney examples with at least one Federal house with twin rear wall chimneys, an uncommon form in the region. All of the period structures known are simple frame buildings, several of which have been substantially altered since their construction. Period houses are located on Chicopee, Springfield and Front Streets.

Institutional: The only surviving period institutional building is the First Congregational Church (1825-26) on Chicopee Street. Built by Springfield builders, Shepherd and Whitmarsh, who are said to have worked under Isaac Damon, the Chicopee church is a very well-detailed transitional Federal/Greek Revival structure with a shallow projecting portico with Roman Ionic columns supporting a pediment and two-stage belfry with a square base and blind octagonal drum with dome. Other institutional buildings of the period which have not survived were two brick schools (20' x 30') of c.1812, a brick school (c.1825) on Church Street, the first Methodist Episcopal meetinghouse (1829) and the first meetinghouse of the Second Parish (1830). Churches founded in the period were the Methodist Episcopal (1822), the First Baptist (1828) and the Second Congregational Church (1830).

VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830-1870)

A. Transportation Routes:

Improvement of primary north-south corridor with Connecticut Valley Railroad in 1845 along base of river terrace through Willimansett across Connecticut to Holyoke with branch to Chicopee Falls in 1846 through Cabotville. Connecticut River bridge to West Springfield from Cabotville opened in 1849. Local highway from Chicopee Falls to Willimansett improved as Grantan Street.

B. Population:

Until 1850, Chicopee's population statistics are inseparable from those of Springfield. In that year, however, Chicopee recorded a population of 8,291 -- about 42.% of the population of the combined towns of Springfield and Chicopee -- a figure which corresponds well with the town's land area: Chicopee made up 42% of the land area of old Springfield. Unlike Springfield, however, Chicopee's population declined in the 1850's by over a thousand persons -- probably a response to the tremendous boom period which Springfield was experiencing. The figure rose only slightly during the Civil War. Of Chicopee's immigrants, which made up 37% of her population in 1855, nine out of ten were Irish -- about a third of the town's population.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Expansion of industrial activity at Cabotville and Chicopee Falls created primary economic center along Chicopee River. Industrial zone extended along south river bank with railroad corridor to Chicopee Falls and planned mill village at Cabotville by 1832. Suburban residential districts formed along primary roads to Springfield Street at Cabotville by Civil War, each with commercial centers at Chicopee River bridges around textile mills. Secondary center developed at Willimansett opposite Holyoke bridge after 1850 with local suburban district on Prospect Street. Chicopee Street retained as civic center with agriculture continued on Chicopee and Connecticut river plains.

D. Economic Base:

Chicopee's greatest development as a cotton town took place in this period, bringing with it a reputation for machine works and small arms which lasted into the 20th century.

By the early 1830's, Chicopee was boasted as a "second Lowell." The waterpower of the Chicopee River, alone, Hayward wrote, "is fully equal to that of the Merrimack at Lowell...." The Boston Associates chartered the Springfield Canal Company, Chicopee's equivalent to Lowell's "Locks & Canals on Merrimack River" entity, to build the canals and mills. Between 1832 and 1841 the Associates built three major cotton mill complexes at the new village of Cabotville: Cabot Mfg. Co. (1832); Perkins Mills (1836); and the Dwight Mfg. Co. (1841). (All three were consolidated as the Dwight Mfg. Co. in 1856.) In 1837 Chicopee mills were producing two-thirds of all the cotton cloth manufactured in the county -- a proportion that rose to 75% eight years later.

By the 1840's, the Ames Manufacturing Company, with apparently close links to the Springfield Armory (as well as to the Boston Associates who sat on its board), was selling swords to the U.S. government and producing a variety of edge tools. The company had introduced electroplating in 1839, and with the acquisition of the Springfield Canal Company machine shop in 1845, became a major manufacturer of textile and other machinery. The resulting prosperity was aided both by the arrival of the Chicopee Branch Railroad in 1846 and the forthcoming government needs of the Mexican War. By 1848 there were 300 men employed in the Ames shops. Its products also included the Boyden turbine, lathes, planing machines, and gunstock machinery. Ames became one of the first firms in the U.S. to manufacture and market a standard line of machine tools to the general public. Among the buyers of its products were pioneers in the American machine tool industry as well as both national armories (Smith, p. 288).

Arms makers had been attracted to Chicopee as early as 1836, with the establishment of the Chicopee Falls Company to manufacture hardware and firearms, though by 1841 the company had failed. Some of the same men -- including mechanics from the Whitney and Colt plants in Connecticut and from the Springfield Armory -- tried again eight years later in the formation of the Mass. Arms Co. Among them was Joshau Stevens, who during the Civil War organized a small pistol shop of his own.

Other local products included friction matches, boots and bricks. Daniel Chapin and Alonzo Phillips are said to have been one of the earliest firms in the country to manufacture friction matches (1836), though the company was taken over by Boston Match after the early death of the promoters. A. G. Parker moved his boot shop to Cabotville in 1853; by 1855 he was employing 30 men; and in 1865, probably in fulfillment of government orders, was turning out over 41,000 pairs of boots annually -- 85% of the total boot production of the county. Brick yards in 1855 employed 35 men and produced 74% of Hampden County's bricks (\$125,000).

Although Chicopee never derived the same extraordinary growth from the Civil War that Springfield attained, several Chicopee industries did well, or started with, war contracts. Swords, arms, boots, leather mail bags numbered among these products. In 1865, the Chicopee Manufacturing Company was the largest producer of cotton flannel recorded in the state, and the only producer in the Connecticut Valley.

E. Architecture

Residential: The Early Industrial period was one of great activity in Chicopee with the founding of the Ames, Cabot and Dwight Manufacturing companies and the Perkins Mills in the first years of the period. With the sharp increase in industrial activity, a great many residences were constructed to house workers in the mills; Chicopee is unusual in the number and quality of its early workers' houses which survive. Also notable is the extensive use of brick which became the dominant construction material for workers' housing of the period. In addition to workers' housing, Chicopee retains a representative body of more elaborate houses in the Greek Revival and Italianate styles. Period workers' housing includes a number of two story gable roof brick double and rowhouses with sidehall plans as well as a few brick tenements of up to nine bays' length with a single offset entrance. Most structures are transitional Federal/Greek Revival or Greek Revival/Italianate in style, reflecting the conservatism generally inherent to vernacular architectural forms. Common decorative features of Chicopee's workers' housing are the use of a dogtoothed course of bricks up the raking eaves of the gable end, the use of an entrance portico with a flat entablature supported by paired Doric columns and the use of dormers with pediments. In addition to multiple family houses, a number of brick two-story and story-and-a-half sidehall single family houses and cottages were also built for mill workers. Much of the workers' housing of the period was the work of a single builder, Charles McClallan (or McClellan). Most period worker housing is located at Chicopee Center between Front and Center Streets with secondary concentrations at Chicopee Falls and Willimansett. In addition to workers' housing, several neighborhoods of more elaborate houses were observed, at Chicopee Falls on Grove Street, at Willimansett on Prospect Street and at Chicopee Center on Springfield Street. These include the Prindle House (1842), a temple front Greek Revival house with a monumental Ionic portico, the Elias Gates House (c.1855), a brick Greek Revival/Italianate sidehall plan house with pilasters, a side veranda and an elaborately composed brick cornice, the Greek Revival Bullens House (c.1840), an end chimney structure with a handsome Doric portico, and a number of sidehall Italianate villas, most with cross gabled bays, lanterns or asymmetrically placed towers. Four square plan Italianate houses with low roofs, square lanterns and bracketted eaves are also known in both frame and brick construction.

Institutional: Chicopee retains a number of period institutional buildings including several churches and schools. Among these are the United Methodist Episcopal church at Chicopee Falls, a two-story Greek Revival church built in 1841 and the Universalist Church at

Cabotville (Chicopee Center), a two-story Greek Revival building erected in 1836. The first church is notable for its use of an octagonal belfry with a conical spire rising directly from the octagonal base while the second, located in the town center, features an unusual plan with commercial space on the first floor and meeting space above; the first floor is still occupied by commercial users.

Surviving schools of the period are the Grape Street School (1861) and a school on Chicopee Street (c.1850). Like much of the residential and industrial construction of the period, both schools are of brick. In addition to these extant brick schools, at least four other brick schools were constructed in Chicopee in the period, three of them in 1845. Other institutions founded in the period include the police and fire departments (1855; 1845-Chicopee Falls; 1848-Cabotville), the town Almshouse (1849), the first High School (1842), the Library (incorporated 1846) and several churches. Among the most significant events of the period was the founding of the first Catholic parish in the town in 1838 with construction of a church in 1840; other churches founded in the period were Grace Episcopal church (1846), Universalist Society (1835), Third Congregational (1834), Second Baptist (1834) and Unitarian Society (1841).

Commercial: Chicopee Center (Cabotville) developed in the period as the primary commercial center of the town. A number of hotels were constructed there during the period, but only one, the Kendall House (1834-35), survives, in altered condition. As originally constructed, the hotel was a three-and-a-half story gable roof brick Greek Revival hotel known as the Cabot House. Although no other commercial buildings have survived from the early years of the period, a few three and four story brick Italianate commercial buildings still stand at the city center.

Industrial: A great many industrial buildings were built in Cabotville and at Chicopee Falls in the period, several notable examples of which have survived. These are all of masonry construction in Greek Revival, Italianate or Romanesque Revival designs. The earliest of these are the mills of the Dwight and Ames Manufacturing companies. Most of these date from the 1860's, although a few buildings of the late 1840's are known to survive. The earlier buildings are smaller, generally of two stories height, with gable roofs and domestic-type double hung sash. The buildings of the 1860's are generally four to six stories in height with Romanesque Revival details such as segmental arched window heads, corbelled cornices and blocky stair towers with open roundhead arches in the upper stages. Among the builders active in the period were John Chase (Reed Building, 1840) and Charles McClallan (Dwight Manufacturing Company buildings #3, 1859; #2, c.1865; #1, 1847).

IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)

A. Transportation Routes:

Expansion of urban development from Springfield and Holyoke created street railway network to Chicopee River industrial centers. Trolley routes from Springfield to Cabotville included lines on Center and Springfield Streets with connecting route on Front Street to Chicopee Falls. Primary north-south line from Chicopee Falls to Holyoke on Chicopee Street to Willimansett. Trolley routes to Chicopee Falls from Springfield included lines on Broadway and East Streets with connecting route to Indian Orchard on Main Street. Primary connecting route to Holyoke from Chicopee Falls located on Gra Street to Willimansett. Suburban trolley route from South Hadley to Fairview operated on private way to Britton Street. West Springfield bridge replaced by iron truss span in 1905 (now closed to traffic).

B. Population:

Between 1870 and 1915, Chicopee's population tripled, in 1891 pushing the community into incorporation as a city. Much of the city's growth, however, occurred after 1905, when the city experienced a growth rate three times what it had averaged in the preceding decades. By 1915 the population stood at 30,138. Of this number, 38% were foreign-born, with Austrian Poles (40%) and French Canadians (29%), making up the bulk of the immigrants, followed by the Irish (10%).

C. Settlement Pattern:

Economic development continued along Chicopee River industrial sites at Cabotville and Chicopee Falls. Independent suburban districts expanded from original mill villages to Springfield along trolley lines creating overlapping development along Front Street corridor by early 20th century. Affluent residential areas established in Chicopee Falls on Broadway around Lincoln Park and in Cabotville on Fairview Avenue. Substantial development of Willimansett area as suburban district of Holyoke with apartment blocks along Chicopee Street trolley line and commercial center at Connecticut River bridge. Secondary suburban growth extended along Granton Street to Aldenville between Willimansett and Chicopee Falls, and to Fairview from South Hadley. Civic focus relocated from Chicopee Street to Front Street corridor between Cabotville and Chicopee Falls. Agriculture maintained on river bottom with tobacco growing on pine plains.

D. Economic Base:

Although the cotton mills continued to be the largest employer of labor in the Late Industrial period (cotton goods accounted for 75% of the town's total manufactured product in 1875), the machine-tool industry gave birth to several subsidiary products, which brought national recognition to Chicopee -- bicycles, automobiles, and tires.

Albert Overman, a Hartford bicycle maker, initially subcontracted with the Ames Mfg. Co. to produce the 'Victor' wheel. With the continued

success of his bicycle, Overman moved to Chicopee, erecting a plant in 1890 in which every part of the bicycle was constructed -- from the saddle cut from hides to the tires produced from raw rubber. In 1894, near the height of the bicycle craze, the firm employed 1200 men. In the meantime another machine works, the Lamb Knitting Machine Company, had begun producing a lower-priced bicycle, initially for Overman, and in 1893 for Overman's competitor (and one-time western sales agent), A. G. Spalding, who bought control of the Chicopee firm. In the mid '90's, the bicycle industry experienced tremendous expansion. Overman, one of the first makers to engage in extensive advertising, financed racing teams, and brass bands for important races. In 1899 Spalding, though not Overman, became part of the giant American Bicycle Co., a trust controlling 65% of the U. S. bicycle market. Both companies, however, had collapsed by 1901 in the sudden burst of the bicycle bubble. Lamb, again reorganized, converted to Spalding's principal line, athletic and sporting goods. (Szetela, 110-118)

In the meantime, the old Stevens Pistol Co. had been incorporated in 1885 as the J. Stevens Arms and Tool Co., doing a prosperous business in shotguns and sporting rifles. After Charles and Frank Duryea built the first American gasoline automobile in 1892, the Stevens company started work on its production, by 1902 advertising it as ready for sale.

The manufacture of rubber tires, begun initially by Spaulding & Pepper in 1896 to satisfy the exploding bicycle industry (!), was bought out by Noyes W. Fisk of Springfield after the collapse of the bicycle business. In 1901 the Fisk Rubber Company made its first automobile tire. By 1912 the plant was employing more than 2,000 workers, and soon would surpass the combined rosters of the two cotton companies.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Chicopee was part of a larger expansion of both Springfield and Holyoke firms into larger quarters, primarily in locations in Willimansett or South Chicopee along the former Connecticut River Railroad. In part, also, this growth was the result of an active Board of Trade.

Chicopee's strong industrial base -- throughout the Late Industrial and Early Modern periods -- meant that a large part of its residents were skilled and semi-skilled factory employees. As a result, Szetela noted, Chicopee never developed the mercantile business that depended on a prosperous middle class. Would-be merchants were deterred by the fact that a large proportion of the residents were employed by a few large factories, raising the spectre of economic disaster in the event of a temporary or permanent shutdown. This factor was also a deterrent to new investment in additional housing stock (Szetela, 127-8).

E. Architecture:

Residential: Residential construction continued at a steady pace through the Late Industrial period with the episode of greatest activity occurring from the late 1890's through 1915. The majority of the houses constructed were multiple family residences with two family and three decker types predominating. Such houses were built

in the greatest numbers in Cabotville, Chicopee Falls, and Willimansett. Most common are the standard vernacular Queen Anne and Colonial Revival forms, such as the hip roof sidehall plan Queen Anne two family with prominent cross gabled dormers and an elaborately detailed veranda. A wider range of stylistic expression is evident in the middle and upper middle class neighborhoods which stabilized in the period in the areas of elite Early Industrial period construction, i.e. Springfield Street in Cabotville, Grove Street in Chicopee Falls and Prospect Street in Willimansett. In those areas, the chronological sequence of styles, from late Italianate and mansard houses of the early 1870's, Stick Style and Queen Anne houses of the late 1870's and 1880's, through Shingle Style and Colonial Revival houses of the 1890's to Georgian Revival and Craftsman style houses of the early 20th century, can often be observed in a few blocks. The houses at Willimansett are slightly earlier and less pretentious than those in the southern half of town, but a few notable examples were observed. The most outstanding of these is the James Emerson House (c.1870) on Prospect Street, an end chimney Gothic Revival/Italianate cottage of brick with stucco finish which combines multiple gables with bargeboards with roundhead Italianate windows and a one-story veranda. At Fairview, modest sidehall Italianate, Stick Style and Queen Anne cottages predominate while in the Aldenville section, residential development occurred somewhat later, after the turn of the century, with the blocks to either side of Grattan Street filled in with Craftsman and Colonial Revival bungalows and two-family houses. In contrast to the Early Industrial period, when brick construction predominated, the bulk of the Late Industrial period houses are of frame construction. Despite this, at least a few Panel Brick apartment blocks of the 1880's and '90's and a smaller number of brick Georgian and Colonial Revival blocks of the turn of the century were constructed at Cabotville and at Willimansett, generally in close proximity to commercial centers.

Institutional: The majority of the city's institutional buildings were built in the Late Industrial period. These include the City Hall (1871, Charles Edward Parker), a Ruskinian Gothic brick structure with a tall dormered campanile, the city's most outstanding period municipal structure. Other notable municipal buildings include the city's schools, most of which are two-and-a-half story hip roof brick structures with Romanesque Revival detailing in brownstone. Also notable are the city's churches, with several Victorian Gothic examples including the First Central Baptist church (1878) and Third Congregational church (1868-70). Other period institutional buildings are the neoclassical brick Library (c.1910) and several Victorian Gothic and Romanesque Revival parochial schools, the earliest of which is the Holy Name of Jesus school, c.1870. To be regretted is the loss of the Shingle Style Unitarian church (1893), a structure notable for its quality of design and as a comparatively rare example of that style locally.

Commercial: Districts of commercial activity expanded at Willimansett, Chicopee Center and Chicopee Falls during the period with two, three, and four story late Italianate, Renaissance Revival and Georgian Revival commercial blocks of red and yellow brick built in some numbers at all three locations. The greatest concentration of these is located

at Chicopee Center. Among the best of these are the Temple Block (1876-77, W.C. Wedge), the Olmsted and Tuttle Company office (1899), the Cabot Hotel (1907) and the Wentworth and Leavitt buildings, both Early Industrial buildings remodelled in the Late Industrial period. Most commercial buildings of the period exhibit the standard details of period commercial architecture, bracketted or corbelled cornices, stilted segmental arched windows and, for the later buildings, pressed metal trim.

Industrial: The majority of the standing industrial buildings in Chicopee date from the Late Industrial period. The major complexes of the period are the Perkins Mill (1892), a six story brick Romanesque Revival building with a shallow gable roof, and buildings of the Dwight Manufacturing Company on Front Street, including Mill #1 (1900, 1912), a six story brick building with pier and spandrel construction, as opposed to the traditional bearing wall construction, and Warehouse A (1907), a five story brick structure with small segmental arched windows with iron shutters. Although the technology was known by the 1870's, pier and spandrel construction does not seem to have been adopted in Chicopee before the turn of the century.

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD(1915-1940)

A. Transportation Routes:

Improvement of local highways as regional autoroads. Primary north-south route on Chicopee Street as Route 116 with bridge replaced across Connecticut to Holyoke in 1931 (still in use). Chicopee River bridges replaced during 1930's at Cabotville and Chicopee Falls. Secondary east-west highway from Indian Orchard to Holyoke as Route 181 through Chicopee Falls and Willimanset. Location of Westover Air Base in 1939 required railroad connection from Willimanset through Aldenville opened to airbase in 1941 (Boston & Maine). A street railway system from Holyoke to Springfield abandoned during late 1930's.

B. Population:

Chicopee's population continued its rapid expansion until 1925 when the declining fortunes of the city's industrial base slowed the influx of employees. Between 1930 and 1940, Chicopee lost 2200 residents, though with a population of 41,952 in 1940, Chicopee remained the third largest city in the county.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Suburban development continued to expand along major transit routes from Springfield and Holyoke around industrial centers at Cabotville and Chicopee Falls. Multiple family districts created along Chicopee Street axis from Willimanset to Cabotville and Granton Street axis from Willimanset to Chicopee Falls with local center at Aldenville. Local elite neighborhoods maintained on Broadway at Chicopee Falls and Fairview Avenue in Cabotville with streetcar suburban development on Springfield, East and Main Streets from local commercial centers. Similar expansion also occurred around Fairview from South Hadley.

Industrial belt maintained along Connecticut River railroad lines between Springfield and Holyoke through Willimansett with corridor along Chicopee River to Chicopee Falls. Location of Westover Air-base in 1940 on pine plains created economic focus with planned residential development formal radial boulevards.

D. Economic Base:

Chicopee's major industries expanded their capacities during the First World War. Due to war office demands, Fisk Rubber became the city's largest employer, but the cotton companies, as well as the Stevens Arms & Tool Co. (purchased by Westinghouse in 1915), and others also expanded. In the early '20's, however, many Chicopee firms experienced the pressure of western competition and closed (Stevens-Duryea); or were sold to outside firms (Belcher & Taylor; Stevens Arms; Ames Sword; Chicopee Mfg.). In 1927 the Dwight Mfg. Co., which had built a mill in Alabama in the 1890's, closed its Chicopee mill entirely. Production fell off at Fisk Rubber, while other companies also suffered financial reverses. The Depression worsened an already bad economic reality. By 1933, 25% of the population were receiving relief. The Industrial Buildings Corporation established by Raphael Sagalyn was part of a concerted effort to attract new industry to Chicopee. The company acquired Dwight's vacant buildings, and in the early '30's attracted a variety of needlecraft and other firms.

In the late '30's, the reorganization of Fisk Rubber as a branch of the U.S. Rubber Co. gave a new life to that firm, which again became the city's major employer.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Most of the residential construction in the period took place on the edges of established neighborhoods. The most commonly constructed house forms of the period were the cottage (bungalow) and the two family house; elite residential construction was confined to infill sites at the city center. The only area of extensive residential construction was Aldenville. Most of the houses and cottages constructed are hip roofed Craftsman styled structures with modest Colonial Revival detailing. Cottages generally derive from the bungalow form with recessed porches, raised basements, and hip roof dormers. Two-family houses show a similar restraint of ornament. Elite construction consists primarily of Tudor Revival and Georgian Revival houses with stucco and masonry trim; such houses are located south of the city center off Springfield Street.

Institutional: Comparatively few institutional buildings were built in the period; most of these are Catholic churches or public schools. The finest of the churches built in the period is the Assumption Church (1922-25, George P. Dion), a Tuscan Revival brick nave plan church with side aisles, a high clerestory, portico with pediment and Scamozzi capitals and offset campanile.

Commercial: Most commercial construction occurred at Chicopee, Chicopee Falls, and Willimansett with some two story and a greater number of one story commercial buildings in brick and concrete built in the 1920's.

XI. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

Chicopee's survey is well documented for residential and institutional buildings of the Early Industrial period; many municipal and private institutional buildings of the Late Industrial and Early Modern periods have not been inventoried, nor are residential buildings of the 20th century included in the existing inventory. Architecturally, district potential exists along Chicopee Street in the vicinity of the First Congregational church and at the Chicopee Center along Springfield Street. Especially notable are the survival of the 1824 meetinghouse, a particularly well-detailed Federal structure, and the survival of the Universalist Church at Chicopee, which preserves an unusual plan with first floor commercial use. Also notable are the Ruskinian Gothic City Hall, the town's several early 19th century brick schools, the state of preservation of the Federal period institutional center on Chicopee Street and of the later 19th century factory village at Cabotville.

Industrial: The city has surveyed in some detail its key industrial landmarks, the Dwight, Chicopee, and Ames manufacturing companies, all three of which should be studied for NR designation. (The first two have already been designated Chicopee landmarks; the third has been determined NR eligible.)

However, some twenty other industrial structures were also identified by the reconnaissance survey as requiring further study. These included Fish Rubber, B. F. Perkins & Son (textile machinery), Hampden Brewing, Coburn Trolley Track Co., the Chicopee water works and municipal lighting plants, and the 1919 Hampden power station of the Turners Falls Power & Electric Co.

XII. SOURCES

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