

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

CONCORD

Report Date: 1980

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

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

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

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

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



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MHC RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

DATE: March , 1980

COMMUNITY: Concord

I. TOPOGRAPHY

Located on river in lowlands and adjacent rolling hills. Many glacial outwash features. A sandy to gravelly soil. Broad expanses of meadow/marsh land along rivers. A major confluence point - Assabet and Sudbury rivers join to form Concord. Many upland ponds plus areas of bog/swamp between elevations.

II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Established as plantation at 'Mustketequid' and renamed Town of Concord, 1635. Original boundaries remain on southwest and northwest sides. Town increased by additional grant, 1655. Original size and boundaries diminished by formation of new towns including: Bedford (1729), Acton (1735), Lincoln (1754) and Carlisle (1754).

III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Important historic town on the western axis of suburban Boston. Located at the junction of the Concord, and Sudbury/Assabet Rivers with documented native village site at Nashawtuc Hill and along the river meadows. Early English town on settlement frontier of Massachusetts Bay Colony with potential housing sites along early highways around Concord center and several ascribed First Period structures of early date. Secondary center at West Concord by late 17th century around iron works mill site with continued expansion of original town core through the 18th century. Many well-preserved Colonial houses of historic note associated with Battle of Concord during Revolutionary War (National Historic Park) with other period houses of both high style and regional vernacular along river highways in north and south sections of town. Modest economic growth in town center through early 19th century with Federal and Greek Revival business buildings. Important intellectual center of Boston area during mid-19th century with several notable houses (National Park) and sites, such as Walden Pond. Industrial development on West Concord along early railroad link to Boston, with well-preserved range of period structures including Victorian mill, housing and state prison. Increasing historicism of Colonial landscape by mid-20th century with Revival style suburban estates along river vistas and early autohighway around town center with original period commercial structures. Continued suburban pressure from Boston metropolitan expansion checked by conservation of historic landscape, although tourist economy threatens integrity of original town center.

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500-1620)

A. Transportation Routes:

Important junction of regional trails at confluence of Concord and Sudbury Rivers. Conjectured routes appear to braid around river fords at North Bridge site, Elm St and Main St. crossings. Primary E/W trails include Virginia-Bedford-Lexington Road to Concord Ctr, branching over river to north as Monument-Barretts Mill Road and to south as Main St. with former loops around the Brook School.

A. Transportation Routes: (cont.)

Southern branches along the Sudbury and Assabet include conjectured trails as Marlborough and Nine Acre Corner Road with westward trails through West Concord as Main-Brook Road and possible Commonwealth Ave. to Mohawk Trail (Rt. 119). Probable routes on north side include sections of Monument St. around Punkatasset Hill and Strawberry Hill Road around Annursnack Hill. It is also conjectured that trails followed from the south around Walden Pond and Fairhaven Hill to Lincoln possibly as Fairhaven Road where portions of a trail still remain near railroad. Other logical routes include Hawthorne St. from Sandy Pond (Lincoln) and Old Bedford Road around Great Meadow. Trails are also conjectured to the documented native village sites at Nashawtuc Hill on the Concord River meadows.

B. Settlement Pattern:

Several sites reported with woodland period occupation, primarily along north side of Assabet between Spencer and Dakins Brooks and below Nashawtuc Hill at confluence of Assabet and Sudbury. Other period sites likely on well drained terraces and knolls along Assabet/Sudbury/Concord and adjacent to upland ponds. (See Shattuck, 1835, p.3 for some detail). At present, no sites with European contact material known.

C. Subsistence Pattern:

A major fishing area during seasonal runs of shad, herring and salmon. In addition, good agricultural land available plus a diverse terrain for hunting/gathering.

D. Observations:

An area of dense aboriginal settlement and activity including nearly all phases of New England prehistory. At present, late woodland and contact period sites are among the least represented and understood. Those which are known probably relate to Nipmuck (freshwater inland) people rather than to coastal tribes.

V. FIRST SETTLEMENT PERIOD (1620-1675)

A. Transportation Routes:

Native trails remain as highway routes to town center during mid-17th century with possible improvement of Great Road (Rt 2A) from Lexington across Mill Brook meadows. Ford sites at river crossings are replaced by bridges during settlement period.

B. Population:

Apparently some native inhabitants at time of Musketequid purchase, 1635. About 10-12 families in original group of settlers. By 1644 about 50 families, mostly from Watertown and Cambridge. Slow growth during period; several families emigrated to Connecticut in 1644.

C. Settlement:

A small native settlement reported on east side of Sudbury at confluence with Assabet in 1635, also a fish weir on Mill creek. Initial colonial settlement on Mill Brook in W side of hill (north side of common). First meeting house built, 1636 "on hill near the brook". Grist mill built, 1639 creating Mill Pond. By 1650 town expanded along Lexington Road (Great Rd.) but remained a clustered settlement with outlying fields and common lands. Town center expanded after 1650: William Buss tavern, 1666; John Heywood's ordinary, 1670; second meeting house built on Common, 1672. By end of

C. Settlement (cont.)

period, no longer small or compact, outlying farms and mills scattered throughout town.

D. Economic Base:

Native "planting field" and fisheries at time of colonial settlement. Area was chosen for its agricultural/pasture potential. Initially a mixed economy including: agriculture, cattle grazing, for trading with natives, fishing and production of building materials - lumber, brick and naval stores (especially tar). By end of period at least two sawmills, Hayward's Pond areas and on Spencer Brook. In 1658, corporation begun for iron production from bog ore, located on Assabet in West Concord (Westvale) area. Two taverns in town center for both local and travelling customers.

E. Observations:

The first interior, non-tide water town in Massachusetts. Despite good setting, a struggling frontier community until mid century. After this, economic diversity and location promoted town's development as a regional center.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1676 - 1776)

A. Transportation Routes:

Highways remain from 17th century with focus of routes upon Concord town center and bridge crossings. Primary road is Lexington-North Sts (Rt 2A) through Merriams Cor with alternate routes around river as Main St. and Barretts Mill Road to W. Concord. Connecting highways of the period include Walden St to the south and Lowell-Westford Road to the north. Important E/W highway across southern section from Lincoln as South Great Road with branches as Plainfield and Powder Mill Road by the mid 18th century.

B. Population:

Apparently steady growth after shaky First period start. Not many specific figures available, Census of 1765 listed 1664 inhabitants in 265 families and 244 houses.

C. Settlement:

Continued growth during remainder of 17th century, virtually unaffected by King Philip's War. First school built after 1687. Developed as an affluent regional center after 1700. Court house built westside of Common, 1721. Towards mid-18th century, several business, tradesman and additional taverns located in town center. Many small farms throughout town. Secondary village developed around iron and milling activities in West Concord (Westvale) during late 17th century.

D. Economic Base:

Remained rather diversified. Many small farms (30 acres) raising cattle & grain. Apple orchards as important secondary activity. Considerable milling, both grist and lumber at probably four separate locations - few details available. Iron works viable until 1700 then converted to grist and fulling mills. Mill products for local or area use rather than export. Development of "business district" in town center not covered in available histories but included taverns (Wright's, 1747 and the Black Horse, by 1740), small businesses and whole sale/retail suppliers.

E. Architecture: Residential: High-style Georgian and vernacular houses present in relatively large numbers. Overwhelming majority of houses were of two-story Central - Chimney type with two-room deep floor plans; decorative details were generally restricted to window frames and entries. Smaller number of houses from period both in the village and in country locations display high-style plans and details, examples include at least one rusticated facade and at least one brick country house; high-style details assigned dates as early as ca. 1740-1763. Other house-types present include several small cottages, half-houses and a small number of twin-chimney houses.

F. Observations:

Evolution from a frontier town into a prosperous regional center (similar to Weston). Heterogeneous in social/economic terms-yeomen farms to affluent gentry. Surprisingly little detailed information for the period 1680-1770.

VII.

FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

A. Transportation Routes:

Colonial highways remain as local roads. Major connecting turnpikes to Boston along E/W axis through Concord Ctr as Cambridge Turnpike and Elm St (Rt 2A) by early 19th century. Secondary links of the period include Sudbury Rd. across river to Nine Acre Corner

B. Population:

Slow growth during period, decline after 1776 may have reflected the establishment of Carlisle and the departure of the Boston-Cambridge population which was quartered in Concord during the Revolutionary War; Trinitarian Society formed, 1826, after which the town's First Parish became the Unitarian Society; no foreign-born population likely.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Major focus of settlement was a Concord settlement, around Monument Square, Lexington Road and Main Street; small mill Village formed at West Concord (Damon's Mill) after 1808 (Main Street at Water Street and Pond Lane); some country estates probably established in northern and eastern parts of town.

D. Economic Base:

Remained primarily agricultural economy of farming and grazing lands. Assabet water power continued to be used at West Concord; cotton factory c. 1810? on 17th century furnace site. c. 1819 lead pipe factory (Commonwealth Ave. & Fort Pond Brook).

E. Architecture: Residential: Exceptionally wide range of house-types present, including vernacular and high-style late Georgian up to ca. 1800 and Federalist designs largely post 1810. Among high-style examples, no single type dominates; however, many have brick end walls, including examples with hip, pitched and gambrel roofs. Of the several apparent (possible) country estates most seem likely to have had square floor plan with hip roofs and brick end walls. Decorative details include ornate entries, cornices, balustrades, etc. Vernacular examples of the period were mostly two-story houses, some continued to be built with central chimney and twin-chimney plans, however the largest number, by far, possessed rear-wall chimneys and low-pitched roofs; this type has been attributed construction dates (locally) between the 1760's (unlikely) and ca 1840. Few cottages were built; of those that remain most are 1½ stories high

E. Architecture: Residential: Moderate number of new houses; those built ranged from vernacular to high-style examples as in preceeding periods. Virtually all high-style houses were built at Concord Center. Styles present included Greek Revival (Temple - Front and pilastered facades), Italianate (both villas and cottages), Carpenter Gothic (relatively small number) and Second Empire (several examples only.) In addition, approximately 6-10 eighteenth-century houses were partially remodelled with early Victorian details, several of these remodelled houses are associated with the transcendentalists/writers. Modest cottages of varied plans, and astylistic early and mid-Victorian designs were built on side streets at the town center and in industrial sections of West Concord.

Institutional: First Parish Meeting house rebuilt in Greek Revival style, 1841-42; Universalist Meetinghouse built 1842-46, acquired by Catholic Church, 1868 and remodelled (?) in Italianate style. Transitional Greek Revival/Italianate style Courthouse built 1850-51 (sold to private business 1867). Italianate style town hall built 1851; one-story Italianate style high school built 1864-65; new Almshouse built 1866; town fire department established 1855; wood-frame Armory maintained by town by 1860s.

Commerical: Concord Center three-story Greek Revival style hotel built at Monument Square, 1844; other inns remained in operation; transitional Federalist/Greek Revival style bank building constructed 1832; some gable facade 2 story wood-frame commercial blocks built during period. West Concord little commercial development, possible two-story wood-frame block with hall built ca. 1860-75 (Italianate style); three railroad depots built by 1870.

Industrial: Astylistic one and three-story wood frame mills may have begun to be built at West Concord by end of period; major mill, was 5-story brick building, Italianate style, built on the site of the 1808 Damon's Mill, in 1864-65 by Worcester architect Elbridge Boyden.

X. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)

A. Transportation Routes:

Road and rail system remain from mid-19th century. Streetcar routes to Concord and W. Concord from Lexington to Maynard over Bedford-Main Sts. with branch to Acton over Elm St. by early 1900s.

B. Population:

Excepting two small declines in 1880-1885 (change in prison population) and 1900-1905, population grew steadily throughout period. By 1890 the Concord Reformatory contained 700 inmates included, in the local census; large foreign born population dominated by Irish immigrants, although Italian and Norwegian immigrants became large groups after 1900. Episcopal Parish organized by 1885; West Concord Union Church (ca. 1890); Our Lady of Help Catholic Parish organized at West Concord ca. 1890. Transcendentalists/writers no longer influential after ca. 1880.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Concord Center became primarily residential with upper-class suburban development and estates (north and west of center) and modest houses built in vicinity of railroad bed (south west of center); two small villages at West Concord grew together along Main Street and along side streets; Village at West Concord expanded northward by prison and housing for the prison employees. Country estates were built in the eastern and northern sections of the town.

D. Economic Base:

Division within town which had begun in previous period was strengthened; Concord Center became more suburban residential while West Concord became an industrial village, built up around the Freight depot and pail factory, still the only major manufacturing industry in town after Damon Mill.

E. Architecture: Residential: Full range of styles and types present, ranging from Utilitarian/vernacular to high-style. High-style present at Concord Center, included late Italiante, (a small number of) 2nd Empire, Victorian Gothic, Queen Anne and Colonial Revival style, architect designed houses. Outlying estate house, tended more to be of Queen Anne, Colonial Revival and eclectic 20th century designs. Modest housing is present in simple examples of all contemporary style, the largest number of modest houses were side-hall plans buildings (one and two stories), followed by double houses and a smaller number of wood-frame row houses.

Institutional: Gothic Revival style Episcopal Church (1885), Queen Anne style Union Church (ca 1890-95), late Victorian Gothic style Catholic Church (c. 1890), Unitarian Church burned, ca. 1800 was re-constructed in Federalist style. District schoolhouses eliminated by 1890, graded schools established at West Concord Center (1880s Queen Anne style). High Victorian Gothic style library built 1873. State Prison planned (Victorian Gothic style), 1873, opened 1878, converted to a reformatory 1880s. Private home for the aged endowed (1886); chapel for School of Philosophy built for A Bronson Alcott (1879-80); Middlesex School established in northern section of town new campus and Colonial Revival style buildings constructed 1904 and later. Museum built by Concord Antiquarian Society ca 1910 (?). Brick, neo-Gothic/Romanesque Armory built (by State?) ca 1900-10.

Commercial: Concord Center - some astylistic 2-story brick row buildings constructed ca 1900, combination railroad depot/hotel built 1878; 18th century Wright's Tavern "restored", 1882. West Concord: 1,2,3-story wood-frame row buildings constructed along Commonwealth Avenue; railroad depot present throughout period (re-built ca 1900?)

Industrial: New construction restricted to West Concord, primarily two and three-story utilitarian design, wood-frame buildings.

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915-1940)

A. Transportation Routes:

Abandonment of trolley and portions of W. Concord rail routes. Construction of bypass autohighway around Concord center in 1930's as new Concord Turnpike (Route 2) with original concrete bridges over river crossing in W. Concord.

B. Population:

Slow small increase in population occurred during most of period; new religious societies not named in secondary sources, although some may have been formed.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Same trends as in preceeding period.

D. Economic Base:

Same as in preceeding period, decrease in importance of agriculture and increase in importance of Boston-related suburban population likely.

with central chimneys. A notable exception is a 1½ story cottage with end-wall chimneys set into brick walls which rise to a parapet (Water Street-Damon's Mill). Several central chimney, double houses may have been built for mill workers at West Concord (Main & Water Streets).

Institutional: First Parish meetinghouse remodelled, 1794 (Federalist style) with a hip roof, pedimented, central pavilion on facade and lantern/cupola built 1794; jail built of split granite, 1791. Almshouse present before 1819, re-built 1819. Seven school districts present by 1800, new school houses built in nearly all, 1799-1800; center school replaced, 1819. Public bath-house present by 1820s; volunteer fire company founded 1827, engine house may have been built. Masonic Hall built ca. 1815-25; private Academy founded, 1822, closed 1834.

Commercial: Tavern/Inns in vicinity of Monument Square; several brick-party wall row buildings constructed to house stores along Main Street and near Monument Square on Lexington Road (?).

Industrial: Wood-frame cotton mill built at W. Concord, 1808, style uncertain, was 5 stories high and was 100' long by 1834.

VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830-1870)

A. Transportation Routes:

Turnpikes and highways remain from early 19th century with junctions at Concord center and W. Concord. Fitchburg railroad from Boston (1844) follows western axis around Walden Pond and town center to mills at West Concord. Secondary branch railroads junction at W. Concord State Prison by 1870, with N/S route to Sudbury around White Pond and E/W route to Bedford around Nashawtuc and Poplar Hills across river (now abandoned route). Street improvements of the period include Bedford St past Sleepy Hollow Cemetery and alignment of Main St across Sudbury River.

B. Population:

After decline to 1,784 in 1840, population rose to 2,249 in 1850 and remained in 2,250 range until ca 1870; foreign-born population after ca 1845, made up primarily of Irish-immigrants; historical associations with prominent group of writers/transcendentalists began in 1830s with natives (Emerson & Thoreau) and with outsiders attracted to town (Hawthorne, etc). Universalist Society formed 1842; Catholic Parish formed 1868.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Primary focus on Concord Center with major houses built along main routes (Main Street, Lexington Road, Monument Street, and Sudbury Road), some side streets laid out and partially developed with modest housing. Small-scale expansion of mill village at Damon's Mill (Main & Water Streets-West Concord) and establishment of small industrial village along Commonwealth Avenue (West Concord).

D. Economic Base:

Acquisition by Damon of cotton mill in 1834 led to invention of new "domest" cloth composed of cotton warp and wool filling. Became universal substitute for linsey-woolsey bringing prosperity to both Damon and West Concord. For remainder of century, Wollens remained the dominant manufacturing industry of the town. Lead pipe factory converted c. 1850 to wooden pail and wooden ware factory remaining in operation til 1890s. Introduction of railroad in 1844 brought change from general farming to milk producing and fruit raising. Ephraim Bull's discovery of the Concord grape said to be "the greatest vegetable improvement of the age" (Hurd, 11, 590).

D. Economic Base (cont):

Several new industries locate along railroad in West Concord including foundry, garnett mills (replacing pail factory), elastic webbing manufacturer, and the large frame (still extant) Allen Chair Co.

E. Architecture:

Period characterized by widespread use of Colonial Revival style for almost all types of building.

Residential: Same general range of house-types as in preceeding period, although most modest houses were of very simple Colonial Revival style and Bungalow style; larger scale houses (suburban and country estate) tended increasingly to be of Dutch Colonial and, more frequently, Federalist Revival design.

Institutional: Eclectic Spanish Mission style school at West Concord (1918), Colonial Revival style schoolhouses built at Concord Center, ca. 1925-35; Colonial Revival style library at Center and branch library at West Concord, ca 1925-35. Colonial Revival style buildings constructed for Middlesex School; Museum built by Concord Antiquarian Society c. 1930. Modern/Colonial Revival style post office built 1937.

Commerical: Concord Center: Construction of two-story, brick Colonial Revival style row-buildings along Main and Walden Streets; farm stands in the eastern part of the town, 1920s (?) West Concord some one-story concrete block buildings (garage?) constructed, alterations carried out on existing buildings.

Industrial: Several frame and masonry industrial buildings built in W. Concord along railroad (see above, Economic Base)

XI.

SOURCES

Shattuck, Lemuel	<u>History of the Town of Concord</u>	1835
Walcott, Charles H.	<u>Concord in the Colonial Period</u>	1884
Wood, Albert	<u>The Plantation at Musketequid</u>	1886
Torres-Reyes, Ricardo	<u>Farming and Land Uses (in Minute Man National Historical Park)</u>	1969
Hammond, Charles.	"Concord's Factory Village: 1776-1862" <u>Old Time New England (Fall 75), pp. 32-38.</u>	