

# MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

## EAST LONGMEADOW

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: March 1982

COMMUNITY: East Longmeadow

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### I. TOPOGRAPHY

East Longmeadow is located on the eastern periphery of the Connecticut River Valley. The town is dominated by a combination of lowlands and uplands. The maximum elevation is only slightly more than 450 feet. A limited amount of marshland occurs primarily in the eastern portion of East Longmeadow. Substantial outcrops of red sandstone are also situated in this area of the town. Local soil is primarily loam. East Longmeadow falls within the Connecticut River drainage. Locally, area streams are part of the Mill River and Watchaug Brook systems. The town has only a handful of freshwater ponds, only one of which is natural.

### II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Originally included as part of Springfield grant during 17th century and established within Longmeadow parish by 1713. Southern boundary with Connecticut defined in 1714 from earlier (1642) survey. Northern boundary with Springfield defined in 1783 with formation of Longmeadow town line and eastern boundary surveyed in 1794 with Wilbraham (now Hampden). Created as separate parish of Longmeadow in 1865 and incorporated as independent town of East Longmeadow in 1894 defining western boundary with Longmeadow.

### III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Suburban industrial town on secondary corridor of Springfield metropolitan development. Located on alluvial plain of Connecticut Valley with suspected native sites along upper Pecousic Brook around Indian Spring. Belated settlements from Springfield and adjacent Connecticut by mid-18th century with some authentic Colonial period houses on early highways around town center. Formation of meetinghouse centers during early 19th century with

locations at Baptist Village including Greek Revival church and crossroads farmsteads at Parker St., and primary town center at East Longmeadow with some surviving period houses. Development of red sandstone quarries at McCarthy and Kibble Hills during Industrial period created primary civic and economic focus at East Longmeadow Center. Railroad connections to Springfield by late 19th century reinforces East Longmeadow Center and quarry activity (now abandoned). Original depot survives with period Victorian houses along radial roads. Increasing expansion of Springfield streetcar stimulated suburban development along axis of North Main Street during Early Modern period with modest bungalows and notable Craftsman styled school at Mount Pleasant. Affluent suburban estates located on Prospect Street and Markham Hill with period modern house. Location of Pratt and Whitney plant during Second World War created industrial park around railroad depot and commercial strip activity along Route 83 to town center. At present, entire area undergoing gradual suburban transformation threatening remaining farmsteads around Baptist Village and eroding fabric of original town center.

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

##### A. Transportation Routes:

Intermediate corridor between central uplands and Connecticut River. Probable east/west trails across alluvial plain appear as northeast: Porter Road, Mapleshade-Westwood Aves, Maple Street around McCarthy Hill, and Pecousic Brook; and southeast: Meadowbrook-South Main (Route 83) to Chestnut Street from Watchaug Brook (Baptist Village). A possible north/south connector may be located at Parker Street from Markham Hill (Springfield).

##### B. Settlement Patterns:

There were no reported native sites in East Longmeadow. However, the presence of a considerable amount of agricultural land and a network of suspected native trails suggest there was probably some native period settlement. The area most likely to have been occupied during this period was the land surrounding the town center and bordered by Westwood and Mapleshade Aves. to the north and west and Chestnut Street to the south.

### C. Subsistence Patterns:

Extensive agricultural land was located throughout East Longmeadow. Available sources of freshwater fish were limited and were confined to the area's several small streams. Local natives would have been more apt to fish in the Connecticut River. Hunting and gathering probably took place in the marshlands of the eastern portion of East Longmeadow.

### D. Observation:

East Longmeadow probably supported a limited native population when considering the area's absence of major freshwater sources and extensive prime agricultural land. This area likely functioned as a major route to the land abutting the Connecticut River (ell Springfield). Locally, East Longmeadow probably fell within territory controlled by the Agawams, a group historically centered in Springfield and West Springfield. Regionally, the Agawams probably were affiliated with the Pocumtucks, the dominant native group in the western quarter of Massachusetts in the early 17th century. East Longmeadow's continued rural nature suggests there is an excellent likelihood of extent native archaeological sites.

## V. PLANTATION PERIOD (1620-16745)

### A. Transportation Routes:

Native trails remained as regional connectors between uplands and Connecticut Valley with secondary route as probable Longmeadow Path (Westwood-Mapleshade-Porter Road) around McCarthy Hill.

### B. Population:

There were no figures for the area's native population. East Longmeadow lacked a colonial population until ca. 1740.

### C. Settlement Patterns:

There was probably some native occupation of East Longmeadow during this period, particularly when considering the absence of a colonial population.

### D. Economic Base:

Traditional native subsistence rounds probably continued relatively unimpeded largely due to the lack of a colonial population.

### E. Observations:

The available secondary sources virtually ignore East Longmeadow during the Plantation period.

## VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

### A. Transportation Routes:

Basic east-west routes improved from existing trails with orientation to Longmeadow on Maple-Westwood-Mapleshade-Porter Road and Chestnut Street-Main-Meadowbrook Road. Improvement of north-south connectors with Park St. to Baptist Village and Shaker Road-Elm Street (Route 220) to Enfield Ct. Secondary period roads appear to include Maple-Pleasant Street loop around McCarthy Hill and Hampden Road to South Wilbraham (Hampden).

### B. Population:

There are no figures for native or colonial occupants.

### C. Settlements:

It is unclear if East Longmeadow had a post-1675 native population. As mentioned earlier, initial colonial settlement did not take place until ca. 1740. The delay in settlement was probably largely due to the tendency of colonial settlement to congregate along major waterways. Settlement of the less

accessible interior usually occurred when lots on the the more attractive riverline areas were no longer available. Although not clearly documented, it appears colonial settlement focused in the vicinity of the present town center and junction of Main, Pleasant, Prospect, Maple Streets. The community lacked a meetinghouse. Local residents attended the Longmeadow precinct meetinghouse throughout the Colonial period.

#### D. Economic Base:

The settlement's economy is poorly documented by secondary sources. Agriculture was the primary pursuit of local residents. The community lacked a substantial mill industry because of the area's absence of streams capable of powering such operations. A sawmill appearing on the 1831 map on a branch of Watchaug Brook may date to the Colonial period. East Longmeadow, Springfield, and the present Connecticut border towns.

#### E. Architecture:

Residential: Less than half dozen Colonial period houses are known to survive in East Longmeadow. Only one of these is a two-story house (Burt House, ca. 1720), the others being center chimney cottages. The Burt House, a center chimney house with five facade bays and a center entrance, is the earliest known house in East Longmeadow. It may have been constructed originally as a half house and later enlarged to full five-bay, two-room status as the irregular placement of the bays suggest some alteration. All of the period structures observed are located in rural settings away from the town center. Period structures were observed on Parker, Chestnut and Prospect Streets.

#### F. Observations:

This period is nearly as poorly documented by secondary sources as the Plantation period. East Longmeadow lacks a legitimate town history. During the Colonial period, East Longmeadow appeared to undergo little economic development. The settlement's lack of industrial, commercial and religious/civic facilities suggests considerable dependence on Springfield. Close social and economic ties also probably existed with the adjoining Connecticut border settlements.

## VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

### A. Transportation Routes:

Formation of East Longmeadow town center created radial highways from meetinghouse, including North and South Main Streets (Route 83) from Springfield, Prospect Street (Route 186) and Shaker-Elm Streets from Enfield Ct. Regional connector between Hampden and Springfield located as Allen Street across Markham Hill.

### B. Population:

The population figures for East Longmeadow are inseparable from the parent town of old Longmeadow, but during this period probably only amounted to a small part of the total, which by 1830 had reached 1,257. Until the 1820s, probably the only "village" was the Baptist Village in the southeast corner of the town, probably begun in the 1760s by Baptists from the adjacent Connecticut towns of Enfield and Somers. With the opening of the sandstone quarries along Main St., East Longmeadow village experienced some growth.

### C. Settlement Patterns:

Formation of local village centers during early 19th century with Baptist church at Baptist Village by 1807 and East Longmeadow meetinghouse at town center by 1828. Quarrying of red sandstone expanded at McCarthy Hill with farming maintained on alluvial plain.

### D. Economic Base:

The territory comprising what is now East Longmeadow remained entirely agricultural during the Federal period, its limited population probably engaged in corn and rye production especially. Red sandstone quarries which would later give the town a national reputation were said to have been worked as early as the first settlement of the town in the 1740s, though this probably amounted only to the use of surface boulders and other easily obtainable stone for local purposes. The first commercial quarrying probably did not occur until shortly after the beginning of the 19th century as new stone quarrying

techniques became available. The earliest quarry to be opened, ca. 1824, was the Salisbury quarry. At least two of the earliest, the Salisbury and Billings suffered from rapid accumulation of water and were closed in the 1830s, not to be reopened until the availability of adequate steam pumps in the 1860s.

It is probable that the development of the village of East Longmeadow in the 1820s owes its existence to these quarries, presumably by that date supplying Springfield with building stone. North Main Street (White Street in Springfield) ran directly to the Upper Watershops and (via Walnut) to the main Armory itself, facilities which in their early years used grindstones of Longmeadow sandstone. Two stores, a tavern, and the Congregational Church all appeared in the 1820s.

#### E. Architecture:

Residential: Approximately a dozen houses and cottages of the Federal period are known to survive in East Longmeadow. As was true for the Colonial period, all of these are located in rural settings. Of the period structures observed, most are center chimney cottages. Center chimney houses of the Federal period were observed on Westwood Avenue, North Main Street, Mapleshade Avenue, Porter Road, Prospect and Chestnut Streets. All of these are simply detailed farmhouses. While most houses and cottages exhibit full five-bay facades, at least one three-quarter plan house and several three-quarter plan cottages are known.

Institutional: The second parish of Longmeadow was organized at East Longmeadow in 1829, one year after the construction of the present Congregational Church at the town center. The church, a 2 & 1/2 story structure with a tripartite frontispiece with Ionic pilasters supporting a pediment and a three-stage belfry crowned with a shallow dome, is a modest version of Plate VII of Asher Benjamin's American Builders' Companion (1827). Although vinyl sided, the meetinghouse is a well-developed example of Federal architecture for its rural setting. In addition to the First Church, other ecclesiastical buildings built in the period and still standing are the First Baptist meetinghouse (1807), a one-story structure since altered for residential use, and the First Baptist church at Baptist Village, a two-story



gable roofed building with a center entrance and gable end with pediment, begun in 1818 and completed in 1833; the present one-stage square belfry with low hip roof and bracketted eaves dates from an 1855 remodelling.

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

### A. Transportation Routes:

Town center remained the focus of local road network with improvement of highways to sandstone quarries on Kibbe and Lee Streets.

### B. Population:

The population figures for East Longmeadow are inseparable from those of the parent town of Longmeadow. In the combined figures, however, there is little discernable rise. The population of the town in 1870 was less than 100 persons more than it had been forty years previous. Possibly in the 1850s, with a growing Irish component, the eastern portion of the town had begun to surpass the western.

### C. Settlement Pattern:

East Longmeadow town center developed as the civic and economic focus of the area with expansion of sandstone quarrying around McCarthy Hill. Farming was maintained on the plain in the eastern section.

### D. Economic Base:

Although East Longmeadow remained a predominantly agricultural community, the sandstone quarries became increasingly important during this period. In 1845, 15 men were employed producing \$4800 worth of stone (6% of the county total); in 1855, 26 men produced \$26,000 worth (52% of county production). Steam pumps introduced in the 1860's made possible the reopening of drowned quarries like the Salisbury; and Springfield's rapid growth during the Civil war provided another stimulus to quarry production.

A railroad to connect Springfield with the East Parish (the Springfield and Longmeadow Railroad) had been incorporated as early as 1849, though the road was not constructed for another 25 years.

E. Architecture:

Residential: By the end of the Federal period, some sidehall plan houses were being built in East Longmeadow. Sidehall plans became more common in the Early Industrial period but the traditional center entrance, two-room-wide plan remained in use in the 1840s. The beginnings of nucleated settlement began to be evident at the town center where sidehall plan Greek Revival and Italianate houses were built on South Main, Pleasant and Prospect Streets. One of the finest of these is a brick Greek Revival house on South Main Street: This house features an unusual round light with a fan in the gable end, and sills and foundations of locally-quarried red sandstone. Frame construction prevailed, however, and by the end of the period a number of 1 & 1/2 story cottages, either with sidehall or center entrance plans or with gable front orientation and entrances on the long side, and two story houses with sidehall plans and side ells or cross gabled bays had been built along all the roads of the town as well as at the town center and at Baptist Village in the southeastern corner of the town.

Institutional: The First Church at the town center was remodelled in 1859, but the most significant institutional construction of the period was the building of approximately a half dozen district schools. All of these are very simple buildings of one story height; all are now in residential use. The earliest of the schools was built in 1831 (Old North). These early schools have gable front orientation and entrances on the long side. By the end of the period, the standard 19th century schoolhouse form with gable front orientation and entrance on the gable end had been adopted.

## IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)

### A. Transportation Routes:

Improvement of north-south corridor from Springfield with Connecticut Central Railroad through town center in 1876 (depot intact). Further improvement of corridor with extension of Springfield trolley line to East Longmeadow Center in 1902 with route on North Main Street. Local quarry tram road built across South Main Street by 1890s (abandoned).

### B. Population:

Population figures for East Longmeadow are inseparable from the parent town of old Longmeadow until 1895. In that year, however, East Longmeadow's population was 1,591--72% of the population of the combined east and west parishes of the old Longmeadow. The population of "the Street" in that year was 620, less than half that of the quarry town. How long East Longmeadow's population had exceeded the western part is impossible to say, though it seems likely that by the 1850s the eastern portion had begun to surpass the western. Between 1880 and 1890, the population of the combined towns rose 55%--a growth almost certainly due to the quarrying activity of the East Parish.

Between 1895 and 1900, the town experienced a sharp drop, attributed to stone cutters leaving town to find work elsewhere (Rutherford), but with the opening of the trolley line in 1903, the town population rose again, reaching 1,939 in 1915.

By 1905, the largest immigrant group in East Longmeadow were the Swedes. The first Swedes were said to have gone first to Cromwell, Ct. to work in the stone quarries there, moving on to East Longmeadow. The Swedish Lutheran Church was organized in 1890. The decade to 1915 saw an increase in both Canadians and Italians.

### C. Settlement Pattern:

Expansion of quarrying with a railroad connection through the town center by late 19th century. Suburban development extended from Springfield along North Main

Street trolley line to towns center during early 20th century. Farming maintained on outlying roads to Baptist Village.

#### D. Economic Base:

The Late Industrial period saw the rise and peak of the town's extensive quarrying activities, in part made possible by the arrival of the railroad in 1876, making Longmeadow stone readily available to national markets. In part, however, the expansion was also due to the arrival of the Norcross Brothers, a Worcester-based construction firm whose long association with H.H. Richardson assured a place for Longmeadow stone in many of the architect's most important buildings.

The arrival of the Norcross Brothers in East Longmeadow in 1873-74 appears to have coincided with Richardson's stone needs for Trinity Church in Boston (O'Gorman, p.111). Norcross was responsible for the stone's national reputation and popularity. Quarrying probably reached its peak in the 1890s. In 1890, the product of the quarries--valued at \$563,179--represented 86% of the entire State's production of sandstone. Of the twelve working quarries, seven were operated by Norcross Brothers, and three by a Springfield firm, James & Marra. Norcross' three principal quarries, however, were the Kibbe, Maynard, and Worcester quarries, after whom the three principal varieties of stone were named. Worcester stone was a brown sandstone; Kibbe, a reddish Brownstone; and Maynard stone was "blood red".

Norcross and James & Marra were each said to employ 200-300 men at their peak. Much of the work, however, was seasonal (April to December), and much of the work was migrant labor.

Though little information is available, the decline in the Brownstone business appears to have been fairly sudden. A protracted strike of local stone cutters is blamed for giving an edge to the easier-to-work Indiana limestone and Ohio greystone (Goodlatte, 152). (Another historian, Rutherford, attributes the population drop, 1895-1900, to the departure of stone cutters, but it's hard to reconcile this sharp loss with the incorporation of the Norcross Brownstone Co. in 1901 and the simultaneous construction of new stone-cutting sheds.) Norcross closed down its East Longmeadow operations in 1915.

#### E. Architecture:

Residential: Construction activity remained modest through the end of the period. Neighborhoods at the town center began to fill in with simple two-story frame houses in Stick and Queen Anne styles; most of these employ sidehall plans with cross gabled roofings and one story porches. A few houses at the town center exhibit period gable screens. Outside of the town center, houses demonstrate a general conservatism with sidehall plan late Italianate designs predominating. After the turn of the century, the northwestern corner of the town began to be more densely settled with houses lining outlying roads as well as those at the town center. Many of these are modest two story Colonial Revival houses with pyramidal hip roofs. Bungalows and cottages are less common than in neighboring Longmeadow.

Institutional: The most significant institutional buildings of the period are the Town Hall (1882), and the Pleasant View School (1916). The Town Hall is a pyramidal hip roof and offset square corner belfry constructed of rockfaced red sandstone ashlar, quarried locally. The Pleasant View School is a one story, hip-roofed structure with shaped door hoods at the entrances. Other institutional buildings of the period include the 5th and 6th District schools (1871-2; 1872-3) and the East Longmeadow Grange (1891-95); all are one-story frame buildings. Institutional structures which have not survived include an early Colonial Revival School (Center School, 1889) and the first Catholic Church (St. Michael's, 1887).

#### X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915-1940)

##### A. Transportation Routes:

Local highways improved as regional autoroads with primary corridor as Route 83 went through the town center from Springfield. Secondary period highways include Route 186 and Route 220 to Connecticut. Abandonment of streetcar service in 1939.

#### B. Population:

East Longmeadow's population grew sharply in the 1915-1925 period--by nearly 120 persons a year--as Springfield's employment and improved transportation made East Longmeadow increasingly attractive. By 1940 the population had reached 3,403, somewhat over double what it had been 30 years before.

#### C. Settlement Pattern:

Gradual closure of sandstone quarries after First World War and significant expansion of street car suburban development from Springfield along North Main Street to town center. Prospect Street emerged as a local affluent district by 1920s with similar development from Springfield on Markham Hill (Allen Street) by 1940s. Farming shifted increasingly to poultry raising and market gardening, while location of Pratt & Whitney Aircraft Plant during Second World War created an industrial focus along railroad corridor.

#### D. Economic Base:

Only one stone yard remained in business for much of the period. The McCormick-Longmeadow Co. moved to this town from Holyoke in 1931, operating the Kibbe and Worcester quarries nearly continuously until 1971. The Maynard quarry, however, had closed by 1938 and between that date and 1965, was used as a popular bathing pool known as Redstone Lake. The quarry reopened in 1965 when architect Philip Johnson determined on the bloodred sandstone for New York University's new Bobst Library building. With the completion of that project in 1971, all quarrying in East Longmeadow came to an end.

In the Early Modern period, poultry raising and market gardening was also carried on. In 1942, with the expansion of Hartford's Pratt & Whitney into war time contracts, the aircraft firm built "Plant M" to turn out aircraft engine parts. At its peak the firm employed 4300 men and women.

#### E. Architecture:

Residential: Limited suburban development occurred in the northwestern corner of the town around the town center during the 1920s. Most of this consists of

modest Colonial Revival and Craftsman cottages. The most significant development in the residential architecture of the period was the construction of two large, and probably architect-designed, Colonial Revival estates along the ridge overlooking the Wilbraham Mountains east of the town; both the houses are located on Prospect Street.

## XI. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

East Longmeadow's survey adequately documents existing late 18th and early 19th century resources, both residential and institutional. Later 19th century structures at the town center and selected early 20th century houses in outlying areas of the town, should be inventoried as well. There is little district potential as most of the town's resources exist in an open rural context. One of the better preserved sections of agricultural landscape occurs in the southeastern corner of the town on King Hill Road where several early 19th century farmsteads with surrounding open land and early roadbed survive in unaltered condition.

Industrial: The only standing industrial structure identified from the historic periods is the small frame railroad depot at the center. However, in view of the importance of quarrying operations to the development of the town (as well as the national fame which the local stone won in the late 19th century), some attention should be given to identifying the various quarries, owners, operators, and the types of stone obtained from each. Because of the different names used in the various sources, considerable confusion exists about which quarry is which.

## XII. SOURCES

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