

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

FRAMINGHAM

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.



MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth

Chair, Massachusetts Historical Commission

220 Morrissey Blvd.

Boston, MA 02125

www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc

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

MHC RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

Date: February 1980

Community: Framingham

I. TOPOGRAPHY

Located on rolling riverine lowlands and adjacent rugged uplands. Lowland topography shaped by glacial outwash action and river meander. Gravelly to sandy soil. Rocky highlands throughout western part of town, especially in northwest corner. Virtually all drainage into Sudbury River which meanders northeast through town. Considerable marsh/meadow adjacent. Several large ponds in southern part of town. Some drainage into Charles from southeast corner of town.

II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

After 1675 referred to as "Framingham plantation" or "Danforth's Farms". Incorporated as Town of Framingham 1700 -- formed from lands granted to various individuals between 1640-1680. A fairly complex history of town boundary adjustments. Remaining original boundaries include Sudbury line (1639) to north and Marlborough line (1656) on northwest.

III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Complex suburban industrial town on primary western axis of Boston with multiple center development. Important native settlement area along Sudbury River and local ponds, overlaid with early land grants of mid-17th century from surrounding towns. Colonial settlement along Sudbury valley with compromise meetinghouse at Framingham Center. Northwest area retains 18th century landscape with period houses through early 19th century, as do portions of fringe southwest area. Significant Black population during mid-18th century linked with Revolutionary War. Three distinctive centers emerge by early 19th century: Saxonville as mill village on Sudbury Falls preserves mid-19th housing and late 19th century factory complex, Framingham Center as civic focus on Boston turnpike retains several high-style buildings from late Colonial to early Victorian period with status residential district, and South Framingham on mainline Boston railroad as urban-industrial center with innovative technology in straw, rubber and paper products with array of late 19th century factories, business district, multiple family housing and regional fringe institutions. Much of historic Sudbury axis overlain by suburban development in mid-20th century along early auto highways.

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500-1620)

A. Transportation Routes:

Located on western axis of trails with complex of routes around Sudbury River. Best documented is "Connecticut Path" (Route 126) from Cochituate to South Framingham apparently along Concord Street with location to Sherborn around Course-Beaver Dam Brooks unknown -- perhaps Irving Street-Western Avenue. Former loops preserved as New-

berry Street and Old Connecticut Path (Route 30). Secondary trails west to Framingham Center probably include Main Street and possible alternate as Central-Summer Streets over Sudbury with western trails from Center as Gay-Salem End Roads and Pleasant-Wavene Streets. N/S link from Farm Pond (South Framingham) to Nobscot Hill (Sudbury) follow axis of Franklin-Walnut-Main-Edgell Streets. Alternate western paths to Marlborough over Sudbury include Potter-Edmans Roads from Stone Bridge with possible loop as Winch-Grove Streets and branch to Sudbury Falls (Saxonville) as Water-Mechanic Streets to Connecticut Path. Other trails to Farm Pond area (South Framingham) are conjectured as Dudley Road around Mt. Wayte, Winthrop-Bethnay Streets around Waushakum Pond and Hartford Street to Natick.

B. Settlement Pattern:

Several sites reported with probable period occupation. Areas of site concentration include: north end of Farm Pond, west side and outlet of Lake Cochituate, and around the falls at Saxonville (see Temple, 1887, pp. 42-49). Other probable locations include well drained terraces and knolls overlooking Sudbury River and major ponds.

C. Subsistence Pattern:

Excellent fishing (shod and herring) in Sudbury River, good agricultural land scattered throughout town, high potential for hunting and gathering. An area capable of supporting a sizable native population.

D. Observations:

Though available evidence is patchy, apparently an area of concentrated native settlement, much of which extended into the Woodland period. Identity of these people remains unclear but probably were inland (Nipmuck) rather than coastal tribes. No European materials reported, however documents suggest some native occupation continued into contact period.

V. FIRST SETTLEMENT PERIOD (1620-1675)

A. Transportation Routes:

Native trails remain as primary highways, especially Connecticut Path (Route 126), and Marlborough roads as Pleasant-Main Streets (Route 30) and Edmans Road during mid-17th century.

B. Population:

Small, a dozen families or less, primarily from Sudbury (Wayland).

C. Settlement:

Scattered farms, especially in northeast section. Also along Connecticut Path and around the north edge of Farm Pond. First settler, John Stone, 1647 -- Saxonville area. No village center.

D. Economic Base:

Subsistence agriculture. Gristmill built by John Stone, 1659 on falls at Saxonville.

E. Observations:

Basically an outlying district of Sudbury (Wayland). Located within the logical axis of development from Watertown/Sudbury: on route of major trail network, good land and water available. Topography discouraged emergence of a village center.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1676-1776)

A. Transportation Routes:

Location of meetinghouse in late 17th century focus road network to Framingham Center. Secondary farm roads link to Sudbury falls (Saxonville) by mid-18th century as Brook-Belknap Streets Central and Elm Streets. Cross roads to Sudbury as Nixon and Wayside Inn Roads and routes to Cold Spring (Ashland) as Badger and Fountain Streets.

B. Population:

Depopulated during King Philip's War. Gradual influx afterwards, groups from several communities. By 1710, 111 men listed on tax rolls. Census of 1765 listed 1,313 people in 234 families; also 205 houses.

C. Settlement:

A half dozen clusters of settlement emerged after King Philip's War. These were based on previous associations and community ties (i.e. Salem cluster, Reading cluster, Watertown cluster). Little interaction among them. Two strongest were Sudbury group in Northeast corner (Saxonville) and Sherborn group in southeast corner (Pratt's Plain). After incorporation, village center established in compromise location (east of Bare Hill). Meetinghouse built, 1701; first school, 1716. Bitter debate over location for new meetinghouse after 1725, finally built on newly laid out Commons, 1735. Dissension continued -- a second church established and built, 1746 (Hemenway Road).

D. Economic Base:

Primarily agriculture and grazing: A town brand registered, 1702. Several men served as rangers during Colonial wars. Grist, lumber and falling mills operated on Sudbury River (especially in Saxonville area) throughout 18th century. Grist and sawmills also on Cochituate, Barton's and Stoney Brooks. Several taverns, both along Connecticut Path and other major transportation routes, as well as in village center.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Central-chimney, two-storey vernacular houses appear as most wide-spread house-type as well as the house-type which is most frequently attributed late 17th century construction dates; a smaller

number of houses with twin interior chimneys also exist from this period. Gambrel roofs are rare (only three examples recorded) as are high-style Georgian details although at least one mid-18th century house with a hip-on-hip roof exists (Pleasant Street) suggesting that some high-style was built. One-storey cottages of the period are either absent altogether or rare in their survival.

Institutional: First meetinghouse built ca. 1700, replaced 1735; first schoolhouse built 1716, nine school (districts?) established 1749, four new schoolhouses built 1750, two schools built 1769, schools re-sited and three new buildings constructed 1774.

Commercial: Probably limited to several taverns and stores conducted in parts of houses throughout period.

Industrial: Probably limited to wood-frame buildings on water-power sites; by 1760 eight (grist and saw) mills and one iron forge existed.

F. Observations:

A heterogeneous collection of small farming clusters which made only limited progress consolidating into a single community. Location on main route west brought these groups together during late 17th century. Topography of town reinforced their disparate tendencies.

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

A. Transportation Routes:

Colonial highways remain in place. Turnpikes set along western axis from Natick as Boston and Worcester (Route 9) in 1809 through Framingham Center and Hartford Turnpike (Waverly Street -- Route 135) in 1812 through South Framingham with discontinued segment over Regis College hill.

B. Population:

Steady increases occurred throughout period, although more rapid increases occurred after 1810. Baptist Society organized 1811-12; Methodist Episcopal Society, 1788; Saxonville Religious Society, 1827; Universalist Society, 1829; Hollis Evangelical Society, 1830.

C. Settlement Locations:

Framingham Centre expanded as a turnpike-center; Saxonville developed as a mill village; development of farmsteads in the north/central parts of the town either advanced or farmsteads in these areas underwent re-building.

D. Economic Base:

Among the earliest manufacturing companies were textile mills -- Saxon wooden mills on the Sudbury River (1824) and the Framingham Manufacturing Co. on Cochituate Brook (1813). Plaiting of straw braid

for home bonnet making began as early as 1799; the earliest straw "factory" appeared about 1815, like the nascent shoe industry, given a greater impetus by the construction of the Boston-Worcester turnpike in 1809. Though tanneries continued to operate throughout the period, the business was eventually broken up by the faster "hot-liquor process" which local tanners did not adopt.

E. Architecture:

Note: The growth of Framingham Center after the opening of the Boston-Worcester Turnpike seems to have attracted a number of master builders to the town (ca. 1810-1815), perhaps providing the area with more sophisticated knowledge of current architectural styles than had previously been the case.

Residential: Vernacular house plans of the preceding period probably remained in use until ca. 1790-1810 when the rear-wall chimney, center-entrance facade type of Federalist house became widespread, examples of this Federalist type exist with both hip and pitched roofs, although hip-roofed examples tend more to be located near the town center and to possess more elaborate decorative details (porches and entries) than do other house types of the period. Also present are a moderate number of side-hall plan houses with transitional Federalist/Greek Revival style trim (ca. 1825-35). A small number of central chimney cottages appear to date from the end of this period with at least one example possessing Federal and Gothic trim (ca. 1825-30). At Saxonville some workers' housing remains from ca. 1825-35, consisting of central chimney double houses.

Institutional: At least twelve new schoolhouses built between 1793 and 1822, all one-room plans, many built of brick; Federalist style meetinghouse built 1807 by town (demolished 1846). Four wood frame churches built, three of late Federalist design (1827, 1829 and 1830) and one of combined Federal/Gothic design (1827). Private academy founded at center 1729 and built two-storey brick schoolhouse (demolished).

Commercial: Major development at Framingham Center consisted of one and two-storey wood frame buildings, some joined together in a row, also three-storey Federalist style hotel building.

Industrial: Brick and wood mill buildings with monitor roofs and bell towers built on water-privilege at Saxonville; boot and shoe-making and straw hat manufacture probably led to construction of few buildings, possible one-storey wood-frame shops.

VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830-1870)

A. Transportation Routes:

Turnpikes and highways remain from early 19th century. South Framingham becomes important railroad junction during mid-19th century with original Boston and Worcester in 1834 (B&A) and branches to Milford (1847) and Framingham Center (1850). Extensions from Framingham Center to Marlborough (1854) and Sudbury (1871) with branch from South Framingham to Sherborn (1870). Railroad shops along east side Farm

Pond now abandoned. Branch from Natick to Saxonville 1846.

B. Population:

Rapid growth with doubling of population between 1830 and 1855 after which population size fluctuated; large immigrant population (mainly Irish) present by 1845-1855. New churches founded included: at Saxonville a Catholic parish (1844-1845) and Congregational Society (1833); at Framingham Center an Episcopal parish (1860); and at South Framingham a Baptist Society (1854), and a Methodist Episcopal Society (1869).

C. Settlement Locations:

Continued development at Saxonville; Framingham Center gradually became wealthier residential district as South Framingham became major focus of industrial and residential development (post-1835).

D. Economic Base:

In the early 1830s William Phipps "discovered a method of desolving rubber and spreading it on cloth" and two evidently independent companies incorporated May 16, 1836 (MHC Survey). Both were in business only a few years, possibly because of infringements on MacIntosh's 1823 patent. However, appears significant for Late Industrial Period development of rubber companies in Framingham and Norfolk County. Taking of Cochituate water supply by City of Boston kills lower Cochituate Brook mill sites. Silk industry stimulated ca. 1836 by State bounty, though short-lived. Arrival of Boston & Albany Railroad in South Framingham gave important boost to industrial development, particularly in straw, and boots and shoes. T.L. Barber straw works on Park Street (ca. 1865) a standing remnant of this period.

E. Architecture:

Note: In general local institutional and high-style residential architecture of this period was stylistically current with national taste and considerably more advanced than that found in neighboring towns. Alexander Esty, a local architect is associated with several of the most advanced buildings of the 1850s-1840s and may have had an influence in introducing Victorian architectural styles.

Residential: A full range of house types was built in Greek Revival, Italianate and Second Empire styles with Italianate (ca. 1848-60) perhaps being the most widespread of the three; there is unlikely to be more than several examples of Carpenter Gothic architecture. High-style architect-designed suburban villas of stone and wood built in and around Framingham Center (Park Street, Prospect Street and Salem Road) on hillside sites near Sudbury River; houses of similar quality built in smaller numbers on the outskirts of South Framingham (Union Avenue and off Concord Street) and Saxonville (Elm, Summer and Central Streets). Side-hall houses and cottages made up largest number of modest houses primarily at Saxonville, Coburnville and South Framingham, of these most are decorated with machine-cut trim and are largely astylistic;

rows of wooden tenements were built in the late Italianate style (ca. 1865-1875) at South Framingham (south of the railroad bed) and at Coburnville.

Institutional: Introduction of new contemporary styles seems to have come through architect-designed public buildings, most notably Greek Revival (town hall, Solomon Willard architect -- 1833), Gothic Revival (First Parish Church -- 1846), early Romanesque Revival (Normal School -- Alexander Esty architect, 1852) and Italianate (school buildings, 1850s). Town-owned buildings of period included two town halls (Center -- 1833; Saxonville ca. 1835-40), two wood frame high schools (1852-1857), one stone high school -- built privately (1837), extensive rebuilding of thirteen districts' schoolhouses before 1847 and construction of schoolhouses after districts abolished and grading introduced, 1865-1866; firehouse built at Saxonville, 1833. Development of the State Normal School began at Framingham Center in 1852-1853; land takings and construction of the Boston water works reservoirs began in 1846-48. Five wood frame churches built (1833-1854) and two enlarged, one stone church built 1870, in general, Greek Revival style remained popular until ca. 1845 when it was supplanted by Gothic Revival as main church style, one early Romanesque church (1854).

Commercial: Italianate commercial buildings built at Framingham Center, primarily two-storey with gabled facades and first storey store fronts, also two-storey wooden blocks (ca. 1865-75) and one Italianate style bank (1853); major new commercial development at South Framingham made up of two and three-storey wood frame blocks, Italianate and Second Empire styles, similar types but fewer in number built at Saxonville; railroad stations built after 1835.

Industrial: Utilitarian style brick factory buildings powered by steam built along railroad bed at South Framingham-Coburnville; enlargement of main mill at Saxonville.

IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)

A. Transportation Routes:

Road and rail system intact from mid-19th century. Horse street-cars from South Framingham to Framingham Center and Saxonville in 1880s on Union and Concord-Summer Streets. Electric trolley routes by early 1900s to Ashland and Natick on Hollis and Waverly Streets from South Framingham and interurban electric along Worcester Turnpike (Route 9) to Boston from Framingham Center.

B. Population:

Rapid growth throughout period, but with slight lulls between 1890-1895 and 1900-1905; large increases in foreign-born population between 1875-1885 and 1905-1915, Irish remained largest group until 1905-1915 when outnumbered by Italians. New religious congregations formed: at Saxonville: none; at Framingham Center: a Catholic mission (1877); at South Framingham: a Congregational Society (1873), a Universalist Society (1878), a Catholic Parish (1876), a Presbyterian congregation (1886) and an Episcopal parish (1888).

C. Settlement Location:

Majority of growth occurred in South Framingham and Coburnville; increased estate and upper-middle class suburban development occurred at Framingham Center and in the western portions of the town; little change at Saxonville.

D. Economic Base:

Rapid industrial growth in South Framingham during this period, which saw peaking of straw industry (\$830,000 worth in 1875), the introduction of Rattan works (1888) and reintroduction of rubber factories producing both rubberized cloth and rubberized footwear. Rattan works were primarily in Prattville, Coburnville had grown up around Coburn Boot Co. Gregory & Co. boot factory: second largest industry in town and one of the largest boot factories in New England. Two major rubber companies, Gossamer (1877, still extant on Waverley Street) and Para Rubber Shoe Co. (1884, now Dennison Mfg.) also attracted employees and in the period 1875-90 South Framingham nearly doubled. Proximity to Boston water supply led to state assistance in construction of early sewage system for South Framingham (1889). Sudbury Aqueduct and gatehouse on Farm Pond (1874-76, standing). Para Rubber replaced by Dennison Mfg. Co., 1890s.

E. Architecture:

Note: Local architecture continued to be current with national taste during 1870s-188s, influenced in part by Alexander Esty and W. Frank Hurd, both residents of Framingham; after 1890s, local architecture fit more into standard pattern of Boston suburban architecture.

Residential: High-style houses of period were few restricted to several examples each of the Second Empire, Queen Anne, eclectic early twentieth century and Colonial Revival styles in scattered locations. More common are substantial, suburban houses of late Italianate, Victorian Gothic (few), Queen Anne and Colonial Revival (few) styles built at South Framingham (Union Street, Warren Road, Concord Street and around Clark Street); slightly later examples of this level of building (including eclectic early 20th century) exist immediately south of Framingham Center. Modest houses of the period are principally side-hall houses and cottages ranging from pattern book examples of Victorian Gothic and Second Empire of the 1870s (Saxonville) to astylistic houses with machine cut decorative trim (South Framingham and Coburnville). Wood-frame row houses continued to be built at South Framingham and Saxonville (Italianate and Second Empire styles) until c. 1880-1890 after which they seem to have ceased being built.

Institutional: Wide-spread use of Victorian Gothic style for churches, and public buildings during the mid-1870s; buildings in this style included one Memorial Hall (1872), one hearse house at Edgell Cemetery (mid-1870s--concrete block construction), four water works gate houses (c. 1876-78) and state-owned Women's Prison (1874-77); Victorian Gothic supplanted by Queen Anne style by late 1880s at State Normal School (c. 1890) and for chapel at Edgell Cemetery (ca. 1889-1890);

more eclectic were firehouses, at least two of which were built 1880s-1890s. Other public buildings included wood frame as well as brick schoolhouses of which 19 existed in use in 1909, a muster-ground for the state militia (1873), an armory (ca. 1905-15) and hospital (1893). Of the six churches built or altered during this period, all were wooden frame, those built before ca. 1885 were Victorian Gothic style while those built after display at least some elements of the Queen Anne style.

Commercial: More diverse development of South Framingham with stores, offices, amusement halls, etc.; brick blocks built beginning ca. 1876, became widespread in 1880s-1890s, commercial district became solidly built-up with brick rows in the early 20th century, styles present include a small number of Romanesque Revival designs and a far larger number of Classical/Beaux Arts designs; some wood frame Second Empire/Victorian Gothic style blocks built at Framingham Center and Saxonville early in period; replacement of railroad stations throughout period.

Industrial: With exception of symmetrical towered facade of mill at Saxonville, most mill construction of period was of brick and of utilitarian design; re-inforced concrete introduced at Saxonville and South Framingham ca. 1905-20.

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915-1940)

A. Transportation Routes:

Abandonment of street railways in 1920s with auto highways to South Framingham as Routes 126 (Concord-Hollis Streets) and Route 135 (Waverly Street) with Framingham Center as Route 30 (Connecticut Path-Pleasant Streets). Express auto highway on Worcester Turnpike in 1930s as Route 9 with original concrete bridges at Route 126 and Lamp Hill (1931).

B. Population:

Rapid growth of population to 1925-30 after which growth slowed until post 1945 suburbanization.

C. Settlement Locations:

Growth mainly in the vicinity of South Framingham.

D. Economic Base:

Framingham remained industrially active, though straw, rubber and cotton industries declined. Chemical companies and producers of water proof paper (like Dennison) filled the void. Roxbury Carpet Co. occupied the old Saxonville Mills.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Development continued along lines established in preceding period. Colonial Revival remained popular style for larger

houses in western and northern sections of town, while Dutch Colonial and Bungalow styles became wide-spread for one and two-storey single-family houses; two-family houses (astylistic) became widely built at South Framingham and Coburnville, although relatively few three-deckers and apartment houses seem to have been built.

Institutional: Extensive new school construction; Classical Revival style town hall built at South Framingham; expansion of institutions established in preceding periods occurred, although no architectural trends are discernable, except at Framingham Center where Colonial/Federal Revival style public buildings were built in the 1920s; other contemporary styles represented throughout town.

Commercial: Main focus at South Framingham -- one-storey blocks with Classical details built (1920s), some free-standing Colonial Revival style brick buildings also constructed (ca. 1925-40); strip development along sections of Route 9.

Industrial: Expansion of existing plants -- primarily utilitarian design, concrete and steel-frame construction.

XI.

SOURCES

Temple, Josiah, History of Framingham (1887).