

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

GARDNER

Report Date: 1984

Associated Regional Report: Central Massachusetts

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

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

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

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

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MHC RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

DATE: 1984

COMMUNITY: Gardner

I. TOPOGRAPHY

Located in the north-central portion of Worcester County, Gardner lies within the second tier of towns south of the New Hampshire border. Its surface is generally uneven and hilly, with elevations ranging from nearly 1300 feet above sea level to about 900 feet above sea level in the Otter River Valley. Most of the town lies between 1100 and 1000 feet above sea level.

Along with the Otter River, the town is drained by a number of streams which provided many good sites for water-powered manufacturing. Many ponds and reservoirs have been formed along these streams, the largest of which is Crystal Lake north of the town center. The waters flow into two major drainage basins--those in the west into the Otter River and eventually to the Connecticut River, and those in the east into the Merrimack River basin.

The town's soils consist largely of Charlton loams, ranging from fine sandy to stoney loam. Where cultivable these soils are among the more important agricultural soils of the county and yield good crops of hay, grain, and vegetables.

II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

A peripheral area of several 18th-century grants, Gardner was established as a town in 1785 from parts of the towns of Ashburnham (1765), Templeton (1762), Westminster (1759), and Winchendon (1764). Parts were annexed to Winchendon in the northwest (1787, 1851) and Ashburnham in the northeast (1815). Parts of Winchendon were annexed in 1794 and 1851. Gardner was incorporated as a city in 1922.

III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Gardner is an urban-industrial center in a poorly drained tributary area northeast of Otter River, on an historic east-west Central Upland corridor. Native sites are likely at Crystal Lake. The area was occupied relatively late as marginal, peripheral lands of Narragansett Number Two (Westminster), Narragansett Number Six (Templeton), Ipswich Canada (Winchendon), and Dorchester Canada (Ashburnham). First permanent European settlement was likely by ca. 1760. A small, dispersed 18th-century agricultural population developed with the meetinghouse site established southeast of Crystal Lake in 1787 after incorporation. The Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike (1800) is sited south of the meetinghouse, with local focus at South Gardner. Early 19th-century local chair and woodenware manufacturing expanded dramatically into a large-scale chair industry in the second half of the 19th century as Gardner became

regional rail focus. Factory concentrations occurred both at West Gardner and South Gardner, and Irish, French Canadian, and diverse later ethnic, multifamily, residential neighborhoods developed and expanded, particularly on Washington Hill and around Glenwood Hill. The meetinghouse center (Old Common) remained the primary civic and high-income residential focus through the late 19th and early 20th centuries, although commercial activities increasingly gravitated toward the West Gardner area, where multistory brick blocks are built after the 1880s. A new civic center is established at West Gardner after local incorporation as a city in 1921. The innovative Gardner State Colony for the Insane is established in the east in the early 20th century.

Some isolated late 18th- and early 19th-century dwellings remain, with a small cluster on Park Street in the north, and elements of turnpike settlement survive along East Broadway in South Gardner. Several notable late 19th- and early 20th-century factory complexes and individual structures survive, as do a number of outstanding civic and religious buildings, a variety of representative single- and multifamily housing, and some notable high-style residences, particularly in the Old Common area. Downtown Gardner retains much of its late 19th- and early 20th-century character, but deterioration of the city core, widespread alterations of commercial and residential exteriors, and destruction resulting from modern Route 2 corridor construction have all lessened its coherence as an urban center. Many landmark industrial structures continue to be threatened. Early automobile era survivals remain along the old Mohawk Trail route (West Broadway/East Broadway). Suburban development is currently most active in the northwest. Expansion of Mount Wachusett Community College and the recent new Route 140 corridor in the east have also had a heavy impact on outlying areas. Destruction and alteration of significant components of the Gardner State Colony have recently occurred as part of its conversion to a correctional institution.

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500-1620)

A. Transportation Routes

Highland tributary area north and east of Otter River corridor. East/west trail from Meetinghouse Pond (Westminster) south of Crystal Lake to Otter River corridor inferred on Betty Spring Road-Pearl Street-Central Street-West Street, with alternate route conjectured on Park Street-Clark Road-Glen Road. Southern trail inferred on Elm Street-South Main-High Street-Minnott Road, to trail south of Cedar Swamp (Westminster). Northeast trail along Whitman River corridor to Naukeag Lakes inferred on Pearl Street-Smith Street-Murray Road.

B. Settlement Pattern

Like so many Worcester County towns, the few sites reported for the town have no cultural affiliation. Like its neighbor Ashburnham, the town lies partially in the Nashua and partially in the Millers River drainage. This reinforces its position located

in a cultural boundary area between the Nipmucks in the south and east and the western Squakeag. Combined with its upland ecology, we can expect low density in this area. Crystal Pond, Otter River, and smaller waterways, including brook tributaries and several ponds, attracted occupation.

C. Subsistence Pattern

In this upland area, visits were seasonal and brief, by small family or task groups, primarily for hunting and perhaps for lithic resources near Kendall Pond in the east.

V. PLANTATION PERIOD (1620-1675)

A. Transportation Routes

Contact period trails continue in use.

B. Settlement Pattern

A continuation of the pattern established during the Contact period, with a reduction when the Squakeags moved north.

C. Subsistence Pattern

A continuation of patterns established during the Contact period.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

A. Transportation Routes

Peripheral part of surrounding towns, with native trails improved as roads to town centers. A new through route is County Road from Winchendon to Westminster (abandoned way southwest of Route 140 to Park Street, abandoned way to Chapel Street, abandoned route to Colony Road).

B. Population

Few figures are available due to late incorporation date. In 1770 there were ca. 13 families in the area. Settlers came to the town from Sherborn, Marlborough, Reading, and Needham, as well as Worcester County towns such as Harvard and Shrewsbury.

C. Settlement Pattern

Little information is available due to late settlement of northwestern Worcester County. This area was the far corners of towns laid out early in the century: Westminster, Ashburnham, Winchendon, and Templeton. The first colonial settler, Elisha Jackson, came to the Westminster section on the post road to the southeast in 1764. A large part of the Westminster area was granted in the town's fourth land division of 1770. These areas were occupied as dispersed farms far from the centers of their respective towns.

D. Economic Base

Little information is available for the area prior to incorporation as an independent town; see parent town reports for description of poor agrarian towns of the northern county.

E. Architecture

Residential: Few period buildings have survived the 19th-century development in Gardner. The oldest known house is ca. 1768 cape moved to Lenox Street. Of the surviving houses, the most common form appears to have been the center chimney plan, both one and two stories. Double chimney houses seem to have been rare in this period.

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

A. Transportation Routes

The Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike is opened across the southern part of town ca. 1800. The Smith Street-Pearl Street route is improved as a connector to the meetinghouse center from the county road.

B. Population

For the years reported, the town's population grows, doubling in 40 years, from 531 in 1790 to 1,023 in 1830. Thirty-three men gathered the church in 1786 but did not call a minister until 1791. As early as 1797 some citizens were certified to Ashburnham's Methodist Church; a society was formed in 1800 included in a circuit that included north Worcester and Franklin County towns. By 1813, Baptists were certified to Templeton until the formation of a society here in 1827 and a church in 1830. That year the town experienced a great revival. This led in part to the dismissal of the town's minister, the withdrawal of many church members, and the formation in 1830 of an Evangelical church by 41 males. It is not known whether any citizens actively participated in Shays' Rebellion; the town petitioned the General Court to bring peace from the insurgency, even if some suffering was involved. Later they wrote Jefferson to object to the Embargo of 1807, emphasizing the importance of foreign trade. As early as 1789 discussion of established a workhouse was dismissed. a voluntary military group, the Garner Light Infantry, was formed in 1813. The first temperance organization was established in 1829.

C. Settlement Pattern

Sparsely populated peripheral area of Westminster, Templeton, Winchendon, and Ashburnham. Hilltop meetinghouse site established by 1787 southeast of Crystal Lake after incorporation as town of Gardner. Meetinghouse completed in 1791, and small residential center develops along Pearl Street after ca. 1790. Secondary

turnpike village develops at South Gardner after 1800 along East Broadway. Dispersed, small-scale woodworking industry of the early 19th century concentrates in many chair manufacturing shops by period's end.

D. Economic Base

During the Federal period Gardner was transformed from a predominantly agricultural community to a growing manufacturing center fueled by woodworking industries, particularly chair-making. During the late 18th century agriculture was supplemented by the burning of potash, the manufacture of tubs, pails and barrels, and other minor woodworking crafts. A result of surplus lumber generated by land clearing, these industries eventually came to be the sole pursuits of a number of individuals. By 1795, six sawmills were in operation in Gardner.

Early in the 19th century chair-making was commenced in Gardner and by 1832 accounted for more than 80% of the total value of the town's manufactured goods (898,000) and employed nearly 200 men and women. The first chair-maker in Gardner was James M. Comee, who began the manufacture of all-wooden chairs in 1805 near the center. Not long afterwards flag (or rush) seated chairs were introduced, the flagging of the seats woven in the home on chair frames made in the shops and put-out to home workers.

Soon Comee's apprenticed workmen set up their own shops, the first being Elijah Brick in 1814. About 1825 Elijah Putnam set up shop on Green Street, and in 1826 Levi and Water Heywood began to make chairs in a shop at the corner of Elm and Central St. The first chair shop established in South Gardner was set up in 1818 by Jones Brick. A second major chair-making plant was set up in South Gardner in 1830 by Stephen Taylor on the site of the later S.K. Pierce and Co. plant.

Until the 1820s most work was carried out by hand, utilizing foot-power to turn lathes, with most shops manufacturing all their chair parts. During the 1820s turning shops, which produced only the lathe-turned posts and rails of chairs, began to appear; among the earliest and largest was the firm of Sawin and Damon, which introduced water-powered circular saws and turning lathes in the late 1820s. By 1832, the time of the Treasury Secretary's Census of Manufactures, Gardner contained nine chair manufactories and the Sawin and Damon turning shop. Other woodworking industries, at least partially mechanized by the end of the period, included tub and pail making; the manufacture of cardboards, disposed of at Leicester where they were finished and readied for market; and box and seive making.

During the opening decades of the 19th century, several other crafts/industries were pursued. In 1808 a mill privilege in South Gardner was developed and a nail-making mill erected. By 1820 the site was converted to a fulling mill and carding mill; by 1829 again changed to the manufacture of pine furniture. Boot and shoemaking also were carried on though in a small way; by 1832 only two shops were recorded in operation. Their leather needs were supplied by a local tanner and currier, George Scott.

E. Architecture

Residential: The traditional center and double chimney forms seem to have prevailed. Single-story, center chimney houses appear to comprise the largest group of survivals. The number of two-story, double chimney houses increased and included a gable on hip example. At least one end chimney house is recorded and two rear wall chimney plans, including one with brick end walls.

Institutional: The first meetinghouse was built between 1787-91. the building measured 45 x 60 feet, was painted a stone color with green doors and white trim, and was ordered to be finished like the Westminster meetinghouse. Four district schools were constructed in 1796 and were improved or repaired in 1802 by the application of Spanish brown and lye paint. Two additional district schools were built in 1818. A private school was built in the center in 1814.

Commercial: The South Gardner Hotel, a ca. 1805, two-story, eight-bay, brick structure, continued in use as a hotel, with additions, into the late 19th century.

VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830-1870)

A. Transportation Routes

The Vermont and Massachusetts (Fitchburg) Railroad begins service through the central part of town between Gardner Center and South Gardner by 1847. The early 19th century roads continued in use.

B. Population

Population growth in the town accelerated during the period, nearly tripling during the 40 years, from 1,260 in 1830 to 3,333 in 1870. Of particular importance to this growth was the expansion of manufacturing in the town, and with it came in influx of foreign-born to the town, expanding from 10.3% in 1855 to 13.4% ten years later. Most numerous, of course, were the Irish, with small numbers of Canadians and English.

With the withdrawal of the Orthodox, the first parish became Unitarian in 1850; by 1843, however, the group had weakened, and discussions of reunification began. This was accomplished in 1867, with the Evangelical views predominating. In 1864 Universalist preaching began in the town, and in 1867 they took over the first parish meetinghouse. As the number of Catholics increased, masses began in 1856; there were ca. 300 in 1863 when two missions existed in the town. In 1869 the Methodists formed a church.

The number of temperance organizations increased, including the Washington Total Abstinence Society of 1842, a reorganization of the first in 1848, and the addition of the Good Templars in 1866. Other voluntary associations also proliferated: a second voluntary military group, the Gardner Greys, was organized in 1844; two brass bands existed in 1855, and a Musical Association,

focusing on the sacred, had been organized in 1851; a lodge of Masons was formed in 1864; a YMCA was formed in 1868. The district schools held circulating libraries, South Gardner had a Social Library Association from 1840, and three subscription libraries, including an agricultural, were formed briefly in the Center. From 1856 discussion about a high school took place, bringing irregular terms in the Center until made permanent in 1866. School districts were abolished in 1869. A poor farm was purchased in 1849.

C. Settlement Pattern

Significant development occurs at the chair manufacturing center at West Gardner, southwest of the Federal period meetinghouse village, along the Pond Brook corridor between Glenwood and Washington Hills. Development also occurs at a second chair manufacturing focus along the Pen Brook corridor at South Gardner. The meetinghouse center remains the main institutional/commercial focus and is the site of most middle- and high-income period residential growth.

Major chair industry expansion after the 1850s occurs along Pond Brook from Central Street south, with factories and mill ponds between Pine and North Main Street, as far as the Vermont and Massachusetts rail line. Immigrant worker housing predominates on the west side of the corridor on North Main, Emerald Street, Pleasant Street, Limerick Street, and Dublin Street. Some worker housing is also located in the Cottage-Spring-Maple Street area. A secondary commercial/institutional center begins to develop by period's end at the seven street intersection at the northern end of the industrial corridor (Central/North Main intersection) with a large commercial block and the Methodist Episcopal Church (1870).

The main civic and commercial center, however, remains at the Old Common with the Second Congregational Church (1856) on Central Street, the town hall (1860), and several scattered commercial establishments just to the south. Middle- and high-income residences extend east and west of this center, on Pearl Street and Central/Lynde Streets, respectively. A high-income district begins to develop southward on School, Chestnut, and Elm Streets as far as Cross Streets, with some further extension on Chestnut Street.

In South Gardner, chair manufacturing expands on the Pew Brook corridor, with factories and mill ponds north of East Broadway. In addition to the established Federal period village cluster, and the Baptist Church (1833) at the East Broadway/High Street intersection, residential infill occurs on East Broadway and High Street, and development extends along South Main from the Vermont and Massachusetts Railroad to Union Street, south on Union Street, and north on Chelsea Street. A small depot cluster develops between West and South Gardner at the North Main/South Main/Elm Street intersection.

D. Economic Base

The 1830s marked a new phase in the chair-making industry - the widespread adoption and use of water and later steam powered machinery, and the introduction of rattan as an important material for the production of chairs. By mid-century many of the major chair-makers had been established and Gardner had become the leading chair manufacturing town in the Commonwealth. Instrumental in the introduction of rattan was Elijah Putnam, who first manufactured chairs with cane seats in Gardner in 1832. The story goes that one of his employees observed inmates of the Connecticut State Penitentiary caning seats for New York manufacturers. He returned with a sample of the seat and materials, allowing Putnam to duplicate the process. Rattan, a species of palm tree, (*Calamus Rotang*), is a product of the forests of East India and of the Malayan Peninsula. The portion of the plant originally used, that is called "cane" in the seats, is really the glazed silicious outer covering of the vine which can be stripped off in long, thin, uniform strips and is remarkably flexible and strong. Putnam at first hired women to cane seats in his factory, but the demand exceeded the amount that he could supply in this manner, so he inaugurated "putting-out" chair frames to be caned in the house. As the popularity of cane seat chairs spread, the practice of putting-out chair frames for home caning was extended until it was itself an important industry, affording employment and an additional income to thousands of households in the region.

The use of cane fostered a whole new industry: the preparation of the rattan vines and slitting into strips. Until mid-century this was a hand process, carried out in shops or in special departments of the chair manufactories. In 1849 Sullivan Sawyer of Templeton received a patent on a machine for splitting and dressing rattan and in 1851 one for cutting rattan. These were followed by patents on a cane-working machine in 1854 and 1855. A number of additional patents were granted during these years to inventors in Philadelphia, Charlestown, South Reading, Templeton, and Gardner. Following this period of technological innovation, several large companies for working rattan were established in Boston and Fitchburg, and supplied the demand for cane in Gardner, very little being worked-up in Gardner as a result.

Towards the end of the period, a second major technological innovation was made in the working of cane. In 1867 a Gardner mechanic, Gardner A. Watkins, invented a loom for weaving cane into a continuous web by the use of power. Though it manufactured only plain-weave cane webbing, it greatly facilitated the subsequent hand-weaving required to produce the more popular and attractive Chinese weave. Following it were inventions of machines which spliced strands together.

Accompanying the mechanization of rattan-working was a general mechanization of nearly the entire chair-making process. The result, by the end of the period, was that virtually the only hand-work done was feeding of stock into machines and the assembly of the different parts together. Another change was the

disappearance of many of the small chair shops and growth of fewer, but larger factories. In 1837, 25 shops employed 350 hands. By 1865, 13 factories employed 461 men and another 1300 women and children caning chairs in their homes.

Of the many firms which were established and prospered in Gardner, perhaps, the most successful and largest was the Heywood Chair Manufacturing CO. The company went through several reorganizations, relocations to an area just northeast of West Gardner Square (in 1834 after a fire of earlier shops), and great incorporated. A fire in 1861 destroyed the factory, forcing suspension of operations for over a year while a new plant was constructed. During the next several decades the company underwent rapid and extensive expansion, becoming the largest establishment in the community and incorporating all stages of production from lumber yard to finishing operations in one location.

The Heywoods were instrumental in the conversion to water-powered production. Levi Heywood introduced specialized machinery, new methods of manufacturing a type of tilting chair machinery which greatly impressed the Viennese chair manufacturer Francis Thonet during a visit to the Heywood factory. By 1870 the firm employed more than 1200 workers and earned more than \$1,000,000 annually.

The company played a significant role in the growth and development of Gardner, as many former employees of the Heywood firm established new manufactories in Gardner, producing many complementary products. Heywood family members represented Gardner in the Massachusetts legislature, served as presidents of banks in Gardner, and as officers in the railroad companies that came through Gardner.

Many of the other major firms in Gardner formed during the 1850s and 60s. Among those that were organized or expanded significantly are: A. White and Co. (1848- later A. & H.C. Knowlton) in the center; the L.H. Sawin Chair Co. (1851) also in the center; Jackson & Greenwood (1852 - later Conant & Bush), west of South Gardner; S. Bent & Bros. (1867) on Mill Street. Philander Derby & Co. (1863), on North Main St.; S.K. Pierce (greatly expanded after 1858) in South Gardner; E. Wright & Co. (ca. 1845) on No. Main St.; Wright & Read (rebuilt after a fire in 1866) in South Gardner; and Greenwood Bros and Co. (begun ca. 1827) in South Gardner.

Agricultural production expanded considerably during the period as land use became more intensive and extensive. Meadow and pasture land increased by nearly 50% from 5500 to nearly 800 acres while unimproved land fell by 50% from 4330 to 2153 acres. Production of grains declined sharply (with the exception of barley). Absolute numbers of livestock remained approximately the same in 1860 as in 1830; declines in the number of cows, oxen, and most dramatically sheep, were compensated by increases in the number of horses in town. Dairying activity was just beginning to change from production of butter and cheese to raw milk by 1870.

E. Architecture

Residential: Few traditional center or double chimney house forms appear to survive. By far, the predominant house type for the Greek Revival period is the gable end, with a large number of five-bay, center entry examples, notably in South Gardner. Later period houses display Italianate, Queen Anne, and Stick Style trim. Second Empire, mansard roof houses, both side hall and center entry plans, were popular in the latter half of the period (the two-story, frame octagonal house dates from 1854 and is ascribed to J. E. Alger. Three late period houses of note are those belonging originally to the Heywood and Martel families. These are two-and-a-half-story, asymmetrical, Queen Anne detailed dwellings with hints of Colonial Revival influence as well. Also of note is a pre-1855, two-story, five-bay, double gable end facade structure.

Institutional: The meetinghouse (1787-91) was apparently reconstructed ca. 1845-46 and second floor inserted so it could be used for the town hall as well as for religious services. The church split and in 1831 the Evangelical Congregational church was built on Green Street facing the Common. This building was subsequently remodelled and is now a broad, two-story, gable end structure with a recessed entry, corner pilasters, a deep cornice, and flushboarded pediment. The building is now an apartment house. The Baptist church was built in South Gardner in 1833. It is a gable end building with pointed arch windows and an advanced entry. The steeple was added in 1872.

In 1860 a two-story, frame Romanesque town hall with an elaborate corbelled cornice was constructed at Central and Elm Streets. A three-story brick addition was built in 1883. The building burned in 1944.

In 1866 a former center school building was converted into the town's first high school. A school was built on Broadway in 1858.

Commercial: The Central House was a two-and-a-half-story, five-bay, gable end, center entry hotel moved ca. 1860 to Green Street to make way for the construction of the Windsor Hotel. The old Central House is now an apartment building.

Industrial: Several frame chair factories were constructed during the 1850s and 1860s.

IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)

A. Transportation Routes

Service from the south to Gardner on the Boston, Barre, and Gardner Railroad is initiated in 1871 and extended north in 1873. The Gardner Electric Street Railway Company is established in 1894. By 1900 connections are in place west to Athol through Templeton and east to Fitchburg through Westminster (Parker Street-Lake Street-Central Street-Chestnut Street-South Main-East Broadway). A branch line runs north on Park Street, west of Crystal Lake to Crystal Park, and a loop is established on North Main and Chestnut Streets.

B. Population

The population growth rate accelerated to a rate unique in the county, multiplying by five times during the 45-year period, from 3,333 in 1870 to 16,376 in 1915; the greatest growth occurred in the period between 1880 and 1885 when the total grew from 4,988 to 7,283. Of particular significance to this growth was the expansion of manufacturing, from 772 males and 160 females in 1905, and 3,844 males and 587 females in 1915. The foreign-born portion of the population increased greatly too, though not at the pace of overall population growth, accounting for just under 17% in 1875 and 1885, and thereafter expanding to 30.4% in 1895, to 33.6% in 1905, and to 35.5% in 1915. At the beginning of the period the Irish and Canadians were dominant; by 1885 the French Canadians were most numerous and remained so through 1905. Russian Finns came to the town in large numbers during the 1890s and significantly outnumbered them by 1915. The final significant groups to come to the town were the Swedes who came first during the 1880s, and averaged ca. 400 in the town during the remainder of the period, and the Poles numbering over 700 by 1915. A large proportion of the institutions formed during the period had their origin in these ethnic groups. The English-speaking Catholics were made a parish in 1872 with Ashburnham and Winchendon and the church, Sacred Heart of Jesus, was built two years later; the Irish formed the Hibernians in 1873. As the French Canadians became more numerous they formed a large number of cultural and mutual insurance associations; the earliest was La Societe St. Jean Baptiste in 1879, followed by the Ancient Order of Forresters; by 1884 a separate French language Catholic church, Holy Rosary had been formed; later organizations included the Court Ferdinand Gagnon Lodge and French Merchants (1897), the Garde d'Honneur (1900), as well as Conseil Graton, Societe des Atisans Canadiens, and Club des Bons Amis; many groups were formed to encourage the process of naturalization, including the Club Launier, L'Union Franco-American, French Naturalization Club and Napoleon Club. A subgroup of Canadians, the Acadians, formed la Societe Mutuelle el'Assomption which became the basis of a national association in 1903. The Scandinavians formed only a temperance society in 1886, outside of a number of Protestant denominations, including the Scandinavians Lutheran church (1887), the Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church (1893), the Swedish Methodist Church (1892), the Finns' Immanuelle Lutheran in 1894, and Congregational the same year. As the number of Polish-speaking Catholics increased, a new national parish, St. Joseph's, was formed in 1907, and a Polish American Society was formed in 1915. Some of the eastern Europeans were Jewish and established Ohave Shalom for religious services in 1910.

Fewer religious institutions were formed during this period by native Gardner citizens. St. Paul's was organized as an Episcopal mission in 1883, and became a parish in 1904. There was a newly organized Unitarian Church in 1884, and a second, Pine St. Baptist Church in 1891. Other voluntary associations were added to the town's roster including the very popular temperance Murphy Movement in 1878, the Odd Fellows the same year, the Sovereigns of

Industry in 1874, a Rifle Club in 1875, as well as the Young Ladies Missionary Society to teach English, Board of Trade (1889), and the Associated Charities, Visiting Nurse Association, and Red Cross early in the 20th century.

The town finally supported a free public library in 1886, and the Gardner Institute (1890-1916) provided lectures and other educational activities. In 1884 the Mt. Gardner Seminar, a college for women was formed. Beginning in 1896 evening classes began to encourage naturalization, a program for which it received commendation from the Commonwealth. Boy Scouts were organized in 1911.

C. Settlement Pattern

Industrial activity in the West Gardner chair manufacturing corridor continues to intensify. A commercial focus develops at its northern end, and worker residential neighborhoods expand up and over the hillslopes to the east and west. At the same time, the meetinghouse area (Old Common) remains the primary commercial/institutional center, with a number of additions. Middle- and high-income residential zones continue to expand in all directions from this focus. Less dramatic growth occurs in South Gardner, with residential infill and extension of established areas. By period's end, the three villages have coalesced into a continuous urban area with a separate, distinct settlement in the east at the Gardner State Colony for the Insane (1903/4).

At West Gardner, manufacturing facilities continue to expand, most notably at the Heywood-Wakefield chair factory complex (1870-97). A second industrial corridor develops along the Fitchburg Railroad line east of Washington Hill and west of Chestnut Street. New commercial activities continue to locate in the Parker/Central Street area, including a number of brick business blocks, such as the Gardner New Building (1906) and the Gardner Savings Bank (1909). Worker residential housing development expands east up Washington Hill south of Cross Street on Pine, Washington, and Peabody Street, and extends south to North Main, and beyond the railroad on Mechanic Street. Further residential development occurs to the northwest on Maple, Lincoln, South Lincoln, and Cross Street. This neighborhood development includes a number of churches, among them the Universalist (1874), Sacred Heart Catholic (1875, rebuilt after fire 1893), and St. Paul Episcopal (1909) on Cross Street, Pine Street Baptist (1904-7), and Swedish Methodist and Lutheran churches. To the west, worker residences extend up and over Greenwood Hill, bordered on the north by Parker Street (where residential development extends beyond the railroad), and on the south and west by the Fitchburg Railroad. Here the institutional focus is the Our Lady of the Rosary Church (1915) at Nichol/Reagon. The Ohave Sholem Synagogue (1912) and St. Joseph Catholic Church (1913) are built on Pleasant Street.

At the "Old Common" (Pearl/Central), the 19th-century civic/commercial focus persists, with the addition of the Heywood Library (1885) and hotel, bank, and business blocks.

Institutional activities extend south on Elm Street with the Unitarian Church (1887), fire station (1897), and high school (1898). Residential development continues in the area, extending south on Chestnut (and to a lesser degree on Elm) beyond Cross Street to the railroad station area, and includes the Methodist Episcopal Church (1877). Residences are also built north on Woodland Street and east on cherry and Edgell to Commee Street. The Old Common area continues as a high-income residential focus.

In South Gardner, manufacturing facilities continue to expand, and infill and extension of established residential areas occurs. New development extends west on Winter Street west of Bents Pond, south in the Nutting, Prospect, and Charles Street area, and on High Street beyond Lovewell and north on Summer Street.

The Gardner State Colony for the Insane (1904) is located away from the established settlement area to the east of the Fitchburg Railroad corridor along the town's border. The hospital facilities include an innovative, dispersed cottage residence layout focus on a central administration/treatment building complex.

D. Economic Base

The last decades of the 19th century saw continued growth of the chair and wood-working industries, with the introduction of toy-making, expansion of rattan furniture, and production of baby carriages. An important development was the diversification of Gardner's economic base to include machine manufacturing, the making of Simplex Time recorders, silver manufacturing, and the stove and boiler making.

The value of goods manufactured in Gardner in 1875 totaled \$9,000. Two decades later Gardner's 50 manufacturing establishments produced goods worth \$5 million, while the value of trade totaled \$2.7 million. Manufacturing employment and value of goods produced climbed steadily through the end of the period, peaking in 1923 with 4980 employees and \$19.6 million dollars worth of goods produced.

The principal industry remained chair-making, dominated by Heywood Bros. & Co. During the 1870s and 80s, the company opened manufactories, warehouses, and finishing plants in major cities across the country from California to New York. By the 1890s the company produced 85% of the seating for U.S. railroads and 100% of Canadian railroads, as well as expanding its product line to include rattan furniture during the 1870s. In 1897 Heywood Bros. merged with the Wakefield Rattan Co. of Wakefield, Mass. On incorporation, the firm became the world's largest manufacturer of cane and reed products, mats and matting, baby carriages, and chairs.

Many of the larger chair-making firms also underwent improvements and expansion during this period. By the late 1910s, nearly 3500 were employed in the chair factories, comprising more than 70% of Gardner's manufacturing workforce and producing nearly 4 million chairs annually.

In the area of Foundry and Sanborn Streets several stove foundries were established during the 1880s, producing oil stoves. In 1882 the firm of Jaquith and Richardson began the production of stoves and furnaces in Gardner. The firm traces its origin to the tin shop of John Boynton in Templeton. Prior to 1877 when the business moved from Templeton to Gardner, it passed through several hands from Boynton to Jaquith & Richardson. In 1884 the precursor to the Florence Stove Works was formed. From 1884 to 1899 there was not one year when at least one patent for improvements to oil stoves was not granted to the principals of this firm. By the 1910s it was the second largest industry in Gardner, employing 600 hands in the manufacture of stoves and ranges.

The invention of the time recorder by a Heywood Company employee, Edmund G. Watkins, launched a new major industry. Initially manufactured by Heywood-Wakefield, for whom the device was developed, in 1902 the Simplex Time Recording Co. was formed. Tremendous growth in the company followed, with the acquisition of rival companies and transfer of equipment and employees to Gardner.

The production of silverware was begun in 1887 by the Frank W. Smith Co. In 1901 the Stone Silver Shop was established, and its founder, Arthur J. Stone became recognized as the dean of American Silversmiths.

The successful economic growth of the late 19th and early 20th century was aided by an aggressive Board of Trade, formed in 1889 to promote the growth and diversification of the town's economy.

Agricultural development underwent considerable change during the period, with major changes occurring in dairying and poultry-raising. Milk production rose from 6400 gallons of raw milk in 1865 to well over 300,000 gallons by the 1920s. Poultry-raising experienced a similar growth. In 1875 only 5400 dozen eggs were sold; by 1905 the number had reached 32,000 dozen as many farmers added the raising of poultry for eggs and meat to supplement their shrinking agricultural opportunities. The general trend was toward more and smaller farms between the 1880s and the 1910s. There also occurred a net increase in woodlands as less productive lands were allowed to return to forest.

E. Architecture

Residential: The primary single-family house form is the two-story, gable end, side-passage plan. Three brick Queen Anne style houses are recorded. Three-deckers were also popular, including an interesting "row" of brick, Colonial Revival examples. By the end of the period, Gardner had 2,168 frame houses, 44 brick houses, three cement or stucco houses, and eight of some "other" material (1915 Census).

Institutional: A Methodist chapel was built on West Street in 1870. The building was replaced with an 1877 structure on Chestnut Street. The Universalist church was constructed at Cross

and Maples Streets in 1874. Sacred Heart of Jesus Church (Irish Catholic), a frame Gothic building designed by James Murphy of Providence, Rhode Island, was built in 1875 on Cross Street. The building burned in 1887 and was replaced with the similar, present Gothic design (Fuller & Delano, Worcester) ca. 1888 on the same site. The First Congregational Church erected a new building in 1878 on the site of the first meetinghouse. The brick Gothic structure measures 64 x 118 feet and has a 125-foot tower. An Episcopal chapel was built in 1884 on North Main Street. St. Paul's Episcopal church built a new structure in 1909 designed by the English church architect Henry Vaughan. The stone church planned by Vaughan was never built, and the parish continues to worship in the 1909 stucco and timber parish hall. Also in 1884, the French Canadian Catholics erected a church building on Nichols Street. In 1895, they began construction on the church of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary. The building, completed in 1915, is a nave plan with clerestory of brick Romanesque design with side aisles and a square side tower. In 1912 the Temple Ohave Sholem was built, a one-and-a-half-story, square, frame Colonial Revival building. St. Joseph's (Polish Catholic) Church, a two-story, brick, gable end, Georgian Revival building, was constructed in 1913. The First Bible Baptist church is a Gothic, gable-end structure with a projecting, square central tower located on the corner of Church and Leamy Streets. Across the street from Sacred Heart Church is an abandoned Italianate gable end church structure that appears to be used for storage.

Many schools were constructed during the period, most of brick in either Romanesque or Colonial Revival styles, or combinations of the two. The first high school building on Chestnut and Logan was built in 1874; West Street school, 1878; Park Street school (two-room, frame building), ca. 1880; Pleasant Street school, 1881; Prospect Street school, 1887; Stuart Street school, 1888; the second high school, 1898; Knowlton Street school, 1901; School Street school, 1903.

Fuller and Delano of Worcester designed the one-story, brick Romanesque Library constructed in 1885. Two two-story brick fire stations were built during the 1880s.

Commercial: Several hotels were constructed during the 1880s. The Gardner House (1881) was opposite the Fitchburg railroad station. The Windsor House, built on the site of the old Central House, was a three-story brick building (83 x 88 feet) on the corner of Pearl and Green Streets. The Richards House opened in the old Methodist chapel in 1889. The Citizens House, on Parker Street near West Street, was a three-story building with two-story porches on three sides.

Commercial blocks were constructed primarily in old West Gardner, beginning in the 1870s and continuing into the early 20th century. The First National Bank was originally housed in a two-story Second Empire building.

Industrial: The Heywood-Wakefield complex, including the six-story, brick triangular building, was built during the last quarter of the 19th century. The F. W. Smith Silva Company erected its two-story brick building with tower in 1892.

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915-1940)

A. Transportation Routes

By the early 1920s, the Mohawk Trail corridor (old Route 7, later Route 2) is established through South Gardner and Gardner Center (East Broadway-South Main-West Street). An alternate east/west route from South Gardner to Templeton (West Broadway) is established by ca. 1930, and this becomes Route 2 in the early 1930s, while the northwest road becomes part of Route 68, and Union Street becomes part of Route 68 south through Hubbardston. A secondary east/west corridor from Ashburnham through Gardner to Templeton is improved by 1940 as Route 101 (Pearl Street-Central Street-Parker Street).

B. Population

The town's population growth slowed considerably during this period, adding only ca. 25% to the total, from 16,376 in 1915 to 20,245 in 1945. Manufacturing remained the overwhelming source of employment in the town, with ca. 65% of the males so employed; many of the town's women working outside the home were also employed as operatives, although the portion fell from 40% to 28% of the total. The repercussions of the Depression are seen in the 179 males engaged in emergency work and an additional 519 unemployed. The proportion of foreign-born in the town also dropped, from 35.5% in 1915 to 24.9% in 1940. The addition of ca. 400 Acadians in the 1920s made French Canadians the most numerous group in the town, followed by the Finns, Poles, and Lithuanians. The latter group formed several benefit associations, including the Peter and Paul Society, the Lithuanian Sons, and for females the Birivire, and later a Lithuanian-American citizens Club and Outhing club. There were also some Lebanese who formed their own Lebanese-American Club. In 1936 the Furniture Workers union was formed, which affiliated with the United Furniture Workers in 1939. Scouting was available for girls from 1920, and a Community Girls Club was formed in 1921.

C. Settlement Pattern

Residential expansion continues, the commercial center shifts completely to the West Gardner focus, and the civic center moves from the Old Common to Pleasant Street south of the new commercial area. In West Gardner, residential expansion continues west beyond Greenwood Hill south of Parker Street and northwest along the West Street auto corridor, between Parker and West, north of West Street, and beyond Parker Pond. At the Old Common some residences are added north of Pearl Street, east of Reservoir Hill. At South Gardner, residential growth extends north on Summer and Chelsea Street to the railroad, and to the southeast of Lovewell Street and beyond Prospect Street. Brick commercial

blocks are added to the West Gardner commercial center, and the new civic focus develops south on Pleasant Street, with the Court House (ca. 1920), Police Headquarters (1928), Post Office (1935), and City Hall (1940).

D. Economic Base

The late 1910s and early 1920s saw continued growth in the economic base of Gardner. In 1921 the city was singled out as the "Chairtown center of the world", and peak manufacturing in the chair industry and in the city's other manufacturing firms peaked in the mid 1920s.

The Great Depression following the 1929 Crash took a tremendous fall on Gardner. In the first year from 1929 to 1930, value of production fell by 25% and the workforce declined by 15%. By 1932 production values and the workforce were nearly 50% of their peak in 1923.

Much of this loss occurred in the chair and furniture industry as many prominent old firms like S.K. Pierce, Philander Derby, and John Dunn all ceased operations during the 1930s. The Heywood Wakefield Co. discontinued its production of cane, reed, and rattan products, consolidating many of its production capacities in Gardner, thus lessening what may have been a much greater impact on the city's economy. Through innovation and specialization the surviving chair and furniture firms continued, and by 1936 manufacturing production in Gardner reached a new high with a total of \$20 million worth of goods produced by the city's diverse industries.

Prior to the passage of the National Labor Relations Act in 1935 there were very few unionized workers in Gardner. In 1936 the Organization of Furniture Workers was formed, ultimately resulting in affiliation with the United Furniture Workers and the Congress of Industrial Organizations with a minimum of labor/management conflict.

With the outbreak of W.W.II, many of the industries in the city were supported by the heavy demands of war production, for which most of Gardner's industries had been converted.

E. Architecture

Residential: Popular housing of the period includes gable end, square pyramidal-roofed, and Dutch Colonial gambrel-roofed dwellings. Brick Colonial Revival houses appear in the more affluent neighborhoods. Bungalows were also observed. Gardner is recorded as having 2,303 dwellings in 1923.

Institutional: The two-story, brick Coleman Street school was built in 1918. The Colonial Revival brick Holy Rosary school, adjacent to the church and rectory, was completed in 1925. A new high school was constructed in 1927.

The two-story, brick Colonial Revival City Hall dates from 1938-40. The brick courthouse was built in the late teens.

Commercial: The Colonial Hotel, a five-story, brick structure, was built ca. 1920.

XI. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

XII. SOURCES