

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

GRANBY

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: August, 1982

Community: Granby

I. TOPOGRAPHY:

The northernmost portion of Granby is dominated by the Holyoke Range, a complex of rugged uplands that extend from Granby west to the Connecticut River (South Hadley). Elevations range between 400' and 950' above sea level. This range is separated from a complex of moderate to rugged uplands located in southern Granby by a broad poorly drained intervalle that occupies a considerable portion of central Granby. The highest point in the southern uplands were the Facing Hills with a maximum elevation of 762'. The town lacks any substantial waterways but is crisscrossed by a number of brooks, most of which ultimately drain into the Connecticut River. The only bodies of freshwater are several manmade ponds and reservoirs including Aldrich Lake and Forge Pond. The uplands surrounding Aldrich Lake are the site of dinosaur tracks. Local soils range from the sandy soils of southern Granby to the fertile alluvium of the town's central intervalle.

II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES:

Originally granted as part of Hadley (1661) with southern boundary at Springfield (Ludlow) established in 1683. Eastern boundary established in 1715 with Equivalent Lands (Belchertown) and southeast corner as the Crank in 1727. Surveyed as Hadley common lands division in 1722 and included within Second Precinct of Hadley in 1733. Established within South Hadley district in 1753 and formed as West Parish of South Hadley in 1762. Incorporated as town of Granby in 1768 with northern boundary along crest of Mount Holyoke range (Amherst). Western line with South Hadley surveyed in 1781 with later adjustments to 1827.

III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW:

Rural suburban town on periphery of Holyoke metropolitan area. Located on the edge of the central uplands along the base of Mount Holyoke range to the Connecticut Valley with possible native site potential around Cold Hill and Pitchawam Swamp. Settled from South Hadley during the mid-18th century with original meeting house site at Cold Hill, including some remaining period houses on West Street axis. Expansion of agricultural potential on upland vales with Colonial houses surviving along Pleasant Street from Stony Brook and on Bachelor Street to Cooks Corners, including authentic gambrel. Meeting-house relocated to Granby Center during early 19th century with well-preserved village green around landmark Federal church of architect design. Limited industrial potential during mid-19th century, with small manufacturing along Bachelor Brook, including remarkable survival of Aldrich Mill with overshot wheel intact. Dairy farming maintained as primary activity through early 20th century with original roadside milk bottle of Early Modern date along Route 202 and Neo-Gothic seminary from Holyoke on School Street. Present development

is most evident along axis of Route 202 from South Hadley to Five Corners with intensive suburban housing expansion along vista roads to Granby Center. Meeting house green retains authentic period character preserved from encroaching development, although historic fabric of Cold Hill site remains unappreciated and fringe activity appears evident from Chicopee in southeast section.

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500-1620)

A. Transportation Routes:

Secondary corridor between central highlands and Connecticut River Valley with primary east-west trail from Cold Spring (Belchertown) reported as Bachelor Street along base of Mount Holyoke range (Snyder and Carroll, Hampshire History, 1964, p.96). Connecting route across mountain range through the Notch reported as old Amherst Road (Route 116) along Granby boundary (Ibid). Secondary routes from Bachelor Brook to Pitchawam Swamp and Cold Hill apparently followed Easton Street and possibly North Street from Bachelor Brook fordway through Granby town center. Southern trail from Facing Hills (Ludlow) and Chicopee River to Cold Hill is most probable along Taylor-Truby-East-Pleasant Cold Hill Streets around Muddy and Stony Brook (Ibid. p.100). Continuing link to highlands possibly followed Turkey Hill Road around Facing Hills.

B. Settlement Patterns:

There were no reported native Contact period sites. The only evidence of native occupation were 5 undated native archaeological sites situated on lowland and upland locations in southwestern Granby. Period settlement sites were probably established on the fertile lowlands immediately south of the Hadley Range and the previously mentioned lowlands and moderate uplands of southwestern Granby. Smaller, short-term hunting camps were established in the vicinity of the town's marshlands, particularly Pitchawam Swamp, an English derivation of the original native name "Pitchawamiche".

C. Subsistence Patterns:

Fertile tracts of agricultural land were available in central Granby, south of the Hadley Range, the vicinity of Porter Swamp and south of West State Street. Native fishing likely took place on the area's several streams, especially Bachelors and Strong brooks. Hunting probably occurred primarily in the rugged uplands of the Hadley Range and local marshlands. The former location was said to abound with wild game such as deer, turkey and pigeons at the time of the first colonial settlement in the early 18th century (Sylvester, 1879: II, 543).

D. Observations:

Native occupation of the Granby area was probably limited - moderate during the Contact Period. The more diversified resource base of the nearby river towns of Hadley and South Hadley would have far more attraction to the study unit's native population. Granby likely was peripheral land utilized by the Norwottucks centered in present Hadley and Northampton. Regionally, the Norwottucks centered in present Hadley and Northampton. Regionally, the Norwottucks appear to have been a Pocumtuck related group. The greatest potential for extant period archaeological sites would be on the lowlands south of the Hadley Range

and the lowlands and rolling uplands of southwestern Granby.

V. PLANTATION PERIOD (1620-1675)

A. Transportation Routes:

Secondary route from Connecticut Valley to Bay Path at Cold Spring (Belchertown) maintained along Bachelor Street with important link through the Notch to Bay Road (Amherst).

B. Population:

There were no figures for a period native or colonial population.

C. Settlement Patterns:

Period native settlement patterns were probably essentially the same as those suggested for the Contact period. Granby lacked a permanent colonial settlement until the Colonial period. Some Hadley residents may have occupied the area on a short-term basis when cutting local timber and overseeing livestock grazing in Granby.

D. Economic Base:

Native hunting and limited horticulture likely continued in Granby. However, colonial use of local meadowlands and uplands for livestock grazing would have interfered to some degree with native subsistence activities.

E. Observations:

As with South Hadley, Granby's limited high quality agricultural land and the imposing natural barrier on its boundary with Amherst (Hadley Range) discouraged pre-1675 colonial settlement. Until the early 18th century, Granby was part of the common lands of Hadley.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

A. Transportation Routes:

Survey of Hadley outer common land prescribed division highways around upper Stony Brook area (1722). These included north-south axis of School Street and east-west axis of Belchertown Road (Route 22). Establishment of Cold Hill meeting house in 1762 created radial highway pattern from West Street and Amherst Road. Other period highways apparently included north-south locations of Taylor and Ferry Street with loop of Kendall Street around Fox Hill. Secondary connector over Mt. Holyoke range located at Harris Road from Bachelor Brook.

B. Population:

It is unlikely Granby had a post-1675 native population. In 1731, the colonial settlement had eight heads of households. In 1765, the town of South Hadley, of which Granby was a part until 1768, consisted of 133 houses, 142 families and 817 inhabitants. By 1776, Granby had a population of 491, slightly less

than 100 fewer residents than the mother town of South Hadley.

C. Settlement Pattern:

The establishment of a permanent colonial settlement in Granby was initiated between 1720 and 1722 with the division of Old Hadley common lands "south of Mt. Holyoke" (South Hadley, Granby). These and subsequent divisions set aside home lots and meadowland based on the size of the prospective proprietor's personal estate. The first colonial settlement did not occur until c.1727 with the establishment of four homes.

Two homes were situated in northeastern Granby on Cold Hill Road and Amherst Road (Moody Corner), respectively. The two remaining homes were located in central Granby on East State Street north of Fox Hill. Period settlement was confined primarily to the lowlands and moderate uplands of central and the western third of Granby. Few, if any homes, were built on the rugged uplands of northern Granby or the uplands and marshy lowlands east of Taylor Street. By the mid 18th century, a primary settlement node had developed at the junction of West Street and Amherst Road. Granby's first meeting house was built at this location in c.1763. The Town's first school house (c.1769+) was situated immediately east of the meeting house. Contemporary settlement extended west and south from the West Street/Amherst Road node along West Street, Kellogg Street, Amherst Street and Pleasant Street and East street. In addition, scattered homes were established along State Street, Ferry and South Streets. The heaviest settlement in the lowlands south of the Hadley Range occurred in the mid-late 18th century along Bachelor Street. Lighter settlement took place along Easton Street, Belchertown Road and School Street.

D. Economic Base:

Agriculture was the primary occupation of the local residents. Grazing and crop production occurred primarily on the lowlands south of the Hadley Range and the moderate uplands west of Taylor Street. Crop production focused on grains along with smaller quantities of flax, turnips, potatoes, pumpkins and hops. Period industrial development was limited. In c.1771, John Preston began operation of a saw and grist mill complex on Bachelor Brook slightly east of its junction with Porter Street. An iron forge was established by Elijah Kent during the Revolution at Bachelor Brook in the vicinity of its junction with School Street.

There was some potash production as exemplified by Israel Clark's production of 4 tons in 1770 (Anniversary Book Committee 1968:90). Local timber was cut for use as ship's timber and masts. These lumber products were carted down to Willimansett (West Springfield) where they were rafted down the Connecticut River to shipyards situated in East Haddam, Connecticut (Ibid). Manufactured goods were imported into the Granby via local merchants and traders such as William Eastman who ran a "trading shop" between c.1758 and 1771. Several tavern/inns operated during the Colonial period including Timothy Nash (1741-1749) and Timothy Smith (Late 18th century), both located in the village of Moody Corner.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Perhaps as many as a half dozen Colonial period residences have survived in Granby. All of these were identified through observation in the field; further research may yield a higher number of surviving structures. Period structures include two houses on West Street, a house on Pleasant Street, a cottage on Bachelor Street and another cottage on Chicopee Street. All of these buildings incorporate center chimneys and most exhibit five-bay facades with center entrances. One of the houses on West Street is only three bays wide and includes an integral lean-to; the Chicopee Street Cottage is also smaller, with a four bay wide facade. Other features of Granby's Colonial houses include the use of gambrel roofs and end gable overhangs.

Institutional: In 1762, Granby was established as the Second Parish of South Hadley and a meeting house was built at West and Amherst Roads.

E. Observations:

Granby's economic development was hampered by several factors, including the area's limited agricultural and water resources and the presence of large tracts of rugged terrain. The town's commercial contacts probably were oriented toward South Hadley and communities south of Granby (eg, Chicopee, Springfield) rather than to the north because of the former areas relative ease of access. The potential for surviving archaeological remains of Granby's period settlement is high throughout the town due to its continued rural nature.

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

A. Transportation Routes:

Relocation of meeting house to Granby Center (1821) formed radial highways from West Street axis, including primary connector to South Hadley canal village as West State Street (Route 202). Other period highways included north-south links to Chicopee as Morgan and South Street.

B. Population:

Granby's population rose through much of the Federal period, nearly doubling in the 30 years 1790-1820. The town's overall growth rate, 1790-1830, of 78 percent ranked in the sixth in the county, immediately preceded by the other Hadley towns: Amherst (113 percent) and Hadley (90 percent). In 1820, however, the population reached 1066, a count that the town would maintain for approximately the next thirty years.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Relocation of meeting house from Cold Hill to Granby Center (1821) with formation of street village along North Street (Route 202). Industrial development of Bachelor Brook mill sites around Aldrich Mills with secondary village center formed at Cooks Corner in northeast district. Agriculture remained as primary activity with farming area around Cold Hill and along axis of Belchertown Road.

D. Economic Base:

Granby's economic development remained predominately agricultural throughout the Federal and succeeding periods, though surplus grain encouraged the establishment of four small distilleries by 1812. Most of Granby's few mills lay along Bachelor Brook, flowing west out of Forge Pond along the base of the Holyoke Range. Forge Pond itself was the site of a small forge operated by Elijah Kent for most of the period.

Eldad Smith was engaged in making buttons (by 1830) for which a "factory" was located at the corner of Amherst and West streets. Smith produced cut pearl buttons, as well as tin and wooden buttons covered with fabric. Benjamin Franklin Smith of South Hadley is said to have invented machinery and tools for making buttons from shells, or "pearl buttons" as they were known in the market. B.F. Smith's factory in South Hadley was erected in 1832 and the Granby and South Hadley factories may have been related. Eldad Smith also put out materials for the home manufacture of palm-leaf hats. By 1832 women in Granby and nearby towns were making 25,000 hats annually for Smith.

Asa Robbins had a small satinnet mill, though by 1832 he had found the making of paper felts more profitable and had discontinued the making of satinets.

E. Architecture:

Residential: A large number of Federal period houses survive in Granby. Perhaps as many as three dozen examples were observed in the field. These include several houses of considerable pretension, of both frame and brick construction. Center hall plans, with end, double or twin rear wall chimney placement, were used, but the traditional center chimney plan predominated. Houses have survived in markedly greater numbers than cottages. Most of the period houses are farmhouses located in open areas to the west and south of the town center. The most outstanding cluster of Federal houses is a group of a half dozen houses at the crossroads of Amherst Road and West Street. This cluster includes two houses of note: a center chimney house with door and window surrounds featuring triglyph-like panels with stop fluting, and an end chimney brick house with splayed granite lintels and fully elaborated fanlight entrance surround. Other Federal houses are located at Moody Corner and at Granby Center.

Institutional: The most outstanding institutional building of the period is the present United Church of Christ, originally built for the West Parish (Second Parish) in 1821. The structure is a well-detailed two-story building with elaborate Federal ornament, including a shallow Ionic portico with pediment and a four-stage steeple with spire. The building is also notable as regionally unusual example of the work of Mendon builder/architects Luther and Elias Carter. The only other institutional building known to survive is the Town Hall (originally a school; 1822), a one-and-a-half story structure on the Town Common adjacent to the United Church.

VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830-1870)

A. Transportation Routes:

Highway system maintained with primary axis along east-west corridor through Granby Center as West State and Belchertown Road (Route 202). No railroads projected or constructed through area.

B. Population:

Granby's population peaked in 1850 with 1104 residents -- only 40 persons above the figure two decades earlier. After 1850 the number began a slow decline until the early 20th century. In 1855, 7 percent were foreign born, about half the county average but well in line with similar figures for Amherst and Belchertown. Almost all of the immigrants were natives of Ireland.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Civic focus expanded at Granby Center along axis of North Street (Route 202) with industrial sites along Bachelor Brook at Aldrich Mills. Farming maintained in eastern district along Belchertown Road (route 202) with prime land in western area around Cold Hill.

D. Economic Base:

Though agricultural projects dominated the town's economy, in the Early Industrial period Granby developed a limited manufacturing diversity with a paper mill and two small woolen mills. As the cotton mills of Chicopee, Palmer, and other towns grew, the cheaper fabrics like satin and flannel were left to the smaller, out of the way mill towns to produce. In 1855, the Ayres and Aldrich mill made 13 percent of the satin produced in the county.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Granby's Early Industrial period architecture suggests that the prosperity the town experienced in the Federal period continued through the 1840's and dropped off sharply by 1870. This pattern is suggested by the relatively large number of well-detailed sidehall and center hall plan Greek Revival houses and cottages in the town as compared to a near absence of Italianate or Greek Revival/Italianate structures. Despite the presence of sidehall plan cottages, on Cold Hill, North, West State, East and Taylor Streets, the traditional central hall plans seem to have predominated. Most of the center hall plan houses in the town are double chimney, five-bay wide structures but a few houses with twin rearwall chimneys are also known.

Institutional: Institutional buildings of the period consist of two schools, both dating from the 1840's. These are the frame, two-story Greek Revival High School and Lecture Hall (1841) at the town center and Schoolhouse #3 (1844), a one-story brick Greek Revival building with brick modillions. Other construction included the renovation of an existing school for use as the Town Hall (1857; see Federal period). One other school of the period may survive as well: The appearance and location of a house at the corner of North and Bachelor Streets suggest that it may have been converted from a school,

shown on that location in 1830.

IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)

A. Transportation Routes:

Extension of suburban street railway lines from Holyoke to Amherst included interurban route through the Notch(1905) with private way from Moodys Corners(Route 116). Secondary line from South Hadley Falls to Granby Center projected but never constructed.(Dwight. Sesquicentennial-South Hadley, 1906, p.121).

B. Population:

Though Granby's population dipped in the 1880's and 90's into the 700's, her number of residents at the start and finish of the period remained at about the same 800+ level. Until around 1900 the number of foreign-born residents declined, but between 1880 and 1905 the figure jumped from 6 to 21 percent, with Frech Canadians, Poles, Irish, and British Canadians making up the largest groups.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Civic focus remained at Granby Center with local industrial activity at Aldrich Mills on Bachelor Brook. Farming continued along axis of Belchertown Road(Route 202) to South Hadley.

D. Economic Base:

No new industries identified. By 1875, the town's limited manufacturing had virtually ceased, though grist or sawmills -- like that at Aldrich Mills -- remained in operation to serve the agricultural economy. Local farms raised large crops of Indian corn, buckwheat, oats, potatoes, and tobacco. By 1880, with selected agricultural products valued at \$98,272, Granby ranked seventh among the Hampshire County towns in value produced. By 1905, milk production ranked second after Belchertown.

Abbie Lathrop had begun raising waltzing mice and other entertaining rodents. When she discovered about 1908 that they had cancer, she developed the business of selling them to hospitals and laboratories. The industry closed after her death in 1918.

E. Architecture:

Residential: From a lull in the 1870's and 80's, residential development in Granby seems to have picked up by the turn of the century. Development seems to have clustered at the town center and to the north and east, along North and Bachelor Streets and Belchertown Road(Route 202). Almost all of the buildings constructed were small one and two-story sidehall plan cottages in the Queen Anne style or, after the turn of the century, hip or gable roof Craftsman and Colonial Revival cottages.

Institutional: In 1879 and again in 1890, town offices were built at the town common. The earlier building is a two-story Italianate structure with a cross gabled ell while the 1890 building, designed by Holyoke architect G.P.B. Alderman, is probably the town's most elaborate Queen Anne style building with a hip roof, a corner turret and a tower. In addition to the construction of these two buildings, the United Church was remodeled in 1878.

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915-1940)

A. Transportation Routes:

Local highways improved as regional auto roads. Primary east-west highway designated as U.S. Route 202 through Granby Center from Belchertown to South Hadley with secondary north-south Route 116 from South Hadley to Amherst through the Notch.

B. Population:

Until the 1930's, Granby's population fluctuated in the 700-800 range. In the final decade of the period, however (1930-40), the resident count rose by 21 percent reaching 1085 in 1940. As a result, the town had an overall growth rate for the period of 31 percent, third highest in the county in a period when half the towns reported declining populations. As in Belchertown, the growth is presumably associated with institutional development, in this case, St. Hyacinth's Seminary in 1927.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Civic focus remained at Granby Center with secondary commercial activity along Route 202 at Five Corners to South Hadley. Dairy farming maintained along Belchertown Road(Route 202) with establishment of St. Hyacinth's Seminary at Cooks Corners(1927).

D. Economic Base:

No new industries identified. Town remained agricultural, with a substantial dairy product.

E. Architecuture:

Residential: Comparatively little residential construction occurred in the period. Most of the houses built were small hip or gable roof Craftsman cottages. These were constructed as infill along major raods, such as Belchertown Road (Route 202), in the 1920's. Some development probably occurred in the late 1930's along Route 116: after World War II, that road developed with modest Colonial Revival tract housing but some of the houses appear to date from before 1940.

Institutional: Significant institutional construction of the period included the building of the Public Library(1917) and of St Hyacinth's Seminary on School Street in 1927. The original St Hyacinth's building (The central of three buildings now standing there) is a three-story Tudor Revival structure of light sandstone. The Library (1917), donated by the Carnegie Foundation, is a small frame neoclassical structure of great architectural merit with a fine Ionic portico. The rear portion of the red brick Granby School on West Street may also date from the end of the period: although obscured by a ca. 1960 front, the rear portion of the school appears to be a modest one-story International Style Building.

Commercial: The most outstanding commercial structure of the period is the Maple Grove Dairy bar represented by a milk bottle and a milk can linked to a

one-story utilitarian structure.

XI. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS:

General: Granby's survey covers only the 19th century town center. No other inventory work has been completed. Of special note is the town's stock of Federal through Greek Revival houses, most of which are located in the western half of town. The crossroads at Amherst Road and West Street would appear to be the only area in the town (with the exception of the Town Common local district) with National Register district potential; the group of Federal houses there is of outstanding quality and preservation. Further work might also include the identification of the architect of the Neoclassical Public Library (1917) at the town center: the architecture of this small building, with both Greek and Roman Revival motifs handled within a simple, almost vernacular building form, is quite remarkable.

Industrial: Aldrich Mills should be surveyed and considered for National Register nomination. The residence at Amherst and West streets should be surveyed for possible evidence of Eldad Smith's "button factory", possibly a shop to the rear.

XII. SOURCES

Granby Bicentennial, 1768-1968, Granby, Massachusetts; Incorporated June 11, 1768 (Granby, 1968).

Judd, Sylvester, History of Hadley, Including the Early History of Hatfield, South Hadley, Amherst, and Granby, Massachusetts (Northampton, 1863; 1905; 1976)