

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

GRANVILLE

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: May 1982

COMMUNITY: Granville

I. Topography

Granville is dominated by a complex of moderate to rugged uplands that are part of the eastern fringe of the Hoosac Range which originates in southern Vermont. The highest elevations occur in the western portion of Granville with the uplands averaging well over 1000 feet in height. The highest point is a peak with an elevation of 1487 feet, immediately northeast of Liberty Hill. The uplands of eastern Granville drop somewhat in elevation with heights averaging between 800 and 900 feet above sea level. The uplands are broken by a series of intervalles, most notable of which is the fertile Grand Valley, which extends to the north and south through central Granville. Several pockets of marshland are scattered about the town's lower elevations. Local soils are basically stony, excluding the fertile loam of Granville's intervalles. The town falls within the Farmington and Westfield river drainages. The streams of western Granville flow to the south and ultimately drain into the Farmington River. Streams situated in the eastern portion of Granville drain to the north into tributaries of the Westfield River. The town lacks any major waterways or natural bodies of fresh water. Several small natural ponds are situated in northwestern and southeastern Granville. Three reservoirs dating to the 19th and 20th centuries are located in northern Granville.

II. Political Boundaries

Originally purchased as a private grant in 1686 from native claims as land beyond Westfield, Granville was acquired by various owners through 1713 with a southern boundary at the Massachusetts line (1713). It was sold to a company of proprietors as the Bedford Plantation in 1718 and was confirmed by the General Court as Bedford district in 1739 (Wilson 1954: pp.3-18). In 1754 it was established as the town of Granville (including Tolland) with its western extent to Farmington River (Sandisfield), northern bounds at Blandford (1741), and the eastern line at Sodom Mountain established with Southwick in 1775. West Granville parish separated as Tolland in 1810, forming the western boundary.

III. Historic Overview

Granville was a rural town with multiple village centers along a secondary corridor between Westfield and Great Barrington. Located along the Connecticut border in the eastern Berkshire highlands, native sites are suspected on upper Little River at Granville Reservoir and possibly Cooley Lake. Settlement from Westfield occurred by mid 18th century; a meeting house site lies near Granville Center, and a late 18th century meeting house in West Granville has survived. There was an upland agricultural economy in the form of cattle grazing on fertile intervalles, with some late Colonial Period houses along the Route 57 axis at

Granville Center and on Beech Hill near the Blandford line. Continued prosperity of dairy farming for butter and cheese existed through the Federal Period, and there are remarkably well-detailed houses in authentic village settings at West Granville and Granville Center. Modest industrial development at East Granville occurred during mid 19th century, with an original toy drum factory intact on Water Street and Greek Revival houses in the town center. There was increasing use of Little River as the water supply for Westfield and Springfield after the First World War; a Neoclassic gate house at Cobble Mountain Reservoir stands. Route 57 developed as a tourist corridor during the Early Modern Period, and there is an original filling station at East Granville. Present development most obviously exists as recreational pressure around Cobble Mountain parkland, while village centers retain remarkable historic integrity despite the traffic pressure along the Route 57 corridor.

IV. Contact Period

A. Transportation Routes

Granville lay in a secondary corridor of access through the lower Berkshire highlands. A trail route is reported from Woronoco (Westfield) along Little River to Cooley Lake as Old Westfield Road (WPA 1937:p.552), with a possible branch west along Tillotson Brook to Granville Center. Continuation of the east-west route across highlands is conjectured along the axis of Route 57 through the Twining Hollow mountain gap. However, no obvious location is evident, except a possible route along Hall Pond Brook from Beech Hill Road.

B. Settlement Patterns

Granville lacked an MHC inventory of native archaeological sites. The only documentation of the recovery of native material from the town was the presence of one or two unidentified native projectile points on the banks of Seymour Brook in southeastern Granville. Native period settlement was probably limited, due to the area's rugged terrain, limited agricultural land and water resources. The nearby fertile, extensive agricultural land and water sources of Westfield would have been far more attractive to native occupants. Period settlement was probably restricted to small, seasonal fishing and hunting camps.

C. Subsistence Patterns

Fertile agricultural land was situated in the "Grand Valley" through which the Valley Brook ran. Limited sources of freshwater fish were available in Granville's ponds (Black and Parson's) and several streams. Hunting likely took place throughout the town's extensive uplands.

D. Observations

Granville appears to have functioned primarily as a resource area for the heavily populated western Connecticut River Valley region (Westfield, West Springfield, Agawam, etc.). The potential for period archaeological sites is low. The greatest likelihood for extant period sites should be in the "Grand Valley" area.

V. Plantation Period

A. Transportation Routes

Native trails remained as regional routes with a pathway along Little River from Westfield as the "Massasoit Trail" (WPA 1937:p.552).

B. Population

There is no reference to native or colonial population.

C. Settlement Patterns

Native settlement probably continued to be limited to small hunting or fishing bands occupying scattered locations seasonally. Some native settlement may have occurred on the Grand Valley agricultural land. The first colonial settlement did not take place until the late 1730s.

D. Economic Base

Natives utilizing the Granville area probably maintained their traditional subsistence patterns. It is doubtful there was any colonial utilization of Granville for its resources, particularly since there were extensive tracts of agricultural and timberland and fresh water sources to the east of the town in Westfield, West Springfield, and Agawam.

E. Observations

Granville was part of the undeveloped periphery of both the native and colonial communities of the western portion of the Connecticut River Valley. There is little or no potential for archaeological evidence of native or period settlement.

VI. Colonial Period

A. Transportation Routes

The settlement of the upper Little River area and formation of Bedford (Granville) township in 1738 established a basic highway pattern. Primary access along east to west was Main Road (Route 57) with a meeting house established near Granville Center (1747). A series of north-south highways follow the topographic grain and township division grid. Period highways included Beech Hill and Blandford Roads, North Lane (Number 2), Hartland Road, South Lane
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(Number 2), Barnard Road (to Southwick). An important north-south connector from Ore Hill (West Granville) followed Hall Pond Brook to Blandford (now discontinued).

B. Population

If Granville had a post-1675 native population it is doubtful there were more than a handful of residents.

In 1754, Granville's colonial population consisted approximately of 75 families. The town's population (Granville, Tolland) had grown to 1126 residents in 1776, making Old Granville the fifth most populous town in what was then Hampshire County. A considerable portion of Granville's early settlers were former Springfield and Durham, Connecticut residents. Smaller numbers moved from Hingham and New Haven, Connecticut.

C. Settlement Patterns

Granville escaped damage during the French and Indian Wars of the 18th century. The town was not settled until ca. 1736, despite its establishment as Bedford Plantation in 1718. At this date, Samuel Bancroft is reputed to have built a home in northeastern Granville in the vicinity of the Granville Reservoir. Settlement was encouraged by the Bedford proprietors, who offered for sale 100-acre tracts of land and the acquisition of 6 acres of grassland after 3 years' residency. Period settlement focused in three areas: the earliest settlement (1730s), excluding the home of Samuel Bancroft, shortly after he built a garrison house a short distance from his home, occurred in the vicinity of the junction of Main Road (Route 57) and Blandford Road. By the late 1740s, this area had developed into the town's primary settlement node and was the location of Granville's first meeting house (ca. 1747). The 1740s witnessed his first settlement in present West Granville (junction of Main Road and Beech Hill Road), and this village's subsequent development as a secondary settlement node. The largest of the settlement foci was situated in present Tolland in the vicinity of Tolland Center (junction of Route 57 and Clubhouse Road). This and the adjoining area was initially occupied in ca. 1750. Evidence of a third quarter of the 18th century settlement occurs adjacent to the southern portion of Silver St. and South Lane #1 and the northern portion of Blandford Road.

D. Economic Base

The town's colonial economy focused primarily on agriculture. Crop production occurred primarily in Granville's valleys, while the uplands were utilized as pastureland and for hay production. Phineas Pratt is the first documented (ca. 1755) holder of a local tavern license. George Pyncheon, Jr. was issued a tavern license in ca. 1764. Pyncheon was also licensed in ca. 1764 to sell "tea, coffee and chinaware" (Wilson 1954:292). Documentation of local industry was limited. The only documented period mill was a grist and sawmill complex built by a Mr. Hubbard on Hubbard's River prior to ca. 1759. A complex of

possible pre 1775 grist and sawmills was situated in eastern Granville on Munn and Seymour Brooks while a possible pre 1775 fulling mill was located northwest of the village of Granville on Tillotson Brook. A second complex of possible 1775 grist, saw and fulling mills was situated in northwestern Granville on Ripley and Borden Brooks.

E. Architecture

Residential: Approximately a dozen Colonial Period houses and cottages have survived in Granville. Among these are a few houses dating from the mid century or earlier: essentially Granville's first settlement period. The earliest documented structure is the John Rosse House (1742), a five-bay center chimney house with an end gable overhang. The Rosse House chimney is pilastered in the manner common to 17th century houses of Massachusetts Bay. Most of the remaining period houses probably date from the third quarter of the century. With a single exception, Granville's Colonial houses and cottages employ the center chimney plan; only one house is known incorporating double chimneys. Several houses and cottages are only four bays wide rather than the standard five bays with center entrance. End gable and second story overhangs are relatively common in the town; all of these appear to be hewn rather than framed. Use of hewn overhangs seems to be fairly common in the region and may relate to Connecticut practice. Also common is the use of the gambrel roof. At least one gambrel-roofed cottage incorporates an entrance surround with broken scroll pediment. All of the period houses observed were located along Route 57 (Main Road). In addition to the standard residences in the town, at least two forts were built in Granville. The first was constructed in 1744 by Samuel Bancroft, the second ca. 1745 by Deacon David Rose. Deacon Rose's fort, also his residence, was built of stone. It is the only instance of a stone garrison encountered in Hampden County.

Institutional: The Granville Congregational Church was organized in 1747. The first meeting house was built in that year; no specifications are recorded for the structure. The only other church existing in the Colonial Period was the Baptist church, which was founded ca. 1760, but not formally organized until the Federal Period.

F. Observations

Formation of a discrete, single settlement focal point was discouraged by the moderate to rugged uplands dominating present Granville and Tolland. A considerable amount of the town's Colonial Period streetscape and landscape survive, including portions of the township rangeways such as North Lane #2 and South Lanes #1 and 2, the "Middle Granville" settlement node (village of West Granville) and the town's first (ca. 1739) cemetery near Granville Center. There is an excellent likelihood for extant period archaeological sites throughout the town due to its rural nature.

VII. Federal Period

A. Transportation Routes

The primary corridor remained as east-west Main Road (Route 57) to Farmington River with connecting highways from Southwick as Sodom Street and from Westfield as Old Westfield Road. A secondary east-west highway was located near the Blanford line to Beech Hill as Clement Road. No turnpikes projected or surveyed through the area.

B. Population

Granville's population density rose steadily throughout the period, though the separation of Tolland caused a loss of 34% of the town's residents and 42% of its land area. In 1830, the town had a density of 38.17 persons per square mile (up from 26.34 in 1790), and a real-number resident count of 1,649.

C. Settlement Pattern

The civic focus was maintained at Granville Center (Jockey Corners) with a street village along Main Road (Route 57). Secondary highway villages expanded at East Granville with a tavern and local manufacturing, and at West Granville with the meeting house (1788) and academy. Agriculture remained the primary economic activity with cattle grazing and wheat farming along the north-south intervals.

D. Economic Base

In 1794 the official town surveyor described the condition of the town:

This town [then including Tolland] is altogether mountainous, and a considerable part of it a barren heath covered with hemlock and other green woods. The valleys are fruitful producing corn. The hills and other grounds that are acceptable afford excellent pasturage and mowing. It is to appearance at a distance one continued cluster of green mountains.

Throughout the Federal Period, no significant change can be observed in this portrait, although in 1810 the town of Tolland (then called West Granville) was separated.

E. Architecture

Residential: Approximately two dozen Federal Period houses have survived in Granville. Among these are some half dozen outstanding houses of exceptional design and preservation. Most of these are located in Granville Center with the remainder at West Granville. Of particular note at Granville Center are the Israel Parsons House (1816), a two-story hip roofed end chimney house with a unique Regency entrance surround composed of concentric round arches, the Joel Root House (1814), a late Georgian double interior chimney house with five-bay facade

treatment on both the front and side walls, and the James Cooley House (1817), a gable front Federal structure with a double-leaved door in the center bay surmounted by a Palladian window. At West Granville are the Curtis Tavern (ca. 1765; remodelled ca. 1800), a five-bay center chimney structure with well developed late Georgian details such as crown moldings with pulvineated friezes and an entrance surround whose frieze is ornamented with plaster swags and a central eagle; and the Country House (1790), a two-story late Georgian brick structure with a massive segmental pediment in the entrance surround. In addition to these outstanding period houses, a number of more modest Federal houses survive. Most of these are two-story hip roofed end or double interior chimney structures with five-bay facades. Several structures of four bays' width were observed, however, along with a few gable front, three-bay sidehall houses probably dating from the 1820s.

The use of at least three distinct details on many of Granville's houses should be noted. The first is the use of stop fluted moldings in cornices, and entrance and window surrounds. The second is the use of an entrance surround containing a semicircular fanlight and sidelights halfway down the door, but without the customary pannelling below: the surround seems to be set keyhole fashion in the wall. Also very common for period houses was the use of four pilasters across the facade. Almost all of the town's Federal houses are located along Route 57 (Main Road).

Institutional: In 1802, the original Congregational church at Granville Center was replaced with the present structure standing on Route 57. A simple two-story gable roofed structure with a center entrance, the church was remodelled in 1890; the present columned facade treatment probably dates from that remodelling. Other churches built in the period were a Baptist Church (1800) at Granville Corners and the Second Congregational Church at West Granville (1788). The Second Congregational Church still stands. A two-and-a-half story structure, the church's facade was remodelled ca. 1845, but the remaining elevations appear to retain their original fabric, including clapboards. The structure exhibits a regionally common 18th century feature - hewn second story and end gable overhangs.

VIII. Early Industrial Period

A. Transportation Routes

Main Road (Route 57) remained as the primary east-west highway connecting local village centers. No railroads were projected or constructed through the area.

B. Population

Granville's population began a long, slow decline from its peak year of 1830. By 1870, despite a brief rise in the 1850s,

the town had lost 356 residents since 1830. Three percent of the 1855 population were foreign-born -- far below the 21.6% county average, and the smallest of any of the hill towns, but for Montgomery. Of these, 39 of the 45 were Irish.

C. Settlement Pattern

Granville Center (Jockey Corners) was maintained as the civic focus. Local manufacturing expanded at East Granville and highway services at West Granville along the axis of Main Road (Route 57). dairy farms remained as the primary economic activity; commercial tobacco production was attempted before the Civil War.

D. Economic Base

The middle decades of the 19th century were Granville's period of manufacturing diversity, however limited. Industrial activity was particularly pronounced at Granville Corners (now Granville village), where a village had developed along the water power provided by Dickinson Brook. The largest industry in 1837 was the manufacture of "pocket-books", employing 15 women that year. In West Granville, John Kent made silver spectacles valued at \$3,000 that year. By 1855 the making of powder kegs was the largest business (28 men employed). Perhaps the powder kegs inspired Noble and Cooley in the same decade to made toy drums a few yards away. The same firm is still in operation today. By 1865 the firm was competing with another local maker, Ethan Robinson, and the two firms together produced \$27,500 worth of military and toy drums with an employee roster of 48 men and women.

Twenty sawmills were identified from the 1857 map of the town, possibly the largest number encountered in any town in the county. Fruit (apples and pears), butter and cheese, Indian corn, hay, oats, and potatoes were among the town's agricultural products. Seventeen acres of tabacco were under cultivation in 1865, but the business was not a success; by 1880 it was gradually being abandoned.

E. Architecture

Residential: The pattern of residential construction shifted in the Early Industrial Period. Granville Corners developed as the town's foremost village and houses began to be constructed along the interior roads of the town. Perhaps as many as seventy-five houses were built in the period, of which many survive. These include a higher proportion of cottages and small houses than has been noted for the earlier period. Almost all period residences exhibit gable front orientation. For the early years of the period the sidehall plan predominated, but by the 1850s, several innovations had become common. The first was the adoption of a cross-gabled form with two bays on the front gable, entrance on the long side (side verandas indicate the entrance location) and shallow projecting side bays. The second innovation was the adoption of kneewall framing. Most

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small houses of the period incorporate a kneewall-framed attic which creates an additional half story of living space. The majority of the houses of the period exhibit Italianate details, the most common of which is the shallow-pitched gable roof with overhanging eaves. Two of the most outstanding houses of the period are a Gothic Revival cottage at Granville Center, with the cross gabled form, board and batten siding and lancet windows, and a heavily-scaled temple front Greek Revival house at West Granville. The Gothic cottage retains a board and batten sided barn and lancet arched garden trellis. Along back roads are a few conservatively styled double interior chimney, five-bay, center entrance farmhouses. One of the best of these is located on Barnard Road: it incorporates the four facade pilasters common in the town in the Federal Period with a Greek Revival Asher Benjamin-derived fretwork entrance surround.

Institutional: The best preserved institutional building of the period is the Academy at West Granville (1837). A one-and-a-half story Greek Revival structure, the Academy incorporates double entrances on the facade and a square belfry with pinnacles. In 1848, the present Baptist Church on Silver Street (Route 189) was constructed. Later alterations, including aluminum siding, have significantly diminished the building's integrity. Also in the period, the facade of the Second Congregational church was remodelled with transitional Greek/Gothic Revival details, including a shallow projecting porch with triple entrances, small corner piers with pinnacles, and a two-stage square belfry with lancet windows and pinnacles. Of the 11 schools districts known in 1879, no schoolhouses are known to survive. A Universalist church was established at Granville Corners in 1863; it is not known whether that church still stands.

Industrial: The only known industrial building of the period surviving is the Noble and Cooley Drum Factory at Granville Corners (1855). This is a three-story frame building with a gable roof; the seven-bay-long facade incorporates a three-bay gabled center pavilion.

IX. Late Industrial Period

A. Transportation Routes

The local corridor remained as Main Road (Route 57) with connecting access to Westfield and Southwick. No trolley lines were constructed through the area.

B. Population

Granville's population continued to decline, from 1293 in 1870 to 784 in 1915. The foreign-born population remained about 20 percentage points behind the county average, rising to 8.2% in 1880 and 12% in 1905. By 1905, Danes had joined the Irish as a major immigrant group, although the former number only 19 and the latter 35.

C. Settlement Pattern

Village centers along Main Road (Route 57) retained local activity with the civic focus at Granville Center and commercial activity at East Granville. Dairy farming remained the primary economic activity.

D. Economic Base

In the last decades of the 19th century, Granville lost the small industries that made up its diversity. The manufacture of toy drums remained the dominant industry. A local historian wrote in 1879:

Agriculture is scarcely in a flourishing condition. The soil is generally sterile and stony. Farmers prefer to buy their grain, as they say they can do so cheaper than they can raise it. Good grazing lands are plentiful, and stock raising, together with the limited production of butter and cheese are the principal products.

By the 1890s, of the twenty sawmills noted in 1857, only one remained.

In 1909-10, the City of Springfield took Borden Brook for a water-supply reservoir, condemning much of its watershed within Blandford and Granville, a move that would be repeated two decades later in the condemnation of land for the city's Cobble Mountain Reservoir.

E. Architecture

Residential: Modest construction continued through the 1880s in the eastern half of the town. There appears to have been little construction elsewhere in the town after 1900. Conservatively-styled Italianate kneewall cottages and small houses probably were built through the 1870s at Granville Corners. Along Route 57 some more substantial two and two-and-a-half story houses were built before 1890. Most of these have sidehall plans embellished with cross gables, bays and ells, and exhibit either Sitck Style or Queen Anne details.

Institutional: The only institutional building known for the period is the Public Library at Granville. A one story hip roof yellow brick Renaissance Revival building with a corner turret and terra cotta details, the Library was built ca. 1905. It may have been donated by the Carnegie Foundation, as no record was found of the town's decision to construct such a building. The library is one of very few brick structures in the town and is clearly the most stylish building of the period.

Commercial: The stores presently standing in the town were probably constructed after 1900. These include one one-story

frame building at Granville and a gambrel roof cottage converted to a store and garage (Benton's Market) at West Granville.

X. Early Modern Period

A. Transportation Routes

There was improvement of local highways as auto roads with a primary east-west corridor as Route 57 from Southwick. Construction of Cobble Mountain and Granville reservoirs required relocation of Old Westfield Road and the extension of Cobble Mountain and Wildcat Roads to Westfield.

B. Population

Granville's population reached its nadir in 1925 with a count of 609 residents. Thereafter, the figure fluctuated in the 600s until after World War II.

C. Settlement Pattern

Street villages were maintained along Route 57 axis as local centers with dairy farming the primary economic activity. Water supply reservoirs for Westfield and Springfield flood the northeast mountain area, with Granville Reservoir (1914-26) on the original settlement site and Cobble Mountain Reservoir (1927-31) on upper Little River at the Blandford line.

D. Economic Base

No new industries were identified.

The major event of the period was the construction (and accompanying land condemnation) of the Cobble Mountain Reservoir, a 22.5-billion gallon water-supply reservoir built in 1928-30 by damming the Little River. Although the dam was built in Russell, the Wildcat Aqueduct and Intake Gatehouse are located in Granville. The aqueduct, or pressure tunnel, ends at a hydro-electric plant, constructed by the Springfield Water Works, 1928-30 in an unusual multi-purpose endeavor to make use of the steep fall between the reservoir surface and the bottom of the Little River gorge. From the hydro plant, water is emptied into the 1909 Diversion Reservoir in the gorge (in the town of Russell), from which it is piped to the West Parish Filtration plant in Westfield.

In 1928, Granville constructed its own reservoir on Hollister Brook.

E. Architecture

Residential: Very little residential construction occurred in the period. Most period houses noted were located along Route 57, Water Street and Sodom Street, in the eastern half of the town. The majority of these are one-story bungalows with hip or

gable roofs, raised basements, shed dormers and modest Craftsman/Colonial Revival detailing. A few two-story Colonial Revival houses with pyramidal hip roofs and four square plans were also constructed.

Institutional: The only known institutional construction of the period was the building of two one-story red brick Georgian Revival schools in 1930, one at West Granville on Beech Hill Road and the other at Granville on Route 57. Both are well detailed structures incorporating Flemish bond masonry; the Granville School has a cupola with an airplane weathervane.

XI. Survey Observations

Industrial: Granville's limited town survey identified only the old drum shop among its industrial structures. The history of the company, and its unusually intact 19th century setting make it a prime candidate for a National Register nomination. Other structures which should be studied for possible National Register designation include the Wildcat Aqueduct and hydro-electric station of the Springfield Water Works.

Granville's survey inventoried almost all pre 1830 residences, most 19th century institutional buildings, and one industrial structure. While recorded, most buildings have little or no historical documentation; this is no doubt the result of the survey methodology, apparently a brief windshield survey. As a result, a number of omissions and errors were noted; these have been corrected on the basis of observation and local histories. Further inventory work should more fully document existing forms and should record notable late 19th and early 20th century residences, as well as later institutional buildings (1930 schools). Granville is notable for its exceptionally fine Colonial and Federal Period residences, many of which appear to be the work of a gifted and creative local builder, probably familiar with English as well as American pattern books.

XII. Sources

Wilson, Albion Benjamin, History of Granville, Massachusetts
(Hartford, CT, 1954).