

# MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

## HOLYOKE

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: April, 1982

COMMUNITY: Holyoke

### I. Topography:

Holyoke is dominated by the small but rugged Mt. Tom Range, the southwestern extension of the Holyoke Range that extends through southern Amherst and Hadley. Both the Mt. Tom and Holyoke ranges are the probable vestiges of a complex of prehistoric volcanoes. The Mt. Tom Range originates on the Holyoke/East-hampton border and extends south through central Holyoke eventually terminating in West Springfield. Elevations rarely reach over 700'. Prominent points include Mt. Tom with an elevation in excess of 1000', East Mountain (775') and Little Mountain (450+'). A series of dinosaur tracks are present in the Mt. Tom Reservation. These uplands grade into a series of rolling hills to the east and west with elevations generally ranging between 200-300'. Narrow floodplains are situated in northeastern Holyoke and the present site of the city's downtown district. Local drainage is good throughout all but the southernmost portion of Holyoke, the site of several moderately sized tracts of marshland. Waterways are restricted to several brooks and streams that eventually drain into the Connecticut River. The Connecticut demarcates the city's eastern boundary. A number of freshwater bodies are scattered throughout Holyoke, the largest of which are the Ashley and Wright pond complex. The majority of these are mill ponds and reservoirs created in the 19th and 20th centuries to sustain the community's residential and industrial needs.

### II. Political Boundaries

Originally included as part of Springfield plantation during 17th century with western boundary at Westfield line surveyed in 1669, and northern line with Northampton in 1685 (Rock Valley segment only). Established as Ireland parish with Chicopee in 1750 and included as part of West Springfield in 1774 with Springfield boundary at Connecticut River. Incorporated as independent town of Holyoke in 1850 with southern boundary at West Springfield line. Established as a city in 1873 with Mount Tom annex from Northampton in 1909.

### III. Historic Overview:

Important urban industrial city on regional axis between Northampton and Springfield. Located on west side of Connecticut River at base of Mount Tom with native sites reported at Depot Hill in Holyoke overlooking Great Falls of Connecticut and possibly around Ashley Pond area. Settlement delayed by limited agricultural potential until mid-18th century with Scotch Irish immigrants at Tannery Brook (Brightside) with authentic Colonial period farmsteads surviving in Rock Valley on Westfield plain. Town center formed as Ireland parish on north-south axis of Northampton Street (Route 5) after Revolution, although no remaining period houses evident. Adjacent development of South Hadley and Chicopee by early 19th century sponsored local authority at Great Falls and intact Federal houses at Ferry Street landing (Ingleside). Agricultural activity maintained on East Mountain vales with survival of period houses and barns, including notable stone example on Mountain Road.

Opening of Connecticut River Railroad during mid-19th century prompted large scale development of Great Falls plain as industrial complex by Boston and New York investors. Holyoke planned as New City around three main power canals with urban brick construction, although success of venture troubled by economic conditions. Much of original Early Industrial fabric remains intact, including Greek Revival style textile mills and row housing at Great Falls Dam, period warehouses and railroad sheds along Race Street canal, Italianate business blocks on Main and High Streets and early Catholic church and schools around Hampden Park.

Explosive growth of Holyoke during Late Industrial period with increasing scale of urbanization. Economic shift from textiles to paper by late 19th century with continued focus of industrial activity along Connecticut River power canals. Large brick factories developed along railroad axis with monumental complex intact at Springdale. Architecturally significant Richardson railroad station survives at Depot Hill with period truss bridges and concrete overpass. Downtown district built with brick business blocks with civic focus around Common, including landmark Victorian city hall of granite stone. Extensive construction of multi-storied brick apartment blocks, both tenements and residential hotels around inner district, many with Romanesque and Classical Revival features, including ironwork and stained glass. Similarly, period churches are also well designed in Romanesque style with notable landmark of Neo-Gothic cathedral. Large area of Highlands developed as suburban housing with elaborate Queen Anne examples and Colonial Revival mansions infilled with modest two family housing. Institutional fringe located along Northampton Street axis (Route 5) with Flemish Revival hospital at Ingleside and authentic period trolley amusement complex intact at Mountain Park (Mount Tom) with original merry-go-round. Limited growth during Early Modern period with continued expansion of suburban residential district in Highlands area, including wide range of Historic Revival styles in brick and stucco and well-preserved Art Deco civic buildings in Downtown.

Present development is most evident along Interstate 91 corridor with overwhelming complex at Ingleside potentially threatening historic fabric of Ferry Street Village. Suburban expansion now reaching crest of East Mountain ridge eroding surviving agricultural landscape along Mountain Rock, although Rock Valley retains remarkable preservation of character. Holyoke Center troubled by persistent problems of abandonment and arson, around inner periphery with loss of brick apartment blocks notable on Depot Hill and Elmwood Park. Extensive urban renewal has stabilized historic industrial area at Great Falls with some revitalization of High Street commercial district, while Main Street depot area appears unstable, threatening historic Richardson station complex.

#### IV. Contact Period (1500-1620)

##### A. Transportation Routes:

Important corridor along west bank of Connecticut River with regional connections across East Mountain ridge to interior. Primary north-south river trail appears obvious as Northampton Street (Route 5) along base of Mount Tom/Nonotuck formation. Suspected trail branches to Great Falls of Connecticut include portions of South-High Streets and Hampden-Prospect Streets. Western route across mountain ridge appears likely as Whitney Rock Valley Roads along Tannery Brook and Ashley Pond with possible loop southwest to Snail Pond as relict trail (U.S.G.S. map). Other mountain connectors to western interior may include segments of Cherry Street around Craft Hill with possible loop to south along East Mountain as relict trail to Ashley Pond (U.S. G.S. map). No documented trails are cited to Mount Tom or Mount Nonatuck summits.

##### B. Settlement Patterns:

There were no reported native Contact period sites. A number of unidentified and Woodland period sites were situated on the lowlands adjacent to the Connecticut River or moderate uplands in the town's interior. All three of the Woodland period sites were located on the Connecticut River lowlands. Native period settlement probably concentrated along these fertile lowlands and those abutting the Ashley and Wright Pond complex. Additional native settlement may have taken place to the northwest in the Rock Valley lowlands.

##### C. Subsistence Patterns:

Considerable agricultural land was available along Connecticut River and the Rock Valley lowlands. Native fishing would have focused on the Connecticut River and Ashley and Wright ponds. Hunting probably took place in the moderate uplands of the town's interior.

##### D. Observations:

Contact period settlement was probably moderate primarily due to the rugged uplands dominating most of the town's western interior. Native settlement would have been much heavier in the extensive fertile lowlands situated to the north in Northampton and to the south in West Springfield and Agawam. However, there was probably a considerable influx of natives to Holyoke during the annual spring fish runs up the Connecticut River. This area may have been part of territory controlled by the Agawams, a sub group of the Nipmucs, who by the 17th century reputedly controlled land on both sides of the Connecticut River between Enfield Falls (Connecticut) to the south and South Hadley Falls, to the north (Everts 1879: I, 20). The Agawams' central location was in Springfield. The greatest potential for surviving native period sites are the lightly developed lowlands adjacent to the Connecticut River, Ashley and Wright Ponds and west of the East Mountains.

## V. Plantation Period: (1620-1675)

### A. Transportation Routes:

Native trails maintained as regional route system. Primary north-south path between Agawam (West Springfield) and Northampton remained as Northampton Street (Route 5) along base of Great Mountain (Mount Tom). Interior route across East Mountain ridge maintained as Whitney-Rock Valley Roads around Ashley Pond.

### B. Population:

It is unclear if there was a Plantation period native population. The first colonial settlement did not take place until c.1730.

### C. Settlement Patterns:

Native period sites probably existed in Holyoke when considering the absence of a permanent colonial population.

### D. Economic Base:

There would have been little change in the traditional native subsistence rounds.

### E. Observations:

This period is virtually ignored by the secondary sources.

## VI. Colonial Period (1675-1775)

### A. Transportation Routes:

Highway system improved with settlement of Ireland parish during mid-18th century. Primary north-south route remained as Northampton Street (Route 5) along base of Mount Tom with highway to western interior as Whitney-Rock Valley Roads along Riley (Tannery) Brook. Several local north-south connectors opened along mountain ridge to interior farmsteads. These include Homestead-Jarvis Aves and Mountain Avenue with east-west links at Westfield Road and other unnamed highways (U.S.G.S. Map) Ferry operated to Chicopee across Connecticut from Ferry Street landing.

B. Population:

The existing sources make no reference to a post-1675 native population. Six colonial families lived in Holyoke c. 1745. The community's first settlers were Irish.

C. Settlement Patterns:

The first colonial homes were established in the vicinity of Riley's (Tannery) Brook by several Irish families in c.1730. By the late 18th century, colonial settlement was focusing further north in the present village of Holyoke. There may have been some scattered 18th century settlement to the west adjacent to Rock Valley Road. Local residents attended the West Springfield meetinghouse since Holyoke lacked its own facility.

D. Economic Base:

Agriculture was the primary economic pursuit of the settlement's residents. Colonial farming probably focused in the lowlands adjacent to the Connecticut River, Ashley and Wright Ponds and Rock Valley. Extensive colonial fishing took place on the Connecticut River in the 2nd half of the 18th century. This area attracted settlers annually from a number of study unit towns. There was no reference to the establishment of period industrial operations.

E. Architecture:

Colonial: Holyoke's Colonial period architecture is known only through photographs taken in the 19th century: no structures of the period are known to survive. Both cottages and two-story houses were constructed. Among the residences depicted were the Captain Miller House (1749 - demolished 1884) on Northampton Street, a center chimney house with a center entrance three bay facade with end gable overhang and Georgian door surround with pediment. Also illustrated were the Brown House, a center chimney Georgian House with quoins, the Rand Homestead, a center chimney cottage with added leanto and the Morgan House, a three-quarter plan center chimney cottage. Most of these were located on Northampton Street.

## VII. Federal Period (1775-1830)

### A. Transportation Routes:

Highway system remained in place with primary north-south route as Northampton Street (Route 5) through Ireland parish around base of Mount Tom. Continued improvement of secondary roads to interior intervals such as Cherry Street extension and South and Hampden Streets to Great Falls mills. Ferries operated to Chicopee side across Connecticut from Ferry Street and South Hadley.

### B. Population:

Separate population statistics are not available for Holyoke until 1850. 11 persons made up the Baptist Church in 1803. About this time there were three district schools; twenty-five years later there were 7.

### C. Settlement Pattern:

Primary civic center formed along Northampton Street with location of meeting house in 1782 and expansion as street village during early 19th century. Agriculture continued on Great Falls plain with local milling sites developed by 1820s from South Hadley canal. Secondary agricultural district maintained along intervals of East Mountain around Rock Valley to Westfield plain.

### D. Economic Base:

Holyoke throughout the Federal period remained an agricultural community. In the 1780's it was centered around a tavern (Ireland P.O.) that served as a halfway stop on the stage route between Springfield and Northampton. In the 1780s and 1790s, new settlers, predominantly Baptist, formed the nucleus of a small "Baptist Village". A grist and saw mill were built on the falls about 1783; and a tannery was in operation near the West Springfield line in 1786.

Manufacturing and commercial life at the Falls was dominated by the canal and canal village which sprang up around it in South Hadley. By 1831, in addition to a thriving village, there were two paper mills. The establishment of a swing ferry about 1828 connecting this center of trade with Holyoke was probably a significant factor in the establishment in 1827 of the Hadley Falls Company. By 1832, the company had erected a small cotton mill, by 1837 employing 70 men and women.

### E. Architecture:

Very few Federal period residences survive in Holyoke. Almost all of these are located in the western half of the city in Rock Valley

and along Westfield Road and Homestead Avenue. Most of the houses known are traditional two story center chimney structures with five bay facades and center entrances. Almost none have survived in original condition. It is likely that houses with more advanced plans, such as end and double chimneys, existed in Holyoke but that these have not survived the pressures of later development. Period settlement focused on Northampton Street where commercial and residential development has been intense; an example of the house type which has not survived was the Crafts Tavern, a two and a half story end interior chimney structure with a one story veranda and a two-story side ell.

Institutional: In 1787, a Baptist congregation was formed in Holyoke and a meetinghouse begun. The meetinghouse was not completed until 1796 and was used jointly by the Baptists and the Congregationalists, who organized in 1799, throughout the Federal period. The only school known for the period was the "seminary", a two story frame building, 40' x 35', built in 1808 and located south of the Rand Homestead (on Northampton Street).

#### VIII. Early Industrial Period (1830-1870)

##### A. Transportation Routes:

Significant improvement of north-south corridor with opening of Connecticut River Railroad in 1845 from Chicopee across Connecticut to Great Falls and along base of Mount Tom. Subsequent purchase and development of Great Falls site by Hadley Falls Company in 1847 created "New City" of Holyoke by summer of 1850 (Griffith, 1887, p.10; Green, 1939, pp. 18-22). Existing routes of South and Hampden Streets used as frame for Holyoke street grid with axis along axis of power canals. Highway connector along base of Connecticut to Ingleside (Tannery Brook) opened as Springfield-Main Streets and secondary connector from Northampton Street as Beech Street (Route 202). Easthampton Road opened as connector to Easthampton around Mount Tom. Bridge replaced ferry across Connecticut to Willimansett (Chicopee) during 1850's and local proto-transit service along Race Street canal as South Holyoke Railroad by 1867 (Shaw, in Wright, 1949 II, p. 545).

##### B. Population:

In 1845 Holyoke was reputed to have 14 homes; five years later it had a population of 3,245. Although the town's population expanded at a fairly brisk pace, rising 74 percent in the period 1850-65, in the final years of the period 1865-70, Holyoke's population climbed over 90 percent, reaching 10,733. As early as 1855, Holyoke's immigrant population numbered 2015, 43 percent of the total, or the highest of any town in the valley. Of this number, 82 percent were Irish, 9.6 percent Scottish, and 4.8 percent English. By 1870, Holyoke was said to have the largest percentage of foreign born of any city in the state.



C. Settlement Pattern:

Civic center remained along Northampton Street with economic focus at Great Falls mill sites. Location of Connecticut River Railroad across Great Falls plain in 1845 fostered development of large scale industrial complex by Boston investors during 1847-50 as New City of Holyoke. Formal plan devised around power canals at First, Second and Third levels with related street grid set along axis of canals. Primary focus centered around Hadley Falls dam and railroad depot at Race Street with civic focus set around Town Common at upper level. Holyoke site developed rapidly before Civil War with mill district along power canals and related worker's housing rows, commercial district at Main Street railroad station and on upper level along High Street axis with suburban residential district extended on Appleton Street to Forestdale Cemetery (1862) and river vistas. Secondary civic focus formed at Hampden Square at upper level as center of Irish and French Canadian Catholic institutional district.

D. Economic Base:

The Early Industrial period was Holyoke's formative period. At its opening in the 1830s, the territory retained all the characteristics of the rural Colonial landscape; at its end in 1870, Holyoke's street and power-canal layout had been constructed and the papermill character of her industries assured.

As late as 1845, Holyoke had been a rural community, but in that year, the completion of the Connecticut River Railroad linking Cabotville and (Springfield) with Northampton suddenly brought the potential of the Great Falls to the attention of the Boston capitalists who had just completed great textile mills at Chicopee a few miles down river. At Holyoke, Thomas H. Perkins, George W. Lyman, and Edmund Dwight hoped to repeat the previous successes at Waltham, Lowell, and Chicopee. Holyoke, which had the greatest theoretical waterpower potential of any site in New England, would be developed as a company town along the lines of Lowell or Chicopee. By 1849, despite the destruction of the company's dam the day it was completed, Holyoke had assumed many aspects of a town, with provision and clothing stores, and prosperity momentarily expected. But the company's extravagant expectations were not to be realized. In the 1850s, manufacturing interests has not yet been developed to an extent requiring the waterpower the company offered. Only one mill (the Lyman Mill) was built according to the company's plan and the depression conditions of the early 1850s hindered further expansion.

In the meantime, Joseph Clark Parsons, a papermaker originally with the pioneer Connecticut Valley mill of the Ames brothers, moved to Holyoke in 1853, where, with the very reluctant acquiescence of the Hadley Falls Company, (who wanted a textile town), organized the Parsons Paper Company. The success if the paper company soon laid to rest all doubts about the desirability of papermakers in Holyoke. The industrial expansion of Holyoke in the 1850's remained limited and in 1857, the financial panic brought down the Hadley Falls Company itself. The company, it was said, had been extravagant in its expenditures, and the failure of the first dam had cut badly into its finances. The assets of the company were purchased by Alfred Smith, one of the original 1827 incorporators, who in turn organized the Holyoke Water Power Company. In the early 1860s, the company began aggressively seeking new industries and making loans for plant expansion.

Among the new industries were woolen companies, of which the Germania company was the foremost. Its German owners fostered a cohesiveness in its Rhineland employees. Ample water supply attracted the Merrick Thread Company up from drought-stricken Mansfield, CT in 1865. It was also about 1865 that the paper mills realized that the success of the Parsons Company -- ample power for running heavy fourdriniers, and chemically pure wash water -- made Holyoke an ideal center for making high-grade papers. Seven paper mills were built in the period 1865-66.

The Hadley Falls Company had established a machine shop in the 1850's. After the company's collapse, the machine shop was taken over for a few years by J.C. Whitin (of Whitinsville, MA). With the closing of that shop in 1863, its employees set up the Holyoke Machine Company, which quickly came to specialize in paper mill machinery and turbine water wheels.

#### E. Architecture:

For much of the period, until 1847, Holyoke retained the sparsely settled character it had had during the Federal period. There were few houses in the town and most of those were located along Northampton Street (Route 5). With the incorporations of the Hadley Falls Company in 1847 and the completion of a dam across the Connecticut River in 1848, Holyoke began a period of intense growth and industrial activity. By the end of the period, there were some 4500 dwellings in the city along with 29 schools and 20 churches. Most of the Early Industrial period development occurred on the lowlands adjacent to the Connecticut River. Among the earliest residences constructed were two and a half story brick sidehall plan Greek Revival rowhouse with pedimented dormers, built to house workers of the Hadley Falls Company. There is little elite or single family construction for the early years of the period, although some sidehall Greek Revival and Italianate houses were constructed; most of these survive in the outlying areas of the city, west of Route 5 and along Route 5 in the northern half of the city. The earliest elite residential construction dates from the 1860s and is located on the hills west of the city's commercial district. Period houses built and surviving include a number of brick Ruskinian Gothic Revival houses with Panel Brick and Stick Style detailing; also popular were late Italianate villas with mansard roofs and elaborate Renaissance Revival details. By the end of the period, more modest single family houses, of both frame and masonry construction, were being built to house upper echelon mill workers and a growing commercial and professional population. Sections of Oakdale and the Pulaski Park area, to the west and north of the business district, began to be developed in the 1860s with two and two and a half story late Italianate Mansard and Stick Style houses.

Institutional: In 1834, the first Congregational Church built their second meetinghouse, a two and a half story frame Greek Revival building which stood until 1892. A second Congregational Church was formed in 1849; in 1852, the congregation erected a two story Federal/Italianate building with blind wallarches containing roundhead windows and a triple entrance facade with a shallow entrance tower and two stage belfry and tower. That somewhat

retardataire building stood until the late 19th century. The earliest surviving church building of the period is Saint Jeromes Catholic Church (founded 1854), a two story brick cruciform plan Gothic Revival building with a center entrance bay surmounted by a spire; the church, built 1856-60, was designed by P.C. Keeley of Brooklyn. In addition to the church, Saint Jerome's convent (1869), a mansard/Italianate brick building, also survives. No other institutional buildings of the period are known to survive. A number of private and municipal institutions established in the period should be noted; among these are the Fire Department (1850), High School (1852), Public Library (1869), Almshouse (1850), Forestdale Cemetery (1860), Second Baptist (1849), Methodist Episcopal (1853), Episcopal (1849), Unitarian (1857) and Lutheran (1866), churches.

Commercial: Despite the establishment of a well-developed commercial district in the period, very few commercial buildings are known to survive. One of the few known survivors is the Nonotuck Hotel (c.1860), a three story brick Greek Revival/Italianate building with a dentilated cornice and end chimneys. Contemporary illustrations indicate that Holyoke's commercial district consisted primarily of three, four and five story brick buildings of the 1850's and 1860's; Italianate, High Victorian Gothic and Panel Brick buildings were common. Among the notable commercial structures which have not survived were the Holyoke House (c.1855), a four story Greek Revival lintel with hip roof, square lantern and two story entrance bay with pediment and the Opera House (c. 1876), a two story High Victorian Gothic building enclosing a cylindrically-roofed round auditorium.

Industrial: While institutional and commercial structures have not survived in great number, industrial buildings of the Early Industrial period are well preserved. Among the mills surviving are the Clinton Silk Mill (c.1860), Graham Manufacturing Company (1863, John Chaze and Charles McClallan), Valley Paper (1864), Whiting Paper (1865, J.S. Newton), Hampton Cotton Mills (1855), Albion Paper (1869, D.H. and J.C. Newton) and some half dozen other period industrial structures. The earliest buildings are three and four story brick Greek Revival structures with gable roofs. While that traditional form remained in use through the 1860s by that time, larger and more innovatively styled mills with square Romanesque Revival stair towers were also being built. Double stair towers are a common feature of Holyoke's Mills. Active local builders and mill engineers included the Newton Brothers, Ashley B. Tower and Charles McClallan of Chicopee. Bearing masonry construction was standard for the period with one notable exception, the Whiting Paper Mill of 1865, which apparently utilized pier and spandrel construction.

## IX. Late Industrial Period (1870-1915)

### A. Transportation Routes:

Continued improvement of railroad connections to Holyoke mills from Westfield opened in 1871 through Ingleside around Ashley Pond (Copeland, 1902, p. 187). Local transit service gradually expanded from horse omnibus operation in 1870s to streetcar routes by 1884. Electrification of horsecar lines during 1890s extended trolley operation to suburban districts. Primary local city routes operated to downtown Holyoke on Springfield-Main, Beech, Appleton, Lincoln and Lyman Streets. Suburban route to Mount Tom from Highland district (Lincoln Street) on Northampton Street to Mountain Park on private way (still intact) with incline cable railway to Mount Tom summit opened 1897. Interurban trolley routes to Northampton opened along Route 5 from Mount Tom and to Westfield across East Mountain on private way (roadbed still intact) to Apremont Highway with local route to West Springfield through Ingleside and Brightside on Springfield Street.

### B. Population:

Holyoke's population rose in the Late Industrial period at a steady, if accelerated, pace for most of the period, averaging about 1700 persons per year, 1870-1910. Within this period, the city's population grew from 10,733 to 57,730--a growth rate of some 437 percent. After 1910, however, the rate began to slacken. In 1915 the population reached only 60,816; and after peaking in 1917, the number of residents began a long decline.

In 1880 the number of immigrants in the city amounted to 49 percent of the population; of these, the largest number came from Canada (44 percent) with another 38 percent from Ireland. Twenty-five years later, all three figures had fallen approximately 10 percent.

### C. Settlement Pattern:

Continued expansion of Holyoke industrial complex despite economic depression of 1870's with increasing scale of urban development. Economic focus maintained along power canals with railroad connections centered around Hadley Falls with secondary focus developed at Springdale by early 20th century. Civic focus set around City Common with secondary center at Hampden Park at Catholic institutional complex. Primary commercial district expanded along High Street axis as downtown area with secondary center at Main Street railroad station. Significant expansion of residential district along suburban trolley lines to Northampton Street axis and affluent neighborhood in Highlands section with river vistas on Pleasant Street by early 20th century. Large scale construction of multi-storied apartment blocks around downtown core to Oakdale and Elmwood sections beginning in 1880s with related row house districts on side streets to upper level terrace by First World War. Institutional fringe developed along Northampton Street axis with hospital complex at Ingleside and recreational center on Mount Tom at Mountain Park by early 20th century. Agriculture maintained in Rock Valley section to Westfield plain with commercial dairying and market gardens.

#### D. Economic Base:

In the Late Industrial period, Holyoke reached its manufacturing peak, as new chemical processes and new administrative controls altered the economics of paper manufacturing.

The early 1870s saw a tremendous building boom in Holyoke, though among paper mills it was limited to large-scale enterprises, by policy of the Holyoke Water Power Company. The Holyoke & Westfield Railroad, chartered by Holyoke men who charged the Connecticut River Railroad with discriminating freight rates, brought spur tracks to nearly every mill by 1872. In 1874 two new mills opened, which by the 1890s would become among the most prominent employers and tax-payers: Herbert Farr built the Farr Alpaca mill (including what appears to be one of the earliest saw-tooth roof weave sheds), importing workers from Canada and England; and William Skinner relocated the Unquomunk Silk Mills from Haydenville. Both had had the strong encouragement of the Holyoke Water Power Company. Builders were the Newton brothers, mill builders and investors who had been responsible for a large amount of industrial construction in Holyoke. On their own initiative, they built paper mills which then they would sell to other firms. In 1876 they were the first to introduce the soda process to pulp making, building in 1880 the Chemical Paper Company, said to be the largest soda pulp mill in the world when it was built.

Another upturn in the business cycle in 1879 brought six new paper mills and a large number of small concerns into being. So many were the opportunities to rent space that the Holyoke Water Power Company erected a large mill on Cabot Street to house the infant industries. At the same time, the company awoke to the fact that the power resources of the canals might be exhausted, and so constructed an elaborate testing flume for accurate hydraulic tests. Holyoke and the Holyoke Water Power Company in the last quarter of the 19th century attracted considerable interest among hydraulic engineers, and the system became a laboratory for new turbines, water meters, and pumps.

As the increasing use of wood pulp lowered the price of rags, American fine papers became increasingly competitive with European products. Despite this advantage a growing number of mills in the 1880s specialized in sulfide papers and machine drying (vs. loft drying). Thus, even as Holyoke was advertising itself as a producer of fine "writings" (first exports, 1876; a "quality paper surpassing that of Aberdeen, " etc), Holyoke mills were already well into the cheaper stuff.

Most of the last new paper mill construction in the early 1890s represented expansion of existing capacity financed from profits. The major events were the establishment of two large combines: the American Thread Company (combined the Merrick and Hadley Thread mills) and the American Writing Paper Co.

Historian Green calls the American Writing Paper Company the "classic example of the unsuccessful trust". Initiated from outside the industry, by men who had no firm grasp of the business, the AWP Co., formed of 16 Holyoke mills in 1899, brought to an end the period of vital growth among Holyoke paper mills. Although it was designed to eliminate the inefficiencies of 16 separate mills, management

never accomplished the pruning and rationalization this required. Buoyed briefly by the wartime profits of World War I, the company succumbed to its own weight in the postwar depression of 1921.

For different reasons, Farr Alpaca declined. The company in the '80s and '90s had witnessed unparalleled prosperity. Through plant expansion and quality production, Farr Alpaca had cut out all rivals and became the largest industrial plant in the city. But the woolen industry was doomed by changes in the tariff as much as changes in fashion. The heavy wool overcoatings required by the open touring car became much less significant with the introduction of the closed, heated automobile.

Holyoke's major asset, her water power, also sharply declined in importance as the expanding electric power grid made any location attractive to industry. The HWP Co. itself took advantage of its hydroelectric capacity, beginning to sell electric power in 1903.

Green dates the end of Holyoke's growth period to 1905. Although wages and annual product value continued to rise through 1919, the sharp decline in the purchasing power of the dollar offset most gains after 1915.

#### E. Architecture:

Residential: A great boom in residential construction occurred in the Late Industrial period; much of the area east of Route 5 had developed by the end of the period with densely settled neighborhoods of single and multiple family housing. Differentiation by socio-economic status was also evident with elite neighborhoods at the western edge of settlement, worker housing adjacent to the miles along the river and middle class housing in the intervening areas and at the northern and southern edges of the city. Brick remained the standard building material for worker housing but otherwise frame construction predominates. Elite house construction consists of a fair number of large brick and frame Stick Style mansions of the 1870s and early 1880s, with a number of Queen Anne and Colonial Revival houses of the 1890s and a great many turn of the century and later Craftsman, Colonial Revival and Tudor Revival mansions. Notable houses of the period include the Stick Style Victorian Gothic O'Connor House (1885), Wistariahurst (1874). For middle class housing, side hall Stick Style, Queen Anne and Colonial Revival houses were built in almost equal numbers with well-detailed two family houses in the same styles. Three deckers are less common. A common workers' housing form of the period is the multi-storied brick tenement block, some of which rise to six stories height. Most tenements were built in the 1880s and early 1890s and exhibit modest, utilitarian Romanesque and Queen Anne details such as windows with segmental heads and stilted arch lintels corbelled cornices and string courses. String courses composed of small moded terracotta tiles are common. Especially notable is the prevalence of apartment blocks in Holyoke; brick Romanesque Revival apartment blocks three and four stories tall began to be built in Holyoke in the 1890s. After the turn of the century, red and yellow brick Georgian Revival apartment blocks, such as the Battleship (1911, G.P.B. Alderman) continued to be built in some numbers along the main east/west streets running west from the business district.

Institutional: Holyoke retains a fine collection of late 19th century institutional buildings, of which Catholic churches and related buildings are perhaps the most numerous group. Among the most outstanding buildings architecturally are the City Hall (1876, Charles B. Atwood) and H.F. Kilburn), a High Victorian Gothic Building of Monson granite, Holy Cross Church (ca.1910), the Holyoke Public Library (1897-1902, James A. Clough), a limestone Beaux Arts Classical

building and the First Congregational Church (1894, G.P.B. Alderman), a brick and brownstone Romanesque Revival structure. Of historical significance are the Turn Halle (1874, Lynch Brothers, Builders), a brick Italianate gymnasium built by and for naturalized German immigrants, The Holyoke Catholic High School (ca.1875; 1883), whose mansard roof brick Italianate buildings are notable indicators of the early establishment of an important Catholic community in the city, fire station (1874), an early Romanesque Revival station, and the Armory (1907, William J. Howes), a brick structure with double crenellated towers.

Commercial: Holyoke retains a very well preserved and representative grouping of late 19th century commercial blocks along High Appleton and Dwight Streets in the city center. Most of these are four and five story brick buildings of the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s. Notable examples include several High Victorian Italianate buildings, a High Victorian Romanesque building and a number of Romanesque and Renaissance Revival buildings. The best of these incorporate polychromatic details, variegated masonry, pressed metal glazed brick and terra cotta trim. Many blocks are architect designed with examples by George P.B. Alderman, W.B. Reid and Roswell P. Crafts. Among the finest buildings are Steiger's Department Store (1899, G. P. B. Alderman), a Beaux Arts Classical design, the Caledonian (1874, Roswell P. Crafts), a Renaissance Revival design with brownstone and cast iron details and Daly's Hotel (1878). Of great architectural significance is the Boston and Maine Depot (1883), a two-story granite hip roof structure designed by H.H. Richardson.

Industrial: A great many industrial buildings were built in Holyoke during the Late Industrial period. Most of these are three to six story brick mills incorporating pier and spandrel construction; shallow gable or flat roofs predominate and stair towers are less common. Often detailing is minimal and consists primarily of windows with segmental arched heads, corbelled cornices and raised string courses. Among the finest mills architecturally are the Merrick Mill #2 (1882), a Panel Brick structure, the Norman Paper Company (1891-93, J.H. Newton), a one story utilitarian structure notable for its two story square Norman office tower and early examples of the use of pier and spandrel construction such as the Pioneer Valley Finishing Company (1873-4, Newton Brothers, builders) and the Farr Alpaca company (1873-4, Newton Brothers, builders).

## X. Early Modern Period (1915-1940)

### A. Transportation Routes:

Gradual abandonment of streetcar service with suburban routes to Westfield, Holyoke and West Springfield in 1920s and local routes in Holyoke by 1936 including Mount Tom railway (abutments still in place). Improvement of regional highways as autoroads with primary north-south Route 5 (Northampton St.) between Hartford and Northampton. Major east-west regional Route 202 from South Hadley through Holyoke and over East Mountain as Westfield Apremont Highway with Easthampton Road as local connector to Easthampton. Connecticut River bridges rebuilt during 1930s with Route 141 to Willimansett (Chicopee) and Route 202 to South Hadley.

### B. Population:

Holyoke reached its peak population in 1917 as war orders flooded Holyoke mills. Thereafter, but for a brief gasp in the early 1920s, her population steadily declined. In 1940, it stood at 53,750 -- down from 60,816 in 1915.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Expansion of urban development restricted by economic decline of industrial complex. Primary economic focus retained along power canals with limited growth at Springdale and fringe activities extended along Springfield Street axis to Ingleside. Commercial district remained along downtown axis of High Street with civic focus rebuilt around City Common before Second World War. Residential expansion continued along primary transit lines to Oakdale and Elmwood districts as modest two family development with secondary expansion to Homestead Avenue at base of East Mountain. Affluent residential neighborhood expanded in Highlands section along Connecticut River to base of Mount Tom with axis on Northampton Street. Agricultural district maintained in Rock Valley extended into Westfield plain with commercial strip development along Route 202 axis (Apremont Highway).

D. Economic Base:

No adequate history of Holyoke in the Early Modern period was encountered. The depression following World War I severely affected a number of industries and finally threw the giant American Writing Paper Company into receivership in 1923, under which it operated with losses for four years. In 1927 it was re-organized and great hopes were expressed for its recovery. The same year (1927), however, also saw the liquidation of the Lyman Mills -- the largest and oldest of the textile mills. Although it threw the textile employees out of work, it was immediately taken over by the adjacent Whiting Paper Company and thoroughly modified for paper making. In 1929 the Holyoke Water Power Company was authorized to build a new hydroelectric station along the river north of the Norman Paper Company. In general, however, but for the steel-frame and concrete U. S. Rubber Company, there appears to have been relatively new industrial construction in Holyoke during this period.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Residential construction continued at a steady pace through the 1920s, especially along Northampton Street and to the west. In the neighborhoods directly along Northampton Street and especially north of Dwight Street, large and well detailed frame and brick houses in Colonial, Georgian and Tudor Revival designs were built in some numbers. West of Northampton Street in the foothills of East Mountain, more modest single and two family Colonial Revival and Craftsman houses and bungalows were built. Most of Holyoke's bungalows are modest architecturally but the number of examples constructed is worth noting.

Institutional: Schools and Catholic churches are the two most common institutional buildings of the Early Modern period. Of these, the Catholic churches are the more outstanding architecturally: among the most notable of the churches is the Church of the Immaculate Conception (1926-27, the Rev. Julian Ginet, architect), a three story French Gothic Revival cruciform plan structure. Other churches include Perpetual Help Church (1922-23, Louis Caron), a Byzantine derived design and Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox (1916-17, Kyriako Kalfas).



Commercial: Comparatively few commercial buildings of note were constructed in the Early Modern period. The most outstanding is probably the Strand Theatre (1915, G.P.B. Alderman), a two story stucco Beaux Arts classical building with an arcaded second story, Ionic pilaster and swag-ornamented panels. Other more utilitarian two, three and four story brick and concrete commercial blocks were built along Appleton Street with smaller commercial buildings at neighborhood centers and along Route 5. Several early gas stations were noted on Route 5.

## XI Survey Observations

Holyoke's survey concentrates on the many fine institutional, commercial and industrial buildings constructed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Churches and mills are particularly well represented. Surviving residential architecture of the Federal and Early Industrial periods

is also well documented, as are outstanding (generally architect designed) residences of the Late Industrial period. Residential neighborhoods of the Late Industrial and Early Modern periods have not been inventoried, however, and completion of area forms is recommended. Other categories which merit further inventory work are municipal buildings such as schools, hospitals and fire stations, and apartment and tenement blocks.

Industrial: Holyoke's city survey was prepared in 1978-79 under a grant from MHC. The work coincided with the preparation by the Architects Collaborative of a proposal for a Heritage State Park in Holyoke.

The survey includes some 50 separate survey forms on industrial structures. This number represents about two-thirds of the number identified independently by the Reconnaissance Survey. Although the omissions by themselves are not critical to the understanding of the resources (though all the hydroelectric stations and most of the bridges are omitted), the methodology evidently used makes the survey seriously flawed.

Buildings were apparently identified by site inspection and their record in secondary sources, especially Green's Holyoke, Massachusetts. No examination was apparently made of maps. This has allowed frequent misdatings and some totally misleading identifications. Thus, the all-important Lyman Mills (MHC #60) are identified and dated as the Whiting Paper Company, though Whiting did not take over the mills until Lyman's liquidation in 1927. The Lyman Mills were the first textile mill to be built in Holyoke (1850), and was the only mill built according to the Hadley Falls Company's original plan for mills in Holyoke. The Parsons Paper Company (MHC 78) was indeed the first paper company to build in Holyoke in 1853--but the existing mill is Parsons Mill No. 2, built blocks away from No. 1 and not constructed until the late 1880's. The statement that the first paper mill built in 1853 still stands is blatantly in error. "Visual" dates assigned are sometimes off by as much as 40 years -- dates which a cursory examination of available atlases would do much to correct. Errors of this type are numerous, and the use of this survey material should be with extreme caution.

Since the survey was undertaken, buildings represented by survey forms 65, 66 and 108 have been demolished, and the top floors of the Skinner mill (#77) have been removed.

In 1978 an extensive NR nomination was prepared for a "Holyoke Historic Industrial District" by AASLH's Historic Landmarks Project. Site descriptions and significance sections are particularly valuable.  
MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report: Holyoke

## XII. Sources

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