

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

HANSON

Report Date: 1981

Associated Regional Report: Southeast Massachusetts

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

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

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

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

The activity that is the subject of the MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report has been financed in part with Federal funds from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior. This program receives Federal financial assistance for identification and protection of historic properties. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability or age in its federally assisted programs. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility as described above, or if you desire further information please write to: Office of Equal Opportunity, National Park Service, 1849 C Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., 20240.



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MHC RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

Date: June 1, 1981

Community: Hanson

I. TOPOGRAPHY

Interior of coastal lowlands. Extensive swamp system running on north/south axis through town. Intense topographic relief in eastern portion of town. Pond system in this area as well. Sandy to gravelly soils.

II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Hanson, formerly the west precinct of Pembroke was incorporated February 22, 1820.

III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Hanson is a rural pastoral community presently undergoing development as a result of the continuing suburbanization of Boston. There are a number of possible native wintering sites at Wampatuck, Maquan, Indian Head and Monponsett Ponds during contact and first period. Development of concentrated European settlement did not occur until after King Philip's War with a small settlement node established at Bonney Hill by the mid-18th century. Although there was a small industrial base that developed during the early 19th century the primary economic base remained agriculturally oriented to the mid-20th century. This agricultural orientation was reinforced by the introduction of cranberry cultivation and the creation of the United Cape Cod Cranberry Co. in the early 20th century. Hanson's ties with Pembroke were reinforced by the development of the Brockton and Plymouth Street Railways Mayflower Grove Park in Bryantville which stimulated some summer development in the Bryantville area. Summer development was also encouraged by the opening of Monponsett Station by the Old Colony Rail Road in the early 20th century. Extensive summer development did not develop despite attractive pond sites due to competition from agricultural usages. Agricultural usage has remained dominant although it is severely threatened due to the demand for residential sites created by improved access to Boston - 128 employment centers.

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500 - 1620)

A. Transportation Routes:

Intermediate corridor between Pembroke and Bridgewater Ponds with access to North River. Primary east/west route documented as Main Street (Route 14) from Indian Head Pond with supposed "Indian Crossway" through Great Cedar Swamp (Hurd, 1884, p. 342). Suspected branches include Redd-South Streets to Pembroke Ponds, Philips-Holmes-Washington Streets across Meadow Brook, and possibly Indian Head Street to Maquan Pond. Routes around North River unclear with possible candidates as Whitman, Drinkwater and State Streets with east/west connector along High-Water-Maquan Streets with original loop as Crescent Street. Authentic trail remnant apparently survives from Whitman Street to Washington Street around Cushing Pond as north/south link. Possible ford sites along Indian Head River at State and Washington Streets.

B. Settlement Pattern:

One possible contact period burial- Main Street, Benjamin Hanks farm. Evidence suggests concentration of native population vicinity of Wampatuck, Maquan, Indian Head, Monponsett.

1. Archaic and unidentified native sites reported primarily from ponds, Great Cedar Swamp (Hanson Hist. Soc. 1959:N.P.)
2. Presence diverse resource base - freshwater ponds, streams, marsh, potential planting grounds.
3. Place names highly suggestive native occupation (i.e., Indian Head and Wampatuck Ponds).
4. Proximity to Pembroke Ponds (Oldham, Furnace, Great and Little Sandy Bottom Ponds, Silver Lake), know site late contact/First Settlement Period native settlements.

C. Subsistence Pattern:

Seasonal fishing, hunting, collecting, agriculture. Ponds, marsh and woodlands probably focal point of fall, winter, early spring subsistence activities - rich resource base (e.g., fish, wild game, wood, potential planting grounds), protection from harsh winter weather. Late spring, summer journey to coast (Kingston, Duxbury?) for fishing, hunting, clamming, Anglo-Indian trade(?).

D. Observations:

Good likelihood contact period site, primarily area of ponds, Great Cedar Swamp (see settlement section). Probable political/cultural affiliation with Mattakeesets of Pembroke Ponds and native population occupying Halifax. Regional affiliation either Massachusetts or Wampanoag, confusing since adjacent to Massachusetts/Wampanoag territorial boundary.

V. FIRST PERIOD (1620 - 1675)

A. Transportation Routes:

Native trails improved as regional highways. Primary east/west road as Bridgewater Path (Main Street - Route 14) and apparently Maquan-Liberty-Whitman Streets (Route 58).

B. Population:

No figures for native or white population. Hanson during period part of Duxbury, 1643; 400 residents.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Wampatuck, Maquan, Indian Head Ponds continue as primary native settlement areas. Land (1000 acres) in this area and nearby Pembroke Ponds specifically reserved for native occupation in Major's Purchase of 1662. Scattered English homesteads, no settlement nodes. Naham

Stetson settled on King Street near Hanover/Halifax line late 17th century. Majority English settlement postdated King Philip's War.

D. Economic Base:

Traditional native fishing, hunting, collecting, agriculture. Minimal white impact on subsistence pattern in Hanson area due to dispersed population. However, coastal rounds restricted considerably by concentration of English population. Farming primary English occupation - purchase large tracts meadow/marshland mid-late 17th century for livestock grazing. Probably some crop production on lowlands adjacent to ponds. Fishing on freshwater ponds and streams. Good milling potential on streams and ponds. Lumbering in woodlands and cedar swamps - house, ship construction materials.

E. Observations:

Discreet native population concentrated around Wampatuck, Maquan, Indian Head Ponds, semi-autonomous. Hanson not organized until 1820, minimal English settlement until late 17th/early 18th century. Indian "threat". Large portion land unoccupied, used by absentee owners for grazing/hay land. Area residents dependent on Duxbury for religious, civic facilities.

COLONIAL PERIOD (1675 - 1775)

A. Transportation Routes:

Regional road system remains from 17th century. Location of meeting house at Hanson center creates radial road network from High Street axis with Liberty, Winter and Indian Head Streets primary east/west highway maintained as Main Street (Route 14) through South Hanson.

B. Population:

No figures for native population. However, 1685 smallpox epidemic in Pembroke Ponds area probably had severe impact on local native population. Lack specific white population figures. Part of Pembroke, 1764; 1409 residents, 1776; 1768 residents.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Diminishing native lands due to Anglo-Indian land transactions. Some continue to reside around ponds, other seek work and residence in white households, probably some emigration to Pembroke Ponds. Small black population. Unclear impact King Philip's War had on settlement. Establishment settlement node centered on Bonney Hill, early-mid 18th century. West Parish (Pembroke) meetinghouse constructed on Hill c. 1746. Early 18th century settlement on Main, Liberty, Washington Streets.

D. Economic Base:

Increased native adoption of white occupations - domestic servants, laborers, whalers, military. Less fortunate become town wards. Agriculture, lumbering primary English economic pursuits. Development of light industry late 17th/early 18th centuries. First mill (saw) MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report: Hanson

built c. 1695 on Indian Head Brook near present town hall. Also site (1737) of grist mills. Brook also site of 1715 sawmill, mile before Drinkwater River. Supplied with lumber cut from extensive stands of cedar and pine. Development iron industry with establishment iron forge/finery on Indian Head River c. 1720 (between Pine Hill, Rocky Run Brook). Furnished with bog iron from Indian Head Pond, charcoal probably initially processed adjacent woods, moved when area deforested. Blacksmithing - Bonney Hill settlement node? Probably export iron, timber, charcoal products - Duxbury, Pembroke, Plymouth, Marshfield, Boston?

E. Architecture:

Surviving Colonial period architecture in Hanson consists of approximately a dozen one-and-a-half story center-chimney cottages and several center-chimney, double-pile houses. Most of these date from the second quarter of the 18th century with a single story-and-a-half cottage dated to the late 17th century. Period houses are concentrated in the northern half of town. All of these are vernacular structures of great simplicity with the exception of the Cushing House (1724) at Washington and Liberty Streets, which retains crown-molded sash and ambitious arched paneling in the parlor. At least one gambrel-roofed cottage is known on Brook Street, but otherwise gable roofs are used throughout. One indication of the town's relative poverty in the period are the several instances of houses being moved and of partially-finished structures being completed by subsequent owners. The first meetinghouse was built on Holmes Street in 1746; also constructed were two schools (1754), neither of which is known to survive.

F. Observations:

Development semi-self sufficient community with strong agricultural and developing industrial base. However, retention political, social economic ties with eastern Pembroke - large number residents moved from eastern Pembroke, community retained as part of Pembroke until 1820, export materials to eastern Pembroke.

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775 - 1830)

A. Transportation Routes:

Basic regional road network intact from 18th century. Improvement in cross connections with Washington-Whiteman Streets across northern district and Franklin and Elm in South Hanson from Main Street axis.

B. Population:

Population figures prior to incorporation in 1820 unavailable. Population in 1820 was 917, grew to 1030 in 1830. Universalist society established in North Hanson in 1829. Baptist Church built South Hanson in 1813.

C. Settlement:

Farming settlement spread from existing node at Bonney Hill. Other nodes include the villages of South Hanson and North Hanson.

D. Economic Base:

In the rush to textile manufacture initiated by the Embargo and the War of 1812, Second Pembrcke Woolen and Cotton Factory Co. (later Hanson Mfg. Co.) incorporated 2/10/1814 and erected woolen spinning mill on Factory Pond south of Teague Bridge; for 20 years provided home weaving for small village near the site.

Monponsett and other ponds continued to supply quantities of bog ore for at least one forge, and, presumably after 1827, for tack factories, built 1827, 1829 at two sites on Indian Head Brook, in response to development in neighboring Hanover of Jesse Reed's tack machine invention, in production 1820s on.

Shoe and boot manufacture probably begun during Federal period, an important consumer of locally produced shoe nails. By 1832 shoe and boot manufacture valued at \$5,250.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Houses of the Federal period are more pretentious and elaborate than their Colonial predecessors, indicating an increase in prosperity in the period; several two-room deep Federal houses with brick end-wall chimneys are known along with at least one small but ambitiously detailed one-by-five bay, two-story hip-roofed house (Cobb House, 1803) on Washington Street with quoins, scalloped cornice moldings, and an elaborate, porticoed entrance. The most ambitious houses of the period are located on Washington Street at Liberty and Whitman Streets. A few other hip-roofed end-chimney Federal houses survive along with one or two more modest rear-wall chimney examples, but the bulk of the housing constructed in the period consists of one-and-a-half story, gable-roofed cape-type cottages, with center and end chimney examples occurring in equal numbers. Examples of this house type are located on Liberty, Washington, and High Streets with isolated examples on Elm and Pleasant Streets. The more substantial cottages have shed dormers, apparently original, across the facade with both five-bay, full dormers and two-bay, double dormers known. Most capes are two-rooms deep with simple entrance treatment generally consisting of sidelights to the dado. A very few end-chimney, three-bay half cottages and at least one hip-roofed double house are known.

Institutional: Two new meetinghouses were built in the period, the Baptist, still standing on Main Street, in 1820 and the Universalist (no longer extant) on Whitman Street in 1829. The Baptist meetinghouse is a one-and-a-half-story, Greek Revival building with a two-stage tower and spire. In addition, four more schools were apparently built as six schools appear on the 1830 map.

Commercial: Several stores are known to have been established in

the period with four appearing on the 1830 map; one, later converted to residential use, was founded in 1798 at Cobb's Corner with others started c. 1825 on Main and Liberty Streets. They are all presumed to have been semi-domestic structures which may survive in residential use.

VIII.

EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830 - 1870)

A. Transportation Routes:

Continued extension of cross-town connectors with County St. from Hanson center and Pleasant and Montponsett Streets through southeast area. Mainline of Old Colony railroad to Plymouth through South Hanson and Burrage (1845) avoiding Great Cedar Swamp to Monponsett.

B. Population:

Population remained stable during this period. Universalist Congregation insufficient to support Church, building turned into hall in 1866. Foreign born population 68 in 1855.

C. Settlement (1830 - 1870):

Old Colony and Fall River Railroad came through in 1845. Impetus for the beginnings of industrial and residential development activity at North and South Hanson Depots.

D. Economic Base:

Cotton mill closed by 1837; subsequently used as sawmill, before destroyed by fire 1852. Period dominated by shoe manufacture. Census records report that number of shoemakers jumped from 7 in 1832 to 420 five years later, producing \$40,000 worth of footwear. By 1855, the peak year, slightly over 300 shoemakers were producing \$158,230 worth of boots and shoes, making it much the largest single industry in the town. By contrast, 37 hands in 2 tack and brad factories produced \$37,000 worth of nails, tacks, and brads. By 1865 there were also 6 mills for sawing box boards, lumber, and shingles.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Almost all of the houses built in the period are sidehall Greek Revival cottages although some half dozen two-story, center-entrance Greek Revival/Italianate houses and double houses are known. It is likely that at least a few end-chimney, five-bay cape-type cottages probably were constructed in the 1830s; by the 1840s, however, the sidehall plan was clearly predominant. Most cottages, while modest, are well-detailed and many retain a full complement of outbuildings often with connecting ells. A very few more ambitious cottages with large single or paired wall dormers were constructed as were a few cottages with verandas. Most cottages have rear kitchen ells. At least a few stylish Greek Revival and Italianate barns survive. Concentrations of Greek Revival and later Greek Revival/Italianate cottages survive along Main Street at Indian Head Road and on High

Street with scattered examples across the town.

Institutional: A new church for the First Congregational was built on High Street in 1836; a two-story, gable-roofed building with a three-bay facade and two-stage tower and spire, the church was later remodelled with Renaissance Revival detailing. Also constructed in the period were several district schools, including the District 4 school (now the Hanson Historical Society), a one-story Greek Revival building with a double entrance in the gable end and two other identical schools, all built in 1845; the district system was abolished in Hanson in 1867.

IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870 - 1915)

A. Transportation Routes:

Continued improvement of Plymouth corridor through South Hanson with circuitous trolley route to Brockton (1900) from Pembroke Ponds along Main-High Streets to town center and northwest to Coxs Corner on Liberty-Spring-Whitman Streets (Cummings, 1959).

B. Population:

Population figures indicate small scale fluctuations to 1890 then gradual increase to 1915. Foreign born population 333 in 1915; almost one half Canadian with small Italian and Portugese communities.

C. Settlement:

Early portion of this period saw spread of residential development from existing nodes at North and South Hanson Depots. Very early 20th century development at Burrage and Hanson side of Bryantville. Some summer development principally near ponds. New Civic center at Maquan Pond and Liberty Street.

D. Economic Base:

Nail and tack manufacture continued throughout the period. In 1875, with shoemaking reduced to one factory producing \$10,000 worth, 2 nail and tack factories produced over \$121,000 worth. Box manufacture for shoes and other products became an established industry, and Joseph White's carriage business, given a strong boost by the 1872 Boston fire, which destroyed a large portion of the horse-and-carriage section of that city, with large sales to U.S. Government for calvary and other transportation purposes. Both water and steam-powered lumber mills in North and South Hanson supplied packing cases, Foster in S. Hanson supplying Walter Baker & Co. in Milton/Dorchester.

1905 saw the initiation of a short-lived experiment in industrial park development when Albert Burrage decided to use local peat to power an industrial community. With Portugese labor he dug a canal to float peat out of the swamps by barge, a distance of some two miles to the new town of Burrage, where porcelain and tin foil factories were erected. The collapse of the former in 1908 essentially destroyed Burrage's scheme for a model village.

More successful was the cranberry industry, initiated in this period probably by 1880s. Earliest indication of an industry provided by pioneer bog builder Albert Gorham who began constructing bogs for other growers in this period. Marcus Urann said to have been the first to visualize the possibilities of a mechanized cranberry industry. In 1912 formed United Cape Cod Cranberry Co. and in the same year erected a brick packing house in South Hanson, said to have been the only plant of its kind in the country. From this factory (with later additions) developed the "Ocean Spray" product and the cranberry packing industry. By the end of the period, directories listed 21 cranberry growers in Hanson, and, also a thriving business, 20 poultry farms.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Modest cottages remained the predominant house type during the period. While most are sidehall, gable-roofed, story-and-a-half structures, a few mansard-roofed cottages were built in the 1870s and '80s. The Italianate style seems to have remained popular through the 1880s with many cottages exhibiting both Italianate and Queen Anne detailing. By the 1890s, the basic sidehall form, in use locally since the 1840s, began to be modified with ells to the side or double rear ells forming a T-plan. Most period cottages include verandas with turned posts as well as patterned shingle detailing in the gable end or as a belt course. Late Industrial cottages are located on Elm, Phillips, Main, Whitman and Pleasant Streets. After the turn of the century, Colonial Revival cottages with gambrel roofs began to be built along Main and Pleasant Streets while along Reed and Monponsett Street and along back roads in the southern half of town, even more modest cottages, some only one story in height and two rooms deep, were constructed in some numbers. Along with these very modest cottages, one-and-a-half-story, hip-roofed workers' housing was built at Burrage; also built were a handful of two-story, hip-roofed two-family houses. A very few more ambitious Late Industrial houses are known, including one, two-story turreted Queen Anne house on Washington Street and several Colonial Revival houses on High Street.

Institutional: Of the institutional buildings constructed in the period, the most numerous are the fraternal halls of which three examples survive in the town, Thomas Hall (1884), a two-story, hip-roofed Italianate building with a center facade gable, Wampatuck Hall (1893), a two-story, hip-roofed Queen Anne building, also with a center facade gable, and the G.A.R. Hall (c. 1900), a one-story, hip-roofed shingled Craftsman building. Also built was the Town Hall (1872), a well-detailed Italianate building, two stories tall, with a hip roof, dormers, quoins and incised lintels. In addition, at least two schools were constructed, one of which, the South Grammer School (1908), a one-story, hip-roofed Queen Anne building, later became the Grange Hall. The other school, built in 1887, is a one-story Italianate/Queen Anne structure now in residential use.

Commercial: In addition to the South Hanson Depot (c. 1880),

a well-preserved one-story, hip-roofed Stick Style station and the Monponsett Depot (1905), a one-story, hip-roofed block, several stores dating from the period survive, including a two-story Queen Anne building with an ornamental parapet, on Whitman Street at Cox's Corner and several one-story blocks at South Hanson.

Industrial: Several one and two-story brick industrial buildings of utilitarian design remain at Burrage, part of the Burrage Porcelain Company plant, begun in 1905. In addition, a few early 20th century garages, one-story buildings with flat roofs and end-wall parapets, survive on Washington and Main Streets.

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915 - 1940)

A. Transportation Routes:

Trolley line abandoned in 1920s with improvement of local roads as auto highways including east/west connections to Brockton as Route 27 (Main St) and northwest connection to Boston as Route 58 through Hanson center.

B. Population:

Population shows steady growth, increases by almost one half 1915 total by 1940. Foreign born population 345 in 1930. St. Joseph the Worker Catholic Church on Maquan St. dedicated in 1939. Rapid post 1960 population increase.

C. Settlement:

No new settlement, again residential development along major transportation routes. Post World War II development consists of infill between existing structures.

D. Economic Base:

Tack industry survived in Hanson into the 1920s, as did the box manufacture. Strongest industry, however, remained cranberry growing. By the 1930s, the WPA guide noted that the extensive cranberry bogs annually produced 8,500,000 cans of cranberry sauce, providing employment for many Portuguese from the south of town in the vicinity of Monponsett Pond, where a community of cranberry pickers had evolved.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Very little construction took place in the period, most of it consisting of modest hip- and gable-roofed, one-and-a-half story bungalows and cottages, very simply finished with Colonial Revival and Craftsman detailing. Various cottages built in the 1920s stand on Whitman, Liberty and Brook Streets in the northern half of town and along Main Street at Bryantville, and on Elm and Pleasant Streets. A very few somewhat more ambitious suburban houses and cottages in the Colonial and Tudor Revival styles were built on High Street.

Institutional: The most important institutional complex of the period is the Plymouth County Hospital (1919) on High Street, a complex of several well-detailed, stuccoed buildings with tiled, hip-roofs in the Mission Revival style, including a U-shaped hospital building, three stories tall, and several surrounding service buildings and staff residences, most of these two stories tall. The Hospital is the only highstyle building of the period and one of very few for any period in the town. Also built was a one-story, gable-roofed Colonial Revival building for the church of St. Joseph the Worker (1939) along with two schools, one a Georgian Revival, one-story, brick building (Thomas School) on Main Street, c. 1925, and the other, now abandoned, on Washington Street, a one-story, frame Georgian Revival structure of the same date.

XI.

SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

There is no town survey.*

Industrial: Reconnaissance survey encountered Phillips Tack Factory annex (1889) on Drinkwater River, site of 1814 cotton mill; and, in South Hanson, the former packing plant (1912+) of United Cape Cod ("Ocean Spray") Cranberry Co., a complex which includes the original 1912 brick structure, thought to be the first cranberry packing plant in the U.S. and the birthplace of the modern cranberry industry (probably NR eligible). Railroad depots exist at both South Hanson and Burrage, and, in the latter community, several of Alfred Burrage's original c. 1905 rockface concrete-block factory buildings. The town has recently constructed a small mill replica on the outlet of Wampatuck Pond, site of Benjamin Hobart's 1829 tack factory and the earlier 1694 Nathaniel Thomas mill. Potential archeological sites include area adjacent to and upstream of Teague's Bridge (1907 concrete arch).

Survey Observations: Potential districts at Bryantville (mid-19th through 20th century cottages; particularly cohesive group of Greek Revival and Italianate cottages with one very well-preserved and elaborate Gothic Revival sidehall cottage and barn) and Cobb's Corner (Washington/Liberty/Whitman Streets; mid-18th through early 19th century cottages and houses with two of the town's very few ambitious residences, Cobb House, 1803; Cushing House, 1724). New uses should also be encouraged for now abandoned 19th century halls and 20th century school.

Development Pressures: Gradual erosion of town center from commercial development along Route 58 with similar effect along Route 27 at Indian Head Pond (Bryantville). Some indications of rural decay evident around Pembroke Ponds - Indian Head Brook with loss of barns and abandonment of houses.

XII. SOURCES

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