

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

HOPKINTON

Report Date: 1980

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.



MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth

Chair, Massachusetts Historical Commission

220 Morrissey Blvd.

Boston, MA 02125

www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc

mhc@sec.state.ma.us / 617-727-8470

MHC RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

DATE: February 1980

COMMUNITY: Hopkinton

I. TOPOGRAPHY

Located on rugged, occasionally mountainous, upland terrain. Prominent elevations and areas of exposed bedrock, especially in western part of town. Terrain shows effects of glacial scouring--a north/south grain to an otherwise irregular topography. Rocky soil. A major watershed area: North Pond a headwaters for Blackstone River; White Hall Reservoir (originally a lake) headwaters for Sudbury River; eastern sections drain south into Charles. Several areas of upland cedar swamp and bog.

II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Incorporated as Town of Hopkinton, 1715. Composed of 25,000 acres including former Praying Town lands called 'Moguncoy' (now Ashland) and adjacent 'waste lands' purchased on behalf of Harvard University. Sections removed by formation of other towns, notably Upton (1735) and Ashland (1846).

III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Suburban hill town on edge of metropolitan Boston set in rugged highlands between Sudbury, Charles and Blackstone Rivers. Limited areas of native settlement around ponds but prime location on Connecticut Path with early 18th century tavern sites. Topography limits Colonial settlement to highland plains with town center and Whitehall Pond with several mid-18th century houses of cottage plan. Industrial innovations of shoes and straw bonnets by early 19th century creates local prosperity in Holliston Center, Hayden Row and mill village of Woodville with well-preserved examples of Federal, Greek Revival and early Victorian houses, many of brick or stone. Belated railroad connection and industrial decline preserves mid-19th century town center with increasing pressure of residential development in attractive highlands near suburban highways by mid-20th century.

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500-1620)

A. Transportation Routes:

Interior highland between Sudbury, Charles and Blackstone Rivers. Primary trails to west and southwest as "Connecticut Path" conjectured to follow Frankland-Main Streets from Ashland and probably around Cedar Swamp-Indian Brook to Elm Streets along natural contours and southwest to North Pond (Maspenook) as Lumber-Hamwood Streets. Westward branch to Whitehall Pond conjectured as Wood Street. Secondary trail from Ashland to Holliston possibly followed Front-Ash-Chestnut Streets around Cold Spring Brook.

B. Settlement Pattern:

No documented sites from period known. Unspecified sites reported along North Pond ('Maspenook'), White Hall Reservoir and Hopkinton Reservoir. Site also likely along Connecticut Path.

C. Subsistence Pattern:

Fresh water fishing in lakes, hunting/gathering in both uplands and bogs. A good area for fur-bearing animals. Limited agriculture possible.

D. Observations:

Despite roughness of terrain, a likely area for Nipmuck sites. Necessary resources available; location in major watershed area, hence on major trail network makes short-term contact period sites probable as well. Area referred to as "Quansigamog."

V. FIRST SETTLEMENT PERIOD (1620-1675)

A. Transportation Routes:

Trails remain as local routes with Connecticut Path as primary highway in mid-17th century.

B. Population:

No permanent inhabitants.

C. Settlement:

No colonial settlement. Minor Praying Town in northeast section (see Ashland).

D. Economic Base:

Some lumbering by natives from Praying Town--especially cedar for shingles and clapboards.

E. Observations:

Despite location on main transportation route, too remote and rugged for period settlement.

VII. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

A. Transportation Routes:

Location of Hopkinton meetinghouse on hill over Cedar Swamp prompts re-location of primary post road as Main-Elm Streets by early 18th century (portions original through State Forest) and west road as Wood Street with loop around Evergreen Cemetery. Radial roads from town center by mid-18th century include Hayden Row, Ash, Wilson and Procter Streets linking north and south with secondary network around Whitehall Pond as Pond, Spring and Winter Streets.

B. Population:

First settlers after 1710. Many Scots Irish who were used to highland terrain. Steady growth throughout 18th century. Census of 1765 listed 1,027 inhabitants in 154 families and 135 houses.

C. Settlement:

Initial settlement in vicinity of Hopkinton Hill. Meetinghouse built and cemetery laid out, 1726 (Main and Ash Streets). Village center gradually emerged around meetinghouse. Scattered farms spread throughout town; some clustering around south end of Whitehall Lake (Pond Street). Episcopal church built on Cordaville Road, 1745--reflection of Royalist/Tory sympathies present in town.

D. Economic Base:

Small scale agriculture and grazing (probably sheep). Some lumbering, especially cedar. No period mills or taverns reported in existing town area. A few period mills in northeast corner (see Ashland).

E. Architecture

Residential:

Little or no high-style likely to have been built; variety of vernacular house types present, most frequent type was probably central chimney two-story type (along major transportation routes) followed closely by a relatively large number of central chimney Cape Cod cottages (in outlying areas and particularly in the west and south-central sections of town), smaller number of twin-chimney two-story houses present and only isolated examples of twin chimney Cape Cod cottages likely.

Institutional:

First Meetinghouse built 1725-26; Presbyterian Meetinghouse in use c. 1734-40; English (Episcopalian) Church built c. 1745-50; first school building constructed prior to 1743.

Commercial:

Domestic plan buildings with associations as taverns likely.

Industrial:

No building outside of wood-frame grist and saw mills.

F. Observations:

A somewhat bleak rural town. Minimal quality of land and distance from population centers resulted in settlement largely by emigrants and other low status groups. Historical sources on this period of town are poor.

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

A. Transportation Routes:

Highways remain in place from 18th century with primary road through Hopkinton center as Hartford Turnpike-Main Street (Route 135) by early 19th century with cross roads to East Hopkinton.

B. Population:

Moderate growth throughout period, more rapid after 1810; Methodist Society formed by 1810 at Hayden Row, Baptist Society at Woodville by 1815.

C. Settlement Location:

Primarily linear development along Main Street at town center, along Hayden Row and along Wood Street at Woodville (after 1808).

D. Economic Base:

Early cotton mill in Woodville section of town constructed 1808, reputedly "second cotton mill in the country to make cotton cloth" (Safford). Textile production rapidly eclipsed by boot and shoe manufacture. Joseph Walker credited with invention of sole and uppers together with wooden pegs, c. 1819, causing marked advances in production.

E. Architecture:

Residential:

A wide variety of Federalist architecture is present, although much of it appears to have been built well into the 1830s; high-style examples include an unusually large number of brick (and some granite) houses with end-wall chimneys, four room plans, hip roofs and high-style decorative details including blind arcades (two examples). Also present are rear-wall chimney and end-wall chimney plan wood-frame houses, and central chimney 1-1/2 story cottages, although no individual building type is clearly dominant for period.

Institutional:

Four meetinghouses/churches built c. 1810 (Methodist), c. 1815 (Baptist), 1818 (Episcopal) and 1829 (Congregational), all predominantly Federalist in plan and detail although Gothic (elements) probable (on at) least one (c. 1815); town probably divided into school districts c. 1790, by mid-19th century ten districts existed.

Commercial:

Few, if any, specialized commercial buildings with exception of reputed former taverns at Woodville and town center including one granite building at town center; reputed development of a "fashionable resort" around a mineral spring at Whitehall Reservoir after 1816 (Hurd, Volume III, p. 780), little other evidence of resort.

Industrial:

Probable construction of one-story workshops for shoemakers after 1810-1825 at town center and Hayden Row; stone monitor-roof mill built at Woodville c. 1825-1835 (?).

VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830-1870)

A. Transportation Routes:

Roads system in place from early 19th century with branch railroad from Ashland around town center along Hayden Row (1872), stone abutments intact (now abandoned).

B. Population:

Rapid growth of population up to 1860 after which population fluctuated in 4,100-4,600 range; large foreign-born population (mainly Irish) present after 1840-45, number of foreign-born reached a peak in 1855 and declined thereafter; Catholic Parish formed c. 1845-51. Note: parts of Hopkinton (with a population of approximately 1,000) were ceded to Ashland in 1840s--Hurd, Volume III, p. 801).

C. Settlement Location:

Major growth at town center along Main Street and newly created side streets, also along Hayden Row and along Wood and Winter Streets at Woodville.

D. Economic Base:

Rapid increase in population, 1840-1860 attributed to successful boot and shoe industry. In 1850 there were eleven boot and shoe factories. In 1860, an existing shop was enlarged becoming, it was said, the third largest boot and shoe factory in the state (Oakes, p. 183).

E. Architecture:

Residential:

Continued popularity of Federalist house styles from preceding period until c. 1837-40; wide variety of Greek Revival and Italianate style houses present, most elaborate examples are at town center (Main and Hayden Row Streets) and include many temple-fronts and houses with two-story porticos, also a moderately large number of 2-1/2 story, hip roofed Italianate villas exist (possibly architect-designed); less elaborate examples of both styles are predominantly side-hall plan cottages, a smaller number of side-hall plan houses and a still smaller number of center-entrance houses; very few examples of Second Empire architecture.

Institutional:

Three meetinghouses/churches built 1837 (Baptist), 1851 (Catholic), 1855 (Methodist); earliest of three was predominantly Greek Revival in style, while latter two were Gothic. Ten district schools in use during period; c. 1845 temple-front academy building built at town center (private), replaced 1850s-1860s by Italianate style high school building; former Methodist Chapel converted to firehouse c. 1855-1860; Grange Hall built c. 1865 (?).

Industrial:

Wide-spread adoption of factory system for shoe making at town center, wood-frame 3 and 4 story factories built, largely astyle with some brackets

as decoration; remodelling of existing factory at Woodville; 11 boot and shoe factories in operation by 1850.

IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)

A. Transportation Routes:

Road and rail system intact from mid-19th century with streetcar route from Ashland to Milford through town center along East Main-Hayden Row Streets by 1890s.

B. Population:

Severe decline of population from a high of 4,601 in 1880 to 2,475 in 1915; foreign-born population declined in number throughout period, although Irish still remained largest foreign-born group; no new religious congregations formed.

C. Settlement Location:

No expansion of settled area; fires destroy portions of town center (1880s) and Woodville (1909).

D. Economic Base:

Manufacture of boots and shoes peaked in 1880 with nine large plants, three being the property of a single organization. By this time, however, growth of nearby manufacturing centers, Milford and South Framingham, coupled with a series of disastrous fires in 1876, 1882, and 1900 caused a rapid decline. The fire of 1882 destroyed the largest plant of Bridges & Co. and persuaded another to move to South Framingham. By 1885 only 4 plants remained; by 1895 there was only one. By 1905 the population was half that of 1880.

E. Architecture

Residential:

Nearly no new building during period--too few examples extant to allow classification; probable loss of buildings at town center and west of town center along Main Street.

Institutional:

Replacement of most of the town's existing institutional buildings occurred during this period; varied examples of architect-designed styles exist.² New churches, 1898 (Episcopal-late Gothic/Arts & Crafts), 1870, (Catholic-Gothic), 1882 (Congregational-late Victorian Gothic); Town Hall built c. 1900-05, public library built 1894; school districts consolidated into three by 1900, multiple room schoolhouse at center during months of period, high school (brick) built 1895.

Commercial:

Depot and car shops built for railroad at town center (c. 1872); several wood-frame 2 and 2½ story commercial blocks may have been built in the 1870s or early 1880s along Main Street, little development thereafter.

Industrial:

Destruction of several factories by fire, no new building likely.

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915-1940)

A. Transportation Routes:

Railroad and street railroad abandoned by 1920s. Auto highway routes through town center in 1930s. Route 135 E/W as Main/Wood Streets and Route 85 N/S as Hayden Row-Cedar-Cordaville Streets with causeway over cedar swamp.

B. Population:

Slow growth of population after a low of 2,289 was reached in 1920; 19th century population levels not achieved until 1955-1960.

C. Settlement Location:

Little expansion of permanent settlement area; small summer cottage colony partially developed on North Pond.

D. Economic Base:

Some possible suburbanization from Milford, but only on a very small scale. Town became primarily residential, though two smaller firms were started in this period--a fire truck manufacturer (whose successor, the Farrar Company, is still in operation in Woodville) and a small silk factory.

E. Architecture

Residential:

Small scattering of Bungalows, particularly in summer cottage areas; otherwise little new construction.

Institutional:

One Colonial Revival style church built c. 1938 (Congregational); remaining school districts consolidated into central school (1918, 1928) and Colonial Revival style school house built 1928.

Commercial:

Little new construction; primarily adaptation of existing structures.

Industrial:

No new construction.

XI. SOURCES

Safford, Mrs. Francis A., A Brief History of Hopkinton (1915)

Oakes, Eugene E., "The Financial History of the Town of Hopkinton, 1840-1905" in his Studies in Massachusetts Town Finance (1937), pp. 183-198.