

# MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

## HUDSON

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.



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## MHC RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

DATE: March, 1980

COMMUNITY: Hudson

### I. TOPOGRAPHY

Located on hilly upland terrain. Several prominent elevations throughout town showing effects of glacial scouring and reshaping. Generally gravelly soil. Two large ponds in eastern part of town and several brooks--all drain into Assabet River, which dominates town landscape. Large areas of upland bog/swamp between higher elevations.

### II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Incorporated as Town of Hudson, 1866, from parts of Marlborough (1660) and Stow (1683).

### III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Small industrial center on Assabet River at periphery of central highlands. Potential native sites suspected along river valley and local ponds with regional trails to western interior. Originally part of 17th century Marlborough Plantation and Indian Town with early 18th century mill site at Assabet Falls (Feltonville, now Hudson Center). Few surviving Colonial period structures on outlying roads, notably along Fort Meadow Brook. Economic development by mid-19th century with shoe industry and railroad connections results in protourban structure with brick business district, multiple family house types, immigrant population, and numerous Victorian suburban houses. Late 19th century fire promoted unified rebuilding of town center with well-preserved commercial blocks and brick factories. Industrial decline of mid-20th century offset by metropolitan expansion along regional highways with potential suburban development of remaining agricultural landscape.

### IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500-1620)

#### A. Transportation Routes:

Located along valley of Assabet River with regional traffic to western interior. Probable routes include Main Street and Bolton Road with loop at Brook Street and ford across Assabet (sewage plant). Secondary east/west trail is conjectured for Central-Packard-Cox Streets to Old Stow Road with likely branch south over Assabet Falls (Hudson Center) and south to Connecticut Path (Marlborough) along axis of Washington Street. Trail around White Pond to Concord River is conjectured as Concord-Bruen Roads.

#### B. Settlement Pattern:

No documented sites reported. Sites likely on well drained terraces and knolls overlooking Assabet and adjacent to Boons and White Pond. Rockshelters possible as well.

C. Subsistence Pattern:

Seasonal fish runs in Assabet, weirs are probable. Limited agriculture plus hunting/gathering.

D. Observations:

Virtually no evidence currently available. Presence of period sites in neighboring areas suggests that they are probable here as well.

V. FIRST PERIOD SETTLEMENT (1620-1675)

A. Transportation Routes:

Native trails remain as local highways with road to Lancaster (Main-Cox-Bolton Streets) as primary route by mid-17th century.

B. Population:

Some native inhabitants from Praying Town. No colonial settlers.

C. Settlement:

Praying town lands included roughly eastern two-thirds of town, mostly south of Assabet. Praying town settlement moved 1670 away from colonial town in Marlborough, possibly to Ft. Meadow Brook area. No colonial settlement.

D. Economic Base:

For Praying town--limited agriculture, some orchards, fish weir in Assabet. Colonial use--western third of town served as a cow common for Marlborough.

E. Observations:

Limited colonial settlement since mostly native owned land.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

A. Transportation Routes:

Highways remain from 17th century with series of local highways from Marlborough Center including Washington, Hudson, Broad and River Streets to mill site at Assabet Falls (Hudson Center) by early 18th century, and Marlboro-Murphy Roads to Lancaster highway. It also appears likely that extension of Main Street (Route 62) to Assabet Falls (town center) was also made during the 18th century, with Linden Street north to Bolton from mill site.

B. Population:

Praying Indians deported during King Philip's War, few returned, very few colonial inhabitants until after 1700. Gradual growth during 18th century--estimate of 20 families by end of period. Specific figures included with Marlborough.

C. Settlement:

Basically an outlying district of Marlborough. Scattered farms with no village center. Some clustering around mill and garrison house on north side of Assabet (near Washington Street bridge). Tavern in same area after 1724.

D. Economic Base:

Agriculture and grazing. Only significant waterpower at Feltonville (now Hudson center). John Barnes's gristmill on Assabet after 1698. Bernard's tavern after 1724 on Marlborough-Lancaster Road (Lincoln Street).

E. Architecture

Residential:

Very few buildings constructed during period, no high-style likely; too few examples recorded to allow generalization, based on Colonial period building in Marlborough, central-chimney two-story houses were probably the dominant house-type of the period, although several twin chimney structures may have existed and at least one central chimney Cape Code cottage was built.

F. Observations:

Primary concern prior to 1700 was how Indian lands could be annexed. Served as primary grist mill for Marlborough during early 18th century; otherwise, an outlying agricultural area.

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

A. Transportation Routes:

Colonial highways remain as local routes with improvement of Main Street (Route 62) as primary E/W highway to Assabet Falls (Hudson Center) by early 19th century.

B. Population:

Extremely small growth during period; no foreign-born population known; Methodist Society organized 1821, although meetings had been held since 1798 together with members from neighboring towns.

C. Settlement Location:

Scattered farm houses and a small village at Hudson center (Feltonville) which contained 16 houses and 1 store in 1820.

D. Economic Base:

Small cotton factory at Feltonville (now Hudson Center) on Assabet c. 1810; tannery by 1799 which by late 19th century had grown into major business supplying dominant shoe industry. Earliest sale shoes produced about 1816; small factory 1821-22.

E. Architecture

Residential:

Little or no high-style built; houses with rear-wall chimney floor plans and cottages (both central and twin chimney types) seem to have been built in approximately equal numbers; no evidence of late Georgian decorative details, little evidence of Federalist style decorative details.

Institutional:

Methodist meetinghouse built 1827, appearance unknown; first school house at center built 1812, 2 outlying school districts established.

Commercial:

Public house and store opened at center, 1794, probably no additional development throughout period.

Industrial:

First shoe shop built 1821, appearance unknown; mill a water privilege throughout period, little other development likely.

VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830-1870)

A. Transportation Routes:

Highways remain in place from early 19th century. Railroad link to Assabet mills (Hudson Center) from Maynard to Marlborough during 1850s along Assabet River (in part abandoned). Aborted Lancaster Railroad roadbed remains intact along Danforth Brook.

B. Population:

Rapid increases occurred during 1850s; Irish population present after c. 1845-50; Baptist Society organized 1844; Unitarian Society organized, 1850; Catholic Parish established 1869.

C. Settlement Location:

Primarily along major roads leading to town center and in small residential subdivisions (on side street) in the vicinities of Main and Lincoln Streets and Broad Street. By 1861, the village contained 165 houses, 8 stores, 2 churches, 17 shoe shops and 1,800 inhabitants.

D. Economic Base:

Box making begun c. 1844 to supply shoe industry. Shoe factories continue to grow. Figures not available but major impetus appears to have been sparked in 1850s with several new firms beginning operation with the introduction of the railroad.

E. Architecture

Residential:

Very little Greek Revival style, Italianate style widespread, individual examples of Carpenter Gothic and Second Empire style. Little fully developed high-style, center-entry twin-chimney houses formed highest level of Greek Revival building, some "T" plan Italianate houses with cupolas built, small number of ornate Second Empire cottages present (c. 1860-65). Most houses and cottages were side-hall plan examples of Italianate style (limited Greek Revival); some double houses and possible boarding houses in vicinity of Broad Street.

Institutional:

Baptist Church built 1851; Second Empire style Unitarian Church, built 1860; Methodist Chapel built 1865; Victorian Gothic style church built 1866-67; Victorian Gothic style Catholic Church built 1870; styles unknown where not noted. Italianate style two-story school house built at center, 1855; two new school houses built, 1867; firehouse built, c. 1849.

Commercial:

Primarily made up of two-story wood-frame blocks of Second Empire and Italianate styles built along Main Street, some with gabled facades, several built as row-buildings; railroad dept by 1856.

Industrial:

Mostly wood-frame construction between 3 and 5 stories high, rectangular floor plans; simple Italianate and Second Empire style, at least 9 major factory buildings existed by the end of the period.

IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)

A. Transportation Routes:

Road and rail routes remain in place with extension of Massachusetts Central (1881) through Hudson Center as E/W railroad. Original steel truss bridge remains intact over Assabet River. Streetcar routes through Hudson Center from Marlborough to Maynard by early 1900s along Main Street (Route 62) south to Park-Brigham Streets with private way around Chapin Street (no evidence of roadbed).

B. Population:

Slow growth until 1885, afterward more rapid until levelling off in 1910-1915; foreign-born population made up primarily of Irish and French Canadian immigrants, Russian and Portuguese immigrants settled here after 1905; Congregational Society (c. 1887-90); additional religious societies may have been formed after 1900, but not recorded in secondary sources.

C. Settlement Location:

Side streets around town center, particularly northward and westward along Lincoln and Main Streets; slight residential segregation evident with more elaborate larger houses in the vicinity of Lincoln Street and simpler, workers' cottages located east of town center in the vicinity of Broad and Manning Streets.

D. Economic Base:

Heavy capitalization of large shoe factories investing in substantial machinery now available. New industries drawn in the 1880s led by the Goodyear Gossamer Company, manufacturers of cloth waterproofed by coatings and pure Para rubber. And Hudson Worsted Co. both marking reintroduction of textiles into Hudson industrial economy. Hudson Board of Trade probably largely responsible for influx. Three large box factories now supplying shoe industry. Thomas Taylor, manufacturer of elastic shoe goring, located in Hudson c. 1888 at urging of Board of Trade. Most of the major shoe company buildings remaining date from this period.

E. Architecture:

Residential:

Little fully developed high-style; the most elaborate houses present were late Victorian Gothic, Queen Anne and a few Colonial Revival style examples, primarily along Lincoln and Pleasant Streets. Ambitious side-hall houses and cottages (Victorian Gothic) were built west of Lincoln Street, near Central Street. Elsewhere, simple side-hall cottages (astylisitic) are widespread. Modest, two-story Queen and Bungalow styles of houses (c. 1900-15) were built south of Packard Street.

Institutional:

Victorian Gothic style churches built for Baptist Society (1870s) and Catholic Parish (1889); late Gothic style church built for Methodist Society (1913); late Gothic style chapel built c. 1910, congregation unidentified (St. Luke's); Congregational Church built by 1912. Second Empire style Town Hall built, 1872; schools graded 1870s and 1880s, new school houses built at Center, 1878, 1882, 1892; 8 school houses in use in 1913; Carnegie library built 1904-06; 3 firehouses stood by 1913, Town Farm active until at least 1913; Romanesque style armory, 1910.

Commercial:

Heavy development along Main Street in late 1880s and 1890s, primarily built up with 3 and 4 story brick blocks of late Victorian Gothic, Renaissance Revival and astylistic late Victorian design; 3-story wood-frame blocks (Queen Anne and Victorian Gothic style) built at the eastern end of the commercial district, near Broad Street; railroad station built 1880s; little or no commercial development in other sections of town.

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915-1940)

A. Transportation Routes:

Abandonment of trolley routes by 1920s and improvement of local roads as autohighways in 1930s E/W as Route 62 and N/S as Route 85 through Hudson center.

B. Population:

Rapid growth to 1925-30; population levelled after 1930.

C. Settlement Location:

Same as preceding period but with slightly greater popularity of neighborhoods west of Lincoln and Washington Streets; some resort development around Lakes near Marlborough State Forest.

D. Economic Base:

Industrial development along Tower Street and along railroad to east of town including Lapointe Machine Tool (manufacturer of first screw-type breaching machine) with successful World War I government contracts and between-war expansion.

E. Architecture

Residential:

Probably no high-style present; scattered bungalows and Dutch Colonial cottages of varying sizes; some astylistic 2-story side-hall plan houses and possible 2-family houses northwest of Main and Lincoln Streets; some resort cabins built around lakes.

Institutional:

Brick school houses built in various neighborhoods around town center.

Commercial:

Little new construction except for some one-story block of stores near Washington and Main Streets.

Industrial:

Development primarily in vicinity of railroad bed; new buildings of utilitarian design; brick and concrete construction.

XI. SOURCES

Belspeth, Barbara. Hudson's Heritage (1966)