

# MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

## LEICESTER

Report Date: 1983

Associated Regional Report: Central 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: October, 1983

COMMUNITY: Leicester

### I. TOPOGRAPHY

Located along the southeastern edge of Worcester County's uplands plateau, Leicester lies at elevations between 700 and 1200 feet above sea level (a.s.l.) The higher elevations are found in the northern portions of the town where the surface is less broken by hills than in the southern portion. There a number of elongated, rounded drumlins rise from a swampy surface crossed by numerous streams. Elevations range from 750 - 850 feet a.s.l. in the swampy valleys to 800 - 950 feet on the drumlins.

This surficial difference also marks a difference in soil types. In the northern, fairly level upland area, Sutton Loam predominates. In the lower, southern area, Charlton and Paxton Loams predominate, the latter found on the tops and sides of drumlins. They range from fine sandy loams to uncultivable stony loams. All three soil types, where relatively clear of stones, rank among the most agriculturally productive and important soils of the country. They are particularly well suited to mowing and pasture, but also yield good crops of potatoes, corn and grains, and vegetables, and are well suited for market gardens and fruit orchards,

Leicester's streams drain into three different drainage basins. Lynde Brook and Kettle Brook in the east join near Cherry Valley before flowing eastward into Worcester and Auburn and into the Blackstone River. In the northwest corner of town Shaw Brook and its tributaries flow west to Spencer and Turkey Hill Brook, which eventually join the Quabog River and the Chicopee drainage basin. The remaining and largest portion of Leicester is drained by several streams, which include Burncoat, Town Meadow, and Grindstone Brook. These join at Rochdale before flowing south to Oxford and into the French River, a part of the Thames River drainage basin.

### II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Included in eight mile square "Towtaid" purchase of 1686. Established as town of Leicester, 1714. Part taken to form district of Spencer, 1753. Part annexed to Worcester, 1758. Part including new district of Paxton, 1765. Part set off as a parish and established as town of Ward (later Auburn) in 1778.

### III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Upland residential community on upper French and Blackstone River tributaries, with likely native plantation site ("Towtaid") on "Strawberry Hill," and documented planting site on "Bald Hill." Permanent European settlement after ca. 1715, with meetinghouse site establishment by 1722. Dispersed 18th and 19th century agricultural settlement, with growth of Federal period village at

meetinghouse center, with academy established 1784. Widespread card manufacturing after 1780s. Early 19th century development of wool textile manufacturing on Kettle Brook (Cherry Valley) and French River (Claville, later Rochdale). Industrial development at Rochdale further stimulated by 1841 railroad connection. 20th century suburban growth is concentrated most heavily in the east, but is now sidespread. Several areas of functional, agricultural landscapes remain, however. Leicester Center retains much of its mid-19th century character, with most of the Federal village area now controlled by Leicester Junior College. Rochdale/Greenville retain significant components of 19th century industrial development.

#### IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1550-1620)

##### A. Transportation Routes:

Upland tributaries of French and Blackstone rivers, with main eastwest route probably Main Street. Pine Street conjectured as best alternative southwest branch. Rawson Street possible third western route. Pleasant Street is likely southern route to French River corridor with River Street connector to western trail. Northern eastwest route is possibly Marshall Street - Hemlock Road - Bond Street, with Paxton Street branch south.

##### B. Settlement Period:

No sites are known beyond rumored finds, in particular to the east of Burncoat Pond. Predicted additional sites would be located adjacent to the town's other ponds, Cedar Meadow. Sargent, Henshaw as well as along the Town Meadow Brook and Kettle Brook systems. Settlement can be expected to consist of small sites of short duration visited on a seasonal basis.

##### C. Subsistence Pattern:

Visits to the Leicester area were on a seasonal basis by small family or task groups, to the upland areas in winter for hunting as well as waterways for fishing. These extractive activities would be pursued from larger more permanent base camps.

#### V. PLANTATION PERIOD (1620-1675)

##### A. Transportation Routes:

Contact period trails continue in use.

##### B. Settlement Pattern:

Continuation of the pattern established in the Contact period with some reduction due to increased colonial presence in the region and consolidation of praying towns.

##### C. Subsistence Pattern:

Continuation of the pattern established in the Contact period.

## VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

### A. Transportation Routes:

Native trails are improved as roads and highways, with the main route the eastwest post road (Main Street). Rawson Street and Pine Street continue to provide west and southwest alternate routes. The north/south route from Oxford to Paxton through the meetinghouse center is improved (Pleasant Street - Paxton Street). A route to the northwest county towns runs across the northern part of town (Marshall Street-Mulberry Street).

### B. Population:

By 1724, 37 settlers had acquired land in the eastern part of the Leicester grant. Few later figures are available. By 1765 the total population equalled , by 1775.

The town developed problems with their minister and his salary almost immediately, and entered into repeated votes and reversals until he was dismissed in 1735. This division was at least partially responsible for a separation by Baptists the following year. The town had several ministers within the short period remaining in the period. Settlers from Rhode Island became the core of a group of Friends in the town from 1732. Schools were provided for the town from 1731.

### C. Settlement Pattern:

A group of Roxbury investors purchase the area known as Towtaid from a Nipmuck group headed by the sachem Oraskaso. Measuring 8 miles square this original grant included both Leicester and Spencer, plus portions of Paxton and Auburn. Settlement was delayed by continuing hostilities between natives and colonial through 1713. The grant was confirmed at that time, with the proviso that the lands be promptly taken up. The proprietors then divided the area in two, setting aside the eastern section for the required settlers while holding the remaining segment for their own profit. Leicester represents the greater part of the settlers' section, divided into 50 lots, which by 1724 was settled by 37 owners of one or more of the 30-50 acre houselots. These, and later division of 100 acres per 10 acre houselots, as well as meadow grants, were selected by lottery. Near the town's center, on Strawberry Hill, the meetinghouse was located. The two dissenting groups located their houses at the town's extremities, the Quakers (1732) in the northeast, the Baptists (1738) in the south. Garrisons or fortified houses were located at the center, to the west of Sargent Pond, south toward Greenville, as well as to the southeast on the Henshaw St.. Hill. Although settlement was to have been concentrated in the east, proprietors began to dispose of their holdings and soon the large front was broken into smaller units. First in the southeast came agitation (1743) for a town that would eventually be granted as Ward/Auburn. Complaints in the west had begun even earlier (1741) and successfully emerged as the district of Spencer (1753). To the north four years of resistance preceeded the formation of Paxton in 1765.

#### D. Economic Base

The town was primarily engaged in agricultural pursuits, with an early concern for its meadows. Several mill privileges were developed early in the town's history, including a grist mill at the outlet of the town meadow near Main Street (1722), a saw mill (1724) and later a grist mill, in Greenville, followed by saw and grist mills at Cherry Valley (by 1730). The town had continual problems raising funds required for public works projects by the large number of non-resident land owners.

#### E. Architecture

Residential: Earliest exact residence appears to be 1720 house of Judge John Mensies(?) on Henshaw Road which may have been one of garrison houses mentioned in Hurd's 1889 history. Now a two-story, five-bay structure, the house has obviously been altered and may incorporate portions of the 1720 building. A two-story, five-bay, double chimney dwelling at has Greek Revival trim, but the leanto indicates an earlier, 18th century construction date. The two-story, six-bay, center chimney structure at Greenville across from the Baptist Church may also date from the third quarter of the 18th century and therefore be the oldest surviving building in that village. Aside from these three buildings, there is little evidence of the form of early dwellings in Leicester. Hurd states that the first houses were of one story with a front room and kitchen and sometimes an added bedroom. Late Colonial period dwellings included the Lopez "mansion" erected on the common in 1777 and described as an "oblong, barracks-looking building" with rooms 7 and 1/2 feet high, a southeast and southwest parlor, central front room, 3 rear rooms, and several chambers (Hurd). The building may or may not have had the cupola mentioned in the 1793 description after it had been purchased and inverted into the Leicester Academy in 1784. Mr. Lopez was a Newport Jew who with others of his religion settled briefly in Leicester during the Revolution. His house may have been reflected Newport taste and style. Hurd also refers to the 1772 "mansion" on Mt. Pleasant built by Joseph Henshaw and "refurbished" by James Swann in 1795 and to the "large residence" of Joshua Clapp, east of the common, later Stonewall Farm, which appeared in 1900 as a two-story, five-bay, double pile end chimney house with a two-story wrap-around Ionic porch. The portico may have been a late nineteenth addition when the house was remodelled as a summer home.

Institutional: The first meetinghouse was erected on the common slightly south of the present Federated Church ca. 1719. It had no porch or belfrey and was unpainted. A Quaker meetinghouse was built ca. 1739-40 and was a one-story building measuring 20' x 22'. The Baptist society which formed in 1738 erected a meetinghouse in Greenville ca. 1747. The first schoolhouse, 1736, was erected ten rods north of the meetinghouse and measured 16' x 20'. A school was built in 1762 on the site of Sargents brick factory (?). Five schoolhouses were built between 1765-67. The first tavern in Leicester on the junction of Main and Paxton,

was built in 1721, burned in 1767, and was rebuilt and operated as late as 1812. The second tavern, built in 1727, was located across from St. Joseph's Church. The James Smith tavern of 1740, the last house on the road to Spencer, was destroyed by a storm in 1759. Since 1766, a tavern has been in operation on the site of the Leicester Inn. Benjamin Fosgate operated a store in the center by 1720.

## VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

### A. Transportation Routes:

The colonial roads continue in use, with the addition of the Stafford Turnpike, built along the town's southeast border, chartered in 1806, opened by 1810.

### B. Population:

Population growth within the town was slow during the war years and the economic difficulties that followed. From a figure of 1005 in 1776, but to only 1103 in 1800, and 1252 in 1820 slowed in part by the formation of Ward/Auburn. Substantial growth followed in the next year when the figure reached 1782.

During the war years, a group of Jews came to the town as a refuge from Newport, consisting primarily of traders, including slaves, and numbering ca. 70.

Quakers continued to meet in the north, but the Baptist met only sporadically, occasionally also in North Spencer and the center schoolhouse. The county's first Episcopal Church was built at Rochdale, sponsored by English immigrants, in 1823. Quakers continued to Rochdale, sponsored by English immigrants in 1823. Quakers continued to meet, but Baptists met only sporadically, occasionally in North Spencer and the center schoolhouse. In 1793, the town enunciated its cosmopolitan image with the formation of both a Social Library and an Academy.

### C. Settlement Patterns:

The period sees growth of the meetinghouse center as an institutional and residential focus while at the same time small, dispersed institutional foci persist, and textile manufacturing is initiated at several water-power sites. Dispersed agricultural settlement continues to be dominant, with increasingly important, small-scale card manufacturing. Growth in the center village is initiated in the 1780s with construction of the 2nd meetinghouse (1784), establishment of the Academy (also 1784), and linear residential development on Main Street, with construction of a number of highstyle residence repaired in 1825, the 2nd Friends meetinghouse built in 1791, and the Episcopal Church built at Clappville (later Rochdale) in 1821. Textile manufacturing is initiated in Cherry Valley in 1814, and in Clappville in 1821.

#### D. Economic Base

Like most Worcester County towns, Leicester's economy as it emerged from the Revolutionary War period was founded on agriculture. In the 1780s, however, Leicester began to be known as a center for cotton and wool card manufacturing. Introduced by Thomas Easle, the industry rapidly expanded as others entered the field. Pliny Earle of Leicester supplied the first machine card clothing manufactured in America to Almy & Brown of Providence for their mill in Pawtucket, set up by Samuel Slater. Many inventories and patents were granted to Leicester inventors and manufacturers as they continued to improve the product and process. During these years the industry was transformed from a hand operations put out to many of the town's homes to a mechanized factory operation. By 1832, eight machine card factories and six hand card factories employed 90 and produced cards valued at \$126,000.

The manufacture of cards also stimulated several other industries and improvements. Several tanneries were established to provide leather for card clothing, and a number of machines for leather cutting and card clothing preparation were invented and improved. Two factories for drawing the wire used in cards were in operation by 1832.

Leicester also entered textile manufacturing at an early date. By 1814 a clothier's shop in Cherry Valley had been converted to a woolen mill; in 1821 a second woolen mill was built on Kettle Brook by Thomas Bottomley. A third mill was built at the lower privilege in Rochdale the same year and occupied by the Leicester Mfg. Co. In 1832 the three mills employed nearly 200 in the manufacture of broadcloths and cassimeres. Other textile-related manufacturers carried out in Leicester during this period included a small shuttle factory and bobbin factory.

Boot and shoe making for the western and southern markets (largely for slave wear) was undertaken during the 1820s and 1830s. By 1832 four shops employed 33 men and produce 13,250 pairs of boots and 7,700 pairs of shoes.

A scythe shop was begun by 1800 in Greenville and by 1832, 1000 dozen scythes were produced there annually. Iron working required much charcoal; In 1832 the three machine shops and scythe factory used nearly 15,000 bushels, probably locally burned.

Leicester's early prosperity is indicated by the establishment of a state bank in the town in 1826. The decade of the 1820s, when significant expansion in all of the industries occurred, also marked Leicester's largest population increase since the period before the Revolution: an increase of 530 residents, or 42%.

#### E. Architecture

Residential: Hipped roofs characterize Federal period houses in Leicester and double end and rear wall chimneys appear to be much more common than the traditional center chimney form. The largest

concentration of period houses is found in the center facing the common. Notable among these is the two-story, brick, end chimney house with recessed arches above the first floor windows, a fanlight, and sidelights. A hipped roof house was also noted in Rochdale and at the intersection of Pine and Charles Streets in southwest Leicester.

**Institutional:** The second meetinghouse was erected in 1784 behind the site of the first building. The belfry and steeple were added later, and in 1826 the building was moved to the site of the present Federated Church. The 1739-40 Quaker meetinghouse was sold and replaced with a new one in 1791. The 1791 meetinghouse no longer stands; the society disbanded in 1853. A synagogue, built sometime between 1777 and 1783 stood as late as 1839. A gable end, nave plan Episcopal church was built in Rochdale in 1824. Now encased in aluminum siding, the church retains its double entry in the gable end; both doors have traversed fanlights and Gothic trim. This structure is the oldest known Episcopal church in Worcester County. The Baptist Church of ca, 1747 in Greenville was repaired in 1779, and again in 1824 at which time it was also enlarged.

Another schoolhouse was built in the center in 1791. The Lopez house (1777) was converted to use as the Leicester Academy in 1783. The Academy was enlarged in 1806 by the erection of a second building, three stories with a cupola, which was later described as having been poorly built.

A combination town hall and bank was erected in 1826. By 1799 the former tavern was known as the Leicester Hotel. A hotel was operating Rochdale ca. 1810.

**Industrial:** A brick factory operated in the center in 1828. In 1814, a wood mill/clothiers shop was located on the road to Auburn near Main Street at the center, the building burned in 1848. Thomas Bottomley built a three-story brick mill at Cherry Valley in 1824. A frame textile mill (Leicester Manufacturing Co.) at Rochdale was built in 1821.

## VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830-1870)

### A. Transportation Routes:

The early 19th century roads continue in use. Service on the Western Railroad is opened in 1841 in Rochdale at the town's southern extremity.

### B. Population:

Population slows, with a reversal experienced between 1830 and 1840 when the total dropped from 75 to 1707. During the decade the town grew quickly to 2269, followed by twenty years of fluctuation within overall growth to 2768 in 1870. Although the growth was not remarkable, the town was changing with increased numbers of foreign-born citizens, as well as manufacturing workers. The latter, numbering only 75 in 1820, grew to 253 in



1840 and to 712 in 1875. While agricultural employment also grew, from 85 in 1820 to 227 in 1840, the expansion ceased, leveling to 218 in 1875. Paralleling growth in manufacturing was the growing importance of immigration. The foreign-born numbered only 63 in 1830, but by 1855 the total had grown to 734. The group, which accounted for 25 - 28% of the town's population during this period, was dominated by the Irish, followed by smaller numbers of English and several Canadians and Germans. As in so many towns, this period brought a multiplication of denominations. A second Congregational (actually Unitarian) Society was formed by 16 men and women in 1832 but did not flourish. A Methodist class was formed in 1844, but soon broke up into smaller groups with different emphasis. These Wesleyan Methodists objected to Episcopalians like the reformed, and drew their name from the abolitionist faction in the schism over the question of slavery in the ante bellum period. This group remained in the center while the traditional Methodist Episcopalians moved to Cherry Valley. The former group dissolved in 1861, while their building was used by a second group of Methodist Episcopalians before merging with their Cherry Valley brethren. With increasing numbers of Catholic immigrants in the town, a Roman Catholic parish was formed and built. Polycarp's east of the center in 1854. In 1867 the building was replaced with a new building and renamed St.. Joseph's. The old building was used in a second parish, St.. Aloysius in Rochdale in 1869. The Quaker meetinghouse was taken down at the end of this period. The town established a high school in 1856 which merged with the academy in 1869. The town's under used libraries were unified in 1858, and became free and public in 1861.

### C. Settlement Patterns:

Growth in the center village and outlying industrial areas continues. The center persists as the main residential, commercial and institutional focus, with significant light manufacturing activity. Sizeable textile manufacturing centers develop at Cherry Valley and Rochdale and secondary industrial villages emerge at Greenville and Mannville.

In the center, the institutional focus remains the academy/church complex north of Main Street, where the Unitarian Church (1834) and third Congregational Meetinghouse (1867) are located. The Methodist Church (1846) is located southeast of this cluster on Pleasant Street. Residential development by period end has strong linear growth along Main Street west of the institutional cluster to Sargent Pond, with a second linear extension south on Pleasant Street beyond High Street, and other development south of Main Street on Pine, Spring and Grove Streets. Small hand and machine card factories are dispersed throughout the village area by period end.

The major industrial focus is the series of factories lined along the Main Street/Kettle Brook corridor in Cherry Valley, from the Worcester line west to Chapel Street. At least six textile mills are operating in this district by 1870, with worker housing on Main Street and in small clusters near the factories. A Methodist

Church located here (1846, rebuilt after 1856 fire), but the Catholic Church (1855, replace 1865) is situated between Cherry Valley and Leicester Center on Main Street.

The second industrial focus is at Rochdale (formerly Clappville) on the upper French River, where additional textile mills are built in the 1840s and 1850s. Linear residential development continues here on the old Stafford Turnpike north of the Boston and Albany line, and worker housing also extends south of the tracks along the French River corridor. The Main Street Catholic Church (1855) is moved here in 1865.

Just northwest of Rochdale, industrial related growth occurs at Greenville, with residential development along Pleasant Street stimulated by the machine knife factory. A smaller manufacturing cluster develops northeast of Leicester Center at Mannville in the 1850's.

#### D. Economic Base

During the middle decades of the 19th century Leicester continued to experience growth in its industry and population. The Civil War caused a small reduction in the productivity of the card industry, but greatly boosted the woolen industry, probably the result of government uniform contracts.

The town's economic base was firmly founded in the textile industry; cotton and woolen card manufacturing remained important, as Leicester became the principal center for card manufacturing in the country before the Civil War. A large number of shops and factories, clustered mostly along Main Street in Leicester Center, produced hand and machine cards and card clothing.

The number of firms producing cards and card clothing dropped from 18 in 1845 to 12 in 1855, as many of the smaller firms were absorbed by larger manufacturers; the value of cards produced increased from \$154,700 to \$175,000 in 1855. In 1865 the number of people employed in card manufacturing was twice that of 1855, though strangely, production decreased. Several firms became prominent during this period, among them Woodcock, Knight & Co., L.S. Watson & Co., which began to absorb smaller Leicester manufacturers in the 1850s and 60s and eventually became the principal card manufacturer in the county, Timothy K. Earle & Co., who in 1843 removed to Worcester and in 1857 erected the largest card factory then in the country and the Sargent Card Clothing Co. which removed to Worcester in 1868 and erected a large factory (still standing) which produced 1/5 of all machine cards made in Worcester County in 1872.

The woolen industry experienced steady growth as twelve mills and several villages were erected in the town during the period. The greatest growth occurred in Cherry Valley, where five mills were built between 1837 and 1854. The village of Mannville grew around a satinet mill built in 1838; in 1866 a shoddy mill replaced a saw and planing mill in Lake side; about 1870 a woolen mill was erected in Greenville, enlarging the small village which grew

around the stiles and later Hankey Machine Knife manufactory, formerly the site of a scythe factory. Repeated fires and rebuilding of the mills occurred during the period and accounted for the low number of mills (5-7) recorded in the manufacturing censuses.

The growth of textile related industries accounted for a period of sustained growth in Leicester which began after the 1837 depression and lasted until the Civil War. During this period population increased more than 60%, valuation of property by 250%, and value of goods produced by nearly 200% to more than \$1.3 million.

Closely tied to card manufacturing was the leather industry, which supplied the material for card clothing. At least four and as many as seven tanneries and currying establishments operated during the period, producing up to 9000 finished hides annually. The leather was also utilized in the manufacture of boots and shoes, heels and other shoe parts carried out in several shops and small factories. The boot and shoe industry never achieved great importance; a decrease in production from the 1820s and 1830s until 1849 a factory was built in town by several local investors hoping to stimulate business. A fire in 1860 and the loss of southern markets for its cheap boots during and after the Civil War all but ended the manufacture of footwear in Leicester.

Forest products played a minor but important role in Leicester throughout the period. By 1865, 800,000 feet of boards and nearly 2,500 cords of firewood were marketed annually; large quantities of wood were also converted to charcoal for consumption in Leicester's scythe and knife factories and machine shops and Worcester's many shops. In 1855 more than 10,000 bushels were sold. Wood products made in the town at various times during this period included bobbins, boot, shoes, and card boxes, and card boards and handles.

Agricultural production expanded and changed with the growth of manufacturing and population in Leicester and in neighboring Worcester. Though the major crops continued to be potatoes, corn and other grains, hay and cattle (both live and slaughtered), fruit orchards and vegetables such as onions, carrots, cabbages, squashes, and beets were cultivated with greater frequency by the 1860s. Sheep which numbered greater than 300 in the 1830s, decreased in number to 65 in 1865. Oxen, steer, and heifer also decreased during the period, though in 1865 more than 300,000 pounds of dressed beef and veal were sold. The number of milk cows increased during this period to 412 in 1865. However, the production of butter and cheese for sale, at 22,000 lbs. and 10,000 lbs. respectively in 1845, decreased to 13,660 lbs. and 825 lbs. in 1865; sales of whole milk increased to 10,000 gallons in 1865 from negligible quantities in 1845. The number of swine and poultry also increased through the period.

## E. Architecture:

**Residential:** Little evidence of single family development early in period outside center, where a few brick gable end Federal Greek Revival houses are found and one two-story, five-bay, center entry gable end dwelling was noted. North of Main Street in Paxton are clustered several late period gable end houses. Cherry Valley and Rochdale retain good collections of Greek period worker cottages and row houses. Of note in Rochdale is the two-story, Italianate house with rusticated sheathing and a cupola. Few examples of popular period styles for the latter half of the period.

**Institutional:** A Unitarian Church was built in 1834 and consisted of a gable end structure with flushboard facade containing a center entry shutter by a pediment supported by Doric columns. A Methodist Episcopal Church was built in Cherry Valley in 1846, burned in 1856, and was rebuilt. The Wesleyan faction of the Methodist Society built a church on Pleasant Street in the center also in 1846; the building was abandoned in 1861. In 1854, the gable end Gothic St. Polycarp's Roman Catholic Church was erected one half mile east of center. In 1867, this building was moved to Rochdale and dedicated as St. Aloysius. St. Joseph's was built on the site of St. Polycarp's the same year. The present nave plan Baptist church with tower in Greenville was built in 1860. The brick nave plan chapel at the Nazarene Home for Boys appears to date from the latter portion of the period.

The new town hall, built in 1855, was an elaborate Italianate two-story, 3 bay, gable end structure. Elias Carter designed the third building for the Leicester Academy in 1833 to replace the "poorly built" structure of 1806. The three-story brick building was 102' long with center section measuring 42' x 40' and the wings 30' x 30'. Improvements were made to the building in 1852, and it was named Smith Hall. In 1867, the old 1784 meetinghouse was moved to the rear of this academy and served as dormitories and a gymnasium until it was demolished in 1908. Greek Revival building noted on Rover Street, now a residence, may be former schoolhouse.

**Commercial:** A new two-story brick building was constructed for the bank in 1853.

**Industrial:** Two brick mills at Rochdale, 1847 and ca. 1854(?), have stone lintels and sills and square gable end towers. Mill in Cherry Valley burned in 1863 and was replaced in 1865 with subsequent additions up to 1915. Thomas Bottomley erected brick on Chapel Street; present building appears to be third quarter 19th century.

## IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)

### A. Transportation Routes:

The 19th century road and rail system continues in use. In the 1890s, electric streetcar service is opened from Worcester along

the old post road (Main Street) through Cherry Valley and the Center to Spencer, with a small loop north of the center village.

B. Population:

Through most of the period, growth was moderate but steady, expanding from 2768 in 1870 to 3416 in 1900. During the early twentieth century, however, totals fluctuated and dropped to 3322 in 1915. The foreign population remained over 20%, but dropped significantly from 29% in 1875. Still the Irish dominated, and were not outnumbered by the newcomer Canadians until 1915, when they were nearly equal in numbers. The English continued to account for a small but steady influx, with the addition of Swedes, Russians and Poles at period's end. The number employed in manufacturing remained quite stable, just over 800 men and women, while agriculture dipped briefly to 167 in 1905, before approaching the 1875 figure, reaching 186 in 1915.

There were no known changes within denomination during this period. Many clubs were grounded during this time, with severe focused on literature, as well as a WCTU (1877), GAR(1870), a country club (1900) and DAR (1901).

C. Settlement Patterns:

Little change occurs outside the established centers. In Leicester Center, residential development extends north on Paxton Street, and continues to move south on Pleasant Street. Otherwise infill occurs on established streets. A library (1872) and bank (1881) are added on Main Street. In Cherry Valley, additions and reconstructions are made at established industrial sites, particularly after a major 1876 flood. Residential growth continues, with an extension south on Auburn Street, and some development southeast of Smith's Pond. Rochdale remains essentially the same, but in Greendale homes are built along Pleasant Street, north of Clark Street and south of River Street and in the area west of Smith's Pond and east of the cemetery. Elsewhere, on the north shore of Cedar Meadow Pond. Two golf courses are constructed, Mount Pleasant west of the Center and Hillcrest south of the Center. The Catholic Nazareth School is opened in the northeast on Mulberry Road.

D. Economic Base:

The textile industry continued to dominate the town's manufacturing concerns, as both card manufacturing and woollen cloth and shoddy production expanded. By 1875, 9 woollen mills produced \$1.1 million worth of cloth and shoddy and eight card factories produced \$287,500 worth of goods, an increase of more than 70% in card production since 1865. During the 1880s the Card Clothing Association began to purchase most of the card manufactories and in 1890, when about 1/4 of the cards used in the U.S. were produced in Leicester, the American Card Clothing Co. had gained control of 3 of the 4 major card manufacturers in Leicester and most of the country's card clothing factories.

Leicester's woolen mills experienced expansion during the latter part of the period due to consolidation with other mills and purchase by large firms. In the 1880s and 1890s the mills switched from cassimeres and satinets to the production of ladies' skirting and cloakings and to flannels, which formed a major part of this production in the early 20th century. Several of the Cherry Valley Mills were purchased during the 1890s and consolidated by members of the Smith family, who became involved in Leicester's woolen industry in 1857. In Rochdale, A. Howarth & Son, who also operated mills in Douglas and Sutton in the early 20th century, produced fine woollens in the 3 mills at that site. Despite the increase in production (to greater than \$2 million) in the decades prior to World War I, the mills experienced repeated slowdowns, closings, and strikes.

The diversion of water in Leicester to Worcester's water supply during the late 19th and early 20th centuries accounted for the cessation of manufacturing in two of Leicester's villages, Lakeville and Mannville. The ponds in these villages became Kettle Brook Reservoirs #1 and #2, and together with City reservoir, which supplied Worcester as early as 1870, they provided a sizable portion of Worcester's water needs.

The value of agricultural production slowly but steadily increased through the period, with dairying the major force. Valued at less than 20% of total production in 1875, by 1905 dairy products totaled 38% of the \$167,902 value of agricultural goods. That year more than 350,000 gallons of milk were produced, probably sold on the Worcester market.

The erection of the electric car line from Worcester to Leicester in 1891, the first suburban line out of Worcester, stimulated suburban development and the number of farms decreased as nearly 2000 acres were removed from agricultural use. Also occurring was a consolidation of farms, particularly dairy farms, which more than doubled their size during the period. The growth of Leicester as a select summer resort during the late 19th and early 20th centuries removed more lands from agriculture but provided additional demand in local markets for the remaining farms.

#### E. Architecture:

Residential: Appears to be little major development. Some early period gable end dwellings occur on Paxton Street near the common. Worker row housing in Rochdale on Stafford Street appears to be late 19th century. Few three-deckers noted in Cherry Valley. Four Square plans occur south and west of center on Pleasant and Main Streets.

Institutional: St. Thomas Episcopal Church erected in Cherry Valley in 1884, designed by Stephen C. Earle, was a frame, gabled nave plan with a shed-roofed vestibule and side entry. The church burned in 1911 and was replaced by a stone Gothic edifice. The 1867 meetinghouse burned in 1900 and was replaced in 1901 with the present stone Gothic Federated Congregational church building which has buttresses and a square tower.

The Leicester Academy was closed in 1878 for repairs and didn't reopen until 1888. No 19th century buildings exist today, and ref. to 1908 demolition of 1784 meetinghouse addition makes possible demolition of other building(s) at same time. A gable end, Queen Anne detailed school house survives in Greenville.

The Public Library, stone Romanesque structure with Flemish gables, was built in 1881 (1896?).

Leicester Hotel built 1885 (presumably on site of old hotel).

Commercial: New bank building erected in 1871.

Industrial: Greenville Woolen Company mill erected in 1871, measured 50' x 50', end was 3 stories with an adjoining brick house. Leicester Wire Company buildings erected in 1880s. Coal building by RR in Rochdale.

#### X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915-1940)

##### A. Transportation Routes:

Main Street improved early as part of the main Boston-New York auto route (Route 5-Yellowstone Trail, later Route 20, finally Route 9) until the Route 20 southwest cut-off is built ca. 1930. Pleasant Street to Rochdale from Leicester Center is improved by the 1920s as a local connector, and in the late 1930s becomes part of Route 56 from North Oxford to Paxton (Pleasant Street-Paxton Street). A Main Street by-pass of the center is in place by 1940.

##### B. Population:

This period marks the town's largest growth period, expanding steadily from 3322 in 1915 to 4851 in 1940. The number of foreign-born during the same period dropped from 20.7% to 13.6%. The town still maintained a rural character with 8.6% of the population so described in 1940. Little information on the town is available for this period.

##### C. Settlement Patterns:

Suburban growth from Worcester and recreational lakeside cottage development appear to be the main period changes as industrial activity declines. Residential development at Rochdale continues to extend south into Oxford. Suburban growth from Worcester takes place in the Cherry Valley area, on the highland north of Route 9, south of Route 9 up Stump Hill southeast of Smith's Pond.

##### D. Economic Base:

The trend established in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, consolidation and ownership of Leicester's factories by outside corporations, continued into the post-War period. The surviving woolen mills, strengthened by wartime government contracts prospered, as did the surviving card factories; by 1922 more than \$5 million worth of goods were produced in Leicester's factories.

The Depression, however, had serious impacts on Leicester's industries. The Channing Smith Textile Corporation, formed in 1923, owned 3 mills in Cherry Valley with annual production of \$2 million worth of flannels, cloakings, and suitings by 600 operatives; by 1931 all three mills were closed. Two of the Rochdale mills were purchased and operated by the large American Woolen Co. during the late 1920s and 30s, while the third mill continued to be operated as the Carlton Woolen Mills through the period.

Most of the card factories taken over by the American Card clothing Co. in 1890 were closed by 1931. Only L.S. Watson Manufacturing Co., formed in 1842, continued manufacturing cards, wire heddles, shuttles, heddle frames, and cards and brushes for dogs through the Depression.

By the end of the period Leicester's industry consisted of two woolen mills, the Watson card and shuttle manufactory, and the Russell Manufacturing Co. which manufactured toys and games.

Suburbanization continued as Leicester's population grew despite a net drop in local industry. This continued the loss of agricultural land while increasing the value of the property and products of the remaining farm land. Dairying continued to dominate; by 1931 a milk and cream processing plant had been erected on Main Street. Poultry and fruit raising also increased during this period.

#### E. Architecture:

Residential: Little significant residential development. Bungalows and single story 1940s residences along Pleasant Street, a bungalow along West Main and some 1930s to 1940s dev. 1920s cottages along east side of Cedar Meadow Pond.

Institutional: A Colonial Revival two-story brick highschool stands in Rochdale (ca. 1920-1930). The Swann Library on the common is a one-story brick Colonial Revival building. A new late Colonial Revival town hall erected in 1939.

Commercial: A 1920s brick motel court is on West Main.