

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

MALDEN

Report Date: 1980

Associated Regional Report: Boston Area

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

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

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

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

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MHC RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

Date: November 18, 1980

Community: Malden

I. TOPOGRAPHY

Town occupies 5.1 square miles along the divide between the watersheds of the Mystic River (whose tributary, the Malden River/Spot Pond Brook, drains the eastern half of the town), and the North Shore, drained by the Great Swamp and the highlands east of Maplewood into the Pines River. The southern half of the town is low-lying and much of it originally marshy, while the northern half--part of the Fells Upland district--is composed of higher ground with rocky outcroppings, several as high as 260 feet above sea level. The Great Swamp (now Holy Cross Cemetery) originally provided a natural boundary between South Malden (now Everett) and Malden.

II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Originally settled as part of Charlestown grant with surviving Eight Mile Line of 1636 as Revere-Saugus boundary. Established as independent town of Malden 1649; portion of original Medford line retained as Melrose boundary at Boolum Rock. Adjustments during 18th century with Medford through early 19th century. Separation of Melrose (1850) and Everett (1870) established north and south lines. Incorporated as city 1881.

III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Suburban industrial city on northern corridor of inner metropolitan Boston. Located at boundary of Mystic River valley and Middlesex Fells highlands. Important regional intersection of native trails at ford of Malden River. Early English town settlement around Bell Rock Park by mid-17th century; surviving First Period burying ground at Sandy Bank. Town center shifted from Bell Rock meeting house to Malden center mill site by mid-18th century with focus of activity along Pleasant-Salem and Main Streets. Few remaining Colonial houses except in highlands on Lebanon and Forest Sts. Primary development during early 19th century due to expansion of milling (nails and dyes) at town center and connections of Salem-Boston turnpikes across Pine River swampland at Linden. Railroad links along Malden River during mid-19th century prompted suburban and industrial growth around Malden center. Affluent residential area extended west along Pleasant St. from depot into Oak Grove highlands; some surviving Greek Revival and Italianate houses. Modest residential neighborhoods developed along Main St. axis at Bell Rock and Waites Mount with examples of period suburban styles. An extensive industrial district emerged along the railroad corridor between Edgeworth and Faulkner on Medford St. and Eastern Ave., although little surviving evidence remains. Malden center retained commercial and civic functions through late 19th century; urban brick business blocks along Pleasant St., landmark Victorian churches and noted Richardson library on Salem St.

Rapid development resulted from Boston streetcar extensions during early 20th century creating residential grid across Maplewood highlands with two-family and three-decker housing along Salem St. axis. A similar mixture of housing types extended along Ferry St. and Fellsway trolley routes. Affluent neighborhood remains along Summer-Pleasant Sts. to Oak Grove with innovative Shingle and Queen Anne examples, infilled by later Historic Revival suburban styles. A similar range at more modest scale around Bell Rock Park. Industrial development continued along railroad corridor; some surviving brick Victorian examples (including Robinson Soap factory), an elaborate depot near Malden center and some Modern structures along Eastern Ave. Commercial and civic activity continued in Malden Square with multi-storied urban office blocks and department stores; secondary centers developed on streetcar lines at Maplewood and Linden with numerous decorative concrete store blocks. Auto highway activity by mid-20th century extended along Broadway through Linden; some early gas stations (including landmark domed example) remain. Present renewal efforts have completely altered original Malden River settlement area and threaten to disrupt urban fabric of Malden Square. Residential areas throughout city retain neighborhood stability, although some deterioration along industrial corridor is evident. Impact of Route One in Linden continues to affect adjacent neighborhoods.

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500-1620)

A. Transportation Routes:

Important junction of regional routes between Boston Basin highlands and Mystic River. Primary N/S trail apparent along Main St. with former loop around Bell Rock Park surviving as Madison St. Primary E/W route appears to be Salem St. with ford across upper Malden River and former loops at Pleasant and Bow Sts. Alternate E/W trail, documented by Cory-Ricker (1939), through highlands apparently followed axis of Fellsway East-Mountain Ave.-Forest St. around Waites Mount through Maplewood along Lebanon St. to Salem St. at Linden. Secondary trails around Malden River include Summer, West, and Ferry Sts. Fragment of primary N/S trail around Pine River along Washington-Waverly Sts. at Revere line.

B. Settlement Pattern:

No documented period sites; however, sites are probable along Malden River.

C. Subsistence Pattern:

A varied and plentiful area: good horticultural land along river and edge of the Fells uplands, access to seasonal fish runs in river, access to shellfish in Mystic tidal flats, potential for upland and lowland hunting/gathering.

D. Observations:

While little is presently known, area probably had a large, though seasonal, native population. Identity of these people is not clear but appears to be part of the Pawtucket group.

V. FIRST SETTLEMENT PERIOD (1620-1675)

A. Transportation Routes:

Native trails improved as regional highways. Primary E/W route along Salem St. and N/S route along Main St. to meeting house at Bell Rock Park by mid 17th century. Secondary period roads included Cross St. (to and from meeting house) and Summer St. along Malden River to mill site. Connections to highlands north included Forest and Lebanon Sts.

B. Population:

Initial settlement by 1634. Population size uncertain; possibly no more than two dozen families by 1675.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Initial focus of settlement on Sandy Bank-(Madison St.). By mid-17th century, expanded along Malden River with meeting house on Bell Rock Park (1649). Early mill site on Mountain Ave. (1640) near highway focus on Salem-Boston path (Main-Pleasant Sts.). Remaining area along highland front (Salem St.) apparently settled as individual farmsteads, although no systematic town plan divisions.

D. Economic Base:

First grist mill established on Spot Pond Brook (Mountain Ave.) in 1640 by Thomas Coitymore in the same year that the Penny Ferry was established across the Mystic River. Economy entirely agricultural during this period.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

A. Transportation Routes:

17th century highway system remained with continued focus of N/S and E/W routes at Malden center (Main St. and Pleasant-Salem Sts.).

B. Population:

Probably relatively slight growth. In 1765, total population of Malden, Melrose, and Everett was only 983, of which Malden had perhaps 6-700. By 1784, there were 102 dwellings within the town.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Shift of civic focus from Bell Rock-Sand (Madison St.) to mill site and highway junction at Malden center by mid 18th century. Primary settlement along Pleasant-Salem Sts. axis with secondary focus at Lebanon St.

D. Economic Base:

Agricultural economy exclusively.

E. Architecture

Residential: Less than half a dozen early houses survive in Malden although it is unlikely that very many houses were standing in Malden before the end of the 18th century. Among those houses extant are a few central chimney houses, a cottage, a half house, and at least one twin rear wall chimney house traditionally dated to 1724, but more probably dating to the 3rd or 4th quarter of the century.

Institutional: In 1658, the second meeting house was built by Job Lane, a Bedford housewright; this and the first meeting house stood at Bell Rock Pasture. The only other structure recorded is a schoolhouse, built in 1712.

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

A. Transportation Routes:

Route system intact from 18th century. Improvement of N/S connections to Boston and Salem across Great Swamp (Linden) with construction of Newburyport Turnpike (Broadway and Lynn St.) by early 19th century.

B. Population:

Virtually stagnant population. Size of three towns grew by only about 30 people a year in the period 1800-1830, though most of this growth probably occurred within the present limits of Malden.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Malden center continued to expand as focus of industrial, commercial, and civic development along Pleasant-Salem Sts. axis with secondary focus at Newburyport Turnpike junction at Linden during early 19th century.

D. Economic Base:

"Until the erection of the Charles River and Malden Bridges in 1786 and 1787," Hayward noted in his 1847 Gazetteer, "this town was as far 'down east' in regard to its connection with Boston by roads and bridges, as any town in the county of York

in the state of Maine, now is." William Barrett, a successful China trade merchant, erected a dye house in 1804 for silk dyeing, immediately south of the Odiorne brothers' nail rolling and slitting mill, also begun in 1804, on the site of the 1640 grist mill. Some shoemaking also begun in the period, and in 1812, Samuel Cox began manufacturing shoe lasts--a business which survived into the 20th century. By the 1830's, over 300 men and women were employed in shoemaking. The tinware industry was begun in Malden in 1819 by Timothy Bailey and survived for the better half of the century.

E. Architecture

Residential: Very few Federal period houses survive in Malden, as is the case for colonial structures. As few as a half dozen central, twin and rear wall chimney houses are known, although perhaps a few more remain unidentified. At least one of these is a relatively high style example, the Sprague House (1797), a central chimney house with an ogee-latticed porch. Another early example, possibly dating before 1775, is a brick end house on Forest Street.

Institutional; Commercial; and Industrial: A brick meeting house, standing at least until 1890, was completed in 1802, while by 1830, four schools had been built. Two taverns are recorded, both at the town center. Several industries were established early in the 19th century, including dyeing, nailmaking, shoe last making, and tinsmithing. None of the structures associated with these activities are known extant.

VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830-1870)

A. Transportation Routes:

Turnpikes and highways remained from early 19th century. Links with Boston improved with establishment of railroads to town center along Malden River: N/S route, Boston & Maine (1845); and E/W route, Saugus Branch-Eastern (1854) through Linden. In addition, early horse car line from Malden center south along Main St. connected with Boston transit system by 1858.

B. Population:

Fairly rapid expansion after 1850, reach 7,367 by 1870--double the figure of 20 years previous. By 1865, about 17% of the population were foreign born; 11% were Irish.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Malden center remained the economic and institutional focus despite a shift west towards the railroad (along Pleasant St.) during mid 19th century. Affluent suburban district developed along Summer St. towards Oak Grove highlands; a similar though secondary area built around Bell Rock. Residential subdivisions

extended along Salem St./Eastern railroad corridor to Linden. Workers district built along Malden River railroad although interspersed with industrial activity.

D. Economic Base:

Major event of the period was the opening of the Edgeworth district after the arrival of the railroad. Both rail and barge transportation (the Malden River was navigable to the center of town) gave ready access to this district between the Saugus Branch and the B&M's Western Division. Boston Rubber Shoe Co. (1853), Malden Chemical Works, New England Flint Paper, Webster & Co.'s Edgeworth Tannery, and the U.S. Naval Ordinance Depot all located in this section. Malden Chemical was begun by Alexander Cochrane, a Scot who had worked in the Talbot Chemical Works in North Billerica (1849-58) before coming to Malden. In 1837, shoemaking alone accounted for \$118,410 worth of the products of Malden. Currying followed with \$99,750. By 1865, there were 5 tanning and currying establishments doing \$283,300 worth of business. By the end of the period, the town's largest manufacturer, the Boston Rubber Shoe Co., employed 150 men and women and produced a product worth annually \$450,000.

Except for Elisha Converse's Boston Rubber Shoe Co., most of the sources fail to note the significant industrial growth during this period. By the Civil War years, Malden was a substantially industrialized town attracting increasing numbers of immigrants to work in its factories. Dye houses, nail factories, forges, brick yards, machine shops, and factories for the manufacture of tin and brittaniaware, and soap, all added to the industrial complexion of Malden during this period.

E. Architecture

Residential: Comparatively few Greek Revival houses have survived and probably few high style or suburban examples were constructed. Only one high style temple front Greek Revival house (1849) is known, on lower Ferry Street. A small group of Greek Revival workers' rowhouses stands on Salem Street at Broadway. Greek Revival/Italianate sidehall houses are more prevalent with fully developed sidehall and center entrance Italianate houses being the most common mid-century form. Clusters of mid-century houses stand just north of Pleasant Street, along Salem St. as well as Main and Ferry Streets around the town center. A few well-detailed suburban Italianates, some with cupolas, survive on Washington St. and on Pleasant Sts. The mansard roof began to be used toward the end of the period, but there is no evidence to suggest that it was adopted before c. 1865. Workers housing includes both double houses and cottages in the Italianate style.

Institutional: The Old City Hall, a brick Greek Revival/Italianate building (1857; John C. Stevens), was recently demolished.

Commercial: At least one imposing period commercial block survives; the Waite Block, a brick Greek Revival structure (1852).

IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)

A. Transportation Routes:

Continued expansion of streetcar routes from Malden Center during late 19th century; N/S electric trolley lines along Main St. to Melrose and Everett with alternate on Ferry St., and E/W lines along Pleasant-Salem Sts. to Medford and Revere with branch at Maplewood along Lebanon St. and loop to Faulkner on Cross St. In addition, routes through Linden to Everett and Saugus including lines on Broadway, Eastern Ave., and Beach St. In Edgeworth, an important trolley line on Fellsway to Medford by early 20th century.

B. Population:

Population in this period soared as it never had before. Between 1870 and 1910, the population multiplied over six times. In the decade 1885-95 alone, the city grew by over 1300 people a year. With these figures, the number of foreign-born residents also climbed--to 26% in 1885, 28% in 1910. Initially, the largest group was Irish, but by 1910, there were also a substantial number of Russian Jews from East Boston and Chelsea.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Continued expansion of residential subdivisions along highlands with status district around Oak Grove-Summer St. and modest suburban areas along Lebanon St.-Maplewood and Main St.-Bell Rock. Workers district extended along railroad corridors with industrial activity along Eastern Ave. at Faulkner and Medford Ave. at Edgeworth. Civic and commercial focus remained at Malden Center along Salem-Pleasant Sts; secondary centers at Maplewood-Lebanon St. and Linden. Cemetery fringe belt extended into Great Swamp by late 19th century along Broadway axis.

D. Economic Base:

Leading industry in the city continued to be the Boston Rubber Shoe Co. of Elisha Converse, first mayor of the city and donor of the city library. By 1900 it had become the largest factory in the world for manufacture of rubber shoes. The Converse Rubber Co., established in 1890, also located in the Edgeworth district. As early as 1870's paint and varnish had been manufactured in Malden, possibly associated with the use of varnish in the BRS plant. By the 1890's, Wadsworth, Howland, & Co. (paint and varnish) had located on Green St., as did the Robinson soap factory (later Potter Drug). Linen fire hose was manufactured as early as 1875; Charles Niedner's Sons on James St. began manufacturing the product in 1893. The first of a number of knitting mills opened in 1907 by the Malden Knitting Mills, who built the present factory on Eastern Ave., in 1915. Much of the industrial development in the 20th century was located along Eastern Avenue, which paralleled the Saugus Branch.

E. Architecture

Residential: Malden experienced its greatest building boom during the period with much of the outer city being developed with a wide range of building types and styles, including some high style architect-designed Queen Anne, Shingle Style, and Colonial Revival houses on the slopes at Oak Grove. Particularly notable are several early and imaginative Shingle style houses along Glenwood Ave. Other imposing Queen Anne and Colonial Revival houses are located along Highland Ave. More modest Queen Anne sidehall single family houses are located off main roads in the western sections of town. Concentrations of Colonial Revival and Shingle style two-families and three deckers were built in areas east of the town center and particularly at the Faulkner and Maplewood section.

Institutional: Many institutional structures, including the town's most noteworthy building, the Romanesque Converse Library (1884-5; H. H. Richardson), were built in this period. These included several well-detailed highstyle architect-designed Queen Anne, Gothic, Romanesque, and Renaissance Revival architect-designed churches in brick and stone with examples by R. A. Cram (St. Paul's Episcopal; 1911), P. C. Keely (Church of the Sacred Heart; 1893) and H. S. McKay and G. F. Newcomb (First Baptist; 1891). Also constructed were a number of municipal buildings by a local architect, Tristan Griffin, including a group of brick fire stations in the Queen Anne style built in the 1880's and '90's. In addition, many schools built in the period survive, such as the Renaissance Revival High School (F. I. Cooper; 1899) and several elementary schools ranging from Romanesque Revival examples of the 1880's through Beaux Arts Classical designs of the late '90's and Tudor Revival schools of the early 20th century.

Commercial: Many ambitious commercial buildings at the town center were constructed during the period, including a number of three and four story panel brick, mansarded, and Georgian Revival examples in red and yellow brick. Notable architect-designed buildings include the Odd Fellow's Hall (1907) by Louis Newhall, and the F. E. Converse Lodge (1896) by local architect Tristan Griffin, both Renaissance Revival examples. Also surviving is a Georgian Revival commercial building with a curved facade, an early example of the use of cast concrete (1916). A secondary commercial center at Maplewood includes a few well-detailed two and three story brick buildings (the 1890's).

Industrial: The Potter Laboratories on Medford Street, a well-detailed example of brick Renaissance Revival building (1892), is one of the more stylish industrial buildings to survive.

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915-1940)

A. Transportation Routes:

Railroad and streetcar lines remained intact through mid-20th century. Improvement of local roads into auto highways: Route 60 (Pleasant-Salem Sts.) E/W through Malden center; Route 1 (Broadway) N/S through Linden; and Metropolitan District Commission upgrading of Fellsway as Route 28. New construction of Route One superhighway on Revere line; retains original Art Deco interchange at Salem St. (1936).

B. Population:

But for the five years, 1915-20, rapid growth continued until 1930, when Malden's population reached 58,036. Although there has been a slight decline since 1950, the figure has remained relatively stable since the Depression.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Nearly complete development of residential areas along highlands with status neighborhood around Oak Grove and secondary areas around Bell Rock Park and Maplewood. Multiple family housing extended along trolley lines and industrial corridor at Edgeworth-Medford St., Faulkner-Cross Sts. and Linden-Eastern Ave. Primary civic and commercial focus remained at Malden center with several high-rise urban office blocks; secondary retail centers at Maplewood (Lebanon-Salem Sts.), and Waites Mount (Forest-Main St.). Auto highway strip development along Broadway through Linden by mid-20th century.

D. Economic Base:

The period is marked by the closing of several of the major 19th century factories--among them Cochrane's Turkey Red Works, the Edgeworth Tannery, the Naval Ordinance depot, and the former works of New England Flint Paper. The new plant of the Malden Knitting Mills on Eastern Ave (1915) was followed in quick succession by four more knitting mills between 1915 and 1925. By 1927, the 114 manufacturers in Malden were led (in product value and capitalization) by rubber boots and shoes, paints and varnishes, and knit goods. Many of the smaller concerns built in this period were constructed along Eastern Avenue. Attributed to Malden by a local resident--but not verified--is the invention of the ice cream cone, and at least two plants manufacturing this product are known to have existed.

E. Architecture

Residential: Older neighborhoods filled in with Craftsman-derived single and two family houses while much of the Edgeworth area southwest of the center was developed with modest 1920's two-family houses. Few expensively finished Period Revival houses were constructed. One notable complex of Modern/Georgian Revival

townhouse apartments in brick were constructed south of Bell Rock Park, possibly in the late 1930's.

Institutional: Institutional buildings constructed in the period consist primarily of a few schools in Tudor and Georgian Revival styles. Some of the stuccoed buildings at the city Infirmary on Forest Street probably date from the 1920's.

Commercial: A few simple Neo-classic/Moderne commercial blocks were constructed at the town center including at least one building, the Neipris Building (1923), faced with pink granite and retaining its original Moderne neon sign. Other examples at the town center are somewhat more conservatively detailed. Also surviving is an intact Colonial Beacon gas station (1928) at Broadway and Salem Street.

Industrial: Several industrial buildings along Eastern Avenue date from the 1920's and '30's including Revere Knitting Mills, Malden Knitting Mills, Friend Bros. Canning factory, and the Samuel Jordan Brush Co.

XI. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

Existing survey is well-researched with excellent documentation on construction dates and architects. Although strong on commercial and industrial buildings, the survey would be improved by a more thorough analysis of the city's residential development. Potential historic district north of Pleasant Street.

Industrial buildings omitted from the survey include the 2-story brick generating station of the Malden Electric Co., the Globe Electric Light factory (25 James St.), and two substantial knitting mills on Eastern Ave., Malden Knitting (at 89 Franklin) and Revere Knitting (124 Eastern Ave.). The Boston Dye House/Golden Bell Cleaners (22-30 Eastern Ave. at Main St., c. 1920?) is an unusual 3-story ashlar limestone structure with cornice, belt courses, a frieze of gilded bells, and chiseled Roman lettering.

XII. SOURCES

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