

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

MONSON

Report Date: 1982

Associated Regional Report: Connecticut Valley

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: July 1982

COMMUNITY: Monson

I. Topography

Monson is dominated by a complex of moderate to rugged uplands generally ranging between 800 and 900 feet in elevation. Most prominent are Peaked Mountain with an elevation of 1278 feet, West Hill, Moon Mountain and its unnamed sister peak, and Peck Hill, all with heights over 1000 feet. Fertile intervalles extend along the northern boundary of Monson and the north central portion of the town. Several moderate-sized tracts of marshland are scattered about Monson, the largest occurring at the confluence of the Quaboag River and Chicopee Brook. The only major waterway is the Quaboag River, which delineates the town's northern boundary. The Chicopee Brook runs north from South Monson and drains into the Quaboag. The latter waterway has been the site of a large portion of the town's 19th century industrial operations. The only local freshwater bodies are several mill ponds and the Conant Brook Reservoir. Local soils range from the rich alluvium of the intervalles to the sandy, rocky soils of the uplands.

II. Political Boundaries

Originally included in the Plantation Adjoining Springfield in 1701, Monson was established with Brimfield in 1714. The southern boundary was at the Massachusetts-Connecticut line, the northern boundary on the Chicopee River, and the western boundary at Springfield Outer Commons (Wilbraham-Hampden), all surveyed in 1714. The Baptist Hill section was annexed to Palmer in 1752 along Post Road. It was established as the independent Town of Monson in 1760, with its eastern boundary with Brimfield and South Brimfield (Wales).

III. Historic Overview

A rural industrial town located on the edge of the primary Springfield-Boston corridor, Monson is situated in the rugged uplands of the upper Chicopee Valley with reported native sites along the Quaboag River. There was an attempted settlement during the mid 17th century along Bay Path, and an aborted Brimfield town center on East Hill during the early 18th century with a surviving period house on the trail fragment. A formal town settlement was established on Chicopee Brook during the mid 18th century, with a period burying ground in Monson Center.

Significant industrial development occurred during the Federal Period, with granite quarries and early textile mills forming an extended street village along the axis of Chicopee Brook to South Monson. Agriculture was maintained on the upland vales through the mid 19th century with period landscapes on East Hill

and Twelve Mile Brook. Continued expansion of Monson Center during the Industrial Period included some Greek Revival and Gothic houses along the Route 32 axis. Civic focus was defined at Monson Center with elaborate Victorian granite buildings of architect design, including former Monson Academy. The State Hospital complex is located on Chicopee Hill across from Palmer Center with surviving period buildings of Italianate style. Industrial development declined during the early 20th century, although South Monson continued as a local center with early plastics production. There was gradual conversion of upland farms to dairying during the Early Modern Period, and modest expansion in the town center. Present development is most obvious along these upland roads with attractive vistas for suburban homes. Monson Center retains Late Industrial Period character with an historic estate district on East Hill.

IV. Contact Period (1500-1620)

A. Transportation Routes

There was limited accessibility of regional routes with rugged highlands except along the Quaboag River valley. The primary east-west trail is documented as Bay Path, reported to have followed east from Twelve Mile Brook (Wilbraham) over Bald Peak to Chicopee Brook and along the axis of Benton Road (Chase, p.48; Moulton, p.37). a secondary east-west trail is reported across the southern section as Longmeadow Path from Scantic River (Hampden) around West Hill to Cedar Swamp, and along Vinica Brook to Lake George (Wales) (Moulton, p.37). No evidence of either trail survives obviously. A north-south trail route is conjectured along Chicopee Brook from the Quaboag River to State Line Pond (Connecticut) along the axis of Route 32, with a secondary route probable along Twelve Mile Brook south-east to Chicopee Brook along Dickinson-Reimer-Wilbraham Roads-High Street. Other trails might also have been located along the crest of the uplands such as East Hill Road, but their location is open to question.

B. Settlement Pattern

There were no reported period native sites. One unidentified native site was situated on a river terrace adjacent to the Chicopee River. Any native settlement occurring in Monson would have focused on the fertile Chicopee River and Chicopee Brook bottomlands.

C. Subsistence Patterns

Extensive agricultural land was situated throughout Monson. Fishing would have occurred primarily on the Chicopee River and Chicopee Brook. The rugged hills and marshland would have been ideal habitats for wild game.

D. Observations

Native settlement in Monson during this period would have been limited due to the absence of extensive freshwater sources and the area's rugged terrain. The extensive waterways of Palmer and Brimfield would have been considerably more attractive to native occupants. The greatest likelihood for extant Contact Period sites should occur in the minimally developed bottomlands adjoining the Chicopee River and Chicopee Brook.

V. Plantation Period (1620-1675)

A. Transportation Routes

The major east-west route between Springfield and Boston is documented as Bay Path along the Quaboag River. The route apparently climbed over Bald Peak along Hovey Road around the base of Chicopee Hill (Chase, p.48). A secondary east-west route is reported as Longmeadow Path from Springfield around West Hill and Cedar Swamp (Moulton, p.37).

B. Population

There were no figures for a native or colonial population.

C. Settlement Pattern

The only suggestion of native period settlement was a Plantation or Colonial Period burial located in northern Monson near the junction of the Chicopee River and Chicopee Brook. Colonial settlement was restricted to a single individual, Richard Fellows. In ca. 1657, Fellows established a tavern to service Bay Path travellers in the general vicinity of the previously mentioned native burial. The site was abandoned a year or so after occupation because of the owner's fear of native attack.

D. Economic Base

The native population probably maintained their traditional subsistence patterns. However, establishment of a large scale English fur trade operation in the Springfield area in the late 1630s may have encouraged local native involvement.

E. Observations

Little can be said about this period, due to the lack of documentation. The site of Fellows' tavern should be located and examined, if still extant, since such evidence of pre 1675 English settlement in this portion of the Connecticut River Valley is highly unusual. Fellows is reputed by several sources to have been the first English settler to have established a residence between Springfield and Brookfield.

VI. Colonial Period (1675-1775)

A. Transportation Routes

The major east-west corridor remained along the Quaboag River with improvement of Bay Path as the Boston Post Road by the 1730s, around the base of Bald Peak to Palmer (Route 20), abandoning the original route. Formation of the first Brimfield town center on East Hill in 1701 presumes existence of Brimfield and East Hill Roads with a surviving section of the roadway to Monson Inventory #2 (1715). The formation of Monson town center in the 1760s created a radial network of meeting house roads, including Fly, Palmer Upper, and Carpenter Roads. Secondary highways were laid out by the 18th century as a loose grid across the uplands with north-south roads as Thayer, Wood Hill, Butler, Bogans, and Bumpstead Roads in the western section and Cedar Swamp, Farm, and Old Reed Roads in the eastern section. East-west connectors of the period include Lower Hampden, Robbins, Blanchard, Stafford Hollow and Munn Roads in the southern section. A regional highway along the Scantic River across the southwest section as Hancock Road connects Stafford, Connecticut with Springfield.

B. Population

There are no figures for a native population. The only figures for Monson's colonial population is that of 1760. At that date, the community had 49 resident families. A large number of the early settlers moved from Springfield.

C. Settlement Pattern

There is no evidence of native postwar occupation. The first English settler is claimed to have been Robert Olds, who erected a home in ca. 1715 near the junction of Palmer Lower Road and the Chicopee River. However, it was not until the late 1720s and early 1730s that substantial settlement took place. The majority of these homes were built in the vicinity of East (Grout) Hill, the first site (never occupied) of the Old Brimfield meeting house. Later period settlement expanded to the west of this hill, focusing on the fertile bottomlands of the Chicopee Brook. By the 1760s this area had developed into a primary settlement node. In ca. 1762, the community's first meeting house was erected in this area adjacent to the intersection of High Street and Bethany Road. More dispersed settlement probably took place adjacent to the Chicopee River and the productive uplands of northern and southeastern Monson.

D. Economic Base

Monson's economy was based primarily on agriculture. The area's limited water power sources discouraged the development of a substantial mill industry. Three pre 1775 mills may have been

erected near the junctions of the Scantic River and Butler Road, Conant Brook, and the Central Vermont Railroad and the northern end of Pulpit Rock Pond, respectively. A store dating to ca. 1760 is claimed to have been established by Asa Moulton on Moulton's Hill.

E. Architecture

Residential: The only Colonial Period residences extant in Monson are center chimney cottages. Of these, approximately a half dozen examples survive. The earliest is a gambrel roof cottage, dated ca. 1720, located on Aldrich Road. Other early center chimney cottages are located on East Hill Road and on Moulton Hill Road. Most period cottages have gable roofs and a five-bay center entrance plan; a few are only four bays wide. Shallow end gable overhangs are also common.

Institutional: The Congregational Church in Monson was not organized until 1762, some fifty years after the initial settlement of the town. The building, which was never completed, stood 20 feet square. A Baptist society was organized in 1768 in conjunction with a group from Wilbraham. In 1771, nine school districts were established in the town. There are no specific building references for either the Baptist church or schools.

Commercial: The first building in the town was a tavern (Richard Fellows' Tavern) and there were also at least two other taverns operating in Monson in the 18th century. These were the Bishop House Tavern (1762), a gambrel roof house demolished in the 19th century, and the Merrick Tavern (1775); the latter may still stand, but it was not identified in the field. X

F. Observations

Monson was probably the least developed portion of Old Brimfield during the Colonial Period. As a result, the community probably maintained close economic ties with Brimfield and Springfield. These ties were undoubtedly facilitated by Monson's proximity to the Bay Path and the Chicopee River. There is a good likelihood of archaeological evidence of the settlement's original East Hill nucleus surviving because of its continued rural nature.

VII. Federal Period (1775-1830)

A. Transportation Routes

Local highways remained focused upon Monson town center along Chicopee Brook. Improvement of north-south highway as the turnpike to Stafford, Connecticut and Palmer (Route 32) through Monson Center and the rebuilding of Boston Post Road as the First Massachusetts Turnpike in 1796 follows the present Route 20.

B. Population

Between 1790 and 1830, Monson's population rose by 70%, reaching 2,263 in the latter year. The peak growth periods were in the decades 1790-1800 (an average of 30.4 persons per year) and 1810-20 (45.2 per year).

C. Settlement Pattern

Monson Center remained the focus of civic and commercial activity along the axis of Stafford-Palmer Road (Route 32). Significant expansion of industrial activity occurred by the War of 1812, with the opening of U. S. government granite quarries on Palmer Upper Road and textile mills along Chicopee Brook, creating a mill village at South Monson. Monson Center retained civic functions with the establishment of Monson Academy.

D. Economic Base

Monson's economic development remained predominantly agricultural throughout the Federal and succeeding periods, although the opening of a granite quarry and the three small textile mills along Chicopee Brook provided some mill employment.

The granite quarry was opened in 1809 by agents of the Springfield Armory, who quarried foundation stone for the Armory from it. The quarry was not worked again until about 1825 when Rufus Flynt quarried stone trim for the Chicopee Bank at Springfield. The stone was transported to the city by teams, and because of this lack of adequate transportation, the quarry business seems to have languished for several decades after.

The earliest textile mill was the Union Cotton Factory (later reorganized and renamed the Monson and Brimfield), built in 1811 at North Monson; though this mill was followed two years later by two more mills at Chicopee Brook privileges in Monson Center: the Monson Woolen Company, and the Hampden Cotton Manufacturing Company. Both the Monson and Brimfield and the Hampden Cotton Manufacturing companies appear to have attracted mechanics of some note. By 1822 Joseph Hall was agent of the former mill; about the same time Hall was advising Edmund Dwight on the location of the Boston and Springfield Manufacturing Company at Chicopee Falls, becoming its first agent when it opened about 1825. Joseph L. Reynolds was a Rhode Island mechanic from Coventry, who had worked under Eli Whitney on his War of 1812 musket contract at Whitneyville, Connecticut. About 1820, Reynolds was in Brimfield, "and there first engaged in the manufacture of cotton sheeting, having special charge of the newly invented power-looms." In 1821, he became general overseer of the Hampden Cotton Manufacturing Company, acting as agent for the company for 25 years. Probably under Reynolds' direction, the company built a woolen mill in 1829, 2,000 feet upstream of the company's 1813 cotton mill. By 1832 the newer mill was producing some \$57,000 worth of satinet; the older mill, \$30,000 in cotton jeans.

E. Architecture

Residential: At least a dozen houses of the Federal Period are recorded in the town inventory and perhaps as many as a dozen additional Federal houses were observed in the field. A fair number of period houses stand at the town center and at South Monson. Most of these are two-story structures, a few of particularly fine and unusual construction. Probably the most unusual of these is a center chimney, hip roof structure with a high attic monitor, located at the town center, just off Route 82. The use of a monitor is known on the Oliver Wight House in Sturbridge and elsewhere in the Worcester area, but is relatively uncommon. The house probably dates ca. 1785. Other well detailed Federal houses include brick end wall chimney hip roof houses on Palmer Road and High Street, a hip roof double chimney brick house on Palmer Lower Road at North Monson, and somewhat more modest double and end chimney houses of frame construction at the town center and also along outlying roads. In general, construction away from the town center is somewhat more modest, with cottages outnumbering houses and frame construction pre-dominantly.

In addition to these single-family houses, a few of the several two-story rowhouse tenements standing at the town center probably were built in the 1820s. These are sidehall plan rowhouse units generally six to eight bays in length with eyebrow windows in the frieze.

Institutional: The second meeting house of the Congregational society was built in 1802. The building, which had dimensions of 80x50 feet, was two stories tall with a double row of windows and a low open (probably) octagonal cupola. The building was sold in 1871 for use as a hall and stores. Other major institutional construction occurred with the founding of the Monson Academy Chemistry Laboratory building, constructed in 1825. The Academy, a two-story frame structure, burned in 1886. In 1825, a Methodist society was organized with a 25x40 foot chapel built in 1826. In 1816, the Baptist society built a meeting house at Wood Hill.

Commercial: The only commercial building recorded for the period was the Norcross Tavern (1796), which is not known to survive.

VIII. Early Industrial Period (1830-1870)

A. Transportation Routes

Continued improvement of the north-south corridor through Monson Center occurred when a railroad route with New London Northern (Central Vermont) opened in 1850 with a branch to the State Hospital.

B. Population

Monson's population fluctuated markedly throughout this period. In the first decade, like many rural towns in the

Valley, the number of residents sharply declined, recovering with a brief burst in the period 1840-50. By 1870, the town had reached only 3,204 - a 41% rise over the figure in 1830. Of the 1855 population, 15% of the residents were foreign born - twice the number in adjoining Wilbraham. Of these, 77% were Irish.

C. Settlement Pattern

Continued expansion of industrial activities along Chicopee Brook created an extending street village from Monson Center to South Monson. Although the civic focus remained at Monson Center, there was some relocation evident to South Monson with the opening of the railroad in the 1850s. Further development of granite quarries along Palmer Upper Road and the location of Monson State Hospital on Chicopee Hill in the 1850s extended the corridor of activity to Palmer Center along the Quaboag River.

D. Economic Base

In the Early Industrial Period were Monson's boom years. Three woolen mills were built, and by the close of the period, Monson was producing, in its six small mills, 75% of the county's production of cheap satinet (half of all the satinet produced in the Valley). As the cotton mills of Chicopee, Palmer, and other towns grew, the cheaper fabrics, like satinet, were left to the smaller, out-of-the-way mill towns to produce; in this way, Monson's proportion of the county satinet production grew from 51% in 1845 to 63% a decade later, to 75% at the close of the Civil War.

Operations at the granite quarry also expanded. Rufus Flynt's son, William, exhibited the stone in Springfield to promote its use, and with the opening of the Western Railroad in 1839, and especially of the New London, Willimantic and Palmer in 1850, business boomed. By 1865 the Monson quarry was the single largest producing quarry in the Valley, and her total production was second only to the production of the combined sandstone quarries of East Longmeadow. (In the 1880s Flynt would be the contractor on H. H. Richardson's nearby station in Palmer, where both Monson granite and Longmeadow brownstone were extensively used.) An offshoot of this business was the well known line of stone-cutters' tools by the blacksmith George Washington Burdick, who moved to Monson in 1866.

The third major industry for Monson in this period was the manufacture of straw hats and bonnets. Charles Merrick, a weaving superintendent in a Rockville, Connecticut mill, thrown out of work in the depression year 1838, determined to attempt the manufacture of palm-leaf hoods, then being secretly made in Rockville. Observing the braid looms in operation in Somers, Connecticut, Merrick introduced the business into Monson in the summer of 1838, becoming the first to produce palm-leaf hoods in

Massachusetts. Two decades later the firm combined with Foxboro and Bridgewater men, Hodges and Hersey, enabling Monson straw goods to be sold through H. H. and Company's New York salesrooms. By 1865, Monson's production of straw bonnets and hats represented the entire production of the Connecticut Valley, while its value made Hampden County the fifth largest producer in the state (following Norfolk, Worcester, Plymouth and Middlesex counties).

Other Monson products included gold and silver spectacles (related to a similar production in Longmeadow?), and the products of a substantial tannery.

E. Architecture

Residential: Many of the houses standing at the town center were built in the period. Most of these appear to date between 1850 and 1875. They include a number of asymmetrical sidehall plan transitional Greek Revival/Italianate and High Victorian Italianate villas with towers and elaborate verandas, some with mansard roofs. Also known are a number of three-bay wide, square plan Italianate houses with center entrances. At least a few Gothic Revival houses, one (on Palmer Road) with original board and batten siding and bargeboards, were also built in the town. In addition to these houses, many more modest sidehall plan Greek Revival/Italianate houses were built along with a large number of Greek Revival and Italianate double houses and rowhouses. The rowhouses are generally three stories tall and eight bays long with sidehall plans; many have fore-shortened third story windows. Many sidehall and center entrance plan cottages were built in outlying areas of the town, most with transitional Greek Revival/Italianate styling. In addition, many barns and outbuildings were also constructed, and still stand.

Institutional: Only a few institutional buildings were constructed at the town center in the period; however, with the establishment of the state poor farm in 1852 in the northern half of town, major institutional buildings began to be constructed in the town. At the town center, the present Methodist Church and St. Patrick's Church were constructed. The Methodist Church (1850) is a two-story gable roof Romanesque Revival structure with Gothic Revival details including a quatrefoil in the projecting square entrance tower. As originally constructed, St. Patrick's Church (1863; remodelled, 1928) was a granite Gothic Revival structure with side aisles and a two-stage belfry.

In 1853, construction of a frame poor house began on the site of the present State Hospital. The original building, which no longer stands, was four stories tall with a central square pavilion and two secondary wings. The poor farm was built at a cost of \$80,000 and was intended to house 500 persons.

Commercial: A few two- and three-story frame stores with Italianate details were built at the town center. Most of these have been altered on the first floor.

IX. Late Industrial (1870-1915)

A. Transportation Routes

The railroad remained as the primary route of north-south axis through Monson Center to Palmer with a branch opened to granite quarries in 1875 (now abandoned). An electric trolley route from Palmer in 1900 followed the north-south corridor to South Monson along Route 32 with a private way in North Monson around Chicopee Brook (now Monson Golf Course). The roadbed of the Southern New England Railroad was constructed along the Quaboag River (Benton Road) as an east-west route from Springfield to Providence, Rhode Island; it was abandoned as a result of the death of two major financial backers, who were killed in the Titanic disaster of 1912 (Harlow, p.335).

B. Population

Between 1870 and 1915, Monson's population fluctuated wildly, declining a step for every three to four paces advanced. Between 1870 and 1900 the rise amounted to only 6%, though the opening of the trolley line to Indian Orchard shortly after gave the town a major boost, advancing the population by another 47% in the succeeding 15 years, just topping 5,000 in 1915. By 1905, the percentage of immigrants in Monson had risen to 20%: the Irish still made up the majority (35%), followed by the Italians (17.5%).

C. Settlement Pattern

There was further development of an industrial axis along Chicopee Brook between North and South Monson, with the civic focus maintained at Monson Center. The primary business district shifted to South Monson with a residential area along the hill-sides. Agricultural activity was maintained on upland vales with a gradual shift to dairying. Both granite quarries and the State Hospital further expanded as fringe districts with an adjunct to Palmer Center.

D. Economic Base

Monson's industrial base became increasingly centered on stone, straw and woolen goods. In 1875, the total manufactured product recorded for the town, valued at \$1,179,275, ranking it sixth among the county's 21 towns, was made up almost entirely (98%) of the value of straw and woolen goods. Both products remained part of Monson's economy well into the 20th century. In the 1880s a second straw works, the Columbia, was opened by R. M. Reynolds, though this appears to have been relatively short-lived. In the mid 1890s, the woolen mills were employing approximately 1,000 workers; new brick mills replaced earlier frame mills (S. F. Cushman and Sons mill, 1886; A. D. Ellis and

Sons, 1908) - a reinvestment that contrasts markedly with the pattern of woolen mill abandonment in this period in nearby Hampden. The two straw works in the mid 1890s employed about 800 men and women; the granite industry, several hundred others.

E. Architecture

Residential: A fair amount of residential construction occurred in the period. A limited number of large and stylish Queen Anne, Colonial Revival and Shingle Style houses were built on High Street with some expensive houses located on Green Street above the town center and on Palmer Road. Most common are small one-and-a-half and two-story sidehall Queen Anne houses, a number of which were built both at the town center and along outlying roads. Two notable houses of the period are a Shingle Style/Colonial Revival house on Green Street and a hip roof stucco Arts and Crafts house on High Street.

Institutional: The vast majority of the town's institutional buildings were constructed in the Late Industrial Period. These include the Public Library (1882), the Memorial Town Hall (1885), and Third Congregational Church (1873), the Universalist Church (1888), several schools, and buildings for the Monson Academy. The Library, Memorial Hall and Universalist Church are all built of Monson granite and are well-detailed and substantial examples of the Gothic and Romanesque Revival styles. The Congregational Church is an elaborate frame building in the Romanesque Revival style. Two Monson Academy buildings warrant special note. These are the Holmes Gymnasium (1900), a very fine brick and terracotta Queen Anne building, and Cushman Hall (1911), a three-story Georgian Revival building of brick laid in Flemish bond with tar-dipped headers. In 1886, the original Monson Academy building was replaced by a two-and-a-half story brick and granite Romanesque Revival structure.

The most substantial institutional construction of the period occurred at the Monson State Hospital, where approximately a half dozen three- and four-story brick dormitories and service buildings in the Romanesque Revival, Georgian Revival and Craftsman styles were built. At least three schools were built in the period (Green Street School, 1890; State Street School, 1893; Mechanic Street School, 1910). The Green and State Street schools were one-story frame hip roofed buildings, while the Mechanic Street School was a two-story building; these may still stand. Also of note is the granite Romanesque Revival entrance arch of the Hillside Cemetery and the granite Flynt and Cushman Memorials, monumental neoclassical fountains.

Commercial: A number of two- and three-story Queen Anne and Colonial Revival commercial blocks of brick and frame construction were built along High Street at the town center. Many of these are well preserved and fairly well detailed buildings.

Industrial: At least two major, monumental factory buildings were erected in the period. These are the Monson Woolen Manufacturing Company (1886) and the A. D. Ellis Factory (1908). Both are located at South Monson, one on Carpenter Road and the other on Route 82. The earlier building is a four-story Romanesque Revival structure all of brick, while the later structure includes granite details in an otherwise brick building in the Panel Brick Style.

X. Early Modern Period (1915-1940)

A. Transportation Routes

The trolley route to Monson Center was abandoned by the 1920s and there was an improvement of local highways as autoroads. The primary east-west highway was Route 20 from Springfield to Boston with a secondary north-south connector from Palmer to Stafford, Connecticut as Route 32.

B. Population

Monson's population in the Early Modern Period fluctuated around 5,000. In 1930 Monson had 86 fewer people than it had fifteen years before. In 1940 the number of residents had reached 5,597.

C. Settlement Pattern

There was continued infilling of commercial and residential district along the Route 32 corridor between North and South Monson with the civic focus maintained at Monson Center. Industrial activities declined along Chicopee Brook, especially at South Monson with the related closure of granite quarries during the 1930s. State Hospital facilities expanded on Chicopee Hill with continued conversion of local agriculture to dairying, forming an estate farm district on East Hill.

D. Economic Base

In the Early Modern Period, Monson became increasingly a farming community, although the granite quarries and woolen mills still furnished employment. The largest of the manufacturers were the A. D. Ellis Mills, employing some 475 workers in the production of automobile, billiard, and casket cloth. The straw works, rebuilt after a 1912 fire, had closed in 1927 on the death of one of its principals.

Two modern concerns established were the short-lived Rubwood Wheel Factory, and its successor, C. F. Church. Rubwood Wheel, on the site of the old Monson and Brimfield Manufacturing Company at North Monson, produced a pioneer wood-and-rubber laminate, the invention of aviator Harry Atwood. Atwood's firm folded after a few years, and the space was taken by C. F. Church, who in 1898 had pioneered in the new sheet plastic "pyroxlin" in Holyoke - the material responsible for the replacement of the old oak and mahogany toilet seats by their modern

white counterparts. Church purchased the North Monson factory soon after his firm became part of American Standard in 1929.

E. Architecture

Residential: Comparatively few houses were built in the period. Most of those constructed were Colonial Revival and Craftsman houses and cottages with gable or hip roofs. Period houses were built as infill at the town center and also along Route 32 in North Monson. At least one stone Craftsman cottage of note was observed on Stafford Road in South Monson.

Institutional: Two of the finest institutional buildings of the period are the South Main Street School (1916) and the Main Street School (1925). The first is a one-and-a-half story buff brick Georgian Revival building with shaped Tudor parapets, presently used as a factory. The Main Street School is of red brick, two stories tall with a flat roof and Beaux Arts classical details. Very few other institutional buildings are known to have been built in the period, although some construction probably occurred at the State Hospital.

Commercial: Modest one- and two-story masonry and frame commercial buildings were built on Main Street in the period, of which the most notable are a 1920s Colonial Revival movie theatre and the Colonial Revival Monson Savings Bank.

Industrial: The most outstanding industrial structure of the period is a Moderne power/sewage treatment plant above the State Hospital in North Monson.

XI. Survey Observations

Monson's survey seems to overlook many important residential structures and all institutional, commercial, and industrial buildings. The existing inventory concentrates on 18th and early 19th century cottages to the exclusion of important Italianate, Gothic, Stick Style and Queen Anne houses at the town center. Also unrecorded are late 19th century institutional buildings of note, especially those constructed of the native Monson granite. Any further research should document the construction of the monitor roof post-Colonial house at the town center.

Industrial: Monson retains three of six woolen mills. All three were built in the Late Industrial Period, at least two of which - S. F. Cushman, 1886 (MHC #100) and A. D. Ellis and Sons, 1908 - should be considered for possible National Register designations.

XII. Sources

Monson Historical Society, History of Monson, Massachusetts (Monson, 1960).

Chase, Levi Badger, The Bay Path and Along the Way (Norwood, 1919).
Harlow, Alvin F., Steelways of New England (New York, 1946).