

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

PRINCETON

Report Date: 1984

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: August, 1984

COMMUNITY: Princeton

I. TOPOGRAPHY

Located in the north central portion of Worcester County, Princeton contains the highest land of the central uplands in Massachusetts. Mount Wachusett, the highest mountain in Massachusetts east of the Connecticut River, rises to 2,006 feet above sea level in the northern portion of the town. Extending southward along this ridge is Little Wachusett Mountain, with an elevation of 1,559 feet above sea level.

The town's surface descends to the east to less than 500 feet above sea level in the valley of the Stillwater River, which forms a portion of the boundary with Sterling. However, the majority of the town's surface lies between 800 and 1,000 feet above sea level, with a number of hills rising above 1,100 feet. With the exception of the extremely rocky north central third of the town containing Wachusett and Little Wachusett mountains, the town's soils are composed of Gloucester stony loam in the east and Charlton, Paxton, and Brookfield loams in the less steeply hilled western portion of town. Where cultivable, these soils yield good crops of hay, grains, and vegetables. The cleared but uncultivable land was used as pasture and the abundant forests in the rocky areas yielded much hardwood for the chair industry in East Princeton.

Most streams in the town drain to the south in the Quinapoxet and Still Water rivers, part of the Nashua River drainage basin. However, West Wachusett Brook in the northwest corner of the town flows northwest into the Ware River in the Hubbardston. These streams provided many small waterpower sites utilized during the 19th century by grist and saw mills and woodworking and chair shops.

II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Partly including in twelve-mile-square "Naquag" Indian purchase of 1686, established as Rutland in 1714. Established as district of Princeton from Rutland "East Wing" and certain other lands in 1759. Incorporated as a town in 1771. Part of Hubbardston annexed in 1810. Part of unincorporated lands of "No Town" annexed, 1838. Part of Westminster annexed, 1870.

III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Highland exurb and agricultural community, largely on the south and east slopes of Wachusett Mountain, with traditional upland corridors both north and south of the mountain. First European settlement (1743) delayed in part by rough terrain and heavy timber. Meetinghouse site established by 1762. Prosperous, dispersed agricultural settlement flourishes by late 18th century,

with many notable Federal period residences. Early 19th century relocation of meetinghouse south to primary Federal period east-west corridor establishes extended central village, with resort hotel development after ca. 1840, a late 19th century civic complex, and an early 20th century summer estate concentration. Nineteenth-century industrial development is focused at East Princeton chair manufacturing village. Heavily gentrified 20th century exurb, with moderate modern suburban development. Functional farmsteads remain, with a number of notable rural roadscapes, most concentrated southwest of Wachusett Mountain. Significant lands are held in private sanctuaries (Massachusetts Audubon, Trustees of Reservations), yet recent ski resort development (1982) on Mount Wachusett north slope may have widespread impact.

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500-1620)

A. Transportation Routes

Highland tributary area with east-west trail south of Wachusett Mountain from Waushacum ponds area conjectured on Sterling Road-Merriam Road-Thompson Road, with south branch on Coalkiln Road. Southeast-northwest trail along Still Water River corridor, then north of Wachusett Mountain (Redemption Road Road-Hobbs Road). North-south trail along Wachusett Brook/Cobb Brook corridor conjectured on Worcester Road-Railroad Road-Gates Road to Thompson Road. Northern route west of Wachusett Mountain conjectured on Westminster Road-Taylor Road.

B. Settlement Pattern

Like so many of the upland towns in the northern part of Worcester County, few sites are reported within the town's boundaries. However, the presence of Mt. Wachusett, highest for miles around, made it a focal point for the region. The area was under the influence of the Sachem Sholan, who gathered his Nashaways at the foot of the promontory as well in Sterling, and at the Nashua ford in Lancaster to the east. This area was an important upland component to the river valley of the Nashua, with regular gatherings of the group here seasonally.

C. Subsistence Pattern

This high upland area was visited seasonally by small family and task groups, primarily for hunting.

V. PLANTATION PERIOD (1620-1675)

A. Transportation Routes

Contact period trails remain in use, most notably as corridors of native movement in late 17th century attacks on Lancaster settlements.

B. Settlement Pattern

Continuation of pattern established during the Contact period with some reduction due to colonial presence.

C. Subsistence Pattern

Continuation of pattern established during the Contact period.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

A. Transportation Routes

Peripheral area of 18th century Rutland settlement with early roads to Rutland meetinghouse--Brooks Station Road, Calamint Hill Road. Princeton meetinghouse at major road intersection in 1762. Native trails are improved as colonial roadways. Important 18th century highways include northwest road from Lancaster (Hobbs Road-Redemption Rock Trail), east-west route from Sterling to Hubbardston (Sterling Road-Merriam Road-Thompson Road), and north-south route from Westminster to Holden/Worcester (Taylor Road-Westminster Road-Church Street-Worcester Road).

B. Population

Colonial settlement came late in the period, numbering five families only in 1752. By incorporation as a district there were 30 resident families but 74 proprietors of the area. In 1765 the total population equaled 284, and greatly expanded by 1776 to 701. These settlers came from the parent town of Rutland, the neighboring town of Lancaster, as well as from older eastern towns, including Dedham, Medford, Sudbury, Watertown, Concord, and Lexington. The town settled its first minister late, 1767, and dismissed him early due to accusations he was a Tory.

C. Settlement Pattern

The major portion of the town was part of the grant of Rutland, purchased in 1686, confirmed in 1713. Known as East Wing, the area was divided by the Rutland proprietors in 1718 into 48 farms of 237 acres, but not immediately settled. The northern and eastern portion of the town had been granted to eight individuals in lots ranging in size from 120 to 1,500 acres. Joshua Wilder, the first settler, arrived from Lancaster in 1739, and four years later discussion of settling the area began in earnest. Sufficient settlers were in residence by 1759 for incorporation as a district in 1759, when the province lands including Mt. Wachusett were added. Most settlers had chosen the lands in the south, in the wing and of better quality, so much discussion over meetinghouse location resulted. The final choice was quite near the geographic center of the town.

D. Economic Base

Little information on the economy is available due to late settlement. A grist mill was established in the west in 1750.

Primary employment came from dispersed farmsteads on the better lands in the south. In 1771 the town fell into the category Poor Agrarian as designated by Pruitt, indicating low commercial development and wealth as well as high propertylessness; the town shares this designation with other of the more northerly, upland towns in the county.

E. Architecture

Residential: The predominant surviving house form is the single-story, five-bay, center chimney plan. Two-story houses of the same plan appear to have been less popular (or there are fewer survivals). Two-story, five-bay, double chimney plans were also observed.

Institutional: First meetinghouse built 1764 (40x50 feet). Schoolhouses erected in 1771-74.

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

A. Transportation Routes

Colonial roads and highways continue in use. The Barre Turnpike is laid out in 1824 from Princeton to Barre Center, with eastern terminus at Goodnow Road (abandoned road to Clark Road at Hubbardston border).

B. Population

The growth of population in the town was slow early in the period, accelerating during the last two decades, from 701 in 1776 to 1,062 in 1810, and to 1,346 twenty years later. The town had difficulty settling their second minister only in 1786; they experienced a revival in 1810; within the context of predictable church-parish disagreements the congregation splits in 1817-18. The Unitarian group vote in a minister of their theological perspective in that year, while the Trinitarian group withdrew and formed a Presbyterian Society the next, which lasted through 1829. Other town citizens formed a Baptist society, numbering 60 members, formed a church in 1822, and built a brick meetinghouse north of the center in 1828.

The town early formed a subscription library, 1790.

C. Settlement Pattern

Prosperous, dispersed agricultural settlement continues, and a number of high-style residences are built, most notably the Boylston estate (1820) on the site of the Gill Estate on Worcester Road south of the meetinghouse. The second meetinghouse (1796) is built at the site of the first structure, and a small Presbyterian church (1819) is built nearby. A small, brick, Baptist church (1828) is located to the north on Myrick Road. Small residential clusters develop at the Sterling Road/Merriam Road junction, and at the Goodnow Road/Brooks Station Road intersection, and some

linear concentration occurs along Worcester Road south of the meetinghouse.

D. Economic Base

Princeton's economy during the late 18th and early 19th centuries was almost wholly agriculture. A large part of the town's land is classified as unimproved and woodlot, 68.9%, with an additional 13.8% described as unimprovable, predictable, due to its upland location and the presence of Mt. Wachusett. Pasturage is the primary land use, 11.3%, a moderate figure for the county, with low percentages as mowing and meadow, 4.2%, and under tillage, 1.7%.

Small-scale manufacturing had been established during the opening decades of the 19th century, consisting of lumbering, burning of charcoal, making of potash, chair-making in several small shops, tanning, boot and shoemaking, and the home manufacturing of palm-leaf hats and straw braid by farmers' wives and daughters.

A small cotton factory was set up on FAcTory Brook in the early 19th century; in 1830 it employed four men, four boys, and eleven women and girls in the production of 125,000 yards of shirting. In 1832 the products of the two tanneries and cotton textile manufactory were valued at \$10,850 and \$10,000 respectively, followed by the making of 12,000 chairs (\$3,900) and 10,000 palm-leaf hats and straw braid (\$3,900). Three of the four industries were already involved in the production of goods sold in the slave states, primarily for use by slaves: palm-leaf hats, cotton cloth, and coarse shoes.

The economic difficulties that came with the post-Revolutionary War depression hit Princeton in the occupation of the Worcester Courthouse during Shays' Rebellion and the town on at least one occasion served as a garrison town for the insurgents. Early agricultural activities included raising sheep and cattle and dairying, particularly making butter and cheese. Most farmers raised hay, corn, rye, barley, oats, potatoes, other vegetables, and fruit. Market wagons began carrying surplus produce, meat, and cheese and butter to Boston by the 1820s.

Princeton began to serve as a summer resort area by 1830, as city residents came to enjoy Mt. Wachusett and the healthful country setting. As early as the mid-18th century, a country estate and gentleman's farm had been established in Princeton by Judge Moses Gill of Boston. In the early 19th century Ward Boylston, Esq. built a villa near the former home of Moses Gill. The establishment of regular stagecoach service between Royalston and Ware through Princeton in the 1820s made the town much more accessible and allowed the growth of the community as a resort during the mid 19 century.

E. Architecture

Residential. One hundred forty-four dwellings are recorded in 1791. It would appear that the largest number of surviving houses

date from this period. The two-story, center chimney plan seems to have been the predominant form. In addition to the gable roofed examples a four-bay, hipped roof and a pyramidal roofed center chimney survive. A smaller number of two-story, double chimney and rearwall chimney forms exist. The rearwall houses are all brick with hipped roofs. Few single-story houses survive, although among those that do, a double chimney example is recorded. Many of these houses display doorways with transoms and full entablatures. Of special note are two high-style houses. The Moses Gill House (late 18th century) was a two-story, five-bay, double-pile house with end chimneys. The house had a hipped roof with balustrade and a pilastered facade and measured 50 x 50 feet. Also on the property was a farmhouse (40 x 36 feet) and a coach and chaise house (50 x 36 feet) which was joined to a barn (200 x 32 feet) by a 70-foot long shed. This elegant establishment belonging to Lieutenant Governor Moses Gill was demolished in the 19th century to make way for Boylston Villa, a one-story, five-bay plan with wings. The facade is stuccoed and above the windows are fan-shaped blinds. The original portico is believed to have been supported by four Doric columns. Evidence exists that the design may be linked to Asher Benjamin (files at S.P.N.E.A.).

Institutional: The second meetinghouse was constructed in 1795 on the site of the first building. The structure measured 70 x 55 feet and had a spire. In 1828 a brick Baptist meetinghouse (34 x 42 feet) was built on the Myrick Road, one mile north of the center. The 1792 school in the center also served as town hall, and from 1810 to 1842 was exclusively the town hall.

Frame center schoolhouse (20 feet square) was built in 1784 and burned ca. 1788. This was replaced in 1792 with a new center school (36 feet square), and again ca. 1810, a third center school building was constructed.

Commercial: Goodman House, a two-story, five-bay center chimney plan, operated as a public house from 1826-46. A two-story, five-bay store, possibly erected by Moses Gill, is now a mansard roofed structure on the common.

VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830-1870)

A. Transportation Routes

The early 19th century roads continued in use. By 1870, the Boston, Barre and Gardner Railroad began service a mile west of the center village along the Wachusett Brook corridor, with stations at Brooks and Princeton Depot.

B. Population

Princeton's population reached a high figure during the first decade of this period, remaining steady, 1,346 in 1830 and 1,347 in 1840; this total would not be surpassed until 1960. Thereafter began a period of overall decline that would not be reversed until after 1920; from 1,318 in 1850 to a period low of 1,201 in 1860,

with a brief recovery to 1,279 in 1870. The early population high may be related to the establishment of some manufacturing in the town, employing ca. 75 men, but never expanding beyond that until the 20th century. Agriculture expanded and stabilized at the same time, employing more than three times the number as manufacturing at this time. Small numbers of immigrants came to the town, dominated by the Irish, at period's end.

At the death of the Unitarian minister in 1832, attempts were made to reunite the two societies that shared orthodox Congregational beliefs. The primary difficulties consisted of the unwillingness of the formerly Unitarian-led group to accept the other's minister, as well as disagreements over admission to church membership. But in 1836 another minister was installed over a united church. Some individuals remained dissatisfied, and met briefly as a Universalist society. By 1838, however, they became interested in Methodism and formed a society of that denomination at Slab City in that year.

The activities of the subscription library were reduced, but the formation of a Ladies Reading Society, Agricultural, and Law libraries filled the void.

C. Settlement Pattern

The third Congregational meetinghouse (1838) is relocated southward to the Sterling Road/Worcester Road intersection, and this location becomes the central focus of three clusters of development at the southern base of Wachusett Mountain. The second Baptist church (ca. 1841) and the town hall (1842) are located at this new meetinghouse center. This area soon becomes the focus of the local summer resort development, with the opening of the Prospect House and the Wachusett House. Residential development continues at the secondary village one-half mile northwest at the Hubbardston Road/Brooks Station Road intersection, and; the Methodist Episcopal Church (1839-40) is located here. The the east of the central village a smaller cluster persists at the Sterling Road/Merriam Road junction. Together, these three clusters form the Princeton Center area.

The main industrial development of the period occurs at East Princeton, where chair manufacturing concentrates along the Keyes Brook tributary, and a linear factory village (including an 1843 Mechanics Hall) develops on Redemption Rock Trail, mainly between EAsT Beaman Road and Stuart Road. A secondary industrial development takes place in the southeast along East Wachusett Brook, although the cotton mill here burns in 1836. Otherwise, industry is dispersed at several small-scale waterpower sites throughout town.

Summer resort hotels are active after the 1840s. Outside of Princeton Center, hostelryes are located on the summit, and on the southern and eastern slopes of Wachusett Mountain.

D. Economic Base

Princeton's manufacturing sector achieved its 19th century peak during the middle decades of the century. This corresponded to the rapid growth in popularity of the town as a summer resort and the highest population level until the 1960s. The agricultural sector also prospered as the summer population provided a greater market for produce and dairy goods.

The greatest growth occurred in the chair manufacturing industry centered in East Princeton. By 1870, Keyes Brook through East Princeton contained five mill sites and East Wachusett Brook in the southeast portion of the town powered seven different enterprises, most of them saw and turning mills and chair shops. Two chair-making firms were established in East Princeton during the 1840s and by the mid 1850s, more than 50 men were employed in the production of \$100,000 worth of chairs and chair stock annually, a fourfold increase in value of the products and employment over the previous decade. In 1865, nine sawmills cut more than 1.1 million feet of boards, as lumbering and woodworking, including the burning of charcoal and cutting of firewood, were the dominant non-agricultural activities in Princeton. In southeast Princeton, several charcoal kilns were located off what is now called Coal Kiln Road. Leather processing was carried on in several tanneries, and in the 1850s a shop produced harnesses, trunks, and saddlery. Boot- and shoemaking increased through the 1830s and 1840s before declining in the 1850s. As many as 100 men and women worked in shops or in their homes during the mid 1840s making more than 60,000 pairs of shoes annually.

Like boot- and shoemaking, the manufacture of palm-leaf hats and straw braid was done in the homes of Princeton's farm families. Women and children produced as many as 75,000 hats annually during the 1830s and 1840s. Textile manufacturing on Factory Brook ceased during the early 1830s, and the site was then used as a saw and turning mill through the 1870s and 1880s.

During the middle decades of the 19th century, Princeton's merchants turned northward to extend their business sphere. Wagonloads of merchandise were regularly sent to Fitchburg and to town in Vermont and New Hampshire.

The establishment of a third stage route through Princeton in 1849 further increased the accessibility of the town and its growing number of resort boarding houses and hotels, clustered on the common and around the base of Mt. Wachusett. By 1870, at least seven hostelryes were in operation. The first Summit House, later enlarged for a hotel, was built in 1870 at the top of Mt. Wachusett to house the concession stand for the increasing number of tourists.

Agriculture also prospered during this period. By 1865 the town's 172 farms employed 224 men. Livestock-raising was the principal activity, with meat, dairy products, hay, and vegetables the major products. Market wagons regularly traveled to Boston through the

1860s, and Worcester runs were added in the late 1860s. The growing of grains remained fairly stable through the 1860s, but the construction of the Boston, Barre and Gardner Railroad in 1871 connected the town to Western grain producers and local cultivation of grains fell sharply thereafter. The railroad stimulated dairying and sales of whole milk, which by 1875 totaled 143,000 gallons. Both butter and cheese production had been declining through the 1850s and 1860s, but the increase in summer visitors and the rail connection reversed the trend, as butter returned to levels of production not achieved since the 1830s.

Much of the town's surface by the 1860s was open meadow and mowing land, as the town's forests were steadily cut and land cleared; less than one-sixth of the town's surface was wooded in 1865. Beef, pork, and veal production was very high--nearly 400,000 lbs. of meat were slaughtered for market and home consumption. The new market provided by the summer resort population stimulated the growing and gathering of a variety of vegetables and fruits, as well as poultry and eggs. The summer boarders also provided additional income through the rental of rooms in many of the farmhouses.

E. Architecture

Residential: Few houses apparently built during the period. East Princeton and Gregory Hill Road have concentrations of popular Greek Revival houses linked to the arrival of the railroad. Typical are side-passage plans and five-bay, center entry gable end houses. 1784 school was converted to mansard roofed dwelling with center chimney late in the period.

Institutional: A gable end Greek Doric structure, third meetinghouse, erected in 1838. A second Baptist church was built between 1841-44 on the east side of the common. This Greek Revival structure was sold and converted into the Princeton House hotel in 1860. Building later destroyed. A Methodist meetinghouse built in 1840 stood one-quarter of a mile northwest of the center.

In 1842 a one-story, one-room town hall (Boylston Hall) was built in the present site of the church. Mechanics' Hall in East Princeton, a two-story, three-bay temple front building, was constructed.

New schools were erected from the 1830s-1850s. Two are now known to survive as dwellings.

IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)

A. Transportation Routes

The 19th century road and rail network continued in use, with the addition of an 1880s carriage road to the summit of Wachusett Mountain.

B. Population

Although there were some small fluctuations, the town's population continued to decline, from 1,279 in 1870 to 800 in 1915, with the greatest drop, of over 200 during the first five years. The foreign-born population within the town remained small, between 7.6% and 19%, and initially was dominated by the Nova Scotians, followed by increasing numbers of Poles and Lithuanians. Agricultural employment continued to outnumber that in manufacturing by over three times at the period's beginning, but by less than twice by its end.

Not surprisingly, within this atmosphere the religious denominations remained the same. The private libraries united and became free and public in 1884. Additional voluntary societies active during this period include a Lyceum, Dramatic Society, Grange, Workingmen's, and Princeton Club. The town did not institute a high school until 1891.

C. Settlement Patterns

Major restructuring of the civic center occurs, and several more local resort hotels are built, followed by the construction of a number of large, summer estates at the turn of the century. Wachusett Mountain is made a state reservation in 1900. After the town hall burns in 1882, the institutional center is reorganized, with the Congregational church moved to the east. Bagg Hall and Goodnow Memorial Library (both 1884) are built on Westlawn Avenue. New hotels are built on the summit of Wachusett Mountain in 1884 and 1908. A number of hotels also burn during the period. Summer residences are built from the 1870s on with earlier Second Empire buildings to the west of the center (Goodnow Road, Westminster Road), and larger Shingle and Colonial Revival estates along the Worcester Road-Church Street-Mountain Road corridor, both north and south of the center. More modest residential cottages are built to the east of the center on Prospect Street.

Outside the center/Wachusett Mountain focus, some development occurs at Princeton Depot, where a number of houses are built on Hubbardston Road, and some infill housing is built in East Princeton where a Congregational Chapel is also located by the 1890s.

D. Economic Base

The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw a general decline in the town's manufacturing sector, as the number of manufacturing establishments fell from 27 in 1875 to less than five in 1915. The value of agricultural goods produced increased steadily, as Princeton experienced its greatest popularity as a summer resort between the 1870s and 1890s. Many of the hotels and boarding houses burned during the late 1890s and early 1900s and were not replaced, partly because of declining popularity of the mountains for vacationing, replaced by the seashore, and partly because of a trend for regular visitors to erect their own summer houses. By

1915, 45 such houses were built in Princeton, often on abandoned or marginally productive farms which were purchased very cheaply. This trend coincided with and contributed to a decline in the town's population by one-third between 1870 and 1915.

Woodworking was the major manufacturing activity during the period, though it experienced several periods of depression and prosperity. Nearly every shop burned at least once during the period, but most were rebuilt and enlarged. Products included carriages and wagons, ladders, chair stock, powder kegs, boxes, lumber, and firewood. Chair-making predominated in the East Princeton shops. The Temple Stuart Co., one of the larger shops in East Princeton, burned in 1910 and was removed to Baldwinsville in nearby Templeton. The T & E. R. Buck Chair Co., located on East Wachusett Brook in the southeast corner of the town, continued to expand through the period and in 1914 was producing 1,000 chairs per day.

Agricultural production, focused on dairying and livestock, was very strong through the period. The value of its products exceeded the value of manufactured goods by the 1860s, often by a factor of at least two. By 1895 whole milk sales totalled 560,000 gallons annually and ranked 11th in the county. An ice business thrived, as both the hotels and dairy farmers required large quantities of ice. In 1915, one firm at 90 local customers. Grain cultivation continued to decline, but poultry, vegetables, and fruit flourished. More than 8,500 quarts of blueberries and strawberries were sold in 1885. Large quantities of meat were sent to market from Princeton during this period. In 1875 the town was the second leading producer of beef in the county, with 189,000 lbs. slaughtered and marketed. Dairying and livestock-raising required much hay and pasture land. During the 1880s and 1890s, nearly 2,500 acres were mowing land while more than 10,000 acres were permanent pasture.

E. Architecture

Residential: Little significant building activity. Some Shingle and Colonial Revival style dwellings are built in early 20th century.

Institutional: The 1838 meetinghouse was moved to its present site on the east side of the common in 1884 to accommodate the new town hall and library buildings. At this time, the church was raised and a basement added. The 1840 Methodist church at Pratt's Corner (Princeton Station) burned in 1892.

Frame schoolhouse built in 1875. A 1906, two-story, shingled Colonial REvival high school is recorded but not in the inventory. Stephen C. Earle designed the 1884 Victorian Gothic granite and brownstone library.

Boylston Hall burned in 1883 and was replaced the following year with a new town hall, also designed by Earle. The two-story brick and brownstone trimmed Victorian Gothic structure is called Baggs Hall.

Commercial: Beginning in 1871 and burgeoning in the 1880s and 1890s was the summer resort industry in Princeton. Several large eclectic, shingled, and revival style summer resort hotels were built during this period. In addition, smaller cottages were also constructed to accommodate the summer business. None of these hotels now stand. The last one was destroyed in 1961.

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915-1940)

A. Transportation Routes

Secondary automobile roads to Princeton Center and Mount Wachusett State Reservation are improved in the 1920s, and a secondary north-south highway (Route 120, later Route 31) is improved from Holden through Princeton Center to Fitchburg (Worcester Road-East Princeton Road-Redemption Rock Trail-Fitchburg Road). By the mid 1930s, the east-west route from Sterling to Hubbardston (Route 62) is improved (Sterling Road-Goodnow Road-Hubbardston Road). The Stillwater River corridor road through East Princeton is upgraded as part of Route 64 (later Route 140).

B. Population

The population of the town continues to drop through most of the period, falling from 800 in 1915 to 707 in 1935, the period low, before recovering slightly. The largest drop, of over 100, came during the first five years. Foreign-born citizens remained proportionally few within the town, dropping from 19% to 13.5%. The town had 28.8% of its number categorized as rural in 1940.

C. Settlement Pattern

Very little new development appears to have taken place during the period.

D. Economic Base

Most of Princeton's manufacturing establishments closed or burned down during the early years of the period, and the town became almost wholly an agricultural community. Summer visitors continued to travel to Princeton, but the large boarding houses and hotels were nearly all gone. Only the summer homes of the visitors and a few smaller boarding houses remained.

Dairying, orcharding, and poultry-raising were the leading activities on the surviving farms. The landscape was becoming increasingly wooded as former farmland, occupied by seasonal residents, reverted to woodland.

E. Architecture

No significant development in the Early Modern period.

XI. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

A fairly complete inventory exists that includes sites marked on the U.S.G.S. map.