

# MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

## SOUTHBOROUGH

Report Date: 1983

Associated Regional Report: Central Massachusetts

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

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

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

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

The activity that is the subject of the MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report has been financed in part with Federal funds from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior. This program receives Federal financial assistance for identification and protection of historic properties. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability or age in its federally assisted programs. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility as described above, or if you desire further information please write to: Office of Equal Opportunity, National Park Service, 1849 C Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., 20240.



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## MHC RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

DATE: FEBRUARY 1983

COMMUNITY: SOUTHBOROUGH

### I. TOPOGRAPHY

Called in 1847 by John Hayward, author of A Gazetteer of Massachusetts, "one of the prettiest towns in the county," Southborough contains 9,024 acres of gently undulating land ranging in elevation from 470 feet on the highest hills to 260 feet above sea level in the river valleys and meadows. The town lies within the Sudbury River Drainage basin, with the Sudbury River forming the town's southern boundary. Formerly, two major brooks, Angle Brook and Stony Brook, traversed the northern and central portions of the town and provided numerous small water-power sites. However, since the creation of the Metropolitan Water Commission, Stony Brook became an aqueduct in 1898 and over 1,200 acres were flooded to form the Sudbury Reservoir.

The soil is strong, rich, gravelly loam, very productive of all types of crops. Numerous sand, clay, and gravel deposits are the result of small glacial lakes and outwash plains such as the flat area followed by the Cordaville Road in the southern part of town.

### II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Originally part of the Marlborough grant of 1660, the "Stoney Brook" section of Marlborough was established as a town in 1727. Part of Framingham ("Fiddleneck") annexed in 1786. Part annexed to Marlborough, 1843.

### III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

A suburban community on the Boston-Worcester corridor, at the eastern periphery of the central uplands. Originally part of Marlborough, with possible 17th century settlement north of Stoney Brook. Productive soils and extensive meadowlands allowed the development of a high density 18th century agricultural settlement. The concentration of Colonial and Federal period wealth is visible in high style farmhouses, especially along East Main Street. Notable dispersed vernacular examples from these periods also survive.

The meetinghouse site was established in 1727 with present central village dominated by mid to late 19th century institutional structures, primarily associated with St. Mark's (Episcopal) and Fay preparatory schools established in the 1860s. Mid 19th century industrial development of boot and shoe, and textile industries occurred at waterpower sites along the Sudbury River/Boston-Albany Railroad corridor at Southville and Cordaville, and also at Fayville along the turnpile/railroad axis. Many sidehall workers; cottages and houses, and some duplexes survive, especially along Parkerville Road, Cordaville Road, and Oak Street. Southville, in particular, retains authentic period industrial village scale.

The 19th century saw continued agricultural prosperity, with the development of intensive dairying for Boston markets. Landmark "Gentlemen farmer" estates west of the center served as the focus of large-scale dairying operations. The creation of the Sudbury Reservoir in the 1890s by the MDC inundated or altered much of the town's agricultural landscape, yet the Wachusett Aqueduct channel does preserve an open meadow landscape south of Main Street. Some early 20th century suburban development was stimulated by the street railway line along Marlboro Road. Suburban development, intensive over the past 30 years, particularly north and south of Route 9, continues to threaten remaining agricultural landscapes. The town's location at the Route 9/I-495 intersection also makes it a prime location for further industrial development.

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

##### A. Transportation Routes:

East-west paths cross the town center as Main Street, crossing reservoir, and through the south as Oregon-Woodland-Gilmore Streets; they join/cross in Westborough.

##### B. Settlement Patterns:

No known sites. Probable utilization of knolls and hills adjacent to the former Stoney Brook which bisected the town, and the Sudbury River in the south, as well as currently flooded adjacent plains.

##### C. Subsistence Patterns:

Seasonal fishing in fresh water of brook and river as well as seasonal hunting and gathering, and agriculture.

##### D. Observations:

No information on this area, but regional patterns suggest Nipmucks in low density, seasonally exploiting freshwater resources.

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

##### A. Transportation Routes:

Native trails utilized as highways.

##### B. Population:

Native population reduced with praying town established in parent town of Marlborough. Little colonial settlement due to threats of frontier warfare.

##### C. Settlement Patterns:

Outlying area of parent town of Marlborough, portion north of Stoney Brook used as cow common. No information on residents.

D. Economic Base:

Reduction in seasonal use by native population. Location of pasture land for Marlborough.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

A. Transportation Routes:

Elaboration of earlier highways with north-south routes to neighboring settlements: Fisher-Ward Streets in the west; Clifford-Deerfoot-Sears Streets, Middle Street, and Hill-Litsquama Roads in there Center; Pine Hill Road in the east.

B. Population:

Forty men sign partition to incorporate in 1727; thirty throat distemper deaths in 1740-41; seventy-five men in 1757; population in 735 in 1776. Seventeen gather a church in 1730, over half during this period only half-way participation.

C. Settlement Patterns:

Two garrisons of Marlborough System location on main east-west artery. Initial dispute over meetinghouse location settled on approximate geographic center on same toue. Burying ground and training field included within this three-acre parcel. All important municipal structures located on adjacent parcels including schoolhouse (1730), pound (1753) and workhouse (1764). Dispersed farmsteads established on outlying Marlborough land.

D. Economic Base:

Primarily agricultural use: pasturage of cattle and sheep/goats, orchard products, grains. By 1771, eight mills, including two saw and tow grist, and eight shops, two tanhouses and two potash works. Landless and poor increasing by end of period.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Little survives from this period. Earliest structures are a two-story, five-bay center chimney dwelling recorded as 1680 and one and one half story gambrel roof house with center chimney on the Oregon Road in the southeast section of town. The Fay House on Center Street dates from 1765 and is a two-story three-bay central chimney plan.

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

A. Transportation Routes:

The colonial roads remain as the local transportation network, with Main Street the principal east-west route, and Ward/Fischer Road part of a main highway from Marlborough to Westborough. The Boston-Worcester Turnpike is complete in 1810, far south of the meetinghouse center.

B. Population:

Population increases slowly, but steadily from 1776 (753) to 1830 (1,080). Period of greatest growth 1810-1820 (+104). First Baptist Church formed in 1827. Lyceum formed in 1824.

C. Settlement Patterns:

Second meetinghouse constructed in Center in 1806. Some linear concentration of houses along Main Street. Baptist church, stores, and dwellings form nucleus at turnpike intersection in Fayville.

D. Economic Base:

Economy largely agricultural during this period, supplemented by cottage industries of boot and shoe manufacture, straw braid and bonnet manufacture, and palm-leaf hat manufacture. Over 200 persons involved in these industries, with the majority (over 150) manufacturing boots and shoes valued at more than \$57,000, most of which consisted of brogans exported to the Western and slave states. Town also supported a small clothier's works, a carriage maker, a small shoe peg manufactory, a tanner and currier, two sawmills, and four grist mills.

The Boston and Worcester Turnpike, which came through Southborough in 1810, appears to have had little immediate impact on the economic development of the community. It is probable that Fayville arose along the intersection of the turnpike and what is now Cordaville Road during this time, but it appears not to have developed into a commercial center until the end of this period.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Center and double chimney plans are fairly equally distributed. One two-story, five-bay end chimney dwelling with brick end walls survives (late 18th century?). In addition, two substantial brick houses also survive: a two-story, five-bay house with jack arches on the first floor level, a semi-circular fanlight and quoins around the door (date?), and a two and one half-story, five-bay Flemish bond gable end structure with a frame pediment and double end chimneys. The 6/9 sash have jack arches, and the entrance displays an elliptical fanlight and sidelights. Two half-houses are recorded.

Institutional: The second meetinghouse (Pilgrim Church) erected in 1806, remodelled in 1850s, Pilgrim Evangelical Society formed in 1830. By 1831 a pauper's establishment was located at Cordaville.

Commercial: Two stores and a tavern existed in the town center by 1831 as well as a tavern and two stores at Fayville.

Industrial: By 1795, mills were located near the county road; a clothier's works and a triphammer works were also in operation. Five mills and a factory are recorded in 1831.

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

### A. Transportation Routes:

The early 19th century road network remains in use, with the addition of two north-south connectors from the Center to the industrial villages on the Sudbury River (Parkerville and Cordaville Roads). The Boston and Worcester Railroad passes along the Sudbury River, at the southern border of town, in 1835. A branch line from Framingham to Marlborough is constructed through Fayville and east of the meetinghouse center in 18 ; a branch of this line runs through the northwest corner of town to Northborough (1855).

### B. Population:

The population almost doubles from 1830 (1,080 to 1870 (2,135), with the greatest increase in the 1850s (+507). Foreign-born population in 16% by 1865. Further diversification of religious organizations, with formation of Pilgrim Evangelical (1832) and later Episcopal (1862) churches. Second Lyceum formed in 1842.

### C. Settlement Patterns:

Industrial villages develop at Southville and Cordaville after 1854, and Fayville after 1860, while development in the Center is stimulated primarily by institutional growth. In Southville, residential development extends north along Parkerville Road and west along Southville Road, with some worker duplexes constructed south of the railway line. In Cordaville, distinct clusters of worker housing appear, with a row of cottages on Southville Road and duplexes west of Cordaville Road.

In Fayville, settlement focuses on the intersection of the turnpike and Central Street/Oak Hill Road, with stores at the intersection, residences and the Baptist Church to the west on the turnpike, and other residences to the south on Oak Hill Road. Industrial development concentrates to the north of the turnpike, near the railroad.

The Center experiences significant institutional development in this period, starting with the construction of the first townhouse in 1840 and the remodelling of the second meetinghouse in 1856. By 1870, a significant institutional cluster develops in the center north of Main Street with an Episcopal Church (1862), Second (brick) Town House (1869-70), Second Meetinghouse, St. Mark's Episcopal School (1865) and the High School. The Fay Preparatory School (1866) also locates in the Center, on the south side of Main Street. The Burnett Estate, headquarters of the "Deerfoot Farm" dairy empire, forms a significant landmark west of the Center. A secondary commercial cluster forms around the railroad depot to the east of the Center.

### D. Economic Base:

The decade of the 1840s introduced manufacturing on a new scale to

the hitherto predominantly agricultural town. Although the Boston and Worcester Railroad had crossed the southern edge of town as early as 1834, the manufacturing villages of Southville and Cordaville came into being alongside the racks only in the mid 1840s. In Southville, two boot and shoe factories were erected by John Kartt and Co., and Newton and Kartt, who maintained a wholesale and retail boot and shoe store on Pearl Street in Boston. A cotton and woolen factory producing kersey, a coarse cloth mostly sold for Southern slave clothing, was also erected along the Sudbury River in Southville. The village of Cordaville was created with the construction of housing and stone factory for the manufacture of cotton and woolen goods in 1847, incorporated as the Cordaville Mfg. Co. in 1849.

A third manufacturing village developed around the earlier crossroads community of Fayville. Long the seat of the Fay family, they now contributed to its growth and development. A store run by one member of the family expanded into an extensive and profitable business. Other brothers were a currier, a cattle broker, a boot, shoe and bonnet manufacturer. Another brother, Sullivan Fay, was an early board member and secretary and treasurer of the Agricultural Branch Railroad, which passed through Fayville in 1855. From 1841-1850, Fayville contained one of the first brush factories in New England, where Whiting Patent Brushes were manufactured. In 1864, this firm was re-established in Boston and became the largest brush manufactory in the U.S. Fayville also contained a brickyard on its outskirts, established in 1860.

By the late 1860s the boot and shoe industry employed more than 150 persons with products valued at over \$200,000, while two textile mills employed nearly 100, with goods valued near \$150,000.

Despite the rapid growth of manufactures during this period, Southborough remained one of the best agricultural communities in the county, particularly well suited to apple orchards and dairying. By 1865 more than 20,000 apple trees were cultivated for their fruit, and more than 149,590 gallons of milk were sent to Boston markets via the railroad.

An important event in Southborough agriculture was the creation of the Deerfoot Farms in 1847 by Joseph Burnett. It soon became one of the largest farms in Massachusetts and famous throughout the country. A scientific farmer especially interested in cattle improvement, he imported one of the first herds of jersey cattle into the U.S. in 1854.

#### E. Architecture:

Residential: Southborough experienced a significant growth in population in the 1850s and 1860s, which is reflected in the heavy concentration of late Greek and Italianate period housing. An abundance of two-story, two-and three-gable end workers' cottages and some larger residences of the same general plan are located in the milltowns of Cordaville and Southville and Fayville. Cordaville retains an interesting collection of six one and one

half, two-bay gable end worker' cottages with clipped gables, a recessed entrance set in an ogee arch, and drip molds. Two-story, six-bay duplexes are also extant in both Cordaville and Southville. three two-story, five-bay, double chimney Greek Revival houses remain west of Fayville along Route 9 where it crosses Middle Road.

**Institutional:** Two private boys' schools were founded in the town center: St. Mark's Episcopal preparatory school (1865) founded by Joseph Burnett, and Fay School (1866), which claims to be the oldest private elementary school in the country, founded by Eliza Fay and Harriett Burnett. Joseph Burnett was also responsible for the 1864 stone Gothic Revival Episcopal Church (St. Mark's). Two frame gabled schoolhouses survive from the 1850s. The Southville Federated Church (Congregational) and St. Matthew's Catholic Church (between Southville and Cordaville on the Southville Road) date from ca. 1870. Southville Methodist Church is now a Masonic lodge. The original Town Hall burned in 1868 and was replaced in 1871 with the present brick Italianate hipped roof structure with stone hood molds and a bracketed cornice.

**Commercial:** Little commercial architecture. Two-story Greek Revival gable end store continues to operate in Cordaville; depot at Southville has been converted to a store; one period commercial building remains in the town center.

**Industrial:** Mills operating at Southville and Cordaville. Joseph Burnett begins to assemble acreage that eventually becomes famous Deerfoot Farm dairy complex (1847).

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

### A. Transportation Routes:

By the early 1900s, two streetcar lines extend through the northern part of town from Marlborough Center. One runs along Fisher and Ward Streets to Westborough, the other on Marlborough Road and Newton Street, turning into the Boston-Worcester Turnpike, where it joins the Boston-Worcester line. Significant new roadbed construction (1903) is undertaken for the Boston-Worcester Line where it enters the town from Westborough in the southeast. Raised roadbed and cut-stone overpass supports are still visible on Parkerville Road south of the turnpike. A number of local roads are lost with the construction of the Sudbury Reservoir, but otherwise the 19th century road and rail network remains in use.

### B. Population:

Population decreases slightly over the period, rising and falling irregularly from a peak of 2,223 in 1895. In 1875, there were 177 Irish, 128 Canadians; in 1885, 187 Irish, 91 French-Canadians, 79 Nova Scotians; by 1905, 151 Irish, 110 Italians, and 54 Nova Scotians. New religious organizations are the Second Congregational Church, Southville (1872), St. Matthew's Catholic Church between Cordaville and Southville (1879) and St. Anne's Catholic Church between Fayville and the Center (1887).



### C. Settlement Patterns:

The most significant developments are the inundation of several farmstead by Sudbury Reservoir, and the landscape modifications that come with MDC control of the Wachusett Aqueduct right-of-way. Expansion in the Central Village consists primarily of the establishment of a small, high-income corridor east of the institutional center. Northeast of the Center, a new St. Mark's building (1890) becomes a major landmark. West of the Center, the Sears Estate mansion is established as the headquarters of the "Wolfpen Farm: dairy complex. Some linear streetcar suburb development is evident along Marlboro Road. By the 1890s, the Southborough golf club has been established, as well as Marlboro Park Race Track at the town's northern border.

### D. Economic Base:

Growth in both the agricultural and manufacturing sectors continued. Boot and shoe manufacturing in Southville continued, employing over 100 people in the 1890s. By the turn of the century, however, the boot and shoe factories and the textile mill in Southville had closed, survived only by a small plaster manufacturer.

Fayville, however, continued to experience growth during this period. A large shoe factory was erected in 1872, nearly doubling the size of the village. In 1888, 300 people were employed in this factory alone. The brickworks continued under the operation of the Framingham Brick Co., and with the aid of steam power, turned out 1.5 million bricks per year until its closing in the late 1890s.

After a temporary closing and reorganization in the early 1870s, the Cordaville Woolen Company was incorporated in 1876 and the factory reopened with the production of woolen blankets by more than 100 employees.

Despite the expansion and survival of several of the larger establishments, the number of manufacturing establishments began to shrink after 1885, when 27 firms were recorded. In that year, the principal industry was the manufacture of boots and shoes, but a total of 17 different industries were represented, employing 385 persons. By 1905, only three major industries remained: three boot and shoe manufactories, one plaster manufacturer, and one woolen mill. The leading establishment in town was Deerfoot Farms, whose growth reflects the continued importance of agriculture in this community.

By 1895 Southborough was second in the county in milk production (653,049 gallons) and cabbabge-raising, fourth in onions, and sixth in the cultivation of apples and pears. At Deerfoot Farms, the first successful cream separator was created, and in 1897 a new dairy, containing all the latest scientific equipment was erected. In addition to dairy products, Deerfoot Farms also established a pork products processing plant.

### E. Architecture:

**Residential:** Colonial Revival and four square houses on Litisquama Road southeast of the town center. A few late 19th and turn-of-the-century revival style mansions scattered on the edges of the town center; Deerfoot Farmhouse: H-shaped 2 and one-half-story shingled structure; Choate House: a two-story stuccoed Colonial Revival house with substantial Colonial Revival barn. Substantial late 19th century cattle and dairy farms west and northwest of the town center, one with a large clerestory barn.

**Institutional:** Major building at St. Mark's School (1890) is three-story Tudor Revival brick and half-timber with cloisters, designed by Henry Forbes Bigelow, an alumnus, wing added 1902, and several modern additions,. South Union School near Southville (ca. 1900) is a three-story rectangular brick block. An early 20th century concrete block firehouse remains in Southville. The Fayville Hall (1910-20) is a gambrel-roofed Colonial Revival building.

**Commercial:** No significant commercial development either in town center or outlying areas.

**Industrial:** Deerfoot Dairy Farm operated by Burnett family contributes to industrial development already established in hill towns of Southville and Cordaville.

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

#### A. Transportation Routes:

Streetcar routes are abandoned by the 1920s, and local roads are improved as automobile highways by the 1930s. The Boston-Worcester Turnpike is converted to a four-lane auto turnpike (Route 9) in 1930-31. Route 30 and Route 85 are paved as east-west and north-south thoroughfares. The original (1930) intersection is preserved at the junction of Route 85/Route 9.

#### B. Population:

Population increases slightly over the period 1915-1940 (+333) to 2,231.

#### C. Settlement Patterns:

Very little expansion noticeable.

#### D. Economic Base:

The manufacturing base of Southborough's economy continued to shrink, as the remaining boot and shoe factories disappeared by the 1920s. The woolen mill at Cordaville ceased the manufacture of blankets in 1928; afterward, it operated for a time as a shoddy mill before finally closing.

Agriculture continued to dominate Southborough's economic activity, led by Deerfoot Farms, the largest remaining local industry. In 1930, it employed 125 persons, producing dairy and pork products from its own and surrounding farms.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Little development seems to have occurred after 1900. A few Four Square houses on main roads.

Institutional: No significant new construction apparent.

Commercial: Town seems unaffected by development in this period.

Industrial: Typical strip development along major arteries.

F. Observations:

Southborough's manufacturing past survives largely in the archaeological record. The Cordaville Mills complex is currently Aiken Park, a Hopkinton Conservation Area. A late 19th century one-story brick shed remains on the relatively undisturbed site which still contains two dry-laid, stone arch bridges, the dam and remnants of the power canals. In Southville only empty lots and traces of foundations mark the shoe factory sites, suggesting some archaeological integrity. In Fayville, development may have disturbed the sites of the factories. A fine brick gristmill of the late 19th century survives in Southborough Center along the railroad tracks. In 1898, it was listed as the C.B. Sawin and Son Gristmill, Flour and Feed Store.

XI. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

XII. SOURCES:

Hudson, Charles. History of the town of Marlborough...1862.  
(Includes some information on this daughter town.)

History of Worcester County. A.F. Jewett and Co., 1879.

Hurd, D. Hamilton (ed.). History of Worcester County. 1889.

Pruitt, B.H. Tax Valuation of 1771 1978.

Other sources contain little information.