

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

SHELBURNE

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.

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.



MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth
Chair, Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Blvd.
Boston, MA 02125
www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc
mhc@sec.state.ma.us / 617-727-8470

MHC RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

DATE: 1982

COMMUNITY: Shelburne

I. TOPOGRAPHY

Shelburne is one of the northernmost towns within the Connecticut River Valley Study Unit. The town is located in the Deerfield River Valley. Local terrain is dominated by a complex of moderate to rugged uplands that are situated on the eastern periphery of the Berkshire Hills. Generally, elevations range between 850 feet to 1400 feet. Several peaks reach over 1400 feet. Prominent local elevations include Massaemett Mountain (1588 feet), Shelburne's highest point, located east of Shelburne Falls, Patten Hill (1429 feet) in northwestern Shelburne, East Hill (1151 feet) located in north-central Shelburne and Greenfield Mountain which extends across the Shelburne/Greenfield line. The only lowlands are a narrow strip of river terrace extending along the Deerfield River. The Deerfield River is the town's major waterway. It delineates Shelburne's western boundary separating the town from Charlemont and Buckland. The river is also the site of Shelburne Falls, traditionally a major native and colonial fishing site. The Deerfield is fed by several brooks that flow south from the uplands into the river. Shelburne has no fresh water bodies while marshlands are limited to several tracts located primarily in the central uplands.

II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Originally granted as part of Deerfield Northwest Pasture (Western Woods) in 1712 with northern boundary at Deerfield line (Colrain). Western boundary established with Charlemont by 1740 from Shelburne Falls with later adjustment at North River (1793). Eastern boundary defined with Greenfield in 1753 and southern boundary with Conway along Deerfield River in 1767. Established as Shelburne district from Deerfield in 1768 and incorporated as a town in 1775.

III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Rural commercial hill town on primary western corridor of Mohawk Trail. Located in Greenfield uplands adjacent to Connecticut Valley with important native fishing site at Shelburne Falls on Deerfield River. Settled during mid-18th century with original meeting house site on Old Village Road above Shelburne center marked by well preserved Colonial house. Upland agricultural economy expanded to potential by early 19th century with several cottage farmsteads intact along Patten Hill, Colrain and Bardwell Ferry Road, including some original Federal brick houses. Civic center reloacted to Greenfield Road (Route 2) with surviving Greek Revival church and related housing bisected by Mohawk Trail.

Important development of Shelburne Falls water power during Early Industrial period with formation of commercial and residential district along Deerfield valley. Main Street retains complete set of original business blocks including rare stone Gothic example, while Water Street preserves range of stylish suburban housing including early brick Federal, Greek Revival and Italianate examples. Shelburne Falls

maintained economic growth through Late Industrial period with Beaux Arts library and bank on Main Street commercial district and expansion of residential neighborhood to base of Massamett Mountain. Several notable bridges remain along Deerfield River including Victorian truss examples at Shelburne Falls and Bardwell Ferry and early concrete trolley span to Buckland (Bridge of Flowers) with later auto highway truss at North River. Development of Mohawk Trail corridor from Greenfield (Route 2) promoted highway commercial activity with early tourist cabins and bungalows intact around Shelburne center. Present growth most evident along Route 2 axis with gradual expansion of roadside development from Shelburne Falls to Greenfield completely dividing original town center. Agriculture remains an active economy on upland farms above Shelburne center to Colrain with some suburban housing on scenic vistas and commercial expansion of sugar and apple orchards from Mohawk Trail. Shelburne Falls retains remarkable integrity of commercial fabric on Main Street with recent renovation, while residential district is protected by Route 2 bypass over Deerfield River.

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500-1620)

A. Transportation Routes:

Important corridor over Massamett highlands along Deerfield River from Connecticut valley to western interior. Primary east-west trail reported along north bank of Deerfield River gorge to Pocumtuck (Sherburne) Falls apparently following 450' contour (Costello, 1975, map), although alternate location may have been further north along West Deerfield-Bardwell Ferry Road to Route 2 axis. Main trail continued north from Shelburne Falls along Deerfield valley (Route 112) to fordway at North River (Ibid.). Connecting trails to interior may be conjectured from Dragon Brook (Shelburne Center) possibly along north-south axis of Little Mohawk Road and to North River valley over Patten Hill Road. Tangent routes across northeast section may have followed course of Punch and Hinsdale Brook to Connecticut valley (Greenfield) .

B. Settlement Patterns:

There were no reported native period sites. The focal point of native occupation was probably Shelburne Falls, originally known as Salmon Falls. This site (both the Buckland and Shelburne sides of the Deerfield) has been the traditional location of some of the most productive salmon fishing in Massachusetts (Davenport 1972: N.P.). Large native fishing encampments were most likely established on the Deerfield River floodplain in the vicinity of the village of Shelburne Falls. Smaller fishing sites were probably located further north on the same floodplain up to the town's border with Colrain in addition to Shelburne's larger streams. Native upland occupation was probably limited to small short-term hunting camps scattered throughout the town's uplands. Massamett Mtn., a native derivative, may have been utilized for this purpose.

C. Subsistence Patterns:

As mentioned above, Shelburne was utilized by natives primarily for its rich source of fish. Limited horticulture may have been undertaken on the broadest local portion of the Deerfield floodplain, in the vicinity of Shelburne Falls village. Native hunting probably took place in the uplands as stated earlier.

D. Observations:

Shelburne's location on the Deerfield River drainage and its proximity to present Deerfield strongly suggests it was utilized primarily as a major resource area by the Pocumtucks centered in Deerfield. The town's location on the Mohawk Trail, a major native transportation corridor between the Connecticut River and Mohawk River Valley, indicates that there was probably some local contact with the Mohicans of the Mohawk valley. Extensive development in Shelburne Falls has likely destroyed a large portion of native period fishing sites. However, vestiges may remain here in addition to some in the less developed portions of the Deerfield floodplain north and south of Shelburne Falls. Additional evidence of native occupation may survive in the upland farm area between Patten Hill and Dragon Hill.

V. PLANTATION PERIOD (1620-1675)

A. Transportation Routes:

Native trails remained as regional routes from Deerfield plantation with primary western path to interior along Deerfield River gorge to Salmon (Shelburne) Falls from West Deerfield - Bardwell Ferry Road around Massaemett Mountain to North River fordway.

B. Population:

Shelburne probably continued to attract large bands of natives. Colonial occupation was restricted to Deerfield residents who fished at Shelburne Falls during the spring months in the late 17th century.

C. Settlement Patterns:

Native settlement patterns probably remained essentially the same as those outlined in the Contact period.

D. Economic Base:

The natives probably maintained their traditional subsistence patterns. The Shelburne/Buckland area likely gained increased importance as a major native fishing site because of the displacement of natives from the Middle Connecticut River valley by English settlers. The establishment of Anglo-Indian fur trade in the valley in the late 1630's possibly encouraged increased native trapping and hunting of fur-bearing animals.

E. Observations:

Research should attempt to clarify the extent and nature of Anglo-Indian contact in Shelburne, particularly in the vicinity of Shelburne Falls. Joint use of the falls by those two groups would have provided an excellent opportunity for trade between the English and natives. Did Anglo-Indian trade become a regularized and structured institution at the falls during the spring fishing season? Scattered archaeological evidence of these period native and colonial fishing camps may still survive in the Shelburne Falls area.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

A. Transportation Routes:

Significant improvement of east-west corridor with opening of Charlemont Road across Greenfield highlands (1754) following South Road around Dragon, Brimstone and Shelburne Hills. Location of Shelburne meeting house on Old Village Hill (1769) established radial highway system from town center including Williams, Fiske and Shelburne-Colrain Road as north-south axis from East Shelburne to Bardwell Ferry and Tower-Reynolds Road over flank of Massaemett Mountain. Secondary highways of the period included Wilson Graves Road from East Shelburne and Taylor Road from West Deerfield.

B. Population:

A limited native presence continued in Shelburne until the late 1750's. In c. 1760 Shelburne's colonial population consisted of five families. This figure increased to 14 families in 1762. Tremendous growth occurred between 1762 and 1776. By the latter date the settlement had 575 residents. As with neighboring Colrain, a large portion of the settlement's period settlers were Scotch-Irish Presbyterians who migrated from Londonderry, New Hampshire. A number of other families were former residents of Upton and Colrain, Massachusetts, and Colchester, Connecticut.

C. Settlement Patterns:

Period colonial settlement was generally dispersed. The first settlement was not permanent. Jonathan Catlin and James Ryder erected homes in the vicinity of the village of Shelburne Falls between 1752 and 1756. Their homes were abandoned shortly after due to fear of native attack. Initial permanent settlement was marked with the reoccupation of these two home sites by Martin Severance and James Ryder in c.1760 (Bardwell 1974:59). However, the settlement that followed took place primarily east of Shelburne Falls. By c.1770, a settlement node had been established in the general proximity of the Hill cemetery (laid out c.1767). The town's first (log) meetinghouse was constructed in c.1769 slightly southeast of this burial ground. Scattered contemporary homes were built in north central, northeastern, southeastern and southwestern Shelburne. The community suffered little or no damage during the last of the French and Indian Wars (1754-1763).

D. Economic Base:

The primary focus of local residents was agriculture. High quality cropland was available in the uplands of central and north central Shelburne. The remaining uplands provided settlers with good grazing land. Colonial utilization of local uplands for livestock grazing pre-dated initial colonial settlement. In 1712, Shelburne was granted as part of the Northwest Pasture to Deerfield for use as pasture land. Shelburne Falls was the site of extensive colonial fishing. In 1743, a statute was passed that reserved 20 acres of land in the vicinity of the falls for use as a public fishing site. It is unclear if native access to this site was restricted and/or prohibited. Lumbering undoubtedly took place in the town's woodlands. The settlement's mill industry does not appear to have undergone much development until later in the 18th century. The only documented period mill was a sawmill first put into operation by Jacob Pool in c.1773 and located south of the village of Shelburne, probably on Bardwell Brook near its junction with South Road. (site of sawmill on 1794 town map)

E. Architecture:

While Shelburne was settled in the 1750's and resettled in the 1760's after a short period of abandonment, only a few cottages of the period are known to survive: one of these, a c.1760 center chimney one-and-a-half story building, survives as the ell of the 1842 Archibald Lawson House. The others were taverns. Given the fact that the settlers included some Scotch-Irish and that in 1769 a "round-log meetinghouse" (Sylvester 1879:647) was built, it is possible to conjecture that the earliest houses built in the town were of log or plank construction. Cottages probably prevailed. The 1769 meetinghouse clearly was recorded as only a temporary structure, as it was replaced in 1773 by a frame meetinghouse. That structure, not finished until 1785, stood until 1832.

Commercial: Two taverns of the period are known to survive. One, the Clark Tavern, is one of the earliest known surviving structures in the town; it is dated 1762. The other, Stebbins Tavern, is dated 1770.

F. Observations:

Shelburne probably had strong commercial ties with the major Middle Connecticut River town of Deerfield. Shelburne's lack of commercial and industrial facilities likely caused the community to turn to Deerfield. Shelburne, in turn, had a diverse natural resource base (that would have interested Deerfield entrepreneurs). The prevalence of a large Scotch-Irish population suggests Shelburne had close religious and social ties with the Scotch-Irish community in Colrain. Research should clarify the impact that the settlement's Scotch-Irish had on settlement and subsistence patterns. The town's log meetinghouse is one of only a handful of documented examples of this construction type in the Connecticut River Valley study unit during this period. Aside from Shelburne Falls there is an excellent likelihood of archaeological remains of period settlement surviving throughout Shelburne.

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

A. Transportation Routes:

Continued improvement of east-west axis with Old Greenfield Road from town center over Greenfield Mountain continuing west as Mohawk Trail (Route 2). Settlement of Shelburne Falls established initial footbridge over Deerfield River (1780) replaced by covered bridge to Buckland (1821) on Bridge Street, with local bridge across North River to Charlemont (1793) and ferry to Conway at Bardwell (1784).

B. Population:

Shelburne's population grew by 105.3% between 1776 and 1790 -- the fifth highest growth rate of any town in the county for these early years. By 1790, however, the population had peaked and began declining. Shelburne, however, did not repeat the development shared by most of the other hill towns, or even Buckland, with whom it shared the Falls. Between 1810 and 1820 the population rose marginally and essentially remained stationary for the next two decades. In 1830, Shelburne's population stood at 995.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Civic focus remained at Shelburne village with surrounding upland agriculture along Little Mohawk Road to Colrain, and south along Bardwell Ferry Road to Deerfield. Economic focus developed at Shelburne Falls with Shaker meeting house (1782) and mill sites at Deerfield dam (after 1800).

D. Economic Base:

Predominantly agricultural economy with small saw and grist mills. Not until the arrival of the Lamsons in the 1830's was the 50-foot drop at the falls utilized for more than saw and grist mills.

Probably during the 1820's, turning machinery was added to several sawmills. Shaving boxes were a product common to Shelburne, Colrain, and Buckland by 1832, probably as a result of Joseph Griswold's (in Colrain, 1828) invention of a machine to cut wooden boxes out of maple planks. Jacob Kellogg, together with Thomas White of Ashfield, were the largest of several hoe makers in the county -- though Kellogg reported only 1000 made at 50¢ each in 1832.

The largest industry reported in 1832 was in tanning, though the two tanneries together reported only five men, and both made boots and shoes on the side.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Approximately two dozen houses of the Federal period survive in Shelburne. These include almost equal numbers of double interior and end chimney houses with center hall plan as well as a number of center chimney plan cottages. The houses, most of which

are located in discrete rural settings, are generally stylish, sophisticated and substantial. Several were constructed of brick, among them the John Friend House, the Captain Parker Dole House and the Clarke and Joel Fiske House (1815-20). The Dole House is one of the finest in the town with a double pile plan and pyramidal hip roof. Another very fine brick Federal house was observed on Bardwell Ferry Road: this is an end chimney, five bay wide two-story structure embellished with three bay wide one-story dependencies. The fully developed tripartite plan with a central block and flanking side pavilions is otherwise unknown in rural areas of the region and is highly unusual. Most of the cottages of the period exhibit the more conservative and modest central chimney plan with five bay fronts. Federal houses and cottages were observed on Route 2, Bardwell Ferry, Shelburne Colrain, Zera Fiske and South Roads and at Shelburne Falls. Of special note at Shelburne Falls is a three-story brick tenement of the period (c.1825) seven bays long by three wide with end chimneys. Also of note is the Parson Hubbard House, a center chimney house remarkable for its second story and end gable overhangs; the double overhang feature is common in Hampshire and Hampden counties, but not often seen in Franklin County.

Institutional: No institutional buildings of the period are known to survive. Despite this, considerable institutional activity occurred. In 1782, a group of Shakers settled in the town; among their numbers was the Society's founder, Mother Ann Lee. In 1785, the society moved on the New Lebanon, New York. A Baptist Society was founded in conjunction with Deerfield in 1792; a meetinghouse for the Deerfield-Shelburne Society was constructed in 1812 in Deerfield. The only other activity for the period was the establishment in 1828 of a Unitarian Society; the society did not build a church until 1842.

VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830-1870)

A. Transportation Routes:

Development of Shelburne Falls expanded local street grid along axis of Bridge and Water Street with replacement of Deerfield River span by Iron Bridge (1869). Significant improvement of east-west corridor along Deerfield River gorge with Troy and Greenfield Railroad (Boston & Maine) from Deerfield to Bardwell Ferry (1867) with connecting bridge to Conway (1868, still intact).

B. Population:

Between 1830 and 1870, Shelburne's population grew by 58.9%, sixth highest growth rate in the county, though some 30 points behind Buckland. Much of this growth occurred in the 1840's with the establishment of Lamson & Goodnow initially on the Shelburne side of the river. Throughout the '50's and '60's, the town continued to expand, the population reaching 1,582 by 1870.

Shelburne reported 85 immigrants (6% of her population) in 1855. Over half of these were Irish, though the community already had 19 Englishmen and 10 from Germany and Holland, probably most connected with the cutlery or the tool business.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Civic focus relocated south from Village Hill to Shelburne center along Greenfield Road (1832). Highland farming continued as primary activity along north-south roads to Colrain and Deerfield with secondary settlement at Bardwell Ferry bridge. Significant expansion of economic activity at Shelburne Falls with Lampson and Goodnow mill (1835) and formation of local church (1851). Commercial district formed along Bridge Street with residential neighborhood along Water Street axis north to Arms Cemetery.

D. Economic Base:

Shelburne remained predominantly agricultural until the arrival of Silas Lamson at Shelburne Falls, and the economic history of Shelburne after 1840 is largely told in the rapid growth of Shelburne Falls.

Silas Lamson, in the town of Sterling, is said to have secured a patent on the crooked scythe snathe about 1800. In 1833, in search of ash timber, he moved to Cummington with sons Ebenezer G. and Nathaniel. (He apparently was also in Montague for a few years.) Probably shortly thereafter, he erected a snathe shop on the Shelburne side of the Falls. As early as 1845, by that time in company with M.C. Goodnow, he employed 75 men producing snathes valued at \$60,000 -- by far the largest product value of any among a growing list of manufactures. The snathe work necessitated the employment of iron and brass-working machinery, and about 1842 (according to the "Buckland" account in the 1879 History of the Connecticut Valley), the manufacture of cutlery was begun in this connection. In 1851 the cutlery was moved to its present site on the Buckland side of the river. But although the business itself was lost to Shelburne (for many years, L&G retained some shops along the Shelburne side, however), the firm's employment of 250 men and its substantial payroll brought a measure of prosperity to the merchants and farmers on both sides of the river.

By 1845 two small satinet mills, shops for scythes, axes, shovels, and rakes had joined L&G at the Falls. By 1855, with the imminently expected arrival of the Troy & Greenfield Railroad, the group had been joined by a maker of steam engines and boilers, the only one recorded in the county at that time. Metal-working shops in the area were developing a notable expertise in small tool manufacturing. The double-cut bit was invented and patented by C.C. Tolman of Shelburne, and first manufactured in the U.S. by Sargent & Foster in 1855 at Shelburne Falls. Ransom Cook of Shelburne patented an auger in the 1850's. Linus Yale, at Shelburne Falls in 1851, is said to have produced the first Yale locks here at that time. James Sargent, a salesman for Yale's bank lock, also was an inventor of combination dial locks for banks. (Unable to obtain the financing, both moved away in the 1860's: Yale to Philadelphia and Sargent to Rochester.) By 1865 H. S. Shepardson & Co., (successor to Sargent's plant and "manufacturers of Shepardson's Patent Mortise and Rim Night Latches" and other locks), with an employee roster of 30 and a product value of \$54,347, was the town's largest business. Second largest was Josiah Pratt & Sons axe factory. Pratt

had made the first cast-steel axes (in the area?) in a blacksmith shop in Buckland Centre; by 1832 he was in East Charlemont where he received a patent on a machine for making axes. In search of increased power, he moved to the Falls in 1843.)

As a measure of the prosperity of Shelburne Falls, the village also contained "the largest, and most commodious and costly hotel in Franklin County" according to Holland. Shelburne, like several of the hill towns, was also a major producer of butter and cheese. By 1845, the town ranked fourth and fifth in butter and cheese respectively in the county.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Great expansion took place in the period. The majority of this construction centered at Shelburne Falls, which developed as the town's central village in the period. In addition to the Falls development, numerous farmhouses and cottages were built along roads in the eastern half of town. In rural areas, such as along Shelburne Colrain, Bardwell Ferry, Zera Fiske and South Roads, traditional five bay front, center entrance houses and cottages, most with double interior chimneys, prevailed. Of note is such a cottage on Shelburne Colrain Road, remarkable for its outstanding Greek Revival entrance surrounded with Greek key pilasters, corner blocks and carved panels with anthemion. Other period houses are clustered at Shelburne Center and East Shelburne. At Shelburne Falls, a variety of period architectural styles and plan types are represented. In addition to additional five bay front center hall plan houses in both the Greek Revival and Italianate styles, of which several well detailed examples were observed, a great many sidehall plan and asymmetrical T and L-plan houses were also noted. These include a number of Greek Revival and Italianate sidehall cottages and houses and a few notable Gothic Revival cottages. Of particular interest are the great many four-square plan and sidehall plan pyramidal hip roof Italianate houses and cottages which were built in the 1850's and '60's; an intact group of such houses stands on High Street while the form represents the most prevalent house type of the period in the Falls village.

Institutional: Only a few institutional buildings were built in the period and only two are known to survive. These are the First Congregational Church, built in 1845 and the First Universalist Church, built in 1870. The 1845 church, a two-story Greek Revival structure with a two-stage steeple, stands on Route 2 at Shelburne Center. The Universalist Church, a modest Stick Style structure with a clipped gable roof is currently in use as a Masonic Hall. While a number of religious societies were formed in the period, almost none constructed churches. Established in the period were the Second Baptist Society, Shelburne Falls (1833; the Shelburne half of the Shelburne-Deerfield Society was dissolved in 1839), the Methodist Society, Shelburne Falls (1842, with its meetinghouse in Buckland) and the Universalist Society, Shelburne Falls (1853). In 1833, the Franklin Academy was founded (rechartered, 1847); other activity included the establishment of the Arms Library (1859, originally housed in the Bank Block), Neptune (1863) and Niagara (1863) Fire Departments and a German Turnverein Society (1869). In 1868, a \$2000 Soldiers Monument was erected at the Falls.

Commercial: Of great architectural significance is the preservation in substantially intact condition of the town's 19th century commercial district on Bridge Street. Approximately a half dozen period commercial blocks stand on Bridge Street. These are the Bank-Hillier Block (1858), the Hotel Block (c.1852), the Baker Block (c.1853), the Swan Block (1847) and the Thayer Block (1837). Of these, the Bank-Hillier, Hotel and Thayer Blocks are of masonry construction; the remainder are framed. The Bank-Hillier Block is the finest, with marble facing, while the Hotel Block, ten by four bays in dimension, is the largest and was considered, at the time of its construction, "the finest and most costly hotel in Franklin County." (Sylvester 1879:647). The other buildings exhibit Greek Revival styling. All are two or three storied structures.

IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)

A. Transportation Routes:

Continued improvement of local connections from Shelburne Falls with replacement of Deerfield River bridge by iron truss (1890 still intact) at Bridge Street and opening of electric trolley line to Colrain along Water Street (1896) with concrete bridge to Buckland (1908), now Bridge of Flowers. Significant improvement of east-west corridor from Greenfield to Shelburne Falls with early auto highway as Mohawk Trail through Shelburne Center (1914) following around Greenfield Mountain along Alken Brook (Route 2).

B. Population:

Shelburne's population peaked for the period about 1880 with 1,621 residents, thereafter pursuing a somewhat halting decline, reaching 1,484 in 1915 -- 98 persons less than the figure 45 years before.

In 1880 as in 1905, much of the foreign-born population (11.4% and 8.2% respectively) were made up of German and English families. A large Italian community, as in Conway and Deerfield in 1880, was probably connected with the construction of the northern extension of the New Haven & Northampton Railroad, completed the following year.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Primary commercial and economic center continued at Shelburne Falls with expansion along Main and Water Street trolley line to affluent residential district at base of Massamett Mountain. Local civic focus remained at Shelburne Center along Greenfield Road (Route 2) with upland agriculture maintained to Colrain line.

D. Economic Base:

The arrival of the Troy & Greenfield Railroad in Shelburne Falls in 1867 (albeit on the Buckland side!) made possible a considerable expansion in Shelburne Falls industry. Among the new firms was Streeter & Mayhew, a maker of silk sewing thread, and by 1875 the town's leading

employer. J. W. Gardner, the English former cutlery superintendent at Lamson & Goodnow, retired in 1876 to form a pocket cutlery firm on the Shelburne side. Both the German Harmonica Company and the Frankton Mills were formed in 1877. (The latter produced cotton print cloth in a former paper mill on the North River.)

By the 1880's Shelburne was the leading milk producer in the county, and the third highest cheese producer. Probably in the 1880's, the Shelburne Falls Co-operative Creamery was established. But the town's key location on the railroad made it an important milk depot, and by the end of the century, local dairy farms began selling milk directly to large milk distributors for the Boston, Springfield, and Northampton markets. Four Franklin County towns led the state in beef production in 1885: Greenfield, Deerfield, Conway, and Shelburne.

Sugar maples and apple trees were numerous, and their products were an important town harvest. Two hardware manufacturers were listed in 1890, Goodell Brothers and H. H. Mayhew Co.; two box makers; and the Mayhew Silk Company. By 1913, two knitting mills had moved into Shelburne Falls.

In the last years of the Late Industrial period, Shelburne Falls was the "Bright Spot" of Franklin County, as the village became "the great hydro-electric power center" of the New England Power Company work along the Deerfield River. "Everything is prosperous," wrote the magazine editors of Western New England in 1912. The power plants were nearing completion; there were plans for a large metallurgical works (Pratt Drop Forge and Tool), and electric power was introduced, c. 1911-12, as a major boost to the manufacturing interests, at Lamson & Goodnow, H. H. Mayhew, and Goodell Tool. In addition, freight traffic over the new Shelburne Falls & Colrain Street Railway, dominated by apples and milk, swelled the business at the Falls.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Expansion at Shelburne Falls continued at a steady pace through the turn of the century but elsewhere in the town, new residential construction virtually ceased; in most cases, the only buildings constructed in rural areas were barns. At Shelburne Falls, however, a range of houses from workers' cottages to stylish two and two-and-a-half story houses were constructed. In general, workers' housing at the Falls consists of sidehall plan one-and-a-half or two-story Stick Style and Queen Anne cottages; such housing is located west of Colrain Road behind the commercial district and on Colrain Road and Mechanic Street. More elaborate and larger Second Empire, Stick Style, Queen Anne and Craftsman style houses, some of them probably architect designed, were built at the northeastern section of the village. Some of the finest of these were built just east of Route 2; these include several hip roofed Stick Style and stucco Craftsman houses as well as one or two mansard roofed houses of pretension. Several houses were constructed of brick.

Institutional: Most of the town's institutional buildings were built in the period. The earliest of these are modest one-story framed

Italianate schools, the Foxtown and Skinner Schools (1871). Later, more substantial buildings were constructed at the Falls. These include the Victorian Gothic hip roofed brick Arms Academy (1880, E. C. Gardner, Springfield), granite Gothic Revival Trinity Church (1884, Bartlett Brothers, builders, Whately) and the Beaux Arts Classical Arms or Pratt Memorial Library (1914), with a domed central block and right angled wings. Other buildings are the neoclassical brick Town Hall (1897), Shelburne Free Public Library (1898), a fieldstone Tudor/Craftsman building at Shelburne Center, the Veteran's Club (1905) and an Eastlake/Italianate chapel (c.1875) on Water Street at the Falls. Founded in the period were the German Harugari society (1873) and the Hook and Ladder Fire Company (1873).

Commercial: The remainder of the commercial district on Bridge Street was built up in the 1870's. Among the well-preserved two and three-story masonry blocks there are the Couillard Block (1876), the Brick Bank Block (1871), the Merrill-Richardson building (1871), the second Swan Block (1871), the Wood Block (1879), Stebbins Block (1880) and Vice Block (1893). Almost all of these are brick buildings with arcaded Romanesque Revival corbel table cornices and segmental arched windows. An exception is the Victorian Gothic Merrill Richardson Building with lancet windows. Almost all retain period storefronts.

Industrial: Probably the most significant industrial structure of the period is the 1908 Bridge of Flowers, a very early reinforced concrete structure. (See Buckland Town Report.)

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915-1940)

A. Transportation Routes:

Abandonment of local trolley system to Buckland and Colrain from Shelburne Falls (1927) and continued improvement of Mohawk Trail (Route 2) as primary east-west auto highway from Connecticut Valley with secondary north-south axis as Route 112 to Colrain, including arch truss at North River (1939).

B. Population:

Shelburne's population continued to fall marginally until 1920. Between 1920 and 1940, it rose 10.2% -- the fifth highest rate in the county, though Buckland in the same period remained relatively stagnant. Much of Shelburne's growth occurred in the early '20's and early '30's. By 1940, the population had reached 1,636.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Continued expansion of Shelburne Falls as commercial center with Mohawk Trail highway axis along Bridge Street business district. Residential neighborhood maintained along Water Street axis with gradual development of Massamett Mountain slopes. Civic activities remained at Shelburne Center with highway commercial development along Mohawk Trail (Route 2) from Greenfield. Dairy farms continued as primary activity on uplands to Colrain and Deerfield.

D. Economic Base:

Shelburne's economic development was limited primarily to the Shelburne MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report: Shelburne

Falls area, where railroad connections, together with the new Mohawk Trail highway brought an expanding tourist-oriented commercial prosperity. Probably the town's major industry was that of the Mayhew Steel Products Company, by 1930 employing about 200 in manufacturing a variety of forged tools.

E. Architecture:

Relatively little residential construction occurred in the period. Houses and cottages were built in small numbers at Shelburne Falls and in scattered locations on Route 2. Almost all of these are modest hip or gable roofed Colonial Revival structures. A few institutional buildings were constructed, including the Shelburne-Buckland Community Church (1928), the brick Georgian Revival State Police headquarters on Route 2 and a neoclassical hip roof school (c.1930) at Shelburne Center. Commercial construction consisted of some new building at Shelburne Falls and a fair amount of auto-related building along Route 2. Buildings at the Falls include the Schack Block (1922) and Blassberg's Garage (1925), a two-story yellow brick building. Tourist courts with six to eight one-room cabins were built on Route 2 at Shelburne Colrain and Little Mohawk Roads.

XI. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

General: Shelburne's inventory is complete for pre-1830 structures and for commercial and institutional structures at Shelburne Falls. In these instances, inventory forms are thoroughly researched and provide complete statements of historic use and ownership record. Existing forms are admirable for their thoroughness. General survey of mid to late 19th-century residential development at Shelburne Falls and of early to mid 19th-century residential and agricultural construction elsewhere in the town has not been undertaken and should be completed. Shelburne is notable for the excellent state of preservation of nearly all architectural resources. Of special note are the intact commercial and residential neighborhoods at Shelburne Falls. Preservation of current open-space levels and of the open, widely-set 19th-century street grid at the Falls should be a priority.

Other areas of particularly intact quality include Taylor, Zera Fiske and South Roads, all with well-preserved 19th-century agricultural landscapes.

XII. SOURCES

Bardwell, Leila S., Bardwell's Ferry, Foxtown History (Shelburne, 1959).

-----, Vanished Pioneer Homes and Families of Shelburne, Massachusetts (Shelburne, 1974).

Borup, Roger, "The Shelburne Falls and Colrain Street Railway Company," Transportation Bulletin No. 75 (July 1967-December 1968), 1-32.

Davenport, Elmer F., As You Were, Shelburne: Interesting Episodes in the History of Shelburne, Massachusetts (Worcester, 1972).

Prendergast, Frank M., "The Sharp Knives of Shelburne Falls," Industry
13 (June 1948), 23-25.

Shelburne, Mass., Town of Shelburne, Bicentennial, 1968 (Greenfield,
1968?).

Shelburne, Mass., History & Tradition of Shelburne Committee, History
and Tradition of Shelburne, Massachusetts (Shelburne, 1958).