

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

SUDBURY

Report Date: 1980

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: January 1980

Community: Sudbury

I. Topography:

Located on rolling river view plain and adjacent upland plateau. Many glacial outwash features. Sandy soil along Sudbury River, increasingly rocky in the uplands. Southwest section is especially rugged. A few upland ponds and several streams. Drainage east into Sudbury River; part of northwest section drains into Assabet--all part of Merrimack system. Extensive marsh/meadow along Sudbury River; scattered bogs throughout central portion of town:

II. Political Boundaries:

Part of Sudbury grant, 1639. Original boundaries remain on north (Concord line 1635), south and southwest. Western part of 'Sudbury Plantation'. Became West Precinct of Sudbury, 1721. Separated from East Precinct (now Wayland), 1780.

III. Historic Overview:

Attractive rural town on the outer edge of Boston suburban development. Set along the flood plain of the Sudbury River with rising uplands to the west, a rich potential for native sites, especially along the river meadows. Part of the original Sudbury town grant of the mid 17th century with several documented garrison house sites of historic importance during King Phillips War and notable battle site on Green Hill. Early location on main Post Road to western interior with Wayside Inn as mid-18th century grambrel tavern. Formation of town center by late 18th century with excellent array of period architecture around hill top green with surrounding burying grounds and town pound. Several fine examples of Georgian and Federal style vernacular houses along main highways and relic loops of Colonial roads. Restricted industrial development in early 19th century with several abandoned mill sites. Few modest Victorian houses around South Sudbury with attractive civic structures and rural cemetery of mid 19th century date. Development of estate district along river highlands during early 20th century with good period Revival designs. Restoration of Wayside site by Ford created early museum village complex with companion auto-highway. Portions of Colonial agriculture landscape survive intact to mid 20th century.

IV. Contact Period (1500-1620)

A. Transportation Routes:

Important location of major east-west trail system around Sudbury River to western interior. Most notable is Boston Post Road

(Rt. 20) with former crossing old Sudbury Road (Rt 27) along Old Country Road and relic loops at South Sudbury and Wayside Inn. Connecting trails around Nobscot Hill are documented for Dudley-Nobscot Rds and "Indian Bridge" at Landham Brook (Raymond Road) perhaps connecting with Pelham Island Rd to Wayland. Trails linking Sudbury with Assabet (Maynard) are conjectured to follow Goodman Hill to Sudbury Center, possibly linking with Wills and Morse Rds to Mossman and Powder Mill Rds. Conjectured trails linking Sudbury-Concord Rivers to southwest might include portions of Peakham Rd and Marlboro-Sudbury Rds through N. Sudbury with old Marlborough Rd also conjectured as a trail. Other local trails followed around river marshes, most probably Water Row Rd. to Round Hill.

B. Settlement Pattern:

No documented sites reported from period, however, probable that some are present. Likely locations and well drained terraces and knolls overlooking Sudbury River, especially at falls and confluence points with major tributaries.

C. Subsistence Pattern:

Excellent fishing potential in Sudbury River, also good hunting and gathering possibilities. Sufficient resources to support a native population.

D. Observations:

Despite environmental potential, apparently very limited native occupation during period. Resources for this are not clear, especially since area supported a large native population during earlier periods (mid to late Archaic especially). The limited period remains are probably Nipmuck (inland, freshwater people) rather than coastal tribes.

V. First Settlement period (1620-1675)

A. Transportation Routes:

Native trails remain as highways, especially main east-west road across Sudbury River (Route 20) past mill site at Hop Brook (S. Sudbury) to Marlborough. Other local roads of the mid 17th century include Old County and Water Row Rds. with garrison house sites.

B. Population:

Quite limited, perhaps twenty families from Sudbury village (now Wayland).

C. Settlement:

Scattered farms, especially in eastern part of town near river. No village center. A few farms in Western part of town - only 10% 48 lots in the two Mile Grant (1649) occupied by end of period. Several farms were fortified "garrison houses" (see Hudson, 1891,

pp. 12-13 for details).

D. Economic Base:

Served as a resource area for Sudbury Village (now Wayland). Land near river used for agriculture and grazing. Lumber and gravel removed for local use. Sawmill built 1659 (Thomas and Peter Noyes) on Hop Brook (South Sudbury).

E. Observations:

A frontier area; limited settlement and economic development due to problems of access and fear of natives.

VI. Colonial Period (1676-1776)

A. Transportation Routes:

Location of Sudbury meeting house by early 18th century prompted radial highways from new town center as Concord, Maynard, Hudson, Lincoln and Old Sudbury Rds. Main east-west road remained Boston Post Road (Route 20) with North Rd. from Concord of possible 18th century date.

B. Population:

Slow growth after King Philip's War, increased after 1720. Estimated population of 500 people by end of period.

C. Settlement:

Virtually all settlement destroyed during April, 1676 raid. Gradual rebuilding until end of century. South Sudbury developed as village center, focusing around sawmills and Post Road. After 1720, Sudbury Center emerged as rival center. West Precinct meeting house raised there, 1723. Development due to central location within town.

D. Economic Base:

Primarily agriculture and grazing plus winter lumbering. Second sawmill built on Hop Brook (Peter King), 1677. Most products for local consumption, probably some meat and hides sold in Boston. Several taverns, especially along major roads: on Post Road- David How's Tavern (now Wayside Inn), after 1702, also an undated tavern in South Sudbury; George Pitt's Tavern on Framingham Road, early 1700's; at least one tavern in Sudbury Center with others on Sudbury Road.

E. Architecture: Residential: large number of houses extant (33 in existing survey); predominance of central chimney two story type; although considerable variety of vernacular types are present including twin-chimney, two story, central chimney half houses (two story) and a small number of central chimney Cape Cod cottages; evidence of Georgian high style restricted to decorative trim of a type that could equally well date from the 1790's.

Institutional: 6 garrison houses described in local histories; however the variety of their plans and sizes makes it likely that they were merely houses which had been fortified, although one was reportedly built of vertical planks; only one meetinghouse built after c 1717; wood frame powder house built 1771 and covered with "rough cast" in 1773.

Commercial: one or two taverns built along Boston Post Road in late 17th century and enlarged in 18th century, related to vernacular house types.

Industrial: several small grist and saw-mills built, none described as to appearance in secondary sources.

F. Observations:

Remained a tough frontier community throughout period - many Sudbury men served as rangers during Colonial wars. Despite several town histories, Sudbury remains somewhat elusive - focus is usually on larger and more prosperous East Sudbury (Wayland).

VII. Federal Period (1775-1830)

A. Transportation Routes:

Highway system remained in place from 18th century. Straightening of Post Road (Rt. 20) across Sudbury River and Hop Brook (S. Sudbury) by early 19th century as well as North Road from Concord.

B. Population:

Small increases in population probably due to small growth of villages at Assabet (Maynard) and South Sudbury; Methodist Congregation formed, 1823.

C. Settlement Location:

Some new building at Sudbury Center and South Sudbury, although little change in settled area.

D. Economic Base:

Remained primarily agricultural base though number of small mills increased, particularly in South Sudbury near the Post Road between Boston and Worcester where there were brick yards, tanning vats and a malt house, in addition to saw, grist, and fulling mills. In the Southwest district three mills operated in relative isolation on Hop Brook. Two coppers, an axe shop, and shoemaker's shop located in North Sudbury, where in addition, bog iron was harvested from the low lands, carted to the Sudbury River, and shipped to Chelmsford.

E. Architecture: Residential: large number of houses extant; most prominent house type was center entrance, two room plan with

rear wall chimneys with low-pitched or hip roofs and decorative trim generally restricted to doorway, also present are a smaller number of cottages with this plan; more high-style examples of the period are few, although those which exist generally have four room plans, end wall chimneys, hip roofs and fanlight entries.

Institutional: only one meetinghouse constructed - 1797 - extant; probable district schools after c.1790-95 although one extant school (attributed 1798 construction date) moved here in 20th c from Sterling, Mass.

Commercial: few buildings constructed; several structures on Post Road at South Sudbury and at Sudbury Center appear as houses, but have tradition of having been built for partial commercail use.

Industrial: no buildings known to remain.

VIII. Early Industrial Period: (1830-1870)

A. Transportation Routes:

Highway system intact from early 19th century, with no railroad construction.

B. Population:

Probably little or no increase in population of Sudbury (increases shown in statistics probably reflect the growth of Assabet Village - now Maynard); small immigrant population after ca.1840-55 predominantly Irish and Nova Scotian; no new religious congregations formed.

C. Settlement Locations:

No basic change in settled area.

D. Economic Base:

Farming remained principal domestic industry though South Sudbury showed a small cottage industry in straw braid. Most small mills noted earlier remained in operation and two mills began operation in Sudbury Center.

E. Architecture: Residential: extremely little building; Greek Revival style widely adopted by mid 1840's for one temple front house and for a small number of side-hall houses and cottages at South Sudbury and scattered along North Road. Italianate style (c. 1860-75) is represented by a small number of side hall houses. Second Empire style first employed 1865 at South Sudbury for large scale house of merchant manufacturer, few houses built in this style.

Institutional: major public buildings, consist of Methodist Meetinghouse (1836), Town Hall (1845), Grange Hall (1846) and Wadsworth Academy, a private school (1857) all built

in variations on Greek Revival style, temple front; six school districts in town (only 5 within present town limits) all presumably contained one-room schools; only other major public building was an octagonal (Italianate) style library built of stone in 1862 at South Sudbury (extant although concealed by later additions).

Commercial: principal commercial center at South Sudbury where at least one two-story, Greek Revival style store building (gabled facade-recessed first story porch) was built ca.1845, followed by Wadsworth Academy (1857) the first story of which contained commercial space; some commercial activity likely to have been conducted in houses.

Industrial: no significant development except for development of wood frame mills at South Sudbury (ca.1865-70) (none extant).

IX. Late Industrial Period (1870-1915)

A. Transportation Routes:

Two secondary railroad lines through Sudbury during late 19th century, Old Colony (Penn Central) from Concord to Framingham through town center (1871) and Massachusetts Central (B&M) through S. Sudbury (1881). Location of Union Ave from Sudbury Center to South Sudbury in 1880's. No street railway routes.

B. Population:

Unchanged throughout period; slight increase in foreign-born population 1880-1905; Italians (although small in number) became largest immigrant group after 1905; second congregational society formed ca 1880.

C. Settlement Location:

Little change in built-up area, although several small estates were assembled by Bostonians in the vicinity of Sudbury Center.

D. Economic Base:

Remained primarily agricultural with considerable export of agricultural products beyond the town, particularly in South Sudbury. First greenhouse erected 1879 and in period 1882-1889, 30 more greenhouses erected. Many small mills continued operation; one machinery manufacturer in South Sudbury near new Mass. Central RR; nail manufacturer near site of present Wayside Inn Grist Mill

E. Architecture:

In almost all categories, the first introduction and major examples of various Victorian styles were built at South Sudbury.

Residential: extremely few buildings constructed; only one or two examples built of Victorian Gothic and Queen Anne high-style, slightly more, but not numerous, examples of simple

houses and cottages in these two styles. Focus of early twentieth century development was on restoration (and enlargement of existing pre-1830 houses) and on the construction of a small number of Arts & Crafts style houses and cottages (post ca. 1910); several Boston architects became residents of town, including Ralph Adams Cram.

Institutional: Queen Anne style dominant ca. 1880-1900 for additions to town library (1880's and 1890's) and for alterations and construction of two churches; Romanesque/Gothic style stone chapel built at Sudbury Center 1914, perhaps for Boston/Sudbury residents; no apparent centralization of school system, two school houses built 1870.

Commercial: several one story brick or stone structures built after ca. 1910 as automobile service stations, first railway station built 1870-71, all three burned and replaced; one train station at South Sudbury built 1880-81.

Industrial: no significant building.

X. Early Modern Period (1915-1940)

A. Transportation Routes:

Colonial highways upgraded as autoroads in 1920's including Old Sudbury-Maynard Road as Rte 27, and Post Road as Route 20 with early by-pass around Wayside Inn by Henry Ford as model highway with original concrete bridge (1928). Other period bridges include loop of Concord Road at Pantry Brook.

B. Population:

No permanent increase in population until 1930-40.

C. Settlement Location:

Some development of South Sudbury and scattered houses built north of Sudbury Center.

D. Economic Base:

Market gardening during early portion of period. Two mill reconstructions created by Henry Ford in vicinity of Wayside Inn.

E. Architecture: General Note: The Colonial Revival style and restoration of buildings perceived as Colonial became widespread during this period, particularly following the restoration and historical reconstructions carried out by Henry Ford near the Wayside Inn, in an effort to create a small historic village.

Residential: Restoration of existing houses as well as the moving and reconstruction of several small number of Arts & Crafts cottages built ca. 1900-35.

Institutional: Only public building at period (excluding schools) was Greek Revival inspired town hall (1932).

Commercial: no significant development.

Industrial: no significant development; historical re-construction of 18th c. grist mill probably not based on any local precedent.

XI. Sources:

Bent, Samuel The Wayside Inn (1897)

Hudson, Alfred History of Sudbury (1884)
 Annals of Sudbury, Wayland and Maynard (1891)

Federal Writers
Project History of Sudbury (1939)

Powell, Sumner Chilton Puritan Village; the Formation of a New
England Town (1963)