

# MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

## UPTON

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.



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](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc)

[mhc@sec.state.ma.us](mailto:mhc@sec.state.ma.us) / 617-727-8470

## MHC RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

DATE: 1983

COMMUNITY: Upton

---

### I. TOPOGRAPHY

Upton lies near the eastern edge of Worcester County, forming an area of high, uneven ground somewhat unusual for this area of the county. Elevations rise to well over 600 feet above sea level in the northwest. The hills are broken by several southerly-flowing streams and rivers which form a broad outwash valley nearly two miles wide south of Upton Center and West Upton. Here the West River is joined first by Warren Brook in West Upton and then by Center Brook approximately three miles to the south. The town's eastern boundary is formed by the Mill River, a major tributary of the Blackstone.

Upton's soils are generally strong and gravelly, composed largely of glacially-formed and deposited soils. Hinckley gravelly sandy loam is found in the outwash plain of the river valley and Gloucester stony and stony fine sand loam, as well as Gloucester loam, occupy the hillsides and hilltops. The latter type is one of the most agriculturally important soils of the county, and had been heavily cultivated and used for orchards. A large patch of this soil type occurs in the eastern portion of the town. Another patch of agriculturally significant soils is found in the northwestern portion of the town and consists of Gloucester fine sandy loam.

### II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Established as a town in 1735, from parts of Hopkinton (1715), Mendon (1667), Sutton (1714), and Uxbridge (1727). Part annexed to Westborough, 1763. Part of Hopkinton annexed 1808. Bounds with Milford and Hopkinton established, 1907. Bounds with Milford and Hopkinton established, 1962.

### III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Upland farming and suburban community between the Blackstone Valley and the upper Sudbury basin, with possible native sites at Pratt Pond. First European settlement in the early 18th century in the south part of town from Mendon, with first meetinghouse one mile south of present center off Mendon Road. Dispersed 18th and 19th century agricultural settlement, with shift of center north to Pratt Pond, 1770. Small-scale early 19th century industrial activity in Upton Center, with concentration of straw goods manufacturing in West Upton after 1835. Major factory expansion in 1872, with associated worker housing construction. Railroad

connection comes relatively late (1890). Significant area presently in State Forest. A good variety of vernacular farmhouses remains intact, with a number of farmsteads still functional. Upton and West Upton villages retain mid to late 19th century scale and landmarks. Major development pressures are incursion of Westborough suburban/exurban zone in scenic northern uplands, and expansion of the Milford area suburban zone in the southeast.

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

##### A. Transportation Routes

Interior highland between Blackstone River Valley and Upper Sudbury River Basin, with juncture of main trails from northeast, southeast, and northwest. Main southeast/northwest trail from Mendon to Grafton along Mendon Street-Grafton Road-Old Grafton Road. Alternate southeast route inferred east of Center Brook along South Street. Northeast route past Pratt Pond to North Pond (Maspenook) in Hopkinton conjectured as Main Street-Elm Street-Hager Road. Possible branch to Milford on Taft Street. North Trail conjectured along Westborough Road-North Street, with possible branch on Westborough Road-Spring Street to Whitehall Pond in Hopkinton.

##### B. Settlement Pattern

The area now Upton served as an area for seasonal hunting and gathering from the larger base camps located to the west in Grafton, or to the south in Uxbridge. Warren and Center brooks, in the east, Pratt Pond in the center, and Taft Pond to the south provided sites for fishing and agriculture and therefore were used more intensively than the area to the north and the west.

##### C. Subsistence Pattern

Fishing on the brooks and ponds, agriculture on the adjacent terraces, hunting in the uplands, on a seasonal basis from base camps to the south and west.

##### D. Observations

The number of sites located near small bodies of water during the Route 146 survey in Uxbridge, etc. to the south, indicates a density of sites far greater than has been predicted for this inland area.

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

##### A. Transportation Routes

Continued local and regional use of established trails.

## B. Population

No information available.

## C. Settlement Pattern

During this period, southern section is part of the grant of Mendon in 1667, and unincorporated lands to the north.

No notation of colonial settlement during this period. Probable reduction in native use with formation of a Christian community in Uxbridge to the south.

## D. Subsistence Pattern

Reduced seasonal use by native population with increase of colonials in area and concentration in the Uxbridge praying town. Occasional use by colonials from surrounding communities as outlying fields, pasturage and mowing land.

# VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

## A. Transportation Routes

Trails improved as local roads, with addition of radiating routes to West River meadowlands (Pleasant Street, West River Street) and eastern uplands (Prospect Street, Christian Hill/Pearl Street). By period end (1770) meetinghouse location shifted north to more logical local transport route confluence. Grafton Road-Mendon Street becomes important regional highway as post road from Worcester to Providence.

## B. Population

Estimated 50 families at incorporation, ca. 25 of whom own their land. Settlers from Hopkinton and Westborough in the north, and from Boston in the east. Covenant signed in 1749 by 23 males, 3 females. By 1765 total population of 614, in 1776 of 702. First minister briefly then dismissed in 1744, followed by seven years without preaching. With Fish ordination in 1751, the pulpit supplied by New Light preachers aligned with the Mendon Association. Quakers but no meeting; a small number of Baptists in 1751 but the society dissolved shortly.

## C. Settlement Pattern

Increased use by colonials with resettlement after King Philip's War, accompanied by settlement on dispersed farmsteads by early 18th century. Initial petition for independence to recently incorporated Sutton in 1731 by 11 inhabitants in the east part of town. With the incorporation in 1735, additional acreage was taken from Hopkinton (3,130), Mendon (2,933) and Uxbridge (1,850), to Sutton's 5,030 acres. Much of the Hopkinton area was owned by

a trust and rented to its inhabitants. The town's meetinghouse was located one mile south of the present location, surrounded by a burying ground. By 1761, discussion of relocating began and brought need for outside counseling in 1768. The committee advised staying in place in anticipation of an impending division of the committee. This did not take place but the new meetinghouse was located in the present center.

#### D. Economic Base

Primarily agricultural community but no reporting in 1771 for more specific data. Saw and grist mill in West Upton on Beaver Brook (1712); a sawmill in southeast Upton prior to incorporation; saw and grist in the Center during the 1750s, and later in the east near Milford. Many town citizens still renting their land from the Hopkins trust at 3p to 1p per year on 99-year lease.

#### E. Architecture

Residential: At least half a dozen one-story, center chimney dwellings survive from this period, most of which date from the mid 18th century. One five-bay example bears the date 1723. A much smaller number of two-story, center chimney houses survives, also dating from the early part of the third quarter of the 18th century. One two-story, five-bay double chimney house was noted (1763).

Institutional: The first meetinghouse was erected in 1736 and was replaced in 1770. This second meetinghouse is said to have incorporated some of the timber from the 1736 structure.

Commercial: The Warren Tavern stood on Hartford Avenue in West Upton until 1883, when it was demolished during expansion of the Knowlton Hat Factory.

Industrial: Late 18th century blacksmith shop is said to have survived in West Upton (?) until about 1930, although removed from its original site.

### VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

#### A. Transportation Routes

Colonial roads continue in use. In 1824, the east-west Central Turnpike (High Street-Hopkinton Road) is incorporated, providing an alternate Boston-Hartford highway. The road is completed by 1830.

#### B. Population

Population growth slow but steady during the period, from 702 in 1776 to 1,167 in 1830.

The Congregational church experienced several revivals at this time under the influence of a Hopkinton minister. At the same time, the Baptists, known here also as Christians, experienced a resurgence. In 1825 a Universalist society was formed.

The town had a select school in 1820, and from 1807-1830 a Social Library with over 200 members.

#### C. Settlement Pattern

Continued dispersed, agricultural settlement. Some residential concentration around the new (1770) meetinghouse center, at the Elm Street/Prospect Street intersection, and along Main Street, Pleasant Street. By period end, some commercial activity appears to shift to West Upton on the main north-south regional highway, after construction of hotel and store in 1825.

#### D. Economic Base

Upton's economy during the late 18th and early 19th centuries was predominantly agricultural. In 1795 four saw and grist mills processed raw materials from the farms and forests of the town. By 1830, a small wool spinning mill along the Mill River and shingle and planing mill were the only new water-powered industries. In 1831 the mill employed only ten persons and produced \$8,400 worth of hosiery yarn.

Shoemaking and straw braiding were important cottage industries during this period. In 1832, 87,000 pairs of cheap brogans were produced and marketed largely in the South to slaveowners. Over 100 persons were employed in this \$78,000 industry; by 1837 the figures increased to 3,500 pairs of boots and 117,000 pairs of shoes valued at \$107,000 with 237 persons employed. More than 400 women braided straw at home, which was then collected and sewn into hats and bonnets in a shop. \$48,000 worth of braid and bonnets were produced in 1831. Leather tanning and currying grew with the shoe industry; by 1831, 2,200 sides of leather and calfskins were curried. A sash and blind manufactory and a blacksmith, who made straw machines and cutlery, were also present in 1831.

Agriculture: In 1784, Upton had one of the largest percentages of unimprovable land in the county, 26.8%, ranking third behind Dudley and Douglas to the west. An additional 52.9% remained unimproved or as woodlot. Tillage involved 1.9% of the acreage, 7.2% in mowing and meadow lands, 8.6% in pasturage.

#### E. Architecture

Residential: The number of surviving identifiable period structures is more than double that for the Colonial period. The center chimney form, generally five bays wide, still prevailed, although greater numbers of two-story examples survive in this

period. A late 18th century (?) one-story, gambrel-roofed, five-bay dwelling was noted as was an 1810 "three-quarter" one-story house with a late 19th century mansard roof. Two-story houses appear to date from the last quarter of the 18th and early 19th centuries. One Federal period house incorporates a ca. 1750 wing. A much altered (19th century) two-story, Federal house with a hipped roof, fanlight, and sidelights was observed on South Street. Five two-story, double chimney houses, seven rear wall chimney examples, and one end chimney house (18th century?) were also recorded. Of note in Upton village are a three-story, five-bay, double chimney house on a raised brick basement with a two-story Doric portico (1817) and a two-story, six-bay Federal/Greek house (1827) with one end chimney and an interior chimney (possibly a five-bay end chimney form with an extra bay).

Institutional: In 1820, the 1770 meetinghouse was "greatly improved."

Commercial: A hotel owned by William Legg was in operation in West Upton in 1830; the Upton Inn occupies the site today and probably incorporates parts of the Federal period building.

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

##### A. Transportation Routes

Federal period highways continue in use. No railroad connections established in this period. Boston and Hartford Telegraph Line of stages runs daily service on Central Turnpike in early part of period.

##### B. Population

Population growth is moderate during this period, expanding from 1,167 in 1830 to 1,989 in 1870. Some shift in occupational categories accounts for growth at this time, while agricultural employments remain steady and manufacturing expands, employing more than twice as many men (513) as well as substantial numbers of women (265). Town histories indicate that most workers in the primary industry, straw, were Americans or straw workers from Luton, England, and farmers' daughters. Few English immigrants are shown in statistics of foreign population, 22 in 1865; however, the total figure is comparatively low, just over 12%, mostly Irish, during this period.

Within the Congregational church, revivals continue, and reform movement activities such as Sunday schools begin. The Baptist and the Universalists joined in the formation of a Unitarian Society in 1847. Catholics during this period attended Mass in Milford.

A high school was established in the early 1860s, but attempts fail so that graduation does not take place until 1877. The Social Library was reorganized and active from 1828-1855.

### C. Settlement Pattern

Significant development early in the period (1830-1850) in Upton and West Upton, with little growth in outlying areas. In the center, the institutional focus is retained with construction of the Unitarian Church (1848) and third Congregational meetinghouse (1849). Residential development extends in all directions, with a distinct high income corridor on North Main Street. To the north, the residential district extends to the linear development along High Street; to the west along School Street, with extensions toward West Upton on West (Main) Street and Pleasant Street; to the south as far as Picadilly Street; and on the east along Elm Street. Small manufacturing shops are dispersed throughout this area.

In West Upton, development accelerates after the establishment of a large straw goods factory in 1835. Worker housing built, mainly west of the factory on the south side of Grafton Road, with middle and high income residences on the north (sunny) side. A secondary cluster develops around the woodworking factory west on Grafton Road.

### D. Economic Base

The manufacture of boots and shoes dominated the town's industry until the 1860s when overtaken by straw bonnet manufacturing. Boot and shoemaking in small shops peaked in 1855 when 390 men and women produced 104,000 pairs of boots worth \$179,000. By 1865 factories and centralized production appeared in Upton. As a result, only 156 people in three factories and a number of shops were able to produce 97,000 pairs of boots worth \$238,000.

Straw braiding and bonnet manufacture grew from a business operating from a country store to two large factories in 1875 producing \$800,000 worth of men's and ladies' bonnets, nearly 90% of the value of the town's manufactured goods. Before the Civil War, up to 1,200 women were employed in their homes producing braid, which was then collected and sewn into hats and bonnets in the factories. The leading manufacturer was William Knowlton, who established his factory at West Upton.

Other smaller industries included the manufacture of saddles, harnesses, and trunks, railroad cars, coaches, wagons, and sleighs, and a soapworks. A fire in 1843 ended textile manufacturing as the woolen mill was destroyed and not rebuilt. 1837 production figures for the small mill indicated 31,200 yards of cloth were produced, valued at \$15,600.

Another important industry during the period was lumbering and woodworking from Upton's 2,300 acres of woodland. In 1865, seven sawmills cut 1.5 million feet of boards and 1,200 cords of firewood for market, while a box manufactory for boot, shoe and bonnet boxes and a planing mill and sash, door, and blind



manufactory converted the lumber into finished products. Together they employed about 30 men and produced goods valued at \$29,000. The foundations and dams of a number of these sawmills remain in good condition.

Agriculture also prospered during this period. In 1865, 306 people were employed on 149 farms. The raising of livestock and hay were the major activities; 146,000 lbs. of beef, pork, mutton, and veal were dressed and more than one quarter of the improved land was devoted to growing hay. Other crops included 300 acres of corn, rye and oats, 116 acres of potatoes, and 40 acres of cranberries. Orchards of apple, pear, peach, and plum trees were also cultivated. Dairying was still a minor concern, as much milk was still diverted to buttermaking. In 1845, nearly 18,000 lbs. of butter and 10,000 lbs. of cheese were made; by 1865, 388 milk cows produced nearly 9,000 lbs. of butter and only 9,000 gallons of milk for sale.

#### E. Architecture

**Residential:** The largest number of surviving dwellings for any one period occurs here with a significant number in the early portion of the period. The increase appears to be the result of the growth of the villages of Upton and West Upton. Greek Revival influence is found in the door surrounds in the center and double chimney plans and in both the surrounds and the frequent use of corner pilasters on gable-end, side-passage plans. Aside from the ubiquitous one- and two-story side-passage, gable end dwellings, the most numerous house form appears to be the traditional center and double chimney one-story dwelling. These are generally five bays wide and date from 1825 to 1850. Two one-story, end chimney examples were also noted. Two-story, double-chimney double-pile houses survive, especially in the villages. Two two-story, end chimney plans were also noted. The only brick house observed in town is the two-story, five-bay, double chimney plan on Hill Street, built in 1832. Four buildings are particularly worthy of note because of their unusual Gothic detail. All are traditional one- or one-and-a-half-story, five-bay dwellings. The one located north of Upton village on Westboro Road and another in West Upton each have five-bay facades facing the street with pointed arch blinds capping the windows on the street facade and the gable ends. The third, built in 1838, is located south of Upton village on Mendon Street and its five-bay facade faces north while the principal facade is turned gable end to the street (east) with a five-bay, center entry. The three bays on the second story have the pointed arch blind. The fourth example, in Upton village, displays elaborate Greek Revival detailing, and again, the gable end (three-bay, side-passage) is to the street. All the windows have the Gothic arches.

Side-passage plans occur primarily in the villages of Upton and West Upton. A significant number of traditional center and double chimney plans survive in comparison with other towns, and the form

is fairly evenly distributed between the villages and the less densely settled parts of town. Most are of two stories. In addition to these types, two end chimney houses were observed. One notable period structure is the one-and-one-half-story, three-bay Italianate dwelling with rounded, Second Empire dormers, quoins, and brackets.

Three substantial two-story, five-bay, double chimney dwellings with recessed, two-bay wings on each end are located in Upton village. A two-story, three-bay, double chimney house displaying a combination of popular Greek, Gothic and Italianate details was observed. Also of note in Upton village is the two-story, six-bay center entry, gable end Italianate dwelling. In West Upton, the two-story hip style Queen Anne Knowlton residence on Main Street survives as does a similarly elaborate Italianate dwelling with projecting central pavillion, corner tower, mansard roof, and Eastlake trim. Four two-story T-plans were noted.

Surviving worker housing in West Upton appears to date primarily from the first part of the period. Two-story, six-bay, multi-family units were observed, as were some one-story Greek Revival duplexes. At least one two-story, hipped roof, center chimney, multi-family unit survives, dating from the latter part of the period.

**Institutional:** The 1770 meetinghouse was sold and moved in 1849 when a new Congregational church was built. The old meetinghouse served a variety of uses including the G.A.R. hall and the fire department before being demolished in 1955. The 1848 Congregational church is a three-bay, gable-end Greek Revival structure. The facade has a broad gabled vestibule with paralleled pilasters. The spire atop the three-staged square tower is from the 1868 Oxford Methodist church and replaces the original spire damaged in the 1938 hurricane. the interior was frescoed in 1893, and then "completely restored" (?) in 1966. since 1970, this building has housed a United Congregational and Methodist parish.

The Unitarian church was also erected in 1848 and is a three-bay, gable-end Greek Revival building. The pediment, bearing an anthemion design, is supported by four Ionic columns.

The 1851 District #2 schoolhouse is a two-story, side-passage plan Greek Revival structure with parallel corner pilasters, a flushboard pediment with a recessed panel, and a cross-gable rear extension.

The Upton Grange Hall is a two-story, five-bay Greek Revival structure with interior end chimneys, corner pilasters, and a central, three-bay projecting pavillion.

The town hall is a restrained, two-story brick Victorian Gothic mass.

Commercial: Of special note is the well preserved West Upton Hotel (now Upton Inn), a large, three-and-one-half-story block on a raised brick basement with a one-story Italianate porch sheltering the center portion of the building. It appears to be the same structure which operated as the W. Legg Hotel on the 1830 map with additions probably throughout the mid to late 19th century.

Industrial: William Knowlton and William Legg built the first mill building in West Upton in 1835. At the same time, a large boarding house for women was created.

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

### A. Transportation Routes

The Grafton and Upton railroad opens to West Upton in 1889, with service to Milford in 1890. The line is initially, or soon becomes, electric powered. By the early 1900s, electric street railway service is running through town, essentially along the same right-of-way, probably on the same tracks as the railroad, with a loop on Williams Street to West Upton, then along Main Street to Upton Center, then south on Upton Street to rejoin the Grafton and Upton line and continue south.

### B. Population

Population figures during this period show fluctuation with little overall growth from 1,989 in 1870 to 2,036 in 1915; the high figure was reached in 1885 with 2,265, the low just five years later at 1,878. The proportion of foreign-born within the population remains low, at about 12% except for 1905, when a figure of 14.3% is reached. Country of origin remains Ireland and England, with increasing Canadian immigrants.

With the expansion of population at West Upton, a new Unitarian Church was donated and the society moved there. Their former building was sold to the Roman Catholic parish at Grafton as a mission, later assigned to Fisherville as a mission, became a separate parish in 1900. A Methodist society was formed in 1872, built a church in the center in 1875.

The persistence of an agricultural population is seen in the existence of a Farmers' Club from 1866, a Grange from 1885, accompanied by a stable number in farming employments. The number of males in manufacturing decreases during this period from over 500 to just over 300, while female employment remains stable at just over 250. The public library was established in 1871, and voluntary associations, particularly those related to rural activities, include Foresters in 1901, Fish and Game in 1910.

### C. Settlement Pattern

Relatively little development occurs in this period, with some institutional and peripheral residential growth in Upton Center, and industry related growth in West Upton. In Upton Center a Methodist church is built in 1876, and the town hall is constructed in 1884. Some residential development extends south on the west side of Grove Street toward the railroad depot, and some infilling occurs on Pleasant and West (Main) Streets. A high school is constructed.

### D. Economic Base

The shoe industry all but disappeared by 1885, a result of factory centralization and concentration in nearby Milford, fire and the absence of a railroad through Upton. However, the straw and palm-leaf hat industry continued to expand until it peaked in the late 1890s with sales exceeding \$1,000,000. By 1900 only the large, prosperous firm of William Knowlton and Sons remained at its West Upton location, the others lost to fire, death or retirement of its principal owners. Other industries continuing past 1900 included box manufacture, the manufacture of bone cutting machines and tools, and several sawmills.

Upton's agricultural base remained strong throughout the period, increasing in total value of agricultural goods from \$104,000 in 1875 to \$173,000 in 1905. The greatest growth occurred in the dairy, which grew from about 20% of total agricultural production in 1875 to 39% in 1905. Milk production underwent a nearly ten-fold increase between 1865 and 1875; butter production tripled. By 1885, milk production more than doubled the 1875 figures to 191,582 gallons, while more than 29,000 lbs. of butter were also produced. This growth in the dairy continued into the 20th century as Upton's farms supplied the neighboring industrial towns of Milford, Grafton, Hopedale, and Northbridge.

Also increasing in value were poultry products, by 1905 comprising more than 10% of the total. The cultivation of vegetables peaked in the 1890s, overtaken by poultry products in importance by 1905. Meat production dropped considerably from its high in 1865; by 1885, less than half as much beef, pork, and veal were produced.

### E. Architecture

**Residential:** Development declines in this period. Some traditional center and double chimney plans occur late in the 19th century. Several two-story, asymmetrical Queen Anne houses were noted.

**Institutional:** In 1873, William Knowlton built the Victorian Gothic Unitarian Universalist church in West Upton. The gable end, center entry structure has a side tower with a mansard roof,

belfry and spire, and a patterned slate roof over the entire building. The architectural integrity of the 1876 Methodist church has been jeopardized by its conversion to town offices. The two-story, gable end structure displays "stick" work and patterned siding. Entrances are at the ends of the facade and through a corner tower. A rose window is centered over the gabled facade.

The Upton Community Center was built on the grounds of the Knowlton Hat Factory by William Knowlton in 1908. The small, square, one-story structure rests on a fieldstone foundation. Under its flat roof are tall, segmental arched windows with granite sills and gauged brick lintels.

Commercial: The 1890 West Upton depot is a gabled "Stick Style" structure with broad gable ends and a central gabled dormer. A one-story, brick Italianate structure (depot?) is located on Glen Avenue, approximately one-eighth of a mile north of the track.

Industrial: Three of the surviving buildings at the Knowlton Hat Factory complex were constructed in 1872. The three brick buildings are located along Main Street in West Upton and range from three to five stories in height, each with a mansard slate roof and restrained Queen Anne/Eastlake type detail. The three have been rehabilitated for use as housing.

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

### A. Transportation Routes

Streetcar service is discontinued in the 1920s and local roads are improved as automobile highways, with the main road the north-south Worcester-Milford highway (Route 140-Grafton Street/Main Street/Milford Road). The east-west Central Turnpike is developed as a secondary highway, but the old part of the route from West Upton to Northbridge is abandoned by the late 1930s.

### B. Population

Population figures continue to fluctuate, with a small amount of overall growth from 2,036 in 1915 to the high of 2,249 in 1940 (but just under the 1885 high of 2,265); the low figure of 1,693 in 1920 was the lowest in ca. 75 years. The percentage of foreign born within the population dropped to 10.4% by 1940. At that same time the town was classified among the county's rural communities, with 483, or 21.5%, of the population so classified. Rural concerns continue to dominate with the formation of District Nursing Service in 1921, and later produce for the poor through the Commonwealth Rescue League in the 1930s.

### C. Settlement Pattern

Very little local development is evident.

#### D. Economic Base

Woodworking, hat manufacture, and agriculture were the base of Upton's economy during the 1920s and 1930s. The firm of William Knowlton and Sons Company of West Upton continued operation through the period, producing straw, velvet, and felt hats for women. In 1925 the Merrimac Hat Corporation purchased the company, but continued operation under its own company name. That year, it was capitalized at \$250,000 and employed between 400 and 800 operatives. At least one saw and planing mill in West Upton and a grist mill in Upton Center continued to operate through the period.

A trend begun in the first decade of the 20th century continued, as the number of farms and farm acreage decreased, with more land going to intensive use for dairying, poultry raising, and flower gardens. At the same time, more acreage was allowed to return to woodland.

The relatively stable population, which did not exceed the 1885 high of 2,265 until 1945, indicated the continuation of most economic patterns from the late 19th century until World War II.

#### E. Architecture

Residential: Development overall appears to have slowed significantly. A half dozen Four-Square houses and two bungalows were noted. A few small scattered clusters of modest 1920s and 1930s dwellings were also observed.

Institutional: The Upton Fire Department is housed in a ca. 1950 one-story, six-bay brick fire house. The George S. Ball School in Upton village is a one-story, Colonial Revival stucco structure of ca. 1930.

### XI. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

The Upton inventory is very poor, containing only a few of the public buildings and the Knowlton Hat Factory; there are no domestic buildings in the inventory.

At least one dozen gable end entry, 19th century barns were noted in the field.