

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

WEST BROOKFIELD

Report Date: 1984

Associated Regional Report: Central Massachusetts

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

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

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

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

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



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MHC RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

DATE: 1984

COMMUNITY: West Brookfield

I. TOPOGRAPHY

Located on the southwestern border of Worcester County, West Brookfield lies on the eastern side of a high, uneven range of hills extending from Warren north to Hardwick and Barre. The Mill Brook Valley and Wickaboag Pond cut through the central portion of the town in a north-south direction. To the west, the valley wall rises steeply to elevations exceeding 1,000 feet above sea level; Ragged Hill, situated in the northwest corner of the town, is the highest peak in the range, rising to 1,227 feet.

East of Mill Brook and Wickaboag Pond, the rise is much more gradual. Several hills approach 1,000 feet, but most of this area lies between 700 and 900 feet above sea level. The village of West Brookfield occupies a broad plain between Wickaboag Pond on the west, the Quaboag River on the south, and Coys Brook on the east.

The town straddles the western edge of a north-south belt of Brookfield series soils. The western range of hills is composed largely of Gloucester loam and stony loam; east of Mill Brook, Brookfield loam and stony loam predominates. Merrimac sand loam occupies the broad plain around the village. Formed as a result of glacial action and deposited under shallow moving water, this soil marks a broad terrace or delta deposit on the northern edge of the former glacial Lake Brookfield, which covered the broad Quaboag Valley. These soils are well suited to cultivation of hay and grasses, grains, and potatoes. Many of the hillsides were formerly used for mowing or for permanent pasture.

II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Part included in original 1660 Quaboag Plantation grant, provisionally established as township of Brookfield in 1673. Included in enlarged, eight-mile-square township granted in 1718. Incorporated as a town, from part of Brookfield, in 1848.

III. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Residential and agricultural community on the Quaboag River corridor, with reputed major native village site at south end of Wickaboag Pond, and many other local sites likely. First European settlement of area in 1665 on Foster Hill, attracted by extensive meadows, intervalles, and grasslands cleared by native burning. "Quaboag Plantation" was destroyed by native attack in 1675. Although resettlement occurred by 1692, the town suffered from native attacks and harassment during Queen Anne's War, with last local fatality in 1710. Second Brookfield meetinghouse located on

Foster Hill in 1716. First Parish meetinghouse relocated to plan southeast of Wickaboag Pond in 1754. Prosperous, dispersed 18th century agricultural settlement, with development of a Federal period, Post Road village at the meetinghouse center. Central village growth is further stimulated by 1839 Western Railroad connection, but local 19th century industrial development was relatively minor. Population declined through the first part of the 20th century, but lakeside cottage construction and dispersed suburban growth have followed. Significant functional agricultural landscapes remain, and the Federal/Early Industrial period central village remains largely intact.

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500-1620)

A. Transportation

Quaboag River corridor, with main east-west trail along Foster Hill Road-Main Street-Old Warren Road, with northeast branch on North Brookfield Road. Northern highland trail conjectured on Wigwam Hill road. Western trail to Ware River Valley over highlands conjectured on Ware Road-Cutler Road-Ware Road-Coy Hill road, with northwest branch on Pierce Road-Ragged Hill Road-Kennedy Road.

B. Settlement Pattern

This area included in a larger region known as Quaboag, well watered by the river of the same name, and based on the word "Squabaug," red water place. Several "villages" were located within the region, including within West Brookfield Wekabaug/Wickabaug, located between the pond of that name and the river. This provided a base for large and long-term residence, while surrounding areas were visited by smaller groups.

C. Subsistence Pattern

The "village" of Wickabaug provided a base for gathering seasonally the dispersed members of the Quaboag group, primarily for fishing. Nearby areas were visited for seasonal agriculture and hunting by families and task groups.

V. PLANTATION PERIOD (1620-1675)

A. Transportation

Contact period trails continued in use. East West Quaboag trail was improved as route from Worcester to Brookfield by 1673.

B. Population

Few colonial settlers came to the grant prior to King Philip's War, which broke up the new settlement. Six or seven families were in the town when 16 individuals received land grants in 1667. When the town was destroyed in 1675, 20 houses were burned. Most came from Ipswich and Essex counties, the original home of the petitioners.

C. Settlement Pattern

The area now West Brookfield was part of a six-mile grant to Ipswich petitioners in 1660. This grant preceded by five years the purchase from a Native American named Shattoockquis. Actual settlement did not proceed immediately, but by 1667, 16 families participated in the initial land division. Foster's Hill was chosen as the location for all houselots, near the center of the large grant. Each lot measured about 20 acres and was supplemented by meadow and upland grants, including an enclosed field of 95 acres on the plain to the east. Grants were to be limited to 200 acres until the required 30-40 families settled.

D. Economic Base

The Native population continued patterns established during the Contact period, punctuated by intertribal warfare. Colonials gathered in a small agricultural community with a modified open field system of production.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

A. Transportation

The main east-west Post Road is laid out in 1753 (Foster Hill Road-Main Street-Old Warren Road). The old northeast trail (North Brookfield Road) continues as an important road to the Second Parish of Brookfield. Trails are improved, and other roads are laid out from the meetinghouse to outlying farmsteads.

B. Population

Resettlement after King Philip's War was slowed by frequent attacks during the 35-year period of frontier warfare that ended in 1713. Only one family of the original settlers returned. This precarious existence led the General Court to require an external committee to supervise the town's affairs during this critical period. In 1698 the families numbered only twelve, and were augmented slightly by assigned soldiers. The town received help from the provincial government toward a visiting minister. The number of adult males increased to 23 in 1704, and to 38 in 1706. Temple (1887) suggests that due to their various origins, from older towns in the east and the Connecticut Valley, they lacked the "social unity" and so were slow in becoming an independent community. By 1717 there about 100 taxpaying households and the committee dissolved in 1718. Three years earlier the town was stable enough to settle its first minister. By mid century population had grown sufficient throughout the large grant that the town was subdivided into three parishes. In 1765 their total population equalled 1,811, fourth in the county, and grew by ca. 50% to 2,649 in 1776, to second in the county.

C. Settlement Pattern

The focus continued to be Foster's Hill where the chief garrison was located and where the church services were held. The

committee required compact settlement in light of the repeated attacks on the frontier. Other garrisons were located west of Wickaboag Pond, near the Brookfield border and adjacent to the pond.

When the town ceased to be governed by committee in 1718, the grant was resurveyed and extended to eight square miles.

By mid century, population had dispersed throughout the large grant so that it was subdivided into three parishes. The area now West Brookfield remained as first parish after the formation of second, or north, in 1750, and third or south in 1754. The meetinghouse was moved from its hilltop location to the plain to the west in 1749 when northern residents began agitating for independence. This was the geographic, but not the population, center of the town.

D. Economic Base

The frontier status of the town slowed its economic development early in the period, but when hostilities in the area ceased, the large town grew rapidly as the focus of the western part of the county. Good soils, well watered, made for a moderate prosperity for the town's farmers. The town's earliest mills were located north of Wickaboag Pond on Sucker and Mill brooks, and to the western Lamberton Brook. The town is not reported for 1771, but probably falls into the Egalitarian Farm Town category of Pruitt.

E. Architecture

Residential: Four period houses are recorded: a five-bay "cape"; two-story, five-bay center chimney plans and a double house; and one two-story, double chimney house. The Col. Joseph Dwight House in the Center is said to be the oldest house in town (1731) and is two-story, four-bay structure. Originally the building is said to have been a leanto. It may have been a "three-quarter house;" now it is completely restored. The ca. 1740 dwelling on Route 9 (Ware Road) is two stories and five bays wide with a hipped roof and center chimney and is described as having two front rooms and a kitchen extending the width of the rear of the house.

Institutional: The first meetinghouse was erected in 1673, second was built in 17xx. It was replaced with a third in 1755.

Commercial: XXXX Tavern dates from the mid-18th century, moved from its original location and altered. Ye Olde Tavern was severely damaged by fires in 1938. The shell remains today.

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

A. Transportation

Colonial roads and highways continued in use.

B. Population

Available figures cover the entire town of Brookfield, until the formation of North Brookfield in 1812. The town grew from 1,811 in 1776 to 3,284 in 1800. The figure dropped even before the division, to 3,170 in 1810, and then to 2,292 in 1820, and rebounded to 2,342 in 1830. Agriculture remained the largest employment, but a significant number, one-third of the total reported in 1820, were engaged in manufacturing. Within the Congregational Church, the Half-Way Covenant was eliminated in 1818, followed by a wave of revivals. Beginning ca. 1800 the town was part of Connecticut Methodist preaching circuits, and the group built a meetinghouse on the northwest border in 1823, the fourth in the county.

C. Settlement Pattern

Dispersed, agricultural settlement continues, and a commercial-residential village develops at the meetinghouse center along the Post Road on the plain southwest of Wickaboag Pond. The fourth meetinghouse is built here in 1795. A Female Seminary is also established in the center. A high-income residential cluster develops around the common at the Post Road/North Brookfield Road intersection, with village extensions west on the Post Road beyond Milk Street, north on Wickaboag Valley Road, and east on Foster's Hill Road to Coy's Brook.

Outside the center, the Wesleyan Methodist Church is built near the northwest border on Lyon Road.

D. Economic Base

West Brookfield during the late 18th and early 19th centuries was a prosperous agricultural community with a long tradition as a higher-order center in western Worcester County.

In the late 18th century, a comparatively small proportion of the town's area was unimproved or woodlot, 43%, and an additional 7.23% classed as unimprovable. A high percentage, 5.9%, was under tillage, while nearly equal amounts of land were in meadow and mowing and in pasturage, 12.6% and 12.8%, also somewhat high figures. Mixed husbandry with special emphasis on sheep- and cattle-raising was widely practiced, with much land devoted to mowing and pasture. Wool, hides, and meat were important animal products, as were cheese and butter, produced by every farmer. Emphasis in livestock-raising slowly shifted in the early decades of the 19th century, as sheep holdings declined and cattle, particularly milk cows, increased. Indian corn was the leading cereal grown, along with rye, oats, and barley. Potatoes were also widely cultivated, following close by behind corn in acreage.

Most early nonagricultural activities were tied in some way to agriculture. By 1830, three sawmills and gristmill existed in the town, and a number of artisans provided services such as blacksmithing, leather-making, cloth fulling and dressing, and woodworking. A printing office was established in 1798, and

Isaiah Thomas produced the first newspaper in the Brookfields there. Later the office also printed numerous agricultural tracts and almanacs. Shoemaking was introduced into the area early in the 19th century, and was carried on in small shops and in the home on a "putting-out" basis.

E. Architecture

Residential: The five-bay center chimney form remains popular, but is overshadowed by a significant double concentration of two-story, five-bay, hipped roof double chimney plans. All appear to be double-pile. Of these, the Jobez Upham House (1790) in the center is characterized by a doorway enframed by Doric pilasters supporting a semicircular fanlight above which is a pedimented frieze capped by a dentilled pediment. End chimney and rearwall chimney types occurred infrequently.

Institutional: Between 1792-94, a fourth meetinghouse was built. The Female Classical Seminary, which opened in 1825, was housed in a two-story, three-bay, gable end side-passage structure.

Commercial: Col. Fisher's Store of ca. 1800, now a residence, is a two-story, four-bay, double chimney structure. A ca. 1820 brick store operated by Amasa Walker was demolished in 1859 to make way for the town hall.

Industrial: The ca. 1820 Merriam Printing Office, now a restaurant, is a two-story, five-bay, hipped roof double pile (?) brick structure. The center entry retains a fanlight, but first floor windows have been altered. Building was used as late as 1840+ (?) as printing office.

VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830-1870)

A. Transportation

The Western Railroad opened service in 1839 through the Quaboag River corridor, with a depot southwest of the center village.

B. Population

The population of this area of Brookfield equalled ca. 800 before incorporation in 1840. The first accurate figure, for 1850, equals 1,344. Growth was particularly rapid between 1855 and 1860 when population increased from 1,364 to 1,548, and between 1865 and 1870, when it reached 1,842. Although the number of farmers was quite large for all of Brookfield in 1840, totalling 827, it is not known how many of these were in the west; manufacturing employment also increased, to 261, but represented a smaller proportion, one quarter. Immigrants to the town were primarily Irish, but the proportion was small, 12.5%, and they met informally for religious services. When separate societies replaced circuits among the Methodists, the foci became Ware and Brookfield meetings. With revivals in the 1850s, however, the town formed its own independent society (1851) and built a

meetinghouse in the town center. Early in the period, prior to 1848, the town established a poor farm.

C. Settlement Pattern

Expansion of the central village occurs after the 1839 establishment of rail service, with the development of the Central Street between Main Street and the depot. At the head of Central Street at Main, the town hall was built in 1859, and this area developed as a commercial focus. Central Street was developed primarily with residences, although some light industry located near the depot end. Residential side streets (High, Mechanic) were established from Central, and some construction took place on Milk Street to the west. The 1795 meetinghouse was remodelled in 1838, and the Methodist Episcopal church moved to the center in 1859. Cottages are built north of Main Street on Cottage Street, north of the cemetery on Wickaboag Valley Road, and northeast of the common on Winker Street.

D. Economic Base

During the period West Brookfield developed the most productive, most prosperous, and most commercial agricultural economy of the Brookfields. By 1850, 77% of its land was improved, and the investment in farm tools was greater in West Brookfield than in Brookfield or North Brookfield. Sheep-raising had declined there more than in the other towns, but cattle-raising had increased; by 1850, West Brookfield's farmers averaged nearly twice as many cows as the more traditional, conservative Brookfield farmers. West Brookfield's farmers also concentrated more on Dairy and meat production. Although more than 86,000 gallons of milk were sold annually by 1865, the large number of cows allowed high cheese production as well. Before the Civil War, the median number of pounds of butter produced on West Brookfield's farms totaled only about 100, compared to 150 in Brookfield and 146 in North Brookfield, while the median level of cheese produced in West Brookfield was 705 pounds, much higher than the 101 and 106 lbs. median levels of Brookfield and North Brookfield. These figures made West Brookfield an exceptionally strong dairy producer at mid-century with regard to the rest of the county.

West Brookfield's manufacturing and nonagricultural sector increased during the two decades before the Civil War, but the workshops remained relatively small. Shoemaking was the leader, employing 131 men and 17 women in 1855 in the production of 41,000 pairs of boots and 20,000 pairs of shoes, largely for the Southern trade. By 1865 these figures increased to 327 men and 27 women who produced 300,000 pairs of boots, valued at \$905,000, a more than elevenfold increase in value over the previous decade. Six boot and heel manufacturers existed in 1870, and the largest, G. H. Fales, employed more than 150. Smaller artisan-based production included hats; currying; saddles, harnesses, and trunks; wagons, sleighs, and other vehicles; chairs and cabinetware; axe handles and other wooden tool parts; and tinware. The printing office did job work and a small type and stereotype foundry was operated. A corset factory was established

during the late 1860s, and by 1875 employed 73 women and girls and seven men. Two milk and cheese factories were established during the 1860s. W. K. Lewis & Co. of Boston operated a condensed milk factory during the Civil War off Daris Road, just south of the Quaboag River. After the war, the factory continued to be used for the production of condensed milk as well as for cheese, butter, and apple butter. The West Brookfield cheese factory operated on North Brookfield Road east of the center village.

E. Architecture

Residential: In the early years of the period, a few center chimney forms are retained. Two-story, double chimney houses, including two double-pile plans, one of brick, survive. Of note is a ca. 1840-55 example, a two-story, five-bay, double chimney house with a hipped roof. Quoins, paired brackets at the cornice, projecting window heads with brackets, and a one story porch with paired brackets are distinguishing features. Four two-story, double-pile, end chimney dwellings are recorded. The predominant form is the two-story, three-bay, gable end, side-passage plan.

Double chimney houses from the second half of the period display Italianate brackets and cornices, and several mansard roofs survive. The two-story double chimney Gothic Revival style house is recorded.

Institutional: In 1838 the meetinghouse (1794), was turned at right angles to face the common and moved back one rod. A porch with four large columns was added. In 1859 the Whitefield United Methodist church acquired the former Templeton Universalist church and moved it to West Brookfield. It is one story, has a bell tower without a spire.

A town hall was built in 1859. Three gable end schoolhouses survive from the period.

Commercial: A ca. 1852 two-story, three-bay, leather shop, later hardware store, survives today as a beauty shop with a 20th century aluminum storefront.

A one-story, eight-bay, frame railroad station dating from the mid-19th century survives. Several of its doors have transoms with four panes displaying Gothic tracing.

Industrial: The W. K. Lewis & Co. condensed milk factory (later Eagle Brand and Borden), built during the Civil War, was a substantial two-story frame Italianate detailed building with a cupola. The structure burned in 1910.

IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)

A. Transportation

In the 1890s, streetcar service is established from Warren along Main-South Main Street through the center and east to Spencer.

B. Population

The growth that characterized the end of the last period continued through 1880 when the town reached its greatest size, 1,917. From that point on, however, decline was rapid, to 1,288 by 1915. Immigration remained relatively unimportant, the highest percentage of foreign-born within the town was 13.3% in 1875, and fell to 11% by 1915. The Irish continued to be most numerous, but followed by French Canadians, small numbers of English, and in 1915, also Poles. Agriculture remained important, employing ca. 150, while manufacturing employment among males dropped by nearly 40%. The Catholics continued to meet informally in the town or with the North Brookfield mission until the construction of Sacred Heart Church in 1889. The town's school system continued to be organized by districts. The Public Library was opened in 1874.

C. Settlement Pattern

Little change took place outside the central village where come commercial and institutional additions were made, and some residential infill and peripheral growth occurred. The fifth meetinghouse was built in 1882, and in 1889 the Sacred Heart Catholic Church was built on the south side of Main Street near Milk Street. The Merriam Library (1880) was built on Main Street opposite the town hall across Cottage Street. A commercial block was added in 1893. The main residential additions included the extension south on Pleasant Street to the Quaboag Corset Company, the West/Cross Street area south of Main and west of Milk, and the Lake Street area to the north.

D. Economic Base

West Brookfield's manufacturing production declined steadily through the 19th century and into the early 20th century following the prosperous years of the Civil War. This was largely the result of a decline in the boot and shoe industry, the products of which in 1865 were valued at \$905,000. The disruptions of the Civil War on the Southern trade and failed credit relationships severely impacted the industry. Production shifted to heavy boots for the Western trade, but declined after the 1880s until only one factory, MacIntosh & Co., remained in 1895. The Bay State Corset Co., headquartered in Springfield, operated a manufactory in West Brookfield through the period, employing 175 during its peak in the 1880s. A new three-story, wood frame factory was erected by the company on Pleasant Street in 1893.

Other firms and occupations included the printing office; harness and saddle repair; wagon and sleigh repair; blacksmithing; carpentry and building; and watch, clock, and jewelry repair. By 1905 no manufacturing was listed, but several occupations remained. Population closely followed the economic trends in West Brookfield. During the 1870s, population, employment, and manufacturing were at a peak. By the mid 1880s, all three began to experience a steady decline, which lasted until World War II.

Agriculture also underwent a number of changes after the Civil War. Some declines in total farm average, number of farms, and in particular, crop categories occurred, but they were more than balanced by the steadily increasing importance and value of milk and other dairy products. By 1905, 432,000 gallons of milk were sold, a more than 400% increase over 1875, and nearly 20,000 quarts of cream were also sold. Butter production fell to 9,400 lbs. per year in 1905, and cheese, once the leading product of the dairy, ceased to be made in any significant amounts by the late 19th century. The remaining cheese factory, formerly the W. K. Lewis & Co. condensed milk factory, was purchased by the Brigham Milk Co. of Boston and the production of condensed milk was reintroduced. The cultivation of cereal grains, with the exception of corn, began a steady decline after the Civil War, as did the cultivation of potatoes.

However, the greater importance of dairying led to increases in acreage of mowing land, which remained high through the period. In 1905, 2,700 acres were in mowing and 5,272 in permanent pasture; in 1865, only 2,049 acres were in mowing and 4,800 in permanent pasture. Poultry-raising for eggs and meat and orcharding also increased in the early 20th century.

The greatest changes in the number and size of farms occurred during the last quarter of the 19th century. In 1865, 211 farms contained 12,882 acres, averaging about 61 acres per farm; by 1895, 98 mixed husbandry farms and 11 dairy farms were recorded, and their acreage size had increased to almost 100 acres. Over the next decade dairy farms tripled in acreage and increased in number and size to 21 farms averaging 154 acres, while mixed husbandry farms declined in number to 95 and in average acreage to 51, as their total acreage fell by 50%.

E. Architecture

Residential: Primarily two-story, gable end dwellings survive from the period, both two and three bays in width. One two-story, three-bay, double chimney Queen Anne house is recorded. Several somewhat elaborately finished Queen Anne/Second Empire houses survive, including one designed by W. D. Preston of Boston in 1873 and said to resemble a Preston-designed house in West Newton. The 1 1/2-story double-pile house is two bays wide with a side entry and a 3 1/2-story polygonal corner tower. The mansard roof is covered with shingles. A ca. 1900 Colonial Revival style brick house, two stories high, five bays wide, with a hipped roof, end chimneys and a double-pile plan, was noted.

Institutional: In 1881, the 1794 meetinghouse (remodelled 1838) burned and was rebuilt the following year. Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church was erected in 1889 and is a gable end Gothic Revival structure with angled buttresses which continue the pitch of the broad roof and a side entrance tower.

The Merriam-Gilbert Public Library was built in 1880 from a design by Joseph R. Richards of Boston. The building is a 1 1/2-story,

brick Victorian Gothic structure with a three-bay gabled entry, banding, central dormer with date stone, and parapet gable ends.

Commercial: The Wickaboag House opened during this period. The hotel was a mid-19th century two-story, three bay dwelling.

The Dillard Edson Block, brick, was built in 1893 as was the modest, two-story Conway Block, a frame structure with metal siding, several storefronts (well preserved), and a dropped bracketed cornice. This is said to have been the major business block in town. Also surviving is a ca. 1910 one-story, three-bay storefront building.

The third railroad station, erected after 1885, is a low, one-story, stone, hipped roof structure with braces visually supporting the roof.

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915-1940)

A. Transportation

Main Street was improved early as part of the main Boston to New York auto route that passes west through Warren (Route 5, later Route 20). By the late 1920s, Ware Road was improved as a northeast route to the Connecticut River Valley. With the shift of Route 20 south, ca. 1930, Main Street-Ware Road became part of Route 9. The West Brookfield-Warren route became part of Route 19. With the upgrading of the North Brookfield Road in the 1930s, this and the Route 19 segment became part of Route 67.

B. Population

The town's size remained at ca. 1,300 throughout this period, experiencing a low at 1,255 in 1930 and a high of 1,387 in 1940. The foreign-born diminished further in proportion within the population, to 7.6% in 1940. A moderate segment, 16.7%, were classified as rural that year.

C. Settlement Pattern

Little change occurred. The 1882 Congregational church was destroyed in 1938, and not replaced until 1942. A number of cottages were built on the shores of Wickaboag Pond.

D. Economic Base

In the decade following World War I, West Brookfield's economy experienced an expansion in the manufacturing sector, as several wire manufacturing firms located in the town. A toy and wooden doll factory was in operation until 1922, when it was purchased by the Gantt Mfg. Co., makers of telephone cords and insulated wire and cable. In 1924 they moved from their Long Hill Road site to the former Grange Hall on South Main Street. The Long Hill Road facility was occupied by the Varnum Yeast Co., later the Capitol Yeast Co. A second wire firm, the Wheeldon Wire Co., occupied the former Quaboag Corset Co. building on Pleasant Street until 1928,

when it was purchased by the Seneca Wire Co. Several new buildings and machinery increased capacity fivefold in the production of special twisted and straightened wires, soft wires for special requirements, and high carbon steel wire. The works closed for several years during the 1930s and in the 1940s were absorbed into the Spencer Wire Co. The former MacIntosh & Co. Boot and Shoe Factory was used during the 1920s and 1930s by a chair manufacturer, shoe manufacturer, and the Quaboag Co. clothing manufactory. The Puritan Braid Co. produced shoe laces.

Agriculture remained an important part of the economy and lifeways of West Brookfield, providing the principal means of livelihood to many of the town's residents. Dairying was still the leading activity, and orchards and poultry farms were also important. Woodland increased as marginally productive lands were allowed to become reforested.

E. Architecture

Residential: Scattered examples of modest Colonial Revival style houses and bungalows represent the period housing stock.

Institutional: The tornado of 1938 seriously damaged the 1882 First Congregational Church. The structure was rebuilt in 1942 and is now a 1 1/2-story, hipped roof block with a projecting gabled wing sheathed in shingles (possibly part of the 1882 structure); a tower entry and long gabled ell at right angles to the shingled wing are definitely 1942 "colonial."

Commercial: A 1919 frame gas station appears as a single-story recessed storefront building with a parapet cornice and an attached two-bay garage. Also surviving is a 1935 Colonial Revival style cinderblock, three-bay gas station.

Industrial: 1918 concrete block toy factory.

XI. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

XII. SOURCES