

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

WHITMAN

Report Date: 1981

Associated Regional Report: Southeast 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: August, 1981

COMMUNITY: Whitman

I. TOPOGRAPHY

Whitman is located in the northeastern portion of the Narragansett Basin. Drainage is via the Shumatuscacant River in the east and Meadow Brook in the west. Topography relief is moderate with a northwest/southeast axis. Swamp lands occur along waterways. Hobart Pond is artificial dating from the Colonial Period. Soils tend to be generally sandy to gravelly.

II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Whitman was incorporated as South Abington from parts of Abington and East Bridgewater on March 4, 1875. Exchanged territory with Brockton in 1875. Name changed to Whitman in 1886.

III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Whitman is a small industrial community in Plymouth County. Possible Contact period native sites. No First Period European settlement small Colonial period settlement with strong ties to Abington Center. Late 18th early 19th century economic base agricultural with small industrial node centered around Hobarts Pond during the early part of the period. Distinct separation of religious and residential from industrial node throughout study period with secondary industrial node developing on Washington Street in the mid-19th century. Distinct residential areas according to income differences developed by latter half of 19th century. Strong industrial base continued into the 20th century.

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500 - 1620)

A. Transportation Routes:

Segment of primary corridor between Massachusetts Bay and Pembroke Ponds-Plymouth Bay. Documented trail follows north/south axis of Shumatuscacant River as Washington Street (Campbell, 1975, map) with probable alternate as Plymouth Street (Route 58) and Franklin Street (Route 27) around Rye Hill. Logical cross link over Shumatuscacant apparently follows axis of South Street. Conjectured east/west connector over Prospect Hill may follow portion of Pine Street. The Satucket path (Washington Street), a major native trail, passed through the center of present Whitman.

B. Settlement Patterns:

No reported native contact period sites. However, the presence of extensive potential planting grounds in present Whitman, the area's proximity to the Pembroke Ponds (site of major native settlement) and the passage of a major native trail (Satucket Path, Washington Street) through Whitman suggests the likelihood of contact period sites in the Whitman area, particularly in the vicinity of Rye Hill, Bedford and Washington Streets and Locust Hill.

C. Subsistence Base:

Seasonal fishing, hunting, collecting and horticulture. Fishing was possible in the area's several streams although the natives probably relied more on the extensive freshwater sources of Weymouth and Pembroke. The late spring and summer months were probably spent on the coast (e.g., Hingham, Weymouth, Scituate, Marshfield) harvesting the abundant marine resources and trading with European explorers and fishermen.

D. Observations:

Whitman's limited freshwater resources were only capable of supporting a small native population. Locally, the natives likely had strong ties with the Mattakeesets of the Pembroke Ponds and/or the Weymouth natives. Regional affiliation was probably with the Massachusetts centered in Neponset.

V. FIRST SETTLEMENT PERIOD (1620 - 1675)

A. Transportation Routes:

Native trails improved as regional highways with primary north/south path from Weymouth to Bridgewater-Middleborough as Washington Street. Secondary route to Pembroke Ponds and Plymouth followed Plymouth and Franklin Streets.

B. Population:

No reported population figures. No permanent white population.

C. Settlement Patterns:

No documentation of native sites or pre-1675 white settlement. Highly probable some native settlement continued particularly since white encroachment on native lands was minimal.

D. Economic Base:

Native population probably maintained traditional seasonal rounds. European-Indian trade, however, assumed increased importance in the native economy. The Whitman area was likely utilized by residents of adjacent white settlements (i.e., The Bridgewaters, Marshfield, Weymouth, Hingham) as a source of fish and wild game, livestock fodder and timber.

E. Observations:

Whitman's moderate development suggests a good probability of surviving native sites, especially in the vicinity of Rye and Locust Hills.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675 - 1775)

A. Transportation Routes:

Development of milling on Shumatusacant created radial network around

Whitman center with School, Harvard Streets as period roads. Improvement of axis over Rye Hill with extension of Plymouth Street (Route 58). Washington and Plymouth Streets were established as public thoroughfares in c. 1690 and 1707, respectively. These two routes provided direct access to the center of Old Abington (Abington). The establishment of Winter Street in c. 1738 was probably undertaken to provide the contemporary Hobart industrial complex with a transportation route to settlements south of Whitman.

B. Population:

No figures for the native or white population. Old Abington (Abington, Rockland, Whitman) around the time of incorporation (1712) had 300 residents. By 1726, the population had only increased to 371 residents. An almost 400% increase occurred between 1726 and 1764 with the population reaching 1263. At the time of the Revolution (1776), Old Abington had 1263 inhabitants. The majority of the Old Abington settlers were Duxbury, Hingham, Newbury, Scituate and Weymouth natives.

C. Settlement Patterns:

No reported native settlement sites. King Philip's War and the white postwar settlement would have displaced any natives inhabiting Whitman at the outbreak of the war. The first white settlers were attracted to the area because of its agricultural potential. The first settlement took place in the 1680's and 1690's. Thomas Josselyn erected a home in c.1686 in the vicinity of the Colebrook cemetery. Philip Reed built a home in c.1696 west of Washington Street near the Abington/Whitman line while Christopher or William Dyer settled immediately south of Commercial Street prior to 1699. Early mid-18th century settlement occurred adjacent to Washington Street. Mid-late 18th century settlement clustered about Hobarts Pond, site of a mid-18th century industrial complex. The community lacked a civic center, this was situated in present Abington.

D. Economic Base:

No documentation of the native economy. Those natives remaining in the Whitman area would have had limited mobility due to the extensive white postwar settlement. Increased reliance on white community for employment and financial support.

Agriculture was the focal point of the white settlement. Lumbering provided timber for the North River shipbuilding industry. An industrial complex was developed on the southern end of Hobarts Pond. A sawmill was established in c.1693. Isaac Hobart erected a gristmill slightly southwest of the gristmill in c.1731. Colonel Aaron Hobart constructed a blast furnace/iron foundry in the mid-18th century. This operation produced bells, munitions and cannon.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Whitman contains approximately a dozen dwellings dating from the Colonial period. Of these, most are central-chimney cottages with five-bay, center-entered facades. At least two brick cottages are known, one on High Street, dated c.1725 and the other on Winter Street, dated c.1740. The High Street cottage, completely of masonry construction

with a center-chimney, is located opposite a brick yard said to have operated during the 18th-century. That cottage exhibits the standard five-bay, center-entered plan while the Winter Street Cottage has a three-quarter plan with an offset interior chimney; the cottage is of brick construction in the front two-thirds only with a framed lean-to to the rear. In both instances, the existence of interior chimneys rather than the more likely end-wall chimneys commonly found in early 18th-century masonry construction makes the early dates assigned to the two cottages somewhat suspect; corroboration of the early dates is in part contingent on verification of 18th-century brick yards on High Street. Two-story houses for the Colonial period are not known to survive but at least one example (Benjamin Hobart House) is recorded; this, too, is an unusual local example, in this instance, of a gable-on-hip roof form. The Hobart house (no date) was a two-and-a-half story structure with a five-bay center-entered facade and end interior chimneys rising on the gable ridge; a hip-roofed Federal portico may be later or may indicate a construction date in the Federal period, but the size and placement of the chimneys suggest at least part of the house dates from the Colonial period. The plan of the house, with projecting wings (as seen from the side) incorporated beneath the hipped portion of the roof, may be responsible for the construction in the area of several houses with one-room deep projections enclosed within one-story verandas (see Rockland Inventory). Cottages of the 18th-century are most likely to survive on Washington, Harvard, Bedford, Plymouth and Franklin streets.

F. Observations:

The community maintained close social and economic ties with the center of Old Abington (Abington). The settlement relied on present Abington for civic and religious facilities. It was not established as a parish until the 19C. None of Whitman's late 17C/early 18C origins remain, largely due to the extensive development of Whitman center in the late 19C and 20C. However, the Dyer Memorial Library (Abington) is an excellent repository of secondary and primary sources and artifacts dealing with all of Old Abington.

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

A. Transportation Routes:

Improvement of north/south corridor with New Bedford turnpike (1807) from Weymouth as New Bedford St. (Route 18).

B. Population:

Separate figures not available prior to incorporation in 1875. Congregational Church at Center 1808.

C. Settlement Location:

Continued residential farming settlement along what is now Washington Street and along South Ave. Continued development of industrial node at South Ave. and Shumatuscant River. Religious concentration at intersedtion of Washington and South Ave. Scattered farm houses along existing roads. Minimal settlement along turnpike (Rte. 18).

D. Economic Base:

Bell foundry begun by Aaron Hobart at site of father Isaac Hobart's early grist mill and canal. Meeting house bells said to have been cast here by 1769 under direction of deserter from British army by the name of Gallimore. (A son of Hobart's is said to have later taught the trade to Paul Revere in Boston.) At outbreak of the Revolution, Hobart, with backing of Provincial government, set about casting cannon, probably by May or June of 1776. His son Benjamin in his History is responsible for the story that a Frenchman passing through town advised him to alter the configuration of his furnace stack. More likely is the account of Martha Campbell that the Provincial government sent Col. DeMaresquelles, newly appointed Inspector General of foundries, to aid Hobart. Though Hobart eventually succeeded in casting several cannon -- held to be the first cast in this country -- they continued to be cast hollow, and it remained for Hugh Orr in East Bridgewater, under DeMaresquelles' direction, to cast and bore the first solid cannon.

At least one sawmill (Hersey's) and one grist mill in operation in 1790s. The sawmill, like others in Abington and Rockland up to about 1830, supplied large quantities of oak timber to North River saipyards and other ports from Boston to Plymouth. Obadiah Hersey's mill is said to have supplied timber for the frigate Constitution built at Boston. Timber also supplied active wooden box industry, 1790-1830.

Tacks had been made in "Old" Abington since about 1770, but with the invention of a foot-operated tack machine with movable ties by Ezekiel Reed of North Bridgewater (now Brockton) about 1786, the making of tacks became one of Whitman's chief industries. Using this machine, Benjamin Hobart established c. 1807 the first tack factory near the eastern end of the 1745 power canal. With the invention in Hanover by Ezekiel's son Jesse of a tack making machine about 1815, and its improvement by Samuel Rogers (E. Bridgewater) and Thomas Blanchard (Millbury) c.1817, Benjamin and Elihu Hobart bought up the patent rights and several machines -- built in Pembroke -- and commenced manufacture in quantity. (With the sudden appearance of English tacks by machines of the stolen patent, tariff legislation was successfully introduced to curb imports of foreign tacks.)

The shoe business in Whitman was probably also begun in this period, though at this date it is impossible to distinguish Whitman's production from that of the rest of Old Abington. The business was thought to have been introduced into Rockland about 1793. However, if the figures of 1875 are any guide at all, Whitman's part in Old Abington's shoe industry was limited. In 1875 Whitman's production amounted to only 9 percent of the total produced by the three towns, with Abington and Rockland each taking about 45-46 percent. A low figure for Whitman in the Federal period could be further justified by the introduction of the shoe industry from towns to the north -- Weymouth and Randolph, closer to Abington and Rockland than to Whitman -- and by the strength of the tack manufacture in the more southerly town, which was closer to the iron-oriented Bridgewater.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Although cottages were undoubtedly the most common house form of the period, several very well-detailed two-story houses are known, at Whitman Center on Washington Street and on Pleasant Street east of the center. These houses are hip-roofed, brick end-wall chimney houses with keystone, splayed lintels and elaborate frontispieces with porticos and leaded elliptical fanlights and three-quarter length sidelights; the portico of the Washington Street house incorporates incised swags in the frieze. Other somewhat less pretentious Federal houses with hip roofs and interior end chimneys were built in limited numbers across the town. Far more numerous are center-chimney, gable-roofed cottages, almost all with the full five-bay, center-entered facade. At least one brick end-wall chimney cottage with a double pile plan unusual for the smaller cottage forms known on Harvard Street, but, in general, end-chimney cottages are not common.

Institutional: The Congregational church was established out of the Third Parish of Bridgewater (East Bridgewater) in 1807. The church the congregation built is notable for its twin towered design; the building as originally constructed was a two-and-a-half story, gable-roofed structure with a Doric portico in antis and pedimented gable-end in the Roman Classical mode with twin towers on square bases with open octagonal domed cupolas rising from each end of the facade. The form is very rare but has been noted in Kingston (1798) and probably derives from Bulfinch's Hollis Street Meetinghouse; by 1844, the twin towers had been removed and replaced by a single steeple centered on the facade. In 1822, a Baptist church was founded at Whitman and a very small meetinghouse (27' x 24') constructed. Two schools are shown in Whitman on the 1830 map, but are not known to survive.

VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830-1870)

A. Transportation Routes:

Continued improvement of north/south axis with mainline of Old Colony railroad to Plymouth (1845) and branch to Bridgewater (1846) from Whitman junction (now abandoned). Period connectors to Whitman center include Auburn and Temple Sts. from Brockton with Essex St. over Shumatuscancant Valley.

B. Population:

Separate figures not available prior to incorporation in 1875.

C. Settlement Location

Continued residential settlement at intersection of Washington and South Ave., expansion of this node to include area bounded by Broad St. Some division of industrial activity with establishment and expansion of Gurney interests in the northern part of the village along Washington St. Some clustering of residential activity along Bedford Street and intersection of Auburn along School, Harvard, and South at the intersection of Washington and Auburn.

D. Economic Base

Manufacture of tacks, and boots and shoes dominated Whitman's economy, though it is difficult to distinguish Whitman's production from

the rest of Old Abington. The Old Abington statistics show two tack factories -- presumably Benjamin Hobart's in Whitman and D.B. Gurney's in Abington center. In 1859 Hobart sold out to Dunbar, Hobart & Whidden, who, with an extensive new factory in 1864, led the town into expanded production. DH&W was followed within the decade by two more tack factories, including Gurney's from Abington center.

Several shoe factories were begun in the 1850s and '60s. Much of the business in the latter decade was spurred by Civil War demands and the McKay stitching machine, to which the success of the men's boot and shoe industry in the area generally has been attributed. Old Abington is said "to have shod half the Union army" (Thompson, p. 480 -- though we note that the other "half of the Union army was shod by North Bridgewater" (WPA Guide) with machine-sewn shoes, and its success in wartime is thought to have guaranteed the popularity of the machine. The McKay stitcher was invented by Lyman R. Blake while employed at the boot and shoe factory of Gurney and Mears in 1857 (Thompson, p. 481), then housed in American Hall, near the southeast corner of Washington and South streets. Blake became a member of the firm and built the first machine with the understanding that he should build the machine with his money and give the concern the use of it. In 1861 Blake joined with McKay in the introduction of the machines to public use.

E. Architecture

Residential: Center-chimney cottages continued to be built into the 1830s, but, increasingly, end-chimney construction came to be the rule for cottage architecture. Five-bay, center-entered cottages with interior end-chimneys rising forward of the ridge are an uncommon form which is occasionally found in Whitman; these probably date from the early years of the period. Similar uncertainty about the placement of double chimneys can be noted in the number of houses set with the end-gable to the street and the interior end chimneys rising through the gable peak. Also common in Whitman are transitional Greek Revival/Italianate cottages of the 1850s with double chimneys placed very close together and centered on the ridge. While recessed sidehall porches are common on Greek Revival cottages of the period, the large gables normally found on somewhat later Italianate cottages of the region are almost unknown in Whitman. At least a few sidehall and center-entrance cottages with Gothic Revival detailing (generally, pierced trim on verandas or bargeboards) are known. Concentrations of mid-century cottages are found along Harvard and School Streets, on Franklin street and along Washington Street. While two-story houses were not built in any numbers during the period, by the end of the period, most cottages had been enlarged through the adoption of a story-and-a-half plan in which additional attic space was created beneath a broad gable roof. Most dwellings of the period are incorporated within larger complexes consisting of a connected series of ells to the side and rear, sheds and a barn.

Institutional: The First Congregational church of Whitman was remodelled during the period in the Romanesque Revival style; round-head windows, a deep pedimented porch and tall three-stage steeple were added. The Baptist church was replaced in 1832 with a 41' x 45' structure which was replaced in 1847; the 1847 building was remodelled in 1857 and survives in much the same condition today. It is a two-and-a-half story, nave plan Romanesque Revival church with double towers on the facade, one of which carries a two-stage square tower with an open belfry and spire.

Other institutional buildings of the period were a double entrance, story-and-a-half Italianate school (probably typical of the dozen or so schools which were built in the town before 1866) and the Hastings School (c. 1870), a two-and-a-half story Italianate building with flush-board sheathing, quoins and round-head windows; neither of still stands.

IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)

A. Transportation Routes:

Expansion of interurban trolley service from Brockton to Whitman center by 1890s on Temple-South-Plymouth Sts with connector to Bridgewater on School-New Bedford Sts (Tucker, 1960, map). Later expansion of street-car route to Plymouth from Whitman center on South Street over Rye Hill (Cummings, 1959, map).

B. Population:

Population after incorporation in 1875 totalled 2456, continuous and steady growth to end to period total of 7520. Foreign born population totalled 443 in 1885 with majority Irish, 1915 total 1146 with majority Canadian. Church of the Holy Ghost est. prior to 1884.

C. Settlement

Expansion of residential settlement in the area bounded by Bedford on the west Rock on north, Washington on northeast and Glen, School and Commercial Streets on the South, also on Park Ave. and Franklin Streets east of the railroad tracks. Industrial node continues at intersection of railroad and South Ave. and along Washington on the north.

D. Economic Base

Under the influence of adjacent Brockton's exploding shoe industry, and a new water-supply system of its own, Whitman in the post-war decades developed a relatively diverse and strong industrial economy. In the 15 years between incorporation in 1875 and 1890, the town nearly doubled in size. South Abington, wrote Charles Meserve in 1884, echoing similar descriptions of Brockton,

is one of the most enterprising towns in the county ... There is a spirit of push and enterprise that is seldom met with, and there is a greater variety of manufactures than in any other part of the town of which it formerly constituted a part. Coffins, caskets, steel shanks, packing-boxes, boots and shoes, tacks, and nails, are some of the articles manufactured ... Probably no town in Plymouth County has grown more rapidly during the past five years than the beautiful town of South Abington.

In the early 1880s alone, six new factories were erected, including an expansion of the wooden box factory of the Atwood Brothers, and several shoe factories.

But Whitman's growth does not seem to have been sustained. The new impetus was primarily in shoe production, and as Brockton's manufacturers turned increasingly toward quality shoe production, and away from cheap shoes, the industry in Whitman -- which, as in Abington and Rockland, had

always been in quality production -- must have felt the competition. After the 1880s, no new shoe factories appear to have been built.

E. Architecture

Residential: The neighborhoods around the town center filled in with modest sidehall plan Queen Anne and Colonial Revival houses, most of these standing a story-and-a-half with additional attic space created by kneewall framing. There is little differentiation of neighborhoods by social strata, rather, larger and more ambitious houses tend to be mixed in with smaller, more modest middle class housing; in general, however, more substantial houses are clustered north of Temple Street and west of Washington Street as well as along Pleasant and Plymouth Streets. While Queen Anne style houses predominate, a number of good Second Empire, late Italianate and shingled Colonial Revival houses are known; the number of houses retaining original details such as spindle screens in gables and on porches, porches with half-moon arches, cast iron cresting and patterned shingles is quite high in Whitman. (The spindle screens and half-moon arches suggest construction dates in the 1880s for many of Whitman's Queen Anne houses as such Japanese-influenced details were popular at that time.) Somewhat later in the period (c. 1900), multiple-family houses began to be constructed along main streets, such as Temple, Franklin, South and Auburn Streets; most of these are Queen Anne/Colonial Revival two-family houses, but a few three-deckers were built; in one instance, (on Temple Street), a Federal house was enlarged with a third story and converted to three-family use. At least a few two-family houses of the Brockton type (two-and-a-half story), gable-roofed Queen Anne with two-story square bay) were built. In/outlying areas, cottages continued to be constructed in some numbers, with some Craftsman cottages with hip, jerkin head or pyramidal roofs, raised rubble basements and kneewall porches with stout posts built along Franklin, Pleasant, Harvard, School and lower Washington Streets.

Institutional: Whitman contains several imposing period institutional buildings including two well-detailed Queen Anne schools, the Dyer School (c. 1885) on School Street, a two-and-a-half story shingled building with a cupola, and the Holt School (1893), a two-and-a-half story, hip-roofed shingled Romanesque Revival building of great character with frontispiece consisting of a round-arched entry in the brick raised basement with a recessed shingled balcony on the second floor and culminating in a hip-roofed belfry tower with exposed rafters and an eyebrow accent. Also dating from the period is the present Town Hall (1907), a two-and-a-half story, hip roofed brick Colonial Revival building which replaced an earlier mansard-roofed town hall which burned. At least two fire stations of the period survive, one at the town center on Temple Street (1901) and one at the intersection of South and Plymouth Streets (c. 1910); both are two-story, brick Romanesque Revival Buildings. Most of Whitman's churches were built in the period. These include the Unitarian (1888), Methodist (1875), Episcopal (1910) and Advent Christian (1893) churches; all simple framed buildings with modest Queen Anne and Gothic Revival detailing; the Unitarian and Methodist churches both have offset square towers.

Commercial: Several large frame and masonry commercial blocks were built at the town center during the period. These include one particularly substantial Panel Brick building (c. 1885) with both two and three-story components, a three-story brick High Victorian Gothic building (1883) and several more modest two and three-story brick High Victorian Gothic building (1883) and several more modest two and three-story frame Queen

Anne commercial buildings. At least two four-story frame hotels operated in the period; neither is known to survive.

Industrial: At least two major show factory complexes survive in Whitman; these are the Bostonian Shoe Company (1864; 1876; 1879), housed in a four-story mansard-roofed building unusual for its Chateausque turreted stair towers and rouelles and a two-story brick Italianate factory (c. 1880) on South Avenue. A two-and-a-half story, hip roofed Queen Anne railroad depot with a square cupola with octagonal spire (c. 1895) burned in 1972.

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915-1940)

A. Transportation Routes:

Abandonment of streetcar service by 1920s and improvement of local roads as auto highways. Primary north/south axis follows Route 18 (New Bedford St.) to central Plymouth. East/west connector to Brockton as Route 27 (Temple-South Sts.) from Halifax.

B. Population:

Dip in Population 1915-1920 then increase in 1925, then decline to 1935, growth resumes in 1940.

C. Settlement Location:

Residential activity consists of infill at Center and along existing roads.

D. Economic Base:

Relatively little new industry. The shoe industry remained dominant, and with the former Jenkins steel shoe frank factory, now a branch of the United Shoe Machinery Corp., the town "excelled in the production of shanks and shoe findings." The U.S. Shank and Finding Co. (the USM subsidiary) was said to be one of the largest factories of its kind in the world. Both the G.G. Roberts Corp. (tack production in the former DH&W factory) and D.B. Gurney continued tack production, though Roberts closed in 1941. The town also had several substantial poultry farms.

E. Architecture

Residential: Residential construction occurred along Temple and Auburn Streets. More modest cottages were also built in some numbers as infill housing in established neighborhoods.

Institutional: The only institutional buildings known to have been constructed in the period are the Holy Ghost Catholic church (1921) on School Street, a buff brick Gothic Revival church with a nave plan, side aisles and low, square tower, the Post Office (1938), a modest brick Colonial Revival building, and the High School (1927, J. Williams Beal), a two-story Georgian Revival building with a segmental portico and herringbone masonry accents.

Commercial: Several one-story masonry storefront blocks were constructed at the town center, with a Beaux-Arts classical concrete store at the inter-

section of South and Washington Streets. Other period commercial buildings may survive on Bedford Street.

XI. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

Whitman has no survey; areas of concentration for future survey efforts should include the town center, the eastern portion of the town, especially Winter, Pleasant and Plymouth Streets, and the southwestern portion of town (School, Harvard, Auburn Streets). Potential districts at School/Harvard Streets and town center. Particularly notable are Whitman's potentially early brick houses, well-developed Federal houses, well-preserved late 19th-century commercial buildings and late 19th-century schools.

A. Industrial: There is no town survey beyond the single Tolles inventory form for the Commonwealth Shoe & Leather Co. Other important industrial complexes surviving which should be surveyed include two major tack factories (Dunbar, Hobart & Whidden; and D.B. Gurney), the Jenkins Bros. Steel shoe shank mf'y (now United Shoe Machinery), and the Atwood Bros. box factory. In addition, the 2-1/2 story frame building at Auburn St. and Route 18 may be the boot and shoe factory of M.S. Reed (1865), an important survival, if so. At least some portions of Benjamin Hobart's 1745 power canal also survive, and the Whitman Historical Commission has created the "Little Comfort Historical Park" at its western end.

XII. DEVELOPMENTAL PRESSURES

Expansive commercial activity obvious around Route 18 and 27 junction with gradual erosion of historic fabric around Whitman center from South St. (Route 27) development. Suburban pressure from Brockton expanding along east/west axis of Routes 27 and 14.

XII. SOURCES

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