

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

EVERETT

Report Date: 1981

Associated Regional Report: Boston Area

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: 1981

Community: Everett

I. TOPOGRAPHY

City occupies 3.75 square miles of the Boston Basin lowland on the north shore of the Mystic River. The city's western and southern boundaries are formed by the Malden and Mystic Rivers, whose extensive tidal marshes became in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the site of major industrial activity. From the junction of the Saugus Branch and Eastern railroads, the land gradually rises to the northeast, culminating in Mount Washington (175 feet) and Corbett Hill, drumlins, and Belmont Hill. Ferry Street follows a narrow valley between these elevations -- a valley which gradually widens into what were extensive meadows and, to the east, the Great Swamp (now Holy Cross Cemetery in Malden), a natural boundary between Everett and its parent to the north, Malden. This northeast corner of the town is drained by the Saugus River. The great proportion of the town is not more than 50 feet above sea level. No freshwater streams are known to have provided waterpower, though a tide mill operated on Island End River.

II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Original part of Charlestown grant 1629 as Mystic Side, with surviving Eight Mile Line of 1636 as Revere-Chelsea boundary. Northern area included as part of Malden town grant 1649 with latter annexation to Mystic Side 1727, with exception of Penny Ferry strip (Malden Bridge) at Broadway (now Boston). Became South Malden parish 1730 but failed to retain status after Revolution. Established as independent town of Everett 1870 with division at Malden line. City incorporated 1892.

III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Industrial suburban city on northern axis of inner metropolitan Boston. Located on Mystic River tidal basin with important complex of native sites at Island End River at Beacham Street oil depot, natural spring at Chelsea-Ferry Streets, and reported fortification on Mt. Washington.

Area of early English settlement along Mystic River at Beacham Point before 1630 and ferry landing to Charlestown by mid-17th century. Corridor of activity between Malden and Chelsea during Colonial period with meeting house located on Belmont Hill at Hancock Street during mid-18th century and one notable surviving early gambrel house on Ferry St. Connecting link to Boston established by late 18th century at Malden Bridge, but high toll rate retards development until turnpike extensions on Broadway during early 19th century. Beacham Point expanded as country estate, although few examples of Federal period houses remain. Primary growth occurred with Boston railroad access during mid-19th century with industrial development along Malden and Island End Rivers with chemical and small manufacturing, including surviving period workers housing at Hendersonville and Bow Street district. Town center is developed at Everett Square with modest suburban neighborhood at crest of Hancock and

Summer Streets and commercial corridor along Main Street to Malden with brick row blocks. Early rural cemetery established on northern periphery at Woodlawn with examples of Victorian funerary art. Expansion of town center is during late 19th century with streetcar connections to metropolitan Boston. Everett Square is marked by series of architect designed civic buildings, including landmark library. Suburban subdivision activities extended across entire area through early 20th century with mixture of two-family and three-decker housing of modest design with secondary commercial center at Glendale Square at Broadway and Ferry Street. Industrial expansion continued to encroach upon residential district along Malden and Island End rivers, especially around Beacham Point where oil storage, elevated transit yards and monumental power station were located during mid-20th century, including commercial strip activity along Revere Beach Parkway. At present developmental pressures are most evident along Mystic River corridor and Broadway, while Everett Square retains a remarkable integrity of urban fabric which appears to have stabilized the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500-1620)

A. Transportation Routes:

Route corridor along Mystic tidelands with primary E/W trail apparent as Buckman-Chelsea Streets from Malden to Chelsea Rivers. Probably N/S branch from documented native spring around Mt. Washington as Ferry-Elm Streets with secondary branch to Great Swamp (cemeteries) as Shute Street. Other possible candidates to Mystic tideflats appear as Main-Bow Streets to Beacham Point and Malden Bridge along Island End River (oil tank farms). Junction between Main and Buckman Streets in West Everett unclear to Bell Rock Park (Malden).

B. Settlement Patterns:

While no period sites have been archaeologically documented, historical literature suggests several probable period sites. These include on Mt. Washington (known as "Sagamore Hill)", around the spring at Ferry and Chelsea Streets, and on Beacham Point (site of Sagamore John's village). Additional sites likely along Mystic River though most have probably been destroyed or buried.

C. Subsistence Pattern:

Important access point to shellfish in Mystic tidal flats as well as other marine resources. Good horticultural land was probably also available along the Mystic lowlands.

D. Observations:

A probable terminus for the corridor running from the Mystic River north to the large lakes and ponds in Stoneham and Wakefield.

Also a likely spot for period trade with Europeans. This, as well as seasonal food collection, would have resulted in a large seasonal population. Identity not known for sure but appear to be part of the Pawtucket group which occupied the Mystic/Saugus drainages.

V. FIRST SETTLEMENT PERIOD (1620-1675)

A. Transportation Routes:

Native trails remain as highways with primary E/W road between Malden and Chelsea as Buckman-Chelsea Streets by mid 17th century, and ferry to Charlestown at Bow-Broadway (Malden Bridge site) by 1640.

B. Population:

First settlement begun by 1643, though number of families probably amounted to not more than 10-12 by 1675.

C. Settlement Patterns:

Early settlement activity along Mystic River tidelands with reported landing site of Maverick estate at Beacham St. Island End River by 1620s and Penny Ferry to Charlestown at Bow-Broadway by 1640. Later development of farmsteads at Mystic side along Chelsea-Buckman Streets and around Mt. Washington during mid 17th century, although no apparent systematic divisions.

D. Economic Base:

Subsistence agriculture and fishing.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

A. Transportation Routes:

Highways intact from 17th century with primary E/W route Buckman-Chelsea Streets and alternate around Belmont Hill as Ferry Street to Malden with branch rangeways as Nichols and Shute Streets. Location of meeting house on Belmont Hill has little direct effect on road pattern.

B. Population:

Probably very slight growth, if any. In 1765, total population of Malden, Melrose, and Everett was only 983, of which Everett had perhaps 100-200.

C. Settlement Patterns:

Expansion of agricultural settlement along Buckman-Chelsea Streets axis and Ferry-Elm Streets around Mt. Washington during mid 18th century, with meeting house focus on Belmont Hill at Hancock-Broadway by 1730. Beacham Point remains as important

estate site with Charlestown Ferry landing on Bow Street (Malden Bridge).

D. Economic Base:

Agriculture and fishing. Some products sent to Boston markets.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Although it once possessed a number of early houses, including a wide range of vernacular house types with full, three-quarter, and half houses as well as cottages, nearly all of Everett's 17th and 18th century structures were demolished with the onset of high density residential development at the end of the 19th century. Only two period houses are presently known, although others may survive in altered contexts. The two surviving houses are gambrel roofed end chimney cottage on Ferry Street (the Jonathan Green House, c. 1720?) and an end chimney half house on Bow Street.

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1820)

A. Transportation Routes:

Highways remain from mid-18th century. Improvement of N/S Boston connections with Malden Bridge over Mystic River 1787 and highway link to Saugus as School-Broadway by 1797, later extended as Newburyport Turnpike 1806 from bridgehead to Malden.

B. Population:

Figures unavailable. Opening of Malden Bridge, 1787, and Newburyport Turnpike, 1806, probably spurred some growth. Perhaps 250-300 population by end of period. In 1835 South Malden had less than 50 houses.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Construction of Malden Bridge at ferry site and extension of turnpike across Belmont Hill prompts development around Everett Square area by early 19th century. Beacham Point remains as isolated estate, while Belmont Hill-Hancock Street attracts early residential sites.

D. Economic Base:

Brick making begun by 1795 in low-lying areas. Agricultural pursuits remained dominant, with increasing amounts marketed in Boston. Probably some shoemaking begun in this period as well. Malden Bridge, constructed in 1787, was 2,420 feet in length and reputedly "the longest bridge in the world" at the time. Builder was Lemuel Cox of Malden, also responsible for the Essex Bridge in Salem. Cox and another builder later sailed to Ireland with a load of American oak to construct the Londonderry Bridge (ref: Winship).

D. Economic Base:

Brickmaking and farming remained primary occupations. Van-voorhis tide mill on Island End River; rope walk on site of modern Everett stadium. Arrival of both Saugus Branch and Eastern railroads in 1854 augmented already growing land sales for residential developments. No significant new industries until post-Civil War years. Arrival of New England Chemical Company, 1868, signaled the beginning of a long history in developing chemical industry in Everett, though this particular company failed by 1872.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Few buildings from this period survive and apparently comparatively few were built, despite the arrival of the railroad (18). Those houses built in the period are generally modest suburban sidehall Greek Revival and Italianate structures. A few of these stand along Hancock, Ferry, Chelsea, Bucknam and Main Streets. Only one highstyle Italianate house is recorded, although at least a few others were undoubtedly constructed; this is the Alonzo Evans House, a center entrance house with a cupola, which stood at Broadway and Hancock until 1926.

Institutional:

In 1851, Woodlawn Cemetery was established at the northern edge of town. Laid out in a Picturesque plan, the cemetery had a stuccoed Gothic Revival gate and gatehouse, since demolished.

Commercial; Industrial:

Little commercial or industrial activity is known for this period, but at least a few simple frame stores are recorded as is at least one "ten-footer" shoe shop.

IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)

A. Transportation Routes:

Extension of streetcar routes from Everett Square on Buckman Street to Malden, Chelsea Street to Chelsea and Broadway and Ferry Streets to Malden by late 19th century.

B. Population:

Everett's population in this period was one of the fastest growing of any in the state, doubling in the decade 1870-80, nearly tripling, 1880-90, and doubling again 1890-1900. Between 1870 with a population of 2,220 and 1915 (37,718), the population grew nearly 800 people a year. Approximately 28% of the 1905 population was foreign born, with natives of Nova Scotia and Ireland making up about 11%.

C. Settlement Patterns:

Continued expansion of residential development along major transit routes from Everett Square with nearly continuous grid along Broadway axis with status area on Hancock-Summer Streets surrounded by multiple family tract housing between Main and Ferry Streets. Everett Square retains primary civic and commercial functions with secondary center at Glendale Square (Ferry-Broadway) and commercial activity along Main and Chelsea Streets. Beacham Point nearly surrounded by industrial fringe activity of oil storage and railyards by early 20th century with expansion along Malden River corridor around Hendersonville. Mt. Washington retained as isolated institutional site for hospital.

D. Economic Base:

This and the succeeding period were Everett's era of rapid industrial expansion, prompted by factors including a rapidly growing work force, incorporation of the town (1870) and city (1893), easy access to and available land close to two rail lines, and proximity to Boston.

Alexander Cochrane, a Scot, worked in the Talbot Chemical Works in North Billerica 1849-58 before coming to Malden in the latter year. In 1872 the Cochrane Chemical Co. purchased the trackside property of the New England Chemical Co., and by 1875, with a product worth \$300,000, the company was the leading town industry -- and virtually the only one beyond five brick yards, an emery wheel manufacturer, and a large grain mill (probably that owned by Vanvoorhis, producing over \$205,000 worth of meal). The success of Cochrane in the succeeding 40 years was mirrored in three other major industries -- paint and varnish, iron and steel, and gas, oil, and coke products. The earliest were the varnish factories, already established in nearby Malden. White, Wiley & Co., (1881), were succeeded by B.J. Richardson, 1888; by Boston Varnish, 1900; Carpenter-Morton, from Boston in 1909; and by 1920, Briggs-Maroney and DuPont. Carpenter-Morton had introduced varnish stains in 1885; by 1930 Boston Varnish had become one of the largest varnish manufacturers in the country. In 1882, based on patents of Charles Waters, the Waters Governor works began manufacturing steam-engine governors -- a business continued well into the 20th century. In 1888 O.J. Faxon started a foundry nearby which manufactured castings for the governor works and piano plates. Norton Iron (1892) became New England Structural Co., a major supplier of structural steel work for buildings and bridges, by 1930, the largest such in New England. Steel castings begun in 1890 by Jupiter Steel Casting, in 1906 were taken over by General Electric to produce small and medium-sized castings. Beginning in the 1890s New England Gas and Coke and Boston Consolidated Gas constructed major works on the salt marshes along the Mystic.

A large number of firms began operation, or moved to Everett, at the very end of the period, 1911-1915, including three shoe factories, and manufacturers of tin cans, ornamental iron, elevators, paper and twine, and shoe shanks.

E. Architecture:

Residential

Intense residential development began to occur with the arrival of extensive streetcar service in the 1880s and many subdivisions of suburban Queen Anne frame two-family houses were completed. Lower slopes of the highlands east of Broadway filled in with modest sidehall workers housing, while west of Broadway slightly more ambitious single and two family houses were built. Upper slopes of the highlands did not develop until the end of the period when whole blocks of restrained Shingle Style and Colonial Revival two-family houses were constructed. Along Broadway and Main Street are a few well-detailed suburban examples of the Queen Anne, Shingle Style and Colonial Revival with at least a few more elaborate highstyle, possibly architect-designed houses, including at least one notable example on Broadway of the Colonial Revival with a semicircular monumental portico. Multiple unit dwellings, mostly Queen Anne and Colonial Revival three-deckers with a number of well-detailed brick apartment blocks in Tudor, Georgian and Romanesque Revival styles, were built along Chelsea and Main Streets, on Broadway and at Glendale, the intersection of Ferry Street and Broadway.

Institutional

Everett's many well-preserved substantial architect-designed highstyle Queen Anne, Renaissance Romanesque and Georgian Revival institutional buildings, located for the most part along Broadway, testify to the city's turn of the century middle-class prosperity in a way which the city's residential buildings cannot, many of those buildings having been altered and debased over the years through the application of inappropriate siding materials. Among the important buildings constructed in the period are two libraries, the Shute Library (c. 1890), a red brick Queen Anne building and the Parlin Library (John C. Spofford, 1894), a buff brick and terracotta Georgian Revival structure, several imposing schools (a Renaissance Revival high school and brick Queen Anne vocational high school), a number of churches, with Italianate, Shingle Style, Renaissance and Romanesque Revival examples, a Georgian Revival police station (Spofford and Eastman, 1908) and a highstyle Beaux-Arts Classical gate and gatehouse at Woodlawn Cemetery (John C. Spofford?, c. 1905).

Commercial

Many highstyle, architect-designed commercial buildings, most of them three and four stories tall and built of red or yellow brick, survive along Broadway at Everett Square. Dating from the 1890s through 1915, these include well-detailed examples of the Romanesque, Renaissance and Colonial Revivals. Many retain well-preserved terracotta detailing and at least a few seem to be the work of prominent Everett architect, John C. Spofford.

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915-1940)

A. Transportation Routes:

Rail and trolley routes remain intact through mid-20th century. Metropolitan District Commission autoparkway constructed E/W along Mystic as Revere Beach Parkway (Route 16) by 1930s with improvement of Broadway as US Route 1 through Everett Square.

B. Population:

City continued rapid growth up to 1930, in the last five years alone growing by nearly 1300 people a year. This growth was dramatically cut off after 1930, and, but for the war years 1940-45, population has been declining ever since. Only in 1945 was the peak of 1930 (48,424) exceeded.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Nearly complete development of residential grid as multiple family housing throughout area with primary activity along Broadway, Ferry, Main and Chelsea Streets around Belmont Hill and Mt. Washington. Civic and commercial focus remains at Everett Square with secondary center at Glendale Square Highway strip activity emerges along Revere Beach Parkway by mid-20th century and along Broadway-Bow Streets at rapid transit terminal (Malden Bridge). Industrial fringe activity completely surrounds residential core at Beacham Point with oil storage tank farms, rail yards and power plants expanding along Malden and Island End Rivers (Chelsea Creek).

D. Economic Base:

By 1923 Everett ranked third in the number of manufacturing establishments in the Boston area after Cambridge and Somerville, though second in capital invested and wages paid. The major products were coke and petroleum products, oils, chemicals, and shoes. During WWI, the Cochrane Chemical Works did a huge

business in war materials and marketed the first U. S.-made H-acid. Acquired by the Merrimac Chemical Co. in 1917, and in turn by Monsanto in 1929. In the late '20s the plant began a complete modernization. New England Fuel and Transportation operated one of the largest coal discharging plants. Two major plants begun in this period were those of Beacon Oil (1919-22) and the Mystic Iron Works (1925-26). Beacon Oil pioneered in the manufacture of ethyl gasoline with its anti-knock properties. President Calvin Coolidge lit the blast of the Mystic Iron Works by direct wire from Washington in 1926 -- the only blast furnace in New England, and the largest east of Pittsburgh. In 1944, Boston Edison constructed the Mystic Station near Malden Bridge.

E. Architecture:

Residential

Neighborhoods south of Woodlawn Cemetery filled in with stripped down Colonial Revival and Craftsman-derived two-families; Tudor and Georgian Revival brick apartment blocks were constructed along Chelsea and Main Streets and Broadway. With few single family houses of any type constructed, bungalows are rare, although at least a few examples at the northeastern outskirts of town probably date from the late 1920s.

Institutional

Institutional construction in the period consisted primarily of school building with examples such as the restrained Beaux Arts classical high school on Broadway.

Commercial

A few modest one and two story Moderne style stores in concrete were constructed along Broadway at Everett Square. Other commercial structures include a theatre on Chelsea Street and a number of one story concrete-trimmed brick cornerstores at neighborhood centers.

Industrial

The Everett Station Garage (1928) on lower Broadway and a brick Colonial Revival substation on upper Broadway are two of the more stylish examples of industrial construction in the period.

XI. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

Everett, as yet surveyed only by the MHC reconnaissance team, badly needs survey work done. Although many of the city's buildings have been re-sided inappropriately, the City seems economically stable and not actively threatened by arson and/or demolition. Well-preserved Main Street is a potential historic district.

Much of Everett's remaining industrial building stock dates to the period 1910-20, and especially 1911-15. There are substantial factory groupings of this date near Garvey and Spring streets, as well as along Charlton Street. Individual buildings that should be noted include the two-story brick Fash's Ice Cream complex (15 William Street), and the three-story brick factory of Sexton Can (Alfred and Cross Streets), and the Tigar Refrigeration Company buildings (Ashland & Beacham). Almost all of the major early 20th century industrial complexes which occupied large Mystic and Malden river sites have now either been removed (Coke Works) or totally modernized (Cochrane/Monsanto Chemical, Boston Gas, Beacon Oil/Exxon). Two exceptions are Edison Electric's 1944 Mystic Station (173 Alford) and the General Electric aircraft engine plant (62 Tremont), both of which deserve further study. There are also two neo-classical electric transformer stations built in the 1920s (693 Broadway and 37 Thorndike), and the apparently largely extant Boston Varnish Company complex at 2nd and Boston streets. The latter, pending further research, may merit NR consideration.

XII. SOURCES

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