

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

WEST SPRINGFIELD

Report Date: 1982

Associated Regional Report: Connecticut Valley

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

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

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

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

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



MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth

Chair, Massachusetts Historical Commission

220 Morrissey Blvd.

Boston, MA 02125

www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc

mhc@sec.state.ma.us / 617-727-8470

MHC RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

DATE: April 1982

COMMUNITY: West Springfield

I. Topography

West Springfield is situated within the Connecticut River Valley. The floodplains of the Connecticut and Westfield Rivers extend along the town's eastern and southern periphery. Broad rolling plains dominate the town's interior. A rugged trap ridge, which is part of the Provin Mountain Range, extends to the north and south on the western edge of West Springfield. The majority of the town is of moderate elevation averaging approximately 100 feet above sea level. The uplands of the town's western periphery range from 150 feet to a maximum of 690 feet. Scattered pockets of marshland are located primarily in the northern and southernmost portions of West Springfield. Local soils range from the sandy loam of the interior plains to the rich alluvium of the river floodplains. The town falls within the Connecticut and Westfield River drainages. Area streams situated in the eastern portion of West Springfield drain into the Connecticut River (the town's eastern boundary). The remaining streams drain south into the Westfield River (the town's southern boundary). All of West Springfield's handful of ponds are man-made.

II. Political Boundaries

Originally included as part of the Springfield grant in 1636 with a western boundary at the Westfield line, which was established in 1670 at the crest of a mountain ridge, the Second Parish of Springfield, formed in 1696, was divided by the Connecticut River. The western bank was incorporated as the Town of West Springfield in 1774, and included Agawam and Ireland (Holyoke). Northern and southern boundaries were established when Holyoke separated in 1850 and Agawam in 1855.

III. Historic Overview

A suburban industrial town at a critical junction of routeways between the Berkshire highlands, Holyoke, and Springfield, West Springfield was located on the west bank of the Connecticut River. Native sites are suspected at the Agawam delta along the Westfield River, on Chicopee Plains at Riverdale, and at upstream sites to Paucatuck Brook. Early agricultural settlement from Springfield occurred by mid 17th century on Chicopee Plains (Route 5) and on the western highway to Westfield (Route 20). The civic center formed around Park Street common by the early 18th century, with the notable Day House of brick

lean-to plan, and other Colonial Period examples survive at Paucatuck and possibly on Route 5 in Riverdale. Agriculture remained the primary activity through the Federal Period, with increasing connections to Springfield across the Connecticut River Bridge by the early 19th century. A landmark meeting house of the Federal style survives at Orthodox Hill (Elm St.) with related period houses.

Reorientation of economic focus occurred with the opening of the Western Railroad during the mid 19th century, creating an industrial corridor at Main and Bridge Streets, including a surviving district of Greek Revival houses. A secondary industrial center formed at Mittineague along the Westfield River with a preserved Early Industrial mill complex and brick housing set beside the railroad. Increasing suburban activity after the Civil War resulted in Springfield bridge and streetcar connections. Park and Main Streets developed as suburban boulevards, with some surviving Victorian houses and brick business blocks around the railroad corridor. A secondary district at Chicopee Bridge has included a preserved suburban Victorian streetscape. There was continued expansion of residential development during the late Industrial Period along suburban trolley lines to Westfield and Holyoke, primarily as modest two- and three-family housing. A major industrial district formed along the railroad corridor from Springfield Bridge to Mittineague with the opening of the Boston and Albany freight yards, with some period coaches, during the late 19th century. Park Street common remained the civic and business center through the Early Modern Period, rebuilt in Georgian Revival style of suburban brick design. The affluent residential district re-oriented from Main Street to Elm Street around Orthodox Hill with historic revival houses. The location of the Eastern States Exposition at the Agawam delta formed an important focus along Memorial Avenue after the First World War, with the original concrete-brick buildings preserved at the entrance and monumental Colonial Revival exhibition halls on States Avenue. Notable is the authentic early museum village of Storowtown preserving Colonial and Federal Period houses from Quabbin Reservoir and Bristol County within the fairground site.

At present, significant development pressures are most obvious along the Route 5 corridor to the Massachusetts Turnpike interchange, overwhelming the historic agricultural landscape with continuing suburban expansion into upland farmlands to Westfield and Holyoke. The industrial railroad corridor, suffering from decay and abandonment, threatens the surviving residential fabric along Main and Park Streets, with considerable loss of significant structures in recent years. Mittineague mill district and the Orthodox Hill meeting house remain remarkably intact despite immediate surrounding development.

IV. Contact Period

A. Transportation Routes

The focus of regional routes was along the Connecticut and Westfield Rivers from the western highlands. The primary north-south trail was reported as the axis of Route 5 along the Connecticut from the Agawam ford as Park-Elm-Riverdale Streets (Swift 1969: p.25), with a branch to the mouth of the Agawam delta as Main St. A major east-west trail along the Westfield River followed the axis of Route 20 from the Agawam ford at River Street as South Boulevard-Pine-Westfield Streets through Mitteneague, to loop around Paucatuck Brook as Sibley-Sikes Avenue (Swift, p.25). An alternate western trail from Connecticut to Paucatuck is likely along Amostown Road-Dewey Street, with connecting branches north to Prospect Hill as Amostown-Millville Roads and Birnie Avenue. Similar branches to the interior highlands from Connecticut appear likely as Piper Road from Bragg Brook and Whitney Avenue from Tannery Brook (Holyoke). It also seems logical that a trail through Bush Notch (Massachusetts Turnpike) followed as Old Holyoke Road-Prospect Street, and a possible ford existed at Paucatuck across the Westfield River.

B. Settlement Patterns

There were no reported Contact Period sites. However, period settlement was probably heavy, considering the presence of large areas of fertile agricultural land and two major rivers. Native period settlement probably concentrated on the Connecticut and Westfield River floodplains and the interior plains north and east of these rivers. Particularly likely locations are the peninsula situated in the southeastern portion of the town and bordering the Westfield River ("Ashcanunsuck"), site of a large Woodland Period village, Mitteneague (Agawam) Falls, and the peninsula extending from Park Street to the Westfield River.

C. Subsistence Patterns

West Springfield contained a diversity of natural resources capable of supporting a large native population. Excellent agricultural land occurred throughout all but the westernmost portion of the town. The bottom lands bordering the Westfield and Connecticut Rivers were particularly fertile, although prone to periodic flooding. Both of these rivers contained vast quantities of fish such as shad, salmon, alewives, bass, pickerel, and perch throughout the town's early history. Native fishing was probably concentrated at Mitteneague Falls and the confluence of the Connecticut and Westfield Rivers. Local production of native ceramics would have been facilitated by the large source of clay situated in the vicinity of the hill adjacent to the westernmost portion of Westfield Street.

D. Observations

West Springfield was part of the heavily settled Connecticut River region, the site of the majority of the study unit's native population during the Contact and Plantation Periods. West Springfield and Agawam (to the south) likely functioned as a major fishing and agricultural area for the Connecticut River Valley study unit natives. By the early 17th century, West Springfield appears to have been included within territory controlled by the Agawams, a group centered in Agawam, probably until ca.1660. Regional affiliation was less clearly defined. Existing secondary sources suggest the Agawams had loose political ties with the Nipmucks of central/western Massachusetts by the 17th century. Ultimate political control may have been in the hands of the Mohawks of New York State, who were reputed by one source to control territory extending to the western side of the Connecticut River (MAS 1940:I(4), 4). Considerable evidence of native occupation survives, exemplified in the several native place names (e.g. Mittineague, Tatham or "Tattom") and the trail network remaining in West Springfield.

V. Plantation Period

A. Transportation Routes

Native trails improved into regional highways with the primary north-south route along Elm-Riverdale Streets (Route 5) to Northampton along Chicopee Plain, and a primary east-west route to Westfield as Westfield-Park Streets (Route 20) from Agawam ford at River St., Ferry service across the Connecticut River to Springfield was reported by 1658, although no formal operation was maintained (Swift 1969:p.95).

B. Population

There were no figures for the native or colonial population.

C. Settlement Patterns

Native occupation of West Springfield continued after the first colonial settlement in the area. However, specific native period settlement locations are unclear. One source referred to a Plantation or Colonial Period burial located near the home of Peletiah Ashley (Events 1879:I,900).

Colonial settlement was limited and occurred in close proximity to the town's fertile river bottom lands. The first homes were not constructed until ca.1654-56 on "Chicopee Plain," an area situated in the northernmost portion of West Springfield adjacent to Riverdale Street. Shortly after (ca.1660), additional settlement took place in southwestern West Springfield in the vicinity of Paucatuck Brook. Area residents attended the Springfield meeting house for religious and civic meetings, since West Springfield lacked its own facility.

D. Economic Base

The area's native population maintained their traditional subsistence rounds despite colonial utilization of large portions of West Springfield as crop and grazing land. Some natives probably participated in the fur trading operation established by William Pynchon in Springfield in the late 1630s.

Local settlers engaged primarily in agriculture. Extensive tracts of farmland were established adjacent to the Connecticut and Westfield Rivers. A large portion of this agricultural land was owned and utilized by settlers residing in present Springfield, since it lacked land as productive as that of West Springfield. Extensive fishing was undertaken by West Springfield settlers in the Connecticut and Westfield Rivers. There was limited period industrial development. The only reported operation was a sawmill built in ca. 1672 on Block Brook.

E. Observations

West Springfield functioned primarily as a resource area, along with Agawam, for the colonial community of Springfield. There is a good probability of extant period archaeological sites occurring in the vicinity of the northern half of Riverdale Street and Paucatuck Brook.

VI. Colonial Period

A. Transportation Routes

Regional highways along the Connecticut and Westfield Rivers improved along the axis of Westfield and Elm Streets from Agawam crossing at River Street. Ferry service across the Connecticut to Springfield was granted in 1683 (Swift 1969: p.95) with a connection to the West Springfield meeting house along Main Street. Other period roads from the town center at Park Street include Kings Highway as the primary connector to Westfield Street, and Memorial Avenue (Route 147) as the connector from the Springfield ferry to Agawam Bridge. Secondary interior highways along the north-south topography include Piper Road from Cayenne and Rogers Avenue from Amostown.

B. Population

West Springfield appeared to retain a small but unspecified post-1675 native population.

There were limited figures for the town's colonial population. In ca.1695, 32 families, more than 200 individuals, lived in the present communities of Holyoke, West Springfield and Agawam. By 1776, West Springfield had a population of 1744 residents.

C. Settlement Patterns

It is unclear where the area's native occupants lived during the Colonial Period.

West Springfield, along with Springfield, was attacked by a hostile native force during King Philip's War. It does not appear as though property losses were as extensive as those of Springfield. Post-1675 settlement focused near the Connecticut River, but further south and east of the two pre 1675 settlement areas. By the early 18th century, a primary settlement node had developed in the vicinity of the present town common (Park Avenue). In addition to a concentration of residences, two community facilities were erected at this location. They included West Springfield's first (precinct) meeting house (ca. 1702) and school house (ca. 1737). The settlement's first burial ground, "Old Field," was laid out slightly south of the common at the junction of Union and Church Streets, between ca. 1702 and 1711. Additional period settlement took place to the north and south of the primary node near the Connecticut and Westfield Rivers, respectively. In addition, there was some mid 18th century settlement in the vicinity of Amostown.

D. Economic Base

Agriculture remained the mainstay of West Springfield's economy. Increased industrial development took place during the last decade of the 17th century and early 18th century. A sawmill was probably built on Paucatuck Brook in ca. 1693. Establishment of a saltpeter and rum distilling operation occurred on this brook ca. 1775. Production of pottery and tile was initiated in the vicinity of "Clay Hill" (between Paucatuck and Block Brooks) prior to 1775.

E. Architecture

Residential: Very few houses of the Colonial Period have survived, and only two such houses are recorded in the town's inventory. These are the Cotton Ely House (1770), a two-story double interior chimney house, and the Day House (1754), a two-story center chimney house with an added lean-to, significant as one of the region's few surviving 18th century brick structures. The Day House has three facade bays, brick jack arches, and a second-story string course. Other possible early houses were observed on Dewey Street and Piper Road; other early houses are possible as well on Birnie Avenue, Amostown Road, and Millville Street.

Institutional: No period institutional structures have survived. However, West Springfield is notable for the unusual form of its first meeting house, built in 1702. The structure, designed (built?) by John Allys of Hatfield, stood 42 feet square and 92 feet high. It rose in three stages, with a hip roofed

ground story surmounted by two consecutively smaller stages. Facade gables adorned the first and third stages. The meeting house stood until 1820. Three-story meeting houses similar in form to the West Springfield example are thought to have stood in Hatfield and Deerfield; as far as is known, the form was unique to the Connecticut Valley. In addition to the meeting house, the first school is believed to have been built in the town in 1706. The first documented school construction occurred in 1752; it was an end chimney, gambrel roof cottage. The domestic form of this structure is curious and may indicate initial construction as a dwelling, although the records do not suggest this. This building stood until 1879.

F. Observations

West Springfield developed as a semi-autonomous community, established as a parish of Springfield in 1698 and later incorporated as a town in ca. 1774. The period also witnessed this community's development as the civic center of the West Springfield parish (Holyoke, West Springfield, Agawam). However, West Springfield maintained close ties with the mother town of Springfield primarily because of the latter settlement's development as an important valley commercial and civic center. The greatest likelihood of extant period archaeological remains should be adjacent to the northern half of Route 5 and the town common.

VII. Federal Period

A. Transportation Routes

Significant improvement of the regional system saw the opening of the Connecticut River Bridge from Springfield in 1804, and related improvement of the east-west axis as Westfield Street from the town center to Paucatuck Brook (Route 20).

B. Population

West Springfield experienced its greatest population growth in eighty years in the last decade of the 18th century, when the number of residents grew by 20% - a growth of nearly 50 persons a year. This growth rate then steadily declined until the decade 1820-30, when the rate amounted to only 2.4 persons per year. Until 1820, West Springfield (then including Agawam and Holyoke) was the largest town in the Connecticut Valley, but the attractions of Springfield proved strong for the west side residents. By 1830, Springfield was already twice the size of her neighbor across the river. West Springfield's residents that year numbered 3,270.

C. Settlement Pattern

The civic center remained around Park Street common with the axis of growth along Elm Street to a secondary center at Orthodox Hill meeting house (1800). Economic activities developed around Springfield Bridge (1804) and along Main Street during the

early 19th century. The primary agriculture was maintained on Chicopee Plain (Riverdale) with outlying farmsteads at Amostown and Paucatuck.

D. Economic Base

For much of the period, West Springfield was the largest town in the county. Its rich agricultural land supplied local markets in Springfield - as well as the Armory itself - together with other river towns. Though a small shipyard near the site of the present North End Bridge is known to have existed for a time between the Revolution and the War of 1812, along with several small distilleries, hat shops, tile works, etc., the town's mainstay was agriculture. This agricultural prosperity bred a conservative distrust of industry, leading in the 1790s to the town's rejection of the U. S. government's choice of West Springfield for a major armory site.

In 1832 the only industry recorded in the town were the Ashleyville tanneries (producing \$12,000 worth of leather annually), although at least three grist mills were also in operation in the Federal Period, together with a maker of hydraulic cement on Paucatuck Brook, said to have supplied the Hampshire and Hampden Canal (1825-31).

E. Architecture

Residential: Some half dozen period houses are known to survive; in addition to these, perhaps as many as another half dozen might survive in altered or unrecognizable condition. Only one cottage is recorded in the local inventory, and it is highly likely that others have survived. Most of the houses recorded are double interior chimney, center hall examples, although several sidehall plan Federal houses are known, including the Noahdiah Loomis House (1793), and another double chimney Federal house with an oval fan in the end gable. This comparatively early use of the three-bay facade with sidehall entrance should be noted as unusual for the region. No highstyle period houses are known to survive. Unsurveyed period houses were noted on Westfield Street, Riverdale Street, and Piper Road.

Institutional: The most significant surviving Federal Period institutional structure is the "White Church," the second meeting house of the West Springfield congregation. Built in 1802 on Orthodox Hill (Elm Street) from the designs of Captain Timothy Billings of Deerfield, the church is now owned by the Masonic Order. It is a two-and-a-half story, gable roof building, somewhat retardataire in the use of a projecting square belfry tower rather than the more up-to-date projecting porch with pediment. The tower is surmounted by two octagonal drums and a steeple. The only other institutional construction known for the period was a two-story brick school of 1818, the second floor of which contained an open room used for town meetings. That building, a combination school and town house, stood until 1873.

VIII. Early Industrial Period

A. Transportation Routes

There was continued improvement of the east-west corridor with the opening of the Western (Boston and Albany) Railroad in 1841 from Springfield across the Connecticut River Bridge, with a route along the Westfield River. Local improvements included the Mittineague Bridge across the Westfield River to North Agawam in 1840, and Union Street as a secondary connector to the town center from the Connecticut Bridge. Chicopee Bridge across the Connecticut to Riverdale opened in 1849, with access along Wayside and Ashley Streets.

B. Population

The establishment of both Holyoke in 1850 and Agawam in 1855 out of West Springfield makes an accurate assessment of the town's population growth in this period difficult. When Holyoke was created, it took with it 52% of the old town's population, and much of the growth in West Springfield between 1830 and 1850 can probably be attributed to the development of Mittineague, and then of Ireland Parish (Holyoke). In 1855, the first year in which the town boundaries coincide approximately with those of today, West Springfield had a population of 2,090 - a density of approximately 124 persons per square mile, or about two and one half times the average density of the town in 1800. West Springfield's foreign immigrants numbered 553 (26% of the town's population), of which over 80% were Irish.

Between 1855 and 1870, the town made negligible gains, reaching 2,606 in the latter year.

C. Settlement Patterns

The opening of the Western Railroad in 1842 reoriented the economic center to Bridge Street with an axis of affluent suburban growth along Main Street. Development of Westfield River waterpower sites with railroad connections created a mill village at Mittineague by the 1850s. The civic center was maintained at Park Street common, with the local business district along Elm Street. Agriculture shifted, increasing to market garden production for Springfield in the Riverdale area with the opening of the Chicopee Bridge (1849).

D. Economic Base

In the Early Industrial Period, the town developed an important industrial base at Mittineague, which it retained into the 20th century. As late as 1875, however, 81% of the manufactured product was produced on the short power canal on the Westfield River. Not until the Early Modern Period did expanding Springfield industries seek out other areas for industrial development and expand across the river.

Mittineague was developed by the Agawam Canal Company, which constructed a power canal there probably some time after 1836. The same year these men also incorporated the Midneag Company to build a cotton mill on the Canal, but nothing appears to have been done. Instead, the power was first utilized by Wells Southworth and the Southworth Mfg. Co. of 1839, which built what was then one of the largest paper mills in the county. Southworth himself appears to have been closely connected with the Canal Company, for when the latter company did build its cotton mill in 1847, Southworth became its superintendent. The Canal Company built extensive company housing in Mittineague, and by 1855 was employing some 350 men and women - well more than the number of all other employees in non-agricultural work put together. With the success of its cotton mill assured, the Canal Company went on to incorporate the Agawam Paper Company, Mittineague's second paper mill, constructed in 1859. By 1865 the two paper mills, employing 157 men and women, produced \$452,529 worth of writing paper, making the town the second most important paper town in the county, after Holyoke. West Springfield paper represented 38% of the county value of paper produced.

The period also saw the town's first developments in market gardening. Richard Bagg is credited with the first, and for a time, the largest, market garden, ca. 1830. The farm is thought to have been one of the earliest to use greenhouses and hot beds for commercial growing. By 1860, when West Springfield growers made the first commercial vegetable shipments to Boston by rail, market gardening was a major business in town.

Tobacco growing had been introduced into the town about 1800 by Mulford Eldridge. By 1855, the town's tobacco crop was valued at \$4,600, or 21% of the value of all tobacco produced in the county, making the town the second ranking tobacco town in the county after Westfield, followed by Agawam. Ten years later, indicative of the great rise in tobacco harvests, although the value of the town's product had increased nearly tenfold, it then represented only 14.5% of the county product.

Another important product for the town was brownstone. In the 1840s, before the extensive development of the East Longmeadow quarries, the Bosworth Quarry in the northwest corner of the town employed 40 men quarrying brownstone. The value of the stone quarried in 1845, \$60,000, represented 79% of the building stone produced in the entire Massachusetts portion of the Connecticut Valley. Not long after, the quarry appears to have become inactive, and not until the 1890s are there further references to quarrying.

E. Architecture

Residential: Development appears to have been slow until the end of the period, when industrialization in the southern half of the town commenced. Greek Revival and Italianate sidehall and center hall (double interior chimney) houses surviving along

portions of Dewey Street and Amostown Road would appear to typify pre 1850 settlement in the town. Other Greek Revival and Italianate houses are located at the town center. Most of these date after 1850. They include several more elaborately detailed houses, such as the Phelon-Southworth House (1839; probably ca. 1855-1860), a cross gabled Italianate villa with eaves and closely spaced brackets, and several brick houses, such as the Aaron Ashley House (ca. 1831), an end chimney, center entrance house with five facade bays. The most outstanding house of the period is "Willow Banks" (1850), a brick Italianate villa designed by Richard Upjohn. "Willow Bank" is composed of a two-story hip roofed main block with a three-story hip roofed square tower offset to the rear, overlooking the Connecticut River. Details include polygonal window hoods with valances, bracketed eaves, brownstone stringcourses and foundations, and an offset frontispiece consisting of a one-story projecting entrance porch surmounted with a balustrade, a second-story round head window enclosed in a relieving arch, and a roof gable with oculus. At the end of the period, more utilitarian housing for workers in the town's newly founded industries began to be constructed at Mittineague and at the town center. Most of this consists of transitional Greek Revival/Italianate cottages and houses with sidehall plans.

Institutional: Although several churches were founded during the period, none are known to survive. The same is true for the 18 schools known to have been standing in 1855. Among the churches founded in the period were the fourth Congregational (1850) at Mittineague, a Methodist church at the town center (1841 organized; 1843 church built), and a Methodist church at Mittineague (1852).

Commercial: The only commercial building of the period observed in the town is a three-story end chimney brick Greek Revival structure opposite the mills at Mittineague. Although its original function is not known, it appears to have been either a hotel or a boarding house.

IX. Late Industrial Period

A. Transportation Routes

Continued improvement of regional railroad connections with Westfield and Holyoke was made through Bush Notch (Massachusetts Turnpike) in 1871, and the Connecticut and New England Railroad from Agawam across the Westfield River by 1880 (now abandoned). Local transit service from Springfield extended across the Connecticut River Bridge to West Springfield town center in 1877, with horsecar routes along Main-Elm Streets. The opening of North End Bridge to Springfield in 1879 permitted a direct streetcar link to West Springfield, with local service along Riverdale Street. Electrification of streetcar lines in the 1890s extended trolley lines as inter-urban routes to Holyoke on Elm-Riverdale Streets (Route 5) and to Westfield along Westfield Street (Route 20). Suburban service to Agawam from Springfield operated on Memorial Avenue and River Street. Regional freight

yards of the Boston and Albany line were established at West Springfield in 1898 (Swift 1969:p.45).

B. Population

In the period 1865-80, West Springfield's population doubled and by 1905 it had doubled again. In 1915 it stood at 11,339 - over four times the size of the town in 1870. Twenty-one percent were foreign-born residents; of these, 30% were Irish, 17% French Canadian; smaller numbers were from Italy and Austria.

C. Settlement Patterns

Industrial development expanded along the Boston and Albany railroad axis from Springfield Bridge to Mittineague. Suburban growth from Springfield centered along the Main Street axis with a warehouse district at the railroad (Bridge Street) and the civic center around Park Street common. Streetcar suburban development expanded along the Westfield Street axis (Route 20) to Mittineague by the early 20th century. The affluent suburban district reoriented from Main Street to Elm Street after the opening of North End Bridge to Springfield (1880) with its center at Orthodox Hill. Market gardening was maintained along Riverdale plain (Route 5) with dairy farms at Amostown. Industrial activity developed at Westfield Mountain with quarrying at Bush Notch (Massachusetts Turnpike) and a reservoir at Bearhole on the upper Paucatuck Brook (1907).

D. Economic Base

In 1875, 81% of West Springfield's manufactured products - paper and cotton cloth - were produced at Mittineague. a large carriage-making firm and two lumber and flour mills made up the rest of the total. In the last decades of the period, writing paper mills became the town's major industrial employer. Horace Moses, a former Agawam Paper employee, founded the Mittineague Paper Company in 1892 which, unified with a Woronoco mill in 1910, became the Strathmore Paper Company. The Boston and Albany Railroad, which had established yards in West Springfield at the end of the preceeding period, had become another of the town's largest employers, and in 1915 the railroad undertook a major enlargement of the yard facilities.

West Springfield's production of market produce had continued to expand, and the 1890s saw the erection of the first sizeable greenhouses. Celery was a major crop in 1900, but many other products were also featured. Nevertheless, the town's proximity to Springfield exerted an important pressure on real estate values, and by 1915 farm production was beginning to feel the impact as valuable crop land was sold off for house lots.

E. Architecture

Residential: Most of the houses now standing in West Springfield were constructed in the Late Industrial Period, and consist primarily of high density middle- and working-class housing, almost all of which located in the extreme southern section of the city. Residential construction appears to have been steady throughout the period. For the early years of the period, sidehall plan Stick Style and Queen Anne cottages, one-and-a-half stories tall with gable roofs and one-story porches appear to predominate for workers' housing. Such houses were built in numbers at Mittineague and along Union Street in West Springfield. After 1890, a greater proportion of the workers' housing constructed was comprised of multiple-family houses, primarily two- and three-deckers in the Queen Anne and Colonial Revival styles. More substantial Queen Anne, Colonial Revival and Craftsman style single-family houses, most of them fairly modestly detailed, were built around Orthodox Hill (Kings Highway and Elm Street) in the northern section of West Springfield. The most elaborate and largest houses, some of them possibly architect designed, are located along Main Street, adjacent to "Willow Bank" and overlooking the Connecticut River. Most of these are Shingle Style or Colonial Revival houses built after 1890. After 1900, neighborhoods of substantial single-family houses in the Colonial Revival, Craftsman, and Tudor Revival styles began to develop along Westfield Street west of Mittineague. Many of these are of masonry construction, whereas most of the earlier houses are of frame construction.

Institutional: A number of important institutional buildings were constructed in the Late Industrial Period. These include the Congregational Church (Perkins and Gardner, 1872), a High Victorian Gothic two-story brick building with side aisles and an offset entrance tower, and at least three Catholic churches: St. Anne (ca. 1910), Immaculate Conception (ca. 1900), and St. Thomas (ca. 1910). St. Anne's, on Memorial Avenue, is a restrained yellow brick Renaissance Revival building with a pedimented facade; Immaculate Conception is a Tuscan Romanesque Revival building with a polychromed facade. Other institutional buildings of the period include the Lowing School (1915), built as the High School, and the Public Library (Edward L. Tilton, 1915), a one-story yellow brick Renaissance Revival building with a tile roof.

Commercial: Most of the commercial building at the town center date from the period, primarily after 1900. These include a well-detailed one-story Colonial Revival storeblock on Elm Street and several three- and four-story utilitarian brick Renaissance Revival blocks with storefronts on the first floor and flats above. In addition to these buildings built in the period, older two- and three-story Italianate commercial buildings were modified in the period with one-story storefronts added to the facade. Other neighborhood storefronts were constructed along

Union Street and to a lesser extent, at Mittineague.

Industrial: The most significant industrial construction of the period was the building of the three- and four-story brick mills at Mittineague in the 1870s and 1880s. Also significant are several Neoclassical and Renaissance Revival pumping stations located along Riverdale Street.

X. Early Modern Period

A. Transportation Routes

Although the inter-urban trolley routes to Westfield and Holyoke were abandoned by the 1920s, local streetcars were maintained to 1936. Also, the Connecticut River span was rebuilt as Memorial Bridge in 1922 (still intact) and regional highways were improved as auto routes with Federal construction of Route 5 as the north-south axis and Route 20 as the east-west corridor.

B. Population

Between 1910 and 1940, the town's population nearly doubled again, although most of this rise occurred in the 1910-25 period. Growth began to slow in the late 1920s, and in the years 1935-40 growth was negligible. In 1940 the population stood at 17,135, a 51% rise over 1915.

C. Settlement Patterns

Suburban expansion continued along the Westfield Street axis (Route 20) from Park Street common to Mittineague, with an attempted affluent district at Tatham Hill. Multiple-family housing expanded from the Springfield bridges to Agawam along Memorial Avenue and River Street to Mittineague. An industrial corridor was maintained along the Boston and Albany Railroad axis, with a secondary center formed around the Eastern States Exposition grounds (1919), along the Westfield River plain. Increasing commercial strip activity along the Route 5 axis replaced market farms in Riverdale with institutional expansion south from Holyoke to the Dominican Monastery (1923). The civic center was maintained around Park Street common with a business district along Elm Street, and an affluent neighborhood on Orthodox Hill.

D. Economic Base

Faced with rising land prices and declining agricultural production, Joshua L. Brooks conceived of a great regional agricultural and industrial exposition. The opening year was 1916. Despite the establishment of the Eastern States Exposition, agricultural production continued to slip. Market gardening at Riverdale and dairying in the western part of town continued to be substantial, however.

The period also saw the movement out of Springfield of a number of industries looking for larger quarters - most of them

settling in the flat land near the Boston and Albany rail yards: Gilbert and Barker (1912), Wico (1920) (both organizations linked to Springfield/Chicopee's burgeoning motor industry) and National Library Binding (1926). General Fibre Box (1919) became the only corrugated box manufacturer in the east outside of Boston, Albany, or New York City.

With the expansion of the Boston and Albany yards in 1915, the railroad became the town's largest employer through the end of the period. At one point, the yard was said to be the largest in all New England. Not until the introduction of diesel equipment in 1951 did the yard begin to decline, closing altogether in 1956.

E. Architecture

Residential: Residential construction remained steady through the 1920s in the southern section of the town. Development continued to expand out Westfield Street with a range of single-family houses in Colonial, Dutch Colonial, and Tudor Revival styles built in the 1920s. These include a number of well-detailed and substantial houses as well as more modest cottages and houses. More utilitarian workers' cottages and multiple-family houses were built along North and South Boulevards and Memorial Avenue. In addition to this construction, a few three- and four-story masonry Georgian Revival apartment blocks were built at the town center.

Institutional: The most significant institutional construction was the establishment off Memorial Avenue of the Eastern States Exposition fairgrounds (1919). Permanent exhibition buildings of red brick and Georgian Revival design were built at that time, along with a series of pavilions for each New England state. The states' pavilions are either replicas or derivations of important Colonial or Federal Period buildings in the home state.

In addition to this construction, in 1927 the assembling of historic structures at Storowtown commenced. Threatened or abandoned historic buildings from across New England were gathered to form a New England village on the fairgrounds. Other period institutional buildings in West Springfield include the Tatham, Mittineague, King, and Main Street schools, most one-story buildings of red brick built in the 1920s, the Children's Home, a four-story brick Georgian Revival structure off Riverdale Road in the northern half of town, the Dominican Monastery, and a Georgian Revival post office at the town center.

Commercial: Most commercial buildings of the period are located along Memorial Avenue in the southern half of the town. Many of these are utilitarian one- and two-story structures of stock brick or concrete construction; of these, the Associated Transport Building (ca. 1930) is the most notable, being a reinforced concrete structure of Moderne design with streamlined details.

XI. Survey Observations

West Springfield's existing survey covers only the city's pre 1850 residential structures and almost no institutional structures; no commercial or industrial structures are inventoried. Early and Late Industrial and Early Modern Period institutional buildings should be inventoried, along with a sampling of post-1850 residences and major commercial and industrial buildings. Lack of an adequate 20th century history of the town has inhibited a full discussion of Late Industrial and Early Modern development, particularly for institutions.

Industrial: West Springfield's survey includes only the Southworth and Mittineague paper mills among the industrial structures, omitting what may be the Agawam Canal Company's cotton mill between the two paper mills. Remaining unidentified structures primarily date to the Early Modern Period, but among those deserving special attention are the Gilbert and Barker complex (once the town's largest employer), the National Library Bindery Company, and the Hampden County Memorial Bridge (1919-22).

XII. Sources

Swift, Esther M. West Springfield, Massachusetts: A Town History (West Springfield, 1969).

Through the Years: West Springfield, 1774-1974 (West Springfield, 1974?).

Western New England 2 (January 1913), entire issue.