

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

NORTH BROOKFIELD

Report Date: 1984

Associated Regional Report: Central Massachusetts

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

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

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

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

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MHC RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

DATE: 1984

COMMUNITY: North Brookfield

I. TOPOGRAPHY

The town of North Brookfield lies at the southwestern edge of the central uplands plateau of Worcester County. Elevations over much of the town range between 700 and 900 feet above sea level, sloping down to 600 feet above sea level along the Quaboag River Valley just south of the town and the Five Mile River valley to the east. A large number of rounded hills are drumlins, deposits of glacial till; several rise to more than 1,000 feet.

The soils of North Brookfield are dominated by the Brookfield series, which form an approximately five-mile-wide, north-south belt from Brimfield and Wales in the south to Oakham and Hubbardston in the north. Brookfield loam, found on the slopes and plains between hills, predominates, with Brookfield stony loam and Paxton loam on the hilltops and drumlins. These soils rank among the most important agricultural soils of the county and yield good crops of hay, grasses, grains, and potatoes.

II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Part included in original 1660 Quaboag Plantation grant, provisionally established as town of Brookfield in 1673. Included in large, eight-mile-square township granted in 1718. Incorporated as a town, from part of Brookfield, in 1812. Part annexed to Brookfield, 1854.

III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Residential, agricultural, and industrial hill town in the uplands north of the Quaboag River corridor, with native sites likely at Lake Lashaway. Peripheral to 17th century Quaboag Plantation focus. Dispersed 18th century agricultural settlement, with Second Parish Brookfield meetinghouse site established by 1749. Location shifts north to established North Brookfield industrial focus in 1823. Nineteenth century growth of North Brookfield village linked to development of major boot and shoe industry after 1819, and 1876 railroad connection. Distinctive worker and high-income residential areas develop. Rubber manufacturing replaces shoe industry in 20th century. Significant areas of functional agricultural landscapes persist. Much of the 19th century commercial/industrial village remains intact.

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500-1620)

A. Transportation Routes

Highland area north of Quaboag River corridor, with main trail conjectured northeast from Wickaboag Pond (Old West Brookfield Road-Bates Street-South Main Street-North Main Street-Oakham Road). Possible east branch on Ward Street-Ashley Road-Kitteridge Road. Branch to Brooks Pond on Brooks Pond Road. Northwest trail possibly on Bell Road-Braintree Road-King Road-Prouty Road. Alternate east-west trail conjectured on Waite Corner Road-School Street-Hillsville Road-Spencer Road.

B. Settlement Pattern

This area was included in a larger region known as Quabaug, north of the river of the same name, and based on the word "Squabaug," "red water place." The "villages" within this region were not located within the boundaries of North Brookfield, but the area was closely incorporated in their spheres of influence. Along the banks of the Five Mile River and the shores of Lake Lashaway, and Horse, Doane, and Brooks ponds, all on the town's east, are predictable locations for sites.

C. Subsistence Pattern

This area was exploited on a seasonal basis from the base "villages" to the south, and along the water sources enumerated above can be expected fishing sites, with hunting in the uplands in the center and west by small family and task groups.

V. PLANTATION PERIOD (1620-1675)

A. Transportation Routes

Contact period trails continued to be used.

B. Settlement Pattern

The area now North Brookfield was part of a six-mile tract granted to Ipswich petitioners in 1660. The focus of settlement was on Foster's Hill, now in West Brookfield, with this area as outlying fields only. The town was abandoned and destroyed during King Philip's War.

C. Subsistence Pattern

The area continued to be exploited by Quabaug with interruption and reduction due to inter-tribal warfare, while colonials used this area for outlying fields, woodlot, and meadow.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

A. Transportation Routes

The main road was the southwest-northeast through route (West Brookfield Road-Cider Mill Road-South Main-North Main-Oakham Road). Trails are improved and new roads laid out to outlying farms from Second Parish Brookfield Meetinghouse after ca. 1750.

B. Population

No figures are available prior to parish formation (1750) when ca. 50 signed the requesting petition. Two years later 26 men signed the covenant at church formation. The church never adopted the Half-Way Covenant. The minister was dismissed in 1775 as a Tory sympathizer.

C. Settlement Pattern

With resettlement after King Philip's War this section of Brookfield was settled as dispersed farmsteads, and was dependent on the Foster's Hill area, now in West Brookfield, where the town's public buildings were located. The six-mile grant was expanded to eight in 1719. Most of the initial grants equalled 60 acres. With the separation of Western/Warren in 1740, followed by the death of the town's minister in 1747, settlers in the north began agitation for a more conveniently located meetinghouse. Resistance from other outlying settlements resulted in the formation of this area as second or north parish in 1750. The meetinghouse was built in 1749 and a five-acre common/training field was set out in 1773.

D. Economic Base

This section shared with the entire Brookfield grant an initial period of struggle followed by prosperity in an agrarian community of dispersed farmsteads. The Five Mile River provided millsites for the area.

E. Architecture

Residential: Very few survivals. A two-story, five-bay, double chimney (behind the ridge) house (1760) and a second quarter 18th century asymmetrical two-story, three-bay, center chimney house are recorded.

Institutional: Meetinghouse for the second parish of Brookfield (North Brookfield) erected in 1749 southwest of present center.

Schoolhouse (1759) built north of meetinghouse.

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

A. Transportation Routes

The colonial roads continued in use.

B. Population

The first accurate figures for the town's population come late in the period. In 1820 there were 1,095 and 1,241 ten years later. The Congregational church experienced several revivals during the Second Awakening waves. Baptists attended services in East Brookfield; some former Free Will Baptists became interested in Methodism and became part of the area circuit.

C. Settlement Pattern

Continued dispersed agricultural settlement as Second Parish of Brookfield until 1812, when North Brookfield was incorporated. The site of the second meetinghouse (1824) was moved a mile north on Main Street. Residential growth at this new meetinghouse center intensified in the late 1820s, stimulated in part by the boot and shoe industry. The second Methodist Episcopal Church (1823) also located in the new village.

D. Economic Base

At the close of the 18th century, North Brookfield, still a part of Brookfield, was a prosperous agricultural community, with perhaps the richest farmland of all the Brookfields. Mixed husbandry was widely practiced, yielding good crops of grain and hay, and livestock and dairy products for domestic use and for trade. Several saw and grist mills processed lumber and meal and a fulling mill on Sucker Brook dressed and finished woolen cloth of domestic manufacture.

During the early 19th century, however, North Brookfield's character began to change; by the end of the period it was the most industrialized of the Brookfields. The major activity which transformed the agricultural economy was shoemaking, introduced by Oliver Ward, who came to North Brookfield before 1810 from the town of Grafton, an early center for leather- and shoemaking. Ward began the manufacture of "sale shoes" in 1810, sent primarily to the South for use by slaves. By 1832, Ward's shop produced 65,000 pairs of shoes annually. In 1819, Tyler Batcheller, a former apprentice to Ward, established his own shop. His business expanded and in 1825 he erected a larger shop and hired more shoemakers. Although his main business, like Ward's, was the manufacture and sale of rough shoes to the South, particularly the "Russet Brogan" which he introduced in 1831, he also produced "Batcheller's Retail Brogan," a shoe specially adapted to the New England trade. By the late 1820s additional shops were opened, many by former employees of Oliver Ward, and by 1832, 130,000 pairs of thick shoes, worth \$100,000, were manufactured in

the town. One hundred-fifty men and women were employed in the factories cutting and sewing the uppers, while many more men and women worked at home or in small shops on their farms bottoming the boots and shoes, an activity that was done on the "putting out" basis until the 1850s or 1860s. The shoe industry also generated work in the manufacture of wooden shoe pegs, shoe boxes, and lasts. In 1832 the industry required 500 bushels of pegs, 2,500 boxes, 1,600 lasts, and many wooden barrels used to pack the shoes.

North Brookfield also contained several small textile mills, the only such mills established in the Brookfields during the period. In 1812 Elisha Matthews purchased the fulling mill on Sucker Brook near Waite's Corner and produced broadcloth, satinets, and cassimeres with nine men, women, and children until 1828, when the mill burned. A second mill was established during the 1820s about a half mile downstream on Prouty Brook. In 1832, seven men and five women were employed in the production of 8,000 yards of kerseymere.

A home industry widely practiced by North Brookfield's women and girls was the making of palm-leaf hats. By 1832, 10,000 hats were produced annually. Like the shoes, and probably the cloth, many of these hats were sent south for use by slaves.

E. Architecture

Residential: Primarily two-story, five-bay, center chimney houses survive. Double chimney examples were noted in lesser numbers, and two rear wall chimney plans were observed. Fanlights, hipped roofs, and the use of brick were noted.

Institutional: Second meetinghouse erected in center in 1823 designed by Elias Carter. Schoolhouse on South Main built in 1816.

VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830-1870)

A. Transportation Routes

The early 19th century roads continued in use, with no local railroad connections.

B. Population

During this period the town sustained its greatest growth, nearly tripling during the forty-year interval. From 1,241 in 1830 the total grew to 3,343 in 1870 with only one brief decline, to 2,514 in 1865. The Irish were the most numerous newcomers here as in most Worcester towns at this time, with smaller numbers of Canadians and English. The foreign-born accounted for only ca. 12% of the population, however. Both agricultural and manufacturing employments increased, the former more than doubling, the latter multiplying by more than five times between 1820 and 1840 alone. While this brought them briefly into parity,

the 1875 figures show manufacturing continuing to expand, and far outstrip agriculture.

Within the Congregationalists, the issue of slavery divided the church and led to the formation of the anti-slavery Union Congregational in 1853. The increasing number of Catholics were served from 1851, initially as a mission of Webster, then Ware, and became an independent parish of St. Joseph in 1867. The town formed a high school in 1857 and eliminated the district system after state legislation in 1869.

C. Settlement Pattern

Significant development of central village occurred with growth of boot and shoe industry. Central industrial focus is at Batcheller Shoe Factory on School Street between Main and Grove Streets. The main commercial and institutional focus develops at the Main/School intersection, with the addition of the town hall (1833, 2nd 1864), Union Congregational Church (1854), and three-story, wooden commercial block (1854). A second focus is established on Grove Street, with the Third Methodist Church (1861) and High School (1857). Separate from these two areas is St. Joseph Catholic Church (1867) on North Main beyond Bell Street.

A high-income residential district develops northwest of the center on Tower Hill (Pleasant, Maple, Chestnut), with corridors on North Main and Summer Streets. More modest houses were built on Spring Street south of this area. Worker housing (cottages and multiunit houses) dominates the area east of Main Street (Grove, School, Forrest, Willow Streets). Less intensive residential extensions occur south on South Main, Gilbert, Walnut, and Elm.

D. Economic Base

In the decades prior to the Civil War, boot- and shoemaking was the driving force in North Brookfield's economy, accounting for at least 90% of the value of goods manufactured in the town annually. In addition, the industry gave much work to makers of accessories such as shoe boxes, lasts, leather, and tools. The steady growth in population which occurred during the period was largely the result of the expanding shoe factories. Agricultural production also profited from the growth of a nonagricultural population, as farming became more commercially oriented toward dairying and some orcharding.

The boot and shoe industry achieved its place of primacy in the local economy by the early 1820s. On the eve of the 1837 Panic, North Brookfield was ranked second in all of Worcester County behind Grafton, producing nearly 600,000 pairs of boots and shoes. Five hundred-fifty men and 300 women were employed in the numerous shops and factories, and hundreds more did bottoming in their homes. The depression which followed closed many of the shops and factories, including that of Oliver War. Employment and production in the industry did not return to the predepression

level until the late 1840s and early 1850s. In 1855, the state census recorded 645 men and 498 women, nearly half of the entire population of the town, employed in the boot and shoe shops and factories. Production totalled 625,000 pairs of boots and shoes worth \$655,450. A local historian claims that in 1860, T. & E. Batcheller & Co. alone produced \$1.5 million worth of shoes (Temple 1887).

The Civil War had a tremendous impact on North Brookfield's boot and shoe industry, since much of the product was for the Southern market, specifically for the slaves. A number of manufacturers failed during and after the war, unable to collect on debts for Southern plantation owners and merchants.

By 1865 changes were apparent. Employment fell to 662 with only 28 women working in the shops and factories, and for the first time more boots than shoes were made. Changes in product and quality were also reflected in the increased value of the boots and shoes: \$865,000 in 1865, compared to \$665,000 in 1855, even though fewer pairs were produced in 1865 than in 1855. T. & E. Batcheller & Co., the largest manufacturer before the war, also operating a store in Boston, emerged from the war years as one of only two surviving firms.

A number of smaller manufacturing businesses operated at various times between the 1830s and 1870s. The small textile mill on Prouty Brook produced small quantities of cassimeres, Kentucky jeans, and flannel through the 1840s before closing in the early 1850s. Palm-leaf hatmaking ceased during the late 1830s. Many of the women who worked part-time braiding palm-leaf hats in their homes probably turned to shoemaking, while others sought employment sewing pocket books and clothing. By 1865 three shops employed 11 men and 61 women and girls in the production of 12,347 dozen pocket books and clothing worth \$54,000. Tanning and currying increased from one to three shops by 1865. Nearly 11,000 hides were processed annually for use in the boot and shoe shops, in a razor strap manufactory, and in a harness shop. A copper and sheet iron smith, tinsmith, and several blacksmiths also operated in the 1860s.

During the prosperity of the 1850s, the North Brookfield Savings Bank was organized (1854). A Daguerrian and photographer operated in North Brookfield by the early 1860s, taking photographs of the town's citizens and their families. In 1865 alone, 1,200 photographs were taken.

The agricultural sector of North Brookfield's economy steadily increased in value. The clearing of forests, with up to 700,000 feet of boards and 4,800 cords of firewood cut annually during the 1850s and 1860s, added pasture and mowing land for the town's growing dairy herds. By 1875 more than 500 milk cows were kept on the 134 farms, and they yielded 121,893 gallons of milk, 37,000 lbs. of butter, and 10,300 lbs. of cheese. This was a significant change from the dairy production of the 1830s and 1840s. In 1845

little whole milk was sold; instead, it was made into 28,000 lbs. of butter and 75,000 lbs. of cheese.

Grain production declined considerably during the period, with the greatest losses in rye, oats, and barley. Cultivation of vegetables, however, steadily increased, as did orchards of apple and pear trees. Poultry-raising for meat, eggs, and feathers began to be commercially important during the 1860s.

E. Architecture

Residential: Double and center chimney dwellings, of both one and two stories, appear to have remained popular for the early portion of the period. The gable end, side-passage plan became increasingly popular throughout the remainder of the century, particularly in the center. Brick examples of this type were noted. Several two-story mansard roofed dwellings were observed in the center.

Institutional: The 1823 meetinghouse was enlarged by the addition of twenty feet on the east side in 1854, a chapel was built, and in 1856 the church was raised to two stories. Alterations were again made in 1874.

The Methodist Episcopal society met in the old meetinghouse in the "lower village" until 1833 when it moved to a structure on Spring Street in the center. This building burned and was replaced in 1854. In 1861, the Congregation built a new church, a gable end 55 x 40-foot structure, on Grove Street (demolished).

St. Joseph Catholic Church on Main Street, a three-bay nave plan Gothic building, was erected in 1867.

The Union Congregational Church (now a furniture store) on Main Street was erected in 1854 and is a Greek Revival gable end building with a three-bay facade and pilasters. Despite the addition of the contemporary storefront, the exterior form of the building has been preserved.

The town hall, built in 1864, is a two-and-a-half- to three-story frame Italianate structure with a slightly advanced, rusticated corner tower with quoins, "Second Empire" dormers, a cupola, and rounded label molds.

A high school built on Grove Street in 1856 burned in 1878 and was replaced in that year with a brick Colonial Revival edifice.

Commercial: The Adams Block is an 1854 three-story frame building ten bays wide with a modillioned cornice.

IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)

A. Transportation Routes

The North Brookfield branch of the Boston and Albany Railroad is opened from East Brookfield in 1876. In the 1890s, a north-south electric street railway branch is opened from East Brookfield on East Brookfield Road.

B. Population

The growth experienced during mid century continued to be significant, but punctuated by more fluctuations, through the end of the century. In 1870 the population equalled 3,343, grew to 4,459 in 1880, fell to 3871 in 1890, rising to over 4,500 in 1895 and 1900. Continued immigration contributed to this growth, with large numbers of Irish being joined by nearly equal numbers of French Canadians. In addition, the proportion of foreign-born within the town doubled, to 24% in 1875. The 1875 employment figures show the importance of increased manufacturing, which employed 812 males and 151 females, compared to 202 in agriculture. The drop in these figures by 1905 and 1915, so that only half the 1875 figure were then employed in manufacturing, may explain the change the town experienced early in the 20th century. The total population dropped, to 2,617 in 1905, and 2,947 ten years later, two-thirds what it had been in 1900. The foreign-born diminished to 19%, continued to be French Canadians and Irish, but with the addition of Russians and Poles. Few changes in the denominational opportunities in the town took place other than the addition of an Episcopal church, Christ Memorial, in 1894. The town established a public library in 1874.

C. Settlement Pattern

Village growth continues in the late 19th century, particularly after the 1876 branch railroad connection. In 1893 a library is added to the established institutional cluster. An Episcopal church is built in 1894. A brick high school is built in 1878 after the first structure burns. The Main/Summer intersection remains the commercial focus, and the School Street area remains the industrial zone. Residential growth and infill occurs in the established areas east and west of Main Street, with major new extensions south. A minor extension north occurs on Bell Street. Infill occurs on the east side worker district, with new building on Forest, St. John, and Mr. Guyot Streets. To the west, the Maple/Summer corridor extends beyond Prospect Street to Bigelow Street. The major sector of residential growth is the extension south beyond Ward Street, on Gilbert, Walnut, and South Main Streets, and on Arch Street between Walnut and Elm, with a new high income corridor on Gilbert Street.

D. Economic Base

North Brookfield's economy continued to prosper through the end of the 19th century, sustained largely by the E. & A. H. Batcheller Co. shoe factory, which employed more than 1,000 men and women through much of the period. It was the only shoe factory in the town until the late 1880s, when H. H. Brown & Co. shoe factory was erected on School Street. At least one more company, the North Brookfield Shoe Co., was also erected, but it closed during the depression in the mid-1890s. Annual production at the Batcheller factory was approximately \$2 million between the 1870s and the early 1900s. When combined with the production of shoemaking accessories like lasts, boxes, leather, and tools, the boot and shoe industry accounted for at least 80% of total manufacturing employment and 90% of the total value of goods manufactured in North Brookfield between 1870 and 1900. The difficulties of the 1890s, which included strikes, reductions of time and wages, and the death of A. H. Batcheller in 1891 contributed to the closing of the town's largest company between 1900 and 1905. The impact on the town was tremendous: population fell from 4,587 in 1900 to 2,617 in 1905, manufacturing employment dropped from 1,300 in 1895 to only 267 in 1905, and production totals declined from nearly \$3 million in 1895 to \$.5 million in 1905.

During the prosperous fourth quarter of the 19th century, a number of other industries flourished in the town. The manufacture of clothing became important by the 1880s, replacing pocket books. Brookfield overalls were produced by John A. White beginning in 1886, and corset manufacturing was introduced in the 1870s. By 1880, 333 men and women were employed in their production. By 1895 nine clothing shops and factories were in operation. Wagon and sleigh building and repairing and harnessmaking continued through the 1880s and 1900s. In 1885, six wagon shops operated in the town and in 1895 three harness shops were recorded. Metalworking was carried out by several blacksmiths, tinsmiths, and watch, clock, and jewelry repair shops throughout the period. The growth of the 1870s and 1880s also sustained several building contractors. The Parmenter Mfg. Co. established a new brickyard in 1892 in the southern portion of the town.

Because of its importance as a manufacturing center, North Brookfield also became a trading center for the surrounding towns. In 1875, 43 traders and merchants operated in the town; in 1905, despite the loss in population and the closing of the Batcheller factory, there were still 40 trading establishments doing business worth \$313,000.

The former Batcheller factory complex remained empty only a short while before the B & R Rubber Co. took over the premises in 1906. Although it did not attain a level of production and employment anywhere near that of the former shoe factory, it did stimulate some minor growth in population by 1915.

The prosperity of the last quarter of the 19th century also extended to agriculture, as the value of agriculture goods also rose to nearly \$200,000 annually in the early 20th century. Although the total amount of cleared and improved agricultural land peaked in the 1870s and declined slowly thereafter, the total acreage cultivated in hay and crops in 1905 was greater than in 1870. The losses in improved land occurred in permanent pasture and grain cultivation, and many marginal fields were allowed to revert to forest.

The number of farms in the town increased through the 1870s and 1880s to about 200, but began to decline in number during the 1890s and 1900s as marginal lands and farms were sold or abandoned. Average farm size increased between 1895 and 1905, as lands became consolidated in fewer, but larger farms.

Dairying continued to be the dominant activity, accounting for 30-45% of annual agricultural production value. Whole milk production and sales increased dramatically after the completion of a rail line to the town in 1876, though they had begun to climb in the previous decade. In 1865, 16,000 gallons of milk were sold annually; by 1875, 121,891 gallons; by 1885, 230,496 gallons; by 1895, 392,708 gallons; and by 1905, 427,254 gallons. A commercial creamery was established on Summer St. west of the town center during the 1880s or 1890s, making butter and selling cream.

E. Architecture

Residential: Little significant development observed. Gable end, two-story dwellings remain popular, although generally more vertical in proportion than earlier similar structures. At least one Four Square plan was observed.

Institutional: The Methodist Episcopal church of 1861 on Grove Street was remodelled in 1892 by the addition of a new auditorium, new entrance and windows, and a steeple (Fuller & Delano). In 1894, the Union Congregational Church erected a new stone church, Tucker Memorial.

In 1871, a gable end Italianate detailed school was erected on the site of the 1816 school. It is now a residence.

Fuller & Delano designed the Erastus Haston Public Library, built by the Norcross Bros. in 1893-94. The library is a two-story, stone Romanesque structure of rock-faced ashlar.

A one-story brick fire station was erected in the center in 1878.

Commercial: George W. Cram of Norwalk, Conn. was responsible for the impressive two-story brick freight depot (1875).

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915-1940)

A. Transportation Routes

A local auto connector (East Brookfield Road, Main Street, New Braintree Road) is improved between East Brookfield and Barre Plains by the mid 1920s. A connector from West Brookfield (West Brookfield Road) is improved by the 1930s. By period's end, the West Brookfield-North Brookfield Center-Barre Plains route is upgraded as Route 67.

B. Population

Few figures and little information is available for this period. Overall growth was gradual, from 2,947 in 1915 to 3,304 in 1940, with a drop to 2,610 in 1920. The percentage of foreign-born dropped from nearly 20 to 11% by 1940. The percentage of the population classified as rural was 20.2%, moderately high in the county.

C. Settlement Pattern

No major residential expansion occurs. An asbestos sheeting factory is added to the industrial area. Camp Atwater (1921) and some cottages are located on the northwest shore of Lake Lashaway.

D. Economic Base

Following the First World War, North Brookfield's economy returned to the levels of production of the 1870s and 1880s, totalling more than \$2 million through the 1920s. The Quaboag Rubber Co. (formerly B & R Rubber Co.) expanded to almost 300 employees and produced 12 to 15 rubber products, including its trademark "Armortred" rubber heels and soles. The company also produced rubber mats and baby carriage tires. The Asbestos Textile Co. was established in the 1920s and expanded through the period. The J. A. White Co. continued to produce overalls and coats and the H. H. Brown Shoe Co. produced slippers and children's shoes through the 1920s and 1930s. In 1931, during one of the worst years of the depression, the value of goods produced in the town's five manufacturing establishments had increased to \$3.5 million and employment was near its 20th century peak with 783 employees.

Agricultural production remained high through the period, with dairying still the dominant activity. Poultry raising, orcharding, and market gardening were also important activities. Nevertheless, total farmland continued its slow decline as more lands were allowed to revert to woodlands or were taken for residential development.

E. Architecture

Residential: No significant development apparent.

Institutional: The 1894 Union Congregational church was acquired by Christ Church, Episcopal in 1938 and reworked by Robert Blackhall of Worcester.

XI. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

Very little, if any, apparent residential development in the Colonial period. Inventory seems to be somewhat sparse in the area of domestic architecture, but very good for public structures.

XII. SOURCES

Snell, Thomas

1854 A Discourse Containing an Historical Sketch of the Town of North Brookfield. West Brookfield: O. S. Cooke & Co.

Temple, Josiah

1887 History of North Brookfield, Massachusetts.