

# MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

## PETERSHAM

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: Petersham

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## I. TOPOGRAPHY

Located in the central portion of Worcester County's western edge, Petersham consists of all of the former town of Dana, and parts of Greenwich and Prescott, as well as the original town of Petersham. The lands of the three towns represent those areas not flooded by Quabbin Reservoir during the late 1930s.

The town is drained by the East and West Branches of Fever Brook, the East Branch of the Swift River, and their tributaries, which all flow southwestward into the reservoir and the Swift River Valley. Much of the western portion of the town is presently controlled by the Metropolitan District Commission as watershed land and by state and private conservation groups. Running north-south through the town and separating the Swift River and Fever Brook valleys is a ridge of hills that rise to more than 1,200 feet above sea level; the river valleys cross the town between 700 and 900 feet above sea level. East of the Swift River the land rises again to more than 1,200 feet above sea level, while in the west the surface descends to below 600 feet above sea level along the shores of the Reservoir.

Petersham's soils consist largely of Gloucester series stony loams. An exception is a long strip of agriculturally important Charlton loams north and east of the center. The Gloucester loams, where cleared of stones, also yielded good crops of hay and grains. The stony areas, though cleared of forest, were most often used as pasture land. As a result, the town was an important dairying and cattle-raising area.

## II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Six-mile-square "Nichewaug" or "Voluntown" grant made in 1733. Established as town of Petersham in 1754. New town of Dana formed in 1801 from parts of Petersham, Greenwich (incorporated 1754), and Hardwick (incorporated 1739). Part of Petersham and Hardwick annexed to Dana and Prescott annexed to Petersham with creation of Quabbin Reservoir, 1927.

## III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Petersham is a highland residential community, with large reservoir, watershed management, and forestry areas. It is located primarily within the upper Swift River drainage, along the historic east-west Sunderland Road corridor from Lancaster to the Connecticut River Valley. Native sites are reputed to exist at Soapstone Hill, Pottapaug Pond (now flooded), and other locations, and evidence of planting field occupancy has been claimed for

Nichewaug (Carter) Hill and other hilltop areas. First European settlement of Nichewaug Plantation occurred ca. 1733 as Volunteers Town or Voluntown Grants to Indian War veterans, with meetinghouse site established by ca. 1735. Settlement of Voluntown was delayed by its situation as a fortified, frontier outpost during the French War, but dispersed agricultural occupance followed the cessation of hostilities, leading to the incorporation of Petersham in 1754.

Prosperous late 18th and early 19th century agricultural development of cattle, orchard, and grain production led to the development of a small meetinghouse center village. Local support for Shays' Rebellion appears to have been strong, and the arrival of a group of Shakers in 1783 was met by mob violence. The southwest area separated from Petersham, Greenwich, and Hardwick in 1801 as the town of Dana, with local meetinghouse focus at Dana Center. Small-scale 19th century development of wooden ware and textile industries occurred on the Swift River and Swift River East Branch, with the main local center at North Dana, and a secondary cluster at Nichewaug (Factory Village) in Petersham. Palm-leaf hat production and soapstone quarrying were other local 19th century industries. Railroad connections came late, with the establishment of the Springfield-Athol line along the Swift River corridor through North Dana in 1873. Agricultural abandonment and population decline persisted through the late 19th and early 20th century.

Some development of Petersham Center as a summer resort took place by the early 1900s, and Harvard Forestry School was established in the northeast in 1908. The initiation of the Quabbin Reservoir project in the 1920s led to the displacement of the entire population of the town of Dana, and all buildings and cemeteries were removed by the time of the flooding of the Swift River Valley in 1930-40. Removal of much of the settlement at Nichewaug in Petersham also occurred, and tracts of land in western Petersham were designated watershed areas, or state forest. Some modern suburban development has extended into town from Athol to the north. While relatively few agricultural landscapes remain intact, a good assortment of vernacular 18th and 19th century survive in the northern and eastern quarters. Petersham Center retains much of its mid-19th century character, and the town's historic fabric persists as part of the esthetic environment of a high-income, exurban community.

#### IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500-1620)

##### A. Transportation Routes

Highland East Swift River tributary area between Millers River (north) and Ware River (south) corridors. North-south trail from Millers River (Athol) past Potopoug Pond (now part of Quabbin Reservoir) in the southwest to Juddy Brook corridor (Hardwick) conjectured on Doe Valley Road-Athol Road-Hardwick Road-Old Hardwick Road-Hardwick Road. Alternative route over Nichewaug

(now Carter) Hill inferred on Glen Valley Road-Nichewaug Road. Southwest branch past Potopoug Pond to west side of Muddy Brook Corridor conjectured as following contours and abandoned roadways. Eastern trail (East Street) conjectured from Ware River area (Old Barre Road) and Burnshirt River (East Street). Possible northwest-southeast connector trail along Shaw Road.

#### B. Settlement Pattern

The formation of the Quabbin Reservoir has disrupted the drainage system and covered likely Swift River Valley sites. Currently reported sites, though of unknown cultural origin, are located on knolls adjacent to the remaining branches and flooded portions of the river, and many more sites, similarly located, should be expected in this area. The confluence of the branches probably provided a gathering point for larger numbers for fishing and planting, while the adjacent areas were occupied by smaller task and family groups.

#### C. Subsistence Pattern

Small family and task groups visited the area seasonally for resource exploitation through hunting and fishing, as well as larger, and more long-term, occupation at the Swift River branch confluences.

### V. PLANTATION PERIOD (1620-1675)

#### A. Transportation Routes

Contact period trails continue in use.

#### B. Settlement Pattern

The location of this area between the primary areas of native and colonial settlement to the south, east, and west meant that contact was secondary. Some depopulation probably resulted from the epidemic of the 1630s in the Connecticut River Valley. Continuation of patterns established during the Contact period.

#### C. Subsistence Pattern

A continuation of patterns established during the Contact period.

### VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

#### A. Transportation Routes

Native trail improved as Sunderland Road from Lancaster ca. 1734 through "Voluntown" (East Street-West Street). Northwest branch improved as road to Orange (Shaw Road-Swamp Road). East Street is connected to improved road to Barre (Old Barre Road). Meetinghouse site is established by ca. 1738, and north-south road is improved from Hardwick past meetinghouse to Athol (Hardwick

Road-Old Hardwick Road-Hardwick Road-Athol Road). Northeast road established to Templeton (Popple Camp Road). Other secondary routes connect outlying farms to the meetinghouse center.

#### B. Population

Settlers were in the town by 1736, when occasional preaching began, and in 1738 a church was formed by 15 men. A petition of 1750 named 47 of 61 household heads in residence. By 1765 the total population equalled 707 in over twice as many families, and grew further to 1,235 in 1776. Most proprietors came from western Middlesex and eastern Worcester counties, but the settlers came from many surrounding towns also. By the end of the period, the Loyalist posture of the town's minister was beginning to cause friction in the town.

#### C. Settlement Pattern

The area now Petersham was, primarily, granted to Bennet, Perley, et al. in 1732 in return for their service under Lovell and White in frontier combat in the 1720s. Forty of the 71 proprietors in this group can be traced to Lovell's final expedition, but few actually settled on the land. They divided the land into homelots the following year, 50 acres each, and located the meetinghouse near what was then the geographical center of the town. The southern portion of the present town, including the Quabbin Reservoir segments, was at this time the western section of Hardwick and the eastern portion of Greenwich. Dispersed farmsteads characterized the settlement of the entire area.

Garrisons or fortified houses were located in the town as protection from repeated frontier warfare.

#### D. Economic Base

The town was classified as commercial in 1771 by Pruitt, an anomaly easily explained by the town's remoteness and age. High propertylessness is probably related to late settlement, and in turn affected the corn yield, with high figures per farmer. The remaining categories are comparable to neighboring towns' rankings as poor agrarian towns with low commercial development, very low community wealth, moderate agrarian prosperity, and low agrarian poverty.

#### E. Architecture

Residential: Oldest known building is a single-story, gambrel roofed, three-bay, center chimney dwelling (Gay House, 1740, NR). Three other single-story, center chimney houses and ten two-story, center chimney plans are recorded. No other building type is recorded for the period.

Institutional: First meetinghouse constructed between 1733 and 1736, measured 40 x 50 feet.

Commercial: Reference to Thomas Carter's inn in 1733.

## VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

### A. Transportation Routes

Additions to the colonial road network include the stage route from Worcester northwest to Vermont (Loring Hill Road-Russell Road-Nichewaug Road)--a more direct connector between Barre and Petersham centers. The Petersham, Greenwich, and Monson Turnpike, promoted by Norwich, Connecticut interests, is incorporated in 1804 and built ca. 1809, with route south from Athol across the west part of Petersham and the northwest part of Dana (Turnpike Road). Roads are focused toward Dana Center (including Barre-Dana Road) after Dana is incorporated in 1801.

### B. Population

The area's population continued to expand during this period. In Petersham, the total grew from 1,235 in 1776 to 1,794 in 1800; the figures for the combined towns, after the formation of Dana, continued to grow to 2,115 in 1810, thereafter the pace slowing to reach 2,319 in 1830.

In Petersham, the disagreements between the Tory minister and the parish increased until he was dismissed in 1777. Some members of the town began worshipping with the Baptists in the south where the minister was a Whig. In 1783 the Shakers visited the town and Dana, attracting some followers but meeting mob violence as they had in other towns they visited. In 1802, the new covenant of the First Parish displayed Unitarian sentiments, and in 1823 a group of 16 formed an Orthodox Congregational Church. In 1824 the Baptists became a branch of the Athol church. In Dana, Hosea Ballou first preached the doctrine of Universalism from 1797, followed by his successor Flagg. Baptists met in the center from 1800-25. Itinerant Methodists visited the town, later forming a class.

The town was to be a shiretown when attempts were made early in the period to form a county from northern Worcester towns and some from another county. The Shays men retreated here to gather more troops during the Rebellion, and were surprised by Lincoln and his troops and were dispersed.

### C. Settlement Pattern

A second meetinghouse is built at Petersham Center in 1788, and a small cluster develops west of the meetinghouse by the early 19th century, including a hotel, and some linear residential extensions on Main (Hardwick) Street and West Street. An Orthodox meetinghouse is built to the north on Main Street (Athol Road) in 1829.

The Baptist Church, built near the Factory Village (Nichewaug) is moved to Dana Center ca. 1800, but no other meetinghouse is built in Dana after its incorporation. Otherwise, outside several grist and saw mill foci, most notably at Nichewaug (Factory Village), North Dana, and Storrsville, dispersed agricultural settlement predominates in the two towns.

#### D. Economic Base

In 1784, a moderate portion of the town was classified as unimproved and woodlot, 68%, with an additional 7.6% classed as unimprovable. A similarly moderate proportion of land was under tillage, 2.8%, meadow and mowing 9.2%, and pasturage, 11.7%.

The late 18th and early 19th century were periods of expanding settlement, clearing, and agricultural improvement of the land. Wood- and agricultural goods-processing industries and related craft shops dominated at the turn of the century. By 1814, Petersham contained four sawmills, a gristmill, three cider mills, a malt mill, two blacksmith shops, and two triphammer shops, and a cooper shop. Textile manufacturing included a mix of home and factory production. A small cotton spinning mill was in operation in 1814 in Nichewaug or Factory Village. The yarn was then sold or put out to domestic weavers. Woolen and linen cloth were also woven in the home, though by the early 1820s, most cloth was factory-made and purchased. Two clothiers' shops and a dye house and fulling processed the home-manufactured cloth. The town also contained a wool carding machine and a small wire pulling shop, which produced wire for hand and machine cards, also put out to be set into card leather in the homes. Pearl and potash were important byproducts of land clearing in the late 18th century and provided much-needed cash products. Similarly, the cultivation of flax provided a marketable commodity in the seeds as well as fiber for home cloth production.

Palm-leaf hat manufacturing commenced during the 1820s by Wetherell & Brown, merchants in the town. They employed someone to teach local women and girls and provided split pal leaves, later purchasing and finishing the palm-leaf and straw hats. By 1832, six dealers were operating in Petersham, employing several hundred area women and girls in the production of more than 127,000 hats, valued at nearly \$32,000. Two tanneries prepared more than 1,000 hides and one shoe shop produced 4,000 pairs of shoes, which were sold in Providence, Rhode Island, and probably to the South to plantation owners for their slaves.

In Dana, economic development during the period was similar. Grist and saw mills processed agricultural goods and wood from land-clearing, and a tannery and distillery provided leather and drink. The soil produced large crops of rye, and during the difficult summer of 1816, Dana supplied rye to many of the harder-hit surrounding towns, gaining a reputation for its rye crop. Potash was also an important product during the early period of land clearing.

Home manufacturing was a major component of the economy during the early 19th century. Setting of wire and teeth on hand and machine card leather, hand loom weaving of yarns put out by a local merchant/shopkeeper, wallet, and pocketbook sewing, and the braiding of hats from palm leaves and rye straw occupied many of the town's women and girls. In 1832, 25,000 hats and 3,000 dozen wallets and pocketbooks worth nearly \$10,000 were produced in Dana.

#### E. Architecture

**Residential:** Center chimney plans appear to continue to be a popular house form. One single-story, double chimney house was observed. Also noted were two two-story, five-bay, hipped roof, double chimney houses. One possible end chimney plan recorded.

**Institutional:** Second meetinghouse built ca. 1785 and was a two-story, five bay, gable end building with a three-story central tower and spire. The Evangelical Congregational church, built in 1829 and remodelled in 1900, is a three-bay, gable end building with pointed arch windows and a domed belfry.

The Bell Schoolhouse was erected in 1794 and stood until the late 19th century.

**Commercial:** A two-story, five-bay house with both rear wall and gable end chimneys stands on East Road between Maple Lane and Quaker Drive. This may be an early 19th century hotel.

### VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830-1870)

#### A. Transportation Routes

The early 19th century roads continue in use, with the addition of a new stage road from Barre to Petersham Center (Route 122/32), built in 1837.

#### B. Population

The population of the area as a whole fell during this period from 2,319 in 1830 to 2,093 in 1870. The 1840 figure of 2,466 represents a brief continuation of the last period's growth, a total that would never be exceeded. Within the area, Petersham's figures dropped steadily while in Dana, growth continued, from 623 in 1830 to 876 in 1860, before declining. The foreign-born proportion of the population is one of the county's smallest, equal to 2.6% to 4% of the total, with the Irish predominating. Agriculture remained the primary employment, outnumbering manufacturing by three to one.

In Petersham, a second Congregational society was formed briefly, ca. 1836, and a similarly short-lived Universalist Society was formed the same year. A Methodist group existed in the town from 1843-49. In 1849 the Baptist society became independent from Athol. In Dana, the Congregational, Universalist, Methodist, and



Baptist groups worshipped together in the North Dana Union church. The Methodists had formed a Liberal Congregational Society in 1830, and suffered a brief split over church organization and the authority of bishops into a Wesleyan and Episcopal group. Christian Connection group, originating in Vermont as an anti-Calvinist, revivalist belief system, met in the town, numbering ca. 100 from the surrounding area. In 1852 an Evangelical Congregational church was founded. A Lyceum operated in Petersham between 1830 and 1850.

### C. Settlement Pattern

Petersham Center develops as a commercial, residential, and institutional focus early in the period, while smaller-scale development takes place at Dana Center and at the North Dana industrial focus. At Petersham Center, a Universalist meetinghouse (1836-37, Baptist after 1849) is added on the east side of the common, the third Congregational meetinghouse (1842) is relocated to the west side of the common, and a Methodist Meetinghouse is built (1843). Residential development, mostly in the late 1830s and 1840s, occurs along the Main Street and East/West Street corridors, with the heaviest concentration east of the common on Main Street north of East Street. An 1847 fire destroys most of the development on the west side of the common, but by period's end, the Highland Institute, a store, and a hotel are located in this area. Petersham's small industrial focus continues to be the "Factory Village" (later Nichewaug), where a powderkeg factory is added to the several small mills active along the Swift River East Branch.

Growth of a small linear residential cluster occurs at Dana Center, where a Congregational church is built in 1853, and two stores are located. More significant growth occurs at North Dana after 1840, stimulated by piano leg manufacturing west of the Swift River. A Union Church (1841), hotel, and store are built, and linear residential development occurs along Main Street east of the river. The smaller Dana village at Storrsville continues as the location of a cheese factory and some small-scale manufacturing.

### D. Economic Base

Petersham's economic base was largely agricultural during this period, as the value of its products exceeded those of manufacturing by at least a factor of two. Dairying and livestock-raising were the principal activities, with cheese, butter, and meat (beef, pork, veal), the leading products. More than 100,000 lbs. of cheese and 20,000 lbs. of butter were produced annually until the 1850s, when both began to decline as whole milk sales increased. During the 1860s a cheese factory was erected, temporarily reversing the downward trend in cheese production. Sheep were kept on many farms early in the period, but their numbers declined sharply during the 1830s. The number of horses on the town's farms did not exceed that of oxen until

the 1860s, when new, lighter agricultural machinery such as hay rakes, mowers, and tedders were becoming more common.

The cutting of Petersham's forests proceeded steadily through the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s. Between 1831 and 1865 the town's woodlands were reduced by two-thirds. Wood products comprised the leading category of manufactured goods during the period, with more than one million feet of boards cut and 13,000 bushels of charcoal burned annually in the 1850s. The amount of land under cultivation in grains and potatoes also peaked during the 1850s before a sharp decline in grain prices and acreage occurred in the 1860s with the availability of Western grains. Hay and pasture land, however, increased steadily with the growing emphasis on dairying and livestock.

The manufacturing sector experienced moderate growth during the 1830s, but the Panic of 1837 and the following depression caused a considerable decline in several of the industries, including palm-leaf and straw hatmaking, and the merchants/shopkeepers involved in marketing them. Prosperity returned in 1844 and by 1845, production was still less than half of its 1837 level. The industry remained steady at this level through the 1860s before declining in the 1870s.

Shoemaking experienced a similar trajectory: expansion during the 1830s, contraction after 1837, slow increase through the 1840s, and a gradual decline during the 1850s. At its peak in 1837, 35 men and women produced 11,000 pairs of boots and shoes worth \$16,000.

Textile manufacturing, which ceased during the late 1820s or early 1830s, was resumed during the late 1830s and 1840s. A small mill producing satinets and cassimeres was operated at Nichewaug, but it closed by the mid 1850s.

Woodworking, which accounted for more than half of the value of manufactured goods through the period, consisted of ten sawmills, a powderkeg and cask manufactory, a maker of tubs and pails, a carriage maker, a small ladder factory, a boxmaker, chair- and cabinet-maker, and a shop where table legs made in Dana were veneered. Metal working consisted of a number of blacksmith shops, a plough maker and a triphammer shop which made hay forks, and a maker of lightning rods and ox balls (for horns). A small brickyard was operated between the 1840s and 1860s, producing about 50,000 bricks annually.

Dana's industries were not unlike those in Petersham. Small manufacturing villages grew around a brickyard and sawmill in Doubleday and around several straw and palm-leaf hat finishing shops and woodworking shops in North Dana. In 1845 a factory for making and shaping pianoforte, melodeon, and billiard table legs was established in North Dana, employing machinery invented by Dana residents Allen Goodman and Warren Hale. The "leg factory" burned three times by 1870, but was rebuilt, enlarged, and

supplied with new and improved machinery each time. At Soapstone Hill in the eastern portion of Dana, a quarry to mine the soapstone deposit was opened and a small mill, employing 30 men, was erected to cut and work the stone into slabs, sinks, and other products.

### E. Architecture

**Residential:** Little evidence of building activity. Single-story, center chimney houses and limited numbers of two-story, five-bay double chimney houses from the first portion of the period are supplemented by the gable end form, both one and two stories, including some temple front dwellings. Development seems to decline as period closes.

**Institutional:** The third meetinghouse of 1842 was a Greek Revival gable end structure with a Doric portico. A second Calvinist society formed and built a meetinghouse in the southwest section of town in 1836-37. A Universalist meetinghouse was built in 1838 and subsequently purchased by the Baptists in 1849. In the 1840s a Methodist chapel was built, but the congregation disbanded ca. 1850.

The 1850 town hall burned in 1957. The two-story brick school of 1848 survives in the center. The #3 district schoolhouse of 1867 has been converted into a residence.

**Commercial:** The 1830 wheelwright's shop survives as a residence. Two-story, gable end Greek Revival commercial structure remains as a country store. Also surviving in the center is a ca. 1830 law office. A fire in 1847 destroyed two commercial buildings and two hotels on the common.

## IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)

### A. Transportation Routes

The Springfield-Athol Railroad opens service in 1873 along the Swift River corridor, passing through North Dana and the western tip of Petersham.

### B. Population

Overall population decline continues from 2,093 for the area in 1870 to 1,439 in 1915. The two towns experienced different patterns, however, for while Dana maintained a consistent figure around 730, with a high of 790 in 1900 and low of 695 in 1885, Petersham drops by half from 1,335 in 1870 to 727 in 1915. The proportion of foreign-born expands from 5.5% in 1885 to over 13% before dropping to 9.8% in 1915. French Canadians outnumber the Irish by 1895, with small numbers of Norwegians in the 20th century. Agricultural employment remained predominant and continued to outnumber manufacturing by four to one. The expansion of industry was felt in North Dana, however, where the

denomination that had formerly shared the Union Church gradually became independent, with both the Congregationalists and Universalists constructing their own churches, leaving the Methodists in the original structure. From 1906 the area's Catholic immigrants could worship nearby in St. Ann's Church. In North Dana the Good Templars built a hall used by many voluntary associations. Of particular importance was the Garfield Grange (1882), member of the Swift River Pomona.

### C. Settlement Pattern

Continued abandonment of marginal agricultural lands is contrasted by summer estate development in Petersham. Industrial activity continues at North Dana. Institutional development continues at Petersham Center, with the addition of a library building (1889-91), a new Baptist church, and St. Peter's Catholic Church (1914) north on Athol Road. Losses to fire also occur, including the Nichewaug Hotel (former Highland Institute) in 1897, and the 1829 Orthodox Church in 1908 (replaced by a replica structure 1910). The greatest concentration of summer estates (mostly Colonial Revival, ca. 1900) occurs from Petersham Center north on North Main Street. The Harvard Forestry School locates in Petersham in 1908. Textile manufacturing is initiated in North Dana in 1880, and a new hotel is built there in 1889. Little other development occurs in the two towns.

### D. Economic Base

Agriculture dominated Petersham's economy during the late 19th and early 20th centuries as the manufacturing sector contracted after the Civil War. Woodworking was the major industry; home work continued with palm-leaf and straw hatmaking and caning of chair seats for Gardner shops. The cheese factory and small boot and shoe shops closed by the 1880s. The value of goods manufactured during the period remained at or below \$35,000 per year, while the value of agricultural goods rose steadily to more than \$160,000 per year by the end of the 19th century.

Dairying and hay led agricultural production, with the greatest increase in milk sales occurring between 1875-1885. A fourfold increase in butter making also occurred during the 1870s. Both these increases follow the completion in 1873 of the Athol and Enfield Railroad and Ware River Railroad in 1873. By 1885, two-thirds of the town's 24,000 acres of farmland were hay and permanent pasture, and nearly 700 acres were under cultivation with grains, potatoes, vegetables, and fruit. Poultry and livestock were also important. Petersham farms declined in number during the early 20th century, but their average acreage increased considerably. In 1905 the 134 mixed agriculture farms averaged 103 acres, up from 95 acres in 1885, while dairy farms averaged 236 acres, up from 93 acres

The completion of the Athol and Enfield Railroad through Dana and the village of North Dana in 1873 was a strong boost to North

Dana's manufacturing establishments. A fire in 1873 at the leg factory destroyed the plant, but it was rebuilt and enlarged and the construction of billiard table frames and all the woodwork connected with the tables was added. This firm continued until 1880, when it was removed to Athol. In its place a satinet factory was established. During the 1890s North Dana, the industrial center of the town, also contained the H. W. Goodman Straw Hat Factory and the Blodgett box and lumber mill. Together these industries employed more than 200 men and women; more than half were employed in the hat factory.

Dana's agricultural production consisted of dairying, livestock, and orcharding. Because the town was smaller than Petersham and the town's surface was more uneven, production was considerably lower, with a smaller percentage of the land improved. Dana was a minor summer resort area during the late 19th and early 20th century as several camps and a number of cottages were erected along the lakes and ponds in the town. These provided a local agricultural market as well as work for builders and service industries.

#### E. Architecture

Residential: Very little development based on surviving structures. Two-story, two-bay, side-passage plans, a ca. 1900 two-story, stuccoed Colonial Revival, an 1899 shingled Colonial Revival, and an 1886 one-and-a-half-story gable end Dutch Colonial hotel.

Institutional: The third meetinghouse of 1842 burned in 1908 and was replaced with a near replica in 1910 designed by William G. Rantoul of Salem. St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church (1914) is a shingled, gable end edifice with buttresses. The St. Francis Xavier Mission property consists of two seemingly abandoned shingle and fieldstone buildings.

The Maria Assumption Academy, two-story, shingled structure, was built in 1899 and designed by Edmund Willson of Providence, Rhode Island to replace the old Nichewaug Hotel that was destroyed by fire. The high school dates from 1906.

Willson also designed the one-story Arts and Crafts public library, built between 1889-1911.

Commercial: The old Nichewaug Hotel was a two-story double-pile structure with end chimneys and a hipped roof with a monitor.

#### X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915-1940)

##### A. Transportation Routes

By the mid 1920s the road from Barre Center through Petersham Center to Athol is improved as a regional highway (Routes 32/122). The north-south Swift River corridor route from

Greenwich through North Dana to Athol is improved as secondary Route 21. Most Dana roads are destroyed with the creation of Quabbin Reservoir by the late 1930s. Also by the late 1930s, a new Route 122 bypasses Petersham Center and follows both new and old roadways northwest south of South Athol to Orange.

#### B. Population

The overall population decline that characterized the majority of the 19th century continued in the 20th century, accelerated by the creation of the Quabbin Reservoir and the annexation of Dana's remaining land mass by Petersham. From an area total of 1,439 in 1915 the total dropped to 923 by 1940, with only a brief recovery in 1925. The towns' population size was similar during the period, reflecting Petersham's more rapid decline in the Late Industrial period; their decline was parallel until the flooding in the 1930s, when Dana figures fell from 595 in 1930 to 387 in 1935. Within the area the proportion of foreign-born remained quite stable, 9.8% in 1915 and 9.1% in 1940. That same year, 38.5% were categorized as rural. In the years just prior to the formation of the reservoir, Dana's Congregational, Universalist, and Methodist groups began again to meet together.

#### C. Settlement Pattern

Only minor development occurs in Petersham. The entire settlement of Dana is abandoned and removed by the end of the period as the town is taken over by the Metropolitan District Commission as part of the Quabbin Reservoir area. All buildings and cemeteries are removed from Dana by 1939/40. In addition, Petersham settlement west of Turnpike Road is removed, as is the industrial complex and part of the residential settlement at Nichewaug (Factory Village).

#### D. Economic Base

The period between the two world wars brought many changes to Petersham and Dana: all water-powered industries were closed and the plants dismantled, and much of the land came under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts or private conservation organizations. By 1915, Harvard University acquired more than 2,000 acres in Petersham as an experimental silva culture forest. A large tract of land was given to the Commonwealth by the Federation of Women's Clubs, and the Metropolitan District Commission acquired vast areas of land for the Quabbin Reservoir and as watershed protection lands. In 1927 all of Dana was annexed to Petersham and the town ceased to exist as an administrative entity. At least half of Dana's former territory was flooded by 1938 by the waters of the reservoir. Petersham also annexed portions of Greenwich and Prescott that were not flooded. Approximately one-fourth of Petersham's lands came under the control of the MDC as watershed protection land.

### E. Architecture

Residential: No major development apparent.

Institutional: The town hall (1960) was designed by Arthur H. Brooks of Cambridge, Massachusetts as a replica of the three-bay, gable end structure of 1850 which burned in 1957.

The 1926 Historical Society building is a single-story, gable end, center entry English bond brick building designed by John Ames of Boston to resemble Holden Chapel at Harvard.

### XI. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

Adequate inventory overall; good coverage of center (historic district).

### XII. SOURCES