

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

STURBRIDGE

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: Sturbridge

I. TOPOGRAPHY

Located in the southwest corner of Worcester County, Sturbridge consists of a series of long, narrow, parallel ridges running in a northeast to southwest direction. These ridges mark the pre-glacial outcrop of the harder strata of schist. Elevations range from nearly 600 feet above sea level in the Quinebaug River Valley, which traverses the town across the ridges in a northwest to southeast direction, to more than 900 feet above sea level along the northern and southern boundaries of the town.

Drainage of the town's several streams is from the north and south into the Quinebaug along parallel surface stream beds between the ridges. A number of ponds, both natural and man-made, also follow the north-south orientation of the valley floors and ridges. Several of these stream and pond systems mark channels of glacial runoff and are lined with Merrimack and Hinckley series terrace deposits of glacial origin laid down by rapidly-moving water. Topographic features such as eskers also mark these channels.

Soils on the ridges and slopes consist of Brookfield stony loam on the ridge tops and Brookfield loam on the slopes and lower hills, with occasional occurrence of Paxton loam on the tops of rounded drumlins. Where the soil is not too stony, all three soils are fairly productive of hay, grains, potatoes, and orchard crops.

In the southwest corner of the town, a vein of graphite has been mined intermittently from the 17th to the 20th centuries, although rarely returning sufficient profit to justify the difficult recovery of the graphite.

II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Originally included within ten mile radius of Winthrop Leadmine grant (Tantiusque Deed) of 1644. Northern section included in Eliot purchase of 1655. New Medfield tract granted 1729. Town of Sturbridge established, 1738. Lands annexed 1754. Part of Charlton annexed 1792. Part of Middlesex Gore annexed 1794. Part included in new town of Southbridge 1816. Part annexed to Southbridge, 1839. Bounds with Southbridge established 1871.

III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

A residential and recreational interior hill town on an important regional transport focus at the Quinebaug River highland corridor, with a concentration of documented or reputed native village sites. Site of Winthrop leadmine excavations begun in 1658

in southwest highlands. First permanent European agricultural settlement after ca. 1725 in eastern uplands (Fiske Hill). Meetinghouse site established by 1731. Expansion of dispersed 18th century agricultural settlement constrained by rough highland terrain. Late 18th century development of meetinghouse center stimulated by turnpike traffic. Early 19th century textile manufacturing development on Quinebaug River at Westville, with subsequent 19th century industrial focus established at Fiskdale. Extensive late 19th/early 20th century recreational cottage development on local ponds. Regional recreational historic museum focus at Old Sturbridge Village (1938) further stimulated by Massachusetts Turnpike/I-84 highway development, with intensive tourist-oriented commercial strip development along Route 20, and local commercial strip development along Route 131 south of Sturbridge Center.

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500-1620)

A. Transportation Routes

Focus of regional trail network at Quinebaug River Valley corridor through rough, northeast-southwest, highland ridge and valley belt. Main Quinebaug trail north of river from Westville ford (Wallace Road-Fiske Hill Road-Whitmore Road-Main Street-Brimfield Road) with alternate northwest branch to Little Alum Pond, Brimfield (Brookfield Road-old road to Champaux Road). North trails to Quabaug area Brookfield Road (past Alum Pond with Warren-Sturbridge Road branch), and New Boston Road. Alternative eastern trails: Route 20-Gifford Road-Podunk Road; or abandoned trail to McGilpin Road-Berry Corner Road. Inferred southeast upland trail to Mashapaug Pond on Mashapaug-Union Road.

B. Settlement Pattern

No sites are known beyond rumored locations, in the southwest adjacent to the graphite deposits at Leadmine Pond and Hill, and south of Cedar Pond near Route 70. Consisting primarily of upland, settlement can be expected to consist of small sites of short duration visited on a seasonal basis primarily for extraction of local resources.

C. Subsistence Pattern

Seasonal exploitation of specific resources by small bands consisting of families or task groups, visiting upland, northern areas in winter for hunting, as well as pond and river banks for fishing.

V. PLANTATION PERIOD (1620-1675)

A. Transportation Routes

Native trails continue in use. Pynchon's Road from Boston to Springfield (after 1635) along the main east to west. Trail to

graphite mine (after 1658) conjectured along Leadmine road. North-south trail improved as road from Brookfield to Woodstock.

B. Population

It is presumed that the numbers of native Americans were reduced as colonial traffic in the area increased and some were pulled into praying towns in the area. The mine employees represent the only colonial population of any duration during the period.

C. Settlement Pattern

Shortly after period's outset, the graphite deposits at Tantiusque are noted by colonial travellers and in 1644 granted to John Winthrop, Jr., who also held iron grants. In the years following, additional land went to Sir Richard Saltonstall (2,000 acres), the Derrick Farm, and purchase by Eliot from the natives. Only the mine appears to have colonial settlement, although small and impermanent.

D. Economic Base

By 1658, work began at the "leadmine," but transportation difficulties and low quality material made the operation uneconomical. There was no other known economic activity by colonials. It is presumed that the native population continued the subsistence patterns of the Contact period until dispersion as a result of King Philip's War.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

A. Transportation Routes

Improvement continues of native trails and earlier regional roads. focus on meetinghouse center after 1733, with radial local network to dispersed upland farms.

B. Population

The original Medfield proprietors numbered 42, with the later addition of 7. Only 12 of these, however, actually settled in the town. By 1738, the town held 51 men, and three years later three more families living in the county gore became part of the town. In 1765 the town's population reached 899, growing to 1,374 in 1776.

The town ordained its first minister in 1736. Later, as a result of the Great Awakening, a number of New Light sympathizers, finding their own minister's response to the movement unenthusiastic, separated from the First Society. In 1750, the same group became Baptist in affiliation.

C. Settlement Pattern

Petitioning by citizens from Medfield begins in 1725, and after several attempts, is granted in 1729 between Oxford, Brimfield

and Brookfield. The land being unequal in quality, 100 lots were laid out, of 50 acres minimum with additions where quality was poor; then adjacent lots joined to make 50 double lots. They were then selected by a lottery in 1730 and permanent settlement of the dispersed farms began. The houses were to be 18 feet in length, allowing a lobby/chimney bay and a single room on the main floor. That same year a lot of six acres was purchased from the Saltonstall farm for the meetinghouse, located near the geographic center of town.

E. Architecture

Residential: No evidence of any period survivals in inventory or field observation. Hurd (1889) refers to Nehemiah Allen house (pre-1738) as being north of the Baptist meetinghouse and on the site of the "old Allen place." No description is given.

Institutional: First meetinghouse erected in 1733, measured 30 x 40 feet and was finished like the Grafton meetinghouse (Jewett, 1879). Baptists had a church in 1747 near Globe Village. Three schools were erected in 1753.

Commercial: The Public House, erected in 1772, is a two-story, seven-bay, center chimney structure. Tavern mentioned by Hurd as operating ca.1750 at Monson(?).

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

A. Transportation Routes

Colonial highways continue in use, with addition of Worcester-Stafford Turnpike (1810) through meetinghouse center (Charlton Street-West Main Street-Leadmine Road-Douty Road-Holland Road).

B. Population

Population growth was steady until the formation of Southbridge in 1816. From a figure of 1,374 in 1776, the population grew to 1,704 in 1790 and to 1,927 in 1810. During the last reporting dates the total stayed at 1,633 and 1,688 a decade later. There were no changes in the religious organizations in the town.

C. Settlement Pattern

Dispersed agricultural settlement continues, with the development of a small residential cluster at the meetinghouse center, particularly after the establishment of the Stafford Turnpike, and the beginning of textile manufacturing on the Quinebaug River. The Second Congregational meetinghouse is built 1784-87, and a small residential corridor develops on East Main, southeast of the church, with some extension east on Charlton Street. Cotton manufacturing begins at Westville in 1811, with worker housing on Wallace Road and Shepherd Road. Textile manufacturing

on the Quinebaug at Fiskdale is initiated after 1827, with early mill east of Brookfield Road and worker housing south of West Main. Further east, tool manufacturing (Snell Augers) is begun earlier (1790) southwest of Cedar Street along the Quinebaug. Work at the graphite mine is taken up again in the 1820s. A Baptist meetinghouse is built on Fiske Hill in 1784.

D. Economic Base

The town of Sturbridge, like most inland towns in Massachusetts and New England, was dominated by agriculture from its settlement in the early 18th century until well into the 19th century. An agricultural society was founded in 1794, only two years after the Massachusetts Agricultural Society was formed, suggesting the presence of a group of progressive gentlemen/farmers. A report from 1800 provides the following impression of agriculture in Sturbridge: a medium-sized farm was 130 acres -- 1/3 pasture, 1/5 mowing, 1/15 tillage, 1/30 orchard, 1/3 woodland; it would keep 15 head of cattle, 2 horses, 15 sheep; seven acres were planted or sown to grain; 3/4 acre of potatoes were planted; milk was made into cheese and butter; and most farmers kept several swine. Several tanneries, established during the 1780s, processed local hides. In 1795, 15 sawmills and four gristmills cut boards and ground grain for the local population.

Water-powered manufacturing was first introduced in 1811 at Westville near Southbridge, where the Sturbridge Manufacturing Company erected the first cotton mill in the area. A number of the company members were also involved in establishing the early cotton mills in Southbridge. Only spinning and wool carding were carried out initially in the small three-story frame mill. The original company went bankrupt after the end of the War of 1812, but a new company was formed to operate the mill. A short distance upstream a gristmill was converted to the manufacture of cotton batting about 1820, but it was not until 1829 that a second spinning and weaving mill was established in Sturbridge. The Quinebaug Co. mill was built in Fiskdale by Josiah and Henry Fiske, natives of Sturbridge. A five-story brick mill and tenements were built by the company and became the core of the village of Fiskdale.

In the town's southwest corner was located a graphite mine, first discovered by the colonists in the early 17th century and owned through much of the 17th and 18th centuries by John Winthrop and his descendants. There was little mining during the 18th and early 19th centuries until 1828, when Frederick Tudor of Boston purchased the mine and began to remove graphite. That year, five tons were mined and shipped to England, rising to 24 tons by 1830. The graphite was turned and kiln-fired to produce crucibles at the Ixion Black Lead Factory. Mining appears to have ended in 1832, perhaps due to excessive amounts of water in the shafts.

E. Architecture

Residential: The center chimney plan appears to have been most common. Both one- and two-story examples are recorded, mostly five bays in width, although a two-story, four-bay house is recorded. Two double-pile houses are recorded; one is a frame, double-chimney example and the other is a brick, end chimney form. A single-pile end chimney house and two rear wall houses are also noted. There are three gable end, side-passage plans which appear to be earlier than the usual Greek Revival type. Four one-story gambrel-roofed houses have been recorded (fourth quarter 18th century). Also of note, the Oliver Wight house, a two-story, five-bay, double chimney gable-on-hip structure, ca. 1787.

Institutional: Second meetinghouse built 1784-87. A Baptist meetinghouse was also erected in 1784 on Fisk Hill. The old West School (now a residence) was built in 1822.

Commercial: Two hotels are indicated on the 1830 map; one is obviously the Public House. The other may be the Quineboag Mills and hotel, erected between 1826-30. This stone building was a two-story, five-bay, gable end, center entry structure.

Industrial: Fiskdale began to develop as the town's major mill village with the construction in 1827 of a five-story stone mill measuring 84 x 40 feet on the lower privilege. This eventually became the Sturbridge Cotton Mills.

VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830-1870)

A. Transportation Routes

The early 19th century highways continue in use, but no rail connections are routed through town.

B. Population

Overall population totals grew during the period from 1,688 in 1830 to 2,101 in 1870. There was fluctuation, however, so that the overall high of 2,291 was reached in 1860 and dipped to 1,993 five years later before climbing again.

In spite of the formation of Southbridge some manufacturing did develop within Sturbridge, reaching its height during this period. Nearly 400 men were employed in manufacturing in 1840, and nearly twice as many were employed in agriculture. The number of foreign-born living in the town increased steadily during the period, accounting for 9.4% in 1855, for 13.8% in 1865, for 22.9% in 1875. The Irish predominated throughout the period, followed closely by French Canadians, as well as small numbers of English and Scots. Both the Congregational and Baptist societies continued, with the addition of a Unitarian Society late in the period, 1864.

C. Settlement Pattern

Sturbridge Center expands as the town's institutional focus, while industrial development continues at Fiskdale. Westville remains a secondary industrial focus. Barber notes 30 dwellings at Sturbridge Center in 1839. Institutional additions include the Third Baptist Church (1833), south of the Congregational Church (moved to Fiskdale in 1838); the town house (1838, enlarged 1859), opposite the Congregational Church on High Street; and a brick school (1855). Residential infill occurs on Main Street, with some extension on High Street. To the northwest, the Agricultural Fairgrounds and Hall are established.

Textile manufacturing expands at Fiskdale, with an 1834 stone mill, and subsequent new upper (1869) and lower (1870) mills. To the east, Snell Augers also expands, with 1841 and 1855 additions. Residential development occurs along Main Street between Brookfield Road and Arnold Road with second cluster further east around the Auger mill. Worker housing is built near the different factory sites. Some residences and small shops are added at Westville.

D. Economic Base

From the 1830s to the Civil War, the economy of Sturbridge experienced steady growth with textiles, leather and shoemaking and metalworking providing the impetus. Both the population and value of manufactured goods peaked during the 1860s and early 1870s; population did not rise above the 2,291 persons counted in 1860 until the late 1930s. The high levels of production achieved during the late 1860s and early 1870s were not exceeded until the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The textile industry was the first to expand in the 1830s. In Fiskdale an upper dam and a large five-story stone mill were erected in 1835 by the Quinebaug Co. soon after the company merged into the Sturbridge Cotton Mill Co., which ran both the new stone mill and the brick mill. By 1837 six cotton mills employing 71 men and 117 women were in operation in Sturbridge, and produced more than 800,000 yards of cloth and cotton batting. Satinet manufacturing was introduced in the late 1840s or early 1850s into the mill at Westville. The depression of 1857 and 1858 forced the closing of a number of the mills. In Fiskdale the stone mill was removed in 1859, and a large brick mill was erected in its place. New housing was built and additions were made to the earlier brick mill over the next decade. By 1865 only the two Fiskdale mills and the satinet mill in Westville remained. Employment and production in the textile industry peaked in the 1840s, when nearly 100 men and 200 women produced 1.9 million yards of cotton print cloth valued at \$118,000. In 1865, 60 men and 69 women were employed in the mills and produced 1.1 million yards of print cloth and 90,000 yards of satinet. However, the value of the goods produced rose to more than \$324,000.

Leather tanning and shoemaking followed next in importance. By 1855 two tanneries and three currying shops prepared more than 2,000 hides, most for the local shoe industry. Several large shops were built in the center village and at Fiskdale during the 1840s and 1850s. Employment rose from 21 men and 8 women in 1845 to 105 men and 85 women in 1855. They manufactured 78,000 pairs of boots and shoes in 1855, largely for the Southern trade. After the war, a better grade shoe was produced in the surviving shops and annual production figures during the late 1860s totaled more than \$300,000.

Metalworking was begun in 1836 with the manufacture of pistols in a shop on Pistol Pond. In 1837, 36 men produced firearms worth \$20,000. The first manufacture of augers and bits in Sturbridge was begun on the site of the pistol shop in 1841, followed by the relocation of an auger and bit manufactory to Wight Village from Ware in 1844. The firm occupied the Wight fulling mill until its destruction by fire in 1852. In its place, three large stone buildings were erected. The firm became the Snell Mfg. Co. in 1862 and employed 75 operatives to produce augers, bits, chisels and gimlets. During the 1850s the shop on Pistol Pond switched from bits and augers to the manufacture of leather cutting and shoe kit tools.

Lumbering and woodworking were also important activities. The town's extensive forests yielded up to 900,000 feet of boards and 4,100 cords of firewood annually. Several chair and cabinet shops operated during the 1830s and 1840s; a pail, tub, and box shop was established in the 1860s; and two wagon and sleigh shops operated in the center village from the 1830s to the 1880s. The large demand for wood and extensive cutting of the town's forests which resulted cleared large areas for pasture and haying. As a result, the raising of sheep and cattle for wool, meat, and dairying were important agricultural activities. In 1837 the town contained more than 2,000 sheep; in 1865, when most towns had greatly reduced their flocks, Sturbridge farms still contained more than 1,000 sheep. Numbers of neat cattle--milk cows, heifers, bulls, steers, oxen--remained high through the period. The more than 600 milk cows in the 1840s and 1850s produced up to 39,000 lbs. of butter and 35,000 lbs. of cheese annually. By 1865, whole milk sales were begun and farm production of cheese fell off considerably thereafter. Butter, however, remained an important market product. Cultivation of grains slowly declined through the antebellum years, as cheaper, Western corn and grains became available on the market.

Agricultural practices, breeding, and methods gradually improved through the actions of the South Worcester Agricultural Society, the successor to the earlier Sturbridge Agricultural Society. Incorporated in 1855, the Society held annual fairs and competitions, and in 1868 purchased a mowing lot on the south shore of Cedar Pond as a permanent fair ground. One obvious change in agricultural practices was the declining use of oxen and increased use of horses as work animals. Between 1855 and 1865, the number of oxen fell by almost one half from 340 to 182, while the number of horses increased from 199 to 234.

E. Architecture

Residential: The major single-family residential form appears to have been the gable end, side-passage plan, primarily of two stories. Center and double chimney forms are still popular, but are secondary to the gable end. The Josiah Fiske house, ca. 1840, is a two-story, five-bay, gable end, center entry house with a Tuscan portico. The Emory Bates house, another mill owner's residence, is a similar three-bay design with Italianate details dating from the 1860s.

Worker housing in Fiskdale consumes a large percentage of the extant housing stock. Most of the structures are frame, two stories in height, and vary from six to eight bays in width. Two brick examples are recorded: a two-story, end chimney, four-plex and a two-story six-bay, gable end duplex. Almost all display Greek Revival details while built as late as 1870. Of special interest was an 1852 four-story octagonal house built as housing for the Snell Mfg. Co. The walls were composed of a "grout" of sand and other crushed materials to resemble stone (demolished, 1964). By the end of the period, the Sturbridge Cotton Mills had erected 100 tenements. Dwellings were also erected by the Snell Mfg. Co.

Institutional: A new Baptist church was erected in 1833 and subsequently moved "down the hill" to Fiskdale in 1838. A town hall was built in 1838. The one-story, gable end structure was raised to two stories in 1858 by the Worcester Southern Agricultural Association which used the building until 1868, when it sold it to the town of Sturbridge. A two-story exhibition hall, built in 1868 for the Southern Worcester Agricultural Association, measured approximately 80 x 30 feet and was located near Cedar Pond.

A one-room frame engine house was built ca. 1850. The two-story, brick school in the center was erected in 1855, replacing one that was built in 1851 and burned. The 1832 frame East school-house is now a residence.

Commercial: Buildings erected during the period include the ca. 1870 two-story brick, gable end store and a mid-19th century carriage shop now converted into a dwelling.

Industrial: In 1834-35, the upper privilege at Fiskdale received a five-story 180 x 40-foot stone mill building, which along with the 1827 brick mill, became the Sturbridge Cotton Mills. In 1869, a three-story, 182 x 70-foot stone mill was added to the site fifty feet north of the first stone building. The following year, the 1827 brick mill on the lower privilege was replaced with "a large and picturesque looking mill" (Jewett). The Wight Village, where augers and bits were manufactured, erected a brick shop in 1847. The building burned in 1852 and was replaced with a two-story 100 x 32-foot structure. Two stone mills were built in 1853 (100 x 45 feet and 46 x 36 feet). This became the Snell Mfg. Co. and later Tennis and Wilson of New York.

IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)

A. Transportation Routes

By the 1890s the Southbridge and Sturbridge electric street railway connects Fiskdale southeast through Sturbridge Center to Globe Village and Southbridge Center along Main Street-Fairview Park Road and later Route 131.

B. Population

Total population figures fluctuate throughout the period, beginning at 2,101 in 1870, ending at 1,648 in 1915. The period high was reached early, 2,213 in 1875, the period low of 1,910 twenty years later. The number of foreign-born in the town decreased from a high of 22.9% in 1875, falling to 14.1% in 1915. Within this group the French Canadians outnumbered the Irish, overwhelmingly by 1915. There were also small numbers of English and later Russians. Early in the period an Episcopal parish, Grace Church, existed, but did not persist.

C. Settlement Pattern

Institutional construction continues at Sturbridge Center, but the new institutional/commercial focus shifts to Fiskdale. Some recreational cottage development begins on local ponds, and suburban expansion from Southbridge begins to filter into the southeast. At Sturbridge Center the Unitarian meetinghouse (1872) is built on Main west of the town hall, which now has a portico and facade, added in 1909. A public library (1896) is built next to the Congregational church. Few, if any, residential additions are made. In Fiskdale, brick schools are built in 1874 and 1896, and Irish and French Catholic churches are built in 1883. The Otis Block (1874), a multi-story brick commercial building, is built on Main Street. Residential infill continues with some extension north from Main Street, including multi-family worker row houses. Linear growth extends east to the Snell Mfg. area.

In the southeast, linear residential extensions out of Southbridge begin along Fisk Hill Road and Fairview Park Road. By the 1890s cottage development is occurring on the west shore of Walker Pond and the southeast shore of Alum Pond.

D. Economic Base

The town was able to sustain its post-Civil War prosperity only through the early 1880s. Between 1875 and 1885, the town lost 12 manufacturing establishments and the value of goods produced fell from \$669,000 to \$384,000. Boot and shoemaking and tanning and currying of leather disappeared completely during this decade, a number of sawmills closed, and the Westville satinet mill burned in 1882. Production at the Fiskdale mills fell off from \$470,000 worth of goods in 1880 to less than \$290,000 during the depression year of 1885. By the end of the decade, production was again up at the Fiskdale mills as more than 10 million yards

of print cloth were manufactured annually by 286 operatives. The company maintained this level of production and employment up to the suspension of operations in 1914.

Unlike the leather and textile industries, the manufacture of augers, bits, chisels and cutting tools continued to expand through the period. The Snell Mfg. Co. grew from 35 employees in 1865 to 150 by the early 20th century, a new plant was erected in 1907, and the company manufactured a line of more than 1,000 different bits, chisels, boring machines, and augers for metal and woodworking uses.

Dairying became the most important agricultural activity by the late 1870s and production continued to expand until whole milk and butter production reached more than 250,000 gallons and up to 43,000 lbs. by the 1890s. By the early 20th century the process of agricultural specialization intensified: the number of mixed husbandry farms and their total acreage fell by 1/2 from 192 to 94 farms, nearly 17,000 acres to 8,100 acres. Dairy farms, meanwhile, increased from 13 to 18 and their acreage nearly doubled from 1,200 to 2,200 acres. Orchards, vegetable farms, and poultry farms also increased. Although the acreage devoted to hay increased, the amount of land devoted to crops declined and several thousand acres reverted to woodland.

E. Architecture

Residential: No apparent major development during this period. Scattered examples of fourth quarter 19th century Queen Anne gable end dwellings. Some early 20th century housing noted in southeast part of town near junction of Wallace and Fisk Hill Roads.

Institutional: The Christian Advent church, erected during the 1890s, is a one-story, frame late Gothic style structure. St. Patrick's Roman Catholic church is a gabled structure sheathed in shingles and measuring 50 x 39 feet. St. Anne's (French Canadian) Roman Catholic church, also built in 1883, is a one-story, frame gable end Gothic structure. Both are now located in Fiskdale on the grounds of St. Anne's Shrine. St. Patrick's is no longer a parish church. The Unitarian church was built in 1872. The 40 x 60-foot church with a 106-foot tower is described in Hurd (1879) as "a tasty and comfortable house of worship."

Two brick Italianate detailed schools were erected during this period: one in 1874, a two-and-one-half-story, five-bay, gable end structure in Snellville, and the other, a two-story, seven-bay structure erected in Fiskdale in 1896.

The 1896 brick, Colonial Revival style library was designed by Darrow (?) of Boston. The Fiskdale mills erected the brick Victorian Gothic community building in 1874.

Industrial: A brick trolley substation was built in 1906.

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915-1940)

A. Transportation Routes

By the early 1920s, the old streetcar route from Sturbridge Center is paved as an automobile highway. An essentially new cut-off road (Route 131) replaces it by the mid 1930s. By ca. 1930, the new regional east-west Route 20 runs north of Sturbridge Center and through Fiskdale, and the north-south Route 15 to Hartford is established. By the late 1930s a secondary connector is paved from Fiskdale north to Brookfield.

B. Population

Population size continued to fluctuate, though increasing overall from 1,648 in 1915 to 2,227 in 1940. The period low was 1,573 in 1920, and a second short-term dip took place in 1930. Foreign-born within the town continued to decrease, to 9.1% by 1940. That same year 6.2% of the population was classified as rural.

C. Settlement Pattern

Most new development is in the form of recreational cottages on the town's ponds and suburban expansion from Southbridge. At Fiskdale, a Federated Church is built in 1922, and some residential development occurs west of Brookfield Road on Route 20. Cottage development continues around Alum Pond, on the southern half of Cedar Pond, on Long Pond, and on Leadmine Pond. In the southeast, residential development out of Southbridge continues on the Route 131 corridor, with high-income residential development up Fiske Hill. Quinebaug Village (1938), later Old Sturbridge Village, is established as an historical museum complex southwest of the Agricultural Fairgrounds.

D. Economic Base

The economy of Sturbridge was seriously disrupted by the extended idleness of the Fiskdale Mfg. Co. mills, the major employer in the town before World War I. By 1920 the town's population had fallen to its lowest point since the late 18th century. It was not until 1927 that the two mills were reopened by the Sturbridge Finishing Co. and the Mason and Parker Finishing Co. The Depression that soon followed closed the mills again.

The manufacture of augers and bits, however, endured the Depression as the Snell Mfg. Co. continued operations until the early 1940s. In 1928 a second manufactory of edge tools, chisels, punches and bricklayers' tools was established.

Dairying continued to dominate agricultural production through the period. Orchards, poultry farms, and vegetable and market gardens increased in importance. The trend of declining agricultural acreage continued as more lands were allowed to revert to forest.

E. Architecture

Residential: No major development apparent. Continuation of early 20th century residential forms along Fiske Hill Road and some 1930s-1940s Colonial Revival inspired houses in same area.

Institutional: Congregational church burned in 1908; replaced by a Federated Church designed in the Colonial Revival style of 1922 by John S. Bilderan.

Commercial: Old Sturbridge Village begun in the 1930s and opened to the public.