

# MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

## NORFOLK

Report Date: 1980

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

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

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

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

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



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## MHC RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

Date: February, 1980

COMMUNITY: Norfolk

### I. TOPOGRAPHY

Located on rolling riverine lowlands and adjacent uplands. Considerable meadow/marsh along Charles. An increasingly irregular topography through the southern and eastern parts of town. Some rocky outcrops, many glacial outwash features. A sandy to gravelly soil. Numerous upland ponds and small lakes all of which drain into Charles. Large areas of upland bog and cedar swamp as well.

### II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Part of Dedham Grant, 1636. Fragment of Dedham/Dorchester line intact as southeast boundary. Part of Town of Wrentham, 1673. Called North Wrentham during 18th Century. Incorporated as Town of Norfolk, 1870 from sections of Wrentham and Franklin.

### III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Rural suburban town on periphery of metropolitan Boston. Located on upper Charles River Valley with presumed native sites along regional trails around wetlands. Early axis of settlement from Medfield during 17th Century with several mill sites after King Philips War. Dispersed agricultural development during Colonial period with some early 18th Century houses of lean-to plan. Formation of town center by early 19th Century with outlying villages at City Mills and Pondville on Boston railroad connections. Expansion of market gardening and dairying through early 20th Century with rural landscape preserved in northern portion. Location of fringe institutions on Boston-Providence corridor during mid-20th Century while town center retains village scale surrounded by increasing suburban development along back roads.

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

#### A. Transportation Routes:

Located on upper valley of Charles River with intersection of several regional trails. Conjectured routes include West-Diamond-Shears Sts. from Walpole to Wrentham around Stop River with branch to Medfield as Seekonk St. and possible loop around Philips Pond as Holbrook St. Other probable trails include Union-King-Main Sts. around Stony Brook and Mill River with apparent alternate branch to Charles River through Norfolk Ctr. as Rt. 115. It also seems likely that a North/South trail through Pondville followed the axis of Everett St.

#### B. Settlement Pattern:

No documented period sites. Sites probable, however, on well drained terraces and knolls overlooking Charles (especially around

Populatic Pond) and adjacent to inland ponds and lakes.

C. Subsistence Pattern:

An area with diverse resources. Anadromous fish runs in Charles (Populatic Pond at terminus), fresh water fishing in ponds and lakes. Good agricultural land available. Hunting/gathering in both uplands and lowlands.

D. Observations:

Though little is reported in the area, appears to be a high probability for sites. Period sites would be of particular interest since area is on border between Nipnuck (freshwater, inland) people and coastal tribes (Massachusetts to east, Wampanoags to southeast, and Narragansetts to south/south west). Information from this area would help clarify broader questions of native settlement and territory which are now poorly understood.

V. FIRST SETTLEMENT PERIOD (1620-1675)

A. Transportation Routes:

Native trails remain as primary routes in 17th Century with main highway from Walpole (Dedham) to Wrentham as West-Diamond-Shears Sts. with Seekonk St. to Medfield.

B. Population:

Perhaps six colonial families by end of period. A few native inhabitants may have remained as well.

C. Settlement:

After 1669, small farms in two areas--City Mills and west of Stony Brook Pond (Grove & Union Sts.).

D. Economic Base:

Subsistence farming and survival. Area chosen for access to meadow land (hay and grazing).

E. Observations:

Inhabitants were part of larger effort to establish settlement at 'Wollomonopoag' (Wrentham). A difficult task despite environmental abundance--one of the more remote sections of the frontier.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

A. Transportation Routes:

Primary routes remain in place with new highways in late 17th Century linking to City Mills as Myrtle St. (1684) to Medway and Boardman-Main Sts. from Walpole around Highland Lake. Other linking roads of the period include Fruit St. to Medfield and Park and Grove Sts. from City Mills.

B. Population:

Abandoned during King Philip's War. Slow recovery by end of century. Steady growth during 18th Century. All specific figures are included with Wrentham totals.

C. Settlement:

Area evacuated during King Philip's War. Rebuilding completed by end of century. Scattered farms throughout town, especially in more tillable northern section. Several clusters of settlement emerged, usually around milling areas: City Mills (after 1680), Mann Pond/Highland Lake (after 1691), Pondville (after 1730). No village center as this was part of Wrentham. Northern part of town had ties with Medfield.

D. Economic Base:

Agriculture and grazing (cattle). Orchards in the Pondville area. Considerable lumbering. Milling of products both for local use and for export: sawmill on Highland Lake 1691, gristmill added 1693; gristmill at City Mills 1694, sawmill added later; sawmill on Stony Brook (Union and Grove Sts.) early 18th Century; undated sawmill on Stony Brook Pond.

E. Architecture: residential:

Little high-style likely to have been built; vernacular building appears to have been divided nearly equally between central chimney houses and cottages; a small body of central-chimney cottages with 3/4 facades was also built, most of these seem to have been incorporated as the rear-ells of later (Federalist) houses, several are associated with construction dates of ca. 1725-50; other cottages attributed dates in 1690 (questionable).

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

A. Transportation Routes:

Formation of town center in late 18th century results in radial road pattern from meeting house as Medway, Union, North and Main Sts. with cross link to Pondville as Pond St. Other secondary links of the period include Miller St. over Mill River and loop of Tucker-Cleveland around Cress Brook. Main turnpike from Walpole to Wrentham opened as Dedham St. by early 19th Century (Rt. 1A).

B. Population:

Small increases probably occurred throughout period, no separate statistics available; North Parish (Congregational) formed, ca. 1795-96.

C. Settlement Location:

Along major roads at Norfolk Center, at City Mills (past ca. 1815) and at Abbyville (Lawrence St. at Bush Pond--ca. 1820?); scattered farmsteads.

D. Economic Base:

Chiefly agricultural before 1812. In the following three years, three cotton manufacturing companies--Wrentham Mfg. Co., 1812 at Bush Pond; Franklin Mfg. Co., 1813 at City Mills; and Stony Brook Mfg. Co., 1814 at Stony Brook. Unidentified foundry begun at Highland Lake, probably in this period on site of earlier saw and grist mills.

E. Architecture:

residential: Little high-style present, although high-style late Georgian and Federalist decorative details existed on houses at Norfolk Center and scattered farmsteads. Varied house-types present with no clear dominance of a single type; the most numerous examples are of central chimney houses and cottages, in addition some two-story twin-chimney and rear-wall chimney houses were built.

institutional: Approximately 6 or 7 school districts present by 1820's; meetinghouse built ca. 1798-1801, Federalist style (Gothic trim probably added ca. 1845, although may be earlier).

commercial: Two-story frame structure with hip roof (Norfolk Center--ca. 1700, 1820's) possible tavern/store; one-story (?) stone store building at City Mills (ca. 1815), few other buildings likely.

industrial: Small-scale cotton mills--wood-frame construction probable (post ca. 1812).

VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830-1870)

A. Transportation Routes:

Turnpikes and highways remain from early 19th Century. Norfolk Co. railroad opened from Boston to Woonsocket (1849) through Norfolk Ctr. and City Mills with short-lived branch to Medway (1853) now abandoned roadway across Tucker Rd.

B. Population:

Small, localized population increases probable; no separate statistics available; Congregational Church (North Parish) divided and re-united during period; Baptist Society formed 1840's (?).

C. Settlement Locations:

Primarily at village of preceding period, little new building in outlying areas; small village developed around Stoney Brook Factory (junction Seekonk and North Streets), ca. 1845-55.

D. Economic Base:

George Campbell's paper mill replaced foundry at Highland Lake producing heavy wrapping and building papers under different owners into 1920's. Outside capital in the 1860's from Franklin acquired Stony Brook and City Mills plants, the former converting to production of wool shoddy.

E. Architecture:

residential: No high-style evident; side-hall cottages and a few double cottages (Greek Revival and Italianate styles) were built in the vicinity of City Mills (Main and Park Sts.), the Stoney Brook Factory and along major roads at the outskirts of Norfolk Center.

institutional: 6 or 7 school districts throughout period, at least one wood-frame Greek Revival style schoolhouse and one Italianate style schoolhouse built; wood-frame "Lock-up" built,

ca. 1860-80. Federalist style meetinghouse of 1801 remodelled with Gothic decoration (?), ca. 1840-45; Greek Revival style meetinghouse built ca. 1840 (Baptist?), Italianate style trim added ca. 1855.

commercial: One- and two-story wood-frame buildings with gabled facades probably built in small numbers--none evident through secondary sources.

industrial: Probably enlargement of existing factories; no new mills except paper mill at Highland Lake.

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

### A. Transportation Routes:

Roads and railroads in place from mid-19th Century with addition of primary rail route from Walpole to Wrentham through Pondville (1892) with original steel bridges intact. No street railway routes through area.

### B. Population:

Fluctuation in 825-1,089 range throughout period; foreign-born population increased during 1890's and early 20th Century; Irish were largest group until ca. 1905-1915, after which Polish were largest group; actual population of all groups was small.

### C. Settlement Locations:

No important expansion of settled area; summer cabin colony began to be developed at Populatic Pond ca. 1905-15.

### D. Economic Base:

City Mills factory under Ray ownership produced felt boot and shoe linings, a product it would stay with (under American Felt after 1899) through the 1920's. Though remaining in operation, the other mills appear all to have changed ownership in the 1870-80's period.

### E. Architecture:

residential: no high-style present for mid- and late-Victorian styles; individual estate quality examples of early-Twentieth Century eclectic design built at Kingsbury Pond ca. 1905-15 (probably no more than ½ dozen examples); few two-storey houses built, those that were built were nearly astylistic/late Queen Anne; scattered mid- and late-Victorian side-hall cottages; cabin/summer cottages of probable rustic design but flimsy construction.

institutional: Italianate/Victorian Gothic style town hall built or adapted from existing building 1880-81; 6 school-houses present in 1884, reduced to 2 by 1909; high school built ca. 1875-90 (?); firehouse built by 1909-stone Gothic chapel built 1909 (off Valley St.).

commercial: "pleasure ground" development by railroad company of Highland Lake (pre-1884); 3 railroad depots by 1876. Commercial building at the town center probably made use of the same building types as the preceding period--little development likely.

industrial: Little new building likely; some brick (Italianate and utilitarian) construct at City Mills (ca. 1880-1915).

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

### A. Transportation Routes:

Transport lines in place from early 20th Century. Auto highways rebuilt from existing roads including main route Southwest from Boston as Route 1A (Dedham St.) and local link from Foxborough to Millis through Norfolk Center as Route 115 (North-Pond Sts.) in 1930's. Early concrete bridge survives on Main St. at City Mills.

### B. Population:

Rapid growth of population after 1925 as a result of opening of state prison and hospital, although it is unclear if the institutions' inmates were included in the Norfolk population or whether local population increases reflected attendants and other personnel who moved to the town.

### C. Settlement Locations:

Major residential developments established in eastern section of town (Pondville and Clark St.); scattered new houses in eastern section of town, particularly along Seekonk and Main Sts.

### D. Economic Base:

No new manufacturing industries, though as in Wrentham, at least one large poultry farm. City Mills (felt) and Bush Pond (reworked wool) continue in operation throughout period.

### E. Architecture:

residential: small amount of eclectic high style may have been built near Kingsbury Pond; majority of new construction consisted of modest bungalows, a smaller number of modest Dutch Colonial and Colonial Revival cottages were built near the junction of Seekonk and Main Streets; continued summer cottage development.

institutional: library located in adapted former schoolhouse (?); prison complex of brick, cast-stone and concrete buildings (some Colonial Revival style) built 1925-27; second prison complex built ca. 1935-40 (?) straddling Walpole town line, concrete and stucco Moderne/International style buildings; Cancer Hospital (Pondville Hospital) built ca. 1915-25(?), all original buildings of eclectic design, built of buff brick with some classical style decorative trim, includes main hospital and houses.

commercial: Some highway-related one-storey development along Dedham St.

industrial: No new construction.

## XI. SOURCES

Wells, Frederick Early Norfolk Revisited (1970).