

# MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

## AMESBURY

Report Date: 1985

**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

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Community: Amesbury

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### I. TOPOGRAPHY

The town of Amesbury is located in the northern portion of Essex County, Massachusetts. It is bordered in the north by the Massachusetts/New Hampshire state line, easterly by Salisbury, southerly by the Merrimack River and the towns of Newbury and West Newbury, and westerly by Merrimack. Physiographically, Amesbury lies within the New England Seaboard Lowland, a relatively smooth coastal strip of land with sane hills usually below the 400 and 500 foot contours. Land surfaces undulate throughout most of the town with several hills and small valleys. The central and western portions of town are especially hilly with some elevations exceeding 300 feet. Elevations average 100 feet or more throughout most of the town. Several plains have been historically important in the town including Sandy Hill, Martin and Buttonwoods Plains in the east and Pond Plain and the plain on Church Street.

Both igneous and sedimentary deposits characterize bedrock deposits in the Amesbury area. Sedimentary Merrimack Quartzite characterized bedrock in the western half of town. Igneous deposits are present in the remainder of Amesbury represented by Dedham Grano-diorite in the central portion of town and Newburyport Quartz Diorite along the town border with Salisbury.

Soils in the Amesbury area represent a mixture of types formed in outwash deposits, friable and compact glacial till, and lacustrine or marine sediments. Soils of the Hinckley-Windsor-Merrimack association are found in areas south and east of Amesbury Center, in a strip-like distribution along the entire western town line and in a small area in the northeastern corner of town. Those soils occur in deep and nearly level to steep deposits. They are excessively drained loamy and sandy soils formed in outwash deposits. Soils belonging to the Scantic-Maybid-Boxton association are found in a large area in the northeastern portion of town east of Market Street and another area east of Lake Attitash. These soils occur in deep deposits and nearly level to moderately sloping areas. They range from very poorly drained to moderately well drained loamy soils formed in lacustrine to marine sediments. Soils of the Pacton-Woodbridge-Montauk associations are found in a strip like distribution east of Hillside Ave and Lake Gardner. Soils in this association are found in deep deposits and nearly level to steep areas. They are generally well drained loamy soils formed in compact glacial till. Soils of the Canton-Charlton-Sutton association are found in two areas east and west of Lake Gardner. These soils are also found in deep deposits and nearly level to steep areas. They are well drained loamy soils formed in compact glacial till. Major drainage in Amesbury is characterized by several swamps, pond, lakes, brooks, and rivers all of which eventually drain into the Merrimack River. Most swamps are located in the central portion of town. Kimball's Pond or Lake Attitash is the largest body of water in the town. The Powwow River was dammed forming Lake Gardner in 1872. Other ponds in the town include Duxbury Pond and Bailey Pond. Major riverine drainage in Amesbury is characterized by the Merrimack River, which drains east to west along the town's entire southern boundary. Interior riverine drainage is characterized by the Powwow River, which drains the western portion of town, and Back River, which drains from the east. Both rivers eventually join the Merrimack.

At European contact, most of Amesbury was forested with little undergrowth. Some grassy areas were also present. The original forest growth in Amesbury and in Essex County in general included a mixture of mostly oak and pine as well as chestnut, popular, maple, birch, and some other hardwoods and conifers. Second growth patterns including oak, maple and pine characterize most of the town today. Some marsh vegetation is also present.

### II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Amesbury was originally part of Merrimack Plantation authorized in 1638 and settled shortly thereafter. The township (including Amesbury) was first named Colchester and later changed to Salisbury at incorporation. Amesbury was originally part of a large territory including the Massachusetts towns of Salisbury, Amesbury, and Merrimack as well as the New Hampshire towns of Southampton, part of Kingston, P???, Newton, Seabrook and Hampstead. Amesbury was part of Old Norfolk County, which then included Salisbury (the Shire town), Hampton, Haverhill, Exeter, Dover, and Strawberry Brook (Portsmouth). In 1655 that part of Salisbury west of the Powwow

River was organized as Salisbury New Town, now Amesbury and Merrimack. Salisbury New Town was established as a new township by the General Court from Salisbury in 1666. In 1667 the town voted to change the name to Amesbury, which was confirmed by the General Court in 1668. Full boundaries were established for Amesbury in 1675. Amesbury petitioned the General Court to be made a frontier town in 1690. Amesbury annexed parts of Salisbury in 1844 and 1886. In 1876 the General Court ordered Amesbury divided. West of Amesbury, also known as Jamaco became the township of Merrimack at that date.

### III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

The town of Amesbury is made up of a large suburban central village with many commercial and industrial structures at its core and dense residential development radiating out from Market Square. A great deal of Federal, Early and Late Industrial Period fabric survives in the central village with few intrusions. Away from the center, development began as dispersed agricultural settlement, some of which remains and is now interspersed with more recently built houses. Residences survive from the Colonial through Early Modern Periods throughout the town and mills from the Federal through Early Modern.

Amesbury was originally part of the 1638 Merrimack Plantation, which included land in Essex County, Massachusetts and in New Hampshire. In 1655, Salisbury west of the Powwow River was renamed Salisbury New Town and included Merrimack. The name changed to Amesbury in 1667 and the land that makes up present day Merrimack was divided in 1876. The part of Salisbury east of the Powwow River to Rocky Hill was annexed to Amesbury in 1886, which finalized the boundaries.

Located in northern Essex County on the New Hampshire border, Amesbury is flanked by Salisbury on the east, Merrimack on the west and the Merrimack River forms the southern border. It is in the coastal lowland and marked by hills of less than 110 meters' elevation. Drainage is via the Back, Powwow and Merrimack Rivers. Lake Gardner and Lake Attitash are the major bodies of water in the northwest section.

Early roads include Haverhill, Pleasant Valley and Middle Roads oriented east-west and Whitehall, Highland, South Hampton, Lion's Mouth and Kimball Roads oriented north-south. These roads emanated from the mill sites on the Powwow River in what would become the population, commercial and industrial center of town approximately one mile up the Powwow River. The Merrimack River was another principal travel corridor through the Late Industrial Period. Turnpikes of the Federal Period were common in the region but none was built in the town. The Salisbury Branch Railroad was built between the Powwow River to the Eastern Branch Railroad at Salisbury Center in 1847. An 1872 station survives on Ring Street. (#68) Street railways provided service along Haverhill Road and north to Newton and Seabrook New Hampshire from 1899 to the 1930s. Haverhill Road became State Highway 110 in 1899 but failed to attract Early Modern Period commercial strip development such as that on Route 1 north of Boston.

A variety of house types and styles were built in the town, beginning with many wood-framed, five-by-two-bay, two-and-one-half story Colonial forms and eventually including many well-executed Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne and Colonial Revival designs. Residential conglomerations appeared during the Colonial Period in the Salisbury Point area, the Ferry and the center around the mills. Later population centers are at the Highlands around Hillside, Greenleaf and Estes Streets. These neighborhoods remain largely intact. The mills built along the Powwow River between 1820 and 1950 are also notable for their degree of surviving context.

For most of its history, Amesbury remained divided between dense industrial and commercial development in the center, the Ferry and Salisbury Point and dispersed agricultural development north of the center. Little commercial or industrial development of intermediate scale took place. Agricultural areas were under cultivation from the Colonial Period to the Late Modern but did not occupy as many people as the industrial activities after 1820. These agricultural areas are located primarily north of the center. Moderne style architecture is seen in one single unit and one multiple unit residential example.

The character of the town is currently industrial and suburban with settlement focused on the mills on the Powwow River. Early population centers consisted of the villages at the Point, the center and the Ferry prior to 1820. Subsequently, the center was the dominant site of growth and expansion, both for industrial and residential development. The major force of change at work in the Late Modern Period is the presence of I-495 and I-95, which provide easy access to Boston and the suburban towns to the south where high-technology industries have proliferated.

Predominant villages with intact historic fabric and context are the center with its many brick mill buildings, the Federal Period residential and industrial villages of Salisbury Point and the Ferry. Significant historic fabric also remains in less densely developed and dispersed areas north of the center and east in Rocky Hill.

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

##### A. Transportation Routes

Native American transportation routes in the Amesbury area likely emphasized water travel along the Merrimack River, which provided a transportation corridor to the coast and more inland areas to the west. Water travel also probably existed along the Powwow and Back Rivers, which linked western and eastern inland areas of Amesbury with the Merrimack River. Land based travel was also probably important, linking similar areas as riverine routes. Major trails may have existed along the northern bank of the Merrimack River following either the Haverhill Road route or the Hunt Road/Main Street route. Both of these routes would have provided an east/west corridor along the northern bank of the Merrimack River. Interior trails may have also existed following the course of the Powwow River along Whitehall Road then Possibly Main Street or Hillside Ames and along South Hampton Road. Secondary trails extending to the town's numerous wetlands likely spurred from major riverine trails.

##### B. Population

Amesbury was inhabited by members of the Pawtucket group (often called Penacook) who inhabited the coast from the north side of Massachusetts Bay in the Saugus/Salem area to York Village, Maine. Locally, this group is commonly referred to as the Pentuckets. Most seventeenth century colonists considered the Pawtucket and Massachusetts Indians closely related but separate entities. Some Pawtucket Indians in the southern portion of Essex County may have been included among the Massachusetts (Swanton 1952; Speck 1928). Gookin (1792) lists ca. 3,000 men belonging to the Pentucket group prior to the 1617-19 epidemics, while Mooney (1928; 4) lists 2,000 men belonging to the Penacook group (probably Pawtucket), as many as 12,000 natives, probably exaggerated. During the same period, both Gookin and Mooney list ca. 3,000 men belonging to the Massachusetts, which probably included sane Pawtucket's. The Native American population in the Amesbury area may have numbered in the vicinity of 100 individuals during much of this period. Following epidemics and Indian wars in the early 17th century, fewer than 25 individuals likely remained in the Amesbury areas.

##### C. Settlement Pattern

No Woodland or Contact Period sites are currently known for the Amesbury area. Several artifacts of potential Contact period origin have been found in the Amesbury area though specific sites are yet to be located. This evidence, in addition to factors such as environmental potential, latter 17th century documentary sources, known Contact period site locations in other Essex County towns, and contemporary secondary sources indicate Contact period sites will eventually be found in the Amesbury area. Known Contact period sites are present nearby in Haverhill, possibly Methuen, Newbury, Newburyport, Ipswich, Salem, Marblehead and probably Saugus. Secondary sources also note a Native American presence in many towns in the area including Haverhill, Methuen, and possibly the Andover/and North Andover area. Numerous locations along the Merrimack River, its tributaries and inland wetlands may have been good site locations. In addition to habitation and village type-sites, special purpose sites such as fishing sites, shell middens, quarries, and burials were also probably present. These sites may have been located along riverine areas or along the periphery of interior wetlands such as ponds, swamps and brooks.

#### D. Subsistence Pattern

Native Americans in the Amesbury area subsisted on a variety of seasonally determined activities including hunting, fishing, the collecting of wild plants and shellfish and horticulture. Hunting was a major activity focusing on larger mammals such as deer and smaller fur-bearers. Upland game, birds and ducks were also hunted, particularly in wetlands and meadows surrounding riverine areas. Seasonal runs of alewives were probably present in most brooks leading to the Merrimack River. Shad, salmon and trout were also available though their distribution was probably restricted to the Merrimack River. Gathering activities probably focused on numerous species of terrestrial as well as freshwater plants. Domestic plants such as corn, beans, pumpkins, squash, and tobacco were important. Native fields were likely located along major riverine areas or around the periphery of major ponds and wetlands.

#### V. PLANTATION PERIOD (1620-1625)

##### A. Transportation Routes

Water travel along the Merrimack Rivet remained the fastest and the most convenient mode of transportation between settlements in the Amesbury area and other settlements on the coast or on the opposite bank of the river. The Powwow River provided convenient water travel to interior areas. Water travel was frequently made by dugout canoes but also by shallops.

Indian trails continued in use in the Amesbury area throughout most of the Plantation period. The first European roadways or cart ways were probably developed around the Powwow River in ca 1640 as Salisbury residents established mills in that area. Other routes shortly followed as settlement west of the Powwow River was authorized in 1641 two roads were laid out, one extending west to Haverhill, the other north to New Hampshire. The western road generally followed the route of the Haverhill Road from the Flowtaug Bridge up Macy Street. (Gun House Lane) through Pond Hills to Haverhill. The northern road generally followed the present course of Whitehall Road from the Merrimack River north across Bailey's, Sandy and Whittier's Hills to New Hampshire. As settlement increased, three individuals were chosen in 1645 to lay out highways west of the Powwow River connecting mills with homes. A road was laid out from the Mill Bridge to the plain beyond the Lyons mouth in 1652. Numerous ways were probably laid out after the first general division of land in 1658. Portions of Buttonwoods Road and the road on Gerry Hill were laid out about that date. Amesbury ferry was established in 1668. George Carr of Carr's Island was given charge of the ferries in 1669.

##### B. Population

Sane Europeans may have settled Amesbury after 1642 as 30 families or approximately one-half of the families in Salisbury were ordered to move west of the Powwow River. This order was delayed and partially defeated. Most Europeans probably settled the area after 1650 as actual land grants were made. Tradition states that early settlers came in two divisions; the first containing nine families; the second--eight families. In 1654, eighteen commoners, possibly ninety individuals, are listed as the original proprietors in Amesbury who received land grants. After 1654 but prior to 1668, ten additional individuals are listed as receiving grants of land. By 1668, twenty-five males, possibly 125 individuals, are listed in Amesbury land divisions. Amesbury's population may have rose to around 250 individuals by 1075. Most Amesbury residents were of English decent, some from the Lincolnshire/Salisbury area of England. Many individuals had previously settled in Newbury and Salisbury. Quakers were present in the Amesbury area by the 1650s, although most residents were Congregationalists. Actual religious services were held at the First Congregational Church in Salisbury.

##### C. Settlement Pattern

Europeans first settled Amesbury in ca. 1645 after residents of the Salisbury settlement voted for an order authorizing thirty families to move west of the Powwow River. Some families apparently settled in the area according to the order, but in general, the order was difficult to enforce and was delayed and partially defeated. The bounds of the new township are now difficult to determine, although it probably included all lands west of the Powwow River--then owned by Salisbury--to Haverhill. The area was originally included in the Plantation at Merrimack, granted to 12 petitioners and grantees by the General Court in 1638. Settlement increased in the Amesbury area until ca. 1654 when sufficient families and freeholders were present to form as new towns. At this

time, the Amesbury settlement had no official name but was referred to as New Town or New Town Salisbury. Articles of Agreement were arranged in 1654 between Old town Salisbury and New Town stating that New Town would be separated from Old Town when it could secure and settle a minister. Between 1654 and separation (ca. 1666-68), each town was separate in most property and civil matters. However, Amesbury residents were expected to attend religious service in Old Town and support its minister--both orders which were not always complied with. New Town was organized the following year in 1655, still lacking an official name. In 1666 the General Court granted township status to the inhabitants of New Salisbury (New Town). In 1667, the town voted to name the settlement Amesbury, continued by the General Court in 1668.

Amesbury's first meetinghouse was built in 1665 in the Union Cemetery area. The town purchased this area in 1863. Previously, burials were at the Golgotha burial ground. The first general division of land in New Town was made in 1858 when a large tract of land bordering on Back River was laid out to town residents. Original members of the settlement received forty acres each with new members receiving ten acres. By 1659 it was apparent that land was already becoming scarce for new settlers. To help alleviate this problem, 500 acres of land beyond the pond was set-aside for the inhabitants' children. This territory was known as "the children's' land." Grants in the area were made to encourage new settlers and were intended for the oldest son in each family. In 1659, twenty-six lots were also laid out along the Merrimack River. The first lot was at Buttonwoods road with others extending along the river westward towards Haverhill. Lots in this locale were not completed and drawn until two years later. In 1661 several new grants were made including the frog pond at the north side of Robert King's Hill and the Whicher's Hill area. In 1862, nearly 4,000 acres were laid out including the land between the pond, Pond Hill and Powwow River as well as lands at Lion's Mouth and great Swamp. This division is probably the 3,876 acres laid out as the Great Lots Division. These lands were given out in lots in 1664, which effectively disposed the town of all cannon lands. In 1667 the actual division of lands set apart for the children in 1659 was ordered the last division of lands during the Plantation period and occurred in 1668 as 100 lots of land were granted to Amesbury residents in four divisions. The first division was in the Whicher's Hill area, the second in the vicinity of the pond, the third between the pond (Kimball's Pond) and Birch Meadows and the fourth along the west side of Pond Brook.

Amesbury settlement during the Plantation period was generally dispersed, particularly in the southern portion of town along the Merrimack River. Some industrial and residential settlement probably began to localize in several area including the banks of the Powwow River, the Ferry and Salisbury Point, all of which were part of Salisbury during this period.

#### D. Economic Base

As Colonial settlers established themselves in the Amesbury area, hunting and gathering wild foods were important to their subsistence. However, the combined use of agriculture and husbandry were clearly the most important aspects in the economic lives of the town's first settlers. Indian corn, wheat, barley and rye were the most important food crops. Orchards were planted by ca. 1655 and vegetables were also grown but grains were the most important food produce. Hemp and flax may have also been important for home textile production. English hay may have been grown by 1675 though salt marsh hay from the Salisbury marshes was probably more important. Husbandry was an important activity in Amesbury. Cattle, horses, sheep, swine, and goats were the most important animals on local farms; oxen and fowl were also present.

Industry began early in the town's settlement. An old sawmill is noted by 1854, probably the Osgood saw mill granted by the town of Salisbury in ca. 1652. The Currier and Macy sawmill was built on the west side of the Powwow River in 1656. Productive lumber mills in Amesbury encouraged two other related industries: shipbuilding and the manufacture of barrel staves. Small class vessels were probably built along the Powwow and Merrimack Rivers throughout the period. These vessels were likely built for local use in fishing and maritime commerce. Barrel staves were manufactured shortly after settlement. This industry increased to the point that by 1665 small-scale stave factories were present in the town. Barrel staves were important in the West Indies trade and also contributed to the commoners who claimed 50 of every 1000 staves made from trees on common lands. River and harbor fishing were also important industries to the town and probably ranked next to farming in importance. Harbor and coastal fishing focused primarily on cod which river fishing focused on shad, salmon, smelt, alewives and bass. By 1675, Amesbury contained a diversified economic base, which focused on farming, fishing, the manufacture of barrel staves and building vessels. These trades provided town residents with several occupations including blacksmith, tailors, carpenters, weavers, millwrights, herdsman, and others.

## VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

### A. Transportation Routes

Native trails had been upgraded to horse paths and cart ways by this time or had become overgrown. The Haverhill Road continued to be the main thoroughfare through the town from the Powwow River area west to the western portion of town (now Merrimack) then Haverhill. East of the Powwow River, the Haverhill Road corridor continued along the Merrimack River through Salisbury via Elm Street. The corridor also branched northerly to New Hampshire on the South Hampton Road and Congress Street. Local routes closer to the Merrimack River existed along Hunt Road and Main Street. West of the Powwow River seven routes continued to connect the Haverhill Road corridor through the town north to New Hampshire and south to the Merrimack River. Main routes to New Hampshire existed along Kimball and Whitehall Roads. Roads to the Merrimack River existed along Pond Hills Road, Buttonwoods Road, possibly Martin's Road and several unnamed ways. Increased settlement during the 18th century resulted in several new roads, particularly in the Salisbury Village, Amesbury Ferry and Salisbury Point areas. In 1719 three roads were laid out including Ferry Road, Birch Meadow Road and part of Lion's Mouth Road. Hunt Road, connecting Haverhill and Buttonwoods Road was ordered in 1721. A road from Clapboard to Cattle's Landing was opened in 1736. Water based travel also increased during this period. In 1752-53 the first bridge was built over the Powwow River at the Ferry. Vessel transportation or packet lines were operated along the Merrimack River throughout this period. Landing points were established at several locations along the river especially near shipyards. Important landings included the one at the mouth of the Powwow River near the Currier Shipyard (1720), the landing at Nichols (now Pressey's) Creek, Clapboard and Cutlets Landing. Wharves were also built in the Merrimack River area, many in the vicinity of the Powwow River.

### B. Population

In 1675, 250 individuals may have resided in Amesbury. During the early Colonial period the town's population increase at a gradual rate as Salisbury residents and new emigrants moved into the area. In 1677, 53 males, possibly 265 individuals are listed as taking the Oath of Allegiance in Amesbury. The number likely remained stable throughout the late 18th century. During the 18th century Amesbury's population increased greatly, particularly after the threat of Indian attack subsided in ca. 1710-20. By 1765, Amesbury's population contained 1550 individuals, or 3.56% of the Essex County total.

From 1785 to 1775, the town's population rose by 15.81% to contain 1795 individuals, or 3.52% of the Essex County total. In 1765 "Negroes" represented the town's only racial minority at 1.10% of the total population. Most Amesbury residents were Congregationalist, worshipping in Salisbury until the Society at Rocky Hill or Second Parish in Salisbury was organized in 1714. Friends Society meetings were held in Amesbury beginning in 1702. A society existed for the St. James Episcopal Church in 1740. Debate exists whether or not an actual Episcopal Church was built during this period.

### C. Settlement Period

Dispersed farmsteads continued to characterize settlement in most of the town of Amesbury throughout the Colonial period. Extensive settlement of the area was probably slowed by the constant threat of Indian raids, which claimed many lives between 1676 and ca. 1722. Watch houses and garrison house were built throughout the town during this period. Only one area, the Amesbury Ferry/Salisbury Point area then part of Salisbury probably approached village settlement. This area was the most populous and thriving portion of town by the mid 18th century. Other areas of town were also receiving increased settlement. During the Colonial period settlement in Amesbury as it then existed focused along the west bank of the Powwow River where several meetinghouses, mills, and shipbuilding were located. In 1717 a new Congregationalist meetinghouse was completed on the Martin Road parsonage lot. By 1761 both the meetinghouse and parsonage were taken down and rebuilt at Sandy Hill. Two Episcopal churches are also reported to have been built during the period. The first Episcopal Church was reported built in 1745 in the Union Cemetery area. The Second Episcopal Church, the King George III chapel was built in 1762 at Pond Hills. In 1705 a lot was given for a Friend's meetinghouse on Friend Street. An almshouse or workhouse was built in 1742. By 1724 settlement had increased in the western portion of Amesbury (now Merrimack) then called Jamaco so that a meetinghouse was built on the plain. The General Court divided Amesbury into the East and West Parishes in 1725.

In 1731 the West Parish purchased land for a training field, common, and burial place.

#### D. Economic Base

Agriculture and husbandry continued to characterize most aspect of Amesbury's economic base throughout the Colonial period. Grains remained the main focus of most agricultural production with corn as the chief crop. Potatoes were introduced by c1730. Husbandry also continued to be important.

Amesbury's industrial base diversified and expanded throughout this period. By the early 18th century, an ironworks together with sawmills, gristmills, fuelling mills and stave factories, all made Amesbury a thriving hamlet. Plantation period sawmills continued into this period along with stave factories. Tanneries were built by ca. 1704 in the Pleasant Valley and one Hills area. Amesbury's first fulling mill was established by Benjamin Eastman in 1708, below the mill bridge on the Powwow River. In 1710 Colonial John Marsh, John Bernard, Joseph Brown, and Jarvis Ring petitioned the town for leave to build an ironworks on an island in the Powwow River without being taxed. The ironworks was built and kept in operation for several years. Gristmills continued to be important to local farmers requiring several dams by 1712 to preserve water for dry time grinding. In 1747 the Whicher brickyard was established at the town landing on Buttonwoods Road. Two other yards are also reported in this area prior to that date. By 1750 the Bartlett line kiln was built near the Powwow River using clamshells for a base. Hat manufacturing was present at the Ferry by 1767. Shipyards continued in operation during this period flourishing throughout the 18th century on both the Powwow and Merrimack Rivers. Larger vessels characterized ships manufacture throughout the period. In 1699 a ketch, the first vessel-class ship, was made on the Powwow. By 1710 several shipyards were present on the Powwow River. Additional Yards were built in subsequent years including the Currier Yard at the mouth of the Powwow in 1720 and the Hoyt Shipyard in 1762. Fishing and maritime commerce also continued in importance throughout the Colonial period. Fishing, while still focusing on the Merrimack River and harbor area, also began to expand to offshore waters. Maritime commerce also expanded developing a great coastal and West Indies trade. Shipbuilding, fishing and maritime commerce encouraged the establishment of several Inns along the Ferry shore.

#### E. Architecture

Residential: No first period houses are documented in Amesbury. The Macy-Colby house is a center chimney saltbox of indeterminate date with a gabled rear ell. The Osgood Harrison was moved to Dover. A single symmetrical gabled center chimney houses with lateral ells survives on Elm St.

Institutional: A meetinghouse was built in the town in 1665, measuring 25 by 30 feet with 16 foot studs; galleries were added in 1699. In 1705 a lot was purchased for a Friends Meetinghouse. In 1715 a new meetinghouse was built, nearer the center of town, measuring 35 feet x 45 feet with 20 foot studs; in 1761 this house was dismantled and rebuilt at Sandy Hill in a larger form with a porch on the west end. A second meetinghouse was built in the area now Amesbury as West Parish Salisbury in 1716; its appearance is unknown. The same year the town voted to build a schoolhouse at Pond Hills, to measure 20 feet square with seven-foot studs. A second schoolhouse was built at the Ferry in 1768. In 1760 there were east and west pest houses.

### VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

#### A. Transportation Routes

By 1830, the town's street network probably increased two fold with most development in the Salisbury Village area south along the Powwow River to the Merrimack in the vicinity of Amesbury Ferry and Salisbury Point. Street networks developed into these areas along with industrial and residential development. Haverhill Road remained the main route through the town and the juncture for routes north to New Hampshire and south to the Merrimack River. Other major routes developed during this period include the River Road (Pleasant Valley Road), first laid out in 1786-87 and later extended in 1822 and probably a portion of Middle Road. Turnpike construction, common in other towns in the region during this period, was absent in Amesbury. In 1790 the Essex Merrimack Bridge was built over the Merrimack River and included two wooden arched bridges resting on Deer Island in the Middle of the river. The Powwow River Bridge was rebuilt in 1794. Stage travel was important in Amesbury during this period although the absence of turnpikes probably limited the extent of regular travel. Packet travel and maritime



transportation continued along the Merrimack River along with several improvements to aid these services. River landing continued to be important as well as several wharfs along the river. In 1829 a breakwater was started across the Joppa flats. Steamer travel began along the Merrimack River in 1829. Ferries also continued during this period from Keniston's wharf to Bartlett's Hill (1789) and Swett's Ferry near Rocks Bridge (1810).

## B. Population

Amesbury's population grew from 1795 in 1776 to 2245 in 1830, an increase of 128%, the fourth highest in the county. In 1784 the intemperate minister of First Church was dismissed, and a minority followed him in the formation of a Presbyterian society. The small Episcopal Church remained active and reorganized at the Mills in 1827; the next year a Congregational church was formed there. In 1803 there were five school districts in the original Amesbury portion of the town known as Ferry, Mills, Pondhills, Pond, and Pleasant Valley. An Academy was organized in 1805. A Masonic Lodge was formed in 1822. In 1825 the town purchased a poor farm.

## C. Settlement

Federal Amesbury consisted of land between New Hampshire and the Merrimack River, west of the Powwow River to the Haverhill town line. Settlement here was focused on the Merrimack and Powwow Rivers due to boat and nautical supply manufacturing industries begun around 1710. Small industrial operations existed at Salisbury Point and the Ferry by the late eighteenth century. The village of Salisbury Point and parts of Main Street had begun to be developed with stylish residences of boat builders in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The 1795 map of Salisbury lists five unspecified mills and an iron works. By 1820, there were textile manufacturing concerns flanking Market Square on the Powwow River. This area would become the central business district of the town but remained mostly residential during the period.

By 1803, the Ferry at the crossing of the mouth of the Powwow River paid the most tax indicating it was the most populous village in town and was the first village in the town to have a schoolhouse in 1796, built of brick. Other population centers were at the West Meetinghouse near Elm Street and Portsmouth Road and on the Powwow River at the Mills, one mile above the Merrimack River. Salisbury Point was also well established by this time with many Colonial and Federal Period residences. A second brick schoolhouse was constructed near the Mills in 1800, indicating increasing settlement there. Schools were built in 1802 in the village of West Amesbury, which became part of Merrimac in 1886 and Pond Hills in 1819. The Pleasant Valley and Pond school districts were also established during the Federal Period.

While construction of school buildings is one indication of settlement location, another is the presence of industrial operations. In Federal Amesbury, mills were being built on the Powwow River from the earliest ears of the period and brought with them residential construction. Salisbury Point at the confluence of the Powwow and Merrimack Rivers was another settlement focus for residents involved in blacksmithing, carpentry, fishing and the manufacture of boats and nautical supplies. The Amesbury Flannel Manufacturing Company was established in 1821 and the Salisbury Manufacturing Company in 1825 in the center at 101 Main Street (# 100). At least three double-unit dwellings for employees were built on High Street. (MHC #'s 405, 505, 506) By 1820, the Mills district had eclipsed the Ferry and the Point areas in terms of settlement density due to the embargo of British goods in 1807 which slowed the shipping trade, and to the increasing employment opportunities offered by the milling concerns there.

Agricultural residences were dispersed throughout the town. Roads experiencing residential development during the period were located mostly near the growing industrial areas on the Powwow River and on the Merrimack. These include Main Street with at least 34 residences built during the period between the center of town and along the river, Andrews Lane on the Merrimack River, Market Street in the center, Pleasant Valley Road, also on the river and Lion's Mouth Road to the north. Agricultural residences were typically two-and-one-half-story, five-by-two bay wood framed structures. (Examples: 500 Main St. (#124), 496 Main St. (#121), 493 Main St. (#120), 488 Main St. (#118).) A small number of one-and-one-half-story, five-bay houses were also built. Double unit dwellings were built on Main and Market Streets, indicating a denser settlement pattern there (422 Main St. (#155), 288-290 Main St. (#190), 47-49 Market St. (#54), 85-87 Market St. (#348), 73-75 Market St. (#352), 1-3 Short St. (#493)). Industrial development occurred on Main, High and Elm Streets. Cemeteries in use from 1775 to 1830 include the Salisbury Point Cemetery on Clark Road and the Corner and Mount Prospect Cemeteries on Elm Street (MHC #'s

801, 804, 803).

Roads built during the period were located mainly around the Mills and the Ferry. Pleasant Valley Road was laid out in 1768-1787 and extended in 1822. Settlement elsewhere in the town consisted of scattered agricultural residences. Evidence of agricultural activity remains on Lion's Mouth Road, Southampton Road and Market Street, all north of the center.

#### D. Economic Base

During the last quarter of the 18th and the first decade of the 19th century economic prosperity in Amesbury depended to a great extent on the fortune of the various maritime activities: fishing, shipping, and shipbuilding. Following the cessation of hostilities with Britain in the 1780s, there was a period of twenty or so years in which ocean wide commerce and fishing flourished. While maritime commerce was limited to small vessels sailing to the West Indies and fishing principally to dories working the Merrimack and the coastal zone, the two activities generated considerable work for those associated with shipbuilding and the related crafts. Numerous shipyards dotted the Merrimack especially in the "Ferry" district but also further upstream in the West parish (later Merrimack). Besides carpenters, the industry gave employment to many blacksmiths, caulkers, sail makers, and others who applied their trades in the ferry district. Fishing, shipping, and shipbuilding suffered near fatal reverses during the Embargo years (1807-1809). In 1810-11 a short-lived recovery was experienced in all three sectors. In 1810 alone, the shipyards of Amesbury turned out 42 vessel including 21 ships, 13 Brigs, and a schooner. However, this was the last gasp, as the War of 1812 again interrupted maritime activities. When business finally resumed, the larger ports like Boston, New York, Portsmouth, Portland, and even Gloucester had consolidated most maritime firms. Thereafter, small ports like Amesbury were home to only small-scale fishermen and an occasional boatyard.

While the War of 1812 essentially killed the local maritime economy, it proved to be a boom in another respect. This second war with Britain made Americans keenly aware of their continued economic dependence on the mother country. "The war prevented the importation of foreign cloths among other things, which created a demand for home manufactures to clothe the people and army" (Merrill: 1880, 333). Amesbury was one of many towns in which experiments with water powered textile manufacture were initiated in 1812. The existence of the Powwow River, with five moderate water falls and a vertical drop of 90 feet in a short distance, prompted Paul Moody and Ezra Worthen, two men who "played such important roles in Lowell two decades later" (Molloy 1975:1), to establish a woolen mill on Mill St. This 1812 mill contained machinery for the manufacture of woolen satinets. The following year another wooden mill was established nearby, this one by Jonathan Morrill.

By 1820, both of these mills had been reincorporated under new ownership: the Moody-Worthen Mill by the Salisbury Mfg. Co. (which also erected a second mill that year), and the Morrill Mill by Ames Lawrence (who also played a major role in the establishment of Lowell as a textile center) under the name of Amesbury Mfg. Co. In 1825 the Salisbury Co. expanded again. This time with a large mill on High St. "which gave a new impetus to business and largely increased the population of [the Mills] section" (Hurd, 1888: 1528).

Other Federal period manufacturing activities included carriage making and nail making. The first chaise and carriage shops were established in West Amesbury ca. 1800, and though business expanded in the latter years of the period, production was still small-scale. The first steps toward establishment of a nail factory were taken in 1810 when the Nail Factory Co. bought flowage rights to Patten's Pond. By 1818, the Iron and Nail Co. was in full operation.

Farming was an important economic activity throughout the period. Of the 7,980 acres of agricultural land reported in the 1791 census, 670 acres (8.3%) were under tillage; 1,543 acres (19.2%) were cultivated with hay; 4,895 acres (61.3%) were devoted to pasturage, and the remainder was wooded or otherwise unimproved. The percentage for tillage was slightly higher than the norm for Essex County, as was that for pasturage, while the acreage of wool and unimproved land was well below average. In 1820, 108 men (37.8% of the total workforce) worked on farms, 166 men (58.2%) in manufacturing, and 11 (3.8%) in commercial occupations.

## E. Architecture

**Residential:** The town's inventory includes only a small number of period houses. The majority are 2 & 1/2 story houses employing double interior chimneys with gable roofs and five bay, center entry facades. Of particular interest are period houses for two families, locating their paired entries in the center of a six bay facade. Examples are also known of three bay and four bay houses with interior chimneys.

**Institutional:** The portion of the town that was West Parish, Salisbury built a new meetinghouse, now known as Rocky Hill, in 1785. It is a two-story gable block with porch entry on the long wall and a block cornice. The Amesbury East Parish (at the center) repaired their house in 1800, and the next year voted to add a cupola or spire; they built a new meetinghouse in 1828, a gable front form with a semi-projecting tower rising to a belfry, and screened by a portico of Tuscan columns. The Friends built a meetinghouse of unknown appearance in 1804. Schoolhouse construction accelerated, including one in 1781, probably in the Pond Hills area, at the Ferry in 1796, at the Mills in 1801; other districts included the Pond, Pleasant Valley, and later One Highway. An academy was organized in 1804, and a frame, gable front structure of 2 & 1/2 stories was constructed with three bays, a center entry, and belfry. The town provided for a smallpox house in 1793, rebuilt its pound in 1800, built a powder house in 1812, and purchased a poor farm in 1825.

**Commercial:** A brick store survives from 1828, formerly of three stories; it is now two under a hip roof with side entry and segmental arch windows.

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

### A. Transportation Routes

Federal period roads continued in use and were improved. Residential and commercial growth in the Powwow River area continued along with the development of cross streets, laid out as new space was needed. Middle Road to Haverhill was laid out in 1830-31. In 1840 Whitehall Road was improved. Glenwood and Aubin Street were accepted as public highways in 1867 and 1868 respectively. In 1843 the wooden Powwow River Bridge was replaced by two stone arches. All bridges over the Merrimack River were made free by an act of legislature in 1868.

Stage travel continued in Amesbury throughout this period until replaced by rail service. In 1843 the General Court gave permission to build a railroad from the Eastern Line in Salisbury to the mills along the Powwow River. At least two different railroads were proposed and granted in 1846 though neither was ever built. Finally, in 1847-48 the Salisbury Branch Railroad was built from the Eastern Branch Railroad in Salisbury west to the Powwow River. The line ran north of Elm Street. In 1864 a charter was obtained to build a horse railroad from Newburyport to Amesbury. The road was built crossing the Merrimack River over the Newburyport Bridge after which it probably ran northward along Elm Street. The horse railroad was not completed during the period. Maritime, commercial, and related transportation improvements along the Merrimack River also continued during this period. In 1863 the Wharf Company of South Amesbury was incorporated to build wharves and collect wharfage (fees for wharf use).

### B. Population

Between 1830 and 1870, Amesbury's population grew by 128.2%, the region's fourth highest after Lynn, Lawrence, and Haverhill. This expansion from 2245 to 5581 included the annexation of Little Salisbury in 1844. The foreign-born population also grew rapidly; in 1855, the proportion of the population was 12.9% and ten years later was 22.0%. The most numerous group was the Irish (over half), followed by the English. New religious societies include the Union Evangelical Congregational (835) at Salisbury Point, Universalist (1844) at the Mills, Free Baptist (1849) and Roman Catholic at the Mills. In 1834, there were eleven school districts in the town; a high school was attempted in 1859. The town made an unusual decision to divide its share of surplus revenue among its inhabitants in 1838. In 1864, attempts were made to unite Salisbury and Amesbury as Merrimack. About 400 townsmen fought in the Civil War. The Odd Fellows organized in 1845, a Temple of Honor in 1886, the Agricultural and Horticultural Society in 1856, and a new Masonic Lodge in 1870.

### C. Settlement

The Early Industrial Period was one of significant growth in Amesbury, with population increasing 128%. Settlement remained focused around the mills at the falls of the Powwow River, the former ferry site over the Merrimack, Salisbury Point and on Main Street along the Merrimack River. Market Square became more industrial and commercial with residences interspersed and radiating from the core. As a concession to the priorities of industry, some houses were removed from Friend and Main Streets to make room for mill buildings and to ameliorate negative effects of living near industrial operations. The village of Rocky Hill at Rocky Hill Road and Elm Street also became a more densely settled residential area. The largest increase in settlement occurred in the center around the mills. Salisbury Point and residential agricultural areas in the north also experienced growth. Development slowed at the Ferry.

As during the Federal Period, the center and particularly Main Street again had the largest amount of new settlement with at least 21 houses and six industrial buildings built. These were typically front-gabled, two-and-one-half-story homes, some of which were double unit dwellings such as MHC #'s 44 (28 Market St.), 48 (46-48 Market St.), and 49 (50-52 Market St.). Industrial buildings were primarily those of the Salisbury Mills Company, which produced woolen textiles. The three to five-story mills were typically brick and built close to the river and to each other, creating a dense industrial complex (Area M). Also, two religious buildings were constructed on Main Street indicating its significance as a major thoroughfare (MHC # 171 (350-352 Main St., Union Evangelical Church of Amesbury and Salisbury), and MHC # 280 (135 Main St. Union Congregational Church Rectory)).

Settlement density increased further with the construction of business blocks on Main and Market Streets after 1850 to support manufacturing interests (see MHC #'s 35, 42). Other streets with new residential, industrial, institutional and commercial buildings were Elm, Friend and Market Streets which all developed at this time close to Market Square in the center of town. Agricultural activities continued to take place on Lion's Mouth Road, Clark Road, Southampton Road, Fern Avenue, and Newton Road, among others. Farmhouses were typically wood framed, single-family two-story dwellings of five by two bays. Variants such as four bay facades exist (MHC # 425, 4 Kimball Rd.). Farming, however, occupied only 23% of the residents while manufacturing occupied 77% in 1865.

The Eastern Branch Railroad was built in 1847 and connected Salisbury with the mills in Amesbury. This helped the mills in the central business district to flourish by allowing the Salisbury Manufacturing Company and others to ship goods directly from their factories. Secondary industrial concerns involved in the businesses of hats, shoes and carriages grew in the center at this time. The Boston and Maine Railroad station was rebuilt in 1872 on Ring Street (MHC # 68) in the Center.

Residential settlement increased the density of the center of town to the Point where the houses there are set close to the road and to each other, creating a suburban residential environment with industrial and commercial fabric at the core. Salisbury Point continued to experience growth despite the decreased importance of maritime industrial activity. Settlement away from the center was by agricultural families and smaller industrial operations with less influence on the trends of settlement in the town. While the Greek Revival style was predominant, northern parts of town near Powwow and Whittier Hills were developed with several Italianate residences (MHC # 363 (6 Arlington St.), MHC # 325 (62 Congress St.), MHC # 444 (115 Haverhill Rd.)).

### D. Economic Base

The Amesbury economy became increasingly dependent on the manufacturing sector during the Early Industrial decades. In 1840, 54.6% (385 men) were engaged in manufacturing occupations, compared to 42% (296 men) in agriculture. By 1865, 77.2% (628 men) worked in manufacturing and only 22.8% (185 men) on farms.

While textiles was the leading industry, the manufacturing sector was broad-based, if still small-scale, including production of goods such as hats and caps, shoes, carriages and wrought iron. Still, the locus of industrial activity was the Mills district where all the textile mills were consolidated under the ownership of the Salisbury Mfg. Co. (the firm's name derives from the fact that it also owned mills in neighboring Salisbury). The Salisbury Mfg. Co. experienced sustained prosperity from the early 1830s until the panic of 1857 when operations were temporarily suspended. In 1832, the company employed 165 people (78 women) in the Amesbury mills and produced 736,000 yards of cloth. Then in 1835 the plant capacity was enlarged. This is reflected in the 1837 census figures, which

show employment up 47% to 243 people (125 women) and production up 70% to 1.25 million yards of mostly flannel and sane satinets. Additional expansion of the physical plant occurred in 1848, 1850, and 1855. In 1852 a dispute over the company's refusal to allow operatives to take their traditional lunch hour resulted in a strike. "The town sided with the men and appropriated \$2,000 to help provide for the operatives. However, the mill owners won out by importing foreigners (most likely from Ireland) to take the place of the horns mill operative," thus breaking the strike (Arrington: 1921. 172). Following the 1857 depression, the firm was reorganized and reopened under the ownership of the Salisbury Mills. Renewed prosperity was afforded by the Civil War, which stimulated demand for woolen goods. Thus in 1862, the Salisbury Mills "greatly enlarged" their works by establishing a new mill on the site of the old nail factory. Shoes, hats, and carriages were all manufactured in increasing the volume as the period advanced. In 1832 fourteen people were employed as shoemakers and volume was a mere 4,000 pairs worth \$3,000. During the ensuing five years several small shops were established in Amesbury where local binders and shoemakers engaged in "outwork" for Haverhill shoe manufacturers. Thus, for a time, shoemaking was "one of the chief branches of industry" (Merrill: 1880, 354). The depression of 1837 caused many of these shops to close. But in the 1850s and 1860s this business expanded again. In 1865, 106 people (69 men) made 63,000 pairs of shoes worth \$57,000. Hats were first manufactured in Amesbury in 1838 when Isacc Martin established a small shop. In 1855 the firm employed 16 people and turned out 25,000 hats. A second company, Amesbury and Horton Hat Co., was established ca. 1863. North grew rapidly during the Civil War and by 1865 the town firms employed 130 people (72 men) and produced 325,000 hats valued at \$211,000. The following year these companies merged to form the Merrimack Hat Company. Manufacture of carriages was primarily confined to the West Parish (later Merrimack) during the first fifteen years of the period. However, between 1856 and 1869 eleven carriage manufacturers established shops in Amesbury itself: R.F. Briggs and Co. in 1856; James Hume, E.S. Fetch, and F.D. Parry in 1859; Seth Clark in 1860; William Ellis, A.P. Boardman and A.M. Huntington in 1867; Foster Gale in 1868; and E.S. Lane and John Hume in 1869. The combined product of the West Parish and Amesbury shops was almost 1500 vehicles in 1865, produced by 140 people and valued at \$238,000, a 376% increase in product value over 1832. Lesser products included earthenware, bricks, tanned leather, harnesses, and still and occasional vessel.

Even with the decline in the number of farms from 296 in 1840 to 185 in 1865, there were still 142 farms at the latter date. These farms had a combined total of 9088 acres of which 7135 acres, a relatively high 78.5%, were improved (village, hay and pasture). In 1865, 1,230 acres (17.2%) were devoted to English and wet meadow hay, 280 to corn and other grains and 155 acres to potatoes. In order of their value, the principal crops were hay, corn, potatoes, and dairy products. The total value of agricultural products was a moderate \$41,400 in 1865. In 1856 the Amesbury and Salisbury Agricultural and Horticultural Society was organized. In 1838 the Powwow River Bank was incorporated, and in 1849 a town poor farm was established.

#### E. Architecture

**Residential:** Few buildings from this period have been inventoried. A small group of gable front houses are known, primarily of 1 1/2 stories with Greek Revival ornament. Several larger homes are known of 2 1/2 story, five bays, and center entry form with Italianate ornament.

**Institutional:** Church construction and remodeling continued. At the center, the Congregational Church was remodeled in 1840. The Friends relocated in 1850-51, and built a plain, gable front block of a single story with center entry and square headed openings. Their former site was occupied by a Free Baptist society. A new Episcopal St. James was built in 1836, replaced again in 1846, but no data is available on appearance. The Sandy Hill meetinghouse was removed in 1848. A Universalistic Church was built in 1846. An unknown meetinghouse (MHC # 204) is a paired entry, gable front with square tower and belfry, round headed openings and a lateral extension. A surviving period school, Ordway/Mills, dates to 1863, a two-story, L-plan, hip-roofed Italianate design with bracketed cornice and other stylistic details; it is now an office. Other new schools included a private school (1850), one at the Ferry (1851). The poor farm was sold in 1842, and a new one purchased in 1849. The town's 1867 library is now owned by the St. Jean Baptiste Society, a low gable, front block with three-bay facade, paired entry, and Italianate ornament.

**Commercial:** A significant number of period buildings have been inventoried. The earliest of these date to the 1850s. Two Main Street stores are known, a 3 1/2 story frame structure housing two stores with paired entries, and a three-story, flat roofed frame Italianate structure that was formerly a Greek Revival gable front. Turner-Reddy (1859) Building was formerly three stories, but is now reduced to one. The 1850 livery stable is a low gabled frame

structure with a lateral shed addition. The 1859 Powwow River National Bank (now North-east) is a two-story brick block of six by seven bays that is now Colonial Revival in ornament. The 1860 Excelsior Block is a three-story, flat-roofed brick Italianate design employing segmental arched windows, a central entry to the upper stories dividing two original stores. A far simpler frame example survives at 69-75 Main Street, housing three stores, an Italianate example (forms #39 and #49) as well as a brick, single store example at Market Square. A small two-story brick pair, one now covered with aluminum, dating to 1863, are also known (form #36). Two buildings retain the earlier single store model of narrow end to the street, an 1860, 2 1/2-story, gable front at 58-60 Friend Street, and a hip-roofed version of 1870 at 44 Friend Street.

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

### A. Transportation Routes

Amesbury's existing street network continued to see improvement with some new roads in the Powwow River/Merrimack River area. Cross streets continued to be laid out in the town center area around the Powwow River area once known as Salisbury Village. Pleasant Street was accepted by the town in 1871. In 1887 Highland Avenue was accepted by the town and named Hillside Ave. Street blocks began to appear after 1870 with street lights installed in some parts of town by 1887. Haverhill Road became a state highway in 1899. In 1873 the horse railroad was completed from Newburyport to Amesbury. Street railway service was electrified in 1899 with the construction of the Amesbury and Hampton electric road. By ca. 1910 street railway service in Amesbury was incorporated into the Massachusetts Northeastern Street Railway System. Main rail lines crossed the Merrimack River at the Newburyport Bridge and along Friend Street, Haverhill Road, Market Street, and Elm Street. Other railroad service changed little during this period with a Boston and Maine line still extending west from Salisbury to the Powwow River locale.

Maritime commerce and related transportation remained important throughout this period. Packet service along the Merrimack River town, including Amesbury continued until 1891 after which only steam tugs renamed carrying coal and lumber. In 1894 the Essex suspension bridge was reinforced, and in 1909 it was razed and the present bridge constructed.

### B. Population

Amesbury's population increased by a moderate 53% from 5581 in 1870 to 8543 in 1915. However, the overall growth masks wide fluctuations in the total number of residents. Between 1870 and 1880 the population declined 40% to 3355. The between 1885 and 1890 this trend was reversed as the total jumped 122% to 9798 people. The number of foreign-born residents increased by 42% from 1250 in 1875 to 1781 in 1915. However, as a percentage of the total, the foreign-born figure declined from 33% to 21% during the population in the early decades, followed by French Canadians at 20% and the English at about 11%. By 1915 French Canadians were the largest group, accounting for almost 40% of the total; followed by the Irish at 25%. There were also smaller numbers of English, Scottish, Russian, Italian and Polish immigrants in 1915.

Social organizations formed during the period include the Trinity Chapter of Royal Arch Encampment of Odd Fellow #57, in 1877; the Knights of Pythias, in 1874; the Knights of Honor, in 1877; and the Endowment Rank, section 273, in 1879. The Old Ladies Home was organized in 1874.

### C. Settlement

As in the Early Industrial Period, significant growth occurred in Amesbury, with the population increasing at a rate of over 50% and new streets being laid out primarily around the center. Market Square, the core of the center, remained the focal point in town despite boundary changes in 1876 and 1886 and continued to be the site of new civic, institutional and commercial construction. The entire town of Merrimac was divided from Amesbury in 1876 and Amesbury annexed the part of Salisbury from the Powwow River to the east side of Rocky Hill in 1886. These changes may account for the downward fluctuation in population between 1870-1880 and the increase between 1885-1890.

Mill employees continued to move into the town to work at the manufacturing companies located along the Powwow River and at the dwindling maritime industrial sites and river transportation terminals along the Merrimack River. A great deal of commercial activity was carried on during the period as well. Mill employees continued to outnumber farmers by nearly a factor of ten, resulting in increased settlement density in and around the center. While double houses have existed in Amesbury since 1750, the first apartment blocks and tenements were built in the center in 1900, 1910 and 1912, indicating a change toward denser settlement (MHC # 90 (104-114 Main St.), MHC # 16 (83-87 Main St.), and MHC # 88 (80-88 Main St.)).

The Salisbury Mill Company on Main Street continued to expand with two additional structures built in 1872 (MHC #'s 102, 103). The Salisbury Manufacturing Company built a mill on Water Street to expand their operations from Main Street (#72). The Merrimac Hat Company built nine new buildings between 1877 and 1912 on Merrimac Street (MHC #'s 508-511, 515-519). Other industrial and commercial operations were located in the center such as the Briggs Carriage Company (MHC # 485) on Cedar Street, the Gray and Davis Lamp Manufacturing Company (MHC # 65) on Elm Street and the Dondero Block (MHC # 12) on Main Street. This industrial development in the center attracted new residents to the town and reinforced the prominence of that neighborhood.

Streets experiencing intense residential development include Main Street, the vicinity of Congress Street between Elm and Clinton Streets, Hillside Avenue, Greenwood Street and other cross streets around the center. Pleasant and Highland Streets were accepted by the town as public roads during the period. Most styles of architectural design are represented in the center, including high style examples of Queen Anne design occupied by owner-class residents on Greenleaf Street, (MHC #'s 264-266 at 55, 27 and 25 Greenleaf St.), Shingle, Queen Anne and Classical Revival on Hillside Avenue (MHC # 263 (1 Hillside Ave), MHC # 262 (3 Hillside Ave.), MHC # 261 (5 Hillside Ave.)) and a large ornate Spanish Revival example at 14 Estes Street (#259). Moderately stylish development also occurred on Hillside and adjacent streets. Residential development on these streets took place between 1870-1911 and had larger lots than more central residences.

The Amesbury and Hampton Street railway was electrified in 1899 and operated on a right of way between Newton, New Hampshire and the village of Rocky Hill with a spur from the center to Seabrook, New Hampshire. Since the villages of Amesbury were well established by that time, the railway system was tailored to it rather than influencing the location of new construction.

#### D. Economic Base

The Amesbury economy was heavily dominated by the manufacturing sector throughout the period. In 1875, 81.2% (841 men) of the male workforce was engaged in manufacturing occupations, while 10.5% (109 men) worked in agriculture and the remaining 8.3% (85 men) in commerce. Between 1885 and 1895, the number of manufacturing jobs more than doubled, peaking at 2,137 men in the latter year, only to decline by 18% to 1742 men in 1905. Despite the larger number of manufacturing jobs, by 1905 this sector employed fewer men relative to the total workforce, engaging 71.9%, compared to 21% in commerce and 6.9% in agriculture. The 500% increase in commercial occupations (to 510 men in 1905) accounts for the changed distribution. The Amesbury National Bank was organized in 1883.

Among manufacturing industries, textiles was the most important early in the period, while carriage making was dominant in the latter decades. The Salisbury mills prospered during the first half of the 1870s, registering a product value of \$1.43 million in 1875. However, the following year the effects of the 1873 depression were felt as the mills ceased operations in the summer, leaving hundreds of mill operatives temporarily unemployed and "causing general stagnation of the ordinary branches of business. The farmers' market, the grocers' business, and most trades were greatly depressed" (Merrill: 1880, 396). Despite reopening later in the decade the Salisbury Mills went out of business in 1880. The following year the mills were purchased and reorganized as the Hamilton Woolen Co. Extensive repairs to the mills and gradual replacement of woolen machinery with cotton machinery enabled the company to survive--though not terribly successfully--until 1913, when the textile mills ceased operations permanently.

The Amesbury carriage industry experienced enormous growth during the period, even prospered during the 1873-78 depression. Still, in 1875 there were only ten carriage making establishments and the product value was under

\$400,000. By 1888 there were thirty such firms, with nearly 700 employees who turned out almost 12,000 carriages worth \$1.2 million. In 1895 there were 43 firms in the business, including those that made wheels, carriage parts, and lamps. Ca. 1900 the industry began shifting to the production of automobiles. One of the first to make the transition was the Briggs Co, which in 1890 was one of the largest local carriage makers. In 1900 the firm began producing wooden automobile bodies, then in 1913 turned to production of steel and aluminum bodies. Another firm, Gray and Davis Co., makers of carriage lamps, switched to automobile headlight manufacture in 1900.

The Merrimack Hat Company was a prospering business throughout the period. In 1868 the firm employed 169 people (118 men) and manufactured nearly one half million hats valued at \$283,000. New factory buildings were erected in 1877, 1890, and 1908. Other manufacturing industries in business during the period included a few small shipbuilders, three small shoe factories, and several clothing shops. The value of manufactured goods almost doubled from \$1.97 million in 1875 to \$3.6 million in 1905.

Despite the relative decline of agricultural occupations, the actual number of farmers actually increased during the period. In 1875, 109 men worked on 63 farms, whereas in 1905, 169 men worked on 143 farms. In the latter year, ten of the farms were devoted to dairying, and as in other Essex County towns, milk and hay were the principal agricultural products. The value of all farm produce increased 155% from \$57,348 in 1875 to \$146,064 in 1905.

#### E. Architecture

**Residential:** Few buildings from this period have been inventoried, and no general patterns can be ascertained without further fieldwork. The exception is the 1900 Rand-Adams apartment block of three stories under a flat roof with four stores on the first floor and bay windows.

**Institutional:** Several of the town's most important public buildings date to this period. The Market Street Baptist Church (1873) is an Italianate design with a square tower rising to a steeple, and flanked by exedra, with paired windows in arched recesses. The 1888 Methodist Episcopal Church is a large hip block with a large gabled dormer and belfry above with entries at each end of the long wall, in a frame Queen Anne design. St. James Episcopal Church was built in 1899 of fieldstone and shingle. A gable front with a low-gabled entry porch, open belfry formed by piers rising from the facade, and lancet openings. The Town Hall was built of brick in 1888, two stories on a basement with a recessed center entry flanked by banks of windows. The Ames Public Library is a Romanesque Revival design of 1900 by Penn Varney. A 2 1/2-story T-plan, with its gable block facade with projecting front is piece, of brick and stone. The Post Office is a Classical Revival design of 1905 of brick and limestone with a roof balustrade, round-headed openings, and a portico with Seamoizzi capitals. The Lafayette Club, once the YMCA, is an altered frame building of six bays with central entry, bow bays, and Georgian Revival ornament.

**Commercial:** The majority of surviving commercial buildings is multi-stoned, flat roofed structures housing two or more stores. Brick Italianate examples include form #60 (1874), 61-67 Main Street (1875), 52-54 Main Street (1880), and 49-57 Main Street (1891). Renaissance Revival examples include the Whitman Block (1899), Fuller Block (1902), and form #40 (1904). Frame examples include 32-36 Friend Street (1880), form #69 (1884), Main Street, form #88 (1910), 14-18 Fried Street (1910), and 83-87 Main Street (1912). An unusual hip roofed example is form #70 (1888). A gable front example survives at 46 Fried Street (1900). Single story examples include form #65 (1890) and 12 Friend Street (1910). The depot of 1872 has undergone many changes to the basic frame hip block with projecting gabled bay, Italianate design.

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

##### A. Transportation Routes

The town's street network continued to increase in density with most improvement still focused on the town center around the Powwow River from lake Gardner south to the Merrimack River. The Haverhill Road (Rt. 110) remained the major east/west route through the town with the Hillside Ave/Market Street (Rt. 1500 corridor) now the major northern route through the town center. Streetcar service ended in the Amesbury area by the 1930s. Only the existing Boston and Maine Railroad Line survived.



## B. Population

After rising a full 39% in the years between 1915 and 1930, Amesbury's population experienced a slight decline, and then stabilized for the remainder of the period. During the whole, the town grew at a rate of 31%.

Unusual among Essex towns, Amesbury's percentage of foreign-born enjoyed a small increase during the first half of the period, rising from 20.8% in 1915 to 22.7% by 1980. At that time, their proportionate numbers assumed the more expected pattern (of decline) and fell to less than 13% by 1950. Some shifting among the nativities occurred. While in 1915, the Irish (22.6%) ranked closely behind the Canadians (33%) as the town's two major foreign-born populations, by periods end, the Canadians (66%) overwhelmingly dominated the Irish (5.3%) now having fallen to a distant third behind the Poles (10%).

## C. Settlement

The Early Modern Period in Amesbury was characterized by a negligible density increase in and around the center with construction occurring as infill on existing streets. The town boundaries had stabilized so the population grew at a steadier rate and manufacturing continued to outpace farming as an occupation. As in Merrimac, the carriage makers turned auto body manufacturers flourished until around 1930 when car companies began making their own bodies, mostly in Detroit. In 1921, 12 auto body manufacturers existed in Amesbury but none remained by 1940. However, the Merrimac Hat Company continued to employ hundreds of workers through the Great Depression into the 1950s and built seven additional buildings on Merrimac Street during the period. The Merrimac Hat Company did fail, however, in the 1950s due to changes in fashion that no longer demanded the wearing of hats. The failures of the auto body companies and the hat company resulted in many small manufacturers and commercial operations taking over the former mill facilities.

As in the Early and Late Industrial Periods, new construction took place along the Powwow River from Lake Gardner to the Merrimack River. The greatest amount of development took place on Friend and Main Streets with fewer than fifteen surveyed residences dating from the period. The majority of residential construction took the Four-Square form (MHC # 415 (52 Whitehall Rd.), MHC # 345 (122 Market St.)) with some Bungalow forms and Craftsman designs (MHC # 416 (58 Whitehall Rd.), MHC # 412 (7 Boie Ave.), and MHC # 413 (9 Boie Ave.)). One apartment building was constructed (MHC # 20, 125 Main St.) indicating the preference for single or double unit dwellings. The settlement patterns established in the Early Industrial Period remained in the Early Modern Period with a shift from a small number of large manufacturing firms to a larger number of smaller firms that occupied the existing buildings.

Settlement in Amesbury continued within the town center and along outlying areas. Suburban development took place on Moncrief, Elizabeth and Baker Streets off Lions' Mouth Road, the north end of Market Street, the east end of Elm Street, the west end of Haverhill Road and other outlying areas. Boie Avenue, Merrill Avenue, Belmont Street and other subdivisions were laid out in the center during the period. Surveyed subdivision houses include MHC #302 (11 Merrill St.), MHC #370 (26 Belmont St.), MHC #375 (7 Belmont St.), MHC #376 (5 Belmont St.), MHC #412 (7 Boie Ave.), and MHC #413 (9 Boie Ave.). There were no substantive changes in settlement locations including a notable lack of streetcar-inspired development of either a commercial or residential nature.

The construction of I-495 and I-95 in the 1960s and 1970s altered the landscape and settlement patterns of the town. The interstates simplified travel to Boston and other employment centers which stimulated residential development that occurred away from the center. A lack of zoning legislation encouraged outsized residential construction on formerly agricultural land with little regard for context or existing land-use types. The result is the suburban character of a commuter town with some local industry and commerce.

## D. Economic Base

Manufacturing continued to dominate the Amesbury economy throughout the Early Modern period. Prior to the Great Depression the industrial mainstay was production of metal automobile bodies and parts. Among the important firms were Briggs and Co., the Walker Body Co, the Bailey Co., Hudson Automobile Co. and Biddle and Smart Co. This last firm produced 41,000 auto bodies in 1926. In all, there were twelve such companies in 1921. In addition, the Craig and Davis Co. had become one of the largest producers of headlights in the U.S. By 1929-30,

most or all of the automobile and parts factories had gone bankrupt, and the industry disappeared from Amesbury. In the 1930s the Merrimack Hat Co. expanded its operations, taking over the Briggs Co. factories. During WW II the firm employed more than 500 people. However the “hatless 50s” caused the company to suspend operations in 1959 (Molloy: 1978, 4).

In 1952 the former textile mills and automobile factories were occupied by 34 small manufacturing firms with a wide range of products. These companies employed 2389 people (78% of the total workforce) on the production of hats, air conditioning hose, bent glass, metal stampings, newspaper, showcases and display fixtures, wood shoe heels, ventilation systems, river board, naval signal systems, confectionary and peanut products, shoes, fishing dories and boats, and brass and iron cartings. The remaining 22% of the workforce was denominated by retail and service workers who represented almost 15% of the total.

#### E. Architecture

Residential: Only an apartment house has been inventoried (form #20), a frame, four stories on a basement with recessed porches with central entry on facade and at canted corner.

Institutional: The town's Neo-Classical firehouse (1926) houses three engines, their entries separated by pilasters, and a low, lateral ell housing the entry. The (1928) police station/court house is a brick Georgian Revival design for a two story, flat roofed block with a central projecting gable block with entry on each side.

Commercial: Period buildings resemble those of the previous period, two to four floors of brick with corbelled cornices. Some, however, rise to only a single story. The Provident Institute for Savings is a brick Georgian Revival design of a single story under a flat roof with entry into its fifth, last bay, with a Scamozzi pediment, and round-headed openings. A 1935 gas station at 52 Friend Street has undergone many changes.

### XI. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

Amesbury's inventory includes 537 building forms, 14 area forms, 8 burial grounds and 33 objects, structures, parks and landscapes. Some were completed before professional standards of documentation were established in the 1980s and are less helpful, but the vast majority are quite complete and appear to be done by professionals. Subjects for research described in the 1980 State Reconnaissance Survey Scope of Work are for the most part clearly represented and thoroughly researched.

A wide variety of resources exist in the town and virtually every type is examined in the inventory, which appears to consist of several survey projects. No identifiable aspects of the community's history have been omitted from the survey projects.

### XII. FINDING AID

Area forms:

<b>Letter</b>	<b>Area Name</b>
A	Amesbury Central Business District
B	The Millyard
C	Salisbury Point
D	Ferry District
E	Highlands Area
F	Lion's Mouth Road
G	Training Field
H	Elm Street
I	Feltch Houses
J	Powwow and Whittier Hills
K	Pleasant Valley Road
L	Saint Joseph Church Properties
M	Amesbury and Salisbury Mills Village Historic District

N Merrimac Hat Company Mills

Building Forms:

<b>MHC #</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b># Street</b>	<b>Historic Name</b>
1	1888	62 Friend St	Amesbury Town Hall and Police Station
21	1828	135 Main St	Unitarian Congregational Church
23	1900	149 Main St	Amesbury Public Library
489	1919	Oak St	Walker Metal Automobile Body Company
57	1873	Market St	Market Street Baptist Church
59	1855	1 Market St	Powwow River National Bank Building
66	1800	40 Elm St	Osgood House
375	1925	7 Belmont St	Wood, George W. House

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