

MHC RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

Date: 1985

Community: Manchester

I. TOPOGRAPHY

The town of Manchester is located in the southeastern portion of Essex County, Massachusetts. It lies at north latitude 42 degrees 34' 30-42" and west longitude 70 degrees 44' 24-43". The town is bounded on the north by Hamilton and Essex, the east by Gloucester, the south by Massachusetts Bay and the west by Beverly and Wenham. It is approximately 4 & 1/2 miles in length along the coast and extends about 2 & 1/4 miles inland for a total of around 5,134 acres. Physiographically, the town lies within the New England Seaboard Lowland, a relatively smooth coastal strip of land with some hills usually below the 400 and 500 foot contours. Locally, coastal Essex County contains more hilly country than other Seaboard Lowland areas. In Manchester, the general surface is irregular, especially near the coast. Elevations are generally 100 feet or less with some hills exceeding 200 feet in the northwestern portion of town.

Bedrock deposits in the Manchester area are characterized by igneous formations throughout the town. These deposits are visible in the form of steep ledges and bold escarpments in several areas. Quincy granite is the most dominant type present. Beverly syenite formations are found along the coast.

Soils in the Manchester area represent a mixture of types formed through glacial outwash, lacustrine or marine sediments, and urban development. Soils of the Chatriele-Hollis-Rock outcrop association are the most common group found throughout the western half and extreme southeastern area of town. These soils occur in deep and shallow deposits in gently sloping to steep areas. They are generally well drained, loamy soils formed in glacial till containing areas of exposed bedrock. In the southeastern area of town, limited distributions of these soil associations are present. One type, the Merrimac-Hinckley-Urban land association is formed in deep deposits in nearly level to steep areas. They are generally excessively drained loamy and sandy soils formed in outwash deposits and areas when soils have been altered by urban development. Soils belonging to the Boxford-Scitico-Maybid association

are also present in this area. These soils occur in deep deposits in nearly level to strongly sloping areas. They range from moderate to poorly drained loamy soils formed in lacustrine or marine sediments. The last soil type in this area is the Annisquam-Scituate association. These soils occur in deep deposits in gently sloping to moderately steep areas. They are generally well drained loamy soils formed in compact glacial till.

Major drainage in Manchester is through several small ponds, swamps, and brooks all generally draining into Massachusetts Bay. Major ponds included Dexter Pond, Lily Pond, and Clark Pond. Sawmill Brook is the major brook in the town. Most swamps are found in the northern and western portion of town. Surface run-off also occurs into several coves and inlets along the coast, the largest of which is Manchester Harbor.

The original forest growth in Manchester and in Essex County in general consisted of a mixed growth of white pine, oak, chestnut, poplar, maple, birch and some other hardwoods and conifers. However, secondary growth patterns cover most of the town today. These patterns are characterized by second growth oak and chestnut in uplands to pine in areas of droughty and sandy soils. Some birch, cedar, juniper and white pine are also present.

II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

In 1640 land was granted to the inhabitants of Salem for a village at Jeffrey's Creek; it was established as an independent town in 1645, and renamed Manchester. In 1672 the bounds between Gloucester and Manchester were established, and in 1902, reconfirmed.

III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500-1620)

A. Transportation Routes

Native American transportation routes in the Manchester area likely emphasized water travel along the town's coastline and major streams or brooks. Conjectured trails were also probably present along these areas, particularly along the coast in the vicinity of Route 127. Inland trails may have also

existed linking the Manchester Harbor area with settlements to the north in the Essex Bay/Ipswich area. This trail may have existed in the School Street Street/Sawmill Brook area. An inland trail may have also existed to the Annisquam River area in Gloucester.

B. Population

Manchester 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 may have been referred to as the Agawam or Naumkeag Indians who may have been a subtribe of the Massachusetts but seemed to be under the leadership of the Penacooks. Most 17th century colonists considered the Pawtucket and Massachusetts Indians closely related but separate entities. Both Swanton (1952) and Speck (1928) include the Pawtucket Indians in this area among the Massachusetts. Gookin (1674) lists ca. 3,000 men belonging to the Pawtucket 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 probably exaggerated. During the same period both Gookin and Mooney lists ca. 3,000 men belonging to the Massachusetts which probably included some Pawtuckets. The entire Native American population in the Manchester area may have numbered in the vicinity of 100 to 200 individuals during much of this period. Following the epidemics, fewer than 50 individuals, if any, remained in the Manchester area.

C. Settlement Pattern

Numerous Woodland and at least one Contact period site have been recorded for the Manchester area. In addition, environmental variables, latter 17th century documentary sources, and the presence of both Woodland and Contact period sites indicate more sites of this period should be present. For example, Manchester Harbor and numerous other coves and inlets along the coast may have been good site locations. At least one Contact period mound was reported at the head of tidewater on a stream where the Kelham and Fitz mill was built (Lamson 1895:345-46). In addition to habitation and village type sites, special purpose sites such as fishing sites, shell middens, and burials were also probably present. These sites may have been located on the coast or along the periphery of interior wetlands such as pond, swamps, and streams.

D. Subsistence Pattern

Native Americans in the Manchester 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. Sea mammals such as seals and drift whales may have also been hunted along the Massachusetts Bay coastline. Upland game birds and ducks were available in and around freshwater wetlands, riverine areas and in marshlands along the coast. Interior ponds and streams afforded a variety of freshwater wetlands, riverine areas and in marshlands along the coast. Some coastal streams may have contained seasonal runs of shad, alewives and smelt. A variety of marine species of fish would have been available in Manchester Harbor, Massachusetts Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. Several species of terrestrial as well as fresh and salt water plants in the Manchester area provided a valuable food resource. Manchester Harbor and the town's coastline presently contain several species of shellfish which may have been available during the Contact period and shell middens sites verify this expectation. Domesticated plants such as corn, beans pumpkins, squash and tobacco were important. The location of native fields are currently unknown, however, they were likely located along the shores of Manchester Harbor, the Massachusetts Bay coastline or interior wetlands.

V. PLANTATION PERIOD

A. Transportation Routes

Water travel along the coast remained the fastest and at times the most convenient mode of transportation between early fishing station and later permanent settlements in Manchester, settlements to the east in Gloucester, and westerly around Salem and Beverly Harbors. Locally, water travel was equally important in Manchester Harbor and along the towns coastline and amongst coastal islands.

Indian trails likely continued in use in the Manchester area throughout most of the Plantation period. Crude European transportation routes also developed, in some areas prior to permanent settlement. By the 1630's many

Indian trails, particularly those along the coast were upgraded to horsepaths and cartways linking early fishing areas. The first road officially laid out in Manchester was the present Beverly and Manchester Road which probably followed the general route of Rt. 127. This road was laid out in 1646 under a court order that a road be built between the Salem Ferry and the head of Jeffrey's Creek. A highway to Cape Ann or the easterly extension of Route 127 was also laid out during this period. Numerous smaller roadways or cartways linked the Route 127 corridor with coastal areas.

B. Population

Native Americans may have resided in the Manchester area during this period, however, little is known about where, in what, or how they lived. Europeans first settled in the Manchester area in 1626-27 when fishermen, abandoning the Cape Ann settlement, settled along the coastline. Additional settlers soon followed. Many researchers officially date the European settlement of Manchester to 1636 when the land at Jeffrey's Creek was divided. Nine males, possibly 45 total individuals are represented in that division. By 1640, 63 people are listed as living at Jeffrey's Creek. In 1662, 20 landowners possibly 100 individuals are listed in the town. Population growth was slow in Manchester, possibly due to the early emphasis on maritime trails rather than agrarian pursuits. Early settlers in Manchester are reported to have emigrated from the eastern shires of England from the area around Manchester. Religion may not have been important to the town's initial settlers as they were probably more interested in fishing and its subculture. Tradition states early worship was held outdoors at Gale's Point. Other worship was in settlers' homes until the 1st meetinghouse was built in 1656. Very few records exist for Manchester's early church. In 1645 at incorporation, the town was still without an organized church. The town's first preacher was hired late in 1645. Manchester residents remained part of the Salem Congregational Church throughout the Plantation period.

C. Settlement Pattern

Little is known regarding the Native American settlement pattern in Manchester during this period. Some natives were probably present though their numbers were small. European settlement in Manchester was made in 1626-27 as several individuals who abandoned the Cape Ann area settled in the vicinity of kettle

Cove (Lamson 1895: 21). Later settlement (1627-1636) in the Jeffrey's Creek area is also considered by some to be the actual settlement of the town. The town landing at the Cove where present day Proctor Street meets the Coast was the focus of most latter emigration. Most early settlement in Manchester was around shore areas. Settlement grew slowly and only gradually moved into the interior. Early settlers, particularly those who settled from Cape Ann, did not have official title to their lands. Title was eventually assured when the Salem government ensured "Old Planters" the lands they improved. Since most early settlers were involved in fisheries they probably did not improve extensive land holdings. Some early grants of land may have been made by the town of Salem although the first official division of land did not occur until 1636-37. At that time nine grants of land were given in the Jeffrey's Creek area known as the Four Hundred Acres. In this division, most grantees received 40 acres with two receiving 50 acres and one received 60. The remainder of the grant was held in common until 1711. The village of Manchester developed in this area. Further grants of land, usually around 25 acres each, were given in the Jeffrey's Creek area from 1637 to 1639.

Many of the town's earliest houses were built in the area of the cove of the Landing. Other settled areas also developed at the foot of Bennett's Hill (1637), in the western part of town (1636), in Sandy Hollow, Black Cove, Norton's Point (1645), and Glass Head (1660).

By 1640 the owners of land at Jeffrey's Creek petitioned the General Court to establish a village in that area. This petition was granted. Settlement increased such that by 1645 the inhabitants at Jeffrey's Creek petitioned the court to name the settlement at Jeffrey's Creek Manchester. This petition was the only act of incorporation for Manchester. The town's first meetinghouse was erected in 1656 near the landing place at Jeffrey's Creek, roughly in the vicinity of School Street and Route 127. Manchester's oldest known burial yard dates to ca. 1650, located at the corner of Washington and Summer Streets. Tradition states that earlier burials were to the rear of the first meetinghouse. One theory also states the town's earliest burial yard was a private yard near the site of the Memorial Library though not much is known of it. A burial place also probably existed at the cove, some say earlier than the one in the village possibly containing the remains of the town's first settlers.

Manchester's lands were probably used in common from the time of initial settlement. However, actual common lands were non-existent until the Four Hundred Acre grant was divided in 1636-37. Nearly all freemen settlers had an interest in the town's common lands. Common lands were used mainly for grazing purposes and for the use of fishermen who needed planting ground, land for flakes, stages, and dwelling houses. Common lands were sold, rented, or given by the town to settlers or other individuals as they wished.

D. Economic Base

Native Americans may have resided in the Manchester area during this period. However, little is known about when, or how, these people lived. English fishermen first settled in Manchester as early as 1626-27 after abandoning the Cape Ann settlement. Fishing was the most important aspect in the economic base of these early settlers. Small boats exploiting local coastal waters characterized the early fisheries. Stages, flakes, and possibly structures for storage were often present along the coastline. Colonists in the area during this period probably combined hunting, fishing, gathering, and some agriculture on a subsistence level. Colonists interested predominantly in agrarian pursuits also began to settle in Manchester but maritime interests remained an important activity in the town. Fishing was encouraged to the point that in 1637 the General Court ordered that fishing vessels, stock and fish should not be taxed and fishermen were exempted from military duty. Boat building was also important, probably for local fishing and coasting. Manchester fishermen probably combined the coastwise trade with fishing. As settlement increased agriculture and husbandry were also important economic pursuits. Indian corn, wheat and barley were the most important food crops grown but grains were the most important food produce. Salt marsh hay was probably exploited from marshes along the coast. Husbandry was also an important activity in Manchester. Cattle, horses, sheep, and swine were the most important farm animals. Oxen and fowl were also present. Several mills were also present in Manchester at an early date. In 1644 the town voted to build a grist mill on the river near the meetinghouse. This mill was probably the John Knowlton Mill and may be the tidal mill noted by Lamson (1895: 60). Other grist mills were also probably present during this period, however, it is uncertain when they were erected (see Colonial Period). Three sawmills were also probably present--one located on Cheever's Creek, another north of a

place known as the "Old Mill Dam", and one on School Street by Saw mill Brook referred to as the "Old Saw Mill" in 1694.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

A. Transportation Routes

Water travel remained an important mode of transportation between Manchester, Cape Ann, Beverly, and the Salem area. However, land transportation was safer and becoming increasingly important. The Route 127 corridor continued to be the major east/west transportation route linking Manchester with Cape Ann to the east and Beverly to the west. The main northerly route was along School Street from the head of Manchester Harbor north to Essex. In 1685 the road between Manchester and Gloucester was improved. In ca. 1722 a road was also laid out from the county road (Rt. 127) by the causeway up the "Grist Hill" for local fishermen to cut firewood. A road was built from the county road to White Beach in 1724. By 1732 the town built a wharf at the landing place near the meetinghouse on Manchester Harbor. This was known as the town's wharf by the common. A bridge was built across the river in the center of town in 1741. In 1759 a portion of the old road to Chebacco (School Street) was abandoned and a new road laid out to the westward of Millet's Swamp. This road was the original road to Ipswich or Chebacco running to the northward of Moses Hill.

B. Population

Manchester's population continued to grow at a slow rate throughout the Colonial period. In 1675, 100 to 150 individuals may have resided in the town. A town census was taken in 1761 which lists 739 individuals including 23 blacks, seven Arcadians and one Indian. 135 families then lived in 103 houses for a ratio of 1.31 families per house. In 1765, 732 individuals are listed as residing in Manchester, a slight drop from 1761. This population represented 1.68% of the Essex County Total. In 1765, 23 blacks or 3.14% of the town's population, and one Indian lived in Manchester. 155 families lived in 103 houses for a ratio of 1.5 families per house indicating the town's population was rising faster than housing, possibly associated with maritime trades.

In 1675 Manchester residents were still members of the Salem Church. After 1677 Manchester residents gathered at Beverly for religious worship. The Manchester Congregational Church was not regularly organized until 1716. Very few records exist for the town's early church history. Manchester had 13 ministers before 1636.

C. Settlement Pattern

Settlement growth was slow in Manchester throughout the Colonial period. Some authors even note the first half of the 18th century as uneventful (Lamson 1895: 61). The hunt of the Four Hundred Acre grant at the head of the Manchester Harbor continued to develop as the town center with the "Cove" growing as the longest precinct in the town by 1700 (Lamson 1895: 60). Most settlement was still concentrated in coastal areas though by 1775 most areas of town had been settled. Manchester village was gathered around the town meetinghouse. New meetinghouses were built in 1691 and 1719, all at, or near, the same location as the first house. Three passages were also built during this period. The first was built in 1685 on School Street, the second in 1699 near the meetinghouse, and the third in 1745. Manchester's second school house was built in 1691. In 1723 a new school houses was built near the meetinghouse in the center of town.

At the start of the Colonial period nearly all settlers in Manchester were freemen and had an interest in the town's common lands. However, as population increased the distribution of common lands were increasingly restricted. By 1713 the owners of common lands under provincial law became organized into a type of corporation with the title of commoners. Commoners managed their offices, elected their officers and membership. Common lands were granted, sold or rented to various individuals and groups throughout most of this period. In 1684 common lands between the county road and Black Cove were laid out for the use of fishermen. In 1699 common lands were sold with the proceeds used for the parsonage. In 1700 the proprietors of common lands authorized the sale of Howes Island. Common lands were used again to support the ministry when the proprietors voted to give 100 acres for the town to select a minister. Numerous other uses were made of town commons including the town's school houses and the inhabitants clay pit. The last division of common land was in 1763.

D. Economic Base

Fishing and maritime related trades continued to characterize a large portion of Manchester's economic base. Agricultural related trades may have been equally important. Most of Manchester's settlement was still concentrated along the town's southern coastline emphasizing the importance of coastal areas. Manchester Harbor developed as the major port area in the town with smaller anchorages dotted along the coastline. Local coastal fishing was still pursued although as larger vessels were built the off-shore bank fishery also gained in importance. By 1696 vessels of over 35 tons are listed as owned in Manchester, many of which were probably used for coasting or trading voyages to Virginia and the southern colonies. Shipbuilding was also present though it may have been of local importance. Agriculture and husbandry gained in importance throughout the period. Grains, particularly corn, continued to characterize most farm products though vegetables may have been gaining in importance. Cows, swine, oxen probably some sheep and horses continued to be important. Lime Kilns were present during this period as well as at least one claypit near the schoolhouse, probably for brick and pottery manufacture. Several saw mills and grist mills were also present, many of which have unknown dates of construction and were in operation during the Plantation period.

Gristmills included John Knowlton's mill in the center of town, Easkott's mill in West Manchester, Israel Forster's mill, a mill on Chubb's Creek, the Gilbert mill in the central part of the village and a mill at the "Cove" near the road to Magnolia Station (Lamson 1895: 356). A windmill is also reported on the plain during this period. Saw mills included the Baker saw mill near the junction of the road to Essex and School St., two mills on Cheever's Creek one at the site of the old Forster mill, and three mills at the "Cove" ((Lamson 1895: 356).

E. Architecture

Residential: Inventoried properties indicate the presence of familiar period forms. Central chimney, symmetrical gable houses are most common, though three bay facades and gambrel roofs are noted. Isolated example of Georgian plan, double chimney houses are also known.

