

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

MERRIMAC

Report Date: 1987

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

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

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

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

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MHC RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

Date: 1987, updated: 1997

Community: Merrimac

I. TOPOGRAPHY

The town of Merrimac is located in the northern portion of Essex County in Massachusetts. It is bordered northerly by the Massachusetts/New Hampshire state line and easterly by Amesbury, southerly by the Merrimack River, West Newbury, and Haverhill, and westerly by Haverhill and the Massachusetts/New Hampshire State Line. The town is about 2-1/2 by 3 miles in extent. Physiographically, Merrimac 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. Land surfaces in Merrimac are generally hilly, interspersed with several valleys and plains. Elevations average 100 feet or more throughout most of the town. Highest elevations are in the central portion of town where surfaces exceed 300 feet.

Bedrock deposits in the Merrimac area are characterized by sedimentary formations throughout the entire town. Merrimack Quartzite is representative of these formations.

Soils in the Merrimac area represent a mixture of types formed in outwash deposits and glacial till. Soils belonging to the Hinckley-Windsor-Merrimac association are formed in small areas in the northwestern and southwestern corners of town and in a strip-like distribution along the Amesbury/Merrimac town line. These soils are found in deep deposits and nearly level to steep areas. They are excessively drained sandy and loamy soils formed in outwash deposits. Soils of the Paxton-Woodbridge-Montauk association are found in most of the southwestern corners of town and in the area between the Boston and Main Railroad and Lake Attitash north to the Massachusetts/New Hampshire line. Those occur 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 most of the central portion of town from the Massachusetts/New Hampshire state line south to the Merrimack River. These soils are also found in deep deposits and nearly level to steep areas. They are well drained loamy soils formed in friable glacial till.

Major drainage in Merrimac is characterized by several swamps, ponds, lakes, brooks, and rivers, most of which eventually drain into the Merrimack River. Swamps are present throughout most areas of town. Lake Attitash on the Amesbury/Merrimac town line is the largest body of water in the town. Other ponds include the Sargent Mill Pond and Neal Pond. Major riverine areas include the Back River which drains to Lake Attitash and East Meadow River which drains to Haverhill. Cobbler Brook drains southerly through the central portion of town.

At European contact, most of Merrimac was forested with little undergrowth. Some grassy areas were also present. The original forest growth in Merrimac 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.

II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Merrimac was originally part of the large land grant created as Merrimac Plantation in 1638, first named Colchester and changed to Salisbury at incorporation. The large territory included the current Massachusetts towns of Salisbury, Amesbury, and Merrimac as well as the New Hampshire towns of South Hampton, part of Kingston, Plaistow, Newton, Seabrook, and Hampstead. Merrimac was part of old Norfolk County (1643-1680) which then included Salisbury (the Shire town), Hampton, Haverhill, Exeter, Dover, and Strawberry Bank (Portsmouth). In 1655 that part of Salisbury west of the Powow River was organized as "Salisbury New Town", now Amesbury and Merrimac. Salisbury New Town was established as a new township by the General Court in 1666. By 1668 the town was officially known as Amesbury, and Merrimac as Jamaco. In 1725 Amesbury was divided into two parishes or districts by the General Court with the Merrimac area known as the West Parish. In 1876 Amesbury was ordered divided by the General Court with West Amesbury becoming the township of Merrimac.

III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

The town of Merrimac lies on the north bank of the Merrimack River approximately ten miles west of the coast. Several hills and a smaller number of ponds mark the rolling terrain. Red Oak Hill rises to 93 meters and Prospect, Bear, Brush and Long Hills are slightly more than 75 meters in height above sea-level. The biggest body of water is Lake Attitash which is approximately 200 acres and lies partly in Merrimac and partly in Amesbury. Several small streams drain the land into the Merrimack River which is the southern border of the town.

Land in the town was originally part of the Merrimack Plantation, founded 1638, which included land in Essex County, Massachusetts and in New Hampshire. In 1655, land west of the Powow River was renamed Salisbury New Town and included Merrimac. The name changed to Amesbury in 1667 and the land that makes up present day Merrimac was divided in 1876. The central village in Merrimac was known as West Amesbury and Merrimacport was called South Amesbury until the town became independent in 1876.

Pre-industrial roads through the town include Main Street (Route 110), oriented east-west with Birch Meadow Hill, Bear Hill and Highland/Church Streets leading north. Locust and Emery Streets connected Main Street with the river to the south. Surviving dispersed Colonial and Federal Period houses and agricultural landscapes are located on Bear Hill Road and Birch Meadow Road and on Highland Street. Colonial Period cemeteries are located on Church Street and at the village of Lower Corner on Main Street near Emery Street. The village of Merrimacport developed during the Federal Period with over ten intact residential examples among many Early Industrial Period houses. House types for the Colonial and Federal Periods are typically wood-framed five-by-two bay, two-and-one-half-story, side gabled

forms. No known industrial buildings remain from these earlier periods. Farming was the earliest method of existence at the time of settlement in the seventeenth century. Maritime industries occupied some residents from the early eighteenth century until the early twentieth century. Carriage-making became common after the first factory was established in 1800 in Merrimacport.

Numerous survivals are present from the Early and Late Industrial Periods and include cohesive residential areas around the Center and Merrimacport on the river. Houses continued to be built in Merrimacport but their numbers were outstripped by development around the center which retains a higher proportion of period buildings. While significant industrial activity occurred in both villages during the periods, little of the industrial fabric remains. Survivals of this type are mostly in the Center and include the abandoned railroad terminal on Liberty Street. Sparse residential development continued afield of the villages to support the farming sector of the population. Early and Late Industrial period industrial activity included many carriage factories located in the Center and in Merrimacport. Some were adapted for use as automobile body factories and continued to employ hundreds of workers until the Great Depression.

Early Modern residential development in Merrimac consisted of some subdivision development off Main Street and around Lake Attitash. A small number of light industrial and commercial structures from the period remain, mostly on Main Street due to its adoption as a state highway (Route 110) in the late 19th century. Few distinguishable agricultural landscapes are evident in the town.

The character of the town is rural with a commercial center at Merrimac Square and a small residential cluster of Federal and Early Industrial Period homes in Merrimacport. A significant amount of Late Modern development and subdivision has taken place throughout the town but has not negatively affected the historic areas of the Center or Merrimacport. Current forces of change are based on the presence of I-495, built in the early 1960s. This limited-access artery facilitates travel to Boston and vicinity as well as other regional commercial centers in northeast Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire.

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500-1620)

A. Transportation Routes

Native American transportation routes in the Merrimac area likely emphasized water travel along the Merrimack River to the seacoast and more inland areas. Land-based travel was also probably important linking interior areas with the Merrimack River and the coast. A main trail through the town probably existed parallel with the river in the vicinity of River Road and/or the Route 110 area. Important interior trails may have also existed in the vicinity of the Church Street/Highland Street corridor which roughly parallels Cobbler's Brook or along portion of Bear Hill Road which follows high ground near Lake Attitash and Back River. Secondary trails extending to

the town's numerous ponds and other wetlands likely spurred from major inland and river trails.

B. Population

Merrimac 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 some Pawtuckets. The Native American population in the Merrimac 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 Merrimac area.

C. Settlement Pattern

A few woodland but no Contact period sites are currently known from the Merrimac area. Several artifacts of potential Contact period origin have been found in the Merrimac locale though specific sites are yet to be located. This evidence, in addition to factors such as environmental potential, later 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 Merrimac 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/North Andover area. Numerous locations along the Merrimack River, its tributaries and inland wetlands many 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.

D. Subsistence Pattern

Native Americans in the Merrimac 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 furbearers. Upland gamebirds 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,

bean, 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

A. Transportation Routes

Indian trails likely continued in use in the Merrimac area throughout most of the Plantation period. Water travel was important along the Merrimack River which provided a corridor to other riverine settlements and the seacoast. Landing places probably existed in the vicinity of Cobbler's Brook and the Merrimack River. European transportation routes may have predated actual settlement in the area. The Haverhill Road on the east/west Main Street corridor may have been laid out by 1641. Other roads likely existed as trails from this corridor. These routes may have included portions of Church Street, Birch Meadow Road, and Bear Hill Road.

B. Population

Merrimac was first settled by Europeans in the late 1640s or early 1650s as settlements westward of Salisbury and the Amesbury area were authorized. The population grew slowly during this period. By 1675 less than a dozen families probably resided in the area. Early Merrimac residents were of English descent and the Congregational faith. Individuals had either immigrated directly from England or had previously settled in coastal settlements such as Newbury or Salisbury. All residents in the area traveled to the Amesbury settlement for worship throughout the period.

C. Settlement Pattern

Merrimac was first settled by Europeans in the 1650s as individuals from the Amesbury settlement were granted lands in the western portion of town known as Jamaco. The exact date of settlement remains uncertain. Dispersed farmsteads characterized settlement throughout this period, most settlement focusing on the east and west Main Street (Haverhill Road) area, particularly around Cobbler's Brook. Land grants in the Merrimac area were probably small during this period, averaging around 50 acres. Merrimac lacked any type of village structure throughout this period.

D. Economic Base

As Colonial settlers established themselves in the Merrimac 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. Fruit and vegetables were also grown, but grains were the most important food produce. Husbandry was an important activity in Merrimac. Cattle, horses, sheep and swine were the most important animals on local farms; oxen and fowl were also present. Lumbering and fishing were also probably important. Lumber may have been cut for local building, barrel staves, export and possibly minor

shipbuilding. Fishing probably focused on salmon, sturgeon and shad in the Merrimack River.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

A. Transportation Routes

Native trails had been upgraded to horsepaths and cartways by this time or had become overgrown. The Haverhill Road (east/west Main Street) remained the major east/west corridor through the town running along the Merrimack River to connect the Salisbury/Amesbury area with Haverhill. Intermittent stage travel was probably present along this route. Major roadways leading north from this corridor included Birch Meadow Road (1737), Bear Hill Road and the town way north from Church Street. Part of the River Road was opened in 1737. Locust Street was also probably opened during this period. Colonial period ferries were located at Saugus Neck in 1735 and at Clapboard Landing to West Newbury in 1764. Merrimack River commerce also increased during this period. Local coasting and river transport was present as well as West Indies trade. Landings were present at Clapboard and Cottle's Landings, both popular terminals for river commerce. Several unnamed ways were also probably present, particularly in the Cobbler's Brook area.

B. Population

Merrimac or Jamaco remained part of Amesbury throughout the Colonial period, resulting in the lack of separate population statistics for the town. Around one to two dozen families may have resided in Merrimac late in the 17th century. By 1775 this population probably increased to 200 or 300 individuals. Most Merrimac residents were Congregationalists though some Quakers may have also been present. A Congregational church was organized in ca. 1726 known as the West Parish. Previously, Merrimac or West Parish residents attended meetings at the parish church at Amesbury.

C. Settlement Pattern

Dispersed farmsteads continued to characterize most Merrimac settlement throughout the Colonial period. Late 17th and early 18th-century garrison houses were located between Church Street and Cobbler's Brook and the Birch Meadow and Highland areas. While concentrated villages were not yet present, reduced fear of Indian attack, subsequent increases in Colonial period settlement and the town's topography directed settlement towards village life in several areas. This development was focused around Cobbler's Brook, and ca. 1715 the area around the junction of Church Street and East/West Main streets was developing as a village center. A meetinghouse was erected in the area in 1722 followed by a burial ground, training field, and common by 1731. In 1726 Jamaco (Merrimac) was divided into the West Parish or West District of Amesbury. The confluence of Cobbler's Brook (also known as Potter's or Sargent's Creek) and the Merrimack River also continued to develop as a settlement locus, known as Clapboard Landing and later Merrimacport. Other settlement in the town was dispersed along Bear Hill and Birch Meadow roads. Land ownership in the Merrimac area probably continued to focus on smaller size holdings. In 1771, 217 acres of tillage land was

present in the town. The largest acreage tilled by any one man was seven acres with most tillage averaging around four acres. A total of 24 acres of orchard were also present of which the largest share was 1-3/4 acres.

D. Economic Base

Agriculture and husbandry continued to characterize most aspects of Merrimac's economic base throughout the Colonial period. Grains remained the main focus of agricultural production with corn as the chief crop. Husbandry also continued in importance. Maritime trades continued to develop throughout this period. Fishing continued to focus on the Merrimack River with a possible emphasis on coastal ocean fisheries as well. Shipbuilding also increased during this period, particularly around Jamaco Point and Cottles Landing. By the 18th century a West Indies trade developed with Merrimacport as a distribution point for sugar and molasses to adjoining and distant towns. Two saw mills were probably located on Cobler's Brook during this period. Brick making, coopering and possibly pottery making were also present.

E. Architecture

Residential: No first period houses have been documented for the town. Two houses are known using the center-chimney saltbox form: the 1734 Clement-Edgar House and the late 1775 Chase-Gadd House. Symmetrical gable center-chimney houses are also known and include the 1750 Sawyer-Robie House with two-story rear ell, the 1754 Sargent-Eastman-Sheys House, the 1760 Kindrick-Becker House and the ca. 1775 Sargent-Smith House. A house said to date to 1702 employs double interior chimneys associated with the fashionable Georgian plan.

Institutional: A meetinghouse was constructed here in 1722, for what would shortly become Second Parish Amesbury; it was to be of the same dimensions as the house built in the First Parish in 1715, 35 x 45 feet with 20-foot studs.

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

A. Transportation Routes

Colonial period routes remained basically unchanged during this period. New routes opened during this period included the River Road (1784) from the Amesbury/Merrimac town line to Clapboard landing, a route between Battis and Birch Meadow Roads, portions of the Old County Road north of Red Oak Hill and part of Highland Street. Several unnamed ways were also probably present in the area around the town center and Merrimacport. Turnpikes were not present in Merrimac though regular stage travel was probably present along the Haverhill Road. River transport continued to be important along the Merrimack River with landing places in the Merrimacport area.

B. Population

Little information is available on the area's population prior to incorporation. In 1782 there were 163 rateable polls, suggesting a population of about 815. There were four school districts in the parish in 1803, known as River, Esquire Sargent, Burcha Meadow, and Highland.

C. Settlement Pattern

Merrimac, part of Amesbury until 1876, saw slow growth during the Federal Period. Most occurred in the south on the Merrimack River at South Amesbury (Merrimacport). West Amesbury (Merrimac Square or Merrimac Center) remained a residential village with one church, a cemetery and some residential development. South Amesbury was populated with residences of shipbuilders and maritime industrialists. The majority of residents were farmers who lived in widely separated residences. Federal Period houses make up 20% of the 63 inventoried buildings.

South Amesbury (River, Broad, Pleasant, Friend and Tannery Streets) was the most important village during the Federal Period. Construction of a school, tanneries, various kinds of small industrial shops and a mill supported activities by residents who built at least ten houses in the area between 1775 and 1830. The carriage manufacturing industry would later play an important part in encouraging growth in Merrimac and was begun in the village around 1800. Houses were typically five-by-two bay, two-and-one-half-story structures. One brick example (# 18, 84 River Road) and other wood-framed examples are in good to excellent condition.

West Amesbury experienced little development before 1830 despite the fact that it was the site of the 1726 West Meetinghouse (rebuilt 1787) and Church Street Cemetery. Approximately four Federal Period residences are present on Main Street east and west of the Square.

Schools were built in the neighborhoods of Birch Meadow in the west and Highlands in the north during the period. Pond Plain was a third area that supported some development including a cemetery and a school but did not compare to South Amesbury in terms of density and commercial activity. More dispersed settlement by farmers took place on Harriman, Bear Hill, Middle and Birch Meadow Roads. Amesbury's poor were housed in the Alms House at the Landing on the North side of River Road near the Haverhill town line from 1825 to 1842.

D. Economic Base

The West Parish of Amesbury, later incorporated as Merrimac, was principally an agricultural district during the Federal period. Shortly before the Revolution "there were 217 acres of tillage land, and the largest amount cultivated by any one man was seven acres." (Hurd 1888: 1543). Fishing for salmon and sturgeon on the Merrimack River was probably pursued throughout the period, as was shipbuilding, on a small scale. Merrimacport was a distribution point for sugar and molasses. Ships from the West Indies would unload these products, after which they would be transported overland to

surrounding towns. Several saw mills were operated. Ship timbers and other lumber were probably exported to the West Indies, as well as floated down the Merrimack to other shipbuilding centers.

Small scale manufacturing firms also were active during the Federal period. An earthenware shop was established in Merrimacport ca 1790; another such shop was opened ca. 1825. Merrimacport was also home to several tanneries and coopers' shops. In 1827 the tanning and currying establishment of Gove, Clough and Rowell commenced operations. Around the beginning of the 19th century, Michael Amery began making carriages in Merrimac, having moved his shop from West Newbury. By 1820, carriage shops had also been established by John Clement, Job Hoyt, and Ebenezer Fullington.

E. Architecture

Residential: Isolated use persisted of the 2-1/2-story center-chimney house type, including the Isaac Whittier House of 1776 and the Sawyer Gilchrist House of 1800. Double interior chimney houses became popular for large homes and include a frame example with a flushboard facade, and the 1828 brick Bancroft-Calnan and Sargent-Fuller-Sweetser houses. The Sargent-Shaw house of the same year has brick-end wall chimneys.

Institutional: A new meetinghouse, West or Second Parish Amesbury, was built in 1787, of unknown appearance. A schoolhouse was built in 1802.

VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830-1870)

A. Transportation Routes

Federal period roads continued in use and were improved. Most new road construction was now confined to local development rather than connecting Merrimac with neighboring towns and districts. Portions of Middle Road near Amesbury were still under construction in 1831. By the mid 19th century, the need for residential space and Merrimacport development resulted in several new local streets accepted by the town in 1851. Most new road construction was focused on the center of town and Merrimacport area. Travel from New Hampshire to the Merrimack River was still important with a new road (Harriman Road?) opened from the New Hampshire line to the Merrimack River to the sharp hill at the west end of Bear Hill.

Stage travel continued throughout this period particularly since no railroad lines were constructed in the town. Stage traffic was present along the Haverhill Road and probably on several roads leading north to New Hampshire. In 1868 the West Amesbury Branch Railroad was incorporated though it did not open during the period. Maritime traffic increased during this period with both sail and steam travel. Merrimacport developed as a major terminal for both passenger and coal transport along the river. From 1830 to 1860 John Boncraft operated a fleet of flat-bottom, squire-ended boats known as "bungalows" between Clapboard Landing and Newburyport. These vessels carried cargoes of bricks, coal, and lumber. By 1863 the South Amesbury Company had built several wharfs, coal yards and sheds in the Merrimacport locale. Steam travel was present although its importance had not yet peaked in the area.

B. Population

Little information is available on the area's population prior to incorporation. A Universalist Society was formed in 1836, followed by Baptists at the port in 1849, and in the center in 1867. In 1834 the area had six districts known as River, Highland, Birch Meadow, Bear Hill, Pond, and Corner; in 1837 the River was divided and the Landing district was added. With district system abolition the outlying Pond and Corner schools were apparently closed. A Y.M.C.A. was formed in 1867, a Masonic Lodge in 1869.

C. Settlement Pattern

While population figures were not taken for this section of West Amesbury, it is apparent from historic maps and from surviving architectural examples that the Early Industrial Period was a time of growth in this part of town. Settlement in 1830 was most dense in South Amesbury on the river. By 1856, West Amesbury had attracted carriage shops, a spring factory and the West Amesbury Manufacturing Company, as well as approximately 40 residences. At this time South Amesbury also had a carriage factory, shops and a wharf but it did not keep pace with West Amesbury in terms of the increasing density. This trend continued until the present time.

A small cluster of Amesbury's population was also located at the south end of Bear Hill Road (village of Lower Corner). A small industrial settlement grew up at the southwest end of Lake Attitash (village of Pond Plain), of which at least one building remains. By 1872, settlement had increased in West Amesbury to the point where it garnered rail service by the Amesbury Branch Railroad (later the Boston and Maine) that did not extend to South Amesbury. West Amesbury had grown to have approximately twice the number of buildings as South Amesbury by this time. Forty-six percent of the 63 surveyed buildings in Merrimac were constructed between 1830-1870.

Roads laid out during the period include Skunk/Emery Road, Broad Street and North Street, all between Main Street and River Road. Few period buildings remain on these roads. Friend Street and an extension of Pleasant Street are short streets built during the period that connected existing roads in South Amesbury. Approximately 50 buildings from the period survive in the village, indicating its expansion during the period. Green and Pleasant Streets south of Main were laid out primarily for residential development in the Center although some industrial operations were carried out in this neighborhood. Pine and Maple Streets were laid out north of Main Street off Church, also for residential development. These streets are the site of approximately 40 period houses. Extensive additional development took place on previously existing roads in the Center with the Greek Revival style predominating.

The Merrimac Branch Railroad was opened in 1872 and connected the town with Haverhill and the Western Division of the Boston and Maine Railroad. It was attracted by a growing number of companies in the Center that produced agricultural products, shoes, earthenware and, most notably, carriages.

Growth of the carriage industry reflected the increasing numbers of people in the two principal villages, many of whom were likely to have been employed in one of the eleven shops. Of the eleven, six were located in the West Amesbury and three in South Amesbury.

Other villages experienced growth during the period. The village of Lower Corner at Main Street and Bear Hill Road was the location of approximately 25 houses, two shops, a blacksmith, a carriage shop, store, school and a cemetery in 1872. Two more shops, two carriage factories, a shoe shop and approximately 15 residences were located at the Landing on the river west of South Amesbury. The Amesbury Alms House was on the North side of River Road near the Haverhill town line from 1825-1842. Dispersed settlement characterized the remainder of the area that would become Merrimac during the Late Industrial Period.

D. Economic Base

The Merrimac economy became increasingly oriented toward manufacturing during the Early Industrial decades. The principal manufacturing activity was carriage making. At least eleven different carriage factories were established during the period; William Chase and Son, in Merrimacport (1838); C.H. Noyes and Son (1845); Moses G. Clement and Son (1849); Willis P. Sargent in Merrimacport (1854); John B. Judkins and Son (1857); George Adams and Son (1857); J.A. Lancaster and Co. (1858); S.C. Pease and Sons (1861); Loud Bros. (1866); A.M. Colby in Merrimacport (1868); and H.G. and H.W. Stevens (1869). In 1848 the West Amesbury Mfg Co. was incorporated and began making carriage wheels in 1848. Another wheel making firm was the partnership of John F. Foster and Henry Howe, formed in 1867. It is said that "in the early history of the carriage business there were no shops in which a complete carriage was built. The business was carried on by an interchange of parts, one shop making bodies, another gears, another doing the iron work, and another trimming and painting." (Hurd 1888: 1548).

The only other known manufacturing activities were shoe making and production of earthenware. Small shoe factories were operated throughout the period by Moses Goodrich and Charles Sargent, manufacturer of boots, and James B. Hoyt, shoe manufacturer. The Chase earthenware factory remained in business.

The National Bank was established in Merrimac in 1863.

E. Architecture

Residential: Double interior chimney houses continued in popularity in Greek Revival 2-1/2-story houses as well as smaller 1-1/2-story houses. The gable-front form rapidly gained acceptance, and equal members of 2-1/2 and 1-1/2 story houses were built with Greek Revival ornament, as well as small numbers of larger houses with Italianate ornament.

Institutional: In 1836 the Universalist Society of West and South Amesbury was formed, and built a meetinghouse of unknown appearance. In 1839 a new Congregational meetinghouse was constructed, a gable-front form with sanctuary over a basement, retaining both Greek and Gothic ornament and triple-hung sash in spite of many later uses. In 1859 a new house was constructed using a Renaissance Revival design; it is a gable-front form with semi-attached tower rising to clock and spire, with a pedimented porch and doric columns screening the entry, and employing paired windows, labels, and quoins. The Merrimacport Baptists built a meetinghouse of unknown appearance in 1850; the West Amesbury Baptists laid the cornerstone of their Merrimac Center meetinghouse in 1869. The River district's 1839 schoolhouse survives, a 2-1/2-story gable-front block with paired front entries and belfry; it was used as a residence after 1899. The 1857 Landing schoolhouse (moved in 1893 and 1972) is a single-story gable front with paired entries.

IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)

A. Transportation Routes

The existing street network in Merrimac continued to see improvement. Local roadways continued to develop, usually cross streets in the village area. Major highways through the town continued along the Haverhill Road (Rt. 110, East/West Main streets) and north through the center of town along Church and Winter streets to Highland Street.

In 1872 the West Amesbury Branch Railroad was opened with a line extending south from New Hampshire, west of Bear Hill Road and east of Church Street to the Merrimacport area. This line was leased to the Boston and Maine Railroad for 99 years beginning in 1873. Electric street railways were also present in Merrimac during this period. One street railway line extended along the entire course of East/West Main streets connecting the Merrimac area with Amesbury to the east and Haverhill to the west. By ca. 1910 street railways in Merrimac were part of the Massachusetts Northeastern Street Railway system. Travel along the Merrimac River also continued in importance throughout this period. From 1880 to 1913, passenger steamers made regular stops at the Merrimacport wharf.

B. Population

Merrimac was one of only six Essex County towns whose population declined in the Late Industrial period. Totaling 2171 people upon incorporation in 1875, the population fell 3.2% to 2101 in 1915. Still, the trend was not uniform. The population fluctuated from a high of 2633 people in 1890 to a low of 1884 people in 1905. The foreign-born population was never very large--representing only 13% of the total population in 1875; 12% in 1915. Throughout the period the principal ethnic groups were Irish, Canadians, and English. The Irish were the largest group early in the period, while Canadians dominated later. Catholics first held services in 1870 in Mechanics Hall. The Methodist Society at Merrimacport was formed in 1875. The First Congregational Society of Merrimac was incorporated in 1878. Other voluntary associations included the Riverside Lodge of Odd Fellows (1875); the Merrimac Temperance Reform Club (1876); the Colonial C.R. Mudge Ladies

Relief Corps (1882); and the Merrimac Branch of the Irish National League of America (1883). The public library was established in 1877, a fire department in 1884, and a newspaper, the Merrimac Enterprise in 1882.

C. Settlement Pattern

During the Late Industrial Period, Merrimac Square (West Amesbury until 1876) continued to attract industrial and commercial establishments while Merrimacport (South Amesbury until 1876) remained a small riverside port. The largest industrial concerns were located around the Square, schools were consolidated here and one was moved here from the Landing. The Amesbury Branch Railroad opened in 1872 with a depot at Liberty and Mechanic Streets and fostered increased settlement around the station. The Square was developed with monumental commercial and civic structures between 1876 and 1886. New residential streets continued to be built, creating a cohesive town center. In Merrimacport, growth was slow and no new roads were constructed. The village of Lower Corner at Bear Hill Road and Main Street experienced little growth. It was the site of some small businesses, the Bear Hill District School, an ice house and several farms. The Landing supported a population comparable to that of Lower Corner and was the site of shipping operations to and from Newburyport and other towns along the river.

Streets laid out between 1872 and 1884 in the Center include Prospect, Grove, Woodland, Nichols, Summer and Forest north and west of the Square. Adams, Green, Pleasant and Central Streets were developed south of the Square. Prospect Hill was laid out northeast of the Square. These were the site of approximately 35 residences and several industrial operations and had become a densely settled section of Merrimac Center. Main Street continued to be developed during the period with approximately 25 residences built between 1872 and 1884. More importantly, two three-story brick business blocks, the High Victorian Gothic Town hall and a two-story brick block were constructed around the square between 1876 and 1886. These and other wood-framed commercial structures around the Square secured its position as Merrimac's focus of commerce and settlement. The Haverhill, Merrimac and Amesbury Street Railway was built along Main Street with a spur to Merrimacport on Broad Street by 1903. Construction of only a few buildings in town can be attributed to its influence.

The arrival of the railroad provided further reason for residents and businesses to locate themselves in the Center. The nine large industrial firms and more numerous smaller ones in the Center shipped large amounts of trade goods from the station on Liberty Street including 100-115 carriages per week in the mid 1880s. The station was a low structure with deep eaves and scalloped vergeboards.

Development around the Square between 1884 and 1915 occurred on Abbot, Orchard, Winter, Vendome, Lincoln and Spring Streets north of Main Street. South of Main Street, Union, Middle, Walnut and Vale Streets were laid out. Approximately 60 houses were built on these streets, creating a dense town center north and south of Main Street and between Orchard and Mill Streets. Houses are set close to the street and to one another in suburban fashion.

Some high style examples of Shingle, Second Empire, High Victorian Gothic, Queen Anne and Stick styles exist but most are two-and-one-half-story Victorian Eclectic end houses. Grove Street and Woodland Avenue are more stylish than other streets in the center.

In contrast to the Center, only approximately 20 residences were built around Merrimacport during the period. Lower Corner experienced some residential development and small industrial establishments were located in the area near Lake Attitash, such as an ice house. Development had slowed almost to a standstill at the Landing.

D. Economic Base

Merrimac continued to be predominantly a manufacturing town during the Late Industrial period. In 1875, 581 men (79.4%) worked in manufacturing jobs, 91 men (12.4%) in agriculture, and 59 men (8%) in commerce. Both the real number and the percentage of manufacturing jobs for men declined by 1915. In that year there were only 400 men (67%) engaged in the manufacturing sector, 67 men (11.2%) in agriculture, and 129 men (21.6%) in commerce. The Merrimac Savings Bank was incorporated in 1871.

The manufacturing sector was dominated by the carriage industry throughout. In 1875 there were 31 firms engaged in the production of carriage bodies, wheels and other parts. The value of these products, \$699,580, was 93% of the total manufacturing product value of \$752,180. With some consolidation and business failures, the number of carriage making firms was down to 19 in 1887. Together these firms employed 469 men and made 3133 carriages and 462 sleighs worth \$867,000. The firm of H.G. and H.W. Stevens was the largest employer with 100 men, and accounted for \$185,000 (21%) of the product value for the carriage industry. The last two decades of the period were a time of general decline in the Merrimac carriage industry. By 1905 the value of all manufactured goods was only \$447,000, or half that of the carriage industry alone in 1887.

Other manufacturing was limited to small-scale production of shoes, leather, and earthenware. The Merino Shoe Co. was incorporated in 1876, employing 75 people and produced 90,000 pairs of boots and shoes worth \$100,000 per year. In 1883 the Bay State Felt Boot and Shoe Co was incorporated and began making felt footwear for sale in the western states and in northern New England.

Farming was pursued in a modest fashion throughout the period. In 1875 there were 43 farms of 2867 acres. By 1905 there were 67 farms of 3500 acres, including seven dairy farms and one poultry farm. In the latter year 2357 acres of the total (67%) were under cultivation, largely with hay. Farmers and several market gardeners supplied food for the local population as well as the larger markets of nearby cities such as Newburyport. The value of agricultural products was also modest, beginning the period at just under \$50,000 and increasing to \$80,000 by 1905.

E. Architecture

Residential: Little period architecture has been inventoried. The gable-front form remained in use, now ornamented with Queen Anne style ornamental shingles and spindlework. At least one larger Queen Anne house with projecting bays and corner tower is known.

Institutional: After incorporation in 1876 the town built a hall with a bequest from William P. Sargent; the brick hip block is a High Victorian Gothic design by Thomas W. Silloway of Boston using a larger corner tower and lower opposite to form an asymmetrical facade on the 40 by 80-foot structure. At Merrimacport in 1872 a frame, gable-front engine house was constructed with entry on the long wall and a rear hose tower, with Italianate ornament. The 1887 post office is a 1-1/2-story gable front with an entry into the shed extension of roof and a lateral garage ell. The Methodists built a church in 1889 of Queen Anne design, a frame, cross-gable with tower and entry into the angle under a roof extension. In the 1880s there were large schoolhouses in the center on Prospect Street and at Merrimacport, and small schoolhouses in four outlying districts.

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915-1940)

A. Transportation Routes

The town's street network continued to see some improvement and expansion, particularly in the village area. In 1940 the Route 110 corridor continued as the major route through the town. Other important paved roads included Merrimac Street (Middle Road), Bridge Street, Newton Street, Birch Meadows Road, Highland Street, Church Street and portions of Bear Hill Road. Gravel or stone surfaced roads were present along portions of North Street, Hadley Street, Battis Road (as it exists today), Birch Meadow Road, and Harriman Road. Several older roads were now considered impassable including Bear Hill Road at Bear Hill, most of Battis Road, Heath Street and Oak Hill.

Streetcar service ended in Merrimac in the 1930s. With increasing automobile traffic passenger steam transport also ended. Railroad travel continued along the Boston and Maine line.

B. Population

Merrimac's growth was steady during the period, its most rapid increases occurring between 1920 and 1925 (up 8%) and between 1945 and 1950 (up 17.6%). Its proportion of foreign born was low for the county as a whole: only 12% in 1915 and falling to 10.2% in 1940. Among the nativities represented at the period's opening were Canadians (many Nova Scotians) (45%), English (16.2%) and Irish (15.4%).

C. Settlement Pattern

In contrast to the Early and Late Industrial Periods, the Early Modern was a time of slow growth and little new settlement took place in either of the principal villages. Many important buildings were either torn down,

dismantled and rebuilt elsewhere, burned or converted to new uses between 1915 and 1945, (Wingate-Sargent House on Pleasant Street, Pease Carriage Shops on the Square, Lancaster Carriage Shop on Green Street, Cleary-Lovell Block on Main Street, Universalist Church on East Main Street) The decline of the carriage industry forced manufacturers to find new uses for factories. Several isolated examples of period construction are evident. The greatest density of Early Modern Period buildings is located south of Lake Attitash on Merrimack, Pleasant, Hillside and Pleasant View Streets.

Merrimac's carriage-building businesses were faced with the challenge of competing with automobile companies for sales and several adapted fairly well by entering into the manufacture of auto bodies for companies such as Rolls Royce, Duesenberg, Pierce Arrow and others. This allowed the Center to remain the settlement focus through the period to the present time. These companies continued to employ hundreds of residents into the early 1930s. Companies such as J. B. Judkins on West Main Street, the Merrimac Body Company on Mechanic and Liberty Streets and the Walker Body Company on East Main Street, all in the Center, were adapted carriage factories. The body companies went out of business when automobile manufacturers began making their own bodies in Detroit after 1930. Some factories adapted again after the auto body business failed and became involved in the manufacture of other large items. The J.B. Judkins buildings on West main Street were used to make diners and caskets but went out of business in 1945 and were soon demolished. Other demolished factories in Merrimac were the Eastern Hard Fiber Company building on Liberty Street after 1914, and James A. Lancaster's carriage company, located at Green and Locust Streets was dismantled in 1915 and moved to Indiana to continue operations there.

Outlying district schools were closed and consolidated in the Center and ultimately at Pentucket Regional High School in 1958. The Thomas Hoyt Memorial Library was built in the center on Main Street in 1930, signifying the enduring importance of that village as the cultural focus of the town.

Residential subdivisions were built in the town before 1952 at the east end of Main Street (Westminster Road) and on the west shore of Lake Attitash (West Shore Road and Lane's Ten Acres). The subdivisions on the lake are comprised of small houses possibly built as second homes that have been turned into year-round residences. Other Early Modern residences were built in the Craftsman style and Bungalow form on Middle Street, Greenleaf, Emery and Winter Streets. The Lower Corner Cemetery on Main Street at Emery Street remained in use until at least 1923.

The presence of the Haverhill, Merrimac and Amesbury Street Railway along Main Street (Route 110) with a spur down Broad Street to Merrimacport did not inspire settlement away from the Center or the river village. Street railway service ceased in the 1930s. Growth in the Landing, Lower Corner and Merrimacport was negligible.

D. Economic Base

Economic activity in Merrimac declined sharply during the Early Modern decades. Early in the period there were four carriage and automobile body manufacturers: J. B. Judkins and Co., Merrimac Body Co., Walker Body Co., and William F. Carter's Carriage Co. There were also two heel makers shops: the Wood Heel Co., and another run by James M. Cushman.

By period's end Merrimac was principally a residential community. In 1955 there were 308 people employed in the town, 121 (3%) in manufacturing, 74 (24%) in transportation, 48 (16%) in retail and wholesale, and 36 (12%) in construction. There were nine manufacturing firms, among the largest of which was Engel-Lewis Counter Co., makers of fiber shoe counters (a stiffener intended to give permanent form to a boot or shoe upper around the heel) and heel tucks. Other firms included Merrimac Brass Co., makers of brass and aluminum castings, and the Wallace Boat Co.

E. Architecture

No period buildings have been inventoried.

XI. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

[1985] The inventory focuses on residences constructed prior to the mid-nineteenth century, includes institutional buildings of later date, but nothing from the twentieth century.

[1997] The current inventory for Merrimac contains 63 building forms, an area form and three structure forms. This does not reflect the existing historic and cultural resources in the town. While buildings included in the survey represent all periods, a heavy bias exists in favor of the Early Industrial Period. Also, most surveyed buildings are located in the village of Merrimacport. Forty-eight of the 63 surveyed buildings are located on either Middle Road or River Road which ignores other significant areas with dense concentrations of historic architecture such as Merrimac Square.

There is a complete lack of burial grounds which are found on Main Street and on Church Street and date to the eighteenth century. Many outlying formerly agricultural residences exist away from the Square and have not been surveyed. Bear Hill Road, Highland Road and Birch Meadow Road all have residences from the Colonial and Federal Periods that have not been included in the inventory. Also, several historic archaeological sites have been noted by local historians but have not been included in the survey. Given Merrimac's active industrial past, these sites cannot be underestimated in terms of their importance to the local history.

Conglomerations of notable resources are around Merrimac Square at the junction of Main, Broad and Church Streets. Here are the town's largest buildings. Two brick business blocks, a cemetery, the Pilgrim Congregational Church (MHC #75), numerous stylish residences, and the English Revival style Hoyt Library are in this area. Northwest of the

Square on Woodland, Grove and Winter Streets, there are well-preserved neighborhoods of residences with few intrusions.

XIII. FINDING AID [1997]

Inventory Forms:

MHC #	Date/Period	# Street	Historic Name/Style
A	1702-1908	Locust, Broad, Friend, Tannery, Bancroft Lanes, Pleasant, North, High Streets, River, Middle Roads,	River Village Historic District (Merrimacport)
22	1889	High Street	United Methodist Church
72	1859	Liberty Street	Congregational Church
18	1828	84 River Road	Sargent- Fullington House
74	1884	Woodland Street	Herbert Delano house
73	1876	Merrimac Square	Merrimac Town Hall

Unsurveyed properties:

Period/Date	Address	Historic Name/Style
1735	Main Street	Sawyer House
Colonial	Main Street	Colonial 5x1 bay Residence
Colonial	Main Street	Lower Corner Cemetery
Colonial	Locust Street	5x2 bay Residence
Colonial	Main Street	5x2 bar Residence
Federal	Main Street	Federal Residence
Federal	Bear Hill Road	Federal Residence
Federal	Bear Hill Road	Federal Farmhouse
Federal	Main Street	Hipped Federal Residence
Federal	Middle Road	Federal Residence
Early Industrial	Church Street	Church Street Cemetery
Early Industrial	Bear Hill Road	Greek Revival Farmhouse
Early Industrial	Main Street	Greek Revival Residence
Early Industrial	Main Street	Greek Cottage
Early Industrial	Middle Road	Greek Revival Residence
Early Industrial	Middle Road	3x2 bay Residence
Early Industrial	Middle Road	5x2 bay Residence
Early Industrial	Main Street	Italianate Residence
Early Industrial	Main Street	Greek Revival Residence
Early Industrial	Church Street	Greek Revival Residence
Early Industrial	Church Street	Italianate Residence
1886	Main Street	Three story Poyen Block
1882	Broad Street	Little and Larkin Block

Late Industrial	Church Street	Colonial Revival
Late Industrial	Vendome Street	Victorian Eclectic Residence
Late Industrial	Woodland	Victorian Eclectic
Early Modern	Locust Street	Craftsman Residence
1930	Main Street	Hoyt Library
Early Modern	Locust Street	Craftsman Residence
Early Modern	Greenleaf Street	Bungalow Residence
Early Modern	Mill Street	Craftsman Residence
Early Modern	Church Street	Craftsman Residence
Early Modern	Winter Street	Craftsman Residence
Early Modern	West Shore Road	Bungalow
Early Modern	Main Street	Skip's Restaurant
Late Industrial	Main Street	Shingle Style Residence
Early Modern	Union Street	Craftsman Residence
Early Modern	Grove Street	Bungalow

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