

# MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

## METHUEN

Report Date: 1986

**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.



### MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth

Chair, Massachusetts Historical Commission

220 Morrissey Blvd.

Boston, MA 02125

[www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc)

[mhc@sec.state.ma.us](mailto:mhc@sec.state.ma.us) / 617-727-8470

## MHC RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

Date: 1986 Update: 1997

Community: Methuen

---

### I. TOPOGRAPHY

The town of Methuen is located in the northwestern corner of Essex County, Massachusetts. It lies about 27 miles north of Boston. Methuen is bordered by Dracut on the west, Pelham and Salem, New Hampshire on the northwest and north, Haverhill on the northeast, North Andover on the southeast and Lawrence and Andover on the south. The town covers an area of 22.41 square miles. Methuen lies within the New England Seaboard Lowland, relatively smooth coastal strip of land with some hills usually below the 400 and 500-foot contours. Ground surfaces in Methuen are uneven and somewhat hilly. Reservoir Hill is the highest elevation in the town reaching 3412 feet above sea level. Several other hills are also in the 200 to 300-foot range including Pie Hill, Lone Tree Hill, Daddy Frye Hill and Meetinghouse Hill.

Bedrock deposits the Methuen area characterized by sedimentary formations throughout the entire town. Merrimac quartzite exists in nearly the entire town. Some gneiss and shists of undetermined age are also present in the northern part of town. These formations are technically classified as sedimentary but contain gneiss of igneous origin with limestone beds.

Soils in the Methuen area represent a mixture of types formed in glacial till, outwash deposits and organic deposits. Soils of the Paxton-Woodbridge-Montauk association area found throughout the eastern half of town from the Lawrence city line north along the New Hampshire border to the Haverhill town line. These soils are also found in small areas east of Meetinghouse Hill and in the extreme northwestern corner of town. Soils in this association occur in deep deposits and nearly level to steep area. They are well drained loamy soils formed in compact glacial till. Soils belonging to the Canton-Charlton-Sutton association are also found in the eastern portion of town from Route 213 north to the Maple Rock area. They are also found in small areas east of the Route 213 and 93 junction and north of Marsh Corner. These soils also occur in deep deposits and in nearly level to steep areas. They are well drained loamy soils formed in friable glacial till. Soils belonging to the Hinckley-Windsor-Merrimac association form a strip-like distribution along the Merrimack River to the Lawrence city line, then a strip northerly to the New Hampshire boundary around the B&M Railroad line. A small area also exists in the vicinity of 1-495. These soils are also 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 Charlton-Rock-outcrop-Medisaprists association are found in the Marsh's Corner area. These soils occur in similar deposits and areas as all other soils in the Methuen area. They range from well-drained loamy soils formed in glacial till to rock outcrops and to very poorly drained mucky soils formed in organic deposits.

Major drainage in Methuen is characterized by the Merrimack River which generally drains west to east along the town's southern and eastern

boundary. Much of the river has been historically navigable to this area. Other major drainage exists through the Spicket River, which flows from Derry, New Hampshire through Methuen into Lawrence. Important drainage also exists through several brooks, ponds, lakes and wetlands (meadows, swamps etc.). Major brooks include Bartlett Brook, Harris Brook, Hawkes Brook and Bare Meadow Brook. Important ponds and lakes include Forest Lake, Mystic Pond, Searles Pond, and Hills Pond. Several small ponds and unnamed swamps are present throughout the town.

At European contact, most of Methuen was deep forest with little undergrowth. Meadowlands represented the only open area in the town. The original forest growth in Methuen and much of Essex County included a mixture of oak and pine as well as chestnut, poplar, maple, birch and some other hardwoods and conifers. Second-growth pattern including oak, pine and maple characterize most of the town today. Wetlands vegetation is also present throughout the town.

## II. POLITICAL BOUUDARIES

Methuen was originally part of Pawtucket Plantation, which was incorporated as Haverhill in 1645. At the time, Haverhill encompassed much of the present-day Haverhill, Methuen and Lawrence in Massachusetts, as well as Salem, Atkinson, Plaistow and Hampstead in New Hampshire. Methuen was established as a town form the western part of Haverhill in 1725. Part of Methuen was set off to New Hampshire with the establishment of the Massachusetts-New Hampshire state line in 1740-1741. In 1847 part of Methuen was included in the new town of Lawrence with additional areas annexed to Lawrence in 1854. Methuen was incorporated as a city in 1917. In 1921 the act of incorporation was declared unconstitutional by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court and repealed in that year. Part of Methuen was annexed to Lawrence in 1930 and part of Lawrence annexed by Methuen in 1946.

## III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

The City of Methuen is a twenty-two-square-mile, mixed industrial and suburban town in northern Essex County. The town originated as a dispersed agricultural settlement in the eighteenth century, developed into a nucleated manufacturing town in the early to mid nineteenth century and became heavily suburbanized in the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. During the last three decades, intersected by interstate highways Routes 93 and 495 which are interconnected by Route 213, Methuen has been incorporated into the northern periphery of metropolitan Boston and has developed a large commuter population.

The eastern portion of Methuen derives from part of the Pentucket Plantation. This section, considered the "wild border section of the Town of Haverhill" was granted to a group of proprietors who subdivided and distributed their property into private ownership. A smaller, western part of Methuen, not part of Haverhill, originated in large tracts granted to individuals.

Only about two hundred settlers had arrived before Methuen was established as a separate town in 1725. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, settlement consisted of dispersed farmsteads without a nucleated village. The first center, located on Meetinghouse Hill (later Daddy Frye's Hill, east of the later Methuen Village) consisted only of the meetinghouse, burial ground and schoolhouse. Prior to the founding of Lowell in the 1820's, the ports of Salem and Newburyport provided the first commercial markets for local agricultural produce and timber.

The Spicket River, which flows south from New Hampshire to the Merrimack River, bisects the town and became the focus of village settlement beginning with construction in 1806 of the Essex Turnpike (Broadway) paralleling the River. The new road advanced transportation and redirected traffic to the river area where industry developed into the factory village that became the new town center.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Methuen had evolved into a mixed agricultural and manufacturing economy. Cottage industries had become mechanized and moved to factories. By 1866, besides the three, major textile mills there were six hat manufacturers and eight makers of boots and shoes in Methuen. The value of manufactured goods increased 111 percent (\$359,042 in 1832 to \$759,472 in 1865) during the Early Industrial Period.

Loss of territory in the southern part of town with the incorporation of Lawrence was partially compensated in local growth generated by proximity to the new city including demand for agricultural produce and the need for suburban housing. Between 1845 and 1865, the value of agricultural production increased 264 percent (\$41,921 to 152,459). The population grew nearly 50 percent (2006 in 1830 to 2959 in 1870) during the period.

Central Methuen developed into an industrial and commercial center with residential areas representing all socio-economic groups. The remainder of town retained its dispersed agrarian settlement.

The Late Industrial Period saw increased industrial specialization concentrated on textile production and residential growth. Methuen in part developed as a streetcar suburb of Lawrence. Subdivisions were created on the periphery of the village and in former rural areas near the boundary of the two communities. In addition, Methuen Center experienced major improvements at the turn of the century sponsored by the local triumvirate of wealthy families who established estates, funded the construction of major civic and philanthropic structures and donated funds for public works. Prominent architects commissioned for these projects created exceptional, nineteenth-century buildings and landscaping which transformed the built environment of Methuen Center.

Despite a decline in the textile industry after World War I, Methuen maintained its character by finding new manufacturing uses for its industrial property.

Suburbanization stagnated between 1920 and 1950, but accelerated after World War II, with growth occurring in scattered pockets throughout the town, not

only in subdivisions plotted on the urban fringe. This reorientation of settlement has resulted in some disinvestment in housing at Methuen Center, especially in the Arlington District. These twentieth-century growth patterns have also diffused much of the nineteenth century urban-rural dichotomy that existed in Methuen.

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

##### A. Transportation Routes

Native American transportation routes in the Methuen area likely emphasized water travel along the Merrimack and Spicket Rivers inland to western interior areas, north to New Hampshire and east to the coast. Water travel was easier, reduced travel time and at times may have been safer. Land-based travel was also probably important, linking interior areas with the Merrimack River as well as land counterparts to riverine routes. Main land routes through Methuen likely focused on the banks of the Merrimack River, providing a link in trails leading from the coast to the interior, eventually to central New Hampshire. A northerly trail also probably existed roughly paralleling the Spicket River. Secondary trails extending to the town's numerous ponds and other wetlands likely spurred from major inland trails along the Merrimack and Spicket rivers.

##### B. Population

Methuen 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 have been included among the Massachusetts (Swanton 1952; Speck 1928). Gookin (1792) 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 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 Methuen area may have numbered in the vicinity of 100 to 200 individuals during much of this period. Following epidemics and Indian wars in the early 17th century, fewer than 25 to 50 individuals remained in the Methuen area.

##### C. Settlement Pattern

Some Woodland but no Contact period sites are currently known for the Methuen area. Probable Contact period artifacts with general town provenience have been found in the Methuen area though specific sites have 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 towns, and contemporary secondary sources, indicate Contact period sites will eventually be found in the Methuen area. Known Contact period sites are probably present in neighboring

Haverhill and in other Essex county communities such as Newbury, Newburyport, Ipswich, Salem, Marblehead and probably Saugus. Secondary sources also note a Native American presence in many towns in the area including most of those surrounding Methuen. Numerous locations throughout the town, particularly along the Merrimack and Spicket rivers, 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 major riverine areas or along the periphery of interior wetlands such as ponds, swamps, meadows and brooks.

Native Americans in the Methuen area subsisted on a variety of seasonally determined activities including hunting, fishing, the collections 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 and Spicket rivers. Shad, salmon, trout and sturgeon were also available though their distribution was probably restricted to the main rivers noted above. 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 (1620-1675)

### A. Transportation Routes

Indian trails likely continued in use in the Methuen area throughout most of the Plantation period. Water travel was important along the Merrimack and probably Spicket rivers, the former providing a transportation corridor to Newburyport and the Atlantic Ocean. European transportation routes in Haverhill began in ca. 1650-60 as Haverhill laid out a large number of ways for the convenience of settlers to reach meadows and woodlands. These routes were laid out as cartpaths and are difficult if not impossible to trace today. No official highways were laid out during this period.

### B. Population

It is unknown exactly when or by how many individuals Methuen was first settled. Some settlement may have occurred in the 1640s after Haverhill and Andover were settled. However, actual permanent settlement probably did not occur until ca. 1660 when land grants were made in this area. By 1765 no more than 25 individuals likely inhabited the Methuen area.

### C. Settlement Pattern

Native Americans may have been living in Methuen during this period although their numbers were small. Mention of wigwams was made in the western part of Haverhill in 1650 and 1660 (Hurd 1888: 1909). This area may have been the Methuen locale. Records are also present from 1662 in General Court

documents alluding to Old Will's planting ground on the east side of the Spicket River, also probably at least partially in Methuen. Europeans may have been in the Methuen area during the 1630s although an authorized settlement did not occur until 1640 when the General Court gave permission for men of Ipswich and Newbury to settle in Andover or Haverhill. The latter area was chosen leading to the settlement of Pentucket Plantation in the summer of 1640. The town of Methuen was included within the limits of this early Plantation. The eastern and southern portions of town near the river were the first sections of town occupied, probably due to the proximity of this area to settlements in Haverhill and Andover. Actual settlement probably occurred in ca. 1660 although no one really knows who or how many people were responsible for the initial settlement or really any settlement in this period. It has been speculated that the Bodwell House, built in ca. 1660 and now in Lawrence, was one of the earliest houses in the town. Methuen lands were granted as part of Haverhill land divisions although few grants were actually made in this area during the period. Some of the earliest grants in the Methuen area were made in 1659 as a division of land west of Spicket River and in 1666 as a parcel of meadow on the south side of Spicket Hill. It is unknown whether anyone actually resided or otherwise utilized these grants.

#### D. Economic Base

Few Europeans were settled in the Methuen area during this period. Among those who did settle, 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. Grains, particularly Indian corn, dominated agricultural production. Hemp and flax were probably produced for home textile production late in the period. Meadows produced grasses for fodder. Husbandry was also an important activity in Methuen. Cattle, horses, sheep and swine were the most important animals on local farms; oxen and fowl were also present. Fishing was probably important in the Merrimack and Spicket rivers where salmon, shad, alewives, sturgeon and bass were plentiful. Industry also developed in Methuen during this period. A sawmill, now located in Salem, New Hampshire, was built on the Spicket (Spiggot) River in 1659. Within the present bounds of Methuen, the Spicket River Falls area was the focus of mill development. A saw mill and grist mill may have been located in this area by the end of the period.

### VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

#### A. Transportation Routes

Native trails had been upgraded to horsepaths or cartways by this time or had become overgrown. While several paths or cartways to meadows and woodlands were laid out during the previous period, actual roadways were not laid out until the Colonial period. The first Methuen road laid out was extended from Hawkes Meadow Brook to James Howe's well and was probably part of Howe Street. This road may have been an earlier cartway from Haverhill. Most Colonial period roadways focused on the central portion of town around the Spicket River. Urbanization makes it difficult to trace many of the

routes. However, they probably included portions of Pond Street, Hampstead Street, Jackson and/or Prospect Street and possibly parts of Washington Street. Numerous Colonial period roadways were also present in the western portion of town leading to the Dracut area. These roads probably included portions of Hampshire Street, West Street, Tyler Street, North Lowell and Lowell Street. At least two ferries were present during this period. Gage's ferry crossed the Merrimack River in the eastern portion of town and Richard Young's ferry in the western portion of town. Riverine transportation was probably confined to the area below Bodwell's Falls.

## B. Population

In 1675, 25 individuals may have resided within the limits of Methuen. This number did not increase greatly until Methuen was set off from Haverhill in 1725. In 1726 a dispute arose over where the town's first meetinghouse should be. At that time, 50 persons are listed (possibly representing 250 total individuals or family members) favoring two different locations for the meetinghouse. From 1775 to 1740 Methuen's population began to rise at a faster rate. By 1740, 165 persons, possibly representing 825 individuals or family members, were taxed in the town. Among them, 71 persons lived in the part of Methuen set off to New Hampshire, while 85 persons lived within the present limits of Methuen. Methuen's population continued to rise during the Revolutionary period. At the time the first census was taken in 1765, Methuen contained 933 individuals or 2.14% of the Essex County total. From 1765 to 1776 Methuen's population rose by 42.12%, probably the fastest growth rate in the town through the 18th century.

Methuen remained ethnically English throughout the period. Congregationalism continued to characterize most religious worship in the town. The First Congregational Church in Methuen was incorporated in 1729. The Second Parish Congregational Church (West Church) was formed in 1766 by members withdrawing from the First Church. The North Church of Methuen (now Salem, New Hampshire) was incorporated in 1740 from the First Church. Baptists probably resided in Methuen during this period worshiping in private homes.

## C. Settlement Pattern

Dispersed farmsteads located in the eastern and southern portions of town continued to characterize most Methuen settlement during the late 17th and early 18th centuries. This pattern continued until Methuen was set off from Haverhill in 1725. The fact that few settlers were settled in the Methuen area until early in the 18th century is somewhat indicated by the fact that while Haverhill, Andover and other settlements in the area suffered greatly from Indian attacks, no known Indian battles occurred in Methuen. In 1712, nine persons in that part of Haverhill, now Methuen, petitioned the town to abate their taxes for support of the ministry and schools. This resulted from the great distance between the Methuen settlement and the town of Haverhill. Haverhill voted to abate 1/2 of the residents' taxes. Prior to the formation of a church in Methuen a dispute arose as to where the meetinghouse should be located. One group of citizens wanted the house on land granted to Methuen by the town of Haverhill specifically for the purpose of building a meetinghouse. The majority of residents in the area



voted to build the meetinghouse on a hill on Howe Street where the later pound was built. The meetinghouse was started on the Howe Street site but later moved to the granted site on Meetinghouse Hill. The house was completed in 1728 then later repaired and improved in 1752. A burial ground was established near the meetinghouse. Other buildings in this area included Frye's Tavern after which the hill was later renamed Daddy Frye's Hill and a schoolhouse built in 1735. In 1775 the town was divided into 7 school districts. A burial ground was laid out in the western end of town in 1772. By the end of this period the village focus was changing from around the meetinghouse to a village in the Spicket Falls area. In 1766 the Second Parish was organized and a meetinghouse built near the Leonard Wheeler House.

#### D. Economic Base

As settlement increased during this period, agriculture also developed to characterize pursuits in the town. 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. Hemp and flax production also probably increased. Meadow grass continued to be cut, gradually being replaced by English hay which grew in importance. Husbandry also continued, possibly with a greater emphasis on sheep. Exploitation of riverine resources also grew during this period. Fishing probably remained an important activity. Lumbering was also growing with wood and timber being rafted to Newburyport on the Merrimack River. Industrial production also increased with a continued focus on the Spicket River Falls area. The Swan saw mill was located in this area as well as grist mills on each side of the river which ran on alternate weeks. A fulling mill was built below the footbridge at Spicket River Falls around or immediately after the Revolution.

#### E. Architecture

Residential: No first period houses are documented in the town. The majority of period houses take the 2-1/2-story, center-chimney and entry, gable roof, symmetrical gable form. Inventoried examples include the John Cross House of 1705, now six bays in width with a rear ell (49 Merrimack St.); the Thomas Eaton House of ca. 1720 (156 Hampstead St.); the Maj. Gen. Dennison/Bartlett/Breen House, prior to 1725, (87 N. Lowell St.); the Wetherby Tavern, 1750-75 with later additions (975 N. Lowell St.), the Moses Morse House of 1762 with a lateral ell (311 Pelham St.); the Gage/Ebeneazer/Messer House of 1763 (369 Merrimack St.); and the Capt. Oliver Emerson House of 1775 (133 North St.). Some variations on this form survive as well, including the possibly single pile and rear ell Currier House of 1750 (70 Currier St.), a hip roofed house of 1721 at 635 Prospect Street, and the gambrel roofed Frye-Bradley House of 1775 (176-178 Merrimack Street). Smaller houses of a single story under a garret include the 1720 Asie Swam House (669 Prospect Street), the 1752 Joseph Perkins House (297 Howe Street), and the unusual Enock Griffin House with entry in the fourth rather than the fifth bay, a lateral ell, and a shed rear addition. A Georgian-plan, double-chimney house survives, the Sawyer House (74 Dracut Street) of two stories, and the Emerson House (58 Ayers Village Road) of one

story.

Institutional: After much discussion about its location, the meetinghouse was constructed (1725) and relocated (1727); it measured 40 by 30 feet with 20-foot posts. A second parish was formed in the west in 1766, and the house was apparently moved three times prior to burning down in 1816. A schoolhouse was constructed in 1735, measuring 18 by 20 feet.

## VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

### A. Transportation Routes

By 1830 Methuen's road network had doubled. Most routes continued to focus on the center of town where they radiated out to the east and west. Major routes coming together in this area included Lowell Street, Pelham Street, Lawrence Street and a route in the Hampshire Street/Sand Hill road area. Each of these routes remained important local roads throughout this period. However, it was the development of the Essex turnpike, locally known as Broadway or the Londonderry turnpike that characterized major transportation improvements in the area during this period. This road was established in 1806 providing a direct route between New Hampshire, Salem and Boston. The corridor ran from New Hampshire through Methuen and Lawrence where it divided with the Essex turnpike extending to Danvers and Salem and the Andover and Medford turnpike to Medford and Boston. The route to Salem became a free road in 1829 and that portion of the road through Methuen from the New Hampshire line remained a toll road throughout this period. Turnpike construction diverted much travel from older routes and accelerated regular stage travel through the town to points in New Hampshire and to the south.

While turnpike travel and older roads in the central portion of town along the Spicket River represented the most development and probably most used routes, areas in the eastern and western portions of town also contained important new roads and extensions of old roads. A major corridor was present along Jackson Street and Howe Street northerly to a point where Howe Street extended east into Haverhill and Hampstead Street forked north into New Hampshire with secondary routes also leading north on Pond, Maple, and North Streets. Merrimack Street also represented an important corridor in the eastern portion of town roughly parallel with the Merrimack River from Lawrence through Methuen to Haverhill. East Street and Pleasant Street were important secondary routes connecting the Merrimack Street corridor with the Jackson Street/Howe Street corridor. In the western portion of town major routes also existed to New Hampshire along the Pelham Street/Hampshire Road corridor with new secondary routes north along Salem Street and Cross Street. Major routes westward to Dracut continued along Lowell Street, North Lowell Street, Tyler Street and West Street. Forest Street was laid out during this period connecting the Pelham Street/Lowell Street corridors.

## B. Population

The Second Parish moved its meetinghouse several times prior to dissolving in about 1816. A Baptist society was organized ca. 1778, and the Universalists ca. 1824. Masons formed a Lodge briefly before anti-Masonic movement forced them to disband.

## C. Settlement Pattern

In the early part of this period Methuen remained a dispersed agricultural settlement with several saw and grist mills, a few, scattered cottage industries (hat and shoe making), a small paper mill and a piano forte factory. The town barely grew in the forty years after the Revolution. Roads formed an irregular web, determined by topography and farm sites, interconnecting the thin, linear strand of farmsteads and adjacent towns. There were seven school districts. Definition of a community center existed only on Meetinghouse Hill (now Daddy Frye's Hill), site of the first meetinghouse (1727, not extant), burial ground (1728-86, extant) and schoolhouse (1735, extant). Another meetinghouse (c. 1798, not extant) for the west parish (set off in 1766), a pound (not extant) and cemetery (not extant) existed for a short period of time on Forest Street in the west part of town. Another west end burial ground (now part of Elmwood Cemetery) was created in 1816. Without a village or nearby markets to induce growth, there were only about six houses, a grist mill and a fulling mill in the area which was to become Methuen Village.

Construction at Methuen of Andover Bridge (1795), the first to span the Merrimack River, replaced one of three ferries and facilitated transportation. Development of a nucleated town center began with the construction in 1806 of the Essex Turnpike (Broadway), which crossed the bridge, and the initiation of larger-scale industrialization. The first straight road in town and an important connector to Boston, the turnpike not only advanced transit, but also in paralleling the Spicket River directed traffic to the area that would become the new center of town. At the falls on the Spicket River, site of the early grist mill and later a fulling mill, Stephen Minot built a cotton mill (1812). It was taken over by the Methuen Cotton Mills (1821) which began to erect new buildings in 1826. A growing number of smaller factories were also built along the Spicket River.

Economic, cultural, religious and residential activities began to concentrate in the area defined by Broadway, Osgood, Hampshire and Pleasant Streets. A hostelry appeared at the intersection of Hampshire and Pleasant Streets with Broadway. Broadway, Pleasant, Park and Lawrence Streets began to evolve from rural roads into neighborhood streets. By 1810, the first residences overlooking the cotton mills and the Spicket River were built on George (now High) and Pleasant Streets.

The Congregationalists and Baptists established meetinghouses in the nascent village. A second Congregational parish organized c. 1766 built and moved its meetinghouse three times before disbanding in 1816. Baptists, who had been scattered throughout town in the eighteenth century, formed a church and built a meetinghouse in the west part of town which they utilized

for some period of time, but gradually diminished then dissolved. A new Baptist Society of Methuen organized in 1815 and constructed a meetinghouse the next year in the village at the corner of Osgood and Park Streets.

#### D. Economic Base

Federal Methuen was largely an agricultural town. In the early years of the period surplus farm products were sold in Salem, but with the founding of Lowell in the 1820s, farmers turned to the closer and therefore more profitable urban market. In 1791 581 acres were under tillage and 2655 acres were devoted to hay, bringing the percentage of the 13,932 acres of agricultural land under cultivation to 23%, an average figure for Essex County towns. Another 3353 acres were devoted to pasturage, while 5570 acres were wooded or otherwise unimproved. Surplus wood was rafted down the Merrimack to Newburyport. In 1791, when Methuen still encompassed the Lawrence area, there were 11 saw, slitting and grist mills in operation. In addition there were two slaughter and tan houses and a large number of meat cattle and swine. In 1820, 74.5% of the 274 men listed on the census worked on farms while the remainder worked in manufacturing occupations. Many farmers and their families made shoes and hats at home or in small shops during the winter months.

Other than small-scale shoe and hat production, the only manufacturing activity prior to 1812 was wool fulling. In 1812 a cotton mill was established by Stephen Minot, opposite the fulling mill, on the north side of the Spicket River, west of Broadway between Lawrence and Pleasant streets. Following a fire in 1818, the cotton mill was rebuilt. Then in 1821 the factory and privilege was purchased by the newly incorporated Methuen Company. By 1826, the new owners enlarged the mill and were manufacturing duck, ticking and other cotton goods.

#### E. Architecture

Residential: A number of houses retained the traditional central/interior chimney house plan/type, including about four single-story, and about five two-story examples (one of four rather than five bays). Paired chimney Georgian-plan houses increased in popularity, particularly in larger examples: double-pile plans with both interior and end wall chimneys (about 10), as well as L-plan houses (about five). Some of these employ hip roofs.

Institutional: The first meetinghouse was rebuilt after burning in 1796, but its appearance is unknown. In about 1778 a Baptist meetinghouse was built in the west, and rebuilt in 1815; neither is described. Universalists built an unknown house ca. 1824. In 1775 the town was divided into seven school districts and the schools cost an average of 29 pounds.

Industrial: The first factory building erected in Methuen, with the exception of a fulling mill and small hatters' and shoemakers' shops, was Stephen Minot's cotton mill erected in 1812 on the north side of the Spicket River near the falls. This building of unknown construction burned in 1818 and was rebuilt (no remains). Having been purchased by the Methuen Company, the Minot cotton mill was replaced ca. 1826 by a brick, four-story cotton

mill, 150 feet by 55 feet, with clerestory monitor roof, and a brick and wooden stair tower, still standing at 51 Osgood St.

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

##### A. Transportation Routes

Federal and Colonial period roads continued in use and were improved throughout this period. By the 1830s objections to tolls and the poor conditions of turnpikes led to the abandonment of the system with control of the turnpikes reverting to local authorities. The Essex turnpike from the New Hampshire line to the Andover and Medford turnpike became a free highway in 1835. Increased residential and industrial development in the central portion of town and similar development as Lawrence was created resulted in an increased street network in those areas. Washington Street represented the only major route laid out during this period, connecting Methuen center with points eastward to Haverhill. Stagecoach travel remained important until the mid-nineteenth century when railroads were developed ending the stagecoach era. Stagecoach passenger travel ended early with freight travel probably continuing to Lawrence throughout most of the period.

As railroads replaced stagecoach lines, several railroad companies were created which laid out local routes and lines between Lawrence, Lowell, Salem and Manchester, New Hampshire. In Methuen a major railroad corridor was present running north/south, roughly parallel with the Spicket River. This line was laid out in 1849 by the Boston and Maine Railroad, locally known as the Manchester and Lawrence, connecting these cities. This railroad line remained unchanged throughout this period. Street railway companies were also organized during this period with routes extended into Methuen from the Lawrence area. In 1863 the Merrimack Valley Horse Railroad was incorporated, later renewing its charter in 1866. In 1867 a company was organized to operate a street railway in Lawrence with horse car travel extended into Methuen that year, probably along Broadway (Essex Street).

Merrimack River navigation was still important in the Methuen area although the first manmade obstacle to this travel, the Merrimack River dam, was created in 1848. This dam effectively ended travel on the river past the Lawrence area. Thus, by 1848 only East Methuen was accessible to river transportation.

##### B. Population

Population growth slowed somewhat during the period to 47.5% as the total grew from 2006 in 1830 to 2959 in 1870. Of these, 12.4% or 320 were foreign born in 1865, dominated by the Irish, but also including Canadians and English. The First Parish relocated its meetinghouse from the hill to the expanding mill community at Spicket Falls in 1832. The Second/West Parish reorganized briefly ca. 1830. A Methodist society was organized ca. 1833-34, as was an Episcopal. The Odd Fellows organized in 1844. The town sent 325 to fight in the Civil War, and 52 died.

### C. Settlement Pattern

Establishment or expansion of three, major, cotton or woolen mills and correlated commercial and residential development furthered the concentration of settlement in the vicinity of the Spicket River falls. The Methuen Cotton Mills which expanded again c. 1845-50, were purchased by David Nevins in 1864 who greatly enlarged the plant and production. In 1864, the Methuen Woolen Mills were established south of the cotton mills. A year later, the Arlington Mills were founded farther south at the lower falls of the Spicket River, the location of formerly occupied (c. 1820-1832) by the piano case factory of Abiel Stevens. At mid century, Methuen's industries included hat, boot and shoe, cotton, harness, stove and tinware manufacture. With the introduction of machinery after the Civil War, hat and shoe production moved to larger factories from home shops. The Tenney hat factory located on the east side of Broadway opposite the Methuen Woolen Mills.

Evidence of the growing concentration of activity at the falls on the Spicket River includes the decision in 1832 (replaced 1855) of the First Parish Congregationalists to build a meetinghouse at the new village on Pleasant Street. The Universalists Church and Society dedicated its meetinghouse near the corner of Pleasant and Broadway in 1836.

In 1840, the Baptist Society of Methuen replaced its meetinghouse (burned 1869, rebuilt 1870) on the same site at the corner of Osgood and Park Streets. The Methodists, having first held meetings in Methuen c. 1833/34, built a meetinghouse on Lowell Street which was sold when the new society in Lawrence drew off many members. Reorganized in 1853/54, the Methodists built a meetinghouse in 1871 at the junction of Lowell and Pelham Streets.

About 1830, the town purchased and laid out a burial ground on Lawrence Street in the Village. The last cemetery in Methuen Center, Walnut Grove Cemetery, organized by a private association in 1853, was laid out overlooking the village on Cemetery (later Grove) Street, between Lowell and Railroad Streets.

On terms of fair cash price plus 33 percent, the Essex Company bonded a substantial portion of land (now North Lawrence) north of the Merrimack River and south of the developing Methuen Center. At the time, this area was the location of only about 10 houses, but encompassed a number of early Spicket River industries including a paper factory and Abiel Stevens' piano case factory.

Despite strong opposition from the Town of Methuen, in 1847 principals of the Essex Company obtained an act of incorporation for a new town called Lawrence. As a result, Methuen lost a large triangular section of its territory along the Merrimack River. Lawrence, the "New City on the Merrimack" grew rapidly and so did the proximate area of Methuen including the emerging Methuen Village.

A commercial and civic center began around the intersection of Hampshire Street and Broadway and along Broadway itself: The Exchange Hotel (1851) replaced the earlier hostelry; the Turnpike (c. 1865), a hotel and store;

several stores (1850's and 1860's); town hall (1853); a post office; drug store and bank appeared on Broadway near the square. Merchants, professionals and industrialists built substantial Italianate and Second Empire residences along Broadway, Pleasant, George (High), Park and Gage Streets. Worker houses appeared east of Broadway in the vicinity of the Arlington Mills.

The remainder of Methuen's land area remained agricultural and retained its eighteenth-century character of dispersed settlement. Produce farming received a new impetus for production generated by demand from readily available markets in Lawrence.

#### D. Economic Base

The Methuen economy shifted to a mixed agricultural and manufacturing base during the period. Large increases in the number of men employed in both sectors brought the 1840 total to 1408, an increase of 413% from the 1820 census. Of these 760 (54%) were engaged on farms and 648 (46%) in manufacturing. By 1865 roles were reversed and manufacturing (55%) replaced farming (45%) as the lead employer, a position it would maintain thereafter.

Early in the period Methuen farmers still marketed their surplus agricultural products in Lowell; however, following the founding of Lawrence, they began to turn their attention to the ready urban market there. Between 1845 and 1865, stimulated by heightened demand in Lawrence, the value of the agricultural product jumped 264% from \$41,921 to \$152,459. Hay, corn, oats and other grains, potatoes and fruit were the most important products in 1845. The larger 1865 product was topped by hay (almost 50% of the total value), then milk, dressed meat and potatoes. Despite these gains the number employed on farms fell sharply to 289 men in 1865, a drop of 62%.

Despite suffering similar employment decline--a 46% drop to 349 men in 1865 -- the manufacturing sector also made impressive gains during the period. The value of manufactured goods increased 111% from \$359,042 in 1832 to \$759,472 in 1865. In 1832 cotton goods and shoes accounted for 76% of the total product value and 87% of the manufacturing workforce. In that year the Methuen Company employed 270 people (83% female) and produced 1.1 million yards of sail and shoe duck, sheetings and tickings worth \$160,600. The same year eight small shoe firms employed 282 people and 160,000 pairs of shoes and boots worth \$113,400 which were marketed in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Louisville. Production at the cotton mills was fairly steady until 1860 when the company was forced to close because cotton, previously purchased in the southern states, proved impossible to obtain upon the outbreak of the Civil War. Likewise, the shoe manufacturers lost access to the southern market during the Civil War and production and employment suffered accordingly. From a peak of 211,300 pairs in 1837, shoe production declined 47% to 111,550 pairs in 1865, while employment fell 39% from a peak of 382 people in 1845 to 232 people in 1865. A second factor impinging on the shoe industry was the shift from shop to factory production and the attendant consolidation of the industry in large centers like Haverhill and Lynn. Despite the decline in production the value of shoes produced increase slightly to \$138,682 in 1865.

Losses in cotton textiles and shoes were at least partially offset by the establishment of a woolen mill and the expansion of the previously small hat industry. In 1864 the Methuen Woolen Co. was established on the Spicket River, south of the cotton mills. In 1865 the company employed 130 people and produced 400,000 yards of cassimeres, flannels, and blanketing worth \$350,000 (or 46% of the total manufacturing product in 1865). Second to woolens in 1865 was the hat industry with a product valued at \$257,920. In 1832 there were five wool and one fur hat shops which only employed 48 people and produced 80,250 hats worth \$60,417. During the next three decades, the industry shifted from the shop to the factory stage, and thus in 1865 six firms employed 161 people who manufactured more than 300,000 hats, a 284% increase in productivity over 1832.

A few smaller industries contributed to the manufacturing base. Early in the period, paper, cotton machinery, treated leather, bricks, soap and candles were produced in small quantities, while later there were two paper and wooden box firms, a coffin-maker, a bookbindery, a tin ware and stove maker, and a chaise and wagon maker.

#### E. Architecture

Residential: Large gable roofed houses with symmetrical facades remained popular; about twenty are known, primarily in the Greek Revival, but also in the Italianate style. Among the latter are a small number of hip-roofed and three-bay houses. The majority of the surviving period houses, however, employ the new gable-front, side-entry form. Small examples of 1-1/2 stories number about a dozen, while larger examples of 2-1/2 stories number nearly twenty. Greek Revival ornament is added in about a third, and small numbers of additions -- and entry ell and cross gables -- are occasionally added. Italianate examples are more numerous, and occasionally employ hip roofs and cross plans. An unusual form survives in the town of large five-bay gable fronts with double interior chimneys. About ten Second Empire houses are known, most large three-story examples.

Commercial: The Exchange Building dates to 1851 but reflects many changes as it later served as a YMCA and Masonic Hall; its ornament is Classical on a three-story hip block with belvedere. The V. Corliss Building of 1860 is a 2-1/2-story brick Italianate design employing segmental arched windows with granite sills and quoins. The Turnpike Hotel of 1865 is a large three-story Second Empire building in a trapezoidal shape with Tuscan columns on the first floor and a belvedere.

Industrial: The Methuen Company enlarged its mill complex during the period. Circa 1840 a three-story brick mill with pitch roof was erected. The extant structure now has a flat roof. Circa 1850 a one-story, 40 foot by 15 foot with pitch roof (extant) factory was erected further south on the Spicket River, west of Broadway. Several hat factories were erected during this period. Of these the Tenney factory stood on the east side of Broadway near the Methuen Woolen Co., while the Ingalls factory stood at the north end of Ingalls St. close to the Lawrence border. Shoe factories were also erected during the period at unknown locations.



Institutional: The earliest surviving institutional building here is the "Old Town Farm," an unusual brick survival dating to 1845; its facade presents a common five-bay center entry, but its high gable roof houses a dormered second floor as well as a garret; the building is also exceptionally deep with secondary entry on the wall perpendicular to the facade and end wall chimneys. The brick Town Hall dates to 1853; this 2-1/2 story gable-front form on a granite base was a Doric frontispiece with a Palladian window above and corbelling at the corner in an Italianate design. The First Congregational Church was relocated to Spicket Falls in 1832 and rebuilt of stone in a Gothic design in 1855, a gable-front form with center-entry tower flanked by exedra. The Baptists built a new meetinghouse in 1840 that burned in 1869. The Gothic First Baptist Church dates to 1869, a gable-front form with gabled entry porch and offset tower with belfry. The Methodists built a meetinghouse ca. 1838 that was later used as a schoolhouse while they met in the townhouse. The original Barker School in West Methuen was a small gable-front, single-story frame building with single central entry.

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

### A. Transportation Routes

The existing street network in Methuen continued to see improvement throughout this period. Most of this development focused in areas bordering Lawrence where industrial and residential development was accelerating at a rapid rate. This development affected Methuen which provided an extension of that development. Railway lines remained unchanged from the previous period with a major corridor extending through the center of town roughly parallel with the Spicket River. Street railways, however, underwent considerable development throughout this period. Electric cars replaced horse drawn cars in ca. 1890. Two street railway companies had routes in Methuen during this period. The largest company was the Massachusetts Northeastern Street Railway System which had tracks connecting the Methuen area with Lawrence and Haverhill. In the western portion of town Massachusetts Northeastern routes extended north along the Broadway/Pelham Street corridor with a spur line north probably along Cross Street. In western Methuen Massachusetts Northeastern lines ran north on Jackson Street from Lawrence northerly to Marston Corners, Tozier Corner and Maple Park on Howe Street to Haverhill. This line joined Broadway in Haverhill which also extended into Methuen along Ayers Village Road. In south Methuen, the Bay State Street Railway system connected a long line which extended from Dracut eastward along the Lowell Boulevard/Lowell Street corridor joining Route 110 in the vicinity of Interchange 34 of Route 93 then extended through Lawrence where it followed Route 110 in Methuen again into Haverhill.

### B. Population

Growing at the greatest rate of any city or town in Essex County, Methuen's total population increased 373% from 2959 in 1870 to 14,007 in 1915, making it the ninth largest town in the county in the latter year. The periods of

rapid growth were between 1870-75, 1895-1900, and 1905-1915. The foreign-born population increased at an even more rapid rate than the total population, expanding by 409% from 1067 in 1875 to 5435 in 1915, thus increasing its proportion of the total from 25.4% in 1875 to 38.8% in 1915. Canadians were the largest immigrant group early in the period, followed closely by the Irish and English. Smaller numbers of French and Scottish émigrés were also present. By 1915 the English were far and away the largest group, representing about 50% of the total, with more than twice as many as the next group, Canadians. Germans and Italians were also well represented. Smaller numbers of Irish, Scottish, Syrian, Russian and French immigrants also lived in Methuen in 1915.

Churches established during the period were Saint Thomas's Episcopal Church in 1878; two Catholic churches--Saint Monica's and a French Catholic church -- both at unknown dates after 1878; the Emmanuel Primitive Methodist Church in 1897, the Forest Street Union Church in 1913 and the Tyler Street Primitive Methodist Church in 1914. Other voluntary associations included the Minerva Lodge, Daughters of Rebecca, established 1873; the Grand Army of the Republic Post 100 in 1877; a branch of the Royal Arcanum (an Insurance Association) also in 1877; the United Order of Pilgrim Fathers, 1879; the "Home Circle" in 1880; a branch of the United Order of Workmen in 1886; and a local of the Knights of Labor.

The Nevins Memorial Public Library was established in 1887. Two newspapers, The Methuen Transcript and Essex Farmer and the Methuen Enterprise were established in 1876 and 1880, respectively. A fire company was established in 1878.

### C. Settlement Pattern

Industrial activity continued to focus residential and commercial development in Methuen Center. David Nevins built a new dam and added six new brick mills to the Methuen Mills between 1879 and 1882. The Merrimack Mills were established in the former Methuen Company buildings along Osgood Street in the 1890s. Non-company, worker housing was built west of the mills on River Street.

The Arlington Mills expanded into an extensive mill complex on 20 acres which spanned the boundary between Lawrence and Methuen. The Ingalls Hat Factory, Lee and Blackburn Chemical Company and Webster and Company Sash and Blind Manufacturers were also located in the area. By 1902, the Arlington Mills employed 4,300 workers, most of whom lived in the Arlington District which developed in the vicinity on both sides of Broadway and extended into Lawrence. The firm built housing for operatives along Ingalls Street. Worker housing also developed along Oakland Avenue, Arnold Street and upper Railroad Street, mostly in the form of single-family cottages and double houses. Three deckers appeared only after the turn of the century.

Several general stores, groceries, hotels, apothecaries and banks located in Methuen Center mostly along Broadway, Pelham and Lowell Streets. A Roman Catholic Church was constructed on Broadway in 1896. Oddfellow's Hall was the last major building added to the commercial district (1904).

Affluent mill owners, businessmen and professionals continued to build their homes in the center, forming the nucleus of a neighborhood that would be expanded by an influx of later suburbanites. New streets (Ditson Place, Gage and Stevens Streets) were introduced across former open land, providing new housing areas proximate to the downtown for the growing middle class. Methuen's best examples of post Civil War residential architecture are found along Broadway, Pleasant, George (High), Park and Gage Streets. Ample yards with landscaping continued to prevail despite increased density.

The extension of electric streetcar lines from Lawrence to Methuen in the 1890s changed growth patterns, precipitating the development of formerly rural areas, such as the several blocks east of lower Prospect Street and Pleasant Valley in southeast Methuen, and intensifying growth patterns on old arteries such as Lowell, Howe and Pelham streets. The ready availability of transportation to the large commercial district in nearby Lawrence also helps explain why the central business district in Methuen Village remained relatively small.

With the growth of the City of Lawrence, Methuen became a residential area for the adjacent city. New construction filled in between extant housing, and several areas in southern Methuen underwent speculative development for new residents promoted to management and white collar workers in industrial and commercial occupations. Still, central Methuen continued to absorb most of the town's rapid population increases. Nevins Park (mainly Gage and Stevens streets) was platted in the 1890s by David Nevins, owner of the Methuen Mills, and promoted as a streetcar suburb. Restrictions were instituted to assure quality construction. The Nevins Park and Fair Oaks (c. 1898-1915) subdivisions filled with Queen Anne, Shingle and Georgian Revival dwellings between 1890 and 1915. By 1906, there were ten significant subdivisions mostly concentrated around the southern periphery of the Methuen Village advertising amenities such as paved streets, electricity and water service. Newer plats such as Fair Oaks, Oaklands, Fairview and Canobieola Heights were as much as five times larger than the 100-lot, Nevins Park.

Three local millionaires, Edward F. Searles, Charles H. Tenney and David Nevins, built imposing estates in Methuen Center. Each rivaled the other in architectural extravagance and landscaping, creating a contrast in the built environment and historical landscape characterized as "mill and mansion". In the 1880s and 90s, Searles and Tenney (estate, main house burned in 1974) erected neighboring "castles" in the area surrounded by Pleasant, Lawrence and East Streets. Each was enclosed by monumental stone walls which have become local landmarks. The Nevins Homestead (demolished in 1959 to allow construction of a new town hall), a Shingle-Style mansion was located at the north end of the village at the juncture of Hampshire Street and Broadway.

In addition, these same families also commissioned eminent architects in sponsoring construction of significant, high-styled buildings in Methuen Center: a music hall, library, railroad station, retirement home, high school, churches and monuments -- the outstanding, nineteenth-century

buildings of Methuen Center. The town contributed a Romanesque waterworks (1893) and Central Fire Station (1899). At Lawrence Street Cemetery, adjacent to his estate, Edward Searles added improvements in 1891 erecting the gatehouse and a tomb for his wife.

#### D. Economic Base

Manufacturing solidified its hold on Late Industrial Methuen's economy. Throughout the period the majority of men were employed in this sector. While there was a brief dip in the 1880s, manufacturing employment increased from 64% of the total male workforce in 1875 to 68% in 1915. During this span the actual number employed in manufacturing increased 245% from 778 to 2684. In agriculture, on the other hand, despite a small increase in the number of farmers and farm laborers, from 314 men to 324, the percentage of the total workforce declined from 26% to 8%. Steady increases in the real number of men employed in the commercial sector, up 464% from 122 in 1875 to 688 in 1915, raised the proportion of the total workforce from 10% in 1875 to 17.6% in 1915. Following a sharp increase in the early 1870s, the manufacturing product value barely increased for the remainder of the period. In 1875 the product value was \$2 million and in 1905 was still only \$2.1 million. Considerable growth in cotton textiles, hats and shoes paced the boom in the decade after the Civil War. In 1870 the Methuen (Cotton) Company vastly enlarged the mills, creating employment for an additional 500 people (650 altogether), and in 1871 the firm introduced jute fabrics to its range of products. In 1875 the value of cotton and jute fabrics produced by this company exceeded \$600,000 (or 30% of the total manufacturing product). Another 1/3 of the 1875 value was generated by the three woolen hat manufacturers then in business, only two of which, J. Ingalls and J.M. Tenney, were still in business in 1886. Much of the remaining 1/3 was accounted for by three shoe firms, only one of which, Tenney and Co., was still operating in 1886.

As the period advanced, textiles assumed even greater importance. A second cotton mill, this one for a large yarn factory, was established in 1881 by the Lawrence-based Arlington Mills on the Spicket River near the Lawrence border. Circa 1881 the Methuen (Cotton) Co. ceased making jute products and began making awning material and flannels, in addition to the normal duck and ticking. The Methuen Woolen Co. ceased making flannels and blankets sometime after the Civil War and in the 1870s turned to production of woolen shawls and cloaking. A second woolen mill was established in 1875, this one by the Arlington Woolen Co., just south of the Methuen Woolen Co., and a hosiery mill in 1883.

Other manufacturing firms operating during the period included Lee, Blackburn and Co., a chemical works established prior to 1884 on Chelmsford and Lawrence streets for the production of commercial fertilizers and other chemicals, three clothing makers and three chaise and wagon makers.

Methuen's agricultural sector experienced continuous expansion during the period as the town's farmers worked to supply the growing city of Lawrence. The value of agricultural products increased 130% from \$230,802 in 1875 to \$532,796 in 1905, giving Methuen the largest agricultural product value in

Essex County in the latter year. Throughout the period dairy products accounted for about 33% of the total value; hay, straw and fodder for about 25%; vegetables for about 12%; and fruit for about 10%. In the later decades poultry products, especially eggs, constituted 10% of the product value. The number of farms increased from 245 in 1875 to 267 (of which 40 were dairy and 4 poultry) in 1905. The peak years for land improvement were ca. 1895 when 5126 acres were cultivated, representing 45% of all agricultural land, compared to a county average of 37% cultivated. Despite the very large agricultural product in 1905, Methuen farmers tilled fewer acres, as the percentage under cultivation fell to 33%, compared to the county average of 36%. Woodland represented 39% of the 1905 acreage, compared to a county average of 33%.

#### E. Architecture

**Residential:** The gable-front form remained popular particularly for more modest period homes. Single-family examples with shingled wall surfaces number about six. Multi-family examples also employ a similar formal core in the duplex, two-family and three-decker variations. The Queen Anne style was popular for larger homes, most commonly adding projecting gabled bays, dormers and porches to gabled, gable-front, pyramidal, or hip blocks, to create complex massing; about ten are known. Later in the period large houses were constructed in the Shingle Style, primarily in the cross-gable form with dominant roof, dormers, and porches; about seven are known. At the end of the period moderate-sized homes (about ten) were constructed in the pyramidal-roofed, foursquare form with Georgian Revival ornament. More modest homes (about five) survive in the related bungalow form.

Two large estates survive in the town. Grey Court Manor or Tenney Castle is a Chateausque design of 1890-92 by Carrère and Hastings; it has burned and severely damaged. Pine Lodge is the estate of Edward F. Searles, now owned by the Order of the Presentation of St. Mary, primarily of rough stone with crenellation; the eclectic design by Searles also includes Tudor and Classical portions, a farm house and barns

**Institutional:** The majority of extant institutional buildings date to this period. The earliest church is Saint Monica's Roman Catholic, a Gothic design of 1896 that includes a three-part entry facade and buttresses. The Emmanuel Primitive Methodist Church is a Tudor Revival gable front with entry porch, cross gable roof and fleche. Saint Andrew's Episcopal is also a Tudor Revival design, a gable block with an entry porch and entry tower at either end of the long wall; it was financed by Searles. The Forest Street Union Church, now Congregational, was also built by Searles, a fieldstone gable-front block with offset entry tower rising to a belfry. Though dating originally to 1875, the Marsh Corner Community Church now presents its 1924 remodelling from school to church; the gable front rises to two stories on a fieldstone basement that also supports the entry porch. A chapel was added next to First Congregational in 1881, also stone, a gable front with entry porch and belfry. The Methodists built a meetinghouse of unknown appearance at the corner of Lowell and Pelham streets in 1871. The Tyler Street Church in West Methuen was pictured in 1929 as a small frame gable front with entry porch and belfry. Saint Thomas Church was located on Broadway at the

Lawrence border in 1884.

A Nevins family gift brought a public library to the town; a brick Renaissance Revival design of Samuel J.F. Thayer dating to 1883, the 2-1/2 story hip block has a central facade gable enclosing stained glass, first-floor arcading sweeping the recessed porch, and a side ell and tower. A 1906 donation led to the construction of the large Tudor Revival Henry C. Nevins Home for the Aged, constructed of brick as a series of gable-dormered gable blocks. Searles financed the Serlo Organ Hall (1897) and the Searles High School (1904), and employed Henry Vaughn to design them; the brick hall has a projecting gabled entry tower and high tower; the school employs three projecting gabled bays linked by the 1-1/2 story gabled block with extensive granite trim. Central Elementary School (1904/1924) is a brick Second Renaissance Revival design of 2-1/2 stories on a granite basement with a steeped belvedere. The Howe School (1914/1923) is a restrained Classical design of brick, rising two stories on a granite foundation; its ten-bay facade is tied by granite string courses with entries at each end, and ornamented by pilasters there and at the central two bays. The Barker School in West Methuen was pictured in 1929 as a brick Classical Revival design of two stories on a basement with a flat roof, and a central frontispiece of columns in antis and side entry. The Central Fire Station was built of brick in a Classical Revival design by John Ashton in 1899; the flat-roofed building has round headed garage doors and a high hose tower.

Commercial: The Queen Anne Red Tavern was built by Searles in 1900, with complex massing and multiple porches. The 1904 Odd Fellows Hall is described as a four-story structure with a three-bay central frontispiece. The 1909 railroad station is a 1-1/2-story gabled block of brick with stone trim.

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

##### A. Transportation Routes

Methuen's street network continued to increase in density with most expansion still centered in the southern portion of town along the town's border with Lawrence. Other local street development also occurred along state routes 110, 113 and the Howe Street area. Road improvements also made during this period were usually necessitated by increased automobile travel. Route 28 or Broadway was the only major paved road in the town. High type bituminous paved roads, also major routes in the town, represented a slightly lesser degree of improvement to major paved routes. These routes included Lowell Street, Riverside Drive, Pelham Street, North Lowell Street, Pleasant Valley, Merrimac Street and Haverhill Street. Low type bituminous paved roads included such routes as Washington Street, Forest Street, Salem Street and Oak Street. Increased automobile travel also contributed to an end of streetcar service, probably in the 1930s. Railroad travel also declined, although routes in existence during the previous period still remained.

## B. Population

After recording an astounding phase of growth during the Late Industrial decades (373%), Methuen's population continued to increase. It experienced its most pronounced growth spurt between 1920 and 1925 (35.7%), and registered an 88.7% growth rate for the period as a whole.

High among Essex towns, Methuen's population was 38.8% foreign-born in 1915, which was dominated during this period by English (48%), Canadians (17.3%), Germans (8%) and Italians (6.7%). By 1940, the town's population was still 25% foreign-born, and the distribution of nativities had remained remarkably constant. The only substantial change, the arrival in 1930 of a substantial cluster of Syrian-Palestinians, and Lithuanians.

## C. Settlement Pattern

The pervasive adoption of the automobile expanded the growth of the built environment of Methuen in correlation to transportation routes. Side streets branched off older roads near central Methuen where numerous houses were constructed in the early twentieth century. Little additional subdivision development occurred between 1920 and 1950. In-fill construction occurred within existing subdivisions. Despite the decline in the textile industry after World War I, the mill buildings of Methuen Center survived by adapting to new uses.

Construction of interstate highways I-93 and 495 in the 1970s opened Essex County to commuter populations. Farmland in Methuen was platted, focusing construction in peripheral areas and fostering disinvestment in the housing stock in Methuen center, especially in the Arlington District which suffered demolition, neglect and extensive alteration.

Modern suburban industrial development occurred in industrial parks off local highways. Development of the Methuen Mall in the east central part of town drew commercial activity away from the services and goods available in the central business district, but the limited size of the central business district diminished the seriousness of the impact.

## D. Economic Base

Manufacturing continued to dominate the Methuen economy throughout the Early Modern period, though after World War II the town became increasingly residential in character. During the pre-World War II period manufacturing employed 69-75% of the male workforce, commerce 17-21%, and agriculture 3-5%. By 1952, while manufacturing had declined in importance, this sector was still the largest source of employment with 37.8%. Commerce, especially wholesale and retail trade, increased its share to 29.1%, followed by the service industry at 15.9%, and construction at 12.2%.

During the early decades of the period textiles were the lead manufacturing industry, still employing almost 2600 people, or 77% of the 3373 people employed in manufacturing as late as 1940. Thereafter the industry experienced rapid decline as mills either reduced their workforce or closed

altogether. By 1952 textiles employed only 250 people, a drop of 90%, and had been replaced by the shoe industry as the lead employer. Still, the shoe industry employed only 350 people. Other goods manufactured in Early Modern Methuen were clothing, wood products, stone, clay or glass products, and fabricated metal products. In all there were 28 manufacturing establishments with 697 employees, 79% fewer than in 1940, indicating the decline of the manufacturing sector. Eighty construction companies employed 225 people, 139 wholesale and retail establishments employed 538. Farms and market gardens still employed a few people at the close of the period.

#### E. Architecture

Residential: Building slowed during the period. Newly popular was the Georgian Revival house, here favoring large hip blocks; about five are known. Isolated examples are also known of Tudor and Mission styles.

Institutional: New construction slowed during this period and was limited to schools. The Marsh School of 1917 is a single-story brick gable block in a Craftsman design with a gabled frontispiece flanked by four windows and secondary entries at each end. The Currier Elementary School of 1923 is a single-story frame hip block with entry porch, also in a Craftsman design.

#### XI. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

Although National Register Properties have added criteria statements, most building forms require further documentation. Field work to assess the inventory has not been completed, but special attention should be paid to locating working class neighborhoods from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Those interested in Searles patronage should see The Mighty Wall, MIT Press.



## XIII. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anonymous

- 1976     Methuen Bicentennial - 250th Anniversary Souvenir Edition.  
Published by the town.

Arrington, Benjamin F.

- 1922     Municipal History of Essex County in Massachusetts, Volume  
I. Lewis Historical Publishing Company, New York.

Fuller, Donald C. and Everette L. Francis

- 1979     Soil Survey of Essex County, Massachusetts, Northern Part.  
USDA, Soil Conservation Service.

Gookin, Daniel

- 1970     Historical Collection of the Indians of New England [1792].  
Jeffrey H. Fiske, ed. [no place]: Towtaid.

Grossie, Rev.

- 1875     Manual of the First Congregational Church, Methuen, Mass.  
Lawrence: Geo. S. Merrill & Crocker, Printers.

Howe, Jos. S.

- 1876     Historical Sketch of the Town of Methuen from its  
Settlement to the Year 1876. Methuen, Mass.

Hurd, D. Hamilton

- 1888     History of Essex County, Massachusetts, Volume I. J.W.  
Lewis and Co., Philadelphia.

Mooney, James

- 1928     The Aboriginal Population of America North of Mexico. John  
R. Swanton, ed., Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections  
80(7). Washington, D.C.