

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

MIDDLEBOROUGH

Report Date: 1981

Associated Regional Report: Southeast Massachusetts

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: July 1981

COMMUNITY: MIDDLEBOROUGH

I. TOPOGRAPHY

Middleborough is an inland town located south of Bridgewater. It is part of the coastal lowlands. The soils are generally sandy to gravelly. Principle source of drainage is the Nemasket River in the north and various brooks in the south. Topographic relief alternates with swamps throughout the town. Assawampset and Quitticus Ponds border the town on the southwest.

II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Middleborough was established as a town on June 1, 1669 (o.s.) "Assowamsett Neck" and adjacent areas granted to the town September 28, 1680. Part ceded to create Halifax July 4, 1734. Part established as Lakeville May 13, 1853.

III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Middleborough is an historic industrial town on the Nemasket River. Middleborough was an important Contact and First period native site with seasonal settlements at the Assawampsett Pond and along the Nemasket River as well as at Titicut. Some European settlement during First period, Colonial period brought heavy immigration to the town. Establishment of iron industry during the period, conflict between European and native interests results in curbing of native seasonal migrations. Colonial period economic base agricultural and industrial with Oliver Iron Works in the latter portion of the period a major employer.

Confiscation of Judge Oliver's foundry and estate during the Revolution begins shift of industrial activity from Muttock south to the Four Corners, what is now Middleborough Center.

The economic base at this point is primarily agricultural with other small industrial nodes at the Upper and Lower works on the Nemasket River. Much of the residential settlement is dispersed farms prior to 1800 with some small clusters at the Green, Morton Town and Titicut. New Bedford-Bridgewater Turnpike spurs some residential development along its route through the northwestern portion of the town although it manages to miss all existing and incipient settlement nodes. Early 19th century sees beginning of the development of the Four Corners as the commercial and industrial center of the town. Pierce's Store built 1819 on Main Street is the first substantial commercial activity in the town. Cotton mills established at both the Upper and Lower works by 1813. Beginnings of fashionable residential area along Main Street during this time. The development of the Four Corners not only draws industrial activity from Muttock and Lakeville but also begins a shift in

social activity from the town house at Morton Town and religious influence from the Green. Early and mid 19th century drawing of industry continues with the relocation of the Briggs Strawhat Factory from the south shore of Assowampset Pond to the Four Corners (This later became the Bay State Straw Works.). Demarkation of fashionable and worker housing districts continues with worker housing near the mills along the Nemasket and fashionable housing proceeding south along Main Street. Central Congregational Church established in 1848 in recognition of the displacement of population.

The introduction of the railroad in 1846 resulted in a gradual movement of industry westward along Centre Street with a second industrial node gradually developing at Everett Square. The location of the Star Mills at the Lower Works in 1869 prevented the decline of the riverfront industrial node and resulted in the bipolar industrial development in the town. New town hall was built near four corners in 1873. Warrentown achieved a brief notarity as the summer residence of Colonel and Mrs. Tom Thumb beginning in 1864. Irish and German immigrants came to work in the Star Mills, however, there are no discernable ethnic neighborhoods until the 1890s when a "Little Italy" was created near the old Morton Town neighborhood. Late 19th century saw continued industrial growth near the railroad and increasing diversification of industrial activity.

Elsewhere in the town small industrial nodes developed during the mid 19th century at Titicut (North Middleborough), Fall Brook and Rock Village. Soil depletion in the southeastern portion of the town results in the gradual depopulation of France. Decline of importance of agriculture continues during the late 19th century although cranberry production begins. Armenians first come to Middleborough in the 1890s. The town reached its industrial peak in 1906. The economic base continued to diversify, one of the first automobile producers (Maxim Motor Car Co.) was located in the Four Corners. There was a severe worker housing shortage beginning in the 1890s and continuing well in the 1920s. The closing of the street railways in the twenties resulted in some hardship for workers as mini-streetcar suburbs had developed along Trolley routes. An active Commercial Club continued to draw industry to the town which compensated for the closing of some of the major industries after the turn of the century.

Although the 1930s depression hit the town hard, numerous federal projects were drawn to the area to compensate. Construction of Route 28 in 1930 drew tourist business from the town. The economy remained relatively stable until the slackening of railroad service in the 1950s. Although Middleborough has lost a great deal of its early structures it is one of the few towns in Plymouth County where one encounters a full range of architectural styles. While there has been some post World War II development in the town it has not seriously endangered the 19th

century industrial aspect of the town.

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500 - 1620)

A. Transportation Routes:

Important regional corridor of routes from Plymouth Bay to Taunton River, and Buzzards Bay with critical crossing at Nemasket River (Middleborough). Primary east/west trail documented as Plymouth-Main Streets (Route 44 axis) to Nemasket ford with continuation west as Center Street (Weston, 1906, pp. 503-505). Alternate paths from Nemasket ford east to Plymouth include Chestnut Street to Woods Pond and Rocky Meadow-Stone Streets to Tahutchot Pond (Carver) with original trail possibly intact over Shorts Brook. Trail route is also presumed along axis of Plympton Street with branch north around Great Cedar Swamp as Thompson Street Primary trail from Nemasket ford south to Buzzard Bay (Mattapoisett-Sippican) follows Sachem-Wareham Streets to Tispaquin Pond with former loop around Route 28/25 junction and south along axis of Route 28 through South Middleborough. Branch to Pocksha-Quittacus Ponds appears to follow Spruce and Cherry Streets to Williams Hill and south as Marion Street with conjectured trail link to Ost Swamp and Wapanucket (Lakeside). Primary trail from Nemasket ford to Titicut ford over Taunton River (North Middleborough) is documented as North Street with alternate Nemasket fordway at Oak Street continued to Titicut as axis of Plymouth Street with ford at Sturtevant Bridge (Weston, 1906, pp. 504). Alternate trail route from Nemasket to Titicut fords appears to follow portions of Center-Pleasant Streets. Trail locations in southeast area remain unclear, with possibility of north/south route from Benson Pond as French Street and east/west route as Pine-Beach Streets.

B. Settlement Patterns:

Native settlement during this period appeared to concentrate in the three areas occupied during the Historic Period. The first area was situated immediately north of Barden Hills and may be the site of Nemasket, the major native settlement within Middleborough during early Historic Period. Several unidentified burials, a wooden dugout canoe and Woodland Period artifacts have been removed from this area (MHC Files). Site complex is well located, it is within a short distance of several freshwater sources, a major native wading place and the junction of four native paths (Taunton, Titicut, Rhode Island, Dartmouth) (Ibid). Second native settlement complex probably located in vicinity of northern portion of Vernon Street and Fort Hill (Titicut) and extended over Taunton River into Bridgewater. A number of contact and historic burials have been encountered here (Middleborough Antiquities 1969: X, 4). Native palisaded fort built on Fort Hill c. 1660. Third settlement area situated on the northeastern shore of Assawompsett Pond. Woodland

and Contact Period components recovered from this area (Robbins 1959: 1-2). Contact or Historic Period Burial exposed in Middleborough center. Local history also noted that native settlements were present on the shores of Tispaquin and Woods Ponds prior to white settlement (Weston 1906: 307).

C. Subsistence Patterns:

Seasonal fishing, hunting, collecting and horticulture. Large stocks of fish were available in Middleborough's freshwater ponds, streams and rivers. Two native fish weirs were situated on the Nemasket River. The extensive wood and swamp-lands and freshwater sources were excellent habitats for large and small wild game. A variety of edible plants (wild cherries, plums, gooseberries, strawberries, etc.) were available throughout the area. Apparently, the local natives journeyed to New Bedford coast where they collected stores of shellfish (Weston 1960: 2).

Native planting grounds were located on land bordering the Nemasket River. The recovery of a number of probably pre-1620 European artifacts from Middleborough and documentation of pre-1620 European presence (e.g., Thomas Dermer) strongly suggests European-Indian trade was a component of the Nemasket natives' economy.

D. Observations:

p The archeological, documentary and environmental data support the thesis that Middleborough was an important native population center in southeastern Massachusetts during the contact period. Regionally, Nemasket was closely tied to the Pokanokets centered in Mt. Hope (Bristol), Rhode Island.

V. FIRST SETTLEMENT PERIOD (1620 - 1676)

A. Transportation Routes:

Native trails improved as regional highways with focus of routes as Middleborough town center (The Green) and critical junction at Nemasket fordway. Main corridor of travel maintained as east/west path to Plymouth and Taunton (Plymouth-Main-Taunton Streets - Route 44 axis) with north/south route from Bridgewater to Rochester as Route 28 axis.

B. Population:

Middleborough remained a major native settlement area although population figures are limited and incomplete. Probably pre-war figures for the area's Christianized natives listed 30 members of the Nemasket church, 30 members at the Titicut church and 35 members at the Assawampsett church (Weston 1906: 18). The non-Christian native population

probably outnumbered the Christian Indians by a large margin when considering the limited success the movement had among the New England natives. White population figures are also sketchy. Weston estimated Middleborough's white inhabitants numbered 75 or more in 1675 (1906: 74). Large numbers of Middleborough's early settlers were children and grandchildren of Plymouth "first comers" and Plymouth residents. Others from Duxbury, Marshfield and Situate.

C. Settlement Patterns:

Continued maintenance of a discrete native community although white settlement contributed to some abandonment of native settlement areas. By the mid-17th century the primary native settlement (Muttock) north of Barden Hill was abandoned by Tispaquin and his followers in favor of Betty's Neck on Assawampsett Pond. Titicut (vicinity of Fort Hill) remained a major native village. Protection was provided by a palisaded fort. Additional native settlement probably continued on the shores of Tispaquin and Woods Ponds. Three churches (probably established between 1650 and 1675) served the Christian natives. The Titicut church was located on Pleasant Street probably near the junction of Pleasant and Plymouth Streets. The Assawampsett church may have been situated on the site of the Old Pond Church while the location of the Nemasket church is unclear. These churches served as the medium through which the local Christian natives were governed and educated under a system similar to that utilized in John Eliot's praying towns.

The first white settler in the Middleborough area appears to have been Sir Christopher Gardner, a "fugitive" from English justics, who settled among the Nemasket natives in 1633. His stay was shortlived due to his capture and return to England. Several years later (c. 1637) a small group of white settlers led by Elizabeth Poole settled in Titicut between the Cohannet (Taunton) bounds and the Titicut (native) fish weir. However, the majority of the pre-war white settlement did not occur until after the mid-17th Century and consisted of a number of dispersed neighborhoods. A community centered about the Nemasket Hill Cemetery probably was established several years prior to 1662. In 1662, the cemetery lot was set aside by the proprietors of the Twenty-six Men's Purchaser. Eddyville was first settled in the early 1660's by Samuel Eddy. At a similar date, George Vaughn and others occupied land lying "between the shores of Assawampsett Pond, the Nemasket River and the Cape Cod Railroad (New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad?)" Weston 1906: 304). The Thomastown neighborhood was initially settled in the late 1660's or early 1670's. Additional pre-1675 white settlement occurred in the vicinity of Thompson Street, the junction of Winter and Cedar Streets and Millers Hill. Despite the establishment of these neighborhoods,

extensive pre-war white settlement was inhibited by the area's large native population. The existing community was protected by a wooden stockade situated on the western bank of the Nemasket River on a hilltop 200 - 300 feet from Main Street.

D. Economic Base:

Natives continued to pursue seasonal subsistence patterns although considerable adjustments had to be made in the latter half of the 17th Century as a result of increased white settlement. A series of purchases by the English from the Nemasket Indians commencing in 1662 with the Twenty-six Men's Purchase left the natives with only the northeastern corner of Middleborough (Indian Reservation) in their legal possession by 1675 (Weston 1906: 581a). The increased white presence also fostered expansion of Anglo-Indian trade.

Agriculture was the backbone of the white settlement's economy. The early settlers were attracted by the area's agricultural potential. Mad Mare's Neck and land adjacent to the Nemasket River were two prime agricultural areas. Fishing, hunting, crop and livestock production were the primary means of food procurement. Lumbering was probably undertaken in Middleborough's extensive woodlands and cedar swamps.

The community's industrial base was virtually non-existent. The only documented industrial operation was a pre-1675 grist mill and dam constructed on the Nemasket River adjacent to the junction of the river and East Main Street. Pre-war industrial development was probably hampered by the community's agricultural emphasis and tenuous relations with the local native population. George Vaughn established Middleborough's first tavern in c. 1669.

E. Observations:

Despite the growing white presence in the Middleborough area, a discrete, relatively autonomous native community persisted throughout this period. Future research should focus on the impact Christianity had on the native population (e.g., development of separate Christian and non-Christian native communities?). Existing material is inadequate. White community retained close ties with Plymouth primarily because of Middleborough's vulnerability to Indian attack and its lack of commercial, civic and religious facilities. A number of Middleborough residents retained their Plymouth homes.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675 - 1775)

A. Transportation Routes:

Highways improved from 17th Century with radial roads from meeting house center (The Green) and Nemasket mill sites (Middleborough center). Period roads include secondary connectors across White Oak Island as Plain River and Precinct Streets; cross links from Plymouth road to Middleborough ponds

as Tispaquin, Purchase, Cedar, and Wood Streets; local highways to Rock Village and South Middleborough as Rocky Cutter, Walnut, Highland and Tenson Streets; and access roads to Titicut (North Middleborough) as Pleasant, Purchase and Center Streets. Nemasket fordways rebuilt as bridges.

B. Population:

Substantial native population throughout late 17th Century and 18th Century. A contemporary account reported that in 1689 there were 20 houses and 80 native residents in Assawampsett and Quittab (probably Nemasket) and 40 adult natives in Titicut (Weston 1906: 18). These figures are not complete since at least in the case of Titicut they do not include children while the figures in general probably represent only church goers. By 1793, the native population had dwindled to 8 families and 30-40 individuals. White population figures continue to be limited. In 1765, the community had 3419 inhabitants. The population had increased by 20% to 4119 residents in 1776. Middleborough had a small black and French Acadian (relocated in late 1750s by colonial authorities) population.

C. Settlement Patterns:

Native settlement area continued to dwindle as the white community underwent extensive postwar demographic and economic growth. The majority of native dwellings in Nemasket were destroyed during King Philip's War. Post-war native settlement appeared to be concentrated in Assawampsett and Titicut. By the late 18th Century the native population was confined to Betty's Neck (Lakeville). White community suffered heavily during the war. All of the dwelling houses and the palisaded fort were destroyed and the settlement abandoned. Residents sought shelter at Plymouth. Resettlement began c. 1677 with the General Court granting permission to do so. The late 1670s and 1680s witnessed development of a primary settlement node centered around the Green. This area also served as Middleborough's civic center initiated with construction of the community's first meetinghouse c. 1679 on the north side of Plymouth Street opposite the Sturtevant house. First meetinghouse was succeeded by the c. 1700 (razed 1754) and c. 1745 (razed 1829) meetinghouses which were built on the Lower and Upper Green, respectively. Community cemetery established c. 1717 on the Green near the First Church. Redevelopment of Fall Brook settlement between Miller Hill and Tispaquin Pond in 1680s and 1690s. Settlers probably attracted by area's milling potential, site of several industrial operations. Settlement in Raymond Neighborhood (Plymouth, Short, Tispaquin Streets) in vicinity of good agricultural land also occurred in the late 17th Century. Establishment of additional contemporary agricultural villages in proximity of Soule and Winter Streets junction (Soule neighborhood) and Purchase Street. Scattered farms erected on the Lowlands (vicinity of Winter Street). The post-war village of Morton

Town (South and North Main Streets) was first settled in the late 1670s with John Morton, Jr. one of the first settlers. 18th Century community expansion north of the town center resulted in the establishment of the Titicut Parish in 1744. The parish meetinghouse was built near the intersection of Pleasant and Plymouth Streets c. 1747. A philosophical dispute among church members resulted in a split between 1747 and 1757.

The "Old Faith" followers (Congregationalists) erected a church on the site of the present Congregational church while the Baptist followers occupied the "Indian Church" on the eastern side of Pleasant Street nearly opposite the Pleasant Street school. The Indian Church was replaced by a larger meetinghouse built on the same site in 1757 (Weston 1906: 401). Potential farmland and extensive timber stands in the South Middleborough area were probably primary factors in the early-mid 18th Century settlement of South Middleborough. A Baptist meetinghouse built c. 1761 adjacent to the junction of Grove and Locust Streets served the Baptist residents of South Middleborough and probably those of Carver, Rochester and Wareham (Weston 1906; 477). A village developed during the early - mid 18th Century in the proximity of the industrial complex situated at the junction of the Nemasket River and Nemasket Street.

D. Economic Base:

Natives seasonal subsistence rounds severely restricted due to the white community's considerable postwar growth. Available land and resources hardpressed by native population. Natives occupying Muttok Hill sold this land c. 1739 because it had been overcultivated, deforested and it lacked an adequate deer population. By the late 18th Century, the native community's primary source of income was the sale of native corn, grain, brooms and baskets. Some natives worked for white employers (e.g., servants, laborers).

Agriculture remained a major facet of the white community's economy. The 18th Century witnessed extensive development of the iron and mill industries. Widespread establishment of these operations was facilitated by the presence of large quantities of bog iron and numerous streams and a major river (Nemasket) capable of powering mill industries. A grist mill and saw mill were constructed at the junction of the Nemasket River and Nemasket Street shortly after 1677 (Weston 1906: 359). A sawmill was established on Bartlett Brook in 1715 and rebuilt in 1744 (Ibid: 387). Establishment of Fall Brook Furnace c. 1735 immediately east of the Fall Brook and East Grove Street junction (Middleborough Antiquities 1966: VIII, 7). Also a possible pre-1775 sawmill and gristmill on Fall Brook a short distance south of the furnace (1795 Middleborough map). A large self-contained industrial complex was developed by Judge Peter Oliver on the site of the previously mentioned Nemasket River grist and sawmill sites between c. 1745 and 1765. The complex included a blast furnace, forge, slitting

mill, blacksmith, finishing and hammer shops, a grist mill and fuel storage sheds. Forge built at junction of Nemasket River and Wareham Street in 1760s. Eddy's Furnace was built on Whetstone Brook probably in the 2nd half of the 18th Century. Operation of the Stillwater Furnace (location?) in the second half of the 18th Century employed 40 South Middleborough residents. Town's iron industry supplied with raw iron from Assawampsett and Tispaquin Ponds and imported iron. Some export of bog iron to Fall River. Possible additional pre-1775 mill operations on Black Brook - two sawmills; Woods Brook - one gristmill; Shorts Brook - one sawmill; Whetstone Brook - one sawmill, one gristmill; Raven Brook - one gristmill, one sawmill; Puddingshear Brook - one gristmill (1795 Middleborough map). A small shipyard was established in the 1750s in Titicut near the Pratt Bridge. Middleborough serviced by several taverns including Coomb's Tavern (c. 1678); Sproat Tavern (c. 1700), Lower Green and Hell's Blazes Tavern (c. 1750), near junction of Wareham Street and Rochester line.

E. Architecture

Residential: Little is known about residential construction in Middleborough prior to King Philip's War, although to judge by the construction at two comparatively substantial two-story houses in the period just after the War, at least a few two-story houses may have been built in the town during the First Settlement period. Even so, it is likely that the most common house form of the First Settlement period was the cottage, either in full five-bay, central-chimney form or in end-chimney, half-cottage form. A few houses of relative sophistication were constructed in the period immediately following King Philip's War. These are the Morton House (c. 1676), a two-story, gambrel-roofed end-chimney house with an end wall overhang and the Palmer House (c. 1676), a two-story garrison house with intersecting gables forming a very unusual X-plan. The Palmer House was one of several garrison houses known in the region, most of these located west of Middleborough and in Bristol County. The house seems to have inspired the construction of the second meetinghouse (c. 1700) which also had a cross-gabled X-plan. Neither the Morton or Palmer House survives. Another notable period structure which does not survive was Oliver Hall, the country estate of Peter Oliver of Boston; the house was styled after an English mansion with a steep hip roof, overhanging eaves and roughcast or stucco finish. Built c. 1744, it burned in 1778 after Oliver, a Loyalist, had fled the country. The earliest surviving houses known for the period date from the 1750s and include a gambrel-roofed, central chimney cottage and a two-story, three-quarter plan, gambrel-roofed house; other 18th Century houses are known on Plympton Road just east of the Green, at Eddyville, on Plymouth Street at North Middleborough, at Warrentown and along Thompson Road. Most of these are center-chimney cottages with a few houses; the full five-bay plan was most common with

few half of three-quarter examples known. A number of houses have gambrel roofs and end-wall overhangs; both features were introduced at the end of the 17th Century and apparently remained popular through the end of the Colonial period. While end-wall overhangs are relatively common in Southeastern Massachusetts, gambrel-roofs are more rare and the two features together constitute a distinctive regional type. Lean-to houses are unusual with only one example, an integral lean-to house with end chimneys, known at Eddyville. End-chimney plans were introduced by 1762, a comparatively late date for this feature. Embellishment generally consists of pedimented door surrounds, porticoes being rare. Particularly notable is a nearly intact grouping of 18th Century center-chimney cottages along Thompson Road; Thompson Road is also notable in that its agrarian character is also well-preserved with active ongoing agriculture.

Institutional: The earliest meetinghouse in Middleborough predated King Philip's War; the second meetinghouse, built c. 1700, had dimensions of 36 feet x 30 feet x 16 feet and incorporated an X-plan with intersecting bables and double ridge poles. It was demolished c. 1754. The third meetinghouse was constructed c. 1745. In 1719, the West Precinct (Lakeville) was organized with the Titicut Parish set off in 1744. Baptist meetinghouses were established in 1756, 1757 (Lakeville), and 1761 with a Separatist church established at Beech Woods (Lakeville) c. 1746-51. A school was built at Muttok c. 1770. No institutional buildings of the period survive.

F. Observations:

One of a handful of southeastern Massachusetts towns that retained a sizeable and discrete native community throughout the Colonial Period. Native history during this period inadequately researched. However, considerable archeological and documentary data provide an excellent opportunity for an extensive examination of the Colonial Period native population. The white community's exploitation of the Middleborough area's water, timber and iron resources spurred the town's development as a major industrial center in southeastern Massachusetts during the period 1676 - 1775. Middleborough's large size and widespread resource base encouraged the establishment of scattered semi-self contained villages. Border villages (i.e., South Middleborough, Thomastown, Eddyville, Soule neighborhood, Titicut) probably developed strong social and economic ties with border towns.

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775 - 1830)

A. Transportation Routes:

Regional corridor between New Bedford and Boston located through Middleborough as New Bedford turnpike (Route 18) with by-pass highway around Middleborough center as Grove Street (Route 28) to Rock Village.

B. Population

Slight decline from 1790 to 1810 after increase from 1776 to 1790. Steady growth from 1810 to end of period. Smallpox epidemic in 1777-78.

C. Settlement

Middleborough Four Corners begins to develop during this period around industrial nodes at the Upper (dam over Nemasket River at Water (now Wareham) Street and Lower (dam over Nemasket at East Main Street) Works. Confiscation of Oliver Estate during Revolution marks beginning of decline of Muttok (at the intersection of Plymouth and Precinct Streets) industrial node. Other small industrial node at Fall Brook. Farming settlements at North Middleborough (Titicut), Warrentown, the Soule Neighborhood, the Thompson Neighborhood, Eddyville, South Middleborough, France, Thomastown and the Green. First Townhouse built in 1796 at MortonTown.

D. Economic Base:

Iron industry initiated in the Colonial Period continued to dominate Middleborough economy, though supplemented after 1811 by textiles and increasing variety of iron products.

Though Fall Brook Furnace probably relied on local ore for much of its life, Oliver Furnace at Muttok appears to have been one of the earliest to recognize the value and use of "mountain" or "rock" ore from New Jersey -- by 1756 -- for small armaments. The Oliver works is also credited by Eayrs (1965, p. 2) with the casting and boring of cannon before the Revolution, though this seems unlikely in the face of claims by Bridgewater and Sharon for De Maresquelles.

By the late 1790s, probably two furnaces in operation (Fall Brook, Eddy's), with bar iron forges at the Upper Works (Wareham Street) and Muttok. Muttok also retained a slitting mill and possibly had instituted a shovel factory by this time (see 1794 map notes). Despite the departure of Tory capital from Muttok, the nail works there continued to be one of the town's key industries, launching Nathaniel Russell, whose Plymouth nail factory dominated that town's manufacturing economy in the early 19th Century.

The new demand for domestic manufactures stimulated by the Embargo resulted in improvements at Muttok, where a new slitting mill was built in 1810, and in textile mills on the Nemasket at North and Wareham Streets ("lower" and "upper" works, respectively). At the upper works, the Nemasket Manufacturing Company (occasionally misspelled "New Market") incorporated the existing forge with a new cotton mill; at the lower works, Peirce and Wood incorporated as the Middleborough Manufacturing Company. Though both textile mills remained in operation through 1865, both were apparently partially sustained by subsidiary iron operations. Probably by the 1820s, Peirce & Wood were producing shovels, and the Nemasket Manufacturing Company, bar iron, worked into nails both by company nail machines and by local farmers.

Both upper and lower works combined to form Middleboro Canal Company (1816) to supply water to the mills, presumably by improving the channel from Assawompsett Pond to Vaughn's Bridge. (Weston, p. 427, says this project was unsuccessful, though it is unclear why not.)

At least five sawmills and nine grist mills in operation by 1794. In addition, large quantities to charcoal were shipped to Wareham and Carver for iron operations in those towns, while ship timber went to other ports. As late as 1832, quantity of boots and shoes manufactured in town did not meet consumption. Until the Embargo, some shipbuilding was carried on at the Taunton River (Joshua Eddy, at Woodward's Bridge other locations and builders disputed with Bridgewater historians); and Benaiah Wilder operated an anchor forge (at Muttock?).

By 1832 the manufacture of shovels, initiated in Middleborough by Abiel Washburn at Muttock, had become an important industry, but the precise date of its introduction and its relationship to the older shovel industry in Easton and the Bridgewater remains unclear.

E. Architecture

Residential: In general, a freater number of more substantial and decorative houses were constructed in the Federal period than had been in the Colonial; most of these were concentrated at the town center but usually at least one elaborate Federal period house stands in each of the scattered villages of Middleborough. Most of these are hip-roofed, two-story houses with end or double interior chimneys; only one three-story Federal House (Pierce House, c. 1810), is known. Many include setmental-arched door surrounds with sidelights and blind fanlights, leaded fanlights being comparatively reare. (Several abandoned Federal houses are known, at South Middleborough and Rock Village.) While end-chimney plans are most common during the period, a few central-chimney hi-roofed Federal houses are known at North Middleborough and at Eddyville. Only one brick house is known, a hip-roofed end-chimney house at East Middleborough. Cottages continued to be built in some numbers during the period with many quite substantial and decorative examples known. Most cottages incorporate paired interior chimneys although the center-chimney form remained a more modest option; at least a few cottages include segmental arched door surrounds most often with sidelights and blind transom. Another feature probably introduced toward the end of the period are full shed dormers extending across the facade; several examples of this type are known, particularly in the northern half of town. One brick cottage with end-wall chimneys is known at the town center on East Main Street.

Institutional: A number of institutional structures were built in the period of which a few survive. The most important of these was the Congregational Church at the Green, built for \$13,000 in 1827 and designed by a deacon of the church, James Sprutt. A two-and-a-half story Federal/Greek Revival structure

with a pedimented hexastylar portico and two-stage belfry with spire, the church is notable for its unusually attenuated steeple. Other churches built were the Baptist church at North Middleborough, a two-story, gable-roofed building with a projecting porch with two-stage tower and open belfry (demolished) and the Methodist church, built at Fall Brook c. 1830. Post offices were established in 1804 at Lakeville and in 1821 at Titicut (North Middleborough). Because the town covers such a large area, as many as 40 schools are thought to have been constructed across the town during the Federal period; most of these were probably one-and-a-half story, gable-roofed building with side entrances and side-gables orientation. At least a few may survive in domestic use but none are known to survive. Other institutional structures of the period included the first Town House (1796), a one-story hip-roofed structure with double entrances on a six-bay front, and the Pierce Academy (1808), a two-story, gable-roofed building with end interior chimneys and an open octagonal cupola (both demolished).

VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830 - 1870)

A. Transportation Routes:

Important regional railroad junction formed at Middleborough center during 1840s with corridor routes to New Bedford, Taunton, Cape Cod and Boston. Main line of Fall River Railroad through Middleborough center from Bridgewater (1847) with connecting branch to Taunton, and extension of route to Cape Cod through South Middleborough (1848).

B. Population

Population stable 1830 to 1840, growth to 1850. 1855 drop in population due to the 1853 incorporation of Lakeville. Population increases continue to end of period although there is a period of relative stability during the Civil War. Foreign born population 234 in 1855.

C. Settlement

Middleborough Four Corners (Center) continues to draw industrial and residential development. Movement of population from outlying districts to the Four Corners results in construction of the Central Congregational Church on South Main Street in 1848. Fashionable homes built along Main Street while worker housing is concentrated near the mills. Establishment of shoe factory in North Middleborough results in increased residential settlement in that area. Colonel and Mrs. Tom Thumb build summer home in Warrentown in 1864.

D. Economic Base:

Rapid diversification of industrial product encouraged by arrival of railroads -- Fall River Railroad (1842), Cape Cod Branch (1848), Middleboro & Taunton (1855-56). The same year the Taunton road opened saw a Taunton man, Samuel Tinkham, and J. B. LeBaron inaugurate a foundry operation that became a town mainstay for half a century. By 1865, but for the Eddy shovel factory, all other iron operations in Middleborough had ceased.

Straw bonnet industry inaugurated by Lakeville man, Ebenezer Briggs, c. 1835, though principal growth awaited sale to Albert Alden, formerly with Foxborough's Union Straw Works. Alden was chiefly responsible for the national reputation of the Bay State Straw Works -- a single plant which by 1865 was producing \$225,000 worth of straw bonnets and hats and employing 900 women. Shoe industry begun in the same period, initially in the Titicut area, c. 1838; by the 1870s, at least two factories at Middleborough village. Much of the work remained the product of small shops, with factories to the north in Whitman, Bridgewater, and elsewhere supplying raw material. By 1855 280 men and women produced annually over \$161,000 worth of boots and shoes, nearly four times the figure a decade before.

By 1865 much the largest manufacturer in town was the Star woolen mill -- part of a nationwide boom in woolen manufacture made possible by the dearth of cotton during the war years. Mill construction was financed and remained strongly tied to New Bedford capital. Other Middleborough products included carriages, and varnish -- a product developed by a local carriage painter, Henry Shaw.

Middleborough retained a strong agricultural base, with 445 farms producing large quantities of beef (\$92,000), pork (\$31,353), Indian corn, potatoes, firewood, etc. Sixteen sawmills were in operation in 1865, 3 box makers, and 2 coffin makers.

E. Architecture:

Residential: The Early Industrial period was one of prolific growth and extensive residential construction with increasingly dense and diversified settlement at the town center and an important secondary settlement at North Middleborough (Titicut). The most notable architectural products of this prosperity are the elaborate and innovative Green Revival and Italianate houses built at North Middleborough and to a lesser extent at Middleborough center. These include the Pratt House (c. 1845), a two-story Greek Revival house with a prominent and unusual monumental portico and square beveledere, and an Italianate villa, possibly modelled after the work of Upjohn, with a two-story portico with an arcaded second story, deep overhanging eaves and a shallowly-pitched gable roof; the house is one of the most academic and sophisticated examples of the Italianate style in Plymouth County (both houses at North Middleborough). The most important innovation of the period was the adoption of the sidehall plan which became nearly universal at the town center by the end of the period although it was not as readily

accepted in outlying villages of the town. Early in the period, center-entered, story-and-a half Greek Revival cottages with interior end wall chimneys were favored, but by the 1840s, Greek Revival cottages incorporating Doric verandas either recessed under the eave or projecting from the facade in temple-form were being constructed; more conservative construction in outlying areas adopted the end-gable orientation of the Greek Revival but retained a center-entered, five-bay facade along the side wall. Side-hall Greek Revival cottages were constructed across the town, the more substantial examples incorporating a double-pile-depth plan with at least a few very small cottages of only one-room's depth built. In the town center, two-story sidehall plan houses with transitional Greek Revival/Italianate detailing were built in some numbers in the 1850s and 1860s along with a large number of more modest sidehall Greek Revival/Italianate workers' cottages; more substantial houses are concentrated in the southeastern sections of the town center with neighborhoods of workers' housing north and west of Main Street. In addition to the many transitional Greek Revival/Italianate structures built, a fair number of Gothic Revival cottages were constructed in the 1860s at the town center; most of these are sidehall plan structures with asymmetrical, cross-gabled massing and sawn bargeboards. At least one very unusual stone cottage with Gothic Revival detailing and late 19th Century stucco is known at South Middleborough. The use of facade gables as a decorative element on transitional Greek Revival/Italianate houses is less common in Middleborough than is generally the case within the region but several outstanding examples, including one triple-gabled house on East Main Street, are known. Also notable are several asymmetrically-planned Italianate villas with low hip roofs, offset towers and/or belvederes, most located along Main Street.

Institutional: In 1843, a second Congregational parish was established at the town center with a story-and-a-half Greek Revival chapel with Doric tetra-style portico and pedimented gable end constructed in that year; five years later, a new, larger church was constructed. The church is an elaborately-detailed two-and-a-half story Greek Revival, gable-roofed structure with an Ionic portico in antis and late two-stage belfry composed of a pair of cylindrical drums surmounted by a spire. Other churches built in the period included a one-and-a-half story Greek Revival Methodist chapel (1841) at South Middleborough and the 1868 Central Methodist church, an unusual Romanesque Revival structure, two-and-a-half stories tall with an offset octagonal tower (both demolished); also the Baptist church at Rock (1852), a one-and-a-half story Greek Revival/Italianate structure. Also established in the period was a high school (1848) which met in the town house, as well as the Pratt Academy (1856) at North Middleborough, a two-story Greek Revival/Italianate building with a projecting central porch; a new building was constructed for the Pierce Academy in 1850, a two-story gable-roofed Greek Revival/Italianate building with a pedimented porch and round cupola (demolished). By 1850,

when the East Middleborough school was built, school design had shifted from the side-gabled Federal form to the gable-ended Greek Revival form with double entrances.

Commercial: The earliest of Middleborough's outstanding collection of mid- to late 19th Century commercial buildings was built along Main Street in the 1840s; the Pierce Store (N.R.), with a two-story Greek Revival temple-front core flanked by one-story wings, stands on Main Street north of Wareham Street. Other structures dating from the 1850s include the two-and-a-half story American Building, and several three-story Italianate blocks presently obscured by one-story modern storefronts.

Industrial: Several two-and-a-half and three-story gable-roofed frame straw and shoe factories with conservative Greek Revival/Italianate detailing were built in the late 1850s and 1860s (demolished) with sections of the Nemasket (later Star) Mills begun in 1863; these probably consist of several two- and three-story brick blocks of utilitarian construction (extant).

IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870 - 1915)

A. Transportation Routes:

Continued expansion of Middleborough as regional railroad junction with belated connection to Plymouth (1892) through Waterville from Carver (now abandoned). Expansion of street railway service to Middleborough center from Taunton on Taunton-Center Street, from Bridgewater-Brockton on Plymouth-Everett Streets through North Middleborough (1899) and from New Bedford-Lakeville on Main Street. Extension to Wareham through South Middleborough on Wareham Street - Route 28 (1901).

B. Population

Population grows 1870 to 1900, stable 1900 to 1905 then continued growth to the end of the period. Foreign born population 379 in 1885 grows to 1696 in 1915. Swedes came from Carver around 1883, Italians in the 1890s. Canadians came in 1907 and a wave of Armenians came in 1910. Catholic Church built near Everett Square in 1881.

C. Settlement

Industrial activity at Middleborough Center begins to develop two separate nodes, the original node at the river and a node that develops near the railroad in the 1880s. Main business commercial district at the intersection of Main and Center Streets (the original Four Corners) with commercial development along Center with a secondary node at Everett Square. Fashionable housing district remains along South Main Street to the Morton Town Neighborhood while North Main Street begins to decline. Severe worker housing shortage during the end of this period although there is some worker housing beginning to develop around Everett Square and along Trolley lines. New Town Hall built at Main and Nickerson in 1873 consolidates

dominant position of the Center in the civic life of the town. "Little Italy" forms at West Grove and Elm Streets in 1890s. Other small industrial settlement at Rock.

D. Economic Base:

With the close of the Civil War, Middleborough had become a rail center virtually unequalled in the county, attracting considerable industrial development to the west side of the village, shifting emphasis from the Nemasket River locations. After the installation of a municipal water system in 1885, several firms constructed plants along Cambridge Street including Murdock Parlor Grate (from Carver), Clark and Cole box factory (from Nemasket River), and Carlton Maxim's planing mill. Middleborough's industrial activity probably peaked about 1906. By that time, the town had a direct rail link to Plymouth (Plymouth & Middleborough Branch RR, 1889-92); the woolen mill, after a decade of failing business, had been reinvigorated by purchase by New York investors led by H.B. Stevens; and though the straw works had closed with Alden's death in 1898, a number of shoe factories provided considerable employment. One of the largest, and a prime factory in the town economy, was the George E. Keith Co., brought to town with great celebration in 1906. The brick industry, initiated in the 1880s on the town's glacial clays, was also strong.

In the last quarter of the 19th Century it was said to have been one of the largest lumber producing towns in the state (Weston). By 1903 there were as many as 16 saw and box mills producing box boards, nail casks, shoe boxes, cranberry boxes, etc.

E. Architecture:

Residential: At least a few mansard-roofed houses were built at the town center in the 1870s, including the Thumb House, residence of Middleborough native, Mrs. Tom Thumb, but in plan, late Italianate and mansard houses were conservative with five-bay-center-entered examples remaining common through the 1870s; at least a few elaborately-detailed late Italianate houses with liberally-applied Renaissance Revival detailing in spandrels, at doors and in window bays, were built along East Main Street and at the town center. Residential construction in outlying villages remained conservative with sidehall-plan late Italianate cottages being built in North Middleborough, Warrentown and Rock into the early 1880s; little construction took place in any of the outlying villages (with the exception of Rock) in the 1880s, while in a few villages (Eddyville, Waterville, South Middleborough), residential construction virtually ceased during the period. By far the greatest activity took place at Middleborough center where well-defined districts of workers' housing, suburban and elite construction continued to develop through the period. Sidehall plan cottages with modest Queen Anne and Colonial Revival detailing were constructed through the 1890s in areas northwest of the center with modest Craftsman cottages with hip, gambrel or jerkin-head roofs, flaring overhung eaves, exposed rafters and verandas built in the area after the turn of the century. Sidehall

plan two-story suburban Queen Anne houses with conservative Colonial Revival detailing were built in the 1890s with Colonial Revival/Craftsman houses with intersecting gambrel gables or hip-roofed four-square plans constructed after the turn of the century. A few more ambitiously-detailed Queen Anne and Colonial Revival houses of some pretention, possibly architect-designed, were built along Main Street south of Wareham Street, with at least one asymmetrically-massed shingled Queen Anne house with distinctive bulbous turned porch posts supporting a veranda running the length of the facade, and several large and well-developed examples of the Colonial Revival. Somewhat more modest but nonetheless well-detailed Queen Anne/Colonial Revival houses were also built at Rock and at North Middleborough.

Institutional: A large number of important institutional buildings were constructed during the period including the Town Hall (1873, Solomon K. Eaton), a rare surviving example of the monumental public buildings of the late 19th Century; the building is an elaborately-conceived two-and-a-half story Romanesque Revival structure with raised basement, hip roof, tall domed cupola and late Italianate detailing. Its attenuated cupola seems to relate to the exaggerated verticality of the steeple of the First Congregational church at the Green. Other architect-designed buildings of the period include the Beaux-Arts classical Public Library (1904, F. N. Reed, New York) and the School Street school (1907, Cooper and Bailey, Boston) a retardataire Renaissance Revival structure with hip roof and high raised basement. Other institutional buildings of the period are the Shingle Style North Congregational church (1894), fieldstone Gothic Revival Episcopal church (1898), Shingle Style Unitarian church (1891) and Queen Anne North Middleborough Baptist (c. 1895). Not standing is a Renaissance Revival High School (1886).

Commercial: Several well-detailed two and three-story brick business blocks were built at the town center along North Main and Center Streets in the 1890s and early 1900s. These include the Bank Block, a three-story Romanesque Revival block with corbelled cornice and rounded corner bay, and several later Colonial Revival blocks in buff and yellow brick with rustication and arcaded detailing.

Industrial: In 1890, the present railroad depot, a one-and-a-half story hip-roofed brick Stick Style building was constructed; other industrial buildings include the four-and-a-half story Washburn grain mill (N.R.) and the one-story frame factory of the Maxim Works at Maxim Corner as well as additional brick buildings at the Star Mills complex.

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915 - 1940)

A. Transportation Routes:

Abandonment of trolley routes to Middleborough center by 1920s

with improvement of regional highways as auto routes. Primary east/west highway from Plymouth-Taunton as original Route 44 (Plymouth-Main-Center-Taunton Streets) through Middleborough center with dated concrete bridge over Nemasket (1926). Main corridor to Cape Cod improved as Route 28 (Grove Street) around Middleborough center with dated railroad bridges (1930) and north/south turnpike to New Bedford-Boston rebuilt as Route 18. Local connector between Lakeville and Plympton as Route 105.

B. Population

Population drops from 1915 to 1920 then slight growth in 1925, a drop in 1930 then slow growth to end of period. Black population 101 in 1920.

C. Settlement

Outlying farming settlements continue to lose population while residential settlement continues at Middleborough Center. Worker housing shortage continues during the first portion of this period. Post World War II residential development consists of infill and several small developments around the Center.

D. Economic Base:

The Maxim Motor Company sold its first fire truck to the Town of Middleborough in 1914, and the company, housed in a former car barn on Wareham Street, has remained a major industry in the town since. In the early 20th Century, labor difficulties plagued both the Nemasket Woolen mills and the shoe industry, forcing the former to close in the 1920s. By 1928 the shoe industry was one of the town's largest employers. Two new firms were brought to town by the Chamber of Commerce in 1933. In 1937 the WPA guide counted more than 40 separate firms, five of which were shoe manufacturers.

E. Architecture

Residential: Few houses of any pretention were constructed in the 1920s. Most of the houses of the period are simply-massed hip or gable-roofed blocks with shingled siding, four-square plans and modest Colonial Revival detailing. A few bungalows with hip and jerkin head roofs, verandas, raised basements and modest sidehall plans were built in the town center and in outlying villages. At least a few Dutch Colonial houses with shed dormers across the facade are known as are a few houses incorporating substantial cobblestone masonry construction.

Institutional: Architect-designed institutional buildings of some pretention were constructed at the town center during the period. These include the Georgian Revival High School (W. H. McLean, 1926), an elaborately-finished two-and-a-half story structure with cross gables, hip roof and two-stage cuopla,

a brick Beaux-Arts classical Fire Station (1926) and the Union Street School (1938, Frank Irving Cooper), a buff brick one-story Moderne school with glass block detail in the stair-hall.

Commercial: A number of one-story commercial blocks with stock detail were constructed along Center and Main Streets during the period; probably also begun in the period was the process of obscuring early and mid-19th Century houses and commercial blocks behind one-story storefront additions. This process has affected several notable Federal, Greek Revival and Italianate structures along Main Street. The focus of commercial construction during the period was along the Cranberry Highway (Route 28) with diners, motor courts, gas stations and roadside stands constructed all along the Route as it passes through the western half of town; many of these early automobile-related structures are preserved along Route 28, particularly at South Middleborough.

Industrial: The most notable industrial structures of the period are the two standpipes erected on Barden's Hill; bot of reinforced concrete, one was built in 1915 and the other in 1932.

MIDDLEBOROUGH

XI. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

Existing survey concentrates on the better-preserved resources of the town, missing several important abandoned early structures in areas which are at present backwaters (i.e., two Federal structures at Rock village). North Middleborough and Middleborough center are well-inventoried but subsidiary villages have had almost no survey, and should be recorded. Outstanding survival of period landscapes along Thompson Road (18th Century agricultural), North Middleborough, Eddyville, Warren-town, and Rock village, all of which have district potential. Early 20th Century automobile streetscape along Route 28 well-intact and threatened by lack of appreciation, and loss of income.

Industrial: Middleborough's town survey includes only one industrial structure: the C. P. Washburn Grain Mill (NR, 4/8/80). Yet surviving are structures or extant sites from virtually every phase of Middleborough's industrial life. Perhaps most important from a regional standpoint are the excavated remains of the Oliver Nail Works/Washburn Shovel factory site. The Fall Brook Furniace is also thought to be identifiable; and the 19th Century is represented by extant buildings of the LeBaron Foundry. There are at least two standing sawmills. The mansard-roofed 1863 Star Mill occupies a Nemasket River site with a long history in textile manufacture. Late 19th Century utilities and public services are well represented by the East Grove Street Pumping Station (1885), the municipal electric light plant, and the Old Colony Railroad Station (1890).

The Maxim Motor Company is still producing custom fire equipment in the car barn into which they moved in the first decade of the century. Though some small shoe shops may survive, the last shoe factory burned in December 1980. There is nothing known to survive of the Bay State Straw Works.

Development Pressures: Primary corridor of activity along Route 25-28 axis with intense commercial development at Main Street (Route 105) junction which threatens historic suburban neighborhood at Middleborough center. Former commercial strip along Route 28 through South Middleborough, and Route 44 through Middleborough center now bypassed by expressway corridor of Route 25 and relocated Route 44. Middleborough center appears to show signs of urban decay, especially around railroad depot area, while historic village at North Middleborough is threatened by private airport use on Pleasant Street. Suburban pressure remains active throughout town, particularly around Pocksha-Asawampsett Ponds, with agriculture still maintained on usable upland.

XII.

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