

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

RAYNHAM

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.

The activity that is the subject of the MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report has been financed in part with Federal funds from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior. This program receives Federal financial assistance for identification and protection of historic properties. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability or age in its federally assisted programs. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility as described above, or if you desire further information please write to: Office of Equal Opportunity, National Park Service, 1849 C Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., 20240.



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MHC RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

Date: October, 1981

Community: Raynham

I. TOPOGRAPHY

Northern portion of the town has some moderate upland with extensive swamp lands. Southern portion of the town has very moderate uplands. Drainage via the Forge River, Dam Lot Brook and Furnace Brook to the Taunton River. Soils generally sandy to gravelly.

II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Raynham was established as a town from part of Taunton on April 2, 1731 (o.s.). Bounds established between Raynham and Taunton in 1866.

III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Meetinghouse location moved to Center in 1773. In general during the late 18th and 19th century Raynham was an agricultural town with two exceptions; a railroad-related commercial and industrial node at Gilmoreville (Raynham) and an industrial node at Sqawbetty near East Taunton. Settlement during this period remained linear with little documented clustering of housing. Raynham retained this linear settlement pattern through the World War II era. Post World War II transportation improvements, i.e., Routes 24, 25 and I 495, have severely impacted the landscape as have strip developments along Routes 138, 104 and 44.

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500-1620)

A. Transportation Routes:

No documented native trails. Present Raynham was east of a major native route (Massachusetts Bay Path) that passed through Taunton. A possible native trail fragment may follow the route of Thrasher Street. An unidentified native village site, purportedly occupied by King Philip, is located immediately south of the street. Additional conjectured trails extend along King Philip, North Main and Elm Streets. The first trail may have been an access route to the former site of Fowling Pond (seasonally occupied by King Philip), while the other two routes could have provided access to Lake Nippenicket (Bridgewater), the site of a possible native Contact Period settlement.

B. Settlement Patterns:

No reported native Contact Period sites. In addition to the two possible period sites described above, a small unidentified village site was situated a short distance north of the junction of South Main Street and Forge River. Additional native settlement probably occurred along the Taunton River, particularly in the vicinity of the river's junction

with Pine Street (opposite of major native settlement of Titicut (Bridgewater) and Squawbetty.

C. Subsistence Patterns:

Fishing possible on the Taunton River, its tributaries and Fowling Pond (formerly located west of the junction of Mill and King Philip Streets). Anadromous fish runs occurred on the Taunton River. The extensive marsh and swamp lands of northern Raynham provided an excellent habitat for game sought by native hunters. King Philip reputedly hunted and fished in the vicinity of the Fowling Pond (Hutt 1924: 791). Prime agricultural land was located along the Taunton River.

D. Observations:

Raynham area resources were capable of sustaining a moderate native population. Extensive settlement was discouraged by the absence of a large freshwater pond. The area's natives were probably locally affiliated with the Titicut settlement in Bridgewater and North Middleborough. Regionally, the Raynham natives likely fell under the control of the Pokanokets centered in Sowams (Bristol, Rhode Island). Existing archaeological and secondary historical sources virtually ignore this period.

V. FIRST SETTLEMENT PERIOD (1620-1675)

A. Transportation Routes:

No documentation of pre-war colonial routes. A route extending along South Main and Pleasant Streets may have been established by the pre-1675 settlers who built homes in this area. The road provided access to Bridgewater and Taunton.

B. Population:

There were no figures for the native population. The white population appears to have been confined to a handful of families, probably only those associated with the c.1656 iron works.

C. Settlement Patterns:

There were probably minimal changes in native settlement patterns, excluding the area of limited white settlement in the vicinity of South Main and Pleasant Streets.

The first white settlement took place in c.1654 near the junction of South Main Street and the Forge River. At this date, James and Henry Leonard and Ralph Russel, three Welsh iron workers hired to establish an iron forge in the Raynham area, settled in the vicinity of the South Main Street and Forge River junction. A few additional homes were erected further east along Pleasant Street. A garrison was built shortly before the outbreak of King Philip's War on the north side of Pleasant Street immediately east of the intersection of Pleasant and White Streets. The settlement lacked a meetinghouse. Residents traveled to present Taunton for church services and town meetings (part of Taunton until 1731).

D. Economic Base:

The native population maintained their traditional subsistence patterns. However, Anglo-Indian trade was established as an important facet of the native economy. The Leonard family carried on considerable trade with King Philip and on several occasions repaired native firearms.

The white settlement's economy was centered around the iron forge complex which began operation in c.1656. The forge was built at the junction of South Main Street and Forge River and operated well into the 18th century. Bog iron was obtained in the nearby Two Mile meadows. The Taunton River provided an excellent access route to potential markets in Middleborough, Taunton and Narragansett Bay. Subsistence farming probably was undertaken in the center of Raynham and possibly as far south as the Taunton River. The settlers probably carried out subsistence fishing and hunting in the Taunton River and its tributaries, Fowling and Gushee Ponds and the wooded lowlands and marsh lands. Timbering was likely undertaken in the Pine, Dead and Titicut Swamps.

E. Observations:

The white settlement was closely tied to present Taunton, largely because of its lack of civic/religious and industrial facilities (grist and saw mills). The iron forge, however, was the earliest iron works established in the southeastern Massachusetts study unit and one of the earliest in New England. Commencement of iron production on this site initiated growth of an iron producing region which by the mid-18th century encompassed present Taunton, Raynham, Norton, Easton and Mansfield.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

A. Transportation Routes:

Little documentation of the colonial transportation network. A road extending along West, South and East Streets was probably laid out around the time of the erection of the first meetinghouse at the intersection of South Main and West Streets in c.1731. Elm, Carver, Center, North Main, King Streets, the southern portion of Locust Street and Church Street (appear on the 1794 Raynham map) probably were constructed in the early-late 18th century in response to settlement and growth.

B. Population:

No documentation of the native population. Minimal data dealing with the white residents. At the time of Raynham's incorporation in 1731, the community consisted of 30 families. By 1765, the town's population had increased to 687 residents. This figure had grown further in 1776 when Raynham had 940 residents. A handful of French Acadians were resettled in Raynham from Scituate and Georgia between 1756 and 1760 (Massachusetts Archives, Vol. 24: 134, 354-355).

C. Settlement Patterns:

The white community emerged virtually unscathed from King Philip's War although five whites were killed near the Taunton River during the fighting. The residents remained in the settlement during the war despite

offers of shelter by several Cape Cod towns. Post-war settlement is poorly documented. A primary settlement node was established by the early 18th century in the proximity of South Main and West Streets, the site of the first (c.1731) meetinghouse. Later settlement expanded away from this node and resulted in the relocation of the second meetinghouse (c.1773) on the south side of South Main Street at the intersection of this road and King Street. There was mid-late 18th century infill on Pleasant Street.

D. Economic Base:

Farming continued although there was a greater emphasis on commercial production. Operation of the Leonard iron forge continued until c.1767 when the Leonard family sold out to Josiah Dean. He established a nail works and iron rolling mill on this site. A blast furnace appearing on the 1794 town map at the southern end of Kings Pond may pre-date 1775. By 1771, Raynham had four tanneries and slaughterhouses, nine grist and fulling mills and three iron works and furnaces. At this date, local shipping (probably Taunton River) amounted to 82 tons (1771 Raynham Valuation Records).

E. Architecture:

Residential: Raynham appears to have comparatively few 18th-century houses: perhaps a half dozen Colonial houses still stand in the town. Of the three or four houses observed, all are center-chimney plan structures with five-bay symmetrical facades. One of the houses, on Pleasant Street near Jones Pond, has an integral lean-to, suggesting a date early in the century. More common are enclosed projecting porches, some with gable pediments. A number of houses and cottages in the town incorporate end-gable overhangs: whether this feature dates from the Colonial period is not known. In most instances, the end-gable overhang was used on houses whose remaining details are Federal in character, and so it is supposed that the feature indicates construction in the Federal period; however, it is possible that end-gable overhangs were employed in the Colonial period. In that instance, at least some of the observed center-chimney cottages with end overhangs may have been constructed in the Colonial period. Examples of this type were observed on Pleasant, Locust, Orchard, and North and South Main Streets. Although it was demolished c.1850, one of Raynham's earliest houses was illustrated in Barber's Historical Collections (1839); this was the Leonard House (c.1670), a larger two-and-a-half story center-chimney frame house with facade gables and a gable-roofed projecting two-story porch. The house served as a garrison in King Philip's War.

Institutional: The first meetinghouse, begun two years prior to the town's incorporation in 1731, was a very simple building without blinds, a steeple or a bell. In 1773, the first meetinghouse was replaced by a similarly simple structure, also without a steeple. The second meetinghouse was built by a local carpenter, Israel Washburn. Although a schoolmaster was first paid in Raynham in 1742, no schools are known to have been built.

F. Observations: Raynham lacked economic diversity with the majority of its economic growth dependent on its iron industry. Assessment of the town's economic and demographic development is hampered by the paucity of research dealing with this period. The existing town history (1870) provides only a cursory overview of Raynham's Colonial Period development.

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

A. Transportation Routes

Taunton-South Boston Turnpike 1806, otherwise improvement of existing Colonial roads.

B. Population:

After slight increase between 1776 and 1790, population remained stable to 1820, then slight increase to end of period.

C. Settlement:

Very little residential clustering. Settlement pattern linear, consisting of farmsteads along colonial roads. Some construction along turnpike. Discrete black community at Gilmoreville.

D. Economic Base:

Continuation of existing iron operations at original Leonard, now Dean forge (producing anchors) and Raynham Furnace on Kings Pond (coffee mills and other hollowware). Major nail works established in 1820's on Taunton River at Squawbetty and East Taunton (later Old Colony Iron Works site) by 1837, producing over \$300,000 worth.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Raynham has a number of houses and cottages dating from the Federal period; at least a dozen Federal houses are known along with more than a dozen cottages. Most of the cottages have a center chimney plan and many incorporate end wall overhangs; houses exhibit a greater variety of plans with equal numbers of end chimney and center chimney houses known. In addition, at least one Federal double house and one Federal house-and-a-half (seven bays wide) were observed on South Street West. Several brick end-wall chimney houses are known with one outstanding example located at Squawbetty on South Street East; this is a hip-roofed building with very fine carved details including a floral-swagged frieze and elaborate leaded entrance surround. At least one other Federal house should be noted; this is a center chimney house on South Main Street which features a two-story projecting porch with an unusual elliptical gable screen. Concentrations of Federal period residences stand at Prattville, Raynham Center, Squawbetty, and, to a lesser degree, at North Raynham as well as along South, Locust, Pleasant and Church Streets.

Institutional: Although several denominations founded churches in Raynham during the period, none of them built churches until the Early Industrial period. The churches established in the period were the Baptist (1811) and Unitarian (1828). At least four schools are indicated on the 1830 map of the town.

VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830-1870)

A. Transportation Routes:

Railroad through eastern portion of town. Otherwise improvement of existing roads.

B. Population:

Slow, steady increase to 1865, then slight drop to 1870. Foreign-born population 127 in 1855, majority from Ireland.

C. Settlement:

Little deviation from settlement patterns of previous period. Civic and religious focus remains at the center. Some commercial development at Center due to railroad.

D. Economic Base:

Primarily agricultural economy with pronounced concentration of iron/nail-making activity at Squawbetty. By 1855 three nail works producing nearly \$500,000. By 1870 Old Colony Iron Works (in Raynham and Taunton) employed 700 workmen and included both rail and water access, tugs entering the works from Taunton River by a lock and canal.

Shoe manufacture introduced c.1840 by Gilmores along Taunton Turnpike, followed by shops near Gushee Pond and at the Centre. "Of all the factories in Massachusetts," wrote Hazard in 1921, "the so-called 'finest' was built by the firm of C. and H. T. Gilmore, in Raynham, in 1857 . . . The large machine shop, with a forge and a machinist permanently in charge, was probably one of the chief reasons why Lyman Blake and Gordon McKay came to this factory five years later to try out the McKay machines." The Gilmores were uninterested, perhaps because, suggests Hazard, they had already invested heavily in their existing factory equipment, and the shoes they specialized in required little fancy stitching. Shoe production throughout Raynham continued to rise throughout the period. By 1875 three factories produced \$220,000 worth.

Farms numbered 127 in 1865. Bricks were also produced in small quantity.

E. Architecture:

Residential: A great many cottages and a lesser number of houses were built in the Early Industrial period; the largest concentrations of period cottages stand at Prattville, Tracy Corner, Squawbetty and Raynham Center. Most of these are transitional sidehall Greek Revival/Italianate structures with simple Greek Revival entrance surrounds (transom and full-length sidelights); a few cottages (especially at Raynham Center and Tracy Corner) incorporate recessed sidehall porticos or projecting one-story verandas. At Squawbetty, a few sidehall Italianate cottages exhibit the feature of a pair of roundhead windows in the gable end, seen in a number of towns on the Taunton River access. Facade gables are another relatively common embellishment for Italianate cottages; they are used on more traditional center-entrance, end or double chimney cottages. Particularly noteworthy are a

grouping of Italianate houses at Squawbetty. Undoubtedly related to the well-developed Italianate houses of Taunton, just across the river, the Squawbetty grouping includes two fully-developed villas with four-square plans, very wide overhanging eaves and low pyramidal hip roofs. Both are of brick and at least one may retain its original stucco. Also known at Squawbetty is an elaborately detailed Greek Revival/Italianate house (c.1860) with heavy carved window caps. Raynham's 19th-century historian, Enoch Sanford, testified to the great increase in the period of houses at Gilmoreville and Squawbetty (1870).

Institutional: In 1832, a new meetinghouse was constructed for the First Parish. A meetinghouse was also built for the Baptist church in 1832; a second Baptist congregation was formed in 1839 and they constructed a meetinghouse in 1841. Baptists had been active in Raynham since at least 1793, when some 150 Baptists were recorded to have been living in the town. The Unitarian faction of the First Parish, which had split off in 1828, also built a meetinghouse in the early years of the period.

Industrial: In 1857, the shoe-manufacturing firm of C. and H. T. Gilmore constructed an ambitiously detailed Greek Revival factory at Gilmoreville (north of Prattville on Broadway/Route 138). It had a Doric portico across the facade and boasted a host of innovative technological features, such as speaking tubes, an elevator, dumb waiters, and a driveway through the lower floor for shipping and receiving freight. While a three-story frame shoe factory still stands at Gilmoreville, it appears to be a later building and the Gilmore factory is not thought to survive.

IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)

A. Transportation Routes:

Trolley line along North and South Main Streets.

B. Population:

Decline to 1890, then return to 1870 level by end of period. Foreign-born population, 120 in 1885, grows to 400 in 1915, with Portuguese majority. Appears to have been a very small Russian community in 1915.

C. Settlement:

Settlement patterns remain linear with little new development.

D. Economic Base:

Relatively little new industry identified. Shoe manufacture peaked during period, but both shoe and iron industries (latter represented by tack factories at Kings Pond and Dam Lot Brook) probably ended by 1915. By 1906 six poultry growers.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Most of the houses built in the period were constructed at Prattville, Squawbetty and Raynham Center, with the greatest concentration at Prattville. Of these, most are sidehall late Italianate and Queen Anne

cottages and story-and-a-half plus attic houses. Many houses incorporate Stick Style gable screens, and at least a few well-developed Stick Style houses are known (at Squawbetty and Prattville). After the turn of the century, single-family Colonial Revival houses with a four-square plan and pyramidal hip roof were built in some numbers along with a number of Craftsman-related cottages with hip roofs, exposed rafters, porches, and jerkin head or hip roofed dormers. Very few multiple-family houses were constructed, with a few examples known to survive at Prattville.

Institutional: The First Parish constructed its present church during the period (on what appears to have been the site of its previous meetinghouses at Raynham Center). The church is a story-and-a-half nave plan Gothic Revival chapel with an offset square tower; it is constructed entirely of fieldstone. Also built in the period was the North Raynham Congregational church (1876), a two-story Gothic Revival frame structure with an offset hip-roofed tower. The major institutional construction of the period was the building of the Borden Colony of the Taunton State Hospital on King Phillip Street. The complex consists of a number of agricultural outbuildings dating from the turn of the century, a well-detailed brick Georgian Revival H-plan dormitory with gambrel-roofed end pavilions (c.1895), a two-and-a-half story late Italianate dormitory (c. 1880), a one-story Craftsman/Colonial Revival school (c.1910) and a story-and-a-half Greek Revival cottage with a free-standing Doric portico. In addition, a few one-story, hip-roofed brick Georgian Revival schools were built after the turn of the century (Center School, South School, North School).

Industrial: Utilitarian brick and frame factories were built at Prattville and Raynham Center during the period. A one-story brick factory is known on Gardner Street with a three-story frame shoe factory on Broadway above Prattville. Also known is a fragment of a late 19th-century factory at Raynham Center; this is a one-story cobblestone shed, now converted to commercial use.

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915-1940)

A. Transportation Routes:
State Route 138 by 1930.

B. Population:
Significant growth between 1920 and 1925, then stable to end of period. Foreign-born population 414 in 1930.

C. Settlement:
Settlement patterns remain linear with new development as infill along existing roads.

D. Economic Base:
No new industry identified. Community largely given over to raising poultry and farm crops.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Although very little construction took place in the Early Modern period, a few well-detailed suburban single-family Dutch Colonial and Colonial Revival were observed on King Philip Street and on Broadway and in scattered locations elsewhere in the town. At least one elaborately-detailed Draftsman/Colonial Revival house was observed on South Street West. In addition, a few very small one-story cottages probably dating from the 1920's were observed in the northern section of town off Broadway.

Commercial: The only commercial buildings observed in Raynham appear to date from the Early Modern period. Most of these are one-story frame and masonry buildings with very little detailing, examples of which are known at Prattville (on Broadway) and on North Main Street at Raynham Center.

XI. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS:

Raynham had only one inventory form; future survey should catalog surviving Colonial, Federal and Early Industrial resources, which consist primarily of single-family residences, some of outstanding architectural quality, as well as Early and Late Industrial commercial, industrial, and institutional structures. Residences of the later periods are generally more modest, although significant groups of houses stand along Broadway and Squawbetty. Particularly noteworthy are well-preserved period landscapes along South Street, both East and West portions; South Street West includes late 18th and early 19th century agricultural complexes with early through mid-19th century industrial development along South Street East at Squawbetty. Well-preserved linear mid to late 19th-century development along Broadway.

Industrial: The only standing industrial structures identified were a shoe factory (770 Broadway) and small brick industrial building at King's Pond. All former mill sites, however, should be surveyed.

XII. SOURCES:

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