

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

SOMERSET

Report Date: 1982

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: January 1982

COMMUNITY: Somerset

I. TOPOGRAPHY

Somerset is bounded on the East by the Taunton River, on the South by Mt. Hope Bay and on the West by the Lee River. Drainage in the north via Labor-in-vain Brook. Terrain is gently rolling to the river. Soils are generally sandy to gravelly with some clay deposits.

II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Somerset was incorporated as a town on February 20, 1790 from that part of Swansea known as the "Shewamet Purchase". Annexed part of Dighton on April 4, 1854.

III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Somerset is a suburban community on the Taunton River and Mt. Hope Bay. By the beginning of the Federal period Somerset was a well established shipbuilding and trading community. At the time of its incorporation the town was "predominantly and flourishingly commercial" (Hart: 1940, 67) During this period there were packets running from Somerset to Providence, Warren, Bristol, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Savannah...indeed it was common practice for Somerset ships to winter in Georgia ports prior to the Civil War. With the development of reliable textile technology Somerset capital was used to develop the textile industry in Fall River. In effect creating a market for goods shipped by the Somerset sea captains. Shipbuilding continued with shipyards at Somerset Village and at Broad Cove to the Civil War. Secondary industries were developed at Pottersville in 1815 and at Somerset Village in 1853. The southern portion of the town remained agricultural throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. After the Civil War the town evidenced some decline, partly due to the shut down of the shipyards (during the war the town served as an army depot). The town's commercial function began to decline during the latter portion of the 19th century, the slack being taken up by the service functions performed by the Old Colony and Newport Railroad coal docks at Somerset Village and those necessary for the Fall River Newport Corridor. After the turn of the 20th century the town became a suburb of Fall River to some extent although it appears to have escaped Fall Rivers financial difficulties of the '30s. Renewed suburban development began after World War II although the southern portion of the town managed to retain a pastoral quality.

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500-1620)

A. Transportation Routes:

The only documented native trail was a route which followed Elm St. and extended west and north into northern Swansea and Dighton, respectively. A native trail probably paralleled the Taunton River oriented along the present course of either Pleasant St. and Riverside Ave. or County and Prospect Sts. and Brayton Point Rd. A second riverine route likely followed the Lee River possibly extending on Elm St. and Lee River Rd. The Lee and Taunton Rivers were undoubtedly utilized as primary access routes to the ecologically rich Mt. Hope and Narragansett Bays.

B. Settlement Patterns:

There were no reported native Contact Period sites. Four unidentified native sites clustered near the eastern bank of the Lee River and adjacent to Lee River

Rd. may be contemporary with the Contact Period burial complex situated in South Swansea. An additional unidentified native site was located at Sandy Point on the eastern bank of the Taunton River. Native Contact Period settlement probably congregated in the warmer months along the lower portions of the Cole and Taunton Rivers because of the availability of extensive marine and riverine resources and agricultural land. The native occupants probably migrated up these rivers into the less exposed interior (Tauton?) during the late fall and winter.

C. Subsistence Patterns:

The Lee and Taunton Rivers and nearby Mt. Hope and Narragansett Bays would have provided the local native population with extensive sources of fish, sheelfish, water fowl and mammals. Additional hunting was probably undertaken in Somerset's streams and interior woodlands. Potential planting grounds were situated along the Lee and Cole Rivers and the town's interior. There is a good possibility the native population engaged in European-Indian trade when considering Somerset's proximity and accessibility to Narragansett Bay, a known area of pre-1620 European-Indian contact (e.g., Verrazano, 1524).

D. Observations:

Somerset appears to have been part of a heavily settled region of native Contact Period settlement which stretched from Narragansett Bay east to Buzzard's Bay. The natives occupying present Somerset appear to have been Pocassetts, a group who probably inhabited present Swansea, Somerset, Fall River and Tiverton, Rhode Island. Regionally, the Pocassetts fell under the control of the Pokanokets (Wampanoags) centered in Mt. Hope, Rhode Island. The greatest potential for surviving archaeological evidence of native Contact Period settlement would occur adjacent to the banks of the Lee and Taunton Rivers.

V. FIRST SETTLEMENT PERIOD (1620-1675)

A. Transportation Routes:

The available resources provided no information concerning pre-1675 colonial transportation routes. Development of a pre-war colonial overland network in Somerset was probably limited since it appears the majority if not all of the pre-1675 colonial settlement in Old Swansea took place in present Swansea and Barrington, Rhode Island.

B. Population:

There were no figures for the native or colonial population.

C. Settlement Patterns:

The extent of native settlement during this period is unclear. Gardner's Neck (separated from Somerset by the Lee River) was the seat of the Pocassetts in the early 17C (Fenner 1911:6) suggesting there was a considerable population in the vicinity of present Swansea and Somerset.

Description of the colonial pre-1675 settlement patterns is non-existent in the available sources.

D. Economic Base:

No documentation of the native economy. The native population probably maintained their traditional subsistence rounds although with an increased emphasis on European-Indian trade.

There were no references made to a colonial pre-war economy.

E. Observations:

Somerset lacks an adequate pre-1675 history. Future research should focus on reconstructing the pre-war native and colonial community's existing in this area.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1657-1775)

A. Transportation Routes:

Development of the post-war colonial transportation network was poorly documented. A likely primary route oriented along County St., Buffington St., Prospect St., Read St. and Brayton Point Rd. was probably erected prior to 1775. Slade's Ferry situated at the junction of Brayton and Riverside Aves. dates to the late 17C while Chase's Ferry located adjacent to the intersection of Elm St. and the present Somerset/Dighton line probably predates 1775.

B. Population:

Existing sources provided no data dealing with the post-war native population. Old Swansea (included Somerset until 1790) had a population of 1840 residents in 1765. This figure increased to residents in 1776.

C. Settlement Patterns:

It is unclear whether Somerset retained a post-war native population. Documentation of the area's colonial community is also inadequate. A settlement node was established in the vicinity of Old Swansea's first Quaker meetinghouse (Prospect St./Friend's cemetery) by the turn of the 18C. A primary settlement node had developed in the vicinity of Pottersville prior to 1795. The community's Baptist population likely attended services in present Swansea. Area residents traveled to Swansea (c. 1700+) for town meetings.

D. Economic Base:

There was no information concerning a native economy. The colonial economy was minimally documented. Agriculture and riverine and off-shore fishing were probably the primary pursuits of the community's residents. The first documented local shipyard was established in the early 18C by Samuel Lee on the Lee River "at the landing" (Wright 1917: 88). Between 1707 and 1712, he built vessels ranging from 50 to 120 tons (Ibid.) Somerset had limited potential for mill industry due to the small number of streams.

E. Architecture:

The number of surviving Colonial period houses is thought to be small; as there is no building inventory for Somerset, detailed information on construction dates is not available, but direct observation suggests most of the standing structures in the town date from the Federal period. Undoubtedly some buildings of the period do survive, but none are immediately apparent. Potential surviving structures stand at Somerset Village on Main Street. There, some half dozen or so center-chimney cottages, some with gambrel roofs, were observed; of these, some are likely to date from the period. The earliest institutional buildings in the town were a school of 1735 (replaced in 1769) and the Friends meetinghouse, organized in 1732. A Friends meetinghouse still stands on Prospect Street at the Swansea border;

a two-story, gable-roofed structure with the one-story shed-roofed projecting double entrance porch typical of Quaker meetinghouses in the region, that building may date from 1732 or it may date from later in the 18th century. An important structure which no longer stands was the Jerathmael Bowers House (1770, demolished 1965). The Bowers House, which stood at 55 Main Street, was a very elaborately detailed two-and-a-half story, gambrel-roofed double chimney plan structure with a rusticated facade, projecting portico with pediment, and dormers with triangular pediments; it may have been the local progenitor of the use of the gambrel roof with dormers, a feature which was used through the end of the 18th century in Somerset Village, where several other period houses with gambrel roofs are known. The interior featured a high-style Georgian parlor with elliptical arched alcoves flanking a fireplace enriched with a dentilated mantel with fretwork frieze and eared overmantel.

F. Observations:

Somerset's proximity to the Narragansett, Mt. Hope and Buzzard's Bays suggests the community had strong economic and social ties with colonial settlements in this region. The settlement also fell within an active 18C shipbuilding region which extended from the eastern shore of Narragansett Bay to Buzzard's Bay. Somerset possessed one of the few and earliest Quaker churches (c. 1701) in the southeastern Massachusetts Study Unit.

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

A. Transportation Routes:

Some improvement of existing colonial roads, major mode of transport remains Taunton River throughout this period. Slade's Ferry still in operation, Packets to major Middle Atlantic and Southern ports.

B. Population:

Population data prior to incorporation unavailable. Population at incorporation 1151, while there was a slight increase in 1800 the general trend was toward a slight decline to the end of the period. It should be noted that it was a nominal decline averaging less than 10% for the period.

C. Settlement:

Principle settlements during this period were Somerset Village, Pottersville-Egypt and the "South District" (South of Slade's Ferry). At the beginning of the period Somerset Village was the most important of these settlements having a well defined commercial function as well as residential. The development of Pottersville began around 1815 with the establishment of the Chace Pottery. The development of Egypt (the area between Buffinton and Center Street) began to develop after the War of 1812 as it drew some of the shipping from Somerset Village. In 1813 Somerset Village had 93 families, Pottersville 68 and the South 54. The South district remained primarily agricultural during this period. Broad Cove began to develop as a shipbuilding node after 1821.

D. Economic Base:

Somerset's route to post-war recovery lay in her shipbuilding, expanding Colonial-period prosperity begun by the Bowers family. Fifteen vessels were built and registered in Somerset 1783-93; in 1794 alone, five more. Somerset

became one of the chief distribution points in New England for foreign goods, with trade to China, the West Indies (Jerathmel Bowers was said to have been the first to ship livestock there), Europe and the Atlantic coast. Next to Taunton, Bowers Shore (Somerset Village) had the highest population of any town in the county by 1800. After 1815 Egypt also emerged as a shipping village in its own right. Between 1815 and 1835, 72 vessels over 20 tons were built and registered in Somerset. This merchant wealth was not only responsible for setting off the town from Swansea in 1790, it was also the source of much of the capital in the development of Fall River mills after 1815.

The only other economic activity of significance was the manufacture of stone and earthenware -- begun in the 18th century when Clark Purinton settled in Somerset about 1753. Purinton, like Paul Osborn of Berkley, had learned the pottery trade in the Essex County town of Danvers. Both had been attracted to the Bristol County location by the nearness to coastal trade routes to New Jersey and other clay sources. Clark Chase, one of Purinton's apprentices, was a key Somerset potter by 1815. By 1832 over \$12,000 worth of pottery was being produced annually.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Most of the 18th-century structures standing in the town appear to date from the Federal period. The largest concentration of these stands at Somerseset Village, on Main Street, but other Federal houses were observed on Brayton Avenue and on Buffinton Street. The majority of the period structures observed are center-chimney houses and cottages with five-bay facades and gable roofs; a few three-quarter plan cottages were also noted. At the Village, perhaps a half dozen two-story houses of somewhat greater pretension were observed. These include at least one transitional Georgian/Federal hip roofed, double interior chimney plan house probably dating from the early Federal period, two double-pile end chimney Federal houses, one with a gambrel roof and one with a gable roof, and a number of center-chimney, gable-roofed houses.

Institutional: The town of Somerset was incorporated out of Swansea in 1790 and the first town meeting was held in that year. A town house had been constructed on County Road in present-day Pottersville by 1830. Other institutional construction of the period included the construction of a Baptist church at Somerset Village 1804 (congregation organized, 1796) and a Methodist Episcopal church at South Somerset, also in 1804 (congregation organized, 1800); the Methodist meetinghouse seems to have been retardataire in plan, with a nearly square format and two projecting porches leading to the galleries (demolished, 1849).

VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830-1870)

A. Transportation Routes:

Improvement of existing federal period roads. Taunton River still major corridor during most of period. Fall River, Warren & Providence Railroad 1866 across Taunton River at Bridge near Slade's Ferry.

B. Population:

While 1840 marked the lowest population total for the period in which data is available the period 1840 to 1860 was one of continuous growth with stability to the end of the period. Foreign born population 10% of total in 1855. Majority were Irish who came to the Mt. Hope Iron Works in 1855.

C. Settlement:

While there was no new settlement in the town during this period there was expansion of existing nodes. The area south of Slade's Ferry remained agricultural and the least densely settled area of the town. (In 1860 there were 58 dwellings in this section which was also the largest in total area). Somerset Village remained the principle village with 64% of the total population residing between North and South Streets in 1860. Egypt-Pottersville contained 20% of the total population. Toward the end of the period Somerset Village began to shift focus, developing a small industrial base as shipbuilding began to phase out. High style 'Captains Row' on Main Street of Somerset Village during this period.

D. Economic Base:

Somerset's mercantile prosperity continued to advance. By 1847, 138 vessels over 20 tons were registered in Somerset, many engaged in coastal trading. With the opening of the Mexican War in 1847, followed by the California Gold Rush, Somerset shipyards broke all previous records. Wrote Hart euphorically of the 1847-57 period --

One hundred and fifty years had been preparing Somerset enterprise, character, and skill for the period that opened that year (1847). No town ever had a more glorious era than the decade that followed. (p. 90)

The most important of the yards was that of James M. Hood, which launched its first vessel, the schooner Empire State, in 1849. In the following five years the yard launched 27 vessels including several important clippers.

The shipyard activity also launched a ropewalk, and in 1853, the Somerset Iron Works, a short-lived anchor forge which failed on the disappearance of the shipyards after 1855. In 1855 the foundry was taken over by Job Leonard, a Raynham Leonard, more recently from East Bridgewater, where he had organized the iron works there. In establishing the Mount Hope Iron Company, he made his father-in-law, Albert Field (Taunton and tacks) president, and erected a large nailworks. By 1865 the nail mill, producing both nails and iron plate valued at \$420,000, employed 280 men and was much the largest single industry in town.

Both Leonard and his father-in-law Field were incorporators of the Dighton and Somerset Railroad (1863-65) linking Taunton and Somerset. (The railroad's 1866 pile bridge over the Taunton River was said to be the longest in New England at that time (Hart, 135).)

The year 1847 also marked the establishment of the Somerset Pottery Co., incorporated out of the old Chase pottery works. By 1855 there were five stone and earthenware potteries, the combination producing the second highest product value total in town (after the Iron Works).

The Boston Stove Foundry, with Taunton backing (Taunton remained a regional center of stove manufacture) was begun in 1854, but until 1867, when its employees reorganized it as the Somerset Co-operative Foundry, it was unsuccessful.

E. Architecture:

Residential: A modest amount of residential construction occurred in the Early Industrial period, with infill construction at Somerset Village, particularly along Pleasant Street. Dispersed construction took place along County, Prospect,

Elm, and Read Streets. Most of the housing of the period consists of end chimney and sidehall plan Greek Revival and Greek/Revival/Italianate cottages and two and two-and-a-half story houses. Exceptions to this are a well-detailed but significantly altered two-and-a-half story Gothic Revival house with a cross-gabled plan on Brayton Point Road, an Italianate octagon house of concrete construction on County Street at Pottersville and a story-and-a-half brick Second Empire cottage (originally a school?) on Main Street at Somerset Village. One of the Federal period houses at Somerset Village was updated in the period with ornate Italianate detailing including a very large octagonal belvedere.

Institutional: The Baptist meetinghouse at Somerset Village was remodelled in 1840 and again in 1855; as it presently stands it exhibits a transitional Greek Revival/Italianate appearance with a square belfry and bracketted window hoods. The Methodist meetinghouse was demolished and a new church built in 1849 (no longer standing); other churches organized in the period include the Somerset Methodist Episcopal (1841), First Christian (1841), and First Congregational, organized in 1861 out of dispute within the Somerset Methodist church. Aside from the Baptist church, the only other institutional buildings known to survive from the period are the old Town Hall (c. 1860) on County Street, a one-story, center-entrance Italianate structure, and a school at Somerset Village (now Women's Club), a one-story, double entrance Italianate building.

IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)

A. Transportation Routes:

Old Colony & Newport Railroad extended line to coal docks at Somerset Village 1872. Slade's Ferry ceased functioning 1876. Improvement of existing roads. Dighton, Somerset and Swansea Street Railway opened 1895. Water borne emphasis changed from primarily shipping at beginning of the period to pleasure craft by the end.

B. Population:

This period was one of moderate growth with a 90% increase from 1870 to 1915. Foreign born population 20% of total in 1885 increased to 26% of total in 1915. Influx of Portuguese at end of 19th century, appear to have settled south of Slade's Ferry.

C. Settlement:

Somerset Village remained dominant during this period with a moderately expanded industrial base, primarily the Mt. Hope Iron Works. Some expansion of area at Slade's Ferry during latter portion of the period due to street railway along Read Street. Also some residential development along Riverside drive. South remained agricultural.

D. Economic Base:

"The thirty years following the Civil War," wrote Hart, "saw a combination of industrial, maritime, and commercial enterprises that raised the town to new heights of activity and prosperity."

The opening of the Somerset and Dighton Railroad -- which quickly became the Old Colony's "New Road" from Boston to Fall River -- brought with it the railroad's major coal port on the south coast, built in 1872 as the trans-shipment point from Pennsylvania-coal barges to Old Colony freight cars. This freight activity, together with the 1876 Slades Ferry Bridge giving quick road and rail

access to Fall River, were in part responsible for prolonging the town's industrial activity while other similar communities adjacent to industrial centers were losing theirs'.

The Mount Hope Iron Works, on Leonard's retirement in 1871, was sold to Wareham's Parker Mills. But Leonard, not content in retirement, erected a new and more efficient works (the "Upper Works") the following year on the site of Hood's earlier shipyard. In addition to nails and tack plate, Leonard also produced a high quality shovel plate for the Ames Shovel Works in North Easton. In 1878 Leonard repurchased the Lower Works and both plants together were operated until Leonard's death in 1905. Much of the labor supply for the Mount Hope came from the old iron towns of the interior -- Taunton, Raynham, Bridgewater, and Middleborough.

Faced with increasing competition from plants nearer the source of raw materials, neither the potteries nor the Stove foundry lasted much beyond 1910. After several reorganizations, the Somerset Stove Foundry closed about the beginning of World War I. The two remaining potteries also closed about the same time.

Caskets, shoes (2 factories), and metal polish were also produced in this period.

Agricultural products were dominated by strawberry production, introduced by Avery P. Slade. In the decades before refrigerator cars, 1880-1900, the town sent large quantities of strawberries north to Boston. "Strawberry trains" with crates from Swansea and Dighton as well as Somerset, left the Somerset station daily for the metropolis during the season.

When prices for tomatoes in Fall River fell making their sale there no longer profitable, Sidney Hathaway, a former potter, opened a cannery in an old pottery building about 1912. As business grew with farmers from Swansea and Dighton also bringing in excess tomatoes, Hathaway gradually added other fruits -- pears, peaches, apples, and finally sweet corn. The business was brought to an end, not by economic considerations, but by the death of the founder's son in WW I.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Some modest workers' housing was constructed in the early years of the period at Pottersville and at Somerset Village; most of this was conservative in plan, with sidehall late Italianate and Queen Anne cottages built through the 1880s. More substantial and stylish houses were built in the 1880s and 1890s and through the turn of the century on Pleasant Street at Somerset Village; among these are towered Queen Anne houses, a few simple Stick Style houses and a number of shingled Colonial Revival houses. Extensive residential construction did not take place in the rest of the town until the end of the period; after 1890, streetcar suburban development began to occur along many roads in the town and small residential neighborhoods of one and one-and-a-half story Craftsman and Colonial Revival cottages began to develop at Pottersville, along County Street, Wilbur Avenue and Read Street. At least one well-detailed brick bungalow was observed on County Road, north of Pottersville. A very few simple Colonial Revival two-family houses were built at Pottersville after the turn of the century. In addition to workers' and suburban housing, some small resort communities began to develop in the period at Pierce Beach and Riverside Avenue in Somerset Village and at Brayton Point at South Somerset. Most of the structures built in these locations are simple one-story shingled cottages.

Institutional: As with residential construction, most of the institutional construction in the town occurred around the turn of the century. The majority of the buildings constructed are schools, most of these being one-story, red brick, hip-roofed Georgian Revival buildings with cupolas, probably built c. 1912; examples include the Village School and South School. An exception to this is a school at Pottersville, a one-story, hip-roofed building in a restrained neoclassical church at Pierce Beach in Somerset Village with a domed open belfry. Saint Patrick's church was founded in 1875; shortly thereafter, an 85' x 43' church was built at a cost of \$8000. An indication of the Catholic church's strength in the community is evidenced by the fact that Saint Patrick's had a parish of 600 while the congregational church numbered only 54 persons.

Commercial: Commercial buildings were constructed at Somerset Village in the early years of the period; very little commercial construction appears to have taken place elsewhere in the town until after the turn of the century, when County Street in South Somerset began to develop with two and some three-story brick and frame stores. The buildings at Somerset Village include several intact late Italianate stores (c. 1880) of two stories' height and one three-story late Italianate warehouse with a first-floor storefront.

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915-1940)

A. Transportation Routes:

Improvement of existing roads. Routes 6 & 138 designated by 1930.

B. Population:

There was a 74% increase in population during this period, unlike other areas Somerset showed growth during the depression. Foreign born total dropped to 22% in 1930 although absolute numbers increased.

C. Settlement:

Growth of discrete residential neighborhoods during this period, around Slade's Ferry Bridge access, along Read Street and in Pottersville. Construction of Montaup power plant prompted residential growth. Little evidence of expanded industrial development.

D. Economic Base:

The opening of World War I brought two new firms to Somerset. The Crowinshield Ship Building Co. in 1917 took over a defunct ship repair yard and began building a variety of vessels under government contract. A year earlier, the Parks Co. opened a branch plant in the former Mount Hope Lower Works, producing phonograph record shellac -- and later bleached shellac.

The construction of the Montaup Electric Company plant, 1923-25, introduced the town's major industry -- power generation. The plant was erected as a combined venture of three utilities: Fall River Electric Light Co., Brockton Edison Co., and the Blackstone Valley Gas and Electric Co. (serving Pawtucket and Woonsocket). The added property valuation which the plant brought enabled the town to markedly upgrade its own municipal services. In 1959 the same harbor facilities that made the construction of Montaup attractive, were cause for the construction of Somerset's second major power plant -- Brayton Point, by the New England Power Co. (The first unit was completed in 1963; the third in 1969.)

E. Architecture:

Residential: Modest residential construction continued into the early 1920s, but does not seem to have carried through the end of that decade. Most of the houses built are simple one and two-story Craftsman cottages with hip or gambrel roofs; these are located in the streetcar suburbs of the early 20th-century. A few larger and more fully-developed Craftsman and Colonial Revival houses were built along County Street.

Institutional: A few schools are known to have been constructed in the period. These are the Wilbur Achool and the Somerset High School. Both are red brick Georgian Revival Structures built c. 1925. The High School is a two-and-a-half story, hip roofed building with a central cupola, while the Wilbur School is similar in design but only a single story in height. The current town hall also dates from the 1920s; this is a two-story red brick neoclassical building with a flat roof on County Street. One of the most stylish private institutional buildings is the Georgian Revival Masonic Temple at Somerset Village, a two-story red brick building on Pleasant Street with a two-story Georgian frontispiece.

XI. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS:

Somerset has no building inventory. Survey work is particularly recommended in Somerset Village, which retains buildings from the 18th through late 19th-century and includes a very well-preserved commercial streetscape of the late 19th-century along Main Street. Throughout the town, post-1940 development, particularly suburban tract development of the 1960s and 1970s, has all but obliterated the agrarian landscape of the town. The early town center at the Village has been preserved through a late 19th-century shift to County Street at South Somerset, but even at the Village, signs of imminent track development are evident at the northern edge of the Village. Aspects of the 19th-century agricultural landscape are still apparent on Elm Street in the northwestern corner of town. Of particular note is the survival of the octagon house on County Street, a very unusual example of concrete construction as advocated by Squire Orson Fowler, creator of the octagon mode.

XII. SOURCES:

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