

# MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

## FITCHBURG

Report Date: 1984

Associated Regional Report: Central 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: 1984

COMMUNITY: Fitchburg

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## I. TOPOGRAPHY

## II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Included in Turkey Hills grant of 1719, and in town of Lunenburg, established in 1728. Established as town of Fitchburg from western half of Lunenburg in 1764. A section in the north is included in the new town of Ashby in 1767, with an addition in 1829. Parts in the southwest are annexed to Westminster in 1796 and 1813. Incorporated as a city in 1872. In 1925 and 1943, border adjustments are made with Leominster to the south, Fitchburg obtaining a tongue of land in the southeast, mostly east of the North Nashua River, and Leominster a long strip of land south of the new Route 2 corridor.

## III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Fitchburg is a regionally significant urban industrial center located along the North Nashua River corridor, second only to Worcester in the Central Massachusetts study unit. The city's steeply graded highland terrain is crossed by several historic routes into the northern Central Uplands region. Riverine native sites are likely. First permanent European settlement occurred in the east and northeast as the western periphery of Lunenburg by 1735, and by 1750 a grist mill site was established on the North Nashua near the Punch Brook confluence. The area remained a garrisoned frontier outpost through the French War, and local fatalities and captivities resulted from an 1748 native attack in the northwest (now Ashby). Postwar, dispersed, upland agricultural increase was sufficient for separation as the town of Fitchburg in 1764, with the meetinghouse site established north of the North Nashua River. By the late 18th century, development of waterpower sites made the meetinghouse center area an important milling focus. The second meetinghouse was relocated west in 1796 after a long controversy.

Although the early 19th century Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike passed south of the meetinghouse center, industrial development continued along the North Nashua and the Phillips Brook tributary, as paper, textile, and scythe factories were built. By 1830, a linear, central village extended from the meetinghouse along the Punch Brook and North Nashua corridor. Continued growth of Fitchburg Center as a commercial and manufacturing focus was boosted by locally financed railroad connections in the mid 19th century, and Fitchburg became an important hub in the developing regional rail network. Industrial development continued along the North Nashua rail corridor at West Fitchburg, Rockville, Crockerville, and South Fitchburg. Expansion continued in the paper, textile, and edge tool industries, and machinery production and chair manufacturing became significant local activities.

Expansion and intensification transformed the central village into a complex, urban nucleus, as the central valley filled and settlement pushed up and over the steep surrounding hillsides, ultimately extending outward as streetcar suburbs. Stylish, single-family, middle- and high-income neighborhoods were built to the north, while immigrant worker cottage and three-decker districts were constructed to the south, including distinctive enclaves of Irish, French Canadians, Scandinavians, and other ethnic groups. A second central district focus was established by the County Courthouse of 1871, and a linear, brick and masonry, multistory, commercial and financial center emerged, including buildings constructed with local Rollstone Hill granite.

Although the paper industry has continued to expand in the southwest, modern industrial decline left a deteriorating urban core, and massive urban renewal removed many of the central district's riverside industrial complexes, as well as other local landmarks. However, much of the 19th- and early 20th-century commercial and civic downtown corridor remains, as does a remarkable mid-19th century residential district north of Main Street. Many outlying industrial centers retain both mill complexes and associated worker housing. A highland, orchard landscape remains, as do scattered late 18th- and early 19th-century farmhouses. Suburban development continues to threaten remaining rural landscapes. In general, the city's central residential areas retain an unusually fine variety of late 19th- and early 20th-century architecture, which continues to be threatened by deterioration, abandonment, and alteration.

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

##### A. Transportation Routes

Highland tributary area on North Nashua River corridor. East-west corridor route north of river inferred as Pearl Street-Blossom Street-Main Street-West Street-Westminster Hill Road, with northwest highland branch on Prospect Street-Flat Rock Road-Scott Road-Ashburnham Hill Road. Highland trail to Naukeag Lake area (Ashburnham) and northwest across northeast corner of town inferred as Fisher Road, connecting along contours to Peal Hill Road-High Rock Road across Ashby State Road to Old Northfield Road (Ashby). Southeast trail along Nashua corridor to Whalan Lake conjectured as Summer Street, with conjectured Bemis Road branch river crossing to Wanoosnoc Road and east-west Monoosnoc corridor along Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike route.

##### B. Settlement Pattern

Like so many other Worcester County towns, there are no archaeological sites reported in the city. In the Nashua River Valley, the area was part of the Nashaway territories, with base camps in Sterling and Lancaster to the south. This upland area had few ponds or level areas for long-term occupation, but small groups visited for resource exploitation.

### C. Subsistence Pattern

Small family and task groups visited the hill areas for hunting and fishing in the Nashua from base camps to the south.

## V. PLANTATION PERIOD (1620-1675)

### A. Transportation Routes

Contact period trails continue in use.

### B. Settlement Pattern

A combination of patterns established during the Contact period.

### C. Subsistence Pattern

A continuation of patterns established during the Contact period.

## VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

### A. Transportation Routes

The Northfield Road (ca. 1736) from Lunenburg to the northwest is established through the northeast highlands on Fisher Road, connecting along contours to Pearl Hill Road-High Rock Road across Ashby State Road to Old Northfield Road (Ashby). Other roads are established into the western territory of Lunenburg in the 1740s. These include the Old Lunenburg Road (Pearl Street-Blossom Street-Main Street-Prospect Street-Flat Rock Road-Scott Road-Ashburnham Hill Road, and the Crown Point Road leading west from the Northfield Road on Fisher Road-Scott Road. In the southern part of town, the road to Westminster follows an abandoned route to Bemis Road over the North Nashua River crossing, then Wanoosnoc Road and the later Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike along the southern border. South Street leads to Leominster/Lancaster. After the meetinghouse site is established in 1762, other roads are developed leading in from outlying farms.

### B. Population

The area's first settler came in 1719, but few followed due to frontier warfare, which continued until 1748. Thereafter growth was rapid, leading to discussion of parish status by 1757. At formation, ca. 40 families of 250 individuals were resident here. The growth continued, reaching 643 by 1776. A minister was settled in 1768.

### C. Settlement Pattern

Fitchburg was granted as the western part of Lunenburg or Southtown in Turkey Hills in 1719. Like its parent town, settlement was slowed by frontier warfare, but after 1748 more moved to this section of the town. Garrisons number four, three in the east where farmsteads clustered, a fourth in the northwest

(now Townsend). The meetinghouse was built on a small one-acre parcel, near the corner of Blossom and Crescent Streets.

#### E. Architecture

Residential: Relatively few period survivals. Predominant form appears to have been center chimney house, with earliest recorded building dated to 1745, although reference is made to a 1719 garrison.

Institutional: First meetinghouse 1766.

### VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

#### A. Transportation Routes

Colonial period highways continue in use. In 1800, the Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike opens service across the extreme southern part of town, with its eastern terminus across the border in Leominster. Roads northwest to Ashburnham are improved along Phillips Brook (Ashburnham Street) and Whitman River (North Branch Turnpike).

#### B. Population

The population of the town grew rapidly during the period, particularly during the early years, from 643 in 1776 to 1,151 in 1790, and to 2,169 by 1830. Disagreements between Trinitarians and Unitarians began in 1800, resulting in a split in 1823 and the formation of the Calvinist Church in 1824. As early as 1787 a group of Baptists met in the west, but they dwindled in time. In 1810 a church of Freewill Baptists from the town and neighboring Ashby met in the north. A lodge of Masons was also shared by these towns from 1801. A voluntary groups of Fusiliers in 1816. By 1830, both an academy and poor farm were operating in the town..

#### C. Settlement Pattern

Fitchburg Center develops as a residential, commercial, and industrial center along the North Nashua River corridor. A secondary industrial focus begins to emerge to the west on the Nashua and on Phillips Brook. Elsewhere, dispersed agricultural settlement continues.

In 1796, after a long controversy over site location, the second meetinghouse at the Main, Mechanic, Prospect Street intersection, northwest of the earlier structure. The Rollstone Meetinghouse (1813) is also built on upper Main Street, and the "New Common" area on Main Street becomes the town's commercial and residential focus, with linear extensions north on Mechanic Street, and west on West Street, and south on Main Street. An academy is built to the east in 1830 at the head of Academy Street. Textile manufacturing is established along the North Nashua as early as 1807. By the 1820s, a cotton factory and worker housing are established on West Street west of the New Common, a woolen mill is operating near the common on Rollstone Street, and another

cotton factory is just to the south off Main Street. At the "Old City," which remains a secondary focus to the east on Main Street, another cotton mill is operating. To the southeast, Burbank's paper mill (1804) is located on Water Street on the north side of the river.

Another paper mill is located on the Nashua in the west part of town, with a scythe factory nearby. Northwest of this, on Westminster Road, a cotton mill is built along Phillips Brook in 1815.

#### D. Economic Base

#### E. Architecture

Residential: Survival rate is higher than for preceding period. Predominant house forms appear to have been two-story, center chimney, and rear wall chimney plans. Some brick center chimney houses, but material seems to occur more in rear wall chimney houses. Hipped roofs generally distributed evenly between two house types. One brick, single-story and two two-story end chimney forms are known to exist. Most double-chimney houses are to two stories, but one-story examples are recorded.

Institutional: Second meetinghouse (1797) survives in much-altered form. Orthodox meetinghouse built in 1805 on corner of Main and Rollstone. A Freewill Baptist church was located on Ashby Road near the Ashby line shortly after 1810.

Schoolhouses were built in the late 1770s with additional buildings (20 x 24 feet) ca. 1798. A brick school was built in Old City in 1812. A new center school was built in 1815.

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

#### A. Transportation Routes

By the mid 19th century, Fitchburg had become the north county focus of a regional rail system, with all the lines running most of their length in town along the North Nashua River corridor. The first and most important line was the locally financed Fitchburg Railroad, completed from Boston in 1845. This is extended northwest as the Vermont and Massachusetts Railroad in 1847. In 1850, connections south are made on the Fitchburg and Worcester Railroad, and in 1865 the Agricultural Branch Railroad (later Boston, Clinton, and Fitchburg) is connected to the southeast.

#### B. Population

Manufacturing and the introduction of the railroad brought a rapid increase in population during this period, from 2,169 in 1830 to 11,260 in 1870, or a 519% increase. Agricultural employment was decreased by 25%, while manufacturing increased fourfold. In addition, the employment opportunities in trade and transportation were enormous, as the new middle class arose during this period.

By the middle of the period, the foreign-born within the town accounted for 18.6%, where it remained through period's end. The Irish were in the overwhelming majority, with smaller numbers of Canadians, English, Scots, and later, Germans. They lived together in a shanty town known as the Patch near the depot. Religious services began in 1842 and six years later a church, St. Bernard's, was formed.

Protestants too established religious societies to serve the expanding population. Within the Congregational Society, a split occurred over slavery, resulting in the formation in 1844 of the anti-slavery Trinitarian society, and later the formation of another society, Rollstone, in 1868. The Baptists reorganized in 1831; the Methodists held camp meetings and met local resistance in the 1840s; a group of Millerites met in the town during the period; the Universalists formed a church in 1844, and the Episcopalians in 1868.

Voluntary associations continued to be population, with a Thief Detecting Society (1839). The Masons were revived, and two groups of Odd Fellows were formed (1845, 1870), and a large number of temperance organizations flourished. The educational interests of the community are reflected in the formation of the Fitchburg Philosophical Society (1835), with a Library, a lyceum (1834), a Men's Debating Society, an Atheneum (1852-57), and Literary Club (1867). The town's farmers formed a club during the period, and later a Grange. Of particular interest, the Workingmen's Associated worked for a ten-hour day in the 1840s, and evening schools were available for operatives from 1846.

Evidence of the conflicts between groups in the town was the long debate over the disestablishment of the district system and the formation of a high school. The former was discussed as early as the 1840s, amid debate that lasted several years. After thirteen years of discussion, the town purchased the Academy in 1849 for use as a high school. Beyond the neighborhood rivalries, this conflict has been interpreted by some as reflecting class antagonisms at the expense of education, and who was to benefit from it came under discussion. In a similar, reforming vein came a number of temperance organizations, as well as a Young Men's Christian Association (1859).

### C. Settlement Pattern

Expansion and intensification transformed the central village into a complex urban nucleus, as the central valley filled and settlement pushed up the surrounding hillsides. By period's end, a linear commercial/institutional district had developed along Main Street, with middle- and high-income residential sectors extending to the north. To the south of the commercial district, industrial development continued on the North Nashua River railroad corridor, and sectors of worker housing extended south from there. Secondary industrial centers develop at South Fitchburg, West Fitchburg, Rockville, and Crockerville, all on the North Nashua or its tributaries.

Civic development on Main Street continues in the Common area in the 1830s and 1840s, with the focus shifted to the southern end of the Common with the relocation of the second meetinghouse in 1837. Additions include a Baptist church (1833), Methodist church (1840) and Universalist church (1847). The location of the Fitchburg Railroad Depot (1845) to the south creates a strong, secondary focus, and civic development proceeds to extend south, with the town hall (1852), second Baptist church (1853), Rollstone Church (1862), and Episcopal church (1868). Academy Street east of the Common remains a secondary civic focus with the 1869 high school. In addition, by period's end, multistory commercial blocks extend along much of Main Street between the Common and the depot.

Industrial expansion continues along the North Nashua River corridor south of Main Street. Important additions include the Putnam Machine Works west of Putnam Street, the Fitchburg Railroad machine and car shops east of South Street and along Water Street, and the Union and Rollstone Machine Shops along Water Street. Industry also locates north of the Fitchburg Railroad freight yard, including the Simonds Manufacturing Company and Fitchburg Machine Company along Summer Street.

Residential development extends northwest in the Bond Street area, and north from Main Street on Prospect Street to View Street, and Mechanic Street to Nichols Street. Between Punch Brook and Mount Vernon Street, the central sector of affluent residential expansion extends north from Main Street to Mount Globe Street, with linear extension on High Street. Further east, settlement extends from Main Street along Blossom Street. East of Blossom Street, high density settlement extends north to Green Street, with lighter development in the Congress-Myrtle-Highland Street area. East of Main Street, development appears along Lunenburg Street on Highland Street, Congress Place, and Lincoln Street. Construction also extends east on Winter Street, and southeast on Summer Street to Goodrich Street.

South of the river, a sector of more modest worker residences expands southward between Laurel Street and South Street to Pine Street. Between South and Water Street, development occurs on Walnut, Payson, and between Nashua and Granite. An Irish immigrant concentration extends south on Water Street and on Middle and Railroad Streets to the east, as far south as Fifth Street, with St. Bernard's Catholic Church (1869) on First Street.

Outside the Center, textile manufacturing continues in the southeast along the North Nashua River at South Fitchburg with 1832 and 1848 mills, and a scythe works (also 1848). A village cluster develops on Bemis Road south of the Fitchburg Railroad. A county jail is built here in 1859. West of the Center, textile and paper mills are put into operation along West and River Street. Worker housing extends south of the river to the west of Rollstone Hill on Beech Street. At West Fitchburg, a series of paper mills are built along the North Nashua from the late 1830s to the 1860s. Edge tool and agricultural implement factories are also active along this corridor, and worker housing extends along



River Street-Westminster Street west of Kimball Road. At Rockville to the northwest, woolen mills are built and rebuilt along Phillips Brook, and worker housing concentrates on Ashburnham Street and Sanborn Street. Paper mill development extends to the southwest in the Crockerville area, along the North Nashua, and up the Whitman River and Flagg Brook tributaries, with scattered worker housing on Westminster Street south of Wachusett Street, and along Princeton Road south to the Turnpike Road. Dispersed, increasingly commercial, agriculture continues in the outlying highland areas.

#### D. Economic Base

#### E. Architecture

**Residential:** Some two-story, double chimney houses of both brick and frame construction built in the Greek Revival style. Smaller number of surviving single- and two-story center chimney Greek houses. The predominant form of the Greek Revival period is the gable-end, side-passage plan, with many temple-front designs. Smaller numbers of gable-end, center-entry houses survive. The gable-end form occurs in both brick and frame. Two brick, mid-century, two-story octagonal houses survive.

Italianate period houses occur in two basic forms: the two-story, three- , and occasionally five-bay, symmetrical facades and the asymmetrical gable-end form. High-style Italianate houses also survive.

Second Empire period houses are generally of two stories and are either side-passage plans, symmetrical, three-bay, center entry facades, and elaborate asymmetrical compositions.

Relatively few Gothic Revival houses appear to have been built.

Multifamily housing consisted of double houses and brick row housing in the Greek Revival period. Italianate style housing consisted of duplexes or double houses and a continued trend in row housing. In addition to multiunit, double and row houses, the later portion of the period saw the development of the apartment building with Second Empire details.

**Institutional:** Village Baptist Church (1833), a gable-end Greek Revival structure, is currently in commercial use. The 1797 meetinghouse was moved in 1836 to make way for a new Unitarian church in 1837, a three-bay, gable-end building with a two-staged spire. A brick, gable-end Methodist church (42 x 60 feet) was built in 1841 and later converted into apartments in the 1880s. A gable-end, brick and stone, Greek Revival Universalist church (1848) survives as a commercial building. Christ Church, Episcopal (1868) is a granite, Gothic Revival, Upjohn-designed church. The Rollstone Congregational Church (1869), a High Victorian Gothic building, was designed by Fitchburg architect Henry M. Francis.

A two-story, five-bay, gable-end brick late Greek/Italianate town hall was built in 1852.

An academy (two-story, gable-end) was constructed in 1830. The 1869 high school was built on nearly the same site, being a two-story, brick Second Empire/Victorian Gothic pile designed by H. M. Francis. Other period schools were: Day Street (1846) in Old City; Dillon (1846), brick Gothic/Italianate; Wachusett School (1850), a late Greek, brick gable-end building; Hastings (1860), a brick, Italianate style building; Ashburnham Street (1860), brick, Italianate.

Commercial: Eight mercantile establishments are listed in 1837. The earliest surviving commercial buildings appear to be ca. 1850 and a gable-end structure, often brick although frame examples probably did not survive. The Rollstone (1849) and Fitchburg (1853) banks both had granite houses. Four-story, brick buildings survive from ca. 1860, including some "Gothic" facades. Italianate style brick blocks were built in the latter part of the period. By the end of the period, both gable-end and gabled two- to three-story Greek and Italianate buildings existed.

Industrial: Mid-century to end-of-the-period brick and frame mills are recorded. Mansard and clerestory roofs occurred as well as gabled and low-pitched roofs. At least one granite mill is recorded (1854). The academy building was converted to industrial use in 1860.

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

### A. Transportation Routes

The 19th-century road and rail system continues in use, with the addition of many new local streets as new residential areas develop. In addition, a street railway network focused on the Center evolves in the late 19th and early 20th century. In 1886, the Fitchburg Street Railway (a horse railway) is laid out for 3.5 miles from Sanborn Road in West Fitchburg along Westminster, River, Main, and Summer Streets to Fitchburg Park in the east. In the 1890s, an electrified system comes to use. Lines run to West Fitchburg on Westminster Road-Princeton Road, along Main Street, south on Water Street, and east on Summer Street. A southern loop runs on Laurel, Walton, Mount Elam, Electric Avenue, South, Charles, and Forest. A northern loop is established on East, Pearl, and Myrtle.

### B. Population

The population of Fitchburg continued to grow quite rapidly, if at a slightly slower rate than during the earlier period. From a total of 11,260 in 1870 the figure grew to 39,656 in 1915, an increase of 350%. The proportion of foreign-born within the population increased during the period, from under 20% to 35% by 1915. As the number of immigrants from Ireland decreased, the number from French Canada increased greatly, becoming most numerous in 1895. English, Scots, and Germans continued to come

in small numbers. Later in the period came Russian-Finns in large numbers, as well as Swedes, Italians, and Greeks. While agriculture remained the employment of ca. 300 men, manufacturing continued to make the most dramatic gains, nearly quadrupling again during this period. In addition, many of the city's women working outside the home were employed in industry, accounting for between 1/3 and 1/2 as many workers.

The number of Catholic churches increased with the foreign-born population, adding two new territorial parishes: Sacred Heart (1878) and St. Francis of Assisi (1903); two French national parishes, Immaculate Conception (1886) and St. Joseph's (1890); as well as an Italian parish, St. Anthony's (1910). These churches were also developing a network of parochial schools, with nuns as instructors. Scandinavian and German immigrants formed Protestant churches along national lines, including both Congregational (German 1888, Scandinavian 1892, Finnish 1895) and Lutheran (Scandinavian 1888, Finnish 1893). In addition, both a Greek Orthodox Church (1908) and Synagogue Agudas Achim (1895) were formed during this period. Additional congregations were also added to the traditional Protestant denominations, bringing the total to five Congregational, four Baptist, three Methodist, three Episcopal, and one each of Unitarian, Universalist, Pentecostal, and Adventist Berean.

Voluntary associations were formed by these many groups to assist adaptation to the United States. Several Hibernian organizations as well as female auxiliaries operated in the town, and the Irish were active in politics and union organizing. French Canadiens stressed survivance through French language schools and churches, the Societe St. Jean Baptiste, Foresters, and business clubs; antagonism between them and the Irish is reflected in their alliance with the Republican Party. Among Germans both the Turnverein (1886) and Order of Harugai were popular. Swedes formed the Order of Vasa. The Finns were particularly active, forming temperance societies, the Knights of Kaleva (1898), the pro-labor Saima Society, and publishing Raiivaaja, and organizing cooperatives and credit unions. By the end of the period, both Young Men's and Women's Hebrew Associations had been formed (1910). The English formed the Sons of St. George and the British-American Club, and the Scottish Clan Leslie, Order to Scottish Clans.

Organizations of workers continued to be important, including the United Workmen, as well as craft-specific unions and relief associations. These were particularly numerous among railroad employees, who formed the Brotherhoods of Locomotive Engineers, Locomotive Firemen, and Section Masters, the Railwaymen's Relief Association, the Order of Railroad Conductors, and the Railwaymen's Christian Association. The wealthy businessmen too formed more associations and clubs, a group of clubs that combined social activities with literary and charitable interests, such as the Fitchburg Benevolent Union (1876), Agassiz Association (1886), Chapin (1884), and Arlington (1886). Organized on more strictly business lines were the Board of Trade (1874) and Merchants

(1886). More purely social and exclusive were the golf and country clubs, as well as the Fay, Park, and Windsor Clubs.

### C. Settlement Pattern

Significant growth continues in Fitchburg's central urban area, and to a lesser extent in the outlying industrial villages. Industrial development expands along the North Nashua corridor and north of the railroad freight yards. Intensive commercial and institutional growth occurs along Main Street from the Common to Summer Street, with a new civic focus at the Courthouse (1871). Infill, peripheral additions, and expansion along streetcar lines take place in and beyond the established residential zones north and south of the river.

Infill continues along the industrial corridor south of Main Street, and major expansion occurs in the North Street/Willow Street area north of Main Street near the railroad depot. New mills are built to the west, including the Orswell Mills, Nockege Mills, and Iver Johnson Factory along River Street, south of the river. Another complex develops further west along Cleghorn Street east and west of Oak Hill Road.

Commercial development along Main Street continues through the period, with larger, brick multistory blocks, and a distinct banking district between Oliver and Day Street. A new, larger railroad depot is built in 1878. After the completion of the County Courthouse in 1871, the Main Street/Wallace Street area becomes an attractive location for civic construction, and in the late 19th and early 20th century a library, police and fire stations, armory, post office, and several churches are built in the vicinity. Several other churches are added or rebuilt along Main Street during the period.

Intensive infill and development occurs in the established residential zones north of the river, with a slight expansion north. From Main Street, residential development extends west on Goddard and Arlington, and affluent residential growth continues to extend north on Prospect, Mechanic, High, and Blossom Street, with some development in the area between Marshall and Mount Vernon Street. To the northeast, new North Street is opened up with the State Normal School (1896), and residential development in the east, north of Pearl Street in the Cedar/Pacific area. To the east, a broad zone of housing extends to Townsend-Boutelle Street, with extensions south of Lunenburg Road and in the Jason Street area. To the southeast, new development takes place between Summer Street and the river.

South of the river, worker housing is built east from Beech Street along Kimball and Leighton Streets. Residential development extends south in the French Canadian "Cleghorn" area between Oak Hill Road and Beech Street to beyond Columbus Street, with St. Joseph Catholic Church (1890) at Columbus/Woodland. Further east, streetcar suburb development extends south along the South Street and Water Street axes.

Development along Water Street extends south through South Fitchburg, where Fitchburg Railroad carshops are built south of the tracks, and worker housing extends east of Bemis Road. At West Fitchburg, the paper industry continues to develop, and worker housing extends into the highlands north of the river, west of Sanborn Road (Temple Street/Phillips Street), west along Westminster Hill Road, and east of Westminster Hill Road beyond Eaton Street. South of the river, residential development extends on Depot Street. Churches are added in the residential zone north of the river, including a Protestant Mission Chapel (1874), Sacred Heart Catholic Church (1878), and a Methodist Church (1883). At Crockerville in the southwest, new paper mills are added, and residential additions are made to the west.

#### D. Economic Base

#### E. Architecture

Residential: All popular and many high-style houses were constructed during the period. Countless Queen Anne and Stick Style houses were built, many being architect-designed. In addition to high-style Queen Anne dwellings, the gable-end form continued to be built with Queen Anne as well as Stick embellishments. Shingle Style houses occur relatively frequently. Early 20th-century styles found in Fitchburg are Colonial Revival, Bungalow, Four Square plan, Dutch Colonial, Mission, and Spanish Revival, again with a good percentage of architect-designed houses.

Multifamily housing consists to a large extent of three-deckers. Some late Italianate and Queen Anne style row houses occur (one High Victorian Gothic double house is known to have been demolished). Early 20th-century apartment buildings of Colonial Revival design was also built.

Institutional: Churches built during the period include: Sacred Heart (1878), frame Gothic now stuccoed; West Fitchburg Methodist (1883), Stick Style design by H. M. Francis; new brick Methodist church (1885); new Universalist church (1886), a brick and stone, "Moorish" style gable-end building; St. Joseph's (1890), brick Romanesque design by O. E. Nault of Worcester; Highland Baptist (1890), a shingled Gothic design by H. M. Francis; Trinity Congregational (1892), a Gothic design by Francis; the Swedish Congregational Church (1893), Shingle Style design by Francis; the Calvinistic Congregational Church (1896), a brownstone Romanesque design by Francis; Emmanuel Lutheran Evangelical (Swedish, 1896), a gable-end Colonial Revival building; Faithful Companion of Jesus (1900), a four-story, brick convent (now vacant); Elm Street Congregational (1903, Francis), a gable-end, shingled building; and the 1913 Shingled Gothic Church of the Nazarene.

Schools built include: School Street (1880s, H. M. Francis), brick Romanesque; Rollstone Street (1884, E. Bayden, Worcester), brick, late Italianate style; West Fitchburg School (1890, Francis), Richardsonian Romanesque Goodrich Street (1891, Francis), brick Romanesque; high school (1895, Francis), brick,

Romanesque; State Normal School (1896), Colonial Revival with parts of complex designed by Francis; Nolan (1902, Francis), brick Classical Revival; East Street (1903, Francis), brick Classical Revival; Hosmer School (1906, Francis), brick Neoclassical.

The Wallace Library and Art Building (1885) is a brick Romanesque/Colonial Classical Revival structure.

Other buildings include: an 1894 YMCA, now a bank, by H. M. Francis; the Worcester County Superior Court building, a granite Victorian Gothic design by E. Bayden of Worcester; the Fay Club (1883, Upjohn), a two-story, brick Victorian Gothic residence converted into a club; city stable (1880s), two-story, brick; Armory (1891, now vacant), a two-story, brick, castellated building designed by Wait and Cutler (?); police station (ca. 1894 by Francis), brick Colonial Revival; Cedar Street Home for Old Ladies (1901, Francis), brick, Colonial Revival; Burbank Hospital (1901), complex of brick and frame buildings in Georgian and Federal Revival and Bungalow styles; Central Fire Station (1902), brick Colonial Revival; post office (1904, James Knox Taylor), one-story, limestone, Neoclassical design (now vacant); U.C.T. of America Hall (1906), brick, shingle, and stucco Arts and Crafts design; Helping Hand Building (1909), brick, Georgian Revival; Fitchburg Historical Society (1911, Francis), brick Georgian Revival; sewage treatment plant (1914); brick Romanesque YMCA.

Commercial: The Rollstone House in 1872 was a three-and-a-half-story, eight-bay, mansard-roofed building with a cupola. Brick business blocks were constructed early in the period and by the 1800s, new fronts were being applied to existing building and larger, plate-glass storefronts installed. Romanesque, Renaissance Revival, Victorian Gothic, and Colonial Revival buildings characterize the period. Union Passenger Station (1878), 2 1/2-story, brick, Italianate design with a tall clock tower.

Industrial: Period industrial buildings are generally brick of two to four stories. Early period mills often had mansard roofs and corbelled cornices. Later constructions were much more utilitarian.

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

### A. Transportation Routes

By the mid 1920s, Fitchburg had become the focus of several regional highways. The east/west Mohawk Trail (old Route 7, then Route 2, now Route 2A) passes through the Center and West Fitchburg (Lunenburg Street-Main Street-River Street-Westminster Street). North-south Route 12 is established through the Center and South Fitchburg (Water Street-Main Street-River Street-Westminster Street-Ashburnham Road). In the mid 1930s, a northern highway through Ashby to New Hampshire is improved as Route 26 (Ashby State Road). In addition, the southwest road to Princeton from West Fitchburg (Princeton Road) is upgraded as Route 120 (later part of Route 31).

## B. Population

Fitchburg's population growth slowed nearly to half during this period. Overall increase was just over 2,000, from 39,656 in 1915 to 41,824 in 1940. The period's high figure was 43,609 in 1925, and dipped to 40,692 five years later. Changing immigration patterns meant a drop in the proportion of foreign-born in the town, from 35% in 1915 to 21.2% in 1940. The French Canadians continued to be the most numerous group in the town (31%), Finns (24% to 16%), Irish (12% to 8%), Italians (10% to 12%), as well as English, Germans, Scots, and Greeks. Manufacturing employment continued to be the greatest source of employment, for both men and women working out of the home. Opportunities were increasing in white-collar, middle-class types of employment. The effects of the Depression can be seen in the numbers of unemployed (1,180) and emergency employment (907) in 1940. The new Italian population formed St. Anthony's in 1908 and added a school in 1919, as well as the Marconi Mutual Benefit Society in 1918. A Polish Club was formed in 1936. Armenians worshipped with the city's Episcopalians and formed a Union and Young Men's society.

## C. Settlement Pattern

Main Street remains the civic and commercial focus, with the addition of some multistory business blocks in the 1920s. A junior high school (1922) and high school (1937-38) are added to the Academy Street civic focus. Infill and peripheral extensions are made in the northern affluent residential area, most notably west of Prospect in the View/Bond Street area, at the north end of Marshall Street, and in the Blossom/Ross Street area. More modest automobile suburb development extends west along Westminster Hill Road, north along Ashby State Road, and east on Lunenburg Street. Single-family residential development also continues to extend northeast between North Street and Lincoln Street, and northeast of the State Normal School in the Coolidge Park area. Single-family development also extends east on Pearl Street, and south of Pearl to the east of Baker Brook, as well as east of Boutelle Street.

South of the river, the worker residential area east of Rollstone Hill continues to extend south from Pine Street beyond Ellis Street, and east of South Street extends to Heywood Street. In South Fitchburg, intensive streetcar suburb development continues along the Water Street and Abbot Street corridors, and St. Francis Church (1928) is located on Sheridan Street.

The Fitchburg-Leominster airport is located in the lowland territory taken from Leominster in the southeast. West of Rollstone Hill, the Cleghorn area of single- and multifamily residences continues to extend south along Shea, Chester, and parallel streets, roughly bounded on the west by Depot Street, and on the south by Franklin road, with an extension south to the west of St. Joseph Cemetery. To the west, paper mill expansions on the North Nashua continue at Waites Corner south of Westminster Road, with residential additions north of the factory, and at West Fitchburg south of the river along the rail corridor.