

# MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

## WARWICK

Report Date: 1982

Associated Regional Report: Connecticut Valley

**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: 1982

COMMUNITY: Warwick

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## I. TOPOGRAPHY

Warwick is one of the northernmost towns in Franklin County. Its northern boundary abuts the southern line of New Hampshire. The town's 37.2 square miles is largest among Franklin County towns. Warwick is dominated by a complex of heavily wooded uplands. Elevations usually range between 900 feet and 1300 feet. The highest peak is Mt. Grace (1617 feet) located northwest of the village of Warwick. Additional prominent points include Mt. Grace's sister peaks of Bennetts Knob (1475 feet) and Little Mount Grace (1225 feet), the triple peaks of Mallard Hill (1334 feet), Mayo Hill (1388 feet) and Ball Hill (1263 feet) situated in northeastern Warwick and Chestnut Hill (1020 feet) southeast of Moore's Pond. These uplands are broken by a number of intervalles and swampy lowlands. Local marshlands include several substantial tracts west of Mt. Grace (Bass Swamp, Stevens Swamp) and in southwestern Warwick (Harris Swamp). The town lacks any major waterways. Northwestern Warwick is drained by Mill Brook which flows west into the Connecticut River in Northfield. The north central and northeastern portions of town are drained by Mountain Brook and Tully Brook, respectively. The southern half of Warwick is drained by Darling and Gales Brooks. Nine ponds and a reservoir are scattered about Warwick. The majority of these freshwater bodies are man made. Several mineral deposits have been discovered in Warwick. Central Warwick was the site of substantial steatite outcrops, and iron ore deposits in addition to small amounts of "black lead" (graphite?). Local soils are basically a sandy glacial fill.

## II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Originally granted as Roxbury and Gardner's Canada in 1735 to veterans of Canadian Expedition (1690) with western boundary at Northfield line and southern boundary with Pequag (Athol) and New Salem (Orange) along Millers River. Northern boundary established in 1740 as Massachusetts Province line with New Hampshire and eastern boundary with Royalshire (Royalston) by 1762. Incorporated as town of Warwick in 1763 with southeast section annexed to Orange in 1783 as step boundary along original (1736) division lots.

## III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Rural recreational hill town on secondary corridor between Orange and Keene, New Hampshire. Located in central highlands with prominent summit of Mount Grace and native potential possible at Hasting and Moore's Pond. Settled during mid-18th century as Roxbury Canada with Warwick Center as meetinghouse location and restored Colonial houses near Mayo Corners. Limited agricultural potential as highland farming district with several late 18th century houses on Mountain Brook to

New Hampshire border and cottages to Chestnut Hill. Warwick Center developed as local civic focus during Federal period with landmark church and several stylish houses around town common and on Hastings Road from Mayo Corners. Upland farming maintained through mid-19th century with Greek Revival cottages along axis of Route 78 to Orange and on Flower Hill around Mount Grace. Limited industrial potential with local sawmills from highland lumbering activity. Recreational expansion during early 20th century with summer cottages at Moore's Pond and early ski trails on Mount Grace. Present development evident as suburban recreational housing along Route 78 axis to Mount Grace from New Hampshire and along Darling Brook near Warwick State Forest. Town center retains authentic village character around common green with restored houses intact near Mayo Corners.

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500-1620)

A. Transportation Routes:

Intermediate highland corridor from Quabbin to upper Connecticut valley. Primary regional trail apparently followed northeast route from Pequag (Athol) as Hasting Heights Road looping as Rum Brook Road to Warwick Center and Hasting Pond following west around base of Mount Grace as Mountain Trail and along north slope of Bolster Hill to Squaqueag (Northfield). Connecting branches from Rum Brook loop apparently followed north as Old Winchester Road and east as Athol Road to Sheomet Lake. Secondary north-south trails from Millers River and Quabbin valley likely followed Moss Brook as Quarry Road (West Orange) and over Chestnut Hill as Flagg Road to Cruce Brook and Mount Grace with alternate loops along Darling Brook to Moore's Pond and possibly along axis of Route 78 and Orcutt Brook over Barber Hill.

B. Settlement Patterns:

There were no reported native Contact period sites. The area's rugged terrain and absence of high quality agricultural land and large freshwater ponds or lakes suggests period occupation was limited to small to moderate sized fishing and hunting encampments. Period sites probably focused on the relatively level land in the general vicinity of Warwick village and south to Hastings Pond, the fill overlooking the previously-mentioned pond, the hill immediately southeast of Richard's Reservoir and the mixture of dry and marshy lowlands south of Moore's Pond.

C. Subsistence Patterns:

It is unlikely native horticulture was undertaken in Warwick. Native fishing likely occurred throughout the town's numerous streams and several natural ponds, particularly Darling Brook, Hodge/Gales Brooks, Mountain Brook, Hastings Pond, Moore's Pond and Laurel Lake. Hunting probably took place on local lowlands and gentle uplands.

D. Observations:

Warwick probably was utilized as a secondary resource area by the native occupants of the major population center situated in Northfield.

Local occupants were most likely Squakheag related, a group who were the dominant group located in Northfield by the 17th century. Those areas with the greatest potential for surviving evidence of period settlement are the Warwick village plain, the hill overlooking Hastings Pond, and the lowlands south of Moore's Pond.

V. PLANTATION PERIOD (1620-1675)

A. Transportation Routes:

Native trails remained as regional routes with secondary path from Northfield to Pequag (Athol) around Mount Grace.

B. Population:

The area probably continued to be occupied by small hunting and fishing bands. Warwick lacked a colonial population until the 1740s.

C. Settlement Patterns:

Native settlement patterns likely were similar to those suggested for the Contact period.

D. Economic Base:

Native subsistence patterns probably were much the same as those described for the previous period. The development of the Anglo-Indian fur trade in the Middle Connecticut River Valley probably encouraged increased native hunting and trapping of fur-bearing animals.

The colonial residents of Northfield may have occasionally hunted and fished in the Warwick area.

E. Observations:

Warwick probably continued to be utilized primarily as a secondary resource area by the native residents of Squakheag until late in the period. Colonial interest in the area was discouraged because of its vulnerability to native attack and the availability of large tracts of high quality land in the Middle Connecticut River Valley.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

A. Transportation Routes:

Survey of Roxbury Canada division (1736) and location of meeting house at Warwick Center (1756) established basic highway system. Radial roads from town center included east-west axis of Athol-White Road and north-south axis of Route 78. North-south division highways apparently included Chase Road, Sheppard-Wendell Road, and White-Flower Hill Road. Primary east-west highway from Warwick to Northfield improved as White and Northfield Road from Mount Grace with Royalston and Hasting Heights Road from Mayo Center to Athol.

## B. Population:

Small bands of natives most likely occupied Warwick on a sporadic basis well into the 18th century.

In 1765, the colonial settlement consisted of only 36 houses, 36 families and 191 individuals. At this time, Warwick's population was the 2nd smallest of towns in the Connecticut River Valley study unit. However, the population had quadrupled between 1765 and 1776. By the latter date, the colonial settlement had 766 residents. Period settlers came from a number of Massachusetts towns including Roxbury and Northfield. The majority of the town's settlers were Congregationalists. However, there were several confirmed Baptists residing in Warwick as early as c.1770 (Morse 1963:63). These attended Baptist services in West Royalston.

## C. Settlement Patterns:

Colonial settlement was scattered. Much of it did not occur until the early 1760s because of the area's exposure to native attack. Initial settlement took place in c.1739 with the construction of six homes. However, it is not clear where these structures were located. The early 1760s witnessed the development of a small settlement node in the vicinity of the present village of Warwick. The town's first meetinghouse (begun c.1753, complete c.1760) was erected in the general area of the present Unitarian Church. The community's first minister, Reverend Lemuel Hodge, established a home in c.1760 on Athol Road slightly east of its junction with Route 78. Later period settlement took place north, northwest and southeast of this node. Period homes were established on the northern portions of Old Winchester Road and Hastings Heights Road and on Gale Road immediately west of Gales Pond. Additional scattered period settlement probably also took place in western Warwick on White Road and Northfield Road.

## D. Economic Base:

The colonial community focused primarily on livestock production and lumbering. The first local mill (saw mill) was not constructed until C.1759 when Mattias Stone completed a sawmill initially begun by Ebenezer Locke on Black Brook immediately south of its junction with Rum Brook Road. This mill was followed by the settlement's first grist mill built in c.1760 and also located on Black Brook near the sawmill. Until this date, local residents carried their grain to Northfield and Athol where it was ground. Warwick's first tavern was established by Deacon James Ball prior to 1775 probably at the junction of Old Winchester and Rum Brook Roads.

## E. Architecture:

Residential: Less than a half dozen houses of the Colonial period survive in Warwick. All of these date from the 1760s or early 1770s. These include houses on Richmond and Athol, Winchester Roads. Of these, the best preserved is the Morse House (1772) on Richmond Road, a two-and-a-half story center chimney plan structure with an integral leanto and Federal carriage sheds. Other houses include the Hedge House, a double interior chimney house dated between 1760-1777 but

in appearance c.1820, and another double interior chimney house dated 1770. In addition to these houses, a center chimney plan gambrel roofed cottage was noted on Richmond Road.

Institutional: The first meetinghouse, the only civic building known to have been built in the period, was constructed in 1754 and had dimensions of 35' x 30' x 19'.

F. Observations:

Warwick was one of a number of upland settlements established in the Connecticut River Valley study unit as a result of grants made to late 17th century Indian War veterans. The town's limited resource and industrial base were major factors in the settlement's establishment of close economic ties with Northfield. Local residents likely sought refuge there during the 18th century Indian Wars. Future research should clarify period settlement patterns and the local economy. None of the available secondary sources dealt with these aspects of community development in much detail. There is a good likelihood of substantial archaeological evidence of period settlement surviving because of the area's continued rural nature.

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

A. Transportation Routes:

Improvement of east-west corridor through Warwick Center with Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike (1799) from Northfield to Athol, now abandoned location from Hastings Pond to White Road with portion intact as Hale Road to Orange. Other period highways included Athol Road to Sheomet Pond, Wendell Road to Moore's Pond, Quarry Road to Northfield.

B. Population:

Between 1776 and 1790, Warwick's population rose 62%, peaking in the latter year at 1,246 persons -- a point from which the town would decline for the next 130 years. Only two other towns in the county -- Conway and Shelburne -- had populations which peaked as early as 1790. By 1830, Warwick's population stood at 1150.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Warwick Center remained as local civic focus with development of Upper and Lower village along axis of Route 78. Upland farming extended to limits of potential cultivation around town center with secondary village at Mayo Corners. Limited economic potential with local mill streams along Darling Brook from Moores Pond and Stevens Swamp.

D. Economic Base:

Warwick's economy was primarily agricultural. The surveyor in charge of preparing the 1830 map of the town, Jonathan Blake, was also a historian. In 1832 he prepared a manuscript history of the town, observing:

In many places the soil is so rocky and broken as to render it unfit for cultivation: in other places, tolerably good; not so suitable for English grain as for grass, corn, and potatoes. The principal exports are beef, cattle, butter, and cheese; but not so much of those as formerly. Braiding straw and palm-leaf hats is the principal occupation of the women [25 women so employed in 1832], excepting attending to the dairy and other household affairs. (Blake, 111)

The principal manufacturing excitement was the short-lived Franklin Glass Factory, begun by a local physician, Dr. Ebenezer Hall, in 1812. With other local support the company, incorporated the same year, succeeded in erecting buildings and producing excellent cylinder glass, according to Blake. The work was under the direction of a Scotsman"of considerable ability, but of questionable integrity... The transactions of the company had been carried on hitherto with too little attention to economy,... and it could not withstand, all circumstances combined, the financial shock [of foreign competition at the end of the War of 1812?]; and it sank to rise no more."

One Erskine operated a satinet mill in 1832, though its life appears to have been short and there is no further record beyond that of the 1832 Treasury Report. Native bog iron was also worked by at least one trip hammer at the outlet of Moore's Pond.

#### E. Architecture:

Residential: Some two and a half dozen Federal houses stand in Warwick. These include nearly equal numbers of center chimney and double interior chimney houses. A similar number of cottages, nearly all with center chimney plans and five bay fronts also survive from the Federal period. The finest concentration of period houses stands at the town center but other houses stand at Mayo Corner and along Winchester, Athol and Wendell Roads. Of note are a twin/rear wall chimney house at the town center and a house with a double hip roof on Hasting Heights Road; the double hip roof is virtually unknown in the region. Other notable houses include the preserved Smith House (c.1800), the Stow House (1804), the Bass House (1812), with a cornerblock entrance surround containing a blind fanlight, and the Russell House (c.1800). The Russell House, which incorporates such Georgian features as an entrance surround with a deep segmental pediment and windows with crown moldings, could date earlier than the construction date given.

Institutional: The Federal period was one of considerable religious ferment. In 1778, a cult leader named Elder Hix appeared in the town, preaching free love and scandalising the townspeople. Baptists, active in the town at least as early as 1774, organized a society with Royalston Baptists in 1806. In 1814, the Congregational Society became Unitarian and in 1829, the Second Congregational Society withdrew from the Unitarian Society. The only religious building constructed however, was a meetinghouse for the First Parish, built in 1786-88. Captain Samuel Langley was hired to build the structure, which had dimensions of 58' x 42' and included a porch on the front.

Nine school districts existed in the town in 1785; eight school-houses were indicated on the 1830 map. None of these are known to survive, but a two-story, two bay wide, sidehall plan structure noted on Winchester Road south of the town center might be a school of the period.

Commercial: The only commercial building known to survive from the Federal period is the Warwick Inn (1828) at the town center, a double interior chimney, five bay front house with double verandas and a long side all added later in the 19th century.

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

### A. Transportation Routes:

Local highway system remained focused around Warwick Center with improvement of east-west highway along Millers Brook as Northfield Road, and north-south axis to Moore's Pond as Wendell Road. No railroads projected or constructed through area.

### B. Population:

Warwick's population continued to decline, with the greatest loss occurring in the post-Civil War years 1865-70. By the latter date, the town had lost a third of its 1830 population, closing the period with 769 residents.

In 1855 Warwick's foreign-born population consisted of 12 natives of Ireland and 11 from England.

### C. Settlement Pattern:

Local civic activities remained at Warwick Center with highland agriculture from Chestnut Hill to New Hampshire line, including farm village at Mayos Corners. Lumbering activity extended on upland slopes from Mount Grace with local sawmills.

### D. Economic Base:

The farms [wrote Blake in 1853] are not so productive as they were forty years ago. Many pieces of tillage-land are nearly worn out (as we term it). Peach trees are a complete failure; and not one tenth part so many apples are now raised as at that time. The trees have become old and decayed, and but few young ones are set out to replace them, although some attention has been paid to grafting of late. The pasture-lands, which were formerly good, have greatly deteriorated, and are almost covered with noxious brushes, brakes, and ferns; and they yield comparatively little to their former products. The hay is also reduced in quantity as well as quality. Less rye and wheat is raised than formerly, but quite as much Indian corn, oats less, and barley probably more.



The greatest manufacturing interest in the town is its lumber. Large quantities of white-pine timber have been manufactured here in times past: the old growth is becoming scarce, being nearly all cut off. Considerable quantities of the second growth of pines are now sawed into pail-staves and other articles of various kinds. The hard wood is worked into chair-stuff, brushwoods, and broom-handles.

There are fifteen sawmills in the town, which annually send to market more than one million feet of lumber [about 5.8% of the county total]. There are three pail-stave shops, and three or four shops with circular saws attached, to cut chair plank and other small articles; one axe shop, three blacksmith shops, and three tanneries; three stores (one of them is a small union store), one tavern, and one post-office.

By 1865 Warwick's lumber production had risen 30%. Twenty sawmills produced 1,555,000 feet of lumber -- 10% of the county's production and the highest quantity reported by any town in Franklin County. Brush Hollow took its name from several brush wood shops located there.

Another industry, begun in 1854 (the year after Blake's description of the town), was the boot shop of Nahum Jones. By 1865 he employed 18 men producing \$22,000 worth of boots. Warwick's single tannery was the fourth largest of eleven enumerated in the county in 1865, with a product valued at \$16,688.

#### E. Architecture:

**Residential:** Residential construction continued at a pace nearly equal to that of the Federal period. Houses and cottages were built in fair numbers at the town center with areas of settlement expanding to the west in the Moores Pond/Wendell Road area and to the south along Winchester Road. Cottages became the predominant house type. While a number of sidehall plan cottages in the Greek Revival and Italianate styles were observed in the field, by far the most common plan type for cottages was the traditional center entrance, five bay front plan with either a single chimney or double interior chimneys. A variant on that form employed the same plan with five bay front but with the end gable facing, rather than parallel to, the street.

**Institutional:** Two important religious buildings were built at the town center in the period. These were the Baptist Church (1844), since 1919 the Warwick Library, and the present Unitarian Church (1836). The Baptist Church, a one-and-a-half story gable front Greek Revival building, is the more modest. The Unitarian Church, two stories tall with a projecting porch with pediment and double entrances, incorporates Greek Revival and Gothic Revival details including lancet windows and a two-stage square belfry with pinnacles and a spire. In 1833, the Second Congregational Society built a meetinghouse but that building is not believed to be standing.

Commercial: A few small two-story Greek Revival/Italianate stores were built at the town center, probably in the 1850s.

IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)

A. Transportation Routes:

Warwick Center remained as focus of local highway system with primary axis north-south from Orange and east-west from Northfield. No railroads or trolley lines constructed through area.

B. Population:

Warwick's population, but for the decade of the 1890s, continued to decline. By 1915, the town had lost 38% of its 1870 population, closing the period with 477 residents. In 1905, the largest group of immigrants were 34 Swedes, who made up half the town's foreign-born population.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Warwick Center remained as local civic focus with dairy farming on highlands from town center and lumbering on upland slopes.

D. Economic Base:

Agricultural economy remained dominated by lumbering and woodworking industries, though both declined as period progressed. Largest manufactured product in 1875 was the boot production of Nahum Jones' factory, responsible for 57% of the town's total product value. Lumber accounted for another 36%. By 1890, two sawmills, grist mill, and box shop of George Wheeler reported.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Very limited residential construction took place in the period. The only exception to this situation occurred after 1900, when some resort development took place around Laurel Lake and Moore's Pond. In those locations, small cottages, most one-story, gable roofed structures with clapboard, shingles or novelty siding, were built. Another form of resort development was the conversion of Colonial and Federal houses to summer use and the construction of additions to existing houses for use as summer hotels. Such development seems to have occurred at Warwick Center after 1900; of note was the enlargement of a center chimney Federal house on Hasting Heights Road, apparently for resort use.

Institutional: Two important institutional buildings were constructed at the town center. These are the Town Hall (1894, James E. Fuller, Fuller and Delano) and the Center School. The Town Hall is a two-and-a-half story hip roofed Colonial Revival structure in a good state of preservation. The Colonial Revival Center School, one story with a hip roof, probably was built c.1910.

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915-1940)

A. Transportation Routes:

Improvement of north-south axis as secondary auto highway Route 78 from Orange to Keene, New Hampshire through Warwick Center to Mount Grace ski area. East-west highway to Northfield remained as unimproved road.

B. Population:

Warwick's population reached its nadir in 1920 at 327 residents. Between 1930 and 1935 and town's population made a 54% gain, climbing to 565 in the latter year. The period closed at 444.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Civic focus maintained at Warwick Center with secondary development of recreational activity around Moore's Pond and Mount Grace ski area.

D. Economic Base:

No new industries identified. Agriculture dominant.

XI. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

General: Warwick's survey is one of the most complete inventories produced by the Franklin County Arts Council. Inventory forms for all major institutional buildings and most pre-1830 residential structures are thoroughly researched and generally contain useful historical data. Very few post-1830 structures have been documented; future inventory work might include completion of area forms for later 19th century construction at the town center and for 20th century resort development. Several oversights in the existing inventory should be noted: there are two Federal period houses on Hasting Heights Road, south of Mayo Corner, neither of which is inventoried.

XII. SOURCES

Blake, Jonathan, History of the Town of Warwick, Massachusetts, from its First Settlement to 1854, Brought Down to the Present Time by Others [John Goldsbury and Hervey Barber] (Boston, 1873).

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