

Historical Resources Chapter Appendix 7-18-06

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF JAFFREY'S HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Geographic Context

The Town of Jaffrey is located on a ridge that forms the watershed between the Connecticut and Merrimack river valleys. Its landscape is dominated by the slopes and 3,165-foot summit of Mount Monadnock. Rolling hills, whose good drainage and sunny slopes provided fine dwelling sites for its early settlers and later for summer residents, characterize the rest of the town. Within the town's bounds are a number of bodies of water, including Thorndike, Gilmore, Cummings, Bailey, Cheshire, Garfield and Parker, Jones, and Gilson ponds, as well as a section of Contoocook Lake and Mountain Reservoir. The Contoocook River forms a major waterway, originating in Contoocook Lake and flowing through downtown Jaffrey, where it powered nineteenth-century industry. In addition to the river, there are numerous brooks, many of which provided water power for early, smaller mills.

Historical and Architectural Development

Jaffrey is one of three contiguous towns collectively known as the Monadnock townships (the others are Rindge and Dublin) that were laid out in the 1740s, shortly after the boundary line between Massachusetts and New Hampshire was resolved. Each was granted by the Masonian Proprietors, a group of wealthy Portsmouth citizens who operated essentially as a speculative land company and granted many of southern New Hampshire's towns. The recipients of Jaffrey's thirty-five-square miles of primeval forest in 1749 were forty individuals, most of them residents of Dunstable (now Nashua and Hollis). Their new settlement was known variously as "Monadnock No. 2," "Middle Monadnock," or "Middletown." The township was divided into 220 lots, of an average 100 acres each.

Scattered settlers were in Jaffrey even before it was set aside as a township, though until the cease of the French and Indian War in 1763, most were transient. A saw and grist mill stood in Squantum as early as the mid-1740s. By the late 1760s, some thirty settlers, nearly all of Scotch-Irish descent, had made Jaffrey their permanent home. In 1773, with the addition of another ten families, Jaffrey was incorporated as a town, named for George Jaffrey, a member of the governor's council and Masonian Proprietor. These early families initially lived in low, roughly constructed dwellings that do not typically survive.

As the town grew, saw and grist mills appeared alongside streams, providing early residents with lumber to construct buildings and edible grain. In addition to the mills at Squantum, a saw mill was erected on the Contoocook at Hadley's Crossing (near the intersection of Lehtinen Road and Old Route 202) prior to 1768. Another early saw mill stood on Mountain Stream, north of Gilmore Pond, in an area later called Mineral Spring Village or Ballou City; it was at this mill that lumber for the Meetinghouse was sawn. At

Slab City, located on Gilmore Lane and the east shore of Jones Pond, were grist and saw mills, as well as the town's first carding mill. Other small-scale (and somewhat later) mills included clothespin and chair stock mills on Mountain Stream at Bailey Mills and a woodenware shop at Hodge Mill on Tyler Brook.

In 1775, residents fulfilled one of the primary requirements for the new town – erecting a meetinghouse. Located in the geographic center of town, the meetinghouse became the focal point of a small town center – Jaffrey Center. Citizens established a burial ground behind it and built a minister's residence nearby. Private dwellings far more substantial than those built in previous years and a system of streets that radiated out from the hilltop village quickly followed. With the opening of the Third New Hampshire Turnpike in 1802 (present-day Route 124), and the substantial trade it brought, Jaffrey Center enjoyed a spurt of growth that continued for several decades.

By the late 1830s, East Jaffrey—today's downtown and also located on the turnpike—had begun to eclipse Jaffrey Center in importance. Its proximity to the Contoocook River and water power ripe for large-scale industrial development soon made it a thriving village that became the center of local affairs. Although town meeting remained in the Center until the early 20th century, East Jaffrey was home to a growing commercial and residential district, oriented around a major cotton mill and smaller industries, mostly based on wood products. Just east of the village – and contributing to its economy—was another cotton mill, Cheshire Mill, that was accompanied by an unusual group of corporate workers' housing – all known as Cheshire Village. When the Monadnock Railroad arrived in 1870, it gave a boost to growth in the greater village, which continued to expand well into the 20th century.

For nearly 200 years, agriculture was the mainstay for the bulk of Jaffrey households outside of the three major villages (Squantum, Jaffrey Center and East Jaffrey). Farms were scattered throughout the entire community, as all but the upper reaches of Mount Monadnock proved arable or suitable for grazing. Thirteen district schools, each with its own schoolhouse, served the scattered farm families. The original 100-acre lots granted in 1749 were divided into tillage land, pasture land and woodlot. The Third New Hampshire Turnpike, which bisected the town, brought an enormous potential for prosperity; wagons loaded with beef, pork and farm produce crowded the roads as teamsters brought farm goods to urban markets, trading them for molasses, sugar, cloth and other city products. Large droves of animals – especially cattle – also traveled the route, in the spring to local and farther afield pastures for summer grazing, and returning in the fall, fattened and ready for the Brighton slaughterhouses. Though sheep was the principal livestock in much of New Hampshire between 1815 and 1840, Jaffrey specialized in cattle that grazed on the lower slopes of Monadnock. As pasture land in urban areas became too pricey for such use, cattle raisers looked to the slopes of distant mountains to graze their animals, and Mount Monadnock offered particularly fertile pasture land. As many as 5,000 acres around the mountain accommodated 2,000 cattle in the 1870s, and the owners of these mountain pastures profited greatly. In addition to these summer cattle, several local farmers maintained sizeable herds.

Most of Jaffrey's farms, however, were small-scale subsistence operations with various specialty crops coming in and out of fashion. Large amounts of cheese and butter, products with ready markets in urban areas, were produced on local farms. In the 1840s, potato production surged for three reasons: (1) Irish immigration was at its height, and many immigrants settled on local farms; (2) the vegetable grew readily in the local soil; and (3) potato starch manufacturing, taking advantage of crop surpluses, had become a major local industry in the 1830s and 1840s. In 1811, a Wilton scientist was the first to commercially produce starch from potatoes. The usefulness of starch was quickly recognized by New England's textile mills, and the new industry took off. The Prescott family, who had made substantial sums of money in cattle grazing, financed a substantial starch factory in Squantum in the early 1830s. Both Jaffrey's potato production and starch industry declined ca. 1850, when a potato disease discouraged local planters, and local mills could not compete with the larger-scale production in Maine's factories.

After the railroad came to Jaffrey in 1870, agricultural production changed. Refrigerated cars, invented in 1881, allowed many farmers to shift from butter and cheese production to more profitable milk, which could be shipped without spoilage to distant urban centers. Nearly all of Jaffrey's milk came from four farms.

Land clearing for agriculture peaked in the decade prior to the Civil War, after which farming as an occupation began a slow decline. New England farms could not compete with the lure of western lands and factory work, to say nothing of the other opportunities revealed to young soldiers in the course of their war travels. Fields and pastures slowly grew over, and some farms were altogether abandoned. Between 1870 and 1880, the number of farms dropped from 165 to 153.

Dairy continued to be an important industry into the early decades of the 20th century, supplying both local and distant markets. In 1933, there were still forty-nine active farms. During that decade, however, local agriculture began to change quickly. Several farms ceased operations, and others shifted their focus to produce what could be sold from roadside stands. A few farms developed specialties in poultry during the 1930s, a period when poultry raising gained strong interest throughout much of New Hampshire. The industry peaked locally in the late 1960s; with 30,000 hens and an accompanying egg hatching business, the Coll Poultry Farm was the largest such operation in the region by the 1970s. By the early 1960s, only five dairy farms remained in Jaffrey; in 2006 there are none.

As early as the 1820s, summer visitors came to Jaffrey, drawn chiefly by the lure and beauty of Mount Monadnock, making the town one of the first mountain resorts in New England. Visitors hiked up the mountain and stayed at one of the many spots on or near its slopes offering food and shelter. Authors wrote extensively of the mountain's lore and allure; among those so inspired were literary greats Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Hawthorne, Mark Twain, William Ellery Channing, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Willa Cather and Rudyard Kipling. The mountain also drew scores of artists. Monadnock has been called one of the world's best-loved mountains.

After the Civil War, tourism picked up markedly. There were no fewer than six grand hotels, and numerous private homes opened their doors to summer visitors, frequently adding porches or wings to accommodate the guests. Many visitors returned to purchase older houses, often rescuing them from deterioration, adding porticos, porches, fieldstone or cobblestone chimneys and foundations, and roof dormers. They also designed extravagant gardens with hedges, formal plantings, and granite walls, and created gracious, tree-lined drives and walkways. Of paramount importance, however, was opening up – or maintaining – the vistas of Mount Monadnock. Some summer residents maintained active farms, either reusing earlier barns or building larger, more modern barns. Some half-dozen model farms existed at the turn-of-the-20th-century, where cattle or horses were maintained year-round with the assistance of full-time managers, who followed the most up-to-date and innovative technology in animal husbandry.

Jaffrey's various bodies of water complemented Mount Monadnock in drawing summer residents. In the 1870s, after the arrival of the Monadnock Railroad transformed travel, the first attempt at promoting recreation on the shores of Contoocook Lake was made. A steamer offered lake cruises, and a trotting course provided the opportunity to ride or watch equestrian events. Summer residents from New York City first settled Gilmore Pond, prized for its beauty and serenity, in the late 1880s. At about the same time, professionals and merchants from Boston gravitated toward Thorndike Pond. Word of Jaffrey's beauty and cultural life spread among academic and professional circles, drawing clusters of New England college graduates.

Jaffrey was fortunate that, by the Depression, its manufacturing base had expanded beyond textiles. At a time when most New England communities were devastated by the loss of major employers, Jaffrey continued to prosper as a regional employment center. In 1897 the Granite State Tack Company (later renamed W.W. Cross & Company and yet later a division of PCI) was founded; by 1930 it was the largest manufacturer of tacks in the world, and a small neighborhood known as KK Village developed around the mill just east of East Jaffrey. Bean and Symonds produced box shooks from 1912 into the 1960s. In 1938, D.D. Bean & Sons Company was established to manufacture matchbooks; the business continues to operate today. Other local industries in the post-World War Two era included several woodworking and electronic plants. Millpore Corporation began producing industrial filters in Jaffrey in 1972, and TFX Medical, Inc., has made medical tubing here since 1980. More recent industries of note include Medefab, makers of medical devices since 1990; Johnson Abrasives, producers of coated abrasives since 1979; and New England Wood Pellet, established in 1998.

Jaffrey's Major Villages

Squantum

Located in the southeast corner of Jaffrey, Squantum is a small village that included some of the town's first settlers who erected saw and grist mills in the 1740s. In the 19th century, starch, potash, woodturning, pail and clothespin factories and shops operated here, followed by Thomas Annett's manufactory of round, veneer boxes. In the early 20th century, Annett expanded production to include baskets, toys, wood finish-trim and boxes

of all types. Present-day Monadnock Forest Products continues the village's industrial tradition. Though none of the historic mills survive, a cluster of buildings, including a brick structure that appears to be a former office for a mill, mill owners' houses, and an unusual row of Federal-style workers' dwellings, continue to convey the village's early history.

Jaffrey Center

Jaffrey Center is the original town center. In 1775 residents raised the Meetinghouse, which was used for town meetings and church services. Behind the Meetinghouse, the settlers laid out a large burying ground, and across the street they erected a house for the minister. A system of roads radiated out from the village. After the Third New Hampshire Turnpike (Route 124) opened, Jaffrey Center became an important stagecoach stop for travelers headed between Boston and Walpole. The village's two taverns, three stores and several shops prospered from the traffic, as well as from the merchants, wealthy farms and professionals who resided there. Cutter's tannery and currier shop operated throughout the first half of the 19th century. The first half of the 19th century brought fine examples of the Georgian, Federal and Greek Revival residential styles to the Center. Melville Academy, erected in 1832, drew students from throughout New England, many of whom boarded in local homes. By the 1830s, East (downtown) Jaffrey started to draw commerce and civic activity away from the Center, though town meeting continued to be held in the Meetinghouse until 1914.

Jaffrey Center played a critical role in the town's early tourism industry. In the post-Civil War era, many summer visitors stayed in the Center's inns, and more than a few residents opened their homes to seasonal boarders. The Center became an enclave for professionals and academics, a large number of whom had been classmates at Amherst College. They purchased abandoned farms and historic houses, which were often altered with Colonial Revival features, and painstakingly preserved the vistas toward Mount Monadnock. In 1906 a group of public-spirited citizens established the Jaffrey Center Village Improvement Society which, over the years, has played a leading role in restoring key properties, such as the Meetinghouse, horse sheds and Little Red Schoolhouse, and improving open space and vistas within the Center.

In 1970, the citizens of Jaffrey recognized the historic and architectural significance of Jaffrey Center by designating it a local historic district. Five years later, the village was also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Downtown Jaffrey (East Jaffrey)

The first mill in downtown Jaffrey was erected ca. 1770 on the Contocook River by John Borland, whose lot included a large part of the downtown. This saw and grist mill was soon joined by a linseed oil mill. East Jaffrey remained a minor village until the Third New Hampshire Turnpike passed through it, bringing with it travel and goods from points northwest and into Vermont. In 1814 a cotton mill was erected, completed only six years after the state's first such mill was built in nearby New Ipswich. Around the mill and the adjacent river crossing emerged a small commercial center, with stores, shops, church, parsonage, several hotels and dwellings. The Turnpike remained the spine of the

village, but side streets soon joined it. In the 1840s the village acquired a school and post office, and its name was changed from Factory Village to East Jaffrey. (In 1946, citizens voted to drop “East” from the village name.)

During the mid-19th century, East Jaffrey enjoyed a spurt of growth, with additional streets, businesses and dwellings. In 1868, a brick cotton mill replaced the old wooden building, and a few years later, the facility added another brick building on the opposite bank of the river to house a boiler room, machine shop, picker room and dye house. Over 100 employees worked in the cotton mill or one of the company’s other mills, which included grist, saw, planing mills that produced shingles, lath, finished lumber and boxes. Just north of East Jaffrey, but influencing its development, was Cheshire Mill, built in 1823 on the Contoocook River. Originally a cotton mill, it was rebuilt in 1828; a cluster of housing for its workers stood behind the mill. The owners of Jaffrey Mills ultimately bought this factory. In 1938 D.D. Bean & Sons purchased it for the production of book matches, an industry that continues to operate today.

The village’s prosperity during the mid-19th century is still reflected in the dozens of houses built in the Greek Revival style. An influx of Irish and French Canadian immigrants to work in the mills resulted in the construction of the first St. Patrick’s Church in 1887, to serve the Catholic population. The village continued to expand in the late 19th and early 20th century, with a wide range of domestic architectural styles spanning the economic spectrum, including a spurt of tenement and apartment construction between 1910 and 1920, a library (1896), a doubling of the cotton mill complex, and additional commercial buildings, many of which replaced or significantly updated earlier structures. A tree-planting program initiated in 1860 introduced maples on both sides of Main Street, some of which survive today.

During the Depression, the town undertook several municipal improvement projects, including a fire station, war memorial, and school. Both the 1936 flood and 1938 hurricane/flood caused tremendous damage to the village and fundamentally changed its appearance. To ensure against future such disasters, a dam was built on the Contoocook River next to the newly replaced Main Street bridge in 1938. This between-the-wars era was also one of increased automobile traffic, and three service stations were constructed within four years. Automobile use brought about the cease of passenger rail service in 1953.

Downtown Jaffrey illustrates the evolution of a village center over a 200 year period. It evolved without a deliberate plan, but its appearance today forms an intact and diverse small New Hampshire townscape. The village retains a wide range of distinctive civic, religious, commercial and industrial resources. Its residences represent a cross-section of architectural styles from the early 19th through the mid-20th century and include Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, Second Empire, Stick, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, Craftsman, and Moderne – and variants on each. In 2002, Downtown Jaffrey’s historic and architectural significance was recognized when the entire village was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.