

FORM A - AREA

Assessor's Sheets USGS Quad Area Letter Form Numbers in Area
107, 108, 219 X

Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Massachusetts Archives Building
Boston, MA 02125

Town: Groton

Place: Farmers Row

Photographs

X *See continuation sheet*

Name of Area: Farmers Row

Current Use:

Residential/commemorative/agricultural/educational

Construction Dates or Period: c. 1680-1970

Overall Condition: Good-excellent

Major Intrusions and Alterations: Approximately 2
modern or rebuilt residences; few modern materials

Acreage: Approximately 30

Recorded by: Sanford Johnson

Organization: Groton Historical Commission

Date (Month/Year): 10/06

Sketch Map

X *See continuation sheet*

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural, structural and landscape features and evaluate in terms of other areas within the community. See Continuation Sheet X

Introduction

The Farmers Row Area comprises a linear village located between the house at 108 Pleasant Street and the south boundary of the Groton School Campus, although the Groton School will be addressed on a separate Area Form in the future. The east and west sides are the rear of the lots along Farmers Row. The area, which is 36 miles west of Boston, consists largely of Federal Period residences with other styles represented including the Greek Revival, Victorian Eclectic, Classical Revival and Colonial. Wood frame and some brick construction, usually of two and one half stories with side gabled roofs, is typical although larger buildings of brick do exist. A great deal of the area's character is derived from the well-preserved farmhouses, many with outbuildings, arranged along the road which is elevated above the Nashua River to the west. The core of the Groton School, begun in 1884, is a group of architect-designed brick and stone buildings focused inward toward a central circular lawn. The area is the town's densest collection of historic agricultural and estate properties and retains strong associations with the residential, educational and agricultural history.

Development

Groton was founded in 1655 by residents from Woburn, Boston and elsewhere as one of the state's westernmost frontier towns. Disputes with Native Americans culminated in the burning of the town in 1676 and persisted into the 18th century, slowing the settlement process begun earlier around the corner of Hollis and Main Streets. At least two attacks by Native Americans occurred within the boundaries of the area in 1704 and 1707. Subsequent agricultural activity proved successful and allowed local farmers to prosper, encouraging the founding of the Groton Academy (later Lawrence Academy, located in Groton Center) in 1792 and, by the 19th century, the construction of numerous estate-quality farm and summer residences along Farmers Row that continue to lend the area a highly refined appearance.

Farmers Row experienced little growth after the middle of the 19th century, leaving the area with the appearance of a neighborhood of Federal Period agricultural and summer estates. Due to local historic preservation legislation put in place in the 1960s, Farmers Row is more well-preserved in relation to other agricultural districts in northern Middlesex County. The vast majority of buildings are contributing elements and continue to associate the area with its historic trends of development. The area retains much of the appearance it had during the early 20th century.

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Farmers Row is the location of approximately 20 residences, most of which are agricultural although some purely residential buildings exist. Also, the Groton School owns numerous residential and educational buildings. The road was established as a county route in the 17th century in order to connect Groton with its fellow frontier town of Lancaster. While early residences existed at that time, they were later replaced with the more substantial buildings we see today. Among buildings in Groton, houses on Farmers Row are more likely to have larger lots with expansive views to the west and exhibit a higher quality of design and level of preservation than houses elsewhere in town other than Groton Center.

Selected Descriptions

The brick house at **2 Farmers' Row (MHC #88)** is a front-gabled, 4x4-bay, Federal style design with rear additions set diagonal to the main block of the house. Decorative features include the nearly symmetrical fenestration in the façade, molded cornice, gable returns and classical trim with sidelights around the off-center entry. Windows are 6/6 double-hung sash with granite lintels and sills; a granite lintel is above the front door as well. Secondary entries are in both diagonal ells and have simple trim; Two brick chimneys rise from the roof of the main block on either side of the ridge; A post and rail fence separates the house from the road. A detached barn is in the south side yard behind the house; The front gabled block is accessed through the street elevation by a rolling vehicle door; 6/6 double-hung sash flank the main door and a door to the mow exists above; a perpendicular ell projects from the north side of the barn and has a lower roofline than the main block; A detached garage from the mid 20th century exists in the north side yard. The setting is rural with extensive tracts of open land providing views from Farmers Row to the woods along the Nashua River to the west. A granite post and wood rail fence lines the front yard. The Asa Lawrence House is in excellent condition has a high quality of design and setting; this is one of several ornate estate properties on Farmers Row; another front-gabled Greek Revival style house exists at 31 Hollis Street

The Lawrence Homestead at **44 Farmers Row (MHC #89)** is comprised of three separately built but attached 2 1/2-story side-gabled blocks oriented parallel to the main block. The main block of 2 1/2 stories and 5x3 bays was built c. 1797 and demonstrates characteristics of the Federal style including the symmetrical façade, center entry, center brick chimney with corbel and classical detail; ornament includes the molded cornice with dentils at the eave of the façade, gable returns, corner boards, entry surround with fanlight, dentils and pilasters capped by an ornate broken pediment (the entry surround is likely a Colonial Revival addition); windows in the main block are 12/12 double hung sash with hoods except in the second story of the façade where the window trim dies into the cornice. Additions made in the late 19th century demonstrate a variety of Victorian details including in the first addition's north wall a clipped gable with dentils above a Palladian window in the side wall and flat-roofed porch supported by colonettes on plinths; the south wall has a variety of multiple pane windows that are mulled in groups of two, three, and four sashes as well as a recessed porch; The second

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addition has on its north wall a paneled brick chimney along the exterior wall, segmental arched gable ornament, molded cornice and closed gable; the south wall has an overhanging gable covering a multiple sash bay window supported by modillions which in turn overhangs a bay window with paired windows flanked by turned posts and paneled woodwork. Stone walls and an iron gate separate the house from the road, lending an estate quality to the building. The house is in excellent condition and is one of the higher style Federal designs in the town; the setting is among open fields that provide views from Farmers Row to the woods along the Nashua River; the Victorian additions are in harmony with the Federal block and add to the grandeur of the house. A stone plaque built into the stone wall topped by an iron fence along the road commemorates the 1707 abduction of the Tarbell children by Native Americans. A cast stone circular fountain measuring approximately 10' in diameter exists in the south side yard. The center is marked by an urn.

The Classical Revival style mansion at **76 Farmers Row (MHC #155)** consists of a 5x3-bay, deck-hipped, 2-story main block expanded at the north side by a second 5x3-bay, deck-hipped form of 2 stories whose front elevation is set back from the principal façade. Secondary masses include the 1/2-round bay at the southwest corner and the 1/2-round portico at the center entry; four brick chimneys are set in from the corners of the main block. Details include the symmetrical fenestration in the façade, fluted pilasters with Corinthian capitals at the corners and flanking the central bay, entablature with deep cornice trimmed with dentils and modillions at the eaves. Windows are mainly 15/15 double-hung sash with slim but projecting hoods; other window types are the 12/12 sash in the secondary block, 18/18 double-hung sash in the 1/2-round bay, a Palladian window lighting the first story of the south elevation and a larger Palladian window flanked by 4/4 double-hung sash over the principal entry. The center entry has a fanlight, 1/2-length sidelights and is covered by a 1/2-round, flat-roofed portico with entablature articulated with dentils, modillions and a balustrade above, all supported by 2 Corinthian columns. The brick outbuilding is a former 2x2-bay district schoolhouse built c. 1830 altered with a second story for use as an office. The perimeter of the yard is marked by a stone fence of random ashlar in granite; stone piers with wrought iron lamps mark the entrance to the unusually large and ornate residence; the setting is a corner lot with large open fields with southwest views from the road to the woods lining the Nashua River; design and materials appear to be largely unaltered

The Greek Revival style, three by three bay, front-gabled house at **123 Farmers Row** rises two and one-half stories. A hipped porch covers the first story of the façade; a rear ell of one story expands the plan at the rear. Decorative elements include the Doric columns supporting the porch, paneled corner pilasters, closed gable and molded eave trim. Windows are 6/6 double-hung sash with shutters and flat hoods; paired sash in the gable peak are fixed 9-pane units; a three-sided bay window on the south side may be a 20th century addition. The side-hall entry is flanked by sidelights with paneled, tripartite lintel above. Stout brick chimneys with corbels occupy the front and rear of the roof ridge. The house is set on terraced ground that slopes down to a granite slab retaining wall at the edge of the road. The detached garage in the rear appears to have been built in the mid 20th century. The house is in excellent condition and retains historic exterior fabric and architectural details

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The Federal style Joshua Eaton House at **182 Farmers Row (MHC #86)** is a 5x2-bay, 2 1/2-story, side-gabled form with a 2-story rear ell and 1-story addition at the south side that connects the barn; a gable-roofed entry porch covers the center entry; a three-sided bay window expands the plan of the main block at the south side. Decorative features include the entry porch with classical details including Doric columns, entablature, dentils and modillions, molded cornice with modillions, gable returns, corner pilasters with molded bases and capitals, plain entry surround with sidelights and flanking pilasters and the symmetrical fenestration in the main block; two brick chimneys rise from the rear slope of the roof. Windows are 6/6 double-hung sash with beaded trim and hoods on the first story. The attached barn is approximately 30'x40', is clad in wood clapboards, has a rolling vehicle door with transom facing east toward the road in the gable end; paired fixed 12-pane sash light the door; a 4/8 double hung unit is in the gable peak; a weathervane occupies the roof peak; a second vehicle door gives access to the ell connecting the house and barn. The house is well-maintained and is typical of the high style estate-scale properties common on Farmers Row; the large open parcel with expansive views to the west, the denticulated cornice and porch provide the house with a high level of architectural significance. A wood picket fence lines the front yard at the road.

Landscape Features

The Farmers Row Area is unusual in the region for its far-ranging westerly views toward Mount Wachusett and other eminences of central Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire. Large open fields surround many of the properties on the west side of the road and reach almost to the Nashua River. The east side of the road is also planted in hayfields in some places such as the segment between Pleasant Street and Broadmeadow Road as and the segment from Higley Street to Peabody Street. Agricultural activity beginning in the Colonial Period has continued in the area and thus the appearance of a neighborhood of farms fields and pastures remains predominant.

Conclusion/Comparison

The Farmers Row Area is the town's largest collection of agricultural buildings and landscapes that, as a result of local historic preservation legislation passed in the 1960s that covers properties from 108 Pleasant Street to the houses owned by the Groton School at the corner of Shirley Road, is very well-maintained overall, contains a small number of modern buildings and few architectural intrusions. The Farmers Row Area occupies a unique position among historic resources in the community, one that does not encourage comparison to other historic areas in Groton due to the presence of summer estates with open fields and long views as well as the high level of quality of the building designs. Other sections of town such as Common Street and Chicopee Row have numerous agricultural properties but lack the cohesion, design quality, viewsheds and level of preservation of Farmers Row.

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HISTORICAL NARRATIVE:

Explain historical development of the area. Discuss how the area relates to the historical development of the town. See Continuation Sheet X

Introduction

During the Period of First Settlement (1620-1675), the town's European residents clustered around the intersection of the modern day Main and Hollis Streets in Groton Center with a small number of additional residents scattered over the town. Those not living in the central village were most likely to be on Farmers Row as it was laid out around the same time as the Main Street-Boston Road corridor and was also a county road by 1673. The first Europeans, coming from Boston, Watertown, Woburn and surrounding towns, traveled on paths over Boston, Martins Pond and Longley Roads, Hollis Street and Farmers Row and Chicopee Row, among other secondary roads. Growth of the town was curtailed by attacks on the white population by Native Americans starting in 1676, which resulted in the destruction by fire and two-year abandonment of the town, and enduring sporadically until 1724. One of these attacks, in 1707, took place at the northern end of the area near the site of 44 Farmers Row. The town's and the center village's population remained primarily agricultural for nearly two centuries, although some small scale industrial activity took place outside the area. By the time the existing First Parish Church was built in 1755, several prosperous local families began to consider the importance of pursuits beyond agriculture, resulting in the founding of the Groton Academy in Groton Center (later renamed Lawrence Academy) in 1792 and an increase in the number of local professionals in the fields of medicine, commerce, architecture and law, some of whom lived on Farmers Row. A number of residents, starting in the 18th century, were trained as physicians and lawyers but continued to operate farms, causing the proliferation of the estate quality farmhouses we see today. The views to the west from the ridge on which the road is sited combined with the refinement of the farmhouse designs, agricultural landscape and cultural offerings of the town as a whole guided the development of the area from a strictly agricultural neighborhood into one of luxury summer homes and gentlemen's farms. A contributing element to the refined agricultural appearance was the construction beginning in 1884 of the Groton School at the south end of the area. Although the school is not agricultural in nature, its open fields and wide campus lawns reinforce the area's rural appearance. Like the summer residents, Groton's founder, Endicott Peabody was drawn here for the bucolic surroundings and the deep roots of the founding families that continued to occupy houses in the area. Activities of neighborhood residents gradually changed in the mid 20th century from farming to commuting by employees to regional employment centers such as Ayer, Lowell and Boston.

Colonial Period 1675-1775

The population of the town of Groton at the beginning of the Colonial Period was around 60 families according to Dr. Green's research. Due to violent attacks on the European settlers by Native Americans

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fighting for King Philip in the spring of 1676, the entire town except five garrisons was burned and the whole of the population decamped, many to Concord for a period of two years. Returning in the spring of 1678, the Europeans renewed their efforts to settle the town and were successful in attracting 40 families (approximately 200 people) by 1680 and 300-350 people by 1692, although growth continued to be slow due to the unstable relations with warring Native Americans. The number of residents in 1765 given by the Massachusetts Historical Commission Town Report is 1443 in 242 families and 174 houses, signifying an increase in the rate of settlement after stabilizing relations with Native Americans around 1730. Of the 174 houses in the town, perhaps as many as 10 existed in the area of Farmers Row. Farms were known to exist at the site of 44 Farmers Row, a Federal style house that replaced a Colonial predecessor owned by Thomas Tarbell and at 133 Farmers Row which was occupied by a member of the Farnsworth family. Also, John Page, a sawyer in South Groton, builder of the Town Pound in 1665-6, town clerk in 1667, representative to the Massachusetts General Court in 1692 and 1693, original proprietor of the town and owner of a 20 acre right, lived near the site of 287 Farmers Row although his house was demolished in 1870. Mr. Page was assigned to a garrison in 1691-2 along with William Green, John Lawrence, Abigail Parker, Joshua Wheat, Samuel Church, Joseph Parker, John Greene, Daniel Cady, Samuel Woods and Thomas Woods, suggesting they all lived on or near Farmers Row. Sixteen years later, the name of Mr. Page and others appeared on a list of Groton inhabitants who had either left the town or were considering doing so, probably due to strife with Native Americans. This was, according to Frederick Jackson Turner's The Frontier in American History, after an act passed by the General Court in 1694-5 enumerated the "Frontier Towns" which the inhabitants were forbidden to desert on pain of loss of lands (if landholders) or of imprisonment (if not landholders) unless permission to remove was first obtained. Indeed, in July, 1707, Town Clerk Joseph Lakin wrote a letter to Governor Dudley requesting permission to leave the town and that it be reduced to a garrison, "so few people being left there". Violence spurring the interest of residents in departing may have been related to the fact that on October 27, 1704, John Shapley of Groton applied to the court for a reward for having killed and scalped one of several Native Americans who attacked him.

Voters of Groton directed selectmen in 1681 to form a school at public expense. Little is known about its location or curriculum and, since there is nothing further in the record on the subject until 1703, it is likely that the school was established and in operation at that time. The number of locations for schools increased to five in 1741 and seven in 1742, making it possible that a school existed at or near the current location of the former District School #3 in the front yard of the house at 76 Farmers Row.

Francis Marion Boutwell has stated in "Old Highways and Landmarks of Groton, Massachusetts" that the majority of residents lived close together along Main and Hollis Street during the period of first settlement, although pressure to expand the population and bring additional acreage under cultivation led in 1713 to the first of five divisions of publicly held lands. During this process, land held in reserve by the town proprietors was given or sold to residents according to their station, financial or otherwise (Ministers and millers frequently received parcels in return for their services), thereby enlarging the tilled area and achieving more control over the natural environment, a common goal of early settlers. Additional divisions came in 1721/2,

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1726, 1748 and 1760. The MHC report describes a few scattered farms on the west side of the Nashua by 1710, confirming that land on Farmers Row had come under the plow by that time.

Residents of Groton in the Colonial Period were compelled to remain on their property by an act of the General Court in 1694/5 which enumerated "Frontier Towns" in Massachusetts and present day Maine. Punishment for abandonment was loss of lands for landowners and imprisonment for others unless permission to leave was first obtained. A site on Shirley Road between Farmers Row and Joy Lane was the place where on October 25, 1704, John Davis was killed by Indians in his own dooryard of a house no longer extant. The event is recorded by a memorial boulder erected in 1910. It was a relatively short time afterward, in 1707, that three children of Thomas Tarbell were taken by Native Americans from their hiding place in a cherry tree near their house on Farmers Row and brought to Canada where they are believed to have remained. Dr. Green states that they had descendants living in St. Regis, Quebec (A settlement of Catholic Iroquois, situated on the south bank of the St. Lawrence) in the late 1800s.

The principal economic activity on Farmers Row, not just during the Colonial Period but throughout its history until the 20th century, was agriculture. Aspects of farming that residents were engaged in included cattle-raising, crop-growing and general husbandry on a subsistence level. An early cash crop may have been fruit, mainly apples as they appear in property descriptions on numerous deeds during the period. Mills for grinding corn and cutting lumber were the principal industrial facilities and were located in the extreme southern part of town now within the bounds of Harvard.

Federal Period 1775-1830

Infrastructural improvements in the area included the placement of milestones by Dr. Oliver Prescott between 1783 and 1787 on Main Street and Farmers Row. These are among the older and more expressive of slate directional markers and so were recorded by photographers working for the Historic American Building Survey in the 1930s. The markers are located on Main Street and on the east side of Farmers Row opposite Peabody Street. The population of the Farmers Row area at the end of the Federal Period was around 60 based on the fact that 12 residences of perhaps five people each are depicted on Caleb Butler's 1832 map of Groton.

The majority of Farmers Row residents were involved in agriculture as a means of making a living. Crops were mainly for subsistence although some were undoubtedly shipped to Lowell after that city's founding late in the period. Fruit would have been a particularly common cash crop. Another cash crop beginning c. 1790 was hops, grown for the most part near the current site of the Groton School on Farmers Row. Production increased throughout the period until by the end Groton was a center of the trade for surrounding towns where it was also grown (these included Westford, Pepperell, Dunstable, Littleton, Tyngsborough, Townsend, Harvard, Shirley, Lunenburg and Boxborough). Henry Woods and the Groton-based Massachusetts Hops Company were notable dealers in the crop until the trade moved west to New York State in the Early Industrial period.

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Residential architecture from the period consisted largely of Federal style designs of five-bay facades, usually of two and one-half stories, although one seven-bay example is in evidence at **112 Farmers Row (MHC #84)**. The first known owner of this house was the widow Ann Dickson whose name appears on the 1832 map by Caleb Butler. Tax records from 1830 show Anna Dickson as the owner of \$1,700 in real property, an average amount for Groton. By 1847, the occupant was Charles Dickson who was taxed in that year for ownership of \$2,800 in real property, suggesting some improvements to the farm, possibly construction of the barn or of the two northern bays of the facade. Mr. Dickson was described by Edward A. Richardson, historian of the neighborhood, as a teamster. A small number of houses in the area were built of brick, notably, the house at **108 Pleasant Street (MHC #87)**, now enlarged with wooden wings flanking the original gable front block. The house, known as "The Elms", was built on a 3x4-bay, Greek Revival style, front gabled plan in 1815 for Judge Samuel Dana, son of the First Parish minister at the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. Judge Dana (1767-1835) was a native of Groton who practiced law in Groton Center and moved here from his house in Groton Center at **86 Main Street (MHC#23)**. He was a founder of Lawrence Academy and one of two lawyers in town in 1798 (the other was Timothy Bigelow, each with two students). Judge Dana operated the town's first post office in the building at 86 Main Street from 1800 until 1804, was a member of the Massachusetts State Senate in 1803, 1814-15, served on the committee to alter the state constitution in 1820-21 and was simultaneously the chief justice of the court of common pleas. He was the town moderator in 1794 among additional public posts. Mr. Dana sold 108 Pleasant Street in 1833 to Timothy Fuller, another lawyer who moved here from Cambridge after visiting the town while his daughter, the future author Margaret Fuller Ossolli attended school at Miss Susan Prescott's School at **14 Main Street (MHC#20)**.

The Lawrence Homestead was built at **44 Farmers Row (MHC #89)** c. 1797 for Susanna and Deacon Samuel Lawrence on the site of a house built during the late 17th or early 18th century (demolished 1796) for Thomas Tarbell who lost three children to kidnapping at this site by Native Americans on June 20, 1707. Samuel Lawrence was a veteran of the Battle of Bunker Hill, justice of the peace, founder and trustee of the Groton Academy and the father of Amos, William and Abbott Lawrence, prominent Groton natives and Boston importers and manufacturers of domestic goods, Lowell industrialists and founders of textile mills in the city of Lawrence, Massachusetts which was named for Abbott, later a U.S. senator and Whig Vice Presidential candidate and founder in 1847 of the Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard University. Amos' and William's donations to their alma mater, Groton Academy, were the impetus for changing the name in 1846 to The Lawrence Academy at Groton.

The earliest known owner of **133 Farmers Row (MHC #85)** is Abel Farnsworth who lived here from c. 1832-c. 1847 according to maps and tax records from those years. From c. 1856-c. 1875, Mr. Farnsworth's relative George Farnsworth, who is listed in 1855 census schedules as a 45-year-old farmer living with his Irish house keeper Jane and three children, was the occupant.

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The Butler map of 1832 indicates the house at **287 Farmers Row (MHC #40)** was the residence of William Bancroft. Francis Marion Boutwell, recording recollections of Miss Elizabeth Farnsworth in 1883, states the house was built by Lieutenant William A. Bancroft in 1815. This may be the William Bancroft born in 1756 and a seven-year veteran of the Revolutionary War. Tax records from 1830 and 1847 list Mr. Bancroft as the owner of real property valued at \$1,300-\$1,800, an average valuation.

Early Industrial Period 1830-1870

Population of the area was around 60 at the beginning of the period and remained fairly constant throughout. There was around 1847-1857 a short-lived influx of approximately 50 Millerites, followers of the Adventist Reverend William Miller described below, to a location slightly south of the present area boundary. References to the profitability of farming and the scenic beauty were made during the period by visitors to Groton. Richard S. Fisher, writing in A New and Complete Statistical Gazetteer of the United States of America in 1853 stated that the town had soils of extraordinary fertility, was a town of great wealth and was the home of many of the first families in the state. John Hayward, writing in the Gazetteer of Massachusetts in 1857, called it a flourishing town of "great neatness and taste which induces many wealthy families to make it their residence". It seems likely that the authors of these travel guides were referring at least in part to the section of Farmers Row, home to, among others of their social station, the Lawrences who were by this time well known industrialists, philanthropists and agriculturalists. Butler noted in his history of the town that the predominant crops were corn, barley, oats, potatoes and rye but hay was the chief crop for market. Apples, peaches, cherries, plums and pears were becoming profitable to sell in Lowell with the growth of that city from the 1820s and the construction of the Worcester & Nashua Railroad through Groton Center in 1847. Butler mentions that hops were grown here but were no longer as profitable as they once were. Hop growers included Osgood Putnam at **182 Farmers Row (MHC #86)**, J. Richards and Alva Cushing on farms now demolished but located in 1856 on Shirley Road halfway between Farmers Row and Joy Lane and Benjamin Moors who lived just outside the area at **518 Farmers Row (MHC #44)**. Also, yeast and yeast cake made from dry hops were kept in a yeast house between Shirley Road and Farmers Row until around 1860 when Midwestern produce displaced the New England variety. The yeast building burned on April 1, 1890. State census information concerning agricultural produce in the town at large, but certainly pertinent to Farmers Row, established an increasing trend for the volume of fruit sold between 1846 and 1866 and a decrease in hop production for the same period. In the area of the Groton School, there were several small-scale industrial shops that are now demolished or moved away. A hoop shaving shop was owned by Walter Keyes and a blacksmith shop by Henry Moody and later Joseph H. Richardson where ship irons and jack screws were made. A shoe shop also existed on Shirley Road as did an additional shop of unspecified use, all depicted on the 1856 Walling map and partly described by Richardson.

Unusual religious activities took place in the area with the gathering of Millerite Adventists from 1846-1856. Adherents of the religious principles of William Miller numbered around 50,000 nationwide and believed in the second advent of Christ and the end of the world between the vernal equinoxes of 1843 and 1844. Disappointed in March of 1844, Mr. Miller revised his estimate for the timing of the world's end based on new

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mathematical formulae taken from numbers mentioned in the various books of the Bible to occur in October, 1844, when, to the chagrin of those who had neglected daily farm chores or actually given away their property, the status quo prevailed. The local leader of Millerites in Groton was Benjamin Hall, a native of Westford who moved to Groton around 1840 and bought a farm of 120 acres along the Shirley Road where he established his "Community", the name that the location of the Millerites' neighborhood would retain for several decades after their demise. The original place of worship was in Groton Center on Willowdale Road in the "Polliwog Chapel", since destroyed by fire. Through the sale of parts of his farm to fellow believers, ownership of the Community was dispersed and expanded to around 12 households. Many of these made homes of former farm outbuildings and all are now moved away or demolished. The core of the settlement was located near the stables of the Gardner House on the Groton School Campus. Also nearby was a building with a tall roof that functioned as wood shop, meeting house, hall and school, an arrangement that lasted for around six of the ten or so years the Community existed. In 1856, Benjamin Hall moved away, eventually settling in Wisconsin and drawing around 25 Groton Adventists there. The hall was taken down in 1878.

Architecture

The house at **2 Farmers Row (MHC #88)** has a brick front-gabled form that is unusual in the town. The house was built for Asa S. Lawrence in 1837 just north of his previous house (since moved to Pleasant Street). Mr. Lawrence was the grandson of Captain Lawrence (d. 1804) who commanded one of Groton's two companies of minutemen on April 19th, 1775 and the Second Company at the Battle of Bunker Hill. Mr. Lawrence lived in the house until c. 1847 when valuations show he paid tax on property worth \$6,600, an amount above the average in Groton. Asa S. Lawrence, the son of Asa Sr., occupied the house by 1855 according to the state census which records him as a 34 year-old farmer married to Agnes with a child William A. Lawrence.

The house at **123 Farmers Row** was first owned by Judge Prescott according to Dr. Green. David Fosdick, a deacon in the newly formed Groton Baptist Church lived here by 1847. A group of 15-24 (sources conflict) Baptists, including deacons David Fosdick and Thomas Hutchins, formed a religious society in Groton in 1831 and began construction of the church in 1841(264 Main Street, MHC #154). Deacon Fosdick remained here with his family until at least 1875 according to atlases and tax records which also indicate he had \$3,500 in stocks and two farms in addition to this one. Census information from 1855 and 1865 show he was a farmer with 4 children and no wife at the time of the census. Deacon Fosdick's son David may also have been a clergyman and is listed as the owner in the 1889 tax records, although the house is noted as the D. Fosdick Estate on the 1889 atlas. According to the younger Fosdick's obituary from the Andover Theological Seminary, reprinted in Green's Historical Series, he was born in Charlestown in 1813, graduated at Amherst College in 1831, taught school in Groton c. 1840 and ministered the Unitarian congregation from 1847-1892 in South Groton (later the town of Ayer).

Stephen Kendall is depicted as the owner of **281 Farmers Row (MHC #39)** on the 1832 map of the town. The road name Farmers Row was in use as early as 1848 according to Mr. Butler's History of Groton,

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suggesting the initial use of the property was agricultural. Around 1846, Edward Adams Richardson names George Martin Shattuck as the occupant of the house. By 1856, the owner was John H. Hartwell, a 46-year-old farmer who lived with his wife Caroline, a boarder named Alpheus Richardson and 4 children, two of whom were described as "idiots" in the census of 1855. By 1875, it was owned by Joshua Wait (also spelled Waitt and Waite) who appears in the 1865 census as a farmer from Malden with a wife named Elizabeth and 3 children. It may have been Mr. Wait who had the house moved a quarter mile north in 1898.

Late Industrial Period 1870-1915

Little in the way of development occurred regarding the transportation routes in the Farmers Row Area. The town hired road repair crews in 1888 to raise Farmers Row out of the mud near the Groton School and Farmers Row was "Macadamized" shortly after Main Street was paved in 1902. With the road network complete, residents turned their attention to improving the grounds of their farms and agricultural estates, hiring on a limited basis landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted and his associates, Frederick Charles Olmsted, Charles Eliot, Arthur Shurcliff and others to design gardens at the house of James Lawrence at 44 Farmers Row, the Groton School and at Clara Endicott Sears' house at 76 Farmers Row, the firm sited her dwelling so as to take in views of the Nashua River. With one house built during the period for a single woman, the population of the area remained fairly constant at around 11 houses or 55 people. The economic base remained agricultural although the increase of wealthy summer residents added a resort or estate feel to the farming activity. The small shops operated in the community had been demolished or moved away by 1880, leaving husbandry, dairying, fruit growing and some crop culture to occupy the residents.

Architecture

James Lawrence had the house at 24 Farmers Row built c. 1870 given that it is depicted on the 1875 Beers atlas. The Stick Style residence and barn of matching design are a fanciful addition to the group of predominantly Federal Style residences along Farmers Row. Mr. Lawrence appears to have lived in the house according to the 1875 atlas and, while he owned the family homestead next door at **44 Farmers Row (MHC #89)**, rented number 44 to T.L. Motley. By 1889, however, James occupied the Lawrence Homestead and may have had his farm employees at 24 Farmers Row. James was the son of philanthropist and industrialist Abbott Lawrence and occupied 44 Farmers Row from 1876, when he enlarged it with the design help of architect John Hubbard Sturgis, to at least 1889 according to landscape historian Faith Smith and the Walker atlas which also shows that he owned not only the neighboring houses at 24 and 2 Farmers Row but the parcel across the road, among others. Mr. Lawrence was a cousin of Groton School founder Endicott Peabody and like him had a brief relationship with the Frederick Law Olmsted landscape architecture firm as they attempted to procure for both clients a view to the Nashua River and hills beyond. Tax records show he had \$262,000 in stocks and bonds and \$10,000 in furniture, among other possessions, all worth a vast amount beyond normalcy for a Groton resident. Mr. Lawrence bought the farm of his relative Asa at **2 Farmers Row (MHC #88)** and constructed an expensive barn to house his prize dairy herd and to supply his creamery, a well known establishment in the region at the time.

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76 Farmers Row (MHC #155) was built in 1894 by Miss Clara Endicott Sears. This was in 1691 the site of a garrison house used to defend against raids by Native Americans. Miss Sears (1863-1960) bought the land and house now at **90 Farmers Row (MHC #83)**, moved the house approximately 1/4 mile to the south and soon thereafter began construction on her mansion at 76 Farmers Row with help prior to construction from Charles Eliot of the Frederick Law Olmsted landscape architecture firm who sited her building. Miss Sears was a wealthy Bostonian (resident with her parents at 132 Beacon Street from 1865-1925), cousin of her neighbor to the north, James Lawrence, and author of novels who later founded the Fruitlands Museum in Harvard, preserved Shaker artifacts and buildings as well as Hudson River School art. She sold the house in 1910 in order to move to Harvard, Mass. Subsequent owners were the DuMaine family from 1927-1946.

Groton School was founded in 1884 by the Episcopal minister Endicott Peabody on land formerly owned by John Graves. Buildings were designed by the renowned Gothicist Henry Vaughan, and by Reverend Peabody's brother's architecture firm, Peabody and Stearns who designed Hundred House, Brooks House, Fives Court the Schoolhouse and others between 1884 and 1902. The school functions on an English public school format and from the beginning catered to the sons of wealthy Bostonians (the school is now co-educational). During the Late Industrial Period, it was the school of Theodore Roosevelt's sons and of Franklin Roosevelt as well as numerous additional nationally significant public servants, businessmen and politicians. The details of the campus design and the school's history are to be described in a subsequent phase of the town's Historic Preservation Plan.

Early Modern Period 1915-1945

The Early Modern Period brought few changes to the area other than limited residential development and some additional faculty and staff housing for employees of the Groton School. The economy continued to function on an agricultural base with James Lawrence's creamery at **2 Farmers Row** functioning into the 20th century under the management of Myron Swallow from 1875-1915. The 1939 WPA maps depicts orchards, hayfields, market gardens, merchantable timber and other crops being grown throughout the area on open land not given over to views and formal landscapes.

The population remained fairly constant, given that there were few new residential buildings. The Lawrence Homestead at **44 Farmers Row** was owned in the 1930's by Carl A. P. Lawrence, an officer in the Groton Leatherboard Company in West Groton. Mr. Taisey was 1977 owner. Owners of Riverdale Farm at **76 Farmers Row** from 1927 to 1946 were the DuMaine family. Frederick C. Dumaine (1866-1951) was an industrialist, former office boy and later the head of the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company of Manchester, NH, said by Helen Sawyer to be the largest textile factory in the world. He donated the 54-acre Groton Place, located at the foot of Long Hill Road, to the town. Zella and Nellie Barrett bought the house in 1946 and remained here until the 1970s. John Lawrence (d. 1924) and his family members Geraldine and Harriet occupied the house at **133 Farmers Row** in the 1920s. Martha Lawrence (d. 1935), widow of John Lawrence

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and sister of Groton School founder Endicott Peabody, lived here 40 years and served as Groton Public Library trustee for 35. John Lawrence's grandson Edward Harding lived here in 1967 according to previous GHC research.

Additional residents, whose names appear in the resident directory for 1918, albeit without addresses, lend a more detailed picture to the population of the area. Owen Baker is listed as a manager and may have run one of the estate farms. James Culver and Walter Davis were farmers. John Hennigan was a laborer and Sherman Monroe a mason. It is interesting to note that there were three chauffeurs, David Gibson, Silas Northrup and Swan Swanson, as well as a coachman named John Bradley. Eleven men were employed at the Groton School as teachers and another five worked there either in management or on the grounds. Most of these lived in the area or on the campus.

Architecture

New construction in the Early Modern Period included the employee house on the Farnsworth Farm (**133 Farmers Row**) which is now a private residence at 125 Farmers Row.

Modern Period 1945-2000

Modern construction is scarce in the area but includes the houses at 12, 18 and 93 Farmers Row. Also, there is a vacant lot at 111 Farmers Row that is scheduled to be developed into a residential building. The establishment of one of Groton's three Local Historic Districts in 1964 has done a great deal to preserve the agricultural landscape although it would seem that the residents until that time had their own motivations and the ability to maintain the agricultural uses and appearance of the land.

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X Recommended as a National Register Historic District. *If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement Form.*

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Form No. X**National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form**

Check all that apply:

Individually eligible

Eligible only in a historic district

Contributing to a potential historic district

Potential historic district **X**Criteria: **X** A B **X** C D

Criteria considerations: A B C D E F G

Statement of significance by: Sanford Johnson

The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.

The area of Farmers Row is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C at the local level. The linear collection of residences is associated with the events and activities surrounding the development of the agricultural and leisure component of the town's economy. It is a representative example of a farm village arranged in linear fashion along a county road with unusually well-preserved buildings and views to the west that take in the hills of Central Massachusetts and of Southern New Hampshire. It continues to bear a strong connection to its past through its surviving historic cultural resources such as houses, barns and fields. Also, the Colonial, Federal, Greek Revival and Victorian Eclectic design elements that survive are evocative of the period of significance, 1680-1956. Well designed farmhouses, high style summer residences, fieldstone walls, post and rail fences, farm fields of ten to fifty acres, represent the distinctive design characteristics of farm villages in New England.

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2 Farmers Row



24 Farmers Row



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112 Farmers Row



123 Farmers Row

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133 Farmers Row



154 Farmers Row

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182 Farmers Row



281 Farmers Row

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287 Farmers Row



Groton School, Farmers Row

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Groton School Chapel, Farmers Row

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Northwest View, Farmers Row



Southwest View, Farmers Row