

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

New Submission  Amended Submission

**A. Name of Multiple Property Listing**

**Historic Farms and Rural Retreats of Topsfield, Massachusetts**

**B. Associated Historic Contexts**

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

**Rural Development in Topsfield, ca. 1670-1955**

**C. Form Prepared by**

name/title Gretchen G. Schuler & Anne M. Forbes, Preservation Consultants, Betsy Friedberg, NR Director of MHC

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city or town Boston state MA zip code 02125

**D. Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*Betsy Friedberg, National Register Director, for*  
Signature and title of certifying official Cara H. Metz, SHPO, Executive Director, Mass. Historical Comm.

4/4/05  
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

*Patrick Andrews*  
for Signature of the Keeper

5/26/2005  
Date

**Table of Contents for Written Narrative**

Provide the

following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and the title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheets in How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form (National Register Bulletin 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

	Page Numbers
<b>E. Statement of Historic Contexts</b> (If more than one historic context is documented, present them in sequential order.)	E (1-44)
<b>F. Associated Property Types</b> (Provide description, significance, and registration requirements.)	F(1-24)
<b>G. Geographical Data</b>	G&H (1)
<b>H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods</b> (Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.)	G&H (1-3)
<b>I. Major Bibliographical References</b> (List major written works and primary location of additional documentation: State Historic Preservation Office, other State agency, Federal agency, local government, university, or other, specifying repository.)	I (1-5)

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 120 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**E. STATEMENT OF HISTORIC CONTEXT:  
RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF TOPSFIELD, ca. 1670 to 1955**

**INTRODUCTION**

This multiple property documentation form covers the development of rural Topsfield outside the town's residential/civic center. The historic context statement traces the evolution of rural land and buildings in Topsfield from the period of early general farming in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, through the 19<sup>th</sup>-century rise of commercial farming and the coming of rural retreats and "gentlemen's farms," to the eventual decline of local agriculture as a main economic force and the firm establishment of rural retreats in the second quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This 285-year time span is the period of significance for the rural development context, which is summarized below.

Although substantially diminished in scale in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, agriculture is still an active part of Topsfield's economy, and the presence of many surviving agricultural resources, including farm buildings, structures, objects, and landscapes that retain considerable historical integrity, has provided the basis for the nomination of several farm and rural retreat properties to the National Register under the Rural Development Context.

**Rural development summary**

Topsfield originally was part of the 17th-century coastal plantations of Salem and Ipswich, with large tracts of its territory granted to residents of Ipswich between 1634 and 1642. At first known as the "newe medowes at Ipswich," Topsfield was given its present name in 1648. Two years later, in 1650, it had enough settled population to be incorporated as an independent town. While a clustered village gradually grew up around the meetinghouse at the town center during the Colonial period, for its first 150 years Topsfield was overwhelmingly an agricultural community, with most of its population widely dispersed on scattered farms. By 1775, only a few small additional village clusters had developed in outlying areas, located around grist mills on the town's waterways, or in groups of farmhouses built by several generations of extended families. The general farming of the Colonial era, which emphasized the raising of cattle, grain, and fruit, was fairly successful, as evidenced by the numerous sizable farmhouses and very large barns that were standing in the 1790s. It continued into the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, when advances in transportation and technology ushered in important changes in the town's

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economy, farming practices, and patterns of development. Topsfield's location midway between Newburyport and Boston, and the construction of the Newburyport Turnpike (now part of US Route 1) through the center of town in 1804, contributed to the town becoming a major stop-over point on a busy stagecoach and wagon route from Boston to the north. Taverns and hotels proliferated as a result, and the town center grew and became more prosperous as local businesses that catered to travelers were established.

In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, wealthy city dwellers established the earliest country seats in Topsfield. Two Salem merchants and ship owners, Capt. Thomas Perkins and Capt. Benjamin Crowninshield, established large country estates on two of Topsfield's old farms in a manner that had long been popular among the European aristocracy. These two Federal-period estates created the precedent for a trend that ultimately was to transform and preserve much of the town's farmland in the late-19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries under the ownership of prominent members of "America's aristocracy." During the same period, the Essex Agricultural Society was founded and began to hold agricultural fairs in Topsfield.

In 1854, the arrival of a regional rail line, the Danvers & Georgetown Railroad, ushered in a brief period of industrial activity and economic prosperity as broader regional markets became readily accessible to both manufacturers and farmers alike. On Topsfield's farms, the demands of those markets, along with progressive farming methods in livestock raising and fruit growing that were accelerated by the influence of both the Essex Agricultural Society's experimental farm and by the presence of several early influential "gentlemen farmers," fostered increasing specialization in Topsfield's agriculture that lasted for the rest of the 19th century. Mid-century manufacturing activity declined by the end of the Civil War, however, as did the pace of residential construction, and Topsfield returned for the most part to an agricultural economy. By then the primary emphasis on local farms had shifted to dairy farming, which lasted until the middle of the 20th century.

By the 1870s a few more farms had been acquired as second residences and rural retreats by wealthy city-dwellers who were attracted to Topsfield for the pastoral beauty of its lush topography and the fertility of its soils. These comfortable "gentlemen's farms" featured new country mansions or updated farmhouses, large and often stylish outbuildings, residences for farm managers, ornamental gardens, and state-of-the-art agricultural fields.

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The gentlemen farmers tended to be the most influential members of the Essex Agricultural Society (EAS). Since its establishment in 1818, the society had fostered much interest among local farmers in experimental farming methods and the exchange of new ideas. As the 19<sup>th</sup> century advanced, agriculture in Topsfield became ever more productive and progressive, in part due to the influence of the EAS. The society promoted competition through its annual agricultural fairs, and fostered experimentation on the part of farmers, both resident and non-resident, who had the means to try out the latest methods and equipment. The country estates became showcases not just for the latest farming methods, but for horticulture, landscape design, and architect-designed rural architecture--all of which contributed their own character to the landscape.

The trend away from the traditional family farm toward these lavish rural retreats continued through the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Even though farm profits entered a period of decline in the early modern era, the fact that agriculture was the main focus for many of the rural retreats helped to preserve Topsfield's historic agricultural resources during those difficult times. The continuing presence of "gentlemen's farms" helped to maintain an agricultural economy even into the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, when legislative and economic forces combined to put an end to the regional dairying industry, and residential construction began to invade the town's farm districts after World War II.

The earliest "gentlemen's farms" had been established by non-resident city dwellers. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, many owners of the rural retreats chose to become full-time residents of Topsfield, bringing stability, monetary resources, and greater participation in town life to the community. Like many of their non-resident predecessors, they continued to raise pedigreed livestock, and to carry on model farming operations. The so-called "gentlemen farmers" of the Early Modern period, (some of whom, like Margaret Cummings and Annie and Jane Shattuck, were women), also raised prize-winning crops and continued the late-Victorian interest in horticulture and landscape design which added specimen plantings and formal landscaping to Topsfield's terrain. They pursued leisure activities such as riding, hunting, gardening, and art, which utilized the rich potential of the town's landscape, but also modified that landscape with bridle paths, gardens, garden houses, and free-standing studios.

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Topsfield rapidly became an affluent residential exurb of the greater Boston area, with many of its residents commuting to work along Routes 1 and I-95 (built in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century). In spite of a protracted late 20<sup>th</sup>-century residential building boom, part of the town's attraction for newcomers remains its most threatened resource--the surviving fields, meadows, and farmsteads of its agricultural past.

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A trend toward consolidation of rural properties into ever-larger country estates began in the 1920s and continued into the 1980s, by which time some of the larger property owners had acquired multiple farms and estates. This type of consolidated ownership has continued to provide employment for tenant farmers and agricultural workers, perpetuated a working model for the leasing of farmland, and protected, at least for the time being, much of Topsfield's pastoral landscape. In addition, over 2,000 rural acres have been preserved under state- and non-profit ownership. Development pressures in the second half of the 20th century, however, accelerated by the construction of Interstate 95 through the west edge of town, have resulted in large portions of Topsfield's unprotected farmland being sold for residential construction. Today the town's remaining farms, farmsteads, and substantial farm fragments such as isolated agricultural fields and outbuildings are vulnerable to the same fate.

**Topography**

Farming and the establishment of the rural retreats, of which farming was a significant component, are closely tied to Topsfield's abundant natural resources. The well drained soils, rich and loamy in the western part of town and sandy and loamy in the eastern part of town, as well as the water sources including the Ipswich River in the south and east and several brooks throughout the town have provided fine conditions for successful farming of crops and the raising of livestock.

Topsfield is located twenty-five miles north of Boston and twelve miles south of the Merrimack River. The town lies at the geographic center of Essex County, within the relatively flat coastal strip of territory called the New England Seaboard Lowland. The Topsfield area is generally hillier than the rest of the Seaboard Lowland, however, and the community has been valued for its rolling terrain of low hills, most of which are less than 300 feet in height. The highest elevations are aligned north to south through the center of the town, from which point the land slopes east and west. Soils near the town's western boundary are representative of the Canton-Charlton-Sutton association--a deep loamy, well-drained type formed from friable glacial till deposits. Soils in the center, northeast, and southern part of town are the more excessively drained sandy and loamy type of the Paxton-Woodbridge-Montauk association. Rich, fertile intervalle land along the Ipswich River, which winds through the southern and eastern sections of town, and the natural hay meadows of the river's associated lowlands were particularly prized by Topsfield's early settlers.

The major drainage and water resources in Topsfield consist of the Ipswich River, several freshwater ponds and swamps, and numerous smaller brooks, including Howlett, Nichols, and Mile Brooks. The

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early settlers referred to the eastern part of Topsfield as "New Meadows" for the sweeping meadows along the river banks, and many large areas of natural meadows still are to be found along the waterways. Much of the town, however, was known first as the "Salem woods" and was originally forested with white pine, oak, chestnut, poplar, maple and birch, intermixed with some hardwoods and conifers. Today's second growth forest includes oak in the uplands, and scrub oak and pine with some birch, cedar, juniper, and white pine at the lower elevations. Other species are scattered.

**Political boundaries**

Topsfield originally was part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century plantations of both Ipswich and Salem. Incorporated as an independent town in 1650, settlement occurred along the southern border in 1659 and 1664 and in the north/northeast section near the Ipswich town line in 1694. Wenham and Hamilton, which adjoin Topsfield to the southeast and east, were formed from parts of Salem and Ipswich in 1643 and 1793, respectively. Danvers, another of Salem's daughter towns, is located south of Topsfield, and Middleton and Boxford border it to the west. The boundary with Boxford, which had been part of Rowley, was disputed until 1664 due to the fact that the large farm of Zaccheus Gould included land in both towns.

**Organization of the Rural Development Context**

The Rural Development Context Statement for Topsfield is presented in a historic overview divided into five chronological periods with the following sub-headings:

- Contact Period and Early Settlement (ca. 1500-1670)
- Expansion of Early General Farming (ca. 1670-1810)
- Early Commercial Farming and First Rural Retreats (ca. 1810-1840)
- The Era of Specialization in Farming and Estate Development (ca. 1840-1914)
- The Decline of the General Farm and the Permanent Residency of Rural Retreat Proprietors (ca. 1915-1955)

The National Register period of significance covers the last four periods, from about 1670 to 1955. Statements on development patterns, architectural development, including the heritage landscape settings, and, when applicable, archaeological resources, are incorporated under the discussion for each chronological period.

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In addition to the evolution of farming in Topsfield, the secondary theme of rural or country retreats or "gentlemen's farms," a rural development pattern that gained strength and breadth from the first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, is documented throughout each applicable chronological period.

**HISTORIC OVERVIEW**

**I. Contact Period and Early Settlement (ca. 1500-1670)**

The native inhabitants of Topsfield at the time of the first European contact were members of the Pawtucket group who occupied an area that extended northeast from Salem, Massachusetts to southern Maine. Locally, these people were known as the Agawam or Naumkeag Indians, who may have been a sub-tribe of the Massachusetts under Penacook leadership. They utilized the territory that became Topsfield, which they called Shenewemedy, for hunting and fishing, establishing trails along the Ipswich River and its tributaries. Known transportation routes used by the native tribes were consistent with the seasonal activities of hunting, fishing, gathering, and perhaps some summer agriculture. Fish Brook near the western border of Topsfield was a particularly active area. A native trail leading west from Ipswich Village with a ford at Howlett Brook later was developed as the main European settlement travel route to the New Meadows along Ipswich Road. Parts of this trail roughly following Perkins Row and Howlett Street were officially laid out about 1640. One inland trail connecting Topsfield with Salem may have existed as a north-south native corridor prior to the laying out of Main Street and Salem Road in 1656, which together comprised the major route south to Salem. A few native inhabitant sites-- possibly of the village type, as well as a few special purpose sites--may have been present, though thorough documentation of such established villages or camps in the Topsfield vicinity is lacking. Native fields of corn, beans, pumpkins, squash, and/or tobacco were likely located along the river or its tributaries and associated wetlands. The local native population is believed to have reached 200 or more prior to the epidemic of 1617-19, after which their numbers probably dropped to fewer than fifty.

In 1638-1639, John Winthrop, Jr., representing the Massachusetts Bay Company, purchased the rights for the territory that included Topsfield from the Sagamore Masconomet. English settlement may have begun as early as 1634-35, when the first land grants here in the "back country" of Ipswich were awarded to a small group of proprietors. By 1642 about half the town's acreage, most of it north of the

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Ipswich River, had been given out in large grants of 300 to 800 acres each. The early years of English settlement were largely characterized by tenant farming on the large land grants given to these first proprietors, most of who resided in Ipswich and Salem. In fact, only one of the large landowners who received a grant at New Meadows in the 1630s and 1640s, Thomas Dorman, actually lived in Topsfield prior to receiving the land grant. Among the recipients of 500-acre grants were two governors of the Bay Colony, Simon Bradstreet and John Endicott. John Winthrop, Jr., who was the son of another governor and later became Governor of Connecticut, received 300 acres.

Over the course of the 1640s and 1650s, several of the larger grants were broken up into smaller farms ranging from under 10 to over 100 acres--some through sales, others under lease agreements. By the 1680s many of the larger tracts also had been divided into 100 to 200 acre lots for the second-generation heirs of the early proprietors.

By the time Topsfield was officially established as a village of Ipswich called New Meadows in 1643, several colonists apparently were living and farming in the area as squatters or as tenants of the large landowners. At the time of the town's incorporation in 1650, the English population was between 25 and 50 individuals in what were probably fewer than a dozen families. By 1675 there were about 250 people in the town, virtually all of them members of farming families.

While the first lands to be cultivated were located on the earliest grants north of the Ipswich River, the farms established there were dispersed throughout that area, rather than concentrated—a land-use pattern consistent with the contemporary meaning of the term "village" as an outlying area of scattered farms. Despite the land grants to the proprietors and the subsequent division of those early grants, late in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, large tracts of common land still remained, most of them located south of the river. Some common land was transferred into private ownership in two divisions in the early 1660s, but a considerable part of the southern section of town remained commonly owned and undeveloped through the end of the century.

Until after 1700, Topsfield's residential development remained dispersed in its outlying farmhouses, most of which were still north of the river, consistent with the land grant disposition described above. The first meetinghouse, built between 1655 and 1658 at a presumed site at the northwest corner of Howlett Street and Meeting House Lane, was located in what is now the north part of town. The location was chosen to accommodate residents of Rowley Village (Boxford) to the northwest, with whom the first church was gathered. While the establishment of Haverhill Road in 1668 leading north

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from the meetinghouse completed the regional north/south corridor through town, no dense village center around a meetinghouse and common was to grow up for at least another generation.

The first Colonial settlers in Topsfield probably relied on hunting and gathering wild foods for a good part of their subsistence in the years when the forest was being cleared and agricultural activity was beginning. It was a combination of agriculture and husbandry; however that was to become the mainstay of Topsfield's farming and of its economy for the next century and a half. Cattle, sheep, swine, and some fowl were raised for each family's sustenance, with oxen and some horses kept as work animals. Many of the main crops--Indian corn, wheat, rye, and barley--provided food for both livestock and people. The raising of vegetables and fruit, especially apples for cider, also was a significant part of the early agricultural pattern. Cider was made at home throughout the period. Textiles were produced in the home, and by 1670 some local professional weavers were fabricating cloth from the yarn that family members spun from their own sheep, or from the vegetable fibers raised in their own fields of flax or hemp. By 1666 farmers also could bring their grain to the first local gristmill, established by Francis Peabody on Mile Brook in the north part of town.

One of the earliest farms was that of Zaccheus Gould (d. 1668) on Washington Street near the Boxford town line. Gould owned up to 3,000 acres, of which only 580 acres are said to have been in Topsfield. Successive generations of Goulds farmed this land along Washington Street through the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Zaccheus Gould of a subsequent generation settled along Prospect Street and River Road in an area that later became known as Lake Village, for the Lake family who established a farm in the same area by 1718.

Other early farms established by families whose descendants remained in Topsfield for over two centuries include the farm of Jacob and Edmund Towne, which started at 47 acres, and Thomas Perkins' farm on Perkins Row. Mills were an important part of early farming communities. The Peabody gristmill stood on land purchased from William Evans in 1666 near what became the intersection of the Newburyport Turnpike and Ipswich Road. In 1670/71 Francis Peabody was granted permission to establish a second mill--a sawmill--near his gristmill.

Architectural characteristics

Early Topsfield records indicate that farmhouses built by the first generation of settlers were clapboarded, and that their roofs were shingled. Documents from 1668, for instance, report that

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Edmund Bridges was desirous of "getting clapboards for his house" (Dow 83). Some information about Topsfield's early farm buildings is revealed in deeds and probate records. Barns were mentioned as early as 1660. In that year, the widow of George Bunker, who had been in Topsfield before 1653, sold her husband's former farm east of the meetinghouse with a house and barn on the property. When George Bunker died in 1658, his probate settlement, the first recorded from Topsfield, also showed that he owned oxen ("working cattle"), cows, heifers, calves, and swine, all of which would have required shelter from the cold New England winters (Dow 82).

The ca. 1670 **Zaccheus Gould House** at 85 River Road (formerly known as 73 Prospect Street) (MHC #216--NRTRA 1990), was originally a humble single-cell house now embedded in the greatly expanded house. It is believed to be typical of the form and size of most of Topsfield's early farmhouses. Expansions of additional rooms, stories, and lean-tos, and structural and decorative features such as the closely spaced joists (18 ½ inches on center) and chamfered frame with lamb's tongue stops on the longitudinal summer beam are probably representational of the houses that have been demolished.

**II. Expansion of Early General Farming (ca. 1670-1810)**

While Topsfield was little affected by King Philip's War of 1675-76, one indication that an initial frontier period of economic and social instability was coming to an end was the sharp rise in population soon after the war ended. 57 men were recorded as representing as many as 285 individuals in 1677; the number jumped to 74 representing about 370 people in 1678. Immigrants and other newcomers who arrived in the late 17th and early 18th centuries were mainly farmers, many of them attracted by the fertile land and wide meadows along the Ipswich River.

The number of artisans associated with the agricultural economy gradually increased as well, with millers, coopers, blacksmiths, tanners, weavers, and carpenters all recorded in Topsfield during the later Colonial period. Many of the artisans, of course, also were farmers, who performed their services for their rural neighbors. By 1705 for instance, Henry Lake was known as a "slaughterman" who had a slaughterhouse on his farm at "Lake's Hill" on Prospect Street and River Road. Shoemaking was undertaken by many early farmers as a winter occupation, and was to continue as a home industry for nearly two centuries. By 1740 the town had a second gristmill, Howlett's Mill, erected on Howlett Brook at the east edge of town. Timber cutting was a significant activity associated with farming, with

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a relatively large number of Colonial sawmills processing the wood cleared from agricultural land. So much wood was cut, however, that as early as 1677 the town passed orders to protect the local timber reserves.

The dispersed land development patterns of the Early Settlement period in Topsfield continued throughout most of the Colonial era. The larger proprietary grants continued to be divided into smaller parcels for members of succeeding generations, perpetuating a family-oriented settlement pattern in the various quadrants of the town. Surnames of farmers in the northwest sector, for instance, included Howletts, Bixbys, and Goulds. Cummings, Perkins, and Bradstreet were still the predominant names in the northeast, just as they had been soon after the original land grants were divided, sold and established as farms in the “wilderness” in the late 1600s. Further divisions of the Topsfield common lands were made periodically to ca. 1729, until the only sizeable parcel remaining under common ownership was the town training field. Over the course of the Colonial period, while the number of privately-owned agricultural parcels increased, their average size diminished. Toward the end of the period, many farms were made up of a collection of small disconnected parcels.

A clustered village slowly evolved at the town center in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and the early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. While its first buildings were constructed around the original meetinghouse, residential growth gradually shifted south along Main Street to the intersection of Washington Street, which now connected with Boxford Street as a regional route west out of town. Eventually, the location of the meetinghouse itself was moved south along with the residential development. Topsfield’s second meetinghouse was built at the intersection of Washington Street and Main in 1703, and rebuilt on the same site in 1759. The distribution of most of the rural population living north of the Ipswich River, however, remained for a longer time. This was evidenced in a 1723 town vote to keep school two-thirds of the year north of the river, and one-third on the south side.

General agriculture and mixed husbandry were the basis of Topsfield’s economy throughout this period of development, but over the decades, increasing amounts of agricultural products were being marketed outside the town’s borders, a fact attested to by the unusually large number of tanners and weavers listed in Topsfield in the early 1700s. Grains continued to characterize the main agricultural products, although there was a significant shift toward corn as a predominant crop. Cattle, sheep, and swine still were the main types of livestock raised. Orchards were increasingly mentioned in the local records through the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and a cider mill was in operation on the Bixby Farm (later known as Meredith Farm) on Cross Street by 1751. By 1798 four farmers were operating cider mills, and six more had “cider houses” on their farms.

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Architectural development

During the long period of self-sufficient farming in Topsfield, dwellings evolved from the small single-cell buildings of the First Period to the comfortable 2½ story center-chimney buildings that were to continue well into the Federal era. It is likely that the well known **Parson Capen House, 1 Howlett Street** (MHC #1, NRTRA 1990) dated at 1683-84 from an incised date on the summer beam, was built as a 2½ story dwelling featuring the distinctive gable overhang with decorative brackets and drop finials, which were restored based on evidence of the original construction. Toward the end of the 17th century a few house dimensions were recorded. In 1691, farmer William Perkins, II signed a contract with Joseph Hale of Newbury for the building of his house, in which the dimensions were specified to be 25 feet long, 20 feet wide, and "14 foot stud". Shingles were specified for the roof, the "poasts" were to be split, and the studs and joists "sawd." (Dow 83-84). A century later, farmhouses listed in the Federal Direct Tax Census of 1798 for Topsfield had reached dimensions of over 1,000 square feet, and many were two stories high.

While documentation of any local resources remaining from the early First Period in architecture is scant, rural Topsfield is more fortunate than most eastern Massachusetts communities in having a handful of pre-1730 benchmark buildings that have been fairly reliably dated by First Period authority Abbott Lowell Cummings. Another example, besides the Parson Capen House and the Zaccheus Gould House mentioned above, is the **Stanley-Lake House** at 95 River Road, (built between ca. 1680 and 1693, with an early enlargement of ca. 1710, MHC #140, NRTRA 1990), which like the Parson Capen House had a second-story overhang with high-style carved embellishments including carved brackets and pendant "drops." On the interior, the Stanley-Lake House has such high-style First Period features as chamfered timbers and posts with carved shoulders.

Over the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, early houses were expanded with additional cells and lean-tos, and some one-story buildings were raised to two stories. The dominant house types of the later Colonial period, whether as-built or enlarged, were the five bay, 2½ story "saltbox" with center chimney and rear lean-to, and probably the 1½ story center-chimney cottage. Building documents show that the small first house of **John Balch** at 9 River Road (MHC #134), which may date to as early as 1752, was not raised to two stories until 1851. His large gambrel-roofed second house of 1769 at 1 Hill Street, however, (MHC #174), was constructed in its full double-pile, 2½ story form, and with a center through-passage and the pair of massive ridge chimneys. Three and four bay wide houses also are known. Early 20th century photographs of the **John Gould, Jr.** house at 119 Washington Street (MHC

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#154) show a tall three-bay house, which was substantially rehabilitated in 1953 to gain the more traditional five-bay, 2½ story form. The two adjacent Gould properties were built in the traditional form, but they differed in overall dimensions, reflecting their different periods of development. The earlier ca. 1730 house at 129 Washington Street (MHC #155) was constructed with a wider roof mass and depth than the later ca. 1765 dwelling at 111 Washington Street (MHC #153).

Beginning in the mid-18th-century, some farmhouses in Topsfield were built with gambrel roofs. The 1769 **Balch House** is one 2½ story example. The **Lake-Bradstreet/Webster House** of ca. 1760 at 70 River Road (MHC #137) is a five-bay, 1½ story building. The most common 18<sup>th</sup>-century roof form, however, remained the side-gabled roof. Some were built with an incorporated lean-to, such as the “saltbox” roof-ed **Matthew Peabody House** at 86 Salem Road (MHC# 343,) constructed before 1744, and the **Capt. Joseph Gould House** at 129 Washington St. (MHC #155, NRTRA 1990), built ca. 1710. Both have symmetrical, five-bay facades.

Similar to the development pattern of surrounding communities, most of which had prosperous farming economies during the 19th century, most of Topsfield's early side-gabled barns were replaced by larger, more efficient “New England” gable-front barns during the town's commercial farming era. A few Colonial English barns (with the wagon door in the side of the building) appear to have found life as secondary outbuildings, however, and one rare large early-18th-century barn survives, the massive pre-1718 **Stanley-Lake Barn** at 95 River Road (MHC #140, NRTRA 1990). A long building of four structural bays, with a fifth bay added a few years after it was constructed, the barn remains a windowless building with vertical-board siding and a pair of high swinging doors on one long side. Its heavy timber frame, with massive hewn beams, braces, flared “gunstock” posts, and a roof with principal rafters, purlins, and cambered tie beams dates to the early period of construction of this unique barn. This general building type continued through the rest of the century in Topsfield. Judging from barn dimensions listed in the 1798 Federal Direct Tax Census for Topsfield, these English barns tended to have at least a three-bay plan of haymow bay/threshing floor/tie-up bay. The 1798 list also mentions several other very large barns on the scale of the Stanley-Lake Barn, their large size attesting to Topsfield's agricultural prosperity in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

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**III. Early Commercial Farming and First Rural Retreats (ca. 1810-1840)**

The population of Topsfield grew from 773 in 1776 to 1010 in 1830, with the greatest increase between 1820 and 1830. However, the town did not undergo the explosive growth of some of the neighboring communities during the early industrial period, as it remained a largely agricultural town. In 1820, 68% of the men were employed on farms. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the division of Topsfield's schools into three districts reflected the continuation of the dispersed pattern of the town's settlement, although it was more equally distributed than before. One schoolhouse was built near the meetinghouse, one in the northeast part of town, and a third schoolhouse was located south of the river. Although some residential growth took place at the town center between 1810 and 1830, by the end of the period most dwellings were still widely scattered.

Until 1800, the pattern of self-sufficient general farming, in which each individual farm provided the food (and most of the clothing) for its occupants, who sold what surplus they could, remained unbroken throughout Topsfield. Changes began to occur at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however. With improvements in agricultural technology and farming methods, local farms became more productive, and more farmers were producing agricultural goods to sell to regional markets. By 1812 two more cider mills were in existence, one of which, built by David Towne on Rowley Bridge Street, became the largest in the greater Topsfield area. The Towne mill not only processed local families' apples into cider for their own consumption, but purchased apples outright from local growers. The Towne mill operated for nearly seventy years, marketing cider and vinegar to individuals and storekeepers as far away as Marblehead and Lynn.

In 1804, a major transportation improvement opened up wider regional markets for all farm products when the Newburyport Turnpike, which ran from Boston to Newburyport, was built through the center of town. Soon, as a result of increasing residential development, especially at the town center, more farm goods could be sold within the town, as well. By 1830 the population of Topsfield exceeded 1,000, an increase of nearly 30% following the Revolutionary War. The establishment of several stores, and the growing number of residences on small lots at the town center increased the demand for what the farmers had to sell, as did the opening of three early hotels and taverns that catered to stagecoach riders and wagon drivers who traveled the turnpike—Perley's (1808), Meady's (1809, later known as Munday's and the Topsfield House), and especially the large and well-known Topsfield Hotel, built the year the Turnpike opened. Also, after 1818 there were daily stage coach connections through the Eastern Stage Company, and Topsfield, situated at the halfway point between Boston and Newburyport, became known as the stage center of Essex County..

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At the same time and in part due to the development of better road access to Topsfield, the earliest rural retreats were established as secondary residences by wealthy Salem shipping magnates who converted existing colonial farms into comfortable "country seats." Similar activity occurred in surrounding towns during the same period. In 1814, for instance, Joseph Peabody, an owner of a major Salem shipping fleet, purchased a farm and substantially enlarged the farmhouse in Danvers, now known as Glen Magna.

Topsfield was only a short distance inland from the coast, and featured rich and pastoral farmland. Captain Thomas Perkins (1758-1830) had been born in Topsfield where his father was a farmer and innkeeper. As a young man, Captain Perkins had gone to Salem where he signed on to one of Joseph Peabody's ships. By the 1790s the two men formed a partnership as owners of sailing vessels, and reaped their fortunes in the thriving West Indies shipping trade. In 1807 Perkins inherited his father's farm on Salem Road, and hired local builder Samuel Hood to build him a high-style Federal country house commensurate with the tastes and ornamentation found in Salem at the time.

In 1821 Benjamin Crowninshield (1772-1851), one of the four powerful Crowninshield brothers, of the family firm which owned the second-largest fleet in Salem, purchased the old Esty Farm that straddled the Newburyport Turnpike. Like his neighbor, Thomas Perkins, Crowninshield transformed the old colonial farm into a stylish and comfortable country seat. Although the famous Crowninshield firm closed in 1817, Benjamin Crowninshield had become involved in local and state politics and later made a name for himself in banking, still allowing time and fortune to pursue the development of his country retreat. With the assistance of a resident farm manager, he turned his nearly 200-acre Topsfield farm into a rural showplace on the European model, with a main house approached by an avenue of planted firs and maples and surrounded by ornamental trees and gardens. While the Topsfield property was truly a retreat from city life, its substantial working farm with pedigreed cattle, specimen crops and orchards of fruit trees also supplied the tables of the Crowninshield mansion in Salem.

In 1818, during the period of development of the Perkins and the Crowninshield estates, the Essex Agricultural Society (EAS) was established. Following on a number of agricultural societies that had been established in other parts of Massachusetts, about twenty men from the Topsfield area gathered at Cyrus Cummings' Tavern (no longer extant) to form the organization. Its stated mission was the promotion and improvement of agriculture in Essex County. Although it was a county-wide organization, the EAS was dominated by Topsfield farmers. In 1822, 34 of the over 120 members were from Topsfield. The society's first Annual Cattle Show was held in Topsfield in 1820. Others followed

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in 1825, 1837, and 1838, with shows held in surrounding communities in the intervening years. In 1858 the society received the bequest of Dr. John G. Treadwell's farm on Boston Street, which survives today as the Topsfield Fair Grounds.

In the 1820s several Topsfield farmers won prizes at the EAS cattle show for cattle and pigs. The categories in which farmers could win prizes, or "premiums" were expanded over the years, keeping pace with new trends in agriculture. Prize categories in fruits and flowers were added in 1835, for example, and bees and honey in 1844. Categories in which Topsfield farmers won prizes reflected some of the local specialties of the time. In the 1830s, local farmers received recognition for their squash, pumpkins, and corn, all of which were major local crops in that decade.

Functioning as a clearing house for agricultural ideas and interests, the Essex Agricultural Society disseminated information both through publications and at the cattle shows, which always began with a speaker telling of newly tried agricultural methods and related materials. All of this was consistent with the Society's mission –the promotion and improvement of agriculture. Examples of talks given at the shows reveal the broad range of up-to-date information the members received. Reports were made on irrigation, reclaiming meadows, domestic manufactures, working oxen and steers, bulls, swine, plowing with single and double teams, dairying, and the cultivation of potatoes. Like the prize categories, topics presented also give a glimpse into what was popular in agriculture at any given time. In the 1830s, for instance, when a fad for silkworm raising swept Massachusetts' rural communities until it was abruptly ended by a combination of disease and the economic panic of 1837, the EAS reports were full of information on silk culture, including the types of trees necessary to support the silk worms and how to cultivate them. The raising of cattle always was a primary topic, and by the end of the 1830s the Ayrshire breed was declared the best suited to the Essex County climate.

The active presence of the EAS and its members in Topsfield was one of the most important factors in the rapid improvement in local agriculture and its growing profitability through the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Competition for prizes and the continual flow of information on improved farming methods honed farmers' skills and kept them abreast of the latest agricultural information. An 1837 report summarized the purpose of the Society, its programs, and the intent of its top prize category, stating "in offering premiums for the best cultivated farms, the Essex Agricultural Society has two principal objects in view; first to induce individual farmers to pay a more particular and systematic attention to the manner of cultivating and improving their lands, and second, to collect a mass of valuable practical

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information on agricultural subjects, by requiring that each candidate for the premiums shall furnish a written statement of the character of his farm, and his method of tilling it, together with any improved modes of cultivation which his experience may have taught him." (EAS *Annual Reports*, 1837, Vol. II.)

The intricate detail of some papers or written reports provides valuable insights into both farming methods and the local diet. For instance, Topsfield farmer Erastus Ware's 1838 statement described the cultivation of wheat, rye, oats, and barley. In that same year Moses Pettingill wrote about producing forty pounds of butter in July and August. He stated that his cows were fed "common pasture food" and that the milk was stored in tin and earthen pans on the brick milk cellar floor for thirty-six hours, after which the cream was skimmed into white oak firkins. The buttermilk would work out of the butter that was salted and allowed to sit for twelve more hours on the cellar floor. After the butter was packed, a "strong pickle of Turks Island salt to which we added saltpetre" was poured on at a rate of one ounce of salt per pound of butter. (EAS *Annual Report*, 1838, Vol. II.)

Among the Essex Agricultural Society's strongest early supporters and most active members were those who represented the emerging class of wealthy "gentleman farmers." Like Thomas Perkins and Benjamin Crowninshield, they were merchants or entrepreneurs from Salem and elsewhere who established lavish "country seats" on some of the old Topsfield farms. Their influence, coupled with rapidly advancing farm technology and the up-to-date information disseminated by both the Society and the growing body of popular agricultural literature, led to continued improvement and rising productivity on Topsfield's farms into the middle of the 19th century.

Toward the end of the period, the mix of crops planted by Topsfield's farmers began to change. In particular, more hay, potatoes, and corn were being grown. While sheep were still being raised, and some flax and tobacco were still being cultivated, considerably more orcharding was being done. Large quantities of butter and cheese were produced for the commercial market, and two local operations begun during this period grew to a substantial size in later years. In about 1820, Capt. William Munday began a butchering business on his farm, and in the 1830s, brothers Joel, William, and later Eleazer Lake, Jr. established a nursery for fruit trees on Lake's Hill north of River Street.

Architectural development

Residential. During the first half of the 19th century, farmhouse types became more varied, although most of the surviving examples from the period are still 2½ story, side-gabled, five-bay dwellings. The center-chimney house continued to be constructed until about 1820; houses with paired chimneys and

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modified plans were gaining in popularity. Houses one-room-deep tended to have paired rear wall chimneys, while two-room-deep buildings frequently had a pair of chimneys at the roof ridge, reflecting a central through-hall plan. The Federal taste for the hipped roof appeared on at least three farms, among them the country houses of the two early gentlemen farmers, Thomas Perkins and Benjamin Crowninshield. The **Perkins House** of 1806-07 at 49 Salem Road (MHC #132) was built one room deep with a pair of tall interior end chimneys, and much later expanded to the rear to become a full double-pile, four-chimneyed building. Although typical in other centers such as Salem, the high-style Federal entry with Ionic half-columns and a gabled and semi-circular fanlight over the door was more elaborate than most farm houses being erected in Topsfield in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Likewise, two interior fireplace surrounds were adorned in the Adamesque manner of Samuel McIntire--with garlands, roping, reeding, shafts of wheat, and fluted pilasters. A similarly ornamented fireplace survives at the 1821 **Crowninshield House** at 116 Boston Street (MHC #94), although other features of that building were changed over time, including the original hipped roof which became a mansard roof in the 1870s.

By the end of the period, local architecture had come under the Greek Revival influence. Although a radical change to the sidehall-entry, gable-front house was in evidence at the town center and on a few farms, the few farmhouses that were built toward the end of this period continued to follow more conservative plans. Two and one-half-story, five-bay houses still were constructed, but now displayed Greek Revival detail as seen at the 1836-37 **Annar Pingree House** built by Capt. Perkins for his sister, Annar (Perkins) Pingree. Located at 45 Salem Road (MHC #144), next to Captain Perkins' house, this new Greek Revival dwelling was constructed with typical features such as 6/6 sash windows, projecting roof eaves, and a side-lighted and pilastered entry. A variation on the old two-room-deep, 1½ story, side-gabled Cape Cod house also continued through the end of the period, now often with higher front and rear walls, and displaying Greek Revival detailing.

Outbuildings. It was over the course of the commercial farming era that the New England barn, with its main wagon doors in the gable ends and its predominately three-part plan divided lengthwise rather than crosswise, reached its fully developed form and supplanted the old English barn. Its eager adoption by Topsfield farmers was at least partly the result of the up-to-date information they received through the Essex Agricultural Society and from the widely-read agricultural journals that had appeared by the 1830s. By mid-century, most Topsfield barns also displayed other advances, such as cellars and vertical-board, and interior sliding doors.

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**IV. The Era of Specialization in Farming and Estate Development (ca. 1840-1914)**

Toward the middle of the 19th century, with continued improvements in technology, farming methods, and transportation, Topsfield's farms became increasingly specialized in their operations. Again, some rural retreat owners took the lead. The primary focus for commercial farming in this period shifted to dairying, to which Topsfield's many large surviving New England dairy barns attest. Topsfield's growing butchering businesses, whose customers extended well beyond Topsfield's boundaries, also supported a secondary concentration on meat production. At the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the incorporation of Topsfield in 1850, prominent citizen and farmer Nehemiah Cleveland spoke of the approximately 20,000 animals that were slaughtered that year in Topsfield for markets in Salem, Lynn, and other regional centers. The coming of the Danvers & Georgetown Railroad through Topsfield in 1854 meant that both meat and dairy products such as butter, cheese and, later, milk could be shipped to markets as far away as Boston in less than a few hours. Improved methods in both breeding and nutrition meant that cows gave more milk, and Topsfield's dairy output soared in the middle of the 19th century. Home production of butter and cheese became increasingly profitable in those years, and in 1850 the town's farms produced nearly 26,000 pounds of butter and 4,500 pounds of cheese.

In spite of the mid-century boom in agricultural productivity, however, the percentage of farm employees in town was actually declining. From 1840 to 1865 farm employment dropped from 59% to 42%. Most of the shift, which paralleled a rise in manufacturing employment from 40% to 58%, was due to the establishment of several small- to mid-sized shoe factories in Topsfield. These shoe factories helped to form the nucleus of a growing commercial area with post office and the depot of the 1854 railroad. Still, many local farmers continued to run small shoe-making operations on their farms until about 1850s and 1860s, when the increased competition from factories in other communities put an end to this longtime sideline. At about the same time the town's true civic core was firmly established at the common and the Congregational Meetinghouse which was replaced in 1842; the Methodist Church was dedicated in 1854; and the Town Hall was built by local builder John H. Potter in 1873.

Acreage planted in apple orchards increased at mid-century, although with the pressures exerted by the temperance movement the production shifted more toward apples for vinegar and "winter fruit" (eating) than for cider. Many improved apple varieties were raised, some of which, such as the "Governor Bradstreet," were developed in Topsfield. Most of the apple trees probably came from the Lake family's Topsfield Nurseries on Prospect Street and River Road, which in the 1850s and 1860s was selling thousands of trees annually, largely through mail-order catalogs.

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In addition to apples, the Lakes raised and sold pear, peach, cherry, and plum trees, and introduced apricots and nectarines to the Topsfield area. The Towne family also entered the nursery business as their cider mill expanded, planting apple seeds left from the "pumice" that remained from grinding apples for cider. Their Rowley Bridge Road cider mill was the largest in Topsfield. In this period it developed into a commercial cider manufactory, where farmers from surrounding towns brought apples to sell or grind.

The EAS continued to function as a clearinghouse for information and an inducement for farmers to excel at their profession through its meetings, speakers, publications, and annual Cattle Shows. In the 1850s many premiums continued to be won by prominent local farmers such as Moses Pettingill and William H. Balch. By 1854 Benjamin Crowninshield's country estate farm had a new owner. Frederick Boyden, former proprietor of several prominent East Coast hotels including Boston's Tremont House, turned it into a successful stock farm, where he raised pigs, cattle, and horses. At the EAS he won premiums for his pedigreed Suffolk pigs and a first prize for his stallion. The Lake brothers often won prizes for the products of their nurseries, and their entries reflect the trends of the times. In the 1850s, for instance, when breeders were trying to top the phenomenal success of Ephraim Bull's Concord Grape, the Lake brothers presented several varieties of grapes they had developed, and the EAS committee reports gave recommendations of which varieties to cross-fertilize to produce improved strains. Other fashionable fruits in the 1850s, besides the continually expanding number of apple varieties, were pears, quinces, and cranberries. The society's establishment of a Committee on Cranberries in 1855 is indicative of their popularity as a cash crop at that time.

Agricultural experimentation was encouraged and promoted by the EAS, and it was considered a public benefit to cultivate to the highest quality and to aim for new and improved crops and methods. Spurred on by the EAS and facilitated by the resources of some of Topsfield's most prosperous farmers, at mid-century Topsfield also became a center for "scientific" farming. A new opportunity for large-scale agricultural experiments came in 1856, with the death of Dr. John G. Treadwell of Salem, who bequeathed his 150-acre Topsfield farm on the Turnpike (Boston Road) to the Society, specifying in his will that it be used "for the promotion of science of Agriculture by the instituting and performance of experiments and such other means as may tend to the advancement of science" (Waters, Thomas F. *The History of the Essex Agricultural Society 1818-1918*, unpublished.). In its plans for the property, the Society contemplated two schemes: to establish a school of practical agriculture, or to offer a long term lease to an "experienced and intelligent farmer" who in lieu of rent would care for the farm and

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engage in experimental farming. The Society made the latter choice, and entered into a detailed lease that among its many provisions required the first lessee, Nathan W. Brown of Newburyport, to conduct experiments with various types of plowing-in of manure, and to keep a journal of the weather and a diary of his work. By 1862 an enormous barn had been built on the property by local carpenter John H. Potter, builder of many of Topsfield's barns.

The Society soon began to lose money on the Treadwell Farm, however, and the tenant was unable to live up to his obligations. For a while some experiments in sheep raising were conducted there, and some Society members used the farm to pasture their own livestock. In 1866 the Society gave a new seven-year lease to farmer Ariel H. Gould, which required him to keep the place in a good husband-like manner. The crops Mr. Gould grew in 1867--oats, potatoes, carrots, rutabagas, turnips, beans, English hay, meadow hay, winter rye, and cranberries--reflect a typical local mix for the third quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. When Gould's lease expired in 1873, the Treadwell Farm was leased to its adjacent neighbor, Col. Thomas W. Peirce, who had succeeded Frederick Boyden as owner of the former Crowninshield Farm. Among the experiments he conducted on the property were trials in the comparative value of manure and commercial fertilizers. Col. Peirce and his farm manager, Mr. Philbrook, maintained the Treadwell Farm in tiptop shape for many years. In 1878, they grew the same combination of crops there as in 1867, with the addition of corn, onions, cabbage, pumpkins, and Hungarian hay.

Following the Civil War, with the exception of the 1873 recession, people in Topsfield enjoyed a period of economic growth and increasingly comfortable life styles. Both wealthy citizens and members of the growing middle class found they had more leisure time, and recreational resources expanded to accommodate their tastes. Vacations in rural New England communities, which were believed to provide a far more healthful environment than the city, became the trend. Topsfield proved to be a popular destination for summer travelers, and many local residents rented out rooms in their houses to Bostonians who wished to escape the city in the heat of the summer. By the mid 1850s, significant transportation improvements, including passenger service on the Danvers & Georgetown Railroad, had made the North Shore, including Topsfield, accessible to more than just the privileged class, and the third quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw increasing numbers of summer visitors coming for extended stays on Topsfield's farms. A newspaper article of 1871 noted that Charles H. Lake was "finishing his new house in anticipation of a large business in the line of summer boarders." (*Salem Gazette*, 1871). Referring to Topsfield, an article in an 1877 issue of the *Salem Gazette* said: "this picturesque town has become a favorite resort of summer sojourners..." (*Salem Gazette*, 1877)

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By the early 1870s, the first two country estates that had been established in the early 1800s also entered a new era of development. Capt. Perkins' country seat, which had been inherited, expanded, and occupied year-round by his nephew, Asa Pingree, II, passed to Asa's nephew, David Pingree II. With that transfer it again became a second home, a country retreat for a successful Salem resident. Col. Thomas Wentworth Peirce (1818-1885) first used his Newburyport Turnpike farm, the former Crowninshield Farm, as a country retreat while living in Boston. A shipping magnate who had begun his career in New Hampshire and had moved his mercantile house, Peirce and Bacon, to Boston in 1843, he later increased his considerable fortune by investing in railroads. His first wife died in 1862, after which he apparently lived in Topsfield full time, supervising the farming activities and participating in the local agricultural fairs. By the 1870s he had remarried, and having invested heavily in southwestern railroads, maintained residences in both Topsfield and San Antonio, Texas. In 1872 he hired well-known local carpenter, Jacob Foster, to transform his Topsfield house into a three-story Second Empire mansion and to build a new stable. In addition to the enlarged country mansion and stable, the transformation of the old Crowninshield country retreat to an up-to-date gentleman's farm of the late 19th century, complete with model dairy, involved the construction of a large cluster of specialized outbuildings. On a farmstead across the Turnpike from his house Col. Peirce built what is reputed to have been the largest cow barn in Essex County, along with at least two smaller barns, an ice house, a blacksmith shop, and a manager's/boarding house. In 1880 the manager's house was occupied by Peirce's farmer and his family, twelve farmhands, a housekeeper, and an Irish-born gardener. Today, of the farmstead on the east side of Boston Street, the farmhouse, some stone walls, and the foundations of the outbuildings are all that remain. Col. Peirce also made significant site alterations on the west side of the road. Based on professional landscape plans by the eminent landscape designer and engineer, Ernest Bowditch, the designed landscape around the owner's house included picturesque walks, ornamental shrubs and trees, and formal gardens. At the same time, state-of-the-art drainage systems were installed on various parts of the property. As described above, from 1873 until his death in 1885, Col. Peirce also leased the Essex Agricultural Society's Treadwell Farm, located just north of his property, where he expanded his experimental farming.

In 1867, another Boston entrepreneur, candy manufacturer Albert Webster (1824-1902), purchased the Lake-Bradstreet Farm on River Road, and by 1873, according to the *Salem Gazette*, was fixing the farm and putting it in a "high state of cultivation." He remodeled the 18th century gambrel cottage for his house, and repaired other buildings, gates, and stone walls. Webster and his family initially used their Topsfield property as a summer retreat, but over the years spent increasing amounts of time on the farm until Webster's death in 1902.

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Farming in Topsfield in the last quarter of the 19th century, as documented in the records of the EAS and Treadwell Farm, was a period when the growing popularity of ensilage as cattle feed led to a great increase in corn-raising and other grains for fodder production, while the cultivation of grains for human consumption virtually ceased, having lost out to competition from farms in the midwest. At the end of the century there was only one remaining gristmill in Topsfield, the Howlett/Perkins Mill off Camp Meeting Road at Howlett Brook. This saw and grist mill had been established as early as 1738 and into the late-19<sup>th</sup> century was a small secondary village with several residences, an 1847 North Schoolhouse, a shoe shop, and some farm structures.

Dairying became an even greater specialty among local farmers toward the end of the century and in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this burgeoning dairy industry and its associated pastures, cornfields, and hayfields that dominated Topsfield's landscape included several large farms of over 100 acres in outlying areas. Benjamin Conant's dairy farm on the old Porter family land at the southwest corner of town, for instance, covered 105 acres when he died in 1904. In the same area, Frank Towne's farm on Hill Street included his house on over 100 acres that was sold in the early 1900s to James Duncan Phillips for his estate at 120 Hill Street. In the northeast part of Topsfield was the Bradstreet Farm on Perkins Row, with well over 100 acres farmed by four generations of Bradstreets until it was sold to Thomas Proctor at the end of the 19th century.

The number of cows in the town almost doubled from 1875 to 1885, and milk production increased over 150% between 1875 and 1895. The Ayreshire continued to be a popular breed of dairy cattle in Topsfield, as were Guernseys. A growing demographic trend in Topsfield's rural development was illustrated in 1875, when two Irish-born farmers, Thomas Cass and James Manning, won premiums for their Ayreshire entries at the annual EAS Cattle Show.

In 1882, a serious drought affected all farms in the region, and the potato experiment then underway at the Treadwell Farm failed. When Col. Peirce died in 1885, he was eulogized as a man of wealth who had benefited the farmers of Essex County in many ways, including improving the local dairy stock by introducing choice cattle. At one time he had owned five bulls, all of different breeds, which he offered for breeding to other farmers in Topsfield. After Col. Peirce's death, the maintenance of the Treadwell Farm began to slip, but revived again under the leadership of local farmer Charles Peabody, head of the Society's Farm Committee. Experiments under the tenant farmers of the end of the 19th century centered on the feeding of cattle, as the new rage for ensilage swept New England. In the 1880s tenant farmer J. Plummer conducted experiments in the production of ensilage corn which was

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stored in a newfangled structure called a silo. By 1895, tenant dairy farmer John M. Bradstreet was experimenting with new methods for the curing of fodder corn and ended up with more cattle feed than the silo could hold.

Topsfield's brief period of industrial prosperity had ended with the Civil War and the loss of both the southern and military boot and shoe markets. The town's population declined considerably between 1870 and the turn of the 20th century, probably due to diminished local manufacturing jobs. The percentage of those employed in manufacturing dropped from 44% in 1875 to 22% in 1905.

Topsfield's farm output, however, continued relatively unabated through the turn of the 20th century, when agriculture again dominated the local economy. Between 1875 and 1905 the percentage of local workers employed in farming increased from 42% to 48%. The number of livestock in Topsfield doubled between 1875 and 1885.

Butchering continued during this period, though on a smaller scale than before. In the 1890s a new specialty, poultry raising, emerged and increased through the turn of the century, as it did in many rural Massachusetts towns. In 1895, dairy, hay, and poultry accounted for 71% of the \$175,000 agricultural output of Topsfield, while fruits and vegetables were a close second. The amount of the town's agricultural land actually increased toward the end of the period. By 1885, 8729 acres of land were in agricultural use, reflecting an increase in acreage for haying and pasturage. A comparison between land use in Topsfield and the rest of Essex County in that year reveals the town's greater reliance on dairy farming: 38% of the land was under cultivation (largely for hay) compared to 32% county-wide, and the large amount of pasture land resulted in 48% of the land being classified as uncultivated, versus 45% in the county overall. Woodland had been reduced, representing only 14% of the land, compared with 23% for the county as a whole.

Behind these changes was the growing presence in Topsfield of a new generation of "gentleman farmers" coming to Topsfield from the city. Attracted by low taxes and reasonable land costs, they bought up farmland, established country estates and summer homes, and took up scientific farming as a leisure-time pursuit. As Capt. Thomas Perkins, Benjamin Crowninshield, Frederick Boyden, and Col. Thomas Peirce had done before them, many of the new estate owners joined the Essex Agricultural Society.

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Topsfield's growth was taking place primarily in the rural sector, where

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new construction was limited almost exclusively to the rural retreats. A telling statement made at the Essex Agricultural Society's Annual Meeting in 1899 reveals the impact of the influx of wealthy families to rural Topsfield. The 1899 Report of the Committee on the Farm, (referring to the Treadwell Farm owned by the Society since 1858,) stated that "real estate in Topsfield has recently advanced very much, several fine residences have been built, and the farm has and is increasing in value in common with other farms in Topsfield."

Among the new residents were a number of prominent regional names. J. Morris Meredith, a Boston realtor and principal of Meredith & Grew, purchased a large farm on Cross Street in 1898, and in 1899 Percy Chase, of Brookline, built a large summer "cottage" on Prospect Street. In the same year Daniel O. Earle purchased the old Cummings farm on Asbury Street and substantially remodeled the property into what was soon the summer residence of Bostonians Mr. and Mrs. C.F. Hemenway.

Two of the largest country estates that survive today were established in 1898 and 1899. Bradley Webster Palmer (1866-1946) purchased the old Lamson farm at the east edge of town and turned it into a 3,000-acre rural retreat. His estate was rivaled only by that of another new arrival, Thomas Emerson Proctor (1873-1949). Proctor's estate, which began with his 1898 purchase of the Dudley Bradstreet farm on Perkins Row, and included subsequent purchases of surrounding lands such as Dr. Henry Sears Estate in 1901, ultimately covered about 4,000 acres. Both Proctor and Palmer hailed from Boston. Both had graduated from Harvard in the 1880s and remained bachelors, eventually retiring to Topsfield, where they remained until their deaths. Bradley Palmer was a founding partner of the noted Boston law firm, Palmer and Dodge. Thomas Proctor dabbled in business and was the beneficiary of his father's amassed fortune from the leather business. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, these two gentlemen alone were largely responsible for the preservation of both vast areas of land and many historic structures in both Topsfield and Ipswich. Most of the turn-of-the-century newcomers participated in farming and in the development of crops, horticulture, and livestock, with contributions to the EAS and entries in the yearly Agricultural Fair. Both Proctor and Palmer joined the Society immediately upon establishing themselves in Topsfield, and as early as 1899 Proctor won first prizes for his Berkshire boar and his Berkshire cow. Throughout the early 1900s he continued to win prizes for his Jersey cows, plowing teams, potatoes and other crops. Other new members of the EAS were Perkins/Pingree relatives, Richard Wheatland and David Pingree, II, who had winter residences in Salem; John Lawrence of Boston in 1905, J. Duncan Phillips of Salem in ca. 1912, and Miss Margaret Cummings of Boston by the 1920s.

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Lynn, for instance, purchased and remodeled part of the Towne farm on High Street in 1904. And in 1905 George and Annie B. Shattuck of Salem purchased an old farm and subsequently hired architect William G. Rantoul to transform it into a gentlemen's farm. They greatly expanded it in 1907, and operated it for many years as a renowned dairy farm.

While farming was an important component of many country seats, some new owners came to Topsfield to establish rural retreats that became showcase properties that did not include farming. Such was the case with the large summer cottage built for the Percy Chases of Boston on Prospect Street. In 1905 Malden residents Arthur H. Wellman and his wife purchased farmland on Salem Road to construct a country estate. Wellman was an attorney in Boston in his own firm, Wellman & Wellman, and also served in the Massachusetts Legislature representing Malden in the early 1900s. In 1910 James M. Marsh of Lynn, owner of the Goodwill Soap Company, built his architect-designed estate next to the Wellmans' also on Salem Road. Like several other early-20<sup>th</sup> century owners, Marsh and his family had summered in Topsfield for a few years before purchasing property. Beginning in 1905 they stayed at the "Pinelands," a Gould property on Washington Street, and later at the "Hickories" owned by A.A. Clarke on Boston Street. When the time came to develop their own country seat, the Marshes purchased land from David Pingree II, then owner of the Perkins-Pingree Farm.

Other summer sojourners who established country seats amidst the working farms of Topsfield were Miss Margaret Cummings (1876-1965) of Boston and James Duncan Phillips (1876-1954) and his wife, Nannie Borden Phillips (d. 1963), of Salem and Boston. As noted above, the Phillips had stayed at the new Pingree mansion on Hill Street for several summers before purchasing over 100 acres of farmland across the street from Frank H. Towne (1859-1957), where they built their country seat in 1911 and 1912. Phillips descended from another prominent Salem family who had made fortunes in the shipping business. An 1897 graduate of Harvard, he was a Vice President at Houghton Mifflin publishing company, and a renowned historian who wrote articles for the *New England Quarterly* and the Essex Institute's *Historical Collections*. While the Phillips retained residences in Salem and Boston, they developed Donibristle Farm as a model dairy farm and prominent rural retreat. They hired prominent Boston-based architectural firm, Putnam & Allen, to design their large summer mansion as well as other buildings on the 100-acre estate. Like the "gentleman farmers" before him, Phillips was a member of the Essex Agricultural Society and participated in the annual agricultural fairs.

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Margaret Cummings purchased land that had been part of the Lake family's farm adjacent to the nurseries, and in 1909 developed a fine estate designed by her brother, architect Charles Kimball Cummings, and landscape architect Arthur Shurcliff (1870-1957). Miss Cummings became an active member of the Essex Agricultural Society, and maintained part of her estate as a working farm with gardens and crops.

In the same period, the EAS, which continued to hold its annual agricultural fairs at various locations throughout Essex County and to maintain its experimental Treadwell Farm in Topsfield, determined to develop the farm into a permanent location for the annual fair. The decision was based on concern for the viability of the Treadwell Farm, on the increasingly difficult yearly struggle to find a large enough site with appropriate buildings for the fair (which had grown substantially over the years), and on the belief that permanent buildings would enhance the fair's quality and success. Still known as the Cattle Show and Fair, (later to become the Topsfield Fair), the first annual fair at the permanent location was held at the Treadwell Farm in Topsfield in 1910.

As had been the case in the past, many early 20th-century Topsfield gentleman farmers and estate owners joined the EAS and took part in the annual fair. In the first quarter of the century, awards went to Thomas Proctor for his Jersey cattle, John S. Lawrence for his Guernseys, J. Duncan Phillips for his draft horses, David Pingree II for his plowing teams and farm horses, and Margaret Cummings for her crops and garden products. An increasing number of women competed in the horticultural and food categories. Among the country seat owners, prizes were awarded to Mrs. Percy Chase, Mrs. Lawrence, Mrs. Percy Smerage, and Miss Margaret Cummings.

Architectural development

Residential buildings from the early part of the period of farm specialization continued to be characterized by a variety of forms. Although 2 ½ -story, side-gabled house types remained popular, the proportion of smaller 1 ½ -story houses increased in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The five-bay, two-room-deep Cape Cod type, now usually with paired ridge chimneys, continued quite late in Topsfield, with good examples being the **Israel Elliot House** at 5 Lockwood Lane (MHC #117) built in 1847-48, and the 1850 **Josiah L. Gould House** at 99 Washington Street (MHC # 152). The shallower, one-room-deep, higher-walled "story-and-a-half cottage" also continued in small farmhouses, with a very late one, the **James Manning House** built at 178 Ipswich Road (MHC #247) in 1886.

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In style and detail, the Greek Revival gradually gave way to the Italianate by 1870. One of the best Italianate examples, the commodious **Charles H. Lake House** at 49 Prospect Street (MHC #132) was constructed between 1866 and 1871. The typical five-bay façade was elaborated with a wide central wall gable façade above a double-leaf glass-and-panel door, and porches supported on chamfered square posts. Polygonal bay windows expanded the interior and provided additional light. It originally had a cupola or belvedere at the center of the roof ridge, a mark of fashion from which the prosperous farmer could survey his domain.

The Second Empire style, popular in many rural communities during and after the Civil War, was less popular on Topsfield's farmsteads. It was part of a radical transformation of the old Crowninshield farmhouse at 116 Boston Street (MHC #94), however, when **Col. Thomas Peirce** added a bracketed mansard roof and bay windows in 1872-1873. As at the Charles H. Lake House, a central cupola or belvedere added by Col. Peirce was later removed, as were a large rear wing and a wraparound porch. In 1898, the house was changed again, taking on a Queen Anne/Colonial Revival Style interior under its second-generation Peirce owners.

Building slowed throughout the town in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and by 1900 new housing construction in Topsfield outside the center village was confined almost entirely to the large country estates of out-of-town owners, where architect-designed mansions formed a radical departure from the conservative, vernacular tradition of the local farmhouses. Architect Charles K. Cummings employed the Craftsman/Tudor Revival style when designing the large 1902-1904 house for **Bradley Palmer** at 24 Asbury Street (MHC #173). Local fieldstone was used to construct the house with a center pavilion and end blocks, and casement windows. Cummings also designed the 1909 Tudor Revival estate for his sister, **Margaret Cummings**, at 82 River Road (MHC #138). Typically Tudor picturesque characteristics of asymmetry mixed with some classical design such as a Georgian Revival entrance surround were used in the brick mansion. As longtime local farmer Loring Rust was about to retire from farming, he sold his farm on Wenham Road to **George and Annie Shattuck** of Salem, who put up a new gambrel roofed stucco Colonial Revival farmhouse at 51 Wenham Road (MHC #350) designed by architect William G. Rantoul in 1907. They added a one-story shingled barn in about 1908 and a fieldstone garage in 1909.

Some of the new gentleman farmers refurbished existing farmhouses, enlarging and updating them, and opening them up to the landscape with the addition of verandas, sleeping porches, and terraces. In

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1899, for instance, Daniel Earle moved the late-1770s **Thomas and Joseph Cummings House** at 83 Asbury Street (MHC #91) back from the road and remodeled it with Colonial Revival features including porches and large windows. He also added a grassed terrace at the rear--a feature that became particularly popular on Topsfield's later rural retreats. In 1901 Mr. Earle built a gambrel-roofed cottage for his farm manager, a new category of residence that was to become another frequent addition on Topsfield's "gentlemen's farms."

Outbuildings. While the mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century trend in Topsfield farmhouses had been for smaller buildings, the barns of this era were growing ever larger, frequently dwarfing the house with which they were associated. Nearly all were of the New England type, which by this time usually had the wagon door centered on the gable-front facade, often a cupola on the roof for ventilation, and a cellar underneath to accommodate pigs, crop storage, or a growing collection of farm machinery. A few side-gabled English Barns were still being built, such as the barn of unknown date that was moved by **Josiah L. Gould** to his farmstead at 99 Washington Street (MHC #152) in 1878, and the barn **Charles Peabody** built on the property at 28 Wenham Road (#347) in 1914. In a trend toward growing specialization in farm buildings, after the Civil War some stables were built, including one at the Crowninshield/Peirce farm, and by the end of the period a few one- or two-story poultry houses were appearing. The **Bradley Palmer Estate**, (the former Lamson Farm) at 24 Asbury Street (MHC AREA I), acquired an assortment of outbuildings in this period, including an 1893 carriage house, a stable of 1902-1904 and a chicken house of ca. 1907. Several outbuildings that were part of the **Thomas Proctor Estate** at 83 Perkins Row included a late 1800s New England barn and at least two ca. 1904 sheds on fieldstone foundations. One is a small clapboarded shed that was used as a sugar house.

As with the farmhouses, the construction of substantial new outbuildings slowed nearly to a standstill on most of the local farms at the end of the 19th century, and what new utilitarian construction there was occurred on the rural retreats. At the **Niles/Vaughan Farm** at 278 High Street (MHC AREA V) for instance, there were several outbuilding additions in the early 1900s, including a ca. 1904 stable, a poultry house, and a tractor shed. True carriage houses, which also accommodated stalls for the carriage horses, were built on the gentlemen's farms in styles compatible with their owners' mansions, such as the 1909 Tudor Revival brick carriage house on the Margaret Cummings estate, and the ca. 1902-1904 Craftsman-Style coach house at the Bradley Palmer Estate. Architects also designed some of the other specialized outbuildings constructed on these farms. Charles Cummings designed a small round brick pump house for his sister's estate, and both a coach house and a stable for Bradley Palmer. The 1909 stone garage on the Shattuck farm was probably designed by W.G. Rantoul, along with the house and barn.

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**V. The Decline of the General Farm and the Permanent Residency of Rural Retreat Proprietors  
(ca. 1915-1955)**

Topsfield entered the modern era with both its economy and its landscape dominated by agriculture, which in turn was centered on the dairy industry. Cows were raised on most of the family farms, and on many of the "gentleman's farms" as well, where resident farm managers maintained the pedigreed herds and oversaw the care of the fenced and walled pastures, rolling meadows, and large barns and outbuildings. However, by the time the First World War was over, local farmers were struggling on two counts. Large scale dairy operations in New England and the huge farms of the midwest had developed into insurmountable competition. In addition, stringent new federal health regulations of the 1920s required costly adaptations such as the building of milk rooms that were separated from the cow barns. An attempt was made to increase the volume of local farm production to a more competitive level through the formation of the Essex County Cooperative Society in 1917. The goal of the new Cooperative Society was "to provide and rent modern farm machinery, to purchase and sell seeds, fertilizers and small tools best suited for production in the County, to advise farmers how best to use modern equipment and materials, and to undertake such other services as the Board of Directors deemed wise." The old Essex Agricultural Society, which supported the establishment of the cooperative as consistent with its mission and the terms of Dr. Treadwell's will, readily leased land and farm buildings on the old Treadwell Farm to the new society.

In spite of the establishment of the Cooperative, the 1920s was a period of decline on Topsfield's family farms, and several more local farmers sold their land to wealthy out-of-town owners. Agriculture was even discontinued on some of the rural retreats, where the former fields and pastures were allowed to grow up to woods, were mowed periodically to maintain vistas over the Topsfield hills, or, at best, were converted to paddocks and pastures for a new wave of equestrians. Fortunately for the preservation of agriculture in Topsfield, however, some 20th-century buyers were serious farmers—a few had even retired from other professions—and they managed to keep a large part of Topsfield's farmland in agricultural use through a time when it would not have survived the test of the marketplace. After George Shattuck died in 1915, for instance, his wife Annie continued to run their dairy farm at 51 Wenham Road, enlarging it from 38 to 45 acres by 1945, and eventually transferring its management to their daughter, Jane.

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Much of the large Meredith Farm as it exists in 2005 was developed over the course of the early 1900s. J. Morris Meredith purchased the 124-acre farm south of the river in 1899, and built his own main house set back from Cross Street, leaving the old Bixby Farmhouse, on the farm working farmstead for the farm manager. By 1923 the estate, well-known by that time as Meredith Farm, was taken over by J. Morris's nephew, Edward Wigglesworth. Mr. Wigglesworth, who lived on Beacon Hill in Boston, was the Director of the Boston Society's National History Museum. Wigglesworth developed a nationally recognized Guernsey herd at Meredith Farm, and for many years was an active member of the Essex Agricultural Society, where his ascendancy to the presidency of the Society in 1928 was the result of a heated campaign and election upset. Meredith Farm's reputation for agricultural excellence was perpetuated into the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century by later owners David and Irma Lampert, who maintained a nationally recognized herd of Ayrshires on the property. In spite of the uncertainty of farming in Topsfield in the early 1900s, establishing a permanent location for the EAS annual fair in Topsfield stabilized that event, and the fair showed a marked increase in entries and attendance from 1911 on. Adding to the health of the EAS were the contributions of both money and time that were made by many of the out-of-town farmer-owners of the large estates. In 1916, several new buildings, including the Grange, a large barn-like structure, were constructed on the fairgrounds, ensuring the permanence and indicating the prosperity of the fair at its Topsfield location. In the 1920s three more permanent buildings, the Fruit and Flower Building, Vegetable Hall, and the Dance Hall, were constructed. Entertainment attractions were added to the four day fair, and the event benefited from advertising. The EAS also gained some income through the sale of some of the land on the west side of the Newburyport Turnpike—one parcel to the Commonwealth for the State Police barracks (1934), and another to the Cooperative Society (1947).

One of the most prominent of the later estates was established in 1920, when John L. Saltonstall (1878-1959) of Beverly and Boston purchased the old Lake-Bradstreet Farm on River Road that had been turned into a country seat in the 1870s by Albert Webster. Saltonstall, a Harvard graduate of the class of 1900, was a first cousin of well-known Massachusetts governor, Leverett Saltonstall. Both of his parents had descended from prominent Boston families that included original settlers of Watertown and the founder of the pre-eminent banking firm of Lee Higginson and Co. Saltonstall was a successful stockbroker from 1903 to 1935, had served as a State Representative in 1911, and was a member of the War Trade Board during World War I. He hired fashionable architects and landscape architects to develop the estate with a new riverfront Georgian Revival mansion and formal gardens, while retaining and enhancing the surrounding pastoral agricultural setting. The Boston architectural firm of Richardson, Barot, and Richardson designed the house, with Philip Richardson, son of Henry Hobson

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Richardson, as principal architect. The architectural firm had an established reputation in developing country estates. Much of the landscaping was laid out by Harold Blossom (1879-1935), who had graduated from the Harvard Graduate School of Design and trained for twelve years in the office of the Olmsted Brothers.

In the late 1920s, once John L. Saltonstall was firmly established in Topsfield at his estate, which he named "Huntwicke", he began to accumulate surrounding properties. He purchased a property on South Main Street and had its house moved to land on the north side of River Road to serve as housing for his property caretakers. By 1928 he had purchased the Chases' summer retreat on Prospect Street, which he eventually occupied in 1941, after selling Huntwicke to Frederick Sears.

Another old farm was converted to a 1920s agricultural estate when the long standing Towne Farm on High Street passed to a Malden resident, Ichabod F. Atwood, who with his wife established their country seat, which they called "Newtowne Farm," at 279 High Street. In the process, they expanded the old farm to 130 acres. Although the Atwoods were summer residents, they raised cows, sheep, and horses and joined the Essex Agricultural Society by 1927.

The personalization of property by giving it a picturesque name was a common fashion among the socially elite and was a common practice in several surrounding communities that had country seats or estates. The derivation of names is unknown in most cases, although some gave an indication of their origins. Many, such as Miss Cummings' name for her River Road estate, "Innisfree", came from British sources, and illustrate the popular Anglophile fashion of the period. Historian James Duncan Phillips, a noted Anglophile, used the name "Donibristle" even while he and his wife were staying at the Pingree Estate on Hill Street, and later transferred it to their own model farm at 120 Hill Street.

Beginning in the late 1920s, many of the early rural retreats became the permanent residences of their owners. Margaret Cummings, who had lived at 300 Beacon Street in Boston, adopted Topsfield as her legal residence as early as 1927, and gave up her city home altogether in about 1932. In 1934 Mrs. George Shattuck and her daughter, Jane, became permanent residents of their prize Topsfield dairy farm.

The Arthur Wellmans retired to Topsfield in the late 1920s. As early as 1921, however, their son Sargent and his wife, Mary (Lines) Wellman, had purchased the adjoining Peabody farm at 28 Wenham

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Road for their permanent residence. There they planted extensive gardens, remodeled the old farmhouse, and called the property "Windridge." Sargent Wellman, also a lawyer, commuted from Topsfield to his father's Boston firm. He became deeply committed to Topsfield, served on many local committees, and was elected Representative to the state legislature in 1924.

In the second quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, while farming as a profession continued to decline, an occasional new country seat was constructed for out-of-towners who came to live in Topsfield year-round. In 1931, Gilbert Steward and his wife, Annie purchased 63 acres overlooking the Ipswich River and established their estate, "Windy River," at 51 Asbury Street with a large brick Georgian Revival mansion, a farmer's house, and several outbuildings.

The Steward property is located in the northeast part of Topsfield opposite Bradley Palmer's vast estate, where riding and hunting were important leisure time activities. In fact, Palmer had been one of the founders of the well-known Myopia Hunt, and had built a steeplechase course on his property. His rival in acquiring land, Thomas Proctor, had polo fields on his nearly 4000-acre property (in Topsfield and Ipswich) just south of the Asbury Street area. The Stewards joined them as some of the area's most prominent equestrians until Mrs. Steward, the former Anne Beekman Ayer, met with an untimely death in a fall from a horse.

The operation of the vast new 20<sup>th</sup> century farms was largely placed in the hands of farm managers, who in most cases lived on the properties. By the early 1900s, for instance, Thomas Proctor had acquired the former Josiah Perkins farm and others on Perkins Row, which were managed by his farmer, Thomas Pierce, who lived at 64 Perkins Row. Although the farm-manager arrangement was essential for the farms owned by out-of-town residents, nearly all of the later estates, even those occupied year-round by their owners, included at least one house on the property for a gardener or other employee. Most of these dwellings were built by the estate owners in such modest 20<sup>th</sup>-century forms and styles as Craftsman bungalows or Cape Cod cottages.

In spite of the infusion of capital provided by Topsfield's wealthy gentleman farmers through the Great Depression and the early 1940s, only two major Topsfield cattle farms survived into the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century—the Meredith Farm, then owned by the Lamperts, and Alfalfa Farm on Rowley Bridge Street at the southwest town line. The latter farm had evolved from Benjamin Conant's successful turn-of-the-century dairy farm, and was by then owned by the Cain family. Today there is virtually no dairy farming left in Topsfield, and considerable tracts of former fields, pastures, and meadows have been converted for residential development.

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Even if dairy farming and other animal husbandry had not precipitously declined in profitability, the residential building pressures of the post-World War II era would have doomed much of Topsfield's remaining farmland. With the coming of the automobile era, in the second quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century part of the old Turnpike corridor (US Route 1) attracted mixed commercial development. A generation later, the construction of Interstate 95 through Topsfield's southwest corner suddenly placed the region's major metropolitan centers within easy commuting distance. Since that time Topsfield's evolution into a residential community and increasingly affluent exurb has progressed steadily, with pockets of suburban-style neighborhoods spreading out from the town center, and outlying farmland giving way to big houses on large lots, such as those recently constructed on Alfalfa Farm.

In spite of the trend toward subdivision and residential development on former farmland after World War II, one of Topsfield's largest estates gradually took shape through the 1940s and well into the second half of the 20th century. In 1940, John L. Saltonstall sold his "Huntwicke" property to Frederick Sears III (1855-ca. 1946.) Mr. Sears was the son of Frederick R. Sears, Jr. a renowned early lawn tennis player who summered in Nahant. Frederick Sears III was living in Palm Beach with his wife Norma Fontaine at the time that he purchased the Saltonstall estate for a summer residence. Soon thereafter he began acquiring adjacent agricultural properties, including the ca. 1769 Balch farmhouse at 9 River Road, which had lost its surrounding agricultural land to John Saltonstall in the 1920s. Sears died about 1946, and his estate was purchased by his cousin, William Coolidge (1902-1992), who added and consolidated properties, accumulating over 400 acres by the 1980s.

Architectural development

Residential. House construction on Topsfield's farms 1915 continued to be represented by high-style mansions for the wealthy owners and smaller modest cottages for their employees. New country retreats favored the Revival styles; both Colonial Revival and Tudor Revival. In 1912 the firm of Putnam & Allen designed a large shingled, hip roofed Colonial Revival house for **James Duncan Phillips** at 120 Hill Street (MHC #262) Some elements influenced by the Arts & Crafts taste of its time, such as the wood shake siding and deeply overhanging roof with decorative exposed rafter ends, were part of the design. The site for **John Saltonstall's** 1921 house at 68 River Road (MHC #136) overlooking the Ipswich River reminded him of James River estates in Virginia, and his architect, Philip Richardson, designed a five-part hip-roofed Georgian Revival brick mansion, complete with hyphens and side pavilions, that was based on the grand plantation houses of colonial Virginia.

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Farm employees' houses from the first half of this period included several well-preserved Craftsman cottages, such as the two built on the High Street farms of **Ichabod Atwood** and **Harry Vaughn** in the 1920s at 268 and 287 High Street (MHC #363 and #354), respectively. Several built in the late 1930s and 1940s were of the same house types that were being built on the side streets fanning outward from the center, including some Colonial Revival Cape Cod houses and some early one-story ranch houses.

Outbuildings. As farm profits began to decline in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially for the small dairy farmer, fewer agricultural buildings were constructed, and most period outbuildings extant today were put up by the later wave of "gentleman farmers."

The trend toward specialization of building function continued on these properties into the modern era. The array of 1920s outbuildings added by Edward Wigglesworth on the **Meredith Farm** on 29 Cross Street (MHC Area N), for instance, included an **icehouse** (MHC #272) and several specialized animal **barns** including a "poultry laying house" and a "swine cabin." Harry Vaughn and James Duncan Phillips also had ice houses, as well as "corn barns," including the picturesque ca. 1930s **corn crib** with slanted sides and exposed rafter ends on Phillips' Donibristle Farm (MHC Area L). In the years shortly before his death in 1935, William Sills, who in 1929 had acquired the old Conant farm, later called Alfalfa Farm, built not only his large Colonial Revival summer home at 252 Rowley Bridge Street (MHC #258), but had amassed a collection of new and renovated farm buildings that included several specialized barns such as a maternity barn for his cows, five poultry houses, and a potting house. Several farmers also built greenhouses during this period, but few survive. Some exceptions are the ca. 1932 **greenhouse** (MHC #260) near the Sills mansion and the **greenhouses and potting sheds** (MHC #287) behind a caretaker's house on the Saltonstall Estate on River Road.

Specialized buildings also were constructed on the EAS property, known as the Topsfield Fair Grounds (207 Boston Street, MHC Area R) as exhibition halls for the annual Cattle Show and Fair. While they differed in size, all were utilitarian and barn-like in design, with gable roofs and wood clapboard siding. Architectural detail was minimal and many had exposed rafter ends, such as the 1921 **Fruits and Vegetables Building** (MHC #311) and the ca. 1920s **Rabbits and Cavys Building** (MHC #315).

An increasing number of garages were built for both cars and farm equipment. The latter, like the wagon sheds that preceded them, tended to be open along one side. New silo construction varied, with new types appearing periodically, such as the 1919 concrete **silos** on John Lawrence's farm at 30 East Street (MHC #245) in the north part of town.

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Several dairy barns constructed between 1910 and 1950 reflected new advances in agricultural thinking. Some have been demolished, including the pre-1929 **barn** with 26 cow stalls, bull pen, calf pen, and milk room on the Shattuck Farm (51 Wenham Road, MHC #351) that was built to a new US Department of Agriculture design, and the huge circular milking barn with a glass front on the Meredith Farm. A handsome gambrel-roofed **barn** of ca. 1925 built by Mass. Agricultural College alumnus E.H. Walter is in good condition, however, on the old Dea. John Gould Farm at 111 Washington Street (MHC #153). By the 1910s, concrete was becoming an increasingly popular material in farm construction. A concrete New England style barn of 1918-19 remains on the Lawrence Farm, and ca. 1940s one-story concrete barns with glass-block windows still perform their agricultural function on the Meredith and Alfalfa Farms.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, fanciful summerhouses, some with whimsical interiors, were constructed on several of the rural retreats. The small brick **summerhouse** on the J. Duncan Phillips Estate (120 Hill Street, MHC #268) was constructed in 1918 with a glazed terracotta hipped roof, a green-tile floor, and one long wall of full length multi-light doors. Until early 1998 the Cummings Estate had a diminutive teahouse designed by Charles Cummings, where the interior had Delft tiles surrounding the mini-fireplace, and raised-field paneling on the walls. The exterior was set off by a sunken garden designed by Robert Nathan Cram. Surviving on the Shattuck property is a small shingled **playhouse** (51 Wenham Road, MHC #353) that later was used as a studio.

Topsfield Today (1955-2005). As in many rural New England communities, Topsfield's relentless residential development in the mid-20th century followed two distribution patterns. The primary trend was a radial expansion outward from the center village, where early-modern and modern single-family houses were built on relatively small lots, and several side streets were laid out. However, in spite of the fact that two pockets of commercial development sprouted along Route 1 (near the EAS Fair Grounds at Central Street, and in the north at Ipswich Road,), the presence of several large and viable farms along the Route 1 corridor, including the Treadwell Farm of the Essex Agricultural Society, spared Topsfield from the type of continuous mid-20th-century commercial strip development that occurred along this main east coast auto route in several other communities. Instead, development outside Topsfield Center has been primarily residential, and has occurred in a more spotty fashion, as parts of former outlying farms have been divided into large-parcel subdivisions with substantial houses, and marketed on the basis of their country setting, vistas, and rural appeal.

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There remain three very large rural properties; two in northeast Topsfield and one in the central part of town. Until 2000, Massachusetts Institute of Technology owned about 480 acres, received through the bequest of William Coolidge of the River Road and Cross Street farms. Coolidge's purchases had included Miss Cummings' "Innisfree," which abutted his River Road main house on the west, as well as Meredith Farm to the south and farms at other locations such as a Bradstreet property off Hill Street on Bradstreet Lane. This later consolidation by Coolidge, most of which occurred outside of the period of National Register significance, is a key reason that so much of Topsfield's overall landscape still is preserved. Mr. Coolidge, like the generations of "gentleman farmers" before him, also was a member and generous supporter of the Essex Agricultural Society, and eventually financed the construction of a large exhibition hall at the Topsfield Fairgrounds (207 Boston Street, MHC Area R) called Coolidge Hall (1983, MHC #313). A real estate developer purchased the amalgamation of farms and has since sold off several parcels, keeping Meredith Farm intact. Due to various pre-arranged restrictions, only two or three additional houses will be built on the total former Coolidge acreage. In the east and north part of town, Bradley Palmer left his 4000-acre estate to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, (now Bradley Palmer State Park), and approximately 2800 acres of Thomas Proctor's holdings (720 acres are in Topsfield), were purchased in the early 1950s by the Massachusetts Audubon Society, which operates the property as part of its Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary.

**ARCHITECTS, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS AND DESIGNERS**

Many of the examples discussed were designed by professionals who played a significant role in shaping the face of Topsfield. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, wealthy land owners hired architects, landscape architects, and interior designers, many of whom were known for their work in surrounding communities. While nearly all of these designers worked at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some local builders were leaving their mark on Topsfield in the early and mid 1800s. Samuel Hood, Charles Brackett, Jacob Foster, and John H. Potter all lived in town and built a number of dwellings and outbuildings for various farmers and country retreat owners.

While some information is given in the above discussion, the following partial catalog of designers, arranged in alphabetical order by period of development, is provided to help establish a context for their work and their impact on the town.

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**Early Commercial Farming and First Rural Retreats (ca. 1810-1840)**

**Brackett, Charles C.** Charles C. Brackett, of Wolfeboro, New Hampshire, lived in Topsfield for about ten years, representing the town in the General Court in 1843. He built many houses in Topsfield, especially in the Greek Revival style, of which the Annar Pingree House at 45 Salem Road (1836-1837) is one of the best-preserved examples. He moved to Ipswich in 1848, the same year that he built the church at Linebrook Parish in that town.

**Hood, Samuel.** Local builder Samuel Hood (1762-1843), who served as the Town Treasurer for five years from 1818, designed and built an the house for Capt. Thomas Perkins, at 49 Salem Road. The interior elaboration was called “so fine that many have thought it to be Samuel McIntire of Salem.”

**The Era of Specialization in Farming and Rural Estate Development (ca. 1840-1914)**

**Bowditch, Ernest** In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Ernest Bowditch lived in Brookline at 446 Walnut Street in a Shingle Style house designed by Hartwell, Richardson and Driver. Bowditch, a civil engineer, had come from Salem. He was the engineer for many subdivision plans in Brookline including Fisher Hill, Chestnut Hill, Aspinwall Hills and many other projects that were done by the Olmsted Firm. In Topsfield he worked on the Benjamin Crownshield Farm at 116 Boston Street.

**Cummings, Charles Kimball.** Charles Kimball Cummings (1870-1955) practiced architecture in Boston from 1897 to 1947 and was well known for his house designs, particularly those of substantial scale for the wealthy of that era. He designed houses on Coolidge Point in Manchester for Bulkeley Wells (1897), two houses in Brookline for lawyer Walter Horton (1912, MHC #BRK 1284) at 155 Longwood Avenue and for Miss L.S. Kimball (1915, MHC # BRK 527), and two society clubs at Wellesley College ; the Phi Sigma Society (WEL:440) and the Shakespeare Society (WEL:461). He also designed family houses including two for his father-in-law, Robert Treat Paine, Jr.(1835-1910); one townhouse in Boston (1901, MHC #BOS 7585) at 12 Queensbury Street and one summer estate in Beverly Farms (1901, MHC # BEV 740) at 23 Paine Place, one for his family, also on Paine Place in Beverly Farms (1902, MHC #BEV742). All of these documented commissions were executed in brick in either the Georgian Revival style or the Tudor Revival style. Two of his better known commissions were Bradley Palmer’s Topsfield estate (24 Asbury Street), which also exhibited Tudor Revival characteristics in its Arts & Crafts style, and his sister’s Topsfield estate the Margaret

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Cummings Estate (82 River Road). Cummings had graduated from Harvard and from MIT and apprenticed in the office of Andrews, Jacques & Rantoul who were known to have commissions in Topsfield. Cummings was a member of the AIA by 1901.

**Foster, Jacob.** Jacob Foster (1824-1906) was a local Topsfield builder who constructed many houses and barns. Some of his work in the 1850s included the Italianate-Style Dudley Perkins House on Perkins Row, several houses on South Main Street, and barns such as one for John Dwinell on Salem Road. There are approximately 25 known structures in Topsfield built by Foster from the 1850s to the 1880s.

**Potter, John H.** There are a large number of houses, outbuildings and institutional buildings attributed to John H. Potter (1823-1901), local carpenter and housewright. In 1873 Potter built the Town Hall. The Charles Lake House on Prospect Street is a good example of a well detailed Italianate house built by Potter. A number of houses are attributed to Potter as well as some fine barns. Buildings constructed by Potter survive in similar numbers to those by Foster, with over 30 buildings attributed to him that are still standing.

**Pray, Hubbard & White.** The landscape architectural firm of Pray, Hubbard & White maintained offices in Boston from 1906 to 1918. In 1912 they worked for Franklin and Helen Balch at 1 Hill Street in Topsfield. James Sturgis Pray (1871-1929) had trained in the renowned Olmsted Brothers firm from 1898 to 1903, and went on to teach at Harvard's Department of Landscape Architecture from 1902 to 1915. In 1908 he became the Chairman of the Department, following Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. in that position. Pray is remembered for having introduced the first full course in city planning into the Landscape Architecture program and was a founding member of the American City Planning Institute. Among the many credits to the firm is the 1915 subdivision of the John Chipman Gray estate in Cambridge into the 100-house lot garden neighborhood known as Larchwood. The curving streets, wide planting strips, landscaped islands and preservation of trees made it an important representative of the garden suburb movement of the time. Other garden contracts in the greater Boston area include the several in Newton: the gardens of G. A. Frost, Esq. and W.B.H/ Dowse, Esq. both in West Newton, and the estate of Esther F.G. Bemis in Chestnut Hill.

**Putnam & Allen.** The Boston based architectural firm of Putnam & Allen was listed as such for only two years 1911 to 1913. However, Eliot T. Putnam and Gordon Allen shared an office throughout much of their respective careers. From 1917 to 1926 Putnam also shared an office and a practice with

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Joseph E. Chandler as Putnam & Chandler. Putnam and Allen were at 31 Beacon Street. All three architects shared an office on West Street (Room 516), followed by 18 Arlington Street, and in the 1930s Putnam and Allen remained in the same office, then at 137 Newbury Street (Room 906). The firm designed the many buildings at the J. C. Phillips' Topsfield estate (120 Hill Street).

**Rantoul, William G.** At the turn of the last century William Gibbons Rantoul (1867-1949), whose career lasted from 1897 to 1942, lived in Beverly and practiced architecture in many North Shore and suburban Boston communities. His early office was at 6 Beacon Street (Room 1001). He designed many houses in Beverly, including an Italian Renaissance stucco dwelling for George Lee in 1910, a Craftsman style house for Nicholas Longworth, and the Montserrat Golf Club in 1902, which he designed to resemble the old clubhouse that had burned. Lee was one of his better clients, as Rantoul designed three houses for him in Brookline between 1899 and 1902, as well as the Beverly house. Many houses for Salem's elite also were designed by Rantoul. In Topsfield he was the architect for George Shattuck's estate. In addition to residential architecture, Rantoul designed a stores on Boylston Street in Boston, the Miller Piano Company building, and the Automobile Club building, also in Boston. Many of the plans and papers of William G. Rantoul are at the Peabody-Essex Museum Library in Salem.

**Sargent, Charles Sprague.** Founder and director of the Arnold Arboretum, Charles Sprague Sargent (1841-1927) advised many of his friends on plant design and material for their North Shore estates. William and Mary Endicott of Salem corresponded with him about Glen Magna, their country retreat in Danvers, and photographs show Sargent on visits at the farm. He also was a close friend of John Muir, traveled throughout America with him and wrote about him in the Sierra Club Bulletin upon Muir's death in 1916. Sargent was the Director of Harvard's Botanic Garden in 1872, thus well positioned to become the founding director of the Arnold Arboretum from 1873, a post he held for 54 years. He collaborated with Frederick Law Olmsted on projects including the laying out of the Arnold Arboretum as part of Boston's Emerald Necklace. He researched and wrote many books on botany, horticulture, landscape gardening and forest conservation.

**Shurcliff, Arthur Asahel.** Arthur Asahel Shurcliff (known as Shurtleff until 1930) (1870-1957) is one of the best-known North Shore landscape architects, who also received his training in the Olmsted Brothers firm. He graduated from MIT with a degree in engineering; however he turned to landscape architecture due to his abiding love for the outdoors, and studied for two more years at Harvard from which he received a second BS in 1896. Shurcliff's mentor was Charles Eliot. During his time in the

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Olmsted office he assisted Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. in establishing the first four-year program in landscape architecture and taught in the program at Harvard until 1906. Shurcliff worked on public projects including highways, dams, and parks, and on many private garden projects, of which one of the best known is Castle Hill, the Crane Estate in Ipswich. In addition, he was Chief Landscape Architect for Colonial Williamsburg from 1928 to 1941, and assisted in laying out Old Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts. In Topsfield, Shurcliff designed the landscape at the Cummings Estate (82 River Road).

**Stickney & Austin.** From 1893 to 1914 and again for a year in 1916, Fred W. Stickney (1853-1918) and William D. Austin (1856-1944) practiced together under the firm name of Stickney & Austin. It was a two-office firm, with Stickney working out of the Lowell office where he also lived, and Austin running the Boston office. It is likely that Austin worked with North Shore rural retreat owners. From 1917 to 1930 Austin practiced alone and during his retirement he compiled a history of the Boston Society of Architects.

**The Decline of the General Farm and the Permanent Residency of Rural Retreat Proprietors (ca. 1915-1955)**

**Blossom, Harold Hill.** Harold Hill Blossom (1879-1935) also was a landscape architect who trained in the Olmsted Brother's firm following his graduation in 1907 from the Harvard Graduate School of Design, from which he obtained a degree in Landscape Architecture. While at the Olmsted Office, Blossom worked with John Charles Olmsted on both the San Diego and the Seattle Expositions, as well as plans for parks and subdivisions. Once opening his own office in Boston in 1919, Blossom was hired to design many private gardens for clients like Edwin S. Webster in Newton, John Nicholas Brown, and F. L. Higginson. Blossom taught at the Lowthorpe School of Landscape Architecture for Women established in Groton, Massachusetts in 1901, and at the Cambridge School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture for Women--a Radcliffe College program for women not admitted to the Harvard School of Landscape Architecture, which was established in 1916. Blossom served on committees of the Boston Society of Landscape Architects and was president from 1930 to 1931. Blossom designed John Saltonstall's landscape at Huntwicke on River Road.

**Cram, Robert Nathan.** Little is known about Robert Nathan Cram except that he was a landscape architect with an office in Boston for only a short time from 1924 until his death in 1930. In 1926 he

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was listed in Boston Business Directories as sharing an office with Charles W. Eliot at 9 Park Street, Room 26. Eliot was the young up-and-coming nephew of the renowned Charles W. Eliot, father of the Metropolitan Park System that later became the MDC. For the last two years of Cram's life he lived at 23 Joy Street and practiced landscape architecture from his home until his death in April 1930. His association with Miss Cummings, with whom he designed a garden adjacent to the garden tea house in 1929 (82 River Road), must have been one of his last commissions.

**Richardson, Barott & Richardson.** The Boston architectural firm of Richardson, Barott & Richardson was made up of three partners who worked together from ca. 1910 to 1930. Their interests in architecture are part of a well known story. Philip and Frederick L.W. Richardson were sons of Henry Hobson Richardson, one of the nation's best-known architects of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Philip Richardson was the senior member of the firm and was the primary architect at the Saltonstall Estate in Topsfield, and for another well-known project, the estate of Ellery Sedgwick in Beverly. Philip practiced on his own from 1930 to 1947. Following the dissolution of the partnership, Frederick L. W. Richardson went to their father's successor firm known as Coolidge, Shepley, Bulfinch and Abbott at that time. Soon after his son, Joseph Richardson, joined the same firm in the 1950s, it became Shepley, Bulfinch, Richardson and Abbott –the Richardson name added for Joseph Richardson who became President of the firm in the 1950s. The third member of this early 20<sup>th</sup> century firm was Chauncey E. Barott. Several of the estates designed by Richardson, Barott & Richardson were recognized in publications of the day, often for their well-designed proportions and for the influence of southern plantation architecture. A lengthy article in *The Architectural Record* issue dated November 1924 was titled "Current Country House Architecture – The Pendulum of Design Swings." The article seeks to affirm that "good architecture is based upon two principles, sound design and good taste..." And to prove this thesis two Richardson, Barott & Richardson designs were offered – photographs of the Georgian Revival houses of John Saltonstall in Topsfield and of Ellery Sedgwick House in Beverly. In both houses, designed by Philip Richardson, salvaged colonial woodworking was installed – raised field panel chimney walls in the Saltonstall home and Adamesque mantels and crown moldings in the Sedgwick House. In Philip Richardson's own Brookline home the interior was reminiscent of 17<sup>th</sup> century interiors, and the early Italian Style was recalled in the Beacon Hill home of Harris Livermore, Esq.

**Description of Potential Archaeological Resources**

The potential for locating ancient Native American sites on parcels where rural property types are

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located is high. Twelve ancient sites are recorded in the Town of Topsfield representing approximately 12,000 years of history. Environmental characteristics of the town indicate locational criteria (slope, soil drainage, proximity to wetlands) that are favorable for the presence of Native American sites. Well-drained, nearly level to moderately sloping landforms (knolls, stream terraces) formed in glacial till and outwash are located throughout much of the town, frequently within 1,000 feet of freshwater wetlands. The Ipswich River drains through the eastern and southern part of Topsfield. Additional important surface drainage is through Howlett, Nichols, and Mile Brooks. Several ponds, swamps, and smaller brooks are also present, all within the Ipswich River drainage.

The presence of First Period settlement and houses in Topsfield may also represent an indication of Native American settlement in the Town. First Period houses are often situated at locations exhibiting the locational criteria favored by Native people in selecting sites. Preferences for locations on south facing slopes and locations with protection from prevailing winds and storms are also important characteristics. In addition, the documentary record indicates that First Period houses and settlements were actually located in locales where Natives had cleared dense forests either for agriculture or settlement purposes. Evidence of Native American settlement during the Contact and Early Settlement Periods (ca. 1500-1670) may indicate similar land use patterns during earlier ancient periods. Widely dispersed early agricultural settlement could easily have incorporated earlier Native settlement locales throughout the town. These areas later grew into the village clusters located in Topsfield in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Given the information presented above, a high potential exists for locating ancient Native American resources at rural settlement locations in Topsfield. Limited examples of known Native sites in Topsfield appear to corroborate that prediction, with some sites located at or near the locations of later rural historic settlement. Ancient Native American sites in Topsfield are expected to represent a wide range of site types from small campsites and flake scatters to larger multi-purpose base camp- type sites. Temporally, ancient sites are expected to cover the full range of occupation identified for southern New England from Paleo Indian through Contact Period sites. Many potential Native sites should retain their integrity as a function of their location on agricultural landscapes.

The potential for locating significant historic archaeological resources in and around rural agricultural property types is also high. Potential historic archaeological resources include evidence of structures, archaeological features, and artifacts representing dwellings, outbuildings, occupational-related features (trash pits, privies, wells), and agricultural landscapes and activities that occurred around

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them. It is important to realize at the outset that important archaeological resources can survive at the sites of rural property types no longer extant and surrounding buildings that exist today. Historic research combined with archaeological survey, testing, detailed analysis, and careful mapping of the evidence listed above combine to form farms, rural retreats, farmsteads, rural districts, and agricultural educational/institutional facilities spanning 285 years of rural agricultural development. Beginning with First Period settlement, farmstead complexes in Topsfield were constructed within well-defined regional and temporal patterns (see St. George, 1982). These patterns evolved over the next 285 years incorporating new characteristics stimulated by changes in Topsfield's economic and social history. While it is beyond the scope of this nomination to examine these patterns and changes, the archaeological record associated with each property type and specific properties in the nomination will provide essential information for documenting them. These will include: evidence on the construction of the dwelling house and its physical modifications over time for both extant buildings and archaeological sites, and the evolution of the dwelling house as part of a farm, rural retreat, farmstead, rural district, and agricultural educational/institutional facility. The research outlined above will include the location of barns, sheds, and other outbuildings as well as occupational-related features, fences, walls, and a variety of other landscape structures and features; and documentation of the changing social, cultural, and economic activities conducted in and around the dwelling(s)/building(s) through examination of midden deposits, trash features, and privies. During earlier periods of settlement and land use, the archaeological record often represents the sole remaining source of information on these aspects of rural farms, retreats, and the individual, family, and community histories they represent. At archaeological sites and at extant rural structures occupied during later periods, historical and archaeological research can combine to identify behavior and objects and contribute important information not documented in the written record.

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**F. ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES: RURAL DEVELOPMENT ca. 1670-1955**

**OUTLINE OF PROPERTY TYPES**

1. FARMS
2. FARMSTEADS
3. RURAL RETREATS
4. RURAL DISTRICTS
5. AGRICULTURAL EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES
6. RURAL DWELLINGS
7. OUTBUILDINGS
8. AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPES/RURAL RETREAT LANDSCAPES
9. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

**INTRODUCTION**

Nine property types associated with historic farms and rural retreats of Topsfield contribute to an understanding of the local rural development patterns. Several of them-- farms, rural retreats, farmsteads, rural districts, and agricultural educational/institutional facilities--are by definition collections of individual property types such as dwelling, outbuildings, and agricultural landscapes. In addition, some of these collections fall into more than one category. For example, a rural retreat may also be a farm or a farmstead, or form one component of a rural district.

In fact, throughout most of the town's rural development, Topsfield's farms and its rural retreats were closely intertwined. All of Topsfield's rural retreats began as farms or parts thereof. Some were established on land that was divided from a farm, others included the agricultural land and existing farm structures, and continued the functions associated with the former agricultural use of that land.

The character of land in Topsfield that originally made it conducive to agricultural pursuits is an important aspect of the rural development context. As evidenced in the town's hills, valleys, water

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sources, and the lush quality of the vegetation on both its natural and manmade landscapes, the town's pastoral character is a key factor in describing, understanding, and establishing the significance of Topsfield's farms, its rural retreats, and their components.

**PROPERTY TYPES**

**Farms**

Physical characteristics. The term **farm** refers to an agricultural complex that retains a dwelling and outbuildings that are related to farming during the period of significance, together with agricultural landscapes that represent the scale of farming for which the property was developed. While the farm category is the most obvious representative of a rural agricultural context, most of Topsfield's historic farms have been greatly reduced in size, with portions sold off for development, converted to conservation land, or otherwise subdivided. Similar land use patterns have occurred throughout the Commonwealth.

A farm may include more than one dwelling, including housing for an owner and for farm workers. Generally there are several types of outbuildings and an agricultural landscape retaining well-delineated fields. The landscape may be accented with cart paths, a farm pond, stone walls, fencing, and other associated features. There is only one identified intact farm in Topsfield which meets the above definition: Meredith Farm includes a ca. 1900 main house for the proprietor set apart from the ca. 1800 manager or tenant-farmer's house. The latter farmhouse is clustered with many types of outbuildings, all in an agricultural landscape that includes fieldstone walls, cart paths, agricultural fields, and a farm pond.

Associative characteristics. An intact historic farm is the most comprehensive illustration of the agricultural way of life in Topsfield. The farm's surviving landscape and the arrangement, design, and succession of its utilitarian outbuildings convey significant information about how agriculture was conducted there. The main dwelling may stand apart from the farmstead and outbuildings, or as is most commonly found, may be an integral part of a roadside farmstead even after the transition to rural retreat ownership.

Topsfield's farms also are the most telling resources about the town's development as a rural, rather than an urban or suburban community. Their original outlying locations led to the building of roads extending to them from the town center. Even modern replacement bridges over the rivers and brooks still bear the names of the farmers whose properties they benefited and who helped maintain them.

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The arrangement of an intact farm is an embodiment of farm design in particular historic periods. In the Colonial era, for instance, Topsfield's farms tended to follow a dispersed, often non-contiguous pattern of ownership. Desirable agricultural resources such as meadows and uplands were not always found adjacent to each other. In addition, the gradual division pattern of Topsfield's common lands over a period of several decades resulted in a farmer or his heirs being granted parcels of land in different localities. On the other hand, some farms evolved during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries to be all of a piece through the gradual acquisition of contiguous parcels.

**Farmsteads**

Physical characteristics. Like farms, Topsfield's surviving **farmsteads** are each a collection of resources. Much smaller than an entire farm, however, a farmstead consists of the main farm dwelling, together with nearby ancillary resources such as outbuildings, tenants' or caretakers' cottages, and significant site features such as stone walls, fences, wells and water tanks. A farmstead may also include remnants of adjoining agricultural or domestic landscape components.

Although the configurations of Topsfield's farmsteads vary considerably, several arrangements are recurrent among them. For instance, the main barn is invariably close to the farmhouse. It may face the house on the opposite side of the road, or more often across a wagon drive or barnyard. On some farmsteads, the house and barn stand side by side facing the street, while on a few corner properties, they face two different streets. Some barns are connected to the house by means of intermediate ells and/or sheds. Virtually all of Topsfield's Colonial-era farmhouses still in their original locations face south, allowing the main facade, which was the wall that had the largest number of windows, to catch the light and warmth of the sun. In some cases, this means that the farmhouse presents a side wall to the street. The barn entry may have an entirely different orientation than the house, due to such factors as the slope of the terrain and the need for sun to warm a cowshed.

Some historic farmsteads which later were occupied as rural retreats have taken on stylish period attributes such as updating in later architectural styles, formal gardens, and garden structures. This type of farmstead usually incorporates specialized outbuildings related to the interests and lifestyles of their later owners, such as stables for horses or living quarters for chauffeurs, gardeners, and other employees.

Associative characteristics. The farmstead is the rural property type that perhaps best conveys the evolution of farming philosophies in Topsfield, and of the forces that influenced those attitudes.

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Among those influences were 19th-century agricultural literature, which disseminated advice on the arrangement of farmsteads, and the working models a farmer encountered through connections with other farmers, most notably by way of membership in the Essex Agricultural Society (EAS). While the earliest of Topsfield's farmsteads apparently were arranged with a farmhouse that hugged the edge of a road, an all-purpose livestock/hay/threshing barn nearby, and a somewhat ill-defined space in between, intact farmsteads of the 19<sup>th</sup> century convey that period's concern with well-planned order, efficiency, and specialization. Although its outbuildings are gone, the main farmstead of the Crowninshield/Peirce Estate, largely built under Thomas Peirce in the 1870s, retains considerable evidence of that specialization. In addition to a large farm-manager's residence/bunkhouse, portions remain of the foundations of its huge, ramped cow barn, (said to have been the largest in Essex County), a separate shed for other livestock, an ice house, a blacksmith shop, and an early-20th-century silo and manure pit--all situated close to the Newburyport Turnpike (now known as Boston Street) opposite the proprietor's house.

**Rural Retreats**

Physical characteristics **Rural retreats** may incorporate all of the property types associated with farms and farmsteads, while in addition they may include property subtypes indicative of the lifestyles of their wealthy owners, such as designed gardens, coachman's or chauffeur's residences, and recreational "summer houses" such as garden houses, tea houses, and gazebos. Some rural retreats consist of a collection of property types developed on former farmland but without any farming component. In these cases there may be only a dwelling with an outbuilding or a formal garden that are illustrative of the way of life of wealthy early-20<sup>th</sup> century families with a second home. Thus a rural retreat may or may not also be a farm or a farmstead.

Associative characteristics. Many of Topsfield's established farms were inherited or purchased to be used as rural retreats by prosperous city dwellers, who often expanded them by acquiring additional, (usually adjacent) farm land. In the mid-20th century, one proprietor even consolidated several farms and rural retreats under single ownership, maintaining the multiple dwellings, outbuildings, and agricultural landscapes as well as some designed garden landscapes.

The development of the rural retreats reflects the development patterns affecting life regionally, from the advances in transportation to the increasing opportunity for leisure time. The large scale of some of the properties that were under the same ownership for long periods of time is reflective of the wealth of those who chose Topsfield for a country seat.

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While most of the rural retreat owners maintained the existing farmhouses and agricultural landscapes, when those properties were adapted to use as rural retreats, the dwellings were usually enlarged and updated, and the farmsteads were altered by the addition of new features such as carriage houses, garages, and designed domestic landscapes with terraces, ornamental gardens and garden structures. On a minority of rural retreats, entirely new country houses were built--many in stylish period materials like brick, wood shingle, and stucco. Still, in Topsfield most of these grand houses tended to respect their rural settings in their relative simplicity of style, and through the use of native fieldstone or other rustic materials. In contrast to the more traditional farmhouses, virtually all of the new rural retreat dwellings were sited to take advantage of the natural views and vistas-- nestled on hillsides, perched on the crests of ridges, or situated on riverbanks. Even in the case of converted farmhouses, the land around the dwelling on a rural retreat was usually cleared, maintained as lawn, and often re-landscaped to optimize both the pastoral views and cooling breezes.

While all of the rural retreats had wealthy owners, in design they tended to be restrained, pastoral, and utilitarian—all qualities which reflect the precedent of early colonial architecture enhanced by the wealth and tastes of the country seat owners. In land use, most of these properties also carried on the practice of agriculture. Their owners tended to be active members of the EAS, and hired farm managers to grow crops, raise animals, participate in experimental farming, and pursue horticultural interests as well.

**Rural Districts**

Physical characteristics. Historic **rural districts** exist at several locations in Topsfield. Most are located in outlying areas, although one is situated just west of the town center. Some developed over time as family- or neighborhood clusters of dwellings and outbuildings, expanding outward as farms were subdivided or built upon by succeeding generations. Others were created anew when wealthy landowners purchased more than one older farm and rearranged the existing buildings or constructed new buildings or structures that linked the former separate properties together.

These districts consist of groups of farm and/or rural retreat resources (farmsteads, buildings, structures, objects, and agricultural landscapes) composed of survivals from more than one rural property. Some are spread out around an intersection, or clearly oriented to natural features such as hills or the river. Other agricultural/rural retreat districts (or parts thereof) are more linear in configuration, with their buildings aligned along one or both sides of a road.

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For the most part, Topsfield's rural districts developed gradually over the course of several generations, and thus they contain dwellings and outbuildings from more than one historical period. The result is a variety, rather than a consistency, of architectural design. Significant dwellings in the Lake Village, along River Road and Prospect Street range from the late 17<sup>th</sup>- to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the more clustered Gould family district on Washington Street, significant buildings date from a First Period ca. 1710 house to a Greek Revival Cape of 1850 to a gambrel-roofed barn of the early 20th century.

Another type of rural district found in Topsfield (although less common in other rural communities), is a hybrid farm/rural-retreat district created in the first half of the 20th century by wealthy "gentleman farmers" who bought up adjacent farms and proceeded to construct new buildings between the farmsteads, to rearrange the existing buildings, or to move houses or outbuildings from elsewhere in town onto the consolidated property. Some districts illustrate the work of professional landscape designers who visually coordinated the consolidated farms through the use of landscape elements such as circulation networks, connected stone walls, fences, and repeated gate designs. The result is just as pastoral as the farmstead clusters that grew up over time, but these districts have a visual character that is less haphazard than that of its purely agricultural predecessors. Economically, this latter type of district was also associated with new forms of lease- or ownership arrangements between the rural retreat owner and local farmers. The Walsh family, longtime owners of the old Balch Farm on River Road, for instance, retained ownership of a small parcel with the farmhouse even after John Saltonstall had bought the rest of the farm, which the Walshes continued to farm.

Associative characteristics. Like its farms, farmsteads, and rural retreats, Topsfield's **rural historic districts** have strong associations with events and activities that were part of the patterns of economic, social, agricultural, and overall community development of the town. In some instances, clusters of farmsteads, dwellings, and outbuildings that were or are surrounded by the agricultural landscape embody the long tradition of continuous family ownership and occupancy. In those districts, succeeding generations of a family built houses near their relatives, on land acquired from family members, and in close proximity to the homes of siblings, parents, cousins, etc. who in some instances worked a farm together. Other rural districts reflect the tastes and interests of the wealthy rural retreat owners, who imposed their own visions of a comfortable rural life on a part of town or a collection of properties. The rural retreat owners built or remodeled houses into sprawling mansions, moved or built picturesque cottages nearby for their employees, constructed state-of-the-art barns for their horses or prize cattle, and hired gardeners to maintain the pastoral setting that held the whole composition together.

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Topsfield's rural districts also vividly display the spatial organization, design trends, and distinguishing characteristics of rural life as it was lived at various times, and by various demographic groups, during the period of significance. In the farm districts, the clustering or aligning of multiple family farmsteads and buildings, and their relationships to the historic road network and to the landscape follow traditional regional patterns of land use. On the other hand, rural retreat districts tend to be more architecturally unified and aesthetically oriented, in some cases vividly displaying the input of professional designers.

**Agricultural Educational Facilities**

Physical characteristics. Also associated with the town's rural and agricultural development are **agricultural educational/institutional facilities**-such as a county agricultural society property established in the 19th century and still functioning today as the Topsfield Fairgrounds, and an early-20th-century farmers' cooperative. Both institutions had a profound effect on farming in Topsfield. The Essex Agricultural Society's large, highly visible property astride the Newburyport Turnpike was a laboratory for experimental farming methods and a locus for disseminating information through its annual agricultural fairs. The Essex County Cooperative Society helped preserve the livelihood of local farmers during the long years of competition and economic hardship between the two World Wars.

Representative examples of this property type contain specialized subtypes of non-residential buildings and structures such as exhibition halls, cooperative storehouses, holding pens, and ticket booths, along with some more standard outbuildings, such as sheds and barns. Both complexes are still set in surrounding agricultural landscapes. The buildings clustered on these properties are of wood construction primarily, with some concrete and metal structures from recent years. Most of the buildings have gable roofs and are reminiscent of barns in scale and detail.

Associative characteristics. Farmers throughout Essex County took part in the Essex Agricultural Society, and the Topsfield cattle show and agricultural fair drew participants from an even wider regional area. The buildings of the Essex County Farmers Cooperative provided collective storage facilities for local farmers during the difficult years of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Both facilities represent communication and mutual support among farmers, the exchange of ideas and information on farming practices, and the promotion and improvement of agriculture. The structures are examples of utilitarian buildings constructed to promote these new ideas. The presence of both the EAS and the cooperative was a key factor in the maintenance of farming as a way of life in Topsfield and nearby

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communities well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Further, the active participation of Topsfield's rural retreat proprietors in both organizations brought financial support and attracted a broader audience to the educational facilities, which in turn contributed to the stability of Essex County's agricultural traditions.

**Dwellings (Residential Buildings)**

Physical characteristics. Under the Rural Development Context, **dwellings** include farmhouses, main houses, cottages, and any residential units such as a chauffeur's quarters over a garage. The main house refers to the proprietor's dwelling which may have been the early farmhouse converted for a rural retreat, or may represent new construction as the owner's dwelling. The farmhouse is the house in which the farmer and farm family lived. With the development of rural retreats, the farmhouse may have been converted to the main house, or relegated to a farm manager or tenant farmer's residence. A cottage may be a converted farmhouse or farm building, or a newly constructed residence for a tenant farmer or employee such as a chauffeur or gardener. As a rule, a farm cottage is smaller than the main house. For each type of dwelling there are examples that display modest detail, most commonly in traditional styles derived from Colonial architecture. Most dwellings still occupy their original locations, although there are occasional examples that were relocated within the property or moved there for reuse as a dwelling for farm workers.

Farm dwellings in Topsfield are generally modest in detail, and usually constructed of wood, but they vary considerably in size and general style. Virtually all of Topsfield's National Register-eligible pre-1800 farmhouses, no matter how early their cores may be, have Georgian-derived or "Second Period" exteriors with clapboard siding, boxed cornices, narrow corner boards, and, in some cases, water tables above their fieldstone- or granite foundations. Doors are paneled, although many are later replacements. Windows tend to be 6/9 sash, 6/6 or later replacements, usually 2/2 sash. The dominant house type of these earlier farmhouses is the five-bay 1½ - or 2 ½ -story center-chimney building. Some have three- or four-bay facades. Most dwellings have side-gabled roofs; some have gambrel roofs; several have rear lean-tos resulting in a saltbox profile.

The five-bay, 2½ -story, side-gabled house type continued in Topsfield's farmhouses all through the 19th century, although by the 1820s the center chimney had given way to a pair of chimneys, usually positioned at the roof ridge. Farm dwellings from the early 19th century through the 1880s also included the two-room-deep, 1 ½ -story Cape Cod house. Extant detailing is the result of both economic factors and trends fashionable at the time a farmhouse was built or altered. There are

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examples of high-style Federal, Greek Revival, and Italianate detailing, for instance, reflecting the prevailing styles of the period in which they were built.

Rural dwellings built during the first half of the 20th century in Topsfield also display a range of scales and forms, from the large 2 ½ -story five-bay houses of wealthy "gentleman" farmers to smaller, more simply-detailed 1 ½ -story cottages which were often put up by the farm owners for their managers or tenants. While Topsfield's 20th-century farm-owners' houses were built in a variety of revivalist styles; most are large Colonial Revival buildings. The 20th-century cottages are predominately 1 1/2-story Craftsman bungalows of the 1910s-'30s, either side- or front-gabled, with vernacular Colonial Revival detailing such as Tuscan columns on the front porches.

Associative characteristics. Many dwellings on the rural properties illustrate regional influences and tend to reflect the frugal "Yankee" attitude in their simplicity and practicality of design, as is evidenced by the long continuance of the five-bay, two-story, end-gabled house form which predominated until the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Changes in house form and in designation of interior spaces are also exemplified by Topsfield's collection of rural dwellings, some of which illustrate more than one historic period through the existence of additions and enlargements. The town's 18th-century farm dwellings include well-preserved examples of several house-types, ranging from one-story side-gabled or gambrel-roofed cottages and Cape Cod houses to 2 ½ -story center-chimney dwellings, also with gabled or gambrel roofs, and one extremely well-preserved house with a rear lean-to "salt-box" form. 19th-century farmhouses include an occasional example of the ubiquitous sidehall-entry, gable-front house of the Greek Revival period, but most retain the three- and five-bay side-gabled form with Greek Revival or Italianate accents. The fact that Charles Brackett, Samuel Hood, Isaiah Small, John Potter and a few other local builders of Topsfield's 19th-century farmhouses are known adds greatly to an understanding of the work of local craftsmen.

Late 19th- and early 20th-century rural dwellings, most of them built as rural retreats for nearby city-dwellers, include spacious, architect-designed examples of the Shingle Style, rustic but comfortable Arts and Crafts dwellings, Tudor Revival brick and stone mansions, and several illustrations of the Colonial Revival in both its Georgian and Federal Revival manifestations. Among the noted architects about whom these dwellings provide important information are Charles K. Cummings, Putnam & Allen, William G. Rantoul, Philip Richardson of Richardson, Barott, and Richardson, and Stickney & Austin.

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Topsfield's farm dwellings evoke the lifestyles of Topsfield's rural families throughout the period of significance. The generally substantial size and subdued yet stylish finish of the farmhouses of the 18th and early-19th centuries indicate the prosperity enjoyed by local farmers during the Colonial and Federal eras. In contrast, both the dearth of examples and the simplicity and small size of the few farmhouses that were built in the latter part of the 19th century bespeak the reduced circumstances of many of Topsfield's general farmers after the Civil War.

On the other hand, the large high-style residences of the out-of-town "gentleman farmers" in both early and later periods tell much about their comfortable lives. Those dwellings also vividly illustrate trends and attitudes associated with the regional rural retreat movement. In the later phase of the movement, in particular, the value placed on pastoral attributes by the wealthy city-dweller owners is obvious in the siting of their new houses to optimize views of the countryside, and in their taste for natural materials (cf. the estate houses built of local fieldstone). Some of Topsfield's rural dwellings from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century also illustrate the popular interest in rusticity, especially in subsidiary dwellings for household or farm employees. Similarly, many alterations made by the rural retreat owners to existing dwellings in the late-19th and 20th centuries, such as the addition of open verandas, sleeping porches, and grassed terraces illustrate an opening up of a dwelling to the outdoors that is quite foreign to the earlier farmers' regard for the house as a place of shelter, warmth, and agricultural activity.

Topsfield's rural dwellings served as the homes of people who literally shaped the town's countryside and drove its economy for much of its history. Through their roles as both local and state-level officeholders, many of the occupants also exerted a strong influence on the development of the community and the region as a whole. Among the owners and residents of Topsfield's grand country houses, for instance, were a series of gentlemen from nearby Salem who included two of Salem's largest ship owners, one of its mayors, and its pre-eminent historian.

**Outbuildings (Non-Residential Buildings)**

Physical characteristics. Two groups of non-residential buildings are associated with Topsfield's rural development. The larger group, **agricultural outbuildings**, consists of functional farm-related buildings from the full range of the period of significance. The smaller group, **recreational buildings**, which with few exceptions is composed of later buildings, is associated with recreational or leisure activities on the rural retreats. Of the agricultural out buildings, barns and carriage houses are distinct

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subtypes. Others, such as stables, garages, sheds, chicken coops, and numerous small utilitarian outbuildings, do not form subtypes, but rather exist as significant site features on Topsfield's surviving farms, farmsteads, and rural residential properties. Non-residential subtypes associated with the recreational and leisure time aspect of the rural retreats include garden houses, boathouses, artists' studios, and playhouses.

As is true with dwellings, Topsfield's outbuildings display regional influences in form, detail, and construction methods, including a prevailing simplicity and practicality of design. Hence the presence of many gable-front "New England" barns dating from ca. 1850 through the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which vary in size, roof shape, and placement of windows and doors. Ancillary buildings visually relate to and are important for their association with dwellings. Some share architectural design characteristics with the farmhouse or main house on the property; others, especially those built in a different era than the house, stand in vivid contrast to the dwelling on the property.

**Agricultural Outbuildings.** The barn is often the visually dominant feature of a farm or farmstead. A few of Topsfield's barns are the "English" type (with the main door in the long side of the building). These heavy timber-frame buildings may have vertical-board siding and are generally windowless except for any windows added well after the date of construction. Most extant barns on Topsfield's rural properties, however, are of the "New England" type that evolved with the agricultural advances of the 19th century. In these barns, which exist in vertical-board, clapboarded, and shingled versions, the main wagon- or "great" door is located in the gable end. Most of these doors are of the sliding type, mounted on the inside of the wall, and slide by rolling on a pair of iron wheels. Most of Topsfield's New England barns are "banked" to some degree, either built with one side into a natural slope, or with an earthen ramp leading to one end, thus accommodating a basement story with its own entrance for equipment or animals under the main hay/wagon/livestock floor. Occasionally, a barn has an attached lean-to or cowshed. Early 20th-century barns in Topsfield are more varied in form, ranging from some with high gambrel roofs to others that are lower one-story cattle- or sheep barns. A few silos still are attached to these later barns. There also are examples of small one-story dairies or milk houses located against or just in front of the barns.

The carriage house or wagon shed is found in a variety of forms. Most are wood clapboard or shingle with openings across the long side to accommodate wagons, farm equipment or carriages. One example of a stone carriage house also is known in Topsfield.

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Other components of Topsfield's rural properties include one-story sheds, windowless ice houses, and special-function animal shelters such as stables and poultry houses. Automobile garages and vehicle sheds such as tractor sheds were constructed on many properties in the first half of the 20th century. A few workshops also survive, including one two-story, side-gabled 19th-century shoe shop.

**Recreational buildings.** The most popular form of recreational building constructed on the rural retreats was the garden house or summerhouse. Delightful to use, these small structures were set amidst a designed garden and were both ornamental and a place from which to view the scenery. Other recreational buildings found on Topsfield's rural properties include bathhouses, boathouses, artists' studios, and children's playhouses.

Associative characteristics. While farm dwellings illustrate the residential and domestic life of Topsfield's farm families, the outbuildings contribute most to our understanding of the farmer's work. Section E describes the decline of the early, multi-purpose English barn that incorporated a threshing floor, and the rise to dominance in the 19th century of the New England barn that was so well suited to Topsfield's dairy farms. Similarly, the outbuildings of the early 20th century convey the influences of government regulation and the changing nature of farm work during the age of the internal combustion engine. Both factors spawned the development of new 20<sup>th</sup>-century outbuilding types. Government policy was responsible for the free-standing and attached milkrooms still seen on several local farms, for instance, and for changes in cow barn interiors. The federal government also disseminated advice on barn and silo construction. Mechanization in the 20<sup>th</sup> century led to the building of tractor sheds and garages, rather than stables and wagon houses.

Topsfield's surviving outbuildings are also significant for their forms--both traditional and innovative--and their stylistic features. As was true throughout the region, agricultural outbuildings in Topsfield demonstrate a long extension of traditional mortised, tenoned, and pegged heavy timber-frame construction as late as the Civil War period, and several of Topsfield's barns are significant as well-preserved examples of this method of construction. Many major 19<sup>th</sup> century outbuildings mimic the detailing of the associated dwellings in window design and in decorative architectural finish such as cornices and cornerboards. Given the large number of barns built over the middle of the century, many of these display stylish, though somewhat simplified, Greek Revival characteristics.

In the collection of Topsfield's magnificent mid-19th-century barns by known local builders such as Jacob Foster and John H. Potter, there remains a wealth of both original and evolutionary detail

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including lofts, cow stanchions, stanchion windows and sliding doors, horse stalls, and cellars for crop storage or piggeries. These buildings contribute greatly to the knowledge about local and regional building practices as evidenced by the work of local master builders.

The growing trend toward specialization of utilitarian buildings and spaces during the 19th century is an important aspect of regional agricultural attitudes, as is the resulting diversification of functional design. Specialized outbuilding forms such as the windowless icehouse and the elevated, slant-walled corn crib, which survive on some of the larger farms, display in their form and design their direct connection to the product stored within them.

On the rural retreats, some outbuildings not only illustrate the work of important architects, but also convey the values and lifestyles of their wealthy owners. Luxurious stables, gatehouses which incorporate living quarters for both horses and coachmen, and summerhouses where resident families could spend leisure hours are only a few such examples.

**Farm landscapes— Rural retreat landscapes**

Physical characteristics. Topsfield's rural character owes much of its pastoral quality to the town's rolling terrain, which in some cases results in broad vistas across the Ipswich River or the town's many brooks and valleys. Many hillside orchards are now largely devoid of their fruit trees, and pastures where dairy herds formerly grazed are now more likely to be dotted with horses, but fields of ripening corn and market crops still characterize other portions of Topsfield's summer landscape. Topsfield's farm- and rural-retreat landscapes consist of various combinations of agricultural fields, pastures, meadows, orchards, gardens, and vistas. They also incorporate a variety of structures and objects such as wells, pumphouses, silos, stone walls, fences, terraces, and garden objects. Small family or neighborhood burial grounds are located on at least two of Topsfield's former farms.

**Farm landscapes**, other than those that exist as part of the farmsteads, range in scale from single cultivated fields of corn, hay, or market crops to sweeping vistas of pastures and meadows on Topsfield's rolling hills and valleys. Some landscape parcels still fit the descriptions and have the same boundaries as described in early deeds, such as the frequently cited term "upland meadow," or the Peabody Farm's five-acre "front field" aligned along Salem Road in front of the Matthew Peabody House.

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A common pattern of farm development that existed in Topsfield and other rural eastern Massachusetts communities from the early Colonial era and still continues in places today is the non-contiguous composition of some agricultural properties. Rather than owning their land in one piece, early farmers generally owned parcels at scattered locations. Pastures, orchards, and the cultivated fields of one farm may have been located on uplands, for instance, while the owner may also have maintained meadows in lowlands or along the Ipswich River, often at a considerable distance from the rest of his land and his farmstead. The result in Topsfield today is that some of the town's most significant and well-preserved historic agricultural landscapes exist apart from the farmstead with which they were associated. In some cases, the farmstead itself may even be gone or its integrity severely compromised, while a portion of its agricultural landscape is intact, and still in agricultural use.

Many of Topsfield's **farm and rural retreat landscapes** are further defined by the presence of manmade features such as fences or dry-laid stone walls, or they display surviving lines or clusters of planted material such as wind screens of trees or shrubbery. Some have a natural boundary of river or brook, trees, or brush. Most of the stone walls (also called stone fences) are dry-laid fieldstone. Few wood fences survive from the period of significance; those that appear to have portions predating 1955 are mainly of the split-rail type, with some simple picket designs found in fences near a farmhouse, enclosing a barnyard and manure pit, or delineating other surviving landscape elements such as remnants of orchards, kitchen gardens, or floral borders and other ornamental plantings.

Gardens remaining from the later part of the period of significance, certainly after 1870, are a significant component of some of Topsfield's rural landscapes. "Garden" refers to the designed feature of a landscape that may be as far reaching as the overall formalized setting of a main house or as small as a terraced or walled kitchen garden beside a farmhouse, main house or cottage. While well-defined gardens are generally not found on the properties that remained in general farming use through the period of significance, nearly all of the rural retreats that retain settings reminiscent of the pastoral and agricultural past have some form of designed formalized landscape setting that acts as a transition between the house and surrounding fields and pastures. Garden ornamentation on the rural retreats may include statuary, terraces, brick or stone walls, and pergolas. Also some rural-retreat gardens are enhanced by the presence of small outbuildings such as garden houses and gazebos. Family burying grounds are part of the landscape on at least two properties.

Associative characteristics While land is an enduring commodity, the character of the landscape itself is ever-changing. Still, much of Topsfield's history can be read in its surviving rural landscapes, which

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in their continuing uses and physical qualities provide important evidence of the role they played during the period of significance. Surviving field patterns, for instance, are reminders not only of past agricultural practices but of aspects of community planning and development ranging from land division in the early Colonial period to consolidation and expansion of pasture and plowland into large parcels under early 20th century gentleman farmers. Drainage and other water-management systems still present on several rural properties that follow either traditional or scientific principles also contribute information about the discipline of engineering. In the cases where landscape architects are known, surviving evidence of garden design, plant selection, etc. has significance for the information it contributes about the design principles prevalent in a given era, and about the work of acknowledged masters such as Ernest Bowditch in the 19th century, and Harold Blossom, Pray, Hubbard & White, Arthur Shurcliff, and Charles Sprague Sargent in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The spatial organization and physical qualities of many agricultural fields and pastures still evoke the distinctive characteristics of the types of farming and the agricultural practices that took place in Topsfield during the period of significance. Many pastures and fields still fill sunny slopes and valleys, bear clear relationships to nearby farmsteads or outbuildings, and are enclosed or crisscrossed with stone walls, vegetative wind breaks, or wagon- or cow paths.

Remnants of several designed landscapes that range from small formal gardens and terraces to the vistas planned by professional landscape architects or shaped by the aesthetic or horticultural tastes of wealthy city dwellers also have significance for their association with the rural retreat movement. Pastoral vistas as part of the landscape are important elements of rural retreats for the way in which they convey a sense of spaciousness or privacy, a connection with the agrarian past, or serve to highlight natural or manmade features.

Family burying grounds are a significant part of the landscape of two properties. In each instance they contribute to the historical associations of the property and convey the sense of intimacy and connection with the family farm or country seat with which the occupants so identified themselves that they buried their dead on their farms, rather than in the town cemeteries.

A few agricultural landscape parcels have the potential to reveal information about former uses of the site. In at least one instance, extensive 19th-century drainage systems are reported to exist. Such systems are likely to yield important information about regional agricultural engineering practices during the period of significance.

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The design and appearance of Topsfield's farms, rural retreats, and their components are reflective of the town's hospitable topography, fertile soils, and of a deeply ingrained conservative and pragmatic attitude toward a restrained architecture embellished in all periods by relatively unpretentious detail. The aspect of some farms, as well as their preservation in an era of agricultural decline, eventually was modified by the wealth and stylish tastes of later owners who turned them into rural retreats. In general, however, the design of these properties carried on the longstanding pastoral and largely utilitarian traditions of the agricultural landscape.

The significance of Topsfield's historic farms and rural retreats is fully described in the Rural Development Context Statement. Farms, farmsteads, rural retreats, rural districts, agricultural educational facilities, rural dwellings and outbuildings, agricultural landscapes, and archaeological resources relating to farms and rural retreats are associated with this rural development of Topsfield between 1670 and 1955.

All nine property types meet Criterion A as important illustrations of rural life in Topsfield in all its manifestations--of economy, culture, beliefs, and attitudes--during the period of significance from the late 17<sup>th</sup> through the mid-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Most are also significant under Criterion C as illustrations of prevailing rural New England architectural types and designs of their construction periods. Some resources, in particular rural retreats and their components, meet Criterion C as examples of the work of noted architects and landscape designers. Some property types may also have archaeological or technological significance under Criterion D. These include some agricultural landscapes where state-of-the-art drainage systems are known to exist, and some buildings that illustrate construction methods that have the potential to yield significant information about historic building techniques.

Topsfield's farms, farmsteads, and their components are living reminders of the agricultural way of life that dominated the town's character and economy from the time of its founding through the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and are thus significant under Criterion A. The relationships between the buildings and other elements of the farm, as well as the design of individual buildings and structures, tell of the needs and philosophies of Topsfield's farmers. They also provide valuable information about technology and culture in any given historic era. Changes in barn design over time, to cite one

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example, reflect influences as diverse as the increasing size of livestock due to improved breeding and nutrition, the disappearing need for a threshing floor after the introduction of threshing machines and the phasing out of grain production, the influence of agricultural publications and organizations such as the Essex Agricultural Society, and a growing humanitarian concern for the comfort of animals under a farmer's care.

Examples of all property types are well preserved, possessing a high degree of **design, workmanship, setting, feeling** and **association**, all of which are important in conveying the connection of a property type with its agricultural roots and/or estate context. Most also retain integrity of **materials** and **location**. It was common on rural properties for buildings to be relocated and materials changed, and many resources which have undergone some alteration in these areas still meet the registration requirements. (See below.)

**REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS**

To be eligible for the National Register within this context under Criterion C, Topsfield's agricultural resources must demonstrate through their design, plan, method of construction, architectural elaboration and/or arrangement and spatial relationships information about the way in which farms and rural retreats and their associated resources were established and used. All eligible properties must retain a level of integrity that conveys their significance and a sense of original purpose and the physical relationship to other historic resources. Setting, design, and location are aspects of integrity that should be particularly evident in properties eligible within this context.

**Farms** in Topsfield may vary in size, and may encompass any number of associated property types and subtypes within their boundaries. In order to be National Register eligible, however, a farm must retain resources from the full range of agricultural functions, and convey the relationships between them. Because of the continually evolving nature of functioning farms and their large number of resources, some changes in design over time, and some loss and replacement of buildings are inevitable, and do not necessarily diminish the property's integrity.

**Farmsteads.** Reduced portions of some former farms, particularly their farmsteads or agricultural landscape resources such as cultivated fields or pastures, may retain their own historic integrity and

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appearance, and still have much to convey about the development of agriculture in Topsfield despite having become physically or functionally disconnected from the farm as a whole. Topsfield's National Register eligible farmsteads, though they may no longer be part of an entire farm, will retain the overall design, feeling, and associations they attained during the period of significance, even though some loss of the agricultural landscape and outbuildings may have occurred, and some later additions may have been made to the buildings. While the house and barn were the minimum building combination necessary for the basic functions of a farm, a farmstead on which the house and at least one other significant building, such as a barn, workshop, or wagon shed remains (either attached or freestanding) would meet the registration requirements necessary to identify a property's agricultural nature. Construction of farmstead components in different eras is part of a property's farming history and is acceptable under the registration requirements. To be eligible under Criterion A, the elements of a farmstead, including house, barn and/or other outbuildings, structures and site features such as silos, circulation routes, stone walls, fences, manure pits, and barnyards must retain a clear relationship to one another and display a clear association with the property's agricultural function during the period of significance. As a whole, the farmstead complex must possess outstanding agricultural associations. If this requirement is met, the resource should be considered for listing even if integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and setting have been somewhat compromised. To be eligible under Criterion C, a farmstead must provide an exceptional and/or illustrative example of Topsfield's agricultural past through architectural style, design, method of construction, or technology. To be eligible under Criterion D, a property of this type must provide or have the potential to provide information about some aspect of farming in Topsfield.

**Rural retreats** must retain a high level of association with the rural retreat development in Topsfield, so that the property continues to convey that association under Criterion A. Also, under Criterion C a relatively high degree of integrity of design, materials, and workmanship is important to convey the original intent and to display a well-preserved example of the property type. The development of most of these properties involved the services of architects and/or landscape designers. In order to be National Register eligible, they must accurately illustrate the work of a designer, with higher expectations of integrity for the buildings than for the landscapes.

Among the most common alterations of rural retreats to be expected is the loss of wings, ells, and in many cases entire outbuildings, which were more prone to destruction by fire, deterioration, and neglect than houses were. Also allowable under the integrity expectations are the updating, enlargement, and modernization of both buildings and setting to incorporate advances in technology

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and adaptation to later modern lifestyles. As with farms and farmsteads, some subdivision of these large properties is expected, but they should maintain enough of the setting so that they are still reminiscent of the privacy, the pastoral setting, and the comfortable lifestyle of the rural retreat.

Rural retreats significant under Criterion A must demonstrate patterns of development associated with the attraction of city dwellers to the town's rich agricultural settings, and with the social patterns of the wealthy privileged class of Boston-area and North Shore society. To be eligible under Criterion C, rural retreats and their components must be outstanding or representative examples of both rural New England architecture and of domesticated cultural landscape that is reflective of either popular design elements drawn from deep agricultural roots, or of the sophisticated tastes of the owners of the country estates.

While overall **location** is important, as with farms and farmsteads, the concept of relocation of buildings to or within a rural retreat property was part of a development pattern that reflected changes in the property's use over time, such as the need for a home for a farm manager, or a conversion of an outbuilding from an outmoded use to a new one. Integrity of **materials** is important, but changes in material can acknowledge shifts from one period of development to another. Integrity of **workmanship** is important in the later retreats that were professionally designed. However, the conversion of existing farm buildings to a rural retreat at times involved a change in materials. Therefore, resources in which the aspects of location, materials, and workmanship are somewhat compromised may still be eligible.

**Rural districts.** Agricultural and rural-retreat districts in Topsfield are significant as illustrations of the town's development as a community that included clustered rural neighborhoods and groups of agricultural resources extending beyond the individual farms or farmsteads. Some districts are significant for their strong family associations across many generations. Under Criterion A, most of the rural districts illustrate one aspect of Topsfield's community development--the evolution of a farming district that came about through the division of large parcels of land for succeeding generations of family members. Thus, farming and/or rural retreat districts in Topsfield must consist of groups of resources composed of survivals from more than one farm or rural retreat. (Single farms or farmsteads or rural retreats should be nominated individually, rather than as districts.) Because of the composite nature of rural districts, a broad range of construction dates, architectural styles, landscape types, etc., would be allowable under the district designation, and they may include a mix of nomination categories and property types.

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Criterion C is most likely to be met by farming- or rural retreat districts which are "distinguishable entities whose components may lack individual distinction." Therefore, more alteration is accepted for district properties than is the case with other property types, provided that contributing components retain enough integrity to convey their agricultural or rural-retreat associations and their relationship to the district group. Under Criterion A, a district as a whole must have strong associations with events, people, or development patterns relating to Topsfield's rural development. Some loss of integrity in design, materials, and workmanship would be acceptable in districts qualifying under Criterion A. To qualify under Criterion D, districts must have the potential to provide additional information about farming methods, technology, settlement, and architecture.

District boundaries should be drawn to include visual evidence of the area's agricultural development, and may incorporate isolated incidences of alteration, modern construction, and demolition. Areas where characteristics that post-date the period of significance predominate should be excluded.

**Agricultural/Educational facilities.** While the rich history of the Essex Agricultural Society is well documented in its annual reports, and includes extensive information on the construction of the Society's first barn in 1861, the extant resources on the property are limited to those constructed after 1910 when it became the permanent location for the society's Annual Cattle Show and Fair. Thus all resources associated with this important activity of promoting agriculture in Essex County date to the 20th century. Since the facility is still in operation, its buildings and site features also have undergone many alterations to accommodate the on-going technology of farming and agriculture. Such evidence should be in the design, materials, and workmanship of the original construction. In addition, some evidence of the overall arrangement or plan of resources on the site should also be evident.

**Dwellings/Residential buildings.** In order to meet individual eligibility requirements, a rural dwelling must retain its overall design characteristics and enough of its setting to convey the feeling of and association with the original farm or rural retreat context. It must also be a well-preserved example of an architectural style, of an architect's or builder's work, or illustrate a method of construction. In general, eligible dwellings must continue to display the materials used during the period of significance. Although roofing material on nearly all Topsfield's houses was changed to asphalt shingle in the twentieth century, only a minor amount of synthetic siding or synthetic detailing should be present, at least on the most highly visible elevations. Removal or replacement of windows and doors will disqualify a dwelling if the type, material, arrangement, and scale of the fenestration is changed to such a degree that it obscures the building's historic associations. A minor amount of this

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type of alteration, however, would not make a dwelling ineligible. A relocated dwelling is not necessarily disqualified if it still retains most of its integrity, since moving buildings was an integral component of Topsfield's rural property history throughout the period of significance.

**Outbuildings.** While most of Topsfield's eligible rural outbuildings will meet registration requirements as part of a farm, farmstead, district, or dwelling, a few, such as a handful of barns that have outstanding associations with the town and region's agricultural past, or which are unusually complete and intact illustrations of a builder's work or a method of construction, may be eligible individually. To meet this qualification, they must possess an outstanding degree of integrity under Criterion C. Whether eligible individually or as a contributing resource in a group or on an individual property, an outbuilding must convey both feeling and association with its past agricultural or recreational functions, retain a sense of the agricultural setting and/or association with the pastoral landscape, as well as add meaning to the associated dwellings and surrounding context. While some barns, stables, and sheds have been all or partially converted to different uses, those which retain their overall visual relationship to the farm or rural retreat, usually through location, materials, design, form, and a majority of their details, are still eligible as part of a complex or group. Location, i.e. the proximity to the main farm or rural retreat dwelling, and setting within a functional or designed landscape are important elements in the eligibility of outbuildings. In most cases, original materials and signs of workmanship should be present in order to convey aspects of a high level of integrity. Recreational outbuildings to be found on some rural retreats, such as boathouses and studios, should demonstrate similar properties of integrity to those required in the agricultural outbuildings.

**Farm and rural retreat landscapes.** To be eligible under Criterion A, a landscape associated with a farm must retain some farming function such as pasturage, tillage, orcharding, or mowing for hay. Changes in the type of agricultural use, such as succession and rotation of crops, or a change in crops raised in response to changing markets, were an integral component of farming, and would not be considered a loss of integrity. Eligible agricultural fields, whether associated with historic farms, rural retreats, or both, are those that continued to be worked during the period of significance. If part of a rural retreat, they will have been taken into account by landscape designers when optimizing the bucolic vistas from a main house or other parts of the estate.

The landscape settings of Topsfield's farms and rural retreats also are significant under Criterion C both for their functional and aesthetic design, and as rural resources whose appearance resulted from spatial arrangements, technological methods, and farming techniques imposed by the farmers who

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owned and worked them. Field patterns, types of plantings, fieldstone walls, wooden fence lines, and windscreens of trees also all contribute to the overall character of these landscapes. Some re-forestation is acceptable, but in order to meet Criterion C a landscape must not be either completely reforested or developed with buildings or structures to the extent that its agricultural or pastoral associations are obscured.

Under both Criteria A and C, a rural retreat landscape must convey some elements of the tastes of its owners, such as evidence of professional or formal design, or display its association with leisure-time pursuits. Evidence of an association with horticulture, for instance, might be the survival of rare or specimen plantings on the property or design remnants of flower gardens. Evidence of equestrian interests might be the presence of horse paddocks or bridle paths from the period of significance.

For the landscapes that may have significance under Criterion D, such as those on the Crowninshield / Peirce Estate, documentary evidence indicating that some sub-surface features, structures, objects, or artifacts exist with integrity, that could yield important information about agricultural practices during the period of significance is necessary. Although no landscapes are being nominated individually at this time, the combination of landscape elements with other resources will enhance a nomination of a complex that defines a farm or a rural retreat.

**Potential Significance of Archaeological Resources**

Since patterns of ancient Native American settlement and subsistence in Topsfield are poorly documented, any surviving sites could be significant. Native sites located at the sites of rural property types may help document the importance of inland settlement along the lower Ipswich River drainage and the relationship of these sites to coastal settlements along the extensive marshes and estuaries in Ipswich. Only 12 sites are recorded in Topsfield, a striking comparison with the 100 or more sites located in neighboring Ipswich along the coast. Ancient sites identified at rural properties may help determine whether the lack of sites in Topsfield is the result of underreporting, environmental, or cultural factors. Increased numbers of sites in Ipswich may be a function of resources available at coastal locations and/or a bias in reporting in favor of shell midden sites along the coast. Despite the high frequency of ancient sites identified in Ipswich and information available from sites located in Topsfield, the lack of systematic research and controlled excavations has resulted in most known sites

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being poorly documented and lacking intrasite information. Systematic research conducted at ancient Native American sites in Topsfield can contribute important information relating to site function and variability that increases our knowledge of ancient sites beyond locational characteristics and culture historical/typological considerations.

Historic archaeological resources identified at the sites of rural agricultural property types have the potential to contribute detailed information on the changing social, cultural, and economic patterns that characterized the lives of individuals, families, and other social groups in Topsfield from the 17<sup>th</sup> through the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Structural evidence from earlier buildings and structural change at existing residences and outbuildings may reflect social change in families and in the community in general. Similar survivals can also reflect economic changes in families, the community, and the region. Detailed analysis of the contents of occupational-related features can also contribute important social and economic information as well regarding the lifeways of individuals who inhabited dwellings associated with rural property types.

Identification and mapping of dwellings, outbuildings, and structures and objects associated with agricultural landscapes can also contribute important information relating to the setting of rural property types through time. The setting or distribution of individual property types listed above has not been studied analytically in any systematic way. The study of buildings associated with rural property types and their organization at specific points in time may contribute important information relating to social patterns and local patterns of development. The siting of buildings during certain periods, the location of outbuildings, parcel size, and the nature of the surrounding landscape may all contribute to our understanding of rural development and the evolution of specific rural property types.

In addition to the siting of buildings and the setting or structure of rural property types at specific points in time, historical and archaeological research can also help define the evolutionary pattern between property types and in specific property types through time. Combined historical and archaeological research can contribute important architectural, social, economic, and intrasite information that links evolutionary developments within property types and between property types through time. Detailed analysis of artifact distributions and the contents of features may contribute details related to the location, type, and construction materials used for windows, doors, chimneys, and building extensions no longer extant. Similar research may also locate key evidence related to the social structure of the household within a specific property and/or type, possibly contributing evidence on extended family occupation, tenancy, and borders. The siting of buildings, structure of property

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types and contents of features may also contribute important information that documents the levels of agriculture and husbandry at specific properties and property types, as well as how these patterns changed as farms and farmsteads evolved into rural retreats. Similar research may also document the role of manufacturing activities or cottage industries within each property type.

It should be stressed that, though less obvious, the research potential for various rural property types lies as much below ground as it does above. Just as buildings evolved over time, the households they housed and farmsteads they were part of also grew and changed. Given that many of the properties in Topsfield are still in rural settings that appear not to have been greatly altered, the likelihood that a significant archaeological record survives is extremely high. Clearly, further documentation is needed even in order to assess the significance of the archaeological potential; such a project would likely produce its own nomination. The point to be emphasized here is that specific properties associated with each rural property type listed in this nomination are probably significant for archaeology independent of other considerations. As a result, any subsurface disturbance, whether repairs to existing foundations, septic installation, or any new construction, should not be undertaken without some professional archaeological assessment.

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**G. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

The geographical area for this Multiple Property Documentation Form nomination consists of the corporate limits of the town of Topsfield, Essex County, Massachusetts.

**H. SUMMARY OF IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION METHODS**

The multiple property listing of Historic Farms and Rural Retreats of Topsfield, Massachusetts is based upon a cultural resource survey of the town's most important rural properties conducted in 1997-98 by consultants Gretchen Schuler and Anne Forbes under the direction of the Topsfield Historical Commission. The Commission, utilizing their local knowledge, augmented by fieldwork and documentary research, first identified a study list of approximately sixty properties outside the town center, (not already on the National Register with the exception of five First Period structures explained below) with the highest potential significance as rural historic resources. The consultants then wrote detailed Massachusetts Historical Commission survey forms for fifty-seven of the best-preserved resources, and evaluated their integrity and significance under the National Register criteria.

The rural survey effort followed earlier surveys that had helped to identify the properties on the study list. A broad-based historic-properties survey undertaken by volunteers in 1972-73 covered the whole community, but was largely limited to pre-1875 resources. Another, more concentrated survey in the 1980s documented in more detail resources in the local and National Register historic districts at Topsfield center. A survey of the First Period buildings of Essex County conducted by Boston University graduate students in 1985 led to the listing in 1990 of five pre-1725 Topsfield properties on the National Register as part of the "First Period Buildings of Eastern Massachusetts Thematic Resource Area" nomination.

The consultants conducted intensive field work on all the properties under consideration, including interior inspections of those buildings which were accessible to them. Careful examination of settings and outbuildings on each property, combined with a general reconnaissance-level survey of the entire town, identified and contributed to the development of the categories and sub-categories included in the Associated Property Types for the Rural Development Context of the Historic Farms and Rural Retreats of Topsfield, Massachusetts. Those examinations also revealed surviving illustrations of

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important construction methods and, coupled with documentary research, provided clues to the presence of some potentially significant agricultural engineering structures. Architectural and landscape descriptions for the survey forms were written to a level of detail sufficient to provide the basis for National Register nomination Section 7 descriptions. They also set the stage for assessing the comparative integrity of the surveyed properties, forming the basis for eliminating some of the more altered resources from consideration for the National Register, while providing the data for developing the Registration Requirements for all property types.

Documentary research for both the rural survey and the preparation of this Rural Development Context statement benefited greatly from several comprehensive works by local historians, particularly George Francis Dow, who wrote the town history in 1940, and C. Lawrence Bond four decades later, whose 1989 *Houses and Buildings of Topsfield, Massachusetts* expanded upon turn-of-the-century historian J.H. Towne's *Houses and Buildings of Topsfield*, 1902. The latter work was originally published as part of the *Historical Collections of the Topsfield Historical Society*, whose many volumes, appearing annually from 1895 through 1923, and sporadically through 1982, form a collection of both primary and secondary sources that is rare in the degree to which it documents the development of a single town.

The 1997-98 rural survey identified 46 of the properties on the original study list as eligible for the National Register either individually or as part of a district. The Topsfield Historical Commission, with input from the consultants, then ranked those properties according to priorities for National Register listing based largely on locally-identified threats to their integrity, such as likelihood of subdivision and development, and instability of ownership. The Massachusetts Historical Commission National Register staff verified that 27 of the properties are eligible under the Rural Development Context of the Multiple Properties Nomination. Additional properties associated with the context are undoubtedly eligible.

Time and budget constraints further reduced the number of eligible resources to be nominated at the time of the initial Multiple Properties nomination submittal. In conjunction with the Topsfield and Massachusetts Historical Commissions, the consultants developed the following selection criteria in choosing properties for the initial nomination phase:

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- endangerment
  - level of historical significance
  - level of architectural significance
  - level of integrity
  - rarity
  - owner support
  - public support and visibility
  - distribution across the categories of property types

The properties included in the first district to be nominated as part of this Multiple Property Nomination are all outstanding illustrations of aspects of rural life in Topsfield during the period of significance. Some may be endangered by residential development or road construction. The Topsfield Historical Commission has weighed threats, levels of significance, size of properties, and interest of property owners to determine the order in which properties will be the subject of nominations under the Rural Development context. It is anticipated that more properties from the list of those deemed eligible by the Massachusetts Historical Commission will be nominated in the future, as time and funding allows.

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ESSEX AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY RECORDS

Annual Reports of Essex Agricultural Society from 1818 to 1924.

Membership Lists of EAS.

Waters, Thomas Franklin. "The History of the Essex Agricultural Society of Essex County, Massachusetts 1818-1918." Published by the Trustees. 1918.

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MAPS

1830 - Map of Topsfield. Surveyed by Philander Anderson for Jacob Towne, Jr., Joseph Batchelder, Isaac Killam, Moses Wildes.

1872 – Beers, D.G. *Atlas of Essex County, Massachusetts*.

1884 – Hopkins, G.M. *Atlas of Essex County, Massachusetts*. Philadelphia.

1910 – Walker Lithograph & Publishing. *Atlas of Essex County, Massachusetts*. Boston

TOPSFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS AND FILES

Agriculture files: Topsfield fairgrounds, Essex Co. Agricultural Soc. and Coop.

Essex County Directories: 1879, 1880-81, 1883-84, 1888-89. Naumkeag Directory for Salem . . . .  
1893-94. North Shore Directories: 1905-1919.

Essex County Antiquarian: 1897-1909

Genealogy collections:

Various families, including Boardman, Bradstreet, Cummings, Dwinell, Gould, Peirce, Perkins, Phillips, Towne, Wildes

Typescripts of genealogical information on Topsfield families: 3 volumes,

Historical Collections of Topsfield Historical Society, Topsfield, MA. Volumes from 1901 to 1928 have an article “Buildings Constructed in . . .” (the year ),  
Volumes from 1907 to 1913 have Vital Statistics

1896. Vol II - Howlett and Clark Families of Topsfield, Topsfield Copper Mines, Cradle of the Averill Family.

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Church Reports

Deeds: 1639-1869, Vol. I - Vol. X

Probate Records: 1650-1840

School Reports

Selectmen's Records: 3 volumes (18th century)

Tax lists: various years

Town Records: 1659-1739, 1739-1778.

Town Warrants

Vital Records (births, marriages, deaths) to 1850

Vital Records after 1850--in files

UNPUBLISHED REPORTS

Frontiero, Wendy. "Saltonstall/Sears/Coolidge Estate, River Road, Topsfield Massachusetts: Evaluation and Recommendations for Preservation Restrictions." Unpublished, 1996, 1999.

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