



## CHAPTER 2 – HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND RESOURCES

Lenox has developed and changed over the past three centuries in response to large scale national trends that have played out locally in the Town's landscape. The native landscape of the Berkshires is the context influencing how and where economic, social, and demographic changes were manifested. Distinct historic building and landscape resources are associated with each period of the Town's historical development, many of which remain today.

Chapter 2 reviews the Town's historical development and outlines the types of historic resources that are associated with each period of change. Historic resource inventories have documented many of the associated buildings and structures for each period, but continuing work is needed in bringing those inventories up to date. In addition to the built resources, understanding how the vegetative landscape has changed during each period is central to appreciation of how Lenox's appearance and physical character has evolved over time.

Historic contexts are those patterns or trends in history by which a specific occurrence, property, or site can be understood and its meaning within history or prehistory made clear. The physical evolution of Lenox can be tied to a series of historic contexts involving natural, economic, and social patterns at a local, regional, and national level. This chapter reviews Lenox's historical development within the framework of the primary contexts influencing its historic building and landscape resources. The historic contexts and time periods to which they relate have been discussed by local historians based upon detailed research into local history. They include:

- Native Landscape and Pre-Settlement (11,700 BP to 1750)
- Agricultural Development and County Seat (1750-1870)
- Early Industry (1783-1877)
- County Seat – Lenox Becomes a Shire Town (1784-1868),
- Arrival of Culture and Beginnings of a Summer Resort (1821-1870)

- The Cottage Era (1870-1930)
- Mid-Twentieth Century Transition (1930-1970),
- Cultural Attraction and Suburbanization (1970-Present).

The Early Industry, County Seat, and Arrival of Culture contexts are sub-contexts of the larger Agricultural Development theme, which is townwide. These sub-contexts, in contrast, have distinct historical topics and relate to specific limited areas of the Town.

Within each of these historic contexts the types and patterns of historic resources that were developed within the landscape are discussed. Whether the historic resources have survived to the present is noted. The extent to which these resources have been inventoried is reviewed. This discussion provides the basis for the identification of issues and recommendations in later chapters of the preservation plan.

## WRITINGS ON LENOX HISTORY

Lenox is fortunate to have a number of high quality contemporary histories that relate the Town's story and document its various aspects. Two books that provide the best overview of Lenox history are David Wood's 1969 *Lenox Massachusetts Shire Town* and Lucy Kennedy's 2016 *Lenox at 250: An Updated History*. Added to this is the Lenox Library Association's 2016 *Lenox*, an Images of America Series publication that provides a wealth of historic photographic images visually tracing the Town's history. All three publications are compact, written in an accessible manner, and provide insightful overviews of Lenox's historical development.

Wood's *Lenox Massachusetts Shire Town* was written for Lenox's 1967 bicentennial and published by the Town (Wood 1969). It is currently out of print. Wood's book is accessible, entertaining reading yet, though brief, appears to be accurate and authoritative. It was the first book to provide a complete history of the Town. In addition to his competent presentation of earlier eras, Wood included chapters on key themes and individuals and provides an overview of contemporary events in the 1960s that brings his history up to the date of its writing. His insights are informative in that he discusses preparation of the Town's first Master Plan, completed in 1968, a decade before economic conditions in the Berkshires began to alter development trends in Lenox significantly.

Lucy Kennedy's *Lenox at 250: An Updated History* was published as an Amazon eBook, available only online (Kennedy 2016). Also entertaining and readable, Kennedy's short book provides a more thorough context for Lenox's history, including discussion of landscape history, Native Americans, New England culture, and life-ways during different periods of Lenox history. Kennedy's book also brings the Town's history up to the date of its writing, documenting important changes in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. She discusses important historical topics such as agricultural life and the local landscape during the early nineteenth century and the divide between the lives of the wealthy cottagers and that of the local population that anchored the Lenox economy. Kennedy's book is an important vehicle for understanding Lenox history.

Lucy Kennedy has also created a website on Lenox history that is featured by the Lenox Historical Society (Kennedy 2017). It includes a wealth of short histories on a variety of topics that are organized by period, topic, people, and places. The website is a vehicle for continued research by Historical Society members, adding in-depth discussion of detailed aspects of the Town's history. The website is an educational resource for those interested in exploring local history.

The Library Association's *Lenox* provides a wealth of historic images along with a running narrative through their captions (LLA 2016). *Lenox* is an essential companion to the Wood and Kennedy histories. It is particularly valuable in picturing the buildings that have been demolished in Lenox. The constant building of new and larger mansions through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries resulted in the loss of the buildings they replaced.

A brief *History of Lenox Furnace & Lenox Dale* describes the industries that have developed in the Town, most located along the Housatonic River in Lenox Dale (Chague 2015). An unpublished *A History of Lenox* written in 1936 was unpublished due to the author's death but was issued in celebration of the Town's 225<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1992. The publication is available on file in the Lenox Library but has not been reviewed for this plan.

Several additional publications provide depth and perspective on Lenox history. Cornelia Gilder has published three books on details of the local story, two of which are with co-authors. *Hawthorne's Lenox*, *The Tanglewood Circle*, published in 2008, discusses Lenox's early and mid-nineteenth century history and focuses on the personal stories of key individuals who were influential during this period (Gilder and Peters 2008). Similarly, her *Edith Wharton's Lenox*, published in 2017, documents the personal stories of the owners of prominent "cottages" during the peak period of the Cottage Era (Gilder 2017). Gilder's *Houses of the Berkshires, 1870-1930* is an illustrated history of the numerous mansions in Lenox, Lee, Stockbridge, and Pittsfield (Gilder and Jackson 2006).

Lenox history is different than most because it involves not only local residents, events, and trends, but also the stories of prominent individuals and families whose stories are rich and tied to large national themes and who exerted strong influences on developments in Lenox. Both Lucy Kennedy's website and Cornelia Gilder's books provide insight into the larger personal backstories of Lenox's prominent residents.

Members of the Lenox Historical Society continue to undertake research on the history of the Town, which is important to support. Given the diversity of topics related to both permanent residents and summer residents over time, there remains a great deal of interesting research to be investigated.

Lenox is also fortunate to have a series of maps of the Town that were created at critical junctures in its history. Maps of Lenox are discussed in discussion of each era of the Town's history and resources, below.

## STATEWIDE FRAMEWORK FOR RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

In 1979 through the early 1980s, the Massachusetts Historic Commission undertook a comprehensive, interdisciplinary assessment of the Commonwealth's cultural resources. Using a cultural landscape approach, Massachusetts was divided into eight regions (or study units) for which broad-based regional reports were prepared that included discussions of geography and landscape; prehistory; patterns of settlement during successive periods of historical development; and examinations of architecture, economy, and material culture. These reports established a comprehensive, reconnaissance level overview of the development of each region and provided the basis for more detailed town level studies that have provided valuable insight and context for history and preservation planning statewide.

This preservation plan for Lenox, and specifically this chapter, takes a similar approach and cultural landscape perspective. Unfortunately, however, a regional report was never prepared for the Berkshires of western Massachusetts, and the valuable information it would have generated on the Berkshire's cultural geography is not available. Individual town reports were also not prepared for the Berkshires. This chapter attempts to bring together some of the information and perspective for Lenox that might have been generated by such an approach.

The statewide periods or contexts that were used in the regional and town reports remain in general use and are cited in the historic preservation element of *Sustainable Berkshires*, the regional comprehensive plan discussed in Chapter 3. They include:

- Prehistoric Period (before 1500)
- Contact Period (1500-1620)
- Plantation Period (1620-1675)
- Colonial Period (1675-1775)
- Federal Period (1775-1830)
- Early Industrial Period (1830-1870)
- Late Industrial Period (1870-1915)
- Early Modern Period (1915-1940)

These periods are useful for Massachusetts as a whole and for the Berkshires as a region. Because of the influence of the Hudson Valley on the Berkshire's prehistoric history and the late settlement of the region (about 1750 for Lenox), the Contact, Plantation, and Colonial Periods in particular are distinctive and run together in the Berkshires. Despite the relevance and importance of the statewide periods, this preservation plan uses periods and contexts that are specific to Lenox and have been identified by local historians as well as the recent National Register nomination that has been prepared for Lenox Village.

Although no regional report was prepared for the Berkshires, the report prepared for the Connecticut Valley in Massachusetts, *Historic & Archeological Resources of the Connecticut River Valley, A Framework for Preservation Decisions* (MHC 1984), is useful in comparison, particularly for periods after 1770. The Connecticut Valley regional report outlines how development occurred in the western portion of the state from the perspective of cultural geography and how cultural manifestations were influenced by landscape considerations. It is a model for a possible similar study for the Berkshires in the future.



## HISTORIC RESOURCE INVENTORIES

A townwide inventory of historic resources was undertaken in Lenox in 1987-1988 by members of the Lenox Historical Commission and staff of the Massachusetts Historical Commission. This inventory has been the foundation for information on historic resources in Lenox for three decades. Additional properties were added to the inventory between 1989 and 1995 and again more recently.

The inventories were recorded on standard forms (Form B - buildings) provided by the Massachusetts Historical Commission as part of its statewide inventory of historic resources. Each form included a photograph of the building or structure; sketch map of its siting; basic description of its date, style, and material; and in some cases, a brief statement of architectural and historical significance. The amount of information provided in the original inventory was minimal. Nonetheless, it was a critical first step in documenting the Town's historic buildings and structures.

In 2011-2012, members of the Historical Commission updated the Form Bs for 172 properties in the vicinity of Lenox Village with professional guidance. The updated forms include considerably more detail than those from the earlier inventory, and they were a significant step forward in professionalizing information on the Town's historic resources. The updated forms were submitted to the Massachusetts Historical Commission in January 2014 and became part of the statewide inventory.

In the Massachusetts Historical Commission database, 368 individual historic resources are listed for Lenox. Most are historic buildings, but at least seven are historic structures—bridges, monuments, streetlamps, markers, and water troughs.

Additionally, ten groupings or areas (Form A - area) of historic resources have been recorded, the largest being for Lenox Village, completed in January 2018 (Larson 2018). The individual buildings in each area are also listed separately in the Town's inventory. Additional resources that had not previously been inventoried have been added to the list of 368 in the area form prepared for Lenox Village.

Each Form B (buildings) and Form A (area) in the Town's inventory has been scanned and is available online on the Massachusetts Historical Commission's *Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System* (MACRIS) website database. The locations of each site have been digitally mapped by street address by MACRIS and are also available in the state's Bureau of Geographic Information. The locations may be viewed online at the MACRIS website and downloaded through the MassGIS database.

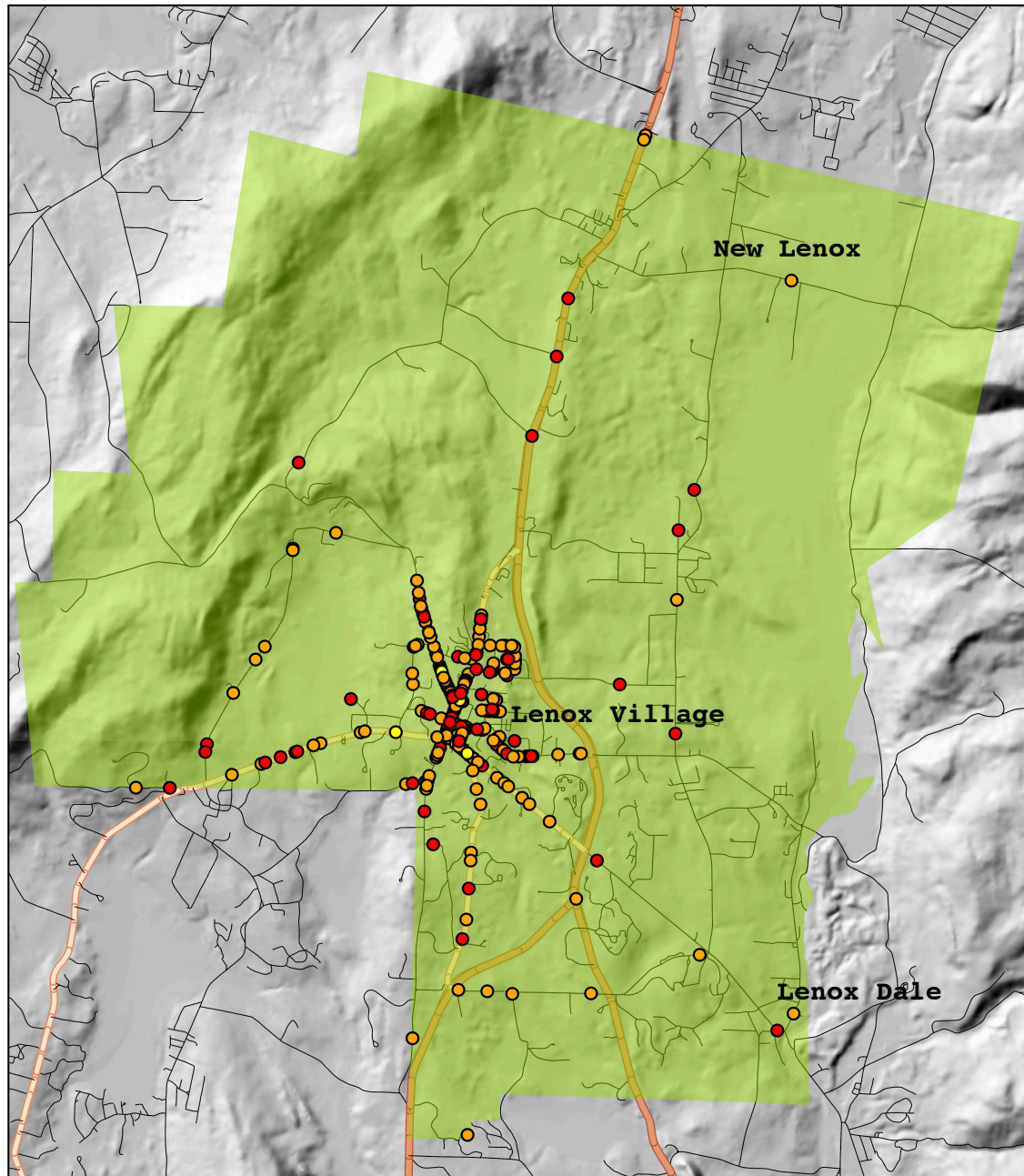
While the existing inventory appears extensive, it does not include all of the historic resources in Lenox. As can be seen on inventory maps, most of the survey work concentrated on properties in and around Lenox Village. The most notable gap is Lenox Dale and the Housatonic River corridor in general. Only four inventoried resources are located in the valley within or near Lenox Dale:

- Saint Vincent de Paul Roman Catholic Church (LEN.327),
- Saint Vincent de Paul Catholic Church Rectory (LEN.328),
- Lenox Iron and Glass Works Paymaster's Office (LEN.326), and
- Lenox Railroad Station (LEN.322).

The entire remaining extent of the Lenox Dale is yet to be inventoried along with other industrial sites along the river, representing approximately 120 resources. Additionally, resources in the northern and eastern areas of the Town appear to be seriously under-represented as compared to historic maps and may include approximately 100 properties. Resources not yet inventoried include nineteenth century agricultural farmsteads as well as later early twentieth century residences. Resources remaining to be inventoried are reviewed further in the discussion of each historical period later in this chapter and in Chapter 8 on recommendations.



***Lenox Dale is an intact, mid-nineteenth century industrial village. Most of the former industrial buildings are lost, but the residential, social, and commercial buildings and neighborhood infrastructure remains with a high degree of historical integrity. Some, like the building above, is a twin constructed to house two families of workers.***



Legend

- |                      |                     |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| Historical Resources | Lenox Town Boundary |
| ● Pre-1860           | Routes              |
| ● 1861 - 1920        | — Roads             |
| ● Post 1921          | — State Route       |
| ● No date available  | — US Highway        |

March 2018

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles

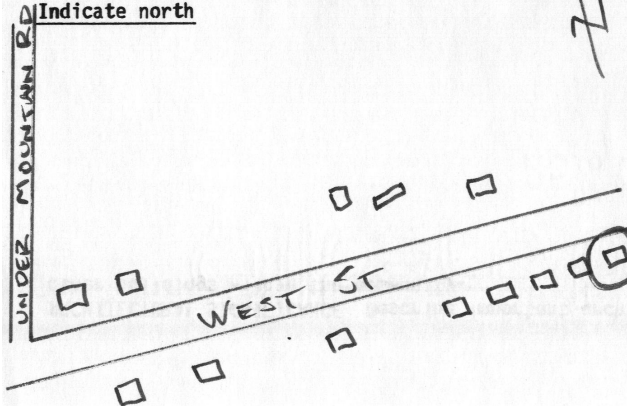
**Map of Lenox showing inventoried resources by street address. The inventory focuses upon the area around Lenox Village and is incomplete in the north and east of Town.**

## FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
80 BOYLSTON STREET  
BOSTON, MA 02116



in relation to nearest cross streets and/or geographical features. Indicate all buildings between inventoried property and nearest intersection(s).  
Indicate north



UTM REFERENCE \_\_\_\_\_

USGS QUADRANGLE \_\_\_\_\_

SCALE - \_\_\_\_\_

AREA \_\_\_\_\_

FORM NO.

134

Town Lenox

SS 189  
153 West Street

Historic Name \_\_\_\_\_

Present private residence

Original private residence

DESCRIPTION \_\_\_\_\_

Style \_\_\_\_\_

Queen Anne

Architect \_\_\_\_\_

Exterior Wall Fabric clapboard/shingle

Outbuildings \_\_\_\_\_

Major Alterations (with dates) \_\_\_\_\_

Condition good

Moved \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Acreage \_\_\_\_\_

Setting Situated close to road on large lot, in residential area.

Recorded by Thomas P. Boland

Organization Lenox Historical Commission

Date 31 August 1987

Sample first page of an inventory form from the original 1987-1988 inventory of Lenox



## HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND RESOURCES

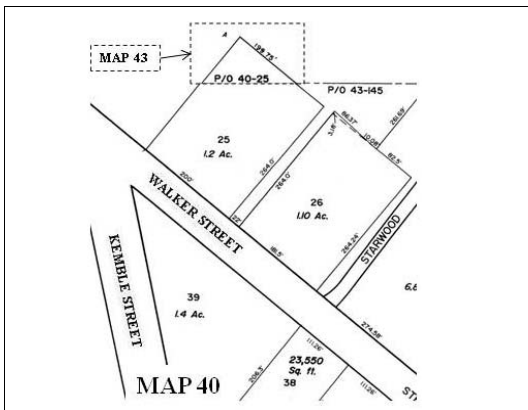
### FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

#### Photograph



#### Locus Map



**Recorded by:** Olga Weiss and Jan Chague  
**Organization:** Lenox Historical Commission  
**Date:** June 21, 2012

Assessor's Number    USGS Quad    Area(s)    Form Number

40-25		A	LEN.36
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LHD, 6/27/75 [LEN.A]

**Town/City:** Lenox

**Place:** Historic District

**Address:** 81 Walker Street (Formerly 103 Walker)

**Historic Name:** Wharton, William C. House

**Uses: Present:** Condominiums

Original: Summer residence

**Date of Construction:** 1885

**Source:** Local histories

**Style/Form:** Queen Anne

**Architect/Builder:** Unknown

#### Exterior Material:

Foundation: Stone and poured cement

Wall/Trim: Wood clapboard and shingle

Roof: Asphalt shingle

#### Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

#### Major Alterations:

Major 3-bay left side ell addition w/2ndary entry w/front gable porch, turned posts

**Condition:** Very good

**Moved:** no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

**Acreage:** 1.2 acres

**Setting:** Village

RECEIVED

JAN 17 2014

MASS. HIST. COMM.

*Sample first page of an inventory form from the updated 2011-2012 inventory of Lenox Village*

### National Register of Historic Places

Lenox has ten properties that are listed individually or as districts on the National Register of Historic Places. They include:

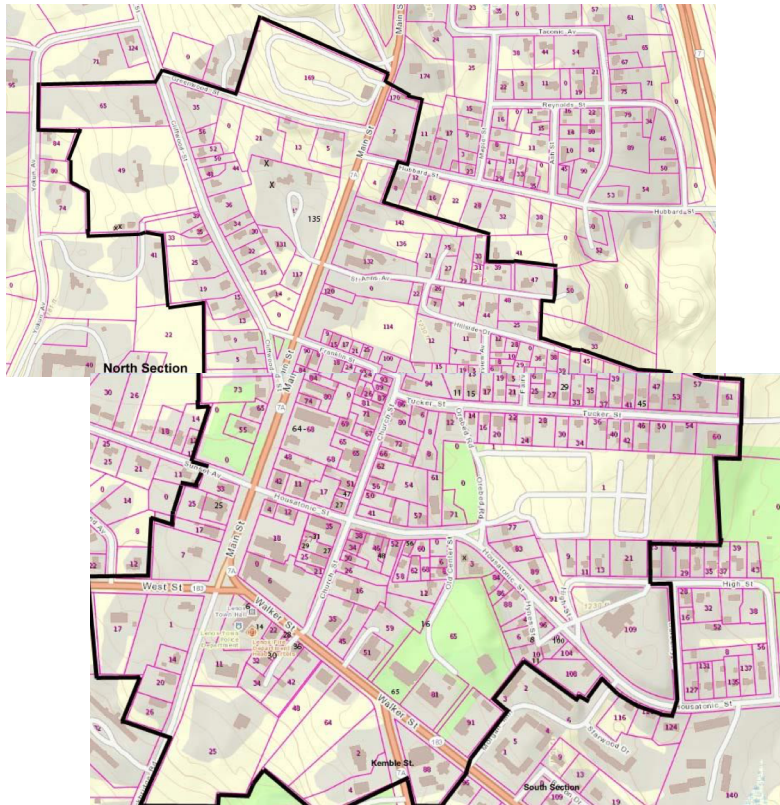
- The Mount (1971) (LEN.164, LEN.315/316, LEN.E)
- Lenox Library (1973) (LEN.21)
- Church on the Hill (1982) (LEN.1, LEN.801, LEN.B)
- Lenox Academy (1982) (LEN.15)
- Elm Court (1985)
- Lenox Railroad Station (1989) (LEN.322)
- Ventfort Hall (1993) (LEN.255, LEN.C)
- Trinity Episcopal Church (1996) (LEN.38/39/40, LEN.D)
- Lenox High School (2004) (LEN.331)
- Frelinghuysen-Morris House and Studio (2016) (LEN.132, LEN.341-342, LEN.348, LEN.910-915)

The Mount, the Edith Wharton Estate, was also designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1971, the only National Historic Landmark in Lenox and one of nine in Berkshire County.

In 2017-2018, the information compiled during the 2011-12 update of inventoried resources in the vicinity of Lenox Village was used to complete the area form for the village mentioned above (Larson 2018) and to develop a National Register Historic District nomination for the village. Prepared by Larson Fisher Associates, Inc., the Lenox Village National Register Historic District includes 262 properties constructed between 1770 and 2014. As of this writing, the nomination is nearing completion but has not yet been reviewed or approved by the Massachusetts Historical Commission or National Park Service. Preparation of the National Register nomination for the village gives professional recognition at a national level to the Town's historic resources. Its potential designation is an important step in acknowledging the historical significance of the village and its historic resources to the Town and its residents.

Most of the buildings included in the Lenox Village National Register Historic District nomination are single family residences constructed in new neighborhoods around the historic village center during the Cottage Era of Lenox's historical development between 1870 and 1930. They range from large mansions prominent during this period to the smaller homes of workers employed by the Great Estates. Of the listed properties:

- 6 were constructed during the 1700s,
- 45 were constructed between 1800 and 1870,
- 112 were constructed between 1871 and 1910,
- 41 were constructed between 1910 and 1930, and
- 19 were constructed between 1931 and 1950.



*Area encompassed by the proposed Lenox Village National Register Historic District (Larson 2018:53-54)*

## NATIVE LANDSCAPE AND PRE-SETTLEMENT (11,700 BP-1750)

The landscape we know today in Lenox and Berkshire County has formed over millions of years. Since the retreat of the last glaciation from western Massachusetts about 11,700 years ago, the climate has steadily warmed and the ecology and plant communities have changed, providing increased sustenance to human populations that have physically moved and culturally evolved to the point that there was an established Native American presence occupying the land at the time Europeans began to settle North America. The pre-settlement, native landscape is the foundation for the historical development of Lenox.

### Geology and Landforms

The landscape of Berkshire County is underlain by three broad but complex geological formations. To the east is the Berkshire Plateau and Mountains, a high plateau that covers almost all of the eastern quarter of the county, extending from Vermont to Connecticut. Comprised of ancient, Precambrian (over 540 million years) metamorphic gneiss and schist, its rocks are highly resistant to erosion. To the west is the Taconic Range of hills and mountains of the Lower Cambrian Period (over 490 million years), made up of schistose and phyllitic metamorphic rocks that are similarly resistant to erosion. (USGS 1974, 1978, 1984)

In the center of the county, running north-south, is the Stockton Formation of calcite marbles that date primarily to the Ordovician Period (445 to 485 million years ago). For millions of years, the rocks of these three geological formations, originally laid down as sediments or igneous flows, lay buried and became metamorphosed by intense heat and pressure. The structure of this geology was dramatically altered by a period of intense mountain building called the Alleghenian Orogeny, approximately 300 to 220 million years ago during the Pennsylvanian and Permian geologic periods.

The Alleghenian Orogeny was a violent collision and fusion of the European, North American, and African continental plates forming the super continent Pangea. The east coast of North America was matched up with the projecting northwest coast of Africa. Pre-existing ocean floor was subducted, and old crystalline rocks were thrust westward over younger sedimentary rocks of the continental margin.

The effect on western Massachusetts was dramatic as the continental collision pushed buried rock formations westward in a fractured tumble. In section, the rock formations became folded, faulted, broken and complex, with rocks of different periods thrust over one another. The collision caused formation of the ancient Appalachian Mountains. The rocks we see today are the roots of those former mountains. (Chute 1945:7-13)

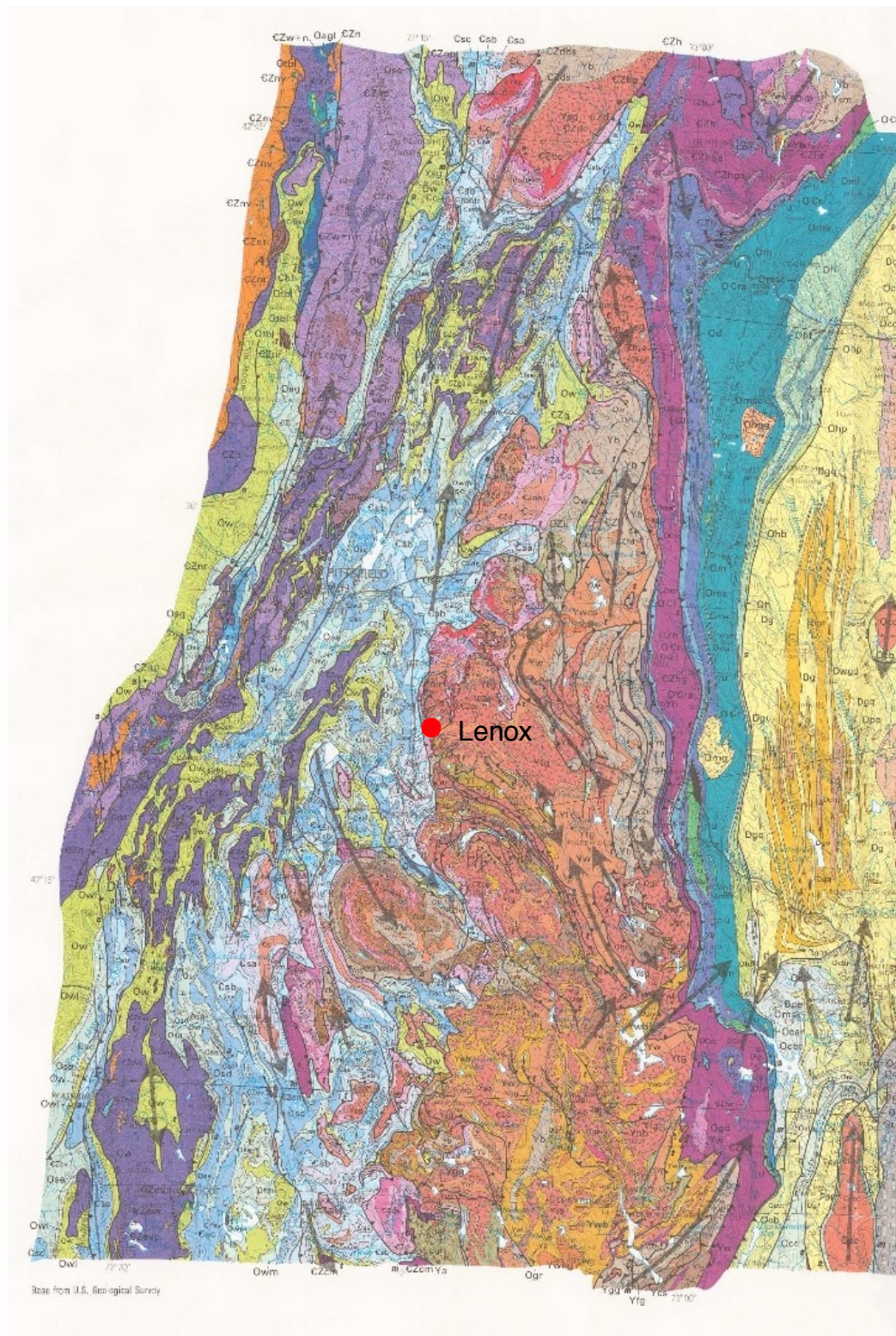
A long period of relative tectonic stability followed the Alleghenian Orogeny as the North American and European/African continental plates continued to separate and the ancient Appalachian Mountains eroded away. By about 30 to 50 million years ago, the mountains are believed to have been reduced to a relatively gently eastward sloping plain.

More recently in geological terms, the Pleistocene epoch, approximately 2.6 million years ago to 11,700 years ago, saw repeated cycles of glaciation in northern latitudes. During the most recent glaciation, the Wisconsinan age—85,000 to 11,700 years ago—a kilometer-thick ice sheet extended southward across Massachusetts to form a terminal moraine that is now Long Island. As it receded, the glacier left behind a depth of glacial till over the underlying bedrock of Berkshire County. Glacial lakes in both the northern and southern portions of the county accumulated sediments before draining away. In today's upland areas the remaining glacial till is commonly thin and in places absent. In the major valleys, the glacial material in some areas is more than 200 feet thick.

Since the glacial retreat, differential erosion of hard and soft rocks combined with the periodic mild uplift, increasing the effects of erosion, have exposed the rocks we see today and created today's topographic relief. The more resistant rocks of the Berkshire Plateau on the east and Taconic Range on the west form the uplands, while the softer, more easily erodible marbles of the Stockton Formation created what is known as the Marble Valley in the center of the county.



## HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND RESOURCES



**Geological map of western Massachusetts. Lenox Village is marked by the red dot. The light blue shades represent the Stockton Formation of the Marble Valley. The Taconic Range is in purple and green to the west (left). The Berkshire Plateau is in reddish and orange to the east (right). (USGS 1983)**





*The Northwestern Highlands ecoregion is represented in blue as 58a through 58e on the map above. The Western New England Marble Valleys, 58b, are in light blue and extend from Vermont, through Massachusetts, into northwestern Connecticut. Lenox is located by the red dot south of Pittsfield. (USGS 2009)*

## The Marble Valley

The form and topography of the Marble Valley, however, are complex, characteristic of the complexity of the underlying geology. Due to faulting and folding, some of the resistant rock of the gneiss, schist, and quartz phyllite that surround the valley also crop out within it. In plan, the Marble Valley extends from southern Vermont, through Massachusetts, into northern Connecticut in a complex weaving of shapes, intertwined with the hills of the Taconic Range and Berkshire Plateau. (USGS 2009)

High elevations in the valley just north of Pittsfield cause separate river systems to drain it. North of Pittsfield, the Hoosic River flows north and west, eventually joining the Hudson River north of Albany. In Pittsfield, several tributaries join to form the Housatonic River, which flows south through Connecticut to Long Island Sound.

The soils of the Marble Valley are formed in thick deposits of glacial till over the underlying marble bedrock. The various soil types are intermingled and their topography is as complex as the larger scaled landforms. Most of the soils are well drained but some soils formed in depressions are poorly drained and create wetlands in otherwise upland areas. (USDA 1988, Chute 1945:13-14)

The Marble Valley has its own identified ecoregion, called the *Western New England Marble Valleys* ecoregion of the Northeastern Highlands. The climate of the Marble Valley has milder winter temperatures and lower precipitation amounts than the surrounding uplands. Historically, the forests covering the valley have been transitional hardwoods (maple-beech-birch, oak-hickory) and northern hardwoods (maple-beech-birch) depending upon latitude, elevation, and aspect. The valley bottom has a great diversity of wetland types ranging from flowing and flooding rivers to ponds and lakes, to vegetative wetlands such as wet meadows, marshes, fens, swamps, and bogs.

North and east-facing slopes are inhabited by deciduous forests typically dominated by sugar maple, yellow birch, eastern hemlock, and beech. South and west-facing slopes are generally dominated by deciduous oaks, hickories, and beech. The warmest and driest sites may have species such as pitch pine, sassafras, and chestnut oak that are typical of the Mid-Atlantic region.

Underlying these generalities of biological community distributions are the interactions of the landscape with a rich land-use history dating back to the inhabitation of the region by Native Americans and the later advent of colonists of European extraction in the early and mid- 18<sup>th</sup> century.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, much of the forest cover was converted to agricultural and related uses, and the vast majority of the residual forests were used as woodlots for timber, charcoal, fuel, and other forest products. With the regional decline in agriculture and the dominance of a fossil fuel based economy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, forests commenced to reclaim much of the land that was previously cleared.

Today, the land cover consists of mixed and deciduous forest, pasture and cropland, and some extensive urban and residential development. The

successional growth and second and third generation forests are derived from the plant communities, seed stock, and ecology of the pre-settlement era. (USGS 2009; Brooks 2008)

### **The Presence of Iron Ore**

The Marble Valley is known historically for its iron industry and locally mined iron ore. Iron does not occur in its native state but is found chemically combined with other elements and compounds. The percentage of iron in different earth materials varies considerably, and when iron is concentrated in high enough amounts by any one of several natural processes, it becomes of interest as a raw material for the recovery of iron.

The iron ore of the Marble Valley is composed of brown hydrous iron oxide minerals that are referred to collectively as limonite. Generally, the ore deposits are irregular, roughly flat bodies that occur at the limestone (marble)-schist contact in the glacial till. The iron ore was formed through the chemical weathering of various minerals available in the limestone-schist mix of the till. (Chute 1945:17-21)

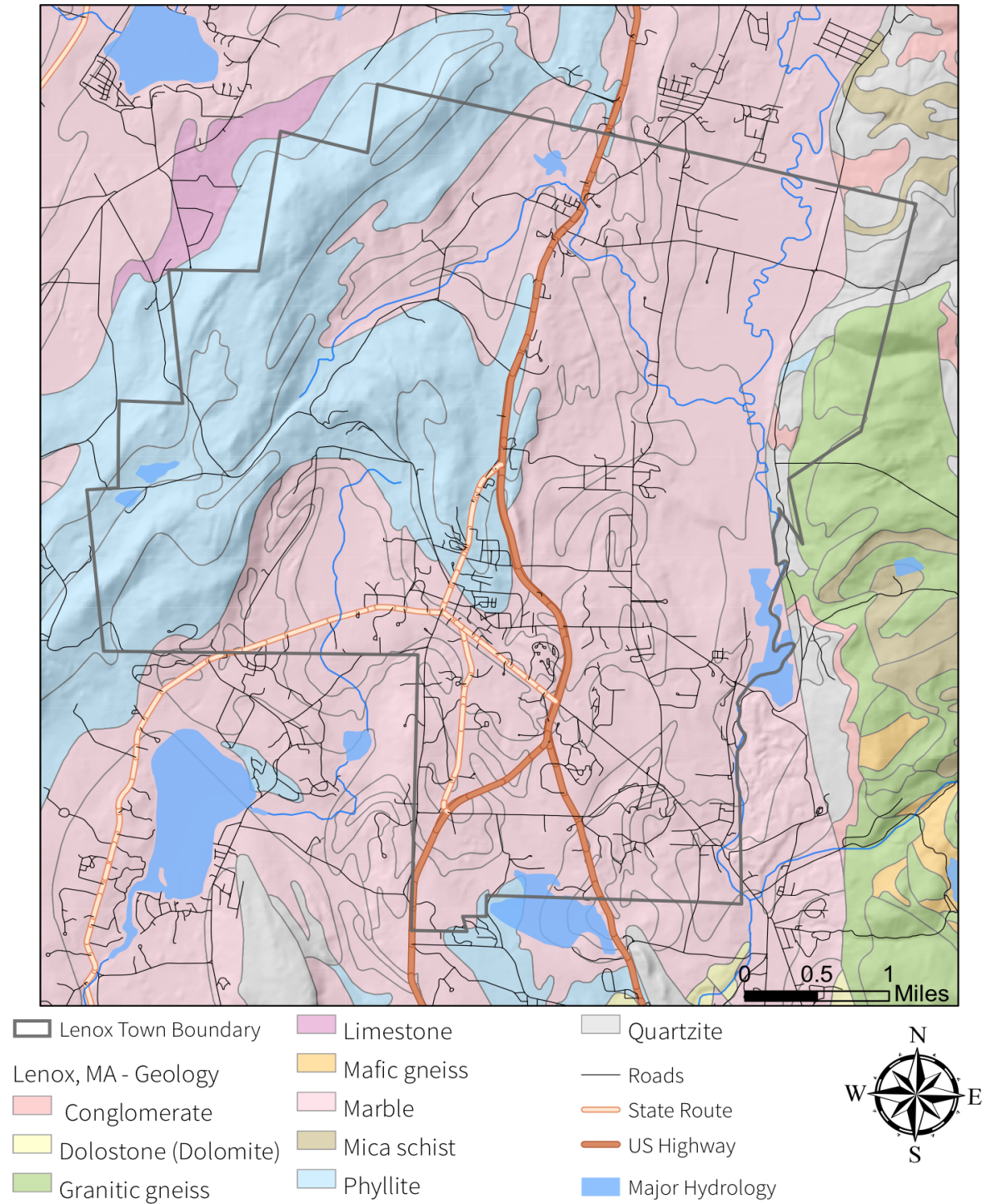
Where the iron ore was shallow enough to get to, it was mined. In the early days, many mining operations were small and shallow, and one or two operators could supply more than one furnace with ore. Farmers could supplement their incomes by mining ore on their properties. Iron ore banks grew in scale as the industry developed. The control of adequate quantities of good sources of iron ore was critical for the financial viability of an ironworks.

The most profitable Marble Valley ore deposits (and resulting furnace operations) were located in West Stockton and northwest Connecticut. In Lenox, four or five ore beds were reportedly opened. One was at the site of the playground on Ore Bed Road. The former ore pit was filled with earth excavated in the construction of the Route 7/20 bypass in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (Kennedy 2017). From the ore pit, underground tunnels were dug west beneath the center of the village to remove the ore.

Another ore bed, the Belden mine, consisted of two small open pits one and one-quarter mile west of Lenox Village along Undermountain Road at the contact point of the limestone/marble till with the schist of Lenox Mountain (Chute 1945:53-54). This location is now a pond and nature preserve across the road from Stonover Farm Bed and Breakfast.

### **Landforms in Lenox**

Lenox is located in the heart of the Marble Valley of western Massachusetts. Lenox Mountain, established as the western border of the Town, is a long, high ridge trending north-northeast. Lenox Mountain is comprised of erosion resistant phyllite and schist rock that are known geologically as part of the Everett Formation of the Taconic Range. Lenox Mountain is a large mountainous outcropping within the Marble Valley, physically separating Lenox, Lee, and Stockbridge from Richmond and West Stockbridge to the west, which are also part of the Marble Valley formation.



***Simplified geology map of Lenox. The center of the Town is predominantly various forms of marble of the Marble Valley shown in light pink. The granitic gneiss of October Mountain is on the east in light green and the phyllite and schist of Lenox Mountain are on the west in light blue. A portion of the phyllite formation projects east from Lenox Mountain to the center of Town, beyond Main Street and the Route 7/20 bypass and is the location of Kennedy Park.***

At Baldhead, an overlook immediately west of Undermountain Road, the mountain has an elevation of 1699 feet above sea level, about 450 feet above Lenox Village. The highest point on Lenox Mountain, Yokun Seat, has an elevation of 2124, about 875 feet above Lenox Village.

Along the eastern border of the Town, October Mountain is part of the vast Berkshire Plateau and Mountains and has a peak elevation of 1984 feet above sea level, 734 feet above Lenox Village and about 1035 feet above the Housatonic River at Woods Pond. October Mountain is comprised of Tyringham Gneiss, an erosion resistant rock originally formed from a molten intrusion.

Together, Lenox Mountain on the west and October Mountain on the east frame the Town with high, steep ridgelines and establish the north-south orientation of the Marble Valley.

The Housatonic River meanders south along the east side of Lenox, immediately below the steep slopes of October Mountain. The river has the lowest elevations in the Town. Wide, flat areas of wetland and low land border the river, mainly on its west side. From the river, the land rises up to the west to a low crest and the main level of the Marble Valley, providing scenic views east across the river to October Mountain.

The “floor” of the Marble Valley has a variable, rolling topography that, though lower than the high ridges to the east and west, does not actually read as a valley. Underlain with a complex mix of dolomite/quartzite marble rock strata and covered with glacial till derived from those strata, the land rolls in complex ways that give great variety to the topography.

Overall, the valley floor slopes from north to south, the direction of the river. Stockbridge Bowl, Lily Pond (both in Stockbridge), and Laurel Lake, all probably of glacial origin, are low areas at the south end of Lenox to which several small creeks flow. Other low areas are wetlands, the most prominent being Parson’s Marsh west of the village which drains south as Marsh Brook toward Lily Pond and Stockbridge Bowl.

Yokun Brook drains much of the north portion of Lenox. It originates along the base of Lenox Mountain and flows generally north and east in a curving route to the Housatonic River. Yokun Brook features numerous ponds, wetlands, and low land areas along its upper reaches.

A large upland area projects east from Lenox Mountain beyond Main Street and the Route 7/20 bypass through the middle of the Town, creating a high landform north of the village, today occupied by Kennedy Park. Comprised of the same resistant phyllite and schist rock that makes up the mountain, this landform is a high hill that divides northern and southern Lenox.

Though clearly defined on paper by its three geological/physiographic forms—October Mountain, Marble Valley, and Lenox Mountain—Lenox is not easily read when experienced at ground level. Its small scale landforms are diverse and complex, providing opportunity for different types of human uses over time.



### **The Native American Landscape Before Settlement**

The New England landscape was occupied by a succession of evolving human cultures following the retreat of the glaciers beginning about 11,700 years ago. As the climate warmed, the bare tundra scraped by the glaciers yielded to vegetation. Southern plant communities migrated northward followed by wildlife and human populations that could find sustenance in the changing ecology.

Archeologists studying the prehistoric history of the northeast United States divide the history into three broad periods, the Paleoindian Period (11,500-9,500 B.P.), Archaic Period (9,500-3,500 B.P.), and Woodland Period (3,000-450 B.P.) according to the lifeways and characteristics that can be inferred from archeological evidence.

The Archaic Period is divided into three sub-categories, the Early Archaic Period (9,500-8,000 B.P.), Middle Archaic Period (8,000-6,000 B.P.), and Late Archaic Period (6,000-3,500). By the Middle Archaic period, environmental conditions in the northeast began to approach those of today, with deciduous forests and a diverse array of plant and animal foods. A seasonal settlement system appears to have been established by this time with permanent or semi-permanent base camps.

By the Late Archaic, modern environmental conditions were present with natural resources similar to those observed by early European settlers and explorers. More locally focused subsistence economies are thought to have developed during this time, perhaps due to increased populations requiring groups to remain in more confined territories.

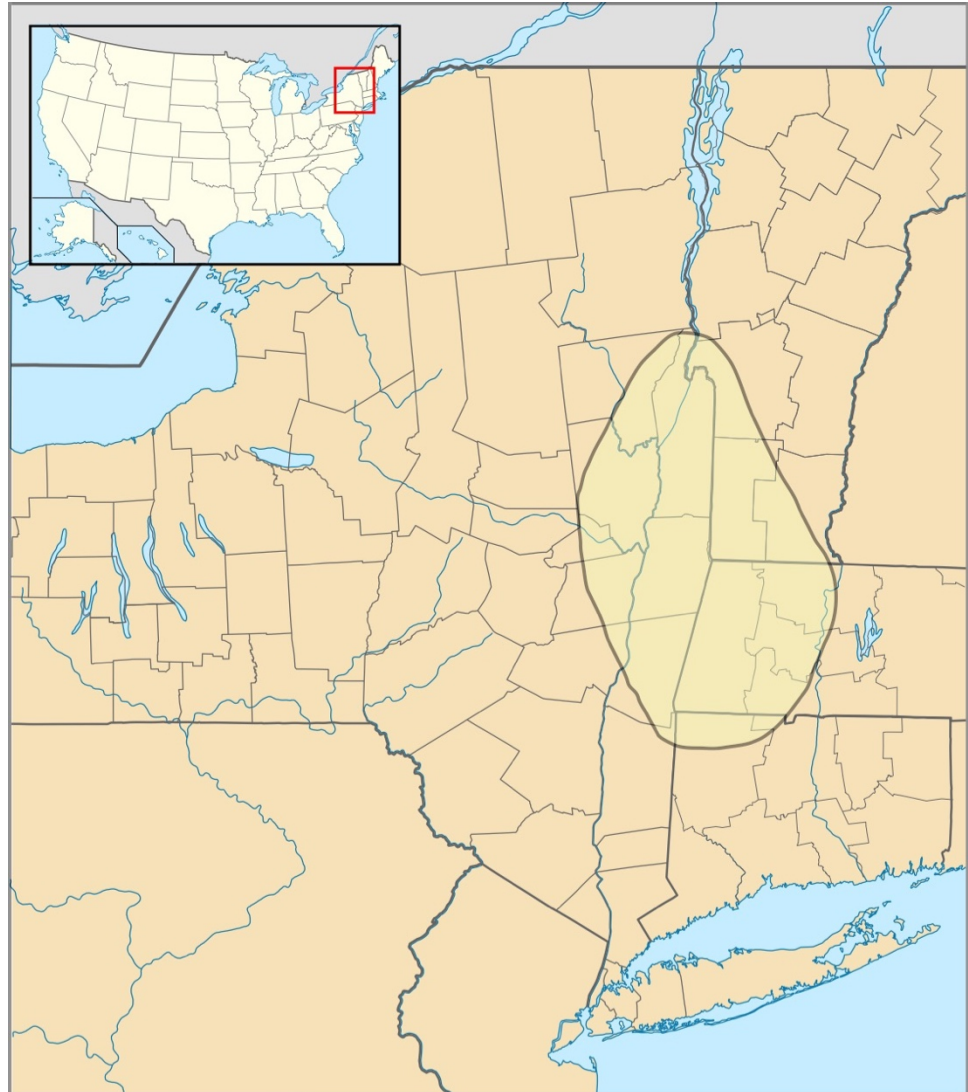
The Woodland Period is also divided into three sub-categories, the early Woodland Period (3,000-2,000 B.P.), Middle Woodland Period (2,000-1,000 B.P.), and Late Woodland Period (1,000-450 B.P.). The trend toward a more localized, semi-sedentary settlement system continued with more permanent base camps along coastal and inland watercourses. The development of new technologies during this period, including ceramics, have been thought to relate to the appearance of horticultural practices.

By the Late Woodland, horticulture including cultivation of corn and beans was widespread with increased evidence of more permanent settlements organized around the locations of soils good for planting. (Donta 1996)

#### ***The Mahican***

By the time of European contact in the early 1600s, Berkshire County was the western portion of a territory controlled by the Mahicans, an Eastern Algonquian Native American tribe centered along the Upper Hudson River Valley. The Algonquian speaking peoples with whom the Mahicans are associated lived along the Atlantic coast from the Chesapeake Bay to Maine and northeastern Canada.

The Mahican homeland is believed to have extended along the Upper Hudson Valley from the Catskill Mountains north to the southern end of Lake Champlain. The territory's eastern edge included the Berkshire Plateau and Mountains in western Massachusetts, from northwest Connecticut to the Green Mountains in southern Vermont. (Sultzman 1997)



***Territory of the Mahican confederacy about 1600 (Wikipedia 2018)***

The Mahican were a confederacy of five tribes composed of three clans and with as many as 40 villages. Major villages were located along the Hudson River, with a council seat located east of present-day Albany. A Housatonic tribe is noted. Although culturally similar to other Woodland Algonquian, the Mahican were shaped by their constant warfare with the neighboring Iroquois.

Villages were large, usually consisting of 20 to 30 mid-sized longhouses, and were located on hills and heavily fortified. Large cornfields were located nearby. Agriculture provided most of their diet but was supplanted by game, fish, and wild foods. For reasons of safety, the Mahican did not move to scattered hunting camps during winter like other Algonquian and usually spent the colder months inside their fortified villages. Mahican villages were governed by hereditary sachems of matrilineal descent advised by a council of clan leaders. Civil authority was not strong. (Sultzman 1997)

The extent to which the Mahican occupied the Housatonic River Valley and the Lenox area is not clear. It is suggested that they came only seasonally to the



Berkshires to hunt (Kennedy 2016:loc 140). As other Native American tribes, they may have conducted controlled burns of the woodland to facilitate hunting and cleared and cultivated fertile lowland areas near villages for agriculture.

Because the Mahican population was so small for such a large land area even at its peak of population before significant contact with Europeans, it can be concluded that the landscape of the Marble Valley in general and Lenox in particular was relatively lightly inhabited or used. The landscape in Lenox likely remained heavily wooded throughout the era of Native American occupation.

### ***Contact with Europeans (1608-1730)***

Henry Hudson sailed up the Hudson River in September 1609 and established contact with the Mahicans just below Albany, who were eager to trade. The first Dutch fur traders arrived on the Hudson River the following year to again trade with the Mahicans. Besides exposing them to European epidemics, the fur trade that began with these events destabilized the region and initiated the Mahican's demise. (Sultzman 1997)

Over the next century, a complex history involving the Dutch fur trade, the Mahican, their rival Mohawk to the west, and other neighboring tribes charted the decline of the Native American cultures in the region. For a time, the Mahican played a central role as middle men between the Dutch and the other tribes. But a 1624-1628 Mahican-Mohawk war resulted in their defeat, and they abandoned their villages west of the Hudson River. European diseases took a devastating toll, decreasing their population from as high as 5000 to 8000 in 1600 to under 1000 by 1672. After further war with the Mohawks in 1662-1664 the Mahican abandoned almost all of the Hudson Valley and held their council fire at Westenhuck on the Housatonic River in the hills south of Stockbridge (Orcott 1882:AppB). (Sultzman 1997)

As more English colonists pressed northward up the Hudson and Housatonic Rivers, the Mahican had difficulty retaining their territory. Lands along the Hudson and in northwest Connecticut were sold or surrendered in the 1680s. A large section of land along the Housatonic was sold in 1724. After the sale, the only Massachusetts land that the Mahican retained was a small area along the Housatonic River between Sheffield and Stockbridge. (Soltzman 1997)

### **Landscape, Prehistoric, and Native American Resources**

Lenox's natural landscape—its geology, soils, landforms, rivers and creeks, and other landscape characteristics—affect the historic patterns of development, land use, economy, and types and placement of historic resources throughout the Town's history. It is the essential base condition for historic character, significance, and integrity.

Archeologists suggest that the Housatonic River Valley and Marble Valley appear to have been more lightly inhabited and impacted by prehistoric and Native American peoples due to the valley's relative inaccessibility, climate, and environmental characteristics that might encourage habitation. It appears most likely that the valley was used seasonally and transitionally rather than as a continuous permanent place of habitation.

The location of known archeological sites are generally not made public in order to protect and preserve them and prevent them from being looted. The below-ground information preserved at archeological sites is essential in deepening our knowledge of prehistoric peoples and human development in New England.

Valuable sites are present within the valley that have the potential to provide information on cultural development through the artifacts buried there, such as stone tools and points. It is the context in which such artifacts are found that provide the information, not simply the artifacts themselves, and it is important that such site be preserved intact.

Sites near streams, rivers, and wetlands may be most likely to be sensitive. Sites on uplands where particular types of stone important to different prehistoric cultures could be quarried may also be of importance. Additional information needs to be made available on the archeological resources in Berkshire County and their preservation.

## **AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND COUNTY SEAT (1750-1870)**

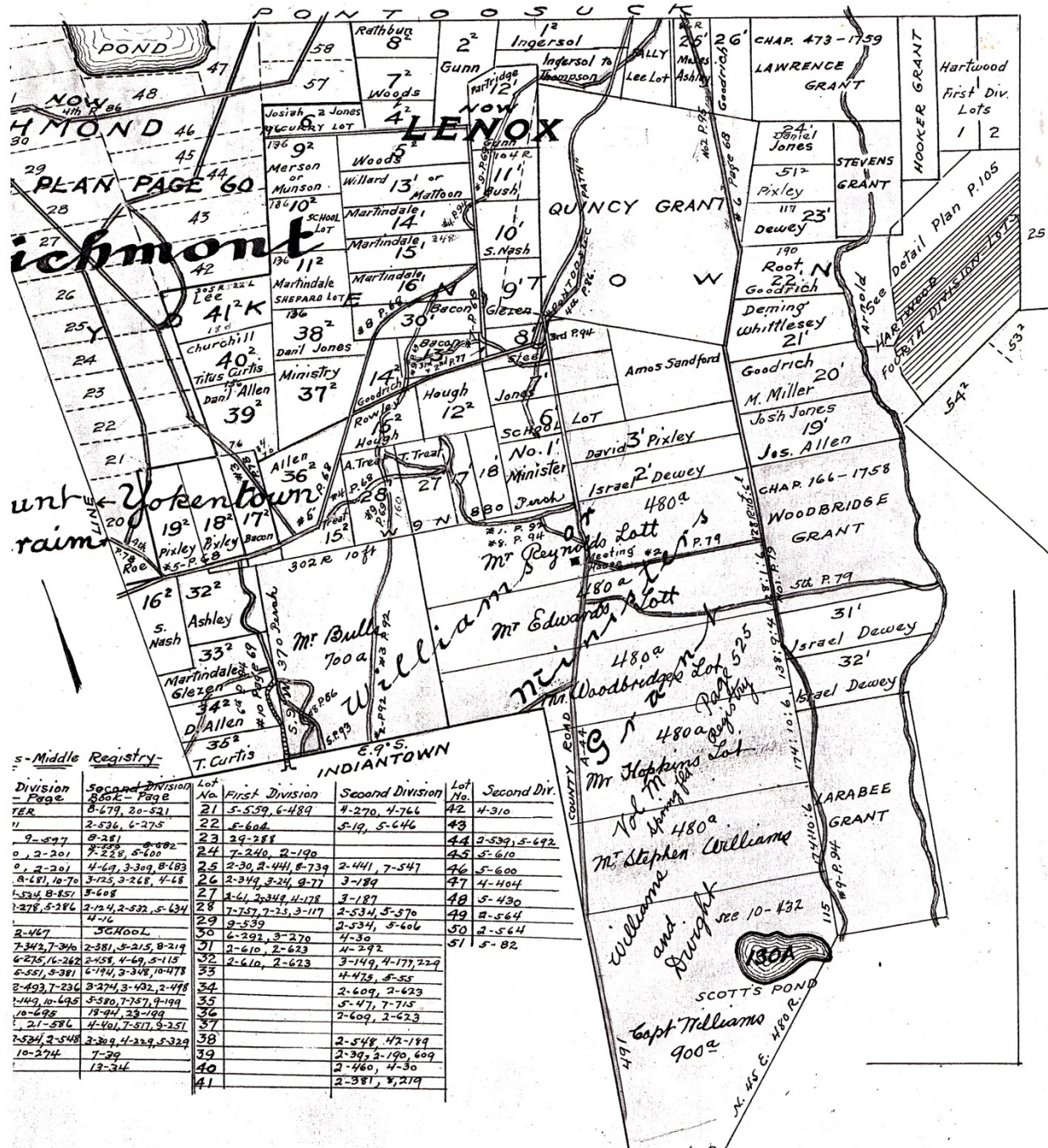
From its initial settlement in 1750 until the time of the Civil War, Lenox developed as an evolving agricultural landscape. The peak period of agricultural development in New England and in Lenox was the mid-1850s, after which time agriculture, markets, and land use began to change.

The period of 1750 to 1870 in Lenox can be viewed as dominated by an agricultural economy with farm-related resources shaping the landscape. The pre-settlement landscape was dramatically altered, and many of the historic land use patterns and resources we see today were established. Local industries during this period were integral with the agricultural landscape. Lenox's selection as county seat in 1784 significantly enhanced the Town's prestige and character and led to its beginnings as a cultural center and summer resort.

### **The Emergence of an Agricultural Landscape – the 18<sup>th</sup> Century**

The settlement of western Massachusetts moved slowly northward up the Connecticut and Housatonic River Valleys in the early eighteenth century. In addition to the Housatonic Valley's remoteness, unrest reverberating in the aftermath of King Phillip's War (1675-78) impeded rapid settlement. Also, the location of the border between Massachusetts and New York was in dispute.

In 1724, a 12-mile by 18-mile tract of land was purchased from the Mahicans in the southwestern corner of what would become Berkshire County. Initial settlement in Sheffield, along the border with Connecticut, occurred in 1725. The Indian Mission in Stockbridge established for a remnant of the Mahican tribe was established in 1738. In 1740, the Mahican leadership gave up a 4,000-acre tract north of Stockbridge that included most of present day Lenox. (Kennedy 2016:loc 248-284)



Depiction of proprietary land grants in Lenox from records in Berkshire County Court House (LHS 2018; Wood 1969:153)

Initial settlement in the vicinity of Lenox dates to 1750, when John Hinsdale and his wife established a homestead on what is today Old Stockbridge Road just below Hawthorne Street. Hinsdale and perhaps others left the area in 1755, retreating to more settled Stockbridge, due to unrest caused by the French and Indian War. But they had returned by 1760, when Hinsdale is documented establishing an inn at his homestead (Wood 1969:12-14; Kennedy 2016:loc 309-337).

In 1761, the Commonwealth broke off the western part of Hampshire County to create Berkshire County and auctioned off large parcels of land. In June 1762, Lot#8 that included today's Richmond and Lenox was purchased by a group of investors. Conditions of the sale were that the lot needed to be subdivided into no less than 50 settlers on farms of at least seven acres, and that a town was to be established. The town was split from north to south by Lenox Mountain with two settlements, Mount Ephraim on the west and Yokuntown on the east side of the mountain. In 1767, the Commonwealth General Court granted a petition to split the township in two. Mount Ephraim was renamed Richmond, and Yokuntown was renamed Lenox. (Larson 2018:6) The original land grants for Lenox are shown on the map below.

The map shows a "Meeting House" along today's Main Street (County Road A-44) on the Reynolds Lot with "Lot No. 1, Minister," just above it, perhaps the location of the Church on the Hill. A "School Lot" is shown just to its north. "Indiantown" at the lower left is Stockbridge. "Scott's Pond" is Laurel Lake. The Housatonic River is shown along the right side of the map.

The roads on the map appear to be inaccurately drawn but give some indication to the relationship between some road layouts and the boundaries of the original land grants. East Street north of Housatonic Street follows the boundaries of five lots before bearing slightly east at the Quincy Grant. Hubbard Street and the future New Lenox Road (not shown on the map) also appear to follow boundary lines. Holms, West Mountain, Undermountain, and Reservoir Roads are also shown.

How the original grants align with landscape features and the potential layouts for farms is an interesting topic for review. Similarly, the degree to which the original grant boundaries survive in today's lot lines could easily be assessed.

The first federal census in 1790 recorded 181 households and 1172 individuals in Lenox (Kennedy 2016:loc 460), indicating that in the twenty-eight years since Lot#8's purchase and twenty-three years since the Town's founding Lenox had been substantially settled. The land grant map may give some indication of the pattern of farmsteads and might be compared to the layout of farms on later maps. David Wood's 1969 history cites early records to indicate the interests and activities of early settlers. Lucy Kennedy's 2016 history briefly characterizes eighteenth century Colonial life.

The most dramatic change in the landscape was the clearing of the forests for the establishment of farms. Clearing would have begun with immediate land needed for farming. The cutting of lumber for construction, fuel, charcoal, and other purposes would have followed until the valley and mountainsides were entirely cleared of large trees. Successional growth would have begun immediately on land not kept open for farming. The erosion of the forest's ancient topsoil would have begun.

Wood quotes a 1763 bond for performance of work in clearing woodland. The two men who were to undertake the work agreed to clear three acres in the months of June and July and an additional ten acres by the following April, being paid the sum of fifty pounds. They "shal well and truly clear up thirteen acors of



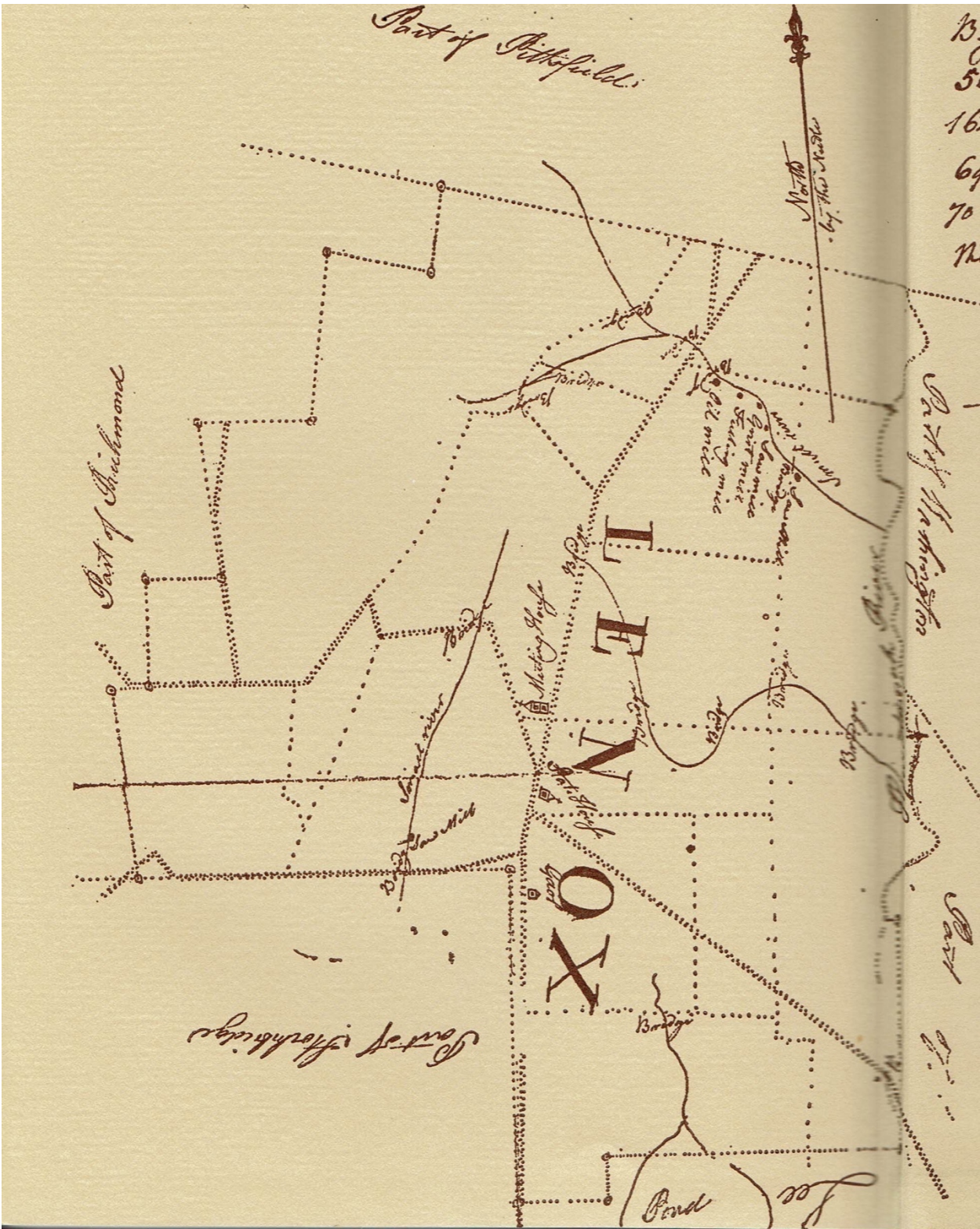


Image of the 1794 Eldad Lewis map of Lenox (Wood 1969)

land fit for to stock with hay seed for mowing and cut down all the wood that is nine inches over and less and clear it all up and burn it and cut all the logs that is on the said land fit for four Oxen to draw..." (Wood 1969:17)

In 1794, Eldad Lewis, a prominent resident, surveyed and plotted the first map of Lenox, depicting and describing the Town's boundaries. The map shows the Housatonic River on the right, county roads in double dashed lines, and local roads in single dashed lines. The courses of Yokun Brook, Willow Creek, and Marsh Brook are drawn with the locations of bridges across existing roads indicated. A "State House" is shown in the location of Lenox Village. A "Meeting House," the predecessor to the Church on the Hill, is shown at today's Main and Greenwood Streets. A "Gaol" is shown on Stockbridge Street south of the village center.

Five mills are shown in a row along Yokun Brook just east of the Pittsfield Road between New Lenox Road and East Street. They include, from west to east, an oil mill, fulling mill, grist mill, and two saw mills, the last of which is on the east side of East Street. With the exception of the last, the sites of these mills are not clearly visible today. Landscape features related to these mill sites may remain. In particular, it would be interesting to know how water was collected and run to power the mills. A small pond exists today on a tributary to Yokun Brook just south of New Lenox Road which could have been a source.

Another saw mill is shown on Marsh Brook just north of today's Hawthorn Street and the Town line. Also, a handwritten note on the map reads: "Just by the bridge near the Southeast corner of the Town is a Dam over the Housatonik River at which is a Furnace, a Forge, a Grist Mill, a sawmill & Fulling mill." The note refers to the location of Lenox Dale.

The 1791 Lewis map and Town records suggest a fully developed agricultural community in Lenox by the late eighteenth century. However, the current inventory of historic resources lists only seven surviving resources from the late 1700s. All are in the village. Six are prominent residences. The other two are the First County Courthouse and Lenox Burial Ground. All are located in Lenox Village and are well documented in the Area Form and recent National Register Historic District nomination for the village, as well as in other sources (Larsen 2018).

Other eighteenth century building and landscape resources may be present at the sites of farmsteads, where earlier buildings were probably incorporated into or replaced by later dwellings and agricultural buildings. Further inventory, research, and documentation of early resources is warranted.

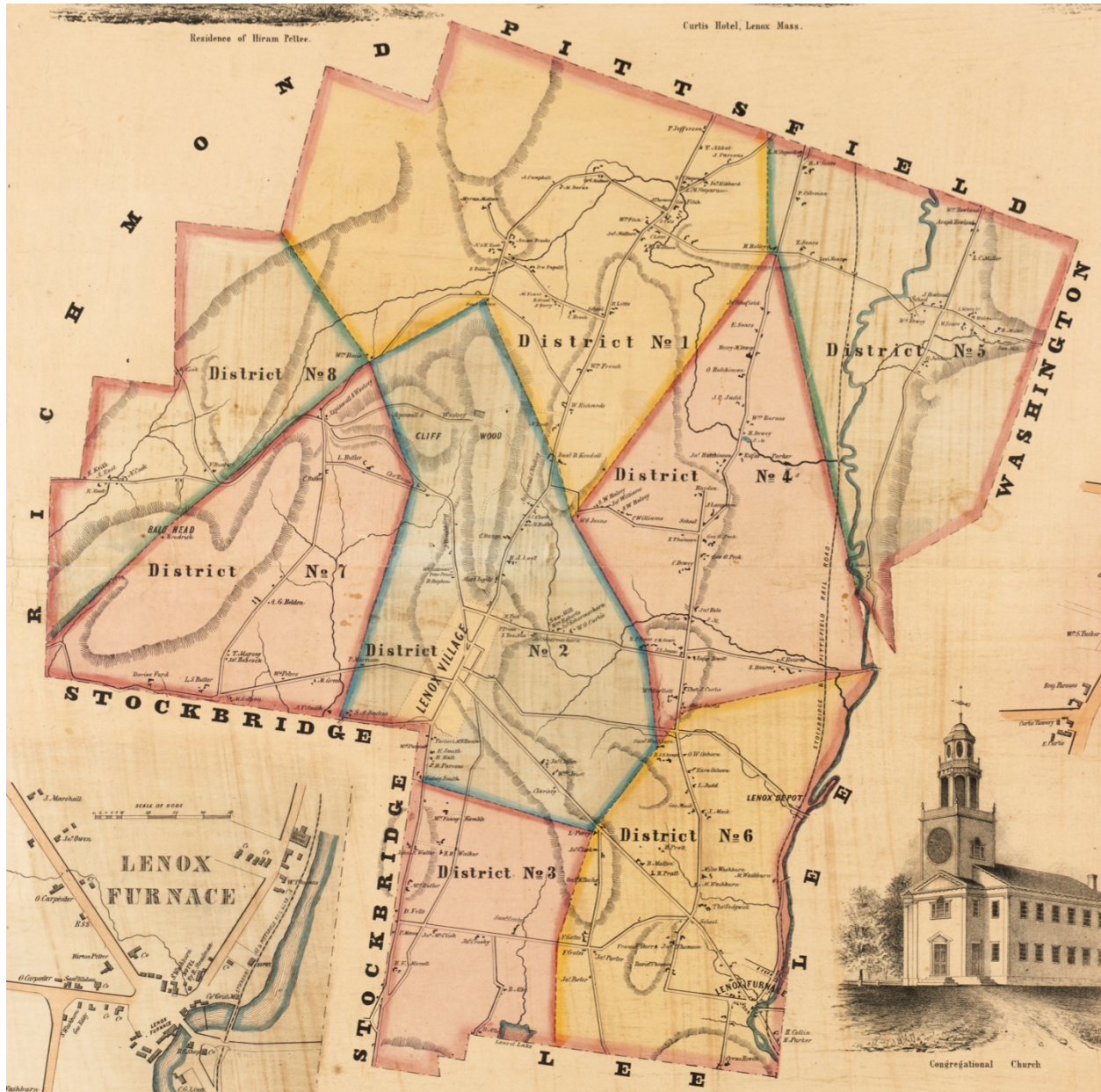
### **The 1854 Clark Map – Peak Period of Agricultural Development**

In 1854, a map of Lenox was published by Richard Clark of Philadelphia. This map depicts Lenox at the time of its peak period of development as a thriving agricultural community. Following the Civil War, rapid momentum in the acquisition of land and construction of new residences by The Cottagers, wealthy summer residents, led to the sale of farms, demolition of farmsteads, and reconfiguration of the landscape, particularly in the southern portion of the Town. Agriculture in New England was changing after the Civil War, and a long period of farm decline and farm field abandonment ensued. The Clark map,



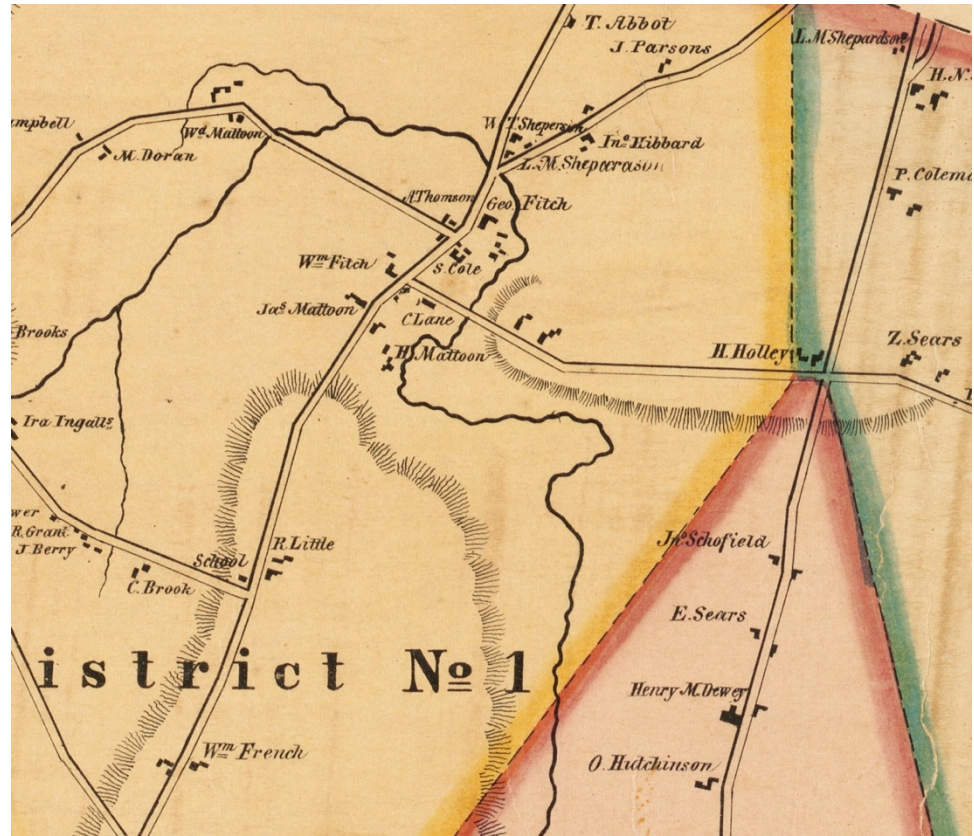
therefore, is an important record depicting historic resources before the decline of agriculture and influx of The Cottagers.

What is most remarkable in the Clark map is the detail with which individual buildings are depicted. The locations of buildings can be accurately determined by their position with respect to historic roads—most buildings, including farmsteads, which dominate the map, were located immediately adjacent to roads. In addition, the actual configuration of individual buildings is depicted in considerable detail. Comparison of the depicted configurations of buildings on the map with buildings surviving today indicates a high degree of accuracy.



*The 1854 Clark map depicts Lenox at the time of its peak period of agricultural development before the substantial changes to the landscape brought by the Cottage Era.*

The Clark map is a remarkable record that enables us to study the layout of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century historic resources with confidence and in detail. The map can be used as a baseline for the inventory and documentation of Lenox's agricultural era. Resource types are discussed below.



*Detail of the 1854 Clark map in which the configuration of individual buildings can be seen. The Pittsfield Road is shown north-south on the left and East Street is shown north-south on the right. Buildings are depicted in the village at the intersection of the Pittsfield, Holmes, West Mountain, and New Lenox Roads. Farmsteads are shown lining East Street. Few if any of the historic buildings shown at the intersection survive.*

### **Landforms, River, Brooks, and Boundaries**

Landforms are only generally depicted on the Clark map, indicated by hash marks outlining the general configurations of sloped land features. However, the configurations accurately show the locations of major landforms that dominated the landscape. At the time, with the lack of tree cover, the landforms would have been more visually prominent than they are today. The Clark map should be laid over a contemporary landform map to better see how individual features relate to topography.

The Housatonic River is accurately depicted on the map, though simplified in the number and detail of its many turns. Specific locations along the river can be identified today. The configurations of Yokun Brook, Willow Creek, Sargent Brook, and Marsh Brook are also accurately depicted and help identify where resources are located.



Wetlands, however, are not shown on the map, either along the river or elsewhere, such as Parson's Marsh. Like the landforms, their contemporary projection onto the map helps explain the condition of the land and why some areas are not developed.

Property boundaries are not shown on the map, but the projection of the original lands grants along with today's property lines and fence lines would help identify the probable configuration of historic farm properties and possibly infer land use.

### ***Road Network***

Lenox's historic road network survives intact. The earliest roads are shown on the 1791 Lewis map and can be compared to those on the Clark map as well as contemporary maps today. Road configurations have changed very little. For the most part, new roads have been added and older roads have not been removed.

The 1794 Lewis map distinguished between county roads and local roads and shows the locations of bridges constructed across stream crossings. The 1854 Clark map shows the roads with some accuracy. Most of the roads existing in 1854 were also present in 1794. West Street running west out of Lenox Village, however, does not appear to be present in 1794. Rather, today's Hawthorne Street appears to run due west along the south boundary between Lenox and Stockbridge beyond Undermountain Road to the southwest corner of the Town.

The Stockbridge-Pittsfield Road through Lenox Village has historically been the primary north-south route through the valley. South of the village, it runs along high ground between Laurel Lake and Stockbridge Bowl, avoiding wetlands and stream crossings.

North of the village, it rises and crosses through a slight gap in the geological landform that projects east from Lenox Mountain and includes Kennedy Park. The rock landform projects east beyond the Pittsfield Road (Main Street) with continued rocky high ground east of today's Route 7/20 bypass. North of the gap, the road descends along a long ridge crossing water only at Yokun Brook. Just beyond Yokun Brook, Holmes Road breaks off to the the northeast, the two roads having joined historically to share a single bridge.

These road configurations closely relate to topographic features and helped determine how lots were laid out and land was used. Lenox's roads are among the Town's most intact and lasting historic features. Changes to the road network have been additive since the agricultural era.

### ***Farmsteads***

As noted above, individual buildings are shown on the 1854 map in remarkable detail. Building configurations are shown along with owners' names and, in some cases, uses (schoolhouse, saw mill, etc.). Many of the buildings shown outside of Lenox Village are historic farmsteads. A number of the farmsteads have been lost, but many remain. The Town's historic resource inventory appears to be incomplete, concentrated around Lenox Village and missing farmsteads to the east and north. The Clark map can be used as an important starting point in continuing the inventory of mid-nineteenth century resources in Lenox.

South of Lenox Village, most of the historic farmsteads have been lost, replaced with late nineteenth century Cottages. Farm configurations have also been changed, as the wealthy summer residents assembled larger properties by combining farms and subdivisions for some residences were created.

East Street was a primary location for farms in Lenox, with better soils than the rocky slopes flanking the Pittsfield Road. A number of historic farmsteads line East Street in the 1854 map, many of which remain. These are probably the locations of initial eighteenth century farms, though the earlier buildings were probably replaced or absorbed into larger residences during the more prosperous times of the early 1800s.

As noted above, the layouts of farms may be able to be conjectured by layering the original land grants over the 1854 map along with contemporary property lines. Historic property lines may be able to be identified. The locations of natural features and historic landscape features such as fence lines, farm lanes, woodlots, and field lines may help identify how farms were laid out and used.

As has been mentioned, Lenox was nearly devoid of trees during the agricultural era. In reconstructing the appearance and use of the agricultural landscape, the lack of trees and open vistas should be taken into account. Soil erosion was a serious issue during this period, eroding hillsides and farm fields and silting creeks and rivers.

### ***Village along the Pittsfield Road***

The 1854 map shows a complex of buildings at the intersection of West Mountain, New Lenox, and Holmes Roads with the Pittsfield Road at Yokun Creek. Few if any of these buildings remain, having been replaced by twentieth century highway commercial development. The story of this village should be a subject of future research. It is not clear that the village had a name, as New Lenox referred to the railroad station east of the intersection near the river rather than to the intersection.

South of the village along the Pittsfield Road several historic farmsteads remain but are threatened with possible commercial development. A few of the historic residences have been poorly treated. One, last used as a restaurant, is currently vacant.

### ***Mills***

Three saw mills are shown on the 1854 map, one of which is also shown on the 1794 Lewis map. The string of mills shown on the 1794 map along Yokun Brook west of East Street do not appear in 1854. The saw mill shown just east of East Street in 1794 remains in 1854 and is depicted with a mill pond. Today, the mill pond remains as a marsh, silted in.

Similarly, a saw mill shown with a pond on the 1854 map along New Lenox Road east and uphill from the Housatonic River also remains as a marsh. A saw mill shown on the 1854 map along Willow Creek east of East Street does not appear in 1794 and has no pond depicted. Willow Creek is also labeled Sawmill Brook on Google Maps. These sites should be investigated and documented.

### ***Railroad***

The construction of the railroad along the Housatonic River occurred around 1850. Three stations were constructed in the Town; Lenox Dale, Lenox Station at the intersection of Housatonic Street and Crystal Streets, and New Lenox. The location of Lenox Depot is labeled on the 1854 map. The impact of the railroad on local industry is outlined further below.

### **Early Industry (1783-1877)**

Early industries were closely associated with the agricultural landscape. Because of the limitations of wagon transport on rough, narrow dirt roads, early industries had to be located near the sources of the raw materials they were dependent upon. Because they were driven by water power, they had to be located along streams and rivers where water could be dammed and the gradient was sufficient to provide enough drop to turn water wheels.

Though located in mountainous terrain, Lenox's geography was not ideal for water power. The early mills shown on the 1794 and 1854 maps of Lenox show mills along the lower runs of Yokun Brook, Willow Creek, and Marsh Brook. As mentioned above, three saw mills, a grist mill, an oil mill (for linseed oil), and a fulling mill (for treating fabric, especially wool), are shown on the 1794 map. Three saw mills are shown on the 1854 map. The lower runs along which they were located do not appear to have a great deal of gradient, and this seems like a relatively limited number of mills for an agricultural community. Additional mills, especially grist mills, may have been located in adjacent towns.



***Lenox Dale in 1875 – furnace to the left and grist mill to the right. (LHS; Chague 2015:2)***

As mentioned, the 1794 map lists Lenox Dale as having a grist mill, saw mill, and fulling mill in addition to its furnace and forge. The grist mill is shown in the 1854 map along with the furnace and glass works. While the Housatonic River clearly has the greatest water flow and seems like a logical place for water powered mills,

it is also liable to flood with some seasonal frequency and is therefore harder to control and liable to destroy any works along it. Mills along smaller creeks were more common.

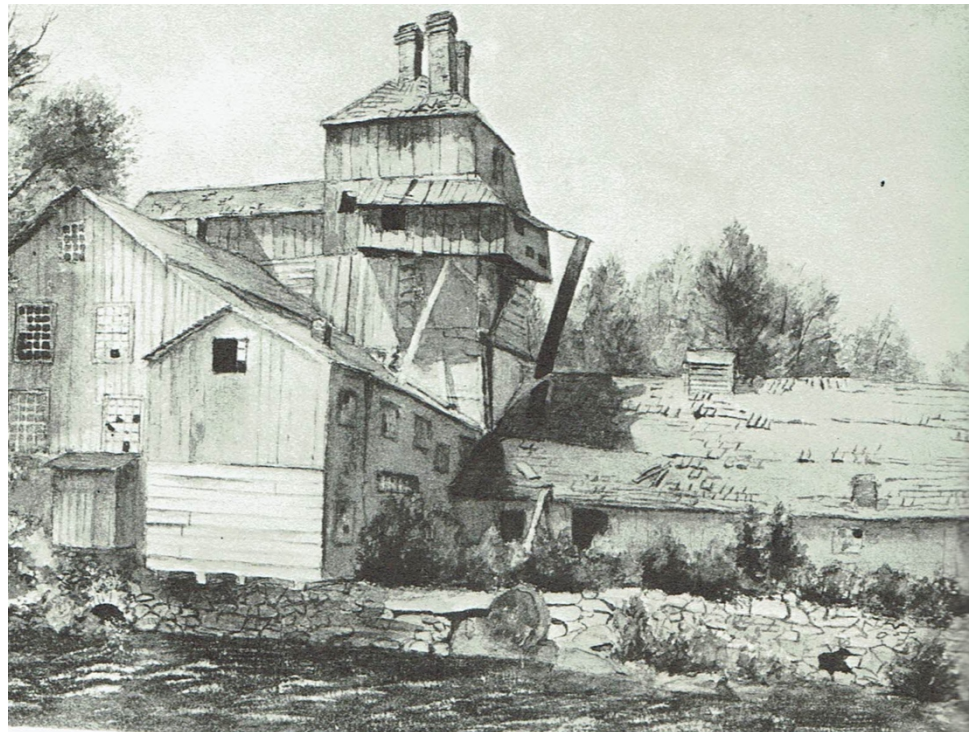
Historic resources associated with mills include not only the mill structures and sites themselves, but streams, dams, ponds, head races, tail races, and wagon roads. These landscape resources should be studied as part of industrial sites.

### ***Lenox Furnace***

Ironworks were also part of the agricultural landscape. They were sited in response to four critical needs: iron ore, water power, wood for charcoal, and limestone. Furnaces needed to be located near the sites of the iron ore beds from which the ore was extracted and were dependent upon wagons and oxen to haul the ore to the furnace.

While the location of ironworks near adequate deposits of good iron ore was of primary importance, the precise siting of the ironworks was dictated by the need for water power. Water power was an essential part of the ironworks, needed to provide furnace blast and to power forges and other machinery. Water power was used to force air into the furnace, promoting high-temperature combustion of charcoal fuel and resulting in chemical reactions that liberated the elemental iron in the ore from its chemical bonds to oxygen, silica and various other impurities.

A local source of limestone was needed as a fluxing agent in separating contaminants from the ore. As the iron ore and limestone melted in the furnace, the impurities in the ore floated to the top of the liquid. The melted limestone combined with the nonmetallic impurities, converting them to liquid slag.



*Lenox Furnace from a late nineteenth century watercolor (LLA; Wood 1969)*

Large quantities of wood were necessary to make charcoal to fuel the furnace. The wood was cut from the forests in the adjacent mountains of the Berkshire Mountains and Plateau and Taconic Range. The wood was stacked and slow-burned into charcoal on the mountain and hauled to the furnace in wagons by oxen. The consuming need for large quantities of charcoal caused the clear cutting of the extensive mountain forests, clearing the mountains of forest that had thrived for hundreds and thousands of years in only a few decades.

Because of the need to be in proximity to these natural resources, ironworks tended to be located in rural and remote areas. As was mentioned earlier in relation to the geology of the Berkshires, the Marble Valley was a source of good iron ore that was formed in limestone/marble till through chemical reactions with minerals in the schist and phyllite of the Taconic Range. The largest ironworks in the Marble Valley were located in Richmond and West Stockbridge, on the western side of Lenox Mountain, and in northwest Connecticut.

Iron ore for the Lenox Furnace was dug from an ore bed on the west side of Lenox Village, the site of today's playground on Ore Bed Road. Mines were dug west laterally from here beneath the village itself, later causing building settling (Wood 1969:69). The Belden mine consisted of two small open pits, now filled with water, located west of the village on the east side Undermountain Road below Baldhead overlook, across the road from today's Stonover Farm Bed and Breakfast. Major A. G. Belden was a former owner of the property. (Chute 1945:53-54)

The furnace in Lenox Dale was established about 1783 and has been fully researched by local historians in Lenox. The furnace operated under various ownerships until 1877. Around the furnace, an early industrial village arose. As mentioned, the 1794 map mentions a grist mill, saw mill, fulling mill, and forge in addition to the furnace. The 1854 map and an 1858 map of of Lenox Furnace show the furnace, glass works, two blacksmith shops, grist mill, saw mill, coal sheds, w.w. shops, office, store, hotel, residences, depot, and other buildings.

The glass works was existing in 1853 using pure quartz sand quarried from the sides of October Mountain. Some sources suggest that glass manufacturing may have begun as early as 1765. It operated with difficulty and eventually closed in 1872. A paper mill was constructed upriver from Lenox Dale at Housatonic Street and Woods Pond in 1835 and continued in production until the mid-twentieth century. After the closing of the furnace the name of the village was changed from Lenox Furnace to Lenox Dale. (Chague 2015; Wood 1969:66-69; Kennedy 2016:loc 893-921; LLA 2016:59-65; Drew 2008)

As the Marble Valley's agricultural landscape developed, intensified, and prospered, so did its ironworks. The iron industry was an important part of the regional economy, providing wrought iron to local blacksmiths, craftsmen, and small manufacturers located in local towns and villages, as well as cast iron products to farmers and residents. In addition to its importance to the local market, iron was exported out of the region but had to be hauled by wagon, which was difficult and time consuming. As with the agricultural landscape, the iron industry reached a peak period of development in the years before the Civil War.



### ***Impact of the Railroad***

With the construction of the railroad through Lenox in 1850, it became possible to import raw materials from other places and ship out finished products as well. Lenox was no longer isolated and limited by the difficulties of wagon transport.

With the increased networks of railroads regionally and nationally, it was no longer necessary to locate ironworks near the sources of iron ore. Better sources of iron ore could also be shipped from distances. With changes in technology, it became possible to run mills with steam engines fueled by coal. Ironworks could be fueled by coke or coal shipped from coal mines in Pennsylvania and elsewhere. Mills, forges, furnaces, and other manufacturing facilities were no longer dependent on water power.

Processing and manufacturing operations began to be concentrated in urban centers such as Pittsfield, where raw materials, machinery, and labor could be concentrated in a single location. Manufacturing operations became larger, more sophisticated, and efficient to operate. Small, remote operations like the Lenox Furnace were driven into specialty products suited to the grade of their ore and their capabilities. Eventually, they were driven out of business. The Lenox Furnace closed in 1877.

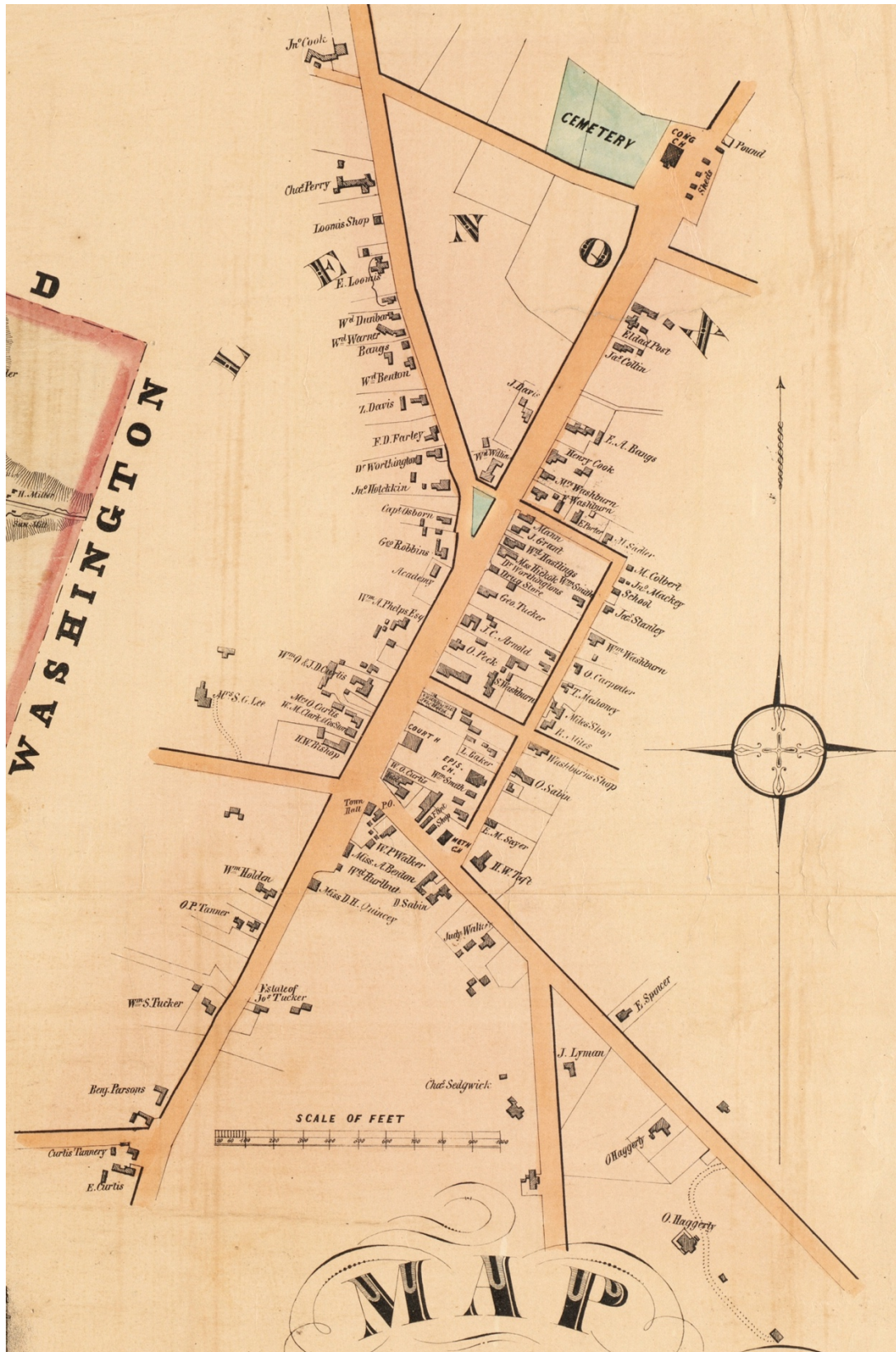
The railroad allowed other industrial operations to grow along the Housatonic River in and north of Lenox Dale in the late nineteenth century. It also facilitated travel for the Cottagers who summered in Lenox and transformed the Town.

### ***Inventory and Documentation***

Lenox's industries have been researched by local historians but they have not been inventoried or documented as historic resources significant to the Town and the region. Lenox Dale in particular is a complete small industrial village that has developed over 250 years with mills, manufacturing buildings, residences, offices, shops, schools, churches, dams, bridges, railroads, and other resources. It has a rich history, a high degree of historical integrity, and is in need of inventory and documentation.



***Lenox Glassworks employee cottages on Crystal Street in Lenox Dale (LLA:2016:79)***



**Lenox Village from the 1854 Clark map – peak period of the village’s development before expansion during the Cottage Era. This is the period for which the village is best known.**

### **County Seat – Lenox Becomes a Shire Town (1784-1868)**

In 1784, a committee from the Massachusetts State Legislature chose Lenox to be the county seat for Berkshire. The selection was made due to the rising population in the northern portion of the county and Lenox's central location. The town would remain the county seat until it was moved to Pittsfield in 1868. The first session of court was held in September of 1787. Planning for a new courthouse began in 1786, though the courthouse construction wasn't completed until 1791 or 1792. A county jail was constructed just down the hill from the village on the Stockbridge Road. (Larson 2018:19; Wood 1969:61)

The First County Courthouse (LEN.27) was constructed at the corner of Main Street and Walker Street and faced west to Main Street. By 1815, it was determined that this building was no longer adequate and a Second Courthouse was constructed by 1816 further north on Main Street in the center of the village. This building is now the Lenox Library (LEN.21), among the best known buildings in Town. The original courthouse was converted to the Town's administrative building and rotated on its site to face Walker Street. The building was moved to Housatonic Street in 1901, when the current Town Office was constructed. It was since greatly modified for commercial and apartment use. (Kennedy 2016:loc 727; Larson 2018:2-3)

The location of the county court in Lenox had a dramatic impact on Lenox Village and transformed the village into a regional center. Many of the best known and most highly valued buildings in Lenox are from the courthouse era of the early nineteenth century. They include the Second Courthouse (Lenox Library, 1815-16, LEN.21), Lenox Academy (1803, LEN.15), Church on the Hill (1806, LEN.1, LEN.B), Curtis Hotel (1829/1853 – later altered and expanded, LEN.23), and a number of prominent residences (1804-1860).

This is the early period for which Lenox Village is best known and visualized in the minds of residents and visitors. Though lawyers and other professionals visited Lenox Village with business relating to the court, the county seat induced many to take up permanent residence here (Larson 2018:23). Prominent Federal and Greek Revival residences line Main Street and establish the early nineteenth century visual character for which Lenox Village and the Town as a whole are known. The county seat period ended in 1868 after the General Court voted to move the seat to Pittsfield. (Wood 1969:64; Larson 2018:20)

The 2018 National Register Historic District Nomination and Area Form outline the historical development of Lenox Village and its buildings from this era (Larson 2018). Approximately 45 resources have been identified within the historic district dating from the period 1800-1870.

Local historians have documented the stories of individuals and residents from the early nineteenth century. The original 1987/88 inventory of historic resources in Lenox concentrated on Lenox Village and its immediate area, focusing specifically on these early buildings. The 1975 local historic district boundaries were drawn to include these earliest public and residential buildings. The 2011-12 update of the historic resource inventory concentrated on these buildings and was an initial step to preparation of the National Register nomination.





*View of Lenox Village, intersection of Main and Walker Streets. The First County Courthouse is on the right. The original iteration of the Curtis Hotel is to its left, and the Second County Courthouse, now the Lenox Library, is further left, immediately above the carriage. (Form Barber in Wood 1969)*

### **Arrival of Culture and Beginnings of a Summer Resort (1821-1870)**

During the second quarter of the 19th century Lenox became a cultural center, a result of which was the early establishment of the area as a seasonal destination for intellectuals and the wealthy. In 1821 Charles Sedgwick became the county clerk and he and his wife Elizabeth moved from Stockbridge to Lenox. Charles' older sister Catherine Sedgwick, a well-known novelist, would visit her brother and sister-in-law often, and described Lenox as a "bare and ugly little village."

However, "Three years later in 1824 she conceded, 'I perceive many beauties that I have before been quite blind to.'" She would eventually move to Lenox and, with her sister-in-law, run the Mrs. Sedgwick's School for Young Ladies founded in 1828 by Elizabeth. The attendees of the school, also referred to as "the Culture Factory", included the later famous actress Charlotte Cushman, Alice Delano, Ralph Waldo Emerson's daughter Ellen Emerson, and Winston Churchill's mother Jennie Jerome.

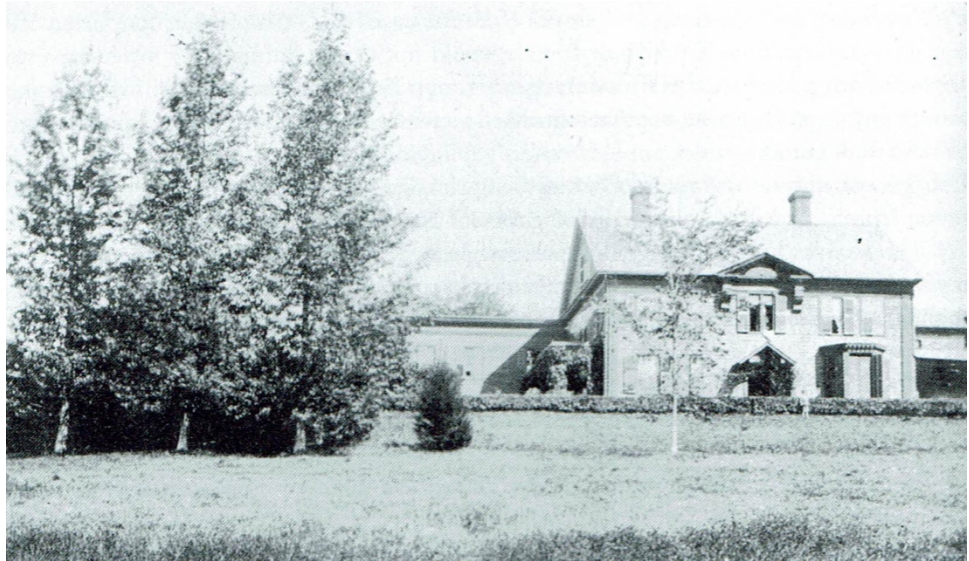
The Sedgwick family was well connected and hosted many friends and visitors from urban areas such as Boston and New York. Some of these visitors would become seasonal visitors and would eventually purchase or build summer homes in the village and surrounding area.

One such friend of the Sedgwicks was Samuel Gray Ward, an early transcendentalist poet, a Boston banker, and a co-founder of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Ward purchased a farm on the ridge overlooking Stockbridge Bowl in 1844 and built Highwood Manor on the property in 1845. Designed in the Picturesque Gothic Revival Style by New York architect Richard Upjohn, Highwood Manor is considered the first of many summer residences built in Lenox over the next seventy-five years.

Another friend of the Sedgwicks was the British actress Fannie Kemble who they had introduced to Lenox by 1835 and who over the years became one of its best known celebrities. When visiting, she stayed at the Curtis Hotel until she became

a full-time resident and bought her own home on Kemble Avenue in 1850.

Such visitors brought back their experiences and impressions of Lenox to their social circles in Boston and New York. Others who came to Lenox to visit and eventually stay included the poet and leader of the transcendentalist movement, Ralph Waldo Emerson, the novelist Nathaniel Hawthorne, the pianist Frederick Rackemann, and the abolitionist Reverend Henry Ward Beecher.



***The Sedgwicks' home on the ridgeline near the intersection of Kemble Street and Walker Streets after having been moved from the intersection of Church and Walker Streets in 1850. The building no longer exists. (LLA 2016:26)***



***The view south over Stockbridge Bowl. (LLA 2016:29)***

Lenox, through word of mouth, family connections and the invitation of friends already familiar with the area, became a summer destination, which was greatly facilitated when the train connection to New York was completed in 1850.

Up through the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the economy of Lenox was still largely based on agriculture, though in the village the county court and its activity generated additional sources of employment and income. During the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century employment and business opportunities were no longer solely centered on visitors to the court but on those escaping the grind and grime of city living. The influx of visitors to Lenox during the 1840s and 1850s impacted the



lives of permanent village residents by creating new opportunities for employment. These included work as shopkeepers, domestic service in homes and hotels, farm managers and laborers.

The 1850 federal census listed 1599 individuals living in Lenox, an increase of 627 over the first census in 1790. Of the 484 who listed occupations, 181 or 37% listed themselves as farmers. 132 or 27% were listed as laborers, which included those working in the mills at Lenox Furnace. 171 had other occupations including those related to the court, commerce, and services such as blacksmiths.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century many farmers had side industries such as managing a livery, blacksmithing, and being teamsters. By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century these side industries had become the primary mode of income for many families in the village. (Larson 2018:24-25; Kennedy 2016:loc 1093,1117)

This early period of Lenox social and cultural life is well studied by local historians. Most of the above discussion is drawn from the Area Form and National Register nomination prepared for the village. However, Cornelia Gilder's and Julia Peters' book *Hawthorne's Lenox, The Tanglewood Circle* describes the period and the personalities in considerable detail (Gilder 2008).

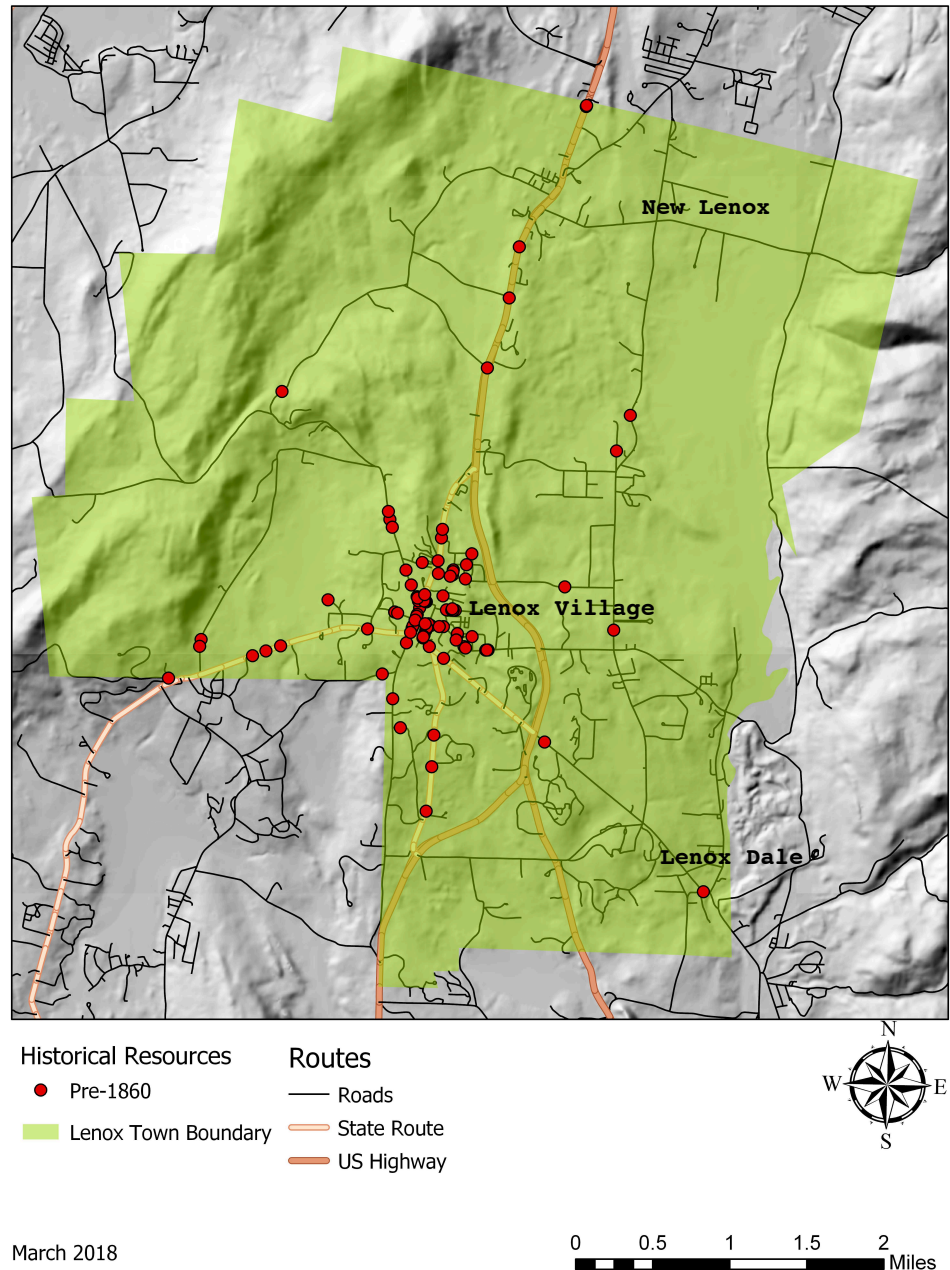
The locations chosen for these early summer residences tended to be close to the village on its south side on high ground with prominent views south over Stockbridge Bowl. As has been mentioned in discussion of the agricultural landscape earlier in this chapter, the land had been cleared of trees for farming and the views south from this portion of Lenox were spectacular. Some of the residences were built just over the Lenox boundary in Stockbridge, including one of the best known today, Tanglewood. Most of the early summer residences no longer exist, having been replaced with later, larger summer residences in the late nineteenth century. Any of the remaining early residences should be clearly catalogued.



***By the 1860s, the summer homes being constructed were becoming visibly larger and grander. Wyndhurst was constructed c.1865 by John Rathbone, an Albany NY stove manufacturer, on the site of an 1803 farmhouse with a spectacular view that had been owned and occupied by Reverend Henry Ward Beecher from 1853 to 1857. Rathbone had the farmhouse moved down the hill. This house was replaced in 1899 by one yet much larger and grander which survives today. (Gilder 2008:66)***

### Summary – Agricultural Development and County Seat

From its founding in 1767 to the Civil War, Lenox developed an agricultural economy, including a range of early industries dependent upon water power and wagon transportation. Selected as the county seat, Lenox Village grew in prestige and wealth and became an early nineteenth century regional center. Lenox's exposure to affluent and cultured individuals from Boston and New York led to its beginnings as a summer resort for those attracted by its scenic beauty and summer weather. Though studied by local historians, many of Lenox's early nineteenth century historic resources have yet to be inventoried and recognized.



**Map showing the inventoried historic resources dating prior to 1860. A significant number of resources associated with Lenox's agricultural era have not been inventoried.**



## THE COTTAGE ERA (1870-1930)

In the late nineteenth century, the summer resort trend in Lenox that began in the 1840s dramatically increased and gained a momentum and scale that would have been difficult to comprehend. Lenox and its neighbors, Lee and Stockbridge, became a center of society and wealth as the cool and scenic Berkshire Hills attracted the affluent and socially prominent from New York, Boston, and elsewhere for the summer and fall months.

Large areas of land changed hands. Building boomed, and the estate mansions and landscapes that were constructed, designed by some of the best New York and Boston designers, became ever larger and more extravagant. One result was the loss of the agricultural landscape in the southern half of the Town.

### The Gilded Age

The Gilded Age was a post Civil War boom that began in the 1870s and lasted until about 1900. It was a period of rapid economic growth, especially in the North and West, spurred by the transportation and industrial expansion sparked by the war-time investment. During the 1870s and 1880s, the nation's economy rose at the fastest rate in its history. [Railroads](#) were the major growth industry, with the factory system, mining, and finance increasing in importance.

However, the Gilded Age was also an era of abject poverty and inequality as millions of immigrants—many from impoverished regions—poured into the country, and the high [concentration of wealth](#) became more visible and contentious.

The United States became a world leader in applied technology during this period. From 1860 to 1890, 500,000 patents were issued for new inventions—over ten times the number issued in the previous seventy years. George Westinghouse invented air brakes for trains making them both safer and faster. Theodore Vail established the American Telephone & Telegraph Company and built a great communications network. Thomas Edison, in addition to inventing hundreds of devices, established the first electrical lighting utility, basing it on direct current and an efficient incandescent lamp. The availability of electric power fueled new, larger industries and spread rapidly across American cities, transforming American life.

The period saw an influx of millions of European immigrants attracted by economic opportunity and higher wages. The rapid expansion of [industrialization](#) after the Civil War led to real wage growth of 60% between 1860 and 1890, spread across the ever-increasing labor force. Immigration from Europe and the eastern states led to the rapid growth of the West, based on farming, ranching, and mining. Labor unions became important in the very rapidly growing industrial cities.

Wealthy industrialists and financiers were labeled "robber barons" by their critics, who argue their fortunes were made at the expense of the working class and were a betrayal of democracy. Many business leaders were influenced by the theory of Social Darwinism, which justified laissez-faire capitalism, ruthless competition and social stratification.

Others argued that business leaders were "Captains of industry" who built the core American industrial economy and created the non-profit sector through acts of philanthropy. Andrew Carnegie donated over 90% of his wealth and said that philanthropy was their duty. Private money endowed thousands of colleges, hospitals, museums, academies, schools, opera houses, public libraries, and charities across the North and West.

The unequal distribution of wealth remained high during this period. From 1860 to 1900, the wealthiest 2% of American households owned more than a third of the nation's wealth, while the top 10% owned roughly three fourths of it. In terms of property, the wealthiest 1% owned 51%, while the bottom 44% claimed 1.1%.

Two major nationwide depressions—the [Panic of 1873](#) and the [Panic of 1893](#)—interrupted growth and caused social and political upheavals. (Wikipedia 2018: The Gilded Age)

### **Lenox's Cottage Era**

In Lenox, this period is known as The Cottage Era during which the affluent amassed large estates and built ever larger and more expensive mansions. It began shortly after the Civil War, a continuation and expansion of the pre-war summer resort period, and ended with the Great Depression. The period saw an enormous volume of new wealth in the hands of very few and an even greater divide between the haves and the have-nots. Those that had the wealth spent it building second, third, and fourth homes in places like the Adirondacks, Newport, the Hudson Valley, and Lenox (Larson 2018:27).

The era of rapid new construction peaked about 1910 and then coasted into years of world war and the 1920s. The construction primarily impacted the southern portion of the Town and immediately adjacent areas of Lee and Stockbridge, taking advantage of the high ground with scenic views south toward the hills. Trees had been removed from the landscape by farming and the iron industry, and open, unrestricted views were more spectacular than they appear today.

As land was sought after for new estates at increasingly high prices, Lenox farmers jumped at the chance to sell their farms, which had become uncompetitive with the vast agricultural expanse of the mid-west that had been opened by the railroad. These summer homes were called Cottages even though they were far from it, and their owners were called "Cottagers."

Andrew Carnegie was a "cottager" who bought Shadowbrook in 1917, once the largest home in the country. Anson Phelps Stokes, who had Shadowbrook built in 1893, was the son of James Stokes who made his fortune in mining, banking, and real estate. Ventfort Hall was built in 1893 for George Hale Morgan and his wife Sarah Spencer Morgan (sister of the banker J.P. Morgan) by George's mother. William Douglas Sloane made his fortune as a furniture maker, but could not afford his cottage Elm Court without his wife's wealth; she was Emily Vanderbilt, granddaughter of Cornelius Vanderbilt. (Larson 2018:27)

Local tradesmen as well as carpenters and stonemasons from England, Italy, and Germany settled in Lenox to build the estates. Estates needed to be staffed with maids, butlers, chauffeurs, and gardeners. Hotels like the Curtis expanded and

took on more staff as the volume of visitors to Lenox grew in this period. Several livery businesses were established in order to accommodate the need for transporting visitors to and from the train station, stalling horses, and parking carriages. Many immigrants, who first came to the village in the 1840s as laborers on farms and domestics in hotels, were now making a name for themselves with their own businesses. (Larson 2018:29)

In the early 20th century the prosperity that Lenox experienced during the last years of the 19th century continued unabated. The year-round working class population that serviced the cottagers and hotel guests increased by nearly 30% between 1880 and 1910. To accommodate this growing population there were several village expansions with subdivisions and new streets like Hynes, Tucker, Fairview, and Taconic. (Larson 2018:32-33)

By the end of the 1920s the Cottagers' boom had drawn to an end with the ever-growing financial burden, first brought on by the Federal inheritance tax in 1903, then the introduction of the Federal income tax in 1915, and finally the rise of property taxes in Lenox beginning in the 1920s. For many Cottagers their property taxes rose to over \$15,000 and, for those who inherited the property from parents, the addition of the inheritance tax had become very burdensome.

The Stock Market Crash of 1929 was the straw that broke the camel's back. Thus, the 1920s marked the end of one era and the beginning of another for these estates. Some families donated their estates to educational and religious institutions. George G. Haven donated Sunnycroft to the Lenox School for Boys, and Andrew Carnegie gifted Shadowbrook to the Jesuits in 1922 after his death. For local farmers looking to sell their land, the end of the Cottage Era meant the end of good prices or even selling their land at all. (Larson 2018:37)



*Coldbrook constructed in 1882 by John Sanford Barnes and designed by prominent Boston architects Peabody and Stern (LLA 2016:43)*

### Cottage Era Resources

As mentioned, the largest impact on the Lenox landscape can be seen in the southern portion of the Town adjacent to Lee and Stockbridge where the hills provided spectacular southern views for Cottage sites. The former agricultural landscape and most of its buildings, field lines, farm lanes, and uses were wiped away and replaced with new estate landscapes. Though many were also agricultural, the layout and character were different.

Large Cottages (mansions) were constructed on prominent hilltop sites that were reached along winding carriage entrance drives. Formal and informal designed gardens surrounded the cottages and cascaded down the hills. New stables and gentleman agricultural buildings were constructed at a distance. Fields of mostly pasture covered the rolling hills. Today, the area in the vicinity of Summer Street and Golden Hill Road south and east of Laurel Lake still convey the sense of open landscape of the era.



*Detail photograph of the 1904 atlas just south of the village showing Cottages distributed across the landscape. North is to the left. (LLA Collection)*

The peak period of development was about 1910 and is well-depicted in maps of the era, especially the Barns & Farnham Atlas of Berkshire County of 1904 and the Sanborn Insurance Map of 1911, which can be considered the Cottage Era's



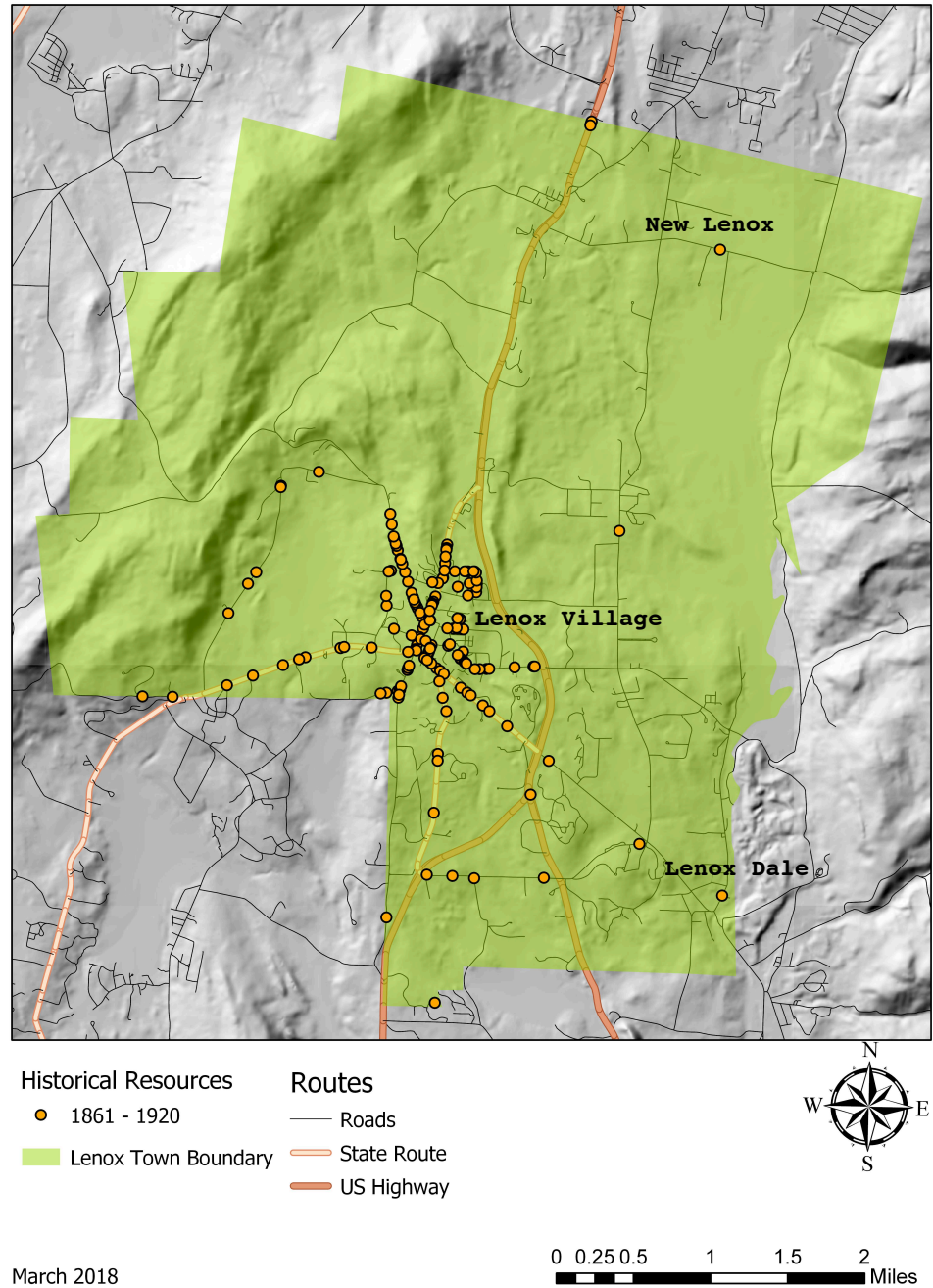
peak point of development. The extraordinary amount of building activity wiped away not only the farmsteads but also earlier (1870-1890) Cottages, as many were replaced with larger and even yet larger mansions.

In addition to the open land at the south end of Town, Lenox Village grew enormously during this period. As documented by Larson Fisher Associates in their 2018 National Register nomination for the village, new streets were added and subdivisions constructed not only for summer residents but also for new fulltime residents who came to work on the estates and for businesses that served the estates.

With the update of the Massachusetts Historical Commission survey forms for the village that was undertaken in 2011-12, and the 2018 National Register nomination and Area Form, these resources are well documented. The older 1987-88 inventory of the Town had focused on the village and surrounding Cottage properties, documenting the estates as well.



*The south elevation of Coldbrook today, a hotel at Cranwell Resort, Spa and Golf Club*



## MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY TRANSITION (1930-1970)

With the fading of the Cottage Era and the extravagant wealth upon which it was based, the question of what would sustain the Lenox economy and what would be the fate of the enormous mansions and their landscapes were difficult questions. The estates began to transition to non-profit groups, especially private schools, and religious orders.

In 1926 Sunnycroft, the former summer home of George C. Haven, was purchased through donations from Trinity Church parishioners and funding from the diocese. The estate became the Lenox School for Boys, and over the next fifty years the school expanded to absorb more adjacent properties from the Cottage Era. These included Spring Lawn in 1957, the Frelinghuysen Home, the gate house at Ventfort Hall in 1959, and the Walker House in 1968. (Larson 2018:41)

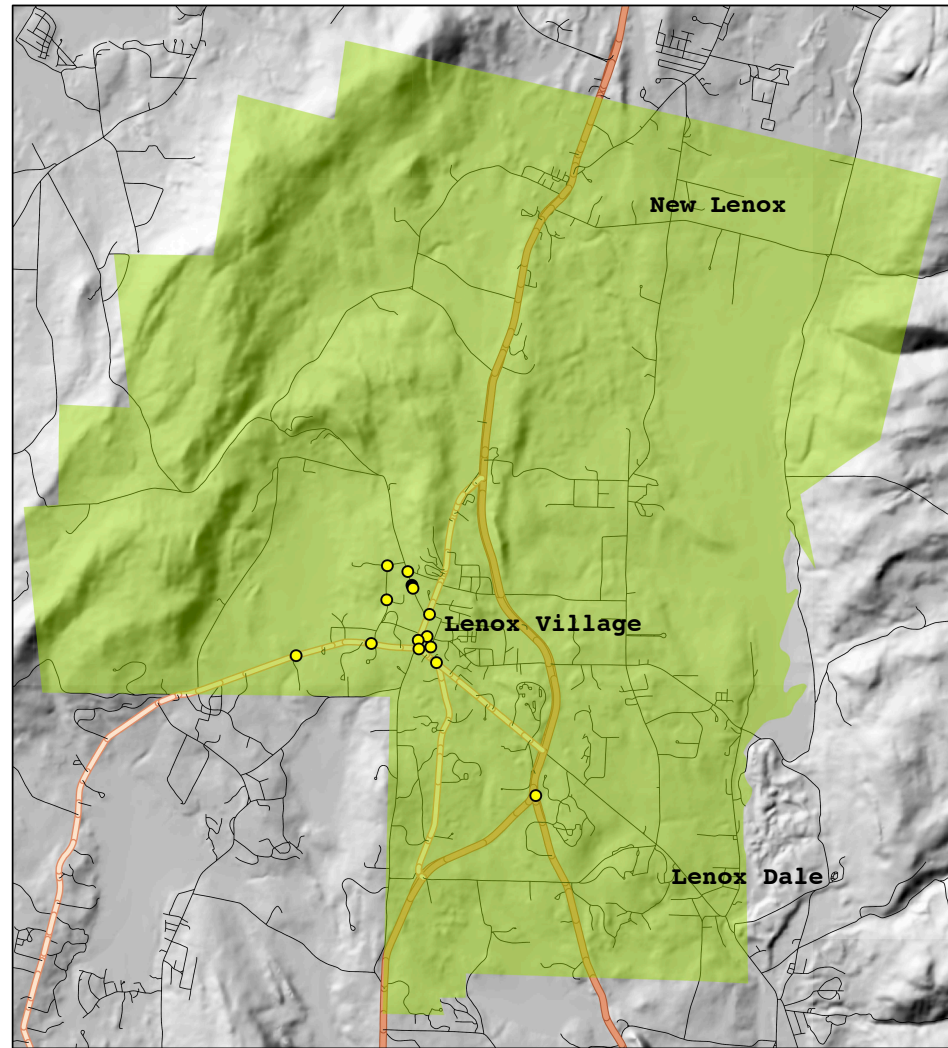
The Lenox School for Boys wasn't the only school to take on former Cottage properties. The Windsor Mountain School was established at the former Winthrop Estate, the former Overlee Estate became the Hillcrest Education Center, and the Foxhollow School for Girls moved from New York to the Holmwood Estate and eventually would expand, taking over Edith Wharton's The Mount. These schools are just a few of the schools that breathed new life into the Cottages during the middle of the 20th century. But by the 1970s many had closed due to the difficulties in attracting students, managing private schools, and the high cost of heating and maintaining the properties during a decade of great inflation. (Larson 2018:41)

During the Great Depression and Second World War, little building took place, as elsewhere in the Northeast and other parts of the country. An exception of note was the construction of the Frelinghuysen Morris House and Studio in 1931 and 1941 in the International Style (LEN.H, LEN.132). In the Post WW II period and throughout the 1950s the housing market rebounded not only in the outer precincts in Lenox but also within the village. As subdivisions in the outer areas of the Town began to spring up to accommodate the growing population, infill housing also occurred in Lenox Village. (Larson 2018:39)

Beginning in the 1950s Lenox experienced a post-war economic boom and entered into an era where the village became a bedroom community for employees of major industries such as GE in Pittsfield and the paper mills in Lee and Dalton (Larson 2018:39). As discussed in Chapter 3 on planning, between 1940 and 1970, the Town's population doubled to 5804 people (US Census 1980). During this period of growth, Lenox became firmly established as a suburban bedroom community to the much larger City of Pittsfield.

In Lenox, suburban subdivisions were developed along East Street and elsewhere, and a number of the Cottage properties sold off their land and subdivided their street frontages with new, small, single family lots. Such estates included the former grounds of Ventfort Hall, which were developed into Morgan Manor, and the Fairlawn Estate on West Street would become Kneeland Avenue (Larson 2018:39).





#### Historical Resources

- Post 1921
- Lenox Town Boundary

#### Routes

- Roads
- State Route
- US Highway



March 2018

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles

***Map showing inventoried historic resources dating from after 1921. Few resources have been inventoried from the post-1930 period.***

The Route 7/20 bypass around Lenox Village was constructed in 1949, and the Massachusetts Turnpike was completed in 1957 (Kennedy 2016:loc2134). Highway commercial development occurred along the northern portion of Route 7/20 replacing the former early nineteenth century village of New Lenox.

During the post-Cottage Era, many Cottage residences were lost to demolition, neglect, and fire. Cottage landscapes were broken up into numerous smaller lots



## HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND RESOURCES

with post-war suburban residential homes. Comparison of the 1911 atlas to the landscape today is striking.

Post war buildings have not been inventoried. Of possible significance are early residential subdivisions in the vicinity of Lenox Village and East Street and early commercial buildings along the Route 7/20 corridor at the north end of town. A prefabricated metal Lustron House from the late 1940s has been identified along New Lenox Street just east of Route 7/20. Early motels may be of particular interest and should be documented before they are potentially lost to redevelopment.

Among the most significant changes to the landscape over the twentieth century is the return of the trees and forests, both on the mountains and throughout the Marble Valley. The visual character of Lenox has changed as the treed landscapes and forests have matured.



*Prefabricated metal Lustron House located on New Lenox Road*

## **CULTURAL ATTRACTION AND SUBURBANIZATION (1970-PRESENT)**

The growth of Lenox since 1970 is discussed in Chapter 3, *Planning Context*, in the review of the planning documents that were prepared and the circumstances behind them.

Instead of continuing to rise, Lenox's population peaked in 1980 at 6523 persons and then declined to 5069 by 1990, at which level it has remained steady to the present. The immediate cause of this change in population trends was the closing of the GE large transformer plant in Pittsfield, announced in 1986, and the related decline of manufacturing in the city in subsequent decades (Kennedy 2016:loc2340).

During the 1990s, with the unanticipated reduction in population growth, the development of land slowed dramatically. Lenox was no longer in a pattern of high volume low-density sprawl. Most new development at the time was more compact and occurred through development along commercial corridors and the reuse of large institutional or estate properties. Only approximately 200 acres of land were converted to developed lands between 1985 and 1998 (Lenox 1999:97). Continued development along Lenox's scenic roads was recognized as potentially harmful to heritage tourism, the Town's economic base.

The estimated 2015 population for Lenox was 5026 (US Census 2011-2015). The growth pressures that had driven suburban development in Lenox in the mid-twentieth century had subsided.