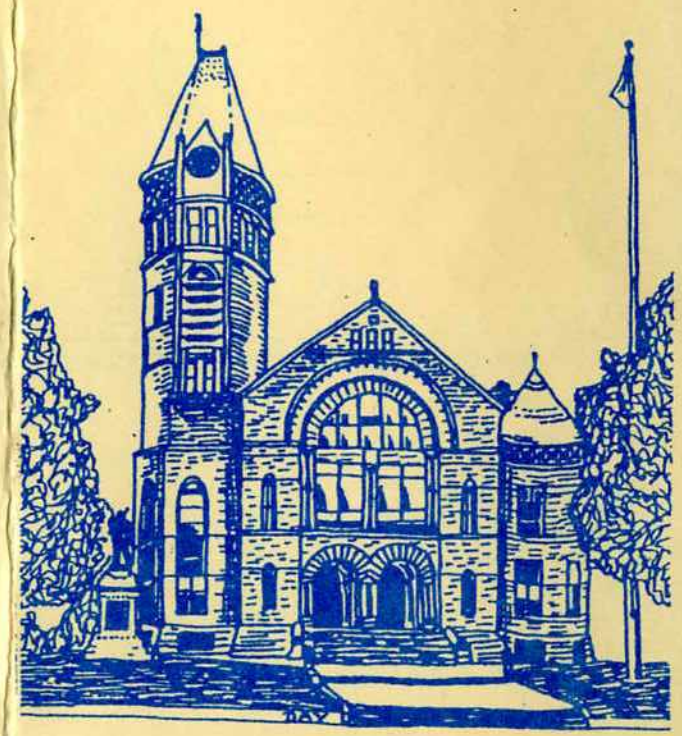


Reference Only

WALKING TOUR OF THE SOUTHBRIDGE "CENTRE VILLAGE"



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- Sources of Information
- * Footsteps Through History
A Walking Tour of Sturbridge Common and Southbridge
EDITED by Brian Burns
- * A Walk Through The "Centre Village"
In Southbridge
By members of the Southbridge
Historical Commission, with architectural comments by
John Curtis / THE EVENING NEWS 9/30/78

The walk outlined in this folder covers the central business district and a little more.

In the year 1800 the development of the center had barely begun. Local residents were building a meeting house on the spot where the Central Baptist Church now stands. Benjamin Freeman's tavern stood on the site of the present fire station, and his barn was across the road from the new meeting house. Marcy's mills, owned by Jedediah Marcy, were down on the river, a little upstream from the present Central Street bridge. There was no Central street then. Marcy's house, built by his grandfather, was up the hill on the site of Notre Dame Church. Those were about all the buildings then standing in the center.

At about this time textile manufacturing was making a start in New England, and entrepreneurs were looking for good sources of water power. There were several such sources on the Quinebaug River, and the textile mill development began at these spots. As a result, demand for residences and business buildings developed.

An old drawing dated 1826 shows a dozen or so buildings in the part of Main Street from Hamilton to present-day Foster. There were a hotel, a tavern, two small stores, and a building having stores on the first floor and apartments above. The meeting house was just off the edge of the drawing. Besides a barn, most of the rest of the buildings may have been residences. One is marked, "Oyster shop". With one possible exception these buildings are gone now. The building with stores and apartments was moved down onto Foster Street nearly a century ago, and is still in use there as an apartment house.

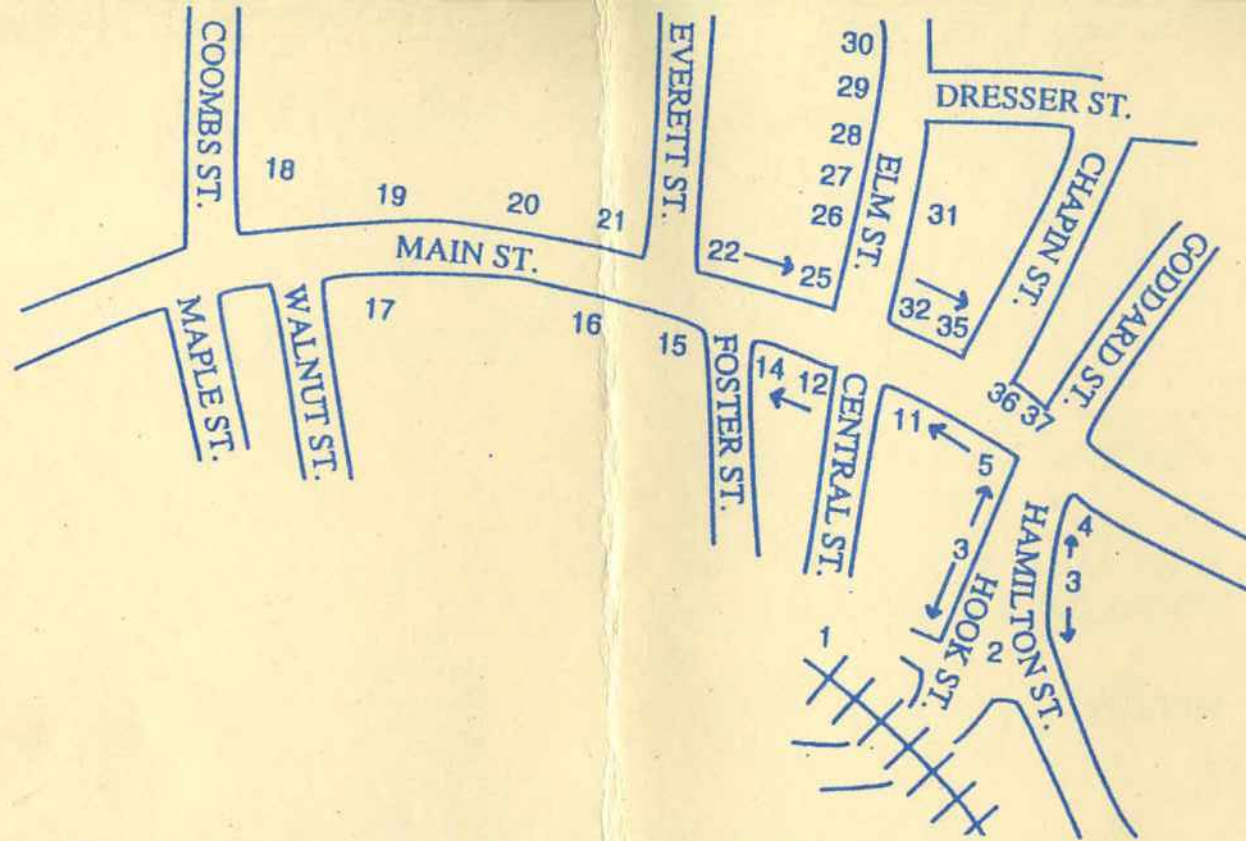
At first, dwellings probably predominated. As the years went by, some of them were modified and converted to business use. The results of this kind of change are still evident on Hamilton Street.

During the middle and latter parts of the 19th century more and more commercial buildings replaced the dwellings. Several of them were lost by fire, but new and better ones were put up in their places. It is mainly the group of buildings from this period which gives Main Street its distinctive character.

The process of change has continued into the 20th century. The Jacob Edwards Library, the post office building, the Shawmut Bank building, the new part of the Southbridge Savings Bank, the Friendly Restaurant and Mario's Restaurant were all built in the present century. The Savings Bank addition is on the site of the old YMCA building, the removal of which was a cause of regret for many old timers.

The imposing building which stood on the corner of Main and Central Streets was destroyed by fire in 1971, and has not been replaced. The adjacent building was burned at the same time, but its spot is now the site of Mario's Restaurant.

Lower Main Street beyond Foster and Everett Streets has many old residences converted to other uses, the Southbridge Credit Union being an example and the Elks Club another. A third is the building now owned and used by the Arts Council. Despite its changed usage, this building probably has more of its original atmosphere than any of the others.



1. **Railroad Station (Casabon Senior Center)**
6 Depot St. - circa 1910
2. **Spanish America War Monument**
Hook and Hamilton St.
3. **Example of Converted Use Residences**
Hamilton St.
4. **Southbridge Church of Christ**
364 Main St. - 1841
5. **Whitford Building**
344-352 Main St. - 1870
6. **Hotel Newman Building**
340-342 Main St. - 1907
7. **Mathieu Building**
330-334 Main St. - 1916
8. **Hotel Colombia (McGrath Insurance)**
328 Main St. - 1900
9. **Goodwin Building**
320 Main St. - 1867

10. **300 Main St.**
Polished) circa 1825
11. **Hartwell Building**
298 Main St. - 1866
12. **Maci Lot**
1872-1971
13. **Ammidown Building**
264-270 Main St. - 1872
14. **Central Baptist Church**
Main St. - 1866
15. **Jacob Edwards Library**
236 Main St. - 1914-1915
16. **Albert Wells Mansion**
(Wells Shopping Center) 176 Main St.
17. **Dresser Park**
18. **Ammidown Castle (Arts Center)**
111 Main St. - 1832

19. **Oak Ridge Cemetary**
113-139 Main St. - 1801
20. **Elks**
155 Main St. - 1844
21. **Southbridge Credit Union**
205 Main St. - 1880
22. **U.S. Post Office**
235 Main St. - 1928
23. **Shawmut**
249 Main St. - 1929
24. **Southbridge Savings Bank**
253 Main St. - 1887
25. **Site of YMCA building**
circa 1885 - 1972
26. **Boston Gas**
7-11 Elm St. - circa 1900
27. **The News**
25 Elm St. - 1832
28. **T & G**
39 Elm St. - 1902
29. **Town Hall**
41 Elm St. - 1888
30. **Congregational Church**
Elm St. - 1885
31. **Fire Station**
24 Elm St. - 1899
32. **Blanchard Block (Pizza Chef and Video
Dimensions & More)**
289-293 Main St. - circa 1860
33. **Edwards Block**
301-309 Main St. - circa 1860 & 1852
34. **Dresser Opera House**
(Finally Lisa's/Vacant) 315 Main St. - 1875
35. **S.K. Edwards Building**
319-321 Main St. - 1878-1882
36. **Barnes Building (T+T Hospital Pharmacy)**
331 Main St. - 1871
37. **Whitford Home**
333 Main St.