

## **Brookside Historic District**

### **Description**

#### **Introduction**

Brookside is a former mill village of 25 historic resources, including the former Brookside Woolen Mill, multiple unit worker housing, single unit residences, a granite dam, a bridge and five examples of modern construction. Buildings are Colonial, Greek Revival, Queen Anne, Victorian Eclectic and Colonial Revival in style and are in poor to good condition. The moderately dense linear area includes resources on Brookside Road between Lowell Road and Coolidge Avenue. Four additional resources are located on Moore Road and Coolidge Avenue. Stony Brook traverses the center of the area along the right of way of the CSX Railroad, both of which are perpendicular to Brookside Road. Brookside complements Westford's other mill villages, Graniteville and Forge Village which are much larger, each containing hundreds of historic resources. Brookside was owned in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century by Chelmsford industrialist George C. Moore who was responsible for much of the industrial development. It was subsequently operated by Abbot Worsted Company, which also operated mills in Forge Village and Graniteville. A railroad depot existed until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century but has been demolished. Other large brick industrial buildings have also been demolished, although the principal mill building and its prominent tower survive. Despite some changes, the Brookside Historic District retains integrity of design, feeling, association, materials and workmanship.

#### **Brookside Mill**

The two-story Brookside Mill on Brookside road is built primarily of brick with some granite ashlar construction in its older sections and some more recent cinderblock additions on the south side of the complex. The existing plan of the mill has evolved to the point where it is nearly square. The oldest section, built of granite around 1862, is a rectangular form oriented largely east-west and measuring approximately 30' x 85'. An 1894 addition, measuring 40' x 50', was made perpendicular to the east end of the granite block and expands the plan to the north. Also in 1894, the main mill measuring 150' x 60' was built parallel to the 1862 mill, resulting in a reversed Z-shaped plan. A wing projected to the east from the central stem of the Z plan, creating a courtyard between it and the main mill. The courtyard formerly contained a square smokestack built of brick that has been demolished. The courtyard has been roofed and enclosed and the east end of the 1862 mill has been extended toward Brookside Road. The enclosure of the courtyard and additions to the 1862 mill have altered the appearance of the complex from that of a series of brick and stone buildings joined around a central smokestack to a single block of amalgamated subparts.

The main component of the Brookside Mill is the 1894 brick, two-story, flat roofed 150' x 60' section located immediately south of Stony Brook and west of Brookside Road. The eight-bay, easterly-oriented facade is interrupted by additions of cinderblock and brick. The north- or stream-side elevation of the building is an unbroken brick expanse of 19 bays which, by virtue of the long row of arch-topped window openings and the lack of modern construction, is most evocative of the mill's former appearance. The brick section of the mill is anchored at its northeast corner by a three-story brick tower with arch-topped windows, many of which have been bricked in. The tower is depicted in an historic engraving with a pyramidal roofed belfry that has since been lost. The belfry had jigsaw brackets supporting the corner posts and a patterned shingle roof. Windows that remain uncovered are 12/12 double-hung sash. Ornament consists of jigsaw eave brackets. Foundation material is primarily cut granite with some brick. A wood-framed shaft, approximately eight feet on a side, is clad in wood clapboards and rises two stories along the west wall of the mill.

The central, older section of the mill was built around 1862 of granite random-laid ashlar. This section, located south and west of the larger brick section, is also two stories and approximately six by four bays. As in the larger brick section, arched openings here are filled with cinderblock, plywood and brick. Ornament on the granite mill consists of heavy wooden brackets, a brick corbel at the eaves and brick vussoirs in the window arches. The brick and stone sections of the mill are joined at a vertical section of overlapping brick and granite masonry visible on the south elevation. The granite mill, while partially visible from both sides, is shielded in some places by modern

wood and cinderblock additions. Modern additions and the deteriorated state have left the granite mill in poor condition.

Construction of the mill consists of load bearing masonry walls with gradual-pitched gabled roof trusses built of wood. Trusses in some places had been supported in the center by rows of wood piers. These piers were modified in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to accommodate forklift traffic. The piers were cut three feet below the ceiling and at the floor level and removed. Their load-bearing potential was replaced by steel turnbuckles attached to exterior walls and slung under the piers' remaining three-foot upper sections. Window sills are granite in many places. Floors are wood plank, several layers thick.

The stream on the north side of the building is the site of the granite dam, the bridge carrying Brookside Road over Stony Brook and the water intake or penstock for the turbine formerly located in the lower level of the mill. The ten-foot high dam is attached at its south side to the mill foundation and extends forty feet north across Stony Brook. A granite block wall eight to 15 feet in height lines the north bank of the brook. Water level was regulated by a control gate or sluiceway in a broad notch in the top masonry course of the dam. Secondary outlets for water flow are located on the north side of the dam, consisting of three-foot diameter iron pipes. Historically the dam impounded a pond of several acres that concealed much of the stone construction described above. Twenty-foot wide Stony Brook now flows through the center of the former pond bed.

Downstream of the dam is the bridge over Stony Brook. Three flat arches, also built of random ashlar, carry the road over the stream bed. Each arch spans approximately 10' while the entire bridge extends for nearly 100', including piers, spandrels and abutments. An additional pair of three-foot diameter iron pipes also conduct water under the bridge.

The penstock, conducting water from stream bed to mill, is a five-foot diameter iron pipe. Water enters the upstream opening, is forced to the right (south) by a 90-degree bend in the intake pipe, which then enters the lower level of the mill tower where it formerly turned the turbine rotor. Nothing remains of the water powered mechanical system inside the building. Water currently enters the base of the tower through the penstock and exits the building through the subterranean brick vaulted tailrace that leads under Brookside Road and back into Stony Brook.

The H. E. Fletcher Social and Athletic Club at **11 Brookside Road** was built in 1920 in the English Revival style as the "Brookside Lunch", a dining hall for employees of the Abbot Worsted Company. The building is a side-gabled form of one and one-half stories with an enclosed entry porch and gabled dormers on the front slope of the roof. A rear ell expands the plan to the east. A secondary entry on the south elevation is covered by a shed-roofed porch. The exterior, labeled as plaster on architects' plans, is now clad in vinyl clapboards. Windows are modern replacements and are smaller than the original 6/6 double-hung sash. The building is sited behind a cut granite retaining wall and is in fair condition.

During the 1970s, the mill owner built a large metal-clad refrigeration facility south of the mill. It has a low-pitched gabled roof and occupies the rear of the parking lot behind the mill. The building is a featureless, windowless mass separated from the mill by an expanse of asphalt paving.

The Brookside Mill is the smallest of Westford's principal historic industrial facilities. Others in Forge Village and Graniteville are older, retain more architectural integrity and display a wider variety of design elements. However, the Brookside Mill continues to represent a significant historic entity that gives a sense of place the village of Brookside. Its brick construction with Victorian details and the associated water-power structures, and its association with the Abbot Worsted Company, distinguish it as an important component of the town's industrial history.

## Residential Architecture

The neighborhood surrounding the mill bears indications of its former status as a mill village. The likely home of Colonial Period miller William Chandler, built ca. 1725 at **20 Brookside Road (MHC #116)** is a side-gabled Colonial style building of two and one-half stories and five by one bay. The house is sided in wood clapboard and the roof is sheathed in asphalt shingles. The center entry has a Federal style surround with sidelights and

entablature. Windows are 2/2 double-hung sash with plain trim. A brick chimney occupies the ridge of the roof. The detached garage is a front gambrel, two-bay form located west of the well-maintained house. The Chandler House is typical of 18<sup>th</sup> century homes in the town. Houses with historic wood clapboard exteriors, Colonial style side-gabled forms, and classical entry surrounds are found in most parts of Westford and identify the area as a place of Colonial Period settlement.

The Greek Revival style house at **9 Brookside Road**, built in 1862, is a front-gabled three by two-bay form of two stories. A one-story ell expands the plan to the south. Windows and siding are modern replacements. The recessed side hall entry retains its wide trim and sidelights. Other ornamental features include the molded cornice and gable returns. A one-story bay window lights the south elevation next to a shed porch in the ell. The house is in fair condition.

A Victorian Eclectic style tenement with paired front doors exists across the stream to the north at **5 Moore Road (MHC 17)**. The ca. 1870 house is a 6x2-bay, side-gabled form of two and one-half stories that overlooks the mill from its hillside location. A two-story addition has been made to the rear of the house. Windows are 6/6 double-hung sash with no trim due to the application of vinyl clapboards to the exterior. Ornamental features include the gable returns and molded cornice. Other exterior ornament may have been removed at the time of the re-siding. Two brick chimneys rise from the roof-peak. A modern triangular entry porch covers the central bay of the fairly well-maintained building.

The Victorian Eclectic style house at **24 Brookside Road**, ca. 1880, resembles 5 Moore Road in its form but lacks the double front entry to confirm it as a double tenement. It is a five by two-bay, side-gabled form with a shed-roofed rear ell. The house, like 5 Moore Road, is located on the low hill to the north that overlooks the mill. Windows are 1/1 and 2/1 double-hung sash with no trim due to the application of vinyl clapboards. The center entry is covered by a flat roofed porch with Victorian turned columns. A granite retaining wall exists between the house and the road. The house is in fair condition.

**One Brookside Road**, built ca. 1890, is a side-gabled form with a Queen Anne style tower attached to the facade and an integrated shed-roofed front porch. The tower is a two-story, three-sided form with a gabled roof. Wood clapboards cover the exterior of the well-maintained house. Windows are 2/2 and 6/6 double-hung sash. A two-story addition has been made to the north side elevation and, like the main block of the house, has corner pilasters, gable returns, frieze and molded cornice.

The Victorian Eclectic style residence at **27 Brookside Road** was built ca. 1890. The two-story, side-gabled five-by-two-bay form is expanded with large dormers on the front slope of the roof and a hipped one-story addition on the south elevation. The roof of the house is clad in asphalt shingles, the walls in asbestos clapboards and the foundation is built of cut granite. Ornamental elements include the wide trim with entablature around the center entry, gable returns, molded cornice and hood moldings over the windows. Dormers have closed gables and paired sash. Windows are 2/2 double-hung sash. The house is in fair condition, having been altered with modern siding.

Six former mill workers' houses, built around 1895, exist at **34-44 Brookside Road**. These are identical in form except for reversals in the layout of the floor plan. They are two stories in height and three bays across the facade with a cross-hipped roof. Cut-away entry porches exist under the front eaves. Adjacent to the entry porch, facades have bays that create canted corners at the first story. Well-preserved examples in this group have wood clapboard exteriors, 6/1 double-hung sash, turned posts supporting the porches and pendants descending from the soffits of the canted corners. Some houses have been altered with the application of modern siding materials, installation of modern windows and removal of some architectural detail.

Coolidge Avenue is the location of historic residential architecture built for employees by the Abbot Worsted Company after their purchase of the mill in 1919. The single family Colonial Revival style house at **1 Coolidge Avenue** is a side-gambrel, three by one-bay form of two stories built around 1936. A two-story rear ell is built perpendicular to the main block of the house. Exterior walls are clad in wood shingles, the roof in asphalt and the foundation is undetermined. Original windows have been replaced with vinyl-framed sash. Ornament on the building consists of the corbelled brick center chimney and corner boards. Gable returns, piers with molded caps, and a segmental arched ceiling ornament the gabled center entry porch. The house is in good condition. The

residence at **3 Coolidge Avenue** is a side gabled cottage also bearing Colonial Revival style details. It was built around 1919 for Abbot Worsted Company employees. It is built on a scale similar to its neighbor at 1 Coolidge Avenue and shares some design elements. Other such residences are scattered widely on Coolidge Avenue and other streets near the district.

The multiple unit residence at **5-7 Coolidge Avenue**, also built ca. 1919, is a side-gabled, two and one-half-story, Colonial Revival style residence of five by two bays. Shed roofed enclosed porches expand the plan at both gable ends. Two entrances with classical trim fill openings in the facade. Windows are 6/6 and 8/8 double hung sash which are paired in the center bay. Exterior walls are clad in wood clapboards, the roof is clad in asphalt shingles and the foundation is built of cobblestone. The house is in good condition and bears a strong resemblance to other multiple unit residences in the mill villages of Graniteville (**MHC Area F**) and Forge Village (**MHC Area E**) where the Abbot Worsted Company also had mills and mill worker housing. The house is in good condition.

Many residences in the village of Brookside are associated with the mill and reflect characteristics common in company-designed and built houses. The similarity of form, scale and building materials identify them as part of a historic industry-based population center. The relatively high density of historic construction focused around the intersection of Stony Brook, Brookside Road and the Stony Brook Railroad are illustrative of patterns of 19<sup>th</sup> century village life.

## **Statement of Significance**

### **Introduction**

Brookside is the smallest of Westford's three mill villages, located on Stony Brook 3-4 miles downstream of Forge Village and Graniteville. (**MHC Areas E, F**) The district is eligible for the National Register under criterion A for its association with the town's industrial history. This was the site of a Colonial Period fulling mill, operated by William Chandler who came to what was then Chelmsford from North Andover. The tradition of manufacturing textiles, as well as milling of corn and lumber, continued at this location under the power of the flow of Stony Brook until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Manufacturing activity encouraged the transformation of the area during the Industrial Periods from a rural hinterland into a busy mill village served by a railroad and street railway. Brookside is also eligible under criterion C for its embodiment of distinctive characteristics of the New England mill village as seen in its repetitive architectural designs for mill worker housing and in the long march of arched windows in the brick expanse of the mill building's north wall.

Decline of manufacturing activity in the 1940s brought on the change from industrial to residential village. Streetcar and railroad services were discontinued in the 1920s and 1950s, respectively. Manufacturing activity at the Brookside Mill gave way to storage in the 1960s which preceded the abandonment of the mill building in the 1980s. The vacant state of the mill has allowed structural deterioration to claim significant building elements such as the tower roof and nearly all the large wood-framed sash that had not previously been replaced with brick. Surviving elements include the granite dam, retaining walls, penstock, bridge, lunchroom and two major historic sections of the mill building. The period of significance for the Brookside Historic District is ca. 1725-1945.

### **Pre-Industrial Period**

Westford's first fulling mill was located ca. 1725 near the current site of the Brookside Mill according to the 1883 town history. William Chandler is noted as having built a water powered fulling mill and grist mill which, by virtue of the powerful head of water for turning a wheel, remained in business throughout the period. The 1795 map of Westford describes both a grist mill and a fulling mill on the site. The 1917 [History of Chelmsford](#) indicates a bridge existed near Brookside by 1827. The 1831 series maps labels the site "mills" with two residences located nearby. One may have been William Chandler's former house at **20 Brookside Road (MHC 116)**, which continues to occupy the southwest corner of Moore and Brookside Roads. The other is 1/10 mile east of the district boundary.

### **Early Industrial Period 1830-1870**

Members of the Adams family, millers of corn and lumber, succeeded Mr. Chandler in operating the mill at Brookside, as is reflected on the 1857 Walling map of Middlesex County. Shortly thereafter, they sold to Theodore H. Hamblett, recent owner of the saw and grist mill at Westford Depot, located upstream approximately one mile at Depot Street. Mr. Hamblett was taxed in 1860 for the mill building, water privilege and stock in trade. He also built a house nearby at **9 Brookside Road**. Mr. Hamblett carried on his business with his relative W. C. Hamblett until 1862 when they sold to George R. Moore according to Stone's History of Massachusetts Industries. George and Seth Moore transformed the product of the mill from flour and lumber to woolen yarn. The factory became part of the Moore family's growing conglomeration of foundries, textile mills and machine shops, based in Chelmsford. The Moore's acquisition began the period of most intense growth for the mill and for the village of Brookside. They erected in 1862 the stone building comprising the oldest existing part of the mill. George R. Moore is listed in the 1870 federal census as a 54 year old manufacturer, married to Philanda R. Moore with children George C., Edward A. and a Mary E. The Moore's houses two non-family members, one of whom was born in England.

The Stony Brook Railroad, which opened along the stream of that name in 1848, also facilitated growth of the village of Brookside. The railroad connected the shipping and manufacturing centers of South Groton (now Ayer Center) and North Chelmsford. The company was based in Lowell and built the road primarily to ship manufactures along Stony Brook, but also offered passenger service. The railroad never owned any rolling stock (engines or cars) and was leased upon its opening by the Nashua and Lowell Railroad, a larger operation with rolling stock operating between the manufacturing centers of its name. The improved shipping opportunities provided by the railroad allowed industry on Stony Brook to grow much faster than before. Ability to transport mill products to Lowell and beyond increased appeal of the Brookside site as well as those of the Abbot and Sargent companies that were making woolen goods and wool refining machinery upstream in Forge Village and Graniteville. Mr. Moore raised the railroad right of way six feet in order to increase the level of Stony Brook and thus the power delivered to the machinery. Brookside Station, located across the brook from the mill, was a one-story, front-gabled building with Victorian details judging by the shape of the window openings in a 19<sup>th</sup> century engraving. The 1857 map shows the station sited between the railroad and the stream to the east of Brookside Road. This was moved across the street and replaced in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by a wood-framed station with ridge-hipped roof. A side-gabled freight house occupied a site west of the station.

During the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, mill workers in Brookside were sufficiently small in number that they did not require company-built housing. In 1855 there were three residences in the village, belonging primarily to farmers. Mrs. A. F. Dun occupied the Colonial Period **Chandler House at 20 Brookside Road (MHC 116)**. The widow Pamela Kendall occupied a home, now demolished, north of the mill near the corner of Moore and Brookside Roads. Ephraim Harwood (also Hayward) owned a house on Brookside Road to the south of the mill. The 1857 map shows a carriage shop to the south of Mr. Harwood's residence.

Sometime later, Brookside Mill workers lived in the company tenement house at **5 Moore Road (MHC 17)**. The building was built between 1865 and 1875 and appears under the company's ownership as the "Boarding House" in the town valuations from that year. 1870 federal census information shows that four residents with different surnames lived in a single house. These were Hannah Boccock, native of England, Alice Jackson of Massachusetts, James Hantor of Scotland and John Tague of Ireland. Additional non-native residents also occupied homes in the area. This is a high concentration of non-native births for Westford at the time.

Early Industrial Period architecture in Brookside bears a similarity to construction in Westford's other mill villages of Forge Village and Graniteville. The random ashlar granite mill built ca. 1862 bears a strong resemblance to the Abbot Worsted Company Mill #1 in Graniteville, built to around the same size of the same material in 1858. Forge Village is the site of numerous multiple unit side-gabled dwellings with paired entries. Tenements at 8-10 and 24-26 Bradford Street are examples of this house type although they were built some time later than the example in Brookside.

### Late Industrial Period 1870-1919

The 1875 town tax valuations indicate that Seth G. Moore owned at Brookside two water-powered mills with auxiliary steam engines, a blacksmith shop and three houses. The woolen mill in 1875 consisted of the granite section in the southwest side of the existing complex along with three similar sized wood-framed mill buildings and

the centrally located brick smokestack. From 1885 - 1911, Mr. Moore's relative George Clifford Moore owned the mills and expanded them almost continually throughout the period. George C. Moore entered Westford Academy in 1863 and later became a civic-minded Chelmsford resident. He donated money to that town for the establishment of the North Chelmsford Fire District, and served as a special police officer. Mr. Moore owned many industrial operations there and made his home in the town. He added an office to the Brookside mill complex by 1885, as well as two houses for employees, a social hall, outbuildings and hundreds of acres of land, all according to tax valuations. Business records indicate he was as much a real estate trader as wool manufacturer. Credit reports compiled in the 1880s by R. G. Dun & Company note Mr. Moore as a wool washer but list mostly land transactions when describing his work. George Moore would exert his influence over the village most noticeably when, in 1894, he replaced the wood-framed mill buildings, as well as two frame store houses and waste house with the existing brick construction.

An 1890 Barlow's Insurance Company survey lists Brookside's principal resource at that time as the Main Mill, which is the existing central granite building. The first story was the location of combing and spinning while the second story housed picking and carding operations. These activities were carried out using Sargent's wool picking and burring machinery which was manufactured three miles up Stony Brook in Graniteville. (MHC Area F) Other processes such as scouring and drying took place in North Chelmsford at another of Mr. Moore's factories. Additional buildings in 1890 which no longer exist are the Wing that faced Brookside Road and housed a coal fired steam engine, looms and repair operations; the Store House for old machinery west of the mill; the Old Mill with its water wheel in the basement; Waste House, Stock House and the square smokestack. These were wood with the exception of the stack which was brick. Employees worked 60 hours per week in the steam-heated, kerosene lamp-lit mill, using both steam and water power to run machinery. By 1891, Brookside Mill employed 125 hands and manufactured 600,000 pounds of yarn a year according to Orra Stone's 1930 History of Massachusetts Industries.

Between 1890 and 1894, a major reconstruction of the mill took place. An insurance survey from that year shows the mill closer to its current configuration. The Old Mill, Stock House and wood-framed part of the Main Mill were removed and replaced with brick construction that included the existing tower on Brookside Road and the brick block along the stream connecting to the Main Mill. Operations of the mill consisted of carding, combing, drawing and picking on the first story, spinning, twisting and weaving on the second and power generation via a Thomson Houston 110-volt dynamo in the base of the tower. The second story of the tower may have been used for offices given the presence of awnings at this location in a historic photo. (The deteriorated condition of the floor prevented physical examination.) The dynamo allowed employees to work by incandescent light. The wood-framed water-closet shaft on the west elevation of the brick mill, the stone dam, Store Houses and a Dust House were also present.

William C. Edwards, who was contracted to build the J. V. Fletcher Library in Westford Center (MHC Area D) and the Sargent School in Graniteville also built the 1894 mill building according to previous research. The Moore Company also built a new social hall near the mill pond (an unidentified predecessor of the existing 1920 hall at 11 Brookside Road). The company retained its blacksmith shop and storehouses. In 1905, Mr. Moore's Westford business was taxed for ownership of nine houses and a boarding house in addition to his mills, among which were the old grist and saw mills, possibly still in use. Blacksmith and box shops existed to support the main industrial activities. An engraving from this period shows the mill with the existing tower as the central element in the complex. Additional surviving components are the dam, penstock, railroad and the granite bridge over Stony Brook. Elements in the engraving no longer standing include the two-story, low-pitched gable-roofed storage building east of Brookside Road and two additional flat-roofed buildings south of the primary building. Standing among the mills in the image is the brick smokestack that has also been demolished.

George C. Moore built six single-family workers' cottages on Brookside Road by 1895. This group of identical homes survives ¼ mile north of the mill. The houses are described in tax valuations as "new cottages, Nos. 1,2,3,4,5 and 6, \$900 each". (MHC Area G, B Form 129) The company owned four more houses in Brookside including the tenement at **5 Moore Road**. News articles in the Westford Wardsman from 1907 and 1908 mention a number of Italians and Swedes working in the quarries and occupying homes in the village. Immigration from those countries as well as Russia was on the rise and many of the new residents ended up in Brookside.

1906 saw the coming of the street railway to Brookside, its construction progress being chronicled in the Westford Wardsman newspaper. A spur line connected the village to the main line at Westford Center via Brookside, Lowell

and Cummings Roads. The Fitchburg and Lowell Street Railway opened for service in May 1907 and offered a connection to West Chelmsford that involved an elevated track over the Stony Brook Railroad right of way, according to the Westford Wardsman. Trolleys, called “electrics” remained in service until the early 1920s when competition with the automobile reduced railway revenues to untenable levels.

By 1915, Mr. Moore owned the entire water privilege along Stony Brook from North Chelmsford to Graniteville in Westford, which comprised 7 miles and 1600 acres. He also owned ½ of Forge Pond, Nabnasset Pond and a great deal of additional land in Westford. In Chelmsford, he owned 80 tenements, a machine shop, leather belt factory and woolen factories that employed over 300 hands. While his company remained in business in Chelmsford into the 1950s, Mr. Moore sold the Brookside Mill in 1911 to the Bigelow Carpet Company who operated it with few changes until they sold to the Westford-based Abbot Worsted Company (**MHC Areas A, B, E, F**) in 1919.

Private homes in the neighborhood at that time included the Queen Anne design at **1 Brookside Road**, built ca. 1885, and occupied by Reuben J. and Augusta Butterfield who operated a carpet-bag shop on the property according to the county atlas from 1889. Theodore H. Hamblet, millwright and former Brookside mill proprietor, lived next door at **9 Brookside Road**, built 1862. Four buildings in addition to the mill are represented in the area on the 1875 county atlas. These are labeled G. R. Moore to indicate they were company-owned buildings, possibly residences. By 1889, the Brookside neighborhood included two additional individual residents, George Buzzy (also Bussey), a farmer and the widow Mary Edwards.

Late Industrial Period components of the Brookside Mill resemble mill buildings of similar date in Forge Village. There, 1887 and 1910 mill additions were also built of brick and had towers attached to their facades overlooking the village. Additionally, facilities in both places undertook the manufacture of woolen yarns, operating as competitors throughout the period. Brookside is distinguished from the Abbot operations by the smaller size of its buildings. Residential architecture in Brookside adhered to styles and forms common in other parts of town. Forge Village has several company-built streets lined with identical worker houses similar in scale and detail to those in Brookside. The Queen Anne example at 1 Brookside Road, however, is one of only a small number of Westford houses with a tower attached to the facade.

### Modern Period 1919-1975

The Abbot Worsted Company acquired ownership of the Brookside Mill in 1919 and expanded on Mr. Moore's development of the village. Within six years, Abbot Worsted increased the value of the mill buildings from \$15000 to \$40000. The company also owned 28 houses and at least two double tenements, all of which represented the high point of production for the Brookside Mill. Some of the houses built after Abbot Worsted's acquisition are located on Coolidge Avenue, including single unit residences at **1 and 3 Coolidge Avenue** and the double tenement at **5-7 Coolidge Avenue**, built between 1919 and 1936. Additional worker housing was located outside the area on Lucille and Lillian Avenues, among other streets. The company also contracted in that year with architect William H. Cox of Boston to design a lunchroom for factory workers, now the building at **11 Brookside Road**. The hall was used for dining while the rear ell was the location of the kitchen. The original facade had elements of the English Revival style such as a corbelled chimney, gabled dormers and plastered exterior walls. The interior of the hall has exposed ornamental timber trusses. The hall also had a stage and dressing rooms for theatrical productions and a movie screen. Its exterior has been re-sided in vinyl and original windows replaced.

The Abbot Company continued to operate the mill for the next two decades but did not expand it further. The Great Depression combined with changes in the economy of woolen manufacture reduced the profitability of the operation. Non-union labor in the southern states produced yarns and fabric at rates the north could not match. By 1945, the Abbot Worsted Company owned no industrial operations in Brookside although they did retain ownership of the many employee houses in the village. The company sold all its interests in Westford in 1956. Employee housing was sold to individual owners by 1961. Residents adopted modern commuter lifestyles at that time. For example, William Emerson, resident of Brookside Road near Moore road worked at Croun Container Company in Maynard, his neighbor Donald Wright at 1 Brookside Road worked in Lowell as a truck driver and Avery Smith of Coolidge Avenue worked as a carpenter at Fort Devens.

A subsequent owner of the mill was Royal Shawcross who used the building for industrial food storage and fruit processing in the 1950s and 1960s. Commodore Foods Corporation carried on that business from the 1960s into the 1980s, during which time they boarded over windows and made unsympathetic changes to the building. The historic mill is now vacant with food storage activities taking place in a modern separately owned facility to the west.

Brookside has Early Modern Period mill-worker houses of style and scale similar to the mill villages of Forge Village and Graniteville. They are fewer in number, however, having served a smaller facility. A significant surviving resource from the period is the former Brookside Lunch at 11 Brookside Road, now the H. E. Fletcher Social and Athletic Club. Built as the employees' lunchroom with theater and movie facilities and later reused as a private social club, the building represents a type once found in many company towns. The counterpart to the Brookside Lunch in Forge Village was demolished in 1980. Halls in Graniteville survive on Cross Street, now in use as the American Legion Hall, and on North Street, which has been adapted for use as a private residence.

## **Conclusion**

Since the time of Abbot Worsted's ownership in the 1940s, the mill village has experienced a near-cessation of industrial activity. Operations in the 1950s and 1960s consisted of processing frozen foods that took place more in the modern cinderblock sections of the mill and ultimately in the metal clad pre-fabricated building west of the mill. Deterioration set in among the historic buildings to the point where the roof of the bell tower has fallen in along with the belfry, leaving the interior directly exposed to the weather. Much of the original granite building is not visible due to cinderblock additions. Buildings depicted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century engraving and located south of the existing mill have been replaced by a parking lot and a modern residence. The depot and freight house, formerly located due north of the bell tower, were demolished in the 1950s and the site remains vacant, although rail-freight traffic continues. Despite certain changes, the surviving elements, including the mill, railroad, former lunchroom, bridge and dam create a visual association between the past and present Brookside Village.

## **Geographical Data**

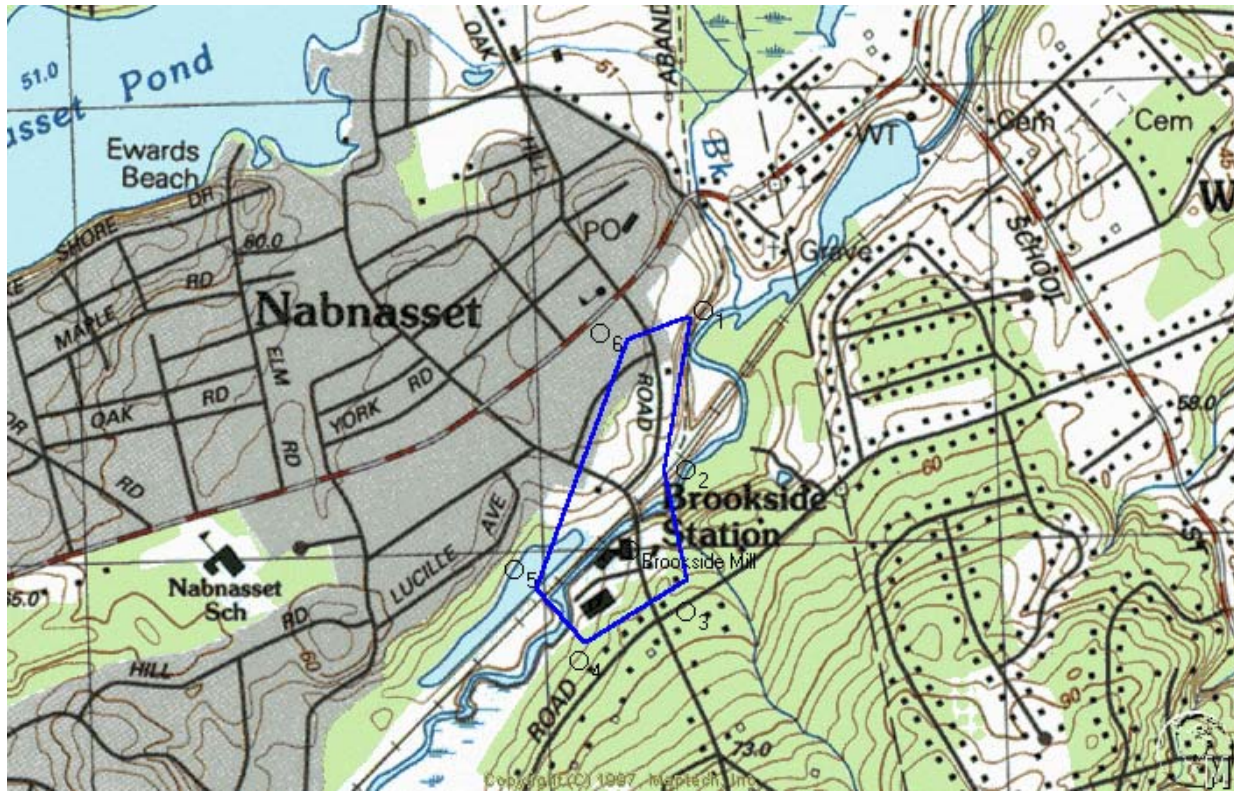
### **Verbal Boundary Description**

Boundaries of the Brookside Historic District include resources on both sides of Brookside Road from its intersection with Lowell Road to its intersection with Coolidge Avenue. Houses numbered 1, 3 and 5-7 on Coolidge Avenue are included as is 5 Moore Road. Boundaries are outlined on the detail of the USGS topographic map attached below.

### **Boundary Justification**

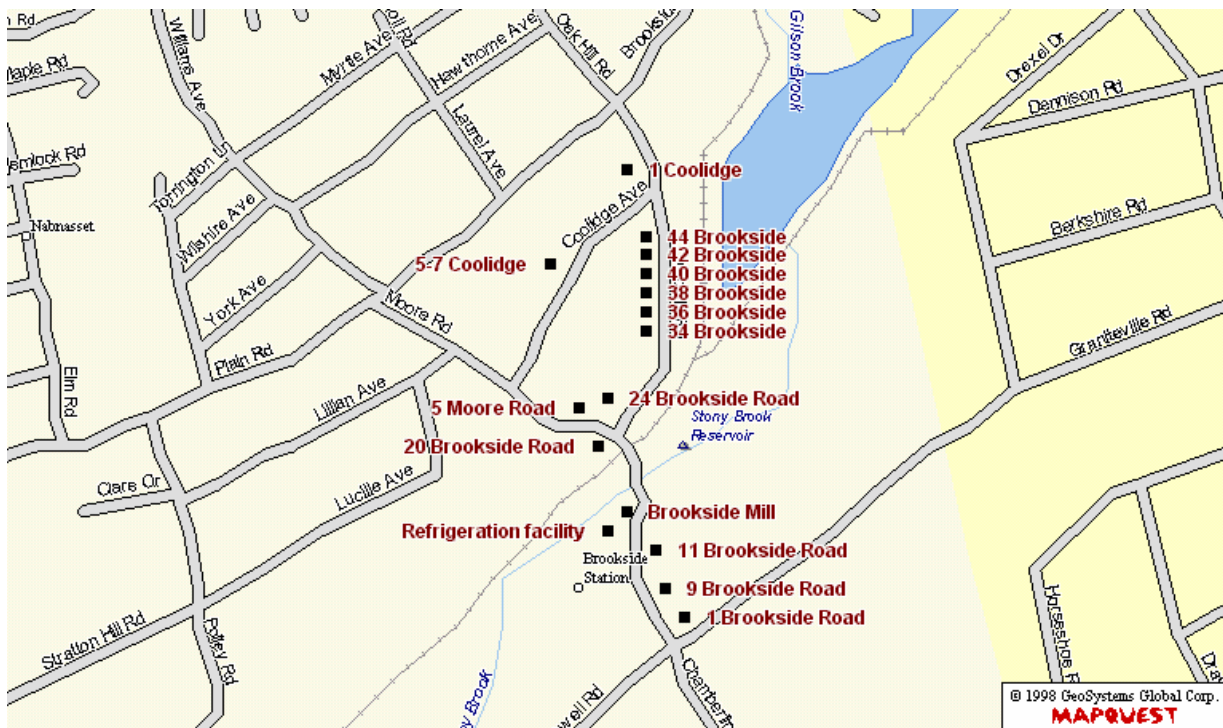
Boundaries of the Brookside Historic District were selected by the consultant and by staff of the Massachusetts Historical Commission for their inclusion of significant historic resources pertinent to the history of the village and for their illustration of the limits of influence of the mill on the landscape. The mill is at the core of the district. Houses on Brookside Road were included within the boundaries for their association with former mill owners as at 9 Brookside Road and with employees as at 34-44 Brookside Road. The Moore Road multiple family residence housed employees of the mill and thus demonstrates a part of the daily life of 19<sup>th</sup> century residents. The same is true for houses on Coolidge Avenue although they are indicative of housing for employees built in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Resources located beyond these boundaries tend to lack integrity of design and materials and are fewer in number, which dilutes their ability to impart information about the past.





Sketch Map

North Toward Top



Sketch Map

North Toward Top

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