The Town of Dudley was established in 1732, by act of the General Court, after families living in the area petitioned to have their own church “convenient” to them. Prior to that time, local inhabitants were part of Oxford and required to travel along the “Woodstock Trail” north to Oxford center or south to Woodstock to a place of worship. That “pathway” is still used today and on Dudley Hill is named Center Road.

The information in this brochure was obtained from the proposal for the Dudley Hill Historic District, voted by the Massachusetts Historical Commission on September 11, 2019 for submission as a Registered National Historic District. A copy of the full proposal is available at the Pearle L. Crawford Memorial Library.


Dudley Historical Commission

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Starting at the Dudley Town Common (1), at the top of Dudley Hill, you are at the center of early Dudley where religious, governmental, educational and social life thrived. The Congregational Church (2) of today is the third structure to occupy the land which was given by the Nipmuck Indians to the newly established town to erect a meeting house for worship, governmental and social use. From this location spread the homes and businesses of the community. The signage on the Common explains the various surrounding buildings.

Face east toward the Black Tavern (3) (1804). Cross the street and walk carefully down Tanyard Road, named for the tannery once located at the bottom, to see the former District One “Old Stone” School (4) on the left (c.1825). Return to Center Road and imagine the road continuing across to the right of the church. That was the Rattlesnake Trail, where stagecoaches headed west after stopping at the tavern. Read the information about the Black Tavern on the sign near the corner, and the postings on the porch. Take this time also to check out the Annex and Barn of Dudley’s first National Register Historic Structures. The stone monument to Dudley’s industrial past was created from parts of the original Stevens Mills built along the French River in the Marino Village section of Dudley.

Cross the street to regain the sidewalk and travel north, to the Congregational Church (5) of today, originally Washington Hall (1849) and located south of the church, then moved to this location when the Dudley Hill Grammar School (6) was built in 1892. The next building was formerly the Moses Barnes Store (7) (c.1804) and site of Dudley’s Post Office for many years. The house to the right was the Moses Barnes House (8) (c.1825). Looking across the street, the vacant space once had a Methodist church, the Phinehas Bemis House and the Bemis store. This was a very crowded and busy center of the town.

Walking north is the Leavens Boarding House (9) (c.1855), with carriage barn (c.1870) in the rear. Continuing north, the Leonard and Polly Baker House (10) (c.1840) is a “Greek Revival” style* cottage with a barn to the rear. Its northern neighbor is a two-family house with a 5-bay symmetrical façade. It was owned by H.W. Pratt (11) (1870). The Betsy Maynard House — Old Parsonage (12) (c.1830), is a hip-ridged, two and one-half story house with hipped porch across the façade. The imposing detached barn to the rear is a two-story cross-gabled form.

Across the street is another Greek Revival home, the Ruel Moffitt House (c.1855) (Parsonage) (13), owned by the Congregational Church. The corner brick house with the 1841 numerals bolted to the façade is the William Hancock-Cady Webster House (14), currently the Nichols College President’s House.

*Greek Revival style usually incorporates columns and a formal, gable fronted, appearance, and was popular in the 1800’s, after the war of 1812.