

Mansfield Center:
Background and Properties

Mansfield Center, the first settlement in Mansfield was settled shortly before 1692. It was called "Pond Place", a translation of the Indian name, Naubasetuck. A street eight rods wide was laid out, and the land on each side was divided in twenty-one house lots. Each house lot carried with it a right to 1000 acres in the outlying parts of town. As the land was surveyed, the trees were cleared and wood used for building and burning, crops were grown and cattle grazed on the resulting cleared land. Some of the settlers left their lots in the Center and built houses on their outlying parcels of land. Traveling from the Center to the outlying parcels accounts for the fact that both historic and modern maps show Mansfield Center as a hub with roads and trails radiating from it.

In 1702, the settlers in "Pond Place" applied to the General Assembly for the right to incorporate as a separate town. They were granted their petition and in May 1703, the Town of Mansfield was incorporated.

The population of Mansfield grew rapidly. Settlers flocked to this town from other parts of Connecticut and from Massachusetts. Between 1756 and 1782, the town grew by almost 1000 people, bringing the population to 2565. Thriving agriculture supported the growing wealth of the town and made possible the building of the eighteenth century houses in the Center.

When industry developed in Eastern, CT in the nineteenth century, Mansfield Center lacked the forceful streams to provide a steady source of water power. While there were some small industries in the Center, most of the larger mills were built along the Fenton and Mount Hope rivers to the east and the Willimantic River to the west. Small communities such as Atwoodville, Eagleville, and Gurleyville, sprang up around these mills and spared the Center industrial development. Mansfield Center remained a residential and agricultural community. Businessmen employed elsewhere in Mansfield, in Willimantic, or even farther afield maintained many of the fine houses as their residences. Well-to-do people came to Mansfield Center to spend the summer in a relaxed, rural environment. Some of the finest houses in the Center were built during the early to middle of the nineteenth century, especially those of Colonel Edwin Fitch.

Over the years the community has supported at least one store, and sometimes more, but commercial establishments other than these did not threaten the character of the Center.