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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Plympton, Plymouth County, MA

7. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Located along a stretch of Main Street between Parsonage and Palmer roads, the Plympton Village Area is a linear village that includes approximately twenty buildings surrounding the Plympton Green. Though primarily residential, the buildings in the area include the town library, the Plympton Town House (town offices, formerly a school), the Plympton Fire House, the First Congregational Church, and a store. In addition to the green, the Plympton Village area includes two other significant landscapes: Hillcrest Cemetery, the oldest burial ground in town, and the First Congregational Church cemetery.

The Plympton Village area is characterized by relatively level topography, though the northern end, including Hillcrest Cemetery, features some gentle hills. Mature trees line Main Street, and the buildings exhibit a similar scale of one-and two-story buildings, most of which are set back about 15' from the street. The predominant architectural style is Greek Revival, reflecting the area's primary period of development in the mid-19th century, although Georgian, Federal, Queen Anne, and Colonial Revival styles are also represented.

Located on the east side of Main Street and stretching from Mayflower Road north to Hillcrest Cemetery, the **Plympton Green** (MHC #901, 1702, Photos # 2 and 4) serves as the focal point of the Plympton Village area. Occupying two acres, the Plympton Green is a long, narrow swath of grassy, open space. Vegetation consists of a few dozen deciduous trees, mostly located along the green's perimeter. Two rows of trees are planted on the green's western edge, buffering the green from Main Street and forming an alley. Stretches of fieldstone walls and split-rail wooden fences separate the eastern edge of the green from some of the residential properties that abut it. Access to these homes is provided by four rights-of-way, finished with gravel, which cut through the green. Plympton Green was part of 30 acres that were surveyed and laid out in 1702 for use by the ministry and as a burying ground and military training green. The church sold all but the green and burying ground by 1843 (Sherman 1907:3, 7; Wright: 1973:23, 111). The dimensions of the Plympton Green have remained essentially the same since that time.

Several objects and structures are located on the Plympton Green. The **Bandstand** (MHC #904, ca. 1920) is located at the southern end of the green. The octagonal, fieldstone base is topped with a wood-shingled cupola (erected in 2000) supported by eight wood, Doric columns. Access is provided via a set of stone steps on the east side of the Bandstand. Bronze plaques commemorating those who served in World War I, World War II, the Korean War, and Vietnam are set into the Bandstand's fieldstone base. The plaques dedicated to veterans of the world wars include names of all of those from Plympton who served.

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The **Grange Pump** (MHC #906, 1911) is located just to the southwest of the Bandstand. It consists of an iron water pump with a concrete trough, on which the words "PLYMPTON GRANGE / 1911" are inscribed.

The **Civil War Soldiers' Monument** (MHC #902, 1889), located north of the Bandstand, features the figure of a soldier standing atop a granite base on which is inscribed the following: "ERECTED / BY THE LADIES' / MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION / OF PLYMPTON / TO COMMEMORATE THE / DEEDS OF HER LOYAL SONS / WHO IMPERILED THEIR LIVES / FOR THE PRESERVATION / OF THE UNION / 1861 - 1865." Low granite curbing, which sources indicate was installed around 1894, surrounds the monument (Wright 1973:27).

The **Deborah Sampson Boulder** (MHC #903, 1906) is located further north on the green. The large, granite boulder includes a bronze plaque which reads as follows: "IN HONOR OF / DEBORAH SAMPSON / WHO FOR LOVE OF COUNTRY SERVED / TWO YEARS AS A SOLDIER IN THE / WAR OF THE REVOLUTION / SHE WAS BORN IN PLYMPTON MASSACHUSETTS / DECEMBER 17, 1760 / THIS MEMORIAL ERECTED BY THE / DEBORAH SAMPSON CHAPTER / DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION / OF BROCKTON AND THE TOWN OF PLYMPTON / 1906."

A steel **Flagpole** (MHC #905, late-twentieth century) is sited to the north of the Deborah Sampson Boulder. Research indicates that this modern pole may have replaced an approximately 90 ft-tall, wooden pole that was erected by the Ladies' Memorial Association around 1895 (Wright 1973:27; Wright 1981:43).

The north edge of the Plympton Green abuts **Hillcrest Cemetery** (MHC #801, 1706, Photo #10) at Main Street and Palmer Road. Now covering 14 acres of gently sloping terrain (approximately six acres of which contain burial plots, the remainder being woodland), Hillcrest Cemetery was included in the 30 acres set aside for use by the ministry and as a training green and burial ground in 1702, but probably did not receive its first burial until around 1706 (Sherman 1907:7; *Plympton 275th Anniversary Celebration* 1982:3).

The southern, triangular section of the cemetery – particularly the area across the street from the Plympton Public Library – contains the oldest burials, and over 500 stones survive. A cut granite wall runs along the west and south edges, while the eastern boundary is delineated by a fieldstone wall. This area has predominantly slate headstones dating from the 18th and early-19th centuries, many of which display skull and wings and willow-and-urn motifs, laid in rough rows and facing west. With the notable exception of the Wright family plot, located at the southern

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end of the cemetery, there are very few family plots. The Soule family tomb occupies the southwest corner of the cemetery. Vegetation in this section of the cemetery is limited to a few scattered evergreen trees. There are three pedestrian entrances: one near the oldest burials (across the street from the Library) and two on the southern edge, providing access from the green. The entrance across from the Library and the easternmost entrance on the southern edge are marked with iron gates.

The burial ground was expanded just before 1900 and again around 1905, and it became known as Hillcrest Cemetery, a name that is now applied to the entire burial ground (Wright 1973:58; Wright 1977:194). The northern section of the cemetery is divided into four quadrants by dirt drives that provide three entrances from Main Street. The two southern entrances are marked by wood gates. A fieldstone wall runs along the west edge of the cemetery, buffering it from Main Street. A boulder, inscribed with "HILLCREST / 1706" is located along this edge, midway between the two gated entrances.

Generally, burials in the southwest quadrant date from the late 19th to early-20th centuries. Those in the southeast quadrant are mostly from the mid-20th century. The northwest quadrant contains graves from the mid- to late-20th century, while the most recent burials are concentrated in the northeast quadrant.

There are hundreds of grave markers, most of which are granite headstones. There are several family plots with monuments and a few flush markers are located among the more recent burials. Two unmarked tombs, which appear to date to the 19th century or earlier, are located in the northern section of the cemetery. One is sited at the north end of the eastern path. The other is located at the edge of the original burial ground, and is probably the former town tomb. Research suggests that the tomb may have been moved from a location closer to Main Street in the early 20th century, though this is unconfirmed (Wright 1973:57). Vegetation in this section of Hillcrest Cemetery consists primarily of scattered evergreen trees and shrubs, though some deciduous trees are located along the perimeter wall.

Diagonally northwest of Plympton Green at the intersection of Main Street and Palmer Road is the former **Central School, 5 Palmer Road** (MHC #88, 1935, Photo #11) which currently serves as the Plympton Town House (municipal offices). The Central School is situated on a graded terrace above the level of Palmer Road. The building is set back from the roadway and the front door is approached by a set of stone steps. A large paved parking area on the south side provides direct access to the building. A wooden ramp on the north side provides some degree of barrier-free access.

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The school was originally designed as a one-story T-shaped structure with red brick walls, large multi-pane (6/6) windows, and intersecting hipped roofs with a louvered cupola centered on the ridge. The double-leaf front entrance is set within a double classical surround. The semi-elliptical main pediment extends through the roofline and is supported by engaged pilasters. The outer surround encloses a smaller broken pediment and pilasters that frame the main doors.

The original building measured 51 by 71 feet and had four main classrooms on the 1st floor. The finished basement was set half above grade with large multi-pane windows providing natural light to the basement playroom. The basement also held the lavatories, a kitchenette, and mechanical equipment. In 1955, the school was expanded to the west with two large gable-roofed additions with metal industrial-style windows. A one story flat-roofed addition at the southwest corner and a flat-roofed canopy over the south entrance were added later. The school was vacated in 1973 and converted to municipal offices in 1975. Just south of the Town House is a new fire station (MHC #87) also erected in 1975.

The next building south on the west side of Main Street is the **Plympton Public Library at 248 Main Street** (MHC #77, ca. 1905), located across the street from Hillcrest Cemetery. Designed by R.L. Young, a Boston architect, and built by E. Laurence Grover of Halifax (MA), the 1-story, 3-bay, Colonial Revival-style building is comprised of a rectangular main block with a granite foundation and a large, rear addition built during a renovation in the early 1990s, which rests on a concrete foundation. The entire building is sheathed with wood clapboard and topped with an asphalt-shingled hip roof, pierced by a single, brick chimney. Windows are primarily fixed sash. A bay window, containing five sash, is located on the north elevation of the main block. Other notable features include the center entry on the east elevation of the main block, which has a pedimented gable and Doric columns; this entry was filled in during the 1990s renovation.

Immediately to the south is the **First Congregational Church Parsonage at 252 Main Street** (MHC #78, 1853-1854). A 1-story, Greek Revival-style Cape, the building is comprised of an east-facing, rectangular main block with an ell extending to the south. The residence features wood-clapboard siding; a side-gable, asphalt-shingled roof; two brick chimneys; and a continuous, shed-roof dormer on the east slope of the roof. Windows are primarily 6/6, double-hung sash. The primary entry is located in the center bay of the main block and features an entablature, pilasters and sidelights. The building was rotated to face Main Street in the 1980s, at which time it was placed on a new, concrete foundation (*A History of the First Congregational Church* 1998:27, 45).

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The **First Congregational Church at 254 Main Street** (MHC #18, 1830, Photo #5) is located to the south of the parsonage. Built in 1830 by Whittemore Peterson of Duxbury, the Greek Revival-style building rests on a granite foundation and is clad in vinyl siding. The asphalt-shingled, front-gable roof is topped with a bell tower and spire, built after an earlier steeple was toppled by Hurricane Carol in 1954. The main entry is located in the center bay of the 3-bay façade, and features a porte-cochere, built around 1903, supported by wood columns on stone bases. Paired corner pilasters and a fully returned cornice characterize the main façade. Brackets are located under the eaves of the north and south elevations. Windows include 1/1, double-hung replacement sash, as well as full-height, round-arched windows on the north and south elevations and a fanlight in the gable peak of the main façade. A large, L-shaped wing extends off the north elevation of the church, the result of two additions: one in the 1980s and another in 1998 (*A History of the First Congregational Church* 1998:17, 27, 32; Wright 1973:76).

The **First Congregational Church Cemetery** (MHC #800, ca. 1850, Photo #6) is located on the rear lot immediately west of the church. Occupying about two acres and owned by the Town, the cemetery was established around 1850, with the first burial occurring in 1856 (Wright 1973:57-58). A fieldstone wall runs along the cemetery's north, west, and south boundaries. There are no established drives or paths in the cemetery, though an informal grass path runs along the southern edge. Gravemarkers date mostly from the 1860s through the 1910s, and are primarily of granite and marble. Family plots are usually demarcated by granite curbing, and monuments, such as obelisks, are common. Vegetation consists mostly of evergreen trees and shrubs, though some deciduous plants are also present.

Located to the south of the church is the **Gilbert H. Randall House at 260 Main Street** (MHC #79, ca. 1890). The 1-story, Queen Anne-style residence rests on a brick foundation. The building is clad in wood clapboards and shingles arranged in a fish-scale pattern. The cross-gable roof is sheathed in slate and topped with two brick chimneys. Windows are mostly 1/1, double-hung replacement sash, though 10-light casement windows are also present. The main entry features a pedimented porch. Two outbuildings are located on the property: a large, 1-story, 19th-century barn and a modern, 1-bay garage.

Immediately to the south is the **Zacheus T. Parker House at 264 Main Street** (MHC #80, ca. 1850). The 1-story, 3-bay, Greek Revival-style house rests on a granite foundation, is sheathed in wood shingles and has a front-gable, asphalt-shingled roof and two brick chimneys. The main façade is characterized by a fully returned cornice with a wide entablature and corner pilasters. The recessed main entry, which is located in the third bay, has a broad entablature and sidelights.

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Windows are primarily 6/6, double-hung sash with louvered exterior shutters. The north and south slopes of the roof each have a single, gabled dormer. A modern, attached garage is connected to the rectangular main block by a small ell on the north elevation. A modern ell extends off the rear (west) of the building.

Further south on Main Street is the **Z.T. Parker Store at 266 Main Street** (MHC #81, 1893). The 2-story, 3-bay building features a granite foundation, variegated wood shingle and clapboard siding, and an asphalt-shingled hip roof with one brick chimney. The main entry is located in the center bay of the east façade, and is housed beneath a porch that stretches the width of the building and features wood columns and a simple railing. The double-leaf entrance is topped by a transom window and flanked by large, multi-pane, fixed-sash windows. A one-story, former outbuilding at the rear of the lot has been converted to a residence.

Immediately to the south is the **Randall Shoe Shop at 268 Main Street** (MHC #82, ca. 1875, Photo #7). The south section of the building, which is topped by a side-gable roof, was built around 1875 to serve as a shoe shop; soon after, the business expanded and the building was extended to the north, with the addition of the mansard-roof section (Wright 1981:359). The entire structure rests on a granite foundation and is clad in wood shingles. Two brick chimneys pierce the asphalt-shingled roof. Windows are primarily 6/6, double-hung, replacement sash. Two entrances, largely unadorned, are located on the east façade. A garage is located at the rear of the property.

Union Hall / Grange Hall at 270 Main Street (MHC #20, 1852) is located at the northwest corner of Main and Elm streets. Set back approximately 30' from Main Street, the 2-story, Greek Revival-style building has a granite foundation, clapboard sheathing, and a front-gable, asphalt-shingled roof with a fully returned cornice. Each elevation exhibits a wide entablature and corner pilasters. The main entrance is located in the center of the 3-bay façade; it is recessed, with double doors and a surround that features a wide entablature and pilasters. The long, narrow window openings are filled with 12/12, double-hung sash. A triangular window is located in the gable peak on the main façade.

At the southwest corner of Elm Street and Main, across from Union Hall is the **Reverend John Briggs House at 1 Elm Street** (MHC #21, ca. 1801). The rectangular, 2-story, 5-bay, Georgian-style residence faces north. It has a granite foundation, clapboard siding, and an asphalt-shingled hip roof with two brick, interior end chimneys. The main entry is located beneath a hip roof porch supported by paired columns, in the center of the north façade. The entrance is flanked by pilasters. Windows are primarily 6/6 and 2/2, double-hung sash.

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A small, rectangular, 1-story building is located just to the south of the Reverend John Briggs House, at **274 Main Street** (MHC #84, early to mid-19th century). Probably a former outbuilding to the Briggs House, the structure features wood-shingled siding, an asphalt-shingled, front-gable roof, and an entry located in the center of the 3-bay-wide east façade. Two fixed storefront windows flank the entry at the first floor of the main façade; a window with 2/2, double-hung sash is located over the entry, in the gable peak. Architectural ornamentation is limited to the building's plain cornerboards.

Located to the south, at the northwest corner of Main Street and Parsonage Road, is the **Joshua V. Peck House at 2 Parsonage Road** (MHC #85, ca. 1894, Photo #8). The Queen Anne-style residence is 1½ -stories tall, rests on a brick foundation, is sheathed in wood clapboards, and features a front-gable roof clad in asphalt shingles. The roof has cornice returns and is pierced by a single, parged-brick chimney painted with the date "1894." The main entry is located on the south façade, within a hip-roof porch supported by turned posts and eave brackets. Windows are 2/2 and 1/1, double-hung sash. A gable dormer is located on the east slope of the roof. The property includes a small, one-story, front-gable **outbuilding** (MHC #85, late-19th century), probably a former blacksmith shop that is currently used as a basket shop.

At the south end of Plympton Green, the **Nathaniel S. Lucas House at 277 Main Street** (MHC #23, ca. 1840) stands at the southeast corner of Main Street and Mayflower Road. The 1-story Cape has a north-facing, rectangular main block with a 1-story ell extending off the east elevation. The building is clad in wood shingles and clapboard siding. The side-gable roof is sheathed in asphalt shingles and features a single, brick center chimney. The main entrance is located in the center bay, is accessed by granite steps, and is flanked by sidelights. Window openings feature 6/6, double-hung sash. A continuous, shed-roof dormer runs along the north slope of the roof and contains five windows. A wood-shingled outbuilding, in poor condition, is located to the south of the residence.

The **Martin Perkins House at 4 Mayflower Road** (MHC #24, ca. 1820) is located on the lot immediately to the east, facing north on Plympton Green. The 2-story, 5-bay, Federal-style residence consists of a rectangular main block with a hip roof and a gable-roofed ell that extends off the rear (south) elevation. The building is clad in weathered wood shingles and features simple wood cornerboards. The main entry is located in the center bay of the north façade, and has a wide entablature, pilasters, and sidelights. Three brick chimneys pierce the roof. Windows are primarily 6/6, double-hung sash; those on the first floor have drip caps. A 19th-century, wood-shingled, front-gable barn is located to the south of the residence. Several large, mature trees are located along Mayflower Road, at the property's northern boundary.

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Located at the northeast corner of Main Street and Mayflower Road, **the J. T. Ellis - L. B. Parker House at 271 Main Street** (MHC #83, ca. 1850) is a 1½ -story, 5-bay, Victorian Eclectic-style building that fronts the Plympton Green. In addition to the rectangular main block, the building includes an extensive rear ell. Clad in wood shingles and clapboards, the residence rests on a granite foundation and is topped by a side-gable, asphalt-shingled roof with two brick chimneys. A center-bay, gabled dormer dominates the main (west) façade. The main entry is located in the center bay and features sidelights and a flat-roof porch supported by simple wood posts. Windows are mostly 2/2, double-hung sash. A bay window is located on the south elevation of the main block. The residence occupies a large lot that is currently used as a horse farm. Several outbuildings are located at the rear of the property, not easily visible from the public way along Plympton Green.

The **William H. Soule House at 263 Main Street** (MHC #19, 1843) is located immediately to the north. The 2-story, Greek Revival-style building is sheathed in wood shingles and clapboard and is topped by an asphalt-shingled, front-gable roof with two brick chimneys. The main entry is located in the third bay of the 3-bay-wide west façade, beneath a full-width, hip-roof porch supported by wood, Doric columns. It is flanked by sidelights. Windows are mostly 6/6, double-hung sash with louvered shutters. A triangular, multi-pane window is located in the gable peak. Granite posts at the west boundary presumably mark the location of a former fence that separated the property from the Plympton Green.

To the immediate north is the 2-story, Greek Revival-style **George Sherman House at 259 Main Street** (MHC #22, ca. 1845, Photo #9). The rectangular, 3-bay-wide main block has an ell extending off the rear (east) elevation. The main block rests on a granite foundation, is sheathed in vinyl siding and is topped by an asphalt-shingled, front-gable roof with a fully returned cornice and a single brick chimney. Corner pilasters provide architectural ornament. The main entry is located in the first bay, and is characterized by a wide entablature and pilasters. Windows are 6/6, double-hung sash. Two wood-shingled barns are located to the south of the residence. Fieldstone walls demarcate the north and east property boundaries.

The northernmost residence fronting the Plympton Green is the **Reverend Ezra Sampson House at 255 Main Street** (MHC #17, late 18th century, Photo #12). Reportedly dating from around the time of the Revolutionary War and featuring a granite stoop inscribed with the date "1776," the rectangular, 2-story, 5-bay-wide, Georgian-style residence is the earliest extant building in the Plympton Village Area. It rests on a fieldstone foundation, features exterior walls clad in wood shingles and is topped by an asphalt-shingled, side-gable roof with a large, brick, center chimney. The main entry is located in the center bay and has a pedimented gable with

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dentils, a transom window and fluted pilasters. Windows are primarily 12/12, double-hung sash with louvered shutters. The property includes three wood-shingled outbuildings, among them a large, ca. 1740, front-gable barn that was moved to the property from Lake Street in Kingston in the mid-1980s and small potting shed that was moved from across the street (260 Main St.) and expanded about 1990. Several mature trees dot the property.

Non-contributing buildings with the Plympton Village area are generally small wood-frame garages built after the period of significance. The only major non-contributing building is the Plympton Fire House (3 Palmer Rd.), a one-story maintenance and office facility constructed in 1975 between the Town House (Center School) and the Library. The firehouse is set back from the road and is not highly visible. The only visual intrusions in the Plympton Village area are standard highway accessories such as street lamps and signage.

Beyond the boundary of the Plympton Village historic district, the development pattern consists primarily of low-density suburban residences and small-scale commercial strips. The area north of the district along Main Street and Palmer Road is characterized by modern single-family homes on large lots interspersed with several older houses. The new DPW headquarters on Palmer Road and the Old Town House (now the Plympton Historical Society) on Main Street are the major public buildings outside the district.

To the east along Mayflower Road, the pattern of modern single-family suburban development continues along with several large tracts of farmland. To the south, the intersection of Main Road and Parsonage Road is marked by a small modern gasoline station, a new one-story post office building, and a small commercial strip. To the west along Elm Street, scattered single-family homes predominate.

The pattern of development beyond the immediate vicinity of Plympton Village is severely constrained by the extensive wetlands in town and the continued cultivation of cranberry bogs. The major threats to the preservation of Plympton Village would seem to come from the encroaching commercial development at the south end of the district and the potential for highway widening or other improvements along Main Street (Route 58).

Archaeological Description

While no ancient Native American sites are recorded in the proposed district, sites may be present. One site has been identified in the general area (within one mile). Environmental characteristics of the district represent locational criteria (slope, soil drainage, proximity to

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wetlands) that are generally favorable for the presence of Native sites. Most of the district includes level to moderately sloping upland terraces and other terrain with the northern and northeastern portions of the district located within 1,000 feet of wetlands. Soils in the district are usually well drained, very stony, and formed in glacial till. Wetlands include unnamed tributary streams of the Winnetuxet River, swamplands, and a pond. Stony soils may adversely affect the site sensitivity of the district. Given the above information and the size of the nominated area (60 acres), a moderate to high potential exists for locating ancient Native American resources in the district.

A high potential also exists for locating historic archaeological resources in the district. Structural evidence may survive from the town's first three meetinghouses (1695-98, 1714, 1772) all located on the green. The green may also contain archaeological evidence of the liberty pole; erected on the green in 1774, the Town pound, stocks, and armory. Structural evidence from a barn and post molds from a fence line associated with Jonathan Parker residence, town minister from 1731-76, may survive at the northern end of the green. Structural evidence may also survive from a store, post office, and school, no longer extant and originally located on the east side of the green. Structural evidence may exist from a chapel built in 1886 then demolished in the 1980s or 1998 when additions were constructed for the First Congregational Church (1830) at 254 Main Street. At the Hillside Cemetery, structural evidence may exist from the Town Tomb, moved in the early 1900s and hearse house, also moved about the same time. Unmarked burials may survive at both the Hillcrest Cemetery (1706) and the First Congregational Church Cemetery (ca. 1850). While no residential sites have been identified in the district, sites may exist. The area around the green was a locus of settlement beginning in the late 17th and early 18th century. Structural evidence may exist from early farmsteads and residences originally located in this area but no longer extant. Most of the existing properties in the district are represented on the 1857 Walling Atlas with residences around the green dating from the late 18th through late 19th centuries. Historical research combined with archaeological testing may locate additional residences; presently undocumented, that survive as archaeological sites from the late 17th through 19th century period. Structural evidence of barns, outbuildings, and archaeological evidence of occupational related features (trash pits, privies, wells) may exist with the many extant buildings in the district and at archaeological sites.

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