

## Downtown Chicopee Historic District Chicopee, Massachusetts

AHS historians documented downtown Chicopee and evaluated its eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. Located on the south side of the Chicopee River, the 80-acre district consists of a former planned industrial community with factory complexes along a canal, worker housing, and a variety of municipal and commercial buildings. Downtown Chicopee encompasses four previously documented areas: the Ames Manufacturing Company, the Dwight Manufacturing Company, the Dwight Manufacturing Company Housing District, and Exchange Street-Market Square. Several additional historic buildings in and adjacent to these areas were included in this documentation.



Downtown Chicopee is eligible as a historic district for its association with the area's varied industries and growth as an urban center, as Chicopee evolved from an agrarian settlement of Springfield into an industrial city (Criterion A). The Dwight and Ames factories were important manufacturing centers that contributed to the development of Chicopee center as an industrial village. The Dwight mill and its predecessors produced cotton textiles on this site from the 1830s to 1927; the Ames factory was incorporated in 1834 and was active through the 1890s. The Ames facility saw continued manufacturing use by Spalding 1908-1948, and the Ames Sword Company remained in business until 1936. These companies provided a livelihood for many Chicopee workers over several generations. Their changes in use reflect evolving economic development as well as changing technologies. The



large collection of remaining worker housing represents the lives of thousands of workers from the 1830s to the 1920s, including local young women and immigrant populations.

The factory buildings in the district represent major industrial complexes and are good examples of mid-19th to early 20th-century industrial architecture (Criterion C). Much of the Dwight Manufacturing Company's complex and its setting remains intact. Some of the Ames Manufacturing Company complex has been demolished but the core remains, including machine shops, office, foundry, and forge shop, representing a significant aspect of Chicopee's industrial past. The Dwight Manufacturing Company Housing is significant as an example of housing in a planned industrial community. Former boarding houses and smaller multi-family dwellings are good examples of their types and some retain a level of character and integrity that is unusual in New England industrial cities of similar size.

The district also contains a number of resources related to the development of Chicopee Center as a commercial and civic center: hotels, retail shops, and businesses that supported the factories' work force, along with City Hall and the library.

