

Sudbury Road

Scenic Roads all photos from December & January 2021

Overview

Sudbury Road shows on early maps (Walcott identifies Sudbury Way) with Dean's first official survey published in 1830. As late as the 1852 Walling survey map, the length of Sudbury Road leaving the town center shows frequent houses along both sides with open land behind to the south and east. Today, a number of historic houses still remain along the treelined portion near the town center. Construction dates from the mid-17th C. (Scotchford-Wheeler House, No. 99, ca. 1650s and Edward Bulkeley House, No. 92, ca. 1650s and relocated), through the first half of the 19th century with important historic associations with John Brown and the Underground Railroad (Francis Bigelow House, No. 19, 1840-1850 and Franklin Sanborn House, No. 49, 1850 and early education (the Mary Peabody Mann House, No. 67, ca. 1830). At the elaborate Italianate home, the Joseph Wheeler House, No.121, ca. 1841) remnant walls, cast iron fencing, and the long-established street frontage remain in place.

As the road progresses through the Hubbardsville historic district, other important structures, the homes and studio of Daniel Chester French (No. 324 and 342), distinguish this important passage away from the town center and train depot.

The present section of Sudbury Road between Fairhaven Road and the Sudbury River began as a right-of-way through the Hubbard's barnyard to give the Wheelers access to a riverside pasture and became a road only when Hubbard's Bridge was built in 1802. An earlier road of that name generally followed the alignment of Route 126 as it avoided crossing the "South River" on the way to Sudbury. Thoreau refers to the route as both Corner Road and Sudbury Road. Herbert Gleason labeled it Corner Road on his 1906 map of Concord. Thoreau also described his fear as he crossed the bridge (string boards and plank) under moonlight as it was under repair. It was officially named in 1889, but County Commissioners laid out the road officially in 1910, with relocations in 1931, 1938, and 1939. The Sudbury River Bridge and its causeway were major elements in the construction of the Concord Bypass connector to the Mohawk Trail, now Route 2. It is not clear when the bridge was renamed Heath's Bridge. The bridge underwent major repairs again in 1967 and 2007.



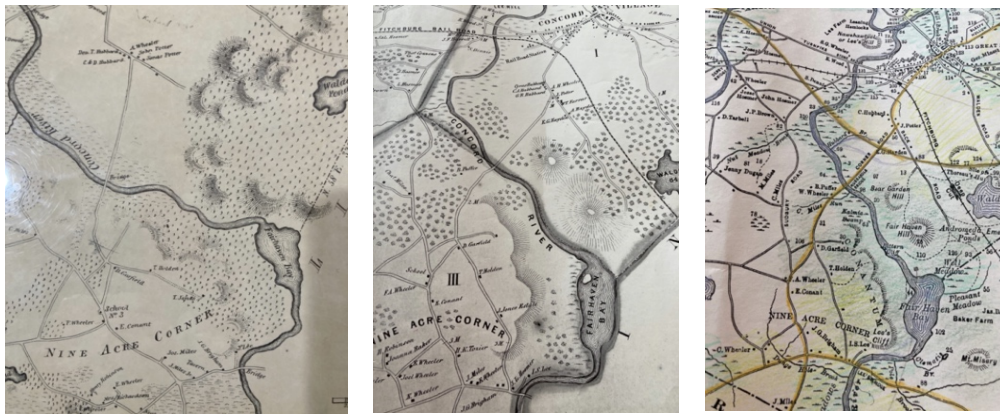
Hubbard's Bridge

Hubbard's Bridge in Gleason photo dated 1906

Today, Sudbury Road south of Route 2 is largely bordered by conservation lands that belong to Concord Land Conservation Trust (CLCT), Walden Woods Project, the Town of Concord. Agricultural uses vie with natural areas for dominance among views. Houses sited directly visible from the road frontage are very few and mostly from the 19th century. Route 2 creates a psychological divide between Concord Center and the South Quarter. This divide is marked immediately by a continuum of conservation land along the south edge of Route 2 that stretches from Emerson Hospital to Sandy Pond Road with a gas station as its single interruption. Farm uses are superimposed on CLCT land for pasture grazed by cattle and corn crops managed by Verrill Farm along the north west frontage of the road and fully visible from Route 2.

The start of Sudbury Road is equally marked by the Farm at Walden Woods, lowland forests, a trailhead for the Walden and Wright Woods network of paths through to Fairhaven Bay and Walden Pond.

An important historic house complex with parts that originated in the 18th century and thoughtful alterations from 1902 through the 1920s and into the present once belonged to Mary Ogden Abbott and subsequently to A. Y. Gowan (both important 20th century Concordians) presents strong architecture and an extensive stretch of high stone wall down to the wetlands and floodplain of the Sudbury River. Across the road is a fine allee' of oaks planted by Henry Bigelow, curator of Harvard's Agassiz Museum and pioneering ichthyologist in the early 20th century. Long views open along the river both upstream and down. As Sudbury Road continues to the south, its margins are wooded on the uphill side to the west or swamp from Conantum onward to Willow Guzzle, conservation land owned by the Town of Concord. Intensive market garden agriculture creates an open landscape with views that sweep from the bottom of Garfield Road across farms to the western edge of Nine Acre Corner at Wheeler Road. This is a rural prospect that survives the hurricane of 1938 despite its wide destruction of greenhouses at the end of Sudbury Road.



Maps from 1830, 1852, and 1906 left to right. The 1906 map is Herbert Gleason with colors added to mark later addition of the Concord Bypass (now, Route 2).

Sudbury Road originates at Main Street. Although 19th century elms have disappeared, it retains a strong tree canopy with a variety of species in front yards and established London Plane, maples and oaks in the town-owned border between sidewalk and street that defines Sudbury Road's western edge.



Views to the south show continuity of trees along the street frontage. The 17th century Scotchford-Wheeler House (No. 99) is separated from Main Street by a series of historically significant 19th century homes that also incorporated schools and shops. The 1850 Franklin Sandborn House (No. 49) housed an academy.



New side streets brought changes including moving the Edward Bulkeley House (No. 92) to face Sudbury Road. The elaborate Italianate facades of the Joseph Wheeler House (No. 121) and cast iron fence with maize motifs is near Thoreau Street.



The house of Thomas Hubbard (No. 342, ca. 1787) was purchased by Henry French in 1865, father of sculptor, Daniel Chester French of the Concord Minuteman, Lincoln Memorial, and Melvin Memorial. Daniel Chester French later built a studio-residence next door in 1879. Both homes are central to the Hubbardsville Historic District.



From Fairhaven Road to Route 2 the frontages of Sudbury Road change sharply with single-family houses built after World War II and stretches of planting designed to shield homes from traffic.



Grazing land at Soutter Field and Bigelow Woods marks the view from Route 2 with plowed cropland farther along beyond Hubbard's Brook.



Walden Woods trailhead abuts "Holderness", the former estate of Mary Ogden Abbott and later, Albert Younglove Gowan. The massive stone wall of the estate once extended through the current location of the driveway to the Walden Woods parking area and the Town's access to a municipal well and pumping station.



The Abbott-Gowan estate stone fence continues at full height until the land falls away to the Sudbury River flood plain on the south side of the road.

The long, century-old oak allee' leads to the Henry Bigelow house on the opposite side of the road.



The wetlands associated with the full length of the Sudbury River are cited in lists of significant examples at the national level. Left view is southeast and right view is west toward the origin of Old Road to Nine Acre Corner.





W. Wheeler/G. Heath house, Heath Farm inspired Thoreau's *The Hollowell Farm*. In 1853, he complained that the new house ruined his walks.

At right, Uhler House and tearoom (ca. 1920) now a residence at junction with Old Road to Nine Acre Corner.



Sudbury Road opens to broad views across farm land on both sides. The Town owns and manages Willow Guzzle.

CLCT does the same for Miller Field. Verrill Farm cultivates both.



At left, cultivated Miller Field looking north in sunshine and at right southwest thru fog with uninterrupted views into Sudbury across Route 117.



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Compiled by Henry Moss, February 2022