

Chapter IV. Historical Resources

4. Introduction

History is a process. It is being made even as it is being written. History is more than the simple recalling of events. It summons new and varied interpretations as people seek to make sense of their current environment.

Historical interpretation can be used as a mirror to the future. The natural setting and human spirit that have been unique to New Hampton should be used as a guide for its future. The Town Plan is one method of helping to recognize and carry on the best and proudest traditions of the town. A plan for the future, however, without a look at the past, is incomplete.

The visual evidence of New Hampton's early character and appearance contributes greatly to the town's current appeal and character, adding personality and a real sense of place. An ongoing, active preservation effort demonstrates that the town has a sense of caring and pride. New residents perceive these values, assimilate them, and bond with their new community.

In New Hampton, the identification and conservation of the built environment can be used as an important community development instrument, especially in terms of evaluating future community planning and development proposals. The preservation of noteworthy architectural styles and historically significant buildings from New Hampton's proud past helps keep the town's rich heritage in clear view, as today's public officials and decision-makers confront a variety of planning and development challenges and opportunities.

4.1 The Historic Inventory

The New Hampton Historic Resources Inventory was limited primarily to properties of significance because of age or architectural style. This survey is a beginning. It sets the stage for a more complete inventory of New Hampton's numerous buildings of significant historic or architectural character, quality and importance.

Twenty-two (22) noteworthy structures were recorded on survey forms, identifying each by common and historic name, location, owner, use and basic description of the structure. Each building was numbered and photographed and descriptive information was

provided such as structure type, style, age, condition and other architectural and historical features of significance or interest.

Where interesting information of historical or architectural importance was known or available from existing records or “windshield” survey observation, this was incorporated to the extent feasible on the survey forms.

4.2 Techniques for Preservation

Preservation of old buildings and neighborhoods enriches inhabitants and visitors alike by affording them pleasant surroundings and, more importantly, by keeping them in touch with a part of their heritage. Along New Hampton roads there are many structures in varying stages of use and repair. These buildings can be repaired and restored and will continue their productive life for a long time to come. The goal is to preserve a bit of the past economically and to live in pleasant surroundings comfortably and safely.

There have been many successful projects involving historic preservation within New England and on the national level. Some examples include Portsmouth downtown and Strawberry Banke; Salem, Massachusetts, and Faneuil Hall Marketplace in Boston; Mount Vernon; the Paul Revere House; Portland, Maine Waterfront; and Charleston, South Carolina. The current trend applies the historic house concept to entire neighborhoods. Rather than preserve one old house, historic preservation is sometimes involved on a larger scale. For information about historic preservation generally, see RSA 227-C.

4.2.1 Historic Building Restoration – Tax Incentives

Some income-producing buildings may be eligible for a 20 percent investment tax credit for substantial rehabilitation, in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation.

For additional information about the National Register of Historic Places and tax incentives for rehabilitating historic buildings, contact the Division of Historical Resources, Department of Cultural Resources, 19 Pillsbury Street, PO Box 2043, Concord, NH 03302. Telephone (603) 271-6437.

4.2.2 National Register

The National Register of Historic Places is a list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American

history, architecture, archaeology, engineering and culture on the local, state, or national level. National Register listing recognizes resources worthy of preservation but does not impose any restriction or limitation on the use of private or non-Federal property unless Federal funds or programs are involved. National Register properties are eligible to be considered for Federal matching grants-in-aid for protection, preservation, rehabilitation or reuse. In addition, National Register designation provides for review and amelioration of effects which any federally funded, licensed or assisted project might have on the property.

The National Register not only provides national recognition of local resources but also helps to develop an appreciation of these special resources by the town, and can foster similar preservation efforts in other parts of the community. Locally, the National Register program is administered by the Division of Historical Resources in partnership with the U.S. Department of Interior's National Park Service. The National Register is primarily a tool for identifying and planning the future of significant historic resources.

Anyone may nominate a district (or other property) to the National Register of Historic Places. The nomination of a property or district to the National Register of Historic Places begins with the preparation of National Register forms, maps, and photographs. The completed forms are reviewed by the state Division of Historical Resources Board. If approved by the Review Board, it is forwarded to the National Park Service in Washington for consideration and final approval. Upon approval by the National Park Service, the property is entered in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Lakes Region Planning Commission completed National Register nomination forms to successfully enter the New Hampton Community Church and the Dana Hill Meeting House in the National Register of Historic Places. (Complete nominations appear on the following pages.) The New Hampton Town House, the Gordon-Nash Library, and the Washington Mooney House have recently been added to the National Register of Historic Places.

4.2.3 Historic Districts

The term "historic district" can refer either to a locally designated historic district or to a National Register Historic District. Both are useful historic preservation mechanisms, but they are very different in the manner in which they are established and the protection they afford. Despite their different procedures and protections, an historic

area may be both a locally designated district and a National Register District.

These two types of historic districts, local and National Register, have the same general purposes to recognize and protect significant community resources, although they function in different ways. In many cases it may be most effective for a locally designated historic district also to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

An historic district is characterized by a more or less homogeneous grouping of structures and/or sites dating from the 18th, 19th, or 20th centuries, an area in which the character of the past is rather strongly asserted both in number of structures and in overall visual quality. These may include groups of related buildings and spaces that represent the standards and tastes of the community or neighborhood during one period of history, unrelated structures that represent a progression of various styles and functions, or cohesiveness that possesses an identity of place.

An historic district is a tool for local land use planning. The primary purpose for establishing historic districts is to protect areas of architectural or historic value from encroachment by inappropriate building forms or development patterns, which could adversely affect the area's character, and to establish regulations for its preservation and protection. Like all municipal activities, the authority to establish districts by cities, towns, and villages was granted by the State Legislature under RSA 674:45 and 674:46. An historic district may be an overlay zone; it may exist within any land use zone designated by a zoning ordinance (e.g., commercial, industrial, residential, agricultural, etc.), in which case it may impose more restrictions than the underlying zone regulations. Like the zoning that has now existed in New Hampton for many years, the establishment of an historic district and its regulations or restrictions is authorized at town meeting. Unlike conventional zoning, the administration of historic district regulations is by an historic district commission as authorized under RSA 674:46-A.

4.2.4 Commissions

The New Hampshire State Legislature has enabled the establishment of town commissions to preserve and protect areas of natural and historic significance.

The town may create an historic district commission and appoint the commission membership. The procedures provided for the

appointment of an historic district commission are found in RSA 673:4.

An historic district commission administers a particular **place** defined by the local legislation to be preserved for its cultural, social, economic, political, community and architectural history. The historic district commission may study areas for future historic districting consideration, and prepare an appropriate ordinance and regulations. However the foremost task of an historic district commission is to see that modifications to structures within its jurisdiction are compatible with the characteristics and design histories of each property and that design standards are consistently and equitably applied.

A heritage commission is a newer and different concept that was enabled by the Legislature in 1992 under RSA 673:4-A. It has broader responsibilities in recognizing, using and protecting the historical and cultural resources of a community, wherever they be in that community. The function is analogous to the Conservation Commission, which is established to advise, review and perform tasks for the protection of the natural environment. By contrast, the heritage commission's focus is on the cultural and man-made resources. Heritage commissions have two and possibly three general powers: to serve as an advisory and review authority; to oversee and administer property; and, if authorized at a town meeting, to assume the composition and duties of an historic district commission. Likewise, if an historic district commission exists, it may, if authorized by a town meeting, assume the composition and duties of a heritage commission.