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Historic & Cultural Resources

“How will we know it’s us without our past?”

-John Steinbeck, Grapes of Wrath

Introduction

A plan for Littleton’s future requires a look to the past. This chapter focuses on the important historic and cultural features that define Littleton’s character and quality of life.

As Littleton plans for the future, culturally significant sites and structures should be considered an integral part of the community because they cannot be replaced. Preservation opportunities that are passed by may be lost forever.

The historic and cultural resources that remain in Littleton help define the fabric and character of the community. They are unique to Littleton and tell a story to residents and visitors alike. Often taken for granted by those who have grown accustomed to their presence, these simple homes, agricultural buildings, commercial structures and landscapes retain a sense of place and identity that is Littleton. The purpose of this chapter is to provide some background on important sites and structures in Littleton, and to promote future preservation activities.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Significant Historic and Cultural Resources

Historic and cultural resources are structures, sites, objects, properties, or districts which have a special historical, archaeological, cultural or aesthetic value. *These resources are defined by a uniqueness to the Town and townspeople and represent areas within Littleton that make it special to those who visit and those who make their homes here.* There are currently several lists of significant resources in Littleton that have been created by different groups. Unfortunately, a thorough inventory of such resources has not been conducted on behalf of the community.

NATIONAL REGISTER PROPERTIES

Properties in Littleton listed on the National Register of Historic Places include the Thayer's Hotel (1849-50), Post Office (1932), Opera House (1894), and the Edward H. Lane House (1813).

LITTLETON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY INVENTORY

The Littleton Area Historical Society maintains a list of historic sites in the Town. Local Buildings considered important for protection include:

MAIN STREET PROPERTIES

- Community House (1884)
- Thayer's Hotel (1849-50)
- Town Opera House (1895)
- Methodist Church (1850)
- Congregational Church (1832)
- Tilton's Opera Block (1881)
- Solomon Block (1912)
- Harrington Block (1897)

- Kilburn Block (1900)
- Carnegie Library (1906)
- "Northern Lights" or Brackett Block (1833)
- Post Office (1932)
- Masonic Temple (1908)



Above: The historic post office building
Source: The Historical Marker Database

COTTAGE STREET PROPERTIES

- "Kilburn" House on South Street formerly owned by Sylvester Marsh, inventor of the Cog Railway, and later Benjamin Kilburn Brothers stereo view fame (1840);
- the "Kilburn" apartments (1873),
- Lane House (1813)
- Langford House (1894)
- Beverly Kennedy House (1890's),
- "Ola Veazie" house (1881),
- Railroad station (originally built in 1875, burned down and was rebuilt in 1929)
- Brackett House Restaurant (1841?) all on Cottage Street;

WEST MAIN STREET PROPERTIES

- Beal House (1833)
- "Bigelow" House (1834)
- Brick "Cyrus Young" House (1820)
- Arlene Strong's House (1838-40) on West Main Street

OTHER PROPERTIES

- Noah Randlett house (1848) on Pleasant Street
- "1895 House" on Pleasant Street;
- "Josiah Kilburn" House (1825) on Mann's Hill
- Episcopal Church (1875) on School Street
- Thomas Pancoast House (1890's) on School Street
- St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church (1913) on High Street
- Robert Campbell House (1778) on Lisbon Road
- Hubert Merrill House (1791) on Lisbon Road
- Parker House (1790's) on Lisbon Road; and the
- "Lincoln Adam's" Farm on Partridge Lake Road.

There are also many other buildings, on and off of Main Street, that are considered historically significant, but have not been included in this list.

OTHER HISTORIC AND CULTURAL FEATURES

The following list was compiled during the preparation of the Littleton Natural Resources Inventory in 2003.

- Historic Granite Quarry used for foundations of many original buildings
- Littleton Outing Cub Ski Jump Landing Hill
- Littleton Outing Club Summit Building/Dam Remains-Parker Mountain
- Historic Roadside Markers (Route 302)
- Wallace Horse Cemetery (Mt Eustis Road)
- Dells Recreation Area
- Mt Eustis
- Pine Hill Trails
- Scenic Outlook-Kilburn Crags
- Scenic Outlook-Summit Parker Hill
- Scenic View I-93 (southbound)

PUBLIC ART

Public art refers to art that is displayed in public spaces. According to Americans for the Arts, public art can take a wide range of forms, sizes, and scales—and can be temporary or permanent. It can include murals, sculpture, memorials, integrated architectural or landscape architectural work, community art, digital new media, performances, and festivals. More about public art can be found in the Arts and the Creative Sector Chapter.

Littleton Area Historical Society

The Historical Society possesses a wealth of information and an impressive collection of materials. The following list of documents related to structures is the product of an interview with members of the Historical Society in October of 2003.

- Historic Glimpses of a North Country Community – Littleton, NH. Mildred Lakeway, 1975.
- History of Littleton, NH. James R. Jackson, 1905.
- Littleton Centennial 1884. Town of Littleton NH.
- Littleton – Crossroads of Northern New Hampshire. John H. Colby, 1984.
- Littleton NH – Images of America. Arthur F. March Jr.
- Littleton NH in the White Mountains. Littleton Chamber of Commerce, 1921.
- Mill Street – Solomon Mann's First Gristmill (Historical Society Folder)
- Parker Homestead at Meadow View Farm 1802. (Historical Society Folder)
- Picturesque and Progressive – Littleton and the White Mountains. Paul R. Clay, 1976.
- Underground Railroad – Carleton House. (Historical Society Folder)
- Victorian Homes 1900. (Historical Society Folder)
- Structures with Historic Date Markers, 1975. (Historical Society Folder)

Littleton is fortunate to have a number of public sculptures for the enjoyment of residents and visitors. The most recent sculpture erected in Town is ***Pollyanna***, shown on the right. Others in Littleton include ***General Grant*** and ***Joan of Arc***.

Additionally, the establishment of ***Harmony Park*** brought public art into the River District of Town. This all-weather instrumental park is located behind Main Street and overlooks the river and woods below. It allows individuals of all ages, skills, and abilities instruments to make sounds, tones, and songs at five different musical stations embedded in the ground.

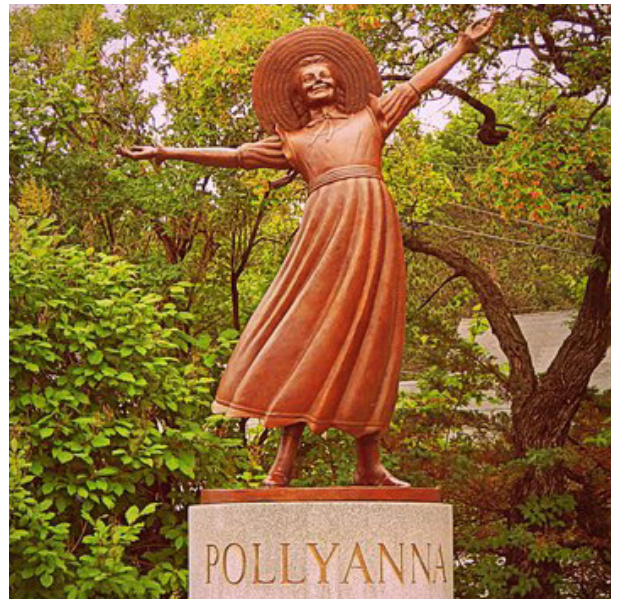
This type of public art is a form of creative placemaking (described further in the Arts and Creative Sector Chapter), and enhances the vibrancy, foot traffic, and public realm near Downtown.

Preservation Activities

In Littleton, most historic preservation work is undertaken by private individuals and groups. Such groups include the Littleton Area Historical Society and Museum, which was formed in 1967 and is housed in the Opera House. The museum is one of the largest town museums in the state of NH. The Society is a valuable asset to the community and could play an important role in future preservation activities. The following are examples of common historic preservation tools and activities NH municipalities can

Pollyanna

Littleton's jubilant bronze sculpture tributes hometown author, Eleanor H. Porter (1868 – 1920) best remembered as the creator of the world's most optimistic character, *Pollyanna*, 1913. Eleanor Hodgman Porter's early residence was in Littleton, and not so far from the Library front lawn...where fittingly *Pollyanna*, Littleton's sculpture presides in an artistic and symbolic place "welcoming residents and visitors."



Above: *The Pollyanna statue*
Source: *Trip Advisor*

Littleton Opera House

The Littleton Opera House, or the Town Building, is a grand, Queen Anne structure that is over 115 years old located on Main Street. This building is an important historic asset and is now used as a rental space for parties, receptions, and conferences, as well as for Town gatherings. The 3,000 sq. ft. The Historical Museum is located in the lower lever. The building was closed down in the summer of 2005 due to safety concerns and reopened in May 2010 after two years of renovations and restoring its original grandeur. These renovations were funded in part by the Town, partly by the Fifteen Miles Falls Mitigation Fund, and the Senate Appropriations Committee by then Senator Judd Gregg. Renovations included new windows, doors, siding, insulation, upgraded lighting and sound systems, and achieving compliance of building and life safety codes.

engage in to protect historic building stock and the character of the community.

HERITAGE COMMISSION

A preservation tool that the Town could pursue is the establishment of a ***Heritage Commission***. This provides a body of town representatives to ***recognize, identify and preserve historic and cultural resources within the community***. Heritage Commissions are allowed under New Hampshire RSA 674:44-a. Such a commission could be a valuable resource to Town boards and citizens. One significant task for such a commission would be the survey and inventory of historic and cultural resources Town wide.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES SURVEY

The most significant preservation technique is ***documentation of existing historic resources***. In addition to providing a permanent written and photographic record of the community's resources, a good inventory is the foundation for other preservation activities. Although a comprehensive inventory has not been conducted in Littleton there are an array of useful information sources available.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

The National Register of Historic Places is the ***official list of the Nation's resources worthy of preservation***. The Register lists properties of local, state, and/or national significance in the areas of American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. Resources may be nominated individually, or in groups, as districts or as multiple resource areas and must generally be at least 50 years old. Listing on the Register can make a property eligible for certain federal tax benefits, but does not interfere with a property owner's right to alter, manage, dispose of or even demolish their property unless federal funds are



Above: Littleton Opera House

involved. National Register listings can be an important step toward changing public perception and increasing historic awareness, but cannot alone prevent detrimental alterations or alterations. However, it remains an important first step toward historic awareness, respect and protection.

LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS

The term ***“historic district”*** refers to a district that includes a cluster of historically significant sites or buildings. A historic district may also be both locally and nationally designated. They are established by Town Meeting vote, or to a National Register Historic District. Both can be useful preservation tools but differ in how they are established and the protection they provide. Under State Law (NH RSA 674:45) communities may establish a local district for the purpose of protecting and preserving areas of outstanding architectural and historic value from inappropriate alterations and additions that might detract from the distinctive character. Historic district regulations typically regular exterior appearance of buildings to ensure compatibility with the historic character of the district. A key component to creating a local historic district is to establish a Historic District Commission.

HISTORIC BUILDING REHABILITATION FEDERAL TAX CREDITS

The rehabilitation of older buildings is often a cost-effective solution benefiting the tax base while filling older structures with new life. Several federal programs have been available over the years to encourage rehabilitation of older structures rather than demolition and replacement by new construction. In certain cases, to be eligible for a federal tax credit program, a building must be a certified historic structure on the National Register, or contribute to a National Register or certified local district. Unfortunately, these tax credits do not cover privately owned, non-income producing residences. Larger structures with income producing potential could benefit from the use of these credits. This would also insure the sympathetic rehabilitation of these buildings.

HISTORIC MARKERS

Markers are a relatively easy, inexpensive way to tell the story of significant people, places, and events in Littleton's history. A few markers already exist along Route 302 in Littleton. These markers are a result of the State Marker Program which is one alternative for erecting markers designating events, people, and places of historical significance to the State of New Hampshire. Another type of marker is the placement of wooden date markers on buildings. This was done in Littleton in 1975 by the Littleton Area Historical Society. For each property owner that purchased a wooden date marker for their structure the Littleton Area Historical Society researched the history of that structure. The research was compiled into a book that is available at the Historical Society Museum.

The sole purpose of markers is recognition. Markers are not intended to be restrictive. They do not protect historic sites, and do not obligate owners in any way. Large place

Littleton Community Center

In 2018, the Littleton Community Center was awarded a Preservation Achievement award by the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance for the restoration of the Community Center building, an 1884 Queen Anne mansion that was formerly owned by Charles Eastman, a North Country lumber baron and entrepreneur. It opened as a Community House in 1919 serving as a place where World War I veterans could stop in to shower, sleep, and eat a meal which looking for employment. In 1984, it was to "dedicate its Community House as a memorial of the Town to the services of its soldiers and sailors in the war against Germany". In 2012, the Main Street property suffered from deferred maintenance and was listed to the Alliance's Seven to Save. The Town invested in restoring the building and a new roof was added, electrical systems were updated, new life safety systems were installed, and a new heating system was installed. Additionally, vinyl siding was removed, clapboards and shingles were repaired and replaced where necessary, and a historic paint palette was selected. Currently, the Littleton Community Center non-profit board is now implementing a strategic plan that includes an LCHIP-funded study on the carriage house and collecting public feedback about community needs.



Above: *Littleton Community Center*
Source: *NH Preservation Alliance*

markers are often used to identify historic sites that have changed considerably over time, or to commemorate events for which there is no standing evidence. Events may include anything that has historical or cultural significance to the community. Littleton could also initiate a marker program using granite blocks or inscribed stones to draw attention to its rich historical and cultural resources.

EASEMENTS

Preservation easements have proven to be an effective tool for protecting historic properties nationwide. An architectural easement such as this protects the exterior appearance of a building. Easements provide property owners with two important benefits. First, the character of the building is protected in perpetuity. Secondly, the donation of an easement may make the owner eligible for certain tax advantages. Easements are also extremely valuable to the community. The costs of acquiring easements may be significantly lower than buying property outright, particularly when easements can be acquired by donation. Significant resources remain in private hands, but are protected from inappropriate alteration. The organization holding the easement is given the right to review any proposed changes to the structure or property. If administered properly, easements are a superior method of conserving and protecting significant resources.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE PROTECTION

Preservation of archaeological sites is extremely challenging. These resources are more difficult to identify and protect than historic structures. Each site is unique and extremely fragile. Unlike many other significant resources, identification of sites and public awareness around these resources often threaten their existence. Rapid growth is the greatest threat to archaeological resources. If a development project is funded with federal funds there will be a review of impacts to cultural

resources. Development of sites with private funds does not require an archaeological evaluation, but local officials should consult with the NH Division of Historic Resources if a proposal will impact a known archaeological resource or a high probability area.

LAND AND COMMUNITY HERITAGE INVESTMENT PROGRAM (LCHIP)

New Hampshire's **LCHIP program** makes matching grants to NH communities and non-profits to conserve and preserve the state's most important natural, cultural, and historic resources. LCHIP works in partnership with municipalities and non-profits to acquire land and cultural resources, or interests therein, with local, regional, and statewide significance. This program provides a funding mechanism for towns to leverage for historic building or site preservation projects.



Above: *The Thayer's Inn*

Source: *Thayer's Inn*



Above: *The Lane House*

Source: *Stewart Property Management*