

CHAPTER 6: HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

1. INTRODUCTION

A plan for the future without a look to the past is incomplete. This chapter was prepared in recognition of the important role Hanover's historic and cultural resources play in the overall quality of life in the community. Historic structures and sites surviving from earlier periods are visual manifestations of the story of a community's people. Vital links and tangible connectors to the past, surviving fragments of history contribute to the individuality of each town and provide it a sense of continuity. Historic structures and sites are an important element of our community's resources, and like many others are nonrenewable, capable of being preserved for the future, or vanishing with a single action.

The special quality distinguishing Hanover from other communities in the region is the development of both a college and a village in Hanover's downtown area, set in a rural backdrop. Elaborate, architect-designed structures expressive of the tradition and wealth of one of the nation's first colleges coexist with the modest one and two-story frame dwellings of early settlers sporadically dotting the rolling landscape, corresponding to the original land grants. The planned community of the college contrasts sharply with the evolutionary development of the town itself, yet the two are intimately interwoven.

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the importance of Hanover's historical and cultural landmarks. Significant local historic landscape and architectural areas are identified. It is the responsibility of the community to plan a program of historical and cultural protection, based on local needs and desires. This chapter does not attempt to be a complete and comprehensive inventory of all local resources, but is intended as a departure point for the future. In the Implementation Toolbox Appendix, existing legislation and tools available to help protect Hanover's rich cultural heritage are discussed.

2. COMMUNITY VALUES AND GOALS

There has not been a community groundswell for the creation of a historic preservation district, however, there is interest in preservation of historic structures and lots of interest in the preservation of the cultural rural landscape. Although other recent surveys of Hanover's residents have not focused on the town's historic resources or cultural landscape, a majority of the respondents to the *Guiding Growth in Rural Hanover* survey agreed that the appearance of both historic and new buildings in Etna village should be regulated.

3. EXISTING RESOURCES

Preservation Action to Date

In recent years, individuals and groups have taken responsibility for many of the local preservation and historical activities, including the collection and propagation of valuable information concerning local and area history. One of the older efforts to document Hanover's history is *A History of the Town of Hanover, New Hampshire* written in 1928 by John King Lord.

The Hanover Historical Society was founded in 1960 to coincide with the bicentennial of the Town. The Webster Cottage is owned by Dartmouth College and operated by the Historical Society as a house museum. It is open to the public on selected days from Memorial Day to Columbus Day. The Society holds approximately four meetings a year, including an annual meeting in the Spring, a field trip, and a December Open House at the Webster Cottage. The Historical Society has published two booklets: *Webster Cottage* (1969) by Francis Childs and *Remainders of the Past in the Village of Hanover* (1976) by W. Randall Waterman. Membership in the Society numbers about 250 although the majority of the membership is not active.

In the past, the Historical Society has been responsible for the placement of date signs on many of the older structures in Town. Current projects include the on-going gravestone restoration project, the Audio-visual History Project, and the Archive Project. In cooperation with the Buildings and Grounds Division of the Public Works Department, the Historical Society is working on the gravestone preservation program for which consultants were hired to inventory the gravestones in Town. To date, inventory work has been completed in three of Hanover's ten cemeteries, the Dana, Hanover Center, and Dartmouth Cemeteries. In addition, work has been started in the Etna Cemetery and the Greensboro Road Cemetery. The inventory of each site includes documentation of the inscription and any motif or border, a picture of the stone, and a description of its condition. Gravestone conservation is the final step of this preservation program.

The Audio-visual History Committee documents interviews with long-term Hanover residents in order to preserve memories of both the people and history of the Town. The Town Archive project is a collaborative effort between the College, Historical Society and Town. In an effort to merge, permanently house, and have access to archival material relating to the Town history, Dartmouth College is providing a location in which the collections of both the Town and Society can be housed. The Rauner Library at Dartmouth also houses a wonderful collection of photographs of the College and Hanover environs. Using funds provided by the Town and Historical Society, the documents have been broadly categorized. A grant has been sought to fund more refined processing in order to have a detailed catalogue of the collection's contents. This is an excellent example of the cooperative spirit the three partners take toward the preservation of the Town's history.

In celebration of the Town's Bicentennial, the Hanover Bicentennial Committee in 1961 published a volume of twenty-two essays of local historical interest, entitled "Hanover, New Hampshire: A Bicentennial Book", edited by Professor Frances Lane Childs. The resources of the Dartmouth College Library and Archives Collections should not be overlooked as a rich source of historical information. The original 1761 Town Charter was restored in 1984.

Surprisingly, within Hanover there are only two structures, Etna Library (also known as the Hanover Town Library) and the stone bridge on Great Hollow Road, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, though many are certainly eligible. A number of local structures have been documented by the Historic American Buildings Survey including Reed, Thornton and Wentworth Halls, Shattuck Observatory, Webster Cottage, Choate House, and the Woodward-Lord House. Etna, Hanover Center, Webster Avenue, Rope Ferry Road, Occom Ridge, Dartmouth College Campus, Etna Highlands, Huntington Hill and North Park Street are

areas where there are significant concentrations of buildings worthy of inclusion in historic districts.

The Town has a conservation and preservation restriction easement for a portion of Mink Brook and its bank below Buck Road, in part to preserve the site of Eleazar Wheelock's 1771 sawmill.

In 2002, the Conservation Commission initiated a survey of agricultural structures in town with the goal of documenting the remaining barns, sugar houses, chicken coops, etc. in order to have a record of the built aspect of the town's agricultural heritage.

The designation of scenic roads can also aid a town in the preservation of rural environs around its historic structures. Locally designated scenic roads include Rope Ferry Road, Hilton Field Lane, Occom Ridge Road, Clement Road, Pleasant Street, Reservoir Road, Pinneo Hill Road, River Road, Goodfellow Road, King Road, Three Mile Road, Ruddsboro Road, Goss Road, Goose Pond Road, Moose Mountain Road, and Ferson Road.

Route 120, Route 10, Wheelock Street, Trescott Road, Etna Road (between Trescott Road and Hanover Center Road), Hanover Center Road and Rennie Road are designated as a part of the Connecticut River Scenic and Cultural Byway. While being located on the Byway does not afford any protection, the recognition it offers brings attention to the cultural resources on the Byway.

Dartmouth College's understanding of the importance of historic character and preservation is especially evident in the 1998 *Campus Master Plan*. The plan stresses preservation of the New England village green archetype as well as preservation of the older core campus buildings and other important open spaces. In 1999-2000 Dartmouth conducted a historical building survey of the campus and created a database with the history of all of its buildings. The goal of this survey is to insure that the Dartmouth building history is well understood and to avoid losing any buildings with unique merits. The College is to be commended for its past performance including additions which are compatible with older structures and the moving of structures where necessary, to preserve them. The conversion of Webster Hall for use as the special collections library is a case in point. There were only minimal façade alterations.

Throughout Town history and in recent years, the evolution of the Dartmouth College campus has resulted in the relocation of numerous historic, early village structures such as Webster Cottage, Choate House and the Woodward-Lord House. These surviving fragments of history contribute much to the character of the Town and the commitment to allow old to coexist with new should be commended. Evidence of the adaptive use of older structures includes the Town's conversion of the area used by the Fire Department to Town Offices.

Growing awareness of Hanover's historic resources has begun to sensitize the community to the possibility of preserving certain historic structures, which in the past might simply have been razed without much ado. Recent examples include the relocation by Dartmouth College of two early houses from their sites at 16 and 18 North Park Street to new sites on Lyme Road. The

former, known as the “Lord House”, dates from 1802 and was home to the College’s sixth president; the latter, known as the “Hutchinson House”, dates from 1810. In addition to their antiquity, both have interesting architectural features and were home over the years to persons of note in Hanover’s history. Recognizing that preservation is not always feasible, an attempt should be made where possible, to preserve a variety of structures of all sizes and from all periods, in order to truly appreciate and accurately represent the Town’s past.

Historic Landscape and Architectural Areas

Listed below are some of the significant historic areas in Hanover. Some are concentrations or clusters of historic structures while others are unique for retaining their historic landscape character.(see Map 6-1, Historical and Cultural Features)

- Known as Mill Village until 1884, **Etna** served as the center of Town affairs, hosting town meetings for 78 years during the mid-century to early 20th century. Its importance in town affairs was secured by the location of the Baptist Church on Etna Common, and Etna’s location near Mink Brook which afforded a valuable power source for grist, saw and ladder mills. Home to some of Hanover’s earliest settlers, modest 1 and story cape structures, dating to the early 19th century predominate, enhanced by stone walls and culminating in the Baptist Church/Common area. The backdrop of fields and woods enclose the village. Two farms reinforce the rural flavor. Just to the north, across Etna Road is the Etna Cemetery. Nomination to the National Register and establishment of a local historic district should be explored.
- The earliest center of local activity, the establishment of **Hanover Center** in 1761 predates the establishment of the College by eight years. Fronting the Parade Ground, is an impressive grouping of late 18th- early 19th century structures including several residences, a schoolhouse and the Congregational Church, unified by their white-clapboarded exteriors and simple lines. To the west is the First Congregational Church of Hanover in Hanover Center and south of the Church is the Hanover Center Cemetery. To the south are several early brick structures. New construction along the east side of Hanover Center Road detracts slightly from this historic landscape that should be protected through National Register and local historic district designation.
- Laid out in 1896, the architecturally rich **Webster Avenue** area represents a cross-section of late 19th century styles, including notable architect-designed examples of the Shingle and Colonial Revival styles. National Register listing may be appropriate.
- A series of early 20th century frame residences dating to the widening of the Occom Ridge road and creation of **Occom Ridge** in 1900. The significance of this grouping is further enhanced by the prominent placement of structures on the ridge. They are mirrored by similar types of residences on **Rope Ferry Road**. Rope Ferry Road now terminates at the Hanover Country Club but in the 18th century it led to the rope ferry used for crossing the Connecticut River.
- Practically since its establishment in 1769, the **Dartmouth College campus** has been a showplace of American architecture, bearing the imprint of the visions and buildings of a variety of designers. Late 18th century buildings, many of which have been moved several times to accommodate the growth of the College, coexist with numerous Georgian Revival structures dating to the tenure of College architect Charles Rich (c. 1900) and commissions of Jens Larson who sought to create a new focus for the Campus

in Baker Library. Several important structures by Ammi B. Young and fine examples of the Romanesque Revival also figure prominently on the Campus. A complete historic resources survey was completed by the College in 2000. This information may be available on the web in the near future. Individual or district National Register listings should be seriously investigated.

- The **South Main Street** hill and **Gilman Island**, just south of the mouth of Mink Brook in the Connecticut River, were both known for the African-Americans that resided in the area for much of the 19th century. Many of the individuals who lived in this area were former slaves, and their homes were described as small buildings standing lengthwise and endwise to the street. Today's residential neighborhood dates back to development in the early 1920s.
- Home of many early East Hanover settlers who sought the hilltops such as Hayes and Pork Hills (King Road), the **Etna Highlands** area today combines several early 19th century dwellings and agricultural buildings, some with spectacular vistas. The area is currently protected to a very limited degree by scenic road designation and some conservation easements.
- The farmland on **Huntington Hill** was originally cleared by Andrew and Hezekiah Huntington who arrived about 1787. The clearing of the farmhouse affords beautiful vistas. Goodfellow Road is a designated scenic road and conservation easements protect some of the road frontage, fields and forests.
- **North Park Street** combines handsome late 19th and early 20th century structures with a new architecturally sensitive development of housing for graduate students on the west side of the street.

Downtown Vitality

In comparison to many downtowns, Hanover does not retain a large proportion of structures predating 1900, but instead has undergone an evolutionary process in large part due to a number of fires over the years. Hanover's most destructive conflagration occurred in 1887, razing the Dartmouth Hotel (now occupied by the Hanover Inn), as well as much of the east side of Main Street. Still, several important early structures survive, significant for providing reference to the historic development of the area. Perhaps the best preserved of the 18th century houses in the village is the Wheelock House (4 W. Wheelock Street), built in 1773, for Eleazar Wheelock, founder and first president of Dartmouth College, and serving as home of the Howe Library from 1900-1975.

Like the Wheelock House, the former Gates House on the corner of Main and East South, was relocated to the downtown to allow room for new construction on the campus. A fine example of the Greek Revival Style as indicated by its pediment front, the Gates House coupled with the Buon Gustaio building to the South (72 S. Main Street), gives some idea of the residential groupings which have lined Main Street. Currently sheathed in asbestos shingles, the historic potential of this building would be greatly enhanced by the removal of the siding to expose the original wood sheathing.

Of similar age are the brick structures Casque and Gauntlet (corner of Main and West Wheelock Street) and 25 Lebanon Street (now Kleen Laundry). Two clapboarded buildings adorned by heavy cornices of the Italianate period (1850-1870) - Ledyard National Bank and the Grange (now Rosey Jekes), act as solitary reminders of the clapboarded structures which predominated earlier in the century. Other downtown structures, such as the Gates House on the corner of Main and East South, were relocated to the business district to allow room for new construction on the Campus.

Building activity in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, beginning after the fire of 1876, resulted in almost unanimous Colonial Revival styling for Main Street, as was fashionable. The vast majority of downtown structures date to this period and many of the commercial blocks in Town still proudly bear the name of their first owner or former associations. Buildings of the period include: Davison Block (1892 and 1903); Bridgman Block (1907 after fire destroyed the 1900 structure); Musgrove Block (1915); Precinct Building (1928); and the Gitsis Building (1929). All of the blocks dating to this period were constructed of brick with classically inspired granite, limestone and concrete trim and moldings, supplemented by brick corbeling and geometric brick patterning at their cornices, of which that adorning the "Currier Block" on the east side of Main Street is undoubtedly the finest in the downtown.

Also unifying the scene of brick blocks is the continuous line of ground floor storefronts. Despite frequent modernizations, most still retain a traditional tri-part arrangement of single pane glass framed by bulkheads and transom light with recessed entries. Adding variety to the street are several neo-Colonial fronts featuring multi-pane windows. Of special note is the storefront at Molly's Balloon Restaurant (43 S. Main Street) adorned by a transom of small pane leaded glass panels. The elegant elaborations possible within the Colonial Revival style are best evidenced in the slate hip roof, fanlights, fluted columns and parapet ends of The Gap (20 S. Main Street).

In the 20th century, Main Street has been transformed by concrete and asphalt paving, replacing dirt streets and watering troughs. Since 1892, Main Street has been illuminated by electric lights replacing gas lamps introduced in 1872. Granite posts have given way to parking meters. Sadly, not a single elm survives of the many which once arched over the street. The advent of the automobile resulted in parking lots and service stations that weakened the axial effect of Main Street, digesting corners. Yet, as recently as the 1950's, two wooden houses stood where the Nugget (57 S. Main Street) now is and as recently as the 1960's, converted livery stables survived on Allen Street.

Properly treated and maintained, the historic structures of downtown Hanover contain

tremendous potential for economic benefit. Many of the buildings retain significant features including elaborate brickwork, decorative glass and metalwork, intact parapets and other decorative details absent from buildings constructed today. The rehabilitation of older buildings is frequently less expensive than new construction. Often taken for granted by those who have grown accustomed to its appearance, the Main Street area and College Green present a strong, attractive historical image to tourists and others passing through Town.

Careful building renovation will erase the signs of deterioration that can eventually undermine the health of a downtown. Building rehabilitation or renovation does not necessarily mean major changes or expenses, nor should it be confused with restoration, in which the appearance of a building is returned to the condition in which it existed at a particular point in time. Not every building needs major work. Minor repairs, repainting and the removal of coverings that detract from a building can make a big difference in its appearance. The best renovations are contemporary solutions but which respect the architectural features that enhance a building. The scale, proportions, materials, textures and details of a building should be examined carefully before starting any renovation. Old photos can be very helpful in assessing a building's potential, uncovering changes it has seen through time, and making decisions about changes to undertake.

Possible expansion of the downtown area can have a tremendous impact on the historic structures contained within. Changes of older buildings should be compatible with the existing building fabric and sympathetic in terms of height, setback, proportions, materials, and detailing. Establishment of an historic district design control district may be appropriate and care should be taken to preserve notable historic structures.

A well-executed renovation project frequently will act as a catalyst for similar work along the street, enhancing the overall image of the downtown. However, it should be remembered structures remodeled in a manner not compatible with their surroundings and departing from the character of the downtown, can cause serious visual harm to the entire streetscape. Specific recommendations for renovating historic structures appear as an appendix at the end of this chapter.

Historic Sites, Landmarks and Potential Archeological Areas

The following areas and sites are representative of the diversity of cultural resources in Hanover.

- Parsons Rock on the west side of a curve in Three Mile Road served as a landmark in several surveys of lots and roads in the neighborhood. The origin of the name for this large boulder has not been established with any certainty. In one story, an itinerant preacher is said to have used the rock as his pulpit on his occasional visits to the region in the 18th century before a meeting house was built. A second story associates the rock with the Pearson (often pronounced "parson") family who lived nearby.
- The Town's boundary stones and monuments are also historic landmarks. Most have the first letters of the adjacent towns incised in them. Other landmarks in Town include the location of the first medical school in the nation, and the Laura Bridgman House in Etna.
- There are impressive stone walls that line many of the Town's rural roads. The stone walls on Pasture Road and the Class VI portion of Wolfeboro Road between Dogford and Elm Roads are good examples.

- Class VI roads, Town roads that are not maintained for vehicles, are now reminders of the Town's earlier settlement history and are popular recreational corridors. The Moose Mountain area especially contains a number of unmaintained roads.
- Areas with proximity to water, such as the Connecticut River and Mink Brook in the case of Hanover, hold great potential for prehistoric and historic archeological areas. Historically, Mink Brook was lined with mills to harness its water power. Four mills (two sawmills, a grist and a ladder mill) are recorded as operating at one time in Etna (formerly Mill Village). Other mills were built in outlying areas such as Moose Mountain and near Goose Pond. Throughout town, cellar holes and stone walls bear silent witness to the hard work of early settlers. Investigation of these areas, as well as the dock sites once lining the bank of the Connecticut River and prehistoric sites, could yield much useful information relating to the lifestyles of native Americans and Hanover's earliest European settlers. Areas of potential historic interest include the original center of Town; the well field of the old Aqueduct Company south of the Greensboro Road; the Granite Quarry south of Greensboro Road; the Tilton Quarry east of Moose Mountain Road and one of the earliest slate quarries on the old Tisdale property.

The visual record of these ancient times is fragile and no doubt much has already been lost through vandalism, builders, farmers, road construction, and the inherent acidic nature of waterfront soils. Since this report deals primarily with the town's existing architecture, investigation by qualified archaeologists is necessary to determine the actual potential of these areas. No comprehensive survey of archeological resources has been prepared thus far, although some independent work has been completed through the Department of Anthropology at Dartmouth. The State Cooperative Regional Archaeology Program (SCRAP) at the Division of Historical Resources also is a good source of information.

4. POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- A complete historic resource survey for Hanover should be conducted with information updated periodically to indicate changes to buildings, including remodeling, fire, demolition, or changes to surroundings.
- Historical interest should be promoted through photographs and murals in public and commercial buildings, markers at key historic structures, brochures describing the Town's history, tours of historic structures and sites, continuation of the audio-visual history project, re-introduction of a local history course into the school curriculum, and continued use of historical photographs to illustrate the Town calendar and Town Report.
- The Town should make every effort to preserve Town-owned historic structures and their important architectural elements.
- The Town and Historical Society should consider the acquisition of available, significant property for conservation and preservation purposes in limited but critical cases.
- Historic landmarks such as town line monuments, boundary stones, Town's center monument, Parsons Rock, Balancing Stone, graveyards and burying grounds and archeological resources should be identified and protected.
- Stonewalls, cellar holes and other cultural artifacts should be identified and protected in the course of subdivision and site plan review.

- Utilization of easements, both preservation and conservation, should be explored.
- Where appropriate, innovative land use controls should be used to minimize the visual impact of new development on significant historic areas.
- The Town should continue to encourage the protection, enhancement and renovation of significant architectural and historic resources using the various mechanisms available to them, as described in the Implementation Toolbox Appendix.
- Additional historic structures and areas should be considered for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.
- The Libraries and Historical Society should provide greater local awareness of the Town's resources and make materials on local history more accessible to the public.
- Copies of literature from the State Historic Preservation Office and the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission regarding appropriate rehabilitation techniques should be placed on file in the Howe Library to encourage the renovation of older homes and buildings.
- Establishment of a heritage commission should be considered in Hanover followed by the possible establishment of local historic district commissions in Hanover, Etna and Hanover Center to protect the architectural character of these places. Special consideration should be given to protecting Hanover Center's historic character, landscapes, and sense of place.
- Designation of scenic roads should be encouraged.
- The gravestone restoration project should become an ongoing program.
- Historic documents should continue to be kept in a secure, fireproof and climate-controlled structure. People and institutions should be encouraged to give documents, maps and photographs to the Rauner Library archives.
- Early handwritten records should be reproduced and copies kept in more than one location.
- Continued support for the Historical Society should be encouraged.
- The Town should encourage the development of a nonprofit foundation to dispense money at low interest from a revolving fund for the renovation of significant historic structures requiring rehabilitation standards owners could not afford.
- A continuing archeological investigation and mapping of Native American sites, mill sites, cellar holes and other historically and culturally valuable sites should be encouraged.