

CHAPTER 9:
CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL RESOURCES



Ashland Town Hall, St. Mark's Episcopal Church and Parish House
Source: Ashland Historical Society

9.1 INTRODUCTION

A close look at history can tell us about the people who lived here before us. We might learn what things they did while they were here and why they did them. We might learn why people moved here, why they stayed here, or possibly why they chose to move away. We can learn about the particular events, businesses, or resources that shaped the community. Likewise, exploring the culture of a community can tell us something about its traditions, heritage, or values. This includes opportunities for people to come together and share something about themselves; such as service and religious groups, hobby or sporting clubs, arts and music organizations or festivals.

After exploring some of Ashland's past, we can ask whether any of these same situations, organizations, or traditions exist today. How is the community of the past similar to today's community? How is it different? Is the situation likely to change in the future? Should certain things be preserved? How can the town plan for this?

This chapter serves to outline historical and cultural resources recommendations that are consistent with Ashland's vision and the results of the community survey.

9.2 HISTORICAL RESOURCES

Ashland has a history of recorded settlement dating back to the mid-1700s and likely had native settlements prior to that. Originally part of the town of Holderness, the more industrial southwest section of town split away in 1868 as the town of Ashland. The town was home to several mills and factories over the years.

Historical resources can include buildings, objects, sites, documents, images, or recordings that tell us something about the past. While many of these artifacts and resources exist, an important question is what should be kept and what should not? Other questions include: how should those things that are kept be preserved, how should they be shared, and at what point should a historical resource no longer be retained?

9.2.1 Local Historical Preservation Efforts

The Ashland Historical Society was formed in 1968 as an outgrowth of the town's centennial celebration. The Society operates three museums. The Whipple House Museum presents the history of Ashland along with information about the Whipple family, notably George Hoyt Whipple, a recipient of the 1934 Nobel Prize in Medicine. The Pauline E. Glidden Toy Museum displays a collection of toys and dolls. The Ashland Railroad Station is home to a collection of railroad artifacts, pictures, and documents. The organization also owns the Reuben Whitten House, donated



to the Society in 1969, which was moved to the Whipple property and has been partially restored. Ashland's Historic Commission oversees the stewardship of the Whipple House.

The Society has 70 dues-paying members and six business partners. Each year members hold fundraising activities to support their ongoing efforts. They host four to six programs (May – October) on a variety of historical and cultural topics. Through the efforts of members, inventories of the Society's collections are being developed. The Historical Society maintains a website at www.ashlandnh.org which includes numerous historical photographs.

In 1982 a detailed inventory of seventeen historic structures was conducted and is part of the 1984 Master Plan. Since then one structure has been destroyed and some have been modified. The inventory of historical structures and sites has not yet been fully expanded as recommended in the master plan. There are many additional historical structures that the Historical Society might add to the inventory, including some distinctive homes, barns, commercial buildings, and monuments.

Prior to the 1984 Master Plan six of the inventoried structures had been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Full descriptions were included in the National Register of Historic Places application and can be read at the National Register web site¹, as well as in the 1984 Master Plan.

While some steps have been taken to implement recommendations from the 1984 Master Plan, more can be done. A framework for expansion of the inventory of historic resources exists but the expanded content is incomplete. St. Mark's Episcopal Church and Parish House were added to the National Register of Historic Places as recommended but the Ashland Freight Depot has not. In early 1989 one of the oldest homes in Ashland was purchased by the Historical Society and subsequently restored; it is now the Pauline E. Glidden Toy Museum. In the late 1990s the Ashland Railroad Station was renovated with transportation funds and it became a railroad museum. Much effort was devoted to the "Save Our School" project which preserved and renovated the Junior High School building. With grants, donations, and tax credits this distinctive, historic property in the village area has been preserved and is being used by community members. Completed in 2010, this building is now known as the Historic Ashland School.

The community's recorded history stretches back more than 200 years. Over that time period, circumstances have changed and the community has changed with it. The town has been home to numerous businesses and industries, schools, and numerous distinctive homes. Some buildings have been demolished, several buildings burned, and a few have survived. Most that have survived have been modified in one way or another to adapt to local needs. The recommendation to publish a comprehensive history of Ashland remains a goal. In 2010 the Ashland Revitalization Committee developed and distributed a map of local businesses and historical sites, including brief descriptions.

¹ National Register of Historic Places <http://nrhp.focus.nps.gov/natreghome.do> (accessed November 3, 2011).

9.2.2 Documenting Ashland’s Historical Sites

Two important compilations document historical sites in Ashland; these include the nationally designated Historic Places and the Historic Resources Inventory; Figures 7-1 and 7-2 provide basic information about the structures. A current photograph and status update is included after each list. The map located at the end of this chapter (Figure) shows the location of each site.

While dated, the established inventory represents an excellent starting point for a comprehensive historic and cultural resources inventory that could be readily integrated with town mapping and tax assessor databases for the purposes of planning, organization and data preservation. It also represents an opportunity for the Historical Society to reflect on additional considerations for the inventory.

Figure 9-1: Nationally Designated Places

Name	Date	Location	Date Listed
Whipple House	1837	14 Pleasant Street	1978
Ashland Grist Mill	1903	20 Main Street	1979
Ashland Junior High School	1877-78	41 School Street	1983
First Free Will Baptist Church and Vestry	1834-5	57 North Main Street	1983
Ashland Town Hall	1871	20 Highland Street	1983
Ashland Railroad Station	1869	69 Depot Street	1982
St. Mark’s Church and Parish House	1859	16 -18 Highland Street	1984
Old Town Jail	1872-73	20 Highland Street	

Current Photographs: Nationally Designated Places in Ashland



Whipple House



Ashland Grist Mill

Photos in this chapter were provided courtesy of E. L. Badger. The Whipple House Museum has remained virtually unchanged since 1982. It still serves as the town's historical museum under the care of the Ashland Historical Society. In 1984-86, the Grist Mill was renovated in keeping with its historic character, to house the Samyn-D'Elia architectural offices and apartments. The exterior did acquire a few new windows and skylights, new front doors, an entrance porch, and a belvedere modeled on a ventilator that once stood on the central roof. But, basically, the building retains its historic appearance.



Historic Ashland School



First Free Will Baptist Church

The old school was acquired from the Ashland School District by Tri-County Community Action Program (TCCAP) in 2008. It was restored and renovated in 2009-10, maintaining many of its essential architectural qualities. Exterior changes included new windows and front steps, the remodeling of the side entrances, and the addition of a rear entrance with porch. The school now houses TCCAP offices, meeting rooms, and a Headstart classroom. The Baptist Church proper has seen little exterior change beyond the 1993 installation of a wheelchair ramp. The vestry saw the replacement of windows in 1993 and the addition of a



Ashland Town Hall



Ashland Railroad Station

wheelchair ramp in 1997. A new side entry porch was built in the northeast corner of the vestry and church in 2007.

The exterior of the Town Hall has seen little change since 1982; the most important alteration being the construction of a new entrance for the Police Station on the north side of the building, which was completed in 1997. Thanks to a federal and state grant supplemented by local fundraising, the Railroad Station was restored and renovated in 1997-98. The exterior was restored to its original appearance with the re-creation of a door, a window, and part of the trackside platform, which had all been removed. Since 1999, the building has served as a railroad history museum operated by the Ashland Historical Society.



St. Mark's Church



St. Mark's Parish House

St. Mark's Church had its chimney replaced in 1995 and its tower rebuilt and restored to its original appearance in 1998-99. The 2005 renovations of the parish house included handicapped access and a new entrance porch.

Ashland Historical Resources Inventory - An inventory of seventeen historic structures was conducted in 1982 and included in the Master Plan, along with a description of the architecture and historical significance of each structure; this inventory included all of the National Register sites so they are not repeated here. Since the last master plan, the Dr. Bricker House was gutted by fire and subsequently demolished. Figure 9-2 lists each of the remaining structures and provides a status update.

Figure 9-2: Ashland Historical Resources Inventory

Name	Date	Location
White Mountain Country Club	1800 - 1810	3 Country Club Drive
Rueben Whitten House	c. 1800	14 Pleasant Street (behind the Whipple House)
Common Man Restaurant	Pre-1861	60 Main Street
Harold C. Proulx House	c. 1840	11 Hill Avenue
Scribner Mill	1880	8 Mill Street
Artist Express Depot	c. 1849	72 Depot Street
Kroeger House	1894	55 Highland Street
Cheney House	1895	82 Highland Street

Current Photographs: Ashland Historical Resources Inventory

White Mountain Country Club



Rueben Whitten House

The White Mountain Country Club has had some modifications, including a new chimney, vinyl siding, replacement windows and doors, and the removal of solar panels from the roof. The Rueben Whitten House is still awaiting restoration.



Common Man Restaurant



Harold C. Proulx House (Dupre)

The Common Man Restaurant has had additions on the west side to enlarge the dining room and on east side to enlarge the kitchen. A fire escape was added on the east side, and the entrance has been moved from the street front to the west side facing the new patio. The Proulx House (Dupre) has seen only minor changes, such as replacing the front steps with a ramp. The front steps have been replaced by an asphalt ramp, the porch converted to work spaces with new siding and windows, and many windows have been replaced.



Scribner Mill



Artist Express Depot

The Scribner Mill is now used for storage and most of the windows are boarded up and the tower entrance has been bricked in. The porch on the eastern side of the Artist Express Depot has been enlarged with new decks on three sides and a sliding glass door added to the northwest side of the building.



Kroeger House (Marcroft)



Cheney House

The Kroeger House (Marcroft) is well cared for and appears to have had no substantive changes since 1984. A dormer and porch were added on to the rear wing of the Cheney House in 2006. Note: The original inventory form failed to note that an attached barn and rear wing had burned before 1982 and that the rear wing had subsequently been rebuilt. The house has been well tended and is currently run as a Bed and Breakfast.

9.2.3 Historic Preservation Tools and Techniques

Buildings, historic sites, objects, documents, photographs, and audio recordings can all be preserved. Before delving too far into a discussion of the various tools and techniques available to a community, organization, or individual for preservation, the question of “Why preserve?” should be addressed. The Historical Society’s mission, stated at the start of previous section, begins to address this question. The answer frequently centers on the desire to maintain contact with one’s heritage. Under certain conditions there may also be economic benefits to preservation.

For buildings and historic sites there are a number of options for preservation, each providing different benefits. The town may establish a heritage commission through Town Meeting vote that consists of three to seven members. A heritage commission is advisory to the planning board and selectmen (RSA 673:4-a, 674:44a-d) for the recognition, use, and protection of historic and cultural resources. It can accept funds to carry out its mission. A heritage commission differs from a historic district commission (RSA 674:45) which is primarily associated with a local historic district and serves in a regulatory capacity.

There are several programs through the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources that can help in preserving historical sites and structures including:

- the State and National Registers of Historic Places,
- assistance with inventorying historical resources,

- preservation of barns and farms, and
- access to tax benefits and grant opportunities.²

Listing in the State Register of Historic Places can contribute to the preservation of historic properties in a number of ways, including:

- Public recognition that a property is significant to a community.
- Consideration and advocacy in the planning of local and state funded or otherwise assisted projects such as governmental land sales and transportation projects.
- Qualification for financial assistance for preservation projects.
- Special consideration or relief in the application of some access, building, and safety code regulations.

Owners of property listed on the State Register are free to maintain, manage or dispose of their property as they choose, without oversight or comment from the NHDHR. However, as property owners plan for needed maintenance or changes, staff members at the NHDHR are available to answer questions and provide assistance.

The New Hampshire Register of Historic Places was established in 2001. Currently no Ashland properties are listed on the NH Historic Register. Individual owners may nominate their property by submitting a completed inventory form to the NH Division of Historical Resources (NHDHR).³ While there is no fee associated with the nomination, it is recommended that an architectural historian or archaeologist assist in this process. Properties already on the National Register of Historic Sites can readily be added to the state register by providing updated information to the State Survey Coordinator at NHDHR.

According to the National Register of Historic Places website⁴, there are a number of benefits that can be gained for both individuals and communities that own properties on the National Register, including:

- formal recognition of a property's historical, architectural, or archeological significance based on national standards used by every state
- inclusion in a public, searchable database that provides a wealth of research information
- encouraging preservation of these historic resources by documenting a property's historic significance
- opportunities for specific preservation incentives, such as:
 - federal preservation grants for planning and rehabilitation

² New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources <http://www.nh.gov/nhdhr/programs/> (accessed September 30, 2011).

³ New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources http://www.nh.gov/nhdhr/programs/state_register.html (accessed December 30, 2011).

⁴ National Register of Historic Places: Fundamentals http://www.nps.gov/nr/national_register_fundamentals.htm

- federal investment tax credits
 - preservation easements to nonprofit organizations
 - alternatives to the International Building Code fire and life safety code
- involvement from the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation when a Federal agency project may affect historic property
 - information on the care and maintenance of your historic property through various Preservation Briefs and Tech Notes
 - opportunities to network with other historic property owners, tour historic areas, or chat with preservationists through conferences, workshops, and preservation organizations
 - the opportunity to celebrate your listing by ordering a bronze plaque that distinguishes your property as listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Listing a property on the National Register places no obligations on private property owners. There are no restrictions on the use, treatment, transfer, or disposition of private property as long as there are no federal monies attached to the property. National Register listing does not lead to public acquisition or require public access. For individual properties, a property will not be listed if the owner objects, or for districts, where a majority of property owners object. National Register listing does not automatically invoke local historic district zoning or local landmark designation.

The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program offers a 20% tax credit for the rehabilitation of income-producing historic structures. This program has been quite successful in promoting private investment in historic buildings for things such as stores, offices, and rental housing. Owners of National Historic Register properties may apply for this credit on rehabilitation costs.⁵

Inventorying historic structures serves to document the importance of that site and its relevance to the history of the community. Both technical and financial assistance are available through NHDHR to New Hampshire communities for inventorying historical structures; to be eligible however, requires that the community has an established heritage commission.

In 2002 the New Hampshire legislature acknowledged that many of the state's old barns and other farm outbuildings are important local scenic landmarks and help tell the story of New Hampshire's agricultural heritage. Yet many of these historic structures are being demolished or not repaired because of the adverse impact of property taxes. RSA 79-D encourages barn owners to maintain and repair their buildings by granting them specific tax relief and assuring them that assessments will not be increased as a result of new repair work.

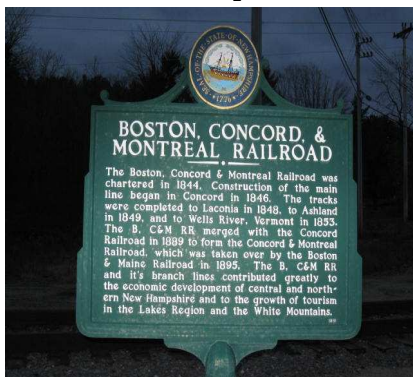
⁵ National Parks Service <http://www.nps.gov/history/tax.htm> and <http://www.nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives.htm> (accessed December 30, 2011).

The program is strictly voluntary on the part of the property owner and combines statewide eligibility criteria and guidelines with decision-making and implementation at the local level. Any owner of a historic barn or other farm building over 75 years old may seek relief by applying to the Select board to grant a discretionary preservation easement and by agreeing to maintain the structure in keeping with its historic integrity and character during the term of the easement.

If, after a public hearing, the Select board determines that the proposed preservation of the structure is consistent with the purpose of the law, it may acquire an easement on the structure for a minimum of ten years and grant tax relief within a range of a 25 to 75 percent reduction of the structure's full assessed value. Maintaining and repairing the building will not result in an increase in its assessed value for property tax purposes.⁶

In 2006 the New Hampshire Legislature enacted RSA 79-E enabling communities to provide tax relief incentives for community revitalization projects. If after adopting an incentive program at Town Meeting, the community determines that substantially rehabilitating an underutilized structure would “enhance the town center with respect to its economic activity, cultural or historic character, sense of community, or in-town residential uses that contribute to economic or social viability”, then the community may grant tax relief to the property owner *on the value of the upgrades* for up to five years. Additional tax relief can be made available for historic structures.

The New Hampshire Preservation Alliance is another resource for local preservation efforts with an emphasis on private efforts. They provide strategic coaching, technical assistance, planning grants, and other services to property owners and civic leaders. These services include workshops for homeowners, training for heritage commissions, matching funds to assist with historic barn assessments, and their staff can meet with community leaders to discuss legal and funding issues.⁷



The NH Division of Historical Resources manages the Historical Highway Markers program jointly with the NH Department of Transportation.⁸ Individuals, groups, or the town may petition for an historical marker. A limited amount of state funds are set aside each year for these markers; the nominating entity may be asked to pay for the marker once state funding is used up. Each marker costs

⁶ New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources http://www.nh.gov/nhdhr/programs/barn_property_tax.html (accessed December 30, 2011).

⁷ New Hampshire Preservation Alliance http://www.nhpreservation.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2&Itemid=118 (accessed November 10, 2011).

⁸ New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources, <http://www.nh.gov/nhdhr/markers/> (accessed January 6, 2011).

approximately \$1,800. Two New Hampshire Historical Highway Markers identify special locations in Ashland, one for Dr. Whipple at the Memorial Park and the other at the Railroad Station⁹.

9.2.4 Issues and Challenges

The Historical Resources chapter of the 1984 Master Plan had four recommendations and the Goals and Objectives from the 1997 Enterprise Plan echoed these same recommendations. Progress has been made on some of these items but several have yet to be completed.

- The 1984 Master Plan included an extensive inventory of the town's historical structures along with a recommendation to expand and update it. This inventory is a valuable resource to the town and is maintained by the Historical Society as a document separate from the master plan.
- As noted above, St. Mark's Church and Parish House have been added to the National Register. The Rueben Whitten House and Ashland Freight Depot have not.
- Several preservation, enhancement, and rehabilitation efforts have occurred in the past two decades. Such efforts could be extended to additional structures in town.
- A comprehensive history of Ashland has yet to be written.

This is an opportunity for the Historical Society to explore and address the various options that exist for it. Challenges include establishing an appropriate means for passing along local history so that it does not simply reside with a few key individuals, prioritizing the group's efforts, and coordinating with other entities in town to effectively use limited resources.

In the years ahead the town will face new challenges as it considers how best to retain elements of its history and make it relevant to the citizens and visitors of today and tomorrow. Establishing effective working relationships between various town entities and clearly identifying local priorities are essential steps in ensuring that important elements of the town's history are passed on to future generations.

Members of the Historical Society are kept busy maintaining all three of its museums. They are also active in the fundraising for maintenance, promotion, and outreach associated with these museums. For a community its size, Ashland is unique in having three museums in town; but it is difficult for them all to be supported with limited attendance. Outreach and publicity are essential for the survival and growth of such entities.

The town should ensure that historical issues are considered in local land use planning. Currently the communication between the Planning Board and the Historical Society is sporadic; they should find ways to communicate and coordinate some of their efforts.

⁹ New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources http://www.nh.gov/nhdhr/markers/markers_map.html (accessed February 13, 2012).

There are numerous historic structures in downtown Ashland. Many property owners may not be aware of the opportunities available to them for preservation, restoration, and revitalization.

9.3 CULTURAL RESOURCES

9.3.1 Cultural Resources Defined

A cultural resource can be thought of as something that serves to enhance the sense of place, traditions, heritage, or values of the community. It could encompass the arts, service groups, festivals, and other opportunities for people to come together and share or interact with others.

There are several reasons for including cultural resources in a master plan. Cultural resources can be an important part of the fabric of a community, something that helps bind members together. In some cases, cultural resources have clear links to the economic vitality of the community.

9.3.2 Cultural Connections

In discussions with members of the Ashland Planning Board, it was noted that Memorial Park, churches, and the current Ashland Elementary School are places where individuals and families gather. Additionally, there is the Booster Club, the community center run by the Parks and Recreation Department that hosts several organizations and community events.



Ashland Booster Clubhouse

Community organizations include the Woman's Club, the American Legion and its Auxiliary, the Rebekahs, Friends of the Library, the Ashland Community Center, the Ashland Garden Club, as well as the Historical Society, which hosts up to half a dozen public programs each year and runs its three museums. Events in town include the Fourth of July and Halloween Parades, Christmas Night in Ashland, the Town-wide Yard Sale, and the Circle Triathlon - a fundraising event for a program that serves underprivileged girls in New Hampshire.

For other cultural events, such as concerts, lectures, and theatrical performances residents and visitors need to travel to nearby Plymouth, Meredith, or Gilford.

9.3.3 Issues and Challenges

Ashland's residents and visitors have access to a number of cultural and social opportunities. The nature of these opportunities has changed over time with many activities happening in neighboring communities. Like much of Grafton County, Ashland's residents have become older; the median age of its residents has increased, from 32.6 years in 1990 to 43.1 years in 2010. Nevertheless, Ashland remains one of the "younger" communities in the Lakes Region; less than 17% of its residents are over 65 years of age.

A challenge seems to be how best to attract and retain volunteers/members of various community organizations. Some factors in this may include the times when groups meet, the limited time available to households with parent(s) working outside the home, and changing methods for younger people to learn about groups and their activities. Another point that was mentioned during discussions is that like many Lakes Region communities, Ashland has a couple of distinct demographic groups; those that have been here for many years and those who are new to the area, those who are older and those with young families. Each group may have different needs; it is often easier for older folks to meet during the day, while those with young families need to consider childcare.

9.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

While there are some issues and challenges regarding historic resources that Ashland faces, there are a number of opportunities for the town. There do appear to be several resources available to assist the town, the Historical Society, and individuals as they strive to be good stewards of Ashland's history and culture.

1. Enhance the communication and understanding between the Planning Board and Historical Society and assist with implementing Recommendations 5, 6, 7, and 8, the town should consider forming a Heritage Commission (RSA 673:4-a, 674:44-a-d).
2. If the town decides not to form a Heritage Commission at this time, the Planning Board should seek to retain a member who is also active in the Historical Society and will actively serve as an intermediary between the two entities, giving regular updates on the activities of each to the other.
3. Members of the Planning Board should gain a greater awareness and fuller understanding of the funding, restoration, and development opportunities associated with historical properties that are available.
4. After considering the various tasks that need to be done, the Historical Society should establish its short- and long-term priorities and communicate these to the town.

5. The inventory of Historical Sites should be updated and maintained as a separate document by the Historical Society with a copy on file at the library and one in the town hall.
6. Encourage the nomination of structures for listing on the New Hampshire Register of Historic Places.
7. Utilize RSA 79-D “Discretionary Preservation Easements” to encourage the maintenance of barns and farms.
8. Consider adopting a Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive Program through RSA 79-E to encourage rehabilitation of structures in the downtown area.
9. The Historical Society should work towards developing a comprehensive history of the town of Ashland.
10. The Historical Society should develop and promote a more detailed Historic Walking Tour of the downtown area, expanding upon the brochure developed by the Revitalization Committee.
11. Develop displays of old photographs in historical context to be installed in various municipal buildings and businesses.
12. Support the efforts of the town Recreation Department to develop and promote activities that bring residents and visitors together throughout the year.
13. Explore development of Historic District and/or Neighborhood Heritage District.

Figure 9-3: Historical Resources Map - Ashland, NH

