

HISTORY AND CULTURE

Bradford has a long and rich history, which is preserved today in the many historic and cultural resources still existing within the town. These historic, cultural and architectural treasures reflect the persons and events which help to define the town as a cultural group. They provide a link to the past, as well as important insights to present conditions, and should be used as a guide to the future.

As a community grows and develops, the gradual erosion of its historical character can happen with the accumulation of incremental changes to buildings and places. However, it is evident from the Community Survey and Community Vision Session that historical preservation is of importance to the residents of Bradford. Preserving and fostering these historic and cultural resources will ensure that Bradford continues to be a place where residents and visitors want to live and visit.

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight local historic and cultural resources, describe why they are significant, and provide the resources, recommendations, and tools to plan for the preservation, protection, and enhancement of those resources.

Bradford’s historic, cultural and architectural resources are highly valued and enjoyed by residents and are continually preserved and protected for future generations to come.

SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY INPUT

Reviewing the results of the Community Survey and the input gathered at the Community Visioning Session indicate residents’ high value and appreciation of the historic resources in Bradford, including the Town Hall and surrounding historic village district. Other top priorities mentioned for future preservation include the original meeting house and school house, also located in the historic district.

Approximately 44% of residents in the Community Survey indicated that they support requiring new construction in the historic district overlay to have designs in keeping with the historic character of Bradford, while a smaller 22% support this throughout all zoning districts in town. 76% are supportive of requiring new retail construction of greater than three storefronts to have a traditional Main Street feel rather than the look of a traditional strip mall. Additionally, 51% percent of residents indicated that they would like to see additional measures related to historic preservation in town, while 21% were not in favor and 28% had no opinion.

Also gathered through the Community Survey, 50% and 48%, respectively were supportive of designating Rowe Mountain Road and Center Road as scenic. Other roads mentioned for scenic designation included Massacum Ave., Sunset Hill road, Jones Road, County Road, and West Road.

BRIEF HISTORICAL PROFILE OF BRADFORD

In 1765, the Masonian Proprietors granted “Number Two”, as Bradford was called for many years, to John Pierce and George Jeffery. It was not until 1771 that William Presbury became the first settler in

the town. After the end of the American Revolution, a number of men from Bradford, Massachusetts, settled in the town and called their new home “New Bradford” or “Bradfordton”. In 1787 the townspeople petitioned the General Court for incorporation, and so Bradford was formed, made up of New Bradford, Washington Gore, and a portion of Washington ceded to Bradford by a vote of its inhabitants.

Prior to settlement, the town had been subdivided by surveyors Hubartus Neal in 1773, Henry Gerrish in 1781, and Stephen Hoyt, Jr. in 1809. The minimum lot sizes at that time were all in excess of 100 acres. Roads and common areas for churches, schools, cemeteries, and meeting houses were laid out and reserved for public use. The cost of land was the clearing and building of a residence. Taxes for making and repairing roads were a penny an acre for three years, and these taxes could be worked out by the settlers. The principal settlement was built at Bradford Center, with lesser settlements at Bradford Corner, Bradford Mills, Hoyt’s Corner, Shattuck’s Corner, and Carter’s Four Corners. Land outside these settlements was used for agriculture.

In 1850 the railroad came to Bradford and maintained a railroad terminal off Main Street until 1961. The railroad united Bradford Corner and Bradford Mills into a new downtown to become known as Bradford Village. In 1863, the Town Hall was moved from Bradford Center to the new Bradford Village, and the lesser settlements ceased to grow. Hotels and inns, livery stables and commercial establishments developed on the shore of Lake Massasecum and the tourist and summer populations in Bradford grew. Gradually, the number and size of farming enterprises shrank, and an increase was seen in lumbering. When the railroad slowed in 1954, and finally ceased running in 1961, the Bradford dairy industry began its decline. It was at this point in the mid-1950’s that Bradford established its first planning board.

The town continues to treasure its rural character and scenic beauty, and over the course of its history, town leaders and residents have worked to ensure that those qualities are maintained. Through continuing the introduction of Bradford residents and visitors to the rich history of the town, Bradford’s past will continue to be passed on from one generation to the next.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Many of the historic and cultural sites noted in this section are depicted on the ***Historic and Cultural Resources Map***.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation’s official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation. Authorized under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register is part of a national program that coordinates and supports public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect our historic and archeological resources. Properties listed in the Register include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. The National Register is administered by the National Park Service, which is part of the US Department of the Interior.

In order to promote places of historic importance through National Historic Register designation, a research and writing effort is required of townspeople or consultants. Once a property is listed, the benefits are: recognition that a property is of significance to the Nation, the State, or the community;

consideration in the planning for Federal or federally assisted projects; eligibility for Federal tax benefits; and qualification for Federal assistance for historic preservation, when funds are available.

Three sites in the Town of Bradford are included on the National Historic Register, the Bement Covered Bridge and the Bradford Town Hall.

- *Bement Covered Bridge* – The Bement Covered Bridge, which spans the west branch of the Warner River, was originally built in 1854. Colonel Stephen H. Long is said to have built the bridge entirely out of hemlock. In 1947 the bridge was deemed unsafe by the town and repairs were made. In 1969, the Town of Bradford and the State reconstructed the historic landmark. The Bement Bridge stands today on Center Road.
- *Bradford Town Hall* – The Bradford Town Hall was constructed in Bradford Center in 1797, and served not only as a meeting place to conduct town business, but also for religious organizations in the community. In 1830 the Baptist Church was built in Bradford Village, and in 1838 the Congregational Church was constructed, leaving the Town Hall solely to the town. In 1863 the Town Hall was dismantled at its location in the Center and moved to its present location on Main Street, where it was raised, and a first floor added. Here the Town Hall provided 2 classrooms and was used as a school house until 1938 when the new Bradford Central School was opened. In recent years, renovations have been completed through a grant received from the Land & Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP). Since the grant was awarded, local fundraising has allowed this work to continue. Recent and future work will continue to meet the Secretary of the Interior’s standards for the treatment of historic properties.
- *Bradford Center Meetinghouse* – The Bradford Center Meetinghouse was originally constructed in 1838 for religious use in response to state legislation mandating the separation of church and state. Additional construction occurred in 1881 when the singing seats were removed, the choir box was placed near the pulpit, and the balcony gallery was converted into a vestry. Located on Rowe Mountain Road, the Meetinghouse today is used as a place of worship and for community activities and private events.

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE MARKER

New Hampshire’s State Highway historical marker program is administered by the NH Division of Historical Resources (NHDHR). Marker requests are reviewed by the State Historic Preservation Officer; costs of the markers are borne either by the Transportation Fund or the sponsoring municipality/organization. Requests for markers must include draft text for the marker, research and justification, and a petition signed by at least 20 persons. Bradford has one New Hampshire marker:

- *Bradford Center* – This Common was designated the geographical center of town in 1791, and at one time was bordered by the Town Pound, constructed in 1789, the District One School, built in 1793, and the Congregational Society Meetinghouse, dedicated in 1838. This is also the original site of the first Meetinghouse in Bradford. Erected in 1797, the Meetinghouse was dismantled in 1863 and moved to Bradford Village, where it is now known as the Town Hall.

LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

In 2005, the town designated a Historic District Overlay for the Old Bradford Center. The purpose of the overlay is to preserve a district in the Town of Bradford that reflects elements of its cultural, social,

economic, political and architectural history. The designation will not only conserve the property, but will also promote the use of the district for the education and pleasure of the citizens of Bradford. The District encompasses the Bradford Center Meetinghouse, the Old Schoolhouse, the Center Burial Ground and the Town Pound, and requires approval for activities in the historic district.

The formation of the Historic District also called for the establishment of a Historic District Commission which is comprised of representatives from the Friends of the Bradford Center Meetinghouse, the Bradford Historical Society, the Bradford Cemetery Commission, and the Bradford Conservation Commission, along with a member of the Board of Selectmen.

At the 2012 Town Meeting, residents voted to designate 3.6 acres of town property with frontage on East Main Street as a historic village area. This portion of the Marshall property includes 75 foot right of way along the west of the lot from East Main Street to the rear north-west corner, assuring the town’s continued access to the rear 18 acres of the Marshall property.

LOCAL HISTORICAL MARKERS

Local markers are erected by the townspeople to commemorate particular events, or to celebrate the uniqueness of the community and its people. Sixteen local markers are known to exist in the Town of Bradford, as displayed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Local Historic Markers

Local Historical Marker	Location	Type of Marker
Lafayette Plaque	East Main Street	Plaque on Stone
Honor Roll	Town Hall	Plaque
County Marker	Corner of Merrimack, Hillsborough & Sullivan Counties	Granite Post
Bradford Springs	East Washington Road	Plaque
School District #1 – Center School	Rowe Mountain Road	Wood
School District #2 – West School	West Road	Wood
School District #3 – Mills School	High Street	Wood
School District #4 – Pond School	Forest Street	Wood
School District #5 – Colby School	Carter Hill Road	Wood
School District #6 – Plains School	Fairgrounds Road	Wood
School District #7 – Andrews School	Dunfield Road	Wood
School District #8 – Corner School	East Main Street	Wood
School District #9 – Village School	West Main Street	Wood
School District #10 – Springs School	East Washington Road	Wood
School District #11 – Jewett School	Juncture of Rowe Mountain Road and Forest Street	Wood
School District #12 – Hoyt School	West Road	Wood

Source: Subcommittee Input

It was noted that Carr’s Store should be considered as a location for a historical marker in the near future. When the railroad was thriving, Bradford provided the connection between Vermont and New Hampshire, and the Carr Store served those railroad passengers and workers passing through town, in addition to the residents of Bradford. First opened in 1837, the Carr Store was owned by five generations of that family for 136 years.

LOCAL HISTORIC SITES OR STRUCTURES

It is important to note the sites and structures of historical significance to the town that may not be

noted on the National Register or with a State Marker. These sites are of importance to the local community, and have helped to form Bradford as it is today.

Table 4.2: Significant Historic Sites and Structures in Bradford

Historic Site or Structure	Location
Bradford Center Congregational Church	Rowe Mountain Road
Bradford Center School	Rowe Mountain Road
Grange Hall	West Main Street
The Brick Mill	West Main Street
Bradford Pines	Junction of Route 103 and Main Street
First Baptist Church	West Main Street
Bradford Springs	East Washington Road
Town Pound	Rowe Mountain Road
Brown Memorial Library	West Main Street
Bradford Bog	East Washington Road
Lafayette Square	East Main Street
Dodge's Store	East Main Street
Massasecum Casino	Massasecum Lake Road
Brown-Shattuck Field	Cilley Lane
Bradford Hotel Site	East Washington Road

Source: Subcommittee Input

CEMETERIES

As discussed in the Community Facilities Chapter, there are 18 cemeteries in town, with many still active. The oldest burial ground in Bradford is thought to be Burial Hill, where many of the first settlers are buried. The earliest remaining stone is that of Sarah Cressy, who died in 1797. Cemeteries in town are listed in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Public and Private Cemeteries

Cemetery	Location
Ames Family Cemetery	Route 103
Bagley/Hadley	Sunset Hill Road
Baptist Church Cemetery	West Main Street
Burial Hill Cemetery	Cheney Road
Center Burial Ground	West Road
Cheney Cemetery	Cheney Road
Colby Cemetery	Day Pond Road
Cummings/Pierce Cemetery	Pierce Road
Durrell Family Cemetery	East Washington Road
Eaton Cemetery	West Road
Howlett Cemetery	Howlett Road
Marshall/Collins Family Cemetery	Pleasant Valley Road
New Pond Cemetery	Lake Road
Old Pond Cemetery	Route 114
Pleasant Hill Cemetery	Water Street
Presbury Cemetery	County Road
Sunny Plains Cemetery	Old Warner Road
Union Cemetery	Jewett Road

Source: Town of Bradford Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2012

The Bradford Cemetery Commission oversees the maintenance of the public cemeteries in town. The Commission manages the regular upkeep of these cemeteries as well as the enforcement of cemetery rules and regulations. All cemeteries and graves can be found on www.findagrave.com.

MILLS

Bradford, like many New England communities, was once the home of several mills located along the Warner River, Lake Todd, and the many small brooks in the town. The Brick Mill, which stands at the west end of Main Street, is thought to be Bradford's oldest standing business structure. Built sometime around 1800, the grist mill operated through the century. In 1895, dynamos were installed at the mill to produce electricity, and the business was sold to the New Hampshire Power Company in 1926. Today, the Brick Mill is a private residence. There are very few remains of Bradford's other mills to be found in the town today.

HOTELS

With its beautiful scenery and natural setting, Bradford became a popular destination for visitors. Several hotels and boarding houses operated in the town throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, and some still stand today. The Gillis House was opened in 1897 and has entertained visitors ever since. It changed hands several times, and in 1954 was renamed the Candlelite Inn before now operating as the Bradford Village Inn. The Pleasant View Farm, now known as the Rosewood Country Inn, first opened its doors in 1896. At one time, as many as 85 guests could be accommodated at the farm. Edward Messer and his wife, and then their son, operated Pleasant View until 1956.

COVERED BRIDGES

Covered bridges once played an integral part in the transportation network of the 19th century. Today they are recognized for their beauty and uniqueness. Bradford is one of the few towns in New Hampshire which has an existing covered bridge, the Bement Bridge. Others which existed in Bradford and have been lost include the Henniker Road Bridge, the Cheney Bridge, and the Wheeler Bridge.

STONEWALLS

The early settlers to Bradford, as to most New Hampshire towns, quickly found that one of their best yearly harvests was the crop of rocks that emerged each spring to dot the fields they hoped to plow. As they carried these stones away from their fields they soon discovered they could use the rocks to build boundary walls to separate their fields from one another and from their neighbors.

In the 18th century farmers marked off small fields surrounded by stonewalls. These small plots were well suited to the intensive farming of that era. However, in the 19th and 20th century as farmers began to use larger equipment, the larger horse drawn machines needed bigger fields, so many stonewalls were torn down and rebuilt.

In planning for the future, we must also honor our past and certainly the thousands of hours of back breaking work that our forefathers invested in these old walls should be remembered. Volunteers might think of working in teams to restore a few sections of long neglected walls along some of our scenic dirt roads to remind the coming generations of a the skill of our ancestors and as silent reminders of a long ago tradition. Grants and other funding methods should also be pursued for restoration or preservation.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN BRADFORD

There are a number of active organizations in Bradford that host many cultural and historical events and activities each year. From parades to art exhibits, these events are important in adding to Bradford's community character.

BRADFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Founded in 1976, the Bradford Historical Society maintains archives of historic structures and events throughout Bradford's history. Over 70 albums and papers with many artifacts from the town's past provide reference for families, scholars and townspeople. The Society's aim is to promote understanding of the town's roots through collecting and preserving, research, and education. Several free programs are sponsored each year for the public.

The Historical Society also maintains and owns four buildings in Bradford, including the Tin Shop, Smithy, and the Old Post Office on East Main Street, as well as the 1793 Center School House at Bradford Center. They have coordinated activities and information with the Conservation Commission and the Friends of the Bradford Meeting House.

RURAL HERITAGE CONNECTION OF BRADFORD

The top priority of the Rural Heritage Connection is to complete restoration of the Bradford Town Hall. During this process, restoration standards will continue to adhere to the standards of the existing LCHIP grant, which will not only preserve the historical integrity of this landmark but also increase the town's competitiveness for future grants related to this project. .

BROWN MEMORIAL LIBRARY

The Brown Memorial library, built and donated to the town in 1932, stands on West Main Street, across from the Town Hall. The library, in addition to loaning out books, videos and audio books, also hosts Book-to-Movie discussions, displays art exhibits, organizes a summer reading program for children, and offers several book sales each year. Additionally, the library hosts many other community events, including a Christmas Tree Lighting, writing workshops, and others.

FRIENDS OF THE BRADFORD CENTER MEETINGHOUSE

The Friends of the Bradford Center Meetinghouse is very active in the preservation of Bradford's historical treasures. In particular, members of the group have worked to preserve the Meetinghouse in Bradford Center. In 2004 and 2005, the group continued a project to restore the interior of the Meetinghouse, originally built in 1838.

BRADFORD COMMUNITY CHURCH

The Bradford Community Church on Main Street, previously recognized as the First Baptist Church, was dedicated in 1830. The building was remodeled several times to accommodate the needs of the growing congregation, and the church is still active today. The building and grounds are used extensively for meetings, performances, and other gatherings by a number of community organizations. Additionally, the Church hosts its own wide-ranging activities and services which include the community food pantry, and weekly and monthly study groups such as the Men's and Women's Fellowship, AA meetings, and Sunday school for children and youth.

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

The Bradford Conservation Commission was established in 1969. Its purpose is to compile information on the town's watersheds and other natural resources, to become familiar with the ever-changing State and Federal regulations concerning such, and to advise the Selectmen, Planning Board, and other local committees and boards on environmental issues. In addition to assisting the Planning Board and other local committees, the Conservation Commission manages the Bradford Bog area as well as the Aiken Town Forest off of County Road and Pearl Forest off of West Road. The Commission hosts educational programming for the local community and also actively maintains hiking trails, maps for which can be found online or at the library.

LAKE MASSASECUM IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

The Lake Massasecum Improvement Association (LMIA) was organized in 1929. Its object is to provide a means by which property owners and other residents may organize their interest and direct their efforts towards the protection and improvement of Lake Massasecum and the property and general welfare of the people of the lake. The LMIA membership is comprised of residents of Bradford and property owners living on or near Lake Massasecum.

LAKE TODD ASSOCIATION

In 2004, the Lake Todd Village District was designated. The Lake Todd Association was organized to protect the lake and to monitor use of facilities in the area. The Lake Todd Village District, which includes properties bordering the Lake in both Bradford and neighboring Newbury, is intended to preserve historic structures as well as the natural features of the region.

VETERAN'S ORGANIZATIONS

While Bradford does not have a post of the American Legion, members of the Warner American Legion Post #39 are active within Bradford.

SPECIAL EVENTS AND CELEBRATIONS

The Annual Bradford Fourth of July Celebration is a day long affair, including midway, parade, 5K road race, barbeque and fireworks. This annual festival is supported by the town, private organizations, and most community organizations in Bradford.

During the Christmas season, many local organizations and churches hold annual events, including a tree lighting in the town and a Christmas Eve service held by the Friends of the Bradford Center Meetinghouse at the Meeting House.

The Bradford Historical Society and the Friends of the Bradford Center Meetinghouse host many weekend events and concerts throughout the year.

In addition to the annual events held in Bradford, there are a number of other cultural and community activities that occur on a regular basis. These include concerts, craft fairs, fishing tournaments, flare nights, among other events. Bradford has a number of very active community organizations which consistently host events that are enjoyed by all.

HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS OR STUDIES

It is important for members of the community to know where the history of Bradford is best documented. The most complete resource on the history of Bradford is *Two Hundred Plus: Bradford*,

New Hampshire, in Retrospect published in 1976 by the Bradford Bicentennial Committee. A more recent publication, *Early Families of Bradford*, published by the Bradford Historical Society in 2004, provides a complete genealogy of Bradford through the Civil War. These volumes are an asset to the community, and are a wonderful resource for the town to remember its history.

In 2012, “Bradford and Warner,” by Laurie Buchar and Rebecca Courser, was published. This book gives a glimpse into the history of the two towns, including vintage photographs from the Bradford and Warner Historical Societies.

SUMMARY

Town commissions, officials, agencies and boards, as well as private developers, need to direct their concerns to where we have been and where we are proceeding. The history of the town can act as a guide to this end. The intent of this chapter is not to repeat town history, but rather give a synopsis of what historical and cultural sites and resources exist in the town.

The primary goals of the Historic and Cultural Resources Chapter are to identify the important historic resources in the town, to ensure that they are preserved in perpetuity, and to educate local residents of their importance.

OBJECTIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OBJECTIVE 1: To appropriately guide future town development by identifying historic sites and resources that are integral to the community and character of Bradford.

- Require that developers contact the NH Division of Historical Resources to ascertain if any known archeological sites are within the vicinity of new development.
- Encourage developers and landowners, by promotion and education, to consider preserving the historic and cultural resources found upon the landscape.
- Require within the Site Plan Review and Subdivision Regulations that developers identify the historic and cultural resources of the property.
- Encourage the Planning Board to adopt architectural/aesthetic guidelines that retain the town’s rural and historic character in the current Historic District and other areas as deemed appropriate.
- Encourage the Planning Board to adopt regulations that would identify the Historical Society, the Historic District Commission, the Conservation Commission, and the Cemetery Commission as an abutter when a site plan is submitted in the Historic District.

OBJECTIVE 2: To develop measures for retaining the visual quality and character of the landscape of Bradford.

- Identify and designate scenic roads within the community to protect shade trees, stonewalls, and other cultural landscape features.
- Protect and preserve stonewalls along roads and property lines, and encourage landowners to consider retaining or rebuilding stonewalls during alteration or development.

OBJECTIVE 3: To raise awareness of the historic resources in the community.

- Continue to install plaques and historic markers on historic structures throughout town.
- Encourage town administration to distribute materials to property owners and builders relating to historic and cultural resources and grant opportunities for preserving these features.
- Communicate with the NH Division of Historical Resources on a regular basis to obtain current information on resource preservation that can be disseminated to the public.
- Coordinate a town-wide survey of historic structures.