

## CHAPTER IV: HISTORIC RESOURCES

### 1 INTRODUCTION/ HISTORIC OVERVIEW

A plan for Claremont's future would not be complete without a look to its past. In terms of planning, historic structures and sites should be considered an integral part of the community's environmental resources for, like other resources of this nature, they are non-renewable. It is the responsibility of each community to plan a program of historic and cultural protection based on local needs and desires.

The evolution of Claremont's architectural heritage can be seen in the traditional periods of national and regional styles. The geography and economic (agrarian and industrial) development distributed the population at different times as farmers and industrial workers. This migration is easy to see. The geography of Claremont has also determined its' residential neighborhoods, and its' mercantile and factory neighborhoods. A transition occurred when the wealthy farmers built second homes on Broad, Summer and Pleasant Streets. Less wealthy farmers who also worked in the mills and had children attending Stevens High School also built modest homes some at the west end of Summer Street.

As a land grant community, Claremont was originally divided in parcels of land used for common land, farming, and timbering. Sawmills, gristmills, and related industries were developed at the same time. West Claremont with its' fertile land was the center of this development. However, farms were spread out along the banks of Sugar River and the slopes of Green Mountain. The oldest existing houses from that era are on Clay Hill Road at the west end of town and Winter Street at the northeast end of town. Some early houses on the high road (North St.) remain or have been altered or moved within the neighborhood with a great destruction of historic property both old and contemporary as a part of an urban renewal project. The downtown center is traditionally a mix of industrial, mercantile and residential. About the time of General La Fayette's visit to the Tremont Hotel (located in what is now Opera House Square,) and other businesses, livery stables and "out houses or privies" in back of these buildings, the area became known as "dog hollow". The term was used for many years even after the reorganization of the area and the building of a sewer system about the time of the building of the current City Hall/Opera House.

The Episcopalians/Roman Catholics had settled and built their churches in West Claremont while the Congregationalists had built their church at the south end of town near what is now Drapers' Corners at the end of Maple Avenue. The church, in true colonial tradition was also used as the town hall. Both the Union Episcopal Church and the Congregational church were moved to the corner of Tremont Square (Now Opera House Square) and the head of Broad Street to become a focal point. It was altered architecturally to become the town hall. Broad Street was a mixture of the first bank, a small shoe factory, churches, but primarily fine homes. Pleasant Street also had fine homes at the south end beyond the Congregational church with shops, professional offices and the Post office at the north end. After fire destroyed the Tremont House, Claremont gained a fine square and a new hotel on the north side with new banks and the new library around the corner. The building of Stevens High school on Broad Street in 1868, allowed space for a town library who's core collection was a gift of Mr. Fisk. But, soon the school needed the space and the library was moved to Sullivan Street. With a gift from J.P. Morgan, Fisk Free Library moved back on Broad Street to its' current location. The common land on Broad Street was used for a park and was divided by paths and roads establishing a very refined boulevard, as it became a civic, cultural, educational and spiritual center. The Square, Pleasant and Broad gave Claremont the business/residential mix that was identified in the Historic District and gives the leadership of Claremont a difficult balancing act to maintain an attractive and thriving city center.

During the industrial boom in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Claremont was fortunate to have a builder/architect, Hira Beckwith. His building design, primarily Queen Anne Style, was used for business blocks, civic buildings and factories. It gave Claremont an architectural unity unknown to any other town in New Hampshire or Vermont during the Victorian Period. That architectural unity held until the late 1960s. It had been slowly destroyed by business sprawl and neglect until the late 1970s until the establishment of the Historic District Commission. Current city planning has incorporated the historic structures of Claremont for consideration in citywide development and long range planning. With many historic pieces still in place, important buildings of all these periods will be identified in this report.

## **2 HISTORIC SITES & STRUCTURE**

### ***2.1 Inventory***

The inventory list that follows is a small list and doesn't encompass all historic properties but merely gently covers a few of the significant structures more well known to the area residents that are participating in the Master Plan writing. It is the intention of the committee to have one of the goals of the Master Plan include a more complete listing and research of the historic buildings and sites prior to the next update of the chapter.

#### **Tremont St./ Opera House Square**

##### **Masonic Hall**

Interior design by Francis Marsden who also designed the Nugget Cinema and Plaza in Hanover. Claremont City Hall/Opera House designed by Lamb and Rich of New York, Henry Rich Architect, Hira Beckwith builder. Replaced original building designed and built by Ichabod Hitchcock and renovated by Hira Beckwith when moved from Drapers Corner.

Claremont National Bank building designed and built by Hira Beckwith

Union Block designed and built by Hira Beckwith and home to his business offices. Brown stone and terra cotta decorations were removed and destroyed in the 1990s.

Bailey Block: Home of Bailey Silver Smiths, the second home of The Fiske Free Library and The American Band. Original building altered by Hira Beckwith.

##### **Tumble in Diner**

Hotel Claremont: Designed and built by Hira Beckwith. Renovated by Hira Beckwith after a fire, dining room torn off and building altered in the 1990's

Opera House Square: Redesigned in the 1990's with federal revenue sharing funds. An antique fountain with a granite pool replaced the watering trough (moved to Mountain View Cemetery.) using a bequest from a Claremont citizen to have a place for dogs, cats and horses to drink.

Broad Street Park: War Memorial Park with a bronze Civil War Memorial figure atop a base sculpted by Martin Milmore. The original soldier bronze from which many other such monuments were copied or modified by other sculptors all over the United States.

## **Broad Street: East Side**

Claremont Fire Station: designed and built by Hira Beckwith

Universalist/Unitarian Church: Steeple, interior alterations with stained glass windows added using Hira Beckwith as architect using an earlier 1800's building.

Claremont Savings Bank: Sight of several important historic homes: the only Gothic wooden house in Claremont, twin brick Gothic houses, a Stick-Style Queen Anne mansion designed and built by Hira Beckwith and a Neo-Classical brick mansion.

Fiske Free Library: Built by Hira Beckwith from plans and a bequest from Andrew Carnegie.

Trinity Church: Altered by the hurricane of 1938 when it lost its steeple

Goodwin Community Center: Original home designed and built by Hira Beckwith

Federal Post Office: Built as part of the WPA, it replaced the original post office located on Pleasant Street.

Stringer Funeral Home: Fine example of the Neo-Classical style

First Bank of Claremont now an Apartment house once offices of Charles Spanos in the Neo-Classical Style.

Clarke-Mortenson: Neo-Classical/neo-Colonial house owned by the Upham family as one of their in-town residences.

Series of important historic homes on the east side of Broad Street

## **West side: South end**

Buckley and Zopf: Neo-Colonial mansion built as a town house for the owners of the "Goddard Mansion" Daughter of Mr. Maynard

Howard Dunn Building: Italianate House design and built by Hira Beckwith

Moose Home: Remains of the Parker Eclectic Baroque mansion designed and built by Hira Beckwith (Beckwith's sister was Josiah Parkers wife) Fine neo-classical house

Paran Stevens' house: anti-bellum neo-classical revival style

## **Summer Street**

Stevens High School: Original building designed and built by Hira Beckwith

Dow Building: One of the finest examples of Neo-Classical/Federal architecture in New England. Copies of its Greek porch can be found in Hartland, VT and Old Deerfield, MA.

Upham house moved from Broad Street when Stevens High School was built. This is a fine example of the Neo-classical/Federal Style in wood.

Federal Brick House with Greek porch (removed)

Crandall House: Second Empire/Italianate Style house. This is the first example of a Hira Beckwith house, in collaboration with Mr. Freeman, in Claremont.

Elks Home: Designed and built by Hira Beckwith in the Queen Anne Style for a member of the Tyler family with a ball room on the third floor.

Four homes designed and built by Hira Beckwith and three homes altered and renovated by Mr. Beckwith starting with Century 21 (former home of Judge Colby) on the other side of Pleasant Street ending at the Hira Beckwith residence.

Hira Beckwith residence designed and built for himself in the High Queen Anne Style.

### **Prospect Street**

Otis Waite House

Queen Anne Style house at the head of Pearl Street

### **Glidden Street**

Connecticut River Bank: site of the first shoe factory in Claremont.

Michaud and Sammon: Early colonial home, one of a series of fine homes now parking lot and Veterans Club

### **Bailey Avenue**

First on the left was designed and built by Hira Beckwith  
Several other significant houses on the street include a Shingle house (Upham) and a Stucco house (Brooks).

### **Bond Street**

California bungalow

Italianate house designed and built by Hira Beckwith at the head of Green Street

### **Pleasant Street**

Bannon Pharmacy: Neo-Classical Nason mansion once surrounded by a garden designed by Olmstead with a companion garden at the Crandall house both of which now house a car service center/gas station.

Congregational Church built in the Neo-Gothic Style

A series of business blocks several of which were designed and built by Hira Beckwith and two of which contain relief sculptures in their facades listed with the Smithsonian Museum in Washington D.C.

### **Dog Hollow**

### **Mill District**

Several other properties exist in the historic district that are designated and protected by the Claremont Historic District Commission. A locally designated historic district is one of the most effective and comprehensive mechanisms to manage change in a historic area. Its purpose is to preserve the significant character of an area, while accommodating and managing change and new construction in accordance with regulations developed by local consensus.

Evidence of Claremont's past is not just located in the downtown area as seen in the list above. A 1968 SCS inventory reported historic Claremont sites all over the City including:

The junction of Sugar River and Connective River is one former living area of Native Americans 400-800 years ago.

Jarvis Hill road was the site of the original town building and school

Ashley's Ferry landing, now a public access to the Connecticut River was at one time the only means of crossing the River.

Tory Hole, a small secluded woodland valley, is so named because it is where the Tories hid from the Whigs.

Moody Farm on Arch Road off Route 12 once supplied horses for the U.S. Cavalry.

Moseley Bow Bridge over the Sugar River to the Mill district.

### **West Claremont**

Godfrey Cooke House

Tyler House – Clay Hill Road, Oldest standing farmhouse

### **Jarvis Hill**

Ralston Tavern – historic hostelry

Upham Homestead

Sargeant House

Colonial Homes from Baxter Upham book

### **Puckershire**

Colonial Farms

Site of "Rose land Dance Hall"

### **Lower/Beauregard Village**

Grist Mill home of an historic water turbine invented in Claremont. First saw and grist mill constructed in 1767.

Esterski Building  
Tontine  
Forman houses  
Site of Ide Brick Yard  
Site of Tory Hole

## **2.2 Preservation Methods**

There are various methods that can be used to encourage the preservation or restoration of historic resources. These include: 1) National Register of Historic Places; 2) local historic districts; 3) Certified Local Government program; 4) local heritage commissions; 5) historic building rehabilitation federal tax credits; 6) historic markers; 7) easements; 8) protection of archeological areas; 9) Scenic Road designation; 10) innovative land use controls; and 11) building code provisions.

Historic districting can be an effective technique for protecting the character of an area. Unlike zoning which focuses on land use, an historic district emphasizes exterior appearance and setting. Yet unlike site plan review, historic districts allow officials to exercise authority over construction and alteration of single family dwellings. However buildings alone need not comprise a district. Effective district preservation should involve streetscapes, landscapes, contributing views and view sheds as well as buildings. It should be noted that historic districting is not an appropriate method for protecting all historical resources in an area, especially where properties are widely scattered.

## **2.3 National Register of Historic Places – Benefits are as follows:**

- Recognition that a property is of significance to the nation, the state or the community
- Some protection from impacts caused by state or federally funded, licensed or assisted projects
- Eligibility for federal tax benefits if undertaking an approved rehabilitation project and the property is income-generating
- Special consideration or relief in application of access, building and safety codes
- Strong Marketing tool for owners and businesses

## **3 GOALS RELATED TO HISTORIC RESOURCES**

Preserving evidence of the past is one key to the future well-being of the community. Claremont's unique land use mix of an urban downtown with outlying farms and woodlands is in itself a reflection of the past. The mill buildings and farms are equally representative of Claremont's History.

**GOAL #1: COMPLETE A COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES FOR THE ENTIRE CITY INCLUDING BUILDING DIMENSIONS**

**GOAL #2: SAFEGUARD THE HERITAGE OF CLAREMONT BY PROVIDING FOR THE PROTECTION OF STRUCTURES AND AREAS REPRESENTING SIGNIFICANT ELEMENTS OF THE CITY'S CULTURAL, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY**

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** Seek grant funding for the maintenance of landmark signs within City government.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** Expand the historic landmark program by educating property owners as to the historic and aesthetic value of their properties, and by signing more properties.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** Secure funding for the City or Historical Society to print a Self Guided Walking Tour booklet outlining the historical sites and buildings in Claremont. The booklets would be available in various locations, e.g. the Library and City Hall, Visitor's Center.

**GOAL #3: ENCOURAGE THE REHABILITATION OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS THAT REFLECTS AND RESPECTS EACH BUILDINGS HISTORIC CHARACTER**

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** In accord with the mill history of Claremont, it would be appropriate, to designate space within one of the mill buildings, as they are developed, to provide a visual arts museum showing the town's waterfront development throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. This display could include still life photography memorabilia.

**GOAL #4: ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT THAT REFLECTS AND RESPECTS THE HISTORIC LANDSCAPE**

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** Develop and implement zoning and site plan regulations that preserve and protect the historic character of Claremont and to ensure historic blending to new or rehabilitated buildings on the perimeter of the City.

**GOAL #5: REVIEW THE CITY OF CLAREMONT'S ZONING ORDINANCE AND THE CITY'S BUILDING CODE TO IDENTIFY REGULATIONS THAT WOULD UNINTENTIONALLY IMPEDE THE REHABILITATION OR REUSE OF HISTORICAL PROPERTIES**

**GOAL #6: ENSURE THAT EFFORTS ARE TAKEN IN SUBDIVISION APPLICATIONS TO PRESERVE HISTORIC FARMSTEADS AND OPEN SPACE AREA**

**GOAL #7: ENCOURAGE ADAPTIVE REUSE THAT RESPECTS CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES**

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** Ensure that future development is sensitive to the historic character of buildings and landscapes within the City.

**GOAL #8: ENCOURAGE THE PROTECTION OF HISTORIC STONEMWORK INCLUDING STONE WALLS, FOUNDATIONS, AND CULVERTS**

**GOAL #9: CONSIDER CREATING THE CITY'S DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE STATE AND PROVIDE TO THE PLANNING BOARD TO INCLUDE AN HISTORICAL RESOURCES COMPONENT**

**GOAL #10: CONSIDER A JOINT HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION / HERITAGE COMMISSION.**

**GOAL #11: PROMOTE USE OF THE FEDERAL TAX CREDITS IN LOCAL HISTORIC REHABILITATION PROJECTS**

**GOAL #12: DEVELOP PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE LISTING OF PROPERTIES ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER**

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