

VI. HISTORIC PRESERVATION

A. Introduction

Typical of many New England communities, Salem can trace its history back to colonial days, but while the community's history is reasonably well documented, the physical manifestations of that history which still exist are relatively limited. Historic resources generally include buildings, bridges, farms, cemeteries, and sites with archeological interest. These resources are often demolished, destroyed, or irrevocably altered as growth and new development occurs, and Salem has been no exception to this phenomenon. However, there is at least one nationally recognized historic resource in the Town and an effort is on-going to identify other such resources. Salem has also established a local historic district with a commission to oversee it, and other historic resources have been locally identified so that they might be spared from damage or destruction and not lost to future generations of Salem residents.

B. Criteria for Identifying Historic Resources

The National Register of Historic Places is the national standard for identification and recognition of historical resources. The eligibility for properties to be included in the National Register is based on fulfillment of one or more of the following four criterion:

Criterion A: Association with events that have made a significant contribution to broad patterns of national, state, or local history.

Criterion B: Association with the lives of persons significant in national, state, or local history.

Criterion C: Embodiment of distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; or representative of the work of a master; or possessing high artistic values; or representative of a significant and distinguishable entity the components of which lack individual distinction (i.e. a district).

Criterion D: Has yielded or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history (i.e. archeological site).

While the actual listing in the National Register confers a universal recognition of a property as historic, the determination of a property as eligible for the National Register also provides that property an elevated status for review and avoidance of impacts from federal projects and actions.

C. Salem Properties listed in, or eligible for, the National Register

No properties in Salem have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and only one property is known to have been determined to be eligible for the National Register, that being the Kelley Farm on Shadow Lake Road. The Final Environmental Impact Statement for New Hampshire Route 111, Windham - Salem (June, 1998) provides the following description of the Kelley Farm:

The property consists of a farmhouse and connected barn on the northwest side of the road and a slaughterhouse, produce stand, and well house on the opposite side of the road. The property is individually eligible for the National Register under Criterion C. It is an excellent example of a vernacular 19th century farm complex of cape and connected barn, with early 20th century outbuildings. This is one of the most complete and best preserved farm complexes in the Town of Salem. The buildings document the evolution of farm structures over a hundred year period, and are significant for the information they provide about early 19th and early 20th century vernacular agricultural building types and building technology in Salem. The approximately 1.07 acres of yard and field around the outbuildings form the National Register eligible property, providing a rural setting for the vernacular farm architecture.

D. Salem's Historic District

In 1967 Salem established its only historic district at the intersection of Main, School, and Bridge Streets. Comprised of 32 properties surrounding the old Town Hall, library, fire station, and cemetery, the district was established locally in accordance with State law (RSA 674:46), but it has not been reviewed for eligibility under the National Register guidelines. Chapter 205 of the Municipal Code of the Town of Salem contains a description of the area so designated as the Historical District, and provides a clarification of the relationship of the standards for signs within the District and those set forth in the Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Ordinance itself contains no direct reference to the Historical District. Everything else to do with the Historical District is found in the regulations adopted by the Historic District Commission, which is comprised of five members appointed by the Board of Selectmen as well as a representative of the Selectmen.

The 1986 and 1992 Master Plans have recommended that another historic district be considered in North Salem in the area of East Broadway and North Main Street. Other areas indicated to be of historic interest in the 1992 Master Plan include the Depot and Main Street easterly of the Depot.

E. Other Efforts to Identify Historic Properties

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires that the direct actions of the federal government, as well as indirect federal actions such as funding and licensing, shall take into consideration the effects of those actions on properties that are included in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) is required under Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 to disapprove of projects that will take any land from a historic site unless there is a feasible or prudent alternative. Because of these federal mandates, research into historic resources has been commissioned as part of several federally funded highway improvement projects in Salem. The improvements to NH Route 111 in Windham and Salem, for which a Final Environmental Impact Statement was published in June of 1998, was the source of the identification and determination of eligibility for the National Register for the Kelley Farm.

Currently, the NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) are considering improvements to Interstate 93 from Salem to Manchester, and in the first phase of environmental studies, they have identified a number of potentially historic properties, including 87 such properties in Salem, as well as sites with potential archeological merit, including 8 such sites in Salem. As the work proceeds on this project, these properties will be evaluated as to their eligibility for the National Register.

In 1991, a local student attending the University of New Hampshire prepared an historical resources inventory for Salem using a map of the Town prepared by Edgar Gilbert in 1907. Her research revealed that 190 of the structures indicated on the 1907 map were still standing in 1991. Contemporary standards for National Register eligibility start with an inventory of structures in excess of 50 years of age, so that all 190 identified structures would more than meet that standard.

Other potentially historic properties that have been discussed during the preparation of this Plan include the Duston Farm, the Haverhill Road farm, the top of Zion Hill, and the Stillwater Manor.

By having a local historic district, the Town is eligible to apply for designation in the Certified Local Governments (CLG) Program which was enacted by the National Historic Preservation Act Amendments of 1980, and in New Hampshire is administered by the State Division of Historical Resources. The certification would provide the Town with a role in the review of National Register nominations within its jurisdiction, as well as access to a pool of grant funds, which require a local match of funds. The grants may be used for identification of historical resources in the community, nominations to the National Register, planning and technical assistance in considering the appropriate treatment of identified resources, awareness and education projects, and actual development projects. To that end, the Town may wish to establish a Heritage Commission, or actually re-establish the Historic District Commission as a Heritage Commission, pursuant to RSA 674:44-a. A Heritage Commission can assume the powers of a historic district commission, but is also empowered to research and inventory historic properties on a townwide basis, and therefore is a logical body to seek grant assistance under the CLG Program.

F. Historic Preservation Recommendations

XCompile an inventory of historic resources from all available sources

XReview and revise the current historic district ordinance and regulations

XEvaluate the potential for additional historic districts and develop draft ordinances as necessary

XConsider National Register nominations for local historic properties and districts

XConsider the public acquisition of easements or the fee title for important historic properties to ensure the protection of the same

XApply for designation as a Certified Local Government and seek grants to assist in preservation related activities

XConsider re-establishing the Historic District Commission as a Heritage Commission

Supporting Studies and References

X*Final Environmental Impact Statement, New Hampshire Route 111, Windham-Salem, [M-STP-F-038-1 (5), 10075]*; prepared for FHWA and NHDOT; June 1998.

X*Historical Resource Inventory of Salem, New Hampshire*; prepared by Patricia Walsh; December 1991.

X*Rules of the Salem Historic District Commission*; unattributed and undated.

X*Scoping Report, Interstate 93 Improvements, Salem to Manchester [IM-IR-93-1 (174)0,10418-C]*; prepared for NHDOT and FHWA by VHB and ENSR; May 2000.

XTelephone interview with Beverly Glynn, member of the Historic District Commission and the Museum Committee, February 7, 2001.

XTelephone interview with Martha Breen, member of the Historic District Commission, January 19, 2001.