

CHAPTER VI: HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Introduction

Residents and visitors alike are drawn to Wilton by its mix of rural character, historical charm, and vibrant community. This unique combination is a product of Wilton's location and its historical and cultural heritage. Without appropriate protection, including preserving its history and promoting its cultural resources, the Town could lose much of its special character. Thus, it is essential that planning and development in Wilton respect, understand, appreciate, and enhance these resources.

This chapter recounts the Town's history, identifies its key historical and cultural resources, lists the tools and strategies that can be used to preserve, promote and protect them, and presents a set of recommendations to do so.

For purposes of this chapter:

- **Historical Resources:** comprise physical buildings or structures, typically more than 50 years old, associated with or conveying:
 - an important event, activity, or pattern of the Town's development;
 - the life of an important person;
 - an exemplary building form, style, engineering technique, or artistic value; and/or
 - information contributing to our understanding of the Town's history.
- **Cultural Resources:** institutions or conditions that are supportive or reflective, of a distinctive cultural character or a community.

This chapter is intended to inform the Land Use Chapter of this Master Plan and will assist the Planning Board and other Town leaders in making informed decisions, especially concerning resources that may need special protection.

Vision

Wilton's unique heritage will be well protected and regionally known, drawing visitors and prospective residents to Town. Even before setting foot in Wilton, they will hear about its traditional festivals and events, alongside impromptu art and cultural activities. Travelers who pass through Wilton by chance will be enticed to make unplanned stops in Town.

Wilton's schoolchildren will learn about its heritage through educational programs about the Town's history and be actively involved in the Town's art and cultural events. Residents of Wilton will take pride in the preservation of historical resources and the promotion of its culture. Wilton will continue to be a unique place to live, work, and play from one generation to the next.

Historical Background

The historical information below relies largely upon the 1888 book, *History of the Town of Wilton, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire*, by Abiel Abbot Livermore and Sewall Putnam (“History”).

The Abenaki People

Before the arrival of Europeans, various tribes of Abenaki people inhabited a vast region spanning what are now the New England states to Quebec. Although it is quite certain that Abenaki hunters traversed the present-day bounds of Wilton for game, no long-term native encampments have been found in Wilton, perhaps due to its hilly terrain. As reported in *History*, Town residents discovered a remnant of a hunting camp in the pine woods west of the current Sand Hill Road Reservoir around the time of the book’s writing. A few arrowheads, hatchets, and stone chisels were also found.

Three Abenaki tribes were active around Wilton: the Pawtucket, based in Pawtucket Fall (present-day Lowell, Massachusetts); the Pennacook, based in what is now Nashua, New Hampshire; and the Souhegan, based in present-day Amherst, New Hampshire. Natural landmarks across the region, including the Souhegan River, the Merrimack River, and Mount Monadnock, bear Abenaki names.

Around the turn of the 18th century, diseases introduced by European settlers ravaged the Abenaki people, as did armed conflicts with both Europeans and other native tribes. The early settlers of Wilton arrived near the end of this period and, fortunately, were spared from raids. Eventually, most surviving Abenaki people migrated north to French Canada, while the few who stayed assimilated with the local population.

The Beginning of Wilton

In 1735, Colonial Governor of Massachusetts Jonathan Belcher chartered the region around the present-day towns of Wilton, Temple, and Lyndeborough as Salem-Canada. Governor Belcher granted land to veterans from Salem, Massachusetts, who had served under Sir William Phips in the war against French Canada several decades earlier. In 1749, Section Number Two of Salem-Canada, which includes present-day Wilton, was part of a royal grant given to John Tufton Mason and several other proprietors, who subsequently sold their lands to settlers. Jacob and Ephraim Putnam, John Badger, and John Dale were among the first settlers on Number Two.

Named after an ancient borough in Wiltshire, England, the Town of Wilton was incorporated on June 25, 1762. By 1773, Town residents had built a log



Wilton Center in the late 19th century, the Town House and First Unitarian Church are visible on the right
Image credit: John Hutchinson Collection, Wilton Historical Society

meetinghouse, the Town Pound, the first schoolhouse, and the Vale End Cemetery in Wilton Center. A more formal meetinghouse was also under construction.



*Putnam Mill in the early 19th century
Image credit: Wilton Historical Society Collections*

Early development in Wilton concentrated around the meetinghouse at Wilton Center but two other villages gradually emerged: West Wilton, on the road to Temple (at the confluence of Blood Brook and Temple Brook where Temple Road meets West End Highway), and East Wilton, on the road to Milford (at the confluence of the Souhegan River and Stony Brook; present-day downtown).

Until the mid-19th century, Wilton was a farming community with several water-powered mills for agricultural and artisan manufacturing needs. By 1839, Wilton contained 8 sawmills, 5 gristmills, 3 tanneries, 2 fulling mills and a bobbin manufacturer. Many of these enterprises were located in West Wilton, which was the industrial center of the Town until the arrival of the railroad.

Shift to Manufacturing

In the mid-19th century, the extension of the railroad from Nashua to Wilton allowed a convenient flow of raw materials and finished goods into and out of the Town, as well as direct access to lucrative urban markets from Nashua to Boston. The first railroad station in Town was built in 1851 in East Wilton. Taking advantage of the railroad connection and local water power, large mills were built along the Souhegan River to make cloth, furniture and wooden boxes. Merchants' names such as Colony, Whiting and Abbott came to figure prominently in Town activity.



*East Wilton circa 1895, with the first Railroad Station at center
Image credit: Glass negative in the Wilton Historic Society General Collection*

As Wilton prospered, the center of commerce and politics shifted to East Wilton to be closer to the river and the railroad. The neighborhoods on both sides of the Souhegan River grew to house the many mill workers, while businesses on Main Street expanded to serve a growing clientele.

Agriculture also thrived at this time. Dairy farming grew because the railroad allowed a morning milk run to Boston in just over an hour. The Whiting Dairy (later known as Hampshire Hills Dairy Farm) just above East Wilton was one of the region's largest dairy producers. The railroad also spurred the apple growing business, especially after a regional wholesaler by the name of Joseph P. Sullivan began distributing apples from small to medium-sized orchards. Wilton orchards – Badger Farm, Batchelder's, Holt's, Heald's, Kimball Heights, McLeod's, Parker's, Pomme-a-Lane, Stevens', Tallarico's, Whiting's and Woodmont's - developed a significant apple growing, processing, and packing industry. The agricultural boom in Wilton lasted until the mid-to-late-20th century when large-scale commercial agriculture in other parts of the country overwhelmed smaller New England producers.



A working apple orchard in Wilton
Image Credit: Wilton Historical Society Collections



The County Poor Farm near West Wilton
Image credit: Wilton Historical Society Collections

In addition to the commercial and industrial development in Town at this time, from 1867 to 1895, Hillsborough County operated a County Farm near West Wilton, an offshoot of efforts to improve overall living conditions for the state's "paupers, insane, and infirm." At the height of its use, there were more than 500 residents on the County Farm.

Tourism and the Three Fires

Around the late 19th century, many well-off urbanites across the country began to seek retreat from their city lives in rural environments. Located at the end of a rail line, Wilton became a popular location for summer homes and rural retreats. Wilton Center, the old center of Town, became the locus of a new summer community as new residents from Boston and as far away as New York bought up old homes and built new ones. Some purchased underperforming farms and converted them into “gentleman farms,” while others built trails and cabins deep in the woods. This wave of development introduced a diverse mix of architectural styles to Wilton, as well as new residents.



*Vacationers at Whiting House Hotel, sometime in 19th Century before the hotel was burnt down in 1874.
Image credit: Wilton Historical Society Collections*

The Honorable David A. Gregg of Nashua, a summer resident of Wilton, donated land, money, and an endowment for the construction and operation of the Town’s public library. The Gregg Free Library was dedicated in 1908 and remains a cultural center of Wilton today. Aside from hosting many cultural events, the Library also houses the Wilton Historical Society and Jacob Abbot’s Rollo Farm Collection – a collection of agricultural tools, machinery and items donated to the Library when the farm was closed.

Not far from the Library, hotels were built to accommodate the influx of tourists by train, including the four-story Whiting House Hotel. Passenger rail service to Boston and beyond was frequent and brought tourists to the Town year-round.



*Left: Wilton Public Library, also known as the David A. Gregg Free Library, and the adjacent Masonic Hall, circa 1908.
Image credit: Wilton Historical Society Collections*



*Right: Aftermath of the 1874 Main Street Fire, with rubbles of the Whiting House Hotel visible on the right
Image credit: Wilton Historical Society Collections*

Despite devastating fires on Main Street in 1874, 1881, and 1885, and the destruction of the Whiting Hotel in the 1874 fire, tourism in Wilton continued to thrive into the early 20th century. Main Street was rebuilt three times in 11 years and, after the seat of Town government moved to East Wilton in 1883, the present-day Wilton Town Hall was completed in 1885 on the site of the old Whiting Hotel.

From 1926 through 1936, Wilton was best known for its Winter Carnival. The Carnival drew many visitors every year and featured a variety of activities and events across Town, including a quarter-mile-long toboggan run down Carnival Hill.



*Winter Carnival Toboggan Run, sometime between 1926 and 1936
Image credit: Bob Lorette Collection, Wilton Historical Society*

Changing Times and Unique Institutions

Times were changing in the mid-to-late-20th century: local industry, agriculture and tourism all experienced major declines due to then-prevailing economic trends. As industrial activities slowed and companies either left Town or closed, the mill buildings became vacant, fell into disrepair, and, with few exceptions, were demolished. With fewer tourists and increasing automobile access, the use of passenger railroad services declined and finally ended for Wilton in 1952.

Like adjacent communities, Wilton became a bedroom town for the greater Nashua region, providing more affordable housing options and a more rural setting to those who worked in urban centers, especially after the completion of Highway 101 in the 1950s. The statewide population boom in the 1970s brought four decades of high population growth to Wilton and it was only in the 2010s that population growth slowed. From the mid-20th century to the present day, large agricultural tracts were subdivided for residential development, including some sizable residential subdivisions beyond the Town center.



*Main Street looking west in 1952
Image credit: Wilton Historical Society Collections*

Alongside new residents, innovative ideas and institutions found their way to Wilton. During this period, Wilton saw the establishment of High Mowing School, Pine Hill Waldorf School, Andy's Summer Playhouse, and the Temple-Wilton Community Farm. These institutions, among others, continue to shape Wilton's culture and are an integral part of Wilton's identity today.



*1989 Old Home Days Parade, celebrating Wilton's 250th Anniversary
Image Credit: Wilton Historical Society Collections*



*Late 20th century Art and Film Festival
Image Credit: Wilton Historical Society Collections*

The Three Town Centers and the Countryside

Downtown Wilton (East Wilton)



*Downtown Wilton — looking south on Main Street
Image Credit: Wilton Planning Board & NRPC*



*Downtown Wilton – looking north on Main Street
Image Credit: Wilton Planning Board & NRPC*

Downtown Wilton is located where Stony Brook meets the Souhegan River, which is also where the railroad crosses the River. This source of water power and the railroad in East Wilton promoted industrial development and were key to the Town's growth in the mid-19th century, resulting in a small but developed downtown area that contrasts with the rural countryside beyond it. Downtown's architectural styles largely date from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, reflecting the rebuilding after the Town fires. Only one building – the former Town jail that currently houses a business – survived all three fires.

Industrial sites lined both sides of the Souhegan River while the civic and commercial heart of downtown ran along Main Street. Residential neighborhoods were, and still are, located uphill from Main Street, except for the neighborhood known as the "Island" immediately next to the former Colony Mill. Main Street is now characterized by a line of predominantly brick buildings with ground-level storefronts on its riverside, and civic buildings, including Town Hall and the Library, on the hillside. A series of steel-truss railroad bridges cut across the river, which is visible behind Main Street Park.

The First Wilton High School and Second Congregational Church on the north and the 1925 Wilton Train Station on the south bookended Main Street. While the Train Station building now houses commercial offices, the single railroad, owned by the Milford-Bennington Railroad, is still active today for transportation of gravel from quarries located off Route 31 in Wilton.



*Wilton Train Station
Image Credit: Wilton Planning Board & NRPC*



*Former Colony Worsted Mill, also known as Abbott Mill
Image Credit: Wilton Planning Board & NRPC*

There are several large industrial buildings along the river to the south of the Train Station, with the Souhegan Wood Product manufacturing facility most prominent. To the west, the former Colony Worsted Mill (also known as Abbott Mill) is visible beyond the railroad bridges and across the river. This building is the best-preserved example of the Town’s 19th-century mills and is ripe for redevelopment.

North of the industrial buildings and toward the Second Congregational Church are recently completed accessible trails, information signs and benches on both sides of Stony Brook, as well as the Town’s War Memorial on Forest Road, dedicated in 1924 and restored in 2020 – all part of the ongoing Wilton Riverwalk project.



*A stone bench in front of Stony Brook – part of the Wilton Riverwalk
Image Credit: Wilton Planning Board & NRPC*



*The Wilton War Memorial on Forest Road, restored in 2020 as part of the Wilton Riverwalk
Image Credit: Wilton Planning Board & NRPC*



*Homes along Park Street
Image Credit: Wilton Planning Board & NRPC*



*Whiting Park and the Florence Rideout Elementary School
Image Credit: Wilton Planning Board & NRPC*

Behind Main Street, Park Street leads uphill to the largest residential area in Downtown Wilton. Featuring several elegant homes along the way, Park Street ends at Whiting Park and the Florence Rideout Elementary School. Most of the homes in this area were built between the 1860s and 1880s, in the clapboard neo-colonial architecture style.

Just north of Whiting Park, Park Street becomes Whiting Hill Road, which runs uphill toward Carnival Hill about 2,000 feet away. Carnival Hill is now a recreational area with open fields and other facilities.

Wilton Center

Wilton Center, the original Town center, was built on top of a hill above Blood Brook. The main part of Wilton Center runs along Isaac Frye Highway. The former Baptist Church (now a private residence), the Town House (present-day Andy’s Summer Playhouse), and the First Unitarian Congregationalist Church define the south end of Wilton Center. A partially-restored remnant of the colonial-era Town Pound is located behind the Unitarian Church. A stone marker commemorates the Second Congregational Church that once stood south of the Town House.



*Wilton Center – The Town House (Andy’s Summer Playhouse) on left, and the First Unitarian Church on right
Image Credit: Wilton Planning Board & NRPC*



*The partially restored remnant of the Wilton Town Pound
Image Credit: Wilton Planning Board & NRPC*



*Wilton Center – the “Red Brick House” and tree-lined Isaac Frye Highway running through the former town center
Image Credit: Wilton Planning Board & NRPC*



*Looking down Wilton Center Road toward Wilton Center
Image Credit: Wilton Planning Board & NRPC*

Except for Andy’s Summer Playhouse and two buildings owned by the Unitarian Church – the church building and the red brick house across the road – present-day Wilton Center is residential. Along Isaac Frye Highway and intersecting roads is a collection of private residences from different eras and in different architecture styles:

- Late-18th-/ early-19th-century colonial homes,
- Late-19th-century craftsman-style vacation homes, and
- 20th-/ 21st-century neo-colonial homes.

Not far beyond Wilton Center lie three cemeteries, including two of the oldest cemeteries in Town – Vale End Cemetery and South Yard Cemetery. These cemeteries, as well as most others in Town, are managed and maintained by the Wilton Cemetery Board of Trustees.

West Wilton

West Wilton is located at the confluence of Blood Brook and Temple Brook, where Temple Road meets the West End Highway.



*West Wilton Bridge
Image Credit: Wilton Planning Board & NRPC*



*19th-century brick houses on Pettey Road at the center of West Wilton
Image Credit: Wilton Planning Board & NRPC*

The double-arch West Wilton Stone Bridge across Blood Brook and the two flanking 19th-century brick houses on Pettey Road mark the center of West Wilton. Spreading out from the center of West Wilton in both directions is a collection of 19th-century colonial-style houses intermixed with several 20th-century neo-colonial and Cape Cod-style homes.

Two early mills – Red Mill and Seldon Mill – sit on either end of West Wilton, one along Blood Brook and the other along Temple Brook. Witnesses to Wilton’s agricultural-artisan era, these mills have long since become private residences.

North of West Wilton and beyond Gibbons Highway / Route 101 is Old County Farm Road, which runs north to Burton Highway. Along this road was the site of the former Hillsborough County Farm. Sometime after the Farm closed in 1895, the County subdivided and sold the land. The former Supervisor’s House and the Poor Farm Barn are all that remain of the Farm’s buildings today. The Supervisor’s House is now a private residence.



*Red Mill located on the west end of West Wilton
Image Credit: Wilton Historical Society*

The Countryside

Many historical sites in Wilton are located outside the Town centers, including homes, mills, cemeteries, agricultural buildings and Town infrastructure.



*Hamblet-Putnam-Frye House
Image Credit: Wilton Historical Society*

Historical Homes: Some of the Town’s most notable residences were built in the countryside, including three homes listed on the National and State Historic Registries: the Whiting Homestead and the Hamblet-Putnam-Frye House are listed on the National Register and Jonathan Livermore House is listed on the State Register. The Whiting Homestead was a large house built in the 1800s on the former Old Whiting Farm, which was also the County Poor Farm. The Hamblet-Putnam-Frye House is a 17th-century residence adjacent to the Frye’s Measure Mill. The Jonathan Livermore House is located on Russell Hill Road, just south of Wilton Center, and features Georgian-style architecture.

Mills: As in West Wilton, there were many mills built along the various brooks in Wilton, particularly in the northeastern part of Town, including the area known as Davisville. The Frye’s Measure Mill (also known as Daniel Cragin’s Mill), a box-making craft shop that has been in operation under various owners since 1858, is also a tourist attraction today. Others, such as the Baker Mill, Livermore Mill and Hopkins and French Mill, were demolished or destroyed over the years, but the Heritage Commission has installed commemorative placards at a few of the sites.



Frye’s Measure Mill

Image Credit: Wilton Planning Board & NRPC



South Yard Cemetery just outside of Wilton Center

Image Credit: Wilton Planning Board & NRPC

Cemeteries: There are five historical cemeteries in Wilton, four established by the Town and another originally established as part of the County Farm. Wilton’s Cemetery Board of Trustees manages the South Yard, Vale End, and Laurel Hill cemeteries and assists with the management of Mt. Cavalry Cemetery. The County Farm Cemetery, on the other hand, is not managed or overseen and remains largely inaccessible over private properties. Often overlooked among more prominent historical sites, cemeteries are actually among the most valuable resources, providing a trove of information about the Town’s early residents, their religions, and lifestyles, and the genealogy of The town.

Agricultural Operations: Even though the heyday of agriculture in Wilton may have passed, several agricultural facilities have either been maintained as working farms or are otherwise still known today, the most notable being Four Corners Farm and Barrett Hill Farm. Four Corners Farm is operated as the Temple-Wilton Community Farm (see more information below under Cultural Resources), and its farm buildings and fields are protected by a conservation easement.



Four Corners Farm/Tempel-Wilton Community Farm

Image Credit: Wilton Planning Board & NRPC

Barrett Hill Farm, named after its first owner Ebenezer Barrett and also known as Stonyfield Farm, is a well-preserved example of what was a rural gentleman’s

hill country farm of the 19th century. There, in 1983, Samuel and Louise Kaymen founded the organic yogurt maker Stonyfield Farm, which is now based in Londonderry, New Hampshire. The farm is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



*Livermore Bridge over Blood Brook
Image credit: Liesl Clark Photography*

Town Infrastructure: Some Town infrastructure has recognized historical value based on its age and significance to Town development, including several bridges.

One notable Town bridge is the Livermore Bridge, spanning Blood Brook at the former Russell Hill Road (current road rerouted through a new bridge located to the south) and Route 101, the only known example of a timber, half-through, pony-lattice truss in North America. It was built in 1860 and extensively rebuilt in the 1930s.

Inventory of Wilton's Historical Sites

Table 1. Wilton's Historical Sites

Map Key	Date	Site	Comments
1	ca. 1800	Oliver Whiting Homestead (County Farm between 1867-1896; now also known as the Old County Farm)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 19th-century Federal-style brick house was built by Oliver Whiting, and the barn with a Gothic Revival cupola was built later in 1846. • In the early 19th century, the property was the center of the largest dairy farms in the region until the property was sold to the Hillsborough County to become the County Farm. • The county-run farm was used to house "paupers, insane, and infirm" and added a multistory almshouse, water supply infrastructure and a "pest house", all of which were dismantled after the farm's closure. • In the early 20th century, the original homestead buildings were transformed into a summer estate by the Beebe family. • Listed on the National Historic Register • Now a private residence
2	1885	Old County Farm Road Bridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to the Old County Farm and an example of a 19th century stone arch bridge • Listed on the National Historic Register • Presently closed to vehicular traffic
3	1867	Old County Farm Cemetery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A mass cemetery for the residents of the Old County Farm • Access through private properties

Map Key	Date	Site	Comments
4	ca. 1761	Hamblet-Putnam-Frye House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The two-story wood-frame house was built by Hezekiah Hamblet, among the earliest houses built in town. The property also has a circa 1840 barn, circa 1900 carriage house that has been converted into a garage, and a small circa 1900 ice house. • The house was acquired in 1808 by Eliphalet Putnam who operated what is now called Frye's Measure Mill next door. A series of mill works, canal, and sluice gate was added in the early 19th century. • In the late 19th century, the property including the house was altered to serve a more recreational purpose. • Listed on the National Historic Register • Now a private residence
5	1800s	Mill Brook Dam at Frye's Measure Mill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created the reservoir for powering the mill
6	1817	Frye's Measure Mill (also known as Daniel Cragin's Mill)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An operational example of Wilton's early mills • Listed on the National Historic Register • Now a private workshop and gift shop
7	1803	Barrett Hill Farm (also known as Stonyfield Farm)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fine example of rural architectural forms of the 19th Century • Former Home of Stonyfield Farm Rural Education Center and founding place of the organic yogurt maker Stonyfield Farm • Listed on the National Historic Register • Now a private residence
8	1760	Campbell-Greenman House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Originally built in New Ipswich, NH and then moved to the current site and restored in 1980. • The house contains a set of interior murals by Rufus Porter, authenticated by the Rufus Porter Museum in Maine • Now a private residence

Map Key	Date	Site	Comments
9	ca. 1760	Burton Farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the earliest homesteads built in Wilton • It was the homestead of Deacon John Burton, who served variously as Town Clerk and Selectman in Wilton in the late 18th century to early 19th century. Deacon Burton was the father of Captain Jonathan Burton and also an ardent Free Mason. • Now a private residence
10	ca. 1850	Langdell Homestead House and Barn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located on both side of Isaac Frye Highway, the house and barn are part of the farm built by Asa Baldwin ca. 1800 • The barn has been an auction barn while the house is vacant
11	ca. 1750	Ephraim Putnam House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 17th-century house of one of the original European settlers of Wilton • Relocated from a site near the intersection of the roads near Vale End cemetery to the current location • Now part of a private residence
12	1752	Vale End Cemetery (also known as the North Yard Cemetery in the past)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The oldest burial ground in Wilton – first burial took place in 1752 and became a Town cemetery in 1778 • This cemetery is managed by the Wilton Cemetery Board
13	1746	Curtis Farm Barn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the oldest extant structures in Wilton • Now a private residence
14	ca. 1840	Red Mill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An example of Wilton's early mills • Now a private residence
15	ca. 1810	West Wilton Stone Bridge (Temple Road over Blood Brook)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An example of a 19th century dry stone arch bridge
16	ca. 1840	Sheldon Mill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An example of Wilton's early mills • Now a private residence
17	ca. 1770	Old Tannery Mill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built by Uriah Smith and operated for years by Marden Brook, this was one of the first tanneries in Wilton • Only part of the mill building and the old milldam remains today • Now a private residence

Map Key	Date	Site	Comments
18	ca. 1909	Harry Gregg House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An example of a 20th century Queen Anne house, built by Harry Gregg on the site of a previous 1832 brick house owned by Asa Jones/Oliver Boynton. • Harry Gregg was the son of David Gregg (the namesake of the Wilton Public Library, 38 in this table), and the father and grandfather of two former New Hampshire Governors. • Now a private residence
19	1773	Wilton Town Pound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A colonial-era enclosure for lost animals • Remnant was partially restored
20	ca. 1800	597 Isaac Frye Highway (known as the Red House or the Brick Store at different times)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The was at several points a store, a post office, meeting hall, place of worship, and first Masonic Hall in Wilton • Was once home to the family of former U.S. Attorney General William French Smith, who served in President Reagan's administration • Now a house of worship for the Unitarian Congregationalist Society
21	1860	Town House (Third Meeting House)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built to replace the Second Meetinghouse in Wilton Center which burned in 1859 • The building was, at various time, Citizens Hall, the Advanced Grange Hall, home to the Wilton Lions Club, and part of the Pine Hill Waldorf School • Now Andy's Summer Playhouse
22	1827	581 Isaac Frye Highway (Former Baptist Church)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first and only Baptist Church in Wilton • Now a private residence
23	1860	First Unitarian Congregationalist Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built on the same site of the Second Meetinghouse after it burned in 1859, to house the Congregationalist Church community • Remains a house of worship
24	1770	Jonathan Livermore House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An example of an 18th-century Georgian-style house built for the Town's first minister, Rev. Jonathan Livermore, who was also given 240 acres, an annual salary and an allotment of firewood • Listed on the State Historic Register • Now a private residence

Map Key	Date	Site	Comments
25	ca. 1936	Livermore Bridge (over Blood Brook; also known as the Old Russell Hill Bridge)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Originally built ca. 1760 but destroyed in the Great Flood of 1936. It was rebuilt using the traditional materials and designed of the old bridge. Closed to vehicle traffic after Russell Hill Road was rerouted through a new bridge located to the south The only known example of a timber, half-through, pony-lattice truss in North America
26	ca. 1809	South Yard Cemetery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The second oldest burial ground in Wilton This cemetery is managed by the Wilton Cemetery Board
27	1978	Recycling Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One of the oldest recycling centers in NH Remain in operation
28	ca. 1849	King Brook Road Arch Bridge (over King Brook)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A prime example of a dry stone arch bridge
29	ca. 1770	Frye Farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seven generations of the Frye Family have farmed this land The agricultural fields are protected by a conservation easement Remain an active farm today
30	ca. 1760	Four Corners Farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An example of an 18th-century farm Listed on the State Historic Register The farm buildings are protected by historical preservation easement and the agricultural fields are protected by a conservation easement. Still operating as part of the Temple-Wilton Community Farm
31	1869	55 Burns Hill Road (known as the Fountain House)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An example of a 19th-century Victorian-style house, built by David Gregg Now a private residence
32	1852	Second Congregational Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Built by the Second Congregational Church, former members of the First Congregation Church who left after a doctrinal split. The second church building built for the Second Congregational Church (see Y in Table 4) Remains a house of worship

Map Key	Date	Site	Comments
33	1871	First Wilton High School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Also the former Odd Fellows Hall from 1897 to an uncertain time • Now a private residence
34	1866	Bales and Putnam Blacksmith Shop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An example of a 19th-century horse-drawn carriage manufacturer • Now vacant
35	1908	Wilton Public Gregg Free Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Town's public library built with donations from the Honorable David A. Gregg • Listed on the National Historic Register
36	1898	Masonic Temple	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remains a meeting place for the local Masonic Society
37	ca. 1850	Wilton Falls Building	Part of the Colony and Abbott Worsted Mills
38	1929	Wilton National Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Wilton National Bank began in 1928 by a group of Wilton businessmen who operated out of the Selectman's Office until the present building was constructed in the following year. • The Bank operated under various corporate entities until it was closed by its final owner, Santander Bank. • Now vacant
39	1885	Wilton Town Hall Theater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listed on National Historic Register • The building houses the town hall and two theatres (a main theater with 220 seats and a smaller theater with 60 seats). The building is open to the public during business hours and events.
40	ca. 1800s	43 Main Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once a jailhouse, this building was the only one on Main Street that survive the three downtown fires in the 19th century • Now a private business
41	1882	Former Colony Worsted Mill (also known as Abbott Mill)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A prime example of Wilton's 19th-century industrial mills • Now vacant
42	1888	79 Main Street (known as the Stanton Block)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built not long after the last great Main Street fire, it was home to Stanton's Grocer • Now the Town's Post Office

Map Key	Date	Site	Comments
43	1880	David Whiting Residence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built by David Whiting, prominent Wilton business owner (Whiting's Mill, Whiting's Dairy, etc.) • Now a private residence
44	ca. 1885	Frederick Colony House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An example of a 19th-century Victorian-style house • Now a private residence
45	1869	Bent-Burke Legion Post Building (former Liberal Christian Church)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built by a group that split off from the Second Congregationalist Church in the East Village over doctrinal issues. The churches later re-united under a single pastor, but the congregation lasted only until 1945, when the building was sold to E.J. Abbott and the Hillsborough Mills. • Mr. Abbott donated the building to the Legion in 1946, which was renamed after two Wilton men who were killed in World War I and World War II, respectively. • Remains the meeting place of the American Legion Bent-Burke Post #10
46	1892	Wilton Rail Station	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The third and last rail station built on the same site • No longer used for rail operations even though the railroad is still in operation • Now houses a mix of private residence and business
47	ca. 1865	Abbott Machine Shop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The older wooden building was home to a number of mills in the 19th century. The brick structure is a later addition built ca. 1950 to house the growing Abbott Machine Shop, which manufactured mill machinery. • Now the Riverview Artist Mills
48	1895	Florence Rideout Elementary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The second site of the Town's High School • Now the Town's elementary school
49	1881	49 Maple Street (former Sacred Heart Church)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formerly the Sacred Heart Church • Now a private residence
50	ca. 1840	41 Tremont Street (former Episcopal Church)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchased by the Episcopal Congregation in Wilton in 1916 to serve as their permanent place of worship. The Building later served as the Town Barn. • Now a private residence

Map Key	Date	Site	Comments
51	ca. 1900	Abbott House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Built by David Whiting and later purchased and expanded by E.J. Abbott. Now a private residence
52	1857	Whiting Dairy Barn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A 19th-century agricultural facility that operated until the 1960s Now a machine foundry
53	1926	Carnival Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once the location of the Wilton Winter Carnival Now a public park with recreational facilities
54	1854	Laurel Hill Cemetery (also known as East Cemetery and Village Cemetery in the past)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First burial took place in 1854 but only became a Town cemetery in 1864 This cemetery is managed by the Wilton Cemetery Board
55	Mid- to late- 18 th century	Mount Calvary Cemetery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Owned by the Diocese of Manchester, which the Wilton Cemetery Board assisted in managing the cemetery

Table 2. Wilton’s Listings on the National Register of Historic Places

Map Key	Listing	Date Added to Register	Picture
2	Old County Farm Road Bridge (over a tributary of Stony Brook)	5/14/1981	 <p><i>Image credit: Jess MacMartin</i></p>
35	Wilton Public Gregg Free Library	1/11/1982	 <p><i>Image credit: Wilton Planning Board & NRPC</i></p>






Map Key	Listing	Date Added to Register	Picture
1	Oliver Whiting Homestead (also known as the Old County Farm)	3/9/1982	 <p><i>Image credit: Wilton Historical Society</i></p>
6	Frye’s Measure Mill (also known as Daniel Cragin’s Mill)	3/23/1982	 <p><i>Image credit: Wilton Planning Board & NRPC</i></p>
7	Barrett Hill Farm (also known as Stonyfield Farm)	8/3/1983	 <p><i>Image credit: Wilton Planning Board & NRPC</i></p>
4	Hamblet – Putnam- Frye House	6/22/2000	 <p><i>Image credit: Wilton Historical Society</i></p>
39	Wilton Town Hall Theatre	4/20/2009	 <p><i>Image credit: Wilton Planning Board & NRPC</i></p>

Table 3. Wilton’s Listings on the State Register of Historic Places

Map Key	Listing	Date Added to Register	Picture
30	Four Corners Farm	7/28/2003	 <p><i>Image credit: Wilton Planning Board & NRPC</i></p>
24	Jonathan Livermore House	10/25/2010	 <p><i>Image credit: Wilton Historical Society</i></p>

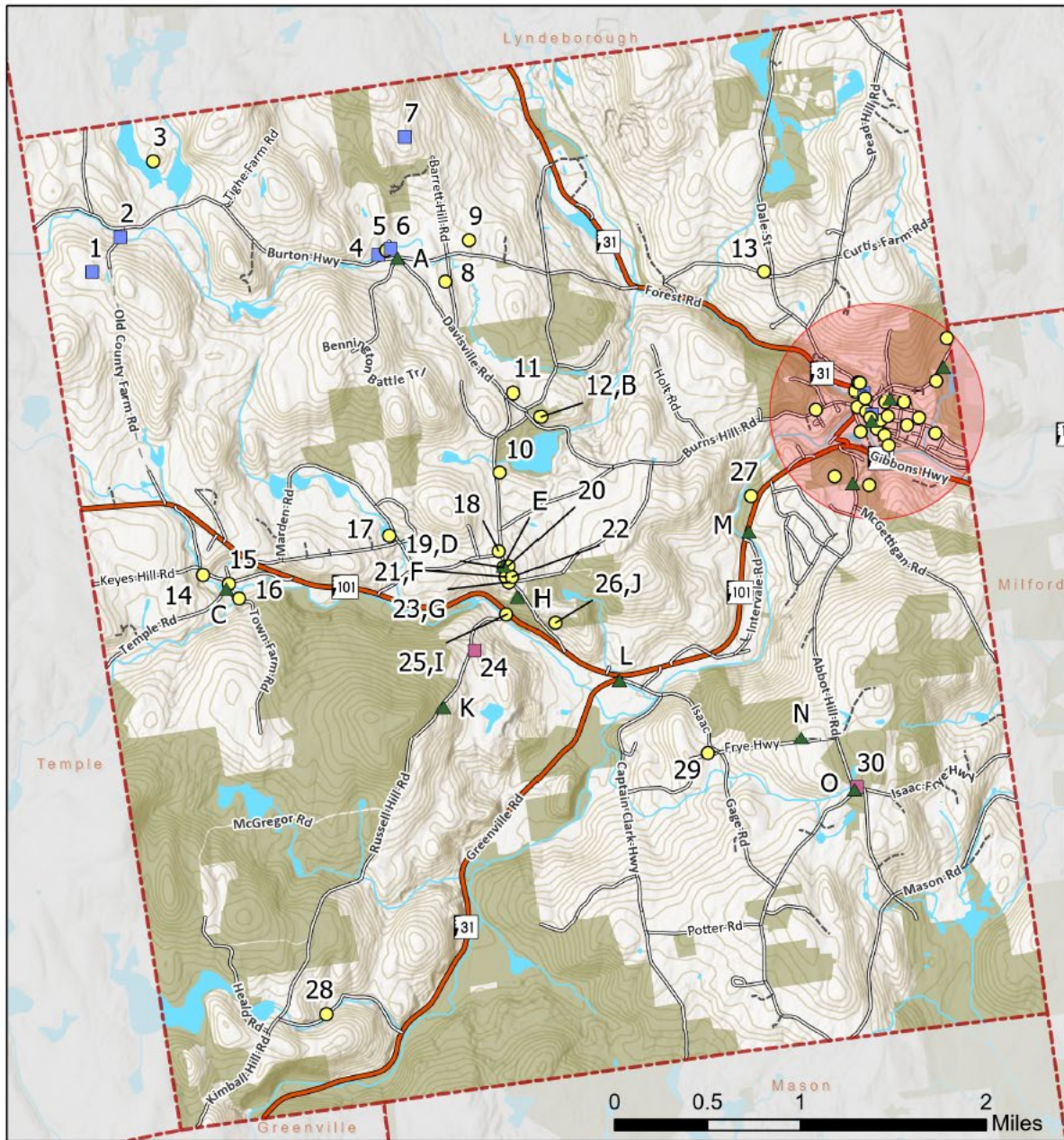
Table 4. Wilton’s Historical Markers

Map Key	Install Date	Marker	Comments
A	2000s	Davisville	• Historical Marker Program
B	2000s	Vale End Cemetery	• Historical Marker Program
C	2000s	West Wilton	• Historical Marker Program
D	2000s	Wilton Town Pound	• Historical Marker Program
E	2000s	Wilton Center	• Historical Marker Program by the Wilton Historical Society
F	2000s	The Town House	• Historical Marker Program
G	2000s	The First Unitarian Congregational Church	• Historical Marker Program
H	c.1856	Original Congregationalist Church Stone Marker	• Marks the site of the original Second Congregationalist Church, which had moved to East Wilton in 1852 (see 36 in Table 1)
I	2000s	Old Russell Hill Bridge	• Historical Marker Program
J	2000s	South Yard Cemetery	• Historical Marker Program

Map Key	Install Date	Marker	Comments
K	Early 19 th century	Captain Sam Greeley Stone Marker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marks where Wilton's renowned Captain Sam Greeley died in 1798. Captain Greeley fought in the Battle of Lexington, was a prominent figure in Town, and was buried at the Vale End Cemetery.
L	2000s	Gray's Corner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical Marker Program
M	2000s	French Village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical Marker Program
N	2000s	The Frye Field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical Marker Program
O	2000s	Abbot Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical Marker Program
P	2000s	Wilton Town Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical Marker Program
Q	2000s	Town Hall Theatre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical Marker Program
R	2000s	The East Village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical Marker Program
S	2000s	Whiting Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical Marker Program
T	2000s	Liberal Christian Church American Legion Post #10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical Marker Program
U	2000s	The Railroad in Wilton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical Marker Program
V	2000s	The Frog Pond	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical Marker Program
W	2000s	Carnival Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical Marker Program
X	2000s	Laurel Hill Cemetery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical Marker Program
N/A	Since 2004	71 House plaques on old houses across Wilton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House Plaques Program by the Wilton Historical Society • Locations not inventoried for mapping

Map 1. Wilton Historical Sites

Wilton Historical Sites



Historical Sites

- Wilton Historical Sites
- Sites listed on National Register
- Sites listed on State Register
- ▲ Historical Markers
- See Downtown Area Map for details

Streets

- State Route
- Local Road
- - - Private Road
- - - Class VI Road

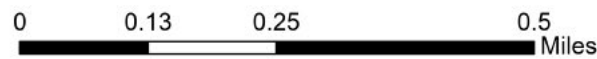
Town Boundaries

- Conserved Lands
- Open Water
- Stream
- 20 Ft Contour Lines



Map 2. Wilton Historical Sites within Downtown Area

Wilton Historical Sites within Downtown Area



Historical Sites

- Wilton Historical Sites
- Sites listed on National Register
- Sites listed on State Register
- ▲ Historical Markers

Streets

- State Route
- Local Road
- - - Private Road
- - - Class VI Road

- - - Town Boundaries

- Conserved Lands
- Open Water
- ~ Stream
- ~ 20 Ft Contour Lines



Threats to Historical Resources

Historical resources are precious, fragile and non-renewable. They can be lost or destroyed by obsolescence, development or mere passage of time unless steps are taken to preserve them.

Lack of Appreciation

If the Town's historical resources are not valued, they will not be protected. Therefore, it is essential to remind the Town of how important history is to its present identity and to continually reinforce residents' sense of that history. Awareness of this link will inform Town planning, and development will be addressed through the lens of Wilton's unique historical character. Ideally, the Town and its property owners will protect and preserve historical resources not merely to comply with applicable law but based on a sincere appreciation of their intrinsic value.

Deterioration and Obsolescence

Historical structures deteriorate with age. Other historical resources disappear without management or care. Prominent Wilton landmarks such as the Town Hall and Public Library are supported by municipal funding and community effort. For less prominent or privately-owned historical resources, keeping them in productive use is often the best way to assure their preservation.

That said, the design and layout of historical structures and sites are often inconsistent with new uses. While some, like the Frye's Measure Mill, may function as working businesses, museums, or memorials, repurposing others would be a significant undertaking requiring substantial effort and investment.

Development

Historical resources, including potential archaeological sites, can be threatened by development itself. Development can take various forms: a new residential subdivision located near a historical resource, the rehabilitation and reuse of an old mill, an array of new solar panels installed on the roof of a historical building. The Town must strike a balance between promoting new development and preserving the historical nature of affected resources.

Archaeological Areas

Sites that may be archaeologically important pose unique preservation problems compared to architectural and other types of historical resources. Unlike historical structures, archaeological resources are more difficult to identify and protect. Each site is unique and fragile, and information is lost when a site is disturbed. Ironically, increased appreciation represents a very real threat to archaeological resources.

Acquisition of land or land development rights is often the only way to preserve archaeological resources effectively, although there are some laws, including those that require certain projects to be reviewed by a Federal agency, that require assessment of their prospective impact on archaeological resources. Mining laws and permitting processes for dredge and fill may also have similar review requirements.

Much of the region's development is undertaken by the private sector and does not require prior archaeological evaluation. The State Division of Historical Resources has limited ability to review private projects for impact on archaeological resources.

Tools for Protection of Historical Resources

Awareness of their intrinsic value, sensitive planning, development and regulation, and local and other incentives can help protect historical resources and preserve their unique contribution to a community's character. There are many tools available to local governments and private parties to encourage and support the preservation or restoration of historical resources. Certain tools restrict development, architectural or structural changes, while others are incentive-based. These tools are usually most effective when used in thoughtful combination and when tailored to the local environment and population.

Wilton and its residents have adopted and/or utilized several such tools to facilitate protection of the Town's historical resources.

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of historical resources across the United States worthy of preservation. Established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and administered by the National Park Service within the Department of the Interior, the National Register lists properties of local, state and/or national significance in the areas of American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture. Resources may be nominated individually, or in groups, as districts, or as "multiple resource areas" and must generally be older than 50 years. Any proposed historic district must gain the approval of a majority of property owners within it.

The primary benefit of National Register listing is the recognition it affords and the appreciation of local resources that generally follows. The National Register requires a review of the effects that any federally funded, licensed, or assisted project, most notably highway projects, might have on a listed property or one eligible for listing. National Register standing can also make a property eligible for certain federal investment tax credits and charitable deductions.

Contrary to common belief, the National Register listing does not interfere with a property owner's right to alter, manage, dispose of, or even demolish a property unless federal funds are involved. Nor does a National Register listing require an owner to open the property to the public. If the owner of a privately-owned property opposes the listing nomination, the property will not be listed. National Register listing can be an important catalyst to change public perception and increase historical awareness, but cannot in itself prevent detrimental alterations or demolition.

Statewide, there are now more than eight hundred National Register listings, of which approximately a hundred are historic districts. The current list of Wilton's seven National Register listings can be found above in Inventory of Wilton's Historical Sites.

State Register of Historic Places

The State Register of Historic Places program, administered by the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources, encourages the identification and protection of historical, architectural, archaeological, and cultural resources in New Hampshire. Listing on the State Register encourages awareness of historical significance, but does not mandate protection. Benefits of State Register listing include public recognition, mandated consideration in the planning of local- and state-funded projects, qualification for state financial assistance for preservation projects (i.e., LCHIP), and special consideration or relief in the application of some access, building and other regulations. There are over 450 listings on the State Registry, two of which are in Wilton. The current list of Wilton's listings can be found above in Inventory of Wilton's Historical Sites.

Local Historic Districts and Neighborhood Heritage Districts

The term "historic district" can refer either to a historic district established by Town Meeting vote (pursuant to RSA 674:45) or to a National Register Historic District. Both designations can be useful preservation tools, and one area can be both locally and nationally designated. Several communities within the region, including Amherst, Hollis, Mont Vernon, and Nashua, have enacted local historic district ordinances. Wilton has not yet done so.

The purpose of a local historic district established under RSA 674:45 is to protect and preserve areas of outstanding architectural and historical value from inappropriate alterations and additions that might detract from an otherwise distinctive character. The district-enabling ordinance typically includes an architectural review process, as well as the review standards, which allow Town officials to exercise authority over the construction and alteration of buildings within historic districts, including single-family dwellings.

A common misconception about historic districts is that structures in them are subject to strict limitations on their exterior, or even interior, elements, and costly requirements for any renovations. Although most historic district ordinances regulate exterior elements of buildings to preserve the character of the district, they can nevertheless be designed to strike a balance between protecting historical resources and overburdening property owners. Moreover, towns can help property owners navigate the review process with guides and public information.

Historic districts should not attempt to "freeze" time, but should preserve what is significant while accommodating new construction and renovation as determined by local consensus. It is not generally appropriate to designate an area where properties are widely scattered as a historic district.

Certified Local Government (CLG) Program

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 provides for matching grants-in-aid to the states from the Historic Preservation Fund for preservation programs and projects. Federal law requires at least ten percent of each state's Historic Preservation Fund grant to be designated for transfer to eligible local governments that apply for the money. A local government can participate in the program once the State Preservation Office certifies that the community has established its own historic preservation commission, district, and a program meeting certain federal and state standards. Matching grants are

made each year to certified local governments for survey and planning projects, including preparation of National Register nominations and historical resource surveys. Currently, the CLG program represents the only source of state funds available for communities interested in preservation planning. In the Greater Nashua Region, the only communities designated as CLGs are Nashua, Amherst, and Hollis.

As noted, the CLG program is only available to communities that have established a historic district.

Building Code Provisions

Building code requirements may help or hinder the use or rehabilitation of a historical building. Some communities have elected to amend local building codes to exempt historical structures from certain code requirements, other than life safety provisions, allowing them to continue to be used safely without requiring them to meet modern standards that could involve extraordinary cost or undermine the historical character that makes them special.

It should be noted that Chapter 12 of the International Existing Building Code (IEBC), adopted by the State and applicable in Wilton, specifically addresses the need to treat historical structures sympathetically. It provides some exceptions to code requirements for buildings identified as being of historical significance. Sections 1202 through 1206 of IEBC Chapter 12 explain how repairs, alterations, fire safety, changes in occupancy and structural issues can be addressed in historical buildings while simultaneously maintaining their character and satisfying applicable code requirements.

Demolition Review Protocol

In 2018, the Wilton Building Department adopted a review protocol as part of its demolition permitting process. The protocol requires the Heritage Commission to be allowed to review the proposed demolition of buildings and structures over 100 years old with a gross floor area of 300 square feet or more, as well as a meeting with the applicant to explore alternatives to demolition. Under the protocol, the Commission does not have the authority to deny a permit, but can request an opportunity to document both the exterior and interior of the structure before demolition.

Because this review protocol is not part of the Building Code, applicants for demolition permits may not be aware of it.

Innovative Land Use Controls and Other Planning and Zoning Opportunities

New Hampshire land use laws give communities the authority to adopt a range of land use laws and regulations, as well as innovative land use controls, which can support a community's character and protect its historical resources. Open space development, also known as cluster development, is an example of land use controls relevant to preservation.

Among other things, open space development is potentially an alternative to development that could affect historical resources. Wilton's Land Use Laws and Regulations currently allow cluster developments in the General Residential and Agricultural District, and the Residential District for tracts of land 15 acres or greater but require setting aside 40-50% of the tract for open space, depending on its proximity to downtown. Cluster developments can offer density bonuses not available to other developments.

Historic Resource Survey

Preservation through documentation is a basic, essential and noncontroversial preservation strategy. In addition to providing a permanent written and photographic record of local architecture, a good inventory is a foundation for other preservation initiatives. It can support grant applications or nominations for listings on the National or State Registers.

Maintaining a historic resource survey (HRS) also supports understanding and appreciation of historical structures and sites. HRS's are also necessary to environmental reviews required for projects receiving Federal funding, such as highway construction.

Historic Structures Report

A historic structures report (HSR) describes buildings' physical history and condition and provides specific information for implementing maintenance or renovation plans. An HSR can be used to analyze the potential of a building to continue to be used, to the benefit of the community, and the possible costs thereof.

Historical Highway Marker Program

Originated by the New Hampshire Legislature in 1955, the aim of the Historical Highway Marker Program is to identify events, people, and places of historical significance to the State. Communities that would like to be considered for a marker submit a request to the State Highway Department and Division of Historical Resources.

The State-funded program is limited to approximately 10 markers per year, which can be placed only on the State highway system. There is generally no cost involved to erect a marker on a State-maintained road. Alternatively, co-operative markers can be ordered at cost when State funds have been exhausted or for placement on local roads or municipal lands. However, sponsors of co-operative markers must assume full responsibility for the cost of the marker and future maintenance through a formal agreement with the State.

Whether State-sponsored or cooperative, these markers enhance the awareness of historical sites and events and thereby can support preservation efforts.

Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive

In 2017, the Town voted to adopt NH RSA 79-E, Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive, which allows the owner of a qualifying structure who intends to rehabilitate or replace it to apply for property tax relief. The applicant must be in Wilton's eligible district, defined by the downtown center. The rehabilitation project must be substantial and provide a public benefit. This tool can be used to help private owners restore buildings downtown and create new housing opportunities.

The program has not seen much use thus far – only one downtown property owner has considered taking advantage of it recently.

Historic Building Rehabilitation Federal Tax Incentives

The Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit (HTC) was formally introduced by Congress in 1979. Previously, there was a 10% credit for the rehabilitation of historic non-residential buildings in service

prior to 1936 and a 20% credit for structures that the National Park Service deemed historic. New tax legislation signed at the end of 2017 (Public Law No: 115-97) eliminated the 10% credit.

To qualify for the 20% tax credit, a building must be a certified historic structure per the National Park Service. The structure must be used for a business or other income-producing purpose, and a substantial amount of the tax credit must be spent on the rehabilitation of the building.

Investment tax credits provide some incentive to rehabilitate and preserve older buildings rather than undertaking new construction. Unfortunately, these credits do not cover non-income-producing residences.

Preservation Easements

Across the country, preservation easements have proven an effective tool for protecting significant properties. An easement is a right encumbering or restricting the use of a property or structure thereon that can be sold or donated to an organization eligible to hold such easements. Just as a conservation easement can protect open space, scenic areas, waterways and wildlife sanctuaries from incompatible uses and development, so too an architectural easement can protect the exterior appearance of a building or its use. In this way, the historical character of a property can be protected in perpetuity.

The donation of an easement to a qualifying organization may produce certain tax advantages for the donor. If the property is listed on the National Register, the donor is eligible under the Tax Treatment and Extension Act of 1980 to take a deduction in the amount of the value of the easement. The donation may also reduce estate and local property taxes.

The cost of acquiring an easement may be significantly lower than buying a property outright to protect it, particularly if the easement is donated. Significant resources can remain in private hands but are protected from inappropriate alteration as the organization holding the easement generally has the right to review any proposed change to the structure or property or its use.

Aside from easements, property owners can impose future restrictions on the use of land or structures thereon by recorded covenants or deed restrictions. These tools can protect historical properties but rarely qualify for charitable or other tax deductions.

Other Actions by Private Individuals and Organizations

Most building renovations are undertaken by private individuals, developers, or groups. Unfortunately, even well-intentioned improvements often employ techniques or materials inconsistent with or insensitive to an older building. As a result, the historical or structural integrity of the building can be compromised and even actually damage the building it was intended to improve. A wealth of specialized information covering topics sensitive to the needs of older buildings is available from the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources.

Preservation Action to Date

Notwithstanding the failure of a proposal in the 1980s to establish a commission to investigate the designation of Wilton Center as a historic district, the Town has undertaken several efforts to preserve its historical resources over the years. Voters consistently approve funds to renovate the Town Hall (new windows, handicapped access, and painting) while preserving the building's architectural style. Renovations to the Wilton Public and Gregg Free Library have included restoration efforts and updates accomplished in accordance with the building's style and history.

In the 1980s, five sites in Wilton were approved for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Since 2000, two additional sites have been added to the National Register and two sites have been added to the State Register of Historic Places. Private groups and individuals, as well as Town agencies, have collected and preserved historical data that illuminate the development of Wilton and its character.

Wilton Historical Society

The Wilton Historical Society was organized in 1908. It was inactive during World War I but reorganized in 1937, inspired by the upcoming 200th anniversary of the Town in 1939. At some point after that, the Society again became inactive but re-formed in October 1971. It has continued in existence ever since.

The Society and its Historical Room are housed on the top floor of the Wilton Public Library; the Society meets monthly. The Society maintains a collection of artifacts, documents and photos, including Jacob Abbot's Rollo Farm Collection. The ever-growing collection is both interesting to the casual viewer and useful to those doing historical research. It is open to the public on Thursday afternoons.



*The Rollo Farm Collection at the Wilton Public Library
Image Credit: Wilton Historical Society*

The Society also published brochures and historical sketches for the Town's and the nation's bicentennial celebrations.

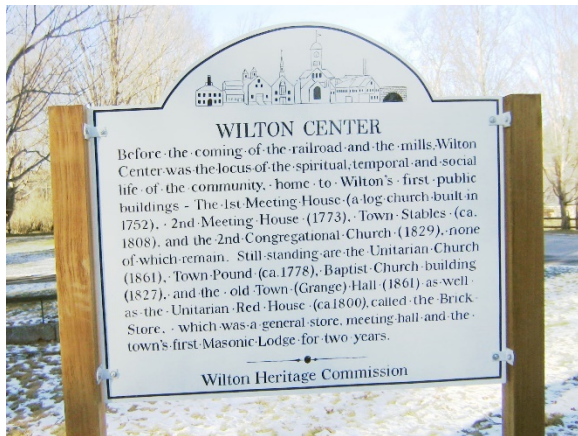
In recent years, the Society has hosted 4th-grade classes from the Florence Rideout Elementary School studying local history. Society members have also been instrumental in preparing applications for listing Wilton's historical sites on the State and National Registers.

Wilton Heritage Commission

Established at the 2000 Town Meeting, the Wilton Heritage Commission is a non-regulatory advisory committee that works to identify and protect Wilton's historically and culturally significant buildings and sites. New members are appointed by the Select Board after being recommended by the Commission. The Commission works closely with other Town Boards and organizations, including the Historical Society and the Cemetery Board of Trustees.

Since its inception, the Commission has worked to preserve many of Wilton's historical assets, including its successful effort to list the Wilton Town Hall on the Federal Register. The Commission also created and actively maintains a historical resources inventory. The Commission monitors The Four Corners Farm for compliance with the New Hampshire Land Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) Conservation Agreement pertaining to the building's exterior.

One of the Commission's main projects is developing historical signage for the Town. The Commission produces historical markers that are placed throughout Wilton, explaining the significance of selected areas and districts. Twenty-three markers have been produced and the Commission continues to replace and refurbish older markers. The Commission also submitted two historical site marker applications to the State Highway Department and Division of Historic Resources in 2002. One application received initial authorization but ultimately failed due to funding issues.



*The historical marker at Wilton Center
Image Credit: Wilton Historical Society*



*One of the many house plaques on Wilton's old houses
Image Credit: Wilton Historical Society*

The Commission also manages the Historical House Plaque Program, a volunteer program under which eligible homeowners can purchase and install historical house plaques on their houses. Eligibility is based on research done by the Commission, which has traced ownership and construction data of houses built from the 1700s through 1850. Since the program's debut in 2004, over 70 homeowners have purchased the plaques. Further research is underway to extend the program to homes that date from 1850 to 1900.

The Commission maintains a digital archive of documents and photographs, with new materials continually being added, as well as a digital archive of oral history. Making use of these materials, the Commission has published a self-guided tour brochure, "the Wilton Heritage Trail Project," available for purchase in Town Hall, and organizes historical presentations periodically.

In June 2003, the Commission submitted an inventory of historical resources to the Conservation Commission for approval. This list was not an all-inclusive inventory but identified major sites within Wilton and has been updated throughout the years.

Cemetery Board of Trustees

Since 2006, Wilton has maintained a three-person elected Cemetery Board. The duties of the Board are to manage the South Yard, Vale End, and Laurel Hill cemeteries and assist with the management of Mt. Cavalry Cemetery. The Board responds to inquiries about family history and burial sites. The Board works with the Heritage Commission to map the cemeteries and repair broken headstones. The Board has also partnered with the Daughters of the American Revolution on projects, including the placement of permanent markers on the graves of John and Mary Dale, descendants of John and Mary Ellinwood Dale, in Vale End Cemetery on October 14, 2006.

Wilton Main Street Association

The Wilton Main Street Association (WMSA) is a volunteer organization of citizens and merchants working with Town officials to improve the look and economic vitality of Wilton's downtown. The WMSA is chartered specifically to preserve and restore historical buildings, collect historical data and photos, and improve public awareness of Wilton's historical and cultural resources. In 1998, as a result of efforts by the WMSA, Wilton was accepted to the Main Street America Program, a national program aimed at preserving and revitalizing commercial downtown areas. Since then, WMSA has helped obtain façade improvement grants and managed and helped maintain the historical Wilton Falls building for many years.

WMSA also owns and maintains the Main Street Park, a pocket park that overlooks the Souhegan River and the railroad bridge over it. The park is host to many cultural events, including concerts and small festivals.



*Main Street Park
Image Credit: Wilton Planning Board & NRPC*

Town Website

In 2018, Wilton introduced a new municipal website to address inquiries about governance and other matters, as well as promote awareness of the Town and its resources. The Heritage Commission and the Economic Development Leadership Team worked together on sections devoted to Wilton's history and historical resources, including a timeline of key events in the Town's history, accompanying photographs, and descriptions and pictures of all 22 of the Town's historical markers.

Wilton's History Series

Hidden In Plain Sight is a series of short sketches written by Michael G. Dell'Orto, the current Chair of the Heritage Commission, which illuminates the intriguing historical oddities that have made Wilton such an interesting town. Some of these articles were originally published in 2002-2005 for the WMSA, and capture information not otherwise documented in other historical records.

Other Efforts

As noted above, the Town has adopted other tools, including demolition review protocols, innovative land use controls and the community revitalization tax relief incentive authorized by RSA 79-E, intended to facilitate the rehabilitation and preservation of its historical resources.

In addition, the Four Corners Farm is encumbered by the only historical preservation easement on private property in Wilton. The easement was the result of negotiation between the property owner (the Temple-Wilton Community Farm) and multiple government agencies, including LCHIP, which owns and administers the easement. In exchange for the easement, the owner secured essential funding from the Federal Farm and Ranchland Protection Program to renovate the property and operate the farm.

Most recently, the Temple-Wilton Community Farm sought to install a set of ground-mounted solar collecting systems as a sustainability effort. Working with LCHIP, which evaluated the nature and impact of the project, the owner was able to secure site plan approval for the solar energy system from the Wilton Planning Board – an example of Town government finding a balance between preserving historical properties and supporting appropriate improvements on them.

Cultural Resources

A town's cultural resources often have their origins in historical resources. This chapter, however, differentiates cultural resources as institutions or conditions that are supportive or reflective, of a distinctive cultural character or a community.

With changing population and trends over time, cultural influences frequently ebb and flow – old ones vanish, new ones spring up, while others are short-lived. Various Town traditions, events and cultural groups have developed over the years in Wilton, many of which, in one form or another, are also commonly found among other New England towns. Nevertheless, the unique way they have developed in Wilton has helped to shape the Town's present character.

While many elements of Wilton's unique culture can, and perhaps should, be further promoted and nurtured, some cultural resources unique to Wilton merit special attention – those that clearly set Wilton apart from other New England towns.

The Waldorf Schools – High Mowing School and Pine Hill Waldorf School

In 1942, Beulah Hepburn Emmet founded High Mowing School to offer children an education based on the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner, which he called anthroposophy, that the spiritual world can be fully explored through human experience.

In practice, Waldorf education values the personality and gifts of every student and seeks to help students reach their full potential both inside and outside the classroom, through a holistic yet personalized method of engagement and learning. Rather than focusing on the key academic skills and assessing academic success through quantitative testing, Waldorf education integrates the arts in all academic disciplines and evaluates each student's success qualitatively.



High Mowing School
 Image Credit: Kendal J. Bush for High Mowing School



Pine Hill Waldorf School – part of High Mowing School since 2017
 Image Credit: Kendal J. Bush for High Mowing School

High Mowing School was the first Waldorf high school founded in North America and is still the only Waldorf boarding school in the United States.

Pine Hill Waldorf School, an elementary school founded in 1972 to extend the Waldorf education curriculum to younger ages, merged with High Mowing School in 2017.

Over the years, the Waldorf schools have attracted many educators, students, and parents from across the country and abroad. This unique community also spurred the development of the Hearthstone Community, a housing cooperative unique to Wilton, and promoted the Temple-Wilton Community Farm, which offers a Community-Supported Agriculture program. The community remains an influential part of the Town today.

Andy's Summer Playhouse

Named after Clarence William Anderson, a celebrated author and illustrator of children's books, Andy's Summer Playhouse is an innovative summer youth theater located in one of Wilton's original meetinghouses in historical Wilton Center. Founded in 1971 by two teachers, Margaret Sawyer and William Williams, the Playhouse produces original works performed by children aged eight to eighteen, with direction and mentoring by professional artists from all over the country. Performances are given and workshops on various theater arts are held at the Playhouse, as well as at venues across the region. The Playhouse boasts many well-known and award-winning alumni and teachers, as well as a reputation widely recognized in youth theater.



"The Arrival" performed at the Andy's Summer Playhouse, adapted from the book by Shaun Tan, directed by Orange Grove Dance
 Image Credit: Andy's Summer Playhouse

Town Hall Theatre

The Wilton Town Hall Theater, on the upper levels of the Town Hall, was first the site of traveling shows and vaudeville, and was then converted in 1912 to a silent film house. In recent years, the Town Hall Theater has hosted movie festivals and continues to show movies of all types, from recently released features to vintage films. The Theatre is well-known throughout the region for the range of its offerings and its contribution to the appreciation of the film industry and its history in America.



*Volunteers and friends of the Town Hall Theatre, with Dennis Markaverich, the Theatre Operator, at center.
Image Credit: Robin Maloney*

Other Arts

Surveys of the community's vision for Wilton consistently identify support and development of the arts generally as essential to its character. Wilton is home to a budding visual arts community that includes a group of artists who work in studios at the Riverview Artists Mill. In addition, a growing number of creative businesses, including art galleries, artisan boutiques and restaurants with live performances are being established in Wilton, which has in the past also been known as a venue for folk and other music from the region and beyond.



*A jewelry crafting session taking place at the Riverview Artists Mill
Image Credit: Sussy-Rose Shield*

Protecting and Promoting Cultural Resources

A small town can rarely count among its assets the continuing unique cultural influences like those enjoyed by Wilton. Protecting cultural resources usually depends on a community's dedication to identify, support and promote them by raising awareness of their existence, character, and, in some cases, facilitating, by zoning or otherwise, their operation and expansion.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are intended to balance the importance of preserving Wilton's historical and cultural resources with its goal of thoughtful growth.

The Town should consider:

Preserving Historical Resources

1. Continuing to promote awareness of its historical sites and structures, their value to the character of the community, and the importance of preserving them, through educational outreach programs, the Town's website, and other opportunities like the *Hidden in Plain Sight* history series.
2. Explaining and promoting, on the Town's website or otherwise, the availability and impact of existing incentives to preserve historical resources, including opportunities for listing properties on the State and National Registers of Historic Places, tax relief under NH RSA 79-E, the Federal Historic Rehabilitation tax credit, and potential tax benefits associated with donating preservation easements. In connection with these efforts, the Town might explore why the Section 79-E program has not been popular in Wilton.
3. Providing guidance to property owners on how to maintain historical properties, including identifying resources such as the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for renovating or rehabilitating them, and links to advisory and financial resources.
4. Reassessing the demolition review protocol with both the Building Department and the Heritage Commission to determine whether it should be enhanced or documented as a specific requirement under the Town's Building Code. The Town should consider addressing the use of historic structure reports (HSRs) and external changes to historical structures that do not rise to the level of demolition.
5. Re-examining the benefits of establishing a historic district or multiple districts in Town and, in that context, making efforts to inform the public fully about the purpose, process and implications to property owners of district designation. If a historic district is established, the Town should consider joining the Certified Local Government Program to open up grant opportunities.
6. Continuing to support the preservation and protection of the Town cemeteries, including by securing and maintaining public access to the County Farm Cemetery.
7. Maintaining an inventory, with available documentation, of Wilton's historical resources, including historical markers, properties with the historical house plaques, and newly identified historical resources.

8. Encouraging owners of qualifying historical properties to apply to list them on State and National Registers, and supporting the expansion of the Town's historical marker and plaque programs.
9. Reevaluating existing Wilton land use ordinances, including its open space development ordinance, in the context of further preserving historical resources and/or facilitating their repurposing and continued use. The Town might consider involving the Heritage Commission as an advisor or reviewer of proposed new development or rehabilitation not involving demolition.
10. Exploring Wilton's pre-colonial history by conducting archaeological investigations in partnership with educational institutions and/or requiring developers to report any findings in the course of their work. If sites are identified, the Town should consider developing a process to address and fund their preservation, including consultation with the State Division of Historic Resources.

Promoting Cultural Resources

11. Developing a specific Plan for the Arts at the Town level, which could address, without limitation, incentives promotional opportunities, an inventory of venues and events in Wilton, opportunities for the creation of public art and murals, funding resources, and guidance on how to leverage tourism and economic development in connection with the growth of the artists' community.
12. Identifying and publicizing the zoning districts where artistic and cultural uses are permitted.
13. Continuing to strategically promote Wilton's unique cultural resources, as well as its other attractive characteristics, on the Town's website and otherwise.