

## Historic & Archaeological Resources

State Goal: To preserve the State's historic and archaeological resources.

### Conditions and Trends

The Windham Historical Society (<http://windhamhistorical.org>) was founded in 1967, and has been very active in the areas of preservation of buildings and artifacts important to the history of Windham and with public education and outreach. This work includes class room visits and guided bus tours more than 200 3<sup>rd</sup> graders annually, eight to twelve public lectures and programs each year, and a weekly local history column in the Lakes Region Weekly. Much of the information in this chapter comes from well researched work done by members of the Historical Society as part of the [1993 Comprehensive Plan document](#). (Fix link)

### Overview of Windham's History

Prior to European settlement, much of the area of southwestern Maine, including the area of Windham, was the part of the homeland of the Abenaki tribe of Native Americans. The Abenaki are associated with the Algonquin Nation, a group of aboriginal peoples that stretched from the Maritime Provinces of Canada through upstate New York and Ontario. There were many seasonal Abenaki settlements between the White Mountains and Casco Bay, and the lakes and rivers were used as travel ways for thousands of years to access seasonal settlements.

The Windham area we know today was settled in 1737. The Massachusetts Bay colony granted this land to a group of individuals and families primarily from Marblehead, Massachusetts. These proprietors of the settlement named the township New Marblehead. This township was incorporated as the Town of Windham in 1762.

The early economy in Windham was focused on agriculture and forestry, and meeting the basic needs of the community and surrounding region. The next phase of Windham's growth included industrialization and manufacturing, centered on the power supplied by the Presumpscot and Pleasant Rivers. Please see the "Historic Patterns of Settlement" section, below for more information.

From 1830 through 1940, the population of Windham held steady around 2,000 people. Since that time, Windham has experienced a high rate of growth, along with the rise of North Windham as a regional retail center.

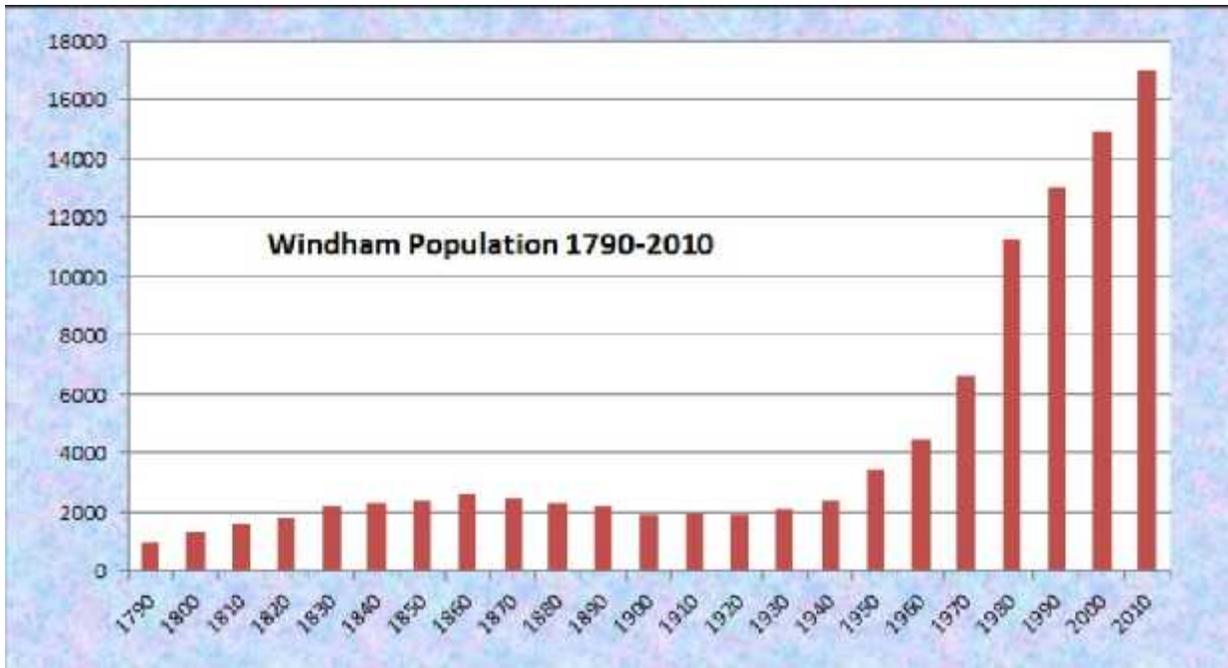


Figure 1. – Windham Population Growth 1790-2010.  
Retrieved from <http://maineencyclopedia.com/windham/#>, Date: 3/6/15.

### Archaeological Resource Inventory

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) divides archaeological sites into two types. Prehistoric sites are Native American, pre-European contact sites, potentially going back thousands of years. Historic sites are mostly European-American and generally date from about 1600 A.D.

#### Prehistoric Archaeological Resources

There are twenty-seven (27) known prehistoric sites in Windham. At least eleven (11) are considered Significant by the MHPC, meaning they are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Map (#) shows the location of these sites. These sites are generally located on the shorelines of Sebago Lake the Presumpscot River. The MHPC states that there has been professional surveys done for prehistoric archeological resources as part of utility and dam relicensing projects, also notes that future professional archaeological surveys would likely reveal additional sites along the Pleasant River, and along the shores of Sebago, Little Sebago, and Highland Lakes, and some of the smaller waterways and ponds in North Windham, as shown on Map 10-1.

#### Historic Archaeological Resources

According to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, there are seven historic archaeological sites documented in Windham. These sites are:

Site	Periods of Significance	Historic Settlement Area
Province Fort	1744 - 1759	First Settlement Area
Gambo Falls Powder Mill	1819 - 1909	South Windham
F. Harris Farmstead	1800s	n/a
Great Falls School	mid-1800s - late 1900s	Great Falls
Craig Road Farmstead	early 1800s - 1900s	n/a
Hawkes Cemetery	1828 - 1897	Windham Center/Windham Hill
J. Robinson Homestead	late 1800s	n/a

Figure 2 – Historic Archaeological Sites in Windham. *Maine Historic Preservation Commission*

The MHPC states that no professional surveys for historic resources have been conducted to date in Windham, and that any future survey should focus on sites associated with Euro-American settlement of the town in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### *Historic Buildings & Sites*

There are several buildings and a district that have been identified by the MHPC as being significant as defined as either listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. These are:

Site	NRHP status	Historic Settlement Area
Parson Smith House	Listed	First Settlement Area
Goold Family House	Listed	Windham Center
Maplewood Farm	Listed	First Settlement Area
Great Falls Historic District	Listed	Great Falls
21 Main Street house	Eligible	South Windham
Dundee Hydro Station	Eligible	n/a
Gambo Falls Bridge	Eligible	South Windham

Figure 3 – Windham Locations on the National Register of Historic Places Listed or Eligible for Listing. *Maine Historic Preservation Commission.*

### *Threats to Significant Historic Resources*

One of the most significant threats to the preservation of historic resources is public awareness of the resources themselves. As shown in Figure 1, Windham’s population has increased dramatically in recent decades. Many of these residents have moved to Windham from other communities, states, or other nations. They do not have a connection to the land and places sustained over generations the way many long time Windham residents enjoy. Without fostering a connection to Windham’s past for both newer residents and for younger residents, historic resources are threatened to be lost, and historic properties and buildings may be developed in such a way as to diminish their historic value.

It should also be noted that the location of new development may also pose a threat to historic resources. Map 10-1 shows a large swath of North Windham north of Tandberg Trail (Route 115) and east of Roosevelt Trail (Route 302) as sensitive for prehistoric archaeological resources. Much of this area is also targeted as a growth area.

## **Historical Society Village Green Project**

In May, 2014, the Windham Historical Society received Planning Board approval for the Village Green project in Windham Center. The vision is to build a replica of an 1800s Maine village that will serve as living history center complete with historic buildings owned by the Society today or acquired in the future that will be relocated to the site. The Village Green will provide an immersive educational experience for Windham area students and will host special programming around historic events, such as reenacted Civil War encampments and blacksmithing demonstrations. This property is also envisioned to be a gathering place for community events.

## **Analysis**

### **Historic Patterns of Settlement**

There are five historic settlement areas that were first noted in the 1993 Comprehensive Plan and carried through the 2003 Comprehensive Plan. These areas are:

#### ***First Settlement Area***

This area is the location of the first European settlement in what is now the Town of Windham. This area is generally bounded by the Presumpscot River and River Road and runs from the Town line with the City of Westbrook and Colley Wright Brook, near the Correctional Center. A Provincial Fort was established here to protect the new settlement in 1744, which also housed most of the settlers through the French and Indian War ended in the 1750s. The Parson Smith house, built in 1764 by the community's minister Peter Thatcher Smith, is also located here, and is listed in the National Historic Register.

#### ***South Windham Village***

This area of Windham was settled at the same time as the area in Gorham directly across the Presumpscot River. The Gorham side is still known as Little Falls Village. Despite the municipal boundary, South Windham/Little Falls has always functioned as a single community. The mills at Little Falls and Mallison Falls just down river provided materials for the township, and later products for larger markets. The river has powered grist, lumber, woolen and pulp mills.

#### ***Windham Center/Windham Hill***

Before Route 302 was constructed, Windham Center Road was the main land route between Portland and the lakes and mountains. As a result, development surrounding the corner of Windham Center Road and Gray Road and the Windham Hill area between that intersection and the Windham Center Road and River Road intersection included a tavern/public house for stage coach travelers, two grocery stores and the first town hall. Many historic homes and buildings remain. The oldest existing church in Windham is the Windham Hill Congregational Church, built in 1835.

#### ***Great Falls***

This area is located at the end of Windham Center Road at the outlet end of North Gorham Pond. This is a relatively small geographic area of Town, but it once supported several mills, including a large furniture manufacturing operation, producing on the order of 20,000 chairs

annually in the 1860s, in addition to tables, stands and bedsteads. The mills are gone now, but there are several good examples of period homes on Great Falls Road.

### ***Popeville***

Located in the area around the Gray Road and Pope Road intersection, and extending up Pope Road across the Pleasant River, Popeville is another site of early settlement. The first resident of this area of town was Elijah Pope, a Quaker, who built his home and blacksmith shop near the Pleasant River in the late 1760s. Other Quaker families followed, and the Friends Meeting House and the Friends Cemetery at the corner of Gray Road and Pope Road are part of their legacy. The next two generations of Popes ran woolen mills and clothing manufacturing operations on the Pleasant River. It is also interesting to note that several of the homes in Popeville were stops on the Underground Railroad prior to the Civil War.

### **Protective Measures for Historic and Archaeological Resources**

Any local protective measures for historic resources in Town are optional or coordinated through the volunteers at the Historical Society.

The Town adopted an Historic Preservation Ordinance (Chapter 126) in 1989, and an Historic Preservation Commission of five (5) members was appointed. However, the recommendations of the group to establish boundaries of historic districts were not implemented, rendering the ordinance unable to be implemented or enforced.

### **Local Site Plan and Subdivision Regulations**

Projects that require site plan or subdivision review by the Planning Board or Staff Review Committee are required to submit a description of any historic or archaeological resources on the project site, as well as a plan that includes the location of “Other important or unique natural areas and site features, including...historic and/or archaeological resources.” See Land Use Ordinance (Chapter 140) [Section 800 – Site Plan Review](#) and [Section 900 – Subdivision Review](#) for these requirements in context with other submission requirements.

Site Plans are required to be sent to the MHPC when “the plan identifies any areas listed on or eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.” The subdivision ordinance goes further and states that Major Subdivisions (defined as five (5) or more lots or dwelling units) must be submitted to the MHPC when “all areas within or adjacent to the proposed subdivision which are either listed on or eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, or have been identified in the comprehensive plan or by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission as sensitive or likely to contain such sites.”

Section 800 includes a performance standard for all projects that states, “If any portion of the site has been identified as containing historic or archaeological resources, the development shall include appropriate measures for protecting these resources, including but not limited to, modification of the proposed design of the site, timing of construction, and limiting the extent of excavation.”

Note that there is no specific requirement for any survey of historical resource requirements if none are known to be on a project site, but only to show the location of known resources.

### **Current state of Windham's Significant Historic Resources**

The Historical Society maintains an inventory of assessments for historic value on older homes in the community. These assessments are conducted by the volunteer members of the Historical Society as they are requested by individual property owners. The inventory also contains information on old businesses, roads, cemeteries and municipal buildings.

This is a valuable resource, but it is not at comprehensive inventory. There is no comprehensive inventory for Historic Resources in the Town.

### **Goals & Suggested Strategies to Implement Goals**

#### **State Goal: Protect to the greatest extent practicable the significant historic and archaeological resources in the community.**

**Strategy 1.** For known historic archeological sites and areas sensitive to prehistoric archeology, through local land use ordinances require subdivision or non-residential developers to take appropriate measures to protect those resources, including but not limited to, modification of the proposed site design, construction timing, and/or extent of excavation.

Note: Partially Implemented. This requirement is in the ordinance for projects that require Site Plan Review, but not for subdivisions or projects that do not require Planning Board or Staff Review Committee approval.

**Strategy 2.** Adopt or amend land use ordinances to require the planning board (or other designated review authority) to incorporate maps and information provided by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission into their review process.

Note: Partially implemented. The ordinance requires coordination with MHPC when National Register properties are on the project site, or in the case of subdivisions, even adjacent to the project site. However, the mapping provided by the MHPC has not been incorporated into the ordinance for projects that do not involve National Register properties .

**Strategy 3.** Work with the local or county historical society and/or the Maine Historic Preservation Commission to assess the need for, and if necessary plan for, a comprehensive community survey of the community's historic and archaeological resources.

Note: Partially implemented. As noted above, the Historical Society has made a good start on this project, but is limited in resources and scope of inventory work. The Historical Society could benefit from Town staff time and mapping support of the Town to advance this project for the most significant historical resources.

**Local Goal – Identify and build public awareness of Windham’s most significant historical resources and structures.**

*Strategy 1.* Work with the Windham Historical Society to complete the historic building and site inventory started by the Society.

*Strategy 2.* Use the mapping provided by the MHPC showing potential prehistoric archeological resources as the basis for a professional survey of the highlighted areas.

*Strategy 3.* Identify historic resources with signage at the street. According to members of the Historical Society, there were signs installed by the Town to identify between 30-40 historic sites and buildings many decades ago. Over the years, this signage has not been maintained or gone missing for all but a few locations.

**Local Goal 2 – Protect Windham’s most significant historic resources and structures.**

*Strategy 1.* Work with the Windham Historical Society, land trusts and private property owners to permanently protect significant historic buildings and sites through acquisition or listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

*Strategy 2.* Re-establish the Historic Preservation Commission in order to update and implement the Historic Preservation Ordinance.