

HISTORY AND CULTURE

Town histories are an integral part of the character and ambiance of any small town. They remind us of how the small, self-sustaining community developed into the typical New Hampshire “bedroom” community of the 20th and 21st century dependent upon goods, services, and employment available in larger municipalities. A number of historic structures, cemeteries, and sites are located in Loudon and will be inventoried in this chapter.

Equally important are the cultural events that are held in Loudon. Not only do they serve to unite its residents to the community, they also bring the past back to life and enable people to appreciate the special, irreplaceable assets of yesteryear. Preservation of historical resources is a logical step in the process of retaining rural character in the face of development. As Loudon’s population grows within the next 20 years, reasonable actions must be taken in the most expedited manner to protect the historical and cultural resources within the Town and to educate upcoming generations of the unique beauty and value of old buildings and mill sites.

While history doesn’t necessarily change with every revision to a master plan, there is new information available from the community survey and other public outreach events as well as changes to ordinances and regulations. In the survey conducted for this master plan update, Loudon residents demonstrated their high appreciation of community culture. When asked what makes Loudon a desirable place to live, 55.5% stated people and community spirit and 39.3% stated historical character.

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE 1

To preserve the historical resources of Loudon, including stone walls, old buildings, landmarks, cemeteries, and cellar holes, and encourage their stewardship;

OBJECTIVE 2

To promote the collection and preservation of historical artifacts relative to the history of Loudon;

OBJECTIVE 3

To encourage cultural events and the participation of residents in such events within Town through workshops, guest presentations, Old Home Day, and the Historical Society; and

OBJECTIVE 4

To develop, maintain, and update the history of the Town of Loudon.

VISION STATEMENT

Loudon supports and preserves its historic and cultural resources by protecting them for current and future generations and by expanding opportunities for community awareness of the Town’s rich cultural heritage.

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

As shown below, results of the community survey demonstrate the communities' strong appreciation for the small town feel and rural atmosphere. Residents also showed a high appreciation for the Town proximity to cities, people and community spirit, and scenic areas.

Community Survey Question 19:

Why do you feel that Loudon is a desirable place to live? (Please check all that are important).

Q. 19	Total	Percentage
Small Town / Rural Atmosphere	311	89.9%
Proximity to Cities	288	83.2%
Employment Opportunities	17	4.9%
Education System	85	24.6%
People / Community Spirit	192	55.5%
Community / Recreational Facilities	98	28.3%
Town Services	99	28.6%
NH Motor Speedway	95	27.5%
Scenic Areas	180	52.0%
Historical Character	136	39.3%
Other	17	-
Total Answered		346

HISTORICAL PROFILE OF LOUDON

Before Europeans migrated north into the Merrimack Valley area, many Native American tribes lived in the region. The land now called Loudon was home to an Abenaki tribe, and the highest point in Loudon, Sabattus Heights, is named after an Abenaki Chief.

The Town of Loudon was incorporated on January 23, 1773. The Town was "set off" from Canterbury and "...established to be a distinct and separate parish by the name of Loudon..." by a Charter approved by the General Assembly, the Council, and the Governor on January 22, 1773.

The Town's name is believed to have two sources. First, the word "Loudon" is a Scottish word meaning "low hills" or "low hilly country." Loudon's terrain is clearly marked by low hills that are punctuated by the North-South flowing Soucook River (Soucook means "wildcat place"). The second source of the Town's name is John Campbell, the Fourth Earl of Loudon. He was one of the original grantors of Canterbury and the selection of the name "Loudon" is seen to honor him.

The Town encompasses approximately 29,696 acres. Originally, Loudon was shaped in a rough rectangle. Its current shape was achieved after two changes of land. The first occurred in 1784 when the residents of the southwest corner of Loudon were dissatisfied with the location of the Meeting House. A committee was established to "set off" that parcel of land to Concord or to Canterbury. Eventually, the parcel was annexed by Concord. The second change happened in 1853 when a parcel of land in the vicinity of Rocky Pond was annexed by Loudon from Canterbury creating Loudon's current shape.

The Charter required a Town Meeting which was held on March 23, 1773, hosted by Abraham Bachelder in his home. The meeting was conducted under the provisions of a warrant from Nathan Bachelder. In 1781, the Annual Meeting was, for the first time, held in the Town Meeting House which was constructed in 1779. Significantly, in 1792, Loudon had the distinction of hearing “testimony” from Shaker Elders Ebenezer Cooley and Israel Chauncey, making Loudon the first place Shaker testimony was given in New Hampshire.

Loudon’s population grew steadily for the first two hundred years. In 1775, the population of Loudon was set at 349. By 1973, the Town’s population was estimated at over 2,000 residents. In 1999, the Town’s population was estimated at 4,635 persons living in 1,762 residences. The Town’s estimated population in 2014 was 5,375 with 2,022 residential units in Town; the 2016 population estimate was 5,466.

Loudon was an agricultural community until just after the end of the nineteenth century. Loudon citizens continue to be involved in traditional agricultural pursuits. Today, agriculture and related industries can still be found in Loudon. An Agricultural Commission has been created, with several local farmers serving on the Commission. The Commission works to promote Loudon farms, the importance of farming in Loudon, and support of local farms. There are farms raising hay, maple products, vegetables, fruits, flowers, rabbit, cattle, pigs, and fowl. There are also farms with eggs, milk, shavings, animal feed, and yarn.

However, many residents now work in communities outside the Town, therefore making Loudon something of a “bedroom” community with Concord being the largest destination for commuters.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

This brief listing is only the beginning of a detailed inventory the Historical Society hopes to accomplish to thoroughly document the history of the Town of Loudon. Cultural events and resources, not always historical themselves, are equally important to document because they bind together the community in many ways.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Loudon has only one site on the National Register at this time. That site is the Loudon “Town Hall” described above as the Meeting House and was placed on the Register in 1990. A large effort is required on the part of individuals to promote places of historic importance through applications to the National Historic Register. No additional protection is afforded through the federal designation of a site to the National Register, but local recognition of the site’s

Figure 4.1: Loudon Historical Society



Source: Town of Loudon

Figure 4.2: Stone House in Loudon



Source: Town of Loudon

importance is powerful tool against any potential development or changes to the site which are detrimental to the historical character. There are several buildings or sites in Loudon which have the historic character that the Town desires to retain. These include the “Town Hall”, Sanborn Mills Farm, and several farms on Loudon Ridge.

INVENTORY OF HISTORIC SITES

These sites stand at places of great historical significance to the State of New Hampshire. Some of these places contain tangible reminders of the past, while others mark the locations of where structures once stood or a historical event took place.

One of the most well-known historical sites in New Hampshire is the Canterbury Shaker Village. While Loudon shares this historical

site with Canterbury, the actual marker is located off of Route 106 at the terminus of Shaker Road in Loudon. The Shakers built the attractive utopian Canterbury Shaker Village in 1792 based upon their high moral standards. The Shakers became renowned for their craftsmanship, agricultural efficiency, and domestic skill. Shaker Village was listed on the National Register in 1975 under the Town of Canterbury.

Local markers, or the actual remnants of the structures themselves, indicate the sites of various historic landmarks.

- Five stone houses made from cut Loudon stone were built in 1830, and four of them still stand today. One of them is now owned by the Town of Loudon and housed the municipal offices. An old Native American trail used to travel along the Soucook River in Loudon and up into Gilmanton. This trail once connected the Concord area with Alton and Lake Winnepesaukee.
- At least a dozen small district schools existed in Loudon in the 19th century. Various old mill sites dot Loudon’s countryside. These mills played a major part in the Town’s early development. Some remains of these structures can be seen along the Soucook River.
- The Loudon Community Building resulted from the renovation of a mid-19th century barn in 1999. It is located directly behind the municipal office building and was part of the same property, the Charles Symonds’ farm. The structure is typical of many barns erected in New Hampshire during that time period. The renovation provided a kitchen, handicapped accessible restroom facilities, the Loudon Historical Society Museum, and a

meeting room which seats about 100 people. The Loudon Community Building is used for regular meetings of all the Town Boards and a wide variety of other Town-oriented functions. An historic marker in the form of a slab of stone marks the location of Sabattus Heights off of Ridge Road, which is the highest location in Loudon. The State Champion Butternut Tree is located off Page Road. There are five other County Champion Trees listed in the National Register of Big Trees, including white ash, sweet birch, eastern hemlock, eastern white oak and weeping willow.

- The Loudon Town Hall was erected in 1779 and served as the first church for the Town as well. In 1782, New Hampshire’s first Shaker sermon was given in this building. The Sanborn Farm, owned and operated by the same family for over two centuries, is now owned by the Cabot Family and known as Sanborn Mills Farm. Extensive restoration efforts involving the dam at the outlet of Sanborn Pond, the grist mill, the blacksmith shop, the ice house, and the saw mill are ongoing. This will return many of the functions of this self-sufficient farm to the operational capabilities which it once possessed 160 years ago.

INVENTORY OF CEMETERIES

Like many other small towns, Loudon has a rich heritage and a strong connection to its past. Cemeteries, both Town-owned and small, private family plots, are important and personal links. The four currently active cemeteries in Loudon are owned and operated by nonprofit Cemetery Associations and the Town of Loudon.

Care and maintenance of the cemeteries is primarily funded from the sale of lots and from interest on trust funds established for perpetual care of the lots, some of which are held and managed by

Table 4.1: Public and Private Cemeteries

Cemetery	Owner	Map Number/Lot Number, Location
Moore Cem (active)	Tow of Loudon	29/84, Church Street
Mount Hope Cem (active)	Town of Loudon	29/84, Church Street
Loudon Center Cem (active)	Loudon Ctr Cem Assn	33/9, Clough Hill Road
Loudon Ridge Cem (active)	Loudon Ridge Cem Assn	63/21, Ridge Road
Loudon Mills Cem	Town of Loudon	20/30, Route 129
Maxfield Cem	Town of Loudon	56/7, William Maxfield Drive
Abbot Cem	State of NH	56/4, William Maxfield Drive
Blake Cem	Private	36/14, Blake Road
Cate Cem	Private	51/40, Lower Ridge Road
Loving Cem	Private	49/106, Clough Pond Road
Moore/Sleeper Cem	Private	45/5, Ridge Road
Ladd Cem	Private	26/10, Route 129
Merrill Cem	Private	27/1, Route 129
Lougee Cem	Private	50/59, Mudgett Hill Road
Hill Cem	Private	50/8, Route 106 North
Winslow Cem	Private	4/11, Bear Hill Road
Hilliard Cem	Private	24/12, Pleasant Street Extension
Fletcher Cem	Private	48/2, Old Shaker Road
French Cem	Private	36/3, Ridge Road
Smith-Sargent Cem	Private	59/7, Voted Road (west end)
Pearl Cem	Private	59/14, Voted Road (east end)
Old family cem(Sleeper)	Private	51/16, Lower Ridge Road
Old family cem (Blaisdell)	Private	60/54, Mudgett Hill Road
Old family cem (Cate)	Private	60/17, Storrs Drive
Old family cem (Whittemore)	Private	58/5, Shaker Road
Old family cem (Hill)	Private	50/4, Country Club #1 Fairway

Source: Town of Loudon

the Town and some by the appropriate Association. The Town budgets for care of the cemeteries it owns and for distribution to the Associations for care of lots which are abandoned or for which no trust funds has been established. For about the last 50 years, a trust fund has been included in the purchase price of a lot. However, since the Loudon Center Cemetery dates back to the mid-1700's and the Moore and Mount Hope to the mid-1800's, a fair number of lots exist without the benefit of a trust fund.

At the present time, land is not required for additional cemetery space as there is enough room for expansion in the Moore, Loudon Center, and Loudon Ridge cemeteries for the next few generations of Loudon residents. More detailed information on Town-owned cemeteries can be found in the Community Facilities Chapter.

INVENTORY OF HISTORIC MILL SITES

The Soucook River afforded early settlers with the ability to create a thriving community based upon this outstanding natural resource. Water-powered mills provided economic opportunities which led Loudon into the Industrial Age of the 1800's. As of the writing of this Chapter, it is expected that there are several other historic mill sites in Loudon but their exact locations are unknown.

Table 4.2: Historic Mill Site Remnants

Location	Map/Lot #
Old Shaker Road, just South of Shaker Road	58/139
Lovering Mills, North of Clough Pond Road corner near Route 106	49/117
Epp's Mill on Academy Brook/Kenney Road	53/1
Outlet of Sanborn Pond on Sanborn Road	17/1
Outlet of a wetland between Bear Hill and Bee Hole Roads	22/11
Shaker Road	58/128
Moore Saw Mill/Lovejoy Road	57/4

Source: Town of Loudon

The **Historical and Cultural Resources Map** depicts the known cemeteries, barns, churches, historic mill sites, and other historical features as noted in this Chapter.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN LOUDON

All small, rural communities have the opportunity to embrace their past and get to know their neighbors. There are many opportunities within Loudon which allow residents to socialize and learn about the history of their Town. With the recent (2015) Town Meeting approval for the creation of a Capital Reserve Fund to prepare a Town History, the Historical Society will be building additional opportunities to learn about Loudon's history. The stronger the ties to local friends, neighbors, and the Town, the more likely people will be to settle permanent roots in Town. Today, gathering places and organized events foster relationships that imitate the dependency on one another that was critical to survival 200 years ago.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

In the year 2000, the Historical Society hosted a State Barn Survey presentation by the State Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture, Markets, and Foods. Society members distributed the Survey to town residents with historic barns, and one property owner received a grant to evaluate his barn at Route 129 and Pittsfield Road. Since that time several other property owners have applied for discretionary preservation easements. When applying for these easements, the property owner is agreeing to maintain the structure in keeping with its historic integrity and character during the term of the easement. Currently there are seven barns that receive reductions in the structure's full assessed value.

The Historical Society's artifact exhibit has been reorganized into five distinct time periods: from 1773 to the present. The array

followed general themes of architectural change, maps and charts, and road and area changes.

As the occasion makes itself available, the Historical Society purchases or is given artifacts and memorabilia. In 2015 the Historical Society established a Facebook page that is used to share activities and other forms of communications with interested residents and others.

Table 4.3: Historic Barns

Barn	Location	Map/Lot Number
Robert Every	South Village Road	Map 20, Lot 32
Rodrick Murray	N H Route 129	Map 22, Lot 13
Earl Tuson	Pittsfield Road	Map 25, Lot 6
Lois & Cynthia Merrill	Blake Road	Map 36, Lot 14
Judith Merrow	Wyman Road	Map 48, Lot 5
Stephen & Carmela Nolin	Clough Pond Road	Map 49, Lot 41
Charlene Morin	Clough Hill Road (barn was early church)	Map 33, Lot 2
Larry & Beatrice Moore	Loudon Ridge Road	Map 63, Lot 9
Allan Barton	Flagg Road	Map 48, Lot 3
Babonis	Bumfagon Road	Map42, Lot 12

Source: Town of Loudon

OLD HOME DAY

Old Home Day is an annual activity organized by the Old Home Day Association. This very popular event is held in August and attracts the young and elderly alike to booths, gatherings in the Village, and to the Historical Society. Activities at Old Home Day include booths set up by local groups, horseshoe tournaments, BBQ, parades, citizen recognition events, demonstrations, baking contests, entertainment, and fireworks.

ANNUAL TREE LIGHTING

Since 2013, the Historical Society has planned a Holiday Tree Lighting celebration in December. Community events at the celebration include entertainment, food, music and fireworks.

Figure 4.3: Annual Holiday Tree Lighting



Source: Town of Loudon

YOUNG AT HEART

The Young at Heart Senior Group holds monthly meetings at the Loudon Community Building and membership grows with each gathering. They hold workshops, sponsor trips, and provide support and socialization opportunities for Loudon residents aged 55 and older.

RECREATIONAL FIELDS

The recreational fields, both at the Elementary School and off of Village Road, serve as meeting grounds for students, parents, and teachers alike for sporting events and outdoor Town functions. New baseball diamonds were constructed on town-owned land on Staniels Road during 1999 and 2000. All recreational fields encourage the socialization of residents and further work to cement the bonds of the townspeople.

LOUDON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The original structure was built in 1860 and was one of thirteen one-room schoolhouses erected in the late 1800's and scattered uniformly about the Town in order to be accessible to all students within a reasonable walking distance. It was called the Village School, serving the children of the Loudon Village section of town, and the only schoolhouse constructed of bricks and mortar. It was occupied by Grades 1-8, as were the others in Town. Of the wood frame structures, five remain standing; four have been converted to residences, one of which has been relocated from its original location, and the fifth was converted to the Loudon Ridge Fire Station but is now a privately-owned accessory structure. An addition was made to the Village School in 1954, and again in 1977 when Loudon joined the Merrimack Valley Cooperative District. At this time it became the Loudon Elementary School. It was further expanded in 1988 and again in 2000. Approximately 300 students from the Town of Loudon are presently enrolled in Grades K-5.

VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS

Loudon has an American Legion Post (#88) that currently meets at 45 South Village Road and has about 68 members. The Legion Post once occupied one of Loudon's older structures. Dating to the first half of the 1800's, it had been a church, a school (or academy), and, prior to the Legion, a Grange Hall. The Legion recently purchased

the former courthouse/police station in the Village which is located at 45 South Village Road.

Figure 4.4: Loudon Legion Hall



Source: Town of Loudon

OBJECTIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The History and Culture Chapter improves the Master Plan's perspective by developing a humanistic aspect of Loudon and its history. It provides insight into the people who turned Loudon into the community it is today by describing a brief history of the Town, *and by inventorying historic and cultural assets of Loudon.*

The Historical Society, a valuable resource to the community, resides in the Loudon Community Building, affectionately called "Charlie's Barn." The Society houses many artifacts in organized exhibits which give a pictorial vision of Loudon's colorful past. Within the Chapter, inventories of cemeteries and historic mill sites

are references for others to use to learn about the history of Loudon. Twenty-six known cemeteries are documented as well as five historic mill site locations. Other such inventories of known historic resources should be undertaken, including old cellar holes, schoolhouses, and other remnants of the past. Cemeteries, mill sites, barns, churches and one National Register of Historic Places site are located on the ***Historical and Cultural Resources Map*** of this 2018 Master Plan.

There are, however many recommendations that need to be accomplished if the recognition of Loudon’s historical and cultural heritage is to become a reality. Perhaps the most important recommendation to accomplish is the writing of a Town History of Loudon. In 2015, a Capital Reserve Fund was created for the purpose of writing a Town History. This task will provide opportunities for the Historical Society to increase community awareness of the rich history of Loudon. In addition, public awareness of history through cultural activities and events will continue to provide today’s basis for future histories of Loudon.

OBJECTIVE 1

To preserve the historical resources of Loudon, including stone walls, old buildings, landmarks, cemeteries, and cellar holes and to encourage their stewardship.

- Maintain a thorough inventory of scenic, abandoned, and discontinued roads within Town and research where old rangeways once fell.
- Nominate sites or buildings of particular historic importance to the Town for the National Register of Historic Places.

OBJECTIVE 2

To promote the collection and preservation of historical artifacts relative to the history of Loudon.

- Maintain a thorough inventory of the historic and cultural resources and artifacts in Loudon.

OBJECTIVE 3

To encourage cultural events and the participation of residents in such events within Town through workshops, guest presentations, Old Home Day, and the Historical Society.

- Produce and promote workshops or tours of local historical buildings and sites as partnered with the Library, Young at Heart Seniors Group, Schools and the Old Home Day Association.

OBJECTIVE 4

To develop, maintain, and update the history of the Town of Loudon.

- Continue to look for opportunities to educate residents on the history of Loudon from the first settlement to present day and other topics of historical significance.
- Support the continued efforts of the Historical Society to create a written Town History.