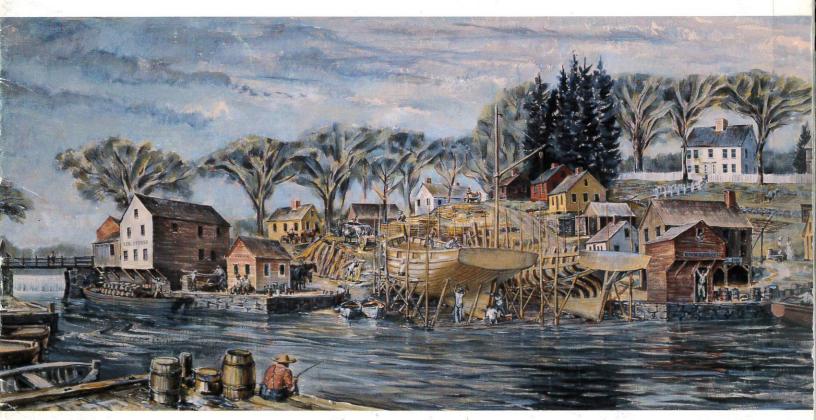
The Historic District of Durham, New Hampshire

A Walking Tour



Detail of The Waterfront at the Falls of the Oyster River, Durham, New Hampshire, circa 1822 (by John Hatch, courtesy of the artist and the Community Church of Durham)



BALLARD HOUSE

In 1790, Joshua Ballard built a Federal Style house on a parcel of land first granted to Valentine Hill in 1651 for a farm. Located on the turnpike between Portsmouth and Concord, it was destined to become a favorite tavern stop in the early years of the village. Charles E. Hoitt acquired the

property in the late 1800s and remodeled the old house to a home befitting his position in the community. He was a selectman for more than twenty years, a prominent "Granger" and a county commissioner all in spite of being Durham's only Democrat. It is said that "his popularity was due to his cordial way of meeting people and to honesty and economy in handling the people's money, the necessary expenses in a new college town demanding wise and strict calculation." The house currently contains two apartments and an insurance company founded by a graduate of the University of New Hampshire.



2 SCAMMELL GRANGE

A one-story schoolhouse, built here about 1860, was purchased in 1893 by the Scammell Grange #122 for a meeting place. To conform with the style of other Grange halls in the region, a second story, and a one-story extension in the rear for a stage, were added in 1897. Named for General Alexander Scammell, hero of the Revolution from Durham, this subordinate of the popular farm-oriented organization in New Hampshire disbanded in 1982. The Town of

Durham bought the property and, by vote of the Town Meeting, renamed it the Henry A. Davis Memorial Building in honor of a former "Granger" and Selectman. It now houses an Infant Care Center, the Durham Art Association, and is available for other community activities.



3 EBENEZER SMITH HOUSE

Ebenezer Smith bought this property in 1784 after it had passed from Nathaniel Hill to several owners, one of whom had placed a dwelling on it in 1764. Prior to his marriage in 1785, he added a new section to the front of the existing structure. The gabled portico, with a round arched

modillioned entry way over an unusually wide door, is an architectural feature of particular interest on an otherwise simple Federal style facade. Mr. Smith studied law with General John Sullivan and became a prominent lawyer in this part of the state. He was a dedicated public servant and genial host. Ezekial and Daniel Webster were frequent visitors, John Paul Jones waited here to take command of the ship *America*, and General Lafayette was a guest when he stopped in Durham in 1825. It has been divided into apartments for most of this century.



4 VALENTINE SMITH HOUSE

The Honorable Valentine Smith bought this house at auction in 1814. Tradition says it was built about 1735, perhaps by Valentine Hill's son, Nathaniel. Judge Smith was considered a "highly useful citizen" of his day, having held many town and state offices in addition to serving a

long term as Justice of the Court. His son, Joshua, and daughter, Mary, lived here all of their lives and continued their father's "good works" and interest in the Durham Social Library. Joshua lived to be 101 and was Town Moderator and Selectman for many years. Mary was church organist, librarian, and benefactress of the poor. She feared for her home "should college people" inhabit it after her death. Professor and Mrs. Clifford Parker restored the house and tended it with loving care from the 1930s to the 1970s. Its rooms have since been student rentals.



M. P. THOMPSON HOUSE Mary P. Thompson, Durham historian, genealogist, and European traveler, purchased the orange house in 1860 when it was a modest white cottage with barn and picket fence. Once her travels ceased, she spent the last 16 years of her life in this c.1800

home writing *Landmarks of Ancient Dover* and preparing material for *A History of Durham* which her nephew, Lucien, saw to completion in 1913. When Gene and Hattie Runlett joined house and barn for extra rooms in the 1920s, Mary's home became "Runlett House" - an inn offering the only lodging for hire in the village at that time. The small yellow bungalow to the west was built in 1907 by Lucien Thompson to provide a central location for the sole use of the post office. The blue building, next along, warehoused multiple uses for close to a century. All three are now student rentals in single ownership protesting, in high color, the regulations of the Historic District.



6 23 MAIN STREET

This center-chimney colonial poised over an exposed granite foundation and embellished with a carved fan over the door, was probably built by ship carpenters. The house is unique in that it measures a foot less in width at the second story than at the foundation. When Mary and Joseph Page

bought it in 1823, Mr. Page kept a store over the well between his house and Reverend Blydenburgh's to the east. He died in 1834 and his widow remained in the house for the next 48 years. She was appointed Postmistress for the years 1849 to 1853 and turned her west front parlor into the mail room. Until the 1960s, the property changed hands many times. Then, the George Findell family moved in, renovated the house, and made the east wing into a law office. Reverend Charles Gross, a young minister at the Community Church, and his bride lived here a few years before it was sold again in the 1970s. It has been rented to students ever since.



7 RED TOWER

The Reverend John Blydenburgh built this house in 1780. His daughter, Margaret, an anti-slavery advocate, lived here until her death in 1862. The property was purchased in 1895 by Hamilton Smith, a millionaire mining engineer, who returned to the scene of his childhood and turned this

modest home into a mansion with a three-story tower. In addition, he acquired land to the south and created a gentleman's farm estate with elaborate gardens and romantic trails along the banks of the Oyster River. A carriage house and stable, billiard house, tea house, and creamery supported this life style. The Smith garden across the road, where the Episcopal Church now stands, surrounded a rustic covered well and was "free to all lovers of the beautiful." Known as the Red Tower, the estate was subdivided in the 1960s. The house was made into apartments and is now occupied by students.



8 MELLEN HOUSE

Facing on Park Court, the main block of this house is Federal style, built c.1800-1810. It is one of only two brick buildings remaining in the Historic District, in a town that had a significant brick-making industry through the last half of the 19th century. Major Henry Mellen, a Durham native who

served with the cavalry in the Civil War, returned home in the 1870s as a hero with severe disability suffered in the line of duty. He and his wife lived here, near the library, where the Major volunteered as librarian for the rest of his days. Step-daughter, Caroline, inherited half the house and married Samuel B. Craig in 1895. He also was a decorated military man and was responsible for some of the first public works construction projects in Durham. Though additions have been made in recent years for apartments and office space, much of the character of the original house remains.



9 COMMUNITY CHURCH

The Community Church of Durham (U.C.C.) has been described as "a superb example of the Greek Revival style as expressed in religious architecture." Built in 1848 by the Congregational Society with funds from the sale of pews, the site on the hill placed the church in the path of a growing village. This is the fourth meeting house constructed in Durham since 1655, when a crude shelter was located on the south bank of the Oyster River "half-way between the falls

and the oyster beds." Corner posts at the Sullivan Monument mark the foundations of the 1716 and 1792 meeting houses that overlooked a waterfront settlement clustered at the falls. With the arrival of New Hampshire College in 1893, the church was enlarged and community rooms added. Alterations to the interior and additions since then have kept pace with changing needs, without compromise to the integrity of the original design. The painting reproduced on the cover of this guide hangs in one of the community rooms.



10 RICHARDSON TAVERN

The Richardson Tavern, built between 1780 and 1800, was licensed as an inn and provided a place for town officials and juries to meet in the years after the Revolution before Durham had a Town Hall. In 1817, the Selectmen recorded payment of \$30 to Joseph Richardson "for expenses

of His Excellency James Monroe, Esq., President of the United States of America, with Selectmen and other Gentlemen." When Hamilton Smith's half-sister, Mary (Janin) Mendell, bought the old inn in the early 1900s, she also purchased the house across the road and demolished it to control her view of the mill pond. Such elegance was unaffordable by the late 1930s when Harold Loveren bought the house and divided it into attractive apartments.



1 DURHAM SOCIAL LIBRARY

Squire Richardson used the upper floor of this small building, c.1800, for his law office. The lower floor, with double doors facing the street at that time, was the local carriage painter's shop. The Durham Social Library occupied a corner of the law office when it incorporated in 1815, but

moved to the Congregational Church as more space was needed. In 1883, the Durham Library Association was organized to sell membership shares and buy Richardson's building. Ten years later, the Town voted to establish a "free" library which New Hampshire College students also used until 1906 when Durham's library was consolidated with the library on campus in an agreement that townspeople would always have access to the collection. The building was converted to apartments, after that, and they rent as such today.



12 STEVENS-MATHES HOUSE

The ell connecting this house and barn as one building suggests that Nathaniel Stevens had a working farm when he occupied this building built c.1830. The original gable front orientation to the street has both late Federal and early Greek Revival influences that have been hidden

behind turn-of-the-century verandas and other alterations. The square, glazed cupola with horse weathervane remains an interesting feature of the barn. Hamilton Augustus Mathes and wife, Belle, moved here from Durham Point in 1883. He was a prominent citizen and business man—having begun the manufacture of bricks on Durham Point in 1862, owning 5 yards, and employing 200 men—at his death in 1891. Belle kept the operation going into the 1900s. The house was divided into apartments when Tom Moriarty bought it so he could use the barn for a shop. With apartments added to the ell, it remains a rental property.



13 SMITH CHAPEL

Though it is not included in the bounds of the Historic District, Smith Chapel is closely tied to it. When Hamilton Smith died, while sailing on the Oyster River in 1900, his widow selected a favored spot on the bank of the river flowing by their estate for a memorial chapel and grave-

yard. Built and consecrated in the Anglican tradition, the stone facade and stained glass windows are reminiscent of the years they lived in England. Hamilton, his wife, Alice, and other members of the family– including their beloved dogs–are buried beside the chapel. Now owned by the Town of Durham and maintained by the Trustees of Trust Funds, the chapel has been restored to its former elegance and is available for small gatherings, on request. It is frequently the scene of summer weddings.



14 DURHAM TOWN HALL

Joseph Coe, Durham shipbuilder and merchant, built this excellent example of Federal style brick architecture in 1825. The unusual round corner door is a feature of only two other buildings in the area that were designed to provide two stories for mercantile use plus a shallow third-floor

apartment. After years of meeting in taverns and schoolhouses, the Selectmen convinced the Town in 1840 to purchase Coe's brick store for a suitable Town Hall—provided it could be acquired "for 1,000 dollars or less." In 1852, funds were voted to make the top two stories into one usable hall to be fitted out with chandelier, settees, and stove. Durham's teenagers of the 1930s and '40s used the hall for basketball and dances. By the 1950s, the Town Meeting was too large for the space. Since 1961, it has been the Durham Historic Association Museum. The first floor is now occupied by the Durham District Court.



15 DURHAM TOWN OFFICES

Sometime before 1893, Joseph Burnham built twin houses next door to his family home. They were mirror image two and one-half-story frame structures on separate small lots. Harrie Rand bought them for rental properties in 1924 and they were still single-family dwellings when the

Town bought the house nearest the Town Hall for office space in 1972. Later, the Town Meeting voted to purchase the house to the south and the two structures were connected in 1978 by a two-story ell in a "contemporary but sympathetic design" that won an architectural award the next year. The building contains a meeting room, the Town Clerk-Tax Collector's office, Business Office, Public Works and Planning, the Town Administrator, the Trustees of Trust Funds, and the Police Department. A large three-dimensional map of the Town of Durham, created by John Hatch in 1965, commands the lobby and is updated frequently to keep information about the Town current.

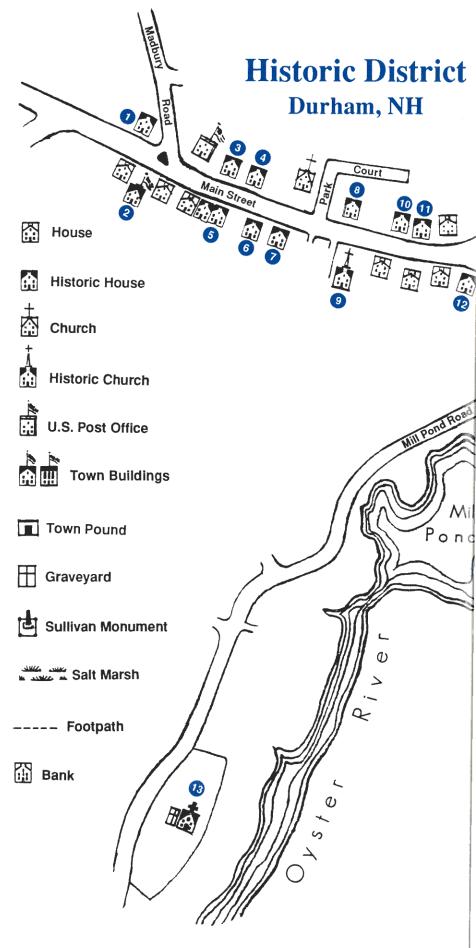


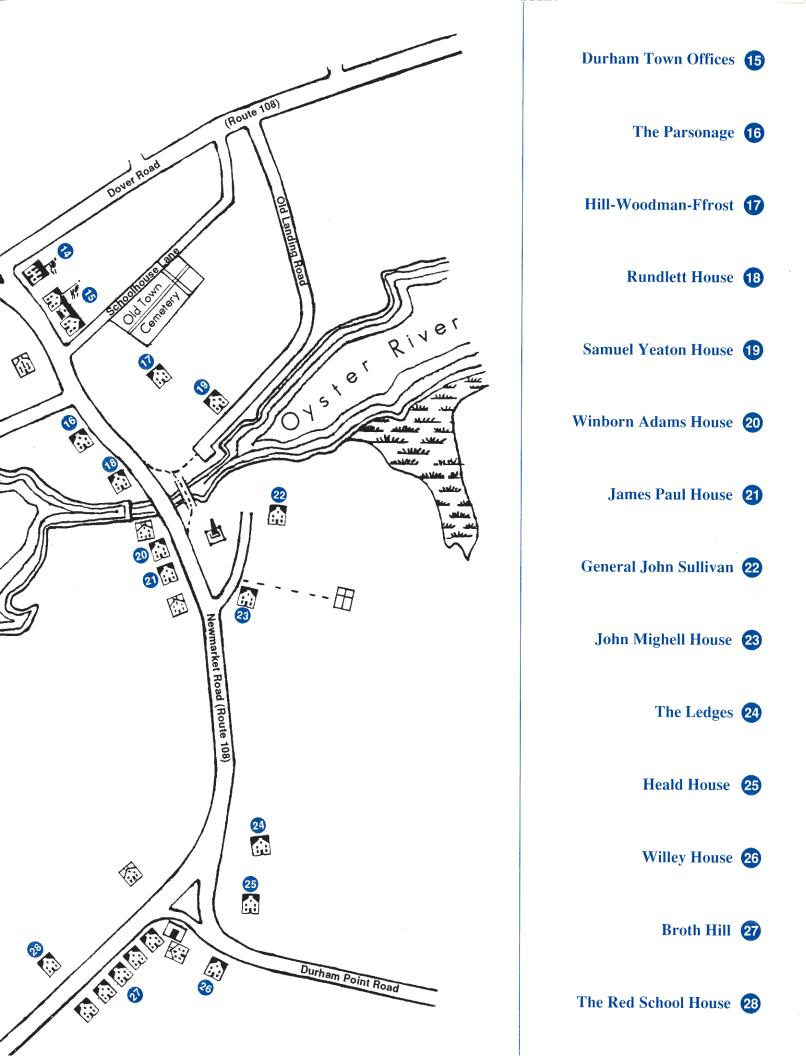
16 THE PARSONAGE

Captain Andrew Lapish Simpson built this house for his bride, Lydia Kelley, before 1840. It is L-shaped in plan with the ell connecting to an old barn that was originally a house owned by William Odiorne, the shipbuilder. It is thought to be one of the oldest structures in Durham.

Andrew Simpson, a noted sea captain who "doubled Cape Horn twentysix times," died in 1870. His widow survived him by 25 years. She was a devoted member of the church and bequeathed her home to the Congregational Society and the Durham Library Association. The house was used as a parsonage from 1895 to the 1950s. Through part of the 1970s and '80s, it was the Parsonage Gallery and Frame Shop where local artists and craftsmen were encouraged to exhibit and sell their work. It is, presently, the home office of an environmental management institute.









17 HILL-WOODMAN-FFROST

It is recorded that Valentine Hill built a house on the north side of the Oyster River near the site of his mill in 1649. With a commanding view from the hill, it has ever since held a position of prominence in the town. The two and one-half-story ell, with large center chimney, is thought

to be the original house. Later Georgian additions may have been made when Nathaniel Hill occupied the house in the 1680s. The property passed to Jonathan Woodman, who sold it to George Ffrost sometime after 1796. He was named Postmaster in 1808; thus the Ffrost store on the northeast side of the falls bridge was also the Post Office for the 40 years of his appointment. Descendents of the Ffrost family owned the house until the early 1980s. Presently, it is awaiting renovation with the hope that its proud elegance will soon again grace the hill.



18 RUNDLETT HOUSE

Old photographs show this house partially hidden by the Rundlett Mill on the northwest bank of the Oyster River by the falls, and deeds dating back to 1790 verify that a Rundlett owned the house in the 1800s. Whether he lived here to be near his saw and grist mill, or if it was a mill-

workers cottage, is not known. It is presumed the house was built c.1750-70. The small, simple structure has little detailing except for turned posts on a porch that extends the length of the facade overlooking the falls. Although it is often ignored in a discussion of historic houses, it clearly retains the honest charm of a modest dwelling typical of its day. Douglas Worthen's Grandmother Phair bought the house in 1927. He and his family now enjoy living with an unobstructed view of the Mill Pond and dam.



19 SAMUEL YEATON HOUSE

In 1789, Samuel Yeaton bought - "for 17 pounds, 5 shillings lawful money" - 23 sq. rods of land just north of the ways at the shipyard landing, where he worked as a cooper. He built his house in the style of a center chimney Georgian Cape with two rooms and a sleeping loft. Drinking water

was carried from across the river because the nearby well was of poor quality. A white road paved with oyster shells went directly by his front door as it turned up over the hill to the village; thus, the house is no longer square with the present road. When the widow Furness acquired the property, she bought more land from the Ffrosts on the promise she would "always plow the last furrow up against their stone wall." This additional land made it possible for later owners to add several wings to the house. Durham's long-time historians, Philip and Dorothy Wilcox, enjoyed caring for this house and its grounds for many years.



20 WINBORN ADAMS HOUSE

Lt. Colonel Winborn Adams is thought to have built this house c.1750. He was a surveyor and innkeeper. Prior to the Revolution, his inn was the scene of many political and social affairs. Adams was with General John Sullivan in the 1774 raid on Fort William and Mary and was

Captain of the first company raised for the Revolution from Durham. He was killed while in command of the 2nd New Hampshire Regiment at the Battle of Bemis Heights in 1777. His wife, Sarah, continued to keep the inn through the 18th century. Members of the Fred E. Jenkins family, owners of the mill on the southwest end of the bridge at the falls, lived here until the 1980s. The small cottage they built between the old Adams place and their mill is being replaced by the present owners with an architectural design in character with the Historic District.



21 JAMES PAUL HOUSE

This is the only stone house in the Historic District. Built between 1830 and 1840, it is transitional Federal/Greek Revival in style. There are four tall chimneys - two on the interior of both ends of the building. Granite lintels over the windows and granite quoins at the corners add much to the

elegance of the design. The house was early marked with tragedy when, in taking down the staging, James Paul was killed. Early residents of the Paul House included the Reverend Barnum who it is said, *walked to Town as going to a funeral*, and the Reverend C.H. Chapin, his successor, who *ran all the way to the Post Office and back*. University professors John Kendall, Sylvester Bingham, and their families lived here in the mid-20th century. The property is presently a single-family residence.



22 GENERAL JOHN SULLIVAN

Dr. Samuel Adams built this Georgian style house in 1740 on land deeded to him by his father, Reverend Hugh Adams. In 1764, Samuel Adams' widow sold the house and 3 acres to John Sullivan, a young lawyer. In time, he added other structures to the property, such as a small

building in the rear thought to have housed slaves, a law office and library, a dairy, and stables. As a returning hero of the Revolution, General Sullivan kept council chambers here when he was elected Governor of this newly-formed State. Distinguished guests from all over the country and Europe were entertained in his home. With his widow's death in 1820, the property passed out of the family, to return almost a century later when Lynde Sullivan, a descendent, bought the house in 1912. (A monument to Sullivan stands on the site of the old meeting house.) Dr. John Reid bought the house prior to its 1973 listing on the National Register of Historic Places.



23 JOHN MIGHELL HOUSE

There was a structure on this property when John Mighell sold it to Samuel Burnham in 1682. A 30-foot well under the floor of what is now the oldest part of the house was probably built there to assure the availability of water during an Indian raid. While such wells were not

uncommon elsewhere at that time, this is the only one known to exist in Durham. The present appearance of the house is in the Georgian style and numerous additions to the rear of the building have not compromised the integrity of the structure. Dr. Jonathan Crosby, Captain Daniel Rogers, the blacksmith, and Mrs. Anna Merrill, can be counted among the many owners of this property. Alexander Graham Bell is said to have visited here in the 1920s while discussing one of his research projects with Professor Ernest G. Ritzman who lived in the house then. The Robert Congdons, present owners of the property, moved here from Durham Point in the 1960s.



24 THE LEDGES

This Georgian style house, known as *The Ledges*, was built c.1750. Subsequent additions of a two-story wing and sunporch to the rear of the house are fully compatible with the original structure. The handsome six-panel front door is flanked by fluted pilasters rising to a triangular pedi-

ment and surmounted by a four-panel transom light of bull's-eye glass. The house has had many well-known occupants – Crosby, Edgerly, Paul, Murphy, etc. For a time, Phillips Academy in Andover owned the house and used it as a country retreat. In recent years, the George Ffrost Sawyer family has restored the house and grounds with a keen sensitivity to tradition, elegance, and comfort for living in the 20th century. Its fine state of preservation reflects their commitment to perpetuating the history of Durham.



25 HEALD HOUSE

This small house, built c.1760, was first located on the south side of Durham Point Road near the Town Pound, where it was crowded next to Mark Willey's home. Federal B. Stevens bought the dwelling and then married Mary Willey, the girl next door. When widowed, she sold the

house to James Sawyer who bought a small lot of land across Durham Point Road then rolled the house out of its cramped location to a place of its own. Additions made to the house in the early 1900s somewhat altered its Georgian character, but the house is now situated in a favorable position and has much charm. Interior irregularities, where rooms have been connected, create a surprise at every turn. The house was occupied by university faculty for several years. Frank Heald, Durham's volunteer photographer and Town Moderator, and his wife Helen, bought the property in the 1950s. Both remain active in local affairs.



26 WILLEY HOUSE

The Mark Willey House, built c.1770, is considered a transitional two and onehalf-story Georgian/Federal style structure. Its front entrance is flanked by sidelights with a plain entablature over the door. Military rolls for 1812-14 show that Mark Willey served in Captain Wiggins'

Company. In September of 1814, the company was activated to serve with other companies from the area when it was feared the British would attempt the capture of Portsmouth. There is no further record of his involvement in the military, but he did serve a term as representative to the General Court in 1843. He is thought to have been a carpenter and related to Thomas *Wille*, Durham's clockmaker of the 1750s. The house has seen a variety of uses but is now a single-family dwelling. The Town Pound is close by to the west. In the early settlement this must have been the center of much activity and noise while animals waited within the stone enclosure to be claimed by their owners.



27 BROTH HILL

The area known as Broth Hill, on the east side of Newmarket Road just beyond Durham Point Road, is a compact unit of 5 modest, similar Georgian-type capes built c.1800. Four of them were built by Joseph Coe as homes for his shipyard workers. The fifth (Lenharth house) was

built in 1761, perhaps for the cobbler who had his shop in a separate building in the back. This last house is extremely simple compared to the rest. At the other extreme, the first (Polk) house is more elaborately detailed than the other center-chimney homes. In spite of numerous additions to all of the houses, the architectural integrity of these singlefamily homes remains intact. A rhyme was composed on the occasion of an epidemic on the hill:

> "Broth Hill, the City of Seth; Were it not for Joe Coe They would all starve to death."



28 THE RED SCHOOL HOUSE

The Red School House is no longer red, but it remains that color in the memory of all older Durham residents. Of a modest early Federal design, it was built c.1790 and was the District #8 one-room school from the date of its construction through the latter part of the 19th century. The

original one and one-half story structure has been extensively renovated in recent years so that what was an *all-but-abandoned* set of buildings is now a handsome whole of connected ells and additional rooms. The main school room has retained its original character throughout the restoration effort. The lane just north leads to a c.1700 Public House and a c.1900 barn now serving the arts in the seacoast as Mill Pond Center.

Durham, New Hampshire Incorporated 1732

A Chronological Perspective...

- 1623 English colonists establish first settlement at Dover Neck.
- **1633** Settlers spread out to nearby tidal shores of Oyster River and are in "recognized possession" of lands up to the fall line by 1640.
- **1649** Valentine Hill is granted "the fall of the Oyster River" and sets up a saw mill by 1651.
- **1655** A Meeting House is built, and taxes paid to the Dover Parish allow a separate minister for Oyster River.
- 1694 Indians, led by the French, "fall upon Oyster River, taking 3 garrisons, killing or carrying-away 94 persons, and burning 14 houses."
- **1716** Oyster River Plantation is granted rights as an independent parish.
- **1732** Oyster River Parish is incorporated as a township and named **DURHAM**.
- 1774 In one of the first acts of the American Revolution, Durham men bring arms and powder (by gundalow from Fort William and Mary to the Meeting House at the falls) which were later used at the Battle of Bunker Hill.
- 1776 1829 Seventy-four ocean-going vessels (46 being of 200-399 ton) are produced in the peak years of shipbuild-ing at the Town ways.
- 1794 1855 Piscataqua Bridge, a 2,363 foot wooden wonder, links Durham east to Newington and west to the New Hampshire Turnpike.
- **1841** The Boston & Maine Railroad is extended through Durham from Exeter to Dover.
- **1893** New Hampshire College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts moves from Hanover to Durham on land willed by Benjamin Thompson.
- **1923** New Hampshire College becomes the University of New Hampshire (UNH) with the addition of a College of Liberal Arts.
- **1946** An influx of WW II students on the G.I. Bill sparks continuing growth of UNH and the Town of Durham.
- **1973** Durham Town Meeting votes *NO* to an oil refinery proposed for Durham Point by Aristotle Onassis.
- **1987** After 255 years of Town Meetings and Selectmen, Durham votes *YES* for a Charter change to a Council-Town Administrator form of government.
- **1992** Durham is 260 years incorporated 359 years old since settled.



The Town Hall, circa 1825

(original water color by C.J. Manuel hangs in the Durham Historic Association Museum)

The Durham Historic Association...

The Durham Historic Association was originally incorporated in 1851. It was re-activated in 1946 and the constitution still reads that it was chartered "...for the purpose of preserving the remembrance of events connected with the history of the Town of Durham, or of individuals who may have resided there, by the erection of a monument or monuments, or in other suitable ways..."

Since 1961, the Association has maintained a museum on the second floor of the old Town Hall which houses a growing collection of objects related to Durham as well as archives of local and genealogical interest. It has also sponsored the publication and re-printing of local histories sold through the museum. Meetings of the Association are held four times a year with scheduled programs or lectures that are always open to the public.

It should be noted here, that this Walking Tour Brochure is not a complete survey of Durham's Historic District. Rather, it is an attempt to highlight those structures easily seen from the road.

The museum is free and open to the public every weekday from 1:00 P.M. - 4:00 P.M. from June to September. Winter hours are Tuesday and Thursday from 2:00 P.M. - 4:00 P.M. or by calling **(603) 868-5436** for an appointment.

Richard M. Fitts, President Durham Historic Association, 1992

The Kellogg Program Office...

The Kellogg Program Office was established with a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation of Battle Creek, Michigan, in 1968, and is an integral part of The New England Center, A Kellogg Center for Continuing Education. The Kellogg Foundation funded ten such centers across the country on University campuses, but the New England Center was the only one to bring together several land-grant universities to serve a major geographic region – New England.

The mission of the Kellogg Program Office is to "*provide leadership in creating innovative adult education programs.*" This mission is expressed in residential programs and projects which focus on the dissemination of existing knowledge, and the creation of opportunities for adult learners to explore and expand their horizons.

The Kellogg Program Office is focused on three major themes in its efforts to reflect the strengths of the communities it serves:

- New England Culture
- · Experiential Learning
- International Issues

For more information about programs and projects, please call (603) 862-1900.

Eileen M. Rogers, Director Kellogg Program Office

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