

CHAPTER

4

HISTORIC AND SCENIC RESOURCES

Athol's history has been shaped by the Millers River, one of its most valuable historic and scenic resources, since its earliest days. The area now comprising Athol was first inhabited by Native Americans who set up seasonal camps near the River's banks during the sixteenth century. The shores of the Millers River were also used as a major transportation corridor for indigenous people during this period. Later, once European settlement began in the 1730s, settlers quickly learned the benefits of harnessing the river's power for industrial purposes. Although Athol was founded as an agrarian community, the Town's limited agricultural productivity soon encouraged business development along the river. The Town's first sawmill was established in 1736 and the first gristmill in 1737, and by the end of the eighteenth century, Athol had twelve mills along the Millers River and the Town's other waterways. The Millers River has continued to play a role in the Town's economy during the past two centuries. However, after rail service was introduced in the 1840s, changing the primary mode of transport for manufactured goods, and later, as other technological advances occurred, its industries' dependence on waterpower declined.

The Town's historic industrial and waterpower base played a tremendous role in shaping the Town's present downtown. Most of the current structures downtown were constructed during the Town's economic heyday of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Today, those historic structures, many of which are architecturally noteworthy, provide valuable insight into the Town's past. Outside of the downtown, there are a considerable number of historic and scenic resources as well, from historic farmsteads and farmhouses located on Moore Hill and Chestnut Hill, to homes and businesses near the Uptown Common, the Town's earliest transportation and commercial center. The Town's historic resources also include properties and sites along the Athol History Trail, and its scenic resources include the viewsheds from the highlands overlooking the Millers River and from the Bearsden Forest peaks. Athol's unique history and strong industrial heritage, mixed with agricultural areas and protected forests, contribute to the Town's unique blend of historic and scenic assets.

The focus of the Historic and Scenic Resources chapter is the inventory of Athol's principal historic and scenic resources. Only through the inventorying of these resources can they be fully identified, and strategies developed to preserve, protect, and promote these assets. The chapter opens by presenting the Master Plan committee's goals and objectives regarding the Town's historic and scenic resources. It then provides a brief history of Athol to give context to the resources inventory. Most of the historic information contained in this historic overview comes from the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) Reconnaissance Survey Report for Athol (1984) and local books on Athol history such as William G. Lord's *History of Athol, Massachusetts* (1953). Athol contains a number of sites that reflect its early agricultural history and settlement and its nineteenth century development as a mill

town and industrial center. After the historic overview, the chapter then lists Athol's most significant historic and scenic resources, largely by geographic area, and discusses the primary issues affecting the preservation of these resources. The chapter closes by providing recommendations regarding Athol's historic and scenic resources and policies that could help protect them for future generations.

The Historic and Scenic Resource chapter's direction and discussion are governed by the key historic and scenic resource goals and objectives expressed and developed during the Master Planning process. These goals and objectives are listed below:

Goal:

- To identify, promote, and protect Athol's historic resources including its structures, sites, and landscapes.

Objectives:

- Consider a comprehensive review, update, and expansion of the existing Massachusetts Historical Commission structures and sites inventory to create a more complete and accurate listing of the Town's historic buildings and properties.
- Investigate ways to increase the public's awareness of Athol's history and historic and scenic resources.
- Consider creating National or local historic districts in the Town's most intact and historically significant sections, such as the downtown and the Uptown Common areas.
- Identify and protect historic and scenic landscapes.
- Consider establishing voluntary architectural guidelines for historic structures and sites to protect their unique historic character.
- Identify and consider pursuing Federal and State grants and other financing options to support historic resource preservation and protection efforts.

Historical Perspective

This section provides an overview of the history of the Athol area. This overview begins in the pre-European era with seasonal Native American settlement, continues through the Town's establishment in the eighteenth century, and periods of significant commercial, industrial, and population expansion during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and closes with the Early Modern period of the early twentieth century, and the slowing of development during that time. Most of the information in this history comes from the Massachusetts Historical Commission's Reconnaissance Survey Report for Athol (1984). The Historical Commission's Survey Reports start by reviewing a town's history and describing its topography and political boundaries. They then discuss the seven historic

periods of its development, exploring transportation services, population changes and characteristics, settlement patterns, economic activities, and significant architecture for each era. The reports conclude by briefly evaluating a town's historic inventory, highlighting its settlement patterns and most significant structures, and discussing potential threats to its historic resources.

The first historic period covered by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) review is the Contact Period of initial European settlement, considered to be between the years 1500 and 1620. Historians believe that a large settlement of the Squateag people, the southernmost group of the Western Abenaki, was located in the area now known as Northfield during this time. Residents from this settlement visited the Athol area on a seasonal basis for hunting and fishing, and it is thought that temporary occupation sites may have been located near the Millers River and other rivers, White Pond, Lake Rohunta, South Athol Pond, and Lake Ellis, as well as many of the area's brooks. During this era, a number north-south and east-west transportation routes (trails) ran through the Athol area, including along the Millers River corridor and the western branch of the Tully River. It is believed that Athol was part of the original Mohawk Trail, a major transportation route during the period.

During the Plantation Period (1620-1675), indigenous residents continued their use of the early transportation routes. However, Native American settlement patterns shifted with the commencement of fur trading with colonists in the 1630s. Historians believe that, influenced by their relationships with the northern Sokoki and with French settlers with whom they traded, the Squateag may have begun migrating north away from the area circa 1663.

The Colonial Period (1675-1775) saw further Squateag migration north. Sales of Squateag lands to settlers occurred in the area west of Athol in 1682 and within the Town boundaries itself in 1720, providing evidence of the Native American settlement shift. Part of the land that was sold in 1720 was used to establish Athol's first colonist community a decade later. The town of Athol (then called Pequoig, the Squateag name for the Millers River) was laid out in 1733 as a six-mile square town and included parts of what are now Orange, Phillipston, and Royalston. House lots of 50 acres each were established in two sections of Town, on East Pequoig Hill near Mill Brook and what is now Pleasant Street, and on West Pequoig Hill, now known as Moore Hill, including an area that is now part of Orange. The first five settler families arrived in Pequoig (Athol) in 1735 and established homesteads on East Pequoig Hill. An Athol History Trail marker, indicating the location of Athol's first home, for the family of Richard Morton, sits today at 813 Pleasant Street.

During the decades following its founding, the Town grew rapidly. By 1750, there were over 30 families living in Athol, and the Town's population increased to 359 people by 1765 and to 848 by 1775. The first meetinghouse and house of worship were built in 1741 at a location halfway between the Town's east and west settlements: on Hapgood Street near Mill Brook. This building burned down soon after construction and was replaced by a new meetinghouse on Pleasant Street. Athol's first two schoolhouses were built in 1766, and four more followed in 1770. The town was officially incorporated as the Town of Athol in 1762. The Town was named Athol by John Murray, the youngest son of the Duke of Athol (also spelled "Atholl") in Blair-Athol, Scotland. John Murray, a resident of Rutland, Massachusetts, owned several hundreds of acres of land in Athol before its incorporation,

and acquired nearly as much more land thereafter. John Murray issued the warrant for the first Town Meeting, and was also the moderator for that meeting.

Athol was founded as an agrarian community and farming, principally to meet families' own needs, continued to be the Town's primary economic activity for many decades. The Town also achieved moderate levels of corn production for sale in its early years. Nonetheless, like so many northern Worcester County towns, Athol was classified by Pruitt as a Poor Agrarian Town for 1771 and ranked low on agrarian prosperity and high on poverty. As a result of its low agriculture rating and limited farming potential, the Town saw some industrial activity even during its initial years. The Town's first sawmill was established in 1736 and its first gristmill in 1737. Other mills were also constructed during the later part of the eighteenth century, and by 1800, more than 10 were in operation.

During the Colonial Period, early Native American trails continued to be used and improved as transportation routes. In addition, roads were constructed to the Town's highland agricultural settlements. By the Period's end, a radial pattern of roads had been created to connect the East Pequig Hill-meetinghouse area with outlying farms and the surrounding communities.

Few buildings from the Colonial Period still exist in Athol. Among those that do remain are a number of houses in the Chestnut Hill area, north of the Millers River, that were built by Jonathan Haven and his descendants. Jonathan Haven served as Athol's first Town Clerk and was a member of the Town's first Board of Selectmen.

The next time period, the Federal Period, took place from 1775 to 1830. During the Federal Period, the Town experienced significant growth in population and settlement. The population expanded from 884 people in 1775 to 1,325 in 1830, and dispersed, upland, agricultural settlement continued. The main areas of agricultural settlement during this period were along Pleasant Street and on Chestnut Hill.

A village and expanded town center began developing in Athol along Main Street, near the third meetinghouse (1773) during the latter half of the era. A major factor contributing to this development was the chartering of the Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike in 1799. The Turnpike traveled from Boston to Central Massachusetts and then onto Brattleboro, and ran largely along the Mohawk Trail corridor. The Athol portion included Route 2A (Templeton Street, Main Street), Chestnut Street, South Athol Road, and South Main Street. A northwestern branch of the main turnpike was constructed from Athol Village to Northfield, and another turnpike (the Petersham, Greenwich, and Monson Turnpike) was established from Athol Village south in 1804. The main tollbooth for the turnpikes was located on Main Street across from the Village Common (today, the Uptown Common). Located at the junction of five main roads, the common served as a major stagecoach stop and helped make Athol an important regional transportation center. Both the tollbooth and stagecoach stop at the Uptown Common are commemorated with Athol History trail markers.

While general commerce was increasing in the Uptown Common area (the town center at the time), industrial activity was also growing near the Town's rivers. The latter half of the

Federal Period saw construction of a paper mill (1810), a cotton mill (1814), a scythe shop, and other water-powered driven enterprises.

There are currently quite a few buildings from the Federal Period remaining in Athol. They include a number of private residences along Pleasant Street and Main Street. They also include the former Athol Town House on Main Street and the Athol Baptist Church on the Uptown Common, both now private residences, as well as the Old Town Hall (fourth meetinghouse) on Main Street near the Uptown Common. The fourth meetinghouse (1828) was constructed after the third meetinghouse burned down in 1827, and was used as the Town Hall from 1848 until 1921, and as the home of the Athol Woman's Club from 1921 to 1957. The building currently houses the Athol Historical Society. The Old Town Hall is one of two properties in Athol that are listed on the National Historic Register. The other is the Pequig Hotel.

The Early Industrial Period (1830-1870) in Athol saw continued growth in population, infrastructure and economic activity, as railroad construction added new commerce and inhabitants to the Town. Provided by the Vermont and Massachusetts Railroad, rail service from Boston to Athol began in 1848. Service was expanded from Athol to Brattleboro in 1849, and from Athol to Greenfield in 1850.

Residential settlement and commercial expansion continued at the Meetinghouse Village center (Uptown Common) during the first half of the Period, prior to the railroad's arrival. Once rail service started, development shifted to the Depot Village along lower Main Street, and industrial activities intensified along the Mill Brook and Millers River corridors. By the end of the Early Industrial Period, the Depot Village had grown to rival the Meetinghouse Village as the Town's commercial and residential center. During the era, various manufacturing enterprises, including textile, boot, machine tool, wood, and paper production, were established along the river between River Street and Main Street in the east, and between Main Street and South Street to the west. Combined with the small-scale manufacturing businesses that developed at dispersed waterpower sites, these firms employed close to 950 workers in 1875, up from less than 100 thirty-five years earlier. All this business activity led Exchange Street, which links Main Street to the Railroad Depot, to develop as the Town's main commercial corridor.

The greatest residential growth during the period occurred in the Depot Village area, particularly along South and Travers Street. South of the railroad corridor, settlement extended south on Cottage Street and east in the School Street-Main Street area. There were also homes built north of the Millers River, along River Street, and in South Athol, where a small hamlet and some woodworking industry began to develop. Additionally, residential settlement continued in the uptown area along Main Street and Pleasant Street and in neighborhoods off these streets.

With the arrival of the railroad and the expansion of industrial activity, Athol's rate of population growth accelerated during the Early Industrial Period, more than doubling over forty years. Athol's population grew from 1,325 in 1830 to 3,517 in 1870. Some of the newcomers were immigrants who came to work in the factories. The largest immigrant

group during the period was the Irish, and by 1865, the Irish comprised 7 percent of the population, or approximately 200 people.

Notable commercial and institutional buildings remaining from the period include the Congregational Church (1859) on Chestnut Street, the Starrett Museum building (1853) on Crescent Street, and the early Uptown post office (Teel House) (1869) on Auburn Place, which has been converted to a private residence. Homes remaining from the Early Industrial Period are primarily Italianate and Second Empire in design and are located in both the uptown village and lower village areas.

During the Late Industrial Period (1870-1915), population and economic growth in Athol expanded over previous eras. The Town's transportation infrastructure continued to increase, encouraging more industry and more people to move to the Town. Rail service from the Depot Village to South Athol was introduced in 1873, and electric streetcar service began from the Depot Village to Orange (1894) and through Phillipston and Templeton to Gardner (1900).

Industrial activity continued to increase, intensifying in the Millers River corridor and expanding in the industrial zone south of Main Street and north of the rail lines. The most significant growth occurred along the Millers River east of the Chestnut Street crossing. Major machine tool factories located in this area during the 1880s and early twentieth century. During the Late Industrial Period, the number of manufacturing workers more than doubled, increasing from 944 workers (1875) to 2,476 (1915). Roughly one-fifth of these workers were women. By 1915, manufacturing firms employed about half of all Athol women working outside of the home.

Commercial business growth and infill occurred in the downtown, leading the Main Street-Exchange Street area to become a commercial center of regional significance. It was during this era that the Pequoig Hotel was constructed (1894). The Pequoig Hotel served as a business and activity focal point for many years. The Hotel contained living suites, single apartments, lodging rooms, banquet and meeting halls, and a dining room and tavern.

During the Late Industrial Period, the residential areas of Athol also experienced growth, both through infill occurring in existing neighborhoods and through settlement expansion into previously undeveloped areas. New neighborhoods of single-family and multi-family housing extended onto the highlands north and south of the Millers River in the 1880s and 1890s and began to fill-in over the next few decades. Residential development also expanded in the Silver Lake area, as well as north along Chestnut Hill Avenue, along Main Street, and east of Pleasant Street. In addition, recreational cottages were built on the Lake Ellis islands.

Some of the housing expansion was directed at the new workers who were moving to Athol for factory jobs. During the Late Industrial Period, worker housing was built along the South Street south of the ponds, and along the south side of Chestnut Street near the Goddard and Manning piano factory. New residential areas (i.e. South Park, Pleasant Valley, and Fairview) were also laid out west of Sanders Street, near the Lewis Sanders factory.

Athol's population growth during the era accelerated, with the number of residents almost tripling over forty-five years. The Town's population expanded from 3,517 in 1870 to 9,783 in 1915. During the same period, the foreign-born population also continued to grow, and by 1915, immigrants comprised one-fifth of the Town's total residents. The largest immigrant influx during the period came from Canada. Other significant groups included Italians early on and later, Lithuanians and Poles. By the end of the Late Industrial Period, the Town's population (at 9,783) reached 86 percent of its current population level of 11,299 (2000 U.S. Census).

As the Town's population grew during the Late Industrial Period, so did the number of voluntary societies and associations. The Town's business leaders established the Board of Trade (1872) and farmers created the Grange (1889), which supplemented the previous Agricultural Society. The United Workmen was organized for factory workers. A library organization was founded in 1878 and became the Town's free and public library in 1882. In addition, various philanthropic activities were supported through Associated Charities, formed in 1903, and the Salvation Army, established a year later. A Women's Club was created in 1900. Also, a number of associations and churches were established for those of different nationalities and religions. Roman Catholics formed Our Lady Immaculate (1904); Polish Catholics began their own services (1913); and Jewish residents established Temple Israel (1910).

There are a large number of noteworthy commercial and industrial buildings in Athol that were constructed during the Late Industrial Period. Much of the downtown Main Street area was developed during that period and many of the most significant buildings from the era still exist. They include: the Pequig Hotel (1895), which is listed on the National Historic Register; the U.S. Post Office/Athol Masonic Lodge (1913) at 336 Main Street; the Webb Block (1891) at 417-437 Main Street; the Fay Block (1879) at 447-453 Main Street; the Athol Second Unitarian Church (1914) at 478 Main Street; the Cooke Block (1912) at 491 Main Street; and the Starrett Block (1913) at 513-527 Main Street (1913). Most of the listed commercial blocks are of an Italianate Victorian Commercial style and contained a mix of offices and retail commercial establishments. Other noteworthy buildings in the downtown are the Athol Downtown Fire Station (1893) on Exchange Street and the Railroad Depot (1873) on South Street. Further uptown on Main Street lies the George Gerry and Sons Co. Building (1892) and the former Trade Winds Guest House (1897), which is now a private residence.

Few homes from the Late Industrial Period are included in Athol's historic structures inventory. Those that are listed, such as William J. Norton Home (1890) and William E. Wood House (1890), are primarily Victorian in style.

The final historic period reviewed by the Massachusetts Historical Commission's Survey Report is the Early Modern Period of 1915 to 1940. During the Early Modern Period, Athol continued to grow in population and economic activity, though the level of growth slowed compared to previous eras. Transportation corridors in the Athol area, including the east-west Mohawk Trail motorway expanded further during this era. However, some of the new highways bypassed downtown Athol, thereby potentially drawing traffic and activity away from the Town center. Such roadways included the US Route 202 (Daniel Shays Highway)

that was constructed through southwest Athol to New Salem and the Connecticut River Valley, and Route 122 that bypassed the downtown to connect to Route 202 to the west.

During the Early Modern Period, residential and commercial activity continued to grow in the depot area, though at a slower rate than in the past. Further residential infill took place in and around the Town center and commercial activity in the Main Street-Exchange Street area continued to intensify. However, manufacturing activity, though remaining dominant, did not increase significantly. Over the twenty-five years, the Town's manufacturing workforce expanded by only about 100 workers. Further, by 1940, the manufacturing industry employed only about one-third of Athol women in the labor force, as opposed to the 50 percent of Athol female workers it had employed just twenty-five years earlier.

Besides occurring near the depot area, residential expansion during the period also took place in the Town's northern and southern highlands. North of the Millers River, residential development continued near Silver Lake, both in the Intervale-Pinedale Avenue area, and between Silver Lake and Sportsman's Pond. Residential settlement also expanded between Silver Lake Street and Chestnut Hill Road, and in the Mount Pleasant Street area. In the southern highlands, growth extended south into the South Park, Fairview, and Pleasant Street areas, and along Sanders and Cottage Streets. Also, recreation cottages were constructed in the southwest part of town, near White's Pond and near Lake Rohunta.

Athol's population growth during the Early Modern Period slowed from earlier times. From 1915 to 1940, the Town's total population grew by only 14 percent, increasing from 9,793 people (1915) to 11,180 (1940). Also, during the period, the proportion of foreign-born residents decreased slightly to 16 percent (from 20 percent in 1915). In 1940, the largest immigrant population was the French Canadians, followed by the Lithuanians, English Canadians, and Italians.

Significant civic and institutional buildings remaining from the period include a number of buildings in the downtown Main Street area, such as the Town library (1918), the Memorial Building (1924) used for the Town Hall, the Athol Savings Bank (1928), the York Building (1930), and the Garbose Building (1926). There are limited architecturally important residential structures remaining from the era. A few three-story apartment buildings dating from the 1930s and 1940s are located in the Town center. In addition, there are also some modest houses from the 1920s and 1930s on Starrett Avenue and on Pinedale Road and Silver Lake Street north of the downtown.

Inventory of Historic Structures and Sites

This inventory of Athol's historic structures and sites was developed with information provided by a variety of sources. These sources include the Massachusetts Historical Commission's historic resources inventory and Survey Report for Athol (1984), discussions with Athol Historical Commission (AHC) members, written AHC materials such as Kathryn Chaisson's Athol's Historic Buildings and Place: A Partial Inventory (1986) and the Athol History Trail brochure, and field surveys conducted by FRCOG Planning Department staff.

The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) maintains a Statewide Inventory of Historic and Archeological Resources in the Commonwealth. Historic resources for each town are incorporated into the statewide inventory when a local Historical Commission submits a completed inventory form for a resource to the MHC. Different forms are used for different types of resources, depending on whether they are a building, an object, a bridge, a burial ground, a park, a streetscape, a landscape, or an area. The MHC has currently no inventoried historic streetscapes and landscapes for Athol.

MHC's historic resources inventory for Athol matches the Athol Historical Commission's own listing of inventoried properties fairly well. There are only a small number of local structures and sites that have been documented locally which are not included on the MHC listing. In addition, there are a few additional historic properties that have been researched for inclusion in the MHC inventory, but for which MHC forms have not yet been completed. Further, some of the structures and sites in the AHC's and MHC inventories have been destroyed, damaged, or altered significantly since their inclusion in the inventories, but records have not yet been updated to reflect these changes. Efforts should be undertaken to review the current inventory listings for Athol and update them as necessary. It is valuable to know, for example, which historic structures are still intact without any major alterations and still retain most of their historic character. These structures, in particular, should be protected against deterioration and neglect. The current historic inventories should also be expanded to include additional noteworthy historic structures. The MHC's Survey Report for Athol (1984) suggests that Athol's historic listings "could be strengthened in the areas of both domestic and public late nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings." Many structures for these eras still exist. An accurate and complete inventory of the Town's historic structures and sites is an essential first step towards preserving and protecting its historic resources.

The lists and tables of historic properties and sites contained in this section are based upon the Massachusetts Historical Commission inventory for Athol, with additions as necessary from Athol Historical Commission records. The two Athol properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Pequoig Hotel and the Athol Historical Society building (Old Town Hall), are discussed first, after which the Town's MHC and AHC inventoried structures and sites are listed and reviewed by geographic area. For each historic structure or site, the following information is provided: the historic name of the feature, its year of origin, its architectural style (if available), its street location, and its MHC inventory reference

number. The final part of this section provides an overview of the Town’s historic cemeteries and bridges, and the sites along the Athol History Trail.

The listings in this section review 180 documented historic resources within Athol. Table 4-1 summarizes these resources by category. Over 60 percent (or 114) of the resources are residential, commercial, or industrial buildings, and 15 percent (or 27) are markers for boundaries or historic sites, including the Athol History Trail sites. Another 5 percent (9) are former building sites themselves, most of which are unfortunately not designated by historic markers. These former building sites include buildings listed in the MHC or AHC inventories that have been destroyed since the original inventory forms were completed. Of the other resources, eleven are cemeteries, seven are bridges, eight are other structures, and four are parks or forests.

Table 4-1: Summary of Inventoried Resources

Type of Resource	Number of Resources Inventoried	Percentage of Total Inventory
Buildings	114	63.3%
Former Building Sites	9	5.0%
Markers	27	15.0%
Burial Grounds	11	6.1%
Bridges	7	3.9%
Other Structures	8	4.4%
Parks or Forests	4	2.2%
Total	180	100.0%

Sources: Massachusetts Historical Commission, *Historic Resource Inventory for Athol, 2000*; Athol Historical Commission records.

National Register of Historic Places Properties

Only two properties in Athol are listed in the National Register of Historic Places (*see Table 4-2*). They are the Fourth Meetinghouse/Old Town Hall building at 1307 Main Street and the Pequoig Hotel building at the intersection of Main and Exchange Streets. Brief descriptions of these properties and their histories are given below. These descriptions draw heavily from information provided in Kathryn Chaisson’s book, *Athol’s Historic Buildings and Places: A Partial Inventory* (1986).

Table 4-2: National Register of Historic Places Properties in Athol

Historic Name	Year	Style	Location	MHC Number
Fourth Meetinghouse/Old Town Hall	1828	Colonial	1307 Main Street	1
Pequoig Hotel	1895	Victorian Commercial	402-428 Main Street	21

Source: Chaisson, Kathryn, *Athol’s Historic Buildings and Places: A Partial Inventory, 1986*.

Old Town Hall/Fourth Meetinghouse/Athol Historical Society building

Athol's third meetinghouse, located at the Uptown Common, burned down in 1827 and the fourth meetinghouse was constructed soon after, during 1827-1828. The building originally housed the Congregational Church, and later the Unitarian Church. In 1848, the Town bought half-interest in the building and began using the second floor for Town Meetings and other Town business. The Town became the sole owner of the meetinghouse when the Unitarian Church discontinued its use the building and consolidated with the Second Unitarian Church downtown. The meetinghouse housed the Town Hall until 1921, after which it was used by the Athol Women's Club, which leased the building from 1921 to 1957. The Athol Historical Society purchased the building in 1957 and continues to own it today. The Historical Society has undertaken numerous renovations and repairs on the building in recent years and is currently raising funds for additional renovations and repairs. The Old Town Hall was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987. The Athol Historical Society maintains a Town auditorium and museum at this building. The museum contains a wealth of historical information and artifacts, including hundreds of articles and photographs depicting life in Athol. One of the main attractions of the museum is a rare, still-functioning 1847 Hook organ, the 83rd instrument built by the firm E. & G.G. Hook of Boston, installed in 1848. The museum is open on Sundays during the summer, and at other times by request.

Pequoig Hotel

The Pequoig Hotel was constructed in 1894, replacing the deteriorated Pequoig House, which was first built on the site as an inn in 1784, and later served as a tavern. The four-story hotel, built facing Main Street, supported a variety of lodging, meeting place, and retail uses over the years, and helped make the Main Street-Exchange Street area a regional commercial and activity focal point beginning in the Late Industrial Period. On its upper floors, the hotel's upper floors contained living suites, apartments, and lodging rooms. Its first floor housed a parlor, dining room, kitchen, billiard room, reading room, meeting rooms, and a sample room for commercial travelers. Also on the first floor were retail spaces fronting on Main Street for up to eight businesses. During its prime years, through the 1940s and early 1950s, the hotel's banquet and meeting rooms attracted events and travelers from throughout the greater region.

In the mid-1950s, a Route 2 bypass was constructed around downtown Athol. This project diverted many visitors from the Town center, contributing to a decline in business and significant hotel and retail vacancies throughout the downtown. As result, by the early 1960s, few stores, guests or tenants remained at the hotel.

In the late 1970s, the Pequoig Hotel was threatened with demolition until a proposal was developed to convert the building into elderly housing, and Town, State, and Federal support was generated for the project. The Pequoig Hotel was placed on the National Register in 1978, largely to protect it from the possibility of demolition. In 1982, private developers received approval and financing to convert the hotel's upper floors into 53 subsidized elderly apartments, and construction for these apartments started soon after. The elderly apartment

building opened in 1983 and remains in use today. The building’s first floor currently houses the Athol Senior Center and a few businesses.

Historic Structures and Sites by Area

This section summarizes Athol’s documented historic structures by geographic area. Each of these areas is identified on the Historic and Scenic Resources Map at the end of the chapter.

Downtown Village Area

The Downtown Village area centers on lower Main Street and also includes the South Street railroad depot area, Exchange Street, and the neighborhood between Main Street and the Millers River near Fish Park. Most of the historic structures in the Downtown Village and along lower Main Street are commercial or institutional in nature, with some residential homes in the mix as well. Many of the commercial blocks along Main Street, including the Pequoig Hotel, were designed to hold retail businesses on the first floor, and residences and offices on the upper floors. Most of the buildings were constructed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, after the start of rail service to Boston induced tremendous expansion and development in the downtown area. Today, downtown Main Street is the Town’s primary location for intact historic commercial buildings. As a result, the Massachusetts Historical Commission has identified the downtown as an area with considerable historic resources. Based on these resources, it has been suggested that the Downtown Village and lower Main Street could possibly be designated as a National Historic District. However, such designation has never been fully pursued.

Table 4-3: Historic Structures and Sites within the Downtown Village Area

Historic Name	Year	Style	Location	MHC Number
C.M. Lee Shoe Factory – Buildings 1 & 6	1884	Style not listed	Main Street	105
C.M. Lee Shoe Factory – Building 2	1881	Style not listed	Main Street	106
C.M. Lee Shoe Factory – Building 3	1895	Style not listed	Main Street	107
C.M. Lee Shoe Factory – Building 4	1884	Style not listed	Main Street	108
C.M. Lee Shoe Factory – Building 5	1890	Style not listed	Main Street	109
Main Street Grade School	1889	Style not listed (brick)	100 Main Street	78
Leland B. Taylor House	1870	Cape Cod	137 Main Street	58
Luna B. Richardson House	1850	Colonial	146 Main Street	74
Athol Saw and Grist Mill (marker)	1912	n/a	Freedom Street	901
William E. Wood House	1890	Victorian	66 Newton Street	92
W.W. Norton Jr. – Parker Kimball House	1890	Victorian	86 Newton Street	91
Sally Fish House (demolished)	1850	Style not listed	Sally Fish Circle	53
Fish Park	1857	n/a	Walnut, Union, Newton, and Maple Streets	Not included
Fish Park Bandstand	1919	Style not listed	Fish Park, off Newton St.	931
Robert Johnson House	1899	Early American	251 Union Street	57
Athol-Orange Baptist Church	1849	Style not listed	Church and Walnut Streets	54

Table 4-3: Historic Structures and Sites within the Downtown Village Area (con't)

Historic Name	Year	Style	Location	MHC Number
Fred Amsden House	n.d.	Colonial	42 Church Street	55
Russell Smith House	1848	Colonial	304 Main Street	56
U.S. Post Office – Athol Branch	1913	Greek Revival	336 Main Street	83
Charles W. Woodward House	1857	Victorian	362 Main Street	93
Krustapentus Block	1864	Style not listed	91 Exchange Street	87
Fort House (marker)	1976	n/a	Exchange Street, near Main Street	917
Athol Downtown Fire Station and Ladder Company #1	1893	Victorian Commercial	206 Exchange Street	80
Pequoig Hotel Block	1895	Victorian Commercial	402-428 Main Street	21
Garbose Building	1926	Victorian Commercial	407-413 Main Street	119
Pioneer Homestead (marker)	1976	n/a	416 Main Street	918
Webb Block	1891	Victorian Commercial	417-437 Main Street	85
Athol Savings Bank	1928	Italian Renaissance	444 Main Street	88
Fay Block	1879	Victorian Commercial	447-453 Main Street	117
York Building	1930	Style not listed	461-467 Main Street	118
Delta Building	n.d.	Style not listed	477-479 Main Street	102
Athol Second Unitarian Church	1914	Style not listed	478 Main Street	52
Cooke Block	1912	Victorian Commercial	491 Main Street	116
Athol House – Slate’s Hotel (demolished)	1873	Victorian	76 Traverse Street	111
Starrett Block	1913	Victorian Commercial	513-527 Main Street	84
James Young – Albert G. Moulton House	1824	Federal	573 Main Street	94
Boston and Maine Railroad Depot	1872	Victorian	South Street	50
Leonard Hotel – Commercial House (demolished)	1891	Gothic	550 South Street	89
Memorial Building	1922	Colonial	584 Main Street	115
Pitts C. Tyler – Nathan Nickerson House	1844	Style not listed	585 Main Street	51

n.d. = date not known.

Sources: Massachusetts Historical Commission, Historic Resource Inventory for Athol, 2000; Athol Historical Commission records.

The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) inventory often identifies not only specific structures and sites of historical importance, but significant streetscapes, landscapes, and general historic areas as well. Within the Downtown Village area as defined for the Athol Master Plan, there are three smaller historic areas recognized by the MHC. They are the Downtown District, the Railroad Depot District, and the C.M. Shoe Lee Company property. The C.M. Shoe Lee Company property includes buildings used more recently by the Woodland Casket Manufacturing Company and the Plotkin Furniture Company. The MHC has limited documentation on all three of the indicated historic areas, and no MHC inventory forms have been completed for any of them. Information is particularly sparse for the Downtown District, and the MHC does not even have a map of the district’s boundaries. During the 1980s, the MHC evaluated each of the other two areas – the Depot District and the C.M. Shoe Lee Company property – to assess their potential eligibility for designation as National Historic Districts. The MHC’s analysis of the Depot District suggested that the district would not be eligible for national designation. For the C.M. Shoe Lee Company

property, the MHC found that it had inadequate information to make a determination either way, and requested additional data. No analysis was conducted by the MHC to assess the potential eligibility of the Downtown District for inclusion on the National Register.

Among noteworthy buildings in the Downtown Village area are: the Pequoig Hotel, one of two Athol properties on the National Register of Historic Places; the Memorial Building, which houses Town Hall; and the Russell Smith House, which was the first brick building erected in Athol. Also worth mentioning is that two former downtown hotels listed in the inventory, the Leonard Hotel and Slate’s Hotel, have both been destroyed. The Leonard Hotel building, last used for apartments, fell into disrepair and was demolished two decades ago for an expansion of the main municipal parking lot downtown. The Slate’s Hotel building, which last housed Brothers’ Pizza, was ruined beyond repair in a recent fire.

Uptown Settlement Area

The Uptown Settlement area includes the upper section of Main Street and the Uptown Common, as well as residential neighborhoods off Main Street to the east. Most of the historic structures in the area are residential, though a fair number of commercial and institutional buildings are also present. Many of the structures date from the nineteenth century. However, two, the Sally Taft House and the Reverend Joseph Estabrook Estate, are from the late 1700s. Many of the historic inventory forms for properties and structures within this area are incomplete, particularly with regards to the architectural style of the inventoried buildings.

Table 4-4: Historic Structures and Sites in the Uptown Settlement Area

Historic Name	Year	Style	Location	MHC Number
Arthur F. Tyler – Trade Winds Guest House	1897	Italian Renaissance	1179 Main Street	95
Athol Town Pound (marker)	1976	n/a	1251 Main Street	916
Sally Taft House	1790	Georgian	1258 Main Street	72
Second Advent Christian Church	1873	Style not listed	1282 Main Street	44
Athol Fourth Meetinghouse – Old Town Hall (and marker)	1828	Colonial	1307 Main Street	1; 915*
Washington Amsden House	1872	Gothic	1328 Main Street	43
Solon W. Lee House	1872	Victorian	1333 Main Street	42
George S. Brewer House	1840	Style not listed	1356 Main Street	41
Briggs Mill Site	n.d.	n/a	Off Green Street	Not included
Col. Samuel Sweetser House	1800		71 Kennebunk Street	40
Andrew Lawton- Dr. George Colony House	n.d.	Victorian	1422 Main Street	39
Limbach House	n.d.	Style not listed	1429 Main Street	37
Judge William S. Duncan House	1924	Dutch Colonial	1440 Main Street	38
Timothy Hoar House	1852	Style not listed	74 Central Street	16
Captain Farwell F. Fay – Craigin House	1824	Style not listed	183 Central Street	97
Bowker House	1870	Victorian	1447 Main Street	36
US Post Office – Athol (Uptown)	1869	Style not listed	32 Auburn Place	2

Table 4-4: Historic Structures and Sites in the Uptown Settlement Area (con't)

Historic Name	Year	Style	Location	MHC Number
Highland Grade School (demolished)	1890	Style not listed	Auburn Place	77
Pratt House – McGregor Lodge	1917	English Tudor	14 Grove Street	35
Athol Town House (and marker)	1827	Georgian	1476 Main Street	96; 914*
Jeremiah Morton – Dr. James Oliver House	1830	Greek Revival	1534 Main Street	69
Dr. Ebenezer Chaplin House	1820	Colonial	1564 Main Street (rear)	34
Phillips Park	1922	n/a	Main Street	Not included
Stagecoach Stop – Brooks Tavern (marker)	1976	n/a	Uptown Common	913
Uptown Common/ Athol Third Meetinghouse (marker)	1976	n/a	Main Street	912
Uptown Common Bandstand	1912	Style not listed	Uptown Common	932
Ginery Twichell Fountain	1898	Style not listed	Uptown Common	930
Athol Congregational Church	1859	Style not listed	1225 Chestnut Street	33
Breed Shoe Factory – George H. Webster Company	1887	Style not listed	1235 Chestnut Street	114
Bemis Lunch Counter and Ice Cream Parlor	1883	Style not listed	1607 Main Street	86
Dr. James Oliver House	1845	Style not listed	9 Common Street	Not included
Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike Toll Gate (marker)	1976	n/a	1665 Main Street	906
George Brewer Door and Window Factory	1892	Style not listed	1709 Main Street	76
Athol Baptist Church	1828	Colonial	1782 Main Street	75
Cushing B. Morse House	1827	Colonial	1 Morse Place	20
Sawyer Mansion Site and Carriage House	1873	Colonial	2033 Main Street (rear)	90
Reverend Joseph Estabrook Estate	1785	Victorian	2094 Main Street	19
Lyman Ward Grade School	1928	Style not listed	2175 Main Street	79

*When two MHC inventory numbers are given for one resource, one number is for the building and the other is for the site's historic marker; n.d. = date not known.

Sources: Massachusetts Historical Commission, *Historic Resource Inventory for Athol, 2000*; Athol Historical Commission records.

The Uptown Settlement area served as the town center during the late 1700s and early 1800s, before the start of rail service. The area's significance to Athol's history is clear from the numerous History Trail Markers along upper Main Street. Because of the area's importance, Richard Chaisson, a long-time Athol resident and member of the Athol Historical Society, developed a proposal (1969) for a Highlands Historic District encompassing the Uptown Common and notable historic buildings and sites nearby. However, no district was ever designated.

Included in the Uptown Settlement area is the second of Athol's two properties on the National Register of Historic Places properties, the Old Town Hall. Funds are currently being raised to renovate and repair this building, which currently houses the Athol Historical Society and the Society's Athol history museum.

School Street-Hapgood Street Area

The School Street-Hapgood Street area covers neighborhoods including School Street, Hapgood Street, and Chestnut Street. The area extends from upper Main Street down the hill going east towards the Millers River and then along the river. The School Street-Hapgood Street area includes the site of Athol’s first meetinghouse (constructed in 1741, and burned down later that same year), the Town’s first cemetery, and markers for two significant historic Native American sites. The first is along the Millers River bank near Riverside Avenue, where more than 2,000 Native Americans crossed the river on March 3, 1676 to retreat from frontier soldiers. The second site, on Chestnut Street near Sanders Street, marks the “Great Trail” that ran from Connecticut to Canada and served as a major transportation route for the region’s indigenous groups.

Table 4-5: Historic Structures and Sites in the School Street-Hapgood Street Area

Historic Name	Year	Style	Location	MHC Number
Judge Charles Field House	1867	Colonial	192 School Street	113
Joel Kendall House	1795	Colonial	298 School Street	47
Athol High School	1892	Victorian	494 School Street	82
Willard Newton – Milton Camann House	1893	Victorian	503 School Street	45
Saint John’s Episcopal Church	1890	English Country	15 Park Avenue	112
Dr. George Hoyt House	1803	Colonial	1169 Chestnut Street	5
Underground Railroad Site (marker)	1976	n/a	1169 Chestnut Street	907
Joel Kendall Saw and Grist Mill	1785	Colonial factory	954 Hapgood Street	71
Hapgood School	1887	Colonial	415 Hapgood Street	46
Athol First Settler’s Cemetery (and marker)	1741	n/a	Hapgood Street near Cheney Street	810; 911*
Athol First Meetinghouse (marker)	1976	n/a	Hapgood Street near Cheney Street	910
Indian Trail (marker)	1976	n/a	Hapgood Street at Sanders Street	908
Indian Crossing (marker)	1976	n/a	South Athol Road near Riverview Avenue	909

**When two MHC inventory numbers are given for one resource, one number is for the building and the other is for the site’s historic marker.*

Sources: Massachusetts Historical Commission, Historic Resource Inventory for Athol, 2000; Athol Historical Commission records.

Pleasant Street Area

The Pleasant Street area runs along Pleasant Street from the Uptown Common east to the Route 2 overpass, and includes Pleasant Street and nearby neighborhoods. Many of the historic structures and sites in this area are residential, and most of the remaining homes date from the early nineteenth century. Athol’s initial colonial settlement occurred in the Pleasant Street area, then known as East Pequog Hill. The first home was built in Athol in 1735 along what is now Pleasant Street; this home site is commemorated with an Athol History Trail marker at 813 Pleasant Street. History Trail markers also indicate the approximate

locations of Athol’s first settler fort (1736-1780) and second meetinghouse (1741-1772). The Uptown Fire House (1896) on Pleasant Street just off the Uptown Common and no longer in active use, has been proposed for demolition to make way for a new parking lot. If demolition is approved, there are plans to salvage any of items of historic value or significance.

Table 4-6: Historic Structures and Sites in the Pleasant Street Area

Historic Name	Year	Style	Location	MHC Number
Athol Uptown Fire Station #2	1896	Victorian Civic	7 Pleasant Street	81
Paul Morse House	1830	Colonial	32 Pleasant Street	30
Ebenezer Cheney House	1845	Colonial	45 Pleasant Street	31
Athol First Home – Richard Morton House (marker)	1976	n/a	813 Pleasant Street	904
Winfield H. Brock House	1870	Colonial	834 Pleasant Street	29
Athol Second Meetinghouse (marker)	1976	n/a	834 Pleasant Street	905
Frye – Stratton House	1800	Colonial	1232 Pleasant Street	28
East Fort (marker)	1976	n/a	Pleasant Street	903
Sun Tavern	1800	Colonial	1307 Pleasant Street	27
Old Pleasant Street Cemetery	1773	n/a	Pleasant Street	808
Masonic Marker	1912	Bronze	Pleasant Street	902
John Humphrey House	1762	Colonial	1672 Pleasant Street	25
John Humphrey – Daniel Bachelder House	1800	Cape Cod	130 Bachelder Road	24

Sources: Massachusetts Historical Commission, Historic Resource Inventory for Athol, 2000; Athol Historical Commission records.

Moore Hill Area

The Moore Hill area centers on the historic Moore Hill and Mount Pleasant Street neighborhoods. The area, initially known as West Pequig Hill, was first settled around the same time as the Pleasant Street neighborhood, also known as East Pequig Hill. The oldest house in Athol, the Aaron Smith House (1736), lies near the bottom of the hill. Farther up Moore Hill, past this house, were the west fort (1741-1780) used by early settlers, and the Sentinel Elm, both now gone, but marked as Athol History Trail sites. Near the top of Moore Hill are some historic farms.

During part of the nineteenth century, the Aaron Smith house served as a tavern and then a stagecoach stop for the Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike that ran along Templeton Street, upper Main Street, School Street, onto Crescent and Fish Streets, Pequig Avenue, and across Cass Meadow onto North Orange Road to North Orange and beyond. A remnant of the Turnpike trail and its stone and earth bridge abutments still lie off North Orange Road in the Rowe Conservation Area.

Table 4-7: Historic Structures and Sites in the Moore Hill Area

Historic Name	Year	Style	Location	MHC Number
Mount Pleasant Cemetery (and marker)	1741	n/a	Mount Pleasant Street	811; 921*
Aaron Smith House (and marker)	1736	Colonial	35 Moore Hill Road	60; 922*
Jesse Kendall House	1745	Colonial	297 Moore Hill Road	59
West Fort (marker)	1976	n/a	Moore Hill Road	923
Daniel Moore House (in Town of Orange)	1824	Colonial	Moore Hill Road	61
Sentinel Elm (marker)	1976	n/a	Moore Hill Road	924
Ezekiel Wallingford House – West Hill Farm (in Town of Orange)	1746	Early American	Moore Hill Road	62
Ezekiel Wallingford Scalped by Indians (marker)	1976	n/a	Moore Hill Road	925
Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike Bridge Abutments	1799	n/a	North Orange Road	929
John C. Hill House	n.d.	Style not listed	304 South Main Street	Not included
Samuel Morton – Jonathan Sawyer House	1780	Colonial	480 South Main Street	64
Indian Meadow (marker)	1976	n/a	488 South Main Street	920
Gethsemane Roman Catholic Cemetery	1911	n/a	Brookside Road	801

*When two MHC inventory numbers are listed for one resource, one number is for the building and the other is for the site's historic marker; n.d. = date not known.

Sources: Massachusetts Historical Commission, *Historic Resource Inventory for Athol, 2000*; Athol Historical Commission records.

South Main Street Area

The South Main Street area runs along South Main Street west of the Millers River, and includes South Main Street and adjacent neighborhoods.

Table 4-8: Historic Structures and Sites in the South Main Street Area

Historic Name	Year	Style	Location	MHC Number
John C. Hill House	n.d.	Style not listed	304 South Main Street	Not included
Samuel Morton – Jonathan Sawyer House	1780	Colonial	480 South Main Street	64
Indian Meadow (marker)	1976	n/a	488 South Main Street	920
Gethsemane Roman Catholic Cemetery	1911	n/a	Brookside Road	801

n.d. = date not known.

Sources: Massachusetts Historical Commission, *Historic Resource Inventory for Athol, 2000*; Athol Historical Commission records.

Silver Lake Area

The Silver Lake area encompasses the in-town sections of Athol that lie north of the Millers River, including Silver Lake, Pequoig Avenue to the west and Fish and Crescent Streets to the east. Most of the inventoried historic sites and structures in this area (see Table 4-9) are related to industry or education. For example, the Pinedale School (1874) was built to serve children living on the north side of the Millers River, and the Factory Boarding House

previously located on Fish Street was constructed to provide housing for factory workers. The boarding house was demolished in 1974 by L.S. Starrett Company for expansion of the company's parking lot. The building historically known as the George Gerry Machine Shop is now the Starrett Museum.

Table 4-9: Historic Structures and Sites in the Silver Lake Area

Historic Name	Year	Style	Location	MHC Number
George Gerry Machine Shop	1853	Style not listed	Crescent Street at Starrett Factory	8
Factory Boarding House Site	1815	n/a	96-98 Fish Street	Not included
Lake Park School Site	1894	n/a	Fish Street and Wallingford Avenue	Not included
Jason Babcock Captured by Indians (marker)	1976	n/a	151 Pequig Avenue	919
William Arthur Cummings House	1890	Style not listed	375 Pequig Avenue	15
Silver Lake Cemetery	1875	n/a	Silver Lake Street	802
Silver Lake Twin Schools	1893	Colonial	145 Silver Lake Street, 40 Goodale Street	49
Pinedale School	1874	Style not listed	Pinedale Road at Silver Lake Road	Not included

n.d. = date not known.

Sources: Massachusetts Historical Commission, *Historic Resource Inventory for Athol, 2000*; Athol Historical Commission records.

Chestnut Hill Area

The Chestnut Hill area extends from the start of Chestnut Hill Road in-town to the close to the Royalston border. It includes Chestnut Hill Road as well as adjoining neighborhoods. Most of the historic properties within this area are Colonial-style homes. Almost all these structures were built during the late eighteenth century, making the Chestnut Hill Area a primary location for intact residences from that period.

Table 4-10: Historic Structures and Sites in the Chestnut Hill Area

Historic Name	Year	Style	Location	MHC Number
Willis – Hiram Lewis House	1770	Colonial	Old Keene Road	13
John Haven Jr. House (and marker)	1777	Colonial	1777 Chestnut Hill Avenue	7; 926*
Jonathan Haven House	1763	Colonial	2239 Chestnut Hill Avenue	3
John Hill – Jacobs House	1775	Colonial	2480 Chestnut Hill Avenue	6
Chestnut Hill School	1850	Style not listed	Chestnut Hill Avenue near Upper Townsend Road	11
Moses Hill – Oren M. Lawton House	1766	Early American	Townsend Road	12
Jacobs Whitman House	1770	Colonial	2819 Chestnut Hill Avenue	4
John Drury House and Dairy Farm	1765	Colonial	Chestnut Hill Avenue	14
Obadiah Kendall General Store and Boot Shop	n.d.	Colonial	3107 Chestnut Hill Avenue	73
Chestnut Hill Cemetery	1786	n/a	Chestnut Hill Avenue	809

*When two MHC inventory numbers are listed for one resource, one number is for the building and the other is for the site's historic marker; n.d. = date not known.

Sources: Massachusetts Historical Commission, *Historic Resource Inventory for Athol, 2000*; Athol Historical Commission records.

Bearsden Road Area

This area includes Bearsden Road and nearby neighborhoods. The historic sites in the Bearsden Road Area include the Highland Cemetery and other notable locations such as the Sunday Stone Ways, the Oxbow Canal and former mill site, and the Mud Hut Colony. The Mud Huts were constructed by Italian immigrants who lived in the huts for two summers between 1902 and 1903 while they constructed the Newton Reservoir. Close to 125 workers resided in the huts during those summers.

Table 4-11: Historic Structures and Sites in the Bearsden Road Area

Historic Name	Year	Style	Location	MHC Number
Highland Cemetery	1843	n/a	Hillside Terrace	807
Sunday Stone Walls	1770	n/a	Bearsden Road	927
Ox Bow Canal and Mill Site	n.d.	n/a	Bearsden Road	Not included
Mud Hut Colony	1902	n/a	Newton Reservoir, west shore	Not included

n.d. = date not known.

Sources: Massachusetts Historical Commission, *Historic Resource Inventory for Athol, 2000*; Athol Historical Commission records.

Templeton Road-Lake Ellis Area

The Templeton Road-Lake Ellis area includes sites and structures along Templeton Road and near Lake Ellis. This area was first settled beginning in the late eighteenth century.

Table 4-12: Historic Sites and Structures in the Templeton Road-Lake Ellis Area

Historic Name	Year	Style	Location	MHC Number
King House	1843	Victorian	115 Templeton Road	99
Ira Oakes House	1780	Cape Cod	318 Templeton Road	100
Abraham Oakes House	1800	Colonial	420 Templeton Road	101
Athol Poor Farm Schoolhouse (demolished)	1873	Style not listed	1125 Templeton Road	9
Athol Poor Farm – Adonijah Ball House	1800	Colonial	1125 Templeton Road	10
Calvary Roman Catholic Cemetery	1867	n/a	Vine Street	806
(house, no name listed on inventory)	1900	Style not listed	154 Lake Ellis Road	110
Lysander Spooner House	1806	Colonial	559 Petersham Road	18

Sources: Massachusetts Historical Commission, Historic Resource Inventory for Athol, 2000; Athol Historical Commission records.

South Athol Village Area

The South Athol Village is located in the southwest corner of Town. Documented historic buildings and sites in South Athol include the South Athol United Methodist Church, the Morgan Memorial Camp Complex, and the South Athol Rail Depot. The South Athol Depot served the Boston and Albany Railroad rail line until the construction of the Quabbin Reservoir, and part of the old railroad bed has been identified as its own historic resource.

Table 4-13: Historic Sites and Structures in the South Athol Village Area

Historic Name	Year	Style	Location	MHC Inventory Number
Boston and Albany Branch Abandoned Railroad Bed	1873	n/a	South Athol Road, from near Riverside Ave to north end of Quabbin	928
South Athol Railroad Depot	1873	Colonial	Flat Rock Road	66
South Athol United Methodist Church	1836	Style not listed	White Pond Road	67
South Athol United Methodist Church Hall and School	n.d.	Style not listed	White Pond Road	103
Morgan Memorial Camp Complex	1906	Multiple styles	South Athol Center	C

n.d. = date not known.

Sources: Massachusetts Historical Commission, Historic Resource Inventory for Athol, 2000; Athol Historical Commission records.

Other Areas South of Route 2

Besides the South Athol Village, there are a few other sections of Town south of Route 2 that also contain historic structures and sites. However, the inventoried historic resources in each of these areas are limited. As a result, all of the documented historic structures and sites in Athol south of Route 2 besides those listed for South Athol are in the table below. The listings in Table 4-14 include three cemeteries, two schoolhouses, a few homes, the old Athol-New Salem Boundary Marker, and the Riceville Pond and Dam in the Petersham State Forest. Most of the structures and sites date from the mid-1800s.

Table 4-14: Historic Sites and Structures in Other Areas South of Route 2

Historic Name	Year	Style	Location	MHC Inventory Number
Fay Cemetery	1834	n/a	Conant Road	804
Pleasant Street Cemetery	1842	n/a	Doe Valley Road	803
Richard B. Ellis House	1794	Colonial	Briggs Road	17
Old Pleasant Street Schoolhouse	1857	Cape Cod	559 New Sherborn Road	23
New Sherborn house	1869	Colonial	1696 New Sherborn Road	22
Lucy Adams House	1770	Colonial	Adams Road	68
Stratton Cemetery	1840	n/a	Adams Road	805
Athol – New Salem Old Boundary Marker (marker)	1830	n/a	New Sherborn Road	900
Petersham State Forest – Riceville Pond	n.d.	n/a	New Sherborn Road	941
Petersham State Forest – Riceville Pond Dam	1933	n/a	New Sherborn Road	940
Stratton House	1820	Colonial	Stratton Road	65
Cory Richards House	1805	Colonial	Carpenter Road	70

n.d. = date not known.

Sources: Massachusetts Historical Commission, *Historic Resource Inventory for Athol, 2000*; Athol Historical Commission records.

Historic Bridges

Bridges are an important part of Athol’s history. The Town’s development patterns and its strong industrial sector owe much to the Millers River and Mill Brook, and the harnessing of waterpower for manufacturing purposes. Bridges gave Athol’s early residents and industries the ability to traverse the river and brook easily, and in doing so, enabled development along both sides of the Millers River and better connectivity between the different parts of Town. Additionally, historic railroad bridges offer a visible current reminder of the role that transportation and the introduction of rail service from Boston played in the Town’s economic development and settlement patterns. Few of Athol’s earliest bridges are still in existence. However, those that are, as well as the other identified historic bridges, still provide important gateways to the Town and the Town center.

The MHC Inventory for Athol includes six bridges. One additional bridge, the South Main Street Bridge over the Millers River, is from the Athol Historical Commission listings. All

seven bridges are listed in Table 4-15. The two historic bridges listed for Chestnut Hill Avenue have been replaced with newer structures, and are no longer in existence.

Table 4-15: Historic Bridges in Athol

Historic Name	Year	Street	MHC Inventory Number
B&M Railroad Bridge #81.41 – Fitchburg Line (replaced)	1895	Chestnut Hill Avenue	938
Chestnut Hill Avenue Bridge over Millers River (replaced)	1921	Chestnut Hill Avenue	935
Exchange Street Bridge over Millers River	1939	Exchange Street	933
Canal Street Bridge over Mill Brook	1940	Canal Street	937
South Street Bridge over Mill Brook	1952	South Street	936
Daniel Shays Highway Bridge over Millers River	n.d.	Daniel Shays Highway	934
South Main Street over Millers River	1922	South Main Street	Not included

n.d. = date not known.

Sources: Massachusetts Historical Commission, *Historic Resource Inventory for Athol, 2000*; Athol Historical Commission records.

Burial Grounds

Burial grounds are important historic resources, and are often rich with genealogical data, Town history, art, and monuments. Historic cemeteries should be identified and protected from decline. Eleven historic cemeteries have been documented for Athol (*see Table 4-16*). Burial records for all of these cemeteries except for the Catholic cemeteries are kept at the Town’s Department of Public Works. The Catholic churches maintain the Catholic cemetery records.

Table 4-16: Historic Burial Grounds in Athol

Historic Name	Year	Street	MHC Inventory Number
Athol First Settler’s Cemetery	1741	Hapgood Street	810
Mount Pleasant Cemetery	1741	Mount Pleasant Street	811
Old Pleasant Street Cemetery	1773	Pleasant Street	808
Chestnut Hill Cemetery	1786	Chestnut Hill Avenue	809
Fay Cemetery	1834	Conant Road	804
Stratton Cemetery	1840	Adams Road	805
Pleasant Street Cemetery	1842	Doe Valley Road	803
Highland Cemetery	1843	Hillside Terrace	807
Calvary Roman Catholic Cemetery	1867	Vine Street	806
Silver Lake Cemetery	1875	Silver Lake Street	802
Gethsemene Roman Catholic Cemetery	1911	Brookside Road	801

Source: Massachusetts Historical Commission, *Historic Resource Inventory for Athol, 2000*.

Athol History Trail

The Athol History Trail project was undertaken by the Athol Bicentennial Commission during 1975 and 1976 as a way to promote Athol’s history and historic resources during the American Bicentennial celebrations. A major contributor to the trail and to the published Athol History Trail brochure was Richard Chaisson, a long-time Athol resident with an extensive knowledge of Athol history. The Athol History Trail includes twenty-four sites, each marked with a sign that describes its role in Athol history. Both buildings and other places of historical significance, including early Native American sites, are included on the trail. Many of the sites date from the eighteenth century, though some are from earlier or later periods. Because many of the sites are located on private property, access to them is limited. However, the trail markers are usually situated close to a public road, and the sites and the markers can be adequately viewed without going onto private property.

The Athol History Trail brochure was originally published in 1976, and reprinted in 1990. Numerous tourists, residents, school students, and others visit the Trail sites each year. The Athol Historical Commission, which formed soon after the completion of the trail from membership within the Athol Bicentennial Commission, helps maintain the trail’s markers, and the Town’s Department of Public Works replaces them when necessary.

Each site along the Athol History Trail was included in the inventory tables presented earlier in this chapter. The sites are listed here again so that History Trail can be considered in its entirety and viewed as its own significant historic resource for the Town.

Table 4-17: Athol History Trail Sites

Trail Sign Number	Site Name	Street	MHC Inventory Number
1	East Fort	Pleasant Street	903
2	First Home - Richard Morton House	Pleasant Street	904
3	Athol Second Meetinghouse	Pleasant Street	905
4	Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike Toll Gate	Main Street	906
5	Underground Railroad	Chestnut Street	907
6	Indian Trail	Chestnut Street	908
7	Indian Crossing	South Athol Road	909
8	Athol First Meetinghouse	Hapgood Street	910
9	Old Burial Ground	Hapgood Street	911
10	Athol Uptown Common/Third Meetinghouse	Main Street	912
11	Stagecoach Stop – Brooks Tavern	Main Street	913
12	Athol Town House	Main Street	914
13	Athol Fourth Meetinghouse – Old Town Hall	Main Street	915
14	Athol Town Pound	Main Street	916
15	Fort House	Exchange Street	917
16	Pioneer Homesite – Jesse Kendall House	Main Street	918
17	Jason Babcock Captured by Indians	Pequoig Avenue	919

Table 4-17: Athol History Trail Sites (con't)

18	Indian Meadow Marker	South Main Street	920
19	Mount Pleasant Cemetery	Mount Pleasant Street	921
20	Athol's Oldest House	Moore Hill Road	922
21	West Fort	Moore Hill Road	923
22	Sentinel Elm	Moore Hill Road	924
23	Ezekiel Wallingford Scalped by Indians	Moore Hill Road	925
24	Colonial Home – John Haven House	Chestnut Hill Road	926

Source: Athol Historical Commission, Athol History Trail brochure, 1976, reprinted 1990.

Historically Significant Landscapes and Scenic Roads

Historically significant landscapes in Athol were identified using a methodology developed by the National Park Service (NPS), and information gathered during field surveys conducted by FRCOG planning staff in the fall of 2001. The NPS distinguishes historic landscapes by considering a number of criteria, including area of significance, period of significance, and historical integrity. The NPS classifies landscapes into four different categories:

- (1) Landscapes that reflect major patterns of a region's history, e.g. agricultural or industrial landscapes;
- (2) Landscapes that are associated with historically significant individuals; e.g. institutional grounds and buildings;
- (3) Landscapes that are important due to their design or physical characteristics, e.g. an eighteenth century Colonial Period rural farm; and
- (4) Landscapes that yield or may potentially yield significant information on a region's pre-history or history; e.g. a Native American encampment site.

The significance of an historic landscape is that aspect of its historical development that falls into one of the above categories, and through the landscape's "use, occupation, physical character, or association, [has most] influenced the development or identity of its community or region" (US Department of the Interior, 1990.) The period of significance for a landscape is the time span in which it attained its importance according to the NPS criteria. The historical integrity and soundness of a landscape help provides a sense of time and place and an understanding of the landscapes' historically significant use, association, design, and information characteristics.

Historically Significant Landscapes

Field surveys by FRCOG planning staff located a number of landscapes in Athol that could be considered scenic and historically significant. These landscapes are listed in Table 4-18 and briefly described below. Scenic vistas for the landscapes are shown on the Historic and

Scenic Resources Map. Most of the identified landscapes fall into the first NPS category described above: landscapes that reflect major patterns of a region’s history. In the discussion of the listed landscapes, each is classified further in terms of its primary use and association. These uses and associations include agriculture, recreation and conservation, community development, industry, transportation, religion, and civic activities. The landscapes are an important way of connecting the Athol area to its past and to the various activities that have occurred throughout its history.

Table 4-18: Historically Significant Landscapes in Athol

Name of Significant Landscape	Type of Landscape
Downtown Village Center, Lower Main Street	Community Development, Civic
Millers River	Industrial, Transportation, Pre-history
Upper Main Street, Uptown Common	Community Development, Civic, Transportation
Moore Hill Road	Agricultural, Community Development
Chestnut Hill Road	Agricultural
Bearsden State Forest	Recreation and Conservation

Sources: Field survey by FRCOG Planning staff, 2001; Athol Master Plan Historic and Scenic Resources subcommittee members.

Downtown Village Center, Lower Main Street

The Downtown Village along lower Main Street is considered a significant historic Community Development and Civic landscape. The village center developed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, after the beginning of rail service from and to Boston in 1848 induced tremendous residential and commercial expansion in the downtown area. Once rail service was established, the Downtown Village quickly became the Town’s commercial and industrial focal point, and many manufacturing firms located close to downtown along the river. Soon after the emergence of the village’s commercial center, downtown Athol became a significant retail center and tourist destination as well. Downtown hotels such as the Pequog Hotel and Leonard Hotel flourished during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with business falling off primarily after the construction of the Route 2 bypass around downtown Athol in the 1950s. Today, the Downtown Village is the Town’s primary location for intact historic commercial buildings; a number of blocks along lower Main Street are still comprised primarily of the buildings that were built during the downtown’s period of prosperity in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries. Lower Main Street also contains a number of significant historic institutional structures, including the Memorial Building, which currently houses the Athol Town Hall. The Downtown Village streetscape presents a valuable landscape of the community’s historic Community Development and Civic resources. One potential option for preserving this landscape could be the establishment of a historic district that contains the most historically intact blocks of lower Main Street.

Millers River

The Millers River is considered to be a significant historic Industrial and Transportation landscape, as well as a significant site for pre-history. During the pre-European settlement contact period, Native Americans (the Squakeag) traveled to the Miller River, originally known as the Pequog River, for its fishing opportunities and established temporary camps along its banks. The banks of the river also held sections of the Mohawk Trail footpath, a major regional transportation route for indigenous people during early periods. The Mohawk Trail crossed the Millers River near intersection of South Athol Road and Riverview Avenue. In later times, the Mohawk Trail and Miller River corridor served as the location first for the Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike, later for the east-west Vermont and Massachusetts rail-line, and eventually for the Route 2 scenic highway, also known today as the Mohawk Trail.

Throughout Athol's history, the Town's development has been linked to its use of the Millers River's power for industrial purposes. The Town's first sawmill was constructed along the river in 1736, and its first gristmill established a year later. As the Town population grew during its early settlement periods, so did its commercial activity near the river. By the end of the Early Industrial Period (1830-1870), various manufacturing enterprises, including textile, book, machine tool, wood and paper production, were located near the river's banks. The growth of industry along the Millers River continued into the Late Industrial Period (1870-1915). The Town's largest employer today, the L.S. Starrett Company, began its manufacturing operations on the north side of the Millers River during the Late Industrial era. The river's industrial landscape can best be viewed by looking east from the Exchange Street bridge or by looking west from the Chestnut Hill Road bridge.

Upper Main Street, Uptown Common

The Uptown Common area and upper Main Street is considered to be a significant historic Community Development, Civic, and Transportation landscape. Before a town center developed on lower Main Street after the start of rail service to Boston, upper Main Street and the Uptown Common served as the central location for the Town's commercial and community activities. Development in the Uptown Common area began during the latter half of the Federal Period (1775 to 1830). Close to 30 historic residential, institutional, and commercial structures from the Federal Period and Early Industrial Period remain in the area today. The Town's third meetinghouse was built at the Uptown Common in 1773, and after it burnt down in 1827, the fourth meetinghouse was constructed nearby to replace it. The fourth meetinghouse served as the Athol Town Hall from 1848 to 1921, and currently houses the Athol Historical Society and history museum.

Upper Main Street's role as a transportation center began at the beginning of the 1800s with the arrival of the Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike from Boston. The turnpike's primary tollbooth in Athol was located on Main Street across from the Uptown Common, and a number of branches of the turnpike started from this area. These turnpike sections individually traveled to Northfield, to Petersham, and through Athol on Route 2A, Chestnut

Street, South Athol Road, and South Main Street. During the Turnpike era, the Uptown Common area served as a major stagecoach stop and regional transportation center.

Upper Main Street provides views of developed highland areas north of the Millers River, of industrial buildings along the river, and of the river itself. The Uptown Common area has been proposed as an area that may be worthy of official historic district designation. Such a designation could help preserve the Uptown Common area and its significant historic sites and structures, and promote its historic assets.

Moore Hill Road

Moore Hill Road is considered to be a historically significant Agricultural and Community Development landscape. Moore Hill, originally known as West Pequoig Hill, is one of Athol's two oldest neighborhoods and was first settled beginning in 1736. During the Town's early days, much of Moore Hill contained farms. This history is apparent from the views available from Moore Hills Road's upper sections. Dramatic, wide-open views of fields and hillsides spread out on both sides of the road. West Hill Farm (the Ezekiel Wallingford House) and Sentinel Elm Farm (the Daniel Moore House) are both historic farms located near the top of Moore Hill and their main structures and fields remain intact today. The Sentinel Elm Farm continues to be used for farming. However, the West Hill Farm, with over a hundred acres, was converted to strictly residential uses in the early twentieth century.

Moore Hill Road provides views of hills and houses north of the Miller River. From the road's lower section, one can also see Athol's downtown and historic downtown structures, such as the Main Street Grade School building.

Chestnut Hill Road

Chestnut Hill Road is considered a historically significant Agricultural landscape. Chestnut Hill's original development, during the Colonial Period, was predominantly agricultural, and historic farms and barns still pervade the landscape. A number of intact farm structures and viewsheds of farmland and fields, as well as distant hills, exist along the road, particularly between Old Keene Road and the historic farm originally owned by John Haven Jr. This farm is included on the Athol History Trail and is still used today for dairying purposes.

Bearsden Forest

Bearsden Forest is considered a significant historic Recreation and Conservation landscape. There are a number of peaks within the forest that offer spectacular scenic views, including Sheep Rock in the forest's northwest corner and Round Top in its southwest corner. From Round Top, the viewshed encompasses nearby towns as well as mountains in three states. The Bearsden Forest, covered with second and third growth forest, abounds with wildlife and offers a variety of recreational opportunities throughout the year.

The Bearsden Forest is rich with local history. A number of historic Native American transportation paths (trails) travel through the forest. In addition, the forest contains various historic structures, including the Sunday Walls and the Mud Hut Colony. The Sunday Walls were built around 1770 as part of a contest between two brothers to see who could lay the most walls in a single day. The Mud Huts were constructed by Italian immigrants who lived in the huts for two summers between 1902 and 1903 while building the Newton Reservoir. The forest is a Recreational and Conservation landscape that is also associated with this early twentieth century works project.

Scenic Roads

In many parts of Athol, historic landscapes blend with scenic viewsheds. Scenic roads, which overlap both, provide a way for residents and tourists alike to access these special places. The Town has not yet adopted any locally designated scenic roads, pursuant to Chapter 40, Section 15C of the Massachusetts General Laws. However, members of the Master Planning Committee may wish to recommend that one or more of the suggested local scenic roads listed in Table 4-19 receive that designation. A roadway’s designation as a local scenic road provides some limited protection to the historic and scenic resources along its route. Once a road has received scenic designation, the local Planning Board must give written approval before any repair, maintenance, or construction of the road is permitted, if that activity would involve the cutting or displacement of trees, or the removal of stone walls within the public right-of-way. The proposed local scenic roads are shown on the Historic and Scenic Resources Map.

State maintained roads, such as Route 2 and Route 2A, cannot be nominated as local scenic roads, but may be designated as scenic byways by the State under the Federal Scenic Byways program. While Massachusetts does not currently have a formal process for designating Scenic Byways, special legislation approving a roadway as a scenic byway can be passed by the State Legislature once a Corridor Management Plan for the byway has been completed. Roadways can also be designated as scenic byways via an Executive Order of the Governor. Recently, Routes 47 and 63/10 in Sunderland, Montague, Erving and Northfield received Scenic Byway designation as a part of the Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway.

Table 4-19: Proposed Scenic Roads in Athol

Name of Road	Portions of Road Considered to be Scenic	Status
Route 2A	Section of Route 2A along the Millers River corridor	Potential State designation
Route 2	Whole length through Athol	Potential State designation
Chestnut Hill Road	From Old Keene Road to Royalston-Athol Border	Suggested local designation
Moore Hill Road	Whole length	Suggested local designation
Pleasant Street	From Uptown Common to Route 2 overpass	Suggested local designation

Source: Field Survey by FRCOG Planning Staff, 2001.

Historic and Scenic Resource Issues

Deterioration and Demolition of Historic Structures

Without due attention and maintenance, deterioration may threaten the Town's significant historic structures. Demolition resulting from lack of upkeep is one of the most pervasive threats to historic resources. If a historic structure is not maintained and experiences substantial deterioration, it can become so cost-prohibitive to restore it, that there are few choices other than demolition resulting in the loss of the historic asset. Over the last few decades, a number of notable historic structures in Athol have been torn down due to the costs of maintaining or restoring them, and to the interest in using their land parcels for other purposes. These structures include the Leonard Hotel and the Sally Fish House, both demolished to build new parking lots; and the Highland Grade School and Athol Poor Schoolhouse, both torn down after their school functions had been moved to other locations.

Additionally, a few historic structures in Athol have been threatened with demolition, but were ultimately saved due to citizen campaigns and successful fund-raising and financing efforts. These structures include the Pequog Hotel building, which is now on the National Register of Historic Places, and the historic bandstand at Fish Park. Currently, one other historic building has been proposed for demolition in the new future: Uptown Athol Fire Station. The old Fire Station building's use as a fire station ceased after a newer uptown station was constructed. The old firehouse has been poorly maintained in recent years, and subsequently, the costs to restore it are now prohibitively high. If, and when, this structure is demolished, plans have been made to save any particularly noteworthy historic items from the building.

In order to preserve historic buildings and structures, it is important to develop strategies to protect these resources and prevent their decline. Such strategies could include Town bylaws or voluntary guidelines to delay the demolition of historic buildings and other structures, projects to promote the rehabilitation or reuse of currently underutilized historic buildings in the downtown area, and financing options to cover the costs of preserving and restoring the Town's historic structures.

Loss of Historic Elements

Over time, historic details on many older buildings, such as door and window moldings, porch supports, eaves brackets, and other features may be lost. Often, when such detailing becomes damaged or decayed, it is permanently removed, and the related structure features are replaced by cheaper or mass-produced versions that lack the character of the original. These changes can be detrimental to a building's historic value and nature. The use of vinyl siding and of vinyl replacement windows with fake mullions can similarly be problematic, and can threaten the historic appearance of older structures. A number of the buildings listed in Athol's historic inventory have experienced extensive alterations, expansions, and other construction projects over the years, so much so, that in some cases, they barely resemble their original structures and many of their historic details have been lost. It is important for

the Athol Historical Commission's inventory of historic structures be updated to identify which of the structures still contain most or all of their historic elements, and have not undergone extensive renovations. Since these structures are the most historically intact, they should be the focus of any preservation efforts. A program to educate the owners of historic properties about the negative impacts of certain renovations and updates, such as vinyl siding and windows, on a building's historic character, and the options for maintaining buildings' historic architectural features, could also be an important tool for preserving the quality of the Town's historic resources.

Incomplete Inventories

The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) maintains a Statewide Inventory of Historic and Archeological Resources in the Commonwealth. Historic resources are usually incorporated into the statewide inventory when a local Historical Commission submits a completed inventory form for the resource to the MHC. However, for some communities, the MHC's listings of historic resources do not include many of the sites and structures that have been identified at the local level. Fortunately, this is not the case in Athol. The MHC's historic inventory for Athol matches the Athol Historical Commission's own listing of inventoried properties fairly well. Nonetheless, there are a small number of local structures and sites that have been documented locally which are not yet included on the MHC inventory. Included among these properties are Dr. James Oliver's House at 9 Common Street, John C. Hill's House at 304 South Main Street, the old Bragg Mill Site off Green Street, and the Old Canal and Oxbow off Bearsden Road.

In addition, there are also historic properties that have been researched for inclusion in the MHC inventory, but for which MHC forms have not yet been submitted. Further, there are a number of inventoried structures and sites that have been destroyed, damaged, or altered significantly since their inclusion in MHC and AHC listings, but for which records have not yet been updated to reflect these changes. There are also properties included on the MHC inventory for which some critical information, most typically, architectural style, is missing. Efforts should be undertaken to review, update, and complete the current historic site and structure listings.

The Athol Historical Commission may also want to consider expanding its inventory to include additional noteworthy historic properties. In its Survey Report for Athol (1984), the MHC suggested that Athol's historic inventory "could be strengthened in the areas of both domestic and public late nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings." Many structures from these eras still exist. A full inventory of the Town's historic structures and sites is essential for preserving all of Athol's historic resources.

In its review, updating, and expanding of the current historic resource listings, the Athol Historical Commission may want to determine which of the previously documented historic structures are intact without any major alterations and retain most of their historic character. As was mentioned above, these structures, in particular, should be the focus of future preservation and protection efforts.

Limited Public Recognition of Athol's Historic Assets

The Athol History Trail, created in 1976, is a wonderful way to promote Athol's history. The twenty-four sites marked on the Trail explore the key moments and sites in the area's early Native American history, Athol's initial settlement by colonists during the early 1700s, and the Town's expansion during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Trail sites are still visited each year by numerous students, tourists, and residents.

Many visitors, as well as some residents, are not particularly familiar with Athol's history beyond the History Trail sites, and more could be done to promote the rest of the Town's history and its historic resources. One possibility is to add historic plaques and markers to more of the Town's historic buildings and sites to better designate and distinguish them, and to educate people about their pasts.

Another, more involved option, is to create historic districts in areas with a number of noteworthy historic structures and sites. During the late 1960s, Richard Chaisson, a long-time resident and member of the Athol Historical Society, developed a proposal for a Highlands Historic District for the Uptown Common area and upper Main Street, but this district was never officially designated. Similarly, during the late 1970s, the Athol Historical Commission submitted a historic inventory for the Morgan Memorial Complex in South Athol. This complex could also be considered for historic district designation, as could the Downtown Village center. The Downtown Village area on lower Main Street is the Town's primary location for intact historic commercial structures.

Any new historic districts could be nationally or locally designated, or could be recognized only informally. National Historic District status is largely an honorary designation, and having a property or an area listed on the National Register of Historic Places generally does not place restrictions or conditions on individual properties. There are restrictions on an individual property only if there is State or Federal involvement or funding in a project affecting a property on the National Register or within a National Historic District, or if local or regional regulations are in place. If there is State or Federal involvement in a project, then the Massachusetts Historical Commission has review authority over any planned changes. If there are local regulations in place, then the Town or the Athol Historical Commission may have review oversight. Also, if a majority of property owners in a proposed district object to national designation, the district will not be listed on the National Register.

An inventory and review of historic structures and sites in a proposed National Historic District must be submitted for the district to be considered for national designation. The Massachusetts Historical Commission is often available to assist with this effort. To be designated as a National Historic District, the area must contain a large number of intact historic structures. The benefits of being on the National Register include eligibility for certain grants and tax credits to restore historic properties, and protection from State and Federal road projects that could adversely influence the character of the National Historic District. Another benefit is national recognition of Athol's historic character and assets, and the publicity and potential tourism that such recognition could bring.

Local Historic Districts are town-designated areas. With Local Historic Districts, a town selects architectural and other characteristics that it considers to be most significant for maintaining the integrity of the historic assets within the District. The town also assumes oversight over proposed alterations, demolitions, and new construction projects, and reviews any proposed projects for their impacts on specific historic buildings and on the Historic District as a whole.

An informal historic district for Athol could be designated by the Athol Historical Commission, the Athol Historical Society, or a group of interested citizens. As with a National Historic District, an informal district would be primarily promotional in nature. With an informal historic district, no restrictions would be placed on any structures or any future construction projects.

Any historic districts established for Athol, be they national, local or informal, could be promoted with signs and brochures, including walking tour booklets or historic overviews and descriptions of historic properties. The creation of historic districts and associated materials could help not only to promote the districts themselves but also to promote Athol's history overall and to encourage more history and heritage-related tourism within the Town and the region overall.

Integration of Land Conservation and Historic Preservation

Athol contains a number of important cultural and land resources, including historic structures, sites, and landscapes. Traditionally, land conservation and historic preservation have been treated as separate issues. However, the close connections between Athol's natural resources and its historic resources call for an integrated approach to preserving and enhancing these assets. For example, the long-term integrity of the Town's historic landscapes on Moore Hill and on Chestnut Hill depends both on the viability of land preservation efforts and on strategies for maintaining the structural and design qualities of the recognized historic buildings and sites.

Incentives and Financing for Historic Resource Preservation

The preservation and restoration of historic structures can often be prohibitively expensive for property owners. An investment tax credit is currently available for rehabilitating commercial properties that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The credit provides up to 20 percent of the costs of a rehabilitation project. There is presently no parallel program to help reduce the costs of rehabilitating and restoring historic residential properties. Legislation for such a tax credit has support at both the Federal and State levels, and it is hoped that a tax credit program for residential structures will be passed within the next few years. Private funding initiatives can potentially offer another avenue for financing restoration projects. Some of the successful strategies that have been used in other parts of the country are revolving funds, facade easement donations held by land trusts, and loans by local banking institutions interested in the long-term economic benefits of historic preservation.

Accessibility

Most historic buildings were not built to be accessible to those in wheelchairs or with other mobility limitations. It is important to improve access to historic buildings as required by the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), by introducing such changes as ramp entrances, wheelchair lifts, and accessible bathrooms. To the extent possible, accessibility measures should be designed to be architecturally compatible with the buildings where they are located.

Recommendations

- Review, update, and complete the current Athol Historical Commission (AHC) inventory of historic sites and structures. Finish Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) inventory forms for locally documented resources for which forms have not yet been submitted to the MHC. Consider expanding the inventory to include additional structures, sites, streetscapes, landscapes, and areas of historic significance. The MHC's Statewide Inventory of Historic and Archeological Resources incorporates all these types of resources.
- Apply to the MHC for a Planning Survey Grant to complete, update, and expand the AHC's historic resources inventory, and to complete additional MHC inventory forms.
- Determine which of Athol's identified historic resources still contain most of their historic elements and character, and target these resources in preservation and protection efforts. Such efforts could include voluntary architectural guidelines to protect structures' historic character and features, outreach programs to educate owners of historic properties about these guidelines, or a Town bylaw or voluntary program to delay the demolition of historically intact structures for a limited amount of time to see if alternatives to demolition can be found.
- Create outreach programs and brochures to increase the public's awareness of Athol's history and historic and scenic resources, and to help market these resources as part of an initiative to promote heritage and recreational tourism within the Town and the region.
- Consider the creation of National Historic Districts in the Town's most intact and historically significant areas, including the Uptown Common area and the Downtown Village area along lower Main Street. National Historic District status is largely an honorary designation, and having a property or an area listed on the National Register of Historic Places generally does not place restrictions or conditions on individual properties. The creation of a National Historic District in Athol could help promote the Town's historic assets and attract additional tourism, as well as generate new tourist-based commercial activity. This, in turn, could then help protect the town's historic and scenic resources from decline.

- Explore ways to revitalize and promote the Athol Historical Commission and Athol Historical Society to help these organizations attract additional members.
- Investigate designating Local Scenic Roads pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15C to provide some protection to historic and scenic resources along the roads, and to restrict the removal of important trees and stone walls in the roads' right-of-way. Proposed Local Scenic Roads are identified on the Historic and Scenic Resources Map.
- Consider initiating discussions with Gill, Orange, and Erving to pursue formal State designation of Route 2 east of I-91 as a Scenic Byway, and applying for Federal Scenic Byway funding to complete a Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan.