

## Chapter 9 – Historic & Archaeological Resources **DRAFT**

### Purpose

Historic and archaeological resources contribute significantly to a community's character and make each town distinctive and welcoming. These resources are important not only for their role in South Berwick's history, but also for their present-day value. Historic buildings and sites add to the town's quality of life and their presence helps maintain property values.

Specifically, this section presents a brief history of the town, describes South Berwick's historic and archaeological resources, assesses threats to these resources, and considers the effectiveness of existing measures to protect and preserve these resources.

### Key Findings

- South Berwick is one of the earliest colonial settlements, and therefore has many historic structures and sites that are valued for their history and cultural significance.
- The Humphry Chadbourne homestead is home to one of Maine's most important historic archeological sites.
- South Berwick has three historic districts with an accompanying ordinance, and a very active and well-established historic society.
- **Although there have been past surveys and documentation over the years, the town lacks a central inventory of sites with potential historic significance. (Still true?)**

### Community Opinion Survey Results

PLACEHOLDER

### Historic Overview

South Berwick was home to author Sarah Orne Jewett (1849-1909), whose works were well known examples of American literary regionalism, also known as "local color", which captured the life and values of 19th century Maine. South Berwick has accepted free thinkers since 1650 as a site of religious expression and diversity, attracted some of Maine's earliest Baptists, Free Will Baptists, and Quakers, and was home to temperance and abolition activists in the 1800s. Maine's oldest school, Berwick Academy (founded 1791), has educated generations of South Berwick residents, including notable civic leaders such as John Noble Goodwin, whom Lincoln appointed territorial governor of Arizona.

One of Maine's earliest European settlements, South Berwick is home to one of America's earliest water power sites, the Great Works Mill, operated between 1634 -1640 near the confluence of the Great Works and Salmon Falls Rivers. The sawmill was near a later one operated by the Humphrey Chadbourne family, whose 1650 to 1690 homestead has become one of Maine's most important 17th century archaeological sites. Prehistoric artifacts in this area also indicate inhabitation of this part of Maine and the Piscataqua region for some 11,000 years before colonial settlement.

Part of the port of Portsmouth during colonial and early federal times, the Town saw the construction of deep-water sailing ships along the Salmon Falls River, as local sawmills processed abundant timber. Quamphegan Landing was a port of gundalows, the river craft that was the mainstay of South Berwick commerce until the railroads came. Downtown South Berwick's two main streets, Main and Portland, were part of the Boston-to-Portland stagecoach road.

Construction of the Portsmouth Manufacturing Company cotton mill at Quamphegan Landing circa 1830 ushered in South Berwick's factory era, and later the Irish and French-Canadian immigration in which many present-day residents claim roots. The Cotton Mill Counting House is now on the National Register of Historic Places, and houses the Counting House Museum, operated by the very active Old Berwick Historical Society.

**(Add to the historic development patterns? Where did the earliest development occur?)**

## Historical and Archaeological Resources

### Prehistoric Archaeological Resources

Archaeological resources are those below ground. There are two types of archaeological resources: prehistoric and historic. Prehistoric archaeological places are those associated with Indian archaeology and generally date prior to the 1600s and European settlement. Historic archaeological places are those associated with the earliest European settlers.

Apart from the sites of Maine's earliest known inhabitants, Paleo-Indians, at the end of the last ice age, most prehistoric archaeological sites are found along water bodies. The remains of Paleo-Indians are often associated with dunes and sandy areas because these areas made suitable campsites.

Prehistoric artifacts indicate inhabitation of this part of Maine for at least 4,000 years (2000 BC). According to MHPC, there are six known prehistoric sites in South Berwick. Three are located along the banks of the Salmon Falls River. The other three were located along utility corridor (gas or powerline) survey routes, well away from the river. Small areas of the banks of the Great Works River and the Salmon Falls River have been surveyed by professional archaeologists. The most extensive surveys in South Berwick to date are for the major utility corridor through the town.

One prehistoric site estimated to be 4,000 to 5,000 years old is on the Hamilton House grounds owned by Historic New England. Prehistoric artifacts have also been found at the Humphrey Chadbourne archaeological site at the confluence of the Great Works and the Salmon Falls Rivers.

Other archaeological resource potential areas include the shore lands of the Salmon Falls River, Leigh's Mill Pond, the Great Works River up to Hooper Sands Road, Knights Pond, and a wetland south of the York Woods Road and extending into Eliot. Aeolian, or sand, areas include "The Sands" along Hooper Sands Road and an area associated with White Marsh Brook and extending into the Town of York.

The Commission recommends these areas of known and potential archaeological significance be surveyed and a review mechanism established to provide a field check prior to any ground disturbance

and/or construction activity. They also recommend continued archaeological survey of the banks of the Salmon Falls River and Great Works River.

### Historic Archaeological Resources

The earliest historic archaeological resources are sites with evidence of early European habitation during the 1600s. The most important locations of the first or earliest settlers are those that are undisturbed and have retained a significant amount of integrity. Generally, these sites or areas are found within 100 feet of navigable water.

The MHPC reports eight historic archaeological sites documented in South Berwick. They are listed in the table below. No professional surveys for historic archaeological sites have been conducted to date in South Berwick. Future archaeological survey should focus on the identification of potentially significant resources associated with the town’s agricultural, residential, and industrial heritage, particularly those associated with the earliest Euro-American settlement of the town in the 17th and 18th centuries.

South Berwick Historic Archaeological Sites			
Site Name	Site Type	Periods of Significance	National Register Status
Great Works Mill	mill, sawmill	1634-1670	undetermined
Jewett House Grounds	domestic	1774 on	undetermined
Col. Jonathan Hamilton House	domestic	ca. 1750-1949	undetermined
Humphrey Chadbourne House	domestic	Built ca. 1643, destroyed in the Salmon Falls raids of 1689 or 1690	undetermined
Jacob Q. Meader	domestic	1850s to 1890s	undetermined
J. Lord	domestic	late 1600s - ca.1900	eligible
Witchtrot Hill Homestead			undetermined
Moore Homestead			undetermined
J. Thompson	domestic	by 1872, but gone before 1893	undetermined

*Source: Maine Historic Preservation Commission, 2022*

Other potential sites include:

- Miles Thompson House (1656)
- John Heard House (by 1640)
- John Morrell House (1668)
- John Plaisted House (ca. 1690)
- Daniel Goodwin, Sr. House (1654)
- John Lamb House (1656)
- Humphrey Spencer House (pre-1676)
- John Crawford House (1676)
- William Pile / James Smith House (1659/1663)
- Moses Spencer House (1680)

The Humphrey Chadbourne site, discovered in August 1995, is one of the most artifact-rich and important archaeology sites discovered in southern Maine, and is clearly a site with not only local but also national significance. **Each summer since its discovery in 1995, the Old Berwick Historical Society**

has sponsored a two-week excavation at the site. The project is a unique partnership between Salem State College, Old Berwick Historical Society, the Chadbourne Family Association, as well as professional archaeologists and dozens of community volunteers. The site appears qualified to be on the National Register of Historic Places. The Maine Historic Preservation Commission has also noted that the entire Great Works River valley and the Salmon Falls Riverbank are archeologically sensitive and need further survey.

## Historic Resources

This section describes historical buildings, structures and objects above the ground. In 1998, the South Berwick Town Council commissioned an architectural historian to initiate an historical building survey of the downtown. A survey of approximately 140 downtown properties was begun. Buildings were photographed and described by an expert; research and documentation now needs to be completed. So far, approximately 100 downtown buildings were noted as potential components of a National Register District. Approximately 20 were found to potentially merit individual listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

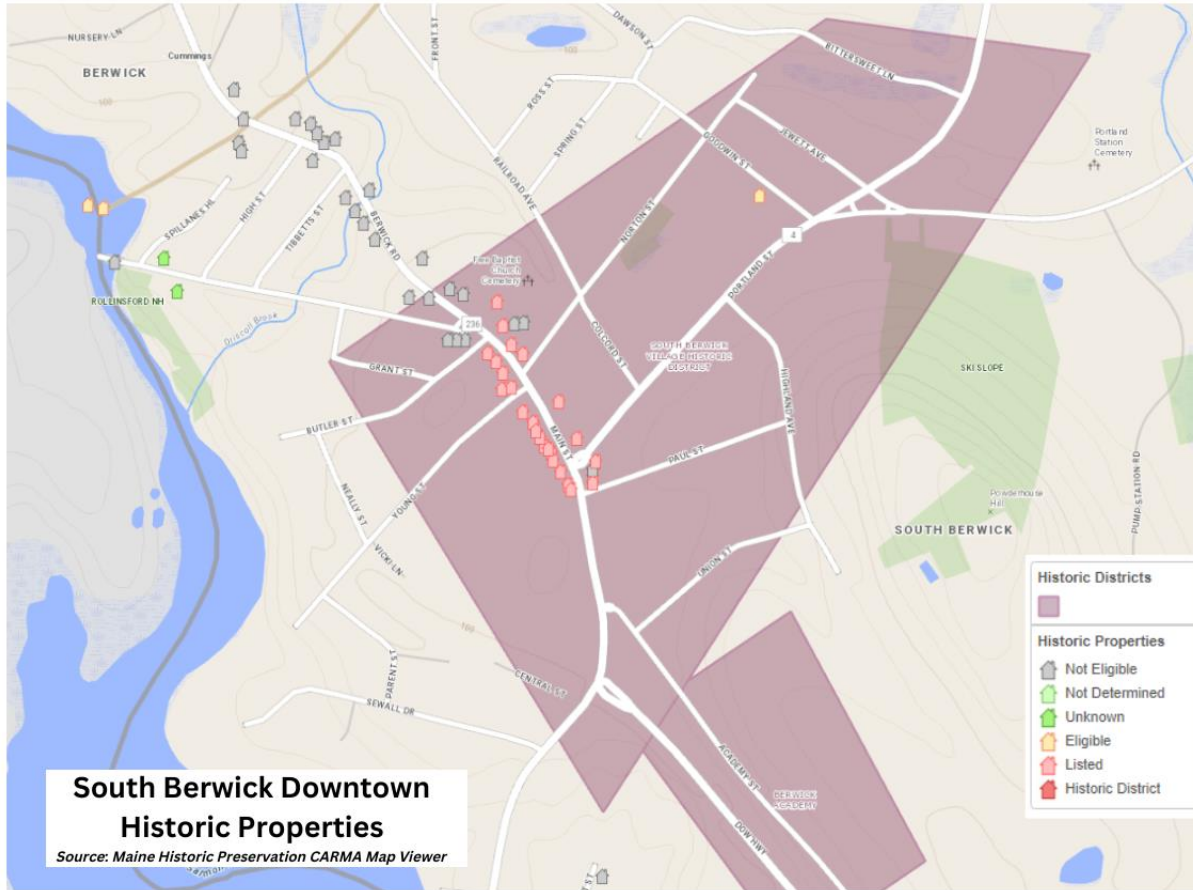
The National Register of Historic Places, administered by the National Park Service, is a listing of those buildings, districts, structures, objects, and sites deemed worthy of preservation for their historical, cultural, or archaeological significance. The main benefits to owning a site listed on the National Register are prestige and community recognition. Listing does not confer legal obligations on the property owner. Certain buildings may qualify for a 25 percent investment tax credit; to qualify, a building must be income-producing, depreciable and a “certified” historic structure. Structures on the National Register are also given a limited amount of protection from alteration or demolition resulting from a federal project.

South Berwick properties now listed on the National Register of Historic Places include:

- The 1785 Jonathan Hamilton House on Vaughan’s Lane
- The 1774 Sarah Orne Jewett House on Main Street
- The 1854 Jewett Eastman House on Portland Street
- The 1830 Portsmouth Company Cotton Mills Counting House on Main and Liberty Streets
- The 1853 Conway Junction Railroad Turntable site on Route 236 at Fife’s Lane
- The 1870 Cummings Shoe Factory at Norton Street and Railroad Avenue
- The Berwick Academy campus includes five historic buildings, dated 1791-1894, comprising a National Register District.
- South Berwick Village Historic District, as identified by MHPC, which covers the town’s historic zoning districts and beyond to a larger area of downtown.

Both the Hamilton House and Sarah Orne Jewett House are also National Historic Landmarks, another federal program which identifies these properties as exemplifying American heritage.

In addition to the downtown structures mentioned above, other sites which have been identified as for possible listing on the National Register include: the Humphrey Chadbourne site, the Great Works Mill site, the Leigh’s Mill House (Vine Street), the General Goodwin House (Oldfields Road), the Judge Benjamin Chadbourne House (Liberty Street) and the Balancing Rock.



### Threats to South Berwick's Historic and Archaeological Resources

The most imminent threats facing these resources are development and poor maintenance. New development such as a residential subdivision, commercial and industrial construction, or redevelopment of an existing building or area without regard to historical, archeological, and cultural resources threatens their existence. Simple neglect and inadequate maintenance have resulted in a greater loss of historic architecture than any other cause. The greatest concentration of historically significant structures is in the downtown, where economic stresses and high traffic make them vulnerable.

### Assessment of Current Protection Measures

The Town of South Berwick has three designated Historic Districts which are intended to help protect significant historic features. There is potential value in extending the districts to include a larger section of the downtown, as well as outside of the downtown to include other priority areas of historical and archaeological importance.



*(Left) Village Center Historic District, (Right) Liberty Street Historic District and (Bottom Right) Conway Railroad Turntable Historic District. Maps are official Historic District Zoning Ordinance maps, with blue highlight added for clarity.*

The Historic District Ordinance requires Certificates of Appropriateness be issued by the Historic District Commission for any change in exterior appearance of all buildings, structures, sites or landmarks in the historic districts, or the new construction of any buildings or structures visible from a public street in the historic districts. It also requires Certificates of Appropriateness for the demolitions of any building or structure in the historic district, or the B1, B2 or BR zoning districts which cover a major portion of the downtown village area. Lastly, the ordinance also covers any alteration to an archeological site, as defined by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission. The ordinance outlines various standards of evaluation that ensure changes or new construction in the districts conform with the architecture of surrounding buildings.

These protections are comprehensive, and the districts cover many of the most significant features of the historic downtown. The inclusion of the B1, B2 and BR zones in the demolition clause protect many historic residential homes in the downtown from being removed or demolished without notification, but they are not otherwise protected from changes or new construction.

Shoreland protection measures found in both State and local regulations provide limited protection of historical and archeological resources near the Town’s rivers and ponds. South Berwick’s shoreland zoning ordinance also includes cultural resources in some cases, such as the Balancing Rock and some scenic views.

Continued documentation and raised awareness of South Berwick's historical resources and policy directing their care and protection can prevent their unintentional destruction and provide for their



protection to the benefit of the town's future residents.

### Summary

As one of Maine's earliest European settlements, South Berwick possesses several locally and nationally significant historic and archaeological sites. **However, the Town lacks a comprehensive inventory of these resources. (Still true?)** Three locally designated historic districts in the downtown area, and an associated zoning ordinance, provide some protection to historic resources. Other significant resources outside of the districts are not protected in any regulated way.

In the downtown, historic structures 100 and 200 years old and older still line streets that were laid in colonial times, and meet at the Sarah Orne Jewett House, a National Historic Landmark. Significant historic sites outside the downtown include schoolhouses, mill and railroad sites, the former Town poor farm, a town Grange Hall, churches and cemeteries.

Limited prehistoric archaeological investigation suggests the riverfronts near the Hamilton House and at the confluence of the Great Works and Salmon Falls Rivers were occupied on several occasions during the past three to five thousand years.

