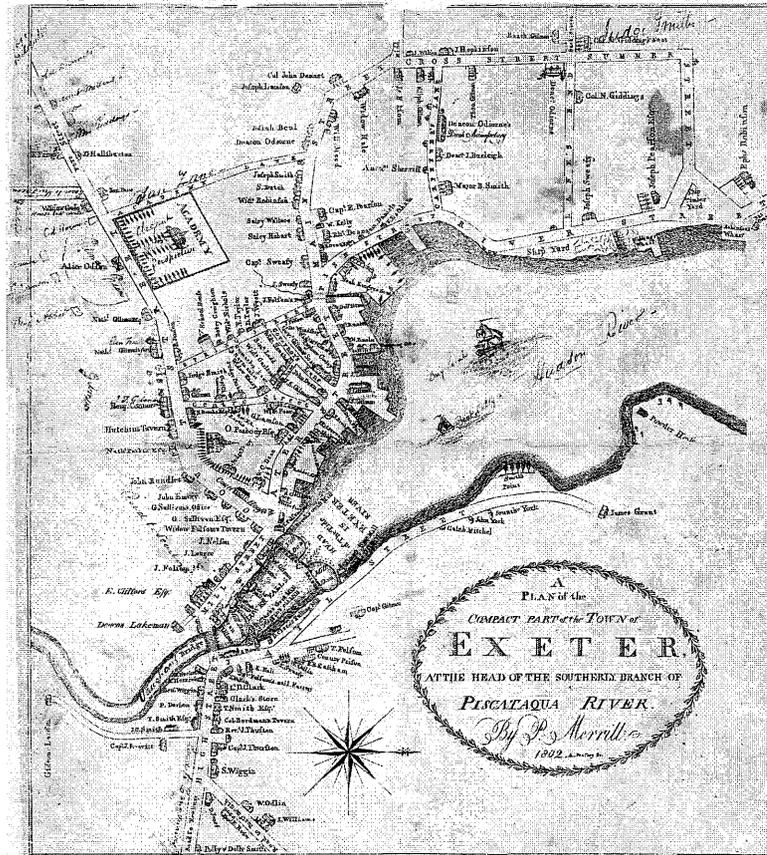


TOWN OF EXETER

Town Wide Mapping Project

August 2012



Prepared for:
Exeter Heritage Commission
10 Front Street
Exeter, NH

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I. Introduction and Methods

In March 2012, the Town of Exeter contracted with Bruce G. Harvey, Principal of Harvey Research and Consulting, in association with James C. Sexton and Dominic Oppedisano, to carry out a Historic Mapping Project of the Town of Exeter. As conceived by the Town and defined in a Request for Proposals (RFP), this mapping project is the first phase in the development of a proposed town-wide area form as defined by the New Hampshire Division for Historical Resources (DHR), which in turn is the first phase of a complete historic architectural inventory of the Town. The intended purpose of the project was to show the patterns of growth that developed over time in different areas of the Town, and in this way to provide material for the creation of strategies for the execution of the historic architectural inventory.

As noted in the RFP and identified below, Exeter's history has been well documented in numerous studies. However, none of these previous studies included mapping data that show areas and patterns of growth in the Town. The current study has resulted in a series of maps that show the spatial development of Exeter over time, by documenting when different areas of the Town were developed. The focus of the present study was on general areas of the Town and the overall patterns of development, and not on individual properties.

The project started with research into the history of the Town, in order to understand the most important themes that influenced the Town's development through the centuries. At the same time, the study identified historic maps that could show the growth of the Town. The maps were then scanned, and the digital files were used to create a series of maps that, together, demonstrate the patterns of growth over time. The basis for the maps used in this mapping study is the most recent street plans as provided by the Town's Planning Department. This allows for the most accurate understanding of the patterns of growth in the Town.

Once the maps were created in draft form, we then carried out a windshield survey in order to field-check the data on the maps. The windshield survey also allowed us to make recommendations regarding areas that should be included in a future historic architectural survey of the Town.

II. Historic Overview

Exeter is fortunate in having been the subject of two very good histories, covering in total 350 years from the early 17th century to the late 20th century. In 1888, Charles Henry Bell, a judge and former governor of New Hampshire, wrote a history of Exeter from 1638 to 1888, while Nancy Carnegie Merrill, the Town Librarian, wrote the subsequent history of the Town from 1888 to 1988. Together, these two books provide vast amounts of useful information. In addition, several cultural resources reports in recent years have summarized this information, and have proved exceptionally useful regarding the industrial history of the Town; these include Monroe (1998 and 1999) and Walsh (2011). The following brief historical overview is focused principally on the growth and spatial development of Exeter as a town from its origins in the early 17th century to the mid-20th century, and draws primarily from these sources as supplemented by the maps that form the basis for this project.

Exeter was first settled by European colonists in 1638 when Rev. John Wheelwright arrived at the falls of the Squamscott River. Wheelwright, born in 1592 in Lincolnshire, England, was ordained as a minister before emigrating to the Massachusetts Bay Colony with his second wife in 1636. Due to his heterodox ideas regarding the Christian faith, which he shared with the famous Anne Hutchinson, he was banished from the colony in the winter of 1637/1638. Wheelwright, who gave the new settlement the name of Exeter, after the city in southwest England, was accompanied by approximately 20 families. He received a release to the right of Indian occupation from a local Indian Sagamore, and thenceforth vigorously defended his claim to the land against the encroachments of the Massachusetts Bay Colony to the south.

The wisdom of Wheelwright's choice of a location was clear to all: the Squamscott River provided easy access to the Atlantic at what is now Portsmouth, the falls of the Squamscott offered the potential for power that could be applied to mills, and the Exeter River upriver of the falls provided a ready source of fresh water. Moreover, marshy meadow lands along the Squamscott offered pastures for cattle, while the nearby dense forests offered hopes for wealth in that timber-dependent economy.

The production of food was of paramount importance to the new settlement, and the first industrial development was oriented toward this end. By 1640, Thomas Wilson built a grist mill for grinding grain into flour, on the east side of the island in the Squamscott River at the lower of the two falls. Wilson, who also owned land on the east side of the river, died in 1643 and passed the ownership of his land to his son, Humphrey Wilson.

By the mid 1640s, however, the growing community of Exeter had begun the process of exploiting the nearby forests for their lumber, which was needed to build and heat houses and to build ships and masts. In the early years of the settlement, all of the wood harvested locally was processed by hand, either riven or sawn using pits in the ground. In 1648, however, the Town leaders took a leap forward in efficiency by entering into a contract with Edward Gilman to build and operate a sawmill at the upper falls of the Squamscott River. Gilman, who with his father had emigrated from Hingham, England in 1638, was at that time operating a sawmill in Hingham, Massachusetts. After building the sawmill on the west side of the river, Gilman's father (Edward) and two brothers (John and Moses) also settled in Exeter. Given the quantity of lumber within easy reach of Exeter, it soon became the Town's principal industry, and other sawmills soon followed. By 1659, Edward Gilman had built a second sawmill across the river from the first, while Humphrey Wilson co-owned a new saw mill which he built on the west side of his family's island at the lower falls in 1650.

Exeter's spatial growth in the early decades was likewise driven by the lumber industry. The initial street, like the original settlement, lay along the west side of the Squamscott River. Now called Water Street, it ran downriver from the upper falls, where Edward Gilman first built his sawmill and the Great Bridge now sits. At the northern end of this street, a path struck to the west into the lumber-filled hinterlands; though its exact path wandered over the next century or so, this path is now Park Street and Epping Road (Rt. 27).

Unfortunately, the current research revealed no maps showing Exeter in the 17th or 18th centuries. As industrial growth continued with the new and more varied mills at the falls of the Squamscott and further upstream on the Exeter River, Exeter's wealth and stability increased. By the time of the Revolutionary War, the Town included mills that produced paper, snuff, and linseed oil from flax seeds. This industrial growth had several implications.

First, all of the mills were powered by water, which kept the densely settled portions of the Town close to the Squamscott and Exeter Rivers. As new streets were laid out, they were oriented primarily to the rivers. Second, the growing strength of Exeter as a regional manufacturing and trade center made relatively wealthy men of Exeter's leaders. This, combined with Exeter's location at the head of navigation of the Squamscott River, gave the Town a degree of political clout.

In 1775, with the growing unrest throughout the American colonies, the British Crown's colonial government of the New Hampshire Colony in Portsmouth was overthrown. From 1775 through the end of the Revolutionary War, Exeter served as the de facto seat of government; it remained the political center even after the Revolutionary War as leaders of the new state worked out the form of a new government and a new constitution, and worked out the location of new state capitol further inland at Concord. Charles Henry Bell, in his 1888 history of the Town, noted that Exeter "had become practically the capital of the State, the seat of government, and the center of all civil and military activity in New Hampshire." (90)

Exeter remained a small, compact, walkable town, focused on the rivers, into the first decades of the 19th century. The earliest map of Exeter identified in this study, from 1802 (Figure 1), shows the concentration of buildings in the streets that lie on the west side of the Squamscott River adjacent to and downstream of the falls, roughly north of what is now Front Street (then known as Court Street). The west bank of the Squamscott was punctuated with wharves, with Water Street immediately behind them. Water Street extended to the south of Front Street only to what is now the Great Bridge; this southern portion was known, appropriately, as Mill Street. Settlement along High Street continued east across the river for only one block, while there were no streets south of Front Street on the west side of the river. As Bell noted in 1888, “None of the streets in the village southerly of Front Street and that part of Water Street between the two bridges are much above a half a century old.” (127) Indeed, significant settlement on the west side of the river extended only to the new Phillips Exeter Academy, which had been established in 1783; by 1802, it remained as only a single building on a large lot on the north side of Front Street at Academy (now Tan) Lane.

In the early 19th century, once the lure of state politics had passed to Concord, Exeter continued in its traditional role as a regional manufacturing, trade, and transportation center. Growth was on its way, however, led by two important developments in particular. Both of them can be seen by 1845, when the next known map of Exeter was published.

First, Exeter gained its first large-scale mill in the late 1820s and early 1830s. In 1827, a group of seven Exeter men pooled their resources to create the Exeter Manufacturing Company, and purchased the mill sites on the east side of the river at both the upper and lower falls. At the same time, the same group of men created the Exeter Mill and Water Power Company, which acquired the rights to the water power at the falls. The Manufacturing Company built a large brick mill in 1830 to produce cotton textiles; it was powered by two large water wheels driven by water channeled from the new dam built at the upper falls by the Water Power Company in 1831. The two

companies were combined into one, the Exeter Manufacturing Company, in 1861, with the new company building a new mill in 1876 adjoining the old mill. As early as 1845, the Dow Map of Exeter (Figure 2) shows a modest amount of new growth on the east side of the river surrounding the new mill, including Portsmouth Ave, High Street, and Auburn Street.

The second important development in the early 19th century was even more powerful in its impact on the growth of Exeter. The western division of the Boston & Maine Railroad entered Exeter in 1841. The Boston & Maine was created in the late 1830s as part of a network of railroads that connected the mills and population centers surrounding Boston with Portland, ME; by the late 19th century, the line had a network of lines throughout New Hampshire and Maine. In Exeter, the impact was profound. Although the rail line extended through the western part of town and crossed what is now Salem Street close to the downtown area, the depot was located considerably west of downtown, where it crossed the outer part of Front Street. This placement of the original depot, more than the rail line itself, drew Exeter's streets and population to the west. By 1845, Railroad Avenue and Winter Street, arcing to the north and east from the railroad tracks toward the Village, were already becoming well populated. The Academy clearly no longer formed the western edge of Exeter.

Although the Exeter Manufacturing Company remained in continuous operation into the mid-20th century, it was the railroad that had the greatest long-term impact on the spatial development of the Town. The ability of the railroads, even the earliest versions, to move raw materials, finished products, and fuel, could not be rivaled by traditional overland or river transportation, reducing unit costs exponentially. Already by the early 1850s, a number of small-scale industries had located near the railroad on Middle Street, including a carriage factory, a pottery shop, and a marble factory. By the 1860s, the Boston & Maine had built a roundhouse, freight house, and wood and coal sheds in Exeter, which allowed for an even higher volume of rail traffic, along with a new depot on Lincoln Street that replaced the original Front Street depot. With these new rail facilities, and the ability to access larger stores of coal and wood for power, new and

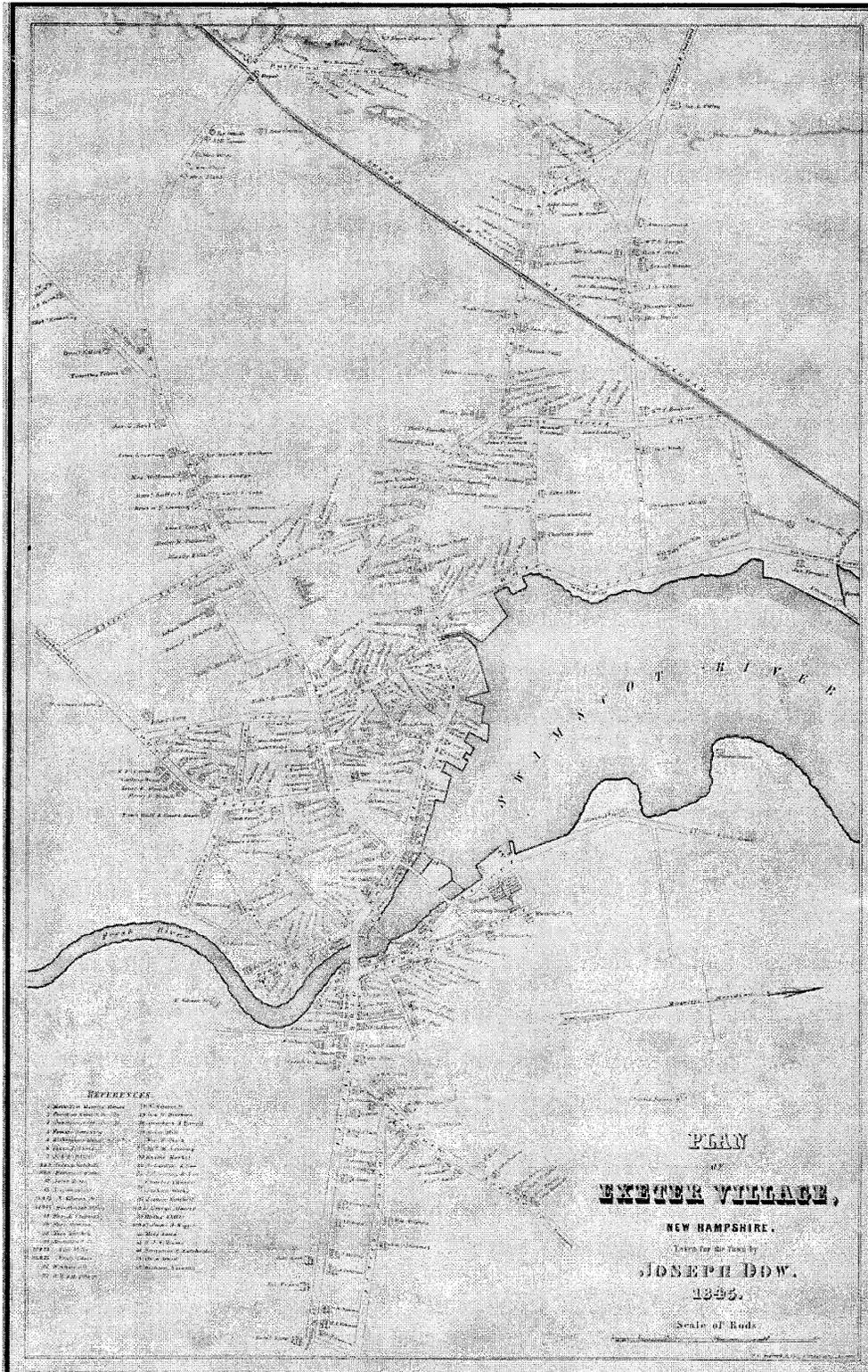


Figure 2. Dow Map of Exeter, 1845. Courtesy of Dartmouth College Library

larger industries created factories along the railroad in Exeter, including the Exeter Machine Company, the Brass Company, Clark's Carriage Works, and the Peabody Steam Gristmill. Later in the 19th century, Exeter drew new brass and machine factories including the Rockingham Machine Company, the Exeter Handkerchief Factory (an offshoot from the Exeter Manufacturing Company), and a host of shoe companies which soon became the Town's largest employers (Monroe 1999).

These new factories required large numbers of workers, who increasingly were immigrants from various European nations, and who needed places to live. Entrepreneurs in Exeter quickly took advantage of this large new market for housing, and created the current network of streets along the railroad. The 1874 Sanford & Evarts Map of Exeter (Figure 3) showed that the village had filled in nearly completely from the river west to the railroad, with complete development along Front Street, the neighborhoods to the south of Front Street, and the streets that crossed the railroad tracks to the north, including Middle, Park, and Salem Streets. In the later 19th and early 20th centuries, new neighborhoods were created that included School Street, Union Street, Dartmouth Street on the east side of the tracks (Monroe 1999), along with neighborhoods on the west side of tracks including Carroll, Charter, Garden, and Washington Streets.

While the western part of Exeter had the most amount of open space for development in the late 19th and 20th centuries, Exeter's downtown remained well developed and vigorous. The proximity of Phillips Exeter Academy to the downtown no doubt contributed to this vigor, but the Exeter Manufacturing Company also maintained a strong presence. The Company came under new ownership in the 1890s as the Kent family gained a controlling interest and led an ambitious expansion program into the 20th century; as result, the company maintained and even increased its productivity during the 1920s and 1930s (Merrill 1988: 466-470). It remained the Town's leading single industry into the 20th century, and "helped to maintain the prominence of the downtown area around Great Falls as a commercial, municipal, and residential center" (Walsh 2011).

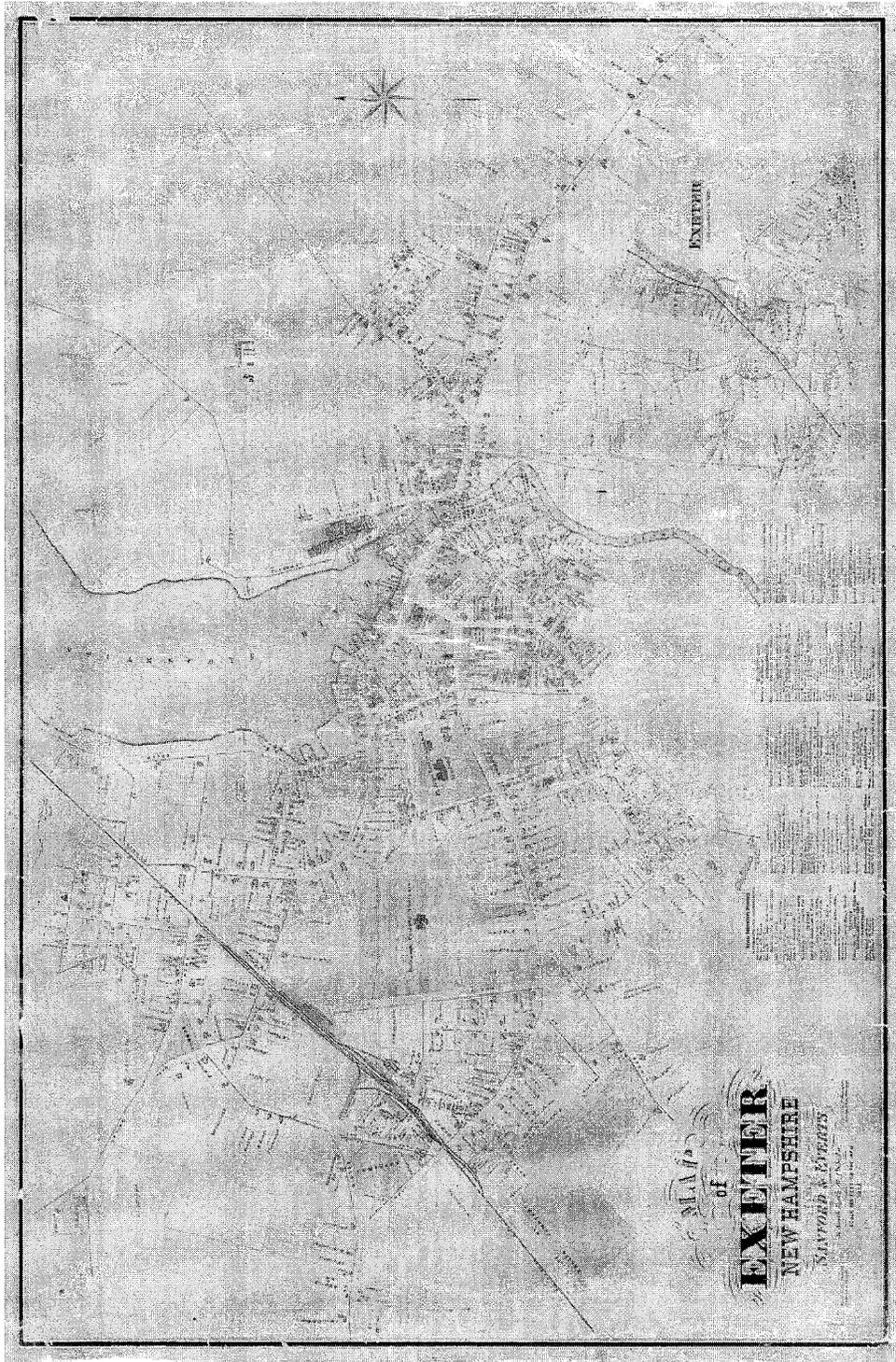


Figure 3. Sanford & Evarts Map of Exeter, 1874. Courtesy of Dartmouth College Library

The portion of Exeter lying east of the Squamscott River saw its greatest development in the 20th century. While the Exeter Manufacturing Company stimulated some growth in this area in the mid 19th century, it remained thinly populated through the 1890s, when the Hurd Atlas of Rockingham County was published (Figure 4); the land lying north of Portsmouth Avenue and east of Chestnut Street remained undeveloped. The biggest new development in this area was the hospital, which was built on the east side of Prospect Hill in 1905; this led to increased development in the area between Portsmouth Avenue and High Street by the 1920s. The Jady Hill area, lying to the north of Portsmouth Avenue, was acquired for development in 1913, though development there took place only after the 1940s.

III. Town Development and Previous Investigations

As noted in the Introduction above, the goal of this Project was to use modern mapping technologies to combine historic map data into a single map. This map could then be used to identify the patterns of growth that developed over time in different areas of the Town in order to guide future survey work.

The eight historic maps or map sets used to create the single modern map yielded a clear picture of the growth of the town. By the time of the earliest map, the 1802 Merrill Map (one of both the whole town as well as a detail of the more densely settled center) showed a T-shaped area of development, running along the west side of the Squamscott River from roughly the area of the String Bridge downstream to the area of Summer Street, west to Summer and Cass Streets and Tan Lane. A panhandle projected to the west, bounded by the current Park and Main Streets. By 1845, the densely settled area of the town extended to the south of Front Street, from Elliot to Water Streets, with Court and South Streets forming the southern boundary. On the north side of High Street, to the east of the Squamscott River, dense settlement extended from the river eastward to Buzzell Avenue, extending north to Bridge, Hall and Auburn Streets. By 1874 the boundaries of dense settlement were further extended, with development occurring in the

area extending from just west of the town center to the vicinity of the railroad depot, north of Park Street. Further development at this time occurred to the south of Court and

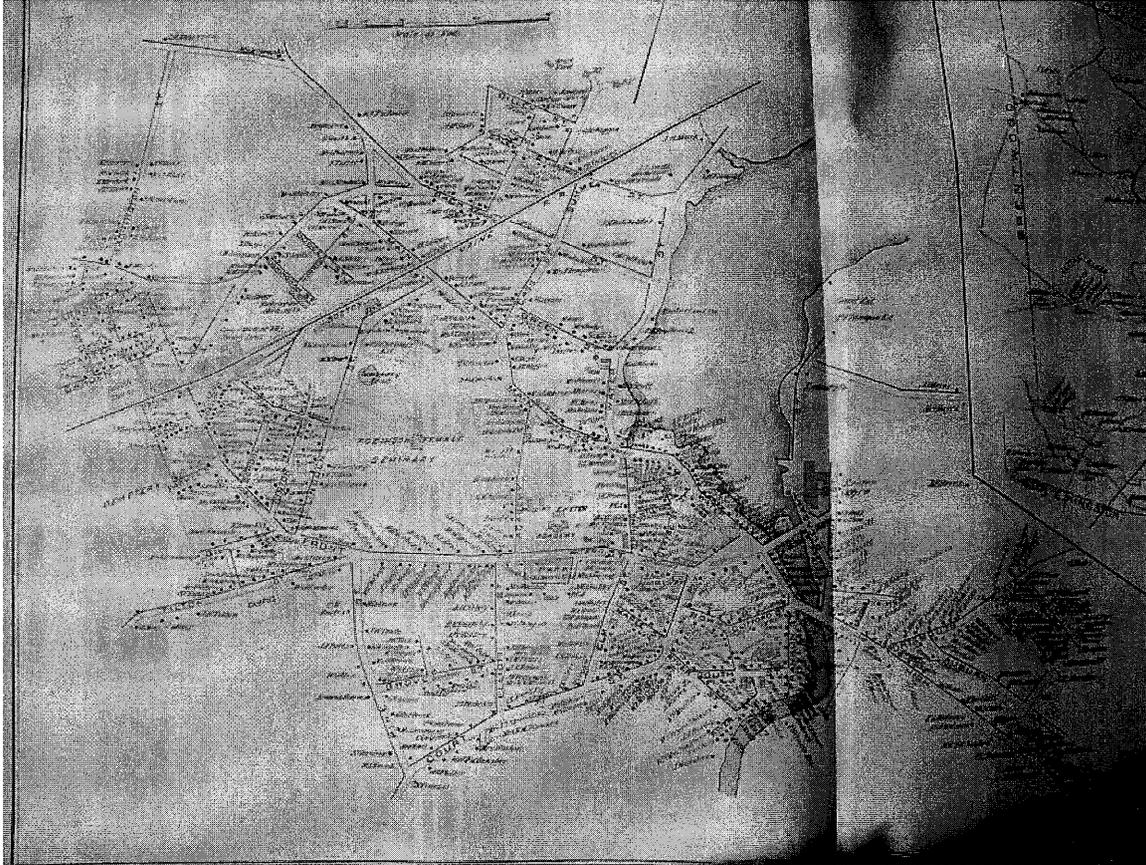


Figure 4. Hurd Atlas of Rockingham County, Exeter Map. Photograph by author, courtesy New Hampshire Historical Society.

South Streets, north of Auburn Street, and between the river and Chestnut Street. The 1885 and 1892 maps show further development concentrated in relatively small areas near the railroad and a small section of land between Front and Linden Streets. The 1913 and 1924 maps show development continuing at a relatively slow pace, with small areas added in all directions of the town center. The final data, taken from 1950 USGS Topographical map of the Exeter Quadrangle, show larger areas of land on the outskirts of town to be settled, perhaps in response to the war effort at the nearby shipyards, or as a result of the need to settle returning veterans after World War II.

Previous surveys have identified the National Register of Historic Places Historic Districts (NRHDs): the Waterfront Commercial Historic District (listed 1980, expanded 1984); the Front Street Historic District (listed 1973); and the Railroad Industrial Historic District (determined eligible in 1999). While our maps included these areas, the focus of the fieldwork and the recommendations for future survey remained on those areas that have not yet been surveyed and documented.

IV. Recommendations for Future Survey Work

As noted above, the present mapping study is designed to be the first step in the completion of a historic architectural survey of the Town of Exeter. Because of the age of the town and the number of extant historic buildings, this historic architectural survey likely will not be undertaken in a single study, but will be broken into discrete surveys that can be funded and carried out independently. The results of the mapping study will allow the Town to plan for this series of surveys over the coming years. In order to assist the Town with this planning process, we have identified specific areas of the town, arranged in rough chronological order based on the dates of the maps that depict them, which we recommend will be good survey units because of temporal, thematic or geographic cohesiveness. We have not assigned a priority to this list, as we understand that the order in which these areas of the town will be surveyed will be determined by the availability of time and funding, and by the specific needs of the community.

Park Street Area



Figure 5 -- Looking south along Cass Street, with examples from the Colonial era through the late nineteenth century visible.

The area roughly bounded by the Swampscott River, Summer and Park Streets, the Epping Road, Main Street, Tan Lane, and the northern and western boundaries of the Front Street and Waterfront Commercial NRHDs was developed by the 1802 Merrill map. At that time it was a mix of residential and industrial properties, with wharves and a shipyard located on the Squamscott River to the east of Water Street and a relatively large mill on Green Street. Over subsequent years the industry has left, buildings have been modified or replaced and infill houses have been constructed. The result is a heterogeneous neighborhood that has examples of historic housing from the eighteenth century through the twentieth, with houses representing the Colonial, Greek Revival, and Victorian Vernacular styles. The area may provide archeological potential, especially near the water.

Phillips Exeter Academy

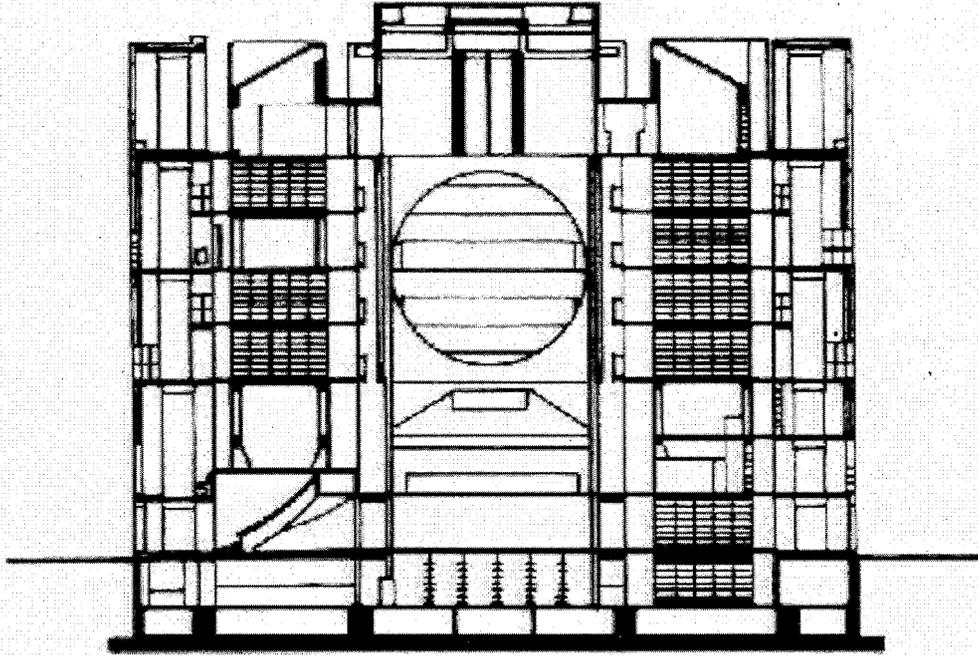


Figure 6 -- Section drawn through the Phillips Exeter Academy Library. (Drawing courtesy of www.greatbuildings.com)

Phillips Exeter Academy provides a mostly unified campus that has grown over time both through the construction of new buildings and the acquisition of existing ones. Taken as a whole, the group provides a heterogeneous collection that includes examples from throughout the historic period – examples include vernacular structures from the Colonial era, high-style buildings from the nineteenth century, and designs by well-known architects of the twentieth century such as Ralph Adams Cram and Louis I. Kahn. The campus plan is also worthy of study. Parts of the Academy were visible on the 1802 Merrill map.

Southeast of Front Street



Figure 7 -- An aerial view of Franklin Street showing the mix of building types present in the area. (Image courtesy of Bing.com)

The area roughly bounded by the Exeter River, the Front Street and Waterfront Commercial NRHDs, and Elm and Gillman Streets was an early addition to the town apparently created to house the town's less prosperous residents. Parts of the area first appear on the 1845 and 1874 maps with an addition by the 1913 map. With a mix of multiple unit houses and smaller residences it provides an interesting contrast to some of the town's wealthier neighborhoods.

Grove Street Area



Figure 8 -- Looking southeast on Pine Street.

The area between the Front Street NRHD, Pine, Court, and Elliot Streets contains some of the largest and most elegant of Exeter's nineteenth and early twentieth century housing. Houses in this part of town are a mix of styles including Colonial, Shingle Style, and Colonial Revival among others, often on larger lots than one finds elsewhere in the center of town. This area appears to provide a meaningful contrast to the areas of worker's housing located both to the east and west. This area was first depicted on the 1874 map.

Oak Street Area



Figure 9--Looking west along Walnut Street.

The area roughly bounded by Park, Locust, Forrest and Summer Streets first appears on the 1874 map. It is a group of roughly contemporary small houses which, for the most part, appear to date to the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Because of the way in which the area was developed, with closely spaced houses on relatively small lots, there has been little room for infill construction.

Railroad District (Housing)

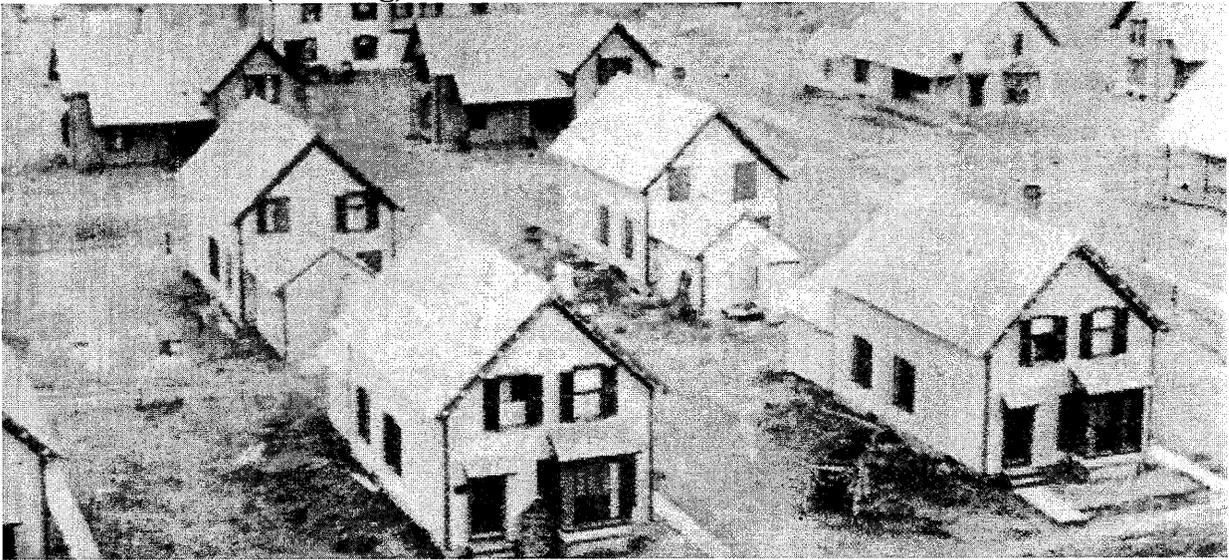


Figure 10 -- A historic photograph of the Charter-Carroll Streets area showing a number of houses apparently built with the same plans. (Nancy Carnegie Merrill, *Exeter, New Hampshire, 1888-1988*)



Figure 11 -- A contemporary photograph showing three houses built using one of the plans visible in the historic photograph above.

The NH Department of Historic Resources has recognized the area around the Boston and Maine Depot as the West End Railroad Industrial District, a NR-eligible

historic district. The recognized district includes the industrial resources that located in the area as a result of the railroad coming to town. The surrounding area, roughly bounded by Lincoln, Main, Winter, Front, Cottage, Myrtle, and Charter Streets as well as parts of Washington, Wentworth and Crestview streets appear to have been developed, in part, to house workers in the West End's factories. A number of the houses appear to have been built on the same plans. This area appears on maps created between 1874 and 1892.

Portsmouth Avenue Area



Figure 12 -- Looking west on Prospect Street.

The area flanking Portsmouth Avenue from the edge of the Waterfront Commercial NRHD roughly to Highland Street and Woodlawn Avenue includes a variety of relatively small houses from the turn of twentieth century.

High Street



Figure 13 -- Looking west along High Street. (Photograph courtesy of Google.com.)

The area along High Street as it runs east from the Waterfront Commercial NRHD out to Drinkwater Road includes a mix of residential buildings from the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (along with some infill houses). Parts of this section of town first appear on the 1845, 1913, and 1924 maps.

IV. References

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