

Historical Resources

Historical Overview:

Within Winthrop's borders, there are a dozen lakes and ponds with as many streams of varying size extending from and in some cases connecting these waterbodies. Early settlers found this area ideal for permanent and temporary living sites and the development of industries, as the waterways provided convenient transportation and power. According to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC), all of the shoreline surrounding Winthrop's lakes has archeological potential.

The first European settlement in Winthrop is recorded as being founded in 1765, with the first water-powered industry (a sawmill) built at the site of the current village. Winthrop was originally known as Scots Town and Pond(s) Town. Upon incorporation in 1771, the name "Winthrop" was selected by the Kennebec Proprietors or the General Court in honor of a former Massachusetts governor. Readfield split off from Winthrop in 1791, and Manchester did the same in 1850.

Originally, Winthrop's industrial base was fed by waterpower and included a cotton mill, grist mill, cheese factory, floor coverings, leather products, and more. Mercantile businesses grew up around the factories, forming Winthrop Village. Winthrop's other villages, East Winthrop and Winthrop Center, grew around the establishment of churches. U.S. Route 202, connecting Augusta to Lewiston, drew additional commercial attention, particularly after it was relocated to bypass the downtown area.

Winthrop's historic settlement pattern is still evident today. Waterpower fueled the development of Winthrop village. The rural areas were dominated by large farms, and the lakeshores by seasonal settlement.

Protecting Winthrop's Historical Resources:

Winthrop recognizes the value of local history, specifically that the connection to the past explains and defines Winthrop's citizens and culture. This connection need not be limited to the protection of historic buildings. The town has identified a greater need in protecting artifacts and documents that are currently stored in less-than-ideal conditions in locations around town.

Beginning around 2010, the Winthrop Maine Historic Society (WMHS) re-established itself. Today, the WMHS Board of Directors meets monthly, excluding the month of December. There are currently slightly more than 200 active Society members, with 12 Board members. The Society is an active entity in the community, with monthly fundraising efforts such as the spring plant sale and the December cookie walk. The Society has also hosted several historic walking tours of the town as well as cemetery tours, with future plans to expand these to all the local cemetery sites in Winthrop -- Main Street, East Winthrop, Metcalf Road and Glenside on Narrows Point Road. Additionally, the WMHS holds a monthly lecture series nine months out of the year on topics related to Winthrop's history.

In 2021, the WMHS purchased the former Key Bank building, located at 107 Main Street, for the storage and display of the town's historical artifacts. In 2022, the Society was approved as an official repository for the town's records by the Maine State Museum Board. In the summer of 2021, after renovations and ADA upgrades, the building was opened to the public as the new Winthrop History and Heritage Center (the Center).

Not only can displays of historic artifacts be found at the Center, but it also provides multiple storage areas, a gift shop, and accommodations for meetings, speakers series gatherings, as well as tourists and visitors. There is also a collection area in the basement and a work area for inventorying and cataloging efforts.

Numerous non-inventoried historical documents and materials have been donated to the town and are stored in trunks, cabinets, vaults, safes and filing cabinets at various municipal locations in Winthrop. In October 2022, the Society was approved for a repository for the town records through the Maine State Museum Board to accommodate these items. The WMHS is working with town administration and Town Council to move forward with documenting, digitizing and organizing these valuable materials and documents, including historical documents currently stored in the town offices. Volunteers are available to inventory and catalogue these materials and documents; however, this will be an ongoing project, expected to take five to 10 years.

A top priority in this project is locating the original town charter, signed by John Hancock. As the WMHS gathers and reclaims numerous historical documents and begins to inventory and catalog them in the Center, it is their hopes that the charter will be recovered.

Maine Historic Preservation Commission Data:

According to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC), there are three types of historic and archaeological resources that should be considered in comprehensive planning. They are:

- Prehistoric Archaeological (Native American, before European arrival)
- Historic Archaeological (mostly European-American, after written historic records)
- Historic Buildings/Structures/Objects (buildings and other above-ground structures and objects)

Archaeological resources are those found underground and are locations where there have been prior signs for the existence of human beings including structures, artifacts, terrain features, graphics or remains of plants and animals associated with human habitation. Prehistoric archaeological resources are those associated with Native Americans and generally date prior to the 1600s. Historic archaeological resources are those associated with the earliest European settlers.

Prehistoric Archaeological Sites:

According to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, no professional archaeological surveys have been done in Winthrop, as of September 2022. The non-professional-level surveys conducted identified three sites known as #37.11, 37.12, and 37.1. Site 37.11,

the John Lund site on Cobbosseecontee Lake, is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Of the other two known prehistoric archaeological sites, one is on the Lower Narrows Pond and the other is on Ladies Delight Island in Cobbosseecontee Lake and is privately owned. The site on Ladies Delight Island has occupation evidence dating back at least 7,000 years.

According to the MHPC, most prehistoric archaeological resources, particularly habitation/workshop sites, are located adjacent to canoe-navigable water bodies. For this reason, MHPC stated that all of the lake shoreline in Winthrop needs professional archaeological survey in advance of development. They have also identified a need for professional survey, inventory, and analysis of these locations.

Historic Archaeological Sites:

As of October 2022, no Historic Archeological Sites have been identified. To date, no professional historic archaeological surveys have been conducted in Winthrop. The MHPC suggests a future archaeological survey be conducted and 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 18th and 19th centuries.

Winthrop's Historic Buildings/Structures/Objects:

The traditional, recognized standard for what makes a historic or archaeological resource worthy of preservation is normally eligibility for, or listing on, the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register, administered by the National Park Service, United States Department of Interior, is a listing of those buildings, districts, structures, objects, and sites deemed worthy of preservation for their historic, cultural, or archaeological significance. The National Register is intended to accommodate buildings and sites of national, state, and local significance.

One benefit of a National Register listing is that certain buildings may qualify for a 20-percent investment tax credit. To qualify, the building must be income-producing, depreciable, and a "certified" historic structure. To obtain this certification, the historic or archeological resource must meet criteria mandated by The National Register Criteria for Evaluation, by the National Parks Service. Additionally, the National Parks Service developed criteria for the recognition of nationally significant properties, which are designated National Historic Landmarks and prehistoric and historic units of the National

Park System. Both sets of criteria were developed to be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation*, which are uniform, national standards for preservation activities.



Structures on the National Register are also provided a limited amount of protection from alterations or demolition where federal funding is utilized. Winthrop has four properties currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places. They are:

- ✓ Cobbossee Lighthouse on Ladies Delight Island
- ✓ Moses Bailey House on Route 135 in Winthrop Center
- ✓ Charles M. Bailey Library on Bowdoin Street
- ✓ Winthrop Mills Company, 149-151 Main Street

All four of Winthrop's buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places are functionally used, in good condition and maintained by their present owners.

Photo Above: Cobbossee Lighthouse on Ladies Delight Island



Photo: The Charles M. Bailey Library

The Charles M. Bailey Public Library is not only on the National Register of Historic Sites, but also a critical and vital resource for Winthrop's residents. The town has an amazingly active community resource in its library that is enjoyed by residents of all ages. It is a beautiful historic site, with an addition to create the adult wing, and other tasteful renovations. The children's wing is like no other, from the playroom to the computer resources -- it is unparalleled. The activities and events for children and adults alike are plentiful. The access to both online and library resources provided by the Charles M. Bailey Public Library are beyond comparison to any other library. Continuing to support this valued and amazing resource through public funding is just so important to Winthrop.

Properties Eligible for Listing in the National Register of Historic Places:

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission also notes buildings or sites eligible for listing. These include the old Winthrop Town Hall (now the police department), the Civil War Memorial next to the old Town Hall, a commercial and residential building at 134 Main Street, Winthrop United Methodist Church, and a residential structure at 67 Main Street.

The former Winthrop Town Hall was built in 1855-56, originally as a combination town office and high school. It was renovated beginning in 2008 to house the police department, who moved in in June 2009.

Several of the original architectural elements of the former Masonic Hall (torn down to accommodate the Bailey Library addition) were salvaged and several are housed at the Winthrop History and Heritage Center. The Morrill House has also been mentioned as worthy of protection.

There are other sites and buildings throughout town whose eligibility for listing has yet to be determined, and other historical buildings are scattered throughout town. Further,

there are other non-eligible properties that are still of historical note, mostly along Main Street and Western Avenue. The Historic and Archeological Resources Map shows the buildings and their locations.

Cemeteries:

Cemeteries are a critical link to our heritage. The town has an obligation to protect and maintain some cemeteries, while others are private or family cemeteries. The following is a list of known cemeteries in Winthrop, which can also be seen on the Historic Resources Map:

East Winthrop Cemetery
Glenside Cemetery
Lakeview Cemetery

Metcalf Cemetery
Maple Cemetery

Threats to Local Historic/Archeological/Cultural Resources:

Nearly all the residential historic buildings in Winthrop are privately owned. None of the historic buildings are in a traditional “historic district,” although most of the buildings are in the village area of town.

The primary threat to most of these buildings is the desire of their owners, present and future, to alter them in ways that destroy their architectural integrity and character. The buildings’ survival in their present form will likely depend largely on the willingness of the individual owners to conserve the historic heritage, of which these buildings are an irreplaceable part.

Unfortunately, some historic resources in town have fallen into disrepair over the years. The town is working to address this in several ways. The Winthrop Maine Historical Society is involved and dedicated to educating residents about the town’s history.

Winthrop has a Cemetery Committee that works with a landscaping crew to remove trees that are jeopardizing treasured headstones. After exploring options for restoring and cleaning headstones of historical importance, the Cemetery Committee has begun restoration efforts. There are limitations on this endeavor, as the town does not own these headstones.

As the WMHS becomes aware of historic resources, it evaluates, claims and restores them, as necessary. One example is a historic church building, the Friends Church, that was recently sold. The pulpit, a picture and the bronze steeple bell have been collected by WMHS from the church and its new owner. These items have undergone review and feasibility for addition to the WMHS collections. Currently funding is being sought to build a permanent enclosure for the steeple bell on the WMHS property. The custom enclosure will hopefully allow for protection from exposure to the elements and for the ability to ring the bell on special days or events. The pulpit and bell have been accepted as part of the permanent collection. This type of effort and intent represents the important work of WMHS.

Existing Land Use Protections:

Due to the lack of traditional “Historic Districts,” the existing regulatory protection for historic and archaeological resources is primarily provided through the state subdivision and shoreland zoning statutes. Maine’s subdivision statute requires review of the impact on “historic sites,” which includes both National Register and eligible buildings and archaeological sites. The State Shoreland Zoning statute includes, as one of its purposes, “to protect archaeological and historic resources.” The town’s Zoning Ordinance contains the following provision intended to protect archeological sites:

Any proposed land use activity involving structural development or soil disturbance on, or adjacent to sites listed on, or eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, as determined by the permitting authority, shall be submitted by the applicant to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission for review and comment, at least twenty (20) days prior to action being taken by the permitting authority. The permitting authority shall consider comments received from the Commission prior to rendering a decision on the application.

This requirement, however, is only applicable to areas located in a shoreland zone. Any area outside of a shoreland zone does not require a survey or review for activities occurring on, or adjacent to sites listed, or eligible to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Therefore, the town does not currently have any specific incentives or regulations for protecting historic areas and/or buildings, or potential historic or archeological resources.

The WMHS provides that most effective protective measures within the town by making residents aware of the town’s history. Their walking tours, regular speaking series, and extensively preserved collection of historic items serve to protect and promote the preservation of Winthrop’s past by offering easy access to historical information that adds value to buildings, materials, and other historic resources.

Important Partners for Historic/Archaeological/Cultural Preservation:

- Winthrop Maine Historical Society (WMHS)
- Town of Winthrop Cemetery Committee
- Maine Historic Preservation Commission
- National Register of Historic Places
- Maine Preservation

Future Consideration:

- ❖ Consider introducing special policies and/or regulations to protect historic homes and buildings. Currently, Winthrop opts for voluntary preservation of homes without

government intervention or restrictive zoning and builds on existing programs offered through the historical society.

- ❖ Is a site survey in areas of proposed development something to consider adding to the subdivision/land use ordinance?
- ❖ Does the town feel it is important/necessary to add protection for potential archeological sites to goals?
- ❖ Recommendations by Maine Historic Preservation Commission - have historic archaeological surveys conducted.