

# Chapter 2

## Historic Resources



# A Brief History of Kennebunkport

## The Prehistoric Period

Eleven thousand years ago, Maine was a mixture of open spruce forest and tundra with a few remaining isolated glaciers. Mammoth, mastodon, and caribou inhabited the land. The Paleo-Indians, arriving from the south or west, hunted all of these animals with tools of bone, wood, and stone. The people were expert hunters and equally expert in the manufacture of their hunting equipment, made with chert.<sup>1</sup> They lived in small bands consisting of a few families, and moved on foot over what still seems like vast distances to us today. It is not uncommon, for example, for these bands to move rock materials from Burlington, Vermont or the lower Hudson River valley into Maine.<sup>2</sup> Artifacts from a site discovered a few miles southwest of Kennebunkport include tools manufactured from stone excavated near Katahdin, Burlington, VT, Saugus, and Hudson Valley, NY.<sup>3</sup>

Around 10,000 years ago the environ-

ment changed. Trees (pine, birch, poplar, and oak, with other hardwoods later) colonized the Maine landscape, forcing everyone who resided here since to live and travel along lakes and waterways and otherwise accommodate a dense forest.<sup>4</sup>

Between 6,000 BC and 1600 AD, the region was the site of three or four cultural shifts. Each era signified the movement of a new culture into the area. These people were semi-nomadic and probably spent part of the year at inland encampments and the rest along the shore. Their trademark huge mounds of oyster and clam shells, accumulated over thousands of years, can still be found today in Kennebunkport. Surveyed by archaeologists from Maine's Historic Preservation Commission, Kennebunkport's shell middens were established 3,000 years ago and were active until contact with Europeans.<sup>5</sup> These same people decorated pottery, built canoes, hunted seals and small whales, and were undoubtedly skillful coastal navigators.

## Arrival of the Europeans

It was the Wabanaki (also Abenaki) who greeted the first Europeans 400 years ago. A loose confederation of tribes, the

Wabanaki included people from Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island to New Hampshire.<sup>6</sup> In coastal Maine south of the Saco River, early explorers noted the reliance of native peoples on agriculture. Crops included beans, corn, squash, pumpkins, and tobacco.<sup>7</sup>

The interface with Europeans began with summer visits from fishermen, who were willing to cross the Atlantic each summer to harvest the incredible bounty of the Gulf of Maine.<sup>8</sup>

By 1616, the visitors had introduced a deadly epidemic. In the period between 1616 and 1620, the population of more than 20,000 native people was reduced to 5,500.<sup>9</sup> Whole villages were decimated. The remaining people often consolidated, choosing one village to live in and abandoning several others.<sup>10</sup> As European settlers began arriving a few years later, they found cleared, but abandoned fields and seized these sites for homes and trading posts.

Several countries laid competing claims to the area which now makes up Maine. None consulted with the native inhabitants before dividing up the land. The French were often trading partners with the Wabanaki. The English traded, but also wanted agricultural land and

lumber. In the space of 200 years, the ancient forests were destroyed, and native peoples pushed to the brink of extinction.<sup>11</sup> Wabanaki preferred treaties to wars, but treaties were broken repeatedly. Massachusetts's courts refused to allow Indians to appear in court to petition for redress. A series of wars followed, most notably King Phillips War in 1675, and Lovewell's War in 172. On June 20, 1756, the Massachusetts's Chamber Council set a bounty of 40 pounds for the scalp of an Indian male and 20 pounds for the scalp of a woman or child.<sup>12</sup> At the time, 200 acres of land could be purchased from the Plymouth Colony for 35 pounds.

In 1763, the Treaty of Paris was signed, and France gave up its claims to Maine. The Wabanaki of Maine were now without an ally in Maine. The meager remnants of the Wabanaki of southern Maine had fled to Canada or the upper reaches of the more eastern river valleys. Like the forest they inhabited, the native people who had lived in southern Maine for over 10,000 years, had been wiped out in less than 200 years. In their place were a people hardened to the diseases that had consumed three-fourths of the native population. The early European inhabitants of Cape

Porpoise were notable primarily for their lack of noteableness.<sup>13</sup> They came with the belief that the New World could offer them more than England had. For most of them, going back was not an option.

It is hard to imagine any part of our country that has been claimed by as many "owners" as Kennebunkport, with the "owners" never having set eyes on it. In 1493, the Pope granted the territory, which included Kennebunkport and Cape Porpoise, to the Kings of Spain and Portugal. In England, Henry VII, also an absentee "owner", granted it to Cabot in 1495. Francis, King of France, decided to claim it as part of his "New France" in the northern part of America. Because these early grants did not bring any colonists, they had no practical effect.

It was fishing that attracted the earliest settlers. Before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, there were already men spending the summer months on the islands of Cape Porpoise. They had come in search of cod, and in the Gulf of Maine had found one of the world's most productive fishing grounds. The islands of Maine, those of Cape Porpoise among them, provided an excellent base from which the fishermen could work. The inner harbors created by the islands

made safe anchorage for the ships and the distance from shore allowed for a certain amount of protection. Although the islands were small, there were small tillable areas, which could produce very welcome vegetables.

Here, on the islands, the fishermen could salt and dry their catches and then pack them away in preparation for the return voyages to Europe. Stage Island, the easternmost island in the Cape Porpoise chain, very likely received its name from the wooden "stages" or racks on which fish were cured during those early years. It is also likely that the first year-round settlement of Cape Porpoise occurred on the islands when some of these same fishermen decided to brave the dangers of winter in order to deliver earlier, and hence more profitable, shiploads of fish to Europe.

Little was recorded about these earliest explorers and settlers of the Maine coast. Fishermen then, as today, were reluctant to divulge the locations of their most successful fishing grounds. But fishermen then, as today, had ways of finding out and as the 17th century progressed, more and more people made their way to this part of the Maine coast.

The increase in population brought with it a higher degree of safety and soon most of the population moved away from the islands and onto the mainland. In fact, enough people had come to warrant an application for township status from the government at Massachusetts. On July 5, 1653, "Cape Porpus" (original spelling) became the fifth incorporated town in the Province of Maine.

It is nearly impossible to determine just how many people made their homes around the shores of Cape Porpus and the banks of the Kennebunk River in those early years. Probably there were never more than 200 at any one time, and those who did live here fished, raised cattle, lumbered and farmed on a subsistence level. None became rich, and the town's economic base was limited to a few small mills. Although the Province of Massachusetts gained in both population and wealth, "Cape Porpus" remained economically depressed.

On December 7, 1689, war was declared between England and France. Armed and inspired by the combatants, hostile Indians began to appear in great numbers. The residents of Cape Porpoise

were forced to withdraw to a fort they had built on Stage Island, and those living between Turbat's Creek and the Kennebunk River made their way to Wells, barely getting away with their lives. The town of "Cape Porpus" was left deserted.

After the warring parties signed a truce in 1695, a few people began drifting back to their homes at Cape Porpoise. The peace didn't last, however, and on May 4, 1702, war again erupted between France and England. In the summer of 1703, 500 Native Americans, led by French commanders, divided themselves into parties and attacked all of the major settlements in Maine. The Kennebunks were assaulted on August 10 of that year. Many settlers lost their lives and the area was once again depopulated.

For a decade the war dragged on, and it was not until 1713 that a peace treaty was signed with the eastern tribes. Slowly, by two's and three's, the hardier settlers began to return to their properties. By 1716, a petition had been submitted to the Massachusetts legislature to restore town privileges to "Cape Porpus." The privileges were restored in 1717. Within two more years,

the legislature was again petitioned, this time to change the town's name to Arundel. The wish was to honor the Earl of Arundel, an original proprietor of New England.

Although land titles were often vague or in conflict, houses were built, and fields cleared in Arundel. Induced by grants of land, talented men began to arrive. Although Indian hostility was to flare up at intervals, the community was more populous and better organized. By 1735, the population had risen to 300. The 1743 census recorded 50 more.

In 1721, all pine trees measuring two feet in diameter two feet from the butt were reserved as the property of the King, to be used as masts for the King's ships. The penalty for cutting one down was 100 pound sterling. Bears were a continuing nuisance to the early residents; William Buland had to attack one with a hoe to save his hog. As late as 1784, the town was paying a bounty for killing wolves.

## 1775 to 1875

Fewer than 600 people lived in the town of Arundel where, in 1775, John Mitchell's eight-ton vessel slid down the ways and into the river. A new era had begun, one that would lift the community from poverty to riches. By the turn of the 19th century, the population had tripled. Six ships, a bark, 20 brigs, a scow, 16 schooners, and 12 sloops all hailed from the Kennebunk River, and all were in active commerce.

On May 22, 1776, more than a month before the Declaration of Independence, the town voted that "If the Honorable Congress should, for the safety of the colonies, declare themselves independent of the Kingdom of Great Britain we, the inhabitants of Arundel, do solemnly engage, with our lives and fortunes, to support them". When the Declaration was received, it was recorded in the town book. Benjamin Durrell, John Whitten, Gideon Walker, John Hovey, and Charles Huff were chosen a Committee of Correspondence, Inspection, and Safety. The population of Arundel at that time was 1,143.

After the surrender of the British army under Lord Cornwallis, it became evident that the government in London

had given up all expectations of conquering their former colonies. On September 3, 1783, a treaty of peace, recognizing the independence of the United States, was signed in Paris. With peace at hand, the more adventurous citizens could build careers as sailors and captains. Some grew wealthy, and most were able to make significant gains over the lifestyles known by their forefathers. With a sound economic base, an ever-increasing population could be supported.

Real estate values soared, with some land selling for more than \$1,000 an acre. Newer and larger homes were built. In the area surrounding Durrell's Bridge, seven shipyards rose on the banks of the river. "Here," Kenneth Roberts tells, "between 1800 and 1820, were built 30 ships, 97 brigs, 27 schooners, 11 sloops and a large number of smaller craft. All the roads to that busy spot were cluttered with material needed by shipwrights." In fact, the area became so successful as a shipbuilding and trading center that, in 1800, Arundel was established as a separate customs district with its own customs house (the building which now houses the Graves Memorial Library).



In one way or another, the entire population linked its fortunes to the sea. It took many skills to build a ship, and experienced craftsmen did virtually all of the labor. Carpenters, sail makers, blacksmiths, caulkers, painters, and adzemen were only a few of the skills required by the yards. These were not easy jobs, but they were jobs of which a man could be proud.

To be considered the best tunnel-borer, plank-liner, or rigger was a mark of distinction. In addition, as this local industry grew, so did the demand for supporting goods and services. Merchants were able to create healthy businesses, traders found a ready market for their goods, and farmers could easily dispose of their crops.

High quality granite was being quarried by several local companies in the early 1800's and hauled by ox team to Goose Rocks Beach for shipment to many destinations. During this period, Kennebunkport became one of the busiest ports in Maine: between 1800 and 1825 more than \$1,000,000 in duties was collected on cargoes being imported.

As commercial activity increased, the citizens followed the retreating forests inland and built towns on the rivers down which logs were floated to the coastal shipyards. Ships built in Kennebunkport carried lumber, ice, lime, and fish all over the world. They were helped by the fact that Maine is ideal for seafaring. The distance between Kittery and Eastport is 250 miles as the crow flies. The shoreline, however, is roughly 2,500 miles in length. There are more than 3,000 streams and rivers bringing water to the shore and

serving as avenues for commerce inland.

The years passed, and the size of vessels being built on the Kennebunk River gradually increased. In 1805, the first vessel of more than 300 tons burden was built and floated downriver by means of an ingenious system of locks. A decade later, vessels of 400 tons were being launched and it became necessary to move many shipbuilding operations from the Landing to the lower end of the river.



Detail from the 1856 wall map of York County. Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.

In 1874, the "Ocean King", the largest sailing vessel built up to that time in the United States, was launched in the Kennebunk River. Despite the glory of the moment, the local shipbuilding industry was in trouble. The building of wooden ships had slowed since the Civil War, and vessels made of iron and steel were displacing traditional wooden ships.

Maine, with its remote location and dwindling lumber supply, could not compete. Though a demand for coastal schooners kept the local shipyards open for a while, it became clear that times were changing, and the economy of Kennebunkport would have to adjust.

The prosperity and growth brought by the shipbuilding industry was fading. Even more alarming was the fact that no replacement was in sight, and transition was inevitable



## Name Changes

The original Cape Porpus encompassed the land area of present day Kennebunkport and Arundel. The town was incorporated in 1653 as the fifth settlement in Maine town to submit to the jurisdiction of Massachusetts.

In 1670, the spelling changed to Cape Porpoise.

In 1719, the General Court voted to name the town Arundel after Thomas Arundell, Early of Wardour.

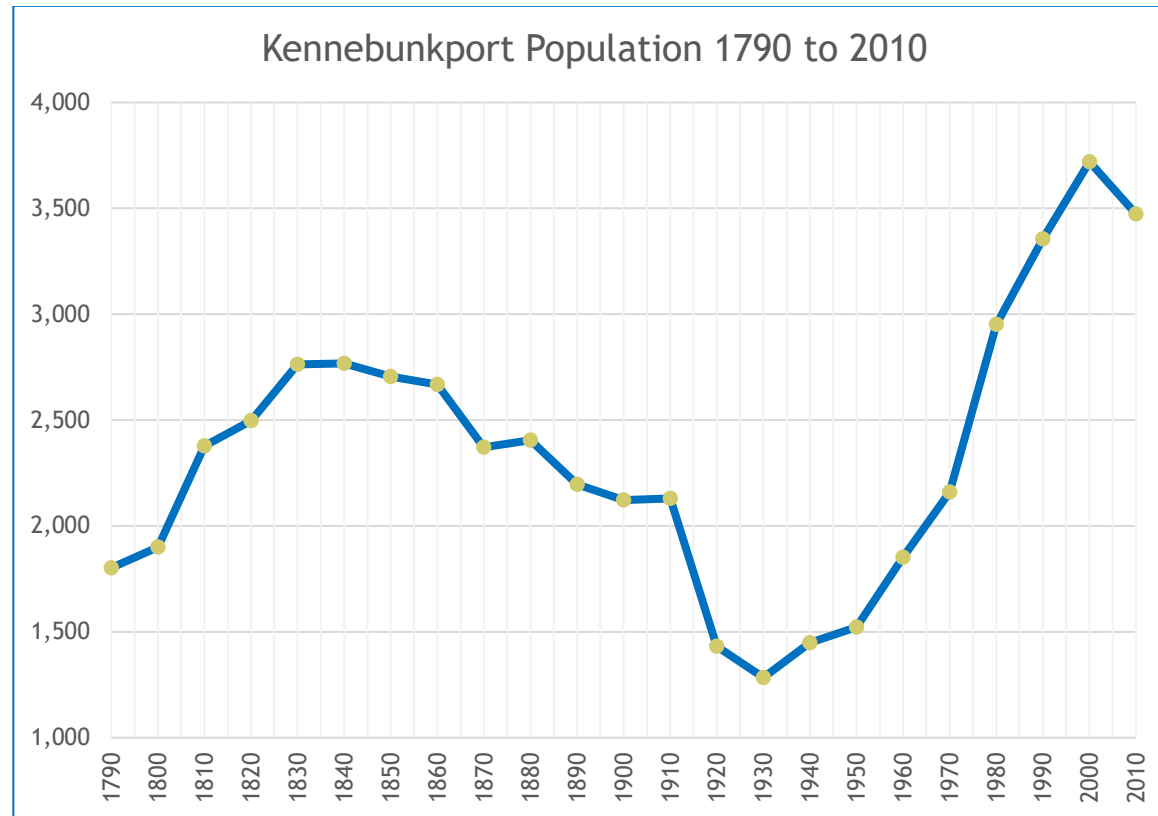
By 1820, Kennebunk was well known in the business world. However, Arundel, was largely unknown. As a result, in 1821, the name was changed to Kennebunkport.

In 1915, the inhabitants of present day Arundel (population 564 in 1920) petitioned the legislature to separate from Kennebunkport. The petition was granted.

## Population Trends

The first census in York County recorded a population of 837 in Arundel (present day Kennebunkport and Arundel). This figure did not include five slaves.

Upon conclusion of the American Revolution, the ship building industry and associated maritime commerce took off and remained a major economic driver through the Civil War years. This economic boom is reflected in the population graph below.



**Figure 2-1. Population of Kennebunkport from 1790 to 2010 (Source: US Census Bureau).**

When ship building declined, the arrival of the summer visitors (see following page) generated new employment opportunities. Hence, population remained relative stable.

What is not immediately obvious in this population chart is that between 1830 and 1910, a substantial number of farmers departed rural Maine (including rural parts of present day Kennebunkport and Arundel) in search of better farmland in the Midwest.



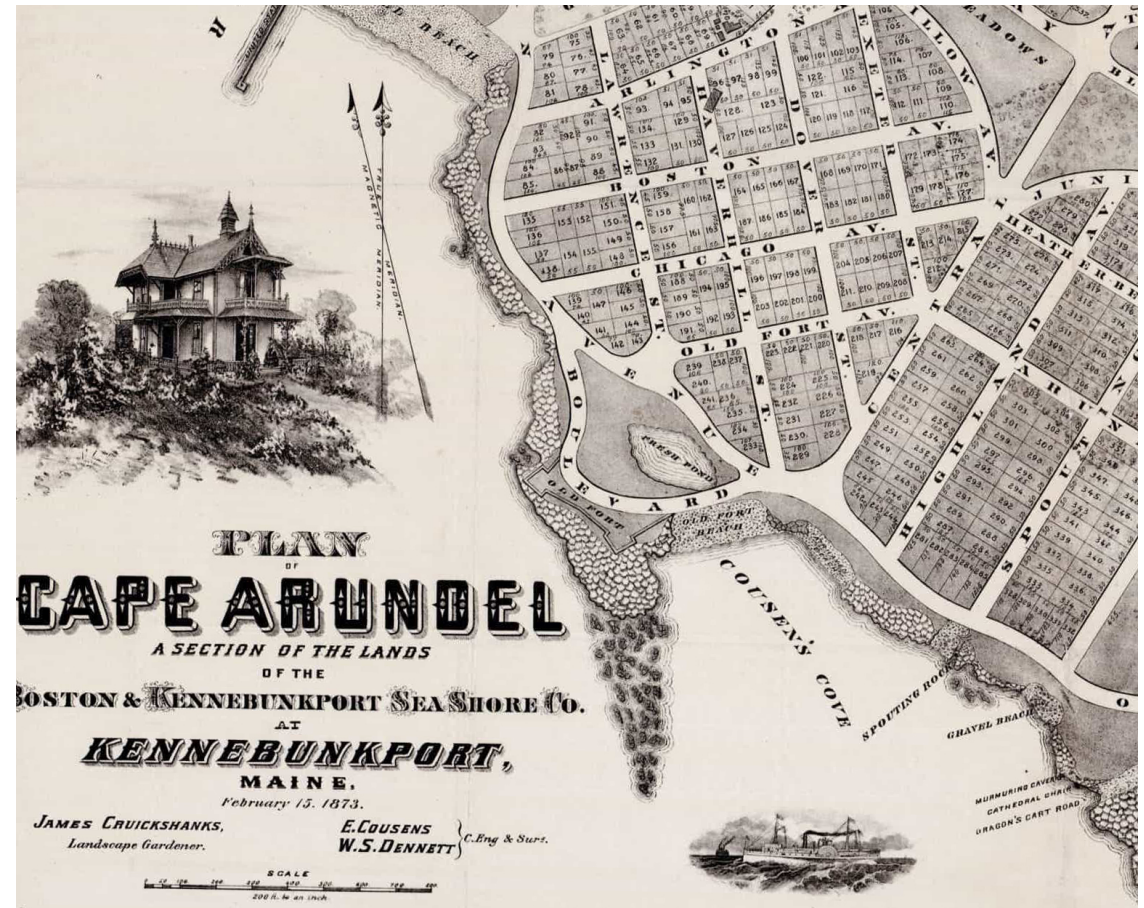
## The Summer Visitors

The railroad brought the summer visitors, whose journey to Kennebunkport was made possible by inexpensive rail fares. It must have seemed ironic to the local seamen that the end of their careers was a part of the town's economic rebirth. Although visitors had been coming for years, it was not until the arrival of the Sea Shore Company that Kennebunkport acquired its reputation as a summer resort.

In 1870, four men from Arlington, Massachusetts conceived the idea of developing a vacation community. They chose for their investment the beautiful rocky shores of Kennebunkport. The land they wished to develop was considered to be nearly worthless by its local owners. It offered no safe havens for fishing boats, and it had no value for pastureland or farming. Only a small dirt road connected this shore property with the Town Square. The modest sums offered by the developers must have seemed magnificent to the native owners. That is, of course, until they later learned about the selling prices for the subdivided parcels.

By 1873, the Sea Shore Company had purchased nearly 700 acres of prime land along five miles of coastline, extending from Turbat's Creek to Lord's Point. A map

was drawn up showing the locations of several house lots, parks, roads, and four hotels. Traditional names were changed to appeal to a new clientele. "Bouncing Rock", for instance, became "Blowing Cave"; "Great Pond" became "Lake-of-the-Woods". Street names reflected the origin of the town's new residents: Arlington, Boston, Haverhill, and so on.



Where today's "Colony" stands, the Sea Shore Company built "Ocean Bluff Hotel", a wooden four-story structure which could accommodate up to 200 patrons. For a room and board rate of \$3.00 per day, the patrons could enjoy "unsurpassed cuisine" and also



The Kennebunk River Club was constructed in 1890. The photograph above was produced by the Detroit Publishing Company. In 1975, the building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places (Source: Library of Congress)

"first-class accommodations". They also received the "healthful and varied pleasures" that the Maine coastline had to offer. Most important to the townspeople, they provided jobs.

Many citizens needed extra income, and the town needed a broader tax base. Although many regretted the changes which were taking place, the town invested in its own future by granting the Sea Shore Company a five-year tax exemption to help them enhance the value of their properties. The course for Kennebunkport had been set.

By 1900, a true summer colony had been established in Kennebunkport. A major addition to the town came with the construction of the Atlantic Shore Line trolley system. It not only carried visitors to their destinations, but also freight to local businesses and coal from the harbor at Cape Porpoise to the mills at Sanford. Thanks to easy access, the summer visitors could enjoy the pleasure of a casino, which had been built overlooking the harbor at Cape Porpoise.

Recreational canoeing was a big draw on the river. Seen to the right and on the following page are summer visitors boarding canoes at the Kennebunk River Club.



Photo Credit: Detroit Publishing Company, Library of Congress



Photo Credit: Detroit Publishing Company, Library of Congress

But for all of the summer activity, the "age of the summer visitor" was only seasonal. The town was crowded from June to September, but by autumn it would be returned to the year-round residents. Even the summer disruption was somewhat passive in nature. The horse and buggy did not encourage frequent, far-ranging expeditions. Although the river saw great activity, canoeing was the order of the day. This must have seemed terribly mild to those who remembered the times when shipyards had crowded the banks.

An interesting feature of the "years of the summer visitor" was that the population included such well-known writers as Booth Tarkington and Kenneth Roberts, and a number of art galleries exhibiting the works of talented artists. Booth Tarkington's enormous summer home, now divided into four large condominiums, was known as "the house that Penrod built" because of the very popular fictional character that Tarkington created.

Unfortunately, the seasonal nature of summer visitor revenue did not provide year-round income, and the population continued to fall. In 1880, it was 2,405. By 1900, it had fallen to 2,130 and 30 years later it had dropped to 1,284, about half what it had been 100 years earlier.



**Summer residents Atwater Kent, Booth Tarkington, and Kenneth Roberts strolling across the site of an 1812 fortification. Photo taken in 1924, courtesy of the Library of Congress.**

## The Automobile Age

A new economy was developing in the United States, with the automobile exerting an increasing impact on the way people lived, worked, and vacationed. Kennebunkport again faced change.

Each chapter of local history has left its distinct mark on the town. The early troubled years of settlement bred an independent citizenry, tied to the land and supported by the sea. The shipbuilding years strengthened the town's commitment to a nautical way of life. As the area grew from poverty to riches, those who lived here remained a homogeneous people, dedicated to the maritime economy, which had evolved naturally from the coastal location.

When shipbuilding declined, Kennebunkport became home to a thriving summer colony. Hotels welcomed thousands of guests each season, and new businesses opened to cater to this new clientele. The influx of summer visitors could be viewed as a seasonal inconvenience to most natives. However, by the 1960's, larger personal incomes and the improved transportation system made it obvious that the tide of people "from away" was a permanent trend.



Many of the people who came would not be leaving on Labor Day. They came with their families in search of a better life. Growth has necessitated the building of new schools and increased the need for public services. New buildings to house the Police Department, the Village Fire Department and the Public Health Nurses have been constructed and renovations to the Town Hall have been completed within the last five years.

The transition period for Kennebunkport was punctuated by a major national event when George Bush, a third-generation summer resident of the town, was elected Vice President and later President of the United States. The languid atmosphere of former summers was changed dramatically by the presence of the Secret Service, the news media, and even heads of state from abroad.

With the increasing number of businesses oriented towards the tourist trade, it is hard to deny that Kennebunkport businesses have become dependent on summer visitors.

# Resource Protection & Education

## National Register vs. Local District

National Register historic districts are frequently confused with local historic districts. The two are quite dissimilar.

National Register districts offer protection from the federal government. Specifically, this designation protects the historic resource from federally funded or licensed actions. National Register status does not prevent a property owner from altering or demolishing structures, except in those instances where the owner voluntarily utilized federal rehabilitation tax credits.

Local historic districts, on the other hand, are intended to prevent property owners from making building alterations that would harm the historic character of the district. In a local historic district, proposed alterations to a building's exterior must be approved in advance by the municipality's Historic Preservation Commission. Unlike National Register districts, local districts offer no protection from federal agencies or from state projects that are funded or licensed by the federal government.

## Local District

In the early 1990's, Town Meeting rejected a proposal to establish a local historic district. The 1996 Comprehensive Plan then recommended the appointment of a Historical Committee to explore various options for preserving the character of the town's historic areas. The Board of Selectmen appointed the committee in 2001. The committee eventually concluded that there was not sufficient support in town for the establishment of a Historic Preservation Commission.

**Table 2-1 Local Historic Districts vs. National Register Districts**

	Local Historic District	National Register District
<b>Advantages</b>	Protects your property value and neighborhood character by preventing your neighbors from making inappropriate alterations to their homes.	Protects your property from the adverse impacts of Federally funded or licensed projects.  May provide eligibility for tax credits.  May provide eligibility for certain federal grants.  Provides the historic property with national recognition, thereby enhancing resale value.
<b>Disadvantages</b>		None

## The National Register

The National Register of Historic Places was established by act of Congress in 1966 with the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act. The primary purpose of the statute is to protect our nation’s historic treasures from federal government agencies. Section 106 of the statute requires such agencies to refrain from causing harm to properties that are listed on the register, or eligible for listing. As the purpose of the law is to offer protection from federal actions, the consent of the property owner for listing on the register is not required.

In Maine, the Section 106 review process is typically triggered by proposals from Maine DOT to utilize federal funds for roadway projects in historically sensitive areas. Prior to construction, Maine DOT is required to determine whether properties that are listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register would be adversely impacted.

Section 106 also applies to federally licensed actions such as the construction of electrical transmission lines, major pipelines, and waterfront projects that fall under the jurisdiction of the Army Corps of Engineers.

National Register listing offers several benefits to property owners. For example, listing provides non-profit organizations with eligibility for certain federal grants.

A National Register listing does not prohibit owners from altering or demolishing the structure (unless federal dollars or tax credits are used) nor does it obligate owners to open the properties to the public, maintain them in a certain condition, or restore them.

A 20% income tax credit is available for the rehabilitation of income-producing buildings that are listed on the National Register. The State of Maine offers a 25% credit. These financial incentives can be, and oftentimes are, the difference between a profitable restoration and one that is not financially feasible.

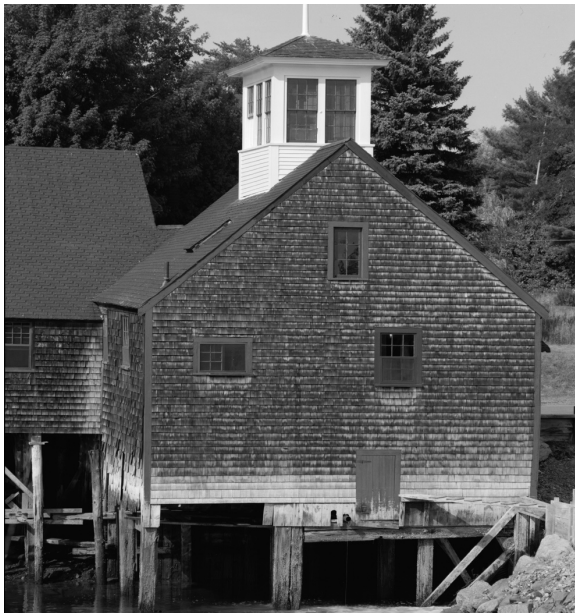
**Table 2-2 National Register Listings in Kennebunkport**

Date Listed	Description	Comment
1973	Perkins Tide Mill	Subsequently destroyed by fire
1973	Captain Nathaniel Lord Mansion	
1974	US Customs House	Presently the Graves Library
1975	Kennebunk River Club	
1976	Kennebunkport Historic District	148 buildings in the Village
1980	Abbott Graves House	
1980	Maine Trolley Cars	Trolley Museum
1982	Clock Farm	
1984	Cape Arundel Summer Colony	158 buildings at Cape Arundel
1988	Goat Island Light Station	
2009	Cape Arundel Golf Club	One of the oldest in Maine (1896)

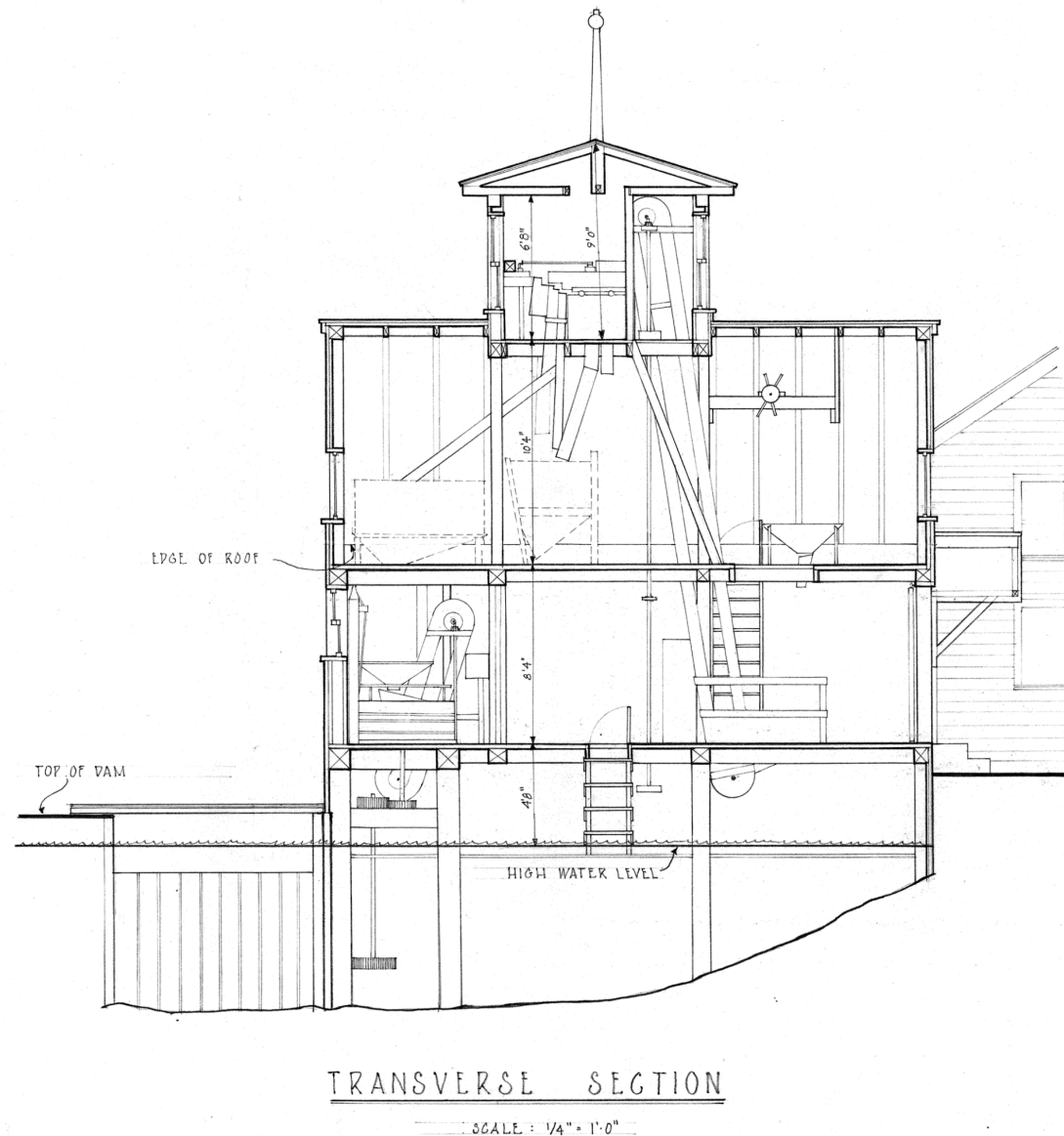
For a town of its size, Kennebunkport is fortunate to have a remarkable number of historic buildings. There are an usually large number of buildings listed on the National Register. The 300+ listed buildings were the result of the nominations of five free-standing structures, two sprawling districts, an archaeological site, ten trolley cars, a golf course, and a lighthouse, as detailed above

## Historic American Building Survey

At the height of the Great Depression in 1933, HABS was established. This federal program initially put skilled architects to productive work. The HABS inventory is considerably smaller than that of the National Register because the documentation standards are far more stringent.



Kennebunkport has four properties in the HABS inventory on file at the Library of Congress: The 1890 Kennebunk River Club, the 1812 Larabee-Carl House on North Street, the 1824 South Congregational Church, and the 1749 Perkins Grist Mill, depicted on this page.





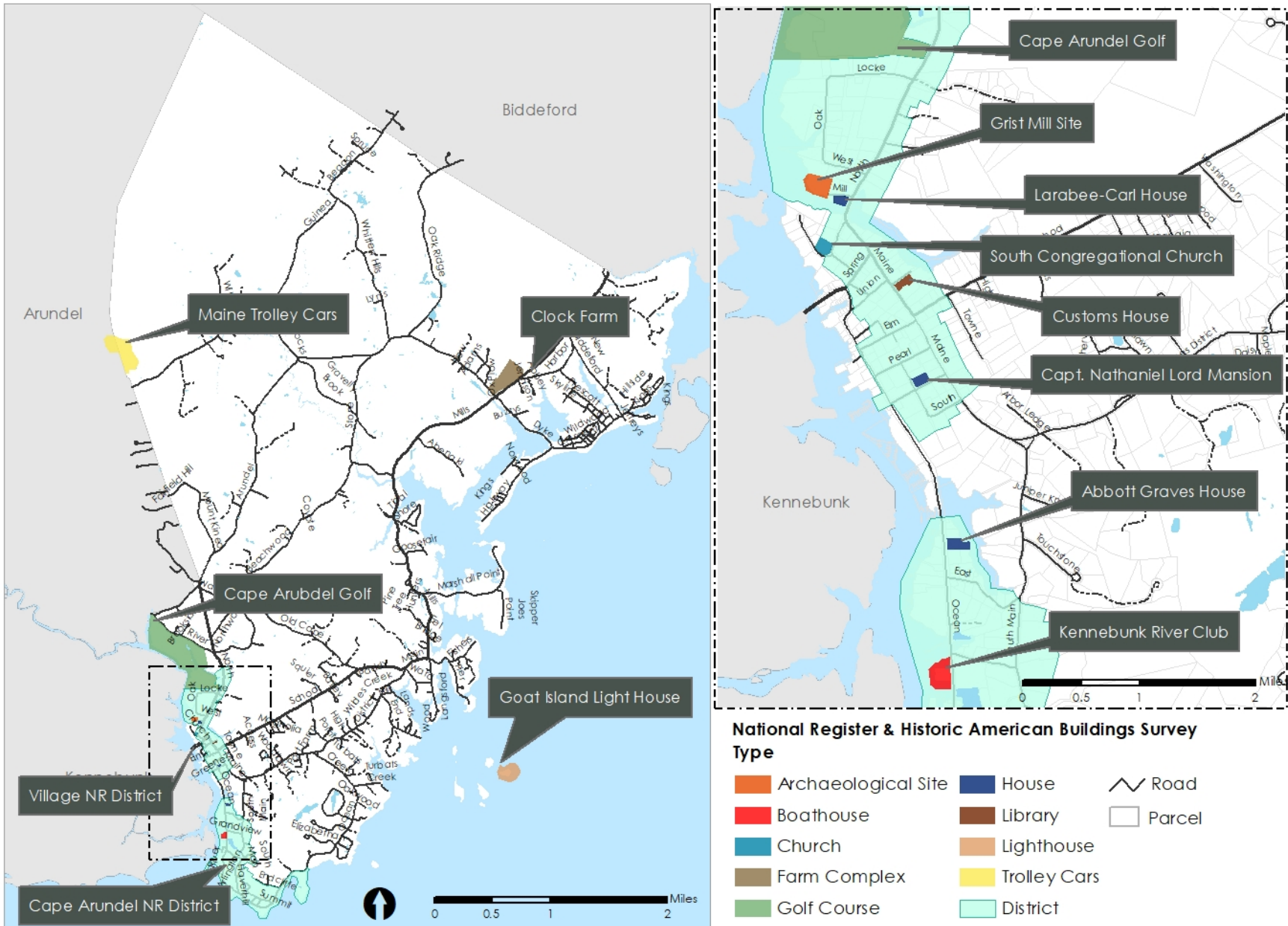


Figure 2-2 Map of National Register & Historic American Buildings Survey (Data source: Town of Kennebunkport)

## Maine vs. The United States

Look carefully at the historic district boundaries (on page 17) and you will notice that much of Dock Square is excluded from the district. This was done at the insistence of Maine's Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) during a contentious nomination process in 1975.

The commission's director explained that the square's "badly re-worked 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings" rendered the architectural integrity of the area to be "clearly substandard."<sup>14</sup> In this regard, the 1877 Brown Block (Colonial Pharmacy, above right) was cited for special recognition. Washington officials pushed back and reminded their Maine colleagues that federal grants and tax credits might solve the problem, but to qualify, the buildings first had to be on the register.<sup>15</sup> The Mainers stood firm.

MHPC's triumph came back to haunt the state years later when federal funds were sought to replace the 1933 swing bridge. Alas, Maine DOT had no data on Dock Square's eligibility for the register and in 2014 was obliged to hire Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (VHB) at considerable expense to survey every building (lower right). VHB concluded that the Dock Square area is eligible for the National Register.<sup>16</sup>



## Kennebunkport Historical Society

The society is a private, non-profit organization that has no regulatory authority, and is not affiliated with municipal government.

In 1975, the Historical Society offered to place plaques on buildings constructed prior to 1876. A committee from the Society conducted considerable research to make these dates as accurate as the available records would allow. Seventy-eight plaques were affixed to local buildings. It bears noting that 26 date back to the 1700's.

Most of these buildings have received excellent care from their recent owners and are a pleasure to look at. They are easy to spot because of the white salt-box-shaped plaque that is usually affixed on the exterior near the front door.

## Certified Local Governments

The National Park Service offers grants and technical assistance to municipalities that qualify as a Certified Local Government (CLG). A Historic Preservation Commission is one of the prerequisites for a municipality to be designated a CLG.



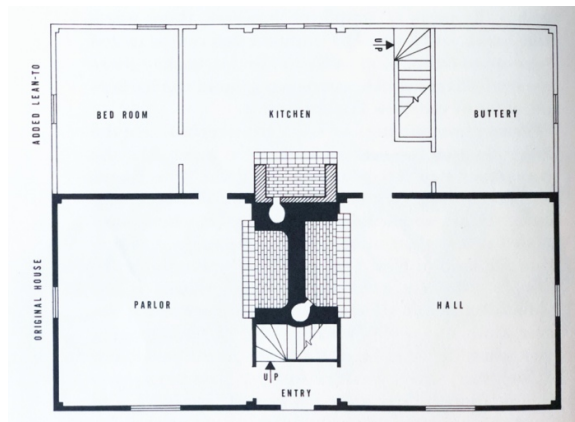
*Painting by local artist Abbott Graves (1859-1936), part of a series of paintings set in Kennebunkport and utilizing local residents as models. Reproduction is courtesy of the Kennebunkport Historical Society.*

# Kennebunkport's Architectural Heritage

## The Colonial Era

The Thomas Perkins house at 16 Oak Street (c. 1730) is believed to be the oldest house in Kennebunkport.

During the colonial era, the kitchen oftentimes occupied the rear of building, enclosed by a long, sloped roofline. This gave the side profile a shape that resembles a distinctive wooden box in which salt was once stored, hence the name for this building form, Saltbox.



The kitchen may be original in the Perkins house, or perhaps it was added later when improved financial circumstances permitted expansion. Two identically sized rooms at the house's front flank a large chimney. The third fireplace faced the kitchen in the rear, as depicted in the floorplan to the left.

Although European settlement in Kennebunkport dates to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, few colonial era buildings survive. The reasons are several.

First, prior to the American Revolution, Kennebunkport and environs was not a wealthy community, and hence the dwellings were modest.

Second, the local population was evacuated on several occasions in response to raids by the French and their Native American allies. Due to this absence of security, the Maine frontier was not viewed as a prudent locale in which to make a substantial investment in buildings.

Third, from the 1780's through the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Kennebunkport was quite prosperous due to the success of the local ship building industry. With a number of newly wealthy individuals seeking a domicile commensurate with their economic and social status, the old houses were more likely to be replaced or modernized to such an extent that few original features survived.

One early home that survived Kennebunkport's sudden prosperity is the 1745 Gideon Walker house at 8 South Street (right).



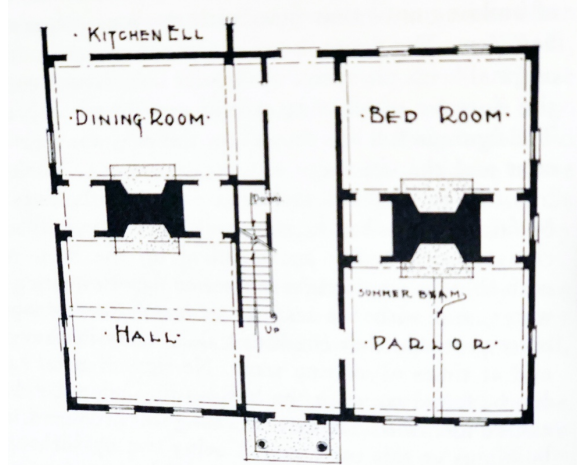
How do we know there is an old house in there somewhere? The large center chimney is a prominent clue.

Prior to 1760, homes were heated by massive central chimneys with a fireplace facing every adjoining room. That was certainly the case in this building.

## The Central Hall Plan

As heating technology evolved, the large central chimney stack gave way to twin stacks situated off center, as seen in the 1799 Daniel Walker House at 7 Pearl Street.

The elimination of the central chimney opened up space for a spacious stair hall at the center of the building.



The floorplan of the Walker House is typical of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in that its front façade is five bays (windows) wide, and two rooms deep.

The small paned windows seen here represent the contemporary limits of glazing technology.

The front entry is a c. 1855 modernization in the Italianate Style, discussed in the pages that follow.



## The Federal Style

Archeological excavations in the vicinity of Italy's Mount Vesuvius in the 18<sup>th</sup> century provided modern Europeans with the first detailed look at domestic Roman architecture. The delicate ornament and slender proportions of the domestic Roman buildings were promptly embraced by one of Britain's most influential architects, Robert Adam. His designs were published by William Pain whose guidebooks arrived in Boston in the 1790's. The new style then traveled up the coast to Salem and Portsmouth, eventually arriving in Kennebunkport c. 1810.

The English referred to this new style as the Adam style. During the post-revolutionary decades Americans failed to develop an indigenous architectural style and reverted instead to mimicking the latest in English tastes. However, Americans were loath to admit as much, and referred to the new Adam style as Federal.



The 1813 Captain Nathaniel Lord mansion at the corner of Pleasant & Green (above) is unquestionably Kennebunkport's most sophisticated manifestation of the Federal Style. In 1973, the house was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

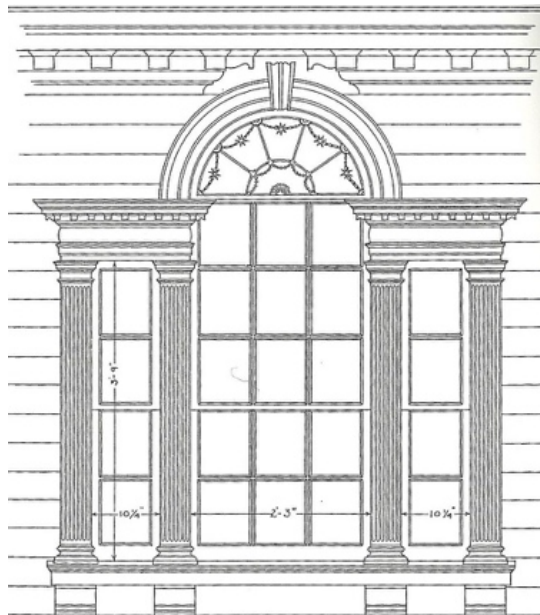
Note the oval window on the Green Street façade, the elliptical fanlight windows above the doors, the truncated third story, and the low pitched hip roof. All are typical features of a Federal Style building.



The window panes are larger than those in the 1799 Daniel Walker House, the ceilings are higher, and the chimney stacks have migrated all the way to the exterior walls.



The center window on the 2nd story, Pleasant Street façade, is a modified Palladian window, a decorative feature



that evolved from the Renaissance. The window type takes its name from Andrea Palladio, a 16th century Venetian architect who was enormously influential in promoting a revival of classical architecture.

Another distinctive feature of the Federal style is a building element in the shape of an octagon, whether it be a room, or the building itself, or in the case of the Lord mansion, the cupola (below).





## Faux Stone

The house at 54 Maine Street is an unusual example of the Federal style in two respects: the utilization of flush board siding in lieu of clapboards, and the application of classical quoins at the building's corners (below).



In both instances, the intent was to imitate 18<sup>th</sup> century English mansions that were made of stone. The construction of this house predates an era when skilled stone masons were available in the US. Thus, the builder resorted to wood, an abundant and inexpensive material in Maine



The original paint color would have reflected an attempt to simulate stone.

The wooden quoins were likewise intended to imitate stone, a material that suggests strength and permanence. Quoins are an architecture feature that dates to ancient Rome. It is possible that the faux stone at 54 Maine Street was inspired by Portsmouth's 1760 Wentworth Gardner House (lower left).

## The Greek Revival

In the late 1820's, architectural tastes shifted yet again. The Greeks were fighting for independence from the Ottoman Empire (1821-1830). Many Americans sympathized with the Greek cause for two reasons: 1) Americans' own War of Independence was a relatively recent event in the collective consciousness, and, 2) Ancient Greece was synonymous with democracy. The US was a young nation whose identity was not fully formed. The ideal of one-man one-vote, and the perceived potential for upward mobility set the US apart from the stratified societies of old Europe. Not surprisingly, Americans embraced the Greek cause.

Many Kennebunkport residents who owed their prosperity to shipbuilding and its associated commerce abandoned the Federal style in favor of the new Greek Revival. The new style was particularly popular in the 1830's and 1840's, and persisted up to 1880.

Kennebunkport's most enthusiastic rendition of the Greek form was constructed by Eliphalet Perkins, III in 1853 at 8 Maine Street. The building is known as the Perkins-Nott House, and is presently home to the Kennebunkport Historical Society's First Families Museum.



Compare Mr. Perkin’s Doric order columns, with those of the Parthenon, erected in Athens in 438 BC, below right. As is plainly evident, Kennebunkport’s Greek enthusiasts were sticklers for authentic detail and historically accurate proportions.

However, one thing that Americans got completely wrong was the color of the ancient Greek temples. The original Parthenon was infused with a polychromatic palette, as seen below.



By 1820 those colors had long disappeared from the Parthenon due to weather and the elements. All that was left was white marble glistening in the Mediterranean sun. Thus, Americans mistakenly, and

unfailingly, painted their faux temples white, with dark green shutters and porch ceilings in robin egg blue.

Where did this robin egg blue come from? The blue porch ceilings migrated up the coast from Charleston and Savannah where there was a belief among African slaves that this particular shade of blue was effective at warding off evil spirits.

The Perkins/Nott house displays another southern influence, a second story piazza that is rare in New England.

Just as the gable end of the Greek temple marked the front of the building, Americans turned their buildings 90 degrees so that the narrow (gable end of the building) faced the street. The half round or elliptical fan light above the front door that marked the Federal style was replaced with a rectangular transom. Full length sidelights (windows) flanked the doorway, as seen here at \_\_ Maine Street.

Note that classical columns could be represented in two ways: 1) a three-dimensional replica of a column as was done at the Perkins-Nott House, and 2) the less expensive two-dimensional version as seen right, known as a pilaster. In this instance, pilasters flank the front door and were applied to the corners of the building.



## Gothic Revival

By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the industrial revolution was in full swing. The era was characterized by an unprecedented rate of technological change that left many with a profound sense of unease, and a nostalgia for an era when life was perceived as calmer, slower, and more predictable. This idealized past found its expression in architecture in various mid-century romantic styles, e.g. the medieval Gothic Revival (1830 to 1860), the Renaissance inspired Italianate (1840 to 1880), the French Second Empire (1860 to 1890), and the Tudor Revival. Late in the 19th century, the asymmetrical Queen Anne (1880 to 1900) was very popular, as was the rigidly symmetrical Colonial Revival (1876 onward).

The Gothic Revival made little headway in Kennebunkport, with one notable exception. In 1876 Mrs. Felicia Cleaves remodeled a conventional 1805 Federal Style home at \_\_\_ Maine Street into a Gothic Revival showpiece. Mrs. Cleaves added a new wing to the right of the original house, for she desired the high ceilings that were common during the Victorian era. The building became known in town as “Aunt Felicia’s Folly” and alternately, “the Witch House.”



In 1966, new owners removed the vergeboard and replaced Aunt Felicia’s gothic wing with a colonial saltbox addition.



## Italianate

Kennebunk's Summer Street is the site of several full-fledged renditions of the Italianate, a style that was particularly popular during the mid-century in New England mill towns.

A few buildings in Kennebunkport display the mass-produced cornice brackets associated with this style, and other decorative elements, as seen here in the Oliver Walker House at 5 Green Street, an 1809 Federal Style home that was modified at mid-century.



The rounded window is another feature typical of the Italianate. This third story window has gone missing, yet the window-sill and rounded window surround survive.

## French Second Empire

The French Second Empire style, with its distinctive mansard roof, was popular in the East Coast's larger cities from in the early 1850's. Enthusiasm for the mansard roof eventually made its way to northern New England, as exemplified in this 1886 example at the Wheeler House at 28 Maine Street. In the meantime, trend setters in large US cities had already abandoned all things French when Napoleon, III's incompetence humiliated his nation in the Franco Prussian War of 1871.



The roof type seen above had been popularized by French architect François Mansart (1598-1666). The form's popularity took off during an ambitious redevelopment of Paris during the Second French Empire (1852-1870).

## Eastlake

Note the decorative trim surrounding the second floor windows (page opposite, and below). This motif was promoted by architect Charles Eastlake between 1870 and 1890, and is generally associated with Queen Anne style buildings. The contrasting paint colors highlight the Eastlake trim well.



## Queen Anne

The Queen Anne Style (1880 to 1900) features varied and decoratively rich ornament, turrets, a variety of surface treatments and materials, and a polychromatic color scheme. These buildings

are picturesque and asymmetrical. The style was very popular from 1880 to 1910. Alas, examples in Kennebunkport are few, and those tend to be subdued and limited in their display of Queen Anne features.

The 1892 “Point O’View” at \_\_\_ Ocean Avenue is about as fully formed example of the Queen Anne that is found in Kennebunkport. The building’s asymmetrical composition, projecting pavilions, the wrap around verandah, oriel window, and variation in wall textures are all hallmarks of the style. This particular house has worked in some decorative half-timbering as well, a decorative embellishment that is more often associated with the Stick Style (1860-1890) and Tudor Revival (1890-1945).



## 17<sup>th</sup> Century Rural England

One of the region's finest examples of a 19<sup>th</sup> century romantic style is the 1892 St. Ann's Episcopal Church chapel at 167 Ocean Drive.



The design inspiration was that of a rural parish church in 17<sup>th</sup> century England.

The stone for the walls was gathered locally. The roofing tiles' various hues indicate origins in different quarries in New York and Vermont. Slate tiles remain the most durable material for roofing.



The arrival of the Portsmouth, Saco & Portland Railroad in 1842 enabled the transport of heavy slate roofing tiles from Vermont and New York to Kennebunkport.



## Tudor Revival

Tudor Revival is another throwback to an earlier era, specifically the reign of the Tudor monarchs (1485-1558).

The revival on this side of the Atlantic was popular from 1890 to 1945. A glimpse of Tudor decorative half-timbering may be seen at the Ocean Drive house adjacent to St. Ann's (right).

The house was erected by the Nesmith family in 1891, and owned by successful inventor and Kennebunkport summer resident Atwater Kent from 1910 to 1946. The building presently serves as St. Ann's rectory.

Another Tudor Revival may be seen at \_\_\_\_\_, a former carriage house built in 1911.



## Colonial Revival

The second most prevalent style in Kennebunkport's two National Register Districts is the Colonial Revival, accounting for 49 buildings. It was the Centennial Exhibition of 1876 (the first World's Fair in the US) that inspired a nostalgia for the country's colonial past.

Unlike the Federal and Greek Revival styles, the Colonial Revival is a mishmash of Roman and Greek precedents, and it is plainly evident that little effort was made to replicate proportions that accurately correspond with historical antecedents.

Nevertheless, the new style proved to be enormously popular, especially during the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Atlantic Hall at Cape Porpoise's village center playfully displays a smorgasbord of Colonial Revival decorative elements on the front of the building, shown here as it appeared shortly after its construction in 1920.



## The Shingle Style

Architectural styles of every era can be observed in Kennebunkport; however, it is the earliest uniquely American form that Yale professor Vincent Scully termed the Shingle Style (1880 to 1900) that is particularly abundant in town. In that respect, few communities can match the Kennebunkport’s rich heritage.

These buildings are characterized by a uniform covering of locally sourced, weathered wood shingles and undulating and curvilinear surfaces that are intended to blend harmoniously with the local landscape.

The Cape Arundel National Register Historic District encompasses 152 buildings. Over 40% are in the Shingle Style.

Shown above right is an architectural elevation produced by the Historic American Buildings Survey in the 1930’s.

Below right is the (18\_\_ ) \_\_ House at \_\_\_\_. Note the palladian window on the third story.



## Mission Style

The former St. Martha's Catholic Church (1903) at the corner of Maine & South is intriguing because of its location at the far end of the nation from where Spanish Colonial styles are typically seen.

St. Martha's exemplifies a subset of the Spanish Colonial, i.e. the Mission Style, that is inspired by early Spanish mission buildings in the Southwestern US.

The tower and rounded arches are a hallmark of the Mission Style (1880 to 1930), as is the bell tower, the tower's red roof, the building's arched entryway, rounded windows, and the fanciful curvilinear parapet that is of a shape that is entirely foreign to New England.

Were this building located in the Southwest, the roof would be sheathed in red tile, and the walls would be of stucco. The decorative Colonial Revival details on the South Street façade are a Maine touch, as is the building's wood shingle sheathing.



## Prairie Style

Another outlier rarely seen in New England is the Prairie Style (1900 to 1920). As the name suggests, this trend in architecture is native to the North American prairie. These buildings are low lying, and emphasize the horizontal, consistent with a prairie landscape where they are typically sited. These houses are finished in stucco (or a stucco lookalike material), and feature a central section that rises higher than flanking symmetrical wings. Horizontal fenestration is another hallmark of the style.



Kennebunkport's sole example of this style dates to 1905, and was referred to as "Westlook" by its original owner and architect, the well-known local artist Abbott Graves (1859-1936). The building was inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright designs that were featured in Ladies Home Journal issues published in 1901. This building is not only a very early example of the Prairie Style (only five years after construction of the first Prairie house in Kankakee, Illinois), but also one of only two in Maine. In 1980, the house was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

**Table 2-3 Timeline of Architectural Styles in Kennebunkport**

	Timeline of Architectural Styles in Kennebunkport																Number of Buildings in the Village NR District	Number of Buildings in the Cape Arundel NR District
Federal	■	■	■	■													53	
Greek Revival			■	■	■	■	■	■	■								22	6
Gothic Revival				■	■	■	■											
Italianate					■	■	■	■	■								6	
French 2 <sup>nd</sup> Empire							■	■	■	■							3	
Queen Anne									■	■	■						4	3
Tudor Revival										■	■	■	■	■	■			1
Colonial Revival									■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	34	15
Shingle									■	■	■							66
Mission									■	■	■	■	■				1	1
Prairie										■	■	■						1
	1800	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	Total # of Buildings in District = 148	Total # of Buildings in District = 152

## Cemeteries

Those with an interest in history will be fascinated by the cemeteries in Kennebunkport and by the often-poignant inscriptions on the headstones found there.

At the \_\_\_\_\_ Cemetery (below), three gravestones tell the story of Captain Israel Crediford who lost his wife (age 31), son (5 months) and daughter (4 months) within



the span of three years, reminding us of the fragility of life in that era, and the unbearable tragedies that were endured.

Just as the town's historic architecture evolved over time, gravestone styles, materials, and content document changing tastes, culture, and technology.

The early fieldstone graves gave way to dark gray slate 1790-1820, which in turn was replaced with white marble at mid-century. The latter is particularly susceptible to the effects of acid rain, and the inscriptions are fast disappearing. The stones provide an invaluable record of the community's history, and are sometimes more reliable than government archives and local history narratives.



The Town of Kennebunkport does not own any cemeteries, and, within the boundaries of the town, there is only one active cemetery, the Arundel Cemetery. Nevertheless, there are believed to be at least 70 private cemeteries within the town, most of them small plots serving just one family.

The Town maintains a database of gravestones, and in 2018 mapped the locations utilizing a Geographical Information System (GIS). The Cemetery Committee has done quite a lot of volunteer work documenting the town's cemeteries, and continues to refine and expand the archive to the extent that time permits.

Some headstones bear witness to the perils of the maritime livelihood which so many Kennebunkport residents pursued. One such tragedy was the wreck of the barque "Isadore" in 1842. "On the morning of its maiden voyage, the Isadore was caught in a severe snowstorm and driven against the rocky shores of Bald Head Cliff just beyond the village of Ogunquit. All fifteen local men on board were lost." In the Bass Cove Cemetery is a monument for the Isadore's captain, Leander Foss.

A stone at the Merrill Family Cemetery recounts another tragedy. The marker at Benjamin Merrill's grave tells us that "after a long life spent on the ocean he perished by the filling of a boat off Kennebunk".

In about 20 of these cemeteries, no headstones remain, although traces of corner posts and rails can sometimes be seen. Others can be identified only by tradition or by mention in land deeds.

Sometimes the headstones have been preserved, but the cemetery itself has disappeared. For example, the stones from the Stone Haven Hill Cemetery were removed to Arundel Cemetery because they were endangered by the ocean. The Stage Island Cemetery was washed away completely. Cemetery locations are depicted on the map to the right.

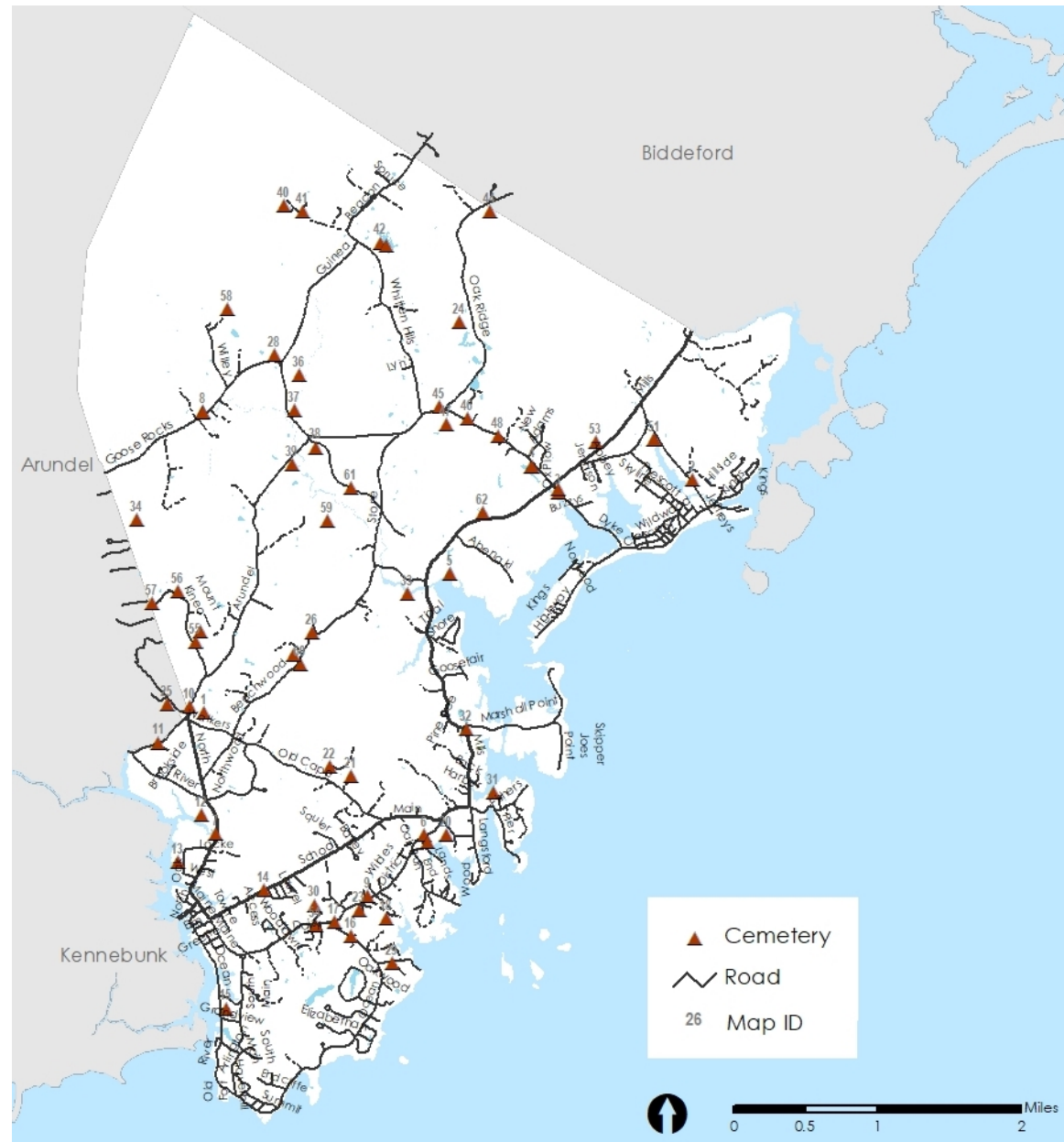


Figure 2-3 Locations of cemeteries in Kennebunkport



**Table 2-4 Cemetery Locations**

Name	Location	Map & Lot	Name	Location	Map & Lot	Name	Map & Lot
Arundel	Walkers Lane	13-6-9	Springer Hill	Roberts Ln		Benjamin Curtis	27-3-6A
Unknown		41-2-5	Mary Wildes Smith		21-9-34	Sylvanus Perkins	39-1-1
Emmons		37-1-3	Oak Ridge		26-2-9B	William Smith	26-2-6
Edwin Hutchins	403 Goose Rocks	37-2-6B	Potters Field Stone		13-7-6	Adams West	25-5-2A
Thomas Perkins	Mills Rd, in Marsh	24-4-2	George Smith		13-6-38	Adams East	25-5-2A
Cape Porpoise	Wildes District Rd	22-5-23	Hall		13-6-33A	Abner Littlefield	37-2-7B
Unknown	North Street	12-1-6	Dearing		16-1-21	Edward Smith 1	37-1-3
Clough		16-1-2	James Wildes	55 Turbats	20-1-70	Edward Smith 2	37-2-6B
Deshon Dobson	98 Wildes District	21-4-15	Jethro Smith		9-4-72	William Wildes	41-1-10
North Parish	Arundel Road	13-6-8	Hovey		30-3-8	Daniel Emmons	41-1-10
Merrill	Arundel Road	1-1-9	Hutchins Littlefield	55 Mills Rd	23-3-5	William James Jeffrey	37-3-9
Rhodes, Somers	72 Main St	12-1-11A	Ethelred Hutchins		24-2-2A	Erastus Wildes	21-1-9
Tristram Perkins	16 Oak St	9-1-11	Leonard Miller		2-1-1	Wormwood	13-5-1A
School Street	School St	9-4-54	Enoch Clough		16-1-2	Fairfield 1	14-2-13
Unknown	Ocean Avenue	8-9-12	Robinson		16-2-1D	Juliette Williams	14-1-2B
Nancy Silva	Turbats Creek Rd	21-1-11	John Smith		16-2-1B	Billings	16-1-10
Unknown	Turbats Creek Rd	21-9-41	Smith Cook		15-3-2A	Timothy Washburn	25-1-4
Unknown	Ebs Cove Lane	21-9-26	Mary Esther Smith		15-3-2	Jacob Wildes	13-3-1A
Huff		22-5-24	Adams Benson		17-1-8	Steve Natalie Emmons	25-1-1
Walker, Bickford	11 Ward Road	22-5-11	Benson Cole		17-1-12C	Spang	37-2-9
Seth Grant	11 Robin Lane	22-9-73B	Daniel Perkins		27-3-4A	Francouer	13-5-4

# Archaeological Sites

## Prehistoric Sites

There remains little readily accessible evidence to remind us of the Native Americans who lived in this area prior to the arrival of the first European visitors.

Along the Batson River, there are oyster and clamshell middens which are believed to mark the location of popular camp sites. Four prehistoric sites are known to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC), as reflected in the map to the right. To protect archaeological sites and landowner privacy, the exact locations are exempt from right-to-know legislation. The precise locations may be obtained with permission from the MHPC.

All four sites consist of shell middens in the coastal zone. The coastal zone and the four known sites should be surveyed further, as should the edges of the Smith, Batson, and Little Rivers.

To the Town's credit, its Land Use Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations include robust protections for archaeological sites.

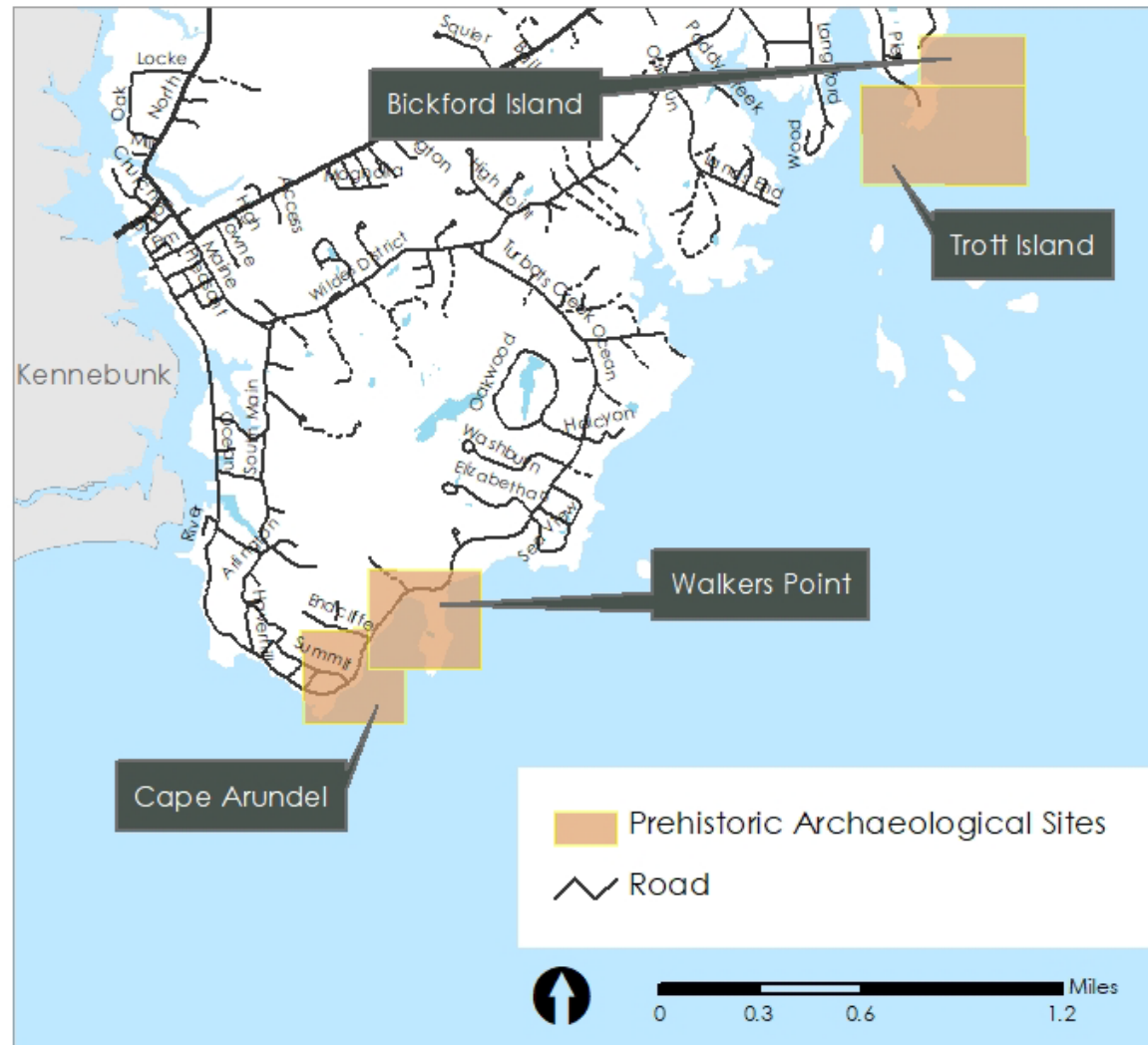


Figure 2-3 Locations of prehistoric archaeological (Data source: Town of Kennebunkport)

## Historic Archaeological Sites

Historic sites may include cellar holes, foundations, mills, wharves, boat yards, and near-shore shipwrecks. The MHPC identified 70 sites in Kennebunkport. Those sites other than shipwrecks are cited in the table to the right. An inventory of shipwrecks is presented in Appendix A.

The c.1749 Perkins Grist Mill had been recognized as a significant structure prior to its destruction by fire. Now it is a noteworthy archaeological site.

The first English fishermen who visited these shores in the early 1600's established their North American bases on Stage and Fort Islands, located on Stage Harbor, which lies just east of Cape Porpoise Harbor. When some of them decided to spend the winter here, a substantial shelter became necessary, and traces of cellar holes can still be found on these islands.

It is believed that a fort for defense against Native Americans gave Fort Island its name, but no trace of the fort is seen today.

Stage Island received its name from the stages that were built for curing fish. There was one archaeological dig on the islands recorded in the 1800's. Several of the islands may have been inhabited.

**Table 2-5 Historic Archaeological Sites Identified by the MHPC**

Site Name	Site Type	Periods of Significance
<b>Stage Island Fort</b>	settlement, fortified	c.1676 - c.1725 (1689)
<b>Cape Porpus Settlement</b>	settlement	c.1620 - c.1675, c.1676 - 1725
<b>Kennebunk Point Fort</b>	military, fort	1814
<b>Dow Inscriptions</b>	artifact, forgery	1940s
<b>Sampson Cove Dam</b>	dam, tidal mill	no clearly datable features, but possibly 18th
<b>Turbat Creek Revetment</b>	retaining wall	late 19th century
<b>Vaughn Island Marsh Hay Fields</b>	hayfield	17th-century date possible, but more likely 18th through 19th centuries
<b>Vaughn Island Drainage/Agriculture</b>	unidentified	late 19th century
<b>Sheep House Foundation</b>	outbuilding	19th century
<b>Stage Island Well</b>	well	not clearly dated, but possibly as early as 17th
<b>Redin Island Well</b>	well	unknown
<b>Vaughn Island Well</b>	well	late 19th century
<b>Trott Island Homestead</b>	domestic	tentatively dated to 18th century
<b>Vaughn Island Foundation 1</b>	domestic	late 19th century to early 20th century
<b>Vaughn Island Foundation 2</b>	Domestic	late 19th century to early 20th century
<b>Paddy Creek Cemetery</b>	cemetery	mid 18th century to early 19th century
<b>Perkins Grist Mill</b>	mill, gristmill	ca. 1749 - 1994
<b>Goat Island Light Station</b>	lighthouse	1833-present
<b>Stone fishweir remnant at Stage Island</b>	fish weir	probably 17th century, based on sea level and nearby 17th century sites on Stage Island
<b>Dwelling #1</b>	homestead	Third to fourth quarter 1600s

In the early 1700's, as the colony grew, more forts were constructed. The site of one garrison, believed to have been built in the 1720's, is located near the Nonantum Cemetery at the intersection of East Avenue and South Maine Street.

A few years later, the town was ordered by the government of the Massachusetts Colony to build a garrison to serve Cape Porpoise. Subsequent deeds show that it was constructed as ordered on Stone Haven Hill, which is on Pier Road just northwest of the causeway leading to Bickford's Island.

In order to foster communication along the shoreline of the colony, the English crown subsidized a pathway which came to be known as the "King's Highway". A track passable for a man on horseback was cleared through the woods and means were provided to cross the many streams that ran perpendicular to the shoreline. Where the "Highway" crossed the Kennebunk River, ferry service was provided. This service was still available well into the 1950's and was used mainly by people wanting to enjoy Gooch's Beach across the river in Kennebunk. To cross smaller streams, large flat "stepping stones" sufficed. Such stones can still be seen crossing Tyler Brook, just off Route 9, in two locations.

Another activity for which there is visible evidence was granite quarrying. By the year 1800, local granite was being used for building foundations, and the breakwaters at the entrance to the Kennebunk River were built of this same material. The quarries themselves, and the foundations of the associated horse barns, can still be seen off Beachwood Avenue. Two small islands in front of the lighthouse were also quarried.

Please see Appendix A for a listing of underwater archaeological sites identified

by MHPC, i.e. shipwrecks.



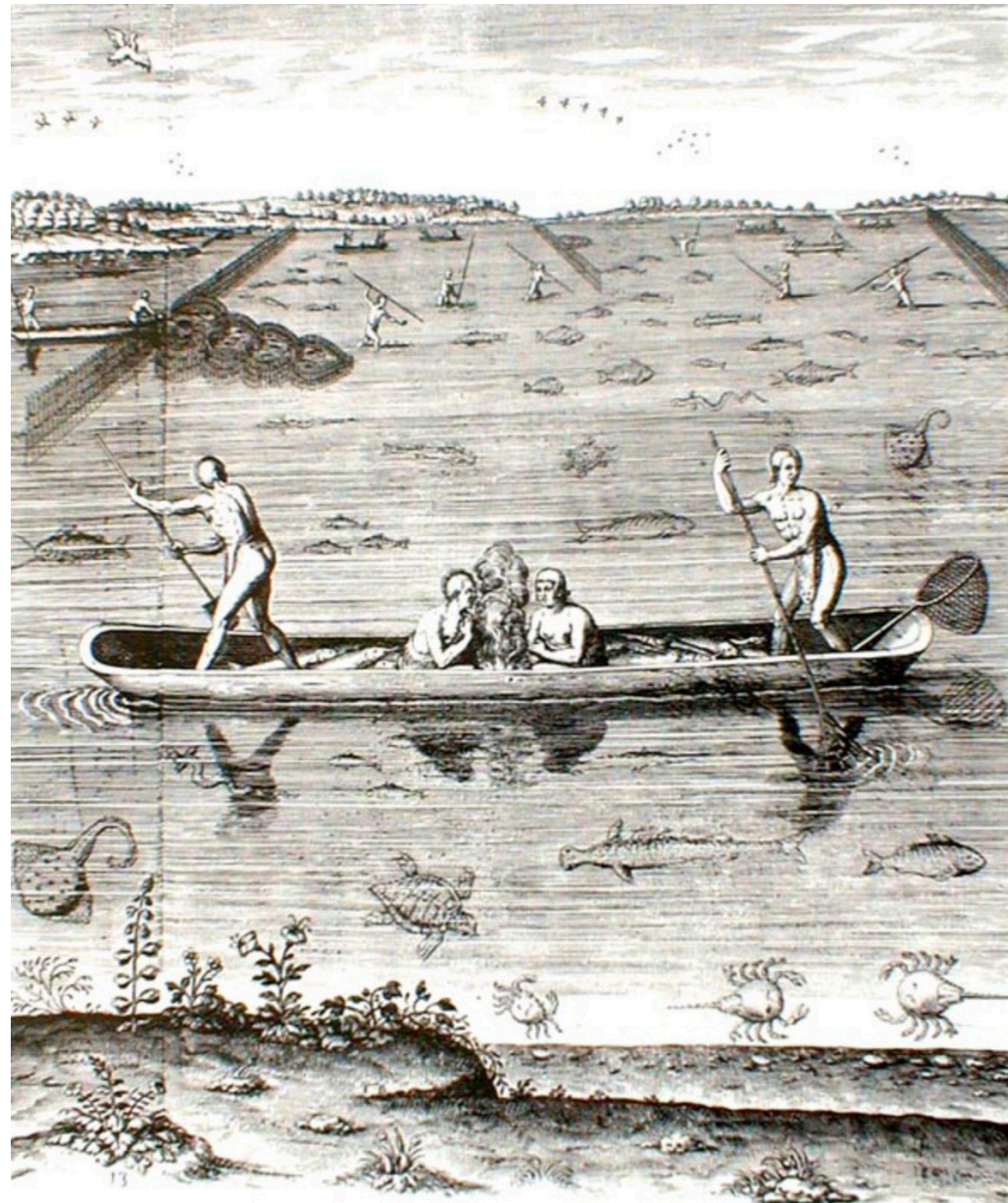
**Stone Wall near Mills Road north of the Batson River**

## The Cape Porpoise Archaeological Alliance

In 2017, the Kennebunkport Conservation Trust (KCT) and the Brick Store Museum entered into a collaborative partnership for the purpose of conducting research in the vicinity of Cape Porpoise Harbor.

In late 2018, Tim Spahr of the alliance made a stunning discovery in the mud flats at low tide: the top section of a dugout canoe. In June 2019, a team of archaeologists from the University of New England and the University of New Brunswick excavated the canoe. Carbon testing dates the 10-foot canoe to 1280 to 1380 A.D. This is believed to be only the fourth dugout canoe discovered in Maine, and the only one that predates the arrival of Europeans.

Tom Bradbury of the KCT explained to the York County Coast Star “As stewards of the land, we want to find out more about those who once lived here. I’m hoping that this excites people’s imagination to continue that discovery. There’s a time element to this as well. There’s an erosion factor and things are being washed away, so we have to discover these things and record them while we still can.”<sup>17</sup>



A dugout canoe observed in Virginia similar to the one excavated at Cape Porpoise.

## Climate Change

Scientists advise us that a changing climate will raise sea level and groundwater, increase the severity of coastal storms and inland flooding, and cause severe droughts. We can also expect a substantial population migration to Maine from those US regions that face more difficult climate challenges. These climate-driven changes pose new and unique threats to Kennebunkport's historic resources.

*Sea Level Rise* - The rising sea threatens low lying historic buildings in the vicinity of Dock Square, and elsewhere, and threatens to inundate archaeological sites in the coastal zone, rendering access to the sites problematic, if not impossible.

*Groundwater* - Rising groundwater will pose a threat to historic structures in low-lying areas.

*Coastal Storms* - Increasingly severe storm events will impact the coastal areas and the intertidal zone in an unpredictable manner. We know, for example, that the cemetery on Stage Island was washed away by coastal storms, and that shifting currents and weather patterns exposed a dugout canoe at Cape Porpoise in 2018, for perhaps the first time in 700 years. In the

absence of swift intervention by local archaeologists, the canoe's exposure could have led to vandalism, or rapid deterioration, or both.



**Excavation of the 700-year old dugout canoe at Cape Porpoise in 2019. Photo courtesy of Kennebunkport Conservation Trust.**

*Inland Flooding* - A warming climate will allow storms moving up the coast to carry a greater volume of precipitation. To the extent that inland flood waters reach levels not seen in the past 300 years, some historic buildings may be exposed to damaging floods.

*Drought* - Scientists predict that New England will experience severe droughts during the summer months. Add some strong wind to the weather mix, and Kennebunkport would have the same conditions that generated massive wildfires that swept across coastal Maine in 1947 and destroyed numerous historic buildings.

### Preparing for Climate Change

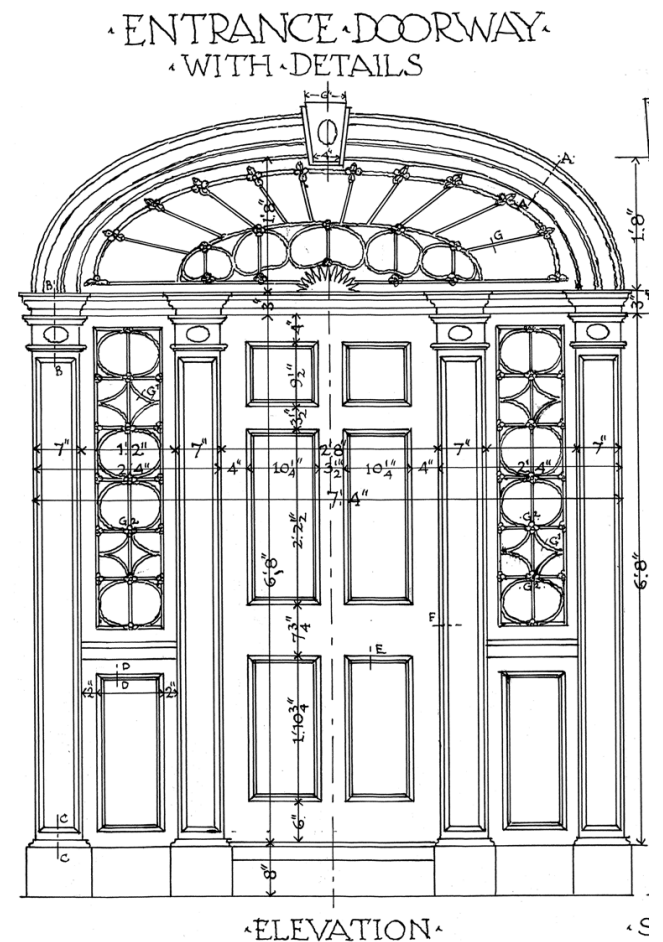
*Prehistoric Archaeological Resources* - The State of Maine’s official guidelines for municipalities call for the preservation of archaeological sites. This is antiquated thinking that fails to acknowledge the imminent peril posed by climate change.

To their credit, the authors of Kennebunkport’s 2012 Comprehensive Plan proposed instead “to promote and preserve the knowledge and integrity of local history and heritage.” Town officials understood that the greatest value of an archaeological site lay not in the artifacts themselves, but rather in gaining knowledge from the artifacts’ complex relationship to each other, and the documentation and subsequent analysis of those findings. While state officials are well-intentioned in seeking to prevent the

sites from being disturbed until such time as funds are available to conduct an intensive excavation by skilled professionals, a rising sea no longer affords communities the luxury of postponing such action in the coastal zone.

*Documentation* - The 1749 Perkins Grist Mill was well documented by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in 1965. It is unfortunate that the building was subsequently lost to fire. This highlights the importance documenting historic resources so as to have a detailed record in the event that they are later lost to the forces of nature, inundation, or fire. The 300+ buildings in Kennebunkport’s two National Register districts are documented, but not in sufficient detail, e.g. most were not even photographed. Documentation is even scarcer for many of Kennebunkport’s historic resources situated outside the districts. This is a deficit the Town could remedy in the near term at relatively little expense.

*Energy Efficiency* - Well intentioned homeowners seeking to improve the energy efficiency of their buildings sometimes make changes that needlessly harm the historic integrity of the structure. Public education such as workshops, e.g. sessions on the restoration of historic wooden window sash as an alternative to expensive and overrated vinyl replacement windows, might be helpful.



**Relocation** - Over the long term, the preservation of historic buildings at their original locations in low lying shoreland areas will no longer be possible due to a rising sea. When evaluating whether it is feasible to re-locate an historic building to higher ground, the buildings' framing system will play an important role in the analysis.

Prior to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, buildings were held together by an exceptionally durable post & beam framework that was well suited for moving the entire building. It often comes as a surprise to many, but the relocation of post & beam buildings was a frequent event. A cost effective alternative to constructing a new building was to assemble a team of oxen to haul a used building over frozen ground to a new location.

Shown to the right is the relocation of the 1770 Joshua Wentworth House from Portsmouth's north end to the city's south end in 1973. Moving the building via barge proved to be less expensive than negotiating narrow streets and dozens of overhead utility cables, and it once again demonstrated the resiliency of post & beam framing systems.



**Photo credit Strawbery Banke Museum**

The Industrial Revolution enabled the development and widespread adoption of the relatively inexpensive balloon frame (mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to mid 1930's) that replaced post & beam framing systems. Thin dimensional lumber extended from the sill all the way to the rafters.

Many of the commercial buildings in the vicinity of Dock Square were constructed during the era when the balloon frame was standard. A balloon framing system makes building relocation far more challenging, and oftentimes unfeasible, as these structures are far more fragile than post and beam construction. As a result, these structures are less suitable for relocation.



## Long Range Planning

The relocation of historic buildings would require a suitable destination. The Town should identify one or more locations in which to relocate the buildings.

As the sea rises, real estate on high ground will become increasingly desirable, and hence more expensive. For that reason, it is advantageous to secure potential sites for relocation sooner rather than later. An obvious choice is land that has already been taken off the market, namely Town-owned land.

A possible strategy would be to designate certain Town-owned acreage for conservation purposes in the near term, with the provision that the land could serve in the (distant) future as the site for relocated historic buildings.

The city of Portsmouth's trauma with urban renewal in the 1970's may offer some useful lessons for Kennebunkport, and serve as an intriguing precedent. Faced with spirited public resistance to a proposal to demolish the city's north end, the Portsmouth Housing Authority relocated a dozen historic homes to a 1.4 acre site that was subsequently known as The Hill, shown below.



The Hill demonstrates the feasibility of relocating historic buildings into a viable cluster that is not dissimilar to a conventional neighborhood. The Hill also offers a preview of sorts as to what the relocation of historic buildings might look like in Kennebunkport, and elsewhere.

## Appendix A - Shipwrecks

Ship Name	Type of Ship	Periods of Significance		Ship Name	Type of Ship	Periods of Significance
<b>Wandby</b>	screw	Built in 1899, wrecked 1921		<b>Pavilion</b>	fishing schooner	-1868
<b>Charles H. Trickey</b>	schooner	1879-1920		<b>Myers</b>	schooner	-1873
<b>J. H. G. Perkins</b>	schooner	1867-1908		<b>Moby Dick</b>	schooner	-1871
<b>Jonathan Sawyer</b>	schooner	1886-1907		<b>Francis A. Baker</b>	schooner	-1875
<b>Mary E. Olys</b>	schooner	1891-1920		<b>E. E. Stimpson</b>	schooner	-1876
<b>Mildred V. Nunan</b>	schooner	26-Feb-12		<b>Webster</b>	schooner	-1876
<b>St. Therese</b>	screw	1-Jul-61		<b>Gem</b>	schooner	-1876
<b>A. F. Kindberg</b>	schooner	1865-1919		<b>Concord</b>	schooner	-1878
<b>Idlewild</b>	gas screw	Aug-20		<b>George E. Nunan</b>	fishing schooner	-1879
<b>Houri</b>	gas screw	1893-1918		<b>Porsillel</b>	schooner	-1880
<b>R.P. Tibbetts</b>	gas screw	1916-1917		<b>Cuttler</b>	schooner	-1880
<b>Frank L.</b>	schooner	1886		<b>Brilliant</b>	schooner	-1882
<b>unnamed vessel</b>	vessel	Unknown		<b>J. S. Pike</b>	schooner	-1885
<b>D.C. Smith</b>	schooner	1869		<b>Bloomer</b>	schooner	-1886
<b>L. D. Wentworth</b>	schooner	1886		<b>Fair Dealer</b>	schooner	1867-1886
<b>Alabama</b>	schooner	-1869		<b>Starry Flag</b>	fishing schooner	1871-1892
<b>Daisy Queen</b>	schooner	Wrecked at Green Island 1886		<b>Lizzie Guptill</b>	schooner	1862-1895
<b>Kittie Clark</b>	schooner	1888		<b>Fred and Elmer</b>	schooner	1860-1895
<b>Leo</b>	schooner	November 29, 1856.		<b>Annie L. Green</b>	schooner	1886-1898
<b>Lizzie K.</b>	schooner	1872-1886		<b>Hattie M. Mayo</b>	schooner	1859-1902
<b>Sampson Cove Wreck</b>	derelict	ca. 1920-1940		<b>Wamby Wanda</b>	steam screw	1921
<b>Langsford Wreck</b>	derelict	ca. 1940-1960		<b>J.B. Meyers</b>	schooner	May 4, 1873
<b>Armada</b>	schooner	1862-1865				



**The wreck of the Empress at Cape Arundel, 1891.**

## Endnotes Chapter 2

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- <sup>1</sup> Maine Indian Program of NE Friends Service Committee. The Wabanakis of Maine and the Maritimes. ME Indian Program. Bath, ME. 1989.
- <sup>2</sup> JP Mosher and AE Speiss. 1992 Field Season at the Hedden Site. Report for the Town of Kennebunk. July 1993. P. 4.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid. Mosher and Speiss. P. 10 & 11.
- <sup>4</sup> Speiss, AE. Maine Historic and Archaeological Sites: Introduction and Management. Maine Historic Preservation Commission. P. 1.
- <sup>5</sup> Speiss, AE. Personal communication. March 17, 2003.
- <sup>6</sup> Maine Indian Program... p.A-4.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. A-7.
- <sup>8</sup> Cod - A Biography of the Fish That Changed the World, Mark Kurlansky, 1997.
- <sup>9</sup> Maine Indian Program
- <sup>10</sup> Speiss, AE. Personal Communication. March 17, 2003.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid p. A-10.
- <sup>12</sup> Eastman, Tom. Professor of History, University of Southern Maine in a lecture. Feb. 1990.
- <sup>13</sup> Bradbury, Charles, History of Kennebunkport. 1837. p.4.
- <sup>14</sup> Correspondence from Earle Shettleworth, Jr. to William Murtagh, Keeper of the National Register, dated November 24, 1975.
- <sup>15</sup> Correspondence from William Murtagh to Earle Sheetleworth, Jr., dated December 15, 1975.
- <sup>16</sup> VHB Architectural Report, authored by Rita Walsh and Nicole Benjamin, August 15, 2014.
- <sup>17</sup> York County Coast Star, June 6, 2019.