

## **10. HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES**

Newton was first settled about 1700. At that time, it was a part of Amesbury, Massachusetts, known as Amesbury Newtown. Following resolution of the Massachusetts/New Hampshire boundary dispute, Newton, (known as "Newtown" until 1846) was set off from Amesbury and shortly thereafter incorporated as a town in 1749. A part of South Hampton was annexed to Newton that same year, and a part of East Kingston was annexed in 1845.

Agriculture was the mainstay of the local economy until the arrival of the railroad in the middle of the 19th century. Carriage and shoe manufacturing played a prominent role during the last three decades of the 19th century and into the 20th.

Newton's religious history is unusual for a New Hampshire town in that Congregationalism played a minimal role. Instead, religious life was dominated by two Baptist Congregations (one of which was the first in New Hampshire) , a "Christian Church", and Quakers. The Baptist and Christian churches survive to the present day. Quaker Grove (Site #24) is about the only remnant of the once significant Quaker presence. (Site numbers on Map 12 indicates the locations of historic sites mentioned in the text.)

### **ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES**

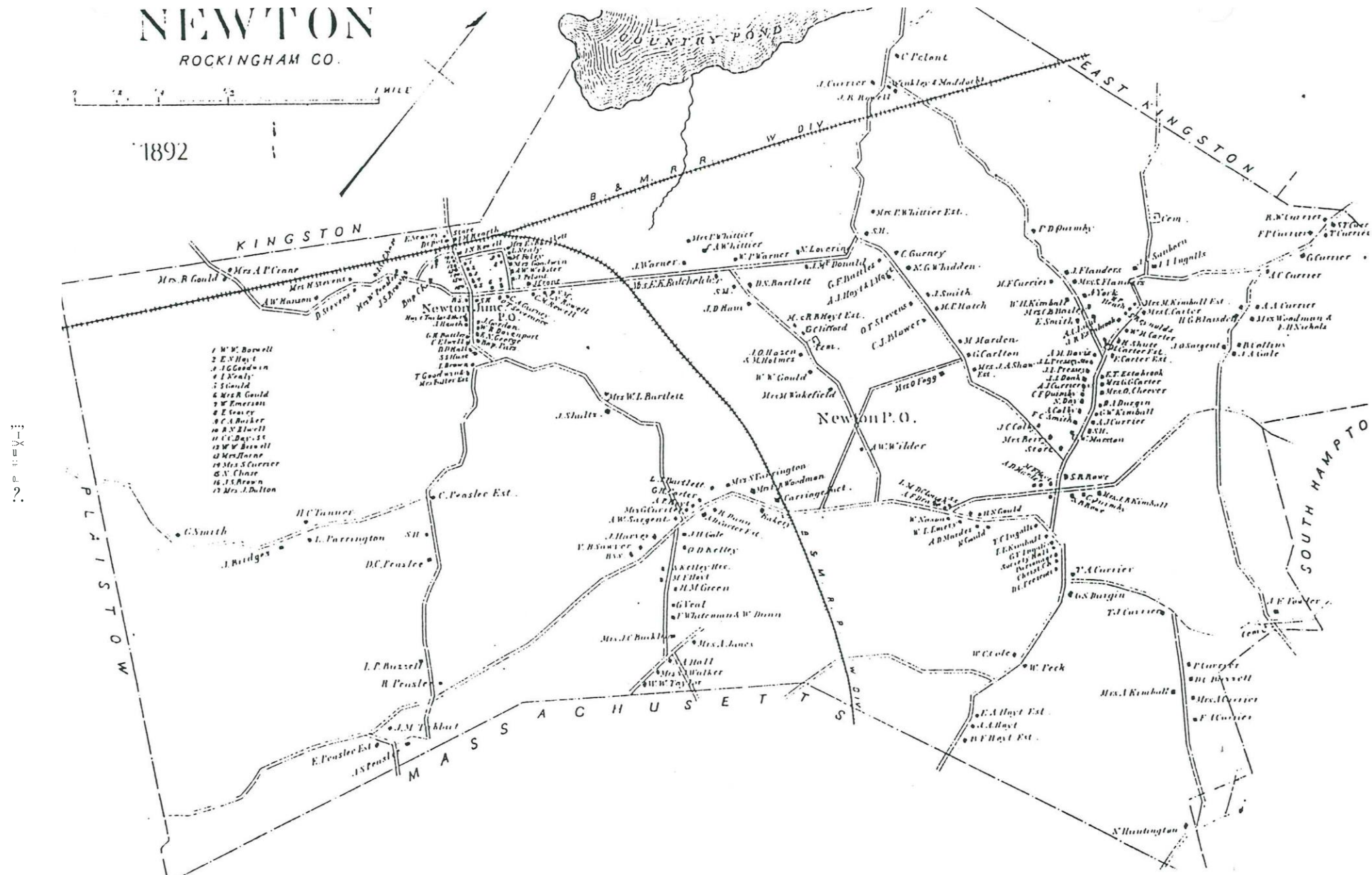
A few clusters of 19th century buildings have survived to the present day. Those that have survived fairly intact include : 1) Newton Junction, most of which dates to the mid-century arrival of the railroad; 2) the town center, which has a decidedly Victorian character due to a massive fire in 1887, and a prosperous carriage factory which helped to rebuild the center; 3) Rowes Comer; and 4) a mid-century village along Route 108 in the vicinity of Heath Street. All four of these areas are indicated on Map 13 and Map 14 as they appeared approximately one hundred years ago.

#### **GEORGIAN (1720-1800)**

Newton's pre-Revolutionary agricultural heritage is well represented by Georgian style farmhouses at 39 Thornell Road (Site #1), Crickett Hill Farm on Gale Village Road (Site #2), one opposite 51 Pond Street (Site #3), the old Currier Tavern at the beginning of Amesbury Road (Site #4), and the "1698 Peaslee House" on Peaslee Crossing Road (Site #5). The scattered distribution of these houses suggests an agriculturally based economy in the 18th Century. The small number of survivors indicates either a very small population, or that many farms were abandoned during Newton's late 19th Century manufacturing era. The absence of any concentration of Georgian structures in the village centers suggests that the present villages were either non-existent, very sparsely populated during the 18th Century, or destroyed by fire.

ROCKINGHAM CO.

1892



# Map 14: 1892

## Map of Newton

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All of Newton's surviving Georgian style houses are rather restrained and conservative in their use of architectural ornament. Such outward austerity is typical of rural New Hampshire, in sharp contrast to the flamboyance of wealthy merchants in nearby coastal ports. Newton's Georgian architecture seems to reflect the prevailing Yankee ethic that material success could be had but not flaunted.

### ***GREEK REVIVAL (1825-1860)***

Also scattered across town are a number of fine examples of Greek Revival style farmhouses. These include the Chrigstrom House on Peaslee Crossing Road (Site #6), 83 North Main Street (Site #7), 80 South Main Street (Site #8), and a red cape opposite the Gale Village Road (Site #9). Of Newton's institutional buildings, the 1835 Christian Church retains well proportioned Greek Revival details (Site #10). As was the case in most of rural America, architectural features on Newton's Greek Revival structures are fairly simple, austere, and restrained .

### ***GREEK VERNACULAR (1850 - 1900)***

As the century wore on, Greek architectural features stubbornly persevered in Newton. Buildings at Newton Junction in particular are almost entirely in this style. This suggests that the arrival of the railroad put Newton Junction on the map and played a key role in expanding the town's industrial base.

### ***QUEEN ANNE (1880-1900)***

Two of Newton's more elaborate Victorian era residences are the Queen Anne/Eastlake style house at the beginning of Highland Street (Site #11), and the old Wilder General Store (Site #12) immediately north of the town Hall. Newton's large number of Queen Anne style properties around the town center is due in large part to that style's popularity during the period of rebuilding which followed a massive fire in 1887. The 1892 Atlas (Map 13) indicates that re-building proceeded rather quickly.

Most of Newton's churches and public buildings such as the town Hall (Site #13), and Library (Site #14), have lost a great deal of their architectural integrity with the relatively recent application of vinyl siding. Many private residences such as the old Wilder General Store (Site #12), undoubtedly Newton's most elaborate example of the Queen Ann style, have likewise been subject to recent renovations which obliterate much of the original architectural features. For this reason, eligibility of these areas for the National Register of Historic Places appears doubtful.

## **OTHER CULTURAL RESOURCES**

Newton's graveyards contain much documentary evidence of the town's early years. In addition to the old graveyard behind the town Hall (Site #15), others include the Highland Cemetery (Site #16), Union Cemetery (Site #17), Willow Grove (Site #18), one off Currierville Road (Site#19), and the old Chase graveyard off Smith 's Corner Road (Site #20), which is very unusual in that it contains the marked gravestone of a slave.

Other noteworthy cultural resources include an earthen dam (Site #21) by Rowe's Corner (indicating former industrial activity and an underdetermined number of mill sites), a

well preserved root cellar (Site #22) approximately one quarter mile north of the intersection of Gale Village Road and Route 108, and the site of the old standard gauge "Peanut Track" (Site #23) running easterly from Newton Junction.

In a town whose economy once revolved around agriculture, little recognizable farmland remains. Surviving farmland was noted in the vicinity of Peaslee Crossing Road, Merrimac Road, Hadley Road, 42 Thornell Road, 80 South Main Street, and 83 North Main Street.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Through the Zoning Ordinance, the town should encourage preservation of agricultural or open space land. Protective measures worth investigating include conservation easements, local land trusts, and the purchase of development rights . The Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF) is a good source of information on conservation easements. Information on local land trusts may be obtained from the Office of State Planning and the Rockingham Planning Commission. A program on the purchase of development rights for eligible farmland is coordinated by the New Hampshire Department of Agriculture .
- Should Newton's citizens desire a local historic district, as authorized by RSA 674:45-50 which would entail a local Commission regulating exterior changes to buildings, the town center and Newton Junction appear to qualify for such a designation .
- Local citizens interested in documenting and preserving graveyards may obtain assistance from the New Hampshire Old Graveyard Associations.