

Chapter X - Historical and Archeological Resources

Purpose

Historic and archaeological resources contribute significantly to community character and make each town distinctive and welcoming. These resources are important not only for their role in telling the story of Ogunquit's history, but also for their present-day value, as historic buildings and sites add to the town's quality of life and their presence helps to maintain property values. Archaeological resources can reveal hidden human history thought lost, often yielding insights that inform those living today about how places were inhabited long ago.

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

Community Opinion Survey Results

PLACEHOLDER

Historic Overview

Introduction

The Town of Ogunquit is relatively young, having only been incorporated in 1980, but its European settlement history stretches back to the early 1600s along with Wells, when fisherman and traders began to frequent the shores. In 1641, a permanent settlement was established when Edmund Littlefield built his home along with saw and grist mills on the Webhannet River. Farmers and shipbuilders followed. In 1913, Ogunquit residents wanted local control of their village and formed the Ogunquit Village Corporation within the Town of Wells with the approval of the State Legislature. By this time, Ogunquit already had a strong sense of its own identity, separate from that of Wells. At that time there were fewer than 200 tax paying residents and only half as many non-resident taxpayers. That changed over time, until by the 1960s, there were more non-resident taxpayers than resident, and while it has remained this way ever since, the last two decades have seen an increase in the number of individuals who live in the community year-round, yielding an increase in the rate of resident taxpayers.

History of Ogunquit

Precontact

The name "Ogunquit" was mentioned in early documents primarily in reference to the river. The application by the Reverend John Wheelwright for the first sawmill sited its location on the "Agunquat" River. The meaning has long been thought to derive from the Natick tribe, meaning "Beautiful Place by the Sea," (which the Town still uses) but more recent scholarship casts doubt on that origin. It may come from the Micmac "pog-um-ik," meaning lagoons formed at the mouth of rivers. While the exact origin of

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the term is not known, the description “Beautiful Place by the Sea” is considered by many to sound most descriptive of Ogunquit. (See A History of Ogunquit Village by Esslyn Gilman Perkins, 1951, pages 15-16).

Colonial Era to mid 19th Century

In the early years of European settlement, travel was difficult due to the lack of usable roads. An order from Massachusetts was issued in 1653 to build a road by the sea. This road was improved through Ogunquit Village in 1664, and the King’s Highway was extended from Portsmouth to Saco in 1719. A mile marker from the original highway still exists in town, marked “B 89 1769,” meaning Boston 89 miles, in the year 1769.

Ongoing conflict with Native Americans and other economic hardships kept growth and industry to a minimum until 1760 when the last of the treaties were signed. Then subsequent national wars (French and Indian Wars, Revolutionary War, and the War of 1812) and their associated economic downturns conspired to repeatedly slow growth all along the New England coast. By 1825, farms, shipbuilding, and trade had resumed, travel was possible via stagecoach, and taverns sprang up to accommodate them. By the end of the 19th Century, Ogunquit had become a busy port at wharfs near the end of the Ogunquit River. During this era, William Henry Perkins began building the iconic Ogunquit Dory in his boat house located on what is today still called Wharf Lane; a modern re-creation today lies at the Winn House. Cargo ships plied their way from Ogunquit to Boston and along the coast. Several sea captains built large homes in town, some of which are still in existence.

Late 19th Century: Beginning of the Artist Colony Era

Ogunquit’s future began to take shape in the late 1800s, as artists who were attracted to Perkins Cove by its summer beauty in turn attracted other people. Summer visitors began to arrive with regularity, especially with the advent of trains and trolleys. Ogunquit Beach first became accessible in 1888, when a bridge was built across the Ogunquit River at Beach Street. There were grand hotels built in Ogunquit for the summer boarders, who would ride the train to Wells Beach Station and then take a carriage to Ogunquit. Some of those hotels still exist, such as the Colonial Inn, built circa 1887 and now on the National Register of Historic Places. Others followed, including the Ontio and Lookout hotels, now converted to condominiums. The Nellie Littlefield house was built in 1889 and has been restored as a Bed and Breakfast. Around this same time, developers, known then as “capitalists”, were buying up shoreland from local owners who found it amazing that such poor, rocky, sandy land was desirable simply because of its view. Several famous tea houses attracted residents and tourists alike, including the Whistling Oyster (now Barnacle Billy’s Etc.) and the Dan Sing Fan house, famous for its cinnamon toast and jasmine tea, overlooking Perkins Cove.

Early 20th Century: Protecting Natural Resources

1913 saw the incorporation of the Ogunquit Village Corporation. A pivotal moment in Ogunquit’s history occurred in the early 1920s, when it was discovered that a Wells developer had purchased the entire shoreline down to the southern tip of Ogunquit Beach. As cottage development marched south from Moody Beach, Ogunquit residents formed the Ogunquit Beach District with the approval of the State legislature to tax themselves for the express purpose of funding eminent domain proceedings. This extraordinary and prescient act by far-seeing Ogunquit residents resulted in the beach being saved at the cost of \$45,000 (half of which were legal fees) several years later. The property today is priceless to the Town and its many visitors.

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Ogunquit by air

Ogunquit Beach (legally a park per the Act to Incorporate the Ogunquit Beach District dated April 1, 1923) is today a beautiful public beach due to the will and actions of Ogunquit's townspeople at a time when Ogunquit was not a wealthy community. The Beach Street Bridge was initially built in 1888, following a fire. Previously, Wells had not allowed a bridge to the beach, and it was only accessible through Wells.

Perkins Cove began as a small fishing village but its rustic shacks, lapstrake dories, rocky outcroppings and churning waves made it an artists' paradise. As a result, it soon emerged as a mecca for artists especially with the advent of two art schools with renowned teachers of painting and sculpture. The Coves' saltmarsh was initially dredged in 1940-41 and a drawbridge was built across the channel in 1944 to replace earlier rickety footbridges as well as allow larger boats access to the protected harbor. To manage the harbor moorings, the Town appointed William Tower Jr. as the first Harbormaster.



Another far-reaching event occurred in 1925, when Josiah Chase, a wealthy conservationist and former legislator, gave one mile of what is now known as the Marginal Way and approximately another mile of access paths to the Town. Other benefactors added ten-foot-wide shoreline easements, eventually forming the 1.25-mile Marginal Way. Originally a narrow path requiring climbing over rocks and running to the Cliff House, it is now paved, wheelchair accessible, and ends at Perkins Cove. This pathway, with its views and benches at the ocean's edge, is beloved by residents and tourists alike. The Marginal Way Committee is responsible for identifying projects to enhance the Marginal Way and makes these recommendations to the Select Board. For example, the Committee annually attracts volunteers to replace invasive plants with native Maine flora. The Marginal Way Preservation Fund, Inc. (a non-profit organization) administers an endowment fund which helps defray the Town's costs associated with

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preserving and maintaining it. In 2016, a new 8,000 square foot garden featuring native plantings was installed in the area of the Marginal Way known as the Devil's Kitchen.

Mid 20th Century: Tourism Growth

Following World War II and the building of the Maine Turnpike between Portland and Kittery, Ogunquit truly became a destination community as the middle-class took to their cars and to the roads to visit the seashore and vacation. The 1950s and 1960s saw robust residential/seasonal and commercial growth in the Town.

The artist colony expanded when Charles Woodbury founded the Ogunquit Summer School of Drawing and Painting, and Hamilton Easter Field founded the Summer School of Graphic Arts in 1911. In 1928, the Ogunquit Art Association (now housed at the Barn Gallery) was established. The Ogunquit Museum of American Art was founded by Henry Strater, on land purchased from Charles Woodbury's family, in 1953.

The Ogunquit Playhouse was founded in 1933 in a converted garage as a summer stock theater. Walter and Maude Hartwig built the current playhouse in 1937 and brought famous Broadway and Hollywood stars to town to perform. John Lane was introduced to Ogunquit by Maude Hartwig and later bought the Playhouse in 1950, helping to found the Ogunquit Playhouse Foundation to ensure its future. In 2005, current director Bradford Kenney became the Artistic Director and has brought the Playhouse into the 21st Century, extending the season from 10 weeks to 26 weeks. The Town recently approved a new zoning district which will enable the Playhouse to modernize and continue to delight audiences well into the future. The original site of the Playhouse was converted in 1939 to become the Ogunquit Square Theater, which ran movies until 1998.



Ogunquit Playhouse

The Leavitt Theater first opened in 1925, showing the silent film "Dante's Inferno." The Leavitt, which went digital in 2014, continues to show movies and has added restaurants to attract guests.

Late 20th Century: Town Incorporation

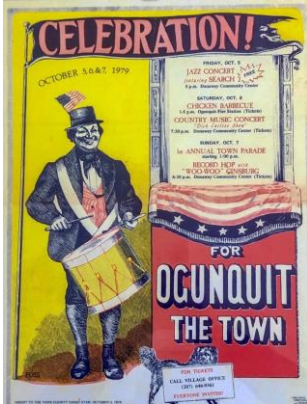
In 1974, S. Judson Dunaway generously donated a community center to the then-village of Ogunquit. Today the building serves as both a community center and town hall. The Dunaway has also been used as the Police Station.

Ogunquit separated from Wells in 1980, incorporating as a standalone town, and celebrated with a parade through the village. The following decades have shown that Ogunquit continues to be unique among

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coastal Maine towns with its long stretch of beach forever preserved for the public as well as its rich arts and culture heritage.



On May 1982 at 2:20 PM, a major fire broke out in the village, leaping from building to building and destroying much of the east side of Route 1. Nine shops, a hotel and a gas station were all badly damaged or destroyed. Residents reacted quickly, removing as much as possible from each building. One eyewitness said, "Finally I got up and looked for myself and couldn't believe it. It was like a fog just rolled into town -- an evil fog." Firefighters from Ogunquit and five surrounding towns joined in to control the fire as well as possible. It was a credit to the community that the Town was back up and running for the summer season.

21st Century: Population Growth & Preservation Efforts

The early years of the 21st century saw substantial residential growth in Ogunquit, as many seasonal residents converted their homes into permanent residences and sought to take advantage of community amenities year-round. This resulted in a nearly two-fold population increase during the first two decades, from less than 900 residents to more than 1,500. In April 2015, another fire erupted at the Blue Water Inn near the Main Beach, totally destroying the restaurant and inn. Both were later replaced by a modern restaurant and hotel space.

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Memorial Library

In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic created a major disruption to life and business in Ogunquit. The restrictions forced the Town to postpone a planned celebration for the 40th anniversary of its incorporation. The celebration finally took place on June 10, 2022, with the Spring BonAire event, featuring numerous concerts, children's events, a craft fair, an art walk, sand drawing on the beach, a live lobster sale off the boats, and fireworks at the Main Beach.



Continuing Preservation

In its evolution from a fishing village surrounded by farms to a seashore destination community, Ogunquit has seen buildings both simple and stately rise along its roads. Because Ogunquit was never a busy port like York or Portsmouth, its early buildings tended to be simple, like the Goodale-Stevens Farm circa 1720. Later buildings, as Ogunquit attracted more residents and grew more prosperous, were more elaborate and reflected building trends of the time. As happened in many other Maine communities, Ogunquit lost older houses and buildings, particularly along Route 1 and Shore Road, as commercial ventures moved in and even if not demolished, some historic buildings were altered as they were repurposed for commercial uses.

Ogunquit has numerous other buildings that were identified in the previous Comprehensive Plan as being either eligible for listing on the National Register or potentially eligible for listing. The Historic Preservation Commission corroborated that these properties still exist and are of interest and added a property to the list as well.

To assist with preservation efforts, the Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) awards grants for education, planning, survey, and National Register application work. In 2017, approximately \$50,000 was available. Each grant requires a 50% match. These grants can be utilized to collect and analyze information on the location and significance of historic properties, produce National Register nominations, educate the public about the benefits of historic preservation, or assist local governments with preservation planning. Eligible applicants include state agencies, municipal governments, educational institutions, and private non-profit institutions.

As mentioned earlier, Ogunquit's municipal codes include its Title XI Historic Preservation ordinance, which provides a legal framework by which the Town can, through the Historic Preservation Commission, protect and preserve its historic, architectural, and cultural heritage. As of this writing, the Commission is not constituted, and its duties have been assumed by the Planning Board. Ogunquit also adopted Zoning Ordinance Article 11 Design Review, which requires Planning Board review of pre-December 31, 1930

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property applications. Proposals for changes on newer projects, which may have an effect on pre-1930 properties within the zoning district, are also subject to review. This Ordinance states that the Historic Preservation Commission must also review and comment on the application under the Historic Preservation Ordinance and Design Guidelines. Having such regulations demonstrates that Ogunquit is serious about historic preservation. The Town has experienced some difficulties with implementing the existing Ordinances. Two of these difficulties are 1) there is no defined local historic district or districts which share certain characteristics as are more typically encountered when a community has historic preservation regulations and 2) the regulations as written do not provide standards by which to specifically determine when a property slated for change will adversely affect a property or a neighborhood deemed historically significant.

In determining how best to solve these ordinance issues, so that both the Town and the Design Review applicants get the best possible outcomes, the Town may want to consider providing funding to the Historic Preservation Commission so that it can begin to administer the Title XI ordinance, obtain legal advice on historic preservation law, and apply for the MHPC's grant to assist Ogunquit with preservation planning. The grant could also assist the Town with identifying and documenting historically significant buildings.

Historical and Archaeological Resources

Historic Resources

This section describes historic districts, buildings, structures and objects located above the ground. Ogunquit recognizes and appreciates its historic buildings and landmarks. In 2000, the Town adopted the Title XI Historic Preservation Ordinance which authorizes the Historic Preservation Commission's duties, functions, and powers.

The purpose of Title XI is to provide a legal framework through which the community can protect and preserve its historic, architectural, and cultural heritage and prevent the loss of architectural history by protecting the outward appearance of architectural sites, and preventing the demolition or removal of buildings while accepting new buildings and structures which are compliant with the character of the town. The Ordinance also provides for procedures by which the Commission may review an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness or a Certificate of Demolition on a historic building or site and by which the Commission may designate a building or site as historically significant. At the same time as the ordinance was adopted, the Town approved designating the iconic Perkins Cove Bridge as a historic structure through Town Meeting and later, residents voted to designate the Winn House and the Dolphin Post as historic.

In addition to the historical designation process that the Town has put into place through its ordinance, there is also the National Register of Historic Places. This federal listing, which is administered by the National Park Service, is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate and protect historic or archeological resources. The Register does not, however, provide any protection against demolition or alteration unless the structure in question has received federal funding for its restoration – only local designation can truly protect structures from demolition. Such funding is typically only available for commercial structures.

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Ogunquit has eight sites listed in the National Register. They are:

- Goodale-Stevens Farm – circa 1720, located on the east side of North Village Road, just south of the Ogunquit River.
- Goodale-Bourne Farm – circa 1740, located on the west side of North Village Road.
- Captain Winn House – circa 1780, moved from its former location on Route 1 where the Gorges Grant Hotel is now to Obed's Lane on the historic Jacobs lot in the 1980s. The building currently houses the Ogunquit Heritage Museum and its collection of historical artifacts, documents, and books. As noted earlier, it was also recognized by the Ogunquit voters as historic.



Winn House

Goodale-Stevens Farm

- Charles Perkins Homestead – circa mid to late 1700s, located on the west side of Route 1 at Scotch Hill, probably built by David Maxwell. According to the Ogunquit Historic Preservation Commission, the Charles Perkins Homestead was demolished some years ago. Across the street, the David Maxwell homestead still exists as the store now known as Panache.
- Ogunquit Playhouse, circa 1937, located on Route 1, was added to the Register in 1995 and elevated in 2015 to a “National Level of Significance” designation.
- Memorial Library – circa 1897, located on the north side of Shore Road, was built by Nannie Conarroe in memory of her husband, George, and given to the Town along with a trust fund to maintain it.
- Colonial Inn – circa 1890, located on the east side of Shore Road. Entered into the National Register on July 30th, 2012 under Entertainment and Recreation Criterion C. Architecture. This turn of the century hotel offers an important visual look back to summer hotels that provided escape from the unhealthy city heat from 1890 through 1960.

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- The Marginal Way was added to the Register in 2022. More information is available in the Appendices.

The Historic Preservation Commission has prepared the Ogunquit Historic Preservation Register, which includes:

- Perkins Cove Bridge, the iconic footbridge spanning the Cove.
- Captain Winn House, late 1700's, as noted above.
- The Dolphin Post, 1700s, sits on the curve of the Ogunquit River and is visible only at low tide. It was used to help schooners move safely to Ogunquit's busy wharfs.
- Ciampa Boarding House, prior to 1885, built for summer boarders in the Queen Anne style.
- Locust Grove Cemetery, 1800's
- Ogunquit Memorial Library, 1897, as noted above.
- Mile Marker, c 1769, placed on Post Road and noting the distance of 89 miles to Boston.
- Ogunquit Playhouse, 1937, as noted above.
- The Woodbury Studio, 1898, the first school of the Ogunquit Art Colony, owned by Charles H. Woodbury.

Ogunquit has 22 historic cemeteries, most of which are privately owned, but maintains Riverside, with plots dating back to the mid 18th Century; Locust Grove, also dating back to the 1750s; and the small Old Burial Ground, dating to the 1850s.



The Dolphin Post

Archeological Resources in Ogunquit

Beyond buildings, structures, or districts there are archeological sites, which are sites of historic significance located below grade (underground). A shipwreck, buried in sand on the river just north of the Beach Street Bridge, is believed to be the Enterprise, a 55-foot schooner thought to have been abandoned in the 1880s. Four precontact archeological sites along the banks of the Ogunquit River have been identified by the MHPC as having possible archeological significance. MHPC has drafted a map with the

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approximate locations. One may contain artifacts from the Ceramic Period, which was from 1000 BC to about 1500 AD. Survey work is required to be certain. Per MHPC regulations, any area within 250 feet of the Ogunquit River, as well as the entire oceanfront, has the potential for containing archeological sites. MHPC recommends that field checks be done in these areas prior to any ground disturbance or construction activity.

Threats to Historic and Archaeological Resources

As residential construction has increased within Ogunquit, this has frequently required the demolition of older homes to construct new homes. The cost of maintaining older homes and buildings can result in deferred care that negatively impacts building integrity, as has been the case with the Ogunquit Village School. The town monitors development and construction to protect historic sites, but there is concern among residents that the historic atmosphere and charm of the town could be at risk.

There are many risks facing the town's historical sites. The Ogunquit Village School is one example. Other historic buildings not listed as such under the guidelines of Ogunquit Municipal Ordinance 97 Article III §97-9, have been demolished; Design Review can require modifications to the architectural design, but cannot always protect the structure itself from demolition.

The Marginal Way has repeatedly suffered damage from storms in the past, and sea level rise presents further risks.

The strategies from the 2004 Plan have been adopted, but time has shown that more can be done. The Ogunquit Historic Preservation Commission has developed a list of older buildings in town, but few have been locally designated as historic under the municipal ordinance. Additionally, the Ogunquit Zoning Ordinance was revised to require reconnaissance surveys of potential archeological sites, but its effectiveness is unknown. The Ordinance also requires analysis of development applications for resources on or near the site, and while it has been effective, there is room for improvement.