

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Introduction

The Easton Historical Society, Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC), and the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry provided Easton with a set of data on its historic and archeological resources used in this inventory and analysis.

Town History

Provided by the Kevin Marquis and the Easton Historical Society, 2014

Easton, formerly known as Letter C and then as Fremont Plantation is located to the west of Presque Isle. In 1851 the first known residence in the Easton wilderness was built by Henry Wilson, who had taught school in Presque Isle. Solomon Bolster arrived in 1854, he joined Henry Wilson and Augustus Rackliffe, it's the sole residents. In 1855-1856, Noah Barker partitioned the township into 142 lots of 160 acres in size, thereby determining its layout. The state opened it for settlement, and on July 26, 1856 it was organized as the Fremont Plantation. A schoolhouse was built in 1858 and the first of several lumber mills was constructed in another year. By 1860 the population was 320. Growth of the population slowed during the Civil War, and the town of Easton was incorporated 1865. Economic growth was slow, evidenced by an 1862 record that taxes should be paid in grain or shingles. The first store was opened in 1863. A starch factory was built in 1877, and a steam shingle mill in 1879. Easton became "one of the greatest potato producing towns in the County. The 1880s saw the appearance of the Methodists and the Free Will Baptists--also the Odd Fellows.¹ By 1880 the population was 835; by 1890, 978.

Lying on both the eastern line of Aroostook County and Maine, Easton so derives its name. It was incorporated in 1865. Previous to that date, it was called Fremont Plantation in honor of Major General John Charles Fremont, the pathfinder and explorer. He was the standard bearer of the young Republican Party of the nation in 1856, when the plantation assumed his name.

Easton was originally a Massachusetts township, but about 1854, like all the other towns in Maine still remaining in the hands of Massachusetts, it was purchased by the State of Maine. In 1855-56 it was lotted by Noah Barker into 160 acre lots, and was opened by the state for settlement. The earliest settler of whom there is any authentic account is Henry Wilson who first came to Presque Isle and taught school there in a log house about 1847. There was at this time a logging road from Presque Isle across the present town in Easton to the St. John River, a road passable only for teams in the winter season.

The early settlers paid for their land by grubbing out and building the road from Fort Fairfield to Blaine, which in 1856 had been run out but was only a spotted line in the woods. It was not passable for wagons until 1859. By 1865, Easton boasted a population of approximately 400 and by Proclamation by the Maine Legislature was officially incorporated as the Town of Easton on February 24, 1865. The town valuation in 1865 was \$39,495 and the first town meeting raised

\$968.53 to support schools, roads and necessary town charges. Taxes could be paid in grain or cedar shingles, both being acceptable as currency in Aroostook County at the time.

In 1858, the first school house was constructed. In 1895, Easton's potential for rail freight was realized when the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad constructed a spur, opening the community to railroad traffic. In the 1960s Frederick Vahlsing constructed the first modern potato processing plant, located along the shoreline of the Prestile Stream and later constructed a \$30 million sugar beet refinery.

In the 1860 census, when Easton was still Letter C Range 1, sixty-nine families lived in area and the only occupation was farmer. These farmers would have had improved acres for crop production and pastureland and significantly more unimproved acreage in woodlots which they depended on for both construction and fuel wood. The Rackliff brothers, as did other farmers in the area, accomplished a lot in terms of clearing land for production purposes in a little over ten years. In 1870, 100 farmers recorded their agricultural production for the census records and the average amount of improved land was a little over 36 acres.

In 1858, voters appeared at a plantation meeting where they voted to establish a school at Easton Center and to forbid liquor licenses in the town. In 1863, the assessors, William Wharff, James Tozier and Nathan Jewell along with the plantation clerk, John Kelly, sent the state a list of voters in Fremont Plantation with 74 names on it. According to state law the assessors had to create the list of eligible voters by August 11th and then on the second Monday in September gather them together to vote on the governor, senators and representatives to the state legislature as well as the president and vice president when applicable. The assessors would preside over the elections, take people's votes and present them to the clerk who would then record them. These voters lists show that the settlers of Fremont Plantation were active participants in government at all levels as well as that they had organized themselves at the local level in order to participate and carry out the necessary requirements to preside over the affairs of the plantation. The first municipal building was constructed in 1957 and in 1973, residents voted to adopt a Town Manager form of government. The first Town Manger was Alphonse Dixon who assumed those duties in 1974.

Today, agriculture and wood products remain the life blood of Easton. McCain Foods, Inc. and Huber Engineered Woods, LLC., both agricultural or resource based industries, make up about 70 percent of the tax base.

Education has always been important to the residents of Easton and schools have contributed to the town's identity as early as the 1870s. Until the mid-nineteenth century, surrounding communities like River de Chute, Pine Tree and Easton Center supported small one and two room school houses that taught students from first to eighth grades. When these students graduated from eighth grade, they had the opportunity to attend high school, which was established in 1877, in the town of Easton.

By 1901 there were 11 school buildings in Easton and its surrounding communities, which included a new school built in the Ladner school district. In 1904 a new free high school was built in town, which later became the elementary school. In 1905 a new school was built in the Mahaney district, followed by a new school in the Pine Tree district in 1907. In 1916, the eight-

grade system replaced the nine-grade system in the schools in the surrounding rural communities. This change meant that these schools taught up to eighth grade instead of ninth grade. If a student wanted to continue into ninth grade, he or she would have to go to the high school. The town school committee noted, in the town report for 1916, that “[this change] brings our common school system up to date. It saves a year of valuable time to students, enables them to go to High School a year earlier, and encourages more pupils to go to High School and to College, or to other institutions of high learning.” This change affected the Easton Center School, the Curtis School, the Dilling School, the Fuller School, the Getchell School, the Ladner School, the Mahany School, the McManus School and the Pine Tree School which were all rural or common schools. By 1920, Easton had a total of 420 children attending approximately twelve different schools in Easton and its surrounding rural communities.

Easton today is vibrant community offering small town living among scenic views in Aroostook. With its many miles of streams and snowmobile trails, it offers year round recreation for its citizens.

Historic Buildings, Prehistoric Archaeological and Historic Archaeological Sites

Two types of archaeological sites need consideration during Growth Management Planning: prehistoric archaeological sites (Native American, before European arrival) and historic archaeological sites (mostly European-American, after written historic records about 1600 A.D.). Prehistoric sites include campsites or village locations, rock quarries and workshops (from making stone tools), and petroglyphs or rock carvings. Prehistoric archaeological site sensitivity maps are based on the current understanding of Native American settlement patterns (known site locations and professionally surveyed areas) within the portion of the state where the municipality is located. Most commonly, prehistoric archaeological sites are located within 50 m of canoe-navigable water, on relatively well-drained, level landforms. Some of the most ancient sites (>10,000 years old) are located on sandy soils within 200 m of small (not canoe- navigable) streams.

Historic archaeological sites may include cellar holes from houses, foundations for farm buildings, mills, wharves and boat yards, and near-shore shipwrecks. Historic archaeological sites can be predicted most often by a review of historic records, maps and deeds. Settlement often focused on transportation corridors, first rivers, and then roads as they were built. Archaeological sites from the first wave of European settlement in any town are likely to be significant (National Register eligible).

Historic Buildings

According to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission (2013), based on preliminary architectural survey data, the following property may be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places:

- Circle K Dairy Farm, 94 Gray Road

A comprehensive survey of Easton's historic above-ground resources needs to be conducted in order to identify other properties that may be eligible for nomination to the National Register. At the time of the writing of this plan, this has not been completed.

Prehistoric Archaeological Sites

According to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission (2013) there are no known Prehistoric Archaeological sites located in Easton and, at the time of the writing of this plan, no professional archaeological surveys have been completed. However MHPC recommends that the areas located along the Chute River, Monson Pond shoreline, and Prestile Stream need archaeological survey in advance of any ground disturbing activity.

Historic Archaeological Sites

According to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission (2013) there is one historical archeological site located in Easton. The Easton boundary line farm located on the Easton/New Brunswick border was surveyed by staff and research indicates early twentieth century context (1900-1940) with potential nineteenth century components

No other professional surveys for historic archaeological sites have been conducted to date in Easton. Future archaeological survey should focus on the identification of potentially significant resources associated with the town's agricultural, residential, and industrial heritage, particularly those associated with the earliest Euro-American settlement of the town in the 18th and 19th centuries.

There are no known Native American archeological sites located in Easton.

Threats to Historic and Prehistoric Resources

The threats to these resources are primarily centered on the harsh northern Maine climate, lack of financial resources and a lack of broad public awareness and appreciation for the value of historic/prehistoric resources. For the most part, historic buildings are wood frame structures that require constant maintenance. While the town provides some funding for the Historical Society, maintenance is generally the responsibility of the owner.

Prehistoric resources are threatened by all land use activity in sensitive areas especially when excavation is involved. Permitting for many activities does not require a review or determination of the presence or absence of these archeological resources. Public awareness of these resources is limited. Some sensitive areas are subject to severe stream bank erosion that may be exposing or degrading prehistoric sites.

HISTORICAL, CULTURAL & ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES
Policies & Strategies

State Goal

Preserve the State’s Historic and Archeological Resources and to further identify these resources and ensure that their value is recognized and protected.

Local Goal

Improve local awareness and understanding of these resources and their value. Identify, recognize and protect new resources that have merit.

POLICY

Improve awareness and understanding of the significance of Easton’s historic, cultural and archeological resources. (HCA)

Strategy	Responsibility	Timeframe
During Easton Days, present information concerning the importance of HCA sites.	Historical Society	Annually
Expand the use of HCA sites, where appropriate, as staging areas for social/educational events that build support for local historic resources.	Historical Society, Clubs, and Town Officials	Annually
Enhance the Municipal website to include a link to information that exhibit the community’s historic, cultural and archeological resources.	Town Clerk and Town Manager	Annually
Improve and update the public signage and literature that directs people to the HCA resources of Easton.	Historical Society and Town Officials	2018
Develop documentation, interpretation and displays that communicate the importance of Churches, farming and logging in local history.	Churches, Historical Society and Town Officials.	2016 and on-going

POLICY

Improve the protection of known and potentially valuable HCA resources of the community.

Strategy	Responsibility	Timeframe
Amend Shoreland Zoning Ordinance to include standards that help identify and protect HCA resources.	Planning Board	2017
When developing the building permit application, include identification of potential HCA resources.	Historical Society, and Planning Board	2017
Sponsor a forum to extract local knowledge on the location of farmsteads, settlements, foundations and artifacts that depict local HCA resources.	Historical Society	Annually

Strategy	Responsibility	Timeframe
Incorporate the use of social media like Facebook to help identify and locate HCA resources.	Historical Society and Town Officials	On-going
Seek funding to develop and implement an historic preservation master plan that includes a comprehensive list of potential sites.	Historical Society and Town Officials.	2016 and on-going

POLICY

Have all eligible sites listed in the National Register of Historic Places and locally recognize and display these sites.

Strategy	Responsibility	Timeframe
Encourage and support the local historical society's effort to produce a comprehensive list and evaluation of potential sites.	Town Officials and Historical Society	2017
Establish a dialogue with owners on the potential historic value of their property.	Historical Society, and Town Officials	2017
Request the participation of the Maine Historic Preservation Commission in the nomination of potential sites for listing.	Historical Society	Annually

POLICY

Recognize and support the identification, interpretation and display of HCA resources as a means to enhance the local economy and quality of life.

Strategy	Responsibility	Timeframe
Continue to support local, regional and international festivals and events that include culturally based activities and international cooperation.	Town Officials	On-going
Encourage and support the development of new activities and events utilizing the Easton Pond recreation area as a staging area.	Town Officials	On-going