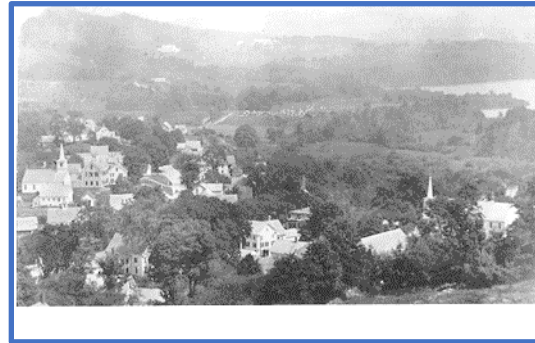


Understanding Freedom Village’s “Sense of Place”

Freedom is like other small NH towns- it takes pride in its small-town values — community involvement, neighborliness, self-reliance, respect for tradition, honesty, family values, patience, resilience, respect for the environment, and inclusivity. These are more than just the cornerstone of small-town living; they are the bedrock upon which any successful, compassionate, and resilient society is built¹.

On March 16th Freedom voters have an important decision to make- whether to totally refurbish the current Town Office (historical Village School House), or build a new Town

Office outside the Village on Old Portland Road. This is an important subject so it is hoped that the voters understand what gives Freedom its Sense of Place.



Tradition, and its preservation, are one of the main aspects of maintaining a town’s sense of place. In Freedom it is the existence and layout of the natural and built environment. The existence of a compact and picturesque village that serves the entire community is part of that sense of place that is Freedom. In fact, it is the preservation of this small-town appearance and feel that the Freedom Master Plan² points to as very important to the Town’s citizens. This article focuses on Freedom Village and what makes it unique and valuable to both residence and visitors.

There are three main components of Freedom village that contribute to its uniqueness:

1. It is the center of the Town. People come to the village to conduct business and enjoy the amenities that it has, even if limited. Residents and visitors come to one central area to mail their letters, conduct business with the Town, go to church, enjoy town and private functions, visit the historical society, shop at the village store and the gallery and fish in the Cold Brook. It is where major annual functions occur such as the Old Home Week parade. It is the human activity and purpose for which people travel to the Village is what keeps the town “vital”. The Village is lived in and used which is important to its sense of place characterization. Not all towns have this.
2. The private homes, many of which have maintained their white-clapboard and shutter style consistent over the last 100+ years. The historic nature of these homes is important to the sense of place that is Freedom Village
3. The “commercial/municipal” buildings and their current and historical functions, to include:
 1. The Post Office*
 2. School House Hill which contains the Town Office*, The Mason’s building, the Gazebo, and the Snow Roller shed.
 3. Town Hall
 4. The First Congregational Church
 5. The Village Store
 6. The Gallery

- 7. The Town Library
- 8. The Freedom Historical Society

*These Post Office and Town Office are open and used full time while all the other buildings have part-time hours, some more than others.

Given that this is a Historical Society Bulletin, let's look at these buildings and their historical context and their current use.

A. Buildings used full-time.

1. The U.S. Post Office:

While the Post Office has been in several buildings (now private) in Town, it has been in its current location since the 1950's. It sits on the site that was formerly Nichol's Garage. This 1960's photo is of Lettie Thurston after a February snowstorm. Parking anyone?



2. Town Office/School House Hill.

This 1900 photo shows the village school. The Baptist Church and the Gazebo as they were originally. The Schoolhouse (now the Town Office) and the other structures are registered with the State of NH as a Historical Site.



B. Buildings used part-time

3. Town Hall and 4. First Congregational Church



This 1930's photograph shows both buildings before entrance walks and ADA ramps. The veterans memorial was also installed later. Note the stove pipe exiting the Church roof at that time. And, no bulleting board yet.

5. The Village Store



The Village Store when Ruth and Barry Jones owned it in the 1969-70 period. Gas was \$0.34/gal.

6. The Town Library



Freedom Library depicted in a 1973 OHW tile by Barbara Dutton; Barbara was the first president of the Board of the Freedom Historical Society when it was established in 1965.

7. The Gallery



The Gallery at 8 Elm St. was originally a small barn attached to the Arthur Merrow House. This remaining structure is now owned by Barbara McEvoy and previously by Mary Hockmeyer.

Peg Scully has also had an art gallery at her house at 27 Elm St. since 1980.



8. The Freedom Historical Society



Freedom Elementary students in front of the Freedom Historical Society’s Allard House after a tour and lesson, 2012.

What is the significance of all of this? One can see that these eight buildings make up a major part of what gives Freedom Village it’s Sense of Place. One thing to be aware of is that at Town Meeting on March 16, 2024, the voters get to decide if they want to abandon the Town Office in the former Village Schoolhouse and build a new structure on Rt. 153 or refurbish the current Town Office/Village Schoolhouse. The project is to give the Town employees brand new office space, either way. This vote could change the nature of Freedom Village sense of place, so voters should be fully informed as to what they are considering, and its impact. The Freedom town website has the details of the two options. It is important to note that you must be present at Town Meeting on March 16 in order to vote; the Meeting is at the Freedom Elementary School this year.

¹ McMahon, Edward T. The Secrets of Successful Small Communities. NH Municipal Association, September/October Newsletter. 2018.

² Town of Freedom NH Master Plan, 2020.

If you would like to see information about some subject specifically, please let us know! Comments can be emailed to FHSociety28@gmail.com.

Feel free to forward this newsletter to other folks so that they can benefit from being and member. For more information about the Freedom Historical Society and more stories and information about the history of Freedom visit <https://freedomhistoricalsociety.org>

Freedom History Quiz



- Do you know who this is? (We do 😊)
- If you do, send us an email with her name. FHSociety28@gmail.com
- For extra credit, can you name her job in town?
- For extra, extra credit, what house did she live in? Hint: it’s in the Village.
- We will tell you in the next edition; and how many correct answers!