

**Celebrating Deering 250 years
1774-2024**

Welcome Home!

A Celebration of Deering Life and Lives.



Presented by
The Deering Historical Society
Friday, July 19, 2024

Part of this exhibit is based on the book *Welcome Home to Deering*, New Hampshire by Evangeline Klee Poling. It was written soon after the Deering Bicentennial Celebration in 1974 and has been republished for Deering's 250th Celebration.

The purpose of this exhibit is to illuminate the history of our community from its origins to the present. To impart an understanding of how events in the past helped to make Deering the community it is today and to create a better path for the future of our community.

The other part of our exhibit focuses on a collection of oral histories, gathered from interviews from a generation born and raised in Deering during the Great Depression. Listening to their personal experiences enhances our understanding of the past and gives clarity to the events that shaped our families and community in which we live today.

Full interviews can be found here:

[youtube.com/@deeringhistoricalsociety](https://www.youtube.com/@deeringhistoricalsociety)

"History unites us for the future"

Support our programs!

Become a member of the Deering Historical Society:

\$30 a year per person 18 yr and older.

\$5 per person under 18 yr.

Support comes in many forms and this exhibit would not have been possible without the participation of many, many people generously donating money, time and labor, tools and talent, collecting information and pictures, writing and editing, scanning photographs and maps, finding or building panels, cleaning, polishing, making dump runs, installing lights, building stairs, advertising, etc.

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The information, photographs and maps are credited to the following resources:

- Welcome Home to Deering, New Hampshire by Evangeline Klee Poling*
- Enduring Faith by Donald Johnson with Jean Johnson and Peter Cram*
- Changes in the Land by William Cronon*
- New Hampshire Historical Society*
- State of New Hampshire Dept of Environmental Services Fact Sheets*
- New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources*
- Hillsboro Historical Society—Winokur Postcard Collection*
- The Forest Society*
- The Deering Cemetery Trustees*
- The Deering Library Trustees*

Personal photograph collections supplementing our Oral Narrative Exhibit have been generously shared by the following:

- The Family’s of Jeanne T. Bartlett, Gordon and Barbara Clark, Jean M. Feather, Donald Johnson, Rodney Kiblin, Wayne and Rose Wilson, Peter and Lou Ellen Beard*

Our Town

Shaping the Land



Hedgehog Mountain, elevation 1,320', is one of several high hills in Deering. It forms a natural barrier between East and West Deering overlooking the Contoocook River. Annual flooding keeps the flat stretch of fields rich for agriculture.

Indigenous Peoples

In the 1600's, over 100,000 Indigenous Peoples populated New Hampshire. By the mid 1700's with over 100 years of war and disease from European contact, surviving communities were left highly vulnerable and either moved to unsettled territories, attempted to assimilate, or had been kidnapped, captured, and sold or used as slaves.

Indigenous Peoples had been cultivating and altering the landscape for 1,000's of years, moving their villages from place to place, hunting, fishing, gathering nuts, berries, plants, and growing crops of squash, corn, and beans according to the season.

As a result, extensive trails existed through old growth forests, consisting of white pine, hemlock, and mixed hardwoods, hundreds of feet tall and several feet in circumference, and also along the riverbanks of the Contoocook and Piscataquog before joining the Merrimack River in Concord and Manchester. Several archaeological sites along the Contoocook River connect Indigenous Peoples settlements based on fishing and agriculture.

Glaciers

Deering's unique beauty, like all of New Hampshire, is a result of receding glaciers around 12,000 years ago, carving hills, mountains, lakes and rivers leaving thin deposits of soil in some areas, sand and gravel in others, many rocks and few mineral resources.

Over time glacial tundra was replaced with forested areas, and habitats evolved supporting animal life, including humans.



View of Deering Reservoir from the top of Gregg Hill.



The damming of the Piscataquog River in 1884 by the Piscataquog Water Power Co. created the Deering Reservoir, headwaters of the Piscataquog River. The Deering Reservoir became a popular attraction for summer people since the early 20th century.



Deering's borders continued to change: in 1786 a portion was seceded to Weare; in 1842 land was seceded to form Bennington; in 1972 a decision was made to change the border to follow the river Hillsboro.

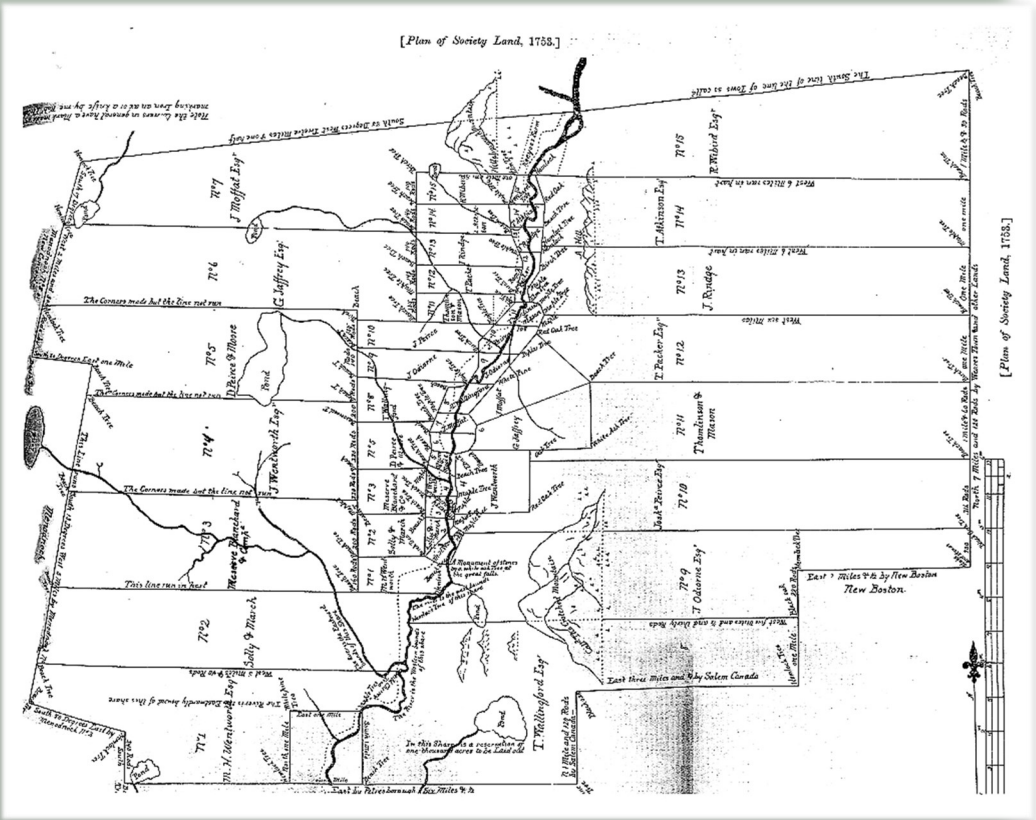
Masonian Proprietors

Deering is one of 221 Towns in New Hampshire. It took over 100 years after the first towns were settled along our seacoast in the 1600's for Deering to establish a permanent settlement, 70 miles inland. It took nearly 10 more years to incorporate, in 1774.

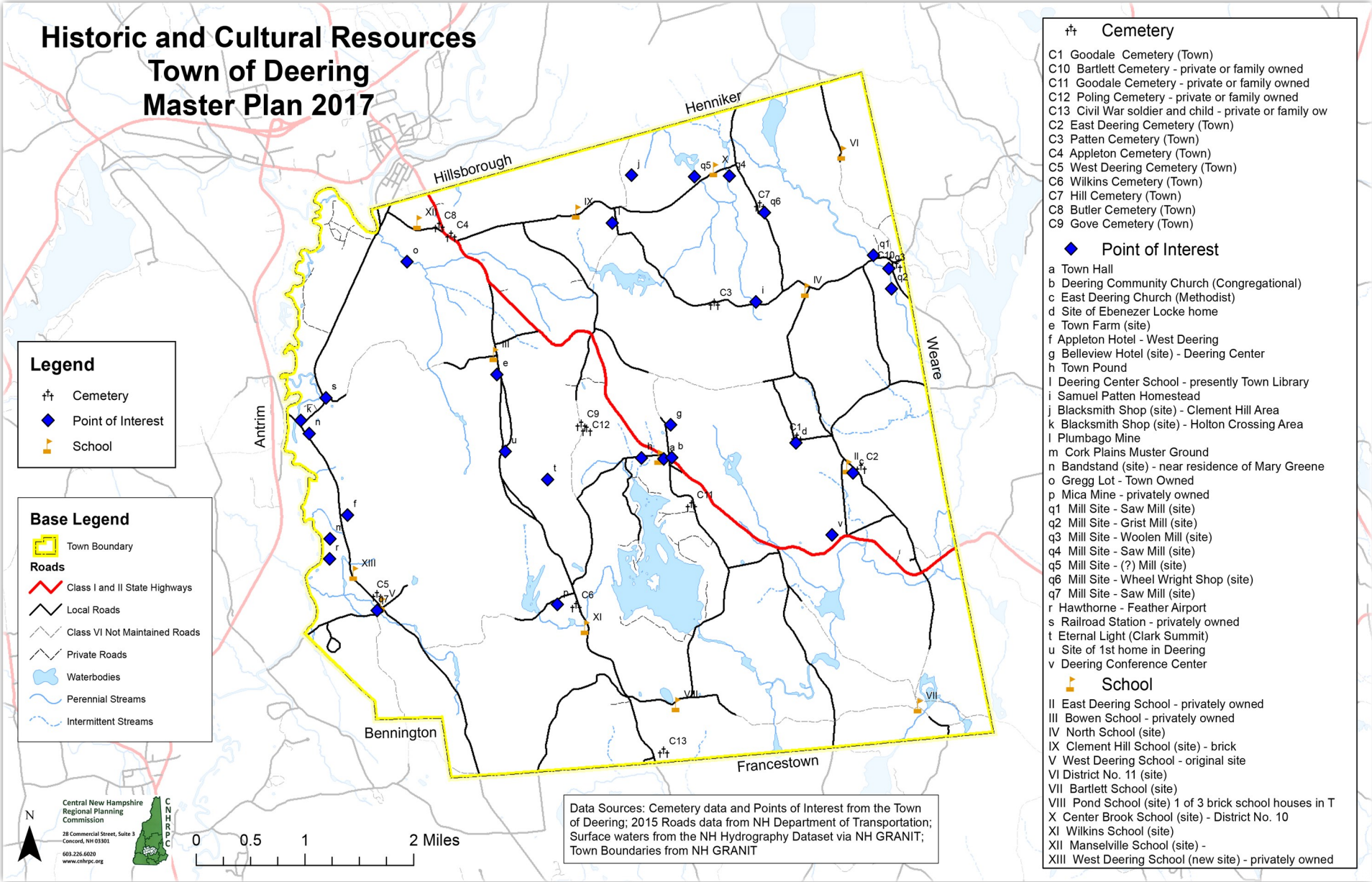
Deering was one of a number Townships granted by a group of private New Hampshire investors, the Masonian Proprietors, as soon as the border disputes were resolved between New Hampshire and Massachusetts in the mid 1700's.

The Masonian Proprietors who granted the Township of Deering did so according to a plan termed the "range town-ship" a plan in which equal sized lots were distributed all at once, separated by straight range roads.

This type of planning encouraged the establishment of isolated farms of 100 or more acres. It greatly diminished the earlier English form of settlement around a central village and central authority.



This map dated 1753, depicts the future Deering as big lots 11 through 15 bordering the Contoocook River. Later, parts of Deering would be carved off to create Bennington and lost to a dispute with the Town of Weare.



Dudley Brook, a tributary of the Piscataquog River, contains the ruins of several old mills from the 18th and 19th century. Mineral resources are few, but once Mica, Lead (Plumbago), Graphite, and Clay were mined.

Our Cemeteries

There are 6 Town-owned cemeteries, two of which are still in use, and 10 privately owned burying grounds in Deering.



Cemetery Trustee working cleaning historic headstones.

Cemetery Trustees are elected officials. They are responsible for maintaining the cemetery landscape, headstones, fencing and ironworks related to the plots. They also sell plots and set up perpetual care trusts.

They have initiated a volunteer Stewardship Program or “adopt a cemetery program” to assist with the maintenance of cemetery grounds by Town residents.

They have recently created a web site with information gathered from volunteers about the Deering Cemeteries found at: DEERINGCEMETERIES.COM.

More information and opportunities for

1783—Gove Cemetery



Gove Cemetery—Wolf Hill Rd.

1785—Goodall Cemetery



Goodall Cemetery—Driscoll Hill Rd.

The Gove Cemetery is the oldest cemetery, on the eastern slope of Wolf Hill overlooking the center of Deering. Some of the Town’s earliest settlers are buried here as well as four Revolutionary War soldiers, and a ‘deserter’ or fugitive of the law.

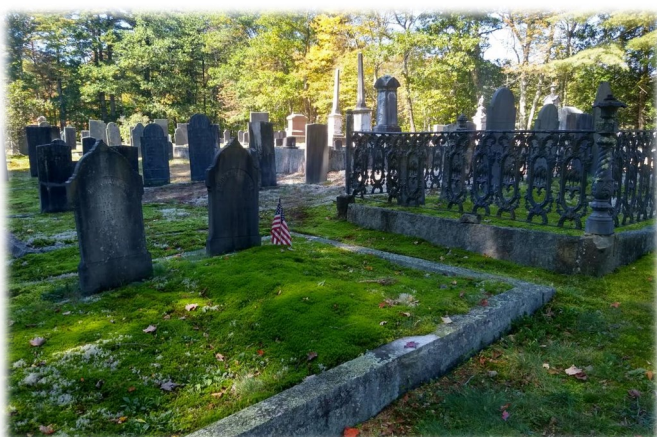
The Goodall Cemetery is where Ebenezer Lock is buried. A local legend reputed to have “fired the shot heard around the world” at the Battle of Lexington in the Revolutionary War.

Here also lie four marked graves of veterans of the War of 1812.

Appleton Cemetery, established in 1809 is located along Route 149. 106 ½ year old

Michael Rivers is buried here as well as soldiers of other wars.

1825—Wilkins Cemetery



Wilkins Cemetery—Old County Rd.

West Deering Cemetery has graves of soldiers from the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and the Civil War as well as early residents.

Wilkins Cemetery also has many early settlers as well as soldiers from the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812 and veterans of World War I and II and Vietnam. This cemetery is still in use.

1811—West Deering Cemetery



West Deering Cemetery—2nd NH Turnpike

Our Churches

1829—Congregational Church

A Congregational Covenant was signed in December of 1789. Meetings were held in the Meetinghouse (Town Hall) until the Congregational Church was built across the street in 1829.

The “Separation of Church and State” in 1819 stated that it was no longer a mandate for Tax Payers to raise taxes to support churches and, particularly clergy. Deering voters, nevertheless, elected to raise some taxes for clergy, but at a lesser amount. Once the church was built, all fiscal responsibility rested on the congregants.

The orthodox and strict Calvinistic-style of the Congregational faith was slightly predominant in the earliest days of Deering, over the more liberal Presbyterian and Methodist expressions of faith, that were beginning to make their presence known.



Dr. Eleanor Campbell and the Summer Colony—1930's

With the decline of Deering's population, the church struggled in the first half of the 20th century. The church found revitalization through the generosity of Dr. Eleanor Campbell and her hosting of numerous ministers from out of state. These ministers provided services for several months when the population of Deering swelled with Eleanor's and ministers' friends and family coming to town.

Eleanor's friends purchased land and houses around the Deering Reservoir, supporting Deering's economy, as well as contributing to several other faith-based organizations.

Dr. Campbell initially had the “Community Building” set up to provide medical treatments as well as hosting parties and conferences, which later became the “Conference Center” and is currently “The Wilds”.

Reverend Daniel and Evangeline Poling bought the “Longhouse” for family camping, which now houses “His Mansion”.

In 1931, she founded the Deering Foundation (renamed the Eleanor A. Campbell Charitable Fund in 2016) to provide tuition for students. The foundation is still in operation.



1830—East Deering Church

Built one year after the Congregational Church, by the same Architect, Reuben Loveren. The East Deering Church is the third oldest public building in Deering. Created by the *United Free Salvation Society*, it was home to the more progressive and liberal leaning: Free Will Baptist, Methodist and occasional Universalist services. The different denominations held services on alternate Sundays, eventually, merging into simply the Methodist Church.

As did the Deering Center Church, the East Deering Church found hard times by the beginning of the 20th Century with the many-pronged rural decline. Deering's population dipped to a mere 287 people, ceasing to function as a church by the end of 1941.

In 1953, Whitney Yeaple purchased the building and land from the Methodist Conference. In March 1984, the church and land were given to the Deering Historical Society.



Our Schools

1772—1885

Before the 1800's, the schools in Deering were held in homes. Then state legislation empowered towns to divide into districts.

The 'District' system planned schools in each district to be within walking distance of the students. The one room school house only had outhouses, and wood heat. Each district hired teachers and set the lengths of summer and winter terms according to what they could afford. Books and supplies were scanty. Teachers had no specific education..

1885—1919

In 1885, the state abolishes the district school system, beginning a period of Town School Board control. State standards required the Town to raise sufficient funds to insure at least 20 weeks of schooling per year.

Colleges started training teachers, and women of Deering were able to serve on school committees. By 1878, they could vote in school elections.

With population declining, the obligation to provide for under 100 students and 11 school districts throughout Deering meant some schools had to close for lack of funds as districts merged.



East Deering School b.1806 closed 1952. Still at its original location, privately owned.



Bowen School c. 1906. Still at its original location and now a private residence.

From 1850—1890 the Town Hall was used as the Deering Academy, a tuition school for advanced studies or high school. (Also known as Tubbs Academy.)

1920—1953

In 1920, Deering, with a population level of 237 residents, had only 36 students attending Deering schools. It was a struggle to meet the state requirements in order to receive funding. Schools merged, the Town started selling the school buildings and lots.

By 1937 only East and West Deering Schools remained opened and Deering children were transported to nearby towns to complete school. By 1947 only East Deering school remained opened up to grade 6, until 1953 when all Deering students were transported to Hillsboro.

1954—

March 9, 1953, the cooperative agreement with Hillsboro was signed into effect. The facilities and programs provided by the combined effort of the two Towns afforded Deering students opportunities unavailable to them otherwise.

According to the agreement, Deering has elected representation on the schoolboard and a computation determining our share of the costs for the combined school effort. Although agreeable to both parties at the time, later, this has been a source of disagreement for some with little in the way of finding a satisfactory resolve.



Pond school near Valley View Farm. Teacher Janet Robertson.



North Deering School c.1923. Later sold and moved, currently a private residence in Deering.



The High school in Hillsboro mid 20th century.

Hillsboro Deering School District now occupies a 19 acre campus complete with athletic fields, and elementary, middle and high schools newly built in the late 1980's and 1990's.



Our Library

Library History

In 1797, the First Selectmen of Deering petitioned the state legislature to incorporate a Social Library Association in Deering. The petition was granted, and books for the library were donated by Deering settlers. The Library was housed in a private home, but ceased operation after a few years. During the 1800's, establishment of a publicly funded library was often proposed and defeated at town meetings.

In 1902, the Deering Library Association was established and situated in a private home; soon branch libraries were established in homes in both East and West Deering.

In 1926, the Deering Public

Library opened in the vacant District 1 Schoolhouse, moving to the Town Hall for the winter months. Deering has not employed a paid librarian since 1967. Library services since then are provided by the 3 Town elected Library Trustees and volunteers. In 2006, the Schoolhouse Library ceased being used for public hours.



The Carew home in Deering Center, which housed the Town Library for many years, as it appeared in the 1890s



The Library at Deering Center, shown in 1952, was originally the District #1 Schoolhouse

Deering Library Today

As other schools in Deering closed, their books were added to the Library's collection. Although the Library remains without water or heat, it is used seasonally for Trustee meetings and provides a summer venue for children's programs.



The



Newly painted in 2023, the District 1 Schoolhouse building was the building in Deering to be granted New Hampshire State Historical status in 2020.

Renovations on the Schoolhouse Library building began in 2020, retaining the original charm and features, including the blackboard, school masters as well as student desk and chairs.

Town Government

From 1774 to 1884, Annual Town Reports focused on the Town poorhouse, schools, and road maintenance. The town was as self-sustaining as the families who lived here. Town priorities revolved around caring for the poor, sick and elderly, education, and the roads. People policed themselves. Fires were fought with bucket brigades. The Town was cared for by its own residents, with wages remaining with the town. If the Town needed to borrow money, it looked to its own residents.

Post WWII, as the population started to increase, Deering residents, facing the challenges of change and growth, adopted zoning ordinances and created a planning board and a conservation commission. Later, a volunteer fire department was created as well as the Chief of Police position, which soon became a full-time post. Residents filled these positions, and department heads were required to live in town.

Today, with a population of over 1,900 residents, our once self-sufficient town has become mostly dependent and reliant on non-

Protection of Rural Character and Environment

1967—Planning Board

In 1967, a Planning Board was created “to project for the community’s future through orderly development.” The land use ordinances proposed and adopted by the Town over recent decades show our continued interest and support in

1969 —Conservation Commission

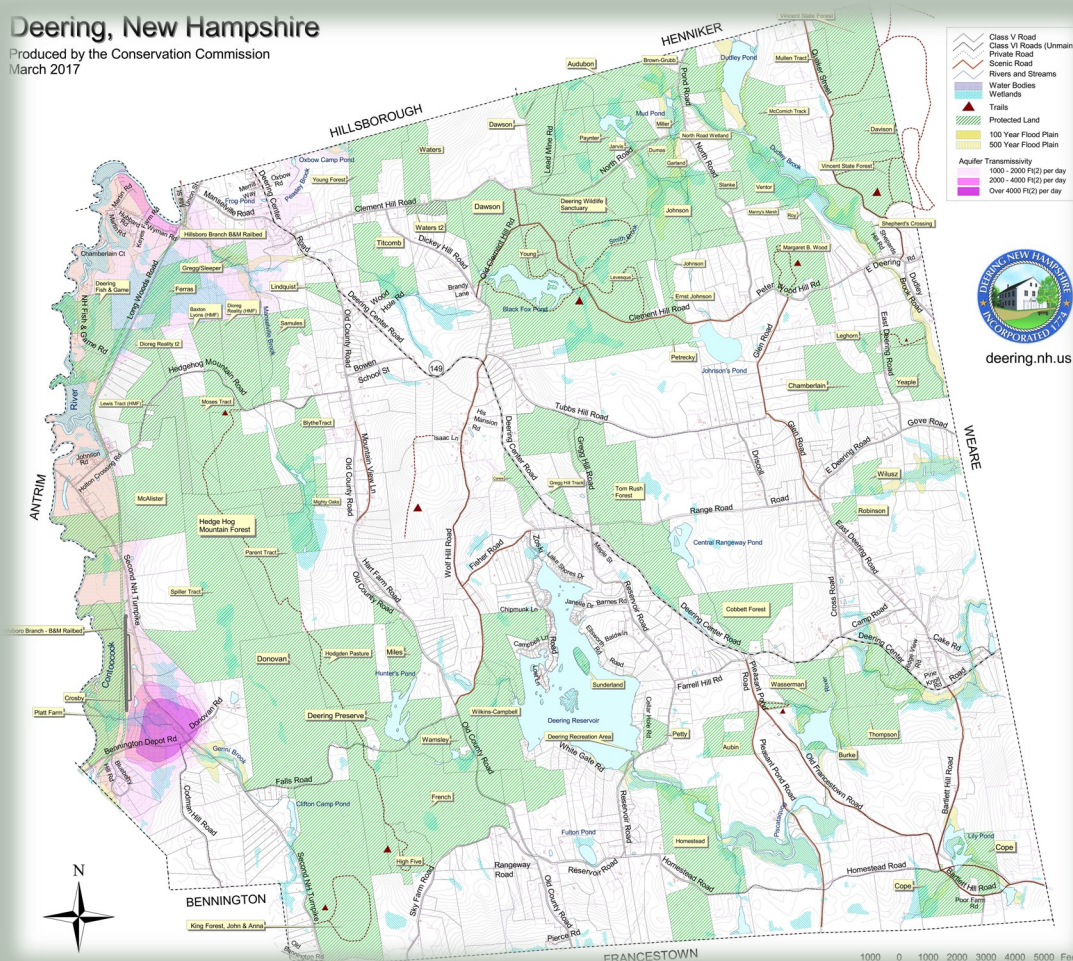
The conservation Commission has worked to conserve lands, create natural resource maps, and develop other programs for conservation awareness and protection and continues to be active in promoting the preservation of our town’s natural resources with support from town residents.



The Town Poor Farm purchased by the Town in 1844 was a self sufficient farm where the poor, unemployed, sick or elderly with no family would be housed. An elected position called the Overseer of the Poor was responsible for the care of the farm reporting yearly in the Annual Reports. Later, in 1872, the farm was sold and the unfortunate would be carried to the county farm in Goffstown or boarded in Deering.

Deering, New Hampshire

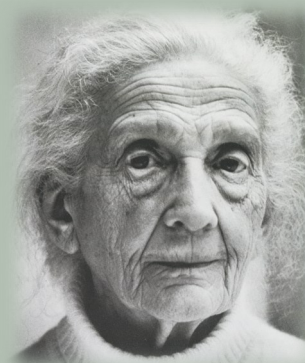
Produced by the Conservation Commission
March 2017



The commission was particularly successful starting in the 1990’s as the commission’s efforts to conserve land by educating and assisting residents in creating easements, resulted in over 7,000 acres being preserved to the benefit of all our futures. Such significant achievement in protecting our rural character and natural resources was accomplished with the support of a generous donor in Town and along with the support of the Town by voting to change of land use tax to be utilized for conservation purposes.



Planning Board meeting reviewing site plans for a potential subdivision 2002. Originally 4 appointed member board with one Selectman, the board expanded to 6 appointed members and a Selectman in 1974.



Lotte Jacobi started the petition for the Conservation Commission and was one of the original members.

Protection of Life and Property

1970—The Police Department

The public’s concern over increased crime related incidents in the late 1960’s led selectmen to change the Chief of Police position from an elected to an appointed one. Soon after, the position became full-time, to meet the needs of the growing town. Along with a full-time Chief, Deering keeps part-time officers, professionally trained and certified, which gives the Town greater police coverage.



From 1774 – 1974, Fires were first fought with bucket brigades. Everyone kept a bucket near the door and when the call was heard ran to help their neighbors. Appointed Fire Wardens would organize the chain of people during these times, but they also warned the Town of fire risks and hazards. Later in the 20th century, Deering depended on fire services from other larger Towns like Weare and Hillsboro to assist with fighting fires.



From 1774 to 1970, Constables, the term preceding Police Chief, were elected at Town Meeting. Their duties included calling (warning) Town meetings, keeping the peace, and collecting taxes. They had the power to arrest and enforce warnings issued by the Selectmen.

The Police Chief typically worked a full-time job elsewhere, often out of Town. They did not have regular hours. They were available as needed, used their personal vehicles, and worked out of their homes. Standard equipment, certification and training were minimal or not required.

Ellie Fitzpatrick was our first woman Police officer in the

1974—The Fire Department

In 1974, civic pride and concern for the safety and well-being of a growing town resulted in the formation of a volunteer fire department. The new department was supported by both the Town and its residents. Land was given on which to build firehouses. Funds were raised for equipment by a Ladie’s Auxiliary. By the mid 1980’s, a rescue squad was set up as well.

The same firehouses are in use today – Murdough, McAlister, and Donovan, named after members of the department – along with a trained and certified fire and rescue department, which now includes members from other communities.



Muriel McAlister was the first woman firefighter and first woman certified to drive a fire truck in Deering and in the State. The McAlister’s gave land for the West Deering Station, so named after the family.



The Central Meetinghouse

Deering’s first public building was the Town Hall built in 1788 after much debate as to the location. It has served our community in many important ways and for many different functions, from worship, to educational, meetings and celebrations. The Town offices were moved here in the late 1960’s. Before then elected officials conducted town business from home. the most recent renovation 2004, included an elevator, air conditioning, new offices, an archive room, a winter library space, and offices and evidence room for the police department.

The first woman to serve on the selectboard was Kay Yeaple in 1970.

Michelle Johnson was the first female voted to serve 4 consecutive terms on the selectboard beginning 2001.

1984 — Selectboard

From 1774 to 1984, three selectmen, elected at the Annual Town Meetings in March, managed the prudential affairs of the Town, conducting the policies and laws set forth by the vote of the legislative body at Town Meeting.

In the 1980’s, a part-time secretary/bookkeeper was hired, office hours expanded, and computers purchased.

By 2007, a part- time administrator was hired.



The March 13, 2004 Town Meeting drew a lot of attention as two bonds, one for the renovation of the Town Hall and the other for the new bridge over the Contoocook River in West Deering was up for consideration.

Town Organizations

These organizations have played and continue to play vital roles in the shaping of our Town. They provide essential services which strengthen the social fabric of Deering, foster a sense of belonging and solidarity, and encourage higher levels of civic engagement.

19th Century

1874—1957: The Wolf Hill Grange #41



The Grange was the first organization of its kind to allow women equal status and voting privileges.

Chartered in 1874, the Grange was one of the first in the state as well as in the nation. The Grange protested rural injustices, defended dairy interests; promoted legislation on the control of contagious diseases in farm animals; developed better market facilities for members' agricultural wares; advocated the protection of wildlife and the conservation of Deering's natural resources; was instrumental in bringing the postal service Rural Free Delivery (RFD) to town; raised the quality of practical instruction in the schools; and extended the school term. Membership peaked in

1950—

Deering Association

Supported by over seventy-three families and individuals and administered by the creation of the Deering conservation Commission, The Deering Association participated in the purchase of the first conservation easement in Town a 13-acre lot known as "The Sleeper Lot". The Association's mission is "to strengthen the sense of community by promoting the historic, cultural and environmental aspects of Deering; to sponsor a variety of yearly programs designed to inform and involve the residents of Deering; to protect and preserve the Town's rural character and its unique natural, historic, and scenic resources."



A Town hike hosted by the Deering Association.

Early 20th Century

1920—1967: The Community Club

First organized by a group of Deering women with the sole purpose to benefit "their town and their people." The Community Club raised funds for projects by organizing fairs and holding regular social events, including Christmas parties, dinners, and dances. Through their efforts, the first and only rural health center for children in the state was opened in Deering. Their fundraising gave the Town hall running water, electricity, a new addition, and the Town's first tractor for plowing snow. In 1927, membership was extended to include men.

1926—present: The Women's Guild

Mrs. Daniel A. Poling assisted in organizing this group, and the first meetings were held at her home, the Long House (now His Mansion, Wolf Hill Rd). The Guild continues to hold traditional summer fairs every August at Deering Center. Money raised by the Guild has been used to support both Deering community projects and projects around the world.

1938—1990's: The Credit Union

The first rural credit union in NH was formed in Deering, Charter 2784. It had 39 charter members and was formed at a critical time as money was unobtainable from banks due to the Great Depression. Loans were



The Deering Association hosting fall community cider pressing at the Town Center.



Fish & Game Club house located W. Deering.

Fish and Game Club

Formally incorporated in 1950, with the purpose “to better hunting and fishing conditions ...to create a more friendly feeling ...and to protect property.” The present clubhouse was purchased from Hillsboro Fish and Game Club in 1958, and later moved to its present location in West Deering. It is surrounded by 100-acres, which are in a conservation easement held by the Deering Conservation Commission. Along with offering programs and facilities for its members over the years, it has sponsored a wide variety of activities supporting the Deering community. Today, membership is up to four hundred.



The Annual Fishing Derby, one of many community events hosted by the Fish and Game Club.

Deering Lake Improvement Association

Formed in 1958 and incorporated in 1971, by and for lake property owners, with the DLIA’s mission is “to protect and conserve the natural resources of the lake and its shoreline.” The DLIA provided funds to build Zoski Rd, started the water testing program (still conducted today), and continues to play an active role in the support of the exotic weed program. It also donates financial support to critical local conservation oriented non–profits such as the NH Lake Association and the Loon Preservation Committee, among others.



Members come together to enjoy a calendar of social events each year but also volunteer their time to support and assist the wildlife—like the loon and bald eagle families—and other lake habitats by participation in the smart lake program or exotic weed monitoring.



2023 Holiday Event hosted by the Deering Historical Society with tree lighting and caroling .

1980—

Deering Historical Society

Established in 1980 and newly reinvigorated with the mission “to engage new and longtime residents of Deering in the appreciation and preservation of the Town’s historical heritage for future generations, and through this common venture to enhance the spirit of cooperation and foster participation in community life.”

The Historical Society was given the East Deering church property and building, where many productive years have been held which focus on Deering’s heritage.

Wars and Conflicts

Revolution Era

1775—1781

During the Revolutionary War, Deering inhabitants contributed money and resources to support the war effort. Men from Deering served in various military campaigns with Andrew Aiken in action at Bunker Hill in 1775.

In 1776, 32 Deering men signed the Association Test pledging to “oppose the hostile proceedings of the British fleets and armies against the United Colonies.” Deering’s militia captain, Ninian Aiken led a company of 18 Deering men to help



The Battle of Lexington and Concord

1792—1848: The Cork Plain Militia

In response to an act of the US Congress and as part of revising the NH Constitution, a state-wide militia made up of “all, able bodied, white male citizens”, was organized. Militia companies from all NH towns were organized into 27 regiments.

Deering, Antrim, Windsor, and Hancock formed the 1st Battalion of the 26th Regiment which mustered every fall on “Cork Plain” in West Deering, the flats along the Contoocook River.

Deering’s unit was a rifle unit. Annual musters drew large numbers of spectators and peddlers to observe the military drills. Over time, the annual event came to be marred by public drunkenness and associated rowdiness and came to an end in 1848.

A reenactment was held in October of 1858.

The Legend of Ebenezer

A source of pride held by Deering residents take from an early history of Deering, claimed that Ebenezer Lock “fired the shot heard round the world” at the Battles of Lexington & Concord on April 19, 1775.

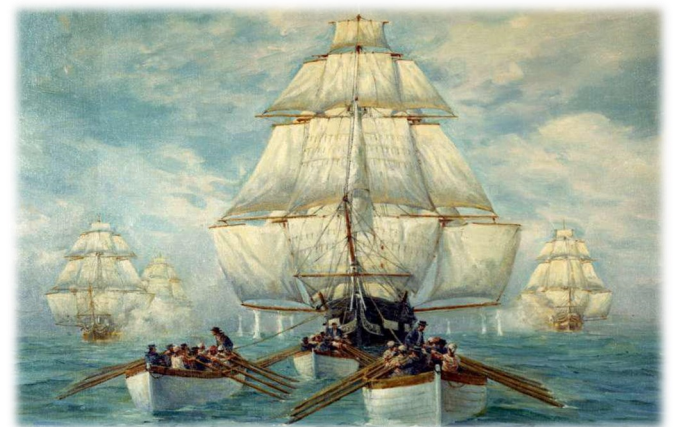
However, current research shows while Ebenezer Lock took part in the Battle of Lexington in the early morning of April 19, he likely did not fire the first shot.

He continued serving Washington’s army for several more battles before returning to Deering to live with his son Benjamin until his death in 1816 at age 82. He is buried in Goodall Cemetery not far from his home.

1812—1815:

The War of 1812

The people of Deering were not vitally interested in this conflict, however, eighteen men from Deering served during the war, seventeen are buried in our Town cemeteries.



The Battle of Rye brings the War of 1812 to NH.

The Civil War

1861—1865

Sentiment in Deering was opposed to slavery. In our town there were several houses with underground stops for runaway slaves. Such secret compartments still exist in those houses today. Several Deering men volunteered to serve in New Hampshire regiments during the War. David and William Dickey, Cyrus Barret and Horace Kenniston, all served in the famous 2nd New Hampshire Volunteer Infantry Regiment. This unit fought at both Battles of Bull Run, Gettysburg, Cold Harbor and marched into Richmond, Virginia in 1865. Deering taxpayers raised money throughout the war to pay bounties to men from other towns who when enlisting were credited to Deering.

Deering’s population was already in a steep decline when the Civil War broke out in 1861. After the war many soldiers, if not slain did not return home. The opening of the Erie Canal made areas to the west, like the fertile Cherry Valley in New York state and others more accessible as did the coming of the railroads.



Battle of San Juan Hill - Charge of the 24th and 25th Colored Infantry.

1898:

The Spanish-American War

Arthur Jacques served in the Spanish-American War in 1898, often related his experience of charging up San Juan Hill in Cuba with Teddy Roosevelt. He is the only Spanish War Veteran appearing on the Honor Roll dedicated on the Town Common in 1945.



Arthur Trotter was wounded during the pivotal American led St. Mihiel offensive in 1918. He later died from those wounds while in hospital in France and is buried in St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery off School Street in Hillsborough.

The Great Wars

1914—1918: World War I

Four men from Deering served in the Yankee (26th) Division in France during the First World War: Perley Bosley, Herbert Dutton, Howard Mann and Arthur Trotter.

Deering celebrated their return with a tremendous "Home Coming" In 1924 a boulder was set on the common and dedicated at the Town's Sesquicentennial Celebration for the World War Memorial, contributions made by the Community Club and the Town. World War 1 was followed by economic problems and by 1920 many in Deering were out of work.

1941—1945: World War II

Over 60 men and women from Deering served in US Armed Forces during World War II. A World War II Honor Roll was accepted by the Town from the Wolf Hill Grange in 1945.

In 1941 and airplane observation post was built at the junction of Rt. 149 and Old County Rd. Operation Sky Watch was maintained for two years with volunteers, the purpose was to detect and report every planed in the sky. Volunteer spotters were present 24 hours a day and reported a lost British plane one Christmas morning. There was another observation post on Gove Hill.



Clark V. Poling was born into a family that had produced six generations of ministers. His family owned the house and surrounding property on Wolf Hill. Clark spent most of his summers in Deering. The property is now part of His Man-

No Greater Glory:

The Four Chaplains and the Sinking of the Dorchester

February 3, 1943, the SS Dorchester, carrying troops, was torpedoed by a German submarine while en route to Greenland. Among the 904 people on board were four military chaplains, Lieutenants George L. Fox, John P. Washington, Alexander D. Goode and Clark V. Poling. The Dorchester sank fast and the chaplains acted quickly, giving their own life jackets to soldiers who did not have one. As the ship went down the four chaplains were last seen, arms linked, praying and singing hymns. 678 men, including the four chaplains, perished.

Several memorials honoring the courage and sacrifice of the Four Chaplains exist throughout the US.

The south summit of Wolf Hill, Deering's highest elevation (1570 ft.), was renamed Clark's Summit in Poling's honor, an eternal light established on the top shined for miles reminding everyone of the young

During the war, Deering residents were issued rationing cards for items such as sugar, gas and even shoes. The Women's Guild issued sewing kits for the Deering servicemen. Deering felt a unifying bond of the war effort and it economic surge was a motivating force for everyone. After the war, the living standard was raised, the value of food and farm products doubled and unemployment all

Post WW II to Present

World War II was the last war fought in which the President asked Congress for a declaration of war. Since then the major conflicts have mostly been shaped by the Cold War and an increasing shift to the Middle East with tensions between armed groups over competing ethnic and religious affiliations. As modern warfare evolves in the 21st century, the difficulties of defining what is and isn't a war continues to grow. Traditional forms of warfare with opposing armed forces clashing at a battleground may soon become a part of military history as remote technology removes the need for "boots on the ground".

In May of 2012, the Veterans Memorial on our Town Common was dedicated with a grand ceremony. The Heritage Commission formed in 2005 with appointed members of our community, had worked for several years to update the WWII Honor Roll, and to create a meaningful memorial for Deering veterans serving in WWII post war and conflicts, including Korea, Vietnam and Afghanistan.



Patterns of Change: 1765—1899

1765—1799

Population Growth: 3 to 900+

1765—First settlers :Alexander Robinson, William Forsaith and Robert Mills.

1774—Deering is Incorporated and named after royal Gov. John Wentworth's, wife Frances Deering.

1774—The first town meeting is held in A. Robinson's tavern, called by moderator W. Clark. The first town selectmen elected: E. Hassel, J. Shearer, N. Aiken and elected town clerk: N. Aiken.

1783—86 voters all property owning white men.

1783—Gove Hill cemetery established on Wolf Hill.

1785—Goodall cemetery established on Driscoll Hill.

1786—Disputes with Weare over border with Deering results in giving up several thousand acres along the east border from north to south.

1788—Town meeting house is erected, settled by state after dispute among residents as to the location.

1789—The Congregational Church is organized.

1792—The 1st Battalion 26th Regiment Militia is organized including, Deering, Hancock and Windsor men, regular musters takes place in West Deering.

1793—Alexander Gregg builds the first dam on Piscataquog River headwaters, Deering.

1797—Residents petition for a library.

1797—The 2nd NH Turnpike connecting Amherst (then Capital) to Claremont begins, destined to go through West Deering.



Published by Harry D. Locke

Store and post office in Deering Center next to the Town Hall. Opened in 1821 and closed in 1915 with the advent of RFD in 1921.

1800—1849

Population Peaks: 1,400

1806—The construction of schoolhouses start.

1816—Early Maps show five roads in Deering.

1820—Population peaks at 1,400.

1821—Deering Center post office opens.

1823—West Deering post office opens.

1829—Deering center church built.

1830—East Deering church built.

1842—Deering gives up southwest land for Bennington.

1844—The Town Poor farm purchased on Old Country Rd.

1847—The tuition "Academy" is organized and held at the Town Hall, 2nd floor.

1848—The Cork Plain Musters, West Deering conclude.

Settlement to Post Revolution:

Self Sufficient Farming and Town Building

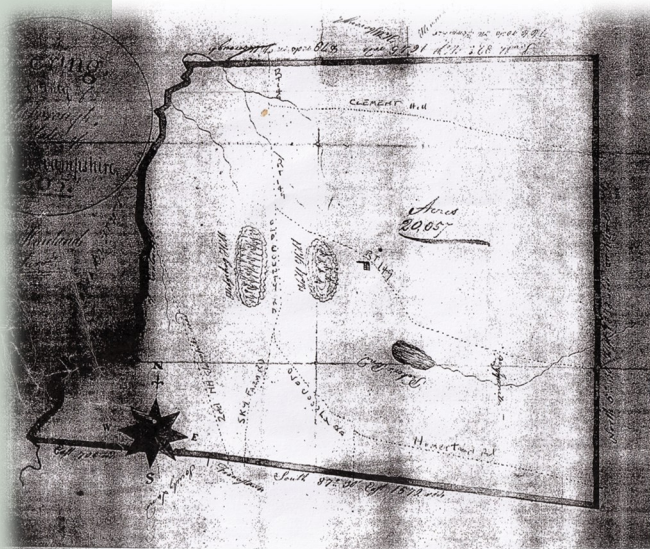
Deering was settled and incorporated while still a colony of the British Empire. The first settlers were mostly from the Scotch-Irish families in Londonderry. Hard working, frugal and practical—the original New England Yankees. Individual freedom to them meant following a collective pattern of God's will.



Property taxes (which could be paid in grain), were used to purchase nails, wood as well as four barrels of rum for the workers who came from neighboring towns to frame and roof the meetinghouse.

The first Deering patriarchs were Alexander Robinson, William Forsaith and Samuel Pattern and they lived several miles of each other, self-sufficient farmers, bartering any excess for other goods, and chopping wood every day to fuel and fire the year. Their lives centered around the farm, the family, the seasons, and the sun. They gathered regularly to worship, even before the meeting house was built and they educated their children at home, using the Bible to teach them to read and write.

After the Revolutionary War, there was an influx of people from other NH settlements. By the end of the 18th century, there were two cemeteries, several grist mills and sawmills along rivers and streams, 2-3 blacksmiths, and a meetinghouse in the center of Town, where Town Meetings and Sunday worship were held. The Congregational Church became the Town's official religious organization, supported by local taxes. Early residents even petitioned for an official library.



There were not many roads, travel was difficult, especially in the winter. Roads within Deering together as well as those connecting other Towns were built soon after the Revolutionary War. The 2nd NH Turnpike was commissioned, connecting Amherst to Claremont, and ran through West Deering. Stagecoaches offered passenger service up until the late 19th century.

1850—1899

Population Declines: 486

- 1856—Deering boasted a clothing mill, a store, two sawmills, two hotels, an academy, three wheelwrights shops, plus 179 houses, 194 families, 1499 cattle, 1089 sheep, 183 horses.
- 1869—Railroad comes through West Deering.
- 1869—East Deering post office opens.
- 1872—The Town Poor House is sold, and the poor carried to Goffstown County Farm or boarded out in Deering.
- 1874—The Wolf Hill Grange #41 is established.
- 1884—The Piscataquog Water Company rebuilds a dam on the site of Gregg Mill at the lower end of the lake, creating Deering Reservoir.
- 1885—The beginning of the era of the Town-controlled School Board system.
- 1891—All Deering post offices listed on route of the daily stagecoach.
- 1892—Deering residents attract summer boarders in several areas in Town.
- 1893—John Butler Smith, once a property owner in Deering, becomes our State Governor.



Chick a Biddy Resort was located where Oxbow Campground is currently off Rte149 close to Hillsboro.

Industrial Revolution: Farming for the Market

In the early 19th century, the self sufficient Deering farmers soon gave way to the developing market economy. Water powered mills in NH; surrounding towns started making woolen textiles; and many Deering farmers went to work those mills or began to raise sheep to meet the demand for wool rather than just grow crops for food.

Most of all the stone walls in Deering were built around this time to pasture sheep.

General stores, often little more than a room in someone’s home, started cropping up. One such place was in a house in Deering Center, located next to the Town Hall, and included a post office.

By 1840, cotton, being less expensive and produced in the South with enslaved labor, had replaced wool in the textile industry. The sheep boom was over. Many Deering farmers either headed out West to farm new land, or moved to towns and cities where there were factory jobs and better amenities, as well as more social opportunities.

The Exodus: Farmers Finding New Markets

Remaining Deering farmers had to adjust the crops they grew and the livestock they raised. Farmers with good land in West Deering started raising beef cattle and dairy cows. Ice was harvested from the “moat” around the Contoocook River. The railroad through West Deering transported goods daily to the cities as far away as Boston. Farmers in other parts of Deering started raising poultry, growing apples, making cider, harvesting cranberries Lumbering operations increased significantly, and many rooms were let to summer boarders.



For years the Bellevue Hotel, located where the bandstand is now, housed summer boarders (never to as tourists) from NY and Boston. Many other places did likewise: Lake view on Gregg Hill; The Maples at Deering center; The Orchards on the lake road; the old Snickles Farm on Gould Hill (now Clement Hill) and The Goodall Farm at the Community Center, to name a few.



Patterns of Change: 1900—2024

1900—1949

Population Declines: 287

- 1902—The first Deering Old Home Day celebration.
- 1906—West Deering post office closes.
- 1906—The library has branches in East and West Deering.
- 1915—Deering center post office closes.
- 1921—East Deering post office closes.
- 1921—Rural Free Delivery (RFD) comes to Deering.
- 1922—The Deering Community Club is established.
- 1926—library moves to Deering center school house
- 1931—town hall addition electricity to town hall
- 1931—Dr. Campbell gifts The Deering Community Center to the Town.
- 1935—Emergency Relief unemployment funds and PWA grant money provide Deering residents with local jobs and money.
- 1936—PWA grants, WPA money received for Blister Rust Control and Flood highway money
- 1936—Child health clinic opens.
- 1937—The Credit Union is established by Deering residents offering loans to farmers in need.
- 1937—Electricity come to East Deering and Deering Center street lights are installed.
- 1938—The Hurricane hits causing the Piscataquog dam to breach causing catastrophes downstream.
- 1940—The Town votes money to repair the dam and create a lake for recreation and tourism.



Salvage of white pine trees blown down during the 1938 hurricane
June 1939 at Fox Forest, Hillsboro, New Hampshire



Town watering trough on Rte. 149.

Depression, Hurricanes and War: Farmers Struggle

In 1900, hoping to attract some of the many people who had moved elsewhere, NH Governor Rollins issued a plan for an "Old Home Day." In 1902, Deering held its first Old Home Day, but few responded. By 1920 Deering's population was at an all-time low.

Gradually, however, a new influx of settlers trickled into town. Mostly from Europe, these immigrant families first worked in the mills, but by now they were able to buy abandoned farms for very little.

They supplement their modest incomes by chopping wood, working on the roads, driving trucks and working as carpenters. Some returned to jobs in the factories they had fled only a few years earlier. But they stayed in Deering, and, together, formed the new generation of citizens that shaped Deering up until World War II.

For most Deering families in the first half of the 20th century, life was harsh. Farmers were fortunate if they cleared \$1,000 a year, and most young men were forced to work after 8th grade rather than go on to high school. The 1920's farming depression also struck Deering, and the 1930's decade long Great Depression plunged most into deeper poverty. In 1938 the fiercest hurricane in memory dealt Deering farmers a third blow. Barns,

Post WW II: End of the Family Farm

After World War II, the economy improved and opportunities opened, but small family farms couldn't compete with the big farms out West. Many had to look outside the town for employment. Often, the men went off to work while the women carried on with the farm work and household duties. Also at this same time, the last of the one room schoolhouses closed, and Deering became part of the Hillsboro-Deering Cooperative. Even our children had to leave town for their education.

The post war investment in roads on Federal and State levels made small rural towns more accessible and more attractive as places to vacation and live. Deering appealed to a new group of people interested in the land its peace and beauty. Young professionals could afford to raise families here while commuting to work in larger towns nearby. The Deering Reservoir became a popular summer attraction and a vibrant sea-

1950—1999

Population Growth: 392 to 1,875

- 1950—Deering Fish and Game is established.
- 1950—The Deering Assoc. is established
- 1951—Clark’s Summit is renamed and the eternal light shines.
- 1953—The last of Deering’s schools close.
- 1954—The Hillsboro-Deering Cooperative Agreement goes into effect.
- 1957—The Wolf Hill Grange #41 holds its final meeting.
- 1958—The Deering Lake Improvement Assoc. is established.
- 1964—The Nathaniel Hawthorn Airpark opens in West Deering.
- 1966—The Planning Board and Zoning Board are established.
- 1969—The Town offices are moved to Town Hall from private residences.
- 1970—The Police Chief and Road Agent are appointed rather than elected.
- 1970—The Deering Conservation Commission is established.
- 1972—The last train through West Deering to Hillsboro.
- 1974—Deering celebrates its Bicentennial—pop. 538.**
- 1974—An entirely volunteer Fire Dept. is established.
- 1975—The first firehouse is built on Old County Rd.
- 1976—The Town celebrates our Country’s Bicentennial.
- 1980—Population increases to 1000**
- 1981—The McAlister Fire Sta. is built.
- 1984—The Deering Historical Society is established.
- 1984—Computers are first purchased for the Town offices.
- 1985—Rescue Squad established.
- 1987—Selectmen hire a secretary.
- 1990—Population increases to 1700**
- 1990—The Donovan Fire Sta. is built.

2000—

Population: 1,900+

- 2000—Town’s first website established
- 2001—Anonymous donor gift’s \$50,000 for a new ambulance.
- 2003—The Town gravel pit is purchased on Hedgehog Mt. Rd.
- 2004—The West Deering Bridge and Town Hall Renovation bonds pass at Town Meeting.
- 2005—Town wide reassessment and tax maps go into affect.
- 2006—Heritage Commission is established.
- 2007—First Town Admin, promoted as Part-time position.
- 2012—Heritage Commission dedicates the new War Memorial on the Town common.
- 2013—Town voted a bond for \$750,000 for road reconstruction.
- 2014—Road Agent, P. Beard retires after 30 yr + on the job.
- 2015—2nd Town Administrator hired as a full time position.
- 2016—Fire Chief, A. Anderson retires after 30 yr of service.
- 2019—Police Chief, J. Pushee retires after 18 yr of service.
- 2020—Town hold’s Annual Meeting days before Covid shut’s down the State of NH.
- 2021—3rd Town Administrator hired.
- 2022—4th Town Administrator hired.
- 2022—Patriotic Committee established.
- 2023—5th Town Administrator hired.

Some even chose to retire here. These new residents all valued the rural character and environment of Deering, and created organizations, clubs and associations that reflected those values and the desire to maintain them, leading to the creation of planning, zoning and conservation efforts starting in the 1970’s.

The last train through West Deering in the early 1970’s marked an end of an era. Once a small agriculturally based community, Deering then became a bedroom commuter town, with many strangers from different parts of the country.

Deering’s population nearly doubled from 1970 to 1980, and again from 1980 to 1990. During this time, there was an expansion in Town services to meet the demands of a growing community. This expansion has continued into the 21st century.



A view of West Deering, with the McAlister farm in the distance, and elms trees lining 2nd NH Turnpike.



The big diesel train making its way through West Deering in the winter . The last trip made was 1972.

A New Age and a Farming Revival

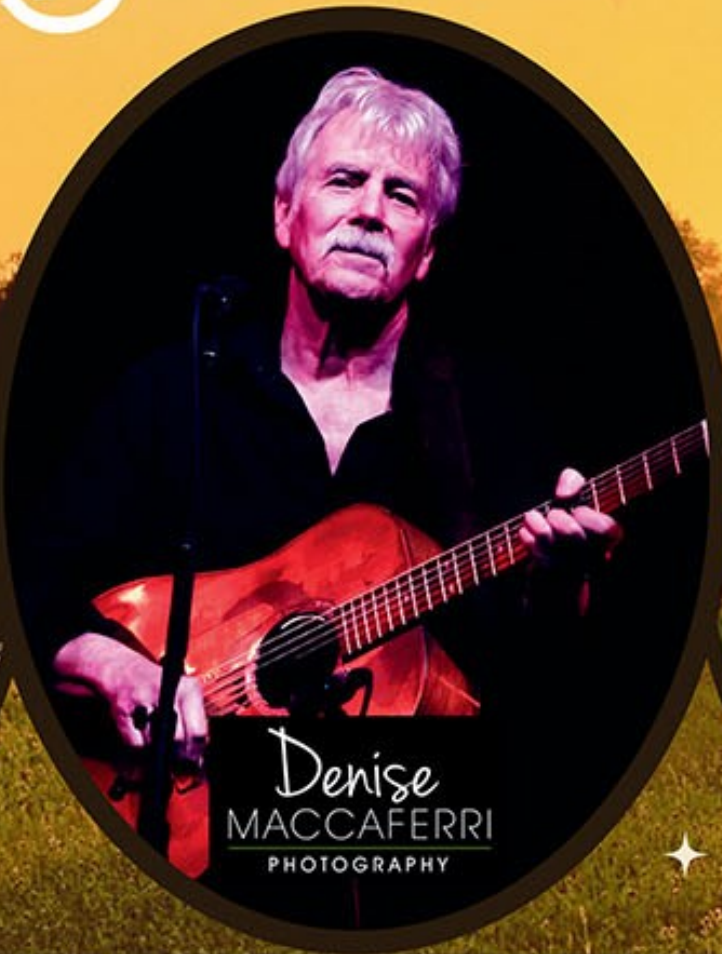
During the first two decades of the 21st century, Deering’s growth rate slowed. Still a community of working professionals, a majority work in area towns and travel an average of 40 minutes to work. A handful are able to work from home with high speed internet capabilities.

However, Deering is also experiencing a revival of its agrarian heritage, as new families move into town with hopes of returning to a simpler, more self –sustaining lifestyle. Roadside farm stands based on an honor system are scattered all over town, offering locally grown and sourced food products and goods such as fresh dairy products, vegetables, eggs, baked goods and even assorted meat or sausage.

Deering’s current population is higher than ever before, at 1,900 residents. Despite this, Deering has a current challenge of finding residents to fill positions in town government, run for elected offices, and join local committees. Even the Volunteer Fire Department is no longer just comprised of Deering residents. Many once-thriving community organizations now struggle with the same problem.

THREE-DAY EVENT | JULY 19TH - 21ST

DEERING 250TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION 1774-2024



**FRIDAY
JULY 19TH**
**DEERING
HISTORY
EXHIBIT**

6-8:30 PM

OPENING CEREMONY
EXHIBIT: A CELEBRATION OF
DEERING LIVES LIVED
PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

📍 EAST DEERING CHURCH

SATURDAY JULY 20TH
CONCERT & FOOD

FEATURING

TOM RUSH

4:30 PM - FOOD TRUCKS

7 PM - CONCERT

📍 WEST DEERING AIRPORT

\$50

SATURDAY JULY 20TH
250TH OPEN HOUSE

10AM-1PM

📍 DEERING LIBRARY &
DEERING COMMUNITY CHURCH

**SUNDAY
JULY 21ST**

**FAMILY BBQ
DANCE &
GAMES**

12-1 PM BBQ

2 PM SQUARE

DANCE & GAMES

📍 DEERING FISH
& GAME CLUB

\$15

FOLLOW US

[www.DEERING.NH.US](http://www.deering.nh.us)

EMAIL: deering250th@gmail.com

FACEBOOK: @DeeringNH250thCelebration

GET YOUR
TICKETS AT ONE
OF THESE PICKUP
LOCATIONS!



TICKETS
CONCERT \$50
BBQ \$15



SCAN ME



Celebrating Deering 250 years

1774-2024

The Opening Remarks were prepared and presented by Michelle Johnson, President of the Deering Historical Society. The event started with the ringing of the bell in the tower.

“This bell was given to the Church (then Methodist) for its 100th anniversary in 1930 by one of its members, Phinetta Stone of Weare. It was presented by Charlotte Holmes, member of the Church and living in this East Deering neighborhood next door to the East Deering School-house.

For centuries, bells have been used to call the community together to commemorate momentous events, those of rejoicing, mourning, even warning, to announce both beginnings and endings. They have also come to symbolize peace and freedom.

Today, this bell calls us together to mark this special event: the 250 the celebration of Deering’s incorporation.

Our Town Welcome signs state Deering was settled in 1765. Yet, by tradition our Town celebrates a date occurring 9 years later. Why is this date of incorporation dearer to us than that of settling?

In 1773, a petition was presented by settlers for incorporation and a charter was granted a year later by the Kings Governor on January 17, 1774. Only then did this settlement become known as “Deering” and only then did we acquire status as a Town with the right to self-governance to make decisions together for the betterment of our community. It is that unique status, right and privilege granted us 250 yrs. ago that we remember that we celebrate that we take pride in.

Welcome Home! Welcome to the home of Deering’s Historical Society and our first exhibit in many years commemorating this important event. It is based on the ideas presented by Evangeline Poling’s book printed in 1977 that resulted from the pride and enthusiasm of town residents 50 years ago celebrating in 1974 and in 1976.

This exhibit has a visual and an audio component. Our purpose is twofold:

We hope to illuminate the history of our community from its origins to the present. To impart an understanding of how events in the past helped to make Deering the community it is today and to create a better path for the future.

We present a collection of oral histories, gathered from interviews with a generation born and raised in Deering during the Great Depression, nearly 100 yrs. ago. We hope that listening to their individual experiences will enhance your understanding of Deering’s past and give clarity to the events that shaped the families and community in which we live today.

Thank you to the many people who have supported this event and the events happening the rest of the weekend. I have listed a few in our brochure this evening but special mentions: the 250 committee with Lou Ellen Beard, chair; Tom Rush for giving the Town his gift of music for another Deering event, and our oral history interviewees Rodney, Wayne, Rose, Gordon, Barbara, Jean, and Jeanne, Don and Peter for your time and patience. I wish to welcome them and their families first if you don’t mind.

Thank you everyone for coming tonight. The Society looks forward to providing more engaging events and activities for our community and to welcoming new members interested in planning and participating. The sanctuary doors may open! “