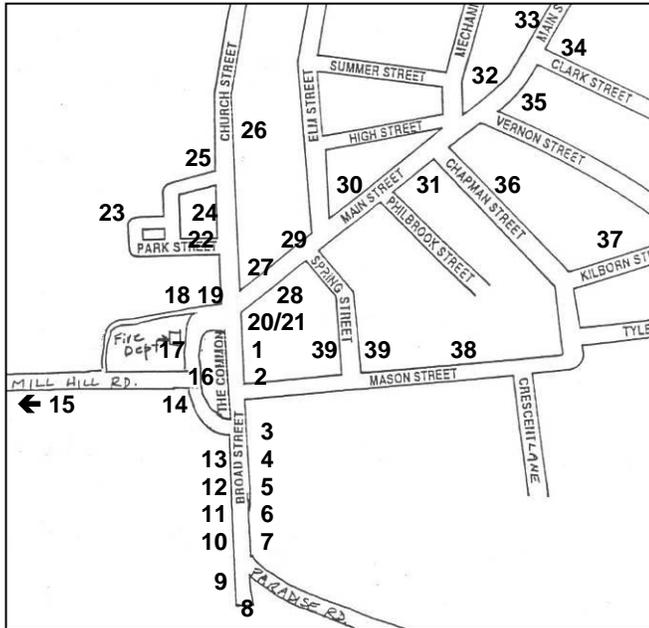


A Walking Tour of Bethel Hill Village

Presented by the Bethel Historical Society

Your walking tour begins and ends at the **Museums of the Bethel Historical Society** on Broad Street, overlooking the Bethel Hill Common. Spanning a period from 1774 to the 1930s, the sites and structures on this tour have been selected for their architectural significance, historic integrity (if renovated), and historical importance to the community and the area.



BACKGROUND

Bethel, Maine, was founded in 1768 as "Sudbury Canada," in honor of the original grantees from Sudbury, Massachusetts, who fought in a campaign to conquer Canada in 1690. The home of the Abenaki for many centuries, Bethel was permanently settled by people of European descent in 1774. Settlement was slowed by the American Revolution, such that there were only ten families here at the time of "New England's Last Indian Raid" in August of 1781—when three of Sudbury Canada's citizens were captured and two taken to Quebec. Following the Revolution, however, the community grew rapidly, and in 1796 it was incorporated as "Bethel," a word taken from the Book of Genesis and meaning "House of God."

Farming was the principal occupation of the earliest inhabitants here, but with the completion of the Atlantic & St. Lawrence Railroad in 1853—connecting Bethel to Portland and Montreal—the wood products industry became a major factor in the economic life of the town. The arrival of the railroad also made it possible for summer visitors from Boston, New York, and other East Coast cities to enjoy the town's extraordinary natural setting at the eastern gateway to the White Mountain region of Maine and New Hampshire.

Bethel has long been a significant educational center, due largely to the financial generosity of William Bingham II to Gould Academy, which was founded in 1836. From the 1890s to the 1920s, Bethel was the site of Dr. John George Gehring's nationally famous clinic for the treatment of persons with nervous disorders. Bethel later became internationally known as

home to the National Training Laboratory, established here in 1947 and which continues to specialize in human dynamics. Bethel's cultural life also was enriched by the presence of such personalities as William Rogers Chapman, who founded the once-famous Maine Music Festival, which from 1897 to 1926 brought to Maine, and often to Bethel, some of the world's finest artists and orchestras.



1. O'Neil Robinson House, 1821. Begun as a Federal style house and extensively remodeled in the Italianate style in 1881, this imposing residence was used as an annex ("The Elms") for the Bethel Inn from 1923 to 1999.

Now one of the "Museums of the Bethel Historical Society," the building contains changing exhibits, a Museum Shop, an extensive research library (open by appointment), and the Society's main office. Hours: Memorial Day to 3rd Friday in October, Tuesday - Friday, 10 am to 4 pm; also Sat., 1 to 4 pm, during July & August; 207-824-2908 / 800-8242910

2. Dr. Moses Mason House, 1813. This Federal style residence was the first house in the village built on a high granite foundation, the first painted white, and the first to serve as a post office (1815). It was restored and renovated in 1972-73 by the William Bingham Trust for Charity prior to its presentation in 1974 to the Bethel Historical Society. The building contains a nine-room period house museum and a large exhibit hall. The 1890s summerhouse at the rear of the property was moved here from the Samuel Philbrook House (# 33) on lower Main Street. Hours (house museum): Thursday - Saturday, 1 to 4 pm, July and Aug. & by appt. at other times. *Cross Mason Street and continue south on Broad Street.*



3. Hastings House, circa 1820.

The village blacksmith and a founder of Gould Academy, John Hastings built this house about 1820. Still owned by a descendant, the Federal period house displays later alterations in the Greek Revival, Queen Anne, and Colonial Revival modes. Note the broad wooden fan over the entrance door, which is sheltered by a columned porch added about 1905. On the side lawn is the Mount Zircon bottle lunch stand (ca. 1922), an unusual example of early 20th century "roadside architecture." *Continue walking south on Broad Street, past the 1848 Gideon Hastings House (until recently a connected farmstead) that has been extensively remodeled.*

4. Hammons House, 1859. This large "side-hall" Greek Revival residence, sited at a right angle to the street, was the home of David Hammons, United States Congressman from 1847-49. The sidelighted doorway facing Broad Street was added about 1925 by William J. Upson, a wealthy partner with William Bingham II in the Bethel Inn Company. (The recently restored porches are also a later addition.) Upson converted the barn to a theater, and plays were presented here by patients of the Gehring Clinic (see #8). *Walk to the next house.*



5. Vogt House, 1840s. This modest cape with Greek Revival trim was constructed by local carpenter John Holt. The main entrance is distinguished by a particularly sophisticated doorway with flat Doric pilasters supporting a denticulated entablature. The small gabled dormers were added in the 1970s. At times during the summer (look for sign), the private gardens behind the house are open to the public.



Continue up Broad Street.

6. Flint / Crommet House, ca. 1850. The front portion of this “temple style” Greek Revival house has a three-bayed façade framed in paneled pilasters and crowned by a well-defined gable pediment with a triangular rear ell was lower and of more modest proportions. *Walk past the next house, which is now the Congregational parsonage.*



7. Rowe / Ames House, 1850s. Built for village merchant Edwin C. Rowe, this generously proportioned side-hall house boasts Greek Revival trim and a large, attached barn with rooftop cupola. The front porch, with its bracketed posts and flat, jigsaw-cut trim, as well as the large bay window with elaborated cornice, are later nineteenth century embellishments. *Continue to the end of Broad Street (a “dead end”).*



8. Gehring Clinic / House, 1896. Once famous for housing a nationally known center for the treatment of nervous disorders, the Gehring Clinic is Bethel's grandest nineteenth century house. It stands on the site of the home of Dr. Nathaniel Tuckerman True, Bethel's first historian and a much-revered educator. The Clinic displays Queen Anne and Colonial Revival characteristics. For more than thirty years, it served as headquarters of the National Training Laboratory. *Turn around, noting the house on the left.*



9. Wright Cottage / Bingham House, 1906 and later. In 1922, William Bingham 2nd, Bethel's greatest benefactor, purchased this Shingle style cottage as a summer residence. The Boston architectural firm of Coolidge and Carlson designed Colonial Revival embellishments that were added in the 1920s. Mr. Bingham's ownership continued until his death in 1955. *Continue walking north; the small house (ca. 1822) with the front porch was the residence of William Frye, Bethel's first lawyer.*



10. Herrick House, 1885. This Queen Anne style house was once the home of a prominent

Bethel attorney and his family. The asymmetrical plan and variety of wall surface treatments are typical of this late 19th century style. The “widow's walk,” fish-scale shingles, and horizontal banding between the first and second floors are interesting features. *Proceed to the next house.*



11. Dr. Francis Tuell House, 1883. Eclectic in style, this house (one of only two houses on the street still occupied by descendants of the original owner) possesses Gothic, Italianate, Queen Anne, and Stick style architectural features. Dr. Tuell was a longtime Bethel dentist. *Continue to the next house.*

12. Edmund Merrill House, ca. 1874. One of two mansard-roofed houses in Bethel, this residence originally displayed elaborate Victorian decorative work and a central tower at attic level. Around 1937, the house came into the hands of the Bethel Inn and a number of Colonial Revival details were added. *Proceed to the next building.*



13. “The Pines,” 1866. Once utilized as a schoolhouse, this two-and-a-half story building combines Greek Revival and Colonial Revival features. It now houses Bethel Inn guests. To the rear of this structure is “The Oaks,” built before 1900 as a large barn and reworked in the Colonial Revival mode (note the classical doorway) about 1929. *Walk to the bandstand on the south end of the Common.*



14. Bethel Inn, 1912-1913. Designed by the Boston firm of Coolidge and Carlson, the Bethel Inn opened in 1913 under the direction of Dr. John George Gehring, William Bingham II, and William J. Upson. Combining Colonial Revival and Craftsman styling, this rambling complex (the wing toward Broad Street dates from 1998) replaced the Prospect Hotel, which stood on this site from 1861 to 1911. *Optional: walk down “Mill Hill,” north of the Inn, and view remnants of 18th and 19th century stone dams near the bottom.*



15. Mill Brook. In 1774 Captain Eleazer Twitchell built grist and saw mills—the first framed buildings in Bethel—on Mill Brook. Other mills were established here through the years. Today there are a number of mill foundations and stone dams visible (one of the best may be seen alongside Rt 5, a short walk to the south). *Return to the west side of the Common and stand near the Victorian horse-watering trough.*

16. Bethel Hill Common. The village of “Bethel Hill” received its name because the earliest approach road brought people up Mill Hill to what is now the Common. Captain Eleazer Twitchell, a founder of Bethel, donated the land for the Common early in the



nineteenth century. Once used for militia drills, the Common has long been the site of town festivals and celebrations. The Colonial Revival bandstand (known locally as the “gazebo,” an architectural term more accurately applied to smaller garden summerhouses) was dedicated in 1995.



17. Rowe Opera House, 1884. Originally designed as a store with public space (“Ideal Hall”) above, this Victorian commercial structure is now condominiums. The front porch with decorative spindlework was added a few years after the building was begun. The current paint scheme is similar to that used at the turn of

the century. *Walk to the bell tower at the end of the Common.*

18. Albert Stiles House, ca. 1852. This Carpenter Gothic style cottage was the first “balloon frame” building in Bethel, representing the transition between post-and-beam and modern construction. Note the bargeboard (“gingerbread”) trim, the wooden façade scored to resemble stone blocks, and the window “drip moulds.” *The next house stands to the right.*



19. Chapman Inn, 1830s and later. During the mid-19th century, this large structure served as the store and home of Ira Crocker Kimball (see #23). Displaying both Federal and Greek Revival details, the house was the third (and final) Bethel residence of musician and conductor



William Rogers Chapman. *Walk to the granite soldiers’ monument and look across to Broad Street.*

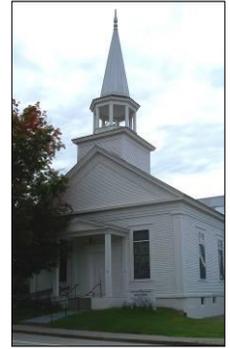
20. Bethel Library, 1937 and earlier. The rear, stack section of this building was once the law office of Bethel attorney Enoch Foster, who later served on the Maine Supreme Judicial Court and who lived in the Robinson House, next door. In 1937, the Colonial Revival front portion of the Library was added based on plans by the prominent Maine architect John Calvin Stevens of Portland.



21. Chapman Block, 1860. This fine three-story brick commercial building was built by Bethel businessman and real estate speculator Robert Chapman. Note the elaborate Italianate false front above the third floor windows. The attached house, with its wide Greek Revival moldings, was constructed as a store and residence at about the same time. *Cross to the Chapman Inn and walk down Church Street to the first church.*



22. Universalist Church, 1853. This modest Greek Revival structure was built by the Bethel Universalists, who worshipped here until the 1920s. The stained glass windows, given in memory of former parishioners, are a noteworthy feature. *Walk down the side street next to the church to Kimball Park.*



23. Kimball Park, 1850s and later. A well-preserved cluster of homes surrounding a small green, Kimball Park was developed by Bethel businessman Ira Crocker Kimball (see #19) in the 1850s, at the time of the railroad’s arrival. *Return to Church Street and continue to the house illustrated below.*



24. Park / Mason House, 1867. Built for carriage maker Pinckney Burnham, this Italianate style house displays tall first floor windows, a bracketed entrance hood, corner quoining, a modillioned cornice, and a pair of segmental-arched windows on the second floor.

25. Congregational Church, 1847. This impressive Greek Revival church with Gothic Revival window treatments displays flush boarding on its façade (in an effort to imitate stone). In the 1930s the steeple (removed in 1899) was restored, and Colonial Revival changes were made inside the building under the supervision of Portland architect John Calvin Stevens. Garland Chapel, appended to the left side of the church, was added in 1892. *Cross Church Street and walk further north to Gould Academy.*



26. Hanscom Hall, 1933-1934. Gould Academy was founded in 1836. The several Neo-Classical buildings around the campus were funded by Bethel philanthropist William Bingham II. Named for longtime principal Frank E. Hanscom, this structure is the administrative center and main classroom building of the Academy. Across the street is the recently renovated Marian True Gehring Students’ Home (1924-1925) displaying Georgian Revival detailing and an impressive clock tower. *Stay on this side of the street and go back to Main Street. Walk around the Hastings Block (1910) and down to the first house.*

27. Tibbetts House, ca. 1850. This side-hall Greek Revival house with columned porch was once the home of Dr. Raymond R. Tibbetts, who practiced medicine here for more than fifty years. *Look across the street to the four-story commercial block containing the Bethel Town Office.*



28. Cole Block, 1891. This massive structure with Queen Anne and Colonial Revival detailing was designed by Maine architect George M. Coombs of Lewiston. The Cole Block was



for many years a center of Bethel's commercial and social life. Odeon Hall, on the second floor, was once used for town meetings, movies, dances, concerts, plays, and lectures. *Continue down the street to the next house.*

29. John Philbrook House / "The Victoria," 1895.

The finest Queen Anne residence on Main Street sports a prominent round corner tower, bay windows, textured wall surfaces, and delicate wooden spindle-work on the porch. *Continue walking down Main Street, crossing Elm Street.*



30. Marshall Bonney House, ca. 1820.

Main Street's oldest structure is this Federal style house, once the home one of the village's earliest cabinet-makers. The house was later utilized as the Methodist Church parsonage. *Walk down the street to the Naimey Block (1922), site of the Bethel Post Office since the 1940s;*



note the wall plaque and sundial. Next, look across the street to the church.

31. Methodist Church, 1892-1893.

This Shingle style building with tall corner tower is the second church structure on this site. In 1915 the building was raised and a new basement story constructed underneath. *Continue walking down Main Street, crossing Mechanic Street.*



32. Civil War Monument, 1908.

Curbed in granite and surrounded by an ornate cast iron fence, this statue commemorates Bethel's role during the "War Between the States." The site once held Bethel's first bandstand. *Walk down Main Street to "Philbrook Place."*



33. Samuel D. Philbrook House, 1879.

With its elaborate detailing and rooftop cupola, this large Italianate style residence and adjoining barn have been renovated for commercial use. The "two-over-two" windows have been replaced with smaller ones that are out of scale with the original window openings. *Cross the street to the next site.*



34. Sudbury Inn, 1850s, ca. 1913.

Once called "Maple Inn," this small hotel incorporates (on the right) the 19th century home of shoemaker Josiah Brown. The Portland firm of Smith and Rumery designed the Queen Anne styled portion (left) dating

from about 1913. *Walk across Clark Street and up Main Street to the second house on the left.*

35. Purington / Merrill House, 1890 and earlier.

An outstanding Queen Anne style residence, this house was originally one-and-a-half stories high. In 1890 the house was raised up, a new first story was inserted, and Victorian details added. Note the unique "spired" cupola on the attached barn. *Continue up Main Street to Chapman Street.*



36. Bethel Lodge #97 Masonic Hall, 1924.

Built as a Christian Science Church, this low, hip-roofed building was dedicated in 1927. The inset entrance framed with narrow columns is an interesting original feature. The church closed in 1949 and was sold to Bethel Lodge in 1952. *Walk up Chapman Street and turn left at Kilborn Street.*

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37. Hall House, 1910.

This asymmetrically arranged residence, recently added to the *National Register*, displays a combination of Shingle style, Craftsman, and Queen Anne design features. Inside, dark-stained woodwork is much in evidence in the original built-in cupboards, bookcases, and window seats. *Return to Chapman Street, walk uphill to Mason Street (watch for traffic), and pass Crescent Lane on your left. The next house will be on your right.*



38. "Alpine House," ca. 1886.

This rambling structure was built by Abiel Chandler as a boarding house for summer visitors. By 1905, the house had become a private residence. The view of Baldpate Mountain near Grafton Notch is particularly impressive from the upper floors on the

north (back) side of the building, a fact that must have pleased tourists staying here before 1900.

39. Bethel Inn Garages, 1930.

Designed by the Boston architectural firm of Coolidge and Carlson, and built with funds provided by William Bingham II, this pair of steeply-roofed structures was used by the Bethel Inn to house guests' vehicles (and their chauffeurs) until the 1960s. The multi-sided ventilators with tall spires and other original features are similar to those on Chase Hall at Bates College (Lewiston), designed by the same firm. *Complete your walking tour by returning to Broad Street and the Museums of the Bethel Historical Society.*



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