

20 Charlestown Main Street Historic District

Main Street, Charlestown, New Hampshire

Charlestown was chartered in 1735 by the Colony of Massachusetts Bay as Plantation No. 4, the northernmost township along the Connecticut River. Today, its quaint Main Street is the longest New Hampshire historic district recognized by the National Register of Historic Places.

Plantation Settlement No. 4 and its Fort were the initial line of protection for Massachusetts' villages that had settled further south, as it was the first place to be attacked by northern descending French troops and Indians driving the English colonists from the area. During the time, if it had not been for Captain Phineas Stevens and his small band of militia withstanding a siege of the Fort by superior French and Indian forces in 1747, the area may have been French-speaking and the entire history of northern New England could have been altered.

By the 1800s Charlestown became known as a center of law and popular home to attorneys, second only to Boston. Two governors of New Hampshire hailed from the town – Henry Hubbard and Ralph Metcalf. Many of these more affluent townspeople built large Federal-style homes along Main Street, while farmer's Cape Cod-style homes dotted the outer countryside and along the Connecticut River.

The Charlestown Main Street Historic District consists of the original 62 structures with their associated outbuildings, streetscape objects, memorials and monuments, including the 1842 Gothic Revival South Parish Church, 1863 Saint Luke's Church, and the 1872 Italianate Town Hall, designed Edward Dow, New Hampshire's most prominent architect after the Civil War.

Charlestown's architecture is as varied as the heritage of its settlers over the last 200 years, including styles of Georgian, Federal, Greek Revival, Gothic, Italianate, French Second Empire, Queen Anne, Stick and the Richardsonian Romanesque buildings.

In addition to walking the historic district, Fort No. 4 offers military reenactments, musters, and tours of its stockade, parade ground and pioneer-style homes throughout the summer months.

Sources:

http://www.charlestown-nh.gov/Public_Documents/CharlestownNH_WebDocs/about
<http://www.crjc.org/heritage/N06-17.htm>

