

## 34 Claremont Historic District

### Claremont, New Hampshire

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Unlike many of the settlements along the Connecticut River Valley, the major growth of Claremont, New Hampshire occurred on the banks of the Sugar River tributary several miles away from the large river. Flowing 130 feet down a series of falls from Lake Sunapee, the Sugar River provided a source of water power that could be tapped for numerous purposes. By the 1830s dams were created along the river to regulate its flow and the banks were lined with small mills producing wool and cotton textiles, flour, and paper and wood products. Today, the Claremont Historic District, also known as the Claremont Multiple Resource Survey, is a successful reuse project and vibrant reminder of the city's earliest development from a traditional New England village to an urbanized industrial community.

Originally, Claremont's center was located in West Claremont, where the Congregationalists and Episcopalians had come together to build Union Church, a shared religious meeting location. The space was short lived as the Congregationalists moved to the southern end of town and built their own meeting house on Maple Avenue. The Episcopalians remained in the settlement area, completing their church after the Revolutionary War.

By the early 1790's the town sought a more centrally located town hall location and acquired a portion of Colonel Josiah Stevens' land on the "Plain," known today as Broad Street Park. Ichabod Hitchcock, master carpenter and builder of both Union Church and the Congregational Church, built a new Congregational meeting house on this tract, now the site of the present day City Hall. The village center on the "Plain" was site to the local meeting house, school and cemetery between 1791 and 1797.

With an increased reliance upon water power, the transformation of Claremont evolved quickly. In 1832 a group of local investors chartered the Claremont Manufacturing Company with \$100,000, to purchase 15 acres of land, encompassing most of the lower village survey from Sullivan Street to the Sugar River, as well as "four of the most valuable water falls in the village". The company and its directors began aggressive development projects, laying out Central, Main and River Streets.

Fear that the town's center would shift to the rapidly growing Lower Village resulted in the creation of a second corporation, The Upper Falls Company. Their construction entailed a stone factory for the manufacturing of satinnet and paper, along with associated houses and stores in 1836.

Today, visitors to the area will find a mix of architectural building styles for religious, commercial, industrial and governmental use, including Victorian, Neo-Colonial, Renaissance Revival, Victorian Gothic, Classical Revival, Richardsonian, Greek Revival, Modern Brick Cube, Second Empire, Gothic Revival, Queen Anne, and Late Gothic Revival. The historic district includes 54 structures and two public spaces, as well as 19 individual properties.

#### **Sources:**

<http://www.crtc.org/heritage/N07-25.htm>

<http://www.greatamericanstations.com/Stations/CLA>