

58 Wells River Village Historic District

Main Street, Newbury, Vermont



The Village of Wells River, Vermont is located at the union of the Connecticut River and the Wells River. These two waterways heavily influenced the industry and development patterns in the Village and thanks to an abundance of water power and access to the Connecticut River, Wells River became a successful mill town and transportation hub.

The Wells River Village Historic District includes almost the entire Village of Wells River, incorporating nearly 100 structures. The main part of the Historic District is comprised of 24 commercial buildings, dating to the 19th century and lining two blocks of Main Street (Vermont Route 5) on either side. The commercial buildings that line the two blocks of Main Street give the area its main character. A number of architectural styles can be observed in this area and the presence of a handful of very large buildings provide for a well-anchored streetscape.

The Baldwin Block Building or Durant-Adams Block, a large 2 ½ story building displaying 19th century commercial architecture and dating to around 1860, represents the northern boundary of the commercial district. The other large commercial building is the Bachop Block Building, which was built around 1830, and located at the southern end of the Main Street façade.

Most of the buildings are vernacular in nature, rather than displaying the more aesthetically focused and less utilitarian high style designs. Nevertheless, the 19th century styles represented include: Greek Revival, Federal, Italianate, French Second Empire and Queen Anne with Greek Revival being the most dominant. The popular early 20th century Colonial Revival style is also represented.

The Chamberlin-Taylor House is considered the oldest structure in the Wells River Village Historic District. The founder of Wells River, Er Chamberlin, built this somewhat plain but strong example of a Cape Cod type house in 1792. After the original construction of the Congregational Church in 1839, the Chamberlin-Taylor House served as the parsonage until the Congregation Parsonage was built in 1876. The Cape Cod styling of the Chamberlin-Taylor House is significant because second only to the log cabin, it became the predominate form of housing in Vermont's frontier.

Like many towns and villages in Vermont, Wells River stands as an example of a prosperous 19th century village. The Wells River Village Historic District was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1983.

Sources:

National Register of Historic Places. Wells River Village Historic District. Town of Newbury. Orange County. Vermont. Reference # 83003217 <http://www.crjc.org/heritage/V16-108.htm>

"Wells River, Vermont." Princeton.edu LDA. Web. Accessed 2 May 2013. https://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Wells_River,_Vermont.html