



Tom Howe Barn & Conservation Area Named to New Hampshire State Register of Historic Places

The Gilmanton Conservation Commission is thrilled to be able to announce that the Tom Howe Barn & Conservation Area was listed on the New Hampshire State Register of Historic Places as of July 25, 2022~!!!!

“The New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources is pleased to announce that the State Historical Resources Council has added five properties to the New Hampshire State Register of Historic Places, each of which reflects the state’s rural history.”

The New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources states The Tom Howe Barn & Conservation Area is eligible for the NH State Register for its association with Gilmanton’s agricultural past, particularly the production of flax and linen. Its agricultural significance is reflected in the landscape, including the cleared fields, small barn, stone walls, foundations, retting pond, and other agricultural elements.

The property is a cultural landscape that features historic elements and landscape features from the property’s various time periods and uses. It includes an expansive hayfield, a retting pond, barn, foundations, and hardwood forest with trails. Along

with the trails are remnants of antique farm implements and equipment. The land also has 1,000 feet of frontage on the 26-acre Meeting House Pond and includes a

sugar bush orchard.

The property was recommended eligible for the New Hampshire State Register for its historical contributions to the history of Gilmanton. It is significant as a rural historic district for its vernacular architecture, layered landscape, and for its contributions to multiple contexts within New Hampshire’s broader history, including flax production, subsistence farming, and the cottage industry of shoe-making.

The built and natural features of the property illustrate the multiple eras of usage.

The small pond on the property was manipulated with a stone platform to be used in the retting of flax for linen production and is one of the only such known ponds to still exist in New Hampshire. The English barn is like many in New Hampshire, is

an important link to the property's agricultural roots and domestic continuance. The foundation remains that are adjacent to the barn are most likely related to an earlier

barn structure that may have also been used as a shoe shop based on historic maps, while the house foundations provide a linkage to the domestic use of the property.

The property retains sufficient integrity, particularly location, setting, feeling, and design, to convey its multi-layered agricultural history, with its extant retting pond and barn, combined with the foundations, pastured land, and wood lots create a rural historic landscape.

The property is located at 245 Meeting House Road in Lower Gilmanton, south of Meeting House Pond. Early records indicate that Swain family settled in the Gilmanton during the late 18th century. John Swain, born 1719 in Hampton, and his wife Judith had six children while living in Hampton Falls. At an unknown date, John along with his sons Theophilus, Levi, and Stephen, and possibly other members of the family, moved to Gilmanton.

The deed records indicate that brothers Theophilus, born 1758, and Stephen, born 1766, and their half-brother Levi, born 1777, owned land along Meeting House Road. After serving in the Revolutionary War, Theophilus married Elisabeth Mann in 1784 and lived in Gilmanton with their seven children. Stephen Swain married Nancy Sanborn of Gilmanton. Their son William Swain, born 1811, owned the property on the west side of Meeting House Road in the mid-19th century. It is possible, based on deed research, that he acquired the property from both his father

Stephen Swain and from Levi Swain in 1836. Unlike Theophilus and Stephen, Levi Swain did not permanently settle in Gilmanton.

The property has had numerous names in the past depending on the owners. However, the property on the New Hampshire State Register Certificate will be listed as "The Tom Howe Barn & Conservation Area". Tom Howe, Gilmanton resident, Senior Land Director for the Society for the Protection of NH Forests, conservationist, preservationist and friend and neighbor, died in an accident on January 26, 2021. Tom was well known and loved, locally, statewide and nationally. It was Tom who led the charge in conserving this property.

After nearly a year of complex document preparation and review by Federal, State, and local agencies, the Gilmanton Land Trust and conservation partner, Five Rivers Conservation Trust finally secured this parcel along with 3 other parcels. The conservation easement is held by Five Rivers Conservation Trust in perpetuity, the Town of Gilmanton owns the property and the Gilmanton Conservation Commission is charged with overseeing and monitoring the property. This property will forever be known as the "Tom Howe Barn & Conservation Area".