

SECTION 8: HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES (Revised October 8, 2004)

HISTORICAL OUTLINE OF OGUNQUIT

Although one of Maine's youngest towns, being incorporated in 1980, and Ogunquit's history is enmeshed with that of its mother town, Wells, whose origins date to the early 1600s. Traders and fishermen frequented these shores in the 1500s, but the permanent settlement was not established until 1641, when Edmund Littlefield settled at the Webhannet River, building not only saw and gristmills but also his home. The original land grant for Wells, dated 1643, did not include this southerly section that is today Ogunquit as Wells' southern boundary was noted as the northeast side of the Ogunquit River. However, it was not long before the settlement expanded, as in less than 20 years (1659), the courts were deciding the boundaries between Wells & Kittery/York which are the southern boundaries of Ogunquit today.

One of the natural resources which enticed the settlers to this area was the abundance of small streams which could be harnessed to provide waterpower for milling the plentiful supplies of timber and for grinding their grain. Another natural resource was the substantial acreage of marshland with its supply of hay. This was an essential feature for nearly all the early successful settlements, as feed for their livestock was readily assured until such time as the land could be cleared, planted and harvested. Hence, it is not surprising to read that Edward Rishworth was granted 20 acres of marsh in that Great Meadow lying south of the Ogunquit River.

Massachusetts Bay Colony assumed control in 1653 and it did not take them long to realize the values of the mills on the local economy. Along with those in Kittery and York, a tax was imposed on mills on both the Ogunquit and Webhannet Rivers to assist the province in the maintenance of Fort Loyal located east of Falmouth.

The Indian Wars and skirmishes made life in these frontier communities problematic. Many fled to the more relative security of the Boston area. But the staunch settlers, who stayed, rebuilt their mills and homes as the Indians burned them. Shipbuilding also continued on a small scale. Schooner trade between Boston and Wells continued with lumber and related products going south and essential supplies coming north. However, the poverty and constant dangers during the Indian Wars kept growth and industry at a minimum for ninety years until 1760, when the last of the Indian treaties was signed. Not until 1719 was a highway laid out between the Cape Neddick River and Saco Falls!

The subsequent wars of the nation continually brought poverty to the area during both the Revolution and War of 1812. The demand for money, soldiers and supplies during the Revolution took its toll with the men not at home to harvest the crops, etc. The War of 1812 saw local seamen impressed, the ships destroyed or damaged and worrisome fears of coastal attack. Ships were buried in the mud of the inland rivers to escape capture.

However, by 1825 the homestead farms could prosper, shipbuilding and trade resumed and taverns sprang up to accommodate the stagecoach traveler. The previews of tourism had arrived! However, agriculture and maritime business continued to be the substance behind the local economy. Cash was scarce so goods and services were often exchanged. Shipbuilding and trade progressed; lumber products, granite and fish went south with groceries and coal being returned. The West Indies trade yielded sugar, rum and molasses. The homestead farm not only provided food for their own use, but potatoes, dried beans, corn and apples were shipped out.

Access to Ogunquit Beach was reached with its first bridge across the Ogunquit River at Beach Street in 1890. Although the MAINE ATLAS of that year notes only York and Old Orchard as Maine summer resorts, at least a dozen hotels catered to the wealthy summer boarders, who came by train to Wells Beach Station and then were "carriaged" to Ogunquit. In 1888 artist Charles Woodbury first experienced Ogunquit, and by the turn of the century would return to purchase property at Perkins Cove and initiate a summer art school. However, the Art Colony did not really flourish until the 1920s and, by 1960, its impact had diminished.

In 1890 it was noted that the forty fishing boats at Perkins Cove would bring in cargos worth \$15,000 annually. Significantly, that year was also the beginning of the farmers selling off land to "capitalists" by the hundreds of acres. Locals wondered why "nobody wanted their good land, but everyone was crazy after the poorest...sandy and most rocky land with 'the view!'" These sales brought not only enhanced values to the shorefront properties, but also increased demands for the local farm produce. It is interesting to note that early surveys noted that only 12% of the land could actually be described as "good" for agricultural pursuits. Thus the transition from the small farming community to that of "tourist-oriented economy" had begun.

In 1906 a larger, consolidated school was built, and both the Methodist and Baptist churches were fixtures on Shore Road. The Atlantic Shore Line began service that year also, providing electric trolley service between Kennebunk Station and York Beach. For a decade or more, this was possibly the most heavily traveled route on the Eastern Division during the summer months. Serving the popular summer resorts of Wells Beach and Ogunquit, as well as York Beach, the line carried near capacity traffic during July and August. Standing room only and trips running every half hour with two or three cars were not uncommon. Advertised as "The Sea View Route," passengers enjoyed frequent glimpses of the blue Atlantic riding along the present Route One between Ogunquit and Wells Corner. However, once the summer season was over, this line was very poorly patronized. By 1917 the line was an early victim of automobile competition and was finally discontinued completely in 1923.

By 1913 the fewer than 200 resident taxpayers wanted management of their own village. The State legislature approved the formation of the Ogunquit Village Corporation within the town of Wells. Sixty percent of Ogunquit's tax dollars would be retained for village expenses with the exception of the schools. Wells would continue to provide complete funding for all schools within the town. At that time, there were half as many non-resident

taxpayers as resident payers. This ratio crept to nearly equal numbers from the 1930s thru the 1950s, but a decade later, in 1960 the non-resident numbers surpassed the resident. In the 21st Century, the number of non-resident taxpayers exceed the resident payers.

In the early 1920s, Ogunquit residents noticed a progression of development of summer cottages heading south along the coast from Moody Beach. Investigating the matter, they discovered that the entire shoreline as far as the southern tip of Ogunquit Beach had been purchased from the State by a man named Tibbets from Wells. With extraordinary prescience, the Ogunquit population of fishermen, farmers and mill workers formed the Ogunquit Beach District in order to tax themselves for the purpose of raising money to embark upon eminent domain proceedings. Ultimately they succeeded in rescuing the beach, at a cost of \$45,000, half of which was legal expenses; half the purchase price. It was a defining moment in Ogunquit's history and some see this effort (which took several years) as Ogunquit's finest hour. A resonant relic of those times is the original surveyor's plot plan of the developer's subdivision showing the beach parceled into 50-foot wide house lots; the drawing is on view at the Winn House Heritage Museum.

It was the period following World War II that the transient middle-class, now owners of family automobiles, discovered the seashore and its vacation opportunities. No longer was Maine's Vacationland just the summer playground for the wealthy. This was the beginning of "bumper to bumper" summer congestion during July and August. This also made it imperative for the village to address the problems of expansion.

By 1951 the Village was governed by a Board of Overseers. By 1957 parking at the Main Beach was at capacity. In 1960 beach erosion was seen as a problem and, in 1974, a dike was constructed over the dunes using federal flood control funds. In 1974, the Village Corporation became the recipient of a generous gift from S. Judson Dunaway of a useful new Community Center. Just six years later, 1980, Ogunquit was able to acquire from the legislature the permission to separate from Wells and become a town unto itself. Again, schools were to be the only connecting link to the mother town, and they would remain a joint endeavor. The two decades since independence have brought both satisfaction and "growing pains."

In the late 1960s a newly formed outreach agency representing the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) Soil Conservation Service offered Ogunquit a project described as a dunes restoration project that would protect the beach from erosion. When in 1974 the existing dunes were bulldozed, and the project revealed itself to be a flood-control dike built of 74,000 cubic yards of glacial till from a Wells sandpit, the Village Corporation, the Special Committee to Restore the Ogunquit Dunes (SCROD) and 13 individuals litigated to halt construction and to have the project done as described in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Court action resulted in a stalemate: USDA/SCS was found guilty of multiple violations of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) yet was not ordered to restore the dunes to their original condition; but the Town was freed from the contractual obligation to rebuild the dike whenever it was destroyed by a storm – as it was in 1978 when its entire fore slope of course material was scattered across the beach face.

INVENTORY OF OGUNQUIT'S SIGNIFICANT HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES IN TERMS OF THEIR TYPE AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Historic Society of Wells & Ogunquit maintains (2002) a list including 6 historic properties in Ogunquit on the National Register of Historic Places. These are listed below.

National Register-Designated Thematic Grouping: "Early Capes of Wells"

Capt. Charles Perkins Homestead

Located on the west side of Route 1 at Scotch Hill; built in the mid to late 1700's probably by David Maxwell.

Goodale-Stevens Farm

Located on the east side of North Village Road just south of the Ogunquit River; probably built by John Goodale. - c 1720

Goodale-Bourne Farm

Located on the west side of North Village Road. This early Cape was built when John Goodale's sons split the family property. - c 1740

Capt. Winn House

Moved from its original location on Old County Road in the 1980's for the building of the Gorges Grant hotel. The main house was relocated adjacent to Obed's Lane on the historic Jacobs Lot. Built by Capt. James Winn. - circa 1780. In 2001, the Winn House was repositioned on its Jacobs Lot site to become the centerpiece of the new Dorothea Grant Common municipal park. A raised yard around the Winn House serves as a platform for outdoor ceremonies and arts performances. The interior of the restored Winn House is a town museum featuring artifacts and interpretations of the historic artists colony and fishing communities in town.

Other National Register of Historic Places

Memorial Library

Located on the north side of Shore Road, this library of stone was designed by architect Charles Burns of Philadelphia and built by Mrs. George Conarroe in memory of her husband in 1897 with an addition in 1914.

Ogunquit Playhouse

Located on Route One, South.

Probably Eligible For National Register

Queen Anne Style Home

Located on Shore Road of former legislator, Roby Littlefield.

“Shingle Style Homes”

Located on Stearns Road and bordering Marginal Way.

Possibly Eligible For National Register (2003: Historical Society of Wells-Ogunquit)

Mansard Style house (circa 1830-1870)

Located on Shore Road across from Memorial Library.

Methodist Church (circa 1874)

Located on Shore Road across from School Street.

Ogunquit Village School (rebuilt 1929)

Located on School Street.

Prehistoric Archaeological Sites

The Maine Historical Preservation Commission (MHPC) has identified four sites along the banks of the Ogunquit River which have possible archaeological significance. There is insufficient information about these sites to determine their actual significance, although one of them (site 4.2) is believed to contain artifacts from the Ceramic Period of the last 2,000 years. The other sites have been designated 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6.

Survey work needs to be done in order to determine if these sites are truly significant and to determine if other archaeological sites exist in Ogunquit. Any area within 250 feet of the water's edge along the entire Ogunquit River, as well as along the entire oceanfront, is considered as having the potential for containing archaeological sites. MHPC recommends that these areas be surveyed and that there be a review mechanism requiring a field check prior to any ground disturbance or construction activity.

Historic Archaeological Sites

The Maine Historic Preservation (MHPC) has identified one site in submerged land below Perkins Cove, the wreck of the ship *Susan Ann*, an 11 ton American-built merchant vessel. The *Susan Ann* was built in 1949 and was wrecked in 1971. The wreck has not been surveyed and its condition is unknown.

Although there is only one historical archaeological site noted by MHPC, there is potential for other terrestrial sites to be found in the village area during excavations, since the settlement of Ogunquit dates back to the 1600's.

Other Significant Areas

Ogunquit Beach

1½ miles of white sand purchased 1923 from private owner

Marginal Way

Shoreline walkway located from Shore Road to Perkins Cove. Received as gift from Josiah Chase in 1925.

Geological Sites

Cliffs of Ogunquit bordering Marginal Way to York.

Described by one source as the greatest geological showplace of America. These dikes and shale's formed from the contortion and folding of strata when earth was young. These dikes of molten rock and veins of milk-white quartz spread throughout Ogunquit's shale's. These white stripes exist from a mere fraction of an inch to long veins two to three feet thick. The largest vein here is a broad one, 2 to 13 feet wide by 10 feet long located about a half mile south of Perkins Cove. This pure white band against the dark background has been used by sailors for centuries as a guide to the coast.

Pine Hill section - green granite

Private Cemeteries - scattered throughout the Town

Public Cemeteries - three

PLANNING IMPLICATIONS FROM HISTORIC AND ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Historically, old homes have been torn down to make room for parking lots or business ventures. The expansion for business uses continues to be a threat to the older dwellings. Private cemeteries have been destroyed also for business ventures.

A significant grant was awarded the Town in 2001 for major rehabilitation of the Marginal Way. The townspeople had previously accepted the gift of the Capt. Winn house and the work to restore it and make it a Town Museum was accomplished in 2002. In 2000, the Townspeople adopted an Ordinance to allow owners to voluntarily have their historic property so designated. This may encourage more to become active in preserving Ogunquit's heritage.

Maine cemetery laws require care for private cemeteries with military burials.

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