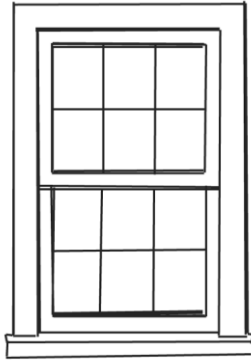


Building on Deering Tradition



A brief history of New England architecture and ideas
for continuing the tradition in Deering,
New Hampshire



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Bartlett House

**A brief history of New England architecture and ideas
for continuing the tradition in Deering, NH**

The Heritage Commission
By Donald Johnson and Mark Johnson

Building on Deering Tradition

Early New England houses are a direct result of the prevailing conditions in New England. The newcomers found an abundance of wood and they had to face very cold winters. Moreover, glass was very expensive and available only in small sheets. The English wattle houses that used a mixture of mud were no match for the cruel New England winters. Governor Bradford wrote in 1621 that a storm “caused much daubing of our houses to fall downe.” By early the 17th century the practical settlers had found that post and beam with clapboard sided houses proved extremely durable against the New England winters.

Post-and-beam construction involves taking large pieces of wood and joining them together with woodworking joints, using mortise-and-tenon construction, without metal construction such as nails. Instead, wooden pegs, bents, braces, and sometimes trusses are employed. Clapboards are made by cutting a plank or board from the right corner to the lower left corner. The sturdy post and beam structures covered with clapboards, proved the most practical building style in all of New England. Reconstructed houses at Plymouth Plantation are early examples of the first use of clapboards.

The first settlers to Deering, such as the Forsaiths, Pattens, Lockes and Loverans, followed this pattern. With ample timber everywhere, Deering settlers set up saw mills along many running streams. In 18th century Deering mills were built along the Piscataqua and even on smaller streams like the 1770s mill on Patten brook in north Deering. The New England model of houses gradually spread across the northern United States to Oregon. Even today many

manufactured houses we see in Deering attempt to follow this building style.



One of the first houses at Plymouth Plantation

New England Style Houses

By the eighteenth century the New England housing styles evolved into two major types, the Cape Cod and the Colonial. By the beginning of the nineteenth century the popular Federal style had also emerged and by the end of that century a few Victorian houses could be found in larger New Hampshire towns.

Cape Cod



The original Elias Hassel house on Clement Hill Road

Cape Cod homes developed from the last quarter of the seventeenth century to about 1830. The defining characteristics of the cape house, which originated on Cape Cod, were dictated by the severe coastal weather and the region's cold winters. Its single story and expansive roof created a low lying building that offered shelter from the winds coming off the ocean. A massive brick center chimney heated the entire house and heat also radiated from the warmth of the bricks. Additionally, the roof had very little overhang; there were no dormers and limited ornamentation, all in an effort to adapt to the extreme and severe climate. The original capes were built directly on the sandy shores, adding to their low profile.

The common Cape Cod houses were rectangular and constructed with post and beam. Most capes are small, averaging 1,000–2,000 square feet. A common size cape measures 28' x 38' with a 10 pitch roof. It is a low, broad frame building, generally a story and a half high, with a steep, perfectly pitched roof without gables, with low eaves, and no cornices. The roofs are one of the most notable things about Cape Cod style houses.

Capes had a six-paneled door flush with the lintel (a supporting wood or stone beam across the top of an opening), and a true Cape Cod door will be truly proportioned. If the house is lucky, it may have a granite millstone for a doorstep. The front door opened onto a tiny entrance hall with steep stairs leading to the second floor. Originally the downstairs was divided into just two rooms, one on either side of the center staircase. Later capes expanded at the sides and back.

Post and beam cape houses dominated until balloon frame construction began to replace it in the mid-1800s. The timber frame houses remained popular throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. After World War II, the basic cape form was copied in new developments such as Levittown in New York and in many New Hampshire towns for its iconic American look.

Colonial



Present Dawson House on Clement Hill Rd.

The New England Colonial is an enlarged cape with two full stories. More affluent residents who could afford both the extra materials needed and the cost of winter heating and lighting often preferred this larger style. Like the cape, the first colonial houses were one room deep with a central chimney. However, by the early 1700s, builders were often adding an addition onto the back side to provide more space. These houses are commonly known as the one and a half room deep saltbox.

The colonial is symmetrical with two windows on each side of the front door and five windows on the second floor. The house usually has a 10 to 12 gable roof pitch and narrow eaves. The two story colonial had one large center chimney and was sided with clapboards. It usually has small casement windows and exhibited very little ornamentation.

Georgian Houses



Original Loveran House on East Deering

The Georgian house was is a more ornate version of the two-story colonial. It featured classical moldings, window caps (pediments) and more elaborated pilastered doorways and various styles of pediments, with the triangular type being the most popular. The interior of Georgian houses usually had cornice moldings, wall paneling and balustrades along the stairways. Georgian Colonial homes usually are a square symmetrical shape, with a paneled front door with flat columns on each side at the center, and commonly five windows across the front and paired a chimney at each end of the house. The gabled pitched roof has a minimal overhang. Many Georgian Colonial homes also have a dental molding (square, tooth-like cuts along the eaves. Georgian Colonial became very popular in New England and the Southern colonies during the 1700's and became a favorite of well-to-do colonists. More humble dwellings also took on characteristics of the Georgian style.

Federal Houses



Present Neville House on Reservoir Road.

After the Revolutionary War the Georgian style gave way to the Federal house. The Federal, the third major New England house type, was deeply influenced by the early 19th century's growing fascination with ancient Greek culture. Prior to the Civil War, the federal was one of the most popular New Hampshire style houses.

Federal houses were usually built for the more well-to-do citizens of the towns. Most federal houses have a central hall plan, a five-bay facade arrangement and a central front door. Above the main doorway there is often a semi-elliptical or semi-circular fanlight with flanking sidelights, frequently decorated by pilasters and/or columns with a flat entablature. Semi-circular or rectangular porticos were common. The federal house usually has a six-panel door, rectangular windows proportioned with simple casing and mullions and a roof style of either gable or shallow hip roof. Tall, slender chimneys appeared at both ends of the building. The Federal houses are of either wood or brick.

What does this Heritage Mean in Deering Today?

What influence does this long, impressive tradition have on contemporary housing designs in Deering? Few of the original factors that contributed to the development of these major housing types hold true today. We now have numerous new materials as an alternative to wood. We have central heating systems, electricity, running water and plumbing. Cooking is no longer done over open fires and wood stoves. Glass is cheap and available in very large sizes. Consequently, many of the defining characteristics of New England houses such as the large center chimney, wood clapboards, and multi-paned windows made from small pieces of glass, are no longer necessary.

Moreover, home builders now are subject to new influences and forces that shape their architectural decisions. New materials, the urge for energy efficiency, the varying size of families and local zoning regulations all help determine building choices. In towns like Deering with large new populations, newcomers often bring suburban housing values with them such as paved driveways, manicured lawns and mulched gardens. Commuters have replaced the town's original small farmers and artisans who often treasured their barns more than their houses. Today the car oriented life-styles require large garages in place of the old timers' barns. The social life of many of the newer residents tends to center in large living and media rooms instead of the almost exclusive use of the kitchen for "visiting" in earlier times in Deering. All these changes have put pressure on continuing a building tradition that was based on climate, available materials, and an agricultural society.

Building on Deering Tradition.

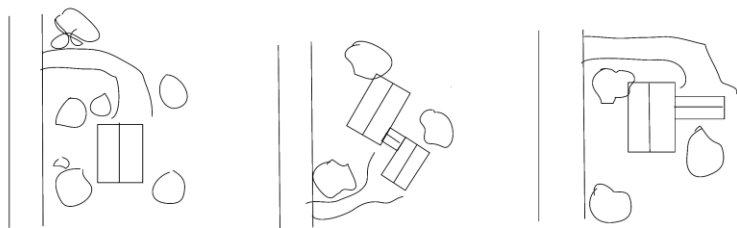
Despite the enormous changes and new realities in contemporary Deering, there continues to be an interest to draw upon the centuries of New England architectural tradition. As you begin the building process of a new home and are interested in incorporating Deering's venerable building traditions, there are three main ideas you can consider for your home: site placement, massing including roof pitch, and choice of materials.

Site Placement

Site placement is the location of your home on the land. Irregardless of the type of house that is constructed, site placement is the most important factor of all when building a new house. The placement of a house on a site determines entry, driveway, orientation to the sun and winds and relationships to the terrain and existing trees and plants. Walking your site at different times of the day and seasons is very important and provides valuable information for your design decisions. After viewing the entire site you can then make careful consideration of the direction of the sun and prevailing breezes and how the nature of the terrain can enhance the buildings' aesthetics.

Another idea for consideration when placing your house is called site repair. Site repair is the idea of placing a new house on the part of your land that is in need of care instead of an area that you consider the best part of your lot. It is common to say "This is the best part of the land and I am going to build my house right here." But when you build the house on the best spot you have to destroy that area to build the house. What you are left with is a house surrounded by areas that need site repair.

An alternative is to build on the edge of the best spot, the area that is not so appealing, and thus preserve the most desirable area. It takes twenty years for a clear cut housing site to heal and appear as if a house has been there for generations. Our forefathers and mothers carefully preserved sugar maples around their houses so they could easily tap them each spring. Being careful to allow large maples, oaks and other hardwoods to continue growing in the immediate area around the new house will ensure the continuity of tradition, welcome shade and a pleasing sight for the eye. This approach also provides an alternative to the common practice of clear-cutting a lot and then building a house in the middle of the clearing.

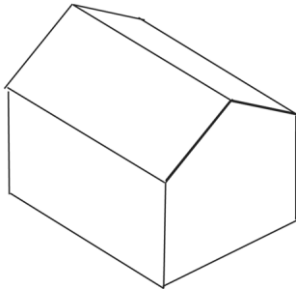


These drawings provide three examples of possible site placement with relationship to the town road, existing trees and the house orientation including driveway.

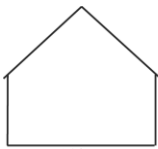
Massing

The massing is the overall shape of a house. The major components that make up the massing of your house are determined by the building dimensions, wall height and roof pitch. One of the major appeals of the Cape and Colonial houses is their proportions and simple massing. New England houses have historically been created by one simple rectangular mass (for example 28 x 36) and gabled roof with

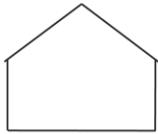
between an 8 and 12/12 pitch. Ells or additions were added on when families grew or more space was required.



This drawing illustrates the idea of simple massing. The building is composed of one rectangle with a gable roof.



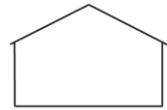
12 pitch



10 pitch



8 pitch



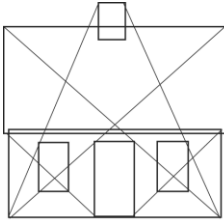
6 pitch

Most New England houses use a roof pitch between 12-8/12 pitch.

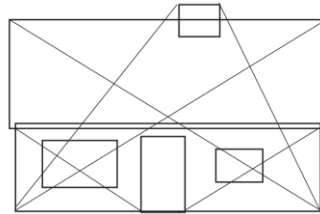
Other parts that contribute to a house's overall massing are type of roof style, dormers, overhang of roof, placement of chimney and additions and outbuildings.

The placement of windows and doors in a building is known as fenestration. Fenestration is a careful design response to the interior functions and organization of the features of a houses site. Designs will vary depending on the unique qualities of a site, such as the view or sun, but it is instructive to consider the balance and harmonious fenestration developed in New England homes over centuries of careful study and practice. The following drawings illustrate the difference between a well balanced

house and one that has no concern for balance or consideration of window placement, door placement, and window size and chimney location. The diagonal lines demonstrate the relationships and connections of the windows doors and chimney.



Balance and symmetry



No relationships or balance

Materials

The similar characteristics and materials of traditional New England buildings contribute to the areas visual cohesiveness and harmony. Wood, stone, glass and brick are the most common materials for the exterior of traditional New England houses. It is extraordinary that the clapboard has endured as the longest running feature of New England houses. The clapboard is so familiar that many think a New England house automatically comes with clapboards. Even today with the enormous variety of new materials including vinyl, aluminum, and cement, the clapboard remains the ubiquitous outside covering, even in manufactured houses.

Other historic practices are dark roof shingles and brick chimneys. Further, you might consider incorporating traditional trim, granite for outside stairs or posts, and maintaining or building new stone walls in an effort to contribute to the continuity of Deering's architectural history.

Toward the Future



Baker House on Reservoir Road

Many of our new houses have been inspired by the long cape and colonial architectural tradition. The following are two good examples of building on Deering tradition.



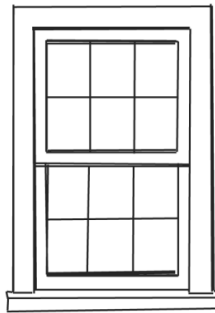
Johnson House on Clement Hill Road

There are many other examples of new houses all over Deering and those who are planning to build should take time to drive around town and gain inspiration from these

new houses as well as from the old capes and colonials that are still standing. Take pictures of the houses you like for whatever reason. Study the pictures and ask yourself, “What is it that I like about this house?” Think about the building tradition in Deering. Seek out builders and/or architect that can help you build the house you want and located it on the site in the place you want.

Finally, the amount of money you have to invest in your new house is not the only factor that has to determine your choice. Your decision and desire to build a new home that blends with Deering’s historic building styles is the most important factor in carrying on Deering’s venerable tradition and contributing to the prized rural character of the town.

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A double-hung muntin pane window
with flat casing trim

Glossy

Clapboards. Narrow boards put on horizontally to an exterior wall, each that overlaps the one below it to create a skin over the frame of a house.

Dormer. A roofed structure with a window that projects from a roof.

Double-hung window. A window with two vertical sliding sashes, each closing half of the window.

Eave. The lower part of a roof that extends beyond the wall.

Ell. An addition that extends from the back of a house.

Fenestration. The placement and arrangement of windows in a building.

Gable. The triangular shape of a building wall created by two sloping roof planes.

Massing. organization of the shape of a building.

Muntin. The slender vertical and horizontal material that separates individual panes of glass in a window or door.

Pane. A small pane of glass in a window.

Pitch. The slope of a roof that is expressed as a ration of vertical rise to horizontal run.

Trim. Decorative pieces around windows, doors and roofs, including casings, cornerboards, rakes, eaves etc.

Books for Information on General Design

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