

## Master Plan Section on Historic Resources and Heritage

The Vision Statement for the Master Plan references the importance of a future “that honors and preserves” Lyndeborough’s “rich heritage, rural character, natural beauty, and close-knit, small-town community.” The passage states our commitment to preserving aspects of the town’s existing resources including “historic landmarks.”

The preservation of the historical built environment has been and remains essential to the town’s character and identity. This can be seen in the unofficial town seal—highlighting the 1845 town hall, the brass cannon owned by the Lafayette Artillery, and an example of Lyndeborough glass, the town’s most important non-agricultural industry and arguably its primary claim to fame. By adapting to changes in settlement patterns while embracing its heritage and history, Lyndeborough has been able to survive and prosper through the years. Future planning should incorporate efforts at preserving and celebrating Lyndeborough’s history and heritage as part of its identity.

### History of the Town

The first people to set foot in what would become Lyndeborough were indigenous groups that arrived perhaps as early as 13,000 years ago. They lived in small nomadic bands, moving often to hunt prey. They traversed the region for well over three thousand years. Two more long-term waves of indigenous people occupied the area, first during the Archaic era (9,000 BCE to 3,000 BCE), and later during the Woodland period, during which nations of the Pennacook Confederacy claimed the Monadnock Region and Souhegan Valley. Many Native American trails along rivers later became roads. Lyndeborough has a documented Native American burial mound near the town center, which has an easement to remain undisturbed.

The first non-indigenous settlement in what would become Lyndeborough came when both the colonies of Massachusetts and New Hampshire claimed the territory. Instead of paying military veterans in cash for their service, Massachusetts gave out land grants to the veterans of a failed expedition to Canada in 1690 during King William’s War. This land grant, called Salem-Canada, was issued in the 1730s to proprietors from Salem, Massachusetts. Most proprietors were absentee owners hoping to gain profits through land speculation. They gave land to John Cram to set up a homestead and sawmill and paid for the framing of a meetinghouse to entice settlement to their frontier land. The town was named after its most famous proprietor, Benjamin Lynde, Jr. in 1753. It was incorporated as a town in 1764.

Multiple changes to the borders of the town occurred over a century, starting around 1750. Combined, these additions to other towns resulted in Lyndeborough’s unusual shape. These alterations, and the resulting challenging geography, have contributed to both physical and perceptual divisions in the town. A lack of town unity continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, though connections have improved with improved transportation and communication over the last half century.

Lyndeborough residents were unified in answering the call to arms and participated in all of the military engagements that they were asked to. They fought in the battles of Bunker Hill and Bennington in the Revolution and served at Portsmouth during the War of 1812. During the Civil War, 135 Lyndeborough men served the Union cause. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Lyndeborough citizens fought in the Mexican Expeditionary Force in 1916, both World Wars, in Korea and Vietnam, and in the conflicts since Vietnam.

Lyndeborough is unique in having its own militia company to protect and defend it and serve as a beacon of community pride. The Lafayette Artillery Company is one of the oldest in the country. It was organized in Peterborough in 1804, moved to Lyndeborough in 1833, and has been a vital part of the community for almost two centuries. For many years, the February 22<sup>nd</sup> levees brought visitors to the town and is an important part of Lyndeborough's heritage. Citizens' Hall was constructed partly to house Artillery activities. The Artillery continues to celebrate and promote the town's history and identity.

Unlike many towns in southern New Hampshire, Lyndeborough did not experience significant industrialization in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its limited industries were mostly small—Clark Pottery in North Lyndeborough (1770s-1850s), several small furniture factories, and the Lyndeborough Glass Company in South Lyndeborough Village (1860s-1880s.) Sawmills, grist mills, and cider mills dotted the rivers in town, but no large industries were established. This contributed to the town's continued small-town character.

As rural depopulation hit the area in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Lyndeborough became a destination for summer vacationers. Multiple farmhouses opened their doors to boarders, while the Pinnacle House served as the town's only grand hotel for about 30 years. Several restaurants and stores have come and gone, with the Village Store serving as a hub for the community for almost two centuries.

Agriculture stood as the primary sustaining career for many in town from colonial days until after World War II. Much of this farming was subsistence agriculture, though by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the town was celebrated for its blueberry and apple industries. Those remained a staple of the town's economy until the 1970s and 1990s, respectively. Maple syrup production and specialty agriculture continue to remind us of Lyndeborough's strong agricultural past.

The population decreased for decades, reaching its nadir in the 1930s. In the post-World War II era, the population has not only rebounded but increased significantly. Development pressures resulting from this increase led to the creation of the Planning Board and zoning ordinances in the 1950s and the Conservation Commission in the 1970s. Regulated growth has helped to maintain Lyndeborough's rural character, even as it increases in population.

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the 21<sup>st</sup>, Lyndeborough has experienced an identity crisis. The town has increasingly become a bedroom community for commuters to Manchester, Nashua, and Boston. Long-time residents have looked back nostalgically to its small-town farming roots

while coping with more people with different backgrounds, interests, and needs. Balancing future needs with an appropriate appreciation for the past and its importance to the town is essential going forward.

## **Historical Resources**

Lyndeborough's history can be seen in its cultural landscapes. Transportation routes and structures, stone walls, public buildings, old homes and churches, historic cemeteries, monuments, schools, cellar holes, and other features contribute strongly to our local sense-of-place. They are our historical resources—documents of our history, just as important as the written records maintained in the town's vaults. As such, we must consider them in the planning process.

Future planning must take into consideration the reality that extreme weather events and acid rain are having an impact on the built environment in Lyndeborough. Gravestones and monuments, especially those made of marble are already mostly indecipherable, due to weathering and acid rain. In recent years, extreme weather events have affected roads and former roads, public and private structures, foundations, cellar holes, and cemeteries. Future planning must take this into consideration.

**Roads and railroads:** The construction of Lyndeborough roads can be divided into four eras. The first is the proprietary period (before 1764), when roads were constructed as cart or bridle paths and were intended to open the town for settlement and commerce. Some of the oldest public roads still in use include parts of Cemetery, Purgatory Falls, Putnam Hill, Citizens' Hall, Pettingill Hill, Furnace Hill, and Pinnacle Roads. Many of these (and others) were expanded to formal two-rod-wide rights of way between 1764 and about 1830; this period also saw the establishment of dozens of other roads in town as well as the privately constructed Second New Hampshire Turnpike through North Lyndeborough. The construction of Forest Road in the 1830s as a three-rod road encouraged commercial patterns in Lyndeborough to shift to the south village. This began the third era of road construction, when the town's road-building program concentrated on improving the connections of South Lyndeborough to other parts of town, replacing old roads, or building new roads to encourage industrial development. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as tourism and automobile travel became more important to New Hampshire, a fourth period of road construction began, one in which state and local funding led to more highway improvements, including paved roads.

Lyndeborough has twelve roads or sections of roads that have been classified as "scenic roads." Most of these roads were designated between 1976 and 1988, with one (Warner Road) added in 2004.

While roads have continued to evolve, the railroad has come and gone but has left its mark on the town's landscape. Opened on January 1, 1874, the railroad reshaped South Lyndeborough village significantly. In 1863, the Baptist Church, built in 1836, was moved to its present location to make way for the train tracks. and Armory Hall was built as a depot. (Part of this building was

moved across the road in 1910 and later attached to the Baptist Church.) The beginning of railroad service in 1874 marked the start of South Lyndeborough becoming the *de facto* center of commerce and population in the town, replacing Lyndeborough Center. A new depot was constructed in 1911, along with a milk house and freight house. The gulf trestle, an inverted steel truss bridge, seen as an engineering marvel when it was constructed in 1883, was replaced in 1986. Although the buildings have been either moved or torn down, the tracks through town, the gulf trestle, and the depot foundation remain.

**Stone Work:** The two stone-arch bridges on Old Temple Road form another notable feature of Lyndeborough's built environment. These bridges, which were built by a private mill owner in 1873, became the town's by prescription in 1893. They were bypassed by a new bridge in 2005. They represent a unique construction for stone arched bridges, as they include two different-sized arches. The Heritage Commission has highlighted their history, beauty, and distinctiveness, as reasons to ensure their continued preservation.

Stone walls border many of the town's roads and add to its small-town charm. Many of these stone walls along older roads were built between 1795 and the Civil War to mark rights of way. New construction and land alterations should attempt to maintain existing stone walls as much as possible, to preserve both the town's natural beauty and historic rural character.

**Public buildings:** Most of the public buildings in Lyndeborough are historically significant and contribute to the town's rich heritage, rural character, natural beauty, and small-town community identity. Planning should prioritize maintaining the historic public structures to preserve as much historical integrity as practical, especially buildings and landscapes connected to the National Register.

Few traces of the first three meetinghouses remain (these initially were constructed to serve church functions as well as for town meetings and common defense). The first meetinghouse for Salem-Canada stood near Putnam Hill Road, when that was roughly the geographic center of the town, from 1741 to 1759, though it remained unfinished. After boundary lines were redrawn and six years after the town received a charter from New Hampshire in 1753, a new meetinghouse was apparently built along Center and Dutton roads, remaining in use for about a decade. The town constructed a third meetinghouse in the center in 1772. The current town hall was built in 1845 on the site of its predecessor, eight years after construction of the Congregational Church. It was enlarged and remodeled in 1883 and 1890, with the stage added in the 1910s, electricity in 1937 and running water in the 1980s.

Citizens' Hall was constructed in 1888-89 to host social activities, especially the annual Lafayette Artillery levee and ball. It has been the home of the town's government since 1966. Electricity first arrived at the hall in 1929, and the town funded renovations in the 1960s and 1980s. Volunteers spearheaded a major renovation of the building from 1998-2001. As a condition for allowing large gatherings in the second-floor hall, the building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Storekeeper Joseph A. Tarbell donated money for the construction of the Tarbell Library building in 1911. A major addition was completed in 2010. Across from it along Forest Road, a two-bay, brick-and-concrete-block fire station was built in 1948. The station doubled in size in 1971. At Lyndeborough Center, the old town barn was built in 1938. It was remodeled in 1954 and remained the barn for the Highway Department until 1990, when the town purchased a concrete-block building constructed for a quartz company in 1964. That building, located on Locust Lane, was retrofitted into the current highway garage. The town also owns a two-car garage on Center Road, built in 1990, that is not historically significant.

**National Register:** Citizens' Hall was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1999. The Town Hall, former Congregational Church, and Town Pound (1774) formed the basis for a National Register district in 1984. The structures in this district as well as Citizens' Hall should closely adhere to the best practices established by the Department of the Interior so that the town can qualify for federal and state grants and not endanger the buildings' certifications or use of the second floor of Citizens' Hall.

**Education:** In 1772, shortly before the Revolutionary War, townspeople voted to fund a system of public education. Five years later, the town was divided into school districts (up to ten at its peak, some combined with neighboring towns.) From the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-20<sup>th</sup>, children attended one-room schools. As the population declined, these schools were moved or combined. In 1948, citizens voted to build a central school in South Lyndeborough. This began in 1949 as a two-room school for first through sixth grades. Those desiring a higher education mostly attended Wilton, Milford, or New Boston High Schools. The Central School had additions in 1956, 1985, 1988, and 2013. The Wilton-Lyndeborough Cooperative Junior-Senior High School was opened in 1971. In 2009, the town voted to have a fully cooperative district. Sixth grade moved to Wilton in 2011, while kindergarten opened in Lyndeborough in 2013. Grades 1-5 moved to Wilton in 2016 after renovations to the Florence Rideout School. The Wilton-Lyndeborough Cooperative Early Learning Center opened at the Central School with kindergarten and pre-kindergarten, along with the SAU offices.

Along with the Central School, Lyndeborough has three one-room schools that are still standing, which have been converted into private homes.

**Old Houses:** Lyndeborough has many private houses and other buildings that are over 120 years old. The Heritage Commission has compiled a notebook cataloguing all of these houses, which number about 125, with information taken from the town histories, deeds, interviews with older residents, and other pertinent sources. The catalog is continuously updated with new information and photographs, and is available for viewing by members of town boards and the public in general. Also, the Heritage Commission has developed a letter to discourage the destruction of structures that are part of Lyndeborough's history.

**Cellar holes/Foundations:** Cellar holes for old houses, barns, and mills are tangible evidence of Lyndeborough's past. If they are damaged or removed, we lose an element of the town's

history. The Heritage Commission strongly discourages property owners from damaging old cellar holes and culverts.

**Records:** Lyndeborough has retained the vast majority of its official town records, from the earliest proprietor books in the 1730s to its town records from 1765 into the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well as its original town charter. Some of these documents have been re-bound in recent years. The Town Clerk maintains most of these, though the earliest records are located in Concord at the Division of Archives and Records Management. Proper archival techniques are being implemented. The town must ensure its ability to preserve these priceless records for generations to come.

**Cemeteries:** Lyndeborough boasts eight public cemeteries (South Yard, Center, Perham Corner, Johnson's Corner, North, Whittemore, Dolliver, and the Forest Road Cemetery) along with a single grave on Crooked S Road. Additionally, several graves exist on private land, including an early family graveyard on Woodward Road.

Several of the cemeteries have been improved, while most have not. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the South Yard Cemetery underwent a fashionable facelift to follow the trends of the era. A retaining wall, stairs, and roads within the cemetery were laid out. The unimproved graveyards continue to be maintained, though maintenance can be a challenge. The Cemetery Trustees have consolidated and digitized the records of burials in town.

Of the eight cemeteries, only the South Yard Cemetery is open to new burials that have not been previously reserved. This cemetery, probably the oldest in town with its first documented burial in 1772, was expanded in the 1830s, 1880s (when the Civil War monuments were installed), 1950s, and 2010s.

Cemetery	Approx. burials	dates	Open for burials
South Yard	Over 1,000	c. 1772-	yes
Center	Around 300	1783-2015	no
Johnson's Corner	Around 250	1777-	no
Perham Corner	Fewer than 100	1790-1923	no
North Cemetery	Around 250	1775-	no
Whittemore	20	1776-1989	no
Dolliver	27	1860-1975	no
Forest Road	Around 25	1828-1922	no

**Monuments:** Along with cemeteries, Lyndeborough is home to several public monuments. A grave site on Crooked S Road, bounded by stone walls, is marked for Dr. Lorenzo D. Bartlett, a smallpox victim in 1854. Oral tradition holds that several interments were made near the poor farm (also on Crooked S Road.) Other known interments outside of formal cemeteries include

ones in North Lyndeborough (Chamberlain family), off Woodward Road (the Blaney family), and off Pettingill Hill Road.

On the South Lyndeborough Common stand monuments honoring veterans of the First World War, the Second World War and Korean Conflict, the Vietnam Conflict, and wars since Vietnam. Next to these is the Hartshorn Cannon, a Naval cannon given on loan from the War Department and dedicated in memory of John Alonzo Hartshorn—Lyndeborough’s second Civil War casualty—in 1902. Near the cannon is a black granite bench dedicated to POW-MIAs by the Military Order of the Purple Heart in 2012 in memory of the Five Minutemen (National Guardsmen from Manchester who were killed in Vietnam.) Another bench on the common is dedicated in memory of resident Patricia Levesque by her classmates in 2013. Volunteers have maintained flower beds around the monuments as a mark of honor. Planning should include perpetual care for these monuments in the future.

The town is planning to install a monument to honor Revolutionary War soldiers. This granite obelisk with chamfered corners will be installed near the war monuments on the South Lyndeborough common. Funds are being gathered through donations. It will be dedicated in August, 2026.

Two memorials have been erected at the Putnam Pond Recreation Area. One, at the small pond that now bears his name, is dedicated to the memory of longtime resident Bruce Geiger. A monument to the late Selectman Lee Mayhew was dedicated at the Putnam Pond boat launch. Another monument, a small obelisk along Center Road near the center village, marks the spot where Christianna Woodward was killed in 1852 while delivering mail. The Heritage Commission has kept this area clean and has erected a sign to better explain what the obelisk commemorates.

**Signs:** Starting in 2019, the Heritage Commission has erected historical-marker signs to highlight elements of Lyndeborough history. Six larger signs have been installed: on the South Lyndeborough Common, Lyndeborough Center Historic District, North Lyndeborough (Clark Pottery), near the glass factory, at the stone arch bridges on Temple Road, and on Brandy Brook Road. Smaller signs have been created for all of the cemeteries. Another, recognizing the importance of the Grange in the town’s history, is set on the Center Hall. Between 2021 and 2023, the Heritage Commission placed “Welcome to Lyndeborough” signs to promote the town as a welcoming, friendly community.

## **Groups that Exist to Maintain Historical Resources**

Several town committees and commissions as well as private entities have advocated for preserving and honoring the town’s rich heritage as part of our identity as a close-knit, small-town community. Among the private groups that have tried to promote Lyndeborough’s history and heritage are the Lafayette Artillery Company and the Lyndeborough Historical Society. Previous groups include the Pinnacle Grange and the Lyndeborough Improvement Society. Past

town committees that have worked to oversee preservation of town buildings include committees to plan landmark celebrations, such as the Bicentennial in 1976 and the town's 250<sup>th</sup> celebration in 1987, as well as several incarnations of the Meetinghouse Committee. In addition, the Conservation Commission, Planning Board, and other committees have supported preserving Lyndeborough's rural character, natural beauty, history, and community identity.

The Historic District Commission was created by vote of the town in 2010. This commission has statutory authority over the Historic District in Lyndeborough Center. This small district incorporates the town hall, former Congregational Church, town pound, old town barn, a private apple orchard, and the Center Cemetery. Any major renovation or alteration relating to the town hall or the exterior of the former congregational Church needs to have prior approval by the historic District Commission. The Historic District Commission must continue to be utilized as part of any future plans for this district.

The Heritage Commission was voted into existence in 2004, shortly after the last Master Plan was finalized. The purpose of this appointed advisory board is "the proper recognition, use, and protection of resources, tangible or intangible, primarily man-made, that are valued for their historic, cultural, aesthetic, or community significance within their natural, built or cultural contexts." Thus, the Heritage Commission is in charge of preserving, defending, and raising awareness for historical and cultural sites in Lyndeborough.

The mission of the Heritage Commission has been to find and list all the town's cultural and historic man-made artifacts. Examples include cellar holes and old foundations, mill sites, culverts and old roads, stone walls, and historical structures in town. The commission also helps to build awareness of historical and cultural sites in the town, while preserving and advocating for its culture and heritage.

Over the last two decades, the commission has been involved in repairs and historic preservation, cataloging old buildings, roads, culverts, and other built environments, as well as historical and educational outreach. The commission has restored monuments, including the Woodward monument on Center Road, added a death date to a war veteran's grave, and arranged for a "no dig" agreement at a Native American burial mound. They fixed the gate of the town pound and restored the curtain backdrop in the town hall. The commission has been instrumental in transforming the South Lyndeborough common into a memorial park and has maintained its upkeep.

The Heritage Commission ensures that alterations to and upkeep of Citizens' Hall conform to the Secretary of the Interior's standards. Use of the second floor and the town's ability to attain some federal and state grants relating to Citizens' Hall depend on our adherence to these standards. The Commission also works in collaboration with the Historic District Commission in an attempt to ensure that repairs to Center Hall and the Town Common conform to the Secretary of the Interior's standards. Because the hall and historic district in the center are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the town's ability to qualify for some federal and state grants relating to Lyndeborough Center depend on our adherence to these standards.

Members of the Heritage Commission have volunteered since 2017 to show fourth graders from the Florence Rideout School local history during their annual local history field trip. In 2021, in conjunction with the Wilton Heritage Commission, the Lyndeborough Heritage Commission hired a professional videographer to create a 45-minute documentary on Wilton and Lyndeborough called *A Shared History—Wilton and Lyndeborough*. Members of the Commission were recorded reading brief histories of the Pinnacle Hotel, Clark Pottery, Lyndeborough Glass Company, the Lafayette Artillery Company, Lyndeborough Center, and South Lyndeborough. This video, which can be seen on [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com), has been a favorite of the fourth graders studying local history. The fourth-grade field trip and video have enhanced Lyndeborough's image in the minds of its children. Educating local children at school, as well as holding events like Community Day, can help the next generation continue to honor and preserve Lyndeborough's heritage and character.

Resident Chris Schoen crafted for the Heritage Commission four beautiful wooden display cases that have been installed in the upstairs hall in Citizens' Hall. The Heritage Commission has set up displays of Lyndeborough history in those cases, as well as the glass case in the meeting room in the first floor of Citizens' Hall. These displays have helped to teach the important history of the town to residents and visitors alike.

The Heritage Commission has been part of Community Day from its start, supporting its goal to bring the community together for a day in August to celebrate Lyndeborough and its people. In 2023, the Heritage Commission coordinated with the Lyndeborough Historical Society to co-sponsor a new and revitalized Community Day. Community Day should remain in future plans for Lyndeborough, since it perfectly epitomizes the idea of honoring and preserving Lyndeborough's heritage, character, natural beauty, and community.

The Heritage commission created a map showing old cellar holes, old roads and trails, old culverts, where some of the town's many sawmills, grist mills and cider mills were located, and the locations of many other structures. This original hand-marked map has recently been digitized. Creating an interactive map that can be utilized by the public could be part of the town's future plans to highlight Lyndeborough's historical built resources.

In October, 2024, the Heritage Commission received an award from the International Society for Landscape, Place, and Material Culture. This award, the Historic Preservation Citation of Merit, celebrated the commission's efforts to preserve and protect historical structures and promote the town and its history over the years. Receiving an international award is a significant achievement for a town the size of Lyndeborough, and the Heritage Commission and the town should be proud of this feat.

### **Conclusion and future:**

The Heritage Commission, along with other committees and private groups and individuals, have established the pattern for planning for the future in terms of addressing Lyndeborough's history and community identity. These groups have exemplified community service by

promoting the town, its culture, and its heritage. The positive press coverage gives Lyndeborough an encouraging image that any small town would envy. The frequent upbeat press coverage has not only improved Lyndeborough's reputation but has also helped to make Lyndeborough an attractive town for visitors and prospective residents, potentially increasing property values.

The Planning Board and Selectmen should consult with the Heritage Commission and Historic District Commission on any plans affecting Lyndeborough's heritage, history, or town identity. Hiring contractors with expertise in historic preservation is essential to ensuring that public buildings remain preserved as well as functional.

Education is essential to relay the importance of Lyndeborough's history and heritage as part of the town's future plans. The creation of the Heritage Commission in 2004 has aided these goals, as has efforts by the commission and others to publicize Lyndeborough's history as an essential part of the town's identity. Continued outreach can ensure that Lyndeborough's future will leave a legacy that "honors and preserves its rich heritage, rural character, natural beauty, and close-knit, small-town community."

This is where I left the photos. I didn't feel like deleting them, since I like them. But if the master plan is going to have photos, we can use some of these.







