2. Congregational Church (4 Highland St.)

Known over the years as the "North Church" or the "White House" for its prominent white spire, this church has long been the symbol of Meredith's New England heritage. Originally built on the high school hill c. 1815, the church was moved to Meredith Bay in 1833. It remained there until 1842, when it was moved again to its present site. Next to the church, the Beede House (12 Highland St.), completed in 1867, is an outstanding example of Italianate architecture. It was built by John W. Beede, whose general store was built at 7 Main St. (now the Lakeview Tavern) in 1853. Beede descendants still own this house.

3. Sanborn House | Drug Store (51 Main St.)

For well over a century, the Sanborn Block has been a focal point of social and business activity in Meredith Village. It was built in 1841 for Dr. Jeremiah Smith. The five bays, 2½-story twin-chimney and a rear two-story ell still show the original structure. In the late 1800s, Dr. George Sanborn had his practice in this building. His son George Freeman Sanborn founded a printing company here in 1871 and started the Meredith News in 1880. Two years later, he launched the Meredith Public Library, providing space in this block and serving as the town's first librarian. He opened a drug store on the opposite corner of Water and Main Streets in 1883 and in 1909 moved the store into the front addition to this building. Sanborn's original mortar and pestle stained glass windows still decorate both sides of the entrance to the old pharmacy.

4. Town Halls & "The Great Catastrophe" (92 Main Street and 73 Main Street)

The center of local government from 1876 to 1958, the "Old Town Hall" at the corner of Main and High Streets (4a), was actually the second town hall built in Meredith Village and the third in the town's history. The first was built on Parade Road in the 1790s, but the town voted in 1854 to build a new hall in Meredith Village (4b–92 Main St.). The next year, during the first town meeting in the still unfinished hall, the floor collapsed under the weight of 600 voters. About 150 fell into the basement, killing four and injuring many others. In 1875 Josiah Sturtevant agreed to construct new offices for the town at the corner of Main and High Streets. The town offices and hall were on the second floor. The first moving pictures ever shown in Meredith were seen there. Except for the storefronts, it retains its original look.

5. Baptist Church (89 Main St.)

The meetinghouse of the Second Baptist Church Society of Meredith was built in 1834. Arched side windows and semi-elliptical fans in the front gable and lower tower are Federalist in style. The onion dome is a later addition. For many years, the Baptist Church bell knelled the deaths of residents by tolling the age of the person who had died.

6. The Civil War Memorial & Meredith Public Library (91 Main St.)

Major E.E. Beede's Civil War Memorial is dedicated to the 12th New Hampshire Regiment that fought in many of the fiercest battles of that conflict, including Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Cold Harbor and the siege of Richmond. Meredith men made up the majority of Company I of the 12th, and local losses were particularly heavy in those battles. Major Beede himself survived two injuries as well as time as a prisoner. He was at the Ford's Theater when Lincoln was shot, and he helped carry the President to the house across the street where he died. After making a fortune mining diamonds in South Africa, he donated this statue "to keep alive the memory of our fallen brave."

The Meredith Public Library had no permanent home until Benjamin M. Smith donated $10,000 for a building in 1900. After growing up in the village during the mid-1800s, Mr. Smith became a successful hosiery salesman in Massachusetts. He donated the library in remembrance of his parents. The building is a Classical Revival structure designed by George Swan. The original main block is a T-shaped structure with a hipped roof and a slightly projecting gable above an entry recessed under a round arch. The building corners are pilastered, and there are bands of elaborate corbelling below the main roof. Windows are set in rectangular openings, with stone sills and keystone lintels. The name and date appear in raised granite. The original structure was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985. Additions to the building were completed in 1988 and in 2021.

7. The Humiston School (103 Main St.)

The town of Meredith had as many as 25 one- or two-room school houses before 1855. Attendance ranged from five to 35. Meredith Village's two-room school house was located on Plymouth St. By 1872 the number of village school-age children had outgrown the original school house, so Meredith acquired this parcel near the village center and built a new school made of wood. The present brick building replaced it in 1914. The building was named for John Humiston, a popular young teacher who died unexpectedly that year. The building's architecture resembles the library in design, but the trim is concrete, reflecting a growing use of less expensive, man-made materials. In 1925, the Humiston building became the town's high school and a new grade school was built on Lang Street. A new high school was built in 1956, and the Humiston building is now occupied by the administrative offices of Inter-Lakes School District.

8. John Bond Swasey House (109 Main St.)

Village canal builder John Bond Swasey built this house in c. 1812. Born in 1782, the young Swasey moved to Meredith's Ladd Hill with his family in the 1790s. In 1809 he acquired a home and store just across the road from this house (now the 114 Main St. lot). This was the beginning of their partnership to upgrade the Waukewan outlet. This house is similar to other early 19th-century homes, featuring two and a half stories, twin chimneys and five windows around a central entrance at the front. The two-story side porch is an unusual feature reminiscent of southern homes. The house still belongs to descendants of John Bond Swasey.

9. Jonathan C. Everett House (4 Waukewan St.)

Another of the oldest houses in Meredith Village, this red house was originally built in c. 1813 by the village's first resident attorney, Jonathan C. Everett. It was initially located next door on the Main St. corner. The early 19th century architecture is consistent with most homes of the era. Note the picturesque barn to the rear. A granite hitching post still stands near the street. The house was moved over on the lot in 1897 by Dr. Frederick Hawkins, who built the ornate house to the left (2 Waukewan Street) which is now the Meredith Inn.

10. William Morse House (17 Lake St.)

The house at 17 Lake Street is the oldest still standing in the Village. It was built c. 1800 by William Morse, the second blacksmith to move to the budding Village. In 1817 it was purchased by Dr. John Sanborn, the first physician to live in the Village. Dr. Sanborn moved to 8 Plymouth St. in 1827 and built the brick house formerly known as Mame's Restaurant.

11. The Swasey Stone

The Swasey Stone at the south corner of Main and Dover Streets is believed to have been placed by John Bond Swasey c. 1811 to delineate the southwestern corner of the mill lot. It was buried for years before being unearthed in the 1970s.

12. Lang | Mansfield | Grad's Store (48 Main St.)

Joseph Whidden Lang built this building in 1855 to house a dry goods business. Lang's nephew Captain Joseph William Lang used the building in 1862 in his recruitment of Company I of the 12th New Hampshire Regiment. The building remained in the Lang family until 1919. It housed many of the village's more prominent retailers, including E.C. Mansfield and Sam Grad. The latter was an immigrant who started out as a peddler with a pushcart before buying the store. Grad's was a popular clothing store until the 1990s. Weeks' Country Store and the A&P grocery store were also former tenants. The building has been renovated, but some features of the original building remain.
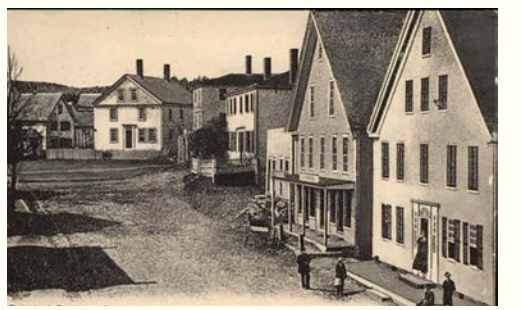
13. The First Inn (23 Main St.)

John Neal built perhaps the first store in the village here in c. 1805. In 1832 it was converted into the village's first inn and tavern where post riders delivered the mail. It burned in 1867 and was rebuilt soon after.
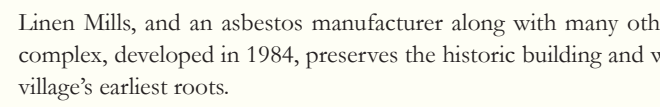
14. The Horne Block & Lower Main Street (14 Main St.)

Bradbury Robinson constructed the first building here c. 1805. He sold it to Samuel Bean, who operated a general store next door from 1814 to 1861. The property was acquired by medical doctors Newell and Mary Nutting in 1894. They constructed the existing building in 1897. "Dr. Mary" was a very popular figure in town and long remembered for the hundreds of babies she delivered. Guy and Edith Horne bought the building in 1947. Edith was Meredith's first chiropractor.
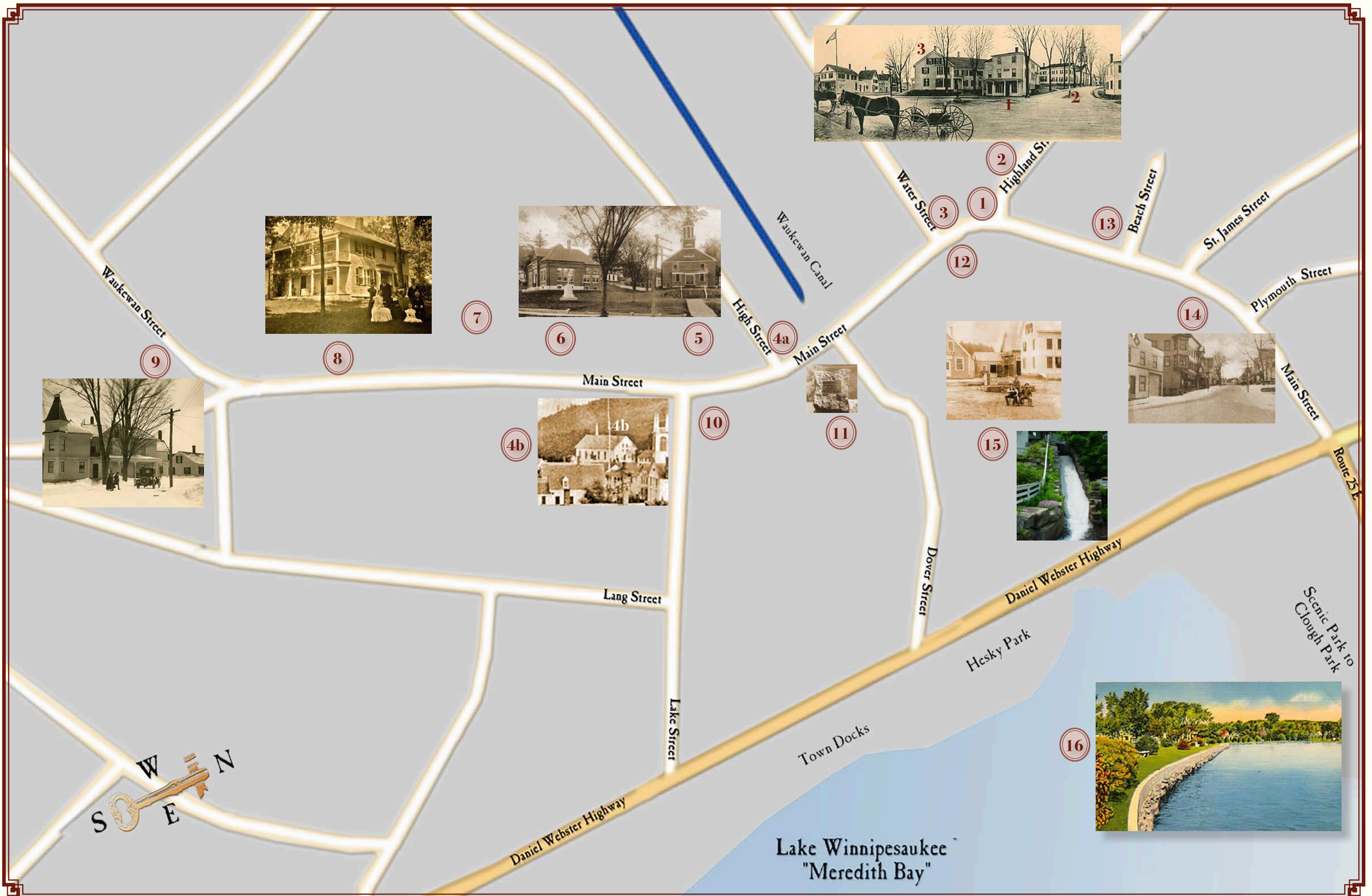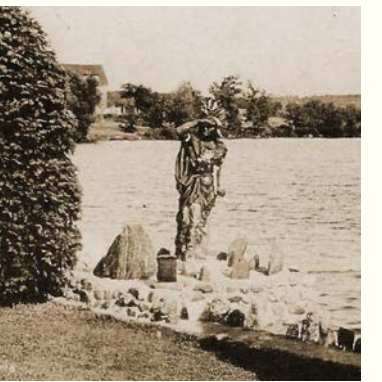
15. Waukewan Canal & Village Mills

The water power of the Waukewan stream was first harnessed for milling in 1787. Small saw, grist and carding mills were built over it or next to it. After entering into a partnership with Daniel Avery, John Bond Swasey spent several years improving the stream's waterpower by tightening its banks and rechanneling it into a canal that led to the still-flowing 40-foot waterfall and mill race. He then rebuilt the mills, transforming the village into a first-class manufacturing center. The old building housing today's Mill Falls Marketplace was constructed in 1833 as a cotton mill. Over the decades the mill yard played host to grist mills, lumber mills, a cotton-processing plant, a piano manufactory, a hosiery manufactory, the Meredith Linen Mills, and an asbestos manufacturer along with many other smaller businesses. The shopping complex, developed in 1984, preserves the historic building and waterfall as a fitting monument to the village's earliest roots.

16. Waterfront

Meredith takes great pride in its public waterfront. The first village wharves on Winnipesaukee date back to the early 1800s when gundalows, horseboats and steamboats landed in the vicinity of Hesky Park. But the bay was decidedly an afterthought to Village residents throughout the 1800s and into the 1920s. Various mills occupied key locations on the village side of the bay, including two lumber mills that clogged the waters with floating logs and piles of sawdust. Years later the Meredith Linen Mills constructed buildings right up to the shoreline. Edward Clough led the process, remaking his waterfront at the head of the bay near Pleasant St. into a well-manicured park with a wonderful stone wall along the shore. He donated the park to the town. The village quickly followed by filling in the neighboring shorefront at the head of the Bay, creating Scenic Park. In the late 1940s the state relocated Rte. 3 along the shore, St. Charles parish built their Catholic Church on Swasey Point (aka Church Point), and the owner of the Linen Mills donated Hesky Park for park purposes. In the early 1950s commercial restaurants and shops sprang up along Rte. 3, and the town added public docks and a boardwalk to the area. The next major leap occurred in the 1980s when Hampshire Hospitality Holdings acquired the mill yard, the PI building at the head of the Bay (Inn at Bay Point), and then the church property, leading to the world-class resort town we enjoy today.

Lake Winnipesaukee "Meredith Bay"

Meredith Village: An Historical Overview

The land that became the town of Meredith was granted to 62 colonists in 1748. It wasn't until the early 1760s, however, that settlers began to establish farms in the township. Earlier settlement had been precluded by the on/off dangers of the French and Indian wars, the last of which ended in 1763. By 1766, a dozen homesteads were in various stages of development in the vicinity of Parade Rd. (Rte 106 now). Ebenezer Smith, the leader of the grantees, had the town's largest farm. Under his leadership, the town was formally recognized by the legislature in 1768. Governor Wentworth changed its name to Meredith, after his friend Sir William Meredith, an influential English Parliamentarian. The new town grew slowly, the population reaching 259 just before the Revolution. By 1790, it was up to 881, and by 1800, it had nearly doubled to 1609 dispersed from boundary to boundary.

The Meredith Village area played little role in this early settlement surge. It was not settled by anyone until 1786. By then, a road—now Main Street—had been built, connecting Parade Road (formerly the Province Road and now Rte. 106) to the eastern end that abutted Moultonborough.

As with virtually all other "villages" in early New Hampshire, its settlement arose from the presence of the water power generated by the stream running

from Measley Pond (now Lake Waukewan) to Lake Winnipesaukee. The most important parcel was located where the Mill Falls Marketplace and Inn now sit because the Measley Pond stream dropped precipitously there. In 1787, Ebenezer Smith and John Jenness partnered to build a saw mill on the stream, beginning the process by which additional mills and then commercial businesses were added, leading to the creation of a thriving village. Although long demolished, the lot at 56 Main St. was the location of the first home built in the future village by John Jenness c. 1787. It housed successive mill yard owners and then became a tenement for workers until well into the 1900s.

Additional businesses were gradually drawn to the area, and by 1805 a small community was taking shape. The village enjoyed steady growth over the next several decades. Successive owners of the mill yard, led initially by John Bond Swasey, rechanneled the Waukewan stream and tightened the mill race to generate more water power. As a result the mill yard and village rapidly expanded during the 1820s, 1830s and 1840s, boosted by the decades-long economic phenomenon known as the "sheep craze" that brought prosperity to New England during those decades. High-

land St., Water St. and High St. were all settled in the 1830s. Moreover, two churches were built, and an inn was established on lower Main St. The arrival of the railroad and steam boating in 1849 provided further impetus to population and commercial growth the village.

In 1855 Meredith Village became the recognized center of the town when Laconia split off to form a separate municipality. In 1859, a group of local businessmen brought corporate organization to the mill yard in the form of the Meredith Mechanic Association. The MMA used public capital to further develop the village's manufacturing potential. Larger businesses were drawn to the village. In due course a bank, a library, a local newspaper and various stores attracted people from the surrounding region. Meredith's (and New Hampshire's) prior identity as farming country gradually gave way to commercial development and tourism.

Thanks to the mill yard, manufacturing continued to play a leading role in the village until the 1950s when vacationing and tourism increasingly became more important to the town's economy and personality. The mill yard finally met its demise in the early 1980s when the Mill Falls hospitality complex replaced the decades-old mill buildings, closing out nearly 200 years of prominence.
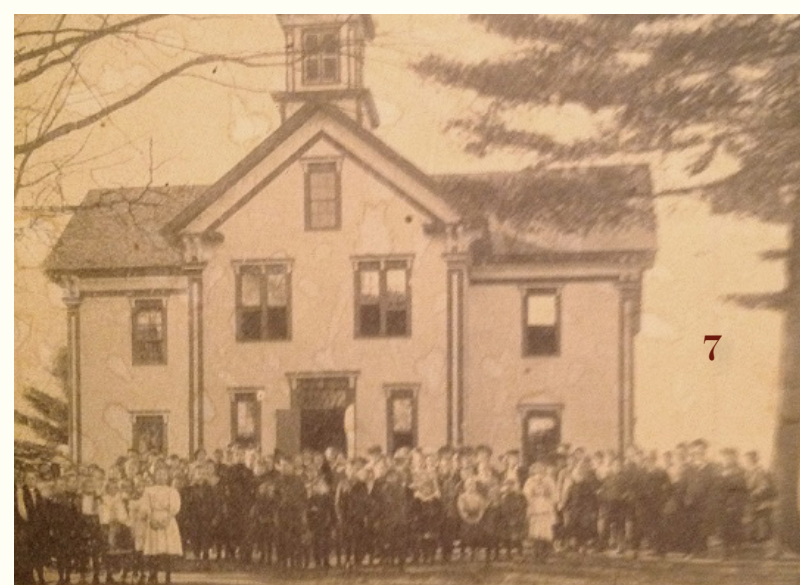
Your Walking Tour Starts Here

1. Historical Society Museum (45 Main Street)

This building was one of the first dozen or so houses constructed in Meredith Village. It was built in 1812 by a saddler named Abel Kimball using pegged timber framing (hand-hewn post and beam) construction techniques that were brought over from Europe. This is especially evident on the second floor, where the ceiling is exposed. Like most early village houses, it served a dual purpose as Kimball's home and shop.

Seneca Ladd purchased it in 1854, and thereafter the building became the major focal point of village activity until 1936. It housed Ladd's piano and melodeon business for several years. In 1869, Ladd established the town's first bank, the Meredith Village Savings Bank, with its office on the second floor, where it operated until 1925. The bank eventually moved to the head of Meredith Bay, where one of its two current buildings is named after Seneca Ladd.

Overlapping with the presence of the bank, the Meredith Post Office rented the first floor almost continuously from c. 1875 until 1936. As a result, the street area outside became known as Post Office Square. For a few years at the turn of the 20th century, the building was also home to the Meredith Public LIbrary before it moved into a new building (76 Main St.) in 1901. From 1936 until 1994, the building housed a variety of retail and commercial businesses along with apartments on the upper floor. Among the many tenants of the building have been the White Mountain Power Company, a grocery store, a restaurant, an undertaker, a first-grade classroom, a Sunday School, professional offices for a lawyer, a surveyor, an engineer, and a tree service, and more recently, a needlework shop and a toy store. The Meredith Historical Society purchased the building in 1994.

[
Take a walk through Meredith Village.
Enjoy our distinctive history
&
architectural heritage.
]

This map is provided courtesy of the Meredith Village Pathways Committee and the Meredith Historical Society. While on the tour, please respect the rights and privacy of property owners.

Meredith Village

Historic Walking Map

A guide to exploring the history & heritage of
Meredith, New Hampshire.