

Self-Guided Driving Tour of Historic Holderness

From wilderness to farming to industry to summer resort, Holderness has seen many changes in 250 years. Ashland was part of Holderness until 1868 when the villagers of Ashland and the farmers of Holderness decided to part ways so our tour goes through both towns.

Starting at the Captain Douglas DiCenzo Bridge over the Pemigewasset River on Rte 175A, go east to Rte 175 (passing under I-93.) On the left you will pass the site of an ancient elm which fell in a storm in June 2011. This was reputed to be the gathering spot for Revolutionary War volunteers.

- 1.** Drive left on Rte 175 toward Campton about 2 ½ miles if you wish a side trip to **Livermore Falls**. The Falls are not visible from the road; a somewhat strenuous hike is required to reach them. There is parking behind the trailer park. The “Great Falls” were the starting point of the original survey of Holderness in 1751. There was once a paper pulp mill here to which logs were driven on the river.
- 2.** If you turn right on Rte 175, you see the **Holderness School**, established in 1879, on land originally owned by Royal Governor Benning Wentworth and then purchased by Samuel Livermore. Livermore Hall honors him. Samuel Livermore, a prosperous judge, congressman and senator, had his house on the bluff where the Holderness School now stands. The house later burned. It is Livermore who is given credit for urging NH to sign the Constitution, making NH the ninth state and so creating the United States of America.
- 3.** Another side trip takes you left up Mt. Prospect Rd. Several early settlers had farms here. 204 Mt. Prospect Rd is the site of an **ox-powered mill** built by John E. Ellison in 1850. The property has been in the Merrill family ever since.
- 4.** Returning to Rte 175, drive about 1/5 mile until you reach the cemetery on the left. **Trinity Church** (Episcopal), which Samuel Livermore built in 1797 for Holderness’ first minister, Robert Fowle, still stands within the cemetery. It is the oldest church in NH still in its original building. Livermore’s grave is nearby. Many descendants of founding families were buried in this cemetery.
- 5.** About ¼ mile past the cemetery is a large **brick federal-style house** built by Captain Russell Cox in 1828 on land originally owned by Samuel Livermore. The house was later owned by Harold Webster, a distant relative of Daniel Webster, who served on the school board and as Town moderator.
- 6.** In 2.4 miles at 356 Rte 175 just past Hardhack Rd on the left is the **Durham house**, one of the oldest buildings in Holderness, a center chimney cape which was built in the late 1700s.
- 7.** Turn right on Owl Brook Road (scenic but 1.2 miles are not paved) and go 1.8 miles to #78 at the junction with Highland Ave. Now in Ashland but once in Holderness, the

privately-owned house (formerly **Shepard Tavern**) and barn are probably the oldest buildings in town. They were built by Samuel Shepard, possibly by the 1770s. He was the innkeeper as well as first Town clerk and Town meetings were held here until his death in 1817. Town Hall was built in 1820. The barn was the site of Ashland Town meetings after the 1868 split.

8-12. Continue on Highland St into Ashland. Turn right on Rte 3. On your left is the brick **Baptist Church** built in 1834. Turn left at the next corner, Winter St, and left again on Hill Ave to see some of the earlier village homes. Past the Catholic Church on the right is a **pair of brick Greek Revival style houses** said to have been built for twin brothers in 1842. Turn left on Pleasant St while noting the **1820 white cape** a little further on Hill Ave. The brick **Whipple House** (Ashland Historical Society) was built about 1830. Next to it is the **Glidden Toy Museum**. (Both have regular summer hours.)

13. Turn right and continue down Main St to see Ashland center. On your left is the former **gristmill** built in 1903 to replace one built in the 1700s which had burned. Totally restored for use as an office, it is the site of Samyn-D'Elia Architects. It stands on the Squam River with a 13' falls which now produces electric power.

14. Return to Rte 3 and follow it northeast. Note the 1990 **covered bridge** built by the Graton family to replace an earlier bridge where Little Squam Lake flows into the Squam River.

If you choose not to follow the gravel road to Shepard Tavern, you can go left on Owl Brook Rd from Rte 3 a distance of 3/10 mile.

15. Continuing on Rte 3 toward Holderness, you will see **Town Hall** just past the intersection with Rte 175. It was built in 1820 and later raised onto a foundation making the lower level usable.

16. On the left is **The Inn on Golden Pond** built by the Sargents in 1879 as a private home.

16a. About ½ mile further on the left is a **yellow New England style farmhouse** which was built in 1831 on "Glebe land" by John and Lydia Jewell. The barn has two stalls for horses and two for carriages. It served as town clerk's office for 30 years under a Piper clerk. According to Louis Francesco, it was a boardinghouse where he stayed after arriving in Holderness as a child. It is now a private home.

17-18. **Holderness Community Church** (on right) was built in 1896 as a Baptist Church. The Annex was once **the Bridge School House**.

19. On the left is **Central House**, now part of the Squam Lakes Natural Science Center and site of Kirkwood Gardens as well as Squam Lake Artisans. Formerly known as the Holderness Inn, the building was built in 1895 to replace an earlier inn which burned. This is the last remnant of the grand hotels of Holderness.

20. Further on the left is **the Squam Bridge Cemetery** where there once was a second Episcopal church. Many early settlers including Pipers and Shepards as well as the first priest, Robert Fowle, are buried here. According to legend, he is buried beneath the location of his pulpit.

21. Turn left on Rte 113. **Davison Brook**, where the state boat launch and parking now stand, was a seasonal site for **Abenaki camps** for many years. Hunting and fishing were the undoubted attraction. There was a similar site along Ames Brook in Ashland.

22. On the Science Center's Mt Fayal trail is the cellar hole that is all that remains of the **James and Sophrania Piper Farm** in use from 1847 to 1886. Their hill farm had 50 acres cleared with horses, cows, sheep and oxen. They raised wheat, corn, peas, beans, potatoes and apples as well as hay.

23. Further out Rte 113 are several farms—**Willoughby, Burleigh** which once had a large dairy operation and **True Farm**. Rattlesnake is now a popular hike through the woods for a spectacular lake view but once was cleared and farmed. It is just past the Pinehurst Rd turnoff for **Rockywold-Deephaven Camps**, a family camp open since 1897. A large farm supplied the camp in former times.

24-25. After driving back down Rte 113, make a left at the intersection with Rte 3. **Curry Place** is on the left across the bridge. The first buildings were part of a 19th century farm. In the rear is the **Holderness Historical Society** housed in the former North Holderness Baptist Church, built in 1861 on Perch Pond Rd and moved to this site in 1994. The Historical Society is open Saturdays from 10 a.m to noon during the summer and by appointment.

26. Just past the Citgo Station, take the right fork up Shepard Hill Rd. On the right, the Squam Lake Inn was built in 1897. On the left you will pass the former Episcopal Church **St Peter's in the Mount** built before 1890. For many years now it has been a private residence.

27-31. At the top of the hill make a right turn onto Coxboro Rd. Six different Coxes were among the first settlers and many built on this road. Closest to the corner, however, are several summer homes with lake and mountain views. On the left is "**Birch Corner**" which was built c.1890. Next to it is "**Pinecrest**," built c.1870. It is supposedly the first house here to have been built specifically as a summer cottage. Then comes the **Goodrich Cottage** built in 1882 and finally "**High Orchard**," a turreted Victorian built c.1880. Across the road on the right side is the "**Tea House**," also built by the Goodriches.

32. On the left side about ½ miles south is **Innisfeld**, built in 1812 overlooking the southwest end of White Oak Pond. When the oldest Innis daughter married R. Bruce Piper, a returning Civil War veteran, she was given the house and farm. Her younger sisters each received one cow and one dollar according to the current owner!

33. There is a farmhouse built in the early 1800s by Walter Cox on the right shortly after Lane Rd. Another Cox farmhouse about a mile down the road on the right at the bottom of the hill was once owned by Vina Henry, a charter member of the Historical Society. There is also a **brick house built in 1835 by Caleb Cox**. Known as “Five Chimneys,” it is at the top of the second hill. The house at the corner of East Holderness Rd and Coxboro was built by a Cox in 1811. (Cox-Cummings-Barker-Taylor house.)

34-35. Turn left on East Holderness Rd and follow it for three miles or so till it ends at Rte 3. Note the **Eastman cemetery** and **Cox cemetery** on the left at the beginning of the road and the **East Holderness cemetery** on the right at the end. The road still has several farms including Hall Farm (left) which was built by Daniel Cox, the Guyotte farm built by Nathan B. Cox (mid-1800s) on the right and the Beij farm, originally the Isaac Smith Farm (right) all with laboriously-cleared fields. The barn was recently dismantled. An earlier farm on the site was built by Capt. Andrew Smythe, one of the original grantees.

36. Turn left on Rte 3 toward the center of town. Park at White Oak Pond on the left if you would like to take a hike along the west bank of **Mill Brook**. No sign remains of the first house in Holderness built by **William Piper and his wife Susannah** along this brook leading from White Oak Pond to Squam Lake. There is a path visitors can follow.

37. Take Shepard Hill on the left just past White Oak Pond uphill. Several Shepards, including Susannah Piper, were among the first settlers of Holderness. **“Shepard Farm”** was built in the late 1700s or early 1800s. Note the house on the left and the barn on the right of the road. It was farmed until about WWI. Ancestors of astronaut Alan Shepard lived there.

38. Further uphill on the right is **“Severance Farm,”** a 19th century farmhouse converted to a summer cottage.

Continue past Coxboro and downhill into Holderness.

Information for this tour came from Abbreviated History of Holderness by Susan Bacon Keith and Margaret Armstrong Howe published for the 200th anniversary as well as Tink Taylor, Sid Lovett, John Merrill, David Closson, Christopher Williams, Tom Samyn, David Ruell, Nancy Wolf, Lynn Durham, Eric D’Aleo, Suzanne Peoples, Lisa Lovett and Dana Armstrong.

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