

APPENDIX J: – Part 1: HISTORIC, ARCHAEOLOGICAL, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

It is important for communities to remember and preserve their past. Doing so adds texture to the fabric of a community and helps create a sense of place. Examples of how people settled and lived provide context and an understanding of the past, and inform a community's perspective on the future.

Saco has a rich history. This chapter identifies the City's known historic and archaeological resources, identifies areas in need of further study, and describes existing preservation efforts.

A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

The following sections are based on Saco historic narratives written by Dr. Emerson Baker in 1987 for the Saco Comprehensive Plan and by Thomas Hardiman, curator of the Saco Museum, in 1996 for a National Register of Historic Places nomination.

1. Prehistoric

From documentary evidence and preliminary archaeological work, it is clear that the lower Saco River was a center of Native American activity, both in prehistoric times and during the contact period (the time of initial encounters between Europeans and Indians in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries). From the writings of the French explorer, Samuel de Champlain, as well as other French and English observers, we know that there was a series of large native villages near the mouth of the Saco River in the first decade of the seventeenth century. A 1605 map drawn by Champlain shows a large Native American village near the present-day campus of the University of New England in Biddeford. The map also depicts Indian cornfields on both sides of the river. The name "Saco" itself is attributed to the Abenaki people's word for "flowing out" or "outlet" and to the word "Sawacotuck" meaning "mouth of the tidal stream.

The Saco Museum owns a collection of Native American artifacts which were discovered at various places throughout the City. Some of these artifacts may be as much as 4-5,000 years old. More recently, in the 1600's and 1700's, Indians lived in

several areas of Saco. The most notable location was Factory Island, which was known in colonial times as Indian Island. Few contact period sites have been found in Maine, so these sites along the Saco River may provide important data for understanding early Indian- European interaction.¹

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) has identified five prehistoric archaeological sites in Saco, including one in the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge and several others on the banks of the Saco River. The MHPC suggests that further survey, inventory, and analysis work in Saco is needed. The banks and flood plain of the Saco River are identified by MHPC as the areas most likely to have archaeological sites.

2. Historic

English occupation began as early as 1618, when Captain Richard Vines and his expedition spent the winter at Winter Harbor (Biddeford Pool). Starting in 1630, just ten years after the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth, the mouth of the Saco became a center of English settlement which included fisherman, traders, lumberjacks, and farmers. By 1636 at least 37 families had settled in the area. Thus Saco became one of the first English settlements in northern New England.

The little settlement grew gradually throughout the seventeenth century, until it was abandoned in 1690 at the outbreak of King William's War. It was not until the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713 that any significant effort at resettlement was made in Saco. After 1713, the Saco side of the river quickly returned to prosperity as a farming, fishing, and lumbering community.²

The fortunes of the small settlement changed in 1716, when William Pepperell, a young merchant from Kittery, purchased 5000 acres and timber rights to an additional 4500 acres on the east side of the Saco River... The Eastern settlement's principal roads, Main Street and the Portland, Buxton, and Ferry Roads, were laid out in 1718.

The settlers on the eastern bank separated from Biddeford in 1762 and named the new village Pepperellborough in honor of the towns' benefactor. The town grew rapidly in

¹ Dr. Emerson Baker - <http://www.sacomaine.org/community/history/archaeology.shtml>

² *ibid*

size and wealth as farming, lumbering, and ship building bloomed and prospered. By the time of the revolution, the growth of international commerce in the town required the government to establish a customs house near the wharves.

In 1805, the town dropped the weighty and difficult to spell name, Pepperellborough, in favor of the simpler ancient name, Saco. The 19th century brought modern industrial capital development to Saco. The first corporation, a nail factory, was established in 1811. The factory was such a paying venture that it was soon followed in 1825 by the first of many cotton milling factories. In the next 25 years, Saco could boast of dozens of industries from cotton mills and machine shops, to iron foundries and cigar factories. With the development of massive cotton mills on the western falls of the river, the sister cities of Biddeford and Saco became leaders of manufacturing in the industrial age.³

According to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) there were 16 known historic archaeological sites in Saco as of June 2008 including a number of shipwrecks. While the shipwrecks appear in the state’s database, the lack of location data limits their pertinence.

Table J.1: HISTORIC ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN SACO		
Site	Type	Date
Goosefaire Brook #1	American domestic	c.1800
York Hill	American domestic, mansion	1782 on
Mercy and Hope	American wreck, schooner	1869
Albion	American wreck, schooner	1869
Nellie Florence	American wreck, schooner	December 5, 1886
Lewis Avenue fill	American dump, industrial	ca. 1850-1930
Stratton's Island Settlement	English settlement	c.1630 - c.1676
Washington B. Thomas	American wreck, schooner	1903
John Scammon House	American domestic	ca. 1730-1780
Boom Road Farmstead	Anglo-American farmstead	1780s to 1850
Skilly Brook Campsite	American campground	second half of the 20th century
Alvin McKenney Farmhouse	American farmstead	ca 1850 to ca 1970
Foxwell Mill	English mill, sawmill	ca. 1636-1675
Cascade Slate Quarry	American quarry, slate	1870s
M.J. Soley	American wreck, schooner	December 26, 1899
Eva	American wreck, schooner	December 4, 1869

³Thomas Hardiman, former Saco museum curator, <http://www.sacomaine.org/community/history/introduction.shtml>

B. HISTORIC RESOURCES

Maine's Growth Management Act requires that, "the value of historic and archaeological resources is recognized and that protection is afforded to those resources that merit it." A community's historic properties provide a tangible link to the past and help create a sense of identity and stability. Saco has been active in preserving and sharing its history. This section enumerates those efforts.

1. National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the nation's cultural resources worthy of preservation. The National Park Service, a part of the Department of the Interior, administers the program. Properties listed on the National Register include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. Among other benefits, inclusion on the list makes a site eligible for federal tax benefits, consideration in the planning of federal or federally assisted projects, and qualification for federal assistance for historic preservation when funds are available.

As of June 2009, Saco had eight sites and two districts included on the National Register. They are:

National Historic Sites

1. Thacher-Goodale House, 121 North St.
2. A.B. Seavy House, 90 Temple St.
3. Saco City Hall, 300 Main St.
4. J.G. Deering House, 371 Main St.
5. Jacobs Houses and Store, 11-17 Elm St.
6. Old Saco High School, 34 Spring St.
7. Grant Family House, 72 Grant Rd.
8. Way-Way General Store, 93 Buxton Rd.

National Historic Districts

1. Saco Historic District (Discussed in following section)
2. Biddeford-Saco Mills Historic District

In 2000, the First Parish Congregational Church at the corner of Main and Beach Streets was destroyed by fire and subsequently removed from the National Register. A new church was built on the same site in 2005.

In 2008, the City completed a seven year process of surveying historic buildings throughout Saco. The results of the survey were used to complete a historic design review manual.⁴

2. Saco Historic District

The Saco Zoning Ordinance includes a Historic Preservation section that addresses the need to preserve areas, sites or landmarks in the City which are historically, architecturally, or culturally significant. In 1991, the City designated much of downtown as a Historic Preservation District (see Figure J.1). The Saco Downtown Historic District occupies approximately 103 acres of land and includes 225 properties. Of these, 186 are considered to contribute to the historical significance of the district.

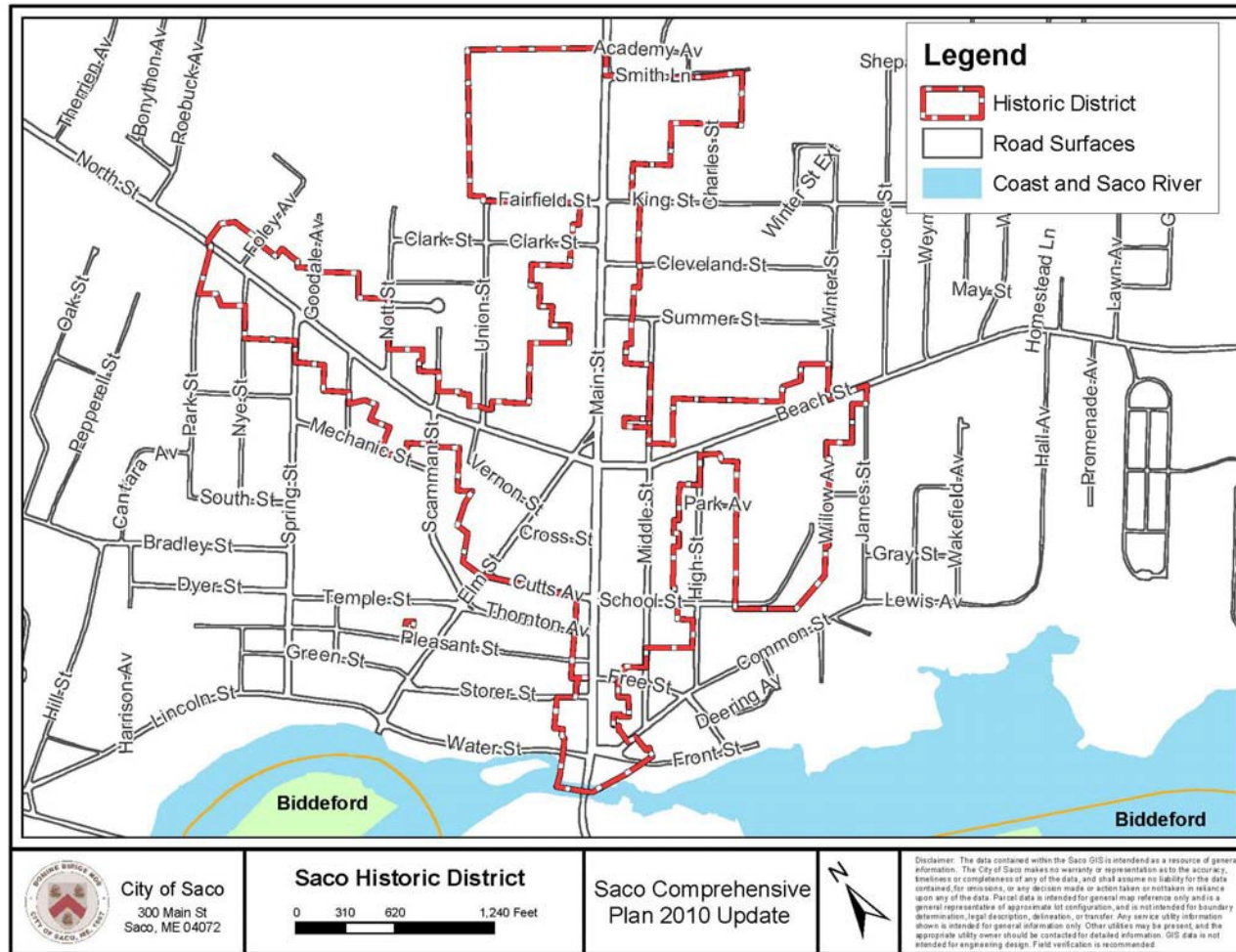
Buildings in the district date from 1785 to 1946. The majority were built during the 1800s. The 186 contributing buildings represent a broad diversity of architectural styles. They include 1 Late Georgian, 34 Federal, 69 Greek Revival, 21 Italianate, 6 Queen Anne, 5 Romanesque Revival, 1 Renaissance Revival, 4 Gothic Revival, 8 Second Empire, 18 Colonial Revival, 6 Bungalow, 3 Arts and Craftsman style, 3 Stick style, 3 modern commercial style, 1 French Provincial, and 3 vernacular structures.

The historic district includes examples of the homes and businesses of Saco as the City grew from an economy based on agriculture, lumber, and trade to an economy based on industry and commerce. The residences of workers, merchants, industrialists, and public figures are represented. The City's growing sense of permanence and prosperity is manifested in Saco City Hall, built in 1855.

The City was designated a Certified Local Government for Historic Preservation in 1991 (one of nine) and has been designated a Preserve America City. Saco supports a National Main Street organization called Saco Spirit, which utilizes the National Main

⁴ 2008 Annual Report Historic Review – Saco Planning Department

Figure J.1: SACO DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT



Street 4-Point Approach⁵ to downtown economic revitalization. Saco's rapid growth has presented challenges in preserving its historic and archaeological resources. However, the City has recognized these threats, and established policies and ordinances to address them.

3. Other Locally Significant Resources

In addition to its archaeological resources and historic buildings, Saco's historic and cultural resources include cemeteries, a library, a museum, and several historic organizations.

Rendezvous Point Cemetery

Rendezvous Point Cemetery is one of the oldest in New England and includes headstones dating back to the 17th century. It is owned by the City and located off of Ferry Road.

Laurel Hill Cemetery

Laurel Hill Cemetery, established in 1844, is one of the earliest examples of a planned garden cemetery in New England. Laurel Hill is the resting place of many citizens important in Saco's history. The cemetery is 170 acres in size and keeps excellent records.

Dyer Library

The Dyer Library has a collection of about 50,000 volumes, including large print, audiobooks, DVDs and video games. The children's room is one of the busiest in the state, year after year. The two meeting rooms are available for rental at inexpensive rates, and are free for the use of non-profits. Several groups meet regularly in the library including a very large book discussion group and crafting group. The library is used on a daily basis by group home residents. Classes from local elementary schools use the children's room on a regular basis, fostering an early appreciation for books and reading. The Library has programming each week to serve the unique emergent literacy needs of babies, toddlers and preschoolers, helping both children (and their caregivers) become aware of the tasks children need to accomplish to be ready to read when they start school.

⁵ <http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/about-main-street/the-approach/>

The Library also houses the Maine History Room. This volunteer-staffed resource is devoted to history and genealogy on a statewide basis but with a special emphasis on southern Maine. Included in the collection, but with limited public access because of the fragility of the resource, are local newspapers dating back to the 18th century. Some of these are available on microfilm. Unfortunately, the only microfilm reader is unreliable and there is currently no funding to either replace or repair it. The Library is also a designated alternative repository for City of Saco records. Many of these are stored in a fireproof vault.

The Dyer Library is located in the former home of Joseph G. Deering, whose family founded Deering Lumber. The building was built in 1869 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Although such an historic building is attractive and appealing, it also presents notable challenges as noted by the Library's Executive Director:

Until recently, the building entirely lacked insulation. With the help of grant funds, the roof and a few other locations are now insulated. However, it's not economically feasible to insulate the masonry walls. Much of the florescent lighting has been switched from T-12 to the more efficient T-8, but if funding could be identified, it would make more sense to start replacing the current lighting with LED lighting. The Library currently has four oil-thirsty furnaces, two forced hot water and two forced hot air. All of these are quite unreliable, about 20 years old, and require frequent repairs. A major project to replace them (and the aged air conditioners) with a geothermal system (largely grant funded) is underway and should be completed by early summer. This project will also necessitate improvements to the library's electrical service which, at just 200 amps (typical in a modern suburban home) is barely adequate for current needs.

The building also has significant upkeep needs: brick repointing, roof repairs, exterior painting and interior flooring/carpeting are all expensive projects that require ongoing attention and money. Fortunately, we received grant funding to replace the library's slate roof in 2014. Another large expanse of roof is rubber; it is now more than fifteen years old and may need to be replaced fairly soon. The parking lot is in poor condition and receives a great deal of traffic, both by library and museum users and in the form of people cutting through to avoid the Main Street traffic light. Not surprisingly, grant money for parking lot repaving is very hard to come by.

The biggest challenge for the Dyer Library Association is the lack of available funding. The Association has an endowment, currently worth about \$1.9 million. The Association is committed to safeguarding these funds, and does not spend more than 4 % annually, which is used for operating costs. The City of Saco contributes the largest portion of our funding. The Association also actively fundraises with two annual fund appeals, and several major annual fundraising events. However, even with all of that, operating expenses lag far behind other Maine libraries that serve similar populations. This results in the Library spending much less on books and other materials per capita and much less on children's programs. It also means the Library is unable to afford to join the statewide circulation system, MINERVA (like nearly all other libraries Saco's size,) and, in general, must do everything on a very strict budget with no flexibility or program expansion possible.

In spite of the challenges, the Library is as busy as ever; serving nearly 200,000 customers a year. The Library is much loved in the community, as the Executive Director says "because our staff is so friendly and knowledgeable and strives to serve."

A few years ago for the 2011 Comprehensive Plan, the Dyer Library compared operating cost, funding, staffing and circulation with other Maine libraries in a peer group (see Figure J.2 on next page). The Dyer Library's per capita operating expenses are—by a significant margin—the lowest in the group. With the exception of Biddeford, Dyer also receives the lowest level of municipal funding. However, Biddeford's operating revenue, due to its endowment, significantly exceeds Dyer's. With the exception of Westbrook, Dyer spends the least of the group on its collection. In spite of that, circulation is close to (although below) the group average of 9.18. Dyer staffing is lower by far than the group average of .00065 FTEs, and is the lowest in the group. The DLA also operates the Saco Museum. Where there are two numbers in the table, they represent a proportional allocation to the library and museum.

Figure J.2: MAINE MID-SIZE LIBRARY COMPARISON 2008-2009

Town	Population Served	Budgetary					Collections				Staffing		
		Total Library Expenses	Municipal Support	Total Operating Revenue	Per Cap Municipal Support	Per Cap Operating Expenses	Per Cap Circulation	Per Cap Collection Size	Per Cap Coll. Exp	Collection Expenditures	Total Payroll	Full time Equivalent	FTEs/Cap
Saco	18,125	\$505,066	\$293500/ \$386000	\$459,388	\$16.19/21.29	\$27.86	8	2.72	\$2.46	\$44,667	\$316,937	8	0.00044
Auburn	23,177	\$1,057,051	\$936,657	\$1,126,311	\$40.41	\$45.60	9	2.89	\$3.33	\$77,411	\$758,234	20	0.00086
Augusta	18,282	\$632,668	\$632,668	\$632,668	\$34.60	\$34.60	10	3.17	\$3.33	\$61,000	\$521,968	11.5	0.00062
Biddeford	21,435	\$767,947	\$280,000	\$817,074	\$13.06	\$35.82	5	3.1	\$3.03	\$65,001	\$538,476	13.46	0.00062
Brunswick	26,953	\$1,423,074	\$1,188,807	\$1,454,521	\$44.10	\$52.80	15	5.03	\$4.40	\$118,781	\$977,284	18.3	0.00067
Kennebunk	15,513	\$591,317	\$436,365	\$581,628	\$28.12	\$38.11	11	3.08	\$3.48	\$54,027	\$421,455	11.05	0.001
Kittery	10,427	\$457,317	\$492,361	\$521,180	\$47.21	\$43.85	8	5.13	\$8.10	\$84,462	\$265,704	5.3	0.0005
Sanford/ Springvale	21,156	\$729,209	\$568,051	\$950,321	\$26.85	\$34.46	8	4.74	\$4.30	\$91,120	\$501,537	13.25	0.00062
Scarborough	19,054	\$844,133	\$760,556	\$858,993	\$39.91	\$44.30	11	3.29	\$3.59	\$68,411	\$487,051	12.44	0.00065
South Portland	23,803	\$898,038	\$716,471	\$746,539	\$30.10	\$37.72	12	3.57	\$3.01	\$71,713	\$746,206	11.63	0.00048
Westbrook	16,534	\$621,376	\$497,681	\$503,126	\$30.10	\$37.58	4	4.7	\$2.34	\$38,851	\$536,985	12.62	0.00076

Saco Museum

The Saco Museum was founded as the York Institute in 1866 by well-educated and generally well-to-do men with a goal of collecting interesting artifacts from around the world, and offering educational and entertaining programming. Although the Museum was originally housed in a building near the Saco River, it was moved to its present location in 1926. It occupies a brick building designed by John Calvin Stevens, in the midst of the Saco Historic District.

The Museum holds a collection of over 10,000 items including some of the natural history objects that its founders acquired in the first years of the museum. It also owns the largest known group of iconic portraits by deaf/mute artist John Brewster, Jr., all of them of local area residents, the earliest known camera in America, and a remarkable panorama painted on nearly 1,000 feet of muslin that was completed by major American artists in about 1850. The panorama was completely conserved and a full-sized replica created in 2011 with the largest portion of the funding coming from a Save America's Treasures grant. The replica, and the mechanism to operate it for performances, currently lives behind the curtain on City Hall's stage. The performances require the help of several strong people and always attract an enthusiastic audience. The Saco Museum collection continues to grow through donations of objects related to the Saco River Valley, as well as through limited purchases.

In addition to the many interesting objects in the collection of the Saco Museum, the facility also has an extensive collection of paper materials. These documents reflect everyday life in Maine from the 1700s through the early 1900s, including diaries, personal and business ledgers, church records, letters, ship records, and mill records. Nearly all of the document collection is housed on the third floor of the library in a (somewhat) humidity and temperature controlled space.

Although the Museum has a small staff, it achieves an ambitious exhibition schedule, with three to five major changing exhibitions each year, including the always-popular holiday event, the Festival of Trees. Since the Museum is the main source for local history in Saco, the staff has recently developed and implemented a rich curriculum for Saco's students, with costumed interpreters visiting schools to present programs, and schoolchildren making repeated trips to the Museum to learn of our vibrant past, forming an integral part of their instruction in local history. All of this is provided free of charge and has been fully incorporated into the school curriculum. Local schoolchildren are also familiar with the Museum because of the biennial Student Art Show, curated by their art teachers. Every child, K-8, from the school district has a piece displayed in the museum during the show. As the Executive Director explains: "In few other towns can children grow up honestly claiming that their own creations have been exhibited in a museum."

In recent years, the staff members of the Saco Museum have completed groundbreaking work on historic northern New England textiles, and have written two books on schoolgirl embroidery and one on 19th and early 20th century clothing. The exhibitions that these books accompanied received national recognition for their quality and depth of coverage. One of these, "I My Needle Ply with Skill," won a coveted national award from the American Association for State and Local History.

The Saco Museum and the Dyer Library share a campus; in the 1970s they became one organization, operated by the non-profit Dyer Library Association. This combination of a public library and a museum is very rare, one of only a handful in the entire country, and offers remarkable potential for serving the cultural and learning needs of our community. Since the Library and Museum are only partially funded by the City of Saco, they are highly dependent upon fundraising in the form of grants and donations, and the health of an endowment that provides some funding for operations. Because of limited funding, the Museum is constantly striving to accomplish important work with few resources. While the Association has made significant strides through the use of grant funding in improving the condition of the building which as recently as 2006 entirely lacked insulation, had just one heat zone, used expensive incandescent lighting, and had inadequate management of humidity, much remains to be done to preserve the collection. With the planned installation of a new, highly efficient HVAC system, the other major ongoing project has been to fully catalog the collection into an online database, and to find better ways to safely house the many objects.

Although Saco is located just minutes from the Portland population center, receiving coverage by Portland newspapers and television stations continues to be a struggle. Increased attendance will generate much-needed revenue so publicity is essential to the future success of the Museum.

Despite significant financial challenges, the Dyer Library and Saco Museum remain vibrant and active through the hard work of dedicated staff and volunteers and the continued generosity of donors.

Saco Historical Society

The Saco Historical Society actively promotes Saco's history. Its forty members typically meet at the Dyer Library five times a year and hold presentations every other month. The Saco Historical Society is currently editing a book on the history of Saco

churches.

Saco City Hall

Saco City Hall, originally built in 1855 and significantly modified a few years later, contains an auditorium on the second floor. The entire building, including the auditorium, was renovated between 1988 and 1995. The auditorium is used primarily for municipal public meetings, and occasionally for performances. The City does not have an established cultural program for the facility.

Historic Main Street Walking Tour

The Main Street Walking Tour features several historic buildings and sites along a 1/2 mile section of Main Street, Saco. The tour spans the area from the Dyer Library to Saco Island. The tour was prepared for the City of Saco by Thomas Hardiman, former curator of the Saco Museum, and includes markers at specific locations that inform walkers of specific historic events. Tour stops include:

1. James Fenderson House, 1914
2. Solomon Coit House, c. 1785
3. York Institute Museum (Saco Museum), 1926
4. Elizabeth and Henry B.C. Green House, 1827
5. Joseph G. Deering House, 1869
6. Jonas C. Tibbets House, 1860
7. First Parish Congregational Church, 1862, burned 2000, rebuilt 2005
8. York Manufacturing Company Agent's House, 1889
9. Emma Hall House, 1892
10. Thornton Hall, 1801
11. Dr. Jeremiah Mason House, 1856
12. James Curtis House, 1827
13. Daniel Page House, c. 1800
14. Old Dyer Library, 1893
15. Saco City Hall, 1855
16. Mutual Theatre, 1927
17. Cyrus King House, 1807
18. Masonic Block, 1907
19. Tristram Hooper Store, 1824
20. Saco House, 1837

21. Central Hall Block, 1828
22. William Pike Block, 1869
23. York National Bank, 1896
24. Pepperell Square
25. William Deering Block, 1894
26. Berry Block, 1869
27. Saco Island and Biddeford/Saco Mill District

Saco Museum Walk

Another public history project, the Saco Museum Main Street Walk, presents colorful historic interpretive panels along Main Street from the Amtrak Station to the Museum. The museum and the City are now working on a third heritage tourism/public history project, which will present 3D photos of Saco near the post office.

4. Local Historic Preservation Regulatory Structure

The Historic Preservation Section (413) of the Saco Zoning Ordinance establishes an Historic Preservation Commission with five members and up to five associate members to administer the regulations of the ordinance. The duties of the Commission are to designate and establish areas of Saco worthy of preservation, as defined in the ordinance, and to review and advise on all applications for construction, external renovation, and demolition projects within such designated areas. A proposed project must earn a Certificate of Appropriateness (which indicates compliance with ordinance regulations) from the Commission before work can proceed. The Commission also has jurisdiction over signage within designated historic districts.

Saco's historic districts are created as overlay districts and can be designated anywhere in the City. Land uses allowed in historic overlay districts are the same as the zoning in which the historic district is located. The exceptions to this rule are bed and breakfast establishments, which are allowed as a conditional use in Historic District R-1a and a portion of C-1 Districts.

C. ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

- Saco has made considerable progress and significant investment in preserving its heritage. To foster greater understanding and appreciation of Saco's history and culture, as well as to strengthen support for the Historic Preservation Commission's work, public outreach and education efforts should continue. The historic walking tour of Saco has proven popular. Continuing efforts to highlight and celebrate Saco's history is one strategy among others that may be employed to help revitalize downtown Saco.
- While much historical preservation work has been accomplished, much remains. The City could consider identifying additional properties worthy of preservation and/or eligibility for the National Register, based on the survey work it has completed.
- To ensure that important archaeological resources are not lost, Saco could consider archaeological survey work.
- Funding for the provision of library services is very low by Maine peer city standards. The City should consider steps to assure the sustainable future of library and museum services and facilities provided by the Dyer Library Association.