

numbers and technical advantages some moved on while others faded into the background.

The French were the earliest European settlers in this region. In order to secure their grip on the strategic Champlain waterway, the French established colonies under grants that were given chiefly to military and naval officers. The grants carried with them certain obligations, one being that the territory had to be settled within a certain length of time. A grant covering the Swanton area was given to Sieur Philippe-Rene le Gardeur de Beauvais, Jr. on July 20, 1734. The French occupied Swanton Falls at this time. On May 10, 1741 the above grant reverted back to the Crown Domain because improvements were not made to the land. Nicholas-Rene Levasseur, a naval constructor, was sent to New France (Canada) in May, 1739 to build ships for the King. In searching for ship timber, he visited the settlement at Missisquoi. In 1748 Levasseur was granted the Seignior of St. Armand. After New France surrendered to Great Britain in 1759, most of the French withdrew from this region.

After Canada was ceded to England, Levasseur sold his Seignior of St. Armand to Henry Guyand, a London merchant. In 1763 Benning Wentworth, Royal Governor of New Hampshire, issued a grant for 23,040 acres of land to be called Swanton. The village was named for Captain William Swanton, an officer in the British army who visited the area during the French and Indian War. Henry Guyand sold his title to the Seignior to Benjamin Pierce, James Moore and George Fulton in 1766. In 1784 Ira Allen purchased 59 of 64 shares of Swanton at a sheriff's sale and employed William Colt to survey the town. Swanton's town government was organized in 1790; however, Swanton Village was not incorporated as a town until 1888. Since then, the town has functioned as one of Vermont's most important industrial centers, providing the state with marble, limestone, ammunition and timber. While industry has moved away from the village, Swanton continues to thrive as a friendly, livable community, while engaging in efforts to promote its heritage.



Heritage Walking Tour Swanton, Vermont

Designed by Sarah L. Farley
The University of Vermont
2000

with assistance from the
Swanton Historical Society

A Short History of Swanton, Vermont

A massive glacier covered all of New England 15,000 years ago and more than a mile of ice capped portions of northwestern Vermont. These millions upon millions of tons of ice depressed the earth's crust, bringing it below sea level. Some 12,500 years ago the glacier retreated north of the St. Lawrence lowland. Salt water flowed in from the Atlantic Ocean to fill the depression in the St. Lawrence basin, thus creating the Champlain Sea. An arm of the sea extended into the Champlain Valley where it remained for the next 2,300 years. During this period, the land encompassed by the town of Swanton underwent significant changes. Eventually the Champlain Sea disappeared. Lake Champlain was born, and the Missisquoi River flowed out across the extensive deposits of sand and silt that once covered the bottom of the sea. Few people, if any, witnessed these changes. However, people were not far behind.

The Abenaki Indians call themselves the People of the Dawn. They were the major Indian group in Vermont, and they are believed to be the original peoples of Vermont. New Hampshire, northern Massachusetts, and southern Quebec below the St. Lawrence River. The Abenaki nation was in Vermont long before Champlain came in 1609. Abenaki is the name for a language group that included the tribes of Maine, the Penacooks of New Hampshire and the Sokwakis of Vermont. The Penacooks and Sokwakis were the principal inhabitants of the Champlain Valley. Native peoples have lived here for at least 10,000 years and some archaeologists believe the ancestors of the present day Abenakis were here as early as 1500 BC. The Missisquoi Village, located in the towns of Swanton and Highgate, was the nerve center for Indians seeking refuge in the Champlain Valley during the 18th century. The Abenakis were the major inhabitants of the village but many Indians driven out of southern New England, such as the Sokokis, lived here as well. These original Vermonters lived off the land and fought fiercely to defend their territory. When, finally, they were overpowered by sheer (continued)

1. Swanton Public Library, 1916: The women and girls of the Golden Rule Circle of the King's Daughters opened Swanton's first reading room in 1898. They assumed the cost of furnishing and paying the operating expenses of the makeshift library, and raised money for the construction of the present library. Saxe & Archibald of Montreal executed the plans for the Neo-Classical style building and the building contract was awarded to C.K. Prouty of Swanton. The cornerstone was laid in 1915 and the library opened in February, 1916. The front steps are constructed of red marble, the vestibule is finished with white marble, and the interior woodwork is Cypress from Swanton shops. In 1960, the structure underwent major renovations, receiving new lighting fixtures and fresh paint both inside and out. Most recently, a new two-story addition, basement and elevator were constructed in 1999, thanks in part to the generosity of Gordon and Barbara Winters. Mrs. Winters is a lifelong member of the King's Daughters, who still occupy their meeting rooms on the second floor.

The Library also is home to the Swanton Historical Society, which was incorporated in 1984. It serves the community as a non-profit, culturally oriented corporation, established and to be continued forever for the public and educational benefit of the people of Swanton, the county of Franklin, and the State of Vermont. The King's Daughters sponsored the Swanton Historical Society and gave them the use of their hall rent-free for the first year.

2. Methodist Church, 1895: Constructed after its predecessor was destroyed by fire, the church retains many original details. During the fire, parishioners rescued the pulpit, pews and many of the stained glass windows, all of which were reinstalled in the new building. Unfortunately, they were unable to save the large window at the Grand Avenue end of the church, and the present window is a replacement.

3. Village Green, 1803: Laid out in 1803, this rectangular-shaped park forms the heart of Swanton and contains a circular 1910 octagonal bandshell, the Goddess of Liberty, and the Royal Swans.

4. Royal Swans: Given by Queen Elizabeth II in 1963 to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Swanton Charter, the swans were brought from Hickling Broad, Norfolk, England, through the Smallburgh Rural District Council which includes the village of Swanton Abbott.

5. Goddess of Liberty: This Civil War memorial was designed and executed by Swanton native Daniel J. Perry in 1868. Carved from pure white Rutland marble, the statue represents the Greek Goddess of Liberty, styled in Grecian dress and resting on a granite base. The names of local veterans are engraved on the base of the statue, as well as on pillars placed around the monument by the Historical Society.

6. E.J. Barrette Ford Showroom, 1930: Constructed in 1930 as an auto showroom and garage, the building is notable for its unaltered condition. Although no longer used as a showroom

In 1917, the buildings were converted to the Champlain Theater, which had a seating capacity of about 400 and featured silent films. However, the increased popularity of outdoor drive-in theaters in the late 1940s, and the advent of television in the early- to mid-1950s contributed to the decline of the small-town theater. Consequently, in 1965 the Prouty family annexed the Champlain Theater to expand their IGA grocery store. Although the buildings have undergone many alterations, they are all that remains of Swanton's 19th century commercial buildings.

13. Veterans Memorial Building, 1948: Originally built as a gymnasium and bowling alley, the Swanton Veterans Memorial Building is home to Memorial Auditorium, which was dedicated "To honor her sons and daughters who served their country in the second great World War 1941-1945."

14. Swanton Savings Bank, 1851: Constructed in 1851, this flat-roof, brick and granite building sits on a cut granite foundation. Originally the Swanton Savings Bank, the structure's Greek-Revival style is expressed in its brick pilasters separating the bays, as well as in the brick entablature which is present on all facades. The building is particularly notable because it is the only Greek-Revival commercial building in Swanton.

15. Barney Marble Mill Site: Swanton was a leader in marble manufacturing as early as 1812. The first marble worked in Swanton used local limestone and produced cemetery headstones, and caps and sills for brick buildings. In 1840 George Barney built a mill which, at one time, occupied both the east and west banks of the river below the falls. In the spring of 1848, Barney started selling black marble floor tiles. In 1873 Barney used Winooksi marble to make floor tiles which were shipped to Washington, DC to be installed in the floors of the State, War, and Navy Department buildings. Around 1900 the Vermont Marble Company acquired this mill and today the site is home to Marble Mill Park.

16. Robin Hood/Renington Powder Plant Site, 1898: The Robin Hood Powder Company was organized in 1898 and first produced bulk shotgun powder used for reloading shells. When this market diminished, the business manufactured 10 and 12 gauge shotgun shells and expanded the plant to the large building on the west end of the bridge. The primary plan for the company was to manufacture smokeless sporting powder but they soon realized that factory loaded shotgun shells were causing a rapid decline in this market. Thus, in 1903 the company became the Robin Hood Ammunition Company and entered the metallic ammunition field. By 1906, production exceeded the capacity of the plant and a new building was constructed on Fourth Street. However, the original plant continued to manufacture powder until 1918 when an explosion destroyed much of the building and killed two employees. Because World War I was almost over, the

22. Martin House, ca. 1850: Located on the corner of Ferry and Church Streets, this two-and-one half story, Greek Revival house may have served Swanton as its Customs House. The structure features a molded cornice with brackets under the eaves and gables.

23. Dorman House, ca. 1835: This two and a half story, L-shaped, Greek Revival house is notable for its stone sills and lintels. The brick wings on the south and west sides of the building are believed to be original.

24. Stilphen/Carran House, ca. 1870: While not high style, this T-shaped Carpenter Gothic house is one of Swanton's best examples of the style. Particularly noteworthy is its bargeboard trim with star and circular cutouts, as well as its Italianate front and side porches.

25. Spear House, ca. 1870: Built circa-1870, this gabled, brick, Greek Revival house features Doric columns, and parapetted end walls with corbelled and dentilled brick eave cornices. The porch was added circa-1900.

26. Church Street Cemetery: The cemetery is home to a statue dedicated to Swanton Civil War hero Stephen F. Brown who, upon arriving on the battlefield at Gettysburg without a sword, seized a camp hatchet and carried it until he captured the sword of a Confederate officer during Pickett's Charge. The survivors of the Thirteenth Regiment of Vermont Volunteers placed a statue modeled after Lieutenant Brown on the Regimental Monument standing on the battlefield at Gettysburg as a tribute to his moral and physical courage.

27. Swanton High School, 1912: Designed by Frank Austin of Burlington and built by Thomas Dunn of Saratoga Springs, New York, this Neo-Classical building was constructed as a grade and high school. Its design is typical of the freely interpreted classical architecture of schools in the early 1900s and originally had an entrance on the north side for boys and on the south side for girls. Recently, the school underwent rehabilitation and is now home to a community health center, the Abenaki Education Project, Hi-Swans Senior Center, a Community Room, and contains senior housing.

28. Academy Building, 1852: Originally the home of Swanton Academy, a school for grades 1-12, this building was constructed following a fire that destroyed an earlier structure. The Swanton town offices occupied the second floor until 1911. The second floor contains a basketball court and stage, presently unused. Today, the town offices occupy the first floor of the building, together with the Franklin-Northwest Supervisory Union.

29. New Wine Christian Fellowship, 1823: Elisha Barney constructed this church for use by Swanton's Congregationalist, Methodist and Episcopal congregations. In 1865 the building became the full property of the Congregational Society and underwent significant remodeling in 1869. In 1890 the organ/choir loft, vestry parlor and two small rooms were added to the building. Additionally, most of the stained

the low, bow-roofed brick building with a parapet end wall and large picture windows retains its iron roof structure with sheet metal covering and large garage doors on the west and south façades.

7. Captain Hawley/Dr. Hall House, ca. 1890: Most likely an earlier house redone in a fanciful chalet style with oversized eaves and brackets, the building's simple gabled form features wide, overhanging eaves supported by large concave brackets with ball pendants. The hipped-roof porch has turned posts with brackets, open-scroll balusters and a lattice foundation cover.

8. Smith House, ca. 1900: This four square house features a large hip and triangular wall dormers facing each side, and a rusticated concrete block foundation. Built as an adjunct to a large estate house immediately to the west but now demolished, the building served as a summer and tea house for the Smith family daughters. Eventually it was converted from one large interior room to a house. Its unusual massing and long, paired, two-over-two windows make it unique in Swanton.

9. Catholic Church, 1925: Although the parish began officially in 1854, Jesuit missionaries were present in northwest Vermont as early as 1750. An example of twentieth century Gothic architecture, the church is modeled after an abbey in Pontigny, France. The original building stood across the street where the parking lot is now located.

10. Wall House, ca. 1860: This house is one of only a few in Swanton with a Gothic form manifested in its steeply pitched roof and wall dormers. The structure is characterized by a multi-shaped slate roof, steeply pitched gable-front facade with two roughly symmetrical ellis, each of which has a triangular wall dormer, and a central block with two cross-gable wall dormers.

11. Daniel House, ca. 1875: This house retains notable gable trusses and Queen Anne-style porch details, both of which were uncommon in Swanton. The rectangular block is decorated with gable trusses in the east, west and south wall dormer gables. There is also large, scrolled bargeboard detailing at the gable ends of the house. The center section of the porch has Eastlake details on the post tops and brackets, while the doorframe has dog-ears (shoulders) at the top and bottom.

12. Champlain Theater, 1877 & 1909: Originally two separate two-and-one half story, gable-fronted buildings, the structures are now connected by a modern, one-story brick façade. The Prouty family originally owned the west structure, built circa 1877 as a grocery store and post office. The building features open eaves with paired brackets and segmentally arched windows. The east structure, built circa 1909, originally housed Bullard's (Recreation) Hall on the upper floor and Sturtevant's Hardware on the ground floor. Its gable end features a parapet wall, corbelled cornice, splayed brick lintels and brick quoins.

company decided not to rebuild the plant and confirmed its operations to the Fourth Street facility.

17. Beacon Feeds Grain Elevators, ca. 1880 & 1946: Originally owned by F.D. LaPelle and run for many years by Bailey & Company, the southern tower was built circa 1880 and the northern elevator was built circa 1946. Originally, a belt drive conveyor ran from the elevators across the top of the Missisquoi River bridge to a grain mill across the river. These buildings are all that remain of a large complex of mills, marble works and other factories that surrounded this spot near the river.

18. H.N. Moreau's Store, 1905: Located on the southeast corner of Depot and River Streets, the structure was built in 1905 after the original building burned. The store sits on a wedge-shaped commercial block, one of the few remaining in Swanton due to numerous fires. Originally operated as a grocery store, the building functioned as a hardware store before returning to use as a grocery. The store retains its late-Italianate cornice and serves as a corner anchor.

19. Barney/Cheney House, ca. 1825: This Federal-style house retains much of its original detail including a large fanlight on the eaves-front east façade. Constructed circa 1825, it is one of only a few Federal-style buildings left in Swanton Village.

20. Depot & Roundhouse, ca. 1892: The Swanton Railroad Station was constructed in the late 1800's to serve the passengers of the Vermont Central Railroad (which later became the Central Vermont) and the St. Johnsbury and Lake Champlain Railroad. In the 1980's it served as the Abenaki Community Center and Tribal Headquarters. In the late-1990's, Poulin Grain Company acquired the deed for the land on which the station sat and planned for its demolition along with an adjacent freight house. The Town of Swanton and the Swanton Historical Society worked together to acquire the Railroad Station and relocated it to the site of the former yard and roundhouse of the St. Johnsbury and Lake Champlain Railroad on South River Road.

Also on-site are the foundation and bays of the nineteenth century Boston & Maine Roundhouse. The Roundhouse contained a balanced turn-table onto which the train engines could drive. The turn-table revolved, allowing the engines to enter and exit the maintenance bays. Once serviced, an engine returned to the turn-table and could back onto the main line.

21. Covered Bridge Piers, 1898: These granite piers are all that remain of a wooden, lattice-truss covered bridge that stretched 369 feet across the Missisquoi River. The bridge, which was built in 1898 to carry passenger and freight trains for the St. Johnsbury & Lake Champlain (later the Lamolle County) Railroad, could carry rail cars weighing up to 100 tons and continued to carry rail traffic until 1968. The bridge, which was the longest of its kind remaining in the U.S., was destroyed by fire in 1987.

glass memorial windows and a manually operated pipe organ were installed at this time. The Congregational Society was legally incorporated in 1901 and renamed the First Congregational Church of Swanton. Today, the church is home to the New Wine Christian Fellowship, an Independent congregation.

30. Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, 1876 & 1909: The southern, Gothic Revival wing of the church was built in 1876 and the northern, English Gothic wing was constructed in 1909. The northern gable of the church is dominated by a Gothic stained glass window with trefoil tracery, designed by Heaton, Butler and Bayne, London. The north wing is constructed of rough-cut, native red marble supplied by Swanton's Barney Marble Company, and it houses an altar carved from white Vermont marble.

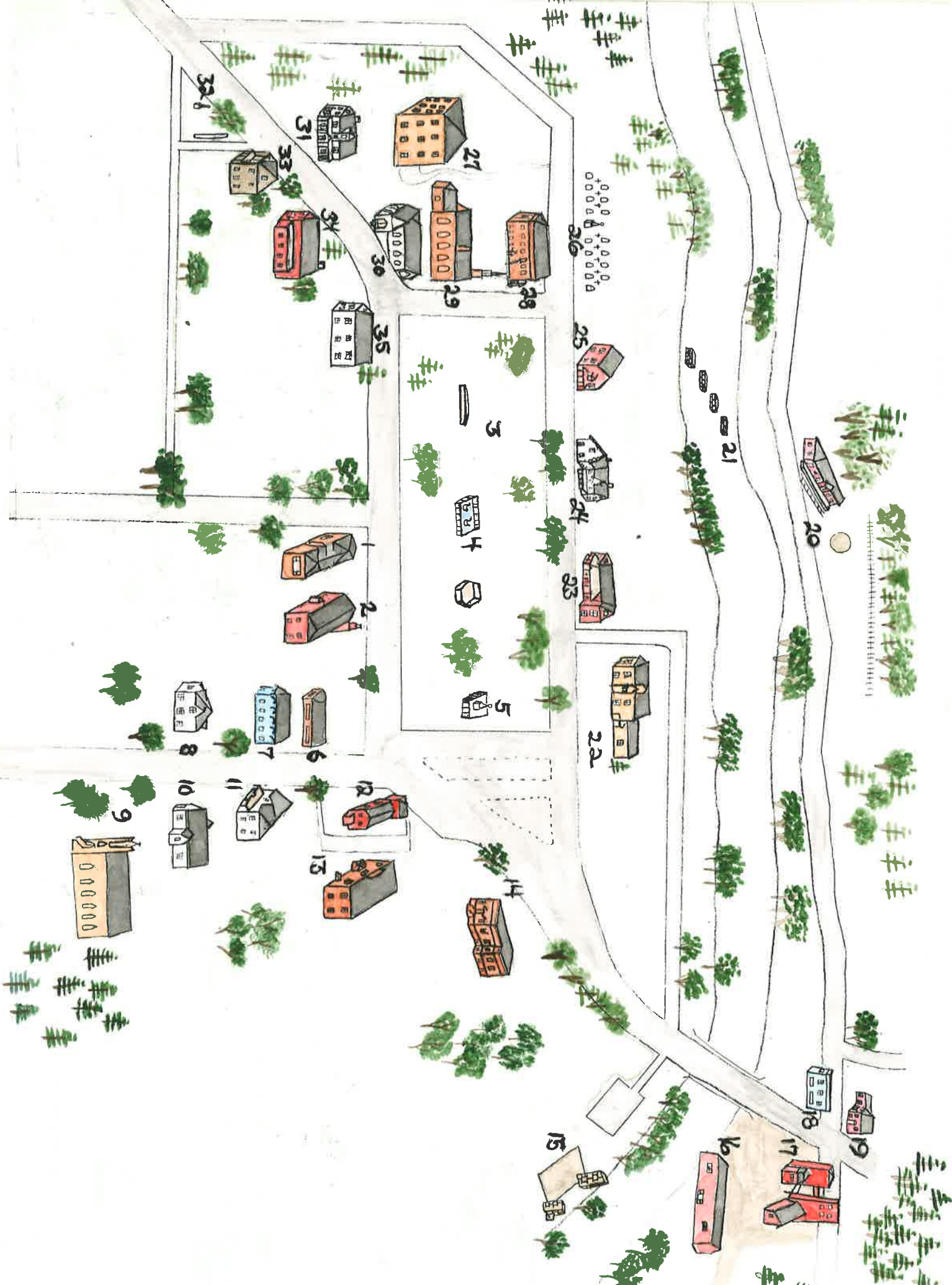
31. Sheldon House, ca. 1880: This gabled and clapboarded home features a mix of details including a central, gabled wall dormer with scrolled bargeboard topped by a six-pointed star finial, and peaked window caps. The front porch with brackets is in the Colonial Revival-style, and the north and south façades have round attic windows. A vertical, matchboard-enclosed vestibule covers the centered front door.

32. Flat Iron Park: Named for its distinctive shape, the park home to the Soldiers' Monument, erected in 1937 and dedicated to Swanton's World War I veterans. Its inscription reads, "To the Memory of Our Boys who Served in the World War." A second monument was erected in 1991 "To Honor All Veterans."

33. Haff/Mapes House, ca. 1905: One of the best Queen Anne-style houses in Swanton, the house was built by the Martin family who went bankrupt during construction and taken over by Dr. Haff, a dentist. The building is irregularly massed with many projecting, two-story bays with flared-shingle gables. The roof overhangs are supported by trussed brackets with pendants, as are several clipped corners on the main mass. The porch features paired Doric columns with brackets; all corners are angled and articulated with boards.

34. #37 Grand Avenue, ca 1855: This house is notable for its details, which transcend several architectural styles. Greek Revival elements include a molded box cornice with pedimented gables. Italianate elements include the front porch with its square, chamfered posts, scroll brackets and cutout baluster. Queen Anne components include triangular dormers while the rear of the building features a Colonial Revival style porch.

35. Bliss House, ca. 1890: This late-nineteenth century home is decorated with a boxed cornice, peaked lintel boards above windows, an hexagonal bay with Italianate brackets on the north façade and an oak door with a glass panel. The large Queen Anne porch features a pediment over the stairs, a round veranda on the southwest corner, turned posts with scroll brackets and turned balusters and valance.



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