

Northfield Historical Commission

On April 2, 1974, the Town of Northfield accepted M.G.L. Chapter 40, Section 8D and established the Northfield Historical Commission, hereinafter called the Commission, for the purposes of identifying, preserving, protecting, and developing the historical or archeological assets of the town as evidence of its past history. Such Commission shall conduct research for places of historic or archeological importance located in Northfield, shall cooperate with the Massachusetts State Archeologist in conducting such researches or other surveys, shall establish an Inventory (Northfield Historical Inventory) and shall seek to coordinate the activities of unofficial bodies organized for similar purposes, and may advertise, prepare, print and distribute books, maps, charts, plans, booklets, leaflets, or pamphlets it deems as required for the judicious carrying out its work.

For the purpose of protecting and preserving such significant places, it shall make recommendations for inclusion in its Inventory to the Board of Selectmen, and, (subject to the approval of that Board), to the Massachusetts Historical Commission, that any such places be certified as a Northfield historical or archeological landmarks, and subsequently listed in the Northfield Historical Commission Inventory.

It shall report to the State Archeologist the existence of any archeological, paleontological, or historical sites or objects discovered in accordance with Section M.G.L. 27C of Chapter 9, and shall apply for permits necessary pursuant to said M.G.L. Section 27C. Any information received by the Historical Commission with respect to the location of such sites and as to specimens uncovered, as defined in M.G.L. Section 26B of Chapter 9, shall not be made a public record.

The Commission may hold hearings, may enter into contracts with individuals, organizations and institutions for services furthering the objectives of the Commission's programs; may enter into contracts with local or regional associations for cooperative endeavors furthering the Commission's programs; may accept gifts, contributions and bequests of funds from individuals, foundations and from federal, state, or other governmental bodies for the purpose of furthering the Commission's programs; may make and sign any agreements and may do and perform any and all acts which may be necessary or desirable to carry out the purposes of this section. It shall keep accurate records of its meetings and actions and shall file an annual report that shall be printed in the Northfield Annual Town Report. The Commission may appoint clerks or other employees as required to carry out its duties.

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ARCHAEOLOGY ACCOUNTABILITY POLICY



Early

Local

Native American Tools and Implements
(Photo by Carol Pike)

THE POLICY'S PURPOSE

To assist the Northfield Historical Commission (NHC) in meeting a mandate to keep and maintain complete and accurate records of the historical cultural resources located in the Town of Northfield, this policy requests that archaeologists, prior to excavating the Town's rich archaeological resources, inform the Northfield Historical Commission of their intent and provide the Commission with the basic information regarding their research.

BACKGROUND

The Town of Northfield is home to a large number of Native American and English sites dating from 13,000 years ago through the Contact Period of the 1600s and continuing on through the Colonial Period into the present. Northfield's connection to its past is part of the foundation for its future.

The early sites have been identified and excavated by both amateur and professional archaeologists. The artifacts that were collected are irreplaceable resources providing an insight into (our) colonial and indigenous past. Over time these artifacts have found their way into private collections as well as museums and university repositories. Notes and articles have been written about some of these sites and about the artifacts that have been excavated from them, and many have been published in professional/scientific journals and monographs. They have contributed to the foundation of modern American archaeology.

Unfortunately, a number of these collections have been lost, stolen or discarded and others have been relegated to university storage, unseen by other researchers and interested members of the community. If more excavations are carried out in Northfield without any local government oversight we are concerned that we will lose an important connection to our history.

POLICY

To better monitor archaeological sites and investigative surveys in the Town of Northfield, the NHC requests:

1. That archaeologists, who are mandated by law or are working on projects that are impacted by State or Federal monies, licenses or permits to acquire Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) permits, submit to the Commission (NHC) the following documents prior to initiating any archaeological survey:
 - a. A copy of the Massachusetts Historical Commission permit (form D).
 - b. A research design plan and the scope of proposed work,
 - c. A contract agreement with the landowner if the excavation is to take place on private land (a contract is not required if the excavation is to take place on town or state property).
 - d. A property ownership plot plan showing boundary pins.
 - e. A site preservation plan-both short and long term.

2. That once the archaeological survey is underway, members of the Commission (NHC), or their designated agent, be allowed to visit the research site.
3. That when the archaeological survey is complete, the Commission (NHC) be provided with:
 - a. The site report and artifact inventory which will be securely stored in the Commission's files.
 - b. A plan for preservation of artifacts from the survey along with information related to their accessibility by other researchers and interested members of the community.

In addition, although not currently required by state law to obtain a MHC permit, non-affiliated archaeologists working on private property in Northfield with permission of the landowner are encouraged to inform the NHC of their plans. They are also encouraged at the conclusion of their work to file a site form and site report with the MHC, which will assign the site a number and add it to the state's site inventory.

Note: Private land owners who plan to host archaeological research projects on their property are strongly encouraged to have a signed, written contract in place with the archaeologists. They should be aware of their liability as landowners and should also be aware that they retain ownership of any artifacts found on or in the ground unless that ownership is transferred to the archaeologist via such a contract.

GOAL

The Northfield Historical Commission developed this policy to promote more openness and information sharing between affiliated archaeologists and the Town of Northfield. The Commission is prepared to assist researchers by providing public records of historical relevance along with "local knowledge" about the sites involved. In turn, archaeologists could assist the Town in its plan to create a sensitivity map and could help to protect cultural sites from destruction brought about by erosion, development or vandalism. This policy is NOT intended to impede archaeological work but instead to foster a spirit of cooperation between the Town and the archaeologists who carry out research here.

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