CHAPTER 8. HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

[Note: This chapter was updated and edited from the original written by planning consultant Beth DellaVallee in 1997. We have no footnotes or bibliography, but for historical sections her sources likely included The Centennial History of Waterville edited by E. C. Whittemore and published in 1902.]

HISTORY

The banks of the Kennebec River and Messalonskee Stream in Waterville show evidence of Indian settlement as far back as 4,000 years before the present. The area embracing Waterville was first settled by the English in 1653 with the establishment of a trading post at Teconnet or Ticonic, the Abanaki Indian name for the area, meaning 'a place to cross'. The settlement on the west bank of the Kennebec at Ticonic Falls was long known by early pioneers as Ticonic Village, even after it was incorporated as a part of the present Town of Winslow in 1771. Waterville set off from Winslow and incorporated as the Town of Waterville on June 23, 1802. West Waterville set off from Waterville, incorporating as a town on February 26, 1873, subsequently changing its name to Oakland on March 10, 1887. The City's charter was adopted on January 23, 1888.

Industries

Waterville developed into a major shipping center during the 19th century. The Town's primary business at that time was lumbering. The Messalonskee Stream supported numerous sawmills and wood-working factories. Other industries on the Messalonskee included a match factory, a woolen mill, tanneries, brick yards, and a shovel handle factory. The first dam built on the Kennebec was erected in 1792.

In 1866, the Ticonic Water Power and Manufacturing Company was incorporated. The company acquired the water rights and property adjacent to the Ticonic Falls. In 1868 a dam was built and in 1874 the Ticonic Power Company became the Lockwood Company which began spinning cotton in 1876. By 1892, the mills employed 1,250 people and produced over eight million yards of cotton cloth.

Transportation

The major transportation corridor during the 19th century was the Kennebec River. Many steamers anchored at Waterville and in 1848 there were five steamers daily between Waterville and Augusta. River traffic dropped off drastically with the opening of the Androscoggin and Kennebec Railroad.

The Two Cent Bridge, a 700-foot long, small steel suspension footbridge spanning the Kennebec River between Waterville and Winslow, was constructed in 1903. It was one of the last toll footbridges in the United States.

LaFleur Airport became a reality in 1930.

The Franco-Americans
The first documented French Canadian settler came to Waterville and located his business in an area known as "The Plains." The Plains was largely one main street, Water Street, with a few lanes branching off of Water Street north of Grove Street. By 1830, there were some 300 French Canadian families that had settled in Waterville, mostly in The Plains.

The construction of the Lockwood Cotton Mill in 1874 attracted a large number of French Canadian immigrants, in part because agents were sent through the southern Quebec countryside to stimulate emigration. By 1881, the French Canadian population numbered 1,625, more than a third of the total Waterville population of 4,700. Immigration continued until 1896 when economic prosperity in Canada caused a slackening of the movement.

As with many immigrant groups, the church was a critical element in the Franco-American community. In addition, from the earliest years, Franco-Americans in Waterville formed religious, social, and financial societies.

The Lebanese Americans
The Lebanese immigrated to Waterville in waves. The first wave came in the 1860s following a revolution between Christians and Moslems in what was then part of Syria. A second wave came in 1910 to avoid conscription into the Turkish Army and as earlier immigrants urged their relatives to join them in Waterville to take advantage of increased religious and social freedom and economic opportunity.

Initially, Lebanese immigrants worked as peddlers. Soon they came to work on the railroad and in the cotton mills. Eventually, many worked in the woolen mills which offered higher pay and better working conditions. As with the Franco-Americans, many Lebanese settled together in one central area. This area included Head of Falls and Front Street. The church and social organizations played an important role in the lives of Lebanese Americans.

HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES
The following properties in Waterville that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places:

- Two Cent Bridge on Temple Street
- Waterville Opera House on Castonguay Square
- First Baptist Church at the corner of Park Street and Elm Street
- Waterville Post Office at Main and Elm Streets
- Universalist-Unitarian Church at Silver and Elm Streets
- Redington House at 64 Silver Street
- Alvin O. Lombard House at 65 Elm Street
- Professional Building at 177 and 179 Main Street.
- Heald House, 19 West Street
- Lockwood Mill Historic District 6, 6B, 10, 10B Water Street
- Gilman Place, 21 Gilman Street

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission maintains survey data on the commercial buildings along Main Street in Downtown, as well as on the textile mill complex. The City has two self-guided walking tours of historic properties. One is a tour of 43 historic properties in and around the downtown area of the City. (See Map 8-1 and the Waterville Main Street web site.) The other tour is the "Museum in the Streets" in the South End, south of Spring Street.

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission recommends that a comprehensive survey of Waterville's historic above-ground resources be conducted in order to identify other properties which may be eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The City-owned chapel on Grove Street, for example, may be eligible for nomination.

While the Commission notes that no professional survey for historic archaeological sites has been conducted to date in Waterville, it suggests that future field work focus on sites relating to the earliest European settlement of the City, beginning in the latter 1700's. Some non-local funding sources available to accomplish survey work include the Commission's Certified Local Government Program and Survey Grants.

The Commission's central repository for prehistoric archaeological survey information identifies six sites along the Messalonskee Stream and the banks of the Kennebec River as prehistoric archaeological sites including Indian artifacts ranging from 4,000 years ago to the arrival of the Europeans. (See Map 8-2.) The Commission indicates that intensive survey is necessary at several of the sites to determine eligibility for listing on the National Register. In the early 1990's, Dr. Arthur Spiess of the Commission visited the site near the confluence of Messalonskee Stream and the Kennebec River and indicated that it would not be eligible for listing on the National Register, because of extensive disturbance over the years (removal of gravel from the City gravel pit).

Reconnaissance work was undertaken prior to construction of the "new" Waterville-Winslow Bridge. Dr. Spiess noted that the site is National Register eligible and that material was excavated from the right-of-way in preparation for planned roadway work. Dr. Spiess indicated that everything outside of the right-of-way is still archaeologically sensitive.

The Commission recommends that the City designate these areas, excluding the one associated with the City's gravel pit, as Archaeological Resource Potential Areas. It further recommends that the City establish a mechanism for archaeological review of all construction activity or other ground disturbing activity within these areas, such that no activity be allowed to proceed without a field check by a qualified archaeologist, and if necessary, archaeological data recovery. As archaeological survey work in the City proceeds, the Archaeological Resource Potential Areas can be refined (usually resulting in a decrease in area) to reflect the locations of known, significant archaeological sites.

Once the sites are identified, individual landowners of significant properties may be approached to obtain their permission for nomination of archaeological sites on their property to the National Register of Historic Places, and additionally to donate preservation easements if they so desire. National Register listing extends protection of Federal legislation against actions by Federal

agencies. The combination of National Register listing and preservation easement plus posting against ground disturbance, extends the protection of State Antiquities Legislation to archaeological sites.

Waterville Historical Society and the Redington Museum
The Waterville Historical Society and the Redington Museum are located in the Redington House, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Museum's extraordinary collection of pharmaceutical antiques was donated by Mr. LaVerdiere, and is on loan from the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and the Maine State Museum. It was collected from a variety of pharmacies throughout the State.

The Museum also houses a collection of artifacts that pertain to the history of Waterville including furniture, examples of early handwork, spinning equipment, tools, early medical equipment, old firearms, Civil War relics, signs from early businesses, china, musical instruments, mementos of the career of Waterville champion trotter, Nelson, material on the development and manufacture of the Lombard Log Hauler which was invented and manufactured in Waterville and which had an enormous impact on the logging industry, Dr. Clair S. Baumen's collection of Indian artifacts with many important pieces related to the Red Paint people who were present in the Waterville area several thousand years ago, period costumes, and documents and artifacts related to the improvement of Waterville as a center for the construction and maintenance of both locomotives and cars for the Maine Central Railroad (MCRR).

Waterville Public Library
The Waterville Public Library, which was built in 1905, was designed by an architect named Miller, who also designed the public library in Auburn. It is in the Richardsonian style that was popular for library buildings in the 1870's and 1880's. Subsequent renovation of the building took place in 1960 following a fire. Additions were completed in 1976 and 2010. For more information about the library, see the public facilities chapter.

PERFORMING ARTS
Waterville Opera House
Another property that is listed on the National Register is the 900-seat Waterville Opera House which was constructed in 1902. The architect was George Adams who designed many city hall/opera complexes in the northeastern United States. Renovations since the mid 1980's provided new seats in the orchestra section, a raised roof stage to accommodate scenery changes, air conditioning, and a skywalk to connect the second floor of City Hall with the nearby Waterville Regional Arts and Community Center (formerly the Waterville Performing Arts Center and Sterns Cultural Center). An addition was constructed in 2012, along with major renovations.

Waterville Opera House Association
The Waterville Opera House Association is a nonprofit corporation which was founded in 1973 to manage and maintain the Opera House. This is done through rental fees, membership fees, in-kind efforts of its membership, and financial support of the City. With the formation of the Waterville

Regional Arts and Community Center, the Association also assumed management and operation of *Artspace* in the Center's building, including designing and administering instruction in the performing arts and scheduling and rental of *Artspace* facilities.

Waterville Regional Arts and Community Center
The Waterville Regional Arts and Community Center (WRACC) is housed in the former Sterns Department Store on Main Street in Downtown. In 1992 a partnership of the Waterville Performing Arts Center and the Sterns Cultural Center purchased the building, renovated it, and secured tenants related to the performing and cultural arts of the region. Since then, classes in classical ballet, tap, jazz, tai chi, African drumming and dance, children's creative movement, theater, and other performing arts have been offered at the facility. When the partnership that owned the building collapsed in 1995, members of the community formed a corporation to purchase the building and hire a building manager.

ACADEMIC RESOURCES

The City has the cultural resources of two academic institutions, Colby College and Thomas College. Kennebec Valley Community College (KVCC), located just north of Waterville in Fairfield, serves City residents as well.

Colby College
Colby College, an independent, co-educational liberal arts college with a 714-acre campus on Mayflower Hill, is a cultural center of the community. The College employs over 700 people, approximately 170 of whom are full-time faculty and 37 of whom are part-time faculty. Current enrollment is 1,838 students.

Colby's campus includes a State wildlife preservation area, 50 acres of playing fields, meadows, woodlands, a pond, and 49 buildings, all of which have been constructed since the College moved from Downtown to its present location in the 1930's. Colby's Library has approximately 778,000 volumes and micro-texts and about 2,710 periodical subscriptions. There are also separate science, music, and art libraries.

Colby's policy is to make its various physical and cultural resources available to the local communities of the Waterville area. The College encourages the public to take part in Colby events, lectures, and performances. The College also encourages faculty and students to volunteer and, in other ways, to become involved in community activities. Colby has an extensive music, performing, and visual arts program.

Thomas College
Thomas College, founded in 1894, is located on a 127-acre campus off the West River Road. It is a private, non-profit, non-sectarian, coeducational professional school which employs approximately 92 people full-time and 56 part-time.

Thomas College offers two-year associate degree, four-year bachelor's degree, and master's degree programs. Fields of study include business, technology, and education.

The College has a current enrollment of approximately 700 full-time students taking day classes, of whom about 65 percent live on campus. Another approximately 300 students attend Thomas part-time, either during the day or in the evening. The College plans to increase full-time enrollment to 1,400 over the next few decades.

Kennebec Valley Community College
Kennebec Valley Community College (KVCC) in Fairfield offers a wide array of courses including nursing, building construction, business administration, electronics, emergency medical technician, health occupations, heavy equipment maintenance, medical/dental assistant, respiratory therapy, and secretarial science.

Churches
There are more than two dozen churches in Waterville representing a broad spectrum of religious affiliations.

Civic, Fraternal, and Community Organizations
Waterville has a wide variety of organizations including the Waterville Rotary Club, the Elks Club, the VFW, the American Legion, the Waterville Women's Club, and the Odd Fellows.

Educational Services
A variety of educational services is available including:

Literacy Volunteer Program: Trains volunteers to tutor adults in basic reading and conversational English.

Maine Children's Home for Little Wanderers: Offers courses in parenting, prenatal care, basic academics, English literature, grammar, history, government, home economics, and aerobics.

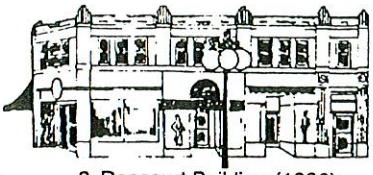
MaineGeneral Medical Center: Offers courses in radiologic technology and laboratory technology.

Social Services
Waterville also hosts a wide range of social service agencies which are more particularly identified in a social services directory available electronically from Kennebec Valley Community Action Program (KVCAP). Those agencies provide alcohol/drug abuse services, boarding/nursing homes, day care centers and preschools, developmentally disabled services, groups that provide assistance with disaster relief, domestic violence project/battered women, employment information, family related information, health information, hospitals and community health centers, housing, meals, clothing, information for the elderly, transportation, legal information, mental health services, rape crisis assistance, and women's services.

Historic Walking Tour Of Downtown Waterville

Map 8-1

1. Milliken Block (1877)
Silver St. Tavern


2. Rancourt Building (1936)
Paragon Shop

3. Plaisted Block (1883)
Plants Alive

4. Soper Block (1890)
Robinson-Davidson (1911)
Carbon Copy

5. Barrell Block (1850/74)
Berry's Stationers

6. Emery (1850
Day's Jeweler

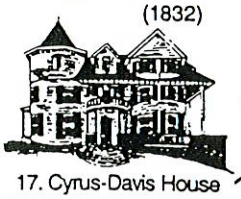
22. Old Post Office (1911)

21. Lombard House (1908)

20. Waterville Library (1924)

19. First Baptist Church
(1826)

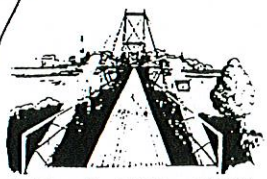
18. Unitarian Universalist Church
(1832)


17. Cyrus-Davis House

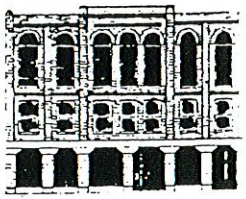
16. Redington House
(1814)

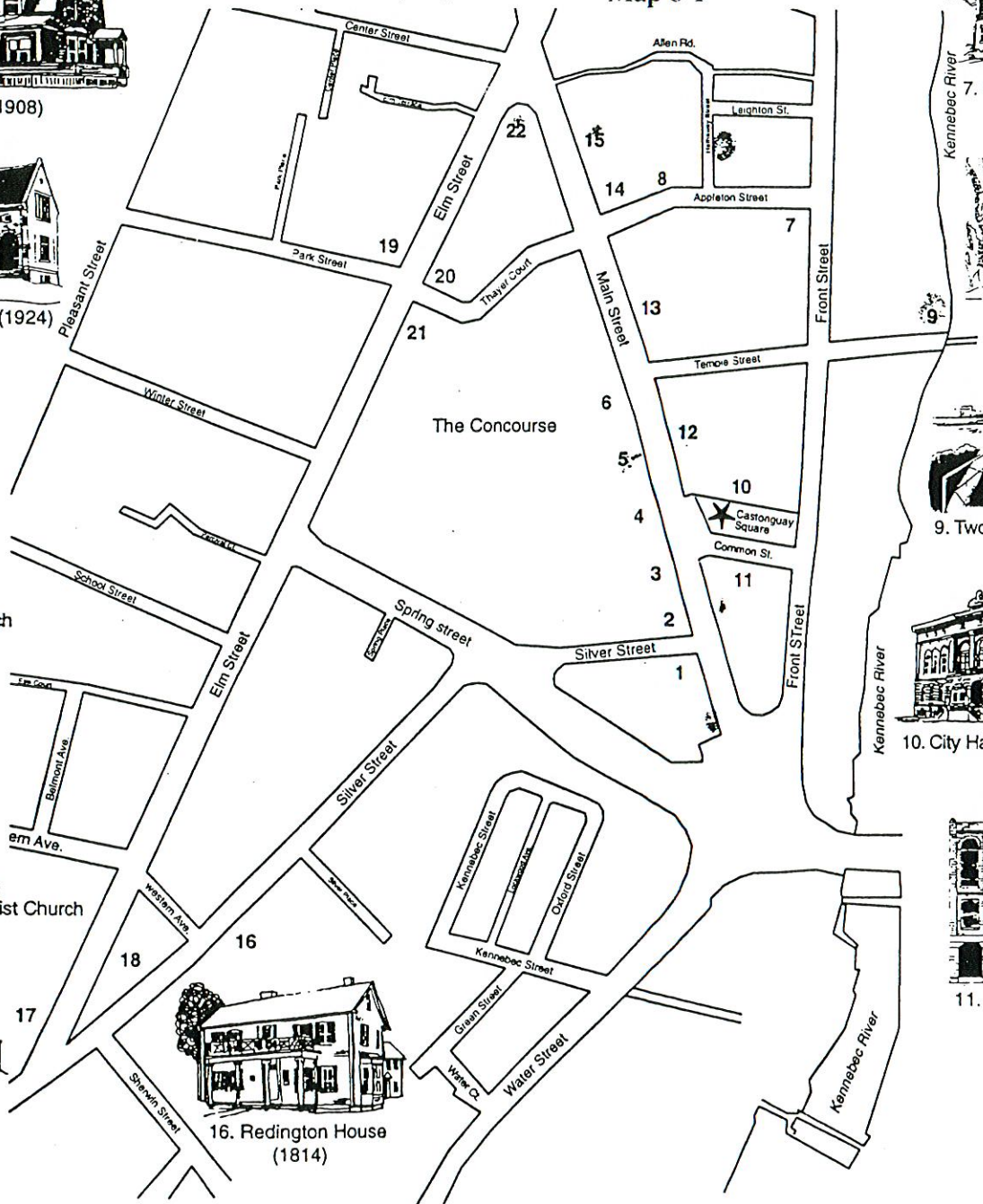
7. Emily Hall House (1834

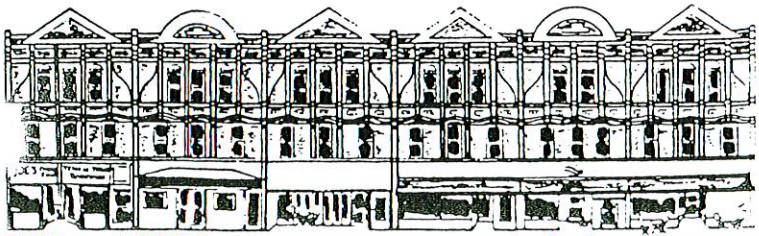
8. Elks Club (1907)


9. Two-Cent Bridge (1903)

10. City Hall/Opera House (1902)


11. Masonic Block (1890

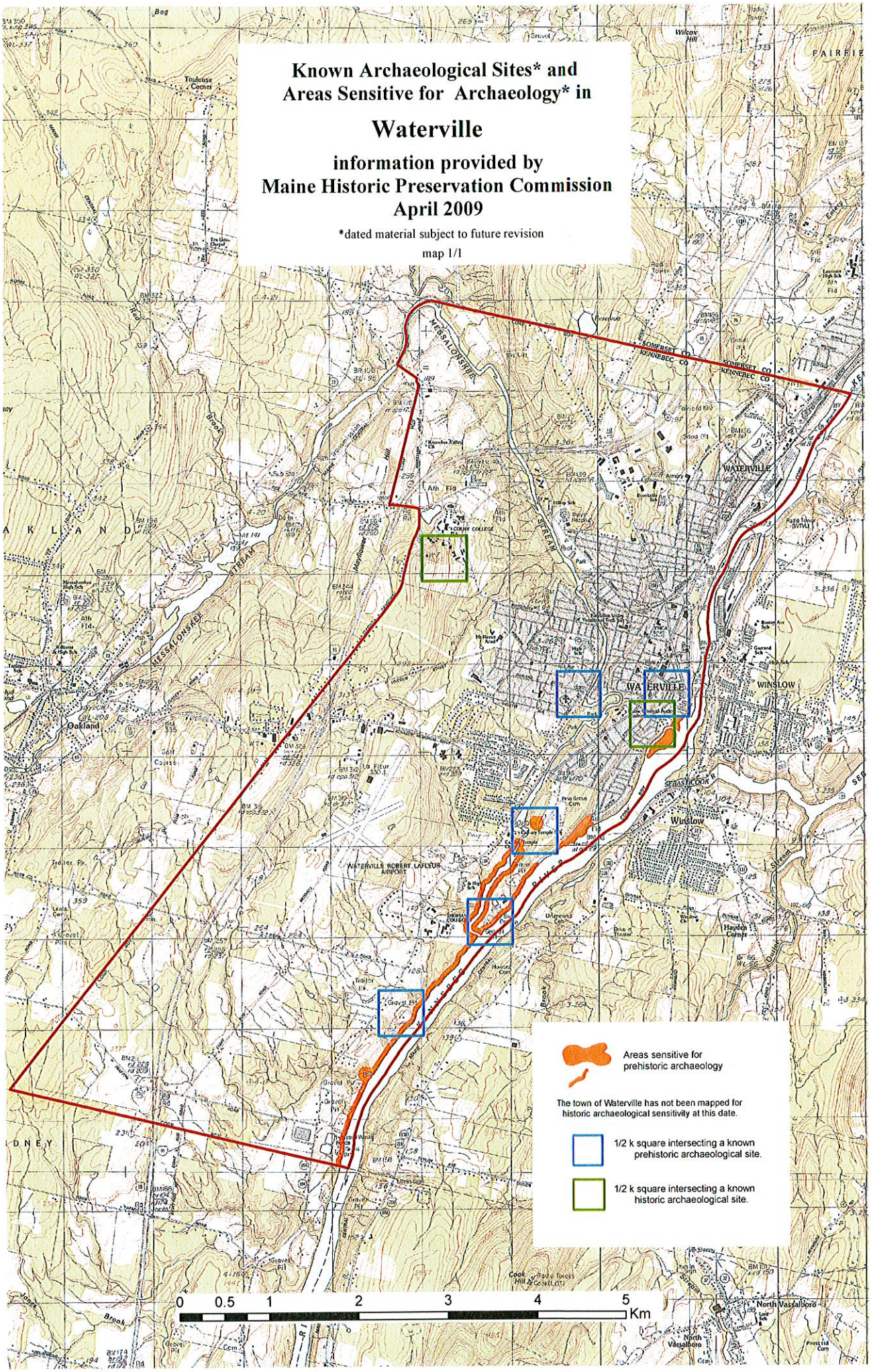




Known Archaeological Sites* and Areas Sensitive for Archaeology* in

Waterville

information provided by Maine Historic Preservation Commission April 2009

*dated material subject to future revision

map 1/1