

## AMHERST— WHAT IS HIDDEN IS AS IMPORTANT AS WHAT IS ON THE SURFACE

— Will Ludt (Chair, Amherst Heritage Commission)



It is easy to describe an 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century building based on its plain marks, roof line, type of framing, and external features, but when only remnants of a resource are left, the task is much harder. Although sometimes difficult, documenting historic resources and town treasures that are hidden beneath the ground or are in a second growth forest can yield valuable information about the early settlers of the area.

In Amherst, as in any town in New Hampshire, there are hidden historic resources that are almost forgotten by time and are not obvious as a resource. In a joint effort to document and rediscover lost resources, the town heritage and conservation commissions made such an effort to find, locate and then accurately doc-

ument the hidden resources that time and the town had forgotten. In starting this task, archaeologists from New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources were contacted to assist our small group in letting us know about proper tactics and techniques for identifying resources. Community training took place in mid-2014. An overview presentation was made by the professional archaeologists, setting goals and expectations. A mixed group was in attendance, including members from the heritage commission, conservation commission, historic district commission, planning board, Nashua Regional Planning Commission, Amherst Town Library, and the historical society.

With basic information and tools in hand, we began the task of actually doing onsite investigation. The team tackled the Fuller Farm, containing foundations and two separate wells, the Peabody Saw Mill foundations, and, finally, a little known early-19<sup>th</sup> century site where a small turning and grinding mill was located. At the end of the day, team members felt that they had spent a worthwhile day in the woods, getting dirty and making a difference in accurately recording the sites. Through this hands-on exercise we learned enough archaeological information to be able to go out on our own and document other sites.



As we completed our training session with NHDHR, there were some realized benefits to our adventure in the woods. Below are several of the top benefits:

- Learned techniques for accurately documenting historic resources, allowing the heritage commission to go on its own in future projects
- Added to the Amherst Town-wide Historic Resources document — identified new structures and resources not previously known
- Bringing town organizations together for a small common cause — sometimes individual organizations within a town are so caught up in their own missions and efforts they are not mindful of other needs and desires
- Meeting new people and having fun learning more about our own community history

I would encourage others who want to embark on a similar journey to start by using the services of NHDHR to help get the project started. Don't be afraid to seek advice and assistance from our state departments in Concord — NHDHR was extremely helpful and dedicated in helping us fulfill our goals.