

Conflicts between development and agricultural lands exist in some areas. As part of a survey conducted by Durham Agriculture Community Partnership, 25 percent of the respondents (i.e., ranchers and farmers) noted that neighbors objected to agricultural activities. This finding generally centered around new residents who are not tolerant of the dust, noise, and smells of productive agricultural lands.

Local ranchers and farmers recognize the value of their lands to the economic viability of the Durham Valley, as well as for their development potential. Because of this, they formed the Durham Agriculture Community Partnership and have been working collaboratively with state and county agencies and regional experts. Together, they are identifying issues and proposing solutions to minimize conflicts, protect important agricultural lands for their open space value, and provide ranchers and farmers with viable economic options that allow them to continue sustainable production.

Issues and Opportunities - Agricultural

The Durham Valley's scenic beauty, temperate climate, and affordability make it an attractive place for development and growth.

- The Durham Valley is experiencing moderate growth, resulting in new development and patterns of development that may impact its scenic, natural, agricultural, and historic qualities. For example, new growth and smaller development patterns such as small lots located along major travel routes are already beginning to impact the significant scenic views adjacent to or visible from the Scenic Byway.
- According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the Town of Durham has grown by 3.7 percent since 2000 (contrasted with a Greene County rate of 2.2 percent and a New York State rate of 1.7 percent). The Town of Durham's population is currently about 2,690 based on the July 2007 estimate.

- Most new growth adds a financial strain on the Town of Durham and Greene County in providing public services. Most of this growth is scattered residential development, frequently on small lots with little or no clustering to preserve open space, which is changing the Durham Valley's rural and scenic character.
- Only one percent of the Town of Durham is public land. Almost all lands adjacent to the Scenic Byway are privately owned, much of which is productive agricultural land. Farming is valued for its historic role, contribution to the local economy, and function in maintaining the Durham Valley's authentic rural character, but it is also endangered by development. Farmlands may indeed be more financially valuable as development property than for farming income.

Management Actions - Agricultural

Promote the protection of important agricultural lands that contribute to the Scenic Byway Corridor by using tools that provide an economic benefit to the landowner.

- a. Identify agricultural resources that also hold important heritage value such as important historic structures, sites, or land uses.
- b. Actively participate in the Durham Agriculture Community Partnership to support its work in protecting important agricultural lands as working landscapes.
- c. Partner with land trust organizations to promote conservation tools (i.e., conservation easements and land acquisition) that protect significant private lands and provide a benefit to the owner. Assist with support letters, grant funding, and education of landowners concerning benefits and constraints of these approaches.
- d. Support the preservation of important lands through services such as grant writing, education, and collaboration.

Cultural and Historic Qualities

The Durham Valley is a unique landscape and its distinct natural setting provides the basis for its heritage. The history of the land from early occupation by indigenous people to milling, iron works, tanning, and agriculture, and onward to today's recreation and tourism has left a variety of cultural, historic, and archaeological resources. These vestiges of the past are the physical remnants that assist in telling the Durham Valley's story of evolution from early Native American habitation to today's diverse rural community with an economic base that includes ranching and farming, as well as tourism and recreation.

This section presents an overview of the cultural and historic qualities that characterize the Durham Valley. A brief history of the Durham Valley is followed by a description of historic preservation activities that have enriched the area since the 1980s and a summary of existing resources. The *Historic Resources* figure highlights a number of the unique attributes in the Durham Valley.



History

Evidence points to the presence of Paleo-Indians in the Catskill region approximately 10,000 years ago, after the glaciers had receded and the climate was beginning to warm. A flint quarry found on

a hill near Athens, Greene County, is the earliest identified site in the region. Another site, between 9,200 and 8,200 years old near Cobleskill, is believed to have been a manufacturing site for points and other stone tools. The Paleo people were possibly the ancestors of the Mohican, Delaware, and Haudenosaunee (Iroquois), who inhabited the region when the first Europeans arrived.

The Durham Valley was first permanently settled in 1784 by families from Durham, Connecticut. The principal draw to the Durham Valley was the water power available from the numerous streams in the area. The rolling landscape of the upland township offered reasonably fertile land, which was heavily farmed in the 19th century. The development of the township came with small villages centered at first around the small industrial communities of Oak Hill and Durham. Settlement and expansion came quickly and by 1825 the population had peaked to a level that has not been matched since. The post-Revolutionary War settlement and growth of the Durham Valley represents a unique period of American history, and is exemplified by the homes, farms, and cemeteries located within the Scenic Byway Corridor.

The Durham Valley has a rich history of diverse and prosperous endeavors. One of the most notable was the high-profile iron works in Oak Hill. However, from the first settlement the principal industry in the Durham Valley has been farming. Other enterprises such as milling, iron works, tanning, retail stores, and boarding houses all flourished in their time, but none dominated the local economy for so long a period and to such a degree as has agriculture.

Farming encompassed the entire Durham Valley from the lowest bottom land along Catskill Creek to the foothills of the Catskill Mountain Range. By 1845, about 90 percent of the land within the Town of Durham was improved for agriculture. In 1875, the farms tended to be fairly large, typically over 50 acres, with almost half ranging in size from 100 to

500 acres – there were over 300 farms. Nineteenth century farms in the Durham Valley raised a mix of cash crops and livestock. The predominant outputs were wool and apples. Neither commodity required extensive barns, so both were relatively easy to produce. Sheep could be grazed on the hillsides and other untillable lands, thus making use of the upland areas within the Durham Valley. In the early 20th century the milk industry flourished throughout the Hudson Valley with railroads promoting dairy operations to the farmers and then transporting milk to the urban centers.

Tanning was also a large and early industry in the upland areas in the Durham Valley and throughout the Catskills. During the 1830s and 40s, Greene



County tanned more leather than did the rest of the state combined. The tanners used the acid-containing hemlock tree bark to cure hides for leather. At first, the bark and wood used in tanning was secondary to the lumber industry, but by the middle of the 19th century, the tanning industry had become quite extensive. Trees were cut, often in excess of what could be run through the saw mills, simply for their acid bark. Some of the excess from this process was used to pave the early plank roads or to construct barns. The industry slowly faded from five operations in 1835 to one in 1855.

By about 1875, the last tannery in the Durham Valley had shut down.

The foundries, four of which were located in Oak Hill, were among the Town of Durham's most prominent enterprises. The most famous of these was the Cheritree Foundry, which began in 1833 as the Oak Hill Malleable Iron Company. The company was developed by Cambell and Scofield to make the Dutcher Plow No. 2. The factory burned to the ground in 1865; was soon rebuilt as the Empire Foundry; continued operations until about 1900; and was famous for the Climax brand plows and other hardware. In addition to the Cheritree Foundry, there was a lesser known iron works in Oak Hill, as well as secondary manufacturers and other home industries common in a rural culture.

Historic Preservation in the Durham Valley

In 1989, the Town of Durham enacted Local Law No. 1 to “*protect and enhance the landmarks and historic districts which represent distinctive elements of Durham’s historic, architectural, and cultural heritage*” and to “*enhance Durham’s attractiveness to visitors.*” Following the enactment of this law and meeting the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act, New York State designated the Town of Durham as a Certified Local Government (CLG). The CLG is a nationwide program that supports local preservation through the creation of local preservation commissions (i.e., the Town of Durham Historic Preservation Commission). The Town of Durham Historic Preservation Commission subsequently designated the Cornwallville Historic District and completed a historic resources reconnaissance survey in 1997.

The increased interest in historic preservation of local buildings and other sites also led to the establishment of a Greene County Register under the auspices of the Greene County Historical Society in 1990. The purpose of this register is to document Greene County’s structures and sites of historic and architectural significance, and

Historic Resources in the Durham Valley Listed on a Register						
Historic Resource	Date	Location	Register			
			Town	County	State	Federal
Historic Buildings and Structures						
Charles Pierce House	c 1840	Route 81, Oak Hill			x	x
Chittendon-Atkinson-Swanson Home	c 1795	Susquehanna Turnpike, Durham	x	x		
Cutting Bagley House	c 1802	Cornwallville Road,	x	x		
Deer Watch Inn	c 1800	Route 27	x	x		
Dutch Colonial A.T. House	c 1787	Route 81, Oak Hill			x	x
Fords General Store	c 1870	Route 81, Oak Hill			x	x
Grove Cottage	c 1830	Durham	x	x		
Hull-Cowles-Bright House	c 1867	Mansard Avenue, Durham	x	x		
Icicle House	c 1845	Route 22, Oak Hill		x		
Ken Dean Home	c 1790	Route 81, Oak Hill	x			
L.E. Cleveland House	1840	Route 81, Oak Hill			x	x
Lyman Tremain Opera House	1895	Route 81, Oak Hill	x	x		
Makely Farm	c 1810	Makely Road, Oak Hill	x	x		
Mt. Zoar Villa	c 1860	Route 23, East Windam	x	x		
Oak Hill United Methodist Church	1859	Route 81, Oak Hill	x	x	x	x
Osborne House	c 1850	Route 81, Oak Hill	x	x	x	x
Parks House	1806	Cornwallville	x	x		
Phinias Tyler House	c 1795	Cornwallville	x	x		
Redbrick House	c 1812	Stonebridge Road	x	x		
St. Paul's Lutheran Church	c 1834	Route 81, Oak Hill	x	x	x	x
The Parsonage	c 1815	Route 81, Oak Hill	x	x	x	x
Tremain House	c 1854	Route 81, Oak Hill	x	x		
Tripp House and Store Complex	c 1832	Route 81, Oak Hill	x	x	x	x
W.F. DeWitt Hotel	c 1865	Route 81, Oak Hill			x	x
Weldon House		Route 145, East Durham			x	x
Whittlesey-Reynolds	c 1820	Susquehanna Turnpike, Durham	x	x		
Historic Roads and Mile Markers						
Susquehanna Turnpike	c 1800		x	x	x	x
Susquehanna Turnpike Mile Marker 15	c 1800	Susquehanna Turnpike			x	x
Susquehanna Turnpike Mile Marker 22	c 1800	Susquehanna Turnpike			x	x
Susquehanna Turnpike Mile Marker 25	c 1800	Susquehanna Turnpike			x	x
Historic Stone Arch Bridges						
Allan Teator Road Stone Arch Bridge		Allan Teator Road, West Durham			x	x
Brand Hollow Road Stone Arch Bridge		Brand Hollow Road, West Durham	x		x	x
Hervey Street Stone Arch Bridge		Hervey Street, Sunside			x	x
Moore Road Stone Arch Bridge		Moore Road, Cornwallville	x		x	x
Stone Arch Bridge at County Route 22	c 1800	Susquehanna Turnpike, Durham			x	x
Stone Arch Bridge at Stone Bridge Rd.	c 1800	Susquehanna Turnpike, Durham			x	x
Woodard Road Stone Arch Bridge		Woodard Road, East Durham			x	x

to advance public awareness, appreciation, and preservation of the County's historic resources. Since that time, over 200 historic homes or sites have been listed on the register – about 20 are in the Durham Valley.

Existing Cultural and Historic Resources

The range of existing cultural and historic resources in the Durham Valley is the tangible evidence of the area's heritage. A sampling of resources that contribute to the character of the Durham Valley includes:



Susquehanna Turnpike – the Susquehanna Turnpike was one of the first turnpikes authorized by the State of New York. Legislation enabling its creation was passed on April 1, 1800, and the first section was opened August 20, 1801. The road stretched from Catskill (on the Hudson River) westward to Wattles' Ferry (Unadilla), New York on the Susquehanna River. In the Durham Valley, the turnpike passed through the hamlets of East Durham (State Route 145), Durham, and West Durham (County Route 20).

Soon after its opening, the turnpike was serviced by a weekly stage route. The overland stage took three full days to make the passage from Catskill to Unadilla and initially charged 10 cents a mile.

The Susquehanna Turnpike played a key role in early expansion westward, and was the longest continuously operated toll road in the United States; the eastern section remained in continual operation until 1901. The Susquehanna Turnpike was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1974, the first road ever given such designation.

Cornwallville Historic District – the district was created by the Town of Durham Historic Preservation Commission in 1989, following the enactment of the local historic preservation law. The district covers the historic hamlet of Cornwallville, as well as much of the viewshed to the north and south. Historical and continuing agricultural use has created a distinct cultural landscape pattern resulting from the geometric patterns of pastures juxtaposed with woodlands.

Oak Hill – the hamlet was the first major pre-revolutionary war settlement in the Durham Valley. In recent years, local residents have restored a number of its important historic buildings, which are now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Stone Arch Bridges – eight stone arch bridges from the 19th century in the Durham Valley are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The two earliest bridges were built around 1800 as part of the construction of the Susquehanna Turnpike. The remaining six were built in the late 1800s under the supervision of Durham Highway Commissioner Jeremiah Cunningham.

Century Farms – the Century Farm program is testament to the traditions of progressive agriculture and community service by farm families in New York State. The program began in 1937 and honors New York farms in continuous operation on the same land by the same family for 100 years or more. Two farms in the Durham Valley (i.e., Hull-O-Farm and the Cunningham Farm) have been recognized by the New York State Agricultural Society.



The accompanying table provides list of resources found on historic registers (i.e., town, county, state, or federal), while the Historic Resources figure illustrates some specific highlights within the Scenic Byway Corridor. The *Historic Resources* figure was developed using the New York State Historic Preservation Office GIS database; through review of the 1997 Resources Reconnaissance Survey; and with the contributions of members of the Town of Durham Historic Preservation Commission.

Issues and Opportunities - Cultural and Historic

Historic buildings, landscapes and features are visible throughout the Durham Valley, helping to tell the story of settlement, industrial activity, and agriculture. Unfortunately, some residents and visitors are not aware of the significance of these resources, and the means to protect these important resources are not always easily available. Although the Town of Durham has a Historic Preservation Commission that has been actively protecting important resources for decades, there are many more sites and properties that have yet to be fully identified and designated.

- The Durham Valley has a number of designated historic sites. Most of these properties continue in their historic use or in an adaptive reuse that is compatible with their historical qualities. And, reuse of historic sites and buildings is recognized as a positive and sustainable approach in the community.
- There are potentially many more properties that may be historically significant, such as agricultural lands, structures on agricultural lands, and roads that may not have been considered significant in previous inventories.
- The Durham Valley has an excellent state-chartered museum with an emphasis on local interest. The research library, the mainstay of the facility, attracts users from well beyond the borders of Greene County.

Management Actions - Cultural and Historic

Assist with the county-wide process to document significant historic resources.

- Encourage the Greene County Historical Society to maintain the historic resource database. Update to include any historic resources identified by this Corridor Management Plan. Update the database on an annual basis, or more frequently if significant information becomes available.
- Coordinate with the Historic Preservation Commission and New York State Historic Preservation Office annually to obtain the most recent listing of inventoried properties.
- Work with the Historic Preservation Commission on a regular basis to obtain information on properties that it is inventorying, surveying, or designating.
- Collaborate with the Historic Preservation Commission to provide their most recent inventories for inclusion in the database.

- If requested, assist the Durham Center Museum with its depository of information on local historic resources (e.g., a catalog of photographs or copies of inventory forms).

Encourage local hamlets to recognize historic resources through historic designation (local, state, or national) or through other planning measures.

- If requested, work with the Oak Hill community to recognize a historic district.
- Support Cornwallville's historic designation through restoration awards.
- Support East Durham's Main Street Project.
- Work with the Town of Durham to ensure adherence to an implementation of Local Law No. 1 of 1989 for Historic Preservation.



Work with the Historic Preservation Commission to craft projects for additional or new inventory, evaluation or designation of historic resources.

- Work with partners and private property owners including farmers to secure funding and technical support for evaluation and inventory projects.

- Add List of Potential Historic Resources to Greene County Historical Society database as sites needing additional study.
- Assist with the preparation and submittal of grant applications to the New York State Historic Preservation Office to conduct additional survey work.

Explain the economic options and benefits of historic preservation, such as gaining eligibility for historic grants for public and community projects and obtaining tax credits for private properties that are designated and rehabilitated as historic properties.

- Assist partners by providing services such as presentations and participating in grant writing and providing letters of support.
- Work with partners to create publications, brochures and other media to promote the importance and benefits of historic preservation.

Recreational Qualities

Recreation has continued to grow to the extent that it is one of the most significant sectors of Greene County's economic base, and the pastoral setting of the Durham Valley provides the perfect setting for outdoor recreation and exploration in unparalleled scenery. The Durham Valley offers many outstanding active and passive recreational activities for youth, families, and senior citizens. Bicycling, farm stays, hiking, and landscape painting are increasingly popular activities in the Scenic Byway Corridor.

Fishing

The Catskill Mountains are considered to be the birthplace of fly-fishing. Theodore Gordon, the dean of American fly-fishermen, first recorded his experiences on Catskill waters in the early 1900s. Today the region continues to offer some of the best fishing opportunities in the United States. Rainbow,