

Historic Infrastructural Timeline of Dover, NH

A product of Dover's developing place in the country during the United States' evolution of culture and legislation.

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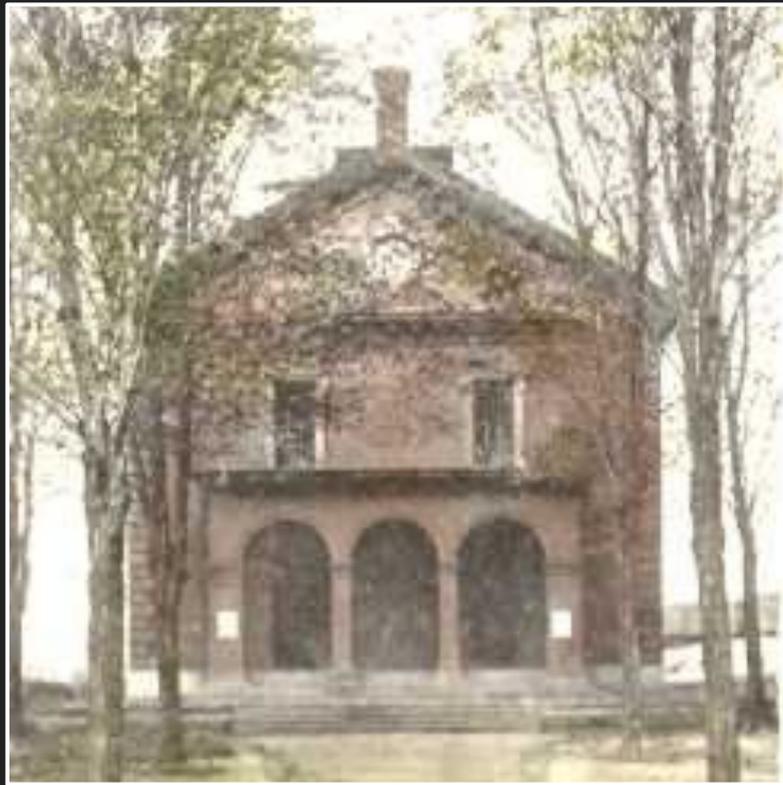


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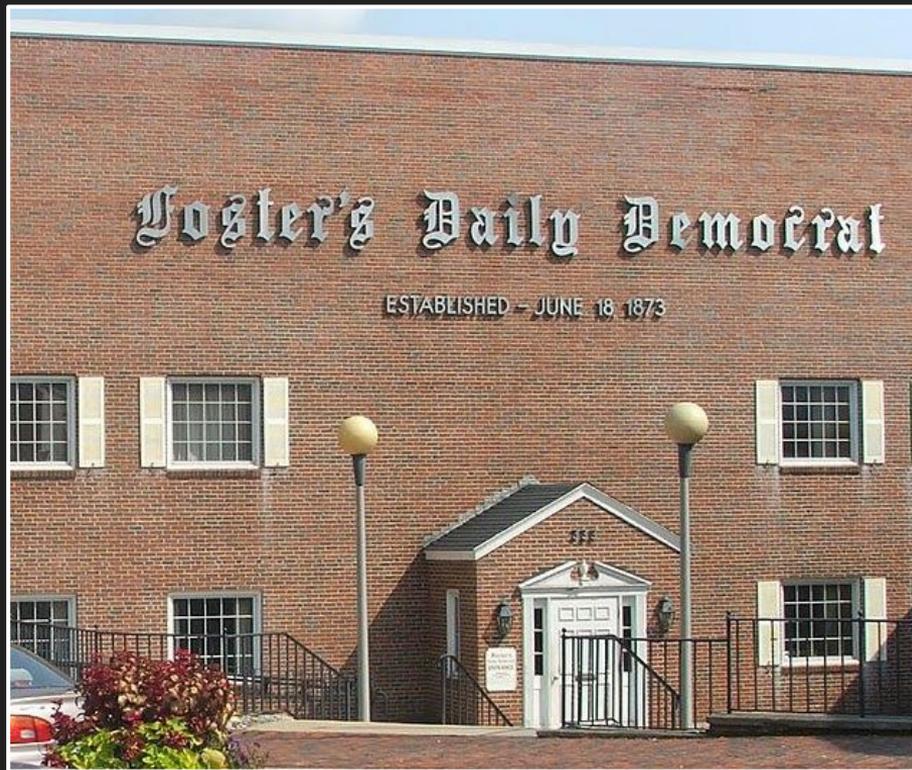


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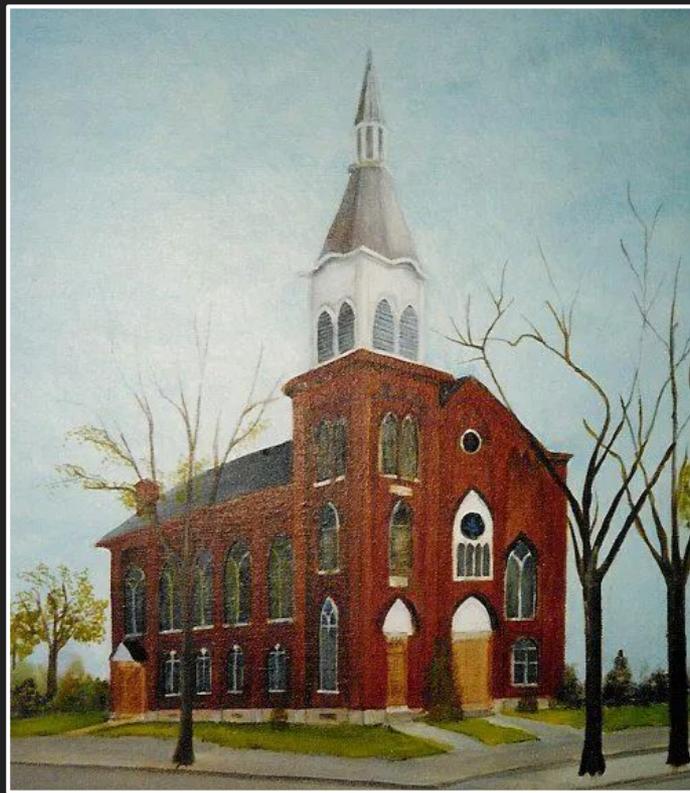


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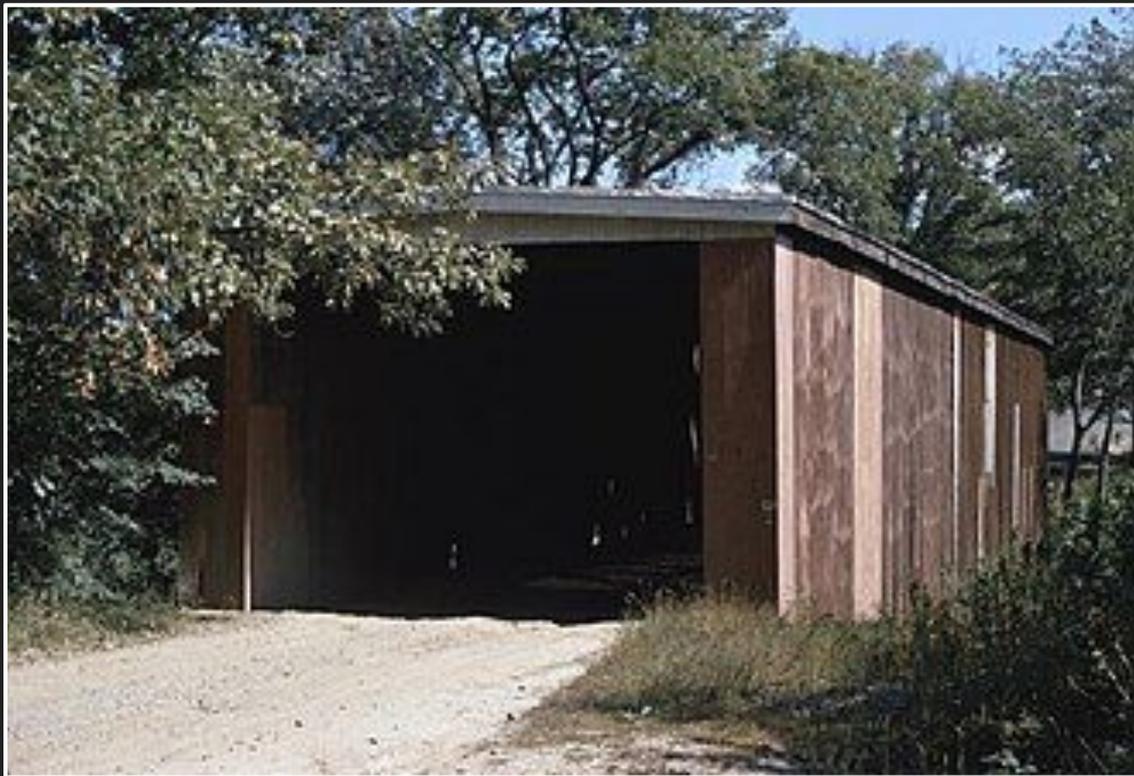


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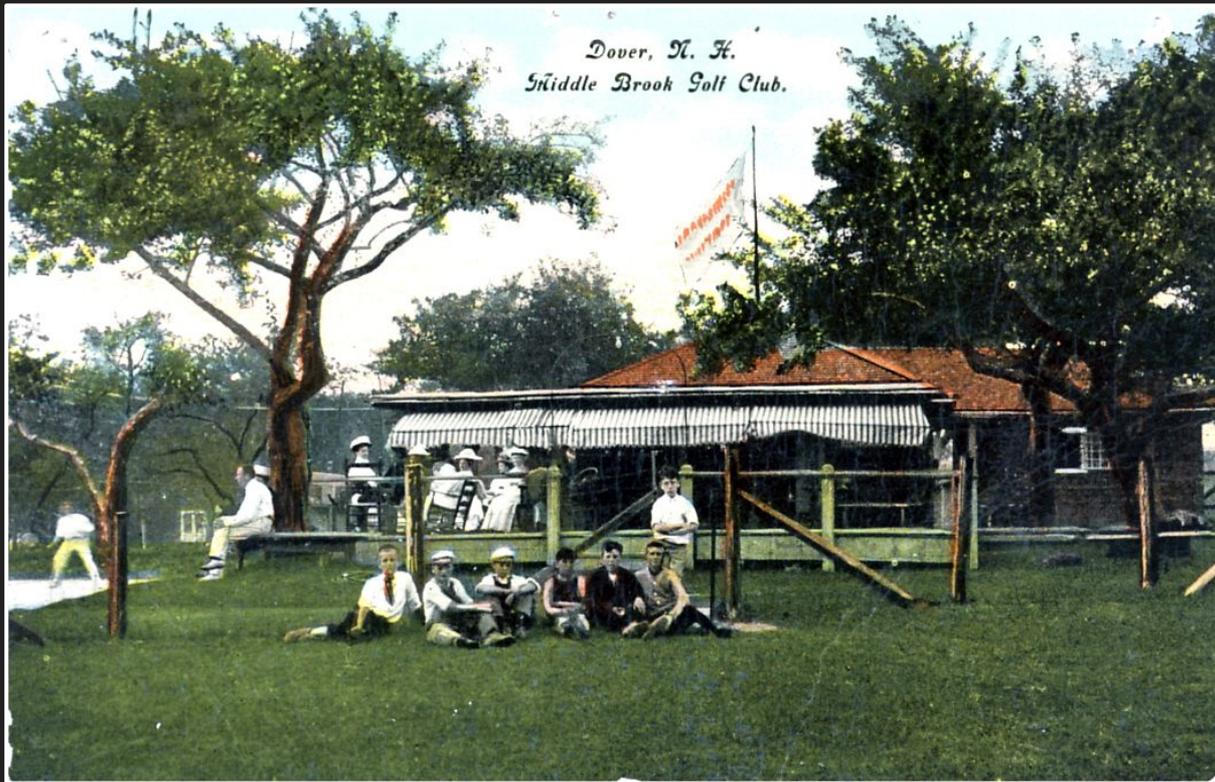
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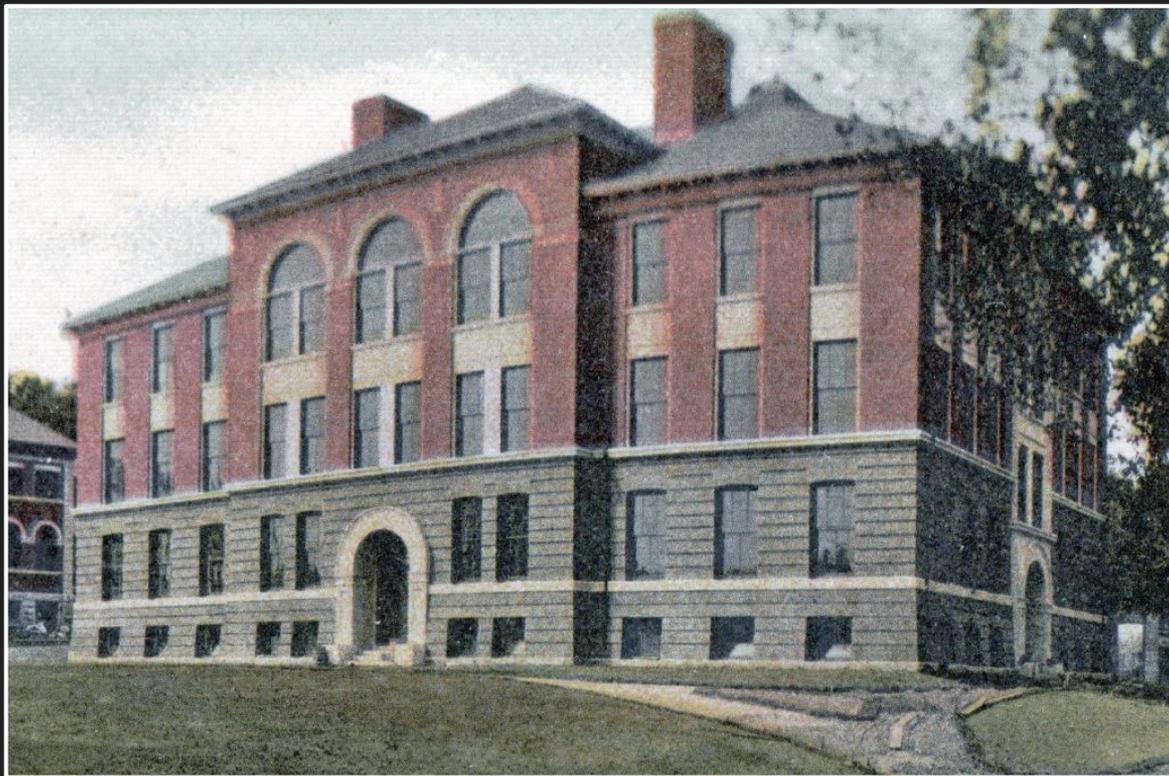
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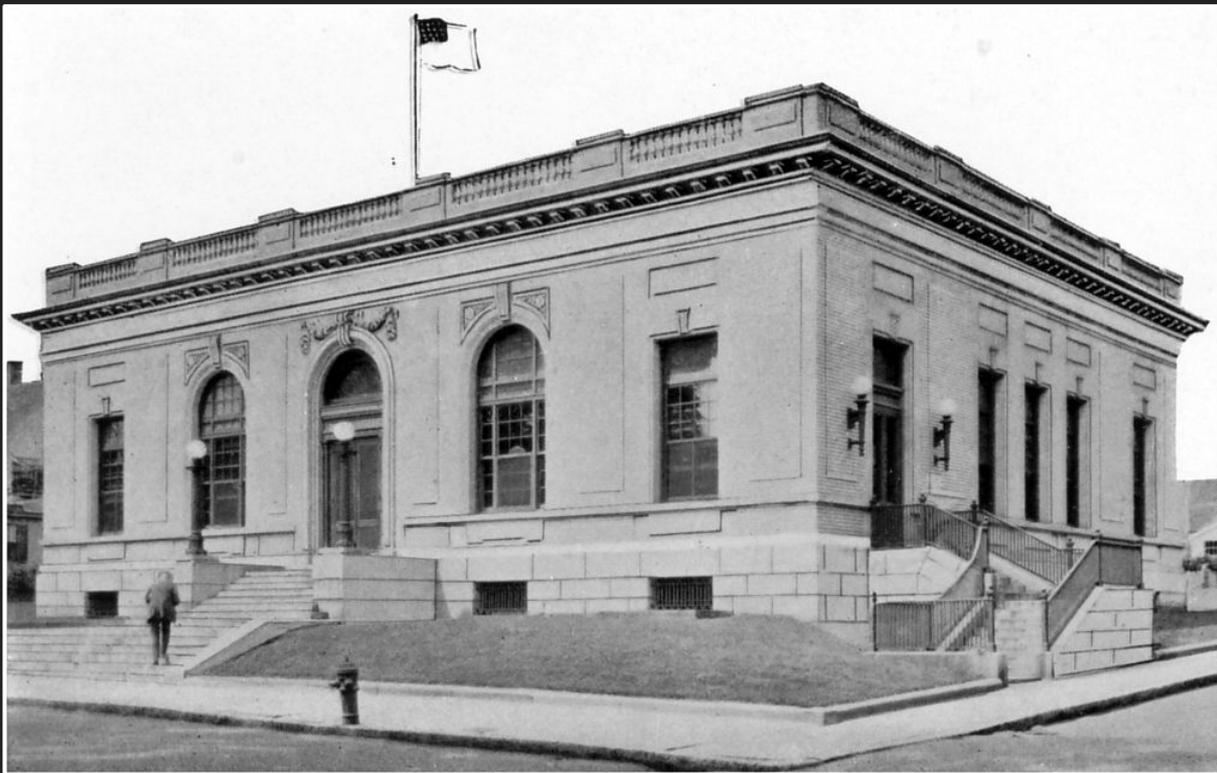


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NH Strafford Bank | 1803

Starting as the NH Strafford Bank in 1803, the bank, along with the entire building in which it was located, was moved from Central Street to Angle Street in 1804, where it remains today. The bank, however, after merging with the Savings Bank, moved to a three-story building on Washington Street in 1847. Once more, in 1895, the two banks (now known as the Strafford National Bank and the Strafford Savings Bank) moved to a granite building constructed by local architect A.T. Ramsdell on the corner of Washington Street. This location was referred to as a “fortress of finance” by the citizens of Dover. In 1963, both banks relocated again to 353 Central Avenue, where the Strafford National Bank remains today. The Strafford Savings Bank, meanwhile, moved to its own building on Washington Street across from the post office in 1984, where it has since remained.

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Woodman House | 1818

Originally constructed in 1818 for Charles and Annie Woodman, the Woodman House now serves as a museum in Dover, containing well-preserved articles of interest from areas of Dover's past. In 1916, the house became known as the Woodman Institute, along with three other notable buildings in Dover: Hale House, Damm Garrison, and Keefe House. The Hale house was built in 1813 by John Williams, the "captain of industry" who founded the Dover Cotton Factory in 1812. The house was later named for Senator John Hale who came to reside in it in 1840. Damm Garrison was built in 1675 and was the original building of the Woodman Institute. The Keefe House was an 1825 Dover home that now displays period carriages and sleighs as well as tools and other collections from the time period.

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First Parish Church | 1829

On December 31, 1829, the fifth home of the First Parish Church was dedicated in Dover, New Hampshire. The First Parish Church was originally founded in 1633, with the first meetinghouse being built in 1634 at Dover Point. A second meetinghouse was later constructed in 1654 and fortified in 1667 as the congregation continued to grow. This meeting house continued to be used until around 1720, when all services were moved to the third meetinghouse on Pine Hill. The First Parish Church served as the center of Dover's government up until 1762, as the church meetinghouse was also the government facility. Although the parish was recognized as a separate entity, town taxpayers continued to support the church until 1828. The fourth First Parish Church was built in 1758, and served the congregation until Dover's next population surge in the 1820s following the construction of the Cocheco Mills.

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Cochecho Mills | 1822

Built in 1822, the Cochecho Mills were a site for cotton textile manufacturing. These buildings replaced earlier sawmills and gristmills, and turned Dover more towards cotton manufacturing. Cotton Textile Manufacturing had begun on the Cochecho River with the Dover Cotton Factory located about two miles upstream at Upper Factory Village. The growth of the mills defined Dover as a mill town. When the mills were incorporated in 1827, the name Cochecho, which had Native American origins, was inadvertently changed to Cochecho. By 1898, the then-called Cochecho Manufacturing Company employed 2,000 workers who earned an average of 53 cents per day. Using the mills' cotton, the Cochecho Print Works managed to produce over 65,000,000 yards of finished cloth a year. These buildings, where Henry Law Park now stands, were torn down in 1913. In 1941, through combined effects of the Great Depression, the city purchased the mills at auction.

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B&M Rail Line | 1842

When the Cocheco Manufacturing company began using coal instead of wood to power their factories around 1840, there was demand for a rail line to bring coal to the factories. The B&M Rail Line was created in the place of the old lumber yard in 1842, which helped direct the development of businesses that were eventually established along Third Street. Most businesses on Third Street (beside the rail line) were dependent on railroad clientele, and these included hotels, theaters, saloons, and restaurants lining the street's south side. Soon after the initial construction of the railroad, a roundhouse and engine facilities were added near the Cocheco River, and two branch lines were created: Cocheco Railroad to Alton Bay (1851) and the Portsmouth and Dover Railroad (1874). There were eventually nine stations within Dover's boundaries, which shifted the focus of Dover's business from the landing.

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Morrill Building | 1846

Completed in 1874 by Joseph Morrill, the Morrill Building housed many businesses including a piano shop and tea room. The creation of the Morrill Building building to house these shops was a result of Dover's population growth through the expansion of the mills. On January 3, 1932, one of Dover's most spectacular fires razed the building, wiping out 26 businesses. The fire was so great that fire brigades from as far as Haverhill, Massachusetts were called for assistance, and it was so hot that the sprinkler system in the nearby Strand Theater was set off. In the old Morrill Building's place, a smaller two-story building was erected which is where the Thirsty Moose Taphouse and other stores are currently located at the corner of Washington Street and Central Avenue.

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Dover High School | 1851

Dover's first high school was established in 1851 on the site of the "Sham Battle." The Cocheco Manufacturing Company sold the land for \$600, and the structure cost \$15,000 to construct. A three-year course of study was instituted, but only students from the north side of the river were permitted to enroll. The Dover educational system was merged, inequalities were addressed, and all Dover students were welcomed by 1869. The west end of Chestnut Street was in decline around 1874, when the great grove of trees beyond the school was chopped down to make place for railroad construction. Eventually, the structure was deemed deficient in location and equipment, and a new facility was constructed on Locust Street, now the McConnell Center, in 1904. In 1907, the mill owners reclaimed the structure on Chestnut Street and turned it into the Eastern States Warehouse that was later torn down in March 1976.

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The American Hotel | 1865

As a result of the opening of the railroad in the Franklin Square area, by the 1840s there was a boom in tourists and hotel building. The American House Hotel, opened in 1865 on Main Street by William B. Smith, was one of the most well-known of these buildings. The hotel was noted for its comfort and style. On October 23, 1912, thousands gathered in front of the American House's porch to hear a speech by President William Howard Taft, who happened to be passing through Dover for a pleasure trip. By the 1920s, amenities at the hotel included electric lights, steam heat and baths, garage facilities, and a telephone in each room. The hotel was sold to Robert J. Smith, the last owner in 1950. Smith's advertisements listed 75 rooms, 50 baths, and a Crystal Dining Room. The American House was torn down in 1966 and was replaced with a modern motel, the Imperial, in 1968.

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Silver Fountain Tea Parlor | 1871

Built in 1871, the Silver Fountain Inn and Tea Parlor is a three-story victorian house reflecting architectural styles from the post-Civil War era that has been maintained as a bed and breakfast. It was home to the Williams family for almost a century, and the current owners have transformed it into an inn with ten beautiful rooms redesigned in the victorian style. Many of the house's finer details have been imported (including French fireplaces, Belgian light fixtures, and Austrian crystal door knobs). From 11.30 to 15.00 Monday through Saturday, they serve lunch and afternoon tea as well, which they have been doing since 2013.

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Foster's Daily Democrat | 1873

Founded by Joshua L. Foster in 1873, Foster's Daily Democrat is a paper named for the U.S. Democratic Party, and which received its name when the Democratic party was less popular in New England. From his time working for the *States and Union* pro-slavery paper in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Foster was already relatively well-known. The paper has supported conservatives over time, but the editors who have maintained the paper since Foster started it have turned it into a source of relatively unbiased local news. Prior to becoming Foster's Daily Democrat in 1873, the news building was originally bought by Foster as the Gazette of Dover in 1858, which he ran until resuming architectural work in 1861.

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St. John's Methodist Church | 1875

Built in 1825 for \$40,000, the wooden two-story structure of St. John's Methodist Church was built on land donated by the Waldron family. Congregating at the old courthouse in Tuttle Square since 1819, Methodists were growing in number in Dover (as Methodism was the city's third oldest religion). By 1850, two chapel wings, a parsonage, and a vestry had been added on to the little church, as it became more frequented by the men and women working in the nearby Cocheco Mills. In 1875, the old church building was razed, and the brick church that currently stands was built to seat one thousand parishioners, along with a bell tower housing eight thousand chimes. This building was used by the church until 1970, when it moved to a new location on Cataract Avenue, and the old church was converted to elderly housing that is now maintained by the Dover Housing Department.

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County Farm Bridge | 1875

This historic covered bridge was built across the Cocheco River in 1875 to connect with the County Farm Complex and allow for a more easily accessible means of transportation across the river. Although the bridge burned down in 1981, there is currently a pedestrian bridge in its place that was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1975. The County Farm Complex had been established in 1867 after New Hampshire passed legislation that authorized the creation of facilities meant to house the country's indigent, criminal, and insane populations. These facilities included a main almshouse, a blacksmith shop, a carpenter shop, a slaughterhouse, and numerous agricultural operations. The almshouse that can be seen today was built in 1881, the county jail was built adjacent to the almshouse in 1907, the farm operations were discontinued 1971, and the current county jail was built in 2004.

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Garrison Tower | 1880

The first Garrison Tower was built in 1880 with the intention of it becoming a public observatory. The construction of the tower reflected the emergence of new astrological concepts such as heliocentrism, that undermined the academic standing of astrology and made it more accessible to the general public. It lasted thirty-one years until the wooden structure caught fire in 1911. The second tower, made of steel, was commissioned two years later by Abby Sawyer in honor of her late husband. It was eventually deemed unsafe and taken down in 1990. The third Garrison Tower observatory that stands to this day was built in 1993. It provides a place where citizens of Dover can easily observe the stars without having to go to an observatory or pay fees.

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Dover Public Library | 1883

With New Hampshire being the first state to enact legislation authorizing the establishment of public libraries in 1849, Dover became one of the first cities to build a public library, which it did in 1883. The land for the building was donated by the Franklin Academy trustees under the conditions that the land would be used for a library or other educational purposes. Additionally, Andrew Carnegie donated \$30,000 to the city to support the creation of the library in 1902. The final building, housing 33,000 volumes, was dedicated on July 19, 1905. Starting in 1909, donations of artifacts of local history were made, which were placed in a Historical Room where there are now over 4,000 items of local and state history. In 1990, major renovations and an extension to the library were finished, which were the only major changes to the original building.

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Strafford County Courthouse | 1890

The Strafford County Courthouse was built in 1890 on the site of Major Waldron's home. Waldron had been distrusted by the Native Americans for tipping the scales of justice, so the Strafford County Courthouse was erected to represent a fair court system that brings justice by balancing the scales of right versus wrong. The courtroom itself can fit anywhere from 300 to 400 people and contains the headquarters for the County Commissioners and the Relief Workers along with judges chambers, attorney's room and witnesses' rooms. An annex was added in 1948, and the building was used afterwards until 1974. At that point, the Courthouse moved to the newly-finished Justice and Administration building, and the building it formerly occupied is now privately owned.

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Dover Children's Home | 1892

What is now known as the Dover Children's home was first constructed by the Women's Christian Temperance Union as a home for 50-100 orphans in 1892. By 1893, seven women had control over the Home's finances and management, which they used to create a charitable association for young children and teenagers called the Dover Children's Home. In 1897, the Dover Children's Home moved to a house constructed specifically for the purpose of the association on Locust Street. This home was outfitted with dormitories, dining halls, playrooms, a nursery, bathrooms, and a quarantine room. The transition from an orphanage to a group home took place in the 1940s and 1950s, and it is still open today as an intermediate group home for abused and neglected children as well as a center for therapeutic, case management, and residential services to teenagers.

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St. Charles Borromeo Church | 1893

The St. Charles Borromeo Church was built in 1893 for the French population of Dover. Between the 1840s and 1930s, many French Canadians fled to New England to find work, and a considerable number flocked to Dover to work at the mills. With the increasing French population, a church to accommodate the new citizens of Dover seemed important. The original church was rebuilt in 1933 with a merging of the St. Mary and St. Joseph churches after a budget cut and a decrease in church attendance. The church still held regular masses until 2009, however, when church membership became too low. In 2017, the building was handed over to a contractor who decided to raze the building to make room for “workforce housing.” Many Dover residents lamented the loss of this beautiful edifice.

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Fire Station | 1899

Built in 1899, Dover's Central Fire Station was in use for over one hundred years. With the Great Chicago Fire, Great Boston Fire, and Great Peshtigo Fires all taking place in the previous decades, the United States was well aware of the importance of fire safety. At the same time, the population of Dover was steadily increasing, with approximately 14,500 inhabitants at the turn of the century, which was another reason for a town Fire Station to be built. While this fire station is no longer the central station of Dover, it is still staffed 24 hours a day by two firefighters and a lieutenant. The current central fire station was built in 2008 and is located on Sixth Street. With Dover's increasing population, however, it has seemed prudent to keep both of these fire stations open, along with the South End Fire Station, that was built in 1967 and currently has one lieutenant and four firefighters on call at all times along with a mechanic.

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Middlebrooke Golf Club | 1903

The Middlebrooke Golf Club was organized in 1903 as Dover's first golf course. This reflected an emerging middle class society and an expansion of leisure time among citizens. This six hole golf course occupied 1,607 yards stretched across several acres of land that is now inhabited by Birchwood Place and an entrance to the Spaulding Turnpike. Middlebrooke Golf Club originally had a small clubhouse and a tennis court as an additional offering for their members. Memberships were \$5.00 a year, and non-noting associate memberships were offered to ladies for \$2.50. The club later moved to a larger facility on Gulf Road in 1921 after being reorganized as the Cocheco Country Club. The course is currently 6,210 yards and has 18 holes, and facilities include a member lounge, swimming pool, and ballroom.

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McConnell Center | 1905

Finished in 1905 and built by the same architect as the Dover Children's Home, Alvah T. Ramsdell, the McConnell Center served as the Dover High School until 1967, when the high school moved to a new location on Durham Road. In 1928, an addition was added to the building, which was designed by J. Edward Richardson, the architect for City Hall. When the building was emptied by the high school, the Dover Junior High School took possession of it and stayed there until 2000. At that point, the Junior High School also moved to a location on Durham Road. In 2002, the building was named the McConnell Center in honor of a Korean War hero and Dover resident, Joseph McConnell. It is now the location of the HUB Family Resource Center and the Dover Adult Learning Center along with various other city departments.

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Wentworth-Douglass Hospital | 1906

When it first opened in August of 1906, Wentworth Hospital consisted of three connected buildings: one ward dedicated for women, another for men, and the third was as an administrative building and nurse's home. From the time of its founding until 1952, the hospital also included a nursing school. The hospital received \$500,000 in 1961 from the Douglass family, which resulted in the hospital's name being changed to the current Wentworth-Douglass Hospital. In 1992, Wentworth-Douglass Hospital was designated a trauma center; this provided the hospital with the medical equipment necessary to treat extreme injuries, being the first on the Seacoast to have this. In 2017, the hospital became a member of the Mass General Brigham medical system.

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Dover Post Office | 1911

Dover's main post office occupies an entire city block in its downtown area. The building has three parts: the original 1911 main building, a large addition on the north side, and an expanded loading dock on the west side. The main portion of the building, a single-story beige brick structure, was designed by James Knox Taylor and completed in 1911. In its first 114 years of existence in Dover, the post office moved eight times. In 1796, Ezra Green, the first postmaster, worked out of a home on Silver Street. Then the post office moved to a Tuttle Square location, then to Tufts' drug store at Central Square, to the Cochecho Block, then to Marston's Block, the Dover Bank building, the Walker Block, and to the corner of Washington and Walnut Streets. The building is one of the region's only examples of Beaux Arts architecture and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1986.

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Orpheum Theatre | 1912

1912 was a year that reflected the growing middle class and the greater leisure time that accompanied this growth. Baseball parks were opened, Universal Studios and the Girl Scouts of the USA were founded, and various theaters were created. Dover's own theater, the Orpheum Theatre, was opened that year. It was later renamed to the State Theater in 1935. By 1955, the theater had been closed and converted into the offices and machine shop of Robbins Auto Parts. Today, the black painted arching letters atop a second story half moon window, along with a "Pontiac Indian Chief" illustration on the side of the building are the only remaining components of the Orpheum Theatre.

Fourth City Hall | 1935

Dover's most recent city hall was built in 1935, and it is the fourth building to have served as City Hall. The first building, built in 1842, was located at the corner of Washington Street and Central Avenue, and it burned down in 1866. The first reconstruction took place in 1868 at the location of the previous City Hall, but this building burned down as well in 1889. The third City Hall was built in 1891 at the location of the present City Hall building. This building consisted of a large opera house, but it too burned down in 1932. Finally, in 1935, the current City Hall building was constructed. In reaction to the three previous buildings burning, the fourth was built to be fireproof. The bell from the original City Hall is hung in the 80-foot tower above the building and includes an auditorium large enough to seat 900 people. It is built in the Georgian colonial style.

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Bellamy Park | 1936

The industry of Dover thrived along its various rivers, along which sawmills and grist mills could be found as early as the 1650s. Spanning the following three centuries, industry such as an iron foundry, cotton, flannel, wool, yarn, cloth dressing, machinery, nails and knives, hosiery, brewing, sewing, cider, shingle, lathe, and more existed along the Bellamy River. Many of these factories, shops, and mills were eventually demolished, paving the way for modern urbanization. It was not until the early twentieth century that a park was created along the fifth falls. Furthermore, this park was not established as Bellamy State Park until the Civilian Conservation Corp project began in 1936 during the Great Depression. This is when the CCC built a bathhouse, sandy beach area, diving platform, and numerous footpaths. This park was a popular recreational site until it was closed in 1976 due to unsafe bacterial concentrations in the water and vandalism.

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Mineral Park | 1953

Completed in December of 1953, Mineral Park was a public housing development that was built to provide clean and modern housing. By the 1940s, Central Avenue was one of the busiest roads in the state. There was not enough parking in business and residential areas, where there was no space to expand. To remedy this, the Dover housing authority created a plan to help redevelop substandard areas of the city, including a place known as “Shantytown” near the intersection of Tolend Road and Whittier Street. Most houses in that area were not fit for habitation at the time this project began. President Truman approved the plans for renovating the area, and the dilapidated houses were burned starting in June 1952. After completing Mineral Park, Dover would continue on its road to renovation with a nine million dollar renewal project in the 1970s.

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Wastewater Treatment Plant | 1960

As a result of the Cocheco Mills being so closely connected to the Cocheco River, industrial waste polluted much of the river until the Wastewater Treatment Plant was built in 1960. The plant was likely built as a result of the 1948 Federal Water Pollution Control Act, which later became known as the Clean Water Act. Because the Cocheco River was already harboring so much pollution from the mills, Dover quickly had to find a way to treat its water. The plant that was built in 1960 is now known as the Huckleberry Hill Wastewater Treatment Facility. The plant has expanded and developed over the years, and it now cleans and tests wastewater to ensure compliance with Federal and State laws, as well as composting any bio-solids generated at the facility and receiving domestic septage from residents and surrounding communities.

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Children's Museum | 2008

On July 30, 1983, the Children's Museum was originally opened in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. 25 years later, the Museum would be relocated to Dover and reopened as the Children's Museum of New Hampshire. The Museum moved into the space of the abandoned Butterfield Gym, which was a city recreation center that was established in 1962. The building was first constructed in 1930 as an armory for the New Hampshire National Guard. The numerous changes in economic and societal focuses throughout the mid and late nineteenth century resulted in the many uses of the armory building. A combination of factors led to the creation of a Children's Museum, including an expanding societal place for children's entertainment, and a growing population that catered to Children's education and interests.

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Police Department | 2016

Although Dover has record of Police presence as early as 1835, the first full time police force was not established until 1925. The first building in which the police department was housed, which has the same square footage as the one built in 2016, also provided space to the district court. By 1985, the Dover Police Department had grown enough that they were asking for a larger space, so in 2013 they created a “book of horrors” to show the city that they needed a new location. Over the years, the building had begun to leak, and every extra space in the building had been used, even after the district court moved out of the building. When land was purchased, the design of the building was still uncertain, as the various sketches for the police headquarters were controversial. Ultimately, a design was decided on that had enough storage for evidence, meeting space, and a training room.

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Dover High School | 2018

To enhance the 21st-century academic learning experience, a new facility of the Dover High School was constructed behind the intermediate school in 1967. This was later torn down and paved over to form one of the high school's parking lots. In 2014, a Joint Building Committee was formed to help guide the \$87.6 million construction project. The 310,000 sq. ft. school opened in August of 2018. The new Dover High School complex also serves as Regional Career Technical Center to prepare students with future career and technical proficiency. When students and community members enter the school, they arrive at the Town Square, a central dining commons that acts as the heart of the school and unifies core spaces including the gym, courtyard, and auditorium. Along with classrooms and specialized learning spaces, each wing contains a “Learning Common” area with social and study spaces. The design reflects the idea of a “future proof” school, one that is truly flexible and can be re-organized as needed.

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