

## **The Richard Scammon Farm National Historic District**

*By Nathan Merrill, Stratham Heritage Commission*

In October 2023, the National Park Service listed the former Richard Scammon Farm on River Road as a National Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places. This is the first property in Stratham so honored, and it represents the culmination of several years' work for the Heritage Commission, with Preservation Company of Kensington completing the required historic inventory documentation and the National Register nomination form on our behalf.

On Friday, February 16, 2024 at 7:00 pm at the Stratham Firehouse, Heritage Commission members Nathan Merrill and Jeffrey Hyland (a Scammon family descendant) will present a free public program on the history of the Richard Scammon farm.

The Scammon Farm National Historic District consists of four properties along River Road, totaling 103 acres. This non-regulatory Historic District includes approximately 30 acres of open fields, 67 acres of forest, and 6 acres developed with historic residential and agricultural buildings. The largest parcel of 89 acres is permanently protected with a conservation easement, held by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF). There is a public walking trail through a portion of this large open space parcel.

Eight generations of Scammons lived on this land west of Portsmouth Avenue and east of the Squamscott River for nearly 300 years. Richard Scammon settled here with his wife Prudence Waldron in 1665, long before Stratham became an independent town separate from Exeter in 1716.

The current homestead at 25 River Road was built by James and Lydia Scammon (generation 4) in 1812. Richard and Abigail Scammon (generation 5) built the existing 40'x84' barn in 1860. Richard Montgomery and Annie Wiggin Scammon (generation 6) built the existing farm manager's house at 21 River Road circa 1910, after an earlier tenant house burned.

The last generation of Scammon heirs subdivided and sold the farm in pieces, beginning in 1967. The houses along the south side of River Road west of #25, and the Oxbow Farm neighborhood are all built on former Scammon land. Today's Market Basket and Shaw's stores are also on land that was subdivided from the old Scammon Farm.

Fortunately, the historic farmstead consisting of the 1812 Scammon house, 1860 barn, several outbuildings, c. 1910 farm manager's house, and Scammon family cemetery all survive intact, within their original settings. Together, they represent a treasured visual tie to our Town's agrarian past. The Heritage Commission is pleased for this special place to be recognized at the state and national levels for its value to the fabric of our nation.

The Heritage Commission sincerely appreciates ongoing support from the Select Board and from the broader community, without which we could not accomplish these types of projects. And critical to the success of this effort has been the cooperation and support we received from the present-day property owners: SPNHF and the Smith and Paul families.

We hope you will join us to learn more about the evolution of this historic farm, and the prominent Scammon family that made great contributions to our Town over many generations.



25 River Road viewed from across the street, undated photograph, probably 1870s.  
Courtesy of Ruth Paul collection



25 River Road, undated photograph, early 20<sup>th</sup> century.  
Courtesy of Stratham Historical Society collection



Holstein cows grazing behind the barn, undated photograph, likely early-20<sup>th</sup> century.  
Courtesy of Ruth Paul collection



Haying behind 25 River Road, digital photograph, 2020.  
Courtesy of Nathan Merrill collection