

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

New Hampshire Roads Taken – Or Not

Heritage Commission February Program

Featuring New Hampshire Humanities Speaker Steve Taylor

In a New Hampshire Humanities To Go program sponsored by the Stratham Heritage Commission, Steve Taylor, former Stratham resident and popular New Hampshire Humanities speaker, will review the history of New Hampshire's highway choices in the last century and the economic, social, and cultural changes that followed those decisions.

In the Seacoast Region the development of our roads has also been determined by the geographical challenge of being bordered by the ocean and intersected by Great Bay and its tributary rivers. Back to its origins over 300 years ago Stratham has been profoundly affected by its location between the coastal towns and the interior waterways and between the larger commercial centers of Exeter and Portsmouth.

In the last decade public forums concerning the Gateway Commercial District, the historic Town Center, and the Town Master Plan have all included lively public debate around highways, roads, and traffic.

Some of the ways in which highway decisions have had an impact on Stratham include the building of the "Stratham Circle," the widening and straightening of Portsmouth Avenue, and the tolls on Interstate 95 which have driven through traffic, both passenger and commercial, onto Portsmouth Avenue/NH. More recently we have even seen backups at those tolls resulting in unusually heavy traffic on our rural residential streets.

Of course we cannot go back in time but we can try to manage the future. That is the aim of Stratham's new Master Plan. It draws attention to both our many historic properties but also to the character of our roadways and landscapes. It charges the Planning Board and Staff along with the Heritage Commission to map and designate "heritage streets" and to develop zoning that includes protections for those character defining assets such as stonewalls and large street trees.

Attend this program to understand the historical background and the forces affecting our roads and highways.

February 7 (storm date Feb. 21)

Stratham Fire Station, 7 PM.

For more information: Heritage@strathamnh.gov