

***Linda Upham-Bornstein, PhD***

185 Mount Prospect Road  
Lancaster, New Hampshire 03584  
Email: [lubornstein@gmail.com](mailto:lubornstein@gmail.com)

February 24, 2016

Martin Honigberg, Chairman  
New Hampshire Site Evaluation Committee  
New Hampshire Department of Environmental Resources  
29 Hazen Drive  
PO Box 95  
Concord, NH 03302 – 0095

Dear Chairman Honigberg:

Re: Northern Path Transmission Line/Historic Resource Assessment

I have had an opportunity to review the Northern Pass Project Historic Resource Assessment (Assessment) on my property at 185 Mount Prospect Road, Lancaster, New Hampshire, a copy of which I attach for easy reference. I am writing to advise you of my strong disagreement with the Assessment's conclusion that the Northern Pass Project (Project) does not appear to have an adverse effect on my property.

First, I need to correct a statement that I made in my September 6, 2015 letter to the New Hampshire Site Evaluation Committee, a copy of which I attach hereto and incorporate by reference herein. In that letter I stated that the existing wood utility poles in that portion of the proposed transmission line that will run roughly parallel to and approximately two – tenths of a mile from the eastern border of my property are not visible from my property. Although none of the existing wood utility poles (approximately 43 feet in height) were visible from my property when I wrote my September 6, 2015 letter, now that the foliage is gone one of them is indeed visible from my home as I write this letter in February, and the others are just below the top of the tree line.

The Assessment correctly finds that my entire 20-acre property “appears to have potential for National Register eligibility based on visually related areas of significance” but then wrongly concludes that the “Project does not appear to have an adverse effect on the property.” (Assessment, 2, 3.) The latter conclusion is based on flawed assumptions and statements that are not supported by the facts on the ground.

The Assessment maintains that the proposed “structures will not be substantially visible in the view from the house, because the Project is at a lower elevation and separated by over a half a mile of wooded land,” that the “transmission lines will be screened by the tree line,” that the “use of weathering steel monopoles in this location will reduce visibility,” and that if “there were intermittent views of the new structures from the house, only the very tops could be visible and those would be silhouetted against the dark trees on the hill behind.” (Assessment, 3.) These statements are simply incorrect. First, the elevation of the Project increases substantially from west to east, and most of the land between my home and the Project has been cleared. There is only a narrow area of wooded land between my home and the Project, and most of that land (especially on the eastern half of our view shed) is at a much lower elevation than that portion of the Project crossing our view shed. The proposed transmission towers will be considerably taller than the existing wood utility poles, one of which I can see now and the others are almost as tall as the tree line. Although the proposed weathering steel monopoles may be less visible than shiny steel lattice towers, they will still be plainly visible from my home. The Assessment concedes that there may be “intermittent views of the new structures from the house,” but dismissively minimizes this fact by asserting that “only the very tops could be visible and those would be silhouetted against the dark trees on the hill behind.” In light of the height (twice that of the existing wood poles), width and appearance of the proposed steel transmission towers, their elevation relative to my house and the trees below them, and the fact that one of the existing wood utility poles is presently visible from my home, I submit that a significant portion of the Project,

and not just “the very tops” of the towers, will be plainly and substantially visible from my home and in historically significant views from the historic resource. Moreover, the Assessment ignores the fact that the mountains behind the proposed transmission line are covered with snow for at least six months of the year and that, therefore, for much of the year the transmission towers will contrast starkly with the bright white backdrop and will be even more visible than they are during the summer.

The Assessment recognizes that Mount Prospect Road is a locally-designated scenic road but maintains that “the property’s scenic view to the east is only minimally visible from the road.” (Assessment, 3.) This assertion is likewise incorrect. Mount Prospect Road has been designated a scenic road under RSA 231:157-158 precisely because of the splendid scenic views of the Pliny and Presidential Ranges that members of the public enjoy from the road. As I noted in my September 6, 2015 letter, in 1887 Persis Chase observed that from the “farm owned by Mr. Johnson [my property] one can see the village of Jefferson, with Mount Starr King rising above” and that “towering grandly over all [is] the White... Mountain range.” Today, one can still see the village of Jefferson, Mount Starr King, and the other mountains in the Pliny Range from Mount Prospect Road at my house, including those portions of the road depicted in photos one, four and five in the Assessment. A number of the proposed transmission towers, especially on the eastern side of our view shed, will also be plainly visible from the road and will ruin the public views of the Pliny Range. The Project will indeed be substantially visible in the main public views of the historic resource.

The seriously-flawed conclusions of the Assessment of my property remind me of what my husband’s law school evidence professor once said about experts: “experts remind me of the eunuchs in the courts of ancient kings; they know all about how it’s supposed to be done, but they can’t do it themselves.” The so-called expert who prepared the Assessment of my property, and who does not live at my property but only visited it briefly, may opine that the Project does not appear to have an adverse impact on my property, but I know my view shed and its topography, I know what I can see now, I know the height and appearance of the proposed structures, and I know that the Project will indeed be substantially visible in the main public views of the historic resource and from my house.

The principal consideration that prompted my husband and I to purchase this particular historic property for our permanent residence was its location in a pristine landscape with stunning views. We would not have purchased this property if the proposed transmission line had then been in place. The proposed above-ground transmission line in our view shed will have unreasonable adverse effects on our property, its aesthetics, its quality as a historic site, and its market value.

I submit that the Project will most certainly have an adverse effect on my property. I invite the members of the Site Evaluation Committee to visit it and see for themselves. I request that the Committee not issue a certificate unless all such transmission towers and lines in my view shed are completely buried

Thank you for considering my concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Upham-Bornstein".

Linda Upham-Bornstein, PhD

***LINDA UPHAM-BORNSTEIN***

185 Mount Prospect Road  
Lancaster, New Hampshire 03584  
Email: lubornstein@gmail.com

September 6, 2015

Martin Honigberg, Chairman  
New Hampshire Site Evaluation Committee  
New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services  
29 Hazen Drive  
P.O. Box 95  
Concord, NH 03302-0095

Dear Chairman Honigberg:

Re: Proposed Northern Pass Transmission Line

I am writing to advise you of my strenuous opposition to the proposed Northern Pass Transmission Project. I object to the construction of an above-ground transmission line across nearly 130 miles of New Hampshire for both personal and public policy reasons. I respectfully submit that the proposed above-ground transmission line will have significant and unreasonable adverse impacts on the people's welfare, the private properties within the Northern Pass view shed, the overall economic growth of the state, the state's environment, historic sites within the view shed, and aesthetics. See RSA 162-H:1; RSA 162-H:16, IV (c)

On a personal level, my husband and I own a home on twenty acres of land on Mount Prospect Road in Lancaster. Mount Prospect Road is a designated scenic road under New Hampshire's scenic road statute, RSA 231:157-158. The proposed transmission line in this area will not be buried but will be placed on large metal transmission towers running roughly parallel to and approximately two-tenths of a mile from the eastern border of our property. The portion of the proposed transmission line that will be plainly visible from, and adversely impact, our property begins at Wesson Road and extends approximately two miles south. The proposed transmission towers in this segment will be 85 to 95 feet tall, or more than twice the height of and substantially wider than the existing wood utility poles, which are not visible from our property.

If these very large metal transmission towers are installed in this two-mile section, they will deface the landscape and ruin the many beautiful views that we presently have of the White Mountains (specifically, the Pliny Range and the Presidential Range). I enclose several photographs depicting some of those views. In her 1887 *Lancaster Sketch Book*, Persis F. Chase remarked that "of all short drives in this vicinity, the one around Mt. Prospect affords the grandest mountain views." Chase further notes that from the "farm owned by Mr. Johnson [our property] one can see the village of Jefferson, with Mt. Starr King, rising above" and that "towering grandly over all, [is] the "White ... mountain range." The view shed of Weeks State Park on Mount Prospect includes our view shed. The United States Department of Energy's *Northern Pass Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement* (EIS) has determined that the existing contrast-dominance rating for the Weeks State Park view shed is "weak" but that its contrast – dominance rating if the proposed above-ground transmission line is constructed would be on the high end of 'moderate,' which "indicates that the visual change would be clearly noticeable to a casual observer, and is likely to be considered adverse." (EIS, 4 – 95.) Moreover, the significant and adverse impact on our view shed will substantially reduce the market value of our property.

It will also have significant and unreasonable adverse impacts on the value and integrity of our property as a historic site. Our home, built in approximately 1810, is one of the earliest residences in the town of Lancaster. It was depicted as the J.A. Johnson property on a late 19<sup>th</sup>-century map of the town and was owned by the Weeks family from about 1915 to 1931. Congressman John Wingate Weeks sponsored the 1911 Weeks Act that created the White Mountain National Forest and his son, Charles Sinclair Weeks, a United States senator from Massachusetts and President Eisenhower's Secretary of Commerce, maintained his summer residence at our property until he sold it in 1931. The Site Evaluation Committee should not permit the construction of an extremely unattractive above-ground transmission line in close proximity to, and in plain view from, a historic property once owned by the man who was responsible for establishing the National Forest in northern New Hampshire.

The proposed above-ground transmission line will also be bad public policy in light of a number of the factors that RSA chapter 162-H requires the Site Evaluation Committee to consider. First, it will be bad for the economies of Coos and Grafton Counties, undermine the overall economic growth of the state, adversely impact the historic sites along the proposed route, and be inimical to the welfare of the population and the State's environment. The transmission line will be a terrible eyesore on the pristine landscape of northern and central New Hampshire through which it will run. Consequently, the line will be antithetical not only to the environment but also to the tourist and recreation industries that are Coos County's best hope for the future economic growth and on which Grafton County likewise relies heavily. Moreover, the United States Department of Energy found that burial of the entire transmission line along the proposed route will create nearly twice as many annual construction jobs over three years, will have double the economic impact from construction, and will generate 97% more statewide annual property tax revenues than the proposed above-ground line. (EIS, 4-5, 4-6.)

The proposed above-ground transmission line will also be inconsistent with New Hampshire's scenic road statute, RSA 231:157-158, and its scenic and cultural byways statute, RSA 238:19-24. As the New Hampshire Supreme Court has observed, the purpose of the scenic road statute is to "encourage the tourist attractiveness of our scenic roads" and to protect and enhance the "scenic beauty" of our state. *Webster v. Town of Candia*, 146 N.H. 430, 435 - 36 (2001). Mount Prospect Road is one of five designated scenic roads in Lancaster, and there are many designated scenic roads within the Northern Pass view shed in other towns. It seems incongruous that, because Mount Prospect Road is a designated scenic road, I must obtain the town's permission to cut down certain trees in my yard but that an out-of-state utility may be allowed to erect enormous and ugly transmission towers a short distance from, and in plain view of, the designated scenic road on which I live. The proposed transmission line will also cross or come close to, in numerous spots, both of the scenic byways in the Great North Woods and all three of the scenic byways in the White Mountains that are included in the New Hampshire Scenic and Cultural Byways System. The statutory purpose of the byways system is to "provide the opportunities for residents and visitors to travel a system of byways which feature the scenic and cultural qualities of the state," to "promote retention of rural and urban scenic byways," and to "expose the unique elements of the state's beauty, culture and history." RSA 238:19, I. The Northern Pass project will adversely impact New Hampshire's scenic byways system and undermine the purposes of the statute.

Finally, for the same reasons that the proposed above-ground transmission line will have substantial and unreasonable adverse effects on our property, its aesthetics, its market value and its quality as a historic site, it will have similar unreasonable adverse impacts on hundreds of other properties within the Northern Pass view shed.



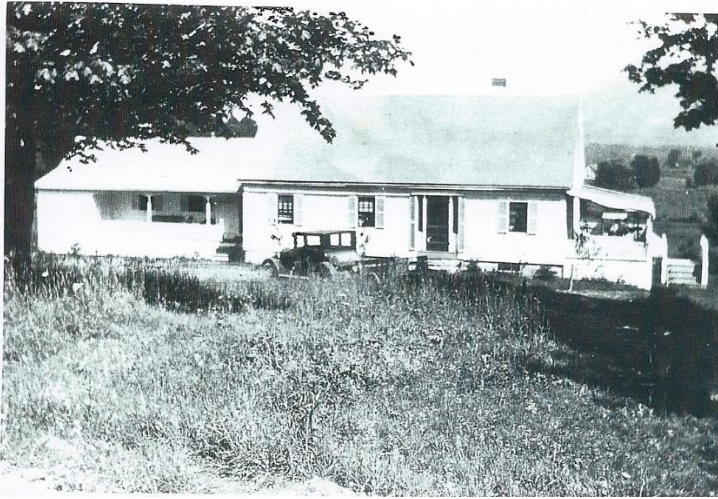
Northern Pass' own reasoning for burying the additional 52 miles supports burial of the remainder of the proposed transmission line. On its website, Northern Pass argues that its recent changes to its proposed route address "inter-related concerns expressed by New Hampshire citizens about tourism, historic landscapes, property values and aesthetics" and that the "additional 52 miles of underground, for a total of 60 miles eliminates potential view-related impacts in the White Mountain National Forest, the gateway areas to the north and south, the Appalachian Trail, and other critical view sheds." (See attached screen shot of website.) I submit that the Weeks State Park view shed is just as critical and just as deserving of protection (through burial of the transmission lines) from unreasonable and adverse view-related impacts as the view sheds along the additional 52 miles of underground transmission lines. I also submit that the same inter-related concerns about tourism, historic landscapes, property values and aesthetics that require burial along this 52-mile stretch apply with equal force to the many other critical view sheds, historic landscapes, and private properties along the other 130 miles of the proposed route.

For the foregoing reasons, I request that the Site Evaluation Committee find that the proposed above-ground transmission line will have unreasonable adverse effects on our property, its aesthetics and its value as a historic site, on hundreds of other properties within the Northern Pass view shed, and on the welfare of the population, the state's environment, the overall economic growth of New Hampshire, historic sites within the view shed, and aesthetics. See RSA 162-H:1; RSA 162-H:16, IV (c). I further request that the Committee not issue a certificate unless the entire transmission line is buried. The Department of Energy's EIS has determined that extensive burial of the proposed transmission line with a 1,000 MW transmission capacity "would be practical and technically feasible." (EIS, 2-1.) Burying the transmission line would also be economically viable and would mitigate the most serious adverse economic, view-related, environmental, and historic effects of the Northern Pass. The Committee should not allow a plethora of gigantic and ugly transmission towers to cut a 130-mile swath across New Hampshire.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Upham-Bornstein".

Linda Upham-Bornstein, Ph.D.



*Figure 1 Weeks/Bornstein house c.1920*



*Figure 2 185 Mount Prospect Rd, 2015*



*Figure 3 Front of house with view from side deck of the existing row.*



Figure 4 View from back of house. The ROW runs from left to right at tree line.





# Northern Pass Project Historic Resource Assessment

## *Individual Property Analysis*

*This analysis is part of a survey of historic (pre-1965) properties located in the Visual APE for the Northern Pass Project in New Hampshire, as shown on Project viewshed maps. It was prepared as part of a study for the Project's SEC application. See Methodology Statement for more information.*

Property ID: LANC46

Property Name/Address:

185 Mount Prospect Road, Lancaster, NH



### I. PROPERTY DESCRIPTION AND SETTING

This property on Mount Prospect Road east of Weeks State Park includes an early nineteenth century house, remodeled in the twentieth century with a scenic view from the back of the house across the low-lying area through which the transmission line passes two-thirds of a mile to the southeast of the historic building.

The house is a c.1810 Cape that was remodeled at an unknown date. The wing is now a two-car garage. The 1½-story house has an asymmetrical façade with center entry, shed dormer and rebuilt central chimney. It appears to reflect the Colonial Revival style of the early to mid-twentieth century. Mature evergreens partially screen the house from the road. It is set back on a semi-circular driveway. The property contains twenty acres on the lower slope of Mount Prospect, bounded on the northwest by Mount Prospect Road and on the northeast by Wesson Road. The land is mostly wooded, with a small front lawn and a man-made pond in the small back yard. The sloping hillside affords a view of the peaks of the Pilot-Pliny Range to the east and Mount Washington to the southeast.

A. Davis was the mid-nineteenth century owner of this house according to the 1861 county wall map. The late nineteenth century owner, John G. Johnson (1848-1911) and his wife and young family moved to Lancaster around 1880. He farmed and lived here with his daughters throughout his life according to the census and vital records on Ancestry.com. In the early twentieth century, the property was owned by the Weeks family along with other farms in the area, as indicated by the property owner's testimony at the Whitefield public hearing. The transmission line through Lancaster dates from the 1940s. It may once have been more visible from this property, when the intervening land along Wesson Road was in agricultural use. Aerial photos from [www.historicaerials.com](http://www.historicaerials.com) show that the land was clear of trees until the 1950s, with reforestation well underway two decades later. Stanley and Ann Goodwin were the owners of this house in the 1970s. The property changed hands several times before being purchased by the current owners in 2007. (See Coos County Registry of Deeds Book 1237, Page 192.)

Property ID: LANC46

Property Name/Address: 185 Mount Prospect Road, Lancaster, NH

## II. NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBILITY ANALYSIS

### a. Significance:

*Does the property have potential significance under National Register of Historic Places Areas of Significance that have a visual component such as Agriculture, Architecture, Community Planning and Development, Conservation, Landscape Architecture, Recreation?*

Y ☒ N ☐

This house could have significance under Criterion C if the interior retains any integrity for its early 1800s construction or significance for the twentieth century Colonial Revival renovations; however the recent remodeling has changed the exterior character considerably. The property is not significant under Criterion A in the Area of Agriculture, because it has no open land, evidence of land-use patterns or outbuildings. If it retains integrity for this era, there may be historic associations with twentieth century summer home contexts for the period of ownership by the Weeks family. As such it relates to the recreational themes discussed in the 2015 *Northern Pass – Great North Woods Project Area Form* by SEARCH. Eligibility is assumed for the purposes of this assessment.

### b. Integrity:

*Is the property able to convey its significance through its physical appearance? Does the property appear to retain the aspects of integrity necessary to convey its historic significance? Including:*

**Design:** Y ☒ N ☐ **Setting:** Y ☒ N ☐ **Materials:** Y ☒ N ☐ **Workmanship:** Y ☒ N ☐

**Feeling:** Y ☒ N ☐ **Location:** Y ☒ N ☐ **Association:** Y ☒ N ☐

The degree of integrity of design and the dates of materials and workmanship are not evident from the street. The house appears to reflect a Colonial Revival period remodeling at some point in the twentieth century. The property does not have integrity as a farm. Twentieth century associations are unidentified by research. The house retains its historic location and setting on an isolated dirt road. The land around the house and along Wesson Road has reforested over the past 50+ years.

**The property does not appear to have potential for National Register eligibility based on visually related areas of significance.** ☐

**GO NO FURTHER**

**The property appears to have potential for National Register eligibility based on visually related areas of significance.** ☒

### c. Boundary Discussion

*How much of the parcels of land associated with the historic structures appears to be part of the eligible property?*

The entire twenty-acre parcel, identified in Lancaster tax records as map R24-parcel 00070, could contribute to the property if it were eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Property ID: LANC46

Property Name/Address: 185 Mount Prospect Road, Lancaster, NH

### III. ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL VISUAL EFFECTS

*What is the visual relationship of the Project to the property? Will the Project noticeably alter or diminish aspects of the historic setting that might contribute to the significance of the property? Check as applicable:*

**The Project will be substantially visible in the main public views of the historic resource.** ☐

**The Project will create a focal point that distracts from the appreciation of the historic resource.** ☐

**The Project will be substantially visible in historically significant views from the historic resource.** ☐

**The Project will isolate the historic resource from its historic setting.** ☐

*If none are checked, then:*

**The Project does not appear to have an adverse effect on the property.** ☒

*If one or more of the above are checked, then:*

**The Project appears to have an adverse effect on the property.** ☐

*Additional comments relating to effects:*

Mount Prospect Road is a locally-designated Scenic Road, but the public view of this house from the street is obscured by trees and the property's scenic view to the east is only minimally visible from the road. Photo overlay modeling in Google Earth confirms that the Project will not be visible in the view of the historic buildings from the public right-of-way.

The Project will not alter the historic setting of the house.

The back of the house has a scenic view facing southeast across the valley through which the transmission line passes. Whether the view relates to historical significance of the house is unknown because the dates of architectural features on the rear (east) elevation have not been identified; although it is unlikely that there is a feature of historical significance relating to this view. There is a modern deck on the south elevation. The focal point of the view to the east is the mountains in the distance.

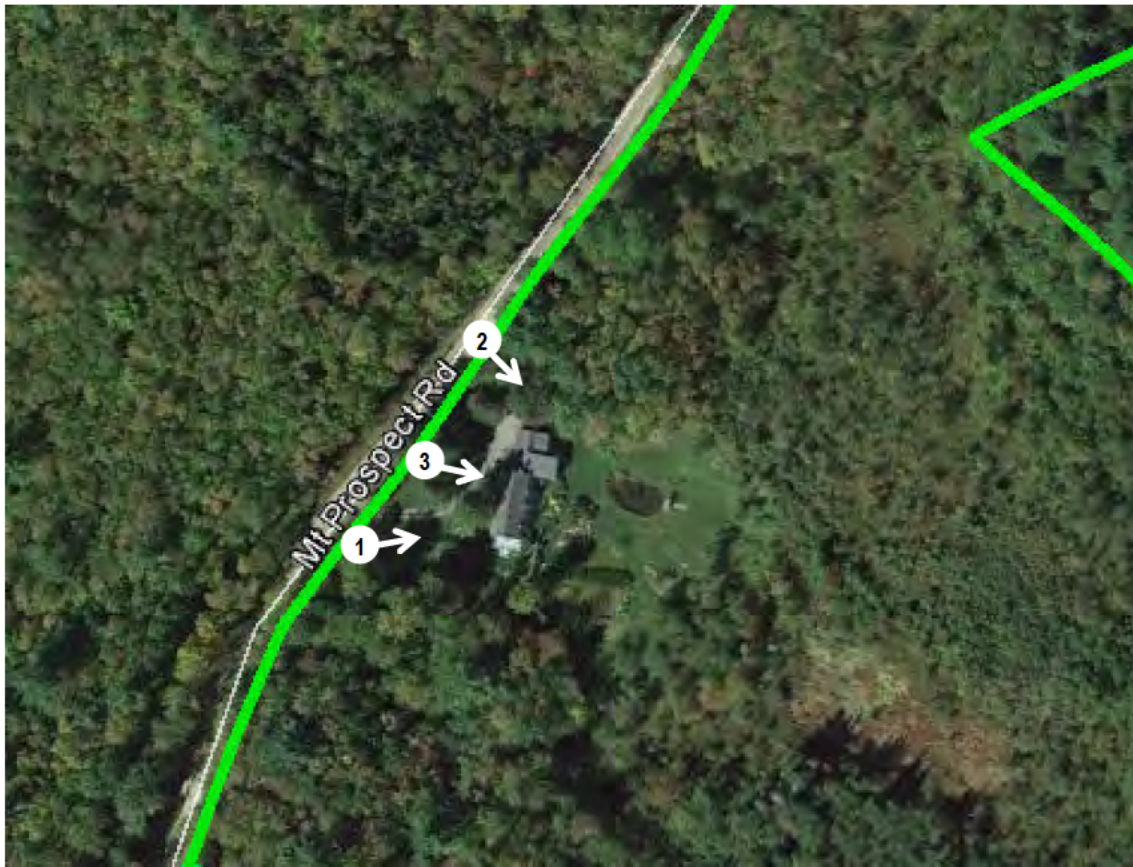
The Project is 0.66 mile from the house and over 0.4 mile from the southeastern corner of the parcel as measured in Google Earth. Proposed structures will not be substantially visible in the view from the house, because the Project is at a lower elevation and separated by over half a mile of wooded land. The transmission lines will be screened by the tree line. The use of weathering steel monopoles in this location will reduce visibility. If there were intermittent views of the new structures from the house, only the very tops could be visible and those would be silhouetted against the dark trees on the hill behind.



Property ID: LANC46

Property Name/Address: 185 Mount Prospect Road, Lancaster, NH

#### IV. SUPPORTING MATERIALS



Key to Photos 1-3 (on Google Earth detail of property)



Photo 1) View from road, facing east-northeast toward Project Area [2015 Field Photo: IMG\_8935]

Property ID: LANC46

Property Name/Address: 185 Mount Prospect Road, Lancaster, NH

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Photo 2) House and wing from road, facing southeast [2013 Field Photo: IMG\_1701]



Photo 3) 2014 Google Earth streetview facing east



## Historic Resource Assessment

Property ID: LANC46











Property Name/Address: 185 Mount Prospect Road, Lancaster, NH



Project is approximately 0.66 mile from the historic building, 0.44 mile from southeast corner of property

### Map Key

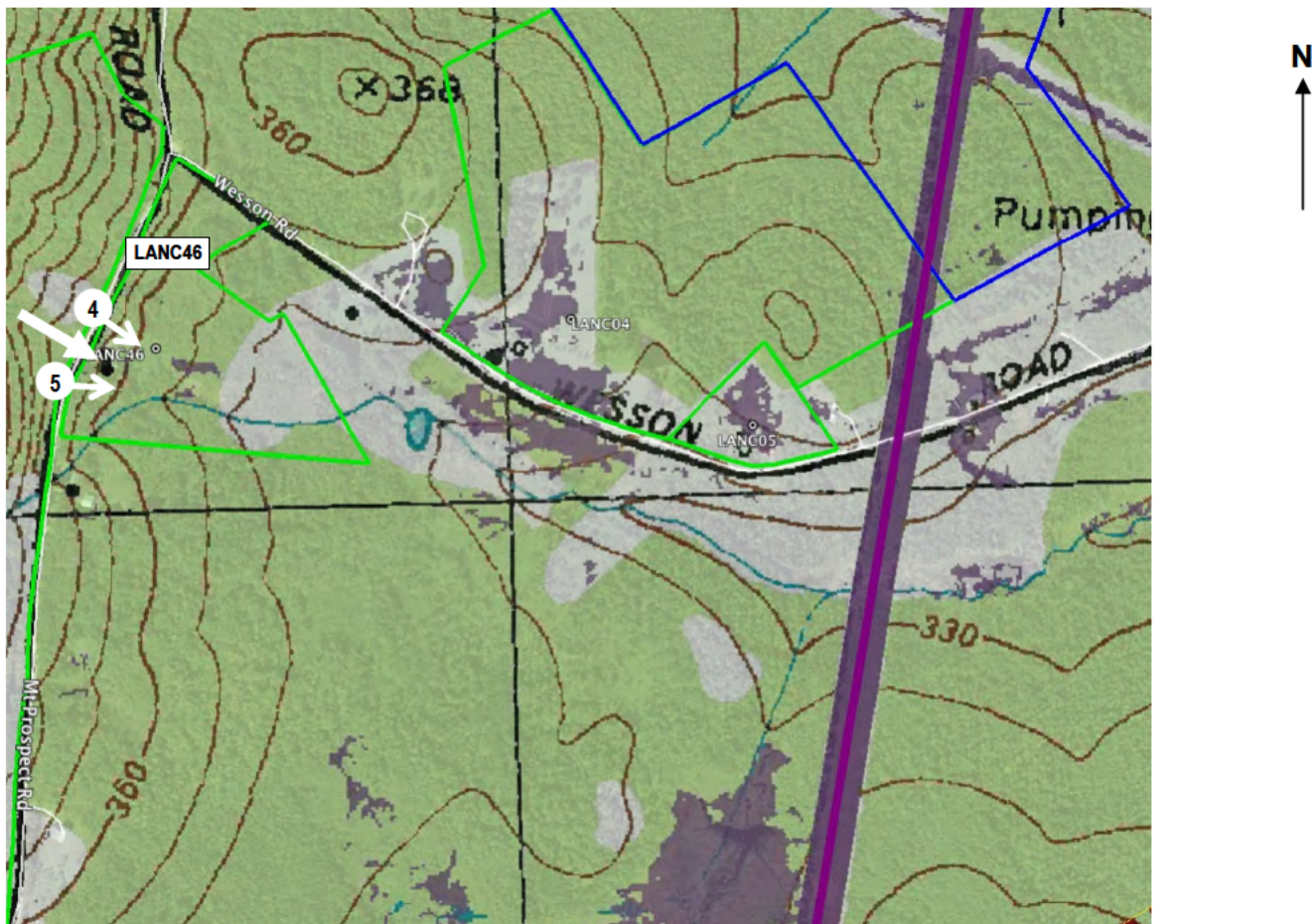
Parcel boundaries of pre-1968 properties:



	Properties with no views of the Project		Project
	Properties with views that are so isolated, limited, or minimal that no effect is possible (see database)		Limit of APE for Historic Resources
	Properties assessed with more than minimal views of the Project		Town Boundaries (thin yellow line)
	Properties assessed and considered to be potentially National Register-eligible and potentially adversely affected by the Project		Photo Numbers
	Properties listed on the National Register, the NH State Register, or National Historic Landmarks (see database for other previously identified historic properties)		
	Properties dated 1966-1968 that currently do not meet the National Register fifty-year age-eligibility criterion (see database)		



Property ID: LANC46

Property Name/Address: 185 Mount Prospect Road, Lancaster, NH



Viewshed map showing LANC46 (white arrow), Limit of APE for Historic Resources  and Project 

Property ID: LANC46

Property Name/Address: 185 Mount Prospect Road, Lancaster, NH

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Photo 4) Wing and backyard from road, southeast [2015 Field Photo: IMG\_8932]



Photo 5) View from side yard looking east in winter [2015 Field Photo: IMG\_8933]