

# EXPLORING LITTLETON



NANCY'S TOUR No. 2

When we were looking for an inn to buy, we knew we wanted to be away from the city, but near a town that had what Nancy termed, a "heartbeat". Littleton fit the bill. We love shopping and poking around here. The world agrees, as Littleton has received numerous awards for its "Main Street" and activities. This tour will take you the back way from Sunset Hill House to our favorite town, and introduce you to some mighty fine North Country shopping. walking shoes and your camera are wise.

Start by grabbing a to-go cup of coffee or tea from the living room, and hop in your car. Placing the inn on your right hand side, head to the corner of Sunset Hill Road and 117, then turn right (downhill) on 117 to the bottom of the hill. At the bottom, turn left onto Route 18 (called the "old Franconia Road" if you're coming from Littleton, or the "old Littleton Road" if you're coming from Franconia...). Visit **Ploughwinds Antique Store** if the "open" flag is out.

Less than a mile further on the left, you'll see **Streeter Pond**, a shallow warm water pond, known for bird life (not just the ducks and geese you'll see crossing the road). This can be a great spot for a picture. If you enjoy photography, turn left on Streeter Pond Road and follow this for a side trip to **Chuck Theodore's Gallery** (about 1/2 a mile down on the right – you'll see the sign), open by happenstance and worth a detour. This building housed the Ski Hearth Lodge for many years, with 7 bedrooms and only one bath! A bit further on you'll see the **Sel Hannah Farm** which is a great place to get fresh produce. And a bit further down again you'll see a bridge crossing the river – another great place for photos. The big field there was a training field used by WW2 civil air patrol pilots. Now, you can either continue and get "lost" in the back hills (to us, "lost" is just a state of mind) or turn around and return to Route 18, (left at the intersection).

Continuing on Route 18, you'll come to a fork in the road at the classic 1940's era cottages. Bear left. Keep your eyes open for huge boulders in the woods on both sides. These "**glacial erratics**" arrived less than 10,000 years ago from the tops of the mountains during the last ice age. At that time, this entire area was covered with up to 2 miles of ice. We think these are really cool...

Not too much further, on your left, you'll see a spring emptying into a big iron cauldron set into the ground. That is the **Gilman Hill Spring**, a local favorite. It is tested quarterly for purity by the state. The cauldron is an original from the Franconia Iron works of the early 19th century, made from ore that came from land next to the inn. The water was great then, and still is. We usually stop for a drink.

The **stone walls** along this country road (with rocks so

considerately left by the glaciers) are among the most beautiful we've ever seen, and frame a classic photo in all weather. No mortar holds these masterpieces together.

Further on, you'll see a sign to the White Mountain School – a prep school with an international reputation for quality.

Coming down the hill into Littleton, gas up at the Irving station on your left (not exciting, but prices are fair). On the right, a bit further on, is **Bishop's Ice Cream** (May through October). Stop for an award-winning homemade cone ("Bear Tracks" is Nancy's favorite: maple, almond and chocolate) and say hi to owners (reformed innkeepers) Jim and Barb.

Then continue to the light (on the right you'll see our Opera House/**Historical Museum** – open by happenstance) and turn left onto Main Street. Find a place to park anywhere (if not on the road, public parking is available behind the cinema). Then come along to meet some of our friends and favorite places.

Littleton is organized into "blocks", each is named after a historic building or activity. The Opera block houses the old Opera house. The Kilburn block was built by the famed stereograph manufacturers. The Thayer block is home of Thayer's hotel. ...You'll see the names on the buildings, with historical plaques explaining their significance.

Now, the **Town of Littleton** is chock full of great shops and galleries. We can't possibly do justice to all of them, but are glad to share some of our favorites.

**Flora Latte** in the Tilton Block, is owned a former Sunset employee. When Emily announced she was going to open a florist and coffee shop, Nancy told her she was nuts. Of course, FloraLatte quickly became not just the best florist in the region, but also the hottest coffee shop! Goes to show how much Nancy knows about business... Stop in, say hi to Em, sit on her cushy couch surrounded by amazing plants, and drink a latte. Neat artwork there, too! **Sunshine Bagels**, right next door, is great for a homemade treat, and the **Contreras Gallery** offers some fine watercolors.

Right across the street is **Jax Jr. Cinema** – a good old-time city movie house with two screens, and our favorite place for rainy evenings. And the **Coffee Pot**, our favorite breakfast place – Say "hi" to Jean.

The Chutter block, next, houses our children's favorite place: **Chutter's General Store and the world's longest candy counter** (no kidding, the "Guinness Book of World Records" attests to this!) Nancy loves the homemade fudge.

Here you can find all your childhood favorite sweets, plus great gifts. Drop your film at the **FotoFactory** for memories in an hour.

At the next crossroads, Mill Street, turn left. **Moocho Solomon's Gallery** is on the left – she is an internationally respected weaver. Then visit the historic working **Grist Mill** down by the river. **Miller's Café** restaurant makes homemade everything (and is our sole supplier for Thanksgiving pies). We like to sit on the deck and enjoy the view of the river. Amble across the state's newest **covered bridge** (don't forget to kiss in the middle), and stroll the river walk.

Returning up the hill you'll see the back entrance to the **Village Bookstore**. The bottom (back door) level houses the children's section, toy shop (our favorite place for gifts – and they will wrap for you!), and the **League of NH Craftsmen Shop** (fantastic). Upstairs (the Main Street level) you'll find the best bookstore we've ever met. No fluffy lattes and overpriced pastries here, just great books and people who have read them. If you've not read "Pollyanna," get a copy. It was written by Littleton resident Harriet Porter.

**Gold House Pizza**, right next door, is a local hangout for great food. **Art To Go** is a fun and funky shop with neat treasures. And further on you'll find the **Littleton Diner** – a classic NH experience. Don't forget to order gravy on those French fries.

Coming back on the other side of the road, drop into **Duck Soup** – our answer to Williams Sonoma. Great kitchen stuff. Upstairs in the same building, you'll find our health food store, the **Healthy Rhino**, and brewpub, the **Italian Oasis**. Wayne, the owner, makes a fine beer indeed.

The **Littleton Public Library**, next on your route, is a must-see. You'll be greeted by a life-sized statue of the "glad girl" herself – **Pollyanna**. Inside, you'll find a museum-quality collection of **White Mountain School artwork**. This genre emerged after the Civil War and features some of the most beautiful artwork ever created of this breathtaking landscape. Many grand hotels (including the original Sunset Hill House), would have an artist in residence, who would paint works on commission. As a part of the hotel's entertainment, they would also give lessons and lectures to the guests, and participate in the social activities of the hotel. It was considered an honor to dine with the hotel's artist. Some say there was a bit of discrete philandering that went on between artists and guests... You may see another example of the White Mountain School (a view looking North into Franconia Notch) in our middle parlor. Although not signed (we could only hope!) we believe it to have been painted by the hotel's resident artist at the turn of the century.

Return to your car and make a choice: You may turn back the way you came (bookstore on your right), and head through the light bearing left onto Union Street for a detour to **Lahout's Discount Store** and **Lahout's Ski Shop** (the oldest ski shop in the US). Both are fun. Then turn around again. Or, simply continue down Main Street (bookstore

on your left) and immediately after the diner turn left on Saranac St. Downhill, head right, and you'll come to **Admac Salvage** and the **Tannery Marketplace** (formerly the Saranac Glove manufacturer). This architectural salvage company has all sorts of neat things, plus several reasonably priced antique and other stores. Continuing down Saranac Street (Admac on your left), you'll come back to Main Street – turn left.

Midweeks (9am-4pm) opposite Brooks pharmacy, turn left at the light, crossing the bridge toward the industrial park, and bear right. You're heading to **Littleton Coin Company** – among the largest coin companies in the world, with a state of the art facility and historical display open to the public for tours. Plus, of course, great coins from entry level to exceedingly rare specimens. When you're done, backtrack to Main Street Littleton, turn left at the light, and continue on!

Weekends, continue along Main Street (route 302 – the "big box" stores are this way, if you must). The **Ammonoosuc River Trading Company** will be on your right, a few miles down. Owned by Jim Carver, it is our favorite place for quality antique furniture.

Further on the left is **Howie's Model Railroad Museum**. You'll find a superb collection of antique model trains, dolls and toys in this unlikely building (which is larger than it seems), and it is well worth Howie's nominal admission. Note that Howie is quite blind, and may not see you when you arrive. Sing out!

Continue on to the intersection of route 117 (about 7 miles from Wal-Mart), and turn left, crossing the Ammonoosuc River. On this corner you'll see a small replica of the old Man of the Mountain built in the 1920's (the real "Old Man" fell from Cannon Mountain in 2003). 100' further, turn left again to **Houston's Furniture Barn** and junk shop. You never know what you'll find. Then, July to October, continue on to the **Corn Maze** and see if you can find your way out.

Returning back to route 117, head uphill (left). You'll pass Rustic Log Cabins, which was an old waystation where they exchanged horse teams to continue to pull the "brakes" (wagons) laden with tourists to the grand hotels (like Sunset Hill House) in Sugar Hill. The stream on your right, Salmon Hole Brook, has great brooktrout fishing and traces of placer gold.

You'll come to the Village of Sugar Hill about 6 miles further on. Route 117 intersects Sunset Hill Road after you traverse the Village of Sugar Hill. You can head "home" now to Sunset Hill House for a drink from our tavern (which you can enjoy by our cozy fireplaces or on our deck) or simply drink in our amazing view. Or you can explore Sugar Hill. Don't forget, our restaurant is open to the public most nights at 5:30.



*Multiple award-winning inn and resort with restaurant, lodging, and banquet facilities with New Hampshire's very best views.*

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