

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 91001648

Date Listed: 11/18/91

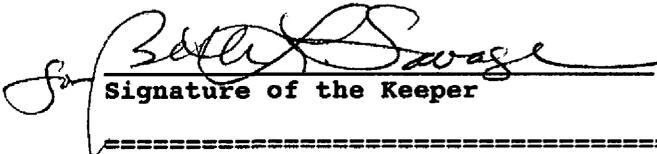
Gate of the Hills  
Property Name

Windsor  
County

VT  
State

N/A  
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

  
Signature of the Keeper

11-18-91  
Date of Action

=====

Amended Items in Nomination:

7. Description: Architectural Classification

Shingle style has been added as an applicable architectural style as illustrated by the hybrid nature of the property's physical character.

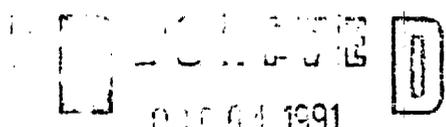
This information was discussed with Elsa Gilbertson, VTSHPO, by telephone.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without attachment)

1648

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name "THE GATE OF THE HILLS"  
other names/site number Waller, Mary E., House

### 2. Location

street & number Royalton Hill Road N/A not for publication  
city, town Bethel N/A vicinity  
state Vermont code VT county Windsor code 027 zip code 05032

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	2	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	2	_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

*[Signature]* \_\_\_\_\_ Date 9/20/91  
Signature of certifying official

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

*[Signature]* \_\_\_\_\_ Date 11-10-91  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic - single dwelling  
Domestic - secondary structure  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic - single dwelling  
Domestic - secondary structure  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Colonial Revival  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone  
walls shingle  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof asphalt  
other brick  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

(Entire text appears on continuation sheets.)

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Bethel, VermontSection number 7 Page 1

Situated on a partly forested hillside overlooking the south edge of Bethel village, the Mary E. Waller House, known as "The Gate of the Hills," consists of an eaves-front, two-and-one-half-story, three-by-three-bay main block and a one-and-one-half-story, three-by-two-bay east wing. Both blocks are wood-shingled below their asphalt-shingled gable roofs. A full-length recessed front porch, three gabled dormers on the front roof slope, and a second-story balcony on the west gable facade contribute picturesque character to the main block. The relatively plain interior was partly embellished with classical decorative features by Dr. George Abbott during his long-term ownership subsequent to that of Mary E. Waller. A contemporary, one-and-one-half-story, wood-shingled, gable-roofed shed/garage stands to the rear of the house. The Waller House retains a high degree of integrity in regard to location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The house occupies a small relatively flat area adjoining the north side of the east-west Royalton Hill Road immediately east of its intersection with the north-south North Road to Barnard. Behind (north of) the house, a steep bank descends abruptly about fifty feet to the level of River Street in Bethel village. A longer hillside ascends eastward from the house, and yet another slope ascends southward across the Royalton Hill Road. The bank and hillsides are generally covered with mixed deciduous and coniferous forest in the vicinity of the house.

Oriented parallel to the Royalton Hill Road, the house is set back from it behind a curved gravel driveway. A modest one-and-one-half-story shed/garage is situated behind the northeast corner of the house. The grounds surrounding the buildings are informally landscaped with a variety of shrubs and trees; a mowed lawn extends from the road to the crest of the bank behind the house. Shrubs and small trees are generally placed near the house. Larger trees dominated by several extraordinarily tall white pines enclose the perimeter of the grounds.

The main block rests on a foundation of mortared stone slabs. The walls are sheathed with wood shingles that are stained dark brown. On the gable facades, a broad fascia band of matched beadboard parallels the raking eaves and concludes at the lower corners of the north slope in closed brackets that support the flared eaves; the soffit is sheathed with the same material. A boxed cornice and molding follow the eaves of the steeply pitched gable roof; now covered with asphalt shingles, the roof was

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originally wood-shingled. The front (south) slope has been overlaid (probably during the 1960s) with a so-called cold roof, trimmed around the perimeter by an additional cornice molding atop the primary eaves cornice. The rear (north) horizontal eaves are flared in the Dutch Colonial Revival manner while the south roof slope changes to a slightly shallower pitch above the recessed front porch. Two rectangular brick chimneys with their longer dimension paralleling the ridge emerge from the north slope, each being about one-quarter of the distance along the ridge from its ends.

The three-bay main (south) eaves facade is arranged symmetrically around a central entrance. Only the first story is fully exposed although deeply recessed behind the full-width porch. The entrance consists of a broad Dutch door with a single light in its upper half and a two-panel lower half. Each side bay is occupied by triplet nine-over-one sash with the plain surrounds common to the house's door and window openings. The sheltering three-bay porch incorporates square solid posts, a wood-shingled apron with molded coping, central projecting wood steps with wood-shingled apron, and unskirted mortared rubble piers supporting the posts. The porch ceiling has been covered with plywood and battens over the original matched beadboards. The latter remain in place on the soffit of the molded eaves cornice.

Three wood-shingled, gabled dormers regularly spaced on the south roof slope constitute the second-story fenestration. The larger central dormer has a steeper pitched roof than the side dormers, and is lighted by quadruple six-over-one sash, contrasting with the triplet four-over-one sash of the side dormers. Each dormer has a narrow beadboard fascia below the double cornice molding of its cold roof.

A distinctive second-story balcony marks the asymmetrically arranged three-bay west gable facade. Centered on the first story beneath the balcony, a triangular bay window projects to a prow supported by a mortared stone pier. The wood-shingled bay window is lighted on each aspect by a nine-over-one sash, and crowned by a molded cornice at the underside of the balcony. Coupled nine-over-one sash occupy the side bays. Supported by heavy chamfered outriggers flanking the bay window, the two-bay, shed-roofed balcony incorporates square posts and a wood-shingled apron capped by a molded coping. Opening onto the balcony, twin doors are lighted in the manner of the nine-over-one window sash common to the house. Outside of the balcony, coupled nine-over-

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one sash occupy the right bay. Another coupled pair of sash is centered on the third (attic) story below a small rectangular louvered vent in the gable peak.

The nearly symmetrical, three-bay rear (north) eaves facade is interrupted by a central first-story, one-by-one-bay, shed-roofed projection. Lacking an exterior entrance, the wood-shingled projection is lighted on each face by an historic casement window (double-leaf on the north face); its roof has been sheathed with standing-seam sheet metal in 1990. Flanking the projection, the first-story side bays are occupied by triplet nine-over-one sash. The second story displays a slight irregularity of fenestration: the right bay has a three-part window consisting of a nine-over-one sash flanked by two six-over-ones; the central bay has triplet six-over-ones; and the left bay has twin coupled six-over-ones. Emerging from the north roof slope, a central shed dormer with wood-shingled cheeks illuminates the attic story by means of triplet six-light casement sash.

The asymmetrical east gable facade is exposed around the exterior of the east wing. On the first story, coupled nine-over-one sash occupy the bay between the recessed front porch and the south side of the wing; north of the wing, a single nine-over-one sash occupies the left bay while a horizontal single-light fixed sash is set in a high position near the north corner. The second story is lighted by a single nine-over-one sash near each corner and multi-light horizontal casement sash next to the north slope of the wing's roof. Like the west facade, the third (attic) story has central coupled nine-over-one sash below a louvered vent at the gable peak.

Recessed from both the south and north facades of the main block, the east wing rests on brick piers skirted with brick-textured rolled asphalt. The exterior sheathing and trim of the wing correspond to those of the main block. An interior brick stove chimney with an arched metal hood rises from the east end of the roof ridge.

The wing's south eaves facade presents a symmetrical three-bay arrangement. The central entrance has a single-light, multi-panel door that was installed probably during the 1950s. Sheltering the entrance, a broad one-bay, shed-roofed porch rests on mortared rubble piers interspersed with lattice skirting; boxed posts (linked by an added metal-pipe rail) support the projecting eaves with beadboarded soffit (matching the porch

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ceiling) and a cornice molding. Outside the porch, the side bays are fitted with nine-over-one sash.

The wing's east gable facade is lighted only by a nine-over-one sash on the right side while a vertical-boarded, hinged loft door enters the left-center of the gable. The rear (north) facade has an irregular arrangement with an off-central entry approached by an open stoop with a dimension rail and lattice skirt. A nine-over-one sash abuts the right side of the single-light, multi-panel door. A horizontal four-light fixed sash was added in the right bay during the 1950s.

The interior of the house is arranged on a somewhat irregular plan oriented around a central stair hall. On the first floor, a living room (labeled "Billiard Room" on the original plans) occupies the southwest (front) quadrant opposite the kitchen in the southeast quadrant. A more formally decorated living room (the original "Living Room") in the northwest (rear) quadrant opens from the rear of the stair hall and adjoins directly the dining room in the northeast quadrant. A back hall and "Butler's Pantry" separate the dining room from the kitchen. The rear "Porch Room" is entered from the main living room by a Dutch door identical to that at the front entrance.

The second floor repeats approximately the layout of the main floor. A bedroom exists in each quadrant around the central stair hall, separated from one another by several closets and a bathroom in the central position on the east side of the hall. Along the south side of this floor, three alcoves occupy the spaces created by the roof dormers, also flanked by closets. The two west bedrooms have doorways opening onto the balcony.

The stair hall represents the general character of the interior finish of the house. The walls and ceiling are plastered and painted. The door surrounds are plain other than the molded cornice caps that probably were added by Dr. George Abbott, who may also have added the molded ceiling cornice. The floor is laid with matched hard-pine boards of relatively narrow width.

On the right (east) side of the hall, the two-leg, open-string main stair ascends to the second floor via an intermediate and an upper landing. It incorporates a molded rail, square balusters, and square newel posts with stepped caps. From the back hall, a narrow three-leg, open-well stair with winders provides secondary access to the upper floor.

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The northwest living room exhibits the most enriched decorative treatment in the house, dating from a renovation made probably around 1950 by Dr. Abbott. He gave the red-brick firebox of the fireplace a molded pine surround plus a mantel cornice, and applied two-tier paneling to the chimney breast. He installed the built-in bookshelves and lower cupboards with paneled doors that cover the south wall on each side of the fireplace. He also added the cornice caps above the doorways (but not the windows) and the heavy molded ceiling cornice.

Entered by a broad trabeated opening from the living room, the northeast dining room displays simpler treatment with some similar decorative features added by Abbott. These include the pediments that crown the triangular dish cupboard in the northeast corner of the room and the canted doorway in the southeast corner, and the ceiling cornice as well as possibly the chair rail molding.

Shed/Garage; c. 1900

Echoing somewhat the appearance of the house, the one-and-one-half-story shed/garage rests on a poured concrete foundation. Its walls are sheathed with wood shingles and, unlike the house, are delimited by corner boards. A plain fascia board follows the boxed eaves of the asphalt-shingled gable roof. An interior brick stove chimney with an arched metal hood rises from the upper rear corner of the east roof slope.

The main (south) gable facade has been altered on the first story by the installation (probably c. 1950) of a central paneled overhead door in a reduced opening. Abutting the left side of the overhead door, a horizontal flush-boarded, hinged pass door provides a pedestrian entry. The original vehicle entrance apparently extended the full width of the facade with a somewhat greater height; the hinge marks of an original door appear on the left corner of the facade. An apparently original vertical-boarded, hinged loft door is centered in the gable.

Both the east and west eaves facades lack fenestration. The rear (north) gable facade contrasts by its symmetrical arrangement of two window bays. Each is lighted by a nine-over-one sash with a plain surround below a shallow hood supported by curved brackets; each hood was added during the 1980s.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Literature

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

Waller, Mary E.

Period of Significance

c. 1896-1918

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

c. 1896

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder

Unknown

\_\_\_\_\_

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

(Entire text appears on continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

(Entire text appears on continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- Univeralty
- Other

Specify repository:

Bethel Public Library, Bethel, Vt.

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property 1.5

UTM References

A 18 69 0 54 0 4 8 54 4 90  
 Zone Easting Northing

C         

B           
 Zone Easting Northing

D         

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Hugh H. Henry, Historic Preservation Consultant  
 organization N/A date January, 1991  
 street & number Green Mountain Turnpike telephone 802-875-3379  
 city or town Chester state Vermont zip code 05143-

9418

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The Mary E. Waller House, known as "The Gate of the Hills," possesses primary significance for being associated with the life of Mary E. Waller (1855-1938), a prolific novelist and essayist in American literature during the first quarter of the twentieth century. The house was constructed for Waller (and her mother) probably in 1896, and here she wrote during the next decade or so her extraordinarily popular The Wood-carver of 'Lympus among several other books. The Waller House holds additional significance for embodying the distinctive characteristics of domestic architecture showing the influence of the Dutch Colonial Revival style, although in fact its stylistic character may derive directly from the Netherlands where the author lived for at least one year.

By the late nineteenth century, the availability of convenient railroad travel between the Atlantic coastal cities and Vermont enabled an increasing number of writers and artists to establish seasonal or year-round residences in the pastorally beautiful state. Some lacked any familial link to Vermont while others had been born here or were related by marriage to Vermonters. Probably the most famous member of the latter group was Rudyard Kipling, who settled in Dummerston and built a distinctive house named "Naulakha" in 1893; he wrote some of his most widely known books during his four years of residency there. Mary E. Waller also belonged to the latter group; she lived a much longer full- or part-time residency in Bethel, and wrote several of her most popular books after the c. 1896 construction of her house, "The Gate of the Hills."

Within the Vermont architectural environment, Mary E. Waller's house belongs to a relatively small pool of houses exhibiting the influence of the Dutch Colonial Revival style that emerged during the early twentieth century. The gable-roofed Waller House, however, was built earlier (c. 1896) than almost all of the gambrel-roofed Dutch variants of the much more common Colonial Revival style in Vermont. During one of her several trips and sojourns in Europe, Mary Waller lived a year in the Netherlands but the specific period of this stay is not known. The stylistic influence for her house may have come directly from her interest and experience in the Netherlands rather than from contemporary American architectural fashion.

The period of significance for "The Gate of the Hills" begins c. 1896 when the house was constructed. Mary E. Waller's mother, Mary D. Waller, actually held title to the house until 1914, when

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it was transferred to the author then living on Nantucket Island, Massachusetts. The period of significance ends in 1918 when Mary E. Waller sold the house.

Mary Ellen Waller was born in Boston on March 1, 1855, the daughter of David F. and Mary Doane (Hallett) Waller. Her father came from Royalton, the township adjoining Bethel on the southeast, where the Waller family had settled in the late eighteenth century. Her mother's family lived in Hyannis, Massachusetts on Cape Cod. Mary's father became a conductor on the Boston and Worcester Railroad, and the family lived in Boston where Mary attended public schools. During her childhood, Mary became a regular summer visitor to Cape Cod, staying at the cottage in Hyannis owned by her maternal grandmother.

Double tragedy struck the family in July, 1867 with the deaths a week apart of both Mary's father (aged 43) and her only sibling, a brother by the name of Daniel B. Mother and the twelve-year-old daughter then moved to Vermont and lived for a time on the Waller family homestead, located on the Royalton Hill Road a short distance east of the Bethel boundary. Mary, nicknamed Nellie to distinguish her from her mother, developed an increasingly devoted relationship with her mother. Then, in Mary's own words, "when I grew old enough to appreciate the Old World my mother took me there. More than four years we wandered over Europe, having a perfectly beautiful time together." They spent time in Paris, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy.

This trip apparently inspired what was probably the first book written by Mary Waller, The Rose-Bush of Hildesheim, published in 1889 by the Boston firm of Estes and Lauriat. The author's name was intentionally abbreviated to M. E. Waller to give the impression that the writer was male and thereby overcome the contemporary stigma on women writers. This version of her name was also applied by other publishers to several of her subsequent and more popular books.

After the first extended European trip, Mary chose to enter the profession of teaching. She started at a private finishing school (Mrs. Shaw's School) in Boston, and next accepted a position at the exclusive Brearley School in New York. Her success there induced her to found Miss Waller's School for Girls in Chicago. She returned to Bethel during this period to spend summers in a house on River Street that had been previously owned by the Waller family. After only five years in Chicago,

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increasing disaffection with teaching and deteriorating health caused her to sell the school. Thereupon she and her mother moved back to Vermont, and acquired the former Waller homestead on the Royalton Hill Road. After a year or two, however, the late eighteenth-century house proved unsatisfactory.

Another extended trip by Mary Waller and her mother to Europe occurred apparently during the 1890s. This trip included a year-long sojourn in the Netherlands that would lead to a book entitled Through the Gates of the Netherlands, published in 1906. Mary created a fictional husband (an architect) for herself in that book even though she actually remained unmarried throughout her life. The Netherlands sojourn also may have inspired the design of a new house that the author and her mother would have built near the south edge of Bethel village.

In September, 1892, Mary D. Waller purchased from A. J. Graham a one-acre lot at the Bethel end of the Royalton Hill Road. The lot directly overlooked the River Street neighborhood and the remainder of Bethel village to the north. The Wallers' new house was constructed apparently in 1896-97. The 1896 Grand List of taxable property in Bethel records that Mary D. Waller then owned a building lot of unspecified acreage worth \$300. The following year (1897), the Grand List entry for Mary D. Waller shows a half acre of land and building(s) worth \$2500.

The identities of the builder and possible architect are not known. What appear to be the original floor plans of the house survive in the possession of the current owners. Devoid of any identification and rather simply drawn, these plans show slight differences from the house as built, suggesting that some changes were made during the actual construction.

Suggesting the direct influence of the Netherlands on its owner(s), the house possesses the flared eaves (although only on the rear facade) typical of the Dutch Colonial Revival style. The next most obvious references are the Dutch doors at the main and "porch room" entrances. The publicly visible front of the house suggests a rather modest cottage in the treatment of the recessed porch beneath a downward extension of the roof slope with dormer windows. The rear facade contrasts by its full two-and-one-half-story height, revealing the house's actual size.

Mary E. Waller apparently intended to have the house built of local stone. The foundation walls of the extraordinarily deep

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basement are heavily constructed of stone and apparently were designed to support stone walls on the upper stories. The cost of that work, however, proved so great that Mary abandoned the idea of a stone house and instead shifted to wood framing and wood-shingle sheathing.

Mary and her mother resided at "The Gate of the Hills" most of the time during the first decade of the twentieth century. According to a contemporary Bethel acquaintance, Flora Webster Chase, she "dearly loves Vermont," and that feeling clearly inspired her in the writing of the novels that would bring her national literary fame. At least eight of her books were written during her Bethel residency, and several have thinly disguised Vermont settings. The Little Citizen was the first novel, issued in 1902 by Lothrop Publishing Co. of Boston. The next year brought A Daughter of the Rich, her first book published by the prestigious Boston firm of Little, Brown, and Co. Both of these books were intended for young readers, and were successful sellers.

Her next published work was a novel entitled The Wood-carver of 'Lympus. The name refers to a locality in the west-central part of Bethel township although the characters are fictitious. According to her Foreword to the 1929 edition, she wrote the book between October, 1902 and February, 1903 while residing at "The Gate of the Hills" (this may have been her only published reference to the house by its name). "I began to write directly upon my recovery from a long and dangerous illness. The writing of the book at this time was made possible for me by the constant devotion and sustaining love of a beloved mother." The house itself also played a role; Mary Waller derived great satisfaction from it, declaring in the foreword that "within 'The Gate of the Hills' there was the warmth and coziness of home, firelight, lamplight, the joy of recent recovery, and the pleasure of creative work." Although Wood-carver proved ultimately her greatest popular success, she found publishers at first unwilling to accept it; Little, Brown, and Co. finally agreed and it appeared in 1904.

Sanna of the Island Town came next in 1905, and the book about the Netherlands the following year. A lengthy narrative poem entitled Our Benny was published in 1909, written to commemorate the centenary of Abraham Lincoln's birth. The setting of Flamsted Quarries, issued in 1910, was undoubtedly inspired by the Bethel white granite quarries, then at the height of their production. (Among other major national buildings, Union Station

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in Washington, D. C. was constructed of this stone.)

Averse to revealing anything about her personal life, Mary Waller wrote almost nothing about "The Gate of the Hills" in her books. One of the rare references to her Bethel residence appears in a chapter entitled "A Private View" in From an Island Outpost, published in 1914. "My home in the Green Mountains stands at the meeting place of three roads or, better perhaps, the triple forking of the highway from the village." The following paragraphs, however, describe the roads and omit any mention of the house itself. The landscape of the hillsides around the house was then mostly cleared for pasture: "Another [Royalton Hill Road] looks eastwards up a steep slope between high grass-hills - upland pastures for sheep and cattle; the vista is closed by the skyline resting on the road at the top!"

Meanwhile, Mary Waller's elderly mother had suffered a severe illness and become increasingly dissatisfied with life at "The Gate of the Hills." After spending some winters on Nantucket Island, Massachusetts, the women moved to the "island outpost" in 1910. There Mary Waller purchased a house with "a large ship's-cabin living room." Several more books appeared during the next few years, including My Ragpicker and A Year Out of Life in 1911, A Cry in the Wilderness in 1912, and Aunt Dorcas' Change of Heart in 1913. Mary became especially involved in the establishment of Nantucket's first permanent hospital, and donated the royalties of a book to its maintenance.

Ownership of the Bethel house was finally transferred from Mary D. to Mary E. Waller in May, 1914, not long before the mother's death. Mary E. Waller's next book, Out of the Silences, was published in 1918. That same year she relinquished possession of "The Gate of the Hills," breaking her half-century link to Bethel. A stockbroker by the name of Samuel Abbott purchased the property.

After the death of her mother, Mary Waller moved back to the Boston area. Her penchant for avoiding publicity was finally overcome in 1924, after the publication of her next-to-last novel, Deep in the Hearts of Men. A writer for the Boston Evening Transcript, Dorothy Gilman, succeeded in gaining an interview, owing at least partly to her gender (Mary Waller abhorred newspaper men). The resulting lengthy article about the author appeared in the newspaper's book section of May 31, 1924.

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A quarter-century after its original publication, The Wood-carver of 'Lympus was reissued by Little, Brown, and Co. in a special edition of 1929, newly illustrated with woodcuts by Walter Buehr. The book passed the 300,000 mark in that printing; it had been published also in at least six other countries. In the Foreword to that edition, Mary Waller broke "a reserve of silence after twenty-five years" and revealed in "a few words" a little about the origin of the book [noted above] at her Bethel house. The Foreword was written in Washington, D. C. where she was then spending winters with relatives.

The last of the more than twenty books written by Mary Waller, The Windmill on the Dune, was published the following year (1930), when she was seventy-five years old. Two years later, she returned to Europe for the final time. Her health failed during the middle 1930s, and she was confined to bed during the last three years of her life. She died at her home in Wellesley, Massachusetts on June 14, 1938 in her eighty-fourth year.

The lack of public knowledge about Mary Waller was reflected in her newspaper obituaries. Both the Randolph (Vt.) Herald and News and The New York Times gave an incorrect middle name (Ella) in their relatively brief notices, an error that was repeated four years later in the encyclopedic Twentieth Century Authors. Nevertheless, the entry for Mary Waller in that book concludes with a cogent assessment of her position in American literature: she "belong[ed] obviously, to that comfortable New England literary tradition which found joy and beauty not in things far off, glittering, and precarious, but in things near, simple, and sure."

Meanwhile, Mary Waller's distinctive house in Bethel had entered the possession of its longest-term owner. In 1920, Samuel Abbott sold the house to his brother, Dr. George A. Abbott, a dentist, soon after the latter's graduation from Tufts University. George Abbott proceeded to make various minor alterations especially on the interior; the east wing was adapted for his dental office. A skilled craftsman in wood, he removed some of the original woodwork in the main living room and created counterparts in a Georgian Revival manner.

George Abbott and his wife, Mildred, retained ownership of "The Gate of the Hills" for nearly a half century before its sale in 1966. Two short-term owners followed during the next several years. Then in 1979, the current owners, John and Judy Anhorn,

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acquired the property. The most notable subsequent change in the house has been the interior adaptation of the east wing to John Anhorn's architectural office, involving the removal of some fabric installed for Abbott's dental office.

"The Gate of the Hills," therefore, continues to evoke strongly its association with Mary E. Waller during the most creative period of her literary career. The house remains virtually unaltered from its original design, reflecting her special interest in Dutch cultural expression. Furthermore, its setting on the hillside has become more sheltered by the growth of the surrounding trees, and now imparts a greater sense of the reclusiveness pursued by Mary Waller than when she lived here.

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BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property being nominated consists of the Mary E. Waller House known as "The Gate of the Hills," a related garage, and a 1.5-acre lot bounded on the south by the Royalton Hill Road and the west by the North Road to Barnard. The south boundary of the property extends in a northeasterly direction from the southwest corner of the lot at the intersection of the east edge of the North Road right-of-way and the north edge of the Royalton Hill Road right-of-way 334 feet along the north edge of the latter right-of-way to the southeast corner of the lot. The east boundary extends in a northerly direction from the southeast corner 108.5 feet on a bearing of North 14 degrees 9 minutes East and thence 106.9 feet on a bearing of North 37 degrees 41 minutes West to the northeast corner of the lot. The north boundary extends in a southwesterly direction from the northeast corner 143.5 feet on a bearing of South 75 degrees 19 minutes West, thence 70.4 feet on a bearing of South 70 degrees 47 minutes West, and thence 74.1 feet on a bearing of South 57 degrees 22 minutes West to the northwest corner of the lot. The west boundary extends in a southerly direction from the northwest corner 243 feet along the east edge of the North Road right-of-way to the southwest corner of the lot. The current deed to the property is recorded in Book 50, Page 399 of the Bethel Land Records.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary of the property being nominated encompasses the lot that was purchased in 1892 by Mary D. Waller, mother of Mary E. Waller, for the purpose of building the house known as "The Gate of the Hills." That lot has subsequently remained in common ownership together with the house. The property being nominated is the lot that has been historically associated with the house.

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The following information repeats for all photographs except where noted:

"The Gate of the Hills"  
Bethel, Vermont  
Credit: Hugh H. Henry  
Negative filed at Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

Photograph 1  
Date: June 1990  
Grounds surrounding house; view looking northeast.

Photograph 2  
Date: June 1990  
Main (south) facade; view looking northwest.

Photograph 3  
Date: June 1990  
East and north (rear) facades; view looking southwest.

Photograph 4  
Date: September 1990  
West facade; view looking northeast.

Photograph 5  
Date: September 1990  
Shed/garage - west and south facades; view looking northeast.

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PROPERTY OWNERS

John C. and Judy S. Anhorn  
Route 2, Box 72  
Bethel, Vermont 05032