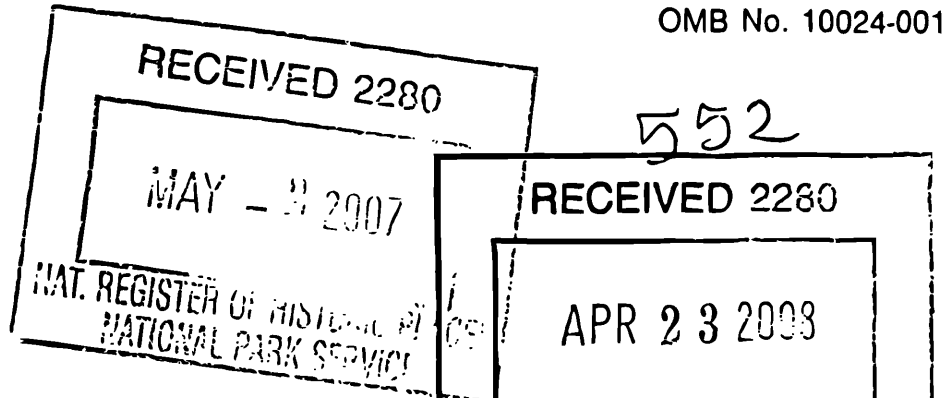


NOV 30 2006

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in how to complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking **NATIONAL PARK SERVICE** appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Benjamin Rowe House

other names/site number Alvah Wilson House

## 2. Location

street & number 88 Belknap Mountain Road N/A  not for publication

city or town Gilford N/A  vicinity

state New Hampshire code NH county Belknap code 001 zip code 03249

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

James M. Conroy 4/30/07  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

NEW HAMPSHIRE  
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

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

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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 of the Keeper

Date of Action

[Signature] 4/30/08

Benjamin Rowe House  
Name of Property

Belknap County, N.H.  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION & CULTURE; Museum

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

No Style

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation granite

walls brick

roof shingle

other brick

wood

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

see continuation sheets

Benjamin Rowe House  
Name of Property

Belknap County, N.H.  
County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

c. 1835

**Significant Dates**

c. 1835

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Rowe, Benjamin

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Thompson-Ames Historical Society

Benjamin Rowe House  
Name of Property

Belknap County, N.H.  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property less than one acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1   9	3   0   5   8   8   0	4   8   2   3   7   7   0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title David Ruell and Elizabeth Durfee Hengen

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date November 29, 2006

street & number Hengen- 25 Ridge Road  
Ruell-7 Hill Ave. telephone Hengen- 603-225-7977  
Ruell 603-968-7716

city or town Hengen- Concord  
Ruell- Ashland state N.H. zip code Hengen-03301  
Ruell- 03217

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Town of Gilford (building) Gilford School District (land)

street & number 47 Cherry Valley Road (both) telephone school- 603-527-9215  
town-603-527-4700

city or town Gilford state N.H. zip code 03249

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Benjamin Rowe House, Gilford  
Belknap County, New Hampshire

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### 7. DESCRIPTION

#### Location

The Benjamin Rowe House is located on the east side of Belknap Mountain Road, at the south end of Gilford village. The house is on the west edge of a 179 acre lot, owned by the Gilford School District. Much of that acreage is historically associated with the house, but it now includes twentieth century school buildings sited north and northeast of the house, playing fields east of the house, and woodland still further east. The nominated property includes approximately one-half acre of land set off from the remaining acreage by a school access road that encircles the house. Belknap Mountain road forms the remaining (western) boundary of the nominated property. (When the Town of Gilford conveyed the property to the School District in 1991, it retained the ownership of the house and the use of the land set off by the school drive.)

#### Overview of building evolution

The Benjamin Rowe House is a brick cape with a wood frame rear ell. Since its construction, probably in the 1830's, the house has undergone three major evolutionary phases. In the late nineteenth century c 1855-1870, the 1 ½ story wooden rear ell was added. In the early to mid twentieth century, large shed roofed dormers, a front entry porch and a concrete milk shed were appended to the cape and the ell was rebuilt into a two story addition. A late nineteenth century porch on the west elevation was replaced with a hipped roof enclosed porch, and some window sash were replaced. In the 1990's, the twentieth century additions were removed, the late nineteenth century side porch was reconstructed, the ell rebuilt, and the remaining agricultural buildings were removed. Despite these changes, the brick cape retained virtually all of its key architectural features, including original woodwork and brickwork and today conveys a high degree of architectural and technological integrity.

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Benjamin Rowe House, Gilford  
Belknap County, New Hampshire

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### DESCRIPTION (cont.)

#### Description of current appearance

The Rowe House is sited at right angles to the road to face south. The cape rests on a granite block foundation. The exterior brick walls are laid in common bond, with seven stretcher courses between header courses. The gable roof is covered with wood shingles and has close cropped wooden eaves. Four brick interior chimneys, two on each roof face, reflect the interior central hall plan and the presence of a fireplace in each of the four main first-floor rooms. The windows have a mix of 9/6, 6/6 and 2/2 sash, further described below. Window and door openings have smooth granite lintels and wooden frames. The frames of the windows and the front entrance are molded, while the two other doors have plain frames. The doors all have granite sills and steps. The windows have wooden sills. The main entrance, in the center of the five bay south façade, has a six-panel Greek Revival door, which is flanked by three-quarter-length sidelights, above molded wooden panels. The four façade windows have 9/6 replacement sash to match the original.<sup>1</sup> The shadow line of a circa 1930's gabled entry porch, removed in the 1990's, remains visible on the brickwork. The first story of the east gable elevation has two windows with 9/6 sash<sup>2</sup> and an entrance with a paneled Greek Revival door, modified by the insertion of built-in windows, to the north of center. The two windows in the east gable differ in their sash, the southerly window having 6/6 sash, the northerly window 2/2 sash. The northeast corner of the east wall reveals the shadow outline of the one story concrete milk shed that was appended to the house until the 1990's. The west elevation has four windows with 9/6 sash in the first story and three windows with 6/6 sash in the gable.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Historic photographs indicate that as late as 1915, the façade windows retained the early 9/6 sash.

<sup>2</sup> The southerly window contains replacement sash.

<sup>3</sup> All but one of the gable sash were replaced with 2/2 sash sometime c. 1900. The sole surviving 6/6 sash remained in the northernmost window of

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### DESCRIPTION (cont.)

Extending the width of the west elevation is a one-story open porch set on a granite base. Its hip roof, trimmed with molded eaves, is supported by open double posts with sawn scroll brackets. (The porch was built in 1999 and is a replica of the porch added to the house in the late nineteenth century.) The north (rear) elevation has three windows with 9/6 sash and a third doorway with an original four-panel door.

Projecting from the northwest corner of the cape, and offset to the west, is a 1 ½ story wood frame ell. The ell was remodeled in the mid 1990's to return it to its nineteenth century appearance. The ell rests on a granite foundation. Its clapboarded walls are trimmed by plain corner boards and close wooden eaves. The doors and windows have plain wooden frames. The gable roof is clad with wooden shingles. A brick stove chimney rises from the roof ridge and a gabled dormer with a double window with 4/4 sash is found on the west slope. One of the two first story entrances, a four panel door in the offset south wall, opens onto the porch on the west end of the cape. The other entrance, a paneled door with a built-in twelve pane window and concrete steps, is located in the east wall, flanked by a 9/6 sash window. Three windows with 9/6 sash puncture the west elevation. The rear north gable end has two windows with 9/6 sash in the first story and a double window with 4/4 sash in the gable. The north gable end also features a basement bulkhead entrance, with low concrete sidewalls and double wooden doors.

The interior of the house retains a high degree of original

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the west gable. Save for one eastern window, the 2/2 sash has been replaced with 6/6 sash to match the one surviving historic sash.

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### DESCRIPTION (cont.)

finish which reflects the Greek Revival style: four and five panel room and closet doors, nearly all of which have Norfolk latches with pewter handles; door and window trim consisting of flat boards with applied beveled edges; mantelpieces in the southeast, southwest and northwest first story rooms; and the front staircase with a molded handrail, round balusters and a turned newel.

### Detailed building evolution

Phase I The original house was a 1 ½ story brick cape that appeared substantially as the building presently appears. The cape had 9/6 window sash in the first story and 6/6 sash in the gables. Sometime after the house was constructed and probably circa 1855-70, a 1 ½ story wood, balloon-frame ell was built, appended on the northwest corner and probably reusing the foundation of the 1 ½ story wood frame house built by Jesse Thing circa 1810.

Phase I(A) In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the Rowes added a one story porch on the west elevation of the main house and a dormer to the ell, both shown in historic photographs.

Phase II In the 1920's and 1930's, the Rowe House acquired numerous additions. During this period, the property was an active dairy and poultry farm operated by Ernest Sawyer. To the brick cape, the Sawyers added full-width shed-roof dormers on each roof slope, an enclosed gabled entry porch, and an enclosed hipped-roof porch along the west side to replace the late nineteenth century open porch. They rebuilt the rear 1 ½ story ell to a full two stories. To support their farm operation, they added a two story frame and concrete block milk shed to the northeast corner of the brick house, as well as scattered chicken houses. In the mid-1950's, they built a gambrel-roof cow barn to replace a mid-nineteenth century Yankee barn that burned in 1954. The cow barn was connected to the milk shed through a series of sheds, all removed by 1989. A horse shed was attached to the



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Belknap County, New Hampshire

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### DESCRIPTION (cont.)

cow barn, and a silo stood nearby. The property also had an early ice house that was moved in 1982 to Easy Street in Gilford village.

Phase III In the 1990's in response to the recommendation of a building study committee and heightened efforts to save the house, the Rowe House underwent a major rehabilitation project to return it to its late nineteenth century appearance. All of the twentieth century additions were removed, including the front entry porch, the dormers, the west porch, the second story of the rear ell, and the milk shed. After the removal of the two shed-roof dormers, the original roof was reconstructed by carefully following the surviving physical evidence and retaining all remaining original fabric. The ell was rebuilt to match its late nineteenth century appearance, using circa 1905 photographic documentation and physical evidence, such as the shadow line of the earlier structure on the north wall of the house and fitting new rafters into the original pockets of the plate. The window sash of the first story was replaced with modern, double-hung 9/6 sash to match the historic sash, using surviving sash as a prototype. (The façade's 9/6 sash had survived as late as 1915.) The 2/2 sash in the west gable was replaced with 6/6 sash to match the one surviving historic sash already in that story. Original exterior doors were located on the site and rehung in their original locations, and the original granite steps (which had also been relocated on the site) repositioned. The one-story open porch on the west elevation was reconstructed based on historic photographic documentation.

The interior rehabilitation of the house included removing acoustical ceiling tile, beaverboard wall coverings and carpeting; rehangng original doors (which had been stored on site); opening up the three remaining fireplaces, and

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DESCRIPTION (cont.)

opening up the partially enclosed front staircase.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The Rowe House Building Committee completed a detailed report which analyzed the various alterations to the building. Its findings and recommendations became the basis for the rehabilitation project.

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Benjamin Rowe House, Gilford  
Belknap County, New Hampshire

### 8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Benjamin Rowe House is significant under Criterion C for Architecture as a fine example of the cape, the common small New England house of its period. It retains its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association for its date of construction, circa 1835.

The cape was one of the most popular house types in New England and in Gilford in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The Rowe House is an excellent representation of the cape, as its form, façade design, and treatment of the entrance and the eaves, is typical of the cape style. (It is distinguished from the local norm in its brick construction and the number of chimneys.) The Rowe House is one of the best preserved capes in the town, as nearly three-quarters of Gilford's remaining capes have been significantly altered. The Benjamin Rowe House is one of Gilford's finest examples of early nineteenth century vernacular architecture, as a characteristic cape notable for its state of preservation and architectural quality.

The Rowe House is a fine example of the cape, one of the most popular house types in New England in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The cape is a one and a half story, gable roofed house. The first floor is typically two rooms deep, while the steeply pitched roof provides ample room for bedrooms in the upper story. Usually, the façade, one of the lateral sides, is five bays wide with a central entrance. The cape did evolve in the nineteenth century. As room heights increased, the front and rear walls also grew higher. The central chimney dominated plan of the earlier capes was replaced by a central hallway plan with smaller chimneys, typically two on the ridgeline. More prosperous owners added high style elements as decoration, such as Greek Revival inspired entrances, corner trim and cornices. But, the basic form remained much the same, providing a compact but comfortable home for a single family.

Certainly, the cape was popular in Gilford in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, when the

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### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (cont.)

town was settled and developed into a farming community with a small central village. The town history notes that the cape was "the most common house type" of the period.<sup>1</sup> A 2006 windshield survey of Gilford found exactly fifty early capes still standing.<sup>2</sup>

A comparison of the Rowe House with the forty-nine other capes in Gilford shows that, in many ways, it is typical of the group. As might be expected, the buildings are all basically one and a half stories high, save where the later addition of large shed roofed dormers have made three buildings into what are functionally two story buildings.<sup>3</sup> With the exception of one house that was rebuilt with a gambrel roof after a fire<sup>4</sup>, they all have gable roofs. So, the classic cape form is still common to virtually all these survivors.

There is more variety in other design features, due in part to later alterations. The usual façade design, a five bay front with a central entrance and four windows, is still the most common, found on over four-fifths of the houses. Two houses had three bay fronts, with a central entrance but only two windows.<sup>5</sup> Seven houses have been altered, so that their original facades are no longer entirely extant. (The

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<sup>1</sup> Adair D. Mulligan, *THE GUNSTOCK PARISH, A HISTORY OF GILFORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE* (West Kennebunk, Maine: 1995) p. 420

<sup>2</sup> David Ruell "Capes of Gilford, New Hampshire" (manuscript, N.H. Division of Historic Resources, Concord, N.H.) The windshield survey of Gilford capes was conducted by David Ruell in the summer of 2006. Like most windshield surveys, it may have missed buildings that were not visible from public highways or that were so altered that they were no longer recognizable as capes. However, the surveyor feels confident that he found the vast majority of capes in Gilford. Most of the capes covered in the survey are mentioned in the lengthy appendix of "Historic Places" in the Gilford town history (Mulligan, pp. 359-412).

<sup>3</sup> 2667 Lakeshore Drive, 263 Intervale Road, and 168 Sleeper Hill Road

<sup>4</sup> 21 Belknap Mountain Road, Mulligan, p. 366

<sup>5</sup> 136 Cherry Valley Road, and 64 Belknap Mountain Road

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### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (cont.)

windows have been replaced with double windows or picture windows in five houses. Both the door and the windows have been replaced and relocated on two houses.)

The main difference in entrance design was the lighting (or lack of lighting) of the entrance hall. Not counting the two buildings which have lost their original main entrances or the three buildings whose entrances are now hidden by later enclosed porches, we find that sidelights were the more popular solution to the problem, as they are found on twenty-one houses. Transom windows were used on another five houses. The remaining nineteen houses had neither sidelights nor transom windows, although we should note in passing that many of the doors on these houses now have built-in windows.

The spacing of the windows on the façade is another design feature that can vary, as they can either be grouped in pairs or evenly spaced across the façade. Ignoring the three bay fronts and the altered facades, we find twenty-nine capes with paired windows and ten with evenly spaced windows in Gilford.

The eaves treatment can also differ. Close eaves are found on thirty-two Gilford capes; cornices with sloping soffits on ten, and box cornices on seven. (One house has a later roof trimmed by open eaves with exposed rafters and fascia boards.<sup>6</sup>)

So, in most respects, the Benjamin Rowe House, with its five bay front, central entrance with sidelights, paired windows, and close eaves, is typical of Gilford capes. It does vary from the norm in two interesting aspects, its masonry construction and its chimneys. Brick houses were quite uncommon in early Gilford. There is only other brick cape in

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<sup>6</sup> 263 Intervale Road

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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (cont.)

the town, the John Roberts House (1120 Cherry Valley Road).<sup>7</sup> Indeed, there are only four early brick houses in Gilford, the other two being two and a half story houses.<sup>8</sup> The brick walls and granite lintels of the Rowe House are therefore quite unusual among the surveyed capes, being found only on the Rowe and Roberts houses. Also unusual is the number of chimneys on the Rowe house. Almost three-quarters of the capes (thirty-six) have one chimney. The majority of Gilford capes (twenty-nine) are, in fact, central chimney capes typical of the early versions of the house type. Another dozen capes have two chimneys, usually placed symmetrically on the ridgeline. (One cape has lost its chimney.) Only the Rowe House has four chimneys. Indeed, the state architectural historian has called the Rowe House "unique in New Hampshire in its floor plan. The placement of four chimneys along the walls of a central hallway, in such a manner as to provide fireplaces for four first-floor rooms, is without parallel."<sup>9</sup> So, while Benjamin Rowe kept close to the common house type of his day in most aspects, he did show his innovative nature in his choice of building material and his design of his heating system.

The comparative survey of Gilford's capes also shows that the Rowe House is one of the best preserved capes in the town. The most common inappropriate alteration is new siding, with seventeen capes found covered with vinyl siding, one with asbestos shingles, and five with wooden shingles. Intrusive large new windows, (picture windows, double windows and oriel windows) appear on eight facades. Two entrances have been removed entirely, others equipped with new doors. Additions have included dormers on nine capes, entrance porches on another ten, one stone chimney

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<sup>7</sup> Mulligan, p. 410

<sup>8</sup> The Benjamin Jewett 3d House (48 Belknap Mountain Road) and the Smith-Sanders Farm (1934 Lakeshore Road) Mulligan, pp. 370-371 and 398-399

<sup>9</sup> James L. Garvin, "The Alvah Wilson House", report dated March 3, 1989 (typescript, Gilford Town Offices, Gilford, N.H.), p. 1

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (cont.)

and one greenhouse. One cape had its original roof replaced by a new gambrel roof. In the opinion of the surveyor, only fourteen of the fifty capes, or 28%, could be called well preserved, that is to say, they appeared from the highway to have had no major exterior changes. Further examination might reduce that number. It is clear, however, that the Rowe House ranks among Gilford's best preserved capes.

In architectural quality, the Rowe House must also be ranked high among the town's capes. Stylistically, the cape's exterior should be placed largely in the vernacular building tradition, as can be seen in its plain brick walls, close wooden eaves, and 9/6 sash windows. The influence of the Greek Revival style is found in interior details, but, on the exterior, is only obvious in the main entrance, with its sidelights and molded frame. But, if the building is not stylistically sophisticated, it is nevertheless well designed. The cape has fine proportions, and a charming if simple composition. The main entrance is dignified and attractive. The unusual arrangement of four chimneys adds an interesting element to the roof. The Victorian porch complements the simple brick cape, adding a welcome touch of decoration. But, it is not so ornate that it seems out of place. The house is well built and well preserved, and has been properly restored to its nineteenth century appearance. The Benjamin Rowe House must be considered one of the finest capes in Gilford, an excellent and pleasing example of this very important regional house type.

Historical Background

Unfortunately, there are no available records that allow us to precisely date the construction of the Benjamin Rowe House. There was a house standing on the property when Benjamin Rowe purchased it in 1815 from Jesse Thing, as Thing describes the property in his deed as "my homestead

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Belknap County, New Hampshire

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (cont.)

farm where I now live"<sup>10</sup> It is thought that this house, presumably built by Thing around 1810, stood on the site of the present ell.<sup>11</sup>

The Rowses, Benjamin Rowe (1790-1884)<sup>12</sup> and his son Simon (1822-1908)<sup>13</sup> owned and operated the farm for over ninety years. It appears in the agricultural censuses as an unspecialized farm, fairly typical of New Hampshire in the nineteenth century. The 1880 census, for example, lists the farm products as hay, butter, eggs, corn, rye, wheat, beans, maple sugar and syrup, potatoes, apples and cordwood.<sup>14</sup> Benjamin Rowe did deviate from the usual farming practices, by joining the silkworm farming boom in 1840, planting a mulberry tree orchard and raising silkworms for their silk for some twenty years.<sup>15</sup> He supplemented his farm income with other work, particularly in the farm's off-season. "In his younger days, he was a drummer and a singing teacher".<sup>16</sup> He worked in the local wool-carding mills and made farm implements, such as "wheels, plows, rakes, etc."<sup>17</sup> Of more

<sup>10</sup> Deed from Jesse Thing to Benjamin Rowe, May 9, 1815, Book SC 7, Page 178, Belknap County Registry of Deeds (manuscript, Belknap County Courthouse, Laconia, N.H.)

<sup>11</sup> Mulligan, p. 372; Thing purchased the land in 1810, Deed Joseph Sibley to Jesse Thing, June 5, 1810, Book SC 5, Page 485, Belknap County Registry of Deeds (manuscript, Belknap County Courthouse, Laconia, N.H.)

<sup>12</sup> Death record for Benjamin Rowe, "Gilford N.H., Births, Marriages, Deaths, Vol. 3, 1876-85" (manuscript, Gilford Town Offices, Gilford, N.H.), pp. 103-104

<sup>13</sup> ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE TOWN OF GILFORD, FOR THE YEAR ENDING FEBRUARY 15, 1909 (Laconia, N.H.: 1909), Deaths page (last page of the booklet); Tombstone of Simon Rowe, Pine Grove Cemetery, Gilford, N.H.

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Census of 1880, New Hampshire, Belknap County, Schedules for Agricultural Production" (microfilm roll A 231.9) Gilford District B, p. 12, line 6

<sup>15</sup> Mulligan, pp. 104-105

<sup>16</sup> Mulligan, p. 373

<sup>17</sup> Rev. J.F. Watson "History of Gilford" in ed. D. Hamilton Hurd, HISTORY OF MERRIMACK AND BELKNAP COUNTIES, NEW HAMPSHIRE (Philadelphia: 1885), p. 746



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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (cont.)

interest in this context, was his work as a carpenter and a brick maker. The Gilford town history reports that "Benjamin Rowe made the most of his few clay deposits on the Pine Hill Stream behind his farmhouse, and appears to have been the only brick maker of note in town."<sup>18</sup> He supplied the bricks for the only other brick house in Gilford village, the Benjamin Jewett 3d House, erected in 1836.<sup>19</sup> The county history states that "brick-making was prosecuted in [Gilford] a few years, particularly by Benjamin Rowe on the Pine Hill stream, and this yard supplied the domestic market."<sup>20</sup> The town historian notes that Rowe's brick making "operation succumbed to competition from the large Doe brickyard at the Weirs [in neighboring Laconia], which had access to better clay, or it may be that he simply tired of making bricks after he got into silkworms."<sup>21</sup>

Lacking direct documentary evidence, we must rely largely on physical evidence to date the building. In his report on the house, state architectural historian James Garvin dated the building to 1830 or later, based on "the use of American [common] bond for the brickwork of the walls and the use of plug drills in splitting the stone of the foundation", both techniques seldom used before 1830. He also pointed out that "the prevalence of Greek Revival moldings and detailing throughout the house points to a date of 1830 or later."<sup>22</sup> An 1830's date would also be consistent with Rowe's known activity as a brick maker, which probably reached its highpoint of production with the two and a half story Jewett House in 1836. One theory notes that Rowe sold two acres of land to his neighbor for \$100 in 1838<sup>23</sup>, and suggests that

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<sup>18</sup> Mulligan, p. 118

<sup>19</sup> Mulligan, p. 370

<sup>20</sup> Watson, in Hurd, p. 763

<sup>21</sup> Mulligan, p. 118

<sup>22</sup> Garvin, p. 6

<sup>23</sup> Deed, Benjamin Rowe to David Goud, Jr., March 26, 1838, Book SC 18, Page 283, Belknap County Registry of Deeds (manuscript, Belknap County

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### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (cont.)

the money from the sale was used to finance the construction of the new cape.<sup>24</sup> This theory has led to the recent use of the date "circa 1838" for the house. But, this date is somewhat speculative, so a more general date of the 1830's or circa 1835 may be more appropriate, given our current state of knowledge.

Local tradition assigns the construction of the house, as well as the making of its bricks, to Benjamin Rowe.<sup>25</sup> Certainly, given his experience as a carpenter, this seems quite plausible, although we cannot discount the distinct possibility that, even if Rowe did the carpentry, a mason was hired to lay the brick walls. Garvin notes that the tradition that the bricks were made by Rowe on the site "is strengthened by the presence in the walls, chimneys, cellar floors and partitions of bricks from all parts of a brick kiln, as if the builder of the house were trying to use up an entire 'burning' of brick."<sup>26</sup> The identification of Benjamin Rowe as the builder is the most likely theory, although, given the lack of documentation, it must remain a hypothesis, however probable it might be.

The Rowses later made other changes to the house. An examination of the first story of the ell by the Rowe House Committee revealed it to be a late nineteenth century structure with a balloon frame. The interior door between the cape and the ell was found to be a former window that had been enlarged. The investigators concluded that the Rowses had added the lower story of the ell, although they may have reused the foundation of the Thing house.<sup>27</sup> The open Victorian porch on the west gable end of the cape can

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Courthouse, Laconia, N.H.)

<sup>24</sup> Mulligan, p. 372

<sup>25</sup> Garvin, p. 2, Mulligan, p. 373

<sup>26</sup> Garvin, p. 2

<sup>27</sup> Arthur Tilton et al, "The Benjamin Rowe House Committee Report, August 1991" (typescript, Gilford Town Offices, Gilford, N.H.) pp. 7-11

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (cont.)

also be attributed to the Rows. Both the porch and the ell appear in early twentieth century photographs of the house. The ell was then one and a half stories high, with a large gabled dormer on its west roof slope. The photographs also show a long one and a half story gable roofed wing running east from the northeast corner of the cape and connecting at its east end to a large two and half story, gable roofed barn set perpendicular to the wing. The barn was served by large doors in its north and south gable ends and was topped by a square ventilator with a pyramidal roof.<sup>28</sup>

Upon Benjamin Rowe's death in 1884, his son Simon inherited the house.<sup>29</sup> Simon continued to live in the house for almost another quarter of a century, until his own death in August of 1908. But, by then, Simon's wife and three children had all died, leaving him with no blood relatives closer than second cousins.<sup>30</sup> So, he left the farm to his son-in-law, John B. Morrill.<sup>31</sup>

Morrill promptly sold the farm in September of 1908 to Ernest P. Sawyer.<sup>32</sup> Sawyer (1870-1956)<sup>33</sup> converted the Rows' unspecialized farm to a dairy farm, and also raised poultry in small chicken coops in the fields behind the house.<sup>34</sup> In 1947, he deeded the farm to his daughter Ruth and her

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<sup>28</sup> The photographs are reproduced in Mulligan, pp. 97 and 373.

<sup>29</sup> "Will of Benjamin Rowe", Belknap County Registry of Probate, Docket No. 3860 (manuscript, Belknap County Courthouse, Laconia, N.H.)

<sup>30</sup> Obituary of Simon Rowe, Laconia (N.H.) Democrat, August 7, 1908, p. 1

<sup>31</sup> Probate records of Simon Rowe, Belknap County Registry of Probate, Docket No. 8251 (manuscripts, Belknap County Courthouse, Laconia, N.H.)

<sup>32</sup> Deed, John B. Morrill to Ernest P. Sawyer, September 14, 1908. Book 124, Page 106, Belknap County Registry of Deeds (manuscript, Belknap County Courthouse, Laconia, N.H.)

<sup>33</sup> Obituary of Ernest P. Sawyer, Laconia (N.H.) Evening Citizen, December 11, 1956, p. 2

<sup>34</sup> Mulligan, pp. 210 and 374

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### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (cont.)

husband Alvah Wilson.<sup>35</sup> The Wilsons continued the dairy operation, even after selling the farm to the Town in 1970.<sup>36</sup>

During the Sawyer-Wilson era, the house saw many changes, most apparently during Sawyer's ownership. Most of the cape's 9/6 and 6/6 sash windows were replaced by 2/2 sash windows. The front entrance was hidden by an enclosed entry porch. Another enclosed porch replaced the open porch on the west gable end. Large shed roofed dormers were built on both slopes of the cape's roof to increase the size of the upper story. The ell was enlarged with a new second story, and a small triangular addition on the east side.<sup>37</sup> (An apartment occupied both stories of the ell and one room of each story of the cape.<sup>38</sup>) A concrete block and frame milk room replaced the wooden wing at the northeast corner of the cape. The original barn was destroyed by fire in 1954 when a conveyer belt loading hay into the barn ignited and delivered burning bales of hay into the loft.<sup>39</sup>

In 1938, when Gilford decided to consolidate its scattered district schools by building an elementary school in the village, Ernest Sawyer sold a lot of almost four acres to the north of his house for the new school building.<sup>40</sup> In 1965, the Wilsons sold an additional ten acres to the school

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<sup>35</sup> Deed, Ernest P. Sawyer to Alvah and Ruth Wilson, July 23, 1947, Book 295, Page 399, Belknap County Registry of Deeds (manuscript, Belknap County Courthouse, Laconia, N.H.)

<sup>36</sup> Mulligan, p. 374; Tilton et al, p. 2, interview of Leo Labonte by David Ruell, October 26, 2006

<sup>37</sup> Mulligan, pp. 97 and 373; Tilton et al, pp. 11 and 17

<sup>38</sup> Interview of Joan Nelson by David Ruell, October 26, 2006

<sup>39</sup> Mulligan, pp. 373-374

<sup>40</sup> Mulligan, pp. 326-328; Deed, Ernest P. Sawyer to the School District of the Town of Gilford, August 18, 1938, Book 235, Page 197, Belknap County Registry of Deeds (manuscript, Belknap County Courthouse, Laconia, N.H.)

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### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (cont.)

district for future expansion.<sup>41</sup> Four years later, foreseeing the need for further school growth and for more recreational fields, the Town of Gilford negotiated an agreement to buy the entire 110 acre farm from the Wilsons. Under the agreement, the Wilsons retained a rent free life tenancy in the house, the farm buildings, any hay raised, and any land not being used by the town or the school. The voters approved the purchase in 1970.<sup>42</sup> Alvah Wilson continued the farm for at least some time after the sale to the Town.<sup>43</sup> But, the Wilsons did not enjoy this arrangement for long. Alvah Wilson died in 1974 at the age of 63,<sup>44</sup> Ruth Wilson in 1976 at the age of 68.<sup>45</sup>

Faced with overcrowding in the old town hall, the Gilford selectmen decided in 1976 to move some town offices to the now vacant Rowe House.<sup>46</sup> They remained there until the completion of a new town hall in 1988.<sup>47</sup>

The future of the again vacant Rowe House sparked a debate

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<sup>41</sup> Mulligan, p. 330; Deed, Alvah and Ruth Wilson to the School District of the Town of Gilford, July 7, 1965, Book 454, Page 281, Belknap County Registry of Deeds (manuscript, Belknap County Courthouse, Laconia N.H.)

<sup>42</sup> TOWN OF GILFORD ANNUAL REPORTS, YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 1969 (Concord, N.H.: 1970) pp. 9 and 94; ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE TOWN OF GILFORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 1970 (Concord, N.H.: 1971) p. 106; Option Agreement, Alvah and Ruth Wilson to Town of Gilford, September 29, 1969, Book 527, Page 382, Belknap County Registry of Deeds (manuscript, Belknap County Courthouse, Laconia, N.H.); Deed, Alvah and Ruth Wilson to Town of Gilford, August 12, 1970, Book 544, Page 37, Belknap County Registry of Deeds (manuscript, Belknap County Courthouse, Laconia, N.H.)

<sup>43</sup> Interview of Leo Labonte by David Ruell, October 26, 2006

<sup>44</sup> Obituary of Alvah D. Wilson, Laconia (N.H.) Evening Citizen, March 13, 1974, p. 3

<sup>45</sup> Obituary of Ruth Sawyer Wilson, Laconia (N.H.) Evening Citizen, January 26, 1976, p. 3

<sup>46</sup> ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE TOWN OF GILFORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 1976 (1977), pp. 11-12; Mulligan, pp. 322 and 374

<sup>47</sup> Mulligan, p. 322

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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (cont.)

between those who wished to preserve the building and others who felt that it should be demolished and the land used for school purposes.<sup>48</sup> A petitioned warrant article to demolish the house and the remaining farm buildings was defeated at the 1989 annual town meeting.<sup>49</sup> The selectmen established a committee to recommend future uses for the building and to oversee its rehabilitation. The farm's outbuildings were demolished to provide room for school expansion. But, the Rowe House was saved.<sup>50</sup>

In 1991, the Town of Gilford transferred the remaining land of the Wilson farm to the Gilford School District, but retained ownership of the Rowe House and the right to use the land immediately around the building that was set off by driveways from the rest of the school property.<sup>51</sup> In the same year, the Rowe House Committee published its report, recommending that the house be restored to its late nineteenth century appearance.<sup>52</sup> The Committee raised the funds for the rehabilitation and restoration of the building and oversaw the work, which continued from 1991 through 1999. The sash in virtually all of the windows were returned to their original configurations. The twentieth century additions, the milk room, the front entry porch, and the western enclosed porch, were demolished. The two shed roofed dormers were removed and the cape roof restored. The ell's second story was rebuilt and the ell's exterior restored to

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<sup>48</sup> Mulligan, p. 374

<sup>49</sup> ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE TOWN OF GILFORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 1988 (Laconia, N.H.: 1989), p. V.; Laconia (N.H.) Evening Citizen, March 16, 1989, p. 3

<sup>50</sup> Mulligan, p. 374

<sup>51</sup> Deed, Town of Gilford to Gilford School District, October 9, 1991, Book 1187, Page 253, Belknap County Registry of Deeds (typescript, Belknap County Courthouse, Laconia, N.H.); "Boundary Line Adjustment Plan for the Town of Gilford & Town of Gilford School District" June 5, 1991, Plan Drawer L 14, Plan 94, Belknap County Registry of Deeds (manuscript, Belknap County Courthouse, Laconia, N.H.)

<sup>52</sup> Tilton et al. , pp. 30-38

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### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (cont.)

match the historic photographs. Finally, in 1999, the Victorian porch on the west gable end was recreated.<sup>53</sup> The exterior of the building was essentially returned to its appearance at the end of the nineteenth century. It should be noted that while the west porch is a complete reconstruction and the ell a partial reconstruction, the brick cape's exterior is almost entirely original. Only the window sash and the roof slopes and covering had to be replaced. The masonry foundation, walls and chimneys, the eaves, the window and door frames, and two of the three doors are the original unchanged features of the cape. So, the exterior, despite its travails, is basically intact.

From 1992 to 2002, the Rowe House housed the offices of the New Hampshire Music Festival. But, since 2002, it has served as a historic house museum operated by the Thompson-Ames Historical Society, the local historical society for the town of Gilford.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Mulligan, pp. 374-375; ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE TOWN OF GILFORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 1990 (1991), p. 42; ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE TOWN OF GILFORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 1991 (1992), p. 35; ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE TOWN OF GILFORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE, FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 1992 (1993), p. 38; ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE TOWN OF GILFORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE, FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 1996 (1997), p. 39; ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE TOWN OF GILFORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE, FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 1999 (2000) p. 47

<sup>54</sup> Mulligan, pp. 308-309 and 375, interview of Joan Nelson by David Ruell, October 26, 2006

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### 10. VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property includes the Benjamin Rowe House and the approximately one-half acre of land around the house that was reserved for the use of the Town of Gilford when the Town deeded the land of the former Rowe-Wilson farm to the Gilford School District in 1991. The Deed, recorded in Book 1187, Page 253, at the Belknap County Registry of Deeds, does not describe the reserved land except by referring to the accompanying plan, "Boundary Line Adjustment Plan for the Town of Gilford & Town of Gilford School District", filed as Plan 94 in Plan Drawer file L 14 at the Belknap County Registry of Deeds. The plan indicates that the reserved parcel of land is bounded on the west by Belknap Mountain Road, and on the north, east and south by curved school driveways that separate the Rowe House grounds from the rest of the school property. (The property appears as part of lot 132.2 on Gilford Property Map 227.)

### VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

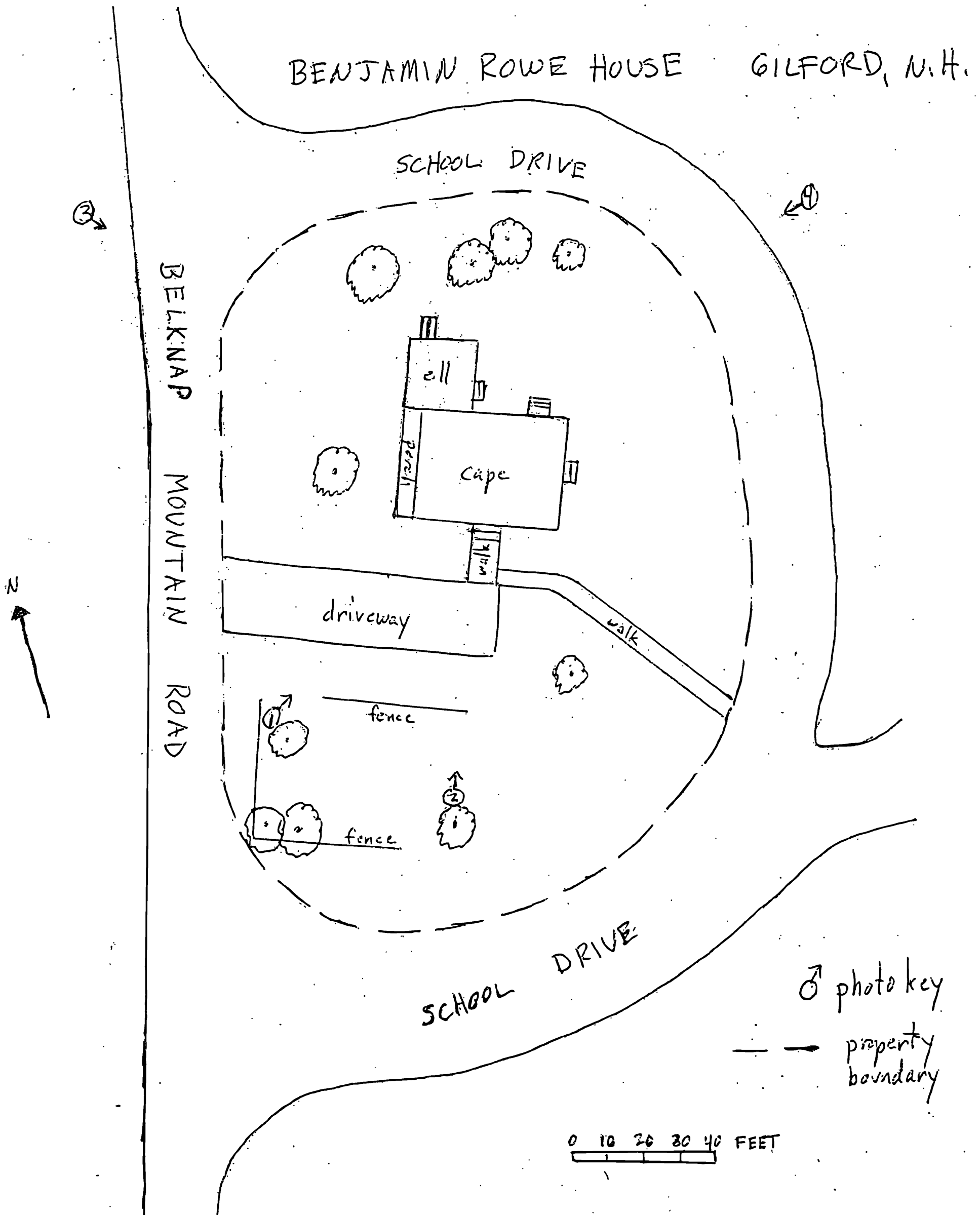
The nominated property includes the Benjamin Rowe House and the land immediately surrounding the house that remains visually associated with the building. The land in the nominated property was historically associated with the building as part of the Rowe-Wilson farm. The remainder of the Rowe-Wilson farm, that included land on both sides of Belknap Mountain Road, has been converted to school purposes and is now used for school buildings, parking lots, and recreational fields. The other buildings of the Rowe-Wilson farm have all been destroyed or relocated. The road and driveways that form the boundaries of the nominated property clearly separate the grounds of the house from the land that has been altered for use by the schools.

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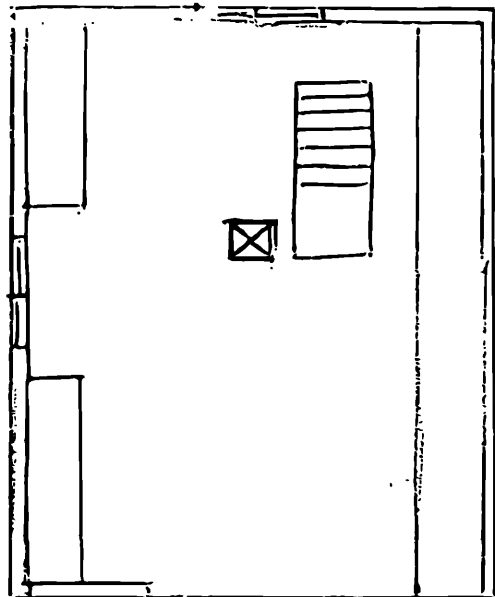


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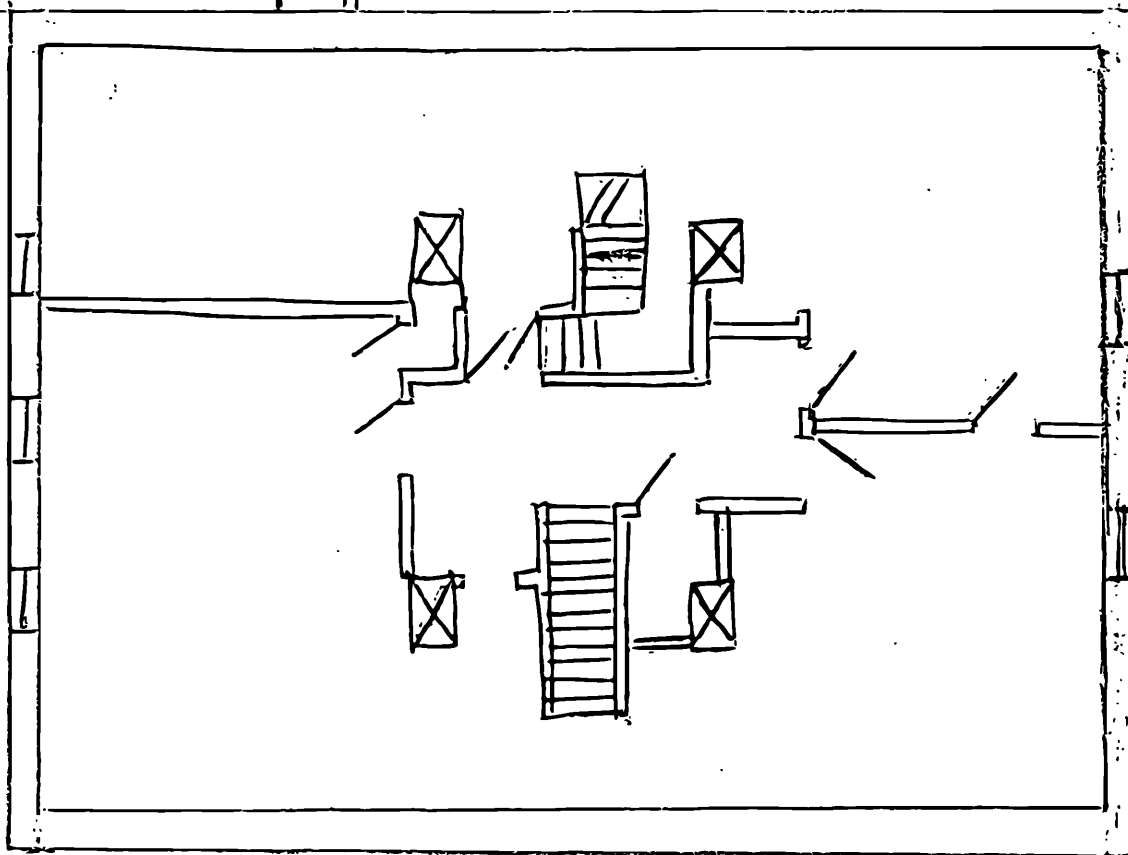
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## BENJAMIN ROWE HOUSE

### Second Story Floor Plan



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