

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

INTERAGENCY RESOURCES DIVISION NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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 Ely Boston & Maine Railroad Depot other names/site number

2. Location

street & number U.S. Route 5 city, town Fairlee state Vermont code VT county Orange code VT 017 zip code 05044

3. Classification

Table with 3 columns: Ownership of Property, Category of Property, and Number of Resources within Property. Includes checkboxes for private/public ownership and building/site/structure/object categories.

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 of certifying official Vermont State Historic Preservation Office Date 12/2/94

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register.
determined eligible for the National Register.
determined not eligible for the National Register.

Elson H. Beall

12.9.94

- removed from the National Register.
other, (explain:)

Entered in the National Register

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Transportation-Rail related

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic-Single dwelling

Government-Post Office

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Other: railroad depot

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls weatherboard

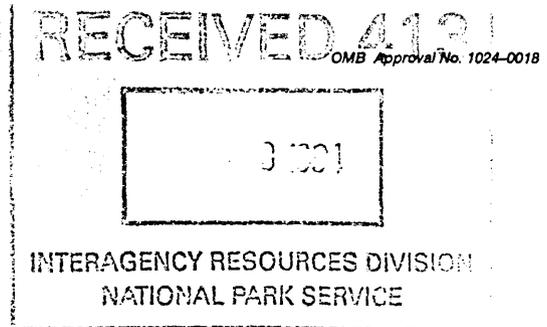
roof asphalt

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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Ely Boston & Maine Railroad Depot
Fairlee, Orange, Vermont

The Ely Boston & Maine Railroad Depot is a well preserved circa 1900 facility that was constructed to offer full rail service to the local rural area as well as house the station agent's family. Probably designed and erected by the railroad company, the partially two story wood framed building was an honest and straight forward answer to the B & M's needs, utilizing stock, readily available native New England materials and methods of construction. Although the property has not been owned or used by the railroad for over thirty years now, the building and site still retain most of their feeling, association, integrity of design, and original materials.

SITE

The Ely depot facility is situated on a triangular piece of land, formed by the single tracks of the Fitchburg Division of the Boston & Maine Railroad crossing, at an acute angle, and the original roadway that later came to be numbered U.S. Route 5. The property is on the eastern side of these tracks, south of the crossing described above. About 1935, this section of Route 5 was straightened so as to run entirely on the western side of the tracks, thereby eliminating the once dangerous crossing.

The part of the lot north and east of the building is presently a graveled parking area, and Old Route 5, now a dead end dirt road, still runs east of the building. The southern part of the lot blends into a graveled rail yard, still owned by the railroad. Until quite recently, there existed a grade platform, constructed of 2" thick planking set on railroad tie sleepers, that ran the full length of the lot, and completely filled in between the building and the tracks.

BUILDING EXTERIOR

The two story main building with its attached single story freight house measures 24' across and 75' long, and was placed parallel to the rails, maintaining 17.5' from the centerline of the tracks to the front west wall of the building. In addition to the building footprint mentioned above, there is a two story bay window on the track side of the facility that projects out 3' and measures 9.5' wide. The roof over the two story portion of the facility has a 9/12 pitch, with the ridge running parallel to

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the tracks, while the lower single story freight house roof only has a 3/12 pitch, with its ridge also running in the same direction.

Overall, the wood framed building is constructed of materials native to New England, probably bought by the Boston & Maine Railroad in a bulk wholesale arrangement from some of its various and numerous suppliers. Typically, the more humble and utilitarian rural buildings of this era were designed by the railroad's own engineering staff, although there are no known drawings of the Ely facility to prove that here that was definitely the case. However, based upon seeing drawings of the other contemporary and similar facilities located along not only Boston & Maine but also Maine Central tracks, it can be assumed that from these drawings, the entire building was pre-cut, pre-packaged, and with railroad cars, transported to the proposed building site, where construction crews employed by the B & M erected the building. Some of the building's components uncovered or otherwise exposed during the course of the property's restoration indicate that this type of design/build activity took place. Numerous pieces of trim and the like are marked "B & M RR, Ely, VT" on the back side.

The two story portion of the building is balloon framed with 2 x 4 studs at 16" o.c. and 2 x 8 rafters similarly spaced. The freight house is framed by placing 4 x 4 studs at 2'-0" o.c., 2 x 8 rafters located above these studs, and two 1" dia. threaded rods with turn buckles running at plate height tying the single story structure together. Hence, the building is kept from spreading due to structural loads on its relatively flat roof. The entire frame is covered with 3/4" sheathing boards, of numerous widths.

The exterior walls are clad with clapboards showing a 3 1/4" exposure, doors and windows bordered by 5" x 3/4" trim pieces, and 7" x 3/4" boards finish off the corners. All the windows utilize a 2" thick sill, and as an additional touch, the first floor window and exterior door heads of the main building have a small bed molding placed above the 5" trim board, and a bevelled wood cap with metal flashing topping the whole assembly off.

Early photographs of the building, circa. 1914, indicate that the main roof was covered with wood shingles. This is also evident by the same material still remaining underneath the

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present roofing. From this it appears that the exposure was approximately 5" to weather, the shingles being white cedar. Based upon various B & M property surveys, during the 1920's new telegraph poles and wires were installed on the site that placed 'hot' wires above the eastern half of this roof, hence necessitating the reshingling of this part of the building with a fire resistant diamond shaped asbestos composition shingle that was typical for the era. These new shingles were placed directly over the existing wood ones, however, the wood remained on the west side of the roof until quite recently. At present the west roof has only a layer of tar paper, awaiting the installation of new wood shingles.

The lower pitched freight house roof is covered by rolled asphalt roofing material and, judging from drawings that survive from other contemporary and similar facilities, this is the original type of roofing that would have been installed at the time of original construction. Although records indicate that built-up tar and gravel roofs were sometimes used on construction similar to this at the time that the Ely facility was erected, it is unlikely that the B & M would have chosen to install this type of roof out in rural Vermont. Rather, it seems more probable that, considering the circumstances, the rolled roofing material would have been the logical choice.

Both roofs use flat 3/4" thick boards of various widths for the cornice fascia material, two built-up pieces for the high main roof and three for the low freight house roof. Also, the main roof uses 3/4" flat boarding for the soffits and related areas, while the broad, 30" overhanging freight house roof has open soffits, the underside of the rafter tails remaining exposed.

The windows and exterior doors installed in the building are typical stock items of the period. With the exception of the two story bay window, the double hung sash is 2/1 light, 14" x 28" and 28" x 28" glass, with typical weight boxes and 4 light, surface mounted, wood storm sash. The bay window area uses the same overall size sash, only it has 2/2 light pattern, for reasons unknown. Also, above each of the four freight house sliding doors is located a fixed piece of 10 light transom sash, with 12" X 14" glass panes. Although several of the exterior doors have been replaced over the years, it appears that at one time, with the exception of the freight house sliding doors, they were all a stock wood unit, with two long panes of glass, and

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flat wooden panels, in a late victorian, "Italianate", pattern. The freight house doors are a "made-on-site" type of door, utilizing 3 1/2" x 3/4" beaded tongue and groove vertical matched boarding, horizontal battens on the interior surface, and hung with stock, overhead rolling, interior mounted hardware.

FOUNDATIONS

A full basement exists only under the north end of the main building, overall measuring 24' across and 27' long. The walls are constructed of rubble stone up to grade, laid in mortar, and 8" thick brick walls from grade up to the underside of the 8 x 8 continuous sills. The remainder of the structure is placed upon 12" square brick piers, creating a crawl space under the unheated freight house area. Interestingly, the brick piers do not extend very far below grade, rather only about 8" or so. At this point they sit on a "pad" of crushed granite cobble stones, placed in a dug hole a little wider than the pier, and extending down below the frost line about 4'. As a result of wanting to enclose this crawl space, 3/4" tongue and groove boarding, of various random widths, and a flush joint, is installed vertically as a "skirt" around this area's perimeter.

LOADING DOCK

The 46' long by 4.5' wide track side loading dock is set on a construction of vertical and horizontal railroad ties, set into the ground and spiked to the building. This dock is faced by the same type of 3/4" skirt boarding and topped by 2" thick by 8" wide planking. The dock and the entire freight house floor is set approximately 4' above grade.

PORCH

Older photographs of the facility show that there used to exist a second floor covered porch, cantilevered with large wood brackets from the east wall of the building. At present, there still exist several of these brackets, as well as numerous tell-tale marks on the building where the now removed roof was attached. It is believed that the porch was demolished shortly after the property was sold by the B & M, in the early 1960's, due to its having become rotted and unsafe for use.

Study of these photographs show that, like the rest of the

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building, the porch was constructed of readily available stock components, nothing that would have been considered "custom" at the time. An almost flat roof of 2 x 4's and probably 3/4" boarding, with a simple cornice fascia of flat boards, was supported on 4" square turned posts, and a railing of 4" x 3/4" vertical boarding with decorative cut-outs surrounded the perimeter, all in a manner typical for the period.

TRAIN SIGNALING EQUIPMENT

Other exterior details of interest include the train signalling semaphore mast and the exterior lighting. The mast is a 7 1/2" square piece of oak, bolted at about 3' above grade to a slightly larger base member, and running up continuously in one piece. The mast has numerous holes, indentations and the like cut into it, so as to receive the various pieces of the manually operated signaling equipment, that has since been removed about 1961 when the facility was decommissioned. Presently, many of the pieces have been tracked down, and the remainder are expected to follow. This equipment was designed by the Boston & Maine Railroad, made of iron, and cast in their repair shops in Concord, N.H. The parts were, for the most part, standardized throughout the B & M operating area. The equipment was used by the station agent for signaling approaching trains to either stop, proceed, or proceed with caution. In addition to the arms that were visible during the day-light hours were lights, also atop the mast, for night time use, giving the same signal information as the arms. The lights were first illuminated by a kerosene lantern, then were later changed to electric. This mast and signaling equipment was installed in 1910 on this, and all similar B & M facilities.

All that remains of the track side exterior lighting is one fixture located at the south end of the loading dock. From any number of old photographs of other B & M facilities, it can be determined that, like the semaphore equipment, this too was standard issue B & M material. The wall mounted decorative steel bracket held a green porcelain clad steel shade. The remains of at least one more similar light fixture appear on the north side of the bay window.

Also, it should be noted that surviving early photographs show the use of metal roof gutters installed over the lobby to track side platform door, and along the entire west and east

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edges of the freight house roof.

Generally speaking, the alterations to the exterior that have occurred since the buildings were sold off in 1961 by the railroad have been minimal and are easily corrected or restored, partially as a result of some excellent early photographs that have survived. The widening of the south east door of the freight house; the addition of two small windows cut into the south wall of the same area; the door, small roof and loading dock installed in place of the first floor north west window on the north end of the facility; several exterior door leaves having been changed over the years; and the removal of the second floor porch are the major items that make up the list. Otherwise, with the exception of an exterior door into the freight office that the railroad removed, installing a window in its place, more of which will be discussed later, the building appears from the outside today substantially as it was originally designed and constructed.

Although there have been some alterations to the interior of the station occurring since the railroad decommissioned and sold the property, overall these changes are minor in nature. As a result, most of the original interior fabric remains in place, and clearly illustrates not only the choice of the materials used for the inside finishes, but also, of equal importance, the layout and relationship of the spaces within the interior of the facility and how these spaces functioned.

BUILDING INTERIOR

Presently, the U.S. Postal Service is leasing the old lobby and the station agent's office area, and has been for over twenty years. At the time that the post office became a tenant, in addition to changing the first floor window at the north west corner and installing a door with a hood and small loading dock, the interior walls separating the public lobby area from the agent's office were removed, making it all one space. However, whoever did this work had the presence of mind to keep the ticket window and counter, the dutch door with a counter that led from the lobby into the agent's office, and all of the related trim pieces. Hence, this material is stored on the site and can be reinstalled at a later date. Also, because a hung acoustical tile ceiling was installed at this time, the above mentioned wall was cut-off and removed at a point below the original ceiling but above the new one. Therefore, not only does the original ceiling

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survive intact, but so does a record of how these now removed walls were originally constructed.

This lobby and agent's office area has walls covered with 3 1/2" triple beaded matched tongue and groove boarding, installed vertically up to a 7 1/2" wide continuous horizontal rail piece at 4' above the finish floor, and the beaded matched boarding placed horizontally above this point, up to the ceiling. Likewise, the ceiling is of 3 1/2" single beaded matched boarding, with a simple crown molding around each area's perimeter. A 7 1/2" high baseboard with a stock base molding applied along the top was used throughout. All of the door and window casings are a simple, stock, late Victorian "scalloped" pattern installed with bullseye rosettes at the upper corners. From the areas above the hung ceiling, as well as other areas on the first floor, it can be determined that originally all the interior finish was varnished. However, at the time that the post office became a tenant, the exposed walls in this area were painted.

Of particular interest in this area is the bay window with the agent's telegraph counter. This was really the nerve center for the entire building, and the spot where the telegraph equipment was installed that kept the agent/operator in touch with the entire B & M system. Later the equipment was updated to include a dispatcher's phone as well. The equipment is long gone. However, the 2" thick hardwood counter remains, including a loose wood insert that covered a recessed piece of equipment when it was not in use. Also, above this counter and between the two windows are the large bolts that held the carriage containing the two control levers for the semaphores.

Off from the lobby space are two toilet rooms, measuring 5' by 4.5', with wall and ceiling finishes matching the main area. Several marks on the walls of both rooms indicate that originally there were installed water closets with the then typical wall mounted tanks. However, these fixtures have been replaced sometime ago by modern ones, installed in the same locations. The same can be said regarding the sinks.

From the station agent's office a door leads into a small 10' by 8.5' room used as a warm office and storage area for the large, unheated, adjacent freight house space. The walls are covered with 3/4" tongue and groove boarding of varying widths,

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with a flush joint, applied horizontally. The ceiling is covered with typical beaded matched boarding, and likewise trimmed with the typical crown molding used elsewhere in the first floor. Doors and windows are trimmed with flat 3/4" x 5" boards. It was earlier mentioned that apparently there used to exist a door from this room out onto the track side platform. This was first thought to be true because of the appearance of patched clapboards on the exterior, under the present window into this area, as well as obvious patching of the interior boarding on the opposite side of the wall. Secondly, when the interior boarding applied to this wall was recently removed to allow for insulation to be placed in the wall cavity, it was noticed that indeed the wall framing around the window had at sometime been altered, eliminating a door and installing a window unit. Also, neatly nailed on a stud inside this area of the wall was a Boston & Maine Railroad shipping label, dated June 23, 1945, routing 1 lot of lumber from the B & M's Billerica Store, in Billerica, Massachusetts to Woodsville, New Hampshire, attention of > N. Wells, F.C.

The freight house area extends into the two story portion of the building by 12.5' and measures 47' by 23' on the inside. With the exception of the space under the second floor area above, there is no interior finish and the studs, rafters, and roof ties all remain exposed. The area under the second floor is covered with simple 3/4" boarding. The flooring throughout this space is 2" thick planking. Between the two doors on the east wall there still exist the Fairbanks Morse freight scales, recessed into the wood floor. Over the years, employees of the railroad have written their names in different places within the freight house area, the most visible one being "Sid Clements Agent, 1944".

Back out in the heated part of the first floor space is a stair and entry hall serving the basement and second floor areas. The walls, ceiling, and trim are the same as is installed in the lobby and station agent's office. However, it still has its original varnish finish, never having been more recently painted. The steep stair has simple pine treads, 3/4" thick now well worn from years of use. The flooring is narrow hardwood, as it is in all of the other first floor heated spaces. A double hung window of opaque glass is set into an interior wall to allow light and ventilation into one of the public toilet rooms on the other side. Also, it should be noted that both of the first floor

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toilet rooms have fixed light transom window units above the doors that lead out into the old lobby area.

The second floor apartment area was originally intended for the station agent and his family. The overall dimensions of the total area are 24' by 40', measured on the exterior, plus the second floor of the bay window as well. As far as any one knows, until most recently, the last time the space was used for dwelling purposes was in the early 1950's. Since that time the upstairs had become a general storage space until the 1980's when the previous owner stripped these areas of their plaster due to the overall very poor and abused condition of things and also to be able to properly insulate, rewire, etc. At the time that the area was cleaned out, all of the interior trim, hardware, doors, etc. was carefully salvaged for future reuse in putting the rooms back together. As of this writing, the reconstruction work is about half completed.

As the second floor space was originally constructed, it was divided up into smaller and more rooms than presently shown. In addition to the living room that took full advantage of the protruding bay window, there was a dining room, kitchen, pantry, bathroom, and two small bedrooms. A hallway leads to the door that exited out onto the covered porch, and also to the attic stairs. All of this was fitted into 960 square feet.

The current restoration plans call for utilizing the same trim, moldings, and other materials previously used, only with a somewhat simplified and more open plan. Flooring within these areas was originally either a narrow hardwood or wide pine boarding. All of the interior doors installed throughout the building are of a stock design of the era, with two vertical raised panels top and bottom, and a matching panel running horizontally the full width of the door, opposite the ornately cast brass door knob. The attic space, other than a simple softwood board floor, remains since its initial construction unfinished. Originally the building was heated by a coal fired single pipe steam heating system, with its boiler located in the basement. However, all of this equipment has since been removed and disposed of.

In summation, the facility that the Boston & Maine Railroad chose to build in Ely to satisfy their numerous requirements is a building with a direct, simple, and functional plan, designed to

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be constructed of economical stock materials that were easy to procure, transport, and erect. Furthermore, this choice of materials and general design combined represents a building type that laborers and carpenters, of perhaps average skill, could put together using only the basic hand tools then available in a rural area, and still achieve a durable and lasting end product. As a result of the above, there are visible particular features contained within the building whole that are characteristic of many rural depots of this era. This is especially true of the freight house, the track side bay window, (although usually only one story) and much of the interior finish.

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)

Transportation
Commerce
Architecture

Period of Significance

c. 1900-1944

Significant Dates

c. 1900

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Boston & Maine Railroad

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

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

- A. History of Fairlee, Vermont; By: Philip G. Robinson; Gibby Press, 1957
- B. Over The River and Through The Years, Book Four, Mills and Mines; By: Katharine Blaisdell; Courier Printing Company, 1982
- C. The Boston & Maine, A Photographic Essay; By: Philip Ross Hastings; Locomotive Railway Preservation, 1989
- D. Vermont Place Names, Footprints of History; By: Ester M. Swift; Stephen Greene Press, 1957
- E. Tales of Thetford; By: Helen Savery Paige, 1977
- F. Steelway's of New England; By: Alvin F. Harlow; Creative Age Press, Inc., NY, 1946
- G. Numerous Issues of the B & M Bulletin; Published by the Boston & Maine Railroad Historical Society
- H. Boston & Maine Railroad valuation maps, records, and schedules
- I. Various property deeds and records of the depot and surrounding property

See continuation sheet

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

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property 8506 sq/ft. = .2 acre

UTM References

A

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

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

From deed description prepared by the Boston & Maine Railroad, March 7, 1961; recorded in Book 23, Pages 420-421 of the Fairlee land records.

This is the parcel of land that has been historically associated with the building.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Frank J. Barrett, Jr.; Architect date _____
organization _____ telephone (802) 333-9819
street & number Route 5 state VT zip code 05044
city or town Ely

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The Ely Boston & Maine Railroad Depot is significant not only as an intact structure that has survived from this country's now past great railroad era, but also because of the role that the property has played in the state's mining and agricultural heritage, and its association with the large number of summer youth camps that once dominated nearby Lake Fairlee. Prior to the present automobile age, it was the vast number of depots such as Ely that linked Vermont to the rest of the world, providing transportation to its population as well as shipping and receiving the goods and services that were a part of daily life several generations ago. The building still retains significant exterior features like the station agent's trackside bay window, the attached freight house, and loading docks that were typical to facilities such as this. Inside, most of the original layout, trim, and finishes are still preserved, all offering a clear understanding of the building and its purpose.

The Boston & Maine Railroad depot building in Ely, Vermont is considered by most local and state maps of the area to be the center point of the village. As far as political boundaries are concerned, Ely is technically within the Town of Fairlee, although admittedly within the extreme south east corner, and locally several of the farms and dwellings situated immediately over the town line in Thetford are said to be also a part of the village.

The Town of Fairlee, Vermont was chartered September 9, 1761, by New Hampshire's Royal Governor Benning Wentworth. Because of the severe terrain in parts of the town, resulting in extremely difficult travel at various times of the year, the town was split into two townships in 1797, Fairlee and West Fairlee.

The village of Ely occupies an area within the Town of Fairlee, first known as "Governor's Right" or "Wentworth Track", a choice 500 acre parcel of fertile farm land bordering on the Connecticut River, reserved by and for the Royal Governor. This was a common practice of his when granting towns along both sides of the river, in areas now within present day Vermont and New Hampshire.

As a result of the river making a wide bend towards New Hampshire, this area of the towns of Fairlee and Thetford possess

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broad fertile meadows, ideally suited for larger scale agriculture, and hence the location of a small village. Throughout much of the nineteenth century this village was officially recognized on numerous maps and school district documents as South Fairlee. In 1872 the U.S. Postal Service opened an office in the village using that name. However, an 1858 map of Orange County published by H. E. Walling does not call out any village name.

In 1847, the Connecticut and Passumpsic Rivers Railroad (C & PRR) surveyed and acquired the land for the section of rails to be built between White River Junction and Wells River, Vermont. Construction of a portion of the line up to Bradford, Vermont took place during the spring and summer months of 1848, with regular rail service commencing in October of that year.

Apparently, within a very short amount of time the railroad started referring to the village area as Wares Crossing, due to the tracks and the main road (later in 1925 to be U.S. Route 5) crossing each other on land surrounded by Lyman Wares' large farm. Referring again to the 1858 Walling map of the County, a depot building is not shown or called out.

Early property records and old town and school reports indicate that from 1830 thru 1870, there existed a small single story brick school house on the site of the present depot facility. This is also clearly shown on the above referred map. The building was owned jointly by the Towns of Fairlee and Thetford, although it was located in Fairlee. At the 1871 March Town Meeting, it was voted to tear down the school house, salvage the bricks, and sell the land to the C & PRR, due to a shrinking school enrollment in the immediate area.

It appears that the railroad constructed a depot facility on the site shortly after acquiring the land, but little else is thought to be known about the building. An atlas of Orange County Vermont, published by F. W. Beers & Co. of New York, New York, 1877, clearly shows a depot building in this location and an October 1872 New England Area Railroad Schedule lists a depot stop as "Ely". Other historical records offer little. However, several now elderly local people have been able to recall hearing that the first building burned in about 1900. Gordon George, a 75 year old man who was born and raised on the large family farm immediately to the south of the present depot, tells of his

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father recalling how, late one cold night the train station next door caught fire and burned to the ground. Gordon says his father told him how worried he was watching the building burn because his boyhood friend and the friend's little dog lived upstairs above the depot. The overall design, materials, and methods of construction of the present building would certainly bear out a construction date of about the turn of the century. Other pieces of data that would support the probability of a new or rebuilt structure on the site are recollections of the building having the first flush toilets in the area; drainage easements across adjacent property for sewage disposal dated August 16, 1901; and the existence of original toilet rooms and plumbing in the building that was integral with the initial design and construction, and not showing any signs of being the result of a major remodeling. It seems quite unlikely that prior to the turn of the century the railroad would have bothered with complete indoor plumbing in a rural facility like Ely.

There were several major and compelling reasons for the railroads wanting to establish a full service facility in the South Fairlee area, but the most important one had to do with the discovery of copper in Vershire and the subsequent development of the mining industry there.

Early in the nineteenth century copper was discovered in the southeast part of the Town of Vershire, but it was not until 1853 that the Vermont Mining Company was chartered and a major effort was made to exploit this find. Apparently, for the next 12 years these efforts met with marginal success until the mining company was acquired by a businessman from New Jersey, Smith Ely, in 1865.

Shortly after Mr. Ely gained control of the mining company, he authorized an engineering study looking at several alternatives for running a spur rail line up to the mining operations. The possibilities of running tracks up the Ompompanoosuc River Valley thru Thetford, or likewise coming off from the C & PRR line in the Fairlee area and following the path of present day Route 244, around Lake Fairlee, to Vershire were looked at. However, apparently both proposals were considered to be expensive and, as a result, the mining company instead chose to establish a shipping and receiving facility at Wares Crossing, on land that was purchased in 1865, immediately south of the present depot facility, and on the same side of the tracks. Upon

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this parcel of land, storage buildings and open sheds were constructed. Coke, used in the smelting process, was imported to the area by rail where it was temporarily stored in open sided sheds until it was later brought by horse drawn wagon the 14 or so miles up to the mining operation and furnaces located in Vershire. Also, it can be assumed that large amounts of other supplies necessary to keep the rapidly growing mining community functioning were brought here by rail.

By 1880, over three million pounds of copper, approximately 3/5ths of the entire output of the United States, was being shipped by rail out of Ware's Crossing annually. This copper was known as "pig" copper, being about 95% pure. In fact, so successful and apparently prosperous was Mr. Ely's operation that in 1878 the Town of Vershire petitioned the State of Vermont to allow the name of the community to be changed to Ely, hoping to flatter Mr. Ely and perhaps, as a result, acquire some substantial donations for funding numerous needed civic projects. However, apparently Mr. Ely's mining empire tucked in the hills of Vermont was not on a financially solid foundation. Monetary and labor problems erupted, and by the beginning of the twentieth century the mines were almost completely closed down. The newly named Town of Ely again petitioned the State, asking to return to being known as Vershire, and did so in 1882.

It is thought that it was during this time that the railroad stop known as Ware's Crossing came to be referred to as Ely Station, or perhaps just "Ely" as stated in the October 1872 railroad schedule mentioned earlier. Beers' 1877 atlas calls out both the names Ely Station and South Fairlee. Also, the site of the mining operations in the Town of Vershire is referred to as Ely. Later, in the early years of this century, the name was shortened by the railroad to just Ely, as is evident by signs that appear in photographs of the station taken circa 1914, and finally, in 1927 the postal service officially changed the name of the Village from South Fairlee to Ely. This was probably due to the fact that mail service was, by that time, being transported by rail.

During the first world war, there was some attempt to reopen the mines, but it was the rise in popularity of the summer youth camps in this part of Vermont and the growth in exporting agricultural goods out of the region that ushered in a whole new era for Ely.

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The early years of the century saw the establishment of as many as ten large summer youth camps around nearby Lake Fairlee. All total, the lake population often swelled by more than 1,500 campers, and in almost all cases, they arrived and departed by rail, going thru the depot in Ely. Also, just up the line in Fairlee the same thing was happening at Lake Morey. By this time, the Boston & Maine Railroad was leasing the tracks and all other related property from the C & PRR. On days when the camp enrollments changed several local men who as youngsters worked part-time during the summer in Ely's freight house, tell of the B & M running special "camp extra" trails up to Ely and Fairlee just to handle the sheer volume of campers. These trains would be placed on the adjacent siding while campers with their luggage either arrived or departed. These same men reminisce about stacking foot lockers inside the freight house right up to the underside of the roof ties, almost 12 feet above the floor, after having weighed each one, but before being able to load them into waiting baggage cars. However, by the mid 1960's, most campers arrived by automobile, and the days of B & M passenger service were over.

The Ely facility also played an important roll in the local agricultural economy, perhaps more so than most of the surrounding "village" depots, with their somewhat limited capacity to handler large amounts of freight.

Much of the upland area out thru the nearby settlements of Post Mills, West Fairlee, and Vershire was used for hay production. This hay was cut and bailed, brought down to Ely by wagon, then loaded upon freight cars that were parked on the long siding adjacent to the large open freight yard. Even up into the 1930's, there was still a market in the cities for hay as a result of horses continuing to be used in urban delivery service. In addition to hay, the depot handled the other common farm products of Vermont such as milk and related dairy goods. Also, like any other full service depot facility, the Railway Express Agency shipped and received out of Ely, which was how most of the area's domestic and consumer goods arrived. According to a REA receipt book found in the building, Ely was office No. 653-D.

Ely was also an important facility as far as the operation of the B & M was concerned. Property survey material compiled by the railroad dated 1914 showed a water tank on the site, and photographs from the same era confirm this. It was a standard B

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& M design, elevated, wooden 50,000 gallon tank, and was a vital water stop half way between White River Junction and Wells River, Vermont for the steam locomotives. During the 1930's the wooden tank was replaced by a steel tower, which has since been removed, and only the concrete foundations remain today. Also, due to the mile long siding just to the south of the building, and again because of Ely's mid-point status, train operators were kept on thru the night and the office remained open with its dispatcher's phone and telegraph service, to assist in moving the freight trains that typically ran at night, up and down the Connecticut River Valley. One retired operator tells of well over 24 trains a day passing over these rails.

By the late 1950's the Boston & Maine Railroad was experiencing critical financial problems, and as a result management was selling off real estate that it no longer felt was necessary for its day to day operations. Passenger and freight traffic was falling off, so in 1959 the B & M Board of Directors voted to sell the property that they only acquired in 1946 from the C & PRR, along with all other assets, that prior to this time had only been leased. B & M schedules for 1958 indicate that if a passenger were outside the building on the platform, the train would stop, but that there was no longer any ticket or baggage service provided. By 1959, Ely no longer appears on any B & M schedules. In fact, the last passenger service on these rails was January 4, 1965.

In 1961 the railroad had surveyed the land, prepared deeds, and sold the building and .2 acre to a private party who proceeded to use the property for storage. During the early 1970's, a quick renovation of the old lobby and agent's office was done, and it became home for the Post Office, which is still a tenant. Presently, plans are being compiled to restore the property and provide office/retail/storage space on the first floor and an apartment up above. It is intended to as closely as possible put the building back together down to such details as paint colors, building signage, train signalling equipment, etc.

The Ely station is significant for a variety of reasons. First, the overall design of the facility with its second floor apartment for the station agent, and the corresponding two story bay window, is unusual to Vermont. Far more typical is the commonly wood framed, single story facility without living quarters, and steeply pitched roofs with broad overhangs found in

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moderately sized villages and towns. It was assumed that by locating in more populated areas, the agent would be able to find suitable housing elsewhere in the community. However, with the Ely facility it was thought best to provide accommodations for the agent/operator and his family. This was more common in rural areas of Aroostook County, Maine, and upstate and western New York, where the distances between established villages was greater.

Secondly, the property has played a greater and more varied role in Vermont's social and economic development than perhaps many of the smaller, more "village" type of rail facilities. Ely's involvement in the state's all too brief mining industry, plus the once flourishing business of agriculture and summer youth camps gives the property an additional historical richness above and beyond the usual functions that it fulfilled by virtue of just being a railroad depot facility.

Thirdly, the fact that the building has survived, reasonably intact, is in this day and age in itself unusual. Unfortunately, as New England's once thriving railroad industry collapsed in the 1960's, and subsequently underwent drastic changes, most of its rural depots were sold off, more often than not for very little money. As a consequence, all too few of these once common buildings still remain in their original state. Many are either completely destroyed or so altered as to be almost unrecognizable, however, none of that is the case with Ely.

One can still see and understand not only the original materials and methods of construction, but also how the building would have functioned years ago as a rural depot facility linking Vermont with the outside world. It can be seen and understood how tickets were sold and the waiting passengers serviced; freight, mail, and the Railway Express Agency business handled; dispatch and telegraph service taken care of and the trains communicated with. Indeed one can still feel how once, during the glory days of the railroads in this country, this station, like so many thousands of others now gone, was truly a busy and important little place.

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A certain piece or parcel of land situated in Fairlee, Vermont, bounded and described as follows: beginning at a point South 80 degrees 49' 30" East fifteen and three hundredths (15.03) feet from Station 990+64.58 on the center line of location of tracks on the Fitchburg Division of the Boston & Maine Railroad, thence running along land of said Boston & Maine Railroad North 27 degrees 06' 31" East two hundred forty-three and eighty--six hundredths (243.86) feet, and thence turning and running along the Highway South 9 degrees 36' 30" West two hundred thirty-two and one hundredths (232.01) feet to land of said Boston & Maine Railroad, thence turning and running along said last mentioned land North 80 degrees 49' 30" West seventy-three and thirty-one hundredths (73.33) feet to the point of beginning, be all of said measurements more or less, said parcel containing an area of about eight thousand five hundred six (8,506) square feet, and being shown upon a plan marked "Land in Fairlee, Vt. Boston & Maine Railroad to Raylen Realty Co. J. F. Kerwin Ass't. Chief Engr. December 1959."