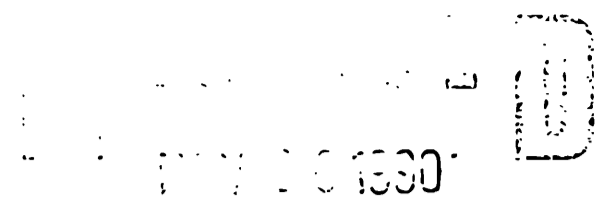


1047

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



NATIONAL  
REGISTER

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

1. Name of Property

historic name FARWELL SCHOOL  
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Route 12A, North Charlestown village N/A not for publication  
city, town Charlestown N/A vicinity  
state New Hampshire code NH county Sullivan code NH019 zip code 03603

3. Classification

|   |   |                                     |                 |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Ownership of Property                       | Category of Property                            | Number of Resources within Property |                 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | Contributing                        | Noncontributing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-local       | <input type="checkbox"/> district               | 1                                   | 1 buildings     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-State       | <input type="checkbox"/> site                   |                                     | sites           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal     | <input type="checkbox"/> structure              |                                     | structures      |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> object                 |                                     | objects         |
|   |   | 1                                   | 1 Total         |

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

*R. Stuart Walker*  
Signature of certifying official  
NEW HAMPSHIRE

10-25-90  
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain):

Entered in the  
National Register

*Arlene Byer*

12/6/90

*[Signature]*  
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/school

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/school

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Romanesque

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Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONEwalls STONESHINGLEroof ASPHALTother BRICK CHIMNEYWOOD DETAILING

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**Describe present and historic physical appearance.**

Farwell School is a two-room stone schoolhouse possessing integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Its architecture falls in the category of Romanesque Revival, executed in random rubble stone. The school has two classrooms and support spaces in a symmetric rectangular plan with shallow projecting pavilion, corner turret and rear addition, under a hipped roof. Farwell sits in a schoolyard by the road in a rural hamlet. The yard also contains a wooden shed, playground equipment, stone horse trough, and several trees. Built for the community of North Charlestown by a businessman and his family, the Farwells, the school has been in continual use as a public school since opening in 1890.

Charlestown NH, on the banks of the Connecticut River, was founded in 1737, and has for the past 150 years been a rural town supported by a mix of agriculture and manufacturing. 5 miles north of the town center is the area called North Charlestown, centered on a typical New England hamlet, with a church, Grange hall, cemetery, and schoolhouse. The village is composed of unpretentious clapboard and brick homes, built in the early to mid 19th century. Farwell School is just north of the Methodist Church, at the north end of the village, just south of where the main road (Route 12A) dips across Ox Brook and forks. Until the 1960's this was the main north-south road on the NH side of the river. Farwell School sits on a rise in a fenced schoolyard, with playground equipment, the shed, a parking area, and trees. To the east across the road was until the 1980's a steep wooded hill, since removed for gravel and replaced by a recreation area. To the north is a soccer field; to the west an apple orchard.

Farwell School was designed by Ward & McFarland, architects from Detroit(1), about whom no further information is available. The builder was Hira Beckwith, from neighboring Claremont NH. Construction was supervised by David Farwell, brother to Jesse Farwell, the donor. The costs of construction and land purchase were funded equally by Jesse Farwell, a Detroit businessman raised in North Charlestown, and his wife, Emer Godfrey Farwell of Detroit.

 See continuation sheet

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National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
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The original plan of the schoolhouse is rectangular; its current "T" plan results from the 1926 addition. Cut stone steps access the wide masonry arch which precedes the recessed entry door. Crowning the pavilion is a projecting gable clad in staggered buttwood shingles. The roof was originally clad with wood shingles, and now has asphalt shingles with aluminum valley flashing. At the north classroom the corner library is an engaged turret with conical cap. There is a large chimney of corbelled brick behind the library turret. An octagonal belfrey in the location of a hip knob over the south classroom balances the tower and chimney on the north side. The belfrey still has wood shingles. At the base of the building, the batter of the water table increases the image of solidity, and helps to balance the deep sheltering eaves. The bathroom addition in the rear (west side) is also of stone and projects from the center of the rear wall.

The front (east) facade is the most important on the school, and has the strongest public identification. The left, or south, third of the facade has 3 tall windows with granite surrounds; a basement window is centered below. The center third is the entrance pavilion. The stonework here is a foot higher, and comes forward about 18" from the front wall of the building. There are 4 granite steps, which decrease in width as they ascend to the arch. The semicircular arch is formed with large stones of the same light granite with rough split texture as the window surrounds. The keystone is of speckled granite. Above the arch are 2 deepset rectangular panelled openings which are stone-trimmed like the windows. A rectangular stone inscribed "Farwell School 1889" sits between them. Inside the entrance porch the walls are clad in staggered shingles, painted white with forest green trim. The porch ceiling is white beaded board, the floor varnished wood. The front door is raised panel, with large plate glass sidelights above wood panels. A divided light transom is over the entire doorway, which is all painted green. Above the stonework of the entrance porch, the triangular gable is clad with staggered white shingles, with a saw-tooth bottom edge. Centered in the gable are paired round-headed windows, the glass now covered with boards. (The original flagpole was centered on the gable.) The north third of the main facade has a short segment of flat wall with an elliptical stained glass window with a simple geometric pattern. The corner turret completes the front facade, and has high, nearly square, curved windows.

The side (north) elevation has the turret on the front corner, and two tall windows and a basement window in the flat wall. The interior chimney punctuates this portion of the structure.

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

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The south elevation has 4 tall windows, centered, with one basement window below. The elongated belfry tower, caps the hipped roof.

The west, or rear, side of the school is divided in three parts. The north and south thirds, integral to the original rectangular plan, each have 2 tall classroom windows over one basement window. The middle segment is comprised of the bathroom addition, and was the location of an earlier wooden structure. This 1926 addition has small vertical windows, set high, and placed the same on the north and south walls--a pair for the sink area, a trio for the toilet area. The west of back wall of the addition is blank. On the north wall the original bulkhead has been replaced with a gable-roofed concrete block stair enclosure.

Exterior details around the building are consistent. Exposed rafters at the open eaves have rounded designed ends, and are painted dark green, as are the small wooden brackets supporting the center gable. Bed molding at the gable is white and green. All the window frames, and the entrance doorway, are painted dark green. Small basement windows are placed in the battered water table, and have 3 panes each. Some have been covered with boards. The classroom windows are tall and single-hung, with a plate glass pane below 12 divided lights, horizontally oriented. High windows encircling the library tower repeat the theme, but are curved. The 1926 bathroom windows are single hung, with two lights.

The uncoursed rough stone foundation flares to 3' thick at the base. Above grade it flares to 2', and switches to large fieldstones and river-rounded stones, split and showing varied colors. According to reporters attending the 1890 Dedication, many stones were "gathered from seven states and from the beds of the rivers running through the town. The varied sizes, shapes and colors, united by red cement, make a handsome mosaic"(2). They were "contributed by the people of the neighborhood"(3). Unique stones were incorporated in the walls: the gate pivot stone from the old Farwell homestead, the initials of the builder, H.B., chipped into a cobble, a stone studded with garnets, a stone with an amusing human profile, and the "alleged meteor", a lacy black stone which couldn't be split(4). The front steps, arch, and all window casings, are of Lake Sunapee granite, a light gray fine-grained building stone quarried in Sunapee NH. The light gray mortar is trimmed with tidy tuck pointing, light brick red in color, with a 1/2" wide rectangular profile. The best stones and most careful tuck pointing were used on the front and sides. On the back side of the building the red mortar covers the gray completely, without tuck pointing.

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Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 4

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Inside the schoolhouse there are two classrooms, divided by the entrance hall. The north classroom has a semi-circular library alcove lined with curved book cabinets, which originally had glass doors. Masses of the chimney and basement stair also intrude. The south classroom is nearly square, and has a small closet. The 2 toilet rooms are reached through arched openings in the main hall, through two wainscoted passages with coat hooks. Originally there was a wooden cloakroom and closet structure on the back of the school, which contained a stair.

The full basement, left unfinished at the time of construction, is reached by a narrow stair from the front hall. Brick piers and columns in the basement support the middle of the structure. Initially the low-ceilinged basement housed only a furnace, but it has been developed gradually to house a meeting area, kitchen, library, boiler room, storeroom, and rear stair. Plans are being considered for a second stair and wheelchair access at the north side of the addition.

The typical interior finish upstairs is wood wainscoting, and top rail with plaster walls and ceiling. The woodwork originally had a clear finish, which can be seen in the closet in the south room. The beaded board wainscoting is of oak and chestnut. The front door is oak. Floors in the south room and hall are oak, with maple in the north room(5). There are built-in slate chalkboards with chalktrays which align with the top of the wainscot and window sills. The hall wainscot is higher. Downstairs, the walls are variously of brick, rough stone, and gypsum board, finished with paint or clear sealer. The basement floors are concrete, linoleum, and carpet.

The bathroom addition was built in 1926. The addition is solid, but of less fine workmanship. The stones are small ovoid cobbles, split for the north and south walls, unsplit on the rear wall, laid with red mortar without tuck pointing. The roof is hipped, of the same pitch as the earlier roof. Inside the floors are cast concrete. Interior walls are painted textured concrete stucco, except for the east wall, which is wood. Toilet partitions are white marble.

At the northwest corner of the school is a 1 1/2 story detached wooden shed (noncontributing), painted barn red. This was built some time before 1920 to house horse-drawn equipment for the volunteer fire department. The walls are sheathed in clapboards and beaded board. The gable roof is sheathed in asphalt. The front or east side of the shed has an attic hatch, and swinging doors. The floor is dirt.

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Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 5

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Additions and Changes:

By an act of the New Hampshire Legislature (1889 House Bill #149), the previous 4 school districts (each served by a one-room school) in North Charlestown now combined for the new Farwell School, would only be taxed for the schools within their own area. As part of the Deed of Trust that gave the building to that community, the Farwell trustees were organized to oversee the school. They are typically 5 North Charlestown citizens, who tend to the legal, financial, and physical welfare of the schoolhouse, often doing repairs themselves. Educational administration has been by various School Boards. Funding has come mainly from taxation.

Interior finishes and painting were completed after the July 4 1890 dedication. The school opened in the fall to 9 grades of "scholars" in the two classrooms. After finishing at Farwell, some went on the High School at Charlestown or Claremont, or to private schools.

In 1891 the basement floor was cemented, the chimney made taller, and window shades purchased. In 1894 there was a court case which upheld the right of Farwell District to be exempt from taxation by Charlestown for schools outside the district. Two of the trustees built a privy on to the existing cloakroom in 1898, and a new furnace was installed.

Few changes were recorded during the first decade of the 20th century. Patching and painting were done. The telephone came to town in 1907. An agreement was made to stop allowing cows and horses to forage on school grounds, and a "kid cart" route was begun to carry the scholars.

The furnace was replaced again in 1910. Running water was installed in 1910, and the 9th grade discontinued. Students went to watch the last log drive pass by on the river. New slate blackboards were placed over the old cracked ones in 1914. In 1915 the roof was resingled, exterior trim painted, and a "heavy, non-climbable wire fence" installed. Money was raised for a Victrola. Older students rode the train to high school. At least by 1919, the girls' toilet room was on the main level of the school, and an area for preparing lunches. There was a stair from that back area to the boys' toilet room in the basement.

Emma Farwell, who as a girl had suggested the school to her father, was chosen to be a trustee in 1926. That same year electric lights were put in, and the stone bathroom addition built on the back of the building. The old wooden toilets were made into a garage, either since demolished, or located

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elsewhere.

In 1933 Miss Farwell passed away, leaving fond memories among the children, to who she would give generous gifts every Christmas. A concrete apron was put around the front of the building in 1936, and window trim painted. During the 1930's the Mothers' Club was founded by North Charlestown women, a social and charitable group which began a long history of works in support of the school and community.

During the 1940's the Mothers' Club aided the existing lunch program (simple hot foods prepared by the teachers and older students) by donations of money, dishes, and an oil stove. They also tended to the basketball hoops and poison ivy in the schoolyard. New lights were added by the trustees. In 1947, following a meeting of North Charlestown taxpayers called by the trustees, the State Legislature made an amendment to the 1889 bill (1947 House Bill #375), limiting the North Charlestown tax arrangement to just the first 6 grades, so that a High School could be built in downtown Charlestown for the use of the whole town. The 7th and 8th grades were moved to that school when it was completed.

In 1952 the Farwell classrooms were painted. The School Board put linoleum on the basement floor. The Mothers' Club served lunches, and donated window shades, audio-visual and playground equipment. Some time before the 1960's, the heating system was switched from hot air ducts to hot water radiators, a supply room built in the basement, fluorescent lights put in the classrooms, and the parking area paved.

In the early 1960's, most recorded improvements were in the basement. The community helped cover the lunch tables with linoleum, and the School Board put in a unit heater. The Mothers' Club obtained an electric stove in a radio promotion, which was installed in a new kitchen area. The Club also began running a volunteer Hot Soup Program.

The Fall Mountain Regional School District was formed in 1965 by 5 rural towns: Charlestown, Walpole, Alstead, Acworth, and Langdon. The State Legislature changed the local taxation for 2 districts-- in Alstead, and North Charlestown, thus eradicating the Farwell District. In 1966 Farwell School came under the jurisdiction of the Fall Mountain School Board, and because of overcrowding grades 5 and 6 were moved to Charlestown Junior High. The regional high school opened in Langdon, 15 miles south. In 1967 the School Board was petitioned by a group of voters to close Farwell School, because of overcrowding, but the school remained open. In mid-year of 1969, the 4th

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Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 7

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grade was moved to Charlestown Primary School.

1970 brought great furor to North Charlestown. In the spring of that year, despite previous agreements with the trustees and community, and without warning, the School Board voted to close Farwell, claiming that they had no control because the building was owned by the local community, and because there were not enough schoolchildren to support it. The trustees didn't want to pay to repair someone else's building, and the trustees no longer had taxation to fund their own repairs. The local people, having a long tradition of independence, and of love for the schoolhouse, and wishing to keep their youngest children near home, rebelled loudly against the Fall Mountain School Board.

After much public discussion, the Board formally agreed to rent Farwell, and to pay utilities and educational costs. A State Evaluation Committee suggested certain repairs. The trustees were able to pay for insurance and a janitor, and organized volunteer Work Days, supported by community donations, during the 1970 summer vacation. The roof was stripped and resingled, again with asphalt shingles. The wiring was repaired, the broken stained glass window replaced with a plastic replica, the basement ceiling and lighting replaced, ceilings and walls repainted, and wood floors refinished. An underground oil tank was installed north of the building. Because of these events and efforts, the community became stronger, and developed an even greater attachment to the schoolhouse.

In subsequent years the trustees and community members have continued this method of upkeep. The attic has been insulated, and green paint stripped from the 1914 slate chalkboards. In 1974 the north half of the basement, previously walled off for the furnace, was remodelled: masonry walls and a new concrete floor made a smaller furnace room, a place for a future library, and for a new kitchen. The old kitchen was removed, and a janitor's area added below the 1926 addition. A new flagpole was installed, with a bronze eagle cast by local high school students. In 1975 the shed roof was replaced, and the first storm windows put up. A second exit to the basement was added in 1976, by replacing the cellar bulkhead on the north side of the addition with an enclosed stairway of unpainted concrete block, with a shallow gable roof. This minor addition is not fine architecture, but is on the least exposed part of the school, and of a similar color to the stonework, and so does not detract from the architecture of the whole. In 1976 a new heating system was put in, and more insulation added to the attic. A new electric service entrance was installed. The new kitchen, with plastic laminate cabinets paid for by the trustees, and a dishwasher purchased with Federal



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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

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funds, was finished in 1977, to a design by students from the High School. At the behest of the State Fire Marshall, glass transoms over the classroom doors were replaced with plywood. Plate glass shot by vandals was replaced.

The new library in the basement was finished in 1978, with money from local donors. Massive stone walls were coated with clear sealer, and a green carpet and bookshelves added. Wiring and lighting were improved in the basement, a sapling removed from the chimney, and the boys' toilets replaced. In 1977 land north of the school lot became available, and was purchased by the trustees from financial reserves and community donations.

The new lot was developed by St. Pierre inc., local gravel pit owners and trustees, who cleared the site, straightened the brook, and built a parking area and soccer field for use by the school and community.

During the 1980's, a new chain link fence was erected, and a cable TV hookup installed. Painting was done regularly, and desks refinished. The wooden gravel hill east of the school was removed by its owners, which allowed more morning sunshine to reach the school. There were 4 grades at the school in the mid-80's. In 1983 the School Board decided to bus the 4th grade to an underused school 15 miles away, meeting with opposition from the parents. Discussions were held on alternatives, including an addition to Farwell. In 1988 the lot west of the schoolyard, an apple orchard which was no longer commercially viable, was offered for sale to the trustees. They purchased on behalf of Farwell School, and currently rent it to a farmer for sheep pasture. Possible uses under discussion are a softball field, or a second schoolhouse to help relieve overcrowded Charlestown schools, and to stop long distance bussing of young students.

In 1989, after the annual Memorial Day parade from the school to the cemetery, a committee was formed to plan a celebration of the Centennial of Farwell School, on July 7, 1990. During 1990, computers were purchased, with the help of funds raised by the students, who will now use both computers and chalk on slate boards. In July of 1990 guests came from near and far, by car and airplane rather than buggy and train, as at the Dedication 100 years before. But at the Centennial, as at the Dedication, there were speeches, and a band, and home-cooked food, set against the backdrop of a fine stone school building. And the scholars, now aged 6 to 98, stood on the stone steps to have their photographs taken.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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**Footnotes:**

- (1) "The Farwell School...", Bellows Falls Times, July 10, 1890, Bellows Falls VT.
- (2) "Dedication at North Charlestown", The Republican Champion, July 10, 1890, Newport NH.
- (3) "Red Letter Day", Springfield Reporter, July 11, 1890, Springfield VT.
- (4) Ibid.
- (5) "An Interesting Event...", The Claremont Advocate, July 9, 1890, vol. XLII #9, Claremont NH.

See also References, Section 9, Continuation Sheet.

**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)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1889-90  
1926

1889-90  
1926 (addition)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

A: Ward & McFarland, Detroit MI  
B: Hira Beckwith, Claremont NH

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

Farwell School is eligible for the National Register under Criteria "C", for its architecture. The school is a well-preserved example of vernacular Romanesque Revival. It is one of two Romanesque Revival structures in the town, the only one of stone and the only one in the style of H.H. Richardson. The 1926 bathroom addition, and less visible alterations, have been in keeping with the character of the building, and do not detract from its significance. The period of significance of Farwell School is 1889-90, the time of its construction, with significant dates of 1890, when it was completed, and 1926 when the stone addition was built.

At the time it was built, 1889-90, Farwell School was a reaction to the one-room schoolhouse of rural New England. It was built as a sturdy, progressive building by a philanthropic former resident. As a testimony to the quality of its design and construction, it has functioned continuously as a rural schoolhouse for 100 years. Farwell School has been cherished by the community through the years both as a building and as an institution.

The primary significance of Farwell School is as a piece of architecture. It was designed by Ward & McFarland, Detroit architects(1), about whom no further information is available. Contemporary buildings in the Detroit area of similar appearance are the DKE Fraternity house, Ann Arbor(2), and the Belle Isle Police Station, 1893, by Mason & Rice. Jesse Farwell was probably familiar with these buildings, or similar ones in the Detroit area where he lived. He apparently commissioned the design around 1888 (ground-breaking was July 4 1889), at which time the style used for the schoolhouse would have been very much up-to-date and fashionable.

Romanesque Revival, into which stylistic category Farwell falls, was one of the popular styles of the 1880's and 90's, used particularly for houses, libraries, churches, and railroad stations most often in urban areas. In New England, H.H.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

\_\_\_\_\_, Biographical Review, Vol. XXII, Biographical Review Pub'l. Co., 1897, biography of Jesse Farwell, pp. 414-34.

Bremmer, Robert H., American Philanthropy, Univ. of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1988.

Farwell School Trustees' Records, includes clerk's notes, legal papers, histories, letters, photographs, newspaper articles, and oral histories, etc. Of particular note: Deed of Trust, Clerk's Book (1872-1965), Meeting Notes (1970-90), 1890 newspapers collected in 1890 by Wesley Hunt (see footnotes for references), copies from scrapbook of Lewis Gay, historical collections from Emma Hunt, photos and letters collected for Centennial by Margery Reed. Stored at Farwell School, in safe deposit box, and at trustees' home.

Ferry, W. Hawkins, The Buildings of Detroit, Wayne State Univ. Press, Detroit, 1968.

Frizzell, Martha, The Second History of Charlestown, Corner Printing Co., Littleton NH, 1955.

Tolles, Bryant and Carolyn, New Hampshire Architecture, NH Historical Society, Univ. Press of New England, Hanover NH, 1979.

Some minor sources are cited only in the N/A Previous documentation on file (NPS): footnotes.

See continuation sheet

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

Primary location of additional data:

previously listed in the National Register

State historic preservation office

previously determined eligible by the National Register

Other State agency

designated a National Historic Landmark

Federal agency

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

Local government

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

University

Other Charlestown Historical Society

Specify repository:

Farwell Trustees' Records

Fall Mtn. Regional School District

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property less than one acre (approx. 9/10 acre)

UTM References

A 

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
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Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

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D 

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Boundaries of the nominated property are indicated on the attached sketch map.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the lot associated with the School since its founding, including the schoolyard. Additional land acquired by the Farwell Trustees (parcel to the north with soccer field and woods, parcel to the west with apple orchard) is not included, having been purchased after 1975, and lacking in historic significance.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Susan E. Reed, Architect

organization c/o Farwell Trustees

date July 1, 1990

street & number 21 West Wheelock Street

telephone 603-643-8233

city or town Hanover

state New Hampshire zip code 03755

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Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

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Richardson, the first master of the style, built from rubble stone the Ames Gate Lodge, N. Easton MA, 1880-81(3). New Hampshire buildings somewhat resembling Farwell are: Rollins Chapel in Hanover by John Lyman Faxon of Boston, 1884-85, the Maplewood Casino, Bethlehem, 1888-89. The only other Romanesque building in Charlestown is Silsby Free Library, by C. McAlpine, 1893-94 (4), a brick and red sandstone structure (listed on the National Register as part of the Charlestown Main Street Historic District, 6/10/87).

The choice of style and material for Farwell School was unusual for its location. Stone was a material used mainly in urban areas, or in towns where there was a great local supply of quarryable building stone. Charlestown itself has few stone structures, with the notable exception of the 1849 "Culvert" in North Charlestown, a massive vault in rusticated granite which carries the railroad over the Little Sugar River. Like brick, stone was often used in urban areas, because it was durable and non-combustible. Stone was probably used for the rural Farwell by its urban architects and donor for these qualities, and to fit the architectural style. The somewhat memorial intent of the building may also have influenced the choice of a monumental material and style.

The use of large, rusticated, rough-cut cobble stones in the Romanesque Revival Style, first popularized by Richardson, was perhaps a way to emphasize the ruggedness of the stone, and to evoke the rugged early medieval Romanesque European churches and castles, along with the artistically popular brawny mountainous regions of the New World. It was largely a rich man's style, used for American urban castles and institutional buildings meant to be durable images of power and old tradition. The architectural associations are not lost on the children. In 1989 "one child who just moved into the area came by, and he was so pleased. He was going to get to go to school in 'the Castle'" (5).

The late 19th century was a time of philanthropic construction, when successful urban capitalists would build public monuments, both practical and beautiful, such as the Freer Gallery, Stanford University, and the thousands of Carnegie Libraries. These monuments were generally large urban structures. The notable exception were small rural libraries, such as the Silsby Free Libraries in Charlestown and Acworth NH, and the libraries in Dublin and Kingston NH, intricate small buildings in rural areas substantially built in stone and brick in fashionable styles. The libraries were buildings given to the community to foster free access to books and information for the general public. These "temples of learning" are of a similar size, style, general intent, and origin to Farwell School, and so it might be grouped

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architecturally with them, but as a public schoolhouse it is unique from the libraries. "Of all the ladders for those who aspired, free libraries and educational institutions... struck capitalists of the 1880's and 1890's as the most inspiring." (11)

### Historical Context:

As in most of rural New England in the 1880's, the children of North Charlestown spent all their schoolyears studying in one-room schoolhouses, usually wooden, scattered throughout the community, each presided over by one teacher, and notorious for being poorly heated and maintained. A former pupil at such a school, Jesse Farwell was home for a summer visit with his family. He had moved west as a youth like many New Englanders, and had become a successful Detroit businessman. After passing by his old decrepit schoolhouse, and at his schoolgirl daughter Emma's suggestion, he decided to build a new school for North Charlestown. He and his wife, Emer Godfrey Farwell of Detroit, funded the project equally.

The schoolhouse was given by the Farwells "for and in consideration of the love we bear the Town of Charlestown... and being desirous of promoting the cause of free public education." Rather than an outright gift, they decided to put the school under the care of the trustees, for the benefit of the four North Charlestown school districts. The building was to be used for "school and library purposes", and to be available for local religious organizations. At the risk of losing the school, the schoolhouse was "to be held and enjoyed by them for school and educational purposes forever on condition that the citizens ... shall at all times keep said school building and grounds in suitable condition and repair." (6)

Land was purchased (only this original plot of land is under consideration for the National Register), and the cornerstone laid on July 4, 1889, by Jesse and his 13-year old daughter Emma. He gave the school in memory of his parents and teachers "while impressed by the perishable nature of all ordinary memorials... it is hoped that some small influence for good, and the general advancement of humankind may radiate from it, even though it may be all unseen ... by the changing throng which will soon take our places. (7)

Speaking a year later at the dedication, July 4, 1890, Farwell hoped that the pupils, teachers, and trustees should "be successful in making this school a pride to the community, an ornament to the township and the model rural school of New Hampshire and New England." (8) The orator for the day, the Hon. Justus Dartt, an educator, said that "this beautiful structure, unique in its

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design... shall stand for learning, and culture, for discipline of life and worth of character in those who trained within it. How well the architect has made it represent the thought for which it stands: varied and diversified in its material it shall give its privileges to all... free to all, a grand representation of the common school... the foundation of our educational system." (9) He further stated that unlike the old neglected schoolhouses, "a neat, pleasant, and well-appointed school-room is an educator of the best kind." (10)

Farwell School was built at the beginning of a long regional trend to consolidate the scattered, isolated one-room schools into larger and more centralized schools. This trend allowed increasing specialization of teaching, and division of students by age, intellect, or interests rather than geography. Centralization was only possible because of improvements to roadways and vehicles.

In the 19th century, the general trend of internal migration in New England, and of the acquisition of wealth, was away from agriculture, towards the cities and the West. (A side effect of these trends was the increasing need for formal education.) Emigration to the cities usually took place in early adulthood, going to the city to seek a fortune. Urban careers are still considered today to be the mark of success and glamour by small town New England. Jesse Farwell took part in that process. He began as a farmboy in New Hampshire, apprenticed to an undertaker in upstate New York, and went on to burgeoning Detroit to become a success in road contracting, transportation, and assorted industries.

Like many intranational American emigrants, Jesse Farwell maintained close ties to his hometown. So many former rural New Englanders kept affection for their hometowns that most towns held an annual "Old Home Day" in the summer to celebrate summer vacation visits "home" by the many who had left. With improvements in transportation, especially the railroad, rural New England was a popular spot for long summer stays to escape city heat. The main railroad line north from New York City came up the Connecticut River Valley, passing through Charlestown and North Charlestown. Downtown Victorian Charlestown had hotels, "casinos", summer homes made from unneeded farmhouses, and even a few grand mansions for affluent people. The town was rural, but not isolated.

The Farwells' choice for a philanthropic structure was unusual, because of its rural location, its architecture, and because the building of public schools was then, and is now, a necessity funded by taxes. But as was remarked at the dedication in 1890, the unusual benevolence of the three Farwells, Jesse, Emer, and Emma, has ensured that they be remembered for generations in North Charlestown, long after the Farwell name disappeared from Charlestown and

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Detroit, and lichen covered their gravestones. The uncommon nature of the gift, a public school held in trust for one part of a town, has prevented the memorial from sinking into placid obscurity, and has insured that the building has been well-kept.

Credit for the high quality stonework goes to the builder, Hira Beckwith of Claremont NH, who built a number of fine buildings in the area, and his unnamed masons, who had a fine eye for the placement of unusual stones. Nothing is really known about the exact source of the stones, but since the region is covered with glacial leavings, the variety is understandable. Some stones were given by the community. The stonework is somewhat flatter than is typical for rubblework Richardsonian buildings, but is still in keeping with the character of ashlar Romanesque structures. A side benefit of the use of stone as a building material is that it requires little maintenance to keep its original appearance, outside the smoke of cities, and is hard to build on to, so that after 100 years the schoolhouse and exterior of the school is little changed. Deep eaves have also helped keep the original appearance.

Farwell School is a good example of a building which has survived and flourished not only because it was well built, but also because it was well designed. Unique looks make it a landmark for strangers, "the little stone school", "the castle", photogenic for the newspapers, an object of distinction for an unimposing hamlet. It became the heart of the local community, in a way that the adjacent Methodist Church could not in an area that had members of a variety of sects. The School became the heart in the way that a plainer, less durable schoolhouse could not have done. It provided rich memories to former students wherever they wandered in the world. It made children feel important, knowing that they were in a good building, built especially for them. Farwell became the heart because there were ways for community members to help support the institution as individuals, with personal involvement rather than impersonal taxes: by being Trustees, by serving soup with the Mothers' Club, by painting and scrubbing in the summers, and by defending it from "outsiders". Even in a quiet rural community which has long felt left behind by the grand forefront of progress and importance, Farwell School has given the community something to be proud of, and to be possessive of, a direct response to the uniqueness of the donation, and the architectural quality of the building.

As has been stated, Farwell School is the most unique building in North Charlestown, for architectural and psychological reasons. Certainly within a 20-mile radius, it retains its uniqueness. The other communities in that circle do have interesting and beautiful structures in many styles. But there are few, if any, buildings of the same style within that area, for farmers in the rural areas could not afford grand stone school buildings. The basis for



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wealth changed during the 19th century, and at that end industrial and resort towns did have the money for fancy buildings, but not to spend on rural schools. The intent of the many lovely village libraries in New England, which Farwell resembles in scale and quality, was the promotion of learning, but they also became memorials to the donors, as small but grand buildings in rural towns.

Within New Hampshire and its fraternal twin Vermont, even within New England as a whole, Farwell School has significance. Romanesque stone buildings were not cheap, so few were built, and seldom in a rural setting. Schools durable enough to withstand 100 years of student wear and tear are not common. A public school supported by a private trust (non-monetary) is rare. As a gift building, it was uncommon, because the general practice of the Gilded Age philanthropists was to found new institutions and to fund relief organizations, rather than to reinforce existing public sector systems. But Emma Farwell, who suggested the gift, was a schoolgirl, not a capitalist giant. Farwell School is probably unique, and certainly a valuable resource worthy of recognition and preservation.

As a small schoolhouse, Farwell is part of a vanishing rural tradition. Unlike counterparts, it refuses to vanish because it was built so well and loved so well. It is also in some ways a cultural relic of the centralization of education, of the philanthropic Victorian industrialists, and of physical but not emotional emigration from rural New England. It was also left from a time when public schools, at least in urban areas, were for a time grand aedifices. But Farwell is not just a dusty souvenir in Grandma's attic, but a thriving school, an important part of our living heritage into the 21st century.

**Footnotes:**

- (1) "The Farwell School...", Bellows Falls Times, July 10, 1890, vol. 35 #28, Bellows Falls VT.
- (2) Warner, C.F., Picturesque Detroit and Environs, Picturesque Publishing Co., Northampton MA, 1893, p. 125.
- (3) Hitchcock, H.R., The Architecture of H.H. Richardson & His Times, Shoestring Press, USA, 1961, p. 58.
- (4) Tolles, B.F. & C.K., New Hampshire Architecture, NH Historical Society, Univ. Press of New England, Hanover NH, 1979, pp. 165, 291, 315.
- (5) Rapsis, J., "Farwell School...", Eagle-Times, Sept. 26, 1989, Claremont NH, p. 1 & 5.
- (6) Deed of Trust, "Jesse Farwell et al...", Sullivan County NH, signed July 4, 1890.

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- (7) newspaper clipping, July 1889, "North Charlestown" column, preserved in scrapbook of Lewis Gay, Unity NH.
- (8) "Dedication of the Farwell School...", The National Eagle, July 12, 1890, Claremont NH.
- (9) "Red Letter Day", Springfield Reporter, July 11, 1890, vol. XIII #28, Springfield VT.
- (10) "Dedication...", op. cit.
- (11) Bremmer, R.H., American Philanthropy, Univ. of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1988, p. 104.

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### Verbal Boundary Description:

Beginning at the corner of the chain link fence north of the Methodist Church parking lot in North Charlestown village, northerly along fence along Route 12A 404.25' (24 1/2 rods). Thence westerly 130' (6 1/2 rods), thence 90° corner, and southerly 387.75' (23 1/2 rods) along chain link fence to southwest corner of playground, then easterly 99' (6 rods) along fence to starting point.

Source: Deed dated July 21, 1890, and survey prepared by Farwell Trustees.

See Also: Charlestown Tax Map, Lot #3 in North Charlestown village. Not all of Lot #3 is under consideration, only the original parcel.

AUG 13 1990

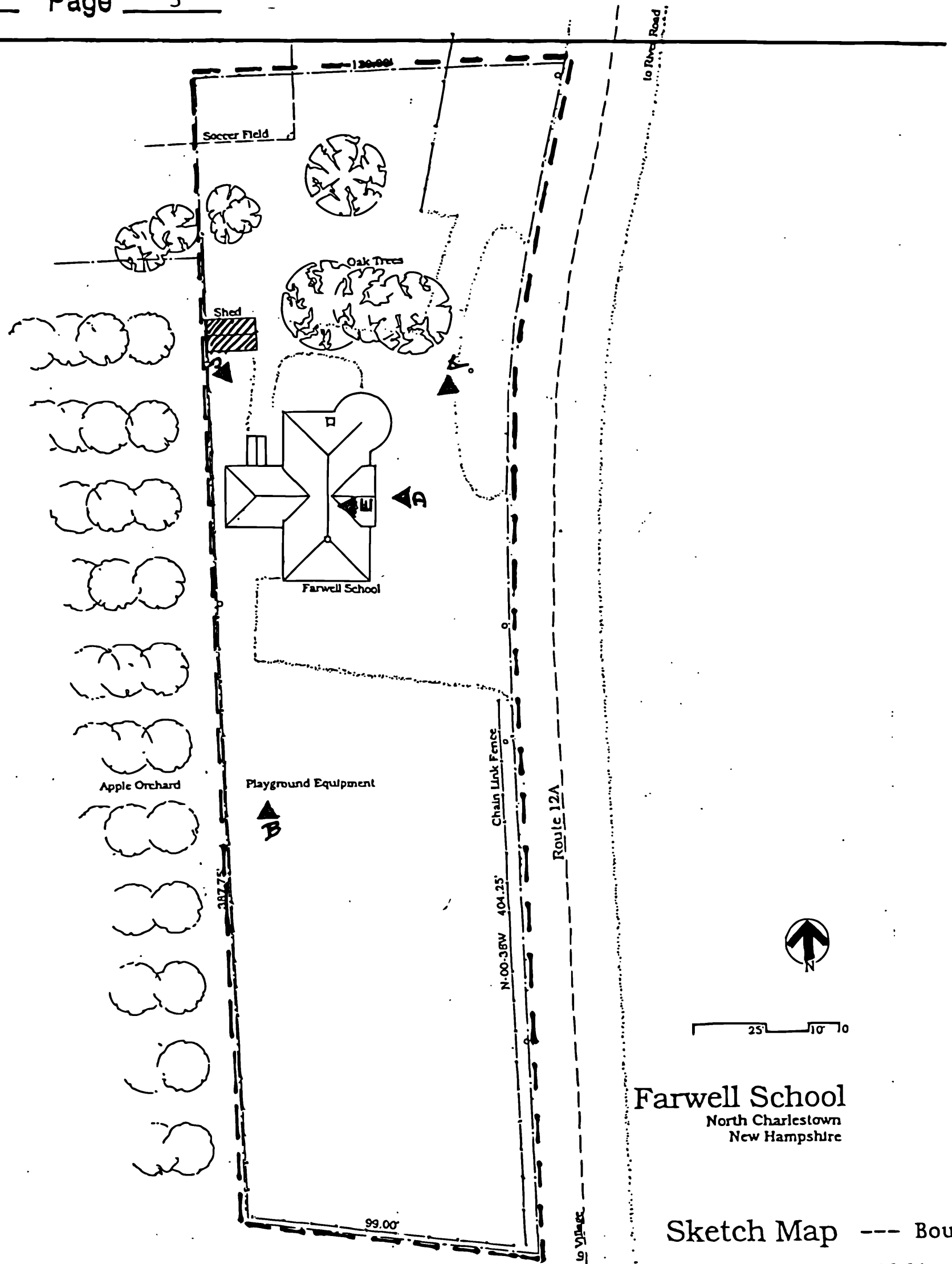
NPS Form 10-900-1  
(5-85)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

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25' 10' 10'

**Farwell School**  
North Charlestown  
New Hampshire

Sketch Map --- Boundary  
 Contributing Building □  
 NonContrib. Building ▨

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This certifies that the appearance has not changed since these photographs were taken.

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Accompanying Documentation

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PROPERTY OWNER:

Farwell Trustees  
c/o David Streeter  
RFD #1  
Charlestown, NH 03603