

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received JAN 5 1983
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic South Reading Schoolhouse

and/or common same

2. Location

street & number Felchville-Tyson's Corner Road, N/A not for publication

city, town ^{South} Reading X vicinity of South Reading Village

state Vermont code 50 county Windsor code 027

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Town of Reading

street & number P. O. Box 72

city, town Reading X vicinity of Felchville state Vermont

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the Town Clerk, Town of Reading

street & number P. O. Box 72

city, town Reading (Felchville) state Vermont

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title VT. Hist. Sites and Structures Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1973 federal state county local

depository for survey records Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

city, town Montpelier state Vermont

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The South Reading Schoolhouse is a rectangular, two and one-half story, gable roofed structure of stone construction. The stonework is of a type known as "snecked ashlar", in which large, relatively thin slabs of gneiss are laid on edge, generally in regular courses, as a veneer over a rubblestone wall. The fenestration is evenly spaced on the north, east and south elevations. A one and one-half story, wood frame shed with a gable roof is attached to the west elevation, and a wood frame, louvered belfry with a pyramid shaped roof crowns the ridge.

Because of the 1834 date of construction, the schoolhouse falls comfortably within the Greek Revival style. However, because of the building's snecked ashlar construction, it is devoid of almost any detailing typical to that style. The interior was partially remodeled in 1873 and does display Italianate Revival style window and door casings.

The South Reading Schoolhouse is located on the Felchville-Tyson's Corner Road approximately three-tenths of a mile due west of the unincorporated village of South Reading, in the south central section of the town. The schoolhouse sits in the southwest corner of an open, grassy, triangular shaped lot on the side of a moderately steep, and predominantly wooded, hill. The hill rises behind the schoolhouse to the west and falls off to the east down toward the village.

The south side of the triangular lot is bordered by the paved, Felchville-Tyson's Corner Road, Reading State Aid Highway No. 1. A gravel road, Reading Town Highway No. 47, joins the paved road just below the schoolhouse, to the east, and, running in a northwesterly direction, defines the lot's northeast side. The northwest side is marked by a brush and tree covered fieldstone wall set into the bank of the hill.

On the opposite side of the gravel road from the schoolhouse, the land drops off sharply down a steep bank to Darby Brook. Across the paved road, to the south, Alder Meadow Brook makes a more gradual descent down the hill toward the village where it joins Darby Brook approximately two-tenths of a mile below the schoolhouse, to the east.

The schoolhouse measures 26 by 40 feet, or two bays by four bays, with the ridge of the gable roof running parallel to the long side of the building. The gable ends are oriented to the east and west. Below grade, the foundation is of rubblestone construction. Above grade, the walls are of snecked ashlar construction, and are eighteen inches thick. The roof is constructed of principal rafters set into a ridge pole, and is covered with asphalt shingles.

The fenestration is evenly spaced but there is no window opening in the right, corner bay on the second floor of the north elevation. There are no window or door openings on the west gable end. The only entrance to the building is located in the left, corner bay on the first floor of the south elevation, facing the paved road.

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On the first floor, the window and door openings have stone lintels and wood sills. On the second floor, on the north and south elevations, the windows are set high against the cornice of the roof so that the cornice forms a continuous lintel. On the east gable end, the second floor lintels are stone.

All of the windows are six-over-two, double hung sash set in frames near the outside face of the stone wall. The first floor windows are covered by bright aluminum, combination storm and screen window units. Solid wood shutters, made out of wide beaded boards which run vertically, cover the second floor windows.

The original entrance door was set back into the stone wall near the inside face with a deep wood jamb and a four light transom. The original door has been removed but the transom remains. A new four light transom and six panel door have been attached to the original jamb at the outside edge. The door has been hung to swing out, and is reached by a pair of steps made out of two large slabs of stone.

In the center of the gable on the east end of the schoolhouse, the inscription "Built 1834" is painted in white on a large, roughly square, stone.

The roof cornice is boxed and detailed with large scale, ogee moldings beneath the jet and along the drip edge. The cornice wraps around the gable ends with a partial return. A small, square brick chimney stack is centered on the ridge on the east gable end in line with the wall. The second course of brick down from the top projects slightly to form a corbelled cap.

The belfry is a double tier, square, wood frame structure with a pyramid shaped roof covered in wood shingles. Straddling the ridge at the center of the building, it is sided with clapboards and detailed with corner boards, fascia, and a plain boxed cornice. The bottom tier is slightly larger than the top, and elevates the bell chamber well above the ridge of the roof. The bell chamber has a tall, narrow, louvered opening, detailed with side casings and capped lintel, on each side. The sills are continuous around the belfry's perimeter, and form a "water table" between the top and bottom tiers. The tall metal shaft of a weather vane, minus its decorative wind indicator, crowns the peak of the roof.

The shed is attached to the west gable end of the schoolhouse. It sits on a rubblestone foundation laid directly on the ground, and is of wood frame construction with clapboard siding, corner boards and fascia. The gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles but has no overhang or cornice. The ridge runs parallel to the one on the schoolhouse, but the north slope, which is equal in pitch to the south, extends down closer to the ground. Two doors, made out of beaded boards which run vertically, are located in the left corner of the west gable end and the right corner of the south elevation, next to the entrance to the schoolhouse.

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The interior of the schoolhouse is laid out as one large room at the east end of both floors with an enclosed stair hall across the west end. The ceilings and walls are finished in lath and horsehair plaster. The windows are deeply recessed into the walls with wide wood jambs which flare out toward the room. The windows and doors are trimmed with wide casings and straight lintels with molded caps and scotia. A wide, beaded wainscoting extends from the bottom of the windows to a wide mopboard. The wainscoting is capped by a rail which is continuous with the sills of the windows. The original floor boards have been covered over with narrow maple flooring.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1834 **Builder/Architect** possibly Clark Wardner and John Adams

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The South Reading Schoolhouse is significant for two reasons. First, it is an outstanding example of snecked ashlar construction. Second, it is, along with the snecked ashlar schoolhouse located in the village of North Chester which also dates from 1834, the second oldest, documented, structure of snecked ashlar construction to be built in Vermont, and the oldest to survive to the present day. (The schoolhouse located in the village of North Chester is listed in the National Register of Historic Places within the Stone Village Historic District. The Stone Village Historic District was entered in the National Register on May 17, 1974.) While not documented, the two stonemasons who were probably responsible for building the South Reading Schoolhouse are Clark Wardner and his cousin, John Adams. Both men were residents of the Town of Reading and were responsible for several other snecked ashlar buildings located in the area.

"Snecked Ashlar" describes a certain type of stonemasonry in which a relatively thick rubblestone wall is veneered with large flat slabs of stone laid on edge. The slabs are tied, or "snecked", to the rubblestone wall with "snecks", small flat stones laid across the top edge of the slabs to tie them back into the rubblestone and produce a stable wall facing. The "snecks" act in much the same way as the metal ties used to secure brick veneer in modern construction.

The large slabs of veneer are gneiss which occurs in extensive layers near the earth's surface where it has been forced by geological pressure into nearly vertical outcroppings. The gneiss was not quarried in the traditional sense but was broken off in large slabs, anywhere from four to six inches in thickness, through the use of explosives, wedges, and pry bars. These slabs were then broken, rather than cut, into smaller, more manageable sizes, and trimmed into roughly rectangular shapes for building. Contrary to what the name "Snecked Ashlar" might suggest, the veneer was never laid up as dressed ashlar but was either laid random or in regular courses. The smaller stones used for the snecks are mica schist, and were "quarried" in much the same way as the gneiss.

Unlike the more conventional methods of veneering in which the veneer is applied after the supporting wall has been constructed, the rubblestone and veneer in snecked ashlar construction were laid up simultaneously. The structural integrity, or load bearing capacity, of the wall, consequently, is dependent as much on the integrity of the rubble construction as on the structural reinforcement provided by the snecked ashlar.

Buildings of snecked ashlar construction are limited, in Vermont, primarily to the southern half of Windsor County. While no exact count exists, by the turn of the

(continued on Continuation Sheet 8-1)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Clemens, Tessie. Stone Houses of Chester. The Vermonter, the State Magazine.
Vol. 40, No. 3-4; March-April, 1935; pp. 53-56.

(continued on Continuation Sheet 9-1)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property One-Half Acre

Quadrangle name Cavendish Quadrangle

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	8	6	9	4	5	4	0	4	8	1	6	2	8	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

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D

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E

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The South Reading Schoolhouse is located on a triangular shaped, one-half acre parcel of land which is bordered along the northeast side by Reading Town Highway No. 47, along

(continued on Continuation Sheet 10-1)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state N/A code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Courtney Fisher, Preservation Planner and Architectural Historian

organization N/A

date 15 October 1982

street & number P. O. Box 575

telephone (802) 496-2452

city or town Moretown

state Vermont

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

William B. Priney

title Director/Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

date 12-29-82

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

for *Alan S. Byer*
Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date

2/3/83

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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twentieth century the number of snecked ashlar buildings located in Vermont appears to have been close to seventy-five. The largest concentrations are in the towns of Cavendish, Chester and Reading, with scattered buildings in the towns of Baltimore, Hartland, Plymouth, Springfield, Weathersfield, West Windsor and Windsor.

The first snecked ashlar building was the Black River Canal and Manufacturing Company factory which was located in the village of Cavendish and was built in 1832. All of the other snecked ashlar buildings in the state are the direct descendents of this snecked ashlar factory. In 1834, the town of Chester and Reading erected, simultaneously, snecked ashlar schoolhouses in the villages of North Chester and South Reading, and established a precedent for the use of snecked ashlar construction for commercial, residential and public structures throughout the area.

In 1832, transportation in Vermont was at a primitive state of development. The only practical way to build with stone was to use available material which did not have to be hauled any great distances. The numerous outcroppings of gneiss and mica schist in southern Windsor County made stone construction a practical alternative to wood, not an unaffordable luxury. The appeal of snecked ashlar construction was based not only on the easy availability of the material, but also on the reduced number of joints on the exterior face of the wall due to the large size of the slabs. Fewer joints meant fewer points of water infiltration, and reduced joint decay.

The origins of snecked ashlar construction in Vermont are not specifically known, or documented. Oral tradition states that Scottish stonemasons working in Canada were responsible for introducing the technique into Vermont. There is a tradition of snecked ashlar construction in the Aberdeen region of Scotland. It is possible that Scottish stonemasons working in Canada emigrated to Vermont in 1832 to work on the construction of the Black River Canal and Manufacturing Company factory. The factory was 100 by 50 feet, five stories in height, and similar in design to the still extant Murdock's Mill in nearby Proctorsville. A project of this scale, in 1832, obviously drew heavily on the manpower resources of the region. Working on the factory with Scottish stonemasons already knowledgeable in the techniques of snecked ashlar construction, the local stonemasons undoubtedly acquired new skills and sharpened old ones which they continued to use long after the factory was completed.

Sixteen stonemasons, either through written documentation or oral tradition, are acknowledged as having been associated with the majority of the snecked ashlar buildings constructed in Vermont. The sixteen stonemasons are: Daniel and Ira Adams; John Adams; Martin Church; Alison, Mason, Patty and Wiley Clark; Arvin Earle; Zephadiah and David Ordway; Joshua Parker; Amasa and Nelson Snell; John Spaulding; and Clark Wardner. More than forty years after these men ceased to be actively involved in the construction of snecked ashlar buildings, William Connelly, a stonemason, built in 1900 the last snecked ashlar building, a barn located halfway between Cavendish and Proctorsville on Vt. Rte 131.

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Of these sixteen stonemasons, only Alison and Wiley Clark, John Adams and Clark Wardner were responsible for the construction of more than one building. Of the four, only Clark Wardner is the direct descendent of a stonemason. The Clark brothers were responsible for a significant number of the snecked ashlar buildings located in the village of North Chester, including the schoolhouse, as well as buildings scattered throughout the town. John Adams and Clark Wardner were cousins through a common grandfather and appear to have worked together on several buildings in Reading, where they were both residents. Consequently, it seems highly likely that they worked on, if in fact they were not responsible for, the construction of the South Reading Schoolhouse.

Clark Wardner's great grandfather, through his father Calvin and his grandfather Frederick, was Philip Wardner, who died in Reading in 1819. A Master Mason registered with the Mason's Guild in Neuenberg, Germany, Philip Wardner emigrated to America in 1750. Settling in Boston in 1752, he was employed as the supervising mason in charge of the construction of King's Chapel. Apparently that tradition was carried on by his great grandson, Clark Wardner, in southern Windsor County.

* * *

The South Reading Schoolhouse was last used as a school in 1970. It is presently used as a community center for the village of South Reading, and as a meeting hall for the South Reading Meeting House Association.

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Davis, Gilbert A. Centennial Celebration, together with an Historical Sketch of Reading, Windsor County, Vermont. A.N. Swain; Bellows Falls, Vermont. 1874.

Davis, Gilbert A. History of Reading, Windsor County, Vermont. Volume Two. (Private Publication). 1903.

Heald, Norman. Chester's Old Stone Houses. (Unpublished Paper). 1932.

Gay, Leon. Dwellings From The Hills. *The Vermonter, the State Magazine.* Vol. 39, No. 10; October, 1934; pp. 225-231.

Gay, Leon. Dwellings From The Hills. *Vermont Life Magazine.* Vol. V, No. 1; Autumn, 1950; pp. 28-33.

Peck, Dorothy. History of Stone Houses in Chester. (Unpublished Paper). Circa 1955.

Whitney, Stephen. Three Stone Churches. *Vermont Life Magazine.* Vol. XXV, No. 1; Autumn, 1970; pp. 27-30.

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the south by the Felchville-Tyson's Corner Road, Reading State Aid Highway No. 1, and along the northwest by a fieldstone wall. The property is recorded in Book 13 on Page 405 of the Reading Land Records. The deed was recorded on January 10, 1835.

The nominated property is the original schoolhouse lot.