

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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

For NPS use only

received **OCT 14 1986**

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections *6 prop.*

**1. Name**

historic Historic Resources of the Rural Otter Creek Valley Wallingford, Vermont (partial inventory: Historic and Architectural properties)  
and or common

**2. Location**

street & number Principally along U.S. Route 7, Waldo Lane, and Cook Drive *N/A not for publication*

city, town Wallingford *N/A vicinity of*

state Vermont code 50 county Rutland code 021

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name Multiple ownership; see continuation sheets 1-2

street & number

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Location of Legal Description**

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

street & number Town Hall

city, town Wallingford state Vermont 05773

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Vermont Historic Sites and Structures Survey has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date 1976 ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

city, town Montpelier state Vermont 05602

## 7. Description

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

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Bounded by parallel ridges on the east and west, the Otter Creek Valley Multiple Resource Area extends about 3½ miles along the bottomland and lower slopes of the Otter Creek valley south of Wallingford village. Both the landscape and the built environment are predominantly agricultural in character. The MRA includes a historic district of nine farmsteads along U.S. Route 7, the main north-south highway through the valley. Five other farmsteads are located to the northwest and south of the historic district. The 19th century farmhouses include brick and wood-framed Federal style, wood-framed Greek Revival style, and vernacular examples, the majority being 2½ stories in height and gable-roofed with five-bay eaves facades and central entrances. The related wood-framed barns range from early 19th century, gable-roofed English type through larger late 19th century, gable-roofed dairy barns to modern gambrel-roofed dairy barns. A variety of lesser outbuildings, e.g., sheds, milkhouses, and chicken coops, complement the barns. While the farm buildings retain their historic character, some show evidence of deferred maintenance or have been converted to other uses after the farms have ceased operation.

The longest river in Vermont, the Otter Creek forms a fairly narrow channel as it meanders northward through the MRA only ten miles from its headwaters. The MRA valley, a fertile intervalle, broadens from south to north, its bottom being about one-half mile in width and lying about 580 feet in elevation. The MRA rises to the 700' contour to the east and west.

Longitudinal hills and ridges bound the valley on both sides. The rounded 1225-foot Green Hill flanks the northeast side of the MRA. The abrupt cliff face of 2690-foot White Rocks Mountain, a regional landmark and part of the main range of the Green Mountains, looms farther east to provide the backdrop. In the opposite (westward) direction, the hillside ascends to the 1965-foot summit of Clark Mountain along the border with the adjoining township of Tinmouth. The valley is part of the greater Vermont valley, the major north-south transportation corridor in the western half of the state. Running between the Taconic and Green Mountains, from Lake Champlain to Massachusetts, it has served as a primary transportation route from prehistoric times to the present.

A heavily trafficked, two-lane highway, U.S. Route 7 traverses the valley bottomland generally west of Otter Creek. The main line of the Vermont Railway passes through the valley generally along the east side of the Creek. About one-half mile south of Wallingford village, Route 7 crosses both the Creek and the railroad on overpasses. Within the southernmost mile of the MRA, the railroad crosses the Creek and again approaches the highway closely.

Three side roads intersect Route 7 within the MRA. Just south of the bridge over Otter Creek, Waldo Lane follows the original alignment of the highway to the abandoned bridge site at the edge of Wallingford village, and then curves northwestward along the creek. A quarter-mile south of the Waldo Lane intersection, Cook Drive intersects Route 7 from the west. Now truncated to a stub in the valley, the road originally climbed the hillside into Tinmouth township. Three-quarters of a mile south of the Cook Drive intersection, Hartsboro Road joins Route 7 from the east side of the valley.

(see continuation sheet 3)

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Rural Otter Creek Valley Multiple Resource Area Description  
(continued)

The predominant cultural features of the valley relate to its intensive 19th century agricultural development. A series of farmsteads occupies most of the valley within the MRA. With few exceptions, the farmhouses, barns, and related outbuildings are situated along Route 7; two of the smaller farms are located along Waldo Lane and Cook Drive. The scattered building groups are generally surrounded by cultivated fields and pastures for grazing. In several cases, the farm properties extend onto the forested hillsides along the west edge of the valley, where activities such as maple sugaring and timber cutting are conducted.

A highly significant subset of the farms within the MRA is historically associated with the Munson and related families. In 1814, Israel Munson of Boston purchased for his brother, Isaac, the farmstead that now bears the latter's name (#1-8). During the succeeding three decades, other members of the family came into possession of five additional farms in the valley. The single farm among them that lies east of the Otter Creek lost its historic farmhouse (built by a son of Isaac Munson) to fire in the late 1970's, and therefore is excluded from the MRA.

The five properties with extant houses related to the Munson family are identified by the following names (the numbers are keyed to the accompanying sketch map):

- a. Isaac Munson Farm (#1-9)
- b. Israel Munson Farm (#1-8)
- c. Goodyear Clark Farm (#1-4)
- d. Hillside Farm (Joel Hill House) (#1-2)
- e. General Robinson Hall House (#6)

The five Munson-related houses dominate the architectural environment of the MRA. The earlier (c.1830) houses share Federal style and brick, marble, and slate materials expressed in three-bay, gable-front orientation with sidehall entrances. The later (1840s) houses are wood-framed with clapboard or flush-board sheathing, and exhibit high-style Greek Revival characteristics on five-bay, eaves-front main blocks with central entrances. The latter houses were almost certainly designed by architects, and represent the highest standards of architectural

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quality in the MRA. The farmhouses unrelated to the Munson family are generally contemporary in period but vernacular in design, displaying in some cases features added in later 19th century styles.

Barns constitute the second principal building type in the MRA, ranging from early 19th century examples of English type to middle 20th century dairy barns. Again, the Munson-related farmsteads possess the finest 19th century buildings. The great multi-unit barn (#1-8A) of the Israel Munson Farm surpasses all others, displaying decorative features designed by the prominent latter 19th century Vermont architect, Clinton G. Smith of Middlebury.

The profound changes experienced in Vermont agriculture during recent decades have exerted highly detrimental effects on the farms in the MRA. Most have ceased to function as commercial agricultural enterprises. While the houses generally remain in residential use, many of the barns and outbuildings have been effectively abandoned or relegated to marginal uses; the accompanying reduction of maintenance is leading to deterioration in several cases. Although buildings of agricultural type comprise the overwhelming majority in the MRA, the number in active agricultural usage has dwindled to a minority.

A few farm buildings have been converted outright to other uses. The outstanding Israel Munson House (#1-8) was adapted in 1983 to an inn and restaurant although the exterior appearance of the high-style Creek Revival main block has been preserved intact. The substantial 19th century barn (#1-7A) of the Post Farm was altered somewhat during a 1978 conversion to an antique shop. Other farm buildings are now being used for non-agricultural purposes without substantial alteration.

Some modern non-farm buildings and mobile homes have recently been introduced within the MRA threatening its unique 19th century agricultural quality. Plans to widen or relocate U.S. Route 7 also threaten the area's environment. Relocation plans should take the MRA's boundaries into consideration.

A large portion of the MRA is included in a historic district that includes an outstanding concentration of farmsteads (9 in total). Strung along U.S. Route 7, the farms extend from near the MRA's north boundary (at the Arthur Davenport Farm, #1-1) south to a sharp bend in the road just south of the Albert Bersaw House, (#1-11). Five other farm complexes (#2,3,4,5, and 6) to the north, west and south of the district are being nominated individually within the context of the MRA.

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Survey Methodology

Since the late 1960s the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation has been conducting a comprehensive town by town survey of Vermont's historic architectural resources. Every year trained architectural historians are assigned towns throughout Vermont where they conduct windshield surveys and conduct historic research to identify all historic resources that are 50 years or older, retain their architectural integrity and are associated with identified historic contexts. Survey forms are then filled out for those identified resources, photographs taken, and local historical groups consulted. A detailed building description and statement of significance are included on the form and the descriptive information - including locational information, dates, and style categories is computerized.

The Division monitors survey data collection very closely, while data is being collected and after draft survey forms have been completed. All survey staff is hired and trained by the Division. Surveyors receive intensive training in survey technique, building description, evaluation, etc. Survey procedures are also thoroughly described in a Survey Manual provided to each surveyor. Surveyors work closely with an experienced Survey Supervisor who meets with them in the field to review problems and questions and who preliminarily edits their work as draft survey forms are completed. When the survey of an entire town is finished, the Supervisor reviews and edits the forms as a group. Then the forms are typed, proof read, bound in books and entered in the Division's files.

In 1976 Kathlyn Hatch conducted a survey of Wallingford. The Wallingford Village Historic District, located in the Otter Creek Valley north of the MRA and nominated to the National Register on November 1, 1984, was identified. Vernacular 19th century hillside farmsteads in the rugged Green Mountains east of the valley and in the rolling Taconic Range to the west were also identified as well as the string of farms along the valley floor, located in today's MRA.

The Otter Creek Valley farms form an easily identifiable group. They occupy Wallingford's most fertile farmland and line the town's and all of western Vermont's major north-south transportation corridor. The farms' 19th century prosperity is evidenced by the building's fine Federal and Greek Revival detailing, the most outstanding of any of Wallingford's rural farmsteads. All of the homes and their accompanying outbuildings are well preserved and intruding modern structures are relatively few. An important historical thread ties several of the farms

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together. A large group were built by the Munson family who moved to Wallingford in 1814 and introduced sheep farming into the area, a highly successful enterprise that spread throughout the county and region in the ensuing years.

Historic archeological resources representing residential, commercial and industrial sites are expected within the MRA. Mid-nineteenth century maps show the existence of two (2) residences, a school, two (2) marble quarries and a lime kiln that were not identified during the historic architectural survey. These probably exist as archeological sites but have not been identified on the ground through field surveys. Wells, privies, refuse middens, scatter and outbuilding foundations are assumed to be associated with all of the farmsteads. The site of Mosley Hall's Tavern, identified by a stone foundation is located just north of the Hall House (#6). A systematic archeological survey including research, identification of above ground features and subsurface testing has not occurred to date. Historic archeological properties are thus not treated in the MRA at this time.

Prehistoric archeological resources are also expected to exist within the MRA. Although only one prehistoric site (VT-RU-43) has thus far been identified within the MRA, the Otter Creek valley overall has one of the highest prehistoric site densities in the state. These sites represent a broad range of Archaic and Woodland occupations and include evidence of use during Paleoindian times. The largest prehistoric quartzite quarry in Vermont is located less than 3 miles southeast of the MRA at an elevation of 1800' - 2500' high in the Green Mountains. Site VT-RU-43 consists of a large, quartzite flake scatter representing various stages of biface reduction and tool manufacture. Located on a 620' - 640' high terrace on the east side of the Otter Creek, the site has not been subsurface tested nor evaluated for National Register eligibility. Based on our knowledge of surveyed areas elsewhere in the Otter Creek, prehistoric sites are expected to exist with floodplains, on shallow side slopes of the valley, on high terraces overlooking the floodplain, and on knolls and promontories at varying elevations above the floodplain. The boundaries of the MRA thus extend up to the 700' elevation in order to include the addition of prehistoric sites once a systematic archeological survey occurs.

## 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 checked="" 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/
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates c. 1790-1930

Builder/Architect

N/A

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The resources of the Rural Otter Creek Valley represent the agricultural development of the fertile valley south of Wallingford village which evolved over a two-hundred-year period beginning in the late 18th century. The MRA's fourteen farmsteads also reflect the dominant 19th century trends of Vermont agriculture, the Merino sheep boom of the 1820s-1830s and the dairying that gained ascendancy after the introduction of rail transport in the 1850s. The farmsteads' houses, barns, and various outbuildings constitute distinguishable entities expressive of predominantly vernacular design. Certain farm-houses achieve markedly sophisticated architectural quality in the Federal and Greek Revival styles, while the barns represent a spectrum of types, the most outstanding being the late 19th century dairy barns.

The original white settlement in the Otter Creek Valley south of Wallingford village occurred during the last quarter of the 18th century. The valley appeared quite differently then, being heavily forested with white pine, hemlock, and the other species where farm fields were later cleared. (Representative of those giant trees are the individual white pines that now tower over the houses of several farmsteads.) A primitive road through the valley was opened during the same period, the first bridge over the Otter Creek just south of the village being built in 1783.

Among the persons who figured significantly in the early history of the valley, William Fox (1760-1822) moved from the adjoining township of Tinmouth in 1791 and purchased a twenty-three acre tract of land (later part of the Dyer Townsend Farm, #1-3) near the intersection of the north - south road through the valley (now U.S. Route 7) and the original road over the hill between Wallingford and Tinmouth (now Cook Drive). The following year, Mosley Hall (1772-1861), whose father had been one of the original proprietors of Wallingford, arrived from Wallingford, Connecticut (the Vermont town's namesake) and settled in the valley closer to what became South Wallingford village.

Both Fox and Hall built houses on their homesteads, the former after buying additional land along the old Tinmouth road where the present Fox-Cook Farm (#3) buildings were constructed. Fox later became prominent in local affairs, the owner of considerable real estate, and Wallingford's representative to the Vermont Legislature for several terms.

The site of Mosley Hall's house and tavern is definitely known, although the building itself was dismantled c. 1910. The foundation lies just to the north of the extant house (#6) built for his son, General Robinson Hall. Mosley Hall joined the local Congregational Church in 1798 and became the second Deacon, a title by which he became widely known. The year of construction for his house-tavern is not known; in any case, the house appeared similar to a counterpart now extant at the Hulett Farm (#4), a short distance to the north. Probably both were built in the early years of the 19th century.

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## Statement of Significance (continued)

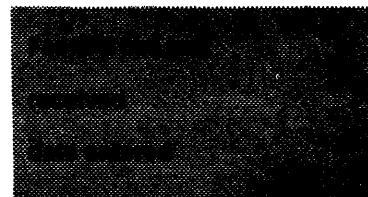
Other farms were established in the valley during the same period. A 250-acre farm owned by Edmund and Gilbert Douglas lay in the broadest part of the valley south of William Fox's holdings. The Douglas farm must have appeared exceptional even then for it caught the attention of Israel Munson (1767-1844), a wealthy physician and merchant from Boston who journeyed to Vermont in the autumn of 1814 to purchase a farm for his brother Isaac.

Early in November, Munson paid \$7,000 in cash to the Douglasses, who traveled to Boston to conclude the sale of the farm and its existing stock of fifteen cows, one yoke oxen, fifteen yearlings, twelve calves, and 165 sheep. The latter - and the financial opportunity they represented - were undoubtedly a principal motive for the purchase; at the same time, Israel bought (at a cost of \$150) a Merino ram and sent it back to Wallingford with the Douglasses for breeding the flock. Only three years earlier, William Jarvis, U.S. Consul to Lisbon, had imported from Spain the first Merino sheep to his farm in Weathersfield, Vermont. The long-fiber Merino wool would precipitate an enormous expansion of sheep raising and the woolen industry in Vermont during the first half of the 19th century; Merinos became the principal livestock in the state by the 1830s. The Munson family was well prepared to benefit from that development.

Isaac Munson (1771-1835) was a blacksmith in New Haven, Connecticut when Israel bought the farm for him. Personal correspondence between the brothers reveals that the elder Munson preferred detailed advice and instructions regarding the move to Vermont and operation of the farm. Israel recommended that Isaac and family stay at Moseley Hall's tavern upon arriving in Wallingford and that Isaac should consult Hall on business matters. Israel also hired a manager, Joseph Tucker, for the farm and sent him to Wallingford with fifteen Merino sheep, four cows, a bull, and a pair of grey mares to complete its stocking. In March of 1815, Israel instructed Isaac to build a barn and to move and repair the existing house. By 1822, the Munson family's association with Deacon Hall and family had led to marriage between Isaac's eldest daughter, Sarah (1795-1851), and Hall's son, Robinson (1797-1861).

Meanwhile another link had been created between the Munson family and the Wallingford community. About four years after Isaac and family settled on the farm, his younger sister, Lois (1784-1851),



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married Joel Hill, a local merchant. The couple lived in the village until the late 1820s, when Israel Munson bought another farm located just south of the village and gave it to his sister. The imposing brick house (#1-2) is reputed to have been erected c.1805; however its architectural similarity to other houses built for the Munson and related families during the 1830s and 1840s suggests that the Hill House was either enlarged or given an overlay of Greek Revival stylistic features during the period of Munson family ownership.

The first of the substantial farmhouses known to have been constructed for Munson-related families was probably the Federal style brick structure (#1-9) that replaced in c.1830 Isaac's wood-framed house. A similar house (#6) appeared about the same time next to Deacon Hall's tavern, erected for Robinson and Sarah (Munson) Hall. The marked similarity between the houses suggests that the same unknown architect or mason was involved in both cases. Isaac Munson, however, was destined not to enjoy his new brick house for long; he died in February of 1835.

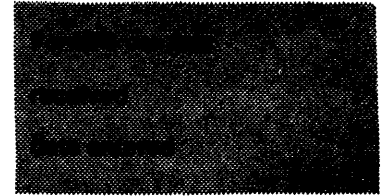
Isaac's death brought the second generation of Munsons into possession of farms along the Otter Creek valley. His farm was divided into two sections, one being the land west of the Creek and the other being the land on the east side. Isaac's eldest son, Elizur (1797-1854) acquired the west half with the buildings while the next eldest son, Isaac Bradley (1806-1876), gained the land across the Creek.

The remarkable architectural efflorescence in the valley was given its principal impetus the following decade. In 1844, the death of Israel Munson brought substantial cash legacies (about \$40,000 each) to the eight children of his brother Isaac, and the children of his sisters Lois (Hill) and Anna. Three of Isaac's children - Isaac Bradley, Israel, and Louisa, wife of Goodyear Clark - proceeded to build architecturally distinguished houses on their nearby farms.

The actual sequence of those projects is not known. It appears that a leading contemporary architect, Asher Benjamin of Boston, was commissioned to design at least the brick house (now destroyed) erected for Isaac Bradley on his farmstead east of the Creek. Some evidence indicates that the house was built in the early 1830s; however, Isaac Bradley acquired the farm only after the death of his father in 1835 and, of course, received the legacy from Uncle Israel's estate not before 1844. Whenever it was built, the house presents a transitional Federal-Greek Revival character somewhat like the earlier Hill House (#1-2) to the north.

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The date of one house constructed with Israel's legacy is known with some certainty. Isaac's fifth daughter, Louisa (1812-1866), married P. Goodyear Clark (1805-1890) in 1830. Nine years later, after residing on the home farm for some time, the couple purchased a farm about three-quarters of a mile to the north. There in 1845, the Greek Revival style was given one of its fullest expressions among the houses in the valley, presumably by an architect whose identity is unknown. (One possibility, Asher Benjamin, died the same year.) The wood-framed Clark House (#1-4) is distinguished from all others in the valley by its smooth flush-boarded exterior, clearly intended to simulate classical stone masonry. The existing farmhouse on the site was cut in half for removal into Wallingford village where it was reassembled.

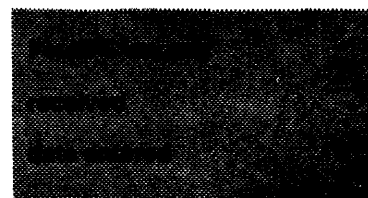
During the period that the building activity on the Isaac Bradley, Munson and Goodyear Clark Farms was underway, an architectural burgeoning began at the intermediate farmstead acquired by Isaac Munson's third son, named Israel (1808-1887) after his uncle. In this case, an existing farmhouse is supposed to have been reconstructed into the sophisticated interpretation Greek Revival style that distinguishes the Israel Munson Farm (#1-8). The Ionic-columned main entrance porch and the paneled door bearing Israel's imprint on the bell escutcheon symbolize the architectural achievement of the again-unknown architect or master builder and his patron. It seems probable that the same person designed or built both Israel's house and that of the Clarks (#1-4). Not only were the houses related architecturally: Israel married Matilda D. Clark, sister of P. Goodyear in 1845.

By 1850, the flurry of residential construction was completed. The Munsons collectively were ensconced in their imposing farmhouses and pursuing their diverse interests beyond the practical tasks of middle 19th century agriculture. Isaac Bradley Munson became active in local politics, and represented Wallingford in the Vermont Legislature during the sessions of 1848-49. Israel emerged as the most astute in financial matters, becoming a private banker to the local farming community and acquiring additional property in the valley.

It was Robinson Hall, however, whose activities ranged farthest in scope from the home farm. A more than passing interest in military affairs earned him the rank of General in the Vermont militia. But the overriding campaign of his life involved the promotion and development of railroads, specifically the Western Vermont (later the Rutland and now Vermont Railway) line through Wallingford. Ironically, that interest ultimately cost him in financial loss the same amount that each of Israel Munson's heirs

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had gained. It happened that Hall's first wife, Sarah (Munson), died the same year, 1851, that the track was laid past the front of their house. (Another Munson lady, Lois Hill, also died in 1851.)

Construction on the railroad started in South Wallingford during the autumn of 1850. Within a year, the company - of which Robinson Hall was a director and, for a short time, president - had extended the track from Rutland to Danby south of Wallingford. In November, 1851, trains began running between those two towns, and Wallingford suddenly found itself connected (via Rutland) to the outside world by a rapid and inexpensive means of transport. By July of the following year, regular trains were passing through Wallingford en route between Rutland and Troy, New York. An old wool barn was moved to trackside in Wallingford village to serve as a temporary depot for shipments of wool and other farm produce.

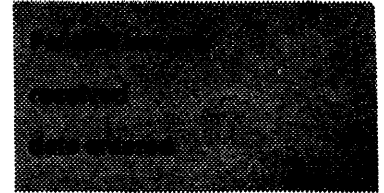
The pace of life in the valley was undoubtedly quickened by the railroad - perhaps even regulated by the predictable passage of trains whistling for the Hartsboro Road crossing near Isaac Bradley Munson's house. Across the Creek to the west, Elizur Munson heard that whistling only a few years before his death in 1854. Rather than allow the home farm to pass out of the family, Israel purchased it in 1856 and subsequently employed tenants to operate it. Israel could sit on his broad south porch and contemplate the sturdy brick house and scene of his own childhood.

Scant records exist of the Munsons' individual agricultural activities during this period but statistics for Wallingford township in the 1840 census reveal generally what was being done in the valley. The sheep boom peaked during the 1830s; the 1840 census found 6,322 sheep in Wallingford, 2,297 cattle, 679 swine, and 301 horses (compared with a human population of 1,608); the wool clip was correspondingly large, with 14,560 pounds sheared that year. The census recorded the great variety of crops then coming from Wallingford farms. The grain crops included principally oats (6,829 bushels); all would have been flailed by hand on the threshing floors of the barns, some of which remain standing in the valley. Potatoes were the largest cultivated crop with 38,775 bushels being harvested the same year, followed by Indian corn with 7,384 bushels. Hay accounted for the greatest quantity, 5,216 tons being cut to feed the thousands of livestock during the long cold winters. Maple sugar provided the common sweetening, and 17,715 pounds were evaporated that year.

The introduction of railroads at mid-century caused fundamental

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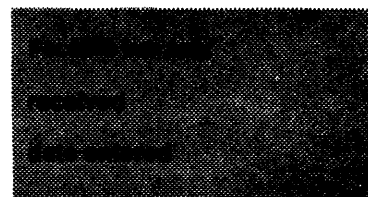
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changes in Vermont agriculture. The overland drives of cattle, sheep, and turkeys to southern New England markets were abandoned wherever the rail lines reached; rail shipment took hours rather than the weeks required for the drives. That rapidity of delivery enabled farmers to begin shipping perishable dairy products such as butter to the metropolitan markets, where they brought much higher prices than in the local villages. Indeed as early as 1851, the Vermont Central Railroad started running a "butter train" to Boston, using double-walled boxcars insulated with sawdust. It was only a matter of time until ice-cooled refrigerator cars were carrying fresh milk from farms throughout the state to the urban centers.

The effects of rail transport, however, were not wholly beneficial to Vermont's farms. The trains imported to the state lower-priced commodities from the Middle West where conditions were much more favorable for efficient and highly productive agriculture. The thrust of Vermont farming then began to shift toward dairying, where the Vermont farmers held the advantage of being closer to the southern New England markets for perishable products.

At least one farmer in the valley, Dyer Townsend, resisted the trend away from sheep. His flock numbered 153 in 1832; by 1845, there were 468 sheep on his valley farm (#1-3) and another that he owned on Sugar Hill to the east. Townshend became a pre-eminent breeder and dealer, selling Merino sheep throughout the U.S. Although he later added a dairy herd to his farm, Townsend remained principally a sheep farmer. An auction was held to dispose of the livestock and personal property after his death in 1886 (at the age of 97); reporting the event, the Rutland Herald commented that "for the past fifty years the best blooded sheep in Vermont, or in this country, have been bred on this farm".

Another significant architectural event involving the Munsons occurred in the middle 1850s when Isaac Bradley sold his farm to his son-in-law, Charles D. Childs, and wife Mary Cornelia Munson. Isaac Bradley then moved into Wallingford village, where an imposing residence in the newly fashionable Italianate Revival style was constructed in 1856 for his retirement years. (See the National Register nomination for the Wallingford Main Street Historic District, entered in the National Register on September 28, 1984.) The Italianate Revival appeared also on a Munson-related farmhouse probably c.1860 after W. W. Kelley, owner of a South Wallingford marble quarry, bought the Hill House from Lois and Joel's son, Israel M. Hill. The house was encrusted with twin bay windows flanking an entrance porch on the

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front and a similar bay window (the only one now extant) on the sunny south elevation. In 1877, the style spread southward to Dyer Townsend's house, which sprouted a full front veranda and south bay window.

A series of deaths struck the Munson clan during the 1860s and 1870s. General Hall watched for the last time the trains of the Western Vermont Railroad pass his house in 1861. Five years later, Louisa (Munson) Clark died; Goodyear would continue farming and outlive her by a quarter-century. And Isaac Bradley Munson's death followed that of his younger sister by a decade (1876).

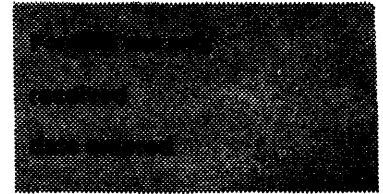
Israel remained on his increasingly impressive estate, now the Patriarch of the family. Writing about Wallingford in 1881, Hamilton Child - who published contemporary gazetteers and business directories for most of Vermont's counties - noted that "the soil on the lower lands is very rich and productive, especially along Otter Creek, where are situated some as beautiful farms as are to be found in the State." Child lists Israel's occupation as "money loaning, wool grower, dairyman," recording that he then owned a total of 510 acres (including a 150-acre mountain farm) and kept a herd of 35 cows. Israel's two sons, Kirk G. (born in 1846) and Isaac E. (born in 1851), are also listed as farmers together with their father. Late in the same year, the household lost mother and wife when Matilda Clark Munson died at age 63.

Across the Otter Creek, Charles D. Childs was clearly being successful in his management of the former Isaac Bradley Munson farm. Hamilton Child records that Childs owned 250 acres plus a "mountain lot" of 250 acres, and that his dairy herd numbered 40 cows -- a large herd for the period. Childs thus rivaled Israel Munson in the scale of his agricultural activities. The other farmers in the valley conducted generally smaller enterprises; Homer H. Waldo, for example, kept 25 cows on his 165-acre farm (#1-3). P. Goodyear Clark continued to own his 140-acre farm but by then he had retired from its operation and had moved into the village.

Goodyear Clark's son, William Pitt Clark (born in 1845), took over the family farm. His agricultural efforts were devoted to the breeding of horses and sheep. By the late 1880s, he had undertaken another kind of economic activity, opening the fifteen-room farmhouse to summer boarders. Under the name of Maple Grove Farm, the Clark farm became the summer home of city dwellers who were then coming in ever-increasing numbers to Vermont for rustic sojourns. The practice spread widely among

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Vermont farms, enabling the owners to augment their cash income without much extra effort.

An epoch in the cultural history of the Otter Creek valley came to an end with the death of Israel Munson in February of 1887. The \$40,000 bequest from Uncle Israel had been well used by his namesake; Israel's own estate comprised two of the finest farms in the valley and a financial trust worth some \$164,000, created for his two sons, Kirk G. and Isaac E. Munson. The contemporary Munson Record states that Israel's "property [was] more than double that of any other man in town."

Another major architectural project occurred on his home farm about the time of Israel's death, and it is unclear whether Israel or his sons initiated same. In any case, a prominent Vermont architect, Clinton G. Smith of Middlebury, was engaged to enlarge and embellish the principal barn. The work was actually performed in 1888, and the result stands yet on the rise behind the house. An eclectic array of stylistic forms applied to the sprawling barn culminates in a rectangular hipped ventilator with round-arched louvers that has become the architectural symbol of the valley's agricultural buildings.

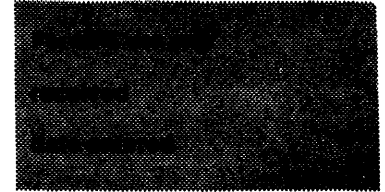
The third generation of Munson brothers continued to operate the farm(s). Near the end of the century, the main barn on the Isaac Munson Farm (south of Israel's) was destroyed by fire. In its place, the largest single-unit barn (#1-9D) in the valley was raised complete with interior silo (now removed) and rectangular ventilator whose round-arched louvers echo those visible across the field on Israel's barn. Also around 1900, the adjacent Post Farm (#1-7) to the north was incorporated into the property and operated by tenants. The younger brother, Isaac E., lived only eight years into the present century but Kirk G. lived until 1932. Neither brother married and Kirk was apparently an invalid for the later half of his life. The brothers must have shared their father's managerial abilities for, by the time of Kirk's death, the trust was worth \$300,000 despite the financial ravages of the Great Depression.

The trust and real estate were then dispersed. Arthur Davison and his wife Maud acquired Israel's home farm, thus the 120 years of Munson ownership ended. The adjoining Isaac Munson Farm was sold to Thomas and Elizabeth Ketcham in 1934, 120 years after the original Munson purchase. Both the Davison and Ketcham families maintained commercial dairy farms on the premises for several decades thereafter.

Dairy farming became the overwhelmingly dominant form of

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agriculture in Vermont during the present century. During the same time, however, the number of active farms underwent a downward trend that accelerated in the 1920s and 1930s and then spiraled in the 1950s and 1960s. First the small and rocky hill farms were abandoned, often being converted later to summer residences. Then the rapidly changing economic conditions around mid-century brought the closures down into the valleys. Only the most efficient and committed farmers could survive under the constraints of limited acreage of prime soils, inflating prices (except those paid for agricultural products), rising property taxes, development pressures, highway relocation, labor scarcity, et cetera.

Regulatory decisions exacerbated the circumstances. In 1958, a Federal marketing order eliminated Vermont milk from the New York market, the traditional route for milk shipped from Wallingford farms aboard the Rutland Railroad's southbound milk trains. The decisive factor for many farmers emerged about 1960, when new regulations required the installation of expensive bulk-tank milk collection systems in place of the traditional milk cans.

Two or three of the smaller farms within the MRA, e.g. the Fox-Cook Farm (#3), had ceased operation in the 1940s and 1950s. The bulk-tank requirement, however, struck also at larger farms; in at least three cases, including the Ketchams' (Isaac Munson Farm) and the adjacent Nichols Farm (#1-10) to the south, the owners chose to abandon dairy operations rather than make the substantial investment in new equipment. The Davison family persevered in dairying on the Israel Munson Farm for another decade until selling it in 1972.

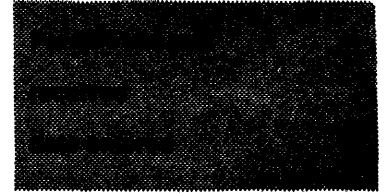
Only one commercial dairy farm now survives in the MRA. It belongs to Arthur Davenport (#1-1), comprising the land, former tenant house, and outbuildings of Joel and Lois Hill's farm together with a modern (1963) replacement for the 19th century dairy barn that was destroyed by fire. The present gambrel-roofed barn (#1-1A) constitutes the most recent addition to the valley's complement of agricultural buildings. A similar dairy barn (#1-3B) was erected c.1950 on the Dyer Townsend Farm.

Another similar barn (#1-4C) was constructed in 1935 on the Goodyear Clark Farm, also to replace a burned 19th century counterpart. Direct descendants of Louisa and Goodyear retained possession of the farm until c.1943. In 1970, the house and a small lot were separated in ownership from the associated farm land and dairy barn.

Disaster struck the Otter Creek valley c.1980 when the farm

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residence of Isaac Bradley Munson was destroyed by fire. Not only did the valley lose one of the six extraordinary Munson-related farmhouses; Vermont lost one of the few examples of residential design attributed to Asher Benjamin. The site of the house now lies vacant and bulldozed but guarded by the echelon of mature trees that formerly sheltered the historic dwelling.

The destruction of the Isaac Bradley Munson House served to mark the conclusion of the nearly two-century period during which agriculture dominated the life of the valley. Most of the farmsteads have become predominantly residential in nature. Apart from the one commercial dairy farm, agricultural activities have generally dwindled to the level of a few sheep, beef cattle, or horses and maybe poultry. The agricultural buildings now reflect their marginal and changing usage, showing either declining physical condition or alterations for different purposes. The current trend appears unlikely to change during the short-term future, and therefore constitutes a serious threat to the integrity of these historic resources.

The valley landscape is undergoing pervasive change. The fields and pastures of the farmsteads show graphically the effects of agricultural decline. Only the best bottomlands are yet being cultivated (mostly in corn for silage) or mowed for hay. The drastic decrease in the livestock population has led to the abandonment of most pastures, especially on the lower hillsides. The disused fields and pastures are steadily reverting to brush and second-growth woods. Small lots are being subdivided from the farmsteads for the modern houses and other buildings that are being scattered randomly along the valley.

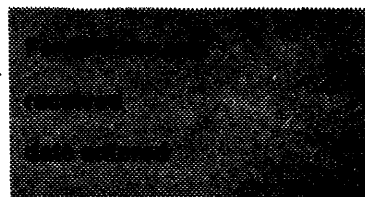
For the time being, the farms of the Otter Creek valley continue to evoke the character of the historic environment at the height of its agricultural and architectural significance during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. One of the more modest farmsteads, the Homer Waldo Farm (#2) retains most nearly its general appearance from that period; commercial dairy farming ceased there c.1960 without any equipment sheds, silos, or other modern buildings having been constructed in contemporary materials. Being apart from the main highway, the setting of the Waldo Farm has also remained relatively undisturbed.

While the Waldo Farm buildings represent vernacular design, the five farms associated with the Munson family are distinguished by the essentially intact character of their Federal and Greek Revival style farmhouses. The five extant houses constitute one of the most outstanding groups of family-related farmhouses in



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Vermont. The Israel Munson and Goodyear Clark houses rank individually among the finest rural expressions in the state of high-style Greek Revival architecture. Complementing the Israel Munson House, the farm's great multi-unit barn holds equal stature in Vermont agricultural architecture for its unifying decorative treatment applied by Clinton G. Smith, one of the state's most prominent latter 19th century architects.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet 66

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property See Continuation Sheets

Quadrangle name Wallingford, Vermont

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UTM References (See Continuation Sheets)

A 

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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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E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet 67

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

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Hugh Henry

organization

date March 1986

street & number Green Mountain Turnpike

telephone 802-875-3379

city or town Chester

state Vermont 05143

## 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.

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer signature

*Emil Silbert*

title Director/Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

date 10/2/87

For NPS use only

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

*See Continuation sheet for listings*  
Keeper of the National Register

date

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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date entered

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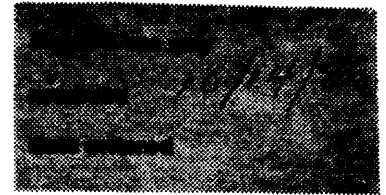
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Verbal Boundary Description: The boundary of the Rural Otter Creek Valley Multiple Resource Area begins at Point A, the eastern extension of the south boundary of the Wallingford Main Street Historic District (entered on the National Register on November 1, 1984) and the 700' topo line. The boundary thence proceeds in a southerly direction along said topo line crossing T.H. 34 and continuing on to Point B, the intersection of said line and a line that runs due east-west crossing the southern tip of an island situated in the Otter Creek just north of South Wallingford village. The boundary thence proceeds in a westerly direction along said line crossing the Rutland Railroad right of way, the Otter Creek and U.S. Route 7 and continuing to Point C, the intersection of said line and the 700' topo line. The boundary thence proceeds in a northerly direction along said topo line to Point D, the intersection of said line and the western extension of the south boundary of the Wallingford Main Street Historic District. It thence proceeds in an easterly direction along said extension and said line, crossing U.S. Route 7 and continuing along a western extension of said line to Point A, the point of origin.

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Multiple Resource Area  
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name Rural Otter Creek Valley MRA  
State Rutland County, VERMONT

~~Substantive Review~~

*Coner Patrick Andrus 11/26/86*

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

1. Fox--Cook Farm

~~Substantive Review~~

*for* Keeper

Attest

*Patrick Andrus 11/26/86*

2. Hager Farm

*Entered in the*  
National Register

*for* Keeper

Attest

*Patrick Andrus 11-26-86*

3. Hall, Gen. Robinson, House

*Entered in the*  
National Register

*for* Keeper

Attest

*Patrick Andrus 11/26/86*

4. Hulett Farm

*Entered in the*  
National Register

*for* Keeper

Attest

*Patrick Andrus 11/26/86*

5. Rural Otter Creek  
Valley Historic District

~~Substantive Review~~

*for* Keeper

Attest

*Patrick Andrus 3/31/87 KS*

6. Waldo, Homer, Farm

*Entered in the*  
National Register

*for* Keeper

Attest

*Patrick Andrus 3/31/87*

7.

Keeper

Attest

8.

Keeper

Attest

9.

Keeper

Attest

10.

Keeper

Attest