



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

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

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1. Name of Property

=====

historic name Robarge, John B. Duplex

other names/site number NA

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number 58-60 North Champlain Street

not for publication N/A

city or town Burlington vicinity N/A

state Vermont code VT county Chittenden code 007

zip code 05401

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3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets      does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant      nationally      statewide X locally. (     See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Suzanne C. Daniels National Register Specialist 6-22-05  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Vermont State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official/Title Date

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

4. 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

*Edson Beall*      *8/6/05*

other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

*[Signature]*

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property (Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the  
National Register 0

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

N/A

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6. Function or Use

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: multiple dwelling

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: multiple dwelling

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Italianate

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: sandstone  
STONE: slate  
CONCRETE

roof STONE: slate

walls WOOD: weatherboard

other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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

See Continuation Sheets

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8. Statement of Significance

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

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

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

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

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE  
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance c.1878-1953

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates c.1878

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder N/A

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

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

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

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

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

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: SHPO, Burlington, VT Town Clerk; University of Vermont Bailey Howe Library, Special Collections;  
Vermont History Center, Barre, VT

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.179 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>18</u>	<u>641759</u>	<u>4926990</u>	3	<u>  </u> / <u>  </u> / <u>  </u>
2	<u>  </u> / <u>  </u> / <u>  </u>	4	<u>  </u> / <u>  </u> / <u>  </u>		

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

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

=====  
1 I. Form Prepared By  
=====

name/title Rebecca Williams

organization Historic Preservation Consultant

date December 15, 2004

street & number 97 Brookside Way

telephone (617) 388-1417

city or town Colchester

state VT zip code 05446

=====  
Additional Documentation  
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Submit the following items with the completed form: Continuation Sheets:

Maps

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

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

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

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

=====  
Property Owner  
=====

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

name Kathleen D. Cannon, ECHO Housing Limited Partnership, c/o Housing Vermont, Inc.

street & number 123 St. Paul Street

telephone (802) 863-8424

city or town Burlington

state VT

zip code 05401

=====  
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Robarge, John B. Duplex  
Burlington, Chittenden County, Vermont

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### Narrative Description

The John B. Robarge Duplex is a cross-gabled, wood frame, two-and-one-half story, two-by-four bay, Italianate dwelling. Attached to the east (back) end of the house is a one-and one-half story, two-by-three bay, gable-roofed, wing. Constructed in 1878 or 1879, the house is in excellent condition and is a wonderful example of a nineteenth-century double house. It is distinguished by its symmetry and by its adaptation of the Italianate style to a middle and working class neighborhood. The house's simple detailing, spaciousness, and gracious proportions set it apart from the smaller-scale homes typical of the area. It is located on a tree-lined street, just one block south of North Street (North Street Historic District, listed in 2001), the Old North End's primary commercial corridor. Two blocks to the south of the house is the head of Church Street, Burlington's central commercial, civic, and ecclesiastical heart. The Winooski and Burlington Horse Railroad passed directly in front of the home beginning in 1885, making it convenient for residents to reach jobs on Church Street and at the nearby mills along the Winooks River and the Burlington waterfront. In the late 1870s, Burlington was simultaneously recovering from the financial panic of 1873 and profiting from expanding lumber and textile industries. The house at 58-60 North Champlain Street was part of the resulting housing construction boom felt throughout the city, and especially in the predominately working class neighborhoods collectively known as the Old North End. A great deal of this new housing stock was constructed as rental properties, serving the large influx of French Canadian, Irish, and German immigrants; a trend which included this property. With its historic weatherboard, two-over-two windows, round-arched windows, and decorative lintel and porch detailing, 58-60 North Champlain Street retains the location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, association, and use of a late nineteenth century vernacular duplex.

The double house at 58-60 North Champlain Street is situated on a one-way road in a neighborhood typical of many in Burlington's Old North End, characterized by a relatively dense mix of single family homes, multi-family homes, wood-frame row houses, and combination residential and commercial buildings.<sup>1</sup> One of the oldest schoolhouses in Burlington, now a residence, is located diagonally across the street. The neighborhoods in the Old North End were typically settled according to ethnic heritage. The homes and apartments around 58-60 North Champlain Street were historically occupied by people of French Canadian and Irish descent. For example, two blocks to the northeast is St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, where services were originally given in French. The buildings along North Champlain Street are set back

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<sup>1</sup> These "Neighborhood Stores" are described in the Multiple Property Nomination, "Neighborhood Stores in Burlington, Vermont, 1790—1940." By C.K. Quinn. 2001.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

Robarge, John B. Duplex  
Burlington, Chittenden County, Vermont

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### Narrative Description (continued)

several feet from the roadway, creating a green space between road, sidewalk and buildings. This green space has traditionally been planted with shade trees, and such a tree grows in front of this house. Located on the east side of the street, the house faces west, towards Lake Champlain, just two blocks downhill to the west. A concrete sidewalk passes in front of the house, and two concrete paths lead from the sidewalk to each of the two front entrances. A gravel driveway along the north of house provides access to the parking area at the rear of the lot. A small grass yard behind the house wraps around the south side. A second short gravel drive on the south side of the building provides room for one additional vehicle. The houses on North Champlain Street offered a direct connection between the two commercial districts in town—Church and North Streets. They also were within convenient walking access to the industrial waterfront with its lumber mills, planing factories, railroad yards and other industries. Beginning in 1885, the Burlington and Winooski Horse Railroad passed directly in front of the house, with connections to downtown Burlington and the extensive mills on the Winooski River.

The west elevation of this two-and-a-half story, gable-front house is the primary street facade. Due to the cross-gabled double house plan, the west elevation is two bays wide, but has two additional recessed bays, one on north and south sides of the main block, giving the effect of four-bay massing. Each of the two recessed bays extends towards the front of the house with a one-story, one-bay, shallow, asphalt-shingled, hip-roofed porch. Each porch has square chamfered posts with square bases and molded capitals, matching chamfered engaged posts, scroll-carved wood brackets, wood beaded board interior ceiling with crown molding, black metal railing, and gray-painted poured concrete floor and steps. The simple molded entablature and cornice match that of the main house. On the east end of each porch is an entrance to the respective north or south apartment. Each doorway opens to a vestibule area abutting the cross-gable, and the actual opening into the building is through a door in the main block, before the cross-gable.

Gray-painted concrete parging covers the foundation's exterior. The water table is picked out with flat wood trim. Historic narrow wood clapboards cover the walls. The windows on the first and second floors of the main block are rectangular, two-over-two, double-hung sash fitted with exterior aluminum storm windows. On the second floor are two additional windows, one on each of the north and south ends of the cross-gable, centered above the entrance door on the first floor. The storm window frames are painted to match the wood work and do not obscure the historic windows. The window openings are framed with flat stock wood trim, wood sills, and



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Robarge, John B. Duplex  
Burlington, Chittenden County, Vermont

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### Narrative Description (continued)

peaked wood lintel with molded peaked cap. This same trim treatment is repeated around the entrance doors, a common Italianate design element. The window in the gable is comprised of a rectangular casement window topped with a half-round window, with flat wood trim, molded round lintel, and wood sill. A triangular vent is tucked in at the top of the gable, just under the wide eaves and molded cornice. These broad eaves and molded cornice are a classic Italianate feature, and are found throughout the building, including the rear wing. It is not known if the house ever had cornice brackets. Currently, the clapboards on the house are painted a creamy yellow, and the trim, eaves, and porch details in white. The molded lintels are picked out in a forest green. The overall facade appearance is one of symmetry and balance.

The north and south facades of the main block are identical, each with four bays, one on each side of the center gable, and two centered in the cross gable. Like the rest of the house, the water table, corner boards, and frieze boards are highlighted with flat stock wood trim, the walls clad in narrow clapboards, and the windows have wood framing sills, and peaked molded lintels. The second floor fenestration matches that below it, with one exception. On both the north and south elevations, the window on the main block closest to the street (west) is not centered above the one below it. Rather, it is shifted about a foot to the east. Also on both the north and south sides, to the east of the shifted window, just before the intersection of the main block with the cross gable is an additional one-over-one window, much smaller than the others, but framed the same as the larger windows. These small windows may have originally lit interior stairwells. In each of the north and south cross gables is a round-top window matching that on the west facade. The rear one-and-a-half story wing has an additional two bays on the south side, while the north side has three. The two westerly bays are the same on both the north and sides and have window openings. The third bay at the northeast corner of the north side accommodates a door. The trim elements for these windows and doors match those of the rest of the house. Three wood steps and a small, modern, wood porch with simple wood slat railing provide access to the door.

The visible portion of the east elevation consists of two bays of the rear wing, and the gable of the main block. From this vantage, it become apparent that the wing is not as wide as the main block, being recessed about one foot on either side. The first floor of the wing has two window openings, with windows and window surrounds that match those on the rest of the building. The second floor of the wing has a couplet of windows set into the gable area. These windows are modern, and the original fenestration pattern in this location is not known. The slightly larger scale and lack of ornamental trim ensure that they are easily distinguished from the original windows. The window in the gable of the main block is the same as that found on the west. A

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

Robarge, John B. Duplex  
Burlington, Chittenden County, Vermont

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### Narrative Description (continued)

similar roof vent is also found at the gable peak. There are no window openings in the east walls of the cross-gable.

The interior of the house is divided bilaterally by a wall that runs east-west through the center of the main building. There are currently four apartments in the house, two on the first floor and two on the second. The two original main entrances provide access to the two first-floor apartments. The second-floor apartments are reached through a door in the northeast corner of the rear wing and also follow the historic north-south division. Each apartment is a mirror-image of the one opposite of it, following the historic arrangement of rooms. An interior staircase in the wing leads up to the second-floor apartments. The rear wing also provides access to a former laundry room, the mechanical room, and the floor hatch that leads to the basement crawl space. The floor of the mechanical room and a portion of the laundry room reveal the historic hardwood flooring. There is evidence that this historic hardwood floor is extant below the recently installed carpet and vinyl floor coverings. While the interiors of the four apartments were recently rehabilitated according to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings*, they retain the original north-south layout, the historic windows, and some simple flat-stock window and baseboard trim. The basement is excavated to a depth of about four feet, and has a dirt floor. The foundation of the main house is legible, constructed primarily of large blocks of local sandstone and slate set in mortar, with upper courses of brick. Between the rock and brick is a course of square hewn timber. The cross gable is supported by foundation walls that extend into main basement space.

Based on a comparison of *Sanborn Fire Insurance Company maps*, the building is almost identical to how it originally appeared. The most significant change occurred between 1889 and 1894, when the original wood shingle roof was replaced with a slate roof set in a plain pattern. This slate roof is still on the building, in good condition after 110 years of service. While the interior space has been altered to accommodate four apartments, it retains its original feel, and the exterior remains intact. Furthermore, it has been noted that only about ten percent of Italianate homes have a gable-front design,<sup>2</sup> as the Robarge Duplex has. It is an excellent surviving example of a vernacular Italianate wood frame duplex, one of only a few in Burlington. The John B. Robarge Duplex is an important part of the streetscape and contributes to a better understanding of the history and evolution of the street.

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<sup>2</sup> McAlester, 2000, pg.211.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

Robarge, John B. Duplex  
Burlington, Chittenden County, Vermont

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### Statement of Significance

The John B. Robarge Duplex at 58-60 North Champlain Street, built in 1878 or 1879, is an excellent example of a vernacular Italianate duplex. Located in the area known as the Old North End in Burlington, Vermont, it is a visual link to the growth and development of the city at a time when Burlington was enjoying great industrial, manufacturing, and commercial success. Having recovered from the financial panic of 1873, business was booming—raw lumber was imported from Canada, dressed and milled on Burlington's Lake Champlain waterfront, and sold to national and global markets. Textile mills grew near the waterfront as well as along the nearby Winooski River. Burlington merchants were constructing monumental commercial blocks along Church Street, Burlington's primary mercantile corridor. These industries and businesses attracted large numbers of laborers, entrepreneurs, and fledgling real estate developers. They also lured large immigrant populations, most notably from French-speaking Canada and from Ireland. As a result of the rapid population increase, Burlington also saw a surge in housing construction. Much of the new construction to house workers was concentrated in the north part of town, traditionally called the "North End." This area extends north of Pearl Street to the Winooski River and the Intervale, west to the waterfront, and east to about North Willard Street. The dwelling at 58-60 North Champlain Street was part of this trend, constructed for John B. Robarge (also spelled Roberge) as an investment property. It was one of at least nine properties that Robarge, a grocer, carriage maker, and blacksmith, owned in 1878. He would go on to own many more rental properties, all within a few blocks of this one, and several in the planned residential developments of the 1880s and 1890s. Consequently, the duplex at 58-60 North Champlain Street represents a relatively early Burlington example of a non-tenement multiple-family rental property, and is part of the city's history of community planning and development. Its modest but stylish architecture and convenient location speak to the aspirations of the building's first owner and to Burlington's vision of itself as a modern city. The Robarge Duplex is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places for its connection with the history and development of Burlington and specifically the Old North End (Criterion A), and for its early duplex architecture (Criteria C). The dwelling continues to serve its original multi-family purpose, has a strong architectural presence on the street, and contributes to a vibrant neighborhood still defined by its mix of residences, family businesses, and working class roots.

### Historical background and significance:

The town of Burlington was chartered in 1763, but did not officially become a city until 1865. Located on the shores of Lake Champlain in northwestern Vermont, Burlington's topography slopes east-west, from the hills near the University of Vermont, down to the waterfront. The

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

Robarge, John B. Duplex  
Burlington, Chittenden County, Vermont

### Statement of Significance (continued)

Winooski River and its fertile intervale lands snake along the northern city limits. Established on a grid plan, Burlington's earliest settlements clustered around the Lake Champlain waterfront, near Church Street, along Pearl Street, and near the Winooski River falls on the border between Burlington and the town of Winooski. Pearl Street was the primary corridor between the waterfront and the falls. With the 1823 opening of the Champlain Canal, Burlington gained a direct connection to the Hudson River, and grew in importance as a shipping port. Although not a coastal city itself, Burlington now not only had direct access to Canada via Lake Champlain and the St. Lawrence River, but also to New York and world markets through the Champlain Canal and the Hudson River, the Erie Canal, and the Great Lakes. Soon after the canal's opening, larger industries were established in Burlington, including the Champlain Glass Company and the Burlington Mill Company.

In 1849, the Vermont Central and the Rutland and Burlington Railroads came to Burlington, and the telegraph connected Burlington to Boston.<sup>1</sup> Transportation and communication further stimulated Burlington's business enterprises, and saw the development of companies ranging from the 1851 Champlain Steamboat Company to the 1862 Burlington Woolen Company.<sup>2</sup> Shepard & Davis, at one time the largest of Burlington's lumber companies (dominating fifty percent of the market<sup>3</sup>) formed in 1869. The University of Vermont, founded in 1791, began admitting women in 1871. The infamous manufacturers of "patent" medicines, the Wells, Richardson & Co., organized the following year in 1872. According to town reports, Burlington's population almost doubled between 1860 and 1870, increasing from 7,713 residents to 13,595.<sup>4</sup>

The lumber industry was a major economic force in Burlington throughout the nineteenth century. After local timber resources were exhausted, Burlington imported Canadian lumber, and then milled it into millions of board feet a year, or manufactured it into everything from spools and bobbins for the thriving textile industry to furniture and window blinds. Between 1855 and 1870, Burlington increased its lumber shipments from 15 million to 110 million board feet annually.<sup>5</sup> By 1880, the city's lumber industry employed more than 1,000 people.<sup>6</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> Allen, 1893, pg. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pg. 9-10.

<sup>3</sup> Blow, 1973, pg. 32.

<sup>4</sup> *Burlington City Directories*.

<sup>5</sup> Blow, 1973, pg. 32.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

Robarge, John B. Duplex  
Burlington, Chittenden County, Vermont

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### Statement of Significance (continued)

city's predominately wood-frame architecture and extensive use of carved wood ornament is a reflection of this industry, and of the skill of the craftsmen and laborers who fueled it. The lumber and related industries continued to grow almost exponentially until the Dingley Tariff was levied in 1897.<sup>7</sup> For companies dealing in hundreds of millions of board feet, the \$2.00 per thousand feet tax on imported timber was quite a financial hardship, and business slowed considerably. Textile and other industries filled the gap when the lumber industry declined.

The continued development of business, industry, and transportation in Burlington attracted increasing numbers of laborers and created a burgeoning social class structure. Many of the employees in the lumber, textile, and glass mills immigrated to the area from French-speaking Canada and from Ireland. These groups were soon followed by people from Germany and Eastern Europe. As Burlington's population grew, so did the need for housing. Those with high-paying jobs could afford to live in the upper-class hill section, or in the south end of town. For many of those employed by the mills however, the north end of town was home. The poorest generally lived closest to the waterfront, and the largely immigrant and working class in the North End. By 1880, this socio-economic stratification was firmly established. In his research on public transportation in Burlington, Alfred Holden describes the emergent pattern: "in 1880 [Burlington] was segregated between the squalid slums adjacent to industrialized Lake Champlain waterfront, the exclusive hill section, the middle brow south end and working class North End."<sup>8</sup> To accommodate the new workers, more and more housing was built in the North End. Single family homes and large estates on early streets in the North End gave way to newly-constructed tenements, boarding houses, and multi-family homes. These new residences were built on small lots, and were often owned by landlords who lived in the more affluent areas of town. The North End became an enclave of ethnic neighborhoods, with French, Irish, Jewish, and German identities. North Street, which runs east-west through the North End, quickly became a bustling commercial district, in conjunction with the plethora of small family businesses that sprung up throughout the North End neighborhoods, each catering to local clientele.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Bygone Burlington*, pg. 34.

<sup>7</sup> Blow, 1973, pg. 32.

<sup>8</sup> Holden, 1993, pg. 8.

<sup>9</sup> Quinn, 2001.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

Robarge, John B. Duplex  
Burlington, Chittenden County, Vermont

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### Statement of Significance (continued)

The double house at 58-60 North Champlain Street is at the heart of this history. Located almost equidistant from Pearl and North Streets, it was constructed in 1878 or 1879 on the site of a large private estate formerly owned by Mr. and Mrs. Burton Shattuck. John B. Robarge and his business partner Alexander Deyette purchased the Shattuck estate on April 6, 1878, for the sum of \$10,000.<sup>10</sup> Part of the mortgage was held by the Farmers & Mechanics Savings Institution and Trust Co. and part of it by Burton Shattuck, but the bulk of the sale was paid out on purchase. Robarge had begun purchasing lots and houses on North Champlain and on nearby streets (e.g. Front and Drew streets) in the early 1870s, sometimes alone, and sometimes with Deyette (also spelled Diette).<sup>11</sup> Robarge and Deyette were both blacksmiths by trade and frequently worked for local carriage manufacturers. According to Rann's 1886 History of Chittenden County, "the oldest (in business) carriage manufacturer in the city is H.A. Ray, who began to make carriages and cutters here in 1857."<sup>12</sup> In 1886, he was noted as employing up to fifteen men. One of these was Robarge, who not only worked for Ray intermittently for decades, but also lived a few doors down from him for most of his adult life.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Deyette became a partner in the carriage manufacturing company of William Smith & Co., founded in 1860.<sup>14</sup> In addition to their blacksmithing and real estate ventures, Robarge and Deyette also maintained a grocery at 31 North Champlain Street for many years, part of the Old North End's neighborhood grocery tradition. Deyette lived above and later, adjacent to the shop, and eventually purchased Robarge's half of this business and property.<sup>15</sup> In 1874, Robarge and Deyette purchased a store on the corner of College Street and Winooski Avenue, and opened a carriage shop.<sup>16</sup> For at least a year Robarge lived over the shop. This business did not last long at this location, perhaps due to the economic climate following the financial panic of 1873. Undaunted, Robarge and Deyette continued purchasing property in the North End.

The Shattuck estate that Robarge and Deyette purchased in 1878 was on an L-shaped piece of land, bounded on the north by Peru Street, west by North Champlain Street, south by land of H.W. Harrington, and east by land fronting on Peru Street previously purchased by Robarge and

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<sup>10</sup> Burlington City Land Records, Vol. 16, pg. 18, April 6, 1878; Vol. 15, pg. 374, April 6, 1878.

<sup>11</sup> Burlington City Land Records, e.g. 1873: Vol. 12, pgs. 80, 141, 491, 506; Vol. 52, pg. 552.

<sup>12</sup> Rann, 1886, pg. 471.

<sup>13</sup> *Burlington City Directories*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*; Rann, 1886, pg. 471.

<sup>15</sup> Burlington City Land Records, Vo. 12, pg. 154, February 14, 1874.

<sup>16</sup> *Daily Free Press*, December 19, 1874, 3/1. Sold by C.J. Alger for Mr. Merritt for \$9,000.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

Robarge, John B. Duplex  
Burlington, Chittenden County, Vermont

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### Statement of Significance (continued)

Deyette.<sup>17</sup> The existing Shattuck buildings were removed and the current duplex was constructed.<sup>18</sup> According to Burlington City Directories, by 1881, Robarge himself was living at 58 Champlain Street (the south side of the duplex), and his occupation was listed as blacksmith. He lived in the house for five years, moving in 1886 to a large home at 25 Front Street. Front Street was near his employer, H.A. Ray, but perhaps more tellingly, it was close to North Avenue, and the newly developing middle and upper-middle class residential neighborhoods spreading up the Avenue. Across the street from Battery Park, Robarge's new address was convenient and added a certain amount of legitimacy for a successful businessman and landholder. Robarge and Deyette remained business and real estate partners until June of 1892, when they engaged in "a division of certain lands hitherto owned in common."<sup>19</sup> Robarge conveyed most of his half interests to Deyette, including the land and grocery store at 31 North Champlain Street. The one property interest that Deyette conveyed to Robarge was 58-60 North Champlain Street. The Robarge Duplex would remain in the Robarge family for twenty-nine more years.

In 1885, just prior to Robarge's move to Front Street, Robarge and Deyette sold part of the 58-60 North Champlain Street lot to George B. Rand. This land was the north part of the property, the "toe" of the boot/L-shaped lot. This left the duplex at 58-60 with a typical rectangular city lot, the size of which has not changed since that 1885 sale. Rand was a local undertaker, and built a small, wood-frame, Italianate business block on the lot that year.<sup>20</sup> It originally housed Rand's business on one side and a grocery on the other. The building was expanded to the south with an attached dwelling by 1894, and then converted to tenements by 1926.<sup>21</sup> The subdivision of the lot at 58-60 North Champlain Street was part of the continued pattern of infill development in the Old North End. Between the 1880 and 1885 census, Burlington gained nearly 2,000 new residents, 267 of whom moved to streets immediately surrounding North Champlain Street.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Burlington City Land Records, Vol. 16, pg. 18, April 6, 1878.

<sup>18</sup> It is not known if the Shattuck house and outbuildings were moved, demolished, or if they burned.

<sup>19</sup> Burlington City Land Records, Vol. 24, pg. 436, June 11, 1892.

<sup>20</sup> *Burlington Free Press*, January 1, 1886, 8/3, "Record of 1885." The block cost \$2,000 to build.

<sup>21</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, 1889, 1894, 1926.

<sup>22</sup> *Daily Free Press*, June 15, 1885, 4/3.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

Robarge, John B. Duplex  
Burlington, Chittenden County, Vermont

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### Statement of Significance (continued)

In 1889, John J. Shea, one of the house's most locally well-known occupants, moved in to the north side (#60), remaining there until his death on June 6, 1904. His widow Mary and his son Charles continued to live in the house for several more years. Shea was a tailor by trade, and spent many years in local civil service. In the mid-1880s, he was made deputy collector of customs at Richford, Vermont.<sup>23</sup> Upon his return to Burlington a few years later he operated his own tailor shop on Church Street. In 1892, he replaced George Rand as the Alderman for Burlington's 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward, the Ward in which he lived.<sup>24</sup> He continued to be re-elected to this post for more than ten years, until at least 1902. In addition, for many years Shea served as foreman of the Barnes Hose, the neighborhood volunteer fire station. He was so well respected in this role that on December 29, 1879, he was presented with a commemorative "running suit...of blue knit silk..." at a surprise celebration in his honor.<sup>25</sup>

Shea's neighbors on the south side changed from time to time. Residents included Mrs. Ellen Ware, a widow whose children lived with her and worked for Wells & Richardson Co. The Wares were followed by Mrs. Barbara Warren and her daughter Hattie. Mrs. Warren was another widow, and her daughter a dressmaker. After Mrs. Warren's death in 1889, the Swan family gained residence, dressmakers and carpenters by trade. The Girards and then the Halls spent the remainder of the 1890s at 58 North Champlain Street. Typical of many people in the neighborhood, the Girards were employed by the Burlington Shade Roller Co. and the Crystal Confectionery Company. The women in the Hall family worked at the Burlington Cotton Mills, while the men were painters and bakers. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the house was occupied by a string of residents, some staying for a few years, others for many years at a time. Residents were predominately clerks, machinists, salesladies, mechanics, and laborers. Many of the family names, such as Durant, Dubuque, Lavoie, and Benoit highlight the Quebec heritage of the area. Though these people were not necessarily as locally well-known as Shea was, they nonetheless contribute to the story of the house, and of the neighborhood in general. The Old North End was home to the working class, many of whom were self-employed. Many more worked in the mills and factories within walking distance of their homes. The Girards and Halls are classic examples of these patterns.

In 1905, Robarge began selling off his property, but retained the house at 58-60 North

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<sup>23</sup> *Daily Free Press*, September 2, 1885, 4/2.

<sup>24</sup> *Burlington City Directories*.

<sup>25</sup> *Daily Free Press*, December 30, 1879, 3/1, morning edition.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

Robarge, John B. Duplex  
Burlington, Chittenden County, Vermont

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### Statement of Significance (continued)

Champlain Street. He had bought and sold extensively in the "Noyes Plan," a new residential neighborhood in the "New North End" off of North Avenue, on Haswell Street, and North Avenue.<sup>26</sup> Many of these properties included "tenement blocks." Robarge died a few years later, on January 3, 1908, at eighty years old.<sup>27</sup> His son had predeceased him, and so all property was inherited by his wife Josephine Almina Childs Robarge.<sup>28</sup> When his estate was settled the following November, his holdings included their Front Street homestead and ten additional rental properties. Over the next few years, Almina disposed of some of the property and she remarried. She and her new husband, J. Henry Lavigne, retained ownership of 58-60 North Champlain Street until 1921, when they sold it to Wilfred and Clara Desaults. The Desaults were never listed as residents, so seemed to have purchased it as an investment rental property. They owned the property until 1943, when they sold it to Donald J. and Mary Antonicci, who in turn sold it two years later to John and Celia Bove. The Boves sold it in 1947 to Donald R. and Phyllis L. Benoit, who moved in to the north side (#60) and lived there for more than thirty-five years. Mr. Benoit was an oil burner mechanic and established his own company, Don Benoit Plumbing & Heating. By 1980, Robert Benoit, likely a son, was living in the south apartment and also worked for the Benoit Plumbing & Heating company.

Comparisons of the 1869 *Beers Atlas Map of Burlington* and the *Sanborn Fire Insurance Company* maps show the dramatic increase in construction in the North End between 1869 and 1889. To accommodate the growing population that fed the city's mills and factories, the North End experienced incredible growth. New multi-family homes replaced single-family homes, entire streets were laid out and developed by single landholders, and entirely new sections of town were planned and developed.<sup>29</sup> Much of this growth occurred in the North End, spreading

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<sup>26</sup> Burlington City Land Records, Vol. 52, pg. 552, November 6, 1905.

<sup>27</sup> *Daily Free Press*, January 4, 1908, 12/3.

<sup>28</sup> Josephine may have been Robarge's second wife. The marriage records for St. Joseph's Church, the French church just a few blocks from the duplex, lists an August 8, 1888 marriage of a John Robarge to Hermine Childs. It also lists Robarge as a widower of Leocadie Diette. An 1874 deed for property owned by Robarge lists his wife as Katie, possibly an anglicized version of Leocadie. Likewise, Hermine could have been translated to Josephine (or Almina). The Diette last name also suggests a source for the long-standing Robarge-Deyette/Diette business relationship.

<sup>29</sup> For example, developed by L.M. Johnson, Johnson Street was cut through the block just behind the house at 58-60 North Champlain,. Entire new neighborhoods, according to "Noyes

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

Robarge, John B. Duplex  
Burlington, Chittenden County, Vermont

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### Statement of Significance (continued)

north to the Winooski River. The John B. Robarge Duplex was built at the core, and was very much part of this expansion and community development (Criteria A). In 1889, when the first *Sanborn Fire Insurance Company* map for the area appears, the Robarge Duplex is outlined as it appears today, and indicated as a duplex. While not part of a new section of town, it still fits the pattern of development, having been constructed as a multi-family, income-producing home, on land subdivided from a formerly large residential estate.

In addition to population pressures and speculative land development, newly invented public transportation drove the expansion of Burlington. The duplex at 58-60 North Champlain Street was poised to take advantage of this. The Winooski and Burlington Horse Railroad Company was chartered in 1872, but did not go into operation until 1885.<sup>30</sup> From the start, the route passed directly in front of 58-60 North Champlain Street, providing convenient transportation to the Church Street area, the mills at the Winooski falls, and eventually as far as Essex, Vermont. When it opened, the line was the “first street railroad in Vermont.”<sup>31</sup> The convenience, and more importantly the business implications, of the Horse Railroad were immediately recognized by the city’s residents. A flurry of speculative housing development ignited along Burlington’s North Avenue. Residents in the traditionally wealthier south end of town were not on the original trolley lines and petitioned for routes to be extended to their neighborhoods. These demands were soon met.<sup>32</sup> Undoubtedly, the fact that the Railroad passed in front of the homes and businesses on North Champlain Street increased their value and status. Now, not only was 58-60 North Champlain Street a handsome Italianate home within walking distance to the two main commercial districts, and to the mills and factories, but it was now on the first public transportation route in the city.

As a good example of a vernacular Italianate duplex, the house at 58-60 North Champlain Street appears eligible under Criteria C. Based on a survey of Sanborn Fire Insurance maps and a visual survey of Burlington’s architecture, it represents one of only a very few duplexes constructed in the Italianate style in the entire city. Its form and detailing are more closely aligned with single-family homes in the more well-to-do sections of town. The cross-gable plan

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Plan,” “L.S. Drew’s Plan,” or Smith & Landon’s Plan,” for example, were built, replacing open land, large estates, and even the County Fairgrounds.

<sup>30</sup> Rann, 1886, pg. 489; Holden, 1993, pg. 3.

<sup>31</sup> *Daily Free Press and Times*, November 17, 1885, in Holden, 1993, pg. 3.

<sup>32</sup> Holden, 1993, pg. 3-4.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

Robarge, John B. Duplex  
Burlington, Chittenden County, Vermont

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### Statement of Significance (continued)

provides a rectangular bay window area for each side, a common Italianate feature. The double porches are highlighted with Italianate-influenced scrolled brackets, chamfered posts, and simple molded entablature. The peaked window surrounds match those of the doors, another Italianate stylistic device. Further contributing to the Italianate style are the round-top windows set in each of the gables, the narrow wood clapboards, and the broad eaves. The house's historic slate roof is common to buildings in Burlington and Vermont in general, and attests to the high quality of materials used in the home's construction. The fenestration and overall plan of the building reflect the symmetry and proportions important to this architectural style. Its appearance fits well with the other buildings on the street and is representative of one of the most popular architectural styles in Burlington.

The John B. Robarge Duplex is a rare surviving example of an Italianate duplex with intact exterior, and still serving its intended use. It was designed to appeal to upwardly-mobile working class residents, and continues to contribute to the character and visual history of Burlington. For more than one hundred and twenty years, the house has resisted further development pressure and alterations to its original plan and exterior finishes. Under Criteria C the house is significant for its adaptation of modest Italianate details and form to an urban duplex, for its relatively large scale, and its contribution to an intact late nineteenth-century neighborhood. Its connection to and illustration of Burlington's economic, immigrant, and community development history make the home significant under Criteria A. Furthermore, with the 1960s loss of an entire working class nineteenth-century section of town, largely settled by residents of Italian American heritage, every remaining building associated with Burlington's industrial and immigrant history is even more valuable. Currently owned by the Burlington Community Land Trust, the duplex built for Robarge and Deyette remains an important link to Burlington's history.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

Robarge, John B. Duplex  
Burlington, Chittenden County, Vermont

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 2 Robarge, John B. Duplex  
Burlington, Chittenden County, Vermont

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

# **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 1

Robarge, John B. Duplex  
Burlington, Chittenden County, Vermont

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## **Verbal Boundary Description**

Burlington City Parcel #044-2-078-000.

## **Boundary Justification**

The nominated property includes the entire parcel and building associated with the Robarge, John B. Duplex at 58-60 North Champlain Street since 1885.