

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 92000337

Date Listed: 04/20/92

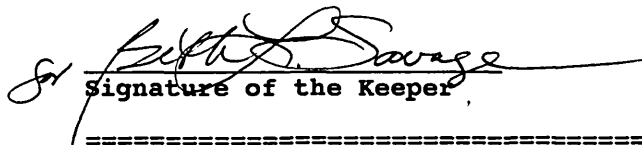
District No. 1 Schoolhouse
Property Name

Windham
County

VT
State

N/A
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.


Signature of the Keeper

4/20/92
Date of Action

=====

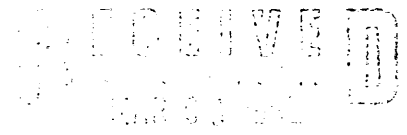
Amended Items in Nomination:

8. Statement of Significance: Period of Significance & Significant Dates

The period of significance and the significant date(s) are the same in this case: c.1850.

DISTRIBUTION:

National Register property file
Nominating Authority (without attachment)



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

1. Name of Property

historic name DISTRICT NO. 1 SCHOOLHOUSE
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Somerset Road N/A not for publication
city, town Somerset N/A vicinity
state Vermont code VT county Windham code 025 zip code N/A

3. Classification

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

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Evan D. St. Louis 2-24-92
Signature of certifying official Date

USDA Forest Service
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Eric N. White 4/26/92
Signature of commenting or other official Date

Vermont State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register. *Billy A. Savage* 4-20-92
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

for Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Education - schoolhouse

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not in Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Other: one-room schoolhouse

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls weatherboard

roof metal

other brick

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

(Entire text appears on continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
Architecture

Period of Significance
N/A

Significant Dates
c. 1850

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
Unknown

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

(Entire text appears on continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Entire text appears on continuation sheet.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

GMNF Supervisor's Office,
Rutland, Vermont

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property approximately 0.25 acre

UTM References

A

1	8
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6	6	4	4	0
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4	7	5	8	2	6	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Hugh H. Henry
organization Historic Preservation Consultant date March 1990
street & number Green Mountain Turnpike telephone 802-875-3379
city or town Chester state Vermont zip code 05143-9418

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Surrounded by abandoned farmland now reverting to mixed forest, the District No. 1 Schoolhouse is located in the southwest quadrant of the unorganized and mostly forested Somerset township on a tract of land within the Green Mountain National Forest. The single-story, two-by-two-bay, clapboarded, vernacular building carries a metal-sheathed gable roof. The main gable facade possesses an unsheltered entrance while the other facades are lighted by two-over-two sash, all with plain surrounds. The interior contains a single former classroom finished with wainscoting, plaster-over-lath, and plywood. The schoolhouse retains to a relatively high degree its integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The District No. 1 Schoolhouse stands closely adjacent, and oriented perpendicular, to the east side of the gravel Somerset Road on a gently sloping site. A small grassy opening lies next to the north side of the building. Mixed deciduous and coniferous trees of medium height now closely surround the south and east sides. The regenerating forest also flanks the opposite (west) side of the road.

The one-story, two-by-two-bay building extends 18.5 feet in north-south width and 24.5 feet in east-west length. The building now rests on mortared concrete-block piers at the four corners and half-way along the north and south sides. The piers are nearly concealed by fieldstone piled loosely to provide a skirt both between and around the piers. The stone skirt tapers outward from the sill especially along the rear (east) facade of the building where the ground slopes downward. The piers and stone skirt were installed about 1964 to replace the original fieldstone foundation.

The building possesses a rough-sawn, post-and-beam frame sheathed on the exterior walls with clapboards stopped by plain cornerboards. The gable roof of moderate pitch is now covered with standing-seam sheet metal; the original roof covering was probably wood shingles. A projecting box cornice without gable returns follows both the horizontal and the front raking eaves but the rear raking eaves are closely cropped. An interior brick chimney rises from the rear (east) end of the ridge.

The main (west) gable facade possesses a single bay, offset to the left of center, occupied by the only entrance into the

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building. The entrance is fitted with a six-panel door and enframed by a plain surround. The front of the building rests nearly at ground level, eliminating the need for entry steps. Immediately above the upper right corner of the entrance, a small square panel appears to have been an opening (now covered) of unknown purpose.

The identical north and south eaves facades are arranged with two bays of window openings placed in west-central and eastern positions, reflecting the interior position of the single classroom. The windows are fitted with two-over-two sash, and their plain surrounds abut the horizontal cornice. The sash are now concealed and protected by vertical-boarded, hinged shutters.

The rear (east) gable facade is arranged with two evenly spaced bays of window openings. The two-over-two sash are also concealed behind vertical-boarded shutters.

The interior of the building contains the single former classroom occupying the rear three-quarters of the floor plan. The front entrance leads into a shallow rectangular room whose walls lack finish sheathing, leaving exposed the building's post-and-beam framing on the west and south sides; this room was used probably for the storage of fuel wood. Adjoining the north side of this room but entered only from the classroom, a small square cloakroom occupies the northwest corner of the interior; its walls are finished entirely with plaster-over-lath.

The classroom consists simply of a plain rectangular room now lacking much evidence of its original purpose and somewhat altered by the partial replacement of its original sheathing materials. Wainscoting of narrow vertical boards reaches window-sill level on the west (front), north, and east walls. The upper wall surfaces are finished with plaster-over-lath on the north and east sides of the room while those on the west and south have been covered with plywood (excepting a section of plaster-over-lath between the doors on the west wall). The plywood replaces wainscoting on the south wall.

The floor boards have been removed from the south half of the classroom, exposing the rough-sawn timber joists. The remaining floor consists mostly of the dimension boards in the underlayer; the finish matched boards have been almost entirely removed. The ceiling has been entirely sheathed with plywood.

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The door and window openings are enframed by plain surrounds. A four-panel door now leans against the north wall of the classroom, apparently removed from the doorway leading to the exterior entrance. The doorway from the classroom into the cloakroom appears never to have had a door.

Centered between the windows and abutting the east wall, the exposed brick stove chimney begins about six feet from the floor. A narrow stack of wood shelves rises from the floor to support the chimney. (The stove has been removed, leaving the building without means of being heated.) The building lacks both electric wiring and plumbing, and therefore has escaped the modifications relating to the installation of those services.

The present appearance of the classroom interior reflects a partial rehabilitation of the building undertaken in 1964 but never completed. The concrete-block piers were installed in place of the original fieldstone foundation, and the deteriorated wood sills and floor framing were partly replaced. The partial plywood sheathing was applied to the interior walls and ceiling. The present two-over-two window sash appear to have replaced the original sash, although the period of that change is unknown.

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The District No. 1 Schoolhouse holds significance for embodying the distinctive characteristics of a type of vernacular building, a one-room schoolhouse constructed during the middle nineteenth century for a small rural school district. Unlike most of its counterparts elsewhere in Vermont, the Somerset schoolhouse was never altered by the installation of twentieth-century improvements such as bank windows or plumbing, and therefore retains a higher degree of architectural integrity. The District No. 1 Schoolhouse represents the entire period of active settlement and public education in the isolated mountain township of Somerset. It has now become probably the only extant historic building in one of the few Vermont townships that have been depopulated and legislatively disestablished during the twentieth century.

Such modest school buildings were common in the rural towns of Vermont during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Each township was subdivided into multiple school districts, typically from ten to twenty in number. The school buildings were constructed at locations of relatively convenient access for the residents of the districts, often a central crossroads. Several grades were taught by one teacher in the single room, and the equipment was generally rudimentary. Most of these schoolhouses, however, have been supplanted during the present century by larger consolidated schools in the village and town centers. Furthermore, the large majority of the surviving one-room schoolhouses have been converted to residential and other uses, commonly being substantially altered during the process.

The District No. 1 Schoolhouse ranks among the few virtually unaltered examples of one-room district schoolhouses extant in the state. In 1904, the state Board of Health undertook to establish standards for public schools relating to sanitation, ventilation, and lighting. The requirements for lighting brought about the installation of banks of windows in nearly all school buildings in Vermont. Somerset township, however, was then declining in population toward the point of being officially disestablished, and substantial improvements in its two schoolhouses were probably considered unnecessary. The District No. 1 Schoolhouse, therefore, never received the banks of windows that became a conspicuous feature of most other schools in the state. Furthermore, it was never modified on the interior by the installation of electric wiring and plumbing.

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The charter for Somerset township was granted by Gov. Benning Wentworth of New Hampshire on September 9, 1761 to a group of 62 persons. Few, if any, of the grantees were probably aware of the inhospitable nature of their six-mile-square, 23,040-acre tract of land along the Main Range of the Green Mountains. A major north-south ridge, culminating in the 3556-foot summit of Mount Pisgah, traverses the eastern portion of the original tract. That mountain ridge effectively divided the township into a narrow band of relatively accessible land along the eastern border (adjoining Dover township) and a larger portion lying in the remote 2000-foot-high basin drained by the East and West Branches of the Deerfield River on the west side of the Pisgah massif.

Writing in 1842, Zadock Thompson aptly described the circumstances prevailing in Somerset eighty years after the granting of its charter: "The township is but little settled, and is very mountainous." At that point in time, there were three schoolhouses, a meetinghouse, and four sawmills within its borders. The 1840 census recorded a population of 262, but most lived in the narrow strip of the township lying east of the mountain.

Somerset's residents were engaged in the usual agricultural activities of the period, keeping a limited number of livestock and raising a greater variety of crops although favoring those that could withstand the short growing season. Corresponding to the contemporary pattern in most Vermont towns, the 426 sheep in Somerset were the most numerous livestock although they barely outnumbered the 421 cattle. The production of field crops was dominated by potatoes at 9,930 bushels and oats at 1,531 bushels along with 777 tons of hay. Aside from the field crops, maple sugar was the most important product of Somerset's farms, with 5,440 pounds being made in 1840. That amount greatly exceeded the quantity of wool, only 993 pounds.

Settlement expanded in the western portion of the township during the 1830s despite its relatively harsh conditions. The town undertook to build and improve roads there, and school districts were organized to provide public education. By 1840, a "South West School District" existed in the area of the presently extant schoolhouse, and ten "schollars" between the ages of four and eighteen lived in that district. The number of "schollars" in what had become School District No. 5 increased to sixteen in 1843, and school was conducted during sixteen weeks of the year.

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The female teacher was paid \$12.00 for the term, and her boarding (probably with a family residing in the district) cost an additional \$12.00. The school district received \$10.13 in "public money" from the town, and the balance of \$13.87 was raised by the district residents. A total of 102 students attended Somerset's five district schools that year.

In 1848, the Prudential Committee of District No. 5 leased from Mehemiah Sprague, Jr. a lot of 30 by 30 feet "with the full privilege of entering upon the same at any time & at all times, for the purpose of building, occupying & repairing a schoolhouse so long as the said district shall want the same for the purpose and use of a District Schoolhouse." The location of the lot indicates that this refers to what later became the District No. 1 schoolhouse. The extant schoolhouse was apparently built around 1850.

The new building was apparently needed to accommodate the increasing number of children in District No. 5. Twenty-nine attended school in 1849, and the term had lengthened to twenty-five weeks. The female teacher was paid \$44.00, and she was provided boarding for \$25.00. The wood used to heat the building cost \$6.00, bringing the total expense of the school for the year to \$75.00. The district received \$31.14 from the town, and raised the balance of \$43.86. Altogether there were 118 students in Somerset that year, and the town distributed \$106.24 to the school districts.

Prior to 1853, Somerset town meetings were held on the east side of the mountain. At that year's regular meeting, the voters decided "to hold the town meetings one-half of the time at the new schoolhouse near the Mack Bridge so-called," near the geographical center of the township on the west side of the mountain. That "new schoolhouse" was apparently located in what later became District No. 2 near the mill pond on the East Branch of the Deerfield River.

Despite its existence during the 1840s and early 1850s, School District No. 5 was "organized" by meetings held during June, 1854 at the district's schoolhouse. Those present at the second meeting voted "to have six months school this season 3 months this summer and 3 months winter." They also decided to procure by the first of September the two cords of fire wood required to heat the building, "each person sending schollars [sic] having a right to get his proportion of said wood." Two years later, in

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1856, it was voted to have ten weeks of school that summer and the same number the following winter. The summer semester began on the first Monday in June and the winter semester the first Monday after Thanksgiving. The starting date of the summer semester was chosen to avoid the muddy roads and poor travel conditions that usually accompanied the spring thaw.

The relative difficulties of settlement in the east and west portions of the original Somerset township are clearly reflected in the pattern shown on the McClellan map of 1856. The township's population exceeded 300 in 1850 but most of this total lived in the narrow eastern strip, where numerous residences lined the primary north-south road. By contrast, there were only about a dozen residences scattered through the entire area west of what was then called Somerset Mountain (later Mount Pisgah). The name "Texas" appears on the map between the East and West Branches of the Deerfield River, a name that suggests the remote and wild character of the territory. Three schoolhouses are shown there, including one on the site of the presently extant building. Another of the schoolhouses (apparently the one used for town meetings) stood southwest of the pond in the East Branch where two sawmills then flanked the river; the road over the mountain crossed the river at that point.

The topographical division of the township undoubtedly caused many practical problems in both public and private affairs. Although a road existed over the mountain, it must have been virtually impassible during parts of the year. That would have required a lengthy detour around the mountains through Searsburg and Wilmington townships to the south. The east-side residents were more directly involved, both economically and socially, with the adjoining townships of Dover and Wardsboro and agitated for annexation to them. Dover, however, refused repeatedly to accept the transfer of Somerset territory.

In response to the problem, the Vermont Legislature acted in 1853 to divide Somerset township roughly along the mountain ridge. The northern third (two miles in length) of the eastern strip was annexed to Wardsboro while the southern two-thirds (four miles) was transferred to Wilmington adjoining at the narrow south end rather than the unwilling Dover on the longer east side. (This illogical arrangement lasted only until 1869 when Dover finally accepted what had become known as the "Wilmington Leg" or "The Handle".) The area of Somerset was thereby reduced to 18,304 acres.

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The drastic reduction in the area of the township and the loss of its most populous portion was followed in 1859 by a redivision of Somerset's school districts. Two new districts were created in the remaining territory. The previous District No. 5 was enlarged by the addition of parts of Districts No. 4 and 6, and was given the new designation of District No. 1.

The Beers map of 1869 shows the two new school districts in the truncated Somerset township lying wholly west of the mountain ridge. District No. 1 corresponded to the west half of the township, and District No. 2 to the east half of its area. The presently (1990) extant schoolhouse occupies the site of the District No. 1 school shown on the map, beside the single north-south road passing through the district. There were then not any nearby buildings on the same (east) side of the road. On the west side, a residence was situated nearly opposite the school and two others were located within a half-mile (only foundations now remain to mark their sites). About one and one-half miles to the south, a small group of buildings including a sawmill and a blacksmith shop straddled the road next to a mill pond (later known as the site of the Tudor mill) in the Deerfield River. Altogether within District No. 1, i.e., the west half of the township, the map shows about a dozen residences. The children living in those few residences constituted the entire student body of the District No. 1 school.

District No. 2 was then even less developed than its western counterpart. A small settlement of a half-dozen buildings was located at the south end of the mill pond on the East Branch of the Deerfield River; it included the District No. 2 school, a sawmill, and a blacksmith shop. That school served the children from only about eight residences shown within the district. The road continued from this settlement eastward over the mountain into what was then The Handle of Wilmington township.

The year (1870) after the Beers map was published, Somerset finally gained a special post office and Hollis Town, Jr. was appointed postmaster. The office probably never occupied a separate building; in 1884, according to Child's county gazetteer, it was located in Town's house, "there being no settlement in the township worth of the title of village." (Reflecting Somerset's small population, Town also served as the town clerk, town auditor, first selectman, and justice of the peace in addition to owning a 220-acre farm.) The post office served a population that ranked among the lowest of any township

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in Vermont: The 1880 census recorded only 67 residents in Somerset. The number declined to 61 in 1890; a decade later, at the turn of the century, it returned to 67.

Among the 67 or so residents, there were only sixteen students attending the two common schools in 1882. Two female teachers were employed, and the town contributed \$87.00 to the districts for operating the schools. The residents of District No. 1 raised \$50.00 that year to support their school. Jason W. Rice, a local farmer, was then Somerset's superintendent of schools. Rice also served in the positions of town lister, grand juror, and justice of the peace. The small total number of students indicates either that the population in District No. 1 had decreased or that the number of school-age children had declined (the former seems more likely). The expense of operating the school fell on a similarly small number of tax-paying residents, and the voters at the District No. 1 annual meetings during the 1860s and 1870s declined repeatedly to provide money for "repairing the schoolhouse."

After the reduction of Somerset's territory to the mountain basin, lumbering became the predominant economic activity in the township. Child's gazetteer records that three sawmills were then (1884) operating in the township and producing substantial quantities of lumber. The largest mill was constructed in 1881 and operated by Frank D. Chase, who owned 2,000 acres of forestland to supply the mill and a contiguous chair-stock factory. Chase's water-powered mill was located at the pond on the East Branch in District No. 2, and produced some 300,000 feet of lumber and a "large amount of chair-stock" per year. Two other sawmills were located south of the District No. 1 schoolhouse on the West Branch of the Deerfield River. Both produced about 250,000 feet of lumber annually; one was built by Hollis Town and the other was then (1884) leased by William and John Tudor.

During the late nineteenth century, the timber industry in Vermont underwent marked expansion in the scale of operations and significant changes in technology, especially means of transport. The small mills at sites within the forest were generally supplanted and eventually abandoned in favor of larger mills near villages or towns. These mills were linked to the sources of timber by logging railroads and improved roads that made possible the efficient movement of large volumes of timber.

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In the case of Somerset, large-scale logging - particularly of spruce timber intended for making wood pulp - was undertaken in the 1880s. The tree-length logs were floated down the Deerfield River to a pulp-and-paper mill built in 1882 at Readsboro, Vermont (just north of the Massachusetts border) by the Deerfield River Co. That firm was controlled by the Newton brothers of Holyoke, Massachusetts, who were prominent in the development of the paper industry in that state. Nine years later (1891), the Newtons extended their Hoosac Tunnel and Wilmington Railroad northward from Readsboro into Wilmington to serve larger facilities for processing the enormous volume of timber available in Somerset. In 1893, a quarter-mile-long dam was erected across the Deerfield River west of Wilmington village creating a 75-acre reservoir to generate electric power and store logs for an immense brick pulp and sawmill constructed there the next year; this industrial complex was called Mountain Mills. About the same time, a large sawmill was built in Somerset to cut hardwood logs, whose inferior buoyancy impedes river driving; that mill sawed three million board-feet of timber annually, ten times the amount of the earlier mills in Somerset. The Deerfield River Co. purchased extensive tracts of timberland in Somerset to supply the mills.

Significant changes occurred in the Mountain Mills enterprise during the first decade of this century. The Newton brothers sold both the H. T. & W. Railroad (in 1904) and the mill complex and Somerset timberlands (in 1906), the latter to the newly formed Deerfield Lumber Co. The brick mill was destroyed by fire in 1903, and its replacement, a smaller wood-framed mill, burned a year later. That was followed by another mill intended primarily for sawing hardwood into various products. A sulphate pulp mill was added to the complex in 1915.

The Deerfield Lumber Co.'s shift of emphasis to hardwood timber brought the need for better transport between the Somerset forests and Mountain Mills. In 1906, the company undertook the construction of the three-foot gauge Deerfield River Railroad from Mountain Mills upstream (northwestward) along the Deerfield River through Searsburg into Somerset. By 1909, there were 22 miles of track in operation, and branch lines reached into several parts of Somerset township. One line followed the East Branch of the river to a point a short distance downstream of the District No. 2 settlement. The settlement itself, however, was reached by the so-called Peck Branch (railroad) from a line along the West Branch of the river. The latter line continued upstream

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along the river through District No. 1 before turning northeastward to reach into the northern half of District No. 2. Another branch line turned away from the West Branch line and followed the Rake Branch (river) into the southwestern corner of the township. The railroad hauled eight million feet of timber per year at its peak. (Some pulpwood continued to be floated down the river until 1918.)

The second decade of the twentieth century brought an entirely different kind of large-scale development to Somerset that physically displaced the nineteenth-century District No. 2 settlement. The New England Power Co. undertook intensive hydro-electric development of the Deerfield River along its entire length in Vermont and Massachusetts, beginning with an expansive storage reservoir on the East Branch in the Somerset basin. The massive earth-filled dam was constructed in 1912-13 nearly on the site of the dam at what was then called Peck's Mill; all of the buildings in the surrounding settlement were removed. The dam extends 2100 feet in length and 104 feet in maximum height, being 600 feet wide at the base and 20 feet at the crest. It impounds a reservoir with a surface area of 1623 acres and a length of five miles extending into Stratton township on the north end. The reservoir has a storage capacity of 57,346 acre-feet of water to supply the seven generating stations that have been constructed downstream along the river.

The Deerfield River Railroad benefited temporarily from the dam project. The railroad hauled most of the earth fill used in the construction, and thereby became financially profitable for the only period of its existence. After the dam was completed, a track was laid along its crest and several connecting spur lines were built to haul logs from the forest covering the northeastern part of Somerset township. The network of active trackage reached its maximum extent of 29.5 miles during the period 1913-15. (A total of 41 miles of line was constructed during the railroad's fifteen-year existence.)

The 1910 census recorded a 45 per cent drop in Somerset's population, to 27, during the first decade of this century. This abrupt reduction may relate to the virtual elimination of settlement in half of Somerset township that occurred when the power company purchased the land for the huge reservoir. Whatever its cause, the reduction in population to that level undermined the efficacy of maintaining a Somerset post office, and it was closed in 1916. The permanent residents were vastly

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outnumbered by the temporary population of loggers living in the camps scattered throughout the township; in 1916, there were some 300 of them working in the woods. The lumber company owned a farm southwest of the District No. 1 schoolhouse to supply vegetables for the loggers and hay for the multitude of horses used to skid logs.

The development of large-scale hydroelectric facilities along the Deerfield River expanded in the early 1920s, soon displacing both the logging railroad and the pulp and sawmills that it supplied. In 1920-21, a subsidiary of the New England Power Co. acquired the Mountain Mills complex and the flowage rights along the river. The railroad was truncated to five miles of line downstream of another dam and storage reservoir constructed in Searsburg, and its operation ceased in 1921. The pulp mill was closed in 1923 and its equipment was removed. Concurrently another huge dam (the highest earth-fill dam in the world at the time) was being constructed at Whitingham, some six miles downstream of Mountain Mills. Its gates were closed in April, 1924 and the Deerfield River valley was soon transformed into a lake known as Harriman Reservoir reaching nearly to Wilmington village, drowning the Mountain Mills settlement and the need for the Deerfield River Railroad.

The remaining Somerset settlement in District No. 1 declined to two families during the 1920s and 1930s, when farm abandonment and economic depression brought about the depopulation of so-called hill towns throughout Vermont. John H. Taylor came to the township in 1920 to serve as caretaker of Somerset Dam. He and his wife, Katie E., owned a farm (with a "large herd of cattle") about a half-mile north of the District No. 1 schoolhouse. Katie Taylor was apparently the last person to teach in the schoolhouse. The building was closed probably by 1930 (when Somerset's population was only 20), and the few remaining students were subsequently taught at the Taylor residence. The last town meeting held at the Town Hall (probably the District No. 2 schoolhouse) was in 1925, and the subsequent meetings were held at the Town Clerk's Office - presumably the residence of Katie Taylor, who was Town Clerk after 1925. The Taylors also filled most of the other town offices in what had become virtually their own fiefdom.

Katie Taylor served as the last Somerset representative to the Vermont General Assembly from 1925 onward. Her vigorous opposition was insufficient to prevent the official

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disestablishment of the township by the Legislature in 1937. The final Somerset town meeting was held on November 24th of that year. The check list of voters for the 1936 general election recorded seven names, and however many came to that special meeting unanimously approved the expenditure of \$1,500 to "buy a gasoline shovel for use on the town roads." (There were then only 6.1 miles being maintained.) The record of the meeting does not mention the impending demise of the organized township. Three years later, the census of 1940 found only five residents left in Somerset. The Taylors had moved to Massachusetts after John was convicted in Windham County Court of cruelty to their three adopted sons.

Most of the land in Somerset that had been cleared during the nineteenth century for settlement and agriculture was reverting to forest by the 1930s. In 1933, the United States Congress established the Green Mountain National Forest along the mountainous spine of Vermont. The entire Somerset township lies within the authorized boundary for Federal acquisition of land. Since 1933, a substantial portion of the township has been purchased for addition to the National Forest; the tract of land including the District No. 1 schoolhouse was acquired in 1950. The United States Forest Service administers the forest and manages the natural and cultural resources that exist within it.

In 1964, the Forest Service undertook a project to rehabilitate the schoolhouse. Its stone foundation and deteriorated wood sills were replaced, the foundation being rebuilt with concrete-block piers screened by unmortared fieldstone. The classroom's walls and ceiling were mostly sheathed with plywood. However, owing partly to insufficient funding, the work was never completed and the building has subsequently remained unused.

The number of historic buildings in Somerset has declined steadily during the twentieth century. Indeed, the District No. 1 schoolhouse may now (1990) hold the distinction of being the only surviving building constructed prior to 1940 within the post-1859 limits of the township. The small number of other buildings in Somerset consists predominantly of seasonal camps unrelated to the earlier settlement. Now awaiting further rehabilitation and possible adaptive use by the Forest Service, the District No. 1 schoolhouse provides the last link to the historic architecture of a virtually extinct Vermont hill-town.

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Chace, J., Jr. McClellan's Map of Windham County, Vermont.
Philadelphia: C. McClellan and Co., 1856.

Map of Timber Lands in Upper Deerfield Valley. The New England
Co., Mountain Mills, Vermont. October, 1920. Scale: 1 inch =
200 rods. Available at the Forest Supervisor's Office, Green
Mountain National Forest, Rutland, Vermont.

Plan of Somerset, Windham Co., Vermont. Manuscript map showing
lot boundaries, abandoned railroads, roads, and streams. Map No.
H-19-G. n. d. Scale: 1 inch = 100 rods. Available at the
Forest Supervisor's Office, Green Mountain National Forest,
Rutland, Vermont.

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BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property being nominated consists of the District No. 1 Schoolhouse and a small surrounding parcel of land adjoining the east side of the Somerset Road within the Green Mountain National Forest. The boundary begins at a Point A located in the east edge of the right-of-way of said road at its intersection with a line fifty (50) feet north of, and parallel to, the north facade of the schoolhouse. Thence the boundary extends southward along the east edge of said right-of-way to Point B located at its intersection with a line fifty (50) feet south of, and parallel to, the south facade of the schoolhouse. Thence the boundary turns eastward and follows said south line to Point C located at its intersection with the west bank of a small brook flowing along a generally north-south course a short distance east of the schoolhouse. Thence the boundary turns northward and follows the west bank of said brook to Point D located at its intersection with a line fifty (50) feet north of, and parallel to, the north facade of the schoolhouse. Thence the boundary turns westward and follows said north line to Point A, the point of beginning.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary of the District No. 1 Schoolhouse property encompasses the schoolhouse and its original leased lot that extended only slightly beyond the footprint of the building. In 1950, that lot together with a much larger tract of land was transferred to Federal ownership as part of the Green Mountain National Forest.

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PROPERTY OWNER

United States of America
c/o Green Mountain and Finger Lakes National Forest
P. O. Box 519
151 West Street
Rutland, Vermont 05702-0519

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PHOTOGRAPHS

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The following information repeats for all photographs:

District No. 1 Schoolhouse
Somerset, Vermont
Credit: Hugh H. Henry
Date: September 1989
Negative filed at Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

Photograph 1
Setting of schoolhouse along road, showing main (west) and south
facades; view looking northeast.

Photograph 2
Main (west) and south facades; view looking northeast.

Photograph 3
North and main (west) facades; view looking southeast.

Photograph 4
Rear (east) facade; view looking northwest.