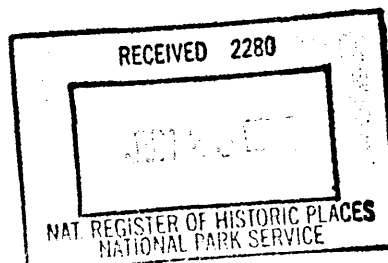


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



904

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 an 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.

1. Name of Property

historic name Fairlee Railroad Depot

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number US Route 5 (Main Street) N/A not for publication

city or town Fairlee N/A vicinity

state Vermont code VT county Orange code 017 zip code 05045

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Elsa Hilbertson National Register Specialist June 17, 1998
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Vermont State Historic Preservation Office
State of 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 official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that the property is:
- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
 - determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
 - determined not eligible for the National Register.
 - removed from the National Register.
 - other, (explain): _____

Edson H. Beall Signature of the Keeper 7-23-98 Date of Action

Fairlee Railroad Depot
Name of Property

Orange County, VT
County and State

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

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/rail-related

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

No Style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls weatherboard

roof asphalt

other wood

Narrative Description

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

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Fairlee Railroad Depot
Orange County, Vermont

Description

The Fairlee Railroad Depot, built in 1848, is a single story, wood-framed, rectangular shaped structure of simple design, with a steeply pitched gable roof, located within the village area of the Town of Fairlee, Vermont. It is set on a large lot, adjacent to the tracks of the Boston & Maine Railroad; and is now surrounded by mature deciduous trees and occasional underbrush. Overall the building is in very good condition and remains unaltered from when it was last actively used by the railroad in 1972. Although the site is no longer occupied by related railroad-type warehouse buildings as in years past and is more vegetated, the property still possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Within the village area of the Town of Fairlee, the main street, also referred to as U.S. Route 5, prompted a very linear pattern of growth because of its layout and juxtaposition to adjacent natural geographical features, beginning during the earliest years of settlement within the upper Connecticut River Valley. The Main Street, about three quarters of a mile long, runs parallel to and westerly of the tracks of the Boston & Maine Railroad, that are in turn parallel to and westerly of the south-flowing Connecticut River. The Fairlee Railroad Depot building is located approximately midway along the west side of Main Street, on a rectangular-shaped lot containing slightly more than four (4) acres. This lot, measuring 534.3 feet on Main Street and an average of about 320 feet deep, runs easterly from Main Street, across the railroad tracks, and down the western bank of the Connecticut River to the water's edge. Adjacent to the southerly side of this parcel, an additional small rectangular lot containing .21 acre of land was added to the original lot in 1978, that runs from Main Street to the tracks, and measures 72.3 feet on the street side, by 128. feet deep. The railroad tracks bisect the lot into approximately equal halves, and the depot building is located on that portion of the lot that lies between Main Street and the tracks, and towards the parcel's southerly boundary.

The earliest photographs of the village area, stereopticon views taken looking down from the nearby Palisades in the 1860's, show that the site also contained, in addition to the depot building, a large wood shed located directly across from and parallel to the tracks and depot, and animal stock pens located immediately north of the depot building, on the same side of the tracks. This is further confirmed by a detailed map of the Fairlee village area published in an 1877 edition of F.W. Beers & Co. Atlas of Orange County, Vermont. The wood shed was used for storing fuel for the early wood-burning steam locomotives.

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2

**Fairlee Railroad Depot
Orange County, Vermont**

Description (continued)

Later, turn-of-the-century photographs show as many as three track-side structures immediately south of the depot, on the same side of the tracks. The one closest to the depot was for many years a creamery. Today none of these aforementioned accessory buildings remain; however, some of the foundation of the creamery building is still visible in the wooded underbrush.

The Beers Atlas also shows that at one time there existed a siding that ran parallel to the depot. However, these same later photographs only show the single track arrangement that presently exists along the easterly side of the building.

A simple dirt U-shaped driveway, very broad in layout, leads up to the building from Main Street. The area between the building, the driveway and Main Street is flat lawn and mature maple trees. In recent years this area of the site has played host to weekend antique flea markets.

The overall dimensions of the building are 30' 6" wide by 74' 6" long, with a simple gable roof of about 10/12 pitch. The wall height from the building floor to the top of the plates is approximately 12' 0". A 3' 0" x 8' 4" bay window protrudes from the track (easterly) side of the building.

The entire structure is of wood-framed construction. With the exception of some heavy plank wainscoting applied to low wall areas along the track side of the building, adjacent to the sliding doors leading into the freight house section of the facility, the entire exterior is clad with wood clapboards laid 3-3/4" to weather. The corner and gable fascia boards are 1" x 9"; and the roof soffits are likewise flat 1" boards.

The roof eaves broadly overhang the side walls, as do the gable rakes which extend generously beyond the building's end walls. The roof fascia board is a simple flat piece of trim placed on a 45° angle. The roof has recently been replaced with dark gray asphalt shingles. However, earlier photographs indicate that wood shingles were once present. The bay window, which falls short of extending as high as the main building's side walls, has a very slightly pitched shallow hipped roof with hardly any overhang, and covered in metal roofing material.

A simple straight, square brick chimney exits the building at the ridge, and extends about 3 feet above it. Earlier photographs of the building show that at one time the chimney stepped in slightly,

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 3

**Fairlee Railroad Depot
Orange County, Vermont**

Description (continued)

several courses above the ridge, and then extended upward the remaining distance about 3 feet, in a very plain and unadorned fashion.

Although at this time the building is devoid of any applied roof gutters, there are on site the remains of ones that until recently were attached to the facility, although having become quite decrepit. The gutter trough was milled out from a single piece of wood and secured to the building by heavy flat wrought iron brackets. Metal down spouts at all four corners of the roof drained the gutters. Early photographs show the existence of the gutters and down spouts.

With the exception of the southerly approximate 24 feet of the building, the structure is supported on a brick foundation that encloses a shallow dirt crawl space. The southerly portion of the building, an addition to the original facility, is set upon masonry piers and enclosed with wood skirt boarding.

The lobby area of the building is believed to have been remodeled about the turn-of-the-century, more of which will be written later in this narrative, and it appears that at that time the bay window was added and some of the exterior doors and windows were changed.

Within the high wall area of the two gable ends and in the lower freight house portion of the building, the windows are the original 6/6 wood, double-hung sash with 10" x 14" panes. These window openings are trimmed with 4" x 1" flat boards and peaked lintelboards. The sills are 2" thick.

In other areas of the building, newer 2 over 2 wood double hung window sash with 14" x 28" glass is present. This also includes the front sash of the bay window. However, the narrow side sash of the bay window is 1 over 1 with 14" x 28" glass. On the westerly elevation of the building, a high piece of fixed sash with 14" x 28" glass brings natural light into an interior toilet room. The trim around these newer window openings is 5-1/2" wide on the sides and 6" across the top with a projecting wood cap piece, and a heavy 2-3/4" wood sill. At one time these newer windows, located at heated interior areas of the building, were equipped with exterior wood 4 pane storm sash, several of which still remain on site.

The two pass doors that exit the building, on the northerly and easterly side, are similar to doors

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Fairlee Railroad Depot
Orange County, Vermont

Description (continued)

seen on other Boston & Maine depots, and are believed to be of latter twentieth century origin. These two doors are trimmed similar to the newer window openings referenced above.

The freight house portion of the facility is equipped with a total of four sliding doors, 6' wide by 6' 9" high, two on the easterly track side, and two on the westerly Main Street side of the building. Because of the 24' addition to the southerly end of the building, the southerly two of these four doors are constructed of slightly different vertical boards, and likewise are trimmed showing minor differences.

Presently (1997) the building exterior is painted a deep maroon/red on the clapboards, with cream trim. Older color photographs of the facility show the application of the standard Boston & Maine colors: golden cream clapboards, black window sash, maroon trim, and a maroon dado painted continuously around the building below the height of the window sills. No trace of the previous B & M color scheme is visible on the building at this time¹.

Between the two front windows of the bay window is placed an 8" by 8" hardwood mast extending slightly higher than the ridge of the main roof. Prior to the railroad decommissioning the building in 1972, fully operational train signaling semaphore equipment (referred to by B & M railroad men as "train order boards") was housed on the mast. At this time, the two levelers inside the building, the rods that pass through the wall of the bay window, some of the various iron pivots attached to the mast, and an iron ladder also bolted to the mast remain. The two long steel control rods, the two iron spectacles that held a range of colored lenses, the counter-weights, and the two porcelain-coated steel blades are missing. All of the above mentioned equipment was standard issue by the Boston & Maine Railroad, fabricated by them in their shops in Concord, New Hampshire, and common to most, if not all, of their depot facilities.²

¹See: Green Mountain Rails - Vermont's Colorful Trains, by Robert Willoughby Jones. Pine Tree Press, Los Angeles CA, 1994, page 152.

²See: B & M Bulletin Volume XVIII, No. 4. Published by the B & M Railroad Historical Society, Inc. 1992. Photograph on front cover.

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Fairlee Railroad Depot
Orange County, Vermont

Description (continued)

Filling in between the building and the tracks, and extending parallel to the tracks beyond the building in both a southerly and northerly direction, was a wooden platform at grade level, a feature evident in older photographs of the property. Presently there remains, in a very rotted condition, some of this platform, constructed of rough sawn 2" thick planking nailed to wooden sleepers.

The only change to have occurred in recent years to the exterior of the building concerns the removal of a small shed, attached to the southeasterly corner, apparently constructed to house a track inspection handcar, and possible other smaller maintenance tools and equipment. The remains of the shed's footprint suggests that it measured about 16 feet square, and older photographs show a low, modest, wood framed structure with a very flat gabled roof. There does not appear to be any record of when this shed was added to the main building, however, turn-of-the-century photographs clearly show it. Regardless of when the shed was constructed, it was applied directly against the existing siding and trim of the main building in such a way that when it was removed, there was no permanent damage to, or repair needed, of the depot's southerly wall.

INTERIOR

The building's interior can be considered, in general terms, divided into two broad areas: one-third heated, finished, lobby, toilet, and office space, and two-thirds unheated, unfinished freight house area. The following description of the interior spaces will start at the northerly end of the facility, and progress southerly.

The lobby measures 15' 2" x 29' 3", and runs the full depth of the building. The walls are covered with vertical 2-1/4" wide matched boarding, and so is the ceiling. The ceiling height is 10 feet, and continuous crown molding covers the joint made by the wall and ceiling intersecting.

Wooden benches are built attached to the three exterior walls, and are continuous except where interrupted by one of the two exterior doors that exit either out the northwesterly corner of the building, or out on to the track side of the facility. Similar to the walls and ceiling, the benches are likewise constructed of matched boarding. Slightly above the benches, at 4 feet, a horizontal wooden trim piece runs continuously around the room. Below this trim piece, both the walls and benches are painted white. However, above it the walls and ceiling have the old original varnished finish.

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Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 6

**Fairlee Railroad Depot
Orange County, Vermont**

Description (continued)

The floor is narrow hardwood strips, and quite worn. Two ticket windows, on either side of a brick chimney encased with in an interior wall, open into the station agent's office. These windows are 1 over 1 double-hung sash with 18" x 20" glass, and individual thick wood counters with heavy ornate wooden brackets. It is believed that until the more recent installation of an oil-fired hot air furnace elsewhere in the building, the only source of heat for the facility was a wood or coal stove located in the lobby, between the two ticket windows.

Two small toilet rooms are located off from the lobby. Both of these rooms measure 6' 0" x 5' 8", and are of the same wood finish as the lobby. The toilet room adjacent to the building's exterior wall has a high piece of fixed glass. However, it has no fixed transom window above its lobby door as does the other toilet room situated fully within the building's interior space. Both toilet rooms have high fixed sash installed within the southerly interior wall that is shared with the adjacent freight house area. One of the toilet rooms has been painted, while the other retains the original varnish. Presently the plumbing fixtures have been removed and both rooms are now serving as storage closets.

The station agent's office measures, exclusive of the 7' 3" x 3' 2" bay window, 8' 10" x 17' 0" overall. The walls, ceiling and floor are of the same wood finish as the lobby, and this room retains the original varnish. A wooden counter fills across the full width of the bay window, with a knee hole centered between two banks of wooden drawers. Mounted above the counter, between the two front windows of the bay window area, are the two iron levers and rods that control the exterior semaphore equipment. Two small wooden steps totaling 12" lead up to a pass door that exits out into the freight house area. A dutch door with a small counter closes off the office from the lobby. A modern hot air furnace is set within the westerly end of this room.

Within the four rooms that comprise this area of the building, all of the interior wood finish and trim clearly suggests that this portion of the facility was extensively remodeled perhaps circa 1900. This is further implied by the newer window sash used within this area of the building, and by the railroad having installed about this time their standard semaphore equipment throughout the Boston & Maine system. And, the similarities to the B & M facility three miles south in Ely, erected about 1901, together with the presence of flush toilets further appear to confirm this.

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Section number 7 Page 7

**Fairlee Railroad Depot
Orange County, Vermont**

Description (continued)

The freight house portion of the facility is unfinished open space that takes up the remainder of the building area. Here, because of the complete lack of any interior finish on the three exterior walls, the heavy timbered, braced frame structure of the building is fully visible.

As has been mentioned previously in this narrative, it appears quite evident that an addition measuring approximately 24 feet was placed on the southerly end of the building sometime after the facility was first erected. From inside the freight house area, this is plainly evident.

The original building, as first constructed, was made up of four bays of heavy timbered, braced framing set - the individual bents are set at 12 feet center to center. Presently two of those bays are the lobby, toilets, and agent's office area, and the two remaining bays are part of the freight house area. And, two additional bays that vary from the original construction in slight detail, are also part of the freight house area. The original building's southerly gable wall sheathing is still visible above the floor area, up under the roof structure.

The older framing system consists of 8" x 5" posts at 12' centers turned flatwise in the wall, with 8" x 8" tie beams and principal rafters above the posts. A principal purlin runs horizontally at mid-point between the 8" x 8" principal rafters, and three 6" x 3" common rafters running continuously from the ridge to the plate are evenly spaced within each 12' bay. Diagonal wind bracing is located at the center of the four original bays of framing. The side wall plates are 8" x 8" with 4" x 4" diagonal braces at each post; and studs measuring approximately 5" x 3" at about 30" on center fill in between the larger posts. Each tie beam is likewise braced at each post.

The two newer bays of framing are almost identical to the original building, except for utilizing slightly heavier timbers for some of the individual framing members, and added horizontal diagonal braces between the tie rafters and the perpendicular wall plates.

A close inspection of the framing members and the horizontal wall sheathing reveals that the material for the original structure was cut with an up-and-down saw, whereas the material for the addition was cut with a circular saw.

The interior wall between the heated area of the building and the unheated freight house space is

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Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 8

**Fairlee Railroad Depot
Orange County, Vermont**

Description (continued)

clad with 1" painted horizontal boarding. The open attic space above the lobby, toilet, office portion of the facility is plainly visible from the freight house.

The three lower windows and the single upper southerly facing gable window, within the freight house area of the building, are the older 6 over 6 type of sash. It appears that there was at one time a window unit at the southeasterly corner of the end wall that would have been symmetrical with the other remaining lower unit.

The floor in this area is 2" x 8" planks, well worn from years of use. Modern fluorescent lights are hung from the overhead tie beams.

Although the Fairlee Railroad Depot Building has not been used as a railroad facility for twenty-five years (as of 1997), and now houses an antique shop, it is still fully recognizable as a village depot for, in spite of the site being less open and more vegetated, the building remains completely unaltered - almost frozen in time.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- [X] 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.
[X] 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 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)

Transportation

Architecture

Period of Significance

1848-1948

Significant Dates

1848

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Connecticut & Passumpsic Rivers Railroad

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:

- [X] State Historic Preservation Office
[] Other State agency
[] Federal agency
[] Local government
[] University
[] Other

Name of repository:

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 1

Fairlee Railroad Depot
Orange County, Vermont

Statement of Significance

The railroad depot building located within the village area of the town of Fairlee is historically significant by virtue of it being an exceptionally well-preserved, first generation structure remaining from the earliest years of railroad development within the State of Vermont. Although now temporarily housing an antique shop, when erected about 1848, it was planned, built, and then successfully functioned for more than one hundred years as a railroad depot until its closing in 1972. Because it is a rural, first generation railroad facility, it possesses an honest, functional and direct simplicity reflective of the era within which it was originally constructed. This was an era then only recently progressed from a period in our nation's development when the long distance overland transportation of goods and people relied, with the exception of canals, upon teams of straining horses harnessed to the wagons and stage coaches that traveled the crude dirt roads and turnpikes of the day.

By the mid-1830's, New England in general and Boston in particular, had come to realize how important a link the Erie Canal had become for the ocean port of New York City and the rapidly expanding regions of the American mid-west and Canada. As a result, thoughts of railroads extending across New England, fanning out from Boston and other coastal areas, began to take shape in many an enterprising Yankee's mind. It was realized that here was potentially a new transportation method that could be operable year round, not subject to the winter icing over of lakes and rivers; and a transportation system that could restore the sagging fortunes of New England while also conveniently making fortunes for its investors!

The early 1840's saw the outbreak of "Railroad Fever" in New England, and the scramble was on to head westward through any natural corridor possible with rails of steel. Although western Massachusetts was looked at for available ways of threading rails over to New York State, the so-called Berkshire Hills presented a formidable challenge to the civil engineers of that time. It was therefore reasoned by some that slightly further to the north, it would be possible to wind through the valleys of Vermont's Green Mountains and connect to Canada via Lake Champlain; or run north parallel to the Connecticut River and access Canada by way of linking up to the St. Lawrence River, and hence the heartland of the upper regions of North America.

After several still-born attempts at chartering railroads within the state during the 1830's, 1843 saw three of the future great railroad lines of Vermont fully chartered - this time successfully. Of these

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 2

**Fairlee Railroad Depot
Orange County, Vermont**

Statement of Significance (continued)

three lines that soon came to be known as the Vermont Central, the Rutland & Burlington, and the Connecticut & Passumpsic Rivers Railroad, it is the latter of the three that is integral with this narrative.

The Connecticut & Passumpsic Rivers Railroad (C&P.R.R.) was originally chartered with the ambitious intent of following the two streams mentioned in its name from the Massachusetts state line to the Canadian border. By the time that it was ready to start actual construction, the C&P.R.R. had given up the idea of building south of White River Junction, instead choosing to concentrate its efforts at pushing northward through St. Johnsbury to Canada. This decision was in part based upon the realization that already White River Junction was becoming an important rail connection to other recently constructed lines like the Northern Railroad that ran down to lower New Hampshire and hence connecting through to Boston; and not choosing to compete with the Sullivan County Railroad that had recently been chartered to run mostly in New Hampshire, south of White River Junction also along the Connecticut River's shore.

The C&P.R.R. got off to a very good start. When it became generally known in financial circles that Erastus Fairbanks, the well-recognized scale manufacturer of St. Johnsbury, Vermont, and Massachusetts magnate Addison Gilmore were the two primary promoters of the new line, the enterprise was given such prestige that its bonds could be sold at par.

By late 1847 the initial survey work had been completed, the land for the right-of-way secured, and construction started at the southernmost terminus of the line in White River Junction. Throughout 1848 gangs of Irish immigrant laborers pushed the rails northward; and by October of that year the first regularly scheduled trains ran between White River Junction and Bradford, Vermont, the next town on the Connecticut River north of Fairlee. In November 1850, the tracks finally reached as far as St. Johnsbury, their coming being greeted as a tremendous local event and celebrated with much enthusiasm. Thirteen years later the rails were completed through Newport to the Canadian border.

In Fairlee, on August 23, 1847, the C&P.R.R. acquired by "taking" 4.16 acres more or less, from the estate of the recently deceased Jabez Weld. This rectangular-shaped parcel of land, measuring approximately 340 feet by 535 feet, situated within the village area easterly of and adjacent to Main Street (U.S. Route 5), straddles the railroad's tracks and borders the western bank of the Connecticut River. It is no longer known if there were any structures on the lot when it was

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

Fairlee Railroad Depot
Orange County, Vermont

Statement of Significance (continued)

purchased by the railroad, nor is it known what use Mr. Weld had previously made of the premises. According to the town records that do survive, he left no heirs or other persons to inherit his estate; and perhaps that is why the location was chosen as a site for the village's depot. Certainly the lot's proximity to the village square and its related public buildings made it convenient and ideally suited to that purpose.

This writer has not been able to ascertain with total certainty that the building that is the subject of this narrative was in fact built at the same time that the railroad was completed and first set into operation. The railroad's records are non-existent of any early information, and local historical documentation offers up very little. However, by examining the materials and methods of its construction, and comparing this surviving structure to other nearby C&P.R.R. depot buildings either still surviving or now demolished but their images recorded in photographs, this writer concludes that the Fairlee facility in question was constructed during the years 1848 to 1850, or thereabouts.

Early C&P.R.R. records do not appear to indicate if the railroad company had a stock plan for a standardized rural station building, or how they contractually had the new facilities constructed. Furthermore, it appears no longer known if the contracts that were let for the grading of the road bed, the erection of bridges, and the laying of track included the construction of buildings. This writer has viewed original letters from the railroad contracting to purchase sawn boards locally from within the towns through which the line was passing; however, the purpose of these boards is not revealed by the correspondence.

It would make considerable sense for the C&P.R.R. to have had a standardized depot plan, or one nearly so. The Northern Railroad, a line constructed only several years earlier from Concord to Lebanon, New Hampshire, appears to have done so; as did the neighboring Claremont & Concord Railroad several years later. Were the reader to examine photographs of the now demolished C&P.R.R. depot facilities once located at nearby Newbury and South Newbury, Vermont, there would be noticed many obvious similarities to the Fairlee structure. In fact, were one to disregard the addition later constructed to the south end of the freight house portion of Fairlee (see Section 7. "Description") and then compare it to the Newbury building, they appear virtually identical to each other. And, although the fenestration of the South Newbury (later referred to by the railroad as "Conicut") somewhat differs from Fairlee's depot, all other external aspects and characteristics of the two buildings appear the same.

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Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

Fairlee Railroad Depot
Orange County, Vermont

Statement of Significance (continued)

Perhaps more telling are the apparent similarities of construction type and materials used to erect the various buildings of which we speak. The writer has in his personal archives a photograph dated March 24, 1963 of the South Newbury depot being torn down. Whoever was demolishing the building chose to go about it in a systematic and piecemeal manner. The photograph shows the old structure's frame devoid of any interior partitioning or finish; and less its exterior wall sheathing, finish, and windows. What is clearly evident is that the naked frame of the South Newbury building appears in the photograph to be virtually identical to the heavy timbered, braced frame so abundantly visible within the freight house area of the Fairlee Depot (again, refer to Section 7 "Description").

The writer believes that the comparison of the two depot facilities once located within the town of Newbury and the surviving building still standing in Fairlee is important. Not only does it help to shed some light on the interesting probability of C&P.R.R. having a stock depot plan, but perhaps more importantly it helps establish the age of the Fairlee building. Frederic Wells' excellent book, *History of Newbury, Vermont*, published in 1902, states, "The depots at South Newbury and Newbury are the ones which were built when the railroad was."

Additionally, an examination of the depot building still standing in East Thetford, Vermont, six miles south of Fairlee, and likewise adjacent to what was originally C&P.R.R. mainline track, is revealing in an effort to help establish the age of the Fairlee building. Although the original Thetford facility has become quite mutilated, having last functioned as an operating depot more than thirty-five years ago, and now housing a laundry-mat, there remain numerous similarities. The overall size, wall heights, roof pitch, massing and methods of construction appear quite close. Although Thetford's historical records are vague on the subject of the East Thetford depot's age, it is generally believed that it too was erected at about the same time that the railroad was first constructed.

To this point in the narrative, the Fairlee Depot has been examined within the context of other nearby and similar building types, primarily in an effort to accurately determine its initial date of construction. Although a brief and general discussion of construction type can rarely be used for the purposes of determining specific dates, it nonetheless is an important component of the building's historic significance, and certainly a clear indicator of the era within which the facility was designed and erected.

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Statement of Significance (continued)

In spite of the rapid development of "balloon" framing, commencing in the early 1830's, it remained for many decades a framing system best suited to smaller scale residential buildings and commercial "shops" - structures where spans could be minimized by either the initial design of the building (minimal width), or by employing interior load-bearing walls to provide the additional support required. Because from their inception the primary business of railroads was the transportation of freight, it was found necessary for the buildings that aided in this task to be of open span and unencumbered with interior walls or columns. Therefore, it appears that a heavy-timbered, braced frame structural system was perhaps often a logical choice to the builders of the first generation of railroad buildings. This was a framing system that still had wide appeal with builders during the several decades preceding the American Civil War; and it was a construction type that was easily understood and handled by a wide variety of rural builders and carpenters of the era.

The rapid advances of industrialization brought about with the American Civil War and its immediate aftermath also hastened the decline of heavy-timbered framing, while promoting the popularity of balloon construction for wooden structures. Not only did this post war evolution hold true for the nation's domestic architecture, but equally as well for the proliferation of railroad buildings constructed during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Whether it was an ornately trimmed and bracketed Eastlake styled passenger depot, or a more functionally planned facility intended to only handle freight, light gauge balloon framing had by far become the preferred structural system, perhaps even exclusively so.

To allow balloon framing a greater use and flexibility, the width of second generation, post-war railroad structures was typically less than the thirty feet across the Fairlee Depot. By reducing the overall building width to twenty or twenty-four feet, standardized two inch thick framing lumber could be easily and quite successfully employed. Where there was the need to maintain clear span space, unencumbered with interior supporting member as in a freight house area, typically steel rods with threaded attachments were installed through the structure to tie it together. The other important advantage that the narrower and lighter second generation of buildings gave the railroad companies was that they could be more readily moved, something that was on occasion deemed necessary to do.

Therefore, within thirty or so years of the probable construction of the depot facility in Fairlee, Vermont by the Connecticut & Passumpsic Rivers Railroad, it had become a building constructed

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Fairlee Railroad Depot
Orange County, Vermont

Statement of Significance (continued)

with what was by then viewed as an antiquated, structural system, albeit a good one; and stylistically perhaps the building perceived as rather plain compared to its more ornate post-war, second generation brethren.

To more fully appreciate the advantages that the railroads found by utilizing the newer balloon framing versus heavy timber, the reader should first briefly consider the changes that had taken place throughout the railroad industry itself during the years immediately following the construction of the depot facility that is the subject of this narrative.

By the waning years of the 1860's, the railroads had become by far the nation's largest single industry. Along with this unprecedented growth of an individual industry came a tremendous purchasing power likewise never before experienced by the private sector, and hence the need for standardization of all variety of materials that the railroads typically consumed. As the rail industry grew in physical size, operational complexity, and economic strength, so too did the numbers of people employed increase, while expanding the types of jobs required to enable the system to function. Increasingly, rail companies employed not only those individuals necessary to perform the tasks that had always been an integral part of railroading like locomotive engineers and firemen, but also "in house" professional engineers to design the post-war proliferation of bridges and buildings that the growing rail systems were requiring; and the carpenters and laborers needed to build these new structures.

Hence, the days of a wide building constructed of a heavy wooden frame contracted by skilled or semi-skilled labor was at an end. In its place were constructed narrower, more standardized structures erected by the railroads', own although perhaps less fully skilled, labor pool (and probably a transient one at that), from pre-cut light gauge framing members and related components, bought in bulk and shipped by the railroad to the construction site.

It has been mentioned previously that an addition extending about 25 feet to the south of the facility appears to have been constructed probably within not too many decades of the original building's completion. This addition, being two bays of new heavy timber framing that matched the existing structure had the net effect of doubling the freight house area of the facility. However, there are not known to exist to this writer any surviving records indicating when this work was performed. Because the addition so closely matches the original building (see Section 7 "Description"), rather

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Statement of Significance (continued)

than being constructed of somewhat newer balloon type framing, this writer believes that it was probably built soon after the facility was placed into service. Any late nineteenth/early twentieth century photographs of the building that this writer has seen show the structure at its present length, appearing, with several exceptions, entirely as it does at this time. An early undated stereopticon view looking down on the village area of Fairlee from the Palisades, thought to have been taken about 1870, clearly shows the depot building. However it does not appear that the aforementioned addition had been constructed to the facility. F.W. Beers & Company's 1877 Atlas of Orange County, Vermont also clearly shows a depot and related storage buildings visible in the stereopticon photograph.

As mentioned in Section 7 an apparent remodeling took place within the lobby area well after the building was first erected. Judging by the materials and methods employed within this portion of the facility, the floor plan layout of the area (lobby, toilets, and station agent's office), and a general comparison to the neighboring depot facility located in Ely, Vermont, constructed circa 1901, indicates that this remodeling took place about 1895-1905. Furthermore, it is believed by this writer that it was during this remodeling that the trackside bay window was added to the building, protruding out from the station agent's office. In addition to the obvious function and benefit that the bay window gave the station agent - the ability to look north or south along the tracks from within the building, the window area also housed the facility's telegraph equipment on the built-in counter, and the control levers and mast for the semaphore train order signaling equipment displayed outside the building. It is thought that it was during this 1895-1905 period in question that the Boston & Maine Railroad, then leasing the Connecticut & Passumpsic Rivers Railroad, installed this equipment, common to all their depot facilities. Also, probably early in the twentieth century, a small shed was added to the south end of the facility in which to house a track inspection car. This shed was completely removed about 1990.

From the very beginning the C&P.R.R. was a profitable and well-run railroad line, the first such in Vermont to pay its stock holders dividends. In 1887 the C&P.R.R. was leased to the Boston & Maine for a period of 99 years, and the Connecticut & Passumpsic Rivers Railroad Company faded into history. The B&M had originally been chartered in 1835 and first operated in lower neighboring New Hampshire. The decade of the 1880's were years of tremendous growth for the B&M, when many smaller lines similar to the C&P.R.R. were added either by lease or purchase, and made this previously small and obscure local line the largest in all New England. Finally, on November 7,

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Orange County, Vermont

Statement of Significance (continued)

1946, the B&M acquired through outright purchase all interests in the old C&P.R.R. and the former lease agreement was terminated.

The decade of the 1950's was not an easy time financially for the B&M, and as a result many of its small rural depot facilities were closed and, in most cases, sold off to outside parties, typically for very little money. The B&M's objective during this difficult period was to quickly reduce operating costs while still attempting to maintain a level of freight and passenger service. However, unlike the fate of B&M's depot facility just to the south in Ely, that the railroad had closed and disposed of by 1961, it was decided to keep the Fairlee building open for business. This was in spite of the B&M's sale of the property July 19, 1961 by indentured deed whereby the railroad leased the premises back from the new owners.

The following year the local Probate Court decreed that the Boston & Maine Corporation had only an easement to use the lands originally belonging in 1847 to Jabez Weld, and the reversionary rights belonged to his estate. Hence, it was ordered and adjudged that the reversionary rights in the premises were escheated to the Town of Fairlee to be disposed of like other property appropriated to the Town School District, as Mr. Weld had left no apparent heirs.

In the meantime, the B&M Railroad continued to offer service from the aging wood framed depot on Main Street. No longer were thousands of children transported each summer by rail to the large summer youth camps located on nearby Lake Morey. On January 3, 1965 passenger service on the line was discontinued; and seven years later, in the face of declining demand for freight service, the Boston & Maine Corporation filed a petition with the Vermont Public Service Board to permanently close the Fairlee Station. At the hearing held in Fairlee March 10, 1972, the railroad pointed out that no longer were passengers being carried to or from the station. Furthermore, in spite of the 145 carloads of freight that were handled during the previous year by Fairlee's Station Agent, the B&M believed that type of service could just as easily be administered from the Woodsville, NH office almost twenty miles to the north. The handwriting was clearly on the wall that the Railroad was continuing to consolidate its service to the public in a world of fast changing transportation preferences. Just as not too many years earlier Fairlee was made to take over service to the neighboring communities of Bradford, Newbury, and Wells River when those stations were each closed, now the time had come and it was Fairlee's turn. The State granted the petition request effective October 22, 1972, and one hundred twenty-four years of continuous rail service

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Statement of Significance (continued)

to the village came to an end.

Although now owned by the Town of Fairlee and playing host during the summer months to an antique shop and flea market, the building remains frozen in time. The outer areas of the land parcel upon which it sits are now over-grown with underbrush, while the once-busy steel rails are absent of passing trains - silently rusting while weeds grow from the stone ballast between the wooden ties. Occasionally the quiet is broken on the trackside of the building by an inquisitive rail enthusiast admiring the building, or a lone squirrel scurrying about its business. However, the Fairlee Station remains an historically important building in the State of Vermont for it was an integral part of the birth of the region's rail industry; played witness to its gigantic growth that spanned the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; and in old age presided over the rail industry's fall from greatness and slip into almost total demise.

One last historical note that should be added to this narrative before closing concerns the use of the words "station" vs. "depot". The Boston & Maine Railroad system did not recognize or use the word "depot". Rather, a facility such as the building in Fairlee was referred to as a "station", as noted in the B&M's 1917 edition of their "Rules For The Government Of The Operating Department". Within the section of the rule book titled 'definitions', a "station" is stated to be: "A place designated on the timetable by name, at which a train may stop for traffic; or to enter or leave the main track; or from which fixed signals are operated." It is this writer's long-held opinion and observation that "station" is more of a regional term used primarily in the northeast of the country; vs. "depot" - a term perhaps used more often throughout the remainder of the country.

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Fairlee Railroad Depot
Orange County, Vermont

Verbal Boundary Description

Being two adjoining parcels of land containing 4.37 acres, be the same more or less, with the depot building and improvements situated thereon, located on the southerly side of U.S. Route 5 in the Town of Fairlee, Vermont, and being those same lands and premises acquired by the Town of Fairlee by the following deeds and instruments:

(1) Book 23, Page 455-6 Escheat Decree of Bradford District Probate Counter in the Estate of Jabez Weld to the Town of Fairlee School District date August 6, 1962.

(2) Warranty Deed from E.T. & H.K. Ide Company, Inc. to the Town of Fairlee dated April 25, 1978 and recorded in Book 31, Pages 543-6 of the Fairlee Land Records.

The above mentioned lands and premises are more particularly bounded and described as follows:

Commencing at an iron rod set in the ground on the southerly right of way of U.S. Route 5, which rod marks the northeasterly corner of the lands and premises herein described and the southwesterly corner of lands and premises now or formerly of Davenport; thence proceeding S 36° 55' E along the westerly boundary of Davenport a distance of 119.8 feet to a boundary point situated in the centerline of the railroad tracks; thence continuing S 36° 55' E along the westerly boundary of lands and premises now or formerly of Marion and Thomas Wilcox, a distance of 152.6 feet to an existing iron post; thence continuing S 36° 55' E along the westerly boundary of Wilcox a distance of 87 feet more or less to a boundary point situated on the northerly bank of the Connecticut River, which boundary point marks the southeasterly corner of the lands and premises herein described and the southwesterly corner of adjacent lands and premises of Wilcox; thence turning an angle to the right and proceeding in a generally southwesterly direction along the edge of the Connecticut River, a distance of 540 feet, more or less, to a boundary point situated on the northerly bank of the Connecticut River, which point marks the southwesterly corner of the lands and premises herein described and the southeasterly corner of adjacent lands and premises of the Boston and Maine Corporation, which boundary point lies on a closure line bearing S 60° 16' 30"W, a distance of 539.5 feet from the last mentioned boundary point; thence turning an angle to the right and proceeding N 36° 36' 30" W along the easterly boundary of adjacent lands and premises of Boston & and Maine Corporation, a distance of 83 feet, more or less, to a set iron rod; thence continuing N 36° 36' 30" W along the easterly boundary of adjacent lands and premises of Boston and Maine Corporation, a distance of 89 feet to a boundary point situated in the centerline of the

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Fairlee Railroad Depot
Orange County, Vermont

Verbal Boundary Description

railroad tracks; thence continuing N 36° 36' 30" W along adjacent lands and premises of Boston and Maine Corporation, a distance of 18.0 feet to a set iron rod; thence turning an angle to the left and proceeding S 53° 05' W along adjacent lands and premises of Boston and Maine Corporation, a distance of 72.3 feet to a set iron rod; thence turning an angle to the right and proceeding N 36° 36' 30" W along the easterly boundary of lands and premises now or formerly of E.T. & H.K. Ide, Inc., a distance of 128.0 feet to an iron rod set in the ground on the southerly right of way of U.S. Route 5, which rod marks the northwesterly corner of the lands and premises herein described and the northeasterly corner of adjacent lands and premises now or formerly of E.T. & H.K. Ide, Inc.; thence turning an angle to the right and proceeding N 53° 05' E along the southerly right of way of U.S. Route 5, a distance of 72.3 feet to a set iron rod; thence continuing N 55° 53' 30" E along the southerly right of way of U.S. Route 5, a distance of 534.3 feet to the iron rod marking the point of beginning.

Meaning and intending to describe those lands and premises depicted on a certain survey plan entitled "Town of Fairlee, Main Street, Fairlee, Vermont, Scale 1" =50', Date July 5, 1989, Revised January 28, 1991, Proj. No. 52689, K.A. LeClair Assoc., Inc., Hanover, N.H." (Attached Exhibit A)

This parcel is defined as Town of Fairlee Tax Lot Map 24, block 21, lot 58.

Boundary Justification

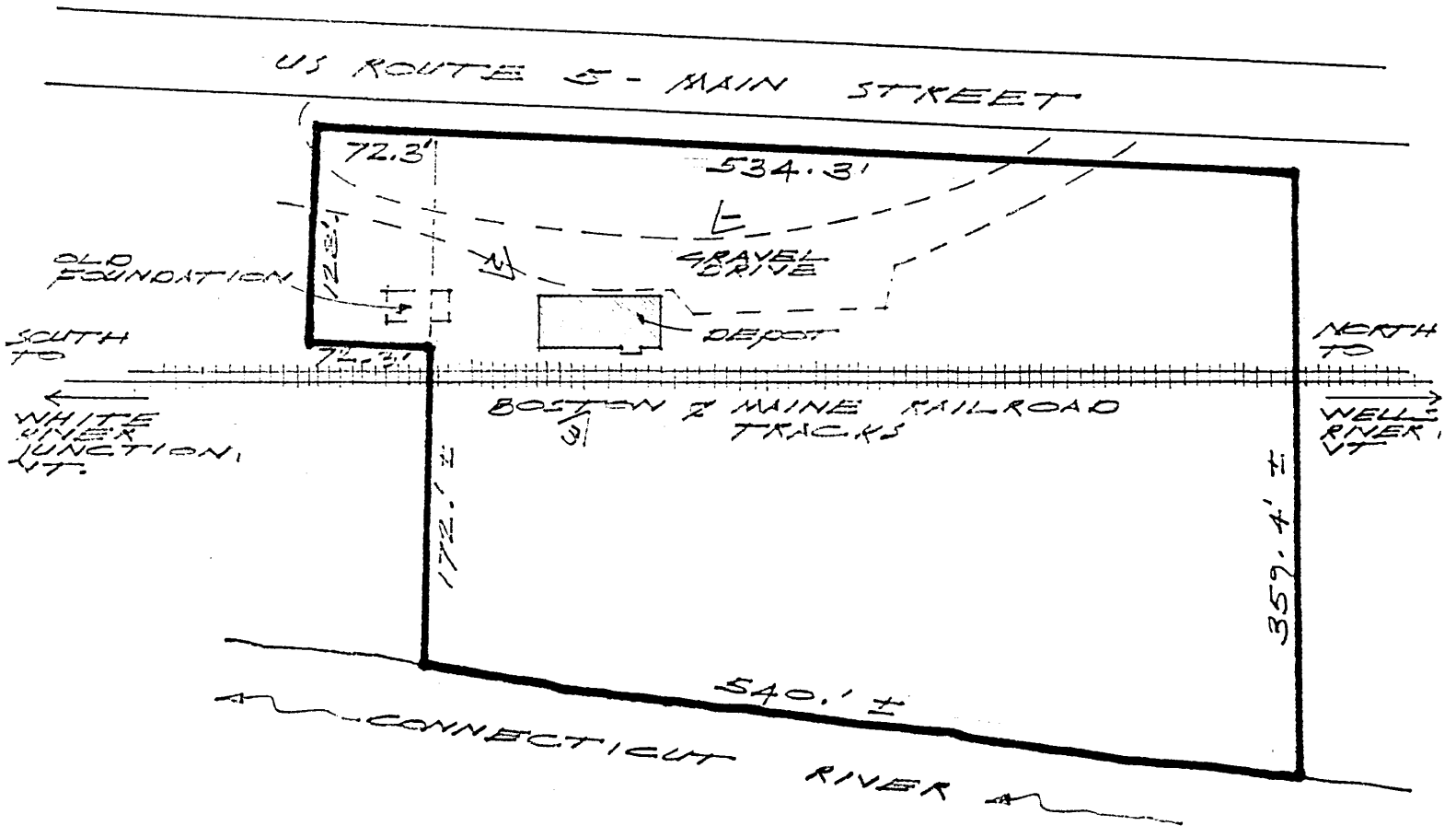
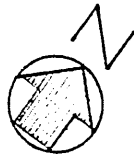
This is the historic parcel associated with this building and is sufficient to convey the historic character and significance of the property.

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• SKETCH MAP •
SCALE: 1" = 100'

> = PHOTOGRAPH VIEW AND NUMBER