

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

1981

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Evarts-McWilliams House

and/or common McWilliams House

2. Location

street & number Georgia Shore Road

N/A not for publication

city, town Georgia

N/A vicinity of

~~Congressional Districts~~

state Vermont

code 50

county Franklin

code 011

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Anna M. Neville and Margaret M. Kline

street & number Box 862

city, town St. Albans

N/A vicinity of

state Vermont 05478

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number N/A

city, town Georgia

state Vermont

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Historic Sites and Structures

title Survey

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date October 6, 1980

federal state county local

depository for survey records Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

city, town Montpelier

state Vermont

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Evarts-McWilliams House (ca. 1799) is one of the best preserved Federal style structures in Franklin County, Vermont. In spite of some minor interior alterations and a major change in roof configuration, it retains a surprising amount of original fabric.

The house is a gable-roofed rectangular, 2½-story, 5x3 bay wood frame and clapboard structure with two interior chimneys, a central entrance on the eaves-front and side entrances on the north and south side elevations. The projecting rear ell is a c. 1835 addition. Presently, the house has a gable roof covered with composition asphalt shingles. However, physical evidence in the attic clearly shows that this arrangement is a replacement of an original hip roof of rather low pitch. Its former angle can still be seen in a line of discoloration on the chimneys in the attic, evidence of the water damage that led to the roof replacement, probably c. 1835. In Vermont's harsh climate, hip roofs often leaked at the roof joints as heavy snow loads melted in spring. Replacement of the roof was often more economically feasible than repair since the cost of lead flashing was very high. The lengthened chimney stacks still retain their original drip courses that once projected just above the roofline. The new gable roof has a pegged ridge pole supported by massive queen posts (12"x12"x46') resting on the central girts. The attic is floored with unusually wide boards that are original as those around the perimeter exhibit marks of the former rafters of the hipped roof.

The house is post and beam frame construction and measures 46'6" by 26'2". Two inch pine plank is set in the framing and is clad with wide feathered clapboards (4½" to the weather) affixed with hand-wrought rose-headed nails. The interior walls are finished with plaster and accordion lath nailed directly to the planks. This type of construction gives the wall a total thickness of less than five inches.

One of the distinguishing features of the exterior is a finely-scaled modillioned cornice which still carries around four sides of the house at the former eaves level. On the gable ends it forms the bottom chord of the fully pedimented gables. The cornice is visually supported by beaded corner boards.

The central 6 panel door has a surround which consists of engaged Tuscan columns on pedestals topped by a simply molded entablature whose architrave and frieze break forward above the columns. The front door is flanked by two six-over-six double-hung sash detached sidelights detailed with Federal style mullion moldings. This treatment results in a particularly wide central bay as can be seen in the isolation of the middle window of the second floor.

The window openings are framed with narrow architrave moldings. Presently those on the two original floors have 12-over-2 sash. The upper sash in these windows is original; the original lower sash is currently stored in the attic of the house, and was probably removed c. 1880. The louvered blinds were probably added at the same time. The four windows in the gables, added c. 1835, have 12-over-8 sash.

The Evarts-McWilliams House features a modified central hall plan with five rooms to a floor. On the first floor, the original kitchen and pantry (now a bathroom) extend across the rear of the central hall. On the second floor, a bathroom now occupies a

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portion of the central hall space. The chimneys are located on the longitudinal portions between the front and rear file of rooms. Side doors with transom lights open into entrance-ways between the front and rear rooms. The south side entrance is equipped with a meat-smoking chamber connected to the kitchen fireplace.

The staircase consists of a single straight run along the north wall of the wide central hall. The treads are finished in black and brown paint to achieve a "tortoise conceit" effect. Its simple square balusters are set diagonally two to a step. The newel post is square and is terminated by a squat pyramidal cap. The stringer has simple brackets.

The former kitchen retains its original nine foot wide fireplace opening with the oven set to the right side. The facing and sides of the fireplace are brick, the rear is schist. The chimney stacks appear to be built of stone for some unknown height above the first floor. The oven is covered with an iron door of early design, perhaps the original. The fireplace opening is framed by beaded boards. There is no physical evidence to suggest the former existence of a mantle shelf.

The Evarts-McWilliams House has six fireplaces including that in the former kitchen. All of the principal rooms, with the exception of the rear chambers, are so equipped. The most elaborate mantels, not surprisingly, are located in the lower front rooms. That in the southwest room in front of the kitchen features fluted pilasters and an articulated entablature. Across the hall, the northwest room has a most elaborate mantel. Its supporting pilasters have sunken panels on their face. The entablature features a row of modillions, a scaled down version of that on the house itself, breaking forward above the pilasters. The fireplaces in the northeast room, first floor and the two front chambers upstairs are framed by simple wide architrave moldings topped by projecting shelves.

Most, if not all, of the doors are original, with six-panels and simple architrave surrounds. One of the most notable features of the internal arrangement of the house is the elaborate array of closets built alongside the chimneys. In the north parlor a full closet is set to the right of the mantel, while to the left is a closet with two sets of double doors, the upper section fitted up with shelves. The unusual vermilion painted background, found within the closets, appears to be original. Upstairs, the front chambers each have a full closet and a little cupboard set above the mantel shelf.

All the exposed corner posts have simple beaded casings. Most rooms and the central hall have simple projecting chair rails which also define the window sill. Above the dado the plasterwork was roughly finished to receive wallpaper but no original paper is evident. The dado appears to be finished for painting and, in fact, Prussian blue paint can be found in certain areas.

Most of the doors are hung with butt hinges but the marks of earlier H and HL hinges can be clearly seen. The smaller closet and cupboard doors retain more of their original hardware. Most, if not all, of the other doors have had their original latches and box locks replaced by porcelain "Bennington" knobs. These alterations were probably carried out c. 1835, at the same time that the main roof was altered and the present ell added.

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The ell is a 1½-story post and beam frame structure measuring approximately 52'7" by 18'4". Closest to the house, three bays of the ell define the summer kitchen; the remainder of the ell is a barn. It rests on a rubble stone foundation and is capped by a gable roof covered with standing seam sheet metal sheathing. The summer kitchen encloses a former exterior doorway and an original twelve-over-twelve window. On the south side, two six-over-six windows flank an early twentieth-century door. The interior contains cut nails, up-and-down sawn dimensional lath and moldings which give it an approximate date of c. 1835. The ell has kneewall windows which light the attic space.

During the mid-19th century a two-bay post and beam frame attached shed was added and clad with board and batten (3"x5") siding that has been retained on the east gable end and north side. On the south side all the siding has been replaced with clapboard which at least superficially integrates the summer kitchen and shed and emphasizes the linear appearance of the ell. A sliding wood door is located in the west bay. Circa 1900 a pantry, with simple tongue and groove paneling, was added to the north side which is detailed with clapboard.

Ten feet from the south corner of the shed a c. 24'x40' rubble stone wall defines the dimensions and location of a former barn.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates c. 1799 **Builder/Architect** possibly William Sprats

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Evarts-McWilliams House is an excellent example of a Federal style house in northern Vermont. In addition, it is the simplest yet best preserved of a group of houses in Franklin County, Vermont, that bear the distinct imprint of William Sprats (ca. 1747-1810), one of Federal-era New England's most talented and least understood master builders. William Sprats was once dismissed as a picturesque legend connected with a group of late 18th-century Connecticut buildings. All of these distinctive buildings were reportedly built by a deserter from Burgoyne's ill-fated army. In the 1950s, however, Sprats' work was researched by William L. Warren, the noted Connecticut art and architectural historian. Warren published a series of articles in Old Time New England. Although only one building in Franklin County, Vermont, is documented as Sprats' work, Warren states that "he built . . . several houses in the region of St. Albans Bay. . . ."

From around 1779 to 1796 William Sprats is credited with the design and/or execution of a group of the most elaborate and influential buildings in Connecticut. To Sprats are assigned several of the finest houses in Litchfield, Farmington, East Haddam, and Colchester. He is documented in connection with the Phelps Tavern at Litchfield (1787-89) and is known to have designed the Litchfield County Courthouse in 1796. Whether Sprats was personally involved in the execution of the last design is doubtful, for by the time of its completion in 1797 he seems to have left Connecticut for New England's rapidly developing northern frontier.

Sprats may have worked in western Massachusetts after first leaving Connecticut. He is known to have settled at Hampton, New York, which lies on the Vermont border adjacent to Poultney. The scope of Sprats' work in New York and Vermont is virtually undocumented compared to his earlier work in Connecticut. He must have been active at his trade, for at the time of his death in 1810, he was able to provide for his large family (Sprats married three times and fathered 13 children) and left a "messuage" (mansion) in Whitehall, New York. His sons and grandsons reputedly carried on as joiners, and several of them moved to Michigan to pursue successful careers. Sprats is buried in Carver Falls Cemetery, West Haven, Vermont, where his tombstone reads: "Wm. Sprats/died/June 24, 1810/in the 53 year/of his age."

There is only one building that is documented as Sprats' work in Vermont--the Georgia Meetinghouse. In 1802 the town of Georgia, Vermont, dedicated its splendid new meetinghouse. Until its tragic destruction by fire in the fall of 1952 the Georgia Meetinghouse (which resembled Sprats' earlier Litchfield Courthouse) stood as one of the finest Vermont buildings of the Federal period. Repairs undertaken in the 1930s included the reinstalling of the original pulpit. As it was being moved, it fell apart revealing a scrap of paper. On it was inscribed the following:

To the memory of the/Joiners who built this/building
William Sprats, Master Builder/Timothy W. Osburn./
John Hart. Seymour Egleste(n)/Horace Hart. Seymour
Jeffrey/Nearing./Georgia Septr 5th 1802.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Ballard, Rebecca, et al. Georgia Town History. 1981. Pp. 121-122.

Briggs, Mildred. Personal Communication. August 1981.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 2.6 acres

Quadrangle name St. Albans Bay

Quadrangle scale 7.5'

UMT References

A

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6	4	6	9	4	0
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4	9	6	0	2	2	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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Verbal boundary description and justification The nominated property is a roughly rectangular lot measuring approximately 450 feet by 250 feet. The boundaries are contiguous with the boundaries of the property of Anna M. Neville and Margaret M. Kline as recorded in Book 32, page 236 and Book 20, page 42 of the Georgia Town Land Records. The nominated property

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

state	N/A	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Philip C. Marshall, Architectural Conservator

Architectural Conservation and Education

organization Service, Historic Preservation Program date May 11, 1982

Wheeler House

street & number University of Vermont telephone (802) 656-3180

city or town Burlington state Vermont 05405

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature William B. Pinney

title Director/ Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer date September 13, 1982

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 10/21/82

for Delores Byers
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
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This document is reportedly preserved at the Georgia Town Office.

There exist other structures in the area whose design may have been influenced by Sprats' work. This includes the Hathaway and Houghton Houses in St. Albans of c. 1794-98 and c. 1800-01, respectively; the Soule House, c. 1804 in Fairfield; and several structures on Route 9 in Georgia, as well as the Evarts-McWilliams House of c. 1799-1800.

It is not too much to label these structures as part of the "school of Sprats". Warren points out that three, perhaps four, of the joiners mentioned in connection with the Georgia Meetinghouse were residents of Georgia: Timothy Osburn, John Hart, Seymour Egleste(n), and possibly Horace Hart. That these men might be responsible for the Evarts-McWilliams House or any of the other structures in the area should be kept in mind.

There appears to be a direct relationship between this group of closely related houses in Franklin County, Vermont, of which the Evarts-McWilliams House is part, and the works attributed to William Sprats in Connecticut. There is no known documentary proof for any buildings in Franklin County of a Sprats authorship except the Georgia Meetinghouse; however, his regional influence is unmistakable.

According to Decker, et al., the house stands on part of the original 500 acre lot of land reserved by Governor Benning Wentworth for himself when the Town of Georgia was organized in 1763. The house was reputedly built for Reuben and Sarah Evarts in 1799 or 1800. Reuben Evarts was the last proprietor's clerk and also the first Town Clerk serving as such for seven years. In the early records of the town, at the Town Clerk's office, no record is made of this lot. The house and the former farm were in the Evarts and related Percival families until 1914 when it was purchased by A. R. Wheeler* and transferred to the McWilliamses in 1926. The structure is still owned by members of the McWilliams family.

* According to town records A. R. Wheeler paid for maintaining water troughs and purchased gravel for the property from 1914 through 1926.

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Decker, Newell, et al. Picturesque Georgia, Vermont. St. Albans: Regal Art Press of St. Albans, Vermont, 1976. P. 92.

Gerrier, Arthur. Personal Communication. May 21, 1981.

Neville, Anna. Personal Communication. May 1981.

Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, Historic Sites and Structures Survey, Number 0608-53.

Warren, William Lamson. "William Sprats and His Civil and Ecclesiastical Architecture in New England. Part II: The Meetinghouse, Georgia, Vermont, 1800-1802, and the influence of Sprats on New England Builders," Bulletin of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, Vol. XLIV, no. 4 (April-June 1954), pp. 103-114.

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encompasses the land immediately associated with the Evarts-McWilliams House and is sufficient to convey its historic context and to protect it.