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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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NATIONAL REGISTER

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 West Berkshire School

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Intersection of Town Highway 26 and Town Highway 3 not for publication

city or town Berkshire vicinity

state Vermont code VT county Franklin code 011 zip code 05450

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.)

[Signature] 9/31/93
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 certifying 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): _____

Signature of the Keeper Entered in the National Register

[Signature]

Date of Action

11/4/93

West Berkshire School
Name of Property

Franklin County, Vermont
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.)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

Educational Resources of Vermont

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/school

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 stone

walls weatherboard

roof metal

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**

West Berkshire School
Berkshire, Franklin Co., Vermont

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The c.1820 West Berkshire School is located at the intersection of town highways 26 and 3 in the village of West Berkshire in the town of Berkshire. It is a two story, post and beam, clapboarded, vernacular building with a stone foundation, sheet metal gable roof, an open, gable-roofed bell tower, and a metal pipe chimney for a wood stove. Significant exterior features include the front door sidelights, bell tower, and banks of windows on both floors. The interior has two classrooms, one on each floor with plank or beaded board walls. The second floor ceiling is coved. The building was used as a school until about 1970 and now houses a seasonal second hand store.

The main block of the school measures twenty-five feet by thirty five feet with the front gable facing north. The front facade has a central paneled door sheltered by an enclosed, clapboard entry with a sheet metal gable roof. To each side of the entrance are the eight pane side lights for the door. Equally spaced over the entrance are two wood frame, unadorned, two over two sash windows, with a wood frame louvered attic vent in the gable peak .

The lower story of the east side facade has a bank of seven adjoining, two over two unadorned wood sash windows, most likely installed in the early twentieth century according to state regulations. The upper story has a bank of eight one over two unadorned sash windows, some of which are boarded over and reach the roof line.

The west side is dominated by a clapboarded enclosed stair case dating from 1958 that starts on the second floor about ten feet from the front and extends towards the back, with a wood plank door at the bottom for an exit and a small four paned fixed window at the top of stairs to aid in illumination.

The south facade (back) has a bank of four eight over eight sash windows on each floor. There is an unpainted enclosed exit on the west side of the bank of windows on the lower level. Three of the windows on the top floor are boarded over at this time. There appears to have been a small louvered wood attic vent in the gable peak.

The interior layout of the main block consists of two large open rooms, one over the other, with a closet in the northwest corner of each floor. There is no cellar. The building has always been heated by a wood stove. It has electricity now, but has never had any running water. It appears that the interior was updated sometime around the turn of the century with beaded board and narrow hardwood floors. The ceiling on both floors is covered with some kind of modern composition board fastened with wooden strapping. The northeast corner staircase in the front hall rises to a landing half way up, turns, and stops in the second floor front hall. The staircase walls are vertical beaded board. The entry hall walls have a beaded board wainscoting with painted plaster above.

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West Berkshire School
Berkshire, Franklin Co., Vermont

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The first floor school room has several octagonal wooden support posts, walls covered with vertical beaded board, and plain trim around the windows. Under the staircase is a small closet with a plank door.

The upstairs class room has a coved ceiling, which makes use of the space under the gable roof for needed headroom. The walls are horizontal boards. The wall near the hallway has a low built-in shelf. The shallow attic can be reached by a ladder through a small ceiling opening near the main door into the classroom.

To the west of the building is a large sugar maple that may be as old as the school. Privies, which no longer exist, were located to the rear near the southwest corner of the building. There is a small non-contributing gable-roofed shed about twelve by ten feet in size with clapboarded walls in the rear.

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.)

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

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Education

Period of Significance

c. 1820

Significant Dates

c. 1820

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
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Section number 8 Page 1 West Berkshire School
Berkshire, Franklin Co., Vermont

The West Berkshire School, constructed about 1820 and used as a school until the 1969-70 school year, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places for architectural and historic significance as an example of a district school. This two story, two room district school with an open bell tower is highly unusual in Vermont, where the vast majority of district schools, built from the late 1700s into the early 20th century, have only one classroom. This simple school retains original features, but also has some improvements from the early 20th century when towns were being encouraged to improve their physical plants. The building has its original door with eight pane sidelights, the whole topped by a molded cornice, and inside the coved second floor ceiling and board walls. From the early 20th century are the distinctive banks of windows along the rear and one side wall on both floors, and on the inside beaded board wainscoting and walls and narrow hardwood board floors. It is being nominated under the multiple property submission, Educational Resources of Vermont, and meets the registration requirements for the school property type.

White settlement in the town of Berkshire began in 1772, but was disrupted by the war and it wasn't until 1789 that the town was chartered and 1796 that the town was organized. The soil was fertile and many farms were established. Saw mills were also built along the Missisquoi River. About 1800 the first school in Berkshire was built of logs, as were the earliest houses. It appears that within a few decades townspeople built new wood frame, clapboard sided schools. There does not appear to be documentary evidence for the year the West Berkshire School was built, but from the physical evidence it looks like it may have been built about 1820. The doorway has sidelights and a cornice with Federal style influence and inside the corner posts of the building (now covered on the first floor with the vertical beaded boards) protrude into the room, as is typical of early post and beam construction. East Berkshire also had a two story school, although it was slightly different, being a little broader with a shallower pitch to the gable roof and a square open bell tower (it was later turned around and another classroom added to the front). There are perhaps six other two story two room district schools in the state, making this a very unusual example of a district school.

Berkshire was divided up into a number of school districts, as was true of all other Vermont towns. The number varied, with

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seventeen districts in the 1870s and thirteen in 1891. In 1860 the report of Waldo Brigham, the school superintendent, in the Vermont State Board of Education report noted the poor conditions of Berkshire schools. An effort appears to have been made at school improvement so the next year Brigham was able to report that "we have in this town some comfortable schoolhouses, but no model ones." In 1865 O. F. Fassett, school superintendent, reported that "as a whole, our schools are much improved during the last four or five years. The change to female teachers is well received, especially since they are cheaper."

It is not known exactly when the banks of windows were installed, but it would have been after 1904 when the State Board of Health passed mandates for better lighting, ventilation, and heat in school buildings. It is likely that the beaded board and the hardwood floors were added at the same time. Gradually the one room schools in town began to close and by the 1940s there were none left. The two room West Berkshire and Center Berkshire schools, and three room East Berkshire school remained in use.

In 1948 money was appropriated to build an enclosed fire escape on the west side of the West Berkshire School. There was also a request for money for running water and plumbing, but it seems not to have passed. In 1949 Tobin Haggerty, superintendent, reported that the "much needed fire escape was built this fall for the West Berkshire School. This fire escape also serves the purpose of a sheltered entrance to the toilet rooms for the boys and girls." Sheila Fuller, current owner of the property and a member of the West Berkshire School's last graduating class, said flush toilets and running water were never installed. The school was cleaned and painted in 1957, and painted again in 1961.

In 1962 a study was begun in town to consider building a new consolidated school because of "multiple grades in all schools, crowded conditions in several schools and unsanitary conditions in two of the schools." It was reported that "unsanitary conditions at Center and West Schools are no secret. One does not need much imagination to visualize the drinking water and toilet facilities. One only has to visit the school on a nice warm day with the wind in the right direction." In 1966 the town voted to purchase land for a new school, which was built and opened in 1969. In 1970 Richard Commings purchased the old West Berkshire School. It remains in its historic condition and is being used as a seasonal second hand store.

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West Berkshire School
Berkshire, Franklin Co., Vermont

Bibliography

Aldrich, Lewis Cass. History of Franklin and Grand Isle Counties. (Syracuse, N.Y.: D. Mason & Co., 1891).

Beers, F. W. Atlas of Franklin and Grand Isle Counties. (N.Y.: F. W. Beers, 1871).

Child, Hamilton. Gazetteer and Business Directory of Franklin and Grand Isle Counties. (Syracuse, N.Y.: Hamilton Child, 1883).

Roberts, Marjorie C., comp. Berkshire Bygones. 2 vols. (Berkshire, Vt.: n.d.).

Vermont State Board of Education. Annual Reports. 1860-1949.

Walling, H. F. Map of Franklin County. (Boston: 1857).

Interviews:

Fuller, Sheila, property owner, Berkshire, VT. March 20, 1993.

Boundary Description:

The school sits on a roughly rectangular lot at the southwest corner of the intersection of town highways 26 and 3, with the main frontage on Town Highway 3. The main (north) frontage width is 98.89'. The east side frontage along Town Highway 26 is 106.48', the rear (south) line is 143.87', and the west side line is 118'.

Boundary Justification:

This is the lot historically associated with the school.