

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only

received SEP 16 1980

date entered DEC 5 1980

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

**1. Name**

historic PARSONS HOMESTEAD

and/or common PARSONS HOMESTEAD

**2. Location**

street & number 520 Washington Road \_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Rye \_\_\_ vicinity of congressional district First

state New Hampshire code 33 county Rockingham code 015

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <span style="margin-left: 100px"><input type="checkbox"/> museum</span>
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <span style="margin-left: 100px"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> park</span>
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <span style="margin-left: 100px"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence</span>
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <span style="margin-left: 100px"><input type="checkbox"/> religious</span>
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <span style="margin-left: 100px"><input type="checkbox"/> scientific</span>
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <span style="margin-left: 100px"><input type="checkbox"/> transportation</span>
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <span style="margin-left: 100px"><input type="checkbox"/> other:</span>

**4. Owner of Property**

name House & 1.7 acres: Woods & field:  
Parsons Park Corporation Town of Rye, New Hampshire

street & number PO Box 47

city, town Rye \_\_\_ vicinity of state New Hampshire

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Rockingham County Registry of Deeds

street & number Exeter Road

city, town Exeter state New Hampshire

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title NONE has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no

date \_\_\_ federal \_\_\_ state \_\_\_ county \_\_\_ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

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## 7. Description

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<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<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		

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### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Present Appearance: The Parsons House is a 2½ story frame dwelling with two chimneys, eight principal rooms, and a central hallway. It is built on a fieldstone foundation with a curb of cut granite blocks above grade, and has a wing attached to the rear elevation. The house reveals traces of an architectural evolution that extends over several stylistic periods, and it includes some of the best domestic woodwork in Rye. The five-bay front (west) elevation is noteworthy for its unusual pedimented central pavilion which embraces the middle framing bay and projects about two feet from the main facade. The pavilion is visually divided into two stories by a projecting cornice at the second floor level. The focal point of the first story of the pavilion is a doorway which is surmounted by a semicircular fanlight with web-like wooden tracery and a "double" archivol. Flanking the doorway are two narrow vertical windows, which are echoed by two similar windows on the projecting sides of the pavilion. The second story of the pavilion has a standard 6-over-6 window in the front, and two narrow vertical windows, like those on the first story, on the projecting sides. The frieze board of the pavilion is decorated with gouged ornament in the form of groups of vertical flutes alternating with rosettes. The frieze ornament is repeated under the raking cornice of the pavilion. By contrast, the frieze board under the main cornice of the facade is decorated with an applied guilloche probably suggested by Plate XXIX of William Pain's The Practical Builder (first Boston ed., 1792).

On the interior, the central bay of the house is divided into a front and back hallway, each with a separate stairway. The front stairway has round dowel balusters, with angle posts characteristic of the Federal style. The newel post, however, is of a heavier Victorian form dating from a remodelling of about 1850. The rear stairway has square balusters set diagonally on a closed stringer. Most of the woodwork of the rear hallway is characteristic of the early nineteenth century.

The southwest parlor is the most elaborately finished room in the house and has suffered little change except for the installation of a bay window on its south wall during the mid-nineteenth century. The delicate Federal mantelpiece is supported on flat pilasters, and similar pilasters extend upward from the mantelshelf to the room cornice. These pilasters are decorated with interlacing chip-carved tracery which suggest, in a vertical plane, the horizontal guilloche of the building's main frieze. The mantelpiece frieze is enriched with a band of progressively increasing and decreasing gouged flutes which combine to form a series of diamond-shaped ornaments. The cornice of this room has a cyma crown moulding, a flat, deeply-projecting corona, a cavetto bed moulding, and a narrow reeded band or frieze adjacent to the wall plaster. The doors are Federal style, but have an unusual arrangement of five panels, with a single wide panel across the doors' width at the top and two pairs of panels below.

The northwest parlor, while superficially decorated in the Victorian style, retains much of its original Federal woodwork, including plaster wainscoting, a double cyma crown moulding, 9-over-9 sash, and Federal doors and casings. The room has undergone some alterations: the fireplace trim was removed when a furnace was installed, a diagonal cupboard in the northwest corner has been removed, and the installation of a bathroom in the adjacent northeast room has created a projection in the southeast corner of the room.

The woodwork of the northeast room is generally in a conservative style characteristic of the years before 1800, and includes panelling with raised fields surrounded by quarter-round mouldings. The wainscoting is for the later flat-panel type, and a simple mantelshelf with Federal bed mouldings has been applied over the fireplace. The southeast first floor room, originally the kitchen, has woodwork of the Federal style.

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The second-floor woodwork of the house, like that of the first floor, is more elaborate and stylish in the front (west) rooms and more conservative in the rear. The northwest chamber has unusual doors like those in the southwest parlor. It also bears some signs of remodelling, having a late Federal mantelshelf supported on an architrave with corner blocks and a frieze board with curved ends that sweep inward to support the shelf. The other chambers are generally in the Federal style, although the southeast bedroom has wainscoting of the earlier raised-panel type.

Original Appearance: The Parsons House is locally dated circa 1757. While none of the obvious features of the house supports a date much earlier than 1800, remnants of an earlier period may survive within the dwelling. In the attic, the stairway to the roof scuttle is an early eighteenth-century closed-string type, obviously re-used from some earlier location. While most of the frame of the dwelling is normal and coherent for a two-chimney ("double") house, the southeast bedchamber contains two posts that do not seem to relate to other parts of the frame and may be remnants of an earlier and smaller frame.

Directly adjacent to the northeast side of the house is a one-story shed which connects to a small barn facing south. Both the shed and facade of the barn have been sheathed with board and batten siding while the elevations which face the road are sheathed with clapboards.

The house is surrounded by open fields. Beyond the fields lies woodland laced with streams and some wetland area.

## 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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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** 1757 Parsons Purchase **Builder/Architect** Unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

**Architecture:** The Parsons House contains some of the most interesting early Federal-style woodwork in southeastern New Hampshire outside of the principal towns of Portsmouth and Exeter. When the Parsons House assumed its present appearance at the turn of the nineteenth century, Rye was a coastal farming community. Despite its rural nature, the town developed distinctive preferences within the Federal style. The Parsons House is probably the best remaining example of those preferences, and many of its interior and exterior features appear to be the work of a single still-unidentified local builder.

While most of Rye's early nineteenth-century houses retain the traditional two-story, central-chimney form that had been common in the area since the 1600's, the Parsons House is unusual in being a "double" house with two chimneys and a central hallway. The dwelling is rendered still more impressive by its projecting central pavilion, which not only gives the exterior a more monumental aspect than would otherwise be the case, but also enlarges the floor area of the hallway. This feature appears to be an adaptation and elaboration of the enclosed entry or "porch" which is frequently seen on local buildings dating from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Only four or five examples of this form of pavilion are known on houses in southeastern New Hampshire. A second example, with general form and architectural detail similar to that of the Parsons House, is seen on the Edmund Johnson House (ca. 1800) on West Road in Rye.<sup>1</sup> A third instance, with a fanlight doorway that clearly derives from the architectural books of William Pain, occurs on the Brackett Weeks Inn in neighboring Greenland. A similar pavilion is seen on the Batchelder-Moore House (1801) in Northwood, N.H., a town which was settled largely by Rye people.<sup>2</sup> The pavilions on the Johnson and Batchelder-Moore Houses, while generally similar to that on the Parsons House, are covered by simple extensions of the main roofs of the houses and lack the impressive architectural quality imparted by the triangular pediment that crowns the Parsons House pavilion.

The Parsons House is further noteworthy in incorporating several interior and exterior features evidently derived from William Pain's The Practical Builder (first Boston edition, based on the fourth London edition, 1792). This book, inspired directly by the British designs of Robert Adam, was the first volume to stimulate the development of a local version of the Federal style in southeastern New Hampshire. Evidence suggests that it was being sold in Exeter, a few miles from Rye, as early as 1794. The guilloche motif seen on the exterior frieze and on the mantelpiece of the southwest parlor of the Parsons House seems to prove that Pain's volume was in the hands of the unknown joiner who finished the house. The main exterior frieze of chip-carved rosettes and flutes may derive from several plates in Pain which show similar (but more elaborate) friezes.

The combination of ambitious plan, localized architectural features and book-derived detailing makes the Parsons House one of the most significant rural dwellings in southeastern New Hampshire.

- 1) Louise H. Tallman, "Old Houses of Rye, N.H.," unpublished typescript in the New Hampshire Historical Society.
- 2) Joann Weeks Bailey, A Guide to the History and Old Dwelling Places of Northwood, New Hampshire. (Concord, N.H.: printed by Capital Offset Company, Inc. for the Town of Northwood, 1973), pp. 116-117.

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# 9. Major Bibliographical References

History of Town of Rye by L.B. Parsons, Pub. 1905

# 10. Geographical Data

ITEM NOT VERIFIED  
 DATE NOT VERIFIED  
 ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED  
 MONUMENT NOT VERIFIED

Acreage of nominated property 52

Quadrangle name Portsmouth, NH-ME

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A 

1	9	3	5	5	7	0	0	4	7	6	3	6	2	0
Zone		Easting						Northing						

B 

Zone		Easting						Northing					

C 

Zone		Easting						Northing					

D 

Zone		Easting						Northing					

E 

Zone		Easting						Northing					

F 

Zone		Easting						Northing					

G 

Zone		Easting						Northing					

H 

Zone		Easting						Northing					

**Verbal boundary description and justification:** The Parsons Homestead tract, including house, fields, and woods, is bounded as follows: on the south by land of Tom and Marion Barron, and by Central Cemetery (Town of Rye); on the north by land of David and Carol Tilton; and on the west by Washington Rd., with roadside inclusions of the Rimbaud residence, & the Branch of 1st National Bank of Portsmouth.

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

state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mrs. Jessie Herlihy Assisted by: Louise H. Tallman, Rye & Lynne Monroe, Exeter.

organization Rye Historical Society date February 23, 1980

street & number 19 Lang Road telephone 964-5993

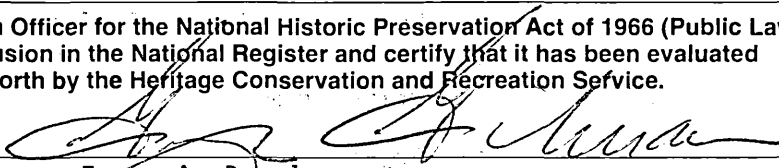
city or town Rye state New Hampshire

# 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature   
 Commissioner, Dep. of Resources & Economic Development  
 title NH State Historic Preservation Officer date August 5, 1980

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

  
 Keeper of the National Register date 12/5/80

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Chief of Registration

FHR-8-300A  
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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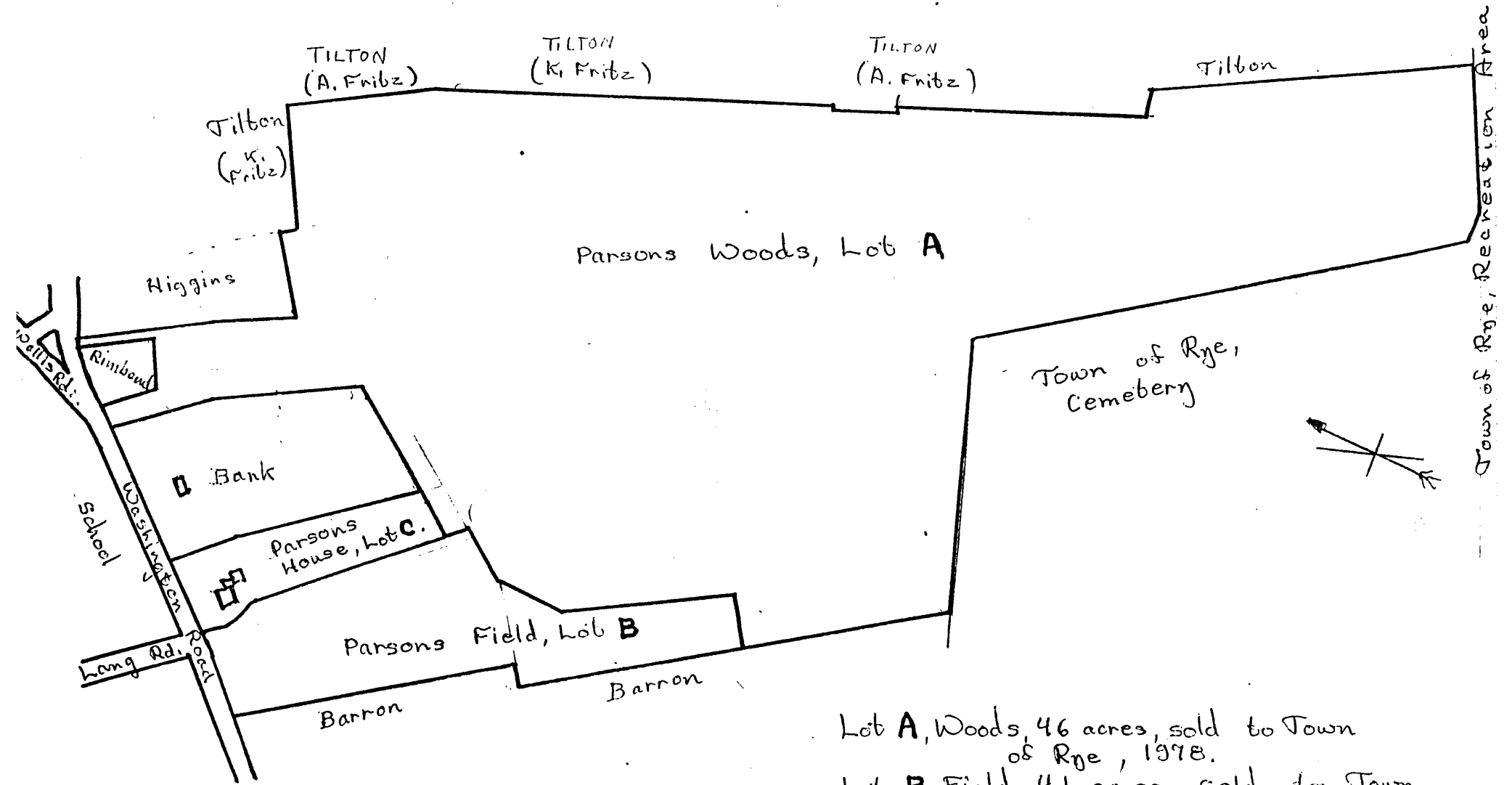
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Fifty-two acres of the former Parsons family holdings are still associated with the house and are protected by deed restriction which prohibit their development. Although there are no longer any related structures on the property, the land is virtually undisturbed and is expected to yield important information concerning agricultural life-style and practice in southeastern New Hampshire.



Lot A, Woods, 46 acres, sold to Town of Rye, 1978.  
 Lot B, Field, 4.1 acres, sold to Town of Rye, 1979.  
 Lot C, Parsons House with 1.7 acres, to be considered for Town purchase in 1980.