

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name BIGELOW-FINCH-FOWLER FARM

other names/site number "THE CENTURY"

name of related multiple property listing N/A

Location

street & number 1549 U.S. ROUTE 20

city or town WEST LEBANON

state NEW YORK code NY county COLUMBIA code 021 zip code 12125

not for publication

vicinity

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

X entered in the National Register

 determined eligible for the National Register

 determined not eligible for the National Register

 removed from the National Register

 other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

BIGELOW-FINCH-FOWLER FARM

Name of Property

COLUMBIA CO., N.Y.

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | private |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | public - Local |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | public - State |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | public - Federal |

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | building(s) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | district |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | site |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | structure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | object |

Number of Resources within Property

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
5	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
5	0	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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: agricultural

outbuilding, agricultural field

INDUSTRY/: communications facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: agricultural

outbuilding, agricultural field

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EARLY REPUBLIC: Federal

LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate

LATE 19th & 20th CENTURY AMERICAN

MOVEMENTS: Craftsman

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: STONE, CONCRETE

walls: BRICK, WOOD CLAPBOARD, CONCRETE

roof: ASPHALT

other: GLASS, METAL, CONCRETE

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Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

The Bigelow-Finch-Fowler Farm is located on U.S. Route 20 in the hamlet of West Lebanon, Town of New Lebanon, Columbia County, New York. The central feature of the nominated property is a brick dwelling, known familiarly as "The Century," which was erected ca. 1830 for the Bigelow family. It is a gable-roofed building of load-bearing brick and sawn-marble construction, consisting of a two-story main block with symmetrical five-bay facade and center-hall plan and a contemporaneous rear brick ell with two small later extensions, ca. 1995 and 2019. The exterior finishes of the dwelling largely convey a late Federal-style aesthetic, as expressed in its principal cornice, which is of distinctive Neoclassical inspiration and embellished with dentils and mutules, and the original segmentally arched doorway; marble dressings, among them the key-stoned door surround, window lintels and sills, and water-table offer further evidence of the house's quality of construction. Additional details, such as the double-leaf glazed and paneled entrance doors and the projecting bay window on the west elevation, speak to a subsequent nineteenth-century Italianate-style updating. Inside, the house is relatively pure to the original construction campaign. It retains most all of its original 1830s plaster and wood finish work and features; there are, in addition, some later-period historic features, among them hardwood strip flooring and a pressed-metal ceiling. Original ca. 1830s features include brick fireplaces with marble dressings and wood mantelpieces; paneled wood doors; and the principal staircase, among other noteworthy features. In addition to the dwelling, the nominated property contains larger and smaller timber-frame barns, in addition to a light-frame granary and a concrete-walled ice house, which collectively served to sustain the property's agricultural endeavors and other functions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These historic features survive on a roughly 17-acre parcel of land inclusive of both tillable acreage and woodlot. There are no non-contributing features located within the nomination boundary.

Narrative Description

Location & Setting

The nominated property consists of 17.3 acres of associated land, the present legal tax boundary, which is situated on the south side of U.S. Route 20 in the unincorporated hamlet of West Lebanon. The property is located approximately halfway between Schoolhouse Road, located to the east, and New Britain Road (County Route 9), to the west, both of which extend in a southerly direction from the main road. The house, the centerpiece of the property, was oriented to face northwards towards the road, as opposed to a southern orientation meant to capitalize on solar heating and lighting. The main block's east-to-west roof ridge roughly parallels the roadway; ancillary buildings are located behind, to the southeast and southwest, and these, along with the house, collectively constitute the property's core. The larger setting of the immediate area is characterized by residential properties, some of which date to the nineteenth century, in addition to a large commercial property located to the immediate

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west. A dense stand of deciduous trees serves to visually buffer the nominated property from the latter property, and it also largely screens the house from view from the road when the trees are leafed out; a second stand of deciduous and coniferous trees is located to the east, and it frames an unpaved driveway that accesses the property from Route 20 and leads along the west side of the house, where it splits into two connected spurs. Further to the south, beyond the outbuildings, is a large open expanse of arable land, 11 acres in extent, which is used contemporarily for hay and alfalfa cultivation. It is bordered by dense woods, particularly to the south and west. There is a relatively open and flat area behind the house, framed by the west end of the main timber-frame barn and the west eaves wall of the granary to the east, and on the west by the east gable elevations of the smaller timber-frame barn and concrete ice house.

Resource Overview

The nominated property's architectural components consist of five contributing historic buildings: the brick house with rear ell, ca. 1830, to which has been added two small frame extensions dating to ca. 1995 and 2019; a large timber-frame barn with self-contained rectangular footprint, measuring 70' by 30,' erected ca. 1895; a second timber-frame barn, measuring 54' by 20' and also self-contained and erected above a rectangular plan, ca. 1895; a light wood-frame granary, measuring 22' by 12,' ca. 1900; and a poured concrete ice house, measuring 15' by 14,' ca. 1900. The location of these features is depicted on the enclosed sketch map, not drawn to scale, which illustrates the principal features of the nominated property.

Bigelow-Finch-Fowler House, "The Century" (1 contributing building), ca. 1830/ca. 1870/ca. 1910/ca. 1995/2019

Exterior

The house consists of the original ca. 1830 sections—the two-story main block and attached story-and-a-half rear ell, both of brick construction—and two more recent frame extensions, ca. 1995 and 2019, which form a continuation of the ell and occupy the footprint of an earlier and now lost extension.¹ The main block is of a characteristic early nineteenth century type. Two stories in height, it has a rectangular plan, end-gabled roof, a symmetrical five-bay façade and central entrance; it is two bays deep on the east gable elevation, the windows placed asymmetrically as a result of interior fireplace locations. The brick walls, laid up in Flemish and common bond, feature window openings trimmed with rectangular-shaped gray marble lintels and sills, and there is a sawn marble water table demarcating the transition between the high mortared rubble stone foundation and brick superstructure. The principal entrance, oriented to face northwards towards the road, retains the original ca. 1830

¹ A ca. 1970 photograph indicates that a frame building, in all likelihood in part a woodshed, once extended from the brick ell, but it was taken down and replaced with the ca. 1995 one-story ell, which only partially occupied the earlier footprint. During 2019 a second gable-roofed extension, square in plan and two stories, was added, and these two newer sections now in large measure correspond with the footprint of the earlier frame feature.

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elliptical surround with impost blocks and keystone motif; however, the double-leaf entrance doors, the upper portions of which are glazed, and the associated heavily molded wood surround represent the ca. 1870 Italianate-style updating. Historic images indicate that the entrance was at one time shielded beneath an Italianate-style porch which has since been removed and replaced by the current iteration, which is gabled and the underside of which follows the elliptical profile of the door surround. Windows in the main block, as well as the ell, are largely of a one-over-one wood sash type, excepting original six-over-six sash located at second-story level of the main block. Four brick chimneys with simple corbelled tops rise from the roofline of the main block; all are positioned near the gable ends walls, with two each on the front and rear roof pitches. The main block features a principal cornice of wood construction, which lacks a corresponding frieze; consisting of closely spaced dentils and modillion blocks, it is of Roman Ionic order derivation and likely a paraphrasing of the cornice of the Temple of Concord, Rome, which was illustrated in period builder's guides.²

The east elevation consists of the end gable of the main block and the east wall of the brick ell and frame extensions; the wall of the ell and ca. 1995 frame extension are shielded on this elevation by a broad porch that extends southwards from the south wall of the main block. There are two windows each at first and second story level on the main block—that at first-story level near the northeast corner is taller than the others—in addition to an attic window fitted with wood louvers, located just beneath the gable's apex. The cornice follows the roof rake on this elevation and the opposite west elevation and is terminated by returns. The east elevation of the ell consists of a glazed and paneled entrance door flanked by windows to either side; the ca. 1995 extension has a single bay, occupied by a door, while the 2019 extension has two windows each at first and second-story level. Returning to the porch, it exhibits distinctive Craftsman-style characteristics, as expressed in the wood-shingled knee wall upon which four tapered and paneled support piers rest. Two openings in the knee wall correspond with the doors that the porch shields; one retains original wood steps, while the other accommodates a wheel chair ramp.

The south elevation consists of the rear wall of the main block, which is partially engaged by the brick ell, from which extend the two frame extensions. Fenestration on the rear wall of the main block consists of a window at first-story level, a window at second-story level west of the ell's roof ridge, and a French door at second-story level east of the ell's ridge. The brick ell has a window at first-story level, west of the ell, fitted with six-over-six sash; two smaller six-light casement type windows at half-story level, and a casement window at attic level, positioned just below the roof ridge. Its raking cornice is of straightforward design and terminated by returns and a shallow frieze. The more recent frame extension obscures the south wall of the ca. 1995 section, and it has an offset glazed door,

² Among those sources which illustrated the Temple of Concord was Edward Shaw's *Civic Architecture* (1831), plates 56-57.

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west of which are large picture windows corresponding with the first and second floor within. Cornices on these extensions are of a simple boxed type, and the foundations are poured concrete.

On the west elevation, the ell is stepped back from the wall plane of the main block, with a projecting bay window located where these two sections engage. As with the opposite elevation, the main block's fenestration is asymmetrical, on account of the interior position of fireplaces, and a portion of the first story is shielded beneath a porch with a corresponding French door providing communication with the interior; there is additionally a window hung with two-over-two sash at first-story level. At second-story level there are two windows with one-over-one sash, above which is an attic window that is centered beneath the roof ridge. The roof rake is trimmed with the denticulated and modillioned cornice. As for the porch, it is wood-floored and has a pent roof sustained by wood Tuscan columns; wood lattice panels screen the area underneath from view. The bay window is four sided and engages the southwest corner of the main block and a majority of the west wall of the ell; it has a stone foundation, large one-over-one and two-over-two wood sash windows, and a deep bracketed cornice in keeping with its ca. 1870 date of construction and the Italianate-style. The remaining area of the ell's wall is given over to a paired window hung with six-over-one wood sash immediately south of the projecting bay, and there is a low shed-roofed dormer that punctuates the roofline. As for the ca. 1995 wood-frame extension, it has a raised concrete foundation, wood clapboard siding and a single door punctuating its west wall; the more recent 2019 extension has two windows at second-story level.

Interior

The main block of the Bigelow-Finch-Fowler House was laid out on a center-hall plan, which at first-story level consists of four rooms each with end-wall fireplaces, arranged asymmetrically in relation to the hallway, which does not extend the full depth of the plan. The second floor was similarly conceived, though there is an additional fifth room, relatively small in size, located at the rear of the plan. The four principal bedrooms have fireplaces, to one side of which are closets. There is additionally a room located in the half-story of the ell, which is accessible by means of a back staircase. At first-story level a portion of the original rear brick wall of the main block was removed, presumably ca. 1870 when the bay window was installed, possibly to create a larger formal dining room. As such, the original southwest room of the main block and the northern portion of the ell now constitute a single volume. The remaining portion of the ell, on the south side of the plan, is given over to a contemporary kitchen, with additional space located in the ca. 1995 and 2019 extensions. There is also a bathroom at first-floor level in the main block, the space for which was taken from the original southeast room.

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It would appear that the northwest room in the main block was the principal parlor, given its location, size and the quality of its mantelpiece. The room immediately south of it, in the southwest corner of the plan—that which was once smaller, prior to the removal of the brick wall separating the ell and main block—likely functioned as a kitchen and informal dining room, given the presence of a fireplace with bake oven. However, in the basement immediately below this hearth is the remnants of a second cooking hearth and bake oven, which muddles functional analysis to some extent. Of the two first-floor rooms on the east side of the plan, one may have functioned as a first-floor bedroom and the other as a formal dining room. The basement, as noted, included finished habitable space that presumably served as the house's principal kitchen for a time. It retains areas of plaster on split-board lath ceiling and plaster finish rendered directly on masonry wall surfaces, in addition to stone flagstone flooring. Centrally located within this former kitchen space is a large timber post with lamb's tongue chamfering and original red finish; it functioned as a structural support for the framing above and is presumed original to ca. 1830. A large batten door with vertical bead-board plank with original red finish provides communication between that room and the adjacent unfinished one on the east side of the plan.

The interior finishes at first and second-floor level in the main block in large measure portray the original ca. 1830 building campaign and Federal-style aesthetics. The house's various wood mantels, which trim fireboxes with brick hearth extensions and sawn-marble surrounds, are of characteristic period types. That in the first-floor northwest room, the parlor, features a three-part frieze and paneled pilasters, and the mantel shelf features characteristic finely wrought moulding profiles; it is of a type common for a parlor or other prominent position. By contrast, the mantel located in the adjacent southwest room represents a characteristic type for a cooking hearth. It consists of a wood surround that encompasses both the fireplace and adjacent bake oven; the latter is concealed behind a hinged door; a molded mantel shelf completes what is otherwise a largely utilitarian design. The third type of mantel is that represented in the second floor's northwest bed chamber, it being a characteristic type for a secondary area. In this type the firebox opening is trimmed by a molded architrave that frames the hearth, above which is a molded mantel shelf.

The open-stringer staircase of the main block is among the house's most notable interior finish features, and the turned newel post, in particular, is among those features which indicate a date of construction bridging the Federal and Greek Revival tastes, given its form and profile. It received turned balusters, two per stair tread, which are attenuated in profile and which sustain the oval-form handrail. The balustered hand-railing follows the stair to second-floor level, where it terminates in a simpler turned newel post with rounded profile and terminal globe finial; a second newel of this type receives the railing that aligns the stairwell opening, the two newels connected by a short

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section of handrail. The newels, baluster and hand railing exhibit a dark brown patina in contrast to the natural cherry-wood surfaces of the treads.

Original doors at first-story level are of a six-panel type cased with back-banded moldings, as the window openings are. Second-story interior doors are of a fielded four-panel type, and the casings on that level are of a simpler type. There is a wide opening between the northwest and southwest rooms in the main block that appears to have been fitted with paired and hinged doors.

Among the later finishes in the house are those which date to the ca. 1870 updating. These include the double-leaf front doors, which were installed, with a new molded casing, within the original ca. 1830 elliptically arched entrance bay. Both the casing and door paneling exhibit the characteristic rounded profiles of the Italianate style, which form a marked contrast to the more finely scaled Federal-style moldings. A similar casing was employed in the west wall of the ell, to allow for communication with the projecting bay window. Also evident are finishes which appear to chronicle a ca. 1910 phase of work, which may relate to the Craftsman-style porch on the east elevation. These include maple strip-flooring and the ceiling treatment of the room where the bay window was introduced; the latter has rectilinear molded wood ribs with fiberboard panels between, and a molded wood cornice. The decorative pressed-metal ceiling in the main block's northeast room, inclusive of a coved cornice, likely dates to that period as well. The French doors, such as that which leads from the northwest parlor onto the porch, also date to this general period.

Main Barn (1 contributing building), ca. 1895

The main barn is a large self-contained building erected above a rectangular plan with end-gabled roof. It appears to have sustained a variety of functions, among them hay storage, horse and cow quarters, and as a carriage barn. Of considerable scale with a 70' by 30' footprint, it was constructed with a square-rule timber frame consisting of circular-sawn softwood timbers, which constitute the principal bents, along with sawn common roof rafters, braces and studding. The exterior is finished with wood clapboard and the roof is clad with corrugated metal affixed to the original wood roof boards; a wood cupola once rose from the roof ridge but no longer remains. The north-facing elevation features asymmetrical fenestration in the form of larger and smaller door openings fitted with large track-mounted sliding doors; the paneled doors have chamfered rails and stiles with boards arranged horizontally in the upper panels and vertically below. Inside, there are two tiers of space, the upper one at one time constituting a hay mow; the track for a hay fork remains suspended beneath the rafters, which are supported by purlin plates between the top plates and roof apex. The lower level retains, among other features, historic-period horse stalls and wood

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stanchions for cows, in addition to a more finished area with tack room on the west side of the plan, where carriages were presumably stored.

Barn/Shed (1 contributing building), ca. 1895

The timber-frame barn with self-contained footprint and slate-clad gable roof consists of an enclosed area on the east side of the plan and open, southwards-facing bays on the west side. The enclosed portion on the east side of the plan has a high foundation of poured concrete with stone aggregate, as does a portion of the east and all of the rear north elevation; the remaining wall surfaces are covered with wood novelty siding and the corners are trimmed with plain boards. The corresponding east gable elevation has large paired wood doors set within a recessed opening. Each door is four-paneled and has chamfered rails and stiles; the doors are framed by a plain wood surround with peaked crown. Above these are two windows, symmetrically placed, which bring natural light into the upper level within; they have simple casings with drip caps and are hung with the remnants of original two-over-two sash. The south-facing elevation has, moving east to west, an opening with a track-mounted sliding door, to one side of which is a small window. The remainder of the elevation is given over to three bays. The square-rule framing consists of circular-sawn timber bents upon which the sawn floor joists of the upper level bear; the braces are nailed to their corresponding framing and not mortise-and-tenoned, as they are in the main barn. In addition to its agricultural function, this building also accommodated telegraph and telephone communications established under the auspices of the Fowler family.

Granary (1 contributing building), ca. 1900

Light wood-frame building with self-contained rectangular footprint and end-gable roof clad with pressed-metal shingles. This building has a dimensionally sawn wood frame and features both wood clapboard siding and slatted wood lath siding, located on the west elevation, which indicates that portion of the building that accommodated corn storage. There is a door on the west elevation, along with a small louvered window opening, and a door is also located on the north elevation.

Ice House (1 contributing building), ca. 1900

The ice house has a roughly square-shaped footprint; it has walls laid up in a crude form of concrete with random stone and discarded brick aggregate and which were covered with a smooth parge coat. The gable fields and roof are of wood-frame construction and the roof is laid with metal shingles. The east-facing principal elevation retains a deteriorated door with surface-mounted hardware, above which is a second smaller opening, both of which have wood frames set within the concrete walls. The gable field is framed and retains a large central opening which presumably functioned as an upper loading bay.

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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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMUNICATIONS

Period of Significance

ca. 1830-1937

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

FOWLER, WARREN

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

Period of Significance (justification)

The cited period of significance, ca. 1830-1937, is initiated with the construction of the house for the Bigelow family and concludes with the death of Warren Fowler, for whom significance is claimed in associated with Criterion B.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

N/A

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Bigelow-Finch-Fowler Farm, located in the hamlet of West Lebanon, Columbia County, New York, enjoys both architectural and historical significance. The centerpiece of the nominated property is a commodious ca. 1830 brick house, known familiarly as “The Century,” around which are clustered four ancillary farm buildings that supported agricultural and other functions in the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The associated property was first settled in the later years of the eighteenth century by New England pioneer Jabez Bigelow (1726-1808), whose family’s presence accounted for the West Lebanon area being known historically by the name Bigelow Flats or Bigelow Hollow; the current house was in all likelihood erected for Jabez Bigelow’s son, Gale Bigelow, though it has been previously dated to the late eighteenth century, an assertion incongruous upon consideration of its physical features. The nominated property was later owned by the members of the Sherman family, which had intermarried with the Bigelows during the nineteenth century, and later by the Finch and Fowler families. In 1873 Mary Jane Finch, daughter of then-owners Edwin G. and Mary Ann Finch, wed Warren Fowler of Manchester, Vermont, a union that initiated a new epoch in the property’s history and one which had important repercussions for the larger region. Fowler, who was a successful insurance agent, was an aggressive advocate of telegraph communications, the potential of which he viewed as transformative for those residing in the Lebanon Valley. During the ensuing decades Fowler played a central role in the establishment of telegraph service in the region, and ultimately telephone service, technological advances that changed the complexion of life in southeastern Rensselaer and northern Columbia County in the period. Those operations were established and conducted for a time from the nominated house, thereby providing an additional layer of significance to the property. The Bigelow-Finch-Fowler Farm is being nominated to the NRHP in association with Criterion C, in the area of Architecture, for the substantially intact ca. 1830 house, which was executed in brick with marble dressings in a late Federal-style vein, and for the collection of later outbuildings that sustained agricultural and other functions. It is additionally being nominated in association with Criterion B, in the area of Communications, for its direct association with Warren Fowler, whose vision of regional telegraph and later telephone service helped to reshape life in the New Lebanon area and beyond beginning in the later years of the nineteenth century.

Historical Context

The New Lebanon area was originally part of the Canaan and King’s tax districts, and it was not established as a township within Columbia County until 1818. The earliest permanent settlers, generally of New England background like the Bigelow family, established the first pioneer homesteads there in the period between the conclusion of the French & Indian War and the onset of the American Revolution. The development of the area was sustained in the nineteenth century by two major overland transportation routes, the Boston to

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Albany stage road—known otherwise as the Columbia Turnpike, present-day Route 20— and the Harlem Extension Railroad, the routes of which were situated in close proximity to the nominated property. Local industry, in the form of water-powered milling and light industrial operations, was bolstered in the first decades of the nineteenth century by the establishment of the Tilden Pharmaceutical Company in the hamlet of New Lebanon, founded in part by Elam Tilden, the father of onetime New York State Governor Samuel Tilden. A thermometer factory and glass works were also important nineteenth-century industries. The Shakers—The United Society of Believers in Christ’s Second Appearance—a monastic and celibate Christian sect, were prominent in the history and affairs of early New Lebanon, having first established a presence there during the 1780s. Mount Lebanon, their home on the slopes of the Taconic Mountains, ranked prominently among the nation’s various Shaker communities; during the nineteenth century it was a prosperous and thriving community, and one in some measure self-contained and isolated from the affairs of the world outside of its boundaries. Horatio Spafford offered the following account of the Mount Lebanon Shakers in his 1824 state gazetteer: “Their little community, slowly increasing in numbers, pretty rapidly in wealth and power, is a sort of miniature of a world, all of one sort, beyond which it is deemed fatal to extend a look or mental vision!”³

The West Lebanon hamlet came to be developed alongside the turnpike’s course, west of the hamlet of New Lebanon and east of Brainard and the Columbia-Rensselaer county border, beyond which lay Nassau and the greater Albany area. It was an important early overland transportation route, linking Boston with the Hudson River at Albany, and in the early nineteenth century businesses such as stage-coach hotels were developed to capitalize on the needs of those traveling its course. During the early part of the century, prior to the advent of railroad transportation, the turnpike was, in the words of historian Franklin Ellis, “almost continuously lined with teams going between [Albany and Boston].”⁴ Of West Lebanon’s development Ellis wrote that it was “built in a straggling manner on the main road through this section,” it was known for a time in early days as Moffat’s Store, one of a number of names in use at one time, along with Bigelow Flats.⁵ By Ellis’s account a “pioneer tavern” was kept at an early date by Joshua Bigelow, along with one erected ca. 1820 for Andrew Snyder and carried on subsequently by others. The hamlet at one time boasted a Methodist meetinghouse, a harness factory, and a post office beginning in 1819.⁶ Spafford’s gazetteer referenced the hamlet as Moffit’s

³ Horatio Gates Spafford, *Gazetteer of the State of New York* (Albany, N.Y.: B.D. Packard, 1824), 342.

⁴ Franklin Ellis, *History of Columbia County, New York* (Philadelphia, PA: Everts & Ensign, 1878), 303.

⁵ Ellis, *Columbia County*, 307.

⁶ Ellis, *Columbia County*, 307.

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Store Post Office, a name presumably in use after the establishment of mail service five years prior; “[it] is on the Creek, and the Albany turnpike, in the W. part of this town, 19 miles from Albany, in Bigelow Hollow.”⁷

Members of the Bigelow family, a prominent one in the affairs of early New England, were among the first to permanently settle in this western quarter of the Town of New Lebanon, along with the Lowdens, Sacketts, Salls, Fellows, Wheelers, Snyders, Cowles and Moffats. By Ellis’s account it was “Gale Bigelow and others of that name” that were among the first permanent settlers in the western part of the town.⁸ Although Ellis noted Gale Bigelow as among the family’s early pioneers, it was actually his father, Jabez Bigelow Sr. (1726-1808), who first settled in New Lebanon. The elder Bigelow, a native of Middlesex County, Massachusetts, and the son of Gershom and Rachel Gale Bigelow, resided in Hebron, Connecticut, where he wed; he subsequently removed to land purchased in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, with his wife, Susannah Elderkin Bigelow (1722-1797), and their children. Following a brief period in Pittsfield, where they occupied a modest 60-acre farm, the couple and their children moved westward across the New York border to New Lebanon ca. 1785, having purchased 600 acres of land there.⁹ At the time of Jabez Bigelow Sr.’s death in the first decade of the nineteenth century, his 600-acre farm was divided between his three sons, Joshua, who was born in 1759 and wed Huldah Hunt of Shoreham, Vermont; Jabez Jr., born in 1760 and who married Almy Gardner (d. 1813) of Providence, Rhode Island; and Gale, the youngest of the couple’s 10 children, who was born in 1766 and who wed Sarah Pratt.¹⁰ It is presumed that the nominated brick house was erected for the latter about a decade or so prior to his death; it should not be mistaken as the family’s pioneer-era dwelling.

Joshua Bigelow, the eldest son, resided on that portion of the farm established and left to him by his father, Jabez Sr., and there he remained until his death in 1831. He came to conduct West Lebanon’s first tavern, established at an early date, and which remained identified as “Bigelow’s Hotel” on contemporary maps into the 1850s. Jabez Jr., his father’s namesake, wed Mary Fenn following the death of his first wife, Almy, and he too remained in West Lebanon until his death in 1829; Mary F. Bigelow died in 1838. Gale Bigelow, like his older brothers, also resided on his part of the pioneer farmstead until his own death in 1843.¹¹ The three Bigelow brothers were influential in the affairs of West Lebanon, including in the plans advanced for the construction of a commodious meetinghouse to serve a Methodist organization, completed in 1819; Joshua

⁷ Spafford, *Gazetteer*, 342.

⁸ Ellis, *Columbia County*, 302.

⁹ Gilman Bigelow Howe, *Genealogy of the Bigelow Family of America* (Worcester, MA: Charles Hamilton, 1890), 84.

¹⁰ Howe, *Genealogy of the Bigelow Family*, 84-85.

¹¹ Howe, *Genealogy of the Bigelow Family*,

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Bigelow was among those who volunteered land upon which to erect it, while his brother Gale pledged \$120 towards its construction.¹² The three brothers, along with their father, Jabez Sr., and other members of the immediate family are buried in a small family cemetery in West Lebanon.

Following Gale Bigelow's passing in 1843, his will stipulated the manner in which his various financial and real estate assets would be divided among his heirs, among those the brick house and a nearby mill seat. In it Bigelow made considerable provisions for his wife, Sarah, who resided in the brick house following his demise.¹³ In 1850 widow Sarah Bigelow, then 68 years of age, was living there in a household headed by her son-in-law, William H. Sherman (1811-1874), along with her daughter and Sherman's wife, Charlotte (1810-1879); the remaining members of the household were a family relation, Griswolda Bigelow, and a farm laborer, William Wheeler.¹⁴ By 1855 the household bore a new composition and new owners, as Edwin G. Finch and his wife, Mary, had assumed ownership and were residing there along with their daughter, Mary J. Finch, and a domestic and two laborers.¹⁵ The Shermans had migrated westward to the Lodi area of Wisconsin—following a brief sojourn in Nassau, Rensselaer County, where they were recorded in the state census of 1855—and are buried in the Garden Bluff Cemetery in Lodi. Aspects of the Finch's farm can be gleaned from data recorded in the 1860 federal agricultural census. At that date it consisted of 115 improved and 9 unimproved acres of land, with arable land dedicated to rye, Indian corn, oat, potato and hay production; the farm was among the largest producers of butter in that part of New Lebanon, with 1,000 pounds produced.

Of considerable consequence to the history of the property was the October 1873 marriage of Edwin G. and Mary A. Finch's daughter, Mary Jane, to Warren Fowler (1849-1937). Fowler was a native of Manchester, Vermont, the son of Harvey Clapp Fowler and Mary Jane Noble Fowler, and a graduate of Oberlin College in Ohio. In 1872 Fowler was working as a fruit salesman; while traveling between Manchester and New York he sought overnight accommodations in the West Lebanon area, at the St. Elmo Hotel, but was subsequently directed to the home of the Finch family. A romance quickly unfolded between Fowler and the Finch's daughter, and the two wed the following year.¹⁶ By 1875 Warren and Mary J. Fowler were residing in the brick

¹²"The Little Church in the Valley," *Chatham Courier* (Chatham, N.Y.), 1965; complete date not known.

¹³"Last Will and Testament of Gale Bigelow," Recorded 9 December 1843.

¹⁴Federal census, New Lebanon, 1850.

¹⁵1855 New York State Census data, New Lebanon.

¹⁶Gladys Vickery, "Hello, Central; Even the Puritanical Shakers Sought Party Lines When Telephones Were New in Lebanon," *The Chatham Courier*, 9 June 1966.

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house with her parents, Edwin G. and Mary A. Finch, along with two household servants. Edwin Finch, a native of Otsego County, New York, noted his occupation as farmer; Fowler noted his as insurance agent.¹⁷ At the time the 1870 federal agricultural census was recorded, the Finch farm was noted as only including 30 acres of improved land, a considerable drop from the 115 improved acres noted a decade prior. There were by that time a limited amount of livestock, indicating that the farm's focus was at that time subsistence agriculture; arable land was given over to Indian corn, oats, potatoes and hay, and the farm produced only modest quantities of butter as compared with that produced ten years earlier.

The insurance business Fowler conducted continued to be carried on by descendants, into the second half of the twentieth century, under the name the Fowler-Finch Insurance Company.¹⁸ Yet it was not in the insurance realm that Fowler left his greatest personal imprint, but instead in the area of communications. The following anecdotal account, written in the 1960s by historian Gladys Vickery, provides a succinct account of Fowler's foray into this field:

Mr. Fowler's entry into the world of communications was born of necessity. The Rutland Railroad furnished the only real means of fast transportation to distant points and while in Rutland, Vt., Mr. Fowler had learned telegraphy. Horse and buggy was a slow means of contacting customers so, one day, Warren Fowler had an inspirational thought. Why not run a wire along the Rutland right-of-way as a means of expediting business and contacting friends in the Lebanon Valley? He persuaded Mrs. Fowler to learn telegraphy. An apt pupil she learned swiftly and soon a telegraph office was established in 'The Century.' The wire was installed, as planned, and while Warren was on the road, Mrs. Fowler was the operator on duty 24 hours a day.

On one occasion, Warren had to make a business trip to New York. On arriving, he went to a telegraph office, dispatched a message to his wife, settled down to smoke a cigar and wait for the reply. The hour was late and the New York operator was chagrined by his customer's serenity. How could this man expect a message back from "up country" before morning? He advised Mr. Fowler of this but Warren puffed his cigar and said "I'll wait." In a few minutes his reply came through. Amazed, the operator asked, "How big a place is West Lebanon?" Warren replied, "A church, a school, a post office and a dozen houses." "And they must have an all-night operator?" the puzzled operator inquired. "That's right," said Warren, "it's my wife, she takes it to bed with her."¹⁹

Electrical telegraphy formed an important precursor to modern telecommunications and was rooted to some extent in the experiments of eighteenth-century European innovators. In essence, telegraphy used electrical signals transmitted by wire to convey information between distant points, and it superseded semaphore

¹⁷1875 New York State census data, New Lebanon.

¹⁸Vickery, "Hello, Central."

¹⁹Vickery, "Hello, Central."

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telegraphy, in which information was conveyed by visual means. The first successful long-range telegraph system is credited to English inventor and scientist Sir Francis Ronalds (1788-1873), who was knighted for his achievement. His groundbreaking work was followed by technological advances made by Baron Schilling von Canstaat, Carl Friedrich Gauss—who worked in conjunction with Wilhelm Weber—and William F. Cooke and Charles Wheatstone; the latter two figures, working together, developed the first practical system put into commercial use in England. In the United States, Samuel F.B. Morse was the preeminent innovator, first working on telegraphy in the 1830s, and he was responsible for the creation of the system of dots and dashes—Morse code—developed in association with Alfred Vail. In 1844 Morse sent his now famous message, “What Hath God Wrought,” on a 44-mile telegraph line between Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, Maryland, which brought telegraphy to center stage in America. During the ensuing decades the telegraph was much adopted nationwide, including the landmark completion, in October 1861, of an overland telegraph line that connected the East and West coasts for the first time, thus precipitating the demise of the Pony Express. In New York State, early telegraph lines were established in New York City and between Buffalo and Lockport in 1845; the following year service was established between Albany and Syracuse via Utica and between Albany and New York City, among other lines. It remained the preeminent means of long-range communications until later in the century, when the telephone came into increasing use.

In 1880 the Finch-Fowler household’s complexion remained much as it had been composed a half-decade prior. In addition to farming, Edwin G. Finch was by that time also engaged as a hotel keeper, carrying on a business interest established years earlier by the Bigelow family. The Fowlers by that time had two young children, and Warren Fowler was working as a fire and life insurance agent; also residing in the house were two farm laborers. In 1878 the *Chatham Courier* announced that Finch had “purchased the hotel at West Lebanon, formerly owned by him, and [he] will give a grand re-union to a select party of ‘old folks’” this evening.”²⁰ By 1885 Fowler had moved his insurance business into the brick house, where he was prepared “to receive his friends on business or pleasure.”²¹ By 1880 Finch was noted as the owner of two farms, one consisting of 104 total acres and corresponding with the nominated property, and a second larger one consisting of 155 acres. Finch had by that time increased the farm’s dairy herd to 12 head and with it its butter output, and in addition to the crops cultivated on its tilled land it had a 6-acre orchard with 25 apple-bearing trees.

Warren Fowler would also prove a key player in the regional introduction of the telephone, a legacy for which he was widely celebrated at the time of his passing. As with the telegraph, many innovators, both European

²⁰New Lebanon news items, *Chatham Courier*, 16 January 1878.

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and American, were involved in the development of the telephone; in the United States Alexander Graham Bell secured the first patent in 1876. As with telegraphy, the telephone was initially mostly used by railroads, newspapers and certain government entities, though the first districts serving residential consumers, with dedicated switchboards, had been established by the end of the 1870s. In 1894 telephones were still unknown in the Lebanon Valley but that was soon to change, as in that year Fowler established a direct telephone line to connect his house with the railroad station at New Lebanon. That work was only in its initial stages when other residents in the area asked to be included and wished to invest in Fowler's fledgling project: those individuals were, by Vickery's account, Abner Haight, a successful New Lebanon merchant; George Tilden of the Tilden Pharmaceutical Company; Benjamin Gates, an area farmer; and a druggist by the name of Schalck.²² Another source indicated that it was Tilden, Schalck, J.H. McGrath, H.G. Carpenter, Pardee Carpenter, and Fowler that founded the Columbia and Rensselaer Telephone Company, which officially organized in March 1894.²³ Regardless of those discrepancies, Haight was clearly one of the first stockholders, as he was named vice president at the time of incorporation; Tilden served as the first president, Schalck as secretary and treasurer, and Fowler as general manager and superintendent.²⁴ The company's formation introduced telephone service into the area, which was first subscribed to by the Tilden Company and the Shakers at Mount Lebanon; as noted by Vickery, "with typical shrewdness [the Shakers] saw this as a means of adding a quick dollar, even if it meant talking over a wire to the 'Worlds People' below them in the Valley."²⁵ In spite of its name, the telephone company in many ways constituted a cottage industry of sorts, conducted from the brick house for a time almost exclusively by members of the Fowler family; "The family went about their household tasks and, if one was baking, they simply dusted their hands and answered "This is Central" and after connecting the calling party, went back to their work."²⁶ The first switchboard had been installed inside the brick house, and it remained there for a number of years until service expansion required the construction of a new dedicated building, erected in West Lebanon around 1914.²⁷

However, in a few years the initial novelty of telephone service had waned somewhat, and the business had yet to meet with any particular financial success. Thus in 1902 the original stockholders who had first bought into Fowler's vision sought to withdraw their financial interest in the enterprise, thereby endangering its future

²¹West Lebanon news items, *Chatham Courier*, 8 April 1885.

²²Vickery, "Hello, Central."

²³"Valley Phone Pioneer Dies in St. Petersburg, Florida," *Courier* (Chatham, N.Y.), 25 February 1937.

²⁴"Retirement of Fowler Family," *Courier*, 1927; complete date not known.

²⁵Vickery, "Hello, Central."

²⁶Vickery, "Hello, Central." In addition to family members, the company also employed Maude Drowne, whose career spanned a half century.

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survival. It was at that critical juncture that Fowler prevailed upon Abner Haight to stay the course, and upon being offered favorable terms to do so, Haight agreed and the company thus remained solvent.²⁸ Fowler and Haight bought out the other partners, and in April 1902 the company reorganized, with Haight elected as president, Fowler as vice president and general manager, and Mary J. Fowler as secretary and treasurer. The Fowler's daughter, Warrena, was elected to serve as director in 1911, and, with her mother, played a prominent role in the company's affairs.²⁹ Prior to 1910, and with only minor exceptions, no officers were salaried, and between that time and 1927 they received only a small salary and one not commensurate with their efforts. The company's first dividend, 4 percent, was paid in July 1910, 16 years after its initial incorporation.³⁰

Warren Fowler served as the company's general manager until 1920. He then served as its president, following the death of Abner Haight, from 1920 until 1927, at which time he retired from the business, along with his wife, Mary Jane, and daughter Warrena. Their collective retirement did not go unnoticed, as the *Chatham Courier* noted it as "An event of more than ordinary interest in the Lebanon Valley."

The growth of [the telephone] system is an instance of what sometimes develops from a small beginning. Many years ago Mr. Fowler built, for his own benefit and convenience, a line from his home in West Lebanon to the railroad station at New Lebanon.

When the line was completed, others signified their desire for the service it afforded and they were taken on. The number of subscribers continued to increase until a considerable number were being served and from this small beginning developed the present system, covering about 1,000 miles of territory and comprising approximately 1,300 instruments.³¹

Fowler was additionally a Master Mason in Unity Lodge No. 9 of Lebanon Springs, an agent of the Western Union Telegraph company, and for 60 years an insurance agent for the Aetna, Hartford and Home Insurance companies, among others.³² For his nearly 50-year service to the Glens Falls Insurance Agency he was commended in 1921, at which time the company released a facsimile of the certificate of authority they first issued him in 1875, noting him as "the honored dean of our agency army."³³ In later years he and his wife wintered in St. Petersburg, Florida, where they had built a winter house and where the latter died in 1929, "but [he was] always eager to return 'home' to his century old residence here."³⁴ Warren Fowler died in February

²⁷West Lebanon news items, *Courier*, ca. 1913-14; complete date/year not known.

²⁸Vickery, "Hello, Central."

²⁹"Retirement of Fowler Family," *Courier*.

³⁰"Retirement of Fowler Family," *Courier*.

³¹"Retirement of Fowler Family," *Courier*.

³²"Valley Phone Pioneer Dies," *Courier*.

³³ "Has Unusual Record as Insurance Agent," *Courier*, 28 July 1921.

³⁴"Valley Phone Pioneer Dies," *Courier*.

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1937. At the time of his passing, his importance as a groundbreaking figure in regional communications was recounted in a number of newspapers:

Warren Fowler, 88, of West Lebanon, pioneer in the independent telephone company which serves 2000 families on southeastern Rensselaer and northern Columbia Counties, died yesterday in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Mr. Fowler served as messenger for the Western Union Telegraph Company. He conceived the idea of a telephone service to speed the messages and in 1894 prevailed upon several influential residents of the well-to-do [New] Lebanon Shaker community, then in its heyday, to invest funds in the enterprise.³⁵

Yet another obituary noted Fowler as being “for over 60 years one of West Lebanon’s most outstanding citizens,” and the pioneering figure in the development of regional telephone service. In 1951 the company Fowler had founded in 1894 consolidated with the Chatham Telephone Company, and in 1956 a new telephone office was established at West Lebanon. Among those in attendance at the christening party of the new office was Fowler’s daughter and former company officer Warrena Fowler Webster of East Greenbush, who had also worked for a time as an operator.³⁶ Following Warren Fowler’s 1937 death the property was sold, the following year, to Laura Anibal, and in the 1960s it was owned by Margaret Ellen and Rose Girdler and, subsequently, by Robert and Alice Jones.

Architectural Context

The nominated house was, by all indications, erected ca. 1830 for Gale Bigelow. The main block’s form was conventional for that period, being gable-ended, two stories, and arranged with one of its longer eaves-front elevations serving as the principal one; it was augmented by space located in the attached rear wing. The main block’s interior was laid out on a center hall plan, though in asymmetrical fashion, with four rooms served by their own fireplaces at first-floor level; fireplaces are also located in the four principal second-floor bedrooms. In addition to the cooking hearth and bake oven located in the southwest corner of the main block, there was also a cooking hearth and bake-oven located in the basement directly below, though the reason for that redundancy is not presently clear. By the time the house was built, dwellings of gable-front orientation with side entrance plans had become increasingly fashionable, as illustrated in Columbia County examples built in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, among them the Anson Pratt house in New Concord (NRHP listed) and the Pixley-Dorr house in Hillsdale (NRHP listed); they would become increasingly common during the popularity of the Greek Revival style. The Bigelow house instead seized on a longstanding and well-established

³⁵Vickery, “Hello, Central.”

³⁶“Operators Christen Telephone Bldg,” *Echo* (New Lebanon, N.Y.), 17 January 1956.

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form and one characteristic of the Federal period. Rear wings became increasingly common in New York and New England after 1800, allowing for some household functions to be removed from the main block and thereby creating a more distinct hierarchy of formal and secondary spaces. The Bigelow's brick house, oriented to face the turnpike, offered itself as a conspicuous indicator of the prominent role the family had played in the settlement and development of West Lebanon; it was a building much in contrast to the dwelling that Jabez Bigelow Sr. erected on the pioneer farmstead—in all likelihood a log or relatively straightforward frame construct—and those in which his sons first lived when they established their own houses when their father's 600 acres were subdivided.

The house's orientation relative to the road—as opposed to a southerly orientation to capture natural heat and light—along with the transitional nature of its late Federal-style treatments, indicate a likely date of construction early in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, as does the use of sawn marble employed for lintels, sills, water-table, and door surround. Spanning the period from the later eighteenth century until the advent of the Greek Revival style—which in rural New York found its first expression during the early 1830s—the Federal style was the fashionable architectural taste during the early years of the American Republic. The style was rooted in the European Neoclassical revival of the eighteenth century, which was spurred by a growing body of specific information on Roman and Greek architecture as studied in remote locations such as Herculaneum, Pompeii, Spalatro, Athens, and Paestum. More specifically, the American Federal style was a derivative of the English Adam style, named for its progenitor, the Scottish-born architect Robert Adam. Adam, having traveled to Pompeii and Herculaneum in Italy, as well as ruins of Diocletian's palace at Spalatro, was deeply impressed by Roman domestic design and decorative themes. From those antique sources, which he melded with contemporary British Palladianism and Italian High Renaissance influences, he created a highly personal style that was the fashionable architectural taste in London in the 1760s and 1770s. Adam's personal style was largely defined by his treatment of interior spaces, notably the functional juxtaposition of variously sized and shaped rooms and their delicate ornamental treatments which artistically utilized and reinvented a variety of Roman motifs. This taste was transmitted to post-Revolutionary America in architectural publications in books such as those authored by the English carpenter William Pain and by first-hand observation by architects such as Charles Bulfinch. Bulfinch introduced the Adam taste in Boston, where he influenced the work of Asher Benjamin, whose *Country Builders Assistant*, 1797, was the first native-published builder's guide. Drawing from Pain's work, Benjamin reformulated the character of the Adam style into a vocabulary suitable for the simpler needs of the American carpenter-builder and for execution in wood.

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The Bigelow-Finch-Fowler House exhibits many features and treatments which relate it to the Federal style. On the exterior, the principal cornices and the arched and keystone main entrance portal were commonly employed exterior treatments. The wood cornice, embellished with dentils and modillions and which lacks a corresponding frieze, appears to be derived from the Temple of Concord at Rome, which was illustrated in architect Edward Shaw's 1831 book *Civil Architecture*, which, along with Asher Benjamin's 1830 work *The Practical House Carpenter*, initiated the paradigm shift towards Grecian forms while also illustrating those of Roman derivation, which were rapidly falling from favor. It is in the original interior woodwork that the style is yet more comprehensively portrayed, in the form of characteristic mantel types, paneled doors, and molded door and window trim. The staircase baluster turnings exhibit the delicacy and attenuation of form characteristic of this design era, although the newel post is suggestive in form and profile of the early Greek Revival period, another factor which suggests a ca. 1830 date of construction.

The house retains many physical aspects representative of the original Federal-period construct; however, historic-period changes are nevertheless evident, among them features added as part of an Italianate-style updating in the post-Civil War period, and later changes dating to the turn of the twentieth century and later, all of which date to the Fowler-Finch ownership period. Surviving Italianate-style features include the double-leafed glazed and paneled entrance doors, which were fitted into the existing aperture with a new casing, and the bay window added to the west elevation; both were characteristic features of the style. With those exceptions, minimal changes were made to the aesthetics of the interior, which instead retained most of its earlier treatments. The work of that era also included the construction of a new Italianate-style front porch with chamfered and bracketed posts, as portrayed in historic images, but which no longer survives. Later historic-period treatments included the introduction of a Craftsman-type porch on the rear wing's east elevation, along with hardwood strip flooring inside and the installation of pressed-metal and beaver-board ceilings in two first-floor rooms. The Craftsman porch, along with the Neoclassical one corresponding with the main block's west gable elevation, may date to as late as 1930, as a news item from that year noted that Fowler was "having two new porches [put] on his summer home" in West Lebanon by Thomson and Shillinger.³⁷ The house as composed today largely reflects the original ca. 1830 building campaign with only minor historic-period modifications. The more recent frame wings that extend to the south of the ell have had minimal negative effect on those earlier parts of the dwelling.

³⁷West Lebanon news items, *Chatham Courier*, 1930; complete date not known.

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The four outbuildings that round out the nominated property's historic features provide an additional layer of architectural interest. All appear representative of a later epoch in the property's history, towards the turn of the twentieth century, and all were apparently erected for the Finch-Fowler family. The large and secondary barns exhibit similar construction features and appear to date to the mid to later 1890s, given a news item from that period indicating that "Work is progressing finely upon Warren Fowler's new barn and carriage house."³⁸ Both are late representations of the timber-framer's craft, with heavy mortise-and-tenoned frames erected with circular sawn hemlock. While the above reference may only relate to the large barn, the similarities between the two suggest they are roughly contemporaneous constructs. The larger barn accommodated horse stables, a tack room, carriage storage, and hay storage, among other functions; the smaller barn featured both open sheds and an enclosed space. The functions of these buildings were rounded out by the granary, which sheltered grains, and by the ice house, which was critical for the longevity of perishables in the age prior to refrigeration.

Conclusion

The Bigelow-Finch-Fowler House shares many important associations with the history of the Town of New Lebanon and the hamlet of West Lebanon. It was erected on a portion of a 600-acre farm first settled in the immediate post-Revolutionary period by Jabez Bigelow Sr., whose three sons came to reside on their allotted acreage following his death, and was erected for his youngest son, Gale Bigelow. By the latter nineteenth century it was owned by the Finch-Fowler family, and from the 1870s until the 1930s served as the principal home of Warren Fowler, a pioneering figure in regional communications beginning in the later nineteenth century. In addition to its direct association with those significant historic themes, the property is additionally significant in an architectural context, given the survival of the ca. 1830 brick dwelling and four ancillary buildings. It is thus a property of no small consequence in the history of West Lebanon and the larger region.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

³⁸West Lebanon news items, *Chatham Courier*, 1895-97; complete date not known.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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Howe, Gilman B. *Genealogy of the Bigelow Family of America*. Worcester, MA: Charles Hamilton, 1890.

Spafford, Horatio G. *Gazetteer of the State of New York*. Albany, N.Y.: B.D. Packard, 1824.

Vickery, Gladys. "Hello, Central; Even the Puritanical Shakers Sought Party Lines When Telephones Were New in Lebanon," *The Chatham Courier*, 9 June 1966.

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 # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 17.17 acres

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 625825 4704852
Zone Easting Northing

3 18 625713 4704449
Zone Easting Northing

2 18 625902 4704521
Zone Easting Northing

4 18 625590 4704810
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary for this NRHP nomination is depicted on the enclosed mapping, which was drawn at a scale of 1: 24,000, 1: 12,000 and 1: 3,601; all maps are entitled "Bigelow-Finch-Fowler Farm, West Lebanon, Columbia Co., N.Y."

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary has been drawn to correspond with a 17.17-acre parcel that includes the house and ancillary historic features; it thus represents the core of the farm, the outbuildings of which date to the turn of the twentieth century. Original land holdings to the east, west, north and south have since been sold off and developed, mostly for residential purposes, leaving the nominated resource, which consists of the property's historic domestic core and land that remains partially in agricultural use.

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title William E. Krattinger
organization NYS Division for Historic Preservation date April 2019
street & number PO Box 189 telephone (518) 268-2167
city or town Waterford state NY zip code 12188
e-mail william.krattinger@parks.ny.gov

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Photographs by William E. Krattinger (April 2018) and Rita Carver (July 2019)
TIFF file format, original digital files at NYS Division for Historic Preservation, Waterford, NY 12188

001 EXTERIOR, house, view looking south towards principal elevation
002 EXTERIOR, house, view looking west showing east gable elevation
003 EXTERIOR, house, view of northeast corner showing cornice detail
004 EXTERIOR, house, view looking north showing porch on east elevation of rear ell
005 EXTERIOR, house, view looking north showing ell and recent addition
006 EXTERIOR, house, detail view of principal entrance, main block north elevation
007 INTERIOR, house, first floor, main block, view showing newel post
008 INTERIOR, house, second floor, main block, view looking down staircase
009 INTERIOR, house, first floor, main block, fireplace and mantel, northeast room
010 INTERIOR, house, first floor, main block, ceiling detail, northeast room
011 INTERIOR, house, first floor, main block, view looking north, northwest room
012 INTERIOR, house, first floor, main block, view of cooking hearth and oven, southwest room
013 INTERIOR, house, first floor, ell, view looking into projecting bay window
014 INTERIOR, house, second floor, main block, fireplace, northwest room
015 EXTERIOR, main barn, view looking south
016 EXTERIOR, barn/shed and ice house, view looking to northwest
017 EXTERIOR, ice house, view looking west
018 EXTERIOR, granary, view looking to southeast

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name _____
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

BIGELOW-FINCH-FOWLER FARM

Name of Property

COLUMBIA CO., N.Y.

County and State



ABOVE & BELOW, historic images of the north elevation of the brick house (undated)



BIGELOW-FINCH-FOWLER FARM

Name of Property

COLUMBIA CO., N.Y.

County and State



ABOVE, Warren Fowler

BIGELOW-FINCH-FOWLER FARM

Name of Property

COLUMBIA CO., N.Y.

County and State



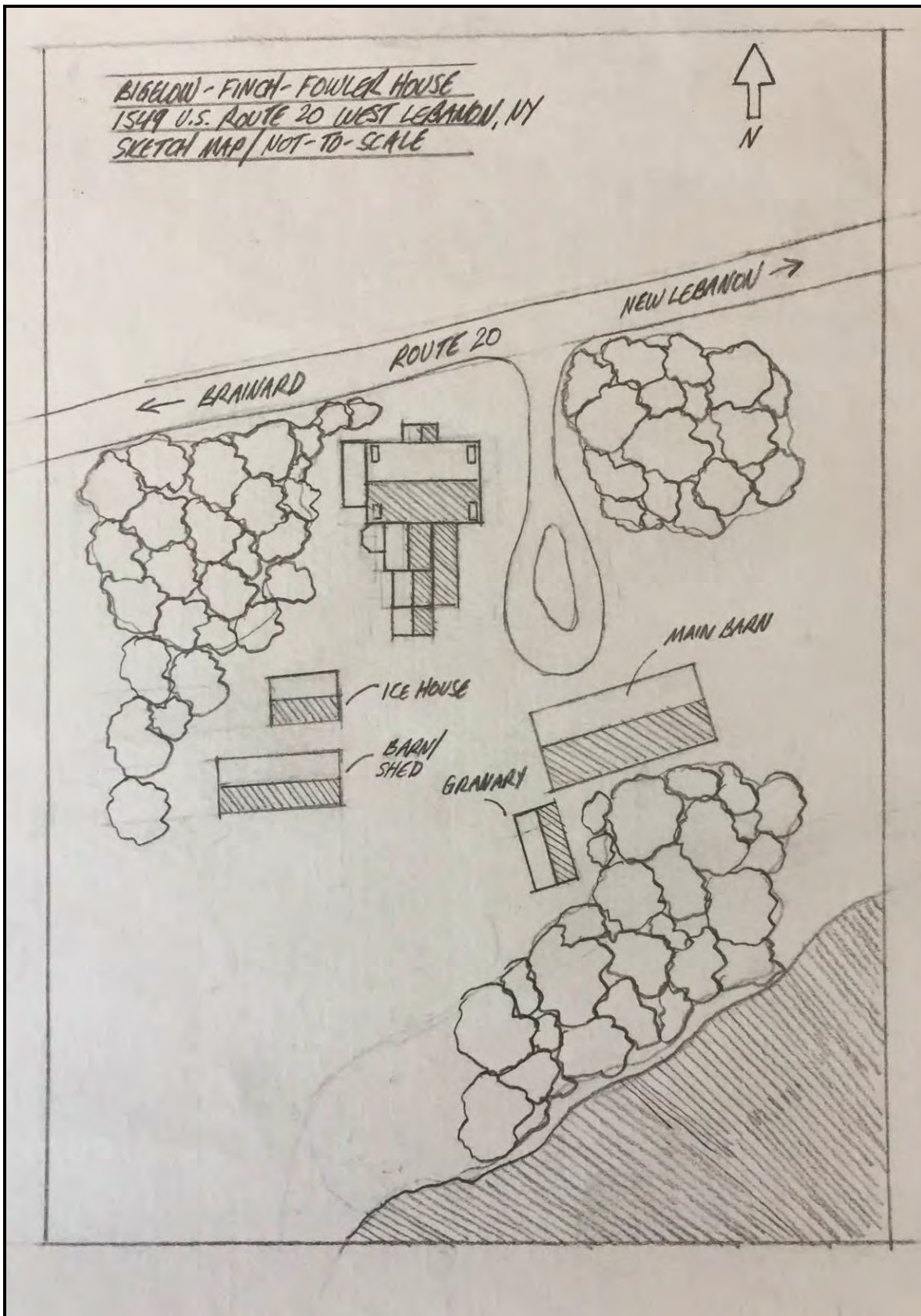
ABOVE, telephone switchboard, in the nominated house, undated image.

BIGELOW-FINCH-FOWLER FARM

Name of Property

COLUMBIA CO., N.Y.

County and State

















THE
CENTURY

1549







PLEASE MAKE
DELIVERIES
TO SIDE DOOR
←









SERVERS



















UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 9/19/2019 Date of Pending List: 10/3/2019 Date of 16th Day: 10/18/2019 Date of 45th Day: 11/4/2019 Date of Weekly List:

Reference number:

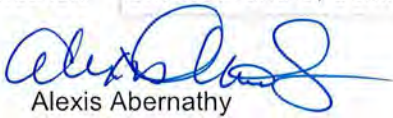
Nominator:

Reason For Review:

☒ Accept ☐ Return ☐ Reject 11/4/2019 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria

Reviewer  Alexis Abernathy

Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2236

Date 11/4/2019

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



**Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation**

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

ERIK KULLESEID
Commissioner



13 September 2019

Alexis Abernathy
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places

Mail Stop 7228

1849 C Street NW
Washington DC 20240

Re: National Register Nomination

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to submit the following two nominations, both on disc, to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register:

Rockefeller Pocantico Hills Estate Historic District, Pleasantville, Westchester County (23 owners, 0 objections)
Bigelow-Finch-Fowler Farm, West Lebanon, Columbia County

Regarding the Rockefeller Estate nomination, I wish to acknowledge the assistance of Barbara Wyatt, who closely guided us through the long effort to document this immense and important historic landscape. Barbara also made a site visit with SHPO staff, read a preliminary draft, and provided valuable feedback about mapping and counting landscape features, especially the system of historic carriage roads.

I am also enclosing a new photo disc for the Powers Building and Powers Hotel, which was nominated about a month ago, because two photos were missing from the original submitted disc.

Please feel free to call me at 518.268.2165 if you have any questions.

Sincerely:

Kathleen LaFrank
National Register Coordinator
New York State Historic Preservation Office