

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received JUN 11 1986
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Ethan Allen Homestead

and/or common Ethan Allen Homestead

2. Location

street & number Off Van Patten Parkway N/A not for publication

city, town Burlington N/A vicinity of

state Vermont code 50 county Chittenden code 07

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Winooski Valley Park District

street & number N/A

city, town Burlington N/A vicinity of state Vermont

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Burlington Town Clerk's Office

street & number N/A

city, town Burlington state Vermont

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Vermont Historic Sites
title and Structures Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1977 federal state county local

depository for survey records The Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

city, town Montpelier state Vermont

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Ethan Allen Homestead is a starkly plain, recently restored, heavy timber wood frame house that overlooks the Winooski River and intervale. Relatively small scale, 34'x24', it is characterized by a 3x2 bay fenestration pattern and centrally located entrances on both the front and rear facades. The plan circulates around a large chimney mass with a kitchen on the west side and two smaller rooms on the east. Two small bedrooms upstairs are finished while the remainder of the upstairs space is exposed with the wall board and hand hewn framing members in full view.

The Homestead stands on a low bluff overlooking the Winooski River, near where the river empties into Lake Champlain. Surrounding the house are several thousand acres of flood plain and intervale which are for the most part undeveloped open space.

The 3x2 bay, 1 1/2 story post and beam structure, is sheathed in clapboards, protected by a wood shingle gable roof, and rests on a mortared stone foundation. Exterior detailing is minimal with a plain board trimming the roofline and glazed transoms above the two entrances.

A large chimney pierces the center of the ridgeline and 12/8 sash light the symmetrically placed window openings. On both the south and north (front and rear) facades windows flank centrally located entries which open into small entrance vestibules. The vestibules provide access to a kitchen on the west side of the house and 2 small rooms on the east side. An enclosed stairway in the kitchen leads to a deep basement and to the second floor that includes unfinished hallway space and two bedrooms finished with plaster walls and ceilings.

Rooms on the first floor are plastered, except for the kitchen which is sheathed in pine boards. Pine also encases the framing members throughout the first floor. The door and window surrounds are all plain boards and a chair rail surrounds the northeast "parlor". Prominent in the kitchen is a large kitchen hearth while a parlor fireplace occupies that room. The former includes a cupboard to the left of the fireplace opening and a simple mantle above, while the latter has slender, simply detailed, flanking pilasters that rise well above the fireplace opening and support a plain mantle shelf.

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The Homestead's present appearance is due to recent restoration activity outlined in the following paragraphs.

Twentieth century siding was removed and clapboards reinstated, the width and size of which were determined when one of the original was found serving as a shim inside a wall. The placement and size of doors and window openings including the transom over the front door, was made evident by the original plank wall boards and framing system, the latter of which was in excellent condition needing little restoration. The proportion of the original windows indicated 12 over 8 sash. These were procured from a house contemporary with the Homestead and installed in all of the openings.

Cuts in the joists and rafters and remnants of the chimney foundation revealed the size and location of the central chimney. It was rebuilt from stone on the property and bricks salvaged from a nearby house of the same era. Stone from the property was also used, with lime mortar that matched the original, in areas of the foundation that needed patching. (Most of the foundation was in good condition due in part to the structure's well-drained sandy site.) Although there was no evidence of the fireplaces' configurations, rotting in a beam, due to the continual scrubbing of the large hearthstone that had once rested on it, determined the location of the kitchen hearth. From this the location of the parlor fireplace was assumed opposite and the floor plan, that of a typical Cape type house, deduced.

Cuts in the second and first floor joists, as well as a well worn board that had once been the uppermost tread on the second floor, and square holes in the second floor floor boards that formerly admitted posts supporting a stair rail, clearly indicated the position of the original staircase, long ago removed. It was rebuilt and sheathed in pine.

Hand split lath marks were discovered in all of the rooms except the kitchen and plaster applied accordingly. A finish of plank wall boards was added in the kitchen. Original pine floor boards which were in good shape beneath modern hardwood floors were exposed throughout the house. There was no evidence remaining of door and window trim or original doors or hardware. Plain board door and window surrounds, in keeping with the house's spartan exterior appearance, were thus applied. Appropriate period reproduction doors and hardware were used where needed.

The nomination photographs show a mobile home type construction

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office located immediately to the west of the Homestead. It is located there temporarily and is scheduled to be removed in the spring of 1986.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates c.1787-1789 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Ethan Allen Homestead is significant as the only surviving residence of Ethan Allen, Vermont's legendary hero. Allen gained fame and national prominence as founder and "Colonel Commandant" of the Green Mountain Boys, leader of the attack and capture of Fort Ticonderoga and a key player throughout most of Vermont's fourteen years as an independent republic. The Homestead was recently recognized after historic research and examination of the building's physical fabric indicated the association with Allen. Twentieth century alterations were removed and the homestead was carefully restored to its late eighteenth century condition as Ethan would have known it.

Ethan Allen was a native of western Connecticut who moved to the frontier known as the Hampshire Grants (now Vermont) in the 1760s. He first gained notoriety as the charismatic, rabble-rousing "Colonel Commandant" of the Green Mountain Boys, a para-military group which used force and intimidation to oppose the claims of New York to land in present day Vermont already granted by New Hampshire and settled by New Englanders. New York was so annoyed with Allen's actions against surveyors and other officials sent out to collect fees from the settlers that a reward was offered for his capture in 1771 and again in 1774. Allen's commitment to the cause was cemented by his own extensive speculation in land under New Hampshire titles. In conjunction with his shrewd brother Ira and other kin from Connecticut, he purchased large tracts of unsettled land in the Champlain Valley, including most of the town of Burlington, and all of the intervale where he would later build a house and farm, the present Ethan Allen Homestead.

In 1775 when news of Lexington and Concord reached the Green Mountains, Allen startled the British Empire and gained widespread personal fame by leading his small army in the seizure of Fort Ticonderoga, one of the continent's key strategic outposts. Later that year Allen was taken captive by the British when he attempted to lead an ill-fated attack on Montreal. For two years and eight months he was a prisoner of war. Allen was finally released in exchange for a British soldier held by the Americans and was made a Colonel by General Washington in 1778.

On his return to Vermont, again with his brother Ira, Allen helped steer the state through fourteen shakey years as an independent republic. Ethan was appointed Vermont's Attorney

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property approximately 140 acres

Quadrangle name Colchester

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

| | | | | | | |
|---|------------|-------------|--------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| A | <u>118</u> | <u>6411</u> | <u>51410</u> | <u>419</u> | <u>310</u> | <u>41810</u> |
| | Zone | Easting | | Northing | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|------------|-------------|--------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| B | <u>118</u> | <u>6410</u> | <u>81210</u> | <u>419</u> | <u>219</u> | <u>51510</u> |
| | Zone | Easting | | Northing | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|------------|-------------|--------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| C | <u>118</u> | <u>6410</u> | <u>41410</u> | <u>419</u> | <u>219</u> | <u>51010</u> |
|---|------------|-------------|--------------|------------|------------|--------------|

| | | | | | | |
|---|------------|-------------|--------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| D | <u>118</u> | <u>6410</u> | <u>31910</u> | <u>419</u> | <u>310</u> | <u>11610</u> |
|---|------------|-------------|--------------|------------|------------|--------------|

| | | | | | | |
|---|------------|-------------|--------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| E | <u>118</u> | <u>6410</u> | <u>01010</u> | <u>419</u> | <u>310</u> | <u>51510</u> |
|---|------------|-------------|--------------|------------|------------|--------------|

| | | | | | | |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| F | <u> </u> |
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| | | | | | | |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| G | <u> </u> |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|

| | | | | | | |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| H | <u> </u> |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|

Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet

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

| | | | | | | | |
|-------|------------|------|------------|--------|------------|------|------------|
| state | <u>N/A</u> | code | <u>N/A</u> | county | <u>N/A</u> | code | <u>N/A</u> |
|-------|------------|------|------------|--------|------------|------|------------|

| | | | | | | | |
|-------|------------|------|------------|--------|------------|------|------------|
| state | <u>N/A</u> | code | <u>N/A</u> | county | <u>N/A</u> | code | <u>N/A</u> |
|-------|------------|------|------------|--------|------------|------|------------|

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Gina Campoli/John Page, Architectural Historians

organization The Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

date January 1986

street & number 58 East State Street

telephone (802) 828-3226

city or town Montpelier

state Vermont

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Director, Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

date 6/6/86

For NPS use only

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

J. Beth Groover
for Keeper of the National Register

date 7/24/86

Attest: Beth L. Savage
Chief of Registration

date 7/24/86

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General and also military commander. Much of his time was spent, however, convincing Congress that Vermont should be the fourteenth State in the Union, a goal that was not reached until 1791 after Allen's death. Allen went to Washington, wrote letters on the subject and even suggested that Vermont join Canada if the new nation would not accept her.

In 1784, Ethan married his second wife Frances Buchanen and in 1787 moved with her to his land holdings in Burlington then a wilderness. Allen traveled extensively and had landholdings throughout Vermont, but chose to settle down on the Burlington Homestead which today retains the undeveloped agricultural environment that Allen would have known. At the time of his marriage, Allen wrote to Ira in Burlington about plans to build a 2-story house, 34'x24' there.¹ This modest size and the spartan character of Ethan's Homestead as it appears today is explained in part by the fact that, although he was a leader in the state, he had little cash, "I am drove almost to death for money,"² he complained in 1784.

Ethan described his 1400 acre farm as having, "350 acres of choice river intervale, a quantity of swales and rich upland meadow, interspersed with the finest of wheatland and pasture land well watered and is by nature equal to any tract of land of the same number of acres that I have ever saw. The country settles fast...little is said about philsophy here; our talk is of bullocks and our glory is the gad. We mind earthly things."³

Ethan Allen lived a relatively quiet life at his Homestead. He enjoyed the life of a framer, land dealer and revered elder statesman and continued his role as one of the republic of Vermont's founders and leaders. In February, 1789, after being stricken by a stroke while hauling a load of hay across frozen Lake Champlain, he died at home. After a military funeral, Ethan Allen was buried in a cemetery above Colchester Avenue in Burlington.

Despite his martial bluster, audacious backwoodsman's manners, and common school education, Ethan Allen was a self-styled intellectual who frequently signed his correspondence "the Philosopher." During the whole land title conflict and subsequent period of Vermont independence, Allen was a prolific and influential propagandist and pamphleteer. At least one of his literary works is viewed by scholars today as a significant contribution to the American Enlightenment. Reason, the Only Oracle of Man, widely known as "Allen's Bible," was a Deist

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religious treatise which foreshadowed Emerson's transcendentalism, served as the early foundation for Unitarianism, and earned its author the unrestrained loathing of the New England Puritan clergy. A less coherent sequel, The Universal Plenitude of Being, was penned in 1788 at Allen's Burlington farm. The appendix to Reason the Only Oracle of Man was also written there.

In 1814 the Homestead was sold to Cornelius Van Ness and was quietly farmed until the present. In 1862 it was advertised for sale at public auction with the local newspaper describing it as, "...situated on the Winooski River, two miles and half from the village of Burlington, and contains 330 acres of intervale, wood and upland. The farm was the property of General Ethan Allen and upon which he resided at the time of his decease..."⁴

The purchaser of the property in 1902, William Van Patten, rented the farm out and, recognizing its historic significance, set aside 12 acres on a ledge above Ethan's home which he offered to the Sons of the American Revolution to establish a tower in Allen's memory. "The newspaper article which announced the intention of building a memorial tower included a map of the proposed park which clearly identified Ethan's house on the intervale and gave a short history of the farm."⁵ A 1901 postcard⁶ and a Victorian line drawing⁷ also identify the farmhouse as Ethan's.

Allen's probate records indicate his farm occupied lots 34,33,32, and part of 31,⁸ the area early Burlington plot maps show as today's Homestead. Litigation proceedings over the farms ownership that occurred after Allen's death and the subsequent marriage of Fanny to Jabez Penniman describe "a certain message [a dwelling house, with adjacent buildings and the adjoining lands] and the farm of land called General Ethan Allen's old farm, and on which the said Ethan Allen lived until the time of his death..."⁹

Despite the recognition gained at the turn of the century with the erection of the Ethan Allen tower, the Homestead went into relative obscurity until the 1980s when it was rediscovered by Vermont historians, most notably Ralph Nading Hill. (Owners during the twentieth century always referred to it as the Ethan Allen House, but this was not publicly recognized.) Examination of the buildings physical fabric confirmed what historic research revealed--this plain and sturdy cottage was the only surviving home of Vermont's earliest and one of its greatest leaders. Its

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dimensions match those that Ethan described to Ira in his letter of 1784 and it included characteristics typical of a late eighteenth century Vermont house -- a hand hewn post and beam frame, evidence of a former massive central chimney, planks up to 17' long placed horizontally in the front wall and hand forged nails.

Historic archeological investigations conducted in 1979 in the area immediately adjacent to the Homestead revealed a limited amount of information due to extensive bulldozing in the recent past. The general pattern of artifact scatter had a mean ceramic date of 1827.¹⁰

The house was altered throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Besides the removal of the central chimney, an ell, siding and dormers were added, exterior doors and windows changed, and the interior finishes and floor plan altered. During the last four years, however, many of these changes have been reversed and the Homestead faithfully restored as described in Section 7. The funds for restoring the Homestead were appropriated by the State Legislature. Future plans for the site, including the house and grounds, include a historic museum run in conjunction with the Winooski Valley Park District and highlighting Allen's life and times.

With the original framing system and foundation intact, the overall massing, proportion and fenestration of the Homestead are clearly as Ethan knew them. The building's location and presence in an open agricultural landscape that has little changed since the turn of the eighteenth century are also true to the original, while interior detailing is based on careful analysis of any and all evidence with little left to conjecture.

The Ethan Allen Homestead is the only surviving structure associated with Ethan Allen, one of Vermont's founding fathers. Situated in the heart of the Allen clan's landholdings at the mouth of the Winooski, one of the state's major tributaries, it is the site where Allen decided to settle down after a colorful and nationally prominent life that took him throughout Vermont and beyond. He finished his greatest work, Reason the Only Oracle of Man there and died at the place, one of Vermont's most historic sites.

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FOOTNOTES

1 Letter written by Ethan Allen to Ira Allen, August 1784, located in the Wilbur Collection, Bailey Howe Library, The University of Vermont, Burlington, Vermont.

2 Quoted in Yankee Kingdom, Ralph Nading Hill, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1960, p.115.

3 Letter written by Ethan Allen to Colonel Stephen Bradley, November 6, 1787, located in the manuscript collection of Vermont Historical Society, Montpelier, Vermont.

4 Burlington Free Press, December 18, 1862.

5 David J. Blow, "Ethan Allen's Burlington Home 1787-1789" in The Chittenden County Historical Society Bulletin, Vol. 12, No. 6, April 1978.

6 Postcard in the personal collection of Mr. Douglas Lewellen, Essex Junction, Vermont.

7 Myra Himelhock, The Allens in Early Vermont, Barre, Vermont Star Printing and Publishing Company, Inc., 1967, p.26.

8 Documents located in the Probate Court, Chittenden County, Burlington, Vermont, "Estate of General Ethan Allen", Vol. 106, p. 223.

9 Documents relating to the Ethan Allen Farm in the manuscript collection of Bob Maguire, Shoreham, Vermont.

10 Martha Pinello and Peter Thomas, "Exploratory Archeological Excavations at the Ethan Allen Farmhouse," Department of Anthropology, University of Vermont, Report # 20, 1979.

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The Burlington Free Press, December 18, 1962.

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Blow, David, title search of Ethan Allen Farmhouse property, conducted in 1977 in Burlington City Clerk's Office.

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Hill, Ralph Nading, Burlington, Vermont, Interview January 2, 1986.

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Hill, Ralph Nading, Yankee Kingdom, (New York, 1960).

Himelhock, Myra, The Allens in Early Vermont, (Barre, 1967), p.26.

Jellison, Charles A., Ethan Allen, Frontier Rebel (Taftsville, Vermont, 1969), pp.320-334.

Kreuger, Sarah P., "Historical and Cultural Justification of the Ethan Allen Home," prepared in 1979 for the Winooski Valley Park District.

Pinello, Martha, and Thomas, Peter, "Exploratory Archaeological Excavations at the Ethan Allen Farmhouse," Department of Anthropology, University of Vermont, Report #20 (1979).

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BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the Ethan Allen Homestead begins at Point A, the intersection of the southern bank of the Winooski River and the south boundary of the Winooski Valley Park property. It thence proceeds in a southwesterly direction along said property line to Point B, the intersection of said line and the eastern edge of the park access road right of way. The boundary thence proceeds in a northerly direction along said edge to Point C, the intersection of said edge and the westerly extension of a line 30ft south of and parallel to the south wall of a c.1940 barn owned by the Winooski Valley Park District. It thence proceeds in an easterly direction along said extension, said line and an easterly extension of said line to Point D, the intersection of said extension and the southerly extension of a line 30ft east of and parallel to the east wall of the Winooski Valley Park District Office. The boundary thence proceeds in a northerly direction along said extension crossing a driveway and continuing along said line and a northern extension thereof to Point E, the intersection of said extension and the eastern extension of a line 30ft north of and parallel to the north wall of the Winooski Valley Park District Office. It thence proceeds in a westerly direction along said extension, said line and a westerly extension thereof to Point F, the intersection of said extension and the eastern edge of the Northern Connector right of way. The boundary thence proceeds in a northerly direction along said edge to Point G, the intersection of said edge and the south bank of the Winooski River. It thence proceeds in a northeasterly and then southerly direction following the south bank of the Winooski River to Point A, the point of origin.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary of the nominated property includes all of the undeveloped and continuously farmed land that remains from the original Ethan Allen farm. It excludes three non-contributing buildings, a c.1940 cinderblock barn, a small c.1940 house, and the Park District Office and garage (built c.1940) that are situated approximately 300 yards to the northeast of the Homestead. The Burlington Northern Connector, a divided highway, and an extensive residential subdivision are situated to the west and southwest and the Winooski River, the boundary of Ethan's farm forms the boundary to the north and east.

ETHAN ALLEN HOMESTEAD
--- NOMINATION BOUNDARY
ROAD LOCATIONS ARE APPROXIMATE
NOT DRAWN TO SCALE

