

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

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

received APR 10 1988

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Wheelock House

and/or common Strahan House

2. Location

street & number Route 30 N/A not for publication

city, town Townshend vicinity of

state Vermont code 50 county Windham code 025

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input 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 Windham Fruit Company

street & number 1400-A Fifteenth Street North

city, town Immokalee N/A vicinity of state Florida 33934

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number N/A

city, town Townshend state Vermont 05353

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date 1974 federal state county local

depository for survey records Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

city, town Montpelier state Vermont 05602

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input 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

Sited prominently in the rural West River valley and retaining a high degree of historic integrity, the Greek Revival style Wheelock House suggests the appearance of a Southern plantation house with a three-bay columned portico on its five-bay eaves front. The circa 1858, two-and-one-half story, clapboarded house with a slate-shingled gable roof possesses paneled corner pilasters, partial eaves entablature, and pedimented gables. The portico displays a high-style array of classical features dominated by molded octagonal columns of Gothic Revival influence. The Georgian-plan interior of the house is richly embellished with heavily molded woodwork, fireplaces with soapstone hearths, and a center stair with continuous railing from the first to the third (attic) stories. A somewhat altered, one-and-one-half story east ell was probably the original (c. 1820) house on the site; a similar-scaled shed extends from the ell. A vertically boarded, gable-roofed barn stands southeast of the house, its west gable decorated to suggest a pediment.

The Wheelock House occupies a rise of ground near the south edge of Harmonyville, a hamlet in the West River valley about one-half mile south of Townshend village. The house commands an expansive view of the one-third-mile wide valley and steeply flanking hills. Toward the west, its main facade overlooks the agricultural bottomlands along the river and the 1680-foot Bald Mountain beyond.

Vermont Route 30 curves around the gradually sloping front (west) grounds of the house. A gravel driveway of horseshoe plan encircles the house, passing between its rear shed ell and the nearby barn to the southeast. Several mature maple trees shade the house and the west and south grounds. A few ornamental shrubs are interspersed among the trees.

Oriented parallel to the highway, the Greek Revival style, wood-framed and clapboarded, rectangular main block of the Wheelock House rises two-and-one-half stories from a granite foundation to a gable roof shingled with bluish-gray slate. An interior chimney with a concrete cap surmounts the ridge near each (north and south) end. The regular fenestration consists of six-over-six sash whose plain surrounds include corner blocks. The second-story surrounds penetrate the frieze band along the horizontal eaves.

Massive paneled pilasters with molded capitals ascend the corners of the main block. The pilasters support a partial entablature with a relatively narrow frieze band, from which closely spaced, under-scaled and stylized modillions curve outward onto the soffit of the molded cornice. The horizontal entablature returns form pediments on both the north and south gable elevations; the raking eaves carry a similar entablature.

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The stylistic treatment culminates in the three-bay portico centered on the symmetrically arranged five-bay main (west) eaves facade. Octagonal tapered columns whose surfaces bear convex moldings and narrow channels support a full Doric entablature including triglyphs, plain metopes, guttae, and underscaled, stylized modillions like those on the main cornice. The columns stand on a wood deck skirted with new latticework. Broad granite steps provide access to the deck.

Sheltered by the portico, the central entrance is enframed by a heavily molded surround whose corner blocks are inset with octagonal panels. Divided sidelights of three-quarters length flank the eight-panel door; the sidelights are themselves enframed by slender molded pilasters with plain head blocks. Both the sidelights and the full-width transom are glazed with frosted glass showing a floral motif. Aligned vertically with the main entrance, a second-story door glazed to match the flanking windows opens onto the portico roof.

The four-bay south gable elevation includes an unsheltered off-center secondary entrance. A broad molded surround with paneled corner blocks enframes its eight-panel door. The clapboarded tympanum of the gable pediment is lighted by a six-over-six sash. The opposite (north) elevation appears identical except for the lack of an entrance.

Projecting from the main block's rear (east) eaves elevation, a one-and-one-half story, clapboarded kitchen ell is recessed from the line of the main block's south elevation. The ell's slate roof carries a rebuilt central chimney with a concrete cap. The somewhat irregular fenestration consists of two-over-two sash.

On the ell's four-bay south eaves front, an off-center entrance is fitted with a paneled door having two slender round-headed lights. The doorway and the two windows to its right are embellished with architrave trim. The three-bay rear (north) elevation also possesses an entrance with an identical door, but the door and window surrounds lack moldings.

Extending eastward from the kitchen ell, a one-story gabled shed is sheathed with clapboards only on its north eaves elevation and flush vertical boards elsewhere. The slated gable roof rises to a ridge lower than that of the kitchen ell, incorporating a short step-down beyond the first bay. Three open bays with canted upper corners occupy the south eaves front of the shed, the right pair being used for vehicles. A small shed-roofed recent addition is attached to the shed's east gable elevation.

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The interior of the main block is arranged on a Georgian floor plan with a center stair hall surrounded by four corner rooms on both full stories. The wall and ceiling surfaces are plastered, the former being wallpapered and the latter being painted. Each room possesses a fireplace with soapstone hearth and brick firebox, placed on the longitudinal interior wall. The fireplace mantels together with the door and window surrounds and the baseboards display a variety of heavily molded woodwork. Those elements are somewhat more complex of design in the public rooms of the first story than the second-story bedrooms. The corner blocks on the first-story surrounds are figured while those on the second story are plain. The doors on both stories are of a five-panel design with applied moldings.

The first-story northwest parlor constitutes the most formally decorated room in the house. A heavy ceiling cornice distinguishes this room from the others in the house while a molded chandelier ceiling medallion appears also in the adjoining entrance hall and the opposite southwest parlor. The latter room contains a cosmetic fireplace (intended for a stove connection) that lacks firebox opening and hearth. A molded chair rail encircles the southeast living room (which receives the secondary south entrance); that feature and the peaked lintel board of its fireplace are repeated in the northeast dining room.

The center hall extends nearly the full depth of the house; a bathroom has been installed in the east end of the hall on both the first and second stories. The hall's first story is embellished by a heavily molded surround of the main entrance and sidelights, whose form reiterates that of its exterior counterpart except for blank corner blocks. A narrow open well flanks the straight open-string stair. One of the house's most extraordinary features, the railing ascends continuously from the first to the third story. Its Federal style oval rail and slender round balusters form a spiral at the lower terminal.

The attic half-story contains three smaller rooms aligned beneath the ridge that were probably intended for servant quarters. The plain treatment of these rooms includes single-bead baseboards and surrounds of the four-panel doors. The stair emerges in the central room, where the railing terminates at the west wall.

The kitchen ell has been extensively altered on the interior, initially during the 1930s when the house was adapted to accommodate summer lodgers. The longitudinal first-story partitions have been removed, leaving only a (rebuilt) central chimney to interrupt the open space between the north and south exterior walls. The upper half-story of the ell remains unfinished.

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A short distance southeast of the kitchen/shed ell (and oriented parallel to it) stands a medium-sized, wood-framed barn constructed probably during the middle nineteenth century. The barn is sheathed mostly with flush boards hung vertically and painted red. Corrugated metal has been applied to the gable roof.

The barn's front (west) gable has been treated to echo the Greek Revival character of the house. The raking eaves carry a molded cornice whose partial returns are balanced by short cornice fragments that turn the northwest and southwest corners of the building. The gable is sheathed with flush boards hung horizontally and painted white to simulate a pediment; a multi-pane horizontal fixed window lights the equivalent of a tympanum. A double-leaf vehicle entrance has been installed next to each corner of this elevation.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates c. 1820, 1858 **Builder/Architect** unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Wheelock House constitutes a unique expression of Greek Revival style residential architecture in Vermont. The exterior displays a fully developed complement of stylistic features in eaves-front rather than the more typical temple-front orientation. The tetrastyle portico combines classical elements and octagonal molded columns of Gothic Revival influence, the latter being extraordinary in Vermont. The sophisticated interior design surpasses the treatment of most contemporary houses in the state's rural areas. The house was built circa 1858 for Allen Wheelock, a native of Townshend but a known slave-owner while resident in Natchez, Mississippi around 1840. Black slave craftsmen may have been involved in the construction of this house; if so, it holds special interest for being an isolated example of that activity in a strongly Abolitionist state.

The origin of the Wheelock House remains somewhat obscure. The present small-scaled, one-and-one-half story kitchen ell predates architecturally the main block and, apparently, Wheelock family ownership of the property. Dr. Joshua Wood acquired the land in 1779 from the original proprietors of Townshend. A deed reference indicates that he built a house here before selling the property to Suel Wood in 1832.

Seven years later, the property was transferred from Suel Wood to Caleb Wheelock, who had lived in the township since at least 1799. The modest nature of the house is reflected by Caleb's assessment on the Grand List of Townshend in 1840, the sum of \$61.60. Caleb and his wife, Sarah, had several children, including a son by the name of Allen who was born in 1814. The senior Wheelock died in 1848 while his wife lived until 1859.

The family's circumstances in Townshend probably induced Allen and his brothers to seek their fortunes elsewhere. Why they chose Natchez, Mississippi remains an historical mystery. Records, however, reveal that in 1839 at the age of 25, Allen became the administrator of an estate in that city. From that estate, he purchased through intermediaries four black slaves at the not inconsiderable cost of \$2530. The four comprised a family group of husband (Junius), wife (Jane), and child (Puss) together with an older woman (Kitty). It is not known whether Allen founded or acquired the clothing store in Natchez later owned by his brothers, and a possible source of his wealth.

In any case, Allen returned to Vermont within a few years. In 1848 (the year of his father's death), he was elected Constable of Townshend.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 4.09

Quadrangle name Saxtons River, Vt.

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UTM References

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4	7	6	6	9	7	5
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Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet.

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Hugh H. Henry

organization Historic Preservation Consultant date December 1985

street & number Green Mountain Turnpike telephone 802-875-3379

city or town Chester state Vermont 05143

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 Eric Gilbertson

title Director, Vermont Division for Historic Preservation date 4/3/86

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

for Melores Byer date 5/8/86
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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Aside from that position, he apparently became a farmer on the family land. The slaves presumably remained in Mississippi, given both the clause in the Vermont constitution prohibiting slavery and the fact that an anti-slavery society had been formed in Townshend as early as 1838.

Four brothers of Allen are known to have lived in Natchez. The 1850 Census of the city records that Almon (age 40), Alpheus (age 28), and Altheron (age 25) Wheelock were resident merchants born in Vermont. In May, 1852, Alpheus was married to Ann Greaves in Natchez. Three months earlier, Miss Greaves had sold thirteen black slaves (including four who were brick masons by trade) that she inherited from her father; she might possibly have continued to own other slaves. An 1858 business directory of Natchez confirms that "A. and A. Wheelock" were clothing dealers, their store being located on Main Street. Apparently the enterprise achieved financial success, and Allen may have retained an interest in it after he left Mississippi. Following the death of Alpheus in 1863, Allen received payments from his estate being administered by brothers Altheron and William G., who were then the proprietors of the store. (Alpheus' estate included "one brick house" containing the store and a frame building "both together valued at \$10,000" and personal property also valued at \$10,000.)

Whatever their source, there must have been sufficient funds available in the late 1850s when Allen undertook the construction of his elaborate new house. Local tradition holds that black slaves belonging to members of the Wheelock family were involved in its construction and that some materials were brought from the South. Documentary evidence of that, however, has either not been preserved or not yet been discovered. Historical circumstances indicate that the Wheelock family in Natchez would have owned slaves during this period.¹

Certain features of the house reflect Southern design practices, and therefore indicate the involvement of Wheelock family members if not slaves from Mississippi. The tetrastyle portico incorporates molded octagonal columns whose distinctive appearance suggests Gothic Revival influence. Such columns are highly unusual in Vermont. Similar columns, however, appear with some frequency in Mississippi, especially near Columbus in the northeastern portion of the state. At least one example existed about forty miles north of Natchez until its destruction by fire earlier in this century.²

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The Georgian interior plan of the Wheelock House possesses a central stair hall that extends upward into the attic story. This arrangement provides the vertical ventilation so desirable in the Southern climate but equally inappropriate during much of the year in Vermont. The continuous balustrade of belated Federal style sweeps upward through a narrow open well to give a strong impression of Southern counterparts.

The high-style decorative treatment of the interior also serves to distinguish this house from most of its counterparts in rural Vermont. The woodwork moldings are boldly profiled and exhibit variations from room to room. Similarly the eight fireplaces display a variety of molded mantelpieces. Ceiling medallions in three rooms and the cornice in the formal parlor further enhance the stylistic expression. These characteristics suggest that the house was not simply the product of local builders.

Its possible construction by black slave craftsmen gives the Wheelock House a peculiar distinction in a state where involuntary adult slavery was abolished by the constitution adopted in 1793. Other cases of Vermont houses built by slave labor are not known although the subject has not yet been adequately researched to determine the possible extent of the practice. Within the Southern states, slaves accounted for a substantial portion of building activity, both in vernacular and high-style forms. Their efforts have remained generally uncredited;³ similarly, the names of the black carpenters who may have worked on the Wheelock House are unknown to history.

The U. S. Census of 1860 reveals a few facts about the Wheelock household. The family consisted of Allen, whose occupation was listed as farmer; his 27-year-old second wife, the former Mary Webster (born in Claremont, New Hampshire); and a twelve-year-old daughter, Addie. A local hired farm laborer and a domestic servant girl from Ireland then lived on the premises. The \$5,000 value of the family's real estate indicates that the present house had been completed. Additionally the family owned personal property to the value of \$2,765, presumably comprising both house furnishings and farm equipment and animals.

Owing possibly to the upheavals caused by the Civil War and his personal association with Mississippi, Allen Wheelock did not long enjoy the satisfaction of owning one of the finest residences in the West River valley. The imminent defeat of the Confederate Army seems to have precipitated a series of events involving the house. In December, 1864, brothers Altheron and William G. quitclaimed to Allen

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a partial interest in the property (probably a previously undivided share inherited from their father). Two days before the April 9th, 1865 surrender at Appomattox, Thomas and Sarah Wheelock Grouch quit-claimed to Allen their partial interest. Ten days after the surrender, Allen removed from Townshend to settle in Ohio; many of his possessions were left behind and sold at auction for meager prices. In July, Albert G. Wheelock also quit-claimed to Allen a partial interest. At the beginning of August, 1865, Allen sold the property outside the family. Allen Wheelock eventually returned to Townshend, for he was buried in a local cemetery after his death in 1889 at the age of 75.

Following a brief interim ownership, Samuel Ober acquired the house in 1866. His family figured actively in nineteenth-century Townshend affairs, and a hill north of Townshend village bears the family name. Just prior to the turn of the century, another locally prominent family became associated with the Wheelock House. Daniel W. Dutton purchased the house in 1896 and held it for over a quarter-century.

The 1933 acquisition of the house by Edith Butler Maguire led to various interior changes, especially in the kitchen ell. The house was then opened to summer lodgers under the name of Red Gate Farm. That use was probably ended by the onset of World War II, and the house was sold to another long-term owner, Frank G. Strahan, in 1943.

The Strahan ownership continued until 1979, when the current owner, Thomas K. Boardman, acquired the property. Thomas Boardman is related both to Joshua Wood and, distantly, to Allen Wheelock. Other members of his family have owned nearby houses since the late eighteenth century. Some of his relatives were close friends with members of the Wheelock family during the middle nineteenth century.

Having been maintained in relatively good condition, the Wheelock House has needed only minor repairs in recent years. Certain exposed components of the portico suffered some deterioration, and the current owner has undertaken a careful restoration that includes repairing or reproducing exactly the original stylistic forms. On the interior, damaged plaster on some walls and ceilings has been repaired in an appropriate manner.

The Wheelock House preserves its original Greek Revival design. The sophisticated stylistic features such as the portico ensemble with molded octagonal columns and the heavily molded interior woodwork remain intact. The house thereby continues to represent tangibly the immediately pre-Civil War period of its origin. The somewhat

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Southern character of that appearance evokes the Wheelock family's association with Mississippi and the possible construction of the house by black slaves. These characteristics serve to distinguish the Wheelock House as a unique expression of nineteenth-century residential architecture in Vermont.

¹ Judgment of Alma K. Carpenter, Historic Natchez Foundation, expressed in letter to Thomas K. Boardman dated September 6, 1985.

² Information provided by Kenneth H. P'Pool, Director, Mississippi Div. of Historic Preservation, in letters to Nancy E. Boone, Architectural Historian, Vermont Div. for Historic Preservation, dated August 14 and 27, 1985.

³ See the paper by John Michael Vlach, "Us Quarters Fixed Fine:" Finding Black Builders in Southern History, delivered at Raleigh, N. C. on December 13, 1980.

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1. Phelps, James H. Collections Relating to the History and Inhabitants of the Town of Townshend, Vermont. Brattleboro, Vt.: Printed by Geo. E. Selleck, 1877, 1884.
2. Rainey, W. H., comp. New Orleans Business Directory. New Orleans: A. Mygatt and Co., 1858.
3. Sheppard's Mississippi State Gazetteer and Shipper's Guide for 1866-67. Memphis, Tenn.: J. S. Sheppard, Publisher, 1866.
4. Vlach, John Michael. "Us Quarters Fixed Fine:" Finding Black Builders in Southern History. Paper delivered at North Carolina Dept. of Cultural Resources, Raleigh, N. C. on December 13, 1980.
5. Records and documents relating to the Wheelock family on file at the Adams County Courthouse, Natchez, Mississippi; copies in the possession of Thomas K. Boardman, Immokalee, Florida.
6. Personal correspondence from Kenneth H. P'Pool, Director, Div. of Historic Preservation, Mississippi Dept. of Archives and History, Jackson, Miss. to Nancy E. Boone, Architectural Historian, Vermont Div. for Historic Preservation, Montpelier, Vt. dated August 14 and August 27, 1985, regarding "Greco-Gothic" octagonal columns in Mississippi.
7. Personal correspondence from Alma K. Carpenter, Historic Natchez Foundation, Natchez, Mississippi to Thomas K. Boardman, Immokalee, Florida dated August 22 and September 6, 1985, regarding the Wheelock family in Natchez.

CARTOBIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Beers, F. W. Atlas of Windham County, Vermont. New York, 1869.
2. Chace, J., Jr. McClellan's Map of Windham County, Vermont. Philadelphia: C. McClellan and Co., 1856.

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The property being nominated consists of the Wheelock House and its polygonal lot adjoining the easterly side of Vermont Route 30. The northerly segments of the boundary extend a total of 425.57 feet, the easterly boundary 263.47 feet, the southerly boundary 611 feet, and the westerly boundary 490.71 feet along Route 30. The deed to the property is entered in Book 44, Page 61 of the Townshend Land Records. The nominated area of 4.09 acres corresponds to the remaining portion of the land historically owned together with the house, and is sufficient to protect the historic resource.