

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

For NPS use only

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

received AUG 28 1984  
date entered SEP 27 1984

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

**1. Name**

historic Peabody Library

and/or common same

**2. Location**

street & number VT  
Route 113 N/A not for publication

city, town Thetford Vt.  vicinity of Post Mills

state Vermont code 50 county Orange code 017

**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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>N/A</u> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Trustees of Peabody Library

street & number N/A

city, town Post Mills N/A vicinity of state Vermont 05058

**5. Location of Legal Description**

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

street & number N/A

city, town Thetford state Vermont 05074

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

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

date 1979  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

city, town Montpelier state Vermont 05602

## 7. Description

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

Enhanced by the pastoral setting of Post Mills village in the Ompompanoosuc River valley, the Peabody Library combines the temple form of the Greek Revival style with a decorative overlay of Italianate Revival elements. The diminutive wood-framed and clapboarded, gable-roofed building of one and one-half stories displays molded entablatures, corner quoins, and footed sills together with a pedimented gable front whose recessed portico includes square paneled pillars. The Peabody Library retains to an extraordinary degree the integrity of its 1867 design.

The Peabody Library stands along Vermont Route 113 just south of its intersection with Route 244 in the small village of Post Mills, near the northwest corner of Thetford township. Post Mills' buildings are somewhat scattered, and the library lacks immediate neighbors on the east side of the highway. To the west, the library faces a hillside beyond nearby houses; behind the building, the terrain slopes downward to the floodplain of the Ompompanoosuc River.

The library's simple rectangular plan extends three bays along the eaves (north and south) elevations, and also three bays across the narrower main (west) gable facade. The low granite slab foundation barely exceeds present grade level of the informally landscaped lot. The building rises one and one-half stories to an asphalt-shingled gable roof; a single interior chimney emerges from the east end of the ridge.

The main (west) facade of the library possesses a three-bay portico beneath a pedimented gable with full horizontal and raking entablatures. Wood quoins define the building corners. Oversized triple-hung sash with six-over-six-over-six lights flank the central entrance; the window openings are enframed by footed sills, louvered shutters, and heavy entablatures. The main entrance displays a more elaborate surround, consisting of a chamfered doorband outlined by a torus molding and surmounted by a denticulated entablature; double-leaf, four-panel doors are hung in the opening. Standing on the plank deck of the portico, paneled chamfered pillars rise from paneled pedestals to support the horizontal entablature of the gable pediment; the frieze carries the library name in raised wood letters. The clapboarded tympanum is lighted by a central oculus with radiating muntins.

The eaves (north and south) elevations reiterate the decorative treatment of the main facade. The smaller window openings have double-hung, six-over-six sash whose common sill level matches that on the main facade, leaving a larger expanse of upper wall surface bounded by the eaves entablature.

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The rear (east) elevation differs in arrangement, having two window bays both on the main story and an upper mezzanine level and partial cornice returns in place of the west pediment. A very small shed-roofed enclosure has recently been attached to the first-story wall to shelter a furnace.

The interior of the Peabody Library lacks both partitions and horizontal division other than the narrow mezzanine that projects from the north, east, and south sides of the open room. The entrance and window openings share heavy molded surrounds while the former is distinguished by a denticulated entablature (as on the exterior). Wood book stacks crowned with molded cornices extend perpendicularly from the side walls, their molded bases matching the baseboard along the walls.

Twin two-run stairs with winders ascend from the west corners of the main floor to the mezzanine; a small closet occupies the space beneath each stair. Both chamfered and octagonal newels support the turned balustrades of the stairs; protecting the mezzanine are a low wood balustrade with rosetted scroll forms and a recently added higher metal railing. The mezzanine is supported by massive wood openwork brackets that were made by J. J. McNutt, Novelty Wood Works, of Boston. The kneewalls above the mezzanine are lined with open shelves rising to the denticulated ceiling cornice that encircles the interior. A molded wood chandelier medallion embellishes the center of the ceiling.

Occupying the position of honor, a large oil portrait of George Peabody hangs above the main entrance. J. P. Mayall of Brighton, England completed the portrait in 1869, working largely from a photograph of his subject (who gave the sittings for color only months before his death the same year). The painting was installed in the library upon its arrival from England in March 1870.

The only significant change in the library's physical nature involves the roof sheathing. The original material is not known but presumably would have been wood shingles. In 1887, however, "genuine sheet steel roofing" was purchased from the Canton (Ohio) Iron Roofing Co., and applied to the roof; period photographs indicate that the material was stamped in the pattern of shingles. The stamped metal was removed in the present century and replaced by asphalt shingles.

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The library has also undergone a cosmetic change of its nineteenth-century paint scheme. Historic photographs show at least a bichrome color treatment, with a darker color being applied to certain elements of trim. The building now displays an essentially monochromatic treatment - white except for black shutters and sign letters.

## 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** 1867 **Builder/Architect** unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Peabody Library holds architectural and historical significance in two principal respects. The building exhibits a unique blend of characteristics from both the Greek Revival and Italianate Revival styles, being an outstanding representative of that middle nineteenth-century transition in architectural fashion. The design created by an unknown architect or master builder remains virtually unaltered in contrast to many other buildings in Vermont from that period. The library's name reflects its association with George Peabody, one of the most important American philanthropists of the nineteenth century. Peabody provided the funds for the library to commemorate a youthful visit to Post Mills, and it is the only institution to have been established in Vermont under his auspices.

Post Mills was named for Eldad Post, originally from Massachusetts, who purchased in 1779 the land around the falls of the Ompompanoosuc River and built the first mill at that site. In 1803, Eldad's son, Aaron, sold to Jeremiah Dodge the Post family lands east of the river, including a saw mill at the outlet of nearby Lake Fairlee.

A son of Jeremiah Dodge, Eliphalet, preceded his father's arrival at the settlement, and became a prosperous farmer in his own right. Eliphalet's sister, Judith, remained in Massachusetts and married Thomas Peabody; a family of very modest means, their children included a son by the name of George.

George Peabody (1795-1869) came to Post Mills when only fifteen years of age. He stayed for a winter with his maternal grandfather, Jeremiah Dodge, and apparently enjoyed especially the company of an uncle and aunt, Eliphalet and Mary Dodge.

Eliphalet Dodge (known familiarly as "Captain Life") and his wife, Mary, produced a large family, including a son named Harvey. Harvey married a daughter of John Riley, who had purchased from Aaron Post that family's land west of the river along with the original mill privilege. Through Sarah Jane Riley, therefore, Harvey Dodge - a cousin of George Peabody - acquired the property of Post Mills' founder, and became a farmer, live-stock dealer, and local politician.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet 5.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 0.26

Quadrangle name Vershire, Vt.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 

18	720020	48622560
Zone	Easting	Northing

B 

Zone	Easting	Northing

C 

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D 

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E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet 6.

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 April 1984

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 Silberton*

title Director, Vermont Division for Historic Preservation date August 22, 1984

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

*Joyce M. Sammon* date 7-27-84  
Keener of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

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The settlement around the falls of the Ompompanoosuc expanded slowly through the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1818, a union church was erected on the "plain" north of the falls by the Congregationalists and the Baptists. A new brick schoolhouse appeared in 1827. Additional mills were built at the falls near the original saw and grist mills. In 1855, the emerging village also contained a cabinet shop, two harness shops, and two stores along with a saddler and two blacksmiths.

George Peabody apparently never returned to Post Mills after his youthful sojourn. For that matter, he seldom returned to the United States after 1837, adopting England as his residence for the remainder of his financial career and life. That career, of course, proved enormously successful. In 1843, he established the firm of George Peabody and Co., specialists in international brokerage and banking. The following decade, Peabody brought Junius S. Morgan into partnership so that he could devote more time to his charitable activities. Subsequently Peabody became "the first great American philanthropist," holding special interest in the development of educational institutions, museums, and libraries.

Three years before his death in 1869, Peabody expressed his "gratitude for the kindness shown him during his early life by my revered uncle, Eliphalet Dodge, and his excellent wife" by offering (in August 1866) the Post Mills community \$5,000 for the construction and furnishing of a library. A library association was quickly formed, and it acquired from Harvey Dodge an appropriate building lot diagonally across the road from his house.

The Peabody funds provided not only for the building and its furniture. Peabody himself retained an agent in London "to purchase standard and useful books as the foundation of your library," with \$1,500 committed to that purpose. Eleven hundred volumes filled the shelves when the Peabody Library was formally opened on October 9, 1867; many of those books have remained in the collection to the present. Harvey Dodge became the first librarian while also serving as a trustee.

The new library marked the onset of an expansive period for Post Mills, already the largest of the six villages in Thetford township. The village's location next to Lake Fairlee enabled the development of a substantial summer tourist trade. The first hotel was built north of the library in 1869, and catered to a clientele largely from the

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Southern states; later hotels were constructed on the lakefront. Another type of recreationally oriented industry emerged at the falls in 1872, when the firm of Chubb and Hall began making bamboo fishing rods; the Chubb factory became nationally recognized for the quality of its products.

These enterprises waned during the early decades of the present century; summer camps replaced the resort hotels and the Chubb company expired in 1931. Post Mills' population declined gradually for several decades, and the Peabody Library remained adequate for the community without alteration. Recent years, however, have brought an upsurge of population and increased usage of the library, leading the current Trustees to consider a moderate enlargement of its limited space.

The Peabody Library constitutes an outstanding example of the Greek Revival temple form decorated with Italianate Revival elements. That stylistic transition occurred later in Vermont than in the metropolitan states to the south, suggesting that the 1867 design originated in Vermont. The design was carried through the library's interior, and certain components thereof, e.g., the openwork brackets that support the mezzanine, were imported from a "novelty wood works" in Boston. The unaltered condition of its design compounds the architectural significance of the Peabody Library, warranting careful preservation of the building in the future.



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1. Baldwin, Jessie A. History and Folklore of Post Mills, Vermont. Thetford, Vt.: Thetford Historical Society, 1983.
2. Latham, Charles, Jr. A Short History of Thetford, Vermont, 1761-1870. Thetford, Vt.: Thetford Historical Society, 1972.
3. Records of the Trustees of Peabody Library held by the Secretary, Sarah Emily Schoenhut, Thetford, Vermont.

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The property being nominated consists of the Peabody Library and its original lot abutting the east edge of the Vermont Route 113 right-of-way. The rectangular lot extends 7 rods (115.5 feet) along the highway by 6 rods (99 feet) in depth. Harvey Dodge sold the lot to the Trustees of Peabody Library in 1866 for \$400.00; the deed is recorded in Book 20, Page 501 of the Thetford land records. The nominated property is sufficient to enclose and protect the historic resource.