

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED JUL 12 1977
DATE ENTERED NOV 2 1977

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

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Elwin Chase House

AND/OR COMMON

Chase House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

1167 25

CITY, TOWN

East Topsham

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Vermont

VICINITY OF

CODE

50

Vermont

COUNTY

Orange

CODE

017

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

DISTRICT

PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

UNOCCUPIED

COMMERCIAL

PARK

STRUCTURE

BOTH

WORK IN PROGRESS

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

OBJECT

IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

BEING CONSIDERED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

NO

MILITARY

OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mr. and Mrs. Seymour K. Browne

STREET & NUMBER

190 Fifth Street

CITY, TOWN

Stamford,

VICINITY OF

STATE

Connecticut

06905

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Office of the Town Clerk

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Topsham

STATE

Vermont

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Vermont State Register of Historic Places

DATE

1977

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

CITY, TOWN

Montpelier

STATE

Vermont

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

Located on a paved road in rural east Topsham Center, the Chase House is a 2 1/2 story, wood frame building, approximately 35' x 20' of post and beam construction with a standing seam metal gabled-roof. Although undocumented, the building appears to date from the early 1830's. The main rectangular structure is three-bays wide, and four bays deep, with the gable-end oriented to the road. From the rear, a single-story, gable-roofed wood-frame ell, housing a modern kitchen, extends to the east. The walls of both buildings are covered with clapboards, the main building containing shuttered 12/6 windows, those in the ell 6/6, dating from a rebuilding of 1976 - 1977.

The main entrance, located on the westerly side of the house, is differentiated by its simple pilastered doorway containing a rectangular transom with leaded-glazed side lights, executed in a Greek Revival-like style. Above the second story, a lunette complements the gable's symmetry, its roundness providing a softening touch, together with a shallow barge-board which trims the eaves around the entire roof.

The rear elevation of the main block contains an attic window, which together with the front lunette, provides the light source for the attic half story. The south elevation contains four bays of symmetrically placed windows, while the north elevation contains three window bays. A fourth bay is covered with clapboards.

A side hall plan, containing the main staircase, provides for an asymmetrical floor plan on the first and second stories of the house. The architectural components within the rooms are simple-unaltered trims, with the original pine floorboards. The main staircase, contained in the hall, retains most of its original newel posts, each post capped with a mushroom-line finial. The principal newel, in the entry hall, had been replaced, circa 1870's, providing for a contrasting victorian touch in an otherwise vernacular earlier 19th century interior.

Surrounding the staircase is a series of wall paintings, attributed to the itinerant American mural painter, Rufus Porter. The murals contain a variety of subjects with no apparent schematic plan as to their location. The murals, and their individual themes may be identified as follows:

Lower Stair Hall, - North Wall

- (1) West Portion (at foot of stairs), Landscape with Trees.
- (2) Center Portion (up the stairs), Landscape with Trees, a large Mountain, and a Waterfall (some area still covered with wall-paper).
- (3) Center Portion (below the stairs), Landscape & Mountain.
- (4) East Portion (behind the stairs), Landscape.

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 checked="" 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

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Chase House is significant in that it contains the only murals attributed to Rufus Porter thus far found in the State of Vermont. It is significant that the Porter murals are contained within a rural house that in itself shows the skills and talents of a local Vermont carpenter-builder.

Porter was born in West Boxford, Massachusetts in 1792 and worked as an itinerant wall painter in Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine prior to painting the Chase House murals, c. 1831-1834. This date has been suggested from a depiction on the lower north wall of the Frigate Potomac whose voyage around the world at this time was prominent news. Porter, the founder of Scientific American, was also interested in navigation improvements which probably accounts for the inclusion of the steamboat in the lower hall of the house.

The dating of the paintings around this time would suggest that they are contemporary with the architectural components of the house, of which the exact building date is thus far undocumented. It should be noted that while the carpenter-builder is unknown, the treatment of the newel posts of the staircase would suggest a local builder, perhaps from the Topsham area. The murals provide the perfect complement for the vernacular building features, and when viewed by the side-lights of the doorway demonstrate the harmonious integration of the vernacular art of the painter, together with the craft of the carpenter-builder. As such, the Chase House may be viewed as a testimony to the integration of the less urban arts in America during the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

1. See Lipman, Jean, Rufus Porter: Yankee Pioneer. (Bibliography for a more detailed account of the life of Porter.)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Lipman, Jean, Rufus Porter: Yankee Pioneer, New York: Charles Potter. 1968
 McGrath, Robert L. Early Vermont Wall Paintings

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1 1/2 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,8	7 2,0 9,0,0	4,8 8,8 6,6,0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

7 0 0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Coextensive with the Seymour K. Browne property lines

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Richard C. Cote Architectural Historian

June 3, 1977

ORGANIZATION

Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

DATE

(802) 828-3226

STREET & NUMBER

Pavilion Building

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Montpelier

STATE

Vermont 05602

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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

William B. Pinney
 Director/ State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 7-6-77

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DATE

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Lower Stair Hall, - East Wall

- (5) Landscape with a very large Tree and Mountains.

Lower Stair Hall - South Wall

- (6) West Portion, Landscape with Trees and Bushes. (By front door)
(7) Center Portion, Landscape and Riverscape with a large
Steamboat similar to Robert Fulton's "Clermont".

Lower Stair Hall, - West Wall

- (8) North Portion, Landscape with Trees.

Upper Stair Hall, - North Wall

- (9) West Portion, Landscape with Trees, possible signature
"R POR ?" at lower left corner (some area still covered
with wall-paper.)
(10) East Portion, Landscape with Trees (considerable area still
covered with wall-paper.)

Upper Stair Hall, - East Wall

- (11) Landscape with Trees and Mountains and, in the foreground,
a house and a Barn which are probably the Elwin Chase house
and barn.

Upper Stair Hall, - South Wall

- (12) East Portion, Seascape with two ships under full sail,
one a sloop and the other the three-masted U.S. Frigate
"Potomac" flying the American flag and the pennant of
Commodore John Downes (In 1831 President Andrew Jackson
dispatched the "Potomac" under Captain Downes to Sumatra
to punish the natives for a "Murderous Attack" on an Ameri-
can merchant ship. Her mission accomplished with a ven-
geance, the "Potomac" then sailed on "Round the World".)
(13) West Portion, Landscape with Trees and Mountains.

Upper Stair Hall, - West Wall

- (14) South Portion, Landscape with Tree.
(15) North Portion, Landscape with Trees.

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Together, the wall paintings represent a total of approximately 600 square feet, and cover the entire wall surface of the hall, both upper and lower.