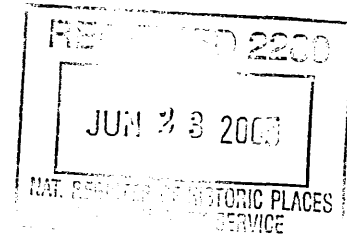


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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Grafton Post Office

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 205 Main Street

not for publication n/a

city or town Grafton vicinity n/a

state Vermont code VT county Windham code 025

zip code 05146

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 nationally x statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Suzanne C. Daniels, National Register Specialist 10-22-05
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Vermont State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register

Edson Beall 8.6.05

other (explain):

Jan

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
n/a

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Government Sub: Post Office
Commerce/Trade Sub: Business

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Commerce/Trade Sub: Professional

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone
roof metal
walls weatherboard
other

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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)

- X 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.
X 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 a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
Community Planning and Development
Politics/Government

Period of Significance 1855-1955

Significant Dates 1855

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation n/a

Architect/Builder unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .02 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone Easting	Northing	Zone Easting	Northing
1	<u>18</u>	<u>694508</u>	<u>4782684</u>	3
2	_____	_____	4	_____
	<u>See continuation sheet.</u>			

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Paula Sagerman, Historic Preservation Consultant

organization _____ date March 16, 2005

street & number 7 Winter Haven Drive telephone (802) 464-5179

city or town Wilmington state VT zip code 05363

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

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.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

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

name Grafton Historical Society

street & number 147 Main Street, P.O. Box 202 telephone (802) 843-2584

city or town Grafton state VT zip code 05146

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. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 1

**Grafton Post Office
Grafton, Windham County, Vermont**

Description

The c. 1855 former Grafton Post Office is located on Main Street in the historic village of Grafton, Vermont. This diminutive vernacular Greek Revival style building is an intact and good example of its type. It was constructed by Grafton's third postmaster, Fabius Bancroft, and served as the village post office for over one hundred years until 1962, when it was sold to the Grafton Historical Society and became its first museum. In 1978, the historical society moved into another building up the street, and since then, the subject building has been leased to private businesses. The building retains its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, and there are no threats to its integrity. The Grafton Historical Society is proud of its architecture and history and intends to continue preserving the building.

Setting

Grafton is a rural town (population about 600) located in north central Windham County in the upper valley of the Saxtons River, which runs east through Rockingham into the Connecticut River. Grafton village is at the confluence of the north and south branches of the Saxtons River, in the center of the town. Surrounding the village are sparsely developed rolling hills with historic farmsteads, and there is one other small remote hamlet called Houghtonville.

Grafton is the quintessential rural Vermont village. It contains a Main Street (Vermont Route 121), and at the center of the village, Main Street intersects with the Townshend Road, creating a focal point. Main Street continues east into Mechanicsville, an extension of the village that follows the Saxtons River. There are also a few side roads off of Main Street and Townshend Road that are within the village. These streets are densely settled with mostly nineteenth century wood frame buildings and very few twentieth-century structures. Most of the resources are single family homes in the Federal and Greek Revival styles, and other historic buildings include a hotel, town hall/post office, general store, two former schoolhouses, and two churches. The village appears to be eligible as a National Register of Historic Places historic district, and many of the properties also appear to be individually eligible for the National Register. There are three buildings in the village that have already been listed on the National Register, two residences (adjacent to the post office) and one church. All of the historic buildings in the village are well-maintained and retain their historic integrity, and there are no intrusions, including utility poles and wires.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 2

**Grafton Post Office
Grafton, Windham County, Vermont**

The Post Office is located on a .02 acre parcel at 205 Main Street. It is adjacent and in close proximity to the former District No. 2 Schoolhouse, and is across the street from the Butterfield House, both of which are being nominated to the National Register concurrently with the Post Office. The Post Office is located on the north side of the street, has a three foot setback from the street, and faces south. The parcel boundaries are five feet on each side of the building and to the rear. Behind the property are a lawn and the south bank of the Saxtons River.

Exterior

The Grafton Post Office has a rectangular footprint oriented perpendicular to the street and was built in two sections; a main block and a small rear addition. It is a one-story, front-gable, three bay wide wood frame structure with a mortared fieldstone foundation, clapboard siding, and a corrugated metal roof with boxed cornices and cornice returns. The entry is in the front left bay, and there are two equidistant double-hung windows to its right. The east elevation has one double-hung window, the west elevation has two double-hung windows, and the rear (north) gable has a horizontal six-pane window. The entry contains a four-panel wood door, and the window openings contain six-over-six wood units. Architectural trim is limited to flat-stock cornerboards, window and door casings, and friezeboards and gable rakes. The front entry has a narrow molded cornice and the windows have thin caps.

The shed roofed rear section spans the rear gable wall and is one bay deep. It has a mortared fieldstone foundation and a standing-seam metal roof. The east half has clapboard siding and the west half was formerly a porch, and has a shingled flared half-wall. There is a square former corner post on a battered base. The porch openings have been infilled with modern sliding windows. The west side elevation has a four-panel wood door. The rear elevation of the east section has a small square window. The building is in excellent condition.

Interior

The main block contains one room, and the rear addition contains two rooms (one is the former porch). The main block has modern wall-to-wall carpeting, low wainscoting with horizontal panels and a plain chair rail, and homasote walls and ceilings. The ceiling is divided into panels with wood strips. Half of the east wall is covered with horizontal beadboard. The windows and doors have flat-stock casings with peaked lintelboards, and there are flat-stock baseboards. The rear addition has modern carpeting and homasote walls and ceilings. The door to the east rear

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 3

**Grafton Post Office
Grafton, Windham County, Vermont**

section is a historic four-panel wood door, and the door between the two rear rooms is a modern veneer door.

Construction Chronology

The building was constructed c. 1855, and remains fairly intact. The exterior appearance has probably not changed since construction, except for the foundation, which was rebuilt after the building was damaged during the 1938 hurricane, and the rear porch, which was enclosed in the late twentieth century. Surviving original interior finishes are limited to the door and window casings. The beadboard and homasote wall finishes may date to the early twentieth-century. Wood flooring probably survives under the carpeting.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 1

**Grafton Post Office
Grafton, Windham County, Vermont**

Statement of Significance

The former Grafton Post Office is significant as an intact and early example of a rural Vermont post office, as a rare example of a one-room nineteenth century post office, and as an important part of the growth of Grafton village. The post office was constructed c. 1855 by Grafton's third postmaster, Fabius Bancroft, and from 1871-1940 was operated by members of the Hall family. These seventy years of service by one family may be a national record. The vernacular Greek Revival post office and its setting retain their integrity and the property meets National Register Criterion A for its contribution to Grafton's and Vermont's history of neighborhood development and government, and meets National Register Criterion C for its architectural merit as an intact early post office. The post office relates to the statewide themes of Historic Architecture and Patterns of Town Development, and Culture and Government. The period of significance of the post office is 1855-1955, which spans the years between its construction date and the fifty-year limit for National Register eligibility.

The former Grafton Post Office (hereinafter called the Post Office) is located on Main Street in Grafton village, which is a densely settled rural village comprised of intact nineteenth-century buildings. Grafton was first chartered in 1754 with the name Thomlinson. Like most Vermont towns chartered before the French and Indian War, the town could not fulfill the conditions of the charter, and in 1763, it was regranted to the original proprietors.

Like many of Vermont's early towns, Grafton's first settlement was on a hilltop, in this case, Middletown Hill, which is about a mile northwest of Grafton village. It has been reported that a man named Slack was the first settler, having arrived in 1768. However, the 1771 census reported that there were no inhabitants in Thomlinson. Middletown's first settlers arrived in the 1770s, but were temporary residents. The first permanent settlers arrived in 1780, and were from Connecticut and Massachusetts. The first recorded town meeting was held in 1783, although it is possible that town meetings had already been held for a few years prior to this. By 1791, the population of Grafton was 561, almost as high as today's population of about 600. By the turn of the nineteenth century, Middletown village had a meeting house, a church, stores, a cemetery, and numerous residences. Besides Middletown, additional hamlets appeared, including Houghtonville, Mechanicsville, and Cambridgeport, which lies partly in Rockingham. In 1791, an auction was held for the privilege of renaming the town. The highest bidder, Joseph Axtell, paid five dollars and a jug of rum and selected the name Grafton, which was the name of his hometown in Massachusetts.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Section 8 Page 2

**Grafton Post Office
Grafton, Windham County, Vermont**

In the early nineteenth century, Grafton residents began to “move down the hill” into what is now Grafton village and adjacent Mechanicsville. Like many other Vermont towns, residents desired to move from hilltops into river valleys, not only because the area was open for development, but also to take advantage of the water power for mills. What is now known as Main Street/Route 121 was laid out in 1818. It follows the Saxtons River and connects Grafton with Rockingham to the east.

In the “lower village,” mills such as a grist mill, saw mill and cider mill were established by the 1820s. The cider mill was converted to a carding mill and woolen factory in the 1830s. By 1840, there were two grist mills, six saw mills and a fulling and carding mill in town. From the 1830s to the 1880s, there was also a carriage and sleigh factory, and Grafton was also known for the manufacture of fishing rods during the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century. Grafton’s most successful industry was soapstone. From the 1850s to the 1890s, there were two quarries in town that were operated by local citizens John L. Butterfield and Charles Smith. The soapstone was milled in Cambridgeport, worked into window sills and lintels, fireplaces, and plumbing pipes, then transported to Bellows Falls to be shipped by rail. Butterfield & Smith became the largest soapstone producer in Vermont and the second largest in the United States. By the end of the nineteenth-century, soapstone was replaced by more durable products, and the industry in general declined.

Starting in the 1810s, stores, churches, schools, and a tavern, were established in the “lower village,” and by the 1830s Grafton village and Middletown competed for the status of being the center of town. By the 1840s, Grafton village had become the established center and Middletown became a rural area comprised of farmsteads. The population of Grafton did not grow as a result of the expansion of the new village; instead, there was just a shift in where people lived. The population peaked in 1820 at 1,482, which is almost 2-1/2 times today’s population.

The 1856 McClellan map reveals that Grafton village was almost as developed as it is today, and what remained of Middletown was a handful of farmsteads, a church, and a cemetery. The 1869 Beers map shows that the Middletown church was gone and that Grafton village was fully developed. Besides the numerous residences, Grafton village had two churches, a parsonage, a cemetery, a hotel, a large schoolhouse (two smaller schoolhouses had recently been closed), a cabinet shop, a tin shop, three stores, a carriage shop, and a blacksmith shop. The churches, stores, hotel and most of the residences remain standing today.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Section 8 Page 3

**Grafton Post Office
Grafton, Windham County, Vermont**

Early twentieth century industries in Grafton included logging and dairy farming, and the spacious Phelps Hotel attracted many visitors. By the mid twentieth century, these industries were dying out, many commercial establishments had closed, and agriculture was on a major decline. In 1940, Grafton reached its lowest population, 393, and many village buildings fell into disrepair.

In 1963, the Windham Foundation was established in Grafton by Dean Mathey of Princeton, New Jersey. Mathey's cousin Mat Hall, who had a summer home in Grafton, assisted with the operation of the foundation. The purpose of the Windham Foundation was, and still is, to revitalize Grafton and provide grants to Vermont organizations. In the 1960s and 1970s it purchased about twenty-seven buildings in the village and restored them, and acquired over 1,000 acres of land surrounding the village. Today, the Windham Foundation provides long-term leases for these buildings, and operates the Old Tavern, the Grafton Village Cheese Company, and conserves the rural acreage as a recreational area open to the public. Besides historic preservation, other community enhancements undertaken by the Windham Foundation include funding the burial of all utility lines in the village and the installation of historically appropriate street lights. Today, Grafton village is one of the most historically intact and well-maintained villages in Vermont. It appears to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, with very few non-contributing resources.

The Grafton Post Office has played an important role in Grafton's history and is an integral part of the village streetscape. Postal service was established in Vermont in 1784, in limited locations. At this point, Vermont's post offices were located in taverns, stores and private homes, and Grafton residents had to retrieve their mail in the adjacent town of Chester. The first local post office was established on Middletown Hill in 1818 or 1819, in Nathan Wheeler's store. He was the first postmaster, and served that position until 1834. Lucius Alexander was the second postmaster, serving from 1835 to 1839. Fabius Bancroft, who served as postmaster from 1841 to 1857, moved the post office "down the hill" to the "lower village" in 1841, into the Barrett Store at the intersection of Main Street and Townshend Road. This was a result of a public petition, and other institutions such as churches and stores were also moving "down the hill" to the village.

Fabius Bancroft (1792-1866) was also an insurance agent (nineteenth-century postmasters in rural areas also maintained other employment). He built the subject building about 1855, and also used it as his insurance office. It is difficult to determine the exact date, because Bancroft did not purchase the land the building stands on, so there is no deed. However, the post office

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 4

**Grafton Post Office
Grafton, Windham County, Vermont**

dates to no later than 1856, when it appears on the McClellan map of the village. It was built on the property of Thomas Davis, who lived west of the post office. (The Davis property is now individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places.) It should be noted that Bancroft was related by marriage to John L. Butterfield, who owned the properties across the street and to the east.

In 1857, Bancroft moved to Bellows Falls where he continued his insurance business, and Nathan W. Weeks served as postmaster from 1857 to 1868. During this time, the building was also Silas J. Smith's shoe shop. Nelson H. Bixby served as postmaster from 1868 to 1871. Although not mentioned in any local history document, the 1869 Beers map of Grafton village labels the subject building only as a "store," and shows that the post office at the time was located at the Town Hall (formerly the Barrett store). Perhaps during Bixby's service, the post office was located in the Town Hall.

Nathan Hall became postmaster in 1871, and shortly thereafter passed away. After his death in 1871, his wife Elizabeth Smith Hall became postmistress, a position she held for twenty-eight years. It was unusual at the time for a woman to be postmaster. Elizabeth was assisted by her daughters Jennie and Fannie. After her mother's death in 1898, Fannie (1859-1944) became postmistress. (Her occupation in the 1880 census is listed as "hunting moths.") She never married, and remained postmistress until 1940. She also ran a gift shop in the building. The seventy years of service by one family may be a national record. After Fannie's retirement, her assistant Amy M. Davis became post master. She served until 1955.

In 1857, ownership of the post office building was conveyed by Fabius Bancroft to his son James, of Bellows Falls. James later moved to Buffalo, and sold the building in 1884 to Fannie Hall for one dollar. It is unknown when Thomas Davis sold the land under the post office, but John L. Butterfield acquired it at some point, probably when he purchased the Davis house in 1883. It is reported that Butterfield eventually gave the land under the post office to Fannie Hall as a birthday gift. About 1892, the Halls acquired the Davis house from the Butterfield estate.

The hurricane of 1938 was very destructive. Thirteen bridges and most of the roads in Grafton were washed away, and the post office, as well as the former adjacent schoolhouse, was swept off its foundation. It is reported that the post office has brick walls behind the clapboards, however, photographs of the dislodged building shows the building was, as a whole, moved completely off the foundation, which could not have occurred if there were brick walls. It is also unlikely that a brick building would be covered with clapboard siding. After the hurricane, the

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Section 8 Page 5

**Grafton Post Office
Grafton, Windham County, Vermont**

building was moved back onto a new fieldstone foundation that was constructed slightly west of the original location. While the building was being repaired, the post office was located in Milldean, which is two houses to the west of the post office building.

In 1945, the post office was sold by Fannie Hall's estate to Humphrey B. Neill. This year, the size of the property was reduced from an unknown size to its current size, with boundary lines five feet from each side of the building. In 1958, one hundred years after the construction of the building, the post office was moved to its present location at the Town Hall.

In 1962, Humphrey and Evelyn T. Neill sold the property to the newly formed Grafton Historical Society. The first President of the society was Samuel B. Pettengill. He and his wife Helen spearheaded the formation of the historical society, and by 1963 had attracted 175 members. Artifacts were temporarily exhibited across the street in a room in the library, and the museum in the former post office opened in 1963. The collection accumulated over the years until the historical society outgrew the building. In 1978, the museum moved to the Stowell/Mead House just up Main Street, which is owned by the Windham Foundation. Today, the historical society maintains this museum, which has a large artifact collection, rotating exhibits, and educational programs. The post office building remains under the ownership of the historical society, and is leased to a real estate office.

The post office is an intact and rare example of a rural Vermont one-room post office, as most historic post offices around the state also share a building with a general store, town hall, or courthouse. Although the building is diminutive and simple, its vernacular appearance depicts its use as a small post office in a rural village and the time period in which it was constructed. It is a good example of a vernacular Greek Revival building, with a front-gable orientation, sidehall-plan front entry location, six-over-six windows, and interior window and door casings with peaked lintels. Because the building is owned by the Grafton Historical Society, its future preservation is ensured.

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 9 Page 1

**Grafton Post Office
Grafton, Windham County, Vermont**

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 9 Page 2

**Grafton Post Office
Grafton, Windham County, Vermont**

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Interviews

Eli Prouty, Grafton Historical Society, March 16, 2005

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 10 Page 1

**Grafton Post Office
Grafton, Windham County, Vermont**

Boundary Description

The rectangular boundary of the Grafton Post Office property follows the perimeter property lines of Grafton Tax Parcel 008075. This parcel is identified on the "Village" map of the Grafton Tax Parcel maps.

Boundary Justification

The boundary is the historic and current legal property boundary of the Grafton Post Office. This boundary is sufficient to convey the historic significance of the post office.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section Photograph Labels

**Grafton Post Office
Grafton, Windham County, Vermont**

The following information is the same for all photographs:

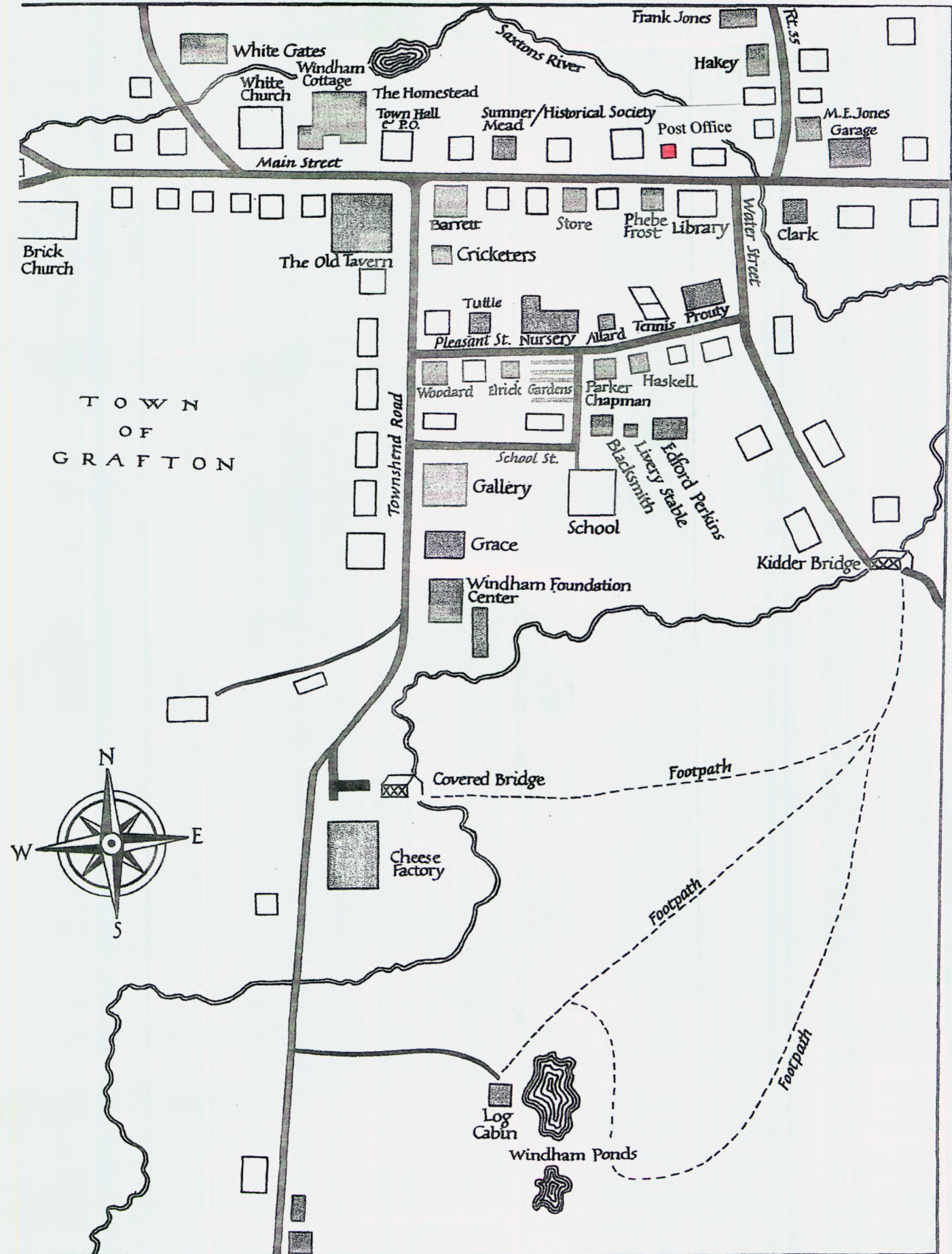
Grafton Post Office
Grafton, Windham County, Vermont
Photos by Paula Sagerman
October 2004
Electronic images on CD filed at Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

Photograph #1
Facing west on Main Street; post office is 2nd building from right

Photograph #2
Facing northwest toward post office

Photograph #3
Facing southeast towards post office

Photograph #4
Facing southwest in post office



Map by the Windham Foundation



Grafton Post Office and
District No. 2 Schoolhouse
Photo dates to sometime
between 1923 and 1938



Grafton Post Office and
District No. 2 Schoolhouse
After 1938 hurricane



Grafton Post Office, c. 1930s