

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.

1. Name of PropertyHistoric name: Northfield Graded SchoolOther names/site number: Gray BuildingName of related multiple property listing: Educational Resources of Vermont

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

2. LocationStreet & number: 168 North Main StreetCity or town: Northfield State: VT County: WashingtonNot For Publication: ☐Vicinity: ☐**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 at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A B X C D_____
Signature of certifying official/Title:_____
Date_____
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ___ entered in the National Register
___ determined eligible for the National Register
___ determined not eligible for the National Register
___ removed from the National Register
___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:

☒

Public – Local

☐

Public – State

☐

Public – Federal

☐

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Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
District	<input type="checkbox"/>
Site	<input type="checkbox"/>
Structure	<input type="checkbox"/>
Object	<input type="checkbox"/>

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register None (0)

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION: Primary and Secondary School

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION: preschool

COMMERCE/TRADE: business, professional

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Foundation: STONE (granite, slate), BRICK;
Walls: WOOD (weatherboard, quoining); Roof: STONE (slate), METAL (corrugated metal);
Other: BRICK (chimneys); WOOD (cupola/belltower).

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Northfield Graded School (known today as the Gray Building) is a wood-frame Italianate-style school building sited on an expansive promontory above the Dog River in the Village of Northfield, Washington County, Vermont. The spare, two-story building overlooks Northfield's central core, Depot Square, and features a rhythmic understated design that is characterized by a symmetrical fenestration pattern and subtle Italianate allusions including pedimented window treatments, quoining, eave bracketing, and a dominant anchoring cupola. The Northfield Graded School served as a public school for Northfield from its 1876 construction to 1994, when the school site was closed as part of wider school consolidation efforts. The building continues to host a private preschool as well as a variety of local business and community entities, with the original classroom spatial delineations largely maintained in its current function. The Northfield Graded School rests on a stone foundation with brick piers that is composed of both granite from the 1876 construction and an underlying layer of slate from an earlier school building at the site that burned in 1876 (Northfield Academy/Institute). Walls are clad in narrow reveal clapboard, with prominent wood quoining framing the corners of the building. The gable roof is sheathed in slate on the front-facing portion of the gable roofline and corrugated metal on the back-facing roofline, with narrow eaves underlain by coved wood brackets.¹ A lofty wood cupola-belltower rises from the center of the roofline, featuring inset louvered arch panels and bracketed gables

¹ According to Gray Building Coalition Member Kerri Hoffman it is unknown whether slate underlies the metal roof on the back side of the roofline. Personal correspondence with Ms. Hoffman, 1/30/2024.

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supported by pilasters on each face. The interior of the Northfield Graded School is highly reflective of the property's educational design, with broad central halls at the first and second levels flanked by large classrooms, four on each level. The classrooms feature expansive window exposure and natural light, and retain key characteristics including blackboards, entry vestibules/coatrooms, and original materials and spatial arrangements. With its strong Italianate design and expansive hilltop siting, the Northfield Graded School serves as a prominent visual and contextual element of Northfield's historic village form, remaining as a longstanding representative of the community's social and architectural development. The Northfield Graded School is representative of the "Multiple Classroom School" type as defined in the "Educational Resources of Vermont" Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF). While the property is no longer in use as a public school, the physical integrity and educational associations of the building remain strong and readily discerned, with the property's integrity of materials, design, workmanship, location, setting, feeling, and association all intact. Material changes to the exterior and interior of the property have been minimal, with only modest reconfiguration of original interior arrangements and materials and no notable alterations to the exterior of the property. A 1927 heating plant and garage that holds a modest infrastructural association with the Northfield Graded School also stands on the site. This property has been documented in this recordation as non-contributing because of both a lack of direct significance and physical integrity, as discussed in the Narrative Description.

Narrative Description

Contributing Resource: Northfield Graded School / Gray Building

Exterior Description

The Northfield Graded School is located on a 2.3-acre lot on a promontory fronting Northfield's North Main Street (Vermont Route 12). The building is set back from the thoroughfare on the top of a knoll above the Dog River, with the primary (west) façade overlooking the roadway and surrounding village. Behind the building, to the east, the promontory drops away to the Dog River, with an undeveloped forested slope descending behind the building to the river. The North Main Street frontage of the parcel is delineated by a retaining wall of granite blocks, added in the mid-twentieth century, and characterized by a broad area of grass-covered sloping open space surrounding the building on its west, south, and north sides. An access drive with paved circular pull-through parking area extends from North Main Street at the north edge of the parcel.²

The building is rectangular in plan, with a wood-frame main body constructed in 1876. A small single-story brick addition extends from the rear (east) side of the building, placed in 1927 and

² The granite block retaining wall was not developed in association with the Gray Building, and is a non-contributing landscape features, although compatible in form. Historically the parcel terminated at the street edge with a boundary of grass and an informal dirt path (see historic images in Additional Documentation). Review of historic records indicates that the retaining wall was added circa 1957 when the adjacent Vermont Route 12 (North Main Street) was widened. See: "Warning: Annual Town and Town School District Meeting," *News and Advertiser*, February 28, 1957.

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serving utility purposes for the building (no longer in use). The building stands on a granite and brick pier foundation, with an unfinished basement with gravel floor. Areas of slate are integrated into the foundation, remnant elements of the Northfield Academy, constructed at the site in 1851 and burned in 1876, precipitating the present building's construction. The building is of a wood-frame balloon structure, sheathed in narrow-reveal wood clapboard with prominent wood quoining at all corners. Fenestration is spare, with a rhythmic arrangement of windows on all sides featuring original six-over-six wood sashes and a pedimented framing treatment at the first level. A centered main entry lines the west, street-fronting side, featuring an enclosed portico with a bracketed pediment design supported by pilasters and expansive side and transom lights above a pair of paneled wood doors. The building has a steeply pitched gable roof sheathed in slate on the front-facing portion of the gable roofline and corrugated metal on the rear-facing, with a bracketed cornice line and brick chimneys punctuating the north and south ends of the building. A prominent, over-scaled cupola rises from the apex of the roofline, with four gabled faces defined by pairs of louvered panels framed by pilasters supporting bracketed gables. A single lightning rod rises from the cupola. A bell once hung in the cupola, since removed.

West Elevation

The west elevation is the Northfield Graded School's primary façade. A concrete walkway accesses a central entry, defined by an enclosed portico featuring a bracketed pediment supported by pilasters and generous multilight wood-frame side and transom lights. A corrugated metal roof sheathes the portico. A pair of four-panel wood doors accesses the building through the portico. The ground level surrounding the front entrance of the building was regraded in the early 2000s to bring the ground level to the portico entrance to allow for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance. At this time original stairs to the main entrance were removed (see historic images in Additional Documentation for original entrance configuration).

Rhythmically arranged windows line the façade, with six windows at the first level, and seven running along the second level. All the windows feature original six-over-six sashes, overlain by metal storm windows, and wood-framed lintels with subtle corbelled sills. The first level windows are accentuated with a subtle pedimented lintel detail, the second level windows have flat wood lintels, with the exception of the centered window at the second level rising above the portico, which is of a heightened Palladian design with sidelights and a pediment detail. Wood quoining frames the corners of the building, rising to a roofline that is defined by coved bracketing. While isolated areas of clapboard have been replaced to address material decay, on the whole, the clapboards largely remain original to construction. A small modern playground area extends from the southwest corner of the building, developed by the current occupant: Rainbow Gardens. The aspect of the west elevation of the Northfield Graded School is lofty and oriented to Northfield's Depot Square, the central commercial and economic axis of Northfield from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. Within this framing context, the Northfield Graded School is a prominent focal point, with views of the building from numerous locales around central Northfield (see historic photographs in Additional Documentation).

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South Elevation

The south elevation mirrors the characteristics of the primary façade. The elevation is characterized by an orderly arrangement of four windows at the first level, four at the second level, and two in the attic gable. All windows are of the characteristic six-over-six configuration with storm windows, with the four at the first level also characterized by the heightened pediment detail at the lintel. Wood quoining rises at each corner, and the coved bracketing frames the roofline, with corner returns at the gable ends. A brick chimney rises above the gable roofline at the south end of the building.

East Elevation

The east elevation of the Northfield Graded School is secondary in nature, facing the steep, forested slope that descends to the Dog River below. This elevation is characterized by an orderly arrangement of windows, five at the first level and eight at the second level. While the windows are of the characteristic multi-light sash design, they do not reflect any of the heightened Italianate detailing of the primary facades, with simple wood framing without any pediment or lintel detailing, reflecting the secondary nature of the elevation. Two secondary entries line the first level of this side, both of which are protected by utilitarian gable roof extensions supported by wood posts. The quoining and coved brackets found on the other elevations is absent on this rear side, with no heightened detailing at the building's corners and roofline. As previously discussed, the roof is sheathed in corrugated metal on the gable roofline, in contrast to the slate that sheathes the front-facing roofline.

A flat-roofed single-story brick addition extends from this elevation, with a stepped two-part form that runs perpendicular to the main body of the building. Research indicates that this addition was placed in 1927 concurrent with the development of a central heating plant and sanitation plant for the Northfield Graded School and Northfield High School, the high school since demolished (circa 1975). The addition is simple in form, with a concrete foundation, brick walls with a subtle stepped brick cornice line, and boarded over windows featuring concrete lug sills and soldier course brick lintels. The addition is no longer in use, with heating systems located in the basement of the main building and the status of any extant vestige sanitation or plumbing systems unknown. The interior of this addition was not accessed as part of this documentation.

North Elevation

The north elevation mirrors that of the south, with four windows at the first level featuring the pedimented lintel detailing, four at the second with a flat molded lintel. Quoining and heavy bracketing frame the building, and a brick chimney anchors the apex of the gable roof.

Interior Description

The interior arrangement of the Northfield Graded School is centered upon the building's core educational functions. Like the exterior, the interior spaces are defined by a standardized and orderly form, with central corridors at the first and second levels flanked by classrooms, four at the first level and four at the second, numbered Classrooms 1-8. Each classroom is organized into two parts, with entry vestibules designed to house coat rooms opening into large, open plan

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classroom spaces. The classrooms are generally standard in scale and plan and are characterized by expansive natural light, high ceilings, and standardized use of materials and finishes including wood floors, wainscoting, and window framing; plaster walls; and predominately wood tongue and groove ceilings with some plaster ceilings and sheetrock. Important original features remain in place, most notably original slate blackboards encircling classroom walls, as well as a distinctive retractable wood panel separating Classrooms 5 and 6, on the southerly side of the second level, designed to be raised and lowered through an attic pulley system to allow for assembly hall functions.

While the building is currently used by a number of distinct tenants with varying operational mandates, few changes have been made to the key spatial arrangements of the building or to the original materials and finishes. Most notable alterations over time include alterations to the original stairway configuration, with the primary front stairway enclosed and the rear secondary stairway removed in the 1980s, and both stairways rebuilt in generally the historic configuration in the early 2000s, albeit with new compatible materials. In addition, many original doorways have been infilled with sheetrock and modern solid core wood doors, with the original arched framing surround remaining in place. Other alterations are modest and isolated, with some areas of modern LED suspended lighting in classrooms, paint in varying color schemes in classrooms, and other miscellaneous changes in fixtures and infrastructural systems.

First Level

The primary entrance to the building is through the enclosed portico on the Northfield Graded School's west side, with two doors accessing a small window-lined vestibule and opening to a pair of four-light, half-light doors overlain by a ribbon transom light that access the main volume of the building. From this entry, a central corridor runs through the heart of the building, with Classrooms 1 and 2 on the south side of the corridor, and 3 and 4 on the north side. The primary stairway leads from this central corridor to the second level, with an additional stairway at the rear of the building. Floors in the corridor are wood, with wood wainscoting, plaster walls with some areas of sheetrock, and high ceilings of tongue and groove wood with suspended period globe light fixtures (not original). The classroom doors lining the corridor are of a distinctive over-scaled arched configuration, with rounded arches and stepped molding, with each classroom number painted at the apex of the arch as well as areas of faux bois woodgraining (painted numbers and woodgraining reapplied in modern period to reflect historic period treatment). While uniformly intact, all of these distinctive doorframes have been infilled to some degree with modern doors and sheetrock surrounds. The rear of the corridor leads through a pair of modern doors and a sheetrock firewall to a lift that was placed in the building in the early 2000s, altering the once open corridor to a small degree.

Classrooms 1-4 on the first level share common character defining characteristics. As designed, each is organized with small vestibule spaces leading to an open main volume, with two doors accessing each classroom through these small pass-through areas, historically used as coatrooms. Historically, the vestibules were characterized by wood floors, horizontal wood board half walls, and plaster upper walls and ceilings, with hooks running along walls for student belongings and various storage fixtures. This configuration remains largely intact, although in some areas floors have been overlain with vinyl covering and limited areas of sheetrock walls have altered original

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dimensions. The open volume of the classrooms feature high wood ceilings, wood floors, wood wainscoting, and encircling slate chalk boards. Isolated single slender structural steel columns provide additional support at the center of the rooms.

Second Level

The second level of the Northfield Graded School is accessed from the front and rear stairs leading up from the first level's central corridor and is of much the same configuration as the first level, with an orderly arrangement of four classrooms, Classrooms 5 and 6 on the south and 7 and 8 on the north. Both stairways feature wood treads and risers, wainscoting, and simple square wood balusters and boxed newels posts, all of which are compatible replacements to original stairway features that were altered and removed over time under the school's tenure in the late twentieth century. The open, central corridor of the second level is much the same as the first, with wood floors, areas of wainscoting and wood board half walls, and high ceilings with plaster walls and ceiling finishes and suspended globe lighting. Like the first floor, a fire wall separates the front and rear sections of the corridor, with a pair of modern solid core wood doors connecting the sections. A small teacher's lounge fills the front of the upper corridor, with original board walls and chalkboards lining this area of the corridor.

Classrooms at the second level are like those of the first level in composition and form, with vestibules accessing the main body and material treatment comparable to that of the first level. One noteworthy and significant exception to this is in Classrooms 5 and 6, which are adjoined by a novel partition wall that can be lifted to adjoin the two classrooms into an assembly space. The three-part partition wall is characterized by three wood panels separated by square wood columns that lift from an attic pulley system, with retraction opening the room into a single volume. The panels are encased in a wood frame surround that features square columns with banded capitals and a molded wood lintel with smooth, unadorned frieze. While operation of the system was not observed, the pulley system remains intact and operable, with operating components evident in the attic (discussed below). Like the first floor, character defining slate chalkboards also remain in place in the second level classrooms.

Attic

The attic is unfinished and accessed from a narrow stairwell leading from the second level corridor. The stairwell features original wood risers and treads and plaster walls that bear names from various periods in the school's operating history (1928, 1939, 1987). The attic is accessed by a lift-up hatch door. The space is unfinished, with wood floors and exposed framing members. In addition, the building's sprinkler system runs through the area, with piping throughout. As discussed in the previous section, the pulley system for the partition wall in Classrooms 5 and 6 is evident, with boxed counterweights suspended on a framing system. While this system is original, some elements have been reinforced and encased in new wood boxing over time. Light is provided by two windows at both the south and north ends, providing a lofty vantage to the town of Northfield below. Brick chimneys line the north and south walls, with isolated areas of modern ductwork also observed. Insulation materials were blown in under the attic floor in the early 2000s and some areas of rigid insulation board line areas of the attic.

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Basement

The basement is unfinished and accessed from a short stairway at the first level. The floor is gravel and the original stone foundation has been sheathed in spray-foam. Brick piers intersperse the open volume of the basement. The head height is low, with exposed floor framing, ductwork, and plumbing. A new boiler system is located in the basement level, enclosed in a small modern utility room on a concrete slab encased in modern sheetrock wallboard. All water and sewer lines to and from the building were replaced in the early 2000s as part of building rehabilitation following the cessation of school use.

Integrity

The physical integrity of the Northfield Graded School remains very high, and the building readily conveys its central community identity as a nineteenth century graded school. The lofty setting and location of the building are key elements of the integrity, with the elevated location in the heart of Northfield indicative of the building's contextual identity as a key facet of Northfield's historical development and community growth. The Italianate design of the building, with a spare and elegant form characterized by subtle architectural allusions is entirely intact, with design features of the exterior and interior reflecting a strong and cohesive stylistic identity. Materials are largely original to construction or compatible replacement materials that were selected in-kind to address material lifespan and deterioration. Workmanship is readily discerned through the building's physical form, with the design and materials reflecting a strong sense of craft and architectural skill. Through this overall material and design integrity, the building's feeling and association retains key associations to the period of significance, and the building retains ample physical and contextual integrity to convey its significance under the criteria of the National Register.

Non-Contributing Resource: Central Heating Plant / Garage

A garage and central heating plant stand north of the Northfield Graded School, standing at the edge of the lot as it descends to the east toward the Dog River. The building is highly deteriorated and was placed in 1927 by the Northfield School District as a garage, central heating plant, and coal storage shed for both the Northfield Graded School and the adjacent Northfield High School, which was constructed on the site in 1905 and has since been demolished. The building is built into the hill, with a two-part form standing on a raised concrete foundation that includes a wood clapboard two-bay garage and a flat-roofed brick section. The two-bay garage is highly deteriorated and exposed to the elements, with the roof and walls partially collapsed and all windows open to the elements. The brick section of the building is in a sounder material condition, with all windows and doors boarded over. The brick composition is similar to that of the brick addition extending from the east wall of the Northfield Graded School, with the two structures built concurrently in 1927, with brick walls, concrete lug sills, soldier course brick lintels, and a subtle stepped brick cornice line. Because of its very unsound material condition, the interior of the building was not accessed as part of this documentation.

The building is documented as non-contributing to the historic property because of its highly deteriorated material condition and its lack of direct contextual association to the Northfield

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Graded School, with the former heating plant not a significant reflection of the historic and physical development of the Northfield Graded School as a Northfield educational resource and severed from its original functional associations to the Gray Building and demolished high school building.

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.)

- ☒ 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.
- ☒ 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.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery

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☐

E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure

☐

F. A commemorative property

☐

G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1876-1974

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Loveland, Josiah Samuel (Builder, Carpenter) (main Northfield Graded School)³

Rice, Joseph C. (Architect and Contractor) (main Northfield Graded School)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Northfield Graded School, (known today as the Gray Building), is a locally significant architectural and contextual representative of Vermont's educational development in the

³ "Josiah Samuel Loveland," *Northfield News*, January 12, 1915.

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nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Constructed in 1876 on the site of the former Northfield Institution (Northfield Academy), burned in a fire earlier that year, the Northfield Graded School served as a vital center for public education in Northfield from its construction through its closure as a public school in 1994. As a significant representative of Vermont's advances in public education in the mid-to-late nineteenth century and an evocative representative of public educational evolution over a century of development, the Northfield Graded School is significant under National Register of Historic Places Criterion A at the local level for its strong educational and community associations as a public community school building. With its striking Italianate form and prominent lofted vantage in the heart of Northfield, the Northfield Graded School is significant under National Register of Historic Places Criterion C at the local level of significance as a cogent architectural and programmatic reflection of educational design in the nineteenth century. The building retains exceedingly strong design integrity, with a similarly robust integrity of plan and functional design, allowing the property to convey important educational attributes from the period of significance. The period of significance for the property spans from the 1876 construction of the building to the close of the historic period in 1974, during a period of consolidation that ultimately led to the decommissioning of the building as a public school in 1994. The property is nominated for the NRHP in association with the contextual framework developed in the Educational Resources of Vermont MPDF (1993) and meets the Registration Requirements delineated by this previous documentation.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The old Academy building at Northfield, which was burned to the ground last winter, forcibly expelling teachers and scholars from school, has been replaced by a substantial, well-planned and well-built structure, exceeding the old in size, and far excelling it in adaptation to the wants of our people. It is built on the old site and is 60 by 90 feet, and two stories high, surmounted by a bell-tower. It is built of wood, with granite foundation and slate roof. Inside there are four main recitation rooms on lower level, opening off from the main hall; above there are three main recitation rooms, the two rooms on the south side being connected by sliding doors so as to form one room when desired...The building in all parts is admirably fitted for its purpose, and is really one of the finest in the state...

On Friday last, the building was appropriately dedicated to its work. "Early candle light," saw every room illuminated and the people began to come in soon after...Introductory remarks were made by Chairman Dr. P.D. Bradford...In a retrospective view he touched upon the origin and the progress of the public school system...That the public school system, enlarged and improved, has been the essential prominent New England idea. The Dr. spoke of Washington County as having large educational privileges—Montpelier with her excellent Union School and her popular Seminary; Barre with its Goddard Seminary and Dr. Spaulding's Academy, both schools of good repute; Waterbury, with its Baptist Seminary, and Northfield, with its Norwich University, an institution to which

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Vermont owes a debt of gratitude it ought to acknowledge, and our graded school, while though yet comparatively in its infancy, is one of which we are proud, as we have a right to be. The burning of the old academy we regarded as a great and almost irreparable loss. We now see it was not an unmixed evil, for that building had outlived its usefulness, had grown too small for our wants and could not be repaired without destroying its symmetry, and we now see beauty arise from ashes and grandeur out of ruins—a permanent edifice which we hope may stand for years to bless our community and honor those concerned in its erection.

Vermont Watchman and State Journal, December 20, 1876

Origins of Public Education in Northfield

Like other towns and villages across the state of Vermont, in the first decades of the nineteenth century Northfield's students were served by a patchwork of highly localized school districts, largely consisting of one-room schoolhouses serving a range of primary students in rudimentary conditions. This district school system, established by the Vermont Constitution in 1777, remained the foundation of Northfield's educational framework through the 1840s, with formal academic instruction limited to the primary levels through eighth grade and generally dispersed in nature. By the mid-nineteenth century, Northfield held a reported 21 primary school districts, serving an estimated 1,240 students at an annual compiled district cost of \$899.78.⁴

The 1840s establishment of Northfield as the operational and economic center of the Vermont Central Railroad undergirded the establishment of the community's first secondary educational institution: The Northfield Academy, chartered in 1846 and constructed in 1851. Both the railroad and the academy were inextricably linked to the tireless promotional efforts of Vermont's 15th Governor and Northfield resident, Charles Paine, a merchant and mill owner who provided much of the driving force behind the railroad's siting through Northfield. As envisioned by Paine, with a railroad-based economy, Northfield would emerge as a dominant economic and commercial force in the state, rivaling established centers including nearby Montpelier and Burlington. As Vermont Central's depot and shop buildings arose in the late 1840s, Paine's boosterism appeared prescient, with the population of Northfield rising from just over 2,000 in 1840 to nearly 4,500 in 1860.⁵

Accompanying Paine's emphasis on Northfield's economic and commercial development, by the 1840s Paine and a cadre of Northfield boosters had spearheaded an effort to develop a private academy in Northfield, with rigorous secondary instruction in mathematics, language, music, and drawing that would befit the steadily rising stature and scale of the community. The Northfield

⁴ Northfield Town History Committee, *Green Mountain Heritage: The Chronicle of Northfield, Vermont* (Canann, NH: Phoenix Publishing, 1974), 181-182.

⁵ Abby Maria Hemenway, *The History of Washington County in the Vermont Historical Gazetteer*, (Montpelier, VT: Vermont Watchman and State Journal Press, 1882), 660; Vermont History Explorer, Washington County Town Census Records, Northfield. Accessed online on December 17, 2023 at [washingtoncountycensus.pdf \(vermonthistoryexplorer.org\)](https://washingtoncountycensus.pdf(vermonthistoryexplorer.org)); "Northfield Town History," unpublished manuscript of the Northfield Historical Society, accessed online on December 17, 2023 at [Northfield Historical Society - Northfield Town History \(nhsvt.org\)](https://northfieldhistoricalsociety-northfieldtownhistory(nhsvt.org)).

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Academy was chartered by the Vermont Legislature in 1846, with the school completed in 1851, located on a prominent knoll overlooking Northfield's Depot Square. The school site was on lands donated by Paine in support of the effort, and largely funded by a donation of \$500 from Paine to the Academy Trustees. As reported in the *Vermont Christian Messenger*:

Wednesday September 10, 1851 will ever be hailed as an auspicious day to the interests of sound and popular education in this rapidly increasing town. The splendid building erected during the past summer by those industrious, faithful, and enterprising architects, Messrs. Jones and Dunham, was dedicated to the cause of education on that memorable day. It is a noble structure, every way worthy of the grand object to which it is devoted, and of which, not only the town and county may be justly proud, but even the whole State of Vermont... This Literary Institution—the result of so much care, effort, and liberality—a generation of scholars thoroughly educated, physically, intellectually, and morally... The school commenced the business of the present, its first term, with one hundred and fifteen pupils. This augers well for its future prosperity.⁶

The establishment of Northfield Academy was part of a wave of private secondary school development that transformed Vermont's educational landscape from the 1840s to the 1860s, with the era termed "The Golden Age of the Academy in Vermont." Between 1840 and 1860, 44 Academies were chartered across the state, reflecting both an increasing emphasis and interest in education and technical knowledge and a surge in the state's economic and demographic growth as industrial development and railroad connectivity linked communities across the state. As opined by the *Vermont Christian Messenger* in 1852, "These Institutions—Academies—are rapidly multiplying, perhaps too rapidly, it may be thought by some; and yet, it will be found on examination, that but a very small portion of the great mass of youth, growing up in our midst, and who are to be the men and women of the next generation, are personal participants in the literary benefits they are designed and adapted to confer."⁷

By 1852, a year after opening, the number of pupils at Northfield Academy had risen to 197, with the number remaining relatively steady through the 1850s. By 1860, however, under a new name of the Northfield Institution (changed 1854), the school's fortunes began to decline, reaching a low of 38 pupils by 1870. The ebb was a reflection of Northfield's demotion from hub for the Vermont Central Railroad—with the line's headquarters wrested to Saint Albans; as well as a saturated market for the state's academies, with an abundance of schools and an increasing dearth of students undercutting the growth of the academy's "Golden Age."⁸

Even as the Academy movement reached a saturation point, public interest in secondary education reached new levels of administrative maturity in the 1860s and 1870s, with state-sponsored legislation relating to educational taxation and compulsory attendance as well as an increasing emphasis on educational quality standards creating an expanded face for public

⁶ "Northfield Academy," *Vermont Christian Messenger*, September 17, 1851.

⁷ Edward Deming Andrews, "The County Grammar Schools and Academies of Vermont," *Proceedings of the Vermont Historical Society*, Volume 4, No. 3, 1936, 117-211; "Our Academies and High Schools, *Vermont Christian Messenger*, August 4, 1852.

⁸ "Our Academies," *Green-Mountain Freeman*, November 25, 1852.

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education across the state. Within this context, the Northfield Institution was assumed by Northfield's public school district in 1870, with, "The Village School District making a permanent arrangement with the Trustees of the Institution to take the building, repair it, and occupy it as a Graded and High School Building, free for all pupils of the Village." As reported in the *Argus and Patriot*, "It is the intention of all connected with this institution to make it worthy of patronage." The school's first term opened August 29, 1870, with 331 pupils spanning primary and secondary levels (first grade through high school). The newly formed Northfield Graded School continued to occupy the building until January 14, 1876, when the building burned in a fire of unknown origin. As opined in the *Vermont Chronicle* several week later:

The notice of the burning of the graded school building, in Northfield, would have little interest for some until they were told it was none other than the old Academy, where 15, 20, and 25 years ago they learned dead language, puzzled over "unknown quantities," and plumed themselves with ornamentals. There too, they "dreamed dreams and saw visions," vowed eternal friendships, and quarreled before the term closed...Binding the heart to the dear old Academy and the friends thereof.⁹

A Well-Planned and Well-Built Structure: Construction of the Northfield Graded School

As reported in the *Vermont Farmer* on January 21, 1876, the Northfield Graded School, "lost but one day in consequence of the burning of the school house, the different grades having been located in Good Templar, Grand Army, Militia, and Village Halls." By spring, the school district had commissioned construction of a new building, located on the same lofty site, with local contractor Joseph C. Rice selected to lead development. Born in Sheldon in 1832, Rice had moved to Northfield in 1850, working as a brakeman for the Vermont Central Railroad. Following injuries from an accident coupling cars, Rice turned to construction, becoming locally known for his earthwork at Norwich University, which included laying the foundations for the first Jackman Hall (1868) and Dewey Hall (1902); clearing and leveling the Norwich Parade Grounds (circa 1868); as well as numerous residential commissions and other community buildings including the foundation for the Northfield Catholic Church (1877). The Northfield Graded School commission ultimately became Rice's preeminent community achievement, with the public-school building remaining to the present as one of Northfield's most—if not the most—prominent community buildings.¹⁰

The Italianate design of the two-story wood-frame building was reminiscent of the burned Northfield Academy/Institution, with a gable roof form surmounted by a prominent bell-tower and key stylistic allusions including brackets, quoining, and pediment detailing. The building departed from its predecessor in key areas; however, most notably in size, standing

⁹ John Gregory, *Centennial Proceedings and Historical Incidents of the Early Settler of Northfield, Vermont* (Montpelier, VT: Argus and Patriot Book and Job Printing House, 1878), 273; "Northfield Graded School," *Argus and Patriot*, August 11, 1870; "Northfield Academy," *Vermont Chronicle*, February 5, 1876; "Local and State," *Argus and Patriot*, August 4, 1870.

¹⁰ "Joseph C. Rice Dies Just Three Months After 100th Birthday," *News and Advertiser*, May 10, 1932; "Joseph C. Rice," Unpublished manuscript on file at the Northfield Historical Society.

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approximately 1/3 larger, and in its orderly and commodious integration of windows, with an expansive and uniform grid of large window openings dominating the building's design and lighting the building's regular arrangement of classrooms, four on each level. This emphasis on order, light, and physical economy was in keeping with educational precepts of the prevailing Common School Movement, which annunciated clear arrangement of spaces and ample light and air. As detailed in the *Vermont Watchman and State Journal* upon the school's opening:

*The school is a substantial, well-planned and well-built structure, exceeding the old in size, and far excelling it in adaptation to the wants of our people. The burning of the old academy we regarded as a great and almost irreparable loss. We now see it was not an unmixed evil, for that building had outlived its usefulness, had grown too small for our wants and could not be repaired without destroying its symmetry, and we now see beauty arise from ashes and grandeur out of ruins—a permanent edifice which we hope may stand for years to bless our community and honor those concerned in its erection.*¹¹

With completion of the Northfield Graded School, Northfield's primary and secondary students occupied the consolidated site, reflecting a strong advancement in the public school framework for the community. Local periodicals record the educational experience of Northfield's students through the closing decades of the nineteenth century, as detailed in the *Green-Mountain Freeman* of 1878:

*The Spring Term of 11 weeks closed Wednesday, May 29th. An exhibition of the Lower Grades, Rooms No. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, was held in Concert Hall Tuesday afternoon, which was attended by a large number of the inhabitants and friends of the school. The exhibition was under the direction of the principal and was the finest exhibition of the Common School that we have ever had.*¹²

In an allusion to the timelessness of middle school hijinks, a report from the *Vermont Christian Messenger* in 1883 conveys a slightly more oblique tone:

*The principal events this week have been in connection with the closing exercise of the Northfield Graded School. Examinations were had in all departments. Committees of examination were present in each room but they have not yet reported to the Directors and it can only now be said that the results were in a general way very satisfactory. This was especially true of Classroom No. 5, the grammar school department which has usually been more or less a source of anxiety and disturbance, but which under the able hands of Mr. Davis took form and shape eminently satisfactory to patron and pupil.*¹³

¹¹ "School Dedication," *Vermont Watchman and State Journal*," December 20, 1876; "The Duty of Instructors in Relation to School Houses," *The Common School Journal*, Volume 1, No. 19, October 1839, 291-297.

¹² "Northfield Graded School," *Green-Mountain Freeman*, June 5, 1878.

¹³ "Northfield Graded School," *Vermont Christian Messenger*, June 7, 1883.

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By the late 1880s and into the 1890s, advertisements for the Northfield Graded School appear regularly in central Vermont newspapers, relaying both the public offerings and the tuition-based program for regional students. As detailed in the *Northfield News* in 1888, “This institution furnishes an unusual opportunity for an excellent education for both sexes...It is pleasantly and healthfully located;” and in the 1901 *Northfield News*, “This institution affords an unexcelled opportunity for an excellent education for both sexes. Its courses of study embrace the most approved in classical and scientific and prepares students for College...The location of the school building is particularly desirable, while the building itself is commodious, and furnished with the most approved system of ventilation and steam heat.”¹⁴

By the late 1890s, period reporting intimated at increasingly crowded conditions in the school. “The Northfield Graded School opened on Monday with a largely increased attendance in the upper departments,” recounted the *Vermont Watchman and State Journal* in September 1897. In 1900, the *Northfield News* noted, “The report of the directors shows that the school year has been one of marked prosperity and the attendance larger than usual, the total enrollment of the High School is 118, the largest in its history.” By 1904, *Northfield News* relayed, “The District recommends the erection of a two or four room building for grade work. It is probably a fact, however, that many of the voters feel a new modern high school will be the best and most economical move in the long run.” By June of that year, the District voted “to build a modern high school building at a cost not to exceed \$16,800.” The building was constructed in 1905, designed by architects Smith & Walker of Montpelier and contracted by Nichols & Parker of Essex Junction. Like the Northfield Graded School, the foundation was excavated and laid by Joseph C. Rice. As part of the construction project, \$1,357.52 was “expended on the old Graded School Building,” adding an “annex” on the rear elevation, presumably as part of heating and sanitation infrastructure upgrades. This annex would be altered and rebuilt again in 1927, discussed later in this section and in the narrative description.¹⁵

The substantial brick high school building stood immediately northwest of the Northfield Graded School, with a Neoclassical and Richardsonian Romanesque institutional form featuring a complex roofline and massing, quoining, and arched focal points. In a dedication ceremony held on May 23, 1905, State Superintendent of Education Walter E. Ranger extolled the building, “speaking at some length on the rise of the High School in Vermont, giving statistics showing the growth from the first beginnings of our Pilgrim forefathers to the modern and well equipped secondary schools of the present day.” While touted as a modern advancement for Northfield, the new brick high school was almost immediately plagued with structural problems. As documented in the *Northfield News* in 1907, “Because of faulty work on the part of the architect in his calculations, it was found that the roof on the new Northfield High School building was not properly constructed, the additional weight of the recent slating probably making the trouble more apparent.” While the building would remain in use by the Northfield School District through the 1970s, the specter of structural risk remained a key thorn in district planning through

¹⁴ “Northfield Graded and High School,” *Northfield News*, September 5, 1888; “Northfield High and Graded School,” *Northfield News*, August 13, 1901.

¹⁵ “News,” *Vermont Watchman and State Journal*, September 8, 1897; “News,” *Northfield News*, June 12, 1900; “Northfield Graded School,” *Northfield News*, June 14, 1904; “News,” *Vermont Phoenix*, June 17, 1904; “News,” *Northfield News*, June 13, 1905.

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the century, with the building ultimately demolished in the late 1970s even as the Northfield Graded School remained a dominant fixture on the site.¹⁶

The Northfield Graded School in an Evolving Educational Context

Following construction of a dedicated Northfield High School at the site, the public district continued to grow, with the school census of 1908 documenting 376 pupils, rising to 434 in 1913, and nearly 500 by 1937. Period accounts of school activities in the Northfield Graded School are indicative of an evolving educational context in school, with student pageants, public lectures, and new equipment and facilities reflecting a dynamic social and cultural context in public education. Tracing a sampling of the events through the first decades of the twentieth century illustrates engagement with prevailing Progressive Education Movement ideals around civic engagement, sciences, technology, and interactive play.¹⁷

Exemplifying this, in 1915, subscriptions were raised for funds for a Northfield Graded School Playground:

*The people of the town propose to establish and equip a public playground, of which Northfield has long been in need. It is very essential that the children have some place to gather for recreation ...teeterboards, swings, sand piles, etc., so that children of all ages may amuse themselves. It is planned to take moveable equipment to the grounds of the Northfield School during the school year.*¹⁸

In 1919, local periodicals noted that, “A new Victrola has been purchased for the Northfield Graded School through the efforts of the teachers and pupils. The various clubs and organizations in Northfield have donated sums toward the payment. The victrola is much enjoyed by the pupils.” In 1924, “Professor C.V. Woodbury gave a very interesting talk before the pupils of Grade Five about the earth, sun, stars, and moon that was very interesting.” In 1930, a community pageant received much local press, presented to the community as “America’s Child.” The pageant was a cogent local reflection of prevailing norms in Progressive education that focused upon citizenry and communal identity in American education:

Some 300 Northfield School Children will appear in a pageant America’s Child...The Pageant comprises three episodes. In the first, Father Time calls on the nations of Europe to help bring answer to the prayer of progress for justice loving people. In the second, the Spirit of the Woods responds to progresses

¹⁶ “Formal Opening,” *News and Advertiser*, May 30, 1905; “Northfield to Rehabilitate Brick School Building,” *The Burlington Free Press*, May 17, 1975.

¹⁷ “School Census 1908,” *Northfield News*, April 7, 1908; “School Census 1913,” *Northfield News*, July 8, 1913; “School Report,” *The Barre Daily Times*, September 13, 1937; “John Dewey and the Progressive Education Movement, 1915-1952,” *The School Review*, Volume 67, No. 2, 1959, 160-173.

¹⁸ “Northfield,” *News and Advertiser*, September 28, 1915; “Parcel Post Bazaar,” *News and Advertiser*, March 21, 1916.

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*prayer for America's Child. The third episode depicts the response of the Spirit of the Home to Progress' plea for a nation for America's Child.*¹⁹

Continuing in the theme of civic participation, a series of civics-based lectures were announced in 1929, articulating many of the social-minded activities of Progressive educational theory with its activist emphasis on educating citizens, "sensitive to the movement of things about them."

Through the efforts of Ms. Cora Kennedy, teacher in Grade Eight of the Northfield Graded School and the kindness of many of the citizens of Northfield, the pupils have been favored with some instructive and interesting talks. The work is in connection with the Civics Class and takes place on each Friday Afternoon. Talks include September 5th, Mrs. Inez Grant on "The Primaries"; September 12th, Dr. C.C. Creegan on "Party Platforms and Presidential Candidates"; September 19th, Professor K.R. B Flint on "The Manner in Which State and National Law Affects the Child"; September 26, Principal J.J. Finnessey on "The Duty of the Boy and Girl to the Community"; October 3, Reverend W.C. Arnold, "What Boys and Girls Owe to Themselves"; and October 10, Reverend J. A. Lynch on "The Duty of the Community to the Boy and Girl" ...²⁰

In addition to an evolving social and education context for public primary education, the 1920s saw an emphasis on sanitation and health that introduced further changes to the site including construction of a central heating plant (documented herein as non-contributing) as well as reconstruction of the 1905 "utility annex" constructed on the rear wall of the Gray Building and placement of exterior fire escapes (fire escapes since removed). As detailed in the *Northfield News* in 1927:

The expenditure of \$22,000 for improvements at the Northfield Graded and High School Buildings, that the health of the pupils attending those institutions may be safeguarded, was authorized by the voters...As was pointed out by Professor A. W. Peach of the school board, who outlined the dangerous conditions existing at the local schools, the improvements voted at the meetings are absolutely essential. Not only are the separate heating plants now maintained in the two school buildings inadequate they are likewise a source of danger because of deterioration...Conditions of sanitation and ventilation at the graded school are such that they are bound to impair the health of both pupils and teachers...The new central heating plant will be constructed northeast of the existing high school building...The underground pocket for coal storage will adjoin the heating plant. The new toilet facilities for the graded school will be in the rear of the building as at present [in the annex], but they will be constructed in a basement. In this way

¹⁹ "News," *The Barre Daily Times*, November 19, 1924; "America's Child Pageant to be Given by School," *The Barre Daily Times*, April 17, 1930.

²⁰ "Northfield," *The Barre Daily Times*, January 15, 1929; Lawrence A. Cremin, "John Dewey and the Progressive Education Movement, 1915-1952," *The School Review*, Volume 67, No. 2, 1959, 160-173.

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the end of the corridor running through the school building will no longer be obstructed.²¹

Thus, at the close of the 1920s, the Northfield Graded and High School site was well-established, with the 1876 Graded School and 1905 High School adjoined by a modern shared coal heating plant and upgraded sanitation infrastructure. The school, with approximately 500 pupils, was an integrated public reflection of the community, with lectures, pageants, graduations, and generations of Northfield pupils stitching the building site into an evolving Vermont community.

Surviving the Twentieth Century: Modernization and Consolidation of the Northfield School System

As the Northfield School District continued to evolve through the twentieth century, the Northfield Graded School faced a number of threats, with periodic campaigns for consolidation and modernization characterizing the decades between the 1930s and the 1990s—many of which called for the decommissioning and razing of the nineteenth century school building. This trajectory mirrored other locales across the state, as Vermont's nineteenth and early twentieth century school buildings yielded to waves of new educational construction fueled by increased Federal and State financial incentives and new proscriptions on educational design and instruction. Reviewing periodicals from the 1930s to the 1990s, the very survival of the Gray Building appears somewhat anomalous, with repeated episodes of near erasure through the twentieth century.

As early as the 1930s, the Northfield Graded School District proposed abandoning the Northfield Graded School, with a new Junior and Senior High School proposed off-site and the corresponding removal of elementary students to the brick Northfield High School Building. In an editorial in the *Northfield News and Advertiser* supporting the bond vote, the District summarized the matter, "While this notice may come as something of a shock to some voters, the overcrowded condition of both the high and grade school is a matter of common knowledge. These crowded conditions and the program of the Federal Government offering 45% of the total cost was the determining factor in forcing action." While strongly supported by the District, the proposal was roundly defeated at the Northfield polls, with 60 in favor and 210 opposed to the new construction.²²

While the matter was decisively settled, and likely suppressed by the arrival of the Great Depression, ten years later in 1948 a bond was introduced again to voters, with the future of the Northfield Graded School squarely in its sites:

This University Town should have a new graded school building, twelve rooms in size and costing \$235,000. This decision was reached by local committees which have been studying educational needs here during the past year...The bond issue

²¹ "\$22,000 for Improvements," *Northfield News*, May 17, 1927.

²² "Enlarged High School To Come Before Meeting," *Northfield News*, June 23, 1931; "Special Meeting on New School Building," *News and Advertiser*, August 11, 1938; "Rejected School Project," *The Barre Daily Times*, September 1, 1938.

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*to permit replacement of the town's 74-year old elementary school will be called within six weeks.*²³

While the bond passed 124 to 111, paving the way for the “razing of the existing elementary school and construction of a new at the site,” in an acrimonious twist, by 1949 Northfield voters had rescinded the bond, with a decisive vote overturning the 1948 authorization. The schism between the Town and the School Board was notable, with school board editorials lamenting the impasse:

*It will be no news to the parents of children in the Northfield Graded School, and we hope to other citizens of the Northfield Graded School District, that the existing grade school facilities are inadequate. This has long been the case, but this year the problem has grown to practically unmanageable proportions...The Board was well aware that this situation was developing and proposed, more than a year ago, the construction of a 12-room grade school to take care of the problem. Citizens of the District, however, concluded that the Board's solution was too expensive or ill-considered. In any event, the authorization to the board to go ahead with the project was withdrawn, and the directors now find themselves with no authority to correct a situation which is rapidly becoming more serious...The problem of overcrowded and antiquated housing of the graded school children is the district's problem and will have to be solved by the district.*²⁴

By 1955, the push for removal of the Northfield Graded School had been replaced with development of a new Northfield High School, with construction of a low-slung brick building in northwest Northfield off Cross Street. The building was dedicated in a community celebration to the “enlightenment and culture of the present and future generations,” and was noteworthy in period press as the first high school building to be dedicated since the early 1950s inception of the State Aid to School Construction Program, which authorized the state to pay 25% of the total \$523,000 construction cost. Construction of the high school was part of a wave of state-funded construction through the 1950s and 1960s, ushering in an era of modernization and notable consolidation. The abandonment of the 1905 brick high school building cleared the way for repurposing of the school complex, with the graded school students split between the two buildings at the site.²⁵

By 1970, however, the town of Northfield was again deliberating the future of public education in the town, as pondered in the *Times Argus*:

²³ “Northfield Seeks \$189,000 Bond for Graded School,” *Montpelier Evening Argus*, July 13, 1948.

²⁴ “New Grade School Wins, 124 to 111,” *News and Advertiser*, August 12, 1948; “Board Favors Plan to Construct Part of Proposed School,” *News and Advertiser*, September 22, 1949; “Voters Again Reject Plans for Improved School Facilities Here,” *News and Advertiser*, October 6, 1949.

²⁵ “Northfield Dedicates New High School,” *The Burlington Free Press*, November 7, 1955; “Vast School Building Program Sped,” *Rutland Daily Herald*, September 14, 1955.

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The Town of Northfield operates a collection of elementary school sites and buildings that stretch from Rabbit Hollow School off Route 12A to the southwest all the way to the Riverton School on Route 12 to the north. The stops in between are the buildings at Harlow Bridge, South Village, Northfield Center, and Northfield Falls. At the Northfield traffic lights are the central elements of the system, the Gray Building, 208 pupils, dating from 1879 [sic], the Brick Building, 253 pupils, 1905, and the so-called cafeteria building, a converted family dwelling whose date of origin is unknown, from which the food for the hot lunch program is ferried to all the outlying schools...The possibility arises that in a few years Northfield elementary education will be able to divert those efforts and funds now used to repair and maintain its scattered buildings, to reaping educational and community benefits from a modern unified school building.”²⁶

After several years of debate and failed bond votes, in 1975 the structurally-suspect brick high school building was demolished, with students housed in the Northfield Graded School and at the off-site Cross Street high school campus in portable buildings. As a stopgap measure, in the early 1980s, the Northfield Graded School was renovated by the District, with the front stairs enclosed in conformance with fire code (enclosure since removed), the back stairs walled in, drop ceilings added, and bathrooms added to each classroom. By 1993, however, after a vote to consolidate all of Northfield’s primary levels on one site, the Northfield Graded School was finally closed—removing it from 117 years of educational service to the students of Northfield. As relayed by Peter Evans, Northfield resident, District educator, and early Gray Building Coalition member, “The consolidation of Northfield’s elementary schools was very controversial, very painful...And the Gray Building was the biggest loser in this initially, there was not a good use for it.”²⁷

After sitting vacant for six years, the building was sold by the District, with the Notice to Bidders relaying:

Please take notice that the Northfield School District will be receiving bids to purchase the following real estate...Being the Gray Elementary School with approximately 2.3 acres of land located on Main Street in the Village of Northfield, Vermont and being all and the same land and premises conveyed to Northfield Academy by deed of Charles Paine dated May 7, 1852...²⁸

By 1999, Northfield residents Rick and Connie Van Arnham had purchased the former Northfield Graded School with hopes for renovation; however, protracted title concerns relating to the property’s bequeathment by Paine for educational purposes only and economic headwinds stymied the venture. By 2001, a small group of community members had formed the Gray Building Coalition, embarking on a campaign that extends to the present to maintain the building as a key community resource for Northfield. Under the Coalition’s ownership and efforts, the

²⁶ “Northfield School Buildings and Sites: A Survey,” *The Times Argus*, November 14, 1970.

²⁷ Oral Interview with Debra Maloney-Evans, Peter Evans, and Jackson Evans. March 9, 2024.

²⁸ “Invitation to Bid,” *The Burlington Free Press*, February 1, 1998.

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building has been largely restored to its original configuration, removing the 1980s alterations, and has been woven into the community and social fabric of Northfield as a vibrant and dynamic community institution. As reminisced by Jackson Evans, Northfield student at the Northfield Graded School in the early 1980s for grades kindergarten, first, and third grades, “It’s amazing to be in the building...to remember the light, the high ceilings, the moveable partition in Classrooms 5 and 6, the creaky wood floor...the coatrooms that felt kind of dark and scary, where the bullies seemed to be. To be in there now and have this perspective on what that school building is, and what it has been for Northfield.”²⁹

Educational Trends in Vermont:

The development and evolution of the Northfield Graded School as a public educational resource for Northfield is reflective of significant contextual strands within the previously established National Register of Historic Places *Educational Resources of Vermont Multiple Property Documentation Form* (MPDF) (approved August 26, 1993). As excerpted from the MPDF:

Schools are clearly reflective of Vermont’s long history of education and its trends. They were and still are important public buildings in their districts, neighborhoods, or towns...Vermont’s historic schools were built in response both to the concerns of townspeople in providing an education for their children and to governmental and legislative mandates (mostly at the state level). They also reflect the architectural trends and building traditions of their periods.

Within this overarching context for significance, the Northfield Graded School meets the Registration Requirements for individual eligibility under the MPDF as a Graded School/Combination High-School Graded School, with the contextual development narrative of the site also reflecting the mid-nineteenth century interchange between Vermont’s Academy movement and the rise of public educational models, as excerpted from the MPDF:

The period 1840 to 1860 saw the most substantial increase in the number of schools in Vermont to date. According to Lewis Stillwell, “Between the years of 1840-1850 the whole state was going in for education more than ever before. During these years 300 new schools were opened and 10,000 new pupils were added to the system. The number of academies more than doubled. College enrollment went up almost 100%.” The rise in the number of academies in Vermont during the 1840s and early 1850s coincided with the rise of public education. Brattleboro (1841) and Windsor (1844) made the first attempts to establish graded secondary schools partially supported by public taxation. By 1860 eleven towns had public high schools...In 1864 the school tax was lifted from pupils, thereby making education entirely free for the first time. The first legislation on compulsory attendance was passed in 1870. In 1874, the State

²⁹ “Northfield Group Eyes Gray Building,” *The Times Argus*, January 14, 2002; Oral Interview with Kerri Hoffman (Gray Building Coalition), December 12, 2023; Oral Interview with Debra Maloney-Evans, Peter Evans, and Jackson Evans. March 9, 2024.

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Superintendent replaced the Board of Education, and county and town superintendents were appointed to inspect and report on schools. The reports were published, often yearly, and many times included articles written by experts on better design for schools.³⁰

As a public Graded and High School Building constructed in 1876 on the ashes of an 1851 Academy building, the Northfield Graded School is an evocative testament to the mid-nineteenth century transitional period between Vermont's Academy model and the rise of a formalized, centralized, and publicly-funded primary and secondary model for public education. As importantly, the educational evolution of the building over its 117 years of educational service is reflective of the continuous changing tides in Vermont's educational system, with other buildings and complexes—Northfield's one room-school houses, the brick Northfield High School, the current Cross Street Elementary/Junior and Senior High Campus—rising and falling as Northfield residents defined the face of public education in the town. As a surviving architectural strand linking Northfield's foundational public expansion in education with its present community form, the Northfield Graded School stands as a significant architectural and cultural testament to the foundational premise of education in Vermont's community development.

Comparative Analysis: Mid-Nineteenth Schools in Vermont

As noted by Northfield Graded School Chairman Dr. P.D. Bradford in a dedication speech for the Northfield Graded School in 1876, "The Public school system, enlarged and improved, has been the essential prominent New England idea." As documented in this nomination, the Northfield Graded School is a cogent nineteenth century expression of this idea, with its Italianate educational form and long-running local educational role within the community of Northfield.

While many comparable nineteenth century educational properties have been lost across the state of Vermont through demolition or material insolvency stemming from disuse, a number of contextually associated educational resources remain, providing a geographically dispersed portrait of educational architecture in Vermont in the mid-nineteenth century. Like the Northfield Graded School, some of these documented resources illustrate the nexus between the nineteenth century "Academy Movement" and the rise of graded public education in the state. Additionally, these comparative architectural resources express common themes of architectural design, with strong Italianate influences, creating a locally-expressive patchwork of design that as a whole conveys significant themes related to the state's educational and architectural development. Within this comparative context, detailed below, the Northfield Graded School is expressive of important local themes of significance related to Northfield's educational and architectural development and is able to convey a strong sense of physical and functional integrity. Further, as an adapted educational building that is now in use as a community accessible space, the

³⁰ *Educational Resources of Vermont National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form*, prepared by the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, listed in the NRHP August 26, 1993.

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Northfield Graded School provides high interpretive value for the public—with community classes, offices, and a preschool providing a diverse range of engagement opportunities.

Comparable educational properties that serve to relay important themes of development in Vermont include the 1864 Summer Street School in St. Johnsbury, Caledonia County. The school was constructed on lands donated by the town's chief economic and cultural patron: the Fairbanks family, of Fairbanks Scale Works renown. Like much constructed in association with the Fairbanks family, the building is of brick, with an expressive Italianate design language featuring arched windows, a heavy bracketed roofline, and a soaring central bell tower surmounting the otherwise spare form. The building is attributed to Chief Carpenter of the Fairbanks Company, Horace Carpenter, responsible for extensive Fairbanks-related construction in the community as well as residential and civic development. The Summer Street School is a contributor to the NRHP-listed Summer Street Historic District and is currently in use as an office building.³¹

In Addison County, New Haven's 1868 Lampson School expresses similar themes, with a spare, cross-gable Italianate form featuring rhythmic arched windows and entries and a steeply pitched bracketed roof with central bell tower. The wood-frame clapboard clad building was constructed as a District School House for New Haven's 6th District during a period in which public graded schools were reaching a higher level of administrative and architectural maturity, with compulsory education legislation in 1870 further fueling this growth. The Lampson School is listed in the NRHP in association with the Educational Resources of Vermont MPDF as an individual resource locally significant for its architectural and educational associations, as well as its association with Sir Curtis Miranda Lampson, a prominent New Haven-born commercial importer and central figure in the development of the first Trans-Atlantic communication cable, who financed the school. The building was converted to residential use in the 1950s following school closure and is not accessible to the public.³²

In the small village of Jonesville, Chittenden County, the 1868 Jonesville Academy presents a simple and spare wood-frame and clad Italianate form that is reminiscent of that of the Northfield Graded School, with a bracketed steeply pitched gable roof, rhythmic windows featuring flat wood lintels, and a bracketed bell tower. The building was constructed as one of nine schools in the greater town of Richmond and was built on lands donated by prominent Richmond-resident Safford Colby. The building remained a school until 1995, after which it was a grange and subsequently converted to use as a private residence, which it remains to the present. The Jonesville Academy is individually listed in the NRHP for its local significance as a rural, Italianate school and its educational significance.³³

³¹ Summer Street Historic District National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (entered into the NRHP 1994, Reference No. 940006340, accessed from the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation Online Resource Center.

³² Lampson School National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (12/21/2001, Reference No. 01001363), accessed from the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation Online Resource Center.

³³ Jonesville Academy National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (11/02/1982, Reference No. 82001762), accessed from the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation Online Resource Center.

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Constructed the following year in 1869 in Washington County, Waterbury's Green Mountain Seminary presents an imposing Italianate form on a plateau embedded between the Worcester Range and Mount Mansfield. The wood-frame building was developed by the Free Will Baptists of Vermont and features a cross-gable bracketed roofline, quoining, heavy molded lintels supported by brackets, and a rusticated stone foundation. The original belltower was removed upon cessation of educational activities in 1941. While established as a private Seminary, the building was deeded to Waterbury in 1895 for use as a public graded school, which it remained until 1941. The building now holds apartments. The Green Mountain Seminary is listed in the NRHP for its local significance as an Italianate architectural development and its educational significance.³⁴

Established nearly twenty years later in 1884 in Rutland County, the Poultney Central School is a wood-frame and brick clad interpretation of an evolving Italianate form. The building was designed and constructed by local carpenter Ashley Wilson, with brick massing, a hipped roof, central bell tower, arched windows, decorative brick work, as well as some Eastlake influence, with decorative wood work heightening the gable ends. Following twentieth century closure, the building was ultimately converted for residential apartment use, a function that continues to occupy the building. The Poultney Central School is listed in the NRHP for its local design and educational significance.³⁵

Within this geographically disparate assemblage of mid-to-late nineteenth century educational resources, spanning various regions of the state of Vermont, the Northfield Graded School reflects important strands of a unified and culturally predominant Italianate design language that shaped educational construction and social aspirations during the period. In addition, as an educational resource, the Northfield Graded School is reflective of common themes of development, with the foundational Academy origins of the property and evolving public educational context also shared by comparative resource types from the period. As a local reflection of this statewide educational context, the Northfield Graded School is well situated to convey both significance under the criteria of the NRHP and high integrity, as further detailed in the following section. In addition, as a resource that is open to the public through community use, the building holds high public interpretive value in comparison to other extant resources of its type.

Application of the National Register of Historic Places Criteria

Criterion A: Education

The Northfield Graded School is significant under Criterion A at the local level of significance for its strong associations with the development of public education in Northfield, Vermont. The property meets the registration requirements for individual eligibility for the NRHP under the *Educational Resources of Vermont* MPDF as a Graded School / Combination Graded-High School with a period of significance spanning from the building's 1876 construction to 1974, the

³⁴ Green Mountain Seminary National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (1/30/1978, Reference No. 78000245), accessed from the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation Online Resource Center.

³⁵ Poultney Central School National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (3/25/1977, Reference No. 77000100), accessed from the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation Online Resource Center.

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close of the historic period and a period of notable consolidation that ultimately led to the closure of the building as a public school in 1994. The educational functions of the building during its period of significance are a locally important reflection of statewide trends in public education, including the foundational legacy of Vermont's Academy models, the rise of consolidated public primary and secondary education, and the role of standardization and consolidation of educational functions over time. The origins of the Northfield Graded School arose from Northfield's mid-nineteenth century prominence as a railroad center for the Vermont Central Railroad and the corresponding establishment of the Northfield Academy/Northfield Institution, with this Academy assumed by an increasingly robust public framework in 1870. With the 1876 burning of the Academy building, the nascent Northfield Public Graded School District assumed an ambitious physical identity, building upon the framework of the Academy in the development of a comprehensive graded school for Northfield students. Through the twentieth century, as periods of modernization reshaped Vermont's educational landscape, the Northfield Graded School remained central to Northfield's public school system and remains a defining symbol of Northfield's community development to the present. This community significance is a cogent reflection of educational evolution in Vermont during the period and bears significance under NRHP Criterion A.

Criterion C: Architecture

The Northfield Graded School is significant under NRHP Criterion C at the local level of significance for its expressive Italianate educational design. Constructed upon the site of the burned 1851 Northfield Academy, the spare Italianate form was both a nod to the "irreparable loss" of the burning of the Academy and a reflection of prevailing educational aspirations of the period. With a symmetry of fenestration and generous introduction of light and open plan space; characteristic allusions including quoining, pediment detailing, and bracketing; and a spare and lofty form with regularity in plan and functional design, the Northfield Graded School reflected both a community anchored to the Academy legacy and an integration of important educational design standards and norms arising in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. This stylistic and functional identity, which is expressed through strong physical integrity, is a significant architectural reflection of educational design in Vermont and is one of few expressive representatives of public graded education from this time period remaining, with many of Vermont's nineteenth and early twentieth century primary and secondary schools abandoned and demolished over the course of the twentieth century as evolving educational and social mandates physically shaped the state's public school system. As an educational representative with strong physical integrity, the Northfield Graded School is a locally significant architectural resource reflecting important design themes in educational and community development.

Character Defining Features

The Northfield Graded School retains a number of key physical characteristics that allow the building to convey its essential physical and operational form as a nineteenth century public school building. These features are considered character defining and allow the property to convey significance within its historic context for development.

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- *Placement and Orientation on North Main Street above Depot Square:* Constructed on a prominent 2.3-acre lot overlooking Depot Square, the Northfield Graded School is perhaps the most identifiable property in the core of Northfield. The site was donated for educational purposes by Charles Paine and is oriented toward Paine's crowning achievement—the former Depot and Railyard of the Vermont Central Railroad. This location and orientation are key character defining elements, with the educational functions of the site from 1851 onward a key component of Northfield's community identity. In addition, the generally open grass lot surrounding the property, with a sloping termination fronting North Main Street is character defining, allowing the building ample exposure to the Village below. Within this context, small-scale and removable play infrastructure does not detract from the site, but is not considered character defining as it has evolved through time in expression of evolving mandates. In addition, the granite block retaining wall that lines the west edge of the parcel along North Main Street is not considered character defining, as research and site documentation indicates it was placed in the 1950s as North Main Street was widened, and a portion of the lot was regraded to terminate at the sidewalk.
- *Spare Italianate Design:* The expressive Italianate design is character defining, including the characteristic fenestration, architectural allusions including bracketing, quoining, the cupola/bell tower, and pediment detailing. Within this stylistic context, all original materials are character defining, including siding, trim, windows and window framing, chimneys, roof materials, and foundation elements.
- *Interior Layout and Plan Devoted to Clear Educational Purposes:* The eight-classroom volume with central corridors and two stairways is character defining and expressive of the building's educational functions. Within this context, the moveable panel between Classrooms 5 and 6 is highly significant, expressing an adaptable and Progressive classroom structure. Other elements add to the character defining layout and plan, including the coatroom vestibules, open classrooms with two walls of windows, perimeter slate chalkboards, and open classroom volumes. Within this functional context, all original materials are character defining, including wood floors and ceilings, plaster walls and wainscoting, slate chalkboards, trim and arched doorway surrounds, and operational elements of the partition wall system in the attic. It is important to note that some of the chalkboards in the Gray Building may not be the original slate according to Gray Building Coalition documentation, with some areas painted chalkboard. All original slate boards are character defining, non-original variants are not, although are generally compatible.
- While compatible in form and design, materials applied in the circa 2000s rehabilitation of the building are compatible but not character defining, including stair materials for the rebuilt stairway, new doors, light fixtures, bathroom fixtures, and lift elements. These features remain as integral components of the operating building, but should be viewed distinctly from the original material composition. As noted by the Gray Building Coalition of the 2000s project, "We retained almost all of the historic aspects of the building but it is now up to code related to electrical, water, sewer, sprinkler, fire

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prevention, insulation and accessibility. These updates have necessitated some changes to the building but have preserved the character defining features of the historic property.”

- The 1928 Central Heating Plant/Coal Shed/Garage is non-contributing to the significance of the site and as such is not considered character defining. Please refer to Section 7 for discussion of this non-contributing resource.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Books

Northfield Town History Committee, *Green Mountain Heritage: The Chronicle of Northfield, Vermont*. Canann, NH: Phoenix Publishing, 1974.

Gregory, John. *Centennial Proceedings and Historical Incidents of the Early Settlers of Northfield, Vermont*. Montpelier, VT: Argus and Patriot Book and Job Printing House, 1878.

Hemenway, Abby Maria, *The History of Washington County in the Vermont Historical Gazetteer*. Montpelier, VT: Vermont Watchman and State Journal Press, 1882.

Newspapers, Journals, Periodicals

Andrews, Edward Deming. "The County Grammar Schools and the Academies of Vermont," *Proceedings of the Vermont Historical Society*, Volume 4, No. 3, 1936.

Argus and Patriot

The Barre Daily Times

The Burlington Free Press

Cremin, Lawrence A. "John Dewey and the Progressive Education Movement, 1915-1952," *The School Review*, Volume 67, No. 2, 1959.

Green-Mountain Freeman

Mann, Horace. "The Duty of Instructors in Relation to School Houses," *The Common School Journal*, Volume 1, No. 19, October 1839.

Montpelier Evening Argus

News and Advertiser

Northfield News

Rutland Daily Times

The Times Argus

Vermont Christian Messenger

Vermont Chronicle

Vermont Phoenix

Vermont Watchman and State Journal

Records and Maps

Various United States Federal Census Records 1860-1940

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Various *Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Maps*: Northfield

Unpublished Materials / Collections

Collections of the Northfield Historical Society

Educational Resources of Vermont National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, prepared by the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, listed in the NRHP August 26, 1993.

Papazian, Lyssa. Historic Preservation Certification Application for the Northfield Graded and High School (Gray Building), March 30, 2001 (on file with the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation (VDHP), Online Resource Center (ORC).

Oral Interviews

Interview with Kerri Hoffman, Gray Building Coalition, December 12, 2023.

Interview with Debra Maloney-Evans, Peter Evans, and Jackson Evans, Northfield residents and Northfield Schools attendees, March 9, 2024.

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 # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): 1213-74

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.3 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 44.15110 ° N Longitude: 72.65467 ° W

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The NRHP Resource Boundary includes the entirety of the legal parcel that the Northfield Graded School occupies, SPAN 441-139-11905. The Boundary includes the significant resource as well as the associated access drive and open space that characterized the property during the period of significance. The Boundary and geographic information are included in accompanying mapping.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The Boundary includes the significant resource as well as its historically associated surrounding site to interpret the educational associations that qualify the property for listing in the NRHP.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Polly Seddon Allen
organization: Consulting Architectural Historian
street & number: PO Box 215

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city or town: Craftsbury Common state: VT zip code: 05827
e-mail polly.s.allen@gmail.com
telephone: 916.201.1855
date: 1/12/2024

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Northfield Graded School

City or Vicinity: Northfield

County: Washington State: Vermont

Photographer: Polly Seddon Allen

Date Photographed: 12/8/2024

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 33. Northfield Graded School, looking east from Main Street toward entrance.
- 2 of 33. Northfield Graded School, looking east at primary façade.
- 3 of 33. Northfield Graded School, looking southeast.
- 4 of 33. Northfield Graded School, looking south.
- 5 of 33. Northfield Graded School, looking northwest.
- 6 of 33. Northfield Graded School, annex overview on east side, 1927.
- 7 of 33. Northfield Graded School, looking northeast.
- 8 of 33. Northfield Graded School, looking south from building site toward central Northfield and Depot Square.
- 9 of 33. Looking northeast toward Northfield Graded School, from former site of Cross Brothers Granite, also see Figure 19.
- 10 of 33. Northfield Graded School, detail of central cupola / bell-tower (bell removed).
- 11 of 33. Northfield Graded School, detail of foundation, depicting slate, granite, and brick piers.
- 12 of 33. Northfield Graded School, detail of entrance portico on west side.
- 13 of 33. Northfield Graded School, detail of paired door entry in portico on west side of building.
- 14 of 33. Northfield Graded School, first floor corridor with classrooms 1-4 flanking, front stairs (rebuilt) rising to second level.
- 15 of 33. Northfield Graded School, first floor corridor looking to rear area with lift and modern firewall.

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- 16 of 33. Northfield Graded School, first floor corridor looking toward main (west) entrance and front stairway.
- 17 of 33. Northfield Graded School, back stairway from first level.
- 18 of 33. Northfield Graded School, typical classroom coatroom vestibule (Classroom 4).
- 19 of 33. Northfield Graded School, typical classroom volume, first level (Classroom 4).
- 20 of 33. Northfield Graded School, typical classroom volume, first level, blackboards in place under white panels above wainscoting (Classroom 1).
- 21 of 33. Northfield Graded School, second level corridor, facing west, Classrooms 5-8 flanking.
- 22 of 33. Northfield Graded School, second level corridor, facing toward front stairway, with attic stairwell evident.
- 23 of 33. Northfield Graded School, looking into Classroom 5 from corridor, through vestibule to main classroom volume.
- 24 of 33. Northfield Graded School, looking from Classroom 5 to central corridor.
- 25 of 33. Northfield Graded School, coatroom vestibule coat hook detail.
- 26 of 33. Northfield Graded School, Classroom 5 slate chalkboard detail.
- 27 of 33. Northfield Graded School, detail of Classroom 5 and 6 partition wall, operating on a pulley system in attic.
- 28 of 33. Northfield Graded School, attic stairwell detail, eras of student graffiti.
- 29 of 33. Northfield Graded School, attic pulley system for Classroom 5 and 6 partition wall.
- 30 of 33. Northfield Graded School, Classroom 3, converted for tenant use with many original features intact.
- 31 of 33. Northfield Graded School, basement with gravel floor, brick piers, and new utility partition.
- 32 of 33. Non-Contributing garage and heating plant, east side depicting collapsed roof and walls, 1927.
- 33 of 33. Non-Contributing garage and heating plant, facing east, 1927.

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ADDITIONAL ITEMS

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Figure 1: Northfield Academy / Northfield Institute. Undated photograph taken prior to 1876 (building burned down in January 1876). (Collection of Northfield Historical Society)

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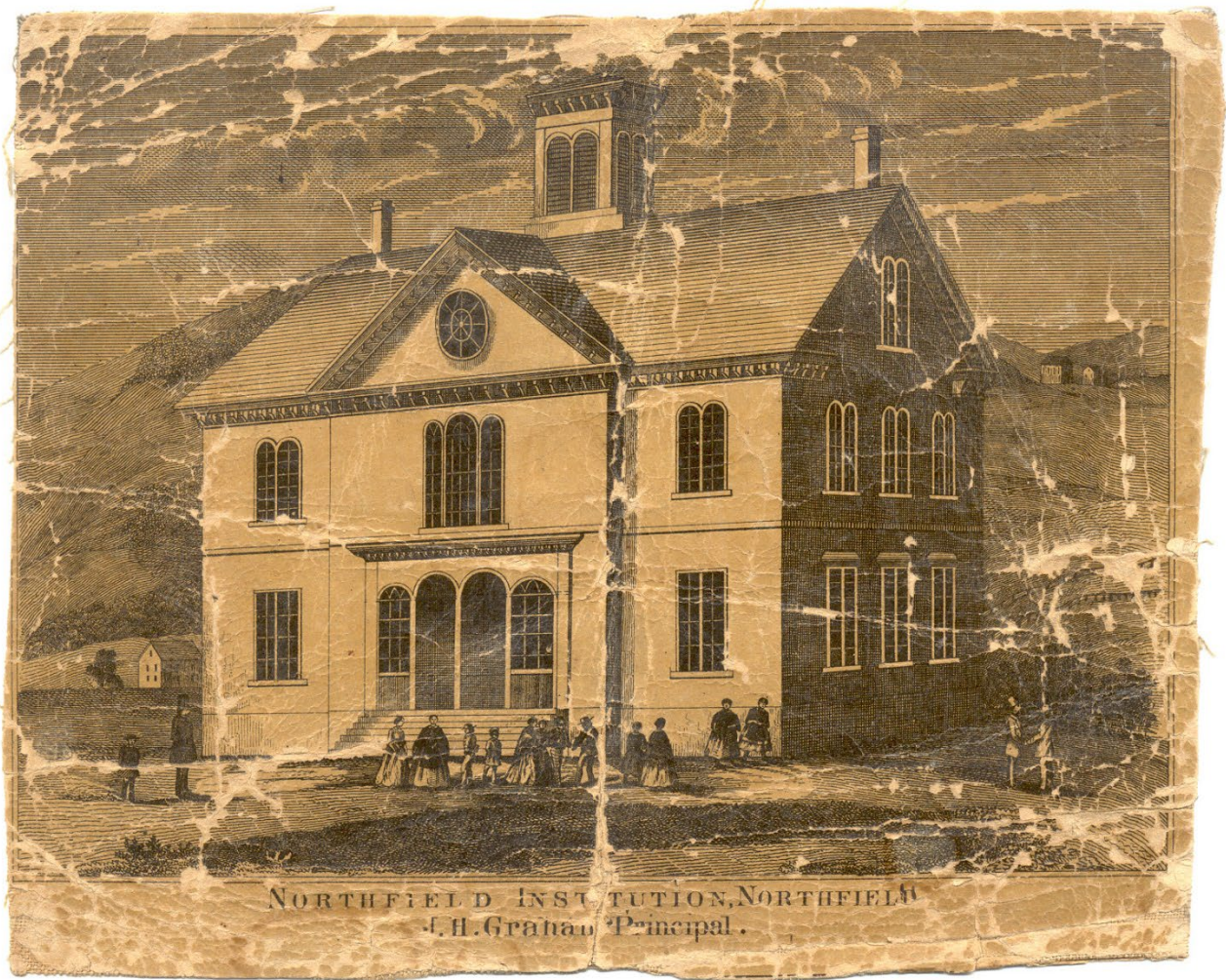


Figure 2: Northfield Academy / Northfield Institute. Undated and attributed rendering (building burned down in January 1876). (Collection of Northfield Historical Society)

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Northfield Academy.

THE FALL TERM OF THIS INSTITUTION will commence on WEDNESDAY, Sept. 10th, and continue 11 weeks.

C. C. WEBSTER, A. B. Principal.
Miss ELIZABETH DREW, Preceptress.
Miss SARAH E. KIMBALL, Teacher of Music and Monochromatic Drawing.

TUITION

In Common English Branches,	\$3.00
Higher English	3.50
Languages	4.00

The charges for Music and Drawing will be the same as in other similar institutions.

The Trustees feel confident in saying, that, with their new and commodious building, surpassed by none in beauty of location and structure, and convenience of arrangement, and with the competent board of teachers they have secured, no Academy in the State affords better facilities for acquiring a thorough and practical education.

Board \$1.50 per week. Rooms can be rented at a reasonable rate, by those wishing to board themselves.

For further particulars inquire of the subscriber.

HEMAN CARPENTER, Sec'y.
Northfield, Aug. 11, 1851. 294 4w

Figure 3: Advertisement for Northfield Academy, 1851.
(*The Vermont Patriot and State Gazette*)

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Northfield Graded School!
School District No. 4, in Northfield, has purchased
the Northfield Institution, and established a
HIGH GRADED PUBLIC SCHOOL.
The Fall Term will commence
Monday, August 29, 1870,
AND CONTINUE TWELVE WEEKS,
Marshall B. Peck, A. B., Principal,
Miss L. L. Fletcher, Preceptress,
With efficient Teachers in the Primary and Inter-
mediate Grades.

TUITION:
FOR PUPILS NOT RESIDING IN THE DISTRICT.

Primary Department,	\$1 00
Intermediate Department,	5 00
High School Department,	6 00
Grammar School Department, { English,	7 00
{ Classics,	\$3 00 to 9 00
Modern Languages, (each)	1 00
Drawing, Painting, and Music, at the usual rates.	
Board, per week, from	\$3 00 to 4 00
Rooms for self-boarding (furnished) per term, from	\$5 00 to 10 00
Unfurnished rooms, per term, from	\$3 00 to 6 00

For further information apply to the Principal,
or to

JAMES N. JOHNSON,	} Prudential Committee.
J. H. RICHARDSON,	
WM. C. WOODBURY,	
WM. S. HAZEN,	
S. H. COLBURN,	

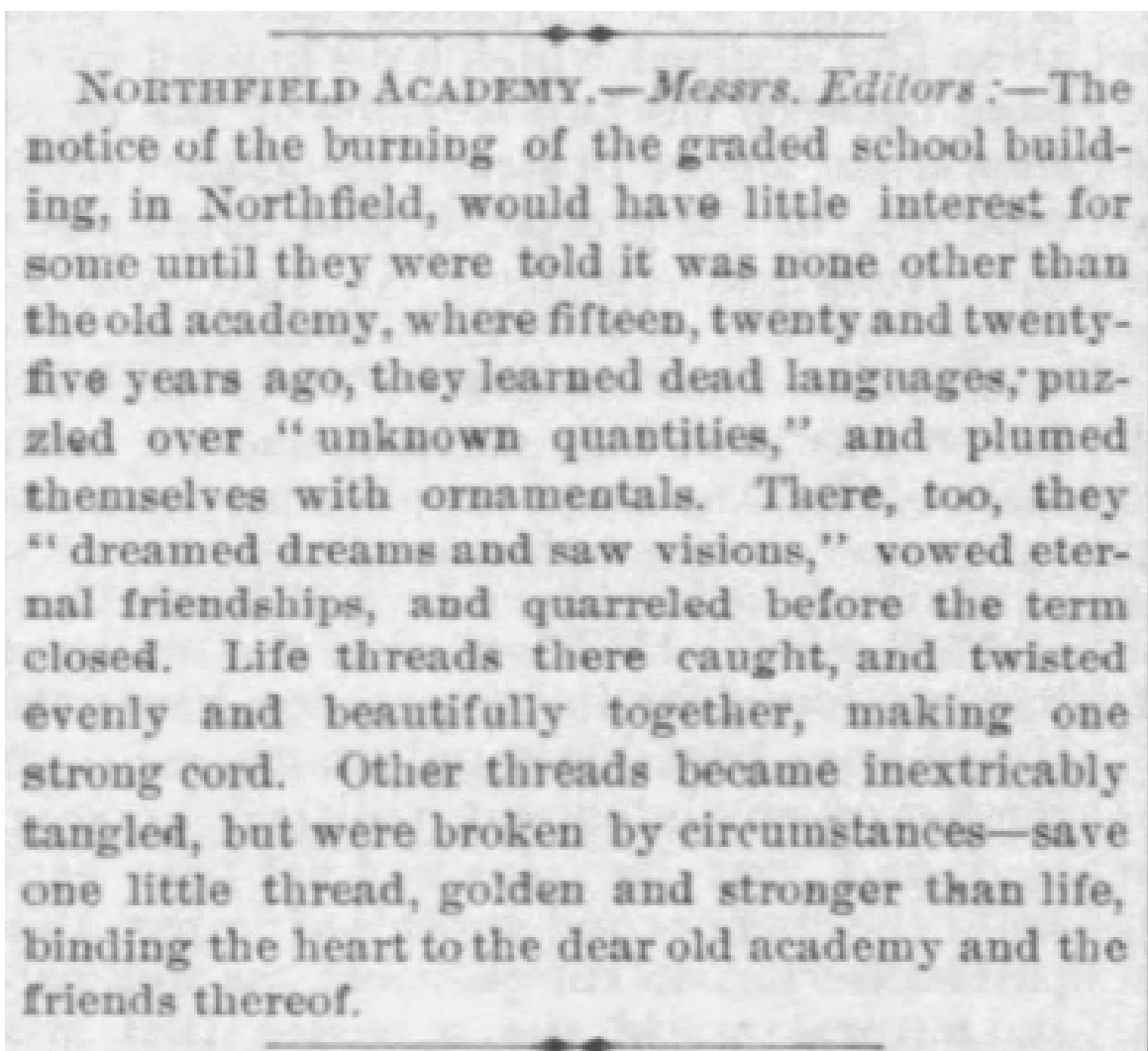
Northfield, July 28, 1870. 6w33

Figure 4: Announcement of purchase of Northfield Institution by Northfield School District, 1870.

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(Argus and Patriot)



NORTHFIELD ACADEMY.—*Messrs. Editors :—*The notice of the burning of the graded school building, in Northfield, would have little interest for some until they were told it was none other than the old academy, where fifteen, twenty and twenty-five years ago, they learned dead languages; puzzled over "unknown quantities," and plumed themselves with ornamentals. There, too, they "dreamed dreams and saw visions," vowed eternal friendships, and quarreled before the term closed. Life threads there caught, and twisted evenly and beautifully together, making one strong cord. Other threads became inextricably tangled, but were broken by circumstances—save one little thread, golden and stronger than life, binding the heart to the dear old academy and the friends thereof.

Figure 5: Reflection on the burning of the Northfield Graded School/Northfield Academy, 1876.
(Vermont Chronicle)

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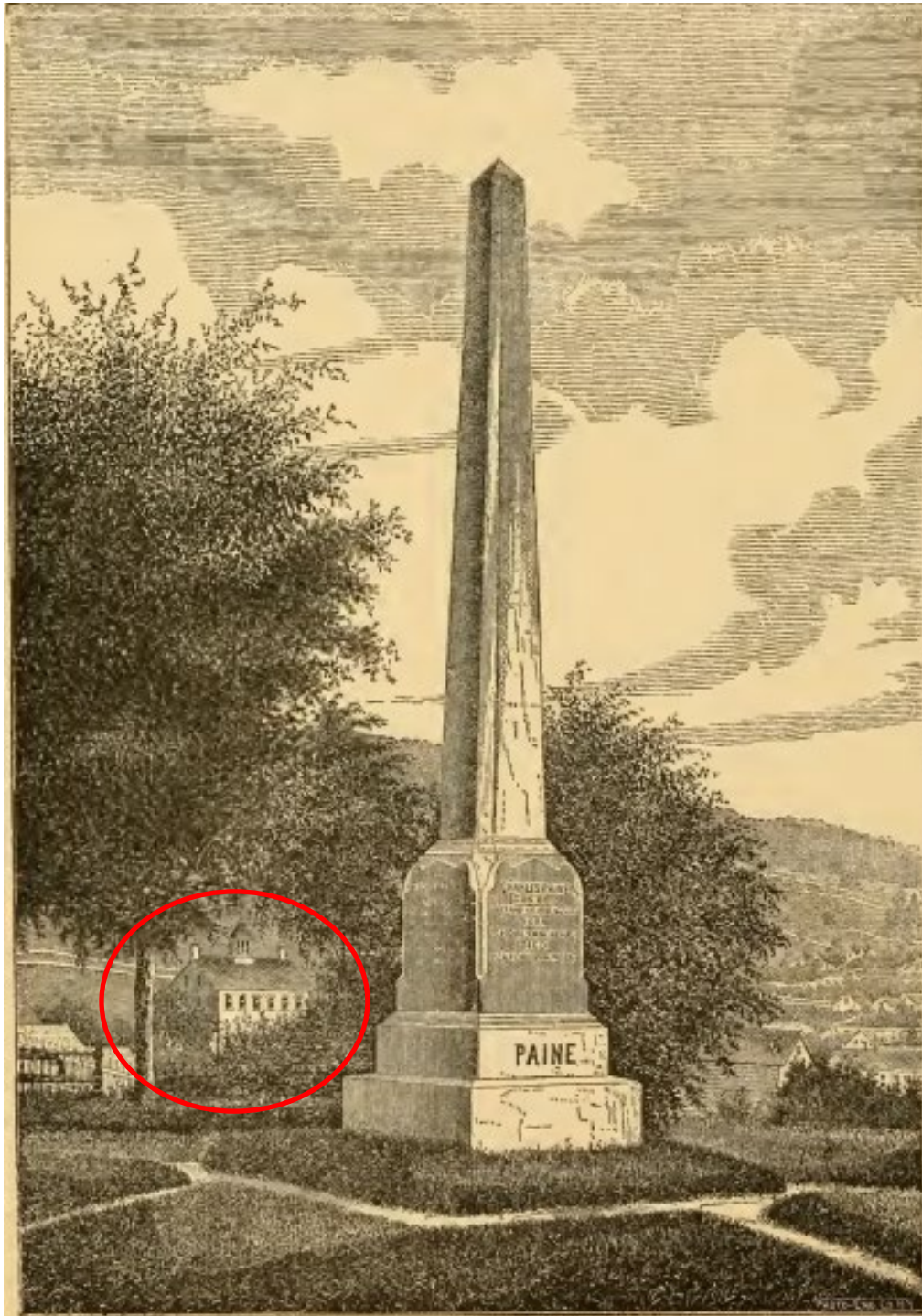


Figure 6: The Northfield Graded School framed in the legacy of Northfield Academy founder Charles Paine, as depicted in *The History of Washington County*, 1882. (Hemenway)

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Figure 7: Northfield Graded School. Undated photograph taken prior to circa 1900 or earlier.
(Collection of Northfield Historical Society)

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Figure 8: Northfield Graded School framed with new plantings. Undated photograph taken prior to circa 1900.
(Collection of Northfield Historical Society)

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Figure 9: Northfield Graded School as seen from vicinity of Dog River to southwest. Undated photograph taken prior to circa 1900.
(Collection of Northfield Historical Society)

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Figure 10: Northfield Graded School as seen from east side of Depot Square. Undated photograph taken prior to circa 1900.
(Collection of Northfield Historical Society)

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Figure 11: Northfield Graded School with students fronting North Main Street, circa 1900 or earlier. Note it does not appear that granite retaining wall is in place at this time.
(Collection of Northfield Historical Society)

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Figure 12: Unidentified woman (perhaps teacher) entering Northfield Graded School. Undated photograph taken prior to circa 1900.
(Collection of Northfield Historical Society)

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Figure 13: Unidentified circa 1900 photograph of Northfield Graded School students and teacher.
(Collection of Northfield Historical Society)

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Figure 14: Unidentified circa 1920s photograph of Northfield Graded School students and teacher.
(Collection of Northfield Historical Society)

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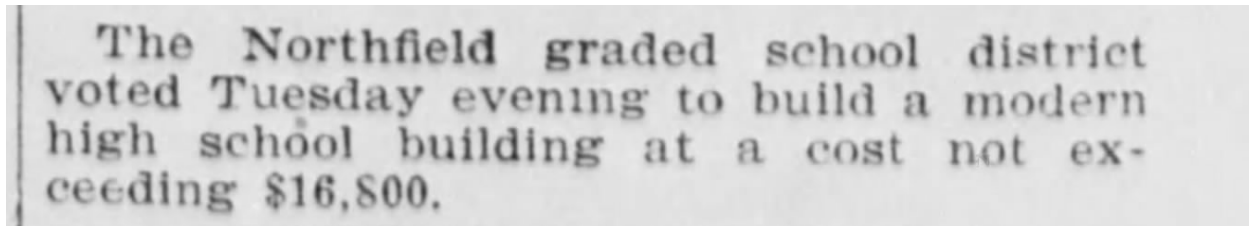


Figure 15: 1904 Newspaper Clipping Announcing Construction of “modern high school building.”
(*Vermont Phoenix*)



Figure 16: Northfield High School (left) with Northfield Graded School (right), circa 1905.
(Collection of Northfield Historical Society)

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Figure 17: Rendering of Northfield High School (left) and Graded School (right), circa 1905.
(Collection of Northfield Historical Society)

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Figure 18: Stereoscope of Northfield Graded and High School, circa 1915.
(Collection of Northfield Historical Society)



Figure 19: Northfield Graded School as seen from Cross Brothers Granite Complex (since demolished), circa 1920. (Collection of Northfield Historical Society)

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Figure 20: A winter scene at Northfield Graded School, circa 1920.
(Collection of Northfield Historical Society)

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Figure 21: Unidentified and partially labelled photograph of students and teacher, circa 1920s-1930s. (Collection of Northfield Historical Society)

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Figure 22: Unidentified photograph of students and teacher, circa 1940s. (Collection of Northfield Historical Society)

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Figure 23: Unidentified photograph of students inside classroom, circa 1950s. (Collection of Northfield Historical Society)

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Figure 24: A village scene from Depot Square with Graded and High School Buildings in background, circa 1900-1910s. (Collection of Northfield Historical Society)

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Figure 25: A village scene from Depot Square with Graded and High School Buildings in background, circa 1920s. (Collection of Northfield Historical Society)

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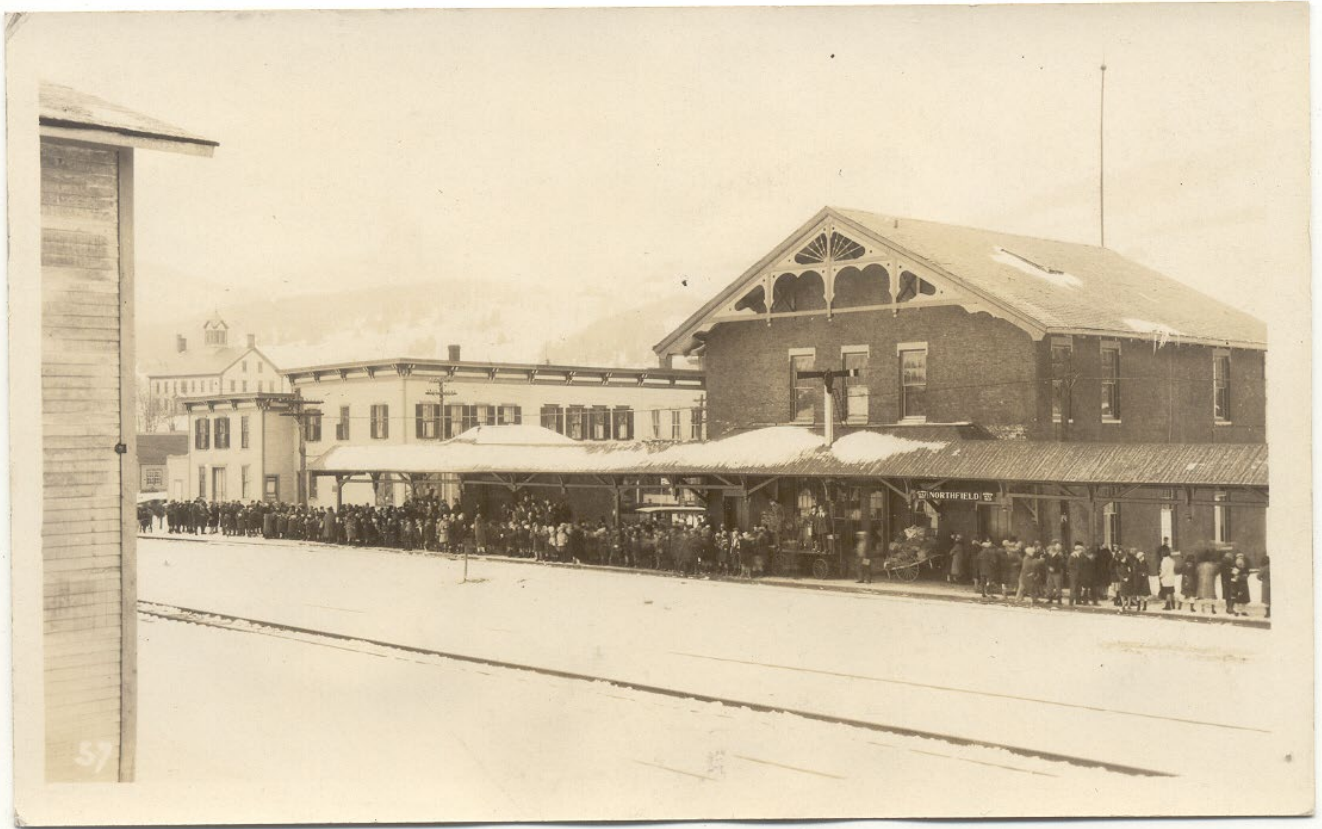


Figure 26: Northfield Passenger Depot with Northfield Graded School in background, circa 1900-1910s. (Collection of Northfield Historical Society)

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Figure 27: A village scene from Depot Square with Graded and High School Buildings in background, circa 1900-1910s. (Collection of Northfield Historical Society)

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Figure 28: Flooding of the Dog River with Graded and High School Buildings in the background, presumably flood of 1927. (Collection of Northfield Historical Society)

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Figure 29: “Summer Activities Pageant” of 1946. As detailed in the *Barre Daily Times*: “The pupils of Grade 1 of the Northfield Graded School gave a program in the graded school building Monday afternoon at 2:30. The subject, ‘Summer Activities,’ was under the musical direction of Mrs. Bertha Whitney, assisted by Miss Kathryn Grace and Miss Maxine McNamara, teachers of Grade 1. It was divided into three sections: Safety, Farm, and Swimming.” Swimming depicted above.

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Figure 30: “Summer Activities Pageant” of 1946. As detailed in the *Barre Daily Times*: “The pupils of Grade 1 of the Northfield Graded School gave a program in the graded school building Monday afternoon at 2:30. The subject, ‘Summer Activities,’ was under the musical direction of Mrs. Bertha Whitney, assisted by Miss Kathryn Grace and Miss Maxine McNamara, teachers of Grade 1. It was divided into three sections: Safety, Farm, and Swimming.” Farming depicted above.

Northfield Graded School
Name of Property

Washington County, VT
County and State



Figure 31: Unidentified photograph of students and teacher, circa 1960s. (Collection of Northfield Historical Society)

Northfield Graded School
Name of Property

Washington County, VT
County and State



Figure 32: Students outside of Northfield Graded School, circa 1970s. (Hanging in Gray Building, source unknown)

Northfield Graded School
Name of Property

Washington County, VT
County and State

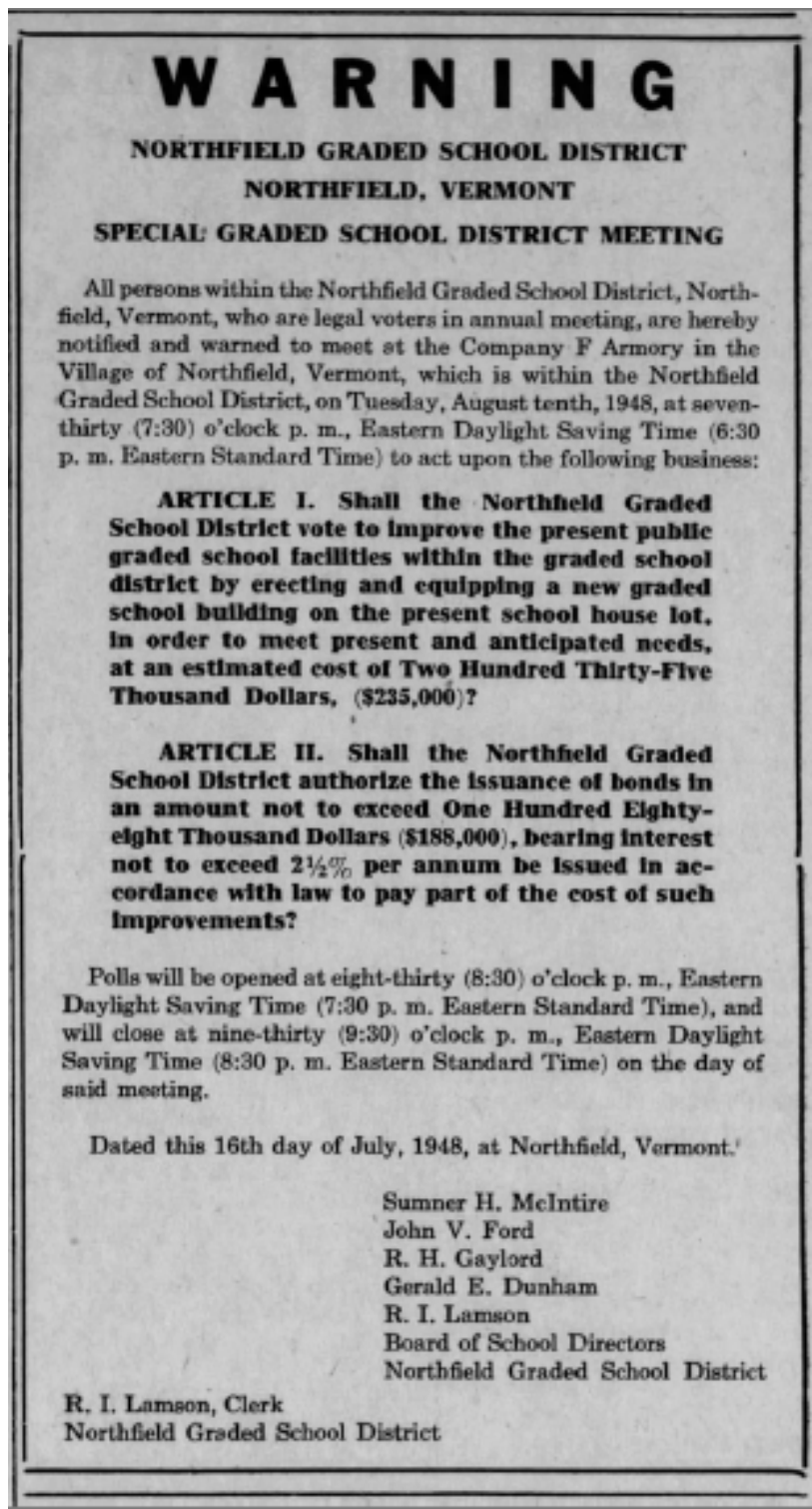


Figure 33: 1948 Warning for Bond to demolish Gray Building and construct a new graded school on site. Bond passed but was later rescinded by residents.

(News and Advertiser)

Northfield Graded School
Name of Property

Washington County, VT
County and State

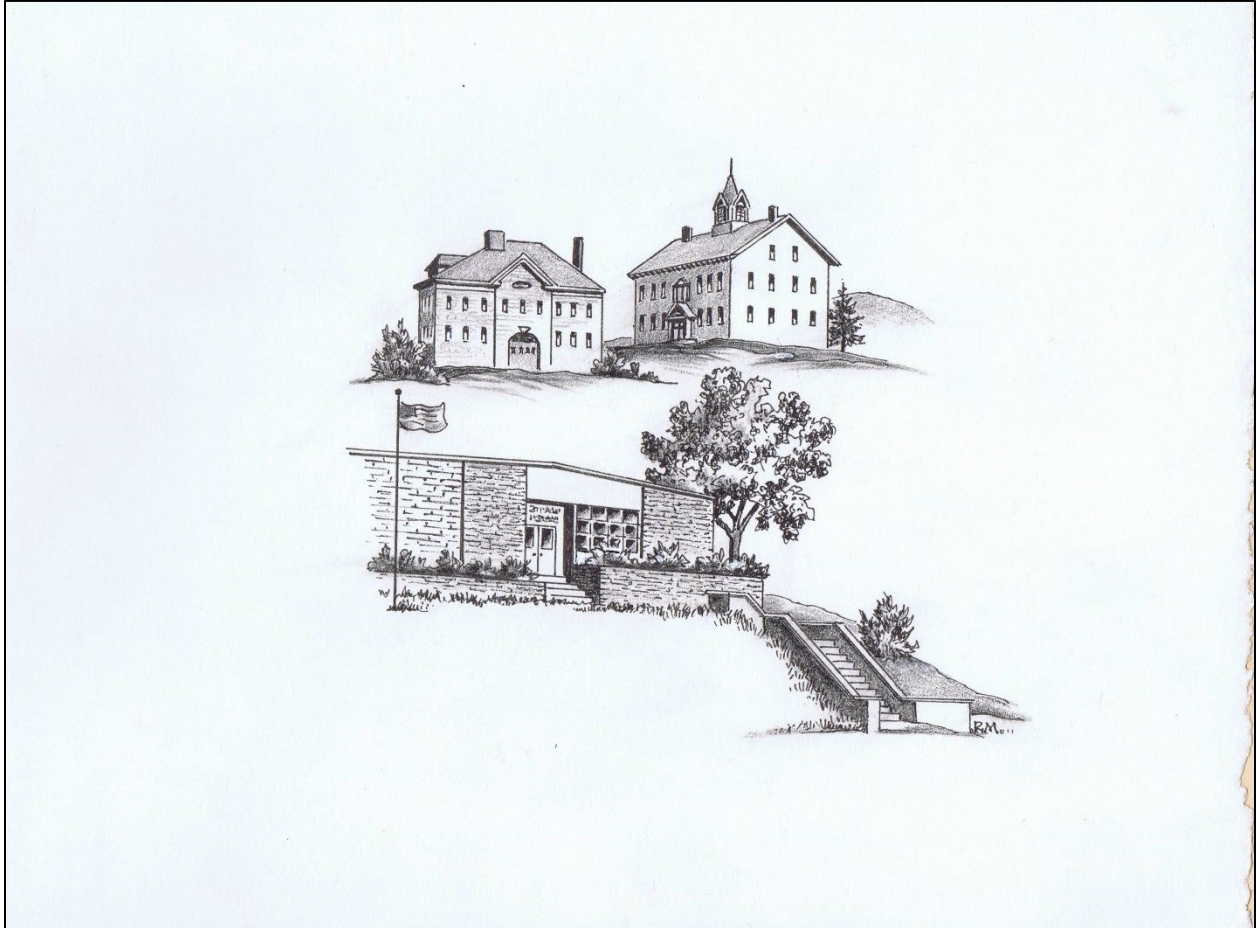


Figure 34: Undated rendering of Gray Building, brick high school, and 1955 Northfield High School.
(Collection of Northfield Historical Society)

Northfield Graded School
Name of Property

Washington County, VT
County and State



Figure 35: Northfield Graded School circa 1980s with portable classrooms, brick high school building already demolished from site.
(Collection of Northfield Historical Society)

Northfield Graded School
Name of Property

Washington County, VT
County and State

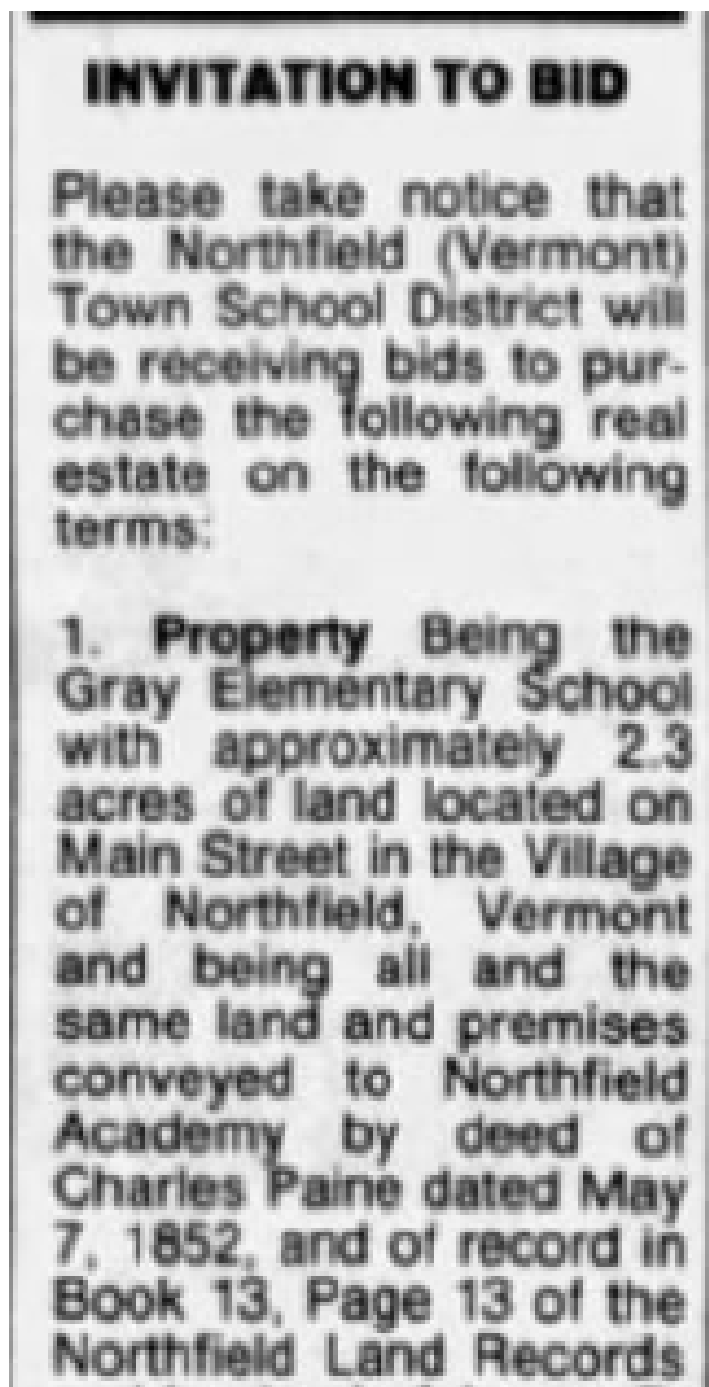


Figure 36: Invitation to bid on Gray Building following closure by school district, 1998.

Northfield Graded School
Name of Property

Washington County, VT
County and State

(Burlington Free Press)

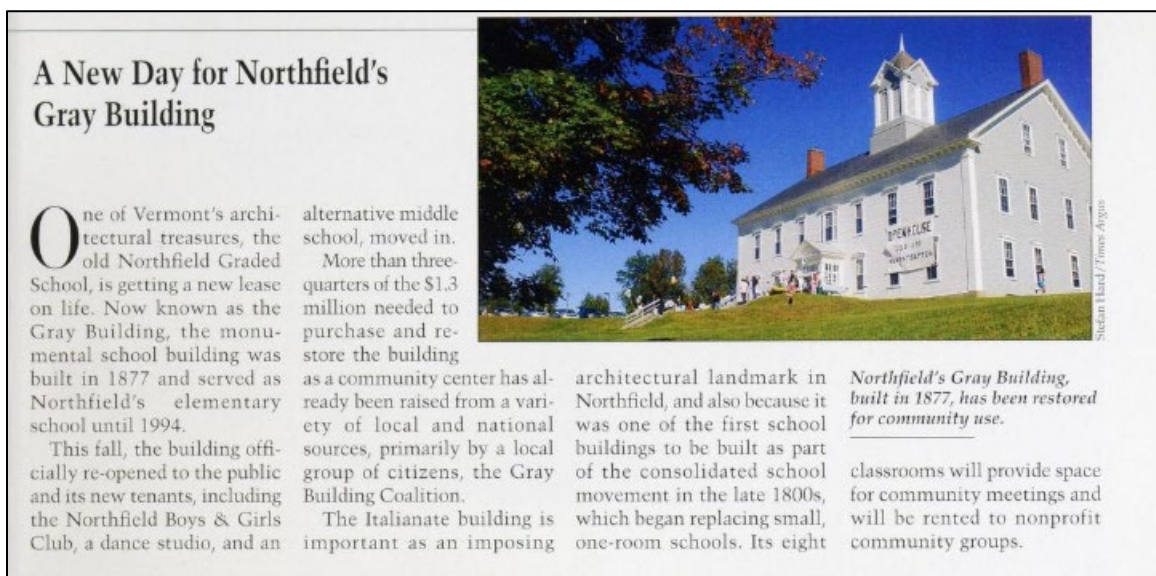


Figure 37: Preservation efforts of the Gray Building Coalition culminate in a community building, 2004.
(Vermont Life)

Northfield Graded School

Name of Property

Washington County, VT

County and State

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations 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.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

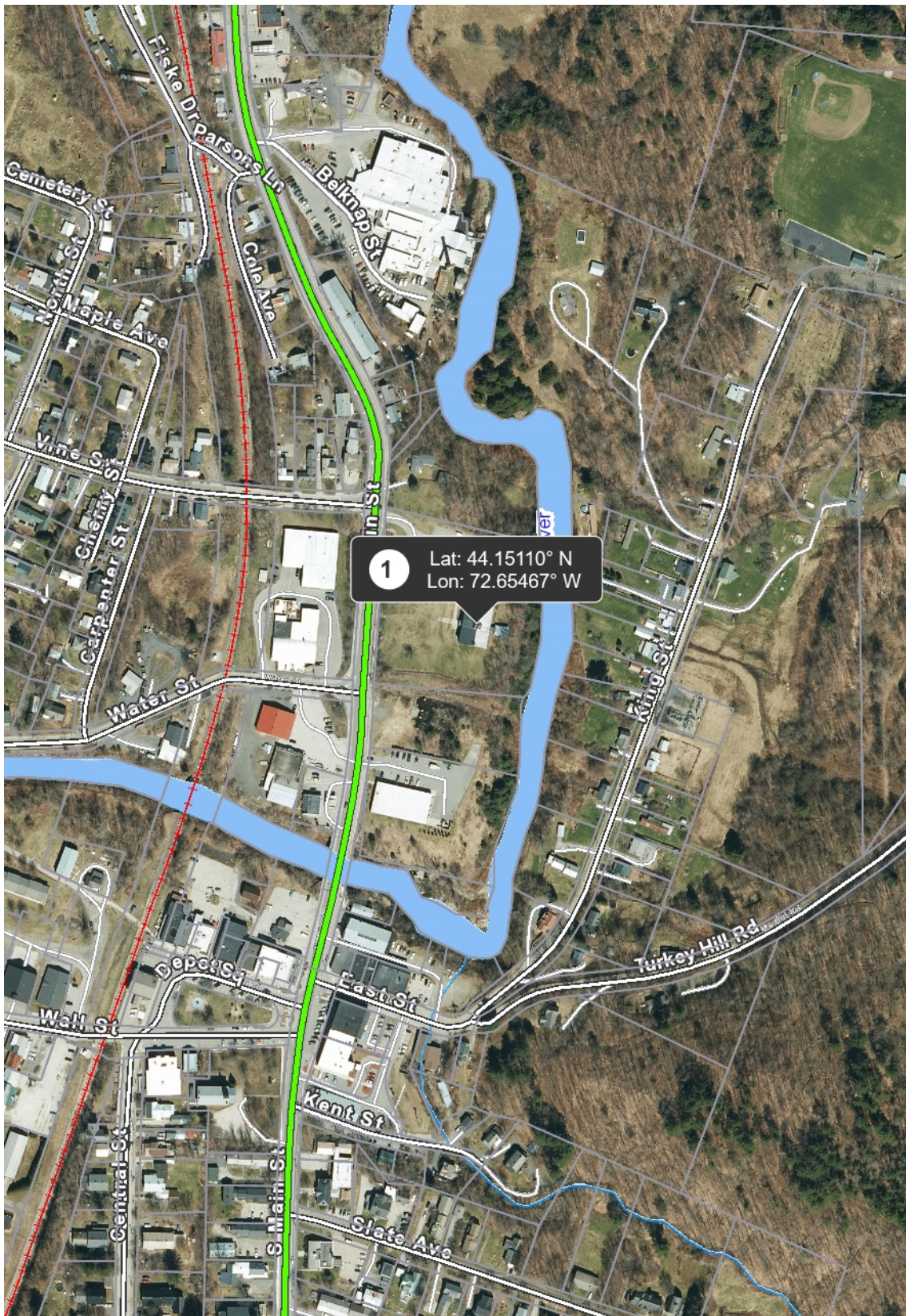
Tier 1 – 60-100 hours

Tier 2 – 120 hours









Tier 3 – 230 hours

Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.



LEGEND

-  Parcel polygons
-  Inactive parcels
-  Airports
-  Mountains and Hills
-  US Highways
-  State Highways
-  Roads - Public (VTrans)
 -  Interstate Highway
 -  US Highway
 -  State Highway
 -  Local road
 -  Other road
 -  Legal trail
-  Roads - Private (E911)
-  Driveways
-  Rail Lines
-  Town Boundaries
-  County Boundaries
-  Airports
-  Rail Lines
-  Town Boundaries
-  County Boundaries
-  Buildings
-  Village Boundaries

1: Historic
Property Location

NOTES

This map was created with the VT Interactive Map Viewer.

0.14 0 0.07 0.14 Miles

WGS_1984_Web_Mercator_Auxiliary_Sphere 1" = 377 Ft. 1cm = 45 Meters

THIS MAP IS NOT TO BE USED FOR NAVIGATION

1: 4,523



















November 30, 2023



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LEGEND

-  Parcel polygons
-  Inactive parcels
-  Airports
-  Mountains and Hills
-  US Highways
-  State Highways
-  Roads - Public (VTrans)
-  Interstate Highway
-  US Highway
-  State Highway
-  Local road
-  Other road
-  Legal trail
-  Roads - Private (E911)
-  Driveways
-  Rail Lines
-  Town Boundaries
-  County Boundaries

Historic Property Boundary/ Parcel Boundary:
2.3 acre parcel boundary is historic property boundary

NOTES

This map was created with the VT Interactive Map Viewer.

0.07 0 0.04 0.07 Miles

WGS_1984_Web_Mercator_Auxiliary_Sphere 1" = 188 Ft. 1cm = 23 Meters

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1: 2,262

November 30, 2023



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Northfield Graded School

168 North Main Street, Northfield, Washington County, Vermont 05663



LEGEND

1: Historic Property Location

NOTES

This map was created with the VT Interactive Map Viewer.

0.29 0 0.14 0.29 Miles

WGS_1984_Web_Mercator_Auxiliary_Sphere 1" = 754 Ft. 1cm = 90 Meters
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1: 9,047

November 30, 2023



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