

STATE OF VERMONT Division for Historic Preservation VERMONT ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY Individual Property Survey Form	SURVEY NUMBER: (Assigned by VDHP)
	Listed in State Register <input type="checkbox"/> Eligible for State Register Yes <input type="checkbox"/> -or- No <input type="checkbox"/> Date:
	PRESENT FORMAL NAME: n/a
	ORIGINAL FORMAL NAME: Ralston building
COUNTY: Franklin	PRESENT USE: vacant
TOWN: East Fairfield	ORIGINAL USE: feed store
ADDRESS: 9596 VT Route 36	ARCHITECT/ENGINEER: unknown
COMMON NAME:	BUILDER/CONTRACTOR: unknown
PROPERTY TYPE: Building	DATE BUILT: ca. 1948
OWNER: Vermont Agency of Transportation ADDRESS: 219 N Main St, Barre, VT 05641	
ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/>	PHYSICAL CONDITION OF STRUCTURE: Good <input type="checkbox"/> Fair <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/>
	STYLE: Vernacular
GENERAL DESCRIPTION: 1. <u>Foundation</u> : Stone <input type="checkbox"/> Brick <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete Block <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> - <i>concrete block piers</i> 2. <u>Wall Structure</u> a. Wood Frame: Post & Beam <input type="checkbox"/> Plank <input type="checkbox"/> Balloon <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Platform <input type="checkbox"/> b. Load Bearing Masonry: Brick <input type="checkbox"/> Stone <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete Block <input type="checkbox"/> c. Metal: Iron <input type="checkbox"/> Steel <input type="checkbox"/> d. Other: 3. <u>Wall Cladding</u> : Clapboard <input type="checkbox"/> Board & Batten <input type="checkbox"/> Wood Shingle <input type="checkbox"/> Shiplap <input type="checkbox"/> Novelty <input type="checkbox"/> Asbestos Shingle <input type="checkbox"/> Aluminum Siding <input type="checkbox"/> Asphalt Shingle <input type="checkbox"/> Vinyl Siding <input type="checkbox"/> Brick Veneer <input type="checkbox"/> Stone Veneer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: standing seam metal 4. <u>Roof Structure</u> Truss: Wood <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Iron <input type="checkbox"/> Steel <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 5. <u>Roof Covering</u> : Slate <input type="checkbox"/> Wood Shingle <input type="checkbox"/> Asphalt Shingle <input type="checkbox"/> Sheet Metal <input type="checkbox"/> Built Up <input type="checkbox"/> Rolled <input type="checkbox"/> Tile <input type="checkbox"/> Standing Seam <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: 6. <u>Engineering Structure</u> : 7. Other:	
Appendages: Porches <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Towers <input type="checkbox"/> Cupolas <input type="checkbox"/> Dormers <input type="checkbox"/> Chimneys <input type="checkbox"/> Sheds <input type="checkbox"/> Ells <input type="checkbox"/> Wings <input type="checkbox"/> Bay Window <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	
Roof Styles: Gable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hip <input type="checkbox"/> Shed <input type="checkbox"/> Flat <input type="checkbox"/> Mansard <input type="checkbox"/> Gambrel <input type="checkbox"/> Jerkinhead <input type="checkbox"/> Saw Tooth <input type="checkbox"/> With Monitor <input type="checkbox"/> With Bellcast <input type="checkbox"/> With Parapet <input type="checkbox"/> With False Front <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	
Number of Stories: 1 Entrance Location: central north facade Number of Bays: 5x2 Approximate Dimensions: 30' w x 70' l	

ADDITIONAL ARCHITECTURAL OR STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTION:

The building at 9596 VT Route 36, East Fairfield, is a one-story, rectangular 70' x 30', shallow gable roof, wood-frame building with standing seam metal siding, a standing seam metal roof, and a full width shed roof porch. The building sits on a foundation of concrete piers and wood posts. A large central entrance that resembles a sliding freight door is accessed from the front porch (north elevation). A large window opening is to the left of the front door. The side (west and east) elevations of the building have five three-pane small, hopper windows set just under the eaves. The east elevation has a boarded up double hung window at the northeast corner. This area of the building shows damage caused by a recent vehicular crash. On the rear elevation is an outline of the small addition that was removed. Its gable roof ghost lines are visible, as well as a large freight door, similar to the one on the façade. See Figures 6-10.

The interior of the building is simple. Original wood flooring remains and a drop ceiling has been added. Wallboard covers the wood sheathing. A small office is located at the front of the building (this is where the double hung window is located). The office walls are clad in flushboard siding and a ladder is constructed into the wall. A second section across from the office has been walled off, presumably for separate storage. A large evaporator remains in the building, a remnant from its days as a storage for the Soule Company. See Figures 11-12.

RELATED RESOURCES ON THE PROPERTY:

The building sits on the east side of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail and within the LVRT and former railroad ROW.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW:

LVRT Brief History:

The LVRT encompasses the former 93-mile railroad corridor in northern Vermont between Swanton and St. Johnsbury. The LVRT includes the former railroad right-of-way (ROW), ballast, and associated features of the now-defunct Lamoille County Railroad (LCRR; also called the LVRR). The LVRR began as a segment of the Portland and Ogdensburg Railroad-Vermont Division, which was constructed between 1869 and 1875. In 1916, the line, under new management, was renamed the St. Johnsbury and Lake Champlain Railroad (SJ & LC RR). In 1948, the railroad was reorganized as the St. Johnsbury and Lamoille County Railroad. When it ceased full operation in 1972, it was known as the Lamoille County Railroad. Excursion trains ran in the 1980s, but the track was not maintained. The LVRR ceased operation in 1994, and in 2002 the State of Vermont began the process of converting the LVRR to the LVRT.

The Lamoille Valley Railroad is historically significant as a good example of rural, east-west rail service in northern New England. The railroad contributed to the development of rail communities such as Sheldon Junction, Morrisville, Hardwick, and St. Johnsbury. The railroad provided valuable freight and passenger service to the communities along its route, stimulating industrial, commercial, and agricultural growth.

Ralston Building History:

The previous building in this location was the East Fairfield depot, constructed ca. 1898 (see Figure 2). The East Fairfield depot was removed in the 1940s. The nearby Sheldon Junction depot was removed in the early 1940s (per rail valuation sheets). Passenger rail service decreased in popularity in the 1930/1940s and at that time, the St. J & LC RR was facing bankruptcy, and the Boston & Maine acquired the St. J & LC RR. Needing to cut costs,

some buildings were removed. Additional evidence of this removal date is found in a set of highway plans that date to 1950. The plans show a different building in this location (“feed store” – see Figure 3) with a small “RR Sta” addition.

Given that the building on these plans does not match the footprint of the original depot, it is fair to assume that the depot had been removed by 1950, and perhaps the railroad leased space in this small addition. Passenger service ended in 1956 on the St. J & LC RR, at which time this portion of the building would no longer be needed. It does not appear in the 1962 aerial (see Figure 4); the small station appendage had been removed by that time.

The railroad valuation plans note “Ralston” on this building (see Figure 5), a reference to the Ralston Company (later Ralston Purina), whose main Vermont factory was headquartered in St. Johnsbury, VT – one end of the St. J & LC RR. Ralston operated from 1948-1974 in St. Johnsbury and had multiple buildings along the St. J & LC RR to serve as warehouses or stores, including one in nearby Sheldon Junction and this one in East Fairfield. During this time, the building served as a feed store. Feed stores located adjacent to the railroad in villages were common because these buildings were served by the railroad. With additional feed stores/warehouses adjacent to the rail line, it is fair to assume that this building would have benefited from the railroad.

In 1991, the Soule family of East Fairfield purchased the former Ralston building, and the Allen Soule Company used it for storage. The company bought and sold evaporators. In 2024, after the Soule family, the East Fairfield Station LLC (Brendan O’Shea and Kyle Saltman) acquired the building through a quitclaim deed. No work on the building occurred at this time. VTtrans purchased the building in 2024.

REFERENCE CITATIONS:

“Fairfield S 53(5)” 1950 roadway plan set, Vermont Agency of Transportation History Engineering Plans,
<https://vtrans.maps.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=889f6a1cb40a4e3fb2fc708109426a15>.

LVRT East Fairfield, 9596 VT Route 36 – Improvement Appraisal Report. Vermont Agency of Transportation. August 5, 2024.

Programmatic Agreement Among: Federal Highway Association, The Vermont Agency of Transportation, and the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers, Inc. For the Proposed: Lamoille Valley Rail Trail (LVRT) – Caledonia, Franklin, Lamoille, Orleans, and Washington Counties, Vermont, December 2010.

“Railroad in Bankruptcy: St. Johnsbury & Lake Champlain Railroad Appeals to Federal Court.” *The New York Times*. New York. January 31, 1945, p. 32.

“Railway Set-Up Approved: St. Johnsbury & Lake Champlain Goes to the Boston & Maine.” *The New York Times*. New York. November 9, 1946, p. 28.

Thomas, Matt, phone conversation with author, April 14, 2025.

Vermont Center for Geographic Information 1962 aerial imagery, <https://vcgi.vermont.gov/data-release/1962-aerial-imagery-now-available-statewide-non-georeferenced>.

Valuation Sheet Reference, VTrans, <https://apps.rail.vermont.gov/map-portal/>.

VHB. *Lamoille Valley Rail Trail – Resource Identification Report*, June 2010.

SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT: Open ☐ Woodland ☐
Scattered Buildings ☒ Moderately Built Up ☐ Densely Built Up ☐
Residential ☒ Commercial ☒ Agricultural ☐ Industrial ☐ Mixed Use ☐
Roadside Strip Development ☒ Other: - *East Fairfield Village*

RECORDED BY: Kaitlin O'Shea, Senior Preservation Planner

ORGANIZATION: VHB

DATE RECORDED: May 6, 2025

LOCATION MAP

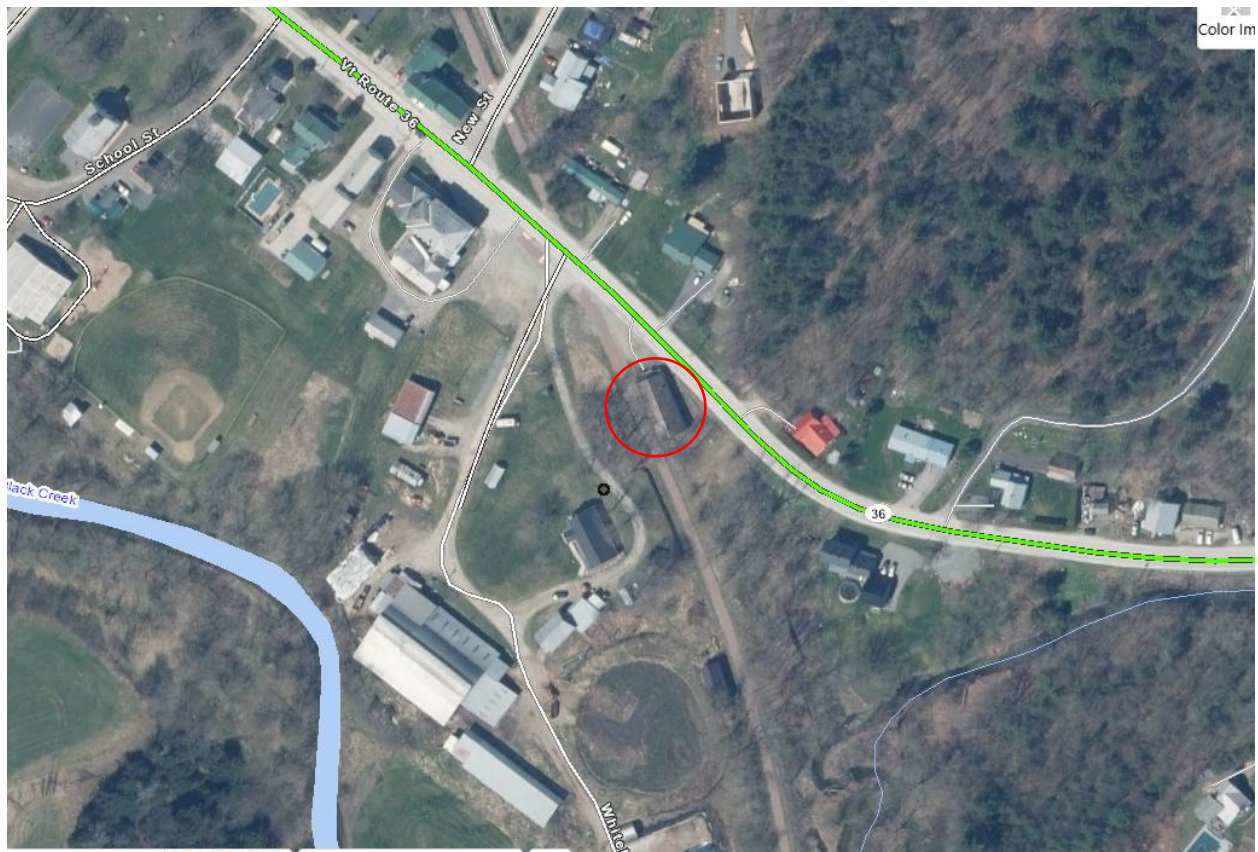


Figure 1: East Fairfield, VT. The building in the red circle is the metal clad building within the LVRT ROW.

HISTORIC IMAGES



Figure 2: The historic East Fairfield depot, no longer extant. The building in the center of the photo remains – 9534 VT Route 36. The railroad runs diagonally across the image, on the opposite side of the depot in this image.

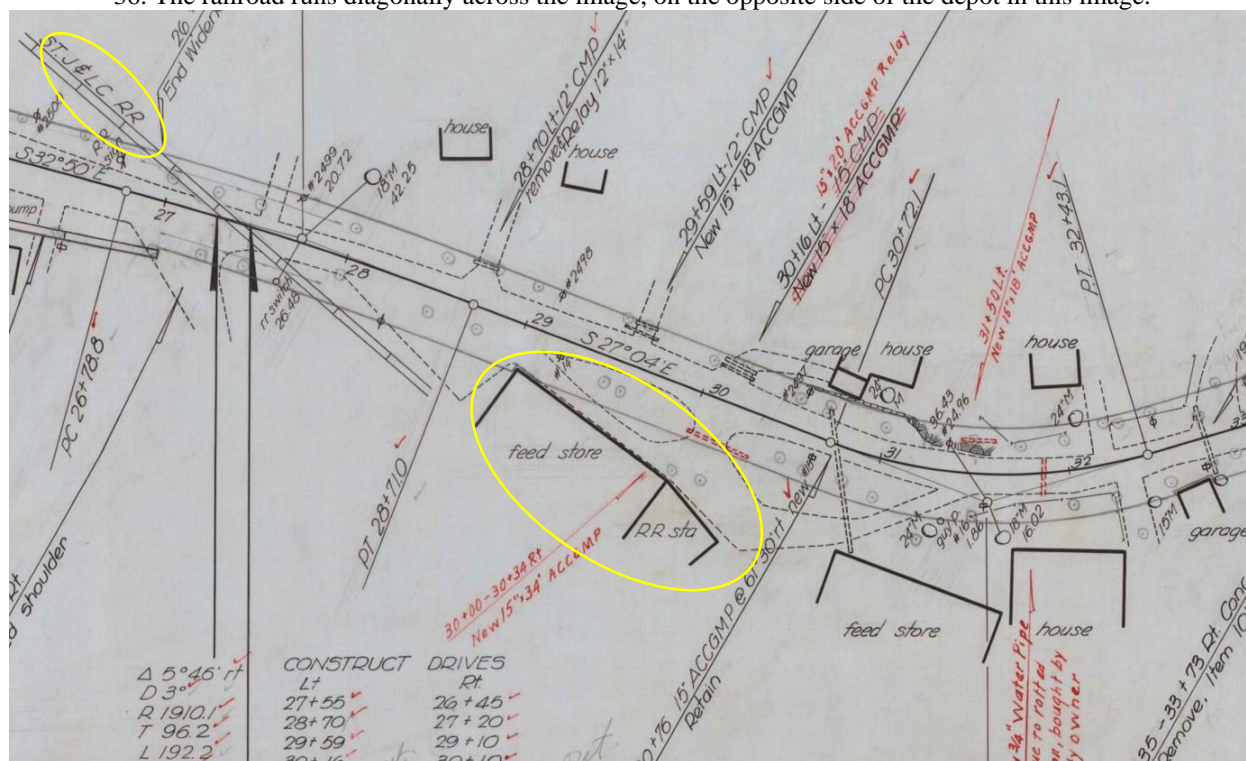


Figure 3: Vermont Agency of Transportation plans, 1950. VT Route 36 is the roadway through the center of the image. Note the St. J & LC RR as well as the “feed store” and attached “RR Sta”. The second feed store is no longer extant.



Figure 4: 1962 aerial, VCGI, shows only a rectangular building without its small angled “RR Sta” addition. The larger feed store remains at this time. It was removed ca. 2000.

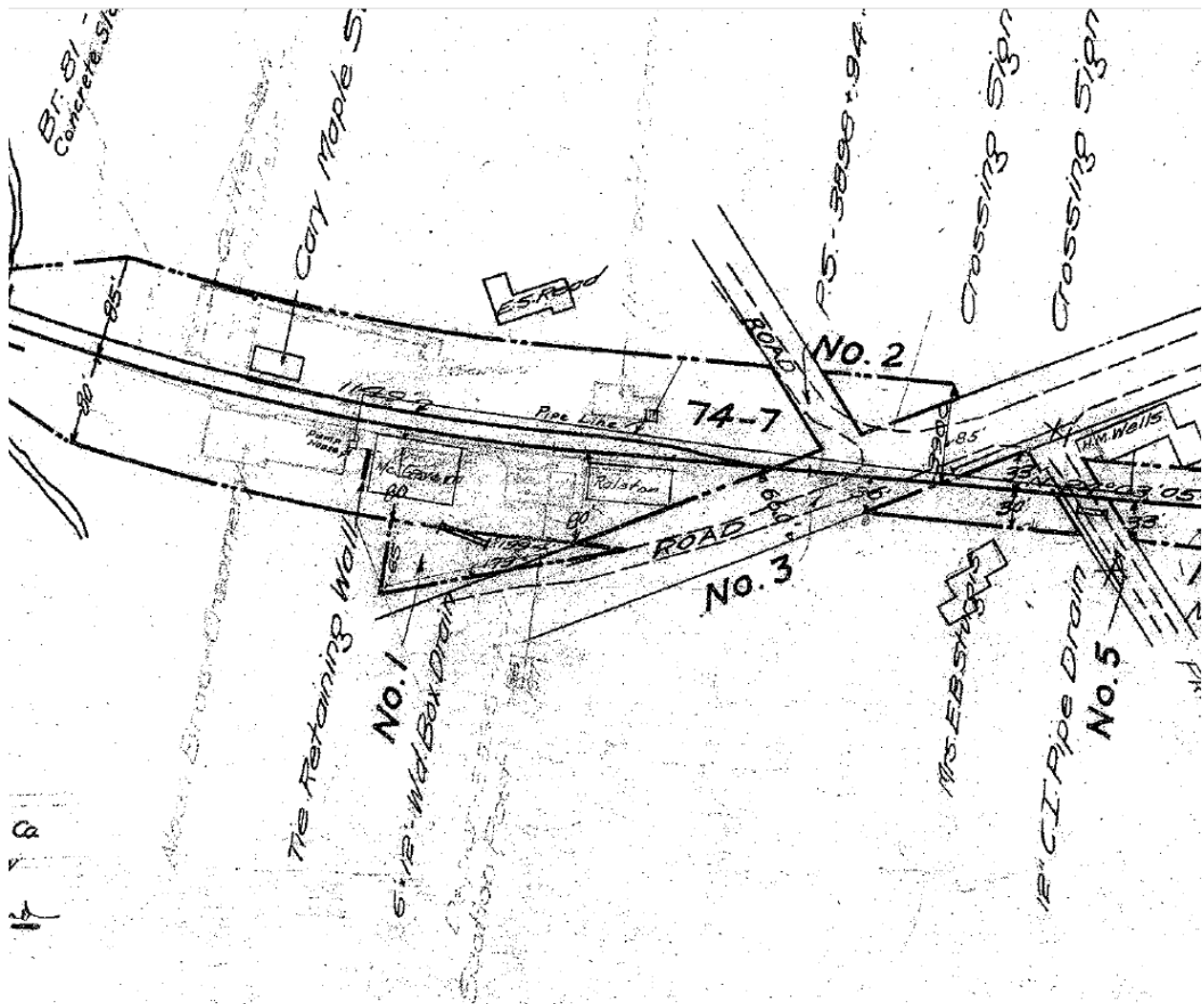


Figure 5: Railroad valuation sheets. Note the “Ralston” building and “Cary Maple Sugar Co.” buildings, which still stand. The “McGovern” building was removed by 2000. And grayed out in this image, at left, is a “Creamery” building. The building between the “McGovern” and “Ralston” buildings is not quite legible and no information is known about it at this time.

PHOTOGRAPHS



Figure 6: Ralston building façade. Note the platform and central, wide freight door. The front porch likely served as the loading platform. Photo by VTrans, April 2025.



Figure 7: Rear of the Ralston building shows the outline of the former “RR Sta” addition. Note a large freight door left of center. Photo by VTrans, April 2025.



Figure 8: East elevation of the Ralston building. Evidence of a recent collision is seen at right. Photo by VTrans, April 2025.



Figure 9: West (trackside / trail side) elevation of the Ralston building. Photo by VTrans, April 2025.



Figure 10: View of the Ralston building from VT Route 36. Photo by VTrans, April 2025.



Figure 11: Interior of the Ralston building, looking to the rear. Photo by VTrans, April 2025.



Figure 12: Interior of the Ralston building, looking to the front of the building. The storage area at left is not original. The office at right is original. Photo by VTrans, April 2025.



Figure 13: Google Street View (July 2023) shows the LVRT crossing (in blue). The yellow line shows the prior railroad crossing, and the route that many trail users take. The red circle shows 9596 VT Route 36. Note the curve in VT Route 36 just beyond 9596.