

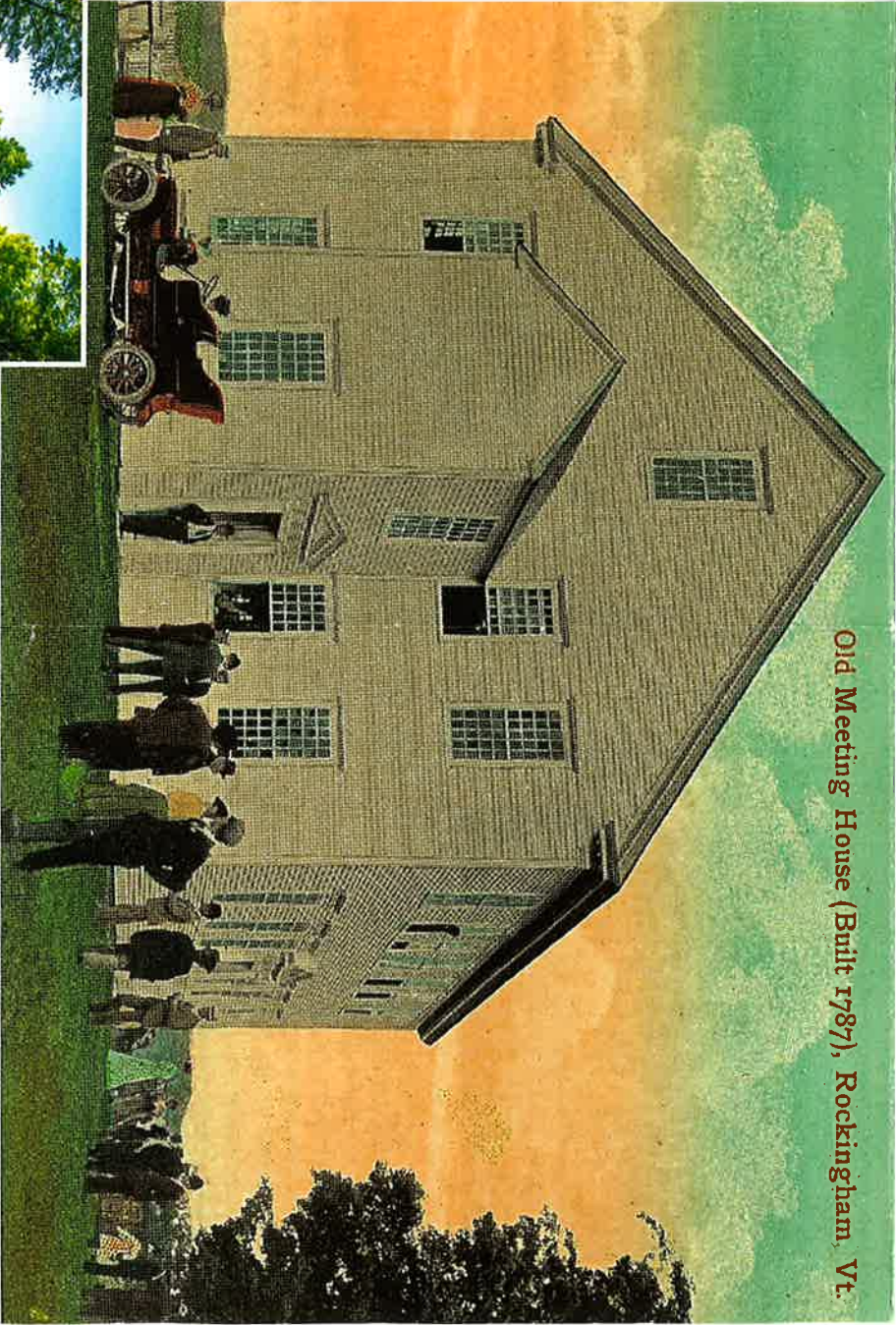
Walking Historic Rockingham Village Tour



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An old grindstone from the
days when mills powered
the village sits on the Divoll
property.

The vault below
the meeting house
was used to store the
recently deceased
when the ground
was frozen.



Old Meeting House (Built 1787), Rockingham, Vt.



The Rockingham Meeting House,

built in 1787 to serve the growing settlement around it, is the starting point of this walking tour of the Town of Rockingham's original village center, which is on the National Register of Historic Places. This historic district contains 10 historic houses, a Grange hall, old schoolhouse and seven historic outbuildings, including six barns and sheds. The Rockingham Meeting House itself is a National Historic Landmark, along with its accompanying burial grounds, hearse house and vault.

You are invited to follow the map and learn more about the area's varied and historic architecture – some of which has survived for more than two centuries. This is a short, non-strenuous walk that directs visitors along both Meeting House Road and Rockingham Hill Road. These are both town roads and visitors should exercise appropriate caution and yield to motor vehicles.

The meeting house today is owned by the town of Rockingham and operated as a museum, open daily from Memorial Day to Columbus Day. For more information about the Rockingham Meeting House, please consult the brochure devoted solely to this building. Copies of the book, *The Old Meeting House and First Church in Rockingham, Vermont*, are also available for sale at the meeting house.

This walking tour has been researched and printed by the Rockingham Historic Preservation Commission, a Certified Local Government Commission according to guidelines established by the U.S. Department of the Interior. The local commission's goals are to preserve the town's history and architecture and foster an appreciation for the past among both residents and visitors alike. For more information, visit our website at www.rockthf.org or contact the town Historic Preservation Coordinator at clg@rockthf.org.

When the first settlers of European descent arrived in Vermont in the mid-1750s, they were confronted by a densely forested wilderness. As the Town of Rockingham was laid out by early surveyors, they located its main settlement – Rockingham Village – on an expansive elevated terrace above the Connecticut River Valley, as it was easily defensible against attack by the French and their Native American allies to the north, and less prone to flooding. Bordered by the Williams River, the village also had a reliable source of water for drinking, agriculture and water-powered industry.

During that time, the French and Indian War was raging between British America and New France (Canada), with Vermont a central part of what was the North American theater of the European Seven Years' War of 1756-63. Although the town was chartered in 1753, it wasn't until the Treaty of Paris was signed in 1763, ending the hostilities, that British colonists began making their way north from Connecticut and Massachusetts – where prime farmland had become scarce – to settle here permanently.

Rockingham Village initially served as the commercial and social hub of the town, which also included the villages of Bartonsville, Bellows Falls, Cambridgeport and Saxtons River. In 1835 there were three taverns, two stores, two blacksmiths' shops and a large tannery clustered around the Rockingham Meeting House, to be joined in future years by additional businesses and hotels.

A Quieter Future

This bustling era for the Rockingham Village community was not to last, however. With defense against attacks no longer a pressing concern, by the early 1800s Bellows Falls began to emerge as the most desirable part of town, with residents lured to the area by lush farmland and the Connecticut River itself, which offered abundant fishing, greater water power for various mills and the ability to transport goods far more quickly than by land. The completion of the Bellows Falls Canal in 1802 – the first to be built in North America – allowed boats to bypass the Great Falls and cemented Bellows Falls' position as the commercial and residential center of town. The development of the railroads in the mid-1800s brought even more industry to Bellows Falls, including numerous paper mills that employed thousands of the town's residents over time.

Still, Rockingham Village remained an important part of the town, if only because the Rockingham Meeting House and town offices were there. In 1839 the meeting house was abandoned as a place of worship, although town meetings continued to be held there until 1869,

when the town offices were relocated to Bellows Falls. Many of the businesses in Rockingham Village were leveled by a disastrous fire in 1908, which also claimed six historic homes. A number of the homes seen today were built on the sites of those burned-out earlier dwellings.

Rockingham Village was further isolated when the relocation of Route 103 was completed in the early 1960s, eliminating the need to use Meeting House Road as a major thoroughfare for traffic.

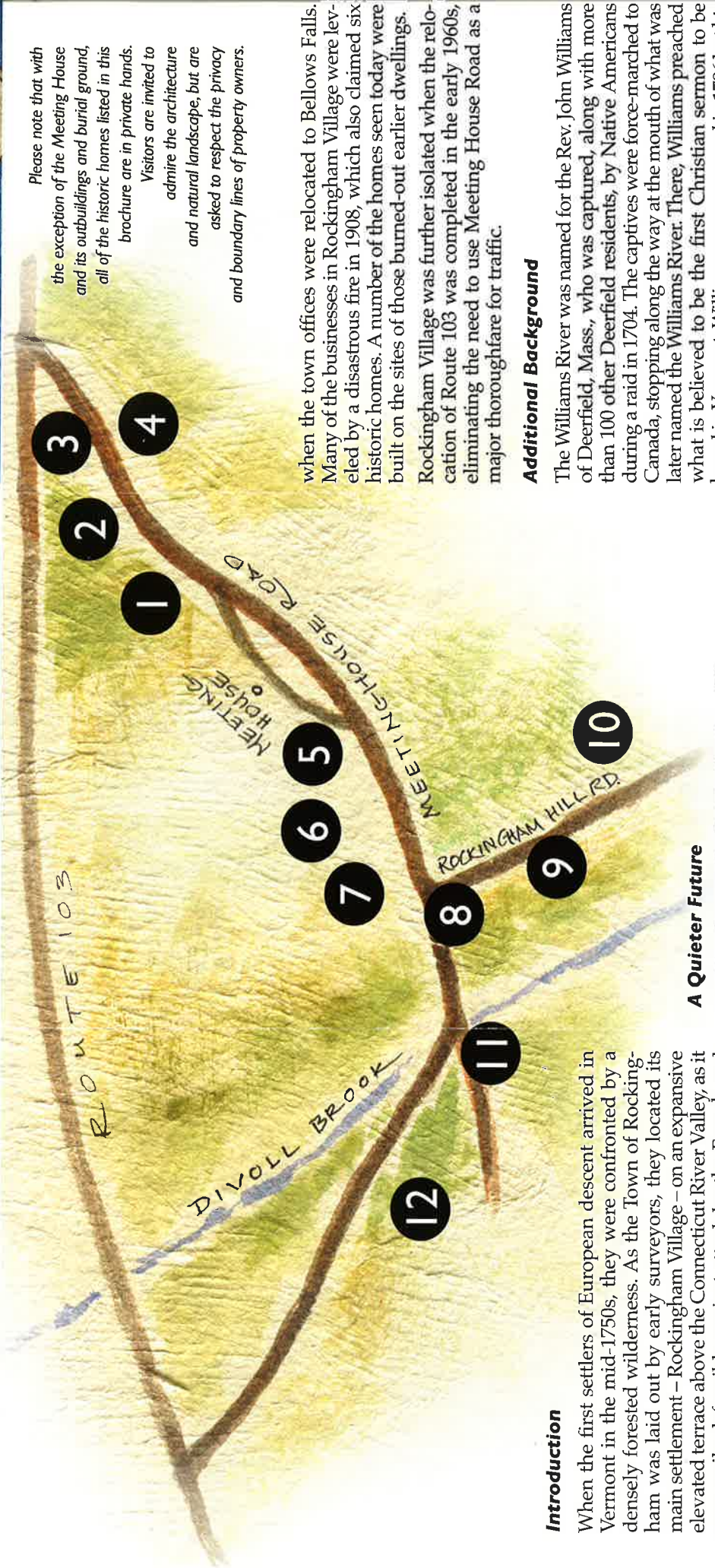
Additional Background

The Williams River was named for the Rev. John Williams of Deerfield, Mass., who was captured, along with more than 100 other Deerfield residents, by Native Americans during a raid in 1704. The captives were force-marched to Canada, stopping along the way at the mouth of what was later named the Williams River. There, Williams preached what is believed to be the first Christian sermon to be heard in Vermont. Williams was ransomed in 1706 but his wife and several of his children did not survive. A marker along Route 103 marks the spot where it is thought Williams gave that sermon.

It should be noted that some Native American tribes fought for the English during the French and Indian War, although the Abenaki Indians of Vermont allied themselves with the French.

Vermont as we know it today did not exist during the early years of European settlement. Alternately claimed by Massachusetts, New Hampshire and New York, the governors of those states handed out charters and land grants – sometimes for the same properties – until Vermonters took matters into their own hands. In 1777, Vermont issued its own Declaration of Independence and Constitution and remained an independent republic for the duration of the American Revolution, although Vermonters played a vital role in fighting for independence from Great Britain. Vermont was admitted to the United States in 1791, becoming the 14th state to join the Union and the first state that was not one of the original 13 Colonies.

Please note that with the exception of the Meeting House and its outbuildings and burial ground, all of the historic homes listed in this brochure are in private hands. Visitors are invited to admire the architecture and natural landscape, but are asked to respect the privacy and boundary lines of property owners.





1. Elijah and Mercy Knight House,
9 Meeting House Road

This home was built circa 1806 and is an excellent example of the Federal style, from its symmetrical Georgian plan to the hip roof, molded trim, regularly spaced windows and front doorway.

Federal style characterizes much of the classical architecture built in the newly founded United States between circa 1780 and 1830. American Federalist architecture typically uses plain surfaces with detail generally confined to panels, tablets and friezes.

Elijah Knight was a lieutenant and captain of Vermont military companies and served briefly as Rockingham's town clerk. He was the town's first lawyer, admitted to the bar in 1796. Knight was admitted to the Vermont Supreme Court in 1803.



2. Jehiel and Mary Webb House and barn,
7 Meeting House Road



This intact Georgian-style home is probably the oldest house in the historic district as well as one of the oldest in the entire town, dating to circa 1775. The home is an excellent and rare example of a Georgian-style Vermont home. While this style varies, it is generally marked by symmetry and proportion, with centrally placed front doors. There have been no major alterations and the front door is original.

The house was built for Jehiel and Mary Webb. Jehiel (1745-1813) moved to Westminster, Vt., in 1765 and in 1774 purchased 85 acres in Rockingham Village.

The property also contains a circa 1850 English barn, so called because it was built on the English model of a three-bay barn, and it is the only barn of that style in the historic district.



3. Ernest and Marjorie Odette House and henhouse,
3 Meeting House Road

This neo-Cape Cod home was constructed in 1941. The Cape Cod style originated with the colonists who came from England to New England, and adapted their traditional British building style to meet the challenge of Vermont's harsh winters. Using local materials, settlers built houses featuring massive central chimneys and low-ceilinged rooms to conserve heat. Steep roofs minimized the snow load while shutters on the windows held back heavy winds. The Cape Cod features a symmetrical appearance, with the front door in the center of the house.

The accompanying henhouse was likely built at the same time as the main block, but was moved in about 1957 to accommodate the relocation of Vermont Route 103, which the home now borders.



4. Jonas and Betsey Fremont House,
4 Meeting House Road

Built circa 1851, this 1½-story wood-frame Greek Revival home is one of only two examples of Greek Revival architecture within the historic district and the only front gable house. The house was constructed for Jonas and Betsey Fremont, although there is some confusion over whether the couple ever actually lived in it.

Greek Revival came into prominence in the late 1700s and early 1800s as interest in the civilization of ancient Greece peaked. The style was seen as a celebration of the democratic principles that guided ancient Greece. In Ver-

mont and throughout New England, the side-passage, front-gable house was introduced, incorporating Grecian doorway moldings, window frames and columns supporting porch roofs. The National style, as it came to be known, became the universal fashion for public buildings, churches, banks and town halls.



5. Pleasant Valley Grange Hall,
13 Meeting House Road

The grange, built in 1908, is a typical example of an early 20th-century vernacular grange hall. It was built on the site of an 18th-century Cape Cod-style house that burned in the fire of 1908. (Before the fire, the grange occupied a hall in the Lovell Hotel, which also burned to the ground that year.)

Vernacular architecture, as its name suggests, was a term given to any construction based on local traditions and the kinds of construction materials available.

This grange hall is an example of the many granges that were built around the rural parts of the country after the national Grange movement formed in 1867. The building is now privately owned.



6. Chester and Emily Hadwen House,
15 Meeting House Road

This 1½-story Colonial Revival bungalow was constructed in 1910 and is a very good example of this style. Before the devastating fire of 1908, there were four early 19th-century buildings on the property.

Colonial Revival sought to emulate America's architecture from the period around the Revolutionary War, which drew strongly from the Georgian architecture of Great Britain. Structures are typically two stories, have a symmetrical front facade with an accented doorway, and evenly spaced windows on either side of it. The Colonial Revival Bungalow style is characterized by a square-shaped main block, pyramidal roof with large hip-roofed dormer and bracketed cornice, and paired windows.

Chester and Emily Hadwen moved into the home after spending nearly 30 years working a large farm on Parker Hill Road, just north of Rockingham Village.



7. Frank and Mary Gammell House,
19 Meeting House Road

Built circa 1938, this 1½-story wood-frame vernacular Colonial Revival is virtually symmetrical, with the exception of the placement of the two front doors. The home boasts all the attributes associated with a vernacular Colonial Revival and is an excellent example of the style. The home was built on the site of the Lovell Hotel, which burned in 1908.



8. Dr. Alexander and Rhoda Campbell House,
3 Rockingham Hill Road

Also known as the "Corner House" since it sits at the corner of Meeting House and Rockingham Hill Roads, this is an 1804 Federalist style home. The two-story building is unusual in that it has an L-shaped main block with two front entrances, one facing each street. Judging by the Green Revival doorway facing Rockingham Hill Road, it is believed this section of the L was constructed in the mid-19th century.



9. Middle School District Schoolhouse,
13 Rockingham Hill Road

The brick schoolhouse, called "School No. 3," was probably constructed in 1807, on land sold to the Committee of the "Middle School District in Rockingham" for \$20. However, the deed of sale noted that there was another school on the property already, so this may have replaced an earlier school on the site. The town at one time had 19 different schools.

The schoolhouse is probably the oldest surviving schoolhouse in town. It is also the only brick structure in the historic district. A wood-frame addition dates to about 1980, and was built to replace an earlier addition.

The schoolhouse closed in the mid-1950s and was converted to a private residence.



10. John Cooper House, 38 Rockingham Hill Road

John Cooper bought this quarter-acre parcel in 1804 and this modified Cape Cod home was built circa 1805. It was probably originally a Cape Cod house that faced south, with different window and door openings. There is a rear ell and two shed dormers at the front roof slope, both modern additions.

After Cooper's death in 1812 the home was sold to a member of the Pulsipher family. Later land records show it was purchased in 1873 by an African American woman named Betsy Jackson, who had been listed in earlier census records as a "pauper" (1850) a washerwoman (1860), and a domestic servant (1870).



11. Fay-Pulsipher House, 30 Meeting House Road

This house proved difficult for architectural historians to date, but it is believed to have been constructed circa 1812 for John Fay, who operated a blacksmith shop just northeast of the house. In 1814 Fay sold the house and shop to David Pulsipher Jr. and Elias Pulsipher, both descendants of David Pulsipher, one of the first settlers.

The 2½-story wood-frame building is a Federal-style home with Georgian plan, and is an excellent example of the genre.



12. Manasseh and Charlotte Divoll House, small horse and carriage barrn,
34 Meeting House Road

This two-story wood-frame Greek Revival was one of many homes in the village that were constructed and owned by members of the Divoll family over the years. Manasseh Divoll (1787-1863) moved to Rockingham from Massachusetts in 1806.

Divoll began buying property in the village in 1814, and during his lifetime he probably owned more property here than anyone else. The Greek Revival side-gable house was built circa 1829.

The small horse and carriage barn, constructed circa 1875, is the only historic outbuilding remaining on the property.