

National Historic Landmark  
Documentation for:  
**Emma Willard House NHL**  
**Middlebury, VT**

Date of NHL Designation:  
**December 21, 1965**

NRIS:  
**66000798**

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

THEME: Education

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

STATE:	Vermont
COUNTY:	Addison
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) (Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

**1. NAME**

COMMON: Emma Willard House

AND/OR HISTORIC: Emma Willard House

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER: 131 South Main Street (Vermont Route 30)

CITY OR TOWN: Middlebury

STATE: Vermont

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: at large

COUNTY: Addison

CODE: 050

STATE CODE: 001

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious		
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME: President and Fellows of Middlebury College  
(contact: James D. Ross, Business Manager)

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Middlebury 05753

STATE: Vermont

CODE: 050

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Town Clerk's Office (Middlebury Land Records, Volume 56, Page 416)

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Middlebury

STATE: Vermont

CODE: 050

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY: none

DATE OF SURVEY:

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE:

CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Vermont

COUNTY: Addison

ENTRY NUMBER:

DATE:

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Emma Willard House, constructed in 1809 for Dr. John Willard, is located on the southeast side of South Main Street opposite the campus of Middlebury College in Middlebury, Vermont. The house stands near the street on an irregularly shaped lot approximately 2.1 acres in size. A well-kept lawn extends to the northeast and southeast of the house; the portion of the lot southwest of the house has been hard-roped to provide a parking area. At the rear of the area (south of the house near the property line) stands a small wooden storage barn with a pitched roof.

The Emma Willard House is composed of three units: the main block; a wing with separate entrance attached to the rear portion of the southwest elevation of that block; and a small ell extending southeast from the rear of the wing. Both the main block and the wing are brick, two stories in height, with hipped roofs broken by interior chimneys. The frame and clapboard ell is a story-and-a-half in height with a pitched roof. All three units are set on a low stone foundation. The entire house is painted a cream color with white trim.

Decorative detail on the exterior of the house is minimal. Flat arches top the windows and entrances on both the main block and the wing; louvered blinds hang at the windows. The two doorways are flanked by narrow rectangular lights, three on either side; above each is a large horizontal light set between two smaller vertical lights. During the nineteenth century, full-length porches were added to the front elevation of the main block and the wing but these have now been removed.

The interior simplicity of the house complements that of its exterior; here decorative detail is limited largely to the plain wooden mouldings around the windows and doors. Most of the rooms have fireplaces; in the parlor, to the right (southwest) of the main entrance, the windows retain their original interior shutters. The only significant structural change in the interior of the house has been the removal of a wall, creating one space from the two original rooms occupying the first-floor rear of the main block.

Boundary

Boundaries of the National Historic Landmark: the boundaries of this Landmark are those of the property as acquired by Middlebury College in 1959 and recorded in Book 56, Page 416 of the Land Records, Middlebury Town Clerk's Office: beginning at the edge of South Main Street at the westerly corner of said property, which is the northerly corner of lands of the President and Fellows of Middlebury College adjoining the highway at this location, thence along the southeasterly side of the highway 327 feet, more or less, to lands of Grant and Kathryn Harnest, thence 224.7 feet, more or less, along the line marking the southwesterly boundary of lands of said Harnests described in the deed to them from the President and Fellows of Middlebury College recorded at Volume 53, Page 534, of Middlebury Land Records, to lands referred to in that deed as being retained by the President and Fellows of Middlebury College, thence

(Continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**6 SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1809, 1814-1819

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Military		
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This two-story brick building was from 1809 until 1819 the home of Emma Hart Willard, an influential pioneer in the development of women's education in the United States. Mrs. Willard's Address to the Public; Particularly to the Members of the Legislature of New York, Proposing a Plan for Improving Female Education, presented in 1818 and published the following year, has been termed the "Magna Carta of female education". The basic ideas concerning women's education expressed in the Plan were derived from Mrs. Willard's experience with the Middlebury Female Seminary, which she operated in her home from 1814 until 1819 and for which she developed her own lectures and teaching methods.

Since 1959, the Willard House has been owned by Middlebury College and is maintained in excellent condition. It is used by the College as an admissions office, but is open to visitors upon request.

History

Intellectual interests stimulated Emma Willard throughout her life. Born Emma Hart on February 23, 1787, in Berlin, Connecticut, she grew up in a family that appreciated books and first taught while completing her own education. Subsequently she moved to Middlebury, Vermont, where she supervised a female academy from 1807 until 1809. In that year she married Dr. John Willard; she was 22 and his third wife, he was 50.

Though apparently fated to be a housewife for the rest of her life, Mrs. Willard retained her interest in female schooling. She acquired a thorough knowledge of the program of Middlebury College, which was just across the street from her home, and realized all the more the inadequacy of women's education.

In 1814, financial difficulties thrust Mrs. Willard back into teaching; after overcoming her husband's objections, she opened the Middlebury Female seminary in her home in the spring of that year. The venture marks a turning point in her life, for out of this experience emerged her basic ideas regarding the education of young women.

Mrs. Willard devoted almost all of her energies to the school. Teaching ten to twelve hours a day, she gradually expanded the usual female curriculum of music, drawing, and penmanship by adding courses in mathematics,

(Continued)

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Barnard, Henry, ed. Memoirs of Teachers, Educators, and Promoters and Benefactors of Education, Literature and Science (New York, 1859).  
 Lord, John. "The Life of Emma Willard", Dictionary of American Biography (New York, 1873).  
 Lutz, Alma. Emma Willard, Daughter of Democracy (New York, 1929).

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		UTM 18.646330.4874110 ° ' "		
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 2.1

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: Polly M. Rettig, Historian, Landmark Review Project; original form prepared by S. S. Bradford, Historian, 10/21/65

ORGANIZATION: Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service      DATE: 12/2/74

STREET AND NUMBER: 1100 L Street NW.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington      STATE: D.C.      CODE: 11

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name: N/A

National Historic Landmark

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) Landmark

Designated: \_\_\_\_\_ date

*2/1/75*

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) Boundary Certified

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ date

*6-30-75*

ATTEST:

Chief, List & Arch. Surveys

Boundary Affirmed:

Keeper of The National Register

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ date

*7/7/75*

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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

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COUNTY Addison	
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(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS)  
(Number all entries)

(Continuation Sheet)

7. Description: (1)

Emma Willard House

southerly along lands of said College 73 feet, more or less, to lands of William and Mary Upson at a point marked by an iron pipe to which reference is made as marking the southwest corner of lands of said College in a deed to said Upsons from said College recorded November 26, 1947, at Volume 50, Page 99, of Middlebury Land Records, thence southwesterly 100 feet, more or less, along said Upson's line to a point marked by an iron stake, thence westerly 196 feet, more or less, along lands of said College acquired by deed from Walter E. Howard recorded February 6, 1912, at Volume 34, Page 690, to a corner therein, thence continuing northwesterly along said College lands 286 feet, more or less, to the point of beginning.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS)

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
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ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

8. Statement of Significance: (1)

Emma Willard House

history, and languages. She even ventured into philosophy. When Middlebury College refused to permit her girls to audit some classes there, she developed her own courses and teaching methods for those subjects. None of her pupils collapsed, as females were supposed to do when exposed to higher education; indeed, Mrs. Willard's school rapidly grew in popularity.

Inspired by the success of the school and deeply concerned about the quality of women's education in general, Mrs. Willard began to formulate her own program for female education. When completed, the Plan began forthrightly by stating that the education of young women needed reform. Because she intended to send the document to the New York State Legislature, she quickly disavowed the idea of creating a women's college, rather proposing a "Female Seminary". She then described the current shortcomings of female learning, suggested principles for such education, proposed a model female seminary, and ended by explaining the benefits of educating women. Apropos of her last point, she claimed that well-educated women would further the growth and brilliance of the American Republic. Hoping to stimulate state support, she presented her Plan to the New York Legislature in 1818. Some legislators applauded the Plan, but most felt that the Republic needed only educated men and Mrs. Willard's plea for support failed. The following year, Mrs. Willard published the Plan at her own expense.

Refusing to allow the Legislature's reaction to defeat her and still hoping to gain some state aid for her Plan, Mrs. Willard transferred her seminary from Middlebury to Waterford, New York, in 1819. No state aid came, but support did come from the citizens of Troy, New York, who offered to provide a building for Mrs. Willard's seminary. Thus, in 1821, classes began at Mrs. Willard's Troy Female Seminary. Once again, she worked exceedingly hard, teaching those subjects for which she could not afford to hire instructors. She constantly expanded the curriculum and wrote textbooks herself; her volumes on history and geography eventually came into wide use.

Though Mrs. Willard retired in 1838, turning over management of the seminary to her son, she did not abandon her interest in education. She cooperated with Henry Barnard in Connecticut and helped to improve that state's public schools. Mrs. Willard also travelled throughout the United States to speak in behalf of improving female education. In addition, she supported the betterment of opportunities for women as teachers, stressing the need for higher salaries and improved classroom facilities. Mrs. Willard died on April 15, 1870.





The Emma Willard House, Middlebury, Vermont

National Park Service Photo, 1965



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

STATE Vermont	
COUNTY Addison	
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ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON: Emma Willard House  
AND/OR HISTORIC: Emma Willard House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
131 South Main Street (vermont Route 30)

CITY OR TOWN:  
Middlebury

STATE: Vermont	CODE 050	COUNTY: Addison	CODE 001
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3. PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT: Polly M. Rettig, Landmark Review Project  
DATE OF PHOTO: September, 1974  
NEGATIVE FILED AT: Historic Sites Survey  
1100 L Street NW, Washington, D.C., 20240

4. IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.  
exterior view from the northeast showing rear of main block and ell



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

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050

COUNTY:

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3. PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT: Polly M. Rettig, Landmark Review Project

DATE OF PHOTO: September, 1974

NEGATIVE FILED AT: Historic Sites Survey

1100 L Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20240

4. IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

view from the southwest showing front and side elevations of main block and wing