

National Historic Landmark and
National Register
Documentation for:
**Justin Smith Morrill
Homestead
Strafford, VT**

Date of NHL Designation: **September 22, 1960**

NRIS: **66000795**

Date of National Register Listing: **November 15, 1966**

NRIS: **66000795**

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Justin Smith Morrill Homestead

AND/OR COMMON

Justin Smith Morrill Homestead

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Morrill Highway (east side, south of village common)

CITY, TOWN

Strafford

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

at large

STATE

Vermont

CODE

050

COUNTY

Orange

CODE

017

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

STRUCTURE

SITE

OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC

PRIVATE

BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

IN PROCESS

BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

OCCUPIED

UNOCCUPIED

WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

YES: RESTRICTED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

NO

PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE

COMMERCIAL

EDUCATIONAL

ENTERTAINMENT

GOVERNMENT

INDUSTRIAL

MILITARY

MUSEUM

PARK

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

RELIGIOUS

SCIENTIFIC

TRANSPORTATION

OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

State of Vermont, Division of Historic Sites

STREET & NUMBER

Pavilion Building

CITY, TOWN

Montpelier

VICINITY OF

STATE

Vermont

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Town Clerk's Office

STREET & NUMBER

Morrill Highway (no number)

CITY, TOWN

Strafford

STATE

Vermont

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey (Vermont-55)

DATE

1959

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress, Division of Prints and Photographs

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

District of Columbia

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

CHECK ONE

CHECK ONE

☐ EXCELLENT

☐ DETERIORATED

☒ UNALTERED*

☒ ORIGINAL SITE

☒ GOOD

☐ RUINS

☐ ALTERED

☐ MOVED DATE _____

☐ FAIR

☐ UNEXPOSED

* the only significant changes were made by Morrill

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Justin Smith Morrill Homestead stands on the lower portion of some 3 acres of sloping land located on the east side of Morrill Highway just south of the village common of Strafford, Vermont. The property to the south and west of the Homestead is occupied by private residences; that to the north is the site of Strafford's Morrill Memorial Library. The front edge of the Morrill property is marked by vertical flush-board fencing set between granite posts. A small stream flows along the northern edge of the site.

Designed by Morrill himself and constructed in 1848-51, the house is a very personal interpretation of the Gothic Revival style. Set on a low brick foundation, the 1 1/2-story building has exterior walls of horizontal flush-boarding and a steep gabled roof of slate; the plan is irregular with a projecting front bay and rear ell. Lathe and bandsaw cut-out decorations line the gable ends of the main portion of the house. Carved finials rise from the gable peaks and from the two dormers on the forward roof slope. At a later date, Morrill added a library on the southeast side of the house and extended the dining room and added a porch on the front; both additions carry crenelated parapets.

Gothic detailing appears throughout the interior of the house with the exception of the main parlor which is Greek Revival in character; all door and window trim is of hand-carved mahogany. On the right (southeast) of the 21-foot deep center hall are the parlor, music room, a bedroom, and the library; on the left are a dining room, breakfast room, and kitchen. The second floor contains four bedrooms in the main portion of the house and three servants' rooms in the ell. The contents of the house are largely original, ranging from oak and mahogany furniture of the mid-19th century to linens and kitchen implements.

Some rehabilitation of the Morrill Homestead has been necessary but this has consisted primarily of repainting and repapering the interior, repair of the roof, and replacement of deteriorated sections of the exterior trim. The small wooden barn or carriage shed which stands immediately east of the house is also in good condition. Further away to the north are a large horse barn and several wooden sheds, all in need of some repair. Beyond these is the farm pond. Traces of a circular carriage drive remain in the lawn in front of the house; other original landscape features have disappeared but could be restored since a plan of the grounds as laid out by Morrill exists in the University of Vermont Library.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE
__1600-1699	__ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	__MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
__1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION
__1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)
		__INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES construction:1848-51 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Justin Smith Morrill

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Justin Smith Morrill of Strafford, Vermont was the man immediately responsible for the two most important actions taken by the federal government in the field of higher education in the whole of the 19th century. As a member of the House of Representatives (1854-1866) and of the United States Senate (1866-1898), Morrill introduced and directed the final passage of the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890, which provided for the establishment and federal support of America's land-grant colleges.

The 1 1/2-story wooden Gothic Revival house which Morrill designed for himself and constructed in 1848-51 stands just south of the village common at Strafford. Although Morrill spent most of his time in Washington during his Congressional career, he retained the Vermont house until his death in 1898. The Morrill Homestead became the property of the State of Vermont, Division of Historic Sites, in 1969. The house remains relatively unaltered and its contents, including furniture, books, and personal memorabilia, are largely original. Maintained as a museum house, the Morrill Homestead is open to the public daily from Memorial Day through mid-October.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Justin Smith Morrill was born at Strafford, Vermont, on April 14, 1810. He attended the village school and neighboring academies until the age of fifteen, when he became a clerk in the village store. Morrill moved to Portland, Maine, in 1828 to learn merchandizing. He returned to Strafford in 1831 and began to operate the village store in partnership with his friend Jedediah H. Harris. The business prospered and by 1848 Morrill was able to retire to a quiet life of reading and farming. In that year he began construction of the Morrill Homestead, which he had designed in a very personal interpretation of the Gothic Revival style; the house was completed in time for his marriage to Ruth Barrell Swan on September 17, 1851. The couple had two sons.

As an amateur politician, Morrill had served on various county and state committees and in 1852 he was selected to represent the Whigs at their national convention. In 1854 Morrill was elected as an Anti-Slavery Whig to the House of Representatives and the next year played a prominent role in the organization of the Republican Party in Vermont. He held his seat in the House until 1866 when he was elected to the United States Senate, where he served for nearly thirty-two years. In the House Morrill became

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Atherton, George W. The Legislative Career of Justin S. Morrill, (1901).
Brubacher, John S. and Rudy, Willis. Higher Education in Transition:
A History of American Colleges and Universities (New York, 1958).
Eddy, Edward Danforth Jr. Colleges for Our Land and Time: The Land-Grant
Idea in American Education (New York, 1956).
Parker, William Belmont. The Life and Public Services of Justin Smith Morrill,
(Boston, 1924)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approximately 3 acres

UTM REFERENCES

ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A 18	7110875	4854850
B		
C		
D		

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION The boundaries of the National Historic Landmark designation for the Justin Smith Morrill Homestead are those of the roughly rectangular, 3 acre property lying on the east side of Morrill Highway (see accompanying sketch map) as donated by the Justin Smith Morrill Foundation in 1969 to the State of Vermont, Division of Historic Sites.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Polly M. Rettig, Historian, Landmark Review Project; original form
prepared by Charles E. Shedd, Jr. Historian, 9/6/60

ORGANIZATION	DATE
Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service	7/31/75
STREET & NUMBER	TELEPHONE
1100 L. Street, NW.	202-523-5464
CITY OR TOWN	STATE
Washington	D.C.

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL _____ STATE _____ LOCAL _____

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

(NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS)

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DATE

12/7/77

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

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CONTINUATION SHEET

1

ITEM NUMBER

8

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a key member of the committee on Ways and Means and was its chairman from 1865 to 1867; in the Senate he served effectively as a member of the committee on finance, of which he was chairman from 1877 to 1879, 1881 to 1893, and 1895 to 1898. As chairman of the Senate committee on buildings and grounds, he was largely responsible for the plan and execution of the terraces, fountains and gardens of the Capitol, the completion of the Washington Monument, and the construction of the Library of Congress building.

Though Morrill's primary interest lay in problems of tariff and finance, his greatest accomplishment was the passage of the legislation which created a system of state educational institutions aided by the federal government. In 1857 he introduced in the House a bill "donating public lands (30,000 acres for each Representative and Senator in Congress under the apportionment of 1860) to the several States and Territories which may provide colleges for the benefit of agriculture and the mechanic arts". This was vetoed by Buchanan in 1859, but similar legislation-- the Land-Grant College Act or the Morrill Act--was signed by Lincoln in 1862. In 1890 Morrill introduced in the Senate the Second Morrill Act which set the precedent for federal aid to education by providing that \$25,000 be given annually by the government to each land-grant college.

Morrill was a skillful legislator, noted for his sound reasoning, his clear apprehension and statement, and his temperate attitude. In his later years in the Senate, his prestige was great and he was often referred to as "the Nestor of the Senate", "the grand old man of the Republican Party", and "the Gladstone of America". Morrill died at his Washington home on December 28, 1898.

Though Morrill spent most of his time in Washington during his Congressional career, he returned regularly to his house in Strafford for vacations. On Morrill's death the house was inherited by his son John, who maintained it until his own death in 1910. Another branch of the Morrill family then took over the property, selling the house and furnishings during World War II to a religious organization which planned to use it as the headquarters for a boys' boarding school. However, the organization changed its plans and within a few months sold the house to Miss Elizabeth Sullivan of Hanover, New Hampshire. Recognizing the historical significance of the house, Miss Sullivan made no changes in it. The Justin Smith Morrill Foundation was incorporated in 1961 and maintained the Homestead from that time until 1969 when it was donated to the State of Vermont.

The Morrill Homestead remains relatively unaltered and in good condition. The contents of the house, including furniture, books, and personal memorabilia, are largely Morrill pieces. In addition, a large collection of Morrill papers and related documents is maintained at Strafford's Morrill Memorial Library,

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CONTINUATION SHEET 2

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

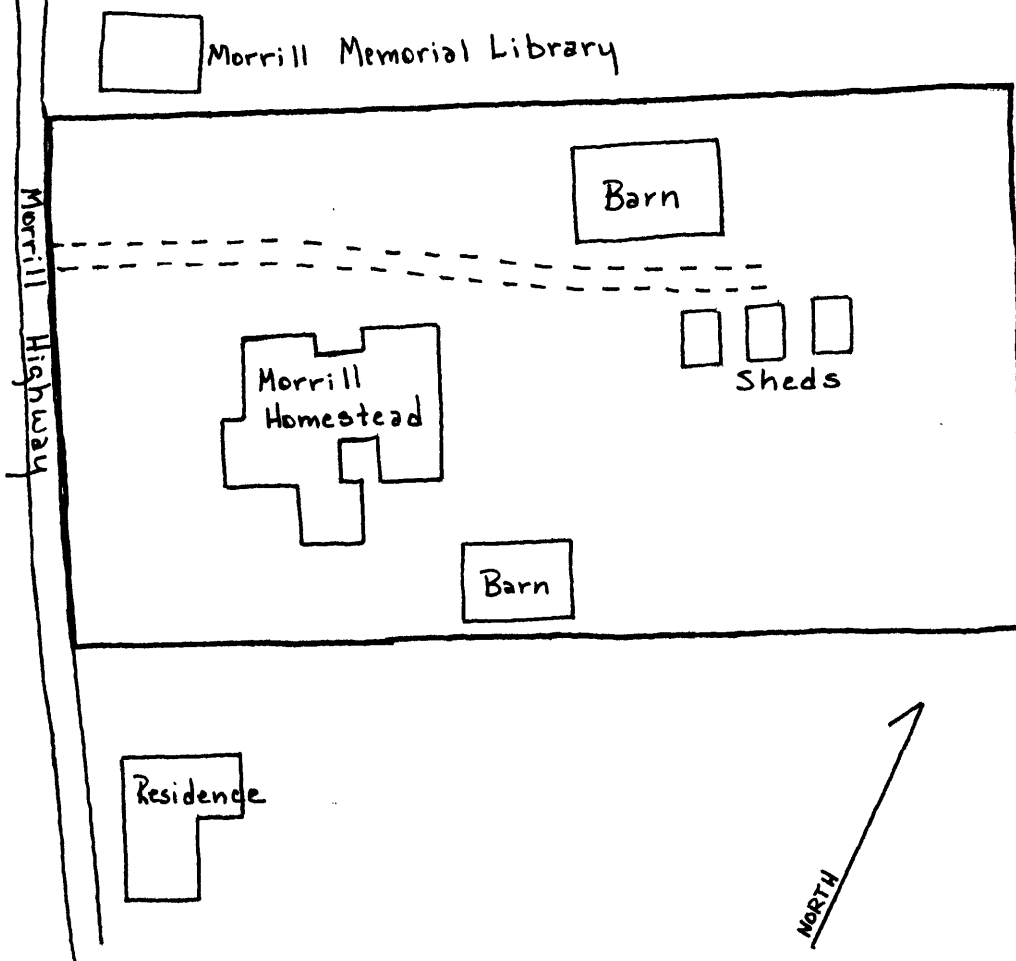
located on Morrill Highway immediately north of the Homestead.

Village
Common

JUSTIN SMITH MORRILL HOMESTEAD
Strafford, Vermont

sketch map - not to scale

National Historic Landmark
Boundary —————







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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM**

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TYPE ALL ENTRIES --| ENCLOSE WITH PHOTOGRAPH

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Justin Smith Morrill Homestead

AND/OR COMMON

Justin Smith Morrill Homestead

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN

Strafford

___ VICINITY OF

COUNTY

Orange

STATE

Vermont

3 PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT

Polly M. Rettig, Landmark Review Project

DATE OF PHOTO

September, 1974

NEGATIVE FILED AT

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service, 1100 L. Street, NW., Washington, D.C.

4 IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

northeast(rear) and northwest elevations..

PHOTO NO. 2