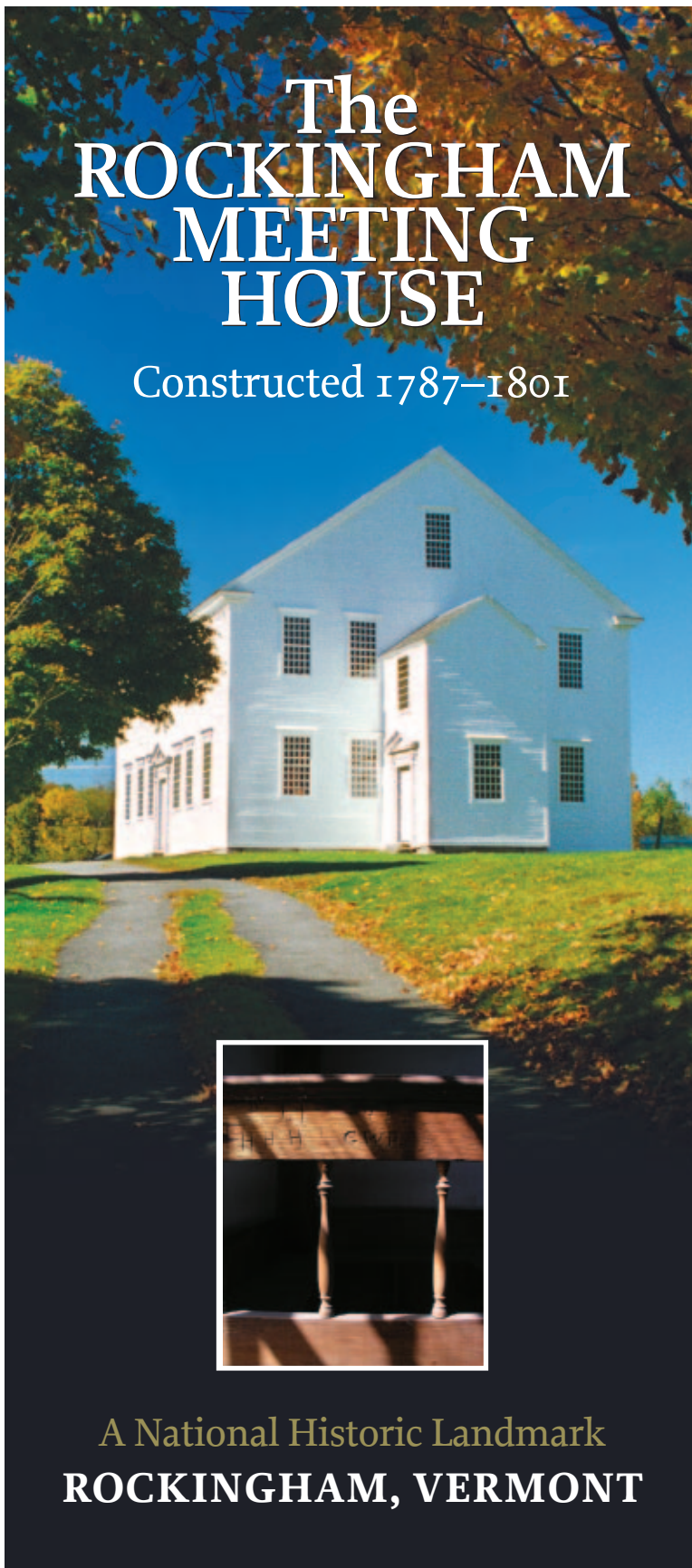
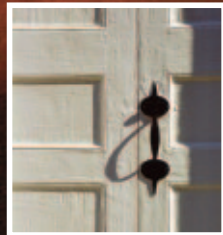


The ROCKINGHAM MEETING HOUSE

Constructed 1787–1801



A National Historic Landmark
ROCKINGHAM, VERMONT



THE ROCKINGHAM MEETING HOUSE IS AMONG THE BEST PRESERVED EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY NEW ENGLAND MEETING HOUSES.

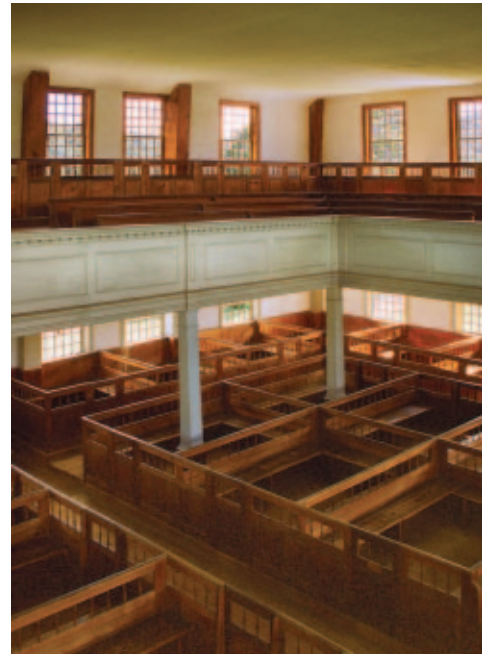
The Rockingham Meeting House

is the oldest public building in Vermont that still exists in a condition close to its original state.

The Meeting House was built between 1787 and 1801 to serve the needs of religious services and civic events in the town of Rockingham, whose first focus of settlement had been in the village immediately surrounding it. The town expected to expand rapidly and planned a meeting house large enough to meet its needs.

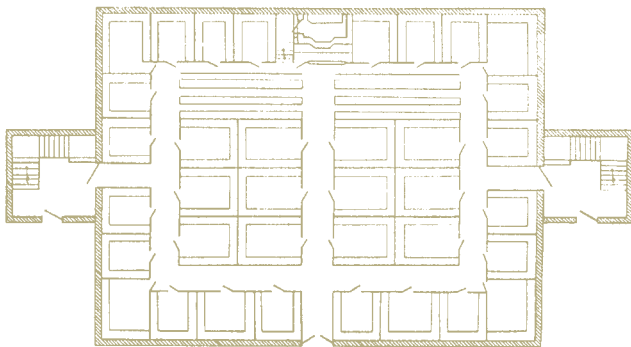
As time went on, settlement in the town shifted to Bellows Falls and Saxtons River, while the village of Rockingham remained small and rural. The Congregational church which used the Meeting House for its services survived only until 1839, and annual Town Meetings continued to be held here until 1869.





The building stood unused for some decades and suffered vandalism and loss of its contents, but in 1906, after a fire which destroyed many buildings in the village, people of the town and the surrounding area recognized that the Meeting House was a well-preserved historical and architectural treasure and raised funds for its restoration.

A light-handed restoration which was completed in 1907 was one of the earliest historic preservation projects in Vermont. The first Annual Pilgrimage celebration at the Meeting House was held in 1907, and this event continues to cap Rockingham's Old Home Days celebration each year.



Much of what stands today is original fabric from the eighteenth century: king-post timber framing, woodworking details of the exterior, many glass panes in the twenty-over-twenty windows, interior plaster work, and most of the material of the "pig pen" box pews. The pulpit was reconstructed in 1906, but the sounding board above it is original. In size and austerity, the Meeting House is very much a Puritan building of a style already considered old-fashioned in more urban parts of new England when it was built. The elegant Georgian details, however, relieve the austerity. The surrounding burial ground contains over one thousand graves, the oldest dating from around 1776, with some of the finest gravestone art found in New England. The nearby hearse shed and burial vault served the needs of the graveyard.

The Rockingham Meeting House was designated by the Secretary of the Interior as a National Historic Landmark on May 16, 2000. It is owned and maintained by the Town of Rockingham.

The Rockingham Meeting House is located on Meeting House Road, off Route 103 — 1 mile from Interstate 91 Southbound Exit 6, and 1.9 miles from the I-91 Northbound Exit 6.



For a more detailed description and history of the Meeting House, see Lyman and William Hayes, *The Old Rockingham Meeting House and First Church in Rockingham, Vermont*

(published 1915 and still in print). The National Historic Landmark application is available at the Rockingham Town offices in Bellows Falls (802-463-3456; rbfprsv@sover.net).

The Meeting House may be used as a place for weddings, baptisms, and other appropriate functions. No artificial lighting may be used, such as candles, kerosene lamps or lanterns. The building has no electricity and is not heated. Therefore, all functions must be held between June and September. All arrangements for use of the Meeting House must be made through the Rockingham Town Offices: in person, in the Town Hall in the Bellows Falls Village Square; by writing PO Box 370, Bellows Falls, VT 05101; or by calling 802-463-3964. **Please note: The building is not handicap-accessible.**

This brochure is made possible by funding from the Town of Rockingham and a grant from the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation.

Brochure design: Mary Lynch / Photography: Alan Fowler