

# FORM B – BUILDING

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

28/34   G & J 84

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

**Town:** Dartmouth

**Place:** (*neighborhood or village*) Russells Mills

## Photograph



**Address:** 1205 Russells Mills Road

**Historic Name:** Russells Mills Village School

**Uses:** Present: Dartmouth Historical & Arts Society

Original: Grammar School

**Date of Construction:** 1871

**Source:** Town Records & Deed

**Style/Form:** Greek Revival

**Architect/Builder:**

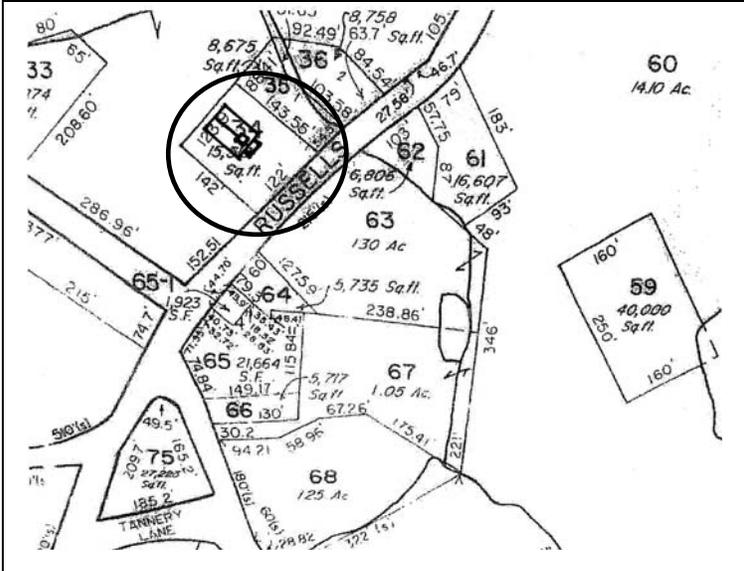
**Exterior Material:**

Foundation: Granite

Wall/Trim: Wood Clapboards

Roof: Asphalt Shingles

## Topographic or Assessor's Map



**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:**

**Major Alterations (*with dates*):**

The original two single entrance doors and transom lights were combined to make the double-front door entry – 1916.

The northern single entry partially infilled with a 2/2 double-hung sash – 1916.

Single entry door installed west of entry – 1959.

**Condition:** Good

**Moved:** no |  | yes | | **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Acreage:** .36 acres

**Recorded by:** Geoffrey E. Melhuish

**Organization:** ttl-architects, LLC

**Date (*month / year*):** February 2012

**Setting:** The Russells Mills School is located on the north side of Russells Mills Road within the Russells Mills Village Historic District. The property is located approximately 150' northeast of the intersection of Russells Mills Road with Fisher Road. A U-shaped gravel drive is located south of the property and provides access to the property from Russells Mills Road.

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Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

*If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

*Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.*

**ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:**

*Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.*

The former Russells Mills Village School is two-story, Greek Revival style building distinguished by a gable roof, hipped roof entry, six-over-six double-hung wood sash windows, and a wood frame bell tower. The Russells Mills School 1205 Russells Mills Road (DAR.84) is located in the village of Russells Mills, Dartmouth. The property is located on approximately one-third of an acre on the north side of Russells Mills Road within the Russells Mills Village Historic District. The Russells Mills Village Historic District is a historic district encompassing resources along Russells Mills, Rock O' Dundee, Slades Corner, Horseneck and Fisher Roads in Dartmouth. The district retains the rural setting of the mid-nineteenth century and contains dwellings from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century including the Joshua Howland House DAR.59, the Royal Smith House DAR.79, and the Captain Frederick Howland House DAR.96. The district was designated a National Register District in 1985 and a Local Historic District in 1998.

The Russells Mills School is located approximately one-hundred fifty feet east of the intersection of Russells Mills Road with Fisher Road. The school is set back from the road and faces southeast. A U-shaped gravel drive provides access to the school from Russells Mills Road. A mill stone is featured in the grass portion of the U at the edge of Russells Mills Road. A compacted earth drive extends along the west elevation of the church. A row of large stones protect the lawn along the south end of the compacted drive. Remnants of a granite post and chain link fence remain along the south, west and north boundary lines of the school. A chain link fence is located along the west and northeast boundary of the property. Animal pens from the Alderbrook Farm (1213 Russells Mills Road) are located along the north (rear) elevation of the school. Single-family residential properties are located to the south and east along the road.

The two-story, three-bay by four-bay, wood frame, Greek Revival style building adopts a rectangular plan on a granite block foundation. The building is clad with painted wood clapboards; simple wood cornerboards highlight each corner. The building terminates in a front gable roof sheathed with asphalt shingles. The cornice is emphasized with a wide trim piece; returns are featured at the gable ends. A one-bay wide by one-bay deep wood frame hipped roof bell tower highlights the south gable end. The bell tower is capped with a wooden spire and compass points directional weathervane. The sides of the bell tower feature a pair of louvered openings on each elevation. A slender interior brick chimney is featured at the north gable end. The chimney features a corbelled chimney cap and metal hood.

Centered on the south elevation is a one-story, one-bay wide by one-bay deep entry porch. The porch terminates in a hipped roof clad with asphalt shingles. The roof is supported by two slender wood posts resting on wood plinths on a concrete pad. Entrance to the building is through paired six-panel wood doors highlighted by a simple door surround with an eight-light transom above. From historic photographs, it appears that original single entry doors located to each side of the façade and their transoms were combined to create the existing double-door entry. It is believed that the door fenestration was changed during an early twentieth century renovation of the building. Access to the porch is provided by a concrete step and simple pipe rail. A five-panel wood door which provides access to a mechanical room is located to the west of the entry porch and a two-over-two double-hung wood sash window is located to the east. Both the door and the window feature a simple wood surround. A c 1940 photograph shows the façade with a single window to each side of the entry porch which indicates that the single door to the west of the entry was likely added when the central heating system was installed in 1959/60.

Three, six-over-six, double-hung wood sash windows are located above the entry on the second floor. Each opening features a simple wood surround capped by a horizontal hoodmold. Combination aluminum storm units have been installed over each

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window. Inoperable modern shutters are located to each side of the window openings. A denticulated triangular vent is located in the gable end above the center window.

The east elevation features four, six-over-six, double-hung wood sash windows on the first and second floors. Like the façade, each opening features a simple wood surround capped by a horizontal hoodmold. Combination aluminum storm sash units have been installed over each window and inoperable modern shutters are located to each side of the openings. A shutter is missing on the second window in from the south end on the second floor. An electric meter is located near the south end of the east elevation between the first and second window opening. The electric supply drops from the cornice above.

The west elevation features four, six-over-six, double-hung wood sash windows on the first and second floors. Like the façade and the east elevation, each opening features a simple wood surround capped by a horizontal hoodmold. Combination aluminum storm sash units have been installed over each window and inoperable modern shutters are located to each side of the openings. A shutter is missing on the second window in from the south end on the first floor and on the first window in on the first and second floors. The missing shutters and stained clapboards indicate the location of an exterior chimney which has been removed and replaced with a vent. A small square cast concrete foundation remnant from the foundation of the exterior chimney is located below the vent. A small six-light fixed sash window is located north of the first window in on the first floor. A simple wood surround highlights the opening. The window was likely added during the twentieth century when a bathroom was installed inside the school.

The north elevation features a secondary egress at the east end of the first floor and a single, six-over-six, double-hung wood sash window to the west. While the trim and four-light transom appear to be original, materials and construction techniques indicate that the nine-light over two panel door is a later replacement. A three-step wooden stair provides access to the entry. A pair of six-over-six, double-hung wood sash windows are located on the second floor above the first floor openings. Each opening features a simple wood surround capped by a horizontal hoodmold. Combination aluminum storm sash units have been installed over each window opening. There are no shutters on the north elevation.

**HISTORICAL NARRATIVE**

*Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.*

Located in Bristol County, the Town of Dartmouth was first settled in 1652 and was officially incorporated in 1664. The first settlements were located in the southwestern part of town in the vicinity of Russells Mills; a later development centered in Smith's Mills was established c 1670. One of the reasons the location for the settlement was the proximity of the Paskamanset River, the principal tributary of the Slocum River as a good source of power to run the mills.

*Over time, there were eleven known water-powered mills operating in the village, including gristmills, sawmills, a bark mill and a fulling mill for processing woolen yard goods. In addition to the mills, this self-sufficient village had several blacksmith shops, a wheelwright, a tannery, a ship-builder, a slaughterhouse, a stagecoach shop, taverns, bowling alleys, and, of necessity, a coffin maker (Dartmouth MA Historical Map 2007).*

By 1857, the village of Russells Mills contained approximately fifty buildings, including stores, a tailor shop, a tannery, a blacksmith shop, a post office, a doctor's office and a church. In response to the growth of the Russells Mills Village, a grammar school was constructed in the village. Dates for the construction of the school differ among various histories; however, a building is shown in the area on Fisher Road on the Henry Francis Walling 1856 Map of Dartmouth. The school eventually became the Dartmouth Grange No. 162, 1133 Fisher Road (DAR.86) during the 1890s. In 1871, a second school was constructed on Russells Mills Road (DAR.84 – 1205 Russells Mills Road). Town records indicate that the Town purchased a lot of land from George Kirby and built the school in that year. The property served as an elementary school for the first year and then became a high school for two years, a role that was rotated every two years among the various village schools of Dartmouth at that time.

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The Russells Mills Library opened in 1895 as the Dartmouth Free Public Library, sharing space in the Village School in Russells Mills when the principal of the school, Thomas Barry, felt a library was needed for his 31 students. At this time, the students ranged from the first grade to two years of high school (Haskell nd:11). Thomas Barry persuaded teachers to act as librarians for a small library and The State Library Board agreed to give them \$100 if the town of Dartmouth agreed to give the library \$50 annually. The Russells Mills Library was the first truly Public Library in town although it was started to serve "only village children and graduates from outlying schools who came to the high school." (Haskell nd:11)

By 1904, the library was so crowded with books that it was moved to another building in the village. At this time, the annual appropriation had risen from \$50 to \$125 and circulation of books was over 1,000. During the next twelve years, the annual appropriation rose gradually to \$400 and the circulation to 4,300 (Haskell nd:12).

In 1914, the Village School was closed when the students moved to the newly constructed Russells Mills School #2 at 1167 Russells Mills Road (DAR.187). The library quarters in the small building in the village were again becoming cramped, and in 1916, the town voted \$500 to remodel the old school into a permanent library and the Dartmouth Free Public Library was reopened on its original site (Haskell nd:12, Russells Mills 2006:3). It is believed that the door fenestration of the property was changed from two single entrance doors and transom lights to the double-front door entry at this time.

Major renovations followed in 1960, adding office space, central heating and an electrical system upgrade. A c 1940 photograph shows the façade with a single window to each side of the entry porch which indicates that the single door to the west of the entry was likely added at this time as well. In 1970, declining circulation within the library brought about a movement from the Town to close the library. The residents of Russells Mills Village successfully fought the closure and the library remained open, on a reduced schedule, for the next thirty-seven years.

On September 11, 2007, the Board of Library Trustees voted to close the library and return the building to the Town Select Board. In a September 20, 2007 article in the Standard-Times, Denise Medeiros, the town's director of libraries, explained that the Russells Mills Library closed due to a lack of funding. In 2010, the Dartmouth Historical & Arts Society was founded to support, promote, preserve, and disseminate the historic and cultural diversity of Dartmouth as well as preserve and rehabilitate the schoolhouse.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES**

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View looking northeast at façade and west elevation.



View east of west elevation.

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View looking southeast at north and west elevations.



View looking southwest at north and east elevations.

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View looking west at east elevation.



View looking northwest at façade and east elevation.

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View looking north at entry.



View looking west at typical window on east elevation.



View looking south at typical window on north elevation.



View looking south toward Russells Mills Road.

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View of granite post and chain link fence located at the southwest boundary of the property.