

INDIVIDUAL INVENTORY FORM

NHDHR INVENTORY #

Name, Location, Ownership

Historic name East Village School
Street and number 889 NH Route 10
City or town Croydon
County Sullivan
Current owner Town of Croydon

Function or Use

Current use(s) School (K-4)
Historic use(s) District School

Architectural Information

Style Schoolhouse/Vernacular
Architect/builder unknown
Source n/a
Construction date 1835
Source Town Records (vol. 5)
Alterations, with dates Front entry porch (c. 1900);
rooftop belfry (1925); schoolroom windows (1932);
electricity (1935); plumbing & septic (1960);
furnace room (1961)
Moved? NO

Exterior Features

Foundation Granite / Dry Stone
Cladding Brick (load-bearing)
Roof material Asphalt Shingles
Chimney material Brick
Type of roof Gable
Chimney location One end, single exterior
Number of stories One
Entry location Façade, off-center
Windows Double-hung (6/6 internal grid)
Replacement? YES (2006)

Site Features

Setting Rural Village
Outbuildings Shed, storage
Landscape features Other: boulders, ledge, walls



Photo #1 Direction: North
Date: March 28, 2025

Tax Map Map 7, Parcel A-385
Acreage 0.6
State Plane Feet (NAD83) X: 936144.712568
Y: 209419.157308

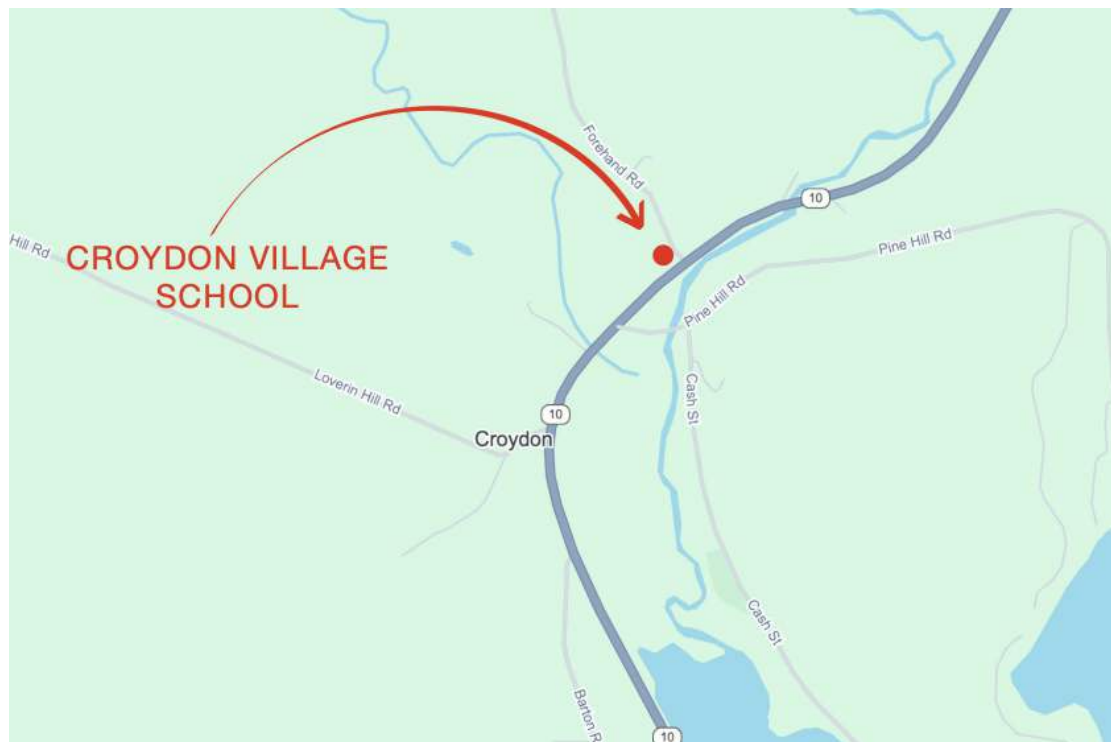
Form prepared by

Name Martha Cummings
James Perkins
Organization Town of Croydon
Date of Survey March 31, 2025

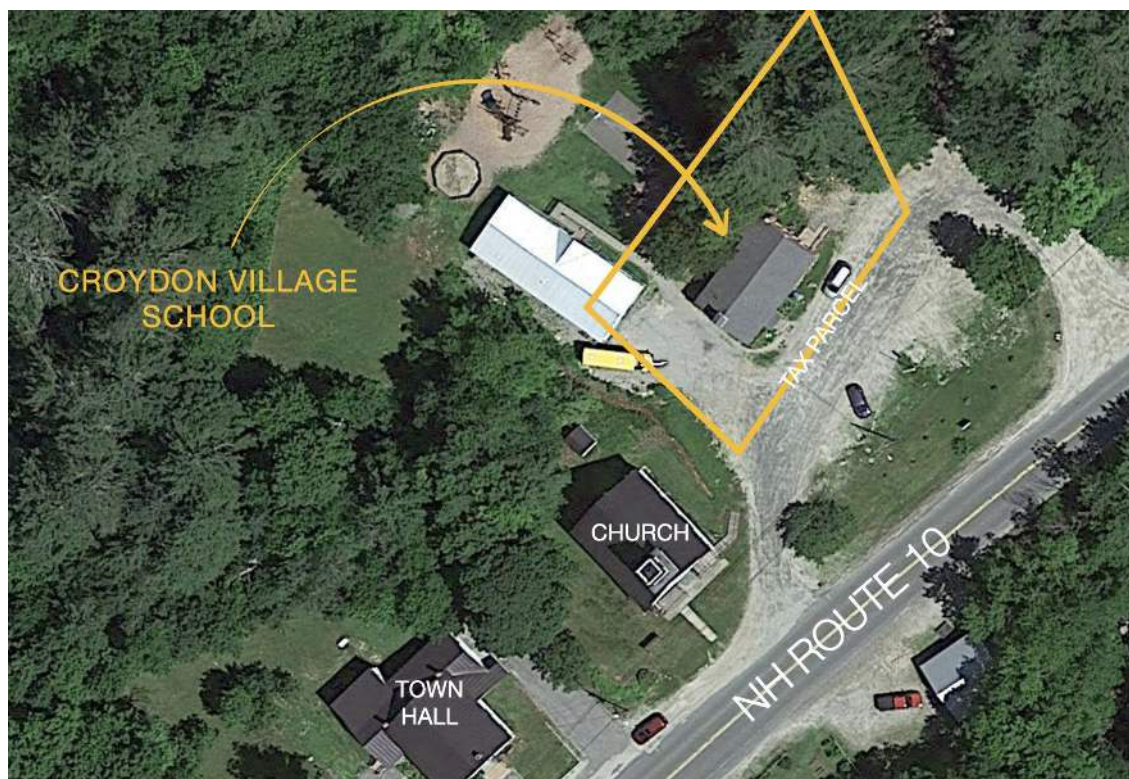
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LOCATION MAP:



PROPERTY MAP:



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Historical Background and Role in the Town or City's Development:

The Croydon Village School is the oldest one-room schoolhouse still operating in New Hampshire.¹ Historically called the East Village or District No. 2 School, it originally served one of the town's ten school districts. Croydon was one of eighteen towns on the eastern side of the Connecticut River created by Governor Benning Wentworth at the end of the French and Indian War. On May 31, 1763, Croydon's charter was granted to sixty-five grantees from Sutton-Grafton, Massachusetts. Most were drawn from a third generation of white settlers in Massachusetts, where land for new homesteads was increasingly scarce (McGuire 3).

The initial survey of Croydon included 23,040 acres of land encompassing the town's six square mile grant. 1,040 acres were deemed un-improvable due to rivers, mountains, rocks, ponds and land reserved for roads, leaving 22,000 acres that were divided equally into sixty-nine shares, one for each grantee, one for the Governor, and the rest reserved for public benefit. Croydon's natural landmarks include Croydon Mountain to the west, the highest point in Sullivan County, and the North Branch of the Sugar River to the east. Much of the land within Croydon is hilly and forested, with streams and ponds interspersed. The Pinnacle is the town's geographic center east of the mountain and was originally planned as the town center, where three of the first five settlers built cabins between 1764 and 1766 (McGuire 8). As with most newly granted towns along the western edge of New Hampshire, the early settlers of Croydon were focused on building mills and roads in order to attract more people and satisfy the terms of their grant. "By the autumn of 1768, Croydon was fairly well established with nine families, a grist mill and a sawmill" (McGuire 7). As more settlers arrived six villages emerged: Four Corners, Croydon Flat, East Village, Ryder Corner, Brighton, and Under-the-Mountain. [See Figure 1]

"Our fathers were the friends of education. Although surrounded by all the difficulties and discouragements incident to a settlement in the wilderness, they devoted both time and money to the education of their children."² Four Corners was the first of the six villages to have a school. In 1770 its inhabitants voted to establish the first school district and "raised eighteen dollars to pay an instructor" (Cooper 21). Classes were held in a private home until 1772 when "the first school-house, a small structure twenty feet square, was built [along Loverin Hill Road]... and eight pounds was raised for the purpose of education" (Wheeler 158).

The town's second school district, in East Village, was formed in 1780 and a schoolhouse built on land then owned by Rufus Durkee (1785–1858) and today the site of Croydon Village School. District residents voted to "hire a male instructor for the three winter months and a female instructor to teach school the rest of the year" (Cooper 20). Lawyer Samuel Morse (1784–1865) purchased Durkee's land (130 acres), tannery, bark mill, and dwelling house in 1821, and Morse descendants continued to own the schoolhouse property until 1926, when it was bequeathed to the town along with the town hall lot (McGuire 100, 107).³

From 1780 to 1830 Croydon saw steady population growth, peaking at just over 1,000 residents, of whom a third were infants and children; in 1830, there were 275 between the ages of six and fifteen. [See Figure 2] By 1834 these children were educated in ten school districts, each charged with staffing and maintaining its schoolhouse and leading to great disparity in conditions and quality of education (Cooper 21). With the ensuing population decline in certain villages, the ten districts were reduced to six over the next twenty years. By the 1850s Croydon had a town school committee and superintendent. The committee's 1852 report to Selectmen noted that District Nos. 9 and 10 were no longer under their supervision since those schools were located in other towns (Newport and Springfield) and that "within a few years, District No. 8 has been so dismembered by repeated acts of the town, as to be incapable of supporting a school."⁴

Several Croydon school districts had made significant building improvements. The Four Corners school of 1772 was rebuilt in 1812 after the first one burned, then in 1830 a "back house" was added, and in 1847 it underwent extensive renovations.⁵

¹ The wooden Landaff Blue School (grades pre-K-4) was built in 1858 and is reportedly the only other one-room schoolhouse currently operating in New Hampshire. See www.landaffblueschool.com.

² Report of the Selectmen of the Town of Croydon for the Year Ending March 1852, 5.

³ Private ownership of school land was common practice in Croydon and consequently town records often omit details regarding schoolhouse construction and improvements.

⁴ 1852 Report of the Selectmen, 8.

⁵ James L. Garvin, "Report on the District Number Eight Schoolhouse Peterborough, New Hampshire," (NH Division of Historical Resources, 11 May 1996), 2.

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Croydon Flat built a new schoolhouse (on the original site) with a brick façade (single course, 4" thick) in 1831, and East Village replaced its 1780 wooden schoolhouse with a load-bearing brick structure in 1835.⁶

The East Village schoolhouse was consistently praised in school committee reports, and it is mentioned in the 1886 *History of Cheshire and Sullivan Counties*: "Here [at East Village]... is one of the best district schools in the county."⁷ By 1915 the Four Corners school was closed and later sold. Just over twenty years later, in 1938, Ryder Corner school was closed, leaving just East Village and Croydon Flat in operation.⁸ By the 1930s public education was changed markedly by school district consolidation and by the advent of regional schools, enabled by improved transportation.

In 1925 a belfry was added to the southern end of the East Village School roof, a gift from Edwin B. Osgood (1859–1934) of Claremont, in memory of his mother Eliza F. Smart (1831–1909) who had attended the school. In 1932, East Village schoolhouse underwent a major renovation in order to reach modern standards: "It is with a great deal of pride that we are able to point to the very marked improvement which has been made in the Village School. This work was done with funds raised by the District rather than by utilizing any type of Federal assistance. The building was entirely renovated during the summer vacation. This means that the interior and exterior of the building have been thoroughly repainted and put into first-class condition. (This included... three additional windows in the front.)" (Gross 6). Electric lights were added three years later.

After 1952 instruction for grades 1–8 was split between the town's two remaining schools: East Village and Croydon Flat. In 1954 East Village served 29 students in grades 5–8, while the younger students attended the Croydon Flat school. The following year, in January, the schools switched so that East Village offered grades 1–4. Then in 1957 the Croydon Flat school closed and students in grades 5–8 were sent to Newport.⁹

In 1997 kindergarten was added to the East Village school, and in 2009 the class was moved into the Town Hall. Within two years the town purchased from Grantham a modular classroom, nicknamed "Big White," installed just beyond the southwest corner of the "Little Red" schoolhouse. Croydon residents and contractors worked throughout the summer to prepare for its opening in September 2012 (McGuire 108). With this additional space, grades K–4 were educated in Croydon, while most older students attended Newport or Sunapee schools.

Since the late 1980s Croydon's East Village school has made headlines and television appearances as one of a dwindling number of active one-room schoolhouses. Subsequent attempts to replace it with a new elementary school were rejected, preserving the one-room schoolhouse tradition. Between 2014 and 2017 school choice limits were resolved. And in 2022 a severe budget cut and restructuring was narrowly averted.¹⁰

The East Village School (District No. 2), or Croydon Village School, continues to make history as a public school still operating on its original 1780 site and still occupying its 1835 brick schoolhouse.

Applicable NHDHR Historic Contexts (please list names from appendix C):

1001. Elementary and secondary education, 1770-present.

⁶ Town records do not explicitly mention its construction, but a pair of entries makes clear that the brick schoolhouse did not exist in mid-October 1834 and was present in February 1836, when it was mentioned in a warrant article regarding the discontinuation of a nearby road. Brick construction was almost unknown in Croydon, which may have just one other brick structure, a Federal style residence at Croydon Flat. It seems likely that both the materials and skills were imported from neighboring Newport, where masonry buildings had become common after 1820, largely through the financing and efforts of merchant James Breck, a Claremont native who operated the store at Croydon Flat from 1804 to 1815 before turning it over his brother, Henry Breck.

⁷ Teachers were sometimes less kind in describing the deportment of their students, with one East Village report opening: "This school is far from being a model one, as you very well know."

⁸ Built on private property, the 1810 Ryder Corner School was moved to the Musterfield Farm Museum in North Sutton in November, 1991.

⁹ The Croydon Flat schoolhouse, the village's third (built in 1884), was sold and converted into a private residence (extant).

¹⁰ Sarah Gibson, *This American Life*, "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Quorum," episode 776, July 2022.

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Architectural Description and Comparative Evaluation:

Site Description

The District 2 East Village brick schoolhouse (Croydon Village School) is located at 879 NH Route 10 at the corner of Forehand Road. The core of Croydon's East Village comprises the schoolhouse, church, town hall, and historical society museum, aligned contiguously along the north side of NH Route 10. Behind the schoolhouse is a separate modern modular classroom building, playground with open space, small storage shed, wooded perimeter and remnant stone walls.

Building Exterior

Built in 1835 on a 42'x28' dry stone and coarse split granite foundation, the single-story East Village School is a load-bearing brick masonry structure, set in American bond, with a gabled asphalt roof, rooftop belfry, and off-center entrance under the eaves. [See Figure 3] Six east-facing windows light the classroom to the right of the entrance and make the building instantly recognizable as a schoolhouse. Modern amenities have been added: a rear shed addition, constructed of concrete block set against the brick wall of the building, contains an oil-fired furnace which provides forced hot air via overhead ductwork throughout the building; and a partially excavated cellar at the SW corner contains a wellhead and electric heater for domestic hot water.

The main entrance on the east façade is reached by three wooden stairs (with pipe handrails on either side) to a small covered porch. Added around 1900 and thoroughly repaired since, the entry porch is now constructed of pressure-treated framing with a tongue and groove ceiling, pressure-treated posts wrapped in faux-wood and railing/fencing on either side. The pediment positioned over the front door covers an original transom window above the modern six-panel metal door, now out-swinging for emergency egress. There are seven windows on the façade, all let into the brickwork with flat arches and trimmed with painted wood. Installed in 2006, the windows are double-pane glass with an internal 6/6 grid and protected by exterior storm windows. Originally there were just four 12/12 double-hung windows along the façade, but three additional windows were added to the classroom section in 1932 and all were converted to 2/2 sash at that time.

The south gable has two windows, also double-pane replacements, and a louvered attic vent centered in the pediment. A modern floodlight has been attached to the wood panel just below the vent. The building's electrical service enters overhead at the right (east) corner and at the opposite (west) corner lies a painted door at the foundation level leading down into the excavated portion of the crawlspace.

The west elevation (rear) faces the playground and modular classroom. At one time a wooden privy/woodshed stood behind the building, perhaps attached at the southern end. Evidence of a door opening and paint shadow lines can be seen in the brick wall near that corner. There is one 2006 double-pane slightly off-center in this elevation with two double-pane hopper windows adjacent toward the southern corner.¹¹ Off the northern end of the elevation is an attached 12' x 8' painted concrete block shed accessed through a single-panel metal-clad wood door on the northerly side with its shed roof extending the plane of the main roof; the shed houses the oil-fired furnace for the school's forced hot air heating system.

At the north gable end toward the eastern corner is a modern painted six-panel door with pressure-treated wooden ramp and railings to provide direct access to the classroom. Adjacent to the ramp is a prominent granite outcrop. Three double-pane windows appear on this elevation (with a fourth apparently converted into the doorway). Near the NW corner stands an exterior brick chimney, no longer in use. A louvered attic vent, identical to the south gable, is also installed.

Soffit trim, fascia, and rake boards on the building are plain and painted white, while the double-hung windows are trimmed with white-painted boards embellished with an inner-edge bead. The brick walls are 8 inches thick with 7 stretcher rows joined by a header course, and the American bonding pattern and thickness extends to the gable peaks. In 2006 the historic lime mortar was removed with a power grinder, vertically and horizontally (damaging the underside of window sills), and replaced with incompatible Portland cement mortar; some bricks are spalling but the damage is not yet widespread. For decades the brick had also been painted red, which pigments have stained the granite underpinning.

¹¹ Brick infill appears at three locations along the rear wall and suggests that its windows once mirrored the façade's original four.

INDIVIDUAL INVENTORY FORM**NHDHR INVENTORY #***Building Interior*

The schoolhouse has always been partitioned with a small room (one-third of the floorspace) at the south end and the larger classroom to the north.

The smaller area (26' x 15') is entered directly from the main door. It now provides space for office work, cloakroom, meeting, kitchen, storage, and restroom facilities. In the ceiling there is a small attic portal and 4' fluorescent fixtures and a few smaller light fixtures. The plastered partition wall has a painted five-panel door (32" x 80") leading into the classroom. Floor coverings include commercial carpet and vinyl flooring.

In 1976, for the school lunch program, a kitchen sink, countertops, refrigerator space, wood paneled cabinets, closets, and a coat cupboard for students were built on the south, west, and north walls keeping windows in situ. Stained wood wainscoting (4' high) protects the lower half of the walls. Plumbing and septic were added in 1960 and each bathroom (roughly 6' x 7') has a toilet, hopper window, laminate countertops, and two small stainless steel vanity sinks. Each also has fiberglass-reinforced wall panels and vinyl floor covering. Just one of the bathrooms has grab bars installed.

The larger room (26' x 29') to the north is the main classroom. Nine stained wooden cleats (42" on center and running the width of the room) support the tongue-and-groove beadboard ceiling using bolts through the roof trusses above.¹² A second attic portal appears in the middle of the ceiling, perhaps marking the location the building's original central chimney. Surface-mounted boxed fluorescent fixtures provide artificial lighting for the classroom. The floor is covered in a faux wood vinyl and a modern stained baseboard runs the perimeter of the room.

The painted walls are a mixture of materials. The south partition wall has horizontal wide wood panel shiplap that runs floor to ceiling in the center of the wall, around the door, but in the upper eastern and western corners are plastered surfaces. On the east wall horizontal shiplap runs from the floor up to the bottom frames of the six windows, with a similar treatment on the north wall and west wall, where there's an extant window and evidence of two infilled openings. Above the shiplap on all the walls is a plaster treatment. The electrical wiring and outlets are all surface-mounted due to the solid masonry wall construction.

Modern bulletin boards appear to cover earlier ones (or perhaps even blackboards) at the head of the room (i.e. along the interior partition wall). In the upper northwest corner there is an unused round duct that penetrates the exterior wall into the furnace shed and a second one leading to the exterior chimney at the north end. A return grate for the current forced hot air heating system is also found in this area. Contemporary rectangular ductwork is visible along the top of the west wall, and round metal heating vents penetrate the ceiling at intervals.

Comparative Evaluation

Although Croydon residents built at least eleven schoolhouses between the late 18th and mid-19th centuries, only the brick school remains publicly owned and operating.

Many former brick district schoolhouses remain standing in New Hampshire. Their survival is largely due to the inherent durability of masonry construction. Within the larger context of district schoolhouses, however, the use of brick was exceedingly rare as the up-front cost typically exceeded conventional wood construction by about 30%.

A 2019 survey of extant brick schoolhouses included the following (in order of construction): Mason (1821), Peterborough (1824), New Ipswich (1829), Sharon (1832), Croydon (1835), Chester (1835), Nelson (1838), Hooksett (1839), Nashua (1841), Kensington (1842), Portsmouth (three between 1845 and 1853), Greenland (1847), Grafton (1848), Pembroke (1851), Dunbarton (1855), North Weare (1856), Wakefield (1858), Canterbury (1860), and Concord (1860). [See Figure 4]

At least a few of these early structures combine brick masonry with a traditional timber frame, but any wood framing at the Croydon school is limited to its floor and pitched roof systems. Croydon also once had a partially brick-clad schoolhouse, built in 1831 and serving the Croydon Flat district. Plotting these extant brick schoolhouses on a map reveals that Croydon and the later Grafton Slab City school were geographic outliers among this building type. According to Jim Garvin, state architectural historian, the Croydon plan is likely unique for its separate winter-term instructional, tutorial, or recitation space for older students.

¹² The 1998 town report says that in October "bolts in the ceiling of the classroom gave way and the wooden ceiling hung precariously while the children were moved to safety in the Town Hall." Whether the current cleats were newly installed or simply reinforced is unclear.

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The East Village School is an excellent example of vernacular schoolhouse architecture, built before the shift to the gable-front Greek Revival style commonly found after 1840.

National or State Register Criteria Statement of Significance:

Criterion A. Association with local events. Croydon's East Village School, District No. 2, is significant for its contributions to the education of Croydon children for nearly 250 years. Between 1780 and 1951, students in East Village and later all of Croydon received their primary and junior high education in the schoolhouse (grades 1-8). Grades 1-4 and 5-8 were then split between the Croydon Village School and Croydon Flat, but in 1957 the latter school was closed and upper grades sent to neighboring towns. The Croydon Village School, however, continued to provide primary education. The addition of kindergarten in 1997 prompted the town to purchase a temporary modular classroom (formerly used in Grantham) to educate students in two separate buildings/classrooms.

Criterion B. Association with significant persons. Like the church (1853) and town hall (1828), the East Village School was constructed on land owned by lawyer Samuel Morse (1784-1865) until his property was finally donated to the town by his descendants in 1926. Today the Morse residence (situated next to the town hall) is operated by the Croydon Historical Society as a historic house museum. Tax records from 1835, the year in which the schoolhouse was built, show that Morse was the largest taxpayer in District No. 2 and funded the greatest share of the construction and later improvements to the schoolhouse. Through his efforts, the center of Croydon moved from Four Corners to East Village in 1839 (McGuire 68). According to Edmund Wheeler's 1889 *History of Croydon*, "Samuel Morse was the only practicing lawyer that ever located in town. He was a native of Dublin, N. H. ; graduated at Dartmouth in 1811; came to Croydon in 1815; was elected representative in 1834, and delegate to the Constitutional Convention in 1850; he died January 1, 1865, aged eighty-one years."

Criterion C. Distinctive methods of construction. The construction of the East Village School is unusual in that its load-bearing brick walls, set in American bond, extend to the peaks of its gable ends. Likewise its brick walls contain cavities for the ends of the half-round, bark-on joists supporting the main floor. Very few brick buildings were constructed in Croydon—an informal survey today finds only a single Federal style residence in Croydon Flat. According to architectural historian Jim Garvin, the floor plan at East Village School appears unique in its allocation of extra floor space for seasonal instruction of older students in its entry room. Andrew Cushing's survey of extant brick district schoolhouses also suggests that the surviving Croydon school was an outlier and the oldest still standing in western New Hampshire.

Period of Significance: 1835 to 1975 (*present less 50 years*)

Statement of Integrity:

Location: The building remains on the site of its original construction (and on the site of its 1780 predecessor schoolhouse).

Design: The building shows the typical adaptation of early school buildings in response to state recommendations and new educational practices, including the insertion of additional windows to the students' left. It also retains the original partition wall which created an unusually large entry/cloakroom area used for higher-level or individualized instruction.

Setting: Croydon's District No. 2 brick schoolhouse stands adjacent to the church, town hall, and Samuel Morse house — all originally built on Morse land. Apart from the addition of a temporary modular classroom behind the schoolhouse and a small storage shed, the setting remains very much intact in both built and natural environment.

Materials: The building's solid masonry walls remain largely intact except where window openings were enlarged to become doorways or moved to accommodate additional windows on the façade. Original lime mortar and tooling has been lost to Portland cement, altering the appearance of the mortar lines and threatening the integrity of the bricks. For many decades, the building had been painted red, earning the nickname, "Little Red."

Workmanship: The brickwork is set in American bond pattern typical of its period. The hand-hewn wooden roof and floor structures are largely intact, with some modern lumber reinforcement in the attic space.

Feeling: The property is instantly recognizable as a historic schoolhouse, still in operation.

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Association: Like the town hall and church, the East Village schoolhouses (1780 and 1835 versions) were built on the private property of Samuel Morse, whose nearby house (with local courtroom) is now operated by the historical society as a museum.

Boundary Description and Justification:

The boundary for this resource corresponds to its tax parcel (0.6 acres).

Bibliography and/or References:

The Croydon Town Clerk keeps historic town and school district records in a series of bound volumes. The Croydon Historical Society has historic images, research, and some district school reports. The following sources were also consulted for additional information and context:

Annual Report(s) of the Selectmen of the Town of Croydon for the Year(s) Ending March 1852 2020.

<https://scholars.unh.edu/do/search/?q=croydon&start=0&context=20637275&facet=>

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Surveyor's Evaluation:

NR listed: individual _____
within district _____

Integrity: yes _____
no _____

NR eligible: individual _____
within district _____
not eligible _____
more info needed _____

NR Criteria: A _____
B _____
C _____
D _____
E _____

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FIGURE 1

Croydon District Schools

NO.	LOCATION	DATES
1	Four Corners	1771 – 1904
2	East Village	1780 –
3	Croydon Flat	1781 – 1957
4	Ryder Corner	1810 – 1938
5	Brighton	1781 – 1895
6	Under-the-Mountain	1790 – 1890
7	w/ North Newport	1785 – 1867
8	Glidden School	1781 – 1850
9	w/ Guild	1800 – 1860
10	w/ Springfield	1790 – 1870

Source: Croydon Historical Society



FIGURE 2

1830 Census

Croydon, NH

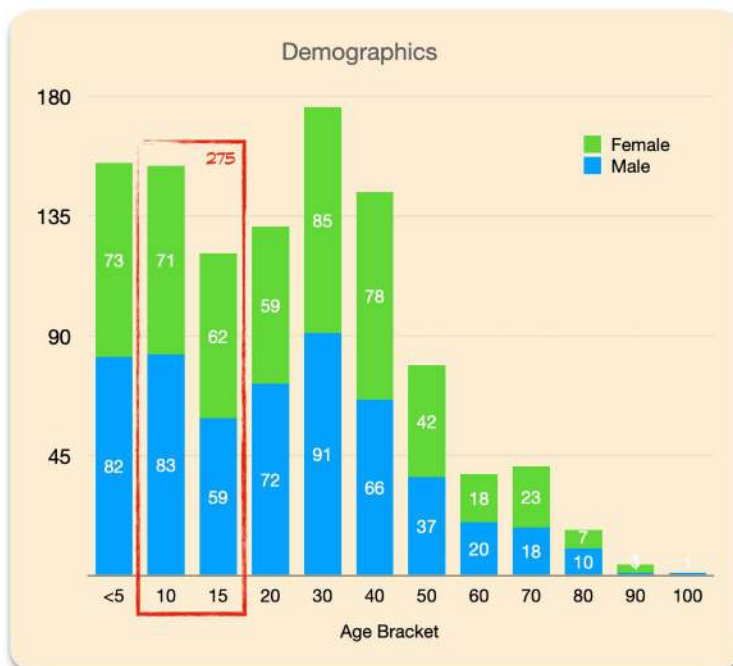
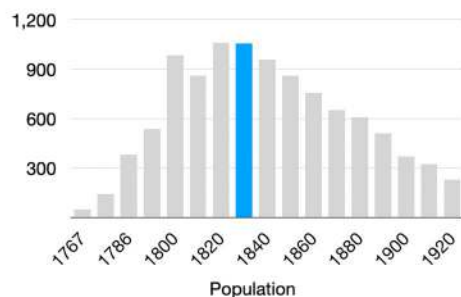


FIGURE 3

Croydon Village School

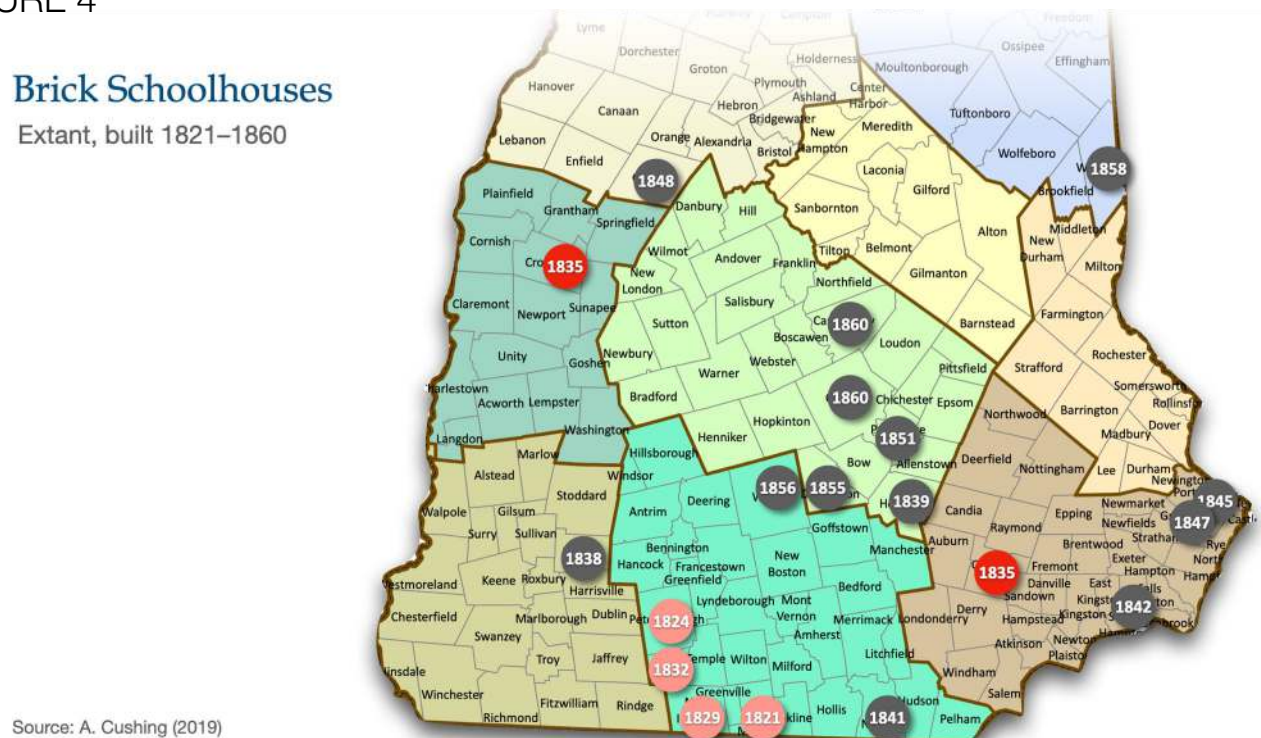
2025 Appearance



FIGURE 4

Brick Schoolhouses

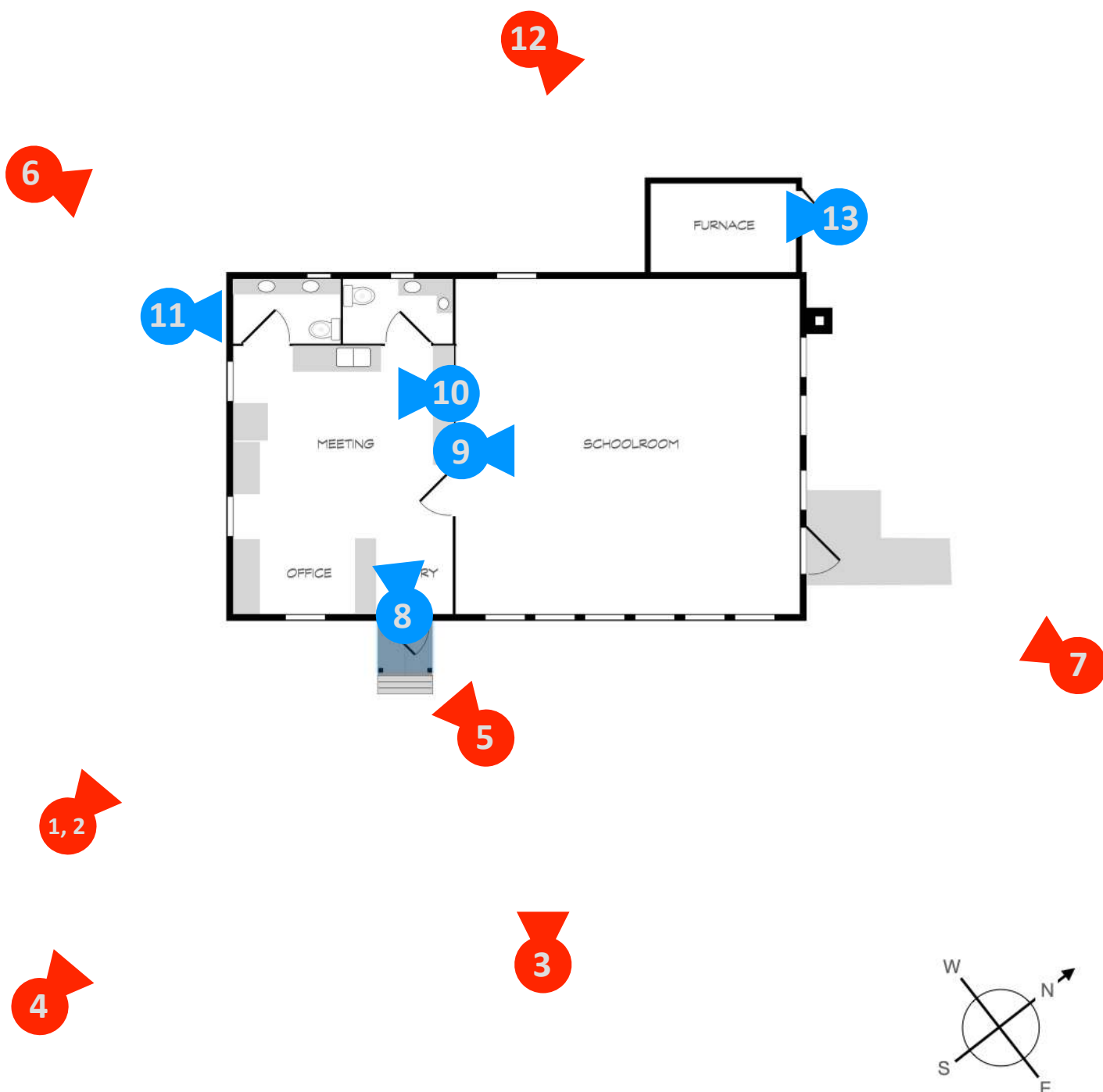
Extant, built 1821–1860



INDIVIDUAL INVENTORY FORM

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PHOTO KEY _____
Photographs by authors, unless otherwise noted.



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PHOTO 2
View N

DESCRIPTION: Undated image with original door/window configuration, central stove chimney, and woodshed-privy behind schoolhouse. *Croydon Historical Society photo.*



PHOTO 3
View NW

DESCRIPTION: Undated (after Photo 2, before 1925 belfry) with entry porch and flagpole. *Croydon Historical Society photo.*

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PHOTO 4
View N

DESCRIPTION: General setting with modular classroom at left, playground beyond.



PHOTO 5
View W

DESCRIPTION: (Rotated image) Main entrance porch, handrails, out-swing door.

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MARCH 28, 2025

PHOTO 6
View E

DESCRIPTION: Office gable end w/ belfry, gable vent, electrical service, cellar door, restroom windows, furnace shed addition, exterior brick chimney.



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PHOTO 7
View W

DESCRIPTION: Classroom gable end, access ramp, exterior brick chimney, detached storage shed. Former window infill visible above door.

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PHOTO 8
View NW

DESCRIPTION: Office space, kitchen, restrooms beyond; classroom panel door at right. Transverse cleat bolted to ceiling joist/rafter truss.



PHOTO 9
View NE

DESCRIPTION: Schoolroom from doorway. Transverse ceiling cleats, attic portal.

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PHOTO 10
View SW

DESCRIPTION: South gable interior brickwork, louvered vent, school bell pull, ridgepole and common rafter framing with horizontal roof boards.



PHOTO 11
View NE

DESCRIPTION: Excavated cellar area, insulated and heated for well water and sewer lines; original floor joists overhead.

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PHOTO 12
View E

DESCRIPTION: Furnace shed addition: three CMU walls abutting original schoolhouse brickwork.



PHOTO 13
View SW

DESCRIPTION: (Rotated image) Furnace shed interior, oil burner and tank, hot air handler; schoolhouse brick wall at left, one window infilled.