

1164

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Hill, Ira House

other names/site number 0703-13: #9 (VT Historic Sites and Structures Survey)

2 Location

street & number 2304 Main Street

not for publication N/A

city or town Isle La Motte vicinity N/A

state Vermont code VT county Grand Isle code 013

zip code 05463

3 State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments)

Suzanne C. Jamelo National Register Specialist 9-26-03
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Vermont State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.
See continuation sheet.
- Determined eligible for the National Register.
See continuation sheet.
- Determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): _____

Ethan H. Beall

Jon

Signature of Keeper

11-13-03

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- Site
- Structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>1</u>	_____	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: _____	DOMESTIC	Sub: _____	Single Dwelling
_____	DOMESTIC	_____	Hotel
_____	COMMERCE/TRADE	_____	Specialty Store
_____	COMMERCE/TRADE	_____	Restaurant
_____	RECREATION AND CULTURE	_____	Music Facility
_____	AGRICULTURE	_____	Processing
_____	GOVERNMENT	_____	Post Office
_____	SOCIAL	_____	Meeting Hall

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: _____	DOMESTIC	Sub: _____	Single Dwelling
_____		_____	
_____		_____	
_____		_____	
_____		_____	
_____		_____	
_____		_____	

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

_____ Greek Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone
roof Asphalt
walls Stone

other Weatherboard

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheets (7-1 through 7-6)

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Hill, Ira House
Isle La Motte, Grand Isle County, Vermont

Located at the northwest corner of the intersection of Main Street and School Street in the Town of Isle La Motte, the Ira Hill House is a 2 ½ story, eaves front, gable roofed, vernacular style house built in 1822 of locally quarried limestone with a large stone and wood-framed addition on its east side. Ira Hill hired master stonemason James Ritchie in 1821 to construct the building to operate as an inn and tavern, and for his residence. Martha (Mattie) and Joseph (Josie) Duba of Isle La Motte purchased the house from the Hills in 1920 and maintained it as a hotel operating a successful restaurant and rooming house into the 1950s. The stone envelope of the main block has changed little since its construction. Door and fenestration openings are in their original locations with minimal alterations, and few new openings have been introduced. The austere solid masonry main block facades features 2/2 and 6/6 double hung wood sash windows and a full width, two story, covered wooden porch fronts the street (east) façade. The prominent 2-story front porch configuration is original to the building, though it has been sensitively rebuilt several times over the years based on photographic evidence. Successive owners have made some changes to the exterior masonry walls, most notably the installation of a 2-story, Italianate-style bay window on the south façade. Other legible changes include blocking original doors to serve as windows, and closing others off completely. All significant changes to the masonry occurred prior to 1940. The large wood and stone ell extending from the south façade of the main block began as a detached 1½-story barn located adjacent to School Street. About 1840, the barn was raised to 2 stories, had its gable ends changed from east-west to north-south, and was connected to the main house with a solid masonry wall on the west, and a wood framed, clapboarded wall on the east. The Ira Hill house is a prominent visual and historical landmark on the island and occupies its original site in the center of the village. Closely fronting the road, it anchors the village four-corner intersection among a row of well-preserved Main Street residences dating from the 1820s to the 1890s. The house backs onto the village green and general store across the pond, both owned by the property's current owner, Dr. Middleton, as well as the village Post Office. With minimal modern intrusions and its prominent original location, the house retains its historic character. This fact, together with minimal changes to the building, have allowed the Ira Hill house to retain the integrity of its historic location, design, workmanship, materials, setting, feeling, and association.

Main Block:

This rectangular plan, 3 by 2 bay, 2 ½ story, eaves-front building has a 4-in-12 sloped gable roof supported by wooden trusses, and covered in asphalt shingles, with built up wooden molded cornice with returns. Quarry-faced, random-range ashlar exterior walls constructed of locally quarried limestone extend 4 feet underground. At their lowest point the walls are approximately 30 inches thick and step down at the story divisions to approximately 20 inches at their highest point, and the stone appears to be horizontally bedded. The largest stones with the finest cuts and finishes are found generally on the first story, and similarly, the better finished stones are placed in the facades most visible to the street. A

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stone curb extending approximately 20-inches above grade surrounds the main block. Interior stone flues are capped with brick chimneys rising flush with the exterior wall at the center of each gable end. As with all Ritchie-constructed buildings, large rectangular stones comprise and strengthen the corners with their longer lengths alternating along each adjoining wall. Massive, irregular stone lintels surmount window openings on the main block while sills are more uniform in shape and generally smaller. Window jambs are formed through finished breaks in the random range ashlar walls. The main block walls show some evidence of translucent and fading grey paint indicating that at one time that all the stone walls were painted grey.

The existing full width, 2-story covered porch on the east (front) façade replaces an earlier porch of similar configuration, but approximately twice the depth of the present 6 feet. A local master carpenter, Merrill Hemond, was responsible for the current construction and fabricated a second-story scrolled balustrade based on physical and photographic evidence to match the historic configuration. Simple, turned posts with curved brackets support the structure and separate the 3 bays of the porch at each level. The main entry through the porch is at ground level and thus there is not a first story balustrade. Lighting at each level is supplied by suspended globes. Forming a stoop for the porch are large rectangular stone slabs laid flush with the ground.

Placement of doors and windows is horizontally asymmetrical on the east façade, shifted slightly to the north (right) side. A large parlor in the south end, compared to a smaller dining room in the north end gave rise to this dissymmetry. Paneled doors with arched half lights and matching screen units on the second story flank a center double hung window. The Masonic date L5822 and the mason compass and square are carved into the stone above the center window. The main entry to the house is via c. 1860 paired half-light doors set into the deep well of the wall opening. The lower halves of the doors are ornately paneled with medallion corner blocks and incised raised panels. A matching pair of screen doors are set flush with the wall and the interior surround is paneled to match the interior doors. Still operating is the original rotating doorbell set into the door. The main entry is vertically aligned with the north side of the center upper window, but wider to the south suggesting that the historic opening was widened to the south for the resulting grander, paired-door main entry. Additionally, the 2 flanking first-story doors on the east facade were partially blocked in to form the present openings fitted with wooden double hung windows.

Three pairs of 2/2 wood sash windows with matching storm units, one evenly-spaced pair per story with smaller gable windows, lend the north gable wall the simplest and most austere look of all the main block walls. The windows are successively shorter on the second and third level, and there are small height differences among windows on each floor. Blocking and a covering of cement below the ground level window on the east side indicates it was historically a door.

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The south, gable end façade has seen several changes from the original construction. Originally a mirror of the north façade, the most significant change is the c. 1880 addition of a 2-story, Italianate-style bay window on the east side. Its second story, with three, 2/2 wood double hung windows, is shorter and narrower than the first story which has 3 pairs of narrow 1/1 wood double hung windows over a short section of paneling. The two levels are separated by a section of curved roof that follows the outline of the bay's three sides. Both levels have paired brackets supporting molded wood cornice, and a stone foundation descends into the ground. The second change resulted from the c. 1840 connection of the detached barn to the west half of the south façade which obscured the first and second story window, and both were relocated slightly to the east, the lower window reconfigured.

A second story door on the west façade let onto a balcony that was removed in 1971, and a lower story window was blocked in with stone. Otherwise, three 2/2, double hung wood windows light the interior.

Main Block Interior:

Much of the Hill House interior dates from renovation work undertaken in the mid to late 19th century. The center hall plan with ample openings into adjoining living spaces with eight foot ceilings lends the interior a spacious, open appearance. Flooring is strip hardwood throughout the first and second floors; the arrangement of the flooring in the present modern kitchen and bathroom which take up the back (west) third of the main floor is such that every third strip is an offsetting darker color wood. The front two thirds of the first story comprise the parlor (south), the diningroom (north), and the center hallway. The east façade windows are centered in the rooms, and the parlor being larger than the diningroom skews the symmetry of the windows to the north on the building's street frontage. Openings from the hall to these two rooms are via large openings with paired, paneled doors, each door measuring over three feet wide. The c. 1880 bay window enlarges the parlor to the south and allows ample natural light. Baseboards on the lower floor are nine-inch flat stock with a one-inch projecting half-round and ogee molding at the top. Doors are generally paneled with wide molded trim. Windows are set in the deep wells with beveled sides and narrow molded trim. Plaster and lath comprise the majority of interior walls, and outside corners are protected with dowel moldings that extend from the baseboard to the cornice. Shallow flat strips with quarter rounds are arranged as faux beams on the hall and parlor ceilings. The one fireplace on the first floor in the diningroom has had its opening bricked in, but retains a wooden mantle with geometric ornament supported by turned legs.

A turned newel post anchors the continuous balustrade extending up the stairs and returning to the landing wall. Square stock is used for balusters leading up, and turned balusters are found on the second floor. Operable transom lights surmount each of four paneled bedroom doors off the second landing, which still retain their room numbers from the Hill House Hotel era. Flooring, windows, doors, and trim

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follow the styles from the first level. A second separate staircase with square newel posts and a turned balustrade rises from the second floor to the unfinished attic, where exposed hand hewn rafters and original plank flooring are evident.

Ell

Though there is no date carved on the original stone barn as there is on the house, careful examination of its walls supports its construction contemporaneous with the main house, and, by stone mason James Ritchie. Similar stone, bedding, mortar profiles, and the use of galletting are evident in the walls. As originally built c. 1822, the barn was a detached 1½-story stone building with gable ends facing east and west. The physical evidence supporting this contention is strong. First, there are remnants of an east-west, 1-story wall that joined at the point of the south edge of the east-facing wood-framed wall. This would have been the original eaves-side north wall of the barn. Second, the existing masonry on the south wall starting at a line even with the bottom of the windows is cut stone, as opposed to the quarry-faced stone below, indicating that this section was placed some time after original construction. Also, the profile of the mortar joint is much narrower between the cut stone than the original section. Finally, there is evidence of the original gable profile in the upper section of the south wall where it was raised to two stories. The lower, quarry-faced section would have been the original south eaves wall – opposing the one that was removed.

About 1840, the barn was raised to its present 2-story height and connected to the house to constitute an imposing 2-story ell extending the building mass south to the four-corners intersection. Concerned more with interior spaces and efficiency of construction, the gabled ell is asymmetrical with a longer and shallower pitched roof line extending to the west. Numerous examiners have opined on the use of wood on the east connecting wall, versus the solid masonry construction of the west connecting wall. Though there is not an available definitive answer, one could expect that wood framing was utilized on the east wall for expediency and cost reasons to accommodate the thirteen door and window openings that provided light and access for the restaurant and dance hall.

The resulting east, two-story, eaves-front façade of the ell is therefore a combination of stone wall on the south end, and wood framed and clapboarded wall on the north end with a corrugated metal roof the entire length. With smaller stones, the use of more rubble, and considerable galletting, the fit and finish of the stone on the barn walls lacks the precision of the main house. Like the house, the corners are strengthened by large alternating stones along each wall, but unlike the house which has been repointed several times, the pale lime mortar joints are much more evident. Six, unevenly spaced window openings on the second floor of the wood section are fitted with a combination of 6/6 and 2/2 wood double hung windows with flat stock trim. Two paneled doors, each with flanking 2/2 double hung windows provided access to the restaurant and tavern on the ground floor of the wood section. To the

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south of these openings are three additional double hung windows, and a single wooden paneled door. The stone section of the east façade is dominated by 3, first-story, stone post and beam openings, the northernmost two of which have been blocked in – one for two, 2/2 windows, and the other for a paneled door. The third opening is accessed by a pair of historic, heavy vertical plank doors. A large, stone-framed hay door constitutes the only opening on the second floor of this section.

The south façade of the ell matches the austerity of the north façade of the main house. A simple molded cornice tucked under the corrugated metal forms the gable in which two planked over windows are located. Beneath them, are four evenly spaced, similarly covered window openings on the second floor; the first floor has no openings. Notable on this façade is the change in stone cutting technique, mortar profile, and stone color above the first story, supporting the contention that the barn was raised to two full stories from its original 1 ½ -story configuration.

On the west façade of the ell which is entirely stone, the old detached barn's original gable end shows as a stone wall dormer with original stone post and beam framed openings below it. The stone lintel over the first-story plank door and adjoining small window also forms the sill under the second story plank door which also has an adjoining window under a common lintel. This west façade steps in several feet to the east at which point the wall continues north to connect with the main house. Five, planked-over, openings are evenly spaced on the second level. Underneath the planks are well preserved 12/12 double hung windows. Two pairs of double hung, 2/2 windows are centered in the first story wall, with a reconfigured plank door and one additional 2/2 window to the north, and a paneled recessed door to the south. The lintel extends by several feet to the north over the plank, and part of the opening underneath has been bricked in, indicating that a wider opening was once in this space.

Two historic 8/8 windows are tucked in the north gable end of the ell, each sash being four lights wide by two high. Three window openings on the second floor are planked over 12/12 windows, and one of three openings on the first floor has been blocked in with stone. The remaining two are a paneled door and a 2/2 double hung window. This window has a protruding soapstone sill that extends inside the building and forms a sink. Water drained to the outside through the extant hole drilled through the stone. A second example of this can be found under the southernmost window on the second floor of the west connecting wall.

Ell Interior:

The interior of the ell remains a ghost of its former prominence in Isle La Motte. Conditions are generally poor as the space has been unoccupied for several decades, and roof problems have allowed water to penetrate the interior over time. However, there are sufficient extant features to evoke strong memories of what occurred there in times past.

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The two-story interior is roughly divided into three sections, from south to north. The southern section, roughly one-quarter of the total area and where the cider mill was located, has gravel floors and rough post and beam framing dating from the mid-19th century. The exterior stone walls are open to the inside. The middle section, roughly one-half of the total ell space, is divided on the first floor into the tavern (beer bar) and restaurant areas that fronted the street façade and had separate entrances. The walls still have their tongue in groove paneling and most of the tongue in groove floorboards are still in place, as is the plank bar separating the patrons and the staff. Over the bar and restaurant was located the Hill Dancing Hall. The trusses supporting the roof that permitted one large open space are evident, as are the well-preserved 12/12 windows set into the open exterior stone walls on the west wall. To the north in the remaining quarter of the ell are two wood paneled bedrooms on the second floor, and the kitchen and pantry on the first floor. Various items used in the Hill House dating from 1850 to 1950 can be found in the ell including kitchen appliances, service items, and signs. The soapstone window sink is in its original location.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Politics and Government

Agriculture

Industry

Period of Significance 1822 – 1953

Significant Dates 1822

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Hill, Ira

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Ritchie, James

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheets (8-1 through 8-7)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)
See Continuation Sheets (XX)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Isle La Motte Historical Society

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.3

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>18</u>	<u>631,190</u>	<u>4,970,500</u>	3	_____	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____	_____

_____ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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Hill, Ira House
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The 1822 Ira Hill House, a 2 ½ story, gable-roofed house with large ell addition, is an excellent representative example of early 19th century vernacular-style, rural Vermont, residential architecture in native stone construction. It is one of nine buildings constructed by master stone mason James Ritchie on Isle La Motte, among them, the 1843 United Methodist Church (listed in the National Register), the c. 1840 Village library, and the 1829 Ezra Pike Jr. House. Built for prominent local citizen Ira Hill, the house is noteworthy for its blending of native limestone and early Scottish settler's skills in a simple, but large and imposing stone building that is still in excellent condition. The form, construction, and historic changes to the house and massive wood and stone ell extending from the south gable end, illustrate the variety of commercial and agricultural endeavors undertaken by successive residents of the house. The Ira Hill House is also significant for the association of its building stone with the early and mid-19th century expansion of marble quarrying on the island and the widespread exportation of this stone for use in noteworthy buildings and bridges in the United States and Canada. In its walls, the house reveals highly fossiliferous stone which was quarried from the upper layers of what are now internationally recognized and studied outcroppings on Isle La Motte of some the world's earliest marine reefs. Finally, the building is noteworthy for its association with its first owner, Ira Hill. Mr. Hill, the son of Caleb Hill, a prominent citizen of Vermont in his own right, was active in numerous commercial and civic endeavors that were instrumental in the development of Isle La Motte's economy and culture. After moving to the island at the age of nine, Ira Hill spent the rest of his life in Isle La Motte engaged in commerce, agriculture, trade, and politics. To summarize: The Ira Hill House is being nominated under Criterion A for its association with tourism for over 130 consecutive years as a hotel and tavern, with agriculture as an early example of a cider mill and processing facility, and with early stone mining enterprises. It is nominated under Criterion B for its association with the Hon. Ira Hill for whom the building was constructed. Mr. Hill had a long and distinguished involvement with commerce and trade, local and statewide politics, and agriculture. Finally, it is nominated under criterion C as representing the work of a master stone mason, James Ritchie, who emigrated from Scotland after apprenticing there for seven years and who built numerous exemplary stone buildings in Isle La Motte and the surrounding area.

Located just below the Canadian border in Lake Champlain, Isle La Motte is the northernmost in the chain of islands including the Alburg peninsula that comprise Grand Isle County. It is a fairly low-lying, rural landscape of 4,670 acres. The island was discovered (and the lake named) by Europeans in 1609 when French explorer Samuel de Champlain, two French companions, and sixty Native Americans sailed into the lake from Quebec. Fifty-seven years later, the island was named for M. de la Motte, Captain of the French Royal Carignan Regiment. M. de Courcelles, Governor of New France, sent Capt. La Motte to the island with 300 men to construct a fort on the site established the previous year. The log palisade fort, dedicated to Sainte-Anne, was the first white settlement in Vermont. Today, the site hosts a complex of buildings constituting St. Anne's Shrine that welcomes tens of thousands of pilgrims each year to attend mass and other religious services

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Hill, Ira House
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and events.

Fort St. Anne was abandoned in 1677, and Isle la Motte was occupied only as a temporary stopover for subsequent decades. During this time, the island was claimed at times by New France, New Hampshire, New York, and Connecticut. The 1777 Declaration of Independence and the establishment of the new Republic of Vermont, as well as the actions of the Green Mountain Boys settled once and for all years of haggling over the ownership of the island. The 1779 grant by Governor Chittenden of Isle La Motte to Major Benjamin Wait and his associates became the final, binding legal title to the land. That same year the Island was chartered "Isle of Mott" and divided by surveyor John Clark into 97 lots averaging 50 acres each.

The first settlers on the island arrived in 1785, followed quickly by another 14 families as indicated in the 1790 Census figures. The road building commenced the following year when residents voted "That the Select Men Be Directed to Lay out a Road this Island and Two Roads One South and the Other North according to the Law..."

Ira Hill's Father, Caleb Hill, bought 50 scattered lots, a total of 1000 acres on Isle La Motte on 18 January, 1803, and he and his wife Cynthia (Strong) Hill and family moved to the island shortly thereafter from Granville, Rhode Island. The last part of the journey was over the ice with 6 children loaded onto bob sleds filled with hay to keep them warm, and pulled by a single horse. The household goods came on a second bob sled train headed by Caleb's brother, Benajah. Caleb built a substantial stone house on Lot No. 33 at the island's north end, a two-story dwelling measuring 35 by 45 feet. This was a notable house at the time, the others settlers houses being made more traditionally of logs. Extant remains of one of the stone walls are still visible from Main Street. At the death of Caleb Hill, he owned more than one quarter of the island. Caleb's business ventures are important in the discussion of the Ira Hill house as Ira partnered with his father in much of the enterprise, and would assume its management at his father's death. Caleb Hill was active in town affairs as Lister, Treasurer, Selectman, and subsequently Representative from Isle La Motte in the Vermont State Legislature and Assistant Judge in Grand Isle County.

Caleb Hill obtained a license in 1805 to keep a tavern and inn at his stone house, the first on the island. This would portend one of his son Ira's more significant ventures. Caleb, who was very active in the Vermont Militia, was commissioned 1st Lieutenant by Governor Isaac Tichenor in 1807. By unfortunate and tragic circumstances, Caleb Hill was shot and killed in his tavern by renegade troops from Commodore McDonough's American Fleet in 1814. The shooting occurred in front of his son Ira, as we know from Ira's own writings.

Ira Hill himself was a prominent and lifelong resident of Isle La Motte after arriving in 1803 at nine years of age. Becoming head of his family at a young age, Ira was instrumental in the town's

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Hill, Ira House
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activities and development until his death in 1887. Caleb bequeathed to Ira lot 45 (the part east of Main Road), and all of lots 46 and 47 – a total of 100 acres. Lots 46 and 47 adjacent to Main Road at the center of the island would become the site of the Ira Hill House, his cider mill operation, tavern, and inn.

In 1822 at the age of 28, Ira Hill contracted with master stonemason and Isle La Motte resident, James Ritchie, to build a large house on Main Street in the center of the village. Born in 1879 in Scotland, Ritchie was a highly skilled stone mason to which the products of his work in Isle La Motte attest. He served a seven year apprenticeship in Scotland and family tradition tells that he immigrated to Canada before settling in Isle La Motte. The collection of his works in the Champlain Islands and southern Quebec define meticulous craftsmanship with precise cutting and laying of stone. A survey of his constructions by this author in 1995 revealed that all remain in remarkably good structural condition with straight and plumb walls and no apparent settling. In 1856, the stone walls of the Ritchie-constructed Isle La Motte Methodist Church survived a devastating fire that destroyed the church interior, further supporting the high quality of Ritchie's work.

The date of construction of the Ira Hill House is well known because the Masonic date of that year is carved into the stone lintel above the original center window on the second story. The carving reads L. 5822 with a hammer and chisel carved to the right of the date. These tools are carved also into at least one other building built by Ritchie and may have represented his mark. The rest of the carving however appears unique. The conversion to Gregorian calendar is achieved by subtracting 4000 years, to obtain the year 1822 as date of construction. The vertical section of the L. also forms the right arm of a compass, the other arm carved downward to the left. Across the middle of this angle appears to be carved the mason's square in the form of a right angled V. It is well known that the compass and square are the mason's symbols as they appear on the main façade of virtually every Masonic lodge. Early minutes from Masonic meetings in Isle La Motte reveal that masons met in private homes prior to the establishment of Masonic Lodges. Additional research may show that the Ira Hill House was used as an early lodge, explaining the Masonic dating and symbols carved into the facade. The carvings may also have the result of Ira Hill's longtime participation in Freemasonry and his standing as a high-ranking official in the organization.

That Ira Hill chose to build his house of stone, as did his friend Ezra Pike (1829 Ezra Pike House, Isle La Motte) when the popular material of the day was wooden logs, is understandable given their connections with freemasonry. Both were among a group of men who received a charter c. 1819 for the Columbus Lodge, No. 11, in nearby Alburg, and Ira Hill was a Master of this Lodge. Isle La Motte's own Lodge No. 81 was chartered November 28, 1867 to Ira Hill, and nine other men; six of them were Hill's. A second freemasonry chapter granted in Alburg was named "Hill Chapter" for Ira Hill, its first High Priest. Interestingly, and with unknown connection if any to freemasonry, both the house and original barn were the same size rectangles, 50 feet by 35 feet.

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Hill, Ira House
Isle La Motte, Grand Isle County, Vermont

The impact on communities in Vermont of the Free Masons in the 19th century was considerable. Membership in the organization was de rigueur for businessmen, politicians, and other influential citizens. Because Isle La Motte's economy during this time was largely based on the production of building stone from numerous local quarries, because Ira Hill owned a substantial island quarry, and because he headed both local and Alburg Free Mason chapters at various times, Ira Hill's prominence and influence was firmly established.

Taking after his father who had the first tavern license in the island, Ira Hill himself evidently decided to get into the tavern and dance hall business soon after his house was completed. Surviving invitations from 1847 tell that the Hill House hosted live music and dancing as of that year, perhaps earlier: "*A.S. PHELPS' FIRST PUBLIC. AT HILL'S DANCING HALL, Isle La Mott, Friday, Feb'y 26, 1847, 6 o'clock P.M. Yourself and Lady are respectfully invited to attend.*" Because the dance hall was located in the second floor of the ell connection, and invitations date back to 1847, the connection between the barn and the hall was completed sometime between 1822 and 1847. The window type (12/12) and stone construction support this. Ira had spent time much of his youth at his father's house/tavern at the north end of the island, and this was likely responsible for the construction of his own multipurpose building aimed at accommodating the attendant comings and goings of a bustling business.

Though now reconfigured, examination of the masonry of the house reveals the presence of an original full-width, 2-story porch on the east facade with 2 doors from the interior on the upper floor, and three doors from the interior at ground level. Extant daybooks from 1829 – 1838 recount the variety of Hill House transactions - including lodging – though the majority of charges were for rum, brandy and cider from his cider mill. The third floor was used as a small ballroom and hosted many local social events, as surviving invitations to gatherings and celebrations there attest. Ira Hill was also Isle La Motte's first postmaster with the Post Office in his building from 1829 – 1844.

Among Ira Hill's more adventurous business ventures was rafting logs to Quebec where the timber was processed and sold. With Ira as "raft master", seven men would live in a log cabin built on the raft deck for the arduous three month trip on Lake Champlain and the Richelieu River. From customs documents in St. Johns Quebec, it is clear the rafts were quite large "Permit Ira Hill, Master of a raft from Vermont to pass as follows, - VIZ – Ten Cribs counting Sixty thousand feet Pine Timbre, One hundred fifty Spars, One Thousand feet Oak and Elm. – which were duly entered according to law..... Custom House at St. Johns this 18th.day of May 1819 and in the 59th. Year of his Majesty's reign."

Other business ventures included hauling dung, keeping sheep, milling wood in the winter with power from a dry-docked steamer, cutting and selling ice from Lake Champlain, and real estate speculation. Regarding the latter, Ira Hill at one time owned most of the land from the great marsh

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Hill, Ira House
Isle La Motte, Grand Isle County, Vermont

to the northern tip of the island. Ira also ran the ferry between Isle La Motte and Alburg between 1819 and 1829. The Isle La Motte Town Records state the toll rates in 1820 "For Each Man - 12 cents, For each Man and Horse - 25 cents, For Sheep and Hogs, ten in number, per head - 6 cents." That Ira Hill ever actually operated the ferry is questionable considering his numerous other business ventures.

With all his pursuits, somehow, Ira Hill found time to follow military and political aspirations. He was appointed Captain in the Isle La Motte Militia when he was 21, and was very active in this capacity during the war of 1812. His youthful appearance and diminutive stature enabled him to pass himself off as a mere boy, and he did so mingling with British troops and carrying back information to assist in the rout of the British at the Battle of Plattsburgh. Among the political offices held by Ira Hill, include Town Lister, Treasurer, Town Clerk, Assistant Judge in Grand Isle County, Representative to the Vermont Legislature, and Delegate to the Vermont Constitutional Convention.

An astute politician and shrewd businessman, Ira Hill did much for the Town of Isle La Motte. Among his many local contributions was granting the land and organizing the construction for the nearby Methodist Episcopal Church begun in 1843 and completed in 1847 (listed in the National Register of Historic Places). The stone for the church likely came from Ira Hill's Marble Quarry on the east shore of the island, though there is evidence the stone came from the Nelson Fisk quarry. The adjacent c. 1840 "stone library" was also constructed for Ira Hill originally for use as a residence for one of his quarry foremen. Both buildings were built by James Ritchie.

Aside from the charges for alcoholic beverages from his cider mill, Ira Hill traded butter, lard, buckwheat, lime, emetic with rum, flour, pork, pans, pills, powder and shot, and timber indicating that in addition to his cider mill, tavern, inn and post office, he kept a specialty store of sorts. Some of these operations may have been housed in wood buildings removed from the property in the mid 20th century, including a large barn to the west, and a wood framed addition on the north façade of the tavern/inn. Others likely took place in the stone and wood framed building that was constructed to connect the original cider mill and the residence.

Ira Hill's original detached stone barn was constructed in the early 19th century ostensibly as a cider mill. Three adjoining openings on the east façade framed by massive stone posts and beams appear to have been constructed to permit passage of horse-drawn apple carts. Inside was housed a successful operation to press apples for the juice to make cider and brandy, which were the primary products of apples in the region until about 1840. Some islanders relate passed-down stories of late nights at the Hill House sampling these island specialties. In the following decades, better grafting techniques led to increased demand for the whole fruit, whose shipments buoyed the local economy into the mid 20th century.

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Section 8 Page 6

Hill, Ira House
Isle La Motte, Grand Isle County, Vermont

The apple industry was instrumental in the development of Isle La Motte and started before 1800, as Col. Ebenezer Allen and Lamberton Allen were known to have operated orchards there in the 1790's. The island's soils, climate and knowledgeable growers lead to an expansion of the industry throughout the century and into the 1900's. At its peak, local businessmen exported barrels of fruit from Fisk Dock on the island's west shore labeled "Isle La Motte Apples" and "Champlain Apples" to France, England, Germany, and South America. So famous was the quality that Isle La Motte Apples became a noted trade name in the markets of New York. The first boats to ship the apples were two-masted schooners, followed by steamboats, most notably the Chateaugay and the Ticonderoga. Later, shipments were hauled overland to Alburg for loading onto VT Central Railroad cars. At an average price of \$ 2.00 per barrel, the 1896 crop brought in close to \$ 30,000 to Isle La Motte farmers, a substantial industry for the small community.

Through the details of his 1814 estate settlement, including 1600 bushels of apples credited at 25c each, Ira's father Caleb was known to have been substantially involved in the apple industry in Isle la Motte. Ira would assume management of much of the business and press the fruit in his cider mill that he built some 10 years after his father's death. Entries in Ira Hill's daybook (1829 – 1838) include sales of cider and other apple products... "One quart Cider – 10c", "Half Gallon Apple Sauce – 25c", "One barrel cider - \$1.50", credit – John Scott, Grafting - \$1.00" all from 1831. Ira's son Henry H. Hill (1834 – 1920) joined his father's business and became known as the pioneer of the commercial apple farming and marketing in Isle La Motte. Among the 10,000 registered apple trees in Isle la Motte in 1892, Ira Hill is listed as having over 1400. A remembrance still told, it is said that Ira would hire locals to pick his apple crop, then pay them with the "drops" from the trees, then charge them to make them into cider.

Apple production in Grand Isle County peaked between 1896 and 1912. Poor market prices, diseased trees, lack of tree replacement, and higher overhead costs combined to force decline on the industry to where only one orchard, Hall Orchard, is operating in Isle la Motte today.

The Ira Hill House is significant also for association of its stone type and origin with the history and development of the island's economy. Aside from local use in a collection of stone buildings built by James Ritchie, Isle la Motte marble was widely recognized and prized for its capacity to take the fine polish required for mantels, counter tops, tiling, and columns. For example, it was shipped into Canada for use in the Bank of Montreal Headquarters, to New York City for use as a finishing stone in fine homes, and to Washington DC for the National Gallery of Art. Not metamorphosed like most marbles, the stone is highly fossiliferous and close inspection by the cognoscenti reveals a myriad of ancient fossils. The marble was also widely used as a durable building stone outside of Isle La Motte – in such buildings as Radio City Music Hall in New York, the Federal Reserve Bank in Boston, the Toronto Art Museum, and the South Hero Inn in Vermont. The stone was also used

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Hill, Ira House
Isle La Motte, Grand Isle County, Vermont

in the piers and abutments of the Brooklyn Bridge, and the Victoria Bridge in Montreal. A total of nine quarries were operating in Isle la Motte during much of the 19th century, employing many residents in the mine pits and support industries. Most quarries ceased operation before 1900, and only the Goodsell quarry on the east shore remains active.

Isle La Motte marble is also prized and known worldwide among paleontologists as coming from the oldest exposed fossil reef in the world. The reef was formed during the Ordovician Period 450 – 480 million years ago in a shallow tropical sea straddling the equator in the Iapetus Ocean, and carried to its present location by plate tectonics. Scientists from around the world have visited Isle La Motte to study exposed sections of this reef in the southern half of the island. From its outcroppings, experts can glean information about some of the most basic principles of biology including succession and evolution among ancient sea creatures. As in these rock formations, fossils are readily visible on the limestone walls of the Ira Hill House and the other stone buildings constructed from Isle la Motte stone.

Ira Hill died in 1887. Records indicate the property was bequeathed at that time to Ira's son Henry Harrison Hill, who continued operation of the Hill House until 1915 and who undertook substantial renovations to the buildings. These changes likely included the addition of the present two-story, Italianate-style bay window. In 1915 and for 25 dollars quarterly, Joseph and Martha (Josie and Mattie) Duba of Isle La Motte leased the Hill House Hotel with the condition that Henry would continue to live in the building and that the Duba's would provide care for him. Around 1920, at the time of Henry's death, the Duba's bought the hotel and continued operation with great skill, warmth, and notoriety into the 1950's. Widespread automobile touring, the bridge constructed to the mainland in 1882, and the development of a ferry to transport automobiles to and from Chazy, New York expanded demand at the popular inn. Extant photographs from 1908 depict luxurious "Phaeton" touring cars packed onto Will Sweet's ferry from New York State landing at Isle La Motte; a one-way crossing cost \$1.25. Many of these tourists stayed at the Hill House, considered to be among the finest hotels in the region.

The Dubas used the cider mill section of the ell to raise minks for a few years. They lived on the second floor of the northern half of the ell with the kitchen and dining room below. Phyllis Richardson, present Isle La Motte Postmaster recalled the polished hardwood floors of the dining room, and the meticulous organization of the dining room and hotel. Other island residents, many of whom worked in the summers for the Duba's, have fond memories of the excellent home-cooked cuisine and especially Mattie's apple and berry pies. Today, the property is privately owned by Dr. Richard Middleton who has sensitively restored much of the house. Dr. Middleton also owns and operates the adjacent Isle La Motte Country Store, and generously maintains the land between the store and Hill House for use as the Isle La Motte village common.

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Section 9 Page 1

Hill, Ira House
Isle La Motte, Grand Isle County, Vermont

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Interviews: Phyllis Richardson, Isle La Motte; Richard Middleton, Isle La Motte.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 10 Page 1
Vermont

Hill, Ira House
Isle La Motte, Grand Isle County,

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries of the Ira Hill House comprise the rectangle defined by the frontage of approximately 225 feet, extending from the center of Main Street to the west along School Street, and approximately 260 feet extending from the center of School Street north along Main Street.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary of this rectangular shaped parcel of land includes the Ira Hill House and land upon which was housed a summer kitchen, veranda, barns, and a tennis court historically associated with the Ira Hill House.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title D. Scott Newman

Organization Historic Preservation Consultant

date April 16, 2003

street & number 2252 Main Street

telephone (802) 928-3727

city or town Isle La Motte

state VT

zip code 05463

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Richard Middleton

street & number 68 School Street

telephone (802) 928-3033

city or town Isle La Motte

state VT

zip code 05463

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Hill, Ira, House
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: VERMONT, Grand Isle

DATE RECEIVED: 9/29/03 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 10/30/03
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 11/15/03 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 11/13/03
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 03001164

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 11.13.03 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



HILL, Ira House
Isle La Motte, GRAND ISLE COUNTY, VERMONT

Credit: SCOTT NEWMAN

APRIL 17, 2003; Negative FILED AT VT-DHP

View Looking SOUTHEAST

Photograph #1

CAMTEC <42340003.JPG> 002 © HD
1237 62 N N N+3 --- 2107.7/100.0



Hill, Ira House
Isle La Motte, Grand Isle County, Vermont
Credit: Scott Newman
April 17, 2003; Negative filed AT VT - DHP
View Looking South
Photograph # 2

2368881.JPG > 005 HD
K N+3 -- 2107.7/100.0



Mill, Ira House
Isle La Motte, Grand Isle County, Vermont
Credit: Scott Newman

April 17, 2003
View looking northwest
negative filed at VT Div. for Historical Preservation.
photograph #3

1544340001.P67.001@CD
1544340001.P67.001@CD
2002.7/0800.0



Hill, Ira House
Isle La Motte, GRAND ISLE COUNTY, VERMONT
Credit: SCOTT NEWMAN
April 17, 2003; Negative FILM AT VT-DHP
View Looking Northwest
Photograph # 4

2580003R.Jee> 002© HD
4 N+3--- 2107.7/100.0

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



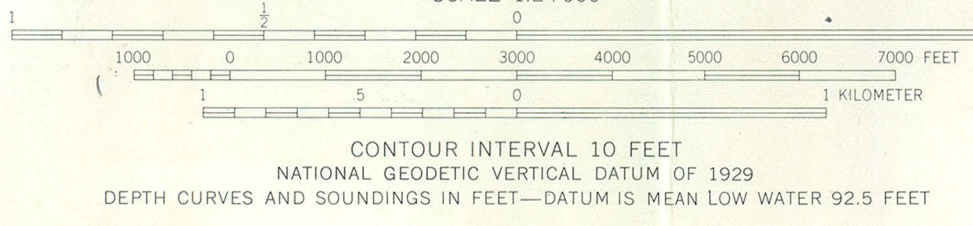
Maped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey in cooperation with New York Department of Transportation Control by USGS, USC&GS, International Boundary Commission, and U. S. Lake Survey

Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1964. Field checked 1966

Selected hydrographic data compiled from U. S. Lake Survey Chart 171 (1962) This information is not intended for navigational purposes

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum 10,000-foot grids based on Vermont coordinate system and New York coordinate system, east zone 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 18, shown in blue

Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty	Light-duty
Medium-duty	Unimproved dirt
U.S. Route	State Route

ROUSES POINT, VT.-N.Y.
NE/4 ROUSES POINT 15' QUADRANGLE
N4452.5-W7315/7.5

Map photoinspected 1972
No major culture or drainage changes observed

1966
PHOTOINSPECTED 1972
AMS 6375 IV NE-SERIES V813

Handwritten note: Hill Ira House, Isle La Motte, Grand Isle County, Vermont. Includes number 18-631190-4970500

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092

QUADRANGLE LOCATION