

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received **AUG 5 1986**

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic North Holderness Free Will Baptist Church, Third Free Will Baptist Church of Holderness

and/or common North Holderness Freewill Baptist Church/Holderness Historical Society Building
(Preferred)

2. Location

street & number Owl Brook Road N/A not for publication

city, town Holderness vicinity of

state New Hampshire code 33 county Grafton code 009

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Holderness Historical Society

street & number P.O. Box 319

city, town Holderness N/A vicinity of state New Hampshire 03245

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Grafton County Courthouse
Grafton County Registry of Deeds

street & number Route 10

city, town Haverhill state New Hampshire 03785

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Holderness Historic Resources Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1983 federal state county local

depository for survey records Lakes Region Planning Commission

city, town Meredith state New Hampshire

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The North Holderness Free Will Baptist Church is a small wooden church which stands on its own lot on the northerly side of Owl Brook Road in the town of Holderness, about .4 mile east of Hardhack Corner. The one and a half story, gable roofed, rectangular building is set on a cut granite block foundation, with its south gable end facing the road. The clapboarded walls are trimmed by wide corner pilasters with simply moulded "capitals". The wide box cornice with mouldings, deep frieze, and returns trims the asphalt shingled roof.

The main facade, the south gable end, is three bays wide, with the church's two entries in the side bays. The entries are virtually identical, each with a granite step, a large four panel door, wide plain frame, and a modern pseudo-Colonial electric light on the lintel. The west entry also has a metal pipe railing and is flanked by small wooden signs with the date "1860", and the owner's title, "Holderness Historical Society". In the central bay of the south gable end is a large six over six sash window with plain frame and louvered shutters. Two smaller six over six sash windows with plain frames are found in the gable itself. The side (east and west) facades each have two large six over six sash windows with louvered shutters and plain frames which butt up against the frieze of the box cornice. The rear (north) gable end is windowless, being interrupted only by a tall, plain, central exterior brick chimney with a modern cleanout door.

The interior consists basically of one large room, the auditorium, with a small vestibule in each southern corner and a choir stall between the two vestibules. All four spaces have board floors, and plaster walls with horizontal board wainscoting topped by a simple coping. All four spaces also share the same high plaster ceiling, as the vestibules' inner walls stop two and a half feet short of the ceiling, and the vestibules do not have their own separate ceilings. These shorter vestibule walls are each topped by a wide frieze with narrow coping on the vestibule side, and by a more elaborate moulded cornice with a deep frieze on the auditorium side. Hanging from the ceiling are the electric lights, six psuedo-kerosene lamps hanging from chains in the auditorium, and two more modern fixtures, one above each vestibule. (In the ceiling directly above the choir stall is the plain framed, board covered opening into the unfinished attic. The attic, lit by two untrimmed six over six sash windows in the south wall, has an exposed framework of joists in the floor, beams and posts in the walls, rafters and purlins in the roof.)

The vestibules are mirror images of each other. Plain frames surround the large four panel door in the south outer wall, the doorless opening to the choir stall in the inner side wall, and the four panel door to the auditorium in the north inner wall. (The west vestibule does have a small wooden cabinet on its inner east side wall.)

The board floor of the choir stall between the two vestibules is raised one step above the vestibule floors. Built against the south (outer) wall of the choir stall is a long board bench. The floor is raised another step in front of this bench. The choir stall is separated from the auditorium by a long low partition sheathed with wide horizontal boarding and topped by a simple coping. In the south wall of the choir stall is a large six over six sash window with a plain frame, whose stool is the coping of the wainscoting and whose lintel butts up against the ceiling. The side walls each contain an unframed doorless opening to a vestibule.

Besides the south window behind the choir stall, the auditorium is also lit by four other large six over six sash windows, two each in both the east and west walls. The coping of the wainscoting serves as the stool for these plain framed side windows. Plain frames also surround the four panel doors to the vestibules in the south corners. Much of the auditorium's north wall is covered by a low board floored platform raised one step above the main floor. (It should be noted that the central section of platform appears to be older than the flanking sections. Behind this central section, the board wainscoting lacks the coping found elsewhere and is raised a few inches higher than the adjoining wainscoting. These differences would

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suggest that some renovation of the pulpit or the platform has taken place.)

The slip pews that occupy most of the auditorium all have board seats, fronts, and backs (the latter topped by rounded copings) and paneled pew ends with simply curved armrests. The main body of the room contains four rows of pews, divided by two aisles starting at the vestibule doors. The rows of seven pews each along the west and east side walls are both fronted by low board partitions of the same height as the pew backs and topped by simply moulded copings. The two central rows have four pews apiece and are fronted and separated by similar board partitions with moulded copings. South of the two central rows, marks in the floor reveal that four pews (two in each row) have been removed. (These removed pews are now stored in the attic.) In this space now stands a large modern metal stove whose stovepipe, suspended from the ceiling, runs the full length of the room to exit through the north wall. In each north corner of the auditorium is found two more pews which face toward the platform. On the platform there now stands a movable pulpit, with elaborate moulded base and cornice and an upholstered Bible rest.

The small lot, basically a trapezoid in shape, is mostly grassed and is relatively flat, although a large granite boulder is found east of the church. Foundation shrubs are found around the building, particularly on the south front. One white pine tree stands next to the building's east wall. And more trees, mostly pines, line the stone walls that mark the northerly, easterly and westerly boundaries of the lot.

The nominated property represents one contributing building.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400–1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500–1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/
___ 1700–1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ theater
___ 1900–	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	___ transportation
		___ invention		___ other (specify)

Specific dates 1860 **Builder/Architect** (see text below)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph) The North Holderness Free Will Baptist Church is significant architecturally as a good, well preserved example of the vernacular country churches of rural New Hampshire in the mid to late 19th century.

The Free Will Baptists of North Holderness were originally organized as a branch of the Free Will Baptist church in New Hampton. In 1829, a separate Holderness church was organized which included the Free Will Baptists of North Holderness and of Holderness (now Ashland) village. By 1847, however, the North Holderness members has separated to form their own independent congregation, known as the Third Free Will Baptist Church of Holderness, or, more commonly, as the North Holderness Free Will Baptist Church. Their early meetings were held in a local schoolhouse, but, in 1860, during the pastorate of Rev. Stephen Leavitt, the North Holderness church proceeded with plans to erect its own building. On October 24, 1860, the North Holderness Free Will Baptist Society purchased a small lot on Owl Brook Road for \$20 from Daniel and Charlotte Leavitt, "the same to be used by said Society for a Meeting House lot and site and for nothing else."¹ As efforts to locate the records of the church have so far proven unsuccessful, we are forced to rely on local traditions for the early history of the building. They are, unfortunately, somewhat contradictory. The traditional date for construction of the building is 1860, but at least one oral tradition gives the date as 1861. A history of the church, published in 1941, states that "the carpenter in charge was John Jewell".² However, John S. Drew is said to have built the church almost entirely by himself, according to a tradition preserved among his descendants. Another tradition that survives in the neighborhood states that the construction of the building was a cooperative community project, with donations of labor and materials by many local residents, and further suggests that a master carpenter named Worthen figures prominently in the project. Without the church records, it is difficult to judge the validity of these various traditions, or to positively identify the builder or designer of the church.

The North Holderness Free Will Baptist Church was disbanded in 1894, when its members joined the new Free Will Baptist Church at Squam Bridge (now Holderness village). However, the building continued to be maintained and used for neighborhood religious services through much of the 20th century. In 1970, the United Baptist Convention of New Hampshire sold the church to the Holderness Historical Society, which has since used the building for meetings and the display of historical artifacts.

There seems to have been very few changes to the building since its construction, particularly on the exterior. About 1930, the present chimney was built to replace an earlier deteriorated chimney. The Holderness Historical Society had added two small signs and electric lights above the doors. But, otherwise, the exterior is unchanged. The interior has seen a few more changes. It appears that, at some unknown period, the pulpit platform was altered. The platform seems to have been widened. And the differences in the wainscoting behind the older central section of the platform suggests that some feature, perhaps a wall bench or a pulpit enclosure, has been removed. As there are no early views of the interior that could enlighten us, we can only speculate as to the original design of this platform area. One old photograph

1. "Warranty Deed, D.M. Leavitt and Charlotte M. Leavitt to North Holderness Free Will Baptist Society" Grafton County Registry of Deeds, Liber 267, Folio 397 (manuscript, Grafton County Registry of Deeds, Haverhill, N.H.)
2. NORTH HOLDERNESS FREE BAPTIST CHURCH 1847–1894 (Meredith, N.H., 1941) unpagged

9. Major Bibliographical References

Holderness Historical Society Photograph Collection, Holderness, N.H.
Margaret A. Howe and Susan Bacon Keith ABBREVIATED HISTORY OF HOLDERNESS 1761-1961 (c.1961
"John S. Drew" (manuscript, Ashland Historical Society, Ashland, N.H.)
Madge Pease, untitled notes (manuscript, Holderness Historical Society, Holderness, N.H.)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approx. 1/4 acre

Quadrangle name Holderness, N.H.

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UTM References

A

1	9	2	8	9	3	8	0	4	8	4	7	1	5	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification The nominated property is a trapezoidal lot, bounded on the south by Owl Brook Road, and on the east, north and west, by stone walls, as is shown on the accompanying sketch map entitled "North Holderness Free Will Baptist Church, Holderness, N.H." The nominated property includes the North Holderness Free Will Baptist Church and the lot on

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David L. Ruell

organization Lakes Region Planning Commission

date February 11, 1986

street & number Main Street

telephone 603-279-8171

city or town Meredith

state New Hampshire 03253

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

S. G. Adamovich

title New Hampshire State Historic Preservation Officer

date

7/29/86

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Alfred Byer

date

9/4/86

Keeper of the National Register

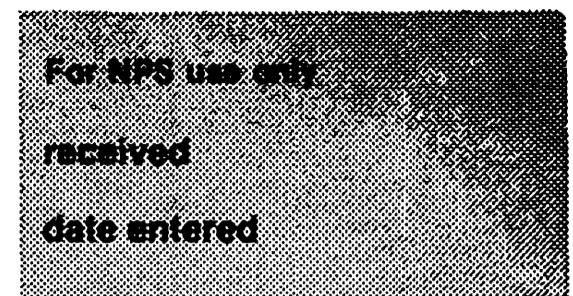
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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does reveal that the stove was once located in the east vestibule. Sometime in the mid 20th century, it was replaced by a more modern stove, which was located in the rear of the auditorium, necessitating the removal of four pews. The 20th century also saw the installation of modern electric lights, most of which were replaced by the Holderness Society with hanging fixtures designed to look like kerosene lamps. By and large, however, the North Holderness Free Will Baptist Church appears today almost exactly as it did in the 19th century.

The design of the North Holderness church was not unusual for central New Hampshire in the mid 19th century. Most small country churches of the time display many of the same features, a simple, gable roofed form, a three bay wide gable end facade with a central window and two side entries, large sash windows on the side facades, corner pilasters, a wide box cornice with returns, two small vestibules and an auditorium filled with slip pews facing a pulpit platform against the rear wall. The East Holderness Free Will Baptist Church (c.1840), for example, has all the same features, differing only in details, such as the design of the corner pilasters and in having three windows on the side facades, instead of the two windows found in North Holderness.³ Save for the echoes of the Greek Revival found in the corner pilasters and the wide box cornice with its deep frieze and returns, the North Holderness church shows little influence of the high styles of the period. It is basically a vernacular building, dating from a time when the vernacular tradition had absorbed some elements of the Greek Revival style. In this respect, the church was not unlike the vernacular houses and farm buildings of its neighborhood, for the architecture of the rural sections of central New Hampshire was still little affected by the Victorian styles that were beginning to appear in the more sophisticated larger villages. But, we should not underestimate this modest vernacular church. It is a good example of its type, distinguished not by its ornament, but by its good proportions and pleasing simplicity. Even if we cannot name the builder, we can recognize the quality of his work. Many similar small country churches have been either destroyed, modernized, or altered to serve other purposes. For, as the automobile made transportation easier, rural congregations have combined, and the small country churches have been largely abandoned. Holderness is unusual in still having two church buildings of this type. The North Holderness Free Will Baptist Church is a well preserved example of a vanishing building type, that recalls an era when rural New Hampshire was largely agricultural and its social and religious life was still centered on neighborhood institutions, such as the district schoolhouse and the small country church. This modest but attractive building reminds us not only of the vernacular architecture in the mid 19th century, but also of a way of life that has to a large extent disappeared.

3. The East Holderness church could well have been a model for the North Holderness church, as it would have been very familiar to the Free Will Baptist of North Holderness.

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NORTH HOLDERNESS FREE BAPTIST CHURCH 1847-1894 (Meredith, N.H., 1941)

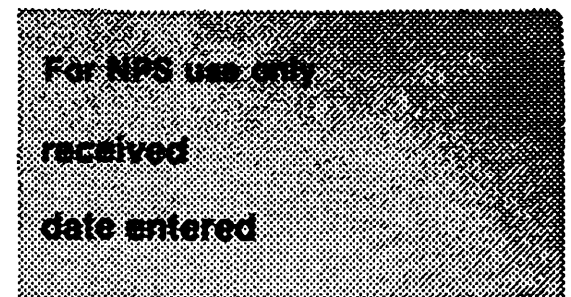
interview, Richard Piper, September 12, 1985

interview, Doris Graton, September 15, 1985

interview, Roy Melanson, September 18, 1985

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which it has stood since its construction. (Holderness Property Map 9, lot 15)
Boundary of property has been highlighted in yellow on sketch map.

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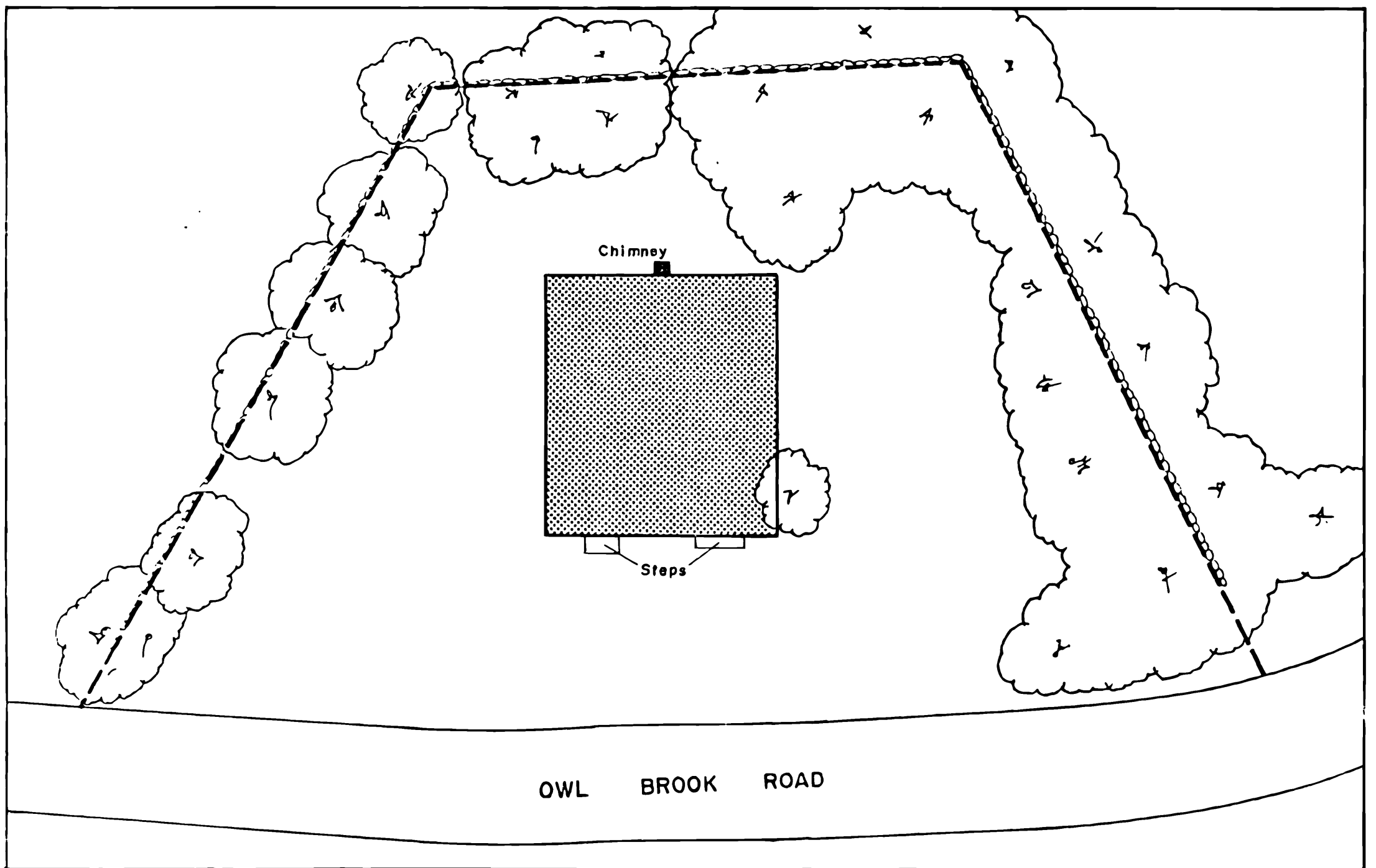
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North Holderness
Free Will Baptist Church
Holderness, N.H.



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This certifies that the appearance of the photographs has not changed.