

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

ENGLISH CHURCH (Union Episcopal Church)

AND/OR COMMON

UNION EPISCOPAL CHURCH

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Old Church Road

\_\_NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Claremont

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

\_\_ VICINITY OF

Second

STATE

New Hampshire

CODE

33

COUNTY

Sullivan

CODE

019

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

\_\_DISTRICT

\_\_PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

\_\_AGRICULTURE

\_\_MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

\_\_PRIVATE

\_\_UNOCCUPIED

\_\_COMMERCIAL

\_\_PARK

\_\_STRUCTURE

BOTH

\_\_WORK IN PROGRESS

\_\_EDUCATIONAL

\_\_PRIVATE RESIDENCE

\_\_SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

\_\_ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

\_\_OBJECT

\_\_IN PROCESS

\_\_YES: RESTRICTED

\_\_GOVERNMENT

\_\_SCIENTIFIC

\_\_BEING CONSIDERED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

\_\_INDUSTRIAL

\_\_TRANSPORTATION

\_\_NO

\_\_MILITARY

\_\_OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Union Church, Inc.

STREET & NUMBER

Old Church Road

CITY, TOWN

Claremont

STATE

New Hampshire 03743

\_\_ VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Sullivan County Registry of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

PO Box 448

CITY, TOWN

Newport

STATE

New Hampshire

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None

DATE

\_\_FEDERAL \_\_STATE \_\_COUNTY \_\_LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED    DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

### Present Appearance:

Union Church is a rectangular frame structure with a gable roof, six arched windows on each side, and a square tower which rises on the west end to a point above the ridge. The tower has arched windows at three levels and is surmounted by an octagonal open belfry. The heavy cornice at the belfry level is capped by a latticework balustrade which terminated at elongated pyramidal turrets on each corner. The belfry is covered by an octagonal wooden ogee dome with a tall mast or spire at its apex. Eight solid wooden posts support the dome and are given the appearance of an arcade by a series of curved frieze boards beneath the cornice of the dome. The church is clapboarded and painted white, though tradition states that it was originally unpainted and subsequently was colored gray with a red rear (east) wall.

The interior is a large auditorium lighted by the arched side windows and by a single window of stained glass on the east end above the altar. The pews are of the box type, those in the center of the room raised above the floor by a single step, and those outside the two aisles raised two steps. The plaster ceiling is laid on riven lath and has a deep central barrel vault running nearly its full length. On each side are areas of flat ceiling which curve downward in deep coves at their juncture with the side walls.

At the east end of the auditorium is a chancel with a high central arched opening supported on unpainted wooden posts, and flanked by two lower arches that repeat the curves of the coved ceiling. This woodwork was added in 1850, when a vestry was built into the northeast corner of the church, and is decorated with chamfers and lamb's tongue stops. In 1875 the vestry was remodelled into a small library, and an organ, which still remains, was installed in the southeast corner of the building. The lath of the chancel area is sawn on a circular saw.

The woodwork of the auditorium (except that of the chancel area) is painted white. The major decorative features of the room are delicate balustrades that surmount the top of each pew wall. Each baluster is of an attenuated urn form, and the rails above the balusters are relatively heavy and are finished with unpainted moulded caps. Most pew doors have single raised panels and stiles and rails decorated with quarter-round mouldings, although some of the pew panelling in the front of the church is surrounded by the ogee mouldings of the Federal era.

The windows in the side walls contain 30 lights in their lower sash and 48 lights (including the arched portions) in their upper sash. Muntins in the sashes in the four western bays of the church are of heavy pre-Revolutionary profile; those in the two eastern bays (which were added in 1820) are of a more delicate profile, and the windows themselves are noticeably smaller than the earlier ones.

The tower was added to the building in 1801, and is supported by massive quarter-round posts at its corners. Its frame is tied to that of the main building by heavy needle beams that extend from the tower into the trusses over the auditorium. The lath used throughout the tower is of the split-board type. The addition of the tower preserved certain features of the original facade of the church, including the old door and a few of the original clapboards.

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DESCRIPTION (Continued)

Union Church incorporates the largest pre-Revolutionary roof framing system surviving in New Hampshire. The trusses are extraordinary for their massive and complex construction, and show a kinship with such contemporary examples as those in the meeting house at Sandown, New Hampshire. Each framing unit is a king-post truss. The king-posts are framed into a bottom chord which spans the building's width, and each post supports doubled principal rafters which are linked together by short struts at their midpoints. The uppermost principal rafters support purlins which, in turn, support closely-spaced common rafters. The trusses are linked together not only by the purlins which run longitudinally from principal rafter to principal rafter, but also by two longitudinal ties that rest on the bottom chords of the trusses, and by single tie beams that join the king-posts at about mid-height. A complex system of bracing reinforces the entire roof system. Two pairs of braces extend downward from each king-post to the lower chord of each truss. A single pair of braces extend upward from each king-post to each of the lower principal rafters. Additional braces near the eaves rise diagonally from the lower chords of the trusses to the two principal rafters. The longitudinal ties that link the king-posts at mid-height are likewise braced to the king-posts by diagonal members. Wind-bracing in the roof-plate is achieved by diagonal members that link the uppermost principal rafters to the purlins.

An additional series of struts projects below the bottom chords of the trusses to support the lath and plaster of the vaults and covings of the auditorium ceiling, while supplementary diagonal braces extend downward to link the bottom chords of each truss with the wall posts. The pride of the original builders in this frame is related in an anecdote which appears in the brief history of the church:

"...on one occasion a fierce storm, greater than any hurricane...swept the area while people were assembled for worship. Among them was a Mr. Dodge who had assisted as a carpenter.... Trees began to fall about the building and many rushed to the door in alarm. Mr. Dodge defended the door blocking it completely and is reputed to have shouted: 'I know this frame. No wind can demolish it. Your only safety lies in keeping beneath its shelter.'"

Original Appearance:

When it was first constructed in 1773, Union Church was a relatively small rectangular structure without a tower. Its entrance was in the west end and its pew arrangement, though less extensive than the present one, was evidently much the same. Tradition relates that:

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DESCRIPTION (Continued)

"The building was designed according to a plan furnished by Governor John Wentworth.... Although the Governor had promised to furnish glass and nails when a certain point in construction had been reached... he had to flee before he could fulfill his promise, which also included a bell and an organ. Only the frame was erected and a roof and outer boarding put on, a floor laid, and temporary arrangements made for worship in the summer. So it remained until 1789, when some pews were sold to purchase the nails and glass. The tower and belfry were added in 1801, and further work, including exterior painting, was undertaken."<sup>2</sup>

Evidence in the form of weathered clapboards still attached to the west elevation of the building and protected by the newer tower suggests that the structure was indeed unpainted, or infrequently painted, during its first thirty years. The building was extended 25 feet to its present length in 1820, with no attempt to make the addition a perfect match to the original work of fifty years earlier. The newer windows are smaller and more delicate than the originals, and the juncture of the old and new clapboards is evident on the exterior. The alterations of 1820 saw the addition not only of some new pews, but also of a reading desk and pulpit; evidently no record remains of the precise character of the original pulpit or altar. The 1820 reading desk and pulpit, in turn, were removed in the alterations of 1850, which resulted in the construction of the present chancel area and the installation of new altar furniture.

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<sup>1</sup> William R. Jarvis, Jr., Union Episcopal Church of Claremont, (Claremont, NH: Eagle Printing Dept., 1971), pp. 11-12.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1773

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### Architecture:

Union Episcopal Church, said to have been built by master carpenter Ebenezer Rice, is the oldest surviving Episcopal church in New Hampshire. As such, it is the state's oldest structure built specifically for religious purposes. Its only contemporaries among non-domestic structures in New Hampshire are several Congregational meeting houses that date from the same era, but these buildings were used as public structures in their respective towns as well as serving a religious function. Although the tradition that plans for Union Church were provided by Gov. John Wentworth cannot be documented, the building's design was probably based somewhat upon that of Queen's Chapel (1732; burned 1806) in Portsmouth. Union Church therefore not only documents building practices in the upper Connecticut Valley during the late eighteenth century, but also preserves the form of church architecture in New Hampshire during the early decades of the nineteenth century.

The roof framing system of the building is the heaviest that survives in New Hampshire from the pre-Revolutionary era. It therefore reflects structural practices not seen elsewhere in northern New England, the only similar roof systems being lighter and less complex frames in smaller meeting houses.

Union Church is important in preserving traces of its entire architectural evolution, beginning with the original frame and joiner's work and extending through the addition of the tower in 1801, the addition of the two eastern bays in 1820 (which incorporate distinctly different roof trusses and typical Federal detailing), and the alterations of 1850 and 1875. Thus, the building embodies the architectural history of its region from the early years of initial settlement, through the increasing prosperity of the Federal period, to the final vigor of the Victorian era.

### Religion:

Union Church Parish is the second oldest Episcopal organization in New Hampshire. The parish was organized by the Rev. Samuel Peters of Hebron, Connecticut, about 1771, after a group of local families had petitioned the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts for assistance. The parish was first regularly served after 1773 by the Rev. Rana Cossitt, who served as a missionary in the surrounding towns and, though suffering persecution as an Anglican during the Revolution, remained in Claremont until 1785. The building is therefore significant as the earliest headquarters of the Episcopal Church in the upper Connecticut Valley.

(See Continuation Sheet #3)



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HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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SIGNIFICANCE (Continued)

Union Church Parish was incorporated by the New Hampshire legislature in 1794, taking its name from a proposed union between the Episcopalians and Congregationalists of Claremont to support a single minister. Although this union was never achieved, the Rev. Daniel Barber, who became rector of the church in 1795, had been trained as a Congregationalist. In 1818 Barber converted to Roman Catholicism, building a brick chapel and school in 1823 across the road from Union Church. Thus, Union Church has the additional religious significance of representing an attempt at cooperation between the Episcopalians and Congregationalists of western New Hampshire, and of giving birth to the first Roman Catholic church in that area.

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SIGNIFICANCE, Continued-

The horse-sheds of the Union Episcopal Church, West Claremont, New Hampshire, are rectangular in plan, 6 bays (4 closed, 2 open) in length, with a double-pitch gabled roof oriented longitudinally. They are located at the rear and to the south of the church building, and immediately behind the parish house; principal axis is perpendicular to the east-west orientation of the church. The structure is of typical heavy timber braced-frame farm-type construction and is sheathed in plain, flush, vertical boarding. Extreme weathering makes it difficult to discern saw or other toolmarks of the exterior, although they could be expected to remain on the interior. The four closed stalls--located at the northern end of the structure, nearest the church--have been converted to storage units with the addition of doors made from vertical flush boards matching the finish, and secured to the wall with modern tapered-butt "garage-door" hinges. The two open bays at the southern end of the structure are unfloored and open to the west. The four closed bays are recessed deeply from the front (west) eave edge, and the two open bays are recessed only slightly less, giving the overhanging slope of the roof the appearance of a projected canopy.

The Union Church horse-sheds are significant as a relict example of a once-common appurtenance of rural churches and meetinghouses; as a reminder of past transportation systems; as an example of the economic--as well as humane--necessity of protecting equine motive power; and as a successful, compatible use of a vestigial structure. The horse-sheds are an important element, visually and historically, which contributes to the setting and the significance of the Union Church.