

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

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 an 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 Poplin Meeting House

other names/site number Fremont Meeting House (Preferred)

2. Location

street & number 464 Main Street N/A not for publication

city or town Fremont N/A vicinity

state New Hampshire code NH county Rockingham code 015 zip code 03044

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Nancy C. Muller 4/22/93
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

NEW HAMPSHIRE
State of 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 certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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:)

Signature of the Keeper Albena Beggs **Entered in the National Register** Date of Action 5/27/93

Fremont Meeting House
Name of Property

Rockingham, NH
County and State

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
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	0	Total

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT: city hall
RELIGION: religious facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

EARLY REPUBLIC: Federal

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: Granite
walls WOOD: Weatherboard
roof ASPHALT
other WOOD

Narrative Description

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

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 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

Period of Significance

1800; 1876

Significant Dates

1800; 1840; 1876

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

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:

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 1

**Fremont Meeting House
Rockingham County, NH**

Description

The Fremont meeting house is a rare survivor of the once-common twin-porch type of New England meeting house. Built in 1800 in the town of Poplin, later renamed Fremont, the structure stands on its original lot on the town's main road. The meeting house is accompanied by a small structure built in 1849 to house the town hearse, and faces the town burying ground on the opposite side of the highway.

The Fremont meeting house is a two-story framed structure with a gable roof. The building measures 46'-6" long and 36'-8" deep and is oriented with one of its broad elevations facing south and treated as the facade. The structure has a central doorway and symmetrical fenestration. On both the eastern and western gable ends, the meeting house has stairway enclosures or "porches" that rise to the level of the tops of the gallery windows and are covered by low-pitched half-hipped roofs. Each porch projects from the side of the building about eleven feet and is 9'-5" deep, with a door on its south and a window, lighting a stairway landing, on its outside wall.

The building is clapboarded on all sides. The clapboards are nailed over wall sheathing of pine boards sawn on an upright (reciprocating) water-powered saw and attached horizontally to the studding and posts of the frame. In common with other eighteenth-century meeting houses in northern New England, the structure has a massive hewn frame of oak, pine, and hemlock. The posts and plates of the frame, and the girts beside and above the pulpit along the north wall, are all exposed to view on the interior of the structure, without casings or paint. The smaller studs of the frame are uniformly hidden by lath and plaster except in the porches, which are not plastered.

The roof frame of the building is composed of a series of massive trusses composed of six pairs of rafters connected at their feet by tie beams that rest on the building's plates. The inner four pairs of rafters, unsupported from below, have supplementary queen post trusses placed below each rafter couple. These reinforcing trusses utilize the tie beams as their bottom chords, with the queen posts rising from the tie beams to intersect and support each rafter at about two thirds of its height. The tops of each pair of queen posts are connected together by a braced horizontal tie which acts as the top chord of the truss. Diagonal struts connect the tops of each queen post to the tie beams below. Placed parallel to the rafters above them, these

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Description (continued)

struts form the end panels of the trusses. Each set of queen posts is connected to its neighboring sets by additional horizontal ties that extend longitudinally through the attic of the building, thereby imparting rigidity to the roof frame in all directions. Horizontal purlins are trenched into the tops of the rafters, supporting a membrane of roof sheathing boards that run vertically from eaves to ridge and are now covered with asphalt shingles. A single-flue brick chimney, built about 1840, rises through the roof just behind the center of its ridge. This stack is supported by the roof framing but does not extend down into the auditorium below.

The main body of the structure and the porches are all underpinned with thick slabs of locally quarried granite. The face of this stone has been hammered to produce a flat, smoothly-textured surface. A retaining dike of concrete has been poured against the face of the underpinning on the rear (north) side, where the original foundation is probably less perfectly finished than on the front. No part of the building has a cellar beneath it.

The facade of the meeting house faces nearly south. Its central doorway has a flat-topped entablature in the Greek Revival style, supported by two flat pilasters, each embellished by three applied fillets. Within this enframingent is a set of double doors, each door having five panels arranged in a manner characteristic of the Greek Revival style. Two windows, bearing twelve-over-twelve sashes, are symmetrically arranged on either side of the doorway. The second (gallery) floor has five corresponding windows, each fitted with twelve-over-eight sashes. All windows on the facade have thin muntins of an ogee profile and simple, flat casings with applied fillets serving as backband mouldings. The doors of the two end porches, also facing south, have single, six-panel doors set within square-edged casings. The cornice of the front of the building has a crown moulding composed of a single ogee and fillet, with a bed moulding composed of an ovolo above a cavetto.

The two end (east and west) elevations of the building closely correspond to one another. Each has its porch centrally placed below the peak of the roof, with a single twelve-over-eight window in the end wall of the porch. Two windows flank each side of the porch on the main floor, with two more at the gallery level; the windows nearest the porches at both levels are placed so close to the projecting porch walls that their side casings touch the inner corner boards of the porches. On both ends of the building, an attic window

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Fremont Meeting House
Rockingham County, NH

Description (continued)

with nine-over-six sashes lies directly above the low-pitched hipped roof of the porch. All sashes behind or to the north of the two porches are twelve-over-twelve on the first floor and twelve-over-eight above, but these sashes have wider, ovolo muntins rather than the narrow ogee muntins seen on the front (southern) portion of the building.

The porches have cornices composed of the characteristic eighteenth-century double cyma crown mouldings with ovolo-and-cyma bed mouldings, distinguishing them from the cornices of the main building, which appear to have been replaced at some time. The two windows on each level behind the western porch retain their original beaded casings with fillet-and-ogee backband mouldings, in contrast to the Greek Revival window casings seen elsewhere on the building.

The rear (north) elevation of the building has four windows at each level, with a central gap in the fenestration corresponding to the location of a now-removed pulpit window that would have been placed midway between the first story and the gallery level. All sashes on this side of the building have ovolo muntin profiles. The rear cornice of the building is similar to that on the front except that it has a bed moulding of a double cyma profile.

The interior of the building has a main floor with box pews around its perimeter, and a gallery encircling three sides of the auditorium. Directly opposite the front door of the building, on its shorter central axis, is the pulpit. In keeping with eighteenth-century practice, this is an elevated enclosure of eastern white pine paneling. It is reached by a staircase of eight risers on the left (west) side; the handrail is straight and has no balusters. The center of the pulpit is a projection composed of three panels; the central panel has an arched tablet top, while the two splayed flanking panels have incurved tops. These projecting panels are supported on a faceted base of ogee profile. Both sides of the central projection have flanking panels with upward-sweeping tops. The entire pulpit is surmounted by a full cornice with a cyma crown moulding and an ovolo-and-cavetto bed moulding. In front of the pulpit is a single boxed "deacon's pew," which has a folding communion table in the form of a broad rectangular board hinged to the top of its paneled front. The entire pulpit and the deacon's pew are painted in brown graining intended to resemble a flame-grained hardwood; the risers of the staircase are painted in grey marbling. In contrast to other paneling in

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Fremont Meeting House
Rockingham County, NH

Description (continued)

the building, which has raised fields surrounded by ovolo-moulded stiles and rails, the panels of the pulpit and deacon's pew are flat.

The perimeter of the main floor of the auditorium has a raised platform that is elevated two risers above the central area. This elevated zone is filled with a series of box pews, which have paneled fronts. Each pew is fitted with hinged seats, which were folded up against the paneling during singing, around its inner walls. Above the top rails of their paneling, these pews have additional rails; the space between the two horizontal members is filled with reproduced miniature lathe-turned balusters of the type commonly seen in eighteenth-century New England meeting houses.

The central portion of the main floor of the auditorium is filled with Windsor-style settees. These replace box pews, which were removed in 1892 to allow more flexible use of the center of the auditorium floor.

A gallery or balcony extends around the east, south, and west sides of the auditorium, supported on heavy, turned posts of solid but unpainted pine and reached by winding stairs enclosed in the east and west porches of the meeting house. The gallery has a plastered front parapet or breastwork, which differs from the wood-paneled fronts of earlier New Hampshire meeting houses and probably reflects the increasing preference for plastered rather than paneled walls as the Federal style gained favor in New England. At the bottom, this breastwork has a double architrave of pine, trimmed with an ovolo upper band moulding. Above the plaster, the gallery has a flat frieze board and a cornice composed of a double cyma supporting a flat cap.

The gallery is largely filled with box pews similar to those on the floor below. On both sides, however, a series of "slip seats" or bench pews face one another across the auditorium. Unlike the box pews, which originally were privately owned by individuals or families, these gallery slips were available to anyone.

In the center of its south side, opposite the pulpit, the gallery has special "singing seats" which take the form of two long benches that face the pulpit and are separated by a slant-topped pine stand for psalm books or sheet music. These special arrangements for a choir reflect the increasing use of choral music in New England religious services toward the end of the eighteenth century, and are among the most intact of their kind in New Hampshire.

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Description (continued)

Near the eastern porch of the meeting house stands a small framed structure built in 1849 to house a town hearse. Originally located in the cemetery opposite the meeting house, the structure was moved to its present location in 1876. The building is one story high, with a gable roof covered with asphalt shingles and windowless, clapboarded walls. It stands on a slight declivity, with its front sills close to the ground but its rear portion supported on mortared piers of flat stones. The building has two hinged doors of board-and-batten construction.

Original appearance: The Fremont meeting house has changed little in overall appearance since its completion in 1800. The building has undergone routine maintenance over the years, and changes made at various times have slowly altered various features of the structure.

Stylistic evidence makes it clear that the meeting house underwent some repair around the mid-nineteenth century. The result of this work was the transformation of certain exterior features of the building from the Federal style to the Greek Revival style. The details that were altered during these repairs include the central doorway and doors, and all the exterior window casings except those on the northwest corner of the building, behind the western porch. It is likely that the cornices of the main body of the house were altered at this time also, since they no longer match the typical eighteenth-century cornices that are retained on both porches.

The interior of the building has experienced sporadic alterations. The earliest of these changes recorded in documents was the construction of the chimney about 1840 when two stoves were introduced to warm the previously-unheated structure. The introduction of the stoves may have coincided with the exterior changes noted above.

The next recorded change was the removal of a traditional, suspended "sounding board" or canopy from above the pulpit about 1860. This was followed in 1888 by the removal of the window that lighted the pulpit from a position behind the desk, in the north wall of the building midway between the main floor and gallery levels. Physical evidence suggests that all window sashes in the front half of the building were replaced at about the same time. The newer sashes have a very thin ogee muntin profile, while the older sashes in the rear of the building retain the ovolo muntin profile that is characteristic of

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Fremont Meeting House
Rockingham County, NH

Description (continued)

the Federal style. The final alteration to the building's appearance occurred in 1892, when the box pews were removed from the center of the main floor of the auditorium to permit more flexible use of the space.

Changes to the meeting house lot have included the dismantling of a former stone animal pound (built in 1802), of which some trace is still visible west of the meeting house, and the moving of the hearse house across the road from the cemetery in 1876.

Statement of Significance

The Fremont meeting house is one of a small group of traditional eighteenth-century public buildings still standing in contiguous towns in southeastern New Hampshire. Of this group, three retain the form of simple, steepleless meeting houses of a once common but now rare type. Of these three, the Fremont meeting house is the only example of the "twin porch" design, once the most popular meeting house type in New Hampshire but now represented in the state by this structure alone. As the sole survivor of a characteristic public building type of the eighteenth century, the Fremont meeting house provides insight into the architectural form that housed civic and religious life in New England during the 1700s. The nominated property retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Its period of significance is 1800 (the date the meeting house was constructed) and 1876 (the date the hearse house was moved there from across the road).

The Fremont meeting house is one of a group of eighteenth-century public structures standing in Rockingham County, New Hampshire, and adjacent Essex County, Massachusetts. Together, this assemblage of buildings represents the largest concentration of early meeting houses remaining in New England. The group defines the range of sizes, plans, and embellishments known within this building type in rural northern New England during the 1700s.

Among neighboring meeting houses, those in the New Hampshire towns of Danville and Sandown (both adjacent to Fremont) are closest in type to the Fremont building. The Danville meeting house of 1760 is the earliest, smallest and simplest of the group. It has no porches; its two staircases are located inside the front corners of the building. It has the lightest frame of the

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Fremont Meeting House
Rockingham County, NH

Statement of Significance (continued)

group, the doubled rafters of its roof being supported merely by diagonal struts rising from the tie beams. The meeting house in Sandown (1773), also without porches, has elaborate Georgian joiner's work on its exterior doorways and its pulpit. Its roof frame is composed of a series of massive king post trusses.

The Fremont building is the only twin-porch meeting house in the group, and is one of only two remaining in New England.¹ The twin-porch plan was favored in New Hampshire and was more characteristic of the region than any other type of meeting house. Research indicates that New Hampshire once had some fifty similar structures.² The Fremont meeting house has assumed special importance as the sole survivor of the type in the state.

The Fremont building is also important as one of the last of the steepleless meeting houses to have been built in New England. The tradition began as early as 1712, when a simple, gable-roofed structure without a steeple was erected in Portsmouth, New Hampshire's coastal metropolis, to supplant an ancient hip-roofed meeting house of the seventeenth-century type. This urban meeting house was echoed in Kingston, some six miles from Fremont, in 1732, when a similar structure was built there, and in nearby Hampstead in 1745. The Hampstead building survives, although it was remodeled by the addition of a steeple in 1792 and by other alterations in 1852.

Unlike the older steepleless meeting houses nearby, the Fremont building reflects the Federal style in the joinery of its pulpit. While the pulpit is stylistically more advanced than those in neighboring meeting houses, the Fremont building exhibits a conservative retention of Georgian detailing, similar to that seen in its neighbors, in its pew paneling.

The roof frame of the Fremont building also displays a significant evolutionary step beyond its predecessors, using the queen post truss in place of the older systems seen in Danville and Sandown. This framing system was gaining favor for the broad spans of meeting house auditoriums in the late 1700s, and is illustrated as appropriate for such buildings in Plate 29 of Asher Benjamin's first architectural guidebook, The Country Builder's Assistant (1797).³ The trusses in the Fremont building are, however, simpler and more rationally designed than those illustrated in Benjamin's book (which

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Fremont Meeting House
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Statement of Significance (continued)

are copied from older English designs), and seem to exemplify the analytical approach to truss design that would increasingly characterize American carpentry in the early nineteenth century.

Like other New England meeting houses, the Fremont building served both a civic and a religious function. The structure continued in use for town meetings from March, 1801, until the construction of another town hall in Fremont in 1911. Fields near the building also served as late as the 1840s as the site of militia musters or practice exercises. Sunday religious meetings continued to be held in the building as well, although with decreasing levels of attendance after the mid-nineteenth century.⁴ Like other meeting houses that served this dual purpose, the building was regarded as a utilitarian structure that alternated between secular and sacred uses. As late as the 1820s, in the absence of nearby tavern buildings to provide refreshment at annual town meetings, the selectmen of Fremont voted to license two tavernkeepers to sell liquor on town meeting and militia days in the two end porches of the meeting house, or close by.⁵

In 1792 and 1798, a few years before the Fremont building was completed, large, transitional meeting houses with steeples were erected in the tidewater New Hampshire towns of Durham and Exeter. These buildings pointed the way to the advent of the fully-developed church plan, which would predominate throughout New Hampshire and the rest of New England after 1800. The Fremont building is therefore doubly significant because it represents the final evolutionary stage of a building type that had appeared in New Hampshire some ninety years before its construction, and because it also represents the once-dominant twin-porch regional variation on that building type.

Notes

¹Edmund W. Sinnott, Meetinghouse and Church in Early New England (New York: Bonanza Books, 1963).

²Peter Benes, "Twin-Porch versus Single-Porch Stairwells: Two Examples of Cluster Diffusion in Rural Meetinghouse Architecture," Old-Time New England 69 (Winter-Spring 1979), 44-68.

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Fremont Meeting House
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Statement of Significance (continued)

³D. T. Yeomans, "A Preliminary Study of 'English' Roofs in Colonial America," APT 13 (1981), 9-18.

⁴Exeter News-Letter, May 11, 1857.

⁵Poplin Town Records, Town of Fremont, 1822-27.

Bibliography

Benes, Peter. "Twin-Porch versus Single-Porch Stairwells: Two Examples of Cluster Diffusion in Rural Meetinghouse Architecture," Old-Time New England 69 (Winter-Spring 1979), 44-68.

Exeter News-Letter (newspaper). Exeter, N.H.: May 11, 1857.

Poplin, N.H. town records, 1822-27. Town of Fremont, N.H.

Sinnott, Edmund W. Meetinghouse and Church in Early New England. New York: Bonanza Books, 1963.

Yeomans, D. T. "A Preliminary Study of 'English' Roofs in Colonial America," APT 13 (1981), 9-18.

Verbal boundary description

The boundaries of the nominated property are indicated by the heavy black line on the attached sketch map.

Verbal boundary justification

The boundaries of the nominated property are those which have historically been associated with the meeting house.

This certifies that the appearance has not changed since the photographs were taken.

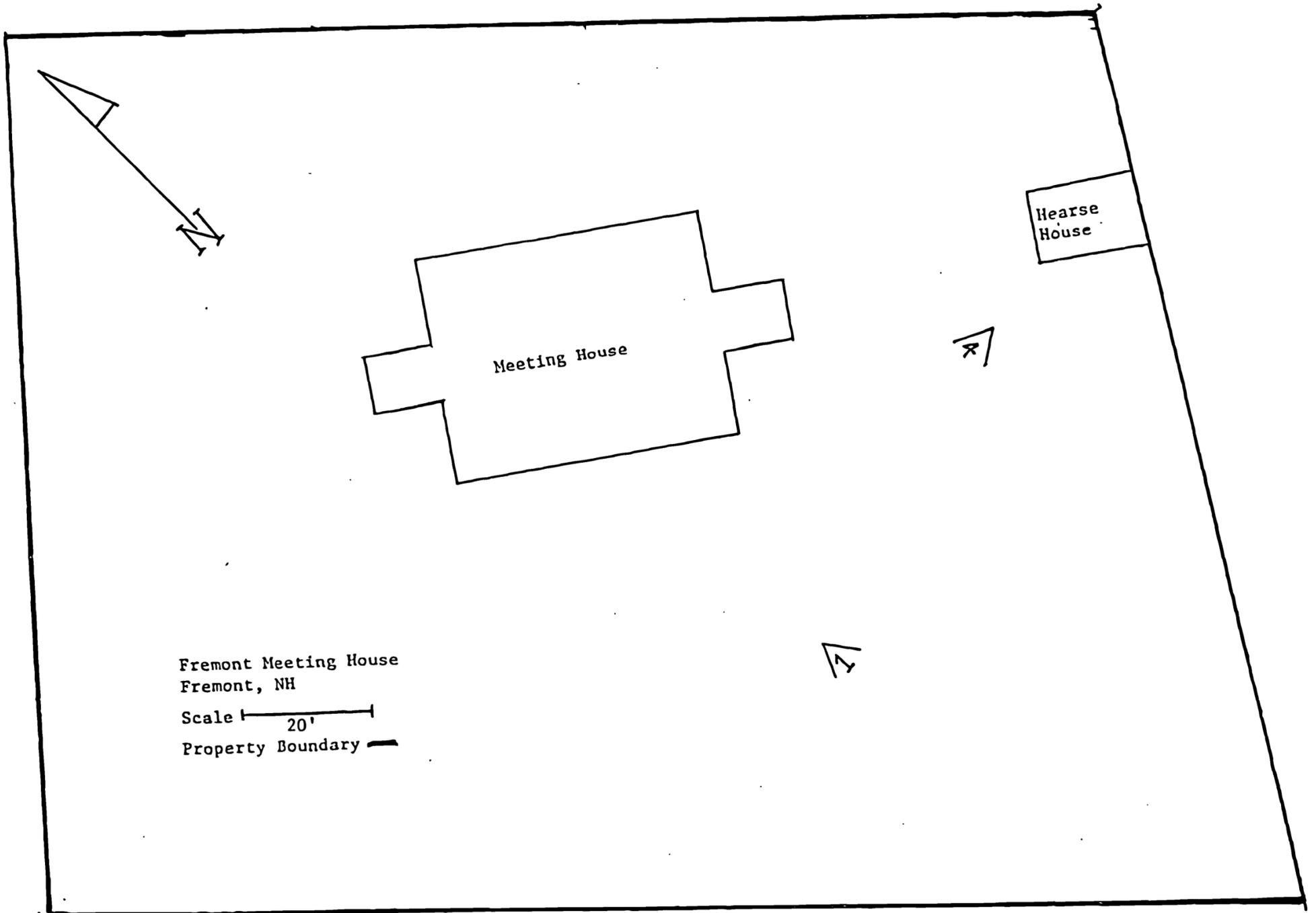
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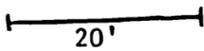
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Fremont Meeting House
Rockingham County, NH

Additional Documentation



Fremont Meeting House
Fremont, NH

Scale  20'

Property Boundary 

Main Street / NH Route 107