

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

For NPS use only

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

received MAY 7 1985
date entered

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

1. Name

historic South Danbury Christian Meeting House

and/or common SOUTH DANBURY CHRISTIAN CHURCH (preferred)

2. Location

street & number Route 4 (1/4 mile south of where Walker Road meets Rte. 4) n/a not for publication

city, town Danbury, n/avicinity of

state New Hampshire code 33 county Merrimack code 013

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" 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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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 South Danbury Christian Church

street & number Route 4

city, town Danbury, vicinity of state New Hampshire 03230

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 03774

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Danbury Historic Resource Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1984 federal state county local

depository for survey records Lakes Region Planning Commission

city, town Meredith, state New Hampshire 03253

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u> N/A </u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The South Danbury Christian Church is a wooden frame church which stands on its own lot on the east side of Route 4 in South Danbury village in the Town of Danbury. The church is composed of three sections. The one and a half story, gable-roofed main block is set with its west gable end facing the road. Centered on that west gable end facade is a narrower and shorter, one-story, gable-roofed entry pavilion, also with its gable end facing west. The shallow pavilion is crowned by a square, one stage tower, with a low-pitched pyramidal roof.

Both the main block and the entry pavilion are set on a cut granite block foundation. All three sections, the main block, the pavilion, and the tower, are clapboarded with wide cornerboards, and are trimmed by box cornices with simple mouldings and friezes. The tower cornice is of a somewhat different design, while the main block and the pavilion share the same cornice. The cornices are pedimented on the west gables of both the pavilion and the main block. Indeed, the horizontal cornices of both pediments are set at the same level, so that the pavilion and main block cornices are continuous. The rear (east) gable cornice of the main block has only returns. All of the roofs are sheathed with asphalt shingles.

In the center of the pavilion's main (west) facade is the church entry--paired four-panel doors, flanked by full sidelights, now covered by louvred shutters. The plain trim of the doors and the sidelights is distinguished only by a simple moulding on the lintel, and by modern electric lamps mounted to each side. The entry is reached by three wide granite steps, with modern wrought iron hand rails. The pavilion's pediment is clapboarded, as are the windowless north and south walls.

The tall tower that stands atop the pavilion is windowless on all four sides, its clapboarding broken only by the cornerboards and the box cornice. The low-pitched pyramidal roof is largely hidden by a balustrade, whose large square corner posts are topped by tall wooden pyramids. The balustrade has simple top and bottom rails, and plain balusters, which are alternately straight sided or "diamond" shaped.

Much of the main block's west facade is hidden by the entry pavilion and the tower. What can be seen, the clapboarded pediment and the clapboarded walls north and south of the pavilion, is windowless. The long north and south facades each have three large six over six sash windows with louvred shutters and plain trim, again distinguished only by very simple mouldings topping the lintels. The granite block foundation on the north facade is interrupted by a low, wide, hinged plywood door, which serves the crawlspace under the church. (The low crawlspace is dirt-floored with stone walls and exposed beams in its ceiling. The very low space is occupied only by heating ducts and short wooden posts supporting the beams.) The rear (east) gable end has a single six over six sash window high in the gable, whose plain trim again has the simple drip moulding on its lintel. (An external gas tank is connected to the attic furnace by a pipe up and through the rear facade. The furnace is also served by a cylindrical metal chimney flue in the north slope of the main block roof.)

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The main entry opens into the vestibule in the pavilion. The vestibule has a carpeted floor, plaster walls with simple baseboards, and a plaster ceiling with a hanging electric light. Plain trim surrounds the double entry doors and sidelights in the outer west wall and the three doors to the auditorium in the inner east wall. The older side doors are single four-panel doors, while the newer central entry has double modern doors, ornamented only by simple applied wooden crosses. (A metal hearing duct from the attic to the crawlspace is found on the east wall just north of the central entry.)

A plain framed opening in the vestibule ceiling leads into the pavilion attic, which, with the tower directly above it and the higher main block attic to its east, forms one large unfinished upper space, with exposed beams, rafters and trusses, board and plywood walls and ceilings. The pavilion attic has a board floor. From it a simple wooden ladder climbs up to the main block attic. A board walkway across the main block's attic joists leads back to a plywood floored section near the six over six sash window in the rear gable. On this floor sits the church's gas furnace. Heating ducts run through the attic from the furnace to ceiling registers and the duct down to the crawlspace.

The auditorium occupies the main level of the main block. Like the vestibule, it has a carpeted floor. Its plaster walls have a simple wainscoting of wide boards, which reaches as high as the stools of the windows. The pressed metal ceiling is divided into square and rectangular panels with ornate mouldings, and is surrounded by an elaborate border. (Some of the ceiling panels have been replaced by heating registers.) A pronounced pressed metal cove with palmettes and ornate mouldings trims the ceiling's edge. A metal chandelier, with a circle of "candle" shaped lights, hangs from chains in the center of the room.

The west wall has three plain framed doors, the modern double doors with applied crosses in the center, and the older four-panel doors to the north and south, as well as two electric lights, with "candles" on brackets. Similar electric lights are found between the three plain framed six over six sash windows in each of the side (north and south) walls. The east wall is divided into three bays by the two old chimneys, now covered with pressed metal of the same design as the ceiling's border, and each trimmed with a simple baseboard and a "capital" formed by a continuation around the chimney of the ceiling's pressed metal cove. In the central bay is hung a simple metal cross, in the north bay, a bronze memorial plaque, and in the south bay, a hymnboard and another double "candle" electric light.

The slip pews have simple board fronts, seats, backs, and pew ends. The pews are supported in the center by plain posts and are ornamented only by simple top mouldings on the backs and by curved arm rests on the aisle pew ends. Two aisles divide the pews into three rows, two rows against the side walls, each with seven pews, and a central row of nine wider pews. (The rear, westernmost pew of the central row is now turned to face the door.) The western corners each boast an L-shaped corner pew of the same design.

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Across the east end of the auditorium is found a platform raised two steps above the floor. The platform is served by external steps at each end and by two indented steps to each side of the central pulpit. The front of the platform is recessed slightly in the center. The platform floor and front, as well as the four steps, are completely covered by the same carpeting used on the floors of the vestibule and the auditorium. The church furniture on the platform is all movable, but worth describing. In the center is the wooden rectangular pulpit, with its baseboard, corner pillars with simple bases and capitals, simple moulded cornice, and reading lectern. (The altar table stands on the floor in front of the pulpit.) Behind the pulpit is a Victorian sofa. A piano with stool is placed against the rear wall in the north bay. South of the pulpit, towards the front of the platform, is an ornate Victorian organ with stool. A short metal railing, hung with drapes, lines the platform edge in front of the organ. Behind the organ, against the rear wall in the south bay, is a slip pew of the usual design.

Standing directly behind the church, almost touching its rear facade, is a modern privy. The one-story, one-stall privy rests on concrete blocks and has walls of vertically grooved plywood and a shed roof of corrugated plastic. Above its southern door of the same grooved plywood is a small transom screen. As might be expected, the privy interior is unfinished, with plywood floor and walls, exposed frame, and plastic roof.

The rectangular lot, bounded on the south and east by stone walls, is mostly grassed, save for an ill-defined, unpaved parking area on the road to the south of the church. Two small evergreens stand in front of the church. But, most of the trees and shrubs are clustered along the stone walls, with only three trees on the north boundary. The land slopes naturally up from the road towards the east. The area on which the church stands is flat, although a steep bank is found directly behind the church. South of the church, towards the rear of the lot, is a narrow plateau on which a horseshed once stood. All that now remains of the horseshed is a short stone retaining wall at the north end of the plateau, and a few flat stones, which once supported the building's posts.

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 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1867 **Builder/Architect** John Woodbury, Contractor

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The South Danbury Christian Church is an attractive late 19th century vernacular church, which carries into the post-Civil War era the church form that had been so popular in the first half of the century. Boasting little ornament, the church is distinguished by its honest simplicity and pleasing proportions.

At a June 2, 1866, meeting, the Christian Society of South Danbury, Inc. was organized to build and maintain a meetinghouse in South Danbury.¹ At the end of the organizational meeting, a committee composed of the President (Miron J. Hazeltine), the Treasurer (Horace Webster), and the Secretary (David P. Walker) were instructed "to examine some desirable place or places of public worship and report at next meeting some plan or plans for an edifice suitable for this Society".² Exactly a week later, the committee, having visited churches in Wilmot and New London, "submitted a plan of a house of the exterior measurement 32 by 40 ft."³ The Society accepted the plan, after enlarging the building one foot in length and one foot in width, and instructed Hazeltine, Webster and Walker "to draft a set of Specifications for the details of the construction and finish of a house of public worship".⁴ The same June 9 meeting chose a three man committee to find a suitable location. On June 22, the site committee "reported that the Society could secure a suitable lot of land for a building site of Mrs. Hannah F. Pillsbury and the Widow Sarah Frazier for the sum of Fifty Dollars (\$50.00), the same to be paid in cash or a pew in the proposed house of worship of that amount."⁵ The meeting voted 11-0 to accept the proposed location.⁶ And a week later, the Society decided to sell the pews at auction on July 4, with the stipulation that one-third of the purchase price be paid in thirty days. As only eleven pews were sold on the day of the auction, sales of pews continued through the summer and the fall. On October 6, only "three or four yet unsold pews" remained, so "The Society voted to proceed with the undertaking of erecting a House of public worship, on its designated lot".⁷ John P. Bean, Wells W. Walker, and David P. Walker were elected the building committee.

¹The Society remained active until a July 25, 1959 meeting, when it was voted to transfer its property, including the church, to the newly incorporated South Danbury Christian Church and to dissolve the Society.

²"Records of the South Danbury Christian Society" (manuscript, South Danbury Christian Church, Danbury, N.H.) p. 8.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 9.

⁵Ibid., pp. 10-11.

⁶Hannah Pillsbury and Sarah Frazier eventually acquired a pew valued at \$60, using the \$50 credit for the quarter-acre lot as partial payment.

⁷"Records...", p. 13.

9. Major Bibliographical References

John R. Eastman - HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF ANDOVER, NH 1751-1906 (Concord, 1910)
The Journal-Transcript (Franklin), June 9, 16 & 23, 1904.
"Records of the South Danbury Christian Society" manuscrip, South Danbury Christian Church, Danbury, NH)
Interview, Edna Powers, December 6, 1984; Interview, Ansel Powers, Nov. 27, Dec. 7, 1984.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .25

Quadrangle name Mt. Kearsarge, NH

Quadrangle scale 1:625 00

UTM References

A

1	9	2	6	6	5	5	0	4	8	1	8	2	6	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

(see continuation sheet)

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

state N/A code county code

state N/A code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David Ruell

organization Lakes Region Planning Commission date December 14, 1984

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 

title New Hampshire State Historic Preservation Officer date APR 26 1985

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

 date 6-6-85
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

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But, some important features of the church's design had yet to be settled. At a May 4, 1867, meeting, "the question of enlargement was discussed. The contractor, John Woodbury, Esq.,⁸ being present offered to enlarge the house by a projection of 6 feet by 18 feet in front for the entry, making room in the body of the house for three additional pews and more space for singers seats for the sum of seventy-five dollars".⁹ The Society accepted the enlargement, thus adding the present entry pavilion to what would have been a simple rectangular building. (The tower is not specifically mentioned in this discussion or elsewhere. It may have been originally planned astride the roof ridge of the main block and simply relocated from the main block to the pavilion. Or it may have been included in the design of "the projection".) At the annual Society meeting on June 8, 1867, "The building committee were instructed to confer with the contractor in relation to extra finish on gable and report immediately. Said committee reported in favor of the alteration which was to extend the finish across the gables, instead of making returns, for which the contractor was to receive twelve and a half dollars (\$12.50)"¹⁰. The Society agreed to the pediments on the west gables and also voted to purchase louvred shutters for the windows.

The church must have been erected during 1867, as the projection, voted on in May, 1867, is tied into the main block frame.¹¹ In October, a meeting of the Society, called to discuss grading around the meetinghouse and make arrangements for its dedication, "voted to have the house dedicated Thursday, Oct. 31st".¹² The Report of the Building Committee noted that \$1420.25 had been received for the pews, and another \$18 in contributions for window pulleys and pew "figures". So, the Society had to borrow \$243.92 to meet the \$1664.17 cost of the building and its furnishings. This cost included \$37.67 for the foundation and doorsteps, and \$1372.50 for the contractor, John Woodbury.¹³

⁸The exact identify of the builder is still unclear. In the neighboring town of Wilmot there lived a father and a son, Lt. John Woodbury (1781-1868) and John Woodbury, Jr. (1807-1876), both of whom were carpenters of note. (John R. Eastman, HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF ANDOVER, N.H., 1751-1906; Concord, 1910, p. 393; also 1860 and 1870 federal censuses for Wilmot.) But the church records do not contain any personal information about the builder, besides his name, that might enable us to make a positive identification.

⁹"Records...", p. 17.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 18-19.

¹¹In the crawlspace can be seen a row of rough stones that would have formed the base of a cut granite block foundation along the entire western front of the main block, suggesting that foundation work, at least, had begun before the pavilion was added to the design.

¹²"Records...", p. 20.

¹³Woodbury's payments were itemized as \$1240 for the basic contract, \$75 for "the projection", \$29.50 for the shutters, \$12 for window cord and pulleys, \$14.50 for "extra on gable and chimney", and \$1.50 for "bolts in foot of rafters". The "Report of the Building Committee" appears in the "Records of the South Danbury Christian Society" on pages 21 and 22.

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Since its construction, the church has been relatively little altered. The only known exterior changes are the addition of electric lights (1930) and handrails (1970's) at the entry. The deterioration of the roof required its replacement in 1974 at which time the tops of the unused chimneys were removed. The interior has seen more changes. The 1904 annual meeting of the Society "voted to make some repairs on the inside of the house, voted to box up the chimneys and cut the platform to the pulpit down one step and lengthen it out to the south side of the house"¹⁴, and "voted to accept the proposition of the two circles, the 'helping hand' and 'willing workers' to repair the inside of the church"¹⁵. A six woman committee was chosen to supervise the repairs, which, unfortunately, are not described either in the records or the local newspapers, although the Franklin paper did identify the carpenter hired for the work as "Charles Morrison of Danbury".¹⁶ Since the chimneys are now enclosed by pressed metal of the same design as the ceiling's border, we can assume that the pressed metal ceiling was installed at the same time. In recent years, there have been other changes. Modern standards of convenience prompted the installation of electric lights in 1930 and a modern heating system with its attendant ducts and registers in 1966.¹⁷ (The privy, erected c. 1981, was another convenience demanded by modern tastes.) Architectural changes have been rather limited, the new carpeting in 1975-6, and the new double door from the vestibule to the auditorium, also in the 1970's. (The older vestibule doors were so placed that it was impossible to carry a casket through the vestibule into the auditorium. Caskets had to be taken in and out of the church by removing a window sash and hoisting the coffin through the window. The new central door eliminated this rather undignified procedure.) But, the other doors, the windows, the walls and most of the pews have survived intact. (There have been some changes in the seating. The choir's seats in the rear of the room were apparently removed in the 1904 renovation. Later, one pew in the central row was turned to face the entry and two corner pews were constructed out of older pews.) Basically, the church appears today much as it did in 1867, when it was first used.

The design ultimately chosen for the South Danbury Christian Church was a very typical 19th century composition--a gable-roofed main block, with a shorter and narrower gable-roofed entry pavilion in the center of the gable end facade and a square tower above the pavilion. This form was particularly popular in New Hampshire's late Federal churches of the 1820's and the 1830's. The North Wilmot Congregational Church (built 1829) and the Salisbury Heights Baptist Church (remodeled 1839) are two

¹⁴"Records...", p. 91.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 92.

¹⁶The Journal Transcript (Franklin), June 9, 1904.

¹⁷The original 1966 oil furnace was placed in the crawlspace. In 1974, the furnace was moved to the attic and, in 1984, replaced by a gas furnace.

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nearby examples of this type. But these two churches, and virtually all of the other churches employing the form, were much larger and more pretentious buildings than the South Danbury church. In size and ornament, the South Danbury church is closer to the small vernacular country churches that appeared at crossroads and in small villages throughout the Lakes Region in the mid to late 19th century. These vernacular churches are usually simple, gable-roofed, rectangular buildings, sometimes distinguished by a small belfry above the main gable end facade. In its original design, the South Danbury church would have looked much like these other small churches. The decisions to add the entry pavilion and the pediments were inspired choices, as they did distinguish the South Danbury church from the other small churches at a minimal cost (\$87.50 to be exact). In construction, exterior ornament and interior finish, the South Danbury church still remains a 19th century vernacular building. But, the pavilion and the tower give it an architectural presence seldom found in its counterparts in the region. The South Danbury church manages to combine, in a pleasing way, the honest simplicity and good proportions that are the chief virtues of the vernacular chapels with the dignity of form that was one of the merits of its Federal predecessors. It must therefore be ranked among the Lakes Region's most architecturally interesting small 19th century churches.

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

The nominated property is a rectangular lot, five rods deep and eight rods wide, on the east side of Route 4 in South Danbury village. The property boundary is shown on the accompanying map entitled "South Danbury Christian Church, Danbury, N.H.". The nominated property includes the South Danbury Christian Church and the lot on which it has stood since 1867. (As the Danbury Tax Map is still being prepared, no tax map number has yet been assigned to the property.)

The boundaries of the nominated property have been highlighted in yellow on the enclosed sketch map.

ROUTE
4

Stairs

Privy

Stone
Retaining Wall

South Danbury Christian Church Danbury, N.H.

