

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received MAY 8 1984

date entered JUN 7 1984

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

1. Name

historic Lyndeborough Center

and/or common Lyndeborough Center Historic District (Preferred)

2. Location

street & number Center Road N/A not for publication

city, town Lyndeborough Center N/A vicinity of

state New Hampshire code 33 county Hillsborough code 011

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name

street & number SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

city, town _____ vicinity of _____ state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Hillsborough County Registry of Deeds

street & number Hillsborough County Court House
19 Temple Street

city, town Nashua state New Hampshire

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date N/A federal state county local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town N/A state

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 Lyndeborough Center Historic District is a group of three structures standing on an elevated site which since 1772 has been regarded as the geographical center of the irregularly-shaped township. Two of the structures are public buildings (a town hall and a church); these replaced a meeting house which had been built in 1772 and had served both functions later performed separately by these two buildings. The third structure is a stone enclosure for impounding stray animals; as in many New Hampshire communities, this was built close to the geographical center of the township for convenience. All three of these structures stand on a hilltop with light vegetation (mostly red maples and sugar maples) and several rocky outcrops. Until the early twentieth century a fourth structure, a long unpainted shed divided into stalls for horses, stood immediately south of the church.

The two buildings in the district are nearly contemporary with one another and were constructed to serve the two functions formerly performed by the old meeting house. Both buildings are good examples of a simple, rural interpretation of the Greek Revival style, both share a common scale and a common aesthetic. The two buildings, with the pound between them, are placed essentially parallel to one another facing Center Road. The principal axis of each runs east and west, and the similar orientation of the two buildings reinforces a sense of coherence and focus at this small town center.

Early photographs suggest that the district has changed only superficially since these structures were erected in the years before 1850; nor has the surrounding neighborhood been much altered. Beyond the borders of the district, but strengthening its sense of integrity, are scattered wood-frame dwellings which are similar in date and style to the structures at the Center. Because commercial growth in Lyndeborough was attracted to a southern hamlet in the township by waterpower and by the coming of the railroad in 1873, the Center district has remained essentially unaltered since assuming its present form.

There are no nonconforming intrusions within the boundaries of the district.

Structures which contribute to the integrity of the district are:

1. Town Hall. The Lyndeborough Town Hall (1845; 1883) is a rectangular framed structure measuring approximately 40 feet wide by 50 feet long, with clapboarded walls, a roof covered with asphalt shingles, and a foundation of split granite slabs resting on field-stone underpinning. The gable end of the structure faces the road and is treated as the facade. Two single-flue brick chimneys pierce the roof, one on the south slope near the front and the second on the north slope near the rear of the building.

The building is treated with simple Greek Revival detailing. Its facade has a central doorway, flanked by two windows with 12-over-12 sashes. Both the door and the windows have flat casings with applied fillets at their outer margins and with square blocks at their upper corners. The door of the building has flat panels surrounded by Grecian ogee mouldings. The doorsteps are two blocks of hammered granite.

The corners of the facade are defined by flat boards which rise to support a cornice; this extends across the front of the building, creating a closed triangular pediment in the gable. The clapboarded tympanum of this pediment is pierced by two windows with 6-over-6 sashes and flat undecorated casings.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below					
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" 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 checked="" 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 various **Builder/Architect** unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Lyndeborough Center Historic District is a group of three structures which represent the administrative center of a rural New Hampshire township from the eighteenth century until well into the twentieth. Continuing to occupy the site and the functions of the long-removed 1772 meeting house, the two buildings that survive at the Center symbolize a political and religious focus that was planned by the town proprietors and has been preserved intact by the movement of economic activity to other parts of the township.

Architecture: The two buildings within the district are excellent rural examples of the Greek Revival style. Replacing an outmoded eighteenth-century meeting house, the town hall and the church reveal a consciousness among the inhabitants of a small New Hampshire community of the current style of more urbanized areas. Retaining their integrity despite some remodellings in the late nineteenth century, both buildings remain as symbols of the taste of rural New Hampshire in the decades before 1850. Due to the movement of the town's commercial activity to a more southerly hamlet with the combined attractions of waterpower, minerals, and the railroad, the Center district has been preserved essentially unchanged from the period of its final evolution in the 1840s. Present uses of the buildings serve to maintain them and to reduce the threat of future intrusions. The town hall has been supplanted for regular meetings by another public building at South Lyndeborough, but continues to serve for occasional functions and to provide a home for the local historical society; the church continues in use for summer services by a merged community congregation. Thus continuing in a diminished but still active role, the buildings at the old Center preserve a strong sense of the time and place of their origins. In this sense, the district compares with other eighteenth-century centers in Masonian townships (see below) which, like Lyndeborough, have often been supplanted by other sites that have attracted economic and political activity.

Community Planning: The Lyndeborough Center Historic District is a surviving relic of a decision which was made in 1768. Prior to that time, the inhabitants of the townships had erected two meeting houses, the first apparently never finished and the second built in an inconvenient location.¹ Due to several alterations in the territory encompassed within the township, the inhabitants again found it necessary in 1768 to determine the geographical center of the tract and to build a third meeting house on that site.

Construction of the third meeting house at the geographical center of the township was dictated not only by the preferences of the inhabitants, but also by the general rules of the original proprietors of the lands. Like many New Hampshire townships, Lyndeborough was part of a tract owned by a group of private landowners whose speculative enterprise was centered in Portsmouth, the provincial capital. In 1746 these men, known as the Masonian Proprietors, purchased the proprietary claim to New Hampshire lands that had descended to the heirs of Capt. John Mason, the original grantee of New Hampshire in the early seventeenth century. This huge tract embraced the territory of Lyndeborough, which was divided into lots for settlers.

9. Major Bibliographical References

(See Continuation Sheet 4-8-2)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1 + acrea

Quadrangle name Peterborough Quadrangle

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UMT References

A

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

B

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

C

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

D

1	9	2	7	4	0	5	0	4	7	5	4	0	0	0
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 John Miles Keefe

organization None

date January 1984

street & number Center Road

telephone 654-6101

city or town Lyndeborough

state New Hampshire

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

 national state X 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. *(see above)*

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

for Commissioner, Dept. of Resources & Economic Development
Deputy New Hampshire State Historic Preservation Officer

date MAY 2 1984

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

for Richard Byers
Keeper of the National Register

NATIONAL REGISTER
National Park Service

date 6/7/84

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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OWNER OF PROPERTY

1. Town of Lyndeborough, Citizens Hall Road, Lyndeborough, New Hampshire.
2. The United Church of Lyndeborough, Forest Road, Lyndeborough, New Hampshire.

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The north side of the building has five windows with casings like those on the first floor of the facade.

The south elevation has four windows like those on the north. The location of the fifth window is occupied by a small gable-roofed wing which has a single small 6-over-6 window and a door in its east elevation.

The interior originally had a single plastered room on the main story. At sometime following the construction of the building, a stage was added. In 1883 the building was remodelled for more versatile use, largely under the efforts of the local Pinnacle Grange which had met there since its founding in 1873. The roof pitch was increased for greater headroom in the attic, and the attic was finished as a second story. A kitchen was provided and the attic became a hall used for dinners. Following this alteration, the building was used increasingly for a variety of social gatherings, a function which it retains to a degree today. Use of the building for town meetings ceased in 1964 and Grange use ended in 1973. Today the building is the home of the local historical society and continues to accommodate various social events.

The exterior appearance of the town hall has changed relatively little. Originally covered with wooden shingles, the roof of the building was given a sheathing of tinned steel in the late nineteenth century and now has asphalt shingles. The building originally had louvered wooden blinds at each of its main first-floor windows; only those on the front remain.

2. Town Pound. About 125 feet north of the Town Hall is the town animal pound. Built on a natural outcrop of ledge and measuring about 32 feet square, the enclosure is constructed with fieldstone walls laid without mortar to a height of some 5½ feet. The structure was built in 1774 at a cost of four (4) pounds, and originally stood next to the meeting house which had been built two years previously as the political and religious focus of the town.

3. Congregational Church. The northernmost structure in the district is the Congregational Church. Built in 1837 to replace the Old Center meeting house as a place for religious meetings, the church is a rectangular framed structure about 44 feet wide and 52 feet long. One story high with a gable roof covered with asphalt shingles, the building has a foundation of split granite slabs and front steps of split and hammered granite. The gable end of the structure faces the road to the east and is treated as the facade. Two single-flue brick chimneys pierce the roof at the rear wall of the building.

The church has pronounced Greek Revival detailing. The facade has two symmetrically placed eight-panel doors which are flanked by sidelights and surrounded by moulded casings with applied fillets at their inner and outer margins and with square corner blocks, also with marginal fillets, at their upper corners. In the center of each of the top casings is an ornamental tablet of a type suggested by the later books of Asher Benjamin. Above the doors are two second-story windows with 6-over-6 sashes and Greek Revival casings; these originally lighted a gallery at the east end of the church auditorium.

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The Greek Revival character of the facade is further emphasized by two broad wooden antae or pilasters at the corners; these rise to support a full three-part entablature at the level of the eaves of the building. The cornice of this entablature defines a triangular pediment in the gable. The tympanum of the pediment is clapboarded and has two rectangular windows with 6-over-6 sashes which light the attic of the church. Above these, in the center of the tympanum just below the peak of the roof, is a semicircular louvered fan.

Rising from the ridge at the front of the building is a three-stage tower. The lowest stage is a square clapboarded base with simple pilasters at its corners and a deeply-projecting cornice above. The second stage is an open octagonal belfry with eight faceted columns rising from a panelled base and supporting a cornice. The belfry contains a bell cast in the bell-founding city of Troy, New York, in 1857. Above the belfry is a faceted roof which rises to support a tall octagonal spire with an ornate vane at its peak.

Each side of the church has three tall windows with moulded casings similar to those at the front of the building. In 1896 the earlier sashes of these windows were replaced with sashes bearing four large lights of clear glass surrounded by narrow strips of stained glass. All windows of the church except those in the gable have louvered blinds; those in the gable had such blinds well into the twentieth century.

The interior of the church was remodelled in 1886 and many of the present appointments of the auditorium date from that change. The main room is entered through two six-panel doors leading from a front vestibule through a gently curved plastered partition. Above these doors are interior windows which transmit some of the light from the second story windows of the facade to the interior of the church. Along each side of the room are three windows which, like those in the east wall, have moulded Greek Revival interior casings with square corner blocks. The room is filled with "slip" pews in a Renaissance Revival style, with bosses and panels of dark wood on their ends. These are arranged amphitheater-fashion to face choir pews and a dais which extend across the west wall of the room. On the dais is a reading desk or lecturn in the Renaissance Revival style and three Gothic chairs. At the east end of the room, between the two doors, is a low enclosure of vertical ceiling boards for musical instruments.

The auditorium is given marked character by careful plastering. The ceiling is gently coved, and the bays between the two chimneys on the west wall are treated with arched niches which have painted texts and trompe l'oeil cloud effects. The room is lighted by two chandeliers which bear six electrified kerosene lamps.

The exterior of the church has changed little since 1837, although records suggest that occasional repairs have been made to the tower due to lightning damage and have reduced the height of the spire. The interior was greatly altered in 1886. A gallery which had once extended across the east end of the room was sealed off, the pews were replaced, a former high reading desk was replaced by the present low dais with its furniture, and the room was carpeted.

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The Masonian Proprietors typically required that a "ministerial lot" near the center of the township have a six- or ten-acre plot carved out of it for a meeting house, burying ground, training field, and other "public" uses.² This requirement led to a decision in 1768 to build the meeting house at the Center; the structure was completed in 1772, and the town pound was constructed two years later at same convenient site.

When repairs were being carried out on the meeting house in 1793, a desire manifested itself to obtain a more spacious lot surrounding the building and the adjacent pound. Since the terms under which the Masonian Proprietors had granted Lyndeborough called for a ten-acre meeting house lot "for public use, notwithstanding such Lott should be laid out to any particular person or person," and since the meeting house lot was considerably smaller than ten acres, a committee was chosen to negotiate with the private owner of land was set off as a common around the meeting house; this is the origin of the land that composes the Lyndeborough Center Historic District of today.³

¹ Rev. D. Donovan and Jacob A. Woodward, The History of the Town of Lyndeborough, New Hampshire, 1735-1905 (N.p.: published by the town, 1906), pp. 277-278, 281.

² James L. Garvin, "The Range Township in Eighteenth-Century New Hampshire," New England Prospect: Maps, Place Names, and the Historical Landscape (Annual Proceedings of the Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife, 1980), pp. 62-64.

³ Donovan and Woodward, History of Lyndeborough, pp. 324-329.

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA.

The district commences on the westerly side of Lyndeborough Center Road at the northeast corner of the Center Church property, approximately opposite the point where New Road joins Center Road from the east. It then runs southerly approximately 1,000 feet on the westerly side of Center Road past the Center Church, Town Hall, and Center Cemetery, ending at the southerly boundary of the Cemetery, the property varying in depth from approximately 175 feet to 250 feet.

The nominated property consists of public and institutional structures of the Lyndeborough historic center which was later displaced by South Lyndeborough. It was the nucleus of the historic center and survives today in the same configuration of a century ago. Boundaries of the nominated district are highlighted in yellow on the attached sketch map.

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National Park Service

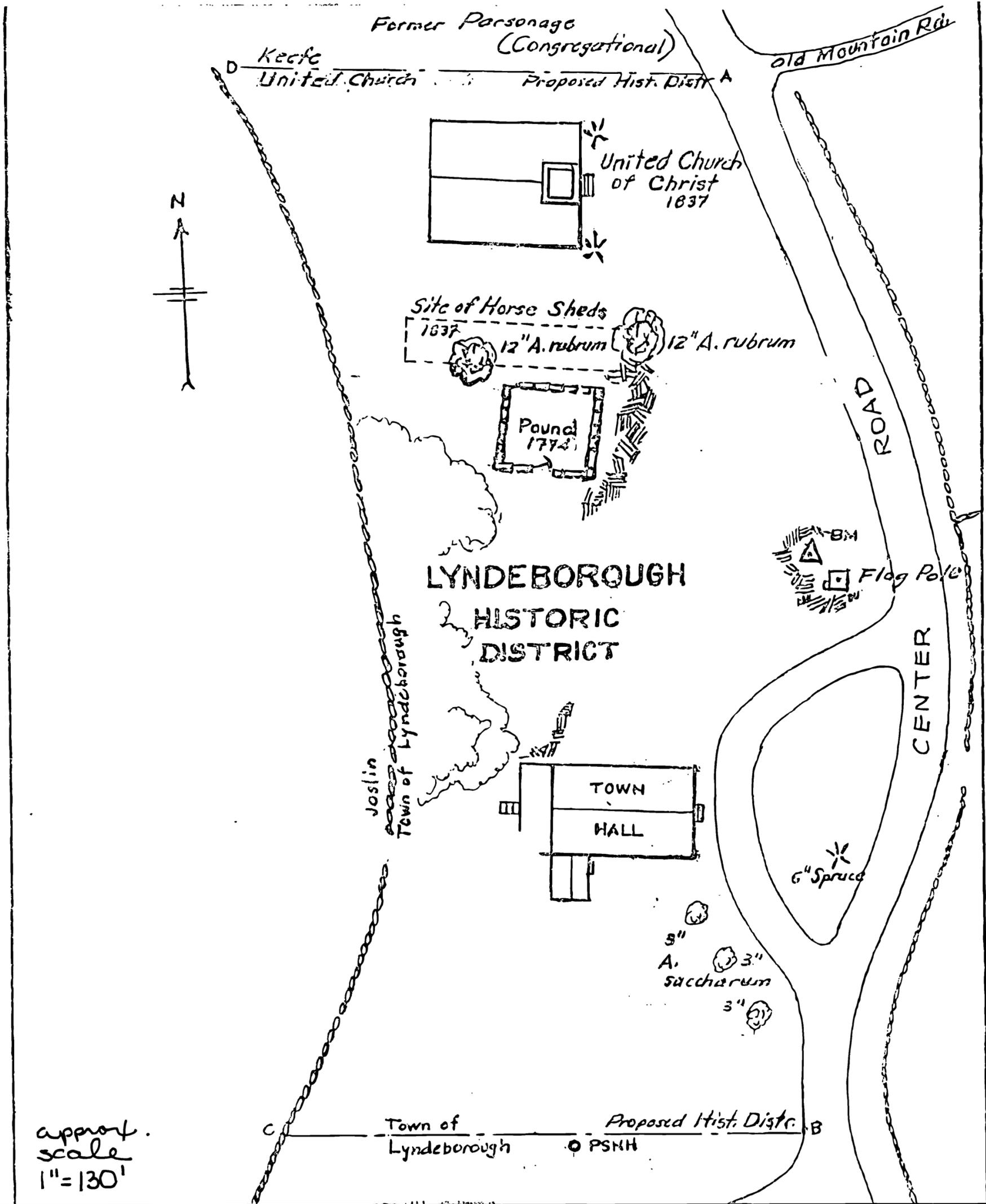
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approx. scale
1" = 130'