

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

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

For NPS use only

received **AUG 5 1986**  
date entered **SEP 4 1986**

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

**1. Name**

historic First Universalist Society Meeting House

and/or common Veterans' Memorial Hall (Preferred)

**2. Location**

street & number State Route #32 (North of Four Corners) N/A not for publication

city, town Richmond N/A vicinity of

state New Hampshire code 33 county Cheshire code 005

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name Board of Selectmen  
Town of Richmond

street & number Town Offices

city, town Richmond \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of state New Hampshire 03470

**5. Location of Legal Description**

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

street & number 12 Court Street

city, town Keene state New Hampshire 03431

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Historic Surveys of Southwestern  
New Hampshire has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1931  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Southwest Region Planning Commission

city, town Keene state New Hampshire 03431

## 7. Description

|  |                                       |   |   |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Condition</b>                         |                                       | <b>Check one</b>                            | <b>Check one</b>                                  |
| <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    |   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A           |

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Built as a Universalist meeting house, Veterans' Memorial Hall is a rectangular building of frame construction, with a low-pitched gable roof. The building is one and a half stories high and measures 40 feet wide by 52 feet long, with a shed-roofed turn-of-the-century addition of 17 by 39 feet on the rear (west) elevation. Constructed in 1837, the building stands on a foundation of roughly split granite blocks, with hammered granite curbs beneath the front wall. The building utilizes a heavy hewn and braced wooden frame typical of eighteenth-century construction. Its walls are clapboarded, and the main roof is covered with slate; the roof of the addition is covered with asphalt shingles. The hall has two chimneys, one piercing the roof beside the ridge at the front, and the second rising through the one-story addition and built against the exterior of the rear (west) wall of the main building.

The front (east) elevation of the hall, facing New Hampshire Route 32, has two doors on the first story, three 12-over-8 gallery windows above (the window in the center being sealed and fitted with a louver for a ventilating fan), and three 12-over-12 windows in the gable. The two doorways, approached by a single wide flight of granite steps, have characteristic Greek Revival detailing. Each has fluted side casings with square corner blocks at the top, and a fluted top casing with a faceted panel in its center. Each door has six flat panels surrounded by applied mouldings and is flanked by sidelights. Extending across the bottom of the front gable is an entablature composed of a wide board divided by a horizontal moulding into an architrave and a frieze, with a deeply-projecting cornice above. The cornice carries up the raking eaves of the roof, defining a closed triangular pediment, while the full entablature extends along each side elevation of the building. Like the remainder of the facade, the tympanum of the pediment is clapboarded.

The side (north and south) elevations of the hall are identical. Each has a wide water table, consisting of a flat board, at the base of the wall, and the full entablature at the eaves. Each elevation has three 12-over-16 windows which light the auditorium within. Each window has flat side casings which curve inward above the sash opening to define a blind Gothic arch whose apex rises to touch the bottom of the entablature. The tympanum of each arch is flush-boarded.

The rear (west) elevation of the hall has two 12-over-12 windows in its gable, above the roof of the addition. The building's entablature returns a short distance along this elevation, but the raking cornice is replaced by a simple board along the edges of the roof. The rear addition has no windows in its northern wall, five 2-over-2 windows and a small toilet window in its rear (western) wall (with a basement access door and a sliding two-light window below), and a 2-over-2 window and entrance door in its south elevation. The porch which provides access to the door covers a bulkhead leading to the partial basement housing an oil-fired forced-hot-air furnace. This addition provides kitchen and toilet facilities.

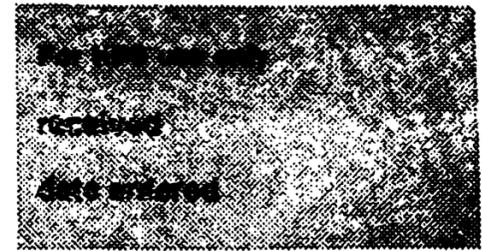
The interior of the building is characterized by simple detailing. Walls are plastered, and the ceiling of the auditorium is coved at its juncture with the walls. The auditorium was repainted and its walls stencilled in 1976. A low stage, measuring ten by twenty feet, stands at the west end of the auditorium, opposite the entrance doors.

The entrance vestibule of the building has two doors leading to the auditorium, a closet at its south end, and a staircase on the north end leading to the balcony and to the attic.

The attic of the building has a finished room (originally probably a vestry or a Sunday school room) at the front (east), reached by the staircase in the northeast corner of the structure. This room contains an early ecclesiastical reading desk, possibly the original desk from the main auditorium. The remainder of the attic is unfinished, and reveals the heavy roof frame of the building.

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Item number 7

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Original appearance: Built as a Universalist meeting house, Veterans' Memorial Hall originally had a more ecclesiastical appearance than it does today. As completed in 1837, the building had a two-stage bell tower at the front of the ridge. The first stage was square and clapboarded, and terminated in a classical cornice similar to that remaining on the main body of the building. Above the cornice, the bell deck was surrounded by wooden crenellation. The second or belfry stage had four arched openings in each face, flanked by Doric pilasters and surmounted by a Doric entablature. Above its cornice, this stage was also capped by wooden crenellation. By 1892, the Universalist society had diminished and no longer required the use of a church. The society transferred use of the hall to the local Grange, which removed the bell and belfry in the fall of 1892 for reasons of safety.

Since that alteration, the building has undergone few changes except for the addition of the small wing at the rear and the change from wood to oil-fired central heating.

The nominated property represents one contributing building.

## 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/             |
| <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** 1837; 1892      **Builder/Architect** Oren Starkey

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Veterans' Memorial Hall was built as a rural church building and retains several features of a local architectural tradition. The building was designed by Oren Starkey (1814–1897), a local carpenter and joiner, and incorporates features seen on nearby churches of a slightly earlier date, combining these features into an almost vernacular expression of ecclesiastical architecture. The building was erected in 1837 by members of the Universalist Church, a religion which had important roots in the Richmond area and which eventually grew to exert great influence in New England and to have a considerable following elsewhere in the United States.

Architecture: Built as the meeting house of the First Universalist Society of Richmond, Veterans' Memorial Hall was designed and constructed at a cost of \$2,485.36 by Oren Starkey, a local builder-architect who later became a skilled stair builder in the nearby city of Keene. Born in the adjacent town of Troy, New Hampshire, Starkey was trained as a carpenter, as were two of his brothers. Starkey apparently followed the old tradition of combining the role of master craftsman (or "chief mechanic," as he was called) with that of architect. A twenty-three-year-old member of the church, Starkey was chosen to design and build the meeting house by a building committee which included his father, John. Design of this building may have been one of Starkey's few opportunities for such work, because he later moved to the nearby city of Keene to work as a carpenter for others and for himself. From about 1870 to his retirement about 1890, Starkey worked as a stair builder.

In designing this meeting house, Starkey established or followed several local traditions. Peculiar to the Richmond area is the placement of a Sunday school room or vestry in the front of the attic of the building. A nearby Richmond church (1838, Unitarian), though built by another contractor, shares the same feature, as do slightly earlier churches nearby in Troy (1835, Congregational) and Swanzey (1836, Congregational). The wooden crenellation which was originally seen on the tower of the church is also peculiar to the area near Richmond in the southwestern portion of New Hampshire. Creating a far stronger Gothic feeling than was common on most New Hampshire churches of the Greek Revival period, similar towers can still be seen on churches in the nearby towns of Jaffrey Center (1830–31, Congregational), Stoddard (1835–6, Congregational), Swanzey (1835–6, Congregational), and Walpole (1836, Episcopal).

The use of slate for the roof of this building also represents local practice. Slate was quarried in Richmond and nearby centers, making this part of New Hampshire the only district of the state where this material was locally produced and used without the expense of importation from more distant quarrying areas. In authorship, design, workmanship, and materials, Veterans' Memorial Hall therefore represents a completely indigenous product of its region.

Religion: Richmond, New Hampshire was one of the points of origin of the Universalist Church in the United States. Built as the meeting house of the First Religious Society of Richmond, Veterans' Memorial Hall has an important symbolic connection with one of the important liberal religions established in the United States in the years following the American Revolution.

The single most prominent figure in the establishment of the Universalist Church in the United States was Hosea Ballou (1771–1852). Ballou was a native of Richmond, New Hampshire, where his father had settled as the town's first minister about 1767. At first a Baptist, Hosea Ballou became influential in the development of Universalist theology in 1803, when a major convention of Universalists was held a few miles from Richmond in neighboring Winchester, New Hampshire. Ballou's doctrine differed considerably from those of pioneers of Universalism in

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

History of the Town of Richmond, Cheshire County, N.H. from its first Settlement to 1882. William Bassett, Boston: C.W. Calkins & Co., Printers, 1884. p. 234-239.  
World Book Encyclopedia, 1970 Edition, Vol.U-V, pg. 20.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 0.18 acre

Quadrangle name Keene, N.H. - Vermont

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UTM References

A 

|      |   |         |   |   |   |          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|------|---|---------|---|---|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1    | 8 | 7       | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5        | 0 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 8 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Zone |   | Easting |   |   |   | Northing |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

B 

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| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

C 

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| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

D 

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F 

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| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

G 

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|------|--|---------|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|      |  |         |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

H 

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|      |  |         |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Verbal boundary description and justification** Map 2-A, Lot 31A, Richmond Tax Map. Boundaries of the nominated property are highlighted in yellow on the attached sketch map. They encompass Veterans' Memorial Hall and the site it has occupied since its construction; eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and sufficient for its protection.

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

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
|-------|------|--------|------|

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
|-------|------|--------|------|

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dorothy A. Mooney (Tel. (603) 242-3024)

organization Southwest Region Planning Commission date April 30, 1986

street & number 28 Mechanic Street telephone (603) 357-0557

city or town Keene state New Hampshire 03431

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

*S. J. Adamovich*

title New Hampshire State Historic Preservation Officer

date 7/29/86

For NPS use only

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

*J. M. Byers*  
Keeper of the National Register

date 9-4-86

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

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Continuation sheet 2

Item number 8

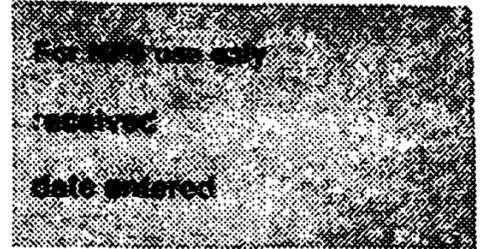
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America, and eventually became the dominant theology of the sect. Sometimes called the "doctrine of salvation by character," Ballou's theology placed great emphasis on free will and on personal responsibility for moral action. Quickly becoming predominant, Ballou's view of religion superseded the doctrines of earlier Universalists in the United States, and remained the essential theology of the church until its merger with American Unitarianism in the mid-twentieth century.

Ballou eventually moved to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and then to Salem and Boston, Massachusetts. Remaining in Boston for the remainder of his career, Ballou did not live in Richmond when the Universalist Society built its meeting house. Nevertheless, Ballou frequently referred in his writings to the town of his birth and early religious experience, even composing a song about "Ballou's Dell," that section of Richmond where he was reared. As the structure that embodied Universalism in the town of its early evolution, the First Universalist Society meeting house of Richmond is an important symbol of religious development in New Hampshire.

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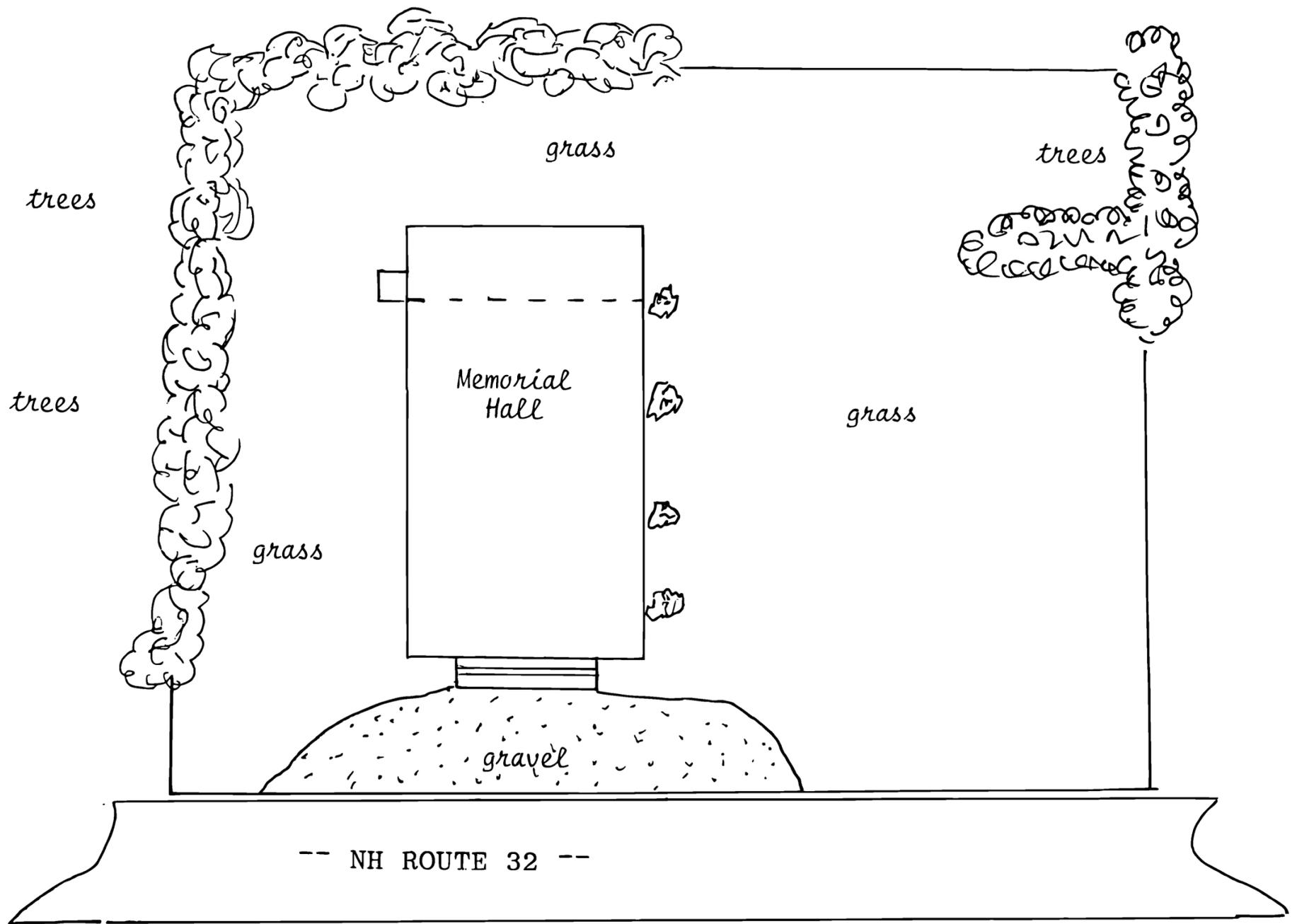


Continuation sheet 3

Item number 10

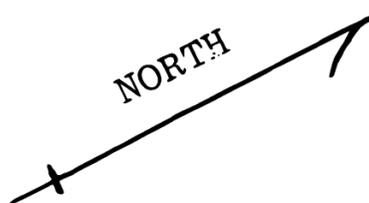
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VETERANS' MEMORIAL HALL  
OF  
RICHMOND, NEW HAMPSHIRE



1" = 44'

SCALE



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date entered

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