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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

387

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Second Free Baptist Church
other names/site number Baptist Meetinghouse

2. Location

street & number Main Street (250 feet south of Church Street) not for publication N/A
city, town Alton vicinity N/A
state New Hampshire code NH county Belknap code NH 001 zip code 03809

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

R. Stuart Wallace January 25, 1990
Signature of certifying official Date
NEW HAMPSHIRE

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register. Mark L. Baker Entered in the National Register 9 March 1990
 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): _____

fn
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion / religious structure

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion / religious structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Italianate

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Granitewalls WeatherboardWood

roof Asphaltother

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Second Free Baptist Church of Alton is an Italianate style wooden church that stands in its original location on its own lot on the southwest side of Main Street (N.H. Route 11) in the village of Alton. The tall, gable roofed main block is set with its northeast gable end facing the street. Most of the main block is one and a half stories high. But, because of its internal layout, the northeast end of the structure is two and a half stories high. (This internal division is not however apparent on the exterior.) Astride the northeast end of the main block's roof ridge and projecting from the center of the main block's northeast street facade is the tall, three story square tower, which is crowned by a tall pyramidal spire. In the center of the main block's rear (southwest) gable end is the narrower, shorter, one story, shed roofed organ addition. Covering the entire rear southwest side of the organ addition is the rear addition, a one story, shed roofed structure. Covering the southeast facades of the organ addition and the rear addition, and stretching to the southeast of the main block, is the tall, one and a half story chapel wing. The chapel wing roof is hipped at its southeast end, but gabled at its northwest end. On the street (northeast) facade of the chapel wing are two small structures, a one story, shed roofed closet (the former vestibule of the chapel wing), located in the east corner of the chapel wing and the main block, and the one story, gable roofed present vestibule which flanks the closet to the southeast. The main block and the tower have post and beam frames. The chapel wing, the organ addition, and presumably the rear addition, have balloon frames. The original church, built in 1853-1854, was composed of the main block and the tower. The original church exterior is quite well preserved, the only significant change to the public facades being the replacement of the main entry steps and doors. The less important rear facade of the original church has been largely covered by later additions the organ addition, the rear addition, and the chapel wing (with its past and present vestibules). The interior of the original church has seen more changes. The entry hall now has pressed metal walls and ceiling and shares a new stained glass window with the auditorium. The auditorium has been given a pressed metal ceiling, an organ recess framed by pilasters and a cornice, a remodeled platform, and new wall decoration. Despite these changes, the original church retains its basic integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The main block is set on a cut granite block foundation. The walls are

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sheathed with horizontal flush boarding on the northeast street facade, but are clapboarded on the side and rear facades. All four facades are trimmed by wide sillboards with watertables, and by cornerboards with concave mouldings on the edges and at the corners themselves. (In the corners formed by the tower and the main block are found quarter round mouldings.) The wide box cornice has mouldings, a deep frieze, pairs of heavy curvilinear sawn wooden brackets, and bracketed returns on the gables. Thin brackets of the same profile as the main cornice brackets are applied on the wall beneath the ends of the returns. (Wire mesh now encloses the northeast front returns to keep out birds. Metal gutters with downspouts are now mounted on the southeast cornice.) The asphalt shingled gable roof is broken only by the tower.

The central bay of the main block's street facade, the three bay northeast gable end, is occupied by the tall tower. The side bays each contain a tall window frame, ornamented by a heavy sill with two shallow curvilinear sawn brackets (one at each end), plain side trim, and a peaked cornice with an upper moulding and a curvilinear sawn bracket at each end. (The brackets of the cornice, although applied vertically to the wall, are sawn diagonally to follow the pitch of the cornice.) The lower portion of each window frame contains a six over six sash window with louvred shutters. The upper section of the window frame is filled by tall permanent louvred blinds with a triangular top. The two three bay lateral (southeast and northwest) facades are virtually identical, differing only in their plain framed basement windows, an eight pane window and a three pane window in the southeast foundation, an eight pane window in the northwest foundation. The main level of each lateral facade contains three tall, large sixteen over sixteen sash windows with louvred shutters. These main level window frames are similar to the northeast front window frames, having the same heavy sills with two sawn brackets and plain side trim. The cornice topping the lateral windows, although given the same mouldings and similar sawn brackets as the front window cornices, are however horizontal. (The lower sash of the lateral windows are now covered by modern metal framed storm windows.) The only opening in the main block's rear southwest gable end is a plain framed six over six sash window high in the gable.

The tall tower is sheathed with horizontal flush boarding above a cut granite block foundation and is trimmed by the same deep sillboards with watertables and the same cornerboards with moulded edges and corners as are found on the main block. The first story is topped by a shallow cornice with a large cove moulding, which encircles that portion of the tower that projects from the main block. The tower is topped by a box cornice with mouldings, deep frieze, and heavy curvilinear sawn brackets (the latter of a different design than those of the main block cornice). The northeast street facade contains the church's main entry, which is now metal framed, double plate glass and metal doors beneath a large, metal framed, rectangular

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plate glass transom window. The new doors and transom window retain the old plain wooden side trim and a peaked cornice with upper mouldings and heavy curvilinear sawn end brackets. (A small electric light on a metal bracket is mounted between the transom window and the cornice.) Mounted next to the entry is a small painted wooden sign identifying the building, with a moulded frame and triangular top. The entry is served by a wide, brick floored, concrete landing, almost as wide as the tower, with three brick floored concrete steps with metal pipe railings on the street front. The upper portion of the tower's northeast front is largely devoted to a very tall triple louver, with a wide central louver and two narrow flanking louvers. The triple louver has a heavy sill with four sawn brackets like those of the main block window sills, plain side trim, and a peaked cornice with mouldings and sawn end brackets like the main entry cornice. The central louver was given a triangular top and the two flanking louvers slanted tops, to follow the slope of the cornice. (Most of this impressive tall triple louver actually covers a blank wall, with only the top portion serving the belfry.) Above the main block roof, the tower has double louvers on the northwest, southeast, and southwest sides, all serving the belfry. The more public northwest and southeast double louvers have slanted tops and are trimmed by a heavy sill with three sawn brackets, plain side trim, and a peaked bracketed cornice of the same design as the triple louver's cornice on the tower front. The less seen rectangular double louver on the rear southwest side has a plain frame. The tower roof is mostly hidden by an unusual wooden parapet. The boards that form the parapet are shaped to give the parapet upper projections in the shape of small Gothic arches, with a half arch at each corner. In the center of each side of the parapet is a higher, wide, flat topped projection, on which is applied a large wooden quatrefoil. Rising from the tower roof is the tall pyramidal spire, which has flush boarded sides with round corner mouldings, and is crowned at the peak by a moulding and an ornate carved knob.

The organ addition has a brick foundation on its only fully exposed facade, the northwest side. Its walls are clapboarded and trimmed by cornerboards and a box cornice with mouldings and frieze and one return on the southwest half gable. A tall brick chimney interrupts the asphalt shingled shed roof, which pitches down to the northwest. The only opening in the northwest lateral facade is a plain framed six over six sash window. The southwest facade is windowless, the lower portion being covered by the shorter rear addition. The rear addition has a concrete foundation, clapboarded walls, and cornerboards. A box cornice with mouldings and frieze, and a return on the northwest half gable trims the shed roof of the rear addition, which is sheathed with asphalt roll paper. The northwest wall contains a boarded up opening in the foundation and a paneled door with a nine pane window and a plain frame in the main level. This side entry is served by a board floored landing with a slat base, reached by a low concrete step and three plain wooden steps, all protected by plain wooden

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railings. The rear southwest lateral facade has a plain framed three pane basement window and three plain framed four over four sash windows in the main level. The southern window lighting the kitchen is larger than the two northern windows lighting the restrooms.

The chapel wing has a cut granite block foundation and clapboarded walls trimmed by deep sillboards with watertables and moulded cornerboards like those of the main block. A box cornice with mouldings, deep frieze, and pairs of curvilinear sawn brackets (similar to the main block cornice brackets), and one return on the northwest half gable trims the asphalt shingled gable roof. The roof is hipped at the southeast end and gabled on the northwest end. A portion of the northeast roof slope, behind the main block, is covered by an asphalt shingled roof, which pitches down southeast from the organ addition roof. A tall brick chimney with simple corbeled cap is found on the southwest slope. The main level of the chapel wing is lit by large double windows, each with four over four sash, three shallow sawn brackets on the sill, louvred shutters, and a cornice with mouldings, frieze, and two sawn end brackets. One such double window appears on the street (northeast) facade to the south of the vestibule and the closet section (the former vestibule) which cover most of the facade. Three more such double windows appear in the rear southwest wall and two more double windows are found in the southeast end wall. The southeast facade also features a large central exterior brick chimney with wide base, tapered shoulders, and corbeled cap. Only a small portion of the chapel wing's northwest gable end is visible, as the organ addition covers the easterly half of both stories and the rear addition covers the first story of the westerly half, leaving only a half gable visible. That half gable does contain a six over six sash window, ornamented like the chapel wing's double windows, by a sill with two sawn end brackets and a cornice with mouldings, frieze, and two sawn end brackets.

At the north end of the chapel wing's street (northeast) facade is the shallow, small closet section (the former vestibule), which has a cut granite block foundation, a clapboarded northeast wall with deep sillboard and cornerboards, a cornice with mouldings, frieze, and two pairs of sawn brackets, and an asphalt shingled shed roof. The closet section no longer has any outer openings. To its southeast is the slightly deeper and taller, but still small, chapel wing vestibule. The vestibule has a concrete foundation, and clapboarded walls trimmed by cornerboards and sillboards with watertables. A box cornice with mouldings, frieze, and returns trims the asphalt shingled gable roof. The narrow southeast lateral wall contains a plain framed two over two sash window. The northeast (street) gable end features the entry, double six panel doors with fluted side trim and a cornice with mouldings, frieze, architrave, and two sawn end brackets. The entry is flanked by two pseudo-Colonial lights. Originally, the entry was served by a concrete landing and two concrete steps with flagstone floors

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and wrought metal railings. A large board floored ramp (suitable for wheel-chairs), supported by wooden posts and served by plain wooden railings, has now been built over the landing and the steps.

The main entry in the tower opens into the entry hall, a space best described as T-shaped in plan, with a wide stem in the tower projection and a narrower crossbar on the northeast side of the main block. (The shape of the room is further complicated by a shallow but wide, three-sided bulge in the center of the rear (southwest) wall, reflecting the intrusion of a recess in the auditorium wall.) The tall large auditorium occupies most of the main block. The only other main level rooms in the main block are two small stairhalls at the northwest and southeast ends of the entry hall, in the north and east corners of the main block. Above the entry hall and the stairhalls, which are shorter than the auditorium, is a T-shaped second story storage room.

The entry hall has a carpeted floor and wainscoating of horizontal flush boarding topped by simple moulded railings, that also serve as the sills for the two windows. The upper walls and the ceiling are covered with pressed metal. The walls are mostly covered by a pattern of squares with ornate geometric and floral designs, separated by bead and reel mouldings. The pressed metal upper walls have a lower border best described as an arabesque design and a simpler but still elaborate foliated decorative upper border. The ceiling also has a basic pattern of squares with geometric and foliated decoration, separated by bead and reel mouldings, albeit of a different design than the pressed metal walls. The pressed metal ceiling has a border of beaded and foliated decoration and a ceiling moulding. The ceiling also features two light fixtures and a large wooden trapdoor with moulded frame, four panels, and two small round holes, one still used for the bell rope. The doors and the exterior windows of the entry hall all have similar frames, with moulded side trim and moulded heads. In the northeast (street) wall of the wide central section, the tower projection, is the main entry, double metal framed plate glass doors beneath a large plate glass transom window, all installed in the older wooden frame. The corners of the tower projection and the main block section are rounded, with curved wainscoating and pressed metal walls. To both the north and south of the wide central section, the northeast wall of the narrow main block section contains an exterior six over six sash window. At the northwest and southeast ends of the entry hall's crossbar (the main block section) is found a four panel door, to the basement stairhall at the southeast end and to the second story stairhall at the northeast end. High in the center of the three sided bulge in entry hall's southwest wall is a rectangular stained glass window with moulded frame depicting Christ praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. (The window is designed to be seen primarily from the auditorium side of the wall.) To each side of the bulge in the southwest wall is a four panel door to the auditorium. South of the

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southerly door is a small single panel wooden door with moulded frame for the electrical panel. At each end of the southwest wall is a painted metal duct for the heating system.

The small stairhall to the basement at the southeast end of the entry hall has a carpeted board floor, three plaster walls with board wainscoating topped by a moulded rail, an unfinished northwest wall of exposed studding and the rear side of plaster lathing, and a high plaster ceiling. No trim surrounds the four panel door to the entry hall in the northwest wall. A very steep set of stairs, with board treads and stringers, virtually a ladder, descends through a hole in the floor to the basement. The basement under the main block and the tower is a largely dirt floored space that is not all dug out to full height. Around the edges of the room, the dirt floor rises to the fieldstone and cut granite block foundation. The unfinished board ceiling with exposed joists and beams is supported by two rows of peeled tree trunks on stone piers and a brick post. The room is lit by untrimmed windows, two in the southeast wall, one in the northwest wall. From the stairs in the east corner, a board walkway leads to a central area with a concrete and brick floor. On the southwest end of this floored area is the building's furnace, from which radiates metal ducts. Near the northwest wall is the oil tank. In the rear southwest wall of the main basement is an opening into the organ addition's basement, with its dirt floor, walls of unfinished boards with exposed framework on low brick foundations, and unfinished board ceiling with exposed joists. An opening in the southwest wall of the organ addition basement leads to the crawlspace under the rear addition, with its dirt floor, low concrete walls, and unfinished board ceiling with exposed joists.

The very small stairhall to the upper levels at the northwest end of the entry hall has a board floor, plaster walls with flush board wainscoating with moulded rail on the northeast and southwest, a board wall on the northwest, and an unfinished wall with exposed studding and the rear side of plaster lathing on the southeast. The small room contains a quite steep stairway/ladder with board treads and stringers, which rises to the second story. (The stairhall has no ceiling, opening directly above to the second story.) As the entry hall is only half the height of the auditorium, the northeast end of the church does have a large, T-shaped, second story space above the entry hall and stairhalls and northeast of the auditorium. The unfinished and little used storage space has a board floor with a large paneled trapdoor to the entry hall, unfinished outer board walls with exposed post and beam frame and studding (on the northeast, southeast, and northwest), and an inner southwestern wall with exposed studding and framework and the rear lathed side of the auditorium's plaster wall. The southwest wall also contains a rectangular projection, the rear side of a shallow plastered recess in the auditorium. The second story storage space has a board ceiling with exposed joists above only a small portion of the space,

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A ladder climbs from the second story to the attic level. The attic is another unfinished space with a small board floored area near the northeast end in the tower, no floor above most of the second story storage space, and an unfinished board floor with exposed joists and insulation above the auditorium. The unfinished board walls of both the main block and the tower have exposed studding and framework. The main block attic has a double pitched unfinished board ceiling with exposed rafters and purlins and three trusses that help to carry the auditorium ceiling. The tower attic level has its own double pitched unfinished board ceiling with exposed rafters. The attic is lit by an untrimmed six over six sash window in the southwest end wall. From the small landing at the attic level, a steep wooden stairway with board treads and stringers rises to a trapdoor in the tower ceiling. The trapdoor opens into the belfry, which has a double pitched floor covered by asphalt roll paper. In the center of the floor is the large bell and its framework, set on a heavy timber base. The belfry has a board ceiling and unfinished board walls with exposed studding and framework. The large louvers in each wall, double rectangular louvers on the southwest, double louvers with slanted tops on the northwest and southeast, and a triple louver with triangular and slanted tops on the northeast, are untrimmed and are now covered on the inside with wire mesh to keep out the birds.

The principal room of the church is the tall large auditorium that occupies most of the main block. The board floor is carpeted in the aisles between and in front of the pews. At the southwest end of the room is a raised platform for the pulpit, altar, and choir. The walls are plastered above a wainscoating of horizontal flush boarding topped by a simply moulded rail, that also serves as the sill for the windows. The plaster upper walls are ornamented by a moulding that encircles the room at the window head level and by large rectangles formed by mouldings laid over the plaster between the wainscoating and the high window head level moulding. The ornate pressed metal ceiling has a deep pressed metal cornice with mouldings, including an egg and dart moulding, and a shallow cove with pressed ornament. In the center of the ceiling is a small modern light fixture surrounded by Greek fretwork and a deep circular moulding, set in a large square, with an elaborate foliated and geometric design. The central square is surrounded by a row of square panels, two rows of rectangular panels, and another row of square panels, all with elaborate mouldings and separated by deep moulded frames. A row of panels with beaded and geometric ornament, another row of square panels with deep moulded frames, and finally, a simpler but still ornate outer border completes the ceiling. Hanging from the ceiling are two ceiling fans and four hexagonal lights with Gothic arched sides and tapered hexagonal tops.

In the center of the street (northeast) wall is a high shallow recess, which rises from the top of the wainscoating to a triangular top. The floor,

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sides and double pitched top of the shallow recess are sheathed with boards. The rear (northeast) wall of the recess is plastered and decorated by a large rectangle formed by mouldings laid over the plaster. In this rectangle is a rectangular stained glass window in a moulded frame, depicting Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, which the auditorium shares with the entry hall. The recess has plain side trim with beveled edges and is topped by a peaked cornice with mouldings and two sawn and carved end brackets. To each side of the recess are found four large rectangles formed by mouldings and a four panel door to the entry hall. The two doors have the same moulded frames and moulded heads seen on the entry hall doors. The three large sixteen over sixteen sash windows in each lateral (northwest and southeast) wall also have the same moulded frames and moulded window heads used in the entry hall. Between each pair of windows in the lateral walls are found three large rectangles formed by mouldings laid over the plaster, while another such rectangle appears to the west (rear) of the westernmost window in each wall.

The rear (southwest) wall of the auditorium is dominated by the large central recess for the organ, which is actually located in the organ addition. In the auditorium proper, the organ recess is framed on each side by a pair of pilasters, set on pedestals with simple baseboards and moulded tops. The pilasters have moulded bases and finely carved Ionic capitals complete with angled volutes and egg and dart mouldings. The pilasters support a deep cornice with mouldings, frieze and architrave, and alternating large and small modillions. Between the inner pilasters, the cornice is peaked, creating a small triangle that is reminiscent of a pediment, but lacks a horizontal cornice. The small triangular area contains a triangular panel formed by mouldings. The organ recess is separated from the platform in the auditorium by a high paneled partition with simple baseboard and moulded coping, that spans the entire opening. The organ recess is flanked on each side by two large rectangles formed by mouldings on the plastered southwest wall. South of the organ recess and the platform, in the rear auditorium wall is a five panel door to the chapel wing, with the same moulded frame and moulded head seen on the other auditorium doors.

Most of the auditorium is filled by four rows of pews, one row along each side wall and two rows in the center. The rows are separated by two aisles which run from the two entry hall doors to a space in front of the platform at the southwest end of the room. The pews have board seats, board fronts beneath the seats, board backs with simple top mouldings, paneled pew ends with curvilinear arm rests, and simple supporting braces at the center of each pew back and at the wall end of each side pew. Save for the two northeastern pews, which are separated only by armrests, the two central rows are separated by a board partition topped by a simple moulding. Twelve pews are found in each side row, and eleven pews in each central row. The raised platform covers the southwest end of the auditorium,

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save for the south corner, where the door to the chapel wing is found. The carpeted floor of the platform is raised a foot and a half above the main auditorium floor. The paneled front with plain baseboard and moulded coping rises above the platform floor to form a low partition around the platform. This partition is interrupted on the main axis of the room by three wide carpeted steps up to the platform floor, which are flanked by angled sections of the partition. The platform front projects slightly at the northerly end. Near the southerly end of the platform is the semi-octagonal projection of the pulpit, with the same baseboard and coping as the platform partition. But, the pulpit projection has two rows of panels instead of the one row found on the rest of the partition. The pulpit has its own raised board floor and a lectern. The other furnishings on the platform, chairs, tables, a piano and the altar, are all movable.

The organ addition contains the organ recess that opens into the auditorium and, to its southwest, a rear room occupied mostly by the organ works themselves. The board floor of the organ recess is raised above the auditorium platform floor. The organ recess has an unusual shape, as the two rear (south and west) corners of the space are curved, with the recess's plaster walls and moulded baseboards following the curve. On each side (northwest and southeast) wall is a tall rectangle formed by mouldings laid over the panels. The ceiling is now sheathed by sheets of composition board trimmed by a ceiling moulding and moulded slats between the panels. The large opening into the auditorium filling the northeast wall is flanked by the already described corner pilasters with moulded bases and Ionic capitals, and is topped by a plain board. In each curved corner is a four panel door to the rear organ room. The doors themselves are flat, but their moulded frames with moulded heads (similar to the entry hall and auditorium door frames) are curved to follow the wall. The organ recess is mostly occupied by the large pipe organ case. The case has a paneled base topped by a cornice and three upper openings with exposed metal pipes, separated by paneled pilasters with tall reeded and moulded capitals. The two side openings are semicircular arched beneath heavy cornices with paneled friezes. The wider central opening has a trefoil arch with pendants beneath an elaborate curvilinear centerpiece with incised and carved ornament. The organist's seat is hidden by a low paneled partition with a moulded coping.

The room occupying the rear of the organ addition is actually divided into three spaces, as the large organ works fill most of the central space, leaving just a narrow space southwest of the organ, which is almost blocked by an exposed brick chimney. The higher central space containing the organ works has board walls and ceiling. The two small spaces at the northwest and southeast ends of the room have plaster walls with plain baseboards and plaster ceilings. (All three spaces have board floors.) The northwest space has a plain framed six over six sash window in the

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northwest wall and a four panel door in a curved plain frame in the curved northeast wall. Three wooden steps descend from the main floor (at the floor level of the organ recess) to a plain framed four panel door in the southwest wall, just behind the organ, which opens into the corridor of the rear addition. The southeast space has another four panel door with curved plain frame in the curved northeast wall. From the landing at this northeast door, four steps, with a simple wooden railing, descend to a landing in the south corner. From the lower landing, a plain framed five panel door in the southeast wall opens into the chapel wing. A light fixture is mounted on the ceiling of the southwestern space.

The small vestibule that serves the chapel wing contains a single room, with carpeted floor, plaster walls above vertical beaded board wainscoating with simply moulded baseboard and rail, and a plaster ceiling with central light fixture. Plain frames surround the double six panel doors in both the street (northeast) and inner (southwest) walls and the two over two sash window in the southeast wall. The inner doors open into the main hall of the chapel wing.

The chapel wing is mostly occupied by a large public hall. At the northwest end of the wing is found the old kitchen in the west corner of the wing and a connecting hallway to the kitchen's northeast. The hallway is L-shaped around the stairhall to the chapel wing attic in the north corner of the wing. The main hall, old kitchen, and hallway all have plaster walls with vertical beaded board wainscoating with moulded baseboards and rails. Their window and door frames all have chamfered edges and carved upper cornerblocks. The door frames also have moulded lower cornerblocks and an ornament at the junction with the wainscoating rail formed by a protruding horizontal moulding of the same design as the wainscoating rail. In the main hall, the upper cornerblocks of the windows and doors are carved with radiating rays. In the old kitchen and hallway, the upper cornerblocks feature carved round patera.

The main hall of the chapel wing has a hardwood floor and a high modern tile ceiling with ceiling moulding and central hanging light fixture. (On the walls are also mounted lights on brackets.) The room is also lit by large double windows, with four over four sash, sills with beveled edges, and the already described frames, one window at the southerly end of the northeast wall and two windows apiece in the southeast and southwest walls. The northeast (street) wall also has two doors, the double six panel doors to the vestibule in the center and the five panel door to the closet section near the north end. In the center of the southeast end wall is a large fireplace with cement hearth, brick fireplace opening with brick surround topped by three projecting courses which support a moulded wooden mantel. The northwest wall contains two five panel doors, a door to the kitchen at the west end and a door to the hallway at the east end. Just east of the kitchen

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door is a short countertop opening, resting on the rail of the wainscoating. The countertop opening from the kitchen has a vertically sliding beaded board door and a frame with chamfered edges and upper cornerblocks, like those on the main hall's windows and doors.

The closet in the closet section (the former vestibule) now has a carpeted floor, a plasterboard northeast wall and a suspended tile ceiling with inset light fixture. The other three walls are still plastered above beaded board wainscoating like that of the walls in the chapel wing. And the five panel door in the southwest wall to the main hall of the chapel wing still has a door frame like those in the chapel wing's hallway and kitchen.

The small L-shaped hallway in the chapel wing connects the main hall, kitchen, and attic stairhall of the chapel wing, the rear room of the organ addition, and the auditorium in the main block. The hallway now has a carpeted floor and a modern tile ceiling with ceiling moulding and central light fixture. In the southeast wall is the five panel door to the main hall. At the northeast end of the room is the five panel door to the auditorium. At the north end of the southwest wall is a paneled door with two tall windows to the kitchen. At the west end of the northwest wall, west of the stairhall intrusion, is another five panel door to the rear room of the organ addition. On the southwest end of the stairhall intrusion is a five panel door to a closet under the attic stairs. (This closet has a board floor, board walls, a ceiling formed by the underside of the stairs, and no interior door trim.) At the east end of the northwest wall is yet another five panel door, to the attic stairhall.

The stairs in the attic stairhall, which have plain board treads and risers, wind through the lower north corner of the stairhall, then ascend to the southwest to the attic. The stairhall has board walls, save for part of the southeast wall, which is unfinished with exposed studding and the rear side of the hallway's plastered lathing. The stairhall has only a partial board ceiling, most of the space opening directly above into the attic. The attic has a board floor at its northwest end above the hallway and the old kitchen. The floor above the higher main hall is unfinished with exposed joists. The unfinished board walls have exposed studding. The unfinished pitched board ceilings have exposed rafters and the trusses that carry the ceiling of the main hall. An untrimmed six over six sash window in the northwest wall lights the attic. Still to be seen on the northwest and northeast are parts of the clapboarded exterior walls of the main block and the organ addition. Also to be seen on the northwest is the old southeast slope of the organ addition's original wooden shingled gable roof, which was superseded by a higher shed roof built above that slope when the chapel wing was erected. The unused space enclosed by the new roof is visible from the chapel wing attic, as is its board ceiling with exposed rafters.

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The kitchen is an L-shaped space, being composed of two sections, the original kitchen in the chapel wing and the narrower shorter kitchen addition in the later rear addition, to the northwest of the original kitchen. Both sections share a linoleum floor. The older section has plaster walls with the wainscoating found in the other chapel wing rooms, and a high modern tile ceiling with ceiling moulding. The southeast wall contains the five panel door and the countertop opening to the main hall. The opening has a shelf at its sill level and a frame with chamfered edges and upper cornerblocks with round patera, like the frames of the kitchen's older windows and doors. In the northeast wall is the paneled door with two windows to the chapel wing hallway. In the exterior southwest wall is a large double window with four over four sash. The south corner contains a chimney protrusion covered by the same wainscoating and plaster as the rest of the original walls. The northwest wall features to the west the wide opening to the kitchen addition and to the east a six panel door with moulded head to the rear addition's corridor. Built against the northeast and southeast walls in the east corner is a counter with beaded board sides, drawers, open shelves, and linoleum top. Above the counter on the same walls is a wall cabinet with open shelves and an upper moulding.

The rear addition has a corridor along its northeast side, the rear wall of the organ addition. To the southwest of the corridor is the new kitchen addition to the south and two restrooms to the north. The four rear addition rooms all have linoleum floors, plaster walls with moulded baseboards, and plaster ceilings. Moulded heads top the windows and doors, the doors also having plain lower cornerblocks and the windows moulded sills. The new section of the kitchen, which opens directly into the kitchen to its southeast, has a four over four sash window in its southwest wall. All three sides of the kitchen addition have plain wooden counters with linoleum tops, the southwest counter also having a builtin sink. Above the counters on the northwest and northeast walls are mounted wooden wall cabinets with upper mouldings. The corridor in the rear addition has a six panel door to the old kitchen at its southeast end, a four panel door to the organ addition in its northeast wall, a paneled door with nine pane window to the outside at the northwest end, and two six panel doors to the restrooms in the southwest wall. The two narrow restrooms each contain a toilet and a wall mounted sink, and each has a six panel door to the corridor at the northeast end and a high four over four sash window at the southwest end.

The rectangular lot is relatively small, having little space to the sides and rear of the building. The flat grounds are grassed. The lawn in front of the building is interrupted by three concrete walks from the concrete sidewalk along the street, a brick edged walk to the main entry steps on the tower, a brick edged walk along the southeast side of the main block to the former vestibule (the closet section) and a walk to the present

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vestibule of the chapel wing. A row of trees marks the southeast boundary to the east of the chapel wing. Foundation shrubs grow on the front of the main block and the sides of the tower and the main entry steps. Some trees grow on the northwest side of the main block and in the west corner of the lot. A few shrubs grow southeast and southwest of the chapel wing. Near the street stands a plain wooden signpost, with an ornate metal bracket, from which hangs a painted wooden sign with scrolled top and base and flanking turned balusters, identifying the church, minister, and service hours.

The original church, the main block and the tower, was built in 1853-1854. The building frame was raised on September 26, 1853; and the completed church was dedicated on March 23, 1854.¹ The building has been in continuous use as a church since its construction and has been periodically modernized and enlarged. Nevertheless, the church is quite well preserved, particularly on the exterior.

The original church, the main block and the tower, has seen only a few exterior changes, the most important occurring at the main entry. In 1930, concrete steps (now covered with brick) and railings were installed at the entry.² Metal framed glass doors and a large transom window replaced the original tall, double, paneled main entry doors in 1970.³ But, the main entry retains its original frame and cornice. Aluminum storm windows were placed on the lower portions of the main block windows in 1969.⁴ Metal gutters and drainspouts were installed on the southeast eaves of the main block in 1965.⁵ Other undated 20th century changes would include the wire mesh on the front gable returns, the light and small sign at the main entry. But, basically, the three public facades of the original church appear today almost as they did in 1854.

Later additions to the church covered part of the rear facade and one rear corner of a side facade of the main block. The first addition was built in the center of the rear facade in 1875 to house the recently purchased organ.⁶ In January of 1891, the Second Free Baptist Society accepted the offer of Mrs. Martha J. Sawyer to build a chapel wing on the church in

1. "Diary of Joseph Mooney", Volume 11, 1853-1854 (manuscript, New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, N.H.) entries for September 26, 1853 and March 23, 1854
2. "Records of Alton 2nd F.B. Church commencing January 1st, 1873" (manuscript, Community Church of Alton, Alton, N.H.), p.185
3. THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1970 (Alton, N.H.:1971), p.2
4. THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1969 (Alton, N.H.:1970), p.2
5. ALTON FEDERATED CHURCHES ANNUAL REPORTS, 1965 (Alton, N.H.:1966), p.17
6. "Constitution and Records of the Second Free Baptist Society, Alton, N.H." (manuscript, Community Church of Alton, Alton, N.H.), p.57; Barton McLain Griffin THE HISTORY OF ALTON (Somersworth, N.H.:1965), p.60

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honor of her late husband, Alonzo H. Sawyer.⁷ The construction of the wing, which commenced in April, was under the direction of "Mr. H. Bennett".⁸ The completed wing, with its large hall and kitchen, was dedicated on August 19, 1891.⁹ (The construction of the chapel wing required the building of a new roof above the southeast half of the organ addition.) The Sawyer Chapel wing has seen a few exterior changes. In the mid 20th century, an exterior chimney for a new fireplace was built on the southeast end.¹⁰ And gutters appeared on the northeast eaves in 1965.¹¹ Originally, the chapel wing was entered through the former vestibule in the corner of the wing and the main block. But, in 1971-1972, the present vestibule was built to replace the original vestibule (which then lost its outer door).¹² The new vestibule replaced a double window in the chapel wing wall, but the window's cornice was reused above the new entry doors.¹³ In 1986, a long wooden ramp, suitable for the handicapped, was built over the steps and landing of the new vestibule.¹⁴ The last major addition to the building, the small rear addition, also has the most obscure history. There appears to be no reference of its construction in the available records, and none of the persons interviewed could remember its erection. Its position, appearance, and functions would suggest an early to mid 20th century date. At the annual meeting in January 1951, reports were made of "repairs and renovation of kitchen and toilet facilities in back hall" during the previous year.¹⁵ But, it is not clear if these undescribed alterations included any exterior changes to the rear addition.

The interior has seen more alterations, as the congregation has attempted to keep it up to date, with new utilities, such as the electric lights installed in 1914¹⁶, and new decorative elements. Still, the layout of the rooms does not seem to have changed. And significant features of the original church, such as the wainscoting in the entry hall and the auditorium and the pews in the auditorium, probably date from the construction of the building. The date of the pressed metal walls and ceiling in the entry

7. "Constitution and Records of the Second Free Baptist Society, Alton, N.H." 1853-1901, p.90

8. Laconia News & Critic (Laconia, N.H.), February 4, 1891, p.3, April 15, 1891, p.2

9. Laconia News & Critic, August 26, 1891, p.1

10. Interview of Kent Locke by David Ruell, July 8, 1989

11. ALTON FEDERATED CHURCHES ANNUAL REPORTS, 1965, p.17

12. THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1971 (Alton, N.H.:1972), p.2
THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1972 (Alton, N.H.:1973), p.2;
interview of Rev. Dwight Meader by David Ruell, July 9, 1989

13. Interview of Rev. Dwight Meader by David Ruell, July 9, 1989

14. THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1986 (Alton, N.H.:1987), p.2

15. "Constitution and Records of the Second Free Baptist Society, Alton, N.H." 1902-1965 (manuscript, Community Church of Alton, Alton, N.H.) p.198

16. Griffin, p.60

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hall is not recorded. But, they probably date from the turn of the century, perhaps from the same renovation that saw the installation of the pressed metal ceiling in the auditorium. The stained glass window shared by the entry hall and the auditorium was installed in 1973.¹⁷ And the carpeting has been periodically renewed, most recently in 1989.¹⁸ The service areas of the original church, the basement and upper floors, are even less changed than the entry hall. The furnace and heating system have, of course, been modernized. The belfry was originally "unbelled".¹⁹ But, a bell was purchased and mounted "soon after completion of the building".²⁰ More recently, wire mesh was placed over the belfry louvers on the inside to prevent birds roosting in the tower.

As the principal room of the church, the auditorium has been the focus of more remodeling. As a newspaper account of the dedication noted, the auditorium was always "carpeted to ensure noiseless walking".²¹ But, the carpet has, of course, been replaced from time to time. The first major change apparently came in 1875, when a large pipe organ was purchased and the organ addition, with its large opening into the auditorium, was built to house it, the whole project costing \$1160.97.²² The elaborate frame of pilasters and cornice around the opening from the organ recess to the auditorium presumably dates from this construction. The addition of the Sawyer Chapel wing in 1891 required the addition of the door to the Chapel wing hallway. At a special meeting in April of 1898, the Society voted "to sheath the audience room overhead with the steel sheathing" and to make other repairs, including painting, to the church.²³ The committee in charge of the renovation and repairs reported at the annual meeting in January of 1900 that the work was completed at a cost of \$648.50, including \$403 "for ceiling, etc.". ²⁴ The pressed metal ceiling was apparently the last major change for another half century. In 1952, the auditorium saw its next major renovation. Dedicated on May 11, 1952, the renovation was designed by architect Maurice C. Witmer and done under the supervision of contractor Ernest Sanders.²⁵ Unfortunately, no description of the renovation

17. THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1973 (Alton, N.H.: 1974), p.2

18. Interview of Rev. Dwight Meader by David Ruell, July 9, 1989

19. The Morning Star (Dover, N.H.), April 5, 1854, p.2

20. Griffin, p. 60

21. The Morning Star (Dover, N.H.), April 5, 1854, p.2

22. "Constitution and Records of the Second Free Baptist Society, Alton, N.H." 1853-1901, p.57

23. "Constitution and Records of the Second Free Baptist Society, Alton, N.H." 1853-1901, p.102

24. "Constitution and Records of the Second Free Baptist Society, Alton, N.H." 1853-1901, pp.107-108

25. ReDedication Service, Second Free Will Baptist Meeting House, Sunday, May 11, 1952 (program)

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is found in the available church records. According to a newspaper account, the renovation included painting, carpeting, "new lights" (perhaps the hexagonal hanging lights), and "new wall coverings".²⁶ The "new wall coverings" may refer to the mouldings that outline large rectangles on the walls, which are similar to moulded rectangles installed in the First Congregational Church, the federated sister church of the Baptist Church, the following year.²⁷ The renovation is also said to have included the present paneled front of the platform, with its projecting pulpit, and the similar paneled partition between the platform and the organ recess.²⁸ Since 1952, the changes to the auditorium have apparently been limited to the stained glass window shared with the entry hall in 1973, and the ceiling fans installed in 1983.²⁹ The organ addition has probably seen some minor changes. The doors to the Chapel wing hallway and the rear addition corridor (and the steps serving these doors) were probably built when the additions were erected. And, at some point in the 20th century, the ceiling of the organ recess was covered by composition board.

The interior of the chapel wing is also fairly well preserved. The main hall and the hallway must have acquired their modern tile ceilings in the mid 20th century, as the kitchen did in 1973.³⁰ The mid 1980's saw the placement of carpeting in the hallway and of linoleum on the kitchen floor.³¹ The principal room of the chapel wing, the main hall, acquired its fireplace in the mid 20th century,³² and its sympathetically designed double doors to the new vestibule in 1971-1972.³³ The old vestibule, now a storage room, is perhaps the most changed, with its new ceiling and outer wall.³⁴ The history of the rear addition is again obscure. 1950 saw the already noted, but undescribed "repairs and renovation of kitchen and toilet facilities".³⁵ The only known change since the undated construction of the rear addition was the installation of linoleum floors in kitchen restrooms, and corridor in the mid 1980's.³⁶ (The grounds are also little changed. The three concrete walks are probably 20th century in date. And the signpost was last replaced in the 1970's.³⁷)

26. Rochester Courier (Rochester, N.H.), April 13, 1952, Section A, p.6

27. See the National Register nomination for the First Congregational Church.

28. Interview of Kent Locke by David Ruell, July 8, 1989

29. THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1983 (Alton, N.H.:1984), p.2

30. THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1973, p.2

31. Interview of Rev. Dwight Meader by David Ruell, July 9, 1989

32. Interview of Kent Locke by David Ruell, July 8, 1989

33. THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1971, p.2; THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1972, p.2

34. Interview of Rev. Dwight Meader by David Ruell, July 9, 1989

35. "Constitution and Records of the Second Free Baptist Society, Alton, N.H." 1902-1965, p.198

36. Interview of Rev. Dwight Meader by David Ruell, July 9, 1989

37. Ibid.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
Architecture

Period of Significance
1853-1854

Significant Dates

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Second Free Baptist Church is significant under Criterion C in the area of architecture as an attractive and impressive example of the early Italianate style, and as the only early Italianate church in Belknap County. Erected in 1853-1854, the building has been in continuous use as a church ever since. The original church is, however, quite well preserved, particularly on the exterior, where the only significant change to the public facades has been the replacement of the doors and steps of the main entry. Later additions have been given compatible designs and placed in retiring positions behind the original building. The interiors of the original church are more changed. Although still retaining many apparently original features, the entry hall and the auditorium have been given such late 19th century features as pressed metal walls and ceilings, and an elaborately framed organ recess. Although the interiors, particularly the impressive auditorium, do possess architectural merit, the real architectural significance of the church is found in its well preserved exterior. The church employs a traditional church form, with a tall tower, containing the main entry, in the center of the gable end of a gable roofed main block. The building possesses a monumentality created by the simple geometric solids of its form, the smooth flush boarding of its street facades, and the large scale of its elements. The well proportioned, symmetrical composition of the church give it an inherent dignity. The ornament, mostly Italianate in character, enhances the design. The excellence of the church's design and craftsmanship ranks it among the best Belknap County churches of its day. The Second Free Baptist Church is unique in the county, as the only pre-Civil War Italianate style church. The county's three other Italianate churches are all good examples of the later and far more elaborate High Victorian Italianate style, leaving the Second Free Baptist Church as Belknap County's only early Italianate style church. (Although owned by a religious institution and used for religious services, the Second Free Baptist Church is eligible under Criteria Consideration A, as it derives its significance from its architectural distinction. The period of significance is the period of the church's construction, when it acquired its architectural significance.)

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

- ALTON FEDERATED CHURCHES ANNUAL REPORTS, 1965 (Alton, N.H.: Alton Federated Churches, 1966)
- THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1969 (Alton, N.H.: Community Church of Alton, 1970)
- THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1970 (Alton, N.H.: Community Church of Alton, 1971)
- THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1971 (Alton, N.H.: Community Church of Alton, 1972)
- THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1972 (Alton, N.H.: Community Church of Alton, 1973)

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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

Specify repository:

Community Church of Alton, Alton

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property less than one acre (approximately .2 acre)

UTM References

A 19 320340 4813520
Zone Easting Northing

B _____
Zone Easting Northing

C _____

D _____

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Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property, a rectangular lot, is described as follows: beginning at the north corner of the lot on the southwest side of Main Street, the boundary proceeds 82½ feet southeast along the right of way of Main Street, then proceeds southwest 103¼ feet, then proceeds northwest 82½ feet, and then proceeds northeast 103¼ feet to the point of

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Boundary Justification

The boundary of the nominated property was drawn to include the Second Free Baptist Church and its historic lot, as conveyed to the Second Free Baptist Society by Enoch Sawyer in two deeds of 1853 and 1855. (Not included in the nominated property are two small parcels of land added to the southwest end of the lot in 1956 and 1964.) The nominated property has been

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title David L. Ruell
organization Lakes Region Planning Commission date August 22, 1989
street & number Main Street telephone (603) 279-8171
city or town Meredith state New Hampshire zip code 03253

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The Second Free Baptist Church of Alton was organized in 1831.¹ Centered on Alton village, this Free Will Baptist church joined with the local Congregational church to erect a union meetinghouse in 1838.² The joint venture was, however, relatively short lived. "In the early spring of 1853", the Congregationalists decided to erect their own church, organizing a society for that purpose in June.³ "The other portion of the people who favored Freewill Baptist views, at once moved to build another Meeting-house" for their own church.⁴ The Second Free Baptist Society, a separate organization from the Church, with the power to hold and maintain real property, held its first meeting on August 2, 1853, and adopted a constitution and elected officers on August 8.⁵ The August 8 meeting of the Society also "voted to purchase a lot & to build a meeting house and that we raise two thousand dollars for that purpose to be subscribed in shares of twenty dollars each".⁶ On August 11, the Society established a building committee of seven men (Seth Sawyer, Tobias Berry, Daniel Sawyer, Jeremiah Jones, Jacob Berry, Ira F. Hayes, and Ichabod Wentworth),⁷ who proceeded to build the church. A lot on the village's main street was purchased for \$125 on August 27.⁸ According to the diary of an Alton resident, the frame of the new Free Will Baptist church was raised on September 26, 1853.⁹ On January 2, 1854, the Society was able to hold its annual meeting in the building.¹⁰ On March 20, 1854, the Society instructed the building committee to sell the pews at public auction "and to repay themselves any balance which may be due them for the expense of building said house beyond the amount of subscriptions which they have received".¹¹ Purchasers of pews could apply any subscription already

1. Barton McLain Griffin THE HISTORY OF ALTON (Somersworth, N.H.:1965), p.59; Mrs. Oscar Duncan "Brief History of Free Baptist Church of Alton" Granite State News (Wolfeboro, N.H.), August 31, 1934, p.2

2. Duncan, p.2; Robert F. Lawrence, THE NEW HAMPSHIRE CHURCHES (Claremont, N.H.:1856), pp.479-480

3. Lawrence, p. 480 (see the National Register nomination for the First Congregational Church for the history of that building.)

4. Lawrence, p. 480

5. "Constitution and Records of the Second Free Baptist Society, Alton, N.H." 1853-1901 (manuscript, Community Church of Alton, Alton, N.H.), pp. 1-10

6. "Constitution and Records of the Second Free Baptist Society, Alton, N.H." 1853-1901, p. 10

7. Ibid.

8. Deed, Enoch Sawyer to the Second Free Baptist Society, Book 22, Page 71, Belknap County Registry of Deeds (manuscript, Belknap County Registry of Deeds, Laconia, N.H.)

9. "Diary of Joseph Mooney", Volume 11, 1853-1854 (manuscript, New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, N.H.) entry for September 26, 1853

10. "Constitution and Records of the Second Free Baptist Society, Alton, N.H." 1853-1901, p. 12

11. "Constitution and Records of the Second Free Baptist Society, Alton, N.H." 1853-1901, p. 14

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paid to the purchase price of their pews.¹² These votes show that the building funds were raised by subscription and by the building committee members themselves, in the hope of reimbursement by the sale of the pews after the completion of the building. The church was appropriately dedicated on March 23, 1854 (the day after the new Congregational church was dedicated).¹³ Thirty-two pews were sold at auction on March 25, and other pews were sold throughout the spring.¹⁴ Unfortunately, the building committee's report, if there was one, was not included in the Society's records. We are not therefore able to name the designer or the builders of the church. One contemporary newspaper account does give "the whole cost" of the new church as \$3000.¹⁵ But, beyond that, we know few details of the actual design and construction of the building. (The church building and lot remained the property of the Second Free Baptist Society until January of 1968, when the Society merged with the Second Free Baptist Church and the First Congregational Church to form the Community Church of Alton.¹⁶ The Baptist and Congregational churches had been federated and had shared the same minister since 1938.¹⁷)

The original church, the main block and the tower, is strikingly well preserved on the exterior. Only the main entry, with its new steps and modern doors and transom window, has seen significant change. And even there, the entry retains its frame and cornice. The other alterations to the public facades, the storm windows, gutters, sign, and wire mesh on the returns, are of little importance and do not seriously change the visual appearance of the building. The later additions do cover much of the main block's rear facade and the rear corner of its southeast lateral facade. But, the rear facade was never an important part of the church design and was probably never entirely visible to the public. The relatively simple vernacular organ addition and rear addition are now hidden behind the main block and

12. "Constitution and Records of the Second Free Baptist Society, Alton, N.H." 1853-1901, p.15

13. "Diary of Joseph Mooney", Volume 11, 1853-1854, entry for March 23, 1854; Dover Gazeteer (Dover, N.H.), April 1, 1854, p.3; The Morning Star (Dover, N.H.), April 5, 1854, p.2

14. "Constitution and Records of the Second Free Baptist Society, Alton, N.H." 1853-1901, pp. 18-19

15. The Morning Star, April 5, 1854, p.2

16. "Second Free Will Baptist Church, Records of the Church Clerk, March 5, 1965 to February 16, 1967" (manuscript, Community Church of Alton, Alton, N.H.) p.63; Deed, Second Free Baptist Society to United Baptist Convention of New Hampshire, Book 497, Page 324, Deed, United Baptist Convention of New Hampshire to Community Church of Alton, Book 497, Page 329, Belknap County Registry of Deeds (manuscripts, Belknap County Registry of Deeds, Laconia, N.H.)

17. "Records of the Alton 2nd F.B. Church Commencing January 1st, 1873" (manuscript, Community Church of Alton, Alton, N.H.), pp.207-209

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the chapel wing; but their clapboarded walls and box cornices nevertheless blend well with the main block walls. The more public chapel wing and its former vestibule (now the chapel section) are designed in a compatible Italianate style, with ornament similar to the main block's ornament, notably the bracketed cornices and sills of the windows, and the box cornice with its pairs of sawn brackets. The well designed Chapel wing, with its hipped roof and large double windows, is a suitable companion to the original church. The new vestibule, although not Italianate in style, is nevertheless compatible with the building. The retiring position of all these later additions have left the main block and the tower as the most prominent part of the building. Today, the original church exterior still appears much as it did in 1854.

The original interiors of the Second Free Baptist Church are attractive spaces of some architectural merit. They do, however, reflect different eras, often in the same room. The entry hall has mid 19th century wainscoating, pressed metal upper walls and ceiling of the turn of the century, and carpeting and a stained glass window of the later 20th century. It is, however, an interesting, if somewhat unusual, space with a T-shaped plan. The auditorium (and the connected organ recess) is mostly 19th century in character. The plaster walls with wainscoating, the tall recess in the street wall topped by a peaked cornice, and the slip pews, all appear to be original features of the room. The organ recess, with its grand pipe organ and its elaborate and impressive outer frame of Ionic pilasters supporting a fine modillioned cornice, dates from the late 19th century. The notable pressed metal ceiling was installed in the last years of the century. A few features, the lights, large moulded rectangles on the walls, paneled platform front, and paneled partition fronting the organ recess, are mid 20th century in origin. But, basically, the auditorium is an attractive and impressive example of 19th century taste. It must rank among the the finest interiors in the town of Alton. (The other public rooms, the hall and hallway of the chapel wing, are also pleasant rooms with fine late Victorian ornament, the wainscoating and the window and door frames. Even the kitchen, restrooms and rear addition corridor are agreeable, if modest, spaces.)

But, clearly, the exterior of the original church, the main block and the tower, is the most architecturally significant feature of the building. Although there are small echoes of the Gothic Revival style in the tower parapet, with its short Gothic arches and quatrefoils, the church is basically Italianate in style. The designer (or designers) did use a standard New England church form, a symmetrical, gable roofed main block with the gable end serving as the main facade and featuring a projecting central tower containing the main entry. The use of flush boarding to create the smooth surfaces of the tower and the main block's main facade is typical of the Italianate style. The ornament with the exception of the parapet, is virtually all Italianate in character, including the moulded

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cornices with sawn brackets above the doors, windows, and louvers, the bracketed sills of the windows and louvers, the coved cornice above the tower's first story, and the wide box cornices with heavy paired sawn brackets crowning the main block and the tower. The deep sillboards with watertables, the cornerboards with moulded edges, and the carved knob at the apex of the spire are perhaps more typical of the period than the particular style, but these features certainly seem appropriate on the early Italianate building.

The composition of the original church was uncomplicated, with essentially just three simple forms, the large gable roofed main block, the tall cubical tower, and the tall pyramidal spire. This simplicity of form gives the large building a monumentality that is reinforced by the scale of its elements, notably the tall windows and louvers. The use of tall blind louvers, with little functional need, on the street fronts of the main block and particularly the tower was an obvious attempt to emphasize the monumentality of the building. The oversize scale of the cornices of the windows, louvers and entry and of the wide eaves cornices with their large brackets helps to create the same effect. The symmetry and good proportions of the facades and volumes of the church also reinforces the building's strong sense of dignity. The unity of the design can be seen in the similarity of the windows and door frames and cornices and of the box cornices of the main block and the tower. Variety was obtained by slightly changing these elements, by contrasting the peaked cornices of the louvers and entry on the tower and main block with the horizontal cornices of the windows on the main block's side facades, and by using different brackets on the box cornices of the main block and the tower, thus avoiding monotony, while still preserving the basic unity of the design. The result is an extremely dignified and impressive building, a fine example of the early Italianate style.

Among the churches of Belknap County, the Second Free Baptist Church is unique as the only example of the early Italianate style. The Italianate style was not very popular among the 19th century church buildings of Belknap County. A recent comprehensive survey of all churches and former church buildings, built before 1945 and still standing in Belknap County, includes some forty-one buildings that were built or remodeled as churches in the 19th century.¹⁸ Of these buildings, only four churches can actually be considered true examples of the Italianate style, the Second Free Baptist Church of Alton (1853-1854), the Evangelical Baptist Church of Laconia (remodeled 1871-1872),¹⁹ the South Baptist Church of Laconia (1877), and

18. The comparison of church buildings in this paragraph was based on David Ruell "Belknap County Churches" (manuscript, New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources, Concord, N.H.).

19. The Evangelical Baptist Church was listed on the National Register on September 12, 1985.

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the United Baptist Church of Lakeport in Laconia (1891-1892).²⁰ (Two other churches, both originally Federal style churches that were subsequently remodeled, do have some Italianate features. The First Congregational Church in Meredith has an Italianate tower and some Italianate windows; and the Northfield-Tilton Congregational Church in Tilton also has Italianate windows. But, neither church can be described as a predominantly Italianate building. So, they will not be included in this comparison.) The three Laconia churches are all excellent buildings, but they do represent the Italianate style, in its more elaborate late Victorian phase. The Evangelical Baptist Church and the South Baptist Church do have forms similar to that of the Alton church, each having a gable roofed main block, with the gable end serving as the main facade and a tower, with the main entry, projecting from the center of that gable end. But, these two Laconia churches each have two stories, with a vestry in the first story, and the taller church auditorium in the second story. The United Baptist Church of Lakeport has a completely different form, with a cruciform main block, flanked on its street front by a round turret and a tall square tower containing the main entry. And all three Laconia churches are far more elaborate in their ornament than the Alton church. All three are lit by tall semicircular arched windows with stained glass and ornate frames, featuring hoodmoulds on the Evangelical Baptist Church and the South Baptist Church and rusticated arches on the United Baptist Church of Lakeport. The Evangelical Baptist Church and the South Baptist Church both have semicircular arched recessed entries. The Evangelical Baptist Church boasts corner pilasters, a dentiled cornice above the tower's first story, and a pedimented box cornice. The even more ornate South Baptist Church has quoined corners, buttresses, finials, decorative gablets, elaborate cornices, keystones on some of its arches, and other sawn and carved ornament that is too complex to describe. The United Baptist Church of Lakeport, although Italianate in many features, such as the cornices and window frames, also borrowed heavily from the Gothic Revival style and the Queen Anne Style for such elements as its large rose windows, its tall tower with buttresses and finials, and the varied sheathing of its walls. (Indeed, the elaborate church might best be described as eclectic in style, rather than as Italianate.) For the simpler early Italianate style of the pre-Civil War period, before the transformation of the style into the High Victorian Italianate, represented so well by the South Baptist Church, we can really find only one example in Belknap County, the Second Free Baptist Church in Alton. The Alton church is an excellent example of the early Italianate style, which shared a certain simplicity of design, with simple forms and restrained ornament, with the other popular pre-Civil War styles, the Greek Revival style and the early Gothic Revival style. As an attractive building that survives today as Belknap County's only early Italianate style church, the Second Free Baptist Church must be ranked among the county's most architecturally significant churches.

20. The United Baptist Church of Lakeport was listed on the National Register on June 6, 1985.

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THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1973 (Alton, N.H.:Community Church of Alton, 1974)

THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1983 (Alton, N.H.: Community Church of Alton, 1984)

THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1986 (Alton, N.H.: Community Church of Alton, 1987)

"Constitution and Records of the Second Free Baptist Society, Alton, N.H." two volumes covering the years 1853-1901 and 1902-1965 (manuscripts, Community Church of Alton, Alton, N.H.)

Deeds, Enoch Sawyer to Second Free Baptist Society, Book 22, Page 71 and Book 27, Page 435, Second Free Baptist Society to United Baptist Convention of New Hampshire, Book 497, Page 324, United Baptist Convention of New Hampshire to Community Church of Alton, Book 497, Page 329, Belknap County Registry of Deeds (manuscripts, Belknap County Registry of Deeds)

"Diary of Joseph Mooney", Volume 11, 1853-1854 (manuscript, New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, N.H.)

Dover Gazeteer (Dover, N.H.), April 1, 1854

Mrs. Oscar Duncan, "Brief History of Free Baptist Church of Alton" Granite State News (Wolfeboro, N.H.), August 31, 1934

Barton McLain Griffin THE HISTORY OF ALTON (Somersworth, N.H.: New Hampshire Publishing Company, 1965)

Laconia Democrat (Laconia, N.H.), February 6, April 3 and 10, May 8 and 29, July 31, August 7 and 28, 1891

Laconia News & Critic (Laconia, N.H.), February 4, April 15 and 29, May 13, August 5 and 26, 1891

Robert F. Lawrence THE NEW HAMPSHIRE CHURCHES (Claremont, N.H.: Claremont Manufacturing Company, 1856)

The Morning Star (Dover, N.H.) March 15, April 5, 1854

Photograph of Main Street in Alton village, c.1896 (collection, Alton Historical Society, Alton, N.H.)

Postcard of Second Free Baptist Church (collection, Robert Witham, Alton, N.H.)

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"Records of Alton 2nd F.B. Church commencing January 1st, 1873" (manuscript, Community Church of Alton, Alton, N.H.)

"Records of Baptist Church" 1939-1963 (manuscript, Community Church of Alton, Alton, N.H.)

Rededication Service, Second Free Will Baptist Meeting House, Sunday, May 11, 1952 (program)

Rochester Courier (Rochester, N.H.) April 3, May 15, 1952

David Ruell, National Register nomination for First Congregational Church Alton, N.H. (manuscript, New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources, Concord, N.H.)

David Ruell "Belknap County Churches" (manuscript, New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources, Concord, N.H.)

"Second Free Will Baptist Church, Records of the Church Clerk, March 5, 1965 to February 16, 1967" (manuscript, Community Church of Alton, Alton, N.H.)

Interviews of Ada Downing by David Ruell, July 10 and 16, 1989

Interview of Kent Locke by David Ruell, July 8, 1989

Interview of Rev. Dwight Meader by David Ruell, July 9, 1989

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Verbal Boundary Description

beginning. The boundary is shown as a dashed line on the accompanying map titled "Second Free Baptist Church, Alton, N.H.". The nominated property appears as part of Lot 25 on Alton Property Map 27, and is described in the Deed of the United Baptist Convention of New Hampshire to the Community Church of Alton, Book 497, Page 329, Belknap County Registry of Deeds.

Boundary Justification

historically associated with the Second Free Baptist Church since its period of construction.

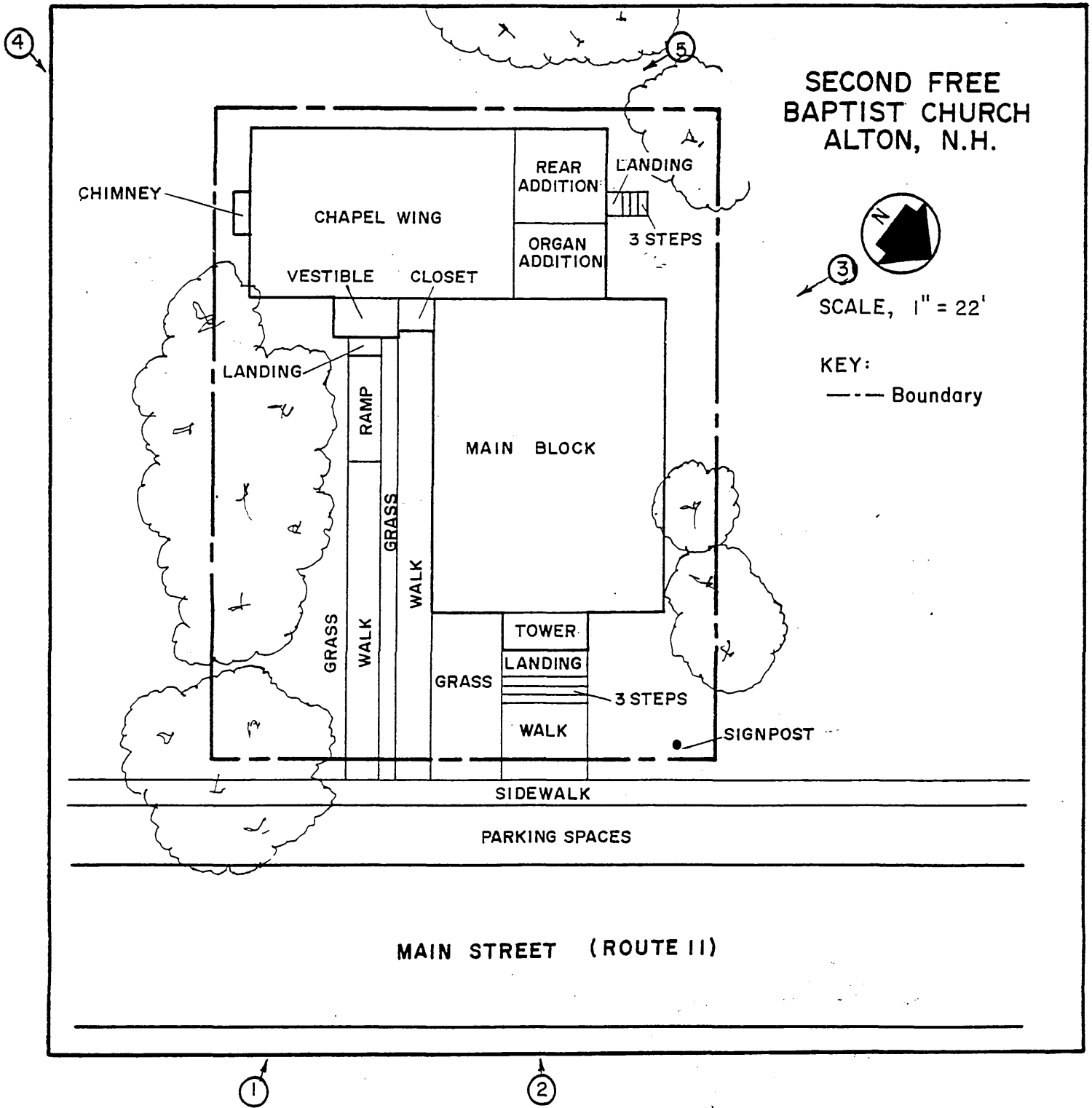
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Second Free Baptist Church

Owner

The Community Church of Alton
P.O. Box 338
Alton, N.H. 03809