

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received AUG 12 1985

date entered SEP 12 1985

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

1. Name

historic New Chester Meeting House

and/or common HILL CENTER CHURCH (preferred)

2. Location

street & number Hill Center Road (-1/4 mile from intersection of n/a not for publication
Route 3A)

city, town Hill, vicinity of (see above)

state New Hampshire code 33 county Merrimack code 013

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Hill Center Church Circle, c/o President Muriel Clark

street & number New Chester Road

city, town Hill, n/a vicinity of state New Hampshire 03243

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Grafton County Courthouse
Grafton County Registry of Deeds (Book 88, Page 156)

street & number Route 10

city, town Haverhill, state New Hampshire 03774

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date N/A federal state county local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town N/A state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<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 <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Hill Center Church is a wooden church which stands in its own lot on the north side of Hill Center Road in the village of Hill Center. The one and a half story, gable roofed building is rectangular in plan and is set with its gable end facing south toward the road. Set astride its roof ridge a few feet back from the south gable end is a two stage tower, topped by an octagonal spire. Towards the rear on its long east facade is a gable roofed hood sheltering a side door with a small landing and steps.

The three public facades of the church (the south gable end, the east and west long facades) are set on a cut granite block foundation and are clapboarded with sillboards and cornerboards. They are topped by a wide box cornice with mouldings and frieze that is pedimented on the south gable end. The rear (north) gable end, by contrast, is set on a fieldstone foundation, is sheathed with brown asphalt "brick" siding, and is trimmed with sillboards, cornerboards and close verges. The main facade is the three bay wide south gable end. In the central bay is the main entry, a double door, each door having two tall panels. The doors share a plain central jamb and are reached by two granite steps with ornate modern wrought iron side railings and a central metal pipe hand rail attached to the central jamb. The doors are set on a plain wooden sill. Their paneled side trim is ornamented with cornerblocks and topped by tall paneled triangular "finials". Above the doors, the wide lintel is "peaked" beneath a drip moulding and carries a painted dateboard labeled "1800". Above the main entry is a large modern pseudo-Colonial electric light fixture. Both side bays of the south gable end contain a tall, large twenty over twenty sash window, with louvred shutters and a plain frame whose lintel is protected by a drip moulding. The south pedimented gable is clapboarded. The long east and west facades each have three more large twenty over twenty sash windows with the same plain frames, although lacking any shutters. The east facade also has two additional features--a small cylindrical metal chimney with a conical cap which breaks through the wall south of the southern window, and a side entry, a six panel door with a plain frame, to the north of the northern window. The side entry is reached by board steps and a board floored landing protected by a simple wooden railings with plain square posts and plain rails. The side entry is sheltered by a large gable roofed hood, supported by simple braces, and trimmed by a heavy pedimented box cornice with mouldings and frieze. The hood's ceiling and tympanum are both sheathed with plywood. The rear (north) gable end has only one opening, a nine over six sash window with plain frame in the gable.

Astride the ridge of the asphalt shingled gable roof is the two stage square tower. The base is clapboarded with cornerboards and a box cornice with mouldings and a frieze. In the rear (north) facade of the base is found a plain framed six pane window. The next stage is the smaller open belfry (which, however, has never housed a bell). The open belfry is surrounded by a railing, whose square corner piers are topped by tall wooden pyramidal pinnacles, and whose railings have simple top and bottom rails, plain board panels at each end, and simple balusters in the center. The slightly pitched floor of the belfry is sheathed with asphalt roll paper around the central metal flashed housing of the metal sheathed wooden hatch cover for the ladder from the base. The belfry's large rectangular openings are framed by large corner piers, which are triangular in plan. Flanking each opening are pseudo-Ionic pilasters, consisting of plain boards trimmed with small half circles that mimic Ionic volutes.

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The belfry ceiling is sheathed with plywood and boards. The belfry is again topped by a box cornice with simple mouldings. The octagonal spire on the belfry roof is framed by a railing of the same design as the railing around the belfry, complete with the same balustrades, and the same corner piers with tall pyramidal pinnacles. The tall, metal sheathed, octagonal spire is crowned by an arrow-shaped weathervane.

The main entry opens into a small vestibule with a carpeted floor, plaster walls with simple baseboards, and a plaster ceiling. The vestibule has an unusual shape, which might be described as a rectangle with diagonally cut inner corners and a three sided projection in the outer (south) wall, giving the space a ten sided shape. To each side of the double outer doors, with their simple frame ornamented only by an inner bead moulding, are narrow angled sections of wall, which serve to connect the entry with the thick regular outer wall of the church. The inner (north) corners are both cut off by four panel doors, set at an angle and trimmed with the same simple frames with inner bead mouldings. On the straight wall directly opposite the entry is a bronze plaque honoring Rev. Elisha H. Wright and two electric "candle" lights.

The rest of the interior is basically one space, but the south end is complicated by the balcony that stretches the full width of the church. Beneath the balcony is the vestibule. And the under balcony space is partially screened from the auditorium proper by two partitions directly under the front of the balcony. However, over a half of the under balcony space opens directly into the auditorium, interrupted only by the two simple square boxed posts that rise from the floor to the ceiling to support both the balcony front and the tower. In each south corner is found a stairway up to the balcony. The stairs are enclosed, save for the doorless opening at each end. A closet is found beneath each stairway, while, above the stairs in the balcony, one stairway is topped by a closet, the other by an enclosed stairway to the attic and the tower. Although the south end is relatively complex, most of the interior is one large tall auditorium.

The underbalcony space shares a carpeted floor with the auditorium. It has plaster walls with simply moulded baseboards and a plaster ceiling. The vestibule appears as a shallow three-sided projection in the center of the space. The angled sides of the projection both contain a four panel vestibule door with the usual frame with an inner bead moulding. A dedication plaque and two candle sconces hang on the projection's straight central wall. In the outer (south) wall to each side of the vestibule can be seen the lower sections of the twenty over twenty sash windows. The windows are set in deep recesses surrounded by plain frames with the same simple inner bead moulding. Built against the outer wall beneath each window is a simple board bench. The ends of the under balcony space are screened from the auditorium by the plaster walled partitions, which have plain corner boards, as well as the same baseboards as the other walls. The ends are narrowed by the stairs along the south wall, which again have plaster walls with the same baseboards. On the inside of each of the stair projections appears a four panel closet door, whose frame features the usual inner bead moulding. (The closets are unfinished spaces with board floors.) At the

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far end of each narrowed end, a single board step leads up to the board floored landing in the corner of the church. From the landing, a steep flight of board steps (flanked by a moulded hand rail) rises along the outer wall to the balcony. The stairwells have plain plaster walls and ceilings, with only the landings boasting baseboards.

The balcony has a board floor and the same plaster walls with baseboards. In the south outer wall are found the upper sections of the two twenty over twenty sash windows, here, as below, in deep recesses having plain frames with an inner bead moulding. Built in front of each window is a board bench. Between the windows is the board floored choir, raised two levels above the main floor. On the wide top level, reached by steps at each end, are found two board benches built against the south wall. On the main floor in front of the choir, and on the narrower lower level of the choir, which stretches along the front of the upper level, stand four choir pews (two on each level) with board seats, backs and bookrests, and plain sawn board pew ends. Each end of the balcony is narrowed by the enclosed stairways, which again have plaster walls. The doorless openings at the top of the stairs each have the usual simple frame with inner bead moulding. The south walls of the narrower ends each contains a four panel door with a frame on the same design. Built against these south walls are narrow board benches, while in front of each of these benches stands a slip pew of the same design as the auditorium pews with board seat and back, and paneled pew ends with curved armrests. The short front of the balcony is sheathed with horizontal boarding. The opening between the balcony and the auditorium is interrupted only by the two boxed posts that support the tower. The balcony and the auditorium share the high plaster ceiling with its pronounced coves on the east and west sides.

The closet above the western balcony stairs and the attic stairs above the eastern balcony stairs are unfinished spaces but they do preserve remnants of the original meetinghouse interior, showing its flat plaster ceiling, its exposed and painted corner posts and plates, and its original plaster walls which were set considerably behind the thick walls now found in the church. (The present plaster walls were apparently built to hide the church frame which, judging from the painted posts and plates, must have been exposed in the original interior.) The simple board steps to the attic rises steeply to a board floor in the south end of the attic. But most of the attic is floorless, with impressive exposed ceiling joists, rafters, purlins and trusses, and unfinished walls and ceiling. (Because of the coves on the east and west sides of the ceiling, we can still see the upper portions of the original plaster walls with their painted posts and plates.) A nine over six sash window in the rear gable lights the attic. A steep flight of board steps rises to the tower base, which has a board floor, exposed timber frame, unfinished walls and ceiling. The base is lit by a six pane window in the north wall. A builtin ladder leads up to the open belfry above.

The auditorium proper, which occupies most of the church, is a large tall space. The aisles are carpeted as is the platform at the north end of the room. The walls are plastered above a wainscoting of wide boards that reaches to the tops of the pews and to the aprons of the window sills. As already noted, the high plaster ceiling has

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large coves on the east and west sides. The south end of the auditorium has essentially already been described. We should only note that the two plaster walled partitions under the balcony to the east and west are as wide as the side rows of pews, and that the balcony front has a moulded base, a paneled front, and a deep moulded cornice. On the front of the two boxed posts are mounted two kerosene lamps with reflectors and ornate brackets. The auditorium's east and west side walls each contain three large twenty over twenty sash windows, set in deep recesses with splayed jambs. The window sills are quite plain, but the frames have the expected simple inner bead moulding. A kerosene lamp on an ornate bracket is mounted on the frame of each window. A simple moulding is found at the lintel level between the windows and between the northern windows and the north wall. The east wall also contains the side entry, beside the north window. The side door is set in a deep recess with a plain frame. The north wall again has board wainscoating but here the wainscoating is raised behind the wide platform that dominates the north end of the auditorium. (The central section of the platform wainscoating features three moulded panels.) Two modern hymnboards hang on the north wall.

The auditorium is largely occupied by four rows of slip pews divided by two aisles, with one row along each side wall and two rows in the center of the room. In the north corners of the room, short rows of pews face the platform, which is as wide as the two central rows. All of the pews, unless otherwise noted, have board floors raised slightly above the carpeted aisles, as well as board seats, under seat fronts, and backs, the backs being topped by simple mouldings. The pews have seat cushions and paneled pew ends with simply curved armrests. The side rows each contain eleven pews, the last pew set against the underbalcony partitions, the first pew being fronted by a paneled partition of the same height as the pews. The two central rows are divided by a board partition, again of the same height as the pews. The central rows have apparently been altered. Each row now contains eight pews facing the platform. The last pew now faces to the rear towards the modern stove set just in front of the balcony. (The stove's metal pipe rises up through the balcony floor, then turns east and continues just above the balcony floor to leave the church through the east wall.) It is evident from the treatment of the divider that one or two pews to the north of what is now the first pew have been removed. The space thus created between the central rows and the platform is now carpeted. Similar changes have been made to the rows of pews in the north corners. The last pew along the side wall was longer than the three pews in front of it, as the short east-west aisles that serve the front pews naturally used some floor space. In front of each corner row is a paneled partition of the same height as the pews. These partitions also serve as the sides of the platform. Each of the partitions contains a paneled door serving the space under the platform. In the east corner, part of the rear pew has been removed to accommodate the new side door. The front pew has been removed and the floor carpeted to provide space for the church organ. Similarly, in the west corner, the two front pews were removed and the floor carpeted. This western space now houses the church piano. The large, wide platform in the center of the north end is raised two steps above the main floor. The

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low platform front is paneled. The platform floor and the two steps on each aisle to the sides of the platform are carpeted. On the platform now stands the pulpit, three chairs, two candlestands, and two flags. All of the present church furniture is movable and most has been associated with the church only in recent years.

The lot has a somewhat unusual shape. The western half on which the church stands is twice as deep as the eastern third, the two rectangular sections being connected by a diagonal boundary. The rear boundary of the eastern strip and the diagonal boundary are marked by stone walls. The rear boundary of the western half is marked by a stockade fence west of the church and by the remnants of a stone wall behind the church. The lot is relatively flat, with only a slight rise from the road to the church. Around the church, the lot is grassed, save that some bushes and trees have grown up in the narrow strip between the church and the rear boundary, and that foundation shrubs, some now of considerable size, were planted on the front facade and the front corners of the church. A few trees also grow in front of the stockade fence. Beside an unpaved drive west of the church, a sign hanging from a metal post announces church parking. On the front lawn of the church stands a metal lamppost with pseudo Colonial gas lamp and the church sign, a wooden sign mounted between two metal posts. Along the diagonal boundary and in the entire eastern strip, the lot is now covered by a thick growth of trees and shrubs. The eastern strip is bisected by a small intermittent brook which flows under the road through a culvert.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1796–1800, 1847

Builder/Architect Enoch Osgood, builder (1847)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Hill Center Church is important architecturally as an attractive mid 19th century church, typical of many such churches in the Lakes Region. This well preserved building, although traditional in form and general design, is enlivened by pseudo-Gothic details.

The Hill Center Church began its career as the meetinghouse for the Town of New Chester (later renamed Hill). Unfortunately, its early history is obscure, as few documents survive to describe its construction or even its early appearance. At the annual March meeting in 1796, the citizens of New Chester "voted to build a Meeting House in the Town the year ensuing".¹ By 1799, the frame of the meetinghouse had been erected, as on March 7, 1799, Moses Stevens sold for \$5.00 to five "committee men" representing "the Society called New Chester Society" "a piece of land where the Meeting House fraim [sic] now Stands", provided that the Society, its "heirs and assigns...shall keep a house for the Public Worship of God on the said land".² At the 1800 March meeting, the Town "voted that a Society may be incorporated for the purpose of Finishing the Meeting House where it now stands in New Chester".³ There are, however, no further records on the erection of the building. As a local historian noted, "No society was incorporated; but the meeting-house was evidently completed soon after by private enterprise."⁴ A congressional election was held at the new meetinghouse on August 25, 1800, and the Town continued to use the meetinghouse for elections and meetings for nearly half a century. It was not until 1819 that the pew owners were finally incorporated as the "Proprietors of the First Meeting House in New Chester".

By the mid 1840's, the meetinghouse was apparently in need of repair and there was growing interest in the erection of a separate town hall. At two meetings in 1845, the citizens of Hill "voted to repair the West meeting house",⁵ as it then was called to distinguish it from a meetinghouse in Hill village, and dismissed an article to build a town hall. But, two years later, they had changed their minds. At the annual meeting in March of 1847, the Town "voted to build a town house separate from the meetinghouse some where near the west meeting house".⁶ The meeting further

¹"Hill Town Records", Vol. 2, p. 183 (microfilm, New Hampshire State Library, Concord, N.H.).

²Grafton County Registry of Deeds, Book 88, Page 156, (manuscript, Grafton County Registry of Deeds, Haverhill, N.H.). The five committee mem were Cutting Favor, Carr Huse, William Murray, Phinias Sargent, and Thomas Favor.

³"Hill Town Records", Vol. 2, p. 240.

⁴Richard W. Musgrove, HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF BRISTOL, NEW HAMPSHIRE (Bristol, N.H., 1904) Vol. 1, p. 252.

⁵"Hill Town Records", Vol. 5, p. 490 (manuscript, Hill Town Hall, Hill, N.H.).

⁶"Hill Town Records", Vol. 6, p. 51 (manuscript, Hill Town Hall, Hill, N.H.).

9. Major Bibliographical References

(see continuation sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .61 acre

Quadrangle name Holderness, NH

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UTM References

A

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

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

(see continuation sheet)

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

state N/A code county code

state N/A code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David L. Ruel

organization Lakes Region Planning Commission date February 1, 1985

street & number Main Street telephone (603) 279-8171

city or town Meredith, state New Hampshire 03253

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title New Hampshire State Historic Preservation Officer

date

7/29/85

For NPS use only

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

for Alonzo Byers
Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date

9/12/85

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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"voted that the Town relinquish their claim in the west meeting house, provided that the different societies shall build a new meeting house or repair the old meeting house on the present meeting house land".⁷ So, in 1847, the new town hall was built across the road from the meetinghouse and the meetinghouse itself was remodeled. "Enoch Osgood of Andover,⁸ a contractor, did both jobs...."⁹ Unfortunately, we cannot describe with any exactness what the remodeling included or even what the building looked like before the remodeling. The only published description of the old meetinghouse simply states that, "It had, like most of the churches of the day, huge pine timbers for frame, two stories high, with a gallery all around inside."¹⁰ Remnants of the original interior, still to be seen in the attic, attic stairs, and balcony closet, reveal that the interior boasted an exposed, painted frame, plaster walls and a flat plaster ceiling. So we do know that the remodeling included the building of the present plaster walls in front of the frame, and the installation of the coved plaster ceiling. But it seems likely that the renovation was far more extensive. The typical meetinghouse erected in the area in the late 1790's or the early 1800's, such as the New Hampton Town House of 1798 or the Bridgewater meetinghouse of 1804-06, was a rectangular, two story, gable-roofed building, without a tower or belfry, and built on the meetinghouse plan, with the main entry in the center of one long side, the pulpit in the center of the opposite wall, and a second story gallery surrounding the room on three sides. In all probability, although there is no documentary evidence for this theory, the New Chester meetinghouse followed the same pattern. The 1847 remodeling would therefore have included the complete remodeling of the meetinghouse to follow the church plan that had become the accepted design for New England religious buildings, a building with the main entry in the gable end and the pulpit at the opposite end, and distinguished as a church by some form of belfry or tower on or above the main facade. Whether or not the building was reoriented in 1847, it is evident that most of the exterior and interior details must date from the remodeling. Most of the major elements of the present church are obviously mid 19th century in design, the main entry with its tall paneled doors, and paneled frame with "finials", the large windows, the pedimented box cornice, the tower with its pseudo-Ionic pilasters and pseudo-Gothic pinnacles, the slip pews with their paneled pew ends, and the coved ceiling. Basically, the church's present appearance dates from the 1847 remodeling.

⁷"Hill Town Records", Vol. 6, pp. 51-52.

⁸The builder could be Enoch M. Osgood (1814-1853) of Andover, described in the family genealogy as a "carpenter, carriage maker, and also in mercantile business", but there is not enough evidence to firmly identify the remodeler of the Hill church. (ed. Eben Putnam, A GENEALOGY OF THE DESCENDANTS OF JOHN, CHRISTOPHER AND WILLIAM OSGOOD (Salem, Mass., 1894, p. 350).

⁹J. W. Favor, "Reminiscences of Hill and Her People", Bristol Enterprise, August 5, 1909.

¹⁰Ibid.

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The next century apparently saw little change to the church. It is obvious that, at some unknown time, pews were removed from the two central rows and from the corner rows, perhaps to accommodate a remodeled pulpit platform, as it was not uncommon in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to replace tall pulpits with lower, wider platforms. In the 1940's, the deteriorated clapboards on the rear gable end were replaced with the present brown "brick" asphalt siding.

By the 1960's, the church was abandoned and slowly but surely decaying. It was no longer used or maintained for religious services. The tower had developed a serious tilt. Plaster was peeling from the walls and the ceiling. A rumor circulated that the unused building was to be torn down as it constituted a fire hazard. But, there were residents of Hill who wanted to save the old building. So, in the summer of 1962, the Hill Center Church Circle was organized with the goal of restoring and maintaining the historic church. Restoration began in October of 1962 when the tower was removed from the church. The tower was rebuilt to the same design, (although the box cornice mouldings were simplified, and the spire, originally wood sheathed, was covered with metal) and hoisted back into place in June of 1963. (The boxed posts were added to give the tower the support it needed.) The work of the Hill Center Church Circle has included the shingling of the roof, repairs to the windows and shutters, the painting of the exterior, replastering and repainting in the interior, and the renewal of the lawn. Changes have been fairly limited--wrought iron railings at the front steps, a light above the entry, a side door to provide an emergency exit, new carpeting, a new stove with metal pipe and chimney, a few memorial plaques and a few lights in the church, a gas lamp and a church sign on the front lawn. The refurbished church was rededicated at a special service on Sunday, July 28, 1968. The Hill Center Church Circle still keeps the church in good repair. Due in large part to the group's efforts, the Hill Center Church appears today much as it did in 1847.

In its basic design, the Hill Center Church is a typical mid 19th century New England wooden church. Its form, a gable-roofed, rectangular building with a two stage tower above its main gable end facade, was the most popular church form of the period. The clapboarded walls trimmed with cornerboards and sillboards, the pedimented box cornice, and the large sash windows with louvred shutters seen here also dominate the exteriors of numerous other rural New England churches. The interior layout, with its rows of slip pews, a balcony at one end above a vestibule, and the pulpit platform at the opposite end, was a standard plan. Most of the interior elements, from the slip pews, through the plaster walls with their board wainscoating, to the coved plaster ceiling, were commonly found in country churches. Interior ornament was limited to the paneling on the doors, pew ends, pulpit platform and balcony fronts, and to the simple bead mouldings on the window and door frames. More ornament was lavished on the exterior. The main entry was given a "peaked" lintel and paneled trim topped by triangular "finials". The tower received the most attention, with its

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pseudo-Ionic pilasters framing the belfry openings, and tall pyramidal pinnacles at the corners of the two railings, and the octagonal spire with its arrow shaped weathervane. The "finials" of the main entry and the pinnacles of the tower railings are faint echoes of the Gothic Revival. Similar features of almost the same design can be seen on the Congregational Church and the Bay Meetinghouse in Sanbornton, just across the Pemigewasset River from Hill, to name the nearest examples. This ornament serves to enliven what is basically a simple building, an attractive country church notable for its honesty and straightforwardness, rather than for its elaborate or fine detail. The Hill Center Church, like virtually all central New Hampshire churches of the period, did not receive the attention of a trained architect. The builder and his patrons did not have any real knowledge of the high styles, although the use of Gothic details suggests that they were at least aware of the architectural fashions of the day. Style was not their primary concern. What they sought was a dignified exterior, a pleasant and spacious interior. And, in the Hill Center Church, they reached these modest but important goals. The church design may not be highly sophisticated, but it is nevertheless quite pleasing. Today the only early church that survives in Hill, the Hill Center Church is among the best of the many mid 19th century country churches found throughout the Lakes Region. These country churches were not in the forefront of architectural evolution, but they are attractive and charming buildings. The picturesque Hill Center Church is a fine well preserved example of an entire generation of Lakes Region churches, and deserves National Register recognition.

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

The boundary of the nominated property is shown on the attached map entitled "Hill Center Church, Hill, N.H.". The property is bounded on the south by Hill Center Road, on the west by the property of Dana Charles, on the north by a cemetery maintained by the Town of Hill, and on the north and west by the property of Thomas Christmas. The nominated property includes the Hill Center Church and the lot on which it has stood since its construction. (Hill Property Map R6, Parcel 22)

Boundaries of the nominated property have been highlighted in yellow on the attached sketch map (9-10-2).

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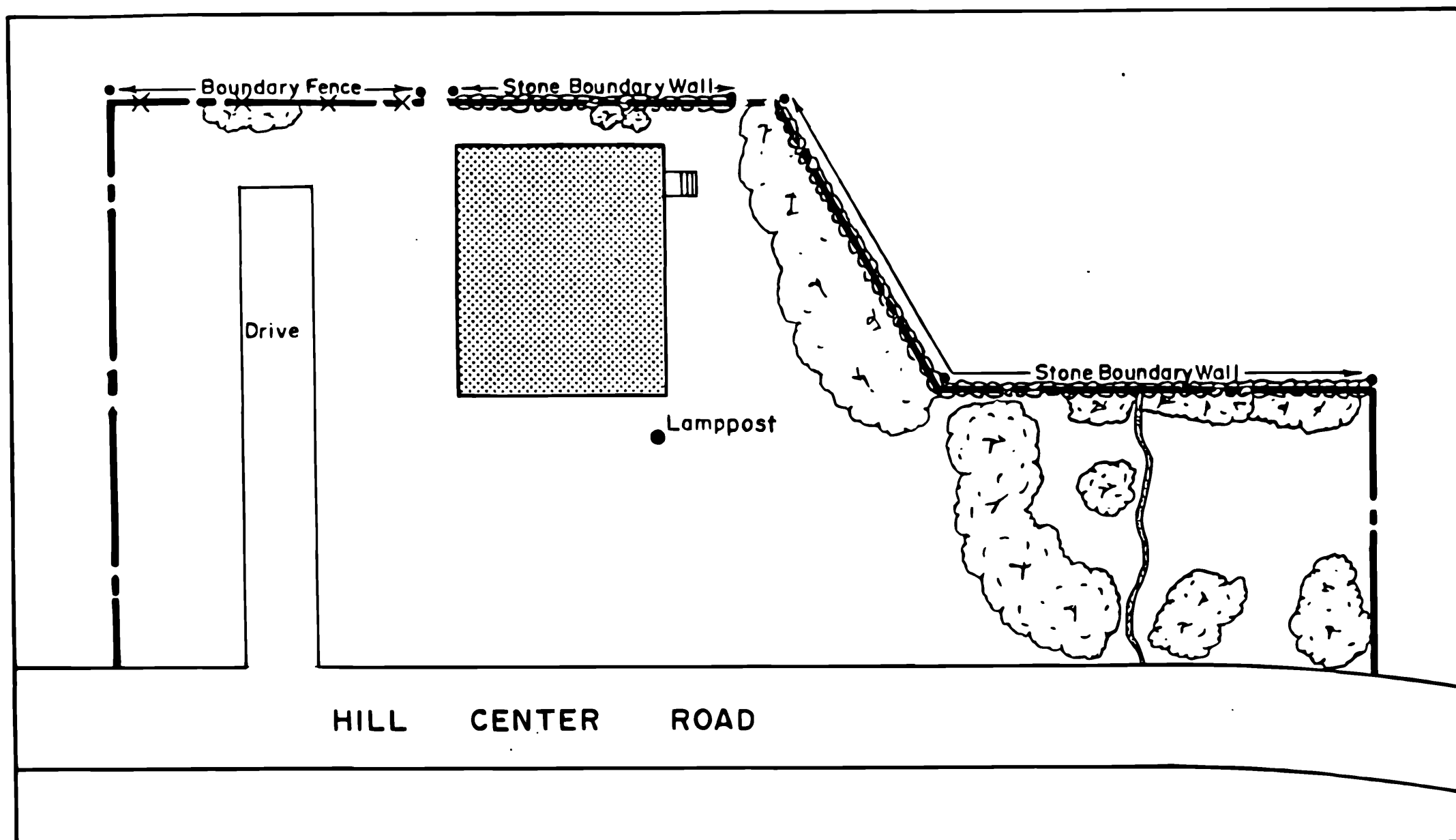
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This Certifies that the appearance of the photographs has not changed