

1004-0018  
EXT. 12/31/84

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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AUG - 5 1988

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Union Meetinghouse

and/or common Dover Town Hall (preferred)

2. Location

street & number School House Road N/A not for publication

city, town Dover N/A vicinity of ~~Congressional district~~

state Vermont code 50 county Windham code 025

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Town of Dover

street & number P. O. Box 428

city, town West Dover N/A vicinity of state Vermont 05356

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the Town Clerk

street & number Town Offices

city, town Dover state Vermont

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Vermont Historic Sites and Structures Survey

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1971, 1982  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

city, town Montpelier state Vermont

## 7. Description

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

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

#### 1. Dover Town Hall, 1828, c.1960

The Dover Town Hall (1) is a rectangular, single-story, three-bay gable-front, clapboarded, wood-frame structure, five bays deep, with a two-stage crenelated and pinnacled tower. Built in 1828 as a meetinghouse, this well-maintained, little altered vernacular style building, with modest classical elements, exhibits Gothic influence in the form of blind pointed arches above the windows. A small one-story c.1960 wing extends to the rear. Set back on the lawn of Dover Common, in a now mostly abandoned neighborhood in Dover, Vermont, together with a c.1874 hearse house (1A) and a c.1900 carriage shed (1B), it faces south towards maple-lined School House Road.

The Town Hall's tower overlooks a once thriving neighborhood, now reduced to a pair of 20th-century houses and the one-story 1957 Dover Free Library, with which it shares the Common. Magnificent views, particularly east towards the New Hampshire mountains, are mostly obscured by secondary growth on the surrounding former pastureland. It is located in the village of Dover Center, which was the first settlement in the Town of Dover. As the most prominent feature of Dover Common (elevation 1895 feet), highest point and center of the village, it could be seen from miles around by 19th-century travelers. A quarter-mile to the north is the town's first cemetery, Dover Yard.

The Dover Town Hall, located on the eastern part of Dover Common, is approached by a semi-circular unpaved driveway. The simple vernacular wood-frame main block, sided with lapped clapboard, rises one story from a cement block foundation (stone blocks were removed during foundation repairs c.1960) to a gable roof trimmed by a close-cropped molded cornice with short, capped returns. A single brick chimney punctuates the rear of the roof ridge. The east roof slope is slate-covered whereas the west slope is asphalt-shingled. A wooden water table encircles the building, capping the foundation.

Exemplifying the evolution of New England meetinghouses during the 19th-century, the two-stage, rectangular, central tower, which dominates the main (south) three-bay, gable-front facade, protrudes slightly from the main block's wall plane and incorporates the main central entrance. Cornerboards, which match those of the main block, define the entity of the tower.

A three-step concrete transverse stoop, protected by an iron railing, serves the entrance. The partially recessed six-panel door is framed by slightly battered, plain pilasters supporting a full entablature on which rests the prominent sign: "Dover Town Hall". Flanking each side of the tower entrance is a single 20/20 sash surmounted by Gothic Revival style pointed arches. A simple architrave molding frames the windows and arches. The

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

**Specific dates** 1828 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The 1828 Dover Town Hall is significant as one of the earliest Vermont examples of a traditionally styled meetinghouse that also displays elements of an emerging Gothic Revival style. It is also significant as the only surviving 19th-century building at Dover Common, now a mostly abandoned neighborhood which was once the focal point of the thriving village of Dover Center, the first village in the town of Dover. Constructed as a combined meetinghouse for Baptists, Methodists and Universalists, it is a prime example of the determination and cooperation of minority denominations to have their own house of worship. Since 1875 this well-preserved building has served the secular function of Town Hall, surviving a 1907 attempt to demolish it.

The Gothic Revival influence on the architecture of the 1828 meetinghouse is manifested by blind pointed arches above the windows and a crenelated parapet with corner pinnacles atop the two-stage tower. This tower, which projects slightly for its full height, is a transition mode which captures the form of a fully projecting 18th-century tower although it appears to be set back over the roof in a 19th-century manner.

Classically styled churches went out of fashion in New England in the late 1840's giving way to the Gothic Revival style. In Vermont many existing classical churches were "modernized" by the addition of Gothic features. To ascertain the dates of the Gothic detailing of the 1828 meetinghouse, church records were consulted. Although this building has housed four separate Protestant denominations (Baptist, Methodist, Universalist and much later, Congregational) during its ecclesiastical period (1828-1883), only the Baptist church records were found. These records, which are relevant until 1852, when the Baptist congregation moved to a new church in East Dover, contain no reference to alterations after the original construction, hence shed no light on the question of whether the Gothic components were added at a later date. Lacking documentary evidence, a structural dating analysis was made with the help of Jan Lewandoski, historic building technology consultant of Greensboro Bend, Vermont. With respect to the pointed arches over the windows, nothing was revealed inside or out which was not compatible with the original 1828 construction date. A segment of curved molding on a window arch, whose profile matches the window frame molding, is nailed with a sprig usually used pre-1840 in Vermont. Therefore, it is possible that the pointed arches over the windows date from the original construction.

An examination of the first stage of the tower revealed a typical post and girt design with pre-1840 type hardwood diagonal braces, contemporary to the original 1828 construction date. The second stage, however, appears to have

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet 9-1

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property Approximately 1

Quadrangle name Wilmington, Vt.

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UMT References

A 

1	8	6	7	9	3	0	0	4	7	5	6	7	0	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet 10-1

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

state	code	county	code
N/A			
state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Stephen Sanders

organization Historic Preservation Consultant

date April 2, 1987

street & number Stark Mountain Rd.

telephone (802) 368-7742

city or town West Halifax

state Vermont 05358

# 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 Director/State Historic Preservation Officer

date 7/20/88

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

date 9/1/88

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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horizontal boards of the blind arches are routed along the inside of the molding, emphasizing the arch contours. A small single-light window adjacent to the multi-pane window in the east bay breaks the symmetry of the main facade.

The second story of the tower's base stage has a 15/20 window which lights the interior gallery. A third story window, further diminished to 15/15, lights the interior of the tower and attic. Both second and third story windows have Gothic trim identical to the main block's windows. The base stage is capped by a molded cornice. The second clapboarded stage rests on a molded base, has cornerboards, and is pierced on four sides by rectangular louvers that are surmounted by pointed arches with imposts to echo the windows below. The arches, which are blind, include louvers which are more closely spaced than those which ventilate the rectangular openings. This bell chamber stage rises to a molded cornice crowned by a Gothic Revival style crenelated parapet with corner pinnacles that are decorated with blind pointed arches. This parapet was duplicated after storm damage in the 1970s.

Both east and west eaves elevations, trimmed by a boxed cornice, contain five symmetrical bays. The southernmost bay on each side has 20/20 sash matching those on the main facade, while the remaining four bays are lighted by 4/4 sash. A small single-light window in the southernmost bay of the east elevation, like a similar window in the main facade, serves the practical function of lighting a lavatory, while disrupting the facade's symmetry.

A one-story, two-bay, irregularly fenestrated c.1960 kitchen wing extends to the rear. The ridge of its asphalt-shingled gable roof joins the rear wall of the main block just below a triangular louvered vent.

The main entrance opens to a 12' x 7' vestibule with a wide plank, wooden floor. A steep, narrow stairway in the east bay rises to a 12 foot deep choir loft with a plain balustrade. The front portion of the balcony, which overhangs a bearing wall, is supported by three steel rods which pierce the ceiling and tie into attic timbers. Two pews stored here recall the ecclesiastical beginnings of this building. They are hand grained to simulate bird's eye maple raised panelling. The main auditorium, lighted by four reproduction chandeliers suspended from the vaulted ceiling, is trimmed with modern materials and contains no church furnishings. A series of small hooks along the ceiling's main axis may have supported original lighting fixtures. Seating was reportedly removed from the auditorium in c.1925 and a new floor laid, thus increasing its versatility for community social activities.

The original post and beam construction can be seen in the attic. A queen-post truss supports the roof adjacent to the tower while three equispaced

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king-post trusses support the rear section of the roof.

1A. Hearse House, c.1874

Situated in a thicket to the northeast of Dover Town Hall (1), this one-story, one-bay, wood-frame, clapboarded structure has cornerboards and rests on a stone foundation. The asphalt-shingled gable roof is trimmed by a projecting molded cornice and the raking eaves are decorated with a frieze board and simple barge board, scrolled at the ends. A slightly recessed, vertical-board door in a plain surround provides entry to the main (south) facade. At the 1874 town meeting it was voted to build a hearse house at the middle of town, for which E. D. Miner was paid \$136. A hearse, purchased by the town for \$100 in 1854, and in use as recently as 1920, was stored here. This building, in fair condition, is now used for storage.

1B. Carriage Shed, c.1900?

Directly behind the Dover Town Hall (1) stands this one-story, deteriorated, wood-frame, vertical board-sheathed building with a metal gable roof. The east-facing gable-front is a single open bay. It is now used for storage.

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been added later. It is set upon girts that were inserted after the first stage was erected. Softwood diagonal braces suggest a post-1840 date. Also, the interior framing of the nailers for the second stage's pointed arches are more carefully shaped than those of the first stage. Based on this data it appears that the upper stage of the tower was added at a later date, probably after 1840.

There are many examples of the overlayment of medieval-inspired Gothic Revival forms and detailing on pre-existing New England meetinghouses and churches of classical and Greek Revival Style in Windham County, Vermont. One of the earliest structures to receive this treatment is the c.1795 Baptist Church in nearby West Wardsboro. A two-story main block with eaves entrance attests to its 18-century meetinghouse origin. In this case, pointed louvered openings on the upper stage of the early-style, fully projecting tower are the only evidence of 19-century Gothic enhancement. The later c.1832 Wardsboro Methodist Church strongly resembles the Dover Town Hall in mass and design, except that the Methodist Church has twin classical entrances and a tower which rests entirely over the roof. Pointed, shuttered arches over the windows and a pinnacled, crenelated tower parapet echo the Dover Town Hall, perhaps indicating related influence in design or construction. The somewhat later 1835 Bissell Parish House, originally a Universalist Church, in adjoining Wilmington (listed in the National Register of Historic Places, August 11, 1980) is an example of a Greek Revival building style with eclectic features that include both Gothic Revival pointed arches and Second Empire style iron cresting atop the tower. Lastly, the 1832 Union Hall (listed in the National Register of Historic Places, July 21, 1983) in the bordering town of Newfane bears comparison with the Dover Town Hall, in terms of both history and architecture. Like the Dover Town Hall, it was built as a Universalist Church, was abandoned by religious groups (c.1852), and was converted to a public hall (1872). Its three-bay Greek Revival facade, divided by four pilasters, the molded capitals of which support the horizontal entablature of a pedimented gable, is a later and more fashionable design than the classical Dover Town Hall. Gothic Revival pointed arches with multi-paned lights head the 20/20 sash. The two-stage tower with pointed arch louvers and a pinnacled, crenelated top stage is almost identical with that of the Dover Town Hall, but rests completely over the shallower roof of the main block.

The town of Dover was originally the southern portion of the township of Wardsborough, a hill town chartered in 1780 by the newly formed Republic of Vermont. A mountain near the center of Wardsborough, impeding north-south communication, resulted in separation of Wardsborough, in 1788, into North and South Districts. The South District eventually received full autonomy in 1810, when its name was changed to the Town of Dover.

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The highlands were cleared first and the village of Dover, also known as Dover Center, located in the southeastern part of the town at an elevation of 1895 feet, became the earliest center of population and the hub of the town's roads.

By 1796 the earliest religious services (Congregational) were held in various settlers' homes. Sufficient tax revenue to support the minister's salary was difficult to raise, however. Under a Vermont law of 1783, persons who were members of other churches were not required to support the majority church and many residents filed certificates to this effect. In 1802, a United Religious Society was formed, hopefully to avoid religious differences. By 1805, a four acre tract of pasture land, now Dover Common, was purchased from Elijah Stearns, and a large two-story meetinghouse was built where the present Dover Free Library stands. Services were conducted by a Congregational minister apparently to the dissatisfaction of a Baptist minority, who withdrew in 1812 and in 1814 built their own meetinghouse about one-half mile northwest of the Common.

In 1828, this Baptist meetinghouse was abandoned when the Baptists joined with a Methodist society, which had been organized in 1827, and a group of Universalists, to build a union meetinghouse, the present Dover Town Hall. Materials from the 1814 Baptist structure were reportedly used in the new meetinghouse. The first few years at the new meetinghouse were challenging ones for the Baptists. Lacking a minister, they usually made do with part-time preaching. A pencilled note below the 1835 entry on Sidney H. Sherman's original manuscript History of the Baptist Church (East Dover) 1814-1872 states "Preach occasionally at Dover Received a Bushel corn or \$1.00 each time."

For the next 41 years, two meetinghouses stood on the Dover Common, the 1805 structure used by Congregationalists and the 1828 meetinghouse just to the southeast and shared by Baptists, Methodists, and Universalists.

The Congregational society continued at the 1805 location until about mid-century. In 1843, the First Church of Christ in Dover, a Unionist group, was formed and met at the church for about twelve years. By 1861, the 1805 building was entirely abandoned and in 1869 was dismantled. K. Haskins, author of the Dover chapter in Hemenway's 1891 Vermont Historical Gazetteer, comments: "... this building should have been zealously guarded and carefully preserved..." This early sentiment for preservation may have influenced the later decision to maintain the Town Hall.

During the mid-19th century, c.1850, the 1828 meetinghouse may have been used for village lyceum meetings, sponsored by a local literary group, the Ciceronian Club. In 1852 the Baptists abandoned this church when they built a



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new church in East Dover which is still in use. The Methodist Society and Universalists continued to hold services until about 1854 and sporadically thereafter. The last church organization to use the 1828 meetinghouse was the Congregational Church of Dover Center, organized in 1872, with 18 members. It met regularly until about 1883.

From 1789 to 1810, when Dover was known as Wardsborough, South District, town meetings were held in town officers' homes. The first meeting, 1811, of the newly incorporated Town of Dover was held in the 1805 meetinghouse on Dover Common. For the next 50 years, town meetings were held in the 1805 or 1828 meetinghouses. From 1862 to 1875, town and freemens' meetings alternated between East and West Dover. In 1875, it was voted to hold all future meetings at the town center, the present Dover Town Hall. They were held there until 1971, after which they moved to the new Dover Elementary School on Dover Road.

Viewing Dover Common today, it is hard to imagine that it was once the core of a thriving village. The meetinghouses on the Common overlooked a general store, blacksmith and carpenter shops, a potash factory, and the 1818 Perry House Inn. A short distance to the southwest, on Estabrook Hill, was the earliest settlement in Dover; it included a cluster of homes, a school house, 1795 and 1813 taverns, and the Samuel Clark store which later moved opposite the Common. During the 19th-century East and West Dover, located on rivers, gained in economic development as Dover Center languished. The Dover Center post office, established 1826, was closed in 1905. The Perry House, long abandoned, was destroyed c.1947. Some of the early Dover Center buildings still stand on Dover Road, but only cellar holes mark the 19th-century buildings which once bordered Dover Common.

At the start of the 20th-century the population of the Town of Dover had decreased (1910 census was 377, down from a peak of 894 in 1810) and the 1828 meetinghouse had fallen into disrepair. Some wanted to demolish it and hold town meetings in East and West Dover. At the 1907 town meeting a resolution presented by Mrs. E R Cook was adopted. It called for an appropriation of \$150 for repair of the church on Dover Common with the proviso that the town have the use of the building for town purposes. The work was performed by selectman Fred Ryther and others under the supervision of a committee consisting of Frank E. Yeaw, O. E. Hill and E. H. Jones. It consisted primarily of a new slate roof, installed by George H. Hall for \$84.65.

In 1978 the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Dover issued a proclamation commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Dover Town Hall. Now, 159 years after its construction, it continues to serve the town as a social hall - the sole survivor of the early settlement at Dover Common.

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Sherman, Sidney H. History of the Baptist Church (East Dover), 1814-1872. In ms., at Dover Town Offices.

Sinnott, Edmund W. Meetinghouse and Church in New England. New York: McGraw Hill, 1963.

Personal interview with Ray Johnson of Dover, Vermont by Stephen Sanders, 1985.

Consultation with Jan Lewandoski of Greensboro Bend, Vermont by Stephen Sanders, 1987.

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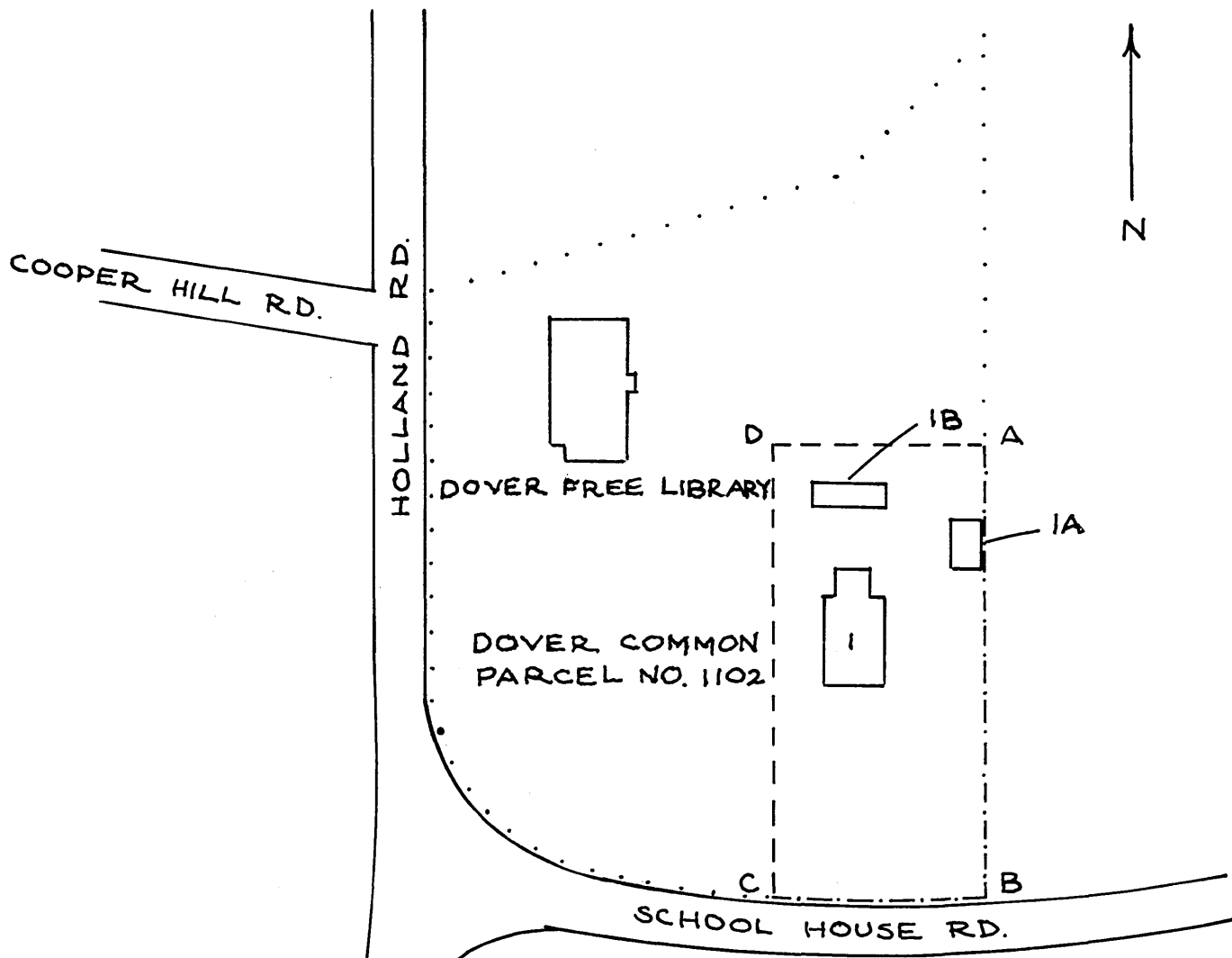
VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the Dover Town Hall nominated property begins at point A, located at the intersection of the east property line of Dover Common (Parcel No. 1102) and an easterly extension of a line 30 feet north of and parallel to the north wall of building #1B. Thence the boundary proceeds in a southerly direction along said property line to point B, located at the intersection of said property line and the north edge of the right-of-way of School House Road. Thence the boundary proceeds in a westerly direction along said right-of-way to point C, located at the intersection of said right-of-way and a southerly extension of a line 30 feet west of and parallel to the west wall of building #1B. Thence the boundary proceeds in a northerly direction along said extension, said line, and a northerly extension of said line to point D, located at the intersection of said extension and a westerly extension of a line 30 feet north of and parallel to the north wall of building #1B. Thence the boundary proceeds in an easterly direction along said extension, said line and an easterly extension of said line to point A, the point of beginning.

As shown on attached sketch map, the nominated property is approximately one acre. It is the southeast portion of the approximate four acre Dover Common (Parcel No. 1102 owned by the Town of Dover) which was deeded by Elijah Stearns on May 6, 1805 to Proprietors of Meetinghouse in Wardsborough South District and recorded in Book 2, page 169 of the Dover Land Records.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The east and south boundaries of the nominated property coincide with the property lines of Dover Common. The north and west boundaries enclose the nominated buildings, separating them from the Dover Free Library which occupies the northwest portion of Dover Common.



DOVER TOWN HALL  
 DOVER, VERMONT  
 JULY 1985

- NOMINATED PROPERTY BOUNDARY
- ..... DOVER COMMON BOUNDARY
- CONTRIBUTING BUILDING

NOT TO SCALE