

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

For NPS use only

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

received MAY 7 1985  
date entered

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

JUN 6 1985

**1. Name**

historic Centre Village Meeting House

and/or common THE UNION CHURCH OF ENFIELD CENTER, NEW HAMPSHIRE

**2. Location**

street & number New Hampshire Route 4A 500' north of  
the Enfield Center 4-corners n/a not for publication

city, town Enfield, n/a vicinity of

state New Hampshire code 33 county Grafton code 011

**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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<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 checked="" 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 Trustees of the Union Church of Enfield Center

street & number Route 4A  
Post Office Box 82

city, town Enfield Center n/a vicinity of state New Hampshire 03749

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Grafton County Courthouse  
Grafton County Registry of Deeds  
street & number P.O. Box 208

city, town Woodsville, state New Hampshire 03785

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title \_\_\_\_\_ 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 \_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

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**Condition** excellent good fair deteriorated ruins unexposed**Check one** unaltered altered**Check one** original site moved

date

N/A

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

The Enfield Center Meeting House is a rectangular gable-roofed structure with clapboarded walls, a fieldstone and concrete block foundation, and a roof covered with asphalt shingles. The building measures about 45' wide by 56' long. The west gable end of the building faces the adjacent road (N.H. Route 4A), and is treated as the facade of the church. The center of the facade is articulated by a gable-roofed pavilion which is 22 feet wide and projects four feet from the body of the building. This pavilion provides a recessed open porch on the first story, having an opening trimmed with flat casings. The rear or inner wall of the porch has a central 12-over-8 window and two flanking eight-paneled doors. Above the porch, the second story of the pavilion provides two 12-over-8 windows set beneath a deeply-projecting cornice which carries across the entire facade and returns along both sides of the structure. The clapboarded tympanum of the pavilion bears a sign, probably original to the building, with the date "1836."

On each side of the pavilion on the first story is a false window opening marked by single louvered blinds. Directly above, on the second story, a single 8-over-8 window pierces the front wall of the body of the building on each side of the projection.

Rising from the pavilion and from the roof of the main structure is a square tower which terminates in a deeply-projecting cornice. Sections of the crown and bed mouldings of this cornice are deteriorated, and in some areas have been replaced by flat boards. The front elevation of the tower has a single false window opening covered by a louvered blind. The rear elevation has a single 12-over-8 window, located off-center toward the south corner of the wall of the tower. Above the roof of the square, lower stage of the steeple (which serves as a bell deck) is a square belfry with a semicircular-arched opening on each of its four faces. The spandrels of this stage are flush-boarded, and its corners are marked by projecting square-edged boards. The openings of the belfry are filled by louvered blinds, and the belfry terminates in a deeply-projecting cornice similar to that on the stage below. Above the belfry is an octagonal lantern with louvered blinds on each face, a deeply-projecting cornice, and a coppered dome with an ogee profile. From the apex of the dome rises a short round spire capped by a tall lightning rod having a three-branched tip and bearing a weathervane in the form of a stylized fish.

Each side elevation of the main block of the structure has three round-topped window openings filled with triple-hung 20-over-15-over-15 windows and fitted with louvered blinds. Near the front (west) corners of each side elevation of the building is a false window with louvered blinds that simulate those of the three true windows. At the top of the side elevations, the deeply projecting main cornice of the structure extends along the eaves to the rear wall of the building.

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The meeting house stands on a site which slopes eastward toward the rear of the building, affording a deep basement. This is lighted by three windows set into a clapboarded cellar wall on the north elevation, and by two windows flanking a door in a similar clapboarded wall on the south elevation.

The rear (east) elevation of the building is a clapboarded wall broken by a low flat-board water table which remains across this elevation from the side walls. In the center of the wall is a doorway leading to the basement; this appears to have been a wide sliding barn-type door whose opening has been partially enclosed and clapboarded. Immediately to the north of the doorway is a tall, modern, single-flue brick chimney which rises against the wall from the ground to a point a few inches higher than the ridge. At points about halfway down each slope of the roof are two smooth-boarded wooden projections which formerly enclosed the lower portions of the chimneys that rose above the roof in these locations.

Inside the two front doors is a nine-foot-deep entry or vestibule. On the right (south) side of the vestibule is a staircase which leads to a gallery. The gallery extends across the west end of the auditorium, with an alcove on the second floor of the pavilion. On the left (north) side of the vestibule, a stairway leads to the basement of the church.

The auditorium is entered by two four-panel doors in its west wall, corresponding to those in the recessed porch of the pavilion. Between these two doors, at the rear of the room, is an eighteen-foot-wide choir loft which is raised nearly four feet above the main floor and is separated from the pews in front of it by a paneled wooden enclosure.

Opposite the choir loft, at the front (east) wall of the auditorium, is a low dias some fourteen feet wide and five feet deep. On this platform is a lecturn, a Victorian sofa, and two chairs in an arrangement which closely parallels the original placement of church furniture here.

Between the dias and the choir loft, the floor of the auditorium is filled with three tiers of slip pews. Against each side wall is a group of eight pews, separated from a central tier of eighteen pews by 3-foot-wide aisles which extend from the two doors of the room. Four additional pews on the left (north) side of the dias face the center of the room; a symmetrical group south of the dias has been removed to the gallery to provide room for an organ and a piano.

Entered on the ceiling of the auditorium is a brass electric chandelier, and additional pairs of electric fixtures light the dias and choir loft. These fixtures were probably installed when electricity first reached Enfield Center about 1925.

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The tower bell was cast by William Blake and Company (formerly H.N. Hooper Company) in Boston in 1870 especially for this building. Funds for the purchase of the bell were raised by subscription in 1869.

Original appearance: The Enfield Center Meeting House has not changed in basic appearance since its completion in 1836. Several exterior features have, however, been removed or altered over the years. The flight of stairs which rises to the recessed porch originally ascended from three sides in a stepped pyramid form; these stairs have been replaced by a straight flight. The wooden walls of the basement originally extended nearly to the ground rather than resting on a concrete block foundation as at present. Two chimneys originally rose from the rear (east) wall of the structure. The tower has suffered several losses which have altered its original design. The square lower stage originally had false shuttered windows on its sides in addition to the one which survives on the front (west). Originally, too, the bell deck at the top of the lower stage had a balustrade with square balusters and heavy corner posts with urn finials; after being gradually reduced in size, this feature was entirely removed in the mid-1900s. The belfry openings were originally open rather than being filled with the present louvered blinds. The original blinds of the octagonal lantern had lighter and more closely-spaced louvers than do the present blinds. The cumulative effect of these superficial losses has been to reduce the original similarity of the tower to a general design illustrated in Asher Benjamin's Country Builder's Assistant (1797) and adopted widely throughout New England.

Church records show that the meeting house was originally accompanied by horse sheds and by a hearse house which was used in conjunction with the adjacent burying ground.

## 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 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** 1836 **Builder/Architect** John Noyes

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Enfield Center Village Meeting House is an excellent late example of a type of church structure which was originally suggested by a "Plan of a Meetinghouse" published in Asher Benjamin's influential book The Country Builders Assistant (Greenfield, MA., 1797). Built by local workman in 1836, the building superimposes Greek Revival features and attitudes upon design which retains Federal-style composition and detailing. Despite superficial losses of architectural features, the building remains an excellent example of a conservative meeting house type which had become almost vernacular New England form by the time of its construction.

**ARCHITECTURE:** The Enfield Center Village Meeting House is one of the latest religious buildings in New Hampshire to retain the form and much of the detailing of a type of meeting house popular in New England in the early 1800s. Based loosely on a plate in Asher Benjamin's Country Builder's Assistant, such building utilized a projecting gable-roofed pavilion to support the front of a three-stage tower which extends from the pavilion onto the roof of the main body of the structure. Benjamin's general scheme, in turn, was based on a few Massachusetts prototypes designed by the Boston architect Charles Bulfinch in the late 1780s and early 1790s.

The Benjamin meeting house type was widely copied and adapted in northern New England in the early 1800s. In some cases, as in Enfield Center, the design was reduced to its simplest form. The Enfield building makes ingenious and economical use of louvered false windows to impart a sense of elaboration and scale to a relatively small and simple building. This is especially evident at the front corners of the building, where both rectangular and arched false windows articulate the areas where a staircase rises and where the walls would otherwise have been blank.

While the Enfield Center meeting house retains the form of a Federal-style structure, its detailing and plan reflects the new concepts of Greek Revival church building. The simple trabeated porch entrance gives some hint of the new style on the exterior. The interior provides greater evidence of a change to a newly-popular style. Here, the high pulpit of the Federal period is supplanted by a low dias with a sofa and lectern in the manner popular in New Hampshire country churches in the 1830s. A similar evolution is seen in the raised choir enclosure at the rear of the auditorium, opposite the dias. The introduction of such features on the floor of the auditorium reflects a new interest in sacred music in New England churches in the 1830s. At this period, psalm or hymn singing had become a popular adjunct to religious services, aided by a number of music books being written in New England and elsewhere. During this time, too, bass viols and other portable musical instruments were commonly introduced into churches to supplement the choir. Likewise, the old enclosed box pews of the earlier period were

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Journal of the Centre Village Meeting House (untitled) 1836-1953, preserved in the Town Hall, Enfield, New Hampshire.

Hamilton Child, "Child's Grafton County Gazetteer, The Syracuse Journal Co., printers and binders, June 1886.

Continued.....

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .5 (approx)

Quadrangle name Mascoma Quad. (New Hampshire)

Quadrangle scale 1:625 00

UTM References

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**Verbal boundary description and justification** The property belonging to the Union Church is shown on tax map 39 of the Town of Enfield, NH. Boundaries are shown in yellow on the attached sketch map. This property represents that historically associated with the Church and does not include anything additional.

**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 Bertrand M. Gilbert

organization Union Church of Enfield date December 1984

street & number Star Rte 4-A telephone (603) 632-7110

city or town Enfield Center state New Hampshire 03749

## 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.

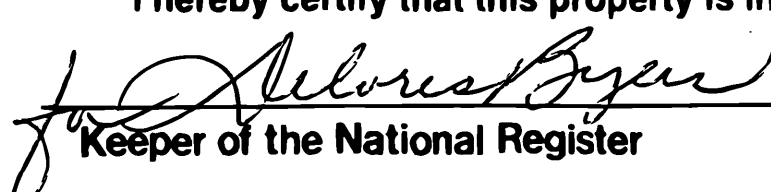
State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title N.H. State Historic Preservation Officer

date APR 26 1985

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

  
National Register

date 6/6/85

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration



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universally supplanted by the long "slip" seats seen in the Enfield Center building.

The Enfield Center Village Meeting House is the product of local craftsmanship. Surviving records list the names of a number of local men, some of them members of the building committee, who supplied timber and lumber and who split stone for the building's foundation. The joiner's work of the structure was completed by local builder John Noyes (about whom little is known), who was paid \$1,428.56 "for finishing (the) House & stock found."<sup>1</sup>

The building was completed in an economical manner by a building committee which reimbursed itself through the sale of pews in the completed structure-- a traditional method in New England of raising the funds to construct a religious building. Pews were purchased by Congregationalists, Universalists, and Methodists. Since the agreement of the proprietors of the meeting house specified that "the occupancy of the pulpit should be determined by the owners of the pews, each pew carrying on vote," the meeting house was always used for interdenominational preaching.<sup>2</sup> The building's frugality of design and workmanship reflects the relatively small population it served, as does the fact that no single denomination in the area was large or wealthy enough to purchase all the pew rights to the structure. The building was not provided with a bell for over 30 years following its completion; at a time when the structure required its first major repairs, a special subscription was organized to purchase the current bell. The building has continued its original interdenominational nature to the present day, now serving as a community church with no single religious orientation.

1

"An Account of Bills of Expense paid by Warren Carr, John C. Clough & Oliver Goohue Building Committee for the Center Village Meeting House, Enfield, New Hampshire 1836."

2

"Records of the Congregationalist Church of Enfield," Vol. 1, 1826-1863, New Hampshire Historical Society; "Journal of the Center Village Meeting House" 1836-1953, Enfield Town Hall; (Mrs. Nellie L. Pierce,) 100 Years for God and Man (Enfield, NH, pp. 8-9.

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An account of bills of expense paid by W.Carr, J.C.Clough & Oliver Goodhue building committee for the Centre Village Meeting House, Enfield, New Hampshire 1836. Taken from a book in the possession of John C. Clough's grandson; of Bellows Falls, Vermont, February 22, 1940.

Tax Map of the Town of Enfield, New Hampshire, Town Hall, Selectmen's office, Map 39.



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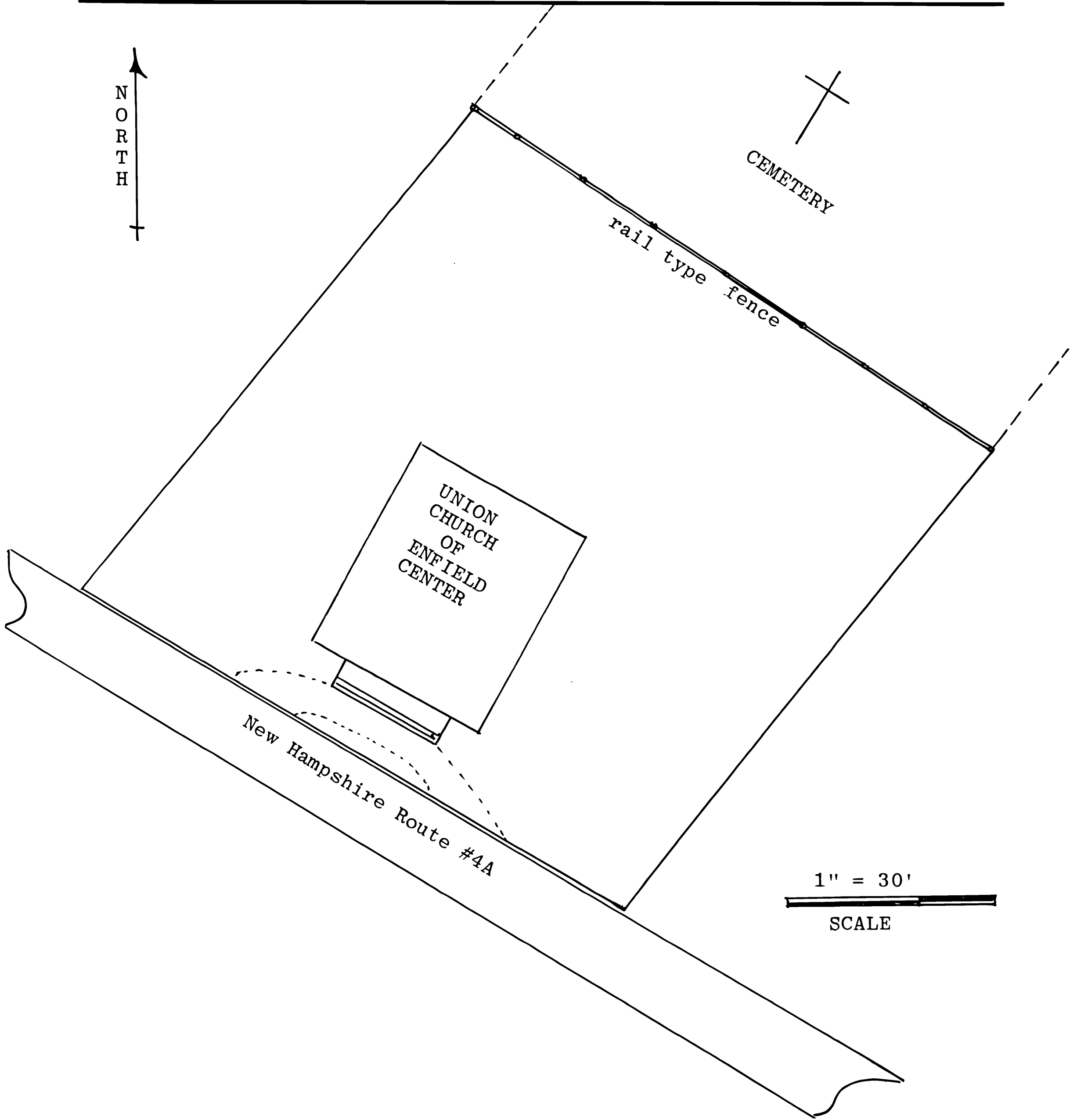
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1" = 30'

SCALE