

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received FEB 25 1983

date entered

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

1. Name

historic FIRST FREE WILL BAPTIST CHURCH;  
MISS PERKINS' HIGH SCHOOL; HOLDERNESS ACADEMY

and/or common FIRST FREE WILL BAPTIST CHURCH AND VESTRY ~~-(preferred)~~

2. Location

street & number 13 - 15 North Main Street not for publication

city, town Ashland vicinity of ~~congressional district~~ (2nd)

state N.H. code 33 county Grafton code 009

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" 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	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name First Free Will Baptist Church

street & number 13 North Main Street

city, town Ashland vicinity of state New Hampshire 03217

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Grafton County Courthouse/Registry of Deeds

street & number Route 10

city, town North Haverhill state New Hampshire 03774

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Ashland Historical Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1982  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Ashland Town Offices, 10 High Street

city, town Ashland state New Hampshire

---

## 7. Description

---

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input 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 First Free Will Baptist Church and Vestry is actually an L-shaped complex of three connected structures--the brick church, set back from and parallel to North Main Street, the brick vestry, set near and perpendicular to the street, and the wooden new vestry, built to join the two brick buildings. Here we will describe each structure separately.

The church was built on a knoll above the street, of brick laid in common bond on a cut granite block foundation. Rectangular in plan, the building is three bays wide and four bays long. A box cornice with simple mouldings, a narrow frieze, and returns on the eastern gable end, is the gable roof's only ornament. A three stage wooden tower rises from the eastern end of the asphalt shingled roof.

The eastern gable wall is the church's main facade, with two entries flanking a central "window". Each entry has granite steps and sill, a paneled door with two upper windows, and a heavy entablature over the door. Directly above the entablature of each entry is the wooden sill of a semicircular arched stained glass window with a brick hood mould. (All of the church's hood moulds are painted white.) Between the two entries is a taller semicircular arched "window" with a brick hood mould and wooden sill. This central "window" is filled with permanent louvered blinds, as there is now no opening in the wall behind the "window". The long north and south facades each have four tall semicircular arched stained glass windows with brick hood moulds and wooden sills. The rarely seen western facade, windowless and somewhat hidden by the new vestry, has a large exterior brick chimney and simple close verges, not the box cornice found on the other facades.

The east side of the tower's plain shingled base is even with the front east wall of the church. Each of the three stages of the tower is smaller than the stage below it. The first stage is shingled with recessed panels on each side. It is ornamented by a band of staggered shingles, arched windows in the east and west recessed panels, and a plain box cornice with a deep frieze. The second stage has paired rudimentary pilasters (without capitols) at each corner flanking recessed panels that contain the louvered blinds of the belfry. Its cornice is similar to that of the first stage, but with a deeper frieze. The third stage of the tower was built for the town clock. The sides are faced with diagonal boarding and framed by paired narrow strips. And, of course, a large clock face with Roman numerals is found on each side. Above the third stage's bracketed cornice is the asphalt shingled tower roof. The roof, which can best be described as a two stage concave roof, supports a wooden finial with weathervane. The church exterior appears today essentially as it did after the 1893 addition of the town clock.

The interior of the church is basically one large auditorium with an enclosed vestibule beneath an open balcony at the eastern end. The vestibule, while not deep, is as wide as the building, with an enclosed stairway to the balcony on the south. It has plaster walls with a beaded board wainscoating and a beaded board ceiling. A double paneled door leads from the vestibule to the auditorium. The auditorium has hardwood flooring, and plaster walls with a beaded board wainscoating. Above is a beaded board ceiling with hanging light fixtures. The ceiling, which also extends over the balcony, is coved with heavy cornices on the north and south sides. The auditorium is lit by eight tall arched stained glass windows with simple wooden trim, ornamented only by a keystone and a single moulding. The slip pews are curved in plan, with ornamented carved ends. The balcony on the east is separated from the auditorium by three wooden arches, springing from paneled pillars with capitols. The balcony is subdivided by two more arches between the two central pillars and the east wall.

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

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet #1 - DESCRIPTION

Item number 7

Page 2

All five arches have moulded trim and a keystone. The balcony also has two of its own stained glass windows, plaster walls and balustrades in the auditorium arches. The west wall of the auditorium is dominated by an "arcade" composed of three Palladian motifs, sharing the same heavy entablature, and supported by paneled pillars at the ends of the motifs and by columns at the sides of the arches. The wider central arch shelters the shallow sanctuary. Above the altar in the sanctuary is another Palladian motif, a stained glass window with a picture of Jesus the Sheperd in the central window. (The other stained glass windows in the church all have geometrical, rather than pictorial, patterns.) The arched ceiling of the sanctuary is again beaded boarding. The narrower northern bay of the "Palladian arcade" is filled by the church organ. The southern bay of the "arcade" actually has a blind wooden arch with a carved tympanum above the entablature, which serves here as the lintel for the bay. The south bay contains the door to the vestry. The floor is raised in front of the central and north bays, for the sanctuary in the center and the choir to the north, in front of the organ. The front of the raised floor, with its assymetric curved plan, is faced with beaded boarding. The choir section was also given a low front wall ornamented by blind arches. With a few minor exceptions such as the hanging light fixtures, and some furnishings, the interior of the church has not changed since 1915 remodeling.

The old Vestry was built of brick, laid in common bond, flemish variation, on a cut granite block foundation. Set back a short distance from the sidewalk, the north gable end of the 2½-story rectangular building faces the street. The building's simple box cornice with a single concave moulding and a deep frieze, has short returns on the gable end. The slopes of the asphalt-shingled gable roof are broken by three brick chimneys with corbeled caps. All but two of the building's sash windows have granite sills and lintels. The two exceptions are the larger windows with wooden sills and lintels on each side of the central entryway in the three bay north facade. The entry's four paneled door is flanked by three quarter side-lights and topped by a rectangular transom window. The sill and lintel of the entryway are still granite, but the steps are now concrete. The north facade is symmetrical, with three windows on the second story and two in the gable. The east facade has three windows on both stories. And, as the building is built into the knoll on which the church sits, the east facade's second story also has, at its rear (south) corner, a four panel door with transom window, granite sill and lintel, concrete steps and a new simple shed hood. The west facade has five windows on the first story and three on the second. A modern fire escape leads down from a small gable-roofed dormer on the third floor. With some minor exceptions, such as the fire escape, the concrete steps, the newer sash in the windows, and, possibly, the two larger windows on the first floor, the Vestry does not seem to have changed in appearance since its construction.

The Vestry's interiors have been more extensively remodeled in both the 19th and 20th centuries. The first story is now one large room with a hardwood floor, a new tile ceiling and modern paneling on the walls. The second story has a vestibule at the southeast entry, with the rest of the space devoted to a large room with hardwood floor, beaded board wainscoating and ceiling. The third story, also one large room, has an interesting suspended floor, suspended from diagonal iron bars tied into the top of the brick walls. (The second and third floors were reinforced in the mid-20th century by new steel posts.) The third story has a plain board wainscoating that may well be original, as well as more modern plasterboard upper walls and a lowered ceiling.

See Continuation Sheet #2-

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

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet #2 - DESCRIPTION

Item number 7

Page 3

The 2½-story rectangular new vestry was erected between the two older brick buildings. Although built of different materials--clapboarded walls with corner boards on fieldstone and brick foundations, the new vestry's east and west walls are flush with the Vestry walls and use the same cornice and frieze as the older building. The gable roof of the old vestry was continued south to intersect with the gable roof of the new building, which parallels the church roof. A one-story shed roofed addition, only as wide as a corridor, was also built along the west wall of the church to connect the new vestry with the western door in the church auditorium. This clapboarded short connector boasts only one window. The south facade of the new vestry has a single door with a simple hood on the first story, and two sash windows on the second. The western gable end has three windows on the first two stories, and two in the gable. Because of the rise of the land, the eastern gable end is only 1½ stories high. And, the narrow space between the two older buildings left room for only a short window and a single door sheltered by a simple hood. The cornice and frieze of the old vestry was continued across the eastern gable end to the church wall, but the western gable end only received short returns. The first story of the new vestry now houses a kitchen with concrete floor, knotty pine paneling and tile ceiling. The second story has a hardwood floor, beaded board wainscoating and ceiling. And the third story has plaster-board walls and ceiling, with narrow hardwood flooring. The main architectural merit of the new vestry is its exterior modesty and deference to the older vestry and the church.

The grounds of the First Free Will Baptist Church and Vestry are mostly grassed with some ornamental trees and shrubs. A paved drive does go from North Main Street up the knoll to the east facade of the church, then along the south side of the church and back to the street on the west side of the vestries. There are also paved walks from the sidewalk to the vestry doors. The knoll on which the church sits, while not very high, is nevertheless tall enough to make the First Free Will Baptist Church one of the dominant buildings in Ashland village.

## 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 type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1834, 1872-1915, c1835 **Builder/Architect** unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The First Free Will Baptist Church and its Vestry are both architecturally important buildings. The Church is a fine Victorian adaptation of an earlier meetinghouse. The Vestry, built as a school in the 1830's, remains a largely unaltered example of a brick vernacular school building.

The First Free Will Baptist Church in Holderness village (later Ashland village) was first organized in 1818, as a branch of Elder Simeon Dana's church in New Hampton. In 1829, the Holderness church was reorganized as an independent church, although still under the guidance of Elder Dana. For its first few years, the church had neither a settled pastor nor a meetinghouse. But, the church prospered and its membership grew. By 1834, the church was large enough to construct and support its own building. At a meeting in February of that year, the Free Will Baptists of Holderness village voted to build a brick meetinghouse on land owned by Moses Cheney. A five man building committee (Moses Cheney, Thos. Sanborn, James Shaw, S.N. Morse, and Person Cheney) was appointed. And the First Free Will Baptist Society in Holderness was organized to build and maintain the meetinghouse. (The Society remained a separate organization from the Church until 1928.) On July 9, Moses Cheney sold the Society a lot on what is now North Main Street for the price he had paid for it in 1830--\$75. The lot was arguably the best site in the village for a church, for it included a knoll that made it, as it has remained, one of the most prominent buildings in the village.

Unfortunately, the Society's records for 1834, the year the church was built, no longer exist. While we can name the building committee, we cannot identify the designer and the builders of the meetinghouse. Indeed, very little is known about its construction. In January of 1835, the sale of thirty-four of the sixty-four pews raised \$1,159. to help defray the costs. And, on January 23, the meetinghouse was formally dedicated. Early views of the building show that the basic exterior composition has not changed. All of the windows were rectangular, not arched, but they appear in the same positions, as do the two entries. The tower was shorter, being only two stages high, with a flatter roof. The meetinghouse, was, in its original form, a good vernacular Federal church, a building that would still be admired today.

But, as the 19th century progressed, the simple meetinghouse became, in the eyes of the church members, old-fashioned and unattractive. To bring it up to date, the exterior and the interior were both remodeled, not in one building campaign, but piecemeal over a period of better than forty years, between 1872 and 1915. The exterior alterations, as noted above, were not extensive, but they were sufficient to change the character and the style of the church. In 1872, the rectangular windows were lengthened and topped by semicircular arches with corresponding hood moulds. Stained glass, so popular with the Victorians, replaced the clear glass of the earlier meetinghouse. In 1873, two new front doors with windows were installed in place of the older paneled doors. And in 1893, the town clock was added to the tower, a change that required not only a new third stage, but a new and taller roof, as well. The base and first stage of the tower were shingled, and two arched windows were added to the first stage. The result of these alterations was an attractive Victorian church, a building that appears a half century younger than it actually is.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

ONE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEDICATION OF FIRST FREE WILL BAPTIST CHURCH IN HOLDERNESS VILLAGE, NOW ASHLAND, NEW HAMPSHIRE, (Ashland, N.H., 1935).  
 ONE HUNDRED FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST FREE WILL BAPTIST CHURCH, ASHLAND, N.H. (Ashland, N.H., 1968).  
 Doris Tatham and John R. Smith. ASHLAND BICENTENNIAL BOOK (Ashland, N.H., 1968).

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 0.36

Quadrangle name Holderness, NH

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

### UMT References

A 

1	9	2	8	7	8	0	0	4	8	4	1	1	5	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 #4-

### 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. Ruell

organization Lakes Region Planning Commission date October 11, 1982

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 [Signature]

Commissioner, Dept. of Resources & Economic Development  
 title NH State Historic Preservation Officer

date February 8, 1983

### For NPS use only

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

[Signature]  
 Keeper of the National Register

date 4/8/83

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet #3 - SIGNIFICANCE

Item number 8

Page 2

The interior renovations were more numerous. There are records of interior alterations in 1872, 1873, 1882, 1893, 1894, 1909, and 1915. The last modernization in 1915 was probably the most extensive, including, among other changes, the hardwood floor, the balcony arches, the "Palladian arcade" at the west end of the auditorium, and the stained glass window above the altar. The church interior was essentially entirely remodeled during this period. Although our knowledge of the original interior is imperfect, it is very doubtful that any interior elements survive in their original form. Today, the church interior reflects the taste of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. For, since 1915, there have been no important architectural changes, just some minor alterations, such as new hanging lights and new sanctuary furniture.

The First Free Will Baptist Church, while no longer representative of the period of its construction, is nevertheless an important building, a fine example of the simpler Victorian churches. This style of church architecture has often been neglected by architectural historians, who have concentrated more on the period revivals of the Victorian era, on the Gothic, Romanesque and Renaissance inspired churches designed by architects. The simpler Victorian churches, which reflect the taste of builders rather than architects, have not received much attention, although their counterparts, the residential, commercial and industrial buildings erected or modified by Victorian builders, have been recognized and acclaimed in recent years. The simpler Victorian churches, as represented by the First Free Will Baptist Church, certainly deserve such recognition, as well.

The Vestry was built on the property of the First Free Will Baptist Society, probably in 1835. There are, unfortunately, no records of its construction. And its early history is somewhat obscure. The 1830 and 1834 deeds for the property make no mention of a building on the lot. And, we do know that the Vestry was standing in 1836, as Miss Nancy Perkins then opened her private high school in the building. Although on the Society's land, the building itself was separately owned. A later mortgage deed makes it clear that the Society did have an active interest in the structure, namely the right of "occupancy of a part of said building for vestry purposes in compensation for the rent of the land on which said building is located".<sup>1</sup> Apparently, then, the building was erected to serve both as a school and as a vestry. In later years, at least, the first floor was used for commercial purposes, housing at one time, an undertaker and a millinery shop. Such commercial use was probably not the original intent of the builders. Certainly, the main use of the building in its early years was as a school. The village would not have a public high school until the 20th century. So there was a strong local need for a private secondary school. Miss Perkins kept her High School in the Vestry from 1836 until 1847, when she married Oren B. Cheney, later the founder and president of Bates College. She was followed by the Holderness Academy and later, a High School Association, organizations which maintained a small secondary school in the Vestry into the 1870's. In 1871, the First Free Will Baptist Society voted to purchase the building if possible. But, it was not until 1878 that the Society bought the Vestry for \$600. from the Ashland Savings Bank, which had acquired the building through an \$800. mortgage deed. Since then, the Baptist Church has made a number of changes in the interior. And, in 1899, the new wooden vestry was added to the rear of the building by contractor Frank W. Fifield. The new vestry provided more space for the Sunday school and connected the old vestry with the church.

<sup>1</sup>Mortgage Deed of Israel D. Woodman to Ashland Savings Bank, April 15, 1873--Grafton County Registry of Deeds, Book 327, Page 403.

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

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet #4 - SIGNIFICANCE

Item number 8 (& 10)

Page 3

Although the interiors of the Vestry have been extensively remodeled, the exterior has seen few changes, and none that have compromised the integrity of its design. The Vestry has the typical form of the small New Hampshire academies of the early 19th century--a 2½-story gable-roofed building, with the gable end serving as the main facade. The Vestry is more modest than most of the surviving academy buildings in that it lacks the short belfry tower usually found on the roof. Nevertheless, given its symmetry, simplicity and proportions, the Vestry is a good example of the private secondary schools of the era, one certainly worthy of inclusion in the National Register.

Together these buildings maintain the overall massing and appearance of the complex since the construction of the two brick structures in the mid-1830's. Since then, changes have not been dramatic, but more organic modifications brought on by changing architectural tastes and the needs of the congregation. Particularly with the understated addition of the wooden vestry over eighty years ago, the visual importance and on-going use of these buildings has been reinforced. This complex can be expected to continue as an important element in the visual and historic life of Ashland village.

---

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal boundary description & justification:

The boundary of the nominated property is shown as the heavy black line on the accompanying map entitled, "First Free Will Baptist Church and Vestry", and encompasses a 0.36 acre portion of Ashland Tax Map #17, Block #6, Lot #14. The nominated property includes that portion of the holdings of the First Free Will Baptist Church developed during the second quarter of the 19th century and continuing in similar use and appearance today. (See Continuation Sheet #5.)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

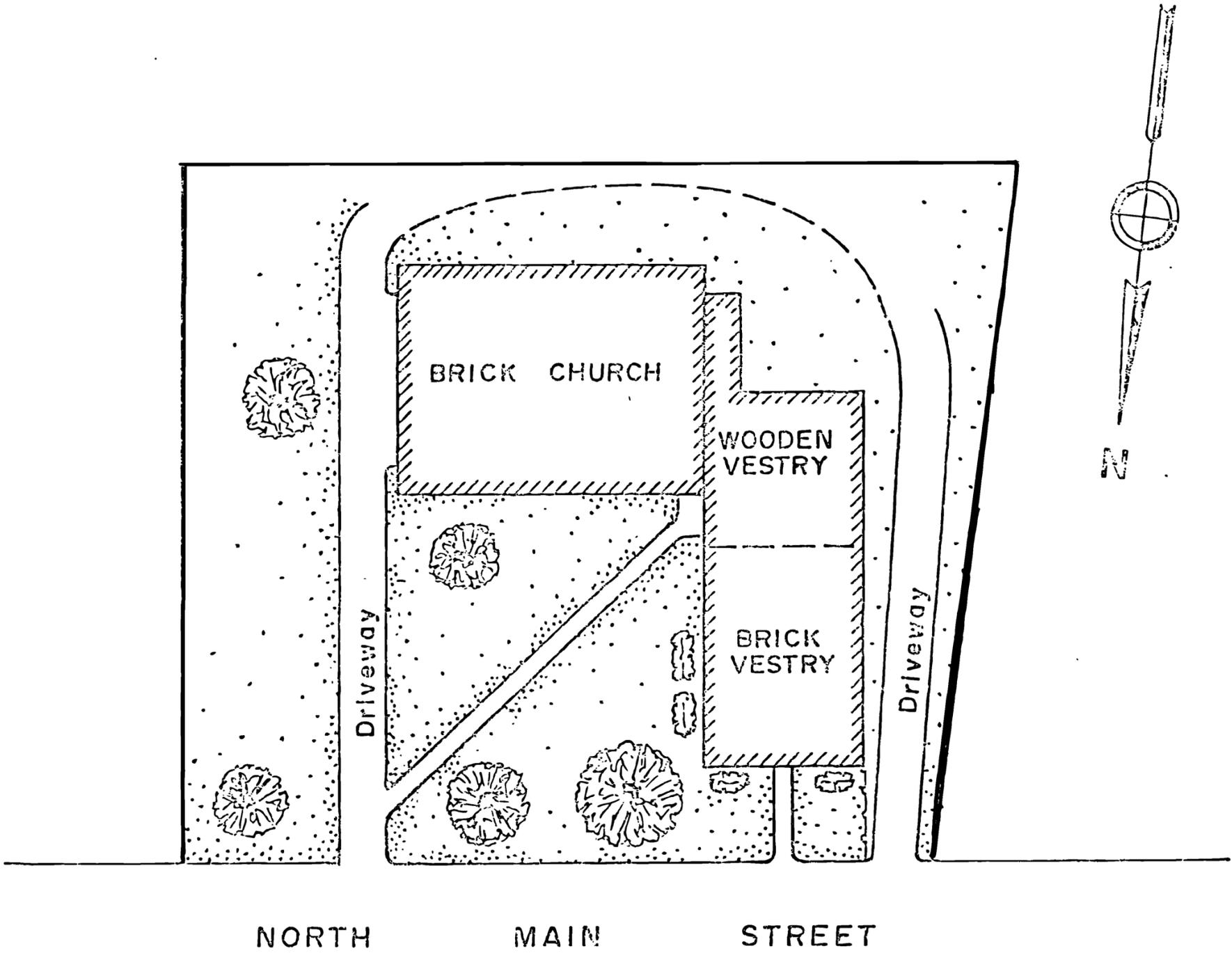
For NPS use only  
received  
date entered

Continuation sheet #5 - ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION

Item number --

Page 1

SKETCH MAP



FIRST FREE WILL BAPTIST CHURCH  
and VESTRY  
Ashland, New Hampshire



Prepared by:  
LAKES REGION PLANNING COMMISSION  
MEREDITH, NEW HAMPSHIRE