

FEB 16 1989

NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 8-86)

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OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

APR 26 1989

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

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

1. Name of Property

historic name LOWER WARNER MEETINGHOUSE

other names/site number none

2. Location

street & number N.H. Route 103 (north side) n/a not for publication

city, town Lower Warner n/a vicinity

state New Hampshire code NH county Merrimack code NH013 zip code 03278

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
1	_____ buildings
_____	_____ sites
_____	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
1	_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

R. Stewart Wallace
Signature of certifying official
NEW HAMPSHIRE

APR 20 1989
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Alanus Byers

5/25/89

for
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious structure

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: occasional meetings & services

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation granitewalls WOOD/weatherboardroof ASPHALTother none

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Lower Warner Meetinghouse is a frame ecclesiastical building constructed in the Greek Revival style in 1844-45. It is located on the north side of Route 103 in Lower Warner, a village consisting of approximately twelve late eighteenth and early nineteenth century houses within the township of Warner and one mile southeast of the town center. The property retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The exterior of the church building is unaltered since its erection, save the loss of the steeple during a thunderstorm in 1893 or 1894¹, and the sole interior alteration concerns the temporary replacement of most of the plaster ceiling with a suspended tile ceiling following roof damage from snow and subsequent plaster failure. Neither alteration has led to loss of integrity in regard to design.

The meetinghouse faces south, toward a field on the opposite side of the road. To its east and west are Federal houses. The meetinghouse is the only non-residential building in Lower Warner. It sits on a one-half acre site, elevated above the road on a two-tiered rise; granite steps which once led to the main entrance are now stored in the rear of the building. Mature trees occupy the front of the lot, and a stone wall marks the rear boundary.

The meetinghouse is rectangular in plan, with a gable roof clad with asphalt shingles and a two-stage tower. Two slender brick chimneys with arched brick caps rise from the roof at the southeast and southwest corners respectively. The building rests on granite blocks and lacks a cellar. Exterior walls are clad with four-inch butt clapboards.

The south (front) elevation is divided into three bays by the aforementioned paneled boards. The outer bays each contain a 20/20 sash wooden window with flat casings and flanked by split blinds. The center bay contains a deeply recessed entrance with a flush board door reveal. Each of the paired doors has two vertical panels that extend the entire length of the door and clay doorknobs. The flanking paneled boards on the face of the building, as well as a wide, horizontal board, frame the entrance. Two granite block steps with iron bootscrapers provide access to the entrance. The cornice of the building returns fully across the front gable to form a triangular pediment. In the tympanum of the pediment is a triangular louver. Below the pediment, a broad frieze consisting of two flat boards continues around the east, south and west elevations.

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The east and west sides of the building are identical. Each contains three 20/20 sash windows that extend nearly the full height of the elevation and match those on the front elevation. The elevations are framed by paneled cornerboards, a flat sill, and the frieze.

The rear (north) elevation is more simply finished. Clapboards sheath the entire wall, which is unbroken by a pediment. A single window, which has six lights in the lower sash and is boarded up in the upper, pierces the gable. The cornerboards are plain, flat boards.

The two-stage tower of the meetinghouse rises from the gallery section of the interior. It consists of a square lower portion and a square stage above it with rectangular louvers on all but the north side, which has vertical boards over the opening. Both stages are sheathed in flush board, have paneled cornerboards and are capped by strongly projecting cavetto cornices. A steeple originally rose from the second stage; it toppled over during a storm in 1893 or 1894.

The interior of the meetinghouse consists of a main gathering room with a rear gallery and an entrance corridor directly inside the doors and below the gallery. At either end of the corridor is a small closet accessed by a six-panel door and stairs leading to the gallery. Floors are grained pine boards. The main room, which is entered through doors with two full-length, raised panels found at the end of each aisle, contains eight rows of long slip pews. The backs and seats of the pews are made of unpainted pine boards. The aisle ends, which are painted, have a single raised panel and curved armrest. They are numbered with eight-sided tin plates with gold-painted numbers. Two pews were removed at some date from the rear center section of the main room. The pine floorboards within the aisles are grained; between the pews they are unfinished. At the north (front) end of the room is an elevated pulpit made of mahogany veneer in the Empire style, with four round columns supporting the desk (top) section which is upholstered. Behind the pulpit, against the wall, is a long pew for the minister.

The gallery has a solid railing with a full-width recessed panel overlooking the main room below. Two rows of pews are found in the gallery; they are not painted and lack panels but have curved armrests.

The interior walls of the building are plaster. A wainscot made of two horizontally-placed boards encircles the perimeter of the main room. It is unpainted along the east, west and south sides, but whitewashed on the

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altar (north) side. The plaster ceiling above all but the gallery section has been replaced with a hung tile ceiling, installed after snow damaged the roof rafters in 1969.

In addition to the pulpit, the building contains three kerosene lamps which hang on the north and south walls, an early piano, a Mason and Hamlin pump organ, a mid-nineteenth century drop-leaf table, and two stenciled sidechairs in front of the pulpit. One of the early stoves is stored on the premises. The building has never been mechanically heated or electrified.

¹ No photographs survive which depict the steeple, but it was probably a plain pyramidal structure capped by a finial; a piece of the weathervane that crowned it is in the Historical Society's collection.

8. Statement of Significance

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

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

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

<p>Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)</p> <p><u>Architecture</u></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Period of Significance</p> <p><u>1844-45</u></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Significant Dates</p> <p><u>1844-45</u></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
	<p>Cultural Affiliation</p> <p><u>N/A</u></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	
<p>Significant Person</p> <p><u>N/A</u></p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Architect/Builder</p> <p><u>unknown</u></p> <p>_____</p>	

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

The Lower Warner Meetinghouse meets Criteria C (architecture) in that it is a virtually unaltered example of a rural, vernacular meetinghouse designed in the Greek Revival style and constructed in 1844-45. In addition, it is the sole church in the Town of Warner which has survived in near-original condition. Although the building lost its steeple during a storm in 1893 or 1894, the lower two stages of the tower survived, and the building's integrity was not undermined. The interior of the meetinghouse retains most of its historic features, including pews, pulpit, grained floors, stove, chairs, lighting devices and original bible.¹ Neither electricity nor plumbing has ever been introduced into the building, and much of the interior appears to have its original finish. The period of significance, 1844-45, represents the date the building was constructed, or when it achieved its architectural significance. The meetinghouse is representative of a specific period of development in Warner. It is located in Lower Warner Village, once the main commercial district of the town, but today a quiet residential area where the meetinghouse is the only non-residential building and a major reminder of the village's past importance. The building meets Criteria Exception A as a religious property whose primary significance is derived from its little-altered representation of mid-nineteenth ecclesiastical architecture. The property was used regularly as a religious property for only two decades.

The Lower Warner Meetinghouse, like most New England meetinghouses built after 1830, is Greek Revival in style. Its builder or architect is not known, but its design is decidedly a rural interpretation of the style, characterized by its distinctive squat, angular proportions, pedimented gable, and deeply recessed center entrance flanked by full-height vertical paneled boards that suggest pilasters and are repeated at the outer corners.² The meetinghouse is the town's only historic religious building that has survived in near-original condition. The 1819 Congregational Church, which was moved to Warner Centre in 1845, was substantially renovated several times during the late nineteenth century. The Baptist Church, built in 1833, was remodeled and converted into a fraternal clubhouse

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Colby, Fred. Myron, "History of Warner". In History of Merrimack & Belknap Counties, ed. by D. Hamilton Hurd. Philadelphia: J.W. Lewis & Co., 1885, pp. 653-677.
First Congregational Church of Warner records [Warner Public Library].
Harris, Amanda B., "A Sketch of Warner". In Granite Monthly, v.19 (1895), pp. 411-439.
Harriman, Walter, The History of Warner, N.H. for 144 Years, from 1735-1879. Concord: Republican Press, 1879.
Lawrence, Robert F., New Hampshire Churches. Claremont, N.H., 1856.
New Hampshire Historical Society photograph collections.
Warner Historical Society photograph and manuscript collections.
Warner, N.H., 1880-1974, ed. by Carl Malmberg. Warner: Warner Historical Society, 1974.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Warner Historical Society

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property less than one acre

UTM References

A 19 272855 4794900
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property includes the entire parcel on which it sits, being the same parcel as when built, as located on Warner Property Map No. 10, Lot 95 and more fully described in Book 1057, Page 308 at the Merrimack County Registry of Deeds.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel on which it sits. This is the same parcel that was sold or given to the Second Orthodox Congregational Society for the construction of the building in 1844. There are no other buildings on the site.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth Durfee Hengen, Preservation Consultant
organization for Warner Historical Society date February 13, 1989
street & number 25 Ridge Road telephone 603-225-7977
city or town Concord state New Hampshire zip code 03301

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The history of the Lower Warner Meetinghouse predates its actual construction. As was true with most New Hampshire towns, one of the conditions of granting the township was that a minister be hired and a meetinghouse erected within a specified number of years. In 1766, four years after Warner was permanently settled, the first Congregational meetinghouse was built; it remained the only church in the community for fifty years. However, dissension within the church erupted before the close of the century, as disagreements surfaced over the proposed relocation of the meetinghouse. That first meetinghouse, a log structure, was located on the south side of the Warner River. After it was destroyed by fire four years later, it was rebuilt on the same site. Heated opposition on the part of the settlers on the opposite side of the river led to the appointment of a committee consisting of three men from neighboring towns to select a new site for the meetinghouse. Despite continued disputes, a building site was chosen on the north side, at the northwestern end of Lower Warner Village and, in 1789, a third meetinghouse was erected. It was later replaced in 1819 by yet another building, also on the north side and nearby.

In the 1840s the congregation again decided to move the meetinghouse, this time from Lower Warner Village to Centre Village, which had gradually usurped the former's position as the business center of the town. Although the move transpired, it was vehemently opposed by twenty-eight people in Lower Warner, who undertook to erect a meetinghouse of their own. Calling themselves the Second Orthodox Congregational Society in Warner, they agreed to erect a building "between the houses of Jacob Currier and Obadiah Hutchinson and, when built, said house shall be considered permanently located, never to be removed."³ Since the town had voted in 1843 to allow all denominations to use the Centre meetinghouse, it is possible that the Second Orthodox Society was also formed to preserve a purely Congregational body.⁴ Their meetinghouse was to be financed by a common practice of the period, through the sale of thirty-two shares, at twenty-five dollars per share, and subscribers were to be repaid by the subsequent sale of pews at auction. Four months later, an agreement between the parties and Stephen George authorized the latter to build a meetinghouse "for the use and benefit of the Second Orthodox Congregational Society in Warner...on or before the first day of March next [1845]."⁵

No further documentation has emerged concerning the construction of the meetinghouse, and until these two contracts were discovered

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several years ago, it had been assumed by local historians⁶ that the meetinghouse had been erected by the Methodists in Warner. Since one historian writes in 1879 of the Methodists' association with the building, and that "a meetinghouse, partly (perhaps mainly) built by them, now stands in a good state of preservation at the Lower Village", it is possible that the Second Orthodox Congregational Society never completed the building themselves, but leased⁷ the site and a partially or fully-built structure to the Methodists. Alternatively, the Orthodox Congregationalists may have used the building for a short period, rejoining the main church after a year or two. The latter is less likely, since that fact probably would have been recorded by historians writing less than thirty-five years later.⁸ It is probable that the Methodists were using the building by 1846, since the church's pulpit bible contains an inscription indicating it was given to the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1846. In either case,⁹ the Methodists used the building for services until the mid-1860s.

At the time the meetinghouse was erected, the Town of Warner was enjoying a thirty-year period of unparalleled prosperity. Farms, town-supported highways lined with stores and taverns, and a number of mills along the Warner River and its tributaries were the basis of its economic strength. The chief business center of the town was Lower Warner Village, which had the town's first post office (1813) and its first hotel, as well as a law office, tavern, and stores, many managed by the George family. Lower Warner had been largely settled by members of the George family, children of John Georgé who was a Hopkinton native and respected Concord lawyer with seventeen children. Stephen George was an affluent gentleman in the village, who had either sold or donated an acre of his land for the meetinghouse site and had overseen the construction of the meetinghouse. Stephen's brother Joshua (died 1874) lived on the opposite side of the meetinghouse and was president of the local bank between 1850 and 1867.¹⁰ Of the twenty-eight signatures supporting the new meetinghouse, seven had last names of George. Even before the move of the main church to Warner Centre, the shift of town affairs was presaged by the relocation of the post office there in 1830. Lower Warner today is entirely residential, save the meetinghouse and a small business located in a former residence. Although the meetinghouse is surrounded by a cluster of houses, Interstate 89, constructed in 1967, effectively severed the southern section of the village from the northern.

After the Lower Warner Meetinghouse was abandoned by the Methodists, the building lay vacant and fell into disrepair. In 1893 or 1894,

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the steeple toppled over during a violent thunderstorm. According to a gentlemen's agreement between Frank Tewksbury and Frank George Wilkins, the two abutters of the property and both descendants of the George family, maintenance of the building fell to the Wilkins family, on whose side the steeple landed. Florence Ordway Wilkins took the responsibility seriously, and held several fund-raising events to paint and re-roof the building and clean up the interior. After her death in 1897, her work was continued by F. George Wilkins' second wife, Elizabeth Howell Wilkins, who lived until 1965. The fund-raising activities ranged from a Mother Goose lawn party to children's theater productions and dances in the Wilkins' barn. The church itself was used for a summer Sunday school, occasional weddings and memorial services and, since 1910, an annual religious service.¹¹

In 1969 Nancy Sibley Wilkins, the daughter of F. George Wilkins and great-granddaughter of Stephen George, and who continues to reside in the adjacent Stephen George House, gave the property to the year-old Warner Historical Society. Earlier that year, the building's only other major alteration had occurred, when the weight of snow on the roof caused a major beam to break. Steel cables were installed to stabilize the rafters, concealed by a new suspended tile ceiling. (The Historical Society plans to replace the tile ceiling with plaster or sheetrock in 1989 or 1990.) Under the Historical Society's ownership, the building continues to be used seasonally for weddings and occasional services and concerts.

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FOOTNOTES

- 1 The bible is now housed in the Historical Society's headquarters in Warner Centre.
- 2 Over 175 churches in New Hampshire were photographed during the mid-1940s; the photograph collection, housed at the New Hampshire Historical Society, contains no images of a building whose design resembles that of the Warner Meetinghouse closely enough to allow an architect or builder's attribution. No other churches in the region bear strong similarities to its design either.
- 3 Apparently the location indicated in this agreement was later changed, as the final site was between the houses of Stephen and Joshua George. See contract dated June 10, 1844, Warner Historical Society collection.
- 4 Vote taken at Town Meeting, March 1843.
- 5 Contract dated October 16, 1844, Warner Historical Society collection. Although Stephen George was paid the sum of \$900 to build the meetinghouse, he was more likely being authorized to oversee its construction.
- 6 None of the deeds or contracts relating to the sale of the land for the meetinghouse or its construction were recorded at the Merrimack County Registry of Deeds. Those that have been found were part of the George family papers; undoubtedly other documents existed and may ultimately be found. Similarly, no newspaper accounts of the church's construction were found between January 1844 and June 1845 in the local paper, the New Hampshire Patriot.
- 7 Harriman, Walter, History of Warner, N.H. for 144 Years, from 1735-1879. Concord: Republican Press, 1879, p.511. The New Hampshire Conference on Methodist Churches, when preparing a history in 1928, had no record of a Methodist Church Building in Warner. See letter dated July 28, 1928 from T.E. Cramer to E.H. Wilkins, Warner Historical Society collection. However, local historians are clear on this issue.
- 8 The Centennial Anniversary of the Congregational Church, written in 1872 by Rev. Henry S. Huntington, makes no reference to a split of any kind within the Warner church. The actual records of the church have not survived in full, although the George family, not mentioned in as members of one of the Ladies' Benevolent Society in 1844 or 1845, rejoin in 1846.

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9 Historians differ on the actual date, but all place the Methodists' departure sometime in the mid-1860s.

10 Granite Monthly, vol. 19, p. 421

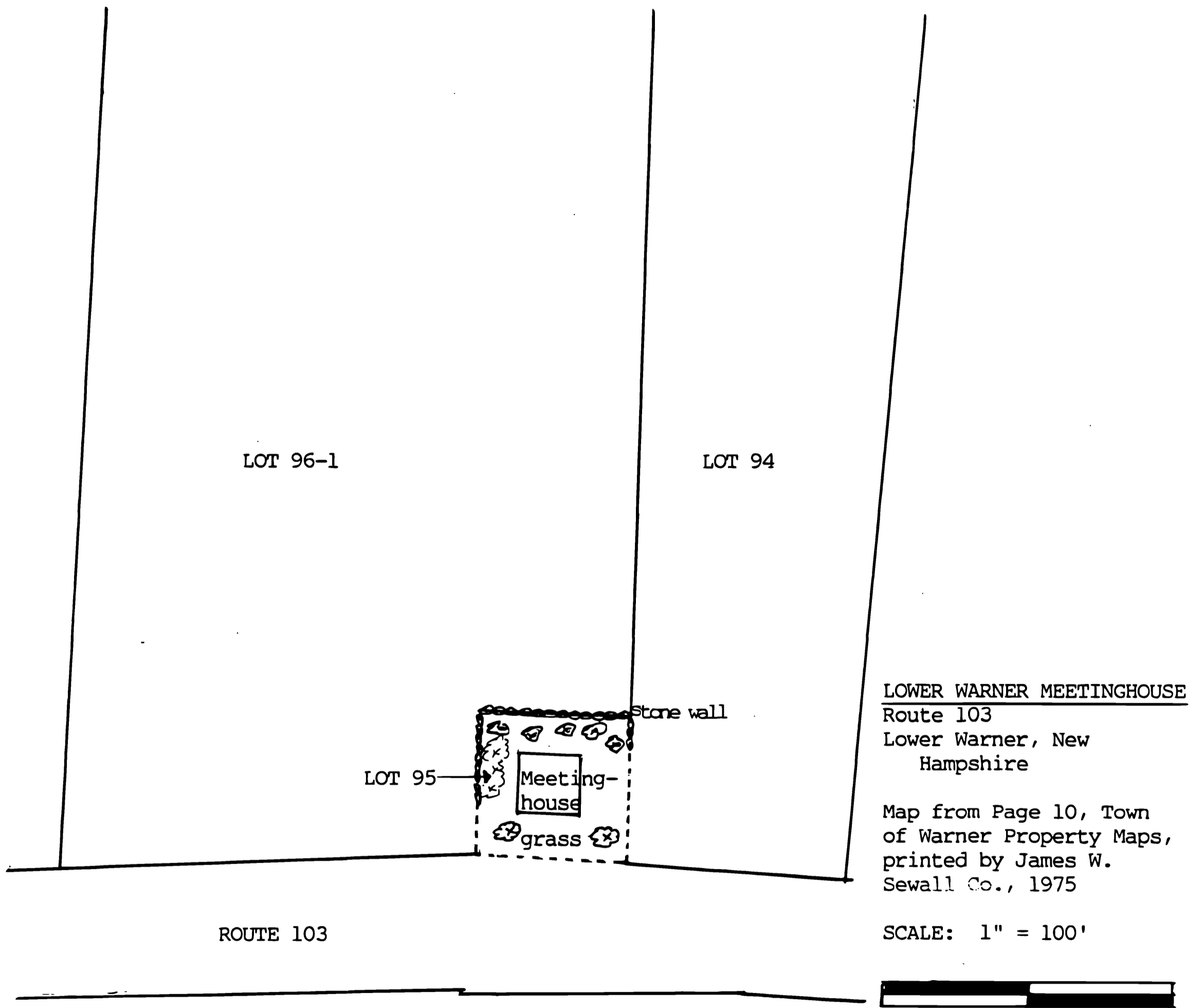
11 Accounts written by Nancy Sibley Wilkins, 1965-69, Warner Historical Society collection.

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OWNER OF PROPERTY

Warner Historical Society
PO Box 189
Warner, New Hampshire 03278

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This certifies that the appearance has not changed since these photographs were taken.