

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED FEB 13 1980  
DATE ENTERED NOV 13 1980

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON

Free Will Baptist Church

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Ridge Top Road

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

New Durham *nc*

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1

STATE

New Hampshire

CODE

33

COUNTY

Strafford

CODE

017

**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 type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<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

Free Will Baptist Church

STREET & NUMBER

Ridge Top Road

CITY, TOWN

New Durham

VICINITY OF

STATE

New Hampshire

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Strafford County Registry of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

Strafford County Justice & Administration Building, County Farm Road

CITY, TOWN

Dover

STATE

New Hampshire

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

None

DATE

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Situated on a rock ledge in a rural area a few miles from the present New Durham town center, the Free Will Baptist Church is a one-story, three-bay, rectangular structure of post and beam construction. It is gable-roofed and clapboarded, with gable front orientation to the road.

The broad gable-end facade is framed by simple pilasters rising to a molded box cornice and a massive triangular pediment and contains a six-panelled door and two shuttered windows. The pediment and the projecting eaves of the building are supported by paired brackets. The center door in the gable end is recessed, has a simple surround with a plain entablature, and is flanked by pilasters.

The basic structure remains unaltered. The two-level belfry, added in 1869, is square and clapboarded. The detail of the main block, including box cornices, pilasters and paired brackets, is repeated on the lower level of the belfry. The second level, with pilasters on a smaller scale and louvers on all four sides, is lined by a lattice-work balustrade with gently sloping triangular railings decorated with open work in the quatrefoil motif. On each corner of the balustrade is a pyramidal post supporting a wooden sphere. The windows have 12/12 sash throughout. There are two surviving chimneys.

Interior features of the building include stamped metal ceiling plates and sidewalls, probably installed in the late nineteenth century, and an elaborate bronze oil lamp suspended from the ceiling.

There are no auxiliary structures on the property.

(Tax Map Reference Number 4-33).

# 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input 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

1819

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The New Durham Free Will Baptist Church, built in 1819, is historically significant as the mother church of the Free Will Baptist movement that began in New Hampshire and Maine in the latter part of the eighteenth century and eventually spread throughout the United States.

The development of the Free Will movement in America and the history of the New Durham church are inseparably associated with the life and philosophy of the movement's founder, Benjamin Randall. Randall was born in New Castle, New Hampshire, in 1749, went to sea at the age of eight and made his living as a sailor until the age of eighteen, when he returned to New Castle and became an apprentice sailmaker, and later a tailor. At 23 he joined the Congregational Church but within a few years had become disillusioned with the behavior of its members, whom he considered to be intemperate and godless. He left the church in 1775, was baptized by immersion the following year, and joined the Baptist denomination.

Shortly thereafter, he became an itinerant evangelist in the rural areas of New Hampshire and southern Maine, and in 1778 was invited to preach in New Durham. He purchased thirty acres of land near the site of the present church and became involved in a farmer-preacher type of ministry that was common in the frontier areas of northern New England.

At this time doctrinal divisions were little known among the Baptists of New England, but before long such a division had manifested itself between Randall and the traditional Baptists of the region. Challenging the prevailing Calvinist theory of salvation only for those so predestined, he and his followers held to the freedom of the will and to the belief that men could be spiritually regenerated by improving the means of grace that they believed God had bestowed on them. They became known as "Freewillers," an epithet of derision, and when Randall's preachments were declared heretical, they were "disfellowshipped."

(See Continuation Sheet #8-1.)

# MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

**UTM NOT VERIFIED**

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

**ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1

QUADRANGLE NAME Alton, NH

QUADRANGLE SCALE 15' series

UTM REFERENCES

A | 1, 9 | 3 2, 5 | 1, 5, 0 | 4, 8 | 0, 7 | 2, 5, 0

B | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

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### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property nominated is a trapezoidal lot bounded on the south by Ridge Top Road, on the northeast by the Bernard property and on the northwest by the Woodside property. (Tax Map Ref. No. 4-33).

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Bernard Hiatt, Preservation Advisor

ORGANIZATION

Strafford-Rockingham Regional Council

STREET & NUMBER

1 Water Street

CITY OR TOWN

Exeter

DATE

May 15, 1979

TELEPHONE

(603) 778-0885

STATE

New Hampshire

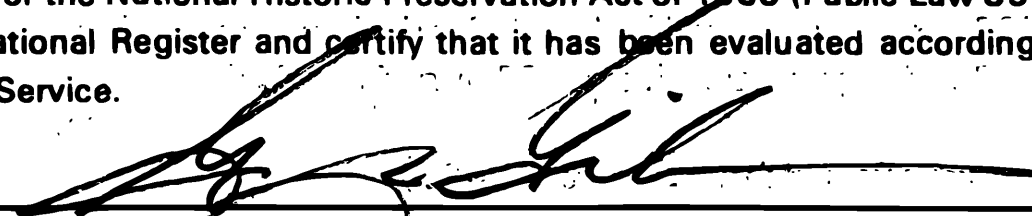
## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

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

DATE January 4, 1980

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

  
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 11/13/80

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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They held their first organizational meeting in New Durham on June 30, 1780. Randall was chosen to write a covenant as well as a polity for the church outlining a form of government which evolved into that which is used by the present-day denomination.

The first "quarterly meeting" (an association of congregations) was held in 1783, and in 1804 the Free Will Baptists were recognized by the State of New Hampshire as a distinct religious denomination. In 1827, with an estimated 304 churches and 18,000 members, the General Conference of Free Will Baptists was formed and by the outbreak of the Civil War its churches had spread into most of the Northern states. The churches of the Northern Conference merged at the Northern Baptist Convention in 1910, and a general re-organization took place in 1935, resulting in the present National Association of Free Will Baptists.

The plans for the New Durham church were drawn up in the autumn of 1818, ten years after the death of Benjamin Randall, and the building was completed the following summer. The belfry was added in 1869, the stamped metal ceiling plates and sidewalls were probably installed in the late nineteenth century, and since that time the building has undergone no major alterations.

Recent maintenance and preservation activities, undertaken by the membership, have included the removal of the wood stoves in 1965 and the re-enforcement and re-balancing of the belfry, repositioning of the original granite slab foundation, partial reroofing and interior and exterior painting in 1977.

The structure is excellently maintained and retains its original fabric and character. Standing alone on high, open land on New Durham's scenic "Ridge", with no twentieth century intrusions within its sight lines, the church conveys a sense of dignity, serenity and stability that provides the town and the surrounding area with an important historic and aesthetic link to its past.

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SIGNIFICANCE, architecture:

The New Durham Free Will Baptist Church is a significant example of rural religious architecture. It is the earliest of a coherent group of church buildings in southeastern New Hampshire associated with the Free Will Baptists, a sect that was established in the immediate vicinity of the New Durham church about 1780. In its original form, without the present belfry, the New Durham church reflected the steepleless meetinghouses that were traditional in the region throughout the eighteenth century; a similar Free Will Baptist church, dating from 1842, stood at nearby North Strafford [Snackerty] until 1956.

In its present form, which derives from alterations in 1869, the church relates to an important regional group of surviving Free Will Baptist structures. Among those which are stylistically close to the New Durham building are the Free Will Baptist churches at Strafford Corners [Crown Point] (1835), Bow Lake Village (1843), and Center Strafford (1857), all a few miles from New Durham in the neighboring township of Strafford, N.H. The latter building, especially, matches many of the features of the New Durham church. This similarity of style may derive from the kindred degree of importance that both churches attained within the sect: while the New Durham building was the mother church of the Free Will Baptists, that at Center Strafford was adjacent to the academy or seminary sponsored by the Church in the mid-1800s.

The New Durham church combines Greek Revival and Italianate features. The Greek Revival elements of its design, which include the simple pilasters of its facade and tower, had been established as appropriate design features of Free Will Baptist churches in the area by 1834, when the church at Strafford Corners [Crown Point] and the academy at Center Strafford had both been constructed in an eclectic style that combined traditional Federal detailing with distinctively Grecian mouldings and trim. The present church at Center Strafford, built near the academy in 1857, seems to have been the immediate prototype for the remodellings carried out on the New Durham structure in 1869. Both buildings share the same general plan, similar tower designs, and closely-related Greek Revival detailing. In addition, both structures have deeply-projecting eaves with paired brackets that reflect the Italianate influence current in this region of New Hampshire by the mid-nineteenth century. The major difference between the two churches is the higher roof pitch of the New Durham structure, undoubtedly a reflection of its original proportioning before the 1869 remodellings.

Because the Free Will Baptists were the fastest-growing religious group in New Hampshire in the early decades of the nineteenth century, their churches form a major part of the architectural heritage of the region. As the earliest Free Will Baptist church in the area and the symbolic focus of the sect, the New Durham structure stands as the epitome of this important regional grouping of buildings.

FHR-8-300A  
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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Major Bibliographical References:

Armstrong, O. K. and Marjorie Moore, The Indomitable Baptists. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1967.

Baxter, Norman Allen, History of the Free Will Baptists, A Study in New England Separatism. Rochester, New York: American Baptist Historical Society, 1957.

Jennings, Ellen Cloutman, The History of New Durham, New Hampshire. New Durham, New Hampshire, 1962.