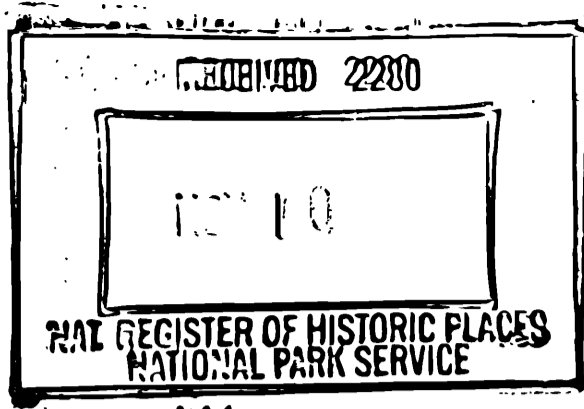


1446

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Baptist New Meeting-House
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 461 Main Street N/A not for publication
city or town New London N/A vicinity
state New Hampshire code NH county Merrimack code 013 zip code 03257

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)
James M. Corcoran 10/31/05
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
NEW HAMPSHIRE
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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): _____

Signature of the Keeper Edson H. Beall Date of Action 12.22.05

Baptist New Meeting-House of New London

Merrimack County, NH

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing		Noncontributing		
1		0		buildings
0		0		sites
0		0		structures
0		0		objects
1		0		Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: Religious Facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: Religious Facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Federal

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: Granite
 walls WOOD: Weatherboard

roof ASPHALT: Shingle
 other N/A

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1Baptist New Meeting-House of New London
Merrimack County, NH

Description

The Federal-style Baptist New Meeting-House, at the corner of Main Street and Seamans Road in New London, is a large, rectangular, two-story framed structure with a gable roof. It has a projecting pavilion and three-stage tower on its front (south) elevation. Measuring 43.5 feet wide by 72.5 feet long, the main body of the church rests on a foundation of split granite. Its walls are clapboarded and its roof is covered with asphalt shingles. Its classical cornice has a crown molding beneath the eaves, a deeply projecting plancia, and a bed molding lying against the walls of the main body of the building.

The Meeting House is a late but faithful reflection of a "Design for a Meeting House" published by Asher Benjamin as Plate 27 in his *The Country Builder's Assistant* (Greenfield, Massachusetts, 1797), the first architectural guidebook written by an American for American craftsmen. The construction materials and details—including closely-laid, white painted clapboards, small multi-paned windows, well-detailed ornamentation, and a well-balanced and stately steeple—help to date the building to the early 19th century. Much of what is seen today is original to the building. The Revere Bell in the steeple is one of the building's remarkable examples of the workmanship of that era.

The façade, or southern elevation, of the church is the most visually complex and highly ornamented portion of the exterior. Like all churches based on the Asher Benjamin pattern, the Baptist Church utilizes one of its gable ends as its front. This façade is five bays in total width. Projecting five feet from the center of the front is a three-bay gable-roofed pavilion having its eaves line at the same elevation as the eaves of the main body of the church, and topped by a closed pediment. On the first story, the central bay of the pavilion is filled with a wide double doorway, each leaf of the doors having four raised panels. The door opening is capped by a closed triangular pediment supported by a full entablature with a pulvinated frieze and by fluted pilasters. The doorway is flanked on each side by a window filled with nine-over-nine sashes. On the second story, the pavilion has a central Palladian window with a louvered fan above its central sash. On each side of the Palladian window are windows filled with nine-over-nine sashes, like those on the first story. In the center of the tympanum of the pediment of the pavilion is a louvered semicircular fan.

The projecting pavilion is flanked by single windows on the building's main body on both the first and second stories. Like other windows on the main structure, these openings are filled with twelve-over-twelve sashes.

The tower of the church rests largely on the roof of the main body of the building, but its front face, lying in the same plane as the front wall of the pavilion, is supported by the roof of the pavilion. The first stage of the tower is tall and plain, marked by a deeply projecting cornice like those of the main building and the pavilion below. The clapboarded walls of the first stage have displayed clock dials on the west, south, and east sides since the installation of the tower clock in 1884. The cornice of the first stage of the tower is capped by a balustrade of square pickets held by heavy wooden rails that are supported by four plinths at each corner of the tower. Each plinth is capped by a turned wooden urn finial.

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Continuation SheetBaptist New Meeting-House of New London
Merrimack County, NHSection number 7 Page 2**Description continued**

The second stage of the tower is an open belfry. Unlike the majority of belfries derived from Asher Benjamin's published design, this stage of the tower is square rather than octagonal in plan. In keeping with a preference seen on a number of earlier churches in neighboring New Hampshire towns, the belfry is supported by four corner posts, cased as heavy pilasters, rather than by eight thin, turned wooden columns as suggested in Benjamin's plate. The openings above the corner posts are spanned by semielliptical arches with molded archivolt. Above the arched openings, the belfry is capped by a deeply projecting cornice identical to that of the tower stage below and to the cornice of the main body of the building. Like the tower stage below it, the belfry cornice is capped by a balustrade of square pickets, heavy rails, and corner plinths supporting urn finials. The church bell was cast by Revere Copper Company in Boston.

The topmost stage of the tower is an octagonal lantern. Each face of the octagon is marked by a louvered blind with a semicircular arched fan at its top. Like the stages below, the lantern has a strongly projecting classical cornice. Above the cornice, the lantern is capped by a faceted ogee dome, as suggested in Benjamin's plate. A tall wooden spire, topped by a gilded ball and weathervane, rises from the apex of the copper-clad dome.

Each side of the building has eight openings along its length on each story. On the second story, or gallery level, each of these openings is a window filled with twelve-over-twelve sashes. On the first story, the two southernmost openings are doors that enter the front stairhall of the building. The northernmost opening on the east side, known as the Shepard Memorial Door, faces buildings of adjacent Colby-Sawyer College and was remodeled in 1944 from a window into this second side doorway.

The interior of the building is characterized by plain plastered walls and by joiner's work that reflects both the Federal style and several later remodelings. The curved slip pews on the main floor are arranged in concentric arcs focused on the pulpit. The latter is a high enclosure, reached by stairs on both sides, which replaced a low, mid-nineteenth-century dais in 1962. A Palladian window is centered in the wall behind the pulpit, replacing a variety of earlier treatments that formerly decorated this wall.

The galleries embrace the south end and the east and west sides of the auditorium. The gallery breastwork has molded entablatures at its bottom and top and a curved transition between its sides and the south end. The side galleries are supported by wrought iron rods that extend down from the tie beams of the building's roof trusses. This method of support probably dates from the lengthening of the building in 1853 (see below). Four support columns were added beneath the south end of the gallery when it was enlarged in 1987 to accommodate the custom-built organ.

Original appearance:

The New London Baptist Meeting House retains its original overall design. Over the years, however, a series of remodelings to both exterior and interior have altered some of the building's details.

It is known that, as built in 1826, the sides of the main body of the church were six bays, or approximately 47.5 feet, in length. In keeping with a practice that was not uncommon in New Hampshire during the 1820s, the pulpit was originally located at the front (south end) of the auditorium, adjacent to the entry wall. According to the Rev. Dr. George Gardner in remarks marking the Church's 1888 centennial celebration and published the

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Continuation SheetBaptist New Meeting-House of New London
Merrimack County, NHSection number 7 Page 3**Description continued**

following year, “[T]his house, as it was originally built, was of sufficient capacity to accommodate all who wished to worship in it, till the opening of the Academy in 1853, when, on account of the large number of students requiring seats, it was enlarged by cutting it open, moving back the pulpit end, and putting in twenty new pews in front of the pulpit,” which was then moved to the north end of the auditorium. No known photograph shows the church in its original configuration, before its extension.

The use of wrought iron tension rods to support galleries and balconies became commonplace during the 1850s with the advent of wood-and-iron roof and bridge trusses. It therefore seems likely, as noted above, that the method of suspending the side galleries of the church from the roof trusses by means of iron rods was adopted at the time of the enlargement in 1853, when the orientation of the galleries would have been changed in relation to the relocated pulpit.

The earliest known photograph of the building, a stereoscopic photograph taken of New London’s main street from the east, shows only the front of the structure [see Exhibit A]. Dating from before the installation of the tower clock in 1884, this photograph shows that the side walls of the first stage of the tower were fully clapboarded, but seems to indicate that the front (south) wall of this stage of the tower had a Palladian window just below the cornice. The same photograph shows that the spire and weathervane above the dome were considerably taller than the present spire and vane.

The early photograph confirms that the front door of the church originally had a horizontal entablature or cornice rather than its current triangular pediment, added in 1962, and suggests that the entrance may have had a pair of single-leaf doors, each surmounted by a semicircular fanlight.

The same photograph shows that the southernmost bay on the east side of the building was a simple doorway, perhaps dating from 1826. Such a side entrance is highly unusual and was probably provided for some reason that was unique to this church. The photograph shows that this side doorway was a simple entrance framed by a plain casing rather than the pedimented entrance located in that position since the 1962 remodeling of the building. There was no similar entrance at the front of the western side wall of the building until 1962, when the pedimented entrance located in that position was added. In most church buildings that follow the standard Benjamin pattern, the stairs to the gallery rise in the front corners of the main body of the building, usually in three runs. In the New London Baptist Meeting House these corners are pierced by the doorways mentioned, and the stairs to the gallery rise in two runs. As mentioned, both side doorways now have elaborate pedimented enframements, added during the renovation of 1962 and closely matching the front doorway of the church.

Although the earliest photograph of the church shows twelve-over-twelve sashes in the visible window openings, a number of published photographs taken during the late 1800s and early 1900s indicate that the original sashes had then been replaced by two-over-two sashes. The current multi-pane sashes date from the 1958 restoration to original-style windows.

Beginning in 1838, the land behind the church was embraced on the north, west, and east sides by a U-shaped arrangement of connected horse sheds. The sheds were later used as car stalls and were removed in 1932.

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Continuation SheetBaptist New Meeting-House of New London
Merrimack County, NHSection number 7 Page 4

Description continued

One photograph showing the dais and interior of the building after 1879 suggests that the interior was then decorated with *trompe l'oeil* painting that simulated pilasters and a modillioned cornice around the outer walls of the auditorium. Other photographs, taken in later years, show the addition, in the late 1890s, of pressed metal ceiling and wall panels, which remained in place until the renovation of 1962. In 1906 an interior baptistry was built. Gas replaced oil lamps in 1906, and electricity replaced gas in 1916. During the 1920s, decorative molding in the shape of an arch was affixed to the wall behind the pulpit in memory of the Burpee family. A cross was centered in the top quarter of this Burpee Memorial Arch. The belfry was rebuilt in 1953 and floodlighted.

In 1959 the Church began discussing a restoration of the Meeting House, thought necessary in order to correct "improvements" such as the stamped steel sheathing on the walls and ceilings. As a part of this restoration the new high pulpit was installed, the flanking stairways built, and the Palladian window inserted above the pulpit. The baptistry was retiled, and colonial chandeliers and sconces were installed. New carpets and pew cushions were provided. At this time the pediments were added to the doorways, entranceways were redesigned, and the brick walkway running east to west from the parking lot to the west lawn walkway was laid. The metal sheathing was removed, and the walls and ceilings were plastered and painted. The restoration was completed in 1962.

In 1969 a large, modern Parish House was constructed as an attachment to the rear elevation of the Meeting House. The first Parish House, which began as a Vestry, or Chapel, was a small, separate building on the western side of the Meeting House, erected about 1874 as a gift from George W. Herrick and doubled in size in 1904 through a gift from Mrs. James B. Colgate. In 1921 improvements to the Chapel included the addition of a second floor. In the 1930s the building was remodeled and rededicated as the Parish House, and improvements continued. Then, in 1967, it was decided to take the building down and construct a new Parish House.

Dedicated in 1969, the new Parish House was approximately 80 feet by 100 feet at its longest point, with its longer sides perpendicular to the longer sides of the Meeting House. It was added to the rear of the Meeting House and is bordered on the opposite side by a driveway on the adjacent Colby-Sawyer College campus. As constructed, this 8605-square-foot, two-story structure was accessible through five exterior doors as well as interior doors on either side of the pulpit. It provided meeting rooms, classrooms, a library/parlor, offices, a kitchen, and rest rooms, without compromising the integrity of the Meeting House itself. The new Parish House was "modern" to its period, with short truncated roof planes leading up to flat roofs as well as inverted dormers. The exterior is white siding intended to simulate the clapboards of the Meeting House, although without the benefit of matching spacing. The windows are of single-pane steel sash, commonly used in modern style buildings in the 1960s and 70s.

Subsequent improvements to the Meeting House itself have included the installation of an amplifying system in 1976 and an automatic fire alarm system in 1986. More noticeable was the 1987 balcony enlargement, necessary in order to better accommodate the custom designed and built pipe organ from the Schantz Organ Company of Orville, Ohio. This organ was preceded by a seraphine, donated by Richard Messer in 1837, and an organ, donated by James B. Colgate and Richard Messer in 1865.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Baptist New Meeting-House of New London
Merrimack County, NH

Section number 7 Page 5

Description continued

In 2003 a large portion of the 1969 Parish House was demolished, and a chapel, bell choir room, meeting rooms and classrooms, offices, a library, a basement activity room, kitchenettes, and handicap rest rooms replaced and enlarged the footprint of the demolished section. The addition borrows elements from the original church building and adapts them in a neoclassical style. The roof pitch has been copied to match the original structure (approximately 6 on 12) and similar proportions to height and width have also been respected. The simple detailing of the twelve-over-twelve existing sash in their rhythmic pattern was carried through the new building. The corner board sizes along with the clapboard spacing (irregular) was maintained to simulate a seamless elevation. The Greek pediment of the addition follows the Federal and Empire period (1780–1850), and the round louver suggests a play on the traditional Palladian theme of that time. The entry door, on the east side of the building, also has a traditional Greek pediment-style roof over the door which is flanked by two sidelights and pilasters. While the detailing was not intended to be an exact replication, it does serve as both a current interpretation and a reminder of the historic splendor of the Meeting House. As part of the 2003 addition, the 1969 kitchen and one entryway to the 1969 Parish House were remodeled and a fire sprinkler system was added to the Meeting House.

The Parish House now measures approximately 80 feet by 120 feet at its widest point and is more-or-less a rectangle constructed perpendicular to the rectangular Meeting House, with the Parish House and the 1826 building together forming an L-shaped structure. Because of the placement of the Parish House, its compatible roof lines, and its surrounding landscaping, the Meeting House remains the more visible and prominent portion of the structure. The design and placement of the Parish House allows an unobstructed view of the east, west, and south (front) sides of the 1826 Meeting House as lengthened in 1853.

The Meeting House with Parish House addition, at the corner of Main Street and Seamans Road, is located at a part of town known as Colby Hill. Colby-Sawyer College is next door. Across Seamans Road is a brick structure, Whipple Town Hall, which is owned by the Town. It is used for community gatherings, town meetings, and as a courthouse. It also houses New London's Police Department. The Meeting House predates both of these significant neighbors. Next to the Town Hall is the Town Green. Across Main Street from the Meeting House is a residential area with homes dating from the 19th century, of various architectural styles.

The land that the Meeting House sits on is near the highest elevation in the Town of New London and on Main Street. The street borders of the building are lined with mature maple trees. Other landscaping is somewhat austere. New London once had large granite slabs as sidewalks. The only remnant of this today is the complete front path from Main Street to the brick walkway at the foot of the front steps to the First Baptist Church Meeting House.

Name of Property

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1826 – 1955

Significant Dates

1826

1853

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Patterned after a design by Asher Benjamin

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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

Name of repository:

The First Baptist Church of New London, NH

Baptist New Meeting-House of New London

Merrimack County, NH

Name of Property

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.3 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 19 258735 4810964
Zone Easting Northing

3 Zone Easting Northing
4 Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Cheryl Cook and Thomas DeMille

organization The First Baptist Church of New London, NH date August 5, 2005

street & number 461 Main Street telephone (603) 526-6511

city or town New London state NH zip code 03257

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name The First Baptist Church of New London, NH

street & number 461 Main Street telephone (603) 526-6511

city or town New London state NH zip code 03257

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 6Baptist New Meeting-House of New London
Merrimack County, NH

Statement of Significance

The Baptist New Meeting-House is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. It is significant architecturally as a well-preserved representation of a Federal-style meeting house patterned after a design by Asher Benjamin. It possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association for the year 1826, the date of construction.

Architectural Significance

As built in 1826, the New London Baptist Meeting House conformed to a classic Federal-style pattern first published as a model for church design almost thirty years earlier. The church was closely patterned on Plate 27, a "Design for a Meeting House," in Asher Benjamin's *The Country Builder's Assistant* (Greenfield, Massachusetts, 1797). This book was the first builder's guidebook written by an American author for American craftsmen and was pivotal in the introduction of the Federal architectural style.

The classic meeting house had been a rectangular building with a gable roof, usually built without a steeple. In the classic meeting house, the principal entrance was at the center of one of the long sides of the structure (usually facing south), and the pulpit was placed against the opposite wall (usually the north wall) on the shorter axis of the building.

By contrast, the Benjamin pattern for a church placed the principal entrance at the center of one of the gable ends of the structure, with the pulpit placed against the opposite end, along the longer axis of the rectangle.¹ This arrangement followed the plan that had been used previously for Anglican churches in New England, but had seldom been adopted by Congregational, Presbyterian, or Baptist congregations, which generally adhered to the traditional meeting house plan.

The New London Baptist Meeting House is significant as a well-preserved example of Asher Benjamin's 1797 meeting house design, a design that caused Americans to turn from the Georgian style, which had predominated in New England throughout most of the 1700s, to the Federal architectural style.

Historical Background and Role in the Town of New London's Development

Incubated and funded by the Town of New London in its infancy in the late 18th century, the Baptist Church was the largest religious order in the community throughout the 19th, and the sole church having its own house of worship at the dawn of the 20th. This symbiotic relationship offers an interesting insight into the nature of church-state affairs in New Hampshire. Although the relationship was ordinarily cordial, it was a disagreement among the parties that led directly to the construction of the Baptist New Meeting-House in 1826, with the resultant relocation of the Town center to present-day Main Street.

1. Benjamin, *The Country Builder's Assistant*, Plate 27.

United States Department of the Interior
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Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 7Baptist New Meeting-House of New London
Merrimack County, NH**Statement of Significance, Historical Background, continued**

New London was incorporated in June 1779 by the General Court. Original grants from the Masonian Proprietors in 1773 reserved a lot for the "first settled minister," and ten years later it was agreed at Town Meeting "to do something in support of ... [a] Preacher." In 1786 it was decided to build a meeting house on Summer (now, Old Main) Street to serve the needs of a fast-growing town of some 219 people.

By the law and custom of the time, each New Hampshire community was required to choose a religious faith at Town Meeting. This faith then became the established church of the town, supported by taxes paid by all. Most New Hampshire towns chose the Congregational Church, but because many of its citizens were Baptists from Attleboro, Massachusetts, New London, acting in its corporate capacity, voted to call Baptist Pastor Job Seamans of Attleboro.

Although most citizens were at the same time Baptists and voters at Town Meeting, the lines between local government and Church were established at an early date. The Town-owned meeting house remained a work in progress for decades. After the Town fell behind in its salary obligations to Elder Seamans, he agreed, in 1795, to no longer look to the Town for compensation.

The most controversial issue among the parties concerned the right to use the Town-owned meeting house. As early as 1797, the Town granted inhabitants not belonging to the Baptist Society the right to invite preachers to use the building. In 1819, the State passed the Tolerance Act, granting citizens the right of denominational choice and fueling a conflict not unique to New London. Finally, at an 1825 Special Town Meeting, Baptists were officially denied the exclusive right to use the meeting house for public worship.

Baptists were determined to build a meeting house of their own. At the time, the center of New London was on Summer Street, approximately one mile west of current-day Main Street. The decision to locate the Baptist New Meeting-House on Colby Hill was a significant one for both Church and Town: upon completion of the Meeting House, New London's center began gravitating to the east.

The Church turned to Anthony Colby and David Everett to supervise construction of the Meeting House, and foundation stones were laid on June 27, 1826. Anthony Colby and his father, Joseph, were instrumental in supporting the new Church and in establishing the adjacent New London Academy, incorporated in 1837 and opened in 1838. Anthony Colby later became a Major General in the New Hampshire Militia, served eight terms in the legislature, and was elected Governor in 1846. An extremely successful farmer and businessman, he also served as New Hampshire's Adjutant General during the early years of the Civil War.

On July 4, 1826, the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, as John Adams and Thomas Jefferson lay dying in faraway states, the large post and beam frame was raised on Colby Hill. All work was completed by early winter, and a formal dedication of the Baptist New Meeting-House was held on Thursday, January 11, 1827.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

Baptist New Meeting-House of New London
Merrimack County, NH

Statement of Significance, Historical Background, continued

A 680-pound Revere Bell, cast in 1826 and numbered 339 in the stock book at the Paul Revere Foundry, was installed in the steeple. It served the Church purpose of calling members to worship, but it also served the Town in at least two capacities: as a fire alarm and as a means of announcing the death of a townsman. In the 1830s the Church exchanged the bell for a larger one from Revere Copper Company.

In 1884 the Revere Bell was joined in the steeple by the large Town clock, built by George M. Stevens of Cambridge, Massachusetts, and gilded by John H. Edmunds. This clock was given to the Town by General Luther McCutchins and his mercantile partner, Mark Nelson. General McCutchins was a successful local businessman who served a term as Adjutant General of the State Militia. The clock has remained the property of the Town, which pays for its maintenance and upkeep.

The opening of the Baptist New Meeting-House changed the landscape of the Town dramatically. Retail stores and the post office were attracted to Colby Hill. By 1838, the Academy building, on land adjacent to the Meeting-House, was helping draw attention to this part of town. The Academy—the area's first educational institution beyond 8th grade—was founded by Joseph and Anthony Colby and other town leaders, most of whom were active in the local Baptist church and the New Hampshire Baptist Association. Finally, in 1853, the Selectmen were instructed to "locate the new Town House between the Baptist Meeting House" and an adjacent property. The relocation of the Town center was complete. The Baptist New Meeting-House was the magnet largely responsible for defining that new Town center.

The year 1853 was significant in many ways. Prominent members of the statewide Baptist community, led by former Governor Anthony Colby, were instrumental in persuading New Hampshire Baptists to take over the Academy in New London, transforming it into the New London Literary & Scientific Institute. The old Town meeting house was purchased by Mr. Colby and moved to a site near the Baptist New Meeting-House and converted into a dormitory for male students. Daily attendance at church services was required of the students (twice on Sunday). The addition of several hundred students in Town led to the first significant alteration to the Baptist New Meeting-House. In 1853 it was enlarged by cutting it open, moving the pulpit end and putting in twenty new pews in front of the pulpit. Not until 1929, when the school became a junior college, were the ties with the Baptist Church severed. Today it is Colby-Sawyer College, a thriving educational institution with nearly 1,000 students.

Most significant events in the life of the community and the nation were celebrated or acknowledged in the Baptist Meeting House. Here the Town celebrated its 100th anniversary in 1879 [see Exhibit B]. Here the entire community gathered to mourn the deaths of Abraham Lincoln and William McKinley [see Exhibit C]. Here the Boy Scouts of America established New Hampshire Troop No. 1 in 1914, which continues to meet within its walls. Here 700 residents crowded into the church to hear First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt speak about the war in Europe on October 8, 1941. It is where the community has gathered at times of great crisis and great celebration as the Baptist Church has moved from dependency to full partnership with the Town of New London.

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Statement of Significance, Historical Significance**The Church's Evolution from Dependency on Town to Partnership with Town**Church-State Union, Established by Colonial Law, Begins to Weaken

Under colonial law (1714), New Hampshire towns called and supported a pastor from an approved denomination. When the Town of New London voted in 1795 to terminate Baptist minister Job Seamans' salary, the church-state union began to dissolve, two decades before State law required it. With this "head start" at church-state separation, Baptists assumed responsibility for their own affairs² and developed a sense of autonomy that laid a foundation for construction of the Baptist New Meeting-House, thirty-one years before the first foundation stone was actually put in place.

Baptists Abandon Town-Owned Meeting House in Favor of Their Own

By 1826, New London's regular Baptists had decided to build a Meeting House of their own, and the philosophical and actual break from Town support of religion was complete. The NH Tolerance Act of 1819, granting freedom of denominational choice, and a vote at an 1825 Special Town Meeting denying exclusive use of the old Town meeting house to regular Baptists led directly to the decision to start construction of the New Meeting-House.³

Cooperation with Town Begins to Replace Control by Town

Anthony Colby, a member of the Baptist Church who would go on to be governor, was co-chairman of the building committee.⁴ Construction began on July 4, 1826, with the raising of the frame atop Colby Hill on what is now Main Street. The Paul Revere Foundry in Boston provided a bell for installation in the steeple. Acquisition of the bell began a new chapter between Church and Town, as the Town began using the Church bell as a fire alarm and means of announcing the deaths of residents.⁵ Later the church acquired a larger bell from Revere Copper Company.⁶

Baptist New Meeting-House and Adjacent School, built in 1837-38, Redefine Town Center

In 1853, it was officially acknowledged that the Baptist New Meeting-House and adjacent school, which Church leaders had helped establish, had redefined the center of New London. Selectmen were instructed to locate the new Town Hall near the Meeting House, which stood on Colby Hill.⁷ This confirmed the relocation of the town center from Summer Street to a spot one mile east, which later became present-day Main Street.⁸ The Town had constructed and owned the first meeting house; now this privately-owned, New Meeting-House was dictating the location of the Town Hall.

2. Squires, *History of the First Baptist Church, 1788-1978*, 6.

3. *Ibid.*, 7.

4. *Ibid.*, 8.

5. Squires and Buker, *Sesquicentennial of Baptist Church*, 48.

6. Stickney, unpublished update to *The Bells of Paul Revere*.

7. Lord, *History of New London*, 406.

8. *Ibid.*, 404.

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Statement of Significance, Historical Significance, continued

Baptists Establish Forerunner to Colby-Sawyer College

Anthony Colby and other prominent members of the statewide Baptist community transformed the adjacent school, originally New London Academy, into the New London Literary and Scientific Institute in 1853. Its location, next door to the Baptist New Meeting-House, reinforced the continuing close ties between Church and school. In fact, the first major alteration to the Meeting House occurred in 1853 in order to accommodate a growing number of students at worship services.⁹ Church members founded the Academy and later transformed it into the Institute; now an influx of students was requiring a lengthening of the Meeting House to add pews.

Mutually Beneficial Church-Town Relationship Continues

In 1884 the Town clock joined the new, larger Revere Bell in the steeple of the Baptist New Meeting- House. The clock is still owned and maintained by the Town of New London, a reminder of the way Church-Town cooperation has grown through the years.

The story of the evolution of New London Baptists, from dependency on Town and State to partnership with Town and State, illustrates the development of church-town and church-state relations in New Hampshire and across much of New England. The beautiful New London Baptist Meeting House is significant as the quintessential example of that evolution.

9. Gardner, *Centennial Celebration of the Baptist Church*, 29.

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Exhibits A, B, C

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Exhibit A

Photograph of New London's main street from the east taken before 1884

Exhibit B

Town of New London's 100th Anniversary Celebration, 1879

Exhibit C

Memorial Service for President William McKinley, 1901

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Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The property is identified as Map 85, Parcel 32 on the Tax Map Records of the Town of New London, NH. Boundaries are indicated on the attached Sketch Map.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries were selected to include the parcel of land that has, with minor changes, been the grounds of the Meeting House since its construction in 1826, and which continues to be associated with the building to this day.

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Additional Documentation Page 15

Baptist New Meeting-House of New London
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Sketch Map

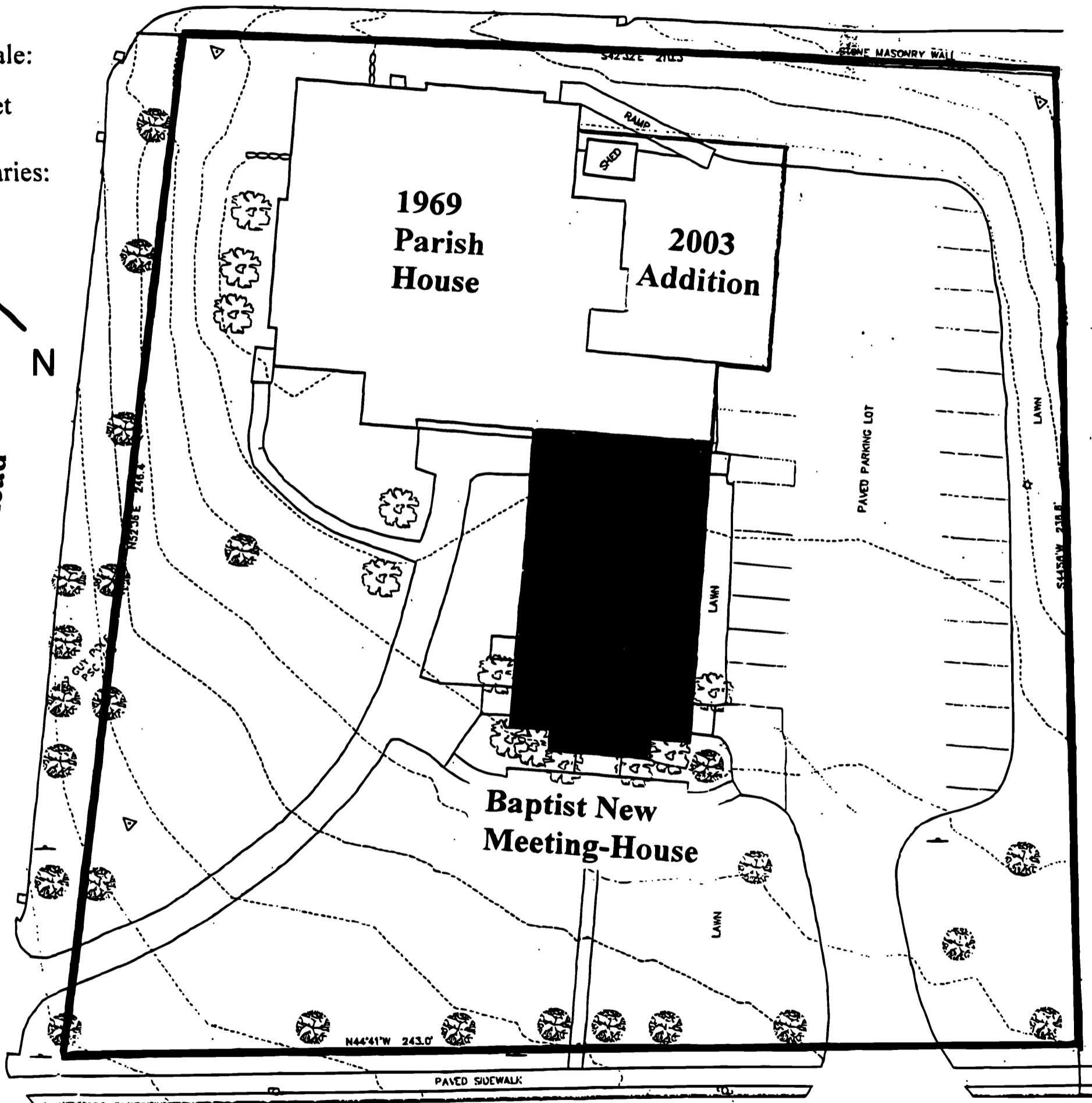
Approximate Scale:

———— = 20 feet

Property Boundaries:



Seamans Road



Main Street