

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

For NPS use only

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

received FEB 7 1985
date entered

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

1. Name

historic DORCHESTER COMMON HISTORIC DISTRICT

and/or common SAME

2. Location

street & number North Dorchester Rd. roughly .2 mile northwest
of its intersection with NH Rte. 118 n/a not for publication

city, town Dorchester n/a vicinity of

state New Hampshire code 33 county Grafton code 009

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name (see continuation sheet)

street & number

city, town vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number P.O. Box 208
Route 10

city, town Woodsville, state New Hampshire 03785

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Dorchester Community Church is listed
title to the National Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1980 federal state county local

depository for survey records United States Department of Interior
National Parks Service

city, town Washington, state DC 20243

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>Church 1883</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Dorchester Common Historic District consists of three 19th century public buildings set in a clearing against a backdrop of trees and fronting what is today known as the Dorchester Common, forming a unique example of a traditional rural New England center of political, religious, educational and social activity. Serving as a muster field and later a farm field, the grassy common was not part of the town center until the church was moved here in 1883. The roads leading into the Dorchester Common remain unpaved and combine with the open spaces, once farmed, now re-wooded, to retain the rural atmosphere and provide an appropriate setting for the simplicity of these vernacular structures.

The three buildings which comprise the district are as follows (see sketch map)

1. DORCHESTER COMMUNITY CHURCH

A simple white clapboard structure rectangular in plan above a granite slab foundation and capped by a steeply pitched gable roof, the front ridge of which is surmounted by a square tower with open cupola. Situated with its gable end facing southward, the church measures three bays wide and three deep. The central entrance consisting of double doors each with four elongated panels, is set above a curbed platform containing random stones. Simple pilasters flank the doorway, echoed in the plain pilaster cornerboards supporting the gable end cornice returns. Like the doorway, the double hung 6/6 windows are capped by entablature lintels. Louvered shutters frame the window openings. A circular window divided segmentally is located in the gable. Above a square clapboarded base six wooden posts support the hexagonal aluminum domical cap and weathervane. A brick corbel cap chimney is located on the rear ridge of the asphalt roof.

As seen today the appearance of the church is largely a result of the moving and rebuilding of the structure in 1883. The original nondenominational church, known as the South Meeting House was built in 1828 in the Thompson Hill area of Dorchester where its foundation is still visible. Built on a subscription basis, its charter is preserved in the Dorchester Historical Museum. By 1883 most of the families living near the church had moved away and it was decided to move the building about two miles to a more central location near the Town Hall. Rebuilt on a smaller scale, timbers were cut at a local mill reducing the structure's size from 40' x 50' to 33½' x 40 3/4'. Building records suggest that the original church, designed by Bailey Welch of Canaan for \$300 closely resembled the North Church in Canaan, also designed by Welch in 1828. (Canaan Street Historic District listed on the National Register of Historic Places May 7, 1983). It featured a square tower projecting four feet from the facade and standing fifty feet high and capped by eight points in the Gothic Revival style. The side elevations of the original church were also three bays wide but the windows contained forty lights each and were topped by pointed arch blind fans.

Although the church went through a period of neglect early in this century, funds were contributed c. 1940 by a local family, the Thayers, for the restoration and electrification of the church. Religious services continue to be held in the church every Sunday from Easter through Christmas. A dirt parking area separates the Church and Town House, to the east.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates Various **Builder/Architect** Various

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Dorchester Common Historic District represents a well-preserved example of a traditional rural New England townscape, a unique union of architecture and open space serving as a local center of political, religious, educational and social activity. Unpretentious in design and execution, the buildings illustrate the work of local builders and the simplification of contemporary design vocabularies into vernacular forms.

As seen today, the Dorchester Community Church is the unusual result of an original 1828 design rebuilt in the 1880's and displays vestiges of the architectural styles prevalent in both periods. Embellishment of the church exterior is limited, designed to house the demands and tastes of the various denominations which would use the building. The church remains today an excellent index to the tastes and skills of a rural New Hampshire town. The Dorchester Community Church was individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places on November 25, 1980.

The Town Hall has continuously housed the most fundamental form of democracy, the meeting, since 1844. A town house was first erected on the site in 1828, burned in 1839 and was rebuilt between 1842 and 1843 after appropriations in 1841. The building continues to serve as a center of social activity, basically unchanged since its construction. Transitional in style, the Town Hall displays blind fans associated with the Federal styles as well as pilasters indicative of the Greek Revival mode.

Built in 1808 for the North School District as one of Dorchester's first four one-room schoolhouses, the schoolhouse was closed in 1936 leaving only one of the ten schoolhouses once serving the town's thirteen school districts. Today, it is the solitary survivor of the first four schoolhouses. The building was opened as a historical museum in 1966 to display old desks and schoolbooks in addition to historical documents of the town.

It should be noted that the church, school and town hall are all contained within a local historic district established by the Town of Dorchester in 1980.

Representing as they do religious, governmental and educational concerns, these three buildings symbolize the essential characteristics of the New England village in general and of Dorchester in particular, centralized in the late 19th century. Embodied in each are vernacular versions of high style architecture as interpreted by local builders.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Dorchester Bicentennial Committee, Dorchester, New Hampshire 1772-1972. 'Dorchester: 1972
 Records of the Dorchester Grange and Community Church, Town Reports, deposited in the Town House, Dorchester.

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property approx, one acre

Quadrangle name Wentworth, NH

Quadrangle scale 1:2400

UTM References

A

1	9	2	6	2	5	2	5	4	8	4	8	8	9	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)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	county	code
	N/A			

state	N/A	code	county	code
	N/A			

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lisa Mausolf, Preservation Specialist

organization Upper Valley-Lake Sunapee Council date August, 1984

street & number 314 National Bank Building telephone (603) 448-1680

city or town Lebanon, state New Hampshire 03766

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

[Handwritten Signature] 1/24/85

title New Hampshire Historic Preservation Officer date

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

[Handwritten Signature]
 Keeper of the National Register

date 3-7-85

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

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List of Owners

Dorchester Community Church Corporation (#1)
Rumney, N.H. 03266

Town of Dorchester (#2,#3)
Rumney, N.H. 03266

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2. TOWN HOUSE

A single story clapboarded structure set on a granite slab foundation, its low pedimented facade facing southward. Above a granite step the central entrance contains a set of six panel double doors which are flanked by pilasters displaying entasis and capped by a blind fan echoed by a similar fan in the pediment. Cornerboards articulate the building edges. Flanking the entrance are two simple 20/15 light doublehung windows with windows of the same configuration lighting the side elevations which both measure three bays across. A single story shed addition spans the rear elevation until it meets a narrow two story gable addition at the northeast corner. The shed was constructed in 1939 to house a kitchen. Doublehung 1/1 windows light the rear shingled addition. A single corbel cap chimney protrudes from the eastern slope of the gable roof near the rear addition. On the interior the original pulpit was removed in 1903 and replaced with the current stage constructed by the Grange who were permitted use of the hall after they repaired it to suit their purposes. A cupboard was made by H.H. Ashley and placed in the town hall in 1902 to store Grange property.

Horse sheds, constructed in 1912 and originally located between the church and town hall fell in ruins in the 1930's.

3. 1808 SCHOOLHOUSE

Facing westward and located east of the Town Hall and adjacent to the Townhouse Cemetery is the 1808 Schoolhouse, a single story clapboarded structure, its gable front capped by a small gable-roofed cupola and set above a rock wall foundation. The central entrance contains a four panel door capped by a three light transom and flanked by a doublehung 9/6 window on each side. Filling the gable above the doorway is a doublehung window with 6/6 sash. Beneath the slightly projecting eaves, a plain frieze connects to simple cornerboards articulating the building edges. A set of four doublehung 2/2 windows light the south elevation while two individual windows covered by vertical boarded doors are located on the north side. The cupola, perched at the front of the gable roof ridge features square posts supporting a gable roof above a clapboarded square base. It was made by John Franz in 1972 to house the bell from the North Dorchester schoolhouse which was closed in 1926. A small brick chimney is situated on the rear ridge of the asphalt roof. Located at the rear of the schoolhouse is a small shingle-covered ell, lit by several fixed four light windows.

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OUTBUILDINGS

To the northeast of the townhouse is a deteriorated shed used to store firewood. Measuring six feet wide, it is sheathed in vertical boards with a metal roof.

A larger shed is located at the rear, situated parallel to the town hall. It too is constructed of vertical boards and has an asphalt roof with an opening on its gable end.

The impression of a town center was previously heightened by the existence of a store next to the schoolhouse, and several other houses in addition to the two which are located north and south of the nominated district today.

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BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The district is bounded on the north by a stone wall, forty-seven feet from the rear of the Town House. From this point the boundary runs in a southerly direction approximately 154 feet with a stone wall bordering the cemetery marking 85 feet south beginning at the townhouse. From there it follows the southern retaining wall of the cemetery, eastward the full 60 feet, thence running southerly about 73 feet proceeding westward until it reaches the unnamed dirt road in front of the structures, following the road in a northwesternly direction to North Dorchester Road, and thence continuing to the beginning point of the boundary.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary of the nominated district is drawn to include that acreage which survives from the original parcels on which these structures were built and which is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Boundaries are sufficient to convey the original context and protect it.

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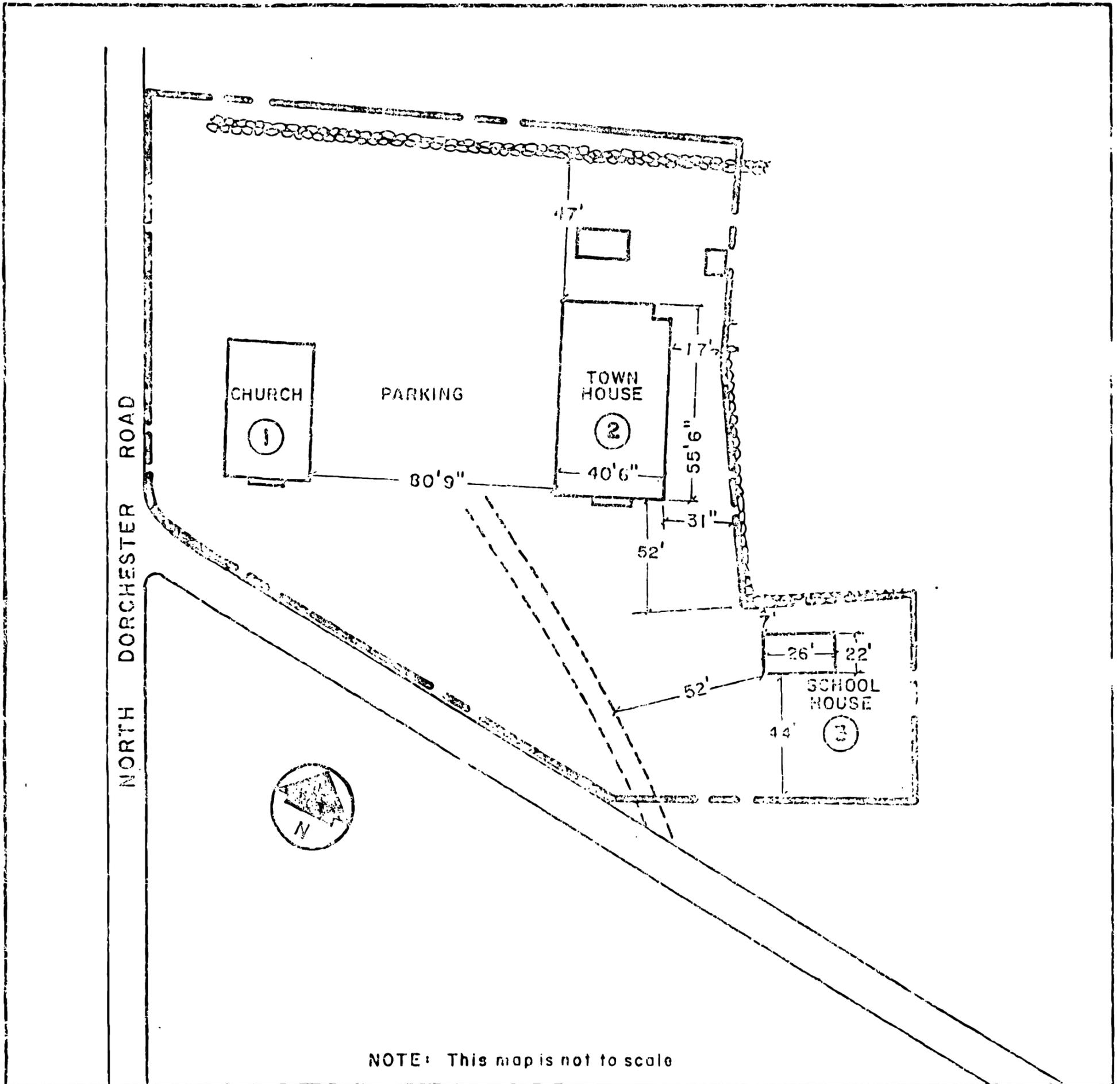
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date entered

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DORCHESTER COMMON
HISTORIC DISTRICT
DORCHESTER, N.H.