

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

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

received **AUG 12 1985**

date entered **SEP 12 1985**

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

**1. Name**

historic Meredith Bridge Congregational Church, Laconia Congregational Church,  
Poeples Christian Church, First Christian Church

and/or common  EVANGELICAL BAPTIST CHURCH (preferred)

**2. Location**

street & number Veterans Square n/a not for publication

city, town Laconia, n/a vicinity of

state New Hampshire code 33 county Belknap code 001

**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 type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" 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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input 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 Evangelical Baptist Church

street & number Veterans Square

city, town Laconia, n/a vicinity of state New Hampshire 03246

**5. Location of Legal Description**

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

street & number 64 Court Street

city, town Laconia, state New Hampshire 03246

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Historical Inventory of Laconia has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1979  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records City of Laconia Planning Department, City Hall

city, town Laconia, state New Hampshire 03246

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## 7. Description

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**Condition**

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

**Check one**

unaltered  
 altered

**Check one**

original site  
 moved date 1903

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**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The Evangelical Baptist Church is a church which stands on its own small lot on the southeast side of Veterans Square, in the city of Laconia. The two and a half story, gable-roofed, rectangular, wooden main block has a three story, square wooden tower (topped by an octagonal spire) projecting slightly from the center of its northwest gable end, which faces Veterans Square. Attached to the rear of the main block is an irregular shaped, four sided, concrete block rear wing. Most of the rear wing is one story high with a flat roof, but a small shed roofed section that overlaps the southwest side facade of the main block is two stories high to provide a protected exit from the second story auditorium of the main block.

The main block, set on a cut granite block foundation, is clapboarded, save for the flush boarding of the pedimented northwest gable. Wide paneled pilasters with bases and capitals ornament the corners. The box cornice with mouldings, deep moulded frieze, and large ornate sawn brackets is pedimented on the front (northwest) gable, but only has returns on the rear (southeast) gable. The asphalt shingled gable roof is broken by the tower and by two plain brick chimneys with tapered caps, one on each slope towards the rear of the building.

In the center of the main block's Square facade is the tower, sheathed with flush boarding and trimmed by wide corner pilasters (paneled in the lower two stories, but plain in the third story). The tower projects slightly from the facade, so the side and rear facades of the three stories are left windowless. The church's main entry is found in a semicircular arched recess, sheathed with horizontal beaded boarding, in the first story of the tower. The entry is served by carpeted granite steps with flared concrete sidewalls and metal hand rails in the center and on the sidewalls. The tall, double, six paneled doors have a moulded surround and a shallow cornice. A semi-circular hoodmould with returns shelters a paneled tympanum over the doors. Moulded boards divide the tympanum into two lower semi-circles and an upper spherical triangle. (Both the hoodmould with returns and the pattern used in the tympanum are common motifs, repeated elsewhere on the exterior.) The recess itself is framed by a moulded semi-circular arch with moulded imposts. On the corner pilaster west of the entry is hung a painted metal church sign with a shallow wooden cornice. The tower's first story is topped by a box cornice with mouldings, deep frieze, and, between the corner pilasters, dentils.

The second story of the tower contains a double window with two semicircular arched stained glass windows with geometric and floral patterns. They share the same plain frame and a joined hoodmould with returns, the returns being ornamented, as elsewhere on the church, by short lower mouldings. The second story is topped by an extension of the main block pediment's horizontal cornice around the tower. The square third story, which projects above the roof, has its own box cornice with mouldings and deep moulded frieze. A recessed semicircular arched panel with moulded arch and imposts on the Square facade contains a semicircular arched lower, which is subdivided into two semicircular arched sections, topped by a spherical triangle. The large louver is sheltered by a typical hoodmould with returns. The octagonal spire stands on a short octagonal base, which has a large recessed panel in each face and a shallow moulded box cornice. The tall spire is sheathed with flush boarding and ornamented by ridge mouldings and a horizontal moulding near the top. At the base of the spire,

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each of the eight slopes has a semicircular arched louvred dormer, topped by a convex roof with flat side roofs, whose shape and moulded cornice echoes the shape and ornament of the hoodmoulds with returns found over the windows below. The spire is crowned by a carved knob and a Celtic cross.

Returning to the side bays of the three bay wide Square facade on the main block, we find a six over six sash window with entablature in each first story. The second story of each side bay contains a tall, wide, semicircular arched, stained glass window, incorporating two lesser semicircular arches and the resulting spherical triangle in its tracery, and with geometric and floral patterns in its glass (save for a chalice depicted in the western spherical triangle). A typical hoodmould with returns shelters each second story window.

The northeast and southwest side facades of the main block have similar fenestration, differing only in the first story. The first story of the northeast facade has five six over six sash windows with entablatures, while the first story of the southwest facade has four six over six sash windows with entablatures, but also, to their rear, a high eight pane window and another six over six sash window, the last two with plain frames. The second story of each side facade contains three tall, wide, semicircular arched stained glass windows of the same design (but for their glass) as their counterparts on the front facade, with two semicircular arches and a spherical triangle incorporated in their tracery, and the usual hoodmould with returns. (Part of the southwest facade is, as already noted, overlapped by a small, two-story extension of the rear wing.)

The rear (southeast) gable end has a shallow, two story, hip roofed central projection, which is clapboarded with narrow corner pilasters and a box cornice like the main block's box cornice. In each second story of the projection's two narrow side facades we find a narrow semicircular arched two over two sash window with a hoodmould (here without returns). In the gable itself is a one over one sash window with a plain frame.

The rear wing, built to fit the rear boundaries of the lot, is almost a triangle in shape, as its northeast wall, which continues the line of the main block's northeast facade, is only a few feet wide. Most of the rear wing is one story high with a poured concrete foundation, concrete block walls ornamented by brick quoins, close metal sheathed eaves, and a flat roof. But a small two story section of the rear wing does project a short distance down the southwest facade of the main block. While this section's side (southwest) facade is a continuation of the concrete block wall with brick quoins, the two story Square (northwest) facade and the second story rear (southeast) facade are clapboarded with cornerboards. The shed roofed, two story section has a simple wooden box cornice with frieze, save for the side facade, which has only close eaves. Each story of the Square facade has a paneled door with a multipane builtin window and a plain frame. The upper door opens onto a steel fire escape on the southwest side of the main block. The windows and the door of the

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concrete block walls have concrete sills and plain wooden frames. The windows usually have single pane pivoting sash, although the larger central panes of the two triple windows are fixed. The southwest wall has, from the front, a single window with two pane pivoting sash, a triple window with two fixed and four pivoting sash, and a double window with four pivoting sash. The long rear (east) facade has, from the north, a single window with two pivoting sash, a door with builtin window and louvers, another single window with two pivoting sash, a double window with four pivoting sash, and, finally, a triple window with two fixed sash and four pivoting sash. The short northeast wall is windowless.

The main entry opens into the vestibule, or, to be more accurate, the lower vestibule, as stairs at each end (northeast and southwest) of the lower vestibule lead up to the upper vestibules, found in the north and west corners of the second story. The lower vestibule has a carpeted floor, a plaster ceiling, and vertical beaded board wainscoating with a simple moulded coping beneath plaster walls. The only exception is a small section of the southeast wall covered by vertical beveled edge boarding, trimmed by a plain baseboard and topped by a simple moulding. This section, directly opposite the main entry doors, contains the double modern wooden doors (with small builtin windows and plain frame) to the Chapel. The main entry doors in the northwest wall have a moulded frame. East of the door in the same wall is a deep small square recess with plain frame, beaded board back, and two wooden cleats for the bell ropes that hang down from the ceiling. The two stairways found along the outer (northwest) wall to the northeast and southwest both have linoleum risers and treads, vertical beaded board wainscoating with the same coping on the northwest, and a balustrade with turned balusters, moulded rail, and elaborate turned and carved newel posts on the southeast. The southwest stairway also has a modern inclined stair "elevator" for the handicapped. The southwest wall of the lower vestibule features only a bulletin board, while the northeast wall boasts a four panel door with moulded frame to a public restroom.

The restroom in the north corner of the first story (beneath the stairs and upper vestibule) has a linoleum floor, formica clad walls, and a modern tile ceiling with ceiling moulding. Simple frames surround the doors, the entry door, the doors of the two stalls, and the short door to a storage space under the stairs. This storage space has a plywood floor, two older plaster walls with beaded board wainscoating, two unfinished new walls, and a sloping plaster ceiling. The storage space is lit by a six over six sash window.

The double doors in the southeast wall of the lower vestibule open into Rice Chapel, the former vestry. Carpeted steps with modern metal hand rails on short sidewalls of beaded boarding lead down to the chapel's carpeted floor, as the chapel and the other rooms of the lower level are set a few feet below street level. Besides the chapel, the largest room in the lower level, the first story of the main block also contains the offices of the pastor and the church secretary in the west corner, the kitchen in the east corner and a classroom in the south corner.

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The chapel is almost a rectangular space, except that, in recent years, the two offices have been expanded and now project substantially from the chapel's north-west wall to the west of the stairs, while, to the east of the stairs, a shallow set of three closets have been carved out of the chapel space. The walls of the chapel are sheathed with modern grooved wooden "paneling" with a simple baseboard and topped by a simple moulding and a frieze of modern acoustic tiles. The suspended tile ceiling has builtin light panels and tracks for suspended folding curtains that can be used to divide the chapel into smaller spaces. The room is punctuated by posts, two round metal posts and two square posts encased in grooved "paneling".

Just west of the stairs in the street wall, on the northeast side of the office projection, is the modern wooden door with builtin window and simple moulded frame to the secretary's office. East of the stairs, the three later closets have outer walls of modern wooden "paneling" of a different design than the older chapel walls, as well as modern wooden doors (two single doors, and one double door) with simple moulded frames. (The three closets still retain the chapel's floor, ceiling, and northwest wall, but have their own new inner walls of grooved wooden "paneling", again of a different design from the chapel walls.) Both of the chapel's side (north-east and southwest) walls have a projecting section of paneling, topped by carpeting, that covers the foundation. The side walls also have six over six sash windows with rippled glass and moulded frames, four in the northeast wall, three in the southwest wall. The rear (southeast) wall has two modern wooden doors with moulded frames, a kitchen door to the north, a classroom door to the south. Next to the kitchen door, a countertop opening, with a two paneled overhead door and a moulded frame, connects the kitchen and the chapel. In the center of the southeast wall, a valence of acoustic tiles covers a movie screen. Also in the center of the rear wall is a short carpeted platform on which stands a movable pulpit.

The pastor's office in the west corner of the lower level can only be reached through the smaller secretary's office. Both offices have carpeted floors, plaster-board walls with simple baseboards, and modern suspended tile ceilings with builtin light panels. In the southwest wall of the secretary's office are found a plate glass window and a modern door with builtin window, both with simple moulded frames and connecting the two offices. The pastor's office has builtin cabinets and two outer windows, a six pane window in the northwest (Square) wall and a six over six sash window in the southwest wall, both with rippled glass and simply moulded frames.

The kitchen in the east corner has a linoleum floor, plaster walls with baseboards, plain window and door frames, and a modern suspended tile ceiling with builtin light panels. The builtin kitchen cabinets and counters include both older units of beaded boarding and newer ones of plywood, all with formica clad tops. An older island sink in the center of the room has a large copper clad basin and an exposed framework. The kitchen is lit by a six over six sash window in the northeast

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wall. The countertop opening to the chapel has a plain frame and beaded boarding in the recess above it for the overhead door. The kitchen is connected by modern wooden doors in the northwest wall to the chapel, in the southwest wall to the neighboring classroom, and in the southeast wall to the rear wing's corridor.

The classroom in the south corner has a linoleum floor and plaster walls with vertical beaded board wainscoating, topped by a simple coping. The modern tile ceiling has ceiling mouldings and a track for the suspended folding curtains that can be used to divide the room in two. The room is lit by three plain framed windows in the southwest wall, a central six over six sash window and flanking high eight pane windows (the southern window looking into the corridor of the rear wing). Plain frames also surround the modern wooden doors, the northwest door to the chapel, the northeast door to the kitchen, and the two southeast doors to the rear wing's corridor. Between the last two doors is a closet with double modern doors, also plain framed. In the south and west corners of the room can be found builtin cabinets, the southern one having wooden framed glass doors.

The upper stories of the main block have two major components, the large auditorium which occupies most of the upper level and is two levels high, and the two stories of space to the northwest of the auditorium. The lower of these two stories contains the two upper vestibules in the outer corners, with a classroom between them, which is connected to the auditorium by a large opening with balustrade. Above these three spaces are three more rooms, all originally classrooms connected to the auditorium by similar large openings with balustrades. But the openings of the upper story side rooms have been closed in and the central room has had a closet and an audio room carved out of it.

The two upper vestibules are virtually mirror images of each other. Both have linoleum floors and plaster walls with the same beaded board wainscoating as the lower vestibules, as well as plaster ceilings. A moulded frame surrounds the stained glass window found in each of their street (northwest) walls. Bulletin boards hang on their outer side walls. Double paneled doors with moulded frames connect each vestibule to the auditorium on their southeast. And each inner side wall has a four panel door with moulded frame to the classroom between the two vestibules. Both of these doors are reached by linoleum clad steps with a sidewall of vertical beaded boarding. But the western door is actually non-functional, for it opens onto a blank board wall.

The lower classroom now has a carpeted floor, but it still retains its pressed metal walls, covered with a pattern of small irregular bumps, above simple wooden baseboards. The pressed metal ceiling has a more formal pattern of moulded panels and a coved pressed metal ceiling moulding ornamented with swags. Moulded frames surround the doors and the large opening, with a balustrade of square balusters and moulded rail, into the auditorium to the southeast. A composition board bulletin

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board on the northwest wall contains a small, simple composition board door that serves a builtin storage space. At the far (southwest) end of the room, a stairway leads up to the upper level. The stairway has wooden steps, the same "bumpy" pressed metal wall with a moulded baseboard, and a balustrade with beaded square balusters and square newel posts with moulded caps. A five panel door under the stairs serves a small closet with board floor, plasterboard walls and ceiling.

The three original rooms in the upper level retain their original walls with simple wooden baseboards and the same sheathing of "bumpy" pressed metal as is found in the lower classroom. The central room, which is higher than the other rooms, has a pressed metal ceiling with elaborate moulded coffering and a coved ceiling moulding. The ceiling is still visible above the closet and the audio room that have been carved out of the central room, as their plasterboard walls, with plain baseboards and top boards, stop far short of the ceiling. The central room is reduced basically to a corridor on the street side of the original space. An indentation in the northwest street wall (corresponding to the tower's projection from the main facade) contains two semi-circular arched stained glass windows with moulded side trim, and plain arches with moulded imposts. The windows, which go to the floor, are protected by metal rails. At both ends of the corridor are four panel doors with plain frames to the side rooms. On the inner (southeast) side of the corridor are the two plain framed modern doors to the closet on the east, and to the audio room on the west. Both new rooms retain the old board floor of the central room. And the closet still has two walls of pressed metal, as well as two new walls of plasterboard. (It has no ceiling, being open above.) But the walls and ceiling of the audio room are completely sheathed with plasterboard, trimmed by a simple baseboard and a simple board ceiling "moulding". The opening into the auditorium with moulded frame and balustrade, like the opening directly below it, is still open in the audio room, but is filled with plasterboard in the closet.

The two side rooms of the upper level, like the two upper vestibules beneath them, are virtually identical, differing only in that the board floor of the east room is now partially covered by linoleum. Both have the same paneled pressed metal ceiling with swag ornamented cove moulding, like the ceiling in the lower classroom. Moulded frames surround the inner doors to the central room and the large openings to the auditorium. (But both large openings are now filled with plasterboard.) And each room is lit by the upper half of a semicircular arched stained glass window with a plain frame and a protective metal railing.

A trapdoor in the ceiling of the eastern side room serves the main block's unfinished attic, which is lit by a single window in the rear gable. Steep wooden stairs take the climber up into unfinished, board floored spire, where the church bell is hung.

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The large auditorium room has a carpeted floor and walls of the same "bumpy" pressed metal described in the last four rooms. But here, the walls have a wainscoating of modern grooved "paneling" beneath an older moulded coping at the window sill level. The pressed metal sheathing is further ornamented by wide paneled pilasters that rest on the wainscoating and rise to an elaborate pressed metal cornice, decorated with swags and egg and dart mouldings, at the impost level of the large arched stained glass windows in the side walls. Above the impost level or lower cornice are found large panels outlined by elaborate mouldings. (The outer corners of these panels are usually cut off by quarter circle indentations.) On the side walls, another elaborate pressed metal cornice marks the lower edge of the large pressed metal coves found on the northeast and southwest sides. (Both the upper and lower cornices are continued, at least partially, onto the end walls.) The large coves are distinguished by rectangular coffering with ornate mouldings. The flat portion of the pressed metal ceiling is divided into nine large rectangles by moulded pressed metal "beams", the intersections of the beams being marked by rosettes. Each large panel is ornamented by more coffering with elaborate mouldings. In the center of each large rectangle is an ornate pendant, the remains of a gas light fixture. (The three central pendants are found in diamond panels, the only departures from the rectangular pattern of the coffering.) The gas lights are now gone, but two modern fans now hang from the ceiling.

The northwest (street) wall of the auditorium is divided into three equal bays by two paneled pilasters supporting the lower cornice, which, but for the interruptions of the upper room openings, is continued across this end wall. The central bay of the two level high wall contains a large wide opening in each level, each having the moulded frame and balustrade with square balusters and moulded rail that has already been described. Above the upper opening (a portion of which is filled by plasterboard), are found three large panels. The central panel would be rectangular and the side panels L-shaped, if their outer corners had not been cut off by quarter circle indentations. The lower levels of the side bays each contain double four-panel doors with moulded frames to the vestibule. The upper levels each contain another large opening with moulded frame and balustrade, although here, both openings are closed with plasterboard. The side bays are also ornamented by continuations of the upper cornices.

The northeast and southwest side walls are virtually identical. They each feature three large semicircular arched stained glass windows with moulded frames. The windows' tracery incorporates two lesser semicircular arches beneath a spherical triangle. The two side windows in the northeast wall (presumably the survivors of the 1902 explosion) both have geometric patterns with some religious symbols. The other four stained glass windows all share the same architectural pattern, which features an arcade at the base, columns on the sides of each lesser arch supporting trefoil arches, gablets and cornices, crowned by short spires with more gablets on their roof slopes. The geometric patterns framed by the columns also boast religious symbols. Between the windows and to the rear of the east windows are found the usual



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wide paneled pilasters (three on each wall) supporting the lower cornice. Between the upper and lower cornices appear three large panels on each wall, which, again, would have been rectangular, but for their quarter circle indented corners. The only real difference between the two side walls is the modern wooden exit door with builtin window and moulded frame at the east end of the southwest wall. (This door serves the small vestibule in the second story of the rear wing's two story section. The vestibule has a linoleum floor, two outer walls of concrete block with brick quoins, and two walls with plywood wainscoating beneath a moulded coping and plaster-board walls, and a modern tile ceiling with ceiling moulding. Moulded frames surround the door to the auditorium and the outer door to the fire escape.)

The center of the auditorium's southeast wall projects forward, dividing the wall into a central projecting section and two identical side sections. The main feature of the central projection is a large, central, semielliptical arched recess. The lower cornice is continued across the southeast wall to serve as the impost for the recess's arch. And wide paneled pilasters support the ends of the arch. (Modern hymnboards hang on each pilaster.) The interior of the recess is sheathed with the usual "bumpy" pressed metal, interrupted only by the impost level cornice on the sides (but not the back) of the recess, and by a narrow semicircular arched two over two sash window in each side wall. (The recess is actually deeper than the projection of the central section of the wall, as it goes back into the rear facade's shallow addition.) Applied to the back of the recess, we find a large wooden cross and a religious inscription in wooden letters. Above the arch appear three large panels with the usual elaborate mouldings, a central "rectangular" panel and two spandrel panels. The lower edges of the panels are curved to echo the arch, while the upper outer corners of the spandrel panels have the usual quarter circle indentations. The two side sections of the southeast wall are divided horizontally by both the upper and the lower cornices. The lower cornice is supported in each section by a paneled pilaster, while a "rectangular" panel with quarter circle indented corners is found between the two cornices.

The auditorium is now largely filled by two sections of pews, served by a central aisle and two side aisles. The long modern pews have simple wooden seats and backs, and paneled rectangular pew ends with moulded baseboards and copings. The southeast end of the room is dominated by a large semielliptical platform, raised three steps above the floor. The sides of the platform are now sheathed with modern grooved wooden "paneling". The steps at each side and the floor of the platform are carpeted. On the platform stands a choir rail, curved back at both ends. The choir rail is also now sheathed with grooved wooden "paneling", but still retains four posts decorated by ornamental carvings, as well as its moulded cornice. In the center of the platform, in front of the choir rail, stand the movable pulpit and three chairs. (The altar table usually stands on the main floor in front of the pulpit.) The area behind the choir rail is raised one step above the platform, while the area in the arched recess has two more levels, each raised another step. The carpeted choir areas normally contain the organ keyboard, other musical instruments and devices, and rows of chairs for the choir.

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The new rear wing is served by a T-shaped corridor, with a main corridor running along the outer southwest wall from the entry in the lower story of two story section to a classroom door, and a secondary corridor running along the former southeast wall of the church from the main corridor to the furnace room door. As the rear wing widens from north to south, available space grows larger to the south. Basically, the rear wing can be characterized as three groups of rooms--a single room, the furnace room, at the north apex of the wing, two restrooms and a classroom in the middle, and two classrooms at the south end. Because of the strange shape of the rear wing, only the two restrooms and the inner southern classroom are rectangular, the other rooms having oddly angled shapes. All of the rooms and corridors, save for the furnace room, have modern tile ceilings with ceiling mouldings. The classrooms and the corridors have moulded window and door frames, modern wooden doors, outer walls of painted concrete block with plain baseboards, and inner walls of painted plywood wainscoating with moulded coping beneath plasterboard.

The corridors have linoleum floors. The main corridor, running along the southwest wall, begins at a paneled outer door with multipane window at the Square (northwest) end and ends at a classroom door with builtin window at the southeast end. It is lit by a double window with pivoting sash and a triple window with fixed central panes, flanked by pivoting sash, all in the outer southwest wall. On the inner northeast wall to the west of the secondary corridor is a high eight pane window serving the classroom in the south corner of the main block. East of the secondary corridor are found, respectively, a classroom window with two fixed panes, two classroom doors with builtin windows and louvers, and a double classroom window, each with two fixed panes. The secondary corridor, running along the former southeast wall of the church, has three doors with builtin windows, serving the main block classroom and the kitchen, in its northwest wall. At the northeast end of the corridor is the plain framed metal door to the furnace room. The corridor's southeast wall has, from the north, two doors with louvers for the restrooms, and then, two doors with builtin windows for two classrooms.

At the north end of the rear wing is the furnace room, largely filled with the furnace and other equipment. The furnace room has concrete floor, walls and ceiling. It is lit by a single window with pivoting sash and a moulded frame. The furnace room is also served by an outer door with a plain frame, and builtin window and louvers.

The two restrooms on the secondary corridor have linoleum floors, and wainscoatings of formica beneath the usual moulded coping and plasterboard walls. (However, the northeast wall of the northern restroom is built of painted concrete block.) The classroom, located behind the two restrooms, has a carpeted floor and the usual walls and ceiling, save that the inner wall shared with the furnace room is, again, of painted concrete block. The classroom is lit by a single window and a double window, all with pivoting sash. A short, wide plate glass window set high in its southerly wall connects it with the easternmost of the two southern classrooms.

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The westerly of the two southern classrooms is the only large rectangular room in the wing. Because of its inner position, it receives no natural light, save that which can be filtered through the surrounding corridors and rooms. Therefore, it has a fixed two pane window in its southerly wall facing the main corridor, and has builtin windows in the three doors that connect it with the main and secondary corridors, and the southeasterly classroom.

The classroom in the southeast corner of the wing has a very irregular shape, complicated still further by a small closet built into the very southern corner of the wing. (The closet, served by a narrow modern door, has the usual plasterboard inner walls and unpainted concrete block outer walls.) Like the other southern classroom, the southeast classroom has a linoleum floor, but here it is partially carpeted. The room can be divided in two by a folding curtain suspended from a ceiling track. It is served by three doors with builtin windows, one to the neighboring classroom, and two to the main corridor. The southeast classroom is lit by a double window with fixed panes (looking onto the main corridor) and a double exterior window with pivoting sash in the southwest walls, and by a triple window with fixed central pane and flanking pivoting sash in the east wall.

The church occupies most of its small lot. A narrow strip of pavement and dirt is found along the northeast facade. A short paved driveway is found on the southwest side of the main block. A sloping concrete walk leads from the driveway to the lower door of the rear wing's two story section. The narrow concrete curbed front lawn, has evergreen shrubs, small trees, and a freestanding church sign. The sign, a wooden framed, glass fronted case with a shallow gabled top, is supported by two flanking round metal posts.

## 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** 1836, 1871-72, 1923 **Builder/Architect** Arthur L. Davis (1871-72)

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Evangelical Baptist Church is significant architecturally as an early 19th century church that was adapted to the needs and tastes of later generations. Beginning as a Greek Revival church, it subsequently acquired an attractive Victorian exterior and a fine early 20th century auditorium.

After the only church in the village of Meredith Bridge (which later became the separate municipality of Laconia) burned on February 27, 1836, the owners of the church, the Meredith Bridge Religious Society, met on March 15, 1836 to consider building a new church. The society members voted to raise \$3500 for a new building by selling shares at \$25 apiece. The society also voted to accept the donation of a lot at the corner of Church and Main Streets. There the church was erected in 1836. Unfortunately, the surviving records say nothing about its designer or its builders. The new church was built to serve the local Congregationalists. So, in 1837, ownership was transferred to the Meredith Bridge Congregational Society (later the Laconia Congregational Society).

The Congregational Church appears in old photographs as a gable roofed building with a three stage tower atop its Main Street gable end facade. The building was Greek Revival in style, with four wide pilasters supporting a pedimented gable. The photographs reveal that it was a rather attractive example of the church architecture of its period. But, they also reveal that little, if any, of the church's original appearance can be detected in the present building. For, within a few decades, the building seemed old fashioned, and therefore unattractive. The fine three stage tower with its octagonal cupola, for example, was described by a local newspaper as "that not very ornamental appendage" and as an "old ill looking apology for a steeple".<sup>2</sup>

In 1871, the Congregationalists, having decided to update the building, turned to a local architect-builder, Arthur L. Davis (1830-1922). Davis not only designed the renovation, but (save for the masonry) also contracted for the remodeling. The entire building was raised six feet to provide a new lower level, with a vestibule, a large vestry, kitchen, and other service rooms. The old steeple was removed. A new three story tower was built projecting slightly from the main facade of the church. Above the tower, soared a new steeple with belfry and clock stages, and a tall octagonal spire that reached some 170 feet above the street (and, perhaps just coincidentally, fourteen feet above the spire of the new nearby Unitarian Church, making it the tallest structure in the community). The exterior of the church was completely remodeled, notably with a new box cornice and large arched stained glass windows in the second story. The interior was, likewise, thoroughly renovated. From the lower vestibule, two stairways lead up to two new upper vestibules and the large auditorium

<sup>1</sup>Laconia Democrat, May 4, 1871.

<sup>2</sup>Laconia Democrat, February 8, 1872.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

(see continuation sheet)

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .14 acre

Quadrangle name Winnipesaukee, NH

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UTM References

A 

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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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H 

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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

state N/A code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title David L. Ruel

organization Lakes Region Planning Commission date February 13, 1985

street & number Main Street telephone (603) 279-8171

city or town Meredith, state New Hampshire 03253

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title New Hampshire State Historic Preservation Officer date 7/29/85

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the National Register date 9/12/85

  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

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that had been completely rebuilt. An important feature of the auditorium was an addition on the rear gable end, which contained an arched recess behind the pulpit, lit by a narrow arched window in each side wall. By the time the church was rededicated in February of 1872, the original Greek Revival building had been obliterated, replaced by a thoroughly Victorian church. The new building was a quite pleasing and distinguished one, a tribute to Davis's skill as a designer.

But the taste of the congregation continued to change. In 1889, the auditorium was again remodeled. The pews were rebuilt, the walls plastered and frescoed, and a pressed metal ceiling installed. Even these changes could not long hold back the tide of fashion. As the 20th century began, the church was again seen as old-fashioned by a new generation of Congregationalists. Many church members wanted a more modern church of brick or stone. And outside pressures came to bear on the building. The city government began to consider the condemnation of the church, both to enlarge the grounds of the new city library to its north, under construction in 1901-03, and to widen Church Street, which, with the layout of Depot Square (now Veterans Square) in front of the new railroad station, had become a major thoroughfare. The future of the Congregational Church was settled dramatically on December 6, 1902, when the Masonic Temple, a Main Street commercial block less than 200 feet from the church, was destroyed by fire. When the fire reached the gunpowder stored in a hardware store in the Temple, the resulting explosion severely damaged the Congregational Church. Nearly all of the ground floor windows and four of the large arched windows in the second story were destroyed. And much of the plaster was knocked off the walls.

Faced with this extensive damage, the Congregationalists soon decided to abandon the church. On January 5, 1903, the Congregational Society established a committee to negotiate with the city, and on June 1, the society accepted the city's offer of \$6500 for the property. On June 22, the Congregationalists voted to build a new church and to sell the old building to the People's Christian Church Society. The People's Christian Church, founded in 1890 and opened in 1892, had been using the old county courthouse as a church.<sup>3</sup> They were happy to buy the old Congregational church for \$1000 (\$600 for the building and \$400 for the organ). The bill of sale was signed October 7, 1903. And late November saw a Concord contractor at work moving the church forward into the Square, then turning and backing it onto a new site, about 200 feet away. The lot on Veterans Square opposite the railroad station was not actually purchased until February 1904, although the owner had previously agreed to the sale of the land and the placement of the building. (As the building is being nominated for its architecture, the usual prohibition against moved buildings being listed on the National Register would not apply.)

<sup>3</sup>The People's Christian Church has since changed its name twice, first to the First Christian Church, and then to the Evangelical Baptist Church.

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Since the arrival of the Evangelical Baptist Church on its present site, the exterior of the church has seen only one truly important change. The great hurricane of September 21, 1938, toppled the upper steeple--the belfry and clock stages and the spire. A new bell was placed in the third stage of the tower. And a new octagonal spire on a short octagonal base was designed by Laconia architect Norman Randlett, and erected in 1939 by contractor Elmer Boynton & Son. The new spire was of a different design than its predecessor. But the designer did make the spire compatible with the church, through such devices as the roofs of the louvred dormers, which echo the hood-moulds below. The only other notable changes to the main block are found at the main entry, which has acquired concrete sidewalls, carpeting on its steps, and new paneled doors. The concrete block rear wing, built in 1957 by contractor Sylvester Rand according to the plans of architect Clifford Broker, although important to the church's Sunday school program, is almost invisible, being largely hidden by the other buildings that tightly enclose the church on both sides. All that the passerby sees of the rear wing is the compatible clapboarded Square facade of its narrow two story section. Basically, the exterior, with the major exception of the steeple, appears today as it did in 1872. This Victorian exterior places the church among a handful of significant Victorian eclectic churches in Belknap County, for Laconia's three Baptist churches, the Evangelical Baptist Church, the South Baptist Church (1878-79), and the United Baptist Church of Lakeport (1891-92), are really the only important churches of the style in the county.

The interior has been much more radically changed. The upper and lower vestibules still retain most of their Victorian details. But, the lower level has been drastically remodeled in recent years. The vestry was rebuilt as a chapel in 1971. In its present condition, it is a thoroughly modern room, with modern carpeting, wall sheathing, and ceilings. The restroom off the vestibule, the new closets off the chapel (built in 1981), the pastor's and secretary's offices (enlarged after a small fire in 1982) are also strictly contemporary rooms. The kitchen and the main block's classroom have also been modernized, although not as completely.

The upper level was also drastically altered, although with more interesting results. It is not clear when the present semielliptical platform or the four newer stained glass windows were installed in the auditorium. But most of the upper story was rebuilt in 1923. The northwest end of the upper level was divided into two levels with a classroom between the two vestibules and three upper classrooms, all with pressed metal walls and ceilings, and all connected to the auditorium by large openings with moulded frames and balustrades. The auditorium was "completely remodeled with steel ceiling and walls",<sup>4</sup> the pressed metal walls with their paneled pilasters, elaborate cornices and large panels, and the pressed metal ceiling, with its even more elaborate coffering. The choir rail was erected on the platform.

<sup>4</sup>Laconia Democrat, July 27, 1923.

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There have been a few changes to the upper level in recent years. Two upper classrooms have been sealed off from the auditorium by plasterboard walls, while the central room has been subdivided to create a storage closet and an audio room. The auditorium has seen the installation of carpeting and modern pews. Modern grooved wooden wainscoting now sheathes its walls, the platform front, and the choir rail. A new side door provides an emergency exit. But, basically, the auditorium and the old classrooms retain their early 20th century appearance. Their most notable features are the elaborate pressed metal walls and ceilings, which seem to have survived intact. Pressed metal interiors of the size and elaborateness seen in the auditorium, or even in the classrooms, are quite rare in central New Hampshire. To date, the pressed metal walls and ceilings that were so popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries have attracted little scholarly attention, so it is difficult to place the church interiors in any perspective. We can say that, in the Lakes Region, these rooms, particularly the auditorium, are among the best examples of this intriguing phase of interior design. Certainly, they are worthy of preservation and recognition.

The Evangelical Baptist Church has had a long and complex architectural history. As it stands today, the church can boast one of the best Victorian exteriors in Belknap County, and one of the few large and elaborate pressed metal interiors in the Lakes Region. This combination, although unusual, is nevertheless deserving of National Register recognition.



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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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Correspondence - Gwendolyn Gove.

Interviews - Gwendolyn Gove, January 5, October 25, October 29, 1984.

Interview - Rolland Gove, October 28, 1984.

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

The boundary of the nominated property is shown on the accompanying map entitled "Site Plan of Evangelical Baptist Church, Veterans Square, Laconia, New Hampshire". The property is bounded on the northwest by Veterans Square, on the southwest by property of the Laconia Congregational Church, and on the northeast and southeast by property of Rene Gignac. The nominated property includes the Evangelical Baptist Church and the lot on which it has stood since 1903. (Laconia Tax Map - plat 149, street 225, lot 2)

The boundaries of the nominated property have been highlighted in yellow on the attached sketch map (15-10-3).

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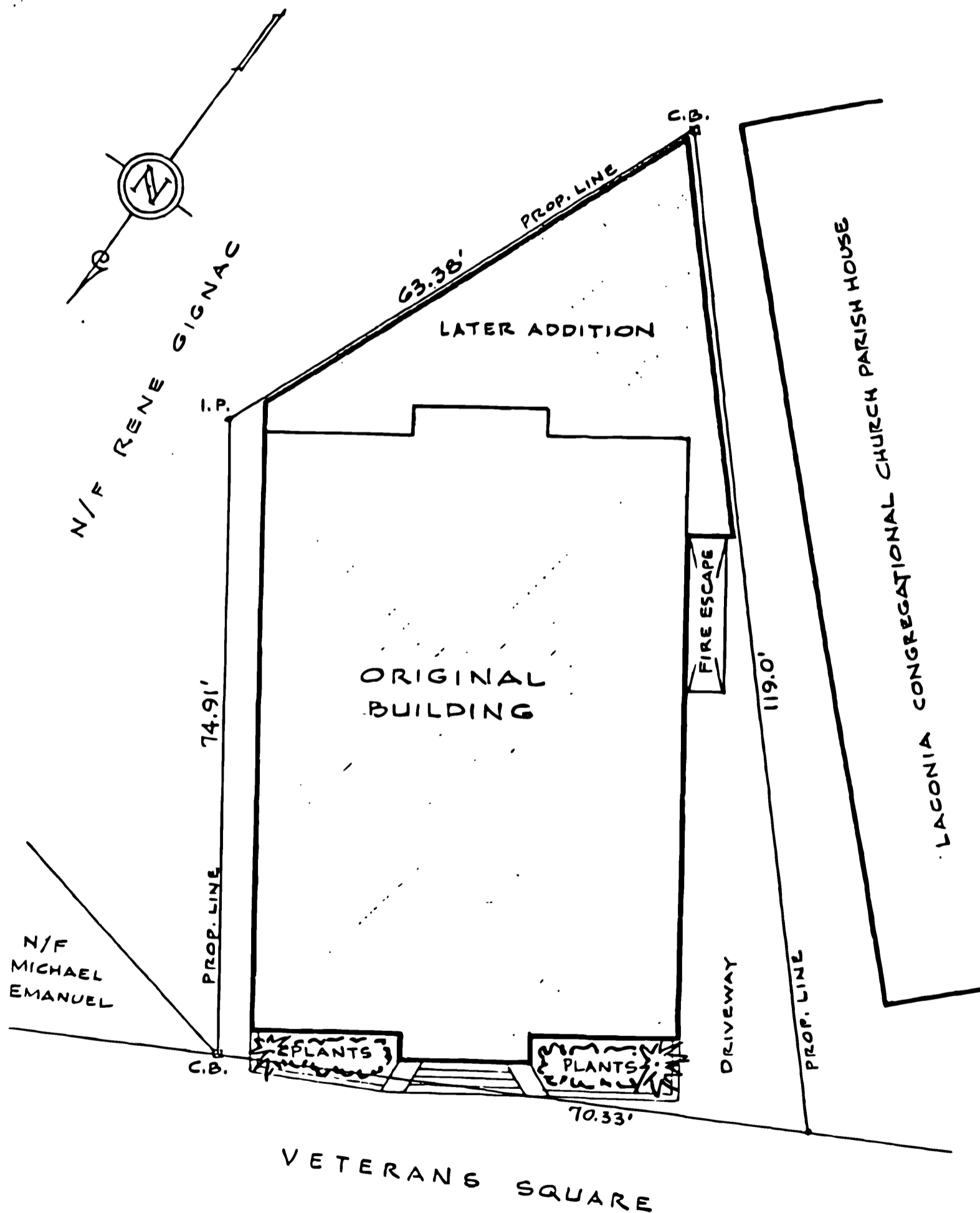
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SITE PLAN OF  
EVANGELICAL BAPTIST CHURCH  
VETERANS SQUARE  
LACONIA, NEW HAMPSHIRE

SCALE 1/16" = 1'-0"

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This Certifies that the appearance of the photographs has not changed