

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

FEB 05 1990

386

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

historic name First Congregational Church
other names/site number Congregational Meetinghouse

2. Location

street & number Church Street (500 feet west of Main Street)
city, town Alton
state New Hampshire code NH county Belknap code NH 001 zip code 03809

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private (checked)
Category of Property: building(s) (checked)
Number of Resources within Property: Contributing 1, Noncontributing 0

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of certifying official: [Signature]
Date: January 25, 1990
State or Federal agency and bureau: NEW HAMPSHIRE

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official:
Date:
State or Federal agency and bureau:

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register. (checked)
determined eligible for the National Register.
determined not eligible for the National Register.
removed from the National Register.
other, (explain:)
Entered in the National Register: March 9 1990
Signature of the Keeper: Mark J. Baker
Date of Action:

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion / religious structure

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion / religious structure**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Granitewalls WeatherboardWoodroof Asphalt

other \_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The First Congregational Church is a Greek Revival style wooden church that stands at its original location on its own lot on the southeast side of Church street in the village of Alton. The church consists of four distinct components. The tall, gable roofed main block is set with its northwest gable end facing the street. (The main block is basically one and a half stories high, being mostly occupied by a tall auditorium beneath an attic. But, at the northwest end, the main block has two stories beneath the attic, a first story containing the vestibule and restrooms and a second story storage space.) Set astride the northwest end of the main block's roof ridge and projecting slightly from the main block's northwest gable end is the three stage tower with spire. The rear(southeast) gable end of the main block is almost completely covered by a one story shed roofed rear addition. Covering the entire northeast end of the rear addition, overlapping the rear southerly corner of the main block's northeast facade, and extending to the southeast of the rear addition is the long, one and a half story, gable roofed vestry. The vestry's main facade is its northwest gable end facing the street. The main block and tower have post and beam frames, the vestry and rear addition balloon frames. The original church, built in 1853-54, was composed of the main block and the tower. The exterior of the original church is well preserved, the notable changes being the removal of a short parapet around the spire base, the replacement of the entry steps, the installation of a small window on one lateral facade and of a stained glass window on the rear gable end, and the construction of the two additions (the vestry and the rear addition) to the rear of the original building. The interior of the original church has been more extensively altered, having seen the conversion of the basement to classrooms (with the consequent construction of a stairway into the first story vestibule), the addition of two restrooms, and the periodic remodeling and renovation of the auditorium. Nevertheless, the original church retains its basic integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The main block, set on a cut granite block foundation, has clapboarded walls and wide paneled corner pilasters with no bases, but with heavy moulded capitals. The wide box cornice with mouldings, deep frieze, and deep architrave has returns on the rear southeast gable, but is pedimented on the main northwest gable. (The raking cornices of the northwest gable are interrupted by the projecting tower. But the horizontal cornice of

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

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

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1853-1854

Significant Dates

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

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

The First Congregational Church is significant under Criterion C in the area of architecture as one of the finest Greek Revival churches in Belknap County. Built in 1853-1854, the building has been continuously used by the First Congregational Church and its successor, the Community Church of Alton. The exterior of the building is however strikingly well preserved, the public facades having changed little since its construction, save in minor details, such as the addition of two inconspicuous windows. The interior, whose original appearance is somewhat uncertain, has obviously seen more remodeling, although it still contains some attractive rooms, notably the impressive auditorium. The building's architectural significance derives, however, from its fine exterior. The church uses a traditional form, a gable roofed main block, with its gable end serving as the main facade and a three stage tower projecting slightly from that main facade. The monumentality of the church is emphasized by its symmetrical design and the simple geometric solids and forms of its composition. The building's dignity is further enhanced by the strong, well crafted Greek Revival ornament, the tall pilasters and pillars, heavy box cornices, and peaked moulded window and door heads. The church is particularly notable for the sophisticated integration of the tower and the main block, which gives the building a coherent design with a strong emphasis on the main axis and the tall tower. The excellent design and craftsmanship of the First Congregational Church ranks it among the best Greek Revival churches in the county. Of the twelve churches still surviving in Belknap County that were built or subsequently remodeled in the Greek Revival style, all in the three decades before the Civil War, the First Congregational Church ranks among the most sophisticated high style examples. Only three other Greek Revival churches in the county can be truly compared to the First Congregational Church for their architectural significance. And only one other church employs as sophisticated a design. The First Congregational Church must be considered one of the finest churches in its style in the county. (Although owned by a religious institution and still used for religious services, the First Congregational Church is eligible under Criteria Consideration A, as it derives its

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

- Lois Alden "History of the Alton Congregational Church" Granite State News August 31, 1934
- "Alton Congregational Church Records" 1894-1920 (manuscript, Community Church of Alton, Alton, N.H.)
- "Alton Congregational Church, Book II, 1921 to 1948" (manuscript, Community Church of Alton, Alton, N.H.)
- ALTON FEDERATED CHURCHES, ANNUAL REPORTS, 1965 (Alton, N.H.: Alton Federated Churches, 1966)
- ALTON FEDERATED CHURCHES, ANNUAL REPORT, 1967 (Alton, N.H.: Alton Federated Churches, 1968)

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

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

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

**Specify repository:**

Community Church of Alton, Alton

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property less than one acre (.3 acre)

**UTM References**

A 19 320200 4813500  
 Zone Easting Northing

C \_\_\_\_\_

B \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zone Easting Northing

D \_\_\_\_\_

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundary of the nominated property, a rectangular lot, is described as follows, beginning at the north corner of the lot, on the southeast side of Church Street, the boundary proceeds southwest along the Church Street right-of way 99 feet, the proceeds southeast approximately 140 feet, then proceeds northeast approximately 99 feet, then proceeds northwest approxi-

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**Boundary Justification**

The nominated property includes the First Congregational Church and the lot on which it was constructed in 1853-1854. The nominated property has been historically associated with the First Congregational Church since its erection. (Not included in the nominated property is an adjoining church owned lot, on which stood the Congregational parsonage and which is now used for a church parking lot.)

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title David L. Ruell  
 organization Lakes Region Planning Commission date August 14, 1989  
 street & number Main Street telephone (603) 279-8171  
 city or town Meredith state New Hampshire zip code 03253

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the northwest pediment is continued around the tower.) The asphalt shingled gable roof is interrupted by the tower and by a tall, plain brick chimney with a capped flue on the northeast slope below the tower.

The central bay of the main block's main facade, the three bay northwest gable end, is covered by the tower, which contains the main entry. The two side bays each contain a tall, wide twelve over twelve sash window with paneled side trim, louvred shutters, and a peaked window head with an upper moulding. (These two tall windows actually light two stories, although no floor division is visible in the windows themselves.) The center of the clapboarded, pedimented gable is covered by the projecting tower, leaving just two small clapboarded triangles. Three, large tall twelve over twelve sash windows, of the same design as the northwestern windows, appear on the two lateral (northeast and southwest) facades. (All of these large windows on the main and lateral facades now have modern metal framed storm windows.) The lateral facades each also have two untrimmed four pane windows in the granite block foundation. The southwest facade has an additional main level window, a small, plain framed, nine pane window with rippled glass, a large central pane, and a border of smaller panes, found at the north end of the facade. The south end of the northeast facade is partly covered by the vestry, whose front wall butts up against the frame of the southerly main block window and whose cornice actually interrupts the side trim of that window. Save for the western corner pilaster, the entire lower level of the main block's southeast gable end is covered by the rear addition. Above the roof of the rear addition can be seen a round stained glass window in a plain frame. An electric light on a long bracket illuminates the window. In the southeast gable itself is the attic window, a plain framed six over six sash window.

The tower is sheathed with vertical and horizontal flush boarding. Most of the first stage's northwest front wall actually projects only a few inches beyond the clapboarded northwest front wall of the main block. The wide box cornice with architrave and frieze ( a continuation of the horizontal cornice of the main block's pediment) which tops the first stage is supported by two large square engaged paneled pillars, that are found at the outer corners of the first stage. The pillars are of the same design as the main block corner pilasters, with the same panels and capitals. (Each now has a pseudo-Colonial lamp mounted on its front.) Narrow sections of vertical flush boarding cover the northeast and southwest sides of the first stage behind the engaged corner pillars. Vertical and horizontal flush boarding sheathes the northwest front of the first stage between the two pillars. Most of the northwest front is occupied by a very shallow recess containing the main entry and a large rectangular panel above the entry. The main entry's tall large double doors each have two moulded panels, a square lower panel and a tall upper panel. The doors have plain side trim, but are topped by a

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peaked door head with an upper moulding, like the heads of the main block windows. The entry and its frame span the full width of the shallow recess. Mounted to the west of the entry is a small painted wood sign with moulded frame and triangular top that gives the service hours. Above the entry, the recess is sheathed with flush boarding, interrupted only by a large rectangular panel with moulded frame and flush boarded infill. The panel now contains a large painted sign identifying the building. On the soffit of the horizontal cornice crowning the first stage is mounted a simple electric light fixture. Between the two pillars is now found a flagstone covered concrete floor. On the front of the entire first stage of the tower is a wide flagstone covered concrete landing. On all three sides of the landing and the tower projection are five continuous wide flagstone covered concrete steps. A modern metal pipe railing starts at the westerly side of the main entry and continues down over the front steps to the walk from the street.

The second stage of the tower is set on a low, wide base, projecting from the main block's pedimented gable and set on the cornice topping the first stage. This base is sheathed with flush boarding and has a slightly pitched board top to shed the rain. Above the base, the second stage, which rises above the roof, is sheathed with horizontal flush boarding and trimmed by paneled corner pilasters of the same design as the main block's corner pilasters, but proportionately reduced in size. The windowless second stage is topped by a box cornice with mouldings, architrave, and frieze, that just barely clears the main block roof ridge on the southeast side. The northwest front of the second stage is ornamented in its lower portion by a shallow but wide rectangular panel with moulded frame and flush boarded infill. The square third stage, the smaller open belfry, is also set on a somewhat larger flush boarded square base, just one board high. The belfry is sheathed with horizontal flush boarding, and is trimmed by paneled corner pilasters of the same design as the second stage pilasters, and by a box cornice, again of the same design as the second stage cornice. In each face of the belfry is a large plain framed rectangular opening, through which can be seen the bell and its framework. The lower portion of each opening is filled by a short railing with two plain rails and decoratively sawn slats. (The belfry openings are now filled by barely visible wire mesh to keep out birds.) The belfry is topped by a tall pyramidal spire, sheathed with horizontal flush boarding and trimmed by vertical cornerboards. The apex of the spire is topped by a simple moulding and by an ornate metal weathervane on a globe.

The vestry has a cut granite block foundation on the northwest gable end (where the ground has been built up higher) and a brick foundation on the other three sides. The clapboarded walls are trimmed by paneled corner pilasters with moulded capitals like those of the main block pilasters. The

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box cornice with mouldings, frieze and architrave is pedimented on the street (northwest) gable, but only has returns on the rear southeast gable. A brick chimney with corbeled cap breaks the northeast slope of the asphalt shingled gable roof. In the center of the three bay northwest gable end is the vestry's main entry, a door with six horizontal moulded panels and a large window. The entry preserves its paneled side trim, but the peaked door head with an upper moulding is almost covered by a modern hood supported by two plain braces. The hood has a plywood ceiling, close eaves, and a low pitched gable roof covered by asphalt roll paper. The two side bays each contain a two over two sash window with paneled side trim and a peaked window head with upper moulding. Similar two over two sash windows with the same side trim and window heads appear on the lateral facades, four on the northeast facade and two on the southwest facade. The northeast facade also has a small plain framed, boarded up basement window. The basement level of the southwest facade contains a small plain framed, four pane window and, in the north corner, an untrimmed half height board door. This basement door is sheltered by a porch roof in the south corner of the vestry and the rear addition, which is supported by their walls and a plain post. The porch floor, of dirt and concrete covered by small stones, is below ground level and is protected by a low concrete block wall. The porch has an unfinished plywood ceiling with exposed rafters, close eaves, and a low pitched, almost flat, roof covered by asphalt roll paper. At the southerly end of the main level of the southwest facade is found a four panel door with the same paneled side trim and peaked moulded head seen on the windows. This door is served by a wooden landing with board floor, reached by a low concrete step and five wooden steps with board risers and treads, all with plain wooden railings. The southeast gable end has two plain framed two over two sash windows, one in the main level and one in the gable. (Metal framed storm windows now cover the main level windows of the vestry.)

The rear addition, set on a high concrete block foundation, has clapboarded walls trimmed by cornerboards. A box cornice with mouldings trims the low pitched shed roof, which is sheathed with asphalt roll paper. The southwest "gable" end has a two over two sash window with paneled side trim and a peaked window head with upper moulding ( a window that was relocated from the vestry). The longer rear facade, the southeast side, has two basement windows, a two pane window and a single pane window, in the concrete foundation, both with concrete sills. The concrete foundation is also interrupted by the rear entry, which rises up into the clapboarded wall. The rear entry, double six panel doors with a plain frame, is flanked by two pseudo-Colonial lamps and is sheltered by a hood with two simple braces, a plywood ceiling with exposed rafters, close eaves, and a very low pitched (almost flat) roof sheathed with asphalt roll paper. On the westerly side of the hood, a simple latticework trellis is attached to

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the brace. To the west of the entry in the main level is a two over two sash window with paneled side trim and a horizontal moulded head (another window relocated from the vestry). The main level also features four smaller plain framed two over two sash windows, one above the rear entry and three to the east of the entry.

Most of the interior of the main block is devoted to the church auditorium. To the northwest of the tall auditorium are two stories. The first story of the northwest end is largely devoted to the vestibule. But, to the southwest of the vestibule is a small anteroom, which serves two small restrooms to its southwest. At the northeast end of the vestibule is the open stairway to the basement level and the L-shaped enclosed stairway to the second story storage space above the vestibule, the anteroom and the restrooms.

The vestibule has a slightly irregular shape, as the lower portion of the L-shaped stairhall intrudes into the east corner of the room and a slight recess is found in the inner southeast wall to the west of the stairhall intrusion. The vestibule has a carpeted floor and plaster or plaster-board walls with moulded baseboards. The high plaster ceiling is interrupted by a central hanging pseudo-Colonial light fixture and a round hole with moulded frame for the bell rope. The outer northwest wall contains the main entry, tall double two panel doors set in a moulded frame with plain lower cornerblocks and square upper cornerblocks ornamented with round patera. East of the entry is found the lower portion of the large twelve over twelve sash window shared by the first and second stories of the northwest end of the main block. In the vestibule, this window has a moulded sill and moulded side trim. The southwest wall contains a new doorless opening to the small anteroom. The opening retains its frame, which is of the same design as the frame of the larger main entry. At the northeast end of the vestibule, carpeted steps descend along the northwest wall to a landing in the north corner. (These basement stairs will be described later with the basement.) A plain wooden railing on the southeast side of the steps protects that portion of the open stairway to the west of the enclosed second story stairhall. At the southwesterly end of the L-shaped second story stairhall is its plain framed four panel door. The vestibule's long southeast (inner) wall features the wide, double two panel doors to the auditorium, found opposite the main entry in the northwest wall and ornamented by a frame of the same design as the main entry door frame. Above the auditorium doors is mounted a modern emergency light fixture. At the west end of the southeast wall is a wooden coat rack, with a plain board side on the northeast and a moulded cornice. To the east of the auditorium doors is the shallow recess, now partly filled by the intruding second story stairhall. The outer westerly corner of the recess is rounded, with curved plaster wall and baseboard.



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The anteroom to the southwest of the vestibule is a small room with carpeted floor, plaster walls with moulded baseboards and a high plaster ceiling. The northeast wall has the plain framed doorless opening to the vestibule and, at the southerly end, a short plain framed plywood door (mounted above the baseboard), which serves a deep short cabinet with plaster walls, board ceiling and floor, and two shelves. Between these two openings, a hand sink is mounted on the wall. The northwest wall features the lower portion of the large twelve over twelve sash window shared with the second story, which here has a moulded sill and moulded side trim. In the southwest wall are two four panel doors to the two restrooms, each in the same moulded frame with plain lower cornerblocks and upper cornerblocks with round patera seen on the doors of the vestibule. The two small restrooms each have a linoleum floor, a toilet, three plaster walls with plain baseboards, a four panel northeastern door with plain frame, and a plaster ceiling. The wall separating the two restrooms is a thin partition of vertical beaded boarding, with simple top and base mouldings. A simple electric light fixture is mounted on this wall in each restroom. The board partition divides the window shared by the two restrooms. The nine pane window has rippled glass, a large central pane, a border of smaller panes, and a plain frame.

The principal room of the church is the tall, large auditorium. The floor is completely carpeted, including the raised platform at the southeast end of the room. The plaster walls all share a wainscoating of horizontal flush boarding topped by a simple moulding that also serves as the sill for the windows. A simple moulding encircles the room at the window head level. Between the wainscoating and this upper moulding, the walls are ornamented by large rectangular panels formed by narrow mouldings laid over the plaster. The high plaster ceiling has broad coves on the lateral northeast and southwest sides. Hanging from the ceiling is a now electrified kersosene chandelier, with eight lights mounted on ornate metal brackets radiating from an elaborate central metal post. The chandelier hangs from the center of a large six pointed foliated ornament surrounded by intersecting arced mouldings, which create a six lobed surround decorated with geometric and foliated ornament. Also mounted on the ceiling are two ceiling fans and three track lights, the latter above the platform.

In the center of the northwest (street) wall is a tall, two foot deep, semielliptical arched recess, which has a plaster ceiling and plaster walls with a wainscoating like the other wainscoating in the room, save that horizontal beaded boarding replaces the horizontal flush boarding found elsewhere. The lower portion of the recess contains the vestibule doors, double two panel doors in a moulded frame with plain lower cornerblocks and upper cornerblocks with patera, like those seen in the vestibule. The doors protrude up into a rectangle formed by mouldings laid over the plaster.

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A wall clock is mounted in the panel and an emergency light above the panel. The upper portion of the arched recess is filled by a projecting balcony whose outer wall comes within a few inches of the auditorium's main wall. The balcony has a plastered underside and a low front wall with a baseboard, eight large panels, and a moulded coping. Above the low balcony front is a sliding door, with six vertical panels all curved at the top to follow the curve of the arch. On the main northwest wall to each side of the central recess is a large rectangle formed by mouldings laid over the plaster and, still to be faintly seen in the plaster and wainscoating, signs of a former door that has been covered over. The northeast and southwest lateral walls are virtually identical. Each has three tall, large twelve over twelve sash windows, which rest on the wainscoating's crowning moulding and are ornamented by moulded frames with square upper cornerblocks with round patera. The lateral walls each have three large rectangles formed by mouldings, two between the pairs of windows and one to the south of the southernmost window. Each lateral wall also has two ornate double kerosene lights (now electrified) mounted on double wall brackets. (A large speaker for the sound system is set on a shelf supported by a simple brace in the east corner of the room.) The northeast lateral wall also has, to the south of the windows, a four panel door to the vestry, with a moulded frame with cornerblocks like the vestibule door frames.

In the center of the southeast wall is a semielliptical arched recess, that is wider than the northwestern recess. The recess has plaster walls and ceiling, save for wainscoating in its lower portion, which is like the wainscoating in most of the room. The recess contains another large rectangle formed by mouldings laid over the plaster. High in the rectangle is a round stained glass window, depicting Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, set in a round moulded frame. Beneath the window and behind the alter table standing on the platform is a curtain in a wall mounted semielliptical arched moulded frame that rests on the wainscoating. To each side of the central recess, the southeast wall is decorated by another large rectangle formed by mouldings laid over the plaster.

The auditorium no longer has fixed pews, just movable chairs and tables on the main floor. The raised platform at the southeast end of the room is found in the center, in front of the recess, and in the south corner, where the organ and choir are located. The platform projects into the room more at the west end, in front of the organ. The platform has a vertical beaded board front and a carpeted floor. It is reached by fully carpeted steps with beaded board sides at the westerly end of the northwest front and along the entire northeast side. A low brass rail with hanging curtain is mounted on the edge of the platform in front of the westerly choir and organ section. Set against the southeast wall at the west end of the platform is the large ornate pipe organ, which has a paneled base topped by a cornice, three semi-

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circular arched openings containing the exposed metal pipes on the front, a moulded arch above the wider taller central opening, a deep moulded cornice above the paneled sides and the two smaller arched openings on the front, two kerosene lamps on brackets between the openings, and crowning carved decoration, including a carved lyre. The other furniture on the platform is all movable, including the altar table, pulpit, and chairs. Set on the main floor to the northeast of the platform is the modern electric organ.

Returning to the vestibule, we find the L-shaped stairhall. The lower section of the stairhall is the newer section, which was built into the vestibule along its southeast wall. From the untrimmed four panel door at the southwest end of the newer section, four steps with plain board steps and risers ascend to the northeast to a board floored landing that stretches into the older section of the stairhall, which is found along the northeast side of the building. The southeast wall of the newer section is the old plaster wall of the vestibule, featuring a painted brick chimney. And the ceiling of the newer section is the old plaster ceiling of the vestibule. But, its northwest and southwest walls are modern unfinished plasterboard walls with exposed studding. From the board floored landing in the corner of the stairhall, plain steps with board risers and treads ascend to the northwest through the older section of the stairhall along the outer northeast wall and wind through the north corner to the second story storage space. The older section of the stairhall has unfinished walls with exposed framework and studding, boards on the outer northeast wall, and the backside of the lathed and plastered southeast and southwest walls. The older section of the stairhall has no ceiling and opens directly above into the second story.

The second story above the vestibule, anteroom, and restrooms is now an unfinished storage area with a rough board floor and unfinished walls with exposed post and beam frame and studding. The outer northwest, northeast, and southwest walls are boarded, while the inner southeast wall is the lathed backside of the auditorium's plaster wall. The space has no ceiling, just beams and joists separating it from the attic level above it. The room is lit by the upper portions of the two large twelve over twelve sash windows (here untrimmed), which the first and second stories share. In the center of the inner southeastern wall is the six panel sliding door which opens into the auditorium. Beneath the sliding door is the paneled balcony front. A brick chimney rises through the storage space and the attic. At the northeast end of the space is the stairway down to the vestibule. Near the westerly window is a steep set of wooden stairs with board treads and stringers, which rises from near the northwest wall to the southeast to the attic level.

The attic level and the tower's second stage are one continuous unfinished space, with unfinished board walls with exposed framework and studding.

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The main block attic has an unfinished floor, with exposed beams and joists and with insulation laid above the auditorium. There are no floor boards above the second story storage space, save for two board floored landings between the steep stairs from the second story and the stairs up to the belfry. The attic level is lit by an untrimmed six over six sash window in the southeast end wall. The main block attic is topped by a double pitched unfinished board ceiling with exposed rafters, purlins, and roof trusses. The tower's second stage is topped by a pyramidal unfinished board ceiling with exposed rafters. From a landing at the attic floor level, a plain steep wooden stairway with board treads and stringers ascends to the northwest to a board floored landing in the northwest end of the tower. From this upper landing, similar steep stairs ascend to the southeast to a trapdoor in the tower ceiling. The trapdoor opens into the open belfry. The belfry has a low pitched pyramidal floor, thoroughly covered with tar. In the center sits the heavy square timber base for the bell and its framework. Southeast of the bell is the board covered trapdoor. The belfry has unfinished board walls with exposed framework and studding, and a board ceiling with a large suspended loudspeaker. Each wall of the belfry is interrupted by a large untrimmed rectangular opening filled by a decorative slat railing and wire mesh.

The basement is reached by the basement stairs in the north corner of the main block. The L-shaped stairs descend into a hall along the northeast wall. Southwest of this basement stairhall is the furnace room, and southwest of the furnace room is a large classroom. The rest of the basement is devoted to a wide L-shaped corridor and five smaller classrooms. The L-shaped corridor runs from the end of the basement stairhall southwest to the center of the basement, and then turns and runs to the rear end of the basement, where it ends at the rear entry hall in the rear addition. Three small classrooms are found southwest of the corridor, and two small classrooms northeast of its central section.

The basement stairs descend northeast from the vestibule along the northwest street wall to a landing in the north corner of the main block and then descend from the landing southeast along the outer northeast wall to the corridor that forms the lower portion of the stairhall. The steps, landing, and lower corridor floor are all carpeted. Wooden handrails are mounted on the stairway walls. The upper stairway has plasterboard walls with plain baseboards. But, the lower portion of the stairhall has painted concrete block walls. The upper stairs and most of the landing open directly above into the vestibule and have no separate ceiling. But, the rest of the landing, the lower steps, and the lower corridor have a three stepped plasterboard ceiling with two inset light fixtures. In the northeast wall of the landing is a shallow short recess with linoleum floor, plasterboard walls and ceiling. The lower corridor is lit by a deeply recessed four pane window in its northeast wall. At the south end of the stairhall corridor

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are found double modern plain wooden doors, each with a large window, sharing a plain frame, that opens into the L-shaped corridor.

The L-shaped basement corridor and the six basement classrooms all share a continuously carpeted floor and a modern suspended tile ceiling with inset light panels. The easterly section of the L-shaped corridor has northeast and northwest walls of painted concrete block, and a southeast wall of modern vertically grooved laminated wood. The other section of the corridor, stretching through the center of the basement has a painted concrete block wall at its southeast end and the same vertically grooved laminated wood on its other three walls. The easterly section of the corridor has plain framed double wooden doors with windows to the basement stairhall in its northwest wall and a wide untrimmed opening, filled by a folding vinyl curtain, to a classroom in its southeast wall. The central section of the corridor has untrimmed plain double wooden doors to the large classroom at its northwest end, two untrimmed openings with folding vinyl curtains to classrooms in its northeast wall, three similar untrimmed openings with more folding vinyl curtains to classrooms in its longer southwest wall, and plain framed double modern wooden doors, each with a large window, to the rear entry hall in the rear addition at its southeast end.

The northerly of the two small classrooms to the south and east of the corridor has a northeast concrete block wall, with a high four pane basement window, and three composition board walls, each with a large untrimmed opening, filled by a folding vinyl curtain. Its southerly companion has painted concrete block walls on the northeast and southeast, and composition board walls on the southwest and northwest. The southwest and northwest walls each feature a large untrimmed opening, filled by a folding vinyl curtain, serving the corridor and the northerly classroom. The three small classrooms to the southwest of the corridor each has a painted concrete block wall on the southwest and a composition board wall, with a large untrimmed opening, filled by a vinyl curtain, to the corridor, on the northeast. The three classrooms are separated from each other by folding vinyl curtains which can be drawn back to unite them all into one space. The southerly of the three classrooms has a painted concrete block southeast wall. The central classroom has a four pane basement window in its southwest wall. The northerly classroom has a composition board northwest wall. The large classroom in the west corner of the basement has painted concrete block walls on the southwest, northwest and northeast, and a southeast wall of composition board and vertically grooved laminated wood. A four pane basement window appears high in its southwest wall. Narrow plain frames surround large double doors to the corridor in the southeast wall and a wooden louvered door to the furnace room in the northeast wall. The furnace room has a concrete floor, the old stone foundation as its outer northeast wall, three concrete block walls, and an unfinished board ceiling with exposed rafters and, at the northeast end, the underside of the basement stairs. No trim

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graces the louvred door to the large classroom in the southwest wall. Most of the furnace room is occupied by the large furnace and its ductwork.

The main level of the vestry is mostly occupied by a large rectangular public hall used for meetings and suppers. To the northwest (streetside) of the hall are three small rooms, a central entry hall, an office in the north corner of the vestry, and a hallway to the church auditorium in the west corner of the vestry. To the southeast (rear) of the hall are two connected rooms, a kitchen in the south corner of the vestry and a pantry in the east corner of the vestry. The six main level rooms share a number of features. All have plaster walls above vertical beaded board wainscoting with moulded baseboards and upper rails. The doors, with the exception of one modern door in the hall, have moulded frames with plain lower corner-blocks and square upper cornerblocks ornamented with round patera. The two over two sash windows all have moulded sills and moulded frames, again with square upper cornerblocks with round patera. The office retains its hardwood floor. But, the entry hall is now carpeted, and the other four rooms now have linoleum floors. High plaster ceilings are found in all but the main hall and the hallway to the auditorium, which now have modern tile ceilings with ceiling mouldings. (Modern light fixtures hang from the ceilings of all six rooms.)

The small entry hall on the street side of the vestry has an outer northwestern paneled door with large window, and an inner southeastern four panel door to the main hall. The main hall has three four panel doors in its northwest wall, serving the hallway to the auditorium, the entry hall, and the office. Three two over two sash windows appear in the northeast side wall. The southwest side wall has another two over two sash window (as well as signs of two other removed windows) and a modern plain framed six panel door to the rear addition's corridor. The rear southeast wall has two doors with original frames. The westerly door to the kitchen is a dutch door, with two panels in both the lower and upper sections, the upper section being topped by a wide board shelf with metal brackets on both sides. The easterly door to the pantry was originally four paneled, but now contains a large rectangular opening (which can be closed by a piece of plywood), with a plain wooden shelf on its front (main hall) side. The office in the north corner has a two over two sash window in the northwest (street) wall, a four panel door to the main hall in its southeast wall, three plain board shelves built against the northeast wall, and a high moulded rail, with metal hooks, on all four upper walls. The hallway to the auditorium also has a two over two sash window in its northwest wall, and a four panel door to the main hall in its southeast wall, as well as a four panel door to the church auditorium in the southwest wall, moulded rails (with and without hooks) on its upper walls, and two wooden shelves on its southeast wall.

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The kitchen in the south corner of the vestry is connected by a wide opening to the pantry in the east corner of the vestry. The larger kitchen has the already described dutch door to the main hall in its northwest wall, and a chimney intrusion, covered by the same wainscoating and plaster as the kitchen walls, in the north corner. The southwest wall has a two over two sash window to the north and a four panel outer door to the south. North of the door and beneath the window, a wooden counter, with vertical beaded board sides, drawers, beaded board door, moulded cornice, and linoleum top, covers the southwest wall. At the easterly end of the southeast wall is a large, wide closet with the same outer walls as the other kitchen walls, complete with wainscoating and upper plaster walls, here topped by a moulded cornice. The closet, which is shorter than the kitchen, has a wide plain framed opening occupying almost all of its northwest front, a linoleum floor, board side walls, plaster rear wall with plain board wainscoating, and a plaster ceiling. (It is now largely filled by a refrigerator.) West of the closet is a two over two sash window. West of the window, the wainscoating is higher than it is on the other kitchen and vestry walls. Built in front of the window and to its west, is a plain plywood counter with drawers, two plywood doors, a modern sink, and a linoleum top. At the west end of the southeast wall, a shallow broom closet with plain board sides and plain board door has been built in front of the wainscoating. The northeast wall between the large closet and the chimney intrusion is largely devoted to a large wide, plain framed opening to the pantry.

The pantry has the already described door to the main hall in its northwest wall, a two over two sash window in its northeast wall, and the wide plain framed opening to the kitchen in its southwest wall. The lower portions of the northeast and southeast walls are covered by counters with fronts of vertical beaded boarding and vertical beveled boarding, doors of the same materials, and linoleum covered tops. The two walls each also have a high wall cabinet with moulded cornice, supported by simple braces. The southeast cabinet is built of beaded boarding, the northeast cabinet of plywood. And each cabinet has two doors of the same materials. In the high plaster ceiling of the pantry is a small plain framed trapdoor to the attic. The unfinished attic has an unfinished floor with exposed joists largely covered by insulation, unfinished board end walls with exposed studding, and unfinished pitched board ceilings with exposed rafters. An untrimmed two over two sash window at the southeast end lights the attic. And a brick chimney rises through the short space. The vestry basement is a low space under the entire vestry, with a dirt floor. The foundation at the northwest end is built of fieldstone and granite. The unfinished board walls with exposed studding on short brick foundations on the other three sides are largely covered by insulation. (Some of the boards in the southwest wall have been removed to reveal the east basement of the rear addition.) The unfinished board ceiling with exposed joists is supported by a central

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row of five brick piers. No trim surrounds a board up basement window in the northeast wall and a four pane window in the southwest wall. But, the southwest board door, the only entry to the basement, has a plain frame. The vestry basement contains a furnace and its ductwork, but is largely used for storage.

The rear addition has two levels, a basement level and a main level, the latter corresponding to the main level of the main block and the vestry. Occupying the southwest end of the main level is a meeting room/classroom, which is connected by a corridor along the northwest side of the rear addition to the main hall of the vestry. To the rear (southeast) of the corridor are two restrooms and a closet at the easterly end of the main level and two small closets at the westerly end of the corridor. In the center of the corridor's southeast side, a stairhall branches off from the corridor to descend southeast a few feet to ground level to reach the rear entry hall. The rear entry hall is a tall space, with the rear entry opening onto a landing at ground level and a stairway descending northwest from the rear entry landing to a landing (beneath the main level corridor) at the back entry to the main block basement. The basement level also contains a storage room to the southwest of the rear entry hall and an unused crawl-space to the northeast of the rear entry hall. The main level rooms, the stairhall, and the rear entry hall share certain basic features. All have modern tile ceilings with ceiling mouldings and, save for the restrooms, carpeted floors. With the exception of some restroom walls and the lower portions of the rear entry hall and stairhall, they also all have walls of vertically grooved laminated plywood.

The main block corridor is lit by two fluorescent light fixtures and, at the west end of its southeast wall, by a deeply recessed, plain framed two over two sash window, looking into the rear entry hall. This southeast window is flanked on each side by a shallow closet, with an untrimmed modern wooden door and the same floor, walls, and ceiling as the corridor itself. The southeast wall also contains, to the east of the stairhall, the two plain framed plain wooden doors to the two restrooms and, between the restroom doors, the plain framed, double, two leaved, plain wooden doors of a shallow closet, which again has the same floor, walls and ceiling as the corridor. At the northeast end of the corridor is a plain framed six panel door to the vestry's main hall. At the southwest end of the corridor is the plain framed, modern wooden door to the meetingroom/classroom. In the corridor ceiling is a simply framed plywood trapdoor to a short, little used attic space, which has the the old exterior walls of the main block and vestry and an unfinished plywood ceiling with exposed rafters.

The meetingroom/classroom is served by the plain framed northeastern door to the corridor and is lit by a fluorescent light fixture and two windows removed from the vestry's main hall, one each in the two outer



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(southeast and southwest) walls. Each relocated window has the two over two sash, moulded sill, and moulded frame with upper cornerblocks with round patera seen in the vestry. The two restrooms are virtually mirror images of each other. Both are L-shaped in plan, because of the closet placed between them. Each has a linoleum floor and a stall built against the wall they share (the southwest wall of the easterly mens' room, the northeast wall of the westerly ladies' room). The ladies' room stall has a plywood door. To the southeast of the stall in each restroom is another toilet, while to the northwest of the stall is a sink. The shared wall, the stall walls, and the side walls flanking the other toilet and sink are wall-papered above a formica wainscoating. The other restroom walls are covered with the vertically grooved plywood found elsewhere in the rear addition. Each restroom is lit by a plain framed two over two sash window at its southeast end and is served by a plain framed wooden door from the corridor at its northwest end.

The stairhall has painted concrete block walls in its lower portion, and vertically grooved plywood on its upper walls. The stairhall is lit by a hanging light fixture and a plain framed two over two sash window at its southeast end. The northwest end of the stairhall opens directly into the corridor. Carpeted steps, flanked by simple wooden handrails on metal brackets, descend southeast from the corridor to a carpeted landing at ground level. A simply framed doorless opening in the southwest wall of the lower landing leads to the rear entry hall. The rear entry hall has a carpeted landing at the rear entry, the plain framed, double, six paneled doors at its southeast end. From this landing, carpeted steps descend northwest to a carpeted landing at the main block basement level, where plain framed, double modern wooden doors with large windows, in the northwest wall, open into the main block basement corridor. The lower walls of the rear entry hall are of painted concrete block, while the upper walls are of vertically grooved plywood. Plain frames surround a two over two sash window above the rear entry in the outer southeast wall, the doorless opening in the northeast wall of the rear entry landing to the stairhall, the interior two over two sash window to the corridor in the upper northwest wall, and the two doors to the storage room in the southwest wall, a half height door of vertically grooved plywood at the rear entry landing and a full size wooden door with a small lower louver near the lower end of the steps.

The storage room, in the basement level to the southwest of the rear entry hall, has a concrete floor, a northwest wall of the old fieldstone and granite block foundation of the main block, three walls of concrete block, and an unfinished ceiling covered by insulation. The room is lit by an untrimmed two pane window in the southeast wall and entered by the two untrimmed doors to the rear entry hall that have already been described.

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The basement level of the rear addition to the northeast of the rear entry hall is a crawlspace that can be entered only from the basement of the vestry, through a section of wall that has been partly removed. The dirt floored, L-shaped, low crawlspace has concrete block walls on the southeast and southwest, the old main block foundation on the northwest, the old brick and wood basement wall of the vestry on the northeast, and an unfinished plywood ceiling with exposed joists. The crawlspace is lit by an untrimmed single pane window in the southeast wall.

The rectangular historic lot of the Congregational Church is relatively flat, save in front of the vestry's streetside (northwest) gable end, where the land rises to the entry. In front of the main block and the vestry, the lot is a grassed lawn. A wide asphalt paved walk leads from the street to the main entry steps. Another paved walk leads from the street to the vestry's main entry. The southerly end of the vestry walk rises to the main vestry entry and is flanked by a metal pipe railing on the northeast. A pseudo-Colonial lamppost stands near the street end of the vestry walk. A paved walk connects the main entry walk and the vestry walk; and another paved walk connects the main entry walk and the driveway of the large asphalt paved parking lot to the southwest of the church. A wide grassed strip separates the southwest facades of the main block and the rear addition from the parking lot, which continues onto an adjoining lot also owned by the church. The parking lot also continues to the rear of the rear addition, up to the rear addition wall, but stops short of the vestry. Concrete paving blocks are found at the rear addition's rear entry. A paved walk to the vestry's side entry crosses the lawn separating the vestry from the parking lot. A asphalt paved driveway, flanked on the southwest by a small grassed area, connects the parking lot to the street. Foundation shrubs grow along the northwest, southwest, and northeast sides of the main block and rear addition. A thick growth of trees and shrubs grow along the northeast and southeast boundaries of the lot. And a large evergreen stands on the front lawn. Continuous strips of concrete for the cornice drippings are found on the southwest and northeast sides of the main block, the southwest sides of the rear addition and the vestry, and some of the southeast side of the vestry.

Construction of the church was authorized by a vote of the First Congregational Society in June of 1853.<sup>1</sup> And the completed original building, consisting of the main block and the tower, was dedicated on March 22, 1854.<sup>2</sup>

- The exterior of the original Congregational Church, the main block and
1. "Records of the First Congregational Society in Alton, N.H." (manuscript, Community Church of Alton, Alton, N.H.), p.8
  2. "Diary of Joseph Mooney", Volume 11, 1853-1854 (manuscript, New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, N.H.) entry for March 22, 1854

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the tower, is remarkably well preserved. A bell was not installed in the belfry until December of 1873.<sup>3</sup> And the weathervane, said to have been from the Old South Meeting House in Boston, was mounted on the spire in 1875.<sup>4</sup> Twentieth century changes have been relatively minor. The small window on the southwest facade, which now lights the restrooms, does not appear in an 1890's photograph of the church,<sup>5</sup> and may well date from the early 1950's intallation of the restrooms.<sup>6</sup> The stained glass window in the rear gable end was installed in 1958.<sup>7</sup> The storm windows were placed on the main block windows in 1970.<sup>8</sup> The lights flanking the main entry were mounted in 1988.<sup>9</sup> Undated minor changes would include the present chimney, the entry steps and landing (resurfaced with flagstone in the mid 1980's<sup>10</sup>), the signs above and beside the main entry, and the wire mesh filling the belfry openings.<sup>11</sup> Old photographs also show that a low parapet around the base of the spire was removed sometime in the 20th century.<sup>12</sup> Basically, however, the public facades of the original church must appear today almost as they did in 1854, when the church was dedicated.

The two later additions have covered much of the rear facade and the rear corner of a lateral facade of the main block. The first mention of the oldest addition, the vestry, in the Society records appears on June 10, 1893, when its was voted unanimously to accept a generous offer of "all the lumber on the stump and brick for underpinning for a vestry"<sup>13</sup>. The same meeting voted to build a vestry on the rear of the church, to authorize a committee to solicit funds, and to have the Society's executive committee prepare plans for the addition.<sup>14</sup> This initial effort was apparently not as successful as had been hoped. On January 1, 1895, the Society again voted to build a vestry and established a committee of three men and two women

3. YEAR BOOK OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN ALTON, N.H., JAN. 1, 1896 (Bristol, N.H.:1896) p.43
4. Ibid.
5. Alton Old Photograph Committee ALTON, A TOWN TO REMEMBER (Wolfeforo, N.H.:1987), p.29
6. "Congregational Church, Records of the Church Clerk, January 7, 1948 to November 13, 1967" (manuscript, Community Church of Alton, Alton, N.H.) pp. 13 and 21
7. "Congregational Church, Records of the Church Clerk, January 7, 1948 to November 13, 1967", p.69
8. THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1970 (Alton, N.H.:1971), p.2
9. THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1988 (Alton, N.H.:1989), p.5
10. Interview of Rev. Dwight Meader by David Ruell, July 9, 1989
11. Alton Old Photograph Committee, p.29
12. Ibid.; postcard of Congregational Church (collection of Robert Witham, Alton, N.H.); Pageant of Esther, Friday and Saturday, 1916 (a program with cover photograph of the Congregational Church)
13. "Records of the First Congregational Society in Alton, N.H.", p.134
14. Ibid.

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to solicit the necessary funds and erect the vestry.<sup>15</sup> The plans for a sympathetic Greek Revival style addition were drawn up by Rochester architect Frank H. Blake.<sup>16</sup> The vestry, built at a cost of \$976.22 by David E. Clough, was dedicated on August 8, 1895.<sup>17</sup> The vestry exterior is almost unchanged, with the hood erected in 1986 above the street entry door being the only significant alteration.<sup>18</sup> The rear addition, built in 1974-75,<sup>19</sup> is another sympathetic addition, which reused the two vestry windows that it covered. The only exterior changes to the rear addition have been the addition of the small porch in the corner of the rear addition and the vestry and the hood above the rear entry, both in 1976,<sup>20</sup> and the lattice-work on the rear entry hood in 1989.

The church interiors have seen more changes than the exteriors. Some of these, such as the installation of electric lights and the periodic replacement of carpets are undated. Others may simply be unknown as there is little information on the early appearance of the interiors, save for two dimly lit photographs of the auditorium in the 1890's.<sup>21</sup> The known changes to the vestibule include the replacement of two separate doors to the auditorium with a single central entry in 1904-05.<sup>22</sup> As part of the 1974-75 renovation of the basement, the northeast end of the vestibule was altered. Formerly this end of the room was rectangular, with two doors, to the stairs to the basement and the stairs to the second story. The basement stairs were enlarged and opened into the vestibule and an extension of the second story stairhall was built along the southeast inner wall of the vestibule.<sup>23</sup> The restrooms now found to the southwest of the anteroom were installed about 1951 in what were apparently closets.<sup>24</sup> (The sink must have been mounted on the anteroom wall at the same time.)

The auditorium, as the principal room of the church, is perhaps the most changed. Some features, such as the recess with balcony in the northwest wall of the room, have proven difficult to date. The two arched recesses,  
15. "Records of the First Congregational Society in Alton, N.H.", p.146  
16. YEAR BOOK OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN ALTON, N.H., JAN. 1, 1896, p.44  
17. Ibid.  
18. THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1986 (Alton, N.H.:1986), p.2  
19. THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1974 (Alton, N.H.:1975), p.6  
THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1975 (Alton, N.H.:1976), p.11  
20. THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1976 (Alton, N.H.:1977), p.7  
21. Alton Old Photograph Committee, p.29  
22. Interview of Ada Downing by David Ruell, July 10, 1989; "Records of the First Congregational Society in Alton, N.H.", pp.174-175; Farmington News (Farmington, N.H.), May 20, 1904, p.1, April 7, 1905, p.1  
23. Interview of Rev. Dwight Meader by David Ruell, July 9, 1989; interview of Kent Locke by David Ruell, July 8, 1989  
24. Interview of Ada Downing by David Ruell, July 10, 1989; "Congregational Church, Records of the Church Clerk, January 7, 1948 to November 13, 1967" pp. 13 and 21

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the wainscoating and plaster walls, and the coved plaster ceiling may well be original features of the room. The organ was given to the church in 1875.<sup>25</sup> The 1890's views of the auditorium show that the organ was placed in the center of the northwest (street) wall on a high platform with a low surrounding partition. To each side of the organ platform were the two separate doors to the vestibule, each serving an aisle between the four rows of pews, two central rows and a row along each side wall, filling the auditorium. The platform for the pulpit was smaller, occupying only that area in front of the recess in the southeast wall. Also shown in the photograph is the present elaborate chandelier.<sup>26</sup> 1895 presumably saw the installation of the door to the new vestry. In 1904-05, the auditorium underwent a major renovation. The old slip pews were replaced by new oak pews divided by a central aisle. The organ was moved to the south corner of the room, where it was placed on an enlarged platform that also served the pulpit area.<sup>27</sup> And the two entries to the vestibule were replaced by a single central entry.<sup>27</sup> 1953 saw another renovation of the auditorium, which included large rectangles outlined by mouldings on the walls and the curtain in an arched frame behind the altar.<sup>28</sup> In 1958, the stained glass window was installed in the southeast wall.<sup>29</sup> The pews were removed and replaced by movable chairs in 1969 to allow the use of the room for Sunday school classes. (The room was also recarpeted.)<sup>30</sup> Ceiling fans were installed in 1983.<sup>31</sup> Although the removal of the pews was a recent significant change, the present appearance of the auditorium must be dated primarily to the 19th century and the early 20th century.

The upper stories of the main block and the tower, being little used save for storage, have apparently changed little since the construction of the building. The basement, by contrast, was entirely rebuilt in 1974 and 1975, when it was remodeled for Sunday school rooms.<sup>32</sup> The renovation was

25. YEAR BOOK OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN ALTON, N.H., JAN. 1, 1896, p.43

26. Alton Old Photograph Committee, p.29

27. Interview of Ada Downing by David Ruell, July 10, 1989; "Records of the First Congregational Society in Alton, N.H.", pp. 174-175; Farmington News May 20, 1904, p.1, July 8, 1904, p.1, Feb. 10, 1905, p.1, March 3, 1905, p.1, April 7, 1905, p.1

28. "Congregational Church, Records of the Church Clerk, January 7, 1948 to November 13, 1967", pp.24-28

29. "Congregational Church, Records of the Church Clerk, January 7, 1948 to November 13, 1967", p.69

30. Interview of Rev. Dwight Meader by David Ruell, July 9, 1989; interview of Leona Houle, July 16, 1989; THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1968 (Alton, N.H.:1969), p.4; THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1969 (Alton, N.H.:1970), p.2

31. THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1983 (Alton, N.H.:1984), p.2

32. THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1974, p.6; THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1975, p.11

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completed in 1976 by the installation of partitions dividing the space into six classrooms.<sup>33</sup> The only significant change in the rear addition, which was erected as part of the 1974-75 renovation, has been the excavation of part of its basement level for the addition of the storage room in 1976.<sup>34</sup> The older vestry has, of course, seen more changes. It was voted in 1938 to remove the wall between the kitchen and the pantry, creating the present wide opening.<sup>35</sup> The late 1940's apparently saw the installation of a new ceiling in the main hall.<sup>36</sup> Linoleum floors were installed in the kitchen in 1956<sup>37</sup> and probably in the other rooms in the same period. The 1950's also saw a new sink counter and broom closet in the kitchen and a wall cabinet in the pantry.<sup>38</sup> A former closet was converted to an office, with new shelves, in 1967.<sup>39</sup> In the 1974-75 renovation and addition project, the main hall lost two windows, but gained a door to the rear addition.<sup>40</sup>

The grounds of the historic lot are little altered. The construction of paved walks is perhaps the most significant 20th century change, but only the walk between the main entry walk and the vestry walk, built in 1956, can be dated.<sup>41</sup> In 1980, the southerly end of the walk from the street to the vestry was rebuilt and ramped up over a bank of earth to replace the former vestry steps and allow handicapped access.<sup>42</sup> The lamppost on the vestry walk dates from the 1980's.<sup>43</sup> 1976 saw the demolition of the Congregational parsonage, which had been built on an adjoining lot, and the construction of a parking lot on the parsonage lot and part of the church lot.<sup>44</sup> (The parking lot was paved in 1978.<sup>45</sup>)

Essentially, the Congregational Church, and particularly its exterior, clearly retains its architectural and historical integrity.

33. THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1976, p.7

34. Ibid.

35. "Alton Congregational Church, Book II, 1921 to 1948" (manuscript, Community Church of Alton, Alton, N.H.) p.180

36. "Alton Congregational Church, Book II, 1921 to 1948", pp.244 and 251; "Congregational Church, Records of the Church Clerk, January 7, 1948 to November 13, 1967", p.21

37. "Congregational Church, Records of the Church Clerk, January 7, 1948 to November 13, 1967", p.37

38. "Congregational Church, Records of the Church Clerk, January 7, 1948 to November 13, 1967", pp.23 and 37

39. ALTON FEDERATED CHURCHES, ALTON, N.H. ANNUAL REPORT, 1967 (Alton, N.H.: 1968), p.13

40. THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1974, p.6; THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1975, p.11

41. "Congregational Church, Records of the Church Clerk, January 7, 1948 to November 13, 1967", p.42

42. Interview of Rev. Dwight Meader by David Ruell, July 9, 1989; THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1980 (Alton, N.H.:1981), p.4

43. Interview of Rev. Dwight Meader by David Ruell, July 9, 1989

44. THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1976, p.7

45. THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1978 (Alton, N.H.:1979), p.5

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primary significance from its architectural distinction. The period of significance is 1853-1854, the years of its construction and, therefore, the years in which it acquired its architectural significance.)

The First Congregational Church in Alton was organized on November 7, 1827.<sup>1</sup> The Congregationalists at first used the late 18th century town meetinghouse for their services.<sup>2</sup> In 1838, they joined with the Free Will Baptists to erect a union meetinghouse.<sup>3</sup> But, this cooperative effort was not long lived. "Early in the spring of 1853, the portion of the people that were disposed to favor Congregational views determined to build a Meeting-house."<sup>4</sup> (The Free Will Baptists also soon decided to erect their own church, which was built at the same time as the Congregational Church.<sup>5</sup>) A subscription paper dated March 18, 1853 was circulated and signed by local people who agreed to pay \$45 per share for the construction of a Congregational church.<sup>6</sup> On June 18, 1853, the first meeting of the First Congregational Society in Alton, a property holding organization legally separate from the religious church, was held.<sup>7</sup> On June 24, the Society adopted a constitution and elected officers.<sup>8</sup> On the following day, the Society "voted that we take measures to build a Meeting house" and "voted to choose a committee of five to purchase a lot, build a Meeting House thereon, and that the sum of eighteen hundred dollars be appropriated for the same".<sup>9</sup> (John W. French, Frances W. Kilbourn, Smith Emerson, Stephen W. Hayes, and Samuel Downing Jr. were chosen for the building committee.<sup>10</sup>) The same meeting also accepted the subscribers who had signed the March 18 subscription paper and established a committee to solicit additional subscribers.<sup>11</sup> Apparently the subscriptions were not entirely adequate as a source of funds, for the next significant action of the Society was a September 10 vote authorizing the building committee to borrow up to \$1000 for the construction of the church.<sup>12</sup> The lot, on an

1. Robert F. Lawrence THE NEW HAMPSHIRE CHURCHES (Clarmont, N.H.:1856)p.477

2. Ibid.; Barton McLain Griffin THE HISTORY OF ALTON (Somersworth, N.H.: 1965) pp.30-31

3. YEAR BOOK OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN ALTON, N.H., JAN. 1, 1896 (Bristol, N.H.:1896), p.43

4. Lawrence, p. 480

5. Ibid.; YEAR BOOK OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN ALTON, N.H., JAN.1, 1896, p.43

6. "Records of the First Congregational Society in Alton, N.H." (manuscript, Community Church of Alton, Alton, N.H.), p.9

7. "Records of the First Congregational Society in Alton, N.H.", p.5

8. "Records of the First Congregational Society in Alton, N.H.", pp.5-8

9. "Records of the First Congregational Society in Alton, N.H.", p.8

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. "Records of the First Congregational Society in Alton, N.H.", p.11

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Alton village street, later called Church Street, was deeded to the Society for \$125 on October 31.<sup>13</sup> On March 10, 1854, with the building apparently completed, the Society established three committees to appraise the pews in the new church, to establish rules for the sale of the pews, and to make arrangements for the dedication.<sup>14</sup> On March 17, it was voted to sell the pews on March 28.<sup>15</sup> The new Congregational church was dedicated on March 22, 1854.<sup>16</sup> At meetings on May 25 and May 29, the Society heard and discussed the report of the building committee, which is unfortunately not recorded.<sup>17</sup> The report must have shown a deficit in the building accounts, as the May 29 meeting established a committee to collect money to pay the outstanding debts of the Society.<sup>18</sup> A denominational historian, writing in 1856, reported that the building cost "about \$3500"<sup>19</sup> (almost twice the initial appropriation of the Society). The Society records and the other available historical materials do not unfortunately identify either the designer or the builder of the church. (The church building and lot remained the property of the First Congregational Society until 1919, when the Society voted to transfer its property to the First Congregational Church and cease to exist as a separate organization.<sup>20</sup> In 1968, the two Alton village churches, the Congregational church and the Free Will Baptist church, merged to form the Community Church of Alton, to which organization the Congregational properties, including the church, were deeded.<sup>21</sup> The two churches had previously federated, in 1938, to share a minister and other expenses.<sup>22</sup>)

The exterior of the original church (the main block and the tower) is quite well preserved. The removal of the low parapet around the spire base

13. Deed, Daniel and Stephen Hayes to the First Congregational Society in Alton, Book 47, Page 279, Belknap County Registry of Deeds (manuscript, Belknap County Registry of Deeds, Laconia, N.H.)

14. "Records of the First Congregational Society in Alton, N.H.", p.16  
15. "Records of the First Congregational Society in Alton, N.H.", p.20  
16. "Diary of Joseph Mooney", Volume 11, 1853-1854 (manuscript, New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, N.H.), entry for March 22, 1854; Dover Gazeteer (Dover, N.H.), April 1, 1854, p.3; YEAR BOOK OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN ALTON, N.H., JAN. 1, 1896, p.43  
17. "Records of the First Congregational Society in Alton, N.H.", pp.23-24  
18. "Records of the First Congregational Society in Alton, N.H.", p.24  
19. Lawrence, p. 480  
20. "Records of the First Congregational Society in Alton, N.H.", pp.193-194  
21. Deed, First Congregational Church in Alton to New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ, Book 497, Page 331; Deed, New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ to Community Church of Alton, Book 497, Page 333, Belknap County Registry of Deeds (manuscripts, Belknap County Registry of Deeds, Laconia, N.H.)  
22. Griffin, p. 62



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and the replacement of the entry steps are apparently the only alterations to original features of the public facades. The other changes were additions of minor elements, the weathervane, the signs and lights around the main entry, the small restroom window, the storm windows, and the stained glass window in the rear gable end. The rear facade and the rear corner of one side facade are somewhat obscured by the later addition of the vestry and the rear addition. But, the rear facade was never important to the original public appearance of the church. And the two small retiring additions were given features, such as the clapboarded walls of both structures and the corner pilasters and pedimented cornice of the vestry, that are similar to those of the original building. So, they do not detract in any way from the church's architectural significance. The public facades of the First Congregational Church remain virtually as they appeared in 1854.

The history of the original church interior is more obscure, as we have no views or descriptions of the interior spaces as they were before the 1890's. We can speculate that many interior features must be original. The auditorium's arched recesses, balcony, plaster walls with wainscoating, and coved plaster ceiling may all be part of the original design. The auditorium has lost its pews and now has an early 20th century platform and main entry and mid 20th century wall ornament and stained glass window. But, in many ways, the church's principal room must appear as it did in the 1850's. The basement has been completely rebuilt, as has one end of the vestibule. But, the remainder of the vestibule, the anteroom, and the upper stories are probably little changed.

The interiors of the First Congregational Church do possess some architectural merit, particularly the large auditorium, with its tall plaster walls with wainscoating, interrupted by large windows and two great arched recesses (one containing a paneled balcony front), its fine window and door frames, and its coved plaster ceiling. The auditorium is an attractive and interesting space. But its early history is unknown, so we cannot say with certainty which features are original. And it has seen some later changes, reflecting late 19th century and 20th century taste, and is no longer a pure example of mid 19th century design. Nevertheless, the auditorium is one of the most impressive interiors in the town of Alton. The lesser public rooms, the vestibule and the anteroom (and the main hall of the vestry) are also pleasing spaces with nice proportions and ornament.

But, the true architectural significance of the First Congregational Church is found in its well preserved and well designed Greek Revival style exterior. The form of the church was a commonplace church form in 19th century New England, a gable roofed main block, with three bay wide facades, the gable end serving as the main facade, and a tall tower with spire projecting from the central bay of that gable end. Here that form is given

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dignity and no little authority by the Greek Revival ornament, the tall paneled corner pilasters with heavy capitals, the strong similar engaged pillars supporting the tower, the heavy box cornices with architraves and friezes (pedimented on the main block), and the peaked moulded heads on the tall windows and doors. All of this ornament is well designed and crafted. The forms of the church are geometric solids, as can be seen in the tall cubical tower with its pyramidal spire. The facades are composed of simple rectangles and triangles. But, the design is nevertheless rather sophisticated. Of particular interest is the integration of the tower and the main block. Not content to simply place the tower on top of the main block, the designer projected it slightly from the front wall of the main block, an act for which there was really no functional need. But, the projection of the tower, and the design of its lower section, does raise the church above the ordinary. The tower, covered with flush boarding, in contrast to the clapboarded main block, emphasizes the main axis of the strongly symmetrical building. And the main entry is further emphasized by its placement in the large central recess flanked by two tall engaged pillars. The pillars support a projection of the horizontal cornice and the low solid base of the tower's second stage. The slightly recessed panels above the main entry and in the second stage reveal the solidity of the flush boarded tower walls. The gradual decrease in the width of the tower's three stages emphasizes the tower's height, as does the tall pyramidal spire. The tower is integrated with the main block facade by the continuation of the horizontal cornice of the main pediment around the tower and by the use of the same ornament, the paneled pilasters, the peaked heads of the windows and the entry, and the box cornices. The facades and volumes are all well proportioned. The result is a strikingly effective design with the best qualities of the Greek Revival style, a simple but impressive monumentality and dignity, combined with an interesting composition that is entertaining to the eye.

The Greek Revival style was popular for the churches of Belknap County in the three decades before the Civil War. A comprehensive survey of the surviving church buildings (and former church buildings), built before 1945 in Belknap County, shows that, of the thirty-one pre-Civil War churches now standing, twelve were built in the Greek Revival style or subsequently remodeled in the Greek Revival style.<sup>23</sup> Four of these churches, the Gilford Community Church (1834), the Evangelical Baptist Church in Laconia (1836), the Centre Harbor Congregational Church (1837), and the Fred Andrew Smart Chapel in Tilton (1852), were later so substantially altered that have either lost their architectural integrity or, as in the case of the Evangelical Baptist Church,<sup>24</sup> are now examples of a later architectural style. Four of the

23. The comparisons in this paragraph and the following paragraph are based on David Ruell "Belknap County Churches", 1988 (manuscript, New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources, Concord, N.H.).

24. The Evangelical Baptist Church was listed on the National Register on September 12, 1985.

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twelve churches, the Meredith Center Free Baptist Church (1831), the Oak Hill Meetinghouse in Meredith (remodeled 1848)<sup>25</sup>, the First Freewill Baptist Church in East Alton (remodeled 1848)<sup>26</sup>, and the Province Road Meetinghouse in Belmont (remodeled 1854), are essentially vernacular buildings, whose Greek Revival ornament is limited mostly to the corner pilasters and cornices. The Meredith Center and East Alton churches do, also have belfry towers with some Greek Revival ornament. Only four churches in Belknap County, the Center Barnstead Christian Church (c.1839), the First Baptist Church in Gilmanton (1842), the First Congregational Church in Alton (1853-54), and the New Hampton Community Church (1854)<sup>27</sup>, can truly be considered high style examples of the Greek Revival style.

All four of the more sophisticated Greek Revival churches used the same traditional form that was standard for New England churches of the early and mid 19th century, a gable roofed main block with its gable end serving as the main facade, crowned by two or three stage tower above the main facade. The problem for the designers of these churches was to apply Greek Revival elements, so as to effectively invoke the image and qualities of Greek architecture, while also creating dignified towers, for which there was no real precedent in Greek architecture. A different design solution was found for the problem in each of the four Belknap County churches. In the two earlier churches, the main facade, the gable end, was treated as a temple front, topped by a pedimented gable (with a full portico of four columns on the Center Barnstead church, and with four pilasters applied to the wall on the Gilmanton church). On both churches, a two stage belfry tower, unrelated to the main block facades, was simply placed astride the roof. There was no attempt in either church to combine the main block and the tower into a cohesive design. Both the Barnstead church and the Gilmanton church are nevertheless quite attractive and impressive buildings. But, they settled the design problem posed by their towers by simply ignoring it. The designers of the Alton and New Hampton churches, both actually under construction at the same time, came up with similar, although still different, solutions to the problem of the tower. Both projected their towers slightly from the center of the main gable end facade, put the main entry in a recess in the tower base, continued the horizontal cornice of the main block pediment around the tower, and composed their towers of stages that decreased in width with height. But, while the Alton main entry was placed in a shallow recess flanked by two engaged pillars, the New Hampton entry was set behind a distyle in antis portico. While the Alton church has two upper stages

25. The Oak Hill Meetinghouse was listed on the National Register on December 1, 1986.

26. The First Freewill Baptist Church in East Alton was listed on the National Register on September 1, 1978.

27. The New Hampton Community Church was listed on the National Register on March 7, 1985.

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topped by a pyramidal spire in its tower, the New Hampton church tower has three upper stages topped by a low pitched roof. The New Hampton church, probably the most sophisticated Greek Revival church in New Hampshire, is perhaps more elaborate in its design than the Alton church. But both designers found a successful solution to their common design problem. Indeed, all four churches are dignified and interesting Greek Revival churches. And it would be difficult to rank the four buildings in any meaningful way. Certainly, we must place the First Congregational Church in Alton among the best and most sophisticated Greek Revival churches in Belknap County.

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Alton Old Photograph Committee ALTON, A TOWN TO REMEMBER (Wolfeboro, N.H.:  
The Kingswood Press, 1987)

THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1968 (Alton, N.H.: Community  
Church of Alton, 1969)

THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1969 (Alton, N.H.: Community  
Church of Alton, 1970)

THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1970 (Alton, N.H.: Community  
Church of Alton, 1971)

THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1974 (Alton, N.H. : Community  
Church of Alton, 1975)

THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1975 (Alton, N.H.: Community  
Church of Alton, 1976)

THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1976 (Alton, N.H.: Community  
Church of Alton, 1977)

THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1977 (Alton, N.H.: Community  
Church of Alton, 1978)

THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1978 (Alton, N.H.: Community  
Church of Alton, 1979)

THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1980 (Alton, N.H.: Community  
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THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1983 (Alton, N.H.: Community  
Church of Alton, 1984)

THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1986 (Alton, N.H.: Community  
Church of Alton, 1987)

THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ALTON ANNUAL REPORTS, 1988 (Alton, N.H.: Community  
Church of Alton, 1989)

"Congregational Church, Records of the Church Clerk, January 7, 1948 to  
November 13, 1967" (manuscript, Community Church of Alton, Alton, N.H.)

Deeds, Daniel and Stephen Hayes to the First Congregational Society in Alton,  
Book 47, Page 279; First Congregational Church in Alton to New Hampshire  
Conference of the United Church of Christ, Book 497, Page 331; New Hampshire  
Conference of the United Church of Christ to Community Church of Alton,  
Book 497, Page 333, Belknap County Registry of Deeds (manuscripts, Belknap  
County Registry of Deeds, Laconia, N.H.)

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"Diary of Joseph Mooney" Volume 11, 1853-1854 (manuscript, New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, N.H.)

Dover Gazeteer (Dover, N.H.), April 1, 1854

Farmington News (Farmington, N.H.), May 20, July 8 and 22, December 23, 1904; February 10, March 3 and 31, April 7, 1905

Barton McLain Griffin THE HISTORY OF ALTON (Somersorth, N.H.: New Hampshire Publishing Company, 1965)

Laconia News & Critic (Laconia, N.H.) August 24, October 5, 1904; January 11, April 11 and 19, 1905

Robert F. Lawrence THE NEW HAMPSHIRE CHURCHES (Claremont, N.H.: Claremont Manufacturing Company, 1856)

Pageant of Esther, Friday and Saturday, 1916 (a program for a pageant held in Alton, apparently in January of 1916, "under the auspices of the Congregational Church")

Postcard of the Alton Congregational Church (collection, Robert Witham, Alton, N.H.)

"Records of the Church", Alton Congregational Church (manuscript, Community Church of Alton, Alton, N.H.)

"Records of the First Congregational Society in Alton, N.H." (manuscript, Community Church of Alton, Alton, N.H.)

David Ruell "Belknap County Churches", 1988 (manuscript, New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources, Concord, N.H.)

YEAR BOOK OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN ALTON, N.H., JAN. 1, 1896 (Bristol, N.H.: Enterprise Publishing House, 1896)

Interview of Audrey Burrill by David Ruell, July 10, 1989

Interviews of Ada Downing by David Ruell, July 10 and 16, 1989

Interview of Arthur Dyck by David Ruell, June 23, 1989

Interview of Leona Houle by David Ruell, July 16, 1989

Interview of Kent Locke by David Ruell, July 8, 1989

Interview of Rev. Dwight Meader by David Ruell, July 9, 1989

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### Verbal Boundary Description

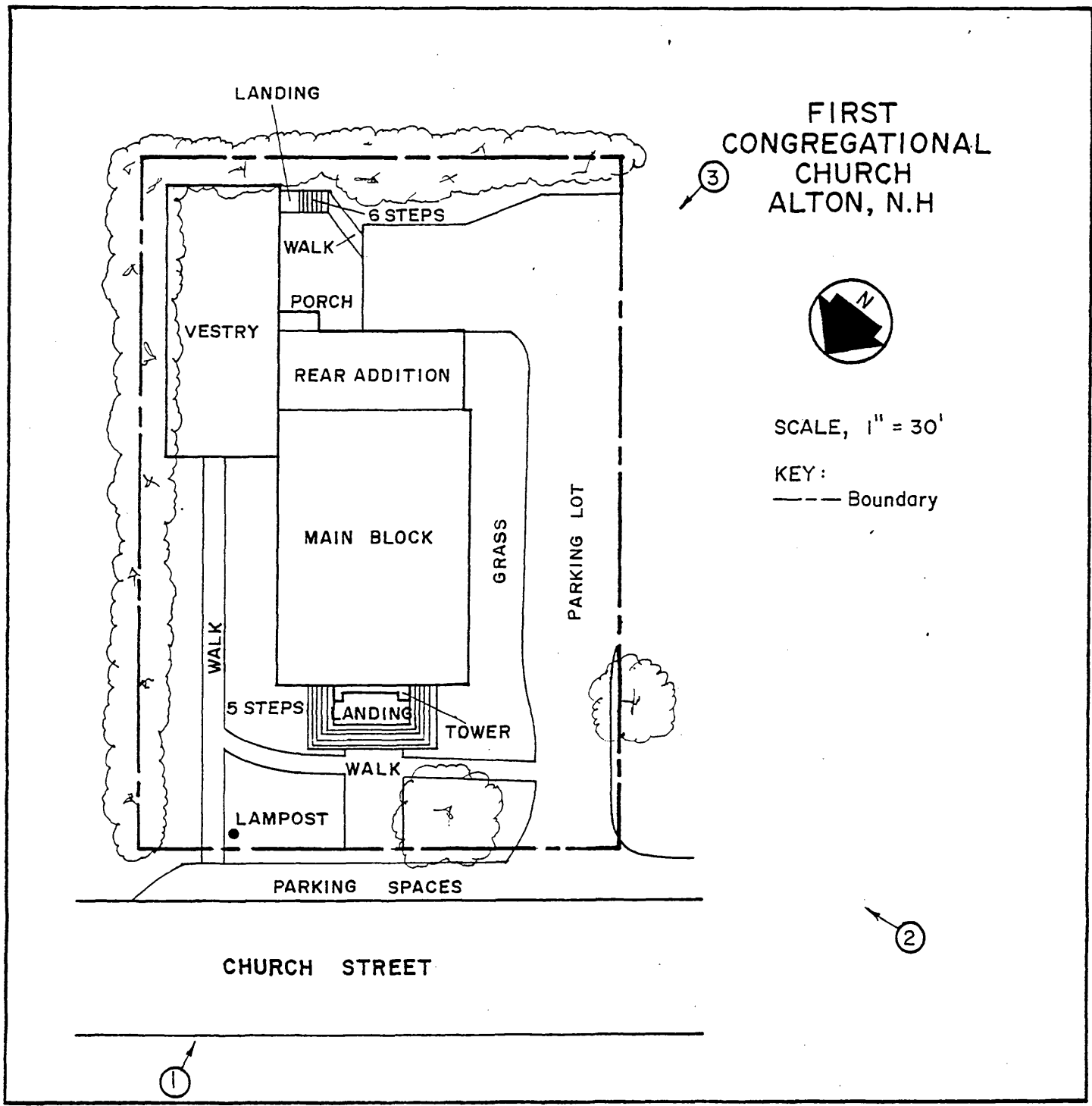
mately 140 feet to the point of beginning. The boundary is shown as a dashed line on an accompanying map titled "First Congregational Church, Alton, N.H." The nominated property is shown as part of Lot 17 on Alton Property Map 28, and is described in the deed of the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ to the Community Church of Alton, Book 497, Page 333, in the Belknap County Registry of Deeds.

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Owner

The Community Church of Alton  
P.O. Box 338  
Alton, N.H. 03809