

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

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

received NOV 14 1984

date entered

DEC 13 1984

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

1. Name

historic Bedford Town Hall

and/or common Bedford Town Hall

2. Location

street & number 70 Bedford Center Road n/a not for publication

city, town Bedford n/a vicinity of

state New Hampshire code 33 county Hillsborough code 011

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: community gathering place

4. Owner of Property

name Town of Bedford

street & number 18 North Amherst Road

city, town Bedford n/a vicinity of state New Hampshire 03102

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Hillsborough County Courthouse

street & number Registry of Deeds
P.O. Box 370

city, town 19 Temple Street state New Hampshire 03060
Nashua,

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Built in 1910, the Bedford Town Hall is 2½ story clapboarded structure with attic and basement, resting on a granite foundation and measuring approximately 95 feet long, 53 feet wide and 57 feet high. Facing westward, the building is oriented with its pedimented front bordering Bedford Center Road and its long elevation along Church Road, separated by a narrow strip of lawn which slopes toward the road. A paved drive extends along the north elevation, leading from the Bedford Center Road to the fire station located at the rear of the structure.

Measuring three bays across, the facade is dominated by a four columned portico in the Roman Doric order. The giant smooth wooden columns feature concrete bases consisting of an astragal and torus molding resting on concrete plinths above granite pedestals. An entablature adorned by metopes and triglyphs with guttae as well as dentils, decorates the cornice of the structure. The soffit of the corona features recessed panels. Monumental pilasters articulate the corners of the building and display a slightly convex profile, echoing the entasis of the columns.

The central entrance features a set of double doors, each a six panel molded configuration, topped by a three light rectangular transom and cornerlights, broken by two sets of two pilasters flanked by 3/4 sidelights that surround the door. An entablature door frame adorned by dentils and paired modillions caps the doorway. Contained in the frieze over the door are gilt letters denoting 'Town Hall'. An octagonal iron lantern is located over the entrance. Above, the windows are paired, doublehung with 8/2 lights. A simple wooden sign 'Bedford Naragansett Grange No. 46' is located above the central second floor window. Sheltered by the projecting pediment, clapboards give way to vertical boards above the midpoint of the third floor windows, which correspond to the gallery level on the interior. Flanking the central bay, the windows are single, again with an 8/2 sash configuration. Beyond a concrete sidewalk a flight of four hammered granite steps runs the length of the facade and features simple wrought iron railings in the center.

Located in the clapboarded pediment is a circular window topped by a keystone and framed by console-like elements above a projecting entablature. The window is filled with clear glass and features an "x" inscribed within a small central circle around which are arranged eight segmental pieces with scalloped edges. The form of the window appears to be borrowed from the earlier town hall destroyed by fire in 1909. The raking cornice of the pediment framing the window is decorated by dentils.

Both the north and south elevations measure six bays across, the central four of which feature a spandrel area of three horizontal molded panels separating the first floor rectangular doublehung windows with 8/2 lights from the second story arched openings capped by keystones. The upper windows feature a lower sash with two lights and a fixed upper sash of eight lights which sprout intersecting tracery above.

The bay located closest to the facade on each side elevation contains a simple rectangular 8/2 window on each floor as does the easternmost bay of the north side. The end bay of the south elevation is occupied by a side entrance located above a flight of granite steps. The simple six panel door with four light rectangular transom above is sheltered by an ornate pedimented door hood adorned by triglyph-derived elements and dentils and supported by panelled ancones with sunburst-like ornament and inscribed chevron designs on the ends. A rectangular doublehung window is located above the entrance. Two tall brick chimneys with corbel caps protrude from the south slope of the asbestos sheathed roof.

The rear elevation, its gable end adorned by cornice returns and a denticulated cornice, measures five bays across. The exposed basement level features a large double sliding door to accommodate the storage of fire trucks and other town property and is flanked on each side by a single rectangular

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doublehung window with 8/2 lights. Five windows of the same configuration light the first floor while single windows are located in the first and last bays on the second and third floors. A single window is centered in the gable. A granite retaining wall demarcates the boundary between the lawn south of the Town Hall and the asphalt area of the fire station to the east.

With the exception of the introduction of electricity in 1915, plumbing in 1925 and a telephone and safe in 1920, the Town Hall's perfectly symmetrical interior remains virtually unchanged since its construction in 1910. The abundant natural oak woodwork, evident in the vertical beaded board wainscoting, turned balusters and square newel posts of the staircases, pilasters and entablatured window and door surrounds survives intact and unpainted. All of the ceilings retain their pressed metal covering.

Upon entering the building, two small rooms lead off the vestibule, each measuring about 17' x 13' x 11' and containing two windows. That in the southwest corner has been used as a selectmen's office and now serves the Supervisors of the Checklist. The other office, since World War II, has been used as a storage room for the Civil Defense. Staircases on each side of the vestibule lead to the second floor.

The remainder of the first floor houses a banquet hall with a large kitchen in the rear. Between the rectangular doublehung windows, square panelled pilasters set on the vertical board wainscoting extend upward as if to support the structural grid of the ceiling which is encased by pressed metal. Substantial wide oak doors with five horizontal molded panels, original to the structure, survive here as they do throughout the building. The second floor auditorium, with a ceiling in excess of twenty feet high, features a central arched stage opening framed by pilasters and lit by floodlights. The scenery for the stage was painted by a WPA Art Project. A mural of Bedford Center is depicted on the rear wall of the stage. The arcaded gallery at the rear of the auditorium measures five bays wide and is adorned with a blind balustrade railing. It is accessible from symmetrical staircases. A dressing room is located on each side of the stage, up a flight of stairs. The walls of the auditorium are lined by paneled pilasters which extend from the floor to the top of the arched window openings where they support denticulated entablature lintels. Here again the pilasters correspond with the grid of the ceiling beams. Modern square fluorescent light fixtures have been set in the ceiling recesses. A small ticket window located at the rear of the hall echoes the dentil and pilaster details decorating the room. An attic covers the entire top floor. The basement houses storage space and the oil furnaces which heat the building.

The area surrounding the Town Hall has historically been the heart of town since the siting of the first town house in 1755. Facing the Presbyterian church (1832) in the distance, the Town Hall stands at one end of the small triangular shaped common which features a spruce tree and geraniums, dedicated as a living memorial to local servicemen of World War II. Also located on the common is a World War I anti-aircraft gun with a plaque on which the names of the veterans are inscribed. The other buildings which skirt the common were predominantly built between the late 18th and mid 19th centuries and include residences and the town library and are sited on generous lawns with substantial trees.

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/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
	<input type="checkbox"/> invention			

Specific dates 1909–1910

Builder/Architect L.B. Lodge/Chase R. Witcher

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Bedford Town Hall, built 1909–1910 is significant both as a unique example of Classical Revival architecture by a prominent New Hampshire architect and for the vital role it has played in Bedford's local government and community life.

Architecture: Designed in June 1909 after fire destroyed its predecessor, the Bedford Town Hall was apparently completed in 1910. Town records show that plans for the building were presented a mere week after an architect was retained. The structure was built by L.B. Lodge at a total cost of \$15,000; \$5,000 of the structure's cost was realized from insurance on the burned structure, with another \$2,000 in the treasury leaving \$8,000 to be raised by the town. Lack of a quorum at several special town meetings called to appropriate the funds, stopped construction in January 1910 until town meeting in March raised the necessary extra money. The architect was paid \$325 for plans and specifications; additional land cost \$497.50 and the builder was paid \$5.00 a day.

The building was designed by Chase Roy Witcher (1876–1940), a native of Lisbon, New Hampshire who studied architecture at the Institute of Technology (now M.I.T.) and with private instructors in Boston. He opened his offices as an architect in Lisbon in 1903, moving to Manchester in 1910. The Bedford Town Hall was apparently one of his first commissions upon opening his office in Manchester, nothing has come to light concerning his early work in Lisbon. Concurrent with the Bedford building Witcher designed the Masonic Lodge in Rochester, the Colebrook Academy and in 1911 the Hotel Laconia and the Lincoln Charles Apartments in Manchester, a series of large brick structures with little or no classical overtures. It is interesting to note that in 1910 Witcher was also employed as architect of the Warner Town Hall, a broad brick structure dominated by a central large arched opening and with no stylistic similarities to the Bedford Town Hall. The Bedford structure can apparently best be considered an exploratory exercise in the classical idioms by a rather young architect responding to a given site and restrictions. During his career Witcher designed over three hundred buildings including those in Manchester, New Hampshire and throughout the U.S., and was in his day considered one of the most successful architects in northern New England. Later commissions include the Bell Building and Merchant's Bank in Manchester, the Balsams Hotel at Dixville Notch, the Shepard Block in Franklin and the Princess Hotel in Bermuda. The Masonic Temple in Manchester stands out as a later more academic experiment by Witcher in the classical mode, fashioned in stone and owing nothing to the Bedford Town Hall.

The Bedford Town Hall represents a somewhat unusual attempt to revive the Greek Revival style in the early 20th century. No doubt expressive of the burgeoning interest in "Colonial" architecture, the Town Hall stands as a somewhat naive though attractive attempt by a local Manchester architect to design a historical structure in the early 20th century. Prior to the publication in the 1920's of works by Fiske Kimball and other scholars, who for the first time distinguished between the Georgian, Federal and Greek Revival styles, architects often freely combined classical elements with limited understanding of the precedents which they borrowed.

9. Major Bibliographical References

History of Bedford, N.H. 1737-1971. Bedford: Bedford Historical Society, 1972.

Inventory of the Town Archives of N.H., No. 6, Hillsborough County, Vol. 3. (W.P.A. Project
Manchester Union Leader, various issues including 5/4/1909, 8/26/1940 continued...^{c. 1940})

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Pinardsville, N.H.

Quadrangle scale 1:24 000

UTM References

A 19 294760 4757710
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification The nominated property is that portion of Map 13 Lot 67 on the local tax assessor's map which is bounded on the south by Church Rd.; on the west by Bedford Center Rd.; on the north by the driveway immediately adjacent to the property and on the east by the driveway & granite wall dividing the Town Hall parcel from the Fire Station which

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries is east of the Town Hall.
continued...

state N/A code county code

state N/A code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lisa B. Mausolf, Preservation Consultant

organization Upper Valley - Lake Sunapee Council date May 17, 1984

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

city or town Lebanon state New Hampshire 03766

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

 national state X 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.

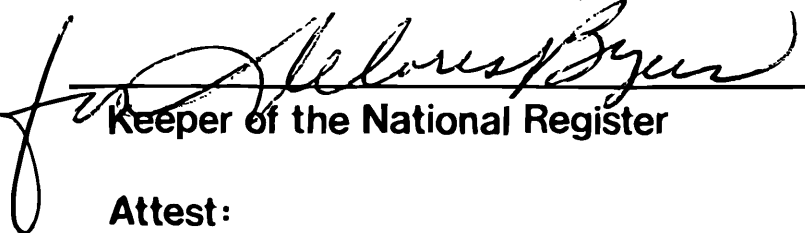
Deputy
State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title New Hampshire Deputy Historic Preservation Officer date 10/26/84

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



Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date 12-13-84

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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In the case of the Bedford Town Hall, the arched windows and the entasis of the antae would have been foreign to the Greek temple forms on which it is loosely based. The proportion of the front columns similarly is inconsistent with classical principles but suggests that the architect was probably restricted by the use of stock columns, a fact born out in the building records.

Precedents for the Bedford Town Hall are not readily apparent. Given the assignment of replacing a Town Hall which was destroyed by fire in 1909, it is probable that the architect was asked to furnish a design for a similar frame structure to fit the existing site and blend with the arrangement of structures around the common.

It is not known whether the circular window in the pediment, reminiscent of the earlier town hall, was a requirement of the commission or the architect's own idea. The monumental portico form of the Town Hall repeats the visual effect of the Ionic portico decorating the Presbyterian Church added in the 1890's; it is not clear whether this was a conscious influence. Generally by this time, earlier frametown halls had given way to masonry buildings. It is interesting to note that other town halls being built in the area at the same time have nothing in common with the Bedford Town Hall. The Dunbarton Town Hall constructed in 1909 is a frame structure in a mixed Georgian-Federal Revival style while the Warner Town Hall designed in 1910 by Whitcher is a brick structure bearing no resemblance to the Bedford Building. The Bedford Town Hall remains an unusual and interesting exercise in the Neo-Greek Revival style, a structure with no apparent parallels in the region.

Politics/Government: The current site of the Bedford Town Hall has been occupied by a total of three town structures beginning with the erection of the old meetinghouse in 1755. This building served as the first town house from 1832 until 1876 when it was dismantled and a new town hall constructed, which was destroyed by fire in 1909, necessitating the building of the current hall. The Bedford Town Hall remains an important visible symbol of the local government and has played a central role in community life throughout its history. Though use of the hall has diminished in recent years due to the town's increasing population, the building has been continuously used for Town Meeting since its construction. The Selectmen's office was here for many years, and the same room now serves the Supervisors of the Checklist. Municipal Court convened in the Town Hall until 1971 when it moved to the new town offices. The Grange, established in Bedford in 1875, held regular meetings here until it was disbanded in 1975. Over the years a variety of organizations have used the hall including the Catholic and Baptist churches prior to construction of their own worship houses, the Unity Club, Women's Club, Church Women and the Historical Society. Jordan Marsh retained part of the hall for an employment office while their building was under construction. Recently, the Town Hall acted as a backdrop and headquarters for NBC's coverage of the New Hampshire primary for a full week in 1980. The building is still rented for outside functions and remains an important landmark in community life.

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Pillsbury, Hobart. New Hampshire Resources, Attractions and Its People: A History. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1927.

Whitcher, William. Descendants of Chase Whitcher of Warren, N.H. Woodsville (N.H.): News Book and Job Print, 1907.

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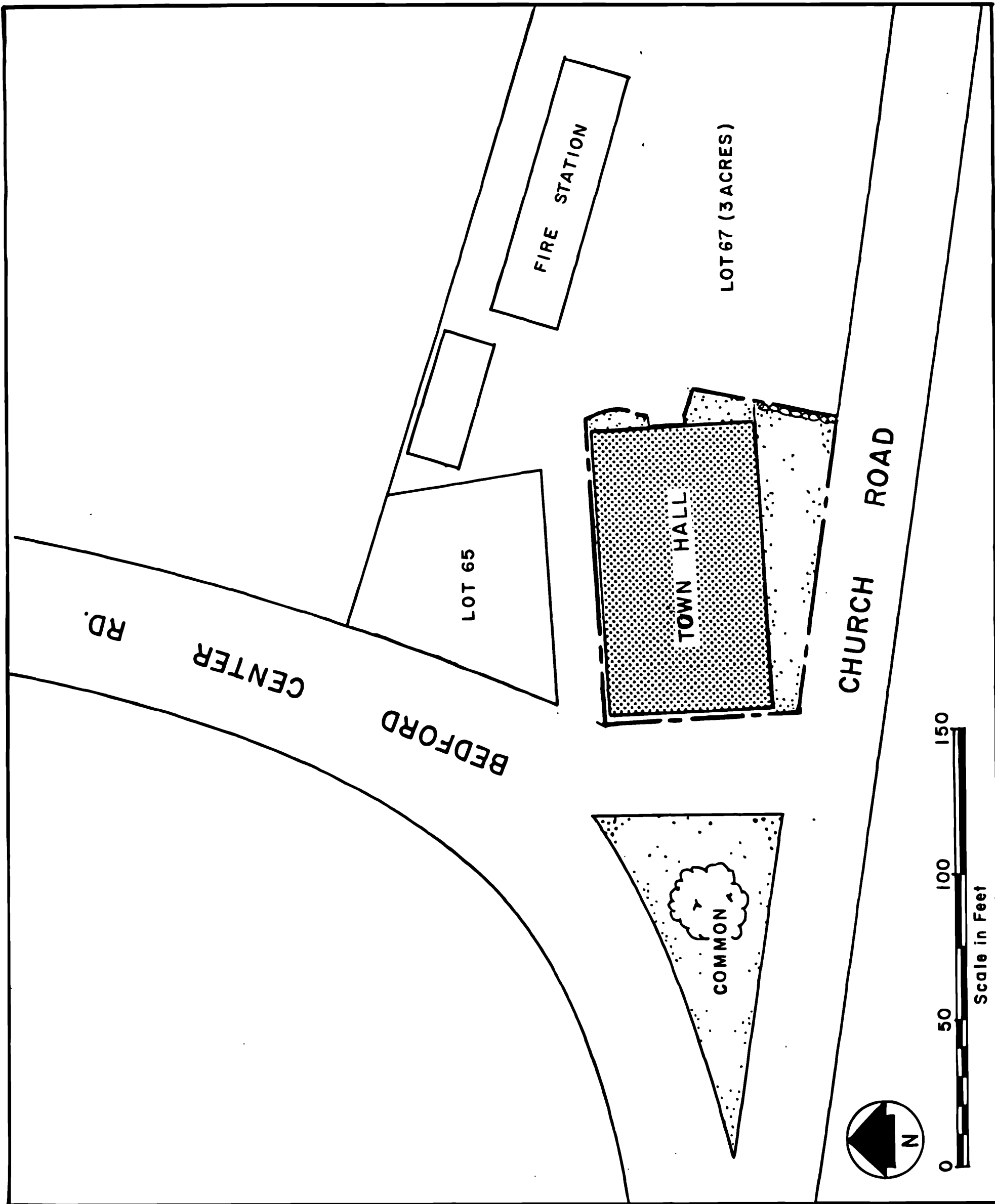
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BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary is drawn to include that acreage which survives from the original parcel upon which the Town Hall was built and is limited to include only those buildings eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Using these criteria, the old Fire Station (that building closest to the Town Hall, moved there and reconstructed from an old barn in 1928) and the New Fire Station (built in 1964), also located on this tax map lot have been intentionally excluded.



BEDFORD TOWN HALL
BEDFORD, N.H.

Note: The boundaries of the nominated property have been highlighted in yellow.