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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

FEB 01 1993

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Bernardston Congregational Unitarian Church

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number Church Street N/A not for publication

city or town Bernardston N/A vicinity

state Massachusetts code MA county Franklin code 011 zip code 01337

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Judith B. McDonough 1/28/93  
Signature of certifying official/Title Judith B. McDonough Date Executive Director  
Massachusetts Historical Commission, State Historic Preservation Officer  
State of Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

sr Signature of the Keeper Beth A. Savage Date of Action 3/18/93

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: religious facility/church

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: religious facility/church

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

MID 19th CENTURY: Greek Revival

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

walls WOOD: Weatherboard

roof STONE: slate

other METAL

**Narrative Description**

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

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## 7. DESCRIPTION

The Bernardston Congregational Unitarian Church is located in the center village of Bernardston, Massachusetts. The town of Bernardston is located in Franklin County along the northern border of Massachusetts with Vermont. Settled first during the 1730s, and permanently by the 1760s, the town maintained an agricultural economy well into the 20th century, with a rural settlement pattern remaining today. The center village is located in the south central portion of the town in the valley along the west side of the Falls River, at an elevation averaging 110 meters above sea level. This village developed here in the late 18th and early 19th century, particularly after the arrival of the Connecticut Valley Railroad in 1846. The Bernardston Congregational Unitarian Church has origins in the founding of the town, for it is the town's first established church, and parts of this building are believed to date to 1739. Since that time the church was moved on three separate occasions before coming to rest in the center village. Sited on the south side of Church Street, at the corner of Depot Street, on a small lot facing to the north, the white clapboard church takes a form common to New England churches in the middle of the 19th century. Oriented with its gable end to the street, the church has a tower rising to a domed cupola, screened by an enclosed gable-roofed vestibule, ornamented by restrained elements of generally classical ornament. It serves as an important element within the village ensemble as well as a distinctive and important individual building within the town's landscape.

Bernardston is located on the western side of the Connecticut River Valley, one of the Commonwealth's northern tier of upland towns. The town is roughly four miles from north to south and five miles from east to west, and is bisected by the Fall River, one of the tributaries of the Connecticut River. The center village of Bernardston is comparatively large, with nearly one hundred buildings, generously spread over an area extending over a mile from north to south and more than a half mile from east to west. Two primary roads intersect in the center of the village, South Street (Route 5 and 10), runs from north to south along the west side of the village, intersecting at a right angle with Church Street (Route 10). Very small roadways form a network of streets off these larger ones, including three that run to the north, merging at the northern edge of the village, and secondary north-south routes including Depot Street, that runs to the railroad line from the center village, and River Road that continues south out of the village.

The majority of the town's public buildings are located in the center village, most constructed in the three decades of the mid-19th century. The Town Hall

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on the north side of Church Street is a Stick style building constructed in 1877, a gable-front form with a semi-projecting clock tower. Two other churches are located here as well, the Goodale United Church and the Baptist Church, both on Depot Street and exhibiting similar nave-plan with tower buildings. The Powers Institute complex (currently being nominated to the National Register), including the school building, Cushman Library, and Cushman Hall form an important complex of education-related buildings in the village center to the west on Church Street. Two small stores date to 1869 and the early 20th century, and the large Bernardston Inn is located at the corner of Church and South streets, built to replace the earlier building after it burned in 1904. The earlier town hall, an earlier academy building, a former Universalist Church, a former blacksmith's shop, and the former district school are also located within the center village. Saw and grist mill sites were developed to the south of the village, near the junction of the river and the railroad; the site of the exceptional stone four-arch bridge of 1846.

These buildings are surrounded by as many as sixty residences constructed during the 18th and 19th centuries, their form and ornament reflecting construction dates during three periods of growth in the village. A handful of houses are said to date to the colonial period, and while some have been altered since that time, many retain period fabric. The first clustering of buildings dates to the early national period, when about ten of the so-called L-houses, 2 1/2-story houses of single pile configuration under gable roofs with rear ells, were built in the village. The next wave of construction dates to the second quarter of the 19th century, when about twenty-five more residences were added. Most are Greek Revival in ornament, and fall into two basic form categories, the 1 1/2-story gable block house and the 1 1/2-story gable front house, the former outnumbering the later. Two related houses, 2 1/2-stories in height with a gable front main block and a wing, are also found in the village. A small number of these houses are found to have Gothic or Italianate rather than Greek ornament. Finally a wave of construction of just under twenty new houses, most in the Queen Anne version of the gable front form, where projecting windows and bays add to the picturesque qualities desired at that time. Both 2 1/2 and 1 1/2 story examples are found in the village. Even with the 1958 construction of Route 91 along the eastern edge of the village, it is still believed the center village retains sufficient integrity for listing in the National Register. Staff members of the Massachusetts Historical Commission have conducted an initial evaluation of the area and have encouraged the Bernardston Historical Commission to proceed with a National Register nomination for the center village.

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The present location of the church is its fourth site, having been moved here in 1824 when this area became the focus of town settlement. The church lot measures 125 feet on the north and south sides, about 168 feet on the east and west. The church itself is set about twenty feet from the road on the east side of the lot, about ten feet from the east lot line and forty feet from Depot Road. The lot is generally flat, sloping downward from the church toward the road. The lot is covered with grass, with a row of hemlocks along the eastern lot line and a hedge and a gravel drive along the west. The rear lot line abuts the Bernardston Center Cemetery, divided by a picket fence. The cemetery was established in 1826, and has been expanded periodically so that it now measures approximately four acres. Over 2000 stones within the yard exhibit a full range of period styles and materials for gravestones, and it is still in use today.

The present appearance of the Congregational Unitarian Church, both on the interior and the exterior, is the result of the large changes made to the building since its move to its present location in 1824. The building measures 40 feet in width and 50 feet in length, with two interior floors under a gable roof, and is oriented to present its narrow end as its street-facing north facade. The church sits on brick footings, its walls are covered in white clapboards, and its roof covered with slate. Its division into two interior floors dates to the renovations of 1847, when the lower area became a small vestry with the sanctuary above. On the north facade is a semi-projecting tower, dating to this last move of the building, rising above in two stages 90 feet to an ogee-roofed, metal-sheathed cupola. It is screened by a pedimented vestibule, four feet in depth and 24 feet in width centered across the facade, closed-in during renovations to the building in 1847. In the rear a shed roofed addition was added in 1879, located in the apse position, serving as the loft for the pipe organ, and measuring about 24 feet in width and 14 feet in depth, with its own secondary entry. At that time the level of the lower vestry was lowered to accommodate more useful rooms.

The church is pierced by large and regularly spaced windows, with its primary doors in the center of the northern facade. Within the vestibule the building's paired entries are divided by a center 9/9 double-hung window sash, with 9/9 double-hung sash windows above each of the two doors. The portion of the tower rising above the ridge has only a single opening, on the rear-facing or south side, but the first stage above, octagonal in section, has a round-headed opening on each of the four primary sides, while the smaller octagonal stage above has similar but smaller openings in the four faces above. Along each of the long walls the elevation reflects the church's interior division into two floors, with 4/4 sash in the first floor and 9/9 in

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the sanctuary above. This elevation is divided into five regular bays, with no opening in the first floor of the bay on the north end of the building. Secondary entries are located into the west south end of the main block as well as into the west side of the organ loft. This space is lit in the first level by 6/6 sash on the east and west elevations, at the sanctuary level by a large 12/12 opening on the south wall and smaller 4/4 sash on the east and west walls.

The church is treated with the simple ornament characteristic of mid-19th century New England churches, focused in this instance at the corners and the cornice of the building. On the facade the gable end of the main block and the frontispiece are treated in the classical manner of the modified temple front. Tuscan pilasters at the corners of each rise to an entablature under the eaves of the roof, with the ends of the gables reading as pediments. Wrapping around the main block and across the facade and the vestibule continues the simple entablature treatment, supported at the rear by corner pilasters as well. A more decorative entablature marks the paired front doors, where dentils have been added across the frieze. In the tower, the corners are marked by quoins at the corners, with small scalloped brackets crossing the re-entrant angle of quoin and cornice. Above, the first octagonal stage is marked by a parallel treatment of Tuscan pilasters and cornice. All of the windows have been hung with black blinds.

On the interior the Bernardston Congregational Unitarian Church has been divided into two levels since 1847. The sanctuary in the upper story is a large rectangular space set off from the vestibule in the front and the organ loft and secondary stair in the rear. Its pulpit is located at the rear or south end of the building, before the organ, on a low platform. The body of the sanctuary is fitted with slip pews, divided by two aisles into three sections. At the front before the pulpit, three pews on the west face to the east rather than the south, while in a comparable position on the east makes room for a piano; in the rear three pews sit on another raised platform. The walls are plastered with wainscoting to the sill level; the ceiling is covered in tin. Below the sanctuary the vestry was lowered in 1879. This space is divided to include one large room along the west side, with two smaller ones flanking it along the east. These spaces include a kitchen, a parlor, and a large meeting hall, used for church meetings in the winter and for Sunday school classes.

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Evidence of church's earlier appearance and structure is rare, and at present, not conclusive about the survival of its earliest 1739 configuration. The building's sills and sleepers are visible in part, hewn timbers with evidence of joist pockets empty since the floor level shows construction employing principal and common rafters; more details about the roof joinery could not be readily observed. The purlins show evidence of regularly spaced mortises along each bottom face, perhaps evidence of their earlier use as horizontals within the frame. Documentary evidence about alterations to the building during each move is ambiguous, but it would appear that, while the whole structure may have been moved intact in 1772, it was apparently broken down and reconstructed during the 1791 move, and perhaps again in 1825.

Archaeological Description

While no prehistoric sites are currently recorded on the property or in the general area (within one mile), it is possible that sites are present. The physical characteristics of the property, a well drained eastward facing terrace within 1,000 feet of the Falls River indicate locational criteria which may be favorable for prehistoric settlement and subsistence activities. In general, however, the small size of the parcel (1/2 acre) and church construction indicate a low to moderate potential for significant prehistoric survivals.

There is also a low to moderate potential for significant historic archaeological remains on the property. Sheet refuse from activities held on church property may be present post dating the 1824 move of the church to this location. Occupational related features, particularly a privy may also be present on the property though none are known at present.

(end)

Name of Property

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- ARCHITECTURE
RELIGION
SOCIAL HISTORY
COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Period of Significance

1739-1942

Significant Dates

1772, 1791, 1824, 1847, 1879

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Connable, Samuel, Sr. & Jr.;
Couch, James; Scott, Moses;
Sheldon, Orra

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

Massachusetts Historical Commission
Bernardston Historical Commission

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreege of Property** approximately 1/2 acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 8	7 0 0 7 6 0	4 7 2 6 9 2 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

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

**Boundary Justification**

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

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Caryl Dyer and Claire Dempsey, NR Edit Consultant  
with Betsy Friedberg, NR Director, MHC

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date January 1993

street & number 80 Boylston Street telephone 617-727-8470

city or town Boston state MA zip code 02116

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

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

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

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

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

**Property Owner**

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

name Bernardston Congregational Unitarian Church

street & number Church Street

telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Bernardston

state MA

zip code 01337

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

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

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Bernardston Congregational Unitarian Church is an important historic monument within the town of Bernardston, Franklin County, Massachusetts. The church was the town's first, and its sequence of three moves from its original location to this site is an exceptional demonstration of a town's efforts to adjust its meeting place to its settlement pattern. Its present appearance, a simple white clapboard church with domed tower is a key element in the landscape of the mid-19th century New England village. The Congregational Unitarian Church is eligible for the National Register meeting criteria A and C, as well as criteria consideration A and B, with significance at the local level. Although the church is a property owned by a religious institution and is used for religious purposes, it derives its primary significance from both its architecture and its historic importance within the historic landscape of Bernardston. It retains integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association.

The town of Bernardston, like many along the northern border of the Commonwealth, was established by the General Court to compensate soldiers serving in the Province's wars with Native Americans. This grant was designated for the descendants of those who fought in the Falls Fight of 1676, one of the battles of King Philip's War fought in Deerfield. Fifty-eight years later, Samuel Hunt of Billerica and others petitioned the General Court for a tract of land north of Deerfield for a new township. Their petition was granted, with a familiar list of requirements made upon them for the establishment of the new community: "provided the grantees do within four years settle sixty families in said township, and have each of them a house eighteen feet square, and five acres of land brought to English grass, or broken up by plowing, and also to build a convenient Meeting House, and settle a learned orthodox minister among them..." The six mile square included what is now the town of Bernardston as well as portions of the town of Leyden and Colrain, and a strip of land now within the state of Vermont. The initial division of land into lots included fifty-acre home lots and an additional meadow lot for each proprietor. While they had no trouble attracting claimants to the land (97 had come forward by 1736), they had more difficulty attracting the required settlers.

The proprietors of Fallstown met in Deerfield to plan the settlement of their land grant. Among their first decisions was to build a meetinghouse there, to measure 50 feet in length, 40 in width, and 23 feet between the joists. As the site of this first community buildings, they chose the top of Huckle Hill in the eastern part of the town. Samuel Connable (1717-1796) is named by his

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descendants as the builder of this meetinghouse, said to have been the first frame structure in the town, as well as his own house, the second frame structure, and town bridges. In 1741 the settlers called their first minister, the Rev. John Norton, a recent graduate of Yale. By 1743 there were a reported fourteen families in the town, but the outbreak of King George's War in 1744 began a fifteen year period when the area was occupied by forts and soldiers rather than farmers and their families. Twenty-five families had returned or newly settled in the town by 1760 and a year later the community settled a new minister, the Rev. Job Wright, another Yale graduate. They petitioned the General Court the next year for the incorporation of the Fall Town grant as a new town named Bernardston. For a brief period in the third quarter of the 18th century the town stretched across the Green River, but soon its large size, coupled with the rough terrain, led to the division of the area. Though the easternmost part remained Bernardston, that portion west of the river was annexed to Colrain in 1771; that to the east of the Green River, but west of the present Bernardston, became Leyden in 1784. As these divisions attest, the colonial town was quite large and its meetinghouse not conveniently located for some residents of the town. Town Historian Lucy Kellog mentions unnamed period sources as indicating the large town's northeast quadrant to have been its most densely settled at this time, and the meetinghouse location on Huckle Hill confirms this.

During the long period when the town was sparsely populated or abandoned, the meetinghouse had suffered, and as early as 1766 the town meeting includes discussion about moving the meeting house or "rigging it up where it is." The building must have fallen into disrepair five years later when the warrant included an item to consider "if they will do anything to repairing (it)...so that the people may meet in the ensuing winter and see if they will move it." During this period the condition of the building led the townspeople to meet in private homes much of the time. The eastern and western sections of the town fought over the new location for the building for several years until an outside committee of men from Montague, Belchertown, and Northfield determined a new location a half mile south of the first site.

Samuel Connable, the builder of the meetinghouse, was put in charge of the move, with a committee of men to assist him, including Samuel Connable Jr., Amasa Sheldon, James Couch, Hezekiah Newcomb, David Rider, Aaron Field, and Moses Scott. Connable Jr. (1743-1794) was a bridge builder like his father, Couch (1718-1816) was Connable Sr.'s brother-in-law and known as a house joiner, while Scott (1713-1799) is said to have built the town's forts, bridges, and sawmill. In December of 1772 they met to actually move the building, beginning on the fifteenth "to make a trial to draw the meeting

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house and to continue the business until it get down to the stake (marking its new location) if it be thought best." In five additional meetings, on the 18th, 19th, 23rd, 26th, and 29th, the group met, usually late in the afternoon, to "draw" the meetinghouse. When it was moved, those whose land was damaged, or whose chains had broken, were compensated by the town. In March of the next year the town voted to underpin the building, board it up, put it all the glass they had, board up any other windows that remain, and hang the door. Further they ordered the committee "to cut off the house if they think best otherwise to finish it up without." In December of 1773, apparently having difficulty agreeing on the plan for the interior, the town voted to "fling up the plan of the pews...and go to an altogether new plan in modelling the pews and seating the meeting house." They voted for pews "the same largeness everyway as the pews in the Greenfield meeting house," following the common period practice of using neighboring models as design sources. Maintenance on the building was still a problem in 1779 when a committee was chosen to "nail on the boards that are come off; to nail up the windows, and the windows in the lower part to be made so as to slip up," suggesting double-hung sash.

Less than twenty years later the community began discussions about relocating the church once more. A committee was named to determine its new site and the town voted to move the church. The church was moved a half mile west to the valley of the Falls River at the intersection of three important town roads. For this move the town had first determined the site to have been the center of the town, and the minister at that time, Rev. Amasa Cook, deeded land to the town for "the convenience of a common around the house of public worship." In a multi-part vote the town voted to "ratify the doings of the committee who have appointed a place to set our meeting house." Their next vote was to "pull down and remove the meeting house to the place appointed...erect the meeting house and complete the covering the outside, underpinning, glaze, and lay the under floor." The 150 voted for this endeavor could be paid in a number of local agricultural products. A committee including Jonathan Sheldon and Connable Jr. and Newcomb from the last move were appointed "for the purpose of pulling down and erecting the meeting house and provide all the necessary materials, hire laborers, and contract for workmen to put said notes in execution." The frame had apparently been taken down by May of 1791 when the town voted to "secure from damage the meeting house timber by covering it from the weather." During the next three years the town voted repeatedly to finish the meetinghouse and to raise sums of money for that purpose, but the process was apparently slow to accomplish. In December of 1794 a committee of seven, including Newcomb and Couch, was appointed "to exhibit a plan of the manner in which they judge most

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convenient for finishing said meeting house." When the plan was presented the town voted to accept it "with this alteration that the pews in the center be square." In April of 1796 the town voted to "finish the lower part of the meeting house except lathe and plaster," and build the pulpit and raise money. Finally in 1797 some real progress was made, and in February the town voted for square pews with banisters, in May sent an unnamed joiner with a committee to look at pulpits, and in September voted to seat the meetinghouse.

The earliest detailed description of the church dates to this period, and clearly demonstrates its affinity to the basic meetinghouse shape of the 18th and early 19th century. The simple rectangular building had doors on three of its four sides, one in each narrow east and west end and another on the long south side opposite the pulpit. Its interior rose to a sufficient height to accommodate a gallery around three sides of its interior. On the floor the meetinghouse had thirty square pews, with two sets of six pews in the center of the building and the remainder arrayed along the walls. The building had no stair or bell towers.

The post-Revolutionary years were a period of exceptional growth in Bernardston, bringing change to the composition of the community and its church. The town's rate of population growth after its incorporation was extraordinary, even for this rapidly expanding part of the Commonwealth. The town's agricultural economy prospered, focusing on the common mixed grain and husbandry culture with period specialties in hops and merino sheep. Saw and grist mills sprang up in multiple locations and were soon joined by a scythe snathe manufactory, several tanneries, and boot and shoe shops. As the town's population grew and changed, so did its religious institutions. The town included Baptists as early as 1782, and while they organized a society in 1789, their permanent organization dates to 1806. Their meetinghouse was the first institutional building to locate in the valley area that became the center village, dating to 1790. In 1794 the radical William Dorrell found followers to his personal vision and the belief that those who had risen above sin were not subject to civil law. The Methodists established a class in 1799, and added their meetinghouse on Depot Street in 1852. Universalists worshipped in the town from 1820 to 1844, building a church in the emerging center as well. Not surprisingly changes were felt within the established church as well. The town's difficulties supporting Wright during the difficult years of the Revolution led him to resign his position and turn to farming and public service within the town. The next minister, Amasa Cook, a Brown University graduate, served from 1783 until 1805 when disagreements with the church led to his dismissal. In their choice of Timothy Rogers as their next minister the church departed from its earlier choices of orthodox or New

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Light-leaning divines to a Harvard-educated pastor who eventually brought the church within the Unitarian camp. At that time dissatisfied parishioners withdrew from the first church and formed the Congregational Church in 1824, building a church across the street from the Unitarian Church in 1833.

By the third decade of the 19th century it was clear that the new institution and commercial focus of the town would be further south in the valley. Other town churches were building in this area and in 1824 the Congregational Unitarian Church joined them and was moved to its present location. The move and the remodeling at this time was undertaken by major Orra Sheldon (1786-1878), who was paid \$1392.29. Sheldon was a native of Bernardston, married to his second cousin Mehitable Sheldon and after her death to her sister Lydia. He was known as a carpenter and bridge builder, and also constructed the Goodale Academy building, eventually re-locating to Cheapside in Greenfield. Although no visual images are known for this building, verbal descriptions, primarily in descriptions of later changes to the building, provide some clues about its appearance. The overall shape of the building remained the same, and it retained multiple exterior doors. It was sited with its gable end to the street, a new orientation for meetinghouses, and at that end a four-columned portico and a belfry, the present semi-detached domed tower, were added to the building; a small piazza was also located on the south or rear side of the building. It is clear from these facts that Sheldon had designed a building in keeping with the common practice in Massachusetts at the time, and the building apparently resembled the better-known work of Elias Carter, Isaac Damon, Lavius Fillmore, David Hoadley, and, of course, Asher Benjamin. Changes to the interior at this time are unknown, though the funds from the sale of the pew ground was to have gone to "finishing" the church. The next year a bell was purchased for the church in Boston; just a dozen years later the faulty bell was replaced with one from Hartford. The church formerly had horse stalls in the rear of the building but these no longer survive.

The last alterations to the church date to 1847 and 1879. In the first the church underwent a major remodeling, bringing it into the more common plan of mid-19th century churches. The committee appointed to oversee this work included J. F. Hale, Jason Brown, John Sanderson, and Daniel Slate, but none of these men have been associated with the building trades. The building's box pews, high pulpit, and gallery were removed; the interior space was divided into two levels, the sanctuary above, a small vestry below; the former exterior doors were closed, and the open portico on the facade was closed to form the present vestibule with paired entries. The sanctuary arrangement of today dates to this period, with the new "sacramental" arrangement of pulpit

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Bernardston Congregational Unitarian Church  
Bernardston (Franklin County)  
Massachusetts

Section number 9, 10 Page 1, 1

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Bernardston Historical Commission. Inventory of Historic Resources.
- Bernardston Congregational Unitarian Church. Records of the Clerk beginning in 1817.
- Bernardston Town Meeting Records, 1762-1815; and other documents in the possession of the Town Clerk.
- Garrison, J. Ritchie. Landscape and Material Life in Franklin County, Massachusetts, 1770-1860. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1991.
- History of the Town of Bernardston...Volume II, 1900-1960. Bernardston: Cushman Library and the Town, 1962.
- Kellogg, Lucy Jane Cutler. History of the Town of Bernardston, Franklin County, Massachusetts. Greenfield: E. A. Hall & Co., 1902.
- Sinnott, Edmund W. Meetinghouse & Church in Early New England. New York: Bonanza Books, 1963.
- Sylvester, Nathaniel Bartlett. History of the Connecticut Valley in Massachusetts. 1879.
- Zimmerman, Sarah, Neill DePaoli, Arthur Krim, and Peter Stott. Historic and Archaeological Resources of the Connecticut Valley. Boston: Massachusetts Historical Commission, 1984.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Town Report for Bernardston. Typescript at Massachusetts Historical Commission.

(end)

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description:

See attached Bernardston Assessors Map #9A, Block C, parcel #1.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries are those associated with the church since it was moved to this location in 1824.

(end)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Bernardston Congregational Unitarian Church  
Bernardston (Franklin County)  
Massachusetts

Section number 8 Page 6

and alter on a dais at the narrow end of the church with rows of slip pews facing it. In 1879 the committee of oversight included Almon Newcomb, P. L. Cushman, and N. S. Cutler. The rear organ loft was added to replace the rear piazza, and accommodate the organ purchased in 1871 that remains in place in the church. The vestry level was lowered three feet to allow for more useful space there, divided to include a large meetinghouse and classroom, with a small parlor and kitchen as well.

Few changes have been made to the building since that time, apart from general maintenance and renewal of surfaces, textiles, and furnishings. The village around the Congregational Unitarian Church grew over the years, but the religious institutions diminished in number. The Universalists have long since stopped meeting in the town and their church has been made into a dwelling. The Methodist Church is gone as well, its congregation having merged with the Congregationalists after World War II to form the Goodale Union Church. This church, with the Goodale Church and the Baptist Church, remain important components in the center village. This church, with its important association with the town's changing settlement pattern, has additional individual significance to the history of Bernardston.

Archaeological Significance

Since patterns of prehistoric occupation in Bernardston are poorly understood, any surviving sites could be significant. Surviving sites in this area can provide important examples of prehistoric settlement in upland/interior locales and along tributary streams of the Connecticut River. These sites can include smaller low density type sites which may contrast larger sites located along the Connecticut River.

Historic archaeological remains described above have the potential to provide detailed information on members of the town's first established church which developed in a rural center village with an agricultural economy that remained unchanged well into the 20th century. Careful analysis of sheet refuse patterns and possible contents of occupational related features can provide information on activities which occurred at the church and its parishioners who were representative of the community. This information can contribute towards a greater understanding of the social, cultural and economic patterns which characterized the unchanged nature of the town for such a long period time.

(end)



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Bernardston Congregational Unitarian Church

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Franklin

DATE RECEIVED: 2/01/93      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 2/16/93  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 3/04/93      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 3/18/93  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 93000128

NOMINATOR: STATE

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: Y PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: Y NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    3/18/93 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept A+C  
REVIEWER Savage  
DISCIPLINE Architectural History  
DATE 3/18/93

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

---

CLASSIFICATION

count       resource type

---

STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

---

FUNCTION

historic       current

---

DESCRIPTION

architectural classification  
 materials  
 descriptive text

---

SIGNIFICANCE

Period              Areas of Significance--Check and justify below

Specific dates                      Builder/Architect  
Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

summary paragraph  
 completeness  
 clarity  
 applicable criteria  
 justification of areas checked  
 relating significance to the resource  
 context  
 relationship of integrity to significance  
 justification of exception  
 other

---

BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

acreage               verbal boundary description  
 UTM's               boundary justification

---

ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION/PRESENTATION

sketch maps       USGS maps       photographs       presentation

---

OTHER COMMENTS

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to

\_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



Unitarian Church  
Church St. Bernardston  
Annette Mackin Oct 1987  
with Annette  
#1 of 2 Westside with steeple

BERNARDSTON CONGREGATIONAL UNITARIAN CHURCH  
CHURCH STREET  
BERNARDSTON (FRANKLIN COUNTY)  
MA

PHOTOGRAPHER: ANNETTE MACKIN

DATE OF PHOTO: OCT 1987

VIEW: LOOKING EAST AT WEST ELEVATION; STEEPLE

PHOTO # 1 OF 2



Unitarian Church  
Church St Bernardston  
Annette Mackin Oct 1987  
with Annette  
#1 of 2 Oblique view

BERNARDSTON CONGREGATIONAL UNITARIAN CHURCH  
CHURCH STREET  
BERNARDSTON (FRANKLIN COUNTY)  
MA

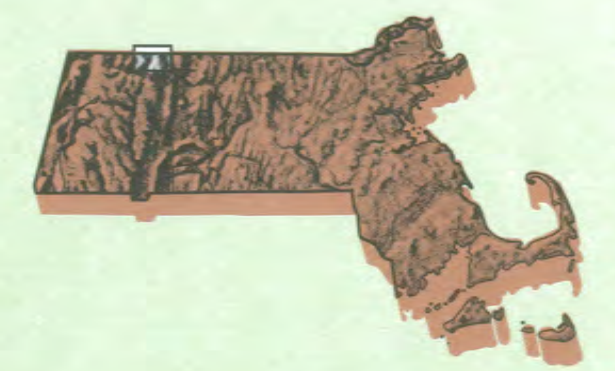
PHOTOGRAPHER: ANNETTE MACKIN

DATE OF PHOTO: OCT 1987

VIEW: LOOKING SOUTH AT THE NORTH (FACADE) ; WEST ELEVATIONS


PHOTO # 2 OF 2

42072F5-TM-025  
**Bernardston**  
 MASSACHUSETTS-VERMONT  
 1:25 000-scale metric  
 topographic map

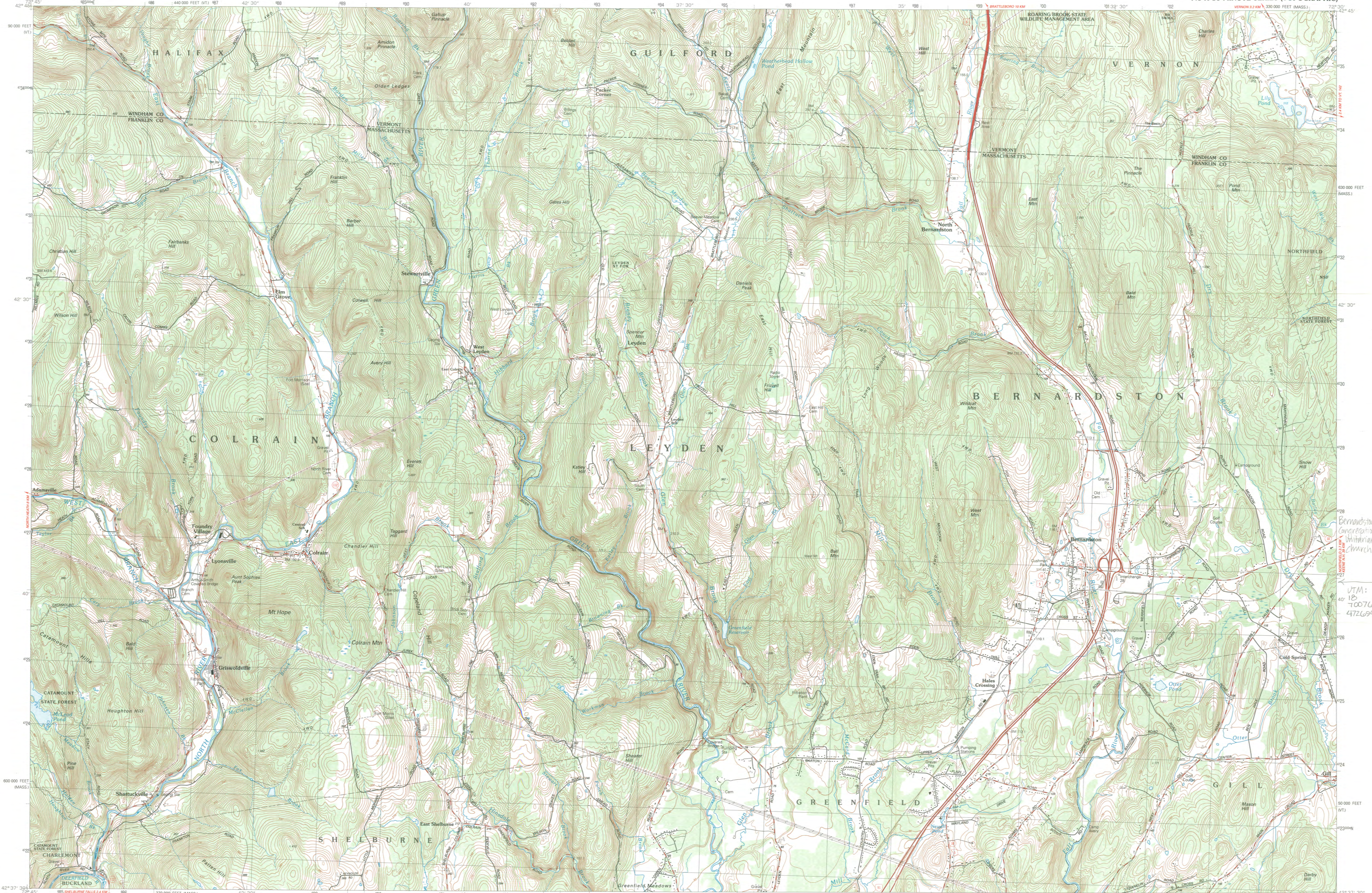


**7.5 X 15 MINUTE QUADRANGLE SHOWING**

- Contours and elevations in meters
- Highways, roads and other manmade structures
- Water features
- Woodland areas
- Geographic names



**GEOLOGICAL SURVEY**  
 1990



Produced by the United States Geological Survey  
 Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA, and Commonwealth of Massachusetts agencies  
 Compiled by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1981. Field checked 1984. Map edited 1990  
 Supersedes Bernardston and Colrain 1:25,000-scale maps dated 1977  
 This area also covered by 7.5 minute, 1:24,000-scale maps: Bernardston and Colrain dated 1977  
 Projection and 1000-meter grid, zone 18  
 Universal Transverse Mercator  
 10,000-foot grid ticks based on Massachusetts coordinate system, mainland zone, and Vermont coordinate system  
 1927 North American Datum  
 To place on the predicted North American datum 1983, move the projection lines 5 meters south and 38 meters west as shown by dashed corner ticks  
 There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map

CONTOUR INTERVAL 6 METERS  
 NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929  
 CONTROL ELEVATIONS SHOWN TO THE NEAREST 0.1 METER  
 OTHER ELEVATIONS SHOWN TO THE NEAREST METER  
 THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS

Meters	Feet
1	3.2808
2	6.5617
3	9.8425
4	13.1234
5	16.4042
6	19.6850
7	22.9659
8	26.2467
9	29.5275
10	32.8084

To convert meters to feet multiply by 3.2808  
 To convert feet to meters multiply by 0.3048

Declination	1	2	3
1	4	5	6
2	7	8	9

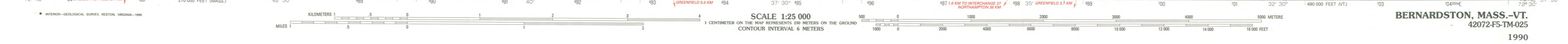
ADJOINING MAPS

1	Jacksonville (7.5)
2	Brattleboro
3	Windsor
4	Rowley
5	Northfield
6	Ashfield
7	Greenfield
8	Orange

FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY  
 DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
 UTM: 18  
 T 00760  
 4726940

**Topographic Map Symbols**

Primary highway, hard surface	—
Secondary highway, hard surface	—
Light-duty road, hard or improved surface	—
Unimproved road, trail	—
Route marker: Interstate, U. S., State	—
Railroad: standard gauge, narrow gauge	—
Bridge: drawbridge	—
Footbridge; overpass; underpass	—
Build-up area: only selected landmark buildings shown	—
House; barn; church; school; large structure	—
Boundary:	—
National, with monument	—
State	—
County, parish	—
Civil township, precinct, district	—
Incorporated city, village, town	—
National or State reservation; small park	—
Land grant with monument; found section corner	—
U. S. public lands survey: range, township, section	—
Range, township, section line: location approximate	—
Fence or field line	—
Power transmission line, located tower	—
Gas; den with rock	—
Cemetery: grave	—
Campground; picnic area; U. S. location monument	—
Wellhead; water well; spring	—
Mine shaft; prospect; shaft or mine; township, section	—
Control: horizontal station; vertical station; spot elevation	—
Contours: index; intermediate; supplementary; depression	—
Distorted surface: strip mine, lava; sand	—
Sounding; depth curve	—
Perennial lake and stream; intermittent lake and stream	—
Rapids; large and small; falls, large and small	—
Swamp; marsh	—
Submerged marsh; land subject to submergence	—
Woodland: scattered trees	—
Scrub; mangrove	—
Orchard; vineyard	—





FEB 01 1993

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

January 27, 1993

Carol Shull  
National Register of Historic Places  
Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
P.O. Box 37127  
Washington, DC 20013-7127

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed you will find the following two nomination forms:

Bernardston Congregational Unitarian Church, Church Street, Bernardston  
(Franklin County), Massachusetts, 01337

Powers Institute Historic District, Church Street, Bernardston (Franklin  
County), Massachusetts, 01337

Both nominations have been voted eligible by the State Review Board and have  
been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer. Owners were notified  
of pending State Review Board consideration 30-75 days before the meeting and  
were afforded the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Betsy Friedberg  
National Register Director  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

enclosure

cc: Carol Dyer, Bernardston Congregational Unitarian Church  
Esther Carlin, Chairperson, Bernardston Historical Commission  
Geoffery A. Rogers, Shared Town Administrator  
Claire Dempsey, Preservation Consultant  
Daniel J. O'Keefe, Chairman, Bernardston Board of Selectmen  
Cushman Library

Massachusetts Historical Commission, Judith B. McDonough, *Executive Director, State Historic Preservation Officer*  
80 Boylston Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02116 (617) 727-8470

Office of the Secretary of State, Michael J. Connolly, *Secretary*