

OFFICE OF THE SUPERVISOR
E.P. [unclear]

**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 First Free Will Baptist Meeting House

and/or common Dana Meeting House (preferred)

2. Location

street & number Dana Hill Road (1½ miles north off Rte 104) n/a not for publication

city, town New Hampton n/a vicinity of

state New Hampshire code 33 county Belknap code 001

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name New Hampton Community Church

street & number Main Street (P.O. Box 247)

city, town New Hampton n/a vicinity of state New Hampshire 03256

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Belknap County Registry of Deeds (Book SC11, Page 62)

street & number Belknap County Courthouse
64 Court Street

city, town Laconia, state New Hampshire 03246

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title New Hampton Historic Resources Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1984 federal state county local

depository for survey records Lakes Region Planning Commission

city, town Meredith, state New Hampshire

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Dana Meeting House is a one-story wooden frame meetinghouse which stands on its own lot on the west side of Dana Hill Road in New Hampton. The rectangular building is placed with its eastern long side facing the road. The clapboarded walls with cornerboards are set on a fieldstone foundation. All of the windows have twelve over twelve sash and moulded trim. The lateral eaves are ornamented by box cornices with mouldings and friezes, but the gable eaves have only close verges with simple returns. The gable roof is now sheathed with asphalt shingles. A brick chimney breaks the north slope of the roof near the center of the ridge. As the chimney is now unused, the arched vault that stands on its corbeled cap has been cemented shut.

Each facade is five bays wide. The principal feature of the eastern (street) facade is the central entry, the meetinghouse's main entry. The double three-panel doors are flanked by simple pilasters and topped by a plain lintel. The main entry is now sheltered by a one-story open entry porch, with concrete floor and side steps. (The northern side steps are flanked by a metal pipe hand rail.) Square corner posts support the porch's gable roof. Each facade of the porch is distinguished by a basket arch ornamented with "keystone" and "impost blocks". Above the arches, the porch is sheathed with vertical beaded boarding. The asphalt shingled roof is trimmed with shallow moulded lateral cornices and close verges on the gable. A painted wooden sign labeled "DANA MEETING HOUSE Erected 1800" hangs on the porch gable. To each side of the entry are two high twelve over twelve sash windows with moulded trim.

The five bay wide north and south gable ends share the same design--a central door flanked on each side by two high twelve over twelve sash windows, all with moulded trim. In each gable is a small attic louver with plain trim. The only differences are in the doors, the northern door having nine panels, the southern door having four panels and a concrete step. The rear west facade has five high windows of the usual design with twelve over twelve sash and moulded trim. The central window, behind the pulpit, is placed even higher than usual in the wall, so that its upper sash abuts the frieze of the box cornice.

The interior of the meetinghouse is one large meeting room filled with pews. Where visible, the floor is covered with wide boards. Some of the building's hewn timber frame is exposed in the walls. Rough chamfered posts divide the long walls into five bays and the gable walls into three bays. The bays of the long walls each contain a single window, save for the central bay of the eastern wall which contains the main entry. The central bays in the gable walls contain the side entries and are narrower than the flanking bays, each of which contains two windows. While most of the posts are square, six of the posts are wider at the top than at the bottom, the transition being marked by a concave curve. Exposed beams divide each bay horizontally. In the window bays, the exposed beam marks the division between the upper plaster walls and the wide board wainscoating. The sills of the plain framed windows rest on the exposed beams. In the three entry bays, the exposed beam is placed somewhat higher in the wall, just high enough to clear the door. Again, wide boards sheathe the entry bays beneath the beam and plaster covers the walls above the beam. Only in the central bay of the western wall is the horizontal beam hidden by the tall pulpit, and the simple wainscoating behind it. The higher window behind the pulpit is surrounded by a plain frame and the usual plaster walls. The plaster ceiling is interrupted by two hanging kerosene lights and a small trapdoor serving the attic.

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The box pews that fill the meetinghouse are all of the same design, although they do have slightly different shapes and arrangements. The partitions and doors are paneled beneath rectangular openings ornamented with small turned spindles, and are topped by simple moulded copings. The box pews have board floors and simple builtin wooden seats.

The room is divided by aisles. A wide aisle leads from the main entry in the center of the east wall to the pulpit in the center of the west wall. Perpendicular to this east-west aisle is a narrower north-south aisle, connecting the north and south side doors. As the walls are lined with box pews, each quadrant of the room is served by an L-shaped aisle paralleling the outer walls. Together, the four L-shaped aisles form a rectangular corridor around the room.

The pews are arranged as follows. Along the long east wall are found eight wall pews, four on each side of the main entry. Similarly, on the long west wall, we find six wall pews, three on each side of the pulpit. Each gable wall has four pews (not counting the corner pews) two on each side of the door. The northeast and southeast quadrants each have five floor pews, three on the east side, two (including one larger pew) on the west side. The southwest and northwest quadrants each have four slip pews on the central east-west aisle and two box pews on the L-shaped aisle. The slip pews, built of heavy planks resting on beams, have simply curved ends and paneled backs.

All of the box pews are raised above the main floor of the room. In order to improve the sight lines, they are ranged at three different levels. The floor pews in the western quadrants and the floor pews facing the central north-south aisle in the eastern quadrants are set one step above the floor. Most of the other pews are two steps above the floor. But the eastern wall pews are all three steps above the floor. Different devices were used to reach the higher pews. Two pews on the central east-west aisle have their own separate steps. The wall pews in the western quadrants are served by narrow continuous steps that run along the L-shaped aisles. In the eastern quadrants, the L-shaped aisles are themselves raised two steps above the floor.

In the center of the west wall is the tall rectangular two level pulpit. The lower level of the pulpit is the deacon's pew, which has a paneled front with a moulded baseboard and a simple moulded coping. The deacons' pew, which is entered by a paneled door with a spindled upper opening, like the other pew doors, has a board floor, paneled side walls, and a builtin bench with a paneled back. Attached to the front of the deacons' pew is a folding semicircular table leaf, for the communion service. Next to the deacons' pew door are the five narrow steps which lead up to the upper level, the pulpit proper. The upper level has paneled front and sides, topped by a shallow moulded cornice. A narrow shelf above the paneled front serves to hold the Bible and other texts. The upper level also has a board floor and a simple builtin bench. (The only other piece of church furniture in the meetinghouse is an ornate freestanding organ.)

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The meetinghouse grounds are enclosed on the north, west and south by a stone wall, that is a crude semicircle in plan, and twice interrupted by gaps. The grounds are grassed in contrast to the dense woods beyond the wall, but some shrubs and trees have grown up along the wall. And a few foundation shrubs are found on the east side of the meetinghouse.

The only other building on the property is a dilapidated two-hole privy, just southwest of the meetinghouse. Most of the shed roof and one wall were destroyed by a falling tree. And part of the floor has rotted away. Still standing are three clap-boarded walls with corner mouldings, and exposed inner studs. The privy did once have a door and a small window. Some of the roof with its exposed rafters still clings to the surviving walls.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1800-02, 1810 **Builder/Architect** Stevhen S. Magoon (interior)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Dana Meeting House is significant architecturally as the best surviving one-story early meetinghouse in New Hampshire. The well preserved meetinghouse is also notable for the simple dignity of its exterior and the fine craftsmanship of its interior, particularly the pews and the pulpit.

The First Free Will Baptist Church in New Hampton was organized in January of 1800. The Free Will Baptists at first met in the homes of church members, but soon decided to build a meetinghouse. Construction of the Dana Meeting House is said to have begun in the fall of 1800. But the first mention of the building in the church records appears in April of 1802 when Josiah Magoon, Abraham and Nathaniel Drake were appointed a committee "to take the oversight in building the meeting house".¹ In July, Jeremiah Marston sold the present lot to the Free Will Baptists for ten dollars. The deed refers to the meetinghouse as already standing and uses as the boundary the semi-circular stone wall that had already been built by the Baptists around the building. At the August church meeting, the meetinghouse was discussed and it was "concluded to bring forward the materials as soon as possible".² In October, when the subject of the meetinghouse was again taken up, "the Brethren pretty freely offered materials and concluded to try to cover it this fall".³ These scanty references are virtually all that is known about the construction of the building. We are not able to identify either the designer or the builders. But the church records do tell us when the building was completed. On December 8, 1802, the Free Will Baptists met at Abraham Drake's barn, "then repaired to the new Meeting House"⁴ for worship and the ordination of two elders and two deacons, including Elder Simeon Dana (1775-1853), the physician-minister whose long association with the meetinghouse gave the building its current name.

The meetinghouse was originally furnished with crude benches. In 1810, it was decided to complete the interior and sell the pews at auction. Stephen S. Magoon, a local cabinet maker and the son of Elder Josiah Magoon, agreed to finish the interior and build the box pews for \$300. When the builder presented his accounts in Septamber of 1810, he had exceeded the agreed cost by only 55 cents. Stephen Magoon's craftsmanship is responsible for much of the meetinghouse's present interest and charm.

The Dana Meeting House was saved from the usual 19th century modernization by the decline of its congregation. Originally, the meetinghouse served the Free Will Baptists of a large area, encompassing five towns. But during the early and mid 19th century, independent churches were organized in the neighborhoods and the villages of this area.

¹Church Record for New Hampton Monthly Meetings" (manuscript, property of New Hampton Community Church, on deposit in Gordon-Nash Library, New Hampton, N.H.) p. 23.

²Ibid. p. 30

³Ibid, p. 36

⁴Ibid, p. 39

9. Major Bibliographical References

(see continuation sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 386

Quadrangle name Holderness, N.H.

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UMT References

A	<u>19</u>	<u>28761010</u>	<u>4835350</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

D			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

E			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

F			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

G			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

H			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal boundary description and justification

(See continuation sheet)

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

state	code	county	code
N/A			
N/A			

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David L. Ruell

organization Lakes Region Planning Commission date July 4, 1984

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

city or town Meredith, state New Hampshire 03253

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer signature *William T. ...* date 10/26/84

title New Hampshire Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

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

John ... date 12-13-84

Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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As the hill farms declined and the villages grew, the old meetinghouse lost its congregation to these new Free Will Baptist churches, notably those in the villages of Holderness (later Ashland), three and a half miles to the north, and New Hampton, two and a half miles to the south. In 1871, recognizing the inevitable, the remaining members of the First Free Will Baptist Church affiliated with the New Hampton Village Free Will Baptist Church.⁵ Since then, the Dana Meeting House has not been used regularly as a church.

The long slow decline of the congregation did help to preserve the meetinghouse, as there was apparently neither the funds nor the energy to modernize the building. The only feature, besides the now unused chimney, that may have been a 19th century addition is the entry porch. There is no documentation as to when the porch was built, leading many to believe that it was an original feature of the building. Certainly, it appears in all known 19th century photographs of the meetinghouse. Its design, however, suggests that it may well have been a later addition, as it does not seem typical of the early 19th century.

The Dana Meeting House was neglected and unused for some years, and might well have suffered the usual fate of abandoned buildings, had it not been for Dr. A.J. Gordon, a New Hampton native who became a prominent Boston minister and the founder of Gordon College. Rev. Gordon returned to his native town in 1888 and found the old meetinghouse in disrepair. With characteristic energy, Rev. Gordon began a campaign to restore the building. He began holding summer services in the meeting house, at which money "was raised for the purpose of repairing the house, that it may retain its ancient and peculiar mode of construction".⁶ Over the next few years, the meetinghouse was carefully restored. Since 1889, the Dana Meeting House has been used for summer services and kept in good repair. Typical of these efforts was a major 1934 fund raising campaign which led to the repair of the deteriorating roof structure, replacement of sills, reshingling of the roofs, and erection of the privy. The later repairs have been done with respect for the original building. Virtually the only significant 20th century changes have been the construction of the concrete step at the south door, and the concrete porch floor. Otherwise, the Dana Meeting House appears as it did when it was in use in the early and mid 19th century.

The plan of the Dana Meeting House is the typical meetinghouse plan used throughout New England in the 18th century--a simple, rectangular, gable-roofed building with its main entry in the center of one long side, the pulpit in the center of the opposite long side, side entries in the gable ends and a symmetrical arrangement of box pews.

⁵In 1951, the New Hampton Village Free Will Baptist Church was reorganized as the non-denominational New Hampton Community Church.

⁶Bristol Enterprise, August 22, 1889.

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But most meetinghouses served an entire town, not just a particular sect, and were therefore much larger, usually two stories high to accommodate galleries. Several such large meetinghouses still stand in New Hampshire, the finest being those in Sandown, Danville, Fremont and Webster. Few one-story meetinghouses were built and fewer still survive. If we except the smaller Quaker meetinghouses, all of which have different plans featuring two separate but equal main entries for the two sexes, the only comparable early one-story meetinghouse in the state is the First Christian Church in Allenstown. The Allenstown church of 1815 is similar in many ways, particularly in its use of stepped platforms for the pews. But, it is a smaller and simpler building, with plain window and door trim, plainer lateral cornices, and only one entry--a single door in the center of the main facade. Architecturally, the New Hampton meetinghouse is obviously superior. It is therefore not presumptuous to describe the Dana Meeting House as the best surviving early one-story meetinghouse in New Hampshire.

Aside from the Dana Meeting House's importance as a well preserved specimen of a rare building type, the meetinghouse is also notable as a good example of early 19th century vernacular architecture. Save for the porch, the facades are relatively simple, with the ornament limited to moulded window and side door trim, lateral box cornices with mouldings and friezes, and pilasters flanking the main double doors. Still, their symmetry and good proportions give the exterior a simple dignity. The porch, although it may be later, is in itself not undistinguished. The interior, whose preservation intact is even more unusual than the survival of the exterior, is perhaps of greater architectural interest. Stephen S. Magoon was a fine provincial carpenter. And his work, although relatively unsophisticated by the high style standards of the day, is still of high quality. The box pews, with their paneled partitions and doors and the unusual spindled openings, and the high paneled pulpit and deacons' pew, all reveal the solid craftsmanship of this country carpenter. The Dana Meeting House is, in fact, a virtually unique survival--a well built and well preserved early 19th century small meetinghouse almost without rivals in the state of New Hampshire.

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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Ernest B. Gordon - ADONIRAM JUDSON GORDON (New York, 1896).

Pauline S. Merrill - A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF NEW HAMPTON (New Hampton, 1963).

Pauline S. Merrill, John C. Gowan et al - A SMALL GORE OF LAND (New Hampton, 1976).

Raymond C. Smith, "Historical Sketch of Dana Meeting House" (manuscript, New Hampton Historical Society Papers, on deposit in Gordon-Nash Library, New Hampton, N.H.)

Eva A. Speare - COLONIAL MEETING-HOUSES OF NEW HAMPSHIRE (Littleton, 1955).

Interview - Pauline S. Merrill, June 10, 1984.

Interview - Edwin Huckins, July 1, 1984.

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10. Geographical Data

The nominated property is bounded on the east by Dana Hill Road, and on the north, west and south by a semicircular stone wall that has served as the property boundary since 1802. The nominated property includes the Dana Meeting House and the lot it has occupied since its construction. New Hampton Tax Map R-10, Lot 10.

The boundaries of the nominated property have been highlighted in yellow on the attached sketch map.

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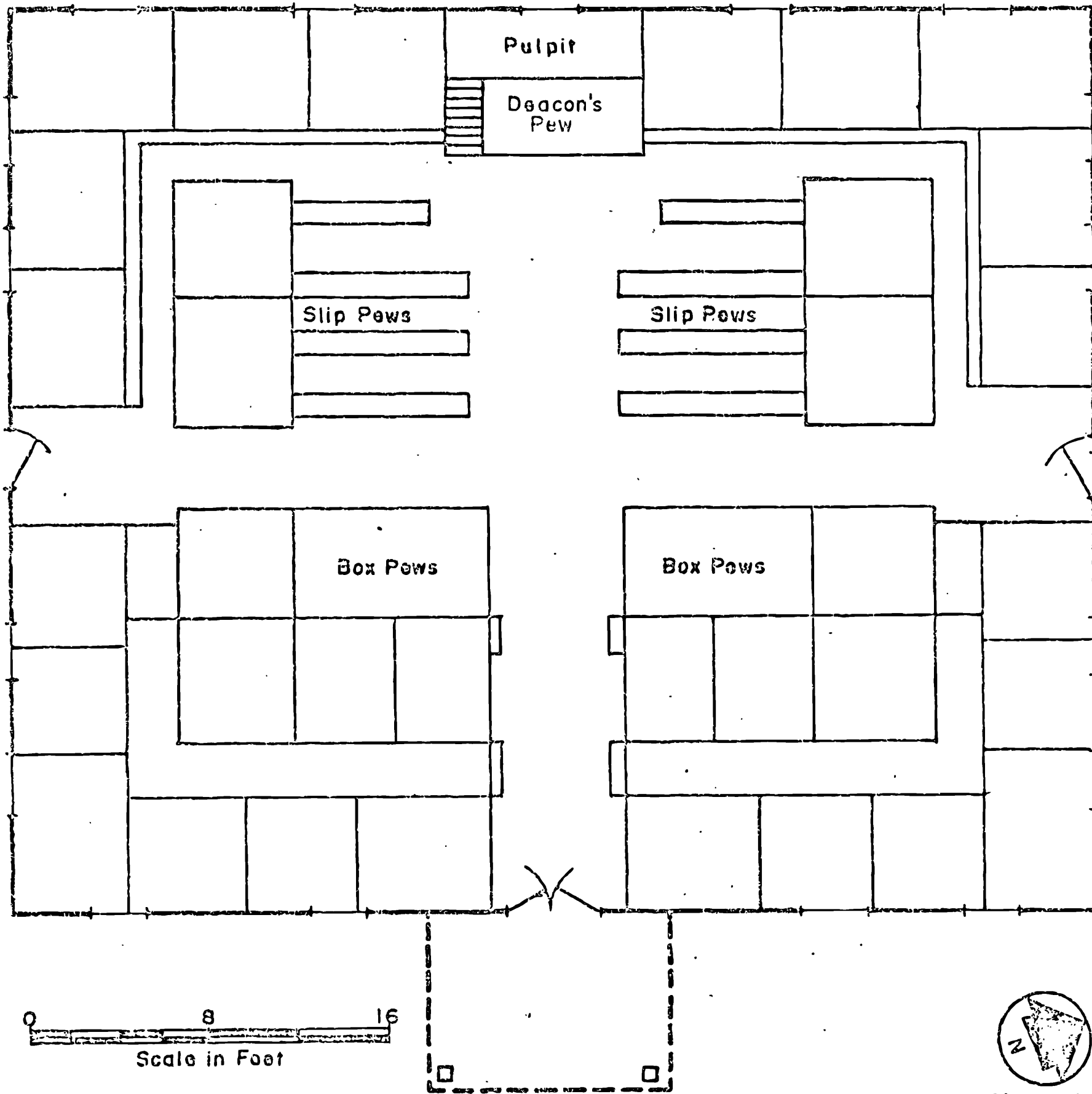
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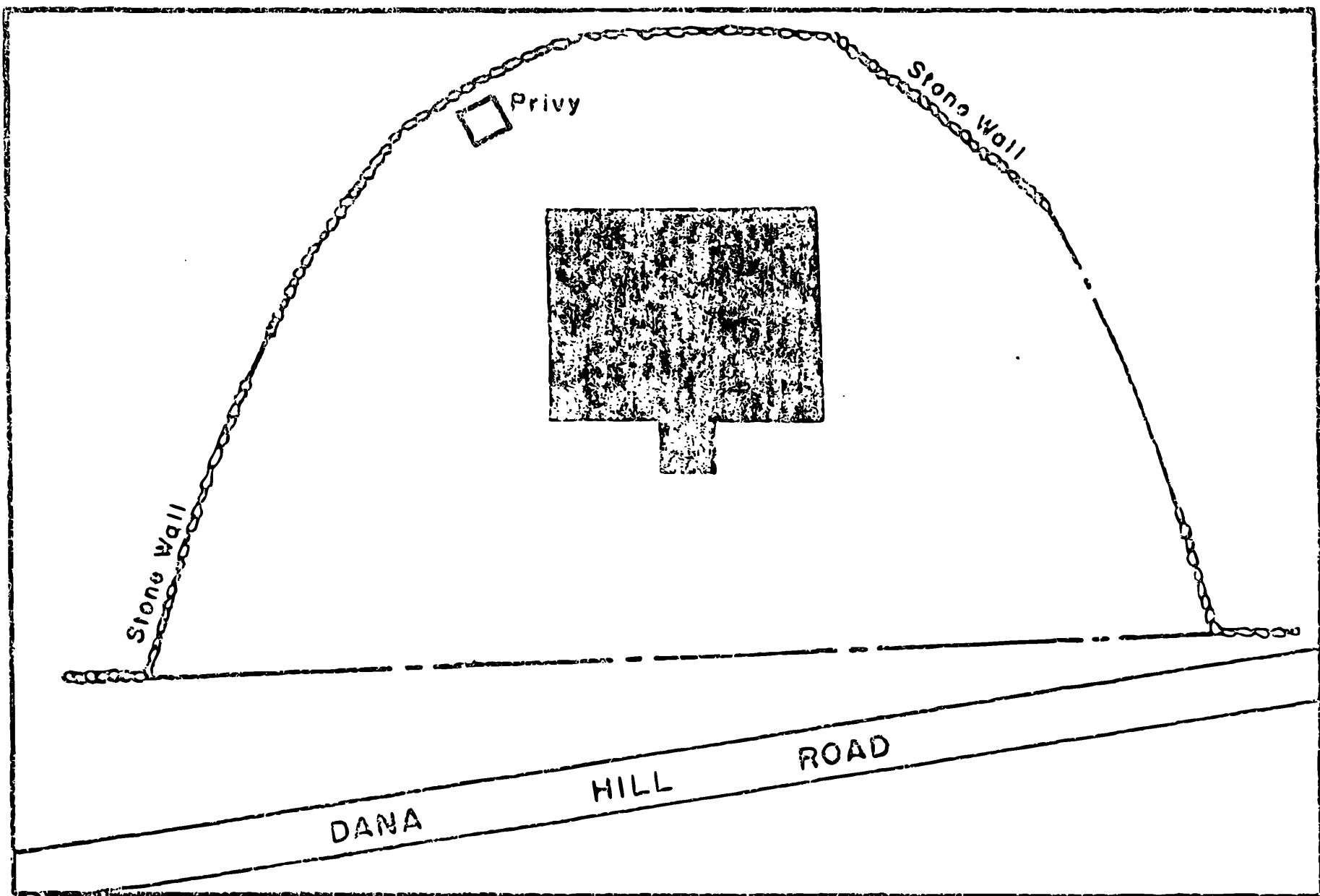
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