

1043

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

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

received JUN 13 1977
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Leicester Meeting House

and or common Leicester Meeting House

2. Location

street & number Intersection U.S. Route 7 and Town Highway 1 N/A not for publication

city, town Leicester N/A vicinity of

state Vermont code 50 county Addison code 001

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	N/A being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Town of Leicester

street & number R.D. 2

city, town Brandon N/A vicinity of state Vermont

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the Leicester Town Clerk

street & number R.D. 2

city, town Brandon state Vermont

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Vermont Historic Sites & Structures Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date September 1977 federal state county local

depository for survey records Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

city, town Montpelier state Vermont

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Leicester Meeting House stands prominently in the northwest corner of the junction of U.S. Route 7 and Town Highway 1, known as "Leicester Four Corners," in Leicester, Vermont. This late Federal period brick building of 1829 shares the village green with the Old Leicester School and Town Hall of circa 1858. Projecting from the gable facade of the Meeting House is an entrance pavilion with an elliptically arched doorway surmounted by a Palladian window. These elements as well as the tall, round-arched windows of the facade and sides are accentuated by round-arched, recessed brick bays. The interior remains largely intact although the orientation of the pews was changed in 1869. The walls and coved ceiling still retain their original plaster; the gently curving waistwall of the gallery is paneled and decorated. Alterations to the Leicester Meeting House have been minor and the building still has its original character.

This masonry bearing brick structure, approximately twenty-six feet to the eaves, was dedicated by the Leicester Meeting House Society in 1829. The architectural elements and details are drawn from the late Federal period. The Meeting House is three bays deep with a gable roof. It has a projecting gable-roofed entrance bay measuring sixteen feet, ten inches across its front. This bay steps out four feet from the main block which measures forty-two feet by fifty feet. The foundation is laid with rough-faced rectangular fieldstone. The brickwork, in good condition, is American Common bond, three wythes thick, using a seven stretcher to one header course pattern. The brick currently exhibits some spalling.

A circa 1900 photograph shows the meeting house with louvered shutters on all the arched windows. In addition, a carriage shed was located to the northwest. In this photograph, the shutters and the shed are showing extensive deterioration, indicative of Leicester's limited public resources. The original wooden steps were destroyed in the hurricane of 1950 and replaced by precast concrete steps with modern cast iron railings. The building originally had no steeple or belfry, although a Town Report from 1949 has a cover photo of the Meeting House with a square, louvered belfry, approximately six feet tall, and capped with a gable roof. It was replaced in 1966 by the present wood-framed belfry with an aluminum sheathed steeple. The original interior chimney has been replaced by the existing exterior chimney built in 1944 for the furnace. The windows on the main block have circular arched, single hung, nine-over-nine sash in fair condition. The Leicester Meeting House Society minutes of 1869 state that monies were voted for replacement sash. The original arched sash probably matched the extant Palladian window muntin design. They are framed into recessed brickwork which repeats the circular arches of the sash, the north gable windows excepted.

The projecting entrance bay has an elliptical arched doorway with a well proportioned Palladian window above it. Both of these elements are accentuated by a circular arched recessed brick bay. At the base of the entrance steps is a large marble slab, probably part of the original steps. The marble door threshold is still in place as well. The double front doors contain six flat panels each with applied cove mouldings. The doors have a cast Norfolk latch, installed late in the nineteenth century as a replacement. The case is beaded with an ovolo backband. Above the doors is a three-light elliptical arched transom sash. The arch is forced flatter than usual by the height of the choir gallery inside. The Palladian window has a single hung sixteen center sash with a

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separate circular sash fixed above. The side lights have single hung six-over-eight sash.

The north facade with no recessed brickwork has two windows and the 1944 chimney. There are eight extant, "S" shaped, wrought iron anchor ties, three on the south gable and five on the north gable.

The cornice on the main block consists of an eighteenth century crown moulding profile—a cyma recta and ogee, a horizontally projecting bed moulding which is a Grecian ovolo profile, and a small three inch frieze with a half inch square fillet. The cornice on the projecting bay is of the same profile and scale as the main block. The roof is covered with slate.

Inside, the vestibule is the full width of the building. It is ten feet, seven inches deep, with an eight foot, eight inch ceiling; the choir gallery is directly above. The front door panels are flush and beaded. The plaster ceiling and walls are intact. The stairways flanking the vestibule are enclosed now. However, the original detail is intact including four steps winding one hundred eighty degrees, turned newel posts, a moulded hand rail, square balusters and mitered riser returns. All of the this detail is original to 1829. The original bearing posts and beam supporting the gallery are cased with quirk beaded boards.

The gallery is largely unaltered: the floor originally stepped down for pew seating but has been boarded over to one level from the exterior wall to the waist wall. A ten inch metal railing has been added for safety. The floors are random width, painted boards. The walls have wide board horizontal wainscotting with lath and plaster above. The Palladian window in the south wall illuminates the gallery. All the windows have splayed, unmoulded jambs and a one and three quarter inch bead to which the plaster abuts.

Downstairs, in the meeting room, the gallery waistwall describes a gently curved segment of a circle. The meeting room side of this waistwall is paneled and quite well detailed. Below the panels is a wide, three step architrave. It has an intermediate ovolo and fillet moulding and a large Grecian ogee back band. The panels are accented with a delicate astragal moulding and framed by a well refined ogee and astragal moulding "stuck" on the stiles and rails. The waistwall is capped by a denticulated cornice consisting of reeded fretwork, ovolo and cove bed moulding, and ovolo chair rail.

The main meeting room has the original plaster on the walls and on the vaulted, elliptical ceiling. The walls are wainscotted with horizontal, wide, beaded boards. The wainscotting is capped with a simple nosed chair rail which is integral to the window stools. A picture moulding has been added near the top of the windows.

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The pews in the meeting room currently face the north wall of the Meeting House. There stands the pulpit on a chantry stepped above the main floor. In front of the chantry is a turned balustrade, and to each side three rows of pews. All outside pews are dadoed into the wainscotting. However, the original plans for the Meeting House and the "Minutes of the Leicester Meeting House Society" both indicate the pews originally faced south toward a pulpit in front of, and below the gallery. The pulpit stood on a raised semi-circular chantry. The Leicester Meeting House Society met April 3, 1869 and decided to move the pulpit to the north end and reverse the pews as well. The floor was to be raised approximately four inches and leveled. It appears the original subfloor and random wide board flooring were reused.

The basement stairwell is located in the southwest corner of the vestibule under the gallery stairs. The six panel door with raised panels encloses crude wooden stairs leading to a four foot high basement under the main block and the projecting bay. The floor is dirt, the foundation stone, and the supporting piers are brick.

The main wooden carrying girt is hewn square and the joists are half round logs. In the center of the basement is a sunken, concrete pad for the furnace, installed in 1944. A small access door was cut into the basement wall, probably for the furnace installation.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1829; 1869

Builder/Architect Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Leicester Meeting House in Leicester, Vermont is the most prominent structure at the "Leicester Four Corners." Built in 1829, it is a well preserved and significant example of late Federal period rural public building design. Its arched windows and recessed brickwork combine with the projecting entrance by to attain a grace of proportion seldom seen in vernacular architecture. The Meeting House has served as a Union Church as well as the location for Town and Freeman's meetings. It is a manifestation of the ambition and pride of a growing nineteenth century agrarian community.

The Leicester Meeting House Society was formed in 1825 and raised twenty-eight dollars for the purchase of approximately three acres on which to build a meeting house. The deed specifies that "the land is to be used only for the worship of God and bought from William Young for literary purposes." The Society proceeded with plans which brought together many locally donated monies, materials and labor which built the meeting house for less than three thousand dollars. The one hundred five thousand bricks, costing three hundred fifteen dollars, came from the Leicester clay beds less than half a mile away. The meeting house is set back on the property to create a village green which has been well preserved. Over the years the meeting house has served a number of religious societies: Methodist, Congregational, the Pentacostal Church and the Church of the Nazarene. In 1869 the Society voted funds to reverse the direction of the pulpit and pews and to raise the floor four inches. Aside from these early alterations, only minor changes have occurred and the meeting house retains nearly all its original elements.

From 1791 to 1830 the population of Leicester grew from three hundred forty-three to six hundred thirty-eight. With greater wealth and a need for a place of worship, the Leicester Meeting House was built in 1829. One year later Dr. William Giles, the first moderator of the Meeting House Society, built his own house across Route 7. His house, called the Stagecoach Inn, was recently listed on the National Register of Historic Places. (Listed on the National Register November 15, 1984.) It served as a stop for road travel from Rutland to Vergennes. By 1858 the Town's population had increased by one hundred and the Meeting House Society granted the Town of Leicester the privilege of erecting a school for the third school district with the upstairs to be used as a town hall. These three buildings are what remain from a busy nineteenth century intersection. They encompassed the religious, educational, business and social needs of the Town of Leicester.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 3+

Quadrangle name Brandon, VT

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	8	6	5	1	9	6	0	4	8	5	8	5	4	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

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D

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Verbal boundary description and justification

As listed in Book Number 5, Page 267, in the Town Clerk's Office in Leicester, Vermont. Original lot associated with the building.

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

N/A

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Townsend H. Anderson, Director of Historic Properties

organization Mill Bridge Construction date June 16, 1986

street & number P.O. Box 564 telephone 802-388-3169

city or town Middlebury state Vermont

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *E. Roberts*

title Director/State Historic Preservation Officer date June 10, 1988

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

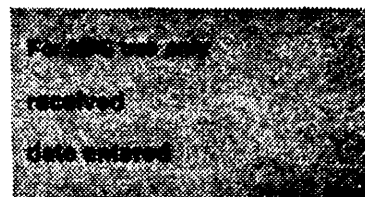
Amy Schlager date 7/28/88
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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Although these buildings hark back to a simpler era and the Route 7 traffic now speeds by this once vibrant intersection, their presence still defines a small rural community. Recognizing them as such is a first step in preserving the integrity of Leicester.

The Leicester Meeting House represents a rare attempt at sophisticated architecture by a small, rural community. It is, furthermore, material evidence of the townspeople's conservative values and their desire for order, discipline and a place of worship. No longer used on a daily basis, it stands as an important artifact reflecting a long period of agrarian development. Historically the meeting house has seen intermittent use by many diverse groups. Presently dormant, it is inevitable that Leicester will find new uses for its most deserving building.

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Major Bibliographical References

Beers, F.W. Atlas of Addison County, Vermont. New York, 1871.

Delorm, Constance. "History of Leicester and the Leicester Meetinghouse".
Three page history stored at Office of Leicester Town Clerk.
Unpublished, no date available.

Smith, H.P. History of Addison County, Vermont. Syracuse, New York, 1886.

The Rutland Herald. Article entitled "Old Leicester Church Rich in History
of Century Ago". November 27, 1929.

The Minutes of the Leicester Meeting House Society. Two Volumes stored in
vault of Office of Leicester Town Clerk. 1825 to date.

Original plan for Leicester Meeting House. Stored in vault of Office of
Leicester Town Clerk. Circa 1828.