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MAY 20 1982

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

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

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

1. Name

historic Fletcher Union Church

and/or common Fletcher Community House

2. Location

street & number SR | Town Road #1 in Fletcher Center N/A not for publication

city, town Fletcher N/A vicinity of ~~Congressional District~~

state Vermont code 50 county Franklin code 011

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Town of Fletcher

street & number c/o Town Clerk

city, town Fletcher N/A vicinity of state Vermont

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Fletcher Town Clerk's Office

street & number Fletcher Center

city, town Fletcher state Vermont

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date 1981 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 Fletcher Community House is a well-preserved wood frame meetinghouse of a common vernacular type. Situated in the small (ten scattered buildings) hamlet of Fletcher Center, it commands an axial view of Main Street, and visually dominates the village-scape.

Construction is of clapboards on a post-and-beam frame. The rectangular plan is three-by-three bays, fifty-six by thirty-eight feet, and displays absolute bilateral symmetry. Centered on the gabled west facade is a projecting two-tiered belltower which houses the main entrance at its base. The building site slopes back to the rear to accommodate an exposed basement level with full fenestration and an entry on the north side. Cornerboards on the main block, tower, and belfry are unusually wide and are constructed with an overlapping layer of narrower boards to create a sense of relief and texture. The steeply-pitched gable roof has wide projecting eaves with cornice moldings and wide, plain frieze boards underneath. Sheathing is sheet metal. The belfry has rectangular louvres on all four sides, and was originally surmounted by a spire and weathervane. A pair of corbelled inside-end chimneys frames the ridge of the roof in the rear.

Fenestration consists of large six-over-six sash with unusual asymmetrical muntin patterns; smaller six-over-six sash appear over the front entrance and at the basement level on the sides; the window over the entrance has been partially blinded with clapboards, and large louvred blinds cover the other front windows. The front entrance has paneled double doors and a transom with round-arched wood panels in an arcade motif. On the north wall is a basement level entrance with a single paneled door and a gabled door hood on plain brackets.

Inside the front entry is a low-ceilinged vestibule from which a staircase with turned newel and balusters leads to a second story balcony and balustraded gallery. The main hall features a ribbed, pressed metal ceiling which curves down to cover the top two feet of the walls where the ceiling and walls intersect. Other original interior detail includes heavy wood moldings over windows and doors, and oval half-round moldings set in series around doors, windows, and as a wide frieze under the balcony. A brass and iron chandelier, originally fired by kerosene, is now electrified. The pews were removed and a stage erected in the east end of the hall c.1919. The finished basement displays little historic fabric except for two solid twelve-inch wood columns which support the joists of the main floor above. Because it is a more heatable and manageable space than the upstairs hall, the basement is now the most frequently used part of the building. Over the course of this century, many improvements have been made to it, including the addition of a kitchen and bathroom.

The Community House retains its original appearance to a substantial degree, with the removal of the spire being the only major exterior change. Minor alterations have been the addition of a low-shingle-sided shed to the south side of the basement in 1922, and the replacement, in 1953, of the original stone foundation with one of poured concrete. During the latter change, two low, shed-roofed abutments were added on either side of the tower to extend the foundation in front.

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 checked="" 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 1871

Builder/Architect N.R. Bingham

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Fletcher Community House is a substantially unaltered example of the New England meetinghouse as it developed in mid-nineteenth century Vermont. Beyond its historic architectural significance as an important vernacular building type, its size and axial position at the head of Main Street visually dominate the small hamlet of Fletcher Center, and give the village a much-needed sense of scale and cohesion. As one of the few public buildings in this rural town, it has long played an important role in the community's religious and social life.

The Community House typifies Vermont's vernacular church architecture. Its distinctive form of gabled roof, strict bilateral symmetry, and three-by-three bay rectangular plan with projecting belltower and entrance centered in front, can be found, with minor variations, on hundreds of churches throughout the state. Executed in either brick or wood, and in styles which changed over the years with popular tastes (mostly Federal, Greek, Gothic, and Italianate), this basic form was strictly adhered to by local builders for more than a century after the Revolution. In this example, the style is a vernacular Italianate, characterized by round-arched panels over the entrance, decorative corner-boards, and a steeply-pitched roof with wide projecting eaves. Other stylistic features are unusual asymmetrically-patterned window muntins, corbelled chimney caps, and a ribbed pressed metal ceiling inside. Originally, a tall spire surmounted the belfry.

The Community House was erected in 1871 by master builder N.R. Bingham, at a cost of \$4200. The year before, Bingham had built the Binghamville church a mile to the south, which shows a similar plan and identical entrance. The Community House in Fletcher Center replaced the village's first church, a brick structure which had stood across the road since 1830. Both were built and occupied as "Union" churches by Fletcher's small congregations of Baptists, Methodists, Congregationalists, and Universalists. This practice of inter-denominationalism, a foreshadowing of modern Protestant ecumenicism, first gained popularity in northwestern Vermont in the late 1820's, when an intense religious ferment engendered many radical new sects and creeds, and so fragmented established churches that co-operation between congregations was often the only practical way to build a meetinghouse.

The building was last used as a church by the Universalists in 1899; the last surviving records of the Union Church trustees are dated 1908. Shortly thereafter, the town selectmen appointed a secular board of trustees to oversee the building's use as a community meeting hall. The pews were removed, the roof and floors replaced, and in 1919, a stage was added. Since then, it has been home for the local Grange, public meetings, holiday suppers, "coming out" parties, and other social functions.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Ballway, Eleanor Wheeler, ed., A History of Fletcher, Vermont (Fletcher, 1976).

Hemenway, Abby Maria, ed., Vermont Historical Gazetteer, Vol. II (Burlington, Vt., 1871).

10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property plus or minus one tenth acre

Quadrangle name Mt. Mansfield

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UMT References

A

1	18	6	6	5	4	9	5	4	9	4	9	5	7	5
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

The exact property boundary of the Community House is not known. The only recorded deed (Vol. 2, p.32, dated December 8, 1832) dates from the construction of the original brick church; it describes a one acre lot lying to the north of the highway, which then ran

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

state code county code

N/A state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title John C. Page

organization Private Consultant

date December, 1981

street & number Box 333

telephone 802-644-5075

city or town Waterville

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

William B. Trimmer

title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

date 4-5-82

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

William H. Brannan

date 5.20.82

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

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

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Continuation sheet

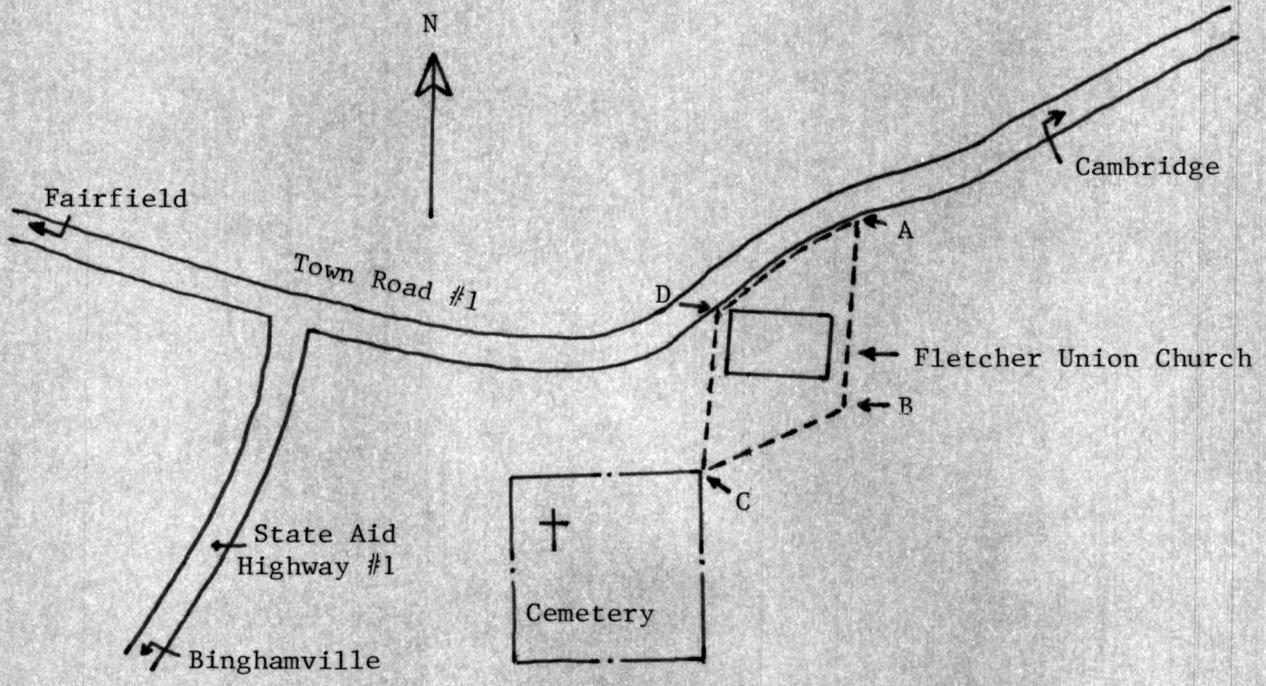
Item number 10

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between the present meetinghouse and the cemetery. Since that time, the road has been re-routed, the church rebuilt, and the one acre lot subdivided several times, so that the only way to determine the property's exact legal boundary would be a measured survey based on descriptions of adjacent properties. The property being nominated (as described in Section 10 and depicted on the sketch map) represents a parcel which both the Community House trustees and adjacent property owners acknowledge to lie within the actual property line.

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the Fletcher Union Church begins at Point A, the intersection of the southerly edge of right-of-way of Town Road #1 and an extension of a line running parallel to and five feet east of the rear (east) wall of the Church. The boundary thence proceeds in a southerly direction along said extension and parallel line to Point B, a point located ten feet southeast of the southeast corner of said building. The boundary thence proceeds in a southwesterly direction to Point C, the point of intersection of the northeast corner of the cemetery and an extension of a line which runs parallel to and ten feet west of the front (west) wall of the Church. From Point C, the boundary thence proceeds in a northerly direction along said extension and parallel line until it meets Point D, the southerly edge of right-of-way of Town Highway #1. The boundary thence proceeds in a northeasterly direction along said southerly edge of right-of-way to Point A, the point of beginning.



MAP OF
FLETCHER UNION CHURCH
FLETCHER, VERMONT

--- Boundary
Not drawn to scale