

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED APR 16 1982  
DATE ENTERED MAY 13 1982

**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** *Guilford Center Meetinghouse*  
HISTORIC  
Guilford Center Universalist Church  
AND/OR COMMON  
Guilford Center Meeting House (Preferred)

**2 LOCATION**  
STREET & NUMBER Guilford Center Road  
CITY, TOWN N/A NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
STATE Guilford N/A VICINITY OF Vermont  
CODE 50 COUNTY Windham CODE 025

**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	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	N/A <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 type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Community hall

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**  
NAME Guilford Historical Society  
STREET & NUMBER  
CITY, TOWN N/A STATE  
Guilford N/A VICINITY OF Vermont

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**  
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Office of the Town Clerk  
STREET & NUMBER  
CITY, TOWN N/A STATE  
Guilford Vermont

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**  
TITLE Vermont Historic Sites and Structures Survey  
DATE 1971  FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL  
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Vermont Division for Historic Preservation  
CITY, TOWN Montpelier STATE Vermont 05602

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The architectural landmark of an early nineteenth century rural hamlet, the former Guilford Center Universalist Church was constructed in 1837. Its design combines Greek Revival and Gothic Revival forms and ornamental details, reflecting the contemporary transition in architectural fashion. The rectangular, clapboarded, gable-roofed building possesses a crenelated engaged bell tower with pointed-arch openings that rises above a classically detailed entrance pavilion. Recently acquired by the Guilford Historical Society, the building retains essentially its original appearance.

The former Guilford Center Universalist Church stands at the center of its namesake hamlet, a cluster of about ten buildings along the north-south alignment of the Guilford Center Road. Sited perpendicular to the west side of the road, the church faces eastward toward a wooded hillside, its bell tower rising above the street to become the dominant architectural feature of the hamlet. To the rear (west) of the church, open meadows occupy the narrow valley bottom along Broad Brook.

Some materials salvaged from an earlier Congregational church built on the hill to the east were used in the construction of the Guilford Center church in 1837. Following the Greek Revival temple form, the unknown builders erected a simple rectangular, one-story, timber-framed and clapboarded main block with a slate-shingled gable roof. Dominated by a two-stage square bell tower, the main (east) facade extends four bays in width while the longer side (north and south) elevations are three bays deep.

The church presents to the street a moderately detailed gable front that displays mostly Greek Revival ornament. A two-bay pedimented entrance pavilion projects slightly forward from the wall with twin doorways framed by fluted pilasters carrying full entablatures. Immediately above each doorway, a six-over-six sash window shows the ornamental variation of smooth pilasters. The pavilion culminates in a full pediment, whose raking cornice and return have mutule blocks in the manner of the main cornice of the church. Completing the symmetrical arrangement of the facade, a twenty-over-twenty sash window crowned by a pointed-arch louvered screen (identical to the openings on the side elevations) flanks each side of the entrance pavilion.

Atop the entrance pavilion rises the two-stage bell tower, projecting slightly forward of the gable front and distinguished by its Gothic Revival details. The main stage of the tower contains the bell chamber, marked by a large pointed-arch louvered opening on each face (in the photographs accompanying the nomination, the louvers have been removed for repair); the projecting cornice of the main stage

(See Continuation sheet 1)

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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is surmounted by a crenelated parapet. The diminished upper stage of the tower displays a slender pointed-arch louvered opening on each face; the original crenelation atop its cornice has been removed.

Nearly devoid of ornament in the Puritan tradition, the interior of the church is entered through a shallow (but full-width) east vestibule beneath a choir loft. Two doorways lead from the vestibule to the side aisles of the sanctuary, whose floor space is almost completely occupied by paneled semi-box pews with scrolled armrests on the aisle benchends. The pews at the west corners are oriented perpendicular to the main rows, facing a central altar dais furnished with a matched set of Gothic-style carved wood chairs. Above the slightly peaked window surrounds, the shallow coved ceiling extends the full length of the interior. Nineteenth century wall sconces and an elaborate central chandelier (converted from kerosene to electricity) provide illumination.

In 1977, the Guilford Historical Society accepted responsibility for the maintenance of the church. Subsequently the Society has undertaken necessary repairs to various parts of the building, including the reconstruction of the brick foundation. A small temporary stage is installed on the altar dais to accommodate musical performances and other community events.

# 6 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      1837

BUILDER/ARCHITECT      Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The former Guilford Center Universalist Church represents the stylistic transition from the dominant Greek Revival to the emerging Gothic Revival that occurred in Vermont religious architecture during the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Constructed in 1837, the building's basic form is a restrained expression of classical origin while some of its ornamental features derive from the Gothic style. The Guilford Center church holds particular importance for retaining essentially its original appearance; the lack of alteration reflects the twentieth century decline both of its religious usage and the agricultural community from which it sprang.

Adjoining the Massachusetts border along the major travel route of the Connecticut River valley, Guilford township received the most intensive settlement in Vermont during the late eighteenth century. The first national census in 1791 counted a population of 2432 in Guilford, the largest among the organized towns in Vermont (and, according to Hemenway, about one fifteen-hundredth of the total for the United States!). By the time of the 1800 census, however, Guilford's population fell to 2256, having entered a decline that persisted until the middle of the twentieth century.

The Guilford Center church belongs to the second generation of religious buildings in the township. During the 1770's, a Congregational meetinghouse was constructed on the hill to the east of Guilford Center. In 1819, the Congregationalists merged with the new Episcopal parish (Christ Church) at Guilford village and, a decade later, Universalists took over the meetinghouse. Its location, however, proved inconvenient to the residents of the Center village in the Broad Brook valley.

In January 1837, the proprietors of the meetinghouse on the hill agreed to sell the building in favor of the valley location. The next month brought the formation of the Guilford Center Meetinghouse Society (apparently Universalist), and in May of the same year the land was donated for the site of the new building. Its construction occurred during the succeeding months, using in part materials salvaged from the dismantled old meetinghouse (for which \$205 was paid). The

(See Continuation sheet 2)

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Hemenway, Abby Maria. Vermont Historical Gazetteer (Vol. 5). Brandon, Vt., 1891.

Official History of Guilford, Vermont 1678-1961. Guilford, Vt.: Town of Guilford and Broad Brook Grange No. 151, 1961.

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED UTM NOT VERIFIED

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.06 acre

QUADRANGLE NAME Brattleboro, Vt.-N.H.

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:62500

UTM REFERENCES

A	18	6914	21010	47	40	21215	B				
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING					ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	
C							D				
E							F				
G							H				

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The former Guilford Center Universalist Church occupies a small rectangular lot with dimensions of 45 feet by 55 feet, described in Book 12, Page 35 (1837) of the Guilford land records.

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

Hugh H. Henry

ORGANIZATION

Historic Preservation Consultant

DATE

December 4, 1981

STREET & NUMBER

Green Mountain Turnpike

TELEPHONE

802-875-3379

CITY OR TOWN

Chester

STATE

Vermont 05143

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL     

STATE   X  

LOCAL     

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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*William P. Penney*

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 P. Penney*  
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 5/13/82

ATTEST:

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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completed church cost \$2409, including the price of \$320 for the bell.

The design of the church reflects the contemporary transition in architectural fashion. The unknown builders created a traditional Greek Revival temple form but in its decoration they acknowledged the emerging Gothic Revival by incorporating pointed-arch and crenelated elements together with typical classical details. The appearance at Guilford of Gothic Revival stylistic features followed by only half a decade the completion in 1831 of Vermont's first substantial example of that style, St. James Church, in Arlington on the western side of the state.

The Universalist parish seems not to have flourished in its new church. Services were held during intervals until actually ceasing about 1860. A revival occurred in 1871 when the parish was re-organized. The Universalists continued to occupy the church for a century although both its membership and frequency of services declined during the later decades. Finally in 1977, the few remaining members transferred responsibility for the building to the Guilford Historical Society.

The declining usage and resources of the Universalist parish undoubtedly spared the Guilford Center church from alteration during the present century. The building lacks only the crenelated parapet atop the bell tower - probably removed owing to deterioration but readily replaceable - from its original appearance. The Guilford Historical Society has undertaken a thorough rehabilitation of the building and concurrently has opened it to community activities, especially concerts by distinguished musicians residing in the area. The Society has revived the name of 'Guilford Center Meeting House' to mark the change of usage.