

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received AUG 9 1983

date entered

SEP 22 1983

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

1. Name

historic STRAFFORD UNION ACADEMY

and/or common AUSTIN HALL

2. Location

street & number ~~Junction of Routes~~ ^{NH} 202A & 126 n/a not for publication

city, town Strafford n/a vicinity of

state N.H. code 33 county Strafford code 017

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant

4. Owner of Property

name Trustees of Austin-Cate Academy, Donald Witham, Chairman

street & number 76 Wakefield Street

city, town Rochester n/a vicinity of state New Hampshire 03867

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Strafford County Courthouse/Registry of Deeds

street & number County Farm Road

city, town Dover state New Hampshire 03820

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	n/a moved date <u>n/a</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Strafford Union Academy building is a rectangular structure of wood frame construction standing on a foundation of split granite blocks. Measuring 36 feet wide by 44 feet deep, the building has two stories, a low-pitched gable roof, and a two-stage belfry. Its frame is hewn from white oak and its walls are clapboarded.

One of the gable ends of the building, facing southwest toward New Hampshire Route 202A/126, is treated as the facade. It is three bays in width, with a central doorway flanked by two windows on the first floor and three windows on the second. The doorway detailing is characteristic of the vernacular Greek Revival style, consisting of flat casings with corner blocks and a central tablet. The door has six flat panels surrounded by applied mouldings of a Grecian ovolo profile. The windows of the facade all have flat casings with corner blocks. Those on the second floor have 12/8 sashes with narrow muntins characteristic of the Greek Revival period. Those on the first floor have 6/6 sashes with larger panes of glass than those above; the dimensions of the first floor window openings suggest that this story originally had 12/12 sashes with glass sizes and muntin profiles comparable to those of the second story.

The gable of the low-pitched roof is treated as a closed pediment. Its lower cornice consists of an undecorated corona supported by a Grecian ovolo bed moulding, while its raking cornices have ogee crown mouldings that extend along the side cornices of the building. The tympanum of this pediment is clapboarded and has a semicircular louvered fan at its center.

Rising from the front of the ridge of the structure is a belfry composed of a square, octagonal belfry. The four corner facets of the belfry are ornamented by paired antae which support a full entablature that encircles the top of this stage of the tower. The four remaining sides of the belfry, corresponding to the four walls of the lower stage, are pierced by louvered openings with pointed arches. Above the cornice of the belfry rises a low octagonal drum from which rises a hemispherical dome surmounted by a tall banneret weathervane.

The side walls of the building have four windows on each floor. The window openings are framed by flat casings. As on the facade, second floor sashes are 12/8; first floor sashes are 6/6. The rear wall of the building has three second-floor windows with 12/8 lights; that on the northwest corner is a modern replacement. The first floor originally had three similar windows, but the central window has been replaced by a door and the two flanking windows closed up and clapboarded. A brick chimney rises between the back door and the northwest corner of the structure.

The interior of the building consists of a large room on each floor, with a vestibule inside the doorway. The stairway to the second floor is on the west (left) side of the vestibule and leads to a similar antechamber on the second floor. The walls of the vestibules were covered by pine sheathing a few years ago.

The two large rooms of the academy building were originally filled with high boxed-in individual desks which could accommodate eighty-five students and two teachers. The ceilings and walls were plastered, white-washed, and papered. Each room was heated by a wood stove, and a shallow well west of the building supplied water.

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Continuation sheet #1 - DESCRIPTION

Item number 7

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Today there is a small kitchen on the first floor, a wood stove, and electric lighting fixtures suspended from the ceiling. The room on the second floor has a second wood stove and a dais at the northern end; otherwise, the room is unfurnished. Some of the walls in the rooms, and both ceilings, have been resurfaced with composition board.

Behind (to the north of) the building is a wooden two-room privy measuring about 7 by 14 feet; this is an early structure, perhaps dating from the time of construction of the main building.

Austin Hall stands essentially in original condition except for changes to the window sashes and plaster noted above. Areas of the tower have been restored over the years, and the original weathervane (preserved nearby) has been replaced by a reproduction.

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 checked="" 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 1833 **Builder/Architect** unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Strafford Union Academy building is one of the best-preserved academic structures of the early nineteenth century remaining in New Hampshire. Built as a seminary for the Free Will Baptist Church, a sect which was founded in the neighboring town of New Durham, New Hampshire, the structure was also a product of the New England academy-building movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For decades it served as a private secondary school for the general population of its region in addition to fulfilling the purposes of the Free Will Baptist church.

Architecture: The Strafford Union Academy building is one of the least-changed early nineteenth century academy structures in New Hampshire. Strafford Union Academy was the fifty-third academy chartered by the New Hampshire legislature; only about ten buildings survive among the academies which were chartered earlier, and most of these have undergone considerable alteration.

Strafford Union Academy is an excellent example of a rural Greek Revival academic building. Constructed in 1833, the building retains elements of the Federal style in the louvered fan in the tympanum of its pediment and in the pointed arched and Tuscan detailing of its belfry. Otherwise, the building is fully Grecian in style, with detailing that probably derives in part from the later editions of Asher Benjamin's American Builder's Companion or from his The Practical House Carpenter (1830). The detailing of the building and the design of its belfry are nearly identical to comparable features on the Crown Point Baptist Church (1835), about three miles to the northeast. Both are undoubtedly the work of a local designer and craftsman.

Both the Academy and the Crown Point Church reveal the impact of the Greek Revival on rural New Hampshire architecture during the 1830s, and both also show lingering influence of the long-familiar Federal style. The Academy building helped to establish a preference for simple Greek Revival design among a group of related local buildings which, like the Academy, were associated with the Free Will Baptists. Because the Free Will Baptists were the fastest-growing religious group in eastern New Hampshire in the early nineteenth century, their buildings form a major part of the architectural heritage of the region. Among the later local structures which reflect the lasting influence of the Strafford Union Academy are the Free Will Baptist meeting houses at Bow Lake Village, Strafford (1843); South Barrington (1847); East Alton (1820; remodelled 1848); Center Strafford (1858); and New Durham (1819; remodelled 1869).

Education: Strafford Union Academy was incorporated in 1833 as one of fifty-three academies that the New Hampshire legislature had chartered by that year. The academy was part of an important movement toward improved secondary education in early nineteenth-century New England. Beginning in the 1790s and ending about 1850 with the increasing establishment of public high schools in the larger communities, private academies played a crucial role in improving educational opportunities for young people throughout the northeastern United States.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet #3.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Alton, NH

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UTM References

A

1	9	3	2	7	7	0	0	4	7	9	2	6	2	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 nominated property occupies town lot #011-79 and is approximately 66' X 91' in size. According to original deeds, this is the lot that has always been associated with the building.

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

state	n/a	code	county	code

state	n/a	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Frederic R. Shiere

organization Strafford Historical Commission

date 3/1/83

street & number Province Road, PO. Box #62

telephone 664-9003

city or town Strafford

state New Hampshire 03884

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 

Commissioner, Dept. of Resources & Economic Development

title NH State Historic Preservation Officer

date 3/1/83

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



date 9/22/83

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet #2 - SIGNIFICANCE

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Some academies, like the one at Strafford, were founded in conjunction with a religious denomination. At Strafford, the religious affiliation seems to have lasted until about 1881, and during this period the Academy was reincorporated under the name "Strafford Seminary" (1849) and then, in 1866, renamed "Austin Academy" to commemorate a bequest.

Throughout this period, the Academy served the educational needs of a wide area, providing a general academic program that brought students from many surrounding towns. After 1881, the Academy was now longer listed as affiliated with the Free Will Baptist Church, and thereafter the institution continued to function as a private school, continuing to utilize its original building until the latter was supplanted for most uses by a new structure completed in 1902.

Religion: Strafford Union Academy played a crucial role in the growth of the Free Will Baptists, a religion which was founded in 1780 in New Durham, a town about nine miles north of the Academy's location. Denying the predestinarianism that had characterized the Calvinist Baptists of New England and elsewhere, the Free Will Baptists held that mankind possessed the means of spiritual regeneration through their innate powers. This belief, in accord with the "experiential" religious thought that swept New England in the late 1700s and early 1800s, brought thousands of members to the new church. The church held its organization meeting in New Durham in 1780. Three years later, members held their first "quarterly meeting," convening an association of congregations. In 1804, the State of New Hampshire recognized the Free Will Baptist Church as a distinct denominations. In 1827, with an estimated 304 churches and 18,000 members, the General Conference of Free Will Baptists was formed.

From the first, Strafford Union Academy was intended as an educational venture of the Free Will Baptist Church, although its curriculum does not appear to have been disproportionately religious in nature. The academy was incorporated by a group of private individuals, and was further augmented by an additional group of proprietors when Strafford Union Academy and Strafford Academy (a new corporation) were merged by law in 1836. Despite the private nature of its proprietorship, however, the institution was a creation of the New Durham Quarterly Meeting of the Free Will Baptist Church which could not, by law, act in a corporate capacity to secure a charter for the academy.

Shortly after the construction of the Academy building, the trustees constructed a three story "boarding house" or dormitory on an adjacent site. From this period the school had the facilities to house students from distant points. The school thus served as one of several seminaries sponsored by the Free Will Baptist Church, while at the same time offering general education to others who did not intend to enter the ministry. The school appears to have retained an affiliation with the Free Will Baptist Church until about 1881, serving as the educational institution most closely associated with the "mother church" of the Free Will Baptists in nearby New Durham.

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL

Continuation sheet #3 - REFERENCES

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Continuation sheet #4 - SKETCH MAP

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STRAFFORD UNION ACADEMY (AUSTIN HALL), Strafford, N.H.
Scale 1" = 20'

