

**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

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

1. Name

historic CENTRE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

and/or common CENTRE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

2. Location

street & number Province Road. n/a not for publication

city, town Gilmanton n/a vicinity of

state N.H. 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Centre Congregational Church, Inc.

street & number Province Road

city, town Gilmanton n/a vicinity of state New Hampshire 03237

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number 64 Court Street

city, town Laconia state New Hampshire 03237

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input 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/removed date n/a
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Centre Congregational Church is a late Federal style wooden church which stands on its own lot near the center of Gilmanon Corner village. The building is set back from and parallel to Province Road, with its main front facing south towards the lawn of the Gilmanon Academy. The church is composed of three sections--the gable roofed, one-story rectangular main block which contains the auditorium of the church; the gable roofed, two-story rectangular entry pavilion centered on the axis of the main block, but narrower and shorter than the larger section; and, directly above the pavilion, a two stage square belfry tower. The pavilion and the main block share a cut granite block foundation, and the same box cornice with mouldings and a frieze, as well as the same style of windows. The large semicircular arched windows contain twenty over twenty sash beneath an eleven pane fanlight, and are surrounded by a moulded trim with a "keystone" and "imposts".

The pedimented entry pavilion is clapboarded on the blank sides, but the main (south) facade, including the tympanum of the pediment, is sheathed with flush boarding. (All three facades do share the same cornerboards and sillboards.) Three wide granite steps stretch the full length of the south facade. In the center are large double doors, each with six moulded panels. They are framed by pairs of columns supporting an entablature with a projecting cornice. The freestanding columns, which do not correspond to any recognized classical order, do have a very pronounced entasis. Directly above the entry is a rectangular recessed panel with a moulded surround, containing a sawn swag shaped ornament. (The date "1826" in metal letters has been placed in the center of the "swag".) On each side of the entry is a large arched window. (Modern additions to the pavilion include two "colonial style" electric lamps beside the doors, a pair of wrought iron railings on the steps flanking the entry, and, to the east of the pavilion in the angle between it and the main block, a tall exterior brick chimney.)

The first stage of the tower is clapboarded with cornerboards, and is topped by the same box cornice with frieze as is used below. The walls of the first stage are unbroken save for a small nine pane window with plain trim on the rear (north) side. The second stage, the belfry itself, is sheathed with flush boarding. On each face is a semicircular arched louver, with wide slats and the same moulded surround with "imposts" and "keystone" as is used on the arched windows. Pilasters mark the corners. And, the same box cornice is used again to top the second stage, although here it projects above the corner pilasters. A metal sheathed square convex roof covers the tower.

The main block is clapboarded with cornerboards and sillboards. The box cornice is used for the lateral eaves and continued horizontally across the gables, connecting on the south facade with the cornice of the pavilion, but the rakes of the gables can only boast close verges. The south walls of the main block behind the pavilion are blank and unbroken. The long east and west sides are virtually identical, each with four evenly spaced large arched windows. (On the east side, there is also a low wooden bulkhead door to the basement.) The rear (north) facade has two large arched windows and, in the gable, a semielliptical louver (for attic ventilation) with a plain sill, but, otherwise a moulded surround with a "keystone". (A tall exterior brick chimney on the rear facade is probably a later addition.)

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Continuation sheet #1 - DESCRIPTION

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A vestibule, which occupies the first story of the pavilion, is a simple room with plaster walls and ceiling, plain baseboards, and wide board floors. It is lit by the lower sections of the two south windows, which have simple trim. The main feature of the vestibule is a wooden stairway to the second story on the north wall. Its sides of beaded boarding are topped by a simple moulded rail, which begins at a plain turned newelpost. A four-paneled door beneath the stairs opens onto the steps down to the dirt floored basement. (Part of the crawlspace beneath the church was excavated to provide room for a furnace.) On each side of the stairway is a large six paneled door, leading into the church auditorium. The second story of the pavilion, reached by the paneled door at the top of the stairway, is another plainroom with plaster walls and ceiling, whose plain trim is here ornamented by "keystones". Another paneled door opens from the second story onto a stairway up to the unfinished attic over the auditorium and through the unfinished first stage of the tower to the open belfry.

The large auditorium, which occupies the whole of the main block, has plaster walls and a plaster ceiling. (Its wooden floor is now mostly covered by carpeting.) The auditorium is well lit by large arched windows, two in the north wall, four each in the east and west walls. Their plain trim is broken only by simple "imposts" and "keystones". (The room is now lit at night by modern hanging electric lights, but kerosene sconces on the walls and a kerosene chandelier in the center of the room are still preserved.) The raised pulpit is found in the center of the north wall, between the arched windows. The tall pulpit has a paneled front divided into three sections by projecting paneled posts, all topped by a projecting moulded cornice. In 1964, a small alter supported by paneled posts was built on the front of the pulpit. On each side of the pulpit front are narrow stairs to the pulpit platform, which is enclosed on the sides by simple railings, ending in square capped posts. On the wall behind the pulpit is hung a heavy curtain with its own moulded cornice. Most of the auditorium is filled with four rows of enclosed pews--a row of square box pews on both the east and west walls, separated by aisles from the two rows of slip pews in the center of the church. The pews all have paneled sides with paneled doors. The walls and seatbacks of the pews are topped with simple moulded rails. The stool and apron of the window sills are continued as a band around the church, and the walls of the square box pews are jointed into the "apron" board. (A few of the pews have been removed--the pews flanking the pulpit, in part to make room for the modern organ, and some pews in the rear of the room, where two storage cabinets have been built and the older organ stands.)

The grounds of the church, slightly over an acre in extent, are mostly grassed, although the easternmost end of the lot which includes a small brook and part of a small pond, has been allowed to revert to forest. Shrubs surround the church foundation. A row of trees marks the northern property line. A paved walkway leads south from the entry to the paved driveway shared by the Academy and the Church, and a wooden church sign stands at the entrance to that driveway.

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 1826–1827 **Builder/Architect** unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Centre Congregational Church of Gilmanton is significant for its architecture, as it is a well preserved and well designed example of a late Federal style church, the best of its kind in the region.

The plan and the elements of the Centre Congregational Church are not unusual for a late Federal church in New England. Indeed, the form of the church was a familiar one in the first three decades of the 19th century--a rectangular main block with a pedimented entrance pavilion centered on its gable facade, and a square belfry tower above. Usually, the pavilions were shallower than that of the Gilmanton church and the tower was set back at least partially onto the roof of the main block. But, there are a number of other churches with the same composition as that found in Gilmanton. Similarly, the elements of the building, such as the arched windows, flush boarding, the two stage belfry and its square convex roof, are typical of the period. Although the pairs of columns flanking the entry, and the recessed panel with carved swag above it are not as common, they were certainly not unique. The designer used the familiar forms and elements of the Federal style, but he used them with skill and confidence. The fine proportions and the judicious use of ornament make the church a distinguished building well worthy of recognition.

The church is strikingly well preserved. It may have been spared from modernization in the Victorian era by the decline in Gilmanton's population and the resulting economic limitations of the church's congregation. Whatever the cause, the church has survived virtually intact, and is now well maintained by a small but active congregation that appreciates its value. Save for the two chimnies, a pair of lamps and the railings flanking the entry, the exterior appears today as it did when completed in 1826. The interior has seen a few more changes, such as the removal of some pews and the partial remodeling of the pulpit. However, it still retains most of its original features, including the enclosed pews that have disappeared from so many early churches.

The Centre Congregational Church is easily the finest surviving Federal style church in Belknap County and the Lakes Region. And, if one were to choose the best churches of its period in the State of New Hampshire, the Centre Congregational Church would certainly rank among them.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Unfortunately, we know little about the circumstances of its design and construction. On February 26, 1826, twenty-five members of Gilmanton's First Congregational Church were dismissed to form a new church in Gilmanton Corner village. Two days later, a lot for the new church was purchased just north of the Gilmanton Academy in the center of the village. The early records of the Centre Congregational Church, while documenting the organization of the Church in some detail, say nothing about the construction of the building. The only record that appears to have survived is the brief statement by Rev. Daniel Lancaster, the second pastor of the Church, in his HISTORY OF GILMANTON. "... the frame ... was erected June 22, 1826. The Meeting House was finished outside the same season, and the next summer completed within--the whole expense was \$3,500. It was dedicated to the service of Almighty God Sept. 20, 1827."³ The names of the designer and the builders are now lost. But, these anonymous men do deserve our praise for their fine work.

-continued

9. Major Bibliographical References

Griffin, Harold and Doris, THE CENTRE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH 182601976 (Laconia, N.H., 1976);
 Lancaster, Daniel, THE HISTORY OF GILMANTON (Gilmanton, 1845);
 Sinnott, Edmund W. MEETINGHOUSE AND CHURCH IN EARLY NEW ENGLAND (New York, 1963);
 Tolles, Bryant F., Jr. NEW HAMPSHIRE ARCHITECTURE (Hanover, 1979).

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1.038

Quadrangle name Gilmanton, NH

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UTM References

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3	0	4	5	9	0
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4	8	1	0	6	7	5
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 Zone Easting Northing

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 Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification

(See Continuation Sheet #3).

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 David L. Ruell

organization Lakes Region Planning Commission date February 27, 1983

street & number Main Street telephone 279-8171

city or town Meredith state New Hampshire 03253

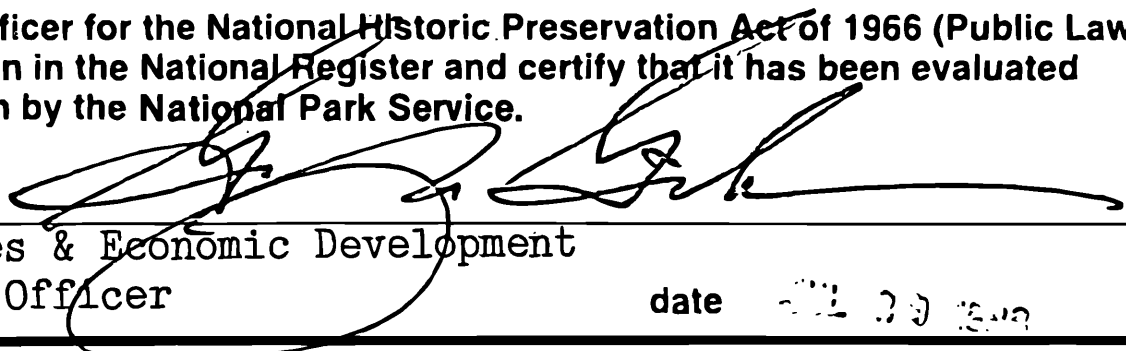
12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



Commissioner, Dept. of Resources & Economic Development

title NH State Historic Preservation Officer

date Feb 29 1983

For NPS use only

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

for Delores Byers
 Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
 National Register

date

9/8/83

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet #2 - SIGNIFICANCE

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FOOTNOTES:

¹ Sometime after the church was built, a choir loft was added at the south end of the auditorium, but it was removed in the 1950's.

² Bryant Tolles, Jr. did make such a choice for his comprehensive guide NEW HAMPSHIRE ARCHITECTURE (Hanover, 1979), and he did decide to include the Gilmanton church (see pp. 247-8).

³ Daniel Lancaster, THE HISTORY OF GILMANTON (Gilmanton, 1845) p. 196.

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Continuation sheet #3 - GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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Verbal boundary description and justification:

The boundary of the nominated property is indicated by the heavy black line on the accompanying map. This is a 4-sided, almost rectangular lot, with eastern and western boundaries of 139 feet, a northern boundary of 334 feet and a southern boundary of 319 feet. The nominated property includes the Centre Congregational Church and the lot it has occupied since 1826. (Gilmanton Tax Map #26, Parcel #3423.)

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Continuation sheet #4 - SKETCH MAP

Item number --

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Centre Congregational Church Gilmanton, N.H.

