

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

For HCRS use only

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

received **OCT 16 1979**

date entered

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

**1. Name**

historic THE RICHMOND TOWN HALL

and/or common THE RICHMOND TOWN HALL

**2. Location**

street & number Route 32 <sup>NH 32</sup> \_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Richmond \_\_\_ vicinity of congressional district Second

state New Hampshire code 33 county Cheshire code 005

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Town of Richmond

street & number Town Hall, Route 32

city, town Richmond \_\_\_ vicinity of state New Hampshire

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Cheshire County Registry of Deeds  
Cheshire County Courthouse

street & number 12 Court Street

city, town Keene state New Hampshire 03431

**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

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## 7. Description

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**Condition** excellent good fair deteriorated ruins unexposed**Check one** unaltered altered**Check one** original site moved date \_\_\_\_\_

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**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

Built in 1780, the Richmond Town Hall is typical of the simple meeting houses of small New England towns in the mid to late eighteenth century. It is a plain white clapboarded structure 30 feet wide and 40 feet deep, without a steeple and originally with galleries on three sides of the auditorium. There are two windows on the ground floor in both front (west) and rear (east), and three on each side, all of them double-hung with six over six panes. Two similar windows have been removed from each side of the second story, as has a circular window on the front, just below the roof. The circular window is preserved in the town archives.

The Town Hall is constructed of large hewn oak timbers. Four vertical posts, over two feet square at the top and tapering to about a foot square at the bottom, support the plates, which are uncased. The plates support king-post roof trusses with bottom chords about 30 feet long and a foot by two feet in section. The roof was resingled about 1810 and was covered with slate in 1884.

The building was first used for town meetings in August, 1782. In 1884 the pulpit and square box pews were removed and benches substituted, the side galleries were removed, the front gallery was enclosed to form an office for the selectmen, a plastered ceiling was added, a chimney was built and a stove installed. A privy-woodshed combination was added to the rear (east) of the building, blocking a window near the southeast corner. Other alterations to the interior include the removal of the southern stairway, the construction of a vestibule enclosing the northern stairway, the replacement of the center of the three front windows on the second floor by a three-sash unit, and the installation of a platform 7½ feet by 24 feet to replace the original pulpit at the east end of the auditorium. A sketch of the building, showing the original fenestration, appears in William Bassett, History of the Town of Richmond (Boston: Calkins & Co., 1884), facing p. 184. The original floor plan, showing pew arrangements, is reproduced on p. 224 of the same volume.

The burying ground known as the "Middle of Town Cemetery" first used in 1780, lies to the south and east of the meeting house. A hearse shed was built sometime in the early nineteenth century about 30 feet northeast of the building, and still houses the original horse-drawn hearse. In the early nineteenth century a receiving tomb was constructed in an adjacent hillside facing Route 32; an iron door to the vault, bearing the date 1865, has been preserved in excellent condition in the archives and may never have been used.

## 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1780 **Builder/Architect** Hezekiah Man

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

**Architecture:** The Richmond Town Hall, though altered over the years, is one of the oldest meeting houses in New Hampshire and preserves evidence of framing techniques used by the eighteenth-century settlers of the Connecticut and Ashuelot River valleys in the southwestern part of the state.

**Politics/Government:** Although the Town Hall was privately constructed as a Baptist meeting house in 1780, it has been used for town purposes since 1782. Eventually acquired by the town, the building was fully remodelled for municipal purposes in 1884, and most vestiges of its former religious appointments were removed at that time. The building continues as the Town Hall and selectmen's office.

**Religion:** Built on land conveyed to the Richmond First Baptist Church by Hezekiah Man, this building was the first meeting house of the sect. Formed in 1768, the Richmond First Baptist Church was one of the earliest Baptist organizations in New Hampshire, and after 1771 maintained contact with the Warren Association of Rhode Island, which in its early years attempted to unite all the New England Baptist Churches. Although the Baptists were one of the strongest sects in Richmond and although their elder, Maturin Ballou (1722-1805), was the first settled minister in the town, the church experienced some difficulty with other churches. The Richmond town charter, like most others in New Hampshire, reserved one full proprietor's share for the town's first minister. This share was duly transferred to Ballou, but members of other denominations objected. Ballou was, therefore, compelled to deed his share of land back to the 126 proprietors of the town. The first Baptist Church continued until about 1830, having merged with another local Baptist organization in 1790 and thereby greatly increased its membership. Despite the fact that it shared the meeting house with the town during these decades, the First Baptist Church was never accorded the status of an "established church" in Richmond, and therefore never received town support. In most New Hampshire towns before church and state were separated by the Toleration Act of 1819, the first sect to settle a minister was usually recognized as the "standing order" and received town assistance in maintaining the meeting house and supporting the minister.

Maturin Ballou (1722-1805) and his son Hosea (1771-1852), both affiliated with the Richmond Baptist Church, were important figures in the religious history of New England. Maturin Ballou, Richmond's first settled minister, was born in Rhode Island and, though not educated for the ministry, began to preach at Smithfield (Rhode Island) in 1752, supporting himself by making spinning wheels. After continuing his religious work in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, Ballou settled in Richmond, where other Massachusetts and Rhode Island families had taken land. The Richmond church over which Ballou ministered after 1770 was one of the first Baptist organizations in New Hampshire and was important in the spread of Baptist theology in northern New England.

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

History of the Town of Richmond, William Bassett, Calkins & Co., 1884.  
 New England Dissent 1630-1833 (2 vols.), William G. McLoughlin, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971.

# 10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreeage of nominated property 2.6

Quadrangle name Keene, NH-VT

Quadrangle scale 15'

UMT References

A 

1	8	7	2	3	4	7	15	4	7	3	7	8	7	9	
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

Bounded on north, south, and east by privately-owned land of Robert Gorman.  
 Bounded on west by Route 32. Richmond Tax Map: Lot #10, Range 6.

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

state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Alan S. Harvey, President

organization Richmond Historical Society date August, 1978

street & number Route 119 telephone 239-6547

city or town Richmond state New Hampshire 03470

# 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature [Signature]

Commissioner, Dept. of Resources & Economic Development

title NH State Historic Preservation Officer date 7-6-79

For HCRS use only

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

[Signature] date 12/19/79  
 Keeper of the National Register

Attest: [Signature] date 12/19/78  
 Chief of Registration

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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CONTINUATION SHEET 1 ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

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SIGNIFICANCE (Continued)

Hosea Ballou, Maturin's son, was born and educated in Richmond and joined the Richmond Baptist Church during a religious revival in 1789. Within a few years, however, the younger Ballou was converted to the doctrine of universal salvation. In 1791 he was excommunicated from the Richmond Baptist Church on doctrinal grounds, and thereafter began an eminent career as one of the leading proponents of Universalism in New England.

Ballou became associated with John Murray (1741-1815), the English-born "father of American Universalism," after 1791, and began a period of itinerant preaching as far west as New York. Ballou's "Universalist Confession of Faith" was adopted at Winchester, New Hampshire, in 1803, and in 1804 he published his Notes on The Parables, followed the next year by a Treatise on Atonement and by a Universalist hymn book in 1808. In 1809 Ballou became the minister of the Portsmouth (New Hampshire) Universalist Church, followed by ministries in Salem and Boston. From 1818 until his death, Ballou was a prolific author, lecturer and teacher, and edited several Universalist periodicals.

Several other sons of Maturin Ballou born in Richmond and originally affiliated with the Richmond Baptist Church became noted Universalist preachers, as did a number of Maturin's grandsons.