

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

For NPS use only

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

received FEB 7 1985

date entered FEB 7 1985

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

1. Name

historic Grace Methodist Episcopal Church

and/or common GRACE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

2. Location

street & number 34 Court Street n/a not for publication

city, town Keene, n/a vicinity of

state New Hampshire code 33 county Cheshire code 005

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	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Trustees of the Grace United Methodist Church

street & number 34 Court Street

city, town Keene, n/a vicinity of state New Hampshire 03431

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Cheshire County Registry of Deeds (Vol 206 Page 55
Cheshire County Courthouse Vol 764 Page 352)

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

7. Description

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

date N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Grace United Methodist Church is a large brick structure in the High Victorian Gothic Style. Measuring about 89 by 65 feet, the church is built on a foundation of locally quarried granite. Its walls, laid in a running bond, are broken at frequent intervals by belt courses, buttresses, and brick hood mouldings, and are further articulated by details of cut granite. The building's axis runs east to west, and its broad roof planes have been covered since 1938 by asphalt shingles. The tall spire at the northeast corner of the building retains most of its original slate covering and displays some of the polychromy which once marked the roof coloration more fully.

The eastern elevation of the church is treated as the facade. The broad gable end is broken by a number of openings, by a turreted buttress that marks the division between the nave and the southern aisle, and by a monumental tower on the northeastern corner. On the first story of the facade are three doorways set within pointed arched openings. The north and south doorways are set one step above the grade and retain their original panelled wooden doors. The central opening, which provides the principal entrance to the building, is elevated six steps above the grade and has two modern glass doors set beneath an original rose window. All three door openings are surmounted by moulded brick archivolt which spring from a brick belt course and have granite keystones. At the second floor level, the facade has a trefoil window above the southern door, three lancet windows filled with stained glass above the main entrance, and a pair of arched windows above the tower doorway. The cornice of the facade consists of a wooden moulding supported by brick corbel table. The square brick buttress at the juncture of the aisle and nave roofs terminates in an octagonal wooden turret capped by a faceted spire with a poppyhead at its tip. The square belltower at the northeast corner of the facade has a belfry above the second floor level, with an arched and louvered opening in each face and a corbel table above. This tower is capped by an octagonal spire which rises to a height of 150 ft. and terminates in a turned finial.

The south elevation of the church, now partially obscured by a block of dwellings, has six evenly-spaced windows on both the main and lower stories, with buttresses which reinforce each window pier. The windows of the lower story, glazed with frosted glass, are capped by brick labels which rise from the brick belt course. The floor line between the stories is defined by a second brick belt course, and the windows of the auditorium, filled with stained glass, are capped by brick archivolt which spring from a third belt course. The eaves of the building, thirty feet above the grade, consist of a series of corbelled brick courses capped by a wooden crown moulding.

The northern side elevation of the building is essentially the same as the southern, except that there are only five window bays; the northeast bay is interrupted by the belltower.

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

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet 1

Item number 7

Page 2

Both the northern and southern slopes of the roof are pitched by six gable-roofed lucarnes at the break between the aisle and nave roof planes. These have flushed-boarded fronts and pointed windows with silvered glass.

The rear elevation of the church has two windows on the first floor flanking a brick projection which houses the organ. This projection has a single first and second story window on its sides, two first story windows on the rear, and a bull's eye window at the gable. A single-flue chimney pierces the ridge of the building at the rear wall.

In 1959 a small concrete block addition measuring fifteen by seventeen feet were added at the northwest rear corner of the building, out of the public view, to house a new oil-fired steam boiler.

The interior of the building is divided into two floors. The lower or basement story includes a vestry measuring 41 by 57 feet, a nursery, three classrooms, a church office, and a kitchen. The exterior walls of these basement rooms are plastered and have hard wood door and window casings, hardwood floors, and pressed metal ceilings.

The main floor of the church has a single large auditorium measuring 58 by 64 feet. This room is lighted by five stained glass windows on each side; these are memorial windows installed in 1907 at the time of the other remodellings to the room. The room has three banks of slip pews on its main floor, but has no columns or other supports to separate the aisles from the central nave. At the front of the room is a dias for reading desks and chairs. This has a black walnut communion rail at the front with vasiform balusters. Installed during the remodellings of 1907, this rail and the accompanying furniture are the work of local craftsman Goerge Poole, a member of the church.

At the rear of the dias is a panelled choir area. At the center of the rear (west) wall of this area is a recess framed by a pointed arch supported by engaged Gothic columns with stiff-leaf capitals. Set within this recess is a tracker-action pipe organ built in 1869 by Steer and Turner of Westfield, Massachusetts. Above the organ is a bull's-eye window.

At the east end of the auditorium are two doorways providing access to the room from the foyer of the building. Above these is a balcony which has a panelled face that projects forward into the auditorium on four moulded wooden knees. The balcony opening is spanned by a Tudor arch which springs from a pair of engaged wooden columns. The east wall of the balcony is lighted by the three lancet windows in the front of the gable of the church.

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

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet 2

Item number 7

Page 3

The auditorium ceiling has a series of false rafters which define the bays between the lucarne windows. These rafters appear to bear upon longitudinal beams at the juncture of the nave and aisle roof planes; these intersections are marked by moulded brackets and turned drops from which are suspended electric light fixtures. The roof is actually supported above the auditorium ceiling by two concealed wood-and-iron longitudinal trusses which span the full distance between the front (east) and rear walls of the church and receive the feet of the rafters of the upper slopes of the roof and the heads of the rafters of the lower slopes. Thus, most of the stresses of the church roof are transmitted to the front and rear walls rather than being borne by the side walls; the latter serve primarily as curtain walls.

Original appearance: Grace United Methodist Church has changed little in essential appearance since its completion in 1869. Its exterior wood-work, originally painted a dark color, has been lightened, and the main roof had its original slate covering replaced by asphalt shingles following damage in the New England hurricane of 1938. The auditorium was remodelled in 1907 with new woodwork and furniture on the dias and with stained glass windows; early wall and ceiling stencilling has been covered by light-colored paint in recent years. The balcony has recently been partially enclosed with modern materials to conserve heat, and the heating plant of the building has been moved to the concrete block structure at the northwest rear corner.

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 1869 **Builder/Architect** Shepard S. Woodcock

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Grace United Methodist Church is one of the few large Victorian Gothic churches in western New Hampshire and is an excellent example of the ecclesiastical work of a prolific Boston architect. The building was designed by Shepard S. Woodcock, who was responsible for a great number of religious, public, and academic buildings in New England during the course of a long career. The church remains relatively unaltered, and typifies the many large religious structures built in New England during the post-Civil War era.

Architecture: Grace United Methodist Church was built between the summer of 1868 and the fall of 1869 and was completed at a cost of \$40,000. The expense of the construction was greater than the congregation could properly bear, and the church remained in debt until 1896.¹ The efforts made by the church to erect a building beyond its parishioners' means resulted, however, in the completion of one of the largest and more interesting religious structures in southwestern New Hampshire, and introduced to that region a Boston architect who would later receive other commissions in Keene and elsewhere in southern New Hampshire. These commissions collectively would represent the best examples of the Victorian Gothic style in New Hampshire.

The Grace United Methodist Church was designed by Shepard S. Woodcock, who was born in 1824 in Sidney, Maine; and was apprenticed in the building trade in Massachusetts during the early 1840's. Apparently self-taught as an architect, Woodcock began his career as a contractor and landscape designer, probably deriving much inspiration from the books of A.J. Downing. He established himself in the Boston area as an architect in 1856, and during the next forty years designed and in some cases constructed more than 140 churches, 50 school buildings, and a number of public buildings, hotels, and houses. Probably due to his early experience in construction, Woodcock continued to be inclined toward works which involved applied engineering, and designed a number of manufacturing buildings; included among these were the Pacific Mills and the woolen mills at Lawrence, Massachusetts.² Woodcock's knowledge of engineering undoubtedly led him to the unusual roof design of the Grace United Methodist Church, where the wood-and-iron trusses being introduced into mid-nineteenth century American construction were used to achieve an uninterrupted span of unusual extent.

Woodcock emerged during the 1870s as one of New England's leading exponents of the High Victorian Gothic style. Grace United Methodist Church utilizes the style to a degree, but several of Woodcock's later buildings were among the most ambitious examples of the style in northern New England. Among these was Keene, New Hampshire, High School (1876), a large, four-story building of brick and granite with a polychrome slate roof.³

9. Major Bibliographical References

History of the Town of Keene, NH by S.G. Griffin; 1903, pp.544, 698
History of the N.H. Conf. Methodist Church, by Otis Cole 1921, pp.156-57
History Upper Ashuelot, by History Committee

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property .243 acre

Quadrangle name Keene, NH

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UTM References

A 18 721600 4756900
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification The nominated property is bounded on the south by the Baker Block, on the north by the Hayes property, on the west by the Whippie property, and on the east by Court Street. Boundaries of the nominated property are indicated on the attached sketch map. These boundaries represent the parcel historically occupied

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries by the church.

state N/A code county code

state N/A code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title John C. Perry

organization date August 15, 1984

street & number 26 Court Street telephone (603) 352-3911

city or town Keene, state New Hampshire 03431

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 [Signature] 1/25/85

title New Hampshire State Historic Preservation Officer date

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

[Signature] date 3-7-85
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**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet 3

Item number 8

Page 2

Just as Woodcock's design of the Grace United Methodist Church had played a role in his selection as architect of the high school in the same town, his design of Keene High School led to his receiving a similar commission on the opposite side of the state. In 1883, Woodcock designed the private Sanborn Seminary in Kingston (National Register 1983) which, though smaller, is greatly reminiscent of the Keene school. Woodcock maintained his practice in Boston from 1856 until 1900, becoming one of that city's most prolific and reliable architects, though not one of the best remembered or documented.⁴

Grace United Methodist Church stands as one of the best-documented of the post-Civil War churches of southern New Hampshire. Its general size and form are typical of an era of increased prosperity and religious piety. Its design and engineering are important examples of the work of a leading New England architect. Its relatively unaltered condition makes the church an important representative of its era, of its locale, and of the work of its designer.

NOTES:

¹Otis Cole and Oliver S. Baketel, ed., History of the New Hampshire Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1929), p. 157; Grace United Methodist Church Commemorating the Bicentennial of the United States of America (Keene, N.H.: by the church, 1976).

²Edward A. Samuels and Henry H. Kimball, ed., Somerville, Past and Present (Boston: Samuels and Kimball, 1897), p. 653.

³Keene History Committee, "Upper Ashuelot," A History of Keene, New Hampshire (Keene, N.H.: City of Keene, 1968), pp. 127, 451.

⁴Boston City Directories, 1856-1900.

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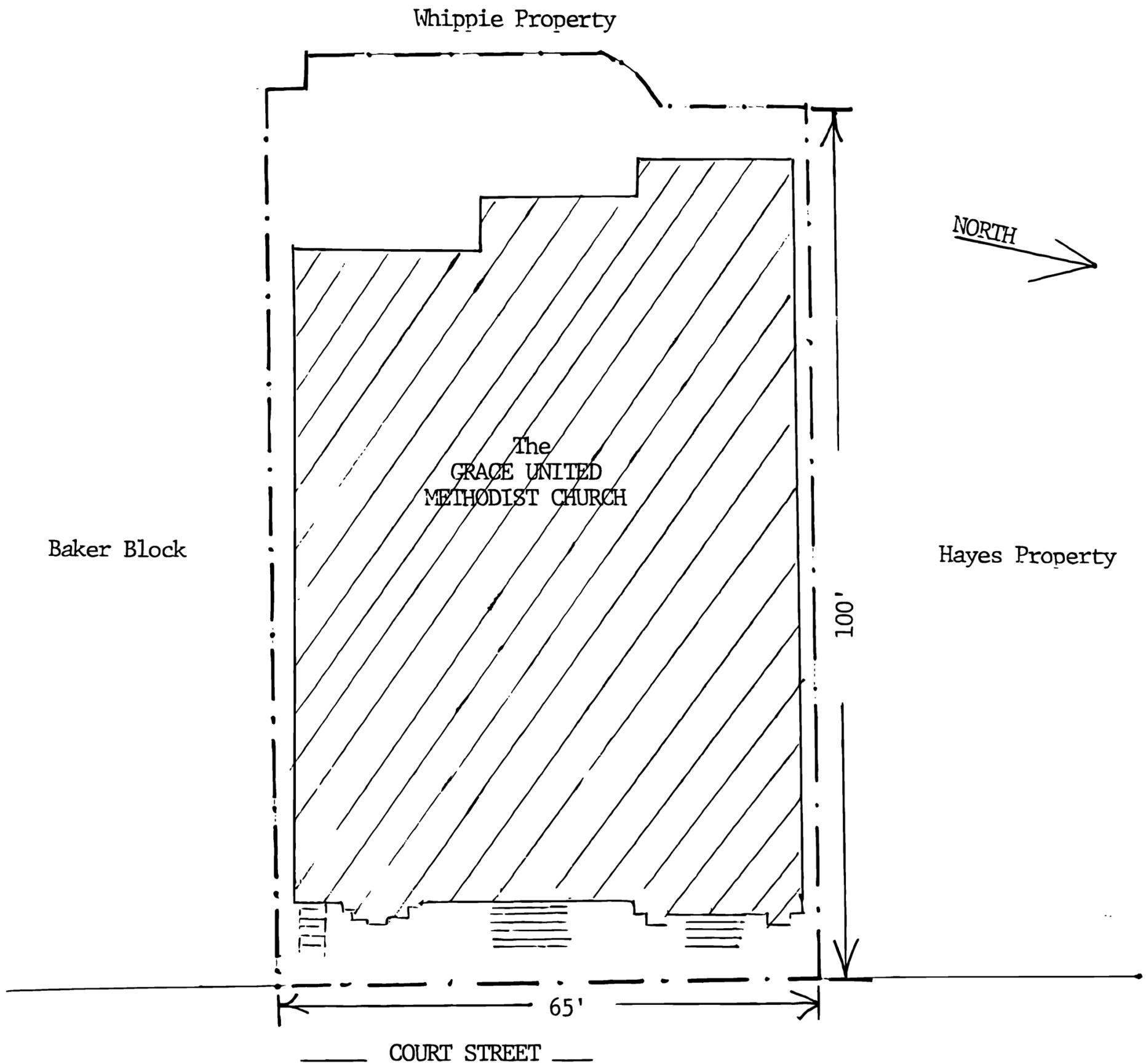
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Continuation sheet

4

Item number 10

Page 2



Note: Boundaries of the nominated property are highlighted in yellow, (map not to scale).

THE
GRACE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Keene, New Hampshire

DN