

FEB 5 1992

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JUN 30 1992
DATE ENTERED	MAR 9 1992

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC United Church of Christ in Keene

AND/OR COMMON

"The First Church; Church at the Head of the Square"

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

23 Central Square

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Keene

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

2nd

STATE

N. H.

VICINITY OF

CODE

33

COUNTY

Cheshire

CODE

005

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME United Church of Christ in Keene

STREET & NUMBER

23 Central Square

CITY, TOWN

Keene

VICINITY OF

STATE

N. H.

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Registry of Deeds, Cheshire County Court House

STREET & NUMBER

12 Court Street

CITY, TOWN

Keene

STATE

N. H.

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

NONE

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 type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE <u>1829</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		<u>1859</u>

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The nucleus of the United Church of Christ in Keene is the 194-year-old 50x70-ft. frame of Keene's 4th meetinghouse raised June 28-30, 1786. This structure originally stood south of its present location, near the site of the Civil War Soldiers Monument today. Sgt. Benjamin Archer, veteran of the Battle of Bunker Hill, was master carpenter and builder of the meetinghouse, placed with its broad side and central doors facing down the wide expanse of Main Street. This church was "consecrated to the Divine Being" on Oct. 29, 1788, "a very handsome parish church," according to editor and essayist Joseph Dennie in 1790. It was painted white or light yellow with green doors; the interior arrangements were typical of their time. Almost all that remains easily recognizable of the 18th century construction today is the steep pitch of the central roof and some building features in the interior attic.

As soon as the division of religious and civil authorities in Keene was complete in 1828, and as plans for the development of the Common were formulated, the meetinghouse underwent its first major renovation. Under a Jan. 1, 1829 contract (fulfilled July 30) James Tewksbury and Samuel D. Goodwin of Charlestown, N. H., turned the structure one quarter around and moved it north almost to its present site. Here the building was brought up to date in keeping with prevailing taste by the construction of a shallow entrance bay and porch supported by four Ionic columns, closed pediment and 5-stage square and octagon tower and spire 130 ft. high. The interior arrangements were entirely altered. According to the 1829 contract, much of the renovation was inspired by the 1818 Fitzwilliam meetinghouse.

Finally in 1859-1860 the last major renovation and alterations were undertaken, again for the purpose of bringing the building in line with contemporary religious usage. The Worcester firm of Boyden & Ball was engaged for architectural plans while Joel Bullard of Alstead was the contractor. Moved back 4 ft., the building was raised to allow the introduction of a vestry below the auditorium. The sanctuary was enlarged; 138 pews on the main floor and 42 in the balcony. A new facade was added with elaborate decoration, Corinthian columns, pilasters, urns and enriched pediment and cornice surmounted by a rebuilt spire 152 ft 2 in. high.

The 60x90-ft. church remains almost unchanged in appearance since its dedication Jan. 29, 1861. There have been some minor changes in the 60x70-ft. and 30-ft. high auditorium; a kitchen was constructed in part of the vestry in 1870. This space was converted to chapel and office use in 1959-1960.

In 1924 a two-story brick parish house was erected adjacent to the church, and this structure was renovated and enlarged in 1959-1960. The most cataclysmic accident of recent history was the loss of part of the spire in the great 1938 hurricane. Roy O. Leonard of Framingham, Mass. restored 37 ft. 6 in. in exact duplication of the original. The church today remains almost as it appears in pioneer photographs of Central Square taken just after the close of the Civil War.

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 checked="" 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 1786;1829;1859	BUILDER/ARCHITECT Benjamin Archer (1786) James Tewksbury & Samuel D. Goodwin (1829) Elbridge Boyden (1859)
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The importance of the United Church of Christ in Keene historically and architecturally is very striking. As the "First Church" has maintained a place close to the center of Keene life for over 200 years, its building has mirrored the history of the church and changing architectural tastes from the 18th century. The structure is an excellent example of sympathetic continued use of an historic building, and incorporates excellent proportions, appropriate design and a central location to become easily the community's preeminent landmark. It is the axis of busy Central Square and the focal point of converging streets into the business district, most especially the striking view up mile-long Main Street from the South. Even at the considerable distance of the surrounding hills and highways leading into the Keene Valley, it is the church and its graceful spire which first call attention to themselves. The church has become Keene's "trade-mark" on police shoulder patches, Boy Scout emblems, service club pins and in countless illustrations, postal cards and advertisements. Almost anyone who knows Keene or anything about it immediately identifies the community with the church which is among the best known landmarks in New Hampshire and perhaps New England.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Federal Writers' Project. New Hampshire, A Guide to the Granite State (Boston, 1938) pg. 186.
 Griffin, S. G. A History of the Town of Keene From 1732...to 1874... (Keene, N. H., 1904).
 Keene History Committee. "Upper Ashuelot," A History of Keene, New Hampshire (Keene, N. H., 1968).
 Continued

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one
 UTM REFERENCES Quadrangle name Keene, NH-VT Quadrangle scale 1:62500

A	1 8	7 2 1 0 4 5	4 7 5 6 9 0 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Tax Assessor's map #3, section #1, parcel #7.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A			

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

David R. Proper, Curator, Historical Society of Cheshire County

ORGANIZATION

51 So. Lincoln St.

DATE

603-352-0170

STREET & NUMBER

Keene,

TELEPHONE

N. H.

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

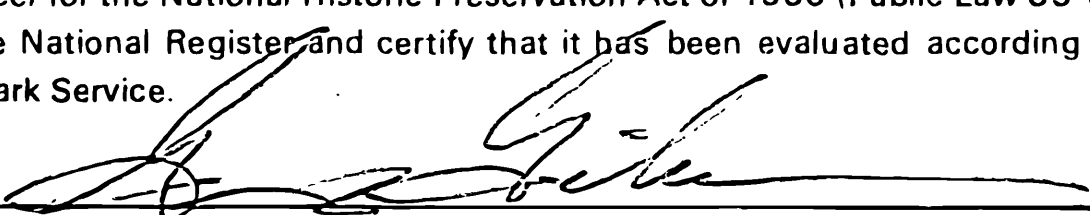
12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

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



TITLE Commissioner, Dept. of Resources & Economic Development DATE

NH State Historic Preservation Officer

April 9, 1981

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Lynn A. Bolke for Acting Keeper

DATE 3/9/1982

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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

FOR HCRS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JAN 8 1980
DATE ENTERED	

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9

PAGE 2

Proper, D. R. History of the First Congregational Church, Keene, N. H.
(Keene, N. H., 1973).

Sinnott, E. W. Meeting House & Church in Early New England (New York,
1963) pp. 155-156.

Tolles, B. F. New Hampshire Architecture, An Illustrated Guide (Hanover,
N. H., 1979) pp. 141-142.