

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

For NPS use only

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

received **APR 13 1983**

date entered

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

1. Name

historic FIRST PARISH CHURCH - DOVER POINT SITE

and/or common FIRST PARISH CHURCH - DOVER POINT SITE

2. Location

street & number Dover Point Road not for publication

city, town Dover vicinity of

state N.H. code 33 county Strafford code 017

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<u> </u> district	<u> </u> public	<u> </u> occupied	<u> </u> agriculture	<u> </u> museum
<u> </u> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<u> </u> commercial	<u> </u> park
<u> </u> structure	<u> </u> both	<u> </u> work in progress	<u> </u> educational	<u> </u> private residence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<u> </u> entertainment	<u> </u> religious
<u> </u> object	<u> </u> in process	<u> </u> yes: restricted	<u> </u> government	<u> </u> scientific
	<u> </u> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<u> </u> industrial	<u> </u> transportation
	<u>X--</u> N/A	<u> </u> no	<u> </u> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: open space

4. Owner of Property

name The First Parish Church (Congregational), A Voluntary Corporation
under the Laws of the State of New Hampshire

street & number 218 Central Avenue

city, town Dover vicinity of state New Hampshire 03820

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number County Farm Road

city, town Dover vicinity of state New Hampshire 03820

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A 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 type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u> n/a </u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

This is the location of the second meeting house of the First Parish Church in Dover. Dover Town Records, dated December 5, 1652, place the dimensions of the proposed meeting house at 40 feet long by 26 feet wide, with 16-foot stud. The house had six windows, two doors, a tile roof, planked walls, and was erected during the years 1653-1654. A series of modifications was voted on December 20, 1658, and by 1660 the meeting house had been "underpin'd & catted, & seeled with boards," and a pulpit and seats were added. The purchase of a bell made in England was approved at this time, and on February 15, 1665 Mr. Peter Coffin was empowered to build a turret upon the meeting house in which to hang the bell.

The structure underwent considerable modification in 1667 when it was decided to fortify the meeting house for defence against Indian attacks. This stockade of upright timbers was completed sometime before 1675 and resulted in a small fort 100 feet on a side with two 16-foot-square sconces (bulwarks) at the northwest and southeast corners, respectively, of the meeting house. These were built higher than the palisade so that watchmen could see well into the distance.

Religious services were conducted here on a regular basis until at least 1713, at which time a new meeting house was built on Pine Hill in Cochecho, where the city of Dover is presently centered. The population of Dover Point had gradually moved north through the years, and only a small cluster of families remained close to the second meeting house. Conflict ensued between the rival meeting houses, but in 1715 a delegation from the Provincial Assembly ruled in favor of Cochecho, and by 1720 all services had ceased at the second meeting house.

Once the meeting house was abandoned in ca. 1720, the bell was removed and taken to the site of the third meeting house on Pine Hill. The building was subsequently allowed to deteriorate and was finally removed prior to the Revolutionary War. The location was continually cited in historical sources throughout the 19th century, and four acres on the west side of Dover Point Road -- containing the meeting house foundation and surrounding woods -- were conveyed by Charles H. Sawyer and Elisha R. Brown to the First Parish Church by a deed dated April 6, 1889 and recorded in the Strafford County Registry of Deeds on April 22, 1889, Book 290, Page 135. The lot measures 527 feet along Dover Point Road on its eastern side; 324½ feet on the north; 520 feet on the west; and 382 feet on the south. The section of this lot to be nominated to the Register consists only of the meeting house and palisade foundations, bounded on the south, west and north by a cast iron fence and on the east by Route 16 (Dover Point Road). (See the attached sketch map.) The surrounding woodlot provides an adequate visual barrier on the south, west, and north; and the whole is set several feet above the highway, providing some degree of protection as well as enhancing the visual impact of the site.

The grass-covered surface of the foundation has been well-maintained and is devoid of large growth with the single exception of a tree in the southwest corner. An earth embankment, rising 1-2 feet above grade and measuring ca. 79-80 feet north-south by ca. 96.5 feet east-west, marks the perimeter of the palisades; and the sconces are still very pronounced at the southeast and northwest corners of the palisades. Each sconce appears rather rounded in outline, and each is characterized by a slight depression in the center. The meeting house foundation within the embankment is completely filled with earth, and no internal features are evident.

The deed for this site contains the restriction that the lot shall be held for the First Parish Church forever and improved, marked and utilized in such a manner as will preserve and perpetuate its historical association as the "Old Meeting House Lot."

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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input 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 1653/54 - 1720 **Builder/Architect** Richard Walderne

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

This archeological site is that of the second meeting house of the First Parish Church (Congregational) in Dover, the oldest Parish and Church in the State of New Hampshire. The Parish was formed immediately after immigrants from Salem, Massachusetts arrived at Hilton's Point in mid-October of 1633. The first meeting house -- probably built of logs -- stood on Low Street approximately where the Dover Point toll house for the Spaulding Turnpike is now located. A few years later, in December of 1638, the First Parish Church of Dover was formally organized, and it has been in continuous existence since that time, occupying successive meeting houses built in 1653/54, 1713, 1758, and 1829.

The second meeting house was on the western side of High Street (now Dover Point Road) during 1653 and 1654 by Richard Walderne, a prominent Dover businessman, trader to the Indians, and parishioner of the Church. At that time the meeting house was centrally located relative to the village on Dover Point, and for the next 50-60 years it was the site of town meetings and the focus of religious activities in Dover. This was also one of the first structures in Dover to be fortified against Indian attack, sometime between 1667 and 1675, and the modification of the meeting house into a 100-foot-square fort proved invaluable during the Indian raids upon Dover in the 1670s and 1680s.

Although the meeting house was eventually removed from its foundations, its role in the early settlement of Dover has been keenly felt until the present day. The site is fenced but open to the public, and virtually every published history of Dover from the early 19th century to the present has commented on the condition of these foundations. The apparent degree of intactness of the embankments (see the attached sketch map) strongly suggests that historical archeology has the potential for testing the accuracy of available historical documentation, for getting the real dimensions of the meeting house and palisades, and for revealing numerous construction details of one of the earliest meeting houses in New Hampshire. Furthermore, excavations here may reveal the architectural changes which accompanied the transformation of an early meeting house into a fort. The fortification of a meeting house was not an unusual occurrence in the 17th century, but it is a change which has never been thoroughly documented architecturally.

Because the foundations have been carefully protected from vandalism and surreptitious digging, the site remains today as practically the only visible and well-preserved reminder of the town's early history. Rarely has any 17th century site, meeting house or otherwise, been preserved so carefully and faithfully to the present day.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Donald R. Bryant, 1970. History of the First Parish Church, Dover, N.H. Dover, N.H.
 John Scales, 1923. History of Dover, New Hampshire. Dover: Printed by Authority of
 the City Councils.
 Alonzo Hall Quint, 1884. The First Parish in Dover, New Hampshire. Two Hundred and
 Fiftieth Anniversary, Oct. 28, 1883. Dover: Printed for the Parish. (continued)

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 0.4 (ca. 9220 sq. ft.)

Quadrangle name Dover East, ME - NH

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A	1 9	3 5 0 4 3 0	4 7 7 7 8 4 0	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification: The section of this lot to be nominated to the Register consists only of the meeting house and palisade foundations, bounded on the south, west and north by a cast iron fence and on the east by Route 16 (Dover Point Road). (See attached sketch map.)

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

state	n/a	code	county	code
state		code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Donald R. Bryant & David R. Starbuck*		
organization	Historical Committee, First Parish Church	date	11/5/82
street & number	218 Central Avenue	telephone	603-742-5664
	Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute*		518-270-6411*
city or town	Dover	state	New Hampshire 03820
	Troy*		New York 12181*

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 March 30, 1983

For NPS use only

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

Donna L. Bryant
 Keeper of the National Register date 5/27/83

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

FIRST PARISH CHURCH--DOVER POINT SITE
DOVER, NEW HAMPSHIRE

