

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	OCT 10 1979
DATE ENTERED	DEC 10 1979

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Grafton Congregational Church and Chapel

AND/OR COMMON

The Brick Church and The Chapel

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

West end of Main Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Grafton

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Vermont

STATE

Vermont

CODE
50

COUNTY

Windham

CODE

025

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 type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

The Grafton Church, Inc.

STREET & NUMBER

P.O. Box 87

CITY, TOWN

Grafton

VICINITY OF

STATE

Vermont

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Office of the Town Clerk

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Grafton

STATE

Vermont

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Vermont Historic Sites and Structures Survey

DATE

1974

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

CITY, TOWN

Montpelier

STATE

Vermont

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Grafton Congregational Church (The Brick Church) stands together with its chapel along the south side of the upper (west) end of Main Street on a rising slope above the Saxtons River valley. The church itself is oriented parallel to the street, overlooking the center of Grafton village and the valley to the southeast. While the church commands a dominating position, the chapel is sited downhill of the church and facing the street in the manner of the nearby houses. The mostly open churchyard is bounded along its east and south sides by stone walls and deciduous shade trees; the latter also cover the sloping southwest corner and west flank of the churchyard.

Commonly called the Brick Church after its structural material (which is laid up in common bond with a header course every tenth row), the church rises two stories on a rectangular plan of 42 feet by 61.5 feet, with the longer side (north and south) elevations being subdivided into five bays. Unlike the more public elevations, the rear (west) elevation of the church is framed in wood and sheathed with clapboards; nevertheless, it is painted red to simulate the brick of the other walls. Also wood-framed and sheathed but painted white, a prominent bell tower and spire distinguish the main (east) facade above a simply detailed portico. The church rests on a granite foundation, and its gable roof is shingled with slate.

The two-story, 24-foot-wide portico on the main facade displays an unusual blend of materials and their uses. A flight of four full-width granite slab steps leads to a granite-slab porch. Enclosing the ends of the porch, brick antas project four feet outward from the main wall plane; intended to simulate terminal columns, the antas are inlaid with soapstone bases and capitals and are painted white on their east (front) faces. Symmetrically spaced within the opening of the portico are two colossal smooth wood columns that rise from soapstone bases to support the clapboarded pediment, whose roof is shingled with slate. The portico shelters twin main entrances with paneled doors; the doorways are surmounted by semi-elliptical blind arches. On the second story, twelve-over-twelve sash windows are set directly above the doorways, being the only fenestration on the main facade.

The pediment of the portico supports the clapboarded base stage of the bell tower, which rises through the main gable peak to support in turn the square paneled bell chamber; the latter is marked by a rectangular louvered opening on each face. Atop the bell chamber stands a smaller paneled stage, the corners of whose base are defined by pinnacles. Above the top stage of the tower, the octagonal paneled spire tapers upward to terminate in a ball surmounted by a weathervane; at the corners of its base, the spire is "buttressed" by short scroll-like ornamental forms.

On the side (north and south) elevations of the church, the fenestration consists of five symmetrically arranged bays of window openings headed by blind pointed arches. The windows consist of tall six-over-six sash arranged in pairs separated by a mullions; each six-over-six is two lights wide and three high. The window sills are made of dressed soapstone. Shutters are fitted to cover both the sash and the blind arch above. The rear elevation of the church is penetrated only by a twelve-over-twelve sash window in the gable end; an exterior chimney rises the full height of the wall near the gable peak.

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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CONTINUATION SHEET 7-1

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 2

Originally the Grafton Congregational Church extended only about fifty feet (and four bays) in length. Between 1859 and 1862, the church was enlarged by the addition of about twelve feet to its west end, which enabled the opening of a fifth window on each side elevation. Apparently the bricks from the original end wall were used to construct the side wall of the addition, and the new end wall was framed and sheathed with wood materials. Since that addition, the church has not been altered significantly in appearance.

Between 1867 and 1883, however, the appearance of the churchyard was altered by the construction of the Chapel directly in front of the church and perpendicular to it. This smaller, unembellished wood-framed and clapboarded building (also painted white) rises one and one-half stories above a stone foundation on a rectangular plan of 35.5 feet by 41.5 feet. Its gable roof (oriented perpendicular to the street) is now sheathed with asphalt shingles. A small one-story shed is attached to its east (left) elevation.

The main (north) gable facade of the chapel is marked by central quadruplet windows and a small entrance porch recessed into the northwest corner. The latter provides access to paneled double doors that face the street. The sash of the quadruplet windows display the same vertical subdivision of lights (two wide, three high) that appears in the side windows of the church. On the three-bay side (east and west) elevations, the windows consist mostly of twelve-over-twelve sash.

Apparently in the 1940's, quadruplet windows were installed in the rear (south) elevation to match those on the main facade. The south windows light the meeting room that occupies the south two-thirds of the main floor, arranged perpendicular to the north-south axis of the building. The north third of the same floor contains a kitchen used for social events in the hall.

Until their demolition earlier in this century, a row of one-story, wood-framed horse sheds stood behind the chapel. The sheds served to provide shelter for parishioners' horses during services and other events in the church and chapel. The driveway to the horse sheds passes between the church and chapel, and is now used for automobile parking.

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 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 1833; circa 1870's BUILDER/ARCHITECT unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The former Grafton Congregational Church ranks among the finest and most nearly unaltered examples of early nineteenth century vernacular religious architecture in Vermont. A blend of simplified Greek Revival and Gothic Revival forms, the church achieves an elemental dignity enhanced by the use of local stone to complement its brick shell and wood tower. The dominant position of the church on a hillside overlooking the village center reflects its spiritual and social significance to the nineteenth century community.

The First Congregational Church was organized in 1785 while Grafton township still bore its original name of Thomlinson. Seven years later, the first church was built in the Middletown Hill district, the early center of settlement in the rapidly growing township. Between 1791 and 1800, the population nearly doubled to 1149, and by 1820 it reached its historical maximum of 1482. During the latter decade, a new road built along the Saxtons River valley diverted traffic from the Middletown road, and a new village began to emerge two miles to the east.

Soon the Congregational Church also felt the attraction of the valley village, although not without great dissension among its members. In 1833, a new society formed to build a church there. A village merchant, Capt. John Barrett, subscribed half its \$4,000 cost, and the new brick church was dedicated in 1834. The construction of the church marked the beginning (in 1832) of the pastorate of the Rev. Moses B. Bradford, whose "long pastorate and conceded ability gave the church prestige throughout this part of the state."¹

Concurrently the village and the township, which by then had received the permanent name of Grafton, experienced the most intensive economic development in their history. A soap-stone quarry was opened on Kidder Hill, southeast of the village; after 1825, it became for a time one of the largest in the United States. In 1831, a woolen mill was established in the village followed, in 1833, by a carriage and sleigh factory and, also in the 1830's, by a butter churn factory.

Although by 1830 the population of the township already started to decline from its peak of the previous decade, the Congregational Church continued to increase its membership. In 1854, 174 persons belonged to the congregation, apparently reflecting the abilities of the Rev. Bradford. He remained in the position until 1859; during his 27 years of leadership, the church "had a larger membership and was more influential than it has ever been before or since."²

Ironically, the physical expansion of the church building occurred during the short (1859-62) tenure of the next minister, M. G. Wheeler. The twelve-foot addition to its west end reiterated the original design, and the building retained its stylistic integrity.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Palmer, Francis A. History of the Town of Grafton, Vermont. Brattleboro, Vermont: The Shaw Press, 1954

Pettengill, Helen M. History of Grafton, Vermont 1754-1975 and Sidelights on Grafton History. Grafton, Vt.: Grafton Historical Society, Inc., 1975.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

UTM NOT VERIFIED

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Approx. one

UTM REFERENCES

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

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Grafton Congregational Church and Chapel occupy a roughly rectangular lot of approximately one acre that adjoins the south side of Main Street and the connecting Hinkley Brook road (Town Highway 6).

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Hugh H. Henry

ORGANIZATION

Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

DATE

August 9, 1979

STREET & NUMBER

Pavilion Building

TELEPHONE

802-828-3226

CITY OR TOWN

Montpelier

STATE

Vermont

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

William B. Sumner

TITLE Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

9/28/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Carol O'Sullivan

DATE

12/10/79

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST: Bruce McDaniel

DATE

12/10/79

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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CONTINUATION SHEET 8-1 **ITEM NUMBER 8** **PAGE 2**

After the Civil War, the population of Grafton decreased steadily, reaching 1008 in 1870. Industrial activity declined, many residents migrated westward, and the nearest railroad passed twelve miles to the east. Nevertheless, the Congregational Church continued to expand its facilities. During the pastorate of Earle J. Ward (1867-83), the Chapel was constructed in front of the church and organs were installed in both buildings. The next resident minister, Aaron Porter, stayed from 1886 to 1888, and during that time the church acquired a bell and a new pulpit.

At the turn of the twentieth century, only about 800 residents remained in Grafton and the decline continued. The membership of the Congregational Church decreased accordingly, and by the second decade of this century reached the level that could not support a resident minister. Concurrently, the other church in the village, the Grafton Baptist Church, experienced a similar decline. Finally in 1920, the churches agreed to unite and established the Federated Church of Grafton. The terms of the agreement included hiring ministers alternately from the respective denominations and holding services in each church for half the year, with the Congregational Church being used during the summer. This arrangement proved successful, enabling the churches to survive the ultimate decline of Grafton's population to 393 in 1940. The dwindling resources of the congregation had the effect of preventing substantial alteration or modernization of the buildings.

After the Second World War, the town experienced a gradual increase in population. A private foundation initiated a continuing program of acquiring both residential and commercial buildings for refurbishment and renewed or adaptive uses. In 1972, the Congregational and Baptist Churches merged completely and adopted the singular name of The Grafton Church, affiliated both with the United Church of Christ (Congregational) and the American Baptist Church in the United States. Currently (1979) services continue in both church buildings according to the seasonal schedule.

The property being nominated to the National Register consists of the former Grafton Congregational Church and Chapel together with their traditional churchyard of about one acre located along the south side of Main Street and the connecting Hinkley Brook road.

¹Francis A. Palmer, History of the Town of Grafton, Vermont, Brattleboro, Vt., 1954, p. 40.

²Palmer, p. 40.