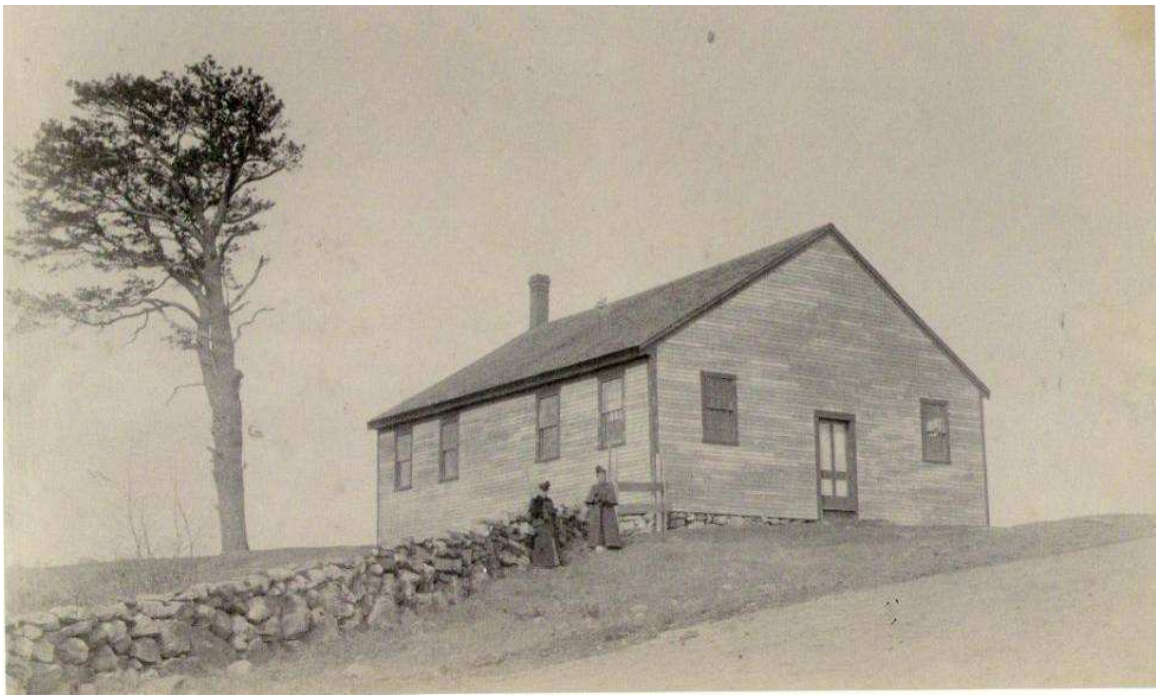
New Durham Meeting House

New Durham, New Hampshire

Historic Building Assessment

with

Preservation Guidelines



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February 2009

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Cover image: New Durham Meeting House, ca. 1880- 1892. *Collection of New Hampshire Historical Society*

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the New Durham Meeting House—its history, its physical evolution, its significant architectural features and its existing condition—in order to guide future decisions for the building.

Now nearly 240 years old, the Meeting House is a beloved fixture of the local landscape. It reflects the untold hours of time and effort many citizens have invested in it, as for the most part, the building is stable and structurally sound. The roof and foundation are solid, and assuming the building remains only minimally used, the interior framing sag is unlikely to move any further. The town is fortunate in that it can take the necessary time to determine best future uses for the structure.

After sitting in poor condition for many years, in private ownership, the building was donated back to the town in 1979. The following year, it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Not everyone supported town ownership of the building, and in 1987 a warrant article asked that it be burned. Fortunately, it did not pass. Instead, the town appointed two committees, both overseen by the Town Historian, to oversee construction projects. The first, undertaken in the late 1980s by a local volunteer group, entailed replacing the roof, siding, exterior trim, window frames and sash, and doors. The second project involved the grounds and included developing the walking trail and restoring the pound.

Another valuable advocate for the Meeting House has been the New Durham Historical Society. Since its establishment in 1991, it has championed the building's restoration, in part by raising funds and applying for grants and keeping the public aware of the building's importance. The Society has also held numerous events at, or on behalf of, the Meeting House. In 2001, it commissioned an architectural and collections assessment for the building.

In late 2006, the town reinforced its long-term commitment to the Meeting House by creating the Meetinghouse Restoration Committee composed of "committed individuals with areas of expertise in restoration, building elements, site preservation, grant writing, research, planning and communication, and cultural event organization." The Committee's charges include creating a strategic plan for the building, and developing and implementing both a community use plan and a long term maintenance plan.

One of the Committee's first undertakings was to commission this report, funded *in part by the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) and in part by the Town of New Durham.* It provides a wide range of data to assist the town plan for the future of the Meeting House. The chapter on its history helps understand how and why the building has physically changed. The chapter on its architecture, which is accompanied by photographs and measured drawings, describes its existing appearance and identifies the specific extant character-defining features from each construction era. The survey of existing conditions specifies what work items need to be addressed, while the section on preservation guidelines outlines the recommended treatment approach to achieve them. The report concludes with discussing how to mesh local ideas for future uses with the needed work.

It would be unrealistic to think that all of the needed work could be accomplished immediately, or that uses for the building will never change. But if this report is used similarly to a road map, it will ensure that all future decisions are informed decisions—ultimately the best decisions for the Meeting House.

History and Evolution of the Meeting House

Introduction

The New Durham Meeting House epitomizes the town's first commitment to a public structure. It is also significant as the site of the first services that the Free Will Baptist Church, which was formed in New Durham, ever held in a church building; the importance of this event was recognized by the town as early as the 1880s.

Located on a slight rise above Old Bay Road in what was once the village of New Durham Corners, the Meeting House was constructed in 1770, with later substantial alterations occurring in 1792 and 1838. Its appearance today largely reflects its conversion into a town hall in 1838. At that time, it was reduced from a two-story structure to a single story. If the main entrance was originally on the southeast eaves side—which was typical for 18th c. meeting house design—it was relocated to the northeast gable front, to face the road, at this time as well.

Brief History of New Durham Corners

A Masonian grant first established the bounds of New Durham in 1749. New Durham was a frontier town near the southeast edge of Lake Winnipesaukee, where the efforts to settle and improve the land were under threat by the Native American population in the region, especially during the French and Indian Wars. The first attempts to settle New Durham in the 1750s failed, because the inhabitants did not fulfill the requirements of the charter. It was not until the conclusion of the war that the requirements were met. The settlers petitioned for it and received the charter in 1762, allowing them to govern themselves. The name New Durham reflected that many of the proprietors came from Durham, New Hampshire. By 1775, the town's population was up to 268.[1]

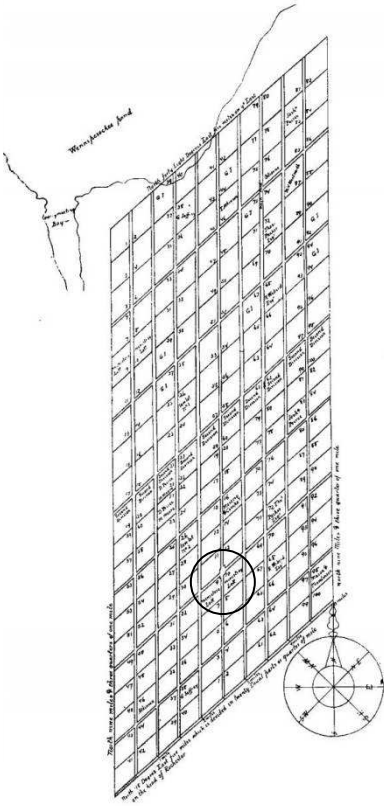
A plan for settlement was drawn up in 1750. The plan was a typical Masonian plan, delineated into near-equally-sized geometric lots separated by ranges, all superimposed on the landscape without account of the topography. The plan divided the town in two, creating two divisions of 100 lots each. The purchaser of lot #1 in the first division also gained lot #1 in the second.

It was common practice in early New England that a town grant stipulate that the purchasers or settlers build a meetinghouse, carve out a minister's lot, and convince a set number of settlers to make

[1] *New Hampshire Provincial and State Papers,* vol. 28; vol. 7: 756; Catherine E. Orlowicz interview.

the new town their home by building a house and improving the land. New Durham's grant was no exception. It required that the town have a Meeting House built "for the Public Worship of God," within six years after the end of the French and Indian War, which came in 1763.[2]

In the center of the first (southern) division were the Minister's Lot (#9) and the Ministry Lot (#10). From Lot #10, the town was to carve out six acres on which to site a meeting house and school, as well as a training field and a burial ground.[3] The town also later located an animal pound there.



Plan of New Durham, 1750
from New Hampshire Provincial and State Papers, *vol. 28, p. 102*

With these structures, New Durham Corners became the center of civic life for the town in the 18th and early 19th centuries. So named because of the intersection of Main Country Road with Cross Center Road, the Corners also had taverns, small shops, residences and farms.[4] The role of the Meeting House was twofold

[2] *New Hampshire Provincial and State Papers,* vol. 28: 100.
[3] See *New Hampshire Provincial and State Papers,* vol. 28: 102; Masonian Plans, Book 4: 84. Masonian Plans, Book 4: 84.
[4] Maps of 1806, 1856 and 1892.

as the center of religious and civic life. Weddings, funerals, Sunday services, town meetings, court trials and community gatherings were held there, as in meetinghouses throughout the state.[5]

Map of New Durham, 1806, detail showing the Meeting House at center.
Collection of the New Hampshire State Archives

The Meeting House Years: Initial Construction

Warrant articles for a June 14, 1768 town meeting in New Durham included a "vote relative to building a Meeting house the present year for the Public Worship of God in said town" and another to "choose a committee to build the same." These articles, addressed at a continuation meeting on July 11, 1768, passed as the town "voted that the Meeting house in New Durham shall be built of the following Dimentions Viz. 42 feet long & 35 feet wide & 20 foot Post with Proportionable timber fir for such a building." A month later, the town voted "to let out the meeting house in New Durham to the lowest bidder To build. [And also] Voted that each whole right shall pay 20/ Lawfull money towards building the meeting house and other Incidental charges not taxed heretofore." The committee was still collecting that tax money in 1769, when Major Thomas Tash and Ensign Jn'o. B. Hanson were charged to "receive the Meeting House and give the Dimensions of the Window Frames." There were to be "but twenty five Window Frames in the aforesaid Meeting House and that the posts shall be but 18 feet between joints."[6]

A town-wide inventory in January 1770 notes, "No. 9 Thar is the Meeting House Inclosed shingled & under floor Laid under pined & window frames in and no more finished towards it." A similar inventory from April 1770 listed "a Meeting House" at Lot No 10

These records indicate that the Meeting House was erected and enclosed, with windows frames installed, by early 1770. Within another two years, and possibly earlier, the town was using the building for meetings; by then, windows and sash would have been in place. Both documentary and physical evidence suggest that the interior of the building, including permanent seating, remained essentially unfinished for another twenty years.

The main entrance to the building most likely was on the southeast wall—the longer eaves side—following traditional 18th c. meeting house design. This makes even more sense when one realizes that when the building was erected, there was a road that ran in front of the southeast elevation.[8]

[5] Benes and Zimmerman, 1979: 2.
[6] "Chapter in the History of New Durham," 1907: 367-371. This article in the Genealogical Register is a transcript "of a document…in the unindexed Court files at Dover, NH…the original book of the proprietors of New Durham, from which these records were copied…is now missing" [359].

on six improved acres. Lot #9 still lacked any buildings, suggesting that a minister's house was not yet built. By then, forty-one houses had been elsewhere built in town. By March of 1772, New Durham's public meetings were being held in the Meeting House. [7]

Finishing the Meeting House: Pews, Pulpit and Porch

In 1791, the town finished the interior of the building after passing warrant articles for building pews, a porch and a pulpit, and accepting and altering the plan of the interior spaces. In March of that year, the town "voted to choose a committee to mark and number the pews in the Meeting house and draft a plan thereof and make return at next adjournment of this meeting."[9] In April, the plan was received and a special meeting was set to auction the pews in June. Pews went to the highest bidders, who would own pew privileges only. This was a common practice and the decision of who sat where was both a political and financial one.[10]

A copy of this plan is not known to have survived.

The new pew owners were responsible for having the pews constructed within eighteen months or their privilege was forfeited. Sums were to be paid in "merchantable white pine Boards or white oak lumber at Dover Landing at the current Market price at or on the first day of April next." The pews were to be built "as nearly alike as the circumstances of each pew will allow and in the usual form of pews in Meetinghouses in general."[11] A year later, the town included in its agenda for town meeting, considering "what order the town will take in regards to the privileges of the pews in the galleries," and "what steps the town will take for the fixing the common seats in the galleries." The pew plan was accepted at that June meeting.[12]

In New Durham, it appears that each pew owner was responsible for constructing his own pew, rather than just paying the town a set sum to have it built.

Given the era, the main floor pews would most likely have been open-top box pews (such as those that are still extant in the Danville Meeting House), so some basic guidelines and dimensions would have been critical to ensure they all fit together.

These town records indicate that the gallery seating was of two types: pews and "common seats," which may have been benches. It further appears that the town took responsibility for installing the latter, rather than selling them off.

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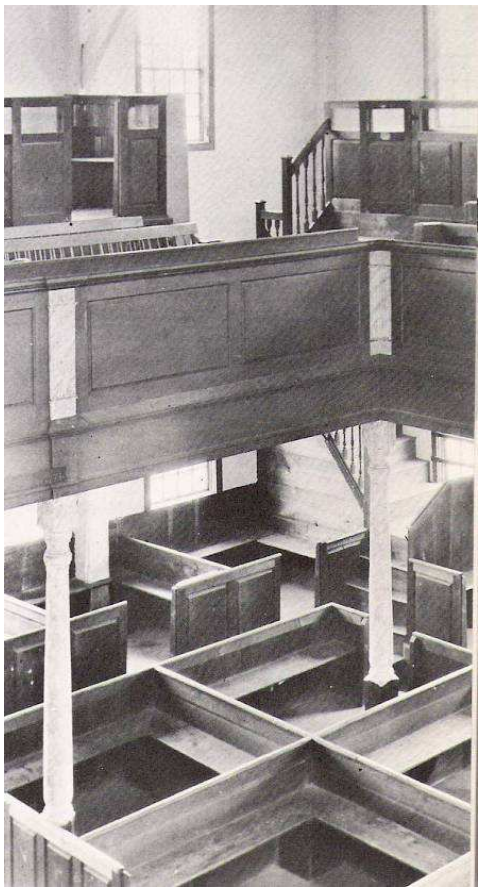
[8] Catherine E. Orlowicz interview.
[7] *New Hampshire Provincial and State Papers,* vol. 28: 105 and 107.
[9] *New Durham Town Records:* March 28, 1791.
[10] Benes and Zimmerman, 1979: 55-56.
[11] *New Durham Town Records*: June 6, 1791; Wiley: 60.
[12] *New Durham Town Records*: May 19, 1792, June 7, 1792, June 18, 1792.

Fremont Meeting House, NH, constructed 1800
The design of these box pews, with their fairly slender spindles, are likely similar to those placed in the New Durham Meeting House in 1791-92.
Photograph by Paul Wainwright



Sandown Meeting House, NH, erected 1774
This view shows a typical late 18th c. arrangement of box pews on the main floor. Note that the gallery is fitted out with both box pews and benches, as was likely the case at New Durham.
From Sinnott, Meetinghouse and Church in Early New England *(1963), p.57*

Rocky Hill Meeting House, Amesbury, MA, erected 1785
The bench shown in this photograph may well resemble those that were placed in the New Durham Meeting House gallery. Note the similarity of the wainscot to that in the New Durham building.
Photograph by Paul Wainwright

1792 was a year of major construction activity in the Meeting House. That the Meeting House was crowded is evident from a vote to close the two doors at the ends of the building in order to fit additional pews in.

The 1806 map of New Durham depicts the Meeting House with a door on a gable end, as well as an eaves side, thus following traditional meeting house design. Both this reference of the 1792 town meeting and the drawing affirm that there was likely a door on the other gable end from the outset.

At one of the June meetings, the town also voted "to let out the building of the porch to the Meeting house to the lowest bidder and to be of the following dimensions namely it shall be 10 feet wide by the Meeting house and 12 feet deep and the Ridge pole to be even in height to the eaves of the Meeting house and it is to be finished and completed in the following manner, to wit, there shall be two doors below and one window in the front and a pair of Stairs of three flights and a door to enter into the gallery-and to be shingled and clapboarded and underpinned in a suitable manner."

Porches—actually enclosures—were a common feature of meeting houses in the late 18th century. Their primary function was to house the stairwells to the gallery. By placing them on the exterior of the building, it freed up interior space for additional pews. Meeting

George Davis won the bid to build the porch for 39½ dollars .[13]

Less than two weeks later, the town resolved that "the pulpit and canopy be built according to that in Mr. Powers Meeting house in Gilmantown"[14] and that the building of the pulpit, canopy, window, Deacon's seat and stairs be completed within five months by Samuel Runnels and Josiah Edgerly for 98 dollars.[15]

houses had either single-porch stairwells, such as New Durham appears to have had, or twin porches, which were placed on each gable end. The single-porch form was common in eastern and coastal areas of New Hampshire and Maine, but it also appeared somewhat further inland, including in areas south of Lake Winnipesauke. For instance, the town of Middleton voted for a single-stairwell porch in 1789. And Wolfeboro voted to imitate Middleton in 1792, the same year that New Durham voted to construct one.[17]

The "two doors below" likely were two-leaf doors within a single opening; the window would have been above them. The term "flights" actually refers to "runs" on a flight, so the stairs would have had three turns as they extended from the first to the second story.

The depiction of the meeting house on the 1806 map (above) without a porch does not necessarily mean it lacked one. All of the buildings on the map are drawn stylistically, rather than realistically. In addition, adding the porch would have meant a three-dimensional representation—far harder to draw. Similarly, the chimney is probably artistic license, as the building probably lacked one as early as 1806.

[13] *New Durham Town Records*: June 7, 1792. The shutting of the end doors was not passed at the following meeting on June 18th.
[14] The above-referenced Gilmanton structure was a Baptist meetinghouse built in 1774, but taken down in 1842 and replaced with a new church building. (Garvin, 2002).
[15] *New Durham Town Records:* June 18, 1792.
[17] Benes, 1979: 50. For more information on meetinghouse porches, see Benes, 1979; Sinnott, 1963; and Speare, 1938.

Need for additional space prompted yet more changes in the fall of 1792, when the town voted to remove the singing seats into the galleries and reduce some of the alleys between the pews from three feet to two and a half. The broad alley and the door alleys were to remain unchanged. Finally, after the completion of the pews came the building of "the parsonage pew and long seats on the floor four in number and the placing of the pillars." Josiah Edgerly also received this commission, for 13½ dollars.[16]

Singing seats were elevated platforms. That New Durham voted to remove them "into the galleries" suggests they were relocated, rather than taken out altogether.

The term "alley" is interchangeable with "aisle."

"Pillars" would be the columns that supported the outer edges of the galleries. In the New Durham Meeting House, if the gallery was on three sides, one column would have been placed at each interior bent, and two additional ones along the second and fifth bents, for a total of six to eight. However, since the building was later dropped down to a single story, there is no surviving physical evidence of their placement.

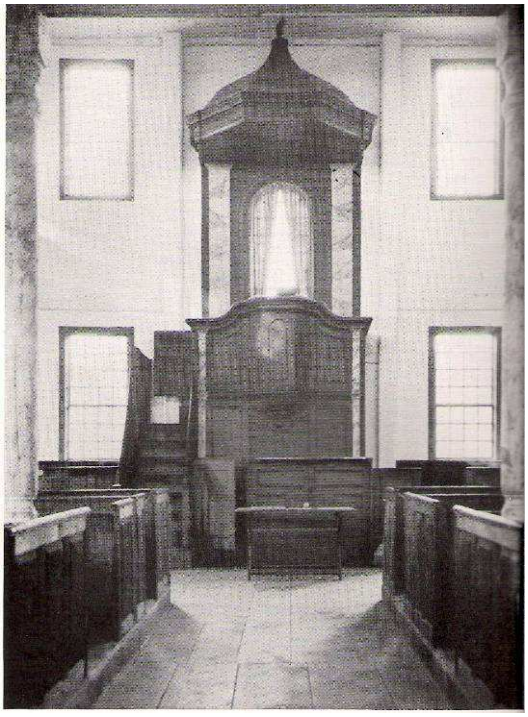
This finish work coincided with a revival in New Durham's Freewill Baptist congregation, which was then using the building. In the 1780s, attendance at Freewill Baptist church services had been dwindling, and there was a serious threat of the sect disbanding altogether. In 1791, a new covenant was made. This scheme for revival apparently worked, and the congregation grew again, prompting a Freewill Baptist revival throughout New Hampshire and Maine. The restored religious interest may have influenced the renewed interest in finishing the New Durham Meeting House.[18]

Town records from 1805, in mentioning the need for further repairs to the meeting house, make specific reference to Josiah Edgerly's finishing the "two porches" according to the contract with the town.[19]

This 1805 reference is the first—and only—time two porches are mentioned. Given the building's comparatively diminutive dimensions, a single porch would be more probable. Photographs of the work undertaken in the 1980s indicate the front gable end never had a porch (and thus,

[16] *New Durham Town Records*: September 22, 1792.
[18] Baxter: 28-29; Buzzell: 132-136.
[19] *New Durham Town Records, 1803-1821*: 12, 13, 31, and 37. Edgerly was a local man who lived on the Bay Road and made a living as a joiner. He also held town positions and a tavern license (Jennings, 1962: 84).

Alna, ME, Meeting House, built 1789
This porch is similar to what could have adorned the New Durham Meeting House. *Photograph by Paul Wainwright*



Sandown Meeting House, NH, erected 1774
The pulpit, canopy, pulpit window, stairs leading to the pulpit, and Deacon's seat below the pulpit are on the eaves side of the building, opposite the main entrance, the typical placement in late 18th c. meeting houses.
From Speare Colonial Meeting-houses of New Hampshire *(1938), p.12*

By 1803, the exterior of the building needed repair. The town voted "to strip all of the old and put on new good clapboard

likely, nor did the rear gable end). If the clapboards along the southeast and southwest eaves wall are ever removed, the question of where—and how many—porches the building had may well be resolved. In the meantime, the only clue is when the lower board of the wainscot was pried off during the course of this study, two mortises in the girt were revealed. Whether they were holes for an entry porch frame, or whether the girt is even original will remain a question until an opportunity arises for a more thorough physical investigation.

A pulpit and canopy (also called a sounding board) were the most dominant interior features of a meeting house. They were often painted with color and exhibited architectural details, fabric drapery and cushions. The pulpit was generally located at the center of the eaves wall opposite the entrance. The pulpit window, which often had an arched upper sash, was immediately above the pulpit, midway between the first and second stories.

In the New Durham Meeting House, the most appropriate location would have been on the northwest eaves wall, as the entrance was on the southeast side, overlooking the pound. The girt in the middle bay of that wall is also thicker, suggesting it may be a replacement, added when the pulpit window would have been removed in 1838, when the building was converted to a town hall.

There is no record as to whether any of this work was ever completed.

shingles cornerboards weatherboards window crowns & likewise to can the plates and put a cornice under the eaves and make a good hassom door with good hatcan over it." George Davis again received the commission to work on the building, this phase at $130. In 1805, as already mentioned above, Josiah Edgerly was called in to finish the "two porches."

As already mentioned, whether New Durham received one or two porches cannot be determined until the siding is removed.

The Meeting House lot also contained the Town Pound, where the town corralled stray animals until owners could be summoned. Proposals for a pound first appear in town records in the 1790s. After several postponements, it appears the pound was finally completed in 1809 by John Taylor. The specifications written in 1808 indicate that the pound was to be 30' square, enclosed by a stone wall 6' thick at the bottom, 2' thick at the top and 8' high, "including a wooden leap one foot square," with a sufficient gate, lock and key. It was to be at the "southerly part of the lot in front of the Meeting house."[20]

This reference to the location of the pound in relation to the Meeting House makes it all the more likely that the original entrance was on the southeast eaves side, thus placing the pulpit on the opposite (northwest) wall.

Early Ministers & the Freewill Baptists

New Durham's first minister was Nathaniel Porter, a Congregationalist, who accepted the post in August of 1773. In 1777, Rev. Porter resigned, after unreconciled disputes with the town over his salary. Two years later, the town brought Benjamin Randall to preach in the Meeting house. Randall was born in 1749 in Newcastle, NH. After coming to New Durham, he became a nationally significant religious leader in the Freewill Baptist movement. He came to serve New Durham by special invitation from residents who had heard him speak as an itinerant minister in nearby towns. He moved his family permanently to New Durham in 1778 and remained there until his death in 1808. Randall had agreed to settle in New Durham with the proviso that he not be confined to any one church or community, but rather be "every person's minister." True to his word, Randall traveled frequently and extensively—by his own accounts, he traversed 2,593 miles in 1807 alone—to minister to congregations around New Hampshire and Maine. He helped to establish churches in many towns and baptized converts throughout the area.[21]

As an adult, Randall joined first the Congregational church and then the Baptist. At about the time he came to New Durham, he split from the Baptist church to become an Evangelist, later called a Freewill Baptist. In 1780, near his home on New Durham Ridge, Randall and a handful of converts organized the first enduring Freewill Baptist congregation in the country. Their first meetings

[20] New Durham Town Records, 1803-1821.
[21] Buzzell, 1827: footnote 25.

were in the New Durham Meeting House and for some forty years, they continued to meet here sporadically. The history of the Freewill Baptist movement has focused on New Durham as the cradle of the denomination. For that reason, annual or quarterly gatherings have taken place in the town since 1792.[22]

Other ministers preached in the Meeting House concurrent with Randall. This was not uncommon, as a meeting house was to serve the townspeople, who often represented differing denominations.[23]

The "Town House"

Two events, which both coincidentally occurred in1819, dramatically impacted the future course of the Meeting House. That year, the New Hampshire legislature passed the Toleration Act, which prohibited taxation to support ministers, effectively separating religious activity from civic. Many of the state's meeting houses that were built for such dual purposes became either churches for the primary denomination in town or "town houses." 1819 also marked the year the Freewill Baptists finished building a church on New Durham Ridge, near where their founder had lived and where the sect had first been organized some forty years earlier.

Many New Hampshire meeting houses retained dual civic and religious uses for a number of years after passage of the Toleration Act. For example, Washington's meeting house remained in town ownership after 1819, but the Congregational Church continued to use it for another twenty years before it built its own church. It was not until then that the pulpit was removed from the meeting house Likewise, the meeting house in Pelham served the dual purposes for twenty-three years, long after the 1819 mandate.

Neither event had an immediate impact on the Meeting House, as it seems Freewill Baptist services took place at both locations for a period; other religious organizations likely continued to use the Meeting House for services, as well as weddings and funerals; and the town did not set about converting the building into a town house for some time. As late as the 1850s, the resident Freewill Baptist minister, Rev. David L. Edgerly, noted several times in his diary that he preached "at New Durham Corner," as well as in the Freewill Baptist Church at New Durham Ridge, where he lived.[24]

By 1831, New Durham residents began discussing how to "repair

[22] There are many biographical sketches of Elder Randall, including Baxter, 1957: 1-64; Fullonton, 1878; Scales, 1914: 444-445; *Souvenir of the Centennial*, 1892: 40-42; and Wiley, 1915. The earliest source is John Buzzell's 1827 *The Life of Elder Benjamin Randall*; Buzzell was a contemporary and a convert of Randall's. The records of the Freewill Baptist Church begin with Randall's ministry in New Durham starting in 1780 and document the church's meetings, services, correspondence and other incidental notes. The records, on microfilm at the NH State Library and difficult to read, continue long after Randall's death. Of note, there are several pages in the film of "loose papers" that would be helpful to any research on the building of the Freewill Baptist Church on New Durham Ridge in 1818-1819.

[23] Buzzell (1827), e.g., mentions another minister in New Durham (p. 92).

[24] Edgerly's diaries from 1848-1891 show a number of meetings and services at several locations in the town and neighboring area. They also list locations such as schoolhouses, the "Academy," the "meetinghouse" (perhaps the one at New Durham Corners). This propensity to minister in several towns and locations is in the tradition set by Benjamin Randall, who traveled often, not binding himself to a single congregation. (Baxter: 21-31; Buzzell; Fullonton; Wiley; et al).

the Old Meeting house so as to answer to the purpose of a town house." Between 1831 and 1838, warrants appeared annually on the town agenda to repair the "Old Meeting house" and "make it "tenantable to do their town business in." However, each year, they were either vetoed or just passed over. One exception occurred in 1835, when the town voted not to renovate the "Old Meeting house" into a "Town House," but instead "the Inhabitants of the town of New Durham do relinquish all their right to the Old Meeting house in said town to the owners of the Pews in said Town." The original article clarifies the purpose of the act: "so that the Pew holders may repair said house for public worship."

The town never did turn the building over to the pew owners.

This mention of repairing the building for public worship further suggests that there were other denominations in town using the Meeting House at this time. For example, in 1836, there were two "regular organized [religious] societies" in town—the Freewill Baptists and the Quakers.[26]

The conversation of abandoning the Meeting House altogether continued in 1836, when the town began to consider constructing a new Town House elsewhere in town. The first warrants came in March that year: "to see if the town will vote to sell the lot on which the Old Meeting house stands or any part of it" and "to see if the town will vote to build a Town House." While these articles were passed over at the meeting, the town instead voted that the selectmen should appoint a committee to "draft a suitable plan for a town house and make an estimate of the probable expense of building the same and also to locate a spot to build said house upon." This plan was accepted at the November meeting, but any further discussion of a town house was passed over later that meeting and again at the March 1837 meeting.[25]

It remains unknown whether the building was cut right above the first floor and again immediately above the gallery floor level, allowing it to drop onto—and thus reuse—the 1770s floor. Or it may have been cut right below the gallery level, thus reusing the gallery floor and infilling what had been the open area. An ideal time to have determined this would have been when the subflooring and joists were replaced in the late 1980s.

In the end, the measure to start anew was cast aside in favor of substantially remodeling the Meeting House to suit modern needs, and perhaps aesthetics. In 1838, the vote passed "that the Old Meeting house shall be cut down to a one-story house and that the Selectmen shall superintend the doing of the same and that they shall cause said house to be repaired in a manner sufficient and comfortable to hold the annual town meeting in next March." The first floor of the Meeting House was removed and the upper story was lowered and set upon the foundation, thus preserving the original roof system. The entrance was moved from the southeast eaves side to the northeast gable end. The pulpit and canopy were likely dismantled at this time in favor of the existing moderator's box and speaker's platform set into the southwest end of the building opposite the new entrance.[27]

[25] New Durham Town Records, 1827-1838.

[26] Jennings (1962) notes that there was a Quaker meeting house in 1856 on New Durham Ridge and may have been one elsewhere in New Durham in 1833 (p. 54). The Congregational Church was established in New Durham prior to Benjamin Randall's tenure, but it is unknown how long that church continued (Stewart: 44). Lawrence (1866) notes three ministers currently preaching in New Durham, but mentions only the Freewill Baptist denomination (p. 338).

[27] New Durham Town Records, 1827-1838.

Northeast (front) and southeast elevations, showing the building much as it would have appeared after it was reduced to a single story in 1838. Photographed ca. 1900.
New Durham Historical Collection

Such drastic remodeling of meeting houses was not uncommon in New Hampshire in the 1820s-1850s. A surprising number of two-story buildings were cut down to single-story structures once they no longer served dual purposes and became either a town house or a church. The alteration resulted in a building more appropriately sized for the town's needs and cut expenses for upkeep and heating. In addition to the practical reasons for such a change, aesthetic motivations were behind some of the remodeling, as by the mid-19th century, the Greek Revival style, had taken hold. Greek Revival buildings usually had the main entrance in the gable side of the building, rather than the eaves side.

New Durham's meeting house was one of many that had its entrance relocated thus. Some towns took the remodeling even further by physically rotating the building to ensure the gable end was prominently oriented toward the road.

Other New Hampshire meeting houses that were reduced from two to one-story buildings include those in Belmont, Groton, Milton, Plainfield (Meriden) and Thornton; some of these buildings were also rotated.

After ca. 1841, records and maps began to call the Meeting House the "Town House," reflecting the change in its structure and function. In 1841 and again in 1844, warrant articles appear to "see if the town will vote to finish a small room in the town house for the use of the selectmen to assess taxes in." Both times, the article was passed over. At town meeting in July 1847, a motion to "repair and finish" the Meeting House initially passed, allowing for "lathing, plastering, putting in the windows and a stove," indicating that the interior of the single-story structure was still

While the wall lath and plaster date from 1847 or 1848, the horizontal wainscot boards, which are secured with wrought iron nails, are part of the original gallery finish, added in 1792. The boards in the middle bays, where the gallery entrance and pulpit window would have been, are

unfinished. However, this vote was followed immediately by a motion to "reconsider the above vote." The following year, in March, a vote passed to repair and finish the Meeting House "under the directions and management of the Selectmen."

from this period, but must have been relocated from another location—perhaps from the first floor.

The Meeting House was likely used in this era for purposes in addition to town meetings. In 1864 a warrant article—though passed over—hints at additional potential uses of the building: vote "to authorize the Selectmen to let the Town House in said town for public meetings, exhibitions, parties and such other purposes as the Selectmen may think proper."[28]

Town records make no mention whether the building had a stove (and thus, a chimney) prior to 1847. Few meeting houses had stoves prior to 1815, largely for fear of fire, but they were gradually added between 1815 and 1840.[32]

In 1870, the debates of the 1830s were echoed when warrants appeared to "vote to sell the Town House and lot or any portion thereof" and "to vote to buy a new lot and build a new Town House" with money raised by taxation. The issue was passed over that year, repeated in 1873 and again passed over. In 1876, the town selectmen began to plead for the repair of the building "as a matter of economy," certainly more prudent than allowing it to fall to ruin and then go into debt building a new town house "which, necessarily will cost some $2500." In 1883 and 1884 these words were finally heeded, and the Meeting House was repaired. In their annual report of 1884, the selectmen summarized with pride that the town had a positive balance at year end despite a few major demands, including completing the repairs on the Meeting House, which totaled $316.80. Expenses show purchase and labor costs for shingles, lumber, ironwork, masonry, clapboards, and paint. "Thus," the selectmen concluded, "we have not only preserved a building that will be useful to the town for many years to come, …but also one that is of great historical interest."[29] They added the caveat: "unless, since the town can boast of its freedom from debt, the number of inhabitants should increase so it may become necessary to furnish larger accommodations." This foresight would prove true twenty-three years later.[30]

In 1907, New Durham erected a new Town Hall in the section of town known as Downings Mills or The Plains that had evolved into the industrial and commercial center and through which the railroad passed. The old Town House in New Durham Corners village now lacked a public purpose.

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[28] New Durham Town Records, 1841-1855 and 1856-1872.
[29] The selectmen end this sentence with "since it was the first Freewill Baptist church ever erected." The facts are slightly incorrect however, as the building was not erected *as* a Freewill Baptist Church, but was rather the first place the denomination practiced after forming in 1780.
[30] New Durham Annual Reports, 1870-1876, 1883 and 1884.
[32] Nylander, 1979: 87-88.

Front (northeast) and northwest elevations, photographed 1942. By this time, the building was used for agricultural storage.
New Durham Historical Collection

In 1912, neighboring farmer Zanello D. Berry purchased the Meeting House and its lot for $251. He used the building to store farm equipment, and he or his successor added a sliding barn door in the rear of the building, replaced the flooring, and may have undertaken slight interior modifications. In 1979, one of Berry's descendents, Lua Pike, gifted the building, the town pound and its six-acre lot to the town. Shortly thereafter, the Meeting House and pound were placed on the National Register of Historic Places for architectural significance and associations with local government.[31]

Northeast (front) and southeast elevations, 1979
from National Register Nomination Form

[31] Garvin et al, 1983: 6; New Durham Annual Reports, 1913 and 1979.

From 1987 to 1990, a major town-led renovation campaign rescued the building from oblivion. During the course of the renovation effort, the roof, clapboards, exterior trim, windows, front door, and sill were replaced under the direction of master carpenter Ernie Vachon. Berry's sliding barn door was replaced with double doors and the opening reduced in size. It was not until 2003 that the clapboard replacement was complete, thanks to an Eagle Scout project. With the exception of the barn doors, the repairs removed materials associated with the meeting house or town hall years.

Foundation work undertaken by JR Graton and Kevin Fife in 2006 repaired the fieldstone foundation seen in historic photographs, adding 19th century spilt granite blocks in a few places.

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Maps & Plans

1750 Plan of New Durham, Masonian Plan Book 4, p84. Collection of the New Hampshire State Archives
1806 Map of New Durham, Collection of the New Hampshire State Archives
1816 *Map of New Hampshire* by Philip Carrigain, Collection of the University of New Hampshire
1856 *Map of Strafford County, New Hampshire* by J. Chace, Jr., Philadelphia
1871 *Atlas of Strafford County, New Hampshire, from Actual Surveys,* by Sanford and Everts, Philadelphia
1892 *Town and City Atlas of the State of New Hampshire,* Boston: D. H. Hurd & Co.

Photograph Collections

New Durham Historical Collection
New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources
New Hampshire Historical Society
Paul Wainwright Photography www.paulwainwrightphotography.com

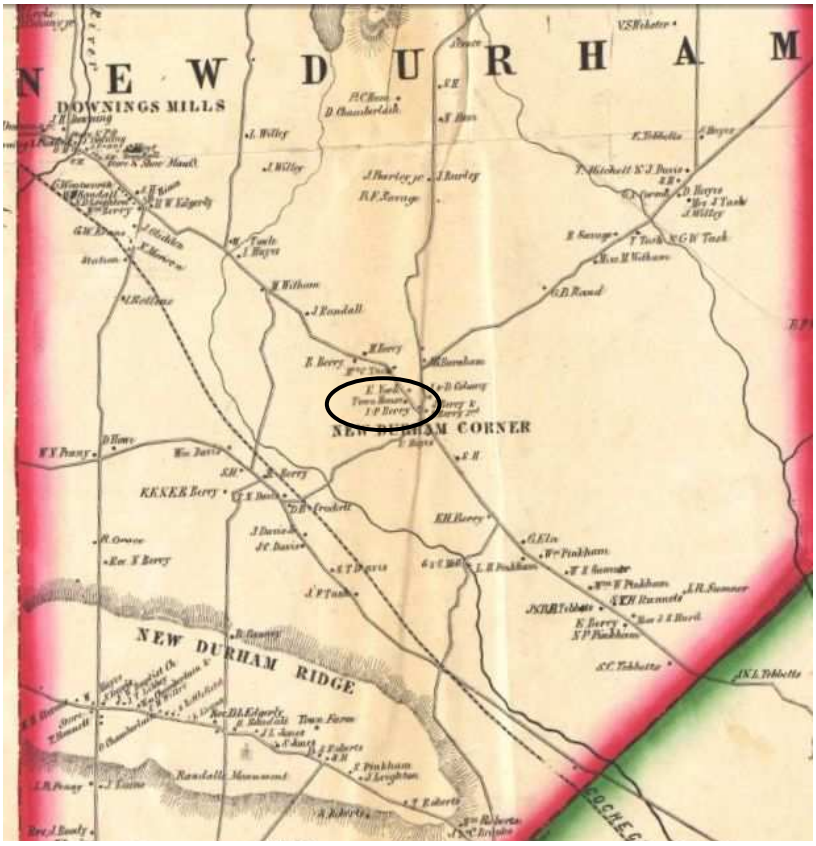
Interviews

Catherine E. Orlowicz, Town Historian, February 2009

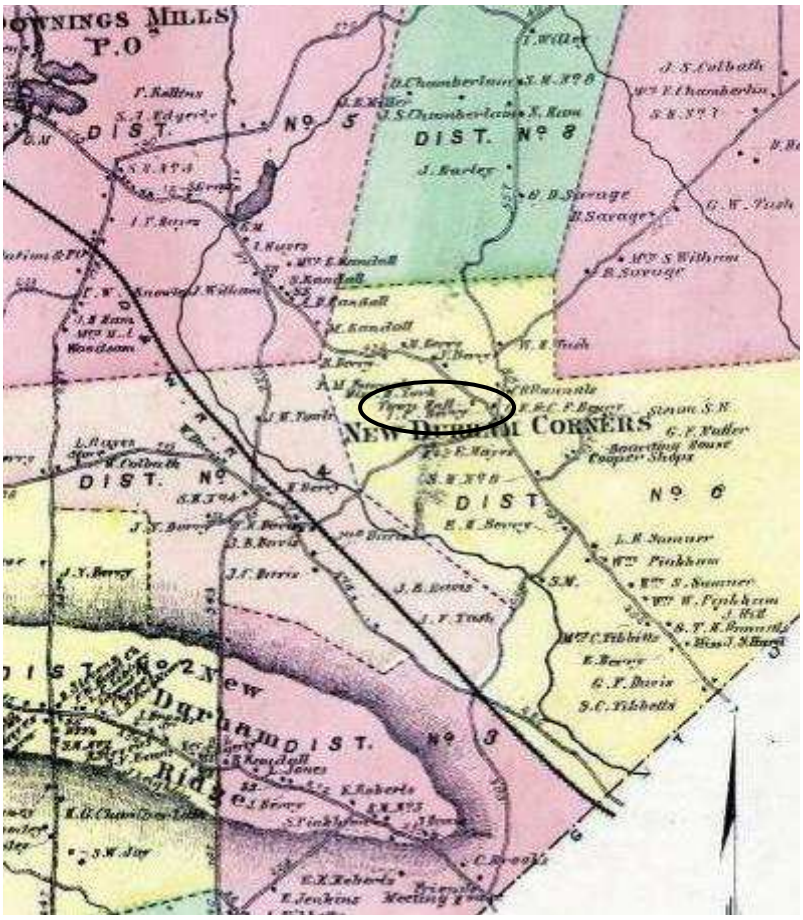
Additional Maps, Plans and Images of the Meeting House

All maps and plans in this section: **N**

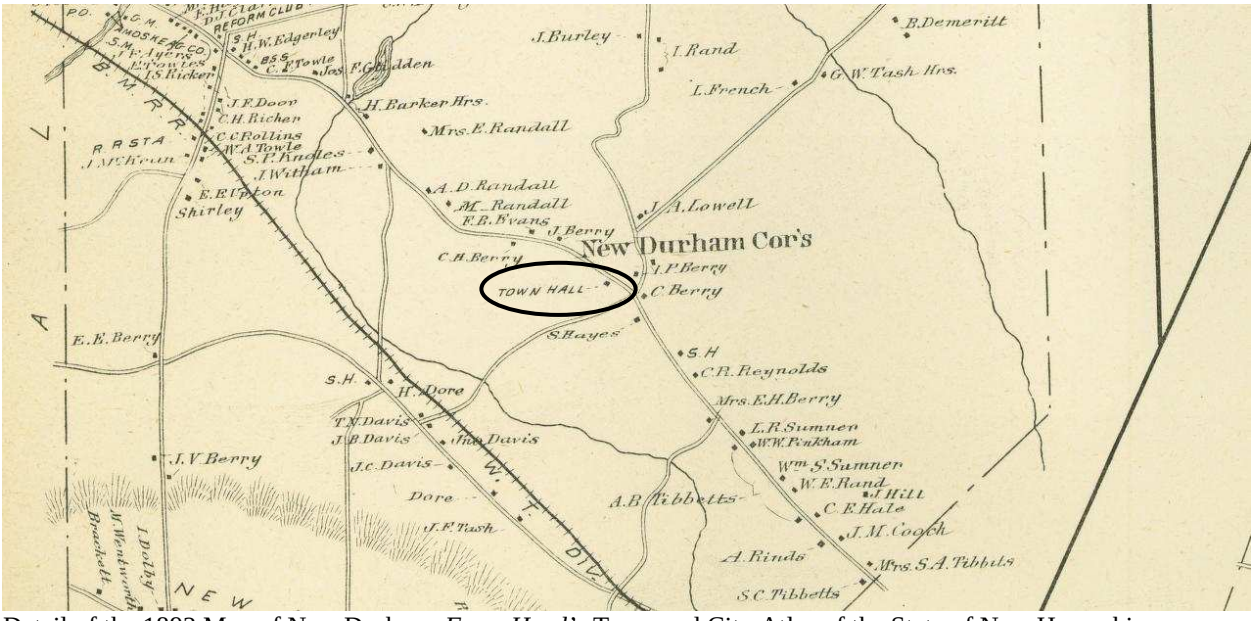
Detail of Carrigain's 1816 *Map of New Hampshire*



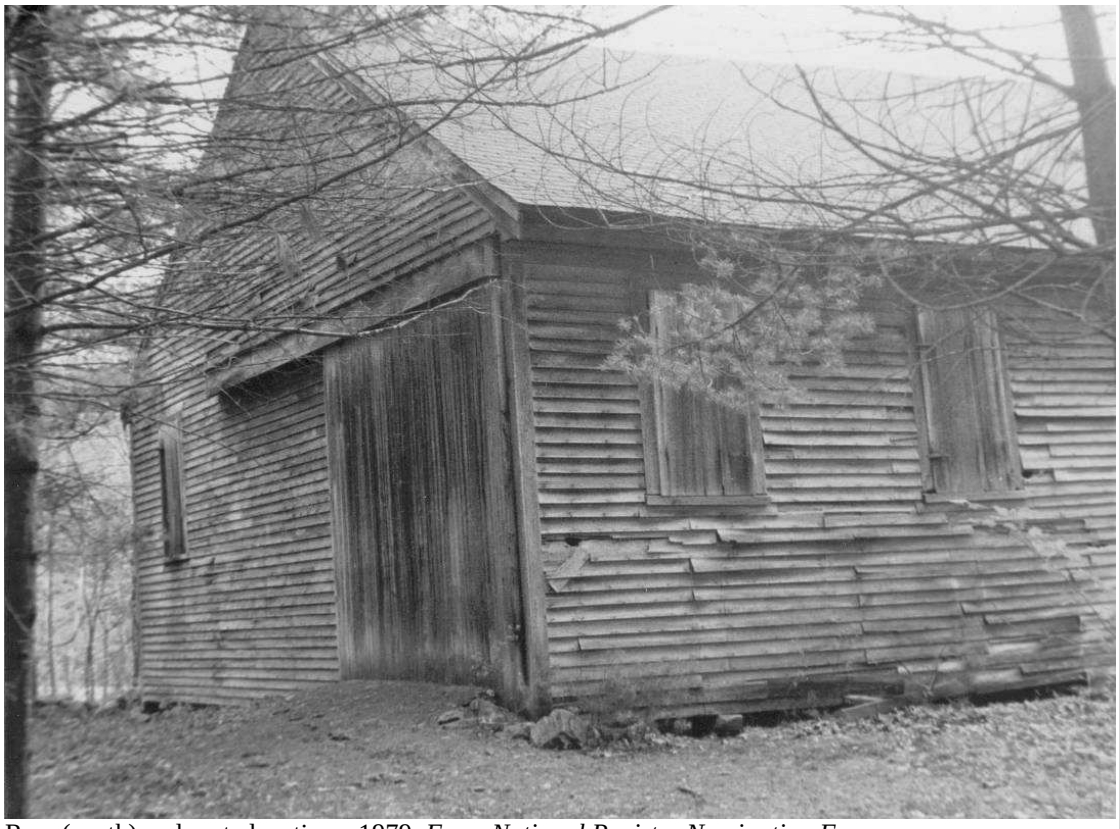
Detail of the 1856 *Map of Strafford County, by* J. Chace, Jr.



Detail of the 1871 Map of New Durham. *From Sanford and Everts'* Atlas of Strafford County



Detail of the 1892 Map of New Durham. *From Hurd's* Town and City Atlas of the State of New Hampshire



Rear (south) and east elevations, 1979. *From National Register Nomination Form*

West elevation, 1979. *From National Register Nomination Form*

Labeled: “Raised enclosed area / Question if it was original pulpit or seating for town officials,” 1979. *New Durham Historical Collection*

Labeled: “Original door to front hall, 1987.” *New Durham Historical Collection*

Labeled: “Sliding barn door [from when building] was used for storage of farm equipment,” ca. 1988. *New Durham Historical Collection*

New Durham Meeting House Timeline

DATE	EVENT
1750	Plan of New Durham drafted. Lot 10 reserved for a Meeting House, school, training field and burial ground.
1762	New Durham Charter granted and name incorporated.
1768	Town voted to start construction of Meeting House.
1770	Meeting House completed (though lacked interior finish).
1772	A town meeting (possibly the first) held in Meeting House.
1779	Elder Randall called to preach in New Durham.
1791-1792	Pews built in Meeting House.
1792	Pulpit and canopy built; singing seats in gallery removed into galleries; gallery finished, including supporting columns and wainscot; parsonage pew built
1803	Clapboards, window & door trim, cornerboards and cornice replaced
1809	Town pound built next to the Meeting House.
1819	Toleration Act passed, separating church and state. Freewill Baptist Church built on New Durham Ridge.
1831	First consideration to convert Meeting House into Town House (discussion veered back and forth for seven years)
1831-1838	Warrant articles to repair the Meeting House continually defeated or passed over.
1835	Town voted to relinquish rights to the Meeting House to the owners of the pews
1838	Town decided to remodel Meeting House for Town House, including cutting it a down to a single story Entrance relocated to northeast gable end Moderator's box & speaker's platform likely constructed
1848	Interior walls lathed & plastered; stove (and likely chimney) installed
1847/48	Southeast end partitioned into two small rooms and vestibule
1870s	Town again considered selling the Meeting House and erecting new town hall; thus only general maintenance undertaken on building.
1883-1884	Meeting House received major repairs to clapboards, masonry, roof
1893	Meeting House painted.
1903	Town voted to build sheds near the Meeting House for town officers' horses, but the vote was indefinitely postponed.
1907	New Town Hall built at Downings Mills section of town.
1912	Neighbor Zanello Berry purchased the Meeting House and lot, and used it to store farm equipment. He or his descendent added a sliding barn door to southwest side and replaced floor boards.
1979	Berry's descendents donated the Meeting House, pound and six acres to town.
1980	Meeting House listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
1987-1990	Meeting House substantially renovated: new front entry door, clapboards, window sash & frames; rear barn door opening infilled and new door installed; re-roofed
2006	Meeting House foundation repaired.

Architectural Description & Surviving Character-Defining Features

The New Durham Meeting House reflects three major eras of construction: 1768-1770 (building was framed and enclosed), 1791-92 (pews, pulpit, canopy and gallery added), and 1838-48 (building cut down to a single story and parts of interior finish). Its current appearance reflects that last era, although the frame dates from the original construction period, as does a small amount of interior finish.

The following narrative describes the building's current appearance and identifies surviving historic architectural features. All of the photographs were taken between October 2007 and October 2008.

Site

The Meeting House sits on an elevated, granite ledge on the south side of Old Bay Road in the historic town center. It shares its six-acre parcel with the 1809 town pound and the town's first burial ground. The lot is wooded, and trees grow close to the building. Walking trails wind through the forest south of the building. An unpaved loop drive accesses the building from the road.

Approach from the east

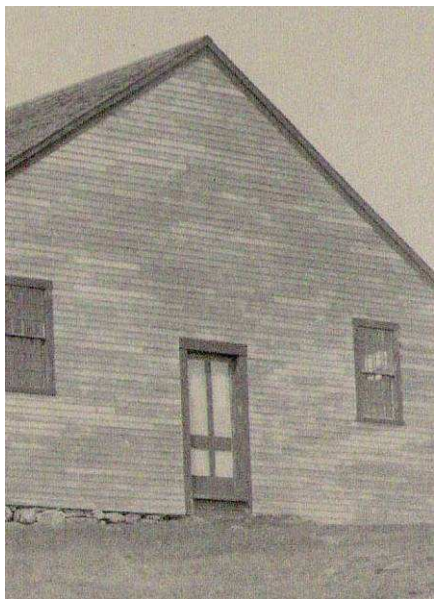
Approach from the west

Town pound southeast of the Meeting House

Exterior

The Meeting House is a 1 ½ story, timber-frame building, five bays wide and three bays deep. Constructed in 1768-1770 as a 2 ½ story structure, the current main story represents what was once the upper level: in 1838, the first floor was cut off, and the upper level lowered to the ground. The building rests on a foundation that is a mix of 19th century quarried granite block and fieldstone. (The granite block was added in 2006.) The roof is clad with asphalt shingles. (Sometime between 1979 and 2001, a brick chimney with a corbeled cap projected from the ridge, near the southwest gable end.)

Exterior materials and finishes reflects substantial renovation work undertaken between 1987 and 2000, at which time the clapboards, window sash and trim, and doors were replaced. Trim consists of flat corner and fascia boards, and window and door casings.

Front (northeast) elevation. From the mid-19th c. until the late 1980s, the front door had four panel. (at right: detail of a late 19th century photograph in the collection of New Hampshire Historical Society)

Southeast elevation

Rear (southwest) and southeast elevations

Detail of rear (southwest) elevation. Double doors date from late 1980s, installed to infill a barn-type opening created in 1912. After the building was cut down in 1838, there was a likely another window in the middle of this bay, placed similarly to that on the opposite gable end.

Front (northeast) and northwest elevations

Detail of replacement siding and trim

Windows: Each of the eaves sides has four windows, leaving the middle bay blank. (In the late 18th c., an entry porch likely occupied this bay on the southeast side, and the pulpit window would have been in the lower part of the wall in the opposite bay explaining the two solid bays.) The front (northeast) gable end has a single window in each bay. The rear (southwest) gable end has only one window, located in the far left bay.

All of the window frames and sash date from the late 1980s. The sash are double hung, 12/12, with 7" x 9" glass. The opening for the window frame is slightly smaller than that which appears in the late 19th photographs. (The photographs also show the original windows had somewhat wider trim boards that abutted the eaves of the building.) A single, early, twelve-light sash survives in the building. Its muntin profile is more akin to a 1792 date than 1770, suggesting at least some window sash was replaced when the building underwent major work in 1792. Since the late 19th century photographs also depict 12/12 sash, it is likely the 1792 sash was retained

when the building was cut down. This one surviving sash would serve as a useful prototype should the existing windows ever need to be replaced again.

At left: detail of a replacement window. At right: sole surviving historic sash, likely from the 1791-92 era

Doors: Two exterior doors are found on the building, one at the front entry and one at the rear. The entry door was installed during the late 1980s renovation, replacing a four-panel door that, judging from historic photographs, likely dated from 1838, when the building was cut down to a single story. The opening measures 34." The rear door, which also dates from the late 1980s, is double-leafed. A wood platform with a simple railing and two steps provides access. (Prior to the late 1980s, there was an exterior, vertical-board, rolling barn-type door here, set within an opening that occupied the entire bay and accessed by a shallow ramp. That door was added in 1912, likely replacing a window.)

Interior

The Meeting House is entered from the middle of the northeast gable end into a small vestibule. On either side of the vestibule, there is a small room. Each of these three spaces was created in 1847 or 1848. The remainder of the interior is one open space. What must be remembered is that this entire space was the upper level of the building until 1838.

Interior view looking south showing southeast and southwest (rear) walls. Interior posts are not original. Wide opening in far corner was created for a barn-type door in 1912.

Interior view looking west showing southwest (rear) and northwest walls. Interior post in foreground is not original.

Interior view looking north, showing doorways into small front rooms and vestibule (partitioned off in 1847 or 1848)

Framing: All of the posts and the plates are visible from the ground level, and the roof system from the attic. The posts correspond to the building's four interior bents, although two inner posts remain, both on the fourth bent. Perimeter posts are covered with plain boards, nailed with cut nails, indicating the covers date from 1838 or 1848. They were probably added in part to finish off the building when it became a Town Hall, and in part to hide the holes for the wind braces, which were removed at that time to increase head room. In addition to the perimeter posts, there are two interior posts, both on the fourth bent. Neither is original.

Interior view showing original (1769) posts and plate along eaves wall

The roof frame, which dates from 1768-69, consists of hewn principal rafters, hewn purlins and vertical sheathing boards. Of six pairs of rafters, one is replaced and others have been repaired. Some of the sheathing boards are original and others have been replaced.

We noted a mistake or two in the process of actually "cutting" the frame and its framing components back in the late 18th century. The building was probably in the process of construction when these mistakes were discovered. When the framing system was "figured," each gable-end of the truss was short one corresponding stud. Someone probably ran out to the woods, cut a tree about the size and length needed, and then placed this "new" stud in the correct mortise hole as the gable end framing was being erected. This new "last minute" stud would not be noticeable to the public in the unfinished attic.

Roof framing system, showing original (1769) hewn rafters and purlins. The white patch shows an area that had gotten wet and may need to be repaired (or replaced with like material if it is not salvageable). The left vertical brace is one that was added to keep the collar tie from sagging. The sheathing boards seen in this photograph are replacements.

Walls: Walls are covered with split/accordion lath, secured with cut nails and, nearly everywhere, plaster. In several areas, what is clearly 19th century writing, as well as perhaps some early 20th century writing, and drawings appear on the plaster.

An unpainted wainscot comprised of two horizontally positioned boards extends around the perimeter of the exterior walls, including in the small rooms at the northeast end. The boards are fastened with wrought iron nails, indicating they date from 1792, when the gallery was built. The angled cap on the wainscot, however, is nailed with cut nails, and probably dates from 1848, ten years after the building was cut down to a single story and at which time the walls were plastered (with the existing plaster). The wainscot on the interior walls of the two small rooms was installed in 1847 or 1848, when those rooms were partitioned off.

Detail of 1792 wainscot, showing also the 1838-1847/48 wainscot cap and post covers.

18th c. butterfly wrought iron nail found in wainscot

Detail of split/accordion lath on walls

Ceiling: The ceiling is split/accordion lath; none of the plaster remains.[1] Cut nails hold the lath in place to the ceiling joists, indicating the existing ceiling dates from either the 1838 or 1848 remodeling activity. (Oddly enough, there is no physical evidence of an earlier plaster ceiling and/or framing: the building has its original collar ties, and there is no sign of joist pockets in the ties. If the ceiling was above the ties, one would expect to see a plaster shadow line—again missing. Yet, a meeting house open to the roof frame would have been highly unusual.)

[1] The missing plaster is due to structural failure. When the building was cut down in 1838, the town removed the wind braces, in order to acquire better head room. However, in so doing, they undermined the roof system. Years of snow load pressure on the rafters, coupled with the weight of the ceiling joists and lath, caused the ceiling to flex and ultimately break the plaster keys, making it disengage and fall.

Detail of ceiling, showing split/accordion lath and joists

View of ceiling joists and lath, as seen from attic

Floor: A new sub-floor was installed during the 1987-1990 renovation. When the building was cut down, it was probably lowered onto the original ground level flooring system. (Logistically, if they had removed the ground level floor system first, they would not have had a very good surface from which to operate. Also, since the second floor had a gallery, they would have had to patch in new framing and flooring in the open area.) In 1912, when the building became a barn, some of the flooring was likely replaced.

Window & Door Casings: Some historic window casings survive, all dating from the 1830-40 period. They are flat, unpainted boards. Similarly, the door casings leading into the three small spaces at the northeast end of the building, dating from the late 1840s, survive; they, too, are flat and unpainted.

1830-40s door casings located at doorways to small front rooms and vestibule

Interior Doors: As late as 1987, mid-19th century doors opened into the two small front rooms.

Mid-19th c. doors that once led to the two front rooms and vestibule, photographed ca. 1987. New Durham Historical Collection

Additional Architectural Features:

- Chimney: Part of the chimney that serviced the stoves remains at the southwest end of the building. (It originally extended above the ridgeline.) It is constructed of brick and plastered over. The chimney was in place by 1848 and possibly earlier.

Remains of chimney near southwest (rear) wall

- Stove openings: Two small, square openings are found in the northwest wall, indicating individual stoves provided heat to each room. The pipe from each space would have joined at some point before reaching the chimney. The openings probably date from 1848, when the rooms were created and a stove installed.

Looking northeast toward the two small rooms at the front of the building. The square openings once held stove pipes connecting the stoves in the small rooms with the chimney on the southwest wall.

- Moderator's box & Speaker's platform: In the middle of the main room, near the southwest wall, there is a wood moderator's box. It is roughly finished, made of two horizontal boards, an intermediary batten, and a baseboard along the front face, and vertical boards on the two sides. In front of it there appears to be the remnants of a speaker's platform. Both were probably built shortly after the building became the town hall in 1838.

- Seating: No historic seating survives, but rudimentary benches existed around at least parts of the wall perimeter as late as 1987. Photographic evidence precludes dating them from 1792, but they may have been installed during the 1838-1847/48 renovation period. Shadow lines of the benches remain visible.

The benches that lined some of the outer walls are visible in this photograph, taken in 1987.

Moderator's box with remnants of speaker's platform

Interior view showing moderator's box at center. Interior posts are not original.

Existing Conditions Survey

Site
Trees on the southeast side of the building (between the building and the pound) and along the southwest side are shading the building such that there is inadequate air circulation. This has caused mildew to accumulate on the roof and siding.

Foundation
The existing foundation (unmortarted granite blocks and stones) rests on a combination of ledge and soil. There are also areas of crushed stone, which were added in 2006 to improve drainage. Building elevation measurements taken around the building over the last two years suggest that the foundation is reasonably stable.

In 2006, the town contracted with JR Graton and Kevin Fife to repair the stone foundation. They removed a portion of the original stone work and replaced it with early 19th century split stones. Photographic documentation from that time indicates that the building was "held in place" and stones were removed and then replaced in areas that had shifted or otherwise changed. Some crushed stone was added to allow for drainage.


The east corner of the Meeting House showing the post-2006 foundation.

Because the siding, trim and windows had been replaced in the 1980s (and made plumb and level), a full jacking of the structure was not carried out, as those sections would have to be "released and/or removed" first. While the good-faith effort to stabilize the foundation in 2006 was successful, the jacking of the building will still need to be addressed so that the posts/plates/rafters can be at the appropriate elevations.

Structural Systems
Sills and floor joists: The sills and floor joists have been repaired and/or replaced over the years. The only original members still in use may be select portions of the sill. A new sub-floor was installed during the 1987-1990 renovation. When the building was cut down, it was probably

lowered onto the original ground level flooring system. (Logistically, if they had removed the ground level floor system first, they would not have had a very good surface from which to operate. Also, since the second floor had a gallery, they would have had to patch in new framing and flooring in the open area.)

Existing floor finish dating from ca. 1990

Posts, girts and plates: These framing members appear to be in reasonable condition, although there may be exterior surface damage to the "plates" (remember that the building was cut-down, so that we currently are looking at the original *second* floor sidewall framing).

Roof truss systems and purlins: After the building was cut down to a one-story structure, the wind braces were removed from the interior of the middle bents (their original purpose was to help brace and keep the collar ties in place). This was done to create a typical, open meeting space.

Physical evidence indicates that the ceiling was likely lathed/plastered for the first and only time during this period. The weight of the additional ceiling joists/lath/plaster, coupled with yearly snow load pressure on the rafters, caused the collar ties to sag and the ceiling to flex, thereby breaking the "keys" of the plaster, allowing the plaster to disengage and fall down.

Attic roof system and bracing, with later additional bracing.

Originally, the braces going from the top of the collar tie to the rafters did not need to be pegged since they were always under compression and could therefore not fall out. However, once the wind braces were removed from the middle bents (as described earlier) and the ceiling joists were added and plastered, the roof truss system lost part of its support. Therefore, while the original brace did not require a pegged connection where the collar tie meets the rafter (particularly near the middle of the truss), the altered configuration should have had a pegged connection. The sagging of the collar ties from the weight of the additional ceiling joists, boards, lath and plaster, as well as the removal of the wind braces between the collar ties and posts, have caused the other braces to drop out and new, longer braces were needed.

Looking up at the joists and lath of the ceiling, where the plaster has fallen away.

The rafters appear to be in reasonably good condition. One rafter has been replaced and others show a discoloration that indicates water damage that may need to be addressed. The purlins also appear to be in reasonably good condition with some replacement/repair and discoloration indicating potential repairs needed. Some of the purlins evidence deflection/sagging, which is not unusual in an 18th century building.

Roof Sheathing/Finish: The roof sheathing appears serviceable. One side has been replaced recently. However, it, too, should be checked the next time the roofing is replaced. The existing asphalt roofing does not appear to be leaking. The asphalt shingles have been replaced more recently on the southeast side. The northwest side shows more wear.

Exterior Architectural Elements

The exterior surfaces of the building (trim, windows, doors and clapboards) were replaced in the late 1980s with new materials. The replacement window units (frame and sash) are slightly smaller than the original openings. A window sash found in the building is probably a second generation sash (circa 1792), but could possibly date to the original construction of the building. This sash is important for two reasons. First, it helps define the sash configuration (twelve-over-twelve) and also the individual glass size (7" x 9"). Second, paint samples can help determine the color history of the exterior and/or interior of that sash. If the clapboards, windows and trim are removed in the future, additional paint analysis may be possible where paint may have adhered to the original sheathing boards.

Historic window sash

Interior Architectural Elements

The interior architectural elements appear to date from the 1838 to 1847/1848 time period, which is after the building was cut down to a one-story structure. The only exception is the perimeter wainscot, which appears to be from ca. 1792. These boards (unpainted or with a slight wash) are held in place with hand wrought nails and in some areas they are held in place with a mixture of hand wrought and cut nails, which may indicate a re-use of older material, including nails.

The interior post covers and perimeter wainscot cap are unpainted and are held in place with cut nails also consistent with the 1838 to 1847/1848 date.

A section of the first floor wall showing wainscot with cap and a covered post

Detail of a butterfly, wrought iron nail in the wainscot

The configuration of the interior partitions and the moderator's box (extant) and elevated speaker's platform (no longer in place) corresponds with the 1847/1848 work relating to the building being converted to town hall space.

Looking southwest toward the moderator's box. Note also the ceiling joists, seen where the plaster has disengaged. Remains of the stove chimney can be seen in the center of this image, above the moderator's box.

The structural supports for the ceiling lath and plaster are re-used water-powered sawn floor joists that have been roughly split and then attached to the collar ties with cut nails. These floor joists most likely were the floor joists from the galleries and were split and re-used after the building was cut down to one story in 1838. The lath is attached to these added floor joists with cut nails, and no earlier nail holes appear in these ceiling joists.

A view of the ceiling joists from above.

The chimney appears to date to 1847/1848 as well. The small openings in each of the two smaller rooms indicate a stove in each room. Each stove would have its own stove pipe that exited through the hole in the wall and then run along the ceiling in the meeting room to connect together before entering the chimney.

Looking northeast toward the two small rooms at the front of the building. The square openings once held stove pipes connecting the stoves in the small rooms with the chimney on the southwest wall.

Mechanical and Electrical Systems
There are currently no existing electrical, plumbing, heating and/or cooling systems. Electricity is supplied to a pole located outside the building. When electricity is needed for a function or event, a large extension cord is run into the building. Historically, an exterior outhouse would have provided the necessary bathroom accommodations, oil lamps the illumination and wood stoves and the pipes running across the ceiling would have provided the heating. Cooling would have been accomplished by opening the windows on a hot day.

ADA
Current ADA access is through the door on the rear gable end, facing the woods.

Preservation Guidelines for Needed Work

Overall Approach to Treatment
Although the New Durham Meeting House was constructed in 1770, its present manifestation reflects the last of three major renovations, all of which dramatically altered its appearance: in 1792, galleries and an exterior porch were added; in 1838, the building was "cut down" to a single story; and in 1847 or 1848 much of the interior was finished off. Today, with the exception of the frame and most of the wainscot, the surviving historic fabric dates from this last period. Thus, it is the strong recommendation of the consultants that any future work, whether it be exterior or interior, preserve the building to the 1838 -1847/1848 era.

Accordingly, we recommend that the work program follow *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Preservation* as outlined below. In essence, protection, maintenance and repair of historic fabric is emphasized, while replacement is minimized. If it becomes necessary to replace a material, it should be replaced with like materials.

Work Phases
Phase 1:

- **Remove** the trees on the easterly side of the building (toward the town pound) and the southerly side (toward the woods) to allow for increased air-flow and sunlight. This is necessary to help dry out the building and correct the current mildew situation.

- **Provide** ADA access with a removable ramp at the front entrance.

At the moment, there are no other structural issues that pose an immediate threat to the building. However, this will change. A primary concern is the risk of further deflection in any of the roof framing components due to their weakened state and potential snow loads. Measurements should be taken three times: in the fall, in the winter when there is a snow load, and in the spring. With a load of snow on the roof, the wood framing system will flex to some degree, but it should then return to its pre-load fall condition. Over time, however, sagging of the timbers can lead to breaks. Monitoring the situation is critical and included under the regular maintenance schedule outlined below.

ESTIMATED COST: $6,300
TIME PERIOD: As soon as possible

Phase 2:
Due to the scope of the work, Phase 2 needs to be completed as a whole. When undertaking these major exterior repairs, approach the building as a complete restoration project, following the *Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for Preserving Historic Buildings*.

Exterior repairs need to precede any interior work.

Phase 2 work should include roof repairs and new roof finish, as well as new windows, doors, clapboards, trim, etc. This work should be based on historical documentary and physical evidence. It should not include electrical or any interior work at this time. The entire process

should be documented with drawings, photography and video.

ESTIMATED COST: $139,500 (with 10% contingency)
TIME PERIOD: When any major repairs are next needed on the building

Specific work items are as follows, though not necessarily in this sequence, as site conditions or unknown building situations may require a different order of work and/or additional steps.

- **Document** any/all important drawings/writing on the existing interior plaster. (Even though the work in this phase is limited to the exterior, the interior plaster may inadvertently be disturbed. Thus it is important that this documentation occur first.)

- **Develop** a stabilization plan for the plaster based on a careful evaluation of the existing conditions by a preservation contractor with experience with historic plaster prior to the onset of any exterior work. (This process may require the removal of sections of plaster that could either be re-installed at a later date or be used as framed wall sections for display. This would particularly apply to the drawings/writing on the plaster, which are high significance to the history of the building.)

- **Remove** trim/siding/windows (holes will be filled-in temporarily).

  NB: Take advantage of the time when the sheathing under the clapboards is exposed; it provides the only opportune time to define more precisely the actual location of the porch(es) and the approximate size of the pulpit window, as well as any other historic features. For example, paint samples taken from the sheathing could help create a more accurate color history of the building. ***Thus, we highly recommend that the project manager and/or town historian, using this Building Assessment, analyze and document all of the sheathing at this time.***

- **Jack up** the building

- **Repair or replace** sills where needed.

- **Add** additional stone work to the foundation as needed to fill in the voids.

- **Remove** the jacks.

- **Open up** the roof system for appropriate repair/replacement where required. This would include plate damage. This would also include engineering fees for the roof truss systems.

- **Close** the roof back in.

- **Prepare and install** appropriate trim and corner boards (brushed or sanded, back-primed and painted).

- **Install** a new 35-year architectural asphalt roof with ice and water shield. Historically, the roof would have had wood shingles. However, wood shingles will cost more and have a shorter life span.

- **Prepare and install** newly-made windows and sash that replicate the ca. 1792 window sash found on site and use old glass. Install new door frames and doors that match those in historic photographs.

- **Install** quarter-sawn spruce clapboards (brushed or sanded, back-primed and painted before installation).

- **Paint** a second coat over the whole exterior.

- **Clean up** site.

Phase 3:
Phase 3 includes renovating the interior with insulation, new plaster and finish floor and outfitting the building with electricity. As with Phase 2, the work needs to be completed as a whole. The entire process should be documented with drawings, photography and video.

ESTIMATED COST: $120,800 (with 10% contingency)
TIME PERIOD: Following, or in concert with, Phase 2

Specific work items are as follows, though not necessarily in this sequence, as site conditions or unknown building situations may require a different order of work and/or additional steps.

- **Document** the interior.

- **Remove** all non historic material. **Transfer** all historical material to storage.

- **Cover** existing historical trim, etc., to help prevent damage.

- **Remove** the remaining ceiling plaster and lath.

- **Repair and/or remove** damaged wall plaster and/or lath. This is a section-by-section process—some sections may require removal of just the plaster, others both plaster and lath. In some sections, the plaster may be stabilized and retained.

- **Install** an electrical panel and wiring for the building. (This would also be a good time to explore the possibility of relocating the electric lines across the road. It is not unusual to have a power company help financially in a building project of this importance.)

- **Install** new lath ceiling.

- **Insulate** the sidewalls. (Regardless of whether or not the building is to be heated at this time, this would be the best and most economical opportunity to install insulation.)

- **Install** a vapor barrier in all sections where plaster has been removed. This may be a combination of 6 mil. plastic and/or vapor barrier paint, taking into consideration areas of plaster that may or may not be left intact.

- **Repair and/or replace** the interior trim with "like materials" where required.

- **Install** lath in areas of the sidewall that have been removed.

- **Plaster** the ceiling.

- **Plaster or repair** the sidewalls based on the outcome of the analysis undertaken in Phase 2. (In the smaller rooms and vestibule, this should be done in concert with the ceiling plastering, as there is no trim in those areas.)

- **Install** a new finish floor.

- **Insulate** the area above the new ceiling.

- **Paint** areas where required.

- **Clean up**.

Total Project Cost
Phase #1, #2 and #3 are estimated at: $266,600 (with 10% contingency, *but excluding* water, septic, plumbing and heating) or $317,000 (with 10% contingency *and including* water, septic, plumbing, heating and electrical included within an addition or an outbuilding)

NB: If water and a bathroom are added, it would be less obtrusive and more economical to keep them out of the existing building. Instead, a separate building or an addition could house a bathroom and small kitchen. This outbuilding/addition could be constructed at the same time or at a later date, although it would be optimal to plan for it as part of Phase 3. The best location for the outbuilding/addition is off the rear (southwest) of the Meeting House.

On-going Schedule of Maintenance
Whether or not a major restoration occurs, responsible monitoring and on-going maintenance are always needed to ensure that small problems do not become large ones. The following serves as a guide:

- The building needs to be monitored/checked at least twice a year to make sure that the building envelope remains weather-tight (i.e. roof, windows, doors, siding) and that the structural issues described under Phase 1 do not get worse.

- In the summer, the building needs to be adequately ventilated, using seasonally secured window louvers and leaving screened gaps in the foundation.

Potential Future Uses

Since 1987, the New Durham Meeting House has been in town ownership. After a major renovation effort that was largely completed in 2000, the building has been used for occasional special events, such as a Halloween haunted house, arts & crafts fair, historical performances inside and along a walking trail, Christmas caroling, a few weddings, and at least one memorial service. The good stewardship of the townspeople has paid off, ensuring that the building is stabilized and able to be used at some level.

A town-appointed committee oversees day-to-day management of the Meeting House—an excellent arrangement as long as it remains active. The committee recognizes that people must be engaged in how the building is used and sustained—develop a sense of ownership—for its future to be viable. To that end, it has recommended that future uses involve the community, be family-oriented and have some tie to local history. Ideas include picnics, Easter egg hunts, musical or theatrical events, re-enactments, and either temporary or permanent exhibits or displays of artifacts. All of these are very appropriate.

Ultimately, the building's future use will depend in large part on whether an outbuilding or addition with modern conveniences (water, septic, heat and a small kitchen for at least heating up meals, etc.) is added, and whether the interior of the building is heated. If it is to be used for historical artifacts, a climate control system should be installed in at that section of the building (at a minimum).

Appendix B:
Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Preservation

1. A property will be used as it was historically, or be given a new use that maximizes the retention of distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships. Where a treatment and use have not been identified, a property will be protected and, if necessary, stabilized until additional work may be undertaken.

2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The replacement of intact or repairable historic materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.

3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Work needed to stabilize, consolidate, and conserve existing historic materials and features will be physically and visually compatible, identifiable upon close inspection, and properly documented for future research.

4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.

5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.

6. The existing condition of historic features will be evaluated to determine the appropriate level of intervention needed. Where the severity of deterioration requires repair or limited replacement of a distinctive feature, the new material will match the old in composition, design, color, and texture.

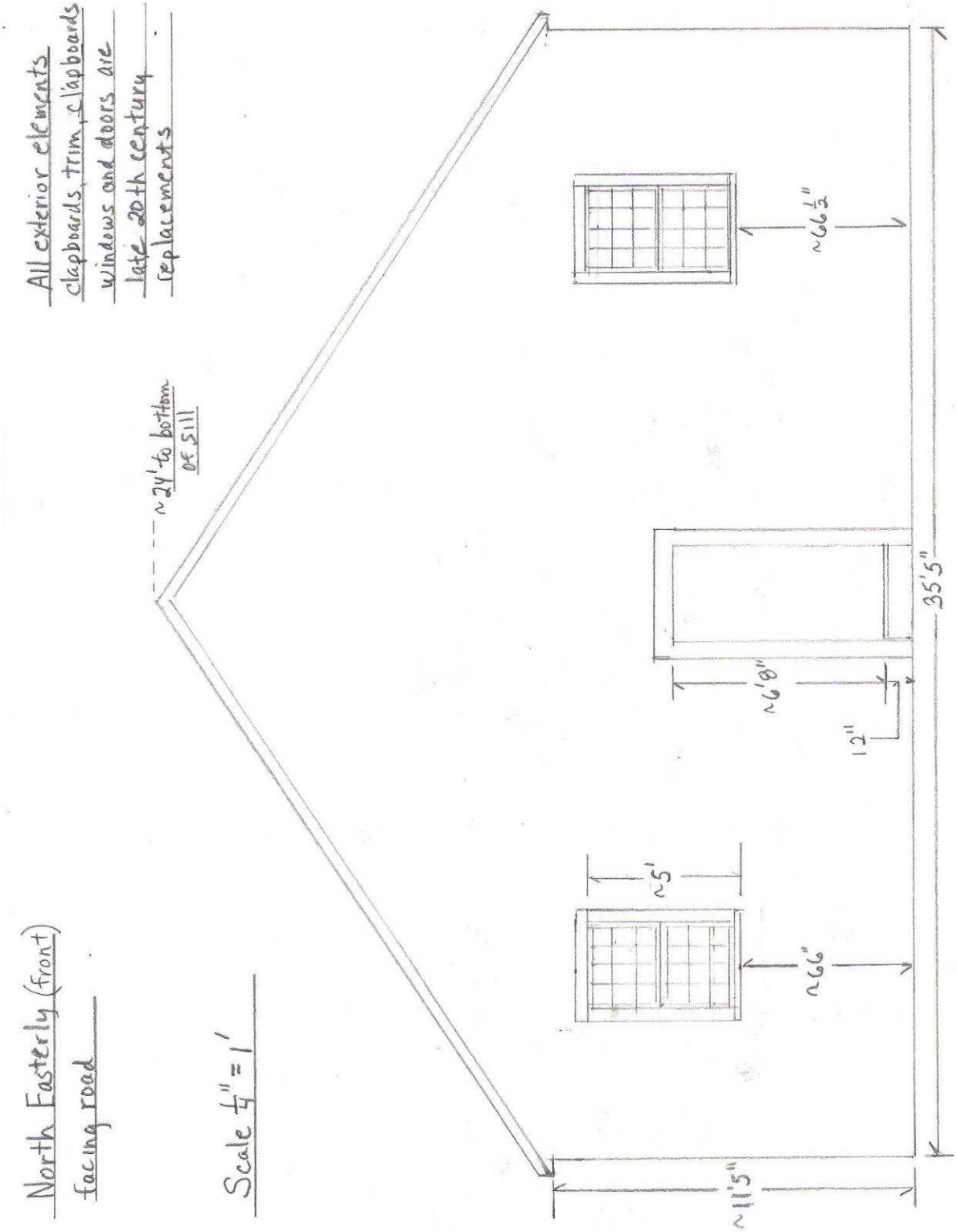
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.

8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.

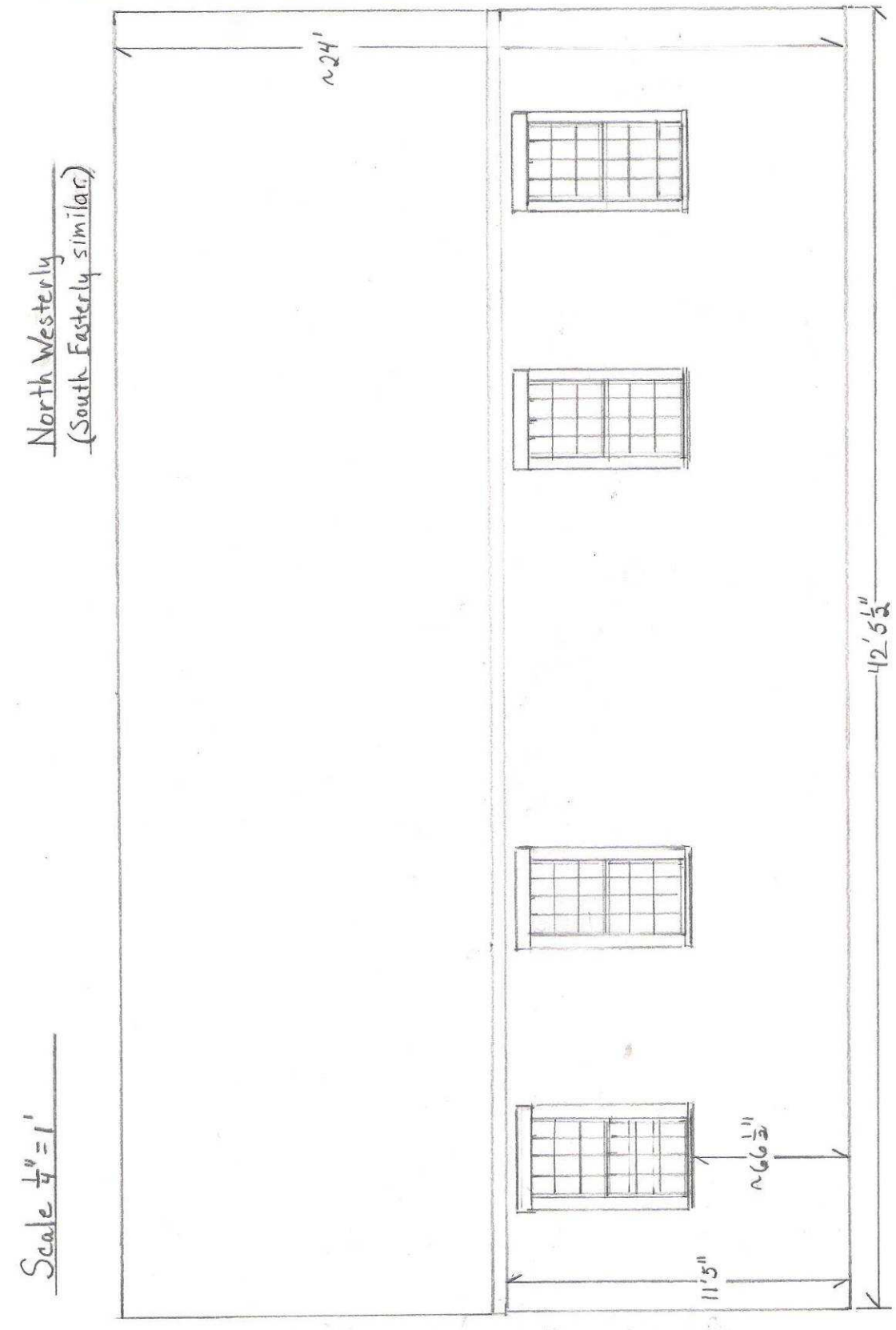
For more information, visit the National Park Service's website for these standards:
http://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/arch_stnds_8_2.htm

Measured Drawings

(scale may be slightly off in scanned images)



All exterior elements are replacements
All measurements approximate
~24' to bottom of sill
~6'8"
~12"
35'4½"
~5'
~6'8"
~11'5"
South Westerly (rear)
Scale ¼" = 1'

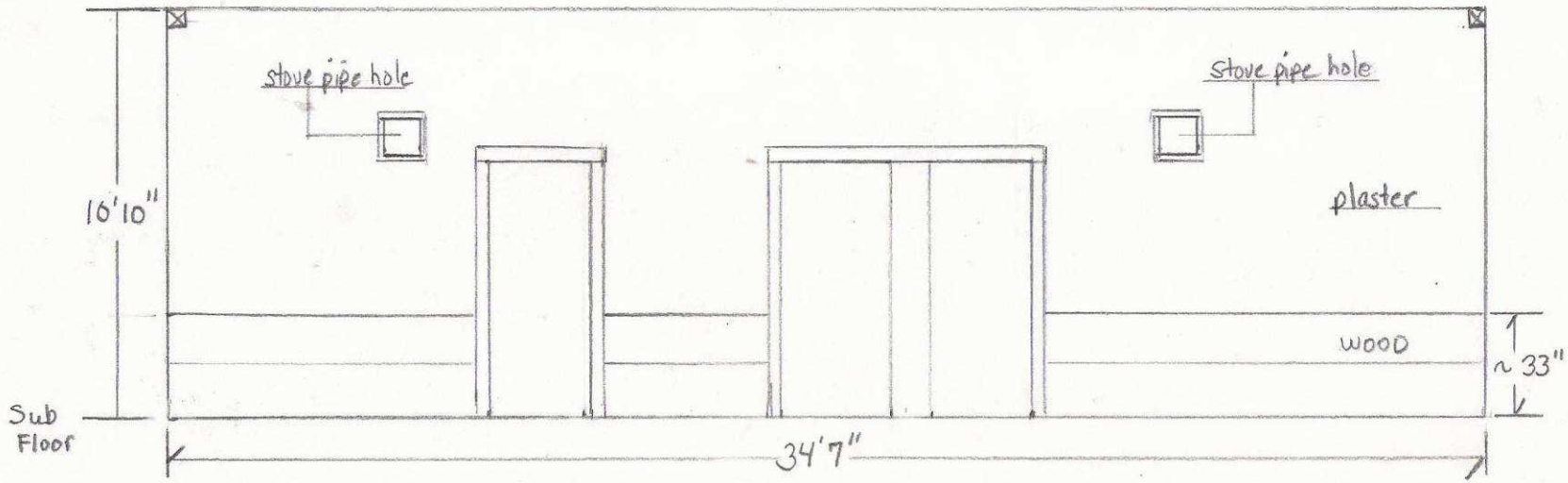

North Westerly
(South Easterly similar)
~24'
42'5½"
~6 6½"
11'5"
Scale ¼" = 1'

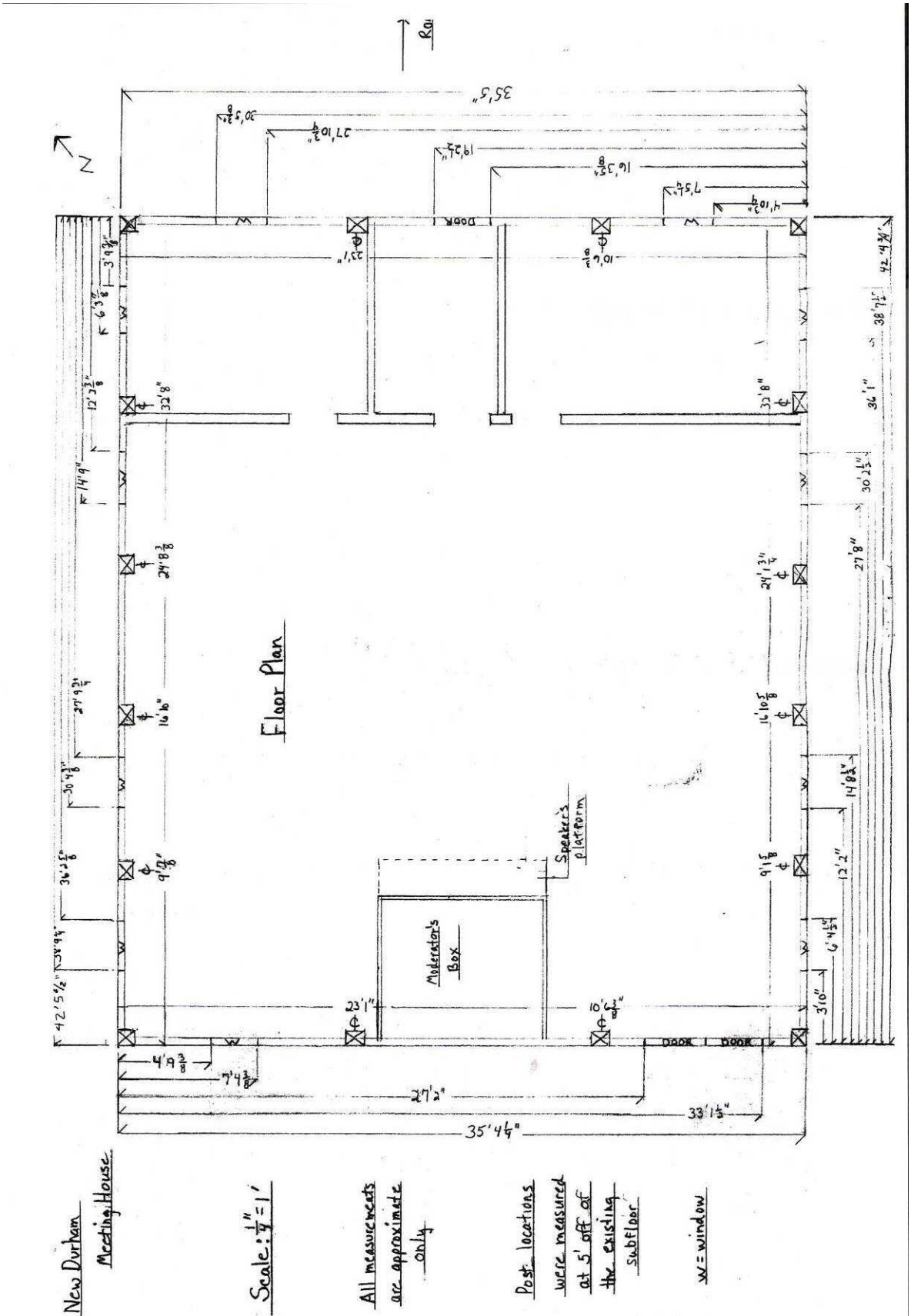
Scale $\frac{1}{4}" = 1"$

ceiling height in building varies from 10'7" - 10'-10" except in vestibule @ 7'-10"

exterior wall wainscot height between $36\frac{1}{2}"$ - 38" off of sub floor including slanted cap.

Interior Partition facing road (from meeting room)




Floor Plan
Speakers platform
Moderator's Box
DOOR
DOOR
35'5"
35'4½"
33'1½"
27'2"
New Durham Meeting House
Scale: ¼" = 1'
All measurements are approximate only
Post locations were measured at 5' off of the existing subfloor
W = window