

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Langdon Meeting House

Other names/site number: Langdon Town Hall

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

## 2. Location

Street & number: 5 Walker Hill Road

City or town: Langdon State: New Hampshire County: Sullivan

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national      X statewide      X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A      \_\_\_ B      X C      \_\_\_ D

Neeshi Mulwa, DSHPO

11/19/19

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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|   |  |
|---|--|
| In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria. |  |
| <hr/>   | <hr/>  |
| <b>Signature of commenting official:</b>  | <b>Date</b>  |
| <hr/>   | <hr/>  |
| <b>Title :</b>  | <b>State or Federal agency/bureau<br/>or Tribal Government</b> |

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**4. National Park Service Certification** I  
hereby certify that this property is: \_\_\_ entered in the  
National Register \_\_\_ determined eligible for the  
National Register \_\_\_ determined not eligible for  
the National Register \_\_\_ removed from the  
National Register  
\_\_\_ other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**5. Classification Ownership**

**of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:

Public – Local

Public – State

Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)

District

Site

Structure

Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

| Contributing | Noncontributing |            |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| <u>2</u>     | _____           | buildings  |
| _____        | _____           | sites      |
| _____        | _____           | structures |
| _____        | _____           | objects    |
| <u>2</u>     | _____           | Total      |

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use Historic Functions**

GOVERNMENT / town hall

RELIGIOUS / religious facility

**Current Functions**

GOVERNMENT / town hall

SOCIAL / meeting hall

SOCIAL / \_\_\_\_\_ civic

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**7. Description Architectural Classification**

Georgian

**Materials:**

Principal exterior materials of the property: Foundation: stone; Walls: wood; Roof: slate

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**Narrative Description Summary Paragraph**

The Langdon Meeting House was constructed from 1801 to 1803 in a simplified Georgian style and updated in a Greek Revival style in 1851. The building is located in the village center of Langdon, a rural town of about 700 people, at the intersection of Walker Hill Road and Holden

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Hill Road (see Figure 1, Location Map and Figure 2, Site Plan). On the north side of the meetinghouse, the land slopes upward to a stone wall running along the boundary with the town cemetery. At the east end of the meetinghouse parcel is the town's former Salt Shed originally a tool shed when built about 1905. The small gable-roofed clapboarded Salt Shed is a contributing building to the meetinghouse property.

The two-story gable-roof meetinghouse has a rectangular-plan, king post-and-beam frame, measuring 40' x 50' (Figure 2, Photos 1-10, accompany this discussion). A modern concrete foundation (2009) is faced with the original granite block foundation stones replaced in their original location and appearance. The building is sheathed in eastern white pine clapboards, many dating to the original 1803 construction. The slate roofing covers older wooden shingles still in place. A three-story steeple is mounted on the west end of the roof. Windows are wood double hung, 6/6 on the first floor, 12/12 on the second floor. There are two primary entrances both with Classical detailing: the south entrance has double doors under a full pediment; the west entrance has a single door under a flat portico. Although the original external, covered stairways (porches) were removed in 1851, this building was originally a twin porch meetinghouse typical of those constructed with the initial settlement of a town and of which less than six are known to survive in New Hampshire.<sup>1</sup> Langdon Meeting House was listed on the New Hampshire Register of Historic Places on July 30, 2012 for its architectural and historic significance.

### **Narrative Description**

#### Site:

The Langdon Meeting House is located on a rare level piece of ground next to the hillside cemetery that predates the meetinghouse by eleven years. The village center consists of the Congregational Church (1842), a two room school house (1938), an old one story firehouse (1960), the old town tool shed (circa 1905), and a few private homes. The closest home, across the common to the south, being the former 1795 Elijah Putnam Tavern. Sometime in the twentieth century Walker Hill Road was straightened and re-routed through the common, now passing within fifteen feet of the meetinghouse. A section of the original road still runs in front of the former Putnam Tavern. Artifacts recovered during an archeological study revealed that most social activity historically took place on the south side of the meetinghouse on this common.

#### Alteration of 1851:

In 1851, in order to comply with New Hampshire's Toleration Act of 1819 and physically and financially separate the religious and government functions within the meetinghouse, the Town agreed to sell to The Universalist Society of Langdon the first ten feet of the first floor of the building in from the west entrance and the entire second story gallery space. The Universalists then converted this space by adding a full second floor between the galleries. Long abandoned and unusable due to building codes, it remains a time capsule of that period. Box pews and raised

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<sup>1</sup> Letter, Christine Fonda Rankie, National Register Coordinator, New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources, to Helen Koss, Town of Langdon Building Committee, December 4, 2006. Filed with Langdon Heritage Commission.

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dais were constructed in a “reverse pulpit” configuration. Also at this time, 1851, the east and west porches were removed. The two existing interior staircases at the west end of the building were constructed within the purchased ten feet for access to the second floor. The west porch and its exterior staircase were replaced with the present entrance portico. Over half of the original second floor 6/6 windows that mirrored the size and location of those on the first floor were removed, boarded up and the siding patched with new clapboards. The remaining second floor window openings were increased in height and fitted with 12/12 sash. The location and size of the original second floor windows is in evidence by the joints and finish of the 1851 clapboard work. A three-story steeple with Classical detailing in the Greek Revival style was added to the west end of the roof over the new church entrance as part of the 1851 renovation. This effectively changed the main entrance from the southern long side of the building to the west gable end under the new steeple.

#### Exterior and Structural Characteristics:

The large double door on the long south side of the structure is framed on either side by pilasters and is capped with a full pediment (Photo No. 8). The original wrought iron strap hinges are still in place (Photo No. 12). This “Door of Honor” originally opened onto the center aisle between wall to wall box pews offering an unobstructed view of the raised pulpit at the north wall and the illumination window elevated on the wall behind it. The pulpit and window were removed in the 1851 renovation; the size and location of the window is evidenced by the clapboard patchwork.

The original Langdon Meeting House construction of 1801-1803 included exterior porches at the east and west ends of the building offering stairway access to the second floor gallery. These porches were removed in 1851 and two interior staircases installed inside the building flanking the west entry door (Photo No. 13, 14). The west entry serves as the primary access to the building (Photo No. 9). It includes a single-wide four-panel door under a flat portico with a wide entablature supported by square columns. The portico rests on granite steps added in 2010 to replace concrete steps. An additional entry door with a portico and wheelchair ramp was added in 2015 at the northeast corner of the building to meet ADA and fire code (Photo No. 5, 6). The new door is located in the same location as an original door leading to a privy that was originally attached or very close to the building.

Thirty three wood double hung windows light the building including nineteen 6/6 windows on the first floor and ten 12/12 twelve windows on the second floor (Photo Nos. 1-6). Two 12/12 windows in the gable walls date to the original 1803 construction. Many of the windows contain the original glass from 1851.

A three-story Greek revival steeple was added to the west end of the roof in 1851 (Photo Nos. 14, 10). The tower section has one fixed 12-light window on the east side. The belfry section has paired louvered shutters for attic ventilation in rectangular openings on all four sides. A bell was

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never installed in the belfry.<sup>2</sup> The spire is pyramidal and topped with a five-foot weather vane cast by Langdon resident Lemuel Huntoon. The steeple is visible from Interstate 91 in Vermont, approximately twelve miles to the west. Restoration of the spire in 2009 replaced rotted clapboards and sheathing. The original four long saplings that form the structural frame of the spire were determined sound and left in place.

#### Interior, First Floor:

The first floor is accessed by three exterior doors, previously described. The first floor consists of a large open meeting area occupying the east two-thirds (~ 40') of the building and a staircase, office and lavatory area occupying the west third (Figure 2; Photo No. 11). A north-south load bearing wall separates the two areas. The meeting area is interrupted only by load bearing columns that carry the second floor structural system installed in 1851. A plaster ceiling obscures the details of the floor system. The columns are boxed with finished boards and decorated at the top with bands of crown molding in a vernacular interpretation of Classical styling that may suggest the Tuscan order of column detailing. In the mid-twentieth century two of the 1851 columns were removed when the aforementioned load-bearing wall was installed to create the office spaces.

Originally the first floor was a single open room filled with box pews. The pews were removed in 1851, leaving trim boards on the north and south walls to which the pews were attached. It has not been determined if the original first-floor box pews were purchased by the Universalists in 1851 and are those presently installed on the second floor. The pews were replaced by long movable wooden benches for use by townspeople during the ongoing annual town meetings and social gatherings held in the room. Several of these ca.1851 benches remain serving the same purpose (Photo No. 11).

A raised stage, 12'-6" x 13'-8", is centered at east end of the meeting room. It is estimated the stage was installed sometime after the Civil War when presentations and entertainment became common in New England meetinghouses. During the 1930's the floor of the meeting room was shimmed to be made level and a hardwood floor layed over the building's original wide pine boards.

In the mid-twentieth century the west 20' of the first floor was partitioned into an office for the town clerk in the southwest corner and for a police officer in the northwest corner. It was probably at this time that the two interior staircases to the second floor built in 1851 by the Universalists were enclosed and fitted with doors at the foot of the stairs. In 2015 the town clerk's office was converted into a rest room. It was at this time the building's first well was dug, water supplied and a septic system was installed. The police office was converted to an area to display some of Langdon's historic artifacts.

#### Interior, Second Floor:

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<sup>2</sup> According to the F. B. Kingsbury history of the town (1932), John Langdon (1741-1819) was so moved by having the town named after him he promised a bell should a steeple ever be added. Unfortunately he was long dead when the steeple was constructed in 1851.

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Two interior staircases flank the west entry and lead up to a foyer that was the west gallery prior to the construction of the second floor in 1851 (Photo Nos. 13, 14). The foyer is 10' deep, corresponding to the building's first floor section purchased by the Universalists, and separated from the congregation hall, or auditorium, with a partition wall fitted with two door openings. The foyer retains its lath and plaster walls and curving vaulted ceiling from the original construction of the building. The stair balustrades are simple, with round shaved balustrades and plain turned newel posts with ball caps.

The second floor auditorium is the same size as the first floor meeting room with the exception that the three exterior walls were increased in thickness into the room by roughly 6", presumably to provide an insulating airspace in the walls (Photo Nos. 15, 16). The windows are trimmed with deep sills and jambs that reveal the wall modification. Two aisles extend from the door openings in the foyer partition wall to the east wall of the auditorium, flanked by box pews laid out in a reverse pulpit arrangement in which the congregation faces those entering the room. The last three rows of pew boxes on the east end of the room gradually elevate by three steps. A circa 1908 Geo. P. Bent pedal organ is located in this raised area, centered among the pews (Photo No. 16). Many of the pew backs are still cushioned in red velvet cloth stuffed with straw (Photo Nos. 16, 17). Some pews have seat cushions of varying designs made by the box owners to their own tastes. Low kneeling benches also remain in the boxes which also vary in style according to the preference of their owner. The aisle-end of the pews have scrolled arm rests and paneled doors. Along the north and south walls the pews abut paneled wainscoting that reaches the height of the window sills.

At the west end of the room against the foyer wall is a raised pulpit consisting of a simple paneled lectern flanked by stairs. An upholstered pew is located against the wall behind the lectern to accommodate additional speakers or honored guests. Two original brass oil lamps are mounted at each end of the lectern. The pulpit platform and the stairs are covered by its original ingrain carpet. The wood is painted in a pale yellow tone similar to the plaster walls.

Nineteenth century photos and earlier charcoal drawings of leading citizens adorned the walls until they were recently, temporarily removed for their protection during rehabilitation work.

The closed pews with original hardware, paneled wainscoting, the unique dais, stenciling at the top of the walls, in grain carpet on the floor, a six plate wood stove, hand shaved balusters and other original features make this space a time capsule of its period. Francis Kingsbury notes in his history of Langdon that on November 15, 1851 the Boston newspaper *The Trumpet*, reporting on the dedication services for the new Universalist "church" writes, "The portion of the house appropriated for a church is very finely finished. The aisles are carpeted and the pews are all cushioned and lined. It will seat about 300."

### Stove & Chimneys



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A wood stove is located in the northwest corner of the auditorium (Photo No. 19).<sup>3</sup> Its flue pipe, suspended by wires, runs horizontally across the entire length of the room to a brick interior chimney north east corner of the building (Photos No. 6, 16. This chimney was determined to be original to the building when it was reconstructed in 2010. Structural repairs made in the attic in 2008 revealed evidence that a second similar original interior chimney was originally located in the southeast corner of the building.

#### Foundation & Basement:

The building rests on a stone and concrete foundation with a partial basement and partial crawl space constructed in 2010. The original field stone foundation with granite slab facing supported the building over a dirt crawl space. In 2009 the stone foundation was determined to be structurally unsound. Portions of the wood sills and wood posts under carrying the interior columns were rotted and required replacement.

In 2010 the building was hydraulically lifted eight feet and temporarily supported on steel girders and wood blocks. Concrete footings and walls were poured to provide a partial basement with a fire resistant utility room for a furnace and sump pump. A second utility room houses the building's first water supply system. A "rat slab" of poured concrete covers the remaining crawl space areas that could not be excavated without blasting the granite bedrock. The original granite slab facing stone was reinstalled over the concrete foundation in their original location to match their original appearance.

Attic and steeple: The king-post and beam construction is visible in the attic. Four hand hewn 10 x 12 hardwood, slightly arched, collar ties reach forty feet to connect the outer walls and support the roof system. The king-posts sit atop them. Two original 12 over 12 double hung windows are at each gable end. Ladders are necessary to access the steeple; one to get into the tower, another to the belfry. One very old ladder is made of a split hard wood sapling with hand shaved rungs. There are louvered windows in the belfry and a small window on the back (east) wall of the tower. A few ancient, loose samplings are still placed horizontally in the joints where angled braces meet king posts. This is likely staging for the original builders.

#### Alterations:

This section provides a summary of alterations previously described with additional information. The building has undergone three major renovations. In 1851 the second-floor gallery was incorporated into a full second floor auditorium for worship space for the Langdon Universalist

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<sup>3</sup> After a 2018 visit to the Langdon Meeting House, Rodney Rowland of Strawberry Banke Museum in Portsmouth, NH, described the stove in an email to the Langdon Heritage Commission. "The stove is quite wonderful. It was made by a foundry company in Pittsford, VT owned by Chester Granger and his partner George W. Hodges. Chester's father, Simeon Granger started the company in 1826, but the company used the Granger & Hodges name only from 1846 to 1852, after George Hodges bought a share of the company. This stove is actually a 6-plate stove (it has no wood box access doors which would make it a 10 to 16 plate) with "raised collar boiler hole". A detail specific to his patent. Most of this type of stove are for houses and would sit on a stand. This one was clearly made for commercial use and sits on 4 lion paw, cabriole legs. A nice detail."

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Society. The exterior porches on the east and west ends of the building were removed. Two opposing interior stairways to the new separated church space were installed inside the west doorway which became the primary entry. The box pews were removed from the first floor and the space adapted into a large assembly hall where civic and social events could take place. A Greek revival steeple with a weather vane was placed on the west end of the roof. Sometime after this renovation a simple platform stage was erected along the center of the east wall. In 1883 walls were added to the south of the stage to create a selectmen's office. Walls were added to the north of the stage to create a kitchen about this time, later converted to a utility room and restroom since removed..

In 2009 the second major renovation was undertaken under the supervision of the Langdon Heritage Commission to repair and replace the foundation as previously described. The original fieldstone steps at the south entrance were saved and put back into place. The concrete steps at the west entrance were replaced with new, cut granite steps. In 2010 a well was drilled, septic system installed and a rest room added where the former town clerk's office was located.

The third major renovation, from 2014 to 2016 included alterations to meet life safety and ADA code requirements. A secondary exit with wheel chair accessibility was added at the southeast corner of the building. A handicap parking area, ramp and covered porch were added outside the new entry. Two interior partitions on either side of the stage not original to the building were removed as previously described. In 2018 exterior repairs to the clapboards and steeple were made, also previously described.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

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**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

**Areas of Significance**

Government

Religion

Architecture

**Period of Significance**

1801 - 1969

**Significant Dates**

1801

1851

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

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**Cultural Affiliation**

(Complete only if Criterion D is marked above.)

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**Architect/Builder**

John Chandler, Alstead NH, Builder

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph**

Langdon Meeting House is significant for its association with events and activities important to local and state history (Criterion A). After the French and Indian War, New Hampshire's Connecticut River valley became safe for settlement. Towns were soon established in areas away from the safety of the few fortified settlements. Langdon was formed in 1787 from the hinterlands of Charlestown to the north and Walpole to the south. In 1803 the townspeople erected the Meetinghouse to conduct the business of town government and for meetings of two religious congregations, the "Covenant of the Universal Church" and the "Congregational Church of Christ in Langdon."

In 1851 the government and religious uses were legally and physically separated within the building by constructing a second floor auditorium for church use. These alterations are intact with a high degree of integrity and physically represent an important event in American legal history, the so-called separation of church and state.

Meanwhile, Langdon citizens continued holding their annual New England style Town Meeting every year in the meetinghouse from 1803 to the present, a record that no other town in New Hampshire or the country has claimed to better. In 2009 the Meetinghouse received a citation from New Hampshire's Honorable Governor Jonathan Lynch, honoring its holding of 207 consecutive town meetings there.

Langdon Meeting House is an important example of the early New England meetinghouse architecture (Criterion C). Its importance is enhanced by the high level of integrity of design, materials and workmanship representative of its original construction in 1803 and the historically important alterations of 1851. Recent restoration and rehabilitation work has stabilized the structure and uncovered, repaired and preserved character defining features of the historic building type. The work was funded with state cultural preservation grants that required all work be done in compliance with the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties. In 2016 the building received the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance Achievement Award for historically appropriate rehabilitation work completed over the preceding ten years.

The period of significance for the Meeting House would extend from its original construction in 1801 through 1969 (the 50 year cutoff) as it still functions as it has historically, with 1851 being an important date of note, due to the significant changes that occurred at that time.

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## Narrative Statement of Significance

Criterion A: Government; Religion: The Connecticut River runs about three miles west of Langdon Meeting House. The river has long served as a transportation highway, first for Western Abanaki Indians who established villages and fishing sites along the banks and then by non-indigenous settlers who followed in the mid-eighteenth century. In 1735-36 the General Court of Massachusetts granted thirty townships between the Merrimack and Connecticut Rivers. Four of these were established along the Connecticut River as Forts 1, 2, 3 and 4, later becoming the towns of Chesterfield, Westmoreland, Walpole and Charlestown New Hampshire respectively. The river's flood plains are still some of the best farmlands in New England. A few miles east of the river were the richly forested but hilly, bolder strewn uplands rising to a thousand feet above sea level. The sunny, relatively flat hill tops if not the first choice for farm lands still offered desirable acreage for settlement. It was in this outlying part of Charlestown Seth Walker purchased property in 1773. It was also the land which would be acceded to form a new town in 1787 named after John Langdon (1741-1819), the second Governor of New Hampshire, delegate to the Constitutional Convention and one of the first two United States Senators from New Hampshire.

A central reason for the formation of this new town was to construct a more convenient place to meet for religious and civic purposes.

Langdon's incorporation is intimately intertwined with the religious affairs of these early settlers. F.B. Kingsbury's 1932 history of the town states, (ibid pg 80), "Among the first duties of all early New England towns was to provide for religious worship." He noted that upon its completion in 1803 the meetinghouse served two denominations, the Covenant of the Universal Church (Univeralists) and the Congregational Church of Christ. At the time, Langdon had a population of approximately 700 people.

It took fourteen years for the founders of Langdon to agree on where to site the Meetinghouse. After years of acrimonious discussions it was decided to build at the geographic center of the town on a one-acre parcel at the juncture of Walker Hill Road and Holden Hill Road. The "burying ground," a town common, a tavern and a grist mill all nearby predated the meetinghouse construction. A de facto center of town had developed here before construction was approved by voters on August 25<sup>th</sup> 1800. Construction was to begin by November first. The first Town Meeting in this structure was held on March 1, 1803.

Before the 1787 incorporation of the town, voting, politicking, town meetings, governmental representation and legal grievances all took place several miles away in the centers of Walpole and Charlestown. It was important to the growing hinterlands of these towns to have easier access to the political and civic centers of town. The first Town Meeting in Langdon was held March 6, 1787 "...at the dwelling house of Capt. Jonas Fairbank...". After due notice of warrant all free male citizens were required to participate in an annual Town Meeting as prescribed in its Charter. In 1787 there were three selectmen with titles of first, second and third. This form of

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town government with changes to enfranchisements has remained constant to this day. On Town Meeting Day in Langdon the voters still elect one of three selectmen for a three year term; a moderator, town clerk, and treasurer are elected in the years their terms expire. This exercise in democracy has been repeated every year in the meetinghouse since 1803.

Up until 1851 when the Langdon Universalists purchased the second floor of the meetinghouse to convert to an auditorium for their meetings, both civic and religious activities were held in the single large galleried hall of the building. Although the New Hampshire Toleration Act of 1819 required the immediate end of taxation in support of church buildings and preachers, the physical separation of church and state took longer. It was often decades before religious congregations finally vacated town meetinghouses. For example, in nearby Washington, New Hampshire, the meetinghouse was converted in 1840 for use by the Universalists by adding a second floor, as was done in Langdon eleven years later. In 1842 the Langdon Congregationalists separated from government by constructing their own church building a short distance away from the meetinghouse.

Langdon Meetinghouse is associated with the early establishment of Universalism in America. In 1791 the Universalists became the first church organized but not officially recognized by the town. William Farwell (1749-1823) was among the founding generation of American Universalist evangelists and the earliest Universalist preacher in neighboring Charlestown, New Hampshire. Farwell traveled and organized Universalist societies in the region and he is assumed to have been instrumental in establishing Langdon's.<sup>4</sup> However, New Hampshire did not recognize Universalist societies as an approved religious organization at the time and therefore citizens could not be taxed for its upkeep. At a special Town Meeting called in April (1791) to address monetary support for the Universalists, the question was dismissed without discussion and it was not until 1805 that the New Hampshire Legislature recognized the Universalists as a religion. The first settled preacher in Langdon was Abner Kneeland (1774-1844), a Universalist who began his tenure in September, 1804. Kneeland was officially ordained October 30, 1805 in the new Langdon meetinghouse and served seven years. Kneeland later left Christianity for Pantheism and was charged with blasphemy in 1833 by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. He was convicted in 1838 and served sixty days, earning the distinction of being the last person jailed for blasphemy in the Massachusetts, and possibly the United States.<sup>5</sup>

#### Criterion C: Architecture:

Originally built as a simplified Georgian meetinghouse typical of the period, the Langdon Meeting House had no belfry or steeple upon construction. The structure was intended to meet both the civic and religious needs of the new town. There is visible evidence of the many

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<sup>4</sup> Peter Hughes, "William Farwell," July 4, 2006. <http://uudb.org/articles/williamfarwell.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.newenglandhistoricalsociety.com/abner-kneeland-the-free-speech-martyr-convicted-of-blasphemy-in-1838/>

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changes of use the building experienced since 1803; the remnants of “new” walls recently removed on the first floor that once housed offices for town clerk, selectmen, police department and a interior privy were saved. The most significant changes were a direct result of the Toleration Act of 1819. This included the addition of a second floor church, removal of two porches, remodeling of second story windows and construction of a large belfry and steeple. The remodeling of existing meetinghouses was not unusual, as in the case of the Washington New Hampshire meetinghouse, which outfitted a second floor for the use of Unitarians in 1840. The meetinghouse in Wentworth New Hampshire underwent similar changes. Built in 1829-30 as a Federal-style Congregational Church, it was divided internally into two floors in 1867 in response to the Toleration Act of 1819. A further example of architectural change after 1819 is described in a New Hampshire Preservation Alliance 2017 web blog entitled [Seven to Save Profile: Grafton Center Meetinghouse](#), “After the passage of the Toleration Act of 1819, which separated church and state, the town and church finally divided the floors of the building. The church took the second floor and added a bell tower, while town business occurred on the first floor”. James Garvin (Ibid, pg 16) states of the effect of the 1819 law, “The architectural result, at least in the prosperous communities, was the proliferation of religious buildings from the 1820’s onward, and also the appearance of a new form of church structure that had its entrance at the gable end, beneath the belfry and steeple.” He refers to this as the “...new ecclesiastical style.”

The Langdon building's architectural importance and high degree of integrity of original materials and features has been recognized by New Hampshire's preservation organizations. A series of grants have been awarded to the Langdon Heritage Commission for rehabilitation and restoration work.. The work has stabilized the structure, corrected conditions of active deterioration and brought the first floor into building code compliance. The work has uncovered historic features hidden from view that allow interpretation of the various uses of the building since 1803. Clapboards that in 1851 patched over but still betraying the location of the original second story windows clearly show the effect of the Toleration Act that forced the religious and civil bifurcation of the building.

The first floor interior was once wall to wall box pews with a central aisle and raised pulpit backlit by a tall window. Telltale remnants of the now gone box pews and pulpit location remain on the interior of three outside walls of the first floor. Remnants of partitioning walls have been deliberately saved to reveal where a kitchen once stood and a Selectmen’s office was created in 1883. Further patchwork in the 1803 clapboards reveal where two gable end porches covered stairways to the second story gallery. The “marriage-marks” in Roman numerals are still visible on the substantial floor beams. The double doors on the long south wall that once served as the “honor door” in 1803 are original, complete with its hardware. They are still the compelling exterior and interior focal point of the building.

The Universalist church auditorium constructed in 1851 within the upper half of the original high meeting room by inserting a second floor between the galleries, remains a virtual time capsule

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completely unaltered with all original finishes and furnishings. The original 1851 ingrain carpet remains in place on dais and lectern area. Stenciling atop the walls of the church remain intact. The church foyer on the second floor features the original curves of the vaulted ceilings complete with it original plaster and lathe walls.

The pews and pulpit removed from the first floor were replaced with long moveable wooden benches capable of seating six or more people, several of which remain in service.

The second floor church does not meet life safety code as a public meeting place. As such, tours to groups of six people at a time are offered on special occasions. The space enjoys a special yet underutilized, museum-like role as a rare, untouched example of an 1851 Universalist Society auditorium.

This building continues to be the primary gathering place for the town's social, cultural and civic functions; the site of every annual Town Meeting since 1803. It has remained vital to the community for over 200 years.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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Wikipedia contributors. Commonwealth v. Kneeland. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia.  
February 26, 2019, 21:16 UTC. Accessed June 2, 2019 at:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Commonwealth\\_v.\\_Kneeland&oldid=885241375](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Commonwealth_v._Kneeland&oldid=885241375).

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** approximately 1.024 acres

### UTM References

Datum: Bellows Falls VT Quadrangle 1998 (NAD 1983)

UTM coordinates at center of property: Zone: 18 Easting: 712996 Northing: 4782480

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary coincides with the legal parcel boundary of the subject property. See Figure 2 for graphic depiction of National Register Boundary.

### Boundary Justification

The National Register boundary coincides with the legal parcel boundary of the subject property (Map 1, Lot 5408.1) and encompasses the contributing resources.

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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title:

McClary, Dennis, Cheeney, Andrea J., Casella,

Richard organization: Langdon Heritage Commission

street & number: 122 NH-12A #4

city or town: Langdon state: NH zip code: 03602

e-mail: dmcclary@sover.net

telephone: 603.209.1788

date: June 5, 2019

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## Additional Documentation

See attached

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Section 10-11 page 1

## Photographs.

### Photo Log

Name of Property: **Langdon Meeting House**  
City or Vicinity: **Langdon**  
County: **Sullivan**  
Photographer: **Richard M. Casella**  
Date Photographed: **September 15, September 23, 2018**

NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0001: South side. Looking North.  
NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0002: Overview of south and west sides. Looking East.  
NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0003: West side. Looking East.  
NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0004: Overview of west and north sides from cemetery. Looking South.  
NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0005: North side, showing ADA accessible sheltered entry at left. Looking South.  
NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0006: East side. Looking West.  
NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0007: Salt Shed, east and south sides, with meetinghouse in background. Looking West.  
NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0008: South entry. Looking North.  
NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0009: West entry. Looking East.  
NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0010: Steeple. Looking North.  
NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0011: Interior, first floor, meeting room, overview. Looking East.  
NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0012: Interior, first floor, south entry doors. Looking South.  
NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0013: Interior, first floor, north staircase. Looking North.  
NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0014: Interior, second floor, north staircase railing, showing original plaster and windows. Looking North.  
NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0015: Interior, second floor, congregation room. Looking West.  
NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0016: Interior, second floor, congregation room. Looking East.  
NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0017: Interior, second floor, congregation room, pews with original horsehair cushions. Looking Northeast.  
NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0018: Interior, second floor, congregation room, pulpit. Looking West.  
NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0019: Interior, second floor, congregation room, showing original woodstove and wainscoting. Looking North.  
NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0020: Attic, showing timber roof framing. Looking East.

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

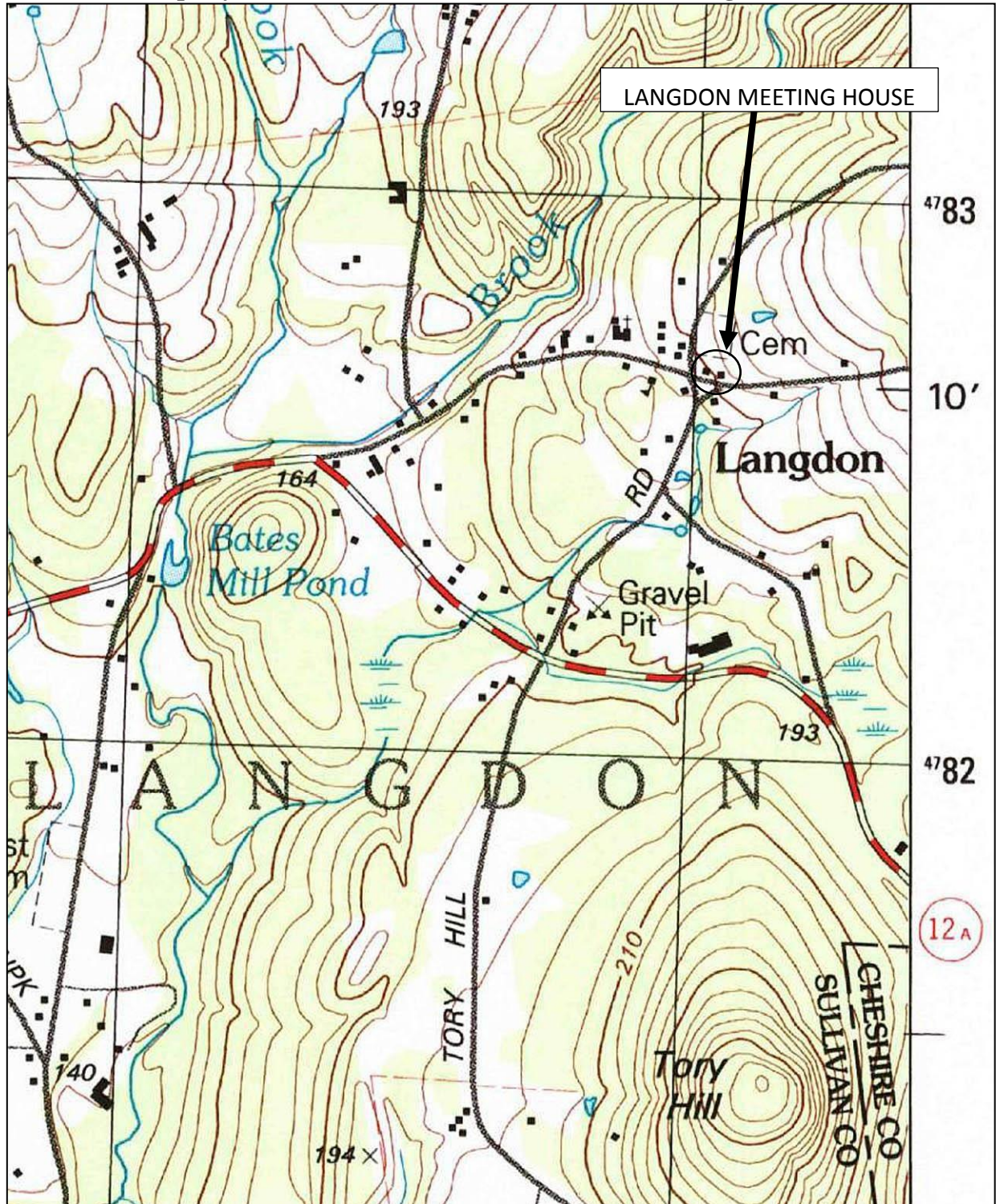
**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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**FIGURE 1: Property Location. USGS Bellows Falls, VT Quadrangle 2012 (7.5 minute)**



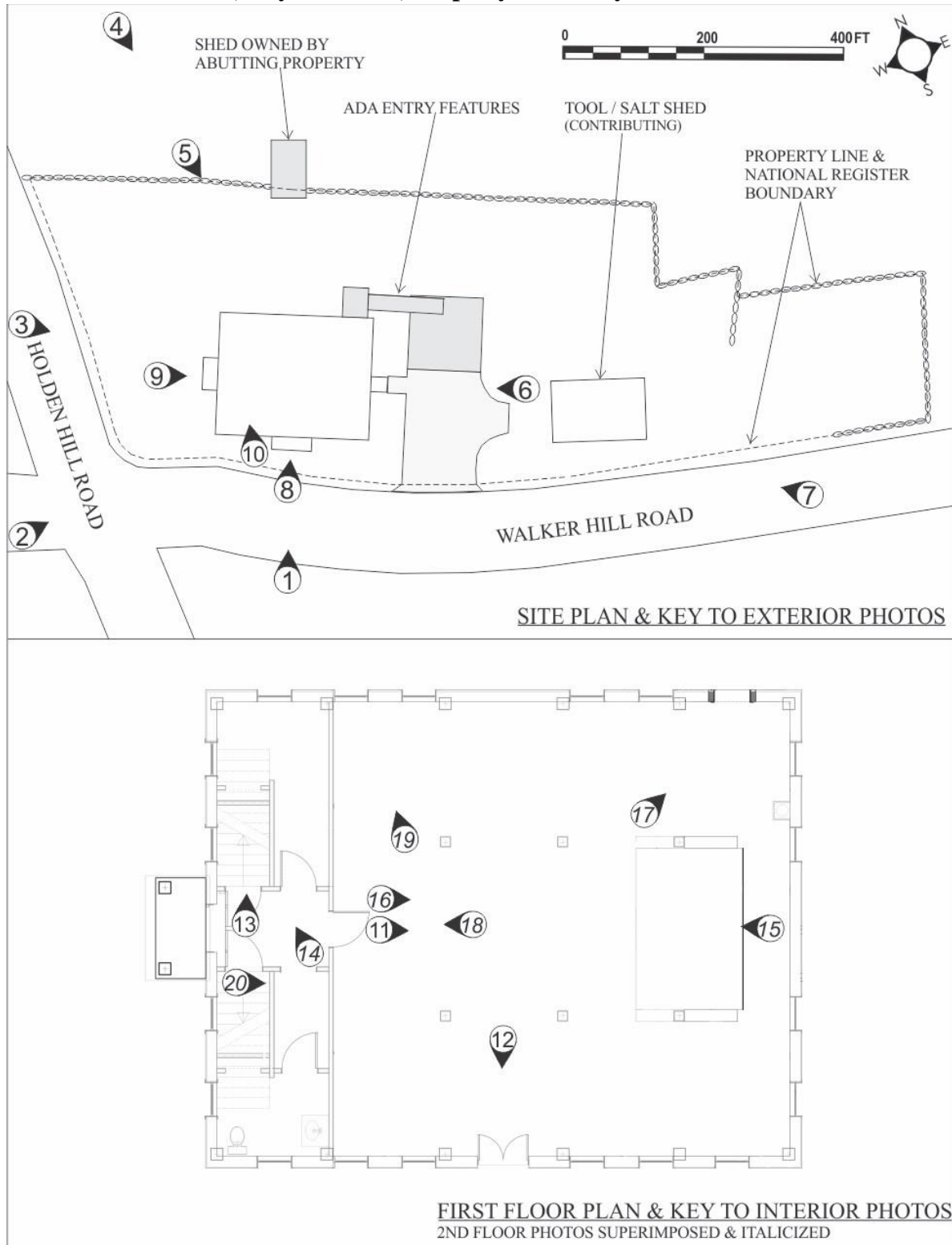


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Additional Documentation page 1

FIGURE 2: Site Plan, Key to Photos, Property Boundary



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NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0001: South side. Looking North.



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NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0002: Overview of south and west sides. Looking East.

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NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0003: West side. Looking East.



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NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0004: Overview of west and north sides from cemetery. Looking South.

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NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0005: North side, showing ADA accessible sheltered entry at left. Looking South.



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NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0006: East side. Looking West.

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NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0007: Salt Shed, east and south sides, with Meeting House in background. Looking West.

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NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0008: South entry. Looking North.



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NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0009: West entry. Looking East.



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NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0010: Steeple. Looking North.

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NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0011: Interior, first floor, meeting room, overview. Looking East.

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NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0012: Interior, first floor, south entry doors. Looking South.

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NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0013: Interior, first floor, north staircase. Looking North.

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NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0014: Interior, second floor, north staircase railing, showing original plaster and windows. Looking North.

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NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0015: Interior, second floor, congregation room.  
Looking West.

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NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0016: Interior, second floor, congregation room.  
Looking East.



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NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0017: Interior, second floor, congregation room, pews with original horsehair cushions. Looking Northeast.

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NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0018: Interior, second floor, congregation room, pulpit. Looking West.

Langdon Meeting House  
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NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0019: Interior, second floor, congregation room, showing original woodstove and wainscoting. Looking North.



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NH\_Langdon\_SullivanCo\_LangdonMeetingHouse\_0020: Attic, showing timber roof framing. Looking East.