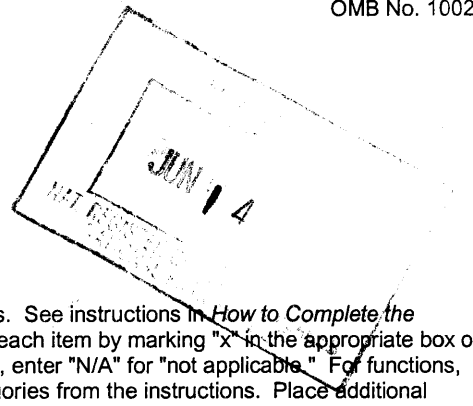


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Colburn House State Historic Site

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number Arnold Road, Old Route 27 (.1 mi. south of northern intersection with Rt. 27) N/A not for publication

city or town Pittston N/A vicinity \_\_\_\_\_

state Maine code ME county Kennebec code 011 zip code 04435

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Carole S. Anderson 6/11/04  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Maine Historic Preservation Commission  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Edson H. Beall 7/28/04  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing Noncontributing buildings sites structures objects Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC / Single dwelling
AGRICULTURE / Agricultural outbuilding

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION / Other: Historic Site

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

EARLY REPUBLIC / Federal
COLONIAL/ Georgian

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation GRANITE
walls WEATHERBOARD
roof ASPHALT
other BRICK

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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# National Register of Historic Places

## Continuation Sheet

COLBURN HOUSE STATE HISTORIC SITE

KENNEBEC COUNTY, MAINE

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### DESCRIPTION

Built in 1765 by Pittston settler Reuben Colburn, the structure that bears his family name is a two-story center-chimney, timber frame house built on a granite foundation that sits on a high hill facing south towards a broad turn in the Kennebec River. Attached to the rear, or northern side of the house, is a one story ell, that was originally added in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, but extensively rebuilt during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Across the dooryard, to the north of the ell, is a small, one-story, late 19<sup>th</sup> century carriage shed, and to its west is a high posted New England barn (c. 1830). Both the barn and the carriage shed sit on low field-stone foundations, and, as with the house are covered in clapboards, many of which are skived and attached with cut nails. The remnants of a small orchard are found to the north of the barn and carriage shed, and several mature hardwood trees line Arnold Road to the east. Several hundred feet to the west, the topography descends steeply to the alluvial plain of the Kennebec River.

On the main house, the five bay southern facade features symmetrically distributed nine-over-nine wooden sash (with Federal era ovolo molded muntins) on the first floor, and similar nine-over-six sash on the second floor. The front door surround has been removed (pending documented restoration) leaving only the six panel door set in its frame beside three-light side-lights on a paneled base<sup>1</sup>. Interestingly, while the chimney and the front door are centered across the facade, the second story window above the door is placed off center to the west. The upper story windows are tucked just under the eaves, which have a boxed cornice upon which gutters have been fastened. The cornice returns briefly on the structure's side elevations. Both sides contain two windows on each floor and a third in the attic story under the gable. The asphalt roof is cropped very close to the narrow rake trim on the sides, and barely extends over the side walls. A secondary entrance is located on the east side of the house. Here, the six panel door is topped with a four-light transom, and flanked by wide Greek Revival pilasters that support a slightly narrower entablature. The northern elevation of the main house is truncated by the attached ell to the west. The eastern sections of this wall contain one window on the first floor, and two on the second floor. Correspondence with previous owners indicate that two original first floor windows were removed, one of which was reinstalled in the current, but not original, location.

The interior of the house contains rooms finished in differing time periods. In the southeast corner of the structure, on both the first and second floors, are the earliest period rooms, which contain 18<sup>th</sup> century Georgian paneling on the fire place walls, and paneled wainscot and crown moulding over plaster on the remaining three walls. The exposed corner posts are cased, and on the first floor a shadow along their upper sides show where a dentil molding was previously incorporated into the crown molding. (The dentil molding is stored in the attic). Also in the parlor an original paneled cupboard door set against the

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<sup>1</sup> The largely conjectural c. 1950s Federal style door surround replica was removed in 1999. Current plans call for the entry way to be restored to its late 19<sup>th</sup> century form, including replacing the bracketed Italiante hood seen in several period photographs.

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COLBURN HOUSE STATE HISTORIC SITE

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fireplace wall was replaced in the 1950s with a fixed panel. During this decade the fire box was also modified with the addition of a baffle and smoke shelf, and both the hearth and the flooring replaced.

On the western side of the house both the downstairs and upstairs front rooms have finishes that are stylistically Greek Revival but are documented to date to the 1870s. There is no wainscot nor paneling in these rooms, and the doors and windows are trimmed with stock moldings and corner blocks. The fireplace surround on the first floor features widely fluted pilasters (similar to those on the eastern exterior door surround) which extend through the frieze to support the visually heavy mantelpiece; the upstairs version is a simpler but still Grecian in expression. In the southwest corner of the room is an 18<sup>th</sup> century corner cupboard with floor to ceiling fluted pilasters which flank raised panels in the frieze and under the clamshell shelves. Between the two front rooms on the first floor is the entrance stair hall, which contains a winder stair set against a curved wall, and trimmed with low relief, veneer-stripped baseboard that follows the curve of the stair. This staircase was also modified in the 1870s from its earlier, rectilinear form.

Board partition walls separate the front rooms from the kitchen, (or keeping room), and a small room in the northwest corner. The original kitchen has undergone a number of remodeling episodes, mostly during the 1950s and 1970s, and very little of the original fabric remains. Some original boarding remains around the fireplace wall, while the north wall has been 'restored' with an application of horizontal feather-edge board paneling. The hearth features newer square pavers, and both the fire box and oven have been rebuilt and capped with a 'rustic' square cut log mantle. Evidence remains on the floor for an ell shaped partition in the northeast corner, which may have housed the back staircase to the second floor. The ceiling is covered in sheet rock, however the wide pine flooring appears original. The small room in the northwest corner retains some original woodwork, however the partition wall on the south side was badly gouged when layers of late 19<sup>th</sup> century plaster were removed. Throughout the house the four panel doors are a mixture of Colonial, Greek Revival and Victorian examples, most of which feature replacement, restoration hardware. The attached ell has been reconstructed several times in the twentieth century and has very little historic fabric. It currently serves as a caretakers apartment.

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

EXPLORATION / SETTLEMENT

MILITARY

INDUSTRY

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1765 - 1954

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Significant Dates

1765, 1775, 1870, 1913

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

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

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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

"Further upstream, near pittston, (sic) stands the home of Major Colburn, the man who constructed the batteaux and gathered supplies for the army."

*Arnold Trail to Quebec Historic District. (NR: 69000018).*

In 1969, the house that Reuben Colburn built in 1765 was placed in the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing resource within the Arnold Trail to Quebec Historic District. The oft told story of Benedict Arnold's trek to capture Quebec reflects the only land and river based military action in central Maine during the American Revolution, and its collective participants are held in high esteem by purveyors of military history. The details of Major Reuben Colburn's involvement are found in the letters of George Washington, journals kept by Arnold and his troops, and Congressional records; the stories have also been repeated through generations of Colburn family lore. It is not necessary to excavate every sentence ever written about Colburn in order to justify ascribing a greater significance to him than was done in the 1969 nomination: his contributions have been validated in many sources. The following four paragraphs, written by one of his descendants, Mark York, provide a brief account of his renown.<sup>2</sup>

"Part of the Gardiner purchase, and first known as Gardinerston (sic), Colburn House was one o(of) the first houses built on the east side of the Kennebec River, known locally as "Colburntown" later changed to Pittston.<sup>3</sup> In 1761, four brothers Jeremiah Jr., Oliver, Reuben, and Benjamin, along with their parents and four sisters, moved to the area by ship from Dracut, Massachusetts... Colburn was one of the first shipbuilder's (sic) north of Bath at that time and as the colonies progressed toward the Revolution, Reuben Colburn, a natural born leader and businessman, was a prominent figure in the national effort that rapidly escalated in, and around the Boston area.<sup>4</sup> Reuben Colburn made three trips to Cambridge in the summer of 1775.

At that time Colburn was commissioned by General Washington to supply boats, supplies and services for an attempt to capture Quebec City from the British. Colburn gathered up Chiefs from the Indian tribes of St. Francis, brought them to Cambridge and

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<sup>2</sup> Excepts taken from draft Statement of Significance for a draft National Historic Landmark Nomination, 2002. Copy on file at the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Augusta, Maine.

<sup>3</sup>Coburn, Silas Roger, p. 29.

<sup>4</sup>Baker, Vol. 1, p. 94.

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presented them to Washington who enlisted their services in the American effort.<sup>5</sup> Washington was pleased with his contribution and paid him for his services as he told General Philip Schuyler in a letter immediately after Colburn's first visit....

Based (on) this leadership effort...Reuben Colburn was given the responsibility to supply an army of 1000 men. His time frame was short and work on 200 'bateaux' began three weeks before the proposed date of departure for the expedition.<sup>6</sup> The army arrived on board the "Broad Bay" anchoring at Colburn's on Sept. 20<sup>th</sup>, 1775 led by Col. Benedict Arnold who was in the company of 19 year-old Aaron Burr.<sup>7</sup> They spent the night in the Colburn House before moving on in the bateaux and by wagon to Fort Western ten miles to the north.

Colburn went on the mission with a company of artificers to repair the bateau on the ill-fated failed mission as ordered by Washington. They went as far as the "chain of ponds" section of the historic district trail before returning home to Pittston. Colburn was never paid for his expenses as noted above and fought the Congress unsuccessfully until his death in 1818. The family carried on this fight until 1856."

The structure that Reuben Colburn built in 1765 was purchased by the State of Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands in 1971 and subsequently has been known as the Colburn House State Historic Site. Efforts have been underway since that time to restore the structure to its circa 1775 appearance. In 1974 the building was first leased to the Arnold Expedition Society, a group dedicated to researching and interpreting the history of Arnold's military trek. The Arnold Society enables the State Historic Site to function as a house museum in which both Arnold's march and Reuben Colburn's participation are rendered tangible through displays of bateaux, maps and military antiquities, as well as home furnishings and family portraits.

The desire to preserve the material culture of Reuben Colburn's mortal contributions did not commence with the State of Maine or the Arnold Society. In 1913 the local chapter of the DAR placed a plaque commemorating the encampment on a boulder just to the southeast of the Colburn front door.<sup>8</sup> Between 1935 and 1938 Bertha Colburn, the great-granddaughter of Reuben Colburn engaged in

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<sup>5</sup>Fitzpatrick, p. 492-96.

<sup>6</sup> Smith, p 69.

<sup>7</sup> Roberts, p 96.

<sup>8</sup> "Historic Homestead," Sept. 5, 1913.

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negotiations with William S. Appleton of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities regarding donating the property to that organization; however, Ms. Colburn ultimately bequeathed it to a cousin. Records at the Bureau of Parks reference at least 19 newspaper articles about the house between 1900 and 1968 with names such as '*Historic Maj. Reuben Colburn House*,' or '*Where Benedict Arnold Rested*,' which indicate a continued public curiosity regarding one of the town's oldest homes. When the house finally passed out of the Colburn family in 1953 the new owners "restored it authentically and with a true antiquarian's appreciation of the architectural beauty of the colonial period," a process that included removing later eras of plaster and lath (and some trim), and the reconstruction of the central chimney (Maxwell, 1956). Indeed, the effort to capture the presence of Arnold and to resurrect the loyalty of Reuben Colburn, continues to manifest itself today.

If the *only* significance imbedded in the wooden structure on the bluff above the Kennebec River revolved around the activities that occurred in the fall of 1775, the effort to place this structure on the National Register as an individual listing (above and beyond its accepted contribution within the Arnold Trail Historic District) would more difficult. Considering all of the effort and interest, there is, relatively little of the property left that witnessed these events. The footprint of the house survives and it's walls are still protected by some early skived clapboards. The window sash, (themselves a Federal era replacement) still offer views of the broad Kennebec River, but both the front and side portals have been altered. On the interior, the floor plan would allow Colburn to negotiate the rooms without pause, but he would not recognize the trim in the southwest parlor, the horizontal paneling in the keeping room, or the rounded stair well in the front hall as work of his own hand. The barn that he had built by 1798 is gone, and in its place is a newer structure with a different orientation, near an ell that did not witness Arnold's march either. Most of these changes were made by members of the next three generations of Colburns who adapted the structure to their needs as they lived and worked in the house. Although the house still provocatively evokes Arnold's era, each of the succeeding generations left their mark on the buildings just as many of the family members left their mark on the land and water of Pittston.

When Reuben Colburn and his brothers and sisters came to Pittston they were among the earliest settlers in the area. In 1763, Reuben purchased lot No. 15, which was approximately one mile wide by five miles long and contained 800 acres. Located to the north of the homestead, Colburn speculated on this property selling much of it off by the 1780s. In 1765 he purchased an additional 107 acres from his brother Jeremiah. This became the basis of his homestead, which he erected shortly thereafter. Over the next forty years the family would be intimately responsible both for the peopling of the area, and for its economic development as well. Most of the ten children of Reuben and his wife Elizabeth settled in the immediate area after marrying. As a result the names that populate the neighborhood throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including Winslow, Smith, Noyes, Loud, Jewett, Cutts and Flitner are related to the Colburns through marriage. In 1789 the family built a meeting house for the community on land just to the north of the Colburn House. Although the gift of the unfinished building was initially rejected by the town, it later accepted the building. (Hanson, p. 150.) Reuben Colburn was later involved in the organization of the



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Congregational Church in Pittston in 1812, which was built several miles up the road.

After the initial activities of settling the land had been accomplished Colburn started to build ships on his property at the edge of the Kennebec River. The earliest references to shipbuilding here are found in the accounts of his activities in the early Revolution when he and his neighbor, Thomas Agry, were responsible for providing Benedict Arnold with the infamous batteau. In 1779 a deed to Samuel Oakman refers to buildings and a wharf on the river, and in 1791 Colburn and his neighbor Samuel Springer are known to have built the Brig Hannah on the edge of the Kennebec. (Hanson, p. 319). A series of deeds in 1794 suggest that this activity both continued and matured over the years. For example, Colburn sold several waterfront lots, (with un-described buildings thereon), reserving in each case the following clause: "the said Colburn reserving to himself his heirs and assigns with the said Winslow [or other named Grantee] the privilege to pass and repass...with any lumber for shipbuilding (so said Colburn shall not damnify said Winslow) six poles wide from said River. " (Book Lincoln 5, p. 349, Lincoln County Registry of Deeds, Wiscasset, Maine). The family's involvement with maritime activities grew as his children matured. His son Ebenezer died at sea in 1799, and another son David, who purchased one of the riverside lots from his father in 1794, was a shipbuilder in both Maine and Nantucket. According to one source, it was David who rescued his father from financial ruin after the War of 1812 caused him to abandon a ship under construction. (B. Colburn, p. 13). At least one of David's sons, Reuben Colburn II, and his cousins Oliver and John Colburn, were also either builders or sailors of Pittston vessels. At one time or another each of these men, with the exception of Oliver Colburn, owned, if not occupied the Colburn House.

Ship building may have been one of the family's primary economic activities, but they were involved with other undertakings as well, including land speculation in Farmington, and lumber harvesting. As with all of the eighteenth and early 19<sup>th</sup> century settlers along the Kennebec farming played a necessary part of all economic activities. In the 1798 Federal tax census, Reuben Colburn's real property holdings were enumerated as a farm of 140 acres upon which sat his house and his barn, which measured 50 feet by 30 feet. The barn currently on the property was constructed later, and stylistically appears to date to the 1830s. In 1818 Reuben Colburn died, and the house and land became the property of David Colburn.<sup>9</sup> Two years later David sold the property to his cousin/brother-in-law John Colburn, but his wife Hannah did not sign a release of her dower, or widow' thirds. In 1824 David Colburn died, and John Colburn sold the property back to David's family. Between 1824 and her death in 1870, Widow Hannah Colburn was the head of the household regardless of which of her sons actually held the deed. David and Hannah produced nine children, who ranged between 21 and 2 years of age at the time of David's death. As the family matured over the next thirty years they relied less on ship building and more on other economic

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<sup>9</sup>A recorded deed indicates that Reuben sold the property to his son in 1794, (Book 5, p. 352, Lincoln), and another indicates that Reuben sold the same property to Jedediah Jewett in 1802.(Book 3, p. 370, Kennebec). There is no indication that Jewett ever occupied the structure nor that the Colburns ever actually relinquished possession.

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pursuits to meet their needs. At one point prior to his death in 1835, John A. Colburn, a son of David and Hannah, planted mulberry bushes that provided food for a collection of silkworms that he raised in an upstairs back room in the house. (B. Colburn, p. 1). In the 1850 population census Reuben Colburn II was referred to as a ship maker, and his youngest brother Gustavus was identified as a log driver on the River. However, both were listed as farmers in that year's agricultural census, having produced oats and hay from their fields, apples from the orchard and butter from their three cows. Indeed, agricultural activities continued at the Colburn homestead to some extent until the last year-round resident moved out in 1902. According to his obituary, Gustavus eschewed ship building in favor of logging and lumber businesses centered on the River, and was connected with the Kennebec Log Driving Company (probably the Kennebec Land and Lumber Company), up until 1870. Twenty years earlier, Gustavus Colburn started repurchasing all of the small lots his grandfather had sold at the river's edge at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Ship building had become a much less profitable business on the Kennebec River by this time and the valuable land could be put to other uses.

In 1852 Gustavus married Alzina Knight, and with their children, they shared the Colburn house with his mother. Although a new barn had been constructed, the house itself had changed little since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century when new windows were installed and a rear ell added. In a recently published memoir written by Bertha Colburn, she recalls that when Hannah died it finally offered the chance for the next generation to update the house. "After my grandmother died, my mother had the west room entirely torn out with the exception of the corner closet that remains the same, as when great grandmother kept her wines in it. Even the plaster and laths were renewed." (B. Colburn p. 3). Both the southwest parlor and the southwest chamber were renovated at this time, with new moldings, baseboards, chair rail and fireplace surrounds installed. The new trim was factory produced, and was loosely based on Grecian precedents. The front hall was also rebuilt and the stair case was reconstructed with a new curved north wall. The Italianate hood that resided over the front door into the 1950s was probably installed at this time as well.

The renovations at the Colburn house may have been linked to a second event that occurred just prior to Hannah's death. In December of 1869 Gustavus and his neighbor (and relative) to the south, Samuel O. Flitner agreed to lease the riverside portion of their homestead lots to the Kennebec Ice Company for the next 10 years. Both Colburn and Flitner were partners in the venture (1/8 portion each). The deed references several existing ice houses and plans for the location of a fifth. From this point until his death in 1886 Gustavus Colburn was engaged in the highly profitable Kennebec Ice industry. Due to rapid consolidation of the various ice companies on the Kennebec it is difficult to track the specific activity on Colburn's property<sup>10</sup>. However, the industry had a tremendous impact on the economy of the region.

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<sup>10</sup>The 1879 County atlas places Fabans' Ice House at the foot of the Colburn property. According to a map reproduced in Everson, in 1882 that location appears to be home of Powers and Co, and by 1892 the Kennebec Ice Company has moved to Hallowell. (Everson, p. 174, and 143).

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"The economic effect of the ice industry on the Kennebec Valley was enormous. Building icehouses used large quantities of lumber, and the effects on ship building and shipping were also very great. In the boom year of 1890, 1,000 teams and 3,000 men were said to be working on the ice near Gardiner alone." (Bunting, 1997, p.302).

The profit margin in harvesting ice was large: according to Bunting ice could be harvested for thirty cents a ton and sold for fifty-cents per hundred pounds. Much of the product was shipped to the West Indies, although it was also used extensively by brewers, meat packers and grocers in the United States. The ice business prospered in Maine, both along the waters of the Kennebec, Penobscot and Cathance Rivers, and at numerous sites along the mid-coast.

"Maine's ice industry was a component of the East Coast natural ice industry, which, over the course of about forty years, grew to immense proportions before suffering a rapid meltdown. At its prime the colorful industry exhibited enormous powers of enterprise, inventiveness, and organization. Although certain ancillary factors sped its demise, its collapse was a classic example of a great industry undercut, at the height of its fortunes, by technological obsolescence." (Bunting, 2000, p. 206).

The technological advance, was, of course, electric refrigeration. Gustavus Colburn remained involved with the ice industry for the remainder of his life. He ended his professional career as a superintendent at the Smithtown ice houses, just up river from where he lived.

The Colburn House sheltered among its occupants four generations of the Colburn family ending with Gustavus' son Richard H. Colburn, who moved to California in 1902 and left the homestead to his sister Bertha, who used it only seasonally thereafter. Certainly the most famous event to occur at the structure was the outfitting of Benedict Arnold's men for the attack on Quebec. But yet the local significance of this house, and the family that it sheltered is much broader than that event alone. It is one of a very few existing houses in the region built in the 1760s, and its timber has provided the framework for a family that constructed the areas first homes and churches, cleared its land and harvested its fields, and utilized the river for an evolving series of economic activities including ship building, lumbering, log drives and ice harvesting. It is a homestead that evolved physically as it was lived in by its occupants.

In its retirement, the Colburn house has significance as an example of a structure whose early history was highlighted by a perspective that valued the colonial era history of the building to the exclusion of its nineteenth-century associations. The Colonial Revival-ization of the Colburn House is in itself a noteworthy expression of community values and associations, and one that had a major physical impact on the structure. Inherent in our contemporary interpretation of the Colonial Revival movements is the understanding that the early practitioners of this philosophy were not as concerned with accuracy as they were with sentiment. Historian Kenneth L. Ames neatly summarizes how this philosophy occasionally

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handled the physical realities of the built environment it celebrated.

Since the process of reinterpreting, revising, rethinking, or reevaluating the past may go on continuously, propelled by newer information or exigencies, it sometimes happens that whatever actually occurred, whatever an object or an environment originally looked like may not be important for a given group at a given moment. The requirement to possess a past as we need it is more pressing than any motive of historical accuracy. What one age deems as historical accuracy a later one sees as naivete or self-deception. The transformation of images to meet historical needs takes place not only in the mind but in the material world as well. The physical past can be shaped or reshaped to fit a society's requirements. It is therefore true that even manifestly authentic materials are hardly immune to alteration or destruction solely by virtue of their design or structural integrity. If they fail to fit current needs, the most pristine remnants of the past may fall prey to demolition." (Ames, p. 5-6).

Interestingly, even the earliest known image to be published of the Colburn house fell prey to the desire to return the structure to its earliest incarnation. In 1886 Edwin Whitefield published a sketch of the Colburn House in The Homes of our Forefathers, and labeled it as follows: 'built by Reuben Colburn, grandfather of the present owner, about 1760. He built the bateaux for Arnold when he was preparing for the invasion of Canada. It stands near the bank of the Kennebec River and is in a good state of repair.' Surrounding the front door is a simple Georgian -era entablature similar to that found on the east elevation. However, in Whitefield's field sketchbook, the door is very clearly topped by the Italianate hood that remained on the house into the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>11</sup>. This updated doorway did not correspond with the artist's notion of why the house was significant, and thus was reinvented for his publication. Taken together, the Colburn House provides an important touchstone to a two hundred year evolution of both local history, and local historical thought. In this context, the Colburn House Historic Site is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, for its significance in conjunction with early settlement and exploration, military history, industry, and finally, social history.

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<sup>11</sup>The Edwin Whitefield sketchbook is in the archives of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, in Boston, Massachusetts.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

COLBURN HOUSE STATE HISTORIC SITE

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 6

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 19 439710 4893904  
Zone Easting Northing

3 19 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

2 19 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

4 19 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title CHRISTI A. MITCHELL, ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN  
organization MAINE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION date 15 April 2004  
street & number 55 CAPITOL STREET, STATION 65 telephone (207) 287-2132  
city or town AUGUSTA state ME zip code 04333 -0065

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**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. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property is fully described by the Town of Pittston tax map number U 13 lot 9.

## BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries of the nominated property reflect the portion of the Reuben Colburn Homestead located on the west side of River Road. These boundaries were essentially established by 1820, and include both the homestead and the alluvial plain on which the family built ships.

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## PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph 1 of 8  
Christi A. Mitchell  
Maine Historic Preservation Commission  
5 May 2004  
South facade; facing northwest.

Photograph 6 of 8  
Christi A. Mitchell  
Maine Historic Preservation Commission  
5 May 2004  
Interior, southwest parlor; facing southwest.

Photograph 2 of 8  
Christi A. Mitchell  
Maine Historic Preservation Commission  
5 May 2004  
North elevation; facing southwest.

Photograph 7 of 8  
Christi A. Mitchell  
Maine Historic Preservation Commission  
5 May 2004  
Kitchen; facing southeast.

Photograph 3 of 8  
Christi A. Mitchell  
Maine Historic Preservation Commission  
5 May 2004  
Barn, east elevation and carriage house, south  
and east elevations; facing west.

Photograph 8 of 8  
Christi A. Mitchell  
Maine Historic Preservation Commission  
5 May 2004  
Southwest chamber; facing northeast..

Photograph 4 of 8  
Christi A. Mitchell  
Maine Historic Preservation Commission  
5 May 2004  
Interior, southeast parlor; facing north.

Photograph 5 of 8  
Christi A. Mitchell  
Maine Historic Preservation Commission  
5 May 2004  
Interior, entrance hall; facing east.