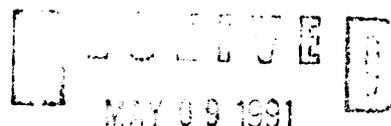


United States Department of the Interior National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name St. John's Episcopal Church other names/site number Union Meetinghouse

2. Location

street & number S. Side of Rt. 27 at Junction with Blinn Hill Road city, town Dresden Mills state Maine code ME county Lincoln code 015 zip code 04342

3. Classification

Table with 3 columns: Ownership of Property, Category of Property, and Number of Resources within Property. Includes checkboxes for private/public ownership and building/site/structure/object categories.

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet. Signature of certifying official: [Signature] Date: 5/2/91 State or Federal agency and bureau: Maine Historic Preservation Commission

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of commenting or other official: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency and bureau: \_\_\_\_\_

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is: [X] 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): \_\_\_\_\_ Entered in the National Register [Signature] 6/14/91 Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion/Religious Structure

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Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion/Religious Structure

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

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Federal

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Gothic Revival

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Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone/Granite

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walls Wood/Weatherboard

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roof Asphalt

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other Wooden belfry

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Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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St. John's Episcopal Church is a rectangular wooden frame building whose pedimented facade is surmounted by a two-stage bell tower. The structure's unaltered exterior combines Federal and Gothic Revival features in what is otherwise an unmistakably Greek Revival style form. It is sheathed entirely in weatherboards and rests on a granite slab foundation. The church stands on the south side of Route 27 in the rural village of Dresden Mills.

The church's handsome front (north) elevation is comprised of an unusual grouping of four broad Tuscan pilasters which frame the entrances and their crowning Federal style round-arched windows. These multi-pane double-hung windows retain their original louvered shutters. Both entrances contain a two-leaf door, each leaf of which has three panels. Pilasters are also located at the corners of the facade where they rise to a full entablature. The square tower has a squat base supporting a tall belfry with round-arched openings on three sides (the rear side has a smaller rectangular opening). Louvered inserts occupy the upper half of these openings which are trimmed in delicate Federal style surrounds (as are all of the window openings). A shallow hip roof with a balustrade featuring spirelets at three of the four corners surmounts the tower. Behind the tower, a brick stove flue rises through the roof ridge.

Both the east and west nave sidewalls are divided into three equal bays. Each bay contains a sixteen-over-twelve double-hung window with operable louvered shutters and round-arched louvered fans. A small rectangular vestry room addition (1852) at the rear is flanked by two additional windows similar to those on the sides except for the absence of the fans.

Unlike the exterior, the interior configuration reflects two distinct historic periods. The majority of the finish and detailing, including the entrance vestibule, arched nave ceiling, rear gallery, and the boxed pews date from the original period of construction. In 1852, after the building had become solely an Episcopal Church, an alter and railing were added in front of a Romanesque style screen. This unusual screen contains a round-arched door that leads into the vestry room. The existing pulpit located in the southwest corner was also apparently added about this time. Sometime later the elaborate central lighting fixture was installed. Both the walls and ceiling retain their plaster over lath finish.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)  
Architecture

Period of Significance  
1832-33

Significant Dates  
1832-33

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1852  
\_\_\_\_\_

1852  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

St. John's Episcopal Church in Dresden Mills is a wood frame building merging Federal, Greek Revival, and Gothic Revival elements into a striking architectural statement. Constructed in 1832-33 by an as yet unidentified builder, the structure is a twin of the nearby Pittston Congregational Church erected in 1831 (N.R. 1/31/78). It is eligible for nomination to the National Register under criterion C and criteria consideration A by virtue of its architectural significance.

The present church building was originally constructed as a Union meeting house by four separate congregations. According to local historians, each group was represented on the building committee, said to have been Charles Thayer, Charles Theobald, Edward Kidder, David Patterson, Thomas Sherman, Joseph B. Bridge, and Samuel Woodward. Although it is uncertain when the idea of a union society formed, by early 1832 the building committee had advanced to a point that it placed a request for proposals in the April 27<sup>th</sup> edition of the Christian Intelligencer (Gardiner). The notice is worthy of reproducing in its entirety:

**NOTICE**

SEALED PROPOSALS will be received by the subscribers until the 10th of May next, for building by contract a Meeting-house near Dresden Bridge - Dimensions - 38 by 54 feet on the ground, 19 feet post - entry within the body of the house 8 feet wide - belfry resting upon the roof. The plan of the inside is copied from a house lately built at West Pittston. The work must be of good materials and done in a plain manner. A contract will be taken to complete said house, painting included, either from the cills [sic] or foundation. For further particulars inquire of either

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Allen, Charles Edwin. History of Dresden, Maine. 1931. Reprinted by Jennie G. and Eleanor L. Everson, 1977.

Christian Intelligencer (Gardiner, ME). April 27, 1832.

National Register Nomination for the Pittston Congregational Church. Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Augusta, 1978.

See continuation sheet

**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

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property Less than 1

**UTM References**

A 

1	9
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4	4	2	0	8	0
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4	8	8	3	7	5	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

B 

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 Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated property occupies the Town of Dresden tax map U-1 lot 35.

See continuation sheet

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary embraces the entire parcel of property historically associated with this building.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Kirk F. Mohney, Architectural Historian  
 organization Maine Historic Preservation Commission date 4/1991  
 street & number 55 Capitol Street telephone (207) 289-2132  
 city or town Augusta, state Maine zip code 04333

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CHARLES THAYER,  
JAMES HOUDLETTE,  
GILMORE BLEN,  
THO'S SHERMAN,  
NATH'L STONE,  
GEO. THEOBALD, or  
REUBEN MESERVE.

Dresden, April 25, 1832

The new building was formally dedicated on June 27, 1833.

The church presumably fulfilled its original intent during the next two decades, although it probably came under the increasing use of the local Episcopalians who had reorganized in 1848-49. The congregation of St. John's Episcopal Church was a descendant of an extinct church of the same name which had been organized in Dresden in 1770. (Located about two miles to the southwest of the present building, this early Maine Anglican church site was listed in the National Register on 11/21/78.) In the fall of 1852 the Union meeting house was consecrated as St. John's Church, although the meeting rights of other denominations was retained. At this time the vestry was added and the interior changes made to better accommodate the Episcopalian liturgy. The congregation was presented a bell cast by J. N. Hooper & Company of Boston in 1860, and the present baptismal font in 1898.

During the twentieth century, the local parish gradually declined to a point that it could no longer sustain regular use of the building. Subsequently, it has been used only on a seasonal basis for both religious and non-religious purposes. However, its trustees have recently demonstrated an interest in making necessary repairs to the building in order to maintain it as a significant part of the small village where it stands.

From an architectural standpoint the church is noteworthy for the careful blending of three stylistic motifs. The main block of the building with its pedimented facade, six broad, Tuscan pilasters and the position of its tower are wholly Greek Revival. While neither the basic form of the body of the church nor its tower are particularly unusual in this period in Maine, the specific details are. Chief among these are the conspicuous round-arched Federal style windows on the facade which are framed by pilasters. The round arch motif is repeated on the nave sidewalls as well as in the belfry stage of the tower. Finally, the Gothic aspect appears in the tower spirelets which grace three (originally four) of the balustrade corners. The survival

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of this latter feature distinguishes St. John's from the church in Pittston after which it was modeled. Although documentary photographs show that the Pittston edifice originally had these features, they have since been replaced by a shallow hip roof. St. John's also retains its full complement of louvered shutters. One additional variation between the two is the presence of a flush sheathed facade on the building in Pittston whereas St. John's always appears to have been covered with weatherboards.

By itself St. John's represents an unusual approach to the design of a church in the early 1830s. Viewed in the context of the extant church in Pittston, however, the two buildings illustrate an important, documented insight into local building patterns in the early nineteenth century.