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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 Webster, Moses, House

other names/site number _____

2. Location

East side of Atlantic Avenue, .05 miles east of Junction with Main Street

street & number Main Street N/A not for publication

city or town Vinalhaven N/A vicinity

state Maine code ME county Knox code 013 zip code 04863

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.)

Eric S. Peterson 2/25/98
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 W. Beall 4.1.98
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

WEBSTER, MOSES, HOUSE
Name of Property

KNOX, MAINE
County and State

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

_____ 1 _____ buildings
_____ _____ sites
_____ _____ structures
_____ _____ objects
_____ 1 _____ 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
_____ 0 _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Single Dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Second Empire

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone/Granite
walls Other/Masonite

roof Stone/Slate
other Entrance Tower

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

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WEBSTER, MOSES, HOUSE

KNOX, MAINE

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Located on Atlantic Avenue on the island of Vinalhaven, the Moses Webster House is a striking two and a half story, towered Second Empire house. Constructed about 1873 for the influential Vinalhaven granite quarry owner Moses Webster, the exterior of the frame house (which is sheathed in masonite in replacement of the original clapboards), features a rich array of eclectic architectural design elements including projecting hooded window moldings, decorative brackets, a patterned slate mansard roof, and an asymmetrically located projecting bay surmounted by a tower.

Rising from a massive granite slab foundation (presumably quarried from the island), the house is an asymmetrically planned two and a half story building containing six bays on the primary (west) elevation. A large two-story bay window projects from the first and second stories on the north end of this elevation. A bracketed and denticulated pediment surmounts the upper bay window and projects with it from the lower slope of the mansard roof. Both the upper and lower bay is treated similarly with a centrally peaked cornice below which are set dentils and Italianate brackets. The tympanum of these cornices is ornamented with carved, Eastlake inspired motifs. The central openings of the bays contain two over two, double-hung sash while the smaller flanking openings have one over one, double-hung sash.

A narrow bay of the house projects forward several feet from the main plane of the wall to form an engaged tower. The first floor of this tower contains a twelve light storm door and an interior door featuring a round arch window with etched glass. Historic photographs from the nineteenth suggest that the house was constructed with two narrow doors on this elevation, each featuring a round arch window. The doorway is flanked by pilasters that support two over scaled Italianate brackets which, in turn, support a projecting hood. Historic photographs indicate that a balustrade once ran around the top of the hood. Access to the front door is provided by four granite slab steps. Above the hood are located two narrow flanking one over one, double-hung sash surmounted by a denticulated, projecting pediment supported by Italianate brackets. The window and pediment both break into the mansard roof as does a single two over two double hung sash and pediment on the south elevation of the second floor of the tower. Above the second floor Italianate windows on the mansard tower are two steeply pointed gabled wall dormers on the south and west elevations. Each of the dormers enclose a pointed arch one over one double hung sash and are surmounted by a steeply pitched projecting hood. The low pyramidal roof of the tower features a large molded cornice supported by Italianate brackets.

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Set further back from the plane of the north wing or tower, the south wing features a wrap around porch with balustrade on the first floor. The most northerly bay of the porch is enclosed while the subsequent three bays are open. A historic stereo view from the 1870's shows that this bay was enclosed at that time. Six square posts with beveled corners, molded capitals, and Italianate brackets carry the gently sloping shed roof of the porch. The enclosed bay of the porch is simply treated with three narrow one over one, double hung sash. A doorway which projects slightly from the plane of the house provides access to a small vestibule. Each of the remaining two bays on the first floor porch area consist of large, two over two double hung wooden sash. The second floor of this elevation features three asymmetrically placed windows. As on the north wing and tower portions of the house, the over scaled mansard roof starts in the middle of the second floor resulting in the pedimented tops of the windows on this level projecting as wall dormers. Each of the three, two-over-two double hung sash is enframed by Italianate window moldings and surmounted by denticulated pediments which are carried by projecting brackets. The large expanse of alternating diamond and coursed patterning slate shingle on the mansard roof of this wing is interrupted on the third floor by a small round arch, two-over-two window with a projecting segmental Italianate round arch hood. An original corbeled chimney with a chimney cap penetrates the mansard roof just behind the third story dormer.

The porch wraps around and continues the length of the one bay of the south elevation. A single two-over-two, double-hung window (identical to those found on the west porch elevation) is centrally located on this end of the house. Wooden stairs providing access to the porch are located on the east end of the south elevation. A single Italianate wall dormer (identical to those above the porch on the west elevation), adorns the second floor of the south elevation of the house. A slate roofed mansard ell extends east from the main body of the house and contains Italianate dormer windows on the south elevation of the second floor similar those found on the west and south elevations. The first floor of the ell contains four simple, asymmetrically placed two-over-two, double-hung sash. Several later shed roofed additions have been constructed on the north side of the ell, while the east side of the ell contains three asymmetrically place six-over-six double-hung windows on the first floor and a Italianate dormer window on the second floor. A steeply pitched third floor wall dormer projects from the mansard roof on the main body of the house, roughly opposite the segmental arch Italianate window dormer on the west elevation of the house. A second floor double, two-over-two window surmounted by a large pediment projects from the mansard roof on the east elevation at the north end of the house. Two Italianate dormer windows are placed symmetrically on the second floor at the north end of the house. A small segmental arch Italianate wall dormer is set on the third floor between the second floor windows.

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In general, the interior of the Moses Webster House is notably more restrained than its exterior. The main stair hall of the house is located in the tower portion of the house off of which are located a bedroom and a parlor. A beveled oak newel and turned balusters distinguishes the staircase which leads to the second floor of the house. The main parlor of the house features a black marble fireplace and finished hardwood floors. A small period den located behind the parlor contains walls paneled in walnut to imitate masonry laid up in ashlar. A modern kitchen is located in the ell of the house. The second floor of the house contains a number of bedrooms, many with marble mantels still intact. Period paneling and turn-of-the-century plumbing survives in one of the bathrooms on the second floor. The third floor of the house contains several smaller rooms and a period cedar closet. Interior woodwork throughout the house survives intact.

The bounds of the Moses Webster property forms a long prominent rectangle running east-west beginning at Wyvern Coombs Square across Atlantic Avenue to the rear of the house. These property boundaries may be consistent with the original purchase of the land by Moses Webster in the early 1860's. Many of the landscaping features also survive relatively intact. A granite slab retaining wall running along Atlantic Avenue and turning east along the south side of the house defines the immediate yard while a (later) concrete path in line with the front door leads from an inscribed polished granite fountain at Wyvern Coombs Square (erected in honor of Moses Webster by his daughter Lucie Walls in 1911), directly to the house. Historic photographs indicate that an iron fence was originally set atop the retaining wall. Granite posts and rounded curbing along the walkway to the front door steps also survive intact. Historic photographs also indicate that a carriage house, constructed in the same style, was located just to the north of the house. Granite slabs strewn about the area are all that survive of the carriage house.

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.

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Industry

Period of Significance

c. 1873-1887

Significant Dates

c. 1873

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Webster, Moses

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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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The Moses Webster House is a well preserved and an exuberant example of the Second Empire manner in residential design built about 1873 for the local granite magnate of that name. The bold detailing on the exterior of the building is lavish and reflects the taste for florid design among the wealthy in America during the Post Civil-War period. It also survives as testament to the importance of the granite quarrying industry not only to the local economy, but to the state as a whole. The building is eligible for nomination to the Register under criterion A for its association with the local granite industry and the resulting impact that enterprise had on the economy of Vinalhaven and the state of Maine during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; criterion B for its association with Moses Webster, a prominent player in that industry, and; criterion C for its local architectural significance.

A native of Hudson, New Hampshire, Moses Webster came to Vinalhaven in 1851 with J.R. Bodwell (also a native of New Hampshire and later Governor of Maine, 1887), to exploit the high quality granite that abounds on the island. While historical records indicate that granite was quarried on Vinalhaven beginning about 1826¹, no large-scale mining of the stone had occurred on the island by the middle of the nineteenth century. In 1852, Webster and Bodwell began operating the East Boston quarry on the island under the firm name of Bodwell and Webster. The 1850's saw significant growth in the business with the company's award of a contract to provide stone for the construction of Petit Manan Light Station in 1854 and the next year a larger agreement with the federal government to quarry and finish stone for buildings at the New York Navy Yard. By 1856, the local press optimistically predicted that the burgeoning Vinalhaven stone industry had "material enough in the beautiful granite which abounds there to employ them for a century to come."²

The 1860's bore out these sanguine prognostications for Bodwell and Webster with new contracts and the purchase of a second quarry by the firm in 1863. Despite a slowing of business during the Civil War, granite quarrying on the island was listed as the major enterprise on the island by 1870. In 1872, the company was renamed the Bodwell Granite Company with Moses Webster as co-owner and vice president of the firm. Records indicate that, in that year, the Bodwell Granite Company employed 600 workers for the quarrying and cutting of stone for the State Department Building in Washington, D.C. and piers for the East River Bridge in New York City. In 1872 or 1873, Moses Webster began construction of his house on Atlantic Avenue. No record of architect involvement in the design of the house or builder is known. The conspicuous siting of this large house (clearly visible from the commercial center of the town) combined with its opulent decorative detailing was, no doubt, intended to serve as a statement of Webster's economic and political influence on Vinalhaven during this period. At this point Webster was effectively running the company on the island as J.R. Bodwell had moved to Hallowell, Maine to pursue the firm's quarrying enterprise in that area. Moses Webster is believed to have lived in the house with his wife and children until his death in 1887.

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The years 1873 and 1874 saw federal contracts awarded to the firm for the construction of new government buildings in Cincinnati and the St. Louis Custom House. The effects of the Panic of 1874 affected the Bodwell Company so severely that by 1876 there were only eighty men working for the company at wages, "at which they cannot make a living." This dire situation for islanders is considered to have been one of the primary reasons for the unionization of Vinalhaven granite workers in 1877.³ A bitter strike ensued and lasted until 1878 when 300 workers were taken on for quarrying stone for the General Wool monument in New York. This prompted the firm's construction of the largest stone shed in the United States up to that time.⁴

The Bodwell Granite Co. continued to secure federal contracts into the 1880's and the enterprise prospered as Vinalhaven became a one company island under the direction of Moses Webster. In 1884, the firm's retail store on Vinalhaven was listed as the state's largest. Webster's involvement in the operation of the company after 1885 is unknown, a period in which its fortunes continued to rise and fall. However, by early 1887 he was reported as being "very ill and failing" and soon after died. Governor Bodwell (who would also die before the year was out) was in attendance at his Masonic funeral on Vinalhaven. It is not known who resided at the Webster House after his death. The Bodwell Company continued to dominate the economic life of the island into the first decade of the twentieth century.

In addition to his important role in the establishment and development of the quarrying industry on Vinalhaven, Moses Webster was very involved in the political and social life of the island. He served as a Selectman for the Town in 1860 and Treasurer for the between 1861 and 1863. Webster was the founding member of the Vinalhaven Masons on January 17, 1868, and after his death the local Lodge was named in his honor. His importance to Vinalhaven was again memorialized in 1911 with the erection of a granite fountain (quarried and carved by the Bodwell Granite Co.) at Wyvern Coombs Square by his daughter Lucie Walls.

Endnotes

1. *A Brief Historical Sketch of the Town of Vinalhaven from its Earliest Known Settlement*. Rockland, Maine, 1900, p.71.
2. Roger L. Grindle, *Tombstones and Paving Blocks - The History of the Maine Granite Industry*, Rockland, Maine: Courier-Gazette, Inc., 1977, p.13.
3. Ibid., p.14.
4. Ibid., p.22.

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A Brief Historical Sketch of the Town of Vinalhaven from its Earliest Known Settlement. Rockland, Maine, 1900.

Grindle, Roger L. *Tombstones and Paving Blocks - The History of the Maine Granite Industry.* Rockland, Maine: Courier-Gazette, Inc., 1977.

Vinalhaven Historical Society. *Images of America - Vinalhaven Island.* Dover, NH: Arcadia Publishing, 1997.

WEBSTER, MOSES, HOUSE

Name of Property

KNOX, MAINE

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less Than 1

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	9	5	1	3	5	0	0	4	8	7	6	9	4	0
	Zone		Easting			Northing									

3															
	Zone		Easting			Northing									

2															
---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

4															
---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

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 James M. Hewat, Architectural Historian

organization Maine Historic Preservation Commission date January, 1998

street & number 55 Capitol Street, 65 State House Station telephone 207/287-2132

city or town Augusta, state Maine 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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Continuation Sheet

WEBSTER, MOSES, HOUSE

KNOX, MAINE

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Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property occupies the Town of Vinalhaven tax map 18, lots 105A and 123.

Boundary Justification

The boundary embraces the two village lots that are historically associated with the Moses Webster House.