

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

JUN 12 1989

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 Donnell, William T., House  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 279 Washington Street  not for publication  
city, town Bath  vicinity  
state Maine code ME county Sagadahoc code 023 zip code 04530

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>2</u>	_____ objects
			<u>0</u> Total

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.

Earle S. Feltman 6/7/89  
Signature of certifying official 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.

\_\_\_\_\_  
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:

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:)

Andrew Byer 7/13/89  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Single Dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation/Culture/Museum

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Italianate

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone/Granite

walls Wood/Weatherboard

roof Asphalt

other Wooden Porch

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The City of Bath is situated on a narrow strip of land between Merrymeeting Bay and the Kennebec River. The south end of the city, where the William T. Donnell House is located, is predominantly residential with buildings dating from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. There is no potential for an historic district. The Donnell House fronts Washington Street and to the rear (east) is the Kennebec River.

As part of the Maine Maritime Museum, the Donnell House is surrounded on the east and south by museum buildings. Immediately adjacent on the south is the historic Percy and Small Shipyard, listed in the National Register (see site map). Behind the house between it and the river are two wood frame exhibit buildings with shingle siding which were built within the past fifteen years.

The Donnell House is a two-and-one-half story three-bay wood frame building with a hipped roof and a porch extending around the west and north sides. Attached to the rear is a two-story hipped roof wing which projects beyond the plane of the north side of the house where it joins the porch. The house was built in the Italianate Style but has undergone a major remodeling on the exterior. The siding is clapboards except for the first floor under the porch roof which is shiplap. The windows are one-over-one double-hung sash with wood pedimented caps that have incised ornamentation. The porch has square posts and projects in the center of the principal elevation where there is an enclosed vestibule at the main entrance. Above the second story windows is vertical novelty siding and paired brackets at each corner. On the principal facade is a hipped roof wall dormer with double-hung sash.

Adjacent to the house on the north side is a two-story hipped roof carriage barn. This structure has clapboard siding and six-over-six double-hung sash. Attached to the north side is a modern one-story shed roof storage structure. Extending from the rear is a long two-story wooden building of recent origin that has a gable roof and shingle siding.

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The interior of the Donnell House reflects two late nineteenth century remodelings. The house has a central hall with a staircase extending up to the third floor. On the south side of the hall is a double parlor extending the full width of the house from front to rear. This has been temporarily divided into two rooms by modern partitions. On the other side of the hall is a parlor in the northwest corner and a library in the northeast corner.

In the rear wing is a dining room, kitchen, pantry, and rear hall with an entrance off the porch. The second floor has a long central hall and several bedrooms. The staircase leads to a hall in the attic and unfinished rooms.

The Donnell House retains much of its nineteenth century interior woodwork. The windows and doors have shouldered architrave trim. The same style woodwork is used throughout the house except in the kitchen, pantry and rear hall which have molded trim with symmetrical corner blocks. The library and dining room have wainscott with raised panels. The northwest parlor has a marble mantel while the dining room has an elaborate carved mantel and overmantel. The only other surviving mantel is in a northeast bedroom, which is a small wooden piece in a late Greek Revival style. The house also contains nineteenth century radiators, light fixtures and hardwood floors. The dining room and southeast parlor also have small plaster medallions.

As originally constructed the house was probably very similar to several Italianate style dwellings built in Bath after the Civil War, such as 712 and 746 High Street. The three-bay facade with entrance porch, low pitched hipped roof, paired corner brackets under the eaves, and pedimented window caps were characteristic of this local interpretation of the style. On the Donnell House the window caps and corner brackets are still evident. A major remodeling occurred sometime within fifteen years of the house's construction, and probably around 1882 when the tax evaluation jumped from \$3,250 to \$4,000. The changes, which can generally be associated with the Stick Style, included raising the hipped roof four feet, adding a wall dormer and novelty siding above the second floor windows. Possibly at the same time the north wing was replaced with a two story hipped roof wing on the east side containing the dining room and kitchen. A large veranda was built across the west and north sides, where it joined a second entry off the new wing. The siding under the porch was changed to shiplap and the entrance vestibule with colored glass was also added.

The interior remodelings are more difficult to determine without a more in-depth investigation. It appears that the newell post in the central hall, the mantel in the northwest parlor and the wainscott in the library date from this period, as do the radiators.

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A second major remodeling occurred within the next decade, possibly either 1888 when tax evaluations jumped from \$4,000 to \$5,500, or 1892 when it increased by another \$1,000. Since Donnell's taxable property also includes the shipyard, it is difficult to document changes using tax records. In any case, stylistic changes suggest that the dining room woodwork, which is oak and in a Romanesque style, occurred in the 1888-1892 period. The door and window trim is identical in profile to that of the main house, but is also oak.

**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)

Industry  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1868-c.1892  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

1868  
c.1882  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

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

Significant Person

Donnell, William T.  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder

Unknown  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

The William T. Donnell House is significant under criterion B as the home of a prominent Bath shipbuilder which has remained largely unaltered since his period of occupancy. The house was built and remodeled at least twice by Donnell during the years 1868-c. 1892 when he constructed over forty-five vessels in his yard which was located just northeast of the house.

William Donnell (18\_\_-1910) was a shipwright by trade who acquired part of the Hitchcock shipyard near this site through marriage to Clara Hitchcock in 1860. Clara's father, Henry P. Hitchcock, operated a shipyard here during the mid-1850s. Tax records show that there was no house included with the property in 1867, but that one was added shortly after. Donnell very likely built his house in 1868, just before his property valuation jumped from \$800 to \$3,000. The Donnell House appears in the 1873 city property map and on an 1877 birds-eye-view of Winnegance (South Bath). The latter document shows a square hipped roof house with a wing on the north side and a detached carriage barn.

Bath's first important period of shipbuilding construction was in the 1840s-1850s, when most of the major architectural landmarks in the city's historic district were erected. A second important period of shipbuilding activity occurred during the 1870s-1880s, when William T. Donnell's shipyard was most active. During that time Bath was the center of schooner construction in Maine. Schooners, the work-horses of the North Atlantic Coast, replaced trans-Atlantic ships in the second phase of Maine's maritime industry. As one historian has noted, "The great schooner was the last technical achievement of the builders of the wooden ships. Notable advances were made in model and rig, but particularly the latter. These made the American great schooner the most weatherly and economical sailing vessel in the world."

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

A History of Bath, Maine by Edward C. Plummer, Bath, 1936.

Illustrated Bath Sketches of The Shipping City Its Industries, Institutions And People, by F. Halcyon Chase, Bath 1903.

A Maritime History of Maine by William H. Rowe, N.Y., 1948.

Tax Records, City Hall, Bath, ME.

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	3	4	3	5	0
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4	8	6	0	3	1	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 William T. Donnell House occupies the City of Bath tax map 25, lot 103.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary of the nominated property embraces the house, carriage barn and immediate physical surroundings historically associated with Donnell's occupancy. It does not extend to the as yet unexplored site of his shipyard formerly located to the northeast.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Roger G. Reed, Architectural Historian  
organization Maine Historic Preservation Commission date April, 1989  
street & number 55 Capitol Street telephone (207)289-2132  
city or town Augusta, state Maine zip code 04333

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Between 1881-1890 the tonnage output in Bath shipbuilding reached its peak. During those nine years 245 schooners were constructed, many by William T. Donnell, whose career parallels the important years of construction of these vessels. Donnell formed a partnership with Gardiner G. Deering in 1866, which lasted until 1887. Deering and Donnell built thirty-four boats, mostly schooners. From 1887 until 1901 Donnell built at least ten more schooners in the yard behind his house. William T. Donnell's career as a boatbuilder thus represents one of the more important individuals in Bath's maritime industry, having been trained as a ship joiner in the early period before the Civil War and subsequently, rising to prominence as a shipbuilder in his own right. He also owned and operated his own fleet of schooners, and is credited with design improvements in his boats. As an important local businessman, Donnell served in the State Legislature from 1897-98, as a County Commissioner, and as a director of the First National Bank.

The Percy and Small Shipyard, which adjoins the Donnell House on the south, was established in 1896 on land acquired from William Donnell. It is listed in the National Register and is operated as a museum by the Maine Maritime Museum. The Donnell House, which was acquired by the museum in 1974, is scheduled to be restored on the interior as a house museum of a shipyard owner. The complex now formed by the house and the shipyard convey an historical association between residence and workplace once common all along the Kennebec River. Although there are other houses in Bath which were the homes of shipyard owners, only the Donnell House retains this close proximity to a surviving nineteenth century shipyard.