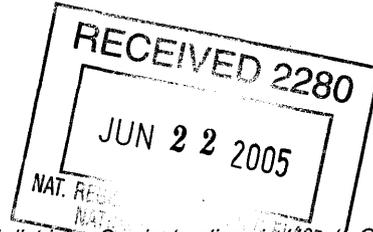


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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 Salem Town House (Former)

other names/site number Salem Community Building

2. Location

street & number Route 142 N/A not for publication

city or town Salem N/A vicinity

state Maine code ME county Franklin code 007 zip code 04983

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.)

[Signature] Date 6/20/05  
Signature of certifying official/Title

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): \_\_\_\_\_

[Signature] Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 8/5/05  
Edson Beall



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

SALEM TOWN HOUSE (FORMER)

FRANKLIN COUNTY, MAINE

Section number 7 Page 2

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## DESCRIPTION

The (Former) Salem Town House is located on the north side of Route 142 in the small northern Franklin community of Salem, Maine. Founded in 1823 as North Salem<sup>1</sup>, and de-organized by Act of the State Legislature in 1945, it is a tiny settlement that lies on a broad plain southeast of the Mount Abraham mountain range, and is bisected by the West Branch of the Carrabasset River. The (Former) Town House is flanked by a pair of later nineteenth century farm houses. This grouping of buildings, along with a few structures clustered around the river to the west constitute the densest portion of the town. One quarter mile to the south is a vernacular church (1901) and the same distance to the east is a large modern regional high school.

Upon initial inspection the (Former) Salem Town House reads architecturally as a church rather than as a civic building. Constructed between October 1857 and July 1858, it is a one and one-half story rectangular wood frame building which has a centrally-located entrance tower on the front elevation. With the exception of the short, overhanging roof separating the tower from the belfry, the building is sheathed in weather boards and rests on a concrete block foundation. Topping the belfry is a flared pyramidal cap covered with wooden shingles, while the roof of the main mass is clad in metal.

Facing south, the five-bay principal elevation is composed of the projecting tower and flanking two-over-two windows on the recessed walls of the main mass. The primary entrance is located on the first floor of the tower and consists of five-panel double doors set under a single-pitch hood supported on paired, scroll-work brackets and accented with smaller, intermediary modillions. The entry is flanked by narrow one-over-one double hung windows which are tightly wedged between the door frame and the corner boards of the tower. A two-over-two sash window is centered over the hood. A truncated, hipped roof, consisting of seven courses of wooden shingles, is located at the mid-point of the tower above the window and forms the transition to the base of the two-stage steeple. The upper section of the steeple contains the open belfry, which is distinguished only by the four, unornamented, wooden corner posts, and the cast iron bell at its center. (Historic photographs show a pair of arched, shingled, architraves on each elevation of the belfry. In deteriorated condition, these and the bell's wheel were removed in 1978). At the peak of the roof cap is a plain wooden post which formerly supported an ornamental spire and weathervane.

The main body of the building is twenty-eight feet by thirty-six feet in dimension and is covered by a gable roof with broad overhanging eaves. Each side elevation contains a trio of two-over-two windows. Wooden corner boards, a narrow frieze, and cornice returns add stylistic elements to the building. At the rear of the building is a one-story, gable roof addition, measuring fifteen feet by twenty-eight feet, which contains a modern kitchen and small restroom. There are no windows on either the east or west elevation of the addition, and three modern casement windows and a centrally

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<sup>1</sup>Shortened to Salem in 1834.

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SALEM TOWN HOUSE (FORMER)

FRANKLIN COUNTY, MAINE

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located door is on the north side. The construction of this addition was begun in 2002, and to date, the east and west elevations have been covered in weather boards, and the roof clad in metal. The unfinished north elevation remains sheathed in oriented strand board.

Inside, the building is divided into an open hall, and a kitchen and rest room in the addition. The hall has narrow, hardwood floors, and plaster walls above vertical bead-board wainscot. The walls intersect the plaster ceiling with a graceful cove executed in painted flush boards, and in the four corners of the room the structural corner posts are exposed. At the center of the room, at two-thirds of its depth, is a concrete block chimney (in the process of being removed). A wide, six panel door separates the vestibule from the hall, while a four panel door leads to the restroom (located where the outhouse formerly stood). Wooden coat pegs are affixed to the southern wall. The northern wall of the room features a centrally located counter and opening through to the kitchen. The interior of the addition is as yet not fully finished but contains sheet rock, walls, plywood floors and a bank of cupboards and cabinets on the west wall.

Over the years the interior walls of the (Former) Town House have been patched with sheet rock and beaver board as the plaster deteriorated. At some point in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a sink and counter were installed against the west wall of the building. In 1978 this was removed, and a small enclosed kitchen area created in the northwest corner of the hall. (Rough sawn floor boards from the attic were used to create the partition walls.) The floor in the vicinity of this space is covered with linoleum. A restoration effort is currently underway, which includes the removal of the 1978 kitchen, the addition of the new kitchen and restroom in 2002, recent installation of a heating system, and plans to install a wheelchair ramp along the north elevation.

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)

POLITICS / GOVERNMENT

RELIGION

Period of Significance

1858-1945

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

1858

1945

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Cyrus J. Ellsworth, builder (1829-1892)

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:

Maine State Archives, Augusta, Maine

United States Department of the Interior  
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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

SALEM TOWN HOUSE (FORMER)

FRANKLIN COUNTY, MAINE

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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Salem Town House is the only historic public building in Salem Township, Maine<sup>2</sup>. It was built in 1858 by the residents of Salem for use as a polling place, town meeting site, and the location of all governmental activities. By default, as the only large gathering facility in the town until 1901, it also provided space for religious services, weddings, funerals, and meetings of social and voluntary clubs. Architecturally, the building is notable for its two stage bell tower, and compact scale. However, it is often assumed to be a church, as its configuration resembles a vernacular religious structure rather than the more austere civic structures that generally characterize Maine's mid-nineteenth century town houses. This building served the Town of Salem until the municipality's charter was forfeited to the State of Maine in 1948, and the town became an un-organized territory under State administration. At that time it was renamed the Salem Community Building, and it continues to actively provide the community with meeting and performance space. Importantly, this building is the only extant, local reminder of the community's existence as the Town of Salem between 1823 and 1945. The (Former) Salem Town House is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, for its role in the political, governmental, and social history of the Town of Salem. By virtue of the building's use as a place for religious services during its period of significance, Criteria Consideration A also applies.

Salem was first settled by Benjamin Heath, who cleared land in what was then a portion of Phillips, Maine in 1814. The following year, Heath returned with two other men, Albert Hayford and Israel Doble, who cleared additional lots, and permanently settled with their families in 1816. By 1821 twenty-four families had settled in the area, and the residents submitted a petition to the Maine legislature to incorporate the Town of North Salem. The new town was to consist of land claimed by the towns of Phillips and Freeman, which opposed the alteration of their boundaries. The residents persisted, and in 1823 were granted a charter to incorporate as the North Salem, formed by segments of the above mentioned towns and 3200 acres from Mount Abram township. In 1834 the "North" was dropped from the town's name.

The following summary of Salem's socio-economic history was prepared by John Mosher and Leon Cranmer, Maine Historic Preservation Commission, in the 2002 "Report of Phase I and Phase II Survey of the Salem Bridge Replacement Project."

"Throughout most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, farming and logging were the most important industries in Salem. Both pursuits supplied a string of saw and grist mills, as well as a starch mill. The town was never large enough to support more than one or two stores at a time, and most of these were said to have "done but a small business" (Mills et al, 1905, p. 47). Even

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<sup>2</sup> Mount Abrams High School, a regional secondary school, is also located in Salem. This building was constructed in 1969.

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SALEM TOWN HOUSE (FORMER)

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so, in 1870 the town had a population of 370 and in 1886 supported four schools (Varney 1886, p. 497). By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the prosperity of the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century began to wane and town fathers such as Albert Pease were lamenting that many farms had been abandoned, their fields covered in brush (Mills et al. 1905)." (Mosher and Cranmer, p. 12).

Indeed, the population of Salem peaked in the 1840 census with 561 residents enumerated. At the center of town, along Curvo Stream (West Branch Carrabasset River) were a succession of water-powered saw mills (starting in 1817) and gristmills. In 1845 Moses Patterson constructed a starch mill (or factory) along the stream. Interestingly, the starch industry was very localized: according to the 1857 Maine Register, Salem had one of 19 such facilities in the state, 14 others of which were located either in Franklin County, or nearby in Somerset County. Salem has always been a remote village, connected principally by road to Phillips in the southwest, and Kingfield in the northeast. Partially destroyed and rebuilt after a flood in 1855, the Patterson Mill complex, which also included a cooper shop, saw mill and grist mill, remained in business until 1868, after which the starch factory closed.<sup>3</sup> In 1883-84 the town received a slight economic boost with the arrival of the Franklin and Meganic Railroad. This narrow gauge line ran between Strong (to the south) and Kingfield, and although it passed through Salem it mostly serviced logging camps along its route. However, the opportunities provided by this line did not stem the population hemorrhaging which continued unabated into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup>

From 1823 to 1858, the annual town meetings, elections, and business of the town was conducted in local barns, or at whatever store was in business, and after 1845, most frequently at the starch factory. Perhaps in reaction to the freshet that heavily damaged the starch factory two years earlier, the town started planning for the erection of a Town House in 1857. Among their concerns was that the location of the building be near to the center of town. Moses Patterson sold them a "parcel of land not far from the starch factory for \$12. In April, a building committee was formed, and by September a draft plan had been presented and accepted by the Selectmen. (Town Record Book, 1857). Cyrus J. Ellsworth, a young local farmer, got the contract to build the Town House, which was finished by the following summer, in time to host a funeral in July. (Mills, et al, p. 63).

The Town Record books do not discuss why a Town House was needed, or how its use was envisioned. Warrant articles and meeting notes simply record the decisions and actions of the town's residents. However, the use of the building for religious function was probably anticipated by the

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<sup>3</sup> Albert Pease, writing in 1862, remarked that the starch factory "...did considerable business for a time. This is now idle." (Mills, et al, p. 46.) He also suggests that the potatoes grown for processing rapidly depleted the fertility of the local soils, causing most agricultural pursuits in the immediate area to suffer.

<sup>4</sup> The population in 1880 was 273 people; in 1900 the number was 195; and by 1940 only 78 residents remained in town.

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SALEM TOWN HOUSE (FORMER)

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community, and may have helped compel the citizenry to support the building's construction.

As a requirement of incorporation, each in the District, or later, State of Maine was required to set aside a certain amount of land for use by the town's first settled minister and church. In some communities these lands were sold and the profits placed in a trust fund, administered by town officers, to subsidize worthy religious activities. In Salem, the Ministry Fund was divided on the basis of the number of adherents to particular denominations, which included the Adventists, Methodists, Free Will Baptists and Universalists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to Albert Pease's description of the town in 1862, "[t]here has never been a meeting house in town, but meetings have been held in dwelling houses and school houses, and lately in the town house. There is now a small society of Methodists, one of Free-Will Baptists, and one of Universalists, these being the only organized societies; who each maintain preaching in town; supported in part by a ministerial fund." (Mills, et al, p. 48.). The use of the (Former) Town House for religious services rotated through the various faith organizations, based on which ones were served by ministers (often circuit ministers). It was not until 1901 that the Salem Evangelical Church (now Methodist) was built on the west side of the River. While this remains the only dedicated religious building in town, the (Former) Town House still hosts wedding and funerals as necessary.

In plan, massing and scale, the (Former) Salem Town House resembles a small, vernacular church. Throughout Maine, communities established in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century had commonly constructed meetinghouses as combination religious and secular centers. However, as older communities grew, and religious denominations diversified, it became impractical to entertain both functions under one roof, and thus separate buildings for church and civic activities became the norm. After 1820, the most common form that the town houses or town halls adopted drew on Greek public architecture, which was undergoing a popular architectural revival. Generally these are stately, if modest, gable fronted buildings, the more stylistically significant of which feature exteriors with full or partial pediments, engaged columns, and decorative architraves surrounding doors and windows. Although these civic structure also adopted Gothic Revival, Italianate or Queen Anne elements through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the basic form of the building seldom varied, and no other known examples included a tower and belfry. If occasionally confused with a school, or later a grange hall, even the most vernacular Town Houses were usually identifiable by their form.

Very little is known about Cyrus J. Ellsworth (c. 1829 - 1982), the builder of the (Former) Salem Town House. He is listed in the Salem or Freeman census as a farmer between 1850 and 1870, and then he disappears from that record. Whether the design for the Town House was developed by the Building Committee, Ellsworth, or other interested parties is not known. However, as it stands today, the structure fairly closely resembles a series of churches or chapels built along the Maine coast in Deer Isle, Brooklin, Waldoboro and Boothbay in the 1890s to 1910s. Each of these small structures feature either a free standing or partially engaged tower with a central entrance and window, shingled transitions to a recessed or narrower steeple, and open belfries and flared pyramidal roofs. Another, very similar example is located in Stonington Maine, and was reputedly built between 1858-60. Other, also constructed later, are scattered throughout Aroostook and Washington Counties.

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It is not inconceivable that the tower was added to the (Former) Salem Townhouse in order to 'dress up' its religious associations, but historic photographs indicate that it was present by c. 1900. Whether it visually reads as a church as result of remodeling or unusual original styling, the religious function of the structure has been consistent.

By the 1940 census, the population of Salem had shrunk to 78 people. Five years later, the State Legislature noted that the "tax rate of the town of Salem has increased to the point where it is almost confiscatory," and that "immediate steps should be taken to take care of the present financial situation."<sup>5</sup> The residents of Salem agreed, and on March 30, 1945 they relinquished the town charter to the State and became an unorganized territory. As a result, all of the financial and governmental decisions were placed in the hands of County or State officials, the Town Records relocated to the Maine State Archives, the post office discontinued, and all town owned property sold. The Town House and the Mt. Abram Cemetery (located 3/4 mile to the east) were sold to a newly established group, the Mount Abram Cemetery Association the following January for \$1. They promptly renamed the structure "Salem Community House." In the sixty years hence, they have maintained the structure in order to provide the community with a public building for social, educational and voluntary events. As the last tangible link to the Town of Salem, the (Former) Town House hold a key position in the maintenance of this communities historical identity.

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<sup>5</sup>P&S, 1945, Chapter 4.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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SALEM TOWN HOUSE (FORMER)  
Name of Property

FRANKLIN COUNTY, MAINE  
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .14 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

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

3	1 9		
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4	1 9		

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 19 January 2005

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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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

SALEM TOWN HOUSE (FORMER)

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## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries of the (Former) Salem Town House are represented on FR 27, Plan 3, Lot 13, on the State of Maine Bureau of Taxation, Unorganized Territories records.

## BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The above cited boundaries represent the limits of the property when conveyed to the Mount Abram Cemetery Association by the State of Maine, in deed, dated 15 January 1946, and recorded in Book 291, Page 255 at the Franklin County Registry of Deeds, Franklin County Courthouse, Farmington, Maine.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

SALEM TOWN HOUSE (FORMER)

FRANKLIN COUNTY, MAINE

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

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## PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph 1 of 3  
Christi A. Mitchell  
Maine Historic Preservation Commission  
28 July 2004  
Facade, facing north.

Photograph 2 of 3  
Christi A. Mitchell  
Maine Historic Preservation Commission  
28 July 2004  
East and south elevations, facing northwest

Photograph 3 of 3  
Christi A. Mitchell  
Maine Historic Preservation Commission  
28 July 2004  
Interior, facing south.