

PH0354546

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED AUG 2 1976

DATE ENTERED NOV 7 1976

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC \*\*

~~The First Church in~~ <sup>of</sup> Belfast  
AND/OR COMMON

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Church Street

CITY, TOWN

Belfast

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

<sup>1st</sup> ~~2nd Hon. William Cohen~~

STATE

Maine

CODE

23

COUNTY

Waldo

CODE

027

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Congregation of the First Church

STREET & NUMBER

6 Court Street

CITY, TOWN

Belfast

VICINITY OF

Maine

STATE

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Waldo County Registry of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Belfast,

STATE

Maine

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

HABS Me. - 86

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

<b>CONDITION</b>		<b>CHECK ONE</b>	<b>CHECK ONE</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The First Church in Belfast, Waldo County, Maine is a fine example of the large frame structures used for religious purposes at the turn of the 1800's. Based largely on the influential "Design for a Meeting House" which appeared in Asher Benjamin's handbook The Country Builder's Assistant, Boston, 1798, this structure is one of the earliest church buildings in Belfast. While the basic church plans can more specifically be attributed as a somewhat modified version of a church in Augusta, Maine, such designs were often borrowed by local craftsmen directly out of Boston architect Benjamin's practical do-it-yourself architectural books. The architect and master builder for the First Church was Samuel French. His assistant, William Frederick, as well as other builders and suppliers came from the Penobscot Bay region.

The decision to build the meetinghouse occurred on February 2, 1818, and land was acquired two weeks later. The building frame was raised June 13, 1818, and the church was dedicated on November 15th of that same year. The cost of the Church, paid for by the price of pews at auction (which ranged from \$90 to 201), totalled over \$6,000. Alterations and additions to the completed church structure have included a Paul Revere bell hung in the belfry in 1820, a belfry clock by Timothy Chase and Phineas P. Quimby installed 1836, the present organ installed 1848, and grading and fencing accomplished September, 1860. During 1868, \$2000 was allocated for remodeling, which included replacement of the original box pews, alterations of the pulpit area, installation of heat and gaslights, replacement of columns by iron rods extending up to the attic beams, the addition of outside shutters, and the changing of doors and small-paned windows to a newer style. The adjoining parish house was dedicated in 1926 at a cost of \$25,000.

*built  
1926  
LEDGWOOD*

An investigation of the 55'x80' exterior of the two-story building (with attic and a half basement) indicates a freedom from the dictates of European classicism resulting from the innovations of the local craftsmen. Typical aspects of churches built during the first quarter of the nineteenth century are however, still very apparent. Specifically, the overall rectangular plan of the First Church gives way to a shallow protruding extension on its northerly oriented facade. This is reached by ascending to an opened platform porch. Major access to the building is gained through the extension. Above the extension rises a large triangular pediment to a height slightly below that of the medium gable roof of the meetinghouse. The building is further fronted with a square central tower which rests partially on the pediment but primarily on the roof of the main structure. Large clocks appear on each of the tower's four faces and above the clock tower rises an open octagonal belfry housing the Revere bell. Above the belfry a second octagonal stage (cupola) rises on eight Doric columns. The cupola is surrounded by a railing of characteristic Benjamin urns at the corners. A small domical vault atop the cupola gracefully gives way to a highly detailed wrought-iron weathervane at its top.

The front of this clapboard structure shows the entrance pavilion described above having three doors running across it, with the middle one the largest and a double-leaf style. Each door is surrounded by decorative pilasters and entablures. Above this tier of doors is a second tier of three windows, the middle one being palladian. To either side of the front pavillion are two tiers of one window each. The building's east and west facades have seven bays with two tiers of windows.

(See continuation sheets)

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The ground floor interior is composed simply of an entry hall followed by one large rectangular sanctuary. A second floor consists of a choir robing room followed by a suspended balcony on three sides of the meetingroom. There is one enclosed stairway, and it extends from the first through the second floors and onward to the belfry. The chancel, added in 1868, is set directly across from and opposite the entryway.

Apart from its significance to local history and the tribute it handsomely pays to Maine's early craftsmen, this building serves as an important link in the evolution from early New England meetinghouse to modern-day churches. Its roots stem from the prominent Neoclassical architects of the time such as Bulfinch, Pain, Adam as modified by such practitioners of architecture as Asher Benjamin. Benjamin's designs, disseminated and made simple by his do-it-yourself country-builder books, helped the way to an American architecture. Country carpenters would modify Benjamin's published designs, but not many changed his proportions, which they believed to be the key to producing grace and beauty. As a fine example of this tradition, and as one of only a few surviving in the state, the First Church of Belfast holds an important position in Maine's architectural heritage.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1818

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Samuel French

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Belfast was founded originally by Scotch-Irish Presbyterians who came in 1770 from Londonderry, New Hampshire and settled on a tract of land purchased from the heirs of General Samuel Waldo. Upon arriving they promptly built a meeting house and voted to tax themselves for "The Incorrigement of a Gospel minister".

The settlers, however, soon suffered incredible hardships as a result of the American Revolution. Their homes and crops were burned and laid waste, and they themselves were obliged to flee for safety. At the conclusion of the war resettlement took place and a large number of new people arrived, mostly of the Congregationalist denomination. In 1796, a Church Council, comprised of ministers from the neighboring towns of Bristol, Warren, Penobscot, and Hallowell, was called for the two-fold purpose of organizing a Church for the town and ordaining the minister to reside over it. On December 29, The First Church of Belfast, Maine was formally organized, consisting of seven members.

After some initial dissension the parish began to thrive and by 1818 decided to erect a larger building. Begun on June 13, it was ready for use, though still unfinished, in five months. The dedication took place on November 15, 1818.

Since its completion the church has remained virtually unchanged externally with exception of the installation of the town clock which was placed in the belfry in 1836. The present organ, a Stevens tracker instrument, was bought in 1848 and is considered to be a fine example of organ-building of its time.

The First Church in Belfast, is a distinguished Federal style church closely linked with the city during most of its history.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Joseph Williamson, History of the City of Belfast, Portland 1877,

The First Church in Belfast, 1796-1946, Belfast, 1946

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1 acre

*less than one acre*

UTM REFERENCES

A 

1	9	4	9	9	4	0	0	4	9	1	8	8	0	0
ZONE			EASTING				NORTHING							

B 

ZONE			EASTING				NORTHING						

*LE CORNER  
10.25.76*

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Frank A. Beard, Historian  
Stephen Kaplan, Graduate Assistant

ORGANIZATION Maine Historic Preservation Commission DATE July, 1976

STREET & NUMBER 31 Western Avenue TELEPHONE 207-289-2133

CITY OR TOWN Augusta STATE Maine

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL  STATE  LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE Carle S. Hitteworth, Jr.

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer DATE July 26, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 11/9/76

DATE 11/2/76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER