

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Maine
COUNTY: Cumberland
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE OCT 3 1973

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
Mechanics' Hall

AND/OR HISTORIC:

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
519 Congress Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Portland

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:  
1st: Hon. Peter N. Kyros

STATE: Maine      CODE: 23      COUNTY: Cumberland      CODE: 005

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) Association Headquarters & Library

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
Maine Charitable Mechanic Association

STREET AND NUMBER:  
519 Congress Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Portland

STATE: Maine      CODE: 23

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Cumberland County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:  
142 Federal Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Portland

STATE: Maine      CODE: 23

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: 1965       Federal       State       County       Local

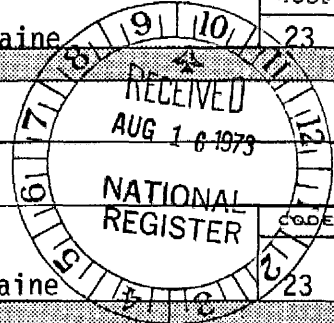
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

STREET AND NUMBER:  
801 19th Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN:  
Washington

STATE: D.C.      CODE: 11

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



STATE: Maine  
 COUNTY: Cumberland and  
 ENTRY NUMBER: OCT 3 1973  
 DATE:

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

(Check One)					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
(Check One)			(Check One)		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered			<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		
			<input type="checkbox"/> Moved		
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Mechanics' Hall stands on the northeast corner of the intersection of Congress and Casco Streets, in the commercial heart of downtown Portland. It fronts southeast on Congress Street. It was designed by Thomas J. Sparrow, Portland's first native architect, for the Maine Charitable Mechanic Association. Construction began in 1857; the building was dedicated on February 23, 1859.

Mechanics' Hall has three stories but is quite tall because the floor to ceiling height of the second floor is 33 feet. The building is rectangular, about 80 feet long and 52 feet wide. Built of brick and granite, which came from Biddeford, Maine, the Hall is an imposing structure of the Italianate style!

The exterior of Mechanics' Hall has not been greatly altered since 1859. The two story granite facade wraps around the left side of the building for a short distance. The facade is divided vertically into three sections; the middle section projects slightly. A stringcourse divides the facade horizontally at the level of the second floor. Above are three tall arched windows, one in each section. The surrounds of these windows and the corners of the facade are executed in vermiculated cut granite. The rest of the facade is of smooth, regular coursed ashlar. The keystones of the three windows are carved with the heads of Vulcan and of Archimedes and the arm of Labor. Originally, on the level of the first floor, the center section contained a double entrance door, and the two side sections had store windows behind granite colonades. These two store fronts have been variously altered, and today are replaced with modern display windows and doorways. The facade originally had a solid balustrade above a modillioned granite cornice. The balustrade was removed by 1876. The cornice remains today; it continues around the entire building.

Because Mechanics' Hall sits on the corner of a block, the left (southwest) side of the building is also important visually. Behind the short section where the facade wraps around, it is divided into four sections. On the second floor level each section contains an arched window of the same size as those in the front facade. Originally, on the first floor level, there was an entrance door in the third section from the front; the other sections contained windows. This door was later eliminated and the windows modernized. The brick of this side is dressed up with a full-length continuation of the granite stringcourse of the facade and a vermiculated granite corner in the rear. The voussoirs of the window arches are also granite.

The brick rear and right side of Mechanics' Hall were originally flanked by other buildings. There are three arched windows in the rear three of the four sections of the right side. There is no granite trim. In the rear, the granite cornice continues up the roofline.

(See Continuation Sheet)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Maine	
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	3 1973

(Number all entries)

7. DESCRIPTION

2

The gable roof of Mechanics' Hall is hipped in the front, sloping back from the facade. It is surmounted by the wooden monitor of the third floor. The monitor has oval and round windows in the front, and arched windows along the sides, all separated by flat pilasters. The back of the monitor is a rectangular brick wall.

Mechanics' Hall presents an imposing and exceptionally unified exterior. The changes to the original appearance of the first floor store fronts do look incongruous, but do not destroy the total impression of the facade.

The exterior of Mechanics' Hall was designed to reflect the original use to which the interior was put. The main entrance opened onto a 14 foot wide hall which ran through the building to meet a smaller entrance way from Casco Street. There was a room across the rear of the building, 52 feet wide and 18 feet deep, which housed the Library of the Association. The ceiling was painted in fresco. To either side of the main hall was a store, leased for commercial use by the Association. In 1886 one of the stores was extended to include the library room and the Casco Street entrance. A wide stairway led from the entrance hall to the second floor which contained the Hall of the Mechanic Association, 66 feet long, 52 feet wide and 33 feet in height. The Hall had a level of balconies supported on iron brackets. The library was moved up into the Hall from the first floor in 1886, and still occupies this room. The third floor was divided into cooking rooms and a dining hall; it was finished in imitation oak. From the music gallery at the northern end, one had an extensive view of Portland harbor.

In 1890, the second floor Hall was renovated according to plans drawn by John Calvin Stevens I, a leading Portland architect. The second floor was divided into two floors. The library, a drawing room, and offices occupied the lower floor. The upper floor was unused. Since then, Mechanics' Hall has been further modernized: the entrance hall has been changed, one of the stores expanded and updated and the upper level of the second floor is used today as a photographic studio. The original third floor has not been used for some time and remains largely in its original condition. Mechanics' Hall has received excellent and sympathetic care from the Maine Charitable Mechanic Association.



**SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century            | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1859

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |  |  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Maine Charitable Mechanic Association was incorporated in 1815 by a group of Portland citizens engaged in the "Mechanic Arts" to give charitable and educational aid to the members of these professions. The Association sponsored exhibitions and trade fairs in 1826, 1838, 1854 and 1859. Over the years it has established an excellent library, sponsored public lectures on appropriate subjects and run a free drawing school, all of which it continues to do. The Association is one of the oldest organizations in Maine and remains an active institution today. Mechanics' Hall was the first permanent home of the Maine Charitable Mechanic Association. It has continuously served and still serves well as the Association's headquarters.

Thomas J. Sparrow (1805-1870), the architect of Mechanics' Hall, was a member of the Association as were all the craftsmen who worked on the building. Sparrow was the first man born in Portland to practice architecture there. He was at first a joiner; by 1841 he was listed in the Portland Directory as an architect. Sparrow designed the Cumberland County Jail, 1858, which was torn down in 1966. Only three of his commissions are known to survive today: a large brick row house on Pine Street built in 1849, the first known example of the Italianate style in Portland; a granite obelisk in the Western Cemetery marking the grave of Henry Jackson, 1851 and Mechanics' Hall, 1859.

Mechanics' Hall is the finest known work of Thomas J. Sparrow. Extremely visible on its corner lot, Mechanics' Hall is one of the most handsome buildings on Congress Street. The total impression of the building is one of great solidity. It has a massiveness which is not oppressing. The detail is executed in such a way as to give a warmth and richness to the facades. The cornice, the vermiculated granite trim of the windows, the corner posts, and the modulation of the wall surfaces temper the scale of the building. The tall arched windows lighten the mass. Considered elegant when it was built, it remains so today. Mechanics' Hall is a vital part of downtown Portland.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Constitution and History of the Maine Charitable Mechanic Association  
 1965. Portland: 1965.  
 Elwell, Edward H. Portland and Vicinity. Portland: 1876.  
 Neal, John. Portland Illustrated. Portland: 1874.  
Portland Evening Express. July 27, 1966.  
Transcript. January 8, 1859.  
Works Projects Administration. Portland City Guide. Portland: 1940.

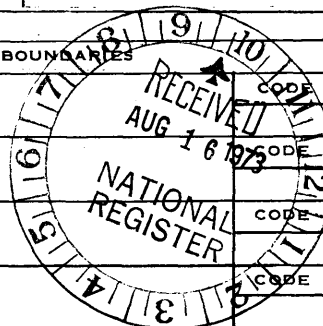
**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		43 ° 39 ' 22 "	70 ° 15 ' 42 "	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Less than one acre

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
Mary Eliza Wengren, Consultant

ORGANIZATION: Greater Portland Landmarks, Inc. DATE: March 1972

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Station A, Box 4197

CITY OR TOWN: Portland STATE: Maine CODE: 23

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name James H. Mundy  
 Title State Historic Pres. Officer  
 Date August 13, 1973

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Robert M. Utley  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 10/3/73

ATTEST:  
[Signature]  
 Keeper of The National Register  
 Date 9/20/73