

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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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 Topsham Fairgrounds Grandstand
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Off North Side of Elm Street N/A not for publication
city, town Topsham N/A vicinity
state Maine code ME county Sagadahoc code 023 zip code 04086

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	_____	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>1</u>	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	<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.

[Signature]
Signature of certifying official
Maine Historic Preservation Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

2/21/92
Date

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): _____

[Signature]
Signature of the Keeper

3/26/92
Date of Action

Entered in the
National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation & Culture/Fair

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation & Culture/Fair**7. Description**Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)Other: Grandstand

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone/Granitewalls WoodOtherroof Asphaltother Board and Batten Siding

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Topsham Fairgrounds Grandstand is a long, narrow wooden structure with a gable roof sheltering an open-air seating area. Its exterior walls are sheathed in board-and-batten siding. The grandstand is located near the southeastern corner of the fairgrounds and adjacent to the oval race track.

Facing north, the structure's principal elevation is symmetrically divided into eighteen bays, each of which is defined by square posts that rise to triangular spandrels and a narrow wall. Slightly less than one-half of the lower portion of these posts extend through a high wall, behind which is the seating area. Centrally located along the elevation is the announcer's booth. Added in the 1940s, this rectangular element is suspended below the eaves of the roof, but a pair of associated dormers breaks the expansive roof line. On both gable ends, intermediary posts extend from the wall surface below the seating area up to the triangular wall under the gable. In both lower walls a large door is located at the southern corner, thereby providing access to the area below the seating. The rear elevation features fifteen six-over-six windows on the main level as well as two doors. This fenestration pattern is relatively symmetrical, but not precisely. A corresponding number of narrow, rectangular openings are located below the eaves. Also evident on this side of the building are the stone blocks and partial stone foundation that support the grandstand.

Below the seating area is a wide corridor that extends the length of the structure. It has a wooden floor and an open structural system which is of frame construction. There is evidence in this area to support the local tradition that the grandstand as it exists today may have been built in three stages. Inspection of the framing and finish, although practically the same throughout the structure, suggests that the middle third was built first. Detailing of the gable ends suggests that the western third might have been the next segment with the eastern section being the last. This is a tentative conclusion, however, which can be confirmed or modified only with further documentary evidence which as of yet remains undiscovered.

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)

Architecture

Entertainment/Recreation

Period of Significance

c. 1863-1941

Significant Dates

c. 1863-77

c. 1900

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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

Initially constructed sometime between 1863 and 1877 and seemingly enlarged twice thereafter, the Topsham Fairgrounds Grandstand is a distinctive type of structure represented by few examples in the State. In fact, it is one of only three known extant grandstands built by a nineteenth century county agricultural society. The structure is significant under criterion A for its association with historic patterns of entertainment and recreation, and under criterion C for its representation of a very specialized type of architecture.

The Sagadahoc Agricultural and Horticultural Society was incorporated on April 14, 1854, and held its first meeting at Bath in July. As reported in the October 17, 1862, edition of the Brunswick Telegraph, the Society's first fair was held in October of 1855 near the grounds on which the present grandstand sits. Like similar fairs held throughout Maine in this period (and today), a wide range of exhibits and livestock were on display with premiums awarded to the best representatives. These annual events were designed to promote the use of improved methods of agriculture, the tangible results of which could be readily observed at the fair. Clearly, they also served an important social and recreational function representing, in many rural areas, the most significant organized gathering of the citizenry. Their popularity, if not necessarily their ultimate success, can be judged by the fact that in 1860 twenty-six county agricultural societies (there were two or more in some of the larger counties) held fairs and received stipends from the state, a dramatic increase from the two or three which existed in 1820.

Documenting the precise construction history of the Topsham grandstand has proved to be, as yet, impossible. There are, however, a number of parameters in which to narrow the period. The first of these is a reference in the 1863 edition of the Maine Agricultural Report in which the report from the Sagadahoc society states that:

See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 2

We have been laboring under quite a disadvantage by the small trotting course; but since the Fair [October, 1862], the Society has purchased sufficient land adjoining to make a good half mile course, which at this time is nearly completed.

It is reasonable to assume that a major reconfiguration of the racetrack would be accompanied by the subsequent construction of the present grandstand. Furthermore, the 1858 Wall Map of Sagadahoc County shows the outline of only a small structure in the center of the circular track then in existence, quite likely an observation post rather than a grandstand. By this date an exhibition hall had also been erected, but it does not survive. The second graphic representation of the fairgrounds is an 1877 birds-eye-view. This clearly shows the oval race course and a grandstand (although without a roof) located on the present site. Also evident is a three-stage observation tower (perhaps the one presumably shown in 1858) near the grandstand, as well as the exhibition hall at the entrance on Elm Street. Finally, a postcard (with a 1914 postmark) of the exhibition hall and grandstand shows that the latter structure had achieved its present configuration by this date.

As noted above, the Topsham grandstand is one of only three extant historic structures of the type associated with county fairgrounds. The others are located in Fryeburg, Oxford County and in Farmington, Franklin County. Both of these structures share similar characteristics to the one in Topsham including their great length, narrow width, and the sheltering gable roofs with semi-exposed gable ends. However, only Topsham's makes use of a board-and-batten sheathing pattern. The others date, respectively, to about 1885 and 1887, thereby making the structure in Topsham perhaps the oldest of the three.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Day, Clarence Albert. A History of Maine Agriculture: 1604-1860. Orono, Maine: University Press. 1954.

Maine Historic Preservation Commission Survey Forms for the Franklin County Agricultural Fairgrounds and the West Oxford Agricultural Society Fairgrounds. Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Augusta.

Wheeler, George Augustus and Wheeler, Henry Warren. History of Brunswick, Topsham, and Harpswell, Maine. Boston: Alfred Mudge & Sons, Printers. 1878.

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

Acreeage of property Less than 1 acre

UTM References

A

1	9
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4	2	3	4	8	0
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4	8	6	4	0	0	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary embraces the dimensions of the grandstand as it presently exists.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary is drawn to encompass the physical limits of the grandstand only. The balance of the fairground property does not retain its historic integrity.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kirk E. Mohny, Architectural Historian
organization Maine Historic Preservation Commission date November, 1991
street & number 55 Capitol Street, Station #65 telephone 207/289-2132
city or town Augusta state Maine zip code 04333-0065

R-4

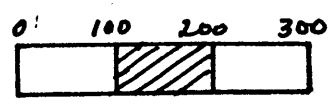
U-8

GRANDSTAND

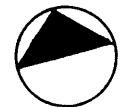


U-8

U-6



SCALE: 1/2" = 100'



25	5
PHOTO INDEX	

PROPERTY MAP
TOPSHAM, MAINE

APRIL, 1981

U-7

