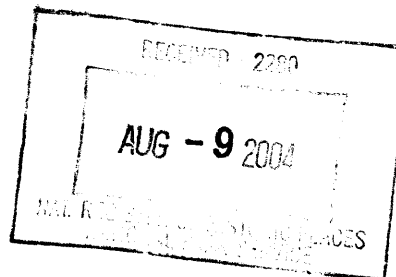


1519

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 Rural Hall

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Surry Road, 1 mile east of Contention Cove N/A not for publication

city or town Surry N/A vicinity

state Maine code ME county Hancock code 009 zip code 04684

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] 8/2/04
Signature of certifying official/Title 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 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
Edson Beall _____
Date of Action
9/22/04

RURAL HALL
Name of Property

HANCOCK COUNTY, MAINE
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

None

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL / Meeting Hall

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL / Meeting Hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN / Italianate

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone

walls Wood / Weatherboard

roof Asphalt

other Brick (chimney)

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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RURAL HALL

HANCOCK COUNTY, MAINE

Section number 7 Page 2

DESCRIPTION

The Rural Hall in East Surry is a modest, 1440 square foot, Italianate-style building located about three miles east of the village of Surry, Maine. The Hall is positioned on the south side of Route 172 (Surry Road), and is separated from the road by a gravel driveway and a small lawn ornamented with a wooden flagpole. When the facility was constructed between 1871 and 1876, the road passed along the south side of the building, and thus the primary facade faces south. Route 172 is the principal connector between Surry and the larger city of Ellsworth to the northeast, and the Hall, which is just south and west of the settlement known as East Surry, is set among farms, small-scale businesses, and residential properties.

Rural Hall is a high posted, one-story, clapboard-covered rectangular building set on a low fieldstone foundation and covered by an asphalt gable roof. The facade of the building is composed of an enclosed entryway with a hipped roof, centered between tall, paired, six-over-six windows which are joined under a simple molded hood. A third set of windows is centered on the wall under the high gable peak. The wide, double, front doors are positioned under a five-pane transom window and are accessed by a low wooden staircase. The exterior of the structure exhibits Italianate stylistic details in the overhanging eaves, narrow frieze and corner boards (with prominent cornice returns) and the narrow, paired windows. Three sets of these windows are equally distributed along the otherwise restrained east and west elevations. The northern end of the roof features a brick chimney at the ridge, and the northern elevation contains an off-center, six panel door set under a bracketed gabled hood. On the center of this otherwise unarticulated wall is a small wooden sign proclaiming "Rural Hall 1871".

On the interior, Rural Hall is characterized primarily by the auditorium which fills the entire building except for the entryway. Portable wooden benches rest on an unpainted pine floor. The benches are often arranged in two blocks separated by a center aisle, and they face a low wooden platform that spans the northern end of the room. A set of stairs leads from the northeast corner of this platform to a balcony that lines the eastern and southern walls of the building. This balcony is suspended from the ceiling by steel rods fastened to a timber truss system in the attic. The floor level of the balcony bisects the tall windows. Below the balcony the walls of the building are layered with horizontal 3 ½" wainscot, topped with a chair rail and then plasterboard. Above the balcony, the lath and plaster walls form a graceful cove at the wall ceiling junction. The ceiling is finished with more 3 ½" boards, (as are the underside and walls of the balcony), and it contains an applied bulls-eye plaster medallion in the center, from which is hung an ornate eight-globe kerosene chandelier.

Rural Hall was built between 1871 and 1876, and its construction history is chronicled by Samuel Wasson, who donated the land for the building, in a manuscript history that is stored at the Hall. There are two features in the present building that are not mentioned by Wasson: the balcony and the entryway. Oral tradition held by members of the Rural Hall Association states that the balcony was not original to the design of the building, however its date of installation is unknown. In a circa 1900 photograph the

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RURAL HALL

HANCOCK COUNTY, MAINE

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balcony floor is clearly visible through the windows. This same photograph confirms that the entry way was a later addition, and it also demonstrates that the transom light and front door were simply repositioned when the entryway was attached at a later, but still unknown, date. Three other minor changes have occurred on the interior as required by the groups meeting in and using the Hall. A small kitchen consisting of a stove, refrigerator, tables, and built-in cupboard is in the southwest corner of the balcony, and a dumbwaiter is positioned against the south wall. The kitchen area was installed in the 1940s to facilitate serving the many social dinners held in the hall. More recently (2000) a small bathroom was enclosed under the balcony next to the stairs, and a Formica topped cabinet and a sink have been installed along the east wall of the entryway. The heating system, however, is original: a wood burning stove located in the back of the room exhausts its smoke and radiates its heat through a long stovepipe, which is hung from the ceiling and traverses the length of the room along the north wall to the chimney.

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.

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL HISTORY

ENTERTAINMENT / RECREATION

Period of Significance

1871 - 1954

Significant Dates

1871-1876

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

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: _____

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In eastern section of the small town of Surry Maine there is no building more connected to the community than the Rural Hall. This one-story Italianate style building has been the site of meetings, lecture, classes, shows, and countless dinners since it was built. It is the only large gathering place serving the rural community of East Surry, and throughout its history has been used for public events, programs and projects. The Rural Hall is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A for its 133 year association with the social and cultural institutions of the town.

Rural Hall was constructed beginning in 1871, but its genesis lies in the establishment of the Excelsior Sewing Circle which was formed three years earlier. According to its charter, twenty-two women and fourteen men joined together specifically "to raise funds to build a Public Hall". By combining their textile talents in the social setting, the industrious members of the Excelsior Circle made and sold enough quilts and clothing to underwrite a substantial portion of the Hall's construction costs. Throughout the nineteenth century many churches sponsored Sewing Circle's or Ladies Aid societies, and during the Civil War these women's institutions were significant for supplying clothing and bandages for the troops. The secular versions of these circles were sometimes associated with moral reform movements, such as Temperance or Abolitionist societies. The impetus for the Excelsior Circle may have evolved from an earlier such group, or may have been concerned simply with the promotion of social improvement on a local level, or possibly they may have simply been aware of the increasing economic potential inherent in cooperative textile production. Two decades later the women of East Raymond, Maine chose the same route in raising funds for a new Chapel in their Town.¹

In 1870 residents of East Surry formed a separate, but affiliated group called the Rural Hall Association. Membership in the association was obtained through the purchase of shares which were sold to community residents for ten dollars each. The funds raised by the sale of the shares were to be used to build the Hall: originally 250 shares were envisioned but only 116 were sold. By far, the Excelsior Sewing Circle was the largest contributor to the effort: they purchased 86 shares in the association. These funds were augmented through the sale of the Excelsior Sewing Circle's products, which by 1882 amounted to \$900.96. Twelve East Surry families purchased most of the remaining shares, and the East Surry Farmers Club purchased three shares. The land for the Hall was donated by Samuel Wasson, the founding president of the Association. However, even with the financial support of the community and the local clubs, it was 1877 before the structure was completed, and several years later before it was fully furnished. Wasson, who was also a local historian, chronicled the building's progress:

"The hall was raised, boarded and shingled in 1871, finished outside in 1872, chimney

¹East Raymond Union Chapel, Raymond, Maine, 1888-1890. (NR: 04000370).

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built in 1873, finished inside in 1875, plastered in 1876, chandelier furnished in 1877, settees supplied in 1878, desk and organ furnished in 1882." (Wasson, p. 72).

The labor for the construction of the building was provided at least in part by the members of the association. There must have been some initial misunderstanding over how the shares were to be paid for, as indicated in the March 9, 1872 minutes of the Association. "Voted that the Original Shares shall be paid in Money or Materials and all pay for Labor on the Hall Lot shall be taken in additional shares. Voted that the price of Labor shall be set by the Board of Managers." By 1876 the building was essentially finished, and the original Association, which was formed to build the hall, was re-organized to maintain 'in the town of Surry a Hall for social and literary purposes'. (Minutes, Rural Hall Association, March 18, 1876).²

Technically owned by the Rural Hall Association, the Hall was used extensively by the share holders, including the Sewing Circle and the Farmers' Club. It was available to other persons or groups, such as a 'Dramatic Club' mentioned in the minutes, for a rental fee established by the Association. A non-denominational Union Sunday School used the building in 1897-1899, and the Good Templars met here between 1892 and 1899. The East Surry Farmers Club was the first of the agriculturally oriented associations to make their home in the Rural Hall. This Farmers' Club was a gathering of local agriculturalists and community members who met to discuss agricultural practices, experiment with new breeds and techniques, or to develop cooperative solutions to common farming problems. According to Wasson, the East Surry Club organized in 1876, and by 1884 they had held three town fairs and two field days. Historian Clarence Day describes the history and organization of these clubs in Maine:

"Farmers' clubs were started elsewhere in New England before they came to Maine. Where the first one was formed in this state is unknown, but the one at Newport held a local fair in 1852. A club was organized at Bethel in 1853 that was for many years one of the most successful in the state. By 1860 Maine had at least twenty active clubs.

Their organization was very simple. Some limited their membership to men; some admitted women also. Some charged a small membership fee; others only required the new members to sign the club constitution. Some had dues, others did not. Membership often included the doctor, lawyer, minister, and other people from the nearby village as well as farm people. Membership usually was not large, although the club located in Minot and Hebron at one time had about two hundred members." (Day, p. 181-182).

²In 1885 the Association was again reorganized, all the original shares were 'called in and cancelled' and new Certificates of Stock were to be issued for every seven successive years membership. Minutes, 5/6/1885 and 3/4/1886.

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Although organized locally, each club was entitled to a small amount of financial support through the Maine Board of Agriculture, which also reported on the clubs' activities in the Annual Report of the Secretary of the Maine Board of Agriculture. By the 1875 there were an estimated 75 to 100 clubs in Maine. (Day, p. 183). Many of these groups, including the East Surry Club, sponsored annual agricultural exhibitions, which gave the local agriculturalists a chance to exhibit their products and livestock, and educate each other about the latest techniques and machinery. Due to the informal nature of the group, the longevity of the East Surry Farmers Club is uncertain.

Later known as the Rural Hall Sewing Circle, the number of members in the original Sewing Circle had dwindled by 1890s. The Hall was fully constructed and furnished by then, and as such the original mission of the Club was accomplished. However the account books indicate this group was still in existence in 1928, although regular meetings had ceased earlier in the decade. As membership in the Excelsior Sewing Circle waned, the Rural Hall became the host of the East Surry Women's Farm bureau. The farm bureau was the local branch of the Cooperative Extension Service centered at the University of Maine. Although not a direct descendant of the Farmer's Club movement, this membership organization had its roots in similarly progressive agricultural thought. The Extension Service was formed in 1907, and seven years later had its first agent in Hancock County, George F. Worden, who in turn started the Farm Bureau as a group to operate on the local level as an arm of the Extension service. The first Bureau in the state was organized in Hancock County in 1917, and the East Surry branch was formed in September 1920. By July of 1949 the East Surry Bureau had become the largest women's agricultural club in Maine. Although not shareholders, the Farm Bureau paid the insurance and electric bills for the Hall. To facilitate the many dinners they sponsored, the members also purchased a stove, hot water heater, desks, closets, coffee pots, dishes and silverware. The kitchen was set up in the southwest corner of the balcony and a dumbwaiter was installed between the balcony and the first floor.

The patrons who have utilized Rural Hall throughout its history represent a cross section of the common social organizations found in the towns and cities throughout Maine, although in many cases the Sunday schools, Farmer's Clubs and Good Templar's met in different buildings. The group with the longest association with the building, besides the Rural Hall Association itself, is the East Surry Garden Club. Founded in 1937, the Garden Club still meets each month at the hall, and uses the facility for its flower shows and annual quilt show. The Hall also hosts numerous meetings, productions and events each year and is rented by residents for gatherings and celebrations. In the 133 years since ground was broken for the Hall the community of East Surry has become less isolated: these needs could be met in larger venues available in neighboring towns and cities. However, the Rural Hall, continues to be actively utilized by the local community, and as such it is an important and vital element in the town's social history.

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Day, Clarence A. Farming in Maine 1860 - 1940. University of Maine Studies Second Series, No. 78. (Orono: University of Maine Press), 1963.

Hansen, Karen V. A Very Social Time: Crafting Community in Antebellum New England. (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1994.

Fifteenth Annual Report of the Secretary of the Maine Board of Agriculture, for the year 1870. (Augusta: Sprague, Owen & Nash, Printers to the State), 1871.

Nineteenth Annual Report of the Secretary of the Maine Board of Agriculture for the year 1874. (Augusta: Sprague, Owen & Nash, Printers to the State), 1974.

Wasson Samuel. History of East Surry, Maine 1763-1884. (Surry: S. Wasson), 1957?. Manuscript copy, c. 1884, located at the Rural Hall, Surry, Maine.

Varney, Geo. J. A Gazetteer of the State of Maine. (Boston: B.B. Russell), 1882.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1/10

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 1 9 5 4 4 0 3 4 4 9 2 6 7 9 5
Zone Easting Northing

3 1 9 [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []
Zone Easting Northing

2 1 9 [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []

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 24 June 2004

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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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries of the nominated property are fully described by the Town of Surry tax map number 43, lot 2.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The above described boundaries represent all the property that has been historically associated with the Rural Hall in East Surry since its construction in 1871.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph 1 of 3

Christi A. Mitchell

Maine Historic Preservation Commission

June 11, 2004

South facade; facing northwest.

Photograph 2 of 3

Christi A. Mitchell

Maine Historic Preservation Commission

June 11, 2004

Interior; facing southeast.

Photograph 3 of 3

Christi A. Mitchell

Maine Historic Preservation Commission

June 11, 2004

Interior, looking down from the balcony; facing northwest.