

5-4-73

Form 10-300
(Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:
New Hampshire

COUNTY:
Rockingham

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY DATE
MAR 20 1973



1. NAME

COMMON:
Portsmouth Public Library

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Portsmouth Academy

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
8 Islington Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Portsmouth

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:
First

STATE: New Hampshire CODE: 33 COUNTY: Rockingham CODE: 015

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"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate):

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious	Library	
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
City of Portsmouth, New Hampshire

STREET AND NUMBER:
City Hall
126 Daniel Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Portsmouth

STATE: New Hampshire CODE: 33

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
Rockingham County Registry of Deeds

STREET AND NUMBER:
Rockingham County Court House
Hampton Road

CITY OR TOWN:
Exeter

STATE: New Hampshire CODE: 33

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
New Hampshire State Historic Preservation Plan

DATE OF SURVEY: November 30, 1970 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Department of Resources and Economic Development

STREET AND NUMBER:
P.O. Box 856
State House Annex

CITY OR TOWN:
Concord

STATE: New Hampshire CODE: 33

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: New Hampshire

COUNTY: Rockingham

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DATE:

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" 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		

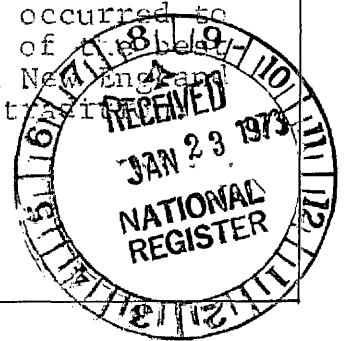
DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Portsmouth Public Library Building is a two-story brick structure with a hammered granite foundation. It is essentially rectangular in plan, though it has a narrow projecting ell at the rear. On the front, it is seven bays wide, with a marble stringcourse between the stories. The central three bays of the main (Islington Street) facade project four inches to form a central pavilion, which is surmounted by a low pediment. In the tympanum of the pediment is a small arched window. The cornice of the building is enriched with applied curved elements of the type illustrated in Plate 26-D of Asher Benjamin's American Builder's Companion. The main (north and east) doorways have arched openings embraced by flat entablatures supported on engaged Ionic columns, the latter having capitals carved by William Dearing (1759-1813). The building has a low-pitched hip roof, and has two chimneys on the north elevation. There are now two skylights at the roof ridge, probably dating from the conversion of the Academy to a library in 1896. The exterior appearance of the building is further enhanced by such features as the marble lintels and slip-sills at the windows, the delicate wrought-iron railings on the granite steps of the two main doorways, and the stringcourse that extends around the main building.

The original exterior appearance of the structure was probably little different from its present appearance, though the building may have had two other chimneys on its rear (south) wall, and it probably had no skylights on the roof. The general exterior design of the building was based upon that of the 1794 Phillips Exeter Academy building (destroyed in 1870), which was designed by Ebenezer Clifford and Bradbury Johnson of Exeter. The major differences between these two buildings were that the Portsmouth Academy was brick rather than wood, had Federal chimney placement, and had no cupola. In general, both the Exeter and Portsmouth academies were based upon accepted norms for college buildings, and one specific prototype may have been the Dartmouth College building, pictured in the February, 1793, Massachusetts Magazine.

The interior appearance of the Portsmouth Academy has been greatly altered, especially by the 1896 remodeling. Originally, the structure may have followed its Exeter prototype in having a central hallway and two major rooms on each floor. It appears likely that the stairway was located in the rear ell. Despite the changes that have occurred to the interior, however, the building remains one of the preserved early academic structures of northern New England and is a key monument in a rich local building tradition.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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STATE New Hampshire	
COUNTY Rockingham	
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	MAR 29 1973

(Continuation Sheet) 1

(Number all entries)

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS continued
 Title of Survey:
 An Inventory of Historic Structures, Portsmouth,
 New Hampshire
 Date of Survey: 1972 Federal State County xLocal
 Depository for Survey Records:
 Community Improvement Program
 Portsmouth Planning Department
 Street and Number:
 City Hall
 126 Daniel Street
 City or Town: Portsmouth State: New Hampshire Code: 03301 33



8. SIGNIFICANCE

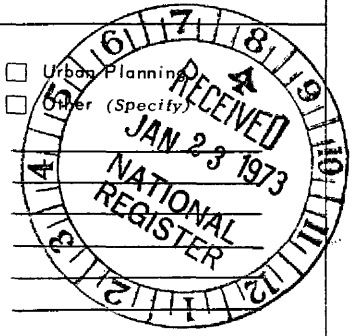
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian 16th Century 18th Century 20th Century
 15th Century 17th Century 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1809

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input checked="" 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 checked="" 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

Architecture

The Portsmouth Public Library building was erected as the Portsmouth Academy in 1809. At that time, it was one of the finest academic buildings in northern New England, and was in some ways superior architecturally to the 1794 Phillips Exeter Academy building that was its prototype. In an architectural sense, the building is important as one of the few remaining early academies, and is a structure of such outstanding refinement that it has persistently been attributed to the Boston architect Charles Bulfinch. Complete documentation for the erection of the building became available in 1966, however, and this information has shown that the designer of the structure was the local builder-architect James Nutter (1775-1855), who was paid \$20.00 for his plans. This information is critical, for it places the academy building within the context of a regional school of designers, of whom Nutter was one of the most creative. Famed as a joiner who was "the head of his craft" in Portsmouth, Nutter executed the fine woodwork in the Portsmouth Athenaeum (1804) and St. John's Church (1807). He is known to have designed other structures besides the Academy, but the latter must be accounted his masterpiece. Nutter appears to have been the apprentice of Elisha Whidden, who was in turn the son of the builder of the famous Langdon Mansion in Portsmouth (1784) and the great-grandson of the master joiner of the Warner House (1716). Thus, Nutter represents the transmission of the builder's skill through five generations of local craftsmen, and the Academy building represents the final phase of a local architectural evolution that had progressed for nearly a century by 1809. The significance of the Academy building is further enhanced by the fact that Nutter wrote an autobiographical account of his early life and religious conversion, an almost unique record of the thoughts of an early builder.

Education

Although Portsmouth had a high school in the early nineteenth century, the Portsmouth Academy was founded to supplement the type of education provided in the public institution. As well as teaching the standard academic

(Continued on Continuation Sheet 2)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Robert S. Chase and James I. Garvin, "Portsmouth, An Architectural Evolution, " New Hampshire Profiles (December, 1970).

James L. Garvin, "Portsmouth and the Piscataqua: Social History and Material Culture," Historical New Hampshire, XXVI:2 (Summer, 1971), 1-48.

James Nutter, "The Experience of James Nutter," (unpublished manuscript).

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

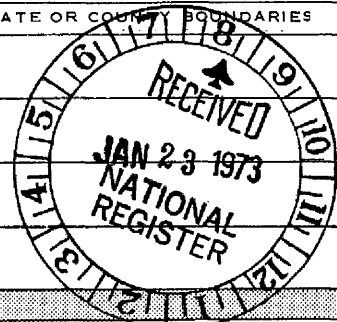
LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	° ' "	° ' "		43°	04'	31"
NE	° ' "	° ' "		70°	45'	41"
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

UTM
19/356610
4770480
CD

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1/2 Acre

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

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



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
James L. Garvin, Research Curator

ORGANIZATION: Strawbery Banke, Inc. DATE: December 6, 1972

STREET AND NUMBER:
P.O. Box 300

CITY OR TOWN: Portsmouth STATE: New Hampshire 03801 CODE: 33

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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: George Galman
Title: Commissioner
Department of Resources and Economic Development
Date: January 17, 1973

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

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

Date: 3/20/73

ATTEST:
W. Bradford
Keeper of The National Register

Date: 3/16/73

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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(Continuation Sheet) 2

STATE New Hampshire	
COUNTY Rockingham	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
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(Number all entries)

8. SIGNIFICANCE continued

Statement of Significance

subjects, the Academy specialized in mathematics and navigation. The Portsmouth Academy was one of a number of similar institutions founded in New Hampshire during a great surge of academy-building in the early nineteenth century, and represents a major advance in educational standards in the region.

Literature

Both Thomas Bailey Aldrich and James T. Fields, later to become prominent men of letters and editors of The Atlantic Monthly, were educated here.

