

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH0682179
FOR NPS USE ONLY
AUG 14 1978
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED NOV 20 1978

**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

North Yarmouth and Freeport Baptist Meetinghouse

AND/OR COMMON

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Hillside Street

__ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Yarmouth

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1st

STATE

Maine

__ VICINITY OF

CODE
23

COUNTY
Cumberland

CODE
005

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

__DISTRICT

PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

__AGRICULTURE

__MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

__PRIVATE

__UNOCCUPIED

__COMMERCIAL

__PARK

__STRUCTURE

__BOTH

__WORK IN PROGRESS

__EDUCATIONAL

__PRIVATE RESIDENCE

__SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

__ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

__OBJECT

__IN PROCESS

__YES: RESTRICTED

__GOVERNMENT

__SCIENTIFIC

__BEING CONSIDERED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

__INDUSTRIAL

__TRANSPORTATION

__NO

__MILITARY

OTHER: meeting place

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Town of Yarmouth

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Yarmouth

__ VICINITY OF

STATE

Maine 04096

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Cumberland County Registry of Deeds,

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Portland,

STATE

Maine

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Yarmouth Historic Preservation Survey

DATE

1972-3,

__FEDERAL __STATE __COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Merrill Memorial Library

CITY, TOWN

Yarmouth,

STATE

Maine

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<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	1825, 1837, 1891	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Baptist Meetinghouse was erected in 1796 on Byram's Hill. The exterior appearance of the building today is the result of alterations performed in 1825 and 1837. However, the original appearance can be surmised from records and investigation of the structure itself.

The original building was 46 feet wide (current width) and 50 feet deep. It was composed of five bays with two rows of windows, 10 on each side. It had four windows across the end and five across the facade. All the original window openings are boarded up, but can be located. The meetinghouse apparently had a steeple or porch built out in front of the main building.

In 1825 extensive exterior alterations were performed, probably under the supervision of Capt. Samuel Melcher of Brunswick, a master builder and architect. The original steeple or porch was taken down. A new porch, similar to that of the First Parish Congregational Church in Yarmouth (built in 1819 and torn down in 1878) was erected. The spire was reported to be similar to that of the First Universalist Meetinghouse in Portland, built in 1821 (now demolished). The resulting spire is exceedingly unusual, being not only conical, but flush-boarded. Extensive research has produced no picture of any other examples. During the 1825 alteration the building was made 10 feet longer; a 30-foot wide entrance portico projecting five feet was added on the facade, topped by a tower, belfry and steeple.

Gothic style features provide the dominant impression of the exterior. The facade of the building has pointed windows with interlacing muntins. The octagonal second stage of the tower, the belfry, has pointed arched openings in conjunction with Roman Doric cornice details, repeating those used on the main doorway of the facade. It is this harmonious contribution of the Gothic and Federal features that lends distinction to the design. Eight "dark windows" painted on the lower part of the spire repeat the pointed arches and interlacing muntins found on the facade.

In 1837, under architect Anthony D. Raymond of Bath, the original side windows were boarded up and the two new windows inserted on each side. The shuttered fake windows nearest the facade must have been put in at that time.

The features of the 1825 and 1837 alterations are the main ones we see on the exterior of the Baptist Meetinghouse today. The building displays a combination of Colonial, Federal, Gothic and Greek Revival style features.

The west end of the building still exhibits much of its late 18th century appearance. The gable attic window has its original 12/12 sash with wide muntins and simple colonial window cap and molding. The clapboards surrounding it are beveled and lapped. The rakes are narrow, tapered and beaded.

The sides of the building are treated in the Greek Revival style: wide corner pilasters support a deep two-part cornice and the three windows have trim of incised moldings and corner blocks. Also, the double windows in the square first stage of the tower have of flat pilasters supporting a lintel.

Federal style features are the entrance doorway with Roman Doric trim, the balus-

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trade with urns crowing the tower and the cornice on the belfry.

A banner weathervane with pointed ball on top, adorns the meetinghouse spire. This could have come from the original meetinghouse steeple.

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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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 1796 BUILDER/ARCHITECT 1825 alterations: Samuel Melcher
1837 alterations: Anthony Raymond

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In the late eighteenth century, the Baptist movement began to spread into the province of Maine, introduced at first by travelling preachers. The first converts in North Yarmouth were baptised at the Lower Falls on the Royal River in 1793. This dissident group, the first to break away from the established Congregational Church, met for several years in private homes, schoolhouses, and barns, until, in 1796, they erected what was one of the first meetinghouses in Maine for worship in accordance with the Baptist rite. It is believed to be the oldest Baptist meetinghouse still standing in Maine and certainly the oldest church in the present town of Yarmouth, as well as being unusually distinguished in design for the area.

The Baptist Meetinghouse was built on a commanding hilltop on the edge of Yarmouth's Upper or Corner Village, and being near the Center of the scattered township, housed the town meetings for many years. Timothy Dwight, passing through the area in 1805, commented: "About 12 miles from Portland and not far, I believe, from the center of the township, a pretty village surrounding a neat church crowns the summit of a very handsome rise, about half a mile north of the road."

The meetinghouse was built by 40 proprietors, being raised on April 30, 1796. The cost was \$1,338/4/5, financed by the sale of the pews as was the custom. The Baptist Religious society of North Yarmouth and Freeport, incorporated by the general court of Massachusetts in June 1797, belonged to the Bowdoinham Association and was one of the first congregations to build its own house of worship.

In 1825 and again in 1837, extensive exterior alterations were performed giving the building a combination of Colonial, Federal, Gothic, and Greek Revival features.

The meetinghouse was abandoned for a new Baptist Church in 1889, and bought by Mr. and Mrs. George W. Hammond, who opened it as an antiquarian society and the town's first library between 1890 and 1910. In 1910, the Hammonds gave the building to the town of Yarmouth, which used it for town affairs and a polling station until 1946. During World War II, the tower was used as an aircraft observation post manned by the townspeople 24 hours a day.

At the request of the town, the Village Improvement Society, an organization incorporated in 1910, assumed the responsibility of maintaining the building, beginning in 1946 and continuing today. At the present time, while no longer in regular use as a house of worship, the meetinghouse is very much part of the town's life. Well-attended ecumenical services are held there annually, including the high school baccalaureate ceremony. It is also used for weddings and occasionally for concerts, meetings, and plays and is open to the public weekly during the summer months.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

North Yarmouth and Freeport Baptist Church Parish Records 1797-1855, Me. Hist. Society.
 Millet, John, History of the Baptists in Maine, Portland, Maine, 1845
 Rowe, William Hutchinson, Ancient No. Yarmouth and Yarmouth, Maine 1636-1936, Yarmouth, 1937.
Yarmouth Village Improvement Society Records, 1946-, Merrill Memorial Library, Yarmouth.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1

UTM REFERENCES

A

1	9	4	0	3	7	7	5	4	8	5	0	5	3	0
ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING						

B

ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING					

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See map for description

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

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Frank A. Beard, Historian , David E. Fortin, Student Intern

ORGANIZATION Ursula Baier

DATE

STREET & NUMBER Maine Historic Preservation Commission

July, 1978

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN 242 State Street

(207)-289-2133

STATE

Augusta

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

Carol S. Fretwell

TITLE

SNPO

DATE

7/31/78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

11.20.78

ATTEST:

Miss Ann Dugg
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

11/17/78