

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 JUL 5 1973

1. NAME

COMMON: Front Street Historic District
AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: 0-100 Front Street to the intersection of Spring and Water Streets			
CITY OR TOWN: Exeter		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: First	
STATE: New Hampshire	CODE: 33	COUNTY: Rockingham	CODE: 015

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: Not applicable
STREET AND NUMBER:
CITY OR TOWN:
STATE:

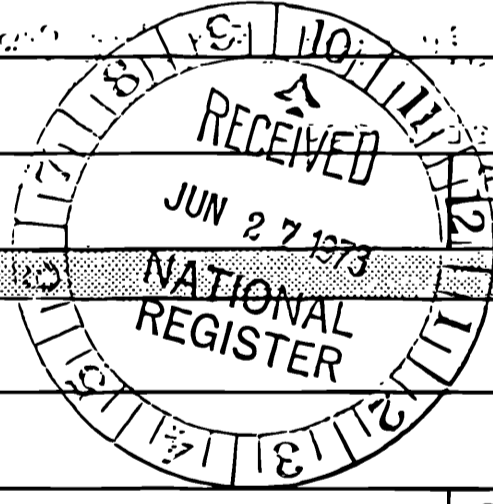
5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Rockingham County Registry of Deeds		
STREET AND NUMBER: Rockingham County Courthouse Hampton Road		
CITY OR TOWN: Exeter	STATE: New Hampshire	CODE: 03833

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: New Hampshire's Historic Preservation Plan		
DATE OF SURVEY: November 30, 1970 <input type="checkbox"/> Federal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local		
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: State of New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development		
STREET AND NUMBER: State House Annex P. O. Box 856		
CITY OR TOWN: Concord	STATE: New Hampshire	CODE: 33

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



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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

Present Physical Condition: The Front Street Historic District, a local district established in 1971 under state enabling legislation, consists of an area 200 feet on both sides of Front Street from its inception at the Swasey Pavilion southwest to and including Gale Park with a five block area to the north bounded by the center of Spring and Water Streets.

The cohesiveness of this area is expressed through historical association, reflected in the lives of individuals and events. Church and State is still concentrated here. The houses of the leading business and professional men which were often combined houses-offices exist. The presence of the Phillips Exeter Academy is apparent.

Visually as well, the district possesses an integrity of location, design, and materials. It is a living museum of the development of New England architecture, particularly domestic and religious from 1700 to the 1930's. Within the area exists a similarity of materials, colors and textures--clapboard and brick; height, proportion, and design--2½-3-story pitched roof buildings; and scale, rhythm, and silhouette--buildings and spaces closely related to each other, walks, streets, and foliage.

From the town center focal point, the Swasey Pavilion (photograph 1) on the right is the Exeter Town Hall (photograph 2) which with its dome dominates this area, the conflux of Exeter's main streets. Behind and within the five-block area to the north are well-maintained eighteenth-nineteenth century buildings. Cincinnati Hall (photograph 3) is near the northern junction where Water and Spring Streets meet. On the right as Front Street rises are the Sleeper, Gardner, and Dudley Houses (photograph 4). At the top of the rise and across from the Congregational Church on the right is Gorham Hall (photograph 5). Continuing past a variety of eighteenth-twentieth century religious and municipal buildings erected close to the Street, Front Street bisects the campus of Phillips Exeter Academy. Before and after the open space of the Academy Yard on both sides of the Street are Colonial Revival and other buildings used by the Academy. Past the Academy proper, domestic architecture, surrounded by abundant foliage and space dominates the Street. To the right is one example, the Gorham Otis House and Dr. Gorham's office (photograph 6).

Near the end of the district, at the junction of Linden and Pine Streets with Front Street, to the left is the Moses-Kent House (photograph 7). Gale Park with the War Memorial statue by Daniel Chester French (photograph 8) terminates the district as Front Street sharply curves north, its character gradually changing.

Original Physical Appearance: The original physical appearance of the area was similar to the current district. Front and Water Streets were two of the town's original highways. Narrow side streets were lanes. Although three homes have been moved within the district, one house was moved into the district before 1800 when two other structures were moved about to be used as additions. Most buildings, therefore, are on their original foundations. Except for telephone lines, paving, and cars; the late eighteenth-nineteenth centuries are still very much apparent.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input checked="" 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) Not applicable

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input checked="" 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

Religion/Philosophy: Of the five churches of different denominations along Front Street, the best known is the First Parish Meetinghouse, the present Congregational Church (entered in the National Register, September 10, 1971). The fifth meetinghouse and third built on the site, the building was host to religious and secular gatherings. In the 1830's, the Cilley Will case trial with Daniel Webster and Jeremiah Mason as opposing Counsel took place here. In 1838, Dr. Benjamin Abbot's 50th Anniversary as principal of Phillips Exeter Academy was celebrated. This was the only building large enough to hold such a throng, including many notables of the day such as Daniel Webster, Edward and Alexander Everett, John G. Palfrey, the historian, Jeremiah Smith, Caleb Cushing, and Leverett Saltonstall.

Political: Lower Front Street was also the area of municipal buildings. West of Swasey Pavilion, now in the middle of Front Street, was the site of the first Town House where "provincial representation of New Hampshire" resolved themselves into a House of Representatives and adopted a constitution, New Hampshire thus becoming the first of the thirteen colonies to set up a separate State government.

The Statue of Justice on the cupola on the fourth and present Town Hall (photograph 2), built in 1855, indicates the original use of the building for town offices and county court.

Gorham Hall (photograph 5), formerly the Squamscott Hotel, was built in 1851. In 1853, Amos Tuck and his political friends met here, October 12, 1853, and during secret deliberations formed an organization they named the Republican party.

Cincinnati Hall (Ladd-Gilman House) (photograph 2), built in 1721 by Nathaniel Ladd was enlarged with a north side addition by Nicholas Gilman, who in this house during the Revolution served as the first Treasurer of the new state of New Hampshire. One son, Nicholas, Jr. was a delegate to the Constitutional Convention. Another son, John T. Gilman, was also a member of the Continental Congress, succeeded his father as State Treasurer, and served a series of one year terms as Governor of New Hampshire. The house continued in the same family, except for one brief interval, until 1902 when it was purchased by the Society of the Cincinnati.

Education: John Phillips founded in 1778 Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts. His plan of establishing an academy in Exeter was made possible by his benefactions and Phillips Exeter Academy was opened in 1783 with William Woodbridge, as principal, followed by Benjamin Abbot, whose scholarship and executive ability established the standards that succeeding principals have maintained.

Continued on Continuation Sheet 1

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

C. H. Bell, History of Exeter (Boston: J. E. Farwell & Co., 1888).
 James Garvin and Nancy Merrill, "Exeter: Its Architectural Heritage,"
New Hampshire Profiles 20:6 (June, 1971), 33-51.

2 11 19 73

NW 11/19/73
 11/19/73
 04/16/73
 12/22/73
 01/18/74
 12/11/74
 12/11/74

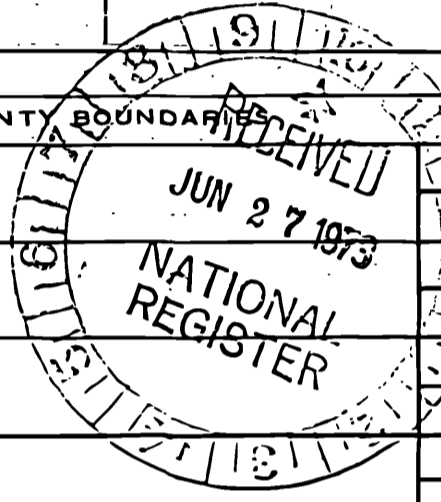
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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	42°	58'	56"	70°	57'	24"						
NE	42°	58'	56"	70°	56'	44"						
SE	42°	58'	38"	70°	56'	44"						
SW	42°	58'	38"	70°	57'	24"						

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 45 acres

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: Nancy C. Merrill, Chairman
 ORGANIZATION: Exeter Historic District Commission
 DATE: March 9, 1973
 STREET AND NUMBER: 112 Front Street
 CITY OR TOWN: Exeter
 STATE: New Hampshire 03833
 CODE: 33

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: George Gilman
 Title: Commissioner
Department of Resources and Economic Development
 Date: June 22, 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: 7/5/73
 ATTEST:
Robert M. Utley
 Director of The National Register
 Date: July 3, 1973

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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(Continuation Sheet) 1.

STATE New Hampshire	
COUNTY Rockingham	
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(Number all entries)

8. SIGNIFICANCE CONTINUED
Statement of significance

In the Academy's century and a half of existence the list of graduates is an imposing one. The Yard, to the north, the oldest part of the Academy property, was given by Governor Nicholas Gilman in 1795. The older dormitories; Academy Building, Alumni Hall, and Phillips Church are off this area, the Church being the only building within the historic district.

Architecture: The variety of styles and excellent condition of the domestic, religious, and municipal architecture within the historic district is superb. The Sleeper, Gardner and Dudley Houses (photograph 4), three-story dwellings in the Federal style, reveal how fully this style was refined in southeastern New Hampshire and how long it retained favor here: the first of these buildings was erected in 1809, and the last, scarcely different, in 1826.

The Sleeper House, today the most altered of the three, was built in 1809 by George Sullivan. The Victorian porch was added before 1885, just prior to the time when the Sleeper family acquired the house. The small store attached to the east was built as a jewelry shop in 1910. The Gardner House, built in 1826, was constructed for John Gardner by a Mr. Pike from Hampton Falls at a cost of \$6,163--a high price for the time. The portico and fanlight of the house, deceptively early in appearance, are actually Colonial Revival additions of the late nineteenth century.

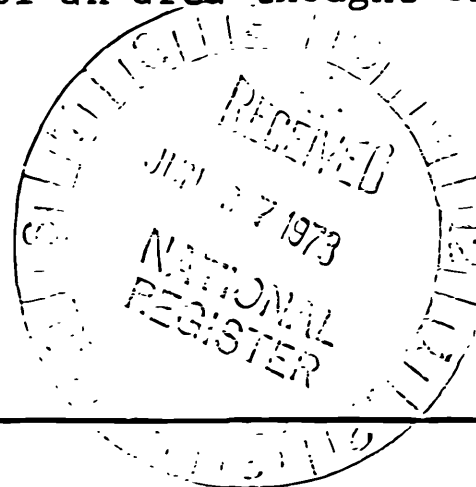
West of the Gardner House stands a dwelling constructed before 1815 by John Rundlett, a master builder. Like its neighbors, the Dudley House (entered in the National Register, June 21, 1971) also had its doorway altered: the heavy Doric portico is a Greek Revival addition that probably dates from the 1830's. In this house lived two physicians named William Perry--men whose lives were inextricably woven into the fabric of Exeter's history.

Seldom in a larger town is there the opportunity to see the phenomenon still visible here: a detached office built adjacent to the proprietor's house. Like the adjacent Gorham Otis House built about 1820 (photograph 6), Dr. Gorham's office is an excellent example of the Greek Revival style.

The Moses-Kent House (photograph 7), built about 1870 by Henry C. Moses, a prosperous wool dealer of Exeter and Boston, is an excellent example of the Second Empire Style. The house is complemented by its original landscaping: the grounds were laid out by Frederick Law Olmsted. Although there are other buildings within the district of architectural significance noteworthy is the Congregational Church, of 1730, already mentioned and the Exeter Town Hall, built in 1855 by Gilman and Dwight of Boston.

Urban Planning: The present boundaries of the Front Street Historic District reflect Beaux Arts urban planning at the turn of this century. The Swasey Pavilion and War Memorial determine the limits of an area thought of as unique then as well as now.

Continued on Continuation Sheet 2



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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

The Swasey Pavilion (photograph 1), given to the town in 1913 by Ambrose Swasey and the War Memorial (photograph 8) in Gale Park, dedicated July 4, 1922, were by two men also known for their collaboration on the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.; Henry Bacon, architect, and Daniel Chester French, Exeter-born sculptor. Henry Bacon, influenced by French in his design of the Pavilion probably designed Gale Park.

The historic section of Front Street was formally defined by these two classic structures. The November 21, 1921 Exeter News Letter gives a report of the War Memorial committee. They explained the need for a suitable park and closed with the following: "Such a park, becomingly adorned as a site for a monument destined to gather fame with the passing years, would form a conspicuous and beautiful head of a stretch of street that contains within its limits many of the chief edifices of the town. From the historic Square and the Swasey Pavilion past the county buildings, the churches, the old houses, the libraries, the Academy quadrangle, through the overarching elms, the visitor would be led to the crown of the way, the Gale Park and the French monument." On June 10, 1971, Exeter voted to make this area an historic district.



