

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received NOV 25 1986

date entered APR 15 1987

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Nathaniel Dyer House

and or common

2. Location

street & number 168 York Street not for publication

city, town Portland, N/A vicinity of

state Maine code 23 county Cumberland code 005

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Frank C. and Barbara L. Rodway

street & number 168 York Street

city, town Portland, vicinity of state Maine

5. 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 N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Dyer House is a 2½-story brick structure, with granite-over-rubble foundation and shallow gable roof. The main section is one bay deep and five wide. The facade is arranged symmetrically with the doorway centered and encased in a simple Federal style surround with toplight. A stubby two story brick ell projects to the rear, its southwest wall continuous with the southwest gable end of the main section. In the 1960s a 2½-story wooden section which was connected to the northeast wall, and which mimicked the overall dimensions and character of the main section, was removed, and two interior doors penetrating the brick gable end were closed up.

The floor plan and interior finish is typical of a house of this style and period--a narrow central hall and staircase with parlor and sitting room to either side, and their respective chambers above. There is a small finished room behind the staircase on the first story. Most of the original staircase's baluster newels, and rail had been removed by the 1960s, but the present owner salvaged virtually identical features from a house across the street (also formally owned by the Dyer family), and had them carefully fitted to the Dyer House stair. The door and window casings throughout the house have standard Federal style mouldings, and each room in both the main section and ell has plain wainscot with a prominent chair-rail. The right parlor has a coved crown moulding. The fireplace mantels are relatively simple, but that in the the left parlor (or sitting room) was originally faced with composition ornament, now missing. A cooking fireplace with beehive oven remains in the kitchen. All doors are six-panelled, many with latches.

The present owner did minor repair work to the interior finish, the brickwork, and the frame in the 1960s, but approximately 80% of the walls remain plastered, and 90% of the woodwork remains original. The wooden diamonds at the base of the front door pliasters were added by the present owner.

The house's walls are of common brick, the facade laid in Flemish bond, the sides and back in English. The present owner installed ventilators in the attic gables in one corner of the ell before 1960.

Located on the south side of York Street, the house is sited on a bluff which slopes down to the rear toward Portland's waterfront. Across York Street are 19th century dwellings of various sizes and styles which do not constitute a potential historic district.

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 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 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 1803 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Nathaniel Dyer House is a locally rare example of an early free-standing masonry structure built for a middle class family. It is the finest remaining example in Portland of its size and type. Although constructed on a site over-looking the Fore River, subsequent commercial development and urban renewal projects have left it a relatively isolated survivor in the city's waterfront area.

According to deed research, the land on which the house stands was purchased by Nathaniel Dyer in 1800 and 1801. Dyer, an early settler and later ship owner and captain in Cape Elizabeth, built on this lot in 1803. Construction of the house was observed by the Rev. Samuel Deane whose personal notes, partially published in 1849 by William Willis, record the erection of buildings in Portland between the years 1784 and 1809.

Exactly why Dyer moved to Portland at the turn of the century is unknown, but the period 1799–1807 was one of great prosperity and building in Portland, while Cape Elizabeth had been experiencing a decline in population since 1790. By 1810–12, a number of Dyers are recorded on both sides of the Fore River, all engaged in shipbuilding. The Portland Dyers, chief among them Nathaniel, Ezekiel and Ezekiel's son Lemuel, had all originated in Cape Elizabeth. Nathaniel's son and grandson, both of whom shared his name, were engaged in shipbuilding until the late 19th century. Nathaniel himself died in 1823, but successive generations of Dyers retained the property until 1959.

According to Willis' History of Portland... (1833), there were 576 houses in Portland in January, 1803, only 26 of which were of brick. Although Dyer's house was over-shadowed in size by contemporary dwellings in the same neighborhood, its building material alone would have classed it among the better Portland houses.

9. Major Bibliographical References

1. Title Search, 162-168 York St., Portland, Me. Donald L. Philbrick, Esq., for Edward G. Hough, Esq. (1957).
2. Interview with present owner.
3. Biographical Review of Cumberland County, Maine, Boston: Biographical Review Publishing Co., 1896 (for Nathaniel Dyer).

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Portland West

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	9	3	9	8	3	3	0	4	8	3	3	4	7	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

B

Zone			Easting					Northing						

C

Zone			Easting					Northing						

D

Zone			Easting					Northing						

E

Zone			Easting					Northing						

F

Zone			Easting					Northing						

G

Zone			Easting					Northing						

H

Zone			Easting					Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

Assessor's Map 43, Lot C-2

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Gregory K. Clancey/Edited by Roger G. Reed, Architectural Historian

organization Maine Historic Preservation Commission date September, 1986

street & number 55 Capitol Street, Station #65 telephone 207/289-2132

city or town Augusta, state Maine 04333

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 *James S. Thompson*

title 11/17/86 S.H.P.O. date 11/17/86

For NPS use only

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

William B. Bushong date 4/15/87
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: Beverly L. Savage date 4-15-87
Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

NATHANIEL DYER HOUSE
Continuation sheet

Item number 9

Page 2

4. History of Cape Elizabeth, pp. 201-208.
5. Portland Directories, 1827-47.
6. The History of Portland..., Part II, William Willis. Portland: Charles Day and Co., 1833. pp. 178-70.
7. Willis, William. Journals of the Rev. Thomas Smith and the Rev. Samuel Deane, Pastors of the First Church in Portland with Notes and Biographical Notices: and a Summary History of Portland. Portland: Joseph S. Bailey, 1849.