

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 Steep Falls Library

other names/site number Pierce Memorial Library

### 2. Location

street & number 1128 Peguawket Trail N/A not for publication

city or town Steep Falls N/A vicinity

state Maine code ME county Cumberland code 005 zip code 04085

### 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.)

Earle S. Thompson 11/26/03  
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): \_\_\_\_\_

Paul Sage 1-15-04  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

STEEP FALLS LIBRARY

CUMBERLAND COUNTY, MAINE

Section number 7 Page 2

---

## DESCRIPTION

The Steep Falls library is a Colonial Revival brick structure located in Steep Falls, a village of Standish, Maine. Constructed in two stages, the northeast facing structure is set on a grassy, oversized village lot, on the west side of Pequawket Trail, one of the villages two main streets. (For sake of convenience in this nomination the orientation of the structure will be simplified to east-facing.) The original three bay structure built in 1917 by E.F. Fassett was doubled in size by the architectural firm of John Calvin Stevens and John Howard Stevens in 1924.

The one story library sits on a raised brick and granite foundation, and is covered with a hipped slate roof. A granite water table encompasses the building, under which are situated four three-light basement windows. Paralleling the watertable is a brick belt course situated about two feet under the roof line. The overhanging copper cornice is articulated with copper modillions. Each side elevation features an exterior chimney stack in the center of the wall, and the corners of the building are decorated with truncated brick quoins.

The facade of the Steep Falls Library is comprised of seven bays, two of which contain pedimented entrance pavilions. Between the pavilions is a shed roofed, brick walled, ambulatory with three, tripartite, six-over-six sash, each flanked by a three-light sidelight. The roof of this atrium is covered with asphalt shingles, and intersection of this roof to the wall plane of the building occurs at the level of the belt course. Flanking the entrance pavilions are two modified Palladian windows with small fan lights surrounded by a marble arch. The wooden windows are located above a marble wall panel and placed on a granite sill. The second and sixth bays contain the entrance pavilions. Each pavilion protrudes from the plane of the wall just enough to provide for an interior vestibule. The pavilions are surmounted by closed, copper pediments, with a copper frieze and, like the building's cornice, copper modillions on the underside of the soffit. The southern entrance is the simpler of the pair: a set of granite steps with iron rails lead to a uncomplicated door way which is articulated only by a wide granite lintel surmounted by a semicircular glass fan identical to those in the Palladian window. Over the door, and between the belt course and the cornice, three marble panels are set into the brick. The corners of the pavilion are also decorated with brick quoins. The northern entrance is more elaborate. In this case, the pediment projects further east than on its southern partner, and rests on two granite Doric columns in the front, and brick pilasters in the back. Below the pediment the two part frieze is inscribed "Memorial Library". The granite entrance steps are as wide as the portico and lined with granite side walls which curve into low pillars at ground level. The front door is an exquisite combination of wood, glass, and granite. The fan-topped, arched, glass door is surrounded by an oak frame, which in turn is enclosed by an arched glass surround with oak panels at the bottom. The entire unit is set into a opening ringed by alternating short and long marble stone blocks.

The north elevation contains a two-over-two window on either side of the chimney. The rear of the building contains a small projection that mimics the northern entrance pavilion (sans portico), and end Palladian windows sandwich four additional two-over-two windows. The only feature on the southern

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

STEEP FALLS LIBRARY

CUMBERLAND COUNTY, MAINE

Section number 7 Page 3

---

elevation of the library is the chimney.

The interior of the Step Falls library consists of three public rooms, a stage and the librarian's office on the first floor, and several partially finished basement rooms. Behind the main entrance vestibule is a broad hall, flanked on the north side by a reading room, and on the south by book stacks. Separating the hall from the side rooms are pairs of Tuscan columns with finely carved egg and dart detail on the capitals. The columns support a broad entablature which stretches across the east and west walls of the hall under a curved ceiling. Above the columns, and springing from the top of the entablature, elongated wooden arches mimic the curve of the ceiling and complete the passageways into the two side rooms. In the reading room low shelves line the walls under the windows, and a brick fireplace topped with a mantle that matches the entablature, is centered on the northern wall. The stack room to the south contains free standing oak shelving units. All the woodwork is of varnished oak; the floors are hard wood and the walls are finished with plaster. Windsor chairs, oak tables, and original light fixtures furnish the rooms, and along with the Mission-style circulation desk, date to the opening of the library in 1917. Behind the main hall is a small toilet and librarians room, both of which are accessed from the northwest corner of the stack room. This section of the library represents the work of E.F. Fassett. As originally designed the circulation desk was placed between the hall and the stack room, and the librarian controlled access to the collections.

In 1924 John Calvin Stevens and John Howard Stevens room designed the Children's room, which doubled the size of the library. This addition is located due south of the stack room and is accessed through a fanlight topped, two-leaf oak door with the same finish as the earlier section of the library. The Children's room is a large open room with wooden shelves lining the walls. An open staircase in the northwest corner of the room is lined with additional shelving, and leads to the basement. At the southern end of the room is a low stage which is separated from the main portion of the room by two square columns and curtains. At the rear of the stage is a brick fireplace that is simply detailed with a band of glazed headers. On the east wall of the children's room are two wooden doors topped with transom lights. The southerly door leads to a vestibule within the southern entrance pavilion, while the northern door leads directly into the ambulatory. This later space stretches across the facade of the building between the two entrances and serves to visually and physically integrate the new and old sections of the library. As with the earlier rooms, the furniture, shelving and lighting in the children's addition is original to the building's opening.

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.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1917 - 1953

Significant Dates

1917

1924-25

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Fassett, Edward F. (1848 -1922 )

Stevens, John Calvin (1855-1940)

Stevens, John Howard (1879-1958)

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:

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

STEEP FALLS LIBRARY

CUMBERLAND COUNTY, MAINE

Section number 8 Page 2

---

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Steep Falls Library is a one-story Colonial Revival brick building designed by Edward F. Fassett in 1916, and enlarged by John Calvin Stevens and John Howard Stevens in 1924. It was built with funds donated by Henry Pierce, a childhood resident of the town, and is administered through a Board of Trustees. The library is eligible for nomination to the National Register under Criteria A and C as more fully explained in the Multiple Property Documentation Form titled "Maine Public Libraries."

The following brief history of the Steep Falls Library was summarized from an article written by Ruth Chaplin in 1984, and printed in *The Pearsontown Press* Volume 4, Issue No 2, 24 May 1999.

The main section of the library (Adult Part) was built in 1916 and opened 1917. It was the gift of the late Henry Pierce to his native village of Steep Falls. Henry was the son of Capt. William Pierce of Standish and Mehitable Charles of Fryeburg.

In 1849 when the California fever called, Henry was allowed to prepare a plan for starting a business in San Francisco, shipping the materials around Cape Horn. Henry left New York in May 1850 on the steamer "Georgia". In 1852 a large variety of goods began to be shipped from Boston and New York for sale by Henry in California. Henry, with other family members who migrated to California over the following years, became very successful in a variety of enterprises that included a bakery business, flour and grain, dairying, a rubber company which made belting to run machines, and a paper company. According to Kay Clegg, a descendent of Henry's sister Ann, they all became wealthy and apparently remain so. Henry and William, the two brothers who never married, were in business together under the title of H & W Pierce Co.

Pierce apparently did not inform family members of his intentions concerning Steep Falls. It was many years after his death that a family member discovered the library on a trip east. Steep Falls Library records state that the building was made possible by the bequest of the late Henry Pierce of California, leaving it optional with the executors of said will whether it would be built. Mrs. Henrietta Pierce Watkinson, a daughter of Henry's brother, Marshall who was living nearby in Baldwin, Maine was instrumental in the decision to build the Children's room in 1924.

The architect for the main section of the library was E.F. Fassett, son and partner of the noted Portland architect Francis H. Fassett. His father had designed the Romanesque Revival Portland Library in 1889, while Edward F. Fassett was practicing in Missouri, but after his return in 1892 the pair executed commissions including the Portland City Hospital (NR: 85000612 ) and the Thomas Brackett Reed House (NR: 4834030). After the death of his father in 1908, E.F. Fassett took on fewer commissions; and the Steep Falls Library may have been the last before his death in 1922. Its strong Colonial Revival style is a departure from the majority of the Fassetts' oeuvre. The relatively simple tripartite layout of the building is anachronistic in two of its features. First, according to the architectural drawings Fassett left for the

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places

## Continuation Sheet

STEEP FALLS LIBRARY

CUMBERLAND COUNTY, MAINE

Section number   8   Page   3  

---

building, it was designed with closed stacks behind a circulation and delivery desk. (See figure 1). This organization of space did not reflect the contemporary design of many of Maine's libraries. In general, a shift was made from the closed stack system to open stacks in libraries designed and built after the turn of the century. Secondly, although the provision for children's rooms had been common for over 15 years, the Steep Falls Library was built without this consideration. However, in 1924, another noted architectural team from Portland was commissioned to enlarge the building.

John Calvin Stevens and his son, John Howard Stevens designed the southernmost room of the structure as a Children's Room" in 1924. At this time the main part of the library was reoriented, and the stacks were opened. The Stevens' firm designed or expanded eleven libraries between 1899 and 1937, of which seven were Colonial Revival in style. John Calvin Stevens started his architectural career, ironically, in the office of Francis H. Fassett, however, while the senior Fassett was known for his Gothic Revival, Romanesque and Queen Ann buildings, Stevens specialized in the Shingle Style and the Colonial Revival. Continuing the Colonial Revival idiom, the Stevens' addition flows seamlessly from the younger Fassett's original design, while at the same time even-handedly presenting the work of both sets of prominent architects.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

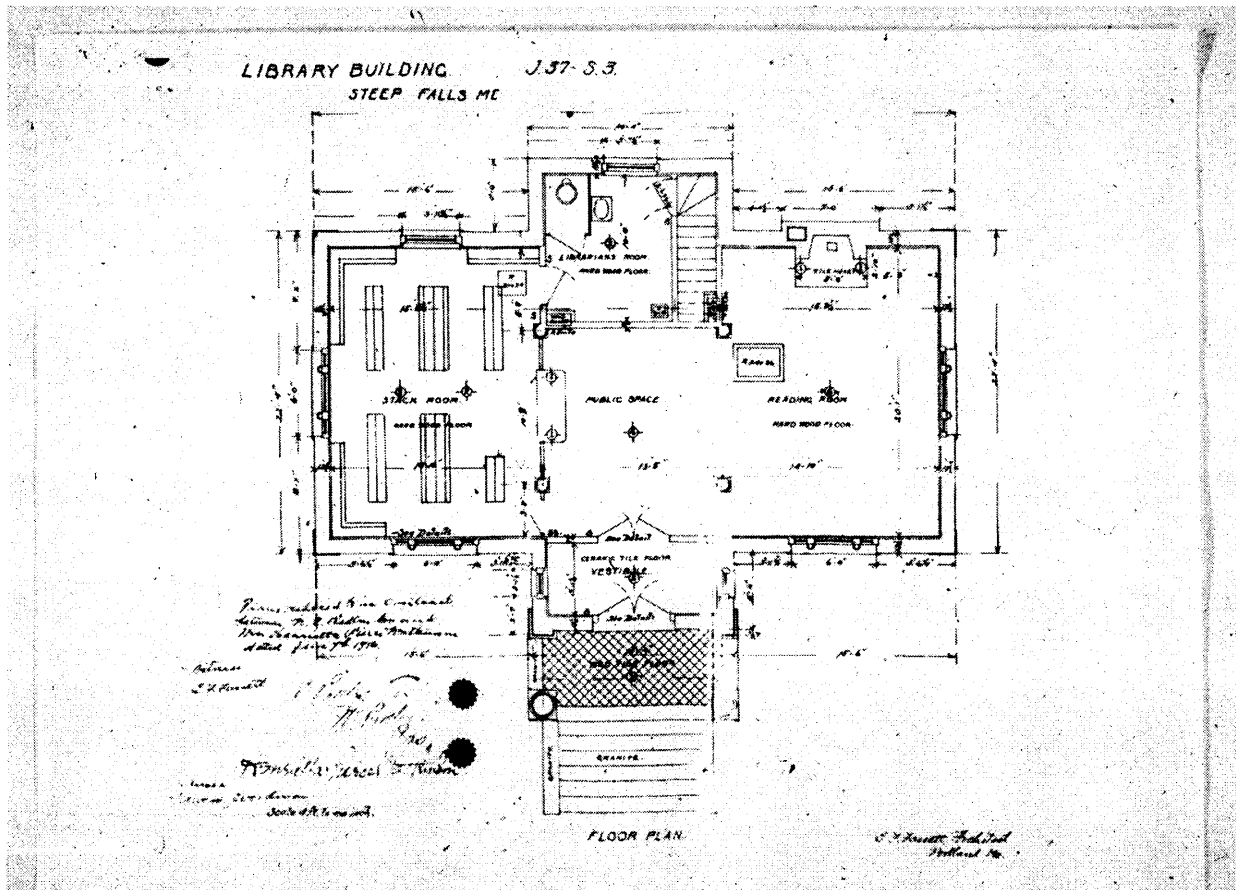
STEEP FALLS LIBRARY

CUMBERLAND COUNTY, MAINE

Section number 8 Page 4

Figure 1

E.F. Fassett's plan for the Pierce Memorial Library, 1916. (Steep Falls Library). Original plan located at the Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine.





United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

STEEP FALLS LIBRARY

CUMBERLAND COUNTY, MAINE

Section number 9 Page 2

---

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chaplin, Ruth. "History of the Steep Falls Library." *The Pearsontown Press* Volume 4, Issue No 2, 24 May 1999. ([Standish, Maine: Standish Historical Society]), p. 1-2.

"E.F. Fassett is Dead, Age 73 Was Prominent Architect Here —Built Many Fine Buildings." *Portland Evening Express & Advertiser*. (Portland, Maine), January 6, 1922.

Mohney, Kirk F. Beautiful in All Its Details. (Portland, Maine: Maine Preservation), 1997.

Stevens, John Calvin II and Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr. John Calvin Stevens Domestic Architecture, 1890-1930. (Scarborough, Maine: Harp Publications), 1990.

Thompson, Deborah. Maine Forms of American Architecture. (Camden, Maine: Downeast Magazine), 1976.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 9/10 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 1 9 3 6 7 1 8 6 4 8 4 9 8 9 8  
Zone Easting Northing

3 1 9  
Zone Easting Northing

2 1 9  
Zone Easting Northing

4 1 9  
Zone Easting Northing

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 28 October 2003

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.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

# **National Register of Historic Places**

## **Continuation Sheet**

STEEP FALLS LIBRARY

CUMBERLAND COUNTY, MAINE

Section number 10 Page 2

---

### **VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The boundaries of the nominated property are fully expressed by the Town of Standish tax map number 33, lot 14.

### **BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The above described boundaries represent all of the property historically associated with the Steep Falls Library in Standish, Maine.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places

## Continuation Sheet

STEEP FALLS LIBRARY

CUMBERLAND COUNTY, MAINE

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

---

### PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph 1 of 5  
Christi A. Mitchell  
Maine Historic Preservation Commission  
25 September 2003  
East elevation; facing west.

Photograph 2 of 5  
Christi A. Mitchell  
Maine Historic Preservation Commission  
25 September 2003  
North elevation; facing southwest.

Photograph 3 of 5  
Christi A. Mitchell  
Maine Historic Preservation Commission  
25 September 2003  
Interior: hall and reading room; facing northwest.

Photograph 4 of 5  
Christi A. Mitchell  
Maine Historic Preservation Commission  
25 September 2003  
Interior: hall and stack room; facing south.

Photograph 5 of 5  
Christi A. Mitchell  
Maine Historic Preservation Commission  
25 September 2003  
Interior: Children's room; facing south.