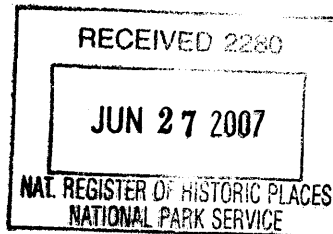


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



793

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 Albany Town House
other names/site number Albany Town Hall

2. Location

street & number Intersection of Route 5 and Route 35 N/A not for publication
city or town Albany Township N/A vicinity
state Maine code ME county Oxford code 017 zip code 04217

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.)

[Signature] 6/20/07
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): _____

[Signature] 8.7.07
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action
Edson B. Beall

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)
 private
 public-local
 public-State
 public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)
 building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)
Contributing Noncontributing
_____ 1 _____ buildings
_____ sites
_____ structures
_____ objects
_____ 1 _____ 0 _____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
N/A _____

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register
NONE _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
GOVERNMENT / City Hall _____
SOCIAL / Civic _____
SOCIAL / Meeting Hall _____
RECREATION / CULTURE / Hall _____

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
GOVERNMENT _____
SOCIAL / Civic _____
SOCIAL / Meeting Hall _____

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)
MID-19TH CENTURY/Greek Revival _____

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)
foundation _____ STONE _____
walls _____ WOOD/ Weatherboard _____
roof _____ METAL / Steel _____
other _____

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

ALBANY TOWN HOUSE

OXFORD COUNTY, MAINE

Section number 7 Page 2

DESCRIPTION

The Albany Town House is a one-story, gable-front, timber frame building set on a small knoll near the center of the Oxford County township of Albany. The thirty-five foot square building with a small rear addition faces southwest towards Hunts Corner Road. (For ease of reference, herewith the building will be said to face west.) Immediately to the north of the Town House lot Hunts Corner Road meets with State Routes 5 and 35 at a four-way intersection. A handful of nineteenth-century frame houses and the Albany Town House form a settlement at the corner which has long been referred to, and is still marked on maps, as "Town House."¹ Further south along Hunts Corner road is the now defunct Round Mountain Grange Hall (1909) and the Albany Congregational Church (1877/8), the only two other public buildings in the Township. To the immediate north and east of the building, and almost adjacent to the addition, are the remains of a poured concrete foundation, the function of which is unknown.

Essentially a vernacular structure, the Albany Town House has a symmetrical, three-bay facade consisting of a central door set between two-over-two wood sash windows. Both the doors and windows are trimmed with flat stock, although the header over the door is shaped as a subtle, triangular "Greek Peak". Two elongated transom windows are set within the upper portion of the door frame in front of the four-panel door. To either side of the door, scars in the clapboards, which clad the exterior of the building, indicate the previous location of sidelights. The sidelights are depicted in a 1945 photograph and were probably covered when the building was resided circa 1948. Wooden corner boards supporting beveled cornice returns and a raking fascia board under the overhanging roof complete the stylistic elements on the building's facade. Centered over the door is a painted wooden sign proclaiming "Albany Town Hall." A set of cement steps flanked by pipe railings lead up the knoll to the front door of the Town House.

Both the north and south elevations are two bays wide and contain two-over-two windows, one placed at the center of the side walls and the other placed midway between the latter and the front of the building. The north wall continues thirteen and a half feet past the main building in a low, shed-roof frame addition clad with wide flush board siding and clapboards. The addition contains a privy and woodshed, and a wood batten door is located along its north wall close to the junction of the addition and the main building. The east (rear) elevation contains a single two-over-two window positioned at the center of the wall. Slightly above this window, and to the south, is a hinged batten hatch which provides the only access to the unfinished and unlighted attic. The building is constructed of four bents of heavy timbers with a hewn rafter-purlin roof system. The roof is clad in corrugated steel and the building rests on a low, loose, field stone foundation. A cinder block chimney extends through the north side of the roof towards the front of the building.

¹A village schoolhouse, known as the Town House School House was previously cited adjacent to the Town House.

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Continuation Sheet

ALBANY TOWN HOUSE

OXFORD COUNTY, MAINE

Section number 7 Page 3

The interior of the Town House features a large open space interrupted only by a small kitchen located in the southwest corner of the building. The walls of the kitchen are constructed of vertical bead board, and a door is set in the south partition wall. The north and east walls of the kitchen are lined with wooden counters with cabinets below. A tin sink is located in front of the kitchen window - the well is located directly under the sink. The brick chimney is located in the kitchen along the south partition wall.

The remainder of the interior functions as an open hall. Finishes include a tin ceiling, narrow, hardwood floors, and horizontal bead board wainscoting on the exterior walls. A narrow, decorative cornice molding is positioned at the junction of the wallpaper-covered plaster wall and the ceiling. In each corner cased corner posts are exposed, while on the side walls, the upper half of the two intermediary posts are exposed in the wall above the wainscot. These posts are also covered with painted cases, and the bottom of the exposed portion is beveled before it recedes within the plaster wall. Two additional interior posts provide support in the north interior bay. One of these is incorporated within the kitchen wall, and the other is free standing. The northeast corner of the room (east of the kitchen) has a raised platform, about eight inches higher than the remainder of the floor. Until recently a wood stove was situated on a cement pad poured into the platform: the stove's chimney rose to the ceiling and then traveled horizontally through the kitchen wall to vent into the chimney stack. The door to the woodshed and privy is located in the northeast corner of the building.

Evidence in the attic indicates that the ceiling was originally plastered, but there is no indication when this was covered with the patterned metal. The ceiling has started to sag to the south and east of the front door, and it is quite likely that the building was originally constructed with two additional interior posts. Based on the finishes (tin ceiling, bead board partition walls) it appears that the kitchen was added and the ceiling replaced (and possibly the posts removed, or cased) in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. The woodshed and privy were constructed in the early 1950s. Sometime after 1945 a small carriage barn or garage, which stood southeast of the Town House, was also removed.

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

POLITICS / GOVERNMENT

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1848 - 1957

Significant Dates

1848

1947

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

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: _____

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

Continuation Sheet

ALBANY TOWN HOUSE

OXFORD COUNTY, MAINE

Section number 8 Page 2

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Albany Town House is one of only three historic public buildings in Albany Township, Maine. It was built in 1848 by the residents of Albany for use as a polling place, town meeting site, and the location of governmental activities. Architecturally, it is a vernacular structure with just a nod towards the Greek Revival style. This building served the Town of Albany until the municipality's charter was forfeited to the State of Maine in 1937, and the town became an un-organized territory under State administration. Sometime thereafter it was christened with a sign renaming it the Albany Town Hall, and the building continues to provide the community with a meeting and gathering space, as well as serving as the only polling venue in town. Importantly, this building is the only extant, local reminder of the community's existence as the Town of Albany between 1803 and 1937. The Albany Town House is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, for its role in the political, governmental, and social history of the Town of Albany.

Albany was first settled shortly after the American Revolution, and until incorporation in 1803 it was known as the Plantation of Oxford. The town, which originally measured seven and one-half by ten miles, is located in the mountainous western part of Oxford County, but features a fertile intervalle along the Crooked River, which runs south through the middle of the town. The following history of Albany was compiled by Oxford County historian Randall Bennett and appears in the Albany chapter of his comprehensive survey of the county's historic architecture.

The former Oxford County town of Albany, now "Albany Township" with the surrender in 1937 of its charter, was first established in 1788 when a group of Andover, Massachusetts, men purchased a "tract of land between Sudbury Canada [Bethel] and Waterford." Between 1788 and 1791 the mountainous acreage was first surveyed and given the official name "Township Number Five." Sometime before the petition for incorporation, the area became known as the "Plantation of Oxford."

Though several records indicate that one [person], John Lovejoy, was living within Albany's bounds by 1784, Abner Holt is usually given the distinction of being the first to fell trees within the town in 1791. Despite the suggestion of "Montgreen" at the time of incorporation, the name "Albany" was substituted and the region given town status in June 1803.

Timber-cutting was, as in the case of most Oxford County towns, of major importance to the first settlers here. With its numerous rivers and streams, including the Crooked River (once proposed as an extension of the then-successful Cumberland and Oxford Canal), Albany early supported a number of water-powered mills. In 1793, Benjamin Proctor raised a grist mill in the southern part of town. Later acquired by John Lynch, the mill's immediate surroundings quickly took on the name "Lynch's Mills" and later, "Lynchville"... A mid-nineteenth century survey indicated a vast array of similar businesses operating in the town, including shingle, stave, spool, and clover mills, and a chair factory. During the second half of the nineteenth century, farming ruled as a major occupation, though the endless stone

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ALBANY TOWN HOUSE

OXFORD COUNTY, MAINE

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walls in the town today testify to how difficult a task it was to clear this upland location. In the twentieth century, several once-prosperous farmsteads were the scene of active mining operations, mainly for feldspar, quartz, and beryl.... Today little remains beyond a few scattered farms and the handful of public buildings that stand, mostly idle, near the junction of Routes 5 and 35. (Bennett, p. 1-2).

From 1803 to 1848, the annual town meetings, elections, and business of the town were conducted in one of the ten school houses. In September of 1847 the townspeople voted to build a new, dedicated, town house. The following spring a site was chosen which was both near the geographic center of town, and the location of the two primary crossroads. By the end of August the building had been erected at a cost of approximately \$400². The Town record books do not discuss why they decided to erect a town building at this time, or how it was to function within the community: the warrant articles and meeting notes simply record the decisions and actions of the town's residents.

Throughout Maine, communities established in the 18th and early 19th century had often constructed meetinghouses as combination religious and secular centers. However, as older communities grew, and religious denominations diversified, it became impractical to entertain both functions under one roof, and thus separate buildings for church and civic activities became the norm. After 1820, the most common form that the town houses or town halls adopted drew on Greek public architecture, which was undergoing a popular architectural revival. Sometimes these were stately, if modest, gable fronted buildings, the more stylistically significant of which featured exteriors with full or partial pediments, engaged columns, and decorative architraves surrounding doors and windows. Although these civic structure also applied Gothic Revival, Italianate or Queen Anne elements through the 19th century, the basic form of the building seldom varied. If occasionally confused with a school, or later a grange hall, even the most vernacular town houses were usually identifiable by their form. In the Albany example, only the overall massing and orientation, the cornice returns and corner boards, and minimally peaked molding over the door references the Greek form. The building's austerity and sparseness probably reflect equal parts local conservatism and geographical isolation.

In addition to serving the town's civic functions, the Albany Town House provided a meeting spot for the whole community. As remembered by resident Edith Labbie, and recorded in one of her notebooks at the Bethel Regional History Center, "for many years, the Albany Town House at the junction of Routes 35 and 5 was a busy place. For a while Methodists held services there. Later, the Albany Masons used the building. Since then, the structure [has been] used for the annual town meeting, as a square dance hall, and 4-H meeting place." (Bennet, personal communication, October 11, 2006).

² Records of the Town of Albany, 1847, 1848.

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ALBANY TOWN HOUSE

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The trajectory of Albany's future was altered significantly in the early decades of the twentieth century. In 1911, the Weeks Act enabled the Federal Government to purchase private forest lands east of the Mississippi. The goal of this legislation was to protect land which had been "ravaged by uncontrolled logging and the fires which raged across the denuded landscapes," and return it to the public domain.³ In 1918 the White Mountains National Forest was established, and the first parcels of land purchased in New Hampshire. Within the next two decades the White Mountains National Forest had expanded into the western part of Oxford County, eventually purchasing all the land in Albany west of Route 5 (north of the Town House) and Route 5/35 (south of the Town House). As a result, close to forty percent of the town's land was removed from its tax base. According to current residents, this, in conjunction with an already dwindling population, adversely affected the town's fiscal situation.⁴

By the 1930 census, the population of Albany had shrunk to 309 people. Seven years later, the State Legislature noted that the "the town of Albany is unable to fulfill its obligations as a town any longer" and that to prevent an emergency and preserve the "public peace, health and safety," it was necessary for the town de-organize and become a ward of the state.⁵ By the end of the year, the residents of Albany had cast their votes in favor of de-organization and they relinquished the town charter to the State and became an unorganized territory. As a result, all of the financial and governmental decisions were placed in the hands of County or State officials, the Town Records relocated to the Maine State Archives, the remaining funds in the school budget were transferred to the state treasurer, and all town owned property sold. In 1947 the State sold the former Town House to a newly established group, the Albany Improvement Association, for one dollar.

Village Improvement Societies or Associations had been formed throughout the nation since just before the Civil War. In general, the intent of these groups was to undertake both physical and social improvements within the communities - projects ranged from cleaning up village greens or installing sidewalks to establishing libraries and sponsoring political or social lectures. According to the incorporation application of the Albany Improvement Association the focus of the group broadly reflected these goals: "the main purpose is to shingle and repair the Albany Town House in order that the inhabitants of the town[ship] will be able to continue using said building for meetings of the 4-H Club, Farm Bureau, Church and Sunday School during the winter, Young people's socials etc."⁶ Very little is known about the frequency or extent to which these events occurred during the 1950s through the 1970s, but the Albany Improvement Association did initially make physical improvements to the

³White Mountain National Forest, 2007.

⁴Robert O'Brien to Christi Mitchell, personal communication. August 16, 2005.

⁵P&S, 1937, Chapter 107.

⁶Certificate of Organization, Albany Improvement Association, Book 431, p. 165. 1947.

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ALBANY TOWN HOUSE

OXFORD COUNTY, MAINE

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building. However, throughout this period the structure was, and still is, used consistently as the township's polling place. In the 1980s the building also served periodically as a meeting site for the Oxford County Commissioners.

In 1999 the Albany Improvement Association, which had never formally dissolved but had been inactive for decades, was reincorporated. The group's goals had expanded to include conservation activities focused on the town's natural resources and ecosystem, installation of the township's first street signs, caring for the Town House, and assisting with preparations for voting. In addition, the Albany Improvement Association uses the building for fund raising activities, such as book and yard sales, as well as to host community meetings and events. As stated in the recent reincorporation application, "this historic building is the "heart" of the community. Its preservation is symbolic to the continued life of this community and the preservation of its shared concern for the natural environment."⁷ As the last tangible link to the Town of Albany, the Albany Town House holds a key position in the maintenance of this community's historical identity.

⁷Albany Improvement Association, 1999.

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ALBANY TOWN HOUSE

OXFORD COUNTY, MAINE

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10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property .25 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 19 358913 4909176

3 19

Zone Easting Northing

Zone Easting Northing

2 19

4 19

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 17 April 2007

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.

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ALBANY TOWN HOUSE

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries of the property associated with the Albany Town House are depicted on the Maine Revenue Service map OX 16, plan 1, lot 130 for Albany Township, Maine.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The above cited boundaries represent all the land and resources historically and currently associated with the Albany Town House.

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ALBANY TOWN HOUSE

OXFORD COUNTY, MAINE

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PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph 1 of 3
Christi A. Mitchell
Maine Historic Preservation Commission
4 May 2007
West facade and north elevation; facing southeast.

Photograph 2 of 3
Christi A. Mitchell
Maine Historic Preservation Commission
4 May 2007
Interior, facing west northwest.

Photograph 3 of 3
Christi A. Mitchell
Maine Historic Preservation Commission
4 May 2007
Interior, showing kitchen and raised platform, facing northwest.