

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED MAR 14 1975
DATE ENTERED APR 24 1975

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

Senator John Holmes House

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

U.S. Route 202

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Alfred

VICINITY OF

First

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Maine

CODE

023

COUNTY

York

CODE

031

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 type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Rev. John Gunther III

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Alfred

VICINITY OF

STATE

Maine

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Registry of Deeds, York County

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Alfred

STATE

Maine

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

March 12, 1937 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington, D.C.

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 Senator John Holmes House in Alfred is an unusual example of a provincial Federal style mansion of the early nineteenth century. Erected in 1802, it possesses such distinctive exterior features as a colonnade on three sides and a balustrade with a bow and arrow motif.

The Holmes House has a granite foundation, is of frame construction, stands two stories high, and possesses a low hipped roof. From the center of the roof projects a large square brick chimney.

The facade or east wall exhibits the classical symmetry of the Federal style. It is divided into five bays with the first story central bay containing the front entrance. This bay has a one story vestibule which projects beyond the main house to the edge of the porch. The facade of the vestibule features a door with a sidelight on either side and a fanlight above. The sidelights are covered with shutters, and the fanlight is covered with a louvred fan. A window is located on either side of the vestibule. The vestibule roof has a balustrade with two attenuated columns at the front which help to support the overhanging porch roof.

The central bay of the second story facade features a glass door with a fanlight above it. On either side of the doorway is an attenuated pilaster. Two windows are located on either side of the facade's central bay at both the first and second story levels.

The south wall of the house has five windows and a doorway on the first story and five windows on the second story. An arched fanlight is found over the doorway. The north wall possesses three windows on both the first and second stories. The east, north and south walls are surrounded by a large porch with fourteen slender columns which stand two stories high. These columns support the overhanging porch roof. This roof displays one of the most unusual features on the house, a balustrade with a series of open panels featuring wrought iron bows and arrows. Local tradition offers two explanations for the presence of the intertwined bow and arrow motif. One has it that Senator Holmes was much maligned and criticized because of supposed Indian blood inherited from his mother's ancestors and that the decoration was employed to spite his detractors. The other legend is that he wished to show his spirit of friendliness toward Indians because of his aboriginal heritage. Whatever the origin, the balustrade is a highly distinctive element of the house.

Senator Holmes built a fifteen room mansion. The first story formal rooms have elaborate Federal woodwork. Other rooms reflect a more restrained treatment of period woodwork. In the front hall is a circular staircase, while the second floor hall displays a vaulted ceiling.

The original rear or west wall treatment of the Holmes House is unclear from its present fabric. As standing, the rear two bays of the south wall comprise the south wall of the two story hipped roof ell. The west wall of the ell contains two windows on each story, while the north wall has two windows and a door on the first story and two windows on the second. A large square brick chimney projects from the center of the ell (See Continuation Sheets)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	MAR 14 1975
DATE ENTERED	APR 24 1975

CONTINUATION SHEET Description ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

roof. The remaining section of the west wall of the main house has two windows on each story.

Two accounts of the Holmes House written in the 1930's describe the former existence of an enclosed garden court at the rear. In 1931, Mary C. H. Kelley wrote:

The house, as originally constructed, was built about a small hollow square or court in which trees and shrubs were planted, and the fields in the rear were terraced down to the brook which flowed thru the meadows at the foot of the mountain. Vestiges of the smooth terraces still remain but the court is not enclosed now, a part of the back of the mansion having been torn down.

A similiar description appeared in the 1937 HABS report on the Holmes House:

The structure was originally built with an enclosed court. The kitchen with fireplace, ovens, and copper vats for hot water, formed the north west section which has been removed, leaving three sections of the original building. The enclosed court was used as a garden.

The survival of a granite foundation would indicate that the unusual feature of an enclosed court was once part of the Holmes House. Perhaps the present ell was originally only one bay wide and extended in a U shaped fashion around the perimeter of the foundation.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1802

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

John Holmes ranked as one of the most prominent and highly respected men in early 19th century Maine. A noted lawyer, he served as a legislator on both the state and national levels and was active in promoting Maine statehood in 1820. Holmes' mansion of 1802 in Alfred is an interesting blend of the heavy mass of the main house with delicate ornamentation superimposed upon it. The ambitious portico and unusual bow and arrow balustrade establish the house as one of Maine's finest examples of provincial Federal style architecture. Its original aspiration to grandeur retains its visual appeal today.

Born in March, 1773 in Kingston, Massachusetts where his father, Malachiah, operated an extensive iron works, John Holmes worked there as a furnace man and at other menial tasks. He was recognized for his intelligence by the local schoolmaster who urged his father to educate him. Although his formal schooling did not begin until he was nearly twenty he overcame this handicap and was graduated from Brown University in 1796. He read law in the office of Benjamin Whitman, a prominent lawyer in Hanover, and was admitted to the bar in Massachusetts in 1799.

Being virtually penniless and seeking fertile ground for his talents he moved to Alfred in the District of Maine in 1799. There was at the time much litigation over land titles in the area and young Holmes, being at first the only lawyer in the town, was handsomely retained by wealthy landowners to dispossess squatters on their land.

He was apparently an effective courtroom advocate but was much given to scathing sarcasm which sometimes prejudiced the court against him. William Willis says this of him "He handled the weapons of wit with more skill and effect than those of severe logic, although he was not deficient in that prime quality of a sound jurist."

His political career began in 1802 when as a Federalist, he was representative from Sanford and Alfred. He was reelected the following year and from this point on his main interest turned to politics and away from the practice of law.

Federal policies shortly became unpopular in Maine and Holmes either changed his opinions or found it politically expedient to become a Democrat in support of Jeffersonian policies. As such he was elected to the General Court again in 1812 and to the Massachusetts Senate in 1813. There he fought vainly but forcefully against anti-war measures and was recognized as an articulate legislator.

(See Continuation Sheets)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	MAR 14 1975
DATE ENTERED	APR 24 1975

CONTINUATION SHEET Significance ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

In 1815, under the terms of the Fourth Article of the Treaty of Ghent, he was appointed by President Madison as one of the commissioners to settle the division of the Island of Passamaquoddy Bay between the United States and Great Britain.

Elected to Congress from the York District in 1816 and 1818 he was active in the movement for Maine statehood and in 1819 served as chairman of the committee which wrote the Maine State Constitution. He was influential and active in the discussions leading to its adoption.

His prominence was attested by election as the first Senator from the new state in 1820. In 1828 he was reelected to this post to complete the unexpired term of Judge Parris.

In 1833 his Congressional life ceased and he returned to his law practice in Maine keeping his hand in politics, however, by serving in the Maine Legislature in 1836 and 1837.

His final public service was his appointment by President Harrison in 1841 as United States District Attorney for Maine which position he retained until his death in 1843.

He was continuously active in promoting the interests of fellow citizens in Alfred and was instrumental in bringing all county court sittings to the town in 1833.

His first wife, Sarah Brooks of Scituate, Massachusetts, whom he married in 1800, bore him all his children, two boys and two girls. After her death he married in 1837 the widow of James Swan who was the daughter of Revolutionary hero, General Henry Knox. Following this marriage, Holmes moved to his wife's home in Thomaston and after his appointment as District Attorney divided his time between there and Portland.

He was buried with full Masonic honors in the Eastern Cemetery in Portland.

This active, ambitious and influential lawyer and legislator contributed generously of his skills to the benefit of his District and State. His home in Alfred is therefore significant not only because of its architectural interest but also because of the man who built it.