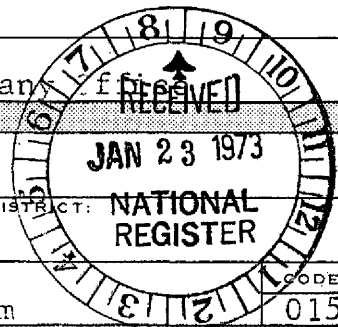


NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: New Hampshire
COUNTY: Rockingham
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE MAY 24 1973



1. NAME

COMMON:
Portsmouth Athenaeum

AND/OR HISTORIC:
New Hampshire Fire and Marine Insurance Company

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
9 Market Square

CITY OR TOWN:
Portsmouth

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:
First

STATE:
New Hampshire

CODE:
33

COUNTY:
Rockingham

CODE:
015

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure 	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) Library

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Proprietors of the Portsmouth Athenaeum

STREET AND NUMBER:
9 Market Square

CITY OR TOWN:
Portsmouth

STATE:
New Hampshire

CODE:
33

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Rockingham County Registry of Deeds

STREET AND NUMBER:
Rockingham County Court House
Hampton Road

CITY OR TOWN:
Exeter

STATE:
New Hampshire

CODE:
33

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
New Hampshire State Historic Preservation Plan

DATE OF SURVEY: November 30, 1970 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Department of Resources and Economic Development

STREET AND NUMBER:
P.O. Box 856 State House Annex

CITY OR TOWN:
Concord

STATE:
New Hampshire

CODE:
33

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: New Hampshire	COUNTY: Rockingham	ENTRY NUMBER: MAY 24 1973	FOR NPS USE ONLY
		DATE:	

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

The Portsmouth Athenaeum is a narrow and tall building of three main stories, but with a mezzanine story, intermediate between the first and second floors, in the stairwell at the rear. The first-floor main room has a curved rear wall and is finished with wainscoting and an elaborate Federal-style cornice executed by the local builder-architect James Nutter (1775-1855). Behind this main room is a small former office with its original vault. The second full floor above the mezzanine story is a library, but was originally a Masonic lodgeroom. The third floor, originally a storage area, had its central portion removed in 1861 to create a gallery. From the exterior, the Athenaeum was originally the focal point of a unified architectural composition. The lower flanking buildings shared marble stringcourses with the Athenaeum, and the cornices of the two flanking buildings swept upward to the elaborate Athenaeum cornice, drawing the eye to this central building. The Athenaeum's facade has arched window and door openings, with web-like tracery, on the first story. At the second floor level (corresponding to the third floor level on the lower adjoining buildings) is a marble plinth that serves as a base for four wooden pilasters of the composite order that support the main cornice, 43 feet above the sidewalk. The facade is embellished with round and oval carved wooden paterae, executed, like the pilaster capitals, by local carver William Dearing (1759-1813). The facade derives its design from that of the 1799 Peirce Mansion in Portsmouth.

The present appearance of the Athenaeum is close to its appearance when it was completed in 1805 as the office of the New Hampshire Fire and Marine Insurance Company. The three major changes that have occurred to the facade are the construction of the present pitched slate roof in 1826, the replacement of the original doors of the building, and the removal of the upward-sweeping cornice from the western adjoining building. The interior appearance is also largely unchanged, except for the removal of western fireplaces on the first and second floors in 1893, remodelling of the reading room fireplace in the same year, alterations to the stairway in 1823, and the alteration of the third floor into a gallery in 1861. Originally, the exterior appearance of the Athenaeum, as well as of the adjoining buildings, was rendered quite different by the fact that all these structures had nearly flat roofs covered with "composition" or pitch and gravel, a revolutionary innovation for the period. The roof of the Athenaeum thus ended at its cornice, which was surmounted by a lattice balustrade. The chimneys were, of course, at that time, and the entire row of buildings had a uniform appearance.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



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

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	New Hampshire
COUNTY	Rockingham
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	MAY 24 1973

(Number all entries)

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS continued

Title of Survey:

An Inventory of Historic Structures, Portsmouth,
New Hampshire

Date of Survey: 1972 Federal State County xLocal

Depository for Survey Records:

Community Improvement Program
Portsmouth Planning Department

Street and Number:

City Hall
126 Daniel Street

City or Town:

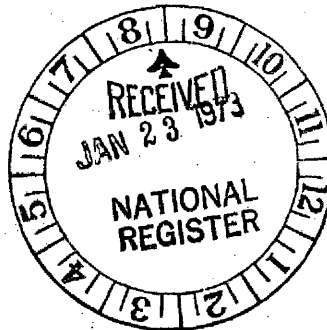
Portsmouth

State:

New Hampshire 03301

Code:

33



8. SIGNIFICANCE

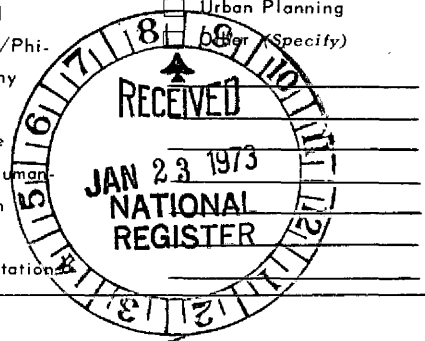
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input 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) 1804

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Military		
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Architecture

The Portsmouth Athenaeum, originally an insurance office, is one of the best-preserved Federal period commercial structures in New England, and is likewise one of the best-designed. The building is completely documented, not only with regard to its original construction, but also with respect to every major change to its fabric up to the present day. Long attributed to the Boston architect Charles Bulfinch, the Athenaeum is now known to have been designed by the gifted local builder-architect Bradbury Johnson (1766-1820), who also worked on or designed such important northern New England structures as the Philips Exeter Academy building (1794), the Portsmouth Market House (1800), and the Pepperrellborough (Saco, Maine) First Parish Meeting House (1803). Portsmouth's best craftsmen were employed on the Athenaeum, and the fact that their work can be completely documented has permitted a great extension of knowledge concerning their styles and skills. The Athenaeum is particularly interesting in retaining its original flat "composition" roof under the present high pitched roof-one of very few surviving flat roofs from such an early date. The Athenaeum is not only a critical building in itself, but is the most important element in a unified grouping of seven other structures whose facades extend for 234 feet along Congress and Market Streets.

Commerce

The Athenaeum is commercially significant in two ways: as a key example of early business architecture, and as the original home and present repository of the records of the New Hampshire Fire and Marine Insurance Company. As an example of commercial architecture, the building is not only important in its own right but also because the interrelated neighboring structure on the west was the original home of the Portsmouth Bank, an institution founded in 1803 specifically to manage the finances of the Insurance Company. The vault of the Portsmouth Bank building projects into the first floor of the Athenaeum building. The two structures together form an especially important commercial grouping.

The New Hampshire Fire and Marine Insurance Company, in active existence from 1803 until 1823, was one of the most

(Continued on Continuation Sheet 2)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Nathaniel Adams, Annals of Portsmouth (Exeter, N.H.:1825).
 Lawrence Craig and James L. Garvin, History of the Portsmouth Athenaeum (Portsmouth, N.H.: 1966).
 Gerald D. Foss, Three Centuries of Freemasonry in New Hampshire (Somersworth, N.H.: 1972).
 Joseph H. Foster, The Portsmouth Guide Book (Portsmouth, N.H.: 1876 and 1884).
 James L. Garvin, "Portsmouth and the Piscataqua: Social History and Material Culture," Historical New Hampshire, XXVI:2 (Summer, 1971), 1-48. (Continued on Continuation Sheet 3)

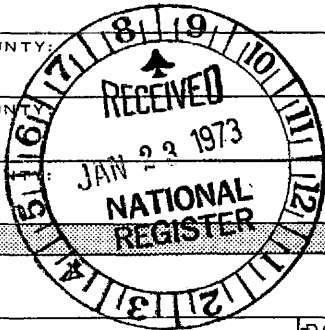
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	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	° ' "	° ' "		43° 04' 37"	70° 45' 29"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: $\frac{1}{2}$ Acre

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



UTM
19/35622
4770101

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: James I. Garvin, Research Curator

ORGANIZATION: Strawbery Banke, Inc. DATE: September 1, 1972

STREET AND NUMBER: P.O. Box 300

CITY OR TOWN: Portsmouth STATE: New Hampshire 03801 CODE: 33

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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: [Signature]

Title: Commissioner
Department of Resources and Economic Development

Date: January 17, 1973

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

[Signature]
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 5/24/73

ATTEST: [Signature]
 Keeper of the National Register

Date: 5 23 73

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet) 2

STATE New Hampshire	
COUNTY Rockingham	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	MAY 24 1973

(Number all entries)

8. SIGNIFICANCE

Statement of Significance

important underwriting agencies in northern New England during its early existence. Its records are an invaluable primary resource for the study of the commercial history of this area and of the early Republic in general.

Education

From 1813 until the incorporation of the Athenaeum in 1817, Portsmouth had no public or semi-public library. After the incorporation of the Athenaeum, this institution possessed the only large opening of the Portsmouth Public Library in 1881. Thus, the Athenaeum had a powerful effect on the educational development and literary enrichment of Portsmouth as that town's major cultural institution during a large part of the nineteenth century.

In the years following its incorporation in 1817, the Athenaeum has acquired a substantial number of important paintings which are displayed in this building. These include a full-length portrait of Sir Peter Warren by John Smibert, portraits by Samuel F.B. Morse and Joseph Greenleaf Cole, several marine paintings, and numerous engravings and mezzotints.

The Athenaeum possesses one of the finest collections in existence of models, paintings, and drawings of ships that were built in the Piscataqua area. Included among these are many half-hull lift models and the famous admiralty model of the 44-gun ship America, built for the Royal Navy in 1749 by Nathaniel Meserve of Portsmouth. This collection constitutes an unique record of the contribution of the Piscataqua region to eighteenth and nineteenth century maritime transportation.

Urban Planning

The Portsmouth Athenaeum is a key component of a unified architectural grouping that was laid out at the focal point of Portsmouth after a devastating fire in 1802. As such, the Athenaeum is a particularly important example of early nineteenth century urban planning at its best, and represents the desire of the leading citizens of Portsmouth to erect "handsome Brick Buildings" after the fire had made the town's first comprehensive redevelopment plan feasible.

Social/Humanitarian

Between 1805 and 1820, the upper floors of the Athenaeum were rented for use as a Masonic lodgeroom by various lodges. These included St. John's Lodge, No. 1; Pythagoras Lodge, No. 33; Washington Royal Arch Chapter, No. 6; and the Grand Lodge of New Hampshire.



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

(Continuation Sheet) 3

STATE New Hampshire	
COUNTY Rockingham	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	MAY 24 1973

(Number all entries)

9. MAJCR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (Continued)

James L. Garvin, "Bradbury Johnson, Builder-Architect,"
(unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Delaware, 1969).

Caleb S. Gurney, Portsmouth. . . Historic and Picturesque,
(Portsmouth, N.H.: 1902).

Society of Architectural Historians, Architecture Near the
Piscataqua, (Portsmouth, N.H.: 1964).

