

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received MAY 12 1986

date entered

JUN 20 1986

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

1. Name

historic Parsonsfield Seminary

and or common

2. Location

street & number ME Route 160 N/A not for publication

city, town Parsonsfield X vicinity of North Parsonsfield

state Maine code 23 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Trustees of Parsonsfield Seminary, Howard V. Lord, President

street & number R.F.D. #2

city, town Limerick, N/A vicinity of state Maine 04048

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. York County Registry of Deeds

street & number

city, town Alfred, state Maine

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? N/A yes \_\_\_ no

date \_\_\_ federal \_\_\_ state \_\_\_ county \_\_\_ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Two buildings comprise the Parsonsfield Seminary nomination. Both are located in a rural setting near the village of Parsonsfield. The campus-like environment is enhanced by an abundance of trees in the area.

The main building, called the Academy Building, is wood construction with clapboard siding. Standing two-and-one-half stories high, this L-shaped structure supports a gable roof and a three story tower in the center of the principal (east) facade. The latter feature contains the main entrance and has a hipped roof. The windows in the building are six-over-six double-hung sash.

The Academy Building is elaborately embellished with decorative woodwork which is mostly in the Italianate mode. There are brackets in two sizes under the wide over-hanging eaves, wood quoins at each corner, cornices over each window, and a pedimented portico supported on brackets over the main entrance. The latter, along with the upper section of the tower, dating from an 1899 remodelling, is more characteristic of the Queen Anne style with its shingles and sun-burst designs.

The dormitory is a large rambling structure two-and-one-half stories high with a gambrel roof. This wooden edifice has clapboard siding and has windows with six-over-one double-hung sash. Although utilitarian in character, this dormitory does feature Colonial Revival details which impart a measure of elegance. Over the main entrance, for example, is an elliptical portico supported on thin Tuscan columns and featuring a roof balustrade with urns. A bay window on the east end supports a similarly-styled balustrade. A large hipped roof dormer over the main entrance reflects the central tower on the Academy Building. This dormer has cast iron cresting.

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1855, 1899      **Builder/Architect** Unknown

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

Although the architectural merits of the Academy Building are obvious (the dormitory - Doe Hall - less so) the most interesting feature of Parsonsfield Seminary is its history as an educational institution and its influence on the surrounding communities.

Pride and perseverance are forces deeply ingrained in the history of Parsonsfield Seminary. Located in North Parsonsfield, a rural community a few miles from the New Hampshire/Maine border near the villages of Kezar Falls and Porter, the school was founded in 1832.

A strong sense of community spirit was evident at the founding of the school by a group of prominent leaders. A similar sense of loyalty and determination to preserve "Par-Sem", as it is familiarly known, continues today as graduates, parents, students, and the townspeople of Parsonsfield consider the options for the present elementary school and the dormitory which closed its doors as a high school in 1949.

When Par-Sem was founded, the population of Parsonsfield was about two thousand. The Seminary was built set back from the Main Street of North Parsonsfield, which was then a busy thoroughfare for freight being moved from New Hampshire to Portland and Boston. Occasional droves of livestock en route to city markets passed, as well as fancy stage coaches carrying passengers. The founders of the school were a group of ministers--including Elder John Buzzell, the first President of the Board of Trustees; a local physician, Dr. Moses Sweat, the Secretary of the Board of Trustees; five local farmers, including Major Thomas Churchill; and three lawyers: Robert T. Blazo, Nathan Clifford, and Rufus McIntire.

One hundred and forty students attended the first session of Parsonsfield Seminary high school. At that time the school was closely affiliated with the Free Will Baptist denomination and many of the churches sent their students to Parsonsfield for their education.

Par-Sem may be considered as a pioneer in the field of secondary education. By 1862, thirty years after Par-Sem was founded, there were still less than three hundred and fifty high schools in the United States.

The school's history has been marked a number of times by struggle and uncertainty. But it has also been characterized by fortuitous turning points stemming from the ingenuity and generosity of its community members. The first seminary was destroyed by a fire in 1854 and the existing building, except for the North Wing, was built soon afterwards. The Civil War and its aftermath forced the Trustees to close the school for short intervals during the years 1863-1868.

In 1877, an unexpected gift of money instilled new hope for the school and furthered the promise for its continuance. Elisha Piper, a Parsonsfield woodsman and farmer, bequeathed eleven thousand dollars to the town of Parsonsfield for the maintenance of a "Free High School". And again in 1899, Parsonsfield Seminary's future became more stable when Bartlett Doe, a successful businessman in San Francisco, returned to his home in Parsonsfield for a visit.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Parsonsfield Seminary Centennial, several authors. Portland, 1932.

Parsonsfield Sesquicentennial, several authors. Cornish, Maine, 1982.

Kuhn, Carol, "Parsonsfield Seminary: Keeping the Old Doors Open", Bitter Sweet, Vol. 7, No. 6, (June, 1984), 6-8.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 2

Quadrangle name Kezar Falls

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

1	1	9
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 Zone 

3	4	3	9	2	10
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 Easting 

4	1	8	4	1	7	1	1	4	10
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 Northing

B 

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 Zone 

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 Easting 

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 Northing

C 

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 Northing

### Verbal boundary description and justification

Assessor's Map, R. 5, Lot 28.

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

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Frank A. Beard, Historian/Roger G. Reed, Architectural Historian

organization Maine Historic Preservation Commission date April, 1986

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

city or town Augusta, state Maine

## 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 *Eric S. Petterson*

title S.H.P.O. date 5/7/86

### For NPS use only

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

*Patrick Andrus* date 6/20/86

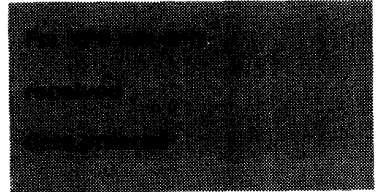
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: *Betty L. Savage* date 6-20-86

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
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PARSONSFIELD SEMINARY  
Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 2

He became interested in the school and had the old seminary repaired and remodelled. When he died in 1905, a portion of his fortune was added to the Trustee Fund and the townspeople began to show renewed interest in the school.

Attendance diminished again during World Wars I and II, when the graduating classes then averaged less than five members and the dormitory was occasionally closed. The last high school graduation was in 1949, the year the dormitory and a long chapter of Par-Sem were closed.

In 1952, the Parsonsfield Consolidated School was founded at Par-Sem when the smaller schools were closed in Parsonsfield--a sixty square mile township with a current population of about one thousand. The school of seventy-four students flourishes as a unique combination of a small, close-knit traditional community school and one that is innovative, personalized, curriculum-centered.

Parsonsfield Seminary's history, inspired by pride and ingenuity, marked by challenge and struggle, is again at a turning point. Many feel the preservation of the large, unused but partially maintained dormitory depends on developing its practical use for the community. The continuation of the elementary school as Par-Sem Consolidated is also under question.