

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received MAY 11 1987

date entered JUN 25 1987

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

1. Name

historic Unitarian Church of Houlton

and or common

2. Location

street & number Military Street not for publication

city, town Houlton vicinity of

state Maine code 23 county Aroostook code 003

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Unitarian Society of Houlton

street & number Military Street

city, town Houlton vicinity of state Maine 04730

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number

city, town Houlton state Maine 04730

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date ___ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input 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

The Unitarian Church in Houlton is a sprawling and remarkably intact wooden frame building displaying a variety of medieval design elements. Its picturesque asymmetry of transepts and wings projecting from the nave is harmoniously blended with the rubble stone foundation and wood shingled exterior surface.

The church's front (north) elevation is composed of the broad gable roofed nave and an offset entrance vestibule attached to a short wing. At the center of the nave is a broad drop arched window with panel tracery and diamond panes. Recessed behind a jetty, it contains three large window sections surmounted by six smaller ones. Eight wood shingled brackets, four on either side of the window, support the arched jetty. There are four symmetrically placed fixed sash windows in the foundation. To the west of the nave is a diamond pane window positioned below the eave of the wing. The entryway, whose paneled doors and heavy shaped wooden surround are inspired by medieval timber construction, lies below a gable roof and drop arched jetty. Church records indicate that this enclosure was made about 1926. A deeply recessed narrow wing at the rear of the vestibule features a third drop arched jetty, a parapet and a tall window in the foundation.

By virtue of the juxtaposition of wings the west elevation is the most asymmetrical. The vestibule features a pair of large four pane windows above five vertical panels set within a surround that matches the one on the entrance. Its roof ridge meets the gable of the short connecting wing. The flat roofed classroom wing contains four windows below a pent roof that is surmounted by a parapet. This 1926 addition abuts the hipped roof west transept which features a large interior brick chimney and two pairs of diamond pane windows. The entire wing rests on a tall stone basement punctuated by six double hung sash windows and a single door. There is a single gablet on the nave roof.

A transept extends from the east elevation. Its pent gable shelters a pair of widely spaced windows. There are two windows on the north side of the transept and two trios on the east wall of the nave. Six windows are located in the basement. A two-leaf paneled door is situated at the northeast corner of the nave and a second door is positioned at the southeast corner. A pair of gablets are located on the broad nave roof. The tower astride the crossing has a louvered belfry capped by an octagonal spire. A brick flue rises through the nave roof.

The rear elevation features the end gable framing a smaller version of the arched front window, a door at the southeast corner and five basement windows. A hipped roof vestibule is located at the basement level between the nave and west wing. There are two additional basement windows and four casement windows on the wing's rear elevation.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" 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 1902 **Builder/Architect** Edwin J. Lewis, Jr., Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Designed by Edwin James Lewis, Jr. (1859-1937) of Boston and built in 1902, the Unitarian Church in Houlton is a handsome and unusual frame edifice. The picturesque church displays a variety of architectural features inspired by medieval precedents as well as wood shingles on the exterior surface and a rubble stone foundation. Its significance derives both from the uniqueness of design and as one of only two known Maine commissions by the architect.

The present structure is the third one which has been occupied by Houlton's Unitarian congregation since its organization about 1835.¹ A fire in 1888 partially destroyed the original 1837 building after which it was abandoned. On May 17, 1902, the congregation's second church building burned in a fire which destroyed a considerable share of Houlton's commercial and outlying residential areas. A new lot was subsequently chosen and the present church erected thereon.

Born in Roxbury, Massachusetts, Lewis attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where he received a degree in architecture in 1881.² His career began auspiciously when he obtained a position as draftsman in the firm of Peabody and Stearns. In 1887, Lewis established his own practice in Boston where he was active until his death in 1937.³ He was elected to Fellowship in the American Institute of Architects in 1891. In addition to the Unitarian Church, Lewis designed the Memorial Chapel in Ocean Point, Maine, a stone building which was illustrated in the 1917 edition of the Boston Architectural Club Year Book.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Putnam, Cora M. The Story of Houlton, Portland: House of Falmouth, Inc. 1958.
Church records.

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property Less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Houlton South, Maine-N.B.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	9	5	8	9	8	1	5	5	1	0	8	2	8	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property is contained within the boundary as drawn on the Town of Houlton Tax Map 35, Lot 130.

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 Kirk F. Mohney, Architectural Historian

organization Maine Historic Preservation Commission date April 14, 1987

street & number 55 Capitol Street telephone (207) 289-2132

city or town Augusta state Maine 04333

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 

title S.H.P.O.

date 5/8/87

For NPS use only

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



date 6/25/87

Keeper of the National Register

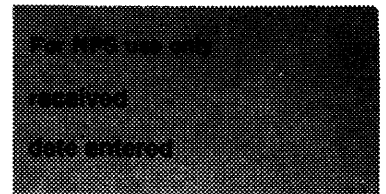
Attest: 

date 6/25/87

Chief of Registration

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

**National Register of Historic Places
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Continuation sheet Unitarian Church of Houlton

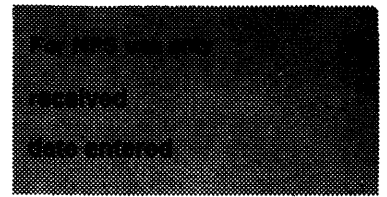
Item number 7

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The handsome proportions and detailing of the exterior of the church are carried to the interior finish. In both color and construction the interior evokes a medieval image. Its most notable features are the trio of king-post trusses which divide the nave into three equal bays. Two similar trusses intersect on a diagonal at the crossing. The trusses have heavy brackets that extend through thin posts to the nave floor. Darkly stained narrow sheathing with overlaid flat ribs form the nave ceiling. Suspended from this ceiling are nine original electric lights with Gothic detailing. The altar stands in a narrow chancel that is framed by a molded drop arch and flanked by a pair of doors. An organ rests in the east transept whereas a meeting room occupies the west transept. The latter is separated from the nave by two large pocket doors. A multi-purpose room and kitchen are located in the basement.

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Continuation sheet Unitarian Church of Houlton

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ENDNOTES

1. Cora M. Putnam, The Story of Houlton (Portland: House of Falmouth, Inc., 1958), p. 126.
2. Henry F. Withey and Elsie Robinson Withey, Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased) (Los Angeles: Hennessey and Ingalls, Inc., 1970), p. 370.
3. Directory of Boston Architects, 1846-1970 (Cambridge: Massachusetts Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1984), p. 42.