

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 02000786

Date Listed: July 15, 2002

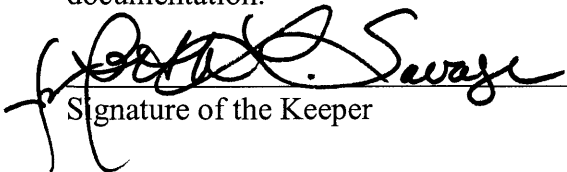
Property Name: Union Meeting House (Former)

County: Lincoln

State: Maine

none
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.



Signature of the Keeper

July 15, 2002
Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 8: Statement of Significance The period of significance is hereby changed to 1794-1952 to reflect the fact that the property has continued to be significant into the past fifty years but does not meet Criteria Consideration G.

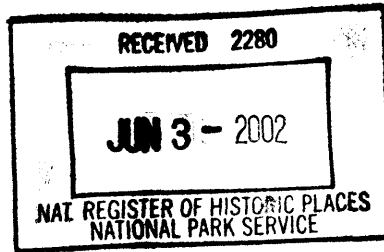
The Maine State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file**
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)**

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National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



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1786

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 Union Meeting House (Former)

other names/site number Westport Townhall

2. Location

street & number Main Road, Route 144 N/A not for publication

city or town Westport N/A vicinity

state Maine code ME county Lincoln code 015 zip code 04578

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.)

Evan S. Peterson 5/30/02
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 of the Keeper

Date of Action

[Signature]
Brian Savage

7/15/02

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UNION MEETING HOUSE (FORMER)

LINCOLN CO., MAINE

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DESCRIPTION

The (former) Westport Meeting House is a one-and-a-half story, rectangular, wood frame structure situated on the Main Road, in Westport, Maine. The east facing building is located on a small, flat lot adjacent to the Westport Community Church; scattered eighteenth- and nineteenth-century farms stretch along the rural road to the north and south. The Federal style building, built by 1794, is clad in cedar shingles on its facade and south elevations, and in clapboards on the north and west. The foundation is of granite and the roof is asphalt. A tall flagpole, fastened to the facade just under the peak of the roof, extends fifteen feet above the structure.

The front facade of the Meeting House contains three bays. On the ground floor a Victorian double door is centered under the peak of the roof. Equally spaced on either side of the door are two eight-over-eight double hung sash, with narrow ovolo muntins and many panes of original glass. Directly above these are similar twelve-over-twelve windows, while a twelve-over-eight window is positioned above the door. Finally, a nine-over-six window is centered directly below the peak of the roof. Except for this last, and highest, window, each portal is topped with a full arched wooden fan. (The fan over the door is larger than that over the windows, thus requiring the middle window above it to be a twelve-over-eight rather than a twelve-over-twelve.) To either side of the front door are wall mounted worship signs, and another plaque announcing the building as the 'Westport Town Hall' is located below the uppermost window. Additional features on the facade includes narrow, tapered rake trim under the almost flush roof, narrow corner boards, and cornice returns. The building is painted white and all the trim and fans are green.

The south and north elevations each contain seven six-over-six windows with wooden fans. The windows are not evenly spaced along the walls, rather they are asymmetrically grouped from east to west: two, followed by one, followed by four. Although all the windows appear to be of the same generation, their uneven placement may suggest a former internal division of space that is no longer apparent. The west elevation originally contained two six-over-six windows with fans, and a single nine-over-six in the peak of the roof, however, a small, one-story rectangular el has been attached to the northwest corner of the building, eliminating one window. This clapboarded addition, which contains modern bathrooms, has a contemporary six-over-six window and door on the south side, and a six-over-six window on the north side. A bulkhead on the south side provides access to the crawl space under the addition.

The interior of the structure reflects the shift in the building's function that occurred in 1885 when it became the Town Hall. Directly inside the front door is a small entry hall paneled in horizontal tongue-and-groove bead board. A small, arched opening was cut in the south wall of the hall to serve as a ticket window. Directly overhead is the floor of the gallery or balcony. To the north is a modern kitchen, and to the south a kitchen work space, with a set of winder stairs in the southeast corner that leads to the balcony. To the west of the entry way is the large meeting room, formerly the sanctuary,

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with a stage at the far western end. The floors are of hardwood, and the exterior walls are plaster over wide-board wainscot. The walls rise a story-and-a-half and then curve gracefully into the plaster ceiling. The stage, which was constructed in 1885 is accessed by stairs along the south and north walls; two four-panel Victorian doors close off the back stage areas from the main hall. In recent decades the southwest corner of the stage was further partitioned off to provide a small office area.

Although the exterior of the church clearly reflects the Federal era construction, the interior retains few details from that period. However, the balcony is original to the Meeting House, and it is here that a hint of the former woodwork can be seen. The panels on the balcony railing, and the two six-panel doors that lead into the kitchen areas, are decorated with very delicate ogee moldings. Additional ornamentation on the balcony include pilasters decorated with a double-tombstone motif separating the moulded panels, as well as a cove and ogee crown molding under the railing. Stop-chamfering is present on the exposed short vertical posts that support the railing on the inside of the balcony. Norfolk latches are on the six panel doors, although it is not known where the doors were originally installed. The roof framing also reveals the early construction date. A king-post truss system was used, in conjunction with a rafter and purlin roof to hang the arched ceiling, eliminating the need for any internal posts in the sanctuary. The exterior posts are visible, although cased, along all of the building's exterior walls.

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Politics/Government

Period of Significance

1794 to present

Significant Dates

1794

1885

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Moses Davis, builder

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.

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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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Constructed in 1794, the former Union Meeting House is a well preserved example of a building type that served both religious and governmental needs in a rural Maine community. Although it shares a pattern of use with many other such buildings in the state, generally the two functions occurred simultaneously rather than sequentially. The property is eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with local government, and Criterion C for its significance as an example of a transitional architectural form. Criteria consideration A also applies by virtue of the building's use for religious purposes.

The (former) Westport Meeting House was constructed by the Town of Edgecomb between 1790 and 1794 for use by the residents of Jeremysquam Island (now Westport and previously part of Edgecomb) as the parish church. Situated to the southwest of Edgecomb, Westport is a 10 mile long island, which at its widest reaches 2 miles east to west. The Back River to the west and the Sheepscot River to the east have fashioned numerous coves and points along the island's coast, making it very attractive for eighteenth-century settlers with fishing vessels. A single road runs down the north/south spine of the island; smaller roads, many of them still dirt, branch off to the coastal settlements. Initially all of the island's civil business was conducted in Edgecomb, but as early as 1774 the island residents were freed from paying taxes to support Edgecomb's meeting house, as it was generally inaccessible to them. In 1774 the issue of building a meeting house on the island was raised, but it was not until 1794 that the structure was finished. Originally occupied by the Freewill Baptists, the Meeting House was not also used for town meetings as they were held in Edgecomb until the island was incorporated as the Town of Westport in 1828. Although one or two town meetings were immediately held in the Meeting House, the residents quickly changed the location to the District #9 school house and reserved the Meeting House for religious worship only.

There are few records pertaining to the congregations using the Westport Meeting House. Itinerant Freewill Baptist ministers were on the island as early as 1771, but the first minister to settle was Rev. Daniel Hibbard in 1786, and it was about this time that pressure increased on Edgecomb to build a church on Jeremysquam. Rev. Hibbard died in 1826, and between then and 1864, the building was shared with a local congregation of Methodists. In 1864 the Methodists purchased the adjoining Music Hall, and relocated the Congregation to that building. The Baptists may have disbanded, because for the next 21 years the building sat empty. Finally, in 1885 the Proprietors of the Union Meeting House received permission to sell their interest in the building from the Maine Legislature, which they promptly transferred to the inhabitants of Westport for one dollar. Within a few months the town started to remodel the building by adding a stage, (and presumably removing the pulpit and pews), and three years later installing privies.

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Although the Meeting House and adjacent Community Church are currently fairly isolated structures on Main Road, in the waning years of the nineteenth century this was the “center of town activity with the Post Office, a store, and the Center School close at hand at the junction of the Post Office Road”. (Swanton, p. 23). Indeed, the structure was used for many social events, including dances, suppers, and civic association meetings. Between the years 1912 and 1926 the Westport Grange # 516 used the building as their headquarters. In 1917 the selectmen installed a kitchen under the balcony for use by the Grange. The main function of the building, however, has been as the location of Town Meetings for the last 117 years. It is here that the community gathers to conduct its annual and monthly business, ironically, just as they had done very briefly, in 1828.

The architectural form of the Union Meeting House is worth examining above and beyond identifying the remaining decorative features. At the same time this structure was constructed other communities in the region were also building meeting houses. Inland along the Sheepscot, the Alna Meetinghouse (NR: 70000079) was raised in 1791 in a traditional, but almost passe form. The pulpit was located on the long wall across from the front door; and galleries hung on three sides of the walls looked down on box pews. Similar buildings had been completed in Walpole in 1772 (Walpole Meeting House: NR: 76000104) and in Bristol (Harrington Meetinghouse: NR: 70000051) three years later, but by 1790 this form was clearly losing sway. The Old German Church in Waldoboro (Waldoboro, NR: 70000050), built in the same year as the Union Meeting house, was similar to the older buildings in its use of box pews, three sided gallery, and high pulpit, but the building was longitudinally oriented, a characteristic of the newer ‘churches’. All of these buildings were extremely simple frame buildings, covered in clapboards, and uniformly lacked steeples. The Westport Meeting House retains the simple, almost domestic, exterior meeting house form of the earlier examples, but its interior configuration, with the gallery at the back of the long sanctuary, presages what became the classic, gable front and steepled New England Church form.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Owen, Katherine Chase. *Early Edgecomb, Maine (Freetown/Jeremysquam)*. [North Edgecomb, Maine: K.C. Owen], 1986.

Swanton, John and Louise, compilers. *Westport Island, Maine once Jeremysquam*. (Newcastle, Maine: Westport Community Association), 1993.

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BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property is fully describe by the Town of Westport, Maine, Tax Map #4, Lot #4.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary of the nominated property contains all that property historically associated with the (Former) Union Meeting House.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph 1 of 2
Union Meeting House (Former)
February 27, 2002
Christi A. Mitchell
Maine Historic Preservation Commission
Exterior, east facade and south elevation; facing northwest.

Photograph 2 of 2
Union Meeting House (Former)
February 27, 2002
Christi A. Mitchell
Maine Historic Preservation Commission
Interior, hall; facing west.