

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED APR 11 1975
DATE ENTERED APR 28 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

Ebenezer Alden House

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

off ME 131

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Union

VICINITY OF

1st Hon. David Emery

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Maine

23

Knox

013

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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mr. & Mrs Joseph Marcus

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Union

VICINITY OF

STATE

Maine

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Knox County Registry of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Rockland

STATE

Maine

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input 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

As a piece of architecture, the Alden House in Union is fraught with contradictions. It is a transitional piece, part Colonial, part Federal and ranks as the earliest surviving example of the latter style left in Maine. It is notable for the high quality of its decorative detail, hand carved in wood by its builder, Ebenezer Alden. This detail exists as an excellent example of the American practice of adapting English models that characterized so much of Colonial and post-Colonial building.

The house is rectangular in shape with a lean-to and a projecting 1½ story ell on the east side. Its 2½ stories are covered by a gabled roof topped off by two symmetrically placed chimnies on the ridge. The building is constructed of brick between heavy timber studding and is covered with thin clapboards. The corners of the building, with the exception of the northeast, are marked with elaborate quoins. The cornice is unobtrusive, worked with a dentil molding. The whole structure is painted white, while the shutters, which flank all but the east windows, are black. The windows of the main block, except those in the gables, are of equal size being sash hung with large panes in a six over six configuration.

There are three principal facades. That to the South faces the road and contains the main entrance. It is of a traditional five-bay scheme with the two outer windows on each floor grouped in close proximity, flanking a central bay which contains the door and above a window. The North facade is more Federal in character, its similar fenestration being quite regular in interval. The West front is composed of three bays symmetrically grouped under a pediment containing two small shuttered windows. The lean-to projects from the right half of the east front. To it, beyond a line marked by the North wall of the house, is attached the 1½ story gabled ell that projects towards the north, forming a sort of court at the back of the house. The interior wall of the ell features a door, two flanking windows and, near the end double doors of what is now a garage.

As noted, Ebenezer Alden was a master woodcarver, employed previous to the construction of his own home at Montpelier. It is probable that Alden's house owes several features to the original Montpelier, including the quoins, but most notably the principal doors which are the most obvious ornaments of the exterior. They resemble in form the "Venetian Door" of the bow front of Montpelier and most likely derive from examples supplied by William Pain in his Practical House Carpenter, London, 1794. The north door, however is apparently a Greek Revival replacement of a later date. The front door is flanked by Doric pilasters and is surmounted by an elaborate broken pediment, similar to one shown in Plate 40 of Pain's book. This feature enframes a delicate semi-circular fanlight. The central door of the west facade is similar, though its broken pediment is more simply detailed. It, too, appears to be a Pain derivative.

(See Continuation Sheet)

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The general arrangement of the interior reflects a traditional central hall four room plan with fireplaces located in the central, longitudinal partitions. This plan is modified slightly by the addition of a narrow passage connecting the west door with the central hall. On the first floor this arrangement produces two large squarish rooms on the east side, the dining room and original kitchen, and on the west side, two narrower sitting rooms. The fireplaces of these two smaller rooms lie on either side of the narrow auxillary passage, their flues being joined into one stack before emerging from the roof. The stairs rise in the front of the hall on the right.

The principal rooms of the first floor are finished with cornices of largely Adamesque detail as are the doors and chair rails. The dining room features recessed window seats. Both the dining room and south parlor contain elaborate mantels, which are flush with the walls. That in the dining room is clearly derived from plate 70 of Pain, though modified in that it lacks the garland and pastoral scene on the central panel shown in the original model. The South parlor mantel is a simplification of plate 86, and does not include elaborate carving on its flanks and lintel. The two other fireplaces of the first floor are finished with simple shelf mantels and are set flush into partially paneled walls, further evidence of lingering colonial tradition. The chimney piece of the original kitchen contains a wide hearth and two Dutch ovens.

In 1965-1968 the present owners, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Marcus, painstakingly restored the house. Utilizing some of Alden's original tools, cornices and other carvings were skillfully restored when necessary. Several fireplaces were reopened with facings rebuilt with bricks found in the barn and other places around the premises. The lean-to and ell were tastefully remodeled utilizing as much as possible, the original beams and floors with the interior walls encased in wide paneling and plaster.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input 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 type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1797

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Ebenezer Alden

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Ebenezer Alden house at Union remains one of the earliest surviving examples of Federal style architecture in Maine exhibiting the refinement of detail characteristic of the period. It is a notable example of provincial architecture, relying for decorative example on plan books, in this case William Pain's Practical House Carpenter published in London in 1794. Its construction date of 1797 makes it a most remarkable and advanced structure in a town that was settled barely a generation earlier (1774) and was, at the time, still largely wilderness.

Its builder, Ebenezer Alden, was a sixth generation descendent of John and Priscilla Alden of Plymouth Colony, and a native of Middleboro, Massachusetts. He came to nearby Thomaston in 1792. Here Alden was employed for two years as a wood carver, completing some of the interior decoration over doors, windows, mantels, etc., at Montpelier, the summer estate of General Henry Knox, Washington's Secretary of War. Alden removed to Union in 1795, building himself a small house and shop (1797) that was Union's first general store. This was but the first of his dozen or so business ventures in the Union area, most notable of which was his potash works in South Union which produced several tons of lye per year. Alden was Union's second postmaster, serving in that position for 32 years (1813-45).

The house itself is largely a product of Alden's own hand. On the site he constructed a brickyard to fabricate bricks for the chimneys and walls. Alden personally carved all the finish detail in wood, utilizing tools that he had formerly employed at Montpelier.

Local history maintains that Alden became a personal friend of General Knox during his employment at the General's estate and that Knox was an occasional visitor to the Alden home. Tradition holds that it was there at a banquet on the lawn in the summer of 1806 that Knox swallowed a chicken bone which led to a throat infection that was the ultimate cause of his death in October of that same year.

Alden was a bachelor when he built his spacious home. He returned to Massachusetts in 1799, where he married Patience Gilmore of Franklin.

(See Continuation Sheet)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Alden, Ebenezer, M.D., Memorial of the Descendants of the Hon. John Alden, Samuel P. Brown, Randolph, Mass, 1867

Matthews, Edwards A., Horse and Buggy Days, Kelly Press Inc., Belfast, Maine, 1950

Nash, Chester and Kahn, Patricia, 200 Years in Union, Courier Gazette Inc. Maine 69; Architecture & Construction, May/June, Vol2, No.2, Down East Enterprise, Camden, 1969

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2

UTM REFERENCES

A 19 478635 481951250
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Earle G. Shettsworth, Jr., Architectural Historian
 Frank A. Beard, Historic Preservationist

ORGANIZATION Maine Historic Preservation Commission DATE April 4, 1975

STREET & NUMBER 31 Western Avenue TELEPHONE 207-289-2133

CITY OR TOWN Augusta STATE Maine

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE X LOCAL X

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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

James H. Mundy

TITLE *State Historic Preservation Officer*

DATE *April 7, 1975*

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
<i>R. P. Montague</i>	DATE <i>4/28/75</i>
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION	
ATTEST <i>J. H. Mundy</i>	DATE APR 24 1975
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	

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The couple returned to Maine, ultimately to produce twelve children. Alden died in 1862 at the age of 88. The home remained in the family until it was sold in 1965.