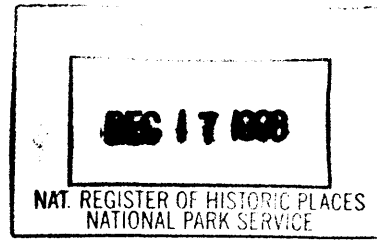


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



1602

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 Orgone Energy Observatory

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

Off West Side of Dodge Pond Road,

street & number .65 Miles North of Junction with Routes 4/16 N/A not for publication

city or town Rangeley  vicinity

state Maine code ME county Franklin code 007 zip code 04970

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.)

Signature of certifying official/Title [Signature]

Date 12/10/98

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]

1-29-99

Orgone Energy Observatory  
Name of Property

Franklin, Maine  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Single Dwelling

Education/Research Facility

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation & Culture/Museum

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

International Style

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone

walls Stone

roof Asphalt

other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

ORGONE ENERGY OBSERVATORY

FRANKLIN, MAINE

Section Number 7 Page 2

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The Orgone Energy Observatory is a two-story, flat roofed International Style building that is constructed principally of fieldstone. It was designed to serve as both a laboratory and residence, and both its exterior and interior are virtually unaltered. At an elevation of about 1,740 feet, the building occupies the summit of a hill that overlooks Dodge Pond, which is located to the west of Rangeley village. It is reached by way of a narrow winding road that branches off of the Dodge Pond Road. The observatory is announced by a pair of stone posts located near the building, one of which contains a bronze tablet with the date 1948 and the other with a tablet containing the name "Orgone Energy Observatory."

Facing east, the observatory's front elevation is comprised of a sequence of projecting and receding wall surfaces and a mid-story deck that projects over a wraparound terrace. The projecting northern third of the facade contains a picture window on each story that is composed of a trio of one-over-one double hung sash. The deck, which is supported by a pair of steel columns and a concrete post, extends across and beyond the balance of the facade. It shelters three large, nearly square windows and a multi-pane door that are located on the deeply recessed wall of the first story, as well as a portion of the terrace that wraps around the south side. A pipe railing is located at the edge of the deck. Supported by the deck on the second floor of the center bay is a wood frame, shingled enclosure that houses a bedroom. It has a pair of two-over-two windows flanked by fixed sash of equal size on its east side, as well as a center door framed by windows on the south side. Recessed from the plane of the bedroom is a wall formed by a large window that is wrapped around the south side and is framed by stonework both above and below. In addition to being set back from the front plane of the building, this bay is also recessed from the south elevation.

The primary entrance is located on the south side elevation. This entrance is approximately centered on the elevation, and is reached by way of a long double flight of stone steps that have a pipe railing on the west side. Its two-leaf door is slightly inset from the wall which is itself deeply recessed from the plane of the main block. Mounted over the entrance is a bronze replica of the symbol of organomic functionalism. A large multi-pane window comprised of long rectangular panes in the middle and square panes on the sides occupies the second story. To the east of the entrance bay is the projecting wall of the main block that contains the flues for the two interior fireplaces. It intersects the south wall of the first story which is punctuated by a large rectangular center window. In the foreground is the terrace that is bordered by a low stone wall. The second story deck is slightly cantilevered over the first story, and the recessed second story wall of the main block is largely composed of the wraparound window and a second large square window to its west. To the west of the entrance bay is a one-story wing that contains a large window surface comprised of two paired one-over-one sash and a single one-over-one in the center.

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

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**ORGONE ENERGY OBSERVATORY**

**FRANKLIN, MAINE**

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Unlike the east and south elevations, the north side and rear walls are very utilitarian in their treatment. The north elevation is a square single plane whose asymmetrical fenestration pattern is comprised of four large windows and two smaller ones. Its upper story is partially stuccoed. The rear wall has a trio of small windows and a large one on the west wall of the wing. Attached to the northwest corner of the roof is a shed roofed frame enclosure that is sheathed in board-and-batten siding. This structure was built on what was originally projected to be an astronomical observatory with a traditional domed enclosure. However, this observatory structure was never installed and the frame enclosure became a studio. One further roof feature of note is Wilhelm Reich's model of concentric circles that depict his theory of energy bands that surround the earth.

Attached to the west side of the wing is a small stuccoed block that was added in 1951. It has a single window on its south elevation, and a door and two windows on the west side.

In plan, the building features an entrance hall behind the main doorway with a set of narrow stairs located along the back wall of the main block. To the right is a wide opening (originally there were a pair of doors located here) that leads into the laboratory, which occupies most of the first story. A large stone fireplace is located on the room's west wall (a second one of similar size exists upstairs), and the former darkroom is located behind a door at the northwest corner. Accessed from the hall, the wing contains a small kitchen, bathrooms, and a room that was utilized as a playroom for Reich's son. The second floor contains a bathroom and office in the landing, the main living room, a bedroom, a storage closet, and a second smaller sitting room.

Throughout the building, the walls are sheathed in tongue and groove "knotty pine" and the ceilings are covered with thin plywood. The building also retains its original light fixtures, vinyl floor covering, and furnishings. In addition, much of the original laboratory equipment is still present, although in the first floor laboratory it is not arranged as it was during Reich's use of it.

The Orgone Energy Observatory is located on a parcel of land that comprises about 200 acres. In addition to the main stone building, there is one substantial L-shaped wooden building erected in 1945 and several small outbuildings. The large building, historically known as the Students' Laboratory, was used as an instructional space for Reich's students. At present, it houses the museum office. Although it is historically linked to Reich's work at Orgonon, it is considered to be a non-contributing building until such time that historians of psychiatry place his work in context.

**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.

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

**Period of Significance**

1948

**Significant Dates**

1948

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Bell, James B., Architect

Collins, S. A. & Son, Builder

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Wilhelm Reich Museum

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

ORGONE ENERGY OBSERVATORY

FRANKLIN, MAINE

Section Number 8 Page 2

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Located at the summit of a hill overlooking Dodge Pond, the Orgone Energy Observatory is an International Style building that was designed by the New York architect James B. Bell and constructed in 1948 for Dr. Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957), a controversial psychiatrist who developed the Orgone therapy method. It was built by the Rangeley contractor S.A. Collins & Son. The significance of Reich's work has yet to be settled by historians of psychiatry, and -- in view of his recent date of death (less than fifty years ago) -- it is improbable that a case can be made at this time for the eligibility of this property under Criterion A or B and Criteria Consideration G. However, the property may satisfy these criteria when sufficient time has passed and a reevaluation of Reich's career takes place. Therefore, this nomination is limited to the fact of the Observatory's significance under Criterion C as a rare example in Maine of the International Style of architecture.

In his essay on modern architecture in Maine that appeared in *Maine Forms of American Architecture* (1976), Philip Isaacson wrote that "The modern home ... made its tentative debut in 1936 from designs prepared by George Howe for Clara Fargo Thomas. The resulting low house of native materials is cantilevered over the waters of Seal Harbor, a choice its architect ... shared with [Frank Lloyd] Wright." Although "Fortune Rock" was a clearly modern house in the genre of Wright's "Fallingwater" design, Isaacson concluded that the first International Style house built in Maine is probably the Harold Tandy House at Hampden Highlands, which was built in 1944 from designs by the Bangor architect Eaton W. Tarbell. Regardless of which building one anoints as the earliest example of the International Style in Maine, there is little doubt that few residential buildings exhibit the characteristics of the style. In this context, therefore, the Orgone Energy Observatory with its flat roof surfaces, cubical proportions, and expansive window openings must be counted both as an important manifestation of the style in Maine, as well as one of the state's earliest examples.

The design of the Orgone Energy Observatory was the work of James Byron Bell, AIA (1902-\_\_\_\_), a graduate (1927) of MIT and the Ecole des Beaux Arts. According to his entry in the *American Architects Directory* (1955), Bell's principal works included a wide variety of buildings including hospitals, banks, and department stores. It is not clear how Reich's relationship with Bell had been established, but this is the architect's only known work in Maine.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

ORGONE ENERGY OBSERVATORY

FRANKLIN, MAINE

Section Number 8 Page 3

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Born in Austria in 1897, Wilhelm Reich served as an officer in the Austrian army during World War I and thereafter attended the University of Vienna where he graduated with a medical degree. During his studies, Reich had become interested in the new discipline of psychoanalysis. He subsequently became a member of Sigmund Freud's inner circle, and was appointed to the position of first clinical assistant at the Psychoanalytic Polyclinic in Vienna. By the early 1930s, Reich had broken with Freud over their disagreement on the origins and solutions to the Oedipus complex, and in 1933 he was forced to flee Germany for Scandinavia. It was here that he discovered "orgone" energy, shortly after which he was invited to teach at the New School for Social Research in New York City. Reich arrived in the United States in September of 1939, and three years later he purchased the former farm of John and Lincoln Ross in Rangeley, Maine, an area to which he had been introduced by Theodore P. Wolfe, M.D. Reich named his property Orgonon, and in 1948 he commenced the construction of the Orgone Energy Observatory.

[The following account of Reich's prosecution by the Federal government and the establishment of the Wilhelm Reich Museum is quoted verbatim from a booklet published in 1975 by the Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust Fund and titled *The Wilhelm Reich Museum, Orgonon, Rangeley, Maine.*]

Reich's life was not destined to end in quiet study and experimentation at Orgonon. In 1954, the United States Food and Drug Administration filed a complaint for an injunction against Reich in a deliberate effort to discredit his discovery of orgone energy. It sought to ban his books and to prevent the interstate shipment of a ridiculously small number of orgone energy accumulators which, it claimed, were misbranded and misrepresented. Since the orgone energy accumulator is an apparatus specifically constructed to accumulate or concentrate atmospheric orgone energy, its value naturally depends on the existence of that energy. To judge this apparatus, or any other single aspect of Reich's work, without seriously examining the evidence for the discovery of orgone energy is therefore scientifically impermissible. This is precisely what the Food and Drug Administration did. Rejecting Reich's original offer to cooperate in a rational, scientific investigation of his work the FDA devoted seven years and millions of the tax payer's dollars to a police-type investigation based on rumor and ill-founded prejudice.

Stating that he could mount no defense which would not admit the authority of a government agency to pass judgement on basic scientific research, Reich refused to appear in answer to the complaint. His written response to the federal court acknowledged that he did so "at the risk of being, by mistake, fully enjoined in all my activities." It was more important, he stated, that "man's right to know, to learn, to inquire, to make bona fide errors, to investigate human emotions . . . be safe, if the word freedom should ever be more than an empty political slogan."

The court rejected Reich's "Response," and on March 19, 1954, the injunction was issued in default, without consideration of any factual evidence. A sweeping, unconstitutional document, it cited Reich's published works, including those written long before the discovery of orgone energy, as "labeling" for the accumulator. Some of these writings were banned from distribution; others were ordered destroyed. The latter were burned under the supervision of representatives of the Food and Drug Administration in August, 1956 and again in March, 1960.

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**National Register of Historic Places  
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**ORGONE ENERGY OBSERVATORY**

**FRANKLIN, MAINE**

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Despite these unconscionable occurrences, Reich refused to abandon his research. While he was conducting experiments in the southwest relating to desert formation, one of his students transported some orgone energy accumulators from Maine to New York. This action, taken without Reich's knowledge or consent, was considered a direct violation of the injunction and led to a charge of criminal contempt. In the legal proceedings that followed, Reich was judged guilty, fined, and sentenced to two years' imprisonment. He was found dead in his cell at the Federal Penitentiary in Louisburg, Pennsylvania, on November 3, 1957.

Wilhelm Reich's last will and testament was executed in March, 1957, three days prior to his imprisonment. Aside from a few personal bequests, Reich left his entire estate to be administered by one trustee as the Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust Fund. This trust fund was created to serve the main purpose of his will, "namely, the safeguarding of the full truth about my life and work."

The trust owns and operates the [Wilhelm Reich] museum and the property of Orgonon. It is also responsible for Reich's archives which he specified should be stored intact for 50 years so as to secure their safety from "destruction and falsification" and to enable future students to obtain "a picture of my accomplishments, mistakes, wrong assumptions, pioneering basic trends, my private life, my childhood, etc."



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

ORGONE ENERGY OBSERVATORY

FRANKLIN, MAINE

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## Bibliography

Koyl, George S., ed. *American Architects Directory*. New York, NY: American Institute of Architects. 1955.

*The Wilhelm Reich Museum, Orgonon, Rangeley, Maine*. Forest Hills, NY: The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust Fund. 1975.

Thompson, Deborah, ed. *Maine Forms of American Architecture*. Camden, ME: Down East Books. 1976.

Orgone Energy Observatory  
Name of Property

Franklin, Maine  
County and State

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### 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property 200.7

#### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 

1	9	3	6	5	1	8	0	4	9	8	2	6	7	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

3 

1	9	3	6	4	2	4	0	4	9	8	1	5	6	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

2 

1	9	3	6	4	9	2	0	4	9	8	1	3	0	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

4 

1	9	3	6	3	7	8	0	4	9	8	2	7	6	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

See continuation sheet

#### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

#### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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### 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Kirk F. Mohny, Architectural Historian

organization Maine Historic Preservation Commission date October, 1998

street & number 55 Capitol Street, 65 State House Station telephone 207/287-2132

city or town Augusta, state Maine zip code 04333-0065

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### Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

#### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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### Property Owner

---

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

ORGONE ENERGY OBSERVATORY

FRANKLIN, MAINE

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## Boundary Description

The nominated property occupies the Town of Rangeley tax map 11, lot 3.

## Boundary Justification

The boundary embraces a 200.7 acre parcel of land which Wilhelm Reich purchased in 1942 for the purpose of developing a laboratory to pursue his scientific studies. The Orgone Energy Observatory occupies a site within this parcel.