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INTERAGENCY RESOURCES DIVISION  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

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) 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 First Parish Congregational Church

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

2. Location

street & number 135 MaIN Street N/A not for publication

city or town Yarmouth, N/A vicinity

state Maine code ME county Cumberland code 005 zip code 04096-1627

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.)

Edward H. Sawyer 5/12/95  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Maine Historic Preservation Commission  
State of 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 the 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:)

for  
Edson H. Beall Signature of the Keeper  
Entered in the National Register 6/20/95 Date of Action

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	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		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)

Religion/Religious Facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Religion/Religious Facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Italianate

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone/Granite

walls Wood/Weatherboard

roof Asphalt

other Three Stage Tower and Spire

Narrative Description

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

**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 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.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

**Period of Significance**

1867-1868

**Significant Dates**

1867-68

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Harding, George M., Architect

Humphrey, Charles, Builder

**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:

\_\_\_\_\_

First Parish Congregational Church  
Name of Property

Cumberland, Maine  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property Less Than 1

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 

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Zone Easting Northing

4 

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 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.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title James Hewat, Architectural Historian

organization Maine Historic Preservation Commission date April, 1995

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

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

**Additional Documentation**

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)

**Property Owner**

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

name \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

**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.*).

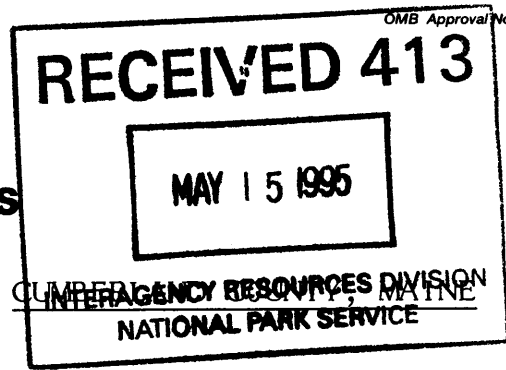
**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this 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 Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

FIRST PARISH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Section number 7 Page 2



Dominating Main Street and the skyline of Yarmouth, First Parish Congregational Church is an imposing frame building designed by the talented and prolific nineteenth century architect, Charles M. Harding. Sheathed in flushboards and clapboards this rectangular, Italianate inspired structure is supported by a granite slab foundation and features a four-stage tower surmounted by an octagonal spire.

The main (north) facade of the building is divided into three bays with the projecting flush sheathed central entrance being further divided into two bays to accommodate the main doors on the first floor. Each of the two-leaf doors are set into a round-arched opening and are flanked on each side by thin columns with Composite and Tuscan order capitals. A round-arched, double-hung window with stained glass is set into a projecting Italianate hood molding on the east and west sides of the narthex. On the second floor, the narthex is punctuated by a centrally located round-arched opening into which are set two attenuated arched windows and an oculus. Its pent gable roof is supported by two paneled pilasters which are surmounted by stylized fleuron capitals. Console brackets support the first floor cornice and banded gable frieze on the nave.

The narthex serves as a base for the tower and spire of the church which rises 140 feet above the street. Above the foundation, on the first floor of the narthex are four buttressed pilasters with projecting moldings and recessed paneling. A banded frieze separates the first free-standing stage of the tower from the narthex. Buttresses with molded plinths frame a recessed quatrefoil window on the north side of the tower and trios of long, narrow arched windows on the east, west, and south elevations. Free-standing attenuated columns (similar to those found on the doorway) flank these windows and support a shallow elliptical arch.

Above this stage of the tower is a bracketed pent roof upon which rests the four sided belfry. Each face of the belfry has two round-arched openings which are enframed by engaged columns with stylized Ionic capitals. A single thin column with diagonal banded patterning on the shaft and stylized Ionic capital separates the arched openings and supports a bas relief patera. The belfry's Mansard roof line is penetrated by a round arch on each side of the tower. The bell is recast from the bell that was in the belfry of the previous Congregational Church known as "The Old Sloop." An octagonal spire with four pointed arch windows and diamond cut shingles surmounts the tower on top of which stands a double cross. Both the belfry and steeple were reconstructed in 1991 when it was discovered that virtually all of the wood was beyond repair.

Long, two-part windows flank the tower on the recessed nave endwall. They are framed by narrow engaged Tuscan order columns and Italianate hood

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CUMBERLAND COUNTY, MAINE

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moldings. The lower windows consist of six-over-six double-hung sash that are separated from the upper windows by rectangular panels each with a simply carved diamond fret. The upper windows are also six-over-six double-hung windows surmounted by round arch sash. Five of these two part windows continue on both the east and west elevations of the church below the cornice which is supported by Italianate brackets. Two gables (each surmounted by small pinnacles) frame the windows on the north ends of these elevations. All of the windows contain stained glass, a significant amount of which appears to have been replaced over the years. A 1970s frame addition containing offices and additional assembly space, extends from the south end of the church. Nineteenth century photographs indicate that the exterior of the church was painted in a polychrome scheme.

The church's interior is separated into three spaces: a vestibule which gently curves across the north end of the building and contains two sets of stairs which lead to the gallery; the nave and side aisles with its rich wood and stained glass; and the wide-arched sanctuary which contains a newly restored organ. Two doors on either side of the sanctuary lead to the addition. The interior exhibits an elaborate use of carved black walnut, chestnut, and butternut woods on a great range of surfaces including the curved pews, paneling, and railings. A centrally located diamond shaped medallion on the ceiling (similar to exterior diamond fret) features an intricately carved wood grill. The pulpit features a broken pediment supported by two Ionic order columns. Doors leading to the nave from the vestibule are grained to imitate walnut.

Recent paint analysis on the church has revealed a lavish decorative scheme with painted stencil designs around the edges of the plaster walls and ceilings thought to date from the 1880s. An interior photograph from 1893 indicates that it was in place by that date. The stencilling was all in an earth tone palette with browns, blacks, ochres, and reds predominating. The intricate fleur de lis, vine circle, and pinstripe patterns appears to have related to the foliage designs on the earlier stained glass. The original decorative scheme was changed in 1930 by the Monmouth decorative painter, Harry Cochrane. All of the stencilling work was painted over sometime during the 1950s. Originally, the main floor walls were wainscotted in paint to chair rail height as was the balcony. The walls are presently painted white with green trim. Consideration is being given to recreating the 1880s stencil and paint scheme. Some serious cracking in the plaster is visible. The basement appears to have been remodelled with modern materials in 1990 when the foundation walls for the church were reconstructed.

An electric lighting system was installed in the late 1890s. In 1909 the front and back rows of pews were removed to provide more space and in 1915 the original organ was replaced. A major redecorating campaign took

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FIRST PARISH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

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place in 1930 as part of the congregation's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary. During World War II, the building stood empty as the congregation worshipped in the back chapel. A number of the stained glass windows were thought to have been lost at this time. In 1953, the steeple was struck by lightning and repairs made. New Foundations were laid for the church in 1990 and the belfry and steeple were replaced in 1991.

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FIRST PARISH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

CUMBERLAND, MAINE

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First Parish Congregational Church in Yarmouth is an imposing Italianate frame building erected in 1867-1868. Plans for the church were executed by the Portland architect George M. Harding who designed nearly seventy buildings in Maine from Saco to Houlton and is known for his unusual interpretations of prevailing architectural modes. The decorative scheme on both the interior and exterior of First Parish Church is lavish and reflects the taste for florid ornamentation that prevailed in the United States during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The building is eligible for nomination to the Register under criterion C and criterion consideration A as a religious property whose significance lies in its architectural statement.

The First Parish Congregationalists of Yarmouth trace their beginnings back to the early eighteenth century. Their first place of worship was the Old Meeting House Under the Ledge (c. 1730) which was located on what is now Gilman Road near Route 88 in Yarmouth about one mile south of the church's present location. The church appears to have been a spare, rectangular frame structure with a transept and steeple. Services were held there until 1818 when a second frame church, "The Old Sloop," was constructed at a more central location on the corner of Bridge and Main Streets almost directly across from the present church. The name of this Federal manner church is thought to have come from the fact that ship's timbers were used in its construction. The "Old Sloop" functioned as a public hall until 1879 when it was torn down.

The post-Civil War years in Yarmouth were prosperous ones as shipbuilding in the area flourished. The increasing affluence of the congregation appears to have prompted it to build a larger, more extravagant church. Land was purchased on Main Street and George M. Harding was retained as the architect. The builder was Charles Humphrey. Pews were sold to help finance the construction of the building which began during the spring of 1867. The church was completed at a cost of \$35,000 late that year and was dedicated in January of 1868.

Portland architect George Milford Harding (1827-1910) is considered to be one of the two most important architects to work in mid-nineteenth century Maine. Of nearly seventy designs for buildings in Maine, thirty-four are extant. The only other extant churches in the state by Harding are the Universalist Church in Hiram (1872) and the Universalist Church at Norlands in Livermore (1872 remodeling of an 1827 church). In Massachusetts Harding is known to have been responsible for the design of at least two churches.

The design for the First Parish Congregational Church in Yarmouth appears to have been executed at a period in which the architect was at a creative peak. While the overall massing of the church with its rectangular nave and multi-stage entrance tower that projects from the facade is very



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FIRST PARISH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

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common in Maine for the period, the remarkably flamboyant interpretations of Italianate motifs are quite innovative. Viewed in the context of Maine church architecture during this period, the First Congregational Church in Yarmouth is very significant. It is also the earliest of Harding's surviving designs for churches and represents a significant period in the work of an important Maine architect.

In addition to its architectural history, the church is distinguished by the late nineteenth century decorative paint and stencilling scheme which lies below several layers of paint. Conservators believe that the designs at First Parish Church may have been stencilled by the noted Maine decorative painter Charles Schumacher, who is credited with having executed numerous interior decorative schemes in Maine during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Most of the 1880s painted finishes at the First Parish Church in Yarmouth have been analyzed and documented. Consideration is presently being given to replicating these schemes in the nave and sanctuary.

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FIRST PARISH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

CUMBERLAND COUNTY, MAINE

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- "Dedication of First Parish Congregational Church, January 15, 1865." Eastern Argus, January 15, 1865.
- "Detectives of Decor Peel Away Walls of Yarmouth Church." Falmouth Forecaster, April 7, 1994.
- "First Parish Church - Letter From Yarmouth, January 15, 1868." Portland Daily Press, January 16, 1868.
- "The First Parish Church." The Notes, February 20, 1990.
- "Historic Building Prepares for 21<sup>st</sup> Century - The Church's New Foundation." Falmouth Forecaster, December 6, 1990.
- A History of First Parish Congregational Church, Yarmouth, Maine, 1730-1980.
- Rowe, William Hutchinson. Ancient North Yarmouth and Yarmouth, Maine - A History 1636-1936., Somersworth, New Hampshire: New England History Press (1980 Reprint of 1937 Edition).

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FIRST PARISH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

CUMBERLAND COUNTY, MAINE

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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The nominated property occupies the Town of Yarmouth tax map 32, lot 115.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The boundary embraces the entire village lot historically associated with the First Parish Congregational Church.