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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). 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 Old Gray House  
other names/site number Hodgden-Merrow House

2. Location

street & number 60 Tavenner Road N/A not for publication  
city or town Boothbay (Sawyers Island) N/A vicinity  
state Maine code ME county Lincoln code 015 zip code 04537

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] 3/23/07  
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] 5.8.07  
Signature of the Keeper 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**

None

**6. Function or Use**

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

DOMESTIC / Single dwelling

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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

DOMESTIC / Single dwelling

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

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

EARLY REPUBLIC / Federal

LATE 19TH/20TH C. REVIVALS: Colonial Revival

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE / Granite

walls WOOD / Weatherboard

roof ASPHALT

other BRICK (chimney)

\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

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# National Register of Historic Places

## Continuation Sheet

OLD GRAY HOUSE

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### DESCRIPTION

The Old Gray House is a Federal Style home located on a small point of land on the west side of Sawyers Island in the Lincoln County town of Boothbay, Maine. The rectangular house with rear ell and side porch occupies a 2.46 acre lot of land characterized by grassy lawns, exposed ledge and a few conifers. The house faces south towards an unnamed inlet and the front lawn slopes gently to offer broad views of the Sheepscot River to the south and west. The only outbuilding on the property is a small well house located several hundred yards south east of the house.

The Old Gray House, as it has been known since 1920, is a two-story wood frame structure with an asphalt covered hip roof and center chimney. The main house measures 38' 5" by 30' and the ell, which extends north along the east elevation, measures 16 by 40 feet. The southernmost 30 feet of the ell is two stories high with a low hip roof; the remainder of the ell is a one story carriage shed under a low gable roof. An exterior brick chimney rises against the east wall of the ell. On the west side of the main house is a single story glass enclosed porch. This feature also has a hip roof. Attached to the southeast corner of the front elevation is a small gable roof basement entryway set in a swale in the surrounding grade. The building has cut granite foundation capstones except at the porch, which is skirted with wooden lattice. The carriage shed has a poured concrete floor. White painted clapboards cover the house and narrow corner boards, a boxed cornice and green louvered shutters at each window add decorative elements.

The primary facade faces south and is composed of five bays on each floor. The facade is not quite symmetrical as the eastern two bays are slightly wider and the front door is just off center. The first floor windows contain nine-over-six double hung wooden sash while the windows on the upper level have a six-over-six configuration. The focal point of the facade is the decorative door surround. This unit contains tapered pilasters under a narrow, two-part entablature. The lower portion of the entablature hosts a four-light transom window. The six panel front door is obscured by a green painted batten door. Two granite steps are positioned in front of the door, and to either side of the surround wooden trellises are set against the clapboards. Two long foundation windows, each fronted with a vertical wooden grill, are located to either side of the steps. The basement entrance has a short, two-leaf glass and wood door and a three light transom on its south wall. The roof of this access way is covered in glass panels and the space now functions as a small greenhouse. The south wall of the enclosed porch has double glass doors set between narrow plate glass windows. A low wooden railing with a starburst pattern is positioned to the interior of the glass panels. Two granite steps are set in front of the porch doors.

The west elevation of the main house has two six-over-six windows on the second floor. A bank of three nine-over-six windows mark the southwest parlor and the two-leaf fifteen pane French door leads to the northwest room. This side of the ell has closely spaced windows on the second floor and three widely spaced nine-over-six windows below. A single nine-over-six window is centered on the west wall of the carriage shed.

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The east elevation of the Old Gray House features an irregular pattern of windows and doors. Four of the six-over-six windows are evenly spaced along the upper floors (two in the main house and two in the ell) before terminating with a bank of three joined windows at the north end of the ell. The external chimney roughly bisects this elevation. South of the stack are three nine-over-six sash, a nine-light fixed sash, and side entrance framed with pilasters and a transom window. All of the elements are located under a horizontal trellis affixed to the clapboards with wooden brackets. North of the chimney is one one-over-six window and a plainly trimmed side door. Beyond this door a two leaf batten door leads to the former woodshed area and a larger set of batten doors access the carriage shed.

The floor plan of the Old Gray House is essentially defined by the location of the center chimney's three fireplaces. In the front half of the building are two large primary rooms separated by the front hallway and three-turn winder staircase. The rear portion of the building contains a small vestibule, bathroom and enclosed staircase in the northeast corner. The remainder of the space is one long open room with a large kitchen fireplace in the south wall. The plan of the second floor is similar, however north of the chimney is an east to west oriented hallway that accesses the back stairs and three rear bedrooms. The ground floor of the ell is laid out as a series of rooms that span the width of the addition. From south to north the rooms function as the (new) kitchen, service hallway, woodshed and carriage shed. The second floor of the ell contains one large bedroom and a small bathroom.

Each of the first floor rooms contain unique decorative features, but as a rule they all share plaster walls and wood floors, generally laid with six to eight inch wide pine. Cased posts with edge beads are visible in each corner of the house as well as under the chimney girts and at the east and west ends of the main partition wall that separates the front and back rooms. With the exception of the dining room, the ceilings are plastered, and all the doors except one are wood with six moulded and fielded panels with butt hinges and Suffolk latches. Pecked granite hearths are located in front of each of the fireplaces.

Both of the front rooms are formal and feature excellent woodwork. The southeast parlor has a intricate cove and bead chair rail, built up baseboard and ogee and fillet crown moulding. The mitered doors and windows are trimmed with an ogee and bead moulding and the chair rail doubles as the window's apron. In the west wall is a beautiful fireplace surround featuring bands of herringbone moulding framing the fire box and dentils above the frieze and under the moulded cornice. The southwest parlor also contains a full compliment of wood work, including a built-up chair rail, one-board wide wainscot and decorative baseboard. The door and window trim is similar to that in the southeast parlor. The cornice in the southwest parlor is of plaster rather than wood, and features an unusual line of moulded plaster with floral corner block run on the ceiling (above the plaster crown) over the east, north and west walls. The Federal style fireplace surround features paneled pilasters and unusual candlestick shaped dentils under the cornice.

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The dining room, or old kitchen differs substantially in overall feel compared to the front rooms. Here the woodwork, including the cased posts, mantle, baseboard and door and window trim has been scraped of its original paint, and the plaster walls are unfinished. As with the front rooms, the flooring is of painted pine. Scars in the floor west of the door to the southwest parlor show the former location of a board partition wall, and variations in the flooring (including boards measuring up to twenty-three inches wide in the northwest corner) suggest that this space had been further partitioned at one time. In this room the fireplace surround consists of a wide, flat mantle board trimmed with an ogee and bead band molding. Cased chimney posts form the sides of the surround and these are also decorated with the band molding. While the firebox was rebuilt when the chimney was replaced (as were all of the fire boxes on this floor) the original bake oven, fronted by a raised panel door, was retained. Exposed chimney girts, second floor joists, and the underside of the upstairs flooring form the dining room ceiling. These wooden elements have an irregular patina, and each of the members have been planed smooth. In addition, the edges of the girts appear to have been chamfered, suggesting that the ceiling was meant to be exposed when originally installed. However, lath nails on the girts and plaster stains on the upper corners of the cased beams indicate that the ceiling was previously plastered.

The side vestibule, back staircase, corner bathroom and front hall complete the first floor of the main house. The bathroom contains cased beams, painted wainscot, and a fiberboard ceiling. Additional cased beams and chair rail are found in the side vestibule, which ends with a heavy six panel door set under a four light transom. The front entry contains a three-turn winder stair with tapered square balusters, and Federal style newel posts and hand railing. A two-panel door under the stairs leads to a small closet and beyond that to a void in the masonry stack. The front door, which also has six panels, is hung with HL hinges.

The second floor rooms are finished more simply than those below. Each bedroom contains painted pine floors, cased posts and moulded chair rail. The ceiling in the southwest chamber is sheet rock, and the remainder of the ceilings have been replaced with fiberboard and battens. There is no indication that there was ever a fireplace in the southwest chamber, but the shallow, parged firebox and brick hearth in the southeast room retain its early 19<sup>th</sup> century construction.

The present kitchen, in the southern part of the ell, has southern yellow pine floors, cased joists, and stained bead board walls. A slate sink (new) is positioned between the windows on the west wall, while the north and south walls contain built-in bead board cabinets and cupboards. The remainder of the first floor ell are unfinished utility spaces with exposed timber framing. The second floor of the ell was recently remodeled and serves a large bedroom.

The cellar of the Old Gray House is accessed by the staircase at the east end of the dining room. The chimney base is formed by a whitewashed brick barrel vault supported on fieldstone piers. At each end of the vault thick wooden lintel beams expand from either side of the top of the arch and their cantilevered ends support the first floor framing around the chimney. These lintels are noteworthy as their outside ends have been cut in a 'yoke' shape consisting of an upper shoulder and

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a beveled underside. The cellar is subdivided by brick partition walls which form two small rooms: one in the northwest corner and the second immediately west of the chimney base. Portions of this latter space retain accordion lath and plaster on the ceiling. Remnants of built-in wooden shelves are found in this room and within the arch.

It is difficult to pinpoint the construction date of the Old Gray House. As will be discussed in greater detail in the Statement of Significance there was a building on this site that functioned as an inn, tavern, and store by 1753. The house was partially destroyed by fire in 1781 at the hands of the British. Between 1786 and 1819 the property changed hands five times and any of these owners could have been responsible for the Federal style alterations- although stylistically it is more likely that it was built after the turn of the nineteenth century.

There are several features that indicate a pre-Federal era component to the house, consisting principally of the basement, first floor framing, and first floor plan. The unusually shaped lintels in the chimney base are not typical of nineteenth century construction in Lincoln County, yet the vaulted arch form does appear in pre-revolutionary structures in the region. Careful examination of the cased posts and exposed girts in the dining room reveal that the posts had originally been gunstock posts as evidenced by remaining mortises and pressure marks in the adjacent girts. Indeed, the post in the northwest corner of the living room retains its telltale taper at the top of the casing. Gunstock style joinery was used at the intersection of vertical posts, plates and rafters. The presence of this style of joinery at ceiling level of the first floor signals that at one time the building had been a single story, center chimney cape. The later addition of the second story and hip roof likely coincided with the installation of the Federal period woodwork.

There is also a tradition that the house is plank framed, or more correctly, built of structural planks on frame.<sup>1</sup> A small gap in the foundation wall between the main house and ell shows thick vertical planks set against a ledger board over the sill plate. Plank framing does not in and of itself designate an early construction date, however, as architectural historian James Garvin points out, by the turn of the nineteenth century many plank framed houses had dispensed with the post and beam skeleton and used the thick lumber as the entire structural system. The cased posts in the Old Gray house preclude this possibility.<sup>2</sup>

Plank framing is a relatively rare structural system in Maine. Studies by Richard Candee indicate that a form of plank framing was found in the Plymouth Colony of Massachusetts, and according to Abbot Lowell Cummings, between 1680 and 1725 clusters of these buildings were built in the Cape Ann/Wenfield areas of Essex County Massachusetts. The current or historic distribution of plank frame houses in Maine has not been studied. With the exception of the thickness of the window

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<sup>1</sup>"Maine's Historic Homes," 1952.

<sup>2</sup> Garvin, page 21-22.

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frames applied to the face of the plank frame structures, there is little evidence on the exterior that an 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century house has a plank-on-frame system. Known examples in Maine include Owen Homestead at Twin Bridges in Turner, portions of the Peacock Tavern in Richmond (NR: 86000675), and the Dummer House (1792) in the Hallowell Historic District (NR: 70000076). The frame of the Old Gray House is extremely similar to that of the Dummer House as it was originally constructed. The frequency of plank construction is known to be related to the presence of sawmills, and thus, access to inexpensive source of lumber. Mills were present early on Sawyers Island, possibly by 1753. In as much as each of the first five owners (or partial owners) of the property came to Maine from north of Boston, an area in which the plank frame was common, the builder was probably building in the structural tradition that was most familiar.

Further confusing the chronology of the house was the extensive remodeling undertaken by the Merrow family in 1920. Some of these changes are known from the plans drawn by the architect, Charles Way, and include the addition of the porch and east side trellis, the removal of the partitions between the old kitchen and the northwest corner room(s), as well as the removal of a porch that spanned the south elevation. Prior to remodeling, the ell had two stories down its entire length under a single pitch roof that descended to one story on the western elevation. Several hinged doors on the northeast end of the ell indicate that it served in part as a carriage shed. The function and design of the remainder of the ell has been lost. Other changes that occurred in 1920 included the replacement of the front door and all of the windows (and addition of two windows in the southeast parlor), and the removal of the plaster ceiling in the dining room. Whether the newly exposed chimney girts and joists were subsequently planed, chamfered and stained to enhance an historic appearance is unknown but not removed from the realm of possibility. The entire chimney stack, from the first floor through the roof was rebuilt at this time as well.

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

SOCIAL HISTORY

EXPLORATION / SETTLEMENT

Period of Significance

Mid-18th century to 1920

Significant Dates

C. 1753

C. 1820

1920

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Way, Charles F., Architect

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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In 1920 the *Maine Sunday Telegram* reported that efforts to locate 'the oldest house in Maine' in conjunction with the centennial of Maine's statehood, had located a likely candidate on Sawyers Island in the Lincoln County town of Boothbay. The unnamed house had served as an inn and was mentioned in deeds recorded in Lincoln County as far back as 1747.<sup>3</sup> The house was described as "a square two-story building of the type of architecture common among the pretentious residences of 200 years ago. The front room is large, as are the other rooms below, and the number of sleeping apartments on the second floor verify the supposition that the building was once a tavern. There are big fireplaces in many of the rooms...and the elaborate woodwork indicates that the builder was a man of means and artistic taste."<sup>4</sup> Adding to the historical importance of the property were hollows in the coastal granite referred to "Indian Kettles," shell heaps (middens), and a submerged rock wall believed to "date back to some pre-historic race." This was not the first time the moniker had been applied to the house on Sawyers Island. A late nineteenth century postcard shows a family posing in front of the less-than-fully painted house. Lettered across the photograph is "Oldest House in Maine - 1751- Sawyers Island." While scholarship since 1920 confirms that there are many houses decades older than the Sawyer's Island house, the actual date of construction remains in question. Its history is intriguing none-the less.

The first record of the property is a 1746 deed from Samuel Barter, housewright (then "of Sheepscot River") to Joseph Patten a trader from Newbury, Massachusetts for the entire island, then known as Ship's Island. By 1753 Patten had established several enterprises on the island. The following account is excerpted from a recent article "the Early Years on Sawyers Island" written by Boothbay historian Barbara Rumsey.

Sawyers Island was an attractive site for a trader and innkeeper, catching traffic going up and down the Sheepscot. If you plunked yourself down on the most visible northwest part of the island, you were likely to draw people. Patten did it all on the island: he ran a tavern and inn, functioned as a trader, decided minor disagreements and drew up legal papers as a justice of the peace, and perhaps built a sawmill. The oldest local manuscript in Boothbay is his account book which covers 1753 to 1762. It provides invaluable insight into who was here and what they were doing - in most cases, drinking a lot of rum....Patten often sold a night's lodging, dinners, and breakfasts, usually to Massachusetts people who were here to get...staves, shingles, clapboards and firewood. He sold little else in the way of goods, but often took goods in payment, such as a calfskin, gunpowder, labor, flour, Indian meal, molasses, pork and coffee.(Rumsey, October 5, 2006).

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<sup>3</sup> The deed in reference, between Samuel Barter and Joseph Patten was actually executed in 1746.

<sup>4</sup>Portland Sunday Telegram, 1920.

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While Patten's account books describe his activities as an innkeeper the earliest record of him receiving an innkeepers license was in 1761. The next year the Kennebec Proprietors, who derived a claim to land within fifteen miles of the Kennebec River from a charter granted to the Plymouth Company in 1632, decided to expand the boundaries of their holdings a bit to the east. Within this contested new frontier they executed a deed to Sylvester Gardiner for Ships Island. Both Barter and Patten swore to the validity of the 1746 deed, although Barter had probably obtained the land as a squatter. In the meantime Patten sold his property to his daughter Alice. But within a few years both Alice and Joseph had left the property.

Gardiner, a broker and agent of the Proprietors, immediately sold the land to Israel Davis of Topsfield, Massachusetts, and in 1762 Thomas Hodgdon of Jeremysquam (Westport) ran the inn for a year. In 1764 Davis mortgaged the property to Benjamin Sawyer of Danvers, Massachusetts, but Davis continued to run the inn between 1763 and 1771. According to the 1771 Boothbay tax list Davis owned a frame house, 2 oxen, 5 cattle, 14 sheep and 31 developed acres, and the 1772 Sproul map shows a large house on the same site as the subject property.<sup>5</sup> In 1773 Davis and Sawyer placed an advertisement in the Essex (Massachusetts) Gazette offering the property for sale:

This day we the subscribers have agreed to make sale of Ship Island,...as soon as can. The Property as followeth. Said Island layeth on the Easterly side of Sheepscot River about nine miles below Witch Casset Point laying over against the Upper March Island, very pleasantly situated in plain sight of the Harbour, right before the House which has been a Tavern House for a Number of Years, also a Barn & Saw-Mill belonging to said Farm, and about 200 Acres, the biggest Half cleared, has been for some years past 25 or more Loads of good English Hay cut on said Farm, and the Pasturing exceeding the Mowing; it is supposed to keep wel 12 cows and four large oxen and 30 or 40 Sheep in the best manner about 2 miles from the Rev. Mr. Murrays Meeting-House...the Benefit of Fish in Sight of the Door....<sup>6</sup>

The land was not sold, however, and Sawyer became the sole owner in 1774, and immediately received an innkeepers license, which he renewed through 1785.

In addition to running the inn and other industries, Sawyer was active in local politics. Rumsey describes his tenure in Boothbay in "Early Years on Sawyers Island":

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<sup>5</sup>A copy of a portion the Holland/Sproule map, 1772, (only the immediate Boothbay region), is among the Rumsey papers. A copy of the entire map is located at the Boothbay Region Historical Society, Boothbay, Maine.

<sup>6</sup> This advertisement, in the form of a letter from Davis and Sawyer and mailed from Boothbay on June 23, 1773, was printed on July 6, 1773. Danvers (Massachusetts), Historical Society, Collection 1916-4. Copy of document located in the Rumsey research on Boothbay.

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Sawyer was a selectman and town treasurer in 1780 and a member of the Committee of Correspondence in 1775 and 1781. The Committee was a Revolutionary entity that spread throughout the colonies' towns; its mission was to carry out the will of the Continental Congress on the local level. Its members were seen by some as full participants in the war effort, the equal of soldiers.

On February 23, 1781, the Committee of Georgetown wrote the Massachusetts governor, John Hancock, about local wartime disasters. Among them was the following: "An armed brig anchored in Sheepscot River and landed some men before day at Deacon Sawyer's and robbed his house of everything except a bed on which his daughter had just lain in [had a baby], then set the house on fire, but by the exertions of the robbed deacon the house was saved."

Sawyer continued as before, but he mortgaged his property in 1782. Things did not go well for him...and he lost his own land in 1786. He'd appealed in 1784 to the government for help since his losses were a result of his loyalty. He repeated his plight in 1786, with the selectmen endorsing his claim...Sawyer explained that he was compelled to sell his real estate, and the proceeds were devalued with inflation and other assets were frozen. No help was forthcoming. (Rumsey, October 5, 2006).

John Appleton was a merchant from Salem, Massachusetts who received a portion of the island as judgment against Sawyer's debts, including the inn and associated buildings. He is listed as a non-resident taxpayer in Boothbay in 1788, 1789, and 1790, and whether he maintained the inn, stores, and mill as part of his Salem based business is unknown. In 1797 he sold the property, including the house, barn, shop outhouses, and appurtenances to Nicholas Tabb Knight a Boothbay vessel captain. According to Rumsey, Knight was the "first resident owner of the house not to maintain an inn." (Rumsey, October 12, 2006). Knight stayed only seven years before moving to Boothbay Center. (He took up residence in the 1768 Session House, listed on the National Register as the Knight- Corey House, NR:80000237.) Knight sold the west half of the island to Benjamin Hodgdon, a mariner from Jeremysquam (Westport) just across the Sheepscot from Sawyers Island.

The Hodgdon family had lived on Jeremysquam since the 1760s and ran a mill of some form. The Thomas Hodgdon who kept the Sawyers Island Inn in 1762 was the grandfather of Benjamin Jr. As described by Rumsey in Hodgdon Shipbuilding and Mills

Benjamin Junior, born in 1779, was the first of Benjamin Senior's sons to purchase land in Boothbay and to eventually settle in Boothbay. In 1805, at the age of twenty-six, he bought the west side of Sawyers Island from Nicholas Tabb Knight and all of Thirty Acre Island...both on the Sheepscot shore. Benjamin, Jr. appears to have been a resident of Boothbay for a time in 1810, and in support of that, he appears on the 1810 census as a resident of Boothbay.

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All the other family members were listed as Edgecomb residents...Benjamin's 1810 residency in Boothbay was not to be permanent, but by 1814 he was consistently "of Boothbay" in the deeds. Probably Benjamin, Jr. and the later Hodgsons moved back and forth across the Sheepscot as their needs dictated. It was not a long way, perhaps a fifteen-minute row. (P. 13-14.)

In 1812 Benjamin's brother Caleb purchased nearby Indiantown Island and in 1816 Benjamin sold half of his Sawyers Island property to Caleb, who in turn sold it to their brother Tyler in 1818. A year later Benjamin sold the other half to Tyler. From then until the early twentieth century members of the Hodgdon family owned the house on Sawyers Island.

None of the aforementioned property transfers give a clear indication of when the Sawyers Island house was built, or when it was remodeled. Neither are the tax records of sufficient detail or consistency to suggest specific building episodes. When Sawyer and Davis advertised the property in 1773 the ad, as run in the *Essex Gazette*, referred to the buildings as being 'almost new,' but this was before the structure was partially burned by the British. However, considering the overall financial position of Sawyer as a result of this episode it is unlikely that he added a second story to the building when he made repairs, and even less likely that this occurred in the Federal style. Appleton could have undertaken the alterations, but as a part time resident who may not have run the inn, this level of investment seems unlikely. On the other hand, Knight, a mariner, may have been prosperous enough to make the alterations - yet he sold the property to Benjamin Hodgdon for only \$100 more than he had spent to purchase the property from Appleton seven years earlier. This too argues against Knight having added the second story.

When Benjamin Hodgdon settled on Sawyers Island he was a young mariner. While he later went on to be active and influential in town affairs his early years on the island, as well as his finances, remain obscure. His younger brother Caleb, who owned a portion of the property for a short time, went on to develop the legendary Hodgdon Shipyard and was extremely influential in the development of East Boothbay. Tyler Hodgdon, the youngest of these three brothers, was also identified as a mariner in the deeds. Available tax records do indicate that between 1815 (the last year extant during which Benjamin owned the entire parcel ) and 1823 (the first year of extant records in which Tyler owned the whole parcel) the taxed liability on the dwelling house jumped substantially. In 1826 Tyler was among the top six taxpayers in town. (Rumsey, 1995, p. 44). Tyler ran a fish selling, shipping, and processing business on Sawyers Island in addition to running a farm. Tax records indicate that between 1840 and his death in 1862 the property contained between five and eight outbuildings in addition to the house. None of these remain today on the subject property, although remnants of the wharfs and at least one outbuilding are visible on adjacent lots.

Whoever was responsible for the enlargement of the Old Gray House they were following a well established precedent. The Old Gray House is one of a handful of significant Federal style homes along the Mid-Coast of Maine. Throughout the structure, the level of craftsmanship, eye for detail,

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and use and execution of the Federal vocabulary makes it a notable example of the style as executed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The prosperity associated with the Old Gray House was reflected in similar homes throughout Maine, built by prosperous families in communities that grew as a result of a prosperous maritime economy. In Maine Forms of American Architecture, William D. Shipman describes the context in which these structures emerged throughout the state.

In Maine, as suggested, the Federal period coincided with the arrival of prosperity in a hitherto remote and relatively backward region. The scarcity of distinguished Colonial buildings, outside the extreme southern section, contrasts with the plethora of good Federal examples and testifies to the District's late development.... The emergence of shipping and shipbuilding as major - and highly profitable - industries after 1790 helped to create small pools of wealth along the Maine coast. While this wealth was hardly comparable to that of the Boston-Salem or New York areas, it was nevertheless sufficient to bring about a wave of building activity at, architecturally speaking, just the right time. Importation of the ideas of Bulfinch and McIntire (together with some of their English antecedents) resulted in a series of buildings whose elegance and restrained classicism make them unusually good examples of their period. (Shipman, p. 68)

In 1918 the Harold K. And Sara Merrow family of Hyde Park, outside of Boston, purchased the uninhabited home from the Hodgdon heirs. By this time the size of the property associated with the house had dropped from half the island to less than ten acres. Harold Merrow was an engineer who was associated with the Merrow Brothers Machine Shop in Wellesley. In 1920, just a few months after the *Maine Sunday Telegram* proclaimed the Old Gray House 'the oldest house still standing in Maine,' the Merrows hired the Sudbury Massachusetts Architect Charles Way to remodel their home.

Little is known about Way. He was born in 1879 or 1880 and was enumerated in the 1910 Sudbury census as an architect. The 1913 Sudbury directory indicates that he worked in Boston, a fact confirmed by both the 1918 Boston Business Directory and his 1920 plans for the Merrow property. His known commissions include a careful reconstruction (with fireproof modifications) of the Sudbury Town Hall, originally built in 1836 and rebuilt after a fire in 1932; renovations to the Rev. Linus Shaw /hard Candy House (both in the Sudbury Center Historic District, NR: 76000277); and the re-erection of the Wayside Country Store, part of Henry Ford's early American village in Sudbury. According to the compiler of the Longfellow's Wayside Inn archives, Way was a dedicated student of history and had a great sense of early American architecture.<sup>7</sup> The Wayside Inn archives also contain drawings done by Way in 1955 depicting his conception of how the original (c. 1686) Inn may have looked. The Wayside Inn, immortalized in Longfellow's poem "Tales of the Wayside Inn," is among New England's best known hostelries. The building was purchased by antiquarian Edward Lemon in 1896 and over the next 20 years he had it, along with another tavern that was dismantled in

<sup>7</sup>Lee Swanson, personal communication 18 January 2006

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Watertown, Massachusetts and moved to the site, carefully restored. Although no evidence has been found to link Way with this tavern prior to Henry Ford's purchase of the property in 1923, if he had been involved with the property professionally this might have supplied the credentials the Merrows required as they sought to alter their historic inn.

The changes designed by Way balance a Colonial Revival stylistic ethic with a Colonial Revival philosophy that aimed in part to recreate history. In the former category can be seen the installation of the trellis, porch and southwest parlor windows, and the redesign of the ell. However, the removal of the partition walls and ceiling plaster in the dining room speak to a desire to replicate a perception of colonial antiquity regardless of historical appropriateness or accuracy.

The Colonial Revival imprint on the Old Gray House is in itself a noteworthy expression of community values and associations, and one that had a physical impact on the structure. Inherent in our contemporary interpretation of the Colonial Revival movements is the understanding that the early practitioners of this philosophy were not as concerned with accuracy as they were with sentiment. Historian Kenneth L. Ames neatly summarizes how this philosophy occasionally handled the physical realities of the built environment it celebrated.

Since the process of reinterpreting, revising, rethinking, or reevaluating the past may go on continuously, propelled by newer information or exigencies, it sometimes happens that whatever actually occurred, whatever an object or an environment originally looked like may not be important for a given group at a given moment. The requirement to possess a past as we need it is more pressing than any motive of historical accuracy. What one age deems as historical accuracy a later one sees as naivete or self-deception. The transformation of images to meet historical needs takes place not only in the mind but in the material world as well. The physical past can be shaped or reshaped to fit a society's requirements. It is therefore true that even manifestly authentic materials are hardly immune to alteration or destruction solely by virtue of their design or structural integrity. If they fail to fit current needs, the most pristine remnants of the past may fall prey to demolition. (Ames, p. 5-6).

Thus, the Old Gray House has significance as an example of a structure whose early history was celebrated and valued to the exclusion of its well crafted nineteenth-century stylistic elements. This property, with 250 years of continuous habitation and structural evolution provides an important touchstone to both local history and social philosophy. In this context, the House is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, for its significance in conjunction with early settlement and exploration, as well as the Colonial Revival movements, and under Criterion C as a good example of both Federal style architecture and Colonial Revival architecture.

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### **VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The boundaries of the nominated property are described by the Town of Boothbay, Maine tax map R4, lot 62.

### **BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The boundaries of this nomination are limited to the current legal property boundaries directly encompassing the Old Gray House. Significant acreage of land historically associated with the property have since been separated from the nominated resource and much of it has been developed to the extent that it no longer retains integrity.

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## PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph 1 of 6.

Christi A. Mitchell

Maine Historic Preservation Commission

12 December 2006

South facade; facing north.

Photograph 2 of 6.

Christi A. Mitchell

Maine Historic Preservation Commission

12 December 2006

West elevation; facing east.

Photograph 3 of 6. Maine\_LincolnCounty\_Old Gray House3.tif

Christi A. Mitchell

Maine Historic Preservation Commission

12 December 2006

Interior, southwest parlor. Fireplace surround detail, facing east.

Photograph 4 of 6. Maine\_LincolnCounty\_Old Gray House4.tif

Christi A. Mitchell

Maine Historic Preservation Commission

12 December 2006

Interior, dining room. Fireplace in south wall and exposed ceiling framing; facing south.

Photograph 5 of 6. Maine\_LincolnCounty\_Old Gray House5.tif

Christi A. Mitchell

Maine Historic Preservation Commission

12 December 2006

Interior, dining room. Cased gunstock post and exposed framing in northwest corner, facing northwest.

Photograph 6 of 6. Maine\_LincolnCounty\_Old Gray House6.tif

Christi A. Mitchell

Maine Historic Preservation Commission

12 December 2006

Interior, cellar. Western terminal end of southern chimney arch lintel; facing north northeast.

*Photographs 3,4,5, and 6 were printed on HP Premium Plus Photo Paper (high gloss) with Vivera Ink.*