

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 (former) Otisfield Town House
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 53 Bell Hill Road N/A not for publication
city or town Otisfield N/A vicinity
state Maine code ME county Oxford code 017 zip code 04270

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.)
Paul D. Fitzgerald 12/30/04
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): _____

for
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action
Edson W. Beall 2/15/05

Name of Property

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
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)

GOVERNMENT / City Hall

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE / Auditorium

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

MID - 19TH CENTURY / Greek Revival
LATE VICTORIAN

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Wood
Stone / fieldstone
walls Wood / weatherboard
Brick
roof Asphalt
Steel

Narrative Description

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

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OTISFIELD TOWN HOUSE (FORMER)

OXFORD COUNTY, MAINE

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DESCRIPTION

The (former) Otisfield Town House is a high posted, one story, gable-fronted vernacular building, with elements of Greek Revival and Victorian era stylistic detailing. Constructed in 1905 by town officials to replace the earlier, ailing, town house, this austere wood-frame building functioned as the location of town meetings, selectman's quarters and polling until the end of the 20th century.

The (former) Otisfield Town House is located on Bell Hill Road, almost at the geographical center of the rural town which is set among the foothills of the White Mountains and dotted with lakes. Bell Hill Road travels north-northwest to south-southeast in an almost straight line. It passes over Bell Hill (800'), less than half a mile to the north of the Town House. The majority of the buildings (including a church and school) along this road date to the first three decades of the 19th century or the last decade of the 18th century. Stone walls, maintained fields and property lines marked by rows of mature trees characterize the built environment surrounding the (former) Town House. The gable-fronted building faces west-south-west. (For ease of reference in this document it will be described as west facing). It is set on the north half of a quarter acre parcel of level land, the southern half of which is covered with grass and at times used for parking. Pine, spruce and birch trees of varying maturity surround the lot.

The footprint of the white-painted clapboarded building is 30' x 40', with an eight foot square portico affixed to the center of the western facade. On the rear (east) of the building are two small additions: in the northeast corner is a small, framed, hipped roof addition containing two primitive toilets, while on the southeast corner is a rectangular brick enclosure with a steel covered, barrel-vaulted roof that shelters the steel vault. The facade of the (former) Town House is three bays wide. The center bay contains the unadorned wood and glass door and is flanked on either side by two-over-one wooden sash windows. A pair of narrow one-over-one sash, set in a shared frame is positioned in the gable attic over the front door. The window and door casings consist of flat stock to which is affixed an ogee moulded drip edge above the unit. The overhanging asphalt roof is decorated along the cornice with ogee-crown moulding, while medium width frieze boards terminate at cornice returns over narrow corner boards. The portico has a fully pedimented roof set on a two board architrave. The portico is attached to the main mass of the building and supported by two square porch supports decorated with scroll-work brackets. Wooden stairs and a wooden ramp lead from the portico to the ground. Both the north and south elevations are marked by four evenly distributed two-over-one windows, frieze boards under the eaves and corner boards, and a pair of similar windows are positioned between the corner projections on the rear of the building. A narrow watertable around the building creates a visual separation between the frame components and the fieldstone foundation which is covered by a painted board skirting.

The interior of the (former) Otisfield Town Hall consists of a single large room, with doors in the eastern wall leading to the bathrooms and the vault, which was installed in 1935. The walls are

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finished with varnished tongue-and-groove match-board oriented vertically below the windows, and horizontally above a simple rounded chair rail. The ceilings are also covered with varnished match board, while the stained floors are of Douglas fir. A rustic, low, "L" shaped rail-and-style fence with two cross braced gates runs from north to south. To the east of the fence four wooden voting booths with match board doors are positioned against the rear wall, and a raised platform for the selectman's table is located in front of the doors to the vault. The doors and windows are trimmed with stock moulding and bulls-eye corner blocks, while four light fixtures, installed c. 1937, hang from the ceiling. The meeting space is heated by an Ashley wood stove, connected to chimney in the east wall, and by a propane-fueled hot-air furnace suspended from the ceiling in the northwest corner of the room. The walk-in vault, which was not available for inspection, was built in by the Herring-Hall-Marvin Safe Company, at the Hall's Safe and Lock Company's Factory in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Name of Property

County and State

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)

POLITICS / GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

1905 - 1954

Significant Dates

1905
1935

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or a grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other
Name of repository:

Otisfield Town Hall, Otisfield, Maine

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Otisfield Town House is eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, for its association with Otisfield's town government, and to a lesser extent, its social history, during most of the 20th century.

The Town of Otisfield Maine is comprised of three small village settlements: Spurr's Corner, Bolsters Mills, and East Otisfield. It is an overwhelmingly rural town, currently supporting 1560 people within its 27,597 acres. Today, the civic and commercial center of town is located in East Otisfield, at the head of a bay on Thompson's Pond. However this has not always been the case, when the earliest settlers starting arriving in town in the 1780s they chose to take up residence on Bell Hill, an 800' hill at the almost exact center of the town. This region was attractive to the settlers in part due to the relatively longer growing season found at higher elevations. Stretched along the stone-wall lined Bell Hill Road are several Federal-era homes and farms, including the Levi Patch House, (c. 1810), the Jonathan Moors House (1797-8), Sawyer Stone Farmstead c. 1810), and the Lyman Nutting Homestead c. 1796, NR # 74000163). In 1797 the Union Meeting House was constructed at the top of the hill, and the plantation formally incorporated as the Town of Otisfield. The town's earliest cemetery is located across the street from the site of the Union Meetinghouse, and the town pound lies less than a mile north on Bell Hill Road.

The (former) Otisfield Town House was not the first civic structure erected in Otisfield. Between 1787 and 1797, town meetings were conducted in the homes of Deacon Stephen Phinney, Timothy Jordan, or David Kneeland. After several years of planning, a Meeting House was erected on the eastern side of Bell Hill Road for joint use by the town and the congregation. However by the mid-1830s the building was failing (wind blew part of the roof off in 1839) and the two uses of the building were no longer compatible. The construction of a new meetinghouse adjacent to the older structure was begun in 1838, while the earlier structure was patched up and used for Town Meeting for several more years, even as the selectmen negotiated with the parishioners about the final disposal of the building. Finally, in March of 1845, the process of selecting a location for the new town house began. After the negotiations were complete, the town decided to move the Meeting House less than one mile down the hill to the southeast and use it as a Town House. The town covered a large geographic area, and there was significant concern about minimizing the distance that any resident would have to travel to the governmental center, as is demonstrated in the minutes for March 7, 1845 town meeting.

"Then Dr. Silas Blake made a report of his success in getting most of the owners of pews in the old meeting house to relinquish their rights to the town.

Voted to have the house carried from the hill and set near the centre of the town.

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Then voted to have it set or located by some travelled (sic) road as near the centre of the town as is consistent.

Then voted to have the town house located as near the centre of the town as a suitable piece of land could be obtained to set it on, measuring from Joseph Halls dwelling house, by the old meeting house to the dwelling house of Capt. Joseph Haskell, on the main travelled (sic) road.

Then voted to build a town house to be completed by the first day of Mar. next.

Then voted that the old meeting house should be converted into a town house.....

Voted to accept the committees report as to the centre and the site for the house on Mr. Tarbell Patch's land.

Voted to have the house set on the half acre of land which Tarbell Patch has promised to sell the town for \$10.

Further discussion that day involved altering the orientation of the building, reusing as many clapboard as "are suitable to lay and make good work", and providing an adequate foundation for the structure. (Spurr, p. 241-2).

By 1905, the now almost 110 year old former meetinghouse turned town house had become problematic. No pictures have been found of this structure, nor do the minutes of the town describe the building, yet in March of 1905 a committee was entrusted with the responsibility of building a new facility on the same site. Only the essential elements required for the building were specified in the minutes. "Voted to build the house 30 by 40 with 12 foot posts. Voted that ditch be dug so it will be well drained, and filled with small stones, covered with flat stones, ditch to be 2 ½ feet square, granite blockings every ten feet." The ditch still drains the level site. The structure was built rapidly, and by December of that year 175 chairs were ordered for the facility, and a \$3 fee was agreed upon as a rental rate for public use of the building. Apparently loathe to abandon completely the earlier building, in March 1906, the town voted to convert this structure into a storage shed.

Appropriate to its location among 18th and 19th century capes and two story Federal homes, the scale of the building is residential, and its exterior is restrained. Throughout Maine, vernacular buildings constructed for use as town offices and meeting halls frequently incorporate some basic elements of the Greek Revival style, including gable front orientation, cornice returns, and frieze and corner boards of varying widths, to which additional stylistic elements of the period may have been added (window hoods, brackets). In Otisfield these typical trim details are not overstated, and

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additional ornamentation is limited to a narrow ogee-shaped drip edge at the top of the window casing, and the entrance portico. This portico reinforces a sense of Grecian style through the use of a fully pedimented roof structure set over a two-board architrave, which in turn is supported by two square porch supports. Victorian scroll-work brackets span the corners on the underside of the portico, and relieve some of the severity of the otherwise austere building.

Historian Randall Bennett, in his published survey of the historical architecture of Oxford County describes the Otisfield Town House as a "late but representative example of the functional and unadorned halls built throughout rural Oxford County following the nineteenth century abandonment of combined church/town meetinghouses." (Bennett, pp. 313-314). Indeed, these 'halls' included not only municipal buildings but schools, Grange Halls and community buildings. While many of these structures built in the decades surrounding the turn of the century were two or two-and-a-half stories tall, the Otisfield Town House is built on a scale that more characteristic of mid-nineteenth century buildings with the same function. (Examples, Waterford Town House, Waterford HD, NR 80000247; Fryeburg Town House, NR 92001295, Brownfield Town Hall, 1846 and Albany town Hall, 1845.) In 1935 a vault was added within a brick addition at the east corner of the building for the storage of town records.

Although built primarily as the location for town meetings, selectmen's meetings and polling, the large meeting space also has a history of being rented out for special occasions and gatherings. In small rural towns such as those found throughout Maine, it is not uncommon for a building like the (former) Otisfield Town House to be the focal point of community events and activities. Sometimes there may be several historic buildings that have fulfilled this roll, including church parish halls, grange halls, or the town hall. However, once the Otisfield Community Hall was built in 1929, this use of the building dropped off considerably.

Town meetings were held in the building until 1985 when they were moved to a new municipal building; voting continued in the building until November of 2002, when it was finally closed. However, the 2003 report of the Otisfield Town Property Review Committee recommended that the structure become the home of the Otisfield Historical Society. For Otisfield, the (former) Town House remain's a touchstone to the community's governmental history.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bennett, Randall. Oxford County, Maine: A Guide to Its Historic Architecture. (Bethel: Oxford County Historic Resource Survey), 1984.

Clayton, W.W. History of Cumberland Co., Maine. With illustrations and biographical sketches of its prominent men and pioneers. (Philadelphia: Everts and Peck), 1880.

Hankins, Jean and David. A Short History of Otisfield, Maine. (Otisfield Historical Society), 1998.

Spurr, William Samuel. A History of Otisfield. (Oxford, Maine: William S. Spurr), 1953.

The Old Maps of Rural Cumberland County, Maine in 1871. (Fryeburg, Maine: Saco Valley Printing), 1983.

Name of Property

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .23 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 19 375582 4881907
Zone Easting Northing

3 19
Zone Easting Northing

2 19
Zone Easting Northing

4 19
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.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title CHRISTI A. MITCHELL, ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

organization MAINE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION date 4 October 2004

street & number 55 CAPITOL STREET, STATION 65 telephone (207) 287-2132

city or town AUGUSTA state ME 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries of the (former) Otisfield Town House are clearly depicted on Town of Otisfield tax map R8, Lot 33.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The above described boundaries consist of .23 acres, and represents the building lot that was sold to the Town of Otisfield by Tarbell Patch in 1905, and upon which the (former) Otisfield Town House was constructed in that year.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph 1 of 3
Christi A. Mitchell
Maine Historic Preservation Commission
7 September 2004
West facade; facing east.

Photograph 2 of 3
Christi A. Mitchell
Maine Historic Preservation Commission
7 September 2004
North and west elevations facing southeast.

Photograph 3 of 3
Christi A. Mitchell
Maine Historic Preservation Commission
7 September 2004
Interior, south wall, facing southwest.