

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: **Maine**
 COUNTY: **Somerset**
 FOR NPS USE ONLY
 ENTRY DATE: **JUL 30 1974**

HBS 2019
 # 443275
 114956525

1. NAME

COMMON:
Governor Abner Coburn House
 AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
Main Street
 CITY OR TOWN:
Skowhegan
 CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:
2nd: Hon. William Cohen
 STATE: **Maine** CODE: **23** COUNTY: **Somerset** CODE: **025**

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

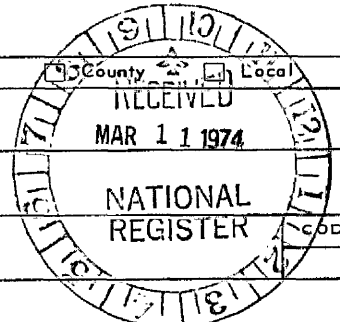
OWNER'S NAME:
Mr. Douglas S. Corson
 STREET AND NUMBER:
Main Street
 CITY OR TOWN: **Skowhegan** STATE: **Maine** CODE: **23**

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
Somerset County Courthouse
 STREET AND NUMBER:
 CITY OR TOWN: **Skowhegan** STATE: **Maine** CODE: **23**

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
None
 DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local
 DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
 STREET AND NUMBER:
 CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:



STATE: _____
 COUNTY: _____
 ENTRY NUMBER: **MA 30 1974**
 DATE: _____
 FOR NPS USE ONLY

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

(Check One)					
<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
(Check One)			(Check One)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Altered			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		
			<input type="checkbox"/> Moved		
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Abner Coburn House, built in 1849 by the master builder Joseph Bigelow, presents an impressive example of the Greek Revival style. It was the home of one of Maine's leading citizens, Governor and lumber magnate Abner Coburn.

The house is basically rectangular, two and a half stories, with four tall chimneys. The Grecian facade is matched boarded, while the side walls are clapboarded. The large temple front consists of four fluted Ionic columns set on granite bases, separated by three sets of four steps, also granite. The columns support an undecorated entablature. A pediment containing two symmetrically spaced rectangular windows is above the cornice. The wall behind the portico is divided into three bays by the columns, each of which contains a window on the upper and lower stories. These six windows are four lights over four, shuttered, and extend nearly the full height of the story. They have a molding on the vertical sides, with small cornices above and square motifs at the lower corners. The windows in the pediment have similar moldings and cornices. Separating the first and second stories of the facade is a rectangular porch, extending from the wall to the columns. This has a cornice on the three exposed sides and is enclosed by a decorative cast iron balustrade.

The right side of the house contains the main entrance. This wall is also divided into three bays, two of which on the first story are filled by the entranceway. This doorway is a rectangular one-story block, protruding from the mass of the house, repeating the Greek motif. The door is flanked by two Ionic columns, proportionately smaller than those of the facade, with a plain entablature. The flat roof is topped by an iron balustrade similar to that on the facade, thus forming a small uncovered porch accessible from the second story. Each corner of the entranceway has a pilaster, and the side walls contain windows similar to those of the front wall, although unshuttered. To the left of the doorway is a bay window, also containing a plain entablature, but no columns or pilasters. This fills the third bay of the first story. The second story has one shuttered window to each bay, similar to the other windows.

The entablature of the facade extends around the side walls, interrupted by a pilaster at each corner. There is a small ell projecting from the left side of the house, in the same style.

The Coburn House, besides being important as the home of a famous figure in history, is thus a prime example of Greek Revival style at the zenith of its development in Maine.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **Built 1849**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Abner Coburn House is significant in three respects: as a specimen of Greek Revival architecture at its highest point of development; as the work of a known architect and master carpenter; and as the home of an important figure in Maine's history.

The Coburn House is an outstanding example of Greek Revival style. Built in 1849 to be the home of Abner and Philander Coburn, wealthy local businessmen, it is a suitable residence for such prominent citizens. It is essentially correct in its Greek Revival elements, portraying the highest development of the style.

The house was built by Joseph Bigelow, a native of Skowhegan, for the Coburn brothers. Bigelow was the son of George Bigelow. Among his other works in Skowhegan are the First Baptist Church, made of brick on Main Street, 1844; The Samuel F. Robinson House, Middle Street, 1845; The Wentworth House, Madison Street, 1862; The Leland House, Madison Street; and the Stephen Coburn House, Pleasant Street. Bigelow had an outstanding reputation as a carpenter, builder, and carver. He carved, by hand, the columns and capitals of the Abner Coburn House. He was also the master carpenter on Richard Upjohn's Isaac Farrar House, Union Street, Bangor, built 1842-1844. (National Register, October 26, 1972) The Bangor Weekly Courier of July 1, 1845, referring to this house, said:

The carpenter work has been executed by Mr. Joseph Bigelow of Skowhegan, an old acquaintance of Mr. Farrar, and been completed so in a manner to command high plaudits for its accuracy, thoroughness, and beauty - indeed few men can equal it while probably none can excel it.

Eleazer Coburn, father of Abner and Philander, was the son of Eleazer, and born on February 24, 1777 at Tyngsboro, Massachusetts. He worked on his father's farm in Old Canaan, Maine, now Skowhegan, where the family moved in 1792. He later inherited this property from his father. On January 18, 1801 Eleazer married Mary Weston, the eldest daughter of Samuel, born in Old Canaan on December 19, 1782. They had 14 children. Eleazer took his two elder sons, Abner and Philander, into the lumber business as E. Coburn and Sons. After Eleazer's death on January 9, 1845, the firm

(See Continuation Sheet)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Coburn, Louise H., Skowhegan on the Kennebec, Skowhegan, Maine, 1941.
 Fogg, Clara Newhall, Abner Coburn Governor and Pioneer Lumberman, in Just Maine Folks
 Williams, Charles E., The Life of Abner Coburn, Bangor, 1885.

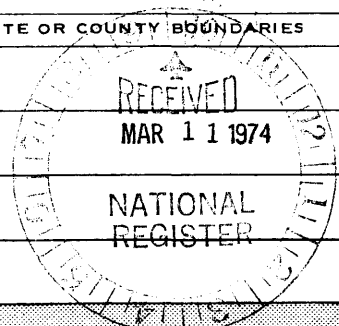
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		44 ° 45 ' 43 "	69 ° 43 ' 02 "	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **One acre**

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: **Charles H. Ashton**

ORGANIZATION: **Maine Historic Preservation Commission** DATE: **January, 1974**

STREET AND NUMBER: **31 Western Avenue**

CITY OR TOWN: **Augusta** STATE: **Maine** CODE: **23**

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name James H. Mundy
 Title State Historic Preservation Officer
 Date March 4, 1974

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Ch. Anagnostou
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 7/30/74

ATTEST:
W. A. Mundy
 Keeper of The National Register

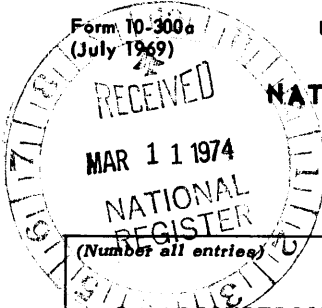
Date 7.29.74

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Maine	
COUNTY Somerset	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
JUL 30 1974	



8. SIGNIFICANCE

was known as A. and P. Coburn. The brother's names remained linked the rest of their lives.

Abner Coburn was born March 22, 1803 in the family farmhouse in Old Canaan. Philander was born on February 19, 1807. In 1849 they had their house built on Baptist Hill, where they both lived as bachelors the rest of their lives. Their sisters Elvira, followed by Mary, were their house-keepers.

Philander was the more retiring of the brothers. While he was philanthropic like his brother, he was less public about his gifts. In the lumber business he was in charge of the cutting end of the operation, spending much of his time in the woods. Philander was known as a fair employer, living under the same conditions as his lumbermen.

A. and P. Coburn was a firm known for its honesty and integrity. The brothers were the foremost businessmen on the Kennebec River. At one time, they controlled most of the timber tracts in Maine, totalling more than 700 square miles. They were prodigiously wealthy, and, due to their honesty, notes signed "A. and P. Coburn" were used as currency around the state. The brothers were very shrewd. Abner once made over \$1,000,000 on land he never saw, buying it for between two and three dollars an acre, and selling it for seventy.

Besides, or perhaps as a result of his great wealth, Abner became one of Maine's leading citizens. He was President of the first bank in Skowhegan, the Savings Bank, director and President of the Maine Central Railroad, trustee of Waterville(now Colby) College from 1845 to 1885, serving as President of the Board of Trustees of what is now the University of Maine. He was a strong supporter of educational and welfare institutions, leaving nearly \$1,000,000 to a variety of these in his will. In 1882 he was called the richest man in Maine, his holdings at the time being worth between six and seven million dollars.

Neither of the brothers ever married, but Abner very nearly did, early in his business life after he had accumulated a sizeable fortune. His intended was from a poor family, and her relatives could not resist gloating aloud over what a fine catch the girl had made and how the marriage would increase their own social and financial standing. When Abner heard of this talk, he immediately broke off the affair.

Abner was always generous to deserving causes, but was a very shrewd businessman. It was said that he never had a dollar to waste, but he always had thousands for a worthy cause.

(See Continuation Sheet)

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Maine	
COUNTY	
Somerset	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	JUL 30 1974

(Number all entries)

8. SIGNIFICANCE

As well as his business achievements, Abner was active in politics. He was born a Federalist, but became a Whig. He was a member of the Maine House in 1838, 1840, and 1844. In 1852 he was an elector for Winfield Scott. With the death of the Whigs he became a Republican. Following terms on the Governor's Council in 1855 and 1857, he was an elector for Lincoln in 1860. In 1862, he defeated Bion Bradbury, Democrat, and General Jameson, War Democrat, for the Governorship, by wide margins. Serving his term of office in the trying war year of 1863, Coburn brought to the position a combination of business acumen, prodigious industry, and unquestionable integrity. These traits characterized his whole life. At the end of his term he was not renominated, because of his devotion to the interests of the state over those of individuals clamoring for unearned positions in the government and the army. He would not yield to these pressures, and was ultimately a victim of his own honesty.

Both brothers died in Skowhegan, Philander on March 8, 1876, and Abner on January 4, 1885.

As an excellent Greek Revival residence; as an existing work by a known architect; and chiefly as the home of one of Maine's most famous citizens; this house definitely deserves to be recognized. It is clearly a building of historic value to people of several various interest.

