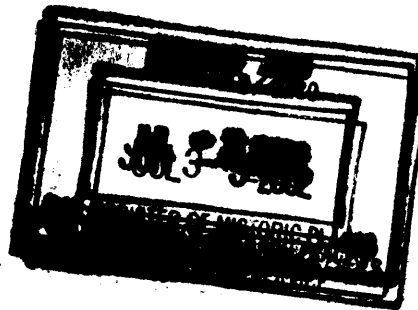


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



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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 First Universalist Society of West Sumner

other names/site number First Universalist Parish of Sumner, First Universalist Society of Sumner, W. Sumner Com. Ch.

2. Location

street & number 1114 Main Street

N/A not for publication

city or town Sumner

N/A vicinity

state Maine code ME county Oxford code 017 zip code 04292

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.)

Earle S. Howard 5/30/02
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): _____

Gordon N. Ball 8/9/02
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
_____ _____ buildings
_____ sites
_____ structures
_____ objects
_____ _____ Total
1 0

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A _____

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)
MID-19TH CENTURY / Greek Revival
LATE VICTORIAN / Italianate

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)
foundation Granite
walls Clapboard

roof Tin
other _____

Narrative Description

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

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

Continuation Sheet

FIRST UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY OF WEST SUMNER

OXFORD CO., MAINE

Section number 7 Page 2

DESCRIPTION

The First Universalist Society of West Sumner Church is a small, one and a half-story, gable fronted wooden frame structure on the northwest edge of West Sumner Maine. The building was constructed between June and October 1867. Facing northeast along the back of a ridge, the compact building with square belfry and octagonal steeple is a significant visual element on the rural landscape. The structure rests on granite foundations and is roofed with corrugated aluminum. Flush-board siding is used on the steeple, while clapboards cover the walls of the central mass. A pair of chimneys punctuate the southwest end of the roof, about four feet to either side of the ridge. A one-story shed addition, containing an early 20th century kitchen, is attached to the basement of the structure on the southeast end. A framed, salt-box style, horse shed is located to the south of the building, at the edge of a grassy parking lot on the east side of the church. This structure, which contains a single door in the middle of its northeast wall, was primarily accessed through a rolling barn door on its northwest gable end. Its primary function was to shelter the horses of parishioners and church visitors during services and meetings.

While, the building style exhibits elements of both the Greek Revival and the Italianate, it is an overwhelming simplicity and subtle elegance that give the religious shell its intrinsic attractiveness. The facade of the church consists of three portals sheltered by the overhanging roof; a twelve-over-twelve window with fanlight is centered on the wall between two Victorian four-panel entry doors. The window is famed with a full-arch window crown, with horizontal ears extending away from the window at the top of the twelve-light sash. A keystone is placed at the top of the arch. The same use of keystone and full arch window crown is repeated on the belfry, where each side of the structure currently features a louvered window surmounted by a blind arch. However at this level, the ears extend around each corner to create a belt course below the hipped belfry roof and octagonal steeple. Each of the front doors are accessed by a set of three wooden steps. Between the steps and road the two low, terraced lawns. On the upper lawn is a contemporary cobblestone and granite memorial plaque: no signs identify this as the church. The doors are framed with plain, flat stock, and topped with a moderate lintels. Medium width Greek Revival corner boards support cornice returns on the gable ends, and a wide frieze under the eaves.

The southeast and northwest elevations reveal a full basement located under the first floor sanctuary. Evenly spaced across the first floor side elevations are three large twelve-over-twelve windows, which are topped with a narrow horizontal hood. In the basement level each elevation contains two smaller eight-over-eight windows directly under the western most upper windows. A small entryway on the southeast side leads to the basement 'vestry' room, and a small bumpout on the southeast corner encloses a modern bathroom. The northwest gable end contains no windows on the main floor, and a single six-over-six in the shed addition.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

Continuation Sheet

FIRST UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY OF WEST SUMNER

OXFORD CO., MAINE

Section number 7 Page 3

The main floor can be accessed through either of the front doors, each of which leads into a small entry vestibule, and then through another, four-panel door into the sanctuary. The entry vestibules are lighted by three-light transoms over the interior doors. A floor hatch in the eastern vestibule opens to a steep flight of stairs, which are the only connection between the basement hall and the sanctuary. A wooden ladder in a closet in the western vestibule provides access to the belfry and steeple.

The sanctuary is a large, almost square room, with two rows of wooden pews set between three aisles. A raised platform, accessed by two sets of stairs is centered on the northwest wall, and contains a wooden podium, a Duncan Fyfe style settee and two side chairs. A pair of kerosene wall sconces are affixed to twin chimneys at the back of the platform. Additional side pews face the platform at the front of the sanctuary, perpendicular to the main sets of pews. The plaster, painted walls are unadorned. The large windows are trimmed in flat stock, and each is flanked by upper and lower interior shutters. From the center of the acoustic tile ceiling hang two, ornate Victorian, brass chandeliers, with frosted glass globes over the kerosene lamps. In each of the northern corners of the room are cast iron wood stoves, which, according to the marks on them, were manufactured in the nearby town of Norway, Maine. Vertical stove pipes extend to within four feet of the ceiling and then run the length of the room to the chimneys on the southwestern wall. Another platform is situated between the two entry vestibules. As with the alter platform, this choir platform is accessed by two sets of wooden stairs, but the front of the platform features a wooden railing containing seven blind arched panels. Similar panels are found on the aisle ends of each pew. The large, arched window lights this choir alcove, and again, two sets of shutters open to either side of the sash, creating an almost Palladian effect when opened.

The basement contains a hall, known locally as the vestry, or Washington Hall. At the northeast end of the hall is a small stage, and the kitchen, constructed in 1913, is reached through a door on the southwest wall. The kitchen and hall contain two inch hardwood floors, and the kitchen walls are finished in horizontal tongue and groove paneling. Four columns have been added for support under the main sanctuary.

Although there are many small town churches in Maine that are simple in style and plan, few are as unaltered as the Universalist Society of West Sumner. Other than the installation of the acoustic tile ceiling, and the replacement of the original carpet, the sanctuary has not changed since it was constructed in 1867: there are no electric lights hidden in the kerosene globes, nor modern baseboard heaters helping the wood stoves along. Each subsequent addition to the building retains the character of its original design: the kitchen is peppered with shelves and furniture rather than plywood cupboards, and barn doors, not garage doors, still access to the horse shed. The Universalist parish, however small, continues to maintain the building that has so long been at the center of their religious and community life.

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

Period of Significance

1867 - 1913

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.

Significant Dates

1867

1876

1913

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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:

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

Continuation Sheet

FIRST UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY OF WEST SUMNER

OXFORD CO., MAINE

Section number 8 Page 2

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The First Universalist Society of West Sumner Church is situated on a high ridge, just to the northwest of West Sumner center. To the west, small homes and farms stretch along the state road toward Pleasant Pond, and down the hill to the south east are nestled several dozen homes and the former West Sumner Baptist Church, built in 1858, now de-sanctified. The Town of Sumner is overwhelming rural, and consists of several small settlement areas which historically supported their own churches, post offices and schools. Today, West Sumner has a small residential population, but other than the Universalist church and the Grange building, it no longer contains the stores and business that defined it as “the Hub” of town through the in the mid-nineteenth century. The First Universalist Society of West Sumner Church is eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria C as an example of a post Civil War church that retains a high level of integrity, and is one of the few remnants of the town's historical past.

The First Universalist Society of West Sumner was established in 1829. For nearly the next four decades the congregation met in the town house, the school houses, or the homes of its members. When the church started planning for the construction of its meeting house in 1867 the town was undergoing several changes. Estimates suggest that greater than fifty percent of Sumner's male residents served in the War, (Healy and Silber p. 37) and church tradition asserts that members came home from the Civil War inspired to build this church. A lot was purchased near the center of West Sumner, and the construction of the church occurred over the course of three months in the summer of 1867. Over the next few years the interior was furnished, pews were constructed and sold to members of the congregation, and the “vestry” (or basement hall, also referred to as ‘Washington Hall’) was started. Wood stoves were installed in the sanctuary and the basement, and carpet laid on the floor. In 1876 the local Temperance Club financed the completion of the vestry. It is difficult to pinpoint the date the ‘horse shed’ was constructed. According to the church records, a shed or woodshed was under construction in 1876, but there is no specific mention of its use as a horse shed.

The history of the religious community in Sumner differs slightly from many of Maine's post-Revolutionary settlements. As with other towns, the initial plotting of town lots reserved lands for use by churches. However, divisions between the Congregationalists and the Baptists in Sumner “led the town's authorities to the solomonic decision that the land grant for church support not be awarded to one denominational group, but revert instead to a permanent ministerial fund to be divided between all active religious societies, according to a formula essentially based on membership numbers in each recognized church. By 1828 this included the Universalists....” (Healy and Silber, p. 15). In West Sumner the Baptist Congregation was historically the strongest, claiming a higher percentage of the local families as members than did the Universalists, and thus in turn receiving a

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

FIRST UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY OF WEST SUMNER

OXFORD CO., MAINE

Section number 8 Page 3

greater percentage of the towns church funds. However, the building the Baptists constructed in 1858 is no longer associated with the denomination and is privately owned and used as a storage facility.

The Universalist Society supplemented their town funds and small member pledges by renting Washington Hall to community groups throughout the building's history. In the 1870s a high school was held in the hall, as were meetings of the Temperance Society and Ladies Aid Society. In 1913 a kitchen was added to the southeast end of the basement, which then enabled the Pleasant Pond Grange # 351 to rent use of the room between 1915 and 1921. The room has been only moderately updated since it was completed in 1876, with the addition of electricity in 1955 and water in 1965, new windows in the 1970s and a bathroom and gas furnace installed in the 1990s. As the only remaining hall in town, it continues to be the site of benefit dinners, family reunions and club meetings.

The sanctuary is almost virtually unchanged from its original appearance. The floral pattern carpet was replaced in 1976, and the original pew cushions are long gone, but the rest of the interior is original, down to the kerosene chandeliers, evoking the same sentiments of community and piety that the returning war Veterans were seeking.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

FIRST UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY OF WEST SUMNER

OXFORD CO., MAINE

Section number 9 Page 2

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Durnin, Richard G. "Sumner and the Railroad". (Norway Center, Maine: Richard g. Durnin), 1998. Copy on file at the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Augusta, Maine.

Healy, George R. and Mark Silber. *Sumner 200: Portrait of a Small Maine Town*. (Sumner, Maine: Town of Sumner), 1998.

"When Sumner Corner was "The Hub."" c. 1940. Unprovinanced newspaper article on file at Maine Historic Preservation Commission.

Woodworth, Anna Henderson, transcriber. "The First Universalist Society of West Sumner, Maine". Transcriptions of church records, 1829 - 1917. Copy on file at the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Augusta, Maine.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .41 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

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

3

1	9													
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Zone Easting Northing

2

1	9													
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4

1	9													
---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

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 18 APRIL 2002

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.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

FIRST UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY OF WEST SUMNER

OXFORD CO., MAINE

Section number 10 Page 2

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property is fully described on Town of Sumner tax map number U-3, lot 21.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property includes all the land historically associated with the First Universalist Society of West Sumner.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

Continuation Sheet

FIRST UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY OF WEST SUMNER

OXFORD CO., MAINE

Section number _____ Page _____

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph 1 of 4
First Universalist Society of West Sumner
March 19, 2002
Christi A. Mitchell
Maine Historic Preservation Commission
Exterior, northeast facade; facing southwest.

Photograph 2 of 4
First Universalist Society of West Sumner
March 19, 2002
Christi A. Mitchell
Maine Historic Preservation Commission
Exterior, facing southeast.

Photograph 3 of 4
First Universalist Society of West Sumner
March 19, 2002
Christi A. Mitchell
Maine Historic Preservation Commission
Interior, sanctuary; facing northwest.

Photograph 4 of 4
First Universalist Society of West Sumner
March 19, 2002
Christi A. Mitchell
Maine Historic Preservation Commission
Interior, sanctuary; facing southwest.