

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

RELIGION / Religious Facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION / CULTURE / Museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

EARLY REPUBLIC

MID-19TH CENTURY / Greek Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE

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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DESCRIPTION

The Surry Town Hall is a one story wood frame former religious building composed of a rectilinear mass fronted by tower and belfry which in turn is surmounted by a conical wooden spire. The building is located on the north side of Surry Road, just west of the intersection with Meadow Road, and across the street from the northernwestern reaches of Patten Bay, which flows into the Union River to the south and east. Surry is a small, relatively rural town in south central Hancock County, and is located about five miles west of the shire town of Ellsworth, Maine. The Surry Town Hall is located on the main thoroughfare between Ellsworth and the village of Surry, which is located about one-quarter mile to the east, and it is set amidst a modest distribution of nineteenth- and twentieth-century residences and small commercial establishments. The level, two-tenths of an acre grassy lot features several deciduous trees in the front and rear of the building, and tall lilac hedges along the side walls.

The Town Hall was built in 1828 as a gable-front, three bay long civic structure. In 1844 it was moved to its current location and the tower and belfry appended to the front. The building rests on a low, fieldstone foundation, is clad with painted skived clapboard and features asphalt shingles on its roofs. The only chimney projects through the ridge at the north end of the building. A set of wood steps with wood hand rails is positioned immediately in front of the tower. The building exhibits only minimal stylistic details representative of late Federal and Greek Revival architecture and the south facing facade is notably simple: the south wall of the main mass is marked only by narrow corner boards and thin cornice returns. The sole break in the facade is a new, wooden four-panel door topped with a four light transom centered in the tower. The tower rises unarticulated, except for narrow corner boards, above the height of the adjoining gable peak, before being capped with a low-pitched hipped roof ornamented at the eaves with a box cornice. The slightly small belfry is positioned on this roof and features louvered openings in each of its four elevations. The corners of the belfry, however, are marked by wide paneled pilasters with Doric capitals; these in turn support the box cornice of the belfry roof. A conical spire rising to a bulb and topped with a stylized fish weathervane is centered on the peak of the belfry's low-pitched hip roof.

Both the east and west elevations of the Surry Town Hall contain three evenly spaced window bays. Each bay has paired four-over-four light double hung wooden sash framed by a simple architrave, and a boxed cornice runs under the eaves. A short, shed roof addition approximately ten feet wide is attached to the north side of the building. The east elevation of the addition is almost fully consumed with a two-leaf, exterior swinging wooden door. The north side of the addition features a two-light modern window at the west end of the wall, and a two-over-two window on the west wall.

The interior of the Surry Town Hall is dominated by a single large room in the body of the building, with a small entry vestibule in the tower, and a storage space in the shed. The meeting room is open to the barrel roof and the cased corner and side plates are visible in the walls. Iron tie rods with turnbuckles link each of the two side posts at plate level. The walls are finished with

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painted, vertical wainscot up to the window sills, above which horizontal bead board clads the walls and ceilings. A low platform is positioned at the north end of the room, and it extends the entire width of the building. Centered on the north wall is a brick chimney in front of which is a pot-belly wood stove 'Monitor 38' manufactured by the Portland Stove Foundry. The chimney rises against what appears to be a blocked, wood-framed opening which suggest the previous location of a window in the north wall. Between the chimney and the west wall is a wood and glass door that leads to the shed. This space has exposed stud walls, a concrete floor and a handicapped accessible ramp leading from ground level to platform level. The back door has been cut through the former location of one of two now-filled-in exterior windows on either side of the interior chimney stack. The front entry, in the tower, is finished with bead boarding that matches the hall.

Now used by the Surry Historical Society, the interior of the Surry Town Hall is furnished with Windsor benches and several small exhibits and display cases are located at the edges of the room. A large, two-leaf, freestanding closet is positioned on the northwest corner of the platform. On the opposite side of the platform a concrete block vault, measuring about six by eight feet and set with a steel door on strap hinges, has been built against the north wall. This vault was installed in 1946 or 1947.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or 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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

POLITICS / GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

1844 - 1958

Significant Dates

1844

c. 1883

1946/7

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Woodward, Stephen C. (Builder)

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

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

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Surry Town Hall is a structure that has served as a community building, church, and as the location of the Town of Surry's governmental functions since 1844. It was originally built in East Surry as the Town House in 1828, but was later sold to the Union Meetinghouse Society and moved into Surry Village. The town retained use of the building during this period, and after it ceased to be used as a church reverted back to municipal functions. Since 1983 the building has been the home of the Surry Historical Society. The Surry Town Hall is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A as a building that embodies broad patterns of history at the local level, in the areas of government and politics, and entertainment and recreation. By virtue of its former use as a church, and later as a Sunday school, Criterion A also applies.

The Surry Town Hall was erected in 1828 by the town to serve as a municipal building. As originally constructed it was a fairly simple, three bay, gable front building with minimal ornamentation, save for moulded cornice returns. As with similar halls in other Maine towns, a hall was needed for town events and to provide a venue for the town's elected officials to conduct meetings, as well as a place where townspeople could gather to vote. Authorizing such a building did not come easily, however, as recorded by the town's historian Samuel Wasson in 1884.

Dec. 22, 1827 a special town meeting was called at the Red Schoolhouse to see "if the town will vote to building a town house". Voted, "Not to build". At the annual town meeting March 3, 1828, it was voted to build a town house 32 by 46 feet and 12 feet post. The vote stood "yes" 75; "no" 34. The "no's" were from the North District. The building of the House was set up at auction and was bid off by Stephen G. Woodward of Surry for \$711.00. It was voted that Edward L. Jarvis, Calvin Peck, and Donald Lord be a committee to furnish a plan, direct and superintend the building of the House, and that the same be a committee to "locate the town house in the most suitable central spot in the town". (Wasson, p. 36).

Although the proposed location of the Town House was a matter of intense debate it was eventually located at the head of Contention Cove, approximately a mile and a half to the east of its current location. However, in 1829 the eastern portion of Surry was set off to neighboring Ellsworth. This was the last realignment of a decades long dispute regarding the borders of the two towns. As a result the Town House was on the far eastern edge of town, which did not sit well with many of the town's residents.

The Town House, a thing of beauty at first, an encumbrance became after the "set-off" in 1829 by Surry was shorn of one half of its estates and more than three-tenths of its polls. Bitter were the complaints that "the Town House was just nowhere"; that "it was too big"; that "it was too expensive"; that "East Surry had everything", and for 15 years how to rid themselves of the burden, "worked like madness on the brain" and until

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someone conceived the idea of converting it into a "Union Meeting House." (Wasson, p. 37-38.)

Thus, in 1844 the Town House was sold to the Surry Union Meeting Society for \$300.00, but the town "reserved the right to hold its town meeting" in the building. Although Wasson states that the town paid \$3.00 per year for the right, the deed states "the town to have said use subject to no charge and free from all expense provided no damage is done to the building whilst in their occupation...." (Book 78, page 478). The building was renamed the Surry Union Meeting House and preparations were made to move it to a more central location in town. The story of the move had become local legend, again, as recorded by Wasson.

Robert Johnson of Bluehill (sic) bargained to move the House to its present site for \$100. When it was in readiness to be moved, insurmountable obstacles appeared in the road, particularly from Benjamin Redman's to C. J. Swett's and at the Patten's Gully. At a council of those "eminent in wise deport" it was decided to bush a way through the forest growth north of the highland from Solomon Treworgy's to Timothy Finn's. To haul the House required the locomotive power of 96 yoke of oxen and 10 gallons of "jug juice". The starting words were, "Everyman to his team; every ox to his bow". Not until the going down of the sun on the third day did the House reach its destination, where it stood for 20 years until a conveyance of the lot could be secured...." (Wasson, p. 38.)

It is unclear why it took 20 years to obtain a deed for the property, but within a few years the Baptist and Methodist Societies had added the tower and belfry with Greek Revival details, and finished outfitting the building for public worship. Ownership of the building was divided into 50 parts, each represented by one of the fifty pews installed, and sold to local parishioners.

It is also unclear how long the Town Hall served as a religious structure. By 1866 the Baptist Society was obtaining land for a meeting house and deeds indicate the Methodists did so at least by the following year. By the time the Surry village map was printed in the Hancock County Atlas in 1881 both of these churches had been erected and the Town Hall was re-named "Town House".

Although no deed has been found releasing the building back to the Town, residents of Surry took up the issue of whether to repair the building at the March 1883 town meeting which was, of course, held in the hall. Five hundred dollar was appropriated for the unspecified repairs and probably at this time the bead board finish was applied to the walls and ceilings, and the platform erected across the northern end of the building.

The Surry Town Hall was used for voting, annual town meetings and Selectmen's meetings until 1978. As outlined in Surry, Maine: An Informal History, "all town meetings were held here generally during the day on the first Monday of March. Local organizations such as a church or the grange would serve dinner at noon. In April, the assessors would convene here for several weeks to

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establish the tax value on each property for the ensuing year. All elections were held in this building. (Page 12.) In 1946 or 1947 the concrete block vault was installed to provide safe storage of town records. While there is no indication as to when the attached shed was built, (it appears to date to the early twentieth century), this small addition was used both to store wood for the hall, and occasionally as a meeting room. It also housed the building's only privy.

The early records of the town and Wasson's 1884 history refer to the building as the 'Town House,' however at some point the name evolved into the 'Town Hall'. Perhaps this nomenclature was adopted in light of the other uses the building received over time. According to local residents, the Town Hall has frequently been used for public suppers, family gatherings, dramatic performances and lectures. It was also used for local recreation, including as the ubiquitous small-town Maine basketball court. The American Sunday School Union sponsored a non-denominational Sunday school at the Town Hall from 1949 to 1953.

Over the years demands of town government increased and required a more specialized set of spaces. Prior to relocating temporarily to a trailer next to the town's school in 1978, some of the town's officials (such as the treasurer and town clerk) were working from private homes. In the summer of 1980 a special town meeting was held at which time the town voted to discontinue use of the building, and in 1983 they leased it to the local historical society.

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Wasson Samuel. History of East Surry, Maine 1763-1884. (Surry: S. Wasson), 1957?. Manuscript copy, c. 1884, located at the Rural Hall, Surry, Maine.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries of the nominated property are described on the Town of Surry tax map 32, lot 59.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The above described boundaries represent the full extent of the resources historically and currently associated with the property.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

ME_HancockCounty_SurryTownHall_001.tif

Photograph 1 of 4

Christi A. Mitchell

Maine Historic Preservation Commission

10 April 2008

South facade and tower; facing northwest.

ME_HancockCounty_SurryTownHall_002.tif

Photograph 2 of 4

Christi A. Mitchell

Maine Historic Preservation Commission

10 April 2008

Interior of meeting hall; facing south.

ME_HancockCounty_SurryTownHall_003.tif

Photograph 3 of 4

Christi A. Mitchell

Maine Historic Preservation Commission

10 April 2008

Interior of meeting hall; facing northeast.

ME_HancockCounty_SurryTownHall_004.tif

Photograph 4 of 4

Christi A. Mitchell

Maine Historic Preservation Commission

10 April 2008

West and north elevations; facing southwest.