

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED JUL 17 1975
DATE ENTERED SEP 9 1975

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Kennebunk River Club

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Ocean Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Kennebunkport

VICINITY OF

First

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Maine

23

York

031

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: recreational

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Kennebunk River Club

STREET & NUMBER

Ocean Avenue

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Kennebunkport VICINITY OF

Maine

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

York County Registry of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Alfred

Maine

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

1965

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Washington, D. C.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Kennebunk River Club of 1888-89 is a handsome example of the Shingle Style architecture which became popular for recreational buildings and summer cottages in the late 19th century. Although the architect is as yet undiscovered, his bold use of the all encompassing gable roof form reflects his awareness of the most advanced design thinking of the period.

Sited directly on the Kennebunk River, the River Club is located a quarter of a mile from the ocean. The building is rectangular in shape, measures 63 feet by 98 feet, stands two stories high, and has a large gable roof with a small intersecting cross gable on each of the north and south walls. The one story, flat roofed, rectangular canoe house which extends the length of the south wall, is a 1908 addition. The entire structure is supported by diagonally braced wooden pilings and is of frame construction covered with horizontal lapped courses of wooden shingles which have weathered to a greyish brown.

The principal elevation of the River Club faces west onto the Kennebunk River. This river facade presents a highly symmetrical composition of elements. At the center of the first story is a pair of doors which is flanked by sidelights. On either side of this doorway are two symmetrically placed windows. The first story is fronted by a porch with five arched openings on the facade and one on the north wall. The central facade and north wall openings are equipped with staircases for access to and from the porch. The remaining four facade openings have railings with inverted arches decorated by spindles.

A double door with sidelights is repeated at the center of the second story facade. This doorway is flanked on either side by a symmetrically placed window. The second story facade is fronted by a large arched porch. Since its removal in this century, the second story porch has been enclosed by a simple railing. The facade design is completed by the all encompassing gable roofline that has a triangular projection at the peak, below which are four louvered panels.

The three remaining walls of the River Club are somewhat more simply articulated. The east or street side contains another pair of doors with sidelights at the center of the first story. In front of this entrance is a portico composed of three arches on the front and one on each of the two sides. Two windows are symmetrically located on either side of the portico.

The portico roof forms a small second story balcony which is reached by a door, again with sidelights. At either side of this doorway is a pair of symmetrically placed windows. The gable roofline is repeated, featuring a small three part window just below the peak of the gable.

The north wall of the River Club displays two three sided bay windows on the first story. Between these on the second story is a small cross gable with two windows on its north side and a stone chimney projecting from its roof. While the roof cornice of the east and west walls is plain, that of the north and south walls (see continuation sheets)

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displays a series of modillions.

The first story of the River Club's south side originally contained a door and two windows. These were eliminated in 1908 by the addition of the present canoe house. The canoe house has an arched opening on the west wall facing the river, two windows on the south wall, and one window on the east wall. The roof of the canoe house is accessible by a door in the cross gable of the main building. This doorway is flanked on either side by a window. A dormer window is located to the left of the cross gable.

The interior of the River Club is finished with simple, unpainted woodwork of the period. The first floor consists of a large social room with a stone fireplace at the north wall. A large opening in the center of the ceiling enables sails to be hoisted to the second floor, where they are dried. The second story is used mainly as a sail loft. It is accessible by a modified flying staircase which connects the first and second floors.

Although minor alterations and additions have been made to the Kennebunk River Club, its original function as a club house and the dramatic visual impact of its design have remained unchanged in 85 years.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) recreational	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1889-1890

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

By the mid 19th century, America's wealthy and middle classes had found it both healthful and fashionable to escape the cities during the summer months. Improved rail and steamboat transportation enabled them to reach distant areas with ease. After the Civil War, Maine's beaches and lakes drew Philadelphians, New Yorkers, and Bostonians to such resorts as Bar Harbor, Poland Springs, and Mount Kineo.

Amid this climate of resort development a group of Boston businessmen purchased the entire shoreline of Kennebunkport in the 1870's. The small coastal village was in the twilight of its shipbuilding days. Yet through the efforts of the Kennebunkport Sea Shore Company, a new era of summer hotels and cottages dawned.

Along with the picturesque shore frontage and the long sandy beach, the adjacent Kennebunk River proved to be a major recreational asset for the town. By 1888 boating on the river was being termed "one of the most enjoyable features of life at Kennebunkport." Although many kinds of boats were used, the canoe was by far the most popular; by 1894 almost 500 of them were owned on the river.

Although for many only a casual pastime, canoeing also became a highly organized activity. A "Lobster, Boat and Canoe Club" started by summer residents in the 1870's became incorporated as the Kennebunk River Club in August of 1889. That year the group began the construction of its present clubhouse, a striking example of the Shingle Style architecture which became favored for recreational buildings and summer cottages during the late 19th century. Completed and opened in 1890, the River Club displays an austere elegance characteristic of its New England setting.

While the architect remains unknown, his skillful use of the all-encompassing gable roof form suggests that he was familiar with such advanced designs of the period as John Calvin Stevens' "House by the Sea" (American Architect and Building News, September 12, 1885) and McKim, Mead and White's Low House of 1887 at Bristol, Rhode Island. The river front of the River Club presents an especially pleasing classical solution in its series of five small arches supporting a large arch which is, in turn, encompassed by a broad gable roof.

(see continuation sheets)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Butler, Joyce, "Canoes on the Kennebunk," Down East Magazine, July 1974
- "Kennebunk River Club," Report Maine-125, Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
- Myers, Denys Peter, Maine Catalogue HABS, Augusta, 1974, pp.163-164
- Scully, Vincent J., Jr., The Shingle Style, New Haven, 1955

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A 19 | 38,0 | 5,8,0 | 48,0 | 5,4,0
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B [] | [] | [] | [] | [] | []
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C [] | [] | [] | [] | [] | []
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D [] | [] | [] | [] | [] | []
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

UTM OK with 9.24.75

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

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr., Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Maine Historic Preservation Commission

DATE

June, 1975

STREET & NUMBER

31 Western Avenue

TELEPHONE

207-289-2133

CITY OR TOWN

Augusta

STATE

Maine

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

James H. Mundy

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

July 15, 1975

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

9/9/75

ATTEST:

DATE

SEP 8 1975

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

W. Mundy

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Since its formal opening on August 2, 1890, the Kennebunk River Club has served as the focal point for summer activity on the Kennebunk River. The tremendous popularity of canoes continued until World War I, and the clubhouse was the starting point of all canoe trips up the river. These outings usually ended at a great stone outcropping known as Picnic Rock or Sunset Rock, which club first leased and then purchased in 1896. The Rock was also the scene of a three day annual canoe race in August.

To meet the increasing demand for canoes, they were made in Kennebunkport and the town became as famous for them as it once had been for sailing ships.

7
In the 1890's, one Joe Ranco ran a "manufactory and wharf at Cape Arundel near the Indian Encampment," and by the early 1900's J. S. Peabody was operating a business at Indian Canoe Landing, a site just above the River Club where Indians once had come to summer from their winter quarters on the Saco River. Now Indians came from the reservation at Old Town, pitched their tents at the mouth of the river, built the canoes ordered by summer people, and hired themselves out as guides to ladies who reserved their services for the afternoon tide one day a week all summer. It became a favorite way to entertain guests and it was not unusual for Peabody to rent 200 canoes on a flood tide.

After World War I, canoes were replaced by motorized launches and sailboats. The pendulum is now swinging back in favor of canoes. One sign of this has been the reestablishment of annual canoe races in 1972 after a lapse of approximately fifty years. Through these changes of fashion, the clubhouse of the Kennebunk River Club has continued to present its bold facade to the river, a strong symbol of a more confident and less hurried age than our own.