

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received MAY 14 1987

date entered JUN 12 1987

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Benjamin C. Wilder House

and or common

2. Location

street & number Main Street _____ not for publication

city, town Washburn _____ vicinity of

state Maine code 23 county Aroostook code 003

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
			<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Salmon Brook Historical Society of Washburn

street & number P.O. Box 71

city, town Washburn _____ vicinity of state Maine 04786

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Aroostook County Registry of Deeds

street & number

city, town Houlton _____ state Maine 04730

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? _____ yes _____ no

date _____ federal _____ state _____ county _____ local

depository for survey records

city, town _____ state

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 date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Benjamin C. Wilder House is a one-and-a-half story frame building which is five bays wide and one room deep. It features a recreated turn-of-the-century wraparound porch, a center dormer and a short rear ell. Clapboards cover the entire frame of the dwelling which rests on a granite and concrete block foundation.

Facing south, the front elevation features the porch which carries across the entire facade and across the west gable end. The porch was rebuilt in 1985 from documentary photographs. Its roof is supported by nine Tuscan columns. Four two-over-one double hung sash windows and a door located at the southeast corner of the principal facade are sheltered by the porch. The openings are framed by plain surrounds. Centrally located on the roof is a pedimented dormer with a single one-over-one sash. Behind, and to the west of the dormer, a brick flue rises through the ridge.

One window and a door opening into the transverse hall occupy the lower story on the west elevation. Short gable end returns frame the pair of symmetrically placed windows in the gable peak. Four windows, two on each story, occupy the east end.

The two-room kitchen ell features dormers on both elevations, a central flue and a short hipped roof porch on the east side. This porch has four Tuscan columns and it shields a door and one window. There are four windows on the west elevation and one in the north gable peak. A shed roofed twentieth-century wing extends to the east of the ell.

The wide plain surrounds and plaster over lath interior wall surfaces of the Wilder house typifies an Aroostook County farmhouse of the third quarter of the nineteenth century. The most notable feature of the six-room main block is the open string stair and its turned newel posts and shaped handrail. Narrow sheathing, arranged in concentric square patterns, covers the walls in the ell. The west end of the wing, which is punctuated by a single window, was used as a wood house. Two garage bays were added to its east end.

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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates ca. 1852 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Benjamin C. Wilder House is a relatively unaltered vernacular house which typifies upper Aroostook County dwellings built during the region's mid-nineteenth century period of settlement. Thought to have been constructed about 1852, the house is an important reminder of the style of domestic architecture in the remote region of northeastern Aroostook. It is thought to be the oldest extant dwelling in the village of Washburn.

The Town of Washburn lies within a broad geographic area of northeastern Aroostook County whose sovereignty was the source of a long post Revolutionary dispute between England and the United States. Widespread permanent settlement of the area, therefore, was delayed until the negotiation in 1842 of the Washburn-Ashburton Treaty. The first settler of Washburn is believed to have been Isaac Wilder, a sawmill operator and uncle of the builder of this house.¹ The town was incorporated in 1861. In 1870 it had a population of 451 persons.²

Benjamin Cushing Wilder (1828-1902), the son of Robert Wilder, came to Washburn about 1843 with his parents. In 1852 he married Adeline Packard, and it is believed that they erected this house soon thereafter. Wilder's name appears in the 1871 edition of the Maine State Year-Book as the purveyor of a variety store in Washburn.³ Following his brief career as a merchant Wilder is said to have subsequently devoted his full attention to farming. He occupied the house until his death. About 1920 the farm was acquired by William Jardine. His heirs sold it to the Salmon Brook Historical Society of Washburn.

The architectural significance of the Wilder house stems principally from its position as a rare relatively unaltered example of mid-nineteenth century vernacular houses in northeastern Aroostook County. Despite turn-of-the-century alterations the house retains much of its original late Greek Revival style character. The region's relative remoteness from the State's centers of architectural fashion strengthened a vernacular building tradition in which popular stylistic forms persisted after others had already been introduced elsewhere. The Wilder house is an important local example of this process.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Wiggen, Edward. "History of Aroostook". Star Herald Press (Presque Isle), 1922.

Cutts, William Richard, comp. Genealogy of New England. Vol. E, Third Series. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1915.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Washburn, Maine

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	9	5	6	4	3	8	5	5	1	8	1	8	2	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

B

Zone			Easting					Northing						

C

Zone			Easting					Northing						

D

Zone			Easting					Northing						

E

Zone			Easting					Northing						

F

Zone			Easting					Northing						

G

Zone			Easting					Northing						

H

Zone			Easting					Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property is contained within the boundary drawn on the Town of Washburn Tax Map 12, Lot 52.

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 Kirk F. Mohny, Architectural Historian

organization Maine Historic Preservation Commission date April 14, 1987

street & number 55 Capitol Street telephone (207) 289-2132

city or town Augusta state Maine 04333

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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Eileen S. Feltner*

title S.H.P.O. date 5/8/87

For NPS use only

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

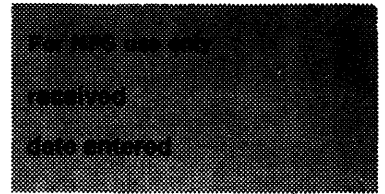
Jayne M. Mupherson Keener of the National Register date 6/12/87

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
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Continuation sheet Benjamin C. Wilder House

Item number 8

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ENDNOTES

1. Edward Wiggin, "History of Aroostook", The Star Herald Press (Presque Isle), 1922, p. 127.
2. Maine State Year-Book and Legislative Manual for the Year 1871 (Portland: Hoyt, Fogg and Breed, 1871), p. 172 hereinafter cited as Maine State Year Book with the appropriate volume.
3. Maine State Year-Book, 1871, p. 172. Wilder's name does not appear in subsequent editions of the Year-Book.