



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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 Oxford Congregational Church and Cemetery

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number East side of King Street, .22 miles North of Junction with Route 121 N/A not for publication

city or town Oxford N/A vicinity

state Maine code ME county Oxford code 017 zip code 04270

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.)
Ernest J. Thibodeau Signature of certifying official/Title 5/18/94 Date
Maine Historic Preservation Commission State of 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 the 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:)
Edson H. Beall Signature of the Keeper Entered in the National Register Date of Action 6/24/94

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
1		sites
		structures
		objects
2	0	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

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Religion/Religious Facility

Funerary/Cemetery

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Religion/Religious Facility

Funerary/Cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

Gothic Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone/Granite

walls Wood/Weatherboard

Synthetics/Vinyl

roof Asphalt

other Two Stage Tower with Spire

Narrative Description

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

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 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)

Architecture

Art

Period of Significance

1842-43

c. 1880

1913

Significant Dates

1842-43

c. 1880

1913

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Cochrane, Harry, Artist

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:

OXFORD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH & CEMETERY
Name of Property

OXFORD, MAINE
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 4

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 9	3 8 0 6 8 0	4 8 8 7 6 1 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

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 Kirk F. Mohny, Architectural Historian

organization Maine Historic Preservation Commission date April, 1994

street & number 55 Capitol Street, Station #65 telephone 207/287-2132

city or town Augusta, ME state Maine 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 Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

OXFORD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH & CEMETERY

OXFORD, MAINE

Section number 7 Page 2

The Oxford Congregational Church is a T-shaped wooden frame building whose unusual front elevation features a colonnade that supports the interior balcony level and pediment, the whole of which is surmounted by a two-stage tower. In overall composition and detail the church exhibits Greek Revival style characteristics although the tower employs Gothic Revival elements in its spirelets and crenellation.

Facing west, the symmetrically-composed facade has four distinct elements. At the base is the colonnade, formed by four paneled posts that are linked by a balustrade with steps at each end. A wide central entry containing a pair of two-panel doors framed by sidelights with diamond panes is sheltered by this porch. The posts support the projecting balcony with its two six-over-six windows and shutters. Pilasters located above the posts continue the vertical emphasis and meet the broad entablature (which continues along the sides) of the pediment. This pediment is crowned by the tower which consists of a square base, a belfry with louvered openings on four sides, and a spire. Paneled pilasters decorate the corners of both stages, each of which repeats the pronounced entablature. They also feature corner spirelets linked by crenellation. Unlike the remainder of the building which is sheathed in weatherboards, the wall surfaces behind the colonnade, balcony, pediment, and tower are covered in aluminum siding.

Both side elevations contain paired double-hung windows with leaded plate glass that match the entry sidelights. These windows were installed in 1922 in place of a nineteenth century set of which had replaced the originals. Shutters are located at each opening. Unlike the facade, the tall granite slab foundation is conspicuous on the sides. The rear windows on both nave sidewalls are partially obscured by entry porches located on the two-story rear addition (constructed in 1956) which lies transverse to the original block. Small six-over-six windows are located above each entry and there are two on each level of the gable ends. The broad rear elevation of the rear wing has an asymmetrical fenestration pattern composed of five windows on the first story and six on the second.

The church's interior is noteworthy not only for its well-preserved Greek Revival style moldings and pews, but also for its decorative nineteenth century wall and ceiling finishes. (A recent interior restoration program has in fact documented the existence of at least three separate episodes of interior decoration.) In plan, the interior is not unlike other churches of the period with the entrance vestibule spanning the nave endwall and stairs to the balcony at each end. Six-panel doors at each end of the vestibule provide access to the nave and aisles that separate three sets of pews. Three entry doors are framed by molded pilasters with Gothic style panels. Their upper projections terminate in a corner block which meets a broad molding that caps the balcony parapet wall. The chancel is formed of a

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OXFORD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH & CEMETERY

OXFORD, MAINE

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raised platform with a centrally located pulpit and flanking balustrades whose wide slates are pierced with crosses. Aisles on either end of the chancel lead to doors that open into the Sunday school addition.

Restoration efforts are focussing on the recovery of the trompe L'oeil designs which are believed to have been painted about 1880. Work on the chancel has revealed a centrally located feature composed of an "apse" framed by two concentric elliptical arches the whole of which is bordered by broad pilasters and a deep entablature. This feature is surmounted by a classically inspired medallion within an elliptical arch. There are smaller round-arched "niches" on the walls flanking the central element and a wide foliate stencil pattern extending from the entablature to the sidewalls. Test patches reveal that this stencil pattern - as well as more extensive designs - continues along the coved ceiling, although it has not yet been restored. Another element in the overall scheme is the large central stencilled medallion on the nave ceiling. It has a central geometric pattern within trompe L'oeil style concentric rings which is in turn bordered by foliate stencils.

To the rear of the church is the cemetery which occupies relatively flat terrain. The headstones are generally modest in their size and design with only a handful of obelisks and two large plots with granite curbing.

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OXFORD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH & CEMETERY

OXFORD, MAINE

Section number 8 Page 2

Erected in 1842-43 at a cost of \$1,525, the Oxford Congregational Church is a notable frame religious structure with distinctive Greek Revival and Gothic Revival style detailing. In addition to its local architectural significance, the church is noteworthy for the decorative trompe l'oeil and stencilled finish on the sanctuary end wall and the nave ceiling. For these reasons the church is eligible for nomination to the Register under criterion C. Criteria consideration A also applies by virtue of the property's religious function.

The Congregational Church in Oxford was organized on May 31, 1826, with a mere six members. The following year, an agreement was made with the Baptists to share their meeting house. By 1836, however, the congregation had grown to the point that their first resident pastor was settled and a parsonage built. In 1840 the Congregationalists lost the use of the meeting house when the Baptist revival greatly augmented its adherents. For the next three years (until the completion of their own church) the Congregational society met in the upper floor of the village schoolhouse.

On March 20, 1841, a meeting was held to discuss the feasibility of erecting a Congregational Church building, an idea which was endorsed at a subsequent meeting in April. The present church lot was chosen and a plan for the building was devised containing 54 pews, three windows on each side and two in front, doors and pews to match those of the Universalist Church in Portland and the belfry "to be in good style and with as much labor as the Methodist Chapel in Norway." Construction commenced in the spring of 1842 with the dedication taking place on June 29, 1843. Although the church's master builder has not been identified, labor was to be provided by church subscribers Otis Mixer and Samuel King, with Nathaniel Lord responsible for the underpinning and cellar.

At the time of its completion the Oxford Congregational Church was the latest in a series of known religious buildings in the general area which utilized a consistent design theme: the pedimented rectangular configuration with a full width colonnade below the interior balcony. Although not an uncommon device among mid-nineteenth century residential and commercial buildings in this part of Maine, the pattern is rare in a religious context. To date, the earliest known church to employ this design is the Free Baptist Church (N.R. 7/13/89) in rural Auburn, a modest Greek Revival style building with some Gothic details erected in 1833. Five years later, the scheme was repeated on the First Congregational Church of New Gloucester (N.R. 11/12/74). This latter building introduced a tower, a device repeated in Oxford, but with substantially different stylistic elements.

In addition to its architectural history, the church is distinguished by the extant, partially restored painting which embellishes the interior. The

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OXFORD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AND CEMETERY

Section number 8 Page 3

initial decoration in the trompe L'oeil style is believed to have been carried out about 1880 when church records indicate that \$600 was spent on repairs. This time frame is well within the period in which this form of decoration was popular in Maine. Documentation on other interiors, both domestic and religious, indicate a shift in the last two decades of the century from trompe L'oeil to stencilling. This style of finish remained popular into the twentieth century. The Oxford Congregational Church experienced this change in taste when, in 1913, the Monmouth architect/artist Harry Cochrane was engaged to stencil the interior. Cochrane apparently retained the existing decoration, but worked it into his own scheme which further embellished the sanctuary and the lower curved portion of the ceiling. A third episode of decoration occurred in 1945 when R. J. Morin of Auburn introduced additional stencil patterns and figural elements. Recent restoration work is focussed on the c. 1880 and 1913 schemes.

Documentary sources and recent church restoration programs support the conclusion that interior embellishment of Maine churches in the Victorian period was not uncommon. Even the most modest of church buildings were apt to be decorated at some point and in some style during this time. Furthermore, the trend was not limited to new construction; in fact most of the known examples are found in earlier buildings whose congregations were obviously trying to update their churches in the latest interior architectural fashions. Undoubtedly, additional examples of both trompe L'oeil and stencilling will continue to be found as church interiors are analyzed and restored.

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OXFORD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH & CEMETERY

OXFORD, MAINE

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History of the Oxford Congregational Church, Oxford, Maine. Printed by the Church. 1993.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property occupies the Town of Oxford Tax Map U-6, Lot 13.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary embraces the entire four acre village parcel containing the church and adjoining cemetery.