

PH0017751

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

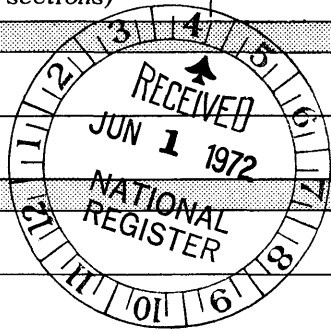
STATE: **Maine**

COUNTY: **Cumberland**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY NUMBER: **JAN 1 2 1973** DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)



**1. NAME**

COMMON: **First Parish Church**

AND/OR HISTORIC: **The First Parish in Portland**

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER: **425 Congress Street**

CITY OR TOWN: **Portland**

STATE: **Maine** CODE: **23** COUNTY: **Cumberland** CODE: **005**

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	_____	_____

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME: **Trustees of the First Parish in Portland**

STREET AND NUMBER: **425 Congress Street**

CITY OR TOWN: **Portland** STATE: **Maine** CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: **Cumberland County Courthouse**

STREET AND NUMBER: **142 Federal Street**

CITY OR TOWN: **Portland** STATE: **Maine** CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY: **Historic American Buildings Survey**

DATE OF SURVEY: **1968**  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: **Library of Congress**

STREET AND NUMBER: **1st Street and Independence Avenue S.E.**

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE: **District of Columbia** CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: **Maine**

COUNTY: **Cumberland**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered (slightly) <input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered			<input type="checkbox"/> Moved <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The First Parish Church is the oldest house of worship in Portland, Maine. It was commissioned in 1824 to replace a wooden frame meeting house (called "Old Jerusalem") built in 1740. A building committee of three men was chosen; one of the members, John Mussey is credited with much of the church's design. On April 9, 1825, a contract was signed with Nathan Howe, joiner, and Henry Dyer, mason, to build and furnish the church. Completed in less than a year, it was dedicated on February 8, 1826.

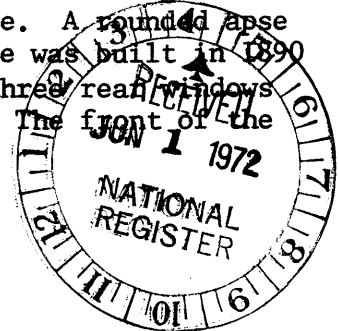
The First Parish Church is located on the north side of Congress Street, between Elm and Chestnut Streets below Monument Square. The building is rectangular, set back in a fenced lot. It is about 66 feet wide and 102 feet long. The exterior of the church has never been altered. It is built of granite quarried in Freeport, Maine. The regular coursed ashlar is undressed except for the corner quoins and the surrounds of the tall arched window and door openings which employ cut granite stones. The roof of the church is gray slate.

The main part of the building is a rectangular hall, used as the sanctuary. It is actually two stories high, but is used as one space; it has a gable roof. A bell tower projects from the front of this hall, flanked by a vestibule on either side. These elements make up the facade of the building, and form a three-bay entrance which is approached from the street by a full-width flight of granite stairs. There are three entrance doors, one in each bay. Each is made up of two six-panelled wooden doors and has a fanlight in the arch above it. Set in the wall above each door is a rectangular panel of dressed granite. The eaves-line of each vestibule is at the same height as that of the sanctuary; the roofs slope back toward the gable of the sanctuary. The bell tower continues vertically. It is square to the height of the vestibule rooftop. An arched fanlight window set over a marble date stone in this section repeats the fanlights above the entrance doors. A smaller square granite section of the tower above this has chamfered corners; it contains a three faced clock which was used in the previous church, and it is topped by a wooden balustrade. Above is an octagonal domed wooden belfry topped by an octagonal wooden cupola and a short wooden spire. On the spire is a bannarette weathervane made in 1760.

In the side wall of each vestibule is a window. The window openings are the same size as the entrance door openings, and the windows are identical to the four windows which pierce each side wall of the church sanctuary. All the windows are triple hung, 15 over 15 over 15, and they have fanlights in the arch above. In the sanctuary windows, a wooden fan covers the arch on the outside. All the window panes are clear glass.

The rear wall of the sanctuary is entirely granite. A rounded apse projects in the center of it. A two-story parish house was built in 1890 next to the church on the right side. It covers the three rear windows of that side; they remain intact but let in no light. The front of the

(See continuation sheet)



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**SIGNIFICANCE**

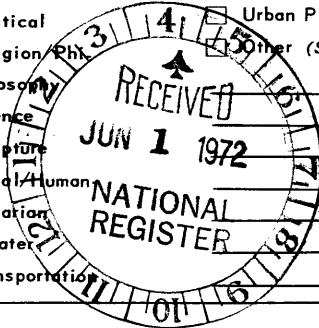
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian |  16th Century |  18th Century |  20th Century  
 15th Century |  17th Century |  19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1825-26**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |   |  |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political       | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion/Ritual | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry     | <input type="checkbox"/> Science                    |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention    | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture                  |  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape    | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian        |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater                    |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature   | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation             |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Military     |   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            | <input type="checkbox"/> Music        |   |  |



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

The First Parish Church was the first major granite structure built east of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. It survived the Great Fire of 1866, a fire which destroyed most of the buildings around it. Today the First Parish Church remains standing in dignified majesty in the heart of downtown Portland. It is a valuable Federal period building in a neighborhood which is full of architecturally important buildings - the Portland City Hall, the Cumberland County Courthouse, the Wadsworth Longfellow House, and many stately brick mercantile buildings. Many new buildings are going up in this area; the First Parish Church more than holds its own in the midst of this continual development.

From the outside, the First Parish Church is truly impressive. It is an imposing visual focal point at the head of Temple Street. When approached from Congress Street the church lot offers a welcome green space, and the set-back of the church itself in this space is a pleasing contrast to the pressing street facades of the majority of the buildings on Congress Street. So important in itself, the church is also important to the visual and architectural texture of the center of Portland.

The church is handsomely proportioned. The granite walls have a warm, rich appearance. The surface modulation of the facade and the rustication of the door and window surrounds give a finer scale to the mass of the building. The bell tower with its clock and weather vane has long been a landmark in the city.

The interior of the church is as impressively executed as the exterior. The sanctuary as a whole is graceful and gives an uplifting sense of lightness. The careful attention given to its restoration and maintenance has insured that it still has the same visual impact that it had originally. Most of the original furnishings are intact; any replacements have been as close to the originals as possible. The crystal chandelier given in 1826 hangs in the center of the sanctuary. The mahogany pulpit, the minister's chair, the communion table, the pulpit Bibles, the wrought iron lanterns flanking the apse, and the Simon Willard clock in the center of the gallery have all been in use since the church first opened.

The history of the church lives with it. First Parish was the first church established in Portland, (than Falmouth), Maine, in 1674. The settlement was burned twice by Indians. In 1718 the consecutive (See Continuation Sheet)

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

First Parish, February 8, 1826 - February 8, 1901. (pamphlet published for the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the Dedication of the Stone Meeting House.) Portland, 1901.

Maine's Writers Research Club: Historic Churches and Homes of Maine, Portland, 1937. ("First Parish of Portland" by Ella Matthews Bangs, pp. 266-268).

Shettleworth, Earle G., Jr.: "First Parish Church Was Built in 1825-26 At Cost of \$18,390", Portland Maine Evening Express, August 4, 1965, p. 56.

Works Projects Administration: Portland City Guide, Portland, 1940.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	0 ' "	0 ' "		43° 39' 29.5N	70° 15' 30 W	
NE	0 ' "	0 ' "				
SE	0 ' "	0 ' "				
SW	0 ' "	0 ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
**Mary-Eliza Wengren, Consultant**

ORGANIZATION: **Greater Portland Landmarks, Inc.** DATE: **February 1972**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Station A Box 4197**

CITY OR TOWN: **Portland** STATE: **Maine** CODE:

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name: Laurance Stuart  
Title: Commissioner, Parks & Recreation

Date: May 22, 1972

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

Robert J. Utley  
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 1/12/73

ATTEST:  
William M. ...  
Keeper of The National Register

Date: 1-8-73

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Maine	
COUNTY Cumberland	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	JAN 12 1973

(Number all entries)

7. DESCRIPTION

parish house is granite, architecturally harmonious with the church; its other walls are brick.

The interior of the church consists of the vestibule area in the front and the main sanctuary. On the second floor above the vestibule are choir rooms. The sanctuary has a suspended gently arched ceiling which spans its entire width. The stairs to the three sided gallery in the sanctuary were originally in the vestibule. When a larger organ was installed in 1853 they were moved to their present position in the sanctuary, one in each rear corner. The slip pews in the sanctuary are original, as are most of the furnishings. The organ casing dates from 1853. The gallery was lowered in 1855. Other alterations made at this time were corrected in 1976 when the church was restored to its original appearance. Today the interior of the church looks much as it did in 1826. Red carpeting and upholstery add warmth to the light colored walls and ceiling.

The lot on which the church stands is surrounded by the original wrought iron and granite fence which was installed when the church was built. The enclosed grassy yard is shaded by large trees.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

history of the First Parish Church began. The first church was a log building, replaced in 1721 by a frame church. In 1740 "Old Jerusalem" was built to house the congregation. In 1819 the Maine Constitutional Convention met in "Old Jerusalem" to draw up the Constitution of the State of Maine. The present First Parish Church stands on this site.

Because the original parish was a theocracy, it was closely bound to the community and its people. The founding citizens of Portland were members of the First Parish Church. When other churches were founded in Portland, many leading citizens continued among the congregation of the First Parish Church. The Longfellow family had a pew in the church. William Pitt Fessenden, Lincoln's secretary of the Treasury and a Senator from Maine, Prentiss Mellon, Maine's first Chief Justice, William Pitt Preble, William Willis, Asa Clapp, Nathaniel Deering, and John Gillman, were parishioners. Herman Kotzschmar was the church organist for forty-seven years. Plaques set in the sanctuary walls commemorate these well-known Portland citizens.

