

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

Inventory—Nomination Form

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

For NPS use only

received DEC 8 198

date entered

1. Name

historic Lafayette National Park Museum of Stone Age Antiquities

and/or common The Robert Abbe Museum of Stone Age Antiquities (Preferred)

2. Location

street & number Sieur de Monts Spring Acadia National Park N/A not for publication

city, town Bar Harbor, vicinity vicinity of congressional district

state Maine code 23 county Hancock code 009

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input checked="" 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
structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
object	<u>N/A</u> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name The Robert Abbe Museum of Stone Age Antiquities, Incorporated

street & number Box 286

city, town Bar Harbor, N/A vicinity of state Maine 04609

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Hancock County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Ellsworth, state Maine

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? N/A 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 Abbe Museum is sited in a wooded, semi-wilderness area at the base of a cliff and near a natural hot spring. The building occupies a small clearing surrounded by hemlock and birch trees, and is approached via a woodland path from a tree-shaded parking area. Museum and surroundings are within the bounds of Acadia National Park.

Constructed in 1928 from designs by Edmund B. Gilchrist of Philadelphia, the museum is best described as "Mediterranean", incorporating features of the Renaissance and Spanish Colonial Revivals. The main portion of the building is an octagonal chamber with four broad and four narrow walls, each broad wall between two narrow ones. Above the chamber is an octagonal roof of red Mediterranean tiles, at the apex of which is a cupola echoing the shape of the chamber and similarly capped by a tiled roof. From both the east and west walls (broad) protrude short, square wings, each half as high as the central chamber, and with hipped, tiled, roofs. The chamber serves as the museum's display room, the west wing as a vestibule, and the east wing as storage space.

The two remaining broad walls of the octagon are filled with large arched windows which cover more than a third of their areas. Each window holds thirty clear-glass panes of various sizes amid arched tracery. Each of the four narrow walls holds a rectangular, six-paned window. Small diamond-paned windows are cut into the north and south walls of the two wings. The entrance door in the west (vestibule) wing is topped by a sign reading "Robert Abbe Museum of Stone-Age Antiquities".

The walls of the whole are stucco, cast-stone being used for running courses above and below the chamber's windows, and for the window trim. Each arched window is topped by a small cast-stone cartouche, and a subtle dentiled course runs below the top cornice. The walls are otherwise unadorned. Each of the cupola's four broad sides holds a screen made from piled rows of red tiles, and the cupola's roof supports a bulbous cast-stone finial. The building has a granite foundation.

The interior wall surface is also of stucco. The chamber has a floor of red bricks laid in a parquet pattern.

The museum's builders were the Shea Brothers of Bar Harbor. The roofing tiles were made to order by a Bangor brick-yard.

In 1967, Bar Harbor architect Robert Patterson added a second octagonal chamber to the rear of the original building, connecting it to the east (storage) wing by a short hallway. The addition is of matched cedar boards with a cedar-shingled roof, and is identical in shape and demeanor to the original chamber, though slightly smaller and without windows. The addition serves as an office for the museum's curator.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below							
prehistoric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion				
1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science				
1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture				
1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/				
1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian				
1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater				
X 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 1928

Builder/Architect Edmund B. Gilchrist

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Robert Abbe Museum is one of the few Maine buildings classifiable as "Mediterranean". Mediterranean styles (e.g., Italian Villa, Spanish Mission) were popular throughout most of the United States in the 1920's but rarely appeared in northern New England. The Museum is perhaps Maine's only example of non-domestic Mediterranean architecture. The building was also one of the first in Maine designed specifically as a museum.

The museum's plans were drawn in 1927-28 by Philadelphia architect Edmund B. Gilchrist, who had previously designed at least one Mt. Desert Island summer home (Grace M. Simmons House in Southwest Harbor, 1924). The design is similar to one drawn a few years before by Yugoslav architect-sculptor Ivan Mestrovic for a mausoleum in Caytat, Italy, although no proof exists that the buildings are connected. Gilchrist's building combines elements of the Italian Renaissance and Spanish Colonial Revival styles, the emphasis being on simplicity both of design and materials. Originally, the building was to be done in the pink granite which abounds on Mt. Desert Island, but it was actually constructed of stucco (or a stucco-like material), probably to achieve greater unity between material and style.

The building is also important as an archaeological monument and landmark museum. Dr. Robert Abbe (1851-1928) was a noted surgeon and among the first American doctors to experiment with radium. Enfeebled by the early 1900's, probably as a result of radioactive exposure, Abbe retired to Mt. Desert Island and became an avid amateur archaeologist. By the 1920's he had amassed a considerable and unparalleled collection of primitive and Indian artifacts, and desired to build a museum for their exhibition. According to Abbe:

"I have consistently set a goal--never to enlarge this collection into a general museum but to fix indelibly a fact of incontrovertible history in the minds of the large and rapidly-growing travelling public. My aim has been to create a permanent, classic, 'one show' historic incident in the path of the 'Maddening Crowd' and to make it as perfect as possible."

The museum's tall octagonal chamber, almost circular in dimension and with no subsidiary public parts save the vestibule, is certainly an effective "one show" container. Abbe worked with Gilchrist on the plans, and the resulting product reflects his concerns and emphasis. The museum's small floor-space invites rapid and easy review of the artifacts, and the chamber's tallness and compactness give it a sense of introspection akin to that of a Roman pantheon.

As Maine's first archaeological museum, and a monument to one of the state's earliest and most enthusiastic amateur archaeologists, the museum has done much to foster interest in Maine's stone-age and Indian cultures. The idea of a museum as a small yet dramatic exhibit geared toward the "rapidly-growing travelling public" (i.e., motorists) was also one ahead of its time.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Lawrence, William. "Robert Abbe", in Robert Abbe Museum Bulletin XI: The First Fifty Years of the Robert Abbe Museum. Bar Harbor: The Robert Abbe Museum. 1978.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1/2

Quadrangle name Bar Harbor

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UMT References

A	1 9	5 6 3 0 8 0	4 9 1 2 0 6 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
C			
E			
G			

B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
D			
F			
H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

Assessor's Map 14, Lot 1

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Gregory K. Clancey, Contract Assistant/Frank A. Beard, Historian

organization Maine Historic Preservation Commission date September, 1982

street & number 55 Capitol Street telephone 207/289-2132

city or town Augusta, state Maine Q4333

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 Eric S. Fetterow

title S.H.P.O.

date 11/29/82

For NPS use only

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

date 1-19-83

Frank M. Dwyer
keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration