

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

MAY 23 1988

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

**NATIONAL
REGISTER**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Universalist Meeting House

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Route 231, Intervale N/A not for publication
city, town New Gloucester, X vicinity
state Maine code ME county Cumberland code 005 zip code 04260

3. Classification

| | | | |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| Ownership of Property | Category of Property | Number of Resources within Property | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | Contributing | Noncontributing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-local | <input type="checkbox"/> district | <u>1</u> | <u> </u> buildings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-State | <input type="checkbox"/> site | <u> </u> | <u> </u> sites |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal | <input type="checkbox"/> structure | <u> </u> | <u> </u> structures |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> object | <u> </u> | <u> </u> objects |
| | | <u>1</u> | <u>0</u> Total |

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

Ernest S. Fitzpatrick, J.N.P.O. 5/16/88
Signature of certifying official Date
Maine Historic Preservation Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this 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:) _____

Alma Byrne Entered in the National Register 6-23-88

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religious/Religious Structure

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Work in Progress

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone/Granite

walls Wood/Weatherboard

roof Asphalt

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Universalist Meeting House is a modest but nevertheless handsomely rendered frame building in the Greek Revival style. Sheathed in flush boards on the pedimented facade and weatherboards elsewhere, the rectangular church exhibits bold stylistic features. Its exterior integrity is closely matched on the interior although a number of changes were made at the turn of the century. A granite slab foundation supports the building.

Facing northeast, the principal elevation of the church is divided into three bays of equal dimension. Four broad pilasters that rise to a wide entablature are distributed across the facade. They frame a pair of doors surmounted by rectangular panels and a central window (now closed and protected by wooden boards with blinds). The doorways contain five-panel doors with original hardware, and they are bordered by symmetrically molded surrounds with corner blocks. Similar moldings appear around all other openings. Behind the protective boards that obscure the windows on the facade and sides are the original eight-over-eight-over-eight triple-hung sash. This is a particularly unusual configuration among Maine's surviving Greek Revival style churches. documentary photographs from the early twentieth century show that the panels above the doors were at that time, and probably originally, outfitted with wooden blinds. There is no interior evidence that these panels replaced windows. The pediment which frames the front elevation features flat multi-part moldings that join to create a broad cornice. The small triangular tympanum is covered in flush boards.

Both the north and south side elevations are identical in their composition. A trio of openings are symmetrically arranged along each wall. All three appear to contain windows behind the protective covering boards but the one nearest the front is actually a false window. Like the panels above the doors this was designed to have fixed blinds as does its counterpart on the north side. the other openings contain triple-hung windows. Those on the south side retain their blinds. The broad entablature carries across both side walls and terminates at the rear in a short return. Pilasters, which are narrower than those on the facade, are located at the corners. A flue stack

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2

punctuates the roof at the rear of the building and a nine-over-six double-hung window is located in the gable peak.

The interior consists of two small entry vestibules that contain enclosed stairs leading to the gallery, and a nave with side aisles. Three groups of original pews occupy the nave whose floor slopes gently downward to the raised sanctuary. Like the windows, this feature is uncommon in Maine's surviving churches of this period. A chair rail carries around the interior linking the window sills and the tall sanctuary baseboard. The windows and doors are bordered by surrounds that are similar to those found on the exterior. The sanctuary extends across two-thirds of the east wall where there are two large support posts covered in a plaster over lath finish. A similar wall finish is used throughout. The rear of the nave is distinguished by the gallery that extends across the end vestibule and a recessed centrally located space. Three long narrow panels extend across the original parapet wall.

About 1900 the gallery was closed when the ceiling was lowered and the existing narrow, darkly stained wood put in place. A diagonally sheathed wall of similar material was added to the top edge of the gallery at this time. This alteration obscures the barrel arched configuration of the original ceiling. The framing for this unusual feature is still in place above the existing ceiling although the plaster and lath have been removed except above the gallery itself.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1839

Significant Dates

1839

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Cotton, Jeremiah, Builder

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Constructed in 1839 by local carpenter/builder Jeremiah Cotton, the Universalist Meeting House is a dignified example of the Greek Revival style in a rural context. Its modest but nevertheless striking composition is rarely matched by its related property sub-types. The church is presented for nomination to the National Register under criterion C and criteria consideration A as a religious property that has architectural significance.

The First Universalist Society of Christians in New Gloucester was organized in 1805 with members drawn from nearby communities including those of Gray, Pejepscot and Poland. In 1830 the congregation reorganized itself into the First Universalist Society of New Gloucester and Pownal. During its early history services were apparently held at various places in the community for it was not until November of 1838 that a meeting was called "...to take such measures for Building a meeting house as a majority of Subscribers or proprietors may think proper." Jeremiah Cotton was awarded the contract to build the meetinghouse, the design of which was prepared by an as yet unidentified hand. By September of the following year the church had been completed and the pews assigned to their owners. Cotton was paid a total of \$900.00 for his work with total costs coming to \$1,500.00.

Church records suggest that the society was in a fairly constant state of financial crisis throughout much of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, by about 1900 the congregation became reinvigorated. The founding of a Sunday School and Ladies' Circle, as well as the construction of a vestry (since removed) and alterations to the main building indicate a renewed commitment to the Church while underscoring its role in the local community. After World War I, however, membership began to decline and from the 1930s until the society's demise in 1957 services were infrequently held. In 1969 the property was acquired by the New Gloucester Historical Society which is

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Church Records

Photograph Collection, Maine Historic Preservation Commission.

See continuation sheet

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

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than 1

UTM References

A

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

C

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|--|---------|--|--|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Zone | | Easting | | | | | | Northing | | | | | | |

B

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|--|---------|--|--|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Zone | | Easting | | | | | | Northing | | | | | | |

D

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|--|---------|--|--|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Zone | | Easting | | | | | | Northing | | | | | | |

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property of less than one acre occupies the Town of New Gloucester tax map 8, lot 29.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary embraces the entire lot historically associated with the Universalist Meeting House.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kirk F. Mohny, Architectural Historian

organization Maine Historic Preservation Commission date April, 1988

street & number 55 Capitol Street, Station #65 telephone 207/289-2132

city or town Augusta, state Maine zip code 04333

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 2

developing plans for the building's restoration.

The particularly forceful architectural statement made by this modest church building makes it all the more unfortunate that the architect remains nameless. This is especially true because two churches (only one of which survives) in nearby communities bear some striking resemblance to this one. Both the 1839 Congregational Church in North Yarmouth and the c. 1840 First Parish Congregational Church in Falmouth (destroyed) were constructed with facades whose compositions were virtually identical. While both of these buildings employed a two-stage tower (also of nearly exact configuration) their overall relationship to the New Gloucester Church nevertheless seems clear. Church records pertaining to the construction of these two buildings do not specify the architect's name. In addition, little more is known about Jeremiah Cotton and his work as a builder. Whomever may have designed the church and whatever its exact relationship may be to those in North Yarmouth and Falmouth, the Universalist Meeting House remains a significant component of rural Maine's Greek Revival style architecture.