

SAMUEL P. GRINDLE HOUSE
13 School Street
Castine
Hancock County
Maine

HABS ME-229
ME-229

HABS
ME-229

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS
FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

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SAMUEL P. GRINDLE HOUSE

HABS
ME-229
(2005)

HABS NO. ME-229

Location: 13 School Street, Castine, Hancock County, Maine.

The coordinates for the Samuel P. Grindle House are 44.390653 N, 68.798744 W; these were obtained using Google Earth and, it is assumed, NAD 1983. There is no restriction on the release of the locational data to the public.

Significance: The Samuel P. Grindle House is significant as a mid-nineteenth century Greek Revival domestic structure contributing to the cultural landscape of the Town Common in the coastal village of Castine, Maine. According to the National Register listing of the Castine Historic District, Castine “is one of the most historic villages on the coast of New England...the sum total of its parts add up to an almost undisturbed eighteenth and nineteenth century environment. From the environmental and aesthetic perspective, Castine has few rivals.” As a result of the military significance and presence in the area since colonization, the economic prosperity from fishing and the shipping port, and its appeal as a summer resort, the architectural character of Castine is widely varied and includes early capes, Federal Style houses, late nineteenth-century summer cottages, and a predominance of Greek Revival buildings.

Established in 1817, the Town Common has been recognized by the Maine Olmsted Alliance for Parks and Landscapes as “one of the best surviving examples of a town green” in New England.¹ As the heart of Castine, the Common is surrounded by ten buildings including the First Parish (Unitarian) Church (1790), Abbott School (1859), Whitney House (1814), J.S. Gardner House (1817), Adams School (ca. 1853), Rev. A.E. Ives House (1840) – once the home of poet Robert Lowell, the Witherle Library (1913), Doty Little House (1802), and the aforementioned Samuel P. Grindle House (ca. 1850). Together, the Common and surrounding buildings form the cultural and architectural context for the entire village of Castine, which is a National Register District (1973). The Samuel P. Grindle House is the first of many structures intended to be documented for the Historic American Buildings Survey.

¹ The lot for the Town Common was sold to the inhabitants of Castine in 1815 by John Perkins. “Said piece of land is hereby conveyed...for the public building...and other public uses; on which the meeting house and school now stand.” Deed quoted in Elizabeth Igleheart, “Greens, Squares or Common? The Answer Lies in Their Origins,” Maine Olmsted Alliance for Parks & Landscapes, *Newsletter* (Summer 1994), 5.

Greek Revival was “the predominant style of the period” during the pre-Civil War decades in Maine. Coinciding with the granting of statehood in 1820 was the introduction of the Greek Revival Style in the United States. It remained popular in Maine into the 1860s, a decade later than most other parts of the country. With a steady increase in the population of Maine during the first half of the nineteenth century, additional housing was needed and Greek Revival was the predominant style chosen by local builders and carpenters.² Greek Revival was easily adopted by local builders because it allowed more freedom and variety since it was mostly concerned with details and proportions and did not require a break from earlier forms and building methods.³ Earl G. Shettleworth, Jr. states in the introduction to Joyce K. Bibber’s book on the Greek Revival in Maine, that “its bold classical vocabulary translated easily and practically into local wood, brick, and stone to create a dignified appearance for any building type. The style embodies the Yankee ethic of forthrightness and simplicity.”⁴ In Maine, the Greek Revival most often found vernacular expression in simple five bay houses with corner pilasters as opposed to the temple form which was featured in illustrated pattern books of the day.⁵ The most “high style” Greek Revival house in Castine, the John A. Jarvis House, dates from the 1850s and exhibits a wrap-around porch with Doric columns. One of the first Italianate buildings to be constructed in Castine was the Abbott School in 1859, adjacent to the Samuel P. Grindle House. Italianate buildings began to appear in the urban centers of Maine a full decade earlier, further implying the unwillingness to relinquish the Greek Revival in rural and village Maine.

Description: The Samuel P. Grindle House is a two-and-a-half-story, wood-framed, five-bay-by-two-bay Greek Revival house with a shingled side-gable roof and two chimneys of different size and brick type. Of the two chimneys, one is original and the other is a recent modern replacement, although in the same location of the original. The façade faces southwest onto the Town Common (for ease of description, the façade will be referred to as facing south). A front porch with two

² Joyce K. Bibber, *A Home for Everyman: The Greek Revival and Maine Domestic Architecture* (Portland, ME: Greater Portland Landmarks, 2000), 2-3.

³ Denys Peter Myers, “The Historic Architecture of Maine,” in *Maine Catalog, Historic American Buildings Survey, National Park Service, Department of the Interior* (Maine State Museum, 1974), 70-71.

⁴ Earle G. Shettleworth, Foreword to *A Home for Everyman: The Greek Revival and Maine Domestic Architecture* (Portland, ME: Greater Portland Landmarks, 2000).

⁵ Bibber, 20, 39, 64.

columns supports a hipped shingle roof over the middle bay (front door). The corners of the wood columns are chamfered above and below a block with an incised circle. Following the line of the chamfer, a line is also incised in the center of the column. Not original to the house, the porch is likely a late nineteenth-century alteration. The first and second floor wood sash windows are glazed with two-over-two lights. The attic windows are six-over-six wood sash. Prior to the installation of aluminum siding, all windows had louvered shutters as seen in historic photographs. The east side of the house has an angled bay with four windows that is not incorporated into the foundation, suggesting the bay window was added at a later date, possibly the same time as the porch alteration. The exterior wood siding has been covered with aluminum siding. Trim and pilasters are wrapped in sheet aluminum following the profile of the wood trim below. The foundation is made of slab granite above grade on the main section of the house.

The rear ell appears to be an earlier one-story building or small cape with a shingled side-gable roof and a modern replacement chimney. The entry door is on the west side of the building. This side of the house is three bays, with nine-over-six wood sash in two bays and the door in the end bay. The north side of the ell is two bays with a single two-over-two window and a casement window. The east side of the ell has been modified with two sliding glass doors that open onto a wood side deck. A photograph, taken from the east around 1970, shows the original configuration of this side with two two-over-two windows and a door just off-center from the earlier, smaller chimney. The exterior has been clad in aluminum siding. The foundation is made up of a combination of mortared rubble and granite slabs above grade. A photograph, taken from the north ca. 1870s, shows the rear ell and what appears to be a lean-to on the west side. Two smaller structures are situated a short distance from the rear ell.

North of the house is a small garage with vertical siding and front-gable roof. The foundation is made of concrete. The structure appears to be a late twentieth-century garage located in approximately the same location as an earlier two-story, wood-framed gambrel barn that appears on Sanborn Insurance Maps from 1901 and 1911 and in photographs from 1939 and ca. 1970s.

The Samuel P. Grindle House is situated on the northeast side of the Town Common between the former Abbott School (currently the Castine Historical Society) and the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Castine, former First Parish Church. The First Parish Church was located southeast of the Samuel P. Grindle House on a parcel of land between the Town Common and School Street, and historically, maintained a driveway between the church and common. School

Street originally ran parallel to the church driveway and was fronted by the Abbott School, Grindle House, and another domestic structure, as seen in Sanborn maps from 1911 and 1925. School Street was rerouted sometime after 1925. It was discontinued in front of the Abbott School and the Grindle House and relocated to the position of the church driveway, therefore creating the greater set back from the street and Town Common for these two buildings as seen today.

The Samuel P. Grindle House has a center-passage double-pile plan. On the first floor, there is an opening from each front room (East Parlor 101 and West Parlor 102) into the room behind (Back Parlor 103 and Dining Room 104). The stairs, located on the east side of the center hall (100), are a straight run to the second floor. At the end of the hall on the first floor are two doors, one leading to the stairs into the cellar and the other a closet. The interior detailing of molding profiles is surprisingly elaborate and eclectic for the simplicity of the house form and exterior. Nearly every room has different molding profiles and mantelpieces ranging from Federal Style to Greek Revival and Italianate to flat stock trim. Room 101, with the bay window on the east side of the house, has more elaborate Greek Revival moldings and mantelpiece than the other first floor rooms. The window and door casing is fluted and matches the mantelpiece pilasters. The west front room (West Parlor 102) has a mantelpiece similar to those in the back two rooms (103 and 104) of the first floor and is consistent with the simpler design of Greek Revival mantels with wide, flat stock trim. The window and door trim in the West Parlor (102) has Italianate profiles from a later date which suggest that the room may have originally had very simple trim, like the back rooms, and was later updated with the installation of the Italianate window and door moldings. The northeast room (Dining Room 104) is the only space in the house with a pressed metal ceiling and cornice. The floors are plank wood flooring except for the hall (100) and East Parlor (101) which have 2" wide maple or birch wood floor boards likely dating from the early twentieth century.

The rear ell is accessed from Back Parlor (103) by a door and from Dining Room (104) through a large cased opening. The ell has a fireplace with wood stove insert and is shifted back from center. The chimney is sheathed with re-used wide, vertical Eastern White Pine beaded boards over which a Federal Style mantel has been applied. A modern kitchen (106) is located in the northeast corner of the ell, possibly an original pantry. An entry (108) and modern bathroom (107) with wood, four-panel doors and Federal Style architrave are located in the northwest corner. The space south of the chimney is one large open room (105). Two doors are located in the center of the wall where the ell is attached to the main house. One door opens to stairs leading up to the second

floor; these stairs have been blocked off with insulation at the second floor level (110). This set of stairs appears to be the original service stairs from the kitchen to the second-floor service area which was later renovated into a bathroom. The other door opens into a storage closet that backs up to the closet in the center hall of the main house (109).

The second floor of the main house is two rooms wide and two rooms deep separated by the center hall (200). Doors have been added to the backs of closets in the south rooms to provide passage between the front (201 and 202) and rear chambers (203 and 204). The molding profiles of the second-floor spaces are simpler than those of the first-floor front rooms. With slight variations from room to room, the mantels have fluted pilasters that match the profile of the window and door casings. The hoods of the more recent doors through the closets are similar to the original doors throughout the second floor but with a deeper radius at the top. At the end of the hall, a bathroom renovation altered the original layout of the attic stairs. This bathroom (205) also provides access to the attic of the rear ell (206) and stairs to the attic of the main house. There is a cast iron tub and a marble sink with original fixtures in the bathroom, as well as the porcelain toilet base stored in the attic date from the 1880s or 1890s.

Located in the attic above the main house is a lined wood reservoir with wood panels, which appears to date from the same period as the toilet. The reservoir is disconnected and is likely dislocated from its original location. The east chimney of the main house has been reconstructed with concrete block, which is exposed in the attic, supporting the modern brick chimney seen from the exterior. The roof is framed with sawn 5" x 5" wood rafters with collar ties. The roof of the rear ell is framed with similarly sized wood rafters.

The cellar foundation walls of the Grindle House are built of mortared rubble stone up to grade with granite slabs above grade. In the main block portion of the house (001), the granite slabs are backed with brick. The framing in the main block of the house is a combination of heavy timbers and vertically-sawn 4" stock. The heavy beams here were clearly reused from another building. This is shown most plainly in the presence of beams with charring from a fire abutting others with no evidence of damage. Near the southeast corner of the cellar, is a brick cistern that is not original to the house. The brick does not match that of the foundation and suggests that the brick cistern may be an early twentieth-century addition to the water system. Typical in Castine is a dug water well in the northwest corner of the cellar below the main house. The well is currently covered and not in use.

At the junction of the main block and the kitchen ell, a single wide sill beam carries framing members from both portions of the house. These are not mortised in from either side, but sit in notches cut in from the top of the beam. A brick wall supports this sill beam where the two sections meet. The bricks appear to match those used for the upper portion of the foundation.

The back wall of the kitchen ell has more rounded field stone in place of the flat-edged stone in the rest of the cellar, perhaps because the cellar was originally a “walk-out” cellar at the rear and was enclosed later. A gap in the granite slabs on the northwest side (now filled with mortared field stone) may originally have been open for ventilation under a set of wood steps to the door, however, the door is not in this location currently and it is not possible to determine if it has been moved without opening up the wall to look at the framing.

Framing in the kitchen ell is all heavy hewn timbers or logs flattened on the tops. Some elements of it appear to have been reused from an earlier structure, as evidenced by mortises in locations that would not have been used here. A log beam behind the current chimney base is cut off in line with the chimney and may indicate a larger footprint for the original chimney base, as would have been required for a cooking hearth and brick oven. Currently, most of the framing behind the chimney is of recent vintage, suggesting extensive repairs. All of the sub-flooring in the kitchen ell has been replaced in recent years.

The framing of the structure suggests that the rear ell was attached to the main portion of the house at the time of construction. Framing members were likely reused from other buildings on or around the site. The rear ell may have been a portion of an earlier structure on the site that was extant in this location or moved to adjoin to the new construction of the front Greek Revival house.

History:

The Samuel P. Grindle House is located on property that was originally associated with a tannery as early as 1794. William Freeman purchased the property including tan yard, vats, and other buildings in 1796 from the tanner, Josiah Crawford. William apprenticed with his father, Peletiah Freeman, also a tanner by trade. By 1811, a house existed on the property in addition to the tan yard and outbuildings. In 1819, Freeman sold the rear portion of the property including tan yard, vats, and outbuildings to John Minot. Freeman died in 1820 and the remainder of his property, presumably the south section facing the Town Common including the house, was subsequently sold at public auction to pay his debts. In 1849 and 1850, Samuel P. Grindle acquired all land previously associated with the “Freeman Tan yard”. In 1850-51, the five-bay, double-pile, center hall Greek Revival House facing the Town Common was constructed and

subsequently sold in 1852 to Samuel Wescott. The house was likely constructed utilizing all or parts of the early nineteenth-century Freeman house or other outbuildings on the property. Grindle repurchased the property and sold the lot adjacent to the house to the Castine School District for the erection of the Abbott School in 1859. The Wescott family maintained ownership of the remaining property and house for much of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The Castine Historical Society purchased the adjacent Abbott School in 1994 for use as exhibit space and archive storage. The Samuel P. Grindle House was purchased by the Castine Historical Society in 2008 and is currently used for exhibition space.

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Project

Information: The documentation project was initiated by the Castine Historical Society which occupies the adjacent Abbot School building. After acquiring the Samuel P. Grindle House, the Castine Historical Society, under the leadership of Ann Miller, David Adams, Roger Moss, and Michael Coughlin, embarked on a preservation plan for the structure including HABS documentation as a starting point prior to any plans of restoration or rehabilitation. HABS documentation was completed by Sutherland Conservation & Consulting of Augusta, Maine. Measured drawings were produced by Melanie Smith. Interior details were documented by Scott Hanson. Research, aid in field measurement, and photo documentation were completed by Amy Cole Ives and Mallory Banks. HABS black and white photography was produced by Todd Caverly of Union, Maine.