

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

JUN 12 1989

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 Purinton Family Farm

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 65 Elm Street☒ not for publicationcity, town Topsham☒ vicinitystate Maine code ME county Sagadahoc code 023 zip code 04086

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>4</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
<u>4</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/ANumber 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.

Signature of certifying official

Maine Historic Preservation Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

Date

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:) _____

Shelley ByrneEntered in the
National Register7/13/89

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Single Dwelling
Agriculture/Subsistence/
Agricultural Outbuilding

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Federal

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone/Granite
walls Metal/Aluminum
Wood/Weatherboard
roof Metal/Tin
other One Story L-shaped Wing

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Purinton Family Farm consists of a small group of wooden frame buildings that represent the surviving elements of an early nineteenth century farm complex. Chief among the buildings is a large two-story five-bay, hip roofed dwelling with a long one-story kitchen ell and narrow woodshed projecting from one side of this ell. Arrayed behind and to the east of the house is a combination carriage house/shop, a barn and a crib, each of which has a heavy timber frame and a gable roof. The complex is prominently sited on a plateau whose north and east sides fall rapidly to a road and small stream. A high railroad bed blocks the view of Topsham's existing National Register Historic District located to the west of here.

Facing Route 24, the principal elevation of the dwelling has a symmetrical fenestration pattern that consists of turn-of-the-century replacement two-over-two double-hung sash windows surrounding a central entrance. Heavily molded surrounds of a late Georgian character border the windows whereas the six-panel raised panel door and four-pane transom are framed by thin pilasters that rise to a wide entablature capped by a thin cornice.

The east and west side elevations illustrate the unusual configuration of this building when compared to its contemporaries. This feature is the two-level arrangement of the roof in which the front two-bay section rises slightly above its two-bay counterpart at the rear. Careful analysis of the framing and interior details does not fully explain the building sequence of this portion of the house. One fact is certain: That the existing secondary roof is a later alteration to an earlier more shallow pitched hip which met the front block below the eaves. The irregular configuration of rooms in the ell and the substantial disparity between floor levels in the upper floor suggests that the rear block may have been a separate building that was joined to the main block at the time of the latter's construction (thought to be about 1810). Of additional note are the large interior brick chimneys that puncture the roof at a point that is just forward of the two blocks. Additional features of the side elevation is the use of only a single window in the second story of the shorter block, and the existence of doorways, of which the one on the east

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side is sheltered by a shallow enclosed hip roofed porch that employs transitional Federal/Greek Revival style details. This porch is believed to have been originally located on the west side.

Projecting to the rear of the house is the one-story with attic kitchen ell. Its features include a central chimney, a pair of windows on the west side, two at the rear, and five along the east wall. The building has a heavy timber frame that includes continuous hewn plates from end to end. It is an early addition to the main house judging by the weatherboards that it covers on the north end. In addition, the long gabled woodshed and privy extends in a perpendicular fashion from about the mid-point of the east elevation. Unlike the granite slab foundation that supports the remainder of the dwelling, the woodshed rests on a rubble stone base. Furthermore, its walls are still clad in weatherboards as opposed to the narrow aluminum siding that covers the main part of the building.

Inside, the house continues to exhibit its Federal period characteristics, primarily in the main front block. These features include sheathed wainscot, a rather modest staircase in the central hall with thin balusters, three-part door and window surrounds, and a pair of mantels employing wide thinly molded entablatures and mantel shelves. Unfortunately, the moldings themselves do not shed light on the building chronology. There appear to be at least four or five different profiles used in various places, but there is no evident pattern to their use or particular design. The walls are of plaster over lath construction.

Standing to the southeast of the ell and in close proximity to the end of the woodshed is the carriage house/shop. Sited with its gable ends facing north-south and its doors oriented to the west, this building is sheathed in wood shingles on its rear and south sides and weatherboards on the more public north and west elevations. It has an entry door at the northwest corner that is mounted with hand forged strap hinges and pintels. A small window is located between it and the larger vertical board door that now rides on track-mounted guides. A single six-over-six window is also located in the south end.

To the southeast of the carriage house is the remarkably unaltered barn whose front gable end is oriented towards the road in keeping with its smaller companion. The front and west sides of the barn are covered with weatherboards whereas the others are clad in asphalt siding. A symmetrical fenestration pattern is utilized on the facade consisting of large two-leaf track-mounted doors framed by smaller doors at the corners and a pair of nine-over-six windows in the loft. There is a single small opening on the east side, three on the west and two at the rear. The interior has a wide central drive with hay lofts above and animal pens along the sides. Its characteristics suggest a date of construction in the 1830s or 1840s.

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Of the three extant outbuildings the crib is the most unique, simply by virtue of the rarity of its type. Sheathed entirely in wood shingles and covered by a gable roof, the crib has a door affixed to its frame with hand forged strap hinges and pintels, and a west wall comprised of narrow slats (now covered over with tin). The frame of the crib is constructed of very large hewn timbers that seem to be inappropriate for a building of such modest scale. It may be that they are recycled materials or perhaps they reflect a concern for the structural integrity under the presumed load.

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The house faces the Old County Road which was built in 1761 to the Cathance area of Topsham and Bowdoinham. The road was well traveled, particularly after the Revolution, as it was the connector to the growing communities to the north and east from the ferry which crossed the Androscoggin River from Brunswick. North's History of Augusta reminds us: "In 1790 Henry Sewall and General Dearborn going to Portland to attend District Court, crossed the Cathance and Brunswick Rivers in ferry-boats". The County Road was used as a stage route in the early nineteenth century; in 1833, the Selectmen of Topsham were authorized to defend the town against any suit brought by the Maine Stage Company to recover damages for the upsetting of one of their carriages near James Purinton's tannery in Topsham on the evening of the 12th of January.

In 1775 James Purinton purchased this property from Robert Gore, a cordwainer. Belcher Noyes of Boston had acted as agent for the Pejepscot Proprietors who voted in 1761 to sell this lot to Robert Gore, "being 60 acres in the Gore of Lotts containing 60 acres together with a small island lying opposite to the Front of said Lot called Gravell Island". Robert Gore is said to have had a garrison house at this site, and is shown as owner of this lot, #50, on the 1768 Map of the Topsham Lots. Gore (also spelled Gower) was elected sealer of leather and warden in the first Topsham Town Meeting in 1764; town clerk from 1767 to 1772; and as a member of the 1775 committee representing Topsham for provisions and ammunition at the beginning of the Revolution. Gore then moved away to become one of the first settlers in the Farmington (Maine) region.

James Purinton was also styled as a cordwainer in the deed from Gore. The son of Deacon Humphrey Purinton, he was born on Cape Cod in 1742. He came with his parents to Georgetown (now West Bath, Maine) in 1750 and learned his father's trade of tanner. In addition to the tannery and mill by his house in Topsham, he had a shop in the village, and purchased several tracts of land in town, including a large farming area inside a bend of the Cathance River in Topsham referred to as "the meadows". By 1781 he was taxed (to raise funds for the Continental Army) on a total of 165 acres in Topsham. He was also a part owner of mills which were built up in the late eighteenth century at the Falls of the Androscoggin. He was also licensed by the Court of Sessions as an inn-holder in 1774 and 1783. In many of these enterprises, he was involved with his brother-in-law, Brigadier Samuel Thompson, who built a house next door c. 1783.

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The opening gun of the Revolution in 1775 echoed in Topsham, where a Town Meeting was quickly held to pass a resolution in favor of separation. The community split in hostile reaction over Brigadier Thompson's denunciation of Thomas Wilson who voted against the resolution - James Purinton was on the side of the Brigadier. Purinton was commissioned a First Lieutenant in Capt. Actor Patten's 8th (Co.), First Lincoln County regiment of Massachusetts Militia, and served in 1778 on the Topsham Committee of Correspondence & Safety.

Topsham tax records from 1775 show that James Purinton was taxed for 3 oxen, 2 cows and 10 sheep. The word "ferry" is appended to his list of holdings - he may have been in charge of the ferry from Topsham to Brunswick that year. By 1781, James Purinton had 2 oxen, 6 cows, 16 sheep, 4 swine, 2 horses, and he was one of the few in town to have "Money" - 10 pounds.

He was active in the religious and civic affairs of the rapidly growing town. The Purintons were Baptists, and Purinton's daughter, Rebecca, was possibly the "Miss R. Purinton" who was the first person in town (1779) to be baptized by immersion. James Purinton and his son, James, Jr., were included as incorporators of the Baptist Religious Society in 1795. James, Sr., was chosen as moderator at the first meeting of the Society, and was a principal in building what was later known as the "old yellow meeting-house" (no longer standing). In 1799, the town voted to petition the General Court in Boston to have a Court of Common Pleas and General Sessions of the Peace held in Topsham thereafter - the Reverend Jonathan Ellis, Dr. Benjamin Porter and James Purinton comprised the committee chosen to draft and present the petition. Topsham became a half-shire town from 1800-1847 of Lincoln County, with its own courthouse in the village.

James Purinton and his first wife, Priscilla Harding (1745-1786) had eight children between 1764 and 1782. Following Priscilla's death he married Silence Winchell of Topsham - they had no children. Two of James and Priscilla's daughters married into the Joseph Melcher family of Brunswick; another, Fannie, married her cousin James W. Pruinton. His two living sons in 1800 were James, Jr., born in 1777, and Ezekiel, the youngest, born in 1782.

James Purinton, Jr., married Miriam Melcher, the sister of his sister's husband, and went into business with his father in the tannery. In 1806, before the birth of his first child, James Purinton, Jr., purchased from Samuel Thompson (descendent of the Brigadier) a lot of 3

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acres "on the North side of the road that leads from the Courthouse to Topsham old meetinghouse". Here he built the house, attributed to the housewright Samuel Melcher of Brunswick, which still stands today, included as the James Purinton House at 64 Elm Street in the 1977 National Register nomination of the Topsham Historic District.

The 1802 Map of Topsham shows James Purinton (Sr.)'s house on the river side of the Old County Road (Elm Street today) although its exact location relative to the present one is uncertain. The Topsham Highway Tax records show that "James Purinton and Sons" are all in the same household (3 polls) from 1806 to 1812, undoubtedly the homestead at Elm Street. In 1809 James Purinton (Sr.), styled Gentleman, deeded to Ezekiel his homestead and part of the land, "with all the Houses & Buildings". The deed was held in keeping of Capt. Nathaniel Purinton of Bowdoin "which deed is to be given up to Ezekiel Purinton at the deseace [sic] of James Purinton" - it was registered, however, in 1830, two years before James, Sr.'s, death. Ezekiel married Isabella Wilson of Topsham in 1810, the same year that he became, at age 27, the owner of and Master of the Ship Tiphys built in Topsham. According to local history (Wheeler), the homestead at 65 Elm was supposed to have been built by Captain Ezekiel in 1810, with the master workman John Jameson of Topsham.

From 1814, taxes were apportioned to James Purinton, Jr., and Ezekiel Purinton as separate households. James' taxes were higher, despite a smaller house lot, as in 1809 he had taken over the tannery from his father "for love & affection I bear to my son & of the Services by him hereto rendered to me". Since James, Jr., is taxed for two polls, and Ezekiel only one, it is probable that James, Sr., had moved across the street to his son's new house. There is no record, however, of James, Sr., ever having owned the house at 64 Elm Street.

The two households continued in much the same manner until 1832, when the two sons together sued their father for debts due them. James, Sr.'s, second wife, Silence, had died in 1829. The settlement to James Purinton, Jr., Tanner, and Ezekiel Purinton, Mariner, resulted in the division of James, Sr.'s, remaining real estate between them, but it was not sufficient to cover the debts. Perhaps the suit was caused by their father's advanced years and condition - James Purinton, Sr., died a few months later. The service he gave is echoed on his headstone in the Burying Ground near the old First Parish Meetinghouse: "Lieut. James Purinton, Dec. 7th 1832, 90 years. One of the revolutionary officers and Staunch supporters of the Republican Constitution". Not set in stone was his enterprising life which saw his community grow from a few settlers to a thriving village during the

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Federal period. He participated as a free man, was called a Gentleman, and left a prosperous family with land, and a secure, and probably inflation and depression-proof business in the tannery, allowing others in the family the captial to go to sea as Owners and Masters of their ships.

His elder son, James Purinton, Jr., the tanner, continued to live at 64 Elm Street cross the street from the homestead. That house remained in the family until quite recently, descending in ownership first to his son Joseph H. Purinton, a Master Mariner, then to Joseph's daughter, Eliza (Mrs. Thomas Given). James, Jr.'s, son, Cyrus, continued the family business as a tanner, buying the tannery from his father in 1856. Cyrus built the house north-easterly of his grandfather's old homestead, across from the tannery site at the corner of Elm Street and Foreside Road.

James Purinton, Sr.'s younger son and his family remained at the homestead. Captain Ezekiel Purinton and his wife Isabella, whom he married in 1810, had five children, four daughters and a son, the youngest, named Israel Collins Purinton born in 1826. Captain Ezekiel was the Master of the Ship Mary built in Bath in 1820, the Brigs Paragon built in 1826 in Topsham, and the Sarah built in Bath in 1830. His final ship was the Brig Veto built in 1832, both owned and mastered by himself. Only nine years after Captain Ezekiel Purinton took over the Brig Veto, he died at age 58 on February 25, 1841. His will was written and signed on February 16, 1841, just a few days before his death: Isabella was left the estate for life; his two unmarried daughters bequeathed \$500 each with the requirement that the girls each "live with her mother at the homestead" until marriage; his son Israel Collins to receive "the whole estate, real and personal, which may remain at the death of his mother, provided that he should continue with his Mother until her death and to labor and manage the outdoor domestic concerns of the estate" - otherwise the estate would have been evenly divided. Israel Collins Purinton was then 15 years old.

The Inventory of Ezekiel Purinton's estate shows him to have been more than comfortable. He had the Farm "at the meadows" with 167 acres, whose first acres had been purchased by his father prior to the Revolution; over 60 acres of other land; a Shop and a dwelling house in the village, and the homestead containing twelve or fourteen acres, with a two-story house, barn and other outbuildings thereon, all valued at \$5,200. There is a quite complete list of his personal estate including farm stock, a Waggon, a four wheel chaise, and tools and implements both "at the meadows" and "at Home". There is such miscellania as a chest of Carpenters tools, a cow bell, a "lot of old Stuff in Porch chamber", two buffalo Skins and a Loom. The homestead furnishings are more than ample, including the expected

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furniture, such as sets of Flag bottom chairs, a sofa, a Harmonica, china, silver teaspoons, etc. More personal to Ezekiel would have been his spy glass and quadrant, charts, silver watch, and his Bank Stock. The real and personal inventory totaled \$9,116.84.

Isabella Purinton remained at the homestead with her son Israel (called Collins) until her death at age 90 in 1879. The farm at the meadows and other real estate was sold. But farm and village life were about to change, and probably painfully for Isabella Purinton. In 1850 the railroad bridge across the Androscoggin was built, bringing the tracks directly beside the homestead's door, and blocking her view of the village to the west. In 1847 James Purinton, Jr., and his son Joseph, who lived in the house across Elm Street deeded land on the north side of the street beside their house for \$50 to the Kennebec and Portland Railroad Company "as far as said Company may need for said Railroad, said strip is to be taken as wide on the road as the Company may need for the Railroad, and as wide back from the Road as they may need for grading the banks of said road so that the Road may be safe and convenient".

The K&PRR registered all the deeds for the new railroad in 1875, but none has been found from Isabella or Israel Collins Purinton. The railroad depot was just over the tracks to the west of their house. This was also the location of Captain Joseph H. Purinton's shipyard where he built a large brig called the Carrie Purinton [sic] in 1869 - despite the difficulty of moving such a large vessel under the railroad bridge. Isabella and Collins would not have been able to see any of this activity, isolated by the high railroad bed. The 1858 and 1911 maps of Topsham, and the 1877 Birds-Eye-View of Brunswick and Topsham clearly show the situation.

Collins Purinton lived at the family house all his life, keeping the homestead farm. In 1863 he married Margaret Ellen Chase of Topsham who was 21 years old at the time. They had three children including a son, James, and two daughters. Collins Purinton died in 1916, Margaret in 1917. The homestead was left to James, and for daughter Jennie, "a home in my homestead for life if she desires". After James died in Topsham in 1933 (his business career was as a bookkeeper, and later Register of Deeds for Sagadahoc County in Bath), his daughter Martha and her aunt Jennie sold the homestead on May 7, 1936, to the Maine Central Railroad Company, reserving a small parcel of land at the far northeast corner.

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The Maine Central, in turn, sold the property at the end of 1936 to Bowdoin graduate Oramandel Wilson, releasing the grantor from any obligation to construct or maintain a fence along any portion of the boundary line. Mr. Wilson is still the owner of the property, and has kept all the buildings standing. He did create a small development in 1956 on the northeast part of the property just beyond the gully, but it is not visible from the homestead. The homestead's remaining land still slopes down to the Androscoggin River behind the house.

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Baker, William Avery, A Maritime History of Bath, Maine, 2 Vol., Bath, 1973.

Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War, a Compilation from the Archives, Prepared and Published by the Secretary of the Commonwealth, Boston, 1904 (Maine Historical Society).

Shipman, William D., The Early Architecture of Bowdoin College and Brunswick, Maine, Brunswick, 1973.

Sinnett, Reverend Charles, Purinton Genealogy (Maine Historical Society).

Wheeler, George A. and Henry W., History of Brunswick, Topsham & Harpswell.
A facsimile of the 1878 edition, Pejepscot Historical Society, 1974.

Manuscripts and other Local History Material

Topsham Clippings - includes article by Sheldon Christian on the "Givven House", and material assembled by Mary Pelham Hill - Vertical File, Maine Historical Society.

Town of Topsham, Tax Records, 1775-1819, Pejepscot Historical Society Archives.

Topsham Vital Records, Mary Pelham Hill compiler, Pejepscot Historical Society Archives.

United States Census, 1790 (published); 1800-1870 microfilm at Maine State Archives.

Deeds and Probate Records

Lincoln County Registry of Deeds & Probate Office, Wiscasset, Maine.
Sagadahoc County Registry of Deeds & Probate Office, Bath, Maine.

Maps

From Wheelers' History:

Settlements in 1752, p. 40.

Brunswick and Topsham Villages in 1802, p. 72.

Roads in 1765, p. 531.

Plan of the Brunswick lots in 1741 and of the Topsham lots in 1768; included in pocket, 1974 ed.

From Pejepscot Historical Society and Topsham Town Office:

1858 Maps of Topsham & Topsham Village.

1877 Birds-Eye-View of Brunswick & Topsham.

1911 Maps of Topsham & Topsham Village.

Pejepscot Historic Survey Card File - based on Town of Topsham Tax Maps.

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)

Agriculture

Period of Significance

c. 1810 - c. 1840

Significant Dates

c. 1810

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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

The Purinton Family Farm stands on a hill above Ferry Point on the Androscoggin River, east of the village historic district of Topsham. On the east side of the house the land drops off to a deep gully, called "Gravel Island Gully" in an early deed. At the upper end of the gully, across Elm Street, James Purinton established a tannery and milldam in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, an economic venture in which he and his family prospered. The property occupied by the existing buildings became Purinton's homestead farm, although the present complex was probably assembled by his son Ezekiel Purinton. The property is eligible for nomination to the Register under criterion A for the manner in which it illustrates the layout and features of an early nineteenth century farm complex.

The agricultural significance of this property stems from the number of surviving outbuildings and their spatial relationship to each other and the main house. Such complexes are rare in Maine and increasingly threatened in the wake of pressure from non-agricultural development and the abandonment of farms. A third historic factor has also contributed to the loss of these groups of detached buildings and that is the trend that began in the mid-nineteenth century of establishing connected farm complexes. Although this practice was not adopted universally in Maine, its popularity was widespread, a fact that is underscored by the large number of such examples that survive. In contrast, the Purinton Farm exhibits the earlier pattern of detached outbuilding layout featuring not only a barn but also a carriage house/shop and a crib. With the exception of the crib, which originally stood off the east side of the house, the relationship of these buildings to each other continues to show the historic pattern. Of particular note is their arrangement to the house by use beginning with the corn crib, the carriage house/shop located off the southeast corner of the long attached woodshed, and farthest (historically) from the house, the barn.

☒ See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

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 # _____

☒ See continuation sheet

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 12

UTM References

A

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

B

1	9
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4	2	3	9	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	8	6	3	3	4	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C

1	9
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4	2	3	3	6	0
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4	8	6	3	6	1	0
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D

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☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property of 12 acres occupies the Town of Topsham tax map U-8, lot 27.

☐ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary of the property embraces the buildings and remaining parcel of land historically associated with the farmstead.

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sally W. Rand/Kirk F. Mohny, Architectural Historian

organization Maine Historic Preservation Commission date April, 1989

street & number 55 Capitol Street telephone (207) 289-2132

city or town Augusta, state Maine zip code 04333

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Purinton Family Farm

Sagadahoc County, MAINE

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION APPROVAL

Keeper

John J. Knowlton 6/27/91

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Purinton Family Farm
Topsham, Sagadahoc County, Maine
Amendment to #7 and #8
April 27, 1990

Dr. Arthur Spiess, Archaeologist and Kirk Mohney, Architect
Historian
The Maine Historic Preservation Commission
55 Capitol Street
Augusta, Maine 04333

The following amendments to the Description and Significance of the Purinton Family Farm (NR 7/13/89) pertain to new information discovered during recent archaeological excavations. Prehistoric and historic period components are involved. The former probably dates to the Susquehanna Tradition circa 4000 to 3000 years ago, whereas the latter has a period of significance dating from about 1761 to about 1840, beginning when Robert Gore's so-called garrison house was erected on the property through the early occupation of the Purinton House. Both components of the site are eligible for nomination to the Register under Criterion D. The goals of recent archaeological survey work around the Purinton House were two-fold. The Purinton house has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places because its layout and features represent a good example of an early 19th-century farm complex. One goal of this phase II archaeological survey was to examine the character and evidence of occupation of this Federal Period farm site. It was considered important to obtain all of the information possible from the land associated with this National Register listed set of buildings. A second goal of the survey concerns an earlier owner of the property, Robert Gore. Gore purchased the property consisting of 60 acres in 1761 and sold it to James Purinton, Sr. in 1775. Gore is said to have had a garrison house on the site, and it was hoped through this survey to find the location of his house. 1761 (or later) is an

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unusual time for the building of a garrison in Topsham. With the fall of Quebec in late 1759 and the subsequent capitulation of all French forces in Canada a year later, the possibility of Topsham being attacked as a result of that conflict was remote. The likelihood of an attack upon Topsham from any quarter was equally remote. It would therefore be interesting to locate and identify what type of house Gore had built at this late date, and to confirm if possible that it was a garrison house as reported by the historic documents. The property had been owned by Mr. Oramandel Wilson from 1936 to 1989. He was quite helpful in explaining the recent history of the property.

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For the purpose of the archaeological survey reported herein, a preexisting site grid was extended from the prehistoric site area of the Wilson property to the area of the house by extending a north/south baseline at E150. From this baseline a metric grid was established around the house, barn, and other outbuildings. Seven transects consisting of six to eleven shovel test pits each, totaling 57 shovel test pits (STPs, measuring 50 X 50 cm.) were excavated around the structures. The purpose of these STPs was to locate artifact concentrations denoting activity areas around the house and identify buried features if present.

In addition, one 4 X 4 meter test pit and 23 1 X 1 meter test pits were excavated around the farmsite. Some of the locations for these pits were based on the results of the excavation of the STPs, where evidence was found to suggest additional work was necessary. Other pits were excavated at locations around the house where it was believed additional information might be obtained, such as near door and window locations.

The method of excavation was either to "shave" the soil with a shovel or to use trowels to more carefully remove the soil. The type of tools employed depended upon the contents of the pit being excavated, trowels being used for the work of a more delicate nature. All dirt was sifted through 1/4" mesh screen to be sure no artifacts were missed in the process of excavation.

There were over 18,000 artifacts historic recovered from the Purinton/ Wilson site. A large proportion of these were construction/demolition debris such as brick and nails. Other artifacts of structural debris include shutter and door hardware, window glass, plaster and mortar. Slightly over 3800 nails were recovered, 17% (n=653) of which were handforged nails. Nails were handforged until the invention of cut nails in 1790. Within five years (1795) almost all nails in use were cut, until the invention of wire nails in the mid-19th century. Less than 4% (n=141) of the nails recovered were wire.

Almost 4200 sherds of European and American ceramics were found during Phase II excavations. Many of these, 1684 pieces (40%), were redware, a utilitarian ceramic common on farmsites and often associated with dairying. Because redwares were used in America from the earliest colonial period to the present, other ceramic types recovered during excavation are much more useful in dating the period of occupation of the site. The

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most common type of ceramic found on the site was pearlware, a refined earthenware having a mean date of popularity of 1810. Pearlware comprises 44% (n=1831) of the ceramic assemblage. The forerunner of pearlware was creamware, which has a mean date of 1790. There were 576 sherds of creamware found, representing 14% of the total ceramics. Seven pieces of English stoneware were found on site. The six pieces of white salt-glaze stoneware have a mean date of 1763 and the single piece of scratch blue salt-glaze stoneware has a mean date of 1760. The 21 sherds of porcelain that were found are difficult to date. Seven of these may date to the 18th century (or earlier). But the remaining 14 pieces must date to the 20th century. These 14 pieces cross-mend to make a teacup with the name "Nippon" on the base. The few remaining ceramics are also of recent date. There were 32 sherds of American stoneware probably dating to the 19th century, and 12 pieces of hard white/yellow, a refined earthenware first introduced around 1820.

Some of the more interesting artifacts are of a personal nature. Artifacts of dress include buttons, cuff-links (sleeve buttons), a collar button, and glass beads. Other unique artifacts include a thimble, jews harp, pocket knives, and toys (discussed further below). Several clay tobacco pipe fragments were found including an almost complete pipebowl. Three coins were recovered: a 1732 George II halfpenny; an 1822 large U.S. cent; and a 1939 U.S. penny.

Features and Context of Artifact Recovery

Several features were located during the course of the excavations. The most impressive feature we excavated was a buried cellar hole (Feature 2) measuring approximately 10 X 4.5 m. or 15' X 33' which is almost 1 X 2 rods. The rod (16.5 feet) was used as a standard in building construction during the 19th century. The cellar was located under the lawn on the east side of the house. The cellar foundation was made of fieldstone, the lower courses of which were still in place. There was also a large quantity of rock in the cellar fill along with a considerable amount of brick. The brick suggests that this structure had a brick chimney.

The artifacts from Feature 2 fill suggest that the cellar had been filled no later than the first half of the 19th century. The artifacts further suggest that the dominant period of occupation or use of this area prior to filling in

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creamware was the predominate ceramic found and a large percentage of the nails were handforged. There were shards of a case bottle and wine bottle found in the fill, along with window glass. Bone of domestic mammals along with fish and shell were also present. The 1732 George II halfpenny came from the cellar as well.

The cellar varied in depth from 150 cm. at its western limits to 85 cm. in the northeastern corner. This depth variation occurred because the cellar is now on the side of a hill, but it originally had been built on level ground, as explained by Mr. Wilson, the property owner. Prior to 1936, access to the house had been across the railroad tracks from the west, and the house sat on a level plain with steep banks to the north and east. In the mid-1930s a flood washed away the railroad bridge across the Androscoggin River. When the bridge was rebuilt, it and the tracks that approached it were raised several feet. Access to the house was then blocked by the railroad to one side and steep banks on two other sides. Because of this access problem Mr. Wilson was able to buy the property cheaply in 1936, but he had to build a new access to the house. He did this by using a horse drawn drag and cutting down the steep bank on the east side of the house, thus forming a more gradual slope and the present driveway. In dragging the dirt to create the slope, he cut through the buried cellar from west to east. Besides clarifying how the original structure associated with this cellar hole had once sat on the land, this information also suggests that original construction of the railroad had not isolated the Purintons from the rest of the village, an idea suggested in previous historic research into the Purinton house (Rand, 1989. M.S. on file at MHPC).

This cellar is probably the remains of James Purinton's first house on the property. This house may have been erected some time after Purinton purchased the property from Robert Gore in 1775 and prior to 1802. The property was deeded to James' son, Ezekiel, upon James' death. Ezekiel married in 1810, and in about the same year built the existing house. The father may have continued living in his original house until his death in 1832, or he may have moved in with his son, demolishing the older house at that time.

Feature 2 could also represent the cellar of Robert Gore's garrison house, which Purinton may have occupied as his first residence. What may help to confirm or deny this hypothesis

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is another set of features on the west side of the existing house, Features 12, 13, 15, and 16. Feature 12 is a trench approximately 30 cm. wide and 92 cm. deep. This feature has been intersected by four test pits, but neither end of the trench has yet been found. The trench contained few artifacts, but these included redware, creamware, pearlware and porcelain ceramics, brick, and bone. At present our assumption is that Feature 12 was a palisade trench which surrounded Gore's garrison.

Feature 13 consists of five individual features labeled 13a-e, all located along the eastern side of Feature 12. Only one of these features was completely exposed (Feature 13b), revealing a rectangular form with straight sides, 84 cm. deep. Judging by what has been exposed of the remaining four features, they seem to be following the same form. The artifacts from features 13 are the same as from feature 12, with the addition of cut and handforged nails and a piece of lead scrap. Features 13a-e appear to be rectangular post holes, although no post molds have yet been found.

Feature 15 was a bowl shaped depression with a maximum depth of 110 cm. This unexplained feature appears to be associated with Feature 12, but exactly how is not known. The artifacts from Feature 15 included redware, stoneware, window glass, cut nails, brick and slag.

Feature 16 was a dark stain, rectangular in profile, containing charcoal. It appears to be the remains of a burned beam, sill, or log. Feature 16 may be associated with features 12 and 15, but not necessarily. Doubts as to its association arise because it was not oriented parallel or perpendicular to feature 12. It is closer to being perpendicular to the existing house. This feature contained only brick fragments and a piece of an iron strap.

Feature 8 was discovered along the same side of the house, four meters south of Feature 12. Feature 8 consisted of a line of laid-up rock running east/west along the north wall of a pit, beginning about 5 cm. below the surface. This rock appears to be the footing for the entryway to the existing house. This entryway is now on the east side of the house, and had been moved to the east side by the time Mr. Wilson bought the property. It was probably moved when the railroad was constructed in 1850 because it was too close to the tracks. A concrete walkway can still be seen on the west side of the house, heading toward the railroad embankment.

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Feature 11 was found also on the west side of the house, in the corner formed by the main house and the ell. The test pit that encountered Feature 11 was originally begun as a 1 X 1 m. square, but was eventually opened to include 4.5 square meters to determine the shape of Feature 11. Because of time constraints only two square meter areas (N220/21 E116) were excavated to the bottom of the feature. This feature is a large oval pit approximately 2 X 2.5 m. across and 185 cm. deep. The pit had been dug very close to the south wall of the foundation of the main house. The other side of this wall is a crawl space. The feature fill contained artifacts throughout most of its depth. These artifacts suggest that the pit was filled during the first half of the 19th century. Pearlware was the predominant ceramic, and there were no modern artifacts.

During the excavation of Feature 11, it was believed that the bottom of the feature had been reached when marine clay was encountered at approximately 130 cm. below the surface. However, it proved possible to dig through this 20-40 cm. thick clay layer. The clay was thickest, almost forming a wall, along the north side of the feature, the side against the house foundation. More artifacts were found below the clay including an 1822 U.S. large cent.

There is insufficient information to determine the purpose of this pit designated Feature 11. Our hypothesis is that the pit was a cistern for the collection of water. It is located at a point where, with the aid of drains, water from several roof lines could be funnelled into the pit. If this hypothesis is correct, it is possible a pipe might be found running from the bottom of the pit, through the crawl space, and into the cellar of the house. The clay might also have been used as a partial lining for the pit to keep water out of the crawl space and cellar. The cistern hypothesis does have one major drawback: the surrounding soils are sandy providing poor water retention. If clay were available to line the pit, it would seem reasonable to line the whole pit and not just one side. The clay may simply be the result of the backfilling process of the pit.

Four unidentified features were found near the rear door which leads into the shed of the present house. Feature 3 was initially found while excavating transect 15, STP 4. In this 50 X 50 cm. pit and at the bottom of the feature, was found the leather sole and heel of a shoe. The size of the holes made by the pegs which held the upper leather to the sole and heel

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of the shoe suggest that wooden (birch) pegs were used, placing the date of manufacture of the shoe before 1854 when iron nails were introduced to the industry. Further, the irregular spacing of these holes indicates that manufacture occurred before an automatic pegging machine was introduced in 1811. Finally, the shape of the holes tells us that the pegs were hand made, placing the date of manufacture prior to 1800 when machine made pegs were first used. The short length of the shoe (19 cm. [7.5"]) suggest it was a woman's or youth's shoe.

A 1 X 1 m. test pit (N209 E124) was opened in order to follow Feature 3. The result was that the feature appeared to reach its south and west extent in this pit as a vague, bowl shaped depression with a maximum depth of 65 cm. Since the northeast extent of Feature 3 was noted in T15 STP4, the shape of the feature can be assumed to be circular. No other artifacts were found in this feature.

While pursuing Feature 3, Feature 5 was discovered in the same 1 X 1 meter pit. The pursuit of this feature in turn necessitated the opening of another 1 X 1 meter pit diagonally to the southeast (N208 E125). This feature ended in the latter pit and proved to be bowl shaped as well, with a maximum depth of 25 cm. Artifacts recovered from this feature included pearlware, redware, calcined bone, and cut and handforged nails.

Also found in N208 E125 were Features 9 & 10. Both of these features were circular reddened stains with a darkened center, suggesting the presence of a fire. Feature 9 was 40 cm. in diameter and Feature 10 was 15 cm. in diameter. No artifacts were found in either feature, but a small quantity of charcoal was recovered from Feature 9. These features could represent historic or prehistoric activity; however, no prehistoric artifacts or debitage were found in either N209 E124 or N208 E125.

The remains of what appears to have been a privy (designated Feature 1) were found at the eastern end of the shed, partly in the existing driveway. This feature consists of a pit at least 80 cm. square and 120 cm. deep. The feature fill contained the full range of artifacts found on this site, suggesting that the pit was not filled until the late 19 or early 20th century. There was only about 10 cm. of dark organic soil on the bottom of this pit, indicating that it was either cleaned out before being filled, or that it had a short life span as a privy. Sherds of an almost complete porcelain

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tea cup were removed from this dark soil at the bottom of the feature. On the bottom of the cup was printed the name "Nippon," further reinforcing the suggested date of filling this pit. The extension of the shed directly to the west of this pit contains a three-hole privy which Mr. Wilson's family used when they first moved to the dwelling. The extant privy and Feature 1 are not physically connected.

The final set of historic features to be discussed were found in N210 E139, and comprise Features 4, 6, & 7. These features were a confusing mixture of ground disturbances ranging in depth from 60 to 70 cm. One thing that they all had in common however, was that they all contained toys. These toys all appeared to date to the late 1930s through the 1940s, which suggested that Mr. Wilson's children might be able to shed some light on these features. Mr. Wilson's sons confirmed that this was the area where they played as children and they "dug all over the place." Prior to Mr. Wilson constructing his driveway, the corn crib had been located adjacent to this area.

Prehistoric Material Around the Purinton House

During the course of testing transect 12, prehistoric material was recovered near the southeast corner of the barn. It was decided to excavate a 4 X 4 meter area here to test the density of prehistoric material and presence of features. A total of 73 flakes, six pieces of fire cracked rock, and a feature were found in this 4 X 4 excavation (Fig. 20). The flakes represent an odd collection of raw materials consisting of grey chert or argillite, rhyolite, and (most common) felsite. Many of these flakes are flat and thin. One felsite flake (#1285) is definitely a biface thinning flake, exhibiting a portion of a long, thin biface edge. Its large size, and flat, thin form is probably indicative of Susquehanna Tradition lithic technology. There were no Woodland period ceramics found in this area, further supporting the conclusion that this is a Late Archaic activity area. The feature, Feature 14, was a dark and reddened stain about 40 cm. square, containing only charcoal. This feature might have been the base of a prehistoric hearth.

A distribution map of flakes and firecracked rock around Feature 14 does not exhibit significant clustering within the 4 X 4 meter area we excavated, with the possible exception of a lower density of material within 1 meter of Feature 14. All flakes and FCR were recovered from a soil context which we

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interpret as a plowzone. Of course the reddened and darkened soil stain designated Feature 14 extended below the level of plow disturbance and therefore remained intact. However, only charcoal was recovered from Feature 14. The exact limits of this artifact distribution, and any other features nearby, will only be discovered with more intensive excavation. No debitage or other prehistoric debris was encountered in transect 9 to the east of the concentration. Testpits 2 (2 flakes), 4 (2 flakes), 5 (1 flake), and 9 (1 flake) on Transect 12 contained prehistoric debitage and fire-cracked rock. Ignoring the one flake from testpit 9 as a possible displaced item, this prehistoric locus may have a diameter of 15 to 20 meters. A substantial sample of charcoal fragments (5.0 gr) was recovered by flotation of the Feature 14 fill in the MHPC laboratory. All were wood charcoal. A sample of forty fragments was identified by Nancy Asch Sidell as pine charcoal. The sample has been submitted for radiocarbon dating.

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The town of Topsham is strategically located along several major water travel routes and is rich in natural resources. Topsham's southern and western boarder is the Androscoggin River which affords access to the western interior. To the east is Merrymeeting Bay into which flow five rivers, including the Androscoggin and the Kennebec. The Kennebec is one of Maine's largest rivers, providing access into north-central Maine, and even into Canada via portages. Because of its location and natural resources, Topsham was settled early in Maine's history.

The area was probably first settled around 1632 by Thomas Purchase who, along with George Way, received a patent from The Council for New England to the lands bounding the Pejepscot River (later to be called the Androscoggin River). The first settler in Topsham was Thomas Gyles who located his homestead on Pleasant Point in 1669. He had very few neighbors, all of whom, including Gyles, abandoned the area by 1676 at the start of the colonial/-Indian wars. It was not until after a precarious peace with the Indians was established by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 that Europeans returned to the area. The newly formed Pejepscot Proprietors, having acquired the lands of Purchase and Way, along with other deeds, began establishing settlers in the area. However, Indian conflicts keep the population low until the end of the Indian wars in 1760. In 1750 Topsham had only 18 families, but by 1760 that number had doubled. Topsham was incorporated in 1768.

Topsham's basic economy was that of agriculture, but the town began to expand this economic basis by the end of the 18th century. Topsham was an ideal location for water powered mills that were active in town through the 18th and 19th centuries. Other industrial activity at different times during the period included shipbuilding, lumbering, mining and manufacturing. The success of these varied economic ventures in Topsham is evident in the fine homes built in the town by successful residents.

The Phase II historic archaeological work at the Purinton/Wilson house has proved rewarding from both an historical and an archaeological point of view. A substantial amount of additional information has been learned of the lives of the people who lived on this plot of land since the mid-18th century. For example, the quantity and variety of creamware and pearlware suggest that the Purinton's were financially sound and were able to "keep up" with the changes in ceramic styles which fashionable society dictated. However, if they had been wealthy, there would have been much more porcelain in the ceramic assemblage. The high quantity of redware suggests that one of the activities which took

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place on this farmsite was dairying. This further confirms that, although prosperous, the Purinton's were working members of the community.

Phase II archaeology has also given us additional information concerning the layout of this 19th-century farmsite. Adjacent to the existing house a previously unknown privy (Feature 1) was located as well as a possible cistern (Feature 11); the latter suggesting one method the occupants may have used to obtain fresh water. Further work is needed on Feature 11 to verify this cistern hypothesis. We now also know that the entryway to the existing house was originally on the west side of the house, but, probably because of the construction of the railroad, it was relocated to the east side of the house.

Most significantly, the archaeological work has uncovered the remains of a buried cellar hole (Feature 2) on the east side of the existing house, and a group of as yet unidentified features on the west side of the house (Features 12, 13 15, and 16). Whether these features are related has yet to be determined, but most likely some if not all of these features are the remains of a garrison house built by Robert Gore, owner of the property from 1761 to 1775.

While the most basic criterion for eligibility to the National Register is that a site be at least 50 years old, the Maine Historic Preservation Commission has established more specific guidelines in determining the significance of a historical site. In Maine, significant sites are those of first and possibly second generation settlers or re-settlers into an area which remain relatively undisturbed. In the area covered by this report, this basic list includes all relatively intact 17th-century sites and first and/or second generation sites resettled after the end of the Indian hostilities in 1713. Also significant are those sites relating to unique ethnic or cultural groups, and/or important individuals, activities, or events, or building types (such as the garrison house, and the early 19th century farmstead considered herein).

Gore's garrison house is a significant site under these latter criteria. There were many garrisons in Maine and Massachusetts during the 17th and first half of the 18th century, including the only extant example in Maine, the McIntire Garrison in York (Clark 1983: 67-69; Borne 1876). A garrison house was simply a fortified house where inhabitants could take shelter in times of trouble. These houses were usually owner built and therefore varied considerably in style and construction technique. Some were converted from an ordinary house while others were

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specially built to withstand attack. They might have been constructed of thick log walls, earthen walls, stone walls, and/or be enclosed with a palisade of 10-15' high walls. One unique example in Maine was the Larrabee Garrison on the Mousam River in Kennebunk which consisted of five houses enclosed by a one acre palisade in the form of a parallelogram (Borne 1876).

Except for the McIntire Garrison, most information on garrisons in Maine derives from oral traditions and myths. It is possible that the assertion that Gore's house was a garrison is just a myth too, since the only reference to it is an unsubstantiated sentence in Wheeler's History of Brunswick (Wheeler 1974: 652). Also, as mentioned in the introduction, 1761 is rather late to have built a garrison house in this coastal region of Maine. Excavation of the Gore "garrison" affords us the opportunity to confirm or deny that this building was indeed a garrison, and add to our scant knowledge of garrison houses in Maine, especially one built at such a late date.

Continued excavation of the 19th-century Purinton farmsite will reveal how the site of the Gore garrison evolved to the present. The archaeological site is associated with a set of farm buildings that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Importantly the layout of the site itself as an early 19th-century farm contributes to the significance. We have already demonstrated that archaeological testing has much to offer for an understanding of the physical layout of the farm. Farms of the mid to late 19th century are well documented through newspaper articles and advertisements, books, pamphlets, photographs, diaries, journals, agricultural censuses, and numerous other sources. Early 19th century farms are poorly documented by these sources. Such farms have been well researched archaeologically elsewhere (see for example: Day 1980; Stewart-Abernathy 1986; Lees 1986; Orser 1988). Archaeological research on 19th-century farms is uncommon in Maine because of the priority of 17th and 18th-century historic archaeological sites. Most 19th-century farmsite excavation in Maine has been the result of construction work, or due to the fact that an earlier site lies within the farm property (see Mahlstedt 1980; Griffin and Faulkner 1981). Norm Buttrick has done the most academic archaeological work on 19th-century farms in Maine (Buttrick 1983a, 1983b, 1985). Buttrick's sites were field schools for either his high school archaeology classes or a college class, designed to train people in archaeological field methods rather than to answer archaeological research questions.

Further Phase III excavations at the Purinton/Wilson Site

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afford us the opportunity to answer some of the questions being asked at other 19th-century farmsites around the country. For example, what was the spatial and chronological patterning of rural/residential landscapes, i.e., how did the Purintons use and modify the land over time? At present we only have the present configuration of land and buildings, but this present configuration is the result of the evolution of the property. Further work can elucidate changing patterns of activity on the site which can be compared to urban and rural contemporaries. The archaeological record can also help answer larger questions of cultural change and how the Purintons dealt with it. For example, how did the coming of the railroad change the lifestyle of the Purintons? More mundane questions might be answered as well, such as where did the Purinton children play and how did that play differ from later (20th century) patterns.

The prehistoric component associated with a radiocarbon dated feature southeast of the Purinton House Barn is certainly significant, for two reasons. Remarkably few prehistoric occupations in Maine have been associated with or oriented toward a small, unnavigable stream. This situation is even more curious when the rest of site 15.153, oriented toward the Androscoggin River, was nearby. Perhaps we can discover why someone or some small group of people chose to orient themselves to a small stream valley away from the most likely camping spot. Because of the rarity of this type of site location, and small size of the occupation, the prehistoric locus southeast of the Purinton Barn is probably a limited occupation, perhaps a single component. It has been associated with a date and is probably uncontaminated by other prehistoric occupation. Each of these attributes by themselves is a sufficient case for the significance of the prehistoric locus. It is likely, although not certain, that the locus belongs to a Susquehanna Tradition occupation. The significance criteria established for Susquehanna Tradition occupations in the draft Susquehanna Tradition Study Unit (Spiess 1989) state in part: "The component must be separable from other prehistoric material on the basis of horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphic separation or clustering, and it must be associated with one or more of the following types of data: 1) features, 2) calcined or non-calcined vertebrate faunal remains and/or invertebrate faunal remains, 3) charred plant remains, 4) or human biological remains. The association of Susquehanna Tradition material with features may be assumed if the site yields a reasonable density of Susquehanna Tradition material separable from other prehistoric material as

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and if some evidence of feature presence (such as fire-cracked rock, or charcoal concentrations associated stratigraphically or horizontally with Susquehanna Tradition lithic material) is present. The prehistoric locus behind the Purinton Barn clearly meets these criteria.

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