Walpole Presbyterian/Congregational Meetinghouse, Bristol, Lincoln County, Maine, 1772; repaired 1872

The two-story framed meetinghouse is one of the smaller eighteenth-century New England houses of worship to survive in tact. The building measures 42 ½ feet in length and 32 ½ feet in depth and sits on a low granite foundation. The walls and gabled roof are covered by shingles. There are three doorways into the building. The principal entrance is on the longer south wall through a pair of double doors framed by pedimented frontispiece. A smaller pedimented frontispiece frames the single door in the center of the west gable wall and a simple architrave and cornice surround the single door in the center of the east gable end. A double tier of flat-headed windows with molded cornices light the building. In the center of the north rear wall is a pulpit window. The glazing of this window forms an arch but the opening itself is flat-headed.

The meetinghouse is framed in a series of irregularly spaced bent—six on the longer walls and four on the gable end walls. The large two-story posts are sheathed with boards with beaded edges. The roof contains of six pairs of principal rafters supported by queen post. The mill sawn roof sheathing is supported by a ridge beams and a series of common purlins.

The interior is finished with a plastered ceiling and walls. A central 5 ½-foot aisle leads from the south double doors to the pulpit on the north wall. The gable end doors open into smaller alleys that form a passage for the line of perimeter wall pews. In the center of the building are two blocks of six square pews. All of these pews have raised paneled wainscoting, which is now painted. The pulpit is the typical New England type with a projecting central section flanked by rectangular paneled sections. A half-polygonal shaped hinged communion table top is located in front of the lower part of the pulpit. The lower part of the pulpit has a central stemmed based with decorative gadrooning and is painted in imitation marble, which flares upward to form the polygonal center of the principal tier of the pulpit. To the west is a ramped staircase with turned balusters. The panels of the center projection are arched and the tops of those to the side follow the upward slope of the large molded cap. A window lights the back of the pulpit and the opening is flanked by fluted pilasters that are also painted in imitation marble. The flat-headed polygonally shaped canopy has a molded cornice and is supported by two iron straps anchored to the back wall.

A ten-foot deep gallery surrounds the pulpit on three sides. The gallery is supported by turned columns that have been painted in imitation marble. Access to the gallery is from a double set of stairs in the southeast and southwest corners of the meetinghouse. The lower level of the gallery is lined with square pews with raised panels. The upper level of the gallery has two rows of long benches. The front row of seats has a tall back and curved bench ends.

Images:
HABS drawings, 1930s
CRL, plan, 1990