



News Release

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21th Annual List of *Maine's Most Endangered Historic Places* Announced

Yarmouth, ME – September 12th, 2019. Maine Preservation announced its 21st list of the Most Endangered Historic Places in Maine on the television show 207, which aired on WCSH-6 Portland and WLBS-2 Bangor on Wednesday, September 11th, 2019, at 7 pm.

Maine Preservation is the only statewide, nonprofit membership organization promoting and preserving historic places, buildings, downtowns and neighborhoods, and strengthening the cultural and economic vitality of Maine communities.

The Most Endangered Historic Places List began in 1996 for the purpose of identifying and raising public awareness about preserving threatened historic properties. Since that time 165 places have been included on the list of which 60 have been saved, 36 are currently undergoing preservation, and 20 have been lost.

"Maine's 2019 Most Endangered Historic Places List demonstrates the wide range of buildings that make Maine special," said Greg Paxton, executive director of Maine Preservation. "From high-style mansions and small, rustic vernacular houses, to both grand and humble meeting houses -- and one enormous fort -- the 2019 list reflects the diversity of our built environment and the strong sense of place and history they provide us are key parts of what make Maine, Maine. But without concerted public action, these significant historic places could be lost forever!"

This year's list highlights nine irreplaceable historic treasures: the Charles A. Jordan House, Auburn; the Callendar House, Bar Harbor; the Old Town House, Belgrade; the Readfield Union Meetinghouse, Readfield; the Chaloner House, Lubec; the Fales Homestead, Thomaston; the Tallman House, Bath; Fort Gorges, Portland; and the Camps and Cottages of Maine.

For more information on each of the listings, please visit: <https://www.mainepreservation.org/most-endangered>.

New to the list in 2019 (listed in alphabetical order by location):

- **Maine Camps & Cottages**

The Story. The bucolic ideal of a Maine camp or cottage is inextricably linked to the history of the Pine Tree State. In defined areas along the coast, such as at Mount Desert Island and Prouts Neck, large-scale and sometimes year-round cottages were built by summer residents --“rusticators”-- who arrived by ferry and train to escape cities to the south. More typical along the coast were modest, small-scale cottages. Inland, an array of rustic camps permitted Mainers and visitors to get back to nature and enjoy the healthful benefits of fresh air, the outdoors, and simple pursuits such as fishing, boating and hunting.

The Threat. Current design trends have led to the wholesale removal of historic features in old camps and cottages, stripping them of their character and authentic qualities. Other classic getaways are being demolished and replaced with gargantuan structures that loom over neighboring homes and change the scale, views, and historic access points of rural communities.

The Solution. As one camp steward says, “We don’t consider ourselves to be the owners of our camp. Instead, we consider ourselves to be its newest stewards. The owners and their descendants cared for the camp and its story for more than 100 years, and we are privileged to have the honor of doing so for the years to come.”

Maine Preservation believes that the following efforts will lead to improved outcomes for our state’s historic camps and cottages:

- Educating owners about ways to modernize and update cottages and camps without destroying the durable historic materials that give them their character;
- Celebrating the authentic sense of place and history that characterize Maine’s vacation places and their role as an escape from the hyper-connected world in which we live;
- Instilling preservation principles and locally protecting historic camps and cottages; and
- Limiting the scale of new houses based on their surroundings.

- **Charles A. Jordan House, Auburn**

The Story. Since 1880, the Charles A. Jordan House has held a place of prominence within the Lewiston-Auburn area. The imposing three-story residence with a square tower was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1974 and deemed “one of the most ornate Victorian homes in the [area] if not the State of Maine.” The owner and architect Charles A. Jordan designed a number of buildings nearby, including Edward Little High School, the Stanley Dry Plate Factory, the Avon Mill, and many private residences. Jordan lived here until his death, when the house was sold to Deacon David French. (The home is alternatively known as the Deacon French House.) In the 1940s, William J. LeBrun converted the property into a 10-room boarding house (known as the Academy House) and the building has been owned and operated by the LeBrun family ever since.

The Threat. A 2018 act of arson ravaged the house. Quick action by the owners temporarily shored up the roof and stabilized the structure, but considerable and timely restoration efforts must be made to halt further deterioration, and to make the building habitable.

The Solution. The Charles A. Jordan House requires immediate investment. As an income-producing property, it is eligible for federal and state historic tax credits. The owners hope that the rehabilitated structure, which holds a place in the hearts of many Auburn residents, will once again serve the needs of the community.

- **Callendar House, Bar Harbor**

The Story. This grand and imposing Bar Harbor “cottage,” built in 1901 for Mrs. John Callendar Livingston, was designed by the legendary architect Fredrick Savage. The structure was Savage’s most formal design -- and also the most expensive (due in no small part to the fact that a fire destroyed the entire building just prior to completion, requiring a near-complete rebuild.) Savage was

a native of Northeast Harbor, designing over 300 buildings, and was the most influential architect in the development of Mount Desert Island. The vast majority of his work comprised the cottages and hotels that marked Bar Harbor's place as a "summer colony." Savage built cottages in many styles, including numerous prominent Shingle Style structures that became popular in the late 19th and early 20th century. The Callendar House, however, is firmly Colonial Revival in design and was the first brick summer "cottage" in Bar Harbor. At the time of its construction it was praised by the *Bar Harbor Record* for both its refinement and its modernity.

The Threat. In 1992, the Callendar House was purchased by The Jackson Laboratory at a foreclosure auction. Since then, the structure has remained largely unoccupied. While 25+ years of limited use takes a toll on any structure, the most pressing issue here is the lack of a future path for the building as the owner considers campus expansion plans that could include demolition of this landmark.

The Solution. The Callendar House is significant both for its impressive architecture and for its evocative representation of Bar Harbor's gilded age. Maine Preservation would like to work with The Jackson Laboratory to help identify an adaptive use for the house that ensures its continued existence and enhances its value to the Lab.

- **Henry Tallman House, Bath**

The Story. The 1820s Tallman House is an outstanding Federal and Greek Revival-style house remodeled in the 1840s by Henry Tallman. Tallman was a prominent resident of Bath and a former attorney general of Maine who later served as a judge on the Bath Municipal Court. His home stands high on a hill overlooking the city and the Kennebec River, with a large cupola, floor-to-ceiling windows, and a wrap-around porch girded by fluted columns. The interior is a treasure with a curved Federal-style staircase, striking black and white marble fireplaces, unusual pocket doors that are raised like window sashes, and a beehive oven in the kitchen.

The Threat. Bath is still experiencing the effects of the last economic downturn with more than 30 vacant houses awaiting resolution of mortgage disputes. Abandoned by its most recent owners, the Tallman House has been vacant for more than four years. The mortgage holder pays property taxes but has made no move to foreclose and release the property back to the real estate market. The house is in need of substantial and critical repairs--including a new roof--before it becomes unsalvageable.

The Solution. Maine Preservation has the capacity and desire to assist the owner in selling the property to someone who will stabilize and rehabilitate the house. Maine Preservation calls on the mortgagee to enter into a dialogue about the property's future and aid its transition to a new owner.

- **Old Town House, Belgrade**

The Story. In 1813, Belgrade required a formal place for its town meetings which, until that time, had been held in private residences. As a result, officials raised \$200 dollars to construct a "town house" next to the burying ground (now known as the Woodside Cemetery). Completed in 1815, the Old Town House is one of Belgrade's oldest buildings. Annual meetings were held in the single-story, post-and-beam structure from 1815 until 1872, as was the 1819 vote to separate from Massachusetts. After the building was used as a quarantine site during a smallpox epidemic, meetings were moved to the local masonic hall. From 1873 to 1918 the building was used by the Woodside Cemetery. Pursuant to the wishes of Belgrade's citizens, the Town of Belgrade recently entered into an agreement with the Belgrade Historical Society to allow the society to preserve and restore the Old Town House and use it for display and meeting space.

The Threat. An assessment of the structure by the Belgrade Historical Society identified several critical issues, most significantly that the building's frame is infested with wood beetles and there is dangerous water infiltration.

The Solution. The Belgrade Historical Society, understanding the significance of this building to the community, has launched a \$200,000 capital campaign to restore the old meetinghouse and has already raised over \$75,000 toward this goal. Meeting the full campaign goal means the society can protect this local landmark and transform it into a useful space for current and future generations.

- **Chaloner House, Lubec**

The Story. The Chaloner House, also known as Cleaves Tavern, is a large saltbox-shaped residence overlooking the Lubec waterfront. Completed circa 1818, this timber frame structure is unusual for a floor plan that features two primary entrances and three formal front rooms on each floor -- unlike the vast majority of Federal-era houses. The floor plan and historic evidence strongly suggest that the house provided living quarters for a family as well as somewhat separate, and significantly less formal, facilities for boarders. The Chaloner House was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2007. In its nomination, the Maine Historic Preservation Commission noted the importance of this house to the region, as it “expands our conceptions of the living arrangements of 19th-century residents of Maine” and represents a regionally rare property type.

The Threat. The current owner has held the property for more than 40 years and is dedicated to its preservation but is not in a position to manage the property. The building is currently unoccupied, deteriorating, and subject to a reverse mortgage. Without prompt action the Chaloner House could be lost. The Lubec community cares deeply about this important structure but does not have the power to force action.

The Solution. Maine Preservation has the capacity and desire to assist the owner in selling the property to someone who will stabilize and rehabilitate the house. Maine Preservation calls on the mortgagee to enter into a dialogue about the property’s future and aid its transition to a new owner.

- **Fort Gorges, Portland**

The Story. Completed between 1864 and obsolete before it could be placed into service, Fort Gorges is an imposing structure that covers Hog Island Ledge in Casco Bay in close view of mainland Portland. Constructed under the guidance of chief stonemason Col. Ruben Smart it is similar to the design and size of Fort Sumter – but built entirely with granite rather than brick. Smart also built Fort Knox and made improvements to Fort Prebble. Fort Gorges was intended to protect the mainland from naval attack but served largely as a storage facility until it was deaccessioned by the federal government and acquired by the City of Portland in 1960. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1973 for its significance as an excellent example of mid-nineteenth century fort construction, the fort is also recognized as a local landmark. Since 1960, the fort has been in use as a city park and is a popular seasonal destination for thousands of kayakers and boaters. Friends of Fort Gorges continues volunteer efforts to clean up the site and work with city officials to develop a viable preservation plan.

The Threat. Fort Gorges' exposed location has subjected it to punishing weather for more than 155 years. Decades of deferred maintenance mean there is a pressing need for stabilization and repair of the masonry walls and the crumbling wharf. Most critically, there is no strong, committed or funded vision for this irreplaceable historic site. If action is not taken the fort could become unsafe for visitors, and more of the historic fabric will succumb to the elements.

The Solution. This summer, new interest from a developer has focused attention and energy on the Fort’s future. This comes at a fortuitous moment as the Friends group embarks on a \$250,000 fundraising campaign to address immediate preservation needs. Maine Preservation believes it is imperative to capitalize on this opportunity and forge a shared vision and master plan by creating a working group of stakeholders to identify the best ownership structure, operating policies, funding needs and stewards for the fort in the 21st century.

- **Readfield Union Meetinghouse, Readfield**

The Story. The Readfield Union Meeting House is significant both for its architecture, which is unusually refined, and for its key role in the Readfield community. When the Meeting House was built in 1828, the rural area surrounding Readfield Corner had several congregations, but they lacked the numbers and resources to construct their own church buildings. These congregations came together to build the Union Meeting House as a multi-denominational meeting place, with each congregation using the building some of the time. The meetinghouse continued to serve this purpose until the mid-20th century, when the local congregations were finally able to build their own buildings, and the Union Meeting House fell out of regular use.

Built by Richard Mace, Jere Page, and Francis Hunt without an architect, the building is the second-oldest brick church in Maine, with a frame and clapboard tower that includes a clock and an octagonal belfry. Several of the sanctuary's arched windows have stenciled stained glass, which is only found in one other church in Maine. The building's most striking, significant, and famous feature is its incredible tromp l'oeil decoration, which was added in 1866 -1868 and covers all four walls and the ceiling of the sanctuary. This work is considered to be the finest example of tromp l'oeil in Maine. The painting is attributed to the artist Charles Schumacher, who is known to have painted about 51 other buildings in Maine. This may be the only remaining, intact example of his work.

The Threat. The Union Meeting House has suffered from years of disuse. Despite ongoing maintenance efforts, the building remains threatened due to its age, the fragility of the murals, and the steep expense of rehabilitation and maintenance.

The Solution. Today, the building is owned and maintained by the Readfield Union Meeting house Company which has been rehabilitating the structure and needs to raise \$600,000 to complete its five-year restoration project. The nonprofit's plan includes replication and resurrection of the spire. With sufficient financial assistance, the Readfield Union Meeting house Company will be able to continue efforts to stabilize and maintain the Union Meeting House, with the goal of using the building for concerts, events, and community meetings.

- **Fales Homestead, Thomaston**

The Story. The Fales Homestead is one of the earliest houses in Thomaston, and one of the last remaining 18th-century houses in the town. Likely built in 1786, the home was occupied by the Fales family until the mid-19th century. By the early 20th century, the home was owned by the Fernald sisters, who resided there for more than 70 years. (The home also has been known as the Fernald House.)

Despite several changes in appearance over the last two centuries, the home remains an excellent example of a Colonial low-posted Cape, with its central chimney, fireplace, and its steep roof. The home also showcases an innovative use of graduated clapboards; narrow at the bottom and increasing in width as the boards march to the roofline. These graduated clapboards were intended to help to decrease exposure to harsh Maine winters.

The Threat. The Fales Homestead has been vacant since the passing of its last in-state owner in 2007. The house now suffers from extensive deferred maintenance. Without intervention, the house may become damaged beyond repair and succumb to the elements, as the formerly attached shed and barn already have.

The Solution. The Fales Homestead has withstood over 233 years of Maine winters. The property could last for generations to come if prompt care is provided. Maine Preservation hopes to work with the current owner of the house and the community to transition the property to a new steward who can ensure that the Fales Homestead is both restored and maintained.

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