

BOOKS

*Photographs by Paul Wainwright
with essay by Peter Benes*



A Space for Faith *The Colonial Meetinghouses of New England*

What is a colonial meetinghouse? It's a structure that meets the following criteria: it was built at tax payer expense (except in Rhode Island), and it was used for both religious worship and town business.

When built in the 1700s, colonial meetinghouses were the center of both religious and civic life - concepts not at all separate in colonial New England. Paul Wainwright has collected a wealth of images of New England's surviving colonial meetinghouses that go beyond mere documentation of what these buildings look like - they explore the feeling of "presence" that exists in them. An accompanying essay by noted colonial historian Peter Benes elaborates on the communities that built and used these meetinghouses, and traces a narrative rich in the history and architecture of New England.



About his book, *A Space for Faith*, Wainwright comments, "This is the first book of my photographs to be published, and the only current book featuring images from all the 'mint condition' meetinghouses still standing in New England today. The images are complemented by a fine essay by Peter Benes and commentary from other noted experts in Colonial history, so the book appeals both to readers of history, as well as those who enjoy historic and architectural imagery. My work seeks to convey my emotions about these places, and is in the permanent collections of both private and corporate collections including the **Boston Public Library** and the **Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.**" The Artist's Statement: "While many of these meetinghouses have been torn down or renovated well beyond their original appearance, the structures included in this book and accompanying exhibition look much as they did when they were first built. I feel a "presence" whenever I am in one of these places - not in a haunting way, but with a sense of wonderment about the people who built and used them. My photographs of these structures are devoid of people, yet to me they are all about our nation's ancestors, whose lives - the day-to-day joys and cares - are not much different from mine today. Sometimes when I am in one of these meetinghouses I love to sit and contemplate those who came before me. I wonder how many others have had the same experience. While architectural photographs are usually seen as illustrations of what a structure looks like, this is not my primary intent. Rather, I see beauty and mystery in these meetinghouses. I love the textures of the wood. I am impressed with their regularity and symmetry - they are beautiful in their austerity and simplicity. Perhaps romantically, I suspect these qualities reflect the lives of those who built them. Their religious beliefs were unambiguous and the simple lines of their meetinghouses reflect this."

www.paulwainwrightphotography.com

www.colonialmeetinghouses.com

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