

New England meetinghouses in a snap

By **NANCY BEAN FOSTER**
Sunday News Correspondent

ATKINSON — Many New England towns were built around the traditional colonial meetinghouse, a center of community life that welcomed the pursuits of both God and man. In his new book, "A Space for Faith: Colonial Meetinghouses of New England," photographer Paul Wainwright celebrates the beauty of some of these centuries-old buildings.

"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," said Wainwright in the introduction to "A Space for Faith."

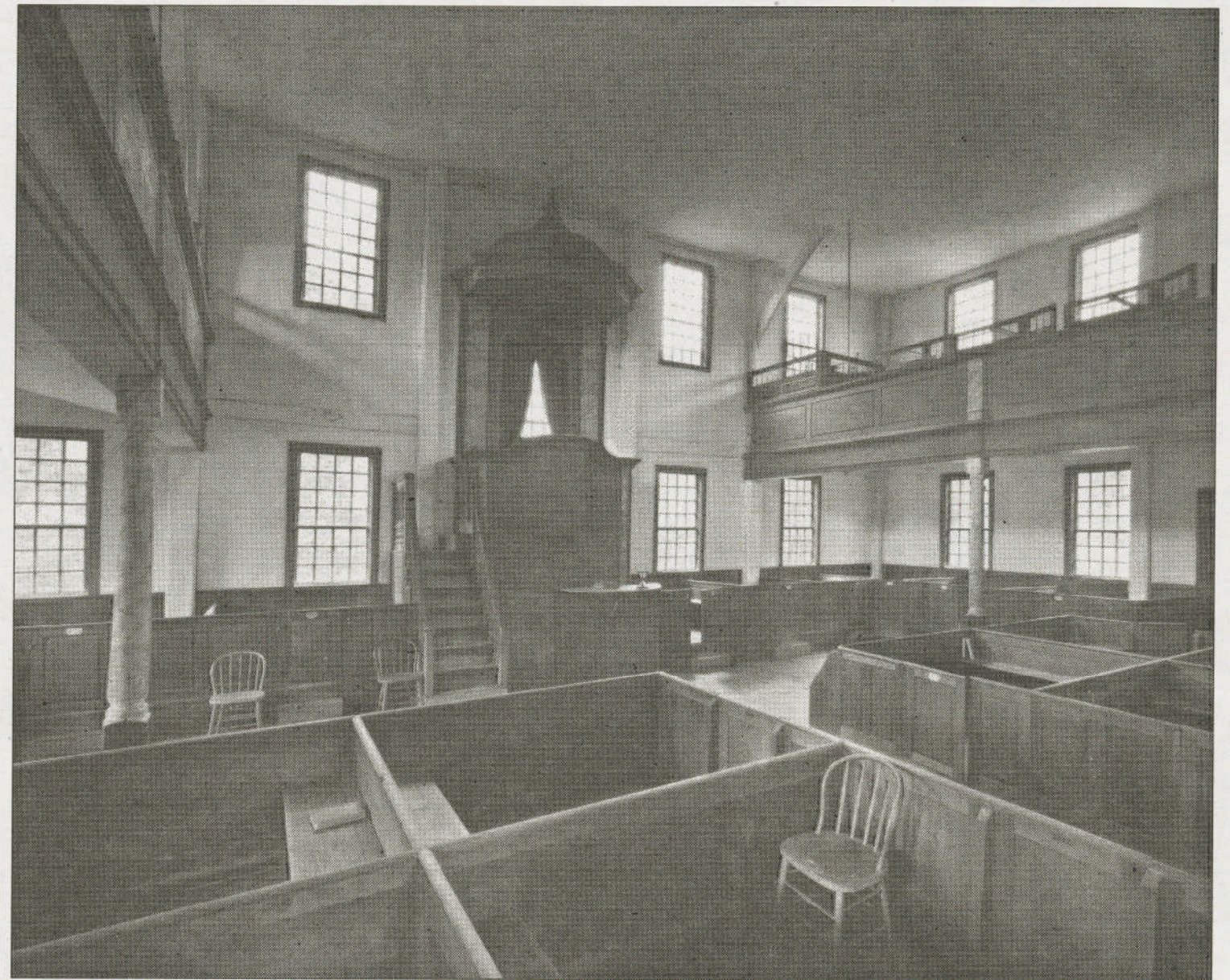
In the book, Wainwright combines history with fine art by capturing images of colonial meetinghouses from across the Granite State and New England. Using natural light and what today may be considered "old fashion" photographic techniques, Wainwright captures both the expansive exteriors and the finer details of the meetinghouses, giving readers an opportunity to explore the buildings intimately.

"Through my photography, it is my goal to bring the story of an important yet little-known chapter of American history to a wide audience," he said.

Wainwright, who lives in Atkinson, has works on display around the country, including the Boston Public Library and the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, said he became interested in photographing meetinghouses after attending a tour of a meetinghouse in Freemont and became fascinated by the history and utility of the building.

"I found the building to be gorgeous — the space, the workmanship, the play of the light on the old wood — and I made several nice photographs of the Freemont meetinghouse," Wainwright said.

After that experience, Wainwright began seeking out more meetinghouses over the span of



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a several years.

"After I posted a few of those photographs on my website, I noticed that they were getting more hits than anything else, and I realized there were a lot of people interested in colonial meetinghouses," he said.

From a collection of more than 500 meetinghouses scattered around New England, Wainwright focused on the buildings that had undergone the least amount of modification over the years. That list brought him and his camera to several New Hampshire towns including Danville, Sandown

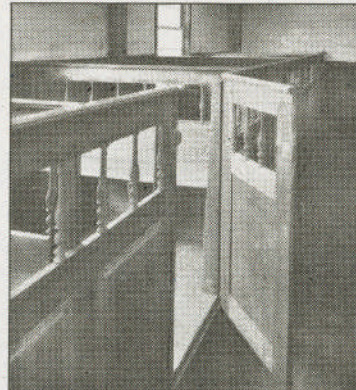
and Holderness.

To round out the collection of photographs included in his book, Wainwright sought the talents of Peter Benes, co-founder and director of the "Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife," who wrote an essay about meetinghouses for the book.

Brent D. Glass, director of the National Museum of American History at the Smithsonian, wrote the forward for the book.

For information on "A Space for Faith" go to aspaceforfaith.com. Wainwright will sign copies at Water Street Bookstore, Exeter, Saturday, July 24, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

More books, Pages 3, 19



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The interior of the Sandown meetinghouse is seen in the top photo. Above and right are interior shots of the meetinghouse in Danville.

