



## NEW HAMPSHIRE DIVISION OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES

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### DAVID GREGG HOUSE 105 BIBLE HILL EXTENSION FRANCESTOWN, NEW HAMPSHIRE

#### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Gregg House is a five-bay, two-story dwelling that retains the framing layout and floor plan of a two-room-deep center-chimney dwelling, a building type that has been identified as having reached a fairly full evolutionary development in the New Hampshire seacoast by the 1720s. The Gregg House is framed with four structural bents of three posts each, the middle post in each bent defining the plane of the rear face of the central chimney. This type of frame defines the front rooms as predominant, and the rear rooms, on each floor, as subordinate; and the joinery in these spaces reflects this hierarchy.

Despite its traditional form, the house exhibits very early federal-style joiner's work throughout. The house thus documents the persistence of what had become a vernacular house form in coastal New Hampshire over a time period of almost a century, spanning two architectural styles, the Georgian and the federal. The house also illustrates the transmission of a coastal house form into inland New Hampshire, some sixty miles from the point where the earliest examples of this framing type have first been identified.

Research by the owners reveals that this house was probably built by one of two Scotch-Irish settlers in Frankestown, thus illustrating the adoption of a vernacular house type from its origins in English settlements to its use in Scotch-Irish settlements.

The interior joiner's work in the Gregg House is well preserved and intact, and is an important document in the advent of the federal style in the Contoocook River watershed. The joinery of this house is comparable to that of the Benjamin Pierce Homestead (c. 1800) in Hillsborough Lower Village, some ten miles north along the Second New Hampshire Turnpike, and may help to document a regional interpretation of the early federal style.

The Gregg House has joiner's work of unusual sophistication. The house combines doors and casings in the federal style with raised paneling of the earlier Georgian style, thus expressing the transitional nature of the dwelling and the evolving architectural style of its period of construction. The southeast front sitting room is the more conservative of the front rooms of the dwelling. Its fully paneled fireplace wall is executed with great skill, yet looks back in its design and in most of its details to the Georgian era. By contrast, the front parlor in the southwestern corner of the house exhibits a federal-style mantelpiece flanked by plastered walls and a chair rail, fully expressing the advent of the newer architectural style. The room is treated with special dignity, having doors that are surmounted with full entablatures composed of the architrave or door casing, a flat frieze above that, and a full cornice, with bed and crown moldings. Above these elaborated doors, the entire room is similarly encircled with a double cornice of a different profile. The thoughtful embellishment of these two front rooms, combined with similar refinements in interior woodwork elsewhere in the dwelling and with a fully developed Tuscan frontispiece (front doorway) suggest the use of a carpenter's pattern book like Asher Benjamin's *The Country Builder's Assistant*. The Gregg House therefore chronicles the skill of local joiners who retained the use of a vernacular house form while updating that framework with transitional woodwork that heralded the change in style from Georgian to federal.