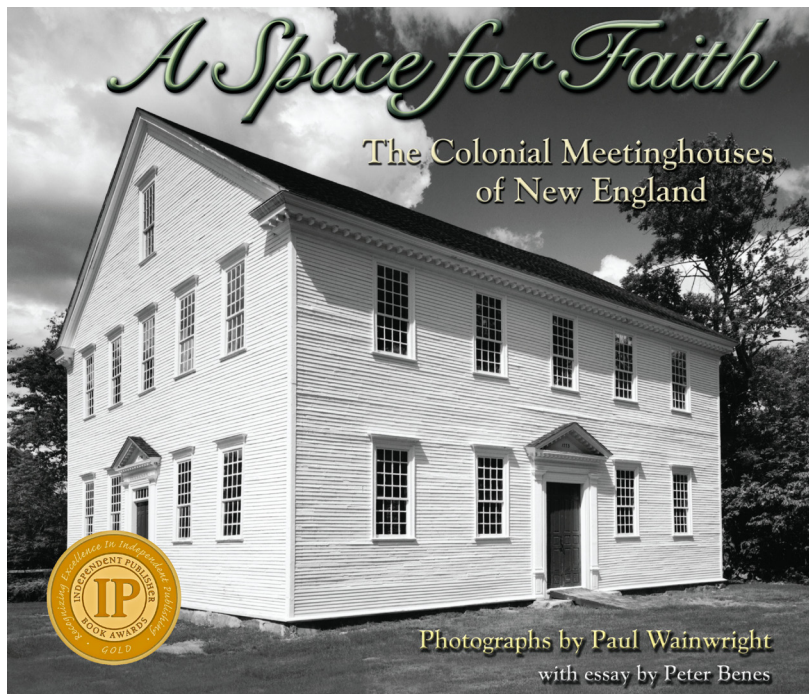


A Space for Faith

The Colonial Meetinghouses of New England

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAUL WAINWRIGHT



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. Many were built with tax money, and their simple, undecorated architecture reflected the desire of early Puritan settlers to live simple lives apart from the Church of England. Yet these were their “cathedrals,” built by hand without adornment, except for the wonderful woodwork. Only a few of them remain

in a relatively unchanged state. These structures not only present a fascinating glimpse into our nation’s colonial history, but are beautiful as well.

In many ways, the location where each photograph was made is unimportant. I approach meetinghouses in much the same way an artist who works with the human form approaches a model. It is not important what the person’s name is. Rather, the artist sees in the model a quality that can, when properly posed and lit, yield a piece of art. These meetinghouses are my “models” for making art, and my photographs reflect my emotional response to them – my physical location when I made each photograph is not of primary importance.

My photographs are first seen in my mind before they are made. My craft with working the camera, developing the negative, and making the print is then harnessed to produce the desired image. The slow pace of working with a traditional wooden field camera, sheet film, chemicals, and photographic paper causes me—forces me—to slow down and think. I enjoy the tactile quality of working with traditional photographic media. There is an intimacy in going under the dark cloth and looking at an upside-down image on the ground glass or in working in the darkroom on a snowy winter day. I hope that this feeling is reflected in my photographs. There is certainly a Zen-like quality to my pace of working, and I think my photographs are better for it. I know I am.