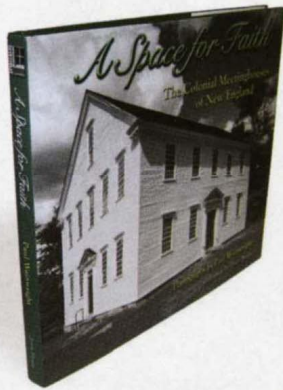


An award-winning photography book illuminates the beauty and mystery of Colonial meetinghouses.

Simple Wonders

Photography by PAUL WAINWRIGHT

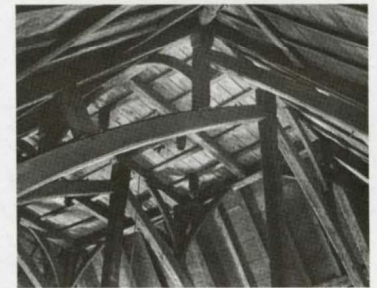
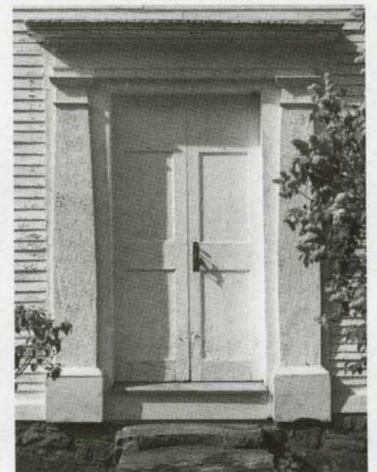
In *A Space For Faith: The Colonial Meetinghouses of New England* (Jetty House, 2009), Paul Wainwright's haunting black-and-white images evoke a sense of how central these simple buildings were to inhabitants of scattered villages and even larger towns and cities. They were physical manifestations of the spiritual, communal and political heart of each community.



Except for the photo of Boston's Old Meetinghouse, which is surrounded by skyscrapers, the structures stand apart from any other buildings. By photographing them in isolation, Wainwright emphasizes their uniqueness. This approach also conveys their architectural simplicity and the absence of frills, and prepares the reader for his wonderfully detailed images.

As Peter Benes notes in an accompanying essay, most New England communities were required to build a meetinghouse to serve as a gathering place for Congregational or Presbyterian believers. Some 2,000 were built between 1630 and 1830, according to Benes.

Built out of logs in the earliest days of colonization—when they also served as forts—meetinghouses went through design phases. Rooflines changed, half-circle windows topped rectangular windows, and bell towers and steeples appeared. Later meetinghouses adopted Georgian architectural



Top to bottom: Door, Olde Meeting House (1755), Danville, N.H. • Roof beams, Old Ship Meetinghouse (1681), Hingham, Mass. • Interior, Old Meeting House (1773), Sandown, N.H.

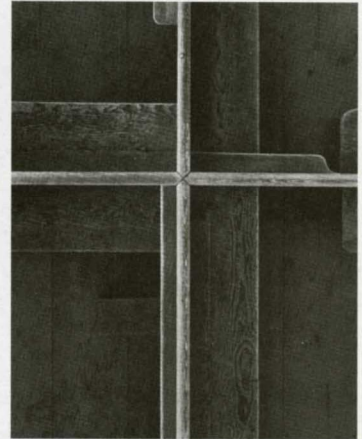


points, while still eschewing more ornate decoration that was considered too “Anglican.”

The photos in *A Space for Faith* encompass these evolving designs. Working with available light streaming through windows grown cracked and wavy with age, Wainwright captures the clean, spare look of time-worn pews, heavily trodden floorboards and aging, flaking paint. Weathered tombstones lean like carved Towers of Pisa in well-tended churchyards, their presence both solemn and oddly comforting.

A Space for Faith won the New England Book Festival Award for best photography/art book of 2010 and the 2011 Gold Medal Award from the Independent Publishers’ Association for the year’s best northeast regional nonfiction book. To preview the book online, visit www.aspaceforfaith.com.

From July 22 through September 4, 2011, the Hallmark Institute of Photography in Turners Falls,



Left to right: View from the pulpit, Old Meeting House (1773), Sandown, N.H. • Looking down on box pews, Rocky Hill Meeting House (1785), Amesbury, Mass.

Mass., will host a show of Wainwright’s meetinghouse photographs. The exhibit is free and open to the public, Friday through Sunday from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Photographs from this exhibit will be available as a traveling exhibit following the close of this show. For more information, visit <http://gallery.hallmark.edu/future.php>. —Bill Hudgins