

A Space for Faith: The Colonial Meeting-houses of New England, photographs by Paul Wainwright with essay by Peter Benes, 2009, Jetty House, 114 pages.



“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,” writes Atkinson photographer Paul Wainwright.

In turn, his photographs will cause you the viewer to slow down and think.

You won’t always know what you’re looking at right away. Sure, a picture of a big old building from outside is easy, but an overhead view of the intersecting walls between pews looks sort of like a wooden cross or an abstract assembly of right angles until you read the caption. Same goes for a view looking straight up from beneath a sounding board and hanging lamp.

These places were built in the late 1700s and have weathered the years since then. In that light, a close-up of a door handle on the Old Meeting House in Sandown is touching not just for its geometric qualities and its sense of light and dark, but for the meaning in its details — what forge shaped that door handle and keyhole, what force made that nick in the wood?

On the other hand, one of my favorites is a wide view inside that same meeting house, showing pulpit and pews, a balcony, and light bursting in the windows. It somehow looks

old and contemporary at the same time.

The picture inside the attic of the Fremont Meeting House in Fremont is another study in geometry, but also evocative of the smell of old timbers and the texture of worn brick.

These 77 black & white images will not reach out and grab your attention by the throat; this is not MTV. You have to settle in with the book for a few moments, and stop to study its contents. Read the scattered quotes from hymns written by William Billings. Ponder.

You will be rewarded.

Images featured in the book are on exhibit at the UNH Graduate Center on the fourth floor of 286 Commercial St. in Manchester, sponsored by the NH Art Association, through Aug. 10. See www.aspaceforfaith.com.—*Lisa Parsons*

Meet the photographer



Camera demonstration and book signing:

- Saturday, July 17, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Gibson’s Bookstore, 27 S. Main St., Concord, during Concord’s Market Days
- Saturday, July 24, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Water Street Bookstore, 125 Water St., Exeter
- Saturday, Oct. 2, from 1 to 3 p.m. at Toadstool Bookshop in Keene

Presentation and book signing:

- Thursday, Sept. 2, at 7:30 p.m. at RiverWoods in Exeter, free and open to the public
- Thursday, Sept. 16, at 6:30 p.m. at Pelham Public Library, free and open to the public