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## Gathering Places

### Images of New England's Colonial Meeting Houses

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With his book, "[A Space for Faith: The Colonial Meetinghouses of New England](#)," to be published in September, New Hampshire photographer [Paul Wainwright](#) is trying to raise awareness of the now-empty buildings that date to the 1600s.

"What I'm really trying to document is how I feel about



the meetinghouses: the sense of wonder that fills me when I experience the space, the solitude, the natural light, the worn wood that people walked on or touched," Wainwright says.

Lacking steeples and altars, these Puritan meetinghouses "were not churches," Wainwright points out; rather, they functioned as catch-all community centers with both municipal and religious uses. About 500 meetinghouses remain in New England, but most of those have been converted to churches. With his large-format camera, Wainwright chose to photograph the 30 meetinghouses that have not become houses of worship.

He started taking an interest in the structures several years ago, starting with one in Freemont, N.H. "After I posted a few of those photographs [of meetinghouses] on my website, I noticed they were getting more hits than anything else, and I realized that there were a lot of people interested in Colonial meetinghouses," Wainwright says.

*Paul Wainwright is a large-format photographer based in Atkinson, N.H.*

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