



## A Federal Presence in the Maine Countryside...

### The Limestone, Maine U.S. Inspection Station. Opened 1934.

Cross border traffic between Canada and the United States has long occurred in the area currently served by the Limestone Land Port of Entry in Limestone, Aroostook County, Maine. Due to a lack of federal focus on land ports of entry, it was not until the 1930s that the United States government would establish a presence in Limestone, Maine.

Prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both the United States Customs Service (Customs) and the United States Immigration Service (Immigration) were focused on activities at ocean ports in major cities. There were very few official ports of entry and it was the responsibility of the individual to report to the nearest customs or immigration office when they crossed the border. This led to a porous border with little control of who entered the United States. Beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, a series of Federal laws and policy changes, including the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882; the Immigration Act of 1891; the Immigration Act of 1921; the Volstead Act; and the establishment of the Border Patrol in 1924, led to an increased need for border stations in places like Limestone. Initially, most Customs and Immigration activities were completed on the road or highway at the crossing point with administrative activities occurring in whatever space the government could find, including commercial buildings and private homes. When there was no physical presence at the border, individuals were supposed to report to the nearest Customs or Immigration office, which were located several miles away from Limestone. With an increase in



*Top: "U.S. Inspection Station, Limestone, Maine," Drawing of Front Elevation, June 23, 1932.*

*Bottom: Construction photograph with the Phair farm buildings in the background. May 16, 1933*

border operations, the Federal government began a program of constructing Customs and Immigration facilities all along the United States border.

The Limestone border crossing is located on State Route 229, commonly known as Grand Falls Road. There are no records of earlier Customs or Immigrations operations at this location in the late-19<sup>th</sup> century. Any operations that occurred here would have been made at roadside with no shelter or facilities.

No records regarding the decision to establish a Federal presence at Limestone or the appropriation amount has been found, but the decisions was most likely made in 1931 during a large appropriation made by the 71<sup>st</sup> Congress for the establishment of land ports of entry at multiple locations in the United States. The Canadian government had recently constructed a port of entry across the border and that may have been a factor in the Federal government's decision.

On August 13, 1932, the Federal government spent \$500 to acquire a 1.3 acre tract of land on the northern side of Grand Falls Road from brothers Walter E. and Hiram B. Phair for the construction of an inspection station in Limestone. The surveyor's description included a reference to concrete markers that represented the national border at the Phair property line. From the property, the Canadian port of entry could easily be seen. Additional acreage on the southern side of Grand Falls Road would be acquired before the project was completed due to drainage issues that required revisions to the original site plans.

In August 1932, plans for the "U.S. Inspection Station, Limestone, Maine" were finalized by the Treasury Department's Office of the Supervising Architect, the primary architects for Federal buildings during this time. The final plans were for a complex consisting of an inspection station, two residences, parking areas, driveways, and landscaping, including flagpoles. The facility was located parallel to Grand Falls Road mere feet from the concrete boundary markers at the property line.

During this period, the Treasury Department typically based all ports of entry on one of six designated Plan Types. The selection of the Plan Type was based upon the traffic volume and available space at a border crossing. Limestone is atypical in that it does not conform to any of the designated Plan Types. While Limestone closely resembles Plan Type 2 with its inspection station flanked by garage wings and the inclusion of detached residences; it is smaller in size, does not include a second floor in the inspection station, and uses less expensive materials than found in most Plan Type 2 facilities.

Construction of the Limestone port of entry began in January 1933 with Onesime Bolduc as the General Contractor. Mr. Bolduc was a French-Canadian, who had moved to Maine and worked on several construction projects in the area during this period.



*Completed Limestone, Maine Inspection Station prior to beginning service, December 1, 1933*

Construction was completed in December 1933 and the facility was occupied by Customs and Immigration beginning in 1934.

At the time of its completion, the Limestone port of entry was a visible reminder of the Federal government and its new border control policies. Typical for the period and Federal government architecture, the facility was designed in the Colonial Revival style. The grounds included a circular concrete driveway that served as the inspection lanes. A gravel driveway was located to the rear of the building and concrete sidewalks circled the perimeter of the building and connected the inspection station to the residences and fueling areas. All of the buildings and structures were all of wood frame construction with painted wood siding.

The inspection station was the primary building of the complex. The multi-light, double-hung wood windows had simple wood surrounds. A single bay vehicle inspection canopy supported by three slender wood columns on the corners projected from the inspection building over the driveway to provide shelter for Customs and Immigration inspections. The building had minimal exterior ornamentation limited to the decorative railing around the top of the canopy.

The inspection station was divided into Customs and Immigration spaces with the two agencies sharing a large public space with a counter and open work areas. The basement contained mechanical and detention areas. The main block of the inspection station was flanked on either side by garages, the one to the west was used for vehicle inspection and the one to the east was used for agency vehicles.

To the rear of the inspection station were two residences, one for each of the agencies. The simple 1-story buildings echoed the inspection building in design with multi-light, double-hung wood windows with simple wood surrounds and minimal exterior ornamentation limited to fan lights in one of the gable ends and shutters on the front façade. Each building had a large front porch with a simple metal railing. On the interior, each residence contained a living room with a fireplace, a kitchen, a bathroom and two bedrooms. Adjacent to each residence were small fueling sheds. At an unknown date, the residences and fueling sheds were demolished.

In 2004, U.S. Customs and Border Protection determined that the Limestone port of entry was eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places for its associations with early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century



*Completed Limestone, Maine Residences prior to beginning service, December 1, 1933*

Federal efforts to address border control issues, such as illegal immigration and human trafficking. As a part of a new era of Federal customs and immigration laws, the Limestone port of entry was part of a new system designed to address land immigration issues. It also served as an important symbol of the Federal government and its commitment to addressing and enforcing Customs and Immigration public policy and programs at both the local and national levels.

The Limestone U.S. Inspection Station, known today as the Limestone Land Port of Entry (LPOE), has been in continual use by the Federal government since it was opened in 1934. Over time the facility has had alterations and changes as technologies and times have changed, but it has remained much the same as when it was first constructed and continues to remain a busy crossing between the United States and Canada. The inspection station remains in use and is a vital asset to U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

**Images:** All images courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)

**Sources:** *Evaluation of Buildings & Structures at the Land Ports of Entry in Maine* (2007), Library of Congress, National Archives and Records (Cartographic, Still Images, and Textual Records of RG 121); and the Limestone Public Library.

**Purpose:** Developed by U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP) to fulfill the terms of the 2012 *Memorandum of Agreement for the Construction of a Communications Tower and Associated Equipment at Limestone Land Port of Entry in Limestone, Aroostook County, Maine*. This document is for public education and is free for non-profit uses.