

Condition Assessment

# Wilton Town Hall

Wilton, New Hampshire



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*Cover: Undated postcard of Wilton Town Hall*

## INTRODUCTION

This Condition Assessment has been prepared for the Town of Wilton by Preservation Consultant Lisa Mausolf in collaboration with Architectural Consultant Alison Meltzer. Also contributing to the study was Jeff Ingram of Ingram Construction. The report was funded, in part, from a grant from the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance (NHPA) which receives funding for this program from New Hampshire's Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP). The purpose of the report is to give a summary of the existing condition of the Wilton Town Hall and make recommendations for future treatments and maintenance. The report is intended to be included in a future LCHIP application.

The Wilton Town Hall was constructed in the town's eastern village in 1884, a symbol of pride and survival in a village that had been decimated by several fires in recent years. Designs for the building by prominent Lowell architects Merrill & Cutler appeared in the national architectural publication, *American Architect and Building News*. As originally designed, the sophisticated Queen Anne style building incorporated a large and ornate public hall on the upper level with town offices below. The Town Hall evolved over the years and has an interesting history of uses, alterations and renovations since its construction. Today the building is as well known for housing the Wilton Town Hall Theatre as for being the location of the town offices. The Wilton Town Hall was individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2009 in recognition of its historic and architectural significance.

The Town of Wilton is to be commended for the care the Town Hall has received to date yet the building presents many challenges. This historic structure will continue to be used as the Town Hall. What the future holds for the upper hall/theater is unfortunately not as certain. Recent years have been marked by significant changes in the distribution of movies. As more movies are being released on streaming services, theaters such as the Wilton Town Hall Theatre may not be as viable. This report documents the history, evolution, and structural condition of the building and identifies its character-defining features. Preservation Briefs for the treatment of specific materials are included in the Appendix to guide work on the building going forward.

**PART 2: HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE WILTON TOWN HALL**

**Brief Description and Setting Overview**

Constructed in 1884, the Wilton Town Hall is an impressive and asymmetrical Queen Anne style composition of brick and granite that rises above the smaller-scaled commercial buildings in downtown Wilton’s business district. Typical of the best of its style, the Town Hall is irregular in plan and mass and exhibits a variety of textures, materials and projections. Rising from the complex roof, the clocktower is a Main Street landmark.

The Town Hall at 42 Main Street is located at the junction of Main and Maple Streets. The elongated triangular lot measures 0.3 acres and is bordered on the southwest by Main Street and on the north by Maple Street. There is a row of parallel parking spaces in front of the building on Main Street. A concrete and brick sidewalk extends along the Main Street frontage.

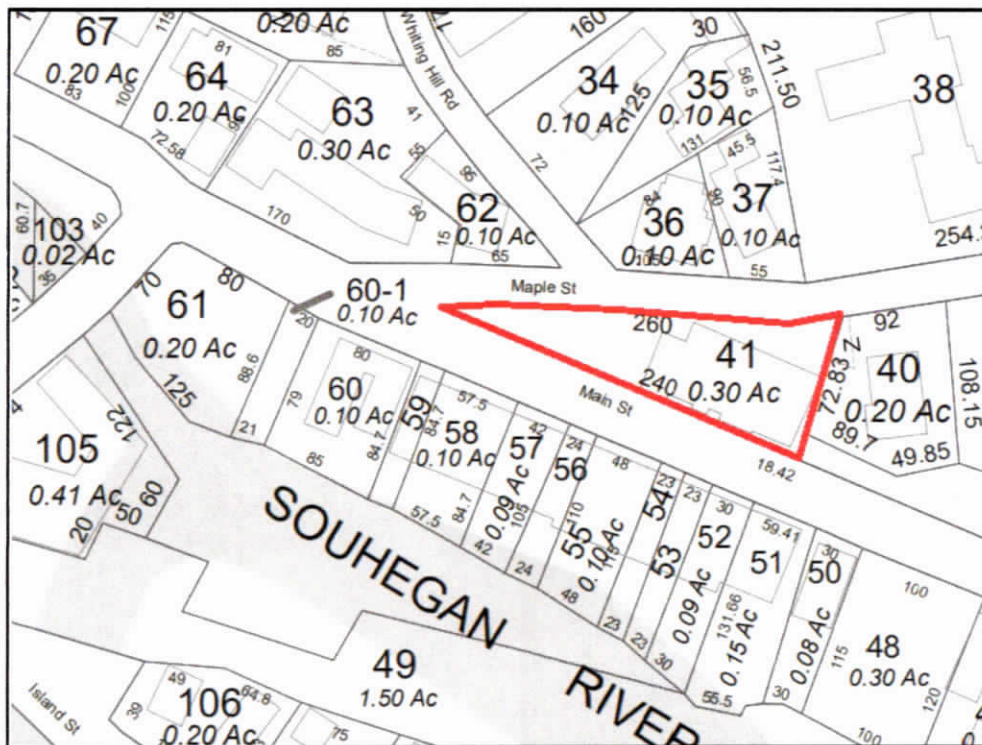


Figure 1  
Location Map (Town Hall lot is outlined in red)

The buildings on Maple Street are largely residential in nature. The buildings on Main Street opposite the Town Hall are commercial. The Town Hall lot slopes downhill considerably from Maple Street to Main Street which has caused various runoff problems over the years.

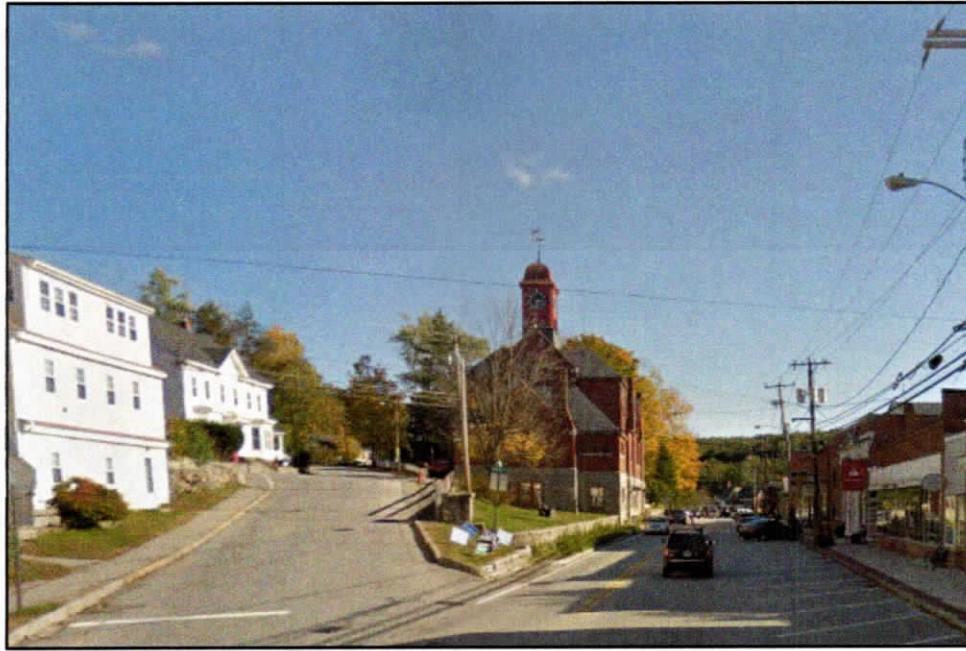


Photo 1

View of Town Hall looking “south” with Maple Street at left and Main Street to right

As can be seen in Figure 1, the Town Hall does not sit exactly due north. For the purposes of this report, the end of the building facing the junction of Maple Street and Main Street is assigned ‘plan north’. The Main Street elevation will be referred to as the west elevation and the Maple Street side will be known as the east elevation.

## History of the Town Hall

The first European settlers – Jacob Putnam, John Badger and John Dale - arrived in Wilton (then called “Number Two”) in 1739. Ten years later the original royal grant to John Tufton Mason was parceled out to a group of investors known as the Masonian proprietors. As customary, several lots were reserved for a church, the minister and the establishment of mills and schools. The first church was a log structure constructed in 1752 in Wilton Center, likely near what is now Andy’s Summer Playhouse. A petition for the incorporation of Wilton was sent to Royal Governor Benning Wentworth in 1781. The town of Wilton was incorporated on June 25, 1762 and the first Town Meeting was held two days later.

In 1773 the original log church was torn down to make way for a new, larger meetinghouse. According to the town history, the new meetinghouse was sited a little to the north of the old log church. The frame for the building was raised by 120 men from Wilton and nearby communities. On September 7, 1773 with the frame nearly up, the main support post, which is believed to have been worm eaten, splintered and broke, causing the central beam it was carrying to collapse. Over fifty workers standing on various points of the frame fell to the ground. Three were killed instantly, two died soon after from their injuries and many of the others were crippled for life. The meetinghouse was finally dedicated in January 1775 and fully completed in 1779.

Sometime in the 1880s, Henry Holt (1839-1917), a local wheelwright and cabinetmaker, built a model of Wilton’s Second Meetinghouse from memory. The model is still owned by the Wilton Historical Society today.

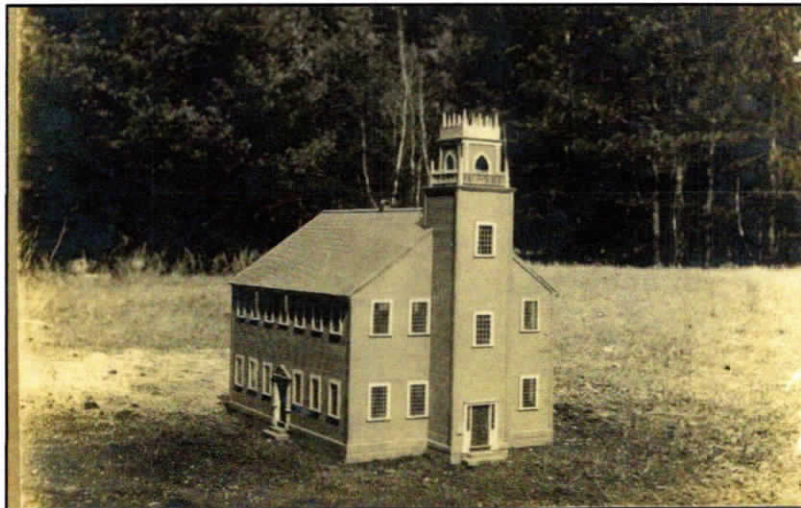


Photo 2

Model of Wilton’s Second Meetinghouse by Henry Holt c.1880

Source: Wilton Historical Society

On December 8, 1859, shortly after the conclusion of a childrens' concert, a suspicious fire broke out and the meetinghouse burned to the ground. At a town meeting on December 26, 1859, the town voted 169-144 to build a town house on the same site for a cost not to exceed \$2,500. Whereas the previous meetinghouse had served joint public and religious purposes, the new building reflected the separation of church and state. The building was completed in 1860 in a vernacular Greek Revival style. The First Congregational Church also built a new separate building nearby.



Photo 3

Undated photo of Wilton Town House & First Congregational Church

The former town house, currently known as Andy's Summer Playhouse, still stands in Wilton Center at 582 Isaac Frye Highway.



Photo 4

Former Wilton Town House (now Andy's Summer Playhouse)

Even as the Town House was being constructed at the Center, the focal point of the community was increasingly shifting from old Wilton Center at the geographic center of the town, to East Wilton on the Souhegan River. The growth and dominance of East Wilton was spurred by manufacturing and rail access. The Wilton Railroad received a charter in 1844 to build west from Nashua although it was not until December 16, 1851 that the first wood-burning engine reached East Wilton. In 1860 the original wooden depot was replaced by a large brick structure that could house an entire engine and tender under its roof. The availability of train service from Wilton through Lowell and onto Boston allowed the dairy business in town to thrive, gave other manufacturers access to materials and markets and also brought summer visitors.

In 1866 David Whiting, a Wilton native and one of the pioneer business men in town, built the Whiting House in East Wilton on the site where the Wilton Town Hall now stands. In 1869 the Whiting House was described as follows:

This public house, which is not only an ornament to the place, but one of the best hotels in the state, has deservedly become a favorite with the traveling public and a popular summer resort. During the summer season just closing it has been constantly filled with families from Boston and elsewhere, who find its accessibility by rail and its fine location just what they want.<sup>1</sup>

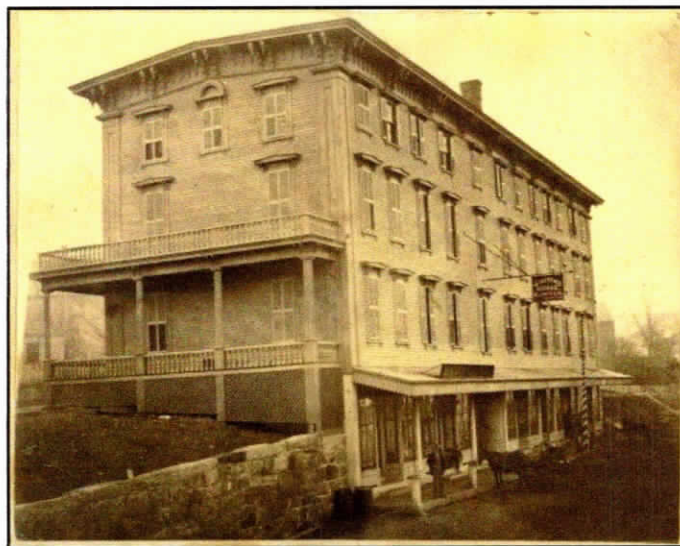


Photo 5

The Whiting House

Source: Wilton Historical Society

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<sup>1</sup> *Nashua Telegraph*, September 21, 1869.



Later, in 1869, Whiting built a large livery stable, 32' x 80', west of the hotel. In 1874 there were three trains a day to Wilton from Boston on the Boston, Lowell and Nashua Railroad. The Whiting House could accommodate from 65 to 100 lodgers.<sup>2</sup> Board ranged from \$7 to \$10 per week.<sup>3</sup> In addition to summer boarders, there were a variety of other guests. Traveling shows that visited Wilton made their headquarters at the Whiting House. On June 30, 1874 a travelling troupe called "Washburn's Last Sensation" performed in town and the show included sixteen vaudeville headliners. Kit Carson Jr. of Texas registered at the Whiting House on June 1, 1873 and on July 14, 1874 a Cornelius Vanderbilt of New York signed the guest register and was given room 1.<sup>4</sup>



Photo 6

Whiting House, after construction of stable

Source: Wilton Historical Society

Confirming the dominance of East Wilton, just eight years after its construction, in 1868, the Town voted to sell the Town House in Wilton Center.<sup>5</sup> The following year the town voted to hold Town Meeting in Depot Hall in the East Village until a new Town Hall could be built. The first public library also opened in the east village in 1872.

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<sup>2</sup> *Boston Globe*, August 14, 1874, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Boston Globe*, June 29, 1874, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> "Kit Carson and Vanderbilt Names on Wilton Hotel Book: Old Whiting House Register Interesting Relic of Fire of 1874", *Nashua Telegraph*, February 17, 1938, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> The former Town House at the Center was later known as Citizens Hall and operated as a public meeting hall. It was rented by the Advanced Grange (founded in 1874) and the Grange took ownership of the building in 1925. The hall was sold to the Wilton Lions Club in 1968 and purchased by the Pine Hill Waldorf School in 1978. It was purchased by Andy's Summer Theater in 1985.



Photo 7  
Depot Hall, East Village

Early in the morning of December 2, 1874, a destructive fire wiped out much of the East Wilton village including the Whiting House. Damage was estimated at more than \$105,000. The fire was believed to have been caused by the spontaneous combustion of oil and painters' rags. It began at a store and dwelling and in addition to the Whiting House, also destroyed the Masonic Hall, the public library, stores, houses and other buildings. The Whiting House was not rebuilt.

Barely recovered from the first conflagration, on January 20, 1881 East Wilton suffered a second serious fire. As stated by the local newspaper, "the pleasant and thriving village of Wilton seems almost doomed to destruction by fire and flood".<sup>6</sup> Although a fire department had been organized and equipped since the 1874 fire, twelve stores, the bank building, post office, masonic hall and a residence were destroyed.

Soon after the fire, it appears that the movement for a new town house intensified. At some point David Whiting offered the town the Whiting House lot for the construction of a town house. In 1881 or early 1882, Lowell, Massachusetts architect Otis A. Merrill was paid \$51.88 by the town for surveying for a new town house.<sup>7</sup> Merrill was the lead architect in the architectural firm of Merrill & Cutler. How he became involved in the town house project is not known although it is likely that there was a connection to the Whiting family.

At town meeting in March 1883, voters voted (166 yeas and 142 nays) to build a town house on the Whiting House lot and to raise the sum of \$15,000 for the same. A building committee was formed consisting of David Whiting; Dr. Franklin M. Pevey, a dentist; and James L. Hardy, a carpenter.<sup>8</sup> Plans for the new building moved swiftly after town meeting. On April 24, 1883 the Milford paper reported that "the architect will soon give the building committee the entire cost

<sup>6</sup> *Farmers Cabinet*, January 25, 1881.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> *Milford Enterprise*, March 20, 1883.

of the new town house” and the May 8<sup>th</sup> paper stated that the committee was ready to receive proposals for the building. As of May 29<sup>th</sup> the proposals of James Hardy for carpenter work and Charles Hesselton for stonework had been accepted and batters were in place for the masonry.<sup>9</sup> The 1883 Town Report indicates that Merrill & Cutler, Architects were paid \$300, presumably to prepare plans.<sup>10</sup> In December the Milford newspaper reported that “the exterior of the town house is nearing completion: the roof which is tasteful and fancy is wholly slated, and the tower is framed and will soon be completed”.<sup>11</sup>

In April 1884 architectural renderings of the Wilton Town Hall appeared in the national publication, *American Architect and Building News*.

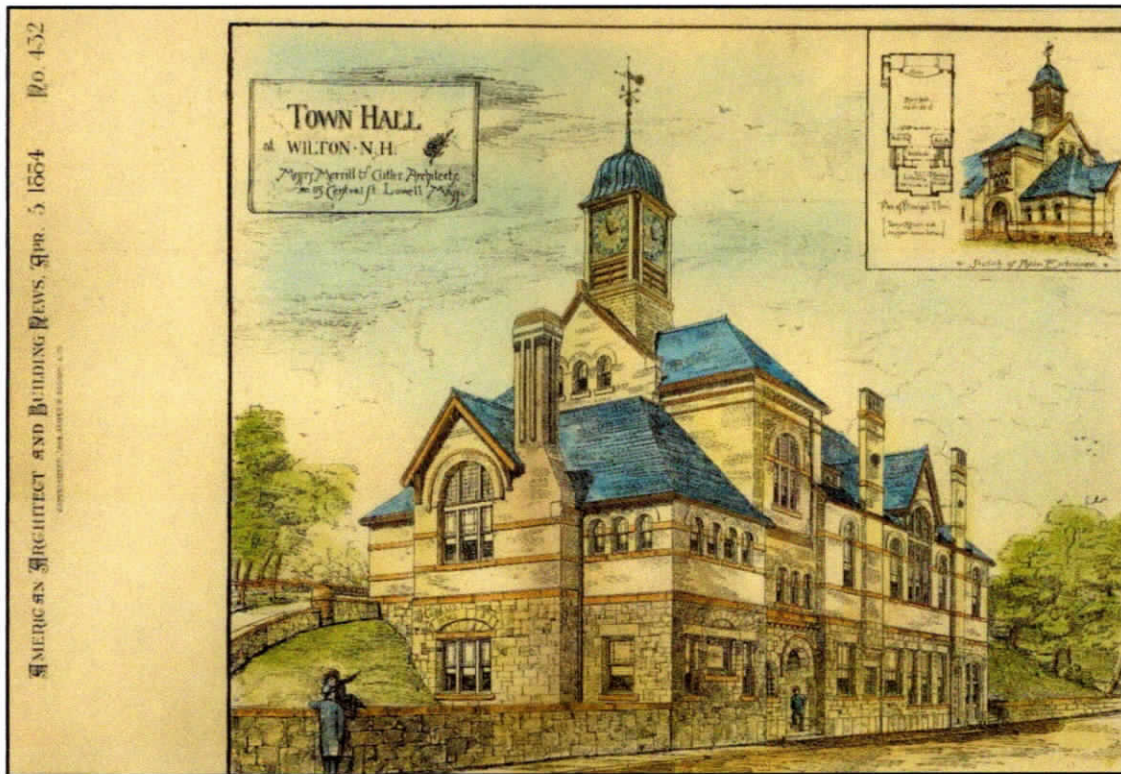


Photo 8

Drawing for Town Hall at Wilton by Merrill & Cutler, Architects

Source: *American Architect and Building News*, April 5, 1884

The Town House was dedicated with great fanfare on January 1, 1885. Afternoon exercises included speeches and music. The main address was given by Isaac Spalding Whiting (1858-1945), a recent Harvard graduate, son of milk dealer Harvey Whiting and grandson of David Whiting. An elaborate supper was served in the upper room. Shortly after eight o'clock that

<sup>9</sup> *Milford Enterprise*, April 24, 1883; May 8, 1883; May 29, 1883.

<sup>10</sup> Annual Report for Town of Wilton for Year Ending March 1, 1884, p. 6.

<sup>11</sup> *Milford Enterprise*, December 18, 1883.

evening Behr's eight-piece Orchestra of Boston began an hour-long concert, concluding with a march that Mr. Behr had composed especially for the occasion. The festivities culminated in a ball consisting of fifteen dances and including quadrilles, polkas, waltzes, redowa and schottische and dancing with refreshments served from ten to twelve.<sup>12</sup>

These photos of the town hall auditorium may have been taken at the dedication of the building in January 1885 or in 1889 when the town celebrated the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its settlement.

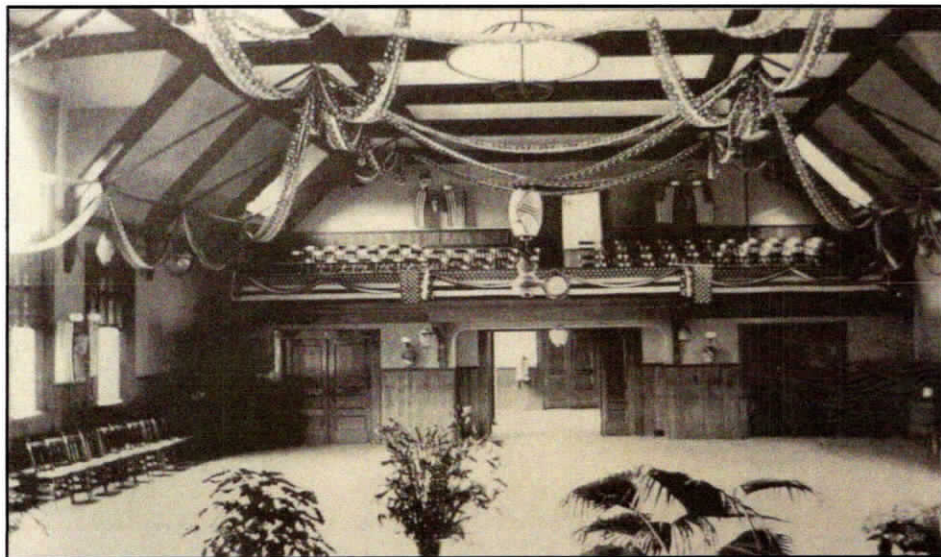
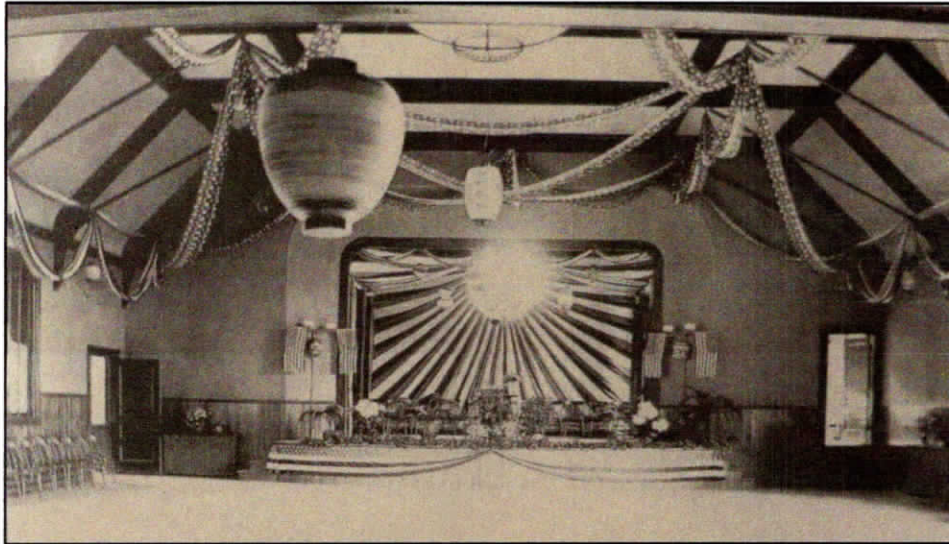


Photo 9

c.1885 photos of Interior of Town Hall Auditorium – looking toward stage and toward balcony  
Source: Wilton Historical Society, *Images of America: Wilton, Temple, and Lyndeborough*.

<sup>12</sup> "The Dedication", *Milford Enterprise*, January 6, 1885.

As discussed earlier, Main Street in East Wilton had been decimated by fires in 1874 and 1881.<sup>13</sup> The construction of the town hall was in many ways a celebration of local residents working together to make Wilton a progressive town. As stated by Isaac Spalding Whiting at the dedication:

It [the building] is the product of our best enterprise and our most advanced public spirit. Born in a gift, that gift has provoked other gifts, and so on, till everybody has brought his contribution of material or service for the ornamentation of our common building. It has lifted us into heights of generosity that we never dared to believe we could climb. It has strengthened us with the strength that comes to a people inspired with a common thought, and working for a common ideal end.<sup>14</sup>

During this period the nearby communities of Milford and Greenville both had erected substantial town houses. In November 1883 a new Town Hall was also dedicated in Lyndeborough. Spalding notes “ We are among the last of the towns in the neighborhood to build a town house. They have stimulated us to put our best foot forward”.<sup>15</sup>

The architect’s design of the building was also viewed with considerable pride. As Whiting noted:

It has been our good fortune to secure the services of an intelligent architect, who has planned for us a structure worthy to be the town’s own building, the place of its deliberations, the home of its politics; a building larger in size, more beautiful in design, and more central in position, than that of any private individual. It is among the first efforts in our town to combine beauty with usefulness. We have here swung away from the prevailing square box, and yet have obtained a building against which no criticism of foppery and ostentation can be brought. Its ornamental parts are its structural parts ingrained in its very being. Quiet and simple, yet not commonplace, it fulfils the chief canons of architectural taste. Its angles and curves present different combinations from different points of view, so that we never tire of it, and the more we see it the more beauties does it reveal. The joy forever in a beautiful object will be ours.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Yet another fire hit East Wilton on December 2, 1885 but did less damage than the other two.

<sup>14</sup> *Address by Isaac Spalding Whiting, at the Dedication of the Wilton, N.H. Town House, January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1885.* Boston: J.A. Cummings & Co., Printers, 1885, p. 13.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p.5.

Numerous individuals made contributions to the building or its furnishings. The gas fixtures were donated by the sons of H.A. Whiting. Several ladies of the town donated the stained glass windows. The inside blinds were furnished by J.H. Spalding of Nashua, Mrs. David Whiting of Wilton, Mrs. George Newell of Boston and Mrs. George O. Whiting of Lexington. Charles H. Burns donated the desk for the stage. A clock inside the hall was the gift of Dr. J. Fleeman. The tables and chairs for the selectmen's room were given by George I. Doe and the town clock was the gift of Dr. F.M. Pevey.<sup>17</sup> The clock was manufactured by George M. Stevens & Co. of Boston and is still operational today, requiring winding every seven days and six hours.

A wonderfully detailed description of the Town House was written in 1889, a few years after the completion of the building, at the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the settlement of the town and offers additional information about the building as originally constructed:

...The walls of its first story, on the Main street side, are constructed of square blocks of stone and the superstructure above, fronting on Maple street, is constructed of pressed brick. It has storm covered entrances on the two sides, partially stained glass windows and a handsome tower with a clock in it. The interior is finished throughout in white ash, and neither time nor money has been spared in making it perfect in every particular. It cost \$20,000. The hall is about 50 feet square, it is lighted by one large central window on each side, at either side of which are smaller windows. The chairs and all the belongings are white ash. The ceiling is pannelled in heavy cherry moulding and a handsome chandelier adorns the center. The entrance to the hall is by broad staircases from both streets into a commodious vestibule in which there is a ticket office. A large gallery is finished with the same care. On the same floor as the hall there is room for a public library 50 feet by about 20 feet. To this room there is an entrance from the main vestibule and also a separate entrance by the side of the main entrance on Maple street. The lower story, which forms a basement on Main street, is partitioned into a banquet hall, kitchen, office for the selectmen, boiler room and storerooms, all being furnished the same as the halls above. The building is heated by steam and lighted with gas. In fine, there is nothing lacking to make it just what the people of Wilton claim for it, the finest town building in the state.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> "Still Proud of Town Hall", *Milford Cabinet*, January 7, 1937.

<sup>18</sup> *Nashua Telegraph*, September 11, 1889.

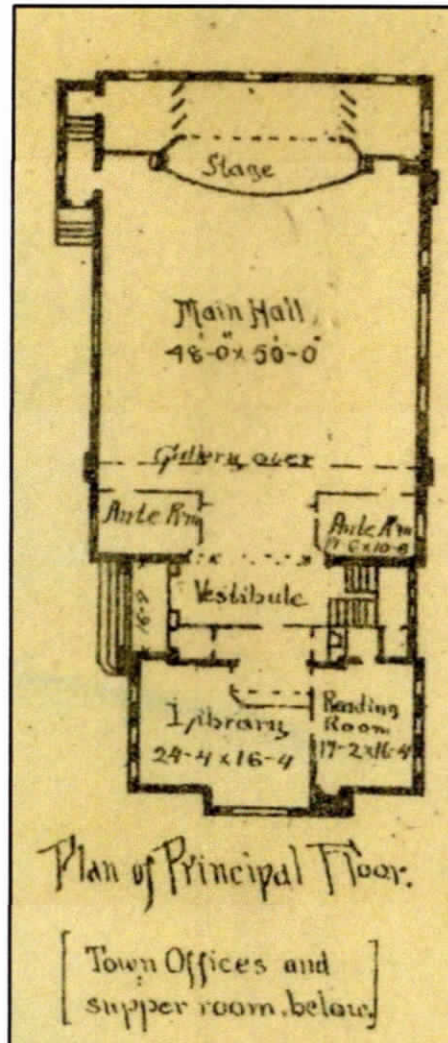


Figure 2

Detail of architects' drawing of upper level

Source: *American Architect and Building News*, April 5, 1884

The second floor of the Town Hall originally included a 50' x 20' room for the town library. Five years after the building was complete, in 1890, there was a Town Meeting warrant article to complete fitting the library room with fixtures and furniture. Not surprisingly, this space was also often put to other uses. In 1897 a local newspaper reported "It is well known to those who have attended meetings or parties at the town hall that the rooms now occupied by the library, are very much needed, oftentimes for dressing rooms, or to put the settees when not in use".<sup>19</sup> When the Masonic Temple was being constructed in 1897, David Gregg of Nashua, formerly a Wilton merchant and member of Clinton Lodge of Masons, offered to finish the first floor of the Masonic building to be occupied by the town library but this never happened. By 1901 the library room in the town building contained several thousand volumes and was quite

<sup>19</sup> *Farmers Cabinet*, March 4, 1897

cramped.<sup>20</sup> In 1905 a warrant article passed at Town meeting to allow the use of the selectmen's room as an additional reading room. The cramped quarters of the library reading room were then only open to the public only four nights a week. The warrant article resulted in the use of the selectmen's room as a public reading room the four weekday evenings on which the library was open.<sup>21</sup> A few weeks later David Gregg offered to build a separate library for the town. The Wilton Public and Gregg Free Library was constructed in 1905-7 and dedicated on September 22, 1908, freeing up the former library space in the town hall for other uses.

By contrast to the fine finishes utilized in the upper hall, the architect's drawings for the lower level label the Selectmen's Room, Supper Room, and Kitchen as "unfinished" as are the rooms at the north end of the building. Only the hallway and staircase leading upstairs are "finished". A record vault is shown in the Selectmen's room and for many years offices for the police, consisting of a rolltop desk, were located in the Selectmen's room as well.

The south end of the building consisted of a small attached garage that opened onto Main Street. Original drawings label this as a "Fire Engine Room" although the 1885 Sanborn map indicates that the space was then serving as a hearse house for the town hearse.

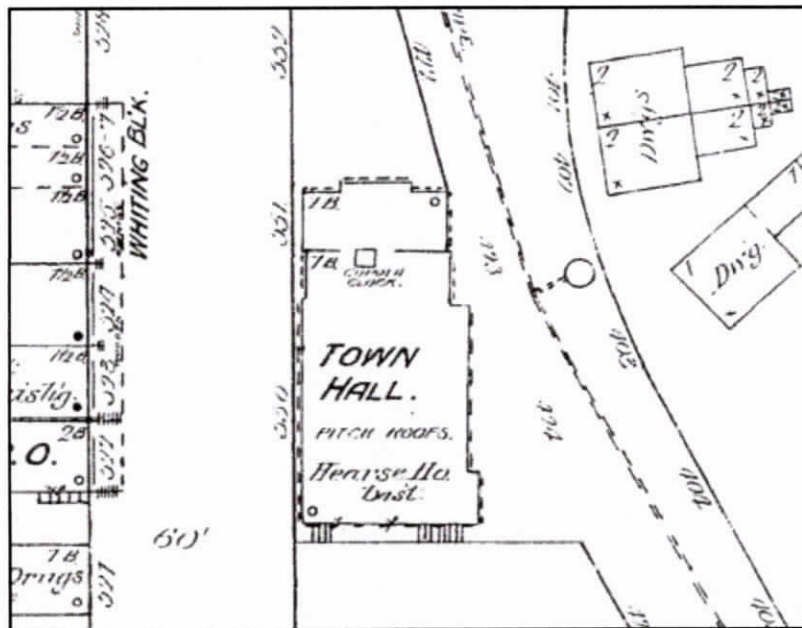


Figure 3  
1885 Sanborn Map

<sup>20</sup> *Granite Monthly*, July 1901, p. 29

<sup>21</sup> *Milford Cabinet*, March 9, 1905



By the time of the 1912 Sanborn map, the space was being utilized by the fire department and one hand engine and one hook and latter truck, drawn by hand, were being stored here.

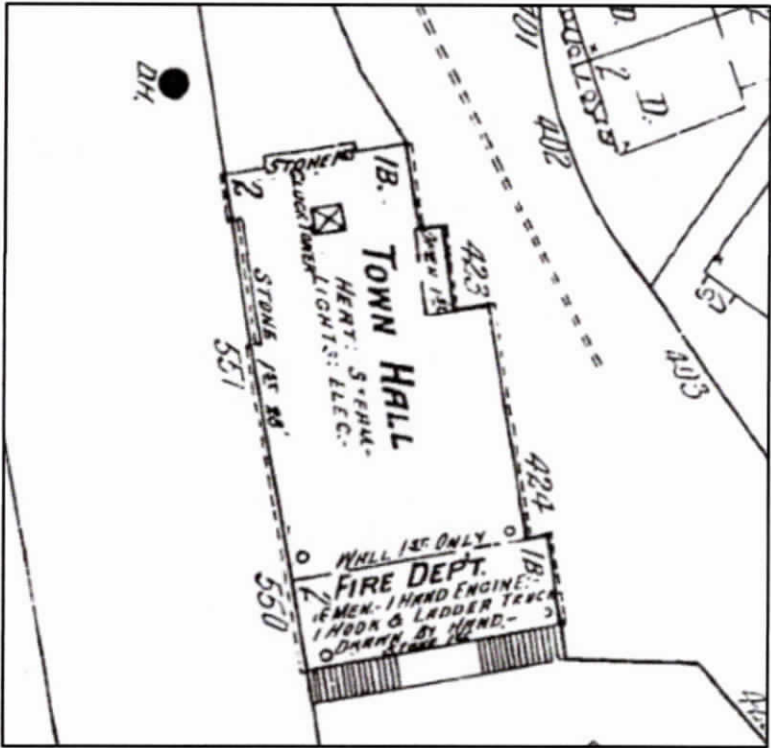


Figure 4  
1912 Sanborn Map

The hall on the second floor of the town hall was designed to be utilized by the community in a multitude of ways. Each year at Town Meeting there were standard articles to see whether the Town would grant free use of the hall to various organizations including the Abiel A. Livermore Post 71 G.A.R. on Memorial Day, the Fire Department for its annual party and the High School for graduation, etc. Other groups using the hall included the W.C.T.U. (Women’s Christian Temperance Union) for temperance meetings and various churches.

Nearly from the beginning, the Town Hall also hosted live entertainment: touring vaudeville acts, plays, minstrel shows, musical entertainments, lectures, recitals, and readings from Shakespeare. Under layers of paint on the sides of the Town Hall stage, there are scribbled autographs of many performers who played the theater over the years. Backstage there are still rows of hooks where the performers once hung their costumes and cloaks. Removable boards at the front of the stage provided cover for floodlights that were originally gas powered.

Town reports indicate that in 1897 the town paid \$4.00 for a dozen spittoons for the town hall.<sup>22</sup> A new piano was purchased for the hall in 1907. A warrant article at town meeting in 1911 to see if the town would vote to purchase scenery for the Town Hall. The scenery purchased consisted of a woodland scene on a roll with matching wings.<sup>23</sup>



Photo 10

Playbills for Events at Town Hall  
Source: Wilton Historical Society

There were also frequent balls in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Shortly after the dedication, the Upper Hall was the setting for the Firemen's Ball. The annual concert and ball by the Wilton Fire Department was for many years the town's banner ball. At the ball in 1912 the music was furnished by Never's Orchestra of Concord. At 11 o'clock supper was served in the banquet hall.<sup>24</sup> A few months later they also played at the Laurel Lodge No. 78 of the Odd Fellows' ball at the town hall.<sup>25</sup> The social season extended roughly from January to April with

<sup>22</sup> 1897 Town Report, p. 5.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Dennis Markaverich, January 6, 2023. According to Mr. Markaverich, the scenery was discarded in the 1960s.

<sup>24</sup> *Milford Cabinet*, Feb. 8, 1912.

<sup>25</sup> *Milford Cabinet*, April 18, 1912.

different organizations using the hall including the Order of Red Men, the Foresters of America, and Sargents' Dancing School. To protect and "lubricate" the wood floors, cornmeal was spread on the floors. The Town Hall was also the site of basketball games in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Prior to the construction of the high school auditorium in 1930 the town hall was often filled to the rafters for basketball games between Wilton and Milford.<sup>26</sup> Sometimes basketball games were combined with dances. Admission to one such event in March 1913 cost 25 cents for adults and 15 cents for children to attend the basketball game. For 10 cents extra there was dancing until midnight.<sup>27</sup> In the mid-1930s there were occasional wrestling and boxing matches run by Leonard Mahoney who offered a gold watch prize to the winner.

The Town Hall was originally fitted with gas lights. In 1906 the newspaper reported that the janitor, John Raymond, had improved the lighting in the hall by putting on new Welsbach burners.<sup>28</sup> A few months later John Q. Hodgman of Milford was hired by the town to wire the Town Hall for electric lights.<sup>29</sup> In February 1912 the selectmen had the Milford Light & Power Co. insert new 40 candle power lights in the town hall.<sup>30</sup> A few months later the big chandelier in the upper hall at Town Hall was taken down and four drop lights were installed in its place.<sup>31</sup> Cut off gas pipes are still in evidence on the second floor ceilings.

Moving pictures were being shown occasionally in the Town Hall as early as 1906.<sup>32</sup> But in April 1912 a steel booth for motion pictures was installed beginning a cinematic tradition that continues today.<sup>33</sup> Initially Charles E. Sawyer, Jr. of Greenville ran the motion picture machine for the Proctor-Young Motion Picture Company with service furnished by the Milford Light & Power Co. Motion pictures were originally shown twice a week; the firm hired films direct from Boston and New York. The silent films were accompanied by music, Mrs. Bertha Burke was an early soloist while Miss Julia Shea played the piano.<sup>34</sup> During intermission local views were showcased on the curtain.<sup>35</sup> In 1919 George Proctor petitioned the Selectmen for a license to show motion pictures every night but was refused and sued the town; the Town won.<sup>36</sup> In 1920 there was a warrant article to see if the Town would vote to install heat and add toilets in the dressing room in the Town Hall. It appears a license was issued in 1921 to operate

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<sup>26</sup> *Milford Cabinet*, January 25, 1940.

<sup>27</sup> *Milford Cabinet*, March 20, 1913.

<sup>28</sup> *Milford Cabinet*, February 8, 1906.

<sup>29</sup> *Milford Cabinet*, May 24, 1906; June 21, 1906; July 12, 1906.

<sup>30</sup> *Milford Cabinet*, Feb. 15, 1912.

<sup>31</sup> *Milford Cabinet*, April 25, 1912.

<sup>32</sup> *Milford Cabinet*, April 12, 1906.

<sup>33</sup> *Milford Cabinet*, April 11, 1912.

<sup>34</sup> *Milford Cabinet*, April 18, 1912.

<sup>35</sup> *Milford Cabinet*, May 16, 1912.

<sup>36</sup> Town Report, 1919.

moving pictures four nights a week. In 1933 Sawyer's Talking Pictures was offering two shows Saturday evenings.<sup>37</sup>

In addition to charging organizations to use the Town Hall for various events there were also various tenants who brought in additional income by renting space in the Town Hall. Town Reports indicate that the Wilton Water Works was paying rent in 1911 and Mrs. Frances B. Archibald was paying rent in 1919. On November 1, 1928 the Wilton National Bank opened temporary quarters in the Selectmen's Room of the Wilton Town Hall. The encouragement they received resulted in the construction of a bank building across the street the following year.<sup>38</sup> An area in the north end of the building was used as a warehouse for the Maude Adams Quality Shop across the street for many years.

There were few physical changes made to the Town Hall in the 1920s and 1930s. One of the chimneys was rebuilt and raised to increase the draft in 1928. In 1929 new ladies' toilets were installed on the lower floor, behind the entrance to the Selectmen's room. In 1921 a room was fixed up and furnished for the American Legion. In 1930 a room on the upper floor, north end, was rented to the Community Athletic Club. In 1934 the room formerly used by the Community Club was being used by the Boy Scouts. On Memorial Day, 1932, two World War I trench mortars were presented to the town by David J. Barry and installed on the town hall lawn.

Small improvements were made to the building in the 1940s. During World War II, the Wilton movie house was one of the only sites in the area to show newsreels about the war. The "Hometowners" sponsored weekly dances in the Wilton Town Hall and Milford Town Hall during the war beginning when gas restrictions and limited recreation facilities in the area encouraged them. Music was provided by a variety of groups including Gene Carlson's Band, Tony Brown's Orchestra of Lowell, Bob Pooley's NBC Orchestra, Vic Roy's Orchestra and Stan Walck's New England Polka King Orchestra. In 1944 funds were appropriated for a fire escape on the Maple Street side of the Town Hall but due to the unavailability of steel during the war, the project was not completed until 1949.<sup>39</sup> A door for the vault was also purchased in 1949. In 1947 \$2,500 was expended to install a jail in the Town Hall.

After the war, the theater business waned and in the early 1950s cut back its hours to two nights per week. Repairs were made to the town hall clock in 1957 including new lighting. In 1958 the two cell jail was judged unsuitable to keep subjects and funds were appropriated at Town Meeting for the purpose of building jail cells and a police station in the old Legion Room in the north end of the Town Hall.

Charles Jowders Sr. (1880-1968) served as the janitor of the Town hall for more than 25 years before retiring in 1961. He worked at Whitings Dairy and at Hillsborough Mills before taking

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<sup>37</sup> Wilton also had a second movie theater. David Proctor began showing moving picture shows at Depot Hall (upstairs above his Depot General Store) in 1914. The theater continued to operate at least into the early 1920s.

<sup>38</sup> *Boston Globe*, May 21, 1929, p. 23.

<sup>39</sup> *Milford Cabinet*, April 26, 1949.

the town hall job in 1934. In addition to working as the town hall janitor, he also was the ticket taker at the movie house two nights a week and served as a special police officer. He also tended the grounds during the summer and many nights could be seen watering the grounds and plants. During this period the hall was heated with soft coal and until 1959 the coal was shoveled into the furnace by hand. A stoker was installed at that time although the ashes still had to be taken out across the street daily in a wheelbarrow to a spot by the river to be taken away by truck.<sup>40</sup>

In 1963 two rooms in the Town Hall – the banquet room and the former library space upstairs - were converted temporarily into elementary school classrooms.<sup>41</sup> The old Banquet Hall served as a fifth and sixth grade classroom while the old Civil Defense room became a sixth grade classroom.<sup>42</sup> Chalkboards are still evident in the banquet room today and markings on the wooden floor in the theater reflect the use of the space as a gymnasium. It was at about this time that the theater scenery dating back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was discarded.

In 1973 the old banquet room was renovated to provide meeting space and storage facilities for various Town committees. The following year after the renovations were complete the Municipal Court moved to the old banquet room. In 1974 the Town Hall was insulated; windows were removed and broken glass was repaired. Storm windows were installed in the Police Department and Civil Defense Room the following year.

In 1973 Dennis Markaverich, the current manager of the Wilton Town Hall Theater, took over the space which had been closed since 1966. The main hall which had a capacity of 250 was outfitted with new theater seating recycled from the Embassy Theater in Waltham, Massachusetts and other theaters. Previously the seating in the hall consisted of wooden seats that were attached to rails for easy moving. Later, in 1988, Markaverich converted the former library space into a second, 63-seat movie screening room, adding seats and a partition to enclose the projection space.

Over the span of several years from 1977 to 1979 the brickwork on the Town Hall was cleaned and pointed by James McEntee. The electrical system was updated as well although today there is still evidence of knob and tube wiring upstairs.

In 1989 the State mandated the installation of a sprinkler system in the Town offices, courtroom and police station. As part of the project, the asbestos tile ceiling was removed. In 1998 \$200,000 was appropriated at Town Meeting to renovate the Town Hall. The single-pane window glass was replaced with double-paned glazing; however the original window sashes were preserved. The back of the former ambulance bay (which had in early years stored a fire engine and later a hearse house) on the east side of the building was converted to a new office for the Selectmen and handicapped-accessible bathroom. The front of the bay was

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<sup>40</sup> "25 Years on the Job", *Nashua Telegraph*, December 19, 1961.

<sup>41</sup> *Nashua Telegraph*, September 24, 1963, p. 9.

<sup>42</sup> Town of Wilton School Report, 1962-1963, p. 23.

reconfigured to accommodate an interior wheelchair ramp. The original garage door was replaced with a fourth exterior door to provide access to the ramp. In 2003 the Police Department relocated from Town Hall to a newly constructed station.

Beginning in 2016 a number of additional energy efficient improvements were made to the Town Hall. Window and door weatherstripping, LED lighting and attic insulation were added in 2016 as a result of an Energy Audit Report. A 2017 Renovation project made additional energy improvements as well as remodeling the north end of the Town Hall that had formerly been occupied by the police department. Prior to the renovation, the space was much as it had been in the 1960s including a holding cell constructed by the police officers in their spare time. The 2017 project to improve office space and meeting space and provide better record storage was designed by Wilton resident Alison Meltzer of Scully Architects of Keene. At this time the crawlspace and walls at the north end of the building were insulated. The heating and cooling for the north end of the building were also upgraded with systems powered by electric heat pumps. The fire alarm system was also installed at this time.

### **The Architects: Merrill and Cutler**

The Wilton Town Hall was designed by the architectural firm of Merrill and Cutler of Lowell, Massachusetts. Otis Addison Merrill (1844-1935) was born in Hudson, New Hampshire in 1844. During the Civil War, he enlisted in 1862 at the age of 18 in Company H, 7<sup>th</sup> New Hampshire Volunteers and was discharged in July 1865.<sup>43</sup> When he returned home, Merrill learned the trade of carpenter and joiner in Haverhill, Massachusetts. He moved to Lowell in 1869 and worked as a carpenter until 1873 when he began to study and practice architecture; he was self-taught. Merrill entered into a brief architectural partnership with Charles S. Eaton. In 1883 the firm of Merrill & Cutler was formed.<sup>44</sup> Arthur Sidney Cutler (1854-1903) was born in Andover, Massachusetts and began working in Merrill's office as a draftsman in 1876. Merrill & Cutler operated until about 1896 after which time Merrill was in practice with Edwin Clark in 1897 and 1898 (Merrill & Clark) and in practice with Perley Gilbert (Merrill & Gilbert) in 1900 and 1901. Soon thereafter, Merrill ceased architectural practice and retired to Pepperell. After Merrill and Cutler dissolved, Cutler worked as an insurance agent for several years and then worked in the City of Lowell Building Department.<sup>45</sup> Arthur Cutler died in 1903, having drowned in Bow Lake in Strafford, New Hampshire after his canoe overturned.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Henry F.W. Little. *The Seventh Regiment New Hampshire Volunteers in the War of the Rebellion*. Concord: Ira C. Evans, 1896.

<sup>44</sup> Frederick W. Coburn. *History of Lowell and Its People*. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1920, p. 431.

<sup>45</sup> Lowell City Directories, various dates.

<sup>46</sup> "Drowned at Bow Lake", *Boston Globe*, August 9, 1903, p. 3.

During his solo career, Otis Merrill designed a number of buildings in Lowell including the Lowell Engine No. 2 Fire Station (1877); the City Stables (1877); the Fiske Building (1877) and the Lowell Old Ladies Home (1883). The firm of Merrill & Cutler is credited with the designs of numerous buildings in Lowell including the First Congregational Church (1884); Lowell City Armory (1891); Lowell City Hall (1893); New Central Block and the Bowditch Family Hotel. They also designed two schools in Andover - Bradlee School (1889) and Stowe School (1895) and a YMCA building in New Bedford.<sup>47</sup> It is noteworthy that in addition to the Wilton Town Hall, Merrill & Cutler had several other designs published in the national publication, *American Architect and Building News*. These included the design for a laboratory at Phillips Academy (Graves Hall) in Andover (1882); the Lowell City Armory (1891); a competition design (awarded third place) for the Odd Fellows Building in Lowell (1891) and the YMCA Building in Madras, India (1896).<sup>48</sup> Merrill & Cutler are known to have designed several other structures in New Hampshire including Concord High School.<sup>49</sup> The firm also designed an impressive wood-frame, Queen Anne style hotel in the White Mountains called Moosilauke Inn in Warren (1886).<sup>50</sup>

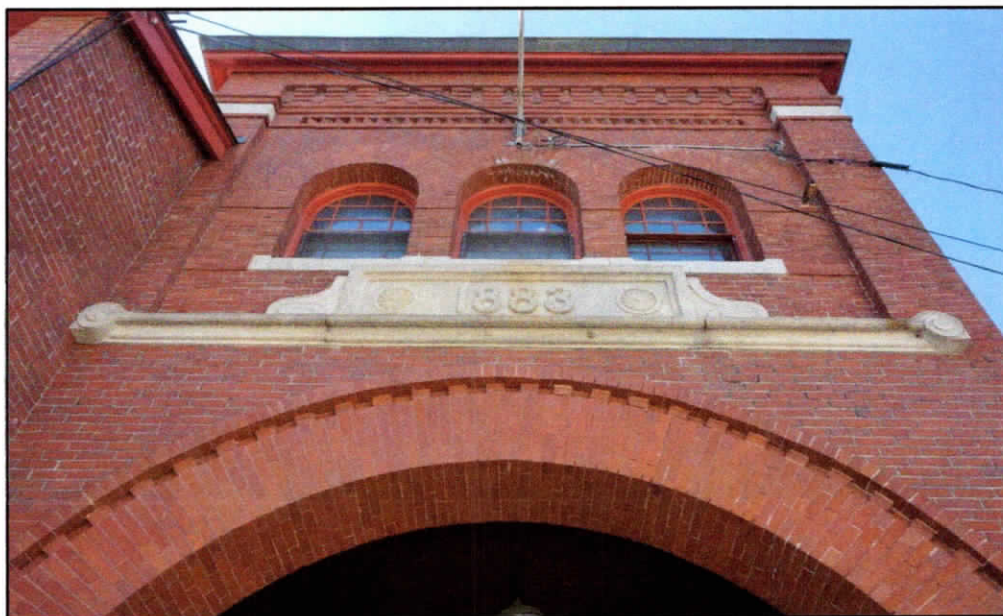


Photo 11

Detail of Wilton Town Hall, Maple Street entrance

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<sup>47</sup> Massachusetts Historical Commission, MACRIS.

<sup>48</sup> Plans for the YMCA building, which was the gift of John Wanamaker, were drawn and accepted in the United States in 1896. After being sent to India, the plans were revised somewhat by a local architect.

<sup>49</sup> The building, later known as Parker School, stood on the corner of School and North State Streets. It was taken down many years ago and the site is now a park (Info. from Elizabeth Durfee Hengen).

<sup>50</sup> Bryant F. Tolles, Jr. *The Grand Resort Hotels of the White Mountains: A Vanishing Architectural Legacy*. Boston: David R. Godine, 1998, p. 170. The Moosilauke Inn burned in 1953.

### Site Description

The Wilton Town Hall is set on an elongated triangular lot measuring 0.3 acres and bordered on the southwest by Main Street and on the northeast by Maple Street. The lot slopes downhill from Maple Street. Along Main Street to the northwest of the building there is a retaining wall consisting of two rows of large granite blocks displaying plug marks, topped by a course of smaller rectangular blocks. The wall along Maple Street consists of a single row of granite blocks topped by a fence consisting of granite posts spanned by sets of two metal rails. In 1898 the Abiel A. Livermore Post No. 71 GAR was given permission to place a foundation for mounting a cannon on the grassy area on the north side of the town house. Later, two World War I trench mortars were installed as well. This area is now known as Cooley Park.<sup>51</sup>

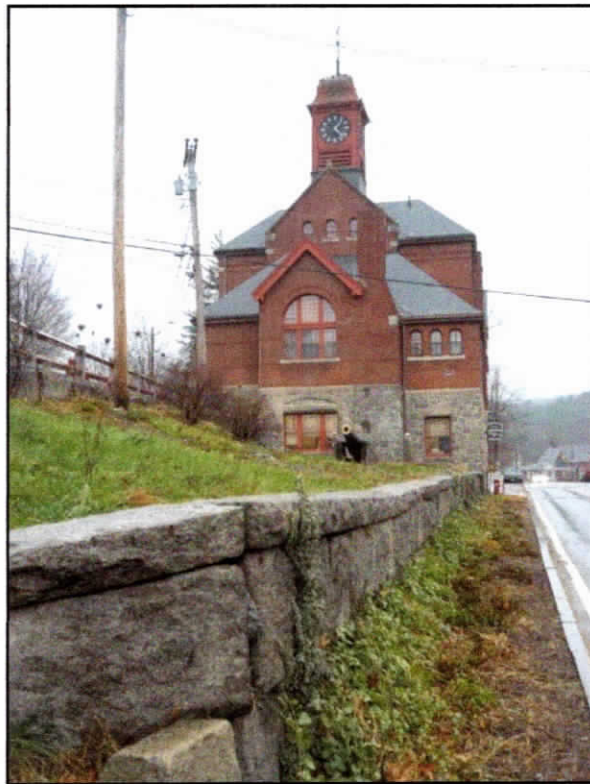


Photo 12  
Granite wall and Cooley Park

On the south end of the building a steep flight of granite steps extends from Main Street to a paved landing with another flight of granite steps climbing the hill up to Maple Street.

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<sup>51</sup> The Park was created by the Main Street Association in the 1990s with some of the funds that had been left to the Town of Wilton in a bequest by local resident Roland Cooley who died December 17, 1973.



### Exterior Description

Constructed in 1883-1884, the Wilton Town Hall is an excellent, visually-rich example of Queen Anne-style civic architecture. Typical of the best examples of the style, it is irregular in plan and mass and displays a variety of materials, colors, and textures.



Photo 13

West (Main Street) and south elevations of Town Hall

In terms of materials, the basement story - fully exposed on the north, west, and south elevations and to a lesser degree on the east side - is constructed of rusticated blocks of Milford granite. The upper portion of the exterior walls are constructed of common face brick, with granite used for the windowsills, capstones of the gable parapet in front of the belltower and the stone with raised "1883" that is located over the Maple Street entrance. The beltcourses, arches and decorative details are pressed brick. Above the roofline, the less visible gable on the south end of the building is sheathed in wood shingles.

The varied roof forms including gables and hips are all sheathed in slate and combined with chimneys, dormers and clock tower give the building a complex silhouette. The bulk of the building (corresponding to the upper hall/theater) is capped by a gable roof with small shed dormers and large gable wall dormers exhibiting wooden vergeboards that have rounded ends and are supported by brackets with incised designs. Rising from the north end of the gable roof is a square clocktower set on a slate-sheathed base and capped by a bellcast roof that is clad in copper, painted red.

Below the tower, both the Main Street (west) and Maple Street (east) entries are at the base of hip-roofed projections; standing three stories on the Main Street side and two on the Maple Street side. Both entries are set into round arched entries displaying a Richardsonian Romanesque influence. The arch of the Main Street entrance is articulated in rusticated granite voussoirs with a smaller arched window opening in the granite wall to the side. The Maple Street arch is constructed of radiating bricks with an outer surround of header brick, alternating bricks and voids giving the illusion of dentils; the arch rests on granite impost blocks. The brick work above the entries and at the cornice of the hipped projection is the most elaborate on the building and includes decorative patterning including bricks set on edge, diagonal courses and woven patterns. At the base of the north end of the building is a lower section capped by a hip roof from which a gable projection rises. The south end of the building, corresponding to the stage area, is capped by a hip roof. Four tall brick chimneys rise from the building. The exterior brick chimney on the north end at some point had its corbelled cap removed. The other three chimneys, two on the west elevation and one on the east wall break through the eaves and feature iron anchor plates in a sunburst motif and panelled caps.

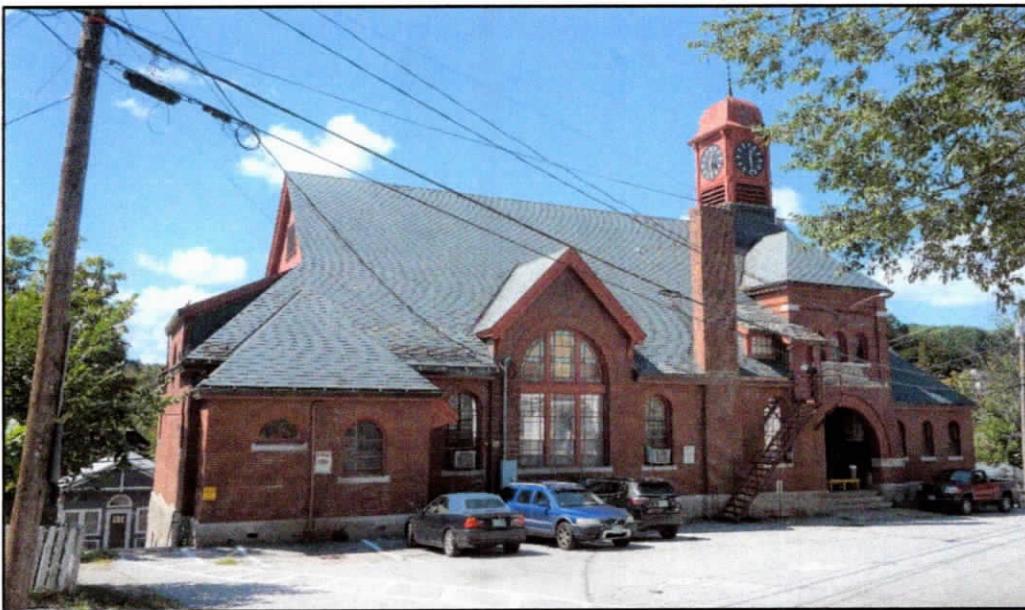


Photo 14  
East (Maple Street) elevation

The incredible variety of window forms present on the Town Hall is another hallmark of the Queen Anne style. Although the original single-pane window glass has been replaced with double-paned glazing, the sash were preserved. The lower level window openings facing Main Street are rectangular and include individual units as well as pairs. Most are double-hung with the upper sash displaying a central pane of glass surrounded by a border of smaller clear panes and the lower sash containing either one or two panes or glass. There is also a fixed unit with a border of smaller glass panes and another with a simple 8/1 configuration. On the Maple

Street elevation, owing to the sloping building site, there are only small rectangular openings punctuating the granite wall and many of these have been filled with brick.

The upper level of the building displays even more elaborate and varied windows. Most are set into arched openings. There are sets of smaller arched windows with 4/4, 6/3 and 6/6 sash. The larger double-hung windows have a more complex patterning of wood muntins. Colored glass is visible in the upper sash of the large arched windows lighting the upper hall and the circular window at the south end of the building, behind the stage, is entirely colored glass panes.

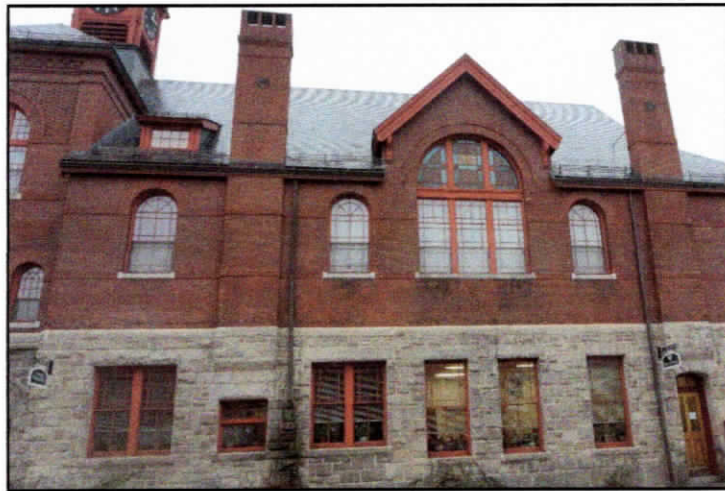


Photo 15

Detail of window variety on Main Street elevation

The Town Hall also retains a number of original exterior doors. Within the arched recesses on both the Main Street and Maple Street elevations there are double doors with gridded glass over three raised horizontal panels.

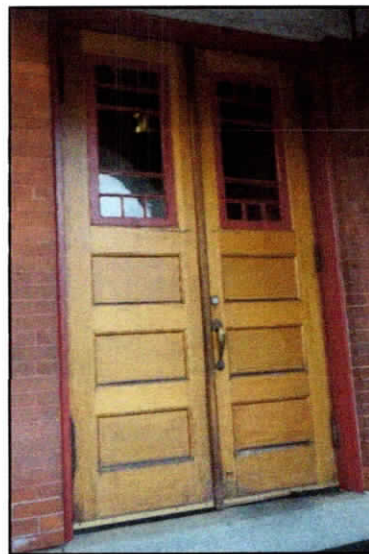


Photo 16

Main Street doors

An additional, similar single door is located adjacent to the Maple Street double doors.

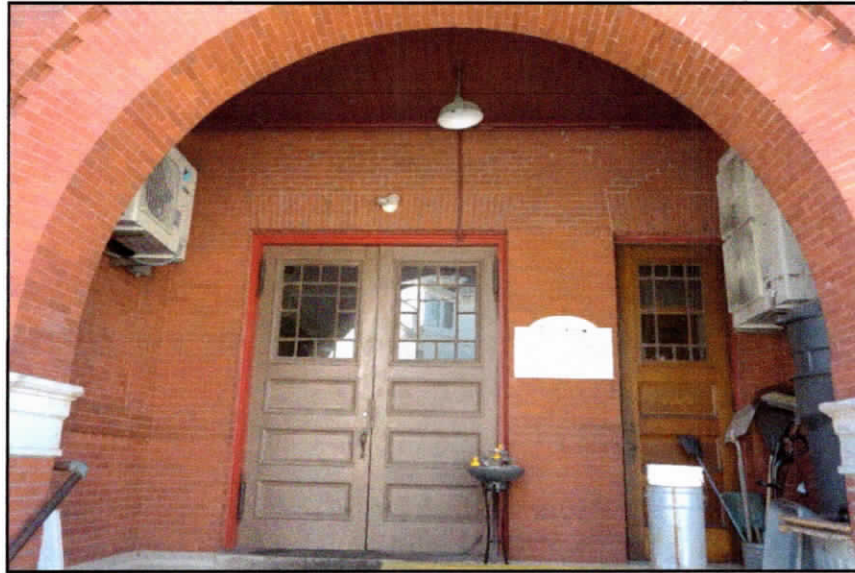


Photo 17  
Maple Street entrance

Original five-panel doors are located on the east elevation at the top of the fire escape and at the stage entrance under the door hood to the south.

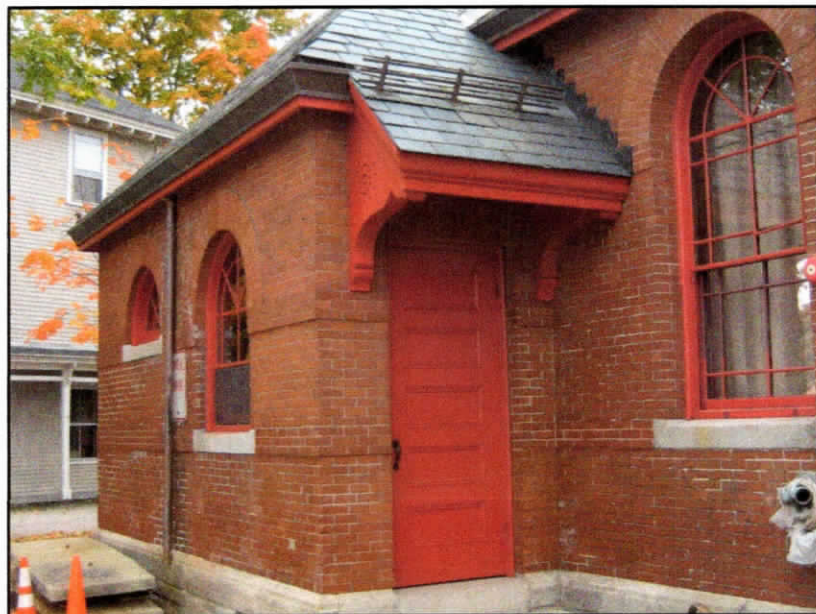


Photo 18  
Stage entrance, south end of Maple Street elevation

Interior Description – First Floor

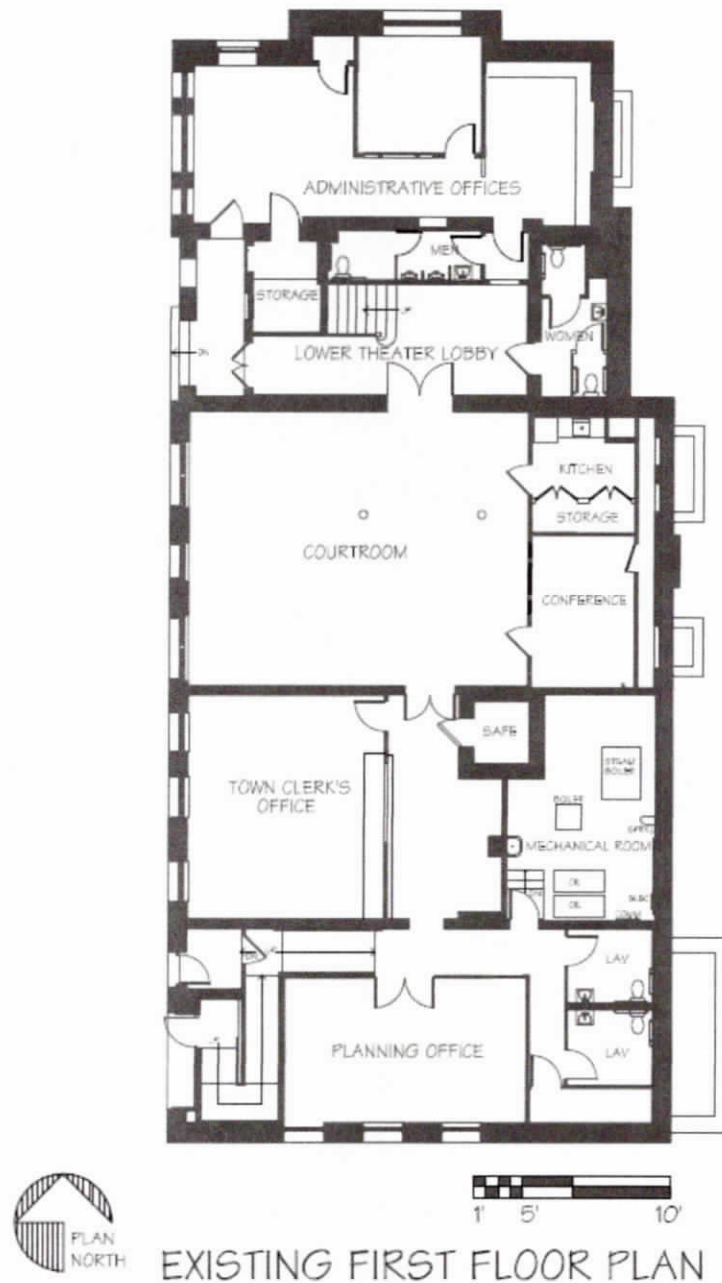


Figure 5  
Existing First Floor Plan

The interior of the Town Hall, particularly on the first floor, reflects a mix of alterations to meet changing town needs. There are three entrances from Main Street. The northernmost of the entrances opens into the lobby and stairs leading up to the second floor hall/theater.

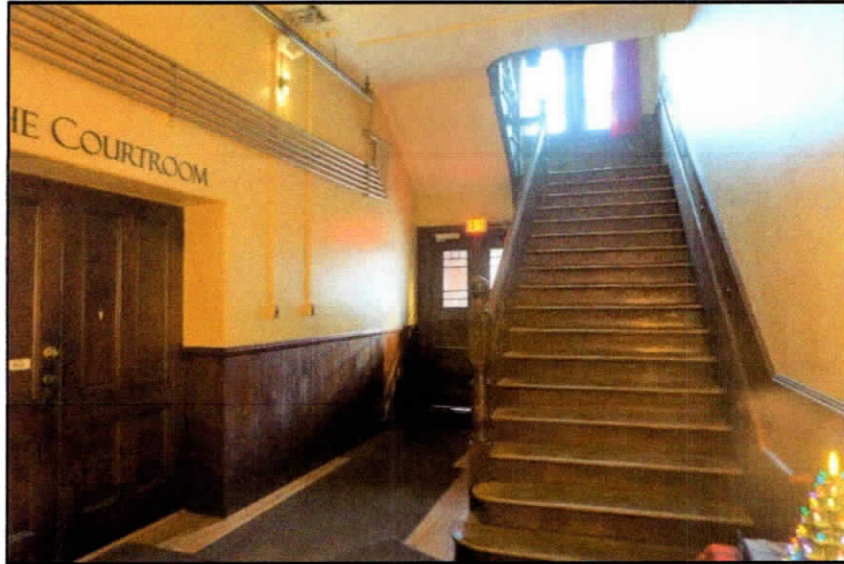


Photo 19

Stairway leading up to second floor, looking toward Main Street

The stairhall retains original finishes including stained wainscoting, maple wood floors and the U-shaped staircase with decorative newel posts and turned balusters. Steam radiator pipes are mounted on the south wall and there is a modern ceiling fan with light hanging from the ceiling.

The area to the north of the stairhall was marked as “unfinished” on original plans and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century housed the police and jail cells. In 2017 this space was remodeled and now houses administrative offices. New walls were added, with glass openings that evoke a sense of the building’s Queen Anne-style exterior windows.

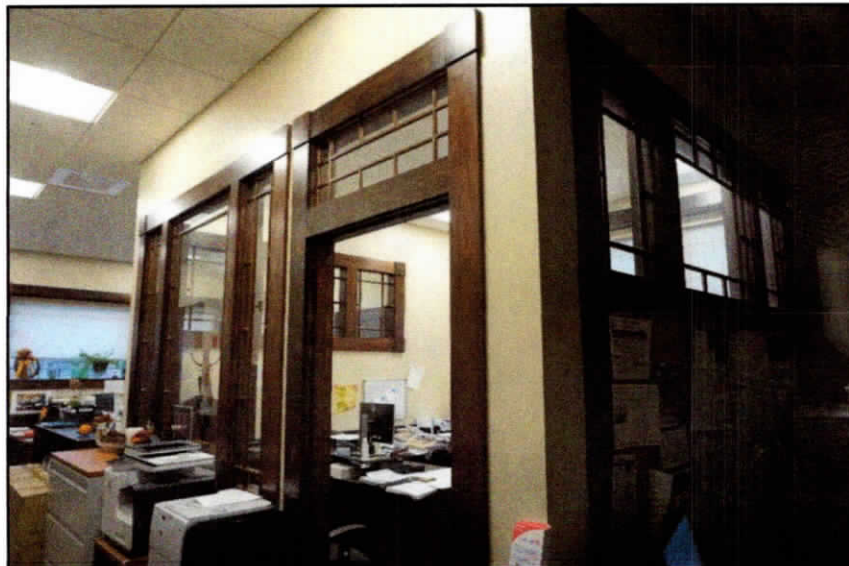


Photo 20

Offices at north end of first floor

This renovated area has dropped ceilings with fluorescent lighting, carpeted floors and wainscoting that echoes that which survives elsewhere in the building. In addition to the office space, the renovated space includes a small storage area and men's and women's bathrooms. There are also several original doors with upper glass and two lower panels.



Photo 21  
Administrative offices looking east

To the south of the lower theater lobby and staircase, double doors of a four-panel configuration lead into a large 27' x 35' room used currently for meetings and for voting. For many years the Wilton Municipal Court met here (Photo 22).



Photo 22  
"Courtroom" looking northwest

Originally this space served as a “Supper Room” where refreshments were served, often in combination with events being held in the hall upstairs. The blackboards were installed in the 1960s when the space served as a temporary classroom. The room retains two original loadbearing columns, maple floors, simple window trim, and stained vertical board wainscoting. There is a dropped ceiling with modern ceiling fan. The space to the east of the meeting room has always been a kitchen area. The former kitchen was renovated in 2017 into storage and a small conference room. One wall is brick and is adjacent to the mechanical room (Photo 23).



Photo 23

In 2017 a new window was introduced between the “Courtroom” and the conference room. The adjacent four-panel door was also modified by the addition of upper glass in the upper two panels.



Photo 24

“Courtroom” looking east



The space to the south of the Supper Room/Court Room originally served as the Selectmen’s Room and has always included a vault although town meeting records suggest that at some point the door was replaced (Photo 25).



Photo 25

The western half of the space has been enclosed by a wall and service window and now serves as the Town Clerk and Tax Collector offices. The hallway has a tile floor and modern pendant light fixtures hang from the dropped ceiling (Photo 26).



Photo 26

Hallway at Town Clerk Office, looking south

The south end of the first floor of the Town Hall originally housed the fire engine, the town hearse and later an ambulance. A solid wall separated the Selectmen's Room from the garage which had an individual doorway and double garage doors opening onto Main Street.



Photos 27 & 28 - Entrances at south end of Main Street

About 1998 the front portion of the former garage was configured to construct an interior handicapped accessible entrance ramp. To the east of the entrance is the Planning Office (Photo 29).

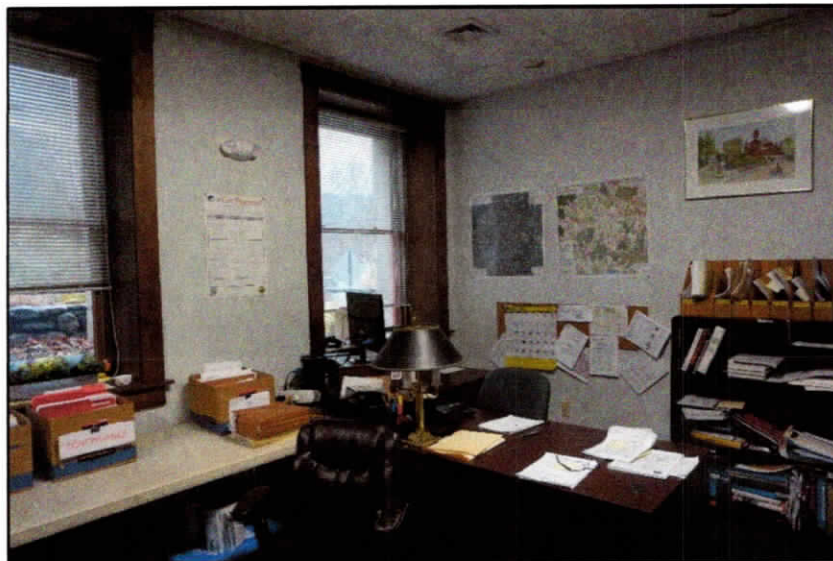


Photo 29

To the east of the Planning Office, handicapped accessible bathrooms were installed (Photo 30).



Photo 30

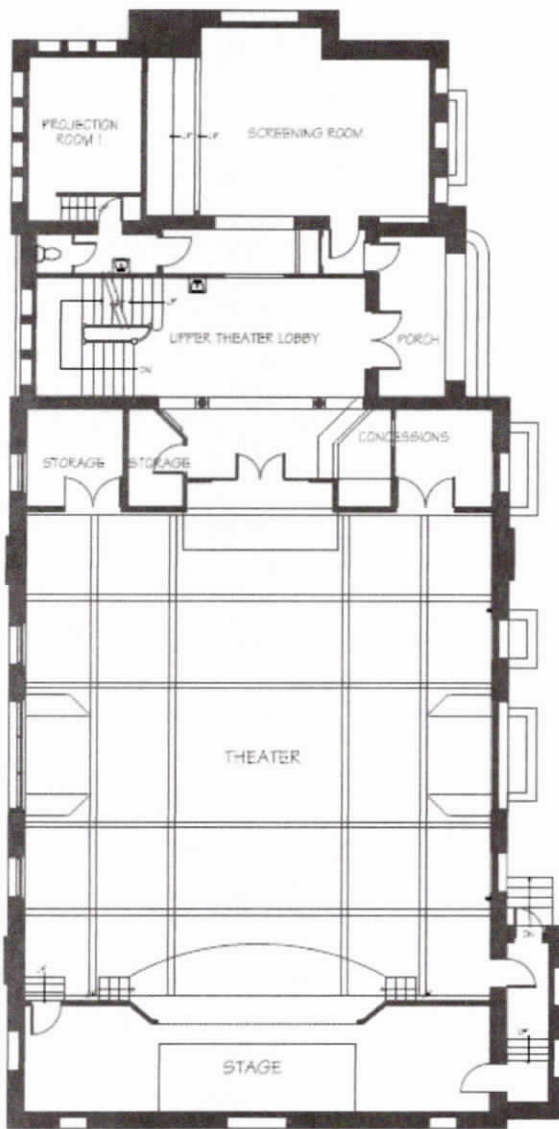
Across the hall, to the east of the town vault is the Mechanical Room (Photo 31) which displays stone and brick walls and a concrete and brick floor. Equipment includes two oil-fired boilers.



Photo 31

Mechanical Room – hot water boiler on left and steam boiler on right

Interior Description – Second Floor

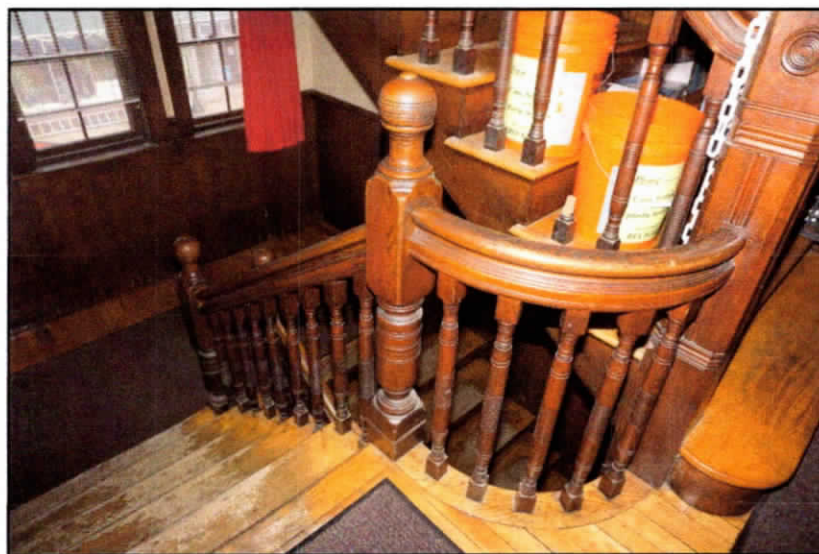
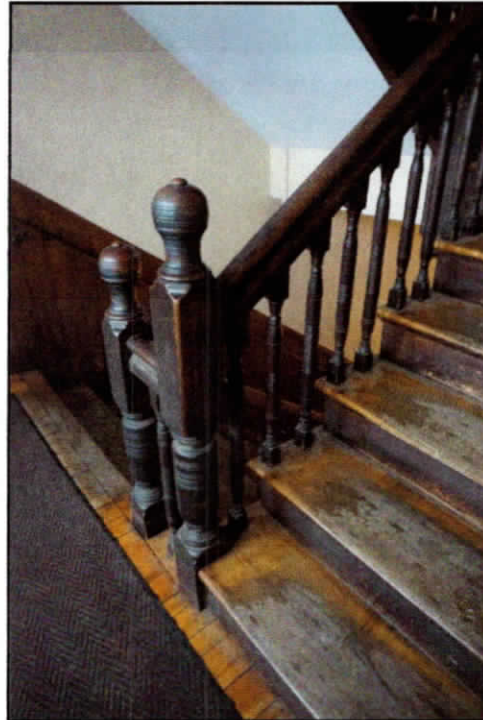


EXISTING SECOND FLOOR PLAN

Figure 6  
Existing Second Floor Plan

Since its construction, the second floor of the building has served as a community center and entertainment venue. Movies have been shown here since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and it is now operated as the Wilton Town Hall Theatre.

The ash staircase leading up from the first floor to the second floor hall retains a high level of integrity. The worn stair treads reflect decades of use by the public.



Photos 32 & 33  
Stairs to Upper Hall

At the top of the stairs is the upper theater lobby. Two decorative load-bearing columns mark the entry to the theater. An additional flight of stairs leads up to the balcony level.



Photo 34

Staircase up to Balcony

To the north of the staircase are two small rooms which originally served as a reading room and library. After the opening of the Wilton Public and Gregg Free Library in 1907, these rooms were utilized by various community groups.

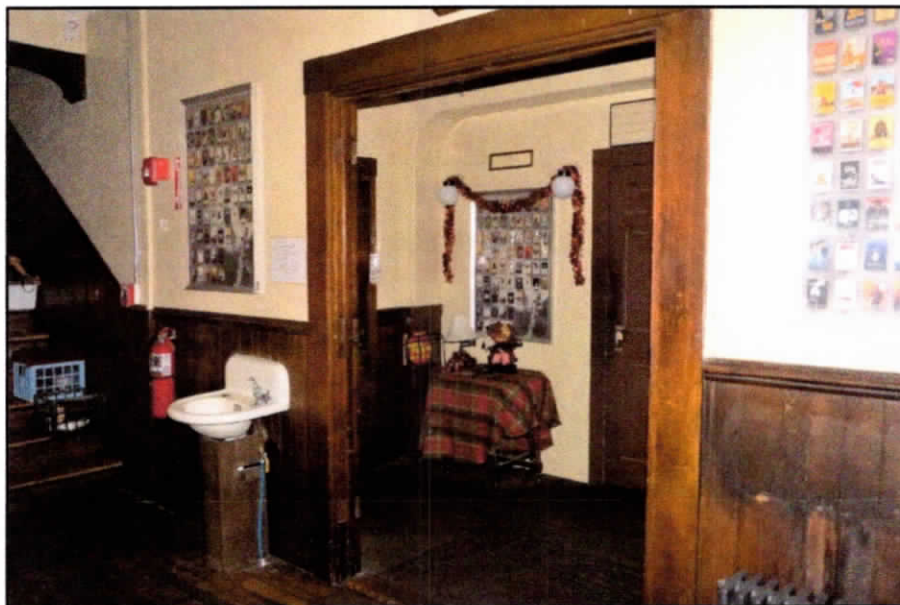


Photo 35

Looking NW at entrance to reading room (now Screening Room)

In 1988, the former library space was converted into a small movie theater (“screening room”). The space retains original vertical wainscoting and plaster walls. The original ceiling is covered by acoustical tiles and the original plaster shows considerable water damage. Theater seats recycled from another location were installed.



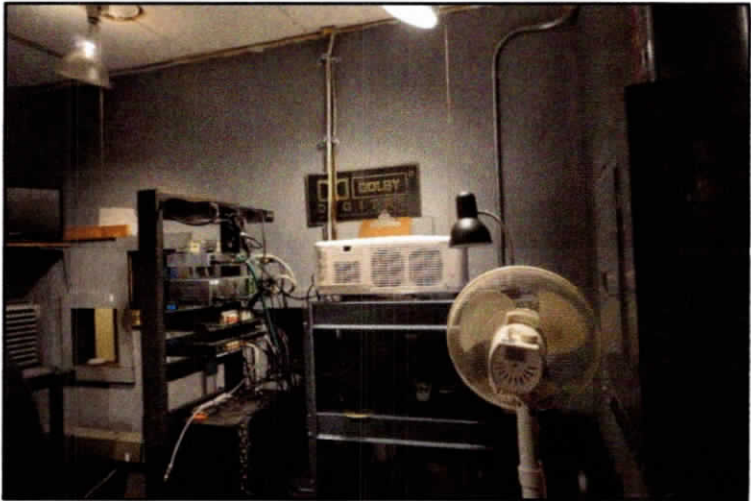
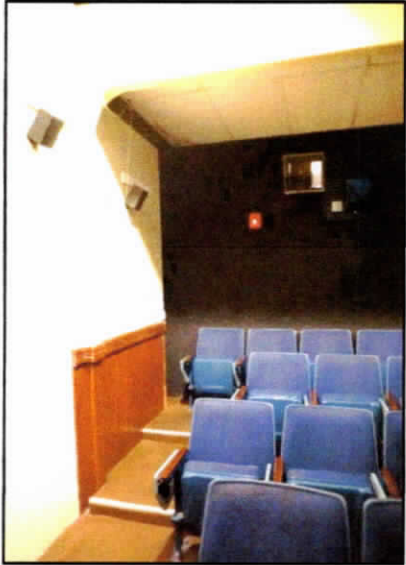
Photo 36  
“Screening Room”

A new opening was introduced on the south wall of the space to provide necessary fire egress (Photo 37).



Photo 37

At the rear (west end) of the theater, a dry wall partition was erected to enclose the projection space (Photos 38 & 39).



Photos 38 & 39  
“Screening Room” Projection Area

Adjacent to the projection room is a small bathroom with vinyl flooring (Photo 40).



Photo 40



To the south of the theater lobby is the entrance to the main theater. The wide, curved opening is supported by a distinctive pair of iron columns with bracketed caps. The wood flooring, wainscoting and four three-panel doors leading into the theater are also original.

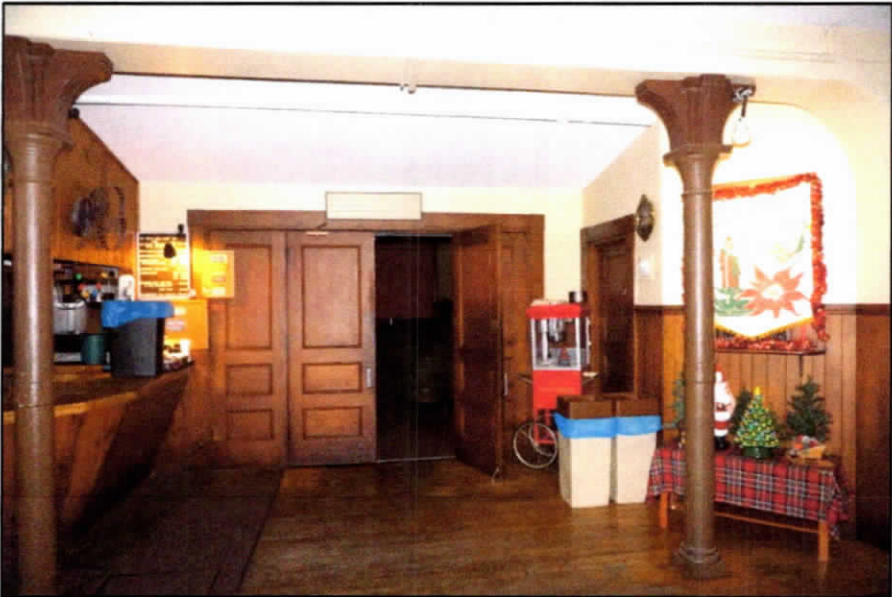


Photo 41

Entrance to Hall/Theater, looking south

Originally there were angled ticket windows on either side of the columns. That to the west is still there, currently covered by a “Season’s Greetings” sign (Photo 42).



Photo 42

The ticket window on the other side was removed c.1960, replaced by a concession stand constructed of clear finished pine (Photo 43).



Photo 43

Inside, the main hall has seen relatively few changes since it was dedicated in 1885 (see Photo 9 for comparison). The most obvious change is the addition of theater seats in the 1970s. The wood floors are still there, bearing the markings of basketball courts and covered in some areas by carpeting. Above the wainscoting and below the angled roof walls, the plaster walls are covered in one foot square perforated acoustic tiles. The windows are all covered with blackout curtains.



Photo 44  
Looking south at stage



Photo 45  
Detail of ceiling trusswork

There is a grid of cherry beams on the flat portion of the ceiling with the beams continuing down the adjacent slopes of the gable roof, terminating at the top of the walls. Diagonal metal rods supplement the beams.



Photo 46  
Ceiling vent

At the center of the room, a perforated, decorated panel covers a ceiling vent. Originally a large gas chandelier hung from the panel but was removed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Numerous later light fixtures with schoolhouse globes hang close to the ceiling.

The main hall was designed with a natural ventilation system that takes advantage of the fact that warm air rises. Warm air was drawn up through the walls into the second floor and then exhausted out through the large ceiling vent (Photo 46) to aid in cooling the building during warm weather (in the days prior to air conditioning). The vent shaft openings in the walls were fitted with decorative rectangular iron grates still visible today (Photo 47).

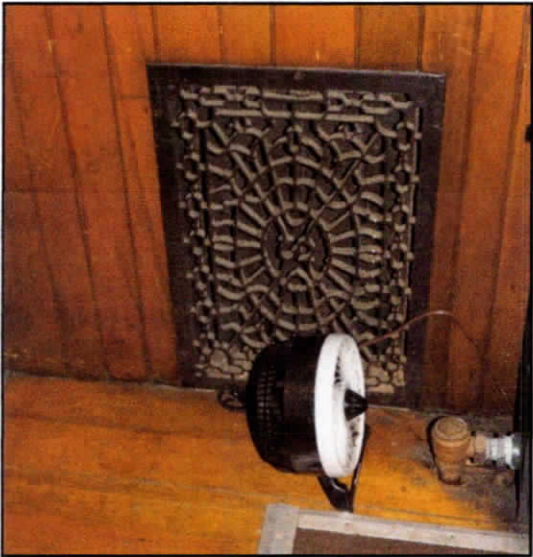


Photo 47

The proscenium stage has a bowed apron with three steps on either end. Underneath the wood boards on the top of the apron there is reportedly evidence of the original gas stage footlights.

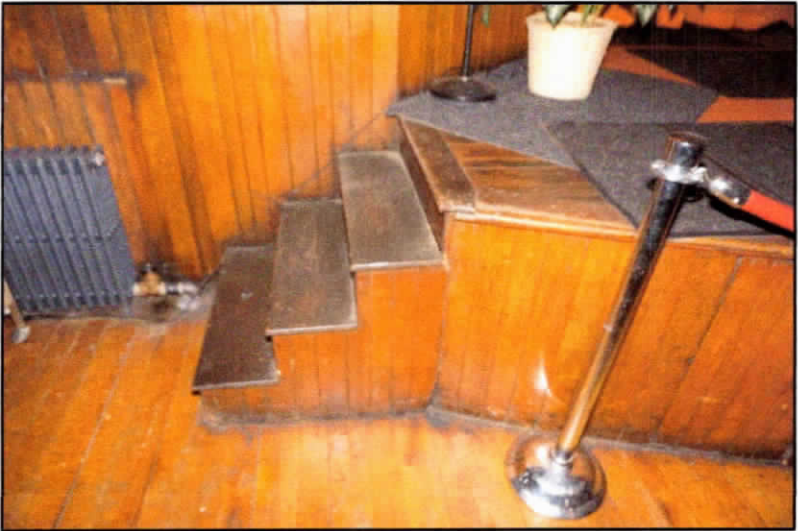


Photo 48

Steps on either end of stage

An original five panel door leads from the exterior (see Photo 18) into the stage entrance vestibule. From there stairs (Photo 49) lead backstage. The stage has an anteroom on either end that at one time served as dressing rooms for the entertainers. There are still hooks mounted on the walls for coats or costumes.



Photo 49

The scenery was reportedly disposed of in the 1960s. At the back of the stage, the circular stained glass window has been boarded on the inside.

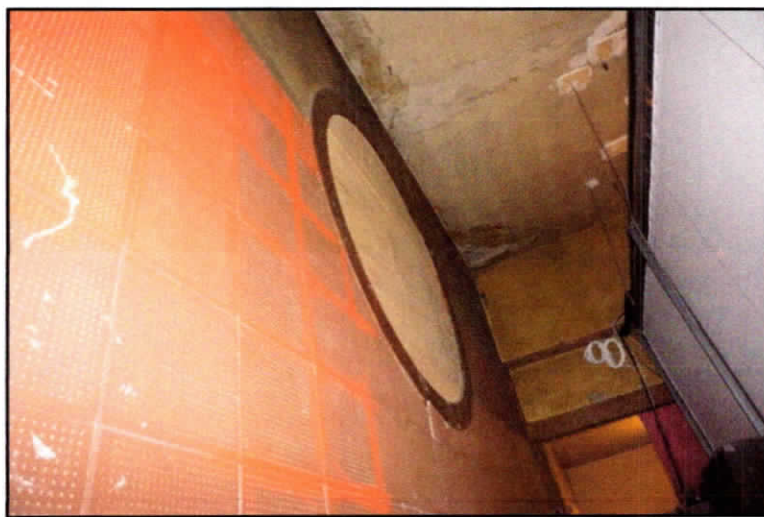
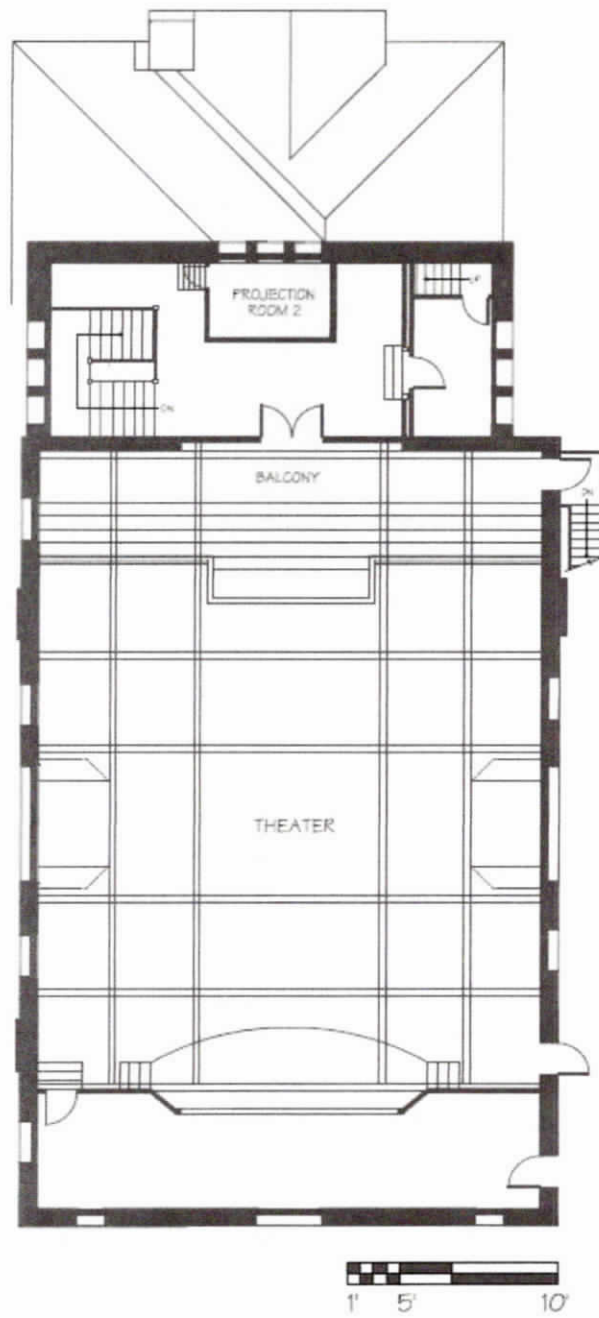


Photo 50

Interior view of circular window on south end of the building

Interior Description – Balcony Level



EXISTING BALCONY FLOOR PLAN

Figure 7  
Existing Balcony Floor Plan

At the top of the stairs is the access to the balcony/gallery overlooking the main hall. The front wall is paneled and the central projecting portion is supported by large decorative brackets. The 64 seats in the balcony were recycled from a Waltham theater. Other than the addition of seating, the view has changed little since the 1880s (compare Photo 9 & Photo 51).



Photo 51  
Main Hall looking north toward balcony



Photo 52  
Detail of balcony

In 1912 a projection booth to hold machinery for the display of motion pictures was installed at the rear of the balcony level. The steel-clad room was designed to be segregated from the theater and to protect against potential fires caused by the incredibly flammable nitrate film that was used through the 1940s. The projection room was equipped with a fusible link, roll down fire shutter. It was vented to the attic above.



Photos 53 & 54  
Door to Projection Room

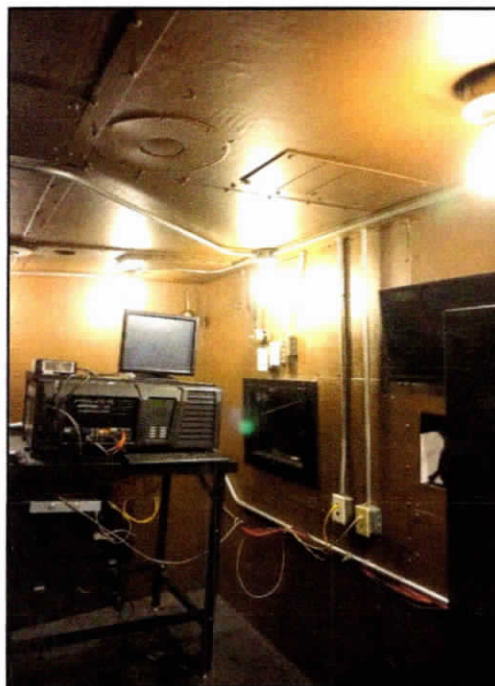


Photo 55  
Inside the Projection Room



In the northeast corner of the balcony level, rough stairs lead up to the clocktower. The clock movement was manufactured by George Milton Stevens of Boston and is original to the building. Carved into a beam by the clock is the date “1884” and some initials. As the weight falls, it drives the clock’s mechanism. It is still operational today.



Photos 56 & 57  
Clock movement and weight

## Primary Character-Defining Features

Primary Character-Defining Features are features that should be preserved in any future repairs or renovations.

### Exterior

- Overall building form, massing, and fenestration
- All surviving framing elements from 1883 construction
- Original masonry construction (brick and granite block exterior walls, chimneys, brick lintels and sills, granite and brick decorative trim)
- All historic wooden window sashes
- Original/historic siding and trim including wood shingles in south gable, gable rakings, brackets, doorhood on east side
- Historic doors
- Clocktower components (massing, vertical board siding, architectural trim, clock faces, clock hands, louvered screens, copper roof, weathervane)
- Roof form and slate roofing
- Metal medallions on chimneys
- Granite steps
- Granite retaining walls along Main Street and Maple Street
- Setting

### Interior

- First floor original plan and historic materials (lath and plastered interior walls  
Stair hall and stairway (stairs, balustrade, newel posts)  
Vault
- Second floor plan and historical materials  
Upper Stair hall and balustrade and newel posts  
Ticket window  
Upper Hall including Balcony  
Roof system in hall including beams, side brackets reinforced with metal tie rods  
Stage and backstage including lights under wooden panels and coat hooks  
Projection room on balcony level  
Wood flooring  
Lighting fixtures (schoolhouse globes)  
Historic faux-bois (grain painting) on interior door  
Decorative iron ventilation grills  
Historic radiators

- Clocktower
  - Stairs leading to clocktower
  - Original tower clock mechanism manufactured by George Stevens Co.

**Secondary Character-Defining Features** -features that meet the requirements for “historic” as per National Park Service guidelines being a minimum of fifty years old, but do not substantially contribute to the overall sense of historic character in the building. Before any future renovation plans involving removal or alteration, they should be thoroughly documented in their current condition.

#### **Exterior**

- Cannon and WWI trench mortars in Cooley Park to west of Town Hall

#### **Interior**

- Blackboards installed in first floor
- Concessions stand outside theater

#### **Non-Character-Defining Features**

##### **Exterior**

- Entrance doors at handicapped entrance on Main Street
- Storm windows

##### **Interior**

- All modern wall partitions, woodwork, ceiling and floor finishes, restroom and restroom fixtures, electrical fixtures, and heating which date to the last quarter of the twentieth century or later
- Seats in theater, balcony and screening room

## EXISTING CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT

### TOWN HALL EXTERIOR

#### Site

- The site slopes down considerably from Maple Street on the east to Main Street on the west side. The only on-site parking is on the Maple Street side of the building. The asphalt paving in that parking area is cracked and uneven. There is no handicap access to the building from the Maple Street entrance, although there is one designated handicap parking spot (Photo 58).



Photo 58 Parking outside Maple Street

entrance

- Parking for the Main Street entrances is on-street only. There is one designated handicap parking space adjacent to the south crosswalk across Main Street and a second designated space adjacent to the north crosswalk across Main Street. Only the south Main Street entrance to the building is accessible, and accessibility there is problematic. Those conditions are detailed further in the section on accessibility later in this report.
- There is strong evidence of roof runoff and site drainage issues in several locations on site. The building is bordered on the north side by the small triangle-shaped Cooley Park which is framed by a tall dry-laid granite block retaining wall to the west, and a shorter granite retaining wall to the east. A garden of moisture loving plantings was created in that area in the summer of 2022 to alleviate some of the roof runoff issues at the northeast corner of the building, but a more permanent and complete solution for the drainage issues is needed.
- Cooley Park is not easily accessed due to the tall retaining wall on the Main Street side and the low retaining wall coupled with a guard rail on the Maple Street side. The Park, which is home to some historic artillery pieces, is in need of landscape improvements. There is evidence (a granite base with a drilled hole) that there was a flagpole in the Park at one time.

- The large blocks of the granite wall on the Main Street side of the Park have shifted some over the years, and some of the capstones need re-setting. There is a taller post comprised of multiple granite blocks where the two retaining walls meet that is missing some capstone pieces.



Photo 59

Missing capstones at granite post

- The sidewalk that connects the two entrances on the Main Street side of the building is a combination of broom-finished concrete with real brick edging and stamped concrete in a brick pattern. The brick edging is broken in places. The stamped concrete is in good condition, but slightly chipped at the edges on the north and south ends.
- The sidewalk outside of the south Main Street entrance is pitched too steeply from the street to the face of Town Hall to allow for ease of access for a wheelchair. There is a granite threshold at that entry door that is somewhat uneven. There is an automatic door opener to alleviate that condition somewhat, but a better solution is needed there.

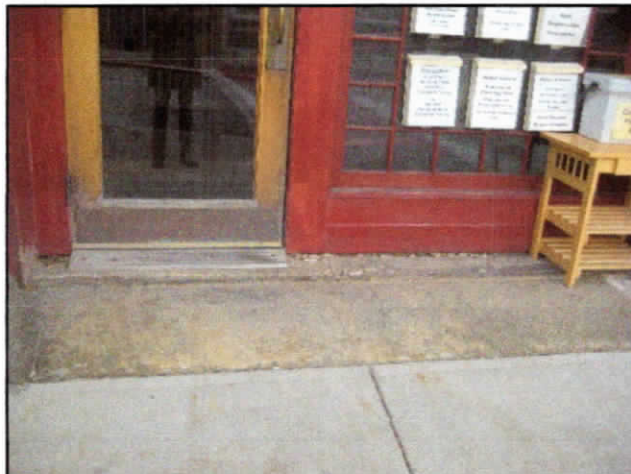


Photo 60

Sidewalk & threshold at the Main Street Town Hall entrance

- There is a flight of granite steps adjacent to the south side of the building that traverses from Main Street up to Maple Street. The steps are uneven and somewhat worn by over a century's worth of foot traffic.

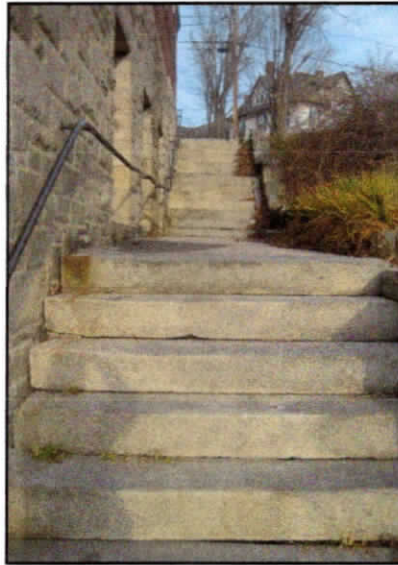


Photo 61

Uneven granite steps at south end of building as seen from Main Street

- A low rubble stone retaining wall along the south side of the stair is in need of repointing.
- The granite steps at both the main Maple Street entrance and the secondary egress at the south end of the Maple Street side need re-setting.



Photo 62

Steps at Maple Street entrance

- The small area of concrete paving at the base of the granite steps at the Maple Street entrance is in poor condition.
- The metal rails of the guard rail between Maple Street and Cooley Park need painting. The granite posts of that guard rail are in good condition.

### Masonry

- The granite masonry at the base of the building is generally in good condition and needs only minor re-pointing. There is also a limited area of rust staining caused by the deterioration of the fire escape on east side.



Photo 63

Granite needing repointing on east elevation

- There are remnants of some type of parging over the granite on the south and west walls. The parging material is very brittle and is flaking off in many locations. It is unclear when or why that application was done.



Photo 64

Remnants of parging that is flaking off of the granite masonry on south elevation

- The brick masonry is generally in good condition. However, over the years it has been re-pointed with badly mismatched mortar colors. The original red mortar can be seen in the arches over many of the windows, and in the sheltered recess of the Maple Street entrance. Varying shades of gray mortar have been used for re-pointing over the years, lending a bit of a patchwork effect to the once monochromatic red walls.



Photo 65

Example of poorly matched repointing on Maple Street side

- The chimney on the Maple Street side of the building was re-built some years ago with both mismatched brick and mortar.

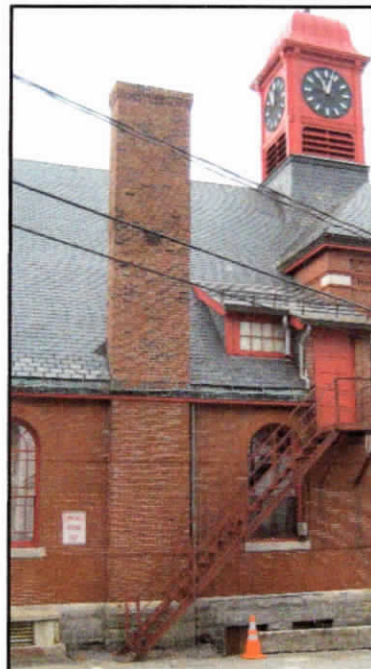


Photo 66

Reconstructed chimney on Maple St.



### Metal

- The fire escape leading from the balcony on the east (Maple Street) façade is missing a portion of handrail at the bottom section and is in need of painting. (It should be noted that the theater balcony is not in use by the public at the time of this report.)



Photo 67

Fire escape is missing a portion of handrail

### Carpentry

- The wood trim on rakes and eaves is in good condition.
- Wood shingle siding on the south gable wall is in good condition.
- The wood louvers and trim on the clocktower are in need of repair.



Photo 68

Wood trim on west gable

### Thermal and Moisture Protection

- The painted copper roof of the clocktower appears to be original. It has reached its serviceable life, is leaking and in need of replacement.

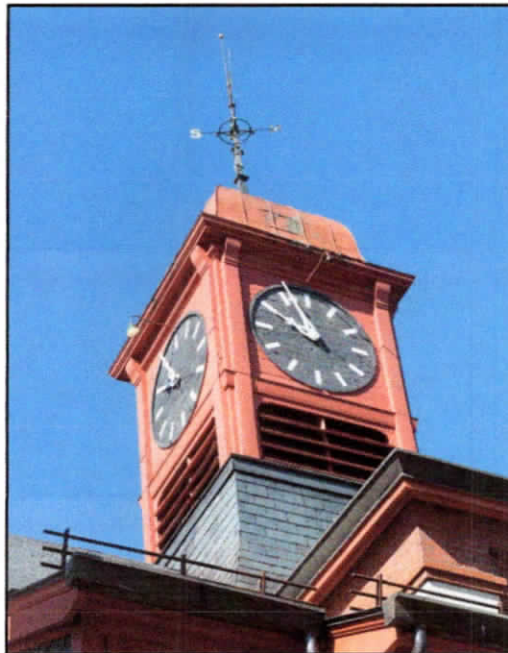


Photo 69

- Roughly 5 to 10 percent of the roof slates are broken or missing. Much of the damage is in areas where the snow guards cause snow and ice buildup.



Photo 70

Area of broken slates at southwest corner



Photo 71  
Broken slates on Maple Street elevation

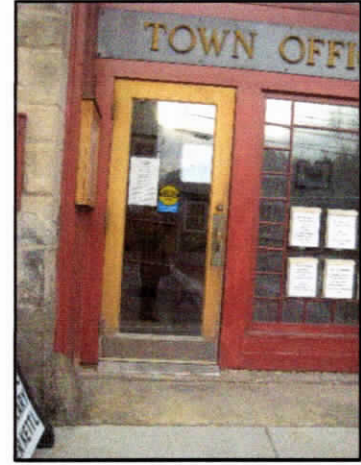
- Some of the copper flashing and gutters have been replaced or repaired in recent years. A number of the copper downspouts are missing their lower lengths or need to be redirected. This will tie into the site drainage work.



Photo 72  
Missing downspout on Main Street elevation

### Doors & Windows

- The entry doors that access the theater from the Maple Street side are in good condition. The second egress door from the front of the theater to Maple Street is also in good condition (see Photo 17).
- The three entry doors on the Main Street side are all in need of refinishing (Photos 73-75).



Photos 73-75

- The windows are generally in good condition. There is an arched window on the Maple Street elevation missing a side molding (Photo 76).

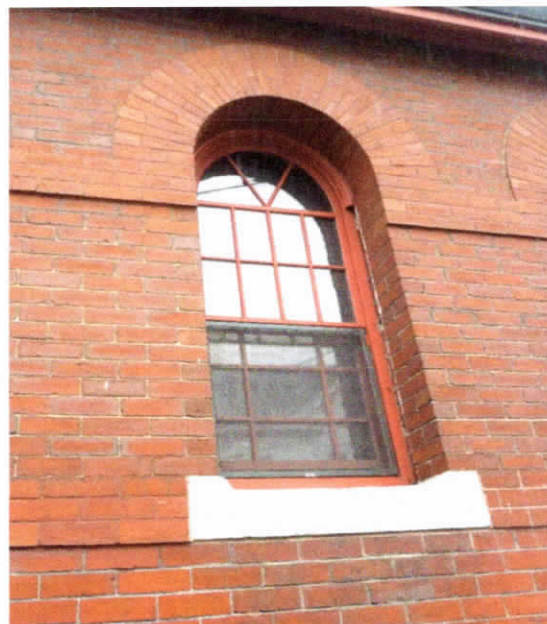


Photo 76

- The colored glass arch window on the west (Main Street) façade has a broken muntin.
- There is a broken pane in the colored glass arch window on the east (Maple Street) façade. There is also a damaged muntin in that window.



Photo 77

View of the arch window on the Maple Street side.  
Note the cracked pane of colored glass in the lower right.

Deterioration of windows on this elevation is also evident inside the theater, behind the curtains that cover the windows (Photo 78).



Photo 78

Interior view of lower part of arch window on Maple Street side.

- The triple arch window at the second floor level on the west façade has had the muntins replaced in the center window. Those muntins are not well crafted.

- It was noted that the first floor windows on the south façade adjacent to the exterior stair contain simple 1/1 sash. Drawings suggest that these were originally 12/2. The current windows are likely later replacements.

## **INTERIOR**

### **First Floor**

#### **Administrative Offices**

- This portion of the building includes the offices of the Town Administrator, Deputy Administrator, Finance Officer, and a space that is shared by the Welfare Officer and the Assessor. This space was last renovated in 2017 and is generally in very good condition.
- Carpet is in good condition but needs frequent cleaning due to its light coloration and higher than expected foot traffic entering from the exterior.
- Walls have clear finished wood wainscoting with painted drywall above, all in good condition
- Ceiling is 2x4 suspended acoustical tile scored to have the appearance of 2x2, with drop in light fixtures. All are in good condition.
- The millwork is in good condition. Some of the existing doors were re-used in the renovation.
- The heating and cooling for this portion of the building consists of electric heat pumps located in the recessed entry on the Maple Street side of the building. They were installed as part of the 2017 renovation and are functioning well for both heating and cooling.
- There is an electrical sub-panel in the rear of this area. All wiring was new in 2017.
- Fire alarm and sprinkler heads are present in this area.

#### **Men's Room**

- This area was also fully renovated in 2017.
- Ceramic tile flooring and wainscoting is in good condition.
- Painted drywall walls are in good condition.
- 2x4 suspended acoustical tile ceiling is in good condition.
- Toilet partitions and plumbing fixtures are in good condition. One wheelchair accessible stall is present.
- There is a portable electric heater in the space.

**Women's Room**

- The Women's Room is not accessible, having an uneven granite step at its entrance.
- There are two hard-built stalls, one of which is set up as accessible to some extent.
- Flooring is vinyl composition tile in good condition.
- The west side wall is exposed brick. Original plans for the building show that this was once an exterior wall. The remaining walls are painted drywall in good condition.
- The ceiling is 2x4 suspended acoustical tile in fair condition, with some damaged tiles.
- None of the door hardware meets accessibility requirements.
- There is a missing escutcheon plate at the sprinkler head.
- Light fixtures are surface mounted and there is one exhaust fan.
- There is a portable heater in the space.

**Lower Theater Lobby**

- Flooring is maple in good condition.
- The walls have stained wood wainscoting that is in fair condition, with some nicks and scratches in the finish. The painted plaster walls are in good condition. There are some small cracks in the plaster.
- The ceiling is painted plaster. The paint is peeling slightly in places.
- In general, the woodwork in this area is nicked and has some slight damage.
- The bottom rail of one of the doors leading into the Courtroom is split. There are no kick plates.
- The doors leading to the exterior from the Lobby are fitted with mismatched panic hardware.
- There is one ceiling mounted ceiling fan/light fixture at the Lower Lobby ceiling and an additional surface mounted fixture at the middle stair landing. These are switched with a keyed switch in the Lower Lobby only. Lighting is generally poor in this space.
- This space is still tied into the steam radiator system that heats the theater level above. There is a series of surface mounted steam pipes high on the south wall that form the radiator for the space.

**Courtroom**

- The maple flooring is in generally good condition, having only a few slight scratches.
- The walls have stained wood wainscoting on the south, west and north walls that is in good condition. The painted plaster above is in good condition. The east wall is entirely painted plaster in good condition.
- The finish on the woodwork surrounding the windows is alligatored at the jambs and heads and is very worn and the sills are water damaged.



Photos 79 &amp; 80

**Damaged woodwork on west windows in Courtroom**

- The ceiling is a 2x4 suspended acoustical tile in generally fair to good condition. A few tiles are damaged or dislodged. A tile is damaged near the north wall where electrical penetrations were made for the emergency light. Some of the tiles adjacent to the west wall are water stained (Photo 81). The source of the water was likely from a radiator leak upstairs. The leak is no longer active.
- Light fixtures are 2x4 parabolic drop in fixtures in good condition.
- Heat in this space is steam delivered through Runtal – type baseboard units.





Photo 81

Water-stained ceiling tile on west wall of Courtroom

### **Kitchen**

- This space was included in the 2017 renovation project.
- The flooring is vinyl composition tile in good condition.
- Walls are painted drywall in good condition.
- The ceiling is mostly a suspended 2x4 acoustical tile scored to look like 2x2 in good condition.
- However, two older 2x4 tiles at the light fixture and the smoke detector are both mismatched and badly stained.
- The cabinets are in good condition, but the upper and lower cabinets do not match.
- Appliances and fixtures are in good condition.
- There is a pendant light fixture in good condition.

**Conference Room**

- This space was also included in the 2017 renovation.
- The flooring is carpet in very good condition.
- The south wall is exposed brick that is the rated wall of the adjacent mechanical room. There are a few penetrations in that wall that may need fire safing.
- The remaining walls have stained wood wainscoting with painted drywall above, all in good condition. The ceiling is the same scored 2x4 suspended acoustical tile ceiling used in the rest of the 2017 renovation and is in good condition.
- There is one decorative pendant fixture and three wall sconces, all in good condition.
- Heat and air conditioning are delivered by a ceiling cassette that is tied into the electric heat pump system installed in 2017.

**Town Clerk Lobby**

- The south end of the building was renovated in 1998.
- Flooring is ceramic tile in good condition.
- Walls have stained wood wainscoting on the west, north and south walls that is in good condition. Painted drywall above is in good condition.
- The ceiling is a 2x4 suspended acoustical tile that is generally in good condition. There is some very slight damage to a few of the tiles.
- The service counter is plastic laminate in good condition.
- Heat is hot water baseboard.
- Air conditioning is delivered through two ceiling diffusers.
- There are two decorative pendant light fixtures. In addition, there are two recessed can fixtures on the east side of the space.

**Town Clerk's Office**

- Flooring is carpet in fair condition.
- Walls on the west, north and south sides have stained wood wainscoting with painted drywall above. All are in good condition.
- The ceiling is a 2x4 suspended acoustical tile. Tiles throughout the space are stained.

- Light fixtures are 2x4 parabolic drop ins in good condition.
- Heat is hot water baseboard and air conditioning is delivered through four ceiling diffusers.

**Planning Office**

- Flooring is carpet in fair condition.
- Walls are painted drywall in good condition.
- The ceiling is a 2x4 suspended acoustical tile that is stained in several locations.
- Light fixtures are 2x4 parabolic drop ins in good condition.
- Heat is hot water baseboard and air conditioning is delivered through three ceiling diffusers.

**Entrance**

- Flooring is ceramic tile in good condition. This space includes the entry ramp.
- Walls have stained wood wainscoting that is slightly scuffed. Painted drywall above is in generally good condition, with some slight damage at the middle landing north wall.
- The ceiling is a 2x2 suspended acoustical tile. Four of the tiles are stained.
- There are three decorative wall sconces in good condition.
- There is one ceiling diffuser and also a wall-mounted cabinet unit heater.
- The fire alarm control panel is located in this space.
- The main entrance door to the entry ramp is equipped with an automatic door opener.

**Unisex Lavatories (2)**

- Flooring in both bathrooms is ceramic tile in good condition.
- Walls are painted drywall in good condition.
- Ceiling is 2x2 suspended acoustical tile in good condition.

**Mechanical Room**

- Floor is concrete and brick in serviceable condition. Floor level is three steps down from the main level of the building.
- Walls are exposed brick on the north, west, and south sides and exposed granite on the east side.
- Ceiling is drywall that is taped and mudded, but not painted.
- Sprinkler service enters this space from Maple Street.
- There are two oil-fired boilers. One is a steam boiler which was installed in 2021. The second is an older hot water boiler (Photo 31).
- The main electrical service panel is in the space.
- There is a utility sink in this space. It is in fair condition. It has a domestic style faucet that is not especially well suited for its use.

**Second Floor****Theater Lobby**

- The stained wood stair to the Upper Theater Lobby is well worn. The treads not only have a worn finish, but the wood is actually worn down from many years of foot traffic.
- The theater lobby flooring is wood in fair condition.

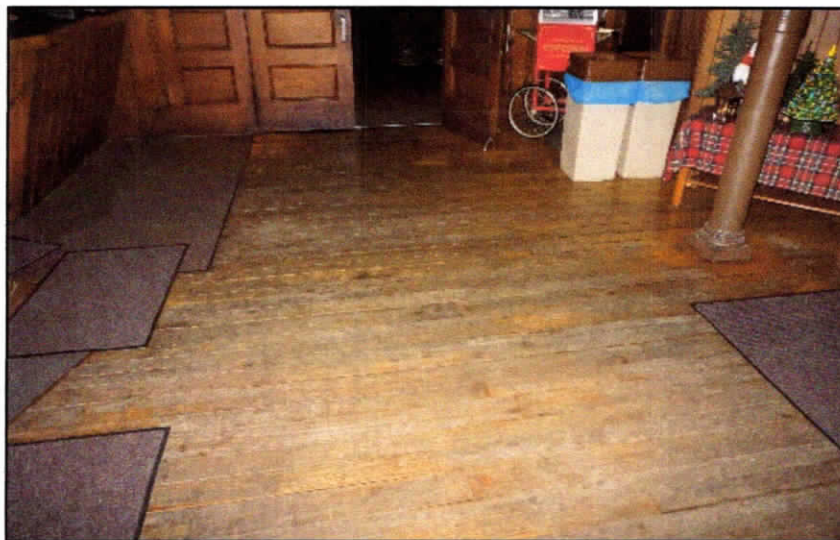


Photo 82

Worn wood flooring in the theater lobby

- The walls are painted plaster in fair to good condition.

- The ceiling is painted plaster in fair to good condition.
- The concessions stand/ticket counter is clear finished pine and was added in the 1960s. It is in fair condition.
- There is a ceiling fan/light combination that is switched from the lower theater lobby only. The lighting in the Theater Lobby is quite poor.
- Heat is delivered by steam radiators throughout the second floor.

### Large Theater

- The flooring below the seating is wood that is in fair to poor condition. The finish is quite worn.



Photo 83

Worn wooden flooring in theater  
Note markings from when space was used for basketball

- The upholstered seating is in fair to good condition.

- The aisles are carpeted. The carpet is in fair condition.

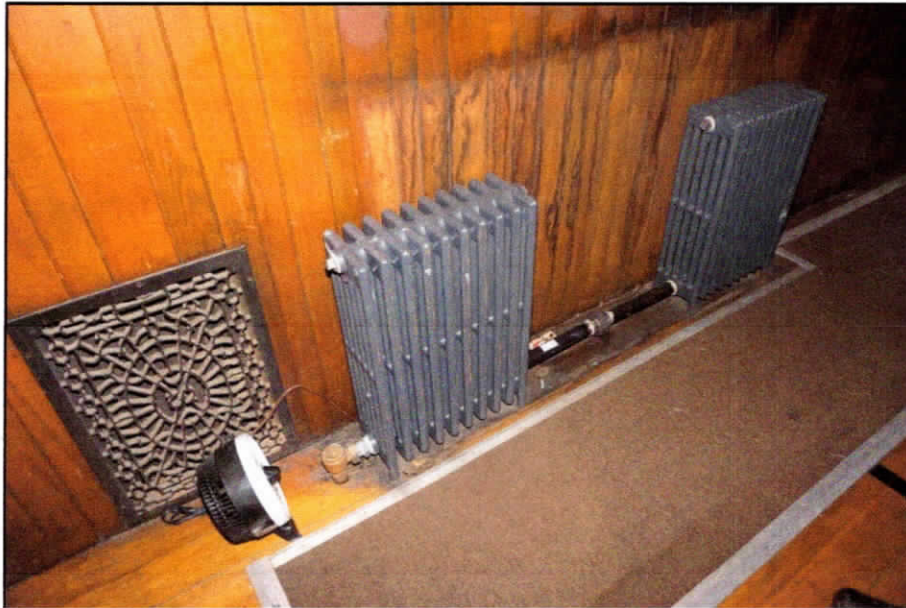


Photo 84

Carpeting covers the wood floor in aisles.

Note the damaged wainscoting marking the location of the historic radiators. The present radiators were installed two or three years ago to replace the old leaky radiators.

- Walls are painted plaster with wood wainscoting that is water damaged in multiple locations. Acoustic ceiling tiles have been added over the plaster portions of the walls.

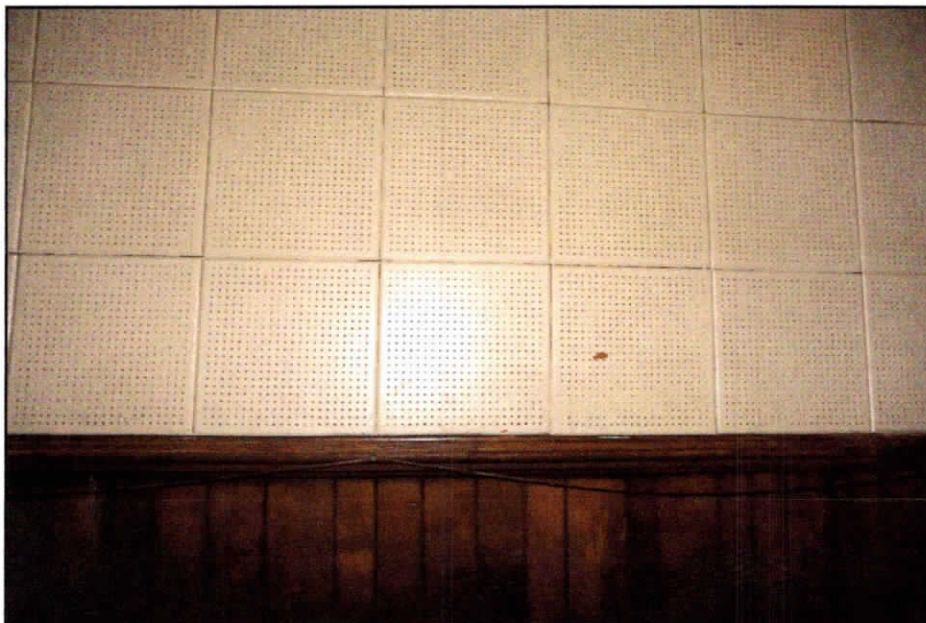


Photo 85

Acoustic tiles cover the plaster walls



Photo 86

- Blackout curtains cover the windows in the theater.
- The ceiling is painted plaster with exposed timber & metal trusses. There are many water stains on the ceiling.
- There are schoolhouse style pendant light fixtures. Lighting levels are quite low. Only one light fixture is currently working in the theater.



Photo 87

### Screening Room

- Flooring is wood that is in fair condition. The finish is quite worn.
- Walls are painted plaster above wood wainscoting. The plaster is damaged in places.
- The ceiling is 2x4 suspended acoustical tile that is stained in some locations.
- The upholstered seating is in good condition.



Photo 88

Damaged plaster on north wall of Screening Room



## Attic

- The timber bents and structural members appear to be in good condition. The first set of photos (photo 89) shows the attic structure prior to the 2016 re-insulation project. The attic is now fully air sealed and insulated with 16 inches of blown cellulose (photo 90).



Photo 89  
Attic prior to insulation



Photo 90  
Attic following installation of cellulose insulation

## General Notes

- The entire building has fire alarm coverage which was added during the 2017 renovations.
- The first floor is entirely sprinklered. The second floor and the attic have no sprinkler coverage. Wilton's Fire Chief has ordered that the building must be entirely sprinklered since it is a place of assembly. That work is likely to commence in 2023.
- Margaret Dillon of Sustainable Energy Education Demonstration Services (SEEDS) performed an Energy Audit on the Town Hall in 2014 which made recommendations for insulating and air sealing, as well as other energy saving measures. The renovations of the first floor in 2017 presented the opportunity to insulate portions of the building at the north end. The exterior walls were insulated with spray foam, and the crawlspace below the north end of the building was insulated with rigid foam and sealed with a heavy duty vapor barrier as a part of those renovations. The attic was air sealed and re-insulated with 16" of blown cellulose to replace the deteriorated fiberglass in 2015.

- The clock is presently working. It requires manual winding which has long been done by Dennis Markaverich, the Theater manager. Consideration should be given to electrifying the clock, while keeping all of the clockworks and weights intact.

### **Accessibility**

Accessibility is an issue throughout the building. The main entrance to the Town Offices is approached by means of the Main Street sidewalk that is sloped right up to the entry door. While that door was equipped with an automatic opener in recent years, it is still quite difficult for anyone in a wheelchair to negotiate without assistance. Once inside the entrance, there is a code-compliant ramp that leads up to the Town Offices level. The two unisex lavatories at this level are code-compliant.

The second floor theater is entirely inaccessible. The Maple Street entrance is four steps above the level of the street, while the Main Street entrance is a full flight of stairs below the theater level. There are no public restrooms at the theater level.

## **PART 5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Sitework**

- Re-paving of the parking area on Maple Street should be included in the maintenance plan for the Town Hall. While this is not a high priority, the paving will only continue to deteriorate over time.
- Site drainage improvements should be a high priority. Original construction plans show perimeter drains on the Maple Street side of the building that connect to a line that runs under the first floor Men's Room and out to Main Street. It appears that drain line picked up both site runoff and sanitary waste, so likely connected to the sewer line on Main Street. There is an additional drain line shown that continues along Maple Street to the northeast corner of the building and down through Cooley Park to Main Street. It is unclear if those drains were installed as designed. Investigation should be made to determine the existence and/or condition of those drains. They should be repaired, if possible, or replaced if not. The gutters deliver a lot of roof runoff at the building perimeter, and it is critical to ensure it is carried away from the building.
- The issues with the granite walls at the perimeter of Cooley Park should be addressed. This could be done as part of the large project to improve landscaping and access to the park. These improvements could also include restoration of the flagpole that was once there.
- The accessibility at the Main Street south entrance needs to be addressed. This should be a high priority. The sidewalk landing at this entrance needs to be level, not sloped, as it is presently. This is problematic due to its proximity to the crosswalk. One solution was developed by Brickstone Land Consultants that addressed the issue by relocating the crosswalk to the south of its present location. Further study would be required to develop an alternative solution.
- The granite steps on the south side of the building should be re-set, along with the exterior granite steps at the two Maple Street entrances.
- The low rubble stone wall that flanks the steps along the south side of the building should be re-pointed. That work could happen in conjunction with the re-setting of the steps.

### **Metals**

- The fire escape on the east side of the building should be repaired and painted. Although it is not in use at the present time, its appearance should be maintained.

## Masonry

- The granite foundation needs minor repointing. All of the re-pointing work should be in accordance with the guidelines of NPS Brief 2, Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Masonry. The remnants of the concrete parging over the granite and any rust stains should be carefully removed.
- The brick masonry needs minor repointing, particularly in the area below the fire escape and the area to the south of the Maple Street entrance. Any repointing of the brick that is done in the future should be done with a mortar that matches the color and the composition of the original red mortar. Again, work should be in accordance with the guidelines of NPS Brief 2.

## Thermal & Moisture Protection

- Broken and/or missing roof slates should be replaced. It is estimated that 5-10% of the slate needs replacement.
- Given its age, the slate roof and associated copper work should be on an annual inspection and repair schedule. Therrien Roofing has been coming on an as-needed basis and performing necessary maintenance and repair work. This arrangement should be changed to an annual schedule to stay ahead of any repair work and slate replacement that will be needed.
- Once the site drainage is addressed, all of the copper downspouts should be inspected and re-connected to the drainage inlets. This will involve replacing some missing sections of downspouts.
- The clock tower roof needs to be replaced with a new copper roof. Therrien Roofing has provided a proposal to perform that work, in addition to any carpentry repairs and restoration of the clock faces. This is a costly undertaking, due to the difficulty of staging the clock tower. It appears, upon viewing the timber structure that supports the clock tower, that removing it and performing the repairs on the ground is not an option. Another possible option would be to enlist the services of a traditional steeplejack to perform this work. These are generally skilled craftsmen who oftentimes work off of rigging suspended from the structure rather than using staging. Repair of the clock tower should be a very high priority.

## Doors & Windows

- Cracked glass and damaged muntins as identified in the Existing Conditions Assessment section should be replaced and/or repaired.
- Interior and exterior wood window sills need repair - or in some cases, replacement - in many locations. These repairs should be a high priority.
- The three sets of exterior doors at the Main Street side of the building should be refinished to protect the wood from further damage by the elements. They would also benefit from the

installation of kick plates. While not a high priority, the set of doors at the Main Street theater entrance should have the mismatched panic hardware replaced.

- The entrance doors to the theater on the Maple Street side of the building need to be refinished. They would also benefit from the addition of kick plates.

### **Finishes – First Floor**

- While the carpeting in the Administrative offices is in good condition, it requires frequent cleaning because of its light color. When it does require replacement, a color should be selected that does not require such frequent cleaning.
- Carpet in the Town Clerks office and the Planning office should be replaced.
- Ceiling tiles in the Courtroom and the south end Town Clerk's areas and Planning office areas should be replaced with a tile that matches the tile used in the 2017 north end renovations. While this is not a high priority at this time, it should probably happen in conjunction with any upgrade to the heat delivery system in the theater above. This is because the radiator leaks that have likely caused much of the staining will be alleviated by that upgrade. In the meantime, stained tiles should be painted or replaced with matching tiles.
- The wood wainscoting and trim in the Courtroom should be lightly sanded and refinished, paying particular attention to the water damaged sill trim.

### **Finishes – Second Floor**

- Wood flooring at the second floor and stairway is all in need of sanding and refinishing. This is a large undertaking because of the amount of fixed seating in place in the two theaters. Aisle carpet runners should be replaced when the wood floors are refinished.
- Wood wainscoting and trim is also in need of sanding and refinishing throughout the theater areas, including the stair and the Theater Lobby. Special attention should be given to the damaged sill trim on the east windows.
- The acoustic ceiling tile that has been installed over the plaster walls in the large theater should be replaced with new acoustic panels designed specifically for theater use. This is for both functional and aesthetic reasons. Manufacturers generally recommend these panels be installed over 25-50% of the wall surfaces.
- When the existing acoustic ceiling tile is removed from the walls, the condition of the plaster walls behind the tile can be evaluated. At the very least, they will require prepping and painting.
- The plaster ceilings should be carefully prepped and painted.

- While the existing theater seating is in serviceable condition, refinishing of the floors introduces a good opportunity to upgrade the seating at the same time.
- Any renovations to the original 1912 projection room for the large theater will require asbestos abatement.
- In general, the scope of the renovations recommended for the second floor theater spaces is such that they would best be completed as one project rather than individually. Any one of these projects would require temporary closure of the theater, and it would be far more efficient and cost effective to close the theater for a limited time while all of the renovations are being completed.

### **Mechanical, Electrical & Plumbing**

- Just prior to completion of this report, the Town sought bids to convert the steam heated portions of the building to a hydronic system. The replacement was originally recommended in the Energy Audit performed by Margaret Dillon. It will be a more efficient system and it is also getting more difficult to find technicians who know how to repair steam systems. That contract has been awarded and the work will commence sometime in 2023. The array of steam pipes on the wall in the first floor lobby will be retained for their historic significance but will no longer function. That space will be heated by a Modine unit. The radiators in the theater were installed two or three years ago to replace old leaky radiators. These newer radiators can be adapted to hot water, so will continue to be used.
- The existing electrical service is relatively new, and likely adequate. However, any renovations that are undertaken should include plans for electrical distribution upgrades to bring switching, outlets, and, especially, wiring up to current code for an Assembly occupancy.
- Lighting is in serious need of upgrade throughout the theater spaces. The four schoolhouse pendant fixtures in the large theater are presently disabled. Changing bulbs in those fixtures is problematic and involves disconnecting them in the attic and lowering them to the theater floor. The introduction of wall sconces would provide some good lighting and give ease of access for changing bulbs. In addition, aisle lights on the floor would improve the lighting in both theaters. New fixtures should have LED lamping.
- The entire second floor and attic areas above require the installation of an automatic fire suppression system. That determination was made at the time of the 2017 renovations to the first floor. Completing that project should be of the highest priority, given that this is a place of assembly. The existing sprinkler service was designed to accommodate the addition of sprinklers at the second floor and above.

**Accessibility**

- As indicated in the Existing Conditions Assessment, a design was prepared by Brickstone Land Consultants in 2016 to address the accessibility of the Main Street Town Hall entrance door. The cost is quite high but no other good alternatives have emerged. Further study would be required to develop an alternative to that scheme.
- Further study is required to investigate a means of making the second floor theater accessible. There are limited options for locating an elevator or wheelchair lift. One possible location would put the lower landing in the location of the present Women's Room. The upper landing would be in the recessed entry on Maple Street, with the elevator door opening directly into the Upper Theater Lobby. An accessible Women's Room could then be located in the present Storage area at the northwest corner of the main theater, replacing the problematic Women's Room on the first floor.

**PART 6 OPINION OF PROBABLE COSTS**

Item #	Outline Description	Low	High
1	Clocktower repairs and roof	201,600.	235,200.
2	Sprinklers at 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor & attic	179,200.	197,120
3	Site drainage	20,000.	26,000.
4	Slate roof repairs	5,000.	10,000.
5	Downspout repairs	6,000.	7,700.
6	Repair cracked glass & damaged <u>muntins</u>	3,900.	4,480.
7	Main Street entrance sidewalk	64,600.	80,700.
8	Repair exterior window sills	28,560.	31,400.
9	Refinish exterior doors and add kick plates	3,400.	3,700.
10	Minor repointing & remove parging	25,800.	28,400.
11	Work at exterior granite landscape items	22,400.	24,600.
12	Fire escape repairs	6,500.	7,200.
13	Re-pave and stripe Maple <u>Street parking</u> area	44,000.	48,400.
14	Refinish Courtroom woodwork	9,500.	10,750.
15	New carpet at south end offices	8,500.	9,400.
16	New ceiling tile at south end offices and entrance	11,100.	13,675.
Total		640,060.	738,725.

Items above are listed in order of priority. Costs listed are rough estimates only. Budgeting for undertaking any of the above projects should be based upon estimates obtained from qualified contractors with a proven track record of performing the work.

*Note: Because the future use of the second floor theater space is uncertain due to changes in the movie industry, estimated costs to renovate the second floor are not included at this time. This is a longer range project, and the eventual type of use may differ somewhat from the current use of the space. This report should be amended when/if there is a clear picture of what the ultimate use of the second floor will be.*



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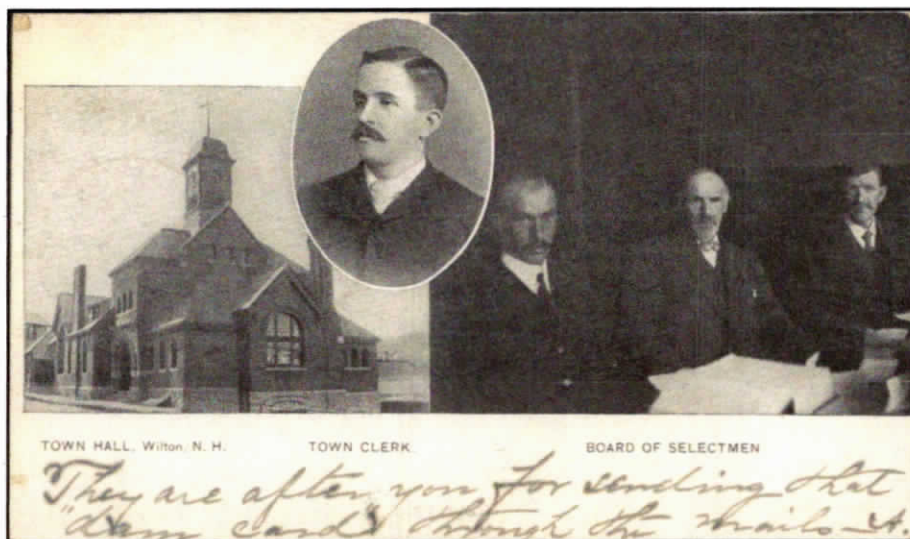
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*Milford Cabinet* 1925-1972

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*Nashua Telegraph*



Early 20<sup>th</sup> c. postcard showing Town Hall, Town Clerk and Selectmen

### **Secretary of the Interior's Standards**

All repairs and treatments should follow the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. A full copy of the Standards and Guidelines can be found on the National Park Service's website (<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/secretary-standards-treatment-historic-properties.htm>).

The Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation should be followed for the Wilton Town Hall. "Rehabilitation" is defined as the process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.

#### *Standards for Rehabilitation*

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

## Preservation Briefs

The National Park Service has published a series of Briefs to recommend methods for the rehabilitation and treatment of historic buildings. These briefs should be followed to maintain good standards of preservation and preserve the historic character of a building. Below is a list of links to recommended briefs for the Wilton Town Hall. A complete listing of all of the Preservation Briefs can be found on the National Park Service website:

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/preservation-briefs.htm>

2. Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Masonry Buildings:

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-02-repointing.pdf>

3. Improving Energy Efficiency in Historic Buildings:

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-03-energy-efficiency.pdf>

4. Roofing for Historic Buildings:

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-04-roofing.pdf>

9. The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows:

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-09-wood-windows.pdf>

10. Exterior Paint Problems on Historic Woodwork:

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-10-paint-problems-exterior-woodwork.pdf>

21. Repairing Historic Flat Plaster – Walls and Ceilings:

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-21-flat-plaster.pdf>

28. Painting Historic Interiors:

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-28-painting-interiors.pdf>

29. The Repair, Replacement and Maintenance of Slate Roofs:

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-29-slate-roofs.pdf>

32. Making Historic Properties Accessible:

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-32-accessibility.pdf>

33. The Preservation and Repair of Historic Stained and Leaded Glass:

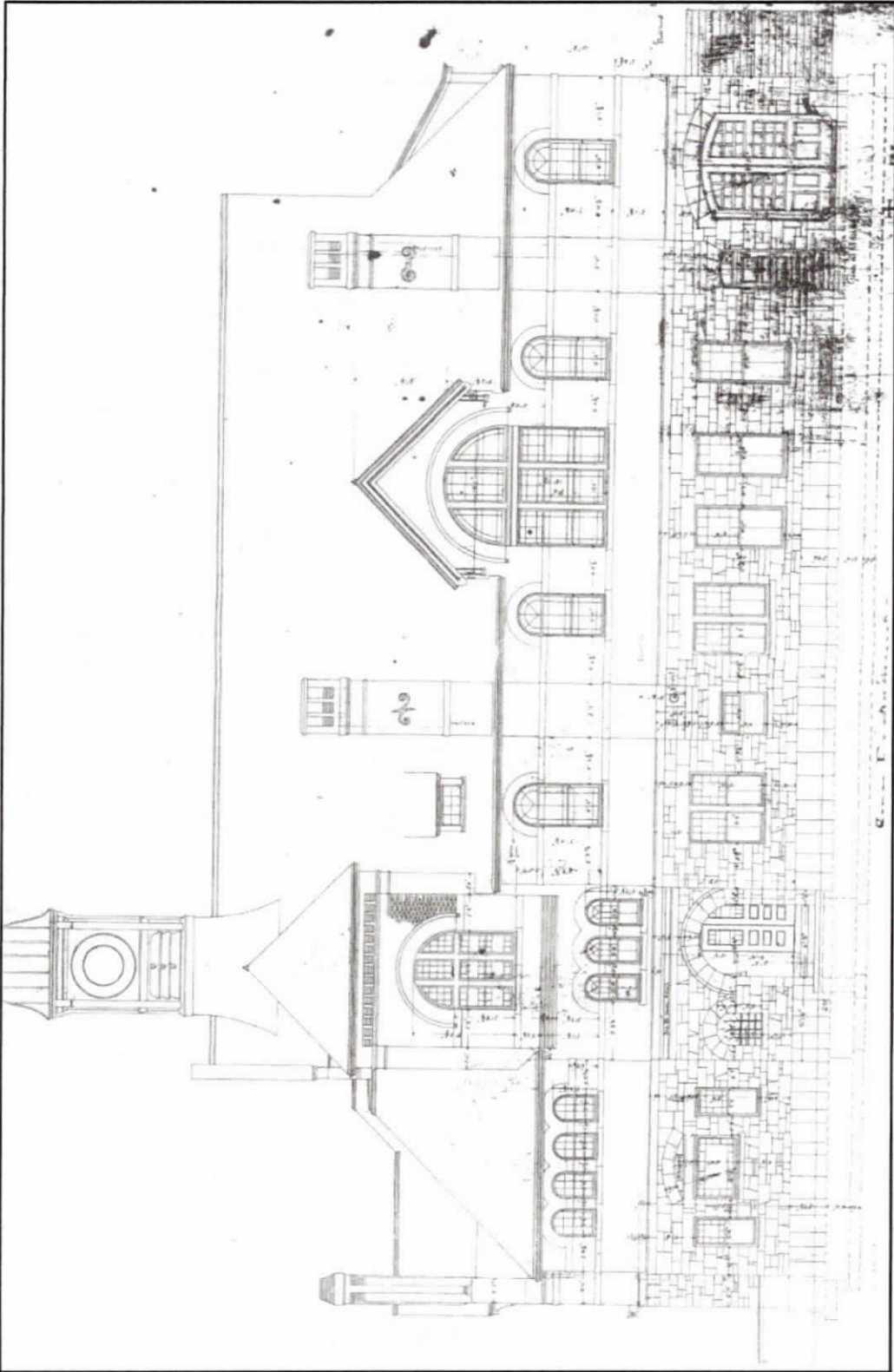
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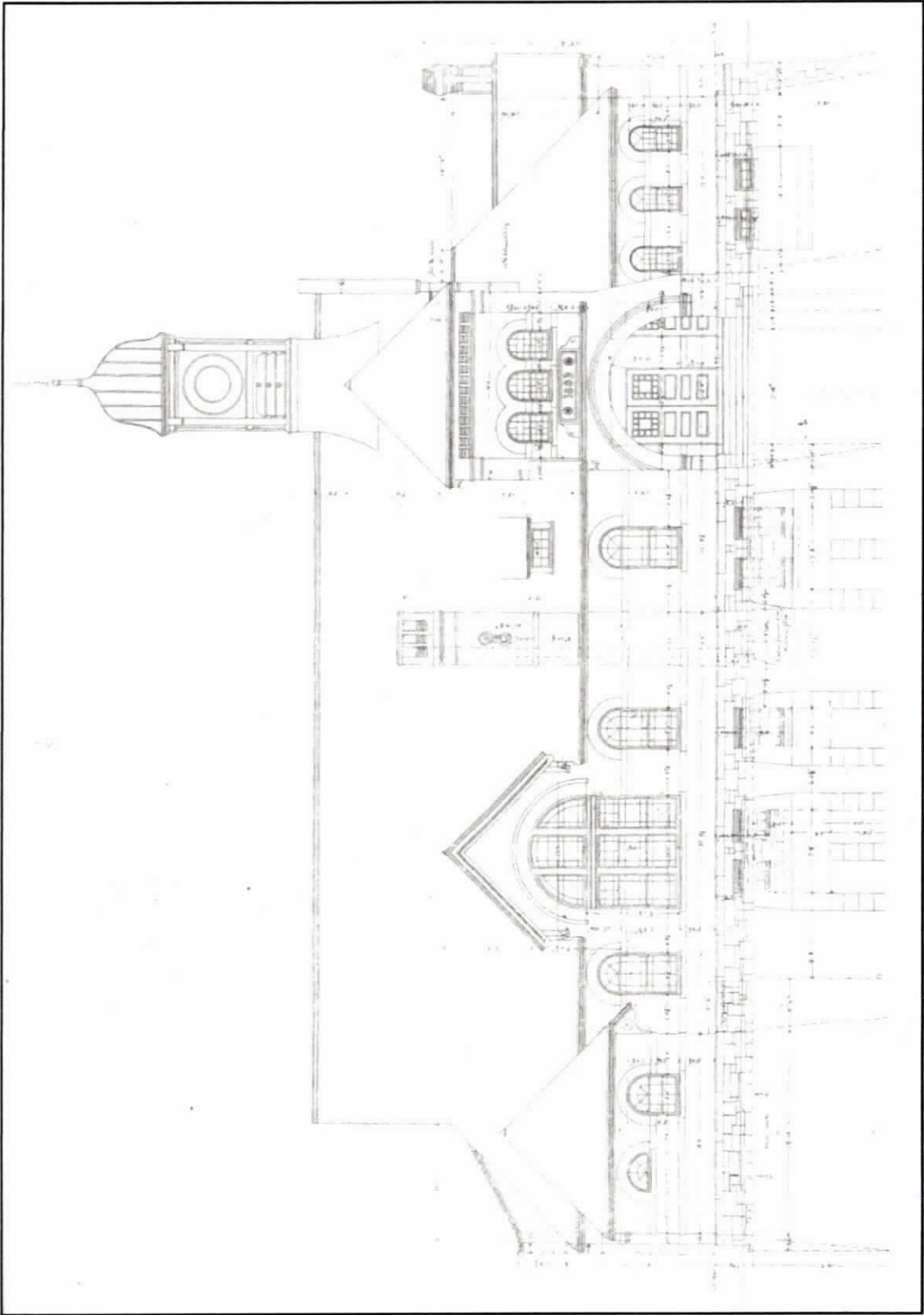
39. Holding the Line: Controlling Unwanted Moisture in Historic Buildings:

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-39-controlling-moisture.pdf>



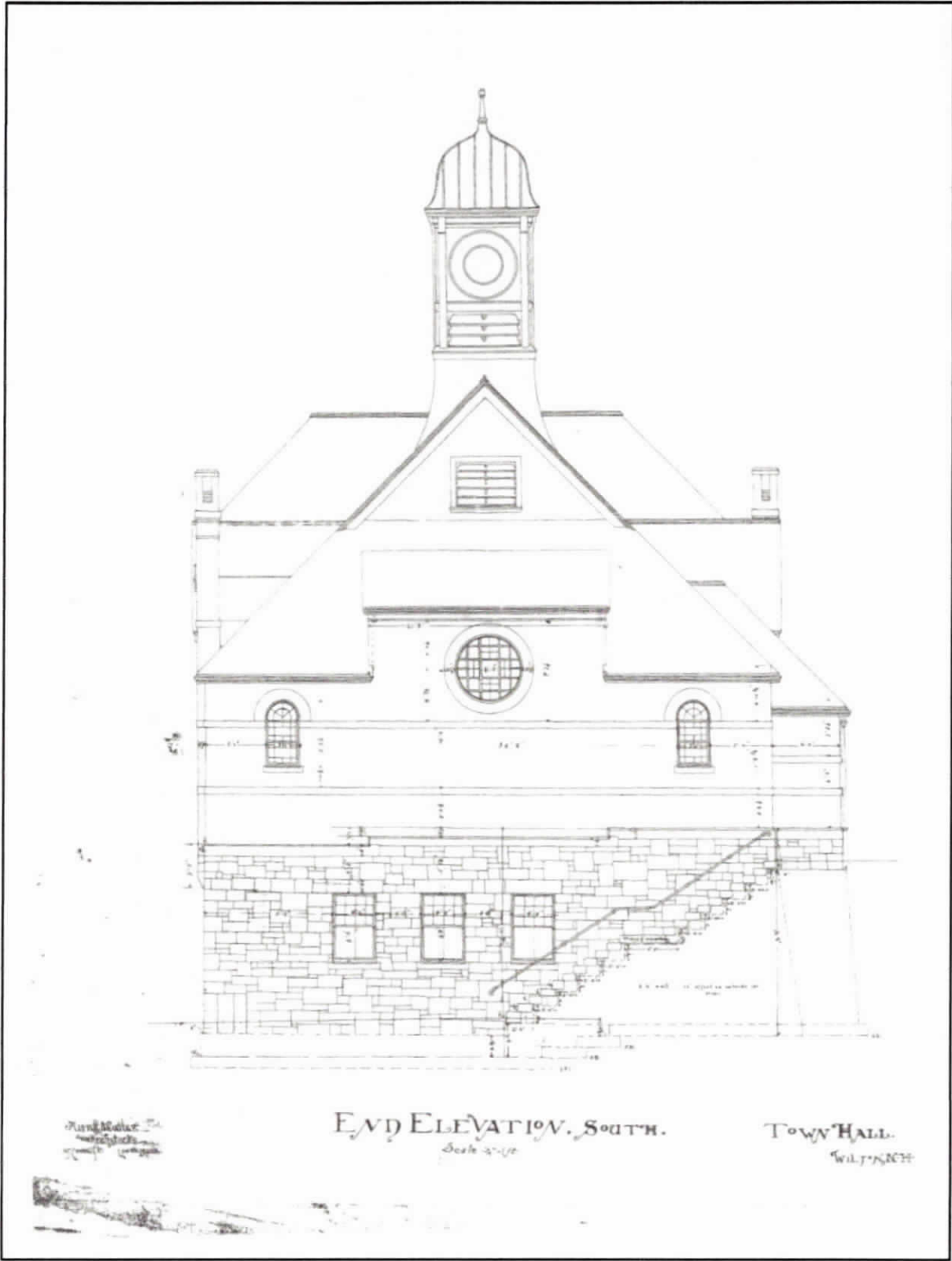
Original Architectural Drawings by Merrill & Cutler, 1883

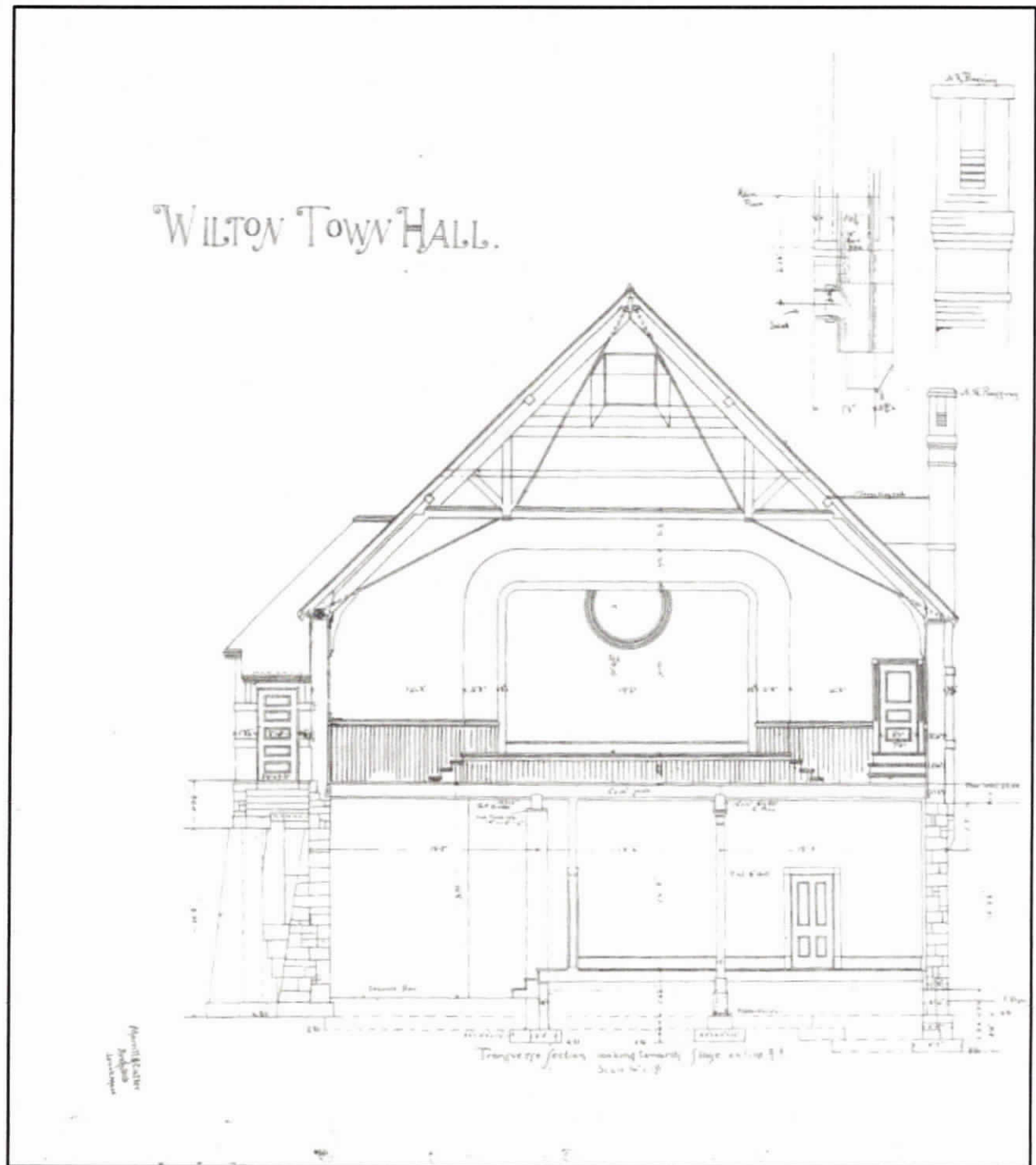




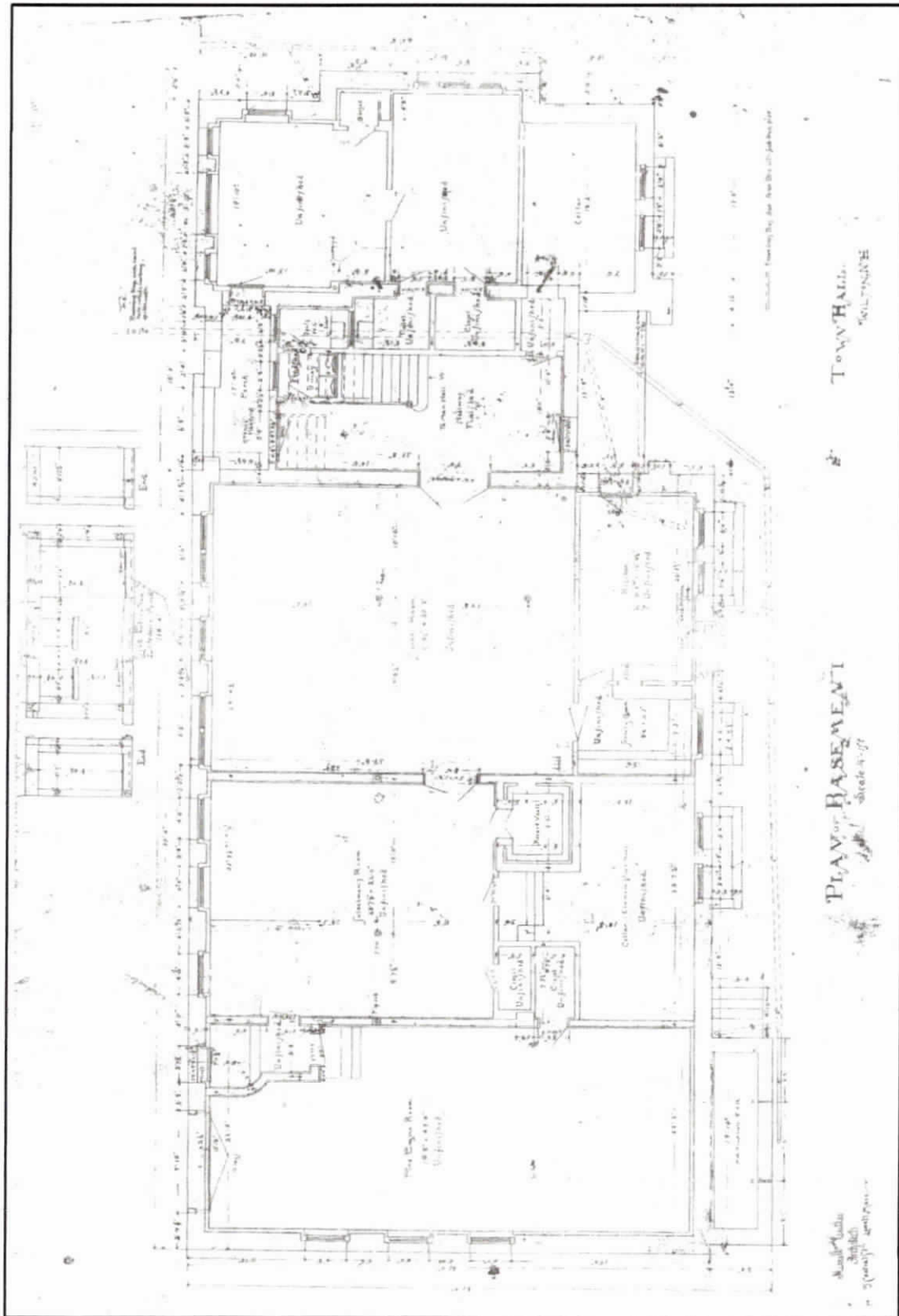


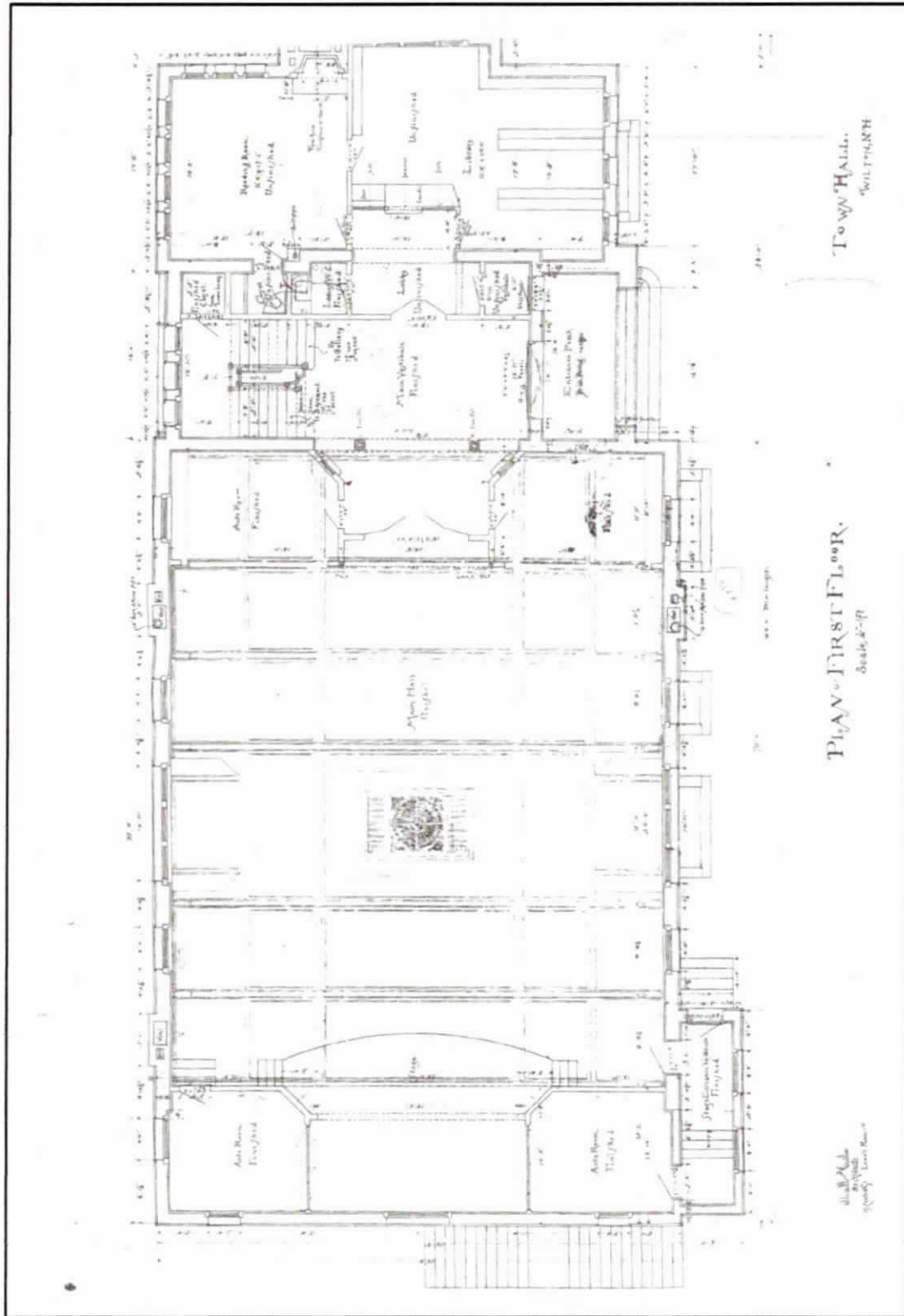


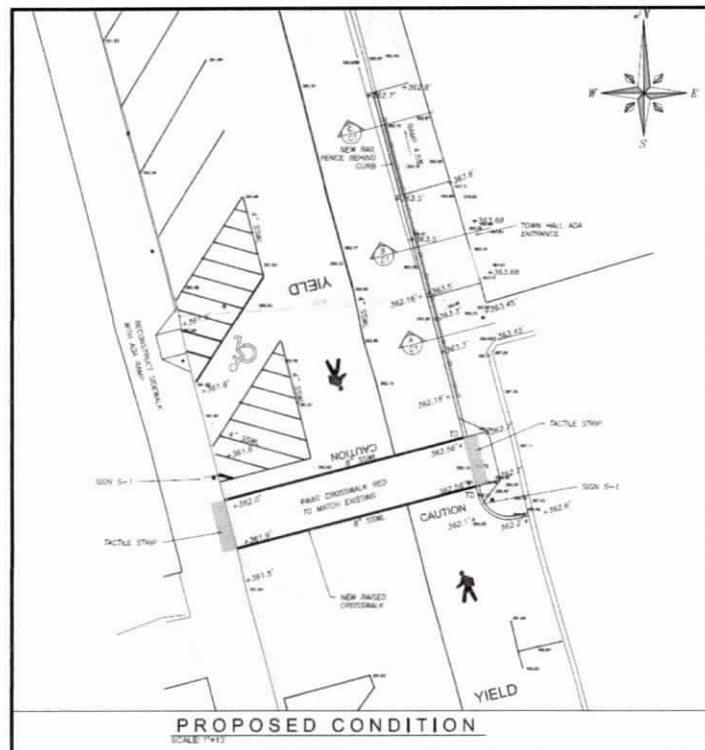
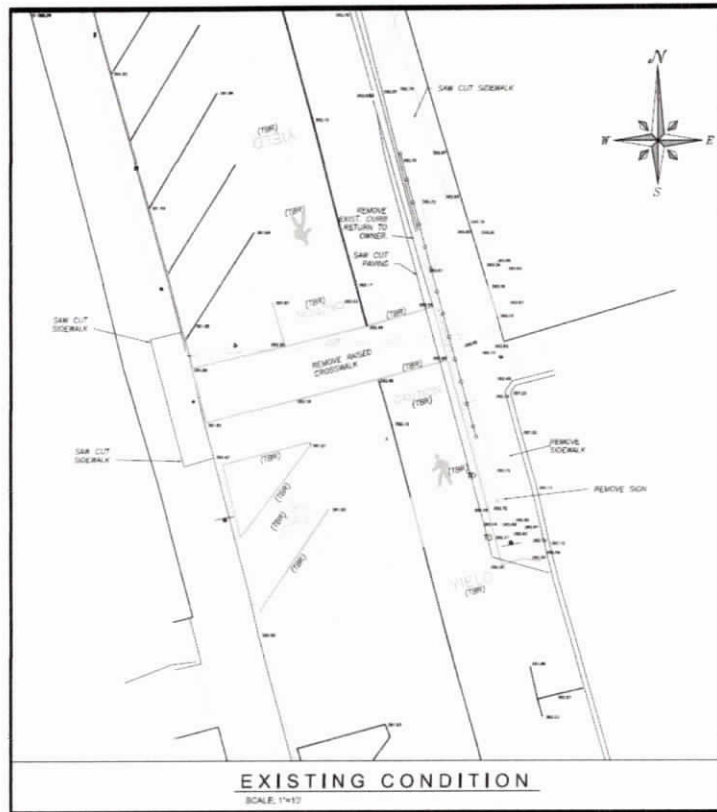












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