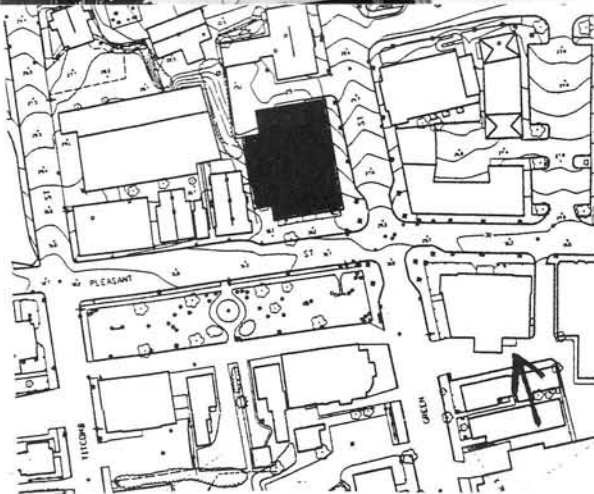


FORM B - BUILDING

NRDIS 8/2/1984

Assessor's number
47-8USGS Quad
NewburyportArea(s)
R,LForm Number
354Massachusetts Historical Commission
Massachusetts Archives Building

Town Newburyport

Place (neighborhood or village)

Address 60 Pleasant Street

Historic Name Newburyport City Hall

Uses: Present City Hall

Original Town Hall

Date of Construction 1851

Source Currier, History of Newburyport

Style/Form Italianate

Architect/Builder Frederick J. Coffin (original building);
J.M. Littlefield of Haverhill (1881 addition)

Exterior Material:

Foundation Granite

Wall/Trim Brick/Sandstone

Roof Asphalt

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures

none

Major Alterations (with dates) 1881- west addition and
galleries added to auditorium; 1976 - hall restored

Condition excellent

Moved ☒ no ☐ yes Date

Acreage 27405 SF (with police station)

Setting opposite Brown Square Park and at corner of
Green Street

Recorded by Lisa Mausolf

Organization Newburyport Historical Commission

Date (month/year) June 1999

Follow Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey Manual instructions for completing this form.

BUILDING FORM (60 Pleasant Street)

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of the building in terms of other buildings within the community.

An excellent example of the Italianate style, the Newburyport City Hall is a 2 1/2-story, front-gabled, brick building with sandstone trim including quoins, belt courses and friezework. Characteristic of the style are the quoins, bracketed cornice, second story balcony, contrasting peaked and entablature window lintels resting on brackets, footed sills and the arched window opening in the attic. Set above a granite foundation at the northwest corner of Green and Pleasant Streets, the building is oriented with its more narrow, pedimented end facing Brown Square Park (MHC#911). Set above stone stairs, the center entrance now contains modern metal and glass exterior doors. It is flanked by brick piers with capitols which support a semi-elliptical arch. Above the entrance large open brackets support a second story balcony with iron railing. The base of the balcony is aligned with the sandstone beltcourse which wraps around the entire building. On either side of the entrance is a bronze World War I honor roll (MHC#938), installed in 1933.

The first floor openings retain their original wooden 8/8 windows and are capped by entablature lintels which are supported by brackets with footed sills set below the windows. On the second floor of the facade a large 15/20 central window opening is flanked by 12/12 sash which also predominate on the side elevations. All of the second floor openings are capped by sandstone pediments resting on brackets and the windows also display footed sills. At the top of the building, above the wide, brownstone beltcourse there is a horizontal board frieze. The cornice and pediment alternate large brackets with pairs of rectangular blocks. Centered in the front pediment is a pair of arched, multi-light windows with a hood mold and a continuous footed sill.

Projecting from the west elevation is the 1881 addition, a two-story, flat-roofed section which is setback from the facade and is trimmed with the same quoins, beltcourse and cornice detailing. Fronted by granite stairs, the former entrance has been filled with brick but retains its flat door hood supported by brackets. The adjacent window consists of a 6/6 sash with entablature lintel while the upstairs 12/12 window is capped by a pediment. A low brick retaining wall filled with plantings is located between the facade and front sidewalk.

The rear elevation is also three bays wide with a central entrance. The entrance is raised above a two-sided granite staircase with a metal railing. The semi-elliptical brick surround is supported by brick piers with sandstone caps. The opening above the entrance is blind and there are two arched windows in the attic.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Describe the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

On March 19, 1850, the citizens of the town of Newburyport voted to build a town hall at a cost not to exceed \$30,000. The building committee consisted of Charles H. Coffin, Albert Currier (a noted contractor and mason), John M. Cooper, Frederick J. Coffin (a local architect), James Blood (a real estate investor) and others. Land was purchased at the northwest corner of Green and Pleasant Streets. The building was designed by Frederick Coffin (1807-1880) who also designed the Green Street Baptist Church in 1848 (MHC#323) and the Ocean Steam Mill on Warren St. (MHC#792-4). Col. Frederick J. Coffin was prominent as a military man, a contractor and in public life. He served in the legislature as a Representative from Newburyport, as Chief Engineer of the Fire Department and served as Colonel in the Eighth Regiment, fighting at Newbern during the Civil War. According to his obituary, Coffin's work as a builder included the Northampton Insane Asylum, the woodwork of the City Hall and several of the mills, the Newburyport Bridge and the Groveland Bridge (Daily News, July 28, 1880).

Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. *If checked, you must attached a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Town
NewburyportProperty Address
60 Pleasant St.
Area(s) Form No.Massachusetts Historical Commission
Massachusetts Archives Building
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

R,L

354

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE (continued):

The cornerstone of the building was laid July 4, 1850 and the building was completed by February 1851. The annual town meeting was held here in March 1851 and a month later a bill was passed allowing Newburyport to annex a large part of Newbury including the areas known as Ridge, Joppa, Belleville, Grasshopper Plains and Artichoke. On June 25, 1851 a new city government was officially organized and Caleb Cushing was elected first mayor.

In the 19th century City Hall served as a center for local civic and social activities. The city's first public library occupied a first floor room from 1855 until 1865. Public celebrations, the fireman's fair, the annual policeman's ball, minstrel shows, dance recitals, memorial services, dances, banquets, art exhibits, lectures, fairs and concerts were also held there. In 1881 a 20' x 70' addition was made on the western side of the City Hall and at the same time a new stage entrance was installed and galleries were added to the auditorium, increasing the hall's seating capacity from about 1,000 to 1,500. As originally constructed the stage was located at the north end of the building with a balcony on the south end. According to an 1881 newspaper article written after the new addition was completed, "no form or feature of the old hall remains". According to local historian, Ron Irving, some of the foundation stones and bricks for the addition came from the ruins of the Bartlet Mills on Pleasant Street which were destroyed by fire in 1881. The architect of the addition was J.M. Littlefield of Haverhill. On May 2nd contractor J.A. Greeley put his crew to work tearing away the bricks on the west side of the building in preparation for the addition. The 1881 City Report indicates that C.S. Austin received about \$1500 for frescoing and extra work on the entry. The new stage measured 27 feet deep and 40 feet wide. The final cost of the renovations was \$14,356 (Daily News, October 17, 1942).

In 1933 the bronze tablets on either side of the main entrance were installed (MHC#938), replacing wooden tablets which were erected shortly after World War I. The tablets list the names of 934 Newburyport men and women who served in World War I. The names are listed in alphabetical order with stars denoting the twenty-nine war fatalities. The list includes nurses in the federal service and all those born in Newburyport who enlisted elsewhere. The tablets were designed by George P. Tilton, who also designed the Civil War tablet at Atkinson Common, the ship at the lower Green and other commemorative objects. The tablets were modeled by the firm of W.A. Schutze of Boston; the sculptor was Sigurd Svendsen. The foundry work was done by the Liebl Bronze Foundry of Malden. The tablets were dedicated with much pomp on November 11, 1933.

Use of the building as a social center decreased during the 20th century and in the 1950s the auditorium and its galleries were declared unsafe and were closed to public gatherings. City Hall was remodeled in 1975. In 1976 the auditorium and galleries were restored in time for the city's 125th anniversary party on June 24.

It is interesting to note that about 1873 architects Bryant & Rogers prepared preliminary sketches for Mayor Elbridge Kelley that would have dramatically altered the appearance of the City Hall. The proposed changes included a tall tower on the east corner of the building, an ornamental portico with an entrance on Green Street and an entrance to the theater in the rear of the building. These plans were never realized (Daily News, 3/17/1898).

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R,L	354
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INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

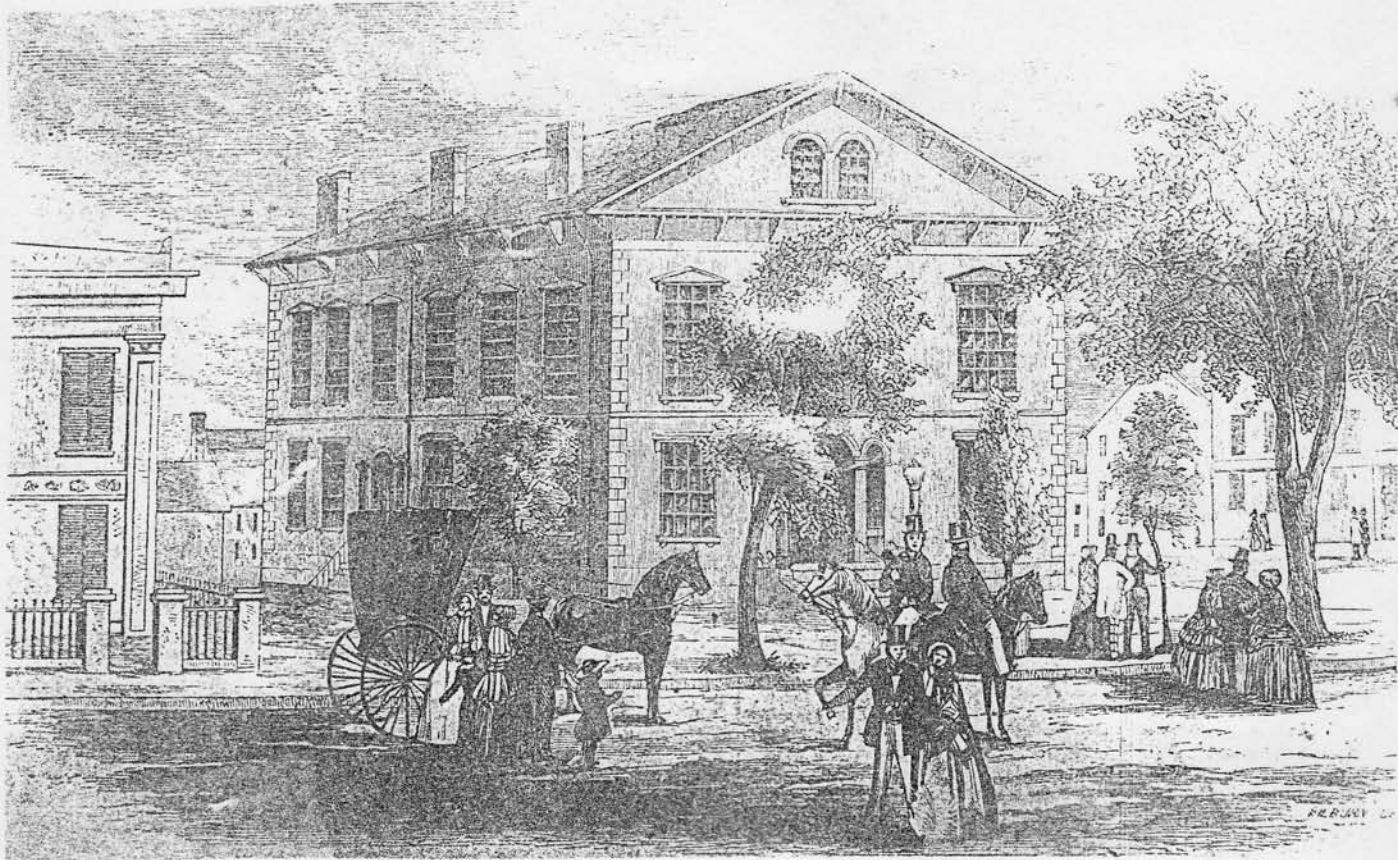
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Source: Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts.