



CITY OF NEWBURYPORT
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
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DRAFT DOD Historical Report

Meeting Date 24 February, 2022; Submitted: 2022
Property Address 0 East Row (Market Square)
Applicant Steve Lewis
Project description Waterproofing and over-cladding of two existing party walls (firewalls) above the roofline.
Plan(s) of Record: Application and documents submitted to [record HAR-22-2](#); also the MHC “Form B” for this structure.

Significance of the historic building/structure

The history of this property is well documented in a Massachusetts Historical Commission “Form B,” which includes a description of the structure as it was ca. 1984. That document describes how the structure is separated into multiple sections “*by the exterior extension of fire walls which terminate in gables which are now primarily stepped but were originally simple gables.*” It also noted that the “*brick is laid in a Flemish bond,*” which indicates that it is the original masonry, as this type of construction is rarely used in more modern times.

There are six storefronts which reflect varying periods of construction and alteration and styles of display. Those at 14 and 21 Market Square retain well-preserved late 19th century cast iron storefronts – important historic features.

The windows on the upper two stories, for the most part, contain wooden 6/6 windows with splayed stone lintels and simple stone sills. There are two Palladian-style openings on the second floor were probably done when the structure was rehabilitated as part of the urban renewal work which completely rehabilitated the structure beginning in 1977.

Near the center of the building is an angled marble panel reading East Row, and there is a sandstone keystone above a door leading upstairs near the center of the building is inscribed “1811”. The Liberty Street elevation includes four large display windows with shallow arched tops, supported by granite posts and lintels.

The relative importance of the historic structure to its setting within the District:

We know that the “East Row” building was constructed shortly after the 1811 fire that destroyed much of Market Square and the adjacent downtown, including the the home of William Morse which is believed to have been on this location. Reportedly (Daily News, April 20, 1878), it was erected by Abraham Perkins, who used part of the building as a hardware store. We are fortunate to have substantial documentation of the various occupants of East Row in the 19th century, including some early photographs. This history

is documented in the Form B and need not be repeated here, except to point out that the extent of this record reflects the busy commercial nature of this location, which was, and remains, an integral part of the heart of Newburyport commerce. The Form B description mentions that on the Liberty Street façade, a “*recessed entry leads to the Market Hall upstairs*” – an interesting reference to the historic use of this building and its role in our history.

The nature of the commerce has evolved, with hardware and furniture stores replaced by the retail and tourist-oriented shops we know today, but there is no question that East Row is not only highly significant commercially – it is an essential component of the Market Square ensemble of post-1811 brick buildings have become iconic of Newburyport itself. It’s hard to overstate its “importance to its setting within the District.”

Recommendations to the SPGA (Planning Board):

The Newburyport Historical Commission has determined that the solution that is in compliance with the Secretary’s standards is to remove the poorly constructed stepped ‘parapet’ firewall extensions and return the masonry to its original configuration of a simple low wall with structurally correct flashing. Before the 1977 rehabilitation project, only the outermost firewall has a high, stepped through-roof extension; making the other firewalls in this design was conjectural rather than historically correct. To make matters worse, the manner of their construction, with rubble infill rather than solid brick and mortar, has been identified as the primary reason for the inability of these partitions to handle rainwater as they should.

The proposed solution to ‘cap’ the firewalls is therefore not ideal, but we recognize that there are also considerations of cost and of disruption to the residential areas below the roof. The applicant has shown sensitivity to the historical character of the structure in their choice of design and materials selected for their proposal, and the NHC can agree that this alternate solution would have only a small adverse impact on the original historical structure.

Glenn Richards, Chair, Newburyport Historical Commission