

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received JUN 13 1983

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Londonderry Town House

and/or common Londonderry Town Hall

2. Location

street & number Middletown Road, N/A not for publication

city, town ^{South} Londonderry X vicinity of South Londonderry

state Vermont code 50 county Windham code 25

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Town of Londonderry

street & number N/A

city, town South Londonderry N/A vicinity of state Vermont

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the Town Clerk

street & number Londonderry Town Office

city, town South Londonderry state Vermont

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Vt. Hist. Sites & Structures Survey has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes no

date 1971 ___ federal state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

city, town Montpelier state Vermont

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Londonderry Town Hall, when originally constructed in 1860, was a typical example of mid-nineteenth century New England meeting house design. It was a rectangular, three-bay by three-bay, wood-framed structure, clapboard-covered, with a gable roof. A steeple, at the entry end of the building, was even with the front wall. Fenestration showing in old photographs suggests a single-story meeting room with a balcony at the entry end. As the building's uses changed during the half century following its construction, additions were made to the front and the back of the building. Beginning about 1889, the back of the building was successively enlarged with a series of lower wood frame additions with a variety of roof shapes. A full-width, two-story vestibule and small entry porch were added to the front in the early twentieth century. *The Town Hall's outstanding turn-of-the-century community hall/theater interior is sheathed with patterned, beaded board and houses a stage with decorative proscenium arch and painted stage curtain.*

As shown in old photographs, the original Town Hall was a rectangular, three-bay by three-bay, one-story wooden structure with a steeply pitched roof and steeple, flush with the wall below at the entry end. A single chimney showed on the ridge of the roof at the end opposite the steeple. An early photo (appears to be from before 1890) shows a wood-shingled roof. The clapboarded steeple has remained unchanged; it consists of a square base topped by a smaller octagonal section with a steep octagonal roof. The square base of the steeple has corner pilasters and an entablature matching the larger ones on the main building. The octagonal upper stage of the steeple has a simpler and still smaller entablature capping plain clapboarded faces trimmed with vertical edge boards.

The front or East facade originally consisted of: 1) three symmetrically placed, 9/6, double-hung windows with an entrance door on either side of the middle window (lower floor); 2) three similar windows at the balcony level directly over those on the first floor; and 3) a single similar window centered in the gable, over the center windows of the two floors below. The doorways were surrounded by pilasters and entablature to match the building.

The only other side shown in old photos is the South. Three large, 12/12, double-hung windows were placed slightly off-center to the rear, allowing for a balcony at the front of the structure. The whole building was clapboarded and painted white. There was an uncovered wooden platform across the front.

According to an article in the Londonderry Town Report of 1889, permission was given to a theatrical group to construct an addition to the back of the building in order to create a stage area. This addition was not at grade but extended over the ground and the horse sheds of the adjacent church. Later, the area beneath this addition was enclosed to create a kitchen and dining area for civic gatherings. A storage wing has also been added to the South West corner of the "theatrical" addition. All rear additions are roofed in corrugated steel. The old 12/12 sash was re-used in the rear additions and new 6/6 sash was installed in the main buildings. There are no clear records as to when most of these additions were made, but apparently none were done before 1889, and judging from physical evidence and local recollection, most were completed by the first third of this century.

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By the early 20th century, there was an apparent need for a different entry to the building. To accomplish this, a two-story addition was added across the front. This addition has a shallow, sloped, hipped roof and a small pediment centrally located - over the door; it covers all but the apparently re-used upper sash of the upper window on the original front of the building. There are five symmetrically placed, 8/8 windows on the second floor and a centrally located double doorway with a single, large window on each side, on the ground floor. The doors are half glass, and the first-story windows are single panes with elongated honeycomb patterned, leaded transom panels above. The roof on the front addition is covered with rolled asphalt roofing. The doorway is sheltered by a small, almost square, one-story, gable-roofed portico.

All of the additions are clapboarded with corner boards, simple fascias, and boxed cornices, and, at present, are painted white. There is a band of diagonal boarding similar to the interior trim work below the second story on the small side walls of the entry addition. A slate roof has replaced the earlier wooden shingles on the main structure.

The original stone foundation has been repaired and, in many places, covered with concrete.

The interior of the building is largely a product of the late 19th and early 20th century renovations. The entry addition is panelled in a narrow beaded-board fir paneling and contains stairs to the basement and balcony, a ticket booth and a storage closet. Some of the original exterior wall and windows are exposed on the second floor of the entry, along with the re-used original first floor entry doors. The main room is entirely panelled in a decorative narrow fir paneling of several types in decorative patterns. Vertical wainscoting throughout is topped by alternating panels of diagonal boards between the windows and under the balcony. Above the windows, there is a narrow band of alternating diagonal boards leading to a large coved ceiling section of horizontal boards on the two side walls. The stage wall consists of a proscenium arch flanked by two decorative, spiral engaged columns on high paneled plinths. The columns are, in turn, flanked by panels of herringbone boarding. The flat part of the ceiling is covered with large rectangular panels of boarding running front to back separated by narrow bands of diagonal boarding. All paneling is varnished with darker stained stripes separating the various patterns. The entry vestibule is paneled in a plainer manner with primarily vertical boarding. All of the paneling has been well maintained over the years and represents an excellent example of this type of decorative work.

The stage curtain is a painted canvas "View on the Rhine". It was restored in 1976 and bears the restored inscription at the bottom, "Cha's Huiest Studio, TROY, N.Y. 1890?". Behind the curtain is the stage area and dressing rooms. These areas are covered with plain boarding and the scrawled names of generations of amateur actors.

Below the stage area is the kitchen/dining area that was originally used for town gatherings. More recently, the Town Clerk's office was in this space. It is currently vacant.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) Local History
Specific dates	1860	Builder/Architect	Unknown	

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Londonderry Town Hall is, in several ways, typical of its time and place. The needs of governmental and civic functions, in general, and the specific needs of the New England form of town government with its annual "Town Meeting" called for a Town Hall. Local architectural tradition dictated its appearance. As civic and social needs changed over the years, the building was modified to suit. The building, as it stands today, is a good example of a typical New England Town Hall, not in its original, general form, but in its amended form, a building that began as a "town hall" meant for town government meetings and was gradually transformed into a building that met other town needs and, therefore, became a community theater and meeting hall. Additionally, the interior remains an excellent, well-preserved example of the decorative use of ornamental, narrow board paneling from the turn-of-the-century era.

Londonderry was probably little different than hundreds of small towns scattered across New England in the mid-nineteenth century. The river provided power for local mills, there was a complete contingent of stores, and there was even talk of a railroad. The New England form of town government requires that a Town's residents get together for a town meeting at least once a year. Like many of their peers in neighboring communities, the people of Londonderry wanted a "town hall" for this annual meeting and for other civic functions. This led to a vote in favor of constructing a "Town House" in 1859; the first town meeting held in this new facility was in September of 1860.

Judging from the various articles in town reports, there was immediate controversy over whether or not the town hall should be used for dancing, singing schools or shows. It appears that, at first, such things were not permitted; but the Town Report of 1889 indicates that the West River Dramatic Club was given permission "to extend over land and horse sheds for erecting in the rear of the town hall and attached thereto a stage for their use." The club took out a note at that time, apparently to pay for the addition.

Local drama productions were popular in the last years of the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th century. As many of these productions were staged in the "Town Hall", the building took on the appearance of a theater. Ornate, varnished narrow board paneling replaced earlier plaster on the interior to upgrade the building's interior appearance from that of a rather plain, functional room to that of a more sophisticated space with a theatrical atmosphere. The use of this type of ornamental, narrow board paneling was common in local public buildings at the time, but the exuberance and imagination demonstrated in its application in this building is outstanding. The ornate painted stage curtain, still in evidence, also dates from this period.

Eventually, an entry was added to the front of the building; it was large enough to include a ticket booth, coat closet, and stairs to the balcony.

Other functions likewise had their influence on the building. The area under the stage and dressing rooms was closed in to provide a kitchen and dining room for town functions. More recently, the dining room was used as the Town Clerk's office. That has since been discontinued.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Londonderry Town Reports, 1859 - Present
Beers, F. W. Atlas of Windham Co. Vermont F. W. Beers, A. D. Ellis & G. G. Soule, N.Y. 1869
Interviews: Mrs. Charles H. Pearson, Mrs. John D. Wiley, Ruth Chaskel; October, 1982.
Historic Photographs and early postcards in the possession of the interviewees.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1/4
 Quadrangle name Londonderry Quadrangle scale 1/62500

UTM References

A	1 8	6 7 7 5 5 0	4 7 8 4 5 4 0	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

The Londonderry Town Hall occupies its original plot, a rectangular one-quarter acre lot, described in Book 11, Pages 408-9 of the Londonderry Land Records. The nominated property consists of the entire parcel.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	county	code
state		code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title William C. Badger

organization John D. Haines, Architect date 10/19/82

street & number Main Street telephone 802-362-3776

city or town Manchester state Vermont

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Eric Silbertson*

title Director/Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer date May 31, 1983

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

J. Melrose Byers Entered in the National Register date 7/14/83
 Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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The Town Hall presents a picture of small town civic and social activities from the latter 19th into the 20th century. It is an architectural embodiment of the cultural changes that moved a simple pre-Civil War society into a more complex, more worldly way of life. The railroad came, and along with it came plays, recitals and visiting lecturers. As the town took on these amenities from a larger world beyond and changed to keep pace with that world, the Town Hall also changed to meet the changing needs of the community.

Eventually, the automobile, movies, television, and changing economic patterns brought further changes, but the need for a relatively large assembly hall has remained. When built, the Town Hall was used primarily for civic functions. As time progressed, any community activity that required a large assembly space took place in the "Town Hall." The recitals and visiting lecturers of the turn-of-the-century era are gone now, but their place has been taken by dances, bingo games, fashion shows, exhibits, Halloween parties and other community functions. The form of New England town government has not changed, so there are still town meetings, and these meetings continue to be held in "Town Hall". Today, the building stands as a record of a small Vermont town's civic and social life during the last century and a quarter.