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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.



1. Name of Property

Historic name: Centennial Hall

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing: _____

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 105 Post Road

City or town: North Hampton State: NH County: Rockingham

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

<u>Elizabeth H. Meyers</u>	<u>2/8/16</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
<u>Director and SHPO, NH Division of Historical Resources</u>	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property <input type="checkbox"/> meets <input type="checkbox"/> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

[Signature]
Signature of the Keeper

4/5/16
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION: school
RECREATION & CULTURE: hall

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION
VACANT

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Stick Style

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Wood, Slate, Brick, Granite

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Located on North Hill in North Hampton, across from the town green and adjacent to the Congregational Church, Centennial Hall was constructed in 1876 to serve as a combination school and public hall. The two-story clapboarded structure is rectangular in plan, capped by a slate mansard roof with straight sides with a cupola tower emerging from the front slope. The building displays elements of the Stick Style including decorative stickwork, trusses and jigsaw ornament. The influence of the French Second Empire style is evident in the mansard roof and front tower. Centennial Hall is set on a small lot measuring less than one quarter of an acre and is located on a curve where Post Road and Atlantic Avenue meet. The front steps of the building extend nearly to the roadway and there is a small area of level lawn surrounding the building. A small single-story addition capped by an asphalt-shingled, hip roof and resting on a concrete foundation projects from the north part of the rear elevation. It was constructed in 1918 to provide bathroom facilities. Centennial Hall displays a strong sense of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

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Narrative Description

Centennial Hall measures 45' by 75' and presents its narrow west façade to Post Road. It is set on a foundation which combines granite in front with hard red bricks on the remaining elevations. The exterior of the two-story building is clad in wood clapboards accented by narrow cornerboards, a wooden watertable and a plain frieze. Single cornice brackets are located at the end of each elevation and are also placed at intervals corresponding with the outer edges of the windows below. In keeping with the Stick Style, additional wooden beltcourses wrap around the building below the first and second floor windows. At the base of the tower there is also decorative stickwork consisting of a band of four "X"s overlaid over vertical boards with raised knobs marking the intersections of the various sticks. The building is capped by a mansard roof with straight sides. The roof retains its original Bangor, Maine slate shingles. Breaking through the front roof plane is a slightly taller mansard roofed tower with a triangular window punctuating the front roof slope. The tower roof is surmounted by a square open cupola. The current cupola is a replica of the original which was removed c.1955. It was constructed in 2000 by Arthur Knowles who used the original architectural drawings and historic photographs to insure design accuracy. The cupola is capped by a copper-sheathed pyramidal roof crowned by a weathervane which reads "1876". Each side of the cupola is three-bays wide with square supports that have small brackets and knobs at the top of each post and panels incised with vertical foliate designs between the posts.

The west façade is three bays wide with a center entrance at the base of the tower with cupola. The current entrance porch is a simplification of the original design with wooden steps and a simple wooden board rail. The entrance is sheltered by a shallow, slate-covered hip roof with a projecting decorative truss. Originally the porch roof was supported by two pairs of attenuated posts and was capped by a small balustrade. At some point the posts were removed. Today the porch has a single pair of thin posts. The double wooden doors are replicas of the original doors and were installed in 2003. Each leaf has a pair of raised panels at the top and bottom, separated by a horizontal panel with raised pyramids. Above the doors is a five-light transom. Lighting the second floor above the entrance portico is a pair of narrow 4/4 double-hung windows. The remaining windows on the façade are six-over-six sash. The windows on the first floor, on either side of the entrance porch, are capped by decorative trusses with the triangular central panel featuring cut-out semi-circles and three small circles. Small brackets with knobs support the ends of the trusses. The plain window sills have small feet which are overlaid over the horizontal beltcourse. On the second floor of the façade, the central tower is flanked by taller 6/6 windows capped by shed roofed hoods supported by small brackets with footed sills overlapping the beltcourse.

The fenestration pattern on the north and south (side) elevations is nearly identical. On both sides, the second floor features the original window arrangement which is both symmetrical and evenly spaced with seven window openings on each wall with shed-roofed lintels and footed sills. The more varied fenestration on the first floor reflects the impact of the 1918 renovations to the school portion of the building.

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On each side, three more windows were added to bring more light into the classrooms. On the south wall this creates a pattern of one individual window toward the front, followed by a band of five windows, a band of three windows and a door in the easternmost bay. The shed canopies are continuous over the clusters of windows and there are footed sills. The glass-and-panel rear door is capped by a decorative truss like those above the first floor façade windows. The north elevation does not have a doorway but instead has eleven windows. On both elevations, the brick foundation is punctuated by small three-light windows that rest on a granite underpinning. Both the north and south roof slopes have two gabled dormers that contain 3/3 windows and are topped by the same small truss seen on the façade windows. There is also a tall brick chimney on the edge of the north roof slope and two metal ventilators rise near the ridge.

The rear (east) elevation is three bays wide on the second floor with the same 6/6 windows visible elsewhere on this level. The first floor has a pair of windows to the south and a single window adjacent to the single-story hipped roof addition which contains bathrooms. The addition has a concrete foundation and asphalt roof and is punctuated by elevated 4 x 2-light windows. Just to the south of the addition is a small gabled bulkhead entrance.

Interior Description

The interior of Centennial Hall has two main floors with a full basement and a full walk-up attic under the mansard roof. The first floor level was originally divided into classrooms but later, non-educational uses in the mid 20th century removed the classroom partitions. As seen today, the first floor consists of a large open space with surviving historic elements including two cast iron columns and the wooden floor. Since 1998 drywall partitions have been installed to form a row of music studios along the south wall, another at the northwest corner and a kitchen area and bathrooms to the rear. The wainscoting which originally lined the outer walls is encased in sheet rock due to lead paint issues. The twelve-foot high ceiling is covered with acoustical panels and fluorescent lighting.

An impressive oak staircase at the southwest corner of the first floor leads up to the second floor hall. The angled newel post at the bottom of the stairs has chamfered corners, raised panels and raised pyramids and a small ball at the top. The staircase is encased by beadboard including curving sidewalls and the outer walls of the stairwell are similarly sheathed in beadboard wainscoting.

The second floor is 18 feet high. On the second floor level trim and interior doors are intact and original graining is evident on some of the doors which are mostly of an original four-panel configuration but also includes later doors with five horizontal panels which were likely installed when the raised stage was added in 1899. The hall retains historic three-light branched fixtures and a molded chair rail extends around the room. At the east end of the hall the stage has a rectangular proscenium opening with paneled surround and capped by a simple entablature. The stage has a curved backwall with fragments of an historic wallpaper border and raised dressing rooms on either side. There is a hatch in the floor.

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From this level stairs in the northwest, southwest and northeast corner lead up to the attic which contained the banqueting hall and kitchen. Dormers provide natural light. The space remains unchanged. A dumb waiter is still in place which once carried supplies and water from the first to the third floor. There are also several small pendant light fixtures which appear to be original.

The basement has stone walls, brick supporting piers and a concrete floor. The boiler room retains an historic boiler and a sliding metal door. Part of the basement was renovated in 1999 for use by an artists' studio.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

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(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Education
Entertainment/Recreation
Architecture

Period of Significance

1876-1952

Significant Dates

1876
1899
1918

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

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Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Towle, John Dearborn (architect)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Centennial Hall is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places with local significance under Criterion A, Social History, for its associations with education and entertainment/recreation in the New Hampshire community of North Hampton. Funded by a native son, John W.F. Hobbs, who had become a successful Boston businessman, the building was constructed in 1876 to consolidate two school districts while providing a public hall. The building played a vital role in the education and recreation of North Hampton's townspeople from its construction in 1876 into the late 1940s. In 1899 a raised stage was added on the second floor, transforming what had been a traditional hall into an important community center that would be utilized by a wide variety of local entertainment and recreation uses. Under Criterion A, the period of significance extends from the date of construction, 1876, to 1952, when the ownership of the building by the town ended. The building was home to several local businesses and small industries for the next three decades and a private school occupied the first floor in the mid-1980s. In 1998 a non-profit group formed and purchased the building, returning it to active community use as a school for the arts, a meeting place, and a host to many groups and charitable organizations.

Centennial Hall is also significant under Criterion C, Architecture, as a good example of the Stick Style, an architectural style which saw limited popularity in the community. It is of interest as the work of Massachusetts architect John Dearborn Towle who is also believed to have been

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born in North Hampton. Significant dates under architecture include the original date of construction (1876), and the dates of significant alteration – 1899, coinciding with the construction of the stage upstairs and 1918, when the schoolrooms on the first floor were renovated to meet modern educational building standards.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The construction of Centennial Hall in 1875-6 was made possible by the generosity of resident John W.F. Hobbs (1815-1890) and fulfilled a long overdue need for a new schoolhouse in North Hampton while also providing a center for the town's social life. At the time of the building's construction there were three district schools in North Hampton – the North, Centre, and East. The building was intended to serve a new unified school district resulting from the union of the North and Centre School Districts which both had antiquated, overcrowded facilities.

The original warrant article calling for the unification of the two districts for economical reasons originated with Charles Seavey of the Prudential Committee on March 9, 1875 but was postponed and defeated at several subsequent meetings. On September 23, 1875 a request for yet another warrant on the matter was issued, marking the first time that Hobbs' offer to build the schoolhouse was announced. Hobbs offered to give North Hampton a new public hall which would house, among other things, the new school. In return, Hobbs requested that the town remove the old school buildings and purchase land on North Hill for the new building. One of North Hampton's most prominent citizens, John W. F. Hobbs had made his fortune by introducing the omnibus (horse and carriage) business in Boston and later by investing in Boston real estate.

In a lightly attended special meeting held on October 8, 1875 the Centre and North Districts finally voted to consolidate districts and graciously accepted Hobbs' offer to build a new "grading" school in town. A committee of three men was to be named including representatives from both districts, provided the North District concurred, to take charge of the moving of materials (stone, brick, lumber, slate, sand, water, and gravel for grading) by voluntary labor or the lowest bidder with the expense not to exceed \$500.00. The three men nominated, and in attendance that day, were Samuel Garland, David Page and John W. Berry.

The decision was subsequently met with opposition and the North District labeled it an illegal vote. There was talk of getting an injunction to prevent the demolition of both existing school houses which was a condition of Hobbs' offer. However, that same evening both buildings were destroyed by a group of "raiders", rendering the matter moot.¹ Thanks to news services, brief mentions of Hobbs' gift appeared in newspapers across the country including the *Boston Post* (Oct. 11, 1879) and *New York Times* (Oct. 18, 1875). The *New York Times* mention was typical

¹ *Exeter News-Letter*, October 12, 1875. The *Boston Post* on October 12, 1875 indicates that the buildings were demolished by "the friends of the new project the night before".

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and stated that Hobbs was “going to present a \$10,000 school-house to the town. Mr. Hobbs is the man who started and drove the Dock Square and Canton street line of omnibuses in Boston, and had to borrow the money to purchase his first set of harnesses. He is now reported worth a million, and is a large real-estate owner in Boston”.²

On October 29, 1875 three wardens of the Congregational Society of North Hampton – James Seavitt, Frank Drake, and John Smith, conveyed the land of the former school house to the United North and Center School Districts for \$50, an amount directed by Hobbs.³ The deed further restricted that no religious services would be held in the Hall above the school. Thus, Centennial Hall was built on the site of the former red brick schoolhouse built in 1825, adjacent to the Town Common established in 1742 and the United Church of Christ built c.1838.

Hobbs apparently optimistically retained noted Boston architect (and North Hampton native?) John Dearborn Towle to design the building prior to the vote and acceptance of his offer, as the seventeen page building specifications and plan are signed by Towle on October 2, 1875.

Following the final approving vote and the dismantling of the former schoolhouses, construction moved quickly. The local newspaper reported on November 12, 1875 that “the walls of the new Hobbs school house at North Hampton are now nearly completed...The hall above is to have dining, kitchen, cook, sink, pantry, and dressing rooms”.⁴ The outside was finished by December 25.⁵ There were, however, some delays. When lifting the ventilator the cross bar broke and the ventilator fell, injuring the carpenters’ foreman.⁶ The main part of the Hall was mostly plastered by January 13, 1876.⁷

Centennial Hall was dedicated on April 27, 1876 with W.H.G. Hackett of Portsmouth presiding over a ceremony that included six speakers, five pieces of the marine band, dance and a good “50 cent” supper.⁸ The Hall opened for the first half day of school on May 1, 1876.⁹ The banqueting hall and kitchen were located on the upper floors of the new building.

From the beginning the school was crowded. In 1876 eighty scholars occupied the two school rooms on the first floor with no running water. Five trustees decided on improvements and allocated funds for the Hall portion of the building as well as supplementing tax allocations for improvements to benefit the school.

² *New York Times*, October 18, 1875. Also the *National Republican* (Washington DC), October 12, 1875; *Daily Review* (Wilmington, NC), October 15, 1875; *Perry Daily Chief* (Perry, Iowa), October 30, 1875.

³ Rockingham County Registry of Deed Book 458, Page 259 and town records.

⁴ *Exeter News-Letter*, November 12, 1875.

⁵ *Exeter News-Letter*, Dec. 25, 1875.

⁶ *Ibid*, Dec. 29, 1875.

⁷ *Dow’s Journal*.

⁸ *Dow’s Journal*.

⁹ *Ibid*.

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Benefactor John W.F. Hobbs died in 1890. After his death the trustees were overseen by Joseph O. Hobbs, acting as an administrator and executor of his uncle's estate and maintained with a \$5,000 trust fund left by John W.F. Hobbs. In 1892 a dining room was added above the Hall on the third floor at a cost of \$1,000.¹⁰ In late 1899 a raised stage with dressing rooms and a new floor were installed on the second floor.¹¹ This renovation was consistent with a trend seen throughout New Hampshire and New England in the late 19th century in which traditional halls were converted into quasi-entertainment centers, providing opportunities for new community entertainments including theatrical productions. In the years that followed, Centennial Hall was the center of the town's social life, hosting a wide variety of performances, gatherings, and public events.

In 1917 the school, operating on the first floor, had 69 registered students. That year the annual School Report determined that the building was unsatisfactory and concluded that it was unwise to make extensive repairs to the building as the State authorities would soon demand a new building. Among the areas of deficiency cited were adequate natural lighting, heat, ventilation, sanitation, water and the need for adjustable desks, chairs and proper slates and composition books. At the time Superintendent of Schools Carl Cotton also took issue with the condition of the school rooms as well as the fact that the school was part of a public hall and called for a reorganization of studies based upon practical subjects (manual training and domestic science).¹² The town was divided over whether it was better to expend more money on the existing Center School or better to build a new and up-to-date, stand-alone school building. Architects from Boston, Lawrence, and Keene submitted plans for a new building but in the end it was voted to appropriate \$5,000 to put the building in suitable condition for schools, so that it would meet the approval of State Inspectors. The School Board (Albert Locke, Eleanor Drake and Ada Moulton), assisted by Rev. Arthur Burrill and John W. Berry were put in charge of the project.¹³ A building committee was chosen consisting of John W. Berry, Rev. Burrill and Edward M. Smith and was instructed to secure a plan from a regular school house architect. Harold E. Mason of Keene was selected to draw up a set of plans but bids from contractors came in vastly over budget (the lowest estimate was \$12,000). Mason's plans were subsequently discarded and prominent local contractor and builder Warren B. Moulton completed new plans. Work was completed in time for the opening of school on September 16, 1918.¹⁴ Town reports show that a total of \$5,206 was spent remodeling the Center Schoolhouse.¹⁵ As a result the first floor was divided into four good school rooms for the Junior High, Intermediate, Primary and Domestic Science with Manual Training located in the basement. In the 1920s the uses of the four rooms changed again. The school maintained three classrooms – one for grades one through three, another for grades four, five, and six and the other for grades seven and eight. The fourth room

¹⁰ *Exeter News-Letter*, June 10, 1892.

¹¹ *Hampton Union*, Dec. 16, 1899

¹² Annual Report for the Town of North Hampton, Year Ending January 31, 1918, pp. 24-26.

¹³ *Exeter News-Letter*, April 10, 17 & 18, 1918.

¹⁴ Annual Report for the Town of North Hampton, Year Ending January 31, 1919, p. 26.

¹⁵ Annual Report for the Town of North Hampton, Year Ending January 31, 1919 shows an expense of \$404.81 and the report for the Year Ending January 31, 1920 shows disbursements of \$4,801.30

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served as the library. The kitchen that served the school's dining hall was located on the west side of the basement. In 1932 a playground was added on land acquired from the Church. Also in the 1920s the District started distributing half pints of milk to underweight students along with supplementary cod liver oil. The Federal Relief Program subsidized free lunches for those in need.

As mentioned previously, Centennial Hall was more than just a school, it was an important center of community life in the late 19th and first half of the 20th century. By all reports North Hampton was a busy, social town during this period. Due to the large number of social and fraternal events reservations had to be made months in advance for the use of either Centennial Hall or the public hall in the Town Hall.¹⁶ For larger gatherings, Centennial Hall offered the benefits of a stage complete with dressing rooms and a large banquet hall that had a dumb waiter on the second floor and kitchen on the third. Centennial Hall attracted crowds from numerous Seacoast communities.¹⁷

Entertainment events held at Centennial Hall included dramatic productions put on by civic, church, clubs, and fraternal groups, concerts, and moving pictures. In the 1890s groups such as the North Hampton Dramatic Club and the North Hampton Musical Association held programs here. Gramophone entertainment was held in Centennial Hall in 1898. The first "talkie" was presented here in 1930.¹⁸ Dancing was especially popular with local residents and Centennial Hall hosted both dancing classes and dance affairs. Dance instructor Charles Block sponsored dances here so his students could show what they had learned in class. His wife played the piano for these dances. Among the events chronicled in the local press were Charles Block's masquerade balls, a Valentine's dancing party held in Centennial Hall in February 1917 and a whist party followed by a dance, with the incentive of a live goose offered as the prize for the winner.¹⁹ Other events were more formal such as the ball given at Centennial Hall in January 1901 with music furnished by Dow's Orchestra. Supper was also served.²⁰

A number of fraternal organizations and other groups met at Centennial Hall. On March 19, 1909 the Union Lodge, Number 5, the Knights of Pythias held an organizational meeting at Centennial Hall attended by 50 men from North Hampton and surrounding towns. A year later the Pythian Sisters (Freedom Temple, Number 13) was founded. The two Pythian organizations sponsored a variety of events including oyster or lobster suppers, dances, plays, and card parties. In 1949 the lodges paid approximately \$419 to the school district for the rental of Centennial hall and the grill (located in the basement).²¹ The building also hosted a number of larger community events including community Christmas trees, inoculation clinics and numerous Junior High School graduations.

¹⁶ Stillman Moulton Hobbs, *The Way It Was in North Hampton*. Portsmouth: Peter E. Randall Publisher, 1994, p. 78.

¹⁷ *Hampton Union*, Sept. 1, 1927.

¹⁸ *Exeter News Letter*, January 25, 1930.

¹⁹ Hobbs, p. 80.

²⁰ *Exeter News Letter*, January 25, 1901.

²¹ *Portsmouth Herald*, March 6, 1950

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In the 1940s the town's school age population showed steady increase. The manual training program flourished and was expanded. The room next to the dining room was enlarged, renovated and outfitted with new tools and equipments and opened to boys and girl in the seventh and eighth grades. The importance of kindergarten for preschoolers was also widely accepted. School enrollment increased from 109 in 1944 to 119 in 1947 with the census indicating that another 19 children would be eligible to enter school the following year. During World War II the 6th grade at Little River School (East District) was moved to Centennial Hall. Previously only 7th and 8th graders had been schooled in the junior high room. Built to accommodate a maximum of 90 students, by 1948 the school had an enrollment of 130. In March 1948 the town voted to build a larger and more functional elementary school. The new school was constructed on Atlantic Avenue in 1949 and the Center School was abandoned.

In 1952 the State Supreme Court ruled that ownership of Centennial Hall reverted back to the North Hampton Congregational Society as the North Hampton School District was determined to have abandoned the school. Church records indicate that the Congregational Society conveyed ownership of the building to the Congregational Church in the early 1950s although no deed has been located. In 1952 five meetings were held on the future of the building with options considered including leasing the Hall to the town, disposing of the building to the highest bidder and even tearing the building down.

In December 1952 Centennial Hall was renovated to house Universal Chemists Inc./Gale Hall Engineering Co. which used the building for the assembly, packaging, and merchandising of automobile gauges ("Mile-O-Meter"). The company moved its operations from Boston and employed about 15 workers.²² In September 1954 the building was damaged by a small fire that started in the flooring underneath a refrigerator and reached into the cellar. Much of the stock and equipment was damaged by smoke and water.²³ On November 25, 1955 company official Howard Woods of Exeter purchased the Hall for \$1.00.²⁴ In December 1958 Hawkrigde Metals Corp., moved its research and development laboratory and main office into the building. There were 15 persons employed including physicists, chemists, electrical and mechanical engineers as well as office and laboratory personnel.²⁵ Patton Engineering Company was also briefly a tenant in 1959. In 1968 the Town of North Hampton passed its first zoning ordinance, placing Centennial Hall in a residential zone. Through several hearings over a period of time owner Howard Woods sought permission to conduct a light-manufacturing business in the Hall. In 1972 the Zoning Board of Adjustment granted approval for office space and/or light manufacturing with specific conditions.²⁶

²² *Portsmouth Herald*, Nov. 19, 1952; Dec. 4, 1952; Dec. 29, 1952.

²³ *Portsmouth Herald*, September 7, 1954.

²⁴ Rockingham County Registry of Deeds, Book 1378, Page 337.

²⁵ *Portsmouth Herald*, Dec. 8, 1958.

²⁶ *Portsmouth Herald*, May 2, 1972.

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In December 1985, after the church passed on their right of first refusal to repurchase the building, Daniel and Anne Grigus bought Centennial Hall for \$55,000 from Howard Woods.²⁷ The Griguses operated a preschool age Montessori School on the first floor for twelve years. Various alterations were made to address the safety codes needed to open a school. Lead paint was removed from the lower half of the exterior of the building and the first floor interior was encapsulated by sheet rock. Asbestos was removed and the bathrooms were renovated to meet the needs of pre-school children.

In 1997 the building was again listed for sale and was slated to become an office complex when 89 year old alumna Louise Booker Goss led a group of concerned citizens, mostly alumni, who came together to preserve this important cultural and historic landmark and return it to community use. Goss had gone to school there as had her mother twenty years prior and her daughter twenty years later. In June 1998 the Friends of Centennial Hall (FOCH) a 501(c)3 non-profit, twelve-member group purchased Centennial Hall for \$125,000.²⁸ The group had raised a down payment of \$34,000 from 80 people and assumed ownership with the Griguses holding the mortgage. The day after the sale, the building was opened for Old Home Day festivities. Fundraising efforts included t-shirts, a wine tasting, tours, a Spring Fling, dinner dances, an auction, open houses, garden tours, theatrical productions, bake sales, yard sales and ice cream sales at Bandstand concerts.

In 1999 JSA Architects of Portsmouth completed conceptual drawings of the envisioned space. The FOCH formed a collaborative partnership in the form of a 12 year lease with then resident tenant, New Hampshire Association of Performing Arts (NHAPA). NHAPA invested \$40,000 to renovate the building's first floor creating two dance studios accommodating 350 students. Gene Guth Music Studio occupied another smaller studio space. Until 2004 the income generated by this relationship covered the building's mortgage and operating expenses. NHAPA managed all aspects of building operations allowing the FOCH to focus exclusively on long range planning and renovation milestones.

As part of the renovations non-original interior walls on the first floor were moved to accommodate the first floor studios. Wooden blinds which had been added in the 1970s for sun protection were removed from the exterior. Work was ongoing from 1998 through the early 2000's. The renovation of the basement into an art/meeting room was funded by a \$25,000 grant from resident Caroline Levine. Funded by the NH Charitable Foundation, third floor dormer windows were replaced with replicas of the originals. In 2000, former student Arthur Knowles used historic photographs to construct and install a replica of the cupola which had been removed from the building c. 1955 due to structural damage. Electrical, fire alarms and plumbing were upgraded, new back entry stairs were built, and the south and west side foundation was repaired and re-pointed. Slate from neighboring properties (Lamprey, Woods) was used to replace the west end and work was undertaken to repair two sides of the roof (north and south mansard roofs along with crown moldings at roof junctures) to control leaking. The partial rebuilding and reroofing of the original entry canopy and replacement of one large

²⁷ Ibid, Book 2578, Page 559.

²⁸ Ibid, Book 3301, Page 2483.

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expansive window located above the canopy was completed by Ben King (then project manager/contractor for the FOCH) in 2001. The FOCH was also successful in having the town taxes waived and in obtaining a 99 year lease for the parking area for a fee of \$1.00. In 2003 historically accurate replicas of the original front doors were installed, built by Little Harbor Door and Window. Earlier in the year the FOCH received its first State of New Hampshire Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) matching grant for \$50,000.

In 2004 Centennial Hall welcomed the Seacoast Academy of Music as the new primary tenant following the unanticipated relocation of the NHAPA, thrusting the small non-profit into building management without the benefit of paid employees. With a capital investment of \$20,000 by the Academy, three main studios were built out while modifications to bathrooms and electrical upgrades were initiated by the FOCH.

The rental agreement with the Academy allowed for increased rental opportunity in the basement and first floor, bringing in additional tenants providing instruction in dance, art, theatre, bridge, sports, meditation, yoga, children's programs, crafts, music lessons and instruction of all kinds. Additionally the building began hosting other non-profits, town events and private functions.

In 2004 sills and clapboards were repaired and Sara Chase, Preservation Consultant, provided guidance on the building's historic paint color after paint sampling and analysis. A second LCHIP grant was secured for \$116,258.

In 2006 the North Hampton Bridge Club moved into the Hall. Also this year 2,000 feet of EPDM rubber roof system was installed and the first and most significant bat abatement and clean-up was completed. A brick walkway with three granite steps was installed at the front entry as well as back entry walkways.

In January 2009 the mortgage was discharged, giving FOCH ownership without debt.²⁹ Grants resulted in the replacement of copper downspouts and gutters and the installation of a new side entry door and bathroom windows. In the basement the stairs were rebuilt and new windows were installed. In 2012 three deteriorated windows on the first floor were replaced by custom built LePage windows, clad black sash exterior, painted white frames exterior and a rosewood stair interior.

Today the Hall is completely self-supporting with rental income from five tenants in addition to private rentals held throughout the year. Offering both reasonably-priced rental and historic charm, the Hall's classroom and meeting space is able to serve the surrounding communities in many ways. The FOCH continues to manage and maintain the building and is optimistically working towards opening the second floor hall and stage for full access.

John Dearborn Towle, Architect (1804-1887)

²⁹ Rockingham County Registry of Deeds, Book 4973, Page 608.

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According to U.S. Census returns, John D. Towle was born in New Hampshire about 1805. Masonic records indicated that he was born in "Northhampton" on November 29, 1804 but no record of his birth has been found in North Hampton records.³⁰ Members of the Towle family were early settlers in Hampton, arriving in 1658.

Similarly, no information has emerged concerning Towle's early education and training. It is not known when Towle left New Hampshire but he married Cordelia Shields of Brownsville, New York in the 1830s. They were living in Albany in 1839 when their oldest child, James Augustus, was born. By 1846 the family had moved to Massachusetts and lived for many years in Newton Center. John D. Towle maintained an architectural office in Boston.

J.D. Towle is one of twenty architects listed in the 1846 Boston Directory. At that time his office is listed as 11 Joy's building. He advertised his services throughout New England.³¹ In 1849 Towle was in partnership with Albert F. Bellows, an artist who had trained as an architect. The partnership of Towle & Bellows was short-lived as in 1850 returned to painting. Towle was in practice by himself until 1852 when he was joined by Francis Foster, a surveyor. The Boston firm of Towle & Foster became well known for their Italianate-style churches which were built all over New England including Chelsea, Boston and Harwich, Massachusetts; Bangor, Maine; and Thompson, Connecticut. One that survives in New Hampshire is the North Congregational Church in Portsmouth (1852-4). About 1856 Towle & Foster ended their partnership and Towle returned to private practice. Among his commissions in the 1860s were three houses in Buffalo, New York and the College Street Congregational Church in Burlington, Vermont.³²

By 1868 Towle was working with his son, J. Edward Towle, in a firm known as John D. Towle & Son. After 1873 Towle again returned to solo practice. He was working by himself with an office at 33 Studio Building in Boston when he designed Centennial Hall for fellow New Hampshire son John W.F. Hobbs in 1875. At the time of the commission, Towle was 71 years old; Hobbs was then 60 years old. In 1862 Hobbs had built a house and barn at the intersection of Lafayette, Hobbs and Elm Roads in North Hampton.³³ The architect of that house is not known.

In the late 1870s Towle relocated with his wife to Kansas City, Missouri. They lived with their son Herbert, a grain merchant (H.W. Towle & Co.), at 1410 Broadway. J. Edward Towle also lived with the family until his death in 1881. John D. Towle was a member of the Missouri chapter of the American Institute of Architects and he is listed in the 1887 Kansas City directory

³⁰ Ancestry.com.

³¹ An ad appearing in the (Brattleboro) *Vermont Phoenix* on September 24, 1846 indicated that he "will furnish designs, Specifications for Churches, Cottages and other buildings, at the shortest notice".

³² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_D._Towle

³³ The exact connection between Towle and Hobbs is not known at this time. Perhaps Towle designed Hobbs' house? Also Hobbs' mother was the former Frances Dearborn and Towle's middle name was Dearborn so maybe there was a family connection?

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as a practicing architect but nothing is known of his work during this period. John D. Towle died in Jackson County, Missouri on July 20, 1887 at the age of 83. At the time of his death he was believed to be the oldest architect in the state.³⁴ His widow Cordelia later lived in New Haven, Connecticut with sons James and Herbert.³⁵

Towle is only known to have designed one other school, Newton High School in Newton, Massachusetts, in 1859. The French Second Empire style building was remodeled in 1875 and demolished in 1896. The only other Stick Style building which he appears to have designed was his own house in Newton at 219 Homer Street in Newton, built c.1865-1870.³⁶

³⁴ *Inland Architect and News Record*, Jan. 1888, p. 107.

³⁵ Ancestry.com

³⁶ Massachusetts Historical Commission, MACRIS database, NWT.3082. Inventory form prepared 1983 by Architectural Preservation Associates.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Ancestry.com. [Information on John D. Towle].

Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instructions, 1876 (includes Superintendent A.W. Berry's Report on North Hampton). [State Archives].

Centennial Hall School alumni interviews and donated photos.

Chase, Sara. Historical Paints Survey for Centennial Hall, 2004.

Dow's Journal. North Hampton Heritage Commission files.

Exeter News Letter (microfiche), various years, Exeter Public Library, Exeter, NH and State Library, Concord, NH.

Friends of Centennial Hall meeting notes and records.

Hampton Union (microfiche), various years, Lane Memorial Library, Hampton, NH.

Herndon, Richard, compiler. *Men of Progress: Biographical Sketches and Portraits of Leaders in Business and Professional Life in and of the State of New Hampshire*. Manchester: Manchester Union, 1898.

Hobbs, Stillman Moulton & Helen Davis Hobbs. *The Way it was in North Hampton*. Canaan, NH: Phoenix Publishing, 1994.

Hurd, D. Hamilton. *History of Rockingham and Strafford Counties, New Hampshire, with Biographical Sketches of Many of its Pioneers and Prominent Men*. Philadelphia: J.W. Lewis & Co., 1882.

Massachusetts Historical Commission, MACRIS database.

North Hampton Civic Club. School Facts. North Hampton, NH: 1949.

North Hampton Historical Society, photographic collection.

North Hampton School Superintendents Reports, various years (Town Clerk/Tax Collector's Office and North Hampton Public Library).

Portsmouth Herald, various dates.

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Rockingham County Registry of Deeds, Brentwood, NH.

Towle, J.D. Original Architectural Plans and Specifications for Centennial Hall, October 2, 1875, [Hobbs family].

Town of North Hampton. Annual Reports, various dates.

Town of North Hampton. Records. [Town Clerk/Tax Collector's Office]

United Church of Christ, meeting notes various years, North Hampton, NH.

U.S. Census, various dates

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.22 acre (9,583 SF)

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 19 | Easting: 349480 | Northing: 4760078 |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The eligible boundary consists of Parcel 014/049/000 in the North Hampton Assessors' records.

Centennial Hall
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Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary encompasses the land historically occupied by Centennial Hall.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Lisa Mausolf, Preservation Consultant with Marcy McCann, Friends of Centennial Hall Inc.

organization: for Friends of Centennial Hall Inc.

street & number: 6 Field Pond Drive

city or town: Reading state: MA zip

code: 01867

e-mail lmausolf@att.net

telephone: 781-944-5958

date: December 2015

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Centennial Hall

City or Vicinity: North Hampton

County: Rockingham

State: NH

Photographer: Lisa Mausolf

Date Photographed: November 2015

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo 1 View looking southeast at north and west (façade) elevations.

Photo 2 View looking northwest at south and east (rear) elevations.

Photo 3 First floor, looking northwest in space originally containing classrooms. Front door is visible at left and at right is band of windows, part of the 1918 alterations to the building.

Photo 4 First floor, looking south at staircase in southwest corner of building leading from first floor to second floor hall.

Photo 5 Second floor, looking east at hall with stage added in 1899.

Photo 6 Second floor, looking southwest at dressing room backstage with hall visible to right.

Photo 7 Second floor, looking south at staircase in southwest corner of building leading from second floor up to third floor.

Photo 8 Third floor, looking east at banqueting hall with kitchen at far end.

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



North at top





WEATHER VANE

WINDY WALKER
CLASSIC

DANGER
FALLING LIMBS & ICE
FROM THIS BUILDING
DANGER

DANGER
FALLING LIMBS & ICE
FROM THIS BUILDING
DANGER

DANGER
FALLING LIMBS & ICE
FROM THIS BUILDING
DANGER

WINDY WALKER
CLASSIC

NO
PARKING



EXIT

BRUSH & PALETTE
ART CLASSES





EXIT







UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Centennial Hall
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW HAMPSHIRE, Rockingham

DATE RECEIVED: 2/19/16 &pW DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 16TH DAY: &pW DATE OF 45TH DAY: 4/05/16
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 16000144

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 4/5/16 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

&a4L

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



NEW HAMPSHIRE DIVISION OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES

MEMORANDUM

To: Lisa Deline

Fax: (202) 371-6447

From: Peter Michaud

Subject: National Register Transmittal Letter

Dear Lisa,

The enclosed disks contain the true and correct copy of the nomination for Centennial Hall in North Hampton, NH to the National Register of Historic Places.

Sincerely,


Peter Michaud

National Register, Preservation Tax Incentives,
& Easements Coordinator

19 Pillsbury Street

Concord, NH 03301

(603) 271 3583 fax (603) 271 3433

Peter.michaud@dcr.nh.gov