

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received **OCT 22 1986**  
date entered **NOV 20 1986**

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

**1. Name**

historic Simsbury Bank and Trust Company Building

and/or common Former Town Hall Building

**2. Location**

street & number 760-762 Hopmeadow Street NA not for publication

city, town Simsbury NA vicinity of

state Connecticut code 09 county Hartford code 003

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" 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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<u>NA</u>	<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 Hall Associates Limited Partnership, c/o Landev, Inc.

street & number 760 Hopmeadow Street

city, town Simsbury NA vicinity of state CT

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Town Clerk's Office

street & number Hopmeadow Street

city, town Simsbury state CT

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

State Register of  
title Historic Places has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1986  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission

59 South Prospect Street

city, town Hartford state CT

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<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 Simsbury Bank and Trust Company building is a 2-story, rectangular brick structure in the Colonial Revival style, built in 1917 to the design of the Hartford architectural firm of Smith & Bassette. It faces west at the northeast corner of Hopmeadow and Station streets in the center of Simsbury, about 12 miles northwest of Hartford.

The 5-bay front elevation of the building, laid up in Flemish bond, extends 72 feet along Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury's main thoroughfare. The bays are defined by 2-story paired fluted pilasters with rosette capitals. At each corner of the building there is a cast stone pier with single pilaster. (Photograph 1) The elaborate central doorway is in the Federal style. The recessed door is flanked on each side by two colonettes that support a shallow enriched entablature. The entablature breaks out over the colonettes. Between the colonettes are leaded side lights over panels, while above the entablature there is a semi-elliptical fanlight. The doorway is framed with marble which in turn is bordered by rowlock brick with marble keystone and impost blocks. There is a wrought-iron balcony over the doorway. (Photograph 2) Each of the two bays on either side of the doorway has a tripartite window with central glazing of 8-over-8 flanked by 4-over-4. The transom has the same glazing pattern as the upper sash, but in diminished height. At the second floor, each bay is pierced by a paired 6-over-6 window sharing a common sill.

The pilasters support an elaborate entablature and balustrade. The entablature consists of a narrow architrave and wide frieze. In the frieze, triglyphs with guttae are spaced between discs under a dentil course. In the cornice, mutules support the corona under a crowning cymatium. Above, half balusters project from a parapet wall between brick piers. (Photograph 3)

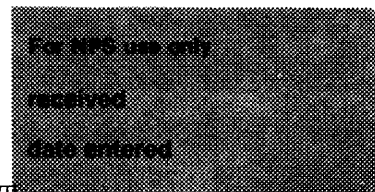
The second street elevation, running 63 feet along Station Street on the south, is similar to the front elevation, except that it has four bays instead of five, and no doorway. The north and rear elevations are plain. On the rear elevation there is an added 28-foot-square 1-story addition for a vault, and an auto teller station. (Photographs 4, 5, and 6)

The street elevations have been altered. Originally, there were three additional doorways, leading to stores. Two were on the front elevation, to the left of the entrance, and one was on the Station Street elevation, toward the back. (See elevation and first-floor plan.) In the 1940s, when the bank needed more space, the doors were changed to windows that match the original windows.

As originally built, the ground plan was not a rectangle. For reasons unknown, a 16 x 32' notch was left at the northeast corner of the building. (See plan.) This area was filled in according to plans drawn by Roy D. Bassette in 1947.

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The front entrance opens to a 2-story stair hall. The wide stairway with iron railing leads up the left wall to a landing and switch back, under skylight. Inside the entrance the door to the right leads to the banking space, now again occupied by a bank. The windows and trim in this space appear to be original, as are most of the windows in the building. There are panels under the windows. (Photographs 7 and 8) In general, throughout the building ceilings have been dropped, doors changed, and partitions altered. (Photograph 9) The original vault remains.

# 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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1917 **Builder/Architect** Smith & Bassette

## Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

### Criteria C (Architecture) and A (History)

The Simsbury Bank and Trust Company Building is an excellent example of commercial Colonial Revival architecture of the type that was popular in the first decades of the 20th century. It substantially retains its integrity, particularly on the exterior. (Criterion C) The bank was the first to be formed in Simsbury, with the help of men prominent in the manufacture of safety fuses, the town's major industry. It has continuously served the community's banking needs since its founding. (Criterion C)

### Criterion C - Architecture

The red brick and white trim of the Simsbury Bank and Trust Company building were widely used during the first decades of the 20th century in architecture that looked to the classical past for its design theme. Interest in classical precedents, such as had been used in the United States before the Revolutionary War, evolved during the last quarter of the 19th century and became the dominant force in design because of the success of the buildings at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, which was known as the White City. The Colonial Revival was firmly entrenched in cities large and small by World War I. It is not surprising that the style was selected for the Simsbury Bank.

The proportions and details of the bank building are carefully articulated. The fluted pilasters, elaborate roof-line entablature and balustrade, and particularly the Federal doorway reflect professional familiarity with the style. The Adamesque doorway is particularly well detailed.

A second influence of importance in American architecture at the time of World War I was that of the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. Many aspiring American architectural students studied at the Ecole, returning to America to become prominent practitioners in the profession. Architecture as taught at the Ecole des Beaux Arts tended to the monumental. Paired columns were often favored. At the Simsbury Bank and Trust Company the paired 2-story pilasters reflect this influence. The Ecole also encouraged heavily emphasized roof lines, often with sculpture rising above the cornice. The bold and heavy balustrade on the roof of the bank is an echo of that characteristic.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Ellsworth, John E. Simsbury; Being a Brief Historical Sketch of Ancient and Modern Simsbury, 1642-1935. Simsbury Commission for the Tercentenary, 1935.

Pattison, George E. Thirty Year Report. Simsbury Bank and Trust Company, 1948

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property Less than one

Quadrangle name Avon

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 

1	8	6	8	2	4	1	9	4	6	3	8	0	4	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

The property is described at Simsbury Land records volume 276, page 298. It is identified as map G-10, block 205, parcel 3 in the Assessor's records.

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

state NA code NA county NA code NA

state NA code NA county NA code NA

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title David F. Ranson, edited by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date March 28, 1986

street & number 33 Sunrise Hill Drive telephone 203 521-2518

city or town West Hartford state CT

## 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 

title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission date October 17, 1986

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the  
National Register

date 11-20-86

  
Keeper of the National Register

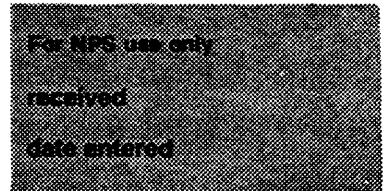
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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The successful architectural firm of Smith & Bassette of Hartford was well versed in the fashionable architectural style of their day. H. Hilliard Smith (1871-1948) had earlier worked in the office of William C. Brocklesby (1848-1910) of Hartford, who in turn had served an apprenticeship in the office of Richard Upjohn and Richard M. Upjohn of New York. After Brocklesby died, the firm of Brocklesby & Smith was succeeded by Smith & Bassette. Roy D. Bassette (1883-1965) had studied architecture at the University of Pennsylvania where he came under the tutelage of Paul P. Cret (1876-1945). In 1929 Cret designed the State Court building on Washington Street in Hartford, in association with Smith & Bassette, in a monumental classical revival mode showing Beaux-Arts influence mixed with the flat decorative motifs of Art Deco. The Smith & Bassette State Office Building (1930-31) nearby at 165 Capitol Avenue is designed in a similar mode. A little of the Beaux-Arts characteristic may be seen in the Simsbury bank.

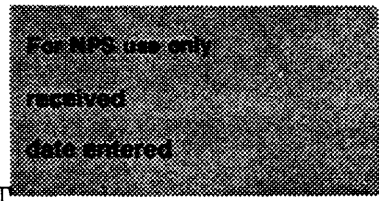
The diversified practice of Smith & Bassette included many prestigious homes in the Colonial Revival and Georgian Revival styles in the west end of Hartford and West Hartford. The red brick, white trim, fluted pilasters, and small pane windows of the bank are a carry-over from the houses.

Smith & Bassette designed a second Colonial Revival building in Simsbury in 1931, across Station Street from the bank. It is Eno Memorial Hall, a community center for the town. Again red brick and white trim are the materials but the dressing is marble rather than cast stone and the roof has a fine lantern. It is a more expensive structure than the bank, and a flattering companion structure.

In addition, the firm designed a library in Avon, a church in Newington, a store in West Hartford and house for the same client, a gateway at Fort Griswold in Groton, and the Packard Motor Co. building in Hartford. For Simsbury clients, in addition to the bank and Eno Memorial Hall, Smith & Bassette designed an office and conference room for Ensign-Bickford, a dining room for Henry E. Ellsworth, and a house at Weekapaug, Rhode Island, for Joseph R. Ensign. The bank brings together several threads from this diversification in the firm's practice. Their fashionable upper-middle-class homes provided the popular architectural style; their experience with a wide range of building types made them comfortable in designing a commercial building; and their enviable list of clients prominent and influential in the world of affairs made them an easy choice for the commission.

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About 1940, the firm of Smith & Bassette was dissolved. The two men continued practicing separately. Bassette drew the plans for the 1947 addition to the bank.

The firm's drawings have been deposited at the Connecticut Historical Society. There were more than 500 projects. For the Simsbury bank there are 14 drawings 20 x 26" on linen in ink, pencil, and colored ink. There are several dozen 27 x 49" and larger drawings in pencil on tracing paper of plans and sections of details such as moldings, transoms, cash drawer, windows, and doors. These drawings are at various scales, many of them full scale.

At the time it was built in 1917, the Simsbury Bank and Trust Company was the largest and most prestigious commercial structure in Simsbury, and it continues so today, with the possible exception of a building several hundred yards to the south which the bank built and moved into in 1969-1970. No other commercial building in Simsbury makes as strong an architectural statement.

Criterion A - History

Smith & Bassette received the commission for the Simsbury Bank and Trust Company building from Joseph R. Ensign (1868-1941), a principal in the the manufacturing firm now known as Ensign-Bickford Industries, Inc. Since the plan shows space for the bank, it is clear that the principal tenant was identified before construction began. The fact that the first president, W. Woods Chandler, was Ensign's private secretary<sup>1</sup> is a further indication of the comprehensive plan. The Southern New England Telephone Company, whose name appears on the second-floor plan, was another tenant identified in advance. The telephone company continued to occupy space there until mid-20th century. The tenants in the front two stores were a soda fountain and the Simsbury War Bureau which shared space with the local chapter of the American Red Cross. The tenant on the Station Street side was a shoe store.

On the second floor, space not occupied by the telephone company was taken up by professional offices.

The bank, the first in the Farmington River Valley, was incorporated January 5, 1916, by fifteen men, with original capital of \$25,000 and surplus of \$12,500. The bank opened its doors for business December 1, 1917. The population of the area was increasing and commercial and industrial growth was gathering momentum. These forces created the need for, and made possible, a local alternative to the common practice theretofore of relying on banks in Hartford. The bank grew steadily during the 1920s, developing enough strength to withstand the financial crisis of 1931-1932. In the mid-1930s, Westminster School, a Simsbury private boys' school, fell on hard times, filed for bankruptchy, and was reorganized successfully

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under the guidance of the bank. Several directors of the bank became trustees of the school in a demonstration of involvement in the community's welfare.

After the bank bought its building from the estate of Joseph R. Ensign in 1941, it made alterations and constructed the addition. At the time it moved out, the bank sold the property in 1969 to the Town of Simsbury which utilized the building as the Town Hall until it was purchased in 1984 by the present owners.

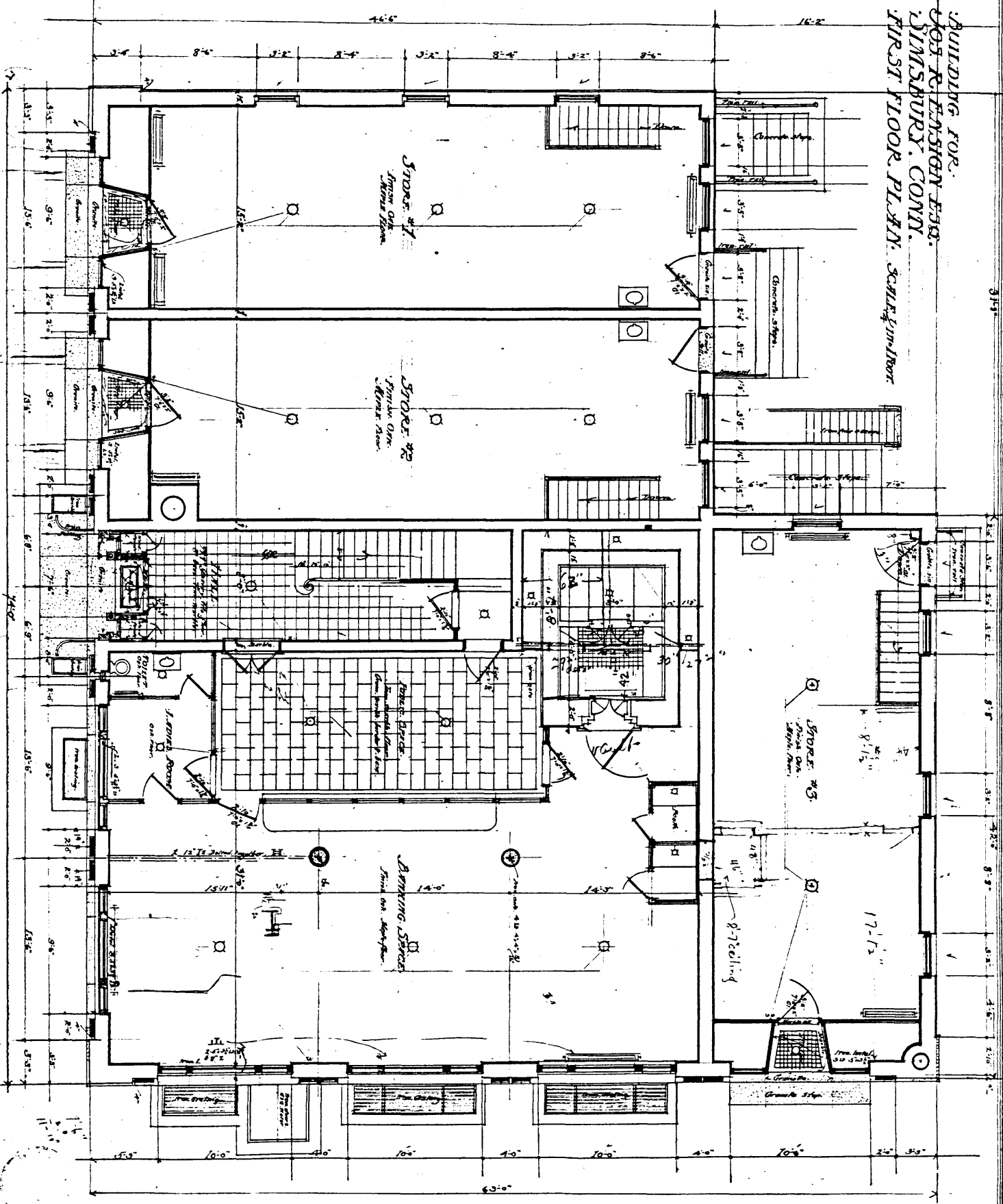
1.

Information of Mr. John E. Ellsworth (b. 1904), interview, March 18, 1986. The Ensign-Bickford company was started in mid-19th century using techniques for the manufacture of safety fuses developed by Bickford, an Englishman who never came to this country. Simsbury operations were in the charge of Joseph Toy. One of Toy's daughters married an Ensign, another married an Ellsworth. John E. Ellsworth held savings account No. 17 at the time the bank opened, and has served on the board of directors since 1928.



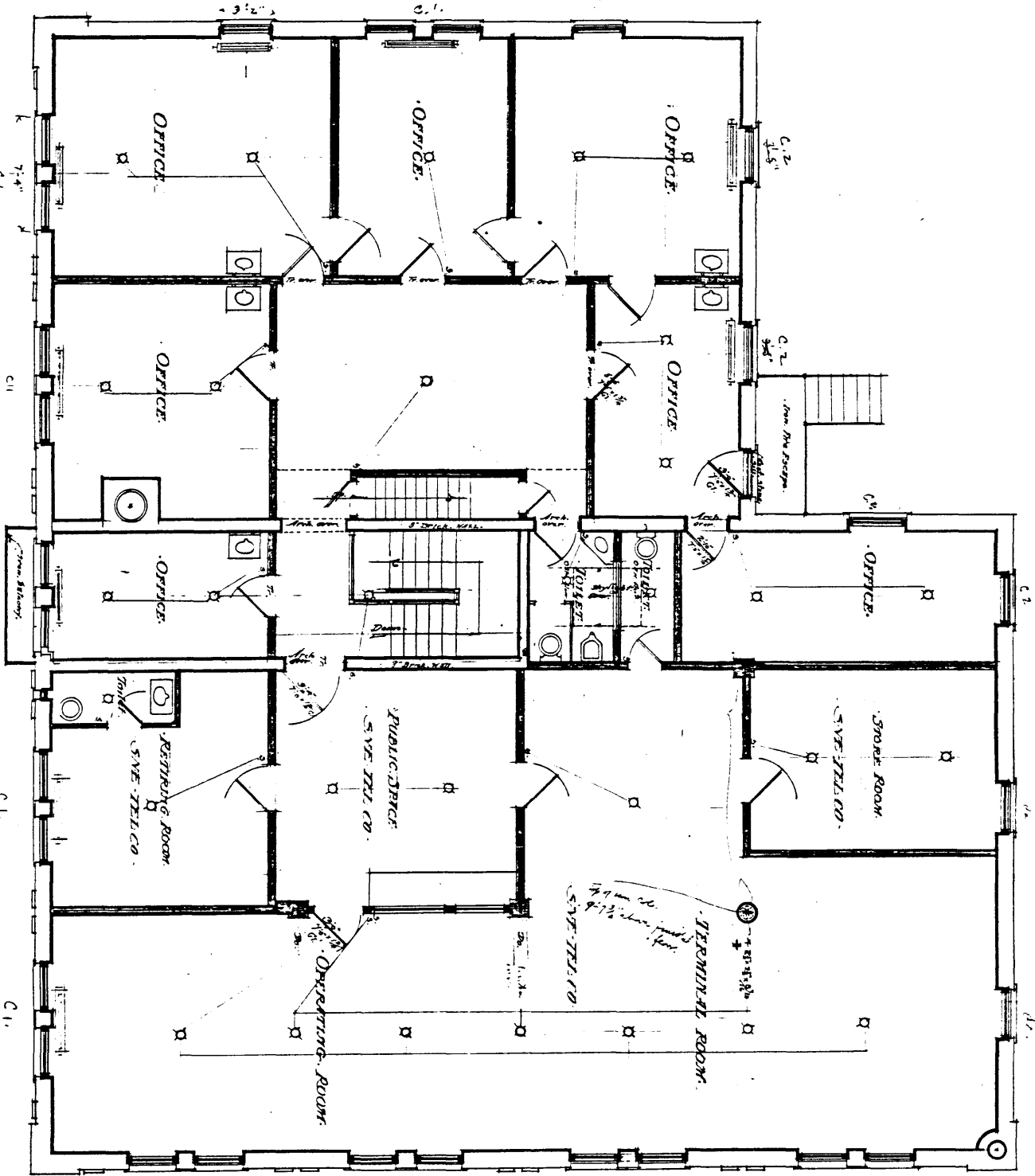


BUILDING FOR:  
GOS R. EUSTON ESQ.  
Simsbury, Conn.  
FIRST FLOOR PLAN. SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"



Franklin & Co. Architects

SECOND FLOOR PLAN



All work finish.  
 Sprinkler for 2nd floor.  
 3' x 3'

