

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 How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Palmer Memorial Hall

other names/site number Palmer Senior Center

2. Location

street & number 1029 Central Street not for publication

city or town Palmer vicinity

state Massachusetts code MA county Hampden code 013 zip code 01069

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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
☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Judith B. McDonough
Signature of certifying official/Title Judith B. McDonough, Executive Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission, State Historic Preservation Officer

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional Comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:
☒ entered in the National Register
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined eligible for the
National Register
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register
☐ removed from the
National Register
☐ other (explain):

[Signature]
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Edson H. Beall 9/3/99

Palmer Memorial Hall
Name of Property

Hampden, MA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

☐ private
☒ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

(Check only one box)

☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing

Noncontributing

1 building
sites
structures
1 objects
2 Total

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

n/a

**Number of contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register**

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Education: Library

Social: Meeting Hall

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Social: Civic

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late Victorian: Romanesque

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Granite

walls Brick

roof Asphalt

other Terra Cotta

Brownstone

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetPalmer Memorial Hall
Palmer (Hampden Co.), Mass.Section number 7 Page 1

Palmer Memorial Hall is located on a small flat lot at the southwest corner of Central and Pleasant Streets, one block north of the Main Street (Route 20) business district in Palmer, Massachusetts. The main block of the building measures 46x65 feet and is two and one-half stories high over a full basement. The building is of solid masonry construction, built of dark red pressed brick, with matching mortar and terra cotta, and set upon a granite foundation. A granite cornerstone, dated 1890, is located at the northwest corner. A terra cotta egg and dart string course encircles the building between the first and second floors. The front facade faces west onto Central Street and is characterized by a two-story gabled pavilion that projects twelve feet out from the center of the main block. A central hipped roof is intersected by a gable dormer on each of the north and south facades. Two small eyebrow dormers are located on either side of the crest of the central hipped roof. Original slate shingles have been replaced with asphalt, first in 1952 and most recently in 1995.

There is no formal landscaping on Memorial Hall's small lot. The front yard is planted in grass, with a concrete walk leading up to the main entrance of the building. The rear of the lot is paved in asphalt as a parking lot. On the front lawn at the southwest corner of the building, there is a large granite boulder with a bronze plaque, erected in the 1920s to commemorate Palmer's World War I veterans. This memorial is considered to be a contributing object for the purposes of this National Register nomination.

The front pavilion serves as the main entrance to the building, with four granite steps leading up to a double arched opening above the granite foundation at the gable end. Two pairs of unmatched metal railings have been installed at the front steps, probably in the 1970s. The wide brick double arch is composed of six courses of headers; it is banded by terra cotta and has foliated terra cotta imposts. Piers to either side of the double arch are capped by terra cotta offsets. Each arched opening contains a separate entrance to the building. The archway on the left (facing the building) is enclosed by double six-panel wooden doors that lead to the great hall on the second floor; the doors are surmounted by a wooden panel in the tympanum on which are painted the words "Memorial Hall." The archway on the right is open, leading onto a porch in front of the entrance to the former library space on the first floor, which is entered through double half-glass wooden doors under a massive brownstone lintel. The south side of the pavilion is opened by another large archway that is spanned at the base by a short, brownstone-capped brick wall and at the spandrel by a decorative iron truss. On the north side of the pavilion is a small arched window opening with a 1/1 double hung wooden sash.

At the second floor of the gable end of the pavilion are three long narrow window openings above the terra cotta string course. The center window is taller than those to its side. Each of the three windows is in three parts: a long rectangular single pane sash, with a wooden transom above, and, above the transom, a single-pane sash at the arch. Three terra cotta emblems decorate the gable end of the front pavilion. Two of the emblems are directly above the crowns of the double arched entrance; the lower one is an open book with the Latin phrase *Pro Bono Patria* (for the good of the nation) inscribed on its

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetPalmer Memorial Hall
Palmer (Hampden Co.), Mass.Section number 7 Page 2

pages; the one above reads "Public Library." The third terra cotta emblem, located at the peak of the front gable, is a banner inscribed with the words "Memorial Hall." The gable wall projects above the roofline as a parapet and is capped with terra cotta coping. The terra cotta cornice is decorated with medallions and foliate.

The front pavilion is flanked on either side by small hipped dormers projecting from the central hipped roof. A pair of narrow arched 1/1 double-hung sash windows with glass transoms is in each of these dormers on the plane of the main block of the building at the second floor; original 1/1 wooden sash have been replaced with aluminum sash of the same configuration. On the first floor on either side of the pavilion, directly below the dormers, is another pair of slightly wider arched windows, containing original 1/1 wooden windows.

The north and south elevations rise up to peak at the intersecting gables on either side of the central hipped roof. Each gable contains a triplet of narrow windows, with the central window in each triplet taller than those to either side. Each of these windows contains 1/1 single-hung sash, with a fully arched upper sash, with the exception that in the north gable, the window on the right is of stained glass. In the south gable, two of the original wood windows have been replaced by aluminum sash. A pair of high brick chimneys flanks each of the two side gables.

The north elevation has four 1/1 wood sash arched windows on the first floor, a pair in the center under the gable flanked by one on either side near the corners of the building. The south elevation originally had six arched windows on the first floor. At some point in time, a door with a transom replaced the second window from the left and the arch above the transom was bricked in. The third window from the left has been bricked in completely. In 1933 a small brick shed addition was built around this side door, with the rear of the shed addition left open for access to the door. The front of the shed addition is enclosed by a wooden door that provides access to a small storage room. A rectangular 1/1 wooden window is set into the south wall of the shed addition.

The east (rear) elevation contains little decoration or detail. An original rear two-story ell projects 8 feet from the back of the building and extends for 32 feet along the length of the building. This ell contains the interior rear stairs. The east facade of the rear ell contains two arched windows at the first floor with a blank second story. Although the terra cotta string course continues around the building onto the main block of the rear elevation it does not extend onto the rear ell. The ell has a hipped roof that projects from the main roof. A hipped dormer over the ell contains three small arched windows. The south elevation of the ell contains two small rectangular windows at the first floor and two above at the second floor. The north elevation of the ell contains an arched doorway with a single door that serves as a rear egress. A small shed roof covers this doorway. Two small rectangular windows are above at the second floor. A concrete switchback ramp, which appears to have been built in the early 1990s, is set against the rear of the building for access to the rear entrance. Like the front elevation, the rear ell is flanked by two hipped dormers on the rear of the main block of the building. Each dormer contains two arched windows

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetPalmer Memorial Hall
Palmer (Hampden Co.), Mass.Section number 7 Page 3

at the second floor; a pair of wider arched windows are below each dormer at the first floor.

The interior of the building was designed to accommodate two distinct functions: a public library on the first floor and a meeting hall for the Grand Army of the Republic on the second floor. The layout and decorative details of each floor are intact, although the building is now used as a senior citizens' center.

The original library space is divided into a vestibule and four rooms: the Main Reading Room, the Boys' Reading Room, a Reference Room, and a Stack Room. All of the rooms and the vestibule have wainscoting and beaded moldings around windows and doors. The vestibule is entered from the porch at the southern side of the front pavilion. The Main Reading Room is entered directly from the vestibule through double half-glass wooden doors flanked by a pair of five-light sidelights. The Boys' Reading Room is entered from the Main Reading Room through a single half-glass door directly to the right of the vestibule, with a single five-light sidelight to the right of the door. A clerestory rises above the vestibule doors and the door into the Boys' Reading Room, bringing additional light into the southwest corner of the Main Reading Room. The clerestory is divided into three sections above either entry: over the vestibule doors is one section of thirty-five lights flanked by five lights over either sidelight; over the door to the Boys' Reading Room is one section of twenty lights, flanked by a five-light section to the right over the sidelight and a fifteen-light section to the left. The various sections of the clerestory are divided by wide mullions. An original pressed metal ceiling is visible above the clerestory in the Main Reading Room, but is covered by a dropped ceiling in the rest of the room. The metal ceiling is fully exposed in the Boys' Reading Room.

The Reference Room and the Stack Room are entered through solid wooden doors on the east wall of the Main Reading Room, with the door to the Stack Room on the right. There are three original tiled fireplaces remaining in the building, one each in the Main Reading Room, the Boys' Reading Room, and the Reference Room. The tile mantels with egg and dart molding and decorative bronze and cast iron frames are original; an original tile hearth remains only in the Main Reading Room. Large floor-mounted wooden cabinets with glass doors line the west wall of the reference room. These cabinets were installed in 1893 to exhibit the natural history collection donated to the library by Dr. W. H. Stowe. The collection is no longer extant. Floors are covered with wall-to-wall carpeting in the Main Reading Room, Boys' Reading Room and foyer and with vinyl in the Reference Room and Stack Room. There is evidence that original quartered oak and southern pine floors are extant under the carpeting and vinyl in the Main Reading Room, the Boys' Reading Room, and the Reference Room. The Stack Room was built to be as fireproof as possible, in order to better protect the library's collection: it has a concrete floor, brick-lined ceiling, and iron doors covered with wood. A safe has been installed in the Stack Room with its entrance through the wall in the Boys' Reading Room.

The Grand Army of the Republic meeting hall is virtually untouched on the second floor. The G. A. R. hall is entered through the foyer on the northern side of the front pavilion. A ticket booth ornamented with carved wooden pilasters is tucked under the front stairway. An ornate stair leads up to the meeting

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetPalmer Memorial Hall
Palmer (Hampden Co.), Mass.Section number 7 Page 4

hall from the foyer. The stair contains wainscoting, decorative wood spindles, carved banister, and turned newel post. The wall of the stair is lined with eight commemorative marble tablets containing the names of Palmer's Civil War soldiers and a bronze tablet memorializing L. L. Merrick, the original namesake of the G. A. R. hall. At the top of the stairs is a vestibule leading into the hall through double five-paneled wooden doors. To the left of these doors is a forty-light clerestory over the stairhall, bringing additional light into the hall from the windows at the front gable. A wooden staircase in the southwest corner of the second floor vestibule leads up to a small balcony overlooking the main hall. This balcony is enclosed by a wooden balustrade with turned balusters.

The main hall is a large open auditorium rising one and one-half stories to a plaster ceiling. Two massive exposed wooden trusses span the ceiling from north to south to support the hipped roof. An anchor in commemoration of Palmer's Civil War naval veterans hangs from the truss closest to the west wall. A curved wooden stage is along the east wall of the hall, flanked by two small anterooms. The main hall contains wainscoting and quarter oak floors. Vaulted ceilings above the arched windows in the gables are covered with pressed metal, as is the ceiling above the stage. The window surrounds have beaded edging and wooden sills. The stained glass window in the north gable is by an unknown artist and commemorates a local Civil War veteran. It is divided into three sections: the first bears a likeness of the veteran in a circle above a sheaf of olive branches; the second bears the caption "In memory of J. H. Smith," with a view of Palmer above the caption; and the third section contains three stacked rifles and a haversack.

An elevator has been installed in the building, with its first floor entrance in the Stack Room and the second floor entrance in the anteroom to the right of the stage in the G. A. R. hall. Although the shaft extends slightly above the roof of the anteroom, it is relatively unobtrusive.

Archaeological Description

While no prehistoric resources are recorded on the nominated property, it is possible that sites are present. One site is located in the general area (within one mile) approximately one mile southeast of the property on the Quaboag River floodplain. Current environmental characteristics of the Memorial Hall property do not represent favorable locational criteria for most types of prehistoric sites. Although the lot is flat, natural soil characteristics have been obscured by construction of the earlier 1875 Wales Building and Memorial Hall. The property is also presently located over 1000 feet from the nearest wetlands. These environmental conditions may have been different in the prehistoric past. Undisturbed soils prior to building construction were probably well drained and, although the property is currently over 1000 feet from the nearest wetlands, it does lie within that distance from the Quaboag River floodplain. Since the river does meander in this area, it could have easily been located within 1000 feet of the property in the past. Thus, the property may have exhibited favorable locational criteria for prehistoric sites at some point in the past. In general, however, the potential for locating significant prehistoric resources on the property is low. Construction impacts from the Wales Building (1875),

(continued)

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Palmer Memorial Hall
Palmer (Hampden Co.), Mass.

Section number 7 Page 5

Memorial Hall (1891), adjacent parking lot and related utilities have probably destroyed any resources that were present on the relatively small (less than one acre) lot.

There is a high potential for locating historic archaeological resources on the Memorial Hall property. Changes in natural soil stratigraphy and structural remains may be present from the earlier Wales Building, a commercial structure built on the lot in 1875. That structure was moved in 1889. Memorial Hall was reportedly built over the Wales Building basement. Construction features may be present associated with the Wales Building as well as portions of it's foundation and related utilities that were not incorporated into the Memorial Hall Building. Construction features may also exist related to Memorial Hall.

(end)

Palmer Memorial Hall

Name of Property

Hampden, MA

County and State

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

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

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Community Development

Period of Significance

1890-1949

Significant Dates

1890

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

N/a

Architect/Builder

Robert H. Robertson

Flynt Building and Construction Company

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetPalmer Memorial Hall
Palmer (Hampden Co.), Mass.Section number 8 Page 1

Palmer Memorial Hall is a civic building that was constructed in 1890-91 to commemorate local citizens who had served in the Civil War. It originally functioned as the town's first permanent public library and as a meeting space for the veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic. The building was designed by New York City architect Robert H. Robertson in the Richardsonian Romanesque style, and displays elements typical of that style: massive arched entry, hipped roof with cross gables, recessed arched windows, and towering gable-end chimneys. Palmer Memorial Hall is locally significant under National Register Criterion A for community development and Criterion C for architecture. It is relatively unaltered and retains its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The Town of Palmer, located in south central Massachusetts about seventy miles west of Boston, was first settled in 1752. Because of its location at the confluence of three rivers—the Quaboag, Swift, and Ware—to form the Chicopee River, Palmer began to attract industrial development after the Revolutionary War. By the early 1800s, at least three mills had been established in the several villages that make up Palmer: a woolen mill on the Swift River in Bond's Village, a cotton mill on the Chicopee River at the aptly named Three Rivers, and another cotton mill on the Ware River in Thorndike. The construction of the Western Railroad (later the Boston and Albany Railroad) through the southern part of the town in 1839 marked the beginning of Palmer's development as a regional transportation center and initiated a shift in the commercial, educational and residential activity of the town from Palmer Center in the north to the area around the railroad right-of-way, which became known as Depot Village. The completion of the New London Northern Railroad (later the Vermont Central) in 1850 connected Palmer with water shipping routes in the south and established Depot Village as a major transportation crossroads. Today, the Palmer Town Hall and the Hampden County District Court are located in Palmer Center, while the business and population centers of town remain along the Main Street (Route 20) corridor around Depot Village.

Throughout most of the nineteenth century, Palmer's population steadily increased due to its rapid industrial and transportation development. By the 1880s, Palmer's growth and prosperity prompted a spurt of institutional construction that was unprecedented in the town's history. Over a period of roughly seven years between 1883 and 1890, Palmer gained three major new buildings in Depot Village: first, in 1883, Union Station, a railroad depot designed by H. H. Richardson (NRHP, 1988); next, in 1888, Palmer High School at the corner of Park and Thorndike Streets; and finally, in 1890, Memorial Hall, which served as the first permanent public library and as a memorial to the town's Civil War veterans. (Union Station and Palmer High School still stand but are vacant.) All of these buildings were designed in the Romanesque style, which had been introduced by Richardson in the late 1870s and remained popular for institutional structures in cities and towns throughout the northeastern United States until the turn of the century.

Prior efforts to establish a public library in Palmer had met with little success. It is known that the first library was established in 1815 by Amos Hamilton, but it soon disbanded after its founder inexplicably departed from Palmer. Another attempt was made in 1841 when thirty dollars was raised by subscription, and, with aid from the state, one hundred books were placed in circulation. This effort failed by 1851, when

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetPalmer Memorial Hall
Palmer (Hampden Co.), Mass.Section number 8 Page 2

lack of support from either the town or the library's subscribers forced the library to close because of the deteriorated condition of its books. The Palmer Public Library Association was formed in 1867, but its attempt to establish a library had failed by 1872. Another endeavor began soon thereafter with a subscription circulating library instituted by a local firm that was a combined pharmacy and bookstore. The Young Men's Library Association, which had been established under the General Laws of the Commonwealth on December 2, 1878, purchased this private circulating library and opened a free library in a vacant storefront on Central Street in 1879. Throughout the 1880s, the Library Association occupied rented or donated quarters in several locations in Depot Village.

The *Palmer Journal* reported on September 26, 1884, that the association had begun seeking a permanent reading room and commented that nearly every small village in the vicinity already had such a facility, with favorable results. The *Journal* maintained that a permanent library would provide an important social benefit to the town beyond its obvious educational value:

There is one thing which a reading room will do in the winter, it will keep from the saloons a certain class of young men who would otherwise spend their evenings there. . . . A good reading room . . . would undoubtedly prove a paying investment in the influence it would have over certain classes.

The *Journal* reported on November 7, 1884, that a committee appointed by the town the previous March to investigate the "matter of a soldier's memorial" had recommended that the town should erect a memorial building, at a cost of \$15,000, which would contain a public library and reading room on the first floor and a hall for the Grand Army of the Republic above. Several other towns in south central Massachusetts had already built or soon would build some type of civic memorial building, either a town hall or library, to commemorate local Civil War veterans. These towns include West Brookfield (1880), Ware (1881), Monson (1882; NRHP 1984), Brookfield (1883), Belchertown (1887; NRHP 1982), Warren (1889) and Spencer (1889). Palmer immediately set aside a sum of \$2,000 toward the construction of a memorial hall.

Plans for the Palmer memorial languished throughout the remainder of the decade while the town continued to set aside funding for the project. The *Journal* seemed to revive interest in the memorial in an article on March 4, 1890, in which it reported that the town had accumulated nearly \$12,000 toward construction costs. In addition, it was reported that Dr. W. H. Stowe, president of the Young Men's Library Association, had secured \$3,000 toward the purchase of a vacant lot at the corner of Pleasant and Central Streets, and, once purchased, would donate the lot to the town for the construction of the memorial building. The *Journal* also expressed some consternation at the town's seeming inactivity over beginning construction:

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetPalmer Memorial Hall
Palmer (Hampden Co.), Mass.Section number 8 Page 3

Our Grand Army boys are feeling somewhat sore and impatient over the town's delay in erecting a soldiers' memorial of some form, and it is not strange, when we remember that a quarter of a century has elapsed since the close of the war, and that it will not be many years until there are none of the old soldiers left to enjoy whatever the town may do for them.

The article praised the efforts of the town government to provide funding for the memorial without resorting to additional taxation, but urged the town to "take hold of the matter and do something."

At a town meeting held in April it was voted to proceed with plans for a war memorial at a cost not to exceed \$20,000. In addition to the funds already in the treasury, the town treasurer was instructed to negotiate a loan not to exceed \$20,000 to pay the balance on the memorial building and to provide for any other purposes related to the project. The townspeople let it be known that they desired a handsome structure that would be centrally located and that would be an ornament for the community. A building committee was selected, with Dr. Stowe as its chairman, and on May 2, 1890, the *Journal* reported that the committee had accepted plans submitted by architect Robert H. Robertson of New York.

Robertson, who lived from 1849 until 1919, practiced primarily in New York during a successful career that spanned more than forty years; he is credited with the 1901 design of the Blantyre estate in Lenox. In an article on Robertson's career published in *Architectural Record* in December 1897, Montgomery Schuyler describes the architect as having shown himself to be an eclectic designer producing buildings in a variety of styles, but being particularly adept at Romanesque, "which he took up in his own way and arrived at his own expression in it."

After graduating from Rutgers University, Robertson began his career in 1875 in association with William A. Potter, designing ecclesiastical and collegiate buildings primarily in New York City, as well as Witherspoon Hall at Princeton University in New Jersey. In practice on his own from the mid-1880s, Robertson continued to design churches but expanded his practice to include commercial, institutional, and residential buildings. He seemed to concentrate on designing in the Romanesque style throughout the 1880s and 1890s, with notable works from this period in New York City including: St. James Church (1887); the Maria Louisa Home of the YWCA (1890), the Lincoln Building (1890; NRHP 1980); St. Luke's Church (1892); the Corn Exchange Building (1892); the Office of the American Tract Company (1894); St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church (1896); and the Park Row Building (1897). Schuyler notes that Robertson seemed to be especially fascinated by the skyscraper, the newest architectural phenomenon of the day, of which the writer remarks that "every New Yorker knows by sight the Lincoln, the Mohawk, the McIntyre, the Corn Exchange Bank, and the building of the Tract Society." The Park Row Building, a Classical Revival skyscraper completed in 1899, was the world's tallest building at the time of its construction. Robertson also designed grand private residences outside of New York City during this period: the Governor Asa Bushnell House in Springfield, Ohio (1887) is in the

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetPalmer Memorial Hall
Palmer (Hampden Co.), Mass.Section number 8 Page 4

Romanesque style and the Dr. Matthew Warner House in Irvington, New York (1896; NRHP 1989) is Late English Gothic.

Although Palmer Memorial Hall is rather plain in comparison to Robertson's other works, it nonetheless stands out as a fine local example of the Romanesque style, with massive arched entry, hipped roof with cross gables, recessed arched windows, and towering gable-end chimneys. Its construction continued an architectural trend begun locally with Palmer's other Romanesque buildings, Union Depot and Palmer High School, as well as regionally with other Civil War memorial buildings constructed in the Romanesque style in nearby Massachusetts towns. The latter include the previously mentioned Monson Memorial Town Hall and Belchertown's Clapp Memorial Library.

Construction of Memorial Hall was begun in July 1890 on the lot at the corner of Central and Pleasant Streets over the existing basement of the Wales Building, a commercial building constructed in 1875 which had been moved in 1889 to a lot at the corner of Central and Main Streets. Memorial Hall appears to have been built exactly to Robertson's specifications, with the exception that a cupola shown at the crest of the hipped roof on an original rendering was never built. General contractor for the project was the Flynt Building and Construction Company of Palmer. The exterior design was executed using many local materials, including bricks from the C. L. Alexander Company in West Brimfield, granite from Monson, and brownstone from Longmeadow. The interior was handsomely appointed with wainscoting, a decorative staircase, tile fireplaces, pressed metal ceilings, and quartered oak and southern pine floors. Memorial Hall was completed in March 1891.

The library was dedicated with great ceremony on April 29, 1891, accompanied by speeches, prayer, and patriotic music. One particularly passionate dedication, as reported the next day in the Springfield (Massachusetts) *Republican*, was delivered by Dr. C. H. Eaton of New York City, a former pastor of the Palmer Universalist Church:

The dream of generations has become a reality, a beautiful and convenient home for the thoughts, words, and works of the master spirits of the world rises in your midst. Luster is added to the present occasion when we remember that here in solid brick and stone are symbolized and united two elements essential to national life: knowledge and patriotism. Here is raised a monument like the Roman tower, on which the fires of patriotism burn forever, guarded by reverent minds. . . . This building is evidence that Palmer desires to embalm in its memory the lives of soldiers, of heroes, and at the same time, by intelligence, enlarge, strengthen and purify the lives of its people.

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetPalmer Memorial Hall
Palmer (Hampden Co.), Mass.Section number 8 Page 5

After twenty-six years, the town finally had a fine memorial building to commemorate the 216 men from Palmer who had served the Union during the Civil War. Twenty-two of these men had perished in the war. The handsome auditorium on the upper floor of the building was dedicated solely to use by the local post of the Grand Army of the Republic and the Women's Relief Corps, an auxiliary of the G. A. R. The Palmer G. A. R. post was named after Lucius L. Merrick, a sergeant in the Thirty-sixth Massachusetts Infantry who had died of wounds received at the Battle of the Wilderness in September 1864. A small bronze tablet at the landing of the front staircase leading up to the G. A. R. hall commemorates Merrick. Also at the landing are eight marble tablets recording the names of all 216 Palmer veterans. A stained glass window in the G. A. R. hall memorializes another veteran, J. H. Smith, who had died in 1889; the window was donated by his widow. Inside the hall, an anchor hangs from one of the massive ceiling trusses, representing Palmer's Civil War naval veterans. G. A. R. meetings were held by the Merrick Post in Memorial Hall until 1919; the post was last listed in the Palmer Directory in 1921. In the 1920s, a large granite boulder was placed in the front yard at the southwest corner of the building with a plaque commemorating Palmer's World War I veterans, thus continuing the use of the property as a memorial through the nation's next great war. No additional war memorials have been placed on the property.

The Young Men's Library Association moved its collection into the first floor of Memorial Hall in spring 1891. Head librarian O. P. Allen stated in the *1892 Young Men's Library Association Annual Town Report* his hope that the new library would increase the fortunes of the library.

Next to the church and the school, the public library is one of the most important factors in the education and enlightenment of the masses. . . We have a building every way worthy of the town, one which elicits the praise of strangers who visit it. The town will certainly take pride in sustaining an institution which has already become an attractive feature, the benefits of which will increase as time goes on.

Despite its new permanent facilities, however, the Library Association faced difficult times for several years. The town's annual appropriation for the library remained static at \$500 and circulation actually declined for the first several years in Memorial Hall. By 1898 the annual appropriation had increased to \$1,000 and 783 residents had become patrons. The library was open 300 days per year and provided twenty periodicals and 5,530 volumes. Circulation had risen to 16,000 volumes per year, more than double that of 1892. During the decade 1910-1920, the library continued to modernize its policies, instituting open stacks, a longer borrowing period, a children's room, branch libraries in Three Rivers and Thorndike, school library centers, and a catalog system set up by a professional cataloger provided by the Free Public Library Commission of Massachusetts. Memorial funds had been established by several patrons to help augment the library's annual budget. The library's motto during this period became "greater facilities, greater opportunities, and greater worth." By 1920, the town appropriation had risen to \$4,000; the library owned 14,500 volumes and recorded a circulation of 56,499. During the

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetPalmer Memorial Hall
Palmer (Hampden Co.), Mass.Section number 8 Page 6

Great Depression of the 1930s the library budget was cut by one-third, yet it experienced an all-time high circulation of 81,945 volumes in 1932, a peak that would not be reached again until 1971.

The first floor library in Memorial Hall also served as home to various other cultural and civic groups during its early years, including the Natural History Society, the Quaboag Literary Circle, the Agricultural Society, and the Palmer Historical Society. Dr. W. H. Stowe, who served as president of both the Library Association and the Natural History Society in the 1880s and early 1890s, also agreed to allow the library to exhibit his entire collection of antiquities, including "old crockery, curios, numerous rare, ancient books, and over 1,000 pamphlets." Part of his rare book collection included first editions of the *Farmer's Almanac*. One of the more interesting items in the collection appears to have been the lock and key to Grave's Tavern, which had been located on the road to Springfield (Route 20) during the Revolutionary War, and where General George Washington was supposed to have stopped and taken a meal.

Dr. Stowe placed two conditions upon his donating the collection to the Young Men's Library Association: first, the library would provide appropriate exhibit shelves, and, second, Dr. Stowe would retain ownership of the collection so that he could sell it in case he needed financial assistance as he grew older. In 1892, the library raised \$300 by private subscription to build fine wood and glass display cabinets for Dr. Stowe's antiquities in the rear reference room. Although these cabinets still stand in their original location, they no longer hold their original contents. The library is no longer in possession of Dr. Stowe's collection and nothing is known of its whereabouts. Dr. Stowe retired from the Library Association presidency in 1895 due to ill health.

The 1960s and 1970s were years of significant change for the library. In 1963, the Young Men's Library Association relinquished control of the library to the town. The Palmer Public Library joined the Massachusetts Western Regional Public Library System, bookmobile service began, and state aid was requested for the first time. In 1977, because of space restraints, the library moved to its present location in a former A & P Supermarket on Main Street. Since the 1980s, the Palmer Senior Center has occupied the library's former Main Reading Room, Reference Room, and Stacks. The Palmer Redevelopment Authority occupies the former Boys' Reading Room. The second floor G. A. R. Hall was stabilized in the 1990s and is now used as additional meeting space by the town.

Despite its change of use, Palmer Memorial Hall has seen few physical changes over the years: an asphalt roof has replaced the original slate, first in the 1950s and most recently in 1995; an exterior rear access ramp and an interior elevator have been installed; pressed metal ceilings and wooden floors have been covered but not removed; six original wooden windows on the second floor have been replaced with aluminum sash; and a small brick shed addition was built onto the south elevation. A small wooden sign bearing the words "Palmer Senior Center" has been attached to the front archway. None of these changes

(continued)

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**Palmer Memorial Hall
Palmer (Hampden Co.), Mass.**

Section number 8 Page 7

has significantly diminished the building's historical or architectural integrity. Palmer Memorial Hall and its associated World War I memorial stand as proud remembrances of the town's veterans, and the hall continues to provide useful civic space for town activities.

Archaeological Significance

Historic archaeological resources described above have the potential to document a 19th century commercial building in Palmer, later moved, and the extent to which it's remaining foundation and basement structure were incorporated into the Memorial Hall design. Potential construction features can help document mid 19th century construction techniques. Archaeological testing might also recover information relating to patterns of 19th century architectural reuse. Portions of the original Wales Building foundation and basement may have been modified or abandoned during construction of the later Memorial Hall structure.

(end)

Palmer Memorial Hall
Name of Property

Hampden, MA
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References See continuation sheet.

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1. Zone Easting Northing
18 720800 4670390

2. Zone Easting Northing

3. Zone Easting Northing

4. Zone Easting Northing

— See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Rebecca Shrimpton, Preservation Consultant with Betsy Friedberg, NR Director, MHC

organization Massachusetts Historic Commission date July 1999

street & number 220 Morrissey Boulevard telephone (617) 727-8470

city or town Boston state MA zip code 02125

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Town of Palmer

street & number 4417 Main Street telephone (413) 283-2608

city or town Palmer state MA zip code 01069-1133

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. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503. NPS Form 10-900 OMB No.

1024-0018

(Rev. 10-90)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Palmer Memorial Hall
Palmer (Hampden Co.), Mass.

Section number 9/10 Page 1

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Schuyler, Montgomery. "Works of Robert H. Robertson." *Architectural Record*. December 1897.

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Temple, Josiah. *History of the Town of Palmer, Massachusetts*. Springfield: Massachusetts: Town of Palmer, 1889.

Ware, Palmer, and Hardwick, Massachusetts Directory 1919-1921. Greenfield, Massachusetts: H. A. Manning Company, 1919-1921.

Withey, Henry F. *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects*. Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, Inc., 1970.

Young Men's Library Association. *Report of the Librarian*. Palmer, Massachusetts: 1892, 1893, 1895, 1898.

(end)

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Boundary Description

The boundaries of the property addressed in this National Register nomination are those shown as Lot 203 on Sheet 58 of the maps of the town assessor of Palmer, Massachusetts. This lot is located at the southwest corner of the intersection of Central and Pleasant Streets in the Town of Palmer.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries of the property addressed in this nomination encompass all of the land originally acquired in 1890 for construction of Palmer Memorial Hall.

(end)

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**Palmer Memorial Hall
Palmer (Hampden Co.), Mass.**

Section number _____ Page _____

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographer: Rebecca Shrimpton
Negatives on file with photographer

Date: April 1999

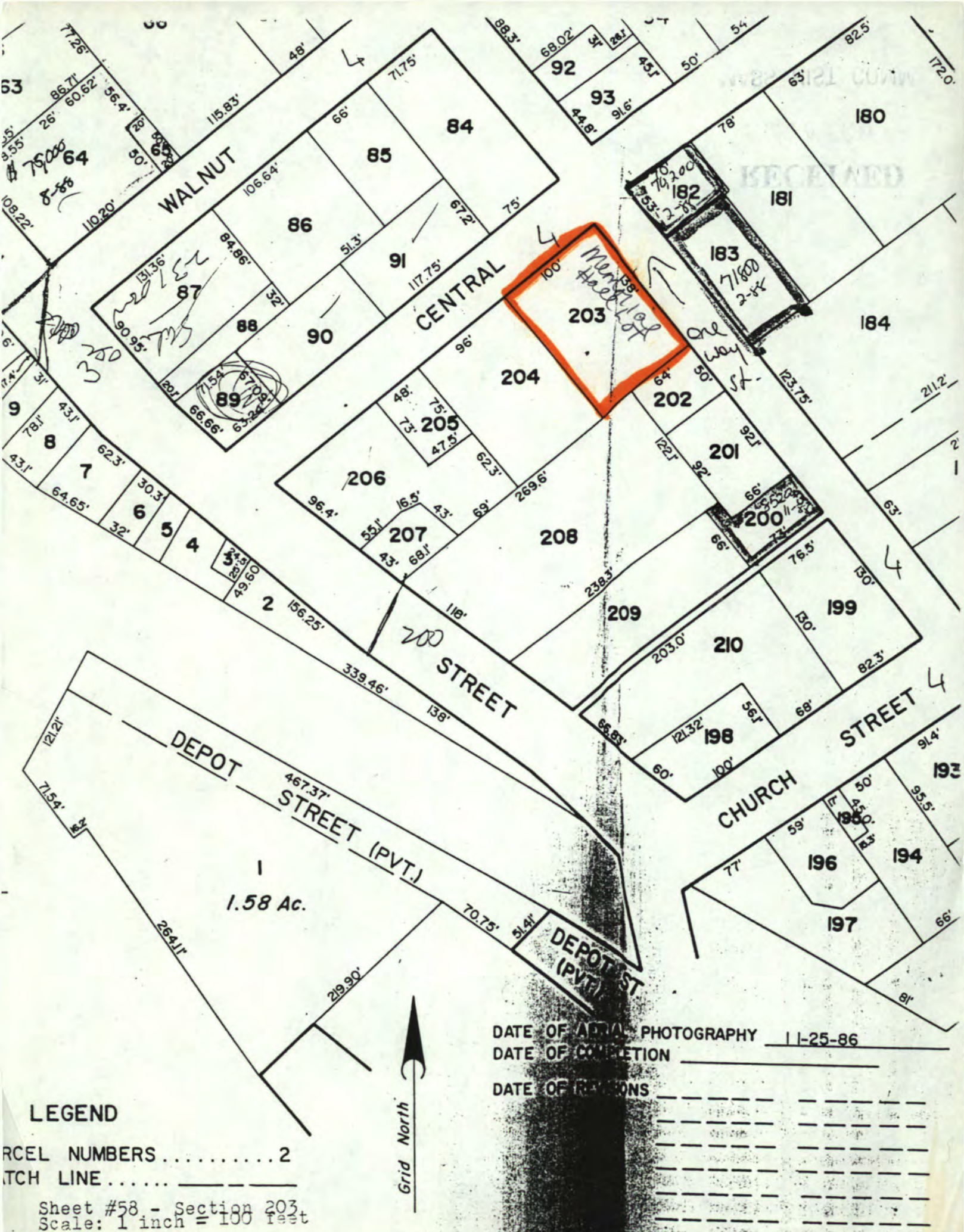
8 x 10"

1. Northwest elevation. View looking east

4 x 6"

2. Front portico. View looking southeast
3. Northeast (side) and southeast (rear) elevations. View looking west
4. Interior, first floor clerestory. View looking west
5. Interior, stairwell with memorial plaque, looking down from second floor. View looking southeast
6. Interior, second floor G.A.R. Hall. View from balcony looking southeast
7. Interior, second floor, stained glass window in G.A.R. Hall. View looking northeast

(end)



RECEIVED

DEC 01 1997

MASS. HIST. COMM

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Palmer Memorial Hall
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Hampden

DATE RECEIVED: 8/02/99 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 8/18/99
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 9/03/99 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/16/99
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 99001082

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 9/3/99 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

ENTERED SEP 3 1999

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

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



①

Palmer Memorial Hall

Hampden County, MA (1029 Central Street, Palmer)

Photographer: Rebecca Shrimpton

April 1999

Description: Northwest (front) elevation. View looking east.

Negative on file with photographer.



②

Palmer Memorial Hall

Hampden County, MA (1029 Central St., Palmer)

Photographer: Rebecca Shrimpton

April 1999

Description: Front portico. View looking southeast.

Negative on file with photographer.



③

Palmer Memorial Hall

Hampden County, MA (1029 Central St., Palmer)

Photographer: Rebecca Shrimpton

April 1999

Description: Northeast (side) and southeast (rear)
elevations. View looking west.

Negative on file with photographer.



④

Palmer Memorial Hall

Hampden County, MA (1029 Central St., Palmer)

Photographer: Rebecca Shrimpton

April 1999

Description: Interior, first floor clerestory.
View looking west.

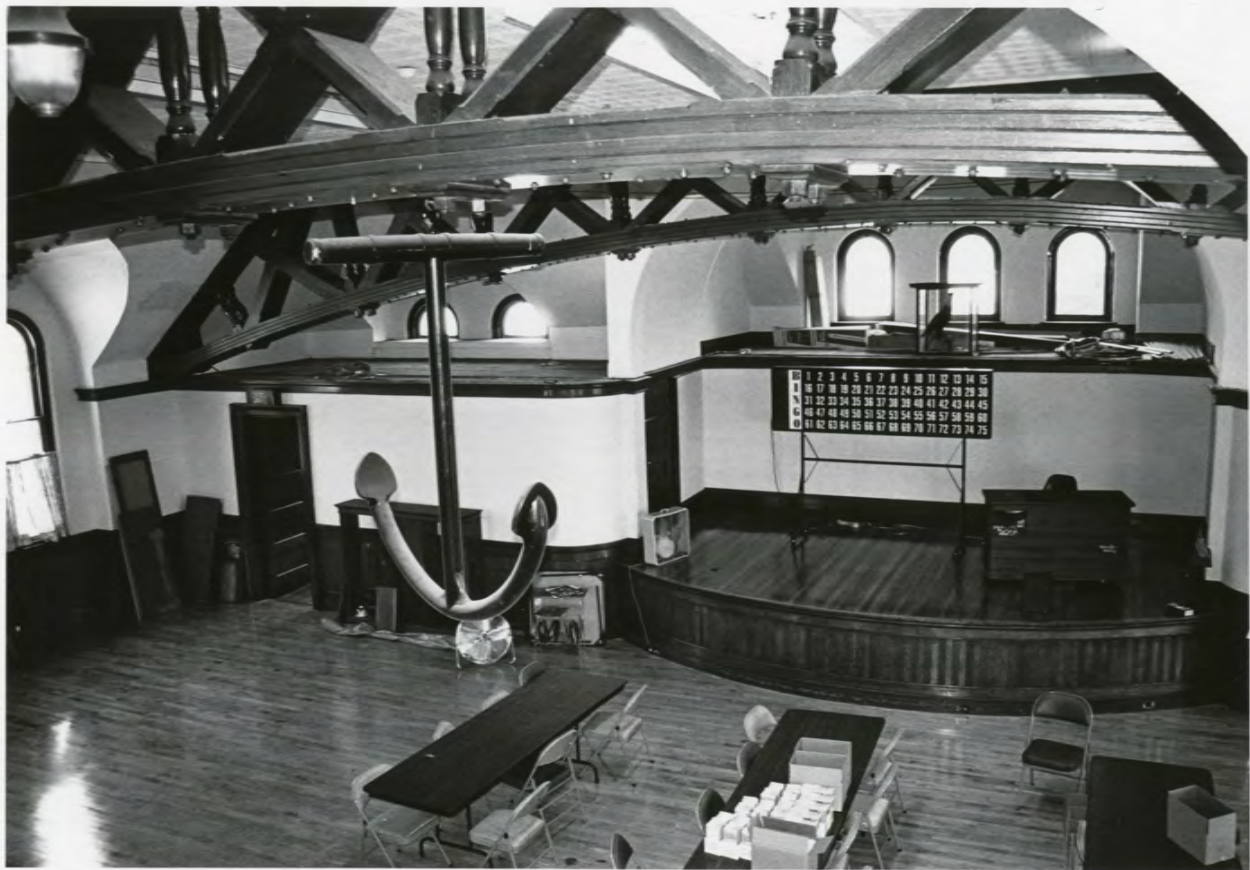
Negative on file with photographer.

⑤

Palmer Memorial Hall
Hampden County, MA (1029 Central St., Palmer)
Photographer: Rebecca Shrimpton
April 1999

Description: Interior, stairwell with memorial plaques.
View pointing down from second floor
looking southeast.

Negative on file with photographer.



(6)

Palmer Memorial Hall

Hampden County, MA (1029 Central St., Palmer)

Photographer: Rebecca Shrimpton

April 1999

Description: Interior, second floor G.A.R. hall.

View from balcony looking southeast.

Negative on file with photographer.



(7)

Palmer Memorial Hall

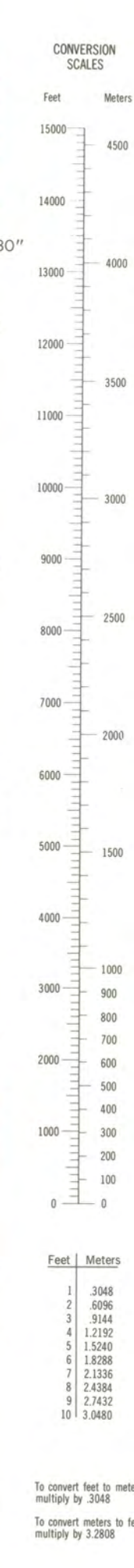
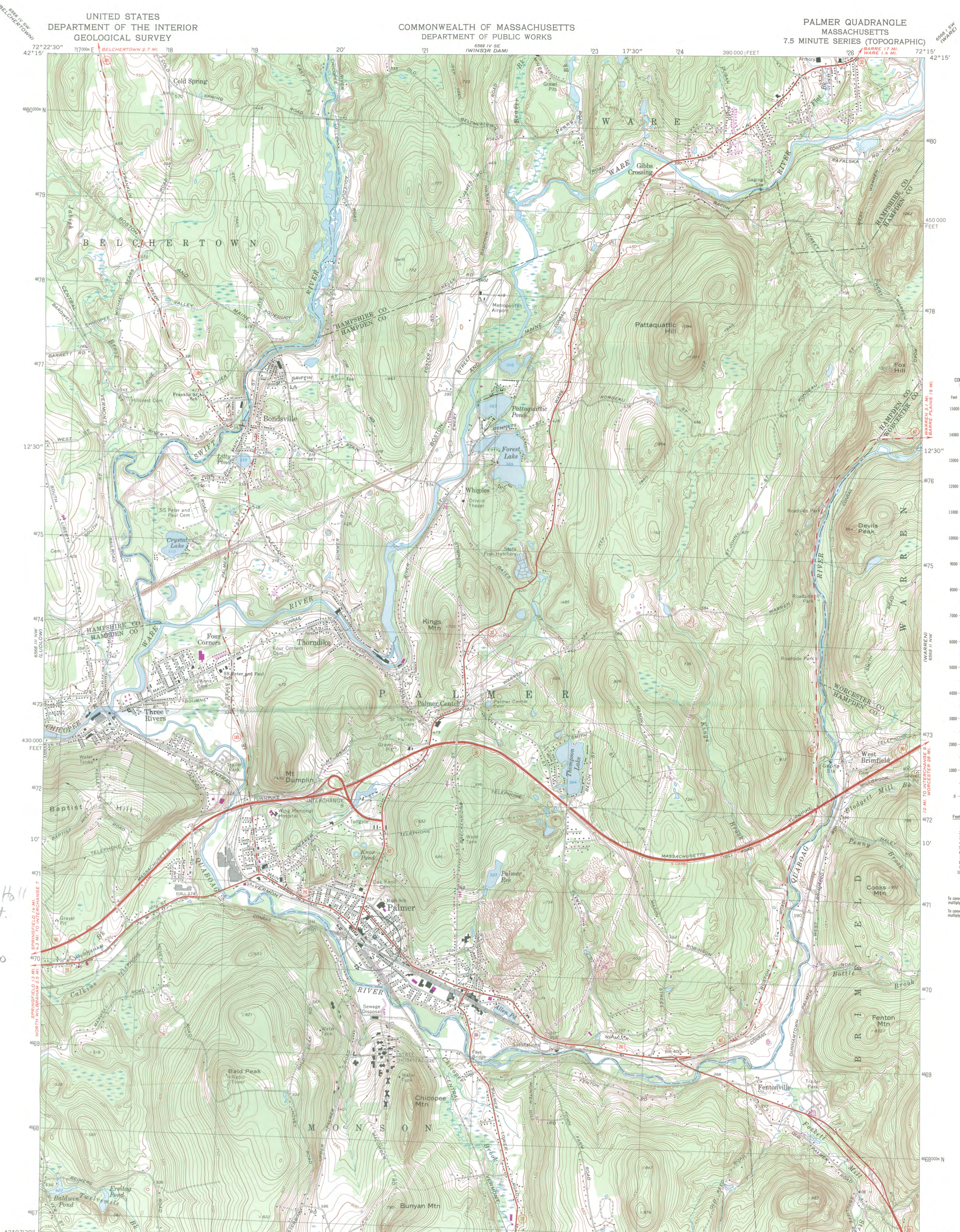
Hampden County, MA (1029 Central St., Palmer)

Photographer: Rebecca Shrimpton

April 1999

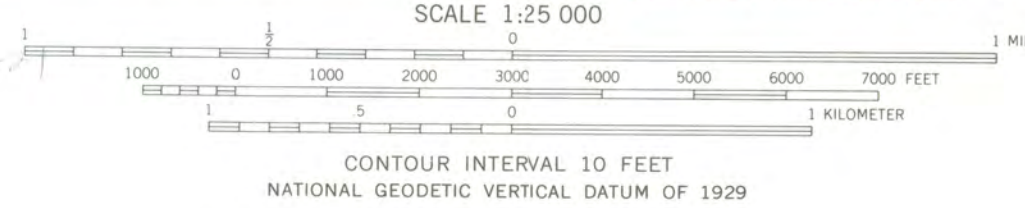
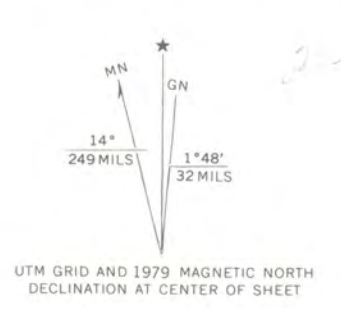
Description: Interior, second floor stained glass windows in G.A.R. hall. View looking northeast.

Negative on file with photographer.



Palmer Memorial Hall
1029 Central St.
Palmer, MA
18 720800 4670390

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey
Topography by planetable surveys 1943-1944. Revised from aerial photographs taken 1967. Field checked 1969
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts coordinate system, mainland zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 18
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked
Revisions shown in purple compiled in cooperation with the State of Massachusetts agencies from aerial photographs taken 1975 and other source data. This information not field checked. Map edited 1979



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Primary highway, all weather, hard surface
Secondary highway, all weather, hard surface
Light-duty road, all weather, improved surface
Unimproved road, fair or dry weather
Interstate Route
U. S. Route
State Route

PALMER, MASS.
N4207.5—W7215/7.5
1969
PHOTOREVISED 1979
AMS 6568 III NE—SERIES V614



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth
Massachusetts Historical Commission

July 28, 1999

Ms. Carol Shull
National Register of Historic Places
Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Mail Stop 2280, Suite 400
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed please find the following nomination form:

Palmer Memorial Hall, 1029 Central Street, Palmer (Hampden Co.), Mass.

The nomination has been voted eligible by the State Review Board and has been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer. The owners of the property were notified of pending State Review Board consideration 30 to 45 days before the meeting and were afforded the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betsy Friedberg".

Betsy Friedberg
National Register Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

enclosure

cc: Michael Strzemienski, Chair, Palmer Board of Selectmen
Sandra Nichols, Chair, Palmer Historical Commission
Rebecca Shrimpton, Preservation Consultant
Michael Marciniak, Palmer Planning Board