

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

For HCRS use only

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

received _____
date entered _____

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

1. Name

historic HENNIKER TOWN HALL

and/or common HENNIKER TOWN HALL, HENNIKER MEETINGHOUSE

2. Location

street & number Depot Hill Road^{Pi.} (Town Road) not for publication

city, town Henniker vicinity of _____ congressional district Second

state New Hampshire code 33 county Merrimack code 013

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Town of Henniker

street & number Town Offices

city, town Henniker vicinity of _____ state New Hampshire

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Merrimack County Registry of Deeds, Merrimack County Courthouse

street & number North Main Street

city, town Concord state New Hampshire

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title NONE has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date _____ federal state county local

depository for survey records _____

city, town _____ state _____

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Original appearance:

The first meetinghouse in Henniker burned in 1780. In 1786 the town voted to build a new meetinghouse, and the frame was raised--having been let out for public bid. In 1787 the frame was enclosed, and the building was first used for public meetings with temporary seats--planks on blocks of wood--until the pew ground was sold and pews erected in 1788. In 1801 it was voted to "underpin" the meetinghouse with "hewn stone," and persons wishing to build horse-sheds near the building were authorized to do so, subject to the selectmen's direction.

The plan of the building followed the typical amalgam of basilica and barn which characterized 18th century New Hampshire meetinghouses: a rectangle oriented east and west, with enclosed porches (actually, secondary entrances and stair towers) at the eastern and western ends. The principal entrance was at the center of the (long) south wall and faced the pulpit, centered on the north wall. Henniker's meetinghouse was a 2-story flank-gabled 7-bay wood-framed and clapboarded structure with 1½-story modified hip roofed 1-bay enclosed porches. All three entrances faced south and were surmounted with a moulded horizontal lintel. Sash were 12/12. Except for a dentilled eave cornice, trim was restrained; it included simple window surrounds, cornerposts, and a water table. Galleries--accessible from the porches--were located on the west, south and east interior walls. The interior appointments included pews, deacons' and elders' seats, special pews for the choir and for Blacks, and an elevated pulpit with a sounding board (which still exists) placed in front of a large multi-paned roundheaded window (which also still exists, stored on the premises). The interior was evidently of high quality, with dentilled cornices and pulpit, and double rows of turned balusters along the tops of the box pews.

Later appearance:

In 1887 the meetinghouse--by then the town hall--was modernized. The pews and pulpit were removed and the galleries extended to create a full second floor. The entrance has moved from the south side to the east; the eastern porch was modified to provide an entrance, ticket booth, and cloakroom at the first floor, and new "U" shaped stair runs were installed in projections from its north and south walls. The western porch was changed to provide selectmen's offices and a kitchen on the first floor, and dressing rooms on the second floor, behind the stage which was built across the western end of the room. The interior retained the 18th century cased pilasters: they were decorated with Queen Anne fan-shaped curved brackets at the second-floor junction of ceiling and pilaster. Some of the 18th century plasterwork may also have survived under a brightly-colored new stencilled decorative scheme. The western porch was expanded, though retaining the hipped part of its original roof configuration; but the eastern porch was changed to a gabled profile on the same axis as the main ridge, with two single-pitch sloping roofs, similarly oriented to create a symmetrical unit, over the slightly stepped-back 1-story stair extensions. A reproduction of the pulpit window was installed below the porch gable and above the entrance doors, and on the interior the original sounding board was relocated to the 2nd floor stairhall, just west of the new window. Small roundheaded 1/1 sash were inserted at the landing-level of the stair extensions on their eastern facade, and a similar sash was placed under the peak of the eastern gable of the town hall. The original 7 bays along the north and south walls became five, consisting of panels linking paired narrow 1/1 sash at the first floor with identical ones above, under a slightly projecting hood-mould; the spaces between the two sets of sash was filled with shingles in a skived-butt pattern. Two stove chimneys were also installed along the west wall of the town hall proper, emerging from the roof approximately 1/3 of the way down from the ridge. The exterior was sheathed in clapboards, with cornerboards but no water table. The projecting box cornices were trimmed with a cyma recta and bedmould; cornice returns were provided at the town hall and eastern porch, but not at the stair extensions. Most likely the 1801 "hewn Stone" underpinnings

-continued-

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1786-87; 1887; 1973-76 **Builder/Architect** N/A

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Summary:

The Henniker Town Hall is significant as one of New Hampshire's less than twenty surviving 18th century meetinghouses (public buildings which served both town and religious functions before the separation of church and state). It is also significant as an example of 18th century town planning; as the oldest remaining public building in Henniker; and as the focus of two successful preservation campaigns—the earlier, in 1887, gave it a new but compatible Queen Anne appearance while expanding its functions as a meeting place, and the later, in 1973-76, reactivated the then-vacant building for daily use as town offices. Thus the Henniker Town Hall (located in the geographic center of the community) has served as a focal point for town government and community affairs for almost 200 years.

Architecture & Government:

The eighteenth-century construction and appearance of the Henniker Town Hall (which remained unchanged for 100 years) is well-documented in photographs, town records, and town historical publications: it can also be extrapolated from intrinsic evidence within the building itself. The town hall retains an unusual roof framing system of kingpost trusses having both primary and secondary top chords; in addition, throughout the building original components (such as the octagonal interior support columns) are still visible. Most remarkably, the original 18th century octagonal pulpit sounding board with its lacy wrought-iron cresting still exists, suspended from what is now the second-floor stairwell ceiling. Directly behind the sounding board is a reproduction pulpit window—a roundheaded multi-paned sash glazed with colored glass and the legend "1787-1887". The original pulpit window sash is stored on the premises, identifiable both by its configuration and by the geometric 18th century muntin profile. These components are rare architectural survivals and can yield information important in understanding popular taste, available building technology, and preferred decorative schemes (including paint color choices) affecting public buildings in late-18th century rural New Hampshire, such information from Henniker would be of particular value because the location, size and style of the meetinghouse was so strongly contested that a committee of three from the neighboring town of Warner was chosen to resolve the controversy.

Controversy continued to envelop the meetinghouse: in 1801—before it was completely finished—a schism arose over selection and payment of the Congregation minister (who was, according to law, chosen by a vote of town meeting and paid by taxes). It was finally voted not to call or to ordain the intended minister; as a result, his partisans withdrew to form the "Calvinistic Society of Henniker" in 1801. Thus church and state were parted in Henniker 18 years before the Toleration Act of 1819 accomplished it throughout New Hampshire. Church services were held by invitation in the public building in 1802-1804, and again between 1827 and 1834 (alternately with the Congregational Church), but after 1801 the Henniker Town Hall ceased to function as a true "meeting house".

The Queen Anne "remodeling" of the Henniker Town Hall is an early example of community commitment to adaptive use of public buildings in New Hampshire. Both functionally and architecturally successful, the changes introduced were sympathetic for their time, and expanded the building's use by providing selectmen's offices and an auditorium (with a complete stage) which could also be used as a dance floor (later, as a gymnasium) and as a

9. Major Bibliographical References

Cogswell, Leander W. History of the Town of Henniker, Merrimack County, New Hampshire.
 (Somersworth, New Hampshire: The New Hampshire Publishing Company, 1973.) (Facsimile
 of 1880 edition.)

Henniker, Town of. "Forget New Hampshire?...the Hills are Home!" (Henniker, New Hampshire:
 Town of Henniker, 1968.)

UTM NOT VERIFIED
 UTM NOT VERIFIED
 APPROX. NOT VERIFIED
 READING NOT VERIFIED

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approx. 4 acres.

Quadrangle name Hillsboro, NH

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UTM References

A	1 9	2 7 0 5 5 0	4 7 8 3 9 7 5	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification -Town Hall is situated on the Town Common, designated in 1975 as the Henniker Historic District, which is bounded by Circle Street and Federal Aid Secondary Route #114 (formerly known as Park Street and as Weare Road). The Town Hall faces Depot Hill Rd., which traverses the common from the middle of the southern side to the north-eastern corner, at the junction of Circle St. and Rte. #114. (See sketch map.)

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

state	N/A	code	county	code
state		code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Victor Kjellman, Selectmen (1975)

organization Town of Henniker date November 24, 1975
 (Revised October 1980)

street & number Town Offices telephone 428-3240 (Town Offices)

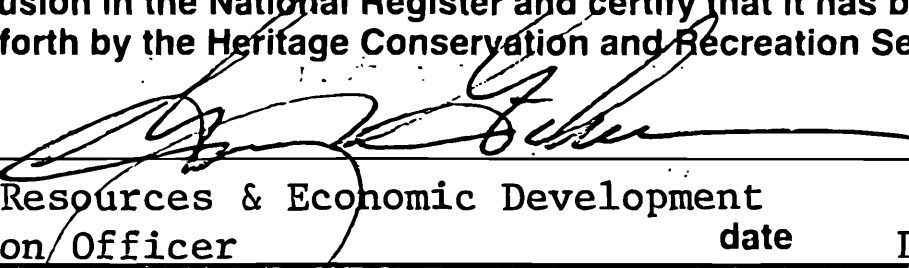
city or town Henniker state New Hampshire 03242

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

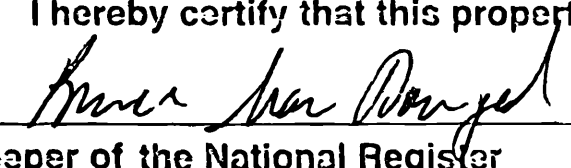
national state local

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 
 Commissioner, Department of Resources & Economic Development
 title NH State Historic Preservation Officer date December 9, 1980

For HCRS use only

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


 for Keeper of the National Register date 2/24/81

Attest: _____ date _____
 Chief of Registration

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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CONTINUATION SHEET SIGNIFICANCE ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

place for public meetings. The Queen Anne elements are intact in the entrance, vestibule/stairwell, and entire second floor; in addition, much of the 1887 stencilled wall decorations still remain in place, covered over by later applications of paint but visible where that paint is peeling or damaged.

The Town Hall was last used for town meeting in 1946. It subsequently served as classrooms for New England College and, later, as a meeting-place for service organizations. After 1971, an inadequate heating system prevented all but incidental use. Thus, by the early 1970's the future of the building was doubtful. After several years of spirited consideration at town meeting, it was voted to establish the Town Hall as a historic building, with the remainder of the "Senter Lot" bound by Circle Street and Route 114 as a historic district; and, as a Bicentennial project, to rehabilitate the first floor and incorporate facilities for district court, selectmen's and town clerk's offices, social service offices, meeting and conference rooms. The second floor was to be left in its existing condition. The project was completed in 1976; as a special Bicentennial observance, a group of local volunteers painted on the west wall of the first floor vestibule and stairwell a mural incorporating places of historical and natural significance in the town of Henniker. Thus, on entering the town hall, one is immediately surrounded by a visual record of the town's life over two-plus centuries. So too does the architectural evolution of the town hall serve as a symbol of the town's continuity and identity.

Community planning:

The Masonian proprietors who laid out the town of Henniker set aside a "right", or designated lot, of 100 acres--known as the Senter (Center) Lot--for support of the ministry. The name, "Senter Lot," implies that its location in the exact center of the township was deliberate. Of its 100 acres, ten were reserved for a common, training field, burying ground, and other public uses including a site for a meetinghouse. In 1794, portions of the Senter Lot were sold off, reserving six acres for the common and meeting house. The four-acre common (incorporating the town hall site) and two burying grounds (not included in this nomination) still remain in public ownership and use.

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CONTINUATION SHEET DESCRIPTION ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

(foundations) were left intact (as much of the original clapboards, etc., also appear to have been). On the interior, finishes were painted plaster with oak woodwork (some areas possibly walnut) and pine(?) matchboard wainscot.

Present appearance:

The present exterior appearance of the Henniker Town Hall is almost identical to its appearance after the 1887 remodeling. The 6-panel paired entrance doors and 6-light transom are of a later date, but the shallow projected hoodmould with a cyma recta profile appears to be 1887 work. Above the entrance is an attached wooden panel sign with "Henniker Community Center" in Old English letters. A wooden plaque identifying the building as the Henniker Town Hall is mounted on the north side of the doors. On the western (rear) elevation of the building 2/2 fenestration occurs in an irregular pattern. There is one first-floor exit from the western porch on the south side and another on the west, both using 6-panel doors.

The entrance vestibule, stairhall, and second floor of the town hall all reflect their 1887 appearance. The only change is a pair of new 6-panel swinging doors which lead from the vestibule into the town offices, and a remarkable mural painted by local volunteers as a Bicentennial project. The mural, on the west wall of the first floor vestibule and stairwell, includes significant historical and natural places in Henniker from its founding to the present, and is a vivid reminder of the town's historical, architectural and archaeological resources.

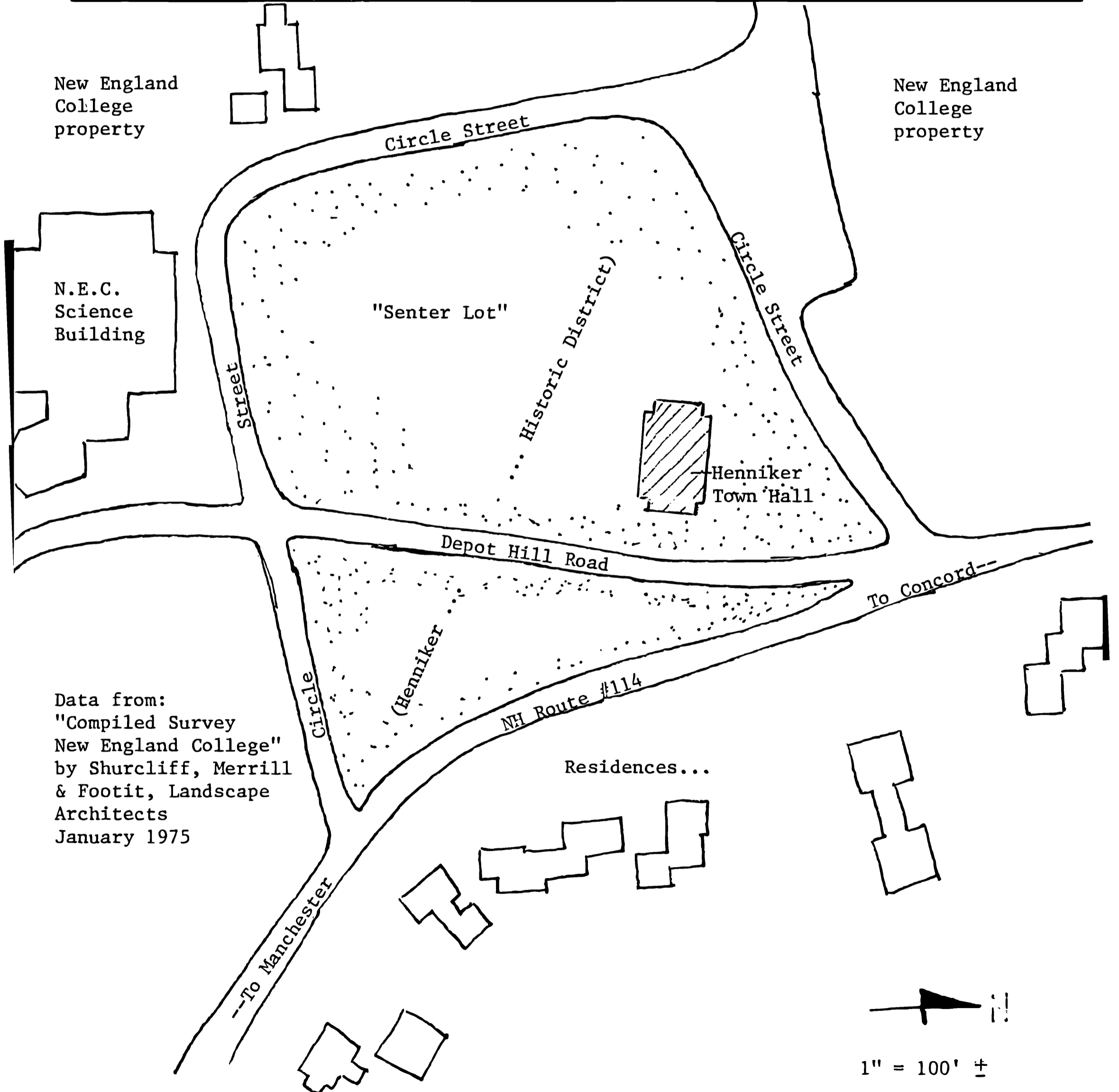
The remainder of the interior of the first floor has been divided into offices and meeting rooms with removable drywall partitions, planned so that the building will continue to be adaptable to any new uses which might be desired in the future.

The Town Common ("Senter Lot") surrounding the Henniker Town Hall is an open grassy "plain", punctuated by scattered granite boulders (glacial erratics) and granite ledge outcroppings, and graced by deciduous and coniferous shade trees. Across from the town hall, on the portion of the common east of Depot Hill Road, is a free standing granite and bronze war memorial tablet surrounded by evergreen shrubs, lighted by a small carriage-type post lamp.

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Henniker Town Hall and Henniker Historic District, New Hampshire.
CONTINUATION SHEET SKETCH MAP ITEM NUMBER PAGE



Data from:
"Compiled Survey
New England College"
by Shurcliff, Merrill
& Footit, Landscape
Architects
January 1975