

JUL 19 1982

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

For HCRS use only

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

received SEP 28 1982

date entered

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

1. Name

historic ~~Laconia High School, Academy Street School~~

and/or common Laconia District Court ~~(preferred)~~

2. Location

street & number Academy Square _____ not for publication

city, town Laconia _____ vicinity of _____ congressional district 1st

state New Hampshire code 33 county Belknap code 001

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name City of Laconia

street & number Municipal Building, 45 Beacon Street, East

city, town Laconia _____ vicinity of _____ state New Hampshire

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Belknap County Courthouse
Belknap County Registry of Deeds (Book 709, Page 377)

street & number 64 Court Street

city, town Laconia _____ state New Hampshire

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title South End Historic Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1982 _____ federal _____ state _____ county local

depository for survey records City of Laconia, Planning Department, Municipal Department

city, town Laconia _____ state New Hampshire

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Laconia District Court was built as a school on a large rectangular lot surrounded by streets. It was constructed of brick laid in common bond (flemish variation) on a granite foundation. The building has four floors--a high basement, two classroom floors and another full floor under its mansard roof, which is crowned by a tall central belfry. The plan is basically a rectangle, seven bays wide and six bays deep, but a three bay central pavilion projects one bay from its main (west) facade, and one story porches shelter the entrances on the west and east.

The exterior is symmetrical but complex. (Here we will describe its features from the base up, and then consider each facade.) The basement is lit by large windows and is marked on the exterior by continuous granite courses at ground level and above the windows. The two classroom floors are lit by unusually tall windows with two sliding sash below a fixed sash containing one large pane surrounded by eighteen small panes. These windows have smooth granite lintels and sills. On the main block, the lintels of both floors are incorporated into an ornamental band. (The lintels are connected by a brick band consisting of two sawtooth courses with projecting courses above and below them.) The wall is capped by a brick cornice composed of several projecting courses and a row of dentils. The mansard roof has steep lower slopes of horizontal slate shingles with a simple curb. (The upper slopes, once covered with copper but now shingled, are not visible from the ground.) Large pedimented dormers punctuate the lower slopes. Each has double windows with upper sash similar to those of the classroom windows--a large pane surrounded by sixteen smaller panes. In the center of the roof, a tall belfry rises from a base covered with horizontal slate shingles. Square in plan, the wooden belfry, has on each side double louvers (with scallop edged slats) topped by carved fan like ornaments and separated by fluted boards. Like the brick cornices below, the belfry's wooden cornice features a row of dentils. The belfry's steep pyramidal roof is covered with fishscale slate shingles of different colors arranged in an ornamental diamond pattern and is crowned by a copper weathervane.

The main facade faces west towards Academy Street. Its projecting central pavilion is naturally more elaborate than the rest of the exterior. The lower lintel band is now a solid granite course instead of brick and granite. The second story windows are here found in recessed panels. But, most of the ornament is concentrated in the central bay (which will again be described from the base up.) Wide granite steps lead up to a one story entryway. Its brick arch, with granite imposts and a granite keystone labeled "1886" in raised numbers, is framed by brick corner pilasters with granite capitols supporting a granite lintel labeled "LACONIA HIGH SCHOOL" in raised letters. The entryway has a brick cornice similar to the main cornice and an arched window on each side. Its interior has wooden steps and floors with walls and ceiling of beaded boarding. The second story recessed panel contains two windows. Resting on their long granite lintels is a brick arch with granite keystone, filled with floral terra cotta tiles. The central bay is topped by a brick pediment featuring a round window framed in special ornamental bricks.

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Laconia District Court (cont.)

The side facades (north and south) are dominated by tall projecting chimnies which are paneled above the second story lintel band and capped by massive corbeled crowns. On each side of the chimnies are three window bays and a dormer. The rear (east) facade has a central one-story entryway that is similar to, although simpler than, the main entryway. Its features include a brick cornice, a brick arch with granite imposts and keystone, arched side windows, granite steps and a beaded bordered interior. Directly above the entryway are a double window in the second story and one of the three dormers found on the rear roof.

The exterior has seen few alterations. The new storm windows and outside lights are unobtrusive. More obvious are the modern glass doors in the entryways and the concrete wheelchair ramp added to the rear to provide access for the handicapped. These changes are relatively minor and detract little from the appearance of the building.

The interiors, always less significant than the exterior, have been more extensively altered. The basement is strictly utilitarian, with concrete floors, brick and stone walls. The third floor, unfinished when the school opened, was later sheathed with beaded boarding and used for gym classes. It now houses mechanical equipment. The two classroom floors are divided by central hallways connecting the front and rear entry and stair halls. On each side of the hallways were large classrooms. The first floor classrooms have now been altered and rearranged to provide a courtroom and offices for the Laconia District Court. (If the funds can be obtained, the second floor classrooms will also be rebuilt to provide another courtroom and more office space.) During the alterations, however, care was taken to preserve the interior trim and hardware. These elements--the windows, doors and their casings, the high wainscoating in the halls, the rails, turned balusters, and elaborate newel posts of the stairs--are well crafted of rock maple. Although the requirements of a courthouse are quite different from those of a school, the alteration was a sympathetic one, retaining many interesting features, if not all the spaces of the original building.

The lot is a large one in an urban neighborhood. Parking spaces have been limited to the sides and the rear of the building, leaving the large tree-shaded lawn as a pleasant open space.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input 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 1886-1887 **Builder/Architect** Frederick N. Footman, Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Laconia District Court is a fine example of Victorian school architecture and of the late Second Empire style. Although built under a tight budget, it exemplifies the monumentality and complexity expected in late nineteenth century public buildings.

In 1886, the Laconia High School was housed in the old Gilford Academy, a building that was overcrowded and obsolete by current standards. As the lease for the Academy and its lot was soon to expire, the village district school board decided that it was time to act, and placed in the warrant for the March 26 district meeting an article--"To see what action the district will take in relation to a new building for the use of the High and Grammar Schools..."¹ The meeting appointed a committee to study the question and adjourned until April 9. The study committee then reported that it had negotiated a new 99-year lease with the trustees of the Academy and recommended the construction of a new school on the Academy lot. The report was generally approved by the meeting, which instructed the committee to obtain more detailed plans within three weeks. On April 30, the committee presented preliminary plans and an estimate for a brick school building prepared by architect Edward Dow of Concord. "After a thorough discussion of the plan, it was voted to build substantially on the model proposed by the committee at an expense not to exceed \$21,000."² A building committee was elected and the district meeting finally adjourned.

In June, the old Academy was placed on rollers and moved a short distance to clear the site. By June 25, the building committee had "engaged as an architect Mr. F. N. Footman of Boston".³ The foundation was completed in July. But further work was held up when the committee realized that the appropriation was not sufficient to build the school according to plan and to meet an unexpected expense, a new sewer drain to the Winnepesaukee River. On August 9, a special district meeting appropriated an additional \$5,000. Contracts were then made for the exterior of the building which was "well nigh completed"⁴ in late November. The contracts for the interior were let in the spring. And the building was finished shortly before the opening of the fall school term on September 5, 1887.

¹Laconia Democrat, March 12, 1886.
²Laconia Democrat, May 7, 1886.
³Laconia Democrat, June 25, 1886.
⁴Laconia Democrat, November 26, 1886.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Laconia Democrat, March 12, 19 & 26, April 2, 9, 16 & 30, May 7, June 4 & 25, July 23 & 30, August 6, 13 & 20, September 3 & 24, November 26, 1886; March 18, April 1, May 6, June 17, July 1 & 8, August 5 & 19, September 2 & 16, 1887 (Particularly important is the long article "The New High School Building" published September 2, 1887.) (See attached sheet.)

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property .67 acre

Quadrangle name Winnipesaukee, N.H.

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UMT References

A

1	9	3	0	0	4	0	0	4	8	2	1	7	2	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 nominated property is bounded by Academy Street on the west and by Academy Square on the north, east and south. It includes the Laconia District Court and its grounds. (Laconia Tax Maps - Plat 141, Street 2, Lot 6)

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

state	n/a	code	county	code
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state	n/a	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title David L. Ruell

organization Lakes Region Planning Commission date June 13, 1982

street & number Main Street telephone 279-8171

city or town Meredith state New Hampshire

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, Dept. of Resources & Economic Development
 title NH State Historic Preservation Officer date September 23, 1982

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

 date 11/5/82
 Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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Laconia District Court (cont.)

When completed, the school housed the Laconia High School and all the grammar schools of the village district. It served as the High School until June of 1922, and then, as an elementary school, the Academy Street School, until June of 1975. In 1977, the City of Laconia received a large federal grant to rehabilitate the building for use by the Laconia District Court. The alterations and renovations were designed by architect Douglass G. Prescott, assisted by David McLaren Hart, historic preservation architect. The Laconia District Court held its first session in the building on December 1, 1978, and has occupied the structure ever since.

The designer, Frederick N. Footman, was born in Great Falls (now Somersworth), New Hampshire in 1848. He is listed as an architect in the Boston Directory from 1874 to 1898 (save for three years, 1893-1895, when he appears as a building contractor.) After he died of cancer in May of 1898, the Somersworth paper described him as a "very successful" architect. "During very recent years, he had acquired a large patronage and at the time of his death, his office was crowded with business."⁵ But, like so many other American architectural history, Footman has yet to receive any scholarly attention. We cannot, therefore, discuss his Laconia School in the context of his career.

The Laconia High School was not an unusual school for its period in New Hampshire. The two-story brick building with a central pavilion is a type not uncommon among the academies of the mid 19th century. The building's style can best be described as late Second Empire. It shares with earlier schools of the style, such as the Ash Street School in Manchester (1874) and the Ashland Elementary School (1878), a mansard roof with dormers, a projecting pavilion, a bell tower, and fine brickwork. But, we can also see some minor influences of other styles. The Queen Anne, for example, can be detected in some of the ornament, such as the floral terra cotta tiles. More significant, perhaps, are the classical elements in the central pavilion--the arches and pilasters beneath a pediment--that are suggestive of the Classical revivals that will become so important in the next decade. But, the Laconia High School, while up to date and modern, was not an innovative building. It is important as a good example of the schools of the time. The school is well designed and well built, an attractive reminder of a period when public buildings were expected to be expressions of civic pride, as well as functional buildings. The skill and taste of the architect can still be seen on the exterior of the building, which survives virtually unaltered. The classrooms that have been altered, while large and pleasant, were never very significant architecturally. Their most important element, the woodwork, has been carefully preserved. So, while the building could no longer function as a school, it is nevertheless a fine example of the better school architecture of late 19th century New Hampshire.

⁵"Death of F.N. Footman", Somersworth Free Press, May 13, 1898.

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9. Major Bibliographical References (cont.)

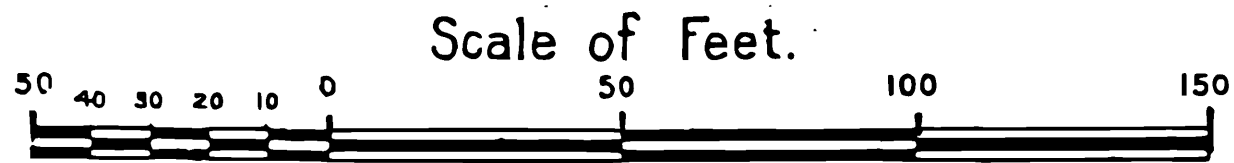
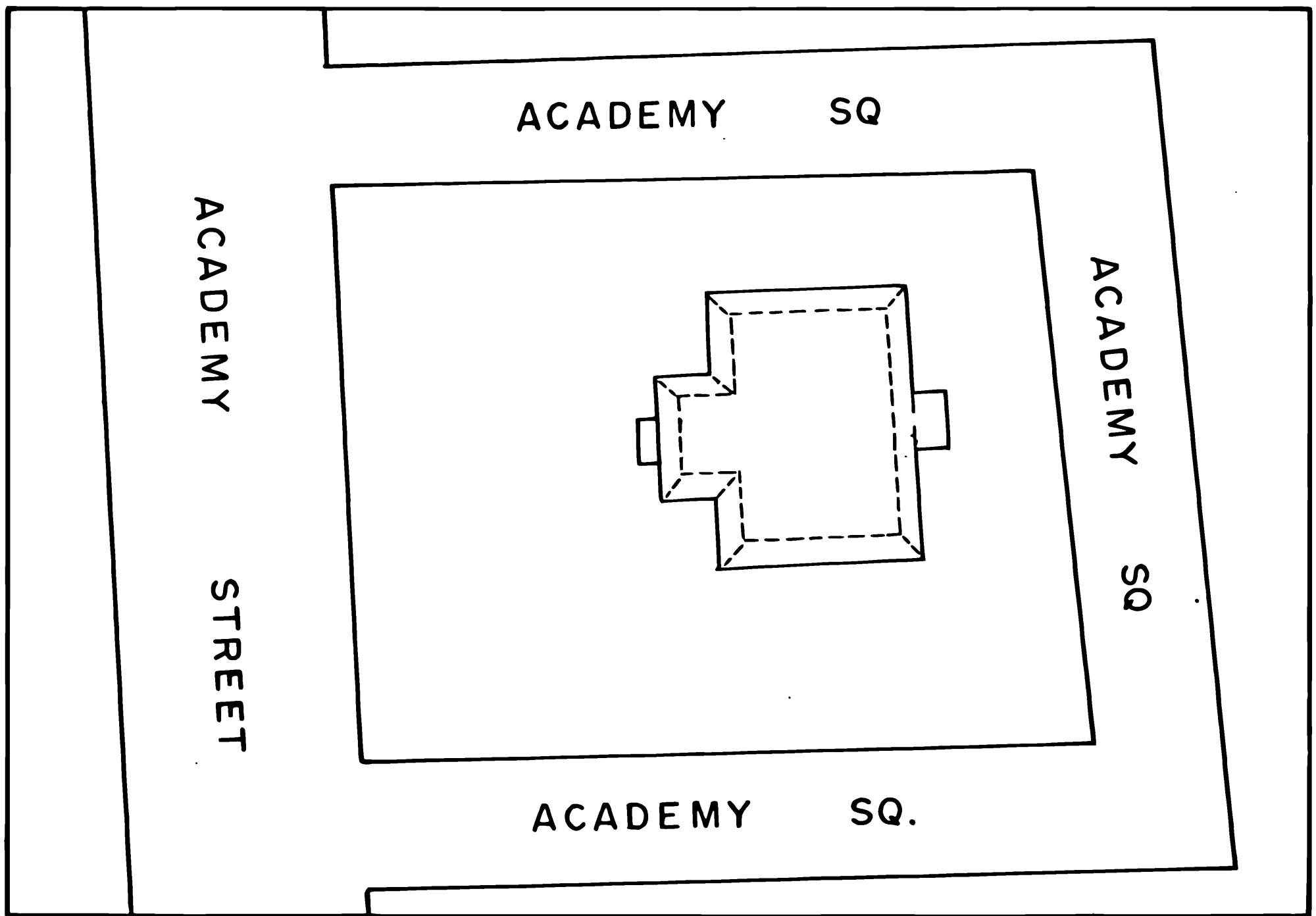
"Death of F. N. Footman", Somersworth Free Press, May 13, 1898.

Prescott, Douglas G. and David McLaren Hart, Specifications for Alterations and Renovations at the Academy Street School Building for Laconia District Court, City of Laconia, N.H., October 31, 1977.

"School Report", Laconia Town Report, Laconia, N.H., 1886, 1888 & 1887.

LACONIA DISTRICT COURT

Laconia, N.H.



PREPARED BY
LAKES REGION PLANNING COMMISSION
MEREDITH, NEW HAMPSHIRE