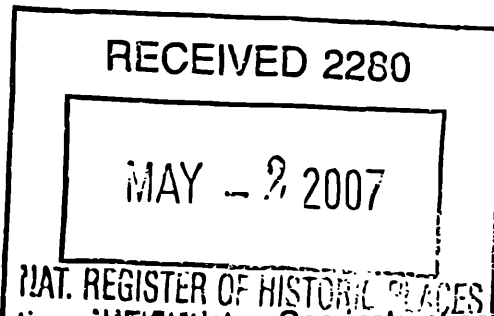


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM



520

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 Wakefield Town Hall and Opera House

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 2 High Street N/A  not for publication

city or town Wakefield N/A  vicinity

state New Hampshire code NH county Carroll code 003 zip code 03872

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

James McConaha 4/30/07  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

New Hampshire State Historic Preservation Officer, Division of Historical Resources  
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 the 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  See continuation sheet.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

Edson H. Beall 6-12-07  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Wakefield Town Hall and Opera House  
Name of Property

Carroll, New Hampshire  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- buildings
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include any previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	total

**Name of related multiple property listings**  
(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**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

- Government/City Hall
- Government/Government Office
- Recreation and Culture/Auditorium
- Government/Correctional Facility
- Commerce/Trade/Speciality Store

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

- Government/City Hall
- Recreation and Culture/Auditorium

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Romanesque

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation granite and brick  
walls brick  
roof asphalt  
other granite

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

SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

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Section number 7 Page 1

Wakefield Town Hall and Opera House  
Carroll County, NH

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**Description**

The Wakefield Town Hall and Opera House is a large, brick Romanesque-style building constructed in 1895 on the northeast corner of High and Meadow (Route 109) streets in the center of the village of Sanbornville. The building expresses its multiple functions in its massing, fenestration patterns, and ornament. This large rectangular structure with a tall square tower in the southwest corner has regular fenestration for the first-floor offices and round-headed windows and large gabled dormers for the second-floor auditorium. The interior plan is fairly legible on the exterior by the fenestration pattern.

The Wakefield Town Hall and Opera House is sited on a small, 0.23-acre, nearly rectangular lot that slopes from west to east. The abutting parcel to the east, a paved asphalt parking lot, now provides parking for city hall visitors. The building faces west towards the former J. W. Garvin Store and the railroad beyond. Meadow Street (Route 109) is a primary east-west roadway through Wakefield. The location of the town hall is at the commercial and civic center of the village in close proximity to the public library, a former school, the railroad tracks, the police station, and a small number of commercial establishments. Small residential neighborhoods are located to the north along High Street and other nearby streets. The north end of Lovell Lake is nearby to the south, developed with residential structures. The 1925 Colonial Revival-styled Gafney Library is immediately adjacent to the town hall on the north. A sensitively designed two-story connector, built in 1999, houses an elevator, stairs, and restroom and provides barrier-free access to both structures.

The Wakefield Town Hall and Opera House is a large, rectangular, two-story hip-roofed brick building with an above grade basement due to the steep grade change on the lot. The three-bay wide, four-room deep building measures 46 feet x 78 feet. Large gabled dormers with louvered lunettes in the gable end are centered on the north, west, and south elevations. The 75-foot tall square pyramid-roofed stair, bell, and clock tower dominates the façade, projecting slightly from the southwest corner, largely inset within the main block of the building. A steeply pitched wall gable punctuates each elevation of the tower, further emphasizing its height. On the main block, brick chimneys pierce the roof immediately west of the south gabled dormer and to the east of the north dormer. A common bond with every eighth course composed of alternating headers and stretchers is used on all elevations above the basement level; at the basement level the more characteristic common bond with all headers in every eighth course is used. Asphalt shingles cover the roof of the main block and dormers. The bell tower, however, retains its original slate roof such as was originally used on the main block and dormers. The dormer side walls are shingle clad. Polychromatic exterior finish in the form of contrasting granite or textured brick window trim (lintels, sills, imposts) in various places and decorative brick belt courses provide visual variation on the wall surfaces. All semi-circular arched openings spring from granite imposts.

All the elevations are largely symmetrical, with the façade treatment being the most varied. On the façade a deep gable-roofed entry porch, with floral and vine decoration in the gable, shields the recessed center entries. Polished granite Corinthian columns set on high brick plinths support the porch. The porch screens the large

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Section number 7 Page 2 Wakefield Town Hall and Opera House  
Carroll County, NH

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semi-circular archway to the two entries in the paneled recess. The left door provides direct access into the northwest room; the centered double-leaf door leads to the center hall and stair tower. Each doorway has transom lights; all doors are two paneled with glazing in the upper half. To the left of the entry a large inset window with a decorative brick archivolt and granite imposts echoes the semi-circular entry. The window features a semi-circular window with tracery above a tripartite window. This window lit the space that was used as a store. At the second floor level a triple window with 1/1 replacement sash is centered above the entry porch, illuminating the auditorium lobby; a double 1/1 replacement sash window is in the first bay, above the semi-circular window. The large centered gabled dormer has a triple 1/1 sash window.

The west and south tower elevations have a pair of shallow blind arches with tall narrow 1/1 sash set in each, illuminating the interior stair. A granite tablet inscribed "Town Hall 1895" is set on the tower's west elevation level with the second-story lintels on the main block. The tower has an additional two stages above the fenestration: a belfry with openings and clock faces above on all four elevations. Each opening and clock face is set in a slightly raised section with a corbel course at the base and decorative brick course between the two stages. Three waist-high iron railings span each opening at the bell stage. A metal finial caps the pyramidal slate roof.

The south, east, and north elevations of the main block feature varied fenestration and decorative treatment at each story. On the south elevation at the basement level are four equally spaced segmental-arched windows with 6/1 sash. A segmental-arched door opening with replacement elements to the west of the most easterly window provides access to the basement. Window placement on the first and second stories is identical, related to the interior plan on the first floor, with two windows for each room, spaced differently for each. Splayed brick lintels and granite sills frame the first-story 2/1 original sash. 1/1 replacement sash topped with semi-circular lights illuminate the second story. The gabled dormers on the north and south elevations have two pairs of windows that provide additional light at the upper story of the auditorium. The three-bay east elevation has three nearly equally spaced windows at the basement and second stories. At the first story this pattern varies only in that the center bay is an entry with an enclosed wood stair that descends along the east elevation. The basement and first-story decorative treatment matches that on the south elevation. At the second story, however, no semi-circular lights are used. A sensitively designed 1999 connector is centered on the north elevation, obscuring some of the original fenestration that consisted of three symmetrically placed windows on either side of entries at the first and second stories. The connector obscures the three middle openings on the first floor and the fourth and fifth openings on the second floor.

Decorative wall trim is consistent on the south, east, and north elevations. A belt course of two rows of projecting bricks delineate the basement level with each course integrated into the top and bottom of each segmental-arched opening. A more intricately detailed stringcourse divides the first and second stories. Paired brackets under the eaves and a decorative brick frieze are used on the main block and tower.

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The front center entry leads to a full-depth 6'-wide center hall and to the stairs in the tower. Six rooms are located to the north of the hall (four offices and two bathrooms) and three to the south, all offices aligned linearly. The original plan featured three main rooms on the north side of the hall—a store, and a banquet room with an adjoining kitchen. Mid-twentieth-century changes converted the front room to an office, subdivided the banquet room into two town offices, altered the kitchen into an office, and in 1999, reduced the front room to accommodate a hall leading to the new connector. The rooms on the south side of the hall (now tax collector, town clerk, town manager offices, respectively) remain largely unaltered. Two bank vaults separate the middle and east rooms, originally a bank and town office, respectively. At the east end of the hall an enclosed straight-run stair leads to the second floor.

The open-well stairs in the tower ascend to the auditorium lobby. The former cloak room (now an office) and ticket window are along the north side of the lobby. Double-leaf doors on the east wall of the lobby lead to the auditorium. The two-story auditorium features a traditional proscenium stage and stage-house at the east end. Behind the stage is a storage room in the northeast corner and in the southeast corner stairs to the attic storage space above the stage and stairs to a hall and stairs to the first floor. A stepped balcony at the west end can be accessed either from the stair tower or from the auditorium floor by stairs added after 1959 along the north wall, most likely for fire code purposes. A storage room has been added under the balcony stairs, adjacent to the original cloak room.

Interior access to the basement is through a door in the stair tower to the east of the stairs. The basement retains the original jail comprised of an outer room and two cells. Much of the basement space has been used as storage and for utilities including the two boilers. A lavatory is located adjacent to the stairs.

Decorative trim, characteristic of the late nineteenth century, is nearly uniform throughout the interior of the building. The original millwork is Michigan ash, originally finished in natural tones, but now painted. That in the southeast room, however, recently has been restored to its original light finish. Door and window architraves feature symmetrical moldings and corner blocks with circular central bosses. Doors are five-panel and many have transom windows. A molded chair rail caps the beaded board wainscoting with plaster above. The same turned balusters are used on the tower stairs and on the auditorium balcony railing. In the center of the auditorium a replacement chandelier is suspended from a large plaster medallion. The first floor southeast office retains some original built-in features in addition to the bank vault. On the west wall is a large cabinet with shelves above and cabinets below. The east wall has built-in drawers with pull-handles. The floors are maple.

The major items installed in the town hall were mostly supplied by Boston manufacturers. The striking clock, manufactured by E. Howard Watch & Clock Co. of Boston with four dials (six feet in diameter) cost \$360 to purchase and install. The bell cast by Blake Bell Co. of Boston cost \$370. Both of these items were financed

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through subscription by local residents (MacRury 1987: 246-47, 257). E. C. Morris Safe Co. made the bank vault doors and W. C. Hall manufactured the jail cell locks.

**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 a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years 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**

**Bibliography**

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 36) 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)

Politics/Government (A)

Architecture (C)

**Period of Significance**

1895-1957 (A)

1895 (C)

**Significant Dates**

1895

**Significant Person**

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Alvah Thurston Ramsdell

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of Repository

# \_\_\_\_\_

Wakefield Town Hall and Opera House  
Name of Property

Carroll, New Hampshire  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property 0.23 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	9	3	3	5	9	8	5	4	8	2	4	1	2	4
	Zone		Easting					Northing							
2															

3															
	Zone		Easting					Northing							
4															

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 Laura B. Driemeyer/Chief Historian

organization Preservation Company date 22 March 2007

street & number 5 Hobbs Road telephone 603-778-1799

city or town Kensington state NH zip code 03833

**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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Town of Wakefield

street & number 2 High Street telephone 603-522-6205

city or town Sanbornville state NH zip code 03872

**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 amend 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 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 Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.



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Carroll County, NH

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**Statement of Significance**

The Wakefield Town Hall and Opera House was constructed in 1895 to serve as the primary civic and cultural meeting place for the town of Wakefield, New Hampshire. The large brick Romanesque-styled building was prominently sited at the intersection of High and Meadow (Route 109) streets in the village of Sanbornville, and the choice of brick instead of wood, the ubiquitous material for the region, signaled that Sanbornville had become the civic, cultural, and commercial center of Wakefield. Sanbornville developed largely after 1871, due to the visionary efforts of John W. Sanborn, a local entrepreneur, and construction of the new town hall corresponded with the renaming of the village from Wolfeboro Junction to Sanbornville, in his honor. The Wakefield Town Hall and Opera House was designed by the prolific New Hampshire architect Alvah T. Ramsdell (1852-1928), noted especially for the design of large public buildings, especially schools and town halls.

The Wakefield Town Hall and Opera House is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for significance in Politics/Government for the period 1895, its date of construction, to 1957, the National Register fifty-year cut-off. It is also eligible for Architecture under Criterion C for the year 1895, its date of construction. The building retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association for the periods of significance. This imposing brick Romanesque building has been the seat of town government since its construction. The long-time use of some of the spaces for commercial and civic uses distinguishes this structure from the many other town halls constructed by larger New Hampshire towns in the late nineteenth century. At this time the entire first floor is devoted to town business while the auditorium continues to accommodate cultural events and town meetings.

**Politics/Government**

The Wakefield Town Hall and Opera House is historically significant as its construction and subsequent use defined the village of Sanbornville as the civic, cultural, and commercial center for the town of Wakefield. From its inception the building was meant to be the seat of town government and signal the development of the village of Sanbornville as the town center. Its large size also allowed it to incorporate cultural and commercial uses. The auditorium, known as the Opera House, was the site of numerous theatrical and musical performances and later film showings. Several first-floor spaces housed different commercial establishments and the post office during the periods of significance. The Wakefield Town Hall and Opera House is significant under Criterion A as the seat of town government since its construction and as the definer of the village of Sanbornville as the town center in Wakefield.

The town of Wakefield is located in southeastern Carroll County along the Maine border. First settled during the second half of the eighteenth-century, the town was incorporated in 1774 by Governor John Wentworth. The original town center was located at Wakefield Corner, just to the north of Sanbornville, and included the town's civic, educational, and cultural institutions and commercial establishments--the schoolhouse, church,

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post, office, library, town house, and several stores. A group of large farmhouses clustered along the top of the ridge also. At the same time several small mill villages developed around the outlets of the numerous small lakes and ponds scattered around the 44.8 square-mile town including present day Sanbornville. The present center of Sanbornville, just west of the northwest end of Lovells Pond (now Lovell Lake) appears on a ca. 1800 map at the intersection of roads from the southeast along the lower edge of the lake running north, with a road to the northeast toward Effingham to the west across the town line. Corn and saw mills were located on the brook below the outlet of Lovells Pond near its confluence with the west branch of the Salmon Falls River, just west of the present village center (Monroe and Federer 1995).

The emergence of Sanbornville as the town's center village began with the efforts of John W. Sanborn to bring the Portsmouth, Great Falls, and Conway Railroad through the area in 1871. Sanborn was instrumental in bringing the railroad through Wakefield and establishing the village that now bears his name, as the center of railroad, commercial, and civic activity. Before that time the area contained fewer than ten houses and was defined only by the intersection of north-south and east-west roads. In 1854 the railroad was built to the village of Union in the southern part of the town, at that time the most active industrial center in Wakefield. In 1871, however, the railroad was extended from Union to Ossipee, passing through Sanbornville as it headed to its northern terminus. The village was known first as Sanborn's Village, then Sanborn's Mills. In 1882, the railroad station and post office there were named Wolfeboro Junction because this was the junction of the main line with the Wolfeboro Branch (Monroe and Federer 1995).

By the last decade of the nineteenth century Sanbornville was a railroad and commercial center, due in large part to the investment and development activities of John W. Sanborn. He was the original investor in the Garvin Store on the west corner of High and Meadow streets. A large railroad depot was nearby, as was a hotel built by Sanborn to accommodate railroad travelers and meetings.

At the time of the construction of the Wakefield Town Hall and Opera House, the building was much larger than necessary for late nineteenth-century town business; the additional space could lodge other entities common in a village center. The building addressed the civic needs for a large auditorium to accommodate the residents during town meetings, to house town clerk and selectmen offices, and a jail. The auditorium also provided a cultural center for theatrical and musical performances. Known as the Opera House this space was used for singing performances, plays, musicals, and later movies and dances (MacRury 1987:258-259, 290-291). The additional first-floor spaces were designed for commercial uses. The northwest room with its large window and separate entry was designed to be a store. The west and middle rooms on the south side of the hall, furnished with a bank vault, were to be used by a bank. In 1909 the post office moved into this space. The large banquet room, with its adjoining kitchen, on the north side of the hall provided space for formal functions (MacRury 1987:238).

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Wakefield followed the pattern of many larger New England towns in its decision to erect a new masonry town hall in the late nineteenth century. Discussion of construction of a larger town hall was formalized at the 12 March 1895 Annual Town Meeting. As early as 1892, however, the *Carroll County Pioneer*, the regional newspaper, noted that the town hall was no longer large enough to accommodate all the town's voters. Since 1838 the town held their town meetings in the one-story frame Town House in Wakefield Corner (MacRury 1986:237, 78). At the March 1895 Annual Meeting the local attorney Arthur Foote offered the resolution "[t]o build a Town Hall at Wolfeboro Junction and to raise the sum of Five thousand dollars therefore [sic]..." and to establish a "Town Hall Building Committee" comprised of William H. Willey, Joseph L. Johnson, and Herbert E. Rogers. The building committee was to obtain building plans and specifications "from some competent architect" (MacRury 1987:233). A vote was taken and passed and the committee set about fulfilling their responsibility to oversee the design and construction of a new town hall.

The proposed building was to be 46 feet x 78 feet, two-stories and a basement with a 75-foot high stair tower with a bell and clock. The concrete basement was to contain two jail cells, two furnaces for heating the building, and storage space. The first floor was to have a 6-foot wide full-depth center hall with three nearly equal-sized rooms on the south side to the east of the stair tower and three differently sized rooms on the north. The southeast room would be the town office and have a vault to safely house town records. The second floor 20-foot high auditorium would seat 400 and have a stage and dressing rooms at the east end. The gallery would seat 150 (MacRury 1987:238).

The renaming of the village from Wolfeboro Village to Sanbornville honored its leading citizen, John W. Sanborn (1822-1903), who provided not only the lot but also funds that initiated construction of the town hall (*Granite State News* 21 May 1895). In the last quarter of the nineteenth century Sanborn invested heavily in the development of the area of what became Sanbornville. A store, later known as the J. W. Galvin store, is on the west side of High Street, across from the town hall, and adjacent to the railroad (Monroe 1995: 4-5; MacRury 1987:593-595). As a young man Sanborn worked in the cattle trade and lumber industry but he took an early interest in local politics. He served in numerous public offices beginning as Constable in 1844 and later as Moderator first in the 1860s and lastly in the 1890s serving in that capacity until his death. At the state level he served as Representative and member of the Governor's Council in the 1860s and in the State Senate in the 1870s. He later was Director and President of several railroad corporations, insurance companies, and banks. He recognized the importance of the steam-powered railroad and actively promoted the plan to extend the railroad north to the White Mountains from the village of Union, then the northern terminus of the railroad, in the southern part of Wakefield.

Thanks to Mr. Sanborn's gift, construction of the foundation began by late May 1895, overseen by J. L. Johnson of Union. The work required removal of heavy boulders and the workmen had difficulty establishing a dry and solid base (*Granite State News* 28 May, 4 Jun 1895). In the meantime, considerable discussion occurred on whether to build the new town hall in wood or brick (*Granite State News* 4 Jun 1895). A petition was circulated

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in late May. By mid-June, with the results two to one in favor, the town settled on brick construction. (*Granite State News* 21 May, 28 May, 18 Jun 1895). With that decision finalized work progressed rapidly on the building. By early July the brickwork had begun (*Granite State News* 2 Jul 1895). By the third week of July the first-floor framing had been laid and the brick work had moved above the basement level (*Granite State News* 23 Jul 1895). At a special town meeting on 23 September 1895 held at the rising town hall the town approved an additional appropriation of \$6,700 necessary to complete the building and furnish it (*Granite State News* 17 Sep 1895; 1 Oct 1895). At the end of November the building committee contracted Frank H. Blake of Rochester to finish the interior wood work, demonstrating the extent of building progress to that point. The 1896 Town Report contains the final report by the Building Committee, listing all the suppliers and the costs associated with the construction of the new town hall. The official dedication of the completed building has not been established but the town held its March 1896 Annual Town Meeting in the building (MacRury 1987:238).

At the special September 1895 meeting the town "voted to authorize the Selectmen to lease for and in behalf of the Town to John W. Sanborn his lessees and assigns for the term of ten years from and after January 1<sup>st</sup> 1896 the two westerly rooms on the Southerly side of the hallway on the first floor of the new town hall building and the westerly room on the northerly side of said hallway, for and in consideration of the sum of \$1750..." (MacRury 1987:238). Sanborn agreed to pay the sum in advance (*Granite State News* 1 Oct 1895).

Until the middle of the twentieth century most of the first-floor rooms were used for purposes other than town-related business. The northwest front room was designed with large window to be used as a store, a use that continued until at least 1959. For much of that time the W. S. Davis Pharmacy occupied the space. In 1909 the post office moved from the Garvin Store across High Street to the two westerly rooms on the south side of the hall where it remained until 1959 (MacRury 1987:1027). By 1959 the banquet room was used for a kindergarten and a dentist occupied the former kitchen space (Wakefield Opera House Committee 2004:45). Since then the town has taken over all the first-floor rooms while the auditorium continues to be used for cultural performances, and restoration planning has begun for that space.

**Architecture**

To design the new Town Hall and Opera House Wakefield hired one of New Hampshire's more successful architects, active in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Dover architect Alvah Thurston Ramsdell designed four comparable New Hampshire town halls between 1893 and 1908. The building therefore is significant under Criterion C as a design by one of New Hampshire's prominent architects but also as one of four examples of a town hall model popularized in the late nineteenth century in established New Hampshire towns and throughout New England.

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Alvah Thurston Ramsdell (1852-1928) was one of New Hampshire's most active and successful architects of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The bulk of his practice involved the design of institutional and commercial structures—town halls, schools, and business blocks—but he also designed many private residences and other private structures (Lawry and Garvin 1998). His early training in and work in the building trades provided him with a good understanding of engineering principles and design.

Ramsdell, a native of York, Maine, was the son of a carpenter and farmer. His training began with an apprenticeship with William A. McIntire (b. ca. 1816-1881), a noted builder, contractor, and millwork manufacturer in South Berwick, Maine. Then, like his father before him, Ramsdell worked as a journeyman carpenter for several years. About 1873 he moved to Boston, Massachusetts, in search of greater experience and opportunities, working as a building contractor. The disastrous 1872 fire that destroyed a large section of Boston's business district and subsequently generated a flurry of building activity may have prompted this move. Over the next ten-plus years Ramsdell worked with a number of Boston's leading contractors of the time, including William McKenzy, Whidden, Hill, and Company; and B. D. Whitcomb and Company. He supervised the construction of a number of Boston's important building projects in the 1870s and 1880s. A number of projects were large masonry buildings including one of the Ames Buildings, designed by the prominent Boston architect Henry Hobson Richardson; the 1884 Cyclorama designed by C. A. Cummings and W. T. Sears; and the Boston Storage Warehouse designed by William E. Chamberlin and W. M. Whidden (Lawry and Garvin 1998).

Ramsdell's early career straddles a particularly transformative period in the building trades, characterized by the rise of the architect-designer, distinct from the housewright-builder. During his residency in the Boston area Ramsdell made the formal transition from builder to architect. He studied architecture and drawing in Boston evening schools. This architectural training was furthered when Ramsdell joined the office of Boston architect William G. Preston (active 1862-1910) who designed a range of Boston buildings including two well-known buildings in the Back Bay, the Museum of Natural History (1862) and the Hotel Vendome (1871) (Lawry and Garvin 1998). Ramsdell most likely worked in the office at the time of Preston's 1887 design of the Chadwick Lead Works building in Boston.

In 1889 Ramsdell returned to northern New England, settling in Dover, New Hampshire, where he opened his own office. For nearly forty years, until his death in 1928, he pursued a successful architectural practice. Soon after his arrival he began to receive important commissions for projects in town and then throughout New Hampshire. A number of Ramsdell's public buildings are recognized as important local landmarks and as symbols of those communities. He worked in a range of popular styles of the period including Romanesque Revival, Gothic Revival, Queen Anne, and Colonial Revival. The architectural vocabulary used in his building designs successfully express the character of the building without obscuring its function (Lawry and Garvin 1998). At the Wakefield Town Hall and Opera House the fenestration pattern of the building conveys the multiple interior uses. A large window is used for the store, regular sash windows for the offices, and large sash



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windows with semi-circular lights and large gabled dormers for the auditorium, to provide sufficient lighting to that two-story space.

A number of towns in southeastern New Hampshire commissioned Ramsdell to design their town hall. In addition to Wakefield, three other better known designs are those for Alton (1894), also brick, and Rollinsford (1894) and New Durham (1908), both wooden buildings. All of these buildings feature similar form, massing, and plan, characterized by a large rectangular block under a hip roof with a tall corner tower with a bell and clock, dormers on the front and side elevations to increase light to the second-floor auditoriums and balconies, and offices on the first floor (Lawry and Garvin 1998).

Ramsdell received a large number of commissions for school designs in New Hampshire and Maine, especially large high school buildings. Projects include the Chandler School in Somersworth (1898-1899), the Dover High School (1904-1905), the North Berwick High School in Maine (1904-1905), and Plymouth High School (1904) in York, Maine. Most of these structures are two or three stories with projecting front pavilions. The pavilions typically consist of tall arcades with large windows and stair halls on each end with arched window openings (Lawry and Garvin 1998).

Ramsdell's work also included designs for specialized function buildings such as meeting halls and institutional housing. In 1894 he designed the small frame Hiram Roberts Grange Hall in Dover. He designed the Wentworth Home for the Aged (1897) and the Dover Children's Home (1898), both also in Dover. Though best known for his large institutional commissions, by 1916 he had also designed more than seventy-five private residences (Lawry and Garvin 1998).

Most of the lead building craftsmen who worked on the town hall came from Wakefield or nearby towns. Identified workmen include the stone mason Joseph L. Johnson of Union, the mason Sam Allen of Brookfield (characterized as "one of the experts on the job"), and Mr. Estes of Lebanon, who supervised the carpentry work (*Granite State News* 28 May, 2 Jul, 23 Jul 1895). Albany Quarries supplied the stone for the foundation and also the sills (*Granite State News* 4 Jun 1895; 2 Jul 1895).

In addition to financing construction of the stone foundation and basement story, John W. Sanborn donated furnishings and decoration to the newly completed building including the polished granite pillars that support the front entry porch. Other items included a set of scenery for the stage, furnishings for the kitchen and dining room including furniture, dishes, glasses, and cutlery, and the table and chairs for the Selectmen's room (MacRury 1987:257).

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Wakefield Opera House Committee. "The Town Hall of Wakefield New Hampshire: A Second Hundred Years, A Master Plan, 3/8/04 Draft 1.5," 2004

**Verbal boundary description**

Boundaries of the nominated property are shown by the dashed line on the attached sketch map.

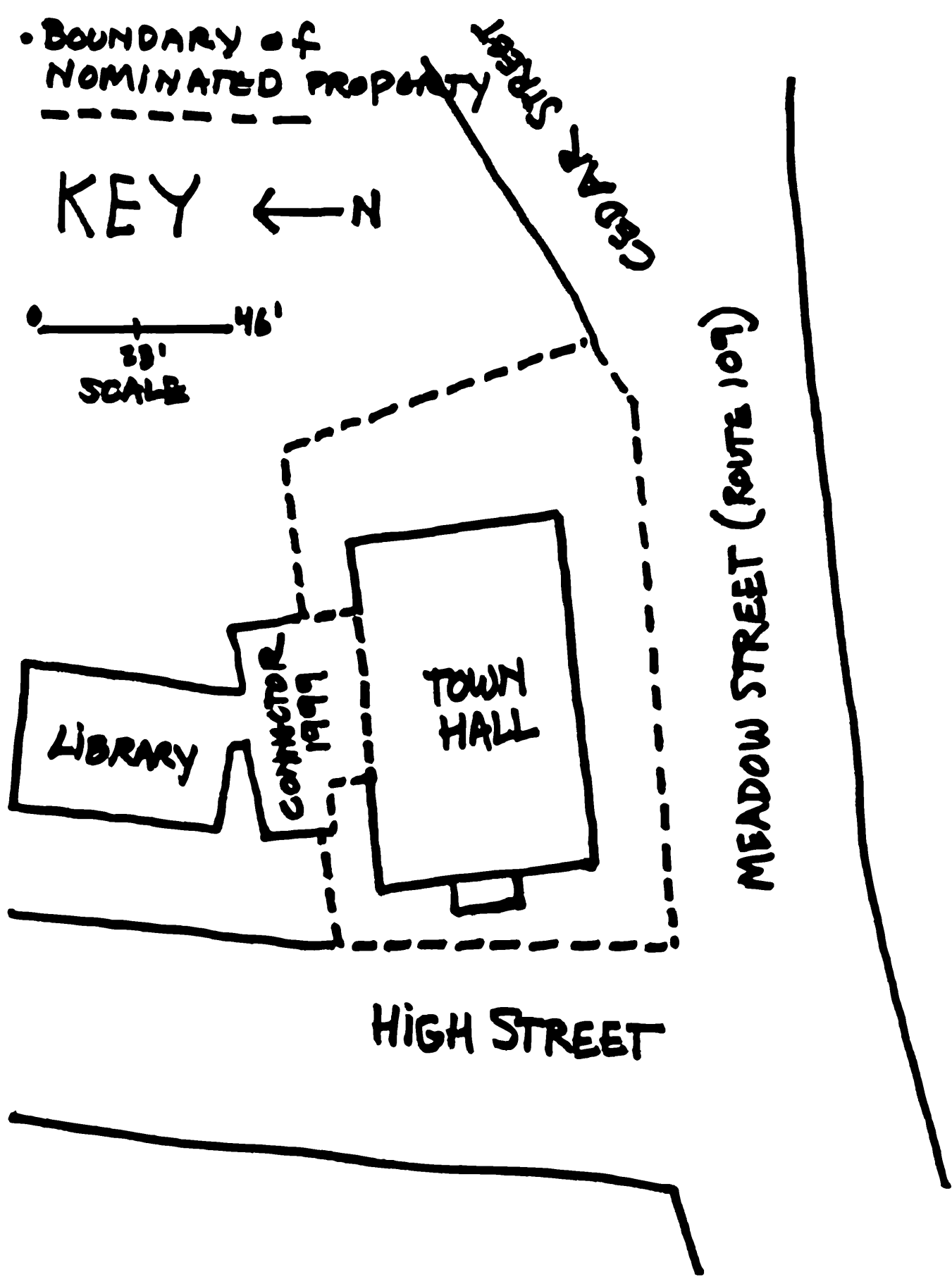
**Boundary justification**

The boundaries of the nominated property reflect those of the parcel of land that has been associated with the structure since its construction, except that the boundary has been drawn to exclude the 1999 connector to the Public Library.

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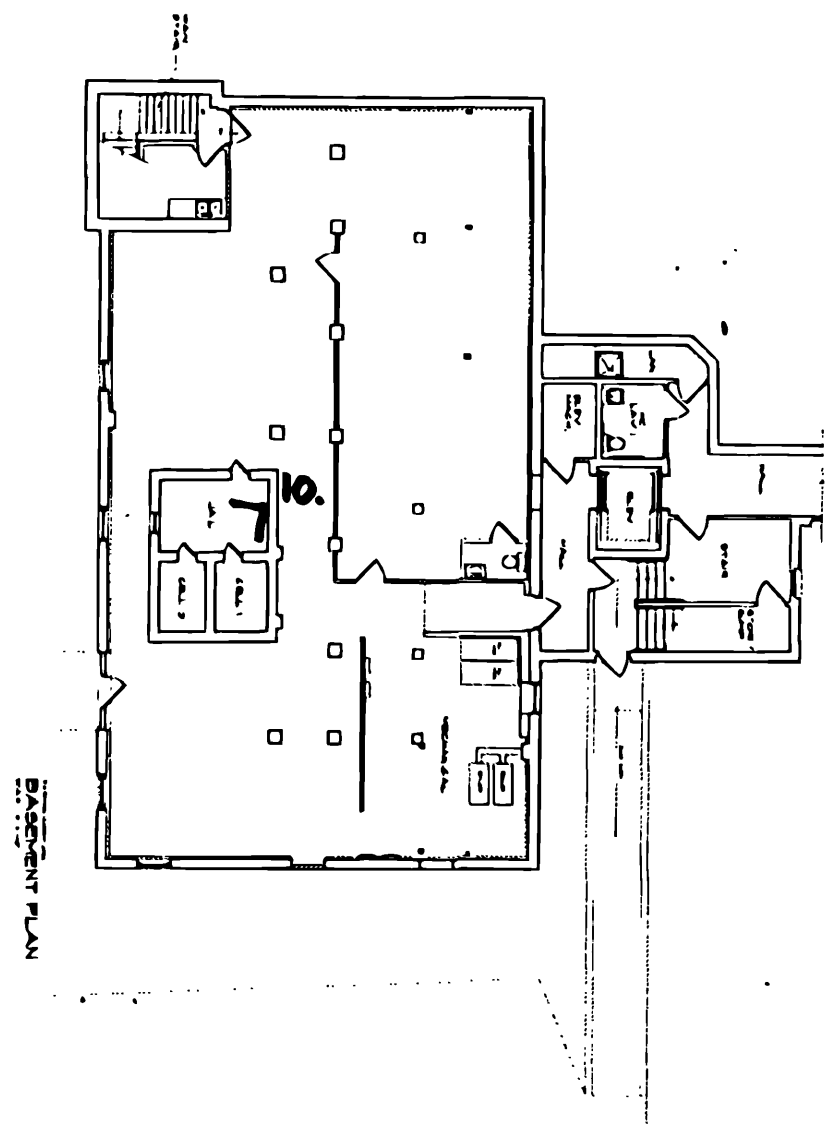
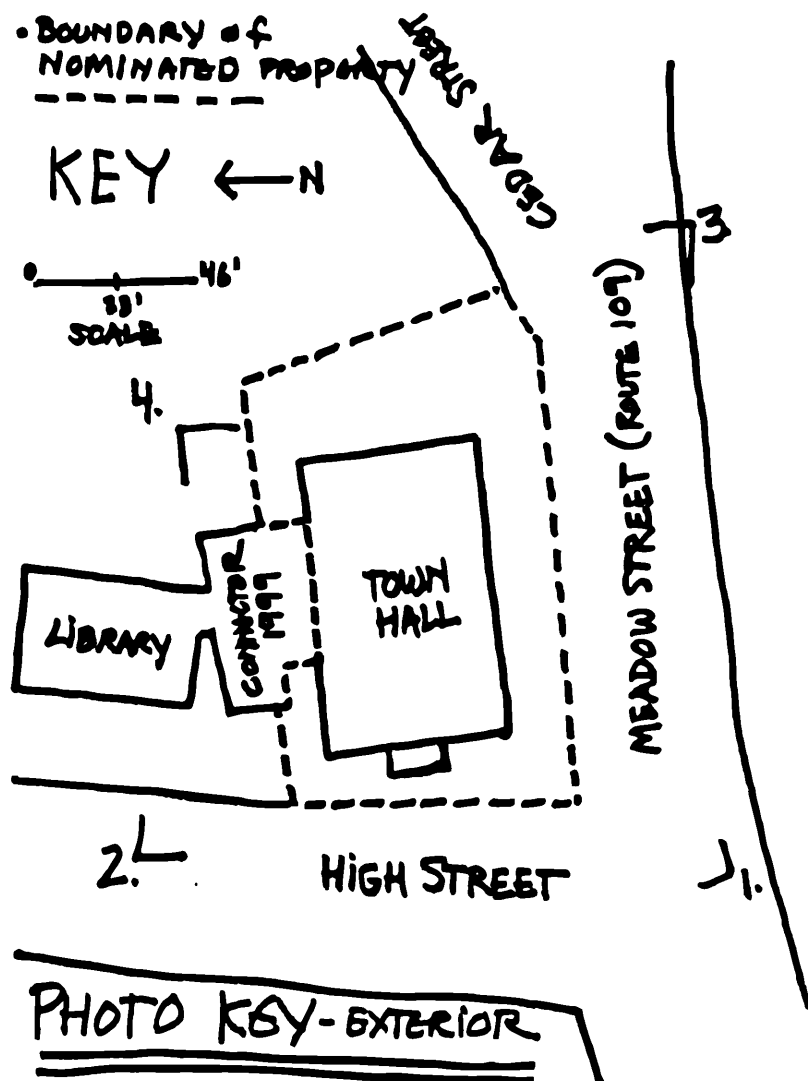
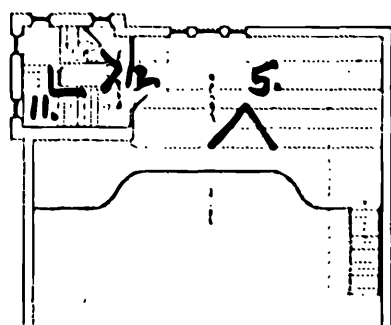
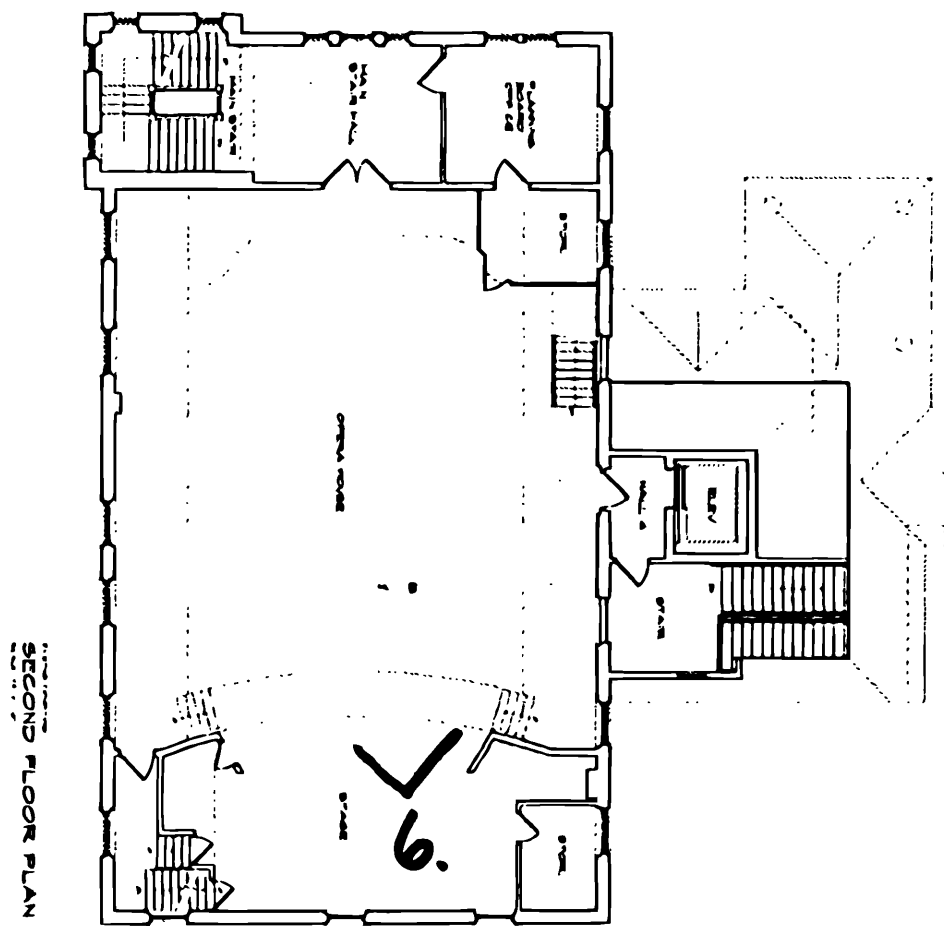
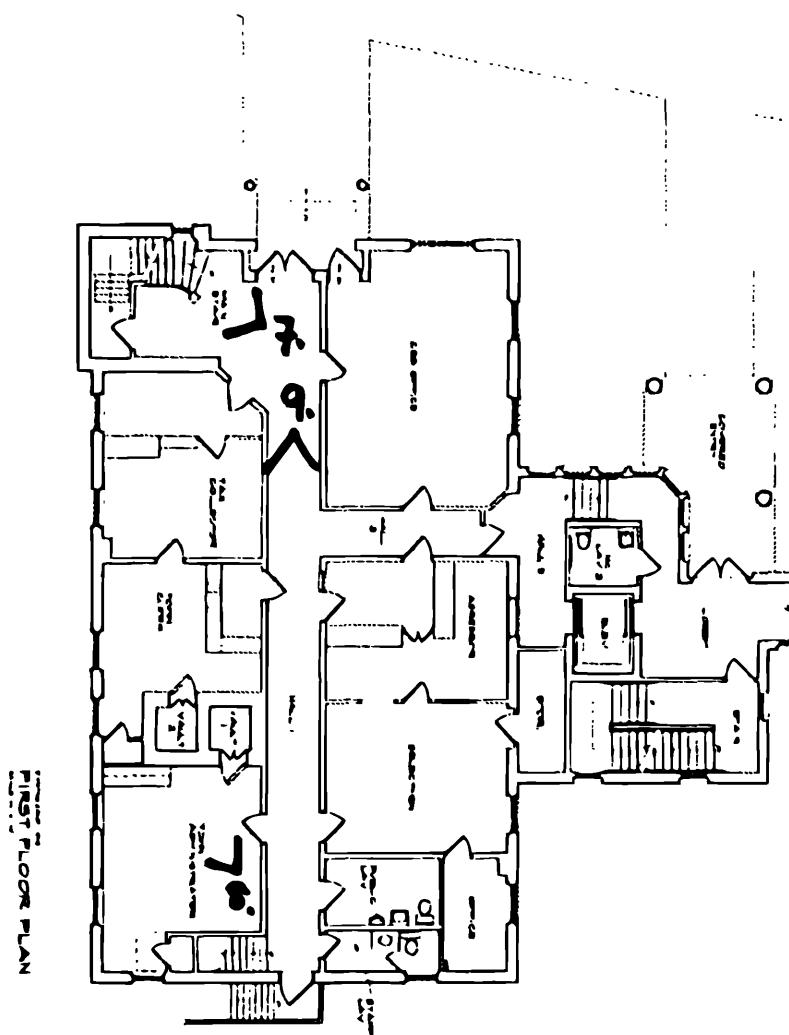


Photo Key

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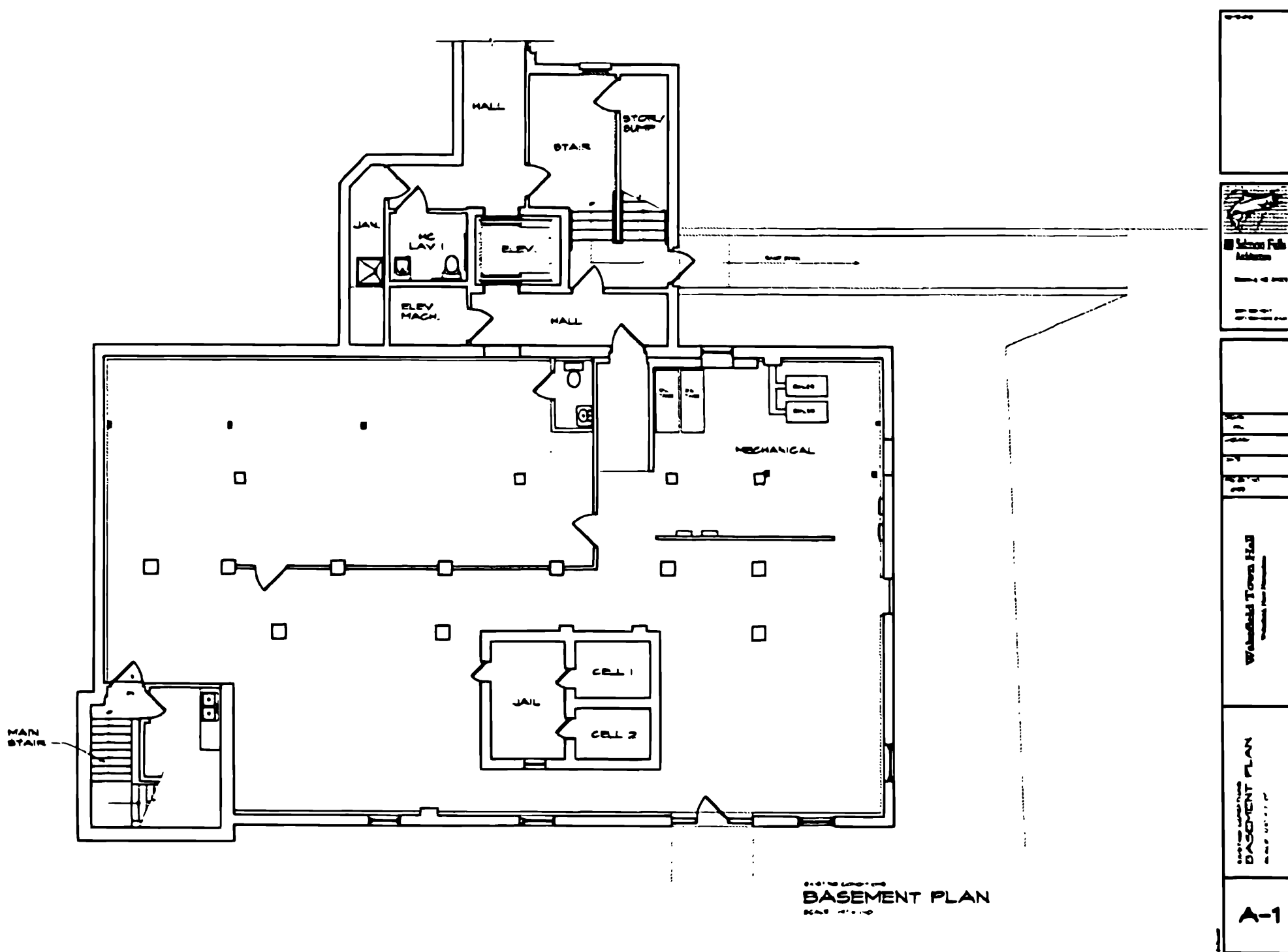
NO. 11 & 12 ARE ON THE SUBSEQUENT  
TWO STAGES OF THE TOWER.

**Photo Key**

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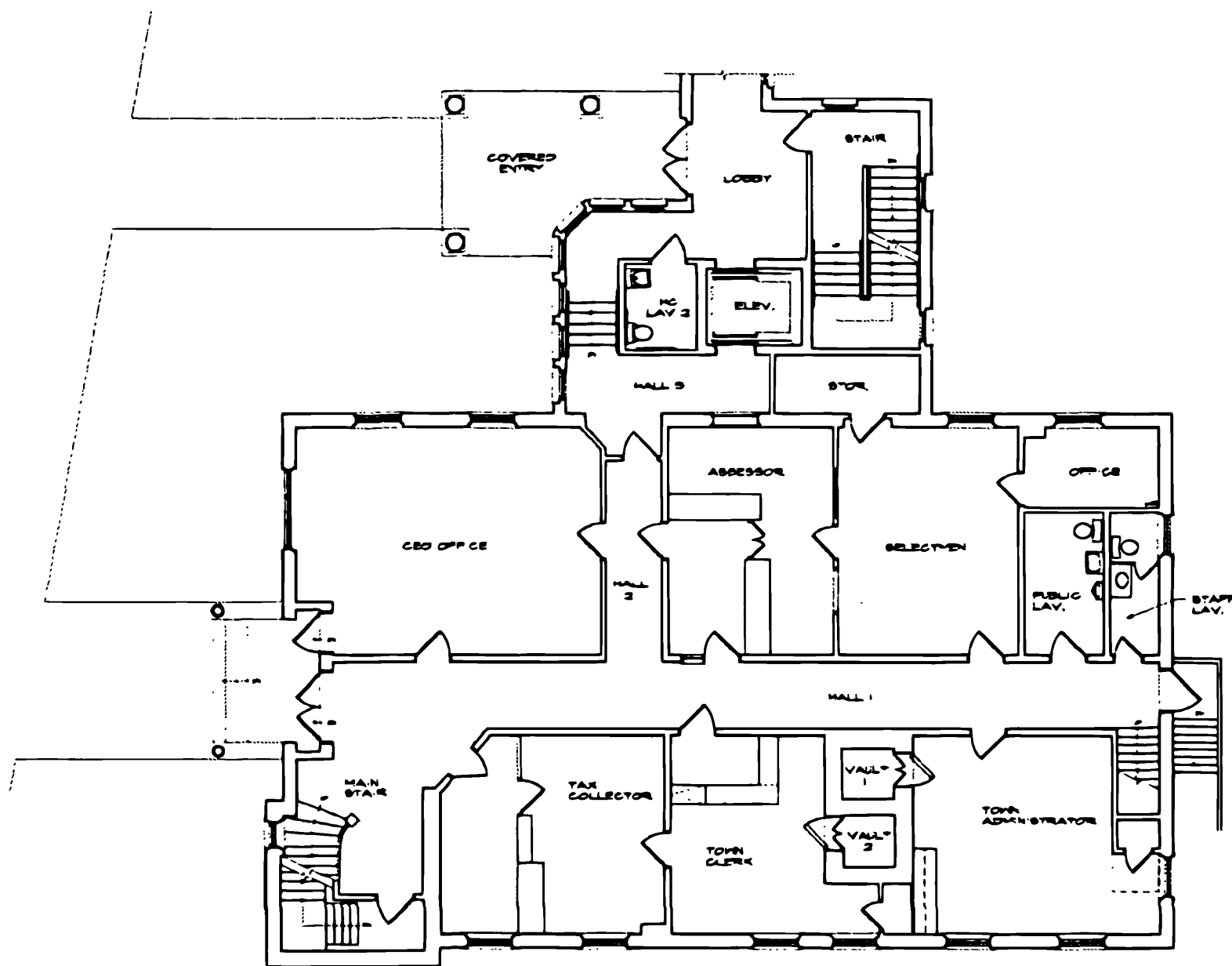


**Plans**

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FIRST FLOOR PLAN  
Scale 1/8" = 1'-0"

Wakefield Town Hall Carroll County, NH
FIRST FLOOR PLAN Scale 1/8" = 1'-0"
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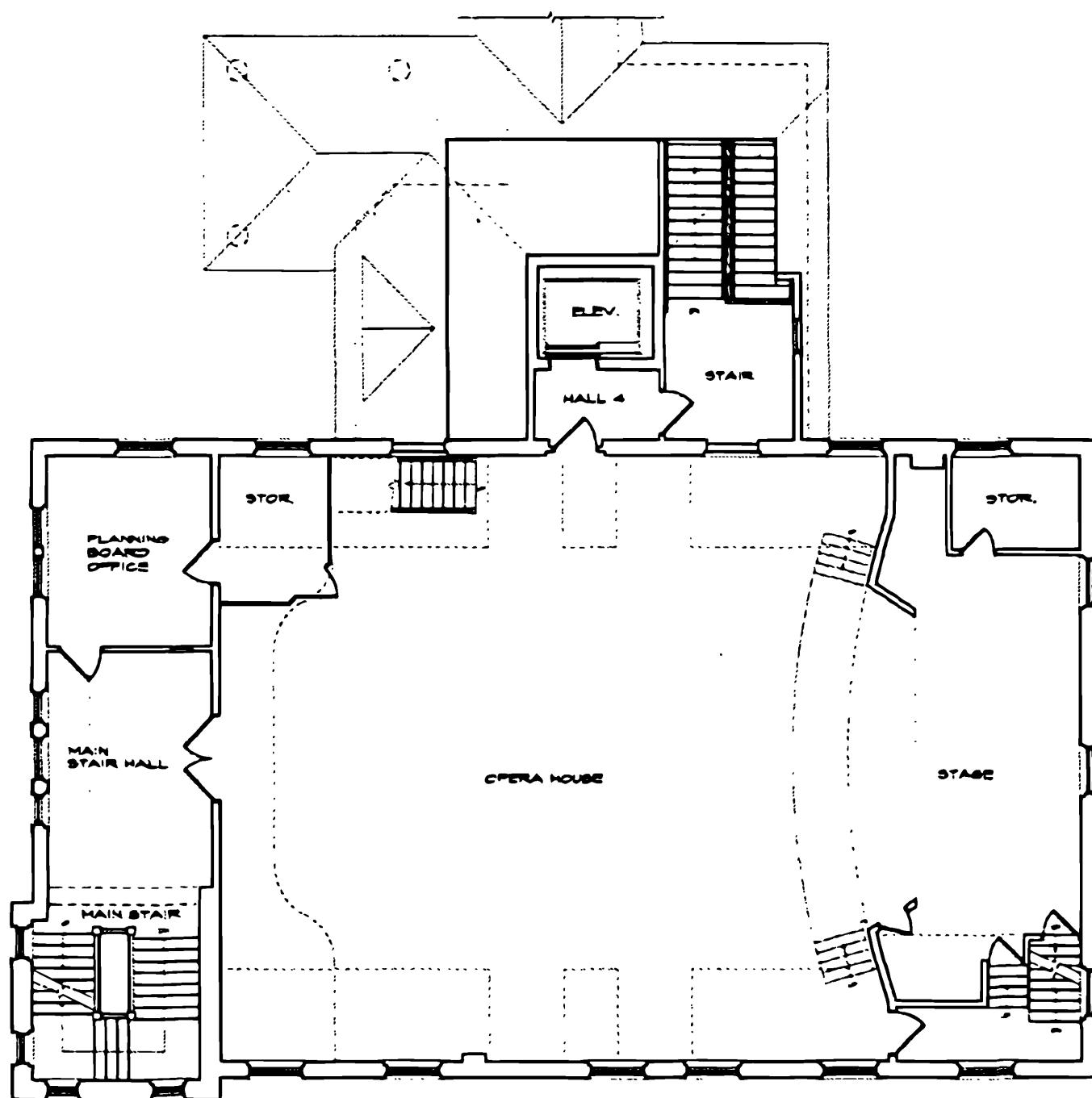


EXHIBIT 102  
SECOND FLOOR PLAN  
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

Wakefield Town Hall Carroll County, NH
SECOND FLOOR PLAN SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"
73

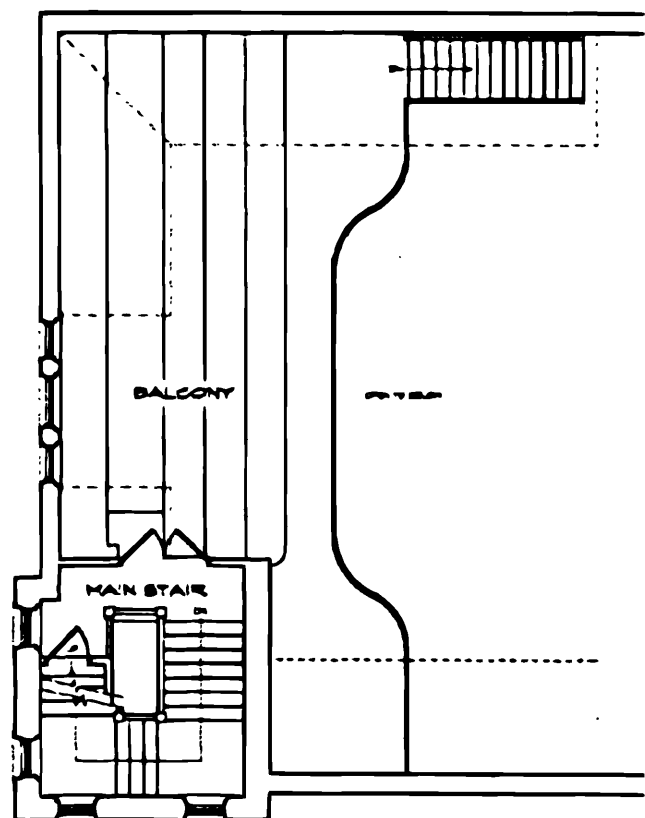
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SECOND FLOOR BALCONY PLAN


Wakefield Town Hall Carroll County, NH
SECOND FLOOR BALCONY PLAN


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Town Hall May Day, before library was built



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After construction of library, Garvin store at left

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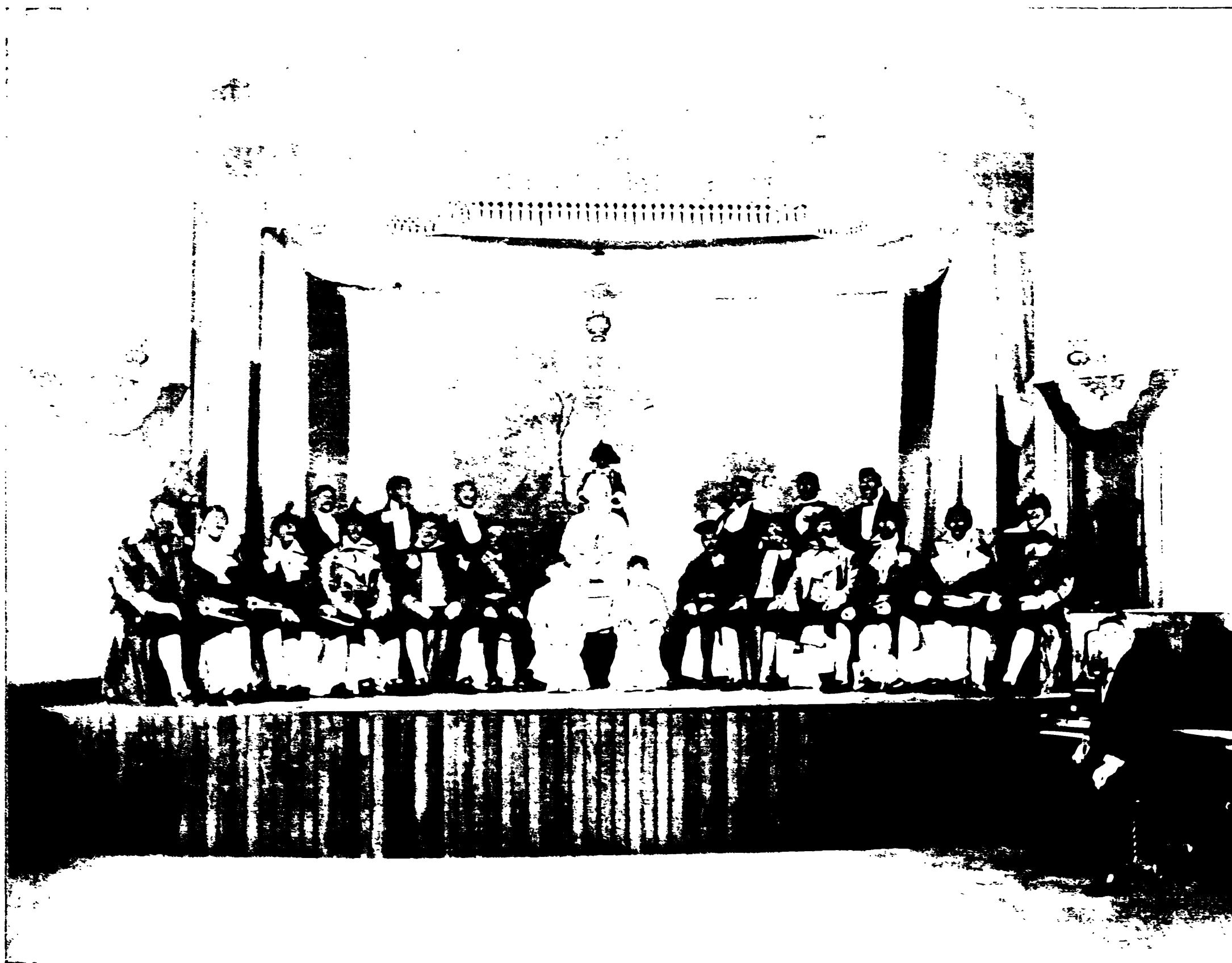
Opera House

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Detail, proscenium