| NPS Form 10-900<br>(Rev. 8-86)   | OMB No. 1024-0018                                       |
|--|---|
| United States Department of the Interior<br>National Park Service  |   |
| NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES<br>REGISTRATION FORM  |   |
|  |   |
| 1. Name of Property  |   |
| historic name: KNOWLTON MEMORIAL HAI   | Ъ.  |
| other name/site number: <u>Ashford Town Hall</u>   |   |
|  |   |
| 2. Location  |   |
| street & number: <u>25 Pompey Hollow Road</u>  |   |
| city/town: <u>Ashford</u>  | not for publication: <u>N/A</u><br>vicinity: <u>N/A</u> |
|  |   |
| state: <u>CT</u> county: <u>Windham</u> cod  | de: <u>015</u> zip code: <u>06278</u>                   |
|  |   |
| 3. Classification  |   |
| 3. Classification<br>Ownership of Property: <u>public-local</u><br>Category of Property: <u>building</u>   |   |
| 3. Classification<br>Ownership of Property: <u>public-local</u>  |   |
| 3. Classification<br>Ownership of Property: <u>public-local</u><br>Category of Property: <u>building</u><br>Number of Resources within Property:   |   |
| 3. Classification<br>Ownership of Property: <u>public-local</u><br>Category of Property: <u>building</u><br>Number of Resources within Property:<br>Contributing Noncontributing<br><u>1</u> <u>0</u> buildings<br>sites<br> |   |

25%

# USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Page 2

|   | Federal Agency Certification   | =======             |  |                   |
|---|--|---------------------|--|-------------------|
| As the des<br>of 1966, a<br>request for | signated authority under the<br>as amended, I hereby certify<br>or determination of eligibil:                                | that th<br>ity meet | nis <u>X</u> nominatic<br>ts the documentati       | on<br>.on         |
| Historic H<br>set forth                 | for registering properties a<br>places and meets the procedur<br>in 36 CFR Part 60. In my op<br>not meet the National Regist | cal and pinion,     | professional required the property $\underline{X}$ | irements<br>meets |
| $\leq$                                  | An manna   | h                   | February 16,                                       | 1994              |
| Signature                               | of certifying official   |                     | Date   |                   |
| D                                       | irector, Connecticut Histori   | cal Com             | mission  |                   |
| State or H                              | ederal agency and bureau   |                     |  |                   |
|   | nion, the property meets<br>criteria See continuat:  |                     |  | National          |
| Signature                               | of commenting or other offic   | cial                | Date   |                   |
| State or H                              | ederal agency and bureau   |                     |  |                   |
|   | l Park Service Certification   |                     |  | *========         |
| ======================================= |  | =======             |  |                   |
| /                                       | certify that this property is red in the National Register   | ls:                 | on A. Beall  | 3/17/94           |
|   | See continuation sheet.  | - •                 | Ente   | ered in the       |
|   | mined eligible for the<br>onal Register  |                     | Net:   | lonal Register    |
|   | See continuation sheet.  |                     |  |                   |
|   | mined not eligible for the .<br>.onal Register   |                     |  |                   |
| remov                                   | red from the National Registe  | er                  |  |                   |
| other                                   | (explain):   |                     |  |                   |
|   |  | forsig              | nature of Keeper                                   | Date<br>of Action |
| 6. Functio                              | n or Use   |                     |  | *=======          |
|   |  | .=======            |  |                   |
| Historic:                               | GOVERNMENT<br>EDUCATION  | _ sub: _            | <u>city hall</u><br>library                        | <u>,</u>          |
|   | SOCIAL   |                     | meeting hall                                       |                   |
| Current:                                | GOVERNMENT   | <br>Sub:            | city hall  |                   |
|   | EDUCATION  |                     | library  |                   |
|   | SOCIAL   |                     | meeting hall                                       |                   |
| ==========                              |  |                     |  |                   |

| 7. Descript  | tion                              |  |            |             |                  |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|------------|-------------|------------------|
| Architectu   | ral Classific                     | ation:   |            |             |                  |
| OTHER: R   | ustic                             | _  |            |             |                  |
|  |                                   | _  |            |             |                  |
| Other Desc   | ription: <u>N/A</u>               |  |            |             |                  |
| Materials:   | foundation _                      | STONE  | roof       | METAL       |                  |
|  | walls _                           | STONE  | ocner_     | <u>N/A</u>  |                  |
| Describe pr<br>sheet.                              | resent and hi                     | storic physical a                                  | ppearance  | e. <u>X</u> | See continuation |
| 8. Statemer<br>=================================== | nt of Signifi<br><br>official has | cance<br>considered the s<br>rties: <u>state</u>   | ignifica   | nce of this |                  |
| Applicable   | National Reg                      | ister Criteria: _                                  | <u>A,C</u> |             |                  |
| Criteria Co  | onsiderations                     | (Exceptions) : _                                   | N/A_       |             |                  |
| Areas of Si  |                                   | SOCIAL HISTORY<br>POLITICS/GOVERNM<br>ARCHITECTURE | ENT        |             |                  |
| Period(s)  | of Significan                     | ce: <u>1924-1943</u>                               |            |             |                  |
| Significant  | Dates:                            | 1924   |            |             |                  |
| Significant  | Person(s):                        | N/A  |            | -           |                  |
| Cultural Af  | filiation: _                      | N/A  |            |             |                  |
| Architect/H  | Builder: <u>Her</u>               | bert Loud (archit                                  | ect)       |             |                  |

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above. <u>X</u> See continuation sheet.

| 9. Major Bibliographical References  |
|--|
| See continuation sheet.  |
| Previous documentation on file (NPS):  |
| <ul> <li>preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.</li> <li>previously listed in the National Register</li> <li>previously determined eligible by the National Register</li> <li>designated a National Historic Landmark</li> <li>recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #</li></ul> |
| Primary Location of Additional Data:   |
| <pre>X State historic preservation office    Other state agency    Federal agency    Local government    University</pre> Connecticut Historical Commission 59 South Prospect Street Hartford, Connecticut 06106   |
| _ Other Specify Repository:  |
| 10. Geographical Data<br>Acreage of Property: <u>approx. 1 acre</u><br>UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing   |
| A <u>18</u> <u>736500</u> <u>4638230</u> B<br>C D D  |
| See continuation sheet.  |
| Verbal Boundary Description: See continuation sheet.<br>The boundary includes the parcel known as 25 Pompey Hollow Road,<br>recorded in Ashford Land Records, vol. 39, p. 15.  |
| Boundary Justification: See continuation sheet.<br>The boundary represents the extent of the Knowlton Memorial property<br>as donated in 1924.   |
| 11. Form Prepared By   |
| Name/Title: <u>Bruce Clouette and Maura Cronin, reviewed by John Herzan</u>  |
| Conn. Historical Comm.<br>Organization: <u>Historic Resource Consultants</u> Date: <u>June 5, 1993</u>   |
| Street & Number: <u>55 Van Dyke Avenue</u> Telephone: <u>203-547-0268</u>  |

City or Town: <u>Hartford</u> State: <u>CT</u> Zip: <u>06106</u>

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Description Knowlton Memorial Hall (Ashford Town Hall) 7-1 Ashford, Windham County, CT

Knowlton Memorial Hall (Photographs 1 and 2) is a large rustic stone building completed in 1924 as a town hall and library for the Town of Ashford, Connecticut. The building is two stories tall and measures 50 by 88 feet in plan. The walls consist of random fieldstone laid up in mortar with wide joints; much of the stone was taken from the land the building now sits on. The stones are mostly rounded, but vary greatly in shape, size, composition, and color, giving the building a rugged appearance. A chimney of similar masonry is located near the northeast corner. Standing-seam copper roofing covers the hip roof, with exposed rafter ends as the only cornice ornament. Still in use for its original purposes, Knowlton Memorial Hall is situated back from the road on the south side of Route 44, in a mixed commercial and residential area.

The three-bay facade, or north elevation, has the main entrance in the center, flanked by two large windows. The recessed entrance (Photograph 3) has a five-pane overlight above wooden raised-panel double doors; a flat-arched lintel of long narrow stones; tall sidelights that are somewhat separated from the doorway itself; and concrete steps, with wrought-iron railings, descending from a small stone-faced landing.

Window openings, of several different sizes, all have wooden divided sash, stone lintels like the one over the main entrance, and bluestone sills (Photograph 4). The large first-floor windows have fifteenover-fifteen sash, while the smaller second-floor windows are fitted with eight-over-eight sash. Below the center second-floor window on the facade is a wrought-iron balcony. On the side elevations are several long and narrow windows that light stairway and bathroom areas.

The interior features a spacious hallway, just inside the entrance, with a stone fireplace on the west side. Above the fireplace hangs a large marble plaque (Photograph 5) dedicating the building to Jonathan Knowlton and Col. Thomas Knowlton; the plaque also names the architect, town officers, and donor Charles C. Knowlton.\* Also on the first floor is an auditorium which can hold 350 seats (Photograph 6). A stairway (Photograph 7) with oak railings and slate treads

<sup>\*</sup>The date on the plaque reads 1923; however, the building was not actually completed until 1924.

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Description Knowlton Memorial Hall (Ashford Town Hall) 7-2 Ashford, Windham County, CT

leads from the hall to the second floor, which provides space for town offices in the front and the Babcock Library at the rear, over the auditorium. Interior finishes are quite plain, with plaster walls and ceilings, hardwood and tiled floors, and a series of raised moldings around windows and doorways (Photograph 8), most of which contain sixpanel doors.

Knowlton Memorial Hall has undergone only minor alterations since its construction. A covered outside stairway to the basement and a disabled-access ramp and entrance were added on the western side of the building, and storm windows have been installed.

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Significance Knowlton Memorial Hall (Ashford Town Hall) 8-1 Ashford, Windham County, CT

#### Summary

Knowlton Memorial Hall is significant as the long-time seat of Ashford town government, as an illustration of small-town philanthropy (Criterion A), and as an example of the rustic cobblestone architecture common in the early 20th century (Criterion C). The building has served to house town offices and Ashford's public library since its completion in 1924, and the auditorium has accommodated town meetings, as well as many other community events and assemblies, for nearly 70 years. In addition to providing a single permanent home for town offices, public meetings, and the library, Knowlton Memorial Hall also helped give Ashford a sense of a town center, something absent after the town was divided (creating Eastford) in 1847. Knowlton Memorial Hall was the gift of textile entrepreneur Charles C. Knowlton in honor of his family, who were prominent in the community since the 18th century (including Col. Thomas Knowlton of Revolutionary War fame).

#### Historical Significance

Charles C. Knowlton, a native of Ashford, accumulated great wealth in the textile industry, beginning in 1878 when he formed a partnership with G. A. Hammond to manufacture silk thread. Hammond ran the firm's mill in Putnam, Connecticut, while Knowlton was responsible for marketing the silk in New York City. Eventually, Knowlton established a national distribution network with salesrooms in major cities, and the mill in Putnam became one of that town's major employers. Despite his long tenure in New York, Knowlton kept close ties with Ashford and was a frequent summer visitor. In his later years, Knowlton decided to give the town a gift dedicated to the memory of his father, Jonathan W. Knowlton, and his ancestor, Col. Thomas Knowlton, a Revolutionary War hero.<sup>1</sup> By building the hall, Knowlton intended not only to provide offices for the town but also to establish a place for the whole community of Ashford to use and enjoy. Knowlton chose the small

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Soon after the Lexington alarm, Knowlton raised a body of men to help defend Boston, and he and his company participated in the Battle of Bunker Hill (Breed's Hill). A year later, Col. Knowlton was killed in New York while attacking British forces under Howe. Eulogized by George Washington as "a brave and gallant officer," Knowlton is also memorialized by a statue at the Connecticut State Capitol in Hartford.

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

#### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Significance Knowlton Memorial Hall (Ashford Town Hall) 8-2 Ashford, Windham County, CT

village of Warrenville for the building, probably because of its central location at the intersection of two major roads.<sup>2</sup>

In thus benefiting Ashford, Knowlton's act was typical of much of Connecticut's small-town philanthropy, wherein men who had made their fortune in New York or other mercantile centers remembered their home towns with gifts such as libraries, town halls, and parks. Especially in the case of agricultural towns such as Ashford, which could not generate their own financial or industrial elite, money for libraries and other public buildings was frequently donated by men who had been born in town but became wealthy elsewhere.

Knowlton's gift was by far the grandest, most expensive, most modern building Ashford had ever seen. Not only did it cost \$150,000, it had steam heat, inside toilets, and electricity (the latter produced onsite), amenities almost unheard of in the town at that time. Somewhat tongue-in-cheek, the <u>Hartford Courant</u> (August 24, 1924) referred to the building as

a breath of Fifth Avenue in the wilderness . . . whose exterior suggests the strength and ruggedness of the inhabitants of the backwoods, while the interior has luxurious appointments.

After Knowlton finished the building, some townspeople were wary of accepting it, fearing the town would be burdened by its operating expenses, but on August 25, 1924, at a special town meeting, Ashford voters chose to accept Knowlton Memorial Hall. The building was dedicated on September 27, 1924, with an elaborate program of festivities that began at 2:30 and lasted well into the evening; over 800 people attended. Ashford's own Babcock Band provided a concert while even more musical entertainment was delivered by a chorus of school children who sang "America the Beautiful" and a song specially written by poet and Ashford resident Emily Chism in honor of the new building. The women of the town provided supper for all the guests.

Since 1924, Knowlton Memorial Hall has fulfilled the intentions of its donor, providing a center for the political and social life of the community. Town meetings and elections have taken place in the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Ashford's earlier center, consisting of several houses, the town common, a Congregational church, the Ashford Academy, and a cemetery, ended up at the extreme eastern edge of town in 1847, when the eastern part of Ashford became the Town of Eastford.

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Significance Knowlton Memorial Hall (Ashford Town Hall) 8-3 Ashford, Windham County, CT

auditorium, and until recently, all town offices were accommodated within the building as well. Civic groups such as the Grange and Babcock Band also made use of the facility as a meeting room, and the public library, known as Babcock Library in honor of Archibald Babcock's donation of \$3,000, continues to occupy the upper floor.

#### Architectural Significance

Knowlton Memorial Hall embodies the distinguishing characteristics of the rustic architecture popular in the early 20th century for bridges, park shelters, and public buildings. Its cobblestone masonry and exposed rafter ends typify the concern for natural materials and honest expression of "structure" that were at the heart of the style. The choice of rough fieldstone masonry for Knowlton Memorial Hall was highly appropriate, especially since much of the stone was gathered onsite, serving as a symbol of the hard labor needed to earn a living from the area's glacial soils. Visually, the building relates to the stone walls that are still one of the town's chief landscape features. At the time the hall was built, Ashford was almost entirely a community of family farms, numbering only about 650 inhabitants.

In its use of natural materials and exposed structure, rustic architecture was related to the Craftsman movement; many Craftsmaninfluenced Bungalow and Foursquare-style buildings also used cobblestones for chimneys, foundations, retaining walls, and porch details. However, what distinguishes rustic buildings such as Knowlton Memorial Hall from other Craftsman-influenced types is the emphasis on rough stone masonry as the <u>primary</u> architectural feature.

Knowlton Memorial Hall was designed by Herbert Loud, about whom little is known other than the fact that he practiced architecture in New York City in the 1910s and 1920s. Although the exterior of the building is plain to the point of severity, Knowlton Memorial Hall's stone stairs, tile and hardwood floors (some of the latter laid in parquetry patterns), and dignified door and window moldings testify to both Loud's abilities as a designer and Knowlton's generosity.

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

- Bibliography Knowlton Memorial Hall (Ashford Town Hall) 9-1 Ashford, Windham County, CT
- <u>Ashford, 1714-1989: Moments from History</u>. Ashford: Ashford 275th Anniversary Committee, 1990.
- Ashford, Town of. Minutes of Town Meetings, Vol. 4, 1879-1942, pp. 158-59.

. Land Records, Vol. 39, p. 15 (1924).

Connecticut Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Hammond, Knowlton & Co.," <u>Nineteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics</u>, <u>1903</u>. Meriden: Journal Publishing Co., 1903. Pp. 327-29.

Hartford Courant, August 24, 1924.

- Stocking, Charles Henry Wright. <u>The Knowlton Ancestry</u>. New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1897.
- Town of Ashford, 1714-1964: Two Hundred Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration. Ashford, 1964.

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

#### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

| Photographs | Knowlton | Memorial Hall   | Photos-1 |
|-------------|----------|-----------------|----------|
|             | (Ashford | Town Hall)      |          |
|             | Ashford, | Windham County, | СТ       |

#### All photographs:

- 1. Knowlton Memorial Hall (Ashford Town Hall)
- 2. Ashford, Windham County, CT
- 3. Photo Credit: HRC, Hartford, CT
- 4. May, 1993
- 5. Negative filed with Connecticut Historical Commission Hartford, CT

Captions:

North and east elevations, camera facing southwest Photograph 1 of 8

North and west elevations, camera facing southeast Photograph 2 of 8

Detail of doorway, north elevation, camera facing south Photograph 3 of 8

Detail of window, west elevation, camera facing east Photograph 4 of 8

Plaque in first floor hall, camera facing east Photograph 5 of 8

Auditorium, camera facing south Photograph 6 of 8

Stairway, camera facing west Photograph 7 of 8

Detail of typical interior doorway, second floor hall, camera facing east Photograph 8 of 8