United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

received FEB 2 5 1983

date entered

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

1. Name

historic   ASHLAND TOWN HALL

and/or common   ASHLAND TOWN HALL

2. Location

street & number   10 Highland Street   ___ not for publication

city, town   Ashland   ___ vicinity of   ~~congressional district~~ (2nd)

state   N.H.   code   33   county   Grafton   code   009

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
___ district	X public	X occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
X building(s)	___ private	___ unoccupied	___ commercial	___ park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational	___ private residence
✓ site	**Public Acquisition**	**Accessible**	___ entertainment	___ religious
___ object	___ in process	X yes: restricted	X government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
	X N/A	___ no	___ military	___ other:

4. Owner of Property

name   Town of Ashland

street & number   10 Highland Street

city, town   Ashland   ___ vicinity of   state   New Hampshire

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.   Grafton County Courthouse/Registry of Deeds

street & number   Route 10

city, town   Haverhill   state   New Hampshire

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title   Ashland Historical Survey   has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes _X_ no

date   1982   ___ federal ___ state ___ county _X_ local

depository for survey records   Ashland Town Offices

city, town   Ashland   state   New Hampshire

7. Description

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Ashland Town Hall is a large public building, set back from Highland Street on its own lot. Rectangular in plan, it is built of brick (common bond, flemish variation), with a gable roof. The three exterior walls most visible to the public are divided into regular bays by rudimentary brick pilasters and a simple frieze ornamented only by a three course band projecting bricks. There are three bays on the main facade (the western gable end facing Highland Street) and five bays on each of the long (north and south) sides. All but one bay originally contained a single tall arched window. Each window had nine over nine sash, a rough granite sill and an ornamental semi-circular arched brick hood mould with granite keystone. The central bay of the main facade contains the entrance--double paneled doors with a granite sill and a wide granite step. Above the doors are a rectangular transom window, a semi-circular window and again, an arched brick hood mould with granite keystone. In the western gable, are found two arched windows of the same design as, although shorter than, the windows below. Above them is a rectangular stone inscribed "1871". The only other ornamental features of the main facade are the simple corbelling on the rake, and the short returns of the cornice. The wooden cornice is also fairly simple, with a cove moulding softening its meeting with the wall. The shingled roof is broken only at the rear (eastern) end of the ridge by a brick chimney. The rear elevation is a strictly utilitarian flat wall, with a plain projecting chimney, a fire escape, and a short wooden gabled shed covering the steps to the basement. Originally, its only windows were two unornamented arched windows in the gable.

Exterior alterations made in the last thirty years to accomodate new educational and governmental uses, although sometimes unsympathetic, have not essentially altered the design. A gabled wooden porch with an arch now shelters the front door. The two easternmost bays on both long sides have also seen changes, but were nevertheless respected as units. On the north side, a side door with a small porch and concrete steps was built in the center of the next to last bay; and the fenestration was changed in the lower part of the eastern-most window. On the south side, a garage door was added in the next to last bay for the school shop; and half the window in the last bay was bricked up when the town vault was built. Two modern steel windows and a fire escape door were added to the rear wall to serve a second-story classroom.

The interior has been more seriously altered. It originally had two floors, each with a large hall. The lower floor had the largest hall, with a stage at the eastern end anterooms and a balcony at the western end. After the Town Hall was transferred to the local school system, a new floor with classrooms was built at the balcony level. Subsequently, the lower half of the hall was further subdivided for police department offices and the town vault. Although parts of its ceilings, walls, floor and woodwork can still be seen in the new rooms, the lower hall no longer survives as a space.

By contrast, the upper (now the third) floor has seen very little change beyond new lighting and heating units. Its most notable feature is a high semi-circular arched plaster ceiling. A storage room and vestibule are found at the western end, but most of the floor is occupied by another large hall. The woodwork of the hall is relatively simple, with a beaded board wainscoating on all walls and plain trim on the two doors with arches in the western wall and the two arched windows, (one now a fire escape door) in the eastern wall. The wooden floor is raised a few inches at the eastern end to provide a stage.

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Inventory—Nomination Form

The only other building on the property is a small jail built soon after the Town Hall. A plain one-story building, with common bond brick walls and a shingled gabled roof, the "lobby" has only a single door and a single window, both with a granite sill and a wooden lintel. The interior, now used for storage, has been stripped to the bare walls.

Most of the grounds have been paved to provide parking space for the Town Hall and the nearby school auditorium-gymnasium. But, on the Highland Street frontage of the property, a small landscaped area has been set aside for the Town Hall sign and the Town's monument to its Revolutionary soldiers, a bronze plaque on a rough granite slab.

8. Significance

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Ashland Town Hall is significant architecturally as a Victorian version of the traditional New England town hall, and historically as the major public building and meeting place of the Town of Ashland.

When the village section of the Town of Holderness was set off as the new Town of Ashland in 1868, the older town retained the Holderness Town Hall. The Ashland town meetings were at first held in the Squam Lake Hall, a privately owned building usually used for auctions. The need for a public building was soon apparent. At its annual meeting in March of 1871, the Town voted to build a town hall, appropriating $8,000 and electing a five-man building committee. The meeting adjourned until April 11, when the location of the building was to be decided. Squam Lake Hall burned to the ground on April 5, so the adjourned meeting was held in a pouring rain on its site. Although a Town Hall was now a necessity, the whole question seems to have become rather controversial. The April meeting adjourned without deciding anything, as did a May town meeting held in a barn. On June 10, the voters met in a warehouse and finally came to some conclusions. The appropriation was reduced to $4,000, the five man committee dismissed, and a new three man committee chosen to build a 36 foot by 60 foot town hall, on a site of their choosing. But, even that did not end the controversy, as yet another town meeting was called on June 29 to consider enlarging the building to 40 feet wide by 70 feet long. The Town voted to leave the question to the building committee, by instructing them to construct a building 36 to 40 feet wide, and 60 to 70 feet long.

The building committee soon settled all these questions by deciding to build "a brick Town Hall 40 by 70 feet on the site of the old Squam Lake Hall."[1] The lot was purchased for $500 on July 25. And records of payments to the building committee indicate that construction was underway by September 1, if not sooner. The building was completed by the end of the year, as on January 15, 1872, the selectmen signed a warrant for a special town meeting "at the Town Hall recently erected for the use of the Town."[2] The purpose of the meeting was to receive the building committee's report and its explanation for exceeding the $4000 appropriation by $2,509.42. Fortunately for the committee, the voters accepted the report and agreed to pay the balance. Unfortunately for us, the committee's report and records cannot now be found. We do know that the contractor was a local man, John Jewell. But we can say little else about its construction or its design.

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[1] *Laconia Democrat*, August 17, 1871.

[2] Ashland Town Clerk's Records, Book #1 (manuscript, Ashland Town Offices, Ashland Town Hall), p. 182.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet #3

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property ___.4___

Quadrangle name ___Holderness, NH___   Quadrangle scale ___1:62500___

UMT References

A | 1,9 | 3,8,7,8,5,0 | 4,8,4,1,3,5,0 |
   Zone Easting   Northing

B | | | |
   Zone Easting   Northing

C | | | |

D | | | |

E | | | |

F | | | |

G | | | |

H | | | |

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet #3

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

state	n/a	code	county	code
state	n/a	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	David Ruell
organization	Lakes Region Planning Commission	date	September 17, 1982
street & number	Main Street	telephone	(603) 279-8171
city or town	Meredith	state	New Hampshire 03253

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

___ national   _X_ 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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title   Commissioner, Dept. of Resources & Economic Development
NH State Historic Preservation Officer   date   February 8, 1983

For NPS use only
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
National Register   date   3/24/83

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

NPS Form 10-900-a
(3-82)

OMB No.1024-0018
Exp. 10-31-84

United States Department of the Interior
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Continuation sheet   #2 - SIGNIFICANCE   Item number   8   Page   2

If the designer is unknown, the source of his design is still obvious. Before the Civil War, many New Hampshire towns built town halls of a standard type--a one-story, wooden, gable-roofed, rectangular building with its entrance at the center of the gable end, and tall windows on the sides lighting a large hall. The Holderness Town Hall is such a building. And similar town halls still stand in nearby towns such as Bristol, Sanbornton, Salisbury, Moultonborough and Dorchester. The Ashland Town Hall is basically a Victorian version of this standard type. Here it appears in brick on a larger scale with more ornament--arched windows, hood moulds, pilasters and frieze, but the plan and form are essentially the same. A not unsimilar contemporary structure is the Charlestown Town Hall of 1872. But, most post Civil War town halls, at least in New Hampshire, were rather more elaborate. The Ashland Town Hall was among the last to still echo the older tradition. Certainly, to fully document the New England town hall, the National Register should include buildings like the Ashland Town Hall.

(At its March meeting in 1872, the Town voted to build a "lobby". The town report records payments made on the construction of the jail between September 1872 and March 1873. It served for many years to house local criminals, drunks and tramps.)

As in most New England towns, the Town Hall was the center of the political life of the community. From 1872 through 1950, town meetings and elections were held in the Town Hall. Politics might be discussed and argued in the streets and the stores. But, the final debates and confrontations, meetings and votes were all held in the Town Hall. Here all the basic decisions of the local government were made for nearly eighty years. (The Town Hall also served as a social and entertainment center. As the largest public hall in the community, it was the most popular site for balls, dances, concerts, plays, traveling shows, movies, meetings, lectures and indoor sports events.)

After the erection of a larger auditorium and gymnasium across the street in 1950, meetings, elections and public events shifted to the new building. In February of 1952, after a fire destroyed the school shop, the building was transferred to the Ashland School District and converted into classrooms for the shop and home economics courses. Most of the major alterations of the building were made for this new use as a school. In 1970, a new school addition was built to house these departments, and the Town Hall was returned to the municipal government. In 1972, the town offices were moved into the former classrooms. The building now houses the offices of the selectmen, town clerk, tax collector, police, water, sewer and electric departments, and serves as the meeting place for such local governmental units as the selectmen, utility commission, planning board, budget committee, etc. Although no longer the site of town meetings and elections, the Ashland Town Hall, is after over a century of public service, still the seat of local government.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Continuation sheet   #3   Item number s   9 & 10   Page   1

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

Ashland Town Clerk's Records, Book #1 (manuscript, Ashland Town Offices, Ashland Town Hall)

Ashland Selectmen's Book #1 (manuscript, Ashland Town Offices, Ashland Town Hall)

Annual Reports of the Town of Ashland (Ashland, N.H.) for the years ending March 11, 1872;
      March 4, 1873; December 31, 1949; December 31, 1950; December 31, 1970; December 31, 1972.

Lake Village Times, April 8 & 22, May 27, 1871; February 2, 1872.

Laconia Democrat, April 13, August 17, 1871.

Doris Tatham & John R. Smith, Ashland Centennial Book (Ashland, N.H., 1968).

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA:

Verbal boundary description and justification:

The nominated property is a rectangular lot (99 feet by 198 feet) at the southeast corner
of the junction of Highland Street and Cottage Place. It is bounded on the north by
Cottage Place, on the west by Highland Street, on the south by land of St. Mark's Episcopal
Church and on the east by land of Richard and Lumina Straw. The nominated property includes
the Ashland Town Hall, its one outbuilding (the former jail) and its grounds. (Ashland
Tax Map 16, Block 7, Lot 1).

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(3-82)

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National Register of Historic Places
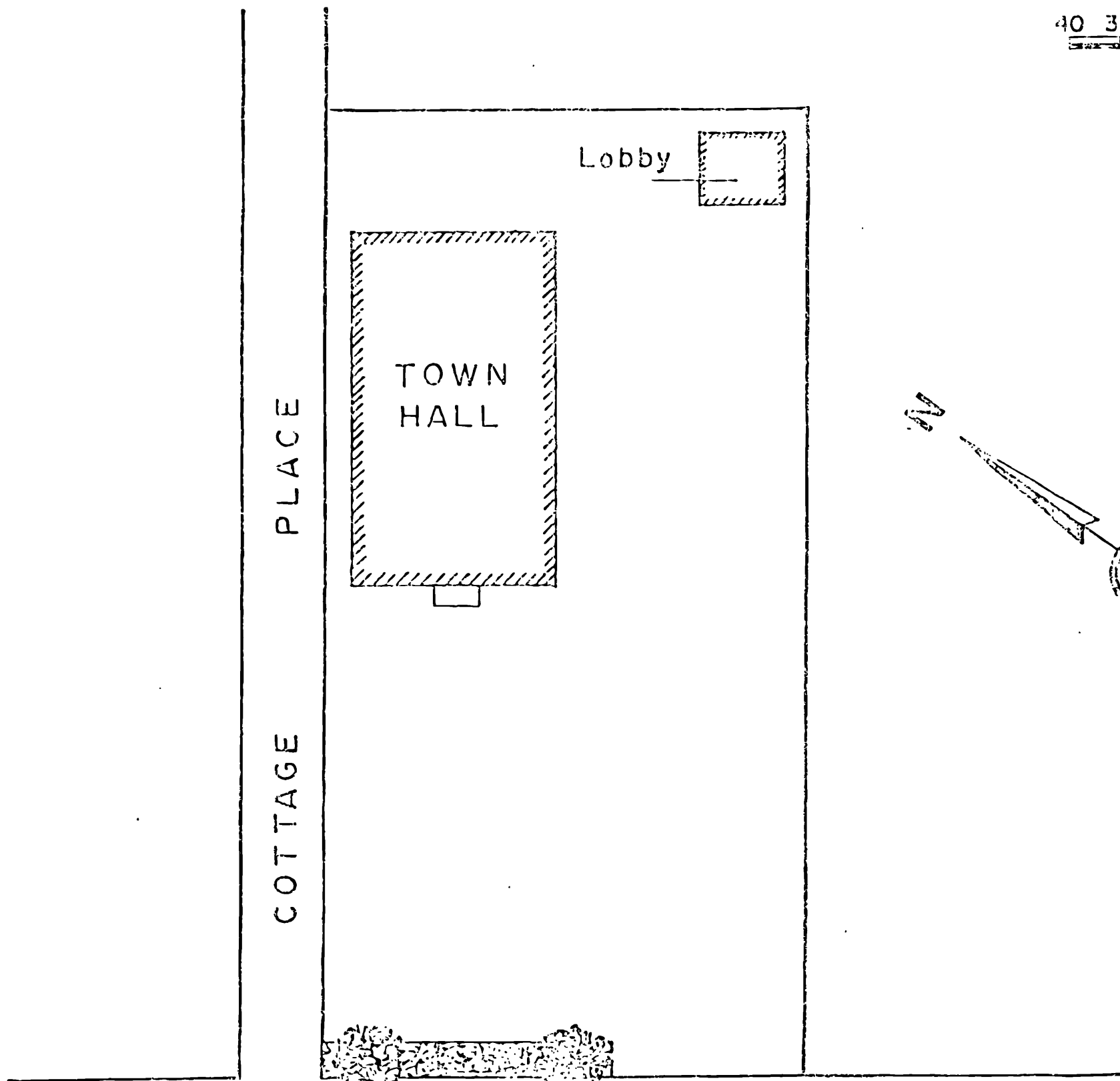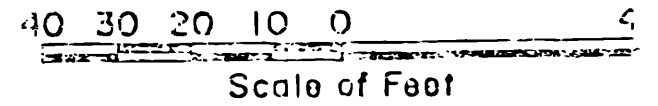# Inventory—Nomination Form

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Continuation sheet #4 – ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION   Item number   --   Page   1

SKETCH MAP

40 30 20 10 0   5

Scale of Feet

Lobby

TOWN HALL

PLACE

COTTAGE

N

HIGHLAND   STREET

SCHOOL ST.

ASHLAND TOWN HALL

ASHLAND, N.H.

Prepared by:
LAKES REGION PLANNING COMMISSION
MEREDITH, NEW HAMPSHIRE