

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

FEB 23 1993

NATIONAL
REGISTER

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 18). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Horace Belden School and Central Grammar School
other names/site number Simsbury High School; Simsbury Town Hall

2. Location

street & number 933 Hopmeadow Street; 29 Massaco Street N/A not for publication
city, town Simsbury N/A vicinity
state Connecticut code CT county Hartford code 003 zip code 06070

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
		<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

[Signature] February 18, 1993
Signature of certifying official Date
Director, Connecticut Historical Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this 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.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

[Signature] 3/25/93
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/school

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/school

GOVERNMENT/town hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/

Late Gothic Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation sandstone

walls sandstone

roof asphalt shingles

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Horace Belden School and the Central Grammar School are similar brownstone buildings located off the west side of Hopmeadow Street, the main thoroughfare in Simsbury. The Belden School, the former Simsbury High School and now the town hall, is set back from the street on a level lot. Its counterpart, the Central School, is located to the northwest on a contiguous property. Set up on a ridge and not visible from Hopmeadow Street because of intervening vegetation and trees, it is accessed from a side road, Massaco Street. (See Exhibit A for site plan.)

The Belden School is composed of two main sections (Photograph #s 1, 2). As designed and constructed, the original 1907 main block was a low one- and one-half-story structure (144' x 38') with a hipped roof and parapeted walls, set on a raised foundation (Exhibit B). It was later widened to 58 feet at the south end and an intersecting rear wing (64'x 92') was built in 1927 at the northeast corner to house a gymnasium and auditorium. The wing has a gabled roof with end wall parapets. In 1961 additional classroom space was added across the rear of the main block when the building was remodeled for use as a grammar school (Photograph #3). In 1983 the interior was renovated for use as a town hall. At that time the wing was renovated for use as the police station. Its south side was altered and a small garage was located in front of that elevation.

The style of the original building is a composite of several influences. Its rock-faced ashlar brownstone walls are influenced by Richardsonian Romanesque but the other primary architectural features, the parapets, the stepped corner buttresses, the projecting angled bays of the facade, and the use of multiple dormers, are more Neo-Gothic, a style also known as Late Gothic Revival. Dormers are repeated along all the slopes of the hipped roof, which was originally sheathed in variegated green slate and is now asphalt-shingled. The facade dormers have wood-shingled peaks and display flared rake boards. The dormers in the north end elevation and across the rear have glazed peaks. Above the main entrance, set off-center in the long facade, is a gabled wall dormer. The entrance itself is modified Neo-Gothic with a broad, slightly pointed arch; its springline is set at midpoint in line with the continuous brownstone water-table (Photograph #4). A band of six-over-six double-hung windows with four-paned transoms, arranged in groups of seven and five, extends across the facade. Paired windows are found along the original north end and repeated in the north elevation of the wing. A set of four windows is located on the original south end elevation, a pattern repeated in the addition there.

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The main entrance today is located on the north elevation between the two sections of the building and is of modern construction with an access ramp and permanent canopy, part of the major renovation as a town hall. Although the interior was generally gutted at this time, individual features remain in place such as the stairwells and a few original classroom doors (Photograph #s 5, 6).

The Central Grammar School is also composed of two sections: a 1913 main block joined to a 1949-50 addition on the west by a one-story Colonial Revival-style connector (Photograph #s 7, 8, 9; Exhibit C). The original main block, which is oriented north and south at the extreme eastern edge of the site, was built in an "L" plan. It has a slated gabled roof, rusticated ashlar brownstone walls, sills and lintels, and a high exposed foundation with a watertable. The east side of the "L" terminates at the north end with a parapeted gabled section set at 90°. The south side has gable parapets on either end (Photograph #10). Although no elevation presents itself as a facade, entrances are found on the north and south ends which are identical in design (Photograph #11). They are recessed, set within a slightly pointed arch with a rectangular wall surround. The double-leaf doors are surmounted by a multi-paned transom. The first-floor window openings, which are arranged in groups of five, now have modern sash with translucent plastic glazing. Most contain fixed sash with small awning windows at the bottom. The basement story windows are original. A small square boiler room projects from the west elevation and has a large stone stack with chamfered corners.

Interior finishes generally remain in place. They include vertical narrow-board wainscot and plastered coved ceilings in both classrooms and corridors (Photograph #s 12, 13). Classroom doors have been replaced but the original closet doors remain in the corridors.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1907 - 1930

Significant Dates

1907; 1913

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

Horace Belden

Architect/Builder

Edward T. Hapgood (architect)

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Horace Belden and Central Grammar schools are significant as distinctive similar examples of Neo-Gothic architecture. Although they have been remodeled to some degree, both have retained their essential exterior architectural features and materials and the interior of the Central Grammar School is largely intact. While the architect of the Central Grammar School is yet unknown, the Belden School was designed by Edward T. Hapgood, of Hapgood and Hapgood of Hartford, a firm noted for its designs for public buildings in the state.¹ Further significance is derived from the fact that the schools are historically linked not only because of their key roles in the development of education in Simsbury in the early twentieth century, but also through their association with Horace Belden, a prominent native son who made major donations to the town for their construction.

Architectural Significance

These schools epitomize in their design and massing the prevailing early twentieth-century philosophy that educational buildings should be monumental structures designed in styles that reflected Euro-English academic traditions. Such architectural precedent had been commonly invoked in the Collegiate Gothic design of earlier college buildings in the state, most notably at Yale, Trinity, and Wesleyan universities and, later in the 1940s, at the University of Connecticut at Storrs. Some of this effect is lost at the Central Grammar School because of its siting but the long, low massing of the Belden School on its open site particularly conveys this concept. An imposing almost intimidating structure, it commands respect for the value of education. It is believed to have been modelled on Cavendish College at Cambridge, England, constructed in 1876.²

With the exception of the replacement of the slate roof by asphalt shingles, the original Belden school has a well-preserved exterior, with its most public elevations appearing today much as they did when it was built to the design of Edward T. Hapgood (d. 1915). Later renovations have been sensitive to his original concept and the first of these utilized the same materials and features.

Although it has a larger, more prominent modern addition, Central Grammar School is

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Annual Report, Town of Simsbury, Connecticut. 1911, 1914, 1938-45, 1961.
American Architect. Vols. 86, 92, 96 1904-1909; Architectural Record. Vol. 39, 1916.
Avery Obituary Index of Architects, 2nd Edition. Boston: G.R. Hall & Co., 1980. Barber, Lucius I., M.D. A Record and Documentary History of Simsbury. Simsbury, Connecticut: D.A.R., 1931.
Ellsworth, John E. Simsbury: Being a Brief Historical Sketch of Ancient and Modern Simsbury, 1642-1935. Simsbury, Connecticut, 1935.
Hapgood and Hapgood: The Architecture of Melvin H. Hapgood and Edward T. Hapgood. Hartford: Stowe-Day Foundation, 1992.
Vibert, William M. Three Centuries of Simsbury, 1670-1970. Simsbury, Connecticut: Simsbury Tercentenary Committee, Inc., 1970.
Withey, Henry F. AIA & Elsie Rathbun Withey. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased). Los Angeles: New Age Publishing, 1956.
Woollacot, Evan W. The Gavel and The Book: The Simsbury Town Meeting, 1670-1986. Canaan, New Hampshire: Phoenix Publishing, 1987.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) 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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Yale University Library Library; Simsbury Genealogical Library; Simsbury Library

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property approx. 12

UTM References

A

1	8	6	8	2	0	1	0	4	6	3	8	7	2	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

C

1	8	6	8	2	4	0	0	4	6	3	8	7	4	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

E 1 8 6 8 2 5 0 0 4 6 3 8 5 7 0

B

1	8	6	8	2	0	2	0	4	6	3	8	8	0	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

D

1	8	6	8	2	5	1	0	4	6	3	8	6	6	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated properties are identified on the Tax Assessor's Maps of Simsbury, Connecticut, as follows: Map H-9/Block 20/Lot 1 and Map G-9/Block 20/Lot 7.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated properties include the land and buildings which have always been associated during the period and dates of significance.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By Reviewed by John Herzan, Connecticut National Register Coordinator

name/title Jan Cunningham, National Register Consultant
organization Cunningham Associates Ltd. date 7/15/92
street & number 37 Orange Road telephone (203) 347 4072
city or town Middletown state CT zip code 06457

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the better preserved. It has retained not only its original exterior and floor plan but most of its original interior finishes.

In the late nineteenth century Edward T. Hapgood was in partnership with his cousin, Melvin H. Hapgood (1860-1899). As Hapgood and Hapgood, the firm had designed the original Simsbury Free Library. Edward Hapgood was later associated, at least on individual projects, with architect Donn Barber. Several other of the firm's buildings designed by Edward Hapgood are featured in architectural periodicals. They include plates and plans for the Horace Belden School which appeared in 1909.³ His other major buildings include the 1904 Connecticut Building constructed for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition and the 1916 Rossini Insurance Company Building in Hartford.⁴

Historical Background

Like all Connecticut towns, Simsbury has been concerned with public education from the outset. A grammar school education had been provided since 1670 when Simsbury broke off from Windsor and became an independent town. District schools first established in the late eighteenth century, which numbered 13 by the early 1800s, continued to function into the twentieth century. Secondary educational needs were initially met by private schools, of which there were a number in the town, beginning in the late nineteenth century.⁵

The modernization of the Simsbury public school system in the twentieth century was a gradual process which was not really finalized until after World War II, when for the first time public education was fully financed by public funds. The early years of the century saw the establishment of public secondary education and the consolidation of grade schools but these new schools were largely funded by private subscription at little or no cost to the town, primarily by Horace Belden. No new philanthropists came forward to take his place after his death in 1931, partly because of the limitations imposed by the new federal tax structure then in place. By the 1950s, however, the scale of capital investment required for new school construction precluded a continued dependence on private philanthropy. More modern systems, such as bonding, and increased taxpayer participation were required.

The town first established a committee in 1902 "to investigate the desirability of establishing a public school of higher degree." The committee found that 72 of the 168 towns in the state provided a high school education. With a potential school population in Simsbury of at least a 100 and probably some assurance that neighboring towns would send pupils on a tuition basis, plans moved forward with the purchase of the lot. The first subscription for the building raised \$22,000. It was completed in 1907 for 125 students as the Simsbury High School, for a total cost of \$55,000. A local masonry contractor, William Ketchin, did the construction and the stone came from his quarry in Simsbury. There is some disagreement between local historians but apparently about \$40,000 was donated by Horace Belden.

Simsbury High School served as a regional school from the start. Students came from neighboring towns, including East Granby, Granby, and Bloomfield, originally all part of Simsbury, and Avon. Many came by railroad, arriving at the local station just down the

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street. A number were from the village of Tariffville, located in Simsbury on the other side of the Farmington River. By 1914 four of the 110 pupils enrolled (37 from outside Simsbury) had graduated. School bus service was implemented in 1928 for residents, by which time the high school already held more than 212 students. New additions had been added in 1927 for more classroom space and a combination gymnasium/auditorium.

Although some district schools continued to function as late as 1935, the first steps for consolidation of the grade schools took place when Central Grammar School was planned to replace two district schools (Hopmeadow and Center schools). It was completed in 1913 by the Ketchin Company, again with stone from their local quarry. Once again Horace Belden was a major subscriber and gave most of the cost of \$35,000. He also donated \$10,000 for the building of a new grammar school in Tariffville.

Simsbury grew dramatically between 1952 and 1962 and more than four million dollars was spent on school construction. Even before World War II, the high school had been overcrowded, drawing criticism from the state board of education. A decision was made to no longer take students from Avon and limit the total to 450, which only temporarily solved the problem. By 1961 the total pupil population was increasing at a rate of 300 per year and the high school was no longer adequate. A large new wing was added to the 1955 Junior High School on Firetown Road to house a new high school. That year Belden School closed for renovations as a new grammar school with plans drawn by the architectural firm of Russell Gibson VonDohlen, for a total cost of almost \$500,000. It was renamed the Horace Belden School in belated public recognition of his support of education. By 1967 another new separate high school was built in Simsbury for an additional \$4 million.

Within 20 years Belden School was no longer needed for educational purposes. Plans were initiated to consider other uses. The most feasible was its conversion to a town hall to replace Eno Memorial Hall, which had served as the town hall since 1932. (It had been a bequest from Antoinette Eno Wood, another Simsbury philanthropist.)

There were a number of factors influencing this decision. There was a need to consolidate town services under one roof. Including the police department, they were then housed in three separate buildings, which could be sold and returned to the tax rolls. The town offices had already outgrown the space at Eno Memorial Hall and had moved in 1969 into the former Simsbury Bank and Trust Building. Town meetings often exceeded the capacity of the auditorium at Eno Hall and were held in the schools. An additional factor was the limited parking at Eno Hall. In 1982 a town meeting with a record attendance of more than 3000 citizens voted to move forward with the project. After a controversy only resolved by a lawsuit and referendum, the townspeople agreed to spend in excess of \$2 million the following year to renovate Belden School as the third town hall in Simsbury's history.

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Section number 8 Page 4Historical Significance

Horace Belden (1845-1931) was the son of Horace and Rachel Fowler Belden. Thomas Belden, his grandfather, who had made his fortune in the West Indies trade, invested in a gin distillery in town in 1807 on Hop Brook, and set up his son, Horace Belden, Sr., in the business, the first of the family to live in Simsbury. Late in his life he built a fine stone house on West Street in 1852.⁶ According to the memoirs of Josephine Pomeroy, a niece, Horace Belden, Jr., who never married, was devoted to his mother and lived with her in the stone house built by his father. After his mother's death in 1899, Horace continued the tradition of making the homestead a family summer retreat for his sisters and their children (his only brother had died before age 30) and devoted himself to town affairs. Having inherited considerable wealth in land, buildings, and stocks from his father, Horace did not depend on the family distillery for an income. In fact he only ran it for a few years after his father's death in 1861 and closed the business for good soon after the Civil War. His many philanthropies in the Town of Simsbury included not only the generous school donations, but major capital support of the First Congregational Church. He also founded and paid for the Simsbury Water Company in 1872. His largest single donation to the town was a bequest of \$100,000 for the building and repairing of town roads.

End Notes:

1. Withey et al, Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased) (Los Angeles: New Age Publishing Co, 1956), p. 263.
2. The similarity between these buildings was established by Calvin Fisher of West Simsbury but has not been confirmed by photographic evidence. See correspondence in Simsbury High School File, Simsbury Library. Cavendish College was a state, not a public, school. It was taken over by Homerton College and as of 1981 was part of the Women's Teacher College at Cambridge University.
3. The American Architect, Vol. 96, No. 1769, November, 1909.
4. Ibid., Vol. 86, No. 31, 1904; Architectural Record, Vol. 39, 1916, pp. 168-171.
5. Simsbury Academy was founded by John B. McLean in 1880. In 1888 he built a new school, McLean Seminary, which was used as the high school in the first decade of the twentieth century, before Belden School (Simsbury High School) was completed. He later served as the town's first superintendent of schools. In 1900 the Westminster School relocated here from Dobbs Ferry, New York, and in 1917 the Ethel Walker School for Girls was founded.
6. The Belden biography is taken from Janice Cunningham, "Horace Belden House," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 1986. Owner's permission was denied but the building was determined eligible for listing by the Keeper of the National Register.

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Horace Belden and Central Grammar Schools, Simsbury, Connecticut

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List of Photographs

Property: Belden and Central Grammar Schools, Simsbury, Connecticut

Photographer: Cunningham Associates Ltd.

Date: 6/92

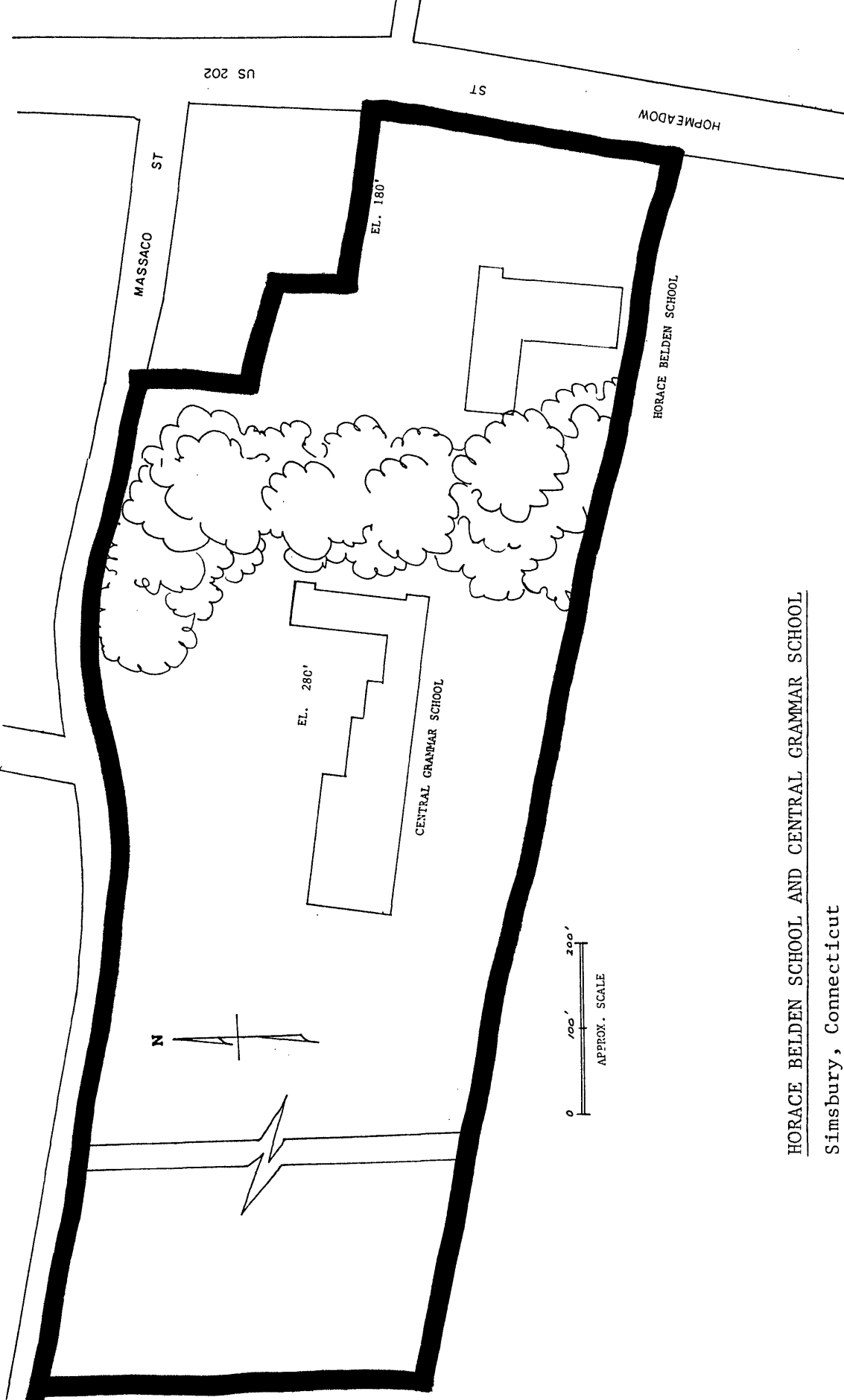
Negatives on File: Connecticut Historical Commission

Belden School

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Facade and south elevation
Facing: NW | 2. North elevation
Facing: SW |
| 3. South and rear elevation
Facing: NE | 4. Main entrance
Facing: W |
| 5. First floor corridor
Facing: NW | 6. Former classroom
Facing: SE |

Central Grammar School

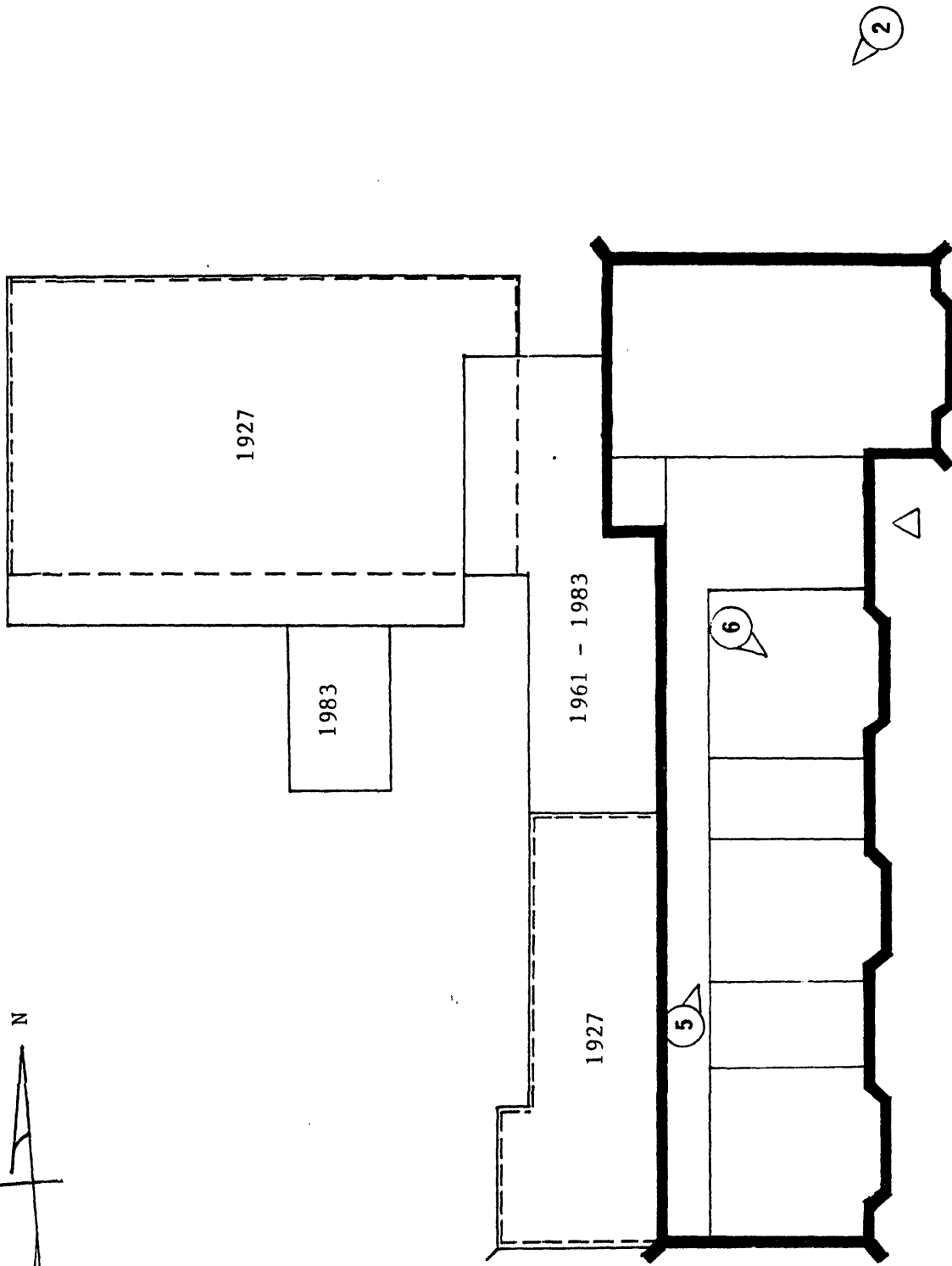
- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 7. East elevation
Facing: N | 8. West and north elevation
Facing: SE |
| 9. 1949 addition
Facing: SW | 10. South elevation
Facing: NE |
| 11. North entrance
Facing: SW | 12. Typical classroom
Facing: SW |
| 13. Typical corridor
Facing: N | |



HORACE BELDEN SCHOOL AND CENTRAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL

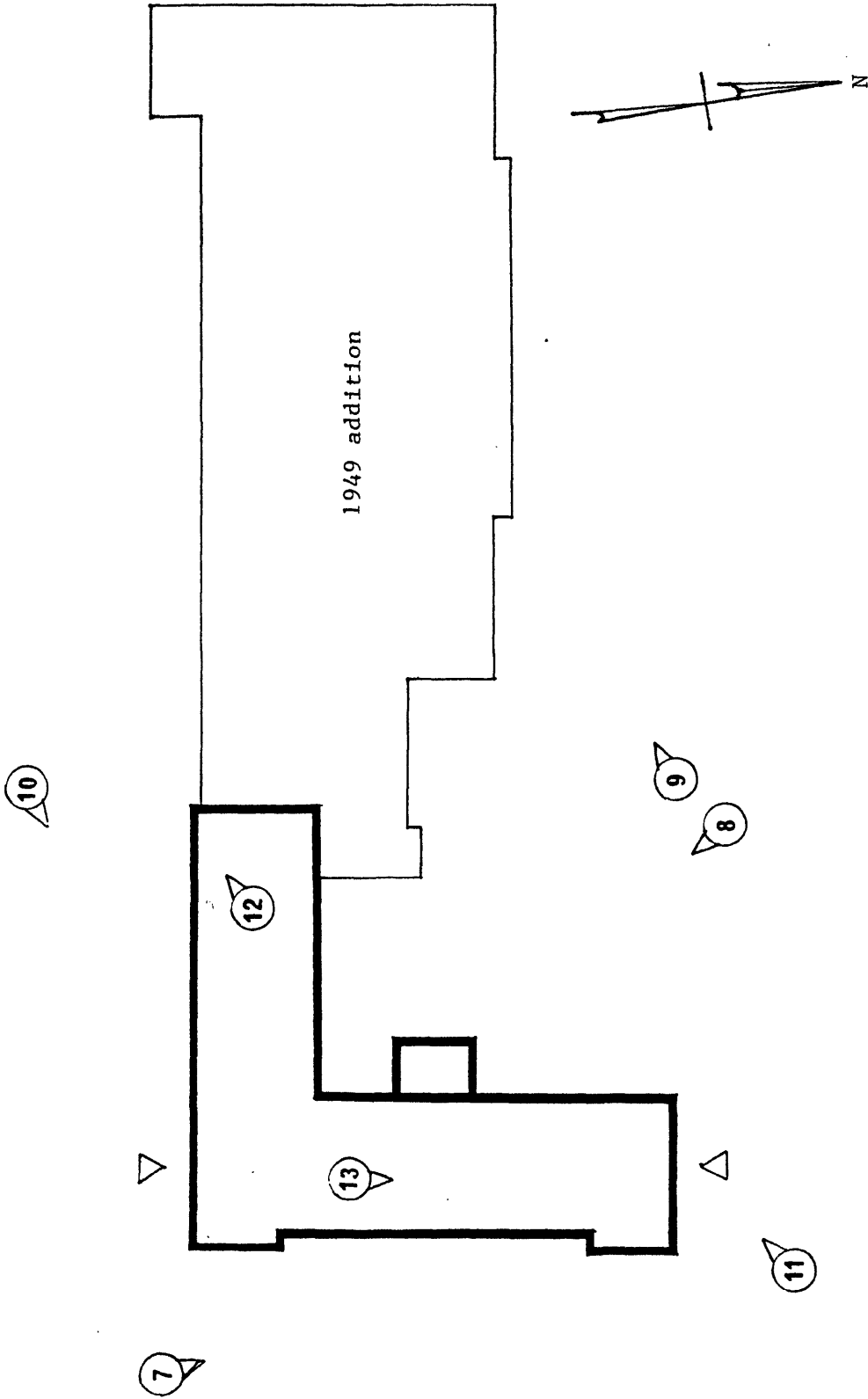
Simsbury, Connecticut

Site plan with location of buildings and elevations



HORACE BELDEN SCHOOL (Simsbury High School)
Simsbury, Connecticut

Schematic Diagram and Photograph Views with original footprint and floorplan
Approximate Scale: 1" = 30'



CENTRAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL, SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT

Schematic Diagram with Photograph Views and original footprint
Scale: 1' = 50"