Fig. 1: The town hall, above right, has changed very little outwardly from what it was in 1900, above left. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

A History of the

Hamilton Town Hall

From 1897 to 2014

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For over a hundred years after its incorporation on Jun. 21, 1793, Hamilton's government and church meetings were held in the church meetinghouse. Up to 1843, the sanctuary was used for both. For its meetings that year, the town began renting a vestry [37] recently built below the sanctuary. [1] At first the rent was low, but by the late 1800s, the town was paying more than $50 annually, plus maintenance costs.

Annual town meetings were held at 10 a.m., the second Tuesday in March. * In advance, the town clerk posted the warrant at the meetinghouse, the general store on the south corner of Bridge and Main streets and, after 1865, also at the general store at the railroad depot. [1]

Town government meetings continued at the church house, despite an 1833 act of the General Court of Massachusetts separating church and government. Civic government no longer was to be under the control of the church. The church house and pastors were not to be supported by tax money. [23]

Town and church government, in Hamilton, had been intertwined from the town's beginning. Nearly all the elected officials were members of the Congregational Church. In the 1600s and into the 1700s, only members of the church could vote on town matters. Building a separate town government building was seen as an unnecessary expense, since much of the routine work by town officials was done in their homes. [10]

Occasionally at the annual town meetings, following the 1833 legislation, the question of building a town house was reviewed and denied. (*Note: The term town hall was not used for the word "hall" then referred to a public meeting place for dances and parties, such as dance halls*.) In 1878, voters overwhelmingly defeated a motion to build a town house, ninety-eight to thirty-seven. [2] As late as 1894, Hamilton voters said no to building a town house. [6]

Finally, in 1897, voters agreed to build a town house on Main Street, between the church house and the center. The article calling for the building's construction said, "providing a building suitable for transacting all Town business," [3, 1] With little opposition, [45] voters appropriated $20,000 for building the town house. [4]

Why the change in favor of the town house?

Yes, there were a few officials who needed office space. And yes, the number of people attending annual town and committee meetings was more than the church vestry could accommodate. However, based on the creation of a large auditorium in the new building, the large space for a library and a large room for a schoolroom, the major impetus for the new building clearly was not on providing space for town government.

* Up to 1752, the Gregorian calendar was used and the new year began Mar. 25. The holding of the Annual town meeting in March was a holdover, of it being the last month in the year.

Land acquired

On Apr. 8, 1897, Selectman Daniel D. Stone sold a one-acre lot, on Main Street, for $1,000, to the town. [13] The lot, 200 x 218 x 200 x 218 ft., [14] was farmland with no structures. (*Fig. 2*)

On the north side of this land was the Francis C. Norton property, on which he had a general store (*today 585 Main St.*). Stone, who was a butcher, also owned the land to the south of the town hall property. Mrs. Mary A. Foster, widow of Charles W. Foster, owned the land behind the town hall property.

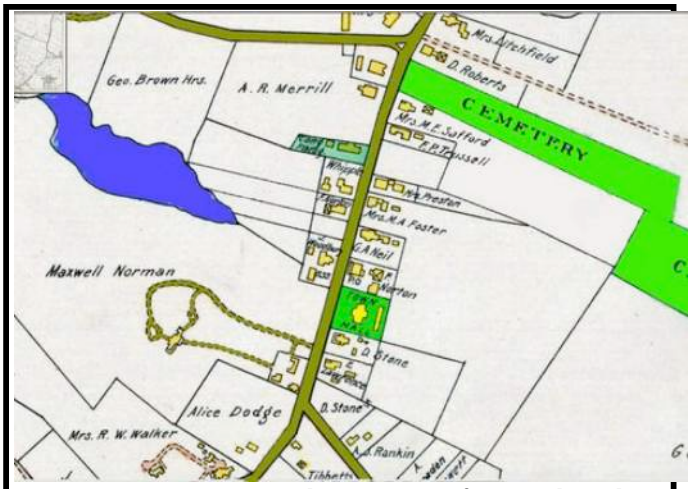


Fig. 2: Town center was along Main St. from Cutler Rd. south to Bridge St. Source, 1910 Walker Map.

The town hall lot was part of a three and a half acre property Daniel Stone bought for $575, on Jun. 2, 1871, from Edward A. Simmonds. [13] The lot was in the center of Hamilton, the area on Main Street between Bridge Street and Cutler Road. Here were general stores, the post office, a blacksmith shop, the cemetery, and the church meeting-house. [1]

Built in 1897

It did not take long for the long-delayed town house to be erected. Construction and furnishing were completed in December 1897, and the building was occupied in January 1898. [1] All this was done in just nine months.

An Oct. 27, 1897 photo showing construction of the building (*Fig. 3*) reveals that a considerable amount of the work was yet to be finished during November and December. The work was done in spite of several snowstorms and below average winter temperatures.

A key factor in completing the building, in such a short period of time, was the work force. They were skilled construction workers that had immigrated to this country from Italy, Germany, England, and Spain.

The final cost (*see table*), less the architect's fee and the cost for the land and furnishings, was $12,274 (*about $345,000 in today's dollar*). The furnishings cost $1,420. [4]

Fig: 3: Construction was completed in December 1897. Photo, Benjamin H. Conant, 1897.

Town Hall Building Costs [a]

Item	Supplier	Cost, $
Cesspool building		62.50
Construction	Pitman & Brown	9,988
Drain pipe	William F. Redlon	69.21
Driving well	Ivory Quimby	25.00
Equipment freight	Charles S. Gwinn	3.95
Expressing	Arthur C. Cummings	12.25
Foundation	Emery Lawrence	833.00
Funnel	John M. Daniels	14.38
Grading	Charles E. Whipple	878.76
Gravel	Otis F. Brown	148.00
Insurance	Theodore F. Cogswell	60.00
Labor	Charles S. Gwinn	13.15
Land survey	Metcalf & Ashton	20.00
Pumping equipment	Ryder Ericisson Engine	145.78
Total		**12,273.98**

a – Source, 1889, Hamilton Annual Reports, pg. 17.

To pay for building the town hall, the Hamilton borrowed $20,000 from the town of Ipswich. [4] In 1902, the loan payment was $3,109, of which nearly a third, $959, was for the interest. [121]

Architectural plans for the building were produced by Ernest Miguel Antonio Machado of Salem, the son of a Cuban immigrant: he was paid $885. [4]

Among other structures for which Machado was the architect were: the Manchester Yacht Club, and the Ipswich mansion, "Mostly House," owned by James H. Proctor, Esq., which was built in 1894. [1, 111] (*Now, owned by New England Bio Labs*) It was called "mostly hall," because Proctor's wife, upon seeing the building for the first time, remarked that it "was mostly hall." [152] Her comments are echoed in a 1906 American Homes and Gardens article concerning the Proctor house: the author stated, "The whole of the center is occupied with the main hall." [111]

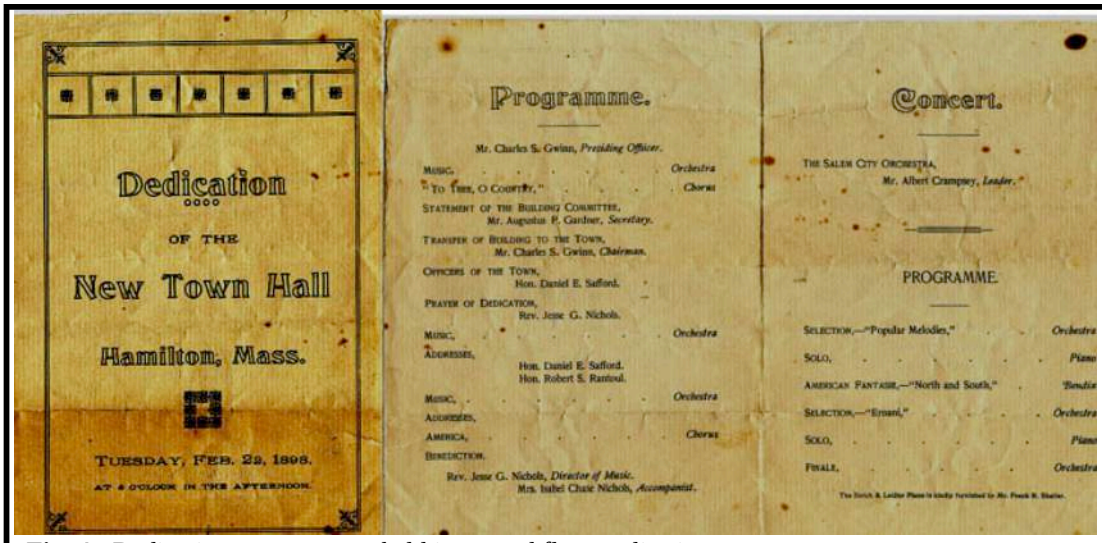
Pitman & Brown of Salem, the builder, was a relatively new company, having started in 1889. A notable project of the company was building the Winnegan Hotel on Baker's Island, in Salem Harbor. At the time a leading hotel in the region, [32] the fifty-guestroom hotel opened in 1889. The hotel's name is an Algonquin word that means "beautiful expanse of water:" which certainly was true of the view from the hotel. A fire destroyed the hotel in 1906. [40]

Gala Dedication

Very appropriately, the Hamilton town hall was dedicated Feb. 22, 1898, which was the recently (*1885*) established date for a federal holiday honoring the country's first president, George Washington.

About thirty years later, on Feb. 22, 1927, President Calvin Coolidge in addressing a joint session of Congress paid homage to President Washington saying that he "was the directing spirit without which there could have been no independence, no Union, no Constitution, no Republic," and most likely no Hamilton.

Despite Feb. 22, 1898 being a rainy and cold day, [73] about "500 citizens, including many handsome women," attended a distinguished dedication program, at an early 3 P.M. dinner, served in the first-floor schoolroom (*now the Memorial Meeting Room*). The Myopia Hunt Club caterer was in charge of the food. [10, 8]



Dedication

OF THE

New Town Hall

Hamilton, Mass.

TUESDAY, FEB. 22, 1898.

AT 4 O'CLOCK IN THE AFTERNOON.

Programme.

Mr. Charles S. Gwinn, *Presiding Officer.*

Music, ... Orchestra

"To Thee, O Country," . . . . . Chorus

Statement of the Building Committee,
Mr. Augustus P. Gardner, *Secretary.*

Transfer of Building to the Town,
Mr. Charles S. Gwinn, *Chairman.*

Officers of the Town,
Hon. Daniel E. Safford.

Prayer of Dedication,
Rev. Jesse G. Nichols.

Music, ... Orchestra

Addresses,
Hon. Daniel E. Safford.
Hon. Robert S. Rantoul.

Music, ... Orchestra

Addresses,

America, ... Chorus

Benediction.

Rev. Jesse G. Nichols, *Director of Music.*
Mrs. Isabel Chase Nichols, *Accompanist.*

Concert.

The Salem City Orchestra,
Mr. Albert Crampney, *Leader.*

PROGRAMME.

Selection,—"Popular Melodies," . . . Orchestra

Solo, ... Piano

American Fantasie,—"North and South," . Bendix

Selection,—"Ernani," . . . . . Orchestra

Solo, ... Piano

Finale, ... Orchestra

The Dutch & Leader Piano is kindly furnished by Mr. Frank H. Shaler.

Fig. 4: Dedication program was held in second floor auditorium.
Source: Hamilton Historical Society

The title on the program was "Dedication of the New Town Hall, Hamilton, Mass." (*Fig. 4*) Apparently, since there was a large auditorium on the second floor, there was no objection in calling the new building a “hall.“

Daniel E. Safford, Esq., town treasurer and former selectman, a well-known historian,* and the former Beverly mayor, Robert S. Rantoul, gave the principal addresses. [25]

The Salem City Orchestra played America (*Not the Star Spangled Banner, for it did not become the National Anthem until 1931.*), provided a concert and afterwards music for dancing. [25] The party lasted until 3 a.m. [8]

Just nine days later, on Mar. 3, 1898, a sunny Thursday, the people of Hamilton held their first annual town meeting in the second floor auditorium. Daniel E. Safford was the Moderator and the selectmen were Isaac F. Knowlton, George E. Safford, and George Gibney. [12]

Of special note was that seventeen women voted for school board members. [12] The 19th Amendment, which prohibited state or federal sex-based restrictions on voting, was ratified twenty-two years later, in 1920.

The 1898 warrant had nineteen articles. The total budget was $70,740 (*just under $2 million in 2014 dollars*) and the town debt was $31,500 (*about $870,000 in 2014 dollars*). [4] At the time, Hamilton's population was about 1,600.

Women, from the Congregational Church, served a noon time dinner in the first floor schoolroom. [1]

The last town meeting held in the auditorium was Mar. 11, 1952. The selectmen were Lawrence R. Stone, Edward A. DeWitt, and Everett F. Haley, who also were the Board of Public Welfare and the Board of Health. (*Lawrence R. Stone was a Hamilton Selectman for thirty-three years: 1941-1974.*)

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* Daniel E. Safford wrote a chapter, Hamilton, for the book History of Essex County, published by, J. W. Lewis & Co., Philadelphia, PA, 1888.

Fig. 5: An impressive addition to the Town of Hamilton. Photo, F. C. Norton, 1900

The 1953 budget was $435,425.12, which was about $90,000 more than the 1952 actual expenses. The selectmen said rising costs were due to inflationary spiral and "our rapidly increasing population" requiring more services and facilities. [66]

Since 1953, Annual Town Meetings have been held in the Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School auditorium. The main reason for leaving the town hall was to eliminate climbing the stairs to the auditorium. In addition, the high school auditorium has more comfortable seating and its inclined floor provides better visibility for people making presentations at the front. Further, there were more toilets at the high school.

Stately Exterior

The town hall design created by Ernest M. A. Machado is impressive, graceful and dignified (*Fig. 5*). * What an impressive addition this was to a small Massachusetts town, having a population well below two thousand.

In the design of the town hall, aesthetics were very important. The façade of the building embodied symbolic statements of the beliefs of the townspeople. The American Federal-style, two-story building has an extended center section, 41 ft. wide and 79 ft. deep, and two, equal-size wings (*ells*), 29 ft. wide and 64 ft. deep, on the north and south sides. The wings, with their duplicate design, sit back 11.5 ft., off the center section, at the front and 5.75 ft., at the back.

In addition to their architectural aspect, the wings provided space, on the second floor, for a stage at the south end of an auditorium in the center section, and at the north end a lobby with a grand, double staircase, with divided flights. After ascending the narrow stairways from the first floor lobby, visitors must have been impressed by the elegant upper floor lobby (*Fig. 18, on pg. 15*).

* In those cases where the town hall remains as it originally was built, the present tense is used.

The exterior of both wings was pine clapboard. Brick and stone were, in the 1800s, common construction materials for Federal-style, municipal buildings. However, the choice of wood for the town hall was much more in common with other structures in Hamilton. All surfaces on the sides and the back of the building were also pine clapboard.

The front of the center section has the appearance of being stone; however, it is wood. Vertical butt joining of wide boards creates large flat surfaces, which when painted white appear to be stone. The center section's Decorative moldings, including columns, window and door arches, and balustrade woodcarvings also are painted white.

Based on a 1900 Francis Norton black-and-white photo of the town hall (*Fig. 5*), the original color of the wings was not white: only the trim appears white. In 1952, Selectman Edward A. Dewitt recalled a 1907 postcard that showed the building as being yellow,* with white trim. [10]

The building's center section was white and the front doors likely were also white for continuity.

To provide ample light for the rooms, the building has many (*46*) large (*6 ft. x 3 ft.*) windows. The twelve-over-twelve pane, double-hung windows (*Georgian style*) had metal pins to hold sashes in the open position, since counterbalance weights had not, as yet, been introduced.

Each section, on the front has three, double-hung, framed-casing windows on the first and second level. (*Fig. 6*)

Above the windows on the second level of the center section, there are lunette extensions. Balustrade pilasters are below each of these windows. The other windows, on the second level, have a peaked pediment above the frieze board. Windows on the first level have a box cornice. On both sides of the second level, the center windows have sidelights, and a swan neck pediment above the frieze board. (*Fig. 7*)

The front entrance has an elliptical fanlight over the double front doors. (*Fig. 7*) Windows on each side of the doors are set in an arched niche, but without fanlights. This entrance provides access to the various first floor rooms offices.

Small, double-hung windows (*eight over eight*) are at both the front and back of the building on the second floor of the center section. (*Fig. 7*) Their position on either side of the three center windows, with their lunette extensions, accentuates the height of the surrounding windows.

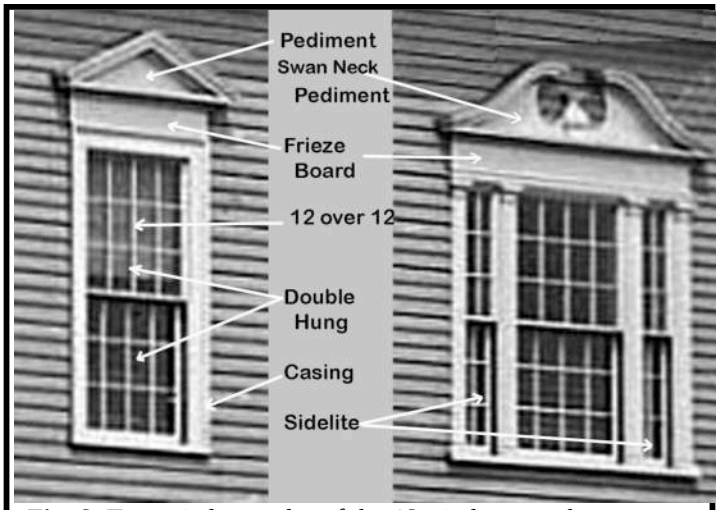

Fig. 6: Two window styles of the 46 windows on the town hall. Photo, F. C. Norton, 1900

* In the late 1800s, pale yellow was a common color for federal design buildings.

Fig. 7: Windows on each side of the front entrance doors are set in an arched niche.
Photo, F. C. Norton, 1900

In the front, the second level of the center section has four pilasters of Ionic columns capped with spiral scrolls. (*Fig. 7*)

The front-entrance, staircase had wood sidewalls, but not railings (*Fig. 7*). The deck was about eleven feet deep, thus providing ample space where special presentations could be made, such as the 1930 WW1 program, in recognition of the town's servicemen (*Fig. 8*). [130]

On the north side of the building, there is a second entrance (*Fig. 9*). The double door entry provided access directly to the large auditorium on the second floor. As it is with the front entrance, this entry has an elliptical fanlight over double doors and fixed windows (*side lights*) on each side (*Fig. 10*).

Not shown in Fig. 9 are two Ionic columns that supported the gable roof and the steps on three sides of the porch. [130]

At the back of the building, a bulkhead door provided entrance to the basement.

The hipped roof, at the front, has a low gable (*pediment*) above the center section (*Fig. 11*). The tympanum (*triangular area*) within the pediment was decorated with a plaster relief sculpture of a bald eagle (*symbol of freedom*) looking to the right, with wings spread (*symbol of protector*) and standing on a shield (*symbol of protection*). On the front of the shield, there is a sphere with a banner around it. The eagle and shield were common features of Federal style buildings.

Fig. 8: 1930 celebration for war veterans .
Photo, Hamilton Historical Society, 1930.

Below the shield, a banner has the inscription, "Incorporated June 21, 1793," the date when the third parish of Ipswich of Ipswich separated and became the town of Hamilton.

Dentil brackets, rows of closely spaced, small, rectangular blocks, are under the roof's eaves (*Fig. 11*).

Atop the roof is an octagonal tower with a cupola, painted red, possibly a symbol of prestige. The tower's exterior apertures are louvered, with panels behind each of the six sides. (*Fig. 12*)

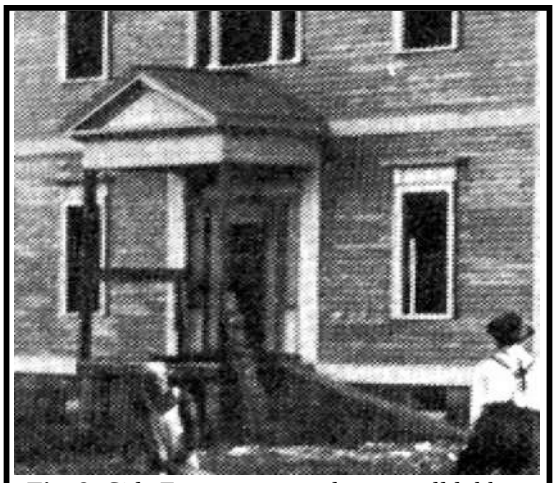

Fig. 9: Side Entrance opened to s small lobby at bottom of two stairways to 2nd floor.
Photo, Benjamin H. Conant, 1897

Fig. 10: Side entrance primarily provided access to the 2nd floor auditorium.
Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

While many town halls built in the late 1800s have a clock, one was not put in the Hamilton town hall tower. There already was a town clock, installed on Jun. 13, 1888, in the meetinghouse steeple (*cost $430.70*). [1]

The cupola and tower sit on a square platform around which is a balustrade. A louvered fan is at the center of each section of the balustrade. The structure is a typical component of houses built for successful mariners. From it they could view coastlines.

It is unclear what ornament was on the town hall weathervane, but it was not an eagle. An arrow fletching was most common. A fish also might have been on the weathervane, the fish having been an early Christian symbol; and the codfish was long hung in the Massachusetts statehouse.

Fig. 11: Pediment with relief sculpture of bald eagle with wings spread and standing on shield.
Photo, F. C. Norton, 1900

Fig. 12: Weathervane, cupola, tower and balustrade atop the town hall. Photo, F. C. Norton 1900.

Fig. 13: Lamp on green was only light at front of the town hall. Photo, F. A. Norton, 1900

The grounds around the building were not planted with shrubs and trees until the 1898 spring. The original landscaping included large shrubs along the front of the building, (*Fig. 5*) and several trees behind the fieldstone wall that was alongside Main Street. Since then, much smaller shrubs have been planted, so as not to block the view of the impressive building.

On May 30, 1898, a flagpole was dedicated in front of the building. [1] The flag had forty-five stars: in 1896, Utah had become the 45th state.

A 1900 photo taken by Francis A. Norton (*Fig. 13*) shows a windmill-powered well on his property, next to the town hall. However, the town hall did not receive water from this well. Ivory Quimby of Wenham received $25 for drilling a well for use by those in the town hall. Records do not say where the well was located. [4] It was not until 1925, that piping was installed to bring water into the town hall (*cost, $800*). [105]

In 1910, Houston A. Thomas of Hamilton provided, “for man and beast,” a drinking fountain outside the town hall. [1, 42] In the late 19th century, it was common for the well-to-do town residents to donate curbside fountains to the town or city.

A long, narrow building was behind the town hall: it is shown on the 1910 Walker map (*Fig. 1*) and the 1900 Norton photo; no information remains about this structure or when it was removed. [1]

Before reviewing the interior of the old town hall, take one more look at the exterior (*Fig. 5*): there were no wires leading to the building. It was not until June 1902 that Hamilton's streets were lighted with electricity. [1] The first mention of paying for town hall electricity (*$37.60, Beverly Gas & Electric*) is in the 1908 Annual Town Reports. [19]

In 1918, telephone service came to the town hall. Apparently, the service began late in the year, for the town hall expenses report for that year lists only $1.49 in phone charges. [94] A year later, with the phone often being used, the expense was $67.38. [38]

First Floor Had Seven Rooms

What was inside the town hall?

There is some confusion about the makeup of the original town hall. Descriptions in articles in the local newspapers are not the same as what is reported in the book, "Changing Times," written by Janice P. Pulsifer, who was a very good historian.

According to the news-papers,* on the first floor there were seven rooms (*Fig. 14*): offices for the selectmen, town clerk, and treasurer; school committee, a grammar school room, a library stack room, According to the news-papers,* on the first floor there were seven rooms (*Fig. 14*): offices for the selectmen, town clerk, and treasurer; school committee, a grammar school room, and a library stack room. There also was a

vault. [8, 9, 10, 11] (*Pulsifer wrote that the vault was in the basement.* [1]) Only one newspaper mentioned that there were toilets. [8]

Three of the offices had cypress walls; in the schoolroom and 2nd floor dressing rooms, there were North Carolina pine walls; the other rooms had whitewood (*spruce*) painted white. [10]

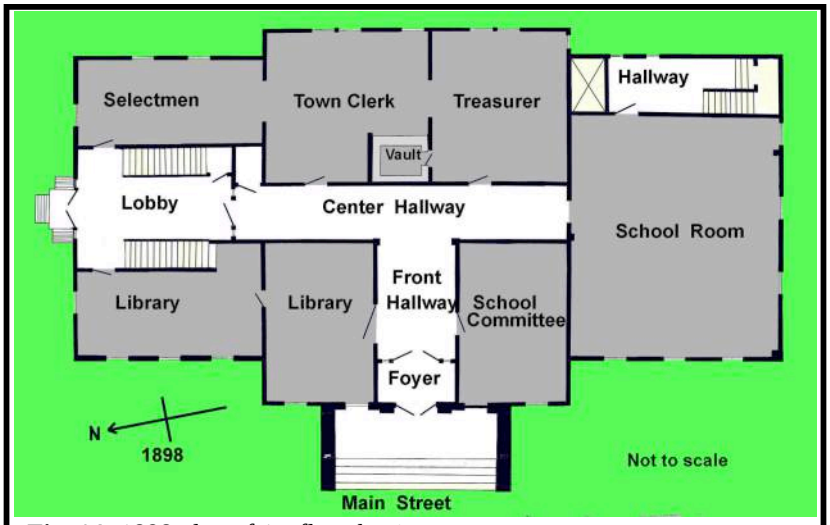

Fig. 14: 1898 plan of 1st floor having seven rooms.
Floor plan (*not to scale*), J. Hauck, 2014

At the front entrance, there was a small foyer, which had a door leading into the town hall proper. The foyer prevented heat loss, when the front door was opened.

The library's public entrance was at the left of the building's front doors. The library occupied two rooms: a book-stack room, at the back, had more than 2,500 books; and a reading room at the front. [4, 20] Being in the front of the building, and facing west, the rooms' six large windows provided ample light into the library. A door at back of the library was for deliveries and use of the staff.

The library was open on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons, and on Saturday evenings. [1] Mrs. Grace (*Dane*) Stone, the selectman's wife, was the librarian, for which she received an annual salary of $100. [77] Her sister, Addie (*Dane*) Stafford was the assistant librarian. [78] (*Both were teachers at the North School on Main Street.*) [20]

The Hamilton Public Library previously was in the John L. Woodbury house, at 588 Main St., just slightly north from the town hall. It had almost six hundred books and pamphlets. [20, 77]

To the right of the front doors, was the School Committee room. [20]

In 1857, the Massachusetts General Court passed an act requiring towns to have a school committee having three members. The school committee evaluated the achievements of both pupils and teachers and issued a report at the Annual Town Meeting. In 1896, there were two hundred and nine school children in Hamilton. [88]

At the far end of the front entrance hallway is another hallway (*center*) that runs north to south. To the north, turning left from the entrance hallway, there was, on the right, the town clerk's room. [+] George T. Litchfield held this office. [4] In addition to being the town clerk, for many years, he also was the Pound Keeper, Tramp Officer, Keeper of the lockup (*jail in the basement*), police officer, and janitor. [84]

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* Newspaper articles in the Hamilton Historical Society files do not have the names of the newspapers in which the articles appeared; see references 10, 49 & 11. They likely were the Salem Gazette, Salem Register, Salem Evening News, Ipswich Chronicle.

+ With regard to the location of the original offices for the selectmen, treasurer, and town clerk, assumptions have been made based on subsequent entries in town records and floor plans.

Fig. 15: Hallway door was kept closed when 2nd floor auditorium was in use.
Photo, J. Hauck. 2014

Just beyond the door to the Selectmen's Office there is a wall with a door at its center. A small janitor's closet was on the right side.

On the far side are a small lobby and a side entrance. The hallway door likely was built to keep people, going to an event in the auditorium and entering the town hall via the side door, from accessing the rest of the first floor. The doorway has sidelights with decorative milled panels. The design is the same as the sidelights on the front and side doors.

To the right after passing through the hallway door, is a door behind which are stairs to the basement.

Next, on the right and in the northeast corner of the building, there was the selectmen's office.

Across from the Treasurer's office, to the right of the side door, there is a door that opened into the back of the library.

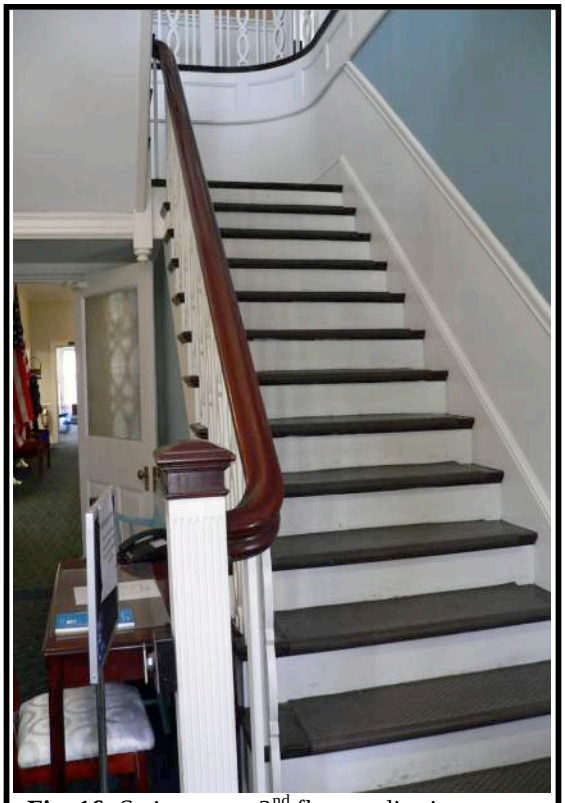

Fig. 16: Stairways to 2nd floor auditorium are on both sides of 1st floor lobby. Photo, J. Hauck 2014.

In the side lobby, there are staircases, one on each side (*Fig. 15*), leading to the second floor. Each staircase has an oak banister and wainscoting. At a landing just below the second floor, the staircases turn to the building's center, where there is a second, wider and ornate staircase. Across the top of the landing, the wainscoting continues. The long climb up the two flights of stairs certainly was not conducive to the elderly or handicapped attending events.

Toward the south end of the center hallway, and just beyond the Selectmen's office, on the left side, was the Treasurer's Office. [35]

Although, in 1838, a bill passed in the General Court allowed towns to appoint police officers with all the powers of constables, except the serving and executing any civil process, Hamilton did not have a police officer until 1898: Charles T. Litchfield was the town's first police officer. [4] The first uniformed officer was in 1908. [1908]

At the south end of the center hall, there was a large (*930 sq. ft.*) schoolroom. [11]

"Suitable for a high-grade grammar school," [1] it was included in the town hall to handle possible student overflows from the town's four district schools, an overflow that did not happen. [11] There was, at the time, a growing need for additional schoolroom space, en though, in 1998, Hamilton built a four-room Center Schoolhouse, at what now is 454 Main St. Just nine years later, in 1907, it was enlarged to eight rooms. [1]

At the back of the schoolroom, there was a wall with a door leading to a narrow hallway. At the south end of the hallway, there is a stairway coming from the basement and also a stairway leading to the second floor (*Fig. 59 on pg. 51*).

As for chairs, desks, cabinets, tables, shades and draperies in the town hall in 1900, there is little information, other than that $1,420 was spent for such items. [4] Much of the money likely went for bookcases, tables and chairs for the library. Each of the town offices had a desk, chairs, table and bookcases. A. C. Damon of Ipswich provided the furniture. [8]

There also is, in the 1898 expense reports, mention supplies for a kitchen in the building; [4] however, there is no indication, in any town report or in the newspapers, as to a kitchen being in the building.

Impressive Auditorium on 2nd floor

The first floor stairways, in the lobby at north side of the building, lead to a single, broad stairway in the center of an auditorium lobby, on the second floor (*Fig. 16*). The attractive handrail design with alternating sawed and straight balusters continues from the first floor to the second floor.

The dominant feature of the town hall was the expansive (*about 3,300 sq. ft.*) auditorium, with its high ceiling, on the second floor. It occupied the center section of the building and both wings.

At the south end, there was a stage, with a small room on each side. The east side room has a stairway to the lower floor. The room on the west side served as a dressing room for stage performances.

At the north end, (*Fig. 17*) there was a lobby and offices on each side that served as coatrooms and program distribution centers. Above this end, there is a balcony (*"gallery"*) with six floor tiers, to provide better sight lines for those sitting there.

Narrow stairways, on both sides of the lobby, lead to the balcony. Coatrooms also were on both sides.

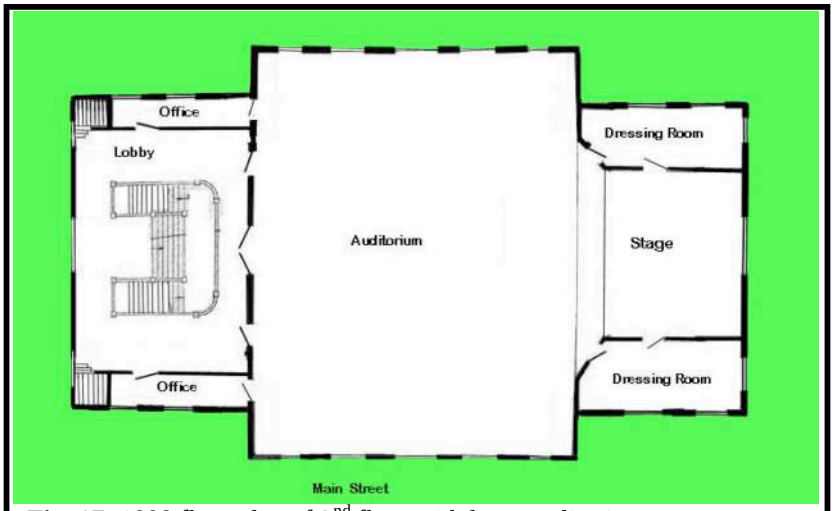

Fig. 17: 1898 floor plan of 2nd floor with large auditorium.
Floor plan (*not to scale*), J. Hauck, 2014

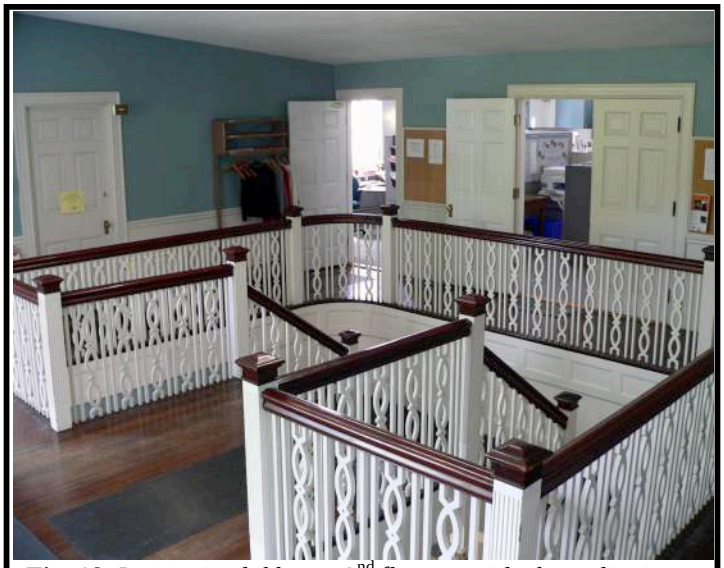

Fig. 18: Impressive lobby on 2nd floor, outside the auditorium. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014.

The auditorium walls were finished in "old red" and all the wainscots, balustrades were painted white. [8] (*This is in great contrast to the current blue and white scheme.*)

The stage curtains were a rich, green velour, "forming a harmonious contrast to the coloring" of the large room. [76] The stage had a gridiron (*metal framework suspended above the stage from which lights and other items were hung*), fly galleries (*narrow raised platform at the side of the stage, where stagehands worked the ropes controlling stage back-drops*) and "all necessary appliances." [8]

Chandeliers were in the auditorium and the lobby, as were wall sconces. [8] The center of the ceiling has a large semi sphere in which a chandelier hung. The lighting fixtures on the walls had glass chimneys and were kerosene-fueled. The large windows on each side of the auditorium, with their lunette extensions, ensured the room was bright during daytime programs.

The auditorium had a seating capacity of four hundred and fifty. [1] This was quite an imposing and ample venue, in 1900, for a town having a population of 1,600. (*Note: Where would there have been parking space for the many vehicles, horse-drawn carriages, attending an event that drew more than four hundred people?*)

Purchased for the auditorium were: chairs (*$560.60*), stage curtains (*$273*), window shades (*$70*) and lighting fixtures (*$253*). [4]

Over many years, events held at the auditorium included: receptions, stage performances, dances, celebrations, weddings, and in 1952 it was the site for the high school junior prom, with parents sitting in the balcony. It was a regular venue for the annual town meeting: often, some attendees sat in the balcony.

In January 1899, a private dance party was held at the town hall, under the auspices of the young society people of Hamilton. As described in an Ipswich newspaper, “It was attended by a large number of belles and beaux of Hamilton and by guests from Boston, Salem and surrounding towns. The stage was decorated with palms and other potted plants, and its rich, velvet portieres and softly shaded lights combined with harmonious coloring of wall and ceiling to make the place more like a finely appointed hall in some private mansion than a public building.” [1] For rent of the auditorium, the town received $81.50, which was about half the cost for the fire department that year. [5]

In 1903, use of the town hall was allowed free for political meetings, public events recommended by the school committee, and for charitable purposes. For all other purposes, there was a charge of one to ten dollars, to be determined by the selectmen. [86]

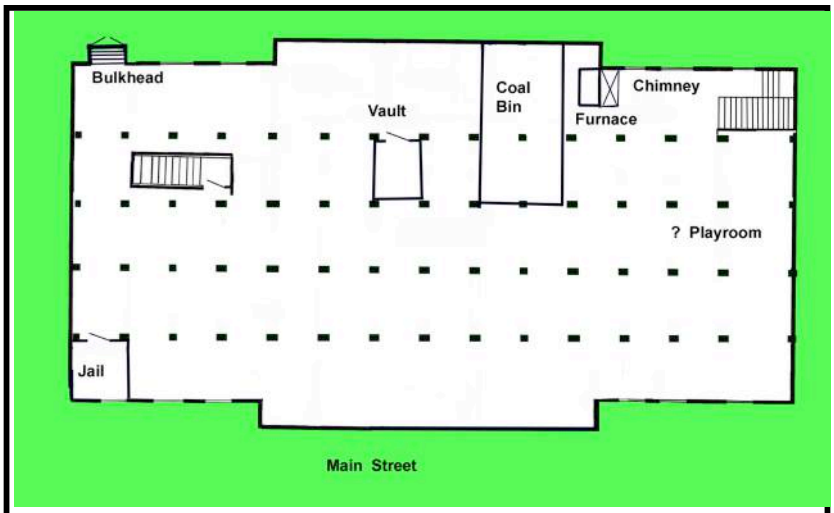

Fig. 19: 1898 floor plan of basement. A playroom also was said to have been there. Floor plan (*not to scale*), J. Hauck, 2014

Wide Open Basement

The basement (*Fig. 19*) had rows of regularly spaced floor support piers. They were wood beams, perhaps eight-inch square.

In the basement, the newspaper articles reported there was a playroom for students, and a boiler room. [8, 9, 10, 11] In Pulsifer's 1976 book, Changing Times, she wrote the basement had a lock-up and a fireproof vault. [1] One newspaper also mentioned there were "laboratories," in the basement. [8]

The student playroom likely was for use when poor weather prevented outdoor activities. Since the schoolroom was for a high-grade, grammar school, the anticipated students would have been ten to fourteen years old. Its location likely was at the foot of the stairway, at the back of the schoolroom.

The small lockup, in the northwest corner, mainly was for detaining tramps arrested in the town. It could provide sleeping space for only one at a time, for it is very small. There was a steel-bar door.

A Hamilton-Wenham Times article, Oct. 26, 1899, reported, "The tramp season has opened at the police stations in this section, that is, those institutions have resumed their function as free lodging houses The real tramps have two runs each year, like migratory fish, up and down a river, so far as seeking lodgings in the police station goes. These runs are in the spring and fall. [18]

A 40-ton-capacity coal bin, with wood walls, likely was in east side of the basement. [11] Based on its capacity, the bin was about fifteen by twenty feet in size. Anthracite coal likely was deposited in the bin via a chute passed through a foundation window.

Next to the coal bin, there was a furnace, connected to a chimney. There are no details about the original furnace, which most likely was a hand-fired unit. Such furnaces required a lot of attention: stoking coal, shaking the grate, removing ashes (*expressed in town records as teaming, i.e., removal by a horse-drawn cart*) and adjusting the draft.

Fig. 20: Around the entire foundation, below each of the first floor windows, there were fixed, basement windows, with stone sills, Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

Heating the town hall was one of the major costs: annual town reports indicated $400 to $500 being spent for coal. Further, furnace parts and heat distribution piping frequently were replaced.

The storage and burning of the coal must have made the basement a smelly and dusty place, not the best place for a student playroom. Added to this was the basement's dampness, being below ground, and occasional flooding.

Also in the basement, there was a vault below the vault in the former first floor Town Clerk's office. The upper and lower floor vaults are not directly connected. Building one below the other provided support for the heavy upper floor unit.

At the back of the northeast corner, there was a bulkhead entrance. A stairway off the center hallway on the first floor also provided access to the basement, from inside the building. Another stairway was at the southeast corner.

There are no descriptions, in town records, of the basement floor as to whether it was dirt, crushed stone, concrete or wood.

Emery Lawrence of Hamilton built the basement and laid the foundation, [45] for which he was paid $838. The wall above ground level consists of rectangular granite blocks; below the ground level, the wall consists of fieldstones. The wall is about eighteen inches thick.

Around the entire foundation, below each of the first floor windows, there were fixed, basement windows, with stone sills (*Fig. 20*).

The back of the foundation is partly above ground, but the front is completely below ground. The property was gradually graded from the street level to allow easy access to the basement.

While there was sufficient light in the basement from the many foundation windows, there was one use of the basement that was kept in the dark. The Wenham-Hamilton Times, on Mar. 14, 1901, reported that ballot-fixing occurred at the town hall, “One of the bright young men of the town fixed the ballots in the cellar of the town hall,” crossing out names of two constables and substituting others. [1]

What Brought Change

The building of the Hamilton Town Hall met what were then present needs: school space, office space, library space and social events space.

Town records contain no references to addressing future needs with the building of the town hall. There was no talk of what the upcoming 20th century might require. The first industrial revolution had seen its heydays. Few people were aware that an even

greater 2nd industrial revolution already was happening.

The last decade of the 19th century saw nearly a sigificant -- 70% -- increase in Hamilton's population. Did town planners think such growth might continue? Would the new town hall be large enough to handle the needs of another population growth of 70%, in the next decade, the first of the 20th century?

Such growth did not occur. In fact, there was no growth. Except for the 1920s, when the population increased 25%, Hamilton saw no increases.

The increase of Hamilton's population is important with regard to the town hall, for it basically is a service center to the needs of the townspeople.

Hamilton Population

Year	Pop.	±%
1900	1,614	+68.0%
1910	1,749	+8.4%
1920	1,631	−6.7%
1930	2,044	+25.3%
1940	2,037	−0.3%
1950	2,764	+35.7%
1960	5,488	+98.6%
1970	6,373	+16.1%
1980	6,960	+9.2%
1990	7,280	+4.6%
2000	8,315	+14.2%
2010	7,764	−6.6%

After WW2, the 1940s brought an increase of 35%; the 1950s, about a 100% jump; the 1960s, 16% growth; and then two decades of little change, until the 1990s, when the population rose almost 15%.

Despite these major population increases, the size of the town hall did not increase.

There only were changes to the configuration of office space in the early 1950s, the mid 1960s and 1970s, and then near the end of the century. The last changes, however, were not brought about by a population increase, but rather as part of marking the 100th anniversary of the building.

The following sections, which cover changes to the grounds, exterior and interior of the building, include many minor refurbishing efforts, as well as the major efforts of 1953, 1966, 1975 and 1997. These changes mainly were made when, as reported by Selectmen in Annual Town Reports, working conditions of the building were poor.

Another factor affecting changes to the town hall was the economy. Plans for expanding the size of the town hall brought with them very high costs that would have required significant tax increases. Even some necessary minor changes, such as humidity control and air conditioning, were delayed because of tax considerations.

Finding funds for town hall changes became more difficult in 1980 when Proposition 2½ (*Mass General Laws, Ch. 59 § 21C*) was invoked. The state law limits property tax increases to 2.5% annually. In 1990, Hamilton's government considered reducing the number of hours that the town hall would be open, as a means of providing money for town programs. [169]

The effects of how this limit on how much tax money could be gathered was compounded by several areas of town expenses that annually increased above 2.5%. These included: employee benefits, school costs, and road maintenance.

Perhaps the most significant factor affecting allocation of tax money has been the much greater focus on the town's education system. In 1900, the town's total budget was about $34,400: 16% went for school expenses. Fifty years later, in 1950, Hamilton's total budget was nearly $300,000. Of this amount, 36.7% was allocated for education. In 2000, the total budget was slightly over $14 million. Of this amount, 61.7% was allocated for education.

Fig. 21: Temporary WW1 honor roll erected in 1918 and removed in 1951. Photo, Hamilton Historical Society

Grounds Changes

The original plan for the town hall was for it to be set back from the street, with an open green in front, thereby allowing full view of the impressive structure. Also, the green would provide an open meeting place for public celebrations, such as Independence Day.

The first modification of the green occurred in 1919, when a temporary WW1 honor roll was erected (*Fig. 21*). [38] The intent was for a permanent memorial, with the names of all those that served, to be made when the war ended. The permanent memorial, probably a plaque, would be placed at a location to be determined. [38]

A welcome home ceremony, for the veterans, was held on the green in 1919. All the living veterans, one hundred and ten, received a bronze medal. [38] The number of Hamilton servicemen was quite large considering that the 1910 Hamilton population was only 1,749.

The WW1 honor roll was the first Hamilton erected for war veterans, anywhere in town. After the Civil War, Hamilton did not establish a Grand Army of the Republic post, nor did it create a Civil War monument. However, in 1924, a large, granite boulder, with a bronze eagle atop it, was not placed on the town hall green, but rather on the green beside the Hamilton Congregational church (*Fig. 22*). [43]

Fig. 22: Soldiers Memorial Green honors those who served during French-Indian Wars, Revolutionary War, War of 1812, Civil War, Spanish-American War and WW1.
Photo, J. Hauck, 2015

A plaque on the boulder reads, “Patriotic Men and Women Who Served Their Country in the Time of War / To the Dead a Tribute / To the Living a Memory / To Posterity an Emblem of Loyalty to the Flag of their Country.” [1]

The choice of the church green was fitting, for it was where, on Apr. 24, 1875, townspeople gathered to hear news about the outbreak of the Civil War (*in the north, this was called the war of the rebellion*). The stars and stripes were raised on a liberty pole,* a rifle salute and patriotic speeches were made. [1] One hundred and thirteen men, who were Hamilton residents ”at one time or another,” served in the war. [1]

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* Liberty Pole, during the Revolutionary War, was erected in a town's square. A red flag would be raised to call people together to voice the opinions regarding British rule.

The temporary WW1 Honor Roll remained on the town hall green until it became very rotted and was taken down. This was done around 1928. [71]

In 1943, on Oct. 17, the town replaced the WW1 honor roll with a temporary honor roll for those town residents who were serving in WW2. [96] The honor roll was erected where the WW1 honor roll previously stood. [107]

The WW2 Honor Roll looked like a blackboard suspended from a cross bar. It was made of wood. Names were painted in gold, in alphabetical order; additional names were added, as others entered military service. Those killed had a gold star painted beside their names.

On Aug. 17, 1946, a "Welcome Home Day" was held in the town: all businesses closed from 1 to 5 pm. Ceremonies were held at the high school. [99] Three hundred and thirty three men and women served in the military, from a town that had a population, in 1940, of 2,307. [107]

Like the WW1 Honor Roll, the WW2 also, with time, became rotted. [71] In 1952, the temporary WW2 honor roll of 1943 was removed from the town hall green. A committee was appointed to find a new site to erect a permanent honor roll. [56]

The town hall green once again was open from the street back to the building, providing a clear view of the building. There was only a flagpole on the green.

Also gone from the Norton property to the north of the town hall was the incongruent, 38-ft.-high windmill and water tank. There are no records of when it was removed. Now, all that remains is a shed that was part of the structure.

Following the removal of the WW2 monument, attention was drawn to making the green and the front of the town hall more attractive and returning it to its original open space. In 1959, the selectmen had the front of the town hall landscaped and new shrubs planted: the cost was just under $800. [60]

Two years later, 1961, the circular drive at the front of the town hall was paved, as were the side and rear roads (*cost, $1,100.75*). [17] Replacing the dirt paths was said to have "greatly improved the appearance" of the area around the town hall. However, it is more likely that the major reason for the change was to eliminate the dust and mud being tracked into the building from the dirt paths. [17, 61]

The flagpole on the green was replaced, in 1988, by the H. Grant Crowell and the Robert Pirie families. [68] Just two years later, the flag, which was flying 24-hours every day, had become shredded and torn at the seams.

As a result, the replacement flag was taken down every evening and raised the following morning. [168] This was discontinued around 2000.

Fig. 23: Honor Roll, erected in 2006, lists WW2 Hamilton veterans on side facing Bay Road. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

The building and placement of a permanent WW2 memorial, with the names of all those who served, took a very long time to happen: fifty-four years. In 2004, when John Haraden, Commander of the Legion, appointed a committee of three to prepare a proposal of a permanent WWII Honor Roll. The committee members were: Robert MacRae, Gardiner Morgan, and Edward Haraden (*John's father*). Gardner died and was replaced by Henry Stelline. [71]

The committee worked closely with the selectmen and, after several years, developed a design. A new list of veteran names had to be developed since no one had saved the old honor roll panel. [71]

In 2006, Phase I of a Veteran's Honor Roll was placed on the green (*Fig. 23*). On the west side of the granite memorial, the side facing the town hall, were engraved the names of the three hundred and thirty three men and women who served in WW2, including the twelve who died (*Fig. 23*).

The WW2 Honor Roll cost about $45,000. Donations came from the Hamilton/Wenham Rotary Club (*$10,000*); the American Legion Post 194 (*$10,000*); townspeople (*$15,000*); and the town government donated $10,000 for site preparation and landscaping. [71]

In 2008, Phase II of the Veteran's Honor Roll was completed with the engraving (*on the monument's east side*) of the names of the three hundred and forty-nine men and women who served in the Korean and Vietnam conflicts.

The WW2 committee had filed for a $15,000 grant from the state. However, the grant was received after the WW2 Honor Roll was completed. The money was turned it over to the Phase II committee. [71]

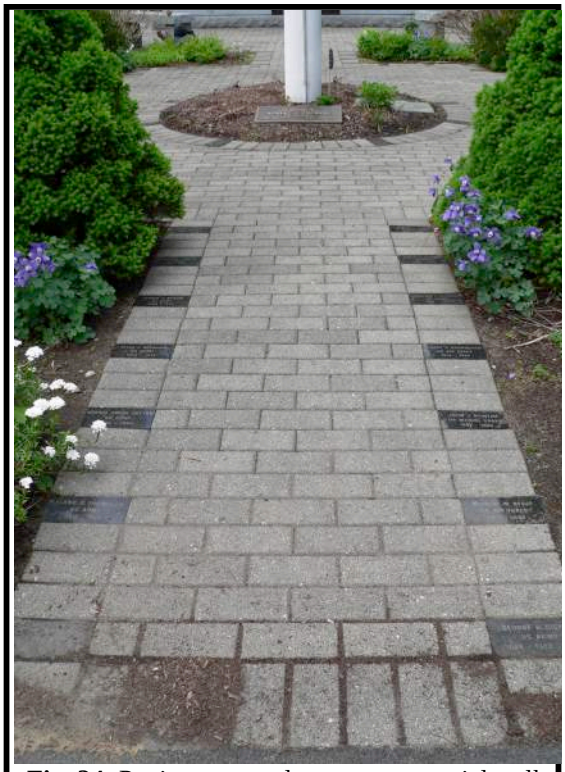

Fig. 24: Paving stones along war memorial walk way's borders have names of 84 veterans.
Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

Leading to the monument is a brick walkway that stretches from the driveway, at the front of the town hall, around the flagpole and monument, and out to Bay Road (*Fig. 24*). Engraved paving stones, along edge of the walkway, have the names of the Phase 1 and 2 committee members, as well as residents who did not enter military service from Hamilton, but wanted to participate, with a gift of $125, in the plaza honoring the veterans.

At the base of the flagpole, a plaque commemorates Robert G. Crowell, the deceased son (*1981*) of Grant and Margaret Crowell. Robert, while not a veteran, was active in municipal meetings and elections, and served on several committees. [114]

There have been many changes behind the town hall. Most noticeable is the increase in the size of land behind the town hall and the other buildings erected.

Through a series of land purchases, over the years, the town hall property has grown to its current size of 3.14 acres (*Fig. 25*). In 1926, the town acquired, for $1,000, a half-acre lot behind the town hall property, from Lydia L. Haraden (*formerly the Foster estate*). [44, 50, 105] The town bought the land for storage of its vehicles and other equipment. To house the equipment, in 1928, the town moved the former (*1908*) Center School building to the lot, where it became a garage. [44] This was done despite a committee's decision that the move was "not advisable." [125]

Fig. 25: Town hall property amounts to 3.14 acres in 2014. Map, J. Hauck, 2014

In years following, the town steadily bought new equipment and vehicles. Some equipment was kept in old sheds, including the 1901 roller shed, directly behind the town hall. Used to house the town's steamroller, the wood shed had a dirt floor, an open front and just high and wide enough for the machine. In the beginning the roller was a good investment. For example, in 1902, the town received $302 from other towns for use of it (*expenses were $1222.52*); however, in later years the expenses for having it were much more than what it brought in.

Ever-focused on keeping costs to a minimum, the town approved, in 1941, converting the old horse sheds behind the town hall into garages for storing some of the trucks and equipment: doors were put on the front of the sheds. It was noted, at the time, that the sheds were gradually decaying and sinking into the ground, and that it would not be a very long time before the garages would have to be replaced. [122]

At the 1948 Annual Town Meeting, $10,000 was requested for building a garage behind the town hall. The Finance Committee supported the article and recommended the amount be $15,000, in order to also provide space for a workshop to be used by the highway, water, tree and moth departments. The Finance Committee acknowledged that "from a financial point of view, this is a poor time to undertake major construction," but the facility, in the long run, would save money needed to replace equipment not properly stored. The articles for the public works building were approved. [55]

John Singer & Sons of Ipswich built the garages (*6*), in October 1948, for $14,942. Surprisingly, construction of the garage did include heating. Charles H. Morse created the plans and specifications and supervised the work at no cost to the town. [55]

The new garage provided space for storage of the equipment of the highway, water, tree and moth departments. The following year (*1949*), there was a request for $2,000 for doing this: voters did not approve the request. [53]

The area behind the town hall was a hodgepodge of garages, old sheds, equipment and vehicles. In 1957, a few of the old sheds were removed, "as they were beyond repair." [104] A year later, the selectmen, wanting to improve the appearance of the back of the town hall, had an old steam road-roller shed (*built in 1901, cost, $491*), [120, 121]

moved to the back of the property (*the back of the former Foster lot*). [59] The large, and not very attractive, wood shed became a storage shed for winter road salt. The move (*cost, $1,500* [59]) also provided more parking space behind the town hall. The area directly behind the town hall, as shown in photos taken in the 1960s and 70s generally was where BPW vehicles were parked. [124]

In 1969, a fire partially damaged the concrete garages. [100] Getting water to the site required hoses to be stretched from a hydrant on the corner of Main and Bridge streets. Forty years earlier, in 1930, Hamilton began installing water hydrants along its streets for fire protection, [106] but did not place one across from the town hall, the town's major investment. Repairs to the garage were made later that year. [100]

During the brief stay of the Ohio Army National Guard at the town hall, in the early years of WW2, the unit used the area for parking its trucks, jeeps and howitzers. [71]

Also in 1969, the town formed a Board of Public Works, with Wallace E. Lane as its Superintendent. The BPW assumed the duties of the Tree Warden, Surveyors of Highways, Superintendent of Parks and the Cemetery Superintendent. [100]

In the late 1970s, more space was needed for the town's equipment and the existing facilities needed to be improved. Therefore, the selectmen brought, at the 1979 Annual Town Meeting, made two requests. The first was for a seventy by one hundred foot garage for all the public works vehicles, a mechanic's bay and a room for the water department's storage and maintenance (*$160,000*). This article met no voter resistance. [82]

The other request was for building the new garage on Bridge Street, across from Woodbury Street, on property the town owned: it was overwhelmingly defeated. [82] Those opposing the garage on Bridge Street said it would endanger the town's water supply (*there is a well there*). Those supporting the Bridge Street site pointed out that the town's two wells in the area had not been active for several years. [82]

Well, if not on Bridge Street, then the back of the town hall property would have to be expanded. In 1979, the first step in this plan was taken. Mary and George Ricker sold (*$6,000*) to the town a small, triangular lot (*0.29 ac*) along the south edge of the existing town hall land. [16] The Ricker purchase squared off the back of the former Haraden land. (*See Fig. 25.*) Two years later, in 1981, the town purchased about one and a half acres (*for "nominal consideration"*), from Robert and Deidre Pirie. [15] Located behind the Haraden lot acquired in 1926, the Pirie land (*Fig. 24*) stretched three hundred and fifty-five feet north from Paddock Lane, and five hundred and sixty-five feet deep on its south corner and six hundred and twenty feet deep on the north corner. Various areas of the former Pirie land are wetland.

Fig. 26: DPW garages built behind town hall in 1948 and lengthened in 1982. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014.

The town now had enough land

to expand its garage space. In 1982, the town added to the existing garages a single level, concrete block, utilitarian building, with three garages and a shop, at the back end (*Fig. 26*). [55]

The 1979 article for the new BPW garage stated that the building was to "conform architecturally in general appearance with the Town Hall." [82] (*Ed. note: There is no explanation on how the concrete block structure was deemed to conform architecturally, in appearance, with the town hall.*) Adding to the existing BPW garages likely cost much less than the $160,000 approved for a new building.

In order to provide more space for a new road salt storage shed, the BPW removed, in 1987, both the old road-roller shed and the old garage that was the former Center Schoolhouse. In 1988, the old buried diesel and gasoline tanks were removed. They were replaced with new gasoline (*6,000-gal.*) and fuel oil (*4,000 gal.*) tanks (*cost, $50,000*). [68]

With the large number of vehicles being serviced behind the town hall, it is not surprising that, in 1989, an environmental problem was discovered: a petroleum product was found in the brook on Paddock Lane. [170] It was believed to have come from diesel oil spills, in the 1970s, in the area of the town garages. [69]

Exacerbating this problem was, in 1990, the uncovering of several buried barrels, of unknown substance, also at the back of the property. The barrels were disposed of as hazardous waste. [70] Initial plans were to have the replacement tanks to be mounted above ground to guard against possible unknown leakages. However, in 1992, they were buried below the concrete pad in front of the garages.

In 1998, the size of the town hall property decreased slightly. The town sold a triangular portion (*0.18 acre*) on the northwest corner of the former Pirie property purchased in 1981, to the Kinsman Estate. [131] (*Fig. 25*).

The garage area behind the town hall remained open until 1999, when a fence was built (*cost, $16,500*). [81] There is stockade fence at the front and on both sides of the garage area, with a few breaks in the fence; there is no fence at the back of the property, nor around the area the goes out to Paddock Lane.

Other than the concrete block building that has nine bays and an office at the far end, there now (*2014*) is, inside the fence, only one other permanent building, which is used to store road salt (*Fig. 27*). Built in 1988, by the Massachusetts Highway Department, the building replaced a dilapidated structure that had been used for many years. [167]

Fig. 27: Road salt shed, built in 1988, replaced a dilapidated structure that had been used for many years..
Photo, J. Hauck, 2014.

At present (*2014*), the town hall property has (*Fig. 28*): a green, town hall, DPW garages, and a winter salt shed. There are from ten to twelve vehicles in the garage area.

Fig. 28: Current layout of town hall property: 1) Green, 2) Town hall, 3) DPW garages, and 4) Winter salt shed. Photo, Bing Maps, 2012.

A new septic field was built in 2006. The septic field is on the north side of the building; there are three septic tanks at the back of the building. [85] At the 2013 Annual Town Meeting, $40,000 was approved for replacing the septic system. [165]

Exterior Changes

The first change to the exterior of the town hall likely occurred not long after it was built.

As can be seen in Fig. 11, the town hall, in 1900, had a plain surface below the center pediment. Sometime after 1900, the words "Hamilton Town Hall," in gold-leaf-covered, wood letters, were added (*Fig. 29*). In 1921, both the lettering and the shield in the pediment were gilded (*cost was $100*). [90] Ten years later, 1931, the shield and "vane" were refinished with gold leaf. [91] (*There was no description of the "vane."*)

The 1900 Francis Norton black-and-white photo also shows the building to have been painted two colors (*Fig. 5*). The center section and building trim appear to have been white, but the wings were not. In 1953, Selectman Edward A. Dewitt recalled a 1907 postcard that showed the building as being yellow, with white trim. [10]

The first reported repainting was done in 1900, at a cost of $70. (*There was no reason given for repainting the building just three years after it was built.*) Painting was done again in 1902 (*$103*), 1906 (*$292.55*) and in 1908 (*$556.63*): no mentions were made of the color.

In 1920, both the exterior and interior were painted. In 1926, the exterior was painted, at a cost of $943. Painting and repairs in 1931 cost $1,218.60; and painting done again in 1936 (*$904.45*).

Fig. 29: Refurbishing the tympanum within the pediment in 2001, made it possible to once again clearly see the relief sculpture. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014.

A major project in 1943 was the repainting and repairing of the town hall. In 1946, the exterior painting cost $1,652. Just two years later, the town hall was painted again at a cost of $2,000. [53]

Up to 1971, there were no restrictions with respect to changes to the exterior appearance of the front of the town hall. However, in 1971, the town crated the Hamilton Historic District Commission, and gave it the authority to approve or disapprove any substantial changes to the outward appearance of all structures in the town's Historic District that included the town hall. [158]

Fig. 30 : In 2012, town hall wings were beige with white trim, and the center section all white. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

The first mention of a possible cause for the frequent repainting of the town hall came in 1975. Lawrence Foster, a retired contractor and former selectman, said something had to be done about the dampness in the basement, for this was causing the exterior paint to blister. [49]

Repainting the town hall was frequent in the years that followed. No reasons were given. In 1994, the town approved $12,000 for repainting the town hall exterior. [78] Paints used, up to that time likely contained lead pigments: lead chromate (*yellow*) and lead carbonate (*white*).

Later in 1994, the state notified Hamilton it had to comply with its requirements to dispose of lead paint. Three options were considered: 1) hand-scraping the lead paint off the building and disposing of the shavings; 2) replacing existing painted wood siding with vinyl siding; and 3) removing all clapboards, paying for their disposal, and installing specially treated wood siding. [112] The second plan included residing the back of the town hall with vinyl siding and repainting the other three sides. [112]

The first approach was taken. [112] Although the appearance of the back of the building was not covered by the Commission' authority, the possible use of vinyl siding was questioned by the Commission. [157]

In 1995, the trim was "de-leaded," by scraping, and then repainted white: [79] the cost was $144,000, [118] which was twelve times more than the $12,000 approved, in 1994.

For most of its history, the entire town hall was "a dazzling white." [10, 28] Photographs shown in TV presentations, made in the 1990s, show the building as being all white, with a green front door.

In 2009, the town approved $33,000 of CPA funds for painting of town hall. [159] The work was done in 2012. The wings were beige with white trim, and the center section all white (*Fig. 30*). A designer suggested the color scheme would be representative of how many civic buildings in the 1890s appeared. [133] In 2010, when discussions began about this project, the color scheme was for painting the building grey and the trim cream; the front door painted a deep navy; and the dome painted a copper color. [155]

The original town hall roof was slate, [28, 86] most likely asbestos slate shingles. At the time, asbestos slate shingles were a widely used material. The possibility of asbestos slate shingles being the original roofing material is supported by its use, in 1927, to cover the roof of the South School building. [92]

In 1902, repairs to the slate roof cost $104. [121] Minor repairs are reported occasionally over the following decades. With the large expanse of the high second floor ceiling, roof integrity has always been very important to preventing water seepage.

No specific mention of removing the asbestos slate shingles appears in the annual town reports, until 1969. Roof repairs were made using asphalt shingling (*cost $5,456.82*). [100] No mention appears in town records of any complaints about how the new roofing material substantially changed the appearance of the building.

In 1993, there was extensive water damage (*caused by an ice dam*) to the roof. [156] The following year, all the roofing was removed, as were all the fascia boards. The initial quote for the work was $52,000. However, cost cutting measures brought the figure down to $44,630. The savings resulted from using pine instead of red cedar boards, aluminum instead of copper drip edges, and eliminating insulating boards and ice shields on steep sides of the roof. [113]

A noticeable change in the town hall's appearance was the installation, in June 1993, of aluminum storm and screen windows (*Fig. 31*) on the first floor. [156,] This happened long after storm/screen windows became common for homes in the 1970s. Records do not mention any previous discussions of installing the aluminum windows. (*Ed note: Might this have been a reluctance to affecting the building's appearance or the perennial concern about keeping costs down?*) As for installing screens and storm windows on the second floor, the Historic Commission issued a Certificate of NonApplicability to the town. [156]

Fig. 31: Distinct change to town hall exterior fame with the installation, in 1993, of aluminum storm and screen windows. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014.

The discordance did not go unnoticed by those dedicated to maintaining the town hall's quintessential appearance.

In 2009, many of the wood windows did not open properly. An original plan was to remove the storm windows and replace all the wood windows with double-pane, insulating windows, which looked much like the original windows. However, the Historic District Commission did not approve the replacement plan. [134] The aluminum storm windows and screens remained.

The front steps are another area of the exterior that has changed from the original construction. The painted wood front

steps were first repaired in 1903 (*cost, $28.02*). [86] Problems of wear, rotting, boards splitting, and warping required repeated repairs.

A major repair occurred in 1909, when the town spent $748.49 repairing the front steps. The work included adding lights. [42]

The 1944 Report of the Board of Selectmen stated that, "During the coming year, some repairs must be made on the town hall steps." [97] This repair work did not happen until 1946. The repairs, boards replaced and repainting, were done by Welch & Lamson of Wenham, at a cost of $348. [99]

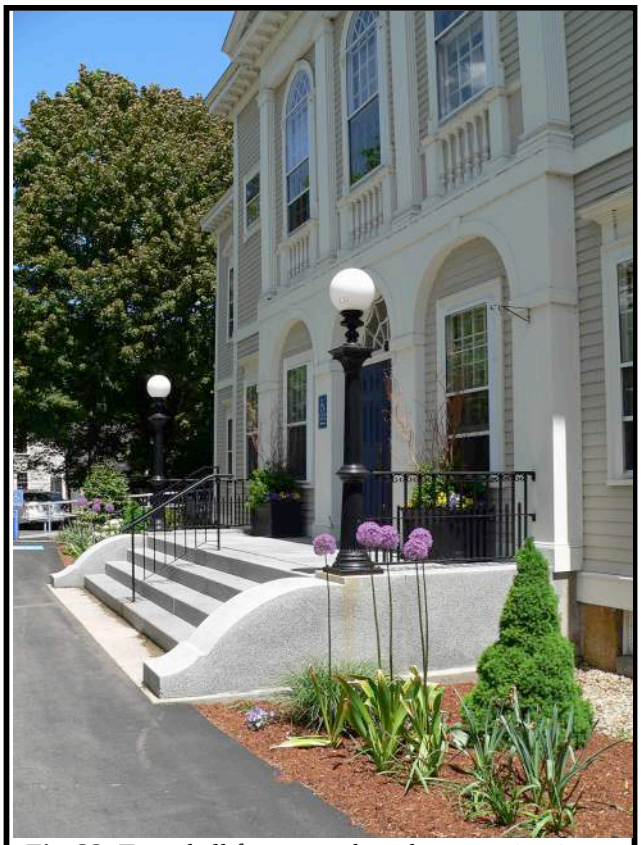

Fig. 32: Town hall front steps have been granite since 2009. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014.

It was not until 1946 that the town hall had concrete front steps (*1947 cost, $348*). [99] The change from wood to concrete did not bring an end to the problems. Winter snow plowing occasionally hit and chipped the concrete steps. Also, the de-icing of the steps with salt, during winters, corroded the concrete. [85] Once again, there were periodic repairs to the front steps. [25] By 1988, new concrete steps were needed to replace the "deteriorated" steps (*cost, $1,167.42*). [68]

No more problems?

Winter conditions, in the years following, affected the concrete front steps.

In 2009, voters approved the Community Preservation Committee (*CPA*) request for $28,000 for replacement of the front steps. New granite steps were installed early in 2011 (*cost, $27,000*). [129] The previous concrete steps were removed in July 2010 and replaced with temporary wood stairs. Replacement began in December 2010. New lights and railings were added to the new granite front steps, in the spring of 2010 (*Fig. 32*). [161]

No more problems?

Fig. 33: Granite front steps repaired in late 2014 to eliminate uneven surfaces. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014.

Unfortunately, the granite steps began to settle, resulting in uneven and hazardous surfaces. This may have been due to the sub-base not having been deep enough. Further, during the winter, moisture that accumulated in between the large granite blocks froze and the ice caused the blocks to separate. The steps were repaired, in November 2014, by laying a new sub-base, replacing the stone blocks and recaulking (*Fig. 33*).

Originally, the front steps did not have railings (*Fig. 5*). Town records do not mention when railings first were added; however, a 1930 photo shows railings (*Fig. 8*). In 1949, the railings were replaced (*cost, $82.50*). With the 2010 installation of granite steps, new railings were added.

Very little change has happened with regard to the appearance of the front doors, other than sometimes being painted green and other times red. The original front doors may have been replaced, but town records make no mention of new doors, until in 1952 (*cost, $435*); [55] and again in 1962 (*cost, $435*). [103]

When built, the town hall did not have lighting at the entrance steps: there only were oil pole lamps alongside the semicircular drive (*Fig. 7*). By 1930, there were electric pole lamps on both sides of the front steps. (*Fig. 8*)

The appearance of the building changed noticeably sometime before 1952, when the town received a new weathervane, a gold leaf coated, American bald eagle casting. The finely detailed copper casting had a two-foot wingspan. It stood on a globe, and was affixed above a directional cross. Town records make no mention of who donated the new weathervane.

More changes came to the exterior beginning in 1975. As part of a Town Hall Restoration Program, extensive repairs were made to the tower and cupola, but its design remained the same. Copper sheeting replaced the original galvanized covering the cupola and the tower deck. An exact duplicate railing replaced the original balustrade around the tower. [22]

Money for repairing the cupola, $19,000, came from a Housing and Urban Development grant. The HUD money also was applied to painting the second floor auditorium, balcony and lobby. [63, 132] This was a rare case of the town receiving outside financial help for maintenance, refurbishing and repainting the town hall.

In the report of costs for the 1975 refurbishing of the cupola, "repair of the weather vane" was said to cost $450, but the weathervane is not described. [22] However, a photo taken after the work was completed shows an eagle weathervane.

Over the years, storms caused minor damage to the town hall. Likely, a strong storm sometime after 1975 (*perhaps either the 1985 or 1991 hurricane*) blew the eagle off the directional cross.

In 2001, Robert Timpani, the town's Director of Facilities and Management, informed the selectmen that there was a large eagle copper casting in the basement (*Fig. 34*). [9, 85] Most of its gold leaf coating was worn away, it was distorted and there were two bullet holes in it (*in a wing and in the body* [85]). Not knowing from where it came, the selectmen gave it to the Historical Society for its collection of town memorabilia. [85]

No one had noticed for many years that the weathervane atop the town hall did not have an ornament above the directional cross.

An investigation of old town hall photos revealed the eagle was atop the cupola in 1961 (*Fig. 35*). The Society initiated plans to restore the eagle to its original perch. There were no engravings on the eagle to indicate when or where it had been made. [85] (*Ed Note: The eagle also was above the cupola in a photo of the town hall that was on the cover of the 1975 Hamilton Annual Town Reports.*)

In 2002, finding bids too high for refurbishing the eagle, Timpani first had it restored to its correct shape by a firm in New Hampshire. He then applied a gold-leaf overlay (*Fig. 36*). [85]

Fig. 34: In 2001, large eagle copper casting was found among items stored by the Historical Society in the basement. Photo, Hamilton Historical Society.

Fig. 35: 1961 town hall photo showing eagle on the weathervane. Photo, Peter Zaharis, 1961.

Fig. 36 : In 2002, Robert Timpani had weathervane restored to its correct shape then he applied a gold-leaf overlay. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

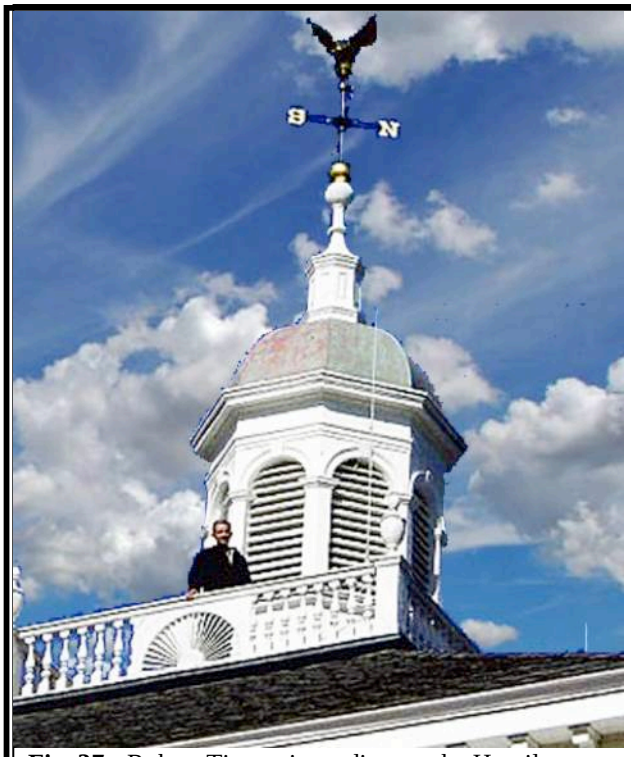

Fig. 37: Robert Timpani standing on the Hamilton Town Hall tower after having replaced the weathervane eagle back on the cupola. Photo, Thomas Haraden , 2002.

Putting the nation's bird back on the weathervane was not an easy task. First, the steel post and directional cross were removed. To do this, Timpani crawled inside the roof to the base of the tower, where he cut the steel post. Not only were the tower confines very tight, but there also was a bee's nest inside. A worker held aloft by a bucket truck, tied a rope around the directional allowing it and the steel post to be pulled out of the top of the cupola. Back on the ground, the eagle was fastened to the top of the post and cross.

A crane raised a worker, carrying the cumbersome casting, directional cross and rod, above the cupola, where he inserted the weathervane rod. Inside the tower, Timpani placed a steel collar around the bottom of the rod to which the eagle was attached and to the top of the rod in the tower. [85] The eagle was back.

Timpani also repaired the turned wood finials of neoclassical urns on the four corners of the balustrade. Portions of them were disfigured from wood rot. The wood balustrade, which had been replaced in 1976, did not require any work (*Fig. 37*). [85]

Along with painting the building, the eagle on the tympanum, within the pediment on the front of the town hall was refurbished in 2012. The cost was $36,000. Once again, visitors and passers-by could clearly see the relief sculpture of a bald eagle with wings spread and standing on a shield, as well as the banner inscription, "Incorporated June 21, 1793." The eagle and letters were painted gold, rather than applying gold leaf.

A temporary change in the appearance of the town hall occurred in 1942. The Civilian Defense Committee put a siren (*cost $480*) on the tower to warn people of an air raid. However, tests revealed the siren could not be heard, under certain weather conditions, in the whole town. Therefore, the fire alarm whistle also had to be sounded. The air raid whistle was sold, in 1949, to the Kingston, NH, fire department for $100. [53]

There also have been changes to the side entrance on the north side of the town hall. Originally, the side entrance had wood steps on three sides of a portico.

Fig. 38: Handicap ramp added to side entrance in 1992 by the Handicap Action Access Committee.
Photo, J. Hauck, 2014.

The first mention of a change to the side entrance is in the 1964 annual town report, where it is stated that the wood steps were replaced, at a cost of $1,167.42. [27, 101] Painting of the "side portico," in 1965, cost $1,126.08. [101]

In 1988, there was a study of how to make the town hall more accessible for people with physical handicaps. The following year, voters at the Town Meeting approved a capital request for $190,690 for such work; however, at the subsequent ballot vote it lost, 529 to 271. [69] The following year, 1991, town meeting voters again approved the request for funding (*$10,000*), and again the request lost at the ballot box, this time overwhelmingly, 1,039 to 356. [70, 75]

In 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act required construction of new public and private business to be accessible. However, existing structures, when renovated, only were to have accessibility, in proportion to the cost of the renovations.

All public meetings were banned from the town hall, until it became handicap accessible. Public meetings were held at the high school. [75]

Finding no support at the town meetings, the selectmen, in 1991, formed a Handicap Action Access Committee (*HAAC*). [75, 173] A year later, volunteers installed a 32-ft. long, prefabricated concrete ramp to the town hall's side entrance to enable people in wheelchairs to enter the building (*Fig. 38*), added an electric door opener, [66, 173] and added steps to the backside of the porch. [85] (*cost, $10,700.* [66]) Further, a men's toilet was made unisex, handicap accessible (*cost, just under $5,000*). [66, 173]

In building the ramp, the deck of the side entrance was covered with several inches of cement in order to raise it level with the base of the side door. In doing this, the molded circular base of each of the two wood pillars was encased in cement. In 2003, the pillars were repaired, because the base sections, within the cement, had rotted. [85]

Fig. 39: Left to right, 1st floor: back entrance, fire escape, basement entrance, and side entrance. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

Adding the handicap ramp to the building changed the appearance of the town hall exterior. The change posed a paradoxical question: do requirements of the 1974 Massachusetts Building Code have precedence over the authority of the Historic District Commission (*HHDC*)? [157]

The solution was for the HHDC was to agree to building the handicap ramp, providing it would be replaced within three years with a design and location that did not distract from the original town hall appearance. The HDCC wanted the ramp to be built at the back of the side entrance, or that the grading in the front be raised to allow for level access to the side entrance. [174]

Town records are not clear, however, the 1992 modifications may have been when the side steps were reduced to two sides, eliminating the steps facing the driveway.

Over the years, many significant and noticeable changes have been made to the back of the building.

The first major change came in 1927, when a fire escape, at a cost of $696.70, was added (*Fig. 39*). [44] The State Inspector of Buildings required the town to erect the fire escape. This action came about when the Inspector, finding that there was a basketball court in the auditorium, condemned the building. Back in 1923, the town spent $300 to build the basketball court. [43, 44,]

This was a relatively new sport, having begun about thirty years earlier. At the 1926 Annual Town Meeting, voters approved the use of the auditorium for basketball by "school children, the A. P. Gardner Post 194 American Legion, the Community Service, the Sir Galahad Club, the St. Paul's Boys Club and any other fraternal or charitable organization" [22]

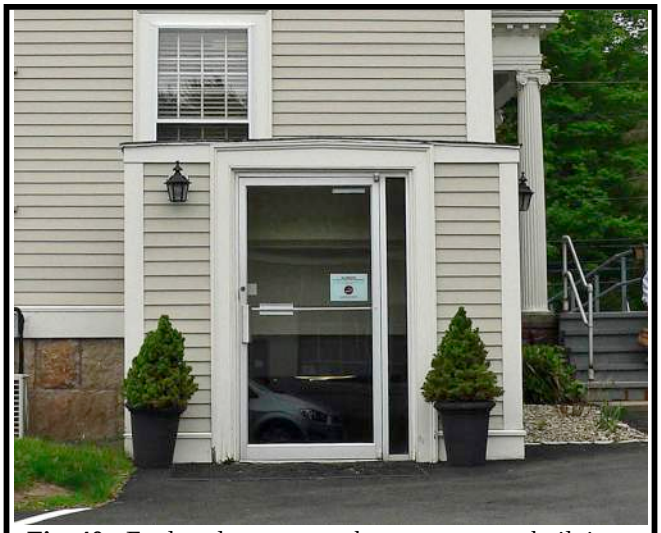

Fig. 40:. Enclosed entrance to basement was rebuilt in 1979. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014.

As building codes became more common at the end of the 1800s, fire safety became an important concern for new construction. In 1882, the Massachusetts General Courts passed an act requiring “All factories and manufacturing establishments, three or

more stories in height, in which forty or more persons are employed, unless supplied with a sufficient number of tower stairways, shall be provided with sufficient fire escapes properly constructed upon the outside thereof, and connected with the interior by doors or windows, with suitable landings at every story above the first, including the attic, if the same is occupied for workrooms. “ [36]

In 1995, as part of residing the building, the fire escape was temporarily removed. The second floor door to the fire escape was replaced. [123, 124]

The first reported change to the bulkhead door for the basement was in 1964 (*$327.28*). [101] The old bulkhead was removed and replaced with an enclosed entrance. The new entrance allowed easier access to the offices in the basement. In 1979, the basement entrance was rebuilt (*Fig. 40*). [180]

In 1977, in order to provide more convenient access to the building for employees parking their cars behind the building, a first floor entrance was built. Also providing another emergency exit, the back door was built in the hallway behind Memorial Meeting Room. [25]

1998, the original wood door was replaced with a steel fire protection door. [85]

In 2003, the stairway's original slate landing was removed and replaced by a concrete surface.

In 2014, the Community Preservation Committee approved a grant of $3,000 for replacement of the back steps with precast concrete steps. [94]

Basement changes

The idiom about a sow's ear comes to mind when looking at the history of the town hall basement. There have been many attempts to convert what was basically a 3,500 sq. ft. [34] utility area into habitable space:

A jail cell was in the basement for law-breakers – only one at a time. However, since the basement was not heated, use of the jail cell was kept to what typically were warm and dry months.

A playroom was in the basement for use by school children. However, the first floor schoolroom was not used by students, until 1952 and then only for a year.

Windows on all sides of the basement, but they are small, thus the area must have often been dark. Early town records do not mention any lights in the basement.

It was common, at the time, for basements to have dirt floors; however, there is no mention of the town hall basement floor, in the various newspaper articles or town reports. In 1953, floor plans indicate that on top of the existing concrete floor, three inches of concrete were added. [35] This was the first mention of the basement flooring.

An early indication of concern about improving the conditions of the basement came in 1907, when the basement's stonewalls were white washed (*cost, $24*); records do not indicate if this was the first time. [84] During major repairs and repainting in 1921, the walls again were white washed (*cost, $73.72*). [90] There is no further mention of painting of the basement walls.

One of the first signs the basement was not suitable for regular use by people occurred in 1919: it flooded in the spring. It cost $106.12 to drain. [38]

Annual Reports for the years following this problem make no mention of anything being done to correct the water problem. And yet, for many years, whenever the need for

more space was discussed, the basement was suggested as a good place.

At the Nov. 25, 1941 Special Town Meeting, the Committee to Remodel Town Hall stated the men's toilet in the basement is not properly lighted, or ventilated, and the floor and walls are in such a condition that it is difficult to keep in a sanitary condition.

Other 1941 recommendations of the Committee were:

Create an office on the first floor, where citizens could confidentially meet with the Town Clerk, the Coordinator, the Assessors or the Tax Collector.

Build a fireproof vault large enough for the great many town records including birth, marriage, naturalization, length of residence and other data that are the only official records a citizen has. The new vault should have "a modern, six-hour fireproof door, as required by the State."

Replace the existing women's toilet that had only one closet and one washbasin. The location of the basin was such that a person using it blocked the passage to the closet. The removal of the women's toilet from its present location and giving this space to the Town Clerks office would give the Town Clerk adequate room which is needed. By building a partition across the assessors room, a women's toilet could be provided with the entrance through the space used as the men's toilet, the men's toilet on the first floor being abolished. [122]

All great plans, but, eleven days later, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, the day that will "live in infamy." The United States declared war against Japan, Germany and Italy.

Hamilton became directly involved in WW2, when in March 1942, the Ohio Army National Guard was billeted on the second floor, used the basement as a storage area and a mess hall, with stoves. [71]

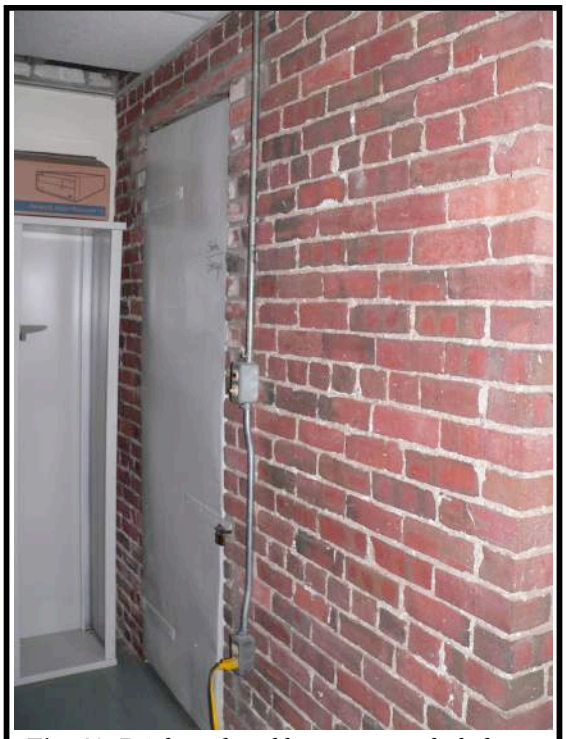

Fig. 41: Brick enclosed basement vault, below Assessors' Office on 1st floor.
Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

Following WW2, calls for expanding town offices to the basement occasionally appear in town records. There was a lot of space in the basement, but it would take a lot of upgrading of this space to make it suitable for people to work there.

In 1949, a general plan was proposed for a major refurbishing of the town hall, including the basement. [53] A year later, 1950, the plan was approved, at the Annual Town Meeting; [80] however, work did not begin until 1953. [57]

The first mention of the partitioning of the basement into rooms is in the 1953 Annual Town Meeting Report: ten rooms were to be built in the basement. [57] To accomplish this, many of the original support posts were removed and steel girders inserted. [35]

Also, a new basement vault was built (*Fig. 41*), directly below a new vault in the

town clerk's office. [57] Changes to the heating system allowed the basement rooms to be heated. This was achieved by installing two new boilers. [35] The coal-fired furnace remained, which meant that fuel costs increased with also heating the basement.

In 1960, heating system was switched from coal to oil. [61] By that time, it was very clear that the coal-fired heating system was antiquated and should be either greatly repaired or replaced. Replacement parts were hard to find and some were no longer available. [60] The switch to an oil burner cost $879.50. Heating water pipes, in the basement, also were replaced. [60]

The use of heating oil did not result in a reduction in heating costs. In 1961, the town spent $1,172.92 for oil. Most subsequent years the oil cost was about $1,200, although some years it did reach about $2,000. However, the switch to oil reduced the amount of storage space needed, eliminated the costs for removing ashes and feeding the furnace, and improved the basement environment.

In 1975, switching from oil to gas was considered, but the cost for gas was 25% more than that for oil. [62, 175] The original 1975 also plans called for installing dehumidifiers, [12] however, after investigation, this too was found to be too expensive. [33, 175]

Some answers to the perennial question of how to reduce heating costs came in 1991. Changes, including installing a new boiler and a thermostat control system throughout the building, reduced the heating costs by more than fifteen percent. [66, 156]

Further improvements in reducing heating costs came in 2011. The previous two-boiler heating system was replaced with a modular heating system having a programmed controller based on the outside temperature. With the new system, maximum efficiency is maintained without having to run at 100% load, as was the case with the former heating system. The operational savings, with the new system, were estimated to be 15 to 20% annually. [133]

More changes to the basement came in 1961. The room arrangement was not changed. Rather, new room assignments were made. This included changing a storage room, at the south end, to being a Civil Defense room. [61, 17] Paul Q. Boisvert was CD director. [59] Across the United States, the Civil Defense Office was key to alerting people on how to prepare for the aftermath of a nuclear war.

Just five years later, 1966, there began another major rearrangement of the basement. All the partitions were torn out [93] and, in 1967, stonewalls were repointed and the area disinfected (*indicating that dampness had been a problem*). [109] New partitions were erected. [93] $35,000 was appropriated for the work. [118]

Moving to the basement was the recently formed Department of Public Works: it replaced the previous Surveyors of Highways. The first DPW Superintendent was Raymond A. Whipple. [162]

Despite the improvements in the basement conditions made with each refurbishing, its use was considered only acceptable for occasional department and committee meetings, but it was not seen as a place for the offices of fulltime workers

In 1974, when a Town Hall Renovations Committee developed preliminary plans for adding office space, they focused on the second floor. [12] Portable partitions were planned to provide flexible office arrangements, there was to be a drop ceiling, bathrooms added, air-cooling provided and a janitor closet built. [117]

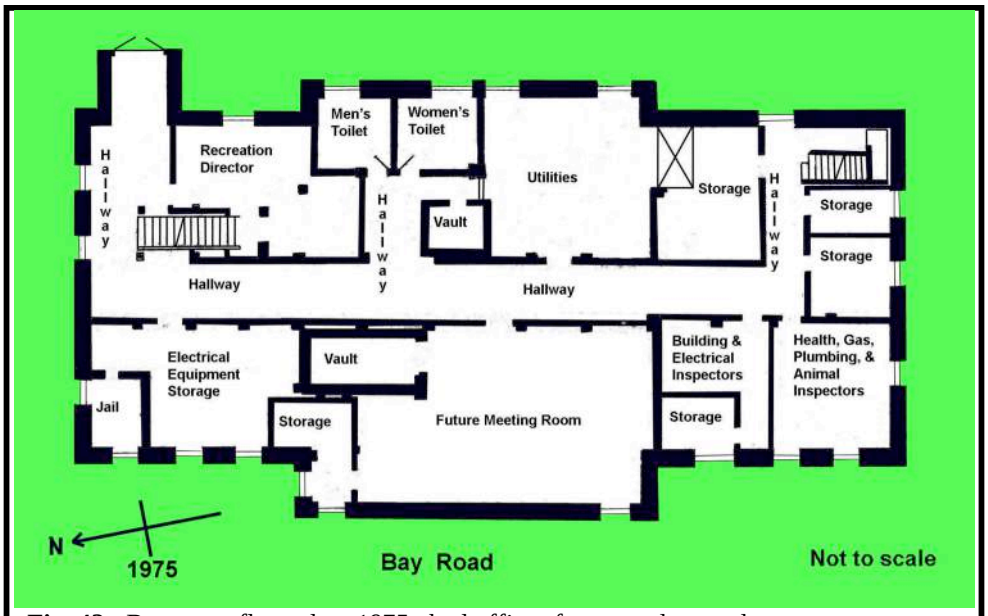

Fig. 42: Basement floor plan, 1975, had offices for several town departments.
Floor plan, J. Hauck, 2014

Quick to the rescue of the auditorium was former selectman and electrical contractor Lawrence Foster. He offered an alternative plan that would not "disturb the historic architecture of the building," in particular the auditorium. [12, 62]

Rather than changing the auditorium, and facing the wrath of some angry townies, the selectmen accepted Foster's plan to add the needed office space in the basement, and completely renovate the building's heating, electrical, plumbing and ventilation systems. Foster averred that his plan would retain the "architecturally perfect" second floor. [34] He estimated the cost for the project would be less than $150,000. [12]

Prior to beginning the 1975 town hall reconstruction, the president of the engineering firm in charge said, "The sequencing of all work while the facility remains in business will require careful co-ordination." [33] Once again, the revamping began with removing partitions to clear the entire basement space. [24, 67]

What followed were several years of work delays, legal actions, confusion, plan changes, charges of improper construction, and a lot of frustration among town employees trying to do their work while their offices were in disarray. [29, 30, 31] There were times "when the sandblasting was taking place in the basement and clouds of dust were emitting in the halls and offices." [24]

When completed in 1978 (*Fig. 42*), the basement had six offices: the Recreation Director, moved from first floor to room at foot of back steps; the Assessors occupied a room along-side the old jail cell [175] and, in the southwest corner, there were offices for the Building Inspector (*moved from first floor*); and the plumbing, milk and animal inspectors. Perhaps, as an indication of just how good the basement conditions were supposed to be was that the regional health officer had a room in the basement. [49, 67, 62]

With people regularly working and meeting in the basement, having toilets was essential. For privacy, the ground level, clear windows were converted to translucent glass blocks. There were several storage areas, including one for future expansion or a

conference room (*now the Hamilton Historic Society room*); a heating/electrical/ventilation/plumbing equipment area (*northwest corner*); two toilets and a new concrete floor. [25, 35] The Civil Defense office (*at the south end*) returned to its former use as a storage room. [17] For the first time, there was hot water for the sinks in the building's bathrooms, [33] and the building had an entirely new electrical system. [33, 65] A year later, the basement was carpeted. [65] Brick facing was added to the outer walls of several basement rooms, including the vaults, the utilities room, jail cell, and storage rooms. [31]

The final Report of Town Hall Renovation Committee ended with, "It is the hope of the Renovation Committee that the town hall will not be allowed to get into the deplorable condition that it was before the renovation." [65] Total cost for the renovation was $124,231.08. [65]

In 1993, all departments in the basement moved to the second floor, except for limited use by the plumbing, building and electrical inspectors. [156] And, so it was until 1997, when, as part of remodeling the town hall for its 100th anniversary, major changes again were made.

Total cost for the many repairs and renovations was $35,000, a far cry from the cost for the renovations in the 1970s. [109] Included in the work were: reworking the ventilation, replacing the air vent, installing baseboard heating, and cleaning and adjusting the air ducts to allow the basement to be useable for town departments. [118]

The room to the left of the bulkhead steps became the Building Inspector's office. [85] The jail cell became a storage area for the building manager's tools and he also had a workbench. The first room on the right of the center hallway, the former Highways Superintendent's office, became another storage room. The next room on the right was the Water Department's laboratory. [85]

Across from this room, a hallway leads to two toilets, a telephone equipment room and a vault. [85] Next to the Water Department laboratory, there were two storage rooms. [85] Across from these two rooms is the utilities room, housing the furnace, water tank, telephone equipment and air handler equipment. [85]

The center hallway, at the south end of the basement, turns to the left. Two rooms on the right were the former offices for the Plumbing Inspector and the Sealer of Weight's and Measures. The building manager began using the Sealer of Weight's and Measures office. Across from them were rooms for cleaning supplies telephone equipment. Previously, the cleaning equipment room was used to store heating oil tanks. [85]

At the end of this hallway extension, there is the original stairway leading to the back of the first floor meeting room. [85]

Despite all the modifications made in 1997, the basement offices soon began to be vacated. Unfortunately, sweating of the fieldstone walls, during the summer, and the runoff resulted in mildew forming in the carpeting and the air became very humid. The conditions affected both the people and the files in the basement.

The carpeting was removed and replaced with vinyl floor tiles. The brick walls were repointed, and the basement was disinfected. [68]

Even with the basement's on-going problems with dampness, files from the second floor were transferred to the basement. For storage of the file boxes, metal shelves from the library on the first floor were placed against the walls of the center hallway. [85]

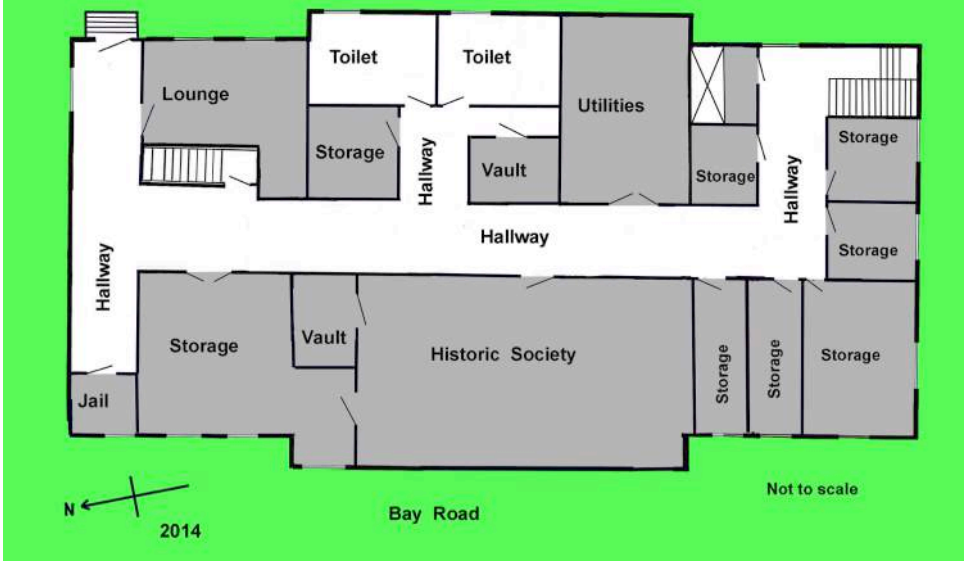

Fig. 43: Floor plan of basement, 2014. Hamilton Historical Society room was former Water Department room. J. Hauck, 2014

The former Building Inspector's office became a kitchen.

The Historical Society moved, from the second floor dressing room, into the former Water Department room. [85] The room provided more space, but with it came low temperatures from fall through spring, and dampness during the summer; all not the best conditions for storing old documents.

Unfortunately, in 1998 there was another water problem in the basement. In June, nearly ten inches of rain fell in the eastern part of Massachusetts. The area recently occupied by the Historical Society had about an inch of water that seeped through the foundation wall. This time, something was done to hopefully prevent the problem from reoccurring. A French trench was dug around the base of the foundation to allow water to drain away. [85]

Fig. 44: Lounge, left of the back steps, has a sofa, table, chairs, refrigerator, microwave oven, and sink.
Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

In 2014, the basement houses (*Fig. 43*): A lounge (*Fig. 44*), to the left of the back steps, has a sofa, table, refrigerator, microwave oven, sink, file cabinet and first-aide kit. (*Very seldom is the lounge used*.); just down the hallway, the small jail cell with its door of steel bars, still exists (*Fig. 45*). The area is a storage room for painting supplies.

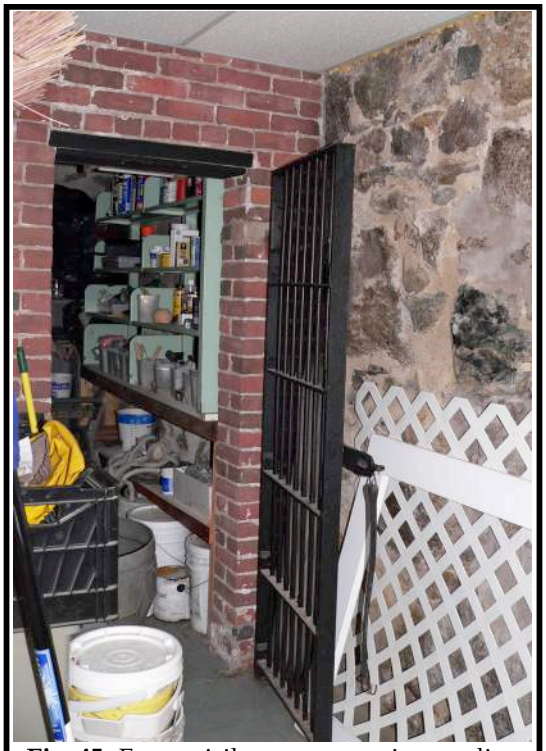

Fig. 45: Former jail now stores paint supplies. . Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

Fig. 46: Basement's center hallway with storage shelves. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

Fig. 47: Vacant basement offices, now storage rooms. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

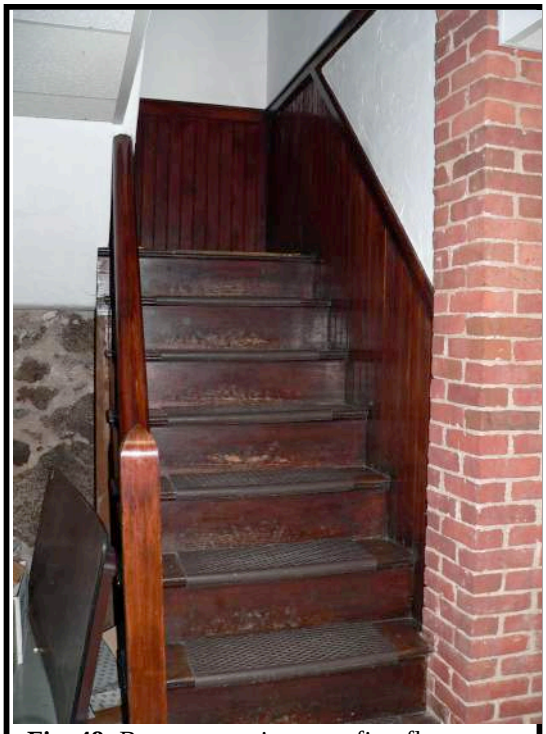

Fig. 48: Basement stairway to first floor. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

Fig. 49: Historic Society room contains historic records, documents, photos; and display files with historic artifacts. Bookshelves have reference books. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

The first room on the right of the center hallway, the former Highways Superintendent's office, now is another storage room.

Halfway down the center hallway, to the left, there is a side hallway. Although no one now regularly works in the basement, it still has the two toilets built in 1975. [49] One also serves as a washroom for maintenance of the basement.

In front of the two toilets, on the right, there is a computer equipment room. To the left, there is a vault (*Fig. 43*).

Back out on the central hallway, a short way ahead and on the right, is the Hamilton Historic Society room (*Fig. 49 & 50*). It contains files with historic records, documents, photos; and display files with historic artifacts. Bookshelves have reference books. A computer has copies of many records, photos and a catalog of the Society's information.

A utilities room, across from this room, has double steel doors and brick walls, for fire protection. It contains a furnace, an air handler, telephone equipment, an electrical panel and water treatment unit. [85]

Continuing down the center hallway to the end, on the right, there are three more storage rooms. The hallway turns left here.

On the right, there are two more storage rooms. The rooms have signs next to the top of their doors: "Plumbing Inspector" and "Sealer of Weight's and Measures" (*Fig. 47*). Neither is occupied, but now are storage areas for various items. The weights and scales formerly in the Weights and Measures Inspector's office now are in a cabinet in the meeting room, on the first floor. (*Fig. 59*)

Fig. 50: Historic Society library of books, videos and atlases. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

Across from the two rooms are two more rooms. One is for maintenance supplies and the other has telephone equipment.

At the end of the hallway, on the right is a stairway (*Fig. 48*)

to a hallway at the back of the Memorial Meeting Room, on the first floor.

The stairways in the basement and at the back of the 1st floor Memorial Meeting Room are virtually the same was they were when the town hall was built: anti-slip pads were later added to the treads. The solid wood stairs, railings and wainscots remain stained, rather than being painted.

For many years, boxes and several file shelves cluttered the center hallway (*Fig. 46).* Portable dehumidifiers sat on the floor at both ends of the hallway. An old safe sat near the north end of the hallway: it previously may have been used by the police for storage of evidence. The selectmen first acquired a safe in 1887. [179]

In 2014, Mother Nature had her way in clearing the center hallway of obstructions: heavy rain storms in November and December caused about a half-foot of flooding in the basement. Water logged file boxes were removed. There also was damage to many historic items in the Historic Society room and the old town clerk's vault.

First floor changes

Many changes have been made to the first floor (*Fig. 51*) and there have been on-going repairs, painting and updating. (*Ed Note: General changes to the building's interior will be covered before reviewing changes to the various rooms.*)

Towards the end 1914, the interior walls had become marred, discolored and pealed. However, with the start of WW1 thoughts of repainting were put on hold.

Then, in the late 1920s, there was the depression and there certainly was little or no money for repainting or repairing the town hall, inside or out.

In 1938, Massachusetts Department of Public Safety inspected the town hall and as a result required the town to make building-wide changes in lighting. [46] Gas was installed as an auxiliary lighting system. [95] In 1939, a buried gas line was brought gas into

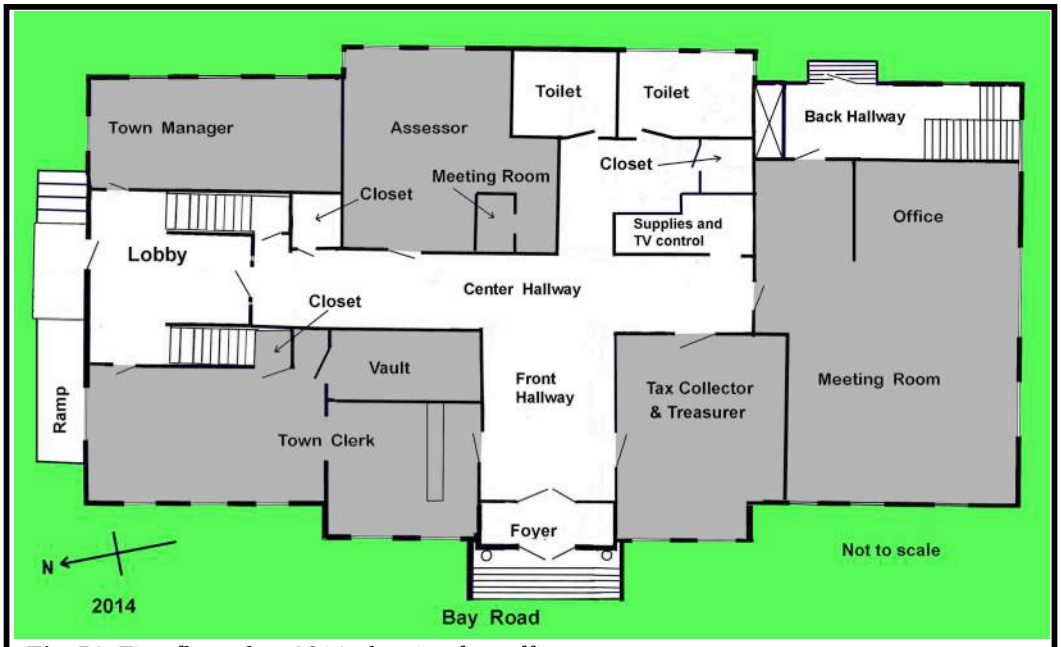

Fig. 51: First floor plan, 2014, showing five offices.
Drawing, J. Hauck, 2014

the building by North Shore Gas Co. [95]

The town hall had become a busy place. In the 1939 Annual Town Reports, the selectmen noted that "every room, with the exception of the large hall, is occupied six days a week." [46]

The following year, 1940, the selectmen applied for help from the U. S. Works Projects Administration (*WPA*) to refurbish the building. [47] Towns were being encouraged to make use of the WPA. This request apparently was not seen as high priority, for no action was taken. Then, in 1943, with there being WW2, all WPA work halted. [96] Long-planned town hall improvements had to be postponed for duration of the war. [48]

However, a significant increase in town hall traffic developed: people were applying for ration cards, inquiring about enlisting, and requesting tax abatements. Selectmen alerted the townspeople that the town hall, due to it being visited much more, had hired more employees and made the town hall open for more hours. As a result, appropriations would be necessary for repairs and repainting. [46]

So, what was done?

In 1942, carpeting was laid throughout the 1st floor. Further, new lights were installed, at a cost of $288.92. [48]

The 1943 Report of the Board of Selectmen stated, "The outside of the Town Hall was given two coats of white paint," and "when conditions permit, it will be necessary to have some work done in the interior." [96] (*1943 was the 150th anniversary of Hamilton's incorporation.*) The inside was painted in 1945 (*$742*) [98] and 1946 (*$1,652*). [99]

Also mentioned in the 1943 Report of the Board of Selectmen was that "For the eighth consecutive year, your Board is pleased to announce there has been a reduction

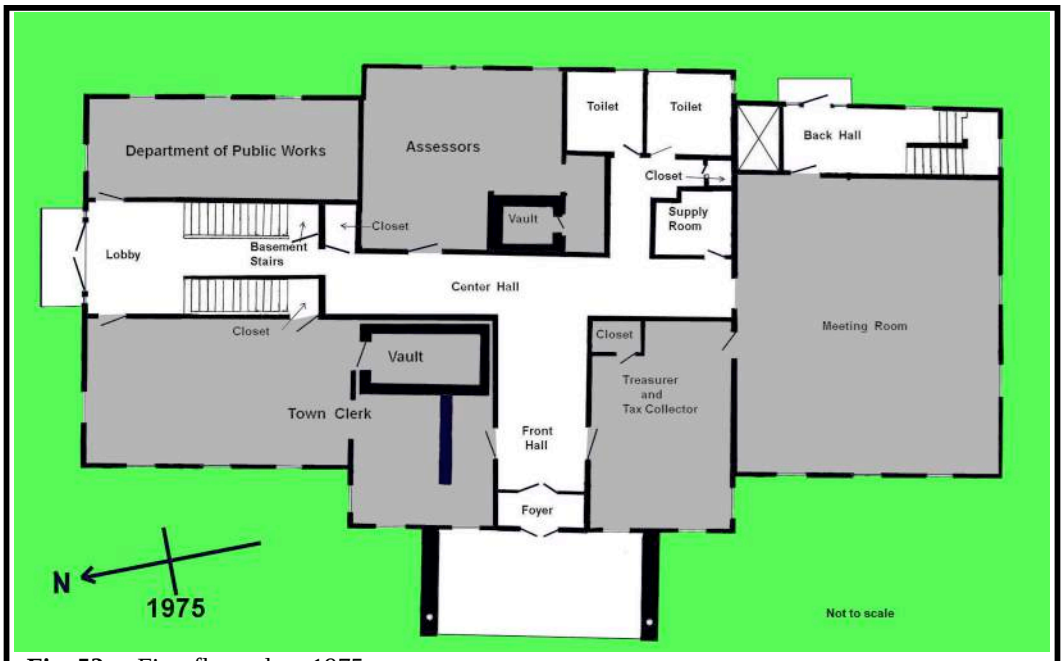

Fig. 52: First floor plan, 1975.
Floor plan, adapted from Hamilton town hall files. J. Hauck, 2014

in the tax rate." [96] Welcome news to many people working for the low war-time wages.

Following WW2, long-delayed projects from 1941 for repairing the town hall began.

From 1946 to 1949: the interior was painted, in 1946, at a cost of $219.66; and in 1949, repairs were made to the back hall, and it and the schoolroom (*then just called the meeting room*) were painted. Further, new lights were installed. [53]

The 1950s saw much more activity in taking care of the town hall and improving it.

In 1951, acoustic ceiling was added to the first floor. [56] It was done again in 1961 (*cost, $460*). [17] Quite likely, the acoustic ceiling tiles were perforated, pressed wood-fiber products. To achieve required fire protection the tiles contained asbestos fibers.

In 1952, at the Annual Town Meeting, the selectmen were authorized to "make changes and alterations to the town hall and in the arrangements of the rooms of the departments, boards and officers of the town within and without the town hall building in such manner as the selectmen may deem necessary or desirable in order to remedy present congested conditions and to protect valuable town records and to purchase and install a new vault and such other additional equipment and fixtures as the selectmen may determine." [55, 56]

The toilet on the center hall, next to the door to the basement, became a janitor's supplies closet in 1953. [35, 102] Twelve year earlier, in 1941, a town hall renovation committee said the men's toilet on the first floor, in an unventilated closet, did not conform to the State Plumbing Laws.

A significant change during this time happened in 1953: the town hall address changed to 577 Main St., to 577 Bay Rd. It was felt that the name should return to its historic designation. The name Main Street "seemed ill-suited to the main thoroughfare running through the country-like and picturesque town of Hamilton." [57, 54]

In 1955, there is the first mention, in the Annual Town Reports, of linoleum flooring (*$35*). There is no previous mention of the 1942 carpeting being removed. Linoleum was put on the floors again in 1961. [108] From experience, it likely had been found that linoleum floors are much easier to clean and more stain resistant.

Or, so it then seemed. By 1979, both the basement and the first floor were carpeted.

Some changes and improvements were made in the 1960s. Apparently, the town hall traffic was quite high, for the linoleum installed in 1955, was replaced just six years later, 1961: new linoleum was laid on the first floor hallways, at a cost of $1,026. [61, 17]

The 1970s saw major changes.

In 1973, during an Annual Town Meeting, in discussions about making changes to the town hall adequate for future government needs, Selectman Edmund J. Reinhalter said, "A Town Manager form of government might be a possibility in the future if it meant town government could function more efficiently and was in the best interest of the town." [116] (*Ed note: this did not happen until 2009.*)

Two years later, 1975, changes began to be made to the first floor (*Fig. 52*). New fluorescent lights were installed. [33] (*Most of the changes were made in the different rooms, which will be covered in subsequent sections.*)

In 1975, the Town Hall Restoration Program for replacing the electrical, plumbing and heating/ventilating systems began. [22, 33] Fluorescent lights again were installed. [33]

In 1977, new suspended ceilings were added to first floor offices, [64] replacing the acoustic tiles installed in 1951. [64] Also that year, the front entrance foyer was rebuilt (*Fig. 53*). [25, 64] This included the replacement of the inner doors, laying of stone tile, placing bulletin boards on the walls and repainting.

In 1977, there were two new toilets on the first floor: one male, and one female. The original plan also called for a handicap/unisex toilet to be built in front of the women's toilet, with its entrance of the center hallway; however, there was not enough money for this. An office supplies room was built in the area.

The final Report of Town Hall Renovation Committee ended with, "It is the hope of the Renovation Committee that the town hall will not be allowed to get into the deplorable condition that it was before the renovation." [65] Total cost for the renovation, Phase I and II, was 124,231.08. [65] This was about $25,000 below was had been budgeted for the project. [25]

By the 1980s, there were a number of people regularly working at the town hall. There was heat for the winter, but no relief from the heat of the summer. In 1988, a plan for air conditioning the building was found to be too expensive. [68]

In 1991, as part of modifications made to the first floor for access by handicapped people, the men's toilet was converted to a unisex, handicap toilet. [173]

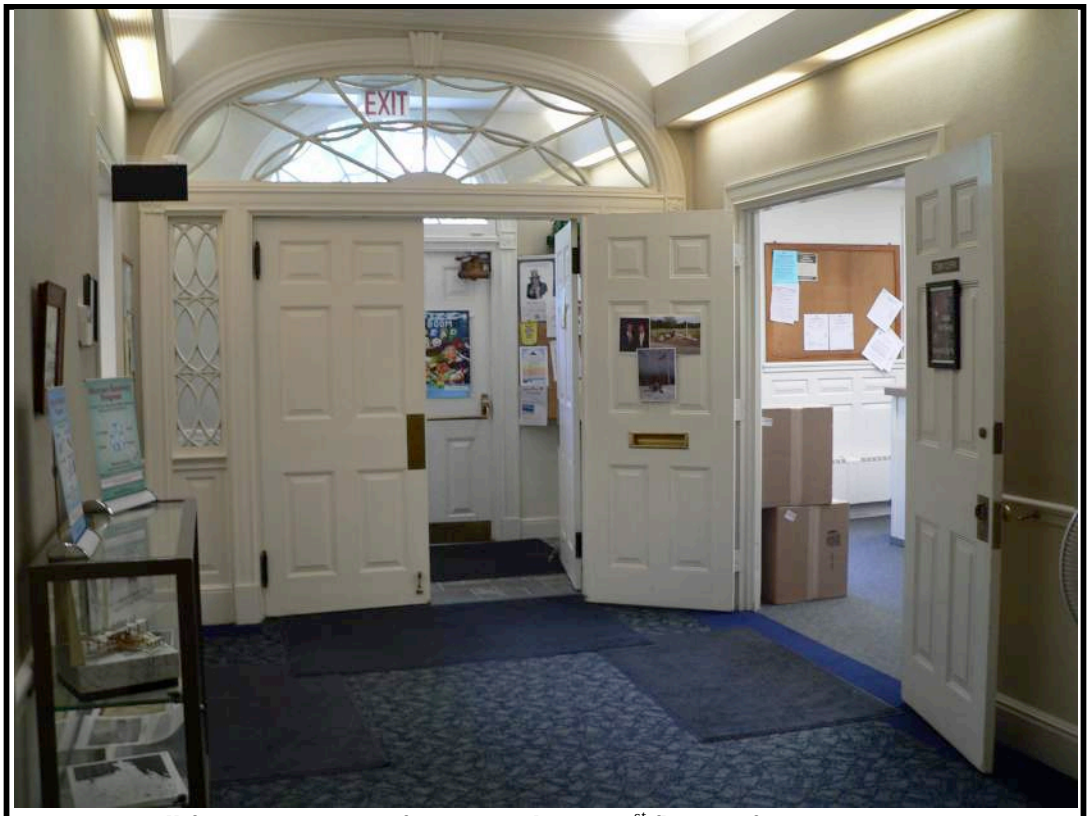

Fig. 53: Small front entry remains from original 1897 1st floor configuration.
Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

The town hall was significantly spruced up in 1992. The auditorium ceiling was included in this work, which was done using Middlesex Vo-Tech workers. [77] Further, the linoleum was removed from the 1st and 2nd floors and replaced with carpeting. [66]

Efforts to provide visitors with interesting items, relating to the history of Hamilton, began in the 1990s. Various large pictures of historic events and notable people hang from the walls throughout the building.

In 1992, the Historical Society placed a display cabinet in entrance hallway. It contained several historical items. The current (*2014*) display (*Fig. 54*) includes a newspaper article about the first flight of an airplane in New England, which happened, in 1910, at Chebacco Lake. A small model of the plane was included in the cabinet.

Fig. 54: Historical display near entrance on 1st floor features major Hamilton historical events. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

In 2011, Town Clerk Jane Wetson found, in the clerk's vault, a large wall map, showing Essex County in 1856. The Community Preservation Commission, in 2012, provided funds (*$10,925*) to have the map framed and glass covered. [166] It is on the wall at the back of the hallway coming from the front door and next to the grandfather clock.

The grandfather clock was moved to hall in 1961. It had been in the meeting room for eight years.

Not long after the move to the center hall, the grandfather clock became silent (*Perhaps being disturbed about being moved?*). Many people, including clock repairmen, tried with no success to fix the clock. It remained mute until 1965, when Harmon Hunt "messed with it" and got it chiming again. Once again, Abbott's gift could be heard throughout the building, tolling the hour and half hour. [41, 72]

Upon fixing the clock, Harmon said, "It will run forever, if they'll remember to wind it." The clock has to be rewound, using a key, every eight days. [72] The town clerk had the job of doing this and it was carried out for many years, but subsequently this was discontinued.

In 1928, the widow of Maj. A.P. Gardner (*He was killed in WW1 and the Legion Post named after him*), who was remarried to Gen. C.C. Williams prepared and donated a large bronze WW1 Honor Roll to the town. The bronze plaque has one hundred and seventeen names (*seven names were added to those on the original WW1 honor roll*). Maj. A.P. Gardner's name appears at the top of the list of names.

At a special dedication ceremony, it was initially mounted on the back wall of the town hall entrance: people entering the building would see it straight ahead. [71] Subsequently, the WW1 plaque was moved to a wall opposite library; and later to its current place in the Memorial Meeting Room (*Fig. 60*).

When the WW1 plaque on the back wall of the town entrance was moved it was replaced with a WW2 plaque. Because of the "great amount of space necessary to include all eligible names," the WW2 plaque only has the names of those, "who gave their lives for their country." [107] (★*Charles W. Appleton,* ★*Charles S. Barrell,* ★*Donald Donaldson,* ★*Hiram T. Folsom Jr.,* ★*John R. Grant,* ★*Bernard P. Greeley,* ★*Robert D. Hiller,* ★ *George L. Meyer Jr.,* ★*Sidney B. Meyer,* ★*Albert H. Oser,* ★*George S. Patton Jr., and* ★*John L. Smith*) The WW1 plaque was moved to the meeting room (*see Fig. 60*).

Much to the relief of the town employees working at the town hall and to visitors coming there in the summer, the first floor was equipped with air conditioning, in 1993. Individual, wall mounted units were installed. The Historical District required two units behind in the front of the building not harm existing shrubbery. Total cost was just under $21,000. [66, 156] Four years earlier, 1988, summer services at the town hall were "seriously curtailed" during a summer heat wave." [68]

In 2011, an examination of the town hall windows revealed that many did not open and close properly. Sashes for fifty-three windows were removed and, where necessary, the wood re-milled and/or repaired. All the rope counter-balances were replaced with chain mechanisms, broken glass panes replaced and new locks installed. [134] All the storm windows and screens were replaced with new ones. The work was done by Energy Services business (*ESCo*) for Johnson Control, with funding (*$50,000*) provided by the Hamilton Community Preservation Committee. [94, 126]

An accounting of the many changes to the various rooms on the first floor has been daunting. When first approached, the words of John S. Hall, a poet and musician, came to mind: “The task that lies before me is daunting and the rewards are uncertain. I should probably let someone else do it.”

Fig. 55: Grandfather clock given to town by Marshall K. Abbott, in 1900, originally was in library. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014.

Library Changes

What now is the Town Clerk's Office began as the town library.

Three years after the town hall opened, in 1901, a grand addition to the library was a grandfather clock (*Fig. 55*). [120] A plaque on the front reads, "Presented to the Town of Hamilton by Marshall Kitteredge Abbott." [7] One of the town's prominent citizens, Abbott was the first president of the Myopia Hunt Club. The clock, almost ten feet tall (*117 in.*), has a face with a calendar and moon-phase wheel. The elaborately carved wood in the case is Santo Domingo (*West Indian*) mahogany (*Swietenia mahogani*). [7]

Houston Thomas presented the clock to the town in behalf of Abbott, who had died in 1899: Thomas was Abbott's nephew.

William Edwin Hadlock, who lived at the brick house on the corner of Main St. and Larch Row in Wenham, made the clock. Inside the case, an inscription reads, "Fecit (*Latin, made*) by William Edwin Hadlock, Wenham, A.D. 1900." [7]

The town library, from its opening in 1898, was a very popular place. [4] Not only were many people using it, but it also acquired more and more books. By 1901, the library had 2,690 books and 944 members. [87]

In 1907, the town received a $1,000 gift, in memory of Gail Hamilton, for use in creating a new reading room in the town hall. The selectmen considered expanding the library into the School Committee room, across the hall. In lieu of doing this, in 1912, the School Committee placed a brass plaque, reading "Gail Hamilton Reading Room," on the hallway door to the library rooms. Many books from her private library were donated to the library. (*Gail Hamilton was the pen name for Abigail Dodge*.) [20, 77]

A change in the use of the town hall library began in 1913, when a branch library was established in the Railroad Avenue store of Osgood J. Kimball. [20] By 1940s, the circulation of books by the branch usually exceeded, by a ratio of three to one, that of the town hall library. The branch was easily accessible in the business center and near the post office. [20]

On March 18, 1934, the main library closed for a complete renovation. The rows of bookshelves were removed and replaced with shelves along the walls. A counter in the delivery room was removed, opening up an archway that had been hidden for many years. The librarian's desk was moved to the delivery room and new shelves were installed. The interior walls were painted ivory and all shelves and woodwork white. New lights were installed. The refurbished library reopened June 2nd. [148]

With the start of WW2, library visits at the town hall dropped off significantly. The town hall library resumed full operation following the war.

Demands not only increased upon the library, but also upon the town government. The growing stream of documents that had to be prepared and kept for future reference resulted in there being storage files throughout the building. The existing vaults in the Town Clerk's office and the basement could not hold any more documents. [51]

In 1953, the solution to this "document flood" was to move the Town Clerk's office, from the back of 1st floor to the library rooms. [57]

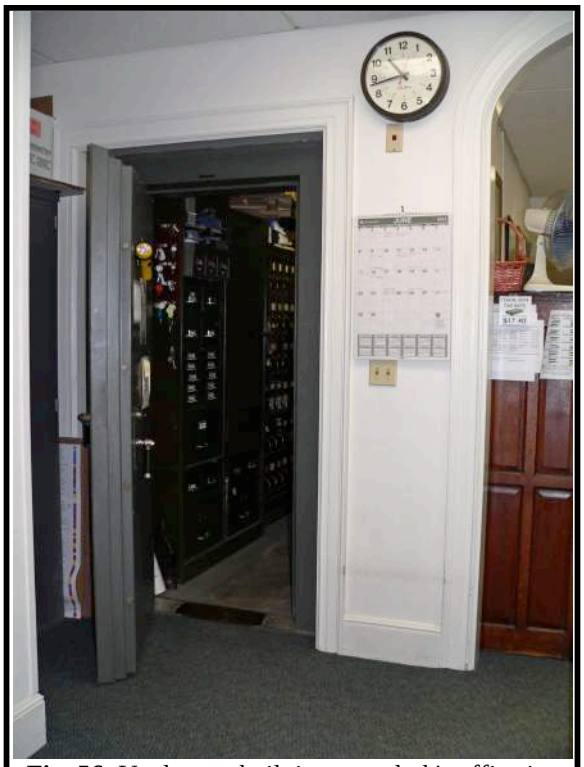

Fig. 56: Vault was built in town clerk's office in 1953. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

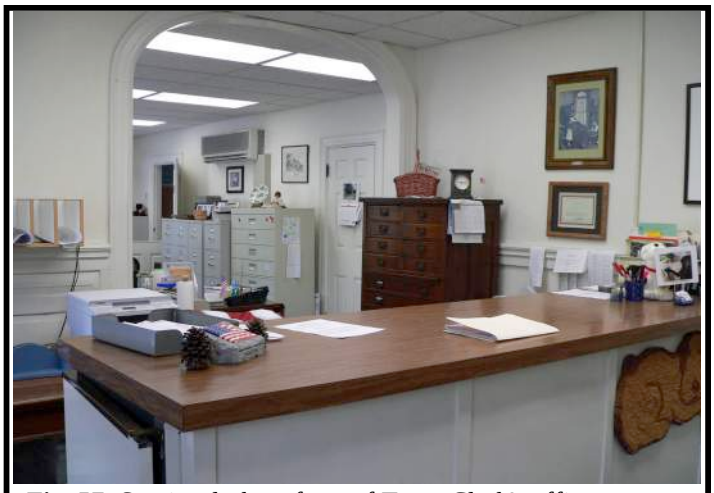

Fig. 57: Service desk, at front of Town Clerk's office, was added in 1953. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

At the time, Francis H. Whipple was the town clerk. (*Note: Known as Mr. Hamilton, he also was the Town Accountant, Board of Selectmen secretary, Board of Health clerk, and clerk to the Board of Registrars.*) [89]

The relocation of the Town Clerk's office to inside the front door provided more space, and was logical location since, as reported in the 1952 annual town report, the Town Clerk remained the only town office "regularly open each day." [55] This was quite a change from 1939, when "every room, except for the large hall, was occupied six days a week." [46]

A large vault was built in the clerk's office (*Fig. 56*). Directly below it in the basement, another large vault was built. [57] The vault in the previous Town Clerk's office was about half the size of the new one. [62]

In 1953, a service counter was built at front of the office (*Fig. 57*). [62] Alterations and repairs to Town Clerk's office continued in 1955 (*$848.11*). [58] The closet, now in Town Clerk's office probably was built in 1955, as part of alterations (*cost $800*). [58]

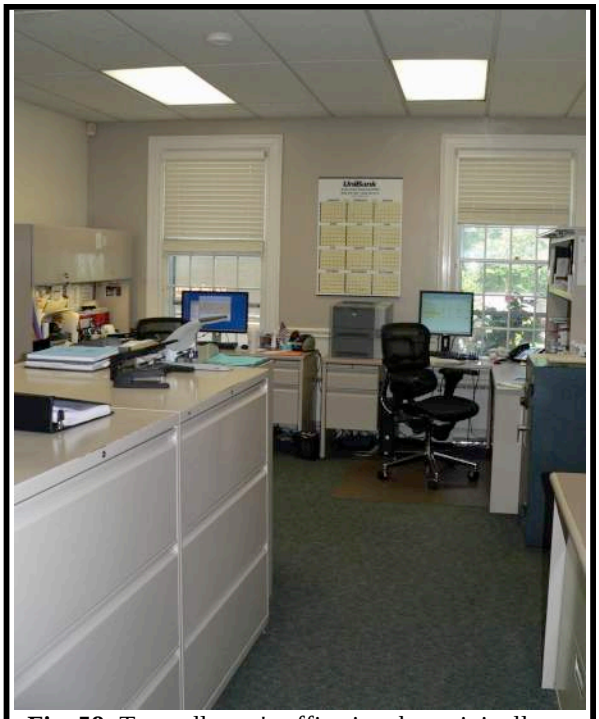

Fig. 58: Tax collector's office in what originally was the School Committee room.
Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

School Committee Room Changes

What now is the Treasurer/Tax Collector Office (*Fig. 58*) began as the School Committee Room.

The school committee room, early in the 1900s, became the Constables' Office. (*An exact date could not be found in town records.*) Annually, Hamilton elected three constables, until 1903 when the number elected was increased to six. Beginning in 1913, the selectmen appointed one of them chief of police: Joseph Merrill was the first. [1]

With the police station being in the town hall, one would expect it to be a very safe place. However, in 1937, vandals broke into the building during the night. No one was ever arrested for the break-in. At the time, Hamilton did not have a full-time policeman, so the building was vacant when the thieves entered. [154]

The room continued to be the chief's office until 1940, when The Federal Government required there be a room in the town hall where Old Age Assistance (*OAA*) applicants could be interviewed privately. [47] The 1935 Social Security Act created the OAA program that gave cash payments to poor, elderly people.

To meet the office requirement, the town transferred the police department from its town hall office to the second floor of the hardware store building, at the depot on Main Street. The rationale for moving the police department was many people had been calling for the police headquarters to be nearer the town center. [47]

Three years earlier, 1932, the Finance Committee recommended closing the police station at South Hamilton and using the vacant room at the entrance to town hall. [177]

The town hall room became the Welfare Office. Private meetings were held there, and applicant records stored in the vault in the town clerk's office. In 1956, as part town hall refurbishing, the room was painted. [146] The Town Clerk, Francis H. Whipple, also served as the Old Age Assistance Representative.

In 1968, the town's Welfare Office moved to the Chittick Block on Railroad Ave. On Jul. 1, 1968, the State Department of Public Welfare assumed all responsibility for administration and financial responsibility of public welfare. [162]

The room next became the Treasurer's Office: Robert H. Brooks was the Treasurer. [162] Previously, the Treasurer's office was where today (*2014*) is the Assessors' Office.

In 1995, the room became the office for both the tax collector and the treasurer. [79] A Town Hall Study Committee had recommended the treasurer to act as the Tax Collector and voters approved the consolidation. [79]

With two people and their associated files being in the room, more space was needed. Rather than moving to another larger room, the tax collectors room was enlarged. In 1999, a wall separating the room from the adjoining meeting room was moved, a little over four feet, into the meeting room. The closet, at the room's east end, was removed and, in its place, a door built to the center hall. A previous door connecting the room to the meeting room was removed. [81, 85] Even with added floor space, this office is tight.

Schoolroom Changes

Today's Memorial Meeting Room (*Fig. 59*) originally was to have been a schoolroom. However, the need anticipated in 1897 for more school space did not happen.

Very soon after the town hall opened its doors, the unused schoolroom became a meeting room for committees and selectmen. The school desks likely were moved to the back of the room.

At the 1923 Annual Town Meeting, the Library Trustees requested that the library be allowed to use the schoolroom as a "reading, recreational and community room." Their request was approved. [119] The following year, 1924, the walls were repainted with a dado terracotta and the upper part finished in a harmonizing color. New electrical fixtures were installed to provide sufficient light for reading. Draperies were hung, and willow and willow-wicker and stuffed cotton-fabric furniture were added, all reflecting the same color scheme. Pictures (*prints*) hung on the wall were: Under Blue Ionian Skies; The Amalfi; The Shepherdess; The Dutch Flower Girl; The Old Farm; and The Bend in the Road. The pictures reflected a then current trend of interior decoration by combining brightness and warmth, with art and education. Total cost was $500. The old black boards and school desks were removed and turned over to the School Committee.

Fig. 59: Memorial Meeting Room, with meeting desks at front, temporary office at back right, weights and measures display case at back left, and door to back hall. The WW2 plaque on the back wall. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

Often, in evenings, dancing, whist parties, and club meetings were held here. [20, 77] Two years later, the Library Trustees purchased an Ivers & Pond upright piano for the community room. [44] Occasionally, during the ensuing years the room was repaired and repainted. [53]

In 1950, the School Committee requested the room be "given over for the use of the kindergarten," Monday through Friday mornings. [107] This is the only reference, in town documents, to the school system ever using the room. In 1952, the kindergarten left the town hall. [101]

During the time the kindergarten was in the schoolroom, 1951, the WW1 plaque was moved from a wall in the entry hallway to the room. [80] The plaque was on the north wall, in the area where there now (*2014*) is the weights and measures display cabinet. [130]

Next to occupy the room was the library, which, in 1953, moved from its original rooms just inside the front entrance. [17] New lighting was installed [57] in the schoolroom. The new location provided more space for bookshelves, most of which were transferred from the original library and a few new ones. To provide different sections in the room, back-to-back bookcases formed a partial partition, from the middle of the south wall. Another short row of back-to-back bookcases divided the back end of the room.

Also moving into the new library room, in 1953, was the grandfather clock. [57]

In March 1960, as the need arose for town officials to have more space, the town decided to have the library leave the building. Voters appropriated $90,000 to build a new library further south on Main Street, next to the recently built fire and police station. The new central library opened in April 1961. [20, 61]

The grandfather clock also was moved that year from the meeting room, going to the center hall, where more people could see this splendid "old gentleman." [7] (*Fig. 56*).

After the library left, a suspended ceiling was built, thirty chairs added, and the room enlarged by removing closets (*total cost was $1,833.33*): [55] the area became a hearing room for use by committees and boards. [17, 61] Previously, the hearing room was at the back of the first floor, an area where there now (*2014*) are toilets, a janitor's supplies room, and a TV control and office supplies room.

In 1993, when some town offices were moved to the second floor, the selectmen began holding their weekly board meetings in this room, instead of in the auditorium on the second floor. This was a more convenient location for people unable and uncomfortable with using the stairways.

Wanting to provide greater access to their meetings, the selectmen, in the fall of 1985, began to have TV coverage on alternate weeks. Remote controlled cameras were added to the Memorial Room (*two on back wall, one on the center of the ceiling and one on front wall*). [74] A technician, sitting in what previously was a supply room, just outside the room, controls the cameras. The telecasts are recorded and available on Hamilton's website.

Fig. 60: WW1 plaque, on wall in Memorial Meeting Room, originally was on back wall of entrance hall. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

Nibbling away of the meeting room floor space began in 1994.

The first "bite" came when three office cubicles were moved into the back of the room, consuming about a third of the floor space. There were no partitions around the office areas, which resulted in the office workers being distracted by people attending meetings and passing through the meeting room. [130]

In 1998, more space was lost as part of the 100th anniversary renovations. As previously mentioned on pg. 50, a wall on the north side of the room was moved about four feet to enlarge the Treasurer/Tax Collector's Office. [85]

The Memorial Room was re-oriented: the west side of the room became the front. [85] (*Fig. 60*) As a result, the number of chairs for visitors was reduced from twenty-five to about fifteen.

The selectmen had two of the three office cubicles moved to the second floor. The remaining office, the Administrative Assistant to the Town Administrator, shifted to the south side of the back door and a movable partition installed to separate the office from the door.

In 2010, the Memorial Room was painted using labor provided by inmates from the Essex County Correctional Facility in Middleton. [171]

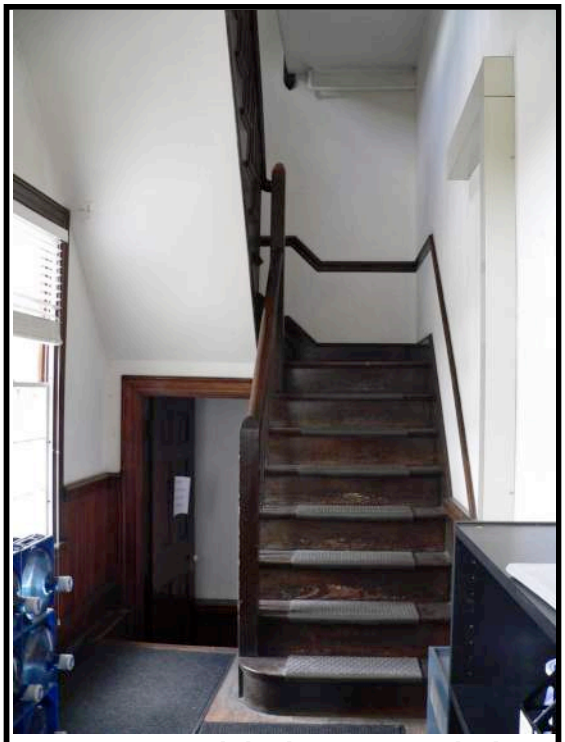

Fig. 61: Stairway behind meeting room leads to basement and auditorium. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

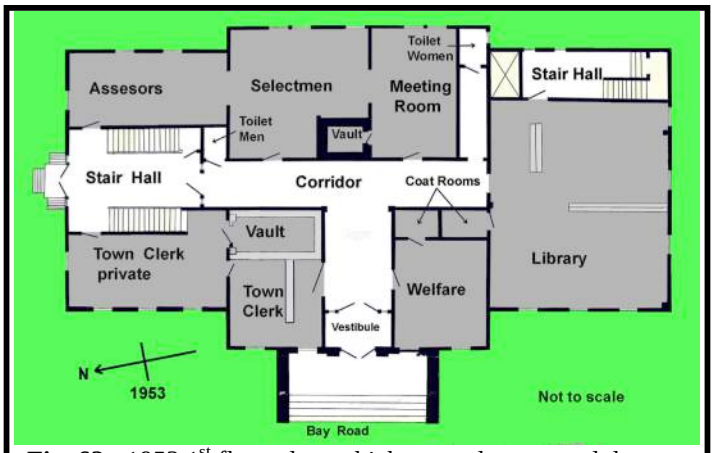

Fig. 62: 1953 1st floor plan, which created a new and larger library and a new welfare office.
Floor plan, adapted from Hamilton town hall files. J. Hauck, 2014

Currently (*2014*), the front of the office remains open to the meeting room (*Fig. 59*). When Hamilton appointed a Town Manager, in 2009, this area became the office for the Assistant to the Town Manager.

Some of the former office space on the north side of the back door did not remain vacant for long. A Weights and Measures display cabinet (*Fig. 59*) was moved from the basement, and also a water cooler added.

In 1998, the WW1 plaque was moved to a side wall near the front of the meeting room (*Fig. 60*). Further, the WW2 memorial plaque was mounted on a wall at the back of the room (*Fig. 59*).

The frequent moving the WW1 plaque was not a simple thing to do. Moving the large plaque, it weighs offer 800 pounds, and required special wall fixtures to support its weight and equipment to handle it.

Two more memorial plaques were put on the walls of the room, in 1974, when it was renamed the Memorial Room. This was done in recognition of the Korean and Vietnam conflicts. Bronze memorial plaques recognizing Hamilton veterans of the two conflicts were placed on the meeting room walls. [117]

Treasurer's Office Changes

In 1898, the treasurer's office (*Daniel E. Safford*) was in the area where there now are two toilets, a cleaning supplies closet, and an office supplies and TV control room.. [4]

The treasurer (*Wallfred B. Sellman*) moved from this room, in 1953, to what originally was the school committee room. [53, 35] After it was repainted. it became a meeting room for use by other town hall departments and as a public hearing room. [101, 102]

The room size was reduced, on the south side, by building a wall running from the center hallway (*Fig. 62*). At the back of the new hallway, a toilet was built. [12, 53, 35] It was designated a women's toilet.

In 1975, there again was a relocation of the offices (*Fig. 52*). [49, 20, 33, 35] The meeting room, as well as the toilet and hallway were removed. In their place, two new toilets were built: one male, one female; original plans called for a handicap, but it was not built. [62, 102] As part of efforts to keep costs down, components of the former first-floor "water closets," were re-used in the new toilets. [33] A hallway from the center hallway was added to the toilets.

Two other rooms also were added, one for use by the building's janitor and the other for storage of office supplies. [35] The latter, in 1985, was modified to serve as the control room for televising selectmen meetings in the Memorial Meeting Room.

Town Clerk's Office Changes

What began as the town clerk's office, now (*2014*) is the Assessors' Office (*Fig. 63*). The first Town Clerk to use the room was Otis F. Brown. [4]

Fig. 63: In former vault area of Assessors' office, a meeting room was built in 2000. Photo, Hamilton Historical Society, 2000.

The original room had a large vault, a closet and a toilet. It was open on two sides to the adjoining selectmen's and treasurer's rooms. [52, 35]

The Town Clerk remained here for fifty-five years, before moving, in 1953, to the former town library rooms. [35, 53] At the time of the move, Francis H. Whipple was the Town Clerk, a position he held from 1944 to 1975. (*The longest time anyone held the Town Clerk position.*)

The selectmen next used the room. The toilet and closet were removed to allow more people to attend meetings. Also, the archways connecting the office to the adjoining assessors' office and the meeting were replaced with solid walls. [102] Part of the space, at the front of the room, remained a vault. However, with the closing of the archway, the vault door was only accessible from the adjoining meeting room. [35]

The Selectmen remained here until 1975, when they began using the auditorium stage for their meetings. [12] The selectmen that year were George H. Ricker, George E. Cantwell, and Thomas E. Sinkiewicz. [62]

It became the Assessors' Office in 1975. [35, 49, 102] The assessors moving into the room were: Robert H. Chittick, Ralph E. Mersereau, and Cornelius J. Murray, Jr. [62]

In order for the vault to be accessible by the assessors, the wall in the former meeting room was moved. [35]

A major project in 2000 was the removal of the vault: it had 16-in. thick brick walls, a steel doorframe and a thick steel door. In its place, a conference room was built. An open area in the wall near the office door allows people entering the office to be seen (*Fig. 62*). The town authorized $15,000 for making the changes. [164]

Selectmen's Room Changes

The current Town Manager's Office (*Fig. 64*), in the northeast corner of the first floor, originally was the selectmen's room. The selectmen also were the assessors until 1912. In addition, the Finance Committee used the room, when it was not required by the selectmen. [178]

In 1944, the office and the town clerk's room, "badly" in need of repair," were completely renovated (*cost, $742*). [97] At the time, the selectmen were: Arthur M. Knight, Lawrence R. Stone, and Everett F. Haley. (*Note: Lawrence Stone served as a selectman from 1940-1974, [116] the longest time of any selectman.*) The selectmen continued using the room until 1953, when it became the Assessors' Office. [35]

Fig. 64: Town Manager's office began, in 1898, as a constable's room. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

In 1975, [12, 25] the Board of Public Works (*BPW*), moved here from its office in the basement. [35, 102] Not only were the office conditions better, but this was an ideal spot for the BPW Superintendent (*Wallace E. Laine*), for the room overlooked the BPW garage and parking area behind the town hall. The Water Department shared the room. [76]

Twenty years later, 1995, the BPW and Water Department moved to the second floor, occupying the stage. [76] Here too, the BPW office overlooked the garage area.

Next, the corner room became the office for the Executive Secretary, Candace Wheeler. She later, 1993, became the Town Administrator, a position she left in 2010, having been a town hall employee for thirty years. [76]

In 2009, Hamilton created the position of Town Manager, replacing the former Town Administrator position: the newly created five-member Board of Selectmen hired Michael Lombardo. (*The selectmen in 2009 were: David S. Carey, William F. Bowler, and Jennifer T. Scuteri.*) There had been just three selectmen since the town was incorporated in 1793. Up to 1961, the selectmen were elected annually. [61]

Second floor changes

Since 1992, many changes have been made to the second floor (*Fig. 65*). The auditorium, stage, dressing rooms and balcony still are there, but now they are occupied by many offices and storage files.

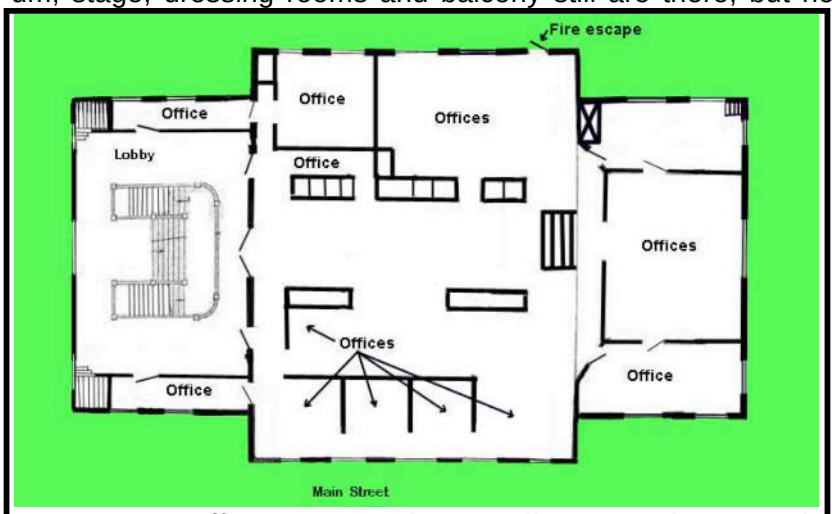

Fig. 65: Many office areas cover what originally was an audi torium and stage. Drawing (*not to scale*), J. Hauck, 2014.

From the very beginning in 1898, the "Great Hall," was considered a town treasure. There far were too many fond memories of special events to which people had been, to ever consider thoughts of making changes, even minor changes.

In the early 1940s, as previously mentioned in the section concerning basement changes (*see pg. 34*), a company of the Ohio Army National Guard was billeted on the second floor. The sergeants slept on the stage. The officers, a captain and a warrant officer, slept in the balcony. All town business was restricted to the first floor. [71]

Fig. 66: Original stage enclosed by a wall to create office space. Later, a door was added, as were steps.
Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

It was a brief stay for the unit left in June 1942. [20, 48] However, the unit was in town long enough for some of the soldiers to date local girls. After the war, there were several marriages of local girls to the GIs. [71]

An unsubstantiated story is that one of the soldiers assigned to the town hall may have fired a couple of bullets into the town hall's weathervane eagle. (*There is more about the eagle on pgs. 29-31.*)

Following WW2, occasional calls began to reconfigure the second floor into office space. However, each time the subject was brought up, there arose strong objections from long-time town residents, who did not want to see this charming chamber changed.

The high school annually held graduation ceremonies in the auditorium. Young people also held weekly socials, called the Covered Wagon Canteen, on the second floor and also the first floor meeting room.

The curtains continued to rise for events … the curtains even were cleaned in 1947 (*cost, $30*). [51] The piano off to the side of the stage was regularly tuned, or at least until 1959: no mention appears in subsequent annual town reports as to its being tuned again. When the curtain fell for the final time and the piano played its last tune are not reported.

Fig. 67: Fluorescent lighting installed, in 19??, at top of 2nd floor's side walls. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

Fig. 68: Balcony filled with file stacks and auditorium floor containing eight office areas. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

There were discussions of possibly adding another floor to the building by dividing the auditorium into two levels. Opponents did not want to lose the quintessential domed ceiling. Others doubted the new floor with its desks, files and people would be beyond the building's structural capabilities. [76]

In 1974, a Town Hall Renovations Committee developed preliminary plans for adding office space to the second floor, and eliminating the auditorium and balcony. [12] Movable partitions were to provide flexible office arrangements, a drop ceiling constructed, bathrooms added, air-cooling provided and a janitor closet built. [117]

As previously described (*pg. 36*), the auditorium was not changed, and the expansion was made in the basement.

A modest intrusion into the auditorium, in the 1980s, was its use by the selectmen and town boards and committees for holding meetings on the stage. Guests sat in the auditorium. [76]

At the 1992 Annual Town Meeting, the "ayes" prevailed over the "nays" for transforming the "Great Hall" into office spaces. Movable partitions were installed to create offices on the newly carpeted floor, and a wall built at the front of the stage to close it off for more office space. The former dressing room and the two rooms in the lobby also became offices. [66]

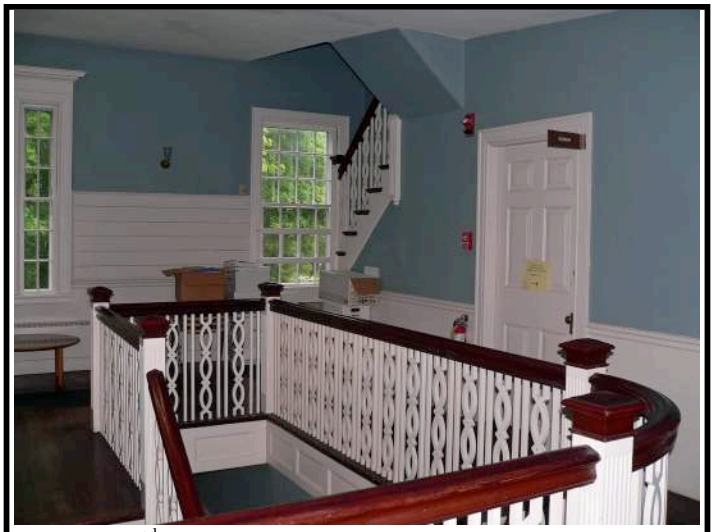

Fig. 69: 2nd floor lobby with stairway to balcony and office on right. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

Moving to the 2nd floor were: the Department of Public Works, Richard Vitale (*from the room that is now the Town Manager's office to the stage*), the accountant, Ellen Rose (*from the Memorial Meeting Room*), the Board of Health, Doris Nason (*from the basement*), and the Conservation Commission, Paul Krachefski (*from the Memorial Meeting Room*). [77, 66] Already on the 2nd floor was the Planning Board: its office was in the former coatroom on the east side of the central stairway. [62]

A high-intensity light was added to the center of the semi sphere in the dome. For maximum effect, the light is a 500-watt, long-life bulb. [85]

Fluorescent lights were installed around the top of the sidewalls. The lights reflect off the curved ceiling (*Fig. 66*). The present electric sconces, below the sidewall lights, likely are in same locations as the original oil lamps.

In the years following, various changes were made in the 2nd floor layout.

An air handler for circulating and cooling air in the auditorium was built, in 1993. [66] The large metal unit, which contains a blower, cooling elements, filter racks and sound dampers, was placed in the small room on the north side of the balcony. Ductwork, inside a metal box at the front of the balcony, distributes and recirculates the air. [66, 85]

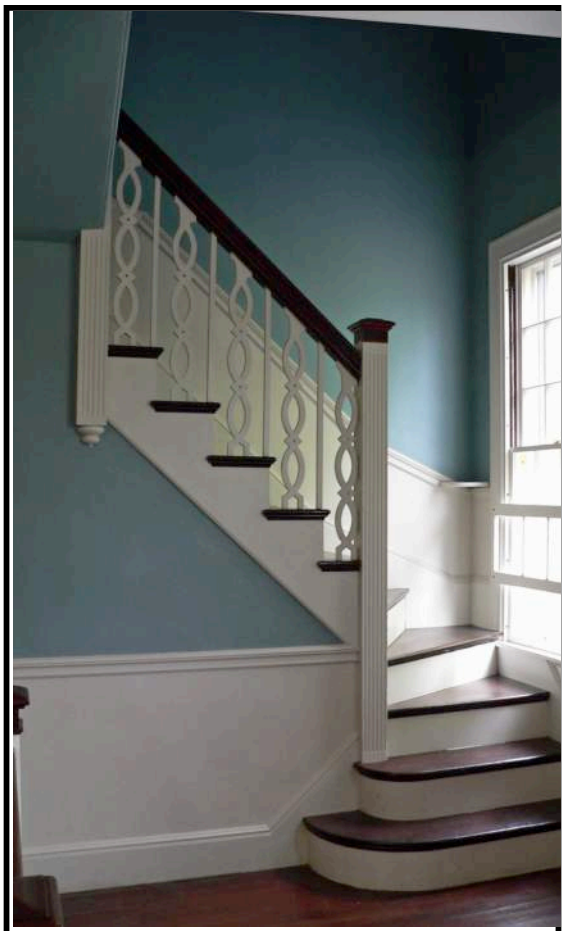

Fig. 70: Narrows stairway to auditorium balcony are on both sides of auditorium lobby..
Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

Also moving, in 1993, to the auditorium was the Hamilton Historic Society: they were given the former dressing room, on right side of the stage. The short and narrow room did not provide much space, but the move had to be made. Previously, the Historic Society's collection of records and artifacts was stored in Harold Daley's house, a short distance north of the town hall on Main Street. However, when the collection became too large, he asked that it be moved.

On moving to the town hall, the Society's collection was made open to the public. The Society formed a Thursday afternoon group in order to answer questions from those visiting the office and to catalog the collection.

The Society's time on the stage did not last long. In 1998, the Department of Public Works, which already occupied the stage, needed more space. As part of a redesign of the second floor workstations, [80] the Society was moved to the basement, into the former Health Department room.

Although there now are no toilets on the second floor, in 1998, there was one at the back of the former dressing room. When the newly formed Department of Public Works (*DPW*) moved there, the toilet was removed and a closet built in its place. [85]

The DPW included: a Highways Division, a Parks Division, a Cemetery Division, an Equipment Maintenance Operations, a Sanitation Division and a Water Division. The Selectmen hired Steve Kinney to be the DPW Director. [109]

Also at this time, an entry was made at the center of the wall that encloses the stage area. Steps, leading up to the door, were installed (*Fig. 66*). [85]

A redesign of the office area, in the auditorium, in 1998, provided space for more town hall departments. The redesign was brought about by the need to move offices from the basement due to moisture problems.

The balcony still has six tiered levels, but in place of people sitting on chairs there are steel file storage racks, holding historic records (*Fig. 68*). This use began in 1992. The narrow stairways on each end of the balcony (*Fig. 70*) make it very difficult to bring and take file boxes and other large items to this storage area.

In the ceiling of the balcony (*Fig. 71*), there is a trap door (*rebuilt in 1975* [22]) through which, on a narrow passage of wood boards, one can access the back of the light fixture in the center of the ceiling and the tower. The roof is close, making it necessary to crawl along the boards. In 2009, a worker, installing a fire detection system, slipped off the walk and put his foot through the ceiling. [85] This happened a year after the ceiling was repaired and repainted, using funds provided by the Community Preservation Commission. [94, 107]

Replacing the 500-w bulb in the ceiling is very difficult. It requires a ladder that can reach the semi sphere that is about twenty-five feet above the floor (*Fig. 72*). The climb is precarious, and made especial so by the fact that the outer globe, which weighs more than thirty pounds, requires two hands to remove it.

The first time the town hall manager, Robert Timpani, went to replace the bulb, he was unaware that there is an optical smoke detecting alarm system in the auditorium. An invisible light beam passes from the west to the east side of the room. When Timpani stretched a ladder toward the ceiling, it interrupted the light beam, which caused an alarm to be sent to the fire department. Within minutes, firemen came racing to the town hall, up the narrow side stairs, up the mezzanine stairs and into the room, only to find Timpani at the top of a ladder. [85]

In 2014, the second floor, which is pleasantly painted light blue with the trim and ceiling being white, has eleven office areas: Building and Inspections, Finance/ Accounting, Planning Coordinator, Conservation Agent, Health Department, Community Preservation agent, Water Department billing, and Department of Public Works, as well as a conference area. Town offices also are in the offices on both sides of the auditorium lobby: Finance Director in the north side, and the Public Health Agent in the south side.

File cabinets line the central aisle running east to west and also separate the office areas. File cabinets on the stage, in front of the wall, contain town maps.

The town hall does not have an elevator. When people that are unable to use the stairs come to the town hall to meet with second floor departments, the personnel go down to meet with them on the first floor. In the side entrance lobby, there is a desk with a telephone for use in contacting people on the second floor. There also is a bench and chairs. (*Fig. 15*)

In 2004, a desk for disabled visitors with business at the town hall was purchased. Also a phone connection was installed. The desk is located just inside the building by the handicap access door. This will allow people to enter the building and use this desk to call for and use this desk to call for assistance from all departments of Town Hall.

There was an attempt to install an elevator in the building in 1989. The selectmen

submitted an application for a Small Cities Program grant of $150,000 to make the town hall accessible to all citizens. The plan was to place an elevator in the north side of the building, replacing the stairways to the second floor and the basement. The elevator would have served all three floors. [153] However, at the May 1989 Annual Town Meeting, voters almost unanimously rescinded an earlier approval to build the elevator. [160]

Again in 1990, the selectmen sought to transfer money (*$190,000*) from the town's stabilization funds for construction of access and facilities for the handicapped. Again, voters did not support the issue. [167]

In an emergency, there are several ways for people to exit the second floor: the lobby at the north end, the stairway to the left of the stage, and the fire escape at the east side (*Fig. 65*).

Not everything on the second floor has changed.

One significant portion of the original Great Hall that has remained almost unchanged is the splendid lobby and mezzanine, with its intricate stairway balusters, stained and polished wood handrails, and polished wood stairways (*Fig. 69*). As previously mentioned (*see pg. 58*), the lobby and mezzanine were to have been removed in 1989, when there was a plan to install an elevator in the building.

While it is not significant, the room on the left side of the stage is basically unchanged: it still has a stairway at the back and currently is a place to make tea or coffee for town hall employees. The stairways to the balcony also are unchanged.

Fig. 70: Balcony entrance to crawl space leading to semi sphere at center of 2nd floor and the cupola and tower. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

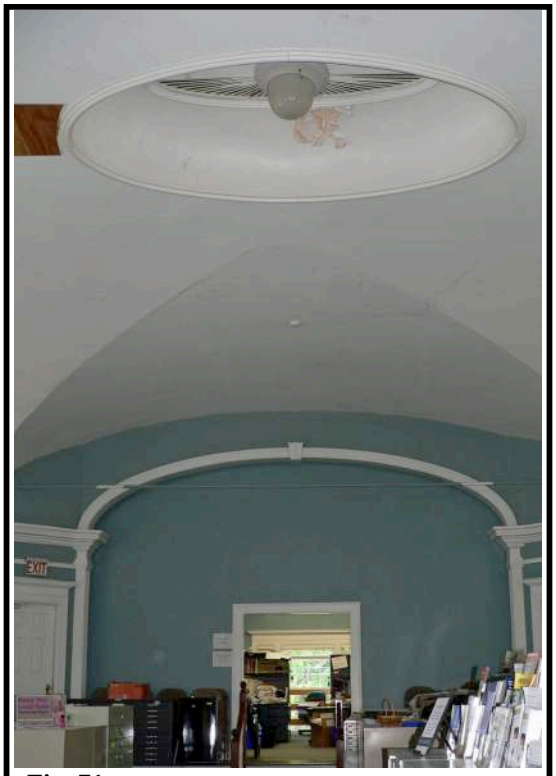

Fig. 71: . Ceiling semi-sphere now with light first had a chandelier. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

Future Changes

The town hall is a busy and crowded place. In 2014, forty-three people daily work at the town hall. Committee and Board meetings are held throughout the day, and into the evening.

2014 Offices in Town Hall	
Sealer of Weights and Measures	2
Public Health Agent	2
Plumbing Inspector	2
Memorial Meeting Room	1
Historical Society	B
Health Department	2
Hamilton Foundation Coordinator	2
Hamilton Development Coordinator	1
Finance Director	2
Department of Public Works	2
Community Preservation Coordinator	2
Conservation Commission Coordinator	2
Buildings Inspection	2
Assessor and Assistant	1
Affordable Housing Coordinator	1
Town Clerk	1
Town Clerk Assistant	1
Town Manager Assistant	1
Town Manager	1
Treasurer & Tax Collector	1
Water Billing	2
Zoning Board Assistant	1

What's needed now:

Utilities

Lighting - Switch to energy-conserving fixtures.

Air conditioning – Central system.

Dehumidifier system – Particularly needed in basement.

Humidification system – Reduce static discharges during winter months that can affect electronic devices.

Heating – Currently, oil is used. Gas may provide significant savings.

Auxiliary power source – Upgraded to meet expanded electrical use.

Toilets – To meet State requirements for handicap accessible.

Water fountains- Each floor should have sources for drinking water.

Dust filtration system – Install system to provide cleaner air throughout the building.

Wi-fi - Essential for wireless communication.

Cell tower – Town hall area now is not always capable of handling cell-phone communications.

Meeting space

Selectmen's Room – The current Memorial Meeting Room, at most, can seat about a dozen visitors. When larger attendance is anticipated, meetings are scheduled at other locations than the town hall.

Audio visual capabilities – Main meeting room needs pull down screens, remote-controllable projectors, white board, and sound-sound speaker system.

Conference room on each floor – This would alleviate current scheduling problem with the Selectmen's Meeting Room.

Library – Reference books and journals now are kept on bookshelves in different rooms. A centralized location, with table and chairs, would provide place for research.

Access

Central delivery area – Reduce hallway traffic by establishing a central delivery station for mail, office products, packages, etc.

Communications system – Video conferencing added to meeting rooms would allow departments not onsite to participate in meetings.

Elevator - Access to the basement and second floor is by stairs, thus requiring town

employees to come to the first floor to meet with people unable to use the stairs.

The Massachusetts Office on Disability was created in 1981, by Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 6, Section 185. The Massachusetts Architectural Access Board sets standards for handicapped accessibility in public buildings, parking lots and some housing.

Stairways – Those connecting basement to first floor are too narrow and poorly lighted.

Hallways – Remove all storage boxes from hallways.

Emergency lighting – Install emergency lighting in all hallways and stairways.

Egress – At present, only one handicap egress exists. Second such egress needed for emergency exiting.

Offices

Flexible office space for second floor – To accommodate future changes in office requirements, consider flexible office space, i.e., movable partitions.

Furniture – At present, the furniture is a hodge-podge of pieces amassed over many years. Chairs are uncomfortable … desks are inadequate … tables over-sized … file cabinets cumbersome.

Lighting – Switch to energy-saving fixtures.

Acoustics – Reduce noise between offices

Storage

Historical documents storage – A controlled temperature/humidity storage room would ensure proper long-term preservation of historic documents.

Literature rack – Literature available to town residents is available in various rooms, including the Town Clerk's Office. For convenience, there should be one location, such as the main hallway.

Off-site record storage – Backup to documents at an offsite location.

Parking

At present (*2014*), parking is very limited. In front, there are five parking spaces (*two handicap*); six on the north side (*two handicap*), and twelve spaces behind the building (*two handicap*).

Consider adding more

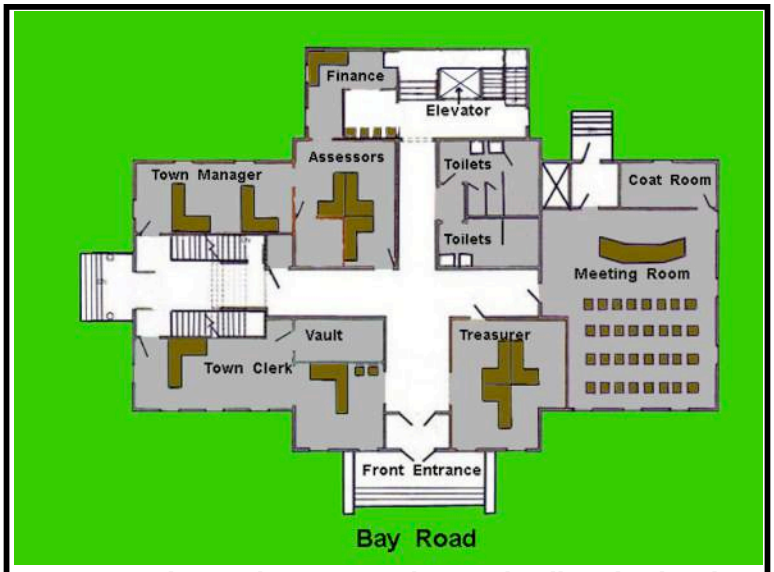

Fig. 73: Students at the Boston Architectural College developed possible changes to the building to meet current and future needs. The plans called for adding a new section to the back of the building that would include an elevator
Drawing Boston Architectural College

parking behind the building and adding a wing, with a new main entrance, off the back.

General

Historic pictures on walls – Provide visitors with more information about the town's history.

Scales in Selectmen's Meeting Room – Move to Historic Society

Main hallway display cabinet – Move to Historic Society.

Antique map in main hallway – Replace glass cover with non-reflecting plastic sheet. Now very difficult to view the map.

Scales in Selectmen's Meeting Room – Move to Historic Society

Employee lounge – Area for having coffee breaks, lunch without doing so at desks.

With employee offices located on the second floor, which is not handicapped accessible, Neill pointed out, in 2013, that if a person with physical disabilities is hired, the situation could prove problematic. [21]

Also at that time, Town Manager Michael Lombardo acknowledged that the town hall was deficient on a lot of levels, notably, "There's no meeting space, we have a lot of inefficiencies with people walking up and down the stairs, there's no handicapped accessibility." [21]

In 2011, studies began for refurbishing and possibly expanding the town hall. The first steps were creation of an asset management system, as well as spreadsheets for the capital improvement program. The town's staff identified capital improvement projects and participated in a work session to discuss priorities and develop strategies for funding capital equipment and infrastructure projects. [127]

Students at the Boston Architectural College on Newbury Street researched how the town hall operated, from which they developed possible changes to the building to meet current and future needs. In addition to revising current department location for improved efficiency, the plans called for establishing a central services center and adding a new section to the back of the building that would become the main entrance and would include an elevator (*Fig. 73*). [168]

As was the way so often in the past when the need for town hall refurbishing arose, response to the 2011 studies did not result in quick action.

In August 2013, Selectman David Neill said, "At some point in the near future, the town hall will need to be upgraded to be handicapped accessible so it meets all the proper codes. [21]

Neill quite rightly stated, "First we need to identify what town hall improvements need to be done. We need to look into the future to see what we need for office space." [21]

In May 2014, the selectman began preliminary discussions for major changes to the town hall, with an eye to completing them in the next four or five years.

Special Thanks

In gathering this information, many people have been helpful. In particular, special thanks go to:

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