

ASHLAND

TOWN HALL



New Town, New Hall

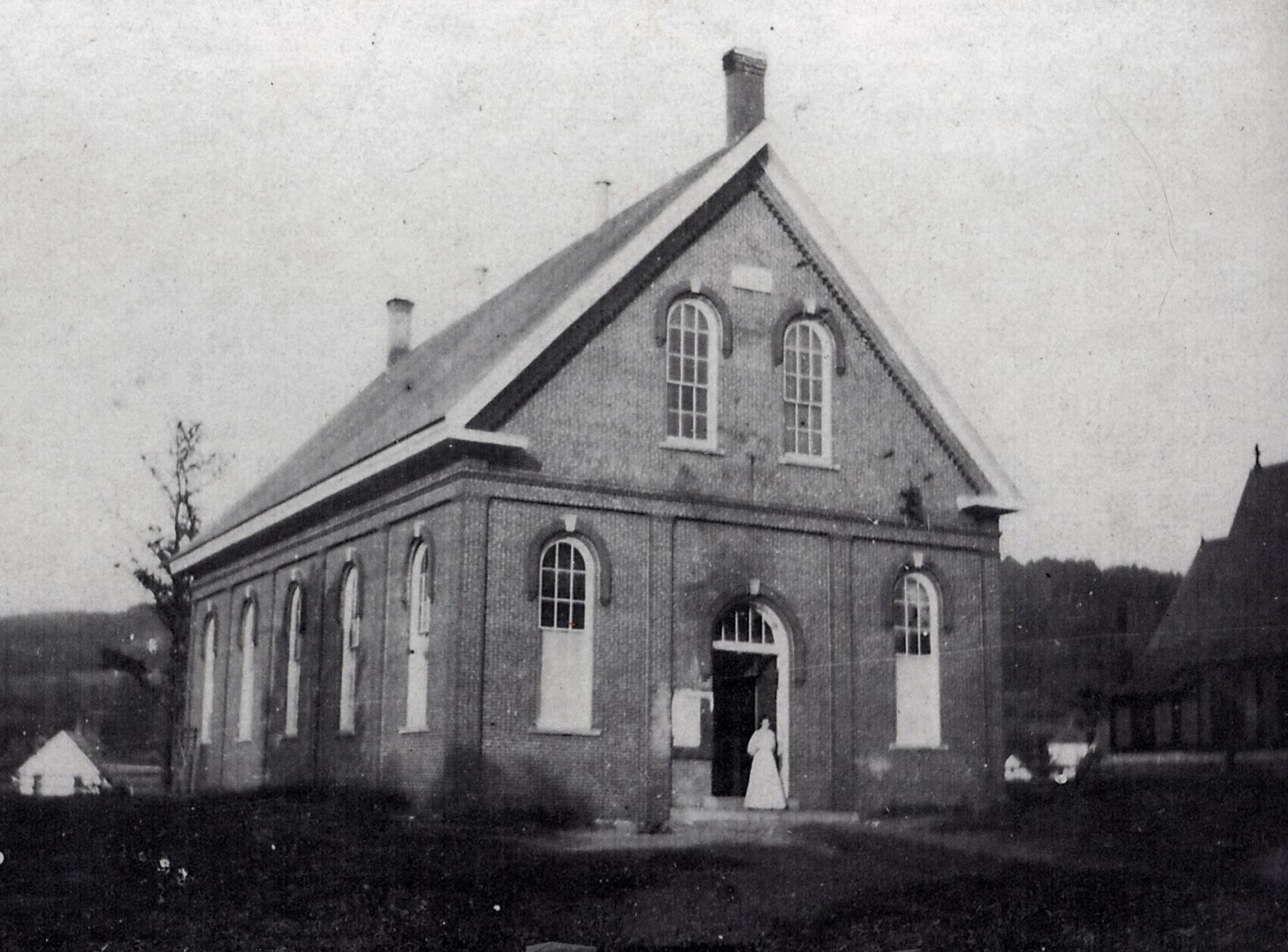
- In 1871 from March to June, meetings were held to decide on location, size and cost of a Town Hall.
- Work was underway by September. The builder was carpenter John Jewell of Holderness who also built neighboring St. Mark's Church.
- The committee chose 40 by 70 feet in size.
- They were not however, able to keep within the \$4,000 budget.



Town Hall, St. Mark's Episcopal Church and Sherrill Hall.

Completion

- January 31, 1872, A special meeting was held in the new Town Hall.
- The meeting then voted to pay the \$2,509.42 above the appropriation. Total cost of the building, stove, and furniture ended up at \$6,999.06.
- The Town Hall consisted basically of two halls stacked on top of each other. The lower hall was two stories high with anterooms topped by a balcony at the street end, and a stage at the rear end. The upper hall is still intact, with an arched ceiling, occupying most of what is now the third floor.





Highland Street, early 1900's.

PUBLIC HALL ERA

- Janitor of Town Hall, an “agent to take care of Town Hall” had 25-26 men who held the post over about 80 years.
- All town meetings and elections were held in Town Hall from January 1872 to November 1950.
- Over the years, hundreds of public events of all types were held here.
- There were other halls in Ashland, but in many ways, the Town Hall was the entertainment, as well as the political, center of the Town.

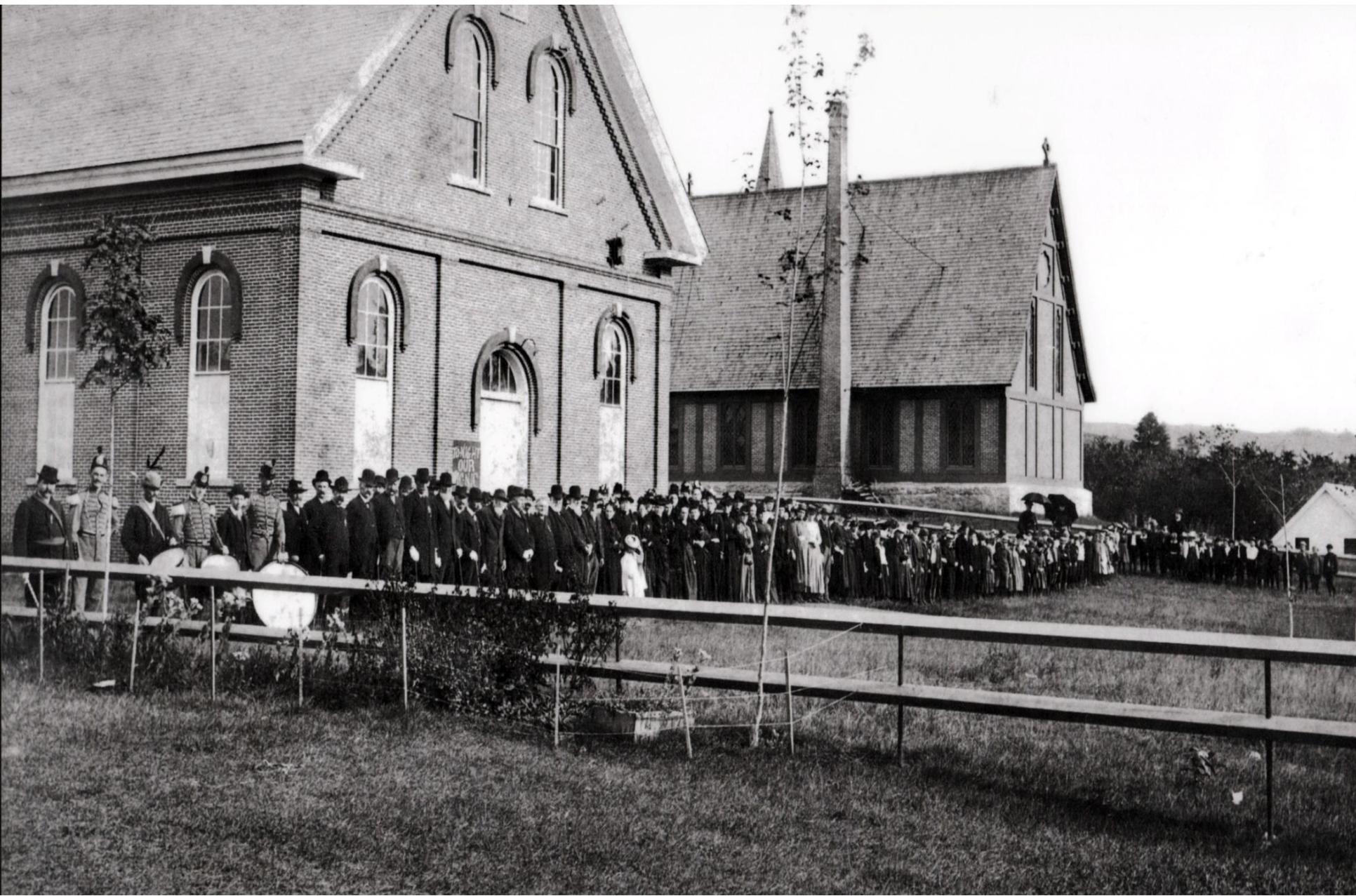


ASHLAND GIRLS VS. PLYMOUTH

The open first floor was used for sports into the early 1950s.

Changes to the Building

- 1878: The ceiling was sheathed, the stage raised and the walls frescoed.
- 1889: Building was wired for electricity.
- 1902: “Town water and suitable closets (toilets) with sewer connection at a cost of about \$170”.
- 1905: Fire escape on the rear of the building for an exit from the Masonic Hall, for \$193.88.
- 1927: Two doors were added on the sides of the building to provide more than one escape route in case of a fire.



Other Structures: Jail

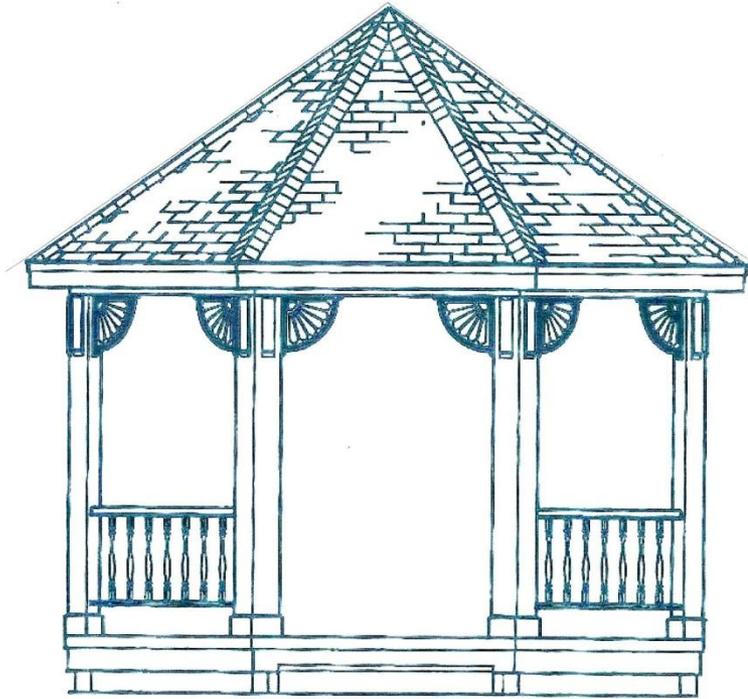


It was not really adequate as a jail. After a dozen escapes, in 1912 for \$225, two steel lattice jail cells were installed in the building. It's unclear when lockups stopped, and it was later used at times as a dog pound, and now mostly for storage.

March 1872 meeting voted to instruct selectmen to build a “lobby”. The cost was \$582.08 and it was often used for “tramps”. Statistics for care of tramps show 60 in 1905, 187 in 1911, and 346 in 1932 at the height of the Depression.

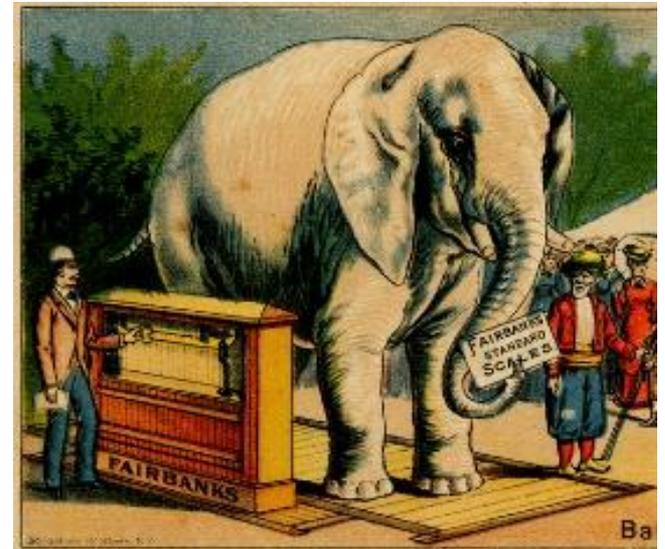


Bandstand and Scale



March 1913 \$100 to build a bandstand which was erected in Town Hall yard that spring and used for the first concert in June. It was demolished in 1930, as it had become too dilapidated.

March 1924 the selectmen purchased a wagon scale and placed it on Main Street.
1929, the location was inconvenient, so it was moved to the Town Hall yard.
1955, the town meeting voted to sell the scale as it had not been used for a number of years.



Example of size of scale. Only elephants in Ashland were in a Fourth of July parade.

Monuments

Civil War Soldiers' Monument

Erected with 1898 town appropriation and money raised by war veterans for a total of \$2,000 paid to John Swenson of Concord.

Originally dedicated on Memorial Day 1899 in the Town Hall yard, it was moved to its present location in 1900.



Revolutionary War Memorial



Dedicated for the Bicentennial on July 4, 1977.

Today it is surrounded by a garden.

As of September 11, 2017, there is also a memorial to Selectman Chair Normand DeWolfe.





Town Hall or Legion?

1919: Town meeting warrant for WWI soldiers memorial.

1920: The two suggestions approved: to give the American Legion \$300 for their present building; and to appropriate \$4,500 to enlarge and remodel the Town Hall as a more lasting memorial.

1921: \$4,500 was not enough. Added \$500 to the Town Hall fund.

1922: More money needed; committee appointed. On May 9, the town meeting voted another \$7,000 to fund and chose a building committee. Vote on assessing every voter an equal sum to raise the \$7,000 was deemed illegal, and the project stopped in its tracks.

1923: Legion members more interested in using the money to build or buy property than on enlarging Town Hall.

The voters agreed, work on the Town Hall rescinded and the \$5,000 in funds was given to the Legion post.

1924: The Legion post bought the old hotel on Monument Square.



Town Hall or Gym?

- In the late 1930s there was interest in both improving the Town Hall, and building a gymnasium for the school.
- The 1940s: Various committees formed to explore renovation and expansion options. An annual capital reserve of \$5,000 started to purchase land and build an assembly hall. In 1946 a bond of \$48,000 for a combined Town Hall and gym on the Town Hall site was added and then the purpose of capital reserve changed from a land purchase to renovating Town Hall for the dual purpose.
- Meanwhile, the School district meeting voted money to purchase adjacent land.
- A special May 1948 meeting made no appropriation but a building committee

continued and the purpose of the reserve fund changed from remodeling Town Hall back to building an assembly building near the high school.

In 1949 the capital reserve fund transferred to the school district, adding to a bond to build a \$90,000 assembly building. It was ready for its first use for the high school graduation in June 1950.





SCHOOL ERA

- The new assembly building-gymnasium took over most of the functions of the Town Hall building which became quite underused when fate gave it a new role. On December 28, 1951, a fire of unknown origin totally destroyed the school shop.
- February 7, 1952, vote to deed the Town Hall to the school district.
- The new first floor shop was ready for use in the fall of 1952.
- Second floor renovations were completed in time for the 1953 school year.
- A Music Room was on the third story.
- The new classrooms however, were not perfect. After a 1964 NH Department of Education's evaluation of the safety and health of students, use of the third floor was discontinued, and the second floor was only for home economics.
- In 1965, a "partial evacuation" of the building made the school's space problems even worse.
- 1968-1970 addition to the Ober School included new industrial arts and home economics classrooms, leaving the Town Hall empty again.



The new second story had two classrooms, the large Home Economics kitchen in the rear, a smaller classroom in the middle, and a corridor with two restrooms and storage space in the front of the Town Hall.

Improving Home Environment New Course of Study at Ashland

... It is my firm intention that Vocational Education will be one of a very few major emphases of the U. S. Office—a priority area in which we intend to place the maximum "weight" of our concentrated resources for effect, a thorough and permanent improvement." This quote is from an article on the growing need for Vocational Education on the high school level written by Mr. Sidney P. Marland, Jr., United States Commissioner of Education. Ashland High School has taken a step forward in this area with a new course of study known as, "Improving Home Environment." Under the guidance of Shop teacher Jesse Bartlett and Home Economics instructor Mrs. Alida Backlund, mixed classes of eighth grade students are splitting the last quarter of this school year between the two fields. It is believed that this is the only class of its type in the State.

Ashland has had a similar program in past years but not for twenty years has the concept of (Continued on Page A-8, Col. 3)



"How Sweet It Is!" Shows taking a sample of their own goodies are Lacey Mansford (left) and Randy Doynton.



Study Hall on the second story.

Photo courtesy of Frank Flanders



Exterior changes during the school era would include the wooden portico at the main entrance, a garage door in the south side to serve the shop and house the driver education car, and new windows and a fire escape door in the rear wall for the large Home Economics Room.

TOWN OFFICES

1970: School district meeting voted to transfer the Town Hall back to the Town, but reserved the right for parking on the lot for all school purposes.

1970: Town meeting rejected accepting the Town Hall property.

1971: Town Hall accepted from the School District, without restrictions on the building's use.

1972: Town budget included \$4,000 to fix up the Town Hall for offices. The town offices moved onto the second floor that September. The police station was also moved in to the rear portion of the first floor.

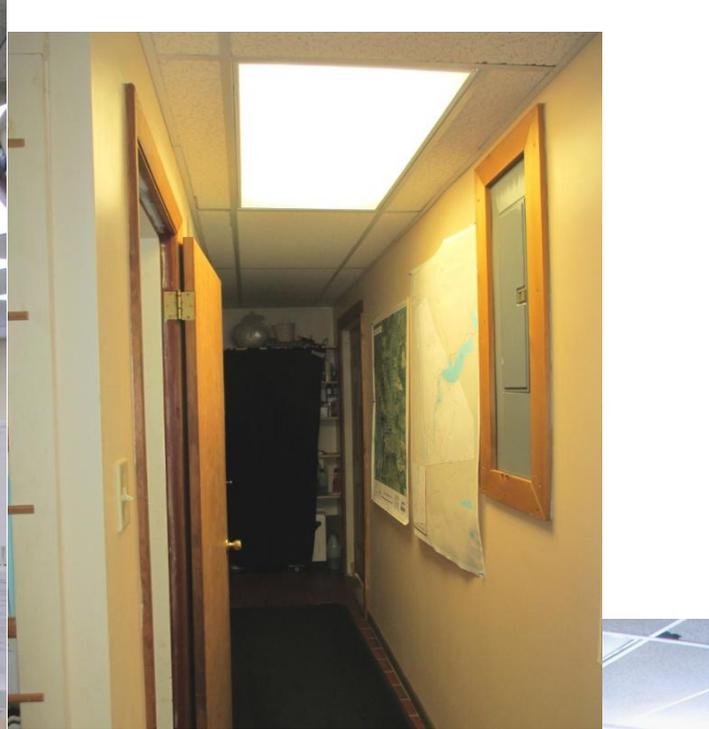


1975: A fireproof vault for town records was built in the rear corner of the first floor.

1976: Landscaped area along the street front of the parking lot created with the monument to the American Revolution soldiers.

Originally just grass with trees, it is now a garden with two benches.





1984: \$30,000 of federal revenue sharing funds used for the Town Hall renovation. Town Offices move to the first floor.

1985: Another \$6500 from the Federal revenue sharing funds to complete the work.

1992: The Electric Department office moved to Town Garage.

1993: The Water & Sewer office moved to Town Garage. The Police Department was given more room, and Conference Room created.

1994: A storage area remodeled as a public room for tax maps access.

1996: Construction of a new Police Department entrance.



Today's welcome to the Town Offices



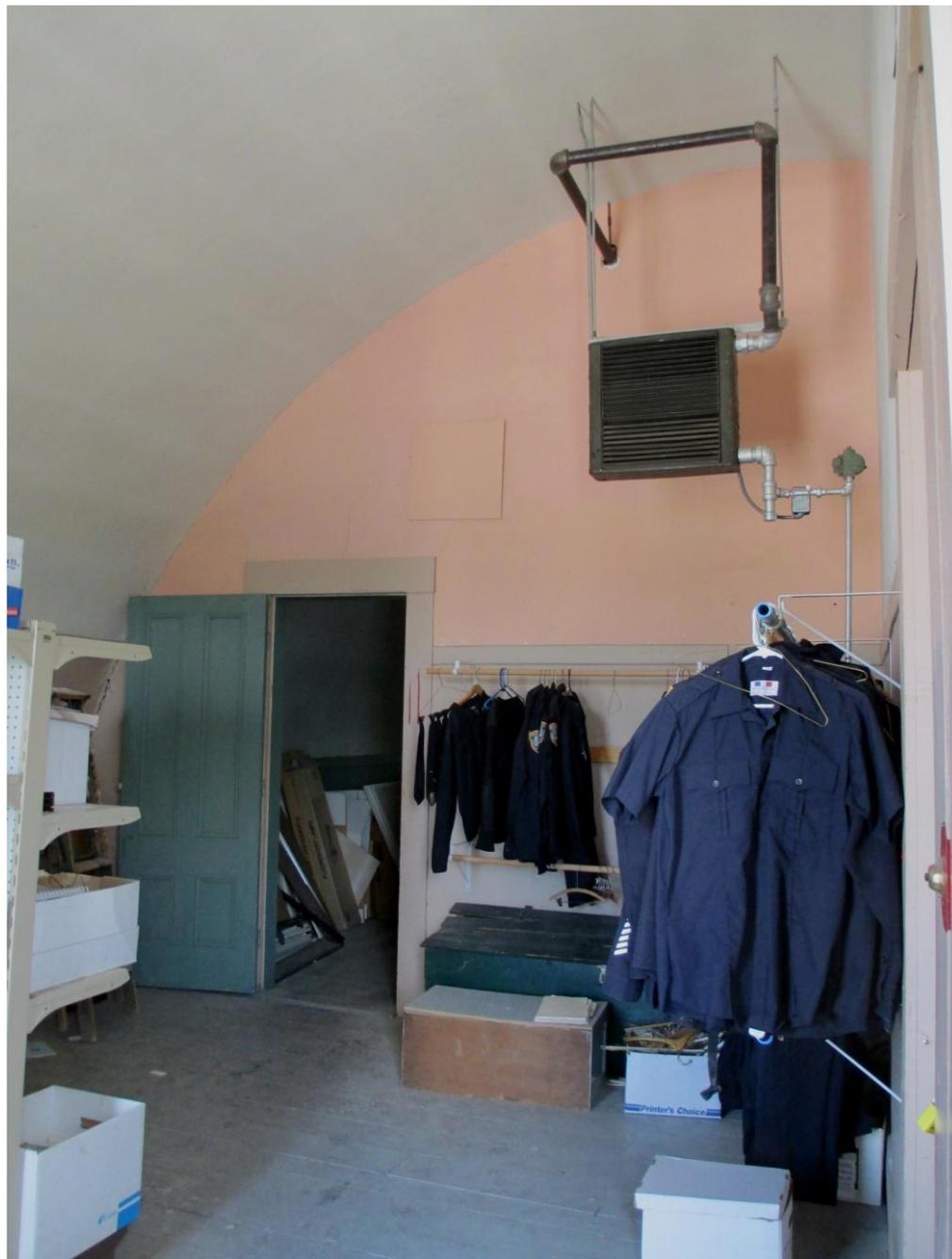
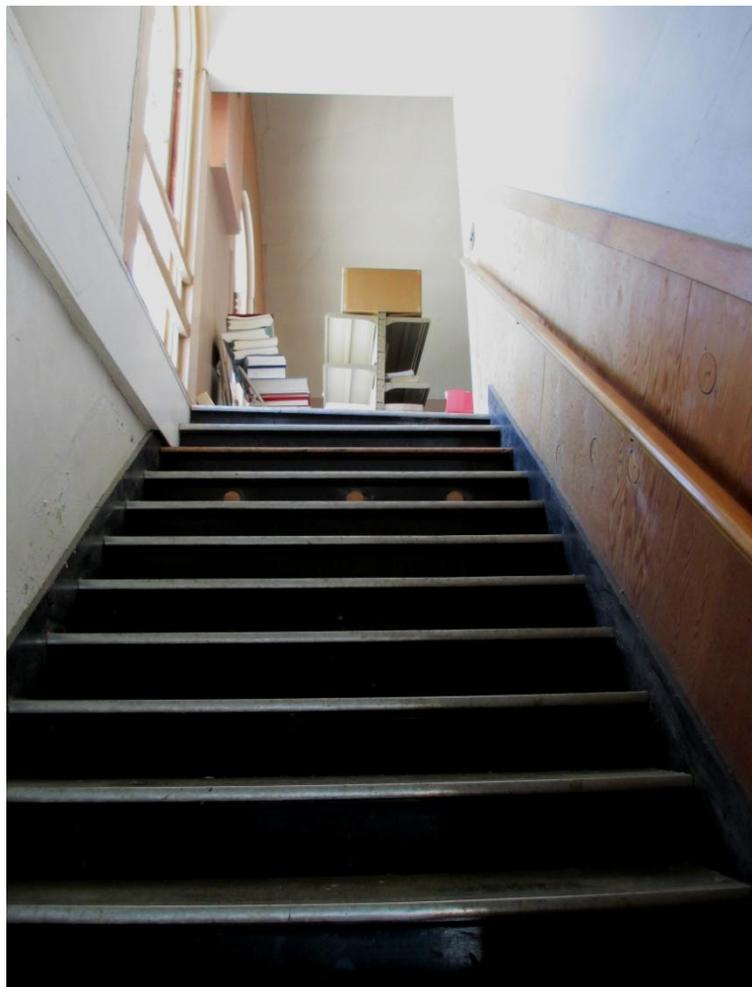
Second Floor

Building Inspector's Office (accessible only by stairs)



Third Floor

Used for storage





Look Up!



Town Hall Future

- 1983: The historical importance of the Town Hall was recognized by the federal government when it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- 1993: Its image was used on the commemorative plate and the buttons for the 125th anniversary.
- There are issues facing the Town Hall that need to be addressed -- energy efficiency, handicapped access, space needs and layout, heating and cooling, ventilation and air quality, deterioration of the historic windows, soffits and masonry.
- An LCHIP award for an historic structural report will provide a comprehensive professional study for phased rehabilitation and a blueprint for the future most efficient use of the Town Hall.
- Capital reserves required for repairs and maintenance.

About New Hampshire's Land and Community Heritage Investment Program

The New Hampshire Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) is an independent state authority that provides matching grants to New Hampshire communities and non-profits to protect and preserve the state's most important natural, cultural and historic resources.

Its legislatively mandated mission is to ensure the perpetual contribution of these resources to the economy, environment, and the quality of life in New Hampshire. Since its inception in 2000, the program has provided 372 grants which have helped to protect nearly 200 historic structures and sites and to conserve more than 278,000 acres of land for food production, water quality, ecological values, timber management and recreation including hunting and fishing.

Grants have been awarded in all parts of the state and in 151 of New Hampshire's communities. \$39 million of state money has leveraged more than \$244 million in funds from other sources.

LCHIP grants are supported by fees on four documents recorded at the Registry of Deeds in every county of the state.

LCHIP receives about \$6 from the sale of each conservation license plate (Moose Plate), which provides about two-thirds of the Program's annual administrative costs. The remainder of the administrative income comes from interest on the LCHIP Trust Fund and other bank accounts, and an administrative fee assessed to each grant.

In Conclusion

- The Town Hall has provided service for 145 years to Ashland in its various roles. It and the Ashland Old School are our most historically important public buildings.
- We hope that the Town Hall will continue to serve the community and still remind us of its historic past if we take care of it.