

LOWELL CULTURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY

IDENTIFICATION 415 MERRIMACK STREET MAP SHEET # 7
 1) CURRENT OWNER City of Lowell OWNER OCCUPIED yes
 2) HISTORIC NAME Memorial Hall (City Library)
 3) CURRENT NAME same
 4) PROPERTY TYPE government - library 5) ZONING CLASSIFICATION B-1
 6) TAXES: PAYMENTS exempt STATUS clear
 7) WITHIN BOUNDARIES OF LHPD

HISTORICAL ABSTRACT

1) CONSTRUCTION DATE ca. 1890-1893
 SOURCE document: Coburn, History of Lowell, p. 430.
 2) ARCHITECT OR BUILDER Frederick W. Stickney
 3) HISTORIC OWNER City of Lowell
 4) ORIGINAL USE: GF library UF library, public hall
 5) PREVIOUS BLDGS ON PROPERTY yes DATE ca. 1840-1890
 SOURCE document: 1841 map, 1850 map; 1879 atlas

DESCRIPTIVE DATA

1) ARCHITECTURAL STYLE Romanes. Revival
 2) PRESENT USE:
 GF office, government
 UF office, government
 3) NO OF STORIES 3
 4) PROP SQ FT 61,280
 5) PLAN rectangular
 6) ROOF hip chateausque
 7) STRUCTURAL SYSTEM load-bearing masonry
 8) OUTBUILDINGS none
 9) MATERIALS:
 FOUNDATION granite
 FACADE all sides: granite, rough coursing
 TRIM copper dormers, finial; granite sculptural reliefs; slate roof
 10) NOTABLE SURFACE & LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS steps

VIEW FROM south PHOTO TAKEN June 1979



ADDRESS 415 MERRIMACK STREET

VISUAL ASSESSMENT

- 1) CONDITION OF BUILDING FABRIC good
- 2) IF DETERIORATED, CAUSES n/a
- 3) INTEGRITY OF HISTORIC BLDG FABRIC: GF intact original fabric
UF intact original fabric
- 4) SURROUNDING LAND USES commercial, industrial, residential, institutional, railroad
- 5) INTEGRITY OF PROP'S HIST SETTING severely disrupted historic setting
- 6) IMPORTANCE OF PROP TO HIST SETTING integral to character

ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTION

See Research Report.

ADDITIONAL HISTORICAL INFORMATION

See Research Report.

ARCHEOLOGICAL COMMENT

The first building activity occurred on this site as early as 1840. However, deep disturbance of the site in 1890 for the Memorial Hall foundation probably destroyed any below-ground remains of the earlier activities on the site.

Research Report
415 Merrimack Street
Memorial Hall (City Library)
1890-93

Lowell Memorial Hall was dedicated in 1893 "as a memorial to the soldiers and sailors of Lowell who lost their lives in the Civil War" (1). This structure is three stories tall and is constructed of white Conway granite. It is of a basically rectangular plan, with projecting bows, turrets, and pavilions (Fig. 1). All of its sides are formally finished in rock-faced granite blocks. Stylistically, this structure is Richardsonian Romanesque.

The principal facade on Merrimack Street is made up of two distinct blocks (Fig. 2). The taller left block is three bays wide with the main entrance to the right and a central semicircular bow. Tourelles adorn the upper corners of that block. The bow front rises three stories to a conical roof. The roof of the western portion is a high chateausque hip. The east portion of the Merrimack Street facade steps back from the central bay, and contains a side entrance bay and a corner turret. The turret, like the larger bow front, has a conical roof.

The main entrance is situated above a basement level and is reached by a flight of stairs. The entrance porch is set into the corner of the entry bay, and the upper floors are supported on columns with Romanesque foliated capitals.

The basement, first, and second floor windows on the main facade are rectangular, and except for the basement windows, are flanked or separated by engaged colonnettes. The window above the ground-floor side entrance is glazed with stained glass. In place of second story windows on the semicircular bow are three recessed granite panels, carved in high relief with Civil War figures. The top floor of the main block of the facade has round-arched windows.

The slate-covered, hipped roof of the main block of the building is surmounted by copper or bronze cresting, with foliated finials. The roof of the lower, eastern block has hip-roofed dormers which are echoed by similar ventilators near the ridge of the higher roof.

Memorial Hall shares a large, landscaped lot with the City Hall. It is situated on Merrimack Street across from the High Victorian Gothic First Congregational Church and the Second Empire Green School.

Two buildings appear on this site on the 1832 Lowell map. In 1841 the rectangular structure on the eastern part of the lot is labeled "Second Free Will Baptist Church." On the 1850 map the two structures on this site are labeled as owned by the Merrimack Manufacturing Company. The 1879 atlas shows several frame structures along both the Moody Street and Merrimack Street sides of the lot. The outlines of the three buildings fronting Merrimack Street suggest double houses, with dependencies to the rear.

The land for the present structure was purchased in December of 1879 from the Merrimack Manufacturing Company (2). In May 1883, the City Council had received a request that some suitable memorial be created to "those Lowell men who, in the war 1861-65, on land and on sea, sacrificed their lives that the nation might live" (3). The cornerstone for Memorial Hall was laid on October 11, 1890 and dedicated on June 3, 1893. The building was planned "...to house a public library in the basement and the first floor. The second floor was largely given to Memorial Hall with the necessary anterooms. On the third floor were rooms for the Grand Army of the Republic and other patriotic societies" (5). (See Fig. 3 and 4).

Frederick Stickney, a Lowell native who practiced architecture in Boston and Lowell, was chosen to design and to oversee the erection of Memorial Hall. He had studied at the Boston Institute of Technology (6). The Boston-based Stickney achieved a national reputation designing buildings in Chicago, Cincinnati and New York (7). His Lowell buildings include the Lowell High School, Moody School, Chelmsford Street School and the Shedd Building on Central Street (8).

Stickney's fee for Memorial Hall was "established at five percent of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, the estimate for the building, and was to cover the expenses of superintending the work during the erection of the building". The final cost of the building was \$174,300 (9).

Lowell Memorial Hall, along with the new City Hall to the east, form an imposing centerpiece and focal point for downtown Lowell. Few buildings in Lowell can boast exterior

and interior decorative treatments as rich as those of the Memorial Hall (Fig. 5). Memorial Hall is one of the prime examples of the Richardsonian Romanesque style in Lowell. Frederick Coburn saw the construction of Memorial Hall and City Hall as "a sign of the evolution of the community into a modern city" (10).

Footnotes

- 1) "Memorial Hall," mss. in U. of Lowell Library Special Collections, n.d.
- 2) Frederick Coburn, History of Lowell, p. 430.
- 3) Ibid.
- 4) "Memorial Hall," op. cit.
- 5) Ibid. For a detailed description of Memorial Hall's interior, see this paper.
- 6) Prentiss Webster, ed., The Story of the City Hall Commission, 1894, p. 53.
- 7) Ibid.
- 8) Ibid.
- 9) Memorial Hall folder, in U. of Lowell Library, Special Collections, Documents file.
- 10) Coburn, op. cit., p. 437.

References

- 1) 1832, 1841, 1850 Lowell maps.
- 2) 1879, 1896, 1906, 1924 Lowell atlases
- 3) The Story of the City Hall Commission, edited by Prentiss Webster, 1894.
- 4) History of Lowell by Frederick Coburn.
- 5) Lowell University Library Special Collections, Document file, Memorial Hall folder.

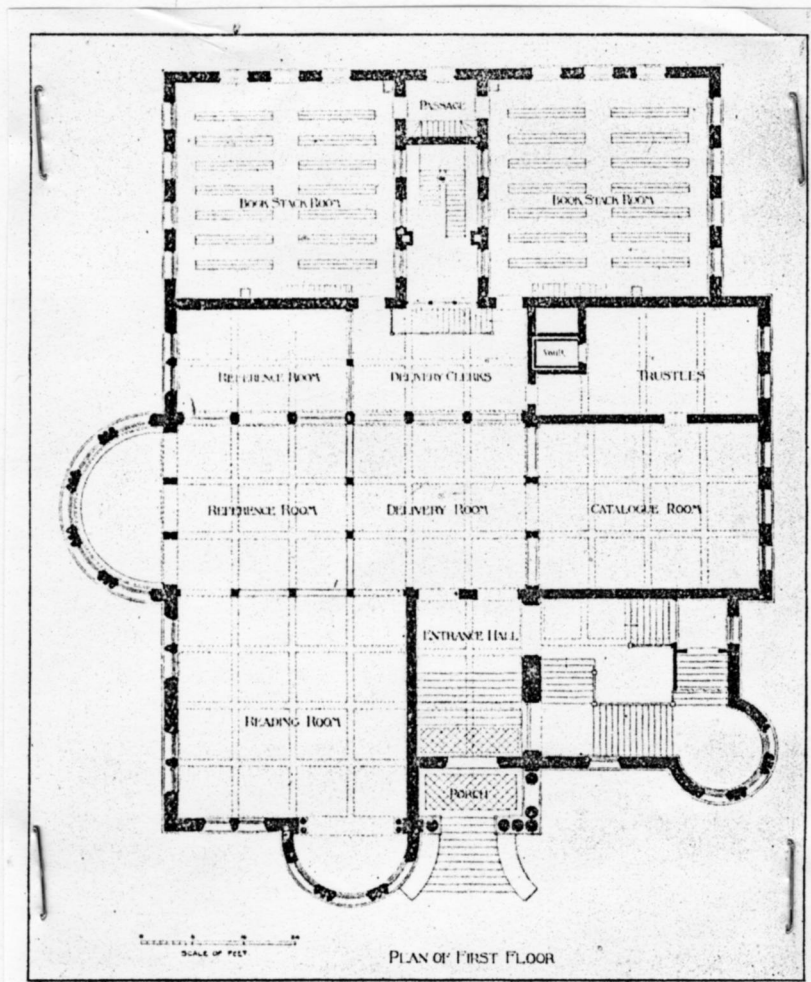


Figure 1

The Story of the City Hall Commission, Prentiss Webster, Ed., 1894.

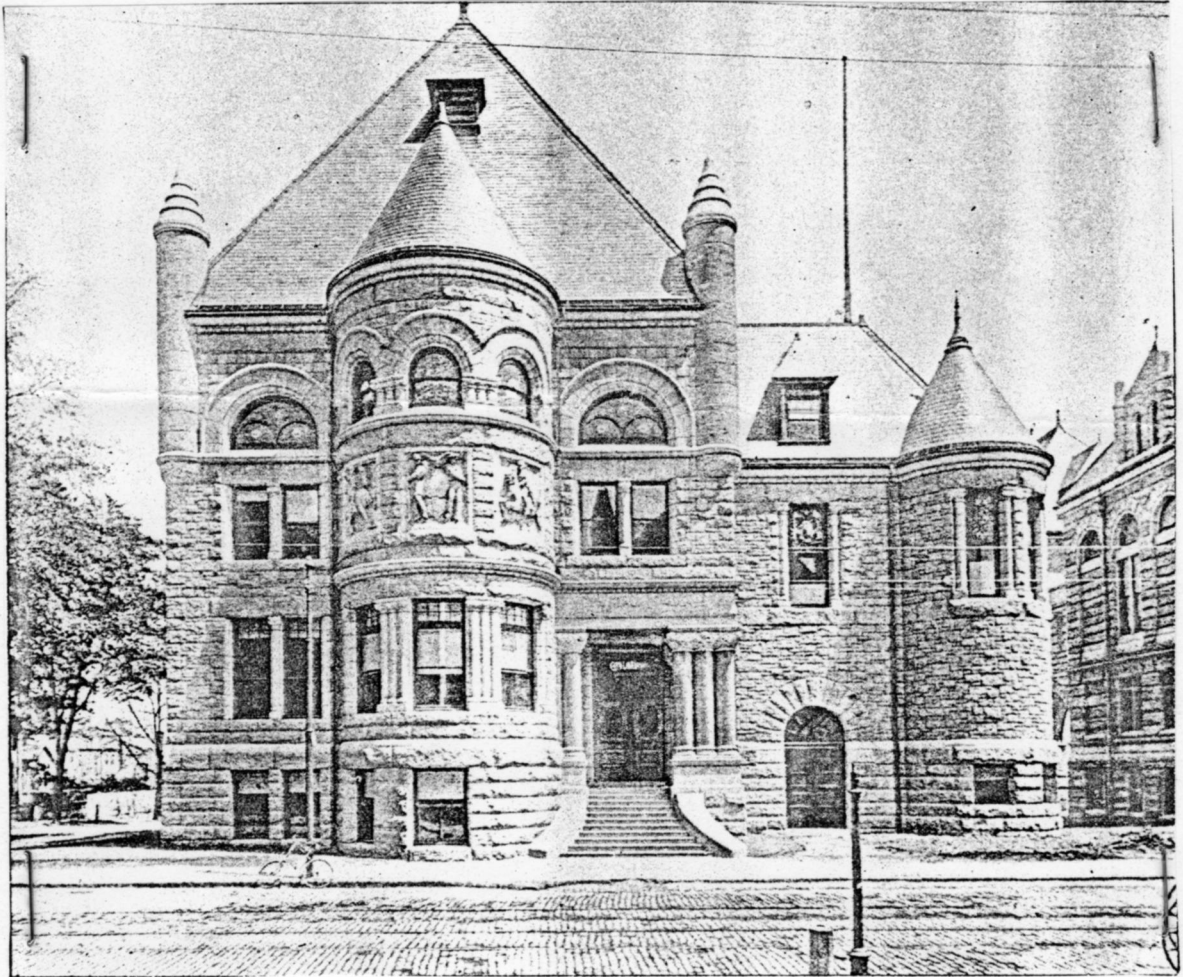


Figure 2

Lowell and Vicinity of Today, p. 8.