

LOWELL CULTURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY

IDENTIFICATION 36 JOHN STREET MAP SHEET # 7
 1) CURRENT OWNER Lowell Five Cent Savings Bank OWNER OCCUPIED yes
 2) HISTORIC NAME Lowell Five Cent Savings Bank
 3) CURRENT NAME same
 4) PROPERTY TYPE commercial 5) ZONING CLASSIFICATION B3
 6) TAXES: PAYMENTS current STATUS clear
 7) WITHIN BOUNDARIES OF LHPD

HISTORICAL ABSTRACT

1) CONSTRUCTION DATE ca. 1923
 SOURCE document: city directories
 2) ARCHITECT OR BUILDER unknown
 3) HISTORIC OWNER Lowell Five Cent Savings Bank
 4) ORIGINAL USE: GF commercial UF commercial
 5) PREVIOUS BLDGS ON PROPERTY yes DATE ca. 1840-1905, 1905-1973
 SOURCE See Additional Historical Information

DESCRIPTIVE DATA

1) ARCHITECTURAL STYLE
Neo-Classical Revival
 2) PRESENT USE:
 GF commercial
 UF commercial
 3) NO OF STORIES two
 4) PROP SQ FT 6936
 5) PLAN rectangular
 6) ROOF flat
 7) STRUCTURAL SYSTEM
metal frame
 8) OUTBUILDINGS
none
 9) MATERIALS:
 FOUNDATION
granite stone

VIEW FROM east PHOTO TAKEN May 1979



FACADE All sides:red brick, f: flemish, side & rear: common w/flemish variation 7/1
 TRIM wood, marble, limestone

10) NOTABLE SURFACE & LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS two street lamps, parking lot w/row of trees

VISUAL ASSESSMENT

- 1) CONDITION OF BUILDING FABRIC good
- 2) IF DETERIORATED, CAUSES not applicable
- 3) INTEGRITY OF HISTORIC BLDG FABRIC: GF intact with minor changes
UF intact original fabric
- 4) SURROUNDING LAND USES commercial
- 5) INTEGRITY OF PROP'S HIST SETTING moderately disrupted historic setting
- 6) IMPORTANCE OF PROP TO HIST SETTING focal point in area

ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTION

This two-story red brick building is essentially a long rectangle with the narrow end to the street. The front, on John Street, and part of the Lee side are treated as a free-standing classical banking temple, a form which was popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The stylistic overlay is Neo-Classical Revival, designed in the Jeffersonian classical tradition, but flattened out in a twentieth century application of the elements to a simple box.

On the front a giant Doric order, executed in limestone, rises to an entablature above the second-story windows and is topped with a dentilated low-pitched pediment. Instead of forming a portico, the order merely suggests one; it is applied directly to the slightly recessed main block of the building. The end bays are flush with outer pairs of piers and columns; quoining on the corners helps suggest projecting end pavilions. The temple rests on a granite base. First-floor fenestration is in the federal style, well executed in delicate but strong wood framing. Upper-story windows are rectangular, squeezed high up between a stringcourse and the frieze. A dentilated cornice extends the baseline of the pediment. There is a plain low parapet above the cornice and a flat roof. The design plays with correct classical features applied to a much simplified form. It succeeds because the stonework and fenestration are bold and elegant.

On Lee the temple theme is continued with two-story limestone piers and other classical elements which extend back from John to a plain rear block. The long north facade is quite simple and very typical of twentieth century commercial architecture. There is a recess at the second-story level which forms a deck in the middle of the long wall.

The elegance of the classical temple overlay is carried into the first-floor banking space with equal competence. The main aisle is covered with a segmentally worked vault. The side aisles have coffered ceilings. Interior materials include light beige marble, natural mahogany, and classical plasterwork. Although relatively low, the space is light and open in feeling.

The site includes a large parking lot which extends to Paige Street along the north wall. A row of trees help soften the visual impact of the lot on the building. There are two noteworthy light standards set on John near the curb which are in keeping with the classical main facade.

ADDITIONAL HISTORICAL INFORMATION

This large downtown site has held a succession of institutional and commercial buildings, dating back to at least 1839-40 when the John Street Church was built at the corner of Paige. The church was extensively altered in 1846 and 1871. A photograph ca. 1900 shows a traditional New England church in a classical style which was developed by Christopher Wren and James Gibbs, English architects, and which appeared in America before the revolution.

Ca. 1904-05 the church was replaced by another building whose architecture had classical origins. This was the YWCA building, a four-story red brick block in the Renaissance Revival style. The building appears to have had a similarly featured brother the YMCA built a few years later at Shattuck and Merrimack Streets. The YM building was designed by Chicago architects, Shattuck and Huzzie, with local supervision by Henry M. Southwick. Perhaps they also designed the YWCA. The YW remained at this location until 1973, according to city directories, when it was apparently torn down for the parking lot.

The bank itself was constructed ca. 1923, replacing the Marble Bank (on the site of Cherry & Webb) which had housed the Five Cent Savings Bank. This banking institution was founded in 1854; for further information see the report on 105 Merrimack.

Alterations to the bank building appear minimal. The most obvious change is the aluminum-framed front door in the central entrance.

Sources

Lowell city maps and atlases.

Lowell city directories.

U. of Lowell Special Collections photo file.

History of Middlesex County. Drake, v. II, pp. 110-111.

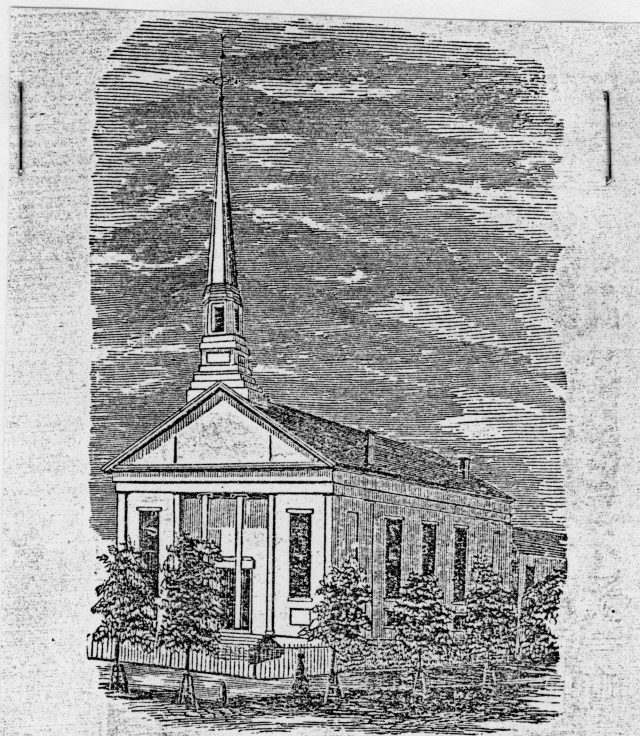
Illustrated History of Lowell, Mass. Courier-Citizen pp. 709-710.

ARCHEOLOGICAL COMMENT

Due to the size, location, and construction of the bank building it is quite unlikely that there would be any undisturbed historic subsurface remains below its foundation. Evidence of the YWCA may exist below the surface of the parking lot.



View from northeast of parking lot (former John Street Congregational Church/YWCA site) and bank. Photo taken by SBRA, May 1979.



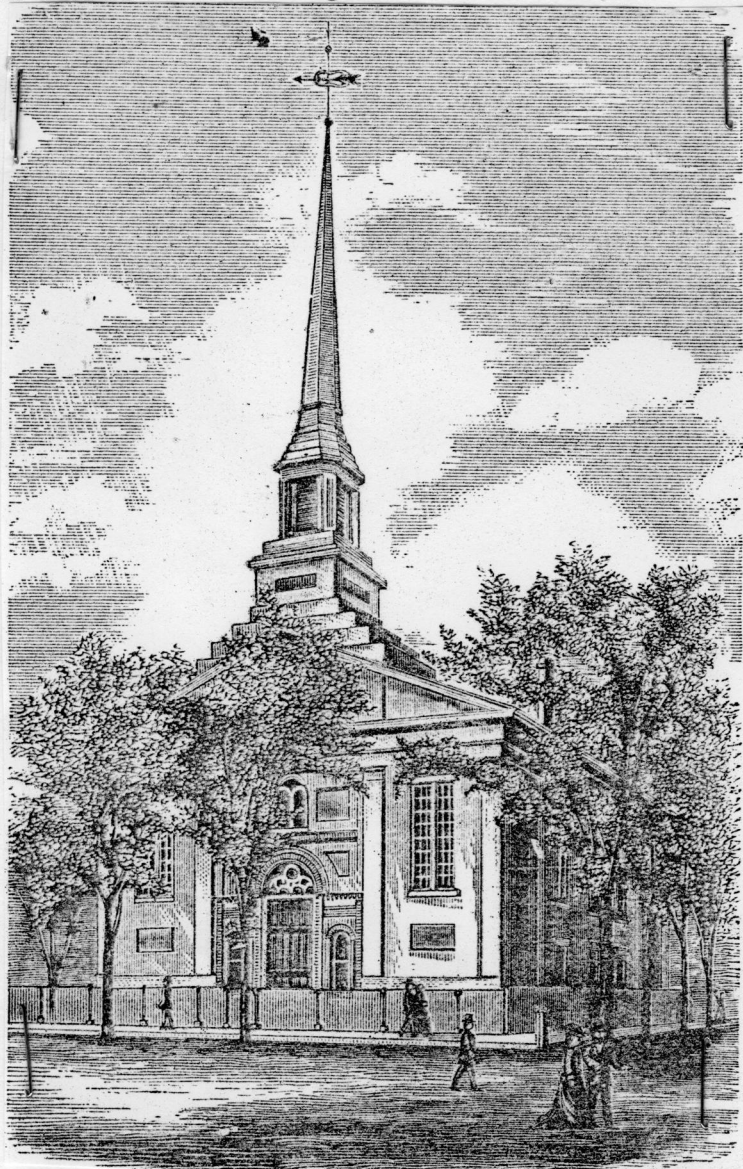
THE JOHN ST. CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

WAS organized May 9th, 1839, with about 200 members, mostly from the First Congregational Church, and the Appleton St. Church. Their Meeting-house was erected in 1839, at an expense of \$20,000, and was dedicated in January, 1840. Rev. S. W. Hanks was ordained March 20, 1840, and dismissed February 3, 1853; on the same day Rev. E. B. Foster was installed over the John Street Church, and is its pastor at the present time. The church numbers about 400 members, and its Sabbath School reports over 300 persons in constant attendance, one half being under 15 years of age.

ADDRESS:

36 JOHN STREET

-5-



John Street Congregational Church, from Drake's History of Middlesex County, v. II (1881), p. 111.



Postcard view of YWCA on John Street at Paige, ca. 1905. U. of Lowell Library, Special Collections, photo file.