

LOWELL CULTURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY

IDENTIFICATION 408 MERRIMACK STREET MAP SHEET # 7
 1) CURRENT OWNER City of Lowell - Green School OWNER OCCUPIED yes
 2) HISTORIC NAME Green School
 3) CURRENT NAME Green School
 4) PROPERTY TYPE Institutional 5) ZONING CLASSIFICATION B1
 6) TAXES: PAYMENTS exempt STATUS clear
 7) WITHIN BOUNDARIES OF LHPD, City Hall HD

HISTORICAL ABSTRACT

1) CONSTRUCTION DATE 1870
 SOURCE documented: Lowell City Documents, 1870-71, p. 50
 2) ARCHITECT OR BUILDER George F. Meacham, Boston
 3) HISTORIC OWNER City of Lowell
 4) ORIGINAL USE: GF institutional UF institutional
 5) PREVIOUS BLDGS ON PROPERTY yes DATE ca. 1831-1869
 SOURCE documented: 1832, 1841, 1850 maps

DESCRIPTIVE DATA

1) ARCHITECTURAL STYLE Second Empire
 2) PRESENT USE:
 GF school
 UF school
 3) NO OF STORIES 3
 4) PROP SQ FT 19,562
 5) PLAN cross-shaped
 6) ROOF flat
 7) STRUCTURAL SYSTEM load-bearing masonry
 8) OUTBUILDINGS none
 9) MATERIALS:
 FOUNDATION granite



FACADE all sides: red pressed brick in stretcher bond

TRIM wood cornice; gauged brick segmental basement lintels; granite: sills, lintels, and belt coursing.

10) NOTABLE SURFACE & LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS none

ADDRESS 408 MERRIMACK STREET

VISUAL ASSESSMENT

- 1) CONDITION OF BUILDING FABRIC. good
- 2) IF DETERIORATED, CAUSES n/a
- 3) INTEGRITY OF HISTORIC BLDG FABRIC: GF intact with minor changes
UF intact with evolutionary alterations
- 4) SURROUNDING LAND USES commercial, industrial, residential, recreational, institutional
- 5) INTEGRITY OF PROP'S HIST SETTING intact with minor intrusions and/or losses
- 6) IMPORTANCE OF PROP TO HIST SETTING integral to character

ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTION

See Research Report.

ADDITIONAL HISTORICAL INFORMATION

See Research Report.

ARCHEOLOGICAL COMMENT

Although this large brick structure does not completely cover the site, the remainder of the area has been blacktopped. If the ground was not entirely disrupted by the excavation for a boiler house on the west side, there is possibility of finding traces of the earlier building foundations in the undisturbed areas.

Research Report
408 Merrimack Street
Green School
1870

(See Research Report on 176-90 Middle Street and 165 Market Street.)

The Green School building has served the children of Lowell continuously since 1870, and its name has been attached to a school since 1849. Certainly a high style building at the time of its dedication in 1870, it has undergone modifications over the years which have dramatically changed its appearance (Figure 1).

Built in the Second Empire style, it is decidedly symmetrical in its cross-shaped plan, and originally maintained a nice balance of the vertical and horizontal units' massing. Now two-stories high and eight-bays long, it originally had a half-story mansard and a three-story projecting pavilion with a mansard cap. "This room in the pavilion is the highest point from which a prospect may be gained, anywhere in the center of our city" (1). The front and sides are faced with red pressed brick in stretcher bond, and the rear in common brick, also in stretcher bond.

The central pavilion contains the main entrance, round-arched, as are the two small flanking windows and the two above. The remainder of the windows are rectangular. The belt courses dividing the floors are of Concord granite as are the window caps and sills. Although the design of this building is formal in nature, the treatment of the window caps is a vernacular version. Only a wooden modillioned cornice remains to complete the building. Sitting on a high raised basement, the windows at that level are of the segmental arch variety.

The treatment of the sides and rear of the building are similar, the rear being a simplified version. A projection at the rear corresponds to the pavilion of the major facade. The windows are not original to the building (they were two-over-two), nor is the main door. Otherwise, the original historic fabric appears to be maintained on what remains of the building.

In good condition, the Green School sits adjacent to the brick Gothic Revival Congregational Church, and across from the Romanesque Revival City Hall and Memorial Library. These buildings together exemplify Lowell's architecture in the second half of the nineteenth century. Built for institutional or governmental purposes, they were each meant to represent the most advanced forms of their day in order to represent their institutions, and the city of Lowell, most proudly. The Green School also represents a moving away from the ubiquitous Greek Revival schools of the '40s and '50s, to a more advanced style of architecture which was looking to contemporary France rather than the past.

The original Green School was opened as Grammar School Number Eight in 1841 on land purchased from the Proprietors of Locks and Canals in 1839 (2). Constructed of brick in the Greek Revival Style, it was designed by Boston architect Richard Bond, who designed other schools in Lowell (3). In 1849, the name of the school was changed to the Green School in honor of Dr. John O. Green, supervisor of Lowell Schools for many years in the early part of Lowell's history (Figure 2).

As explained in a later School Department report: "It began to be seen in a very few years after the erection of the building, that a grand mistake had been made in locating it, for little buildings were rapidly arising on every side; a stable was built upon the corner where the office of the Gas Light Company now is, and the appearance of the whole neighborhood was changing for the worse" (4). Finally, after a boiler explosion in 1863 in which five men were killed and a building destroyed, serious attempts were made to find a new location for the school. Finally, by 1870, the present site was secured, the old building moved off, and the new Green School erected. The old schoolhouse on Middle Street was sold to the J. C. Ayer Company in 1872 and is now the site of the J. C. Ayer Company Building.

The new site "...was nearly the same as the site of the first schoolhouse built at the commencement of [Lowell's] history. This house was a commodious wooden edifice, which thirty-five years ago was removed to Cabot Street and fitted up for dwellings which are still occupied as numbers 10 and 12 on the street" (5). Two structures appear on the site as early as the 1832 map, of L-shaped configuration. In 1841, two rectangular structures are indicated on the map. By 1850,

a long rectangular structure appears, labeled "Lowell." From 1879-1924, the atlases show the Green School as a cross-shaped brick structure, labeled as such.

The Lowell City Documents of 1870-71 give an elaborate description of the materials and cost, which at that date was upwards of \$110,000. The architect was named as George F. Meacham of Boston.

In April of 1958, a serious fire heavily damaged the newly renovated schoolhouse (Figure 3). A newspaper article of the period points out that when the school was rehabilitated, it would be a two story building with a flat roof (Figure 4). Unfortunately, fire claimed the crowning element of this building as it did several other Second Empire structures in Lowell.

Still used as a schoolhouse today, the Green School represents the period in Lowell when it was reaching the height of its prosperity. When first built, it faced Monument Square and sat adjacent to the earlier frame First Congregational Church. By the turn of the century, the Church had been replaced by a High Victorian Gothic structure, and Monument Square had been enriched by the erection of the Romanesque Revival City Hall and Memorial Library. Together, these four buildings exemplify architectural high style in Lowell in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Footnotes

- 1) Lowell City Documents, 1870-71, p. 49, U. of Lowell Library, Special Collections.
- 2) "Papers Relating to the Building of Houses for the High and Grammar Schools of Lowell, 1839," U. of Lowell Library, Special Collections.
- 3) "4th Annual Report of the Receipts and Expenditures of the City of Lowell in 1839," U. of Lowell Library, Special Collections.
- 4) Lowell City Documents, 1870-71, p. 60, U. of Lowell Library, Special Collections.
- 5) Ibid., p. 47.

Other Sources

"Papers Relating to the Building of Houses for the High and Grammar Schools in Lowell, 1839," Lowell U. Library, Special Collections.

"4th Annual Report of the Receipts and Expenditures of the City of Lowell for 1839," Lowell U. Library, Special Collections.

"5th Annual Report of the Receipts and Expenditures of the City of Lowell for 1840," Lowell U. Library, Special Collections.

Lowell City Documents, 1870-71, Lowell U. Library.

Lowell U. Library, Special Collections, Scrapbook No. 96.

Lowell U. Library, photo file.

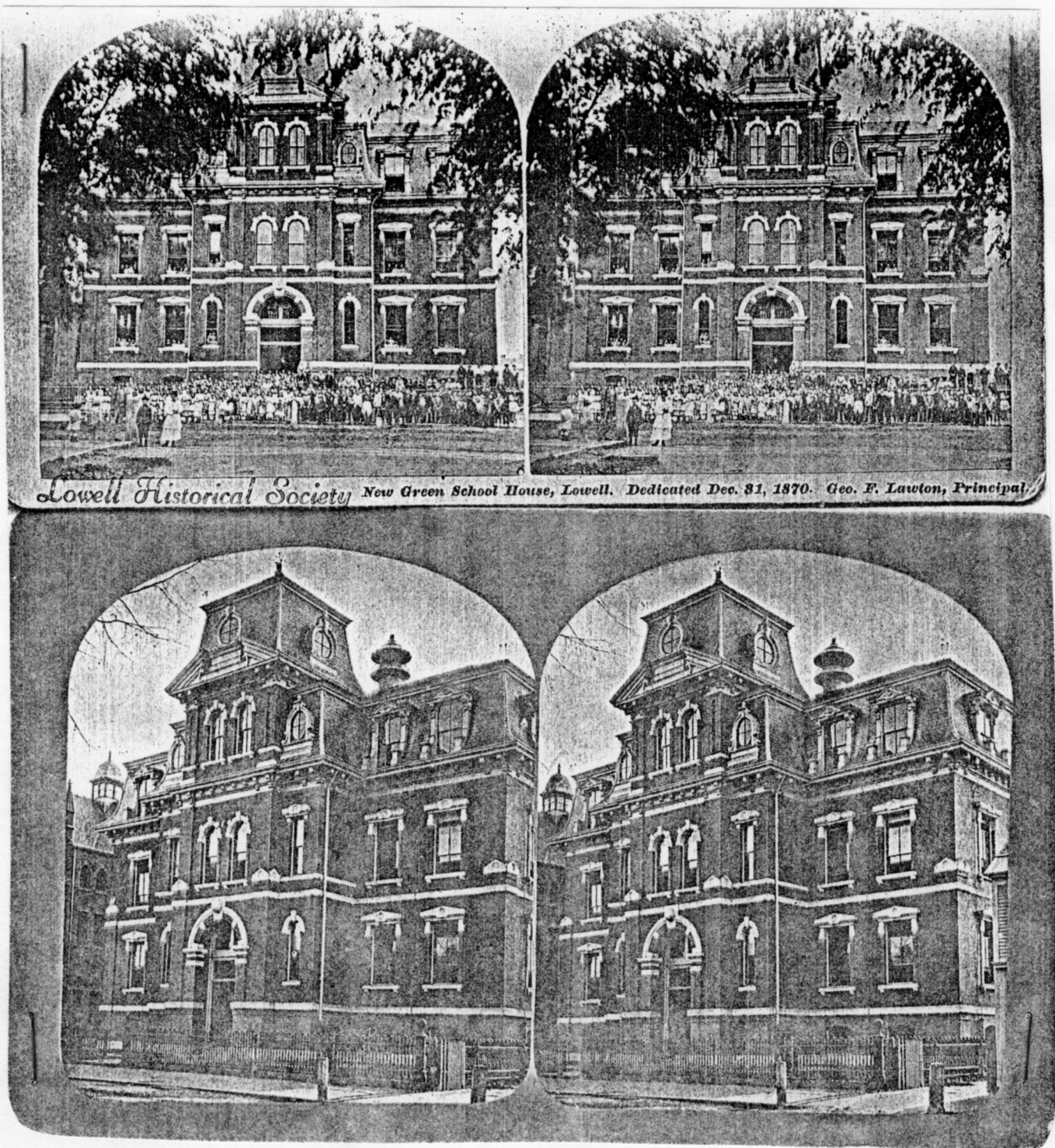
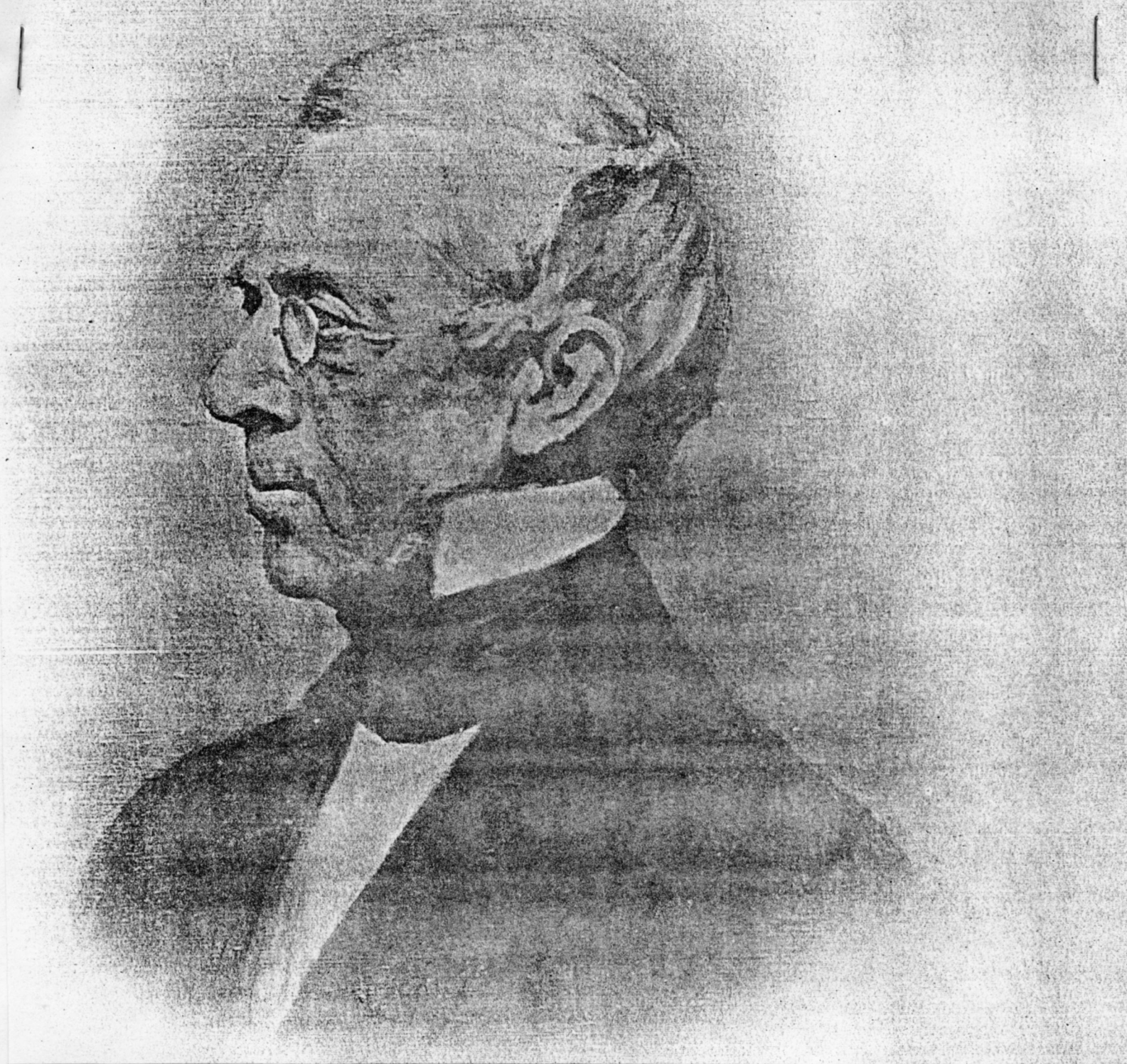


Figure 1

U. of Lowell Library, Photo file, Special Collections.



John Orne Green, A.B., M.D.
First Chairman: 1867-1883

Figure 2a

U. of Lowell Library, Special Collections, photo file.

PLAN OF LAND NEAR THE CITY HALL, PROPOSED TO BE PURCHASED BY THE CITY.

June 26, 1839.

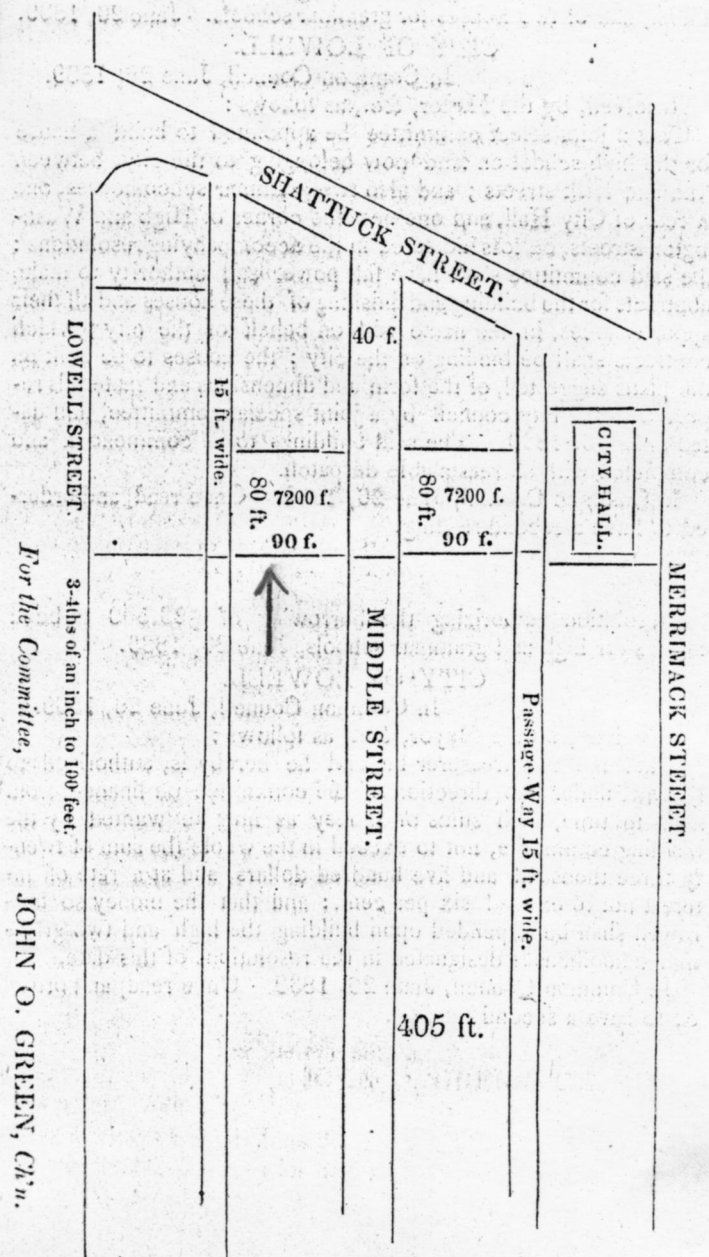


Figure 2b

Plan of Middle Street area, showing two lots recommended for purchase for school sites. Arrow indicates lot on which original Green School was built.

From "Papers Relating to the Building of Houses for High and Grammar Schools in Lowell," 1839. U. of Lowell, Special Collections.

Resolution authorizing the employment of an architect to draw working plans for grammar and high schoolhouses, June 26, 1839.

CITY OF LOWELL.

In Common Council, June 26, 1839.

Resolved, by the Mayor, &c., as follows :

That the joint special committee, who have had under consideration the subject of the high and grammar schoolhouses, be authorized to employ a competent architect to draft working plans of the buildings proposed in their report.

In Common Council, June 26, 1839. Once read, and ordered to have a second reading.

An estimate of the materials and labor which will be required to erect and finish a schoolhouse for a grammar school.

Excavation, wall, underpinning, caps and sills, and all the stonework and masonry, including stock,	2,250 00
Furnace,	100 00
Timber for frame, 35 M, framed and raised, \$21,	735 00
Two outside doors in 2 parts,	40 00
10 small windows in basement, \$10,	140 00
12 large do. in schoolroom, \$20,	240 00
Gutters, pediment end and conductors,	300 00
Slatting,	50 00
Slatting and pointing 4750 ft, \$11,	522 50
Lead and zinc,	50 00
Floors,	400 00
Firs and furring,	300 00
Stairs,	100 00
9 inside doors, \$10,	90 00
Mopboards, casings and inside blinds,	200 00
150 desks, \$1 75,	262 50
250 chairs, 50c,	125 00
Iron work,	75 00
Painting,	150 00
Contingencies,	300 00
	<hr/>
	\$6,430 00

For the committee.

JOHN O. GREEN, Chairman.

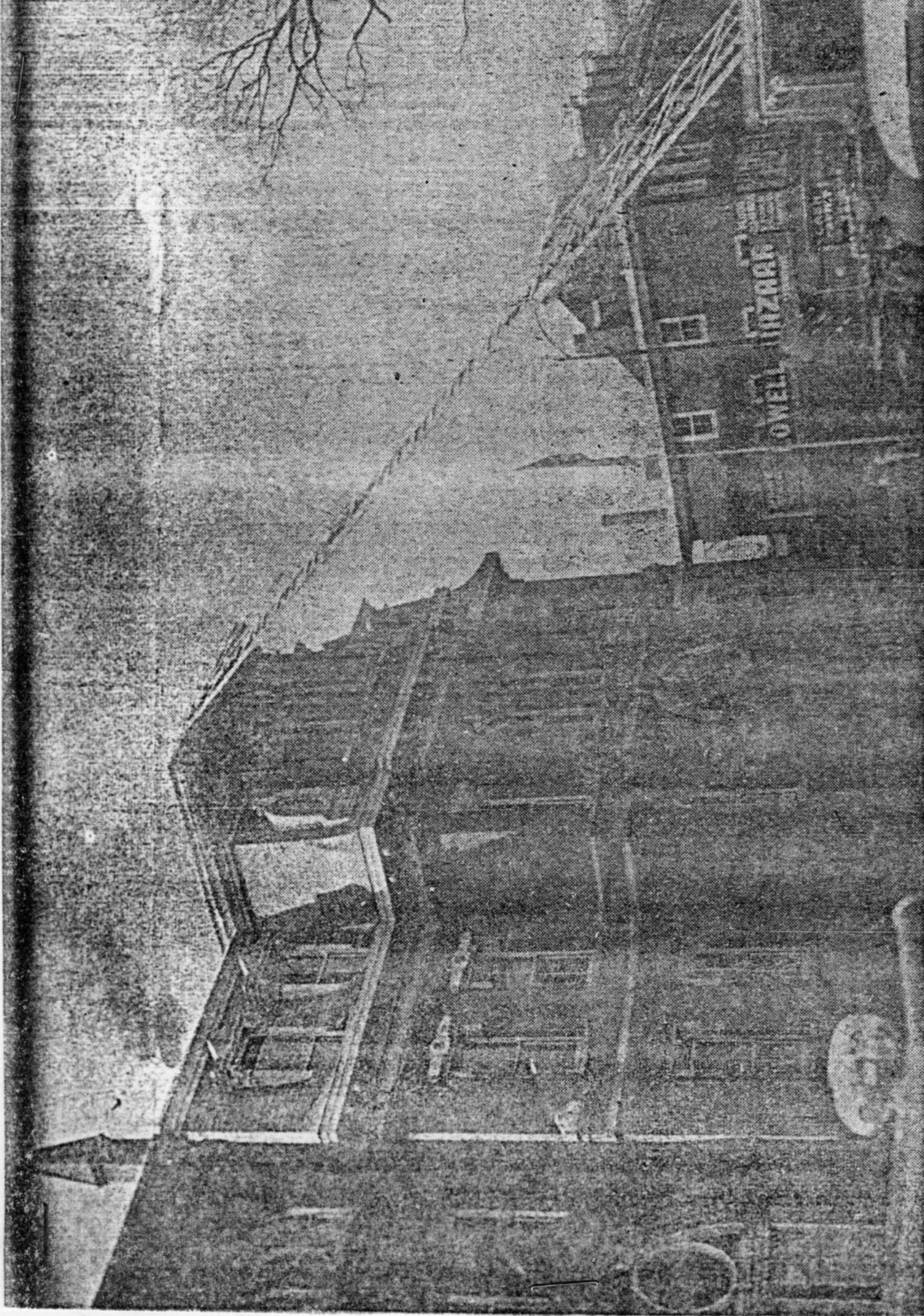
June 26, 1839.

In Common Council, June 26, 1839. Reported by the committee on building houses for high and grammar schools.

Figure 2c

Estimate of expenses required for construction of first Green School, 1839.

From "Papers Relating to the Building of Houses for High and Grammar Schools in Lowell," 1839. U. of Lowell, Special collections, p. 13.



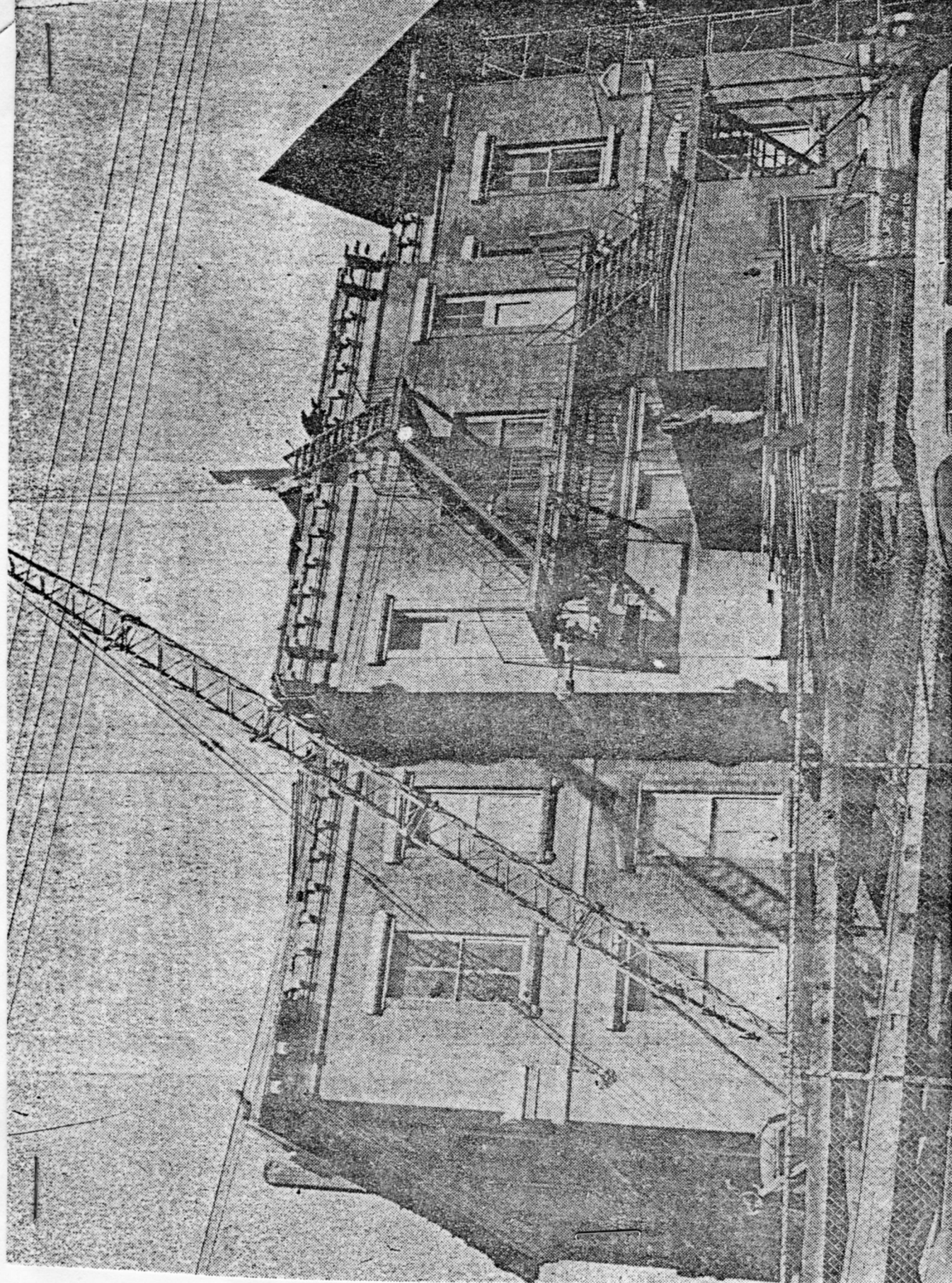
Firemen Battle Green School Fire

Shown above is the scene at the Green school shortly after fire broke out in the building this morning and for a time threatened to doom the 75-year-old structure. Flames many feet high shot out from the ventilator atop the red brick building and smoke belched from the school when firemen arrived at the scene. Quick action on the part of the fire-

men was credited by school department officials for holding the fire in check and saving the structure from total destruction. Teachers led 225 children in orderly fashion from the building as soon as the alarm was sounded. Some of the teachers and all of the children thought at first that they were being taken out on a regular fire drill exercise.

Figure 3

Lowell Sun, 4/18/58. Scrapbook #96, U. of Lowell Library, Special Collections.



Green School Face-Lifting

Work is continuing on the reconstruction of the fire-damaged Green school to get the structure in readiness for the reopening of classes in September. The above picture shows the progress of the work up to date. The third floor of the

building has now been taken off and work will begin to put a new roof on the two-story building. The school was heavily damaged by the fire of April 1957.

Figure 4

Lowell Sun, 3/24/59, Scrapbook #96, U. of Lowell Library, Special Collections.