

LOWELL CULTURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY

IDENTIFICATION 40 MARKET STREET MAP SHEET #12  
 1) CURRENT OWNER David Glass and Harold Nagin OWNER OCCUPIED no  
Heritage Canal Associates  
 2) HISTORIC NAME Old Market House (later Police Station)  
 3) CURRENT NAME Old Market House  
 4) PROPERTY TYPE governmental 5) ZONING CLASSIFICATION 1A  
 6) TAXES: PAYMENTS current STATUS clear  
 7) WITHIN BOUNDARIES OF LHPD

HISTORICAL ABSTRACT

1) CONSTRUCTION DATE 1837  
 SOURCE documented: Annual Report...City of Lowell, 1837  
 2) ARCHITECT OR BUILDER Horace Howard  
 3) HISTORIC OWNER City of Lowell  
 4) ORIGINAL USE: GF commercial UF governmental  
 5) PREVIOUS BLDGS ON PROPERTY no DATE \_\_\_\_\_  
 SOURCE \_\_\_\_\_

DESCRIPTIVE DATA

1) ARCHITECTURAL STYLE Greek Revival  
 2) PRESENT USE:  
 GF vacant  
 UF vacant  
 3) NO OF STORIES 3½  
 4) PROP SQ FT 30,459  
 5) PLAN rectangular  
 6) ROOF end-wall gable  
 7) STRUCTURAL SYSTEM  
load-bearing masonry  
 8) OUTBUILDINGS  
none  
 9) MATERIALS:  
 FOUNDATION  
granite blocks



FACADE F, S: red pressed brick in stretcher bond; R: red brick in common bond  
 TRIM granite sills and lintels, steps

10) NOTABLE SURFACE & LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS none

ADDRESS 40 MARKET STREET

VISUAL ASSESSMENT

- 1) CONDITION OF BUILDING FABRIC needs major repair
- 2) IF DETERIORATED, CAUSES vandalism; lack of maintenance
- 3) INTEGRITY OF HISTORIC BLDG FABRIC: GF intact with evolutionary alterations  
UF intact original fabric
- 4) SURROUNDING LAND USES commercial, industrial, canal frontage
- 5) INTEGRITY OF PROP'S HIST SETTING moderately disrupted historic setting
- 6) IMPORTANCE OF PROP TO HIST SETTING focal point in area

ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTION

See Research Report.

ADDITIONAL HISTORICAL INFORMATION

See Research Report.

ARCHEOLOGICAL COMMENT

Archeological work might prove fruitful on the sides and rear parking lot of the Old Market House. The present structure has been located here since 1837. The portion of the property fronting the Pawtucket Canal was the town landing in the mid-nineteenth century, and remains of that use of the site might be preserved there.

Research Report  
40 Market Street  
Old Market House (later the Police Station)  
1837

Situated on the southern side of Market Street near Central is the Old Market House. This structure is similar to other Lowell Greek Revival public buildings such as the Old City Hall and the Coburn School in terms of its temple-like form, decidedly horizontal massing, and simplicity of surface embellishments.

Three-and-a-half stories high, it is thirteen bays long and three bays deep. Of brick construction, the main and side facades are faced with pressed brick and laid in common bond (eight to one). The rear facade is faced with common brick and also laid in common bond. Engaged pilasters (now missing their wooden capitals) are located at the corners and also divide the main facade into three large sections. The central section is three bays wide, while those flanking are five. This structure rests on a foundation of granite slabs, pierced with many basement windows.

The ground floor presently has three entrances on the main facade, enframed by granite posts and lintels. The entrance in the westernmost (right) bay, along with its granite steps, is original. The doorways in the sixth and ninth bays (counting from the east or left) were cut through at a later date. Originally, the fourth bay was the location of another entrance. The windows of the ground floor are double hung, as are those in the upper stories of the eastern and central sections. The tall window openings in the western section of the facade span both upper floors. These windows are divided by paneled spandrels. It is unclear whether these window openings originally spanned both floors. All the windows have finely dressed granite sills and lintels.

The eastern and western gable ends of the building are derived from the classical temple form. Engaged corner pilasters visually support a wooden cornice that forms a pediment of the gable end. Within the tympanum is a rectangular window set into what was originally a lunette opening. In the central bay of the eastern end is a tra-beated granite doorway, now half filled in with brick. The windows are double hung, with granite sills and lintels. However, some of the windows of the west end retain their original sash of twelve panes over eight at the second

story, and eight over twelve at the third.

The rear, or southern, facade repeats the window treatment of the main facade. A rock-faced granite stringcourse, located between the basement and ground floor, spans the length of this rear wall. Abutting the central section of this wall is a three-story rectangular brick addition with a flat roof. The windows are segmental arched, with rowlock lintels and granite sills.

The asphalt-shingled ridge roof of the main block has two chimneys. At the center of the roof is the base of a cupola which once housed fire bells for the city. (These bells are now located in the Central Fire House.)

Stylistically, this structure displays a vocabulary common to Lowell Greek Revival public buildings of the 1830s and 1840s. The temple-like form, brick construction, simple use of granite slabs, trabeated entrances and engaged pilasters are all hallmarks of Lowell's vernacular Greek Revival architecture. Needing major repairs, the building is presently vacant. Many windows are broken and others are boarded up.

Presently this structure appears isolated on the southern side of Market Street. The Bigelow Mill buildings, once adjacent to the west, are no longer extant, leaving a void across from the solid wall of late nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings which line Market Street's northern side. A parking lot is located between the Market Building and the Pawtucket Canal.

The present building was the first to occupy this site. The Market House, later known as the Police Station, was built in 1837 through a joint effort by city and county [1]. The block was purchased in 1835 and 1836 from a group of local businessmen. "A parcel of land, two hundred and eight feet by ninety feet was obtained for \$.75 a square foot, for a total of \$14,055.00" [2].

The architect, or master builder, of the Market House was apparently Horace Howard. Traditionally, this structure's design has been attributed to Kirk Boott, but recent research seems to point to Howard as the designer. Howard was listed in the 1830's Lowell directories as "Horace Howard, Housewright." The city's expenditures for the Market House construction included payment to "Horace Howard for plan, \$11.00" [3].

Two quite different figures are listed for the cost of the building. Mayor Bartlett on June 12, 1837 declared "that the total cost was \$36,796.17, while ten months earlier, John Robinson, legal attorney for the savings institution in Lowell, contended the cost was \$66,986.25" [4].

The Market House opened March 5, 1837. On the lower floor there was originally located "twenty-two stalls occupied by dealers in meat, butter, cheese, eggs and vegetables. Efforts were made to induce all the provision dealers to locate here" [5]. The popularity of a central location for provisions was short-lived. Soon "street markets and butcher's carts competed with the public market... Only those who were best accommodated in its vicinity, sought the Market House for their dinners and after awhile the stalls became vacated" [6].

The upper floors "were used for county and police courts. The police court for many years occupied the east end, and the Supreme and common courts, the western end.... Daniel Webster, Rufus Choate and other great orators of the time were heard in the chambers of the old Market House" [7]. In 1852 the courts were relocated to the courthouse building on Gorham Street. The city then bought out the county's interest in the building for \$10,000.00 and carried out drastic internal changes [8]. After the courts vacated the building "...the police station moved into the lower floor and basement of the west end. The police offices and courts were placed on the second and third floors. The offices of C. P. Talbot and Company, a law firm, moved from the basement to the east end. The center of the building was fixed to house the liquor agency" [9].

In 1858 James H. Rand, a Lowell architect, was paid for plans and specifications for alterations to the Market House [10], including a "bell deck." On the night of June 22, 1859, a severe fire "broke out beneath the bell tower and burnt off the roof and damaged the building otherwise badly, particularly the part occupied by the Police Court.... It required over \$4000 expense to put the building in good shape again" [11]. The cupola was rebuilt after the fire [12].

In 1874-75 funds were voted to remodel a portion of the Market House as a Police Court [13] and the west end of the second floor was so altered. In 1873 mention is first made of extending the building southward "for a city government building" [14], but the plan was not carried out. The

present small rear addition does not appear on the Lowell atlases until 1906.

The 1879 and 1896 Lowell directories list commercial concerns as well as the Police Station as occupants of this building. "C. P. Talbot Chemical Company," "R. O. Adams Wood Dealers," "Noble and Hallowell Machinists" and "George E. Crosby Provisions" are listed as being housed in the old Market House. In 1896 the Police Station and job wagons of various owners are listed at this address. Apparently the building was used exclusively as a Police Station from the early twentieth century until 1972. The building is presently vacant.

During the 1820s and 1830s many American cities, in an attempt to centralize market facilities, built large temple-like structures in the newly popular Greek Revival style. Lowell's Market Building, although not a long-term success as a market building, housed other services for the city of Lowell, functioning variously as a court house, armory and police station. This structure is a fine example of a brick vernacular Lowell public building, reflecting the housewright and mason's craft.

#### Footnotes

- 1) National Register Nomination, "The Old Market House" (1977), p. 4.
- 2) Ibid.
- 3) First Annual Report of the Receipts and Expenditures of the City of Lowell, (1837), p. 16.
- 4) National Register Nomination Form, op. cit.
- 5) Newspaper clipping dated June 12, 1868 in scrapbook at U. of Lowell, Special Collections, labelled "Selections, Historical and General, mostly concerning Lowell and Vicinity (1894.)"
- 6) Ibid.
- 7) National Register Nomination Form, op. cit.
- 8) Ibid.

- 9) Ibid.
- 10) Twenty-third Annual Report...of City of Lowell, (1858), p. 42.
- 11) 1868 clipping, op. cit.
- 12) Twenty-fourth Annual Report...of City of Lowell, (1859), p. 89.
- 13) Fortieth Annual Report...of City of Lowell, (1875), p. 118.
- 14) City Documents, (1873), p. 12.

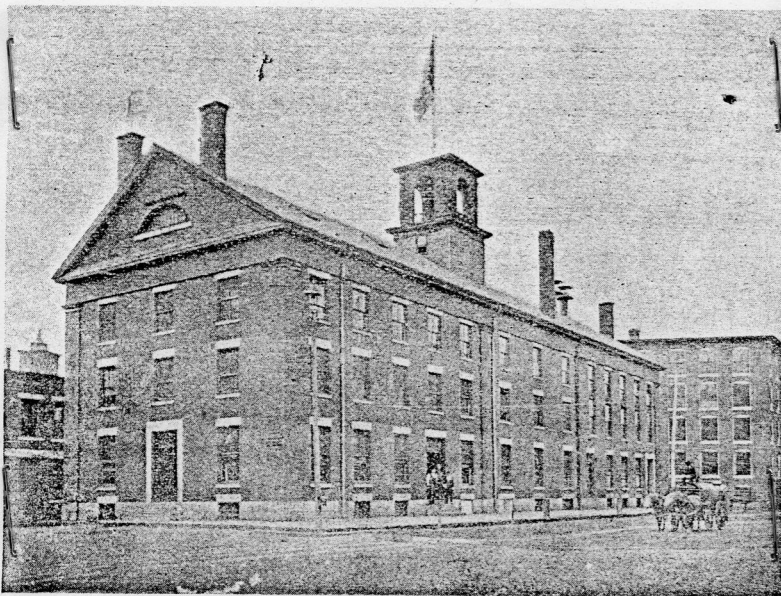
Other References

1841, 1850 Lowell maps.

1879, 1896, 1906, 1924 Lowell atlases.

Lowell directories.

Illustrated History of Lowell, 1897, p. 629.



POLICE STATION — OLD MARKET HOUSE.

Figure 1

From Illustrated History of Lowell, Mass, Courier Citizen, published 1897, p. 629.