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Old City Hall, Lowell, Massachusetts,
and Its Surrounding Properties

Robert Weible
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Old City Hall has stood witness to many of the social and political trends that have shaped Lowell's history, and it is unfortunate that its present condition belies its potential value to the National Park Service. This study will attempt to outline the history of the building and its nearby properties, and to hopefully draw a relationship between the building and those relevant social forces. This study will also offer brief recommendations for the use of the building by the Park Service.

GENERAL BACKGROUND

Before Lowell was incorporated as a town, its affairs were handled by the agents of Lowell's textile companies, most notably by Kirk Boott, agent of the Merrimack Manufacturing Company.¹ The companies, under Boott's direction, had assumed responsibilities related to every aspect of community life. They provided employee housing, established schools, built St. Anne's Church, and laid out the plans for the physical development of the town itself.² Boott and his associates were able to dictate the direction of the town at this point because the companies owned most of the land and because they had no real opposition - mill employees constituted the bulk of the town's population and were in no position to question Boott's authority. As industry grew, however, so grew the

town. Land was gradually sold to private and commercial interests, and the increasing number of shopkeepers, artisans, and small businessmen came to represent a largely independent group of townspeople whose interests did not always coincide with those of Boott and the manufacturers.

When the town of Lowell was incorporated on March 1, 1826, these townspeople gained a voice in their local government for the first time,³ and, as a result, the homogeneous political structure began to break down. At the first town meeting, held at Coburn's Tavern on March 6, 1826, this divergence of interest became apparant. By one partisan account, unsympathetic to the town, the meeting was dominated by "rum and rabble" - presumably the townspeople intoxicated by more than the exhilaration of governing themselves. Despite the emergence of this vocal and growing interest group, however, the manufacturers ("the temperance men") remained the dominant influence in the development of early Lowell.⁴ Since this group supplied the bulk of the town's revenue,⁵ however, they were not anxious to expand the social role or political strength of the local government. Rather, they restricted the size and scope of the government and subordinated it to their own interests.

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Lowell's earliest town meetings were held at two local taverns, the above-mentioned Coburn's, which is still standing on Pawtucket Street near Pawtucket Falls, and at Frye's, then located on Central Street.⁶ Both taverns were well-patronized, and, when not serving the town's purposes, both enjoyed reputations as "places of entertainment for man and beast." As such, neither proved to be a suitable setting for the execution of town business, and in May of 1829, the town decided to build for itself a "commodious and suitable place of assembly."⁷

THE TOWN HOUSE AND CITY HALL

The site for the new building, almost certainly selected by Kirk Boott, was located in the center of town across the street from St. Anne's.⁸ The land was purchased for \$3,360 from the Proprietors of Locks and Canals, a corporation directly linked to Lowell's textile companies.⁹ At the time, the site was a rocky ledge, ten to fifteen feet high, covered, as some early residents remembered, with blueberry bushes in the summer.¹⁰ The ledge was also remembered as the place from which the town fool ("an insane man, Larkin Moore") harangued the congregation of St. Anne's as they left church one Sunday.¹¹ Considering the eminence of the orators who would speak at Town Hall in

the following years, one can only note the irony of the first "speech" to be recorded on what has become a historic site. Boott, in any case, was not not interested in the potential historic value of the site. Having laid out the manufacturing and boarding house districts of Lowell to conform with the canal system, Boott decided to locate the Town Hall in the commercial district, itself centrally located and accessible to the mills and their employees.¹²

Construction began late in the spring of 1829 with the contract for the lumber and carpentry being awarded to Humphrey Webster, a first cousin of Daniel Webster and one of early Lowell's more successful contractors.¹³ A local physician helped launch the project auspiciously one evening by driving his horse and buggy into the hole dug for the foundation ("the Doctor was not much injured, but his carriage was badly used up").¹⁴ Nevertheless, by May of 1830, the Town House, as it was known, began to accept tenants.¹⁵ The cost for the building's construction was \$15,560, excluding the money paid for the land.¹⁶

The Town House, shown in Figure 1, with its Doric pilasters and gabled roof, was the first structure in Lowell to show, however simply, the growing influence of Greek revivalism.¹⁷ There is some question about the building's

designer, whether Boott designed it himself or whether it was the work of one or more of his draftsmen.¹⁸ Whatever the case, Boott was the most influential man in Lowell at the time, the man most responsible for town planning, and the man who had designed St. Anne's and many of the mills. As Lowell's most nearly qualified architect, then, it is safe to assume that if he did not actually draw the plans for the Town House, he at least played an important role in its design.¹⁹ This relatively simple design, furthermore, reflects the governing attitude of Boott and the manufacturers that town business was more or less an extension of their own manufacturing business, and that, as such, it need not be glorified by distinctive architecture.²⁰ This attitude was understandable since any architectural embellishments would have been financed, for the most part, by corporate taxes.

The Town House, as originally constructed, had two main floors, a basement, and an attic. The first floor and basement were rented to commercial tenants, the second floor used for town purposes, and the attic used by two militia companies.²¹

The first floor was several steps above ground level and was divided in half by a corridor running lengthwise from

east to west, connecting the entrances on either side of the building. ²²The stairway was located on the east end of the corridor. Two storefronts faced Merrimack Street, and three, including the town's post office, faced the rear of the building. The basement was occupied by two grocery stores, each with separate entrances. Lowell's agricultural background and early town status are reflected in the evening activities of at least one of these groceries. One old resident remembers the basement grocery as a place to "chat about the current events of the day," and to "trade choice bits of tattle." ²³The second floor, twenty feet high, included two offices used by town officials and the town's meeting hall, adjoined by an ante-room. ²⁴

After 1831, the hall was rented to political, religious, and other groups when not being used by the town. Privately sponsored meetings in the hall would range from church services, ²⁵ to vocal concerts, ²⁶ to one of New England's first abolitionist meetings to result in a riot in 1834, ²⁷ to speeches by Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, John Quincy Adams, Edgar Allan Poe, and Abraham Lincoln. ²⁸ Clay's 1833 speech, incidentally, was not attended by anglophile Kirk Boott, who never forgave Clay for his role in the War of 1812. ²⁹ Lincoln spoke at the City Hall during the presidential campaign of 1848. His speech, given in

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in behalf of Zachary Taylor, the Whig candidate for president, was judged "replete with good sense, sound reasoning, and irresistible argument" by Whigs, though Democrats found no "argument in favor of General Taylor worthy much consideration." 30

The meeting hall's primary service, however, was to the town government. It was here that town meetings revealed the growing political strength of the town's non-manufacturing interests and the consequent strengthening of the local government. Whereas in previous years, Boott had used his control of the government as an instrument of company policy, the continued growth of the town resulted in an independent local government more willing to spend tax dollars for public purposes and more responsive to a more diversified constituency. This trend became evident by 1832 in a series of town meetings divided over the question of expanding Lowell's public school system. Boott and his associates had, from the start, shown an interest in the general welfare of their employees, though it seems that this sense of social responsibility did not fully extend to the rest of the community. Reluctant to see a larger percentage of the manufacturers' profits used for local tax purposes, Boott opposed the proposed 1832 school expansion and was defeated. He blamed his defeat on the spokesman for

the opposition, Rev. Theodore Edson, rector of St. Anne's, and, as a result, Boott - ever the good loser - withdrew his support of Edson's church and never entered it again.³¹ More importantly, though, the meetings showed that by asserting themselves politically the town's citizens could use the institution of a stronger town government in order to protect and further their own interests.

The growth of Lowell and its independent municipal authority had implications for the physical evolution of the Town House itself. Lowell's growing civic pride, for example, became evident with the 1832 proposal to erect a bell and clock on the roof of the Town House. Evident at the time, too, however, was the still formidable presence of corporate interests possessed of the notion that town business should not be glorified by architecture. The proposal was defeated.³²

Nevertheless, Lowell's phenomenal growth and the expanding role of its government did eventually necessitate future changes in the Town House. In 1836, Lowell became a city and the Town House became known as the City Hall. At that time, first floor shops on the south side (rear) of the building were asked to leave, to be replaced by city offices.³³ In the following year, a Merrimack Street entrance was added, making the building more accessible to the public and to the attic's militia companies.³⁴

By the mid-forties, city officials were being forced to recognize the need to increase the space available to them beyond that provided by their existing building. Having been further cramped by the addition of the City School Library to the building's first floor in 1845,³⁵ officials began formulating solutions to their growing dilemma as early as 1846. One proposal involved the purchase of land to the east of City Hall, enlargement of the hall proper, and the construction of a three and a half story addition. Plans were drawn for this purpose in 1847 (Figures 2 and 3) by J.H. Rand, one of Lowell's first self-designated architects, but his proposals were dismissed.³⁶ Rather, the decision was made to use the entire existing structure for city purposes, requiring the eviction of Carleton and Hovey's drug store, one of the original tenants and the lone remaining shop on the first floor.³⁷

A more permanent solution to the pressing demand for space was reached in 1852 and 1853, when the city and the Boston and Lowell Railroad agreed to share the costs of the construction and maintenance of Huntington and Jackson Halls. These halls were located in a single structure located near the existing city building at the intersection of Merrimack and Dutton Streets. Upon completion, the first

floor was used by the railroad and the upper floors by the city.³⁸ The building, illustrative of the growing romantic trend in architecture, was declared "one of great beauty" and "an ornament to the city," reflecting the growing awareness of the city as an institution to be glorified by architectural achievement.³⁹ Lowell's growing pride, too, was not unlike that of other cities in the area, and an unspoken architectural competition seems to have developed between cities throughout the Merrimack Valley. The citizens of Manchester, New Hampshire, for example, had erected an elaborate city hall in 1845, a possible source of encouragement for the construction of the above-mentioned building in Lowell.⁴⁰

THE CITY GOVERNMENT BUILDING

The demand for space having been relieved, the city, in 1852 and 1853, undertook the major renovation of its former city hall, the building now known as the City Government Building. The structure was changed so extensively (Figures 4-8) that it was said that the men who built the Town House in 1830, "could they come back to earth again," would have had trouble recognizing their original building.⁴¹ The biggest structural changes involved the removal of the hall proper, the lowering and external alteration of the

first floor, and the construction of a third floor.⁴² Costs
 for these alterations exceeded fourteen thousand dollars.⁴³ As
 before, the city rented commercial space on the first floor,
 while using the upper floors for its own purposes. The second
 floor included offices for the mayor and other city officers,
 the Common Council Room (Figure 9) and the Mayor and Aldermen's
 Room (Figure 10).⁴⁴ The City Library and other offices were
 located on the third floor.⁴⁵

The first floor renovation of the City Government
 Building was motivated in part by the desire to attract quality
 stores to the building, thereby increasing rental income.⁴⁶
 Thus, whereas an income of \$775 was listed in 1840, by 1856
 stores on the first floor were paying over twice that amount,
 \$1775.50.⁴⁷ These four stores, for their money, now occupied
 choicely located commercial space extending from storefronts
 on Merrimack Street to the rear of the building.

The first tenant in June of 1854 was Carleton and
Assoc. Hovey's drug store, the same firm that had rented a shop in the
 old building from 1830 to 1848.⁴⁸ In June of 1855, this firm
 prescribed the "pure, wholesome, nourishing" concoction that
 cured Father John O'Brien's sore throat. So impressed was
 Father John that he recommended the remedy to friends and
 parishioners, thereby launching the large-scale production of
Father John's Medicine - one of the more successful patent

medicines manufactured in Lowell, a city known for its patent medicine industry.⁴⁹ Carleton and Hovey were the direct beneficiaries of the success of Father John's Medicine, and their shop remained in the City Government Building through 1913, when they removed to their own building on Market Street.⁵⁰

By 1855, shortly after the restructuring of the City Government Building, Lowell had grown from the town of 6,477 which constructed the original building in 1830 to the booming city of 37,554.⁵¹ In the meantime, the mill owners had remained the single most important interest group in Lowell. After Boott's death, however, and after having turned increasingly to immigrant labor, companies no longer provided housing and moral supervision for their employees to the degree that they had with their locally recruited female operatives.⁵² Their growing indifference helped allow city politicians to solicit the political support of the immigrant workers through the use of the patronage system and other devices. Thus, city officials further extended their base of support and the city government expanded its offices claiming nominal responsibility for the well-being of all Lowell citizens.⁵³

The continued growth of the city government in size and status had two major consequences which effected the future of the City Government Building: the need for further expansion

of the government itself and the growing desire of the city to house itself in a structure reflecting its elevated status.

The growth of the city became a problem for the City Government Building when the building's third floor proved inadequate for the library, whose books were increasingly in demand. In 1870, a proposal which would have moved it back to the first floor was narrowly defeated, indicating, among other things, the city's continued concern for its rental income.⁵⁴ The library, in any case, was soon moved out of the building and into the Hosford Block on Merrimack Street. Its former space was remodeled for city purposes in that same year, 1872.⁵⁵

In the following year, the mayor officially recognized the need for more room, noting that the "increase in all departments has far outgrown the limited space allotted for some of the offices." Rather than bear the expense involved in the construction of a new city hall, he suggested the expansion of the City Government Building.⁵⁶ Though his suggestions were not acted upon at the time, limited expansion and reorganization of the building did take place in later years. The Office of the City Water Board took over a first floor storefront in 1885;⁵⁷ The City Treasurer's Office was enlarged by a one-story brick addition to the rear of the building in 1886;⁵⁸ and the Office of the Overseers of the Poor moved to another storefront by 1889.⁵⁹

Another problem with the City Government Building was its age. During this period (1855-94), it needed to be routinely modernized and maintained. Along these lines, the installation and maintenance of boilers proved to be a continuing problem, complicated as it was by their inefficient use in heating Huntington Hall. Purchased from the Lowell Machine Shop in 1860, the two boilers caused almost constant concern until their replacement in 1872.⁶⁰ Incidental repairs on the building were required as a matter of course as well, though in 1878, more substantial repairs, including the re-boarding and slating of the roof, cost over five-thousand dollars.⁶¹

The Government Building's limited space and its increasing age, when combined with the desire for a more elaborately designed structure eventually resulted in the decision to build a new city hall. The feeling that the old Government Building's appearance was out of place had become evident at least by 1873 with the proposals for expansion. At the time, the mayor suggested that the addition of modern windows and a mansard roof would allow the building to "correspond somewhat with the many changes in the old-fashioned buildings on Merrimack street."⁶² The actual decision to construct a new city hall, though, did not come until 1879 with the purchase of the City Hall Building Lot, land on Merrimack Street west of Monument Square.⁶³ This decision, it should be

noted, came despite the fact that after the improvements of the previous year, the City Government Building was structurally sound.⁶⁴ F. W. Stickney's plans for the new city hall and library, however, were not drawn until 1889, and construction did not begin until the following year.⁶⁵ The new building, richly Romanesque, was completed in 1893. It satisfied all demands for a city hall designed to architecturally elevate the status of the city and its government.

SALE TO PRIVATE INTERESTS

No longer requiring the Old City Hall for municipal purposes,⁶⁶ in 1894 the city proceeded on a course resulting in the sale of its former home.⁶⁷ The building was disposed of at auction in October of 1895 to Warren Sherburne of Lexington, Massachusetts. Upon purchasing it, Sherburne gave notice of his intention to "make great changes in the building."⁶⁸ True to his word and in accordance with the trend of modernizing older downtown structures,⁶⁹ Sherburne, in 1896 completely rebuilt the Merrimack Street face in its present Colonial Revival style. (Figures 11 and 12). Other alterations, including the one-story addition to the building's western side have taken place since that time, though none of these changes can be said to have any real historic significance, the building having served only routine commercial purposes in the twentieth century.

CITY HALL COMMON

The lot of over seven thousand square feet of land directly south of Old City Hall once served as a city common. (Figure 13). It was purchased from the Proprietors of Locks and Canals for \$913.33 in 1839, upon the condition that it never be used for the construction of any building.⁷⁰ Revealed in this purchase are two important facts: what was then the corporation's active involvement, through deed encumbrances, in the physical development of the city, and the city government's growing concern for the preservation of its open spaces. With regard to the latter point, the mayor, in 1845, recognized the fact that "we are being hemmed in by walls of brick and mortar, shutting out the pure air of heaven."⁷¹ This attitude changed by 1874 regarding the City Government Building's common, however, when the city paid an additional \$9,400 to the Locks and Canals Company for the removal of all 1839 restrictions.⁷² This transaction took place when city officials were contemplating the expansion of the City Government Building (see page 13), and they may have been eyeing the common as a site for future construction. Of course, no such construction ever took place, and by 1879, the year in which the city committed itself to a new city hall, only a small frame building could be found on what was still, essentially, a common (Figure 13). The city made the decision

to sell the unencumbered land at the same time that it sold Old City Hall. ⁷³ Lowell Institution for Savings bought the former common in 1896, ⁷⁴ and quickly erected another short-lived frame structure (Figure 13). That same firm owns the land today and uses it as a parking lot.

JADE PAGODA AND SOLOMON LOTS

The two structures presently adjacent to ^{the} eastern wall of Old City Hall, the Jade Pagoda Restaraunt and the Solomon Building, occupy the two original lots sold by the Locks and Canals Company in 1828. Their relationship to Old City Hall in the nineteenth century is shown in Figure 14.

The lot bordering Old City Hall (Jade Pagoda) was sold to William Wyman, one of early Lowell's more colorful and enterprising citizens. He was considered an eccentric and a visionary, a religious ranter known to distrust "college-larned" ministers, and a man possessed of "ideas of the future possibilities of Lowell" which "were nearly half a century ahead of those of his neighbors." He was politically active, Andrew Jackson's strongest local supporter and one of Kirk Boott's antagonists, and he served as Lowell's second postmaster. ⁷⁵ As such, he moved the town's post office to the new Town House in 1830 - to the displeasure of those early Lowellians who had reportedly bribed other town officials in order to keep the post office at its former

location.⁷⁶ More importantly, however, Wyman was also responsible for the construction of many of the early buildings in Lowell,⁷⁷ including Concert Hall, home of Lowell's first public entertainments, Classic Hall on Merrimack Street, numerous religious buildings, and, most significantly, Wyman's Exchange at the corner of Merrimack and Central Streets.⁷⁸

The building constructed next to the Town House in 1829, however, did not represent one of Wyman's more impressive achievements. It was only one of many "ten-footers," unornamented, one-story wooden structures which lined Merrimack Street at the time. These "ten-footers" appeared in Lowell at a time (1825-35) "of great building activity, but of slight architectural achievement," and they served the purpose of quickly returning capital to investors and their commercial tenants.⁷⁹ Wyman's investment in this building, excluding the land, was only about five-hundred dollars.⁸⁰ It should be noted, too, that construction on these sites was subject to the restrictions of the Locks and Canals Company, whose deeds stipulated that buildings over ten feet high had to be constructed of brick or stone with a slated roof ⁸¹ company policy once again illustrative of the company's involvement and concern for the physical development of the town.

If it served no other purpose, the size of Wyman's "ten-footer" allowed ready access to the eastern entrance of

the Town House. This, of course, was not always beneficial to the latter building, as was the case in 1834 when an angry mob completely surrounded the Town House in violent protest of an abolitionist meeting.⁸² Nevertheless, the "ten-footer" was at best a temporary structure,⁸³ and Wyman's original building appears to have lasted until 1848 (if that long). Carleton and Hovey, having been asked to vacate City Hall at that time, erected a new one-story building on Wyman's land.⁸⁴ The construction of this building, about which little is known, may have limited access to the eastern entrance of City Hall, causing the city to close it off.⁸⁵

Access was definitely impeded in 1859 with the construction of the four-story Carleton Block (Figure 15). This building was named for George Carleton, late of Carleton and Hovey, and was built by his widow Mary, his former partner Charles Hovey, and one of Lowell's most influential manufacturers, William A. Burke.⁸⁶ The Railroad Bank and the Mechanics Savings Bank, with which Hovey and Burke were both affiliated, occupied space on the lower floors of this building through 1873 when the banks moved to the Mechanics Savings Bank Building (see page 21).⁸⁷ Shortly before that date, however, Hovey's group had sold the building to the Odd Fellows, who, lacking imagination, had renamed it the Odd Fellows Block.⁸⁸ This renowned fraternal organization used

the building's upper floors for their own purposes, and rented space on the lower floors to commercial tenants. Upon completion of Odd Fellows Hall on Middlesex Street, the Odd Fellows moved and sold their former building to Frederick Wier in 1897.⁸⁹ Wier, not surprisingly, renamed his new acquisition the Wier Block. The building changed hands several times since then, as well, and despite a major 1904 fire,⁹⁰ it continued to serve the same basic commercial purposes. A more ruinous fire destroyed the building's upper stories in 1942, however, resulting in the removal of the upper part of the building shortly thereafter.⁹¹ The foundation and reconstructed first floor of the Wier Block constitute what is currently the Jade Pagoda's building.

The present Solomon lot, like its neighbor, was sold by the Locks and Canals Company in 1828. Unlike Wyman, however, the owner of this lot, Thomas Billings, built a brick structure in accordance with Locks and Canals restrictions. This building, three-and-a-half stories with a gabled roof, took a form not uncommon for commercial brick structures in Lowell at the time.⁹² It can be seen, however poorly, in Figure 5. Completed before the Town House,⁹³ and valued at \$2,000,⁹⁴ it was one of the first brick buildings on Merrimack Street.⁹⁵ It was here that Billings printed the Lowell Mercury, one of Lowell's first newspapers, and the first Lowell Directory (1832).⁹⁶ In 1833, he left town, but retained possession of his building

until 1850, when he sold it to Silas F. Gladwin, a dentist, who, in turn, sold it in 1870.

The buyer in that sale, the Mechanics Savings Bank, occupied its imposing four-story structure in 1873 (see page 19). Figure 16 shows the building immediately after its disastrous 1962 fire. Note that the advertisement on its western wall was put there by a daguerrotypist who rented space from Gladwin in the fifties (before the Carleton Block was built),⁹⁷ indicating that the bank, in constructing its building, made use of the original Billings wall and parts of its foundation. The building served its original purpose until its sale in 1939 to the Merrimack Savings Bank.⁹⁸ It was sold again to the Solomon family in 1945, who opened a yard goods and clothing store. They continued to operate their store even after the fire of 1962,⁹⁹ having restored the first floor to its present condition.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Old City Hall is the most logical place for the Park to interpret the theme "Industrial Urbanization in America," since, as briefly discussed above, the growth of the city is directly related to the growth of its government. Thus, too, the success of the city in building roads and sewers, for example, and such services as fire and police protection for its citizens, can be interpreted for this building, as can the growth of urban

ghettos and the city's failure to come to terms with the impoverishment of its increasing number of mill workers.

There is, however, a less direct relationship between Old City Hall and the Park's other major themes. Although the dynamic interaction between the growing textile industry and the city itself is evident in local politics throughout the nineteenth century, the Park's primary theme, the "Industrial Revolution in America," would best be developed elsewhere. The interpretation of industrialization at Old City Hall would emphasize the point of view of the city and would obscure the fact that the growth of Lowell's industry preceded and determined the growth of the city.

Likewise, the theme "Life and Labor in an Industrial Society" would, for the most part, be better interpreted from the point of view of industry. This is particularly true in Lowell's early years, the most significant period in Lowell's history, when textile companies played a determining role in the lives of their employees. Old City Hall would be a useful location for the interpretation of early town life, however, and would perhaps lend itself to the interpretation of the overall theme ("Life and Labor") in later years, during which time the city government began to expand its social and political roles. Since immigration occurred during this period,

and since there is a definite relationship between the city government and the immigrant community - if only in the failure of the former to recognize its responsibilities to the latter - then immigration as a sub-theme might be interpreted with some justification at Old City Hall.

Since the architecture of any given building at any given time is secondary to a structure's social and economic background, the following recommendations, relating to the physical presentation of Old City Hall, are made from a purely historical point of view. This perspective considers the interpretive value of the building and its nearby land, but pays only lip service to aesthetic value, the current economic situation, and the technical problems of restoration.

Physically, Old City Hall has had three lives: the Town House and City Hall (1830-52), the City Government Building (1853-96), and a commercial building (1896-present).

The post-1896 structure has not played a significant role in any aspect of Lowell's history, and, as such, it is not directly appropriate for the interpretation of any of the Park's themes. This being the case, if it is purchased and maintained in its present form, it should be used as a visitor center or for administrative or other non-interpretive purposes.

The City Government Building, though, is certainly more useful to the Park's interpretation of historic themes, since it was from this building that the city government oversaw the development of a more mature urban-industrial center. This version of Old City Hall lends itself to the interpretation of "Industrial Urbanization in America," and it is the building most appropriate for the discussion of the relationship between urbanization and immigration. The two upper floors originally used by the city as office space might serve a combination of interpretive and administrative purposes, and the first floor might profitably combine interpretation with some commercial use.

The Town House/City Hall, if restored, would also be an excellent interpretive center, since this was the version of the building which served Lowell during its most historically significant period. As the building most illustrative of the relationship between Lowell's founding fathers and Lowell itself, it lends itself most readily to the interpretation of the integral relationship between industrialization and urbanization. Moreover, this version of the building was the center of community activity more so than later reconstructions, and it is this version of the building that is haunted by a variety of ghosts ranging from Kirk Boott to Abraham Lincoln. Besides serving certain interpretive functions, the restoration of the original town hall would provide

an auditorium on the second floor which could be used by the Park for any number of purposes, and, as with the City Government Building, the first floor could combine interpretation with commercial activity.

Either of the latter two restored buildings would make an attractive visitor center.

The lots occupied by the Jade Pagoda and Solomon buildings have been used since 1829 as commercial properties. The present buildings themselves, however, have no historic value, despite the fact that parts of their foundations date back to the original construction and are useful to Park architects and archeologists. Since it is obvious that the Park cannot reconstruct these four-story structures, the Park's interests would best be served by proceeding with plans for their removal (after archeological study). In a sense, the resultant open space would represent a break with traditional land use. Precedent for the maintainance of an open area near Old City Hall was set in 1839, however, with the purchase of the land directly south of the building. It should be remembered, too, that access to the original Town House was unobstructed on all four sides (see pages 18-

It may be in the Park's interest, too, to explore the possibilities of acquiring the bank parking lot in the rear of Old City Hall. The re-establishment of the former common would be

an asset in itself, and it ^{would} prevent future construction on the site, thereby maintaining the traditional southern access to Old City Hall.

In general, it should be noted that Old City Hall is located near other important resources in Lowell - St. Anne's, the Merrimack Canal and Gatehouse, the Welles Block, and the Mack Building - and that the final presentation of the area is critical to downtown Lowell itself. There is, after all, the possibility that a properly restored Old City Hall might set a precedent for the intelligent restoration and preservation of privately owned buildings in the rest of the downtown area. Beyond its relationship with private interests, however, the final treatment of Old City Hall will certainly need to be co-ordinated with that of other Park properties. The alternatives in the preceding pages are suggested with the belief that, whatever its final use, this building is a potentially valuable asset to the Park, and that, as such, it should be possible for Old City Hall to become an integral part of the overall plans for Lowell National Historical Park.

NOTES

- 1 The area was actually part of the town of Chelmsford, a technicality that in no real way obstructed the overall developmental designs of the manufacturers.
- 2 Samuel Adams Drake, History of Middlesex County, II, Boston: Estes and Lauriat, Publishers, 1880, pp. 64-65, and Wilson Waters, Historical Sketch of St. Anne's Church, Lowell, Massachusetts, Lowell: Courier-Citizen Company, Printers, 1925, pp. 20-22, 36
- 3 Drake, History of Middlesex County, II, pp. 64-65
- 4 "Old Times," undated newspaper article from 1894 scrapbook in possession of Lowell Historical Society at University of Lowell, Special Collections, entitled Selections, Historical and General, Mostly concerning Lowell and Vicinity, I, p. 16. Hereafter referred to as Selections.
- 5 Drake, History of Middlesex County, II, p. 65
- 6 Prentiss Webster, The Story of the City Hall Commission, Lowell: Citizen Newspaper Co., Printers, 1894, p. 62. Coburn's was also referred to as Balch and Coburn's in C.C. Chase, "Brief Biographical Notices of Prominent Citizens of the Town of Lowell - 1826 to 1836," Contributions of the Old Residents Historical Association, Lowell, Mass., IV, Lowell: Morning Mail Print, 1891, p. 294, and D. Hamilton Hurd, History of Middlesex County, Massachusetts, II, Philadelphia: J.W. Lewis and Co., 1890, p. 17.
- 7 Webster, The Story of the City Hall Commission, pp. 63-64
- 8 "What Kirk Boott Contemplated," Selections, II, pp. 105-6
- 9 Webster, The Story of the City Hall Commission, p. 67
- 10 "What Kirk Boott Contemplated," pp. 105-6. An article appearing in the Lowell Courier-Citizen on Sept. 11, 1912, p. 1, maintains that early town meetings were held in a wooden building located on the present site of Old City Hall, and that this early building was moved to make room for the town hall. This assertion, however, is not substantiated by facts.

- 11 Charles Hovey, "Reminiscences - No. 2," Selections, II, p. 69
- 12 John Coolidge, Mill and Mansion, New York: Russell and Russell, 1942, pp. 26-27, 50, 51
- 13 Frederick W. Coburn, History of Lowell and Its People, I, New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1920, p. 177, and Divers Hands, Illustrated History of Lowell and Vicinity, Massachusetts, Lowell: Courier-Citizen Company, 1897, p. 237
- 14 Hon. John A Knowles, "Reminiscences of Forty Years in Lowell: Number Seven," Selections, I, p. 164
- 15 The post office announced it would be moving to the Town House in the Lowell Mercury, May 8, 1830, p. 3. Other tenants followed suit over the next few months. By November, the Town Clerk's Office was established on the second floor. Lowell Mercury, Nov. 27, 1830, p. 3
- 16 Webster, The Story of the City Hall Commission, p. 67
- 17 Coolidge, Mill and Mansion, p. 61
- 18 "What Kirk Boott Contemplated," p. 106, and Knowles, "Reminiscences of Forty Years in Lowell: Number Seven," p. 164
- 19 Coolidge, Mill and Mansion, pp. 190-91
- 20 ibid., pp. 61-64
- 21 The best descriptions of the early Town House are found in Webster, The Story of the City Hall Commission, pp. 67-8 and Charles Hovey, "History of an Old Firm," Contributions of the Old Residents Historical Association, Lowell, Mass. I, Lowell: Stone, Huse, and Co., Book and Job Printers, 1873, p. 238.
- 22 Ready access to the eastern entrance was possible at this time. See pages 18-19.
- 23 George Hedrick, "Reminiscences, and Recollections of Lowell, since 1831," Contributions of the Old Residents Historical Association, Lowell, Mass., I, p. 370

- 24 Webster, The Story of the City Hall Commission, p. 68, and Z.E. Stone, "George Thompson, the English Philanthropist, in Lowell," Contributions of the Old Residents Historical Association, Lowell, Mass., II, Lowell: Morning Mail Print, 1883, p. 121
- 25 Webster, The Story of the City Hall Commission, p. 69
- 26 "The Bakers Sung at City Hall," Vox Populi, Sept. 22, 1848, p. 2
- 27 Stone, "George Thompson, the English Philanthropist, in Lowell," pp. 112-32
- 28 Charles Cowley, History of Lowell, Lowell: B.C. Sargeant and J. Merrill and Son, 1868, p. 148, and "Some Famous Guests Entertained in Lowell," Lowell Courier-Citizen, May 30, 1911, p. 48, and for Clay's visit, see The Times, October 31, 1833, p. 2
- 29 "Some Famous Guests Entertained in Lowell," p. 48
- 30 "Whig Meeting," Daily Journal and Courier, Sept. 18, 1848, p. 2, and "Whig Meeting Saturday night," The Lowell Advertiser, Sept. 19, 1848, p. 2
- 31 Benjamin F. Butler, Butler's Book, Boston: A.M. Thayer and Co., 1892, pp. 53-55, Drake, History of Middlesex County, II, p. 64, Coolidge, Mill and Mansion, p. 200, and Waters, Historical Sketch of St. Anne's Church, Lowell, Massachusetts, p. 78
- 32 Webster, The Story of the City Hall Commission, p. 70
- 33 Webster, The Story of the City Hall Commission, pp. 71-72, and see the Lowell Directories, 1832-38
- 34 Webster, The Story of the City Hall Commission, pp. 71-72, and Coburn, History of Lowell and Its People, I, p. 233
- 35 Webster, The Story of the City Hall Commission, pp. 72-73, and Hurd, History of Middlesex County, Massachusetts, II, p. 233

- 36 Rand's original plans are on file with the Lowell City Engineer's Office. The City Auditor lists a payment of \$130 for these plans and for other of Rand's proposals in "The Auditor's Annual Report of the Receipts and Expenditures of the City of Lowell: 1847," Auditor's Reports, filed in Special Collections, Lowell Public Library, p. 63.
- 37 Hovey, "History of an Old Firm," p. 241, and Webster, The Story of the City Hall Commission, pp. 72-73. A fruit seller remained in the basement. See Auditor's Reports and the Lowell Directories.
- 38 "Agreement between the Boston and Lowell Railroad and the City of Lowell Relating to the Building of Huntington and Jackson Halls," follows "Auditor's Report: 1853."
- 39 Webster, The Story of the City Hall Commission, pp. 73-74 and Coolidge, Mill and Mansion, pp. 96-97
- 40 Coolidge, Mill and Mansion, pp. 209-10
- 41 Hurd, History of Middlesex County, Massachusetts, p. 19
- 42 Webster, The Story of the City Hall Commission, p. 74
- 43 "Auditor's Report: 1852," pp. 56-57, and "Auditor's Report: 1853," pp. 51-52
- 44 "Municipal," Vox Populi, Feb. 11, 1853, p. 2
- 45 Hurd, History of Middlesex County, Massachusetts, II, p. 234, and Webster, The Story of the City Hall Commission, p. 80
- 46 Webster, The Story of the City Hall Commission, p. 74
- 47 "Auditor's Report: 1840," p. 35, and "Auditor's Report: 1856," p. 42
- 48 Hovey, "History of an Old Firm," pp. 241-42
- 49 "Looking Backward 60 Years," Lowell Courier-Citizen, Feb. 3, 1916, p. 14
- 50 see the city directories

- 51 Hands, Illustrated History of Lowell and Vicinity, Massachusetts, pp. 189, 621
- 52 George F. Kenngott, The Record of a City: A Social Survey of Lowell, Massachusetts, New York: MacMillan, 1912, pp. 28, 46-48
- 53 In practice, however, municipal officers controlling the political structure were generally as unsympathetic to the deteriorating conditions of the mill workers as were the mill owners. This lack of concern was a result, in part, of social barriers created by ethnic differences. Beyond that, it is illustrative of Lowell's social and political inertia at the time. Although city officials used immigrants for political purposes, they often sidestepped their responsibilities to these same citizens, since, after all, the responsibilities for mill workers were traditionally shouldered by a generation of more socially conscious mill owners.
- 54 "The Inaugural Address of His Honor Edward F. Sherman," Lowell City Documents, 1870-71, Lowell: Stone and Huse, 1871, p. 15
- 55 "The Inaugural Address of His Honor Francis Jewett," Lowell City Documents, 1872-73, Lowell: Marden and Rowell, 1873, p. 10, and Hurd, History of Middlesex County, Massachusetts, II, p. 10
- 56 "The Inaugural Address of His Honor Francis Jewett," Lowell City Documents, 1873-74, Lowell: Marden and Rowell, 1874, pp. 13-14
- 57 "The Inaugural Address of His Honor James C. Abbott," Lowell City Documents, 1885-86, Lowell: Harrington Bros., 1886, p. 14
- 58 "The Inaugural Address of His Honor James C. Abbott," Lowell City Documents, 1886-87, Lowell: Campbell and Hanscam, 1887, p. 13, and in the same volume, "Annual Report of the Superintendent of Buildings," p. 6
- 59 Lowell Directory, 1889, p. 798

- 60 Various Lowell City Documents in the Lowell Public Library refer to the boilers. "The Auditor's Report, 1861," pp. 80-81, lists their original price as \$1,400 each. Different "Inaugural Address's" of the mayors refer to their operational difficulties: 1863 - p. 20, 1868-69 - p. 10, 1870-71 - p. 10, 1872-73 - p. 10, and 1894-95 - pp. 10-11.
- 61 "Annual Report of the Superintendent of Buildings," Lowell City Documents, 1878-79, Lowell: C.L. Knapp and Son, 1879, p. 3, and in the same volume, "Auditor's Report," p. 141
- 62 "The Inaugural Address of His Honor Francis Jewett," Lowell City Documents, 1873-74, pp. 13-14
- 63 "The Inaugural Address of His Honor Frederick T. Greenhalge," Lowell City Documents, 1879-80, Lowell: Marden and Rowell, 1880, p. 12, and "New City Hall Building," Lowell Daily Citizen, Dec. 27, 1879, p. 3
- 64 The mayor, in 1878, stated, "With the improvements and alterations made to the building, it will answer the purposes of the city for many years." "Inaugural Address," Lowell City Documents, 1878-79, pp. 8-9
- 65 "The Inaugural Address of His Honor Charles D. Palmer," Lowell City Documents, 1889-90, Lowell: Vox Populi Press, 1890, p. 8
- 66 The School Department used the former Common Council Room as its manual training room. Lowell City Documents, 1893-94, photograph opposite "Annual Report of the School Committee."
- 67 "Inaugural Address of Hon. William F. Courtney," Lowell City Documents, 1894-95, Lowell: Campbell and Hanscom, 1895, pp. 29-31
- 68 "Old City Hall Sold," Lowell Sun, Oct. 2, 1895, p. 4
- 69 "The City As It Now Is," Lowell Courier-Citizen, May 30, 1911, p. 16
- 70 Southern Registry of Deeds, Middlesex County, Book 389, Aug. 7, 1839, p. 556

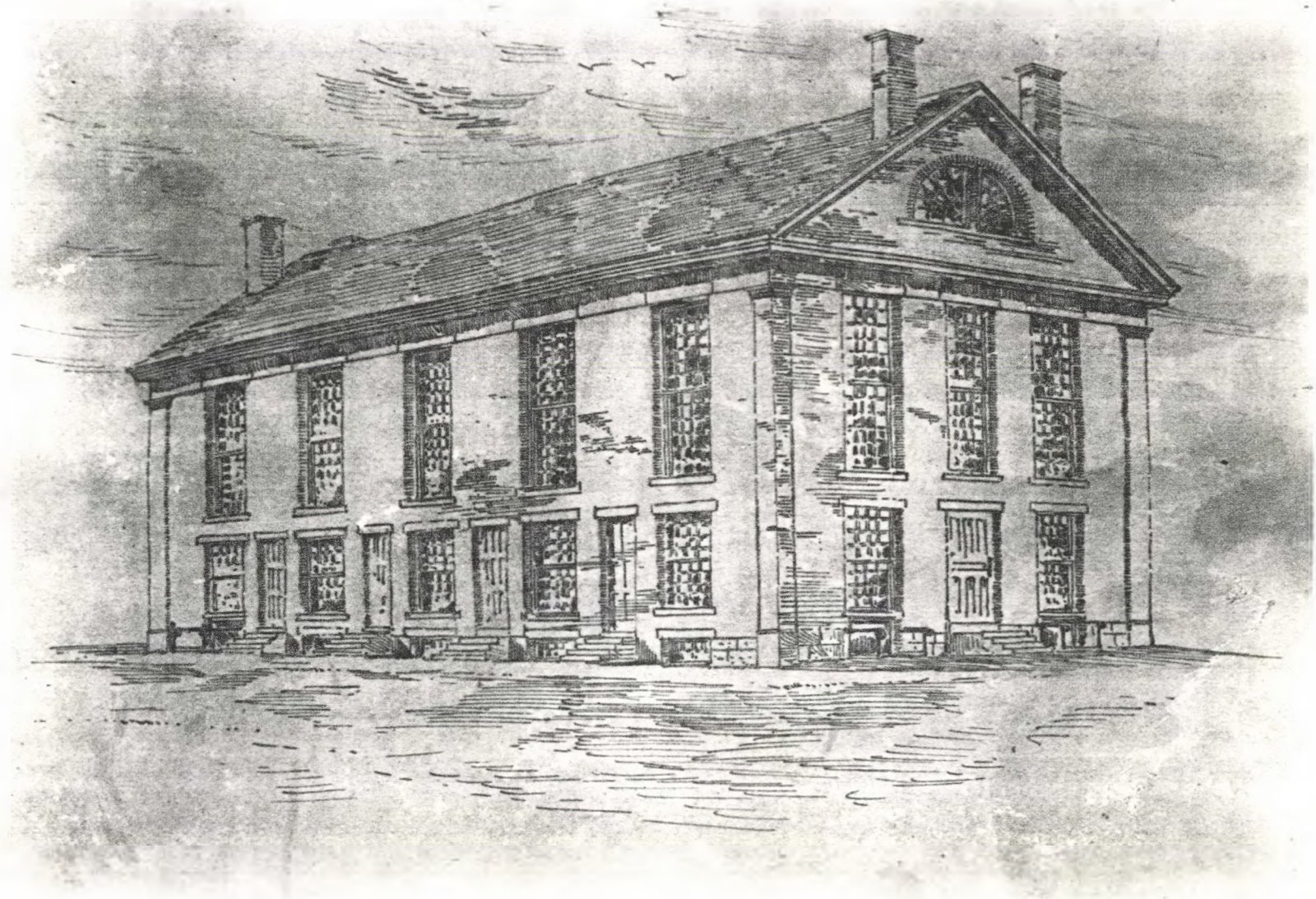
- 71 quoted by Thomas Bender, Toward an Urban Vision: Ideas and Institutions in Nineteenth Century America, Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1975, p. 88
- 72 "Inaugural Address of His Honor Francis Jewett," Lowell City Documents, 1874-75, Lowell: Hunt Brothers, 1875, p. 12, and Proprietors of Locks and Canals on Merrimack River, Directors' Records, Vol. 4, 1853-77, meeting of Nov. 5, 1874
- 73 "Inaugural Address of Hon. William F. Courtney," Lowell City Documents, 1894-95, p. -30
- 74 MND Records, Number 281, pp. 71-72
- 75 Charles Hovey, "The Wyman Farm and Its Owner," Contributions of the Old Residents Historical Association, Lowell, Mass., II, pp. 84-86, and C.C. Chase, "Lives of Postmasters," Contributions of the Old Residents, IV, Lowell: Morning Mail Print, 1891, pp. 131-33, and Stone, "George Thompson, the English Philanthropist, in Lowell," p. 107
- 76 William Wyman, "For the Mercury," Lowell Mercury, May 8, 1830, p. 3
- 77 All of Wyman's buildings disappeared by 1878.
- 78 Hovey, "The Wyman Farm and Its Owner," pp. 85-86, and Chase, "Lives of Postmasters," p. 132
- 79 Coolidge, Mill and Mansion, pp. 45, 53, and "In the Early Days: Recollections of Lowell 60 Years Ago," Lowell Daily Courier, Feb. 13, 1897, p. 6
- 80 Valuation Book, City of Lowell, 1826,7,8,9,30, Lowell City Tax Assessor's Office, shows an increase of \$500 in Wyman's property between 1829 and 1830.
- 81 Drake, History of Middlesex County, II, p. 64
- 82 Stone, "George Thompson, the English Philanthropist, in Lowell," p. 122
- 83 Coolidge, Mill and Mansion, p. 53
- 84 Hovey, "History of an Old Firm," p. 241

- 85 Iron shutters were purchased for this purpose. "City Auditor's Report: 1848," pp. 59-60
- 86 Frank P. Hill, Lowell Illustrated, Lowell: Huse, Goodwin, 1884, p. 21
- 87 Charles Hovey, "The Discount Banks of Lowell," Contributor of the Old Residents Historical Association, Lowell, Mass., IV, Lowell: Morning Mail Print, 1885, pp. 262-63, and Hands, Illustrated History of Lowell and Vicinity, Massachusetts, pp. 448, 484
- 88 MNRD, Book 78, p. 238
- 89 MNRD, Book 321, p. 476
- 90 "Second Alarm Was Rung In," Lowell Citizen, Jan. 9, 1904, p. 1
- 91 "General Alarm for Fire on Merrimack Street," Lowell Sun, March 4, 1942, p. 1. The upper floors were listed through 1946 in the Lowell City Directories.
- 92 Coolidge, Mill and Mansion, pp. 53-54. One such building, constructed at about the same time, still stands at 101-107 Central Street in Lowell.
- 93 Advertisements announcing store openings on Nov. 14, 1829, appeared in the Nov. 21, 1829, Lowell Mercury, p. 6.
- 94 Valuation Book, City of Lowell, 1826, 7, 8, 9, 30, Lowell City Tax Assessor's Office, shows an increase of \$2000 in Billings's property between 1829 and 1830. Proprietors of Locks and Canals on Merrimack River, Cash Book A, 1826 to 1831, p. 256, at Baker Library, Harvard University, shows that Billings financed his building through the company for the above price of \$2000.
- 95 Alfred Gilman, "The Newspaper Press of Lowell," Contributions of the Old Residents Historical Association, Lowell, Mass., IV, p. 239
- 96 ibid., and Charles Hovey, "Early Trades of Lowell," Contributions of the Old Residents, II, p. 157

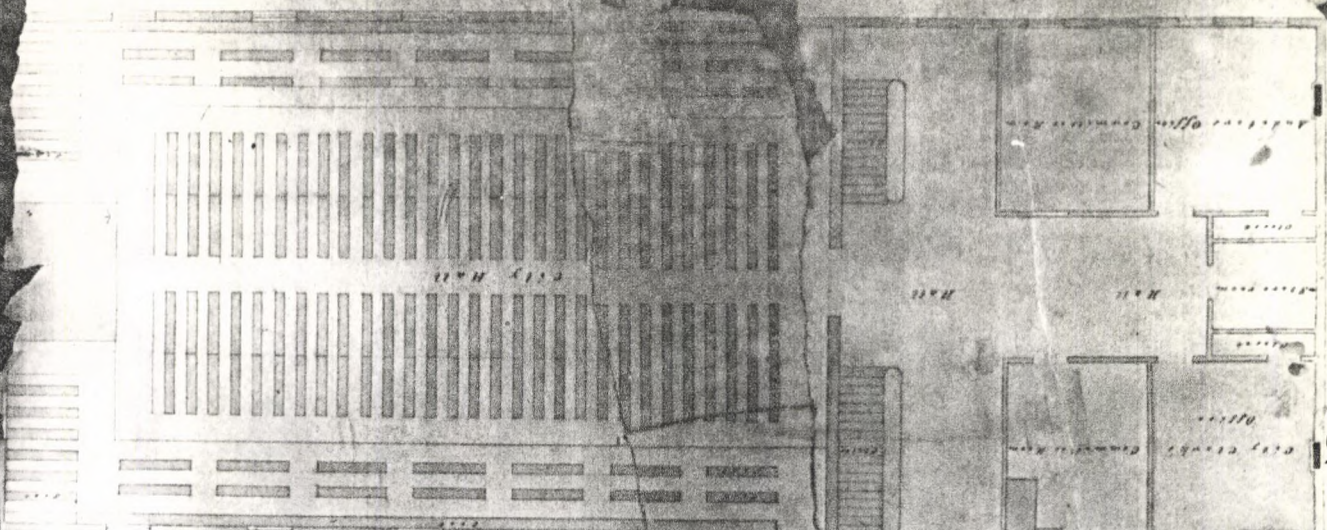
- 97 George K. Warren is listed at that address in the Lowell Directories, 1853-58.
- 98 MNRD, Book 929, p. 48
- 99 "Downtown Fire Loss \$250,000," Lowell Sun, April 10, 1962, p. 1

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

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- Figure 5 Merrimack Street, 1859-72 (Special Collections,
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- Figure 7 City Government Building, ca. 1886 (Special
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- Figure 8 City Government Building, ca. 1893 (Lowell
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- Figure 9 Common Council Room, City Government Building
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- Figure 16 Solomon Building, 1962 (Solomon family
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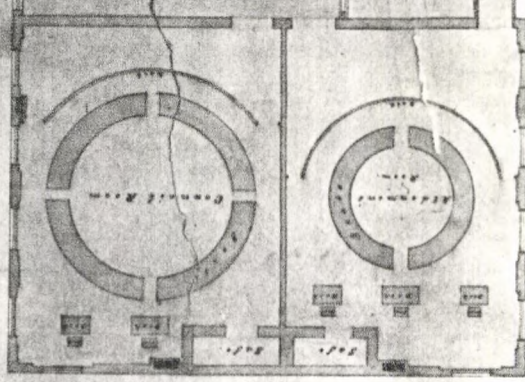
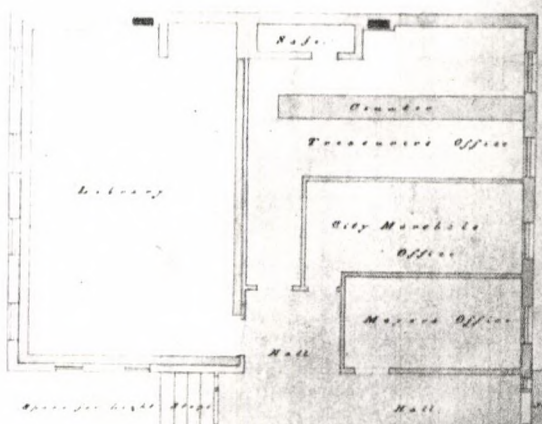


OLD TOWN HALL
BUILT IN 1830.

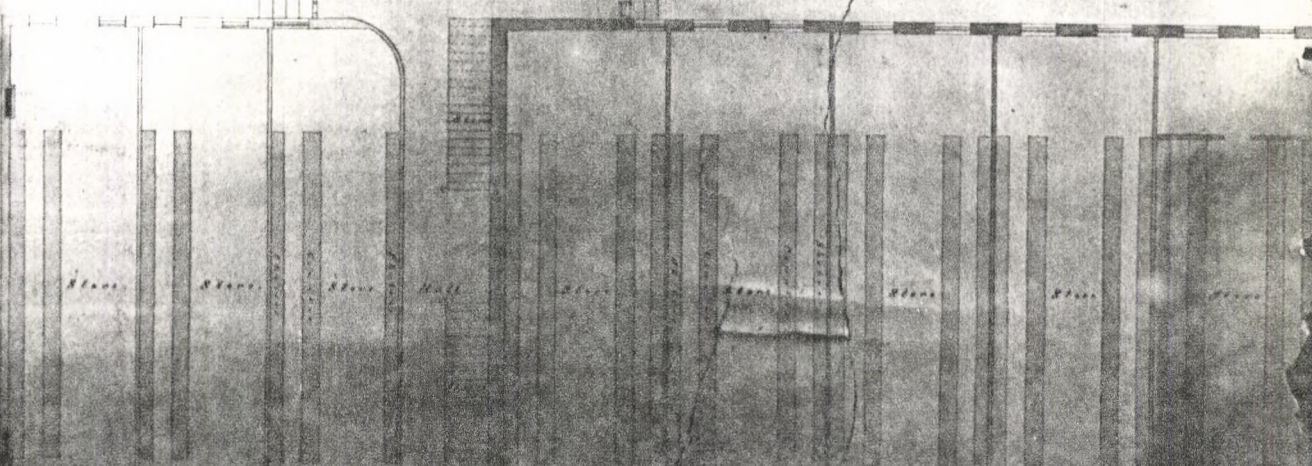


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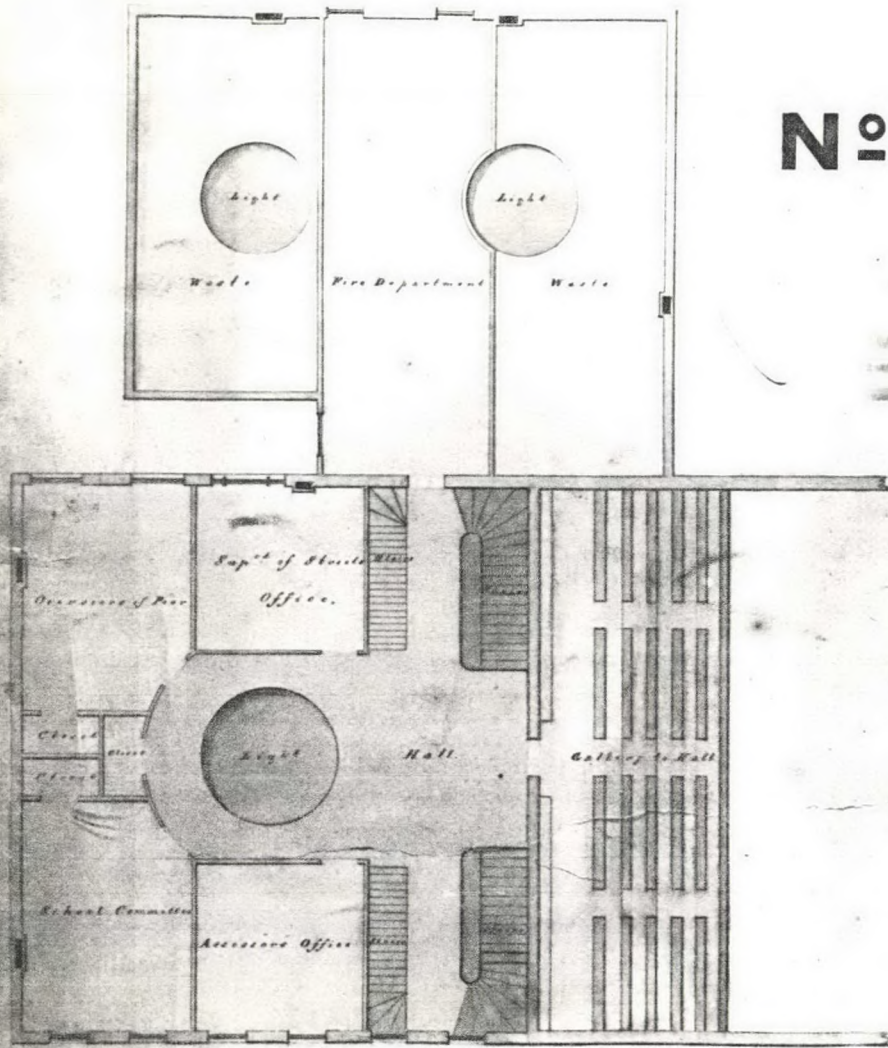
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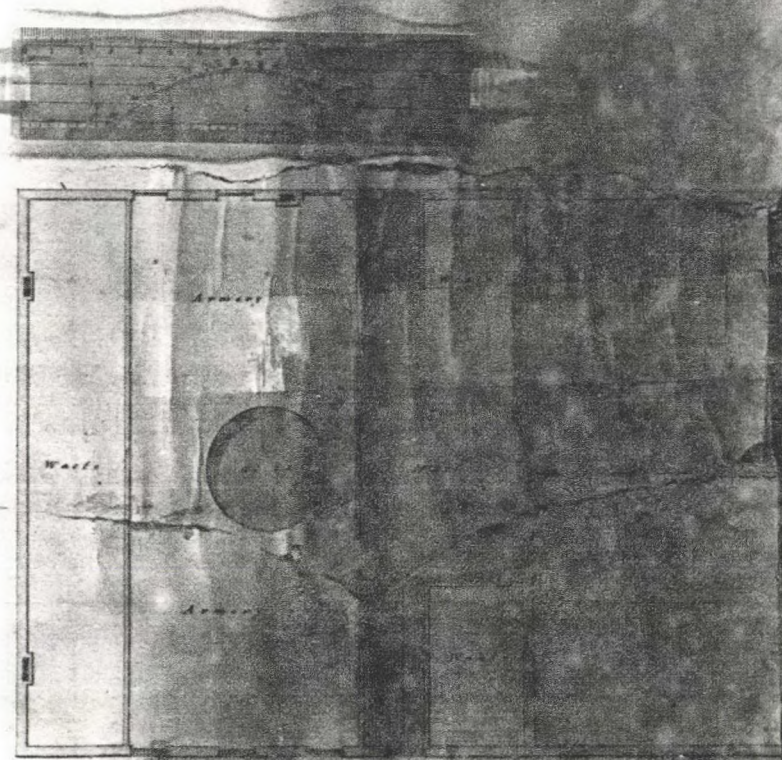
Proposed Alterations to City Hall.



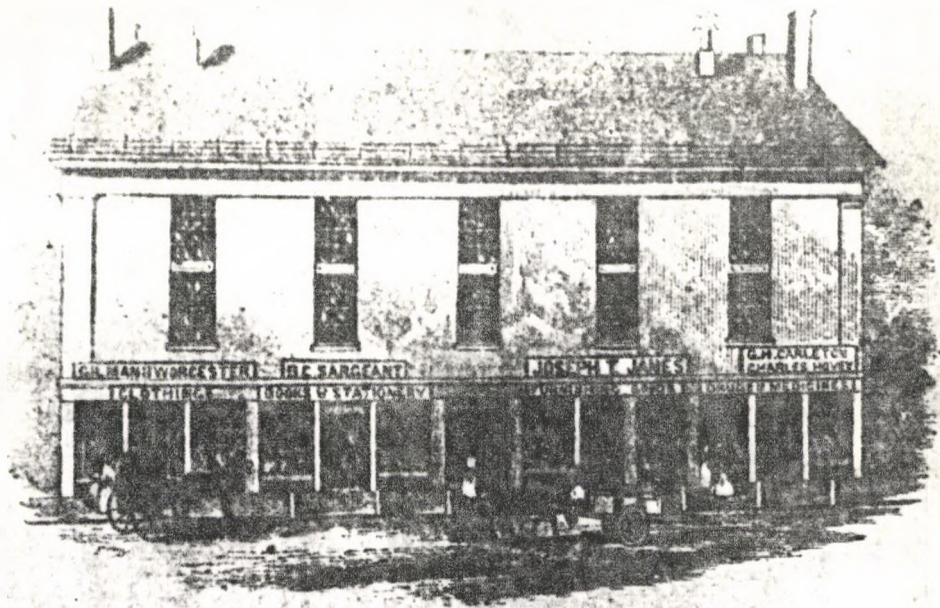
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**B. C. SARGEANT,
BOOKSELLER AND STATIONER,
CITY HALL BUILDING, LOWELL.**

Figure 4

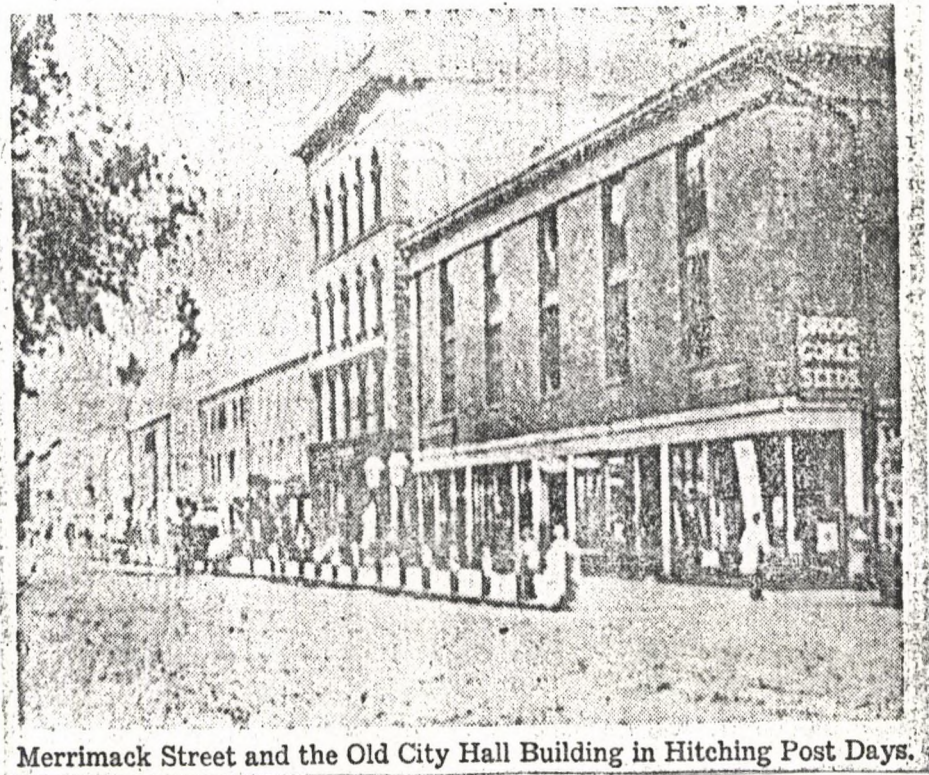


Figure 5

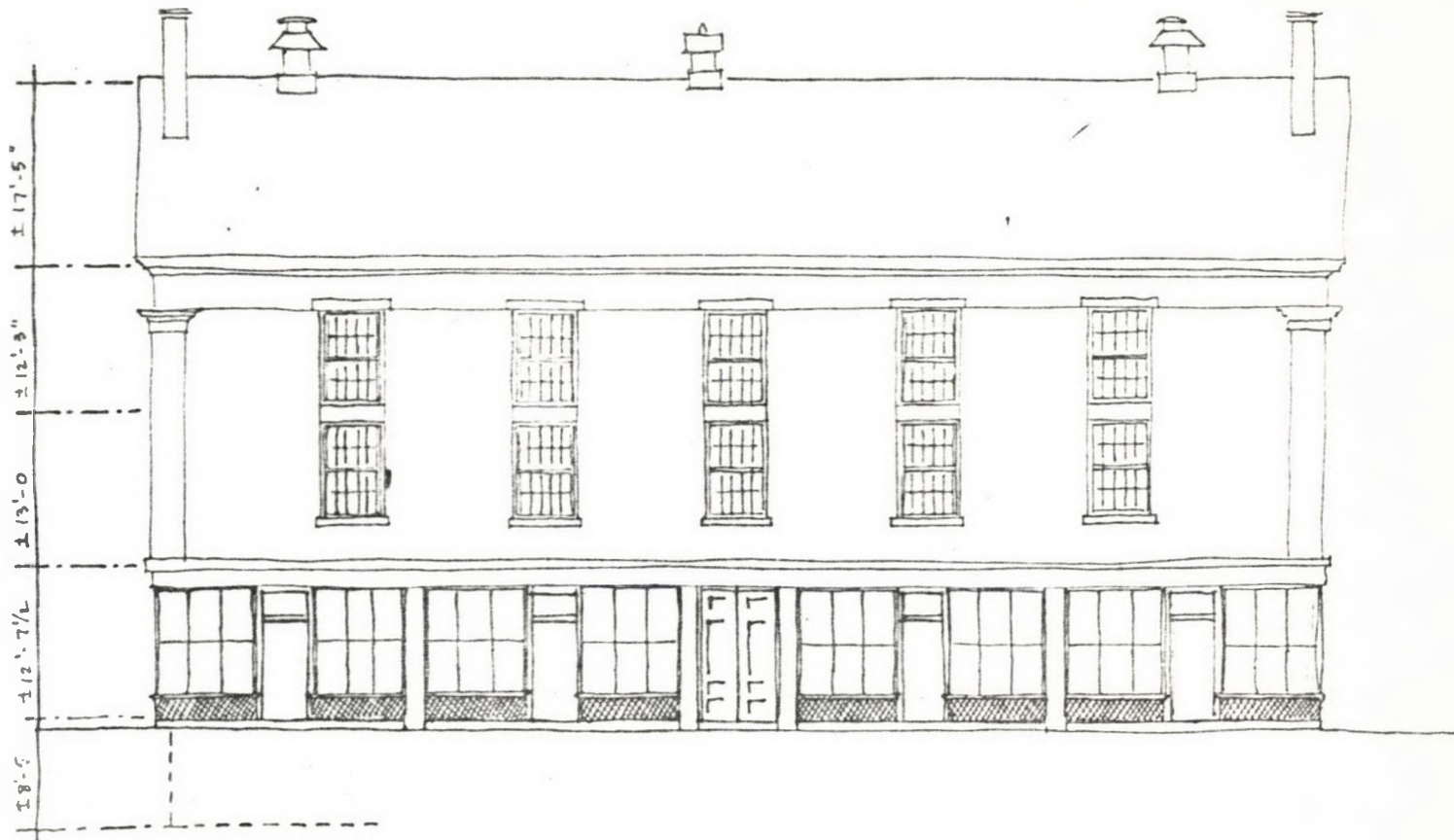
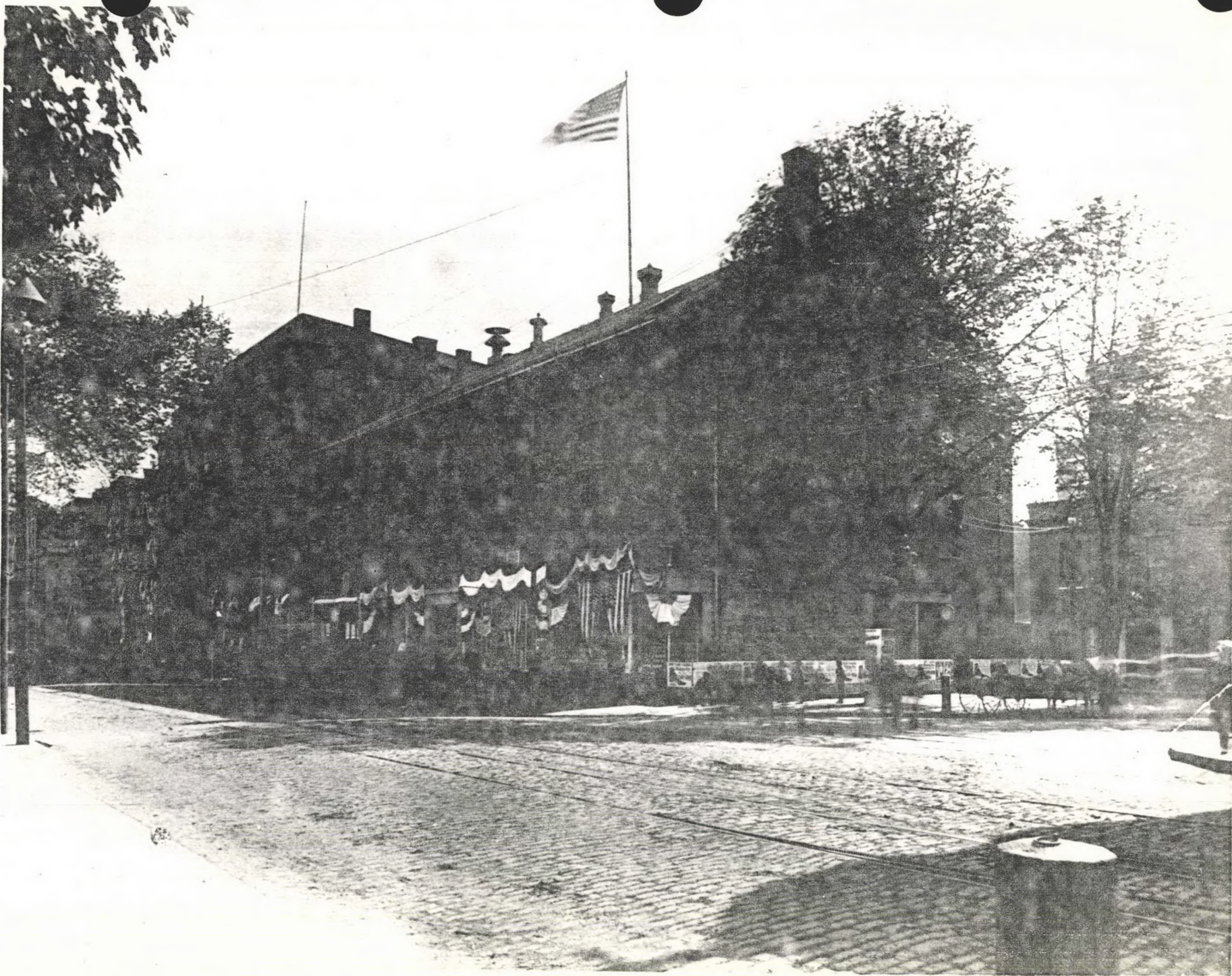


Figure 6

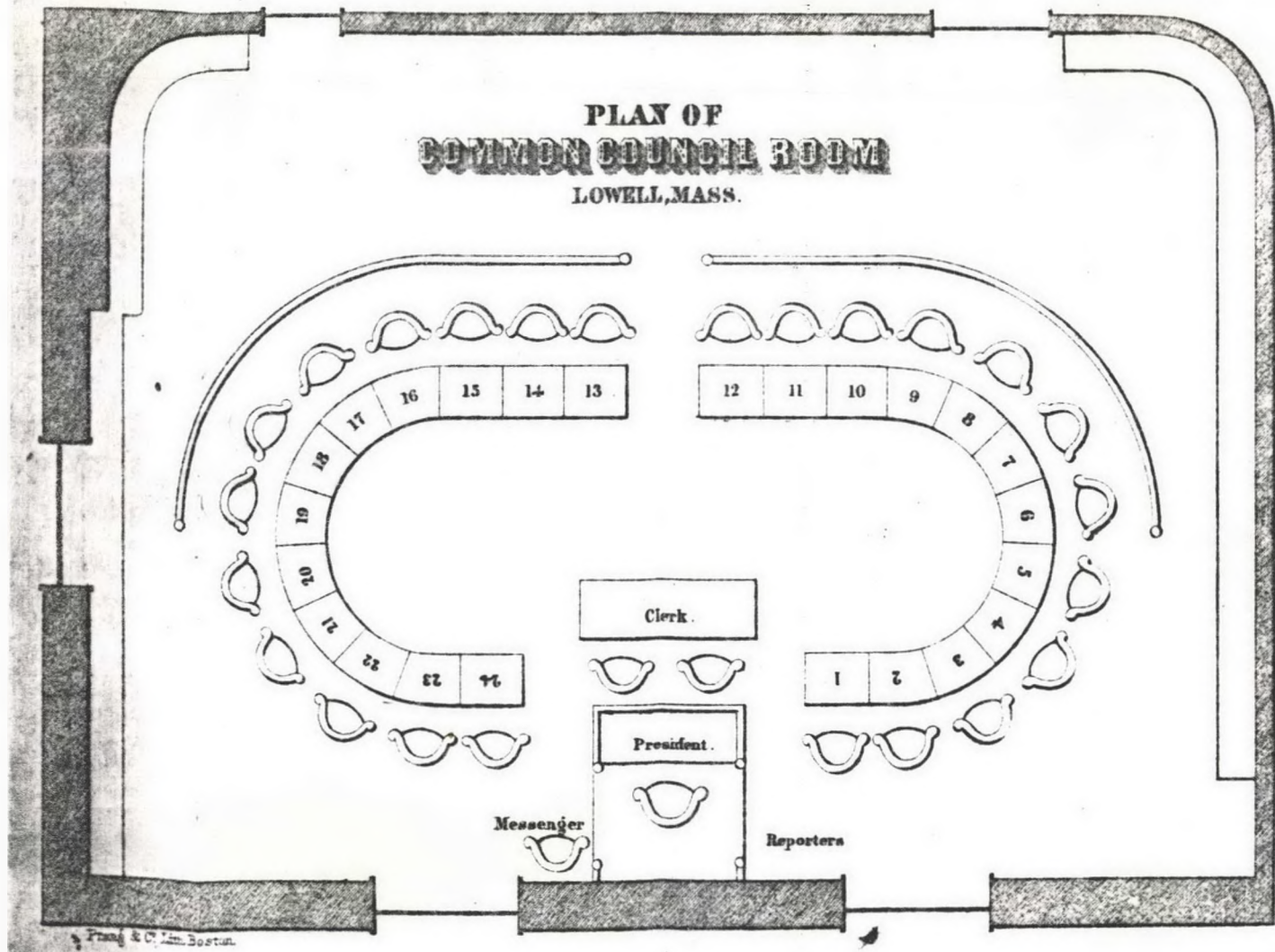
drawn by
Penelope H. Batcheler





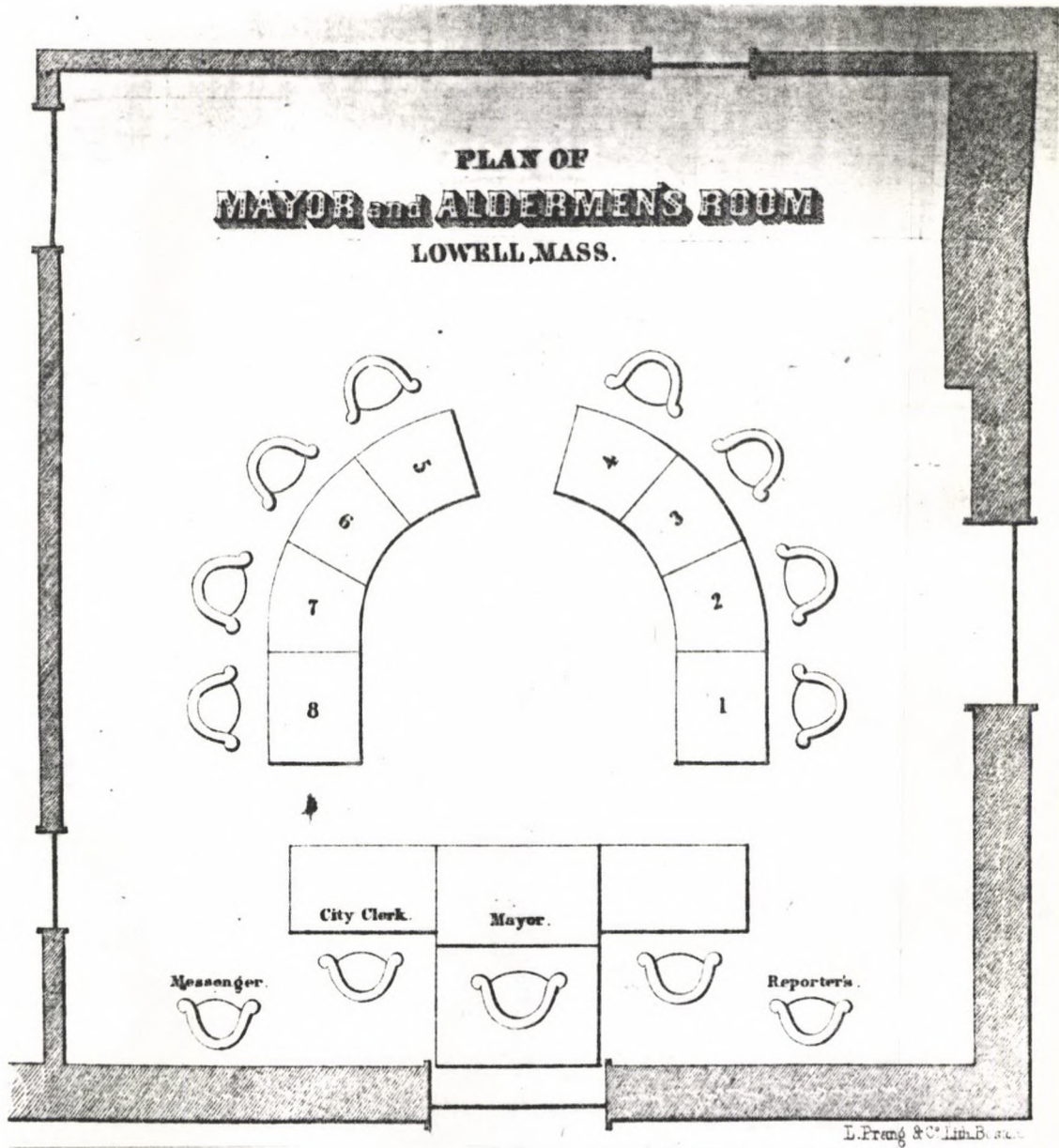
FIRST CITY ILL.

PLAN OF
COMMON COUNCIL ROOM
LOWELL, MASS.



NORTHEAST
CORNER

Figure 9



SOUTHEAST
CORNER

Figure 10

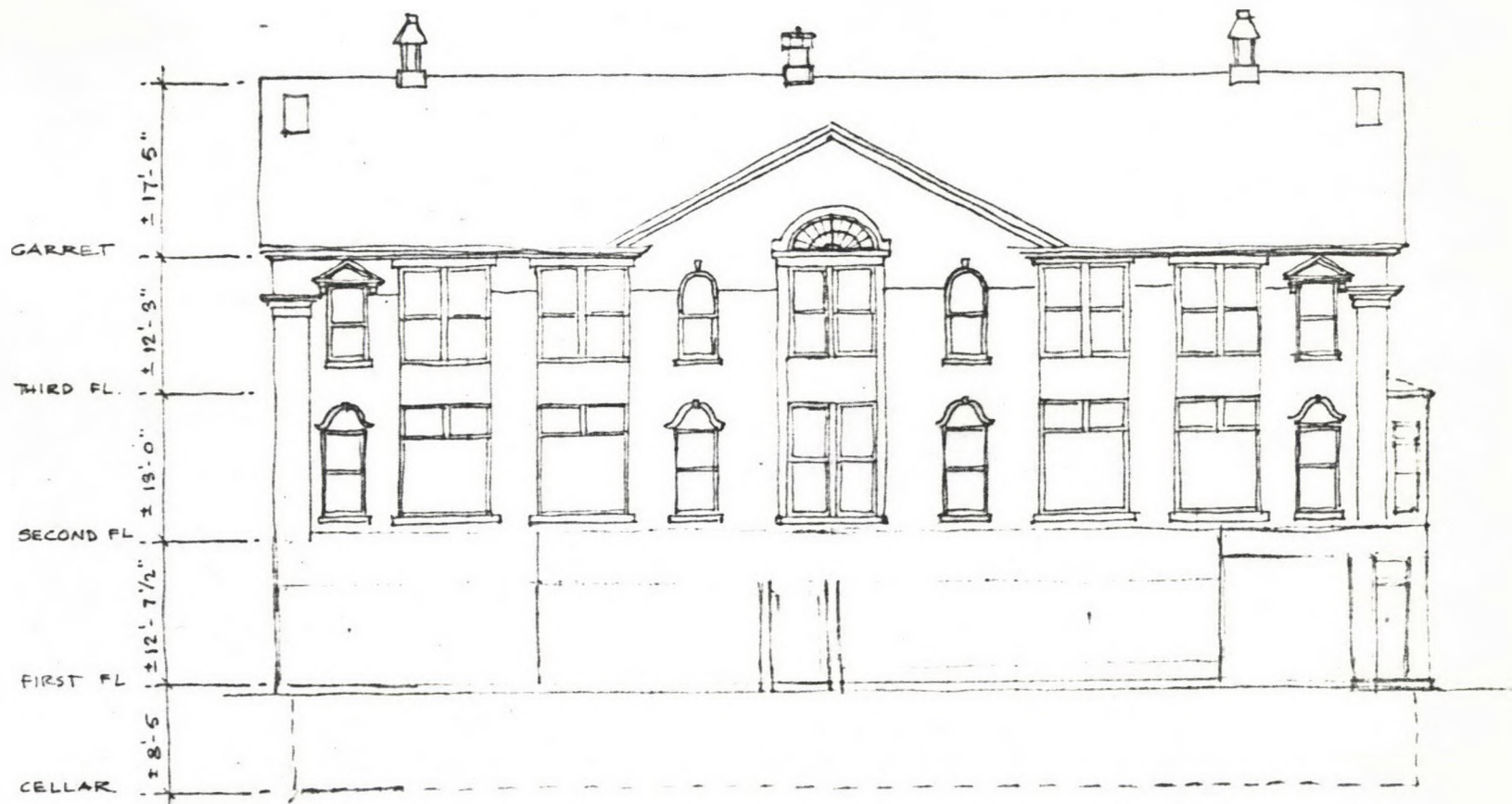


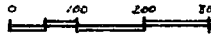
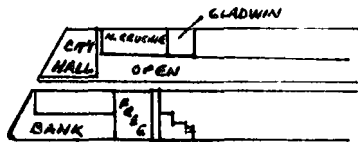
Figure 11

Penelope H. Batcheler



OLD CITY HALL.

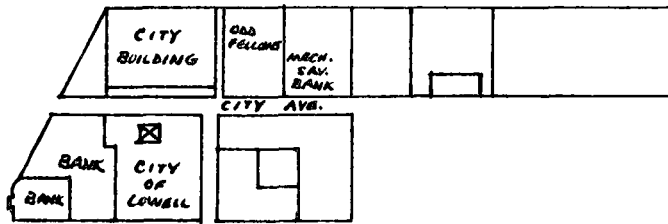
Rough Tracings from City Atlases



Plan of Lowell
Sidney & Neff
Philadelphia

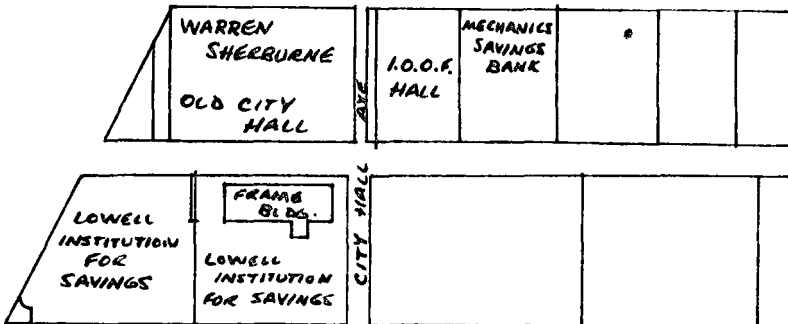
1850

(inaccurate)



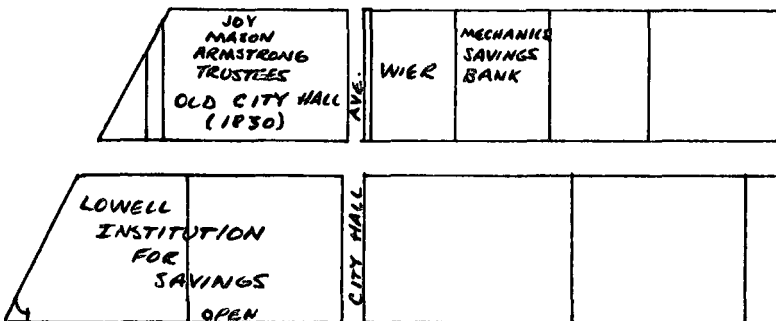
City Atlas of the
City of Lowell
G.M. Hopkins
Philadelphia

1879



Atlas of the City
of Lowell
L.J. Richards & Co.
Springfield, Mass.

1896



Atlas of the City
of Lowell
L.J. Richards & Co.
Springfield, Mass.

1906

Figure 13

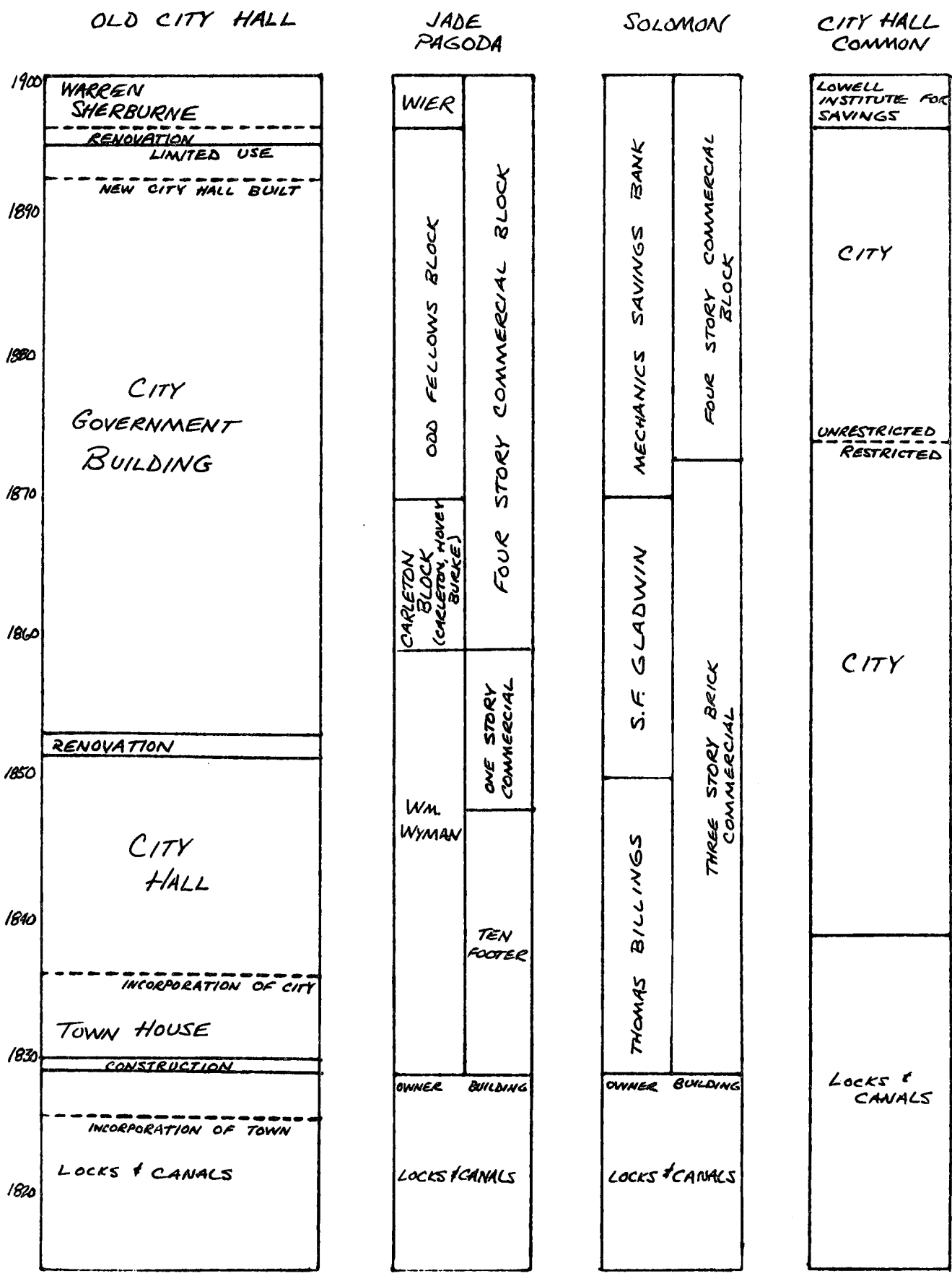
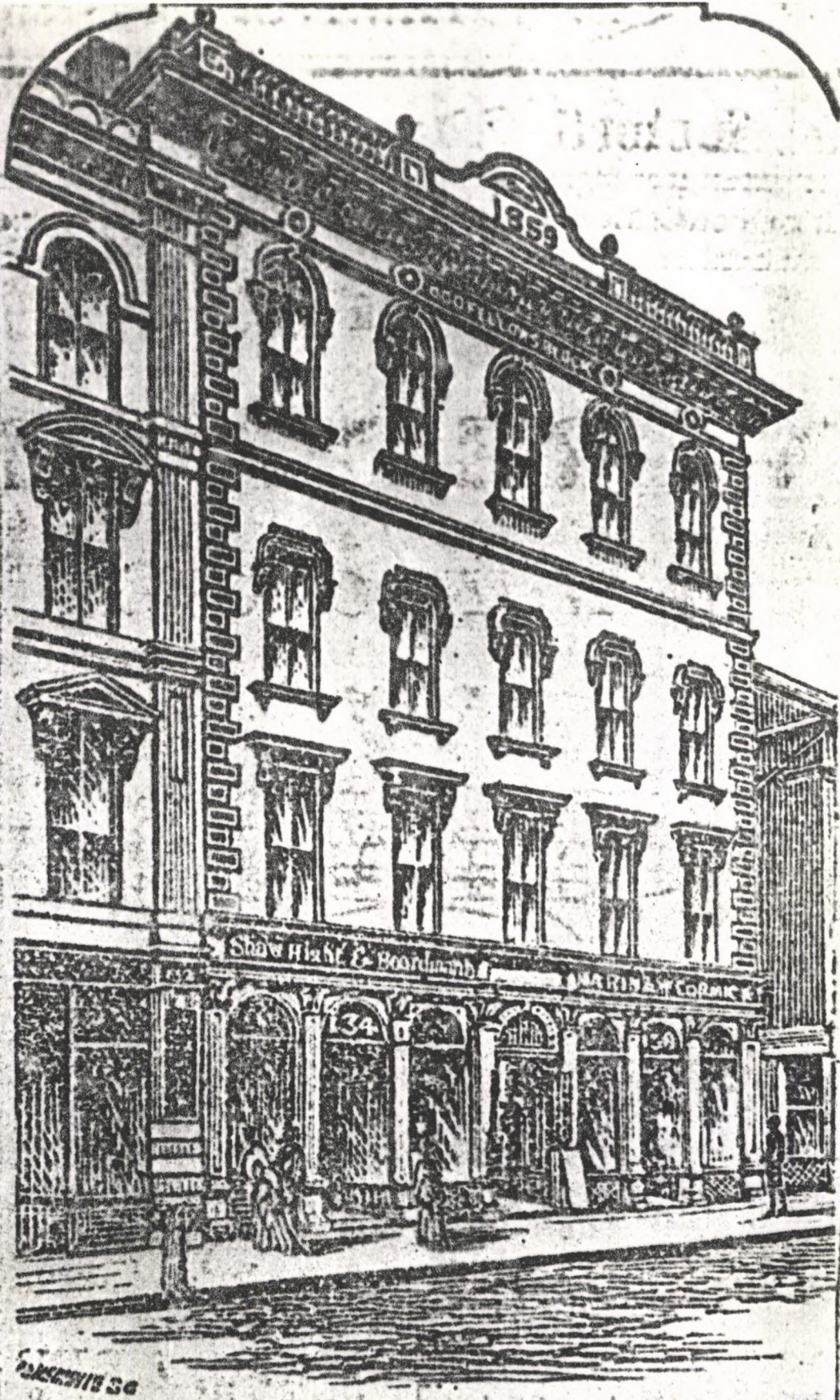


FIGURE 14

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ODD FELLOWS' BLOCK.



RESTAURANT

MEATS FISHES

DAGA

REC

This study was prepared as an in-house report for use by National Park Service planners and interpreters. It was written with the assistance of Penny Batcheler and Ken Lacoste of the National Park Service, Ed Harley of the Lowell Public Library, and Dorothy Donovan of Lowell National Historical Park.