

# Memorial Town Halls in New England

By WILLIAM ROGER GREELEY

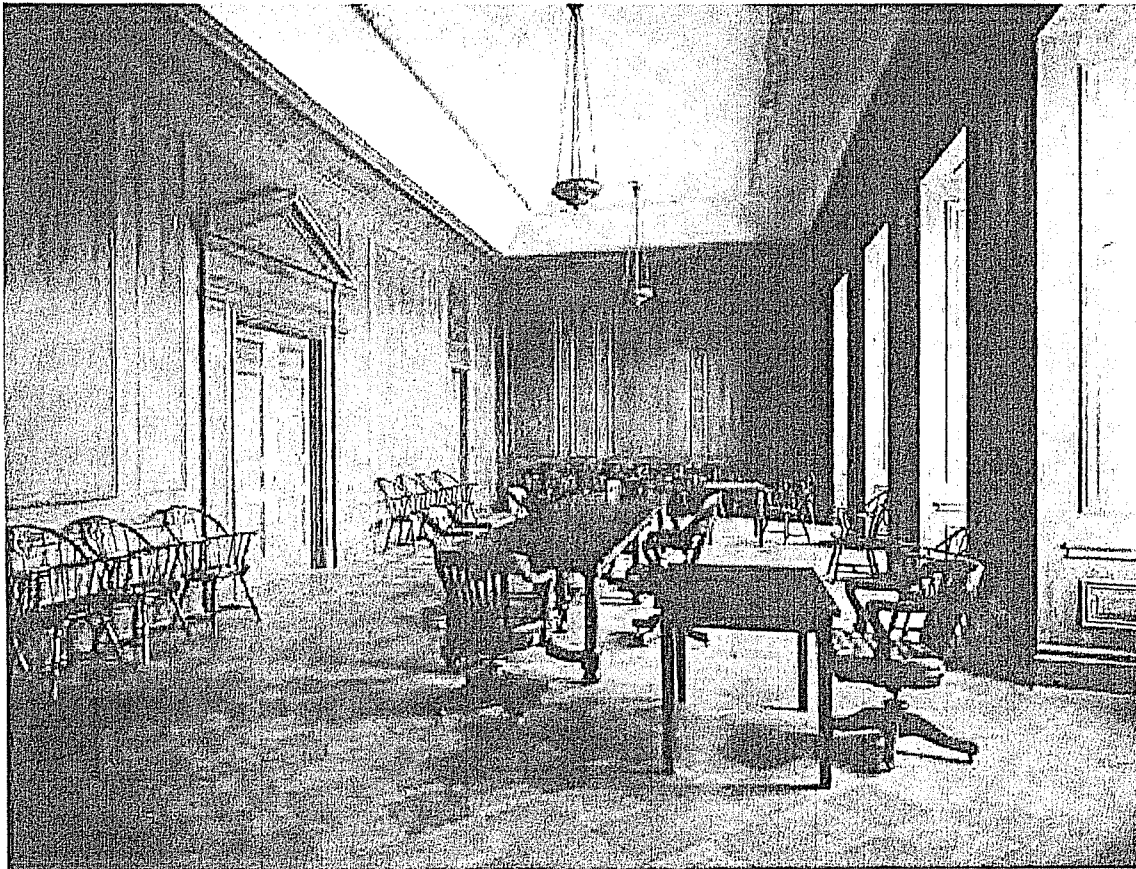
**T**HE Bureau of Memorial Buildings of the War Camp Community Service issued a pamphlet some time ago dealing with community buildings as war memorials.

This idea of a community building is vague and idealistic, excepting perhaps in New England. The New England town has had from the very first just such a building, although it has never been called by that name. The New England communities were hardly settled before the freeholders got together and established a form of government which we think of as a simple democracy. They built themselves a meeting house to serve all the purposes of government, social life and religion. On week days they met in a single room to vote on political measures, including the purchase of land for the town common or commons and of a wood lot for the use of the settled minister. They elected fence viewers to settle lot-line disputes, field drivers to gather together stray cattle, and pound keepers to watch over the cattle in the pound until the owners claimed them. On Sunday in the same room they gathered, morning and afternoon, to listen to

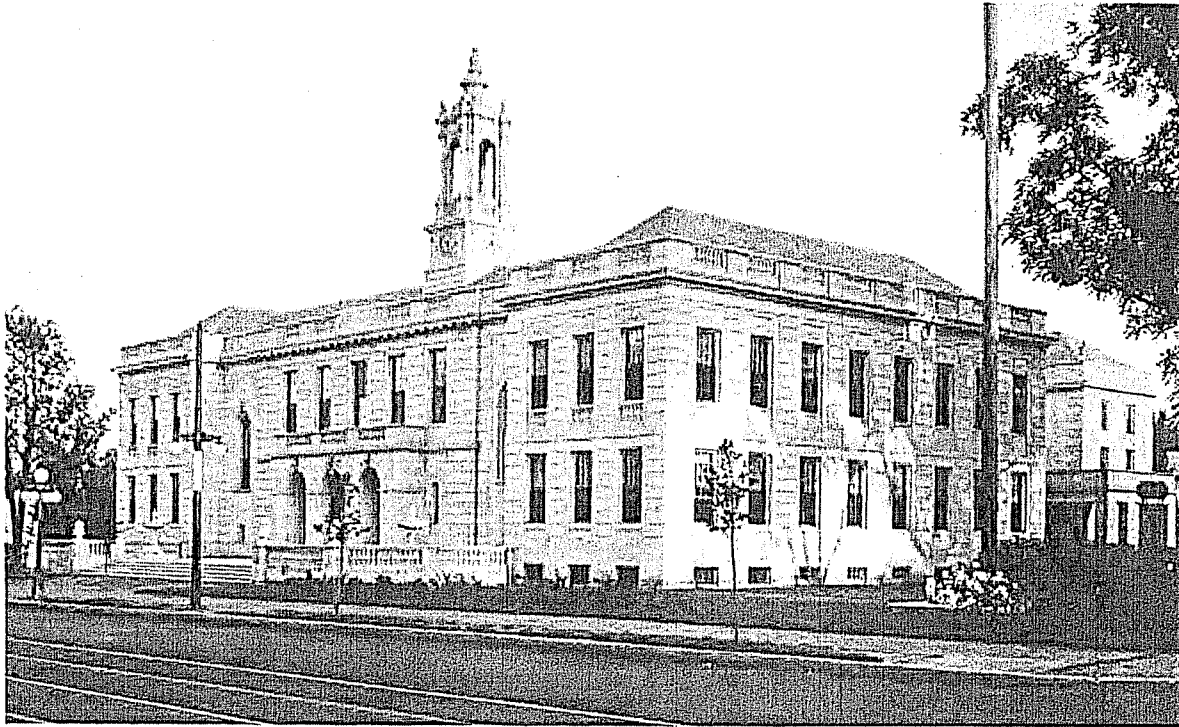
their minister. The government of the church and town were one, and so the meeting house was a community building in a fuller sense than any that we have had since. Outside the first meeting house there was a row of hitching posts, as the voters came on horseback, owing to impassable roads. Later on a row of horse sheds was added. Such was the simple equipment of the early community building.

Many of the New England towns today are forced by the universal suffrage to give up the simple democracy and have recourse to a limited or representative town meeting. This reduces the number of voters without changing the form of the meeting or the conduct of town affairs, and makes it possible to house under one roof all those who are to participate in the meeting. The town hall of today, instead of having the one room of the early settlers, must satisfy a long list of departments and requirements. Among these may be mentioned:

1. The hall. This is for meetings, for elections and for many non-political uses, among which are theatrical and moving picture entertainments, dances, celebrations, lectures, concerts, etc.

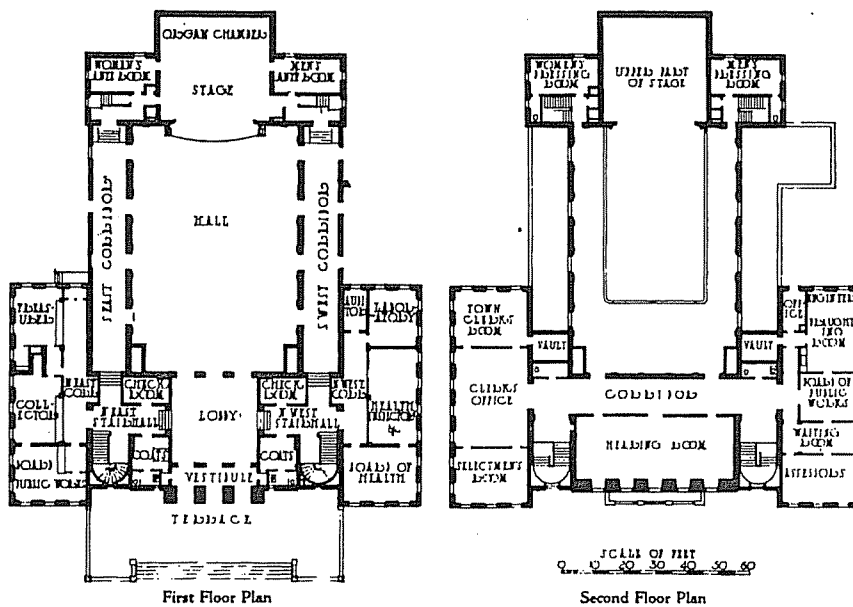


Hearing Room, Town Hall, Arlington, Mass.  
R. Clipston Sturgis, Architect



General View of Town Hall, Arlington, Mass.  
R. Clipston Sturgis, Architect

- 2. The town office. This general office is usually occupied by the town clerk and his assistants, if he has any.
- 3. The selectmen's office. This may be made large enough to serve as a small committee or hearing room. It must have a vault for records.
- 4. Office of the treasurer, auditor and accountant. These officers have charge of the town finances and must have a vault.
- 5. An office for the collector and assessors, with vault.
- 6. An office for the board of public works, which has charge of the water, sewer and road departments and other minor engineering work, such as small bridges and culverts.
- 7. An office for the town engineer and his draftsmen, if any.
- 8. Sealer of weights and measures. This officer must have some small equipment, although his work is largely done outside.



Town Hall, Arlington, Mass.

- 9. Quarters for inspectors. Various inspectors require only desk room, and all of them can occupy one large office. They include inspectors of buildings, plumbing, wiring, slaughtering, meat and provisions and milk.
- 10. The board of health. This board requires an office, and should have in any large community a small laboratory for biological and bacteriological analysis.
- 11. Cemetery commission.
- 12. School department, although this department

is often provided for in one of the school buildings.

13. Fire department. The activities of this department are also frequently taken care of in one of the buildings belonging to it.

14. Police department and lockup. In large communities this department has its own building; otherwise a lockup is sufficient, and may be placed in the basement of the town hall.

15. The park department.

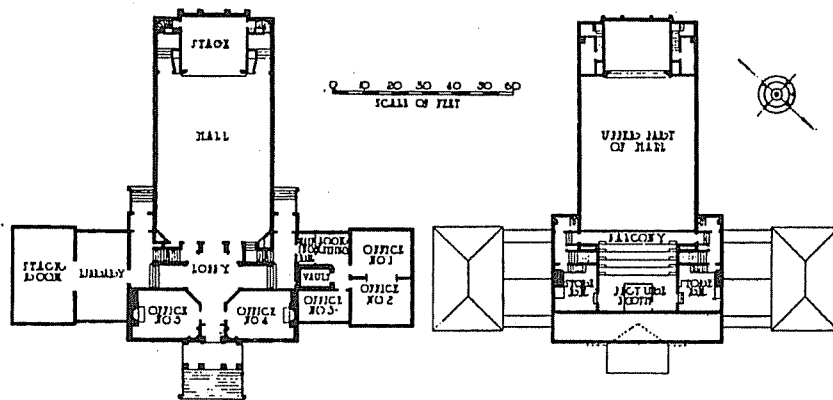
16. The planning board. This board and members of the park department can meet in a committee room, as they need no separate quarters.

Added to all these departments, which are strictly administrative, are usually a number of facilities for social uses. Chief among these is a banquet or supper room with a kitchen and pantry. Often also a room is set apart to serve as a public library. This use may be temporary, pending the time when the library shall have grown so as to need a separate building. By that time the room in the town hall originally used for housing the library will be needed for some new town department.

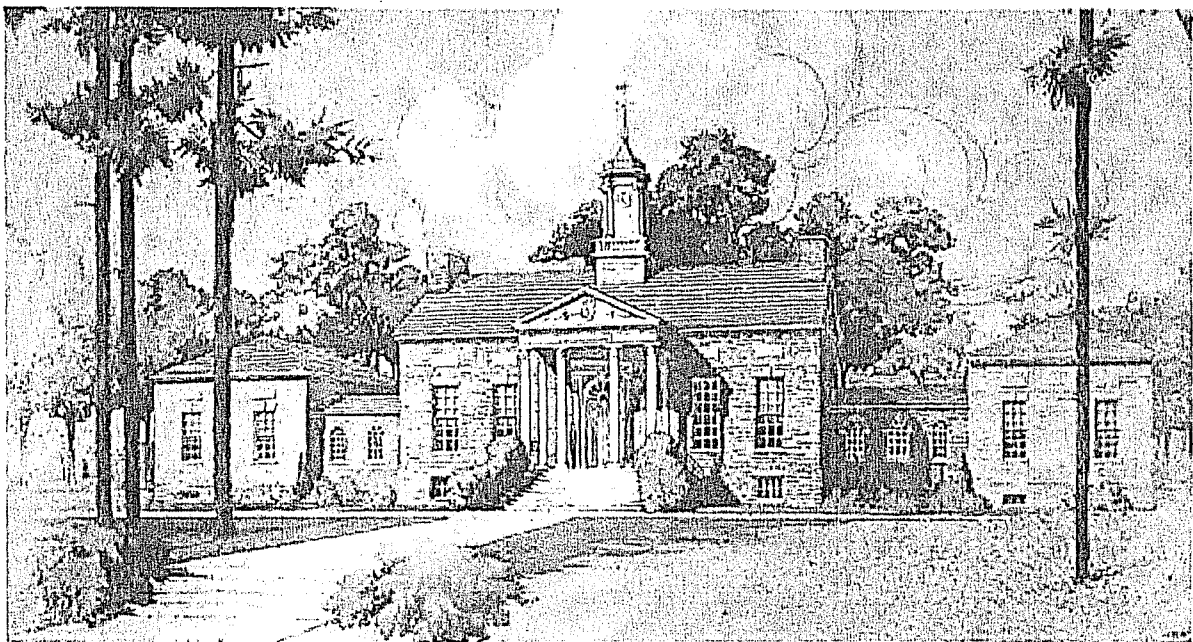
The present standards controlling the design and construction of town halls are much higher than they used to be, and this has a very direct effect upon the character of the building. Up to 15 years ago the hall was usually on the second floor with the offices and smaller rooms underneath. Today such an arrangement

would be regarded as quite unsatisfactory compared to the plan in which the hall is on the first floor. The increased number of voters in most towns makes it very important that the hall shall be provided with adequate exits near the ground. This fact affects the ground plan of the town hall fundamentally. Furthermore, a hall approached by a broad flight of steps and entered at the first floor level is much more dignified and impressive than one reached only by interior staircases. The hall cannot have offices built over it, as this is uneconomical; therefore the offices must be in the basement underneath the hall or in a wing or wings on the same level. In the plans shown of the Tewksbury and Dover Town Halls the wings are a single story in height. In the Arlington Town Hall the plan is similar in arrangement but the wings are two stories high.

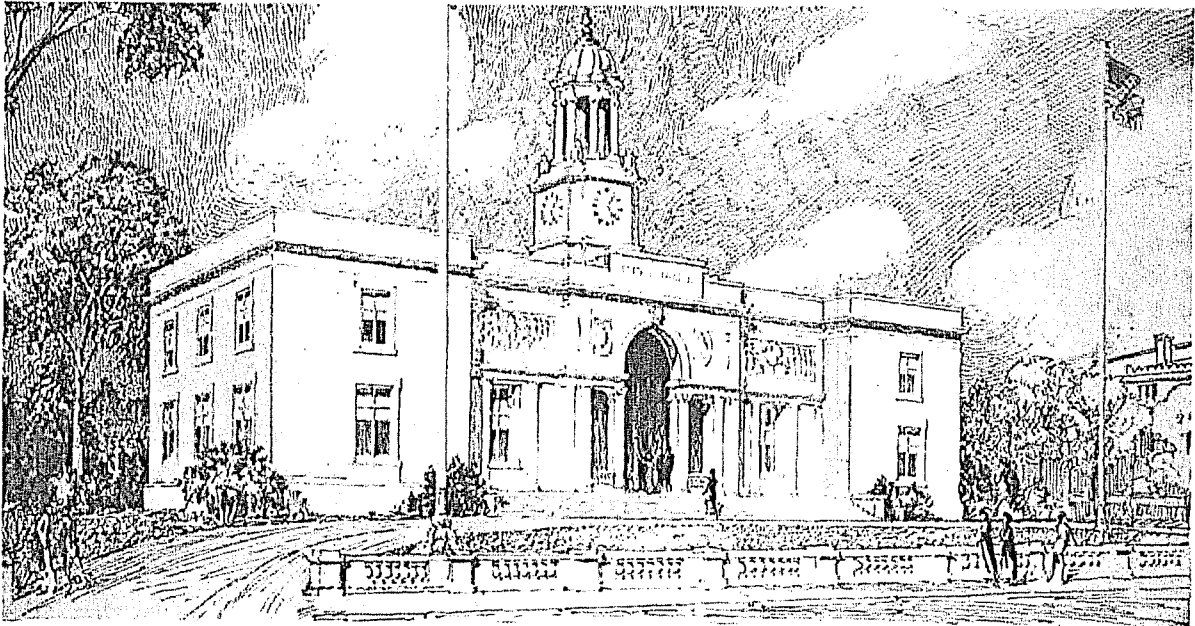
The requirements of the smaller towns at the



First and Second Floor Plans, Dover Town Hall



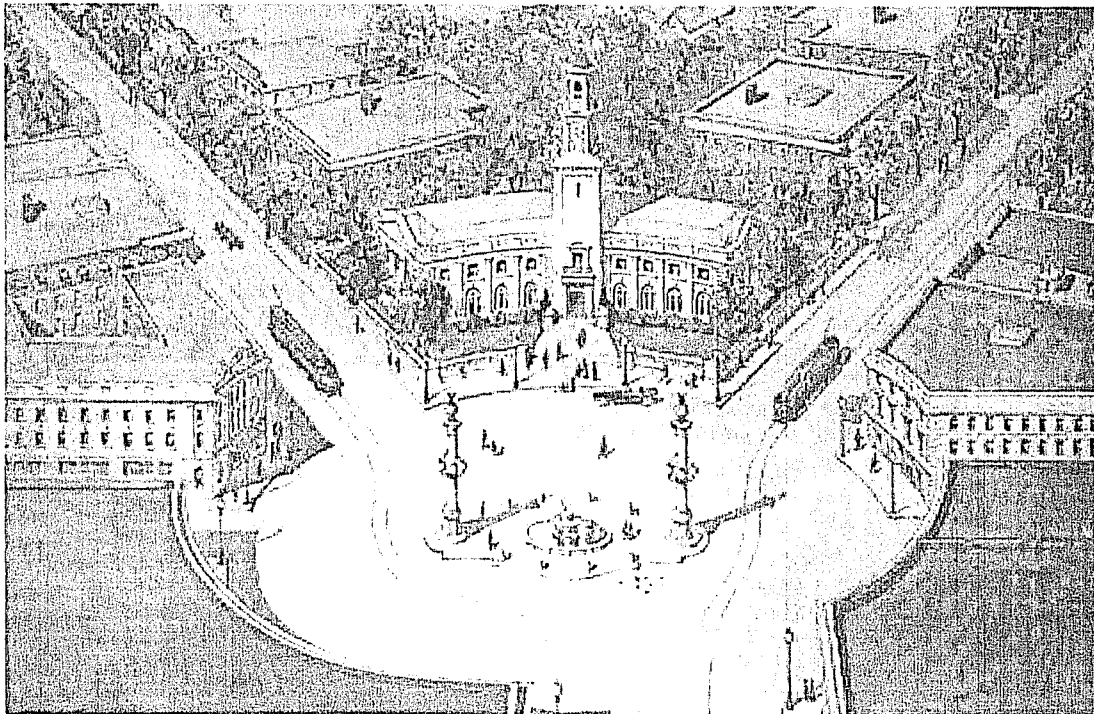
Sketch for Town Hall at Dover, Mass.  
Kilham, Hopkins & Greeley, Architects



Proposed Memorial City Hall for Attleboro, Mass.  
Kilham, Hopkins & Greeley, Architects

present time are shown in both the Tewksbury and Dover plans, which may be regarded as typical as far as the accommodation which they provide is concerned. They contain halls with stages and galleries, general offices with two private offices each, one for the selectmen and similar boards and committees and the other for the assessors and officials dealing with finances. Each has also a room for use

as a public library, one or more committee rooms, a banquet hall and a kitchen, together with such minor items as a small room for the sealer of weights and measures, a lockup and storage space. This provides for a community of 2,000 or 3,000 population. The Arlington Town Hall serves a community of 15,000 to 20,000. When the population exceeds this latter figure the limited or



Scheme for a Town Square at Framingham, Mass.  
Charles M. Baker, Architect

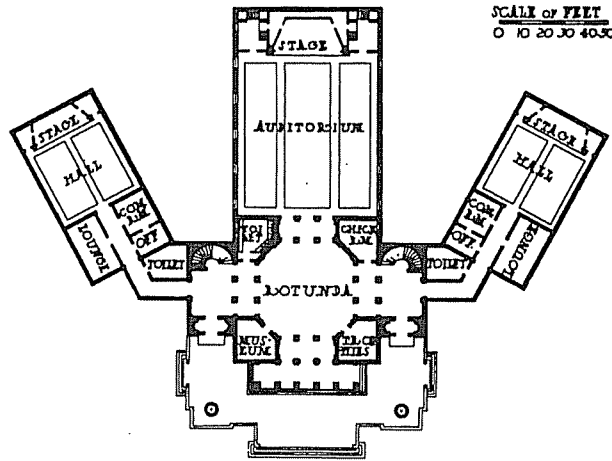
representative form of government becomes necessary, and the capacity of the hall need not, therefore, be increased. So much for the practical side of the town hall.

Much has been said as to the desirability and propriety of making such a building a memorial to the men who participated in the great war. It has been argued that such a memorial may combine beauty with utility, and that it is usually of a size that will add appreciably to the character of the village center where it may be built. All this is true. Architecture is one of the fine arts, and if the memorial hall is good architecturally the memorial is highly successful and is a credit and honor to those whom it commemorates. Of course it may not be of good architecture, but the same risk exists in the field of sculpture or painting. A monument may not be monumental or even tolerable in appearance. The commemorative painting may be very fine or very disappointing. A work of art which is not successful is a very great burden for any community to carry. Nevertheless, it is through some form of art that we must seek to express our ideals and emotions, and when a town decides to erect a memorial the important task is to choose the best artist available for the type of memorial desired, whether it be sculpture, painting or architecture. The easiest mistake, especially for a well-to-do American com-

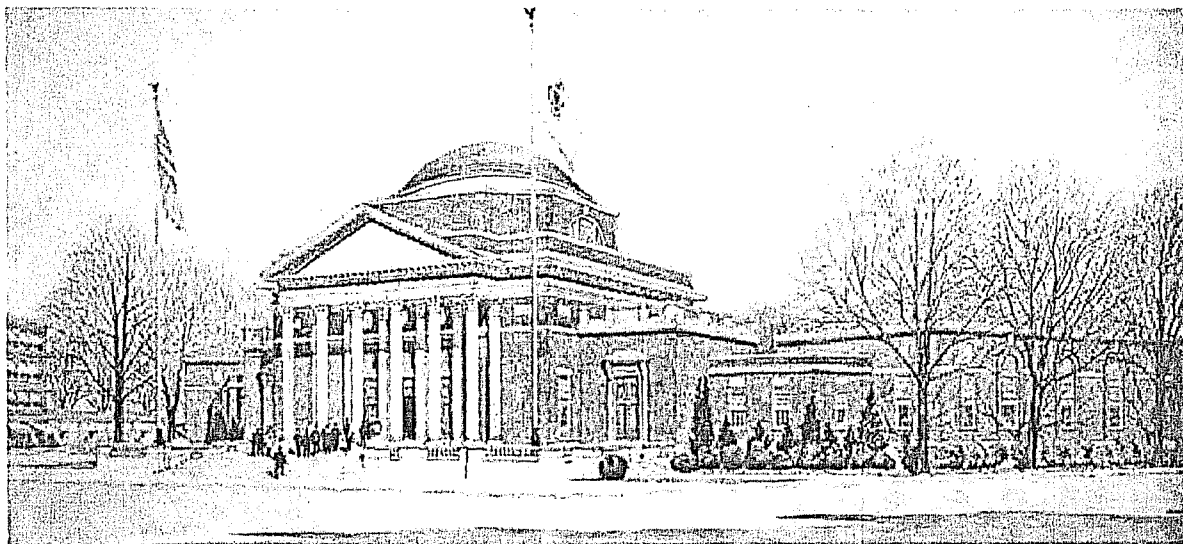
red brick trimmed with white marble or other stone. This is adapted to buildings in the colonial and Georgian styles and is usually in harmony with the surroundings that the building is likely to have in a New England village. In the larger towns and cities buff limestone, freestone or even marble is frequently used. The Arlington Town Hall is entirely of Indiana limestone, while the public library nearby is in Ohio freestone. The two materials appear very well together. Another stone frequently used, particularly suited to the New England climate, is granite. This stone lends itself not only to the colonial treatment but to the Greek, Roman or renaissance architectural styles. University Hall, by Bulfinch, in the Harvard yard is an example of the beautiful use of granite in a small colonial facade. Another building by this early New England architect, the Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, shows granite treated in a

munity, is to build the memorial too large at the sacrifice of scale and material. The building should dominate but not overpower its surroundings, and it should be of permanent construction and of the handsomest materials available. A small building of granite may be a very much nobler memorial than a large building of humbler material.

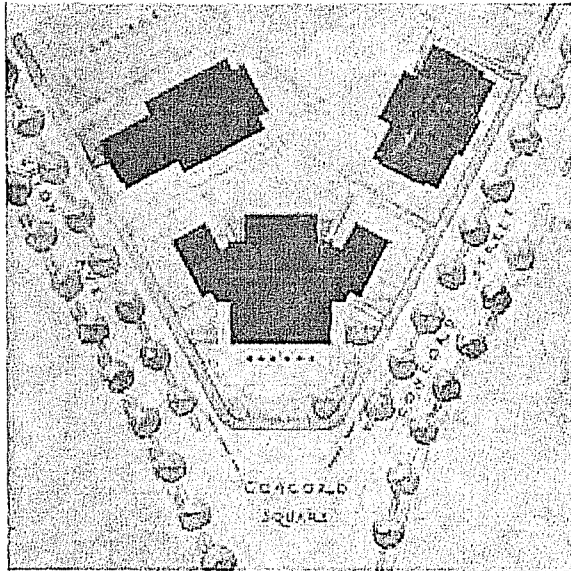
The material most common in New England for use in public buildings is common



Main Floor Plan for Proposed Memorial Building Framingham, Mass.



Perspective of Proposed Memorial Building at Framingham, Mass.  
Charles M. Baker, Architect



Alternative Scheme for Square, Framingham, Mass.  
Charles M. Baker, Architect

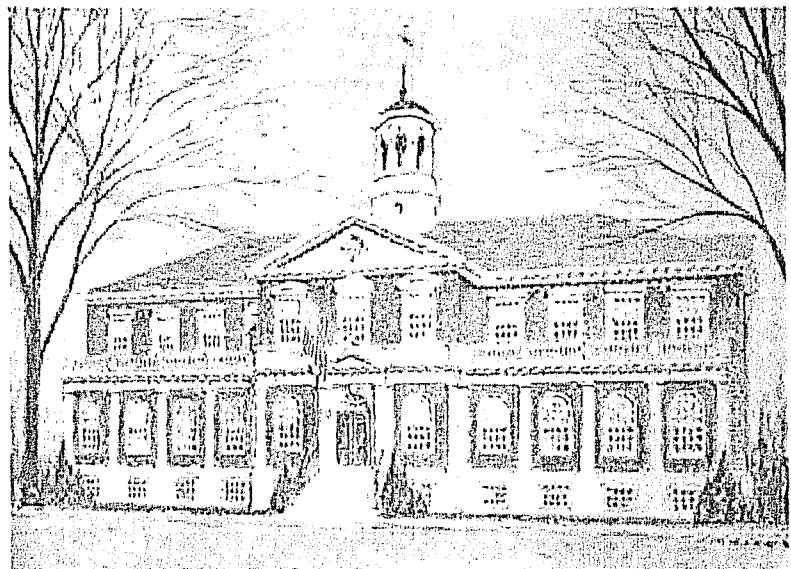
different style bordering on the impressiveness of the Roman, but with excellent results. The early use of granite was generally restricted to styles in which ornament was not essential. In some cases carved ornament was supplied by marble panels, for example. Enlarged facilities today, however, make carving in granite comparatively as simple as in the softer stones.

The memorial character is secured by the qualities already enumerated. Beauty alone will not make the building a memorial. Bad scale will mar it. Cheap or temporary materials will ruin it. Impropriety of design will spoil it. A memorial town hall designed like an ordinary office building is lacking in memorial quality. On the other hand it is just as bad to have it look like a state capitol.

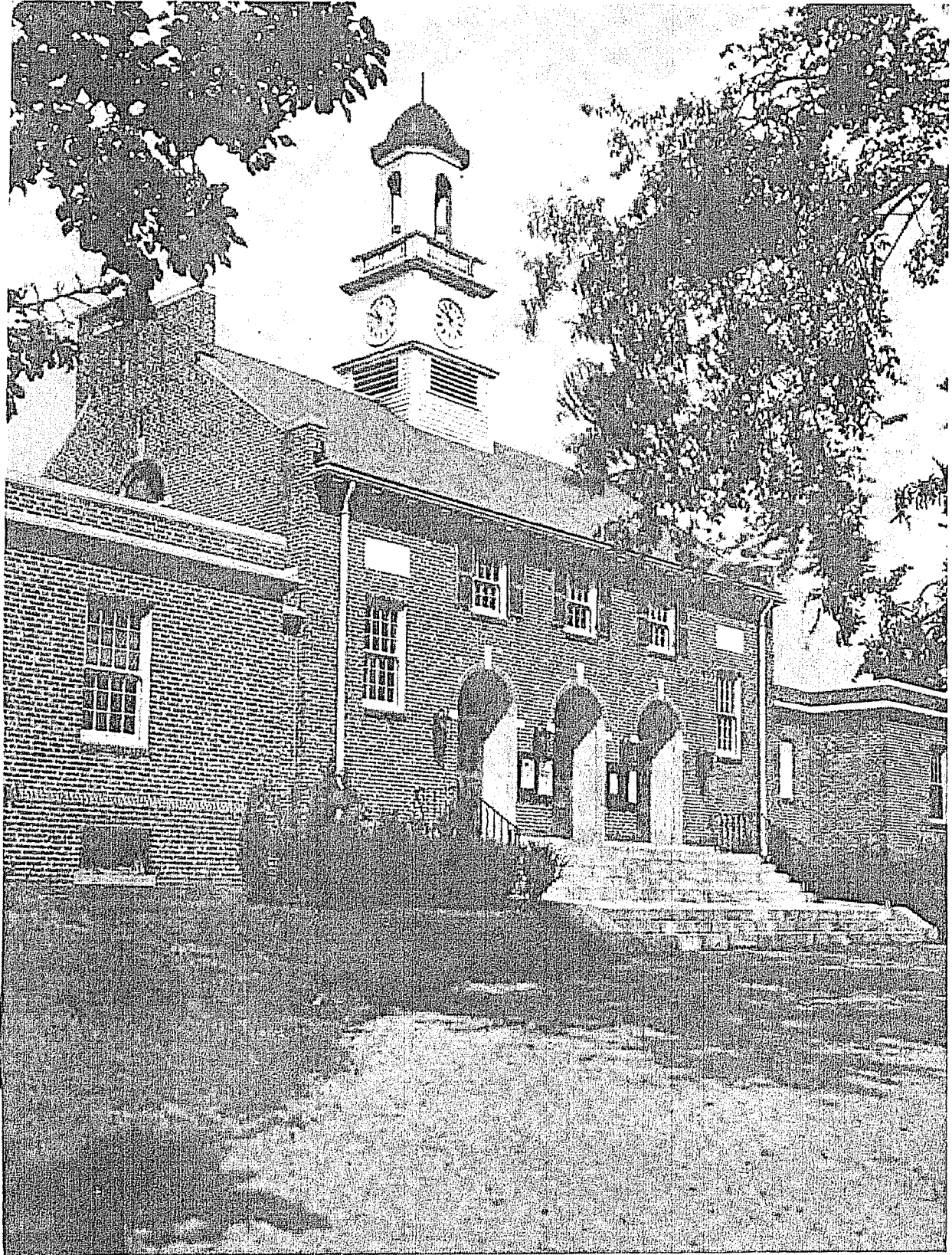
In the usual town hall display must be avoided and every effort made to preserve a dignified simplicity. Tradition should dictate the style used, particularly in a locality which possesses noble traditions, for in commemorating its heroes who went out from the town the community will want to build a monument which reflects their characters, homes and haunts. Old Deerfield, Massachusetts, is steeped in the traditions of the Indians and early settlers. The style of its memorial should be in harmony with such a tradition; Ashtabula and Gary should build in a different style, St. Augustine in another, San Diego in still another, and New Orleans in a style wholly different.

Arlington, Massachusetts, is a town with some revolutionary traditions, but now a large and thriving residential suburb of Boston. The style of its town hall well expresses this particular community. The Dover and Tewksbury Town Halls are located in remoter suburbs, having the character of small, open villages, with farms and country residences. Both towns have only general colonial traditions. The Attleboro City Hall is again different in style. Attleboro is a small city, almost entirely devoted to the manufacture of jewelry. The city hall is very delicate in its detail, and is of fine material, either white marble or light colored stone, richly carved. The proposed memorial at Framingham is monumental in scheme, but in its modest materials entirely fitting.

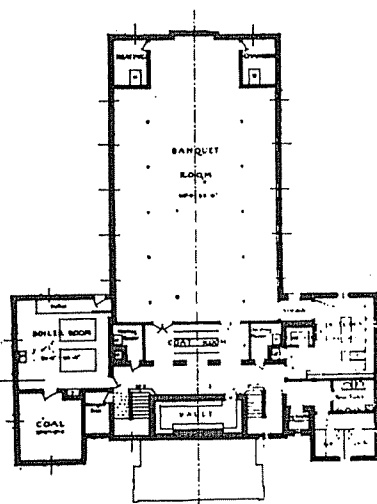
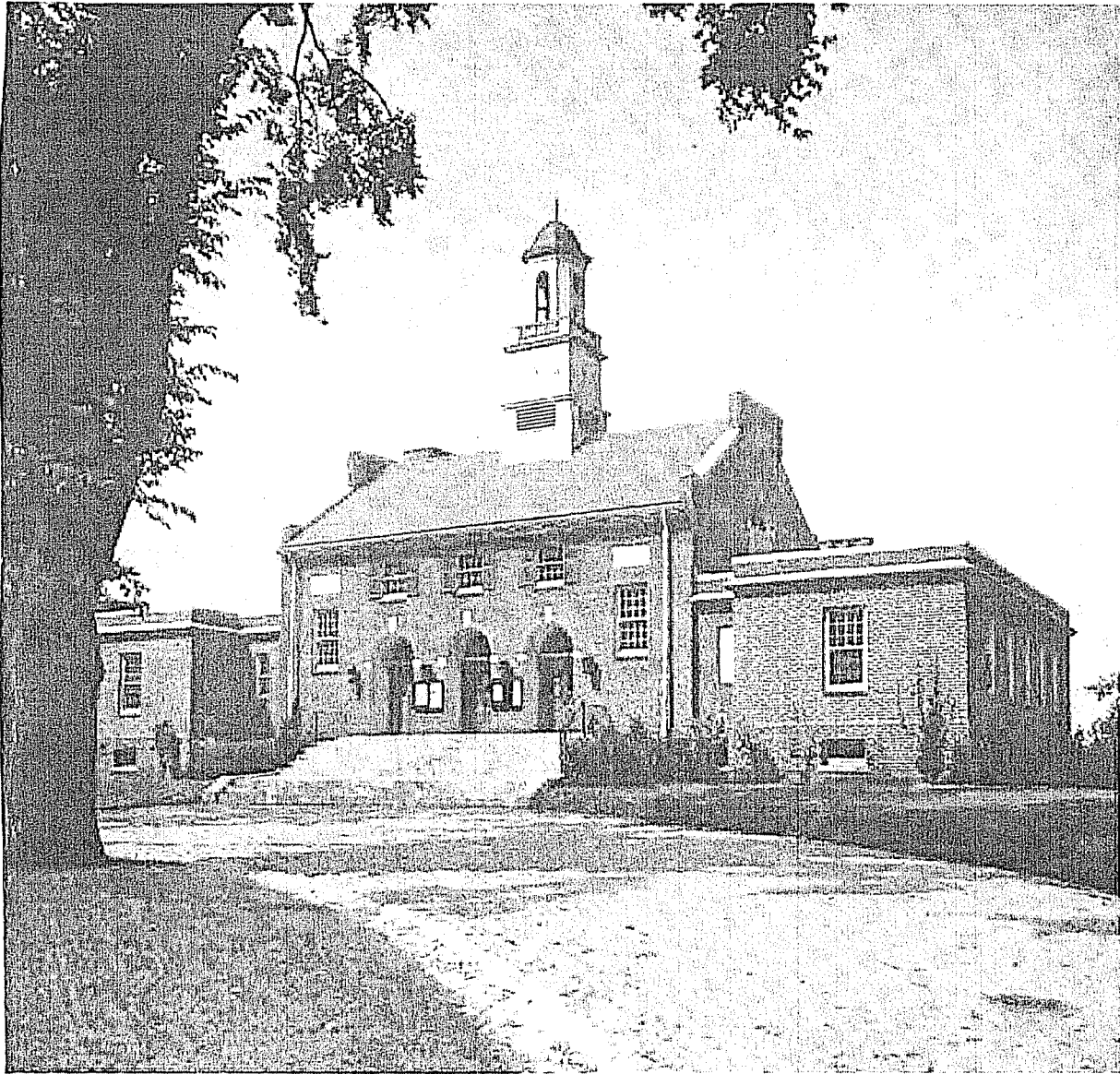
The town hall is generally among the more important buildings of a place; quite often it is the most important structure in the town, and it is necessary that it be given a dignity which shall make it in keeping. Such a building is rarely without surrounding grounds of some extent, and this adds to the importance of its treatment since it becomes practically a civic center. Moreover, a town hall is expected to be a structure permanent and lasting, built to function as long as the town itself endures, which, particularly where it is developed as a memorial, should stir the architect to the exertion of his utmost efforts in the matter of design, plan and the wisest choice of materials. Properly designed, the town hall will prove a lasting testimonial to the skill of its architect; no less so, perhaps, than a memorial to those whose sacrifices are commemorated therein. With due consideration in each individual case of these factors of propriety, scale and style, a large percentage of the memorial town and city halls that will inevitably be built may be worthy of their communities.



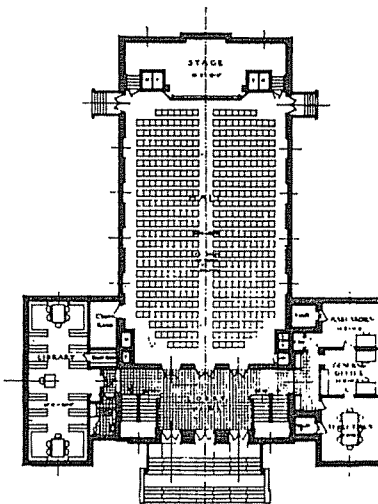
Proposed Town Hall, Framingham, Mass.  
Charles M. Baker, Architect



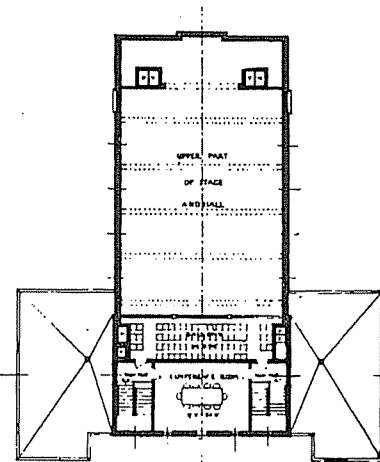
DETAIL VIEW FROM APPROACH, TOWN HALL, TEWKSBURY, MASS.  
KILHAM, HOPKINS & GREELEY, ARCHITECTS



BASEMENT PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



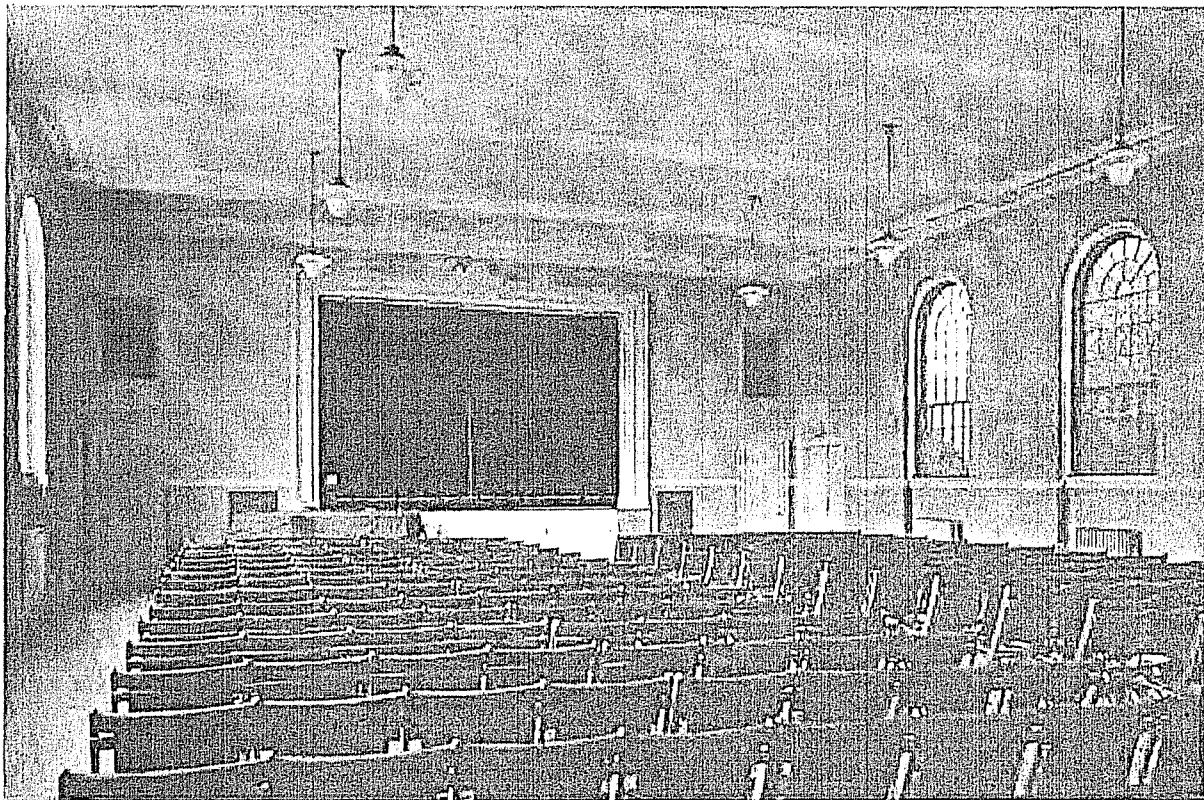
SECOND FLOOR PLAN

TOWN HALL, TEWKSBURY, MASS.  
KILHAM, HOPKINS, & GREELEY, ARCHITECTS





ENTRANCE LOBBY LOOKING TOWARDS OFFICES



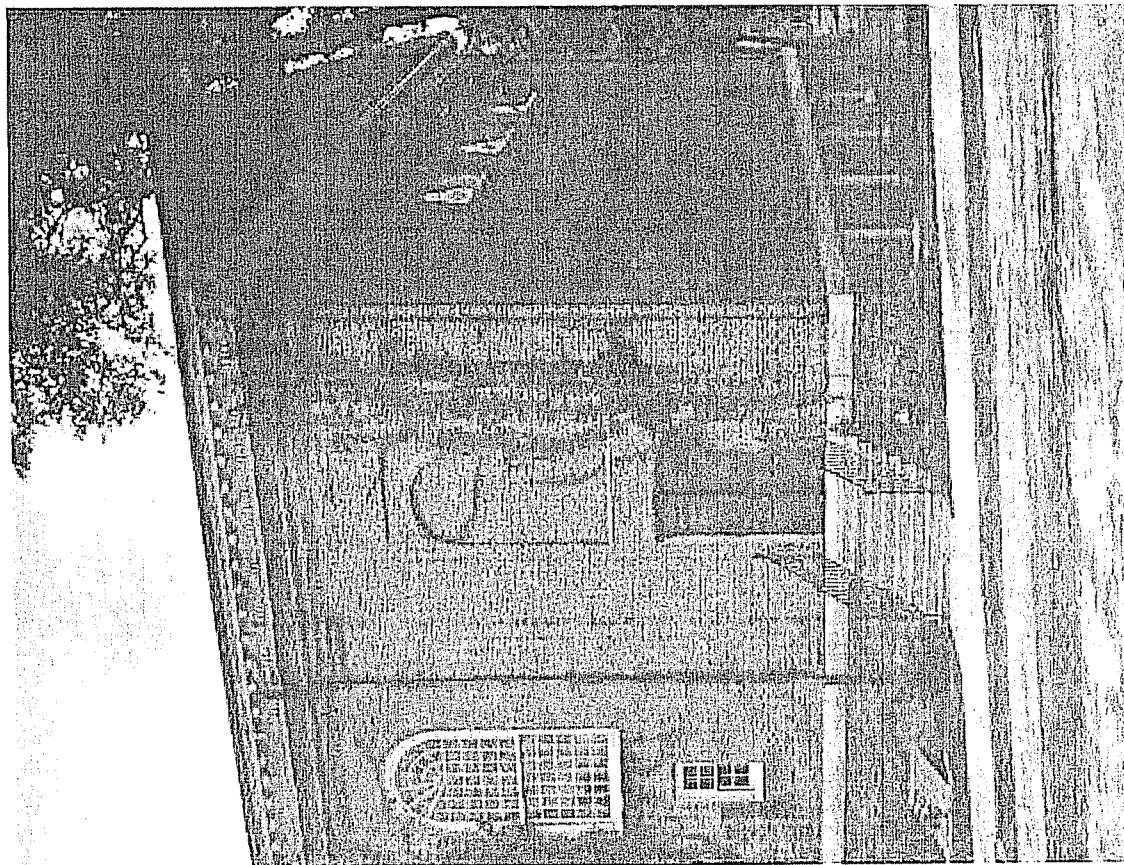
ASSEMBLY HALL

TOWN HALL, TEWKSBURY, MASS.  
KILHAM, HOPKINS & GREELEY, ARCHITECTS

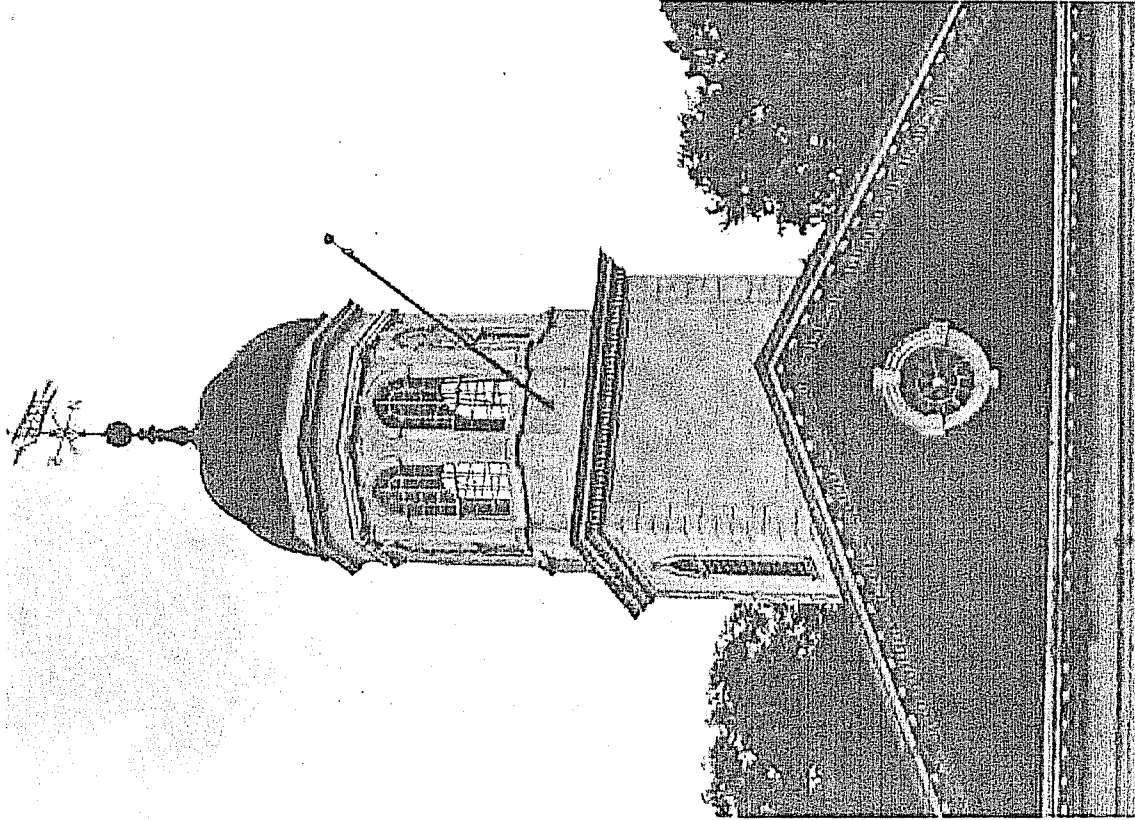


TOWN HOUSE, PETERBOROUGH, N. H.

LITTLE & RUSSELL, ARCHITECTS



DETAILS OF FRONT AND SIDE FACADES  
TOWN HOUSE, PETERBOROUGH, N. H.  
LITTLE & RUSSELL, ARCHITECTS

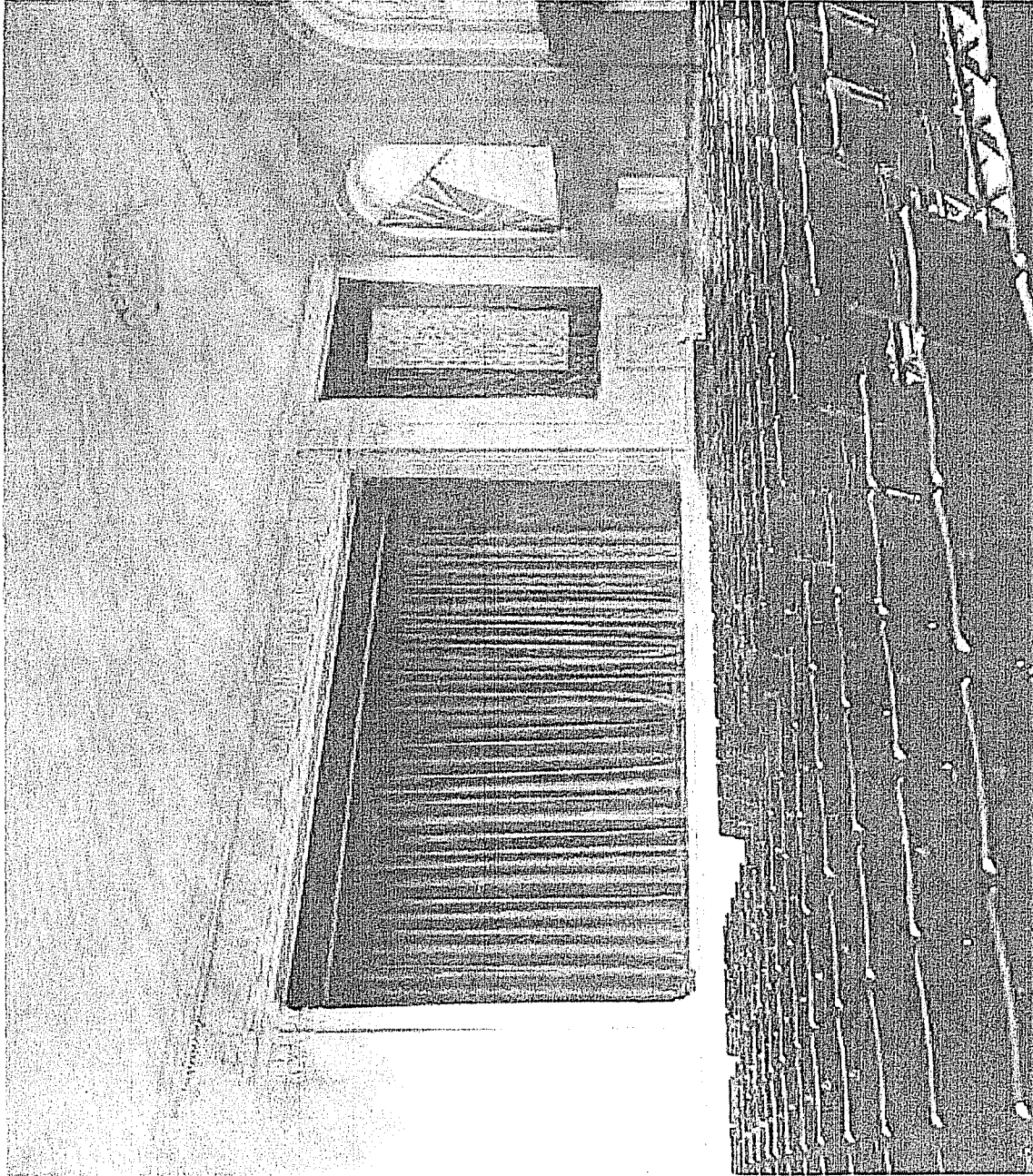


DETAIL OF LANTERN

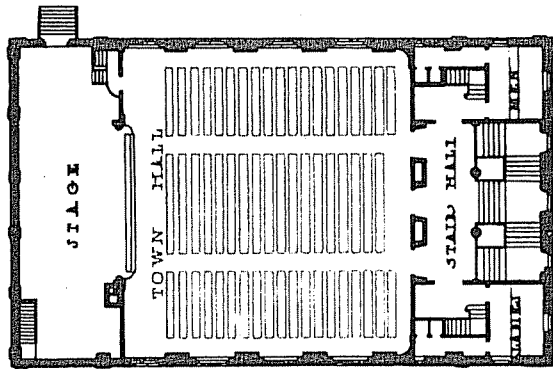


DETAIL OF STAIR HALL

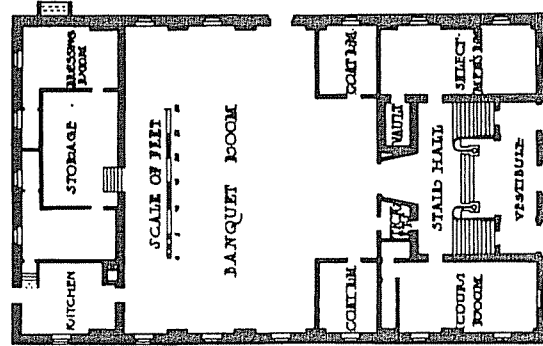
TOWN HOUSE, PETERBOROUGH, N. H.  
LITTLE & RUSSELL, ARCHITECTS



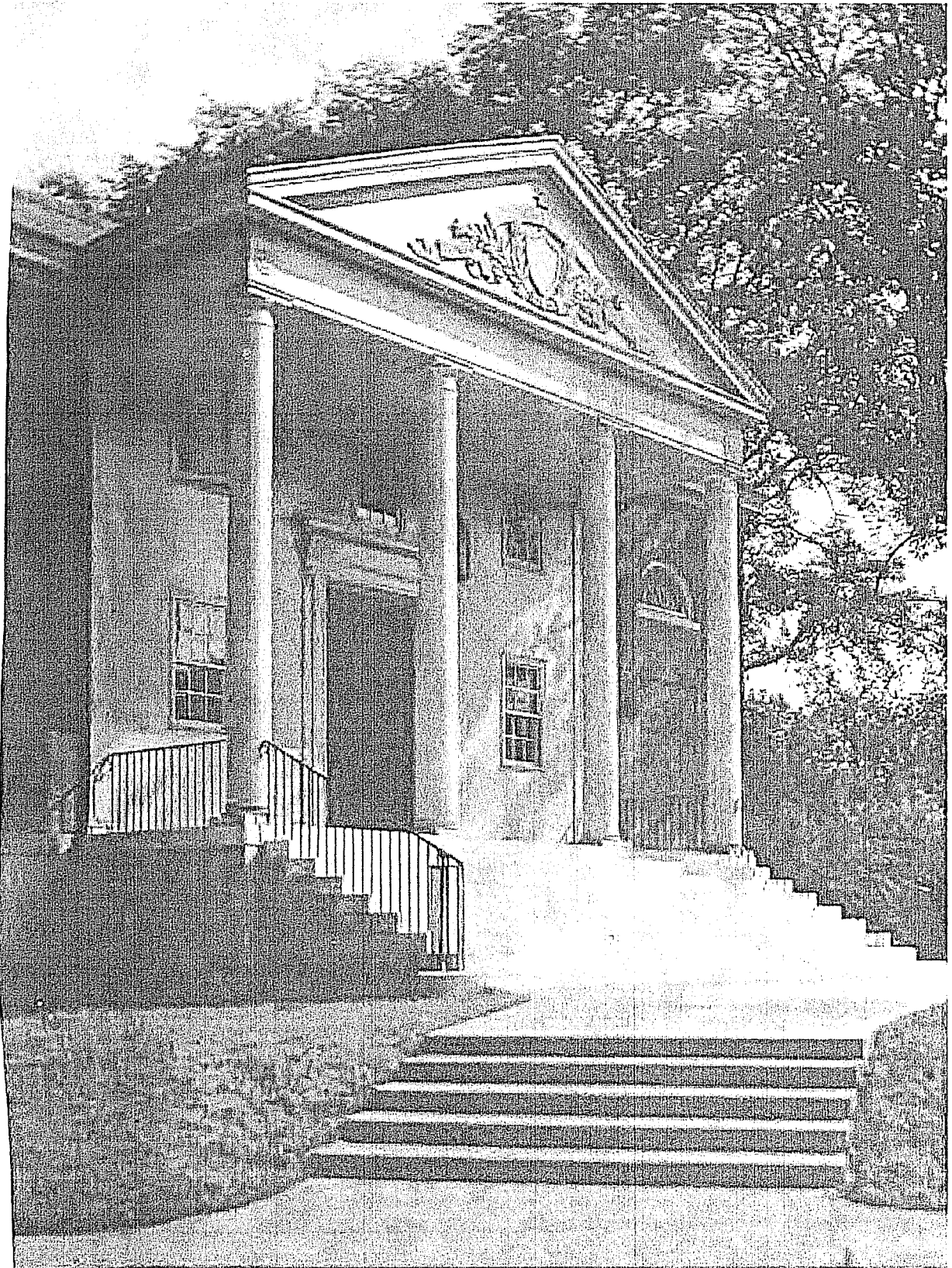
ASSEMBLY HALL  
 TOWN HOUSE, PETERBOROUGH, N. H.  
 LITTLE & RUSSELL, ARCHITECTS



SECOND FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



DETAIL OF ENTRANCE PORTICO  
TOWN HALL, KENNEBUNK, MAINE  
J. D. LELAND & COMPANY, ARCHITECTS