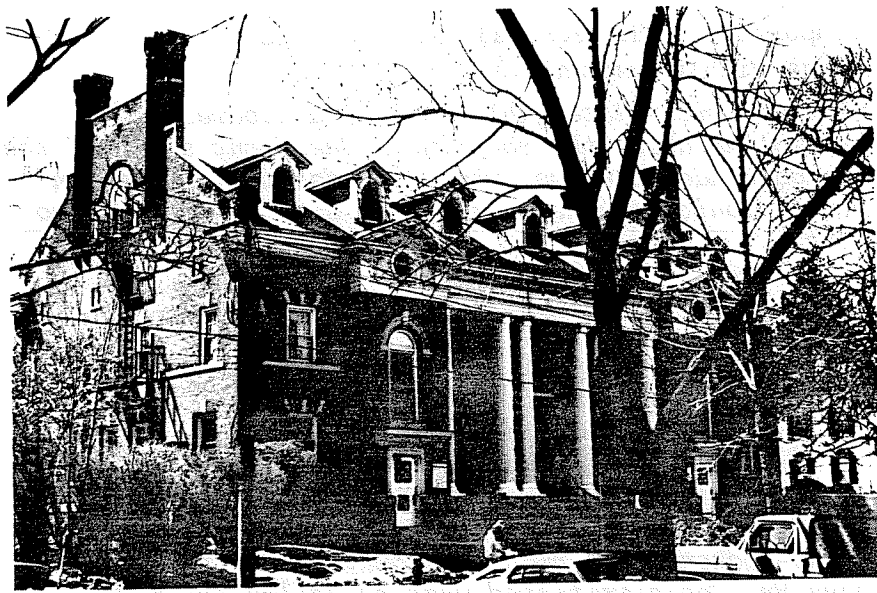


Area	Form no. 31B-261
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MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
294 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108



Northampton

8 Gothic St.

Occupant Name People's Institute

Original club

Present community building

Type:  Private individual  
 Private organization  
People's Institute of Northampton

Public \_\_\_\_\_

Original owner Home Culture Club

REASON:

Location in relation to nearest cross streets and other buildings or geographical features. Indicate north.

Date 1904

Source S.D.R.

Style Southern Colonial

Architect \_\_\_\_\_

Exterior wall fabric brick

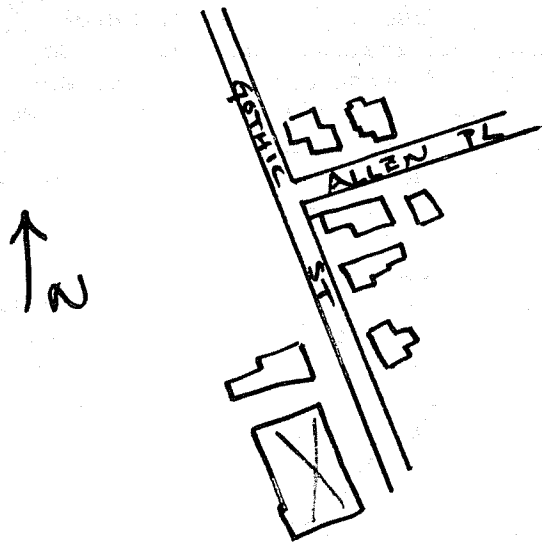
Outbuildings \_\_\_\_\_

Major alterations (with dates) \_\_\_\_\_

Moved \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Approx. acreage \_\_\_\_\_

Setting \_\_\_\_\_



Recorded by E. Lonergan

Organization NHC

Date June 1980

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE (describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within community)

The building is two stories in height with slate gable roof, and elbowed end walls with double diagonal stacks projecting above the roofline. The front slope of the roof has seven gabled dormers with round-headed windows, while the facade features an over-sized recessed portico with fluted Ionic columns. On either side of the portico is a pedimented pavilion of 2½ stories.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE (explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community)

George Washington Cable moved to Northampton in 1884. The foremost Southern novelist of his day, he was also an out-spoken civil rights advocate, and prominent speaker. Not long after settling here Mr. Cable initiated what he called the Home Culture Club, whose object was to "introduce culture into the homes of all people". What began as a small reading and discussion group quickly developed into several neighborhood groups. By 1894 the Club had been endowed with a Club House on Center St., and by 1896 the activities had expanded to 75 chapters all over the country and all "looking to Northampton and Mr. Cable for inspiration and guidance in their reading".

"The Private Home is the Public Hope" became the Club's motto, and Mr. Cable's vision of creating "impulses to betterment among all classes of Northampton" rippled beyond the reading circles. In 1892 he founded the Evening School for Adults, which offered citizenship and language classes to immigrants, and academic subjects to wage earners who had not completed high school. With a staff of Smith College volunteers he created the Home Arts Program, where women could learn the "Domestic Sciences". From Andrew Carnegie Mr. Cable procured a healthy endowment for the local Garden Competition "to stimulate people to better their own dooryards. The popularity of the program grew until eventually 1000 households were competing for its annual awards.

In 1904 a new headquarters was constructed for the Home Culture Club on Gothic St. This cost \$40,000 and was primarily paid for by Andrew Caregie, who came to Northampton in 1905 to dedicate the new building. The James House, a mid-19th century residence next door to the headquarter on Gothic St. was also incorporated into the organization.

The name was changed to the Peoples Institute of Northampton in 1909 and the building became a full-fldged community center. In addition to evening and Home Art classes there were elocutionists and lecturers on such varied subjects as Shakespeare, English cathedrals and milk consumption. There were 15-cent suppers followed by free entertainments, a children's Saturday morning hour and meeting spaces for Scouts and the Girl's City Club. A Labor Exchange was also sponsored through which employers and prospective employees might meet, and a hot lunch program was instituted for school children whose parents

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Continued.

1895 and 1915 Atlases.  
Springfield Daily Republican Dec. 31, 1903 and Dec. 31, 1904.  
Valley Advocate June 11, 1980 p. 2.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

712

Community: <i>Northampton</i>	Form No: <i>31B-261</i>
Property Name: <i>People's Institute</i>	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

*Historical Significance.*

*The building housed a library with separate men's and women's reading rooms; a parlor and fully equiped kitchen for parties, dinners and teas; a theatre; an assembly hall; " a room where one may rest"; bathrooms; and a pool room.*

*Mr. Cable died in 1925 but the People's Institute has continued until today, although with a slightly more narrow focus.*

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

