

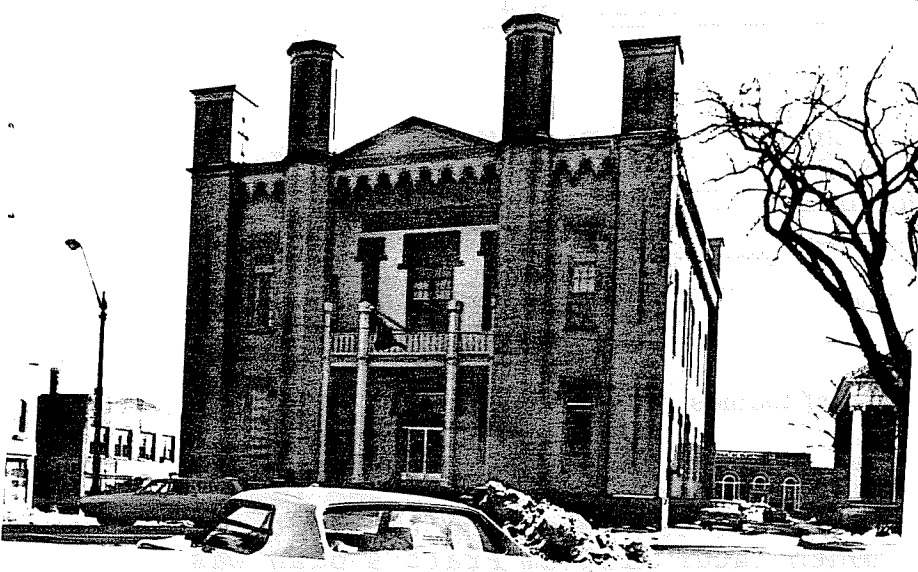
FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, State House, Boston

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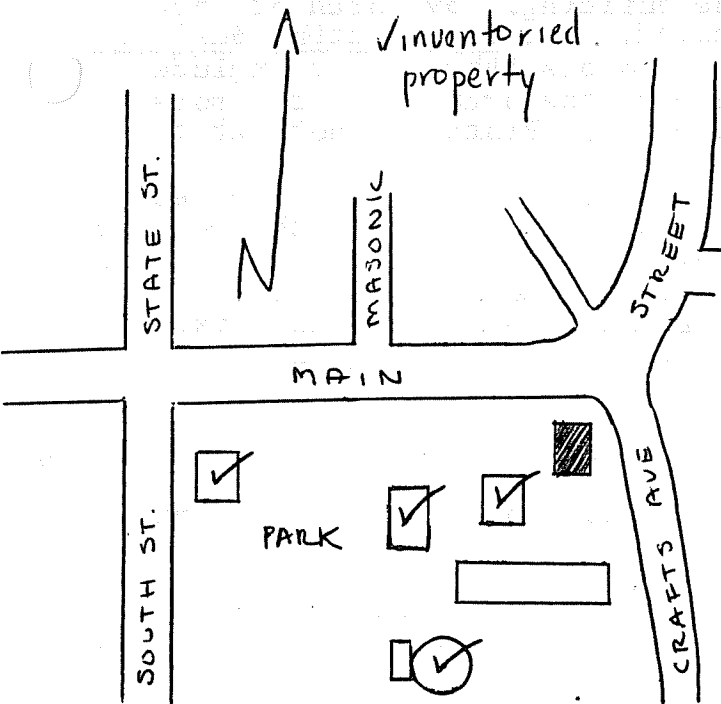
In Area no. <u>A</u>	Form no. <u>31D-163</u>
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790



1. Town Northampton
 is 210 Main Street
City Hall (Town Hall)
 at use City Hall
 present owner City of Northampton
 description:
1849-50
 source 3/19/1850
Gothic Revival/Picturesque
 architect William Fenno Pratt

other buildings. Indicate north.



exterior wall fabric stucco over brick
 Outbuildings (describe) none
 Other features battlements; windows with gothic revival moldings; decorative wooden trim; stone foundation
 Altered yes-over Date _____
 Moved no Date _____

5. Lot size:
 Less than one acre x Over one acre _____
 Approximate frontage 75 feet
 Approximate distance of building from street
30 feet

6. Recorded by C. Dubie
 Organization Northampton Historical Commission
 Date April 16, 1976

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE
 USGS Quadrant _____
 MHC Photo no. _____

(over)

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MAY 5 1976

7. Original owner (if known) Town of Northampton

Original use Town Hall/Lecture Hall

Subsequent uses (if any) and dates City Hall after 1884

8. Themes (check as many as applicable)

Aboriginal	_____	Conservation	_____	Recreation	_____
Agricultural	_____	Education	_____	Religion	_____
Architectural	<u>x</u>	Exploration/ settlement	_____	Science/ invention	_____
The Arts	_____	Industry	_____	Social/	_____
Commerce	_____	Military	_____	Humanitarian	<u>x</u>
Communication	_____	Political	<u>x</u>	Transportation	_____
Community development	<u>x</u>				

9. Historical Significance (include explanation of themes checked above)

In 1846 the town voted to build a new town hall, either on the site of the existing hall (near the First Church and Courthouse) or on a new lot. In May of 1849 the lot adjoining the Unitarian Church was purchased and a month later William Pratt's plan was adopted in spite of an offer from John Tappan, a Northamptonite, to secure an architect from Boston, Theodore Voelchers (about whom nothing else is known), to design the building. By March of 1850 the building was completed and dedicated. The Town Meeting Building Committee Report is in the archives of Forbes Library; it includes mention of Pratt's fee and a list made by the architect of errors which the workmen had made in construction. (Pratt did not get the contract to build the Hall.)

Pratt designed the building in the early period of his career, when the influence of the picturesque was strong. While the massing and symmetrical facade of the building were rational, the decorative elements—battlements and castellation (now removed)—were romantic to the point of absurdity. Local residents have always had mixed feelings about the building; in the 1900's the building was to be replaced by a more imposing, Classical structure. In 1974 an attempt was made to remove the last of the "Gingerbread". It now appears that local citizens and government have come to terms with the building as an historical curiosity.

Until the construction of Memorial Hall in 1873, the Town Hall served as a lecture hall, this space on the 2nd floor now being offices. Many socials, dances, and lectures were held in the building. On several occasions, the more advanced thinkers in the town invited speakers like William Lloyd Garrison and found themselves locked out by the more conservative keeper-of-the-keys.

10. Bibliography and/or references (such as local histories, deeds, assessor's records, early maps, etc.)

Hampshire Gazette, 3/17/1846, 5/1/1849, 5/15/1849, 6/26/1849, 7/17/1849, 3/12/1850, 3/19/1850.