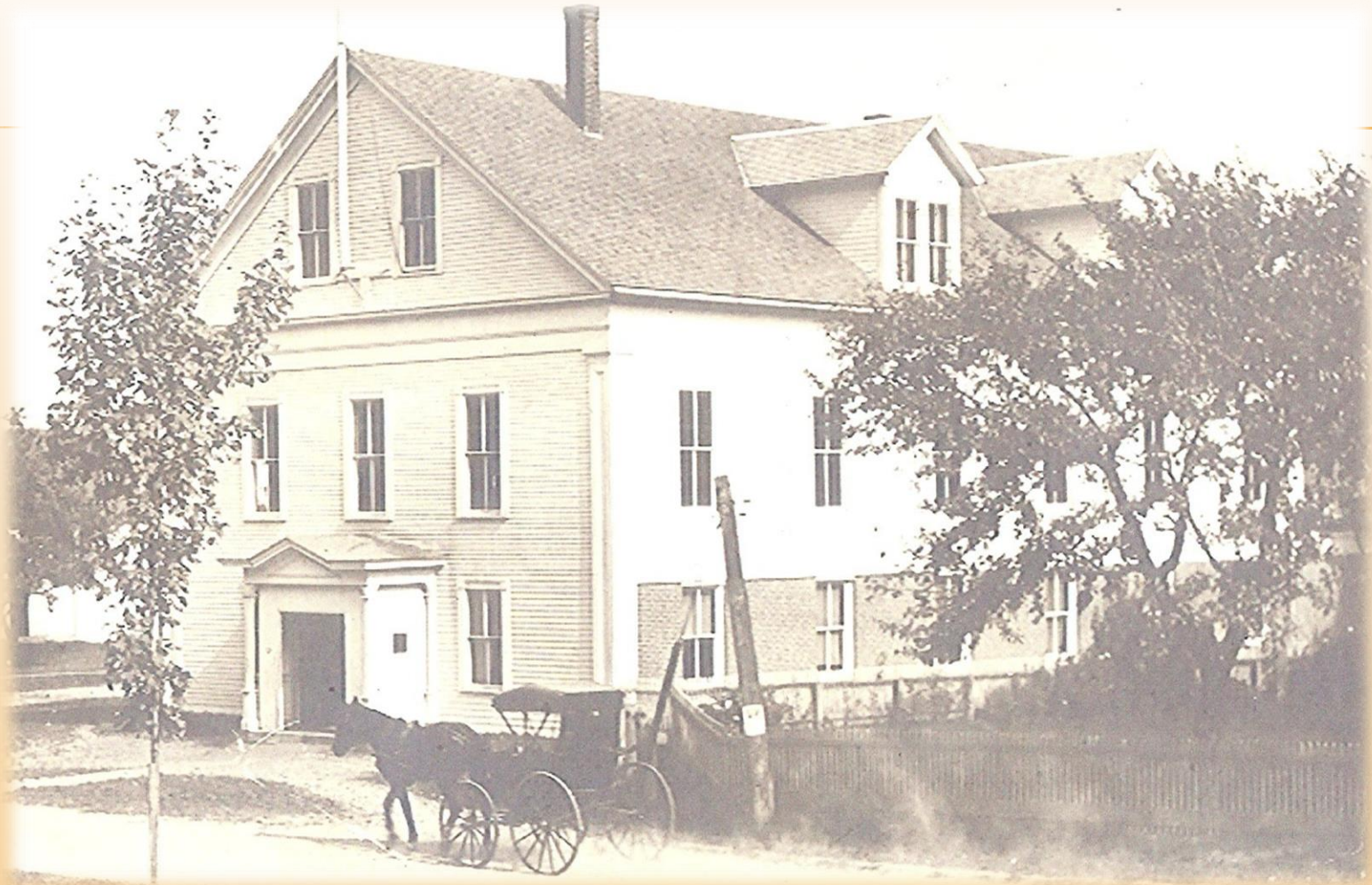




**A PRECIOUS TOWN ASSET  
- THE OLD TOWN HALL -  
IS IN JEOPARDY.**



From its beginning, this was a **hall for all people to gather.**  
Town residents used this building for 176 years.



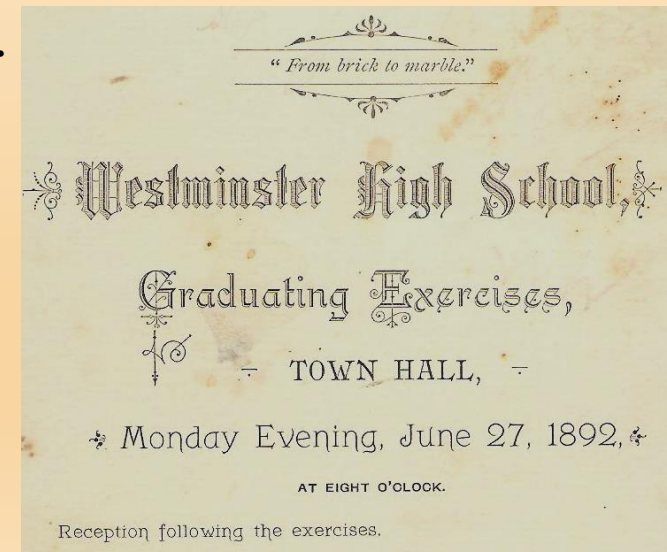
# The town itself began to use the building

for school in the 1920s  
when more classroom  
space was needed

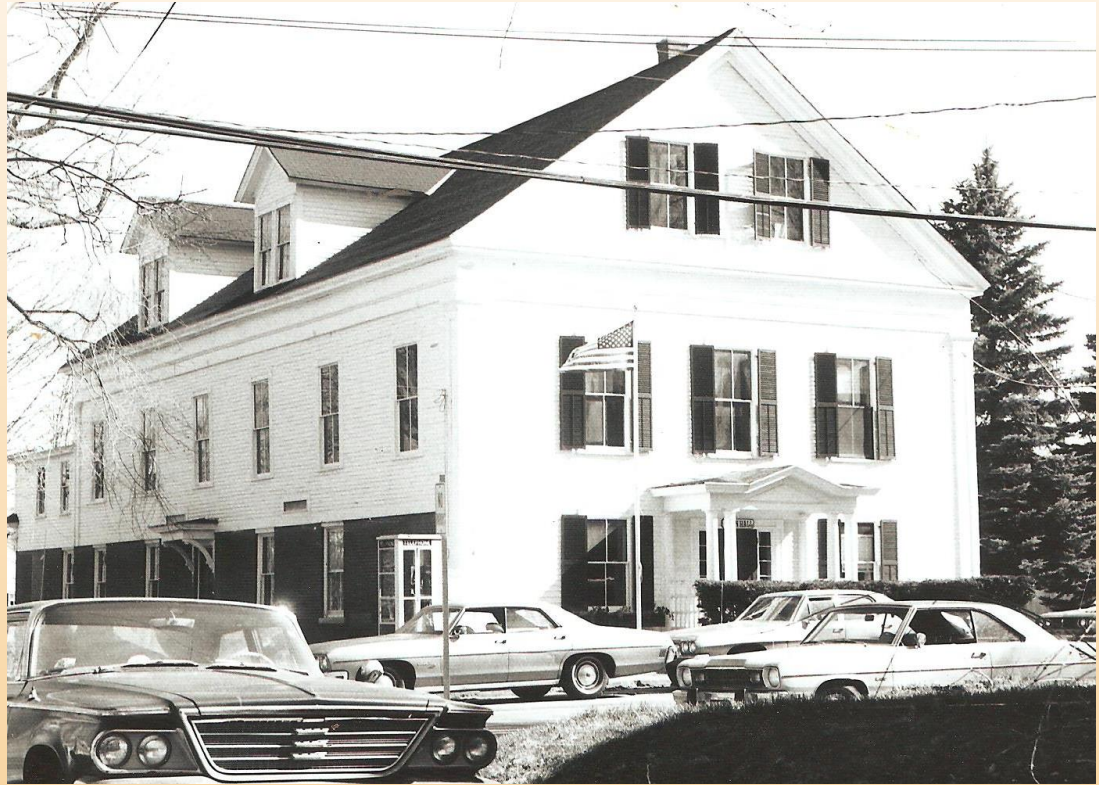


as a gym for the basketball team which  
ran from the Upton School to the Town  
Hall for their games.

and as the site for graduation  
exercises for the  
Westminster High School



It could fit a  
LOT of people. A town  
meeting  
in 1957 had more  
than 700 people  
attending!



---

This generous policy to open the Town Hall  
for more than strictly municipal uses  
was true since its beginning.

Voters established the Town House open for  
***all meetings of a moral, scientific, and  
literary nature, when anyone requested it.***  
Even non residents were allowed  
to rent the building.



# The 1<sup>st</sup> FLOOR



was a big wide open hall where numerous meetings were held, including Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts

and where refreshments were served after every big event held on the second floor.



# The 2nd FLOOR

---

Of course town elections and town meetings  
were held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor,  
but others used it too!

- ❖ Women's Relief Corps
- ❖ Worcester County Extension
- ❖ Westminster Grange
- ❖ Westminster Farmers Cooperative Association
- ❖ The Lutheran Church's first place of worship
- ❖ The Catholic Church's first place of worship
- ❖ and many other local organizations that could not afford to build their own meeting places

The 2nd story has beautiful hard wood floors and long benches and folding theater chairs for programs.





# The STAGE



was used by many groups  
for ceremonies,



and dance recitals.

and performances  
by theatrical groups



and plays by school groups and others  
like the Women's Club.





The hall was a popular place for wedding receptions and anniversary parties because it was the largest hall in town.



and the dances - for all ages -  
sponsored by many different groups as fundraisers.



# The 3rd FLOOR

---



was a special meeting hall for the Grand Army of the Republic and the Sons of Veterans

as well as the  
Farmers & Mechanics  
Association  
and the Veterans of  
Foreign Wars.



The shuffle board courts are  
still painted on the floor!



# THEN CAME CHANGE

When the population grew more in the 1970s,  
the Town created *several tiny offices*  
on the **1<sup>st</sup> floor of the Town Hall**  
so town officers and newly formed committees  
could do business there.

These changes made it **impossible**  
for organizations to hold  
events or public suppers on the **1<sup>st</sup> floor.**

In the 1990s two offices were even carved out  
of the large auditorium on the **2nd floor,**

***No more town meetings or large gatherings.***

**The 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor** became a large storage room with no access to the public.





---

This Town Hall  
was intended to be a  
gathering place  
**for the people -**  
and should be again.

---

We can renovate our  
town hall  
as other towns have  
successfully done.



The Townsend Town Hall needed to be renovated for continued use. The vinyl siding was removed.

Renovations cost \$1.6 million.  
Built NEW in 1999  
it would have cost \$5 million.  
It included an elevator,  
climate control, all new  
utilities, technology systems,  
and two small additions.







Our town hall could look like Townsend's –  
with a gorgeous auditorium where their  
town meetings are held.

---

# **The 1<sup>st</sup> Floor**

A visitors center can be created on the 1st floor-  
a great way to inform residents and tourists  
of all kinds of opportunities!



The commercial kitchen can be designed to accommodate caterers serving parties on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor,



and local farmers can prepare foods for market with professional equipment and not have to travel to Worcester to do so.





Small groups  
can meet on the 1st floor!



or exercise groups and  
children's play groups can gather.



---

# **The 2nd Floor**

could be rented out  
for formal events  
as in Framingham.







Stairs can be made beautiful like this grand stairway.



Our Town Hall can be rented out for banquets, receptions, and group meetings.





with restrooms designed to accommodate brides and their wedding parties.



Or the hall can be set up as an auditorium for town meetings.



And lighting can be added for theater productions





movie nights or concerts



also for the Town summer  
concerts when it's raining!



# AND THE 3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR?

The Westminster Historical Society is prepared to:

- ❖ Create changing exhibits to enrich the public's experience,
- ❖ Manage a museum on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Town Hall sharing Westminster's history,
- ❖ Staff a research library for those investigating Westminster people, homes, and events,
- ❖ Establish a lending library of the Education Department with special collections for groups wanting hands-on materials for groups and classes, and
- ❖ Make a workshop room for activities focusing on crafts of New England.

Westminster has been without a Town Museum since 1996.



Most of the artifacts from the museum are in storage and some in the Azarian barn haven't been seen by the public for many decades.



Let's uncover the beautiful architecture on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor like these coved ceilings.





Art and historical exhibits can be open for all  
and up for several weeks.



And public workshops  
can be a regular offering.



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**RUMOR HAS IT  
THAT THE  
BUILDING  
CANNOT BE  
RENOVATED.**



---

# **NOT TRUE!**

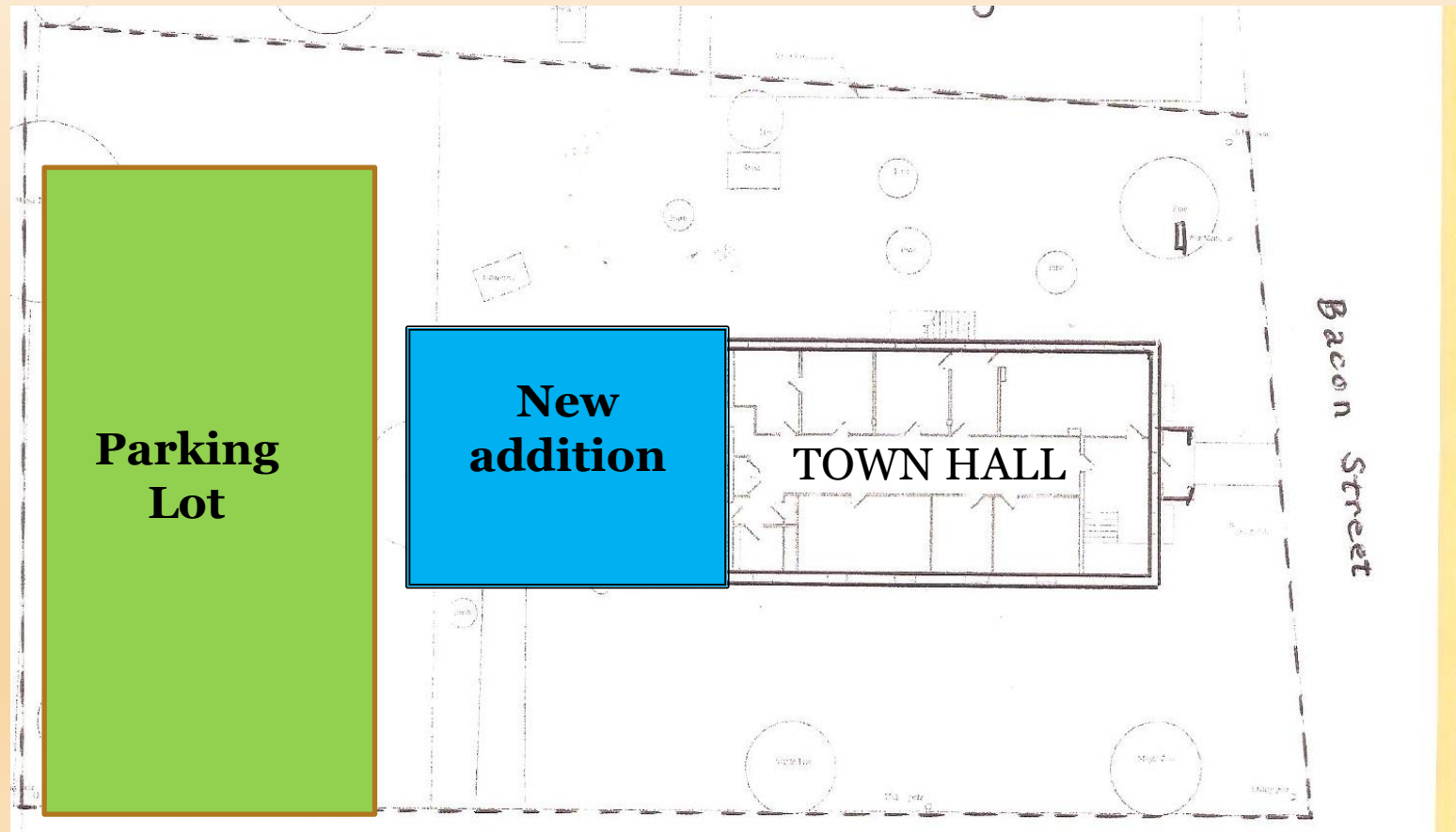
The old town hall has been determined by architectural and engineering professionals to be sound and reusable.

---

**IS THERE ENOUGH  
LAND FOR PARKING?**

# Yes, there is.

There's also room for an addition in the rear for **restrooms** on each floor, a **commercial kitchen**, and an **elevator** to access all floors.





And there's plenty of room for park benches along the Pleasant Street side of the building.



---

# **WHY SAVE THIS BUILDING?**

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Reusing an old building  
is the epitome of “living green,”  
and if there ever was a time  
to reuse and recycle,  
it is now.



# ALSO CONSIDER THIS

Planning experts have told us that we can expect Westminster, with the undeveloped land we have now, to “build out” to 20,000 people in the future.  
(We have 8,000 today.)

We will **need *more community space*** when we have 20,000 people in this town!

*Let's not be short sighted.*

We should all think of our town's future. To renovate this community building now will cost *less* than building a new structure for the same purposes in the future.

---

# IT'S OUR TURN IN HISTORY.

We were given this valuable asset by our founders.

It has been central to the life and heritage of Westminster  
for the majority of this Town's existence.

We can preserve, protect and properly maintain  
this Town Hall to be used both now and in the future!

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Countless New England communities have done everything in their power to save their meetinghouses and old town halls. Why?

Because they are rare!

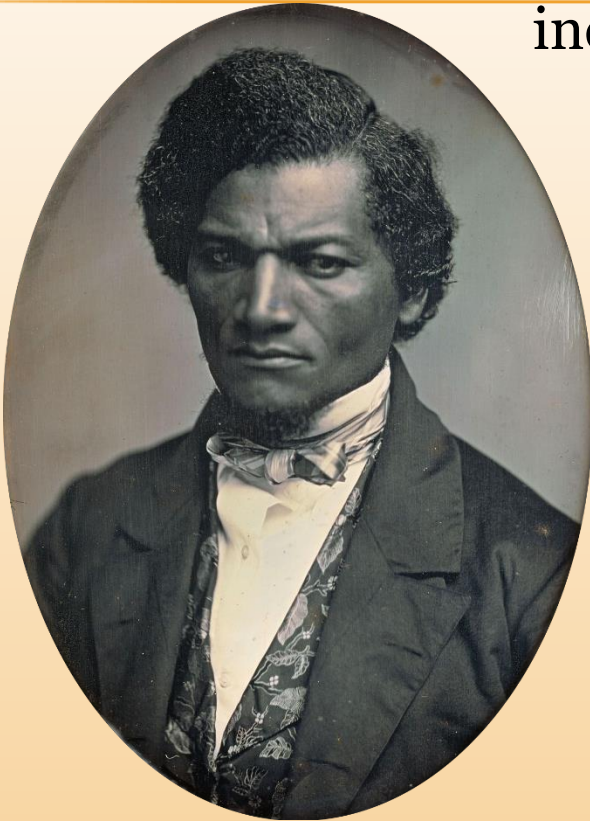
Ours is listed on the

**National Register of Historic Places**  
because it is **historically and architecturally significant to our town and our nation.**

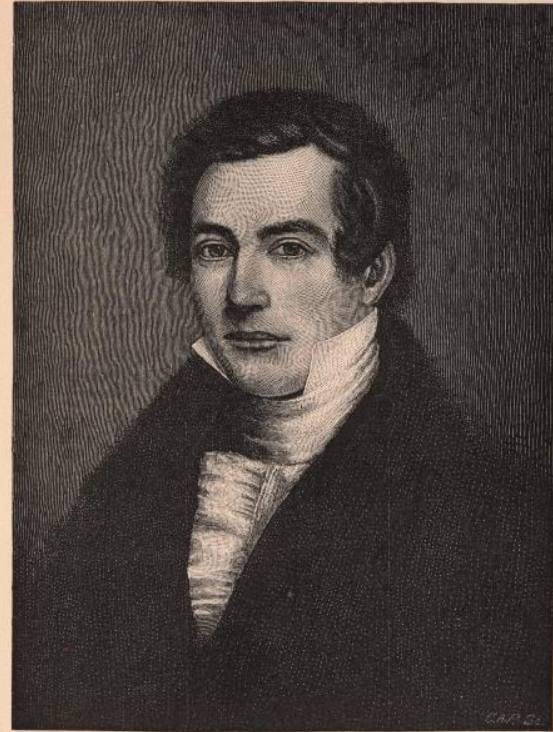


# Important national leaders spoke in Westminster at the Town Hall

including



Frederick Douglass, a free black man who was self taught and a brilliant author and speaker for the abolition of slavery and women's rights.



*Wm. L. Garrison.*

William Lloyd Garrison, the most influential spokesperson for the movement to abolish slavery in the United States.

---

And, because it **is a National Register** property,  
it is eligible for matching grants  
from a number of federal and state sources:

The MA Historical Commission's Preservation Projects Fund,  
the MA Cultural Facilities Fund,  
the State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits program,  
the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program  
and, the Community Preservation Act (once the voters of  
Westminster accept this source of state funds).

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The Westminster Historical Society's mission is  
to save and share Westminster's history  
and our town hall is an important piece of that history.

*The Westminster Historical Society is prepared  
to be a lead partner in this venture,  
but we cannot do it alone.*



---

**Then how can we  
get this done?**

---

# **1<sup>st</sup> We have to act now!**

**It's important to VOTE at the Town Election on April 25.**

**There is only ONE ballot question  
in addition to voting on boards and commissions.**

**Should we save the old town hall for community use?**

---

## 2<sup>nd</sup> We need volunteers.

We need residents, neighbors and businesses who are invested in the town of Westminster to come forward.

If we give this building new community life it will be an important **economic, social and cultural anchor** of the Westminster Village center once again.



---

Special places do not happen by accident.

**We must act now to keep this treasured gathering place.**

**Please take the time to VOTE on April 25!**

**The future of this building is in our hands.**

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By  
Betsy Hannula

Curator and Secretary of the  
Westminster Historical Society  
and  
Member of  
Westminster Historical Commission