

(attach photo here)

(attached to map)

2. Town Sterling, Massachusetts

FORM B - STRUCTURE SURVEY  
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, State House, Boston

Street address 31 Cor. of Main & Maple Sts-  
opposite village "Common"

Name Sterling Town Hall (on frieze)

Original use Formal Assembly Rm. 2nd floor-  
Other Rooms, 1st floor,  
(for suppers, etc. kitchen facilities

Present use Town Offices-1st floor-  
2nd floor-Assembly Hall.

Present owner Town of Sterling

Open to public Yes

Date 1835 Style Federal Period  
(similar to #16 without ell)

Source of date Centennial Address (1881)  
by Wm. F. Holcombe (p. 70 Rugg. Ed.)

Architect John Springer - with Doric  
Columns by John M. Stevenson.

1. Is this structure historically significant to:  
Town Commonwealth Nation

Structure has historical connection with the following themes (See also reverse side):

- |                      |                                 |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Agriculture          | Commerce/industry               |
| Architecture         | Science/invention               |
| <u>Art/sculpture</u> | Travel/communication            |
| Education            | Military affairs                |
| <u>Government</u>    | Religion/philosophy             |
| Literature           | Indians                         |
| <u>Music</u>         | <u>Development of town/city</u> |

3. CONDITION: Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated Moved Altered Added bldg. lengthened to  
provide a stage some yrs. ago. 1878  
Fire escape added recently. (18)

4. DESCRIPTION

NOTE: Town Hall occupies a bit over 1/2 acre of land. (orig. deed for 1/2 acre).  
FOUNDATION/BASEMENT: High Regular Low. Material: Foundation variable-granite  
blocks on no. side; brick wall on so. side- with entrance leading to cellar.

WALL COVER: Wood Clapboards Brick Stone Other \_\_\_\_\_

ROOF: Ridge Gambrel Flat Hip Mansard \_\_\_\_\_  
Tower Cupola Dormer windows Balustrade Grillwork \_\_\_\_\_

CHIMNEYS: 1 2 3 4 1 chimney no. side near front of bldg. Center End End interior Gable Elaborate Irregular

STORIES: 1 2 3 4 ATTACHMENTS: Wings Ell Shed Dependency 2 stories with basemen  
Triangular pediment with frieze- 1 window in center.

PORCHES: 1 2 3 4 Portico 3 windows, 2nd floor  
2 windows, 1st fl. on either side of center door. Balcony Recessed:

FACADE: Gable end: Front/Side Ornament: 1 front door (center) 1 rear exit, and two  
exits so. side rear, via new fire escape from both floors.

Entrance: Side Front: Center/Side Details: see above.

Windows: Spacing: Regular/Irregular Identical/Varied are 7 large (vertical) windows on  
both north and south sides of bldg. upstairs and down stairs-evenly spaced.

Corners: Plain Pilasters Quoins Cornerboards on front under portico- 4 doric  
columns almost 2 stories in height.

OUTBUILDINGS: I recently acquired small brick bldg (formerly used by Light Dep  
will be used for storage, or possibly vault purposes.

5. Indicate location of structure in relation to nearest cross streets and other buildings  
See sep. attachment.

6. Footage of structure from street 8-10' on fro  
Property has abt 42' feet frontage on street

Recorder Mrs. Frances P. Tapley (Mrs. George Q.)  
Frances P. Tapley, Chrm.

For Historical Commission, Sterling.

Photo Yes (2)

Date Dec. 27, 1971

NOTE: Recorder should obtain written permission from Commission or sponsoring organization before using this form.

SEE REVERSE SIDE

RELATION OF SURROUNDING TO STRUCTURE

Neighboring Structures **varied- Business, Residential, and Town-owned Bldgs. & Chur**  
 Style: Colonial Federal Greek Revival Gothic Revival Italian Villa Lombard Rom.  
 Venetian Gothic Mansard Richardsonian Federal Modern (school).

Type Buildings: see above Conditions: Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated

Use: Residential Commercial Religious Proximity: Varied-excellent to fair- 1 p  
Fairly Close Proximity

Landscape Features: Agriculture Open Wooded Garden: Formal/Informal Village Common  
 Predominant Features or Green opposite Town Hall-shade trees-grass, etc.  
 Landscape Architect None, although Sterling Garden Club has done some planting

GIVE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF HISTORIC IMPORTANCE OF SITE (Refer and elaborate on theme circled on front of form)

This 2nd Town Hall, built in 1835, stands on the same site of orig. Town Hall built abt. 1800-1801, said to have been one of first Town Hall Buildings (sep. from Church) in Worc. County. Orig. bldg. housed school classrooms on 2nd floor and hall on first. It was 38' X 28'. The land was deeded to the town (with certain restrictions) in 1799, by Ebenezer Pope. (See Worc. Co. Deed Vol. 168, p. 61). Pope was said to have been a nephew, by mar. of Gen. Israel Putnam. Because of hard usage, the 1st Town Hall fell into dis-repair, and in 1834 was sold to Col. John Ball Pratt, a well known cabinet maker & builder, who removed it to its present location and re-modelled it into a house which is still standing (abt. 1/2 mi. S.W. on Rt. 12).

The new Town Hall built in 1835, completed in Nov. at cost of \$2,857.85, Edwin A. Conant, a well-known lawyer (and benefactor of the Town) gave the Dedication Address. It was this native born son who gave the Conant Free Public Library, located across the Common slightly S.W of the Town Hall (1885), as a Memorial to his daughter.

Later, funds were given the town to build an addition (or to lengthen the Town Hall) in order to provide a proper stage on 2nd floor, and more space on 1st floor. The 2nd floor was used for Town Meetings, dancing classes, social gatherings, and as a display area for Annual Cattle Shows. Exhibits of fruits, flowers, handwork and bakery goods were displayed for judging and prizes.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND/OR REFERENCE (see sep. page-for additions)

First Town Hall - built 1800-01 - The Worcester Magazine & Historical Journal, Vol. 2, No. 1 - May 1826, pub. Worcester: Rogers & Griffin, p. 46 & 47.

2nd Town Hall - Centennial Address; Wm. Frederic Holcombe (1881) Typed copies available in Library, Sterling, Hist. Soc., Inc.; and, a special bound copy with Index, prepared for Chief Justice Arthur P. Rugg of Mass. Supreme Ct., now in custody of the Sterling Historical Society, Inc., p. 70.

First Town Hall - ref. found in handwritten copy of "Hist. of Sterling" by Moses Sawyer (1830), a well-known surveyor & map-maker of that same date.

Clippings from many sources now in Sterling Historical Society Files.

History of Sterling (1781-1931) to Commemorate 150th Anniv. of Town, has picture of Town Hall (p. 5) with notation about John M. Stevenson, maker of Doric columns. (John Springer, the architect, came to Sterling from Lancaster, N.H. He mar. dau. of Dr. John Barnard, prominent physician of the Town. Elizabeth, wife, died 6-9-1856 a. 83; he d. 2-5-1866, a. 83; bur. in Sterling Source: Cheever Cemetery Records; and Town V.R.).

\* Hurd, Hist. of Worc. Co., Vol. 1 pp. 490-491, tells of Springer, the architect, of dedication ceremonies and of musical concert which followed.

RESTRICTIONS None. Restrictions set by Ebenezer Pope in 1799 were recinded by 1835 when new Town Hall was built. See Deed (1834) Vol. 298, p. 36

Original Owner: of Land (with restrictions on Town House to be built) Ebenezer Pope  
 Deed Information: Book Number 168 Page 60 Worc. Co. Registry of Deeds

Vol. 298, p. 367, recinds restrictions, & land given outright to town - @ \$80.00, given by Jacob Conant and Betsey P. Conant, his wife. She was dau. of Ebenezer Pope. The said Ebenezer Pope died 3-24-1825 a. 73 yrs., bur. Sterling.

We learn that Architect and Builder, John Springer came to Sterling some time before Feb. 27, 1814, the date upon which he filed marriage intentions to Eliza (both) Barnard of Sterling. She was a daughter of Dr. John Barnard and Elizabeth (Fairbanks) Barnard. Dr. John Barnard had come to Sterling from Bolton with his wife and family, some years earlier and lived in an early home he had erected on the south easterly part of Redstone Hill. Dr. Barnard & wife were admitted to the Church, then known as the first church of Sterling, in 1795, on November 22nd. Daughters: Eliza, Sophia & Lucy were admitted to the church on Dec. 18, 1803. (Source: Rev. Reuben Holcomb Records)

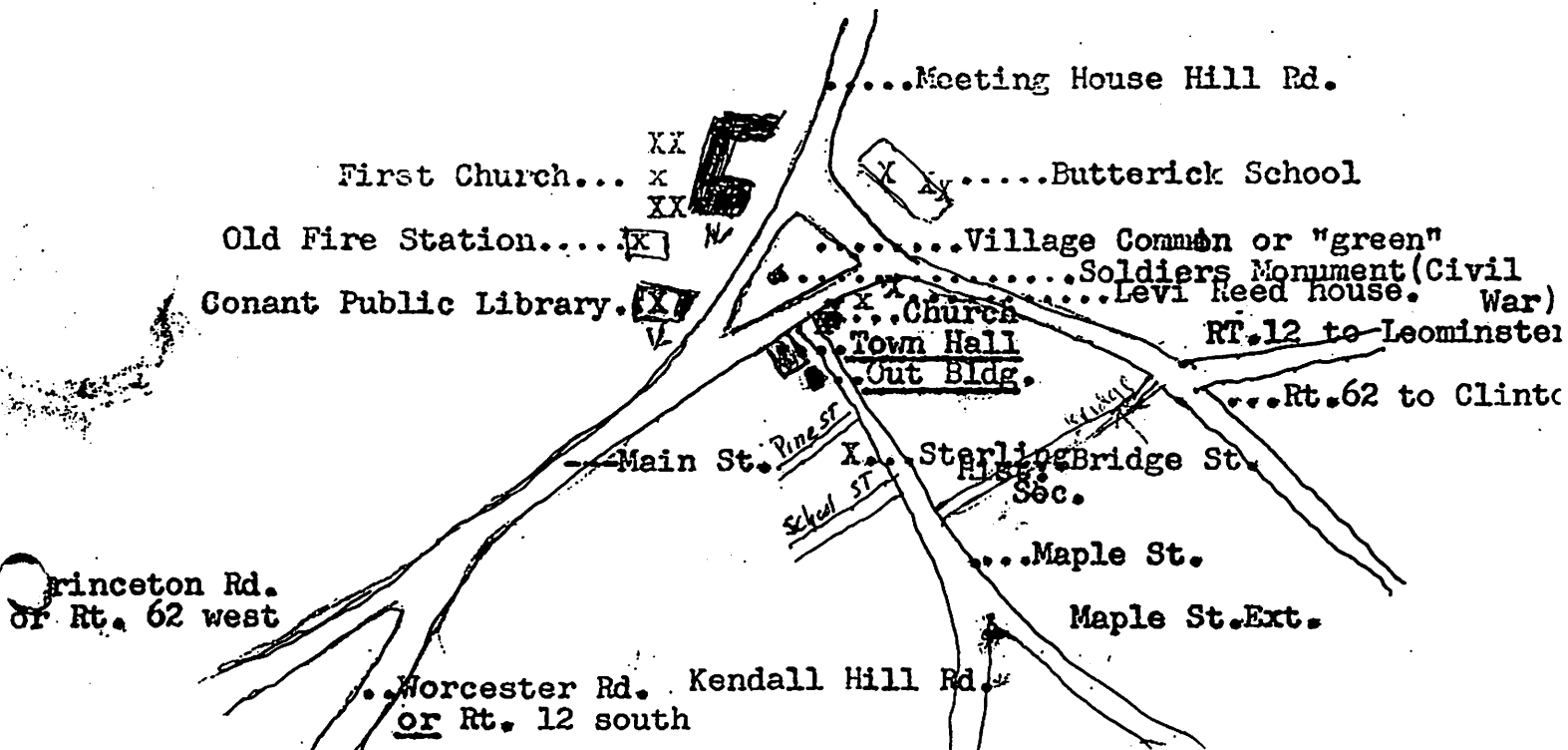
From Death Records of Sterling, we learn that John Springer, died ae. 83, on Feb. 1, 1866, at Sterling, Widower, Carpenter, born Conway, New Hampshire, son of Samuel Springer of that place. (Reg. 2 p. 7.)

John Stevenson, the builder of the Doric Columns on front of Town Hall (1807-1883) was married to a local girl Ruhamah M. Butterick, and they lived in an old house in or near the Rowley Hill area of Sterling. She was dau. of Francis (6) Butterick, and sister of Ebenezer (7) Butterick of Butterick Pattern Fame ("Early Families of Chocksett Church", by Frederick Lewis Weis-Butterick Family Lineage)

From a historical clipping dated Feb. 28 (Year unknown) Worcester Daily Telegram - we learn that the addition to the east end of the Town Hall was built with funds given by Mrs. Jane (Bailey) Kilburn, widow of Capt. Eli Kilburn, in 1893. The Town Voted at March Meeting to accept her gift of \$2000, for the enlargement and beautification of the Town Hall, and the answer was taken to Mrs. Kilburn who was then ill, and the thanks of the Town were given to her. Mrs. Kilburn passed away a few days later, not living to see the accomplishment of her desires.

When the addition was built, "the architecture was not changed... The interior was improved and frescoed; a gallery was built at the front end (2nd floor), and a furnace and other modern conveniences were added." The work was completed before the next Town Meeting.

The Town Hall stands almost opposite the First Church across the Town Common, and slightly north east of the Conant Library.



The first Town Hall dedicated around 1800, or shortly thereafter, was said to have been the "first edifice erected in this County, for the purpose of holding Town Meetings" (separate from the Church). It was a decent building 38 X 28', with a porch in front. The upper story was used as a district school house for the Centre district or Ward. (See Vol. 2 p. 46, Worcester Magazine and Historical Journal, History of Sterling by Isaac Goodwin, Published in Worcester, Mass. (1826), William Lincoln and C.C. Baldwin, Editors & Publishers.

The second Town Hall, erected on the same site, in November of 1835, was the scene of Dedication Exercises, with an Address by Edwin Conant, Esq. of Worcester, but a native born citizen of Sterling. The building has long been the scene of many public gatherings. During annual Cattle-Show Days, exhibits of fruit, vegetables, hand work, and various types of canning and cooking were on display for possible prize-winning items.

Graduation Exercises for the Schools, which had been held in the Churches of Sterling, after 1893, were held in the newly enlarged Town Hall.

Dinners and Suppers were held on the first floor of the Town Hall on many occasions, and well-known early singing masters were heard in the upper Hall. It was the custom to place exhibits of antique interest and historical value in the Hall on special Anniversary Celebrations. Public Dances, and Private Dancing lessons were held in the upper Hall. Until recently, all regular Town Meetings were held in this building. Because of the increase in population during recent years it has been necessary to hold Town Meetings in the Houghton School in southerly area of Town.

During the visit of General Lafayette in 1824, Townspeople in charge of the welcoming committee, erected a large platform across the road from the Town Hall in the Village Common or Park.

During past years the Town has placed many pictures of value on the walls of the upper Town Hall. Some are in storage now, but two remaining oil paintings should be noted:

1. Oil Portrait of William Alexander, better known as Lord Stirling, of Revolutionary War Fame. It has been said that Sterling was the first town to have been called by this name (in 1781), in honor of that famous Patriot under whom so many Sterling Soldiers served during the War. The Portrait was presented to the Town by Miss Mary Ellen Butterick, daughter of Ebenezer Butterick of Pattern fame. The date of the presentation Ceremony was July 14, 1919. The portrait was done by Miss Eleanor C. Bannister, of Brooklyn, N.Y.
2. Oil Portrait (almost full length) of Chief Justice Prentiss Mellen, born in Sterling, son of the first Minister of Sterling, Rev. John Mellen, who assumed his pastorate in 1744. Judge Mellen was first a United States Senator from Massachusetts until Maine became a separate State in 1820. Chief Justice Mellen became the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Maine in 1820, and died in Portland, Maine Dec. 31, 1840. (He was b. in Sterling in 1764). Joseph B. Kahill, the Artist, painted an original painting of Chief Justice Mellen which hangs in the Supreme Court Bldg. in Portland. The Sterling copy by him was painted later

(under special Commission) by Miss Mary Ellen Butterick, Chief Justice Arthur Prentice Rugg, of our Massachusetts Supreme Court, and by the Honorable Herbert Parker, of Lancaster, famous Attorney of our Commonwealth. Presentation Ceremony was held Nov. 11, 1911, in the Sterling Town Hall. Judge Rugg, the Hon. Herbert Parker, and other guests gave special Addresses upon this occasion.

During recent years the only regular occupants of the Town Hall were Members of the Welfare and Nursing Departments, and the Police Office.

On or about November 1st of 1971, a decided change occurred in the 1st floor rooms of the Town Hall. Many Offices of the Town are now quartered there including the Board of Selectmen, Assessors, the Town Clerk; the Electric Light Department (collection dept.), Town Accountant, etc. Prior to this change, the Police Dept. Office had been moved to a renovated first floor room. Some rather rapid renovation work has been done to satisfy the immediate needs of those officials who are now housed in the old Town Hall, but care should be taken in future restoration work to insure the historic elements of this building are kept unspoiled.

A sizeable amount of money will be needed for restoration projects on this building, which will probably be slow in coming because of the rapidly rise in Taxes, and the many needs of an increasing population rate necessitating new schools, roads, and other necessary utilities. It is the hope of the Historical Commission that Federal or State Funds may become available to aid in such a restoration Project over a five- or more, year period.

*Frances P. Tapley*  
 Frances P. Tapley (Mrs. George O.)  
 Chairman, Historical Commission,  
 Sterling, Massachusetts.