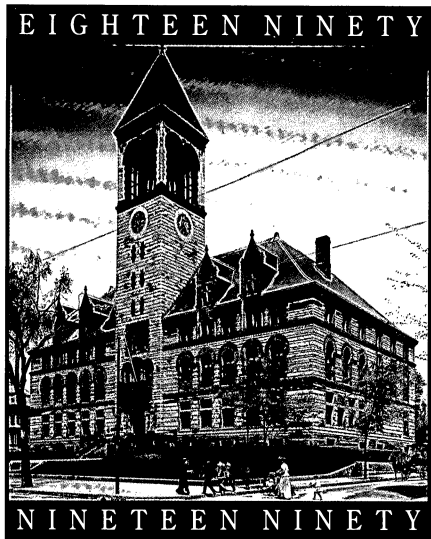


C A M B R I D G E



C I T Y • H A L L

This is one building that in the broadest, truest way always has reflected and always will the life of the city. The rich memories of the past, the life of the present, and the brightest hopes for the future, all cluster around it, and within its walls will find a full and true expression. Whatever is good and just and noble in our municipal life, together with its faults, its errors, and its shortcomings, will be the history written on its walls, by which posterity will judge how well we did the duty set before us.

–Speech of the Hon. William E. Russell,
at the laying of the cornerstone, May 15, 1889

Cambridge City Council

Alice K. Wolf, Mayor

Kenneth E. Reeves, Vice Mayor

Ed Cyr

Francis H. Duehay

Jonathan S. Myers

Sheila T. Russell

Walter J. Sullivan

Timothy J. Toomey, Jr.

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Cambridge Historical Commission

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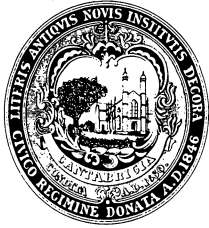
John Whisnant

M. Wyllis Bibbins, alternate

Suzanne R. Green, alternate

Charles M. Sullivan, Executive Director

1890-1990



C A M B R I D G E C I T Y H A L L

By Harriet S. White and

the staff of the

Cambridge Historical Commission

Foreword

Cambridge City Hall is a magnificent Richardsonian Romanesque building near the geographic center of the city. For the people who work here, City Hall is something more than stone and mortar: it is the center of our local democracy. In the labyrinth of its halls and offices, city officials hear from residents and address the issues of the day. The ongoing work of city government, such as setting a tax rate or issuing a birth certificate, proceeds.

Since Cambridge was founded in 1630, civil and church covenants drafted by early citizens have evolved into city government, but a hall of assembly has been a constant interrupted only by fire or the construction of a new and grander hall. The present City Hall, donated by a former Cambridge resident, Frederick Hastings Rindge, is the grandest of them all, and represents the highest in civic involvement.

Cambridge has changed greatly in the hundred years since the foundation of City Hall was laid. As Cambridge has welcomed more immigrants and become a truly international city, those who cross the threshold of City Hall or who work here have mirrored these changes. Remembering the people in earlier centuries who protested or spoke out in front of church elders, royal commissioners, or the common council, one cannot but help feel a strong sense of continuity in the City Council chambers.

As Mayor, I have this sense of history when I enter City Hall. This feeling is all the more powerful since Cambridge has long accommodated people who have sought to redress grievances and advocate issues of great importance.

I encourage you to take a good look at City Hall and our government and to appreciate what they mean to us as we approach a new century.

—Mayor Alice K. Wolf

Introduction

This volume celebrates the 100th anniversary of the completion of Cambridge City Hall. It traces the movement of the seat of Cambridge government from its earliest days and describes the design and building of Frederick H. Rindge's great gift to his native city.

City Hall is one of Cambridge's best known landmarks. Built in a period of unprecedented growth and prosperity, it embodies ambition and optimism, relating the City's pride in its past and its confidence in its future. Its monumental scale and its longevity suggest permanence, stability, and a commitment that the City's civic and cultural values will endure.

The Cambridge Historical Commission is proud to publish this commemorative booklet. We acknowledge the research and authorship of Harriet White particularly and the assistance of the staff of the Commission under the direction of Charles Sullivan. We also thank City Clerk Joseph Connarton and Donald York of the Cambridge Public Library. We leave to other writers the tantalizing prospect of revealing some of the innumerable tales that could be told of what has transpired inside City Hall during the past 100 years.

*—William B. King, Chairman
Cambridge Historical Commission*



City Hall is Cambridge's most celebrated civic building. Designed in 1888 by the architectural firm of Longfellow, Alden & Harlow, it is a fine example of Richardsonian Romanesque architecture, the preferred style for public buildings in the United States during the 1880s.

Imposingly placed and solidly built, City Hall occupies a prominent site on Massachusetts Avenue, the city's major thoroughfare. The site is bordered on the north by residential streets lined with mid- to late-19th-century houses. To the east and across Massachusetts Avenue stand several distinguished civic, institutional, and commercial buildings, among them Saint Mary's Syrian Orthodox Catholic Church, built in 1822 and moved to 8 Inman Street in 1888, the Cambridge Mutual Fire Insurance Building (1888, John A. Hasty) at 763 Massachusetts Avenue, the Y.M.C.A. (1896, Hartwell, Richardson & Driver; addition, 1910, Newhall & Blevins) at 826 Massachusetts Avenue, and the Central Square Post Office (1933, Charles R. Greco).

The location of so many important buildings in close proximity to City Hall was not coincidental. During the City Beautiful movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, planners envisioned cities graced by park systems, wide avenues, and well-defined civic centers. The city officials of Cambridge, in selecting the site for their new City Hall, hoped that the area along Massachusetts Avenue would develop in such a manner.

Early Town Halls

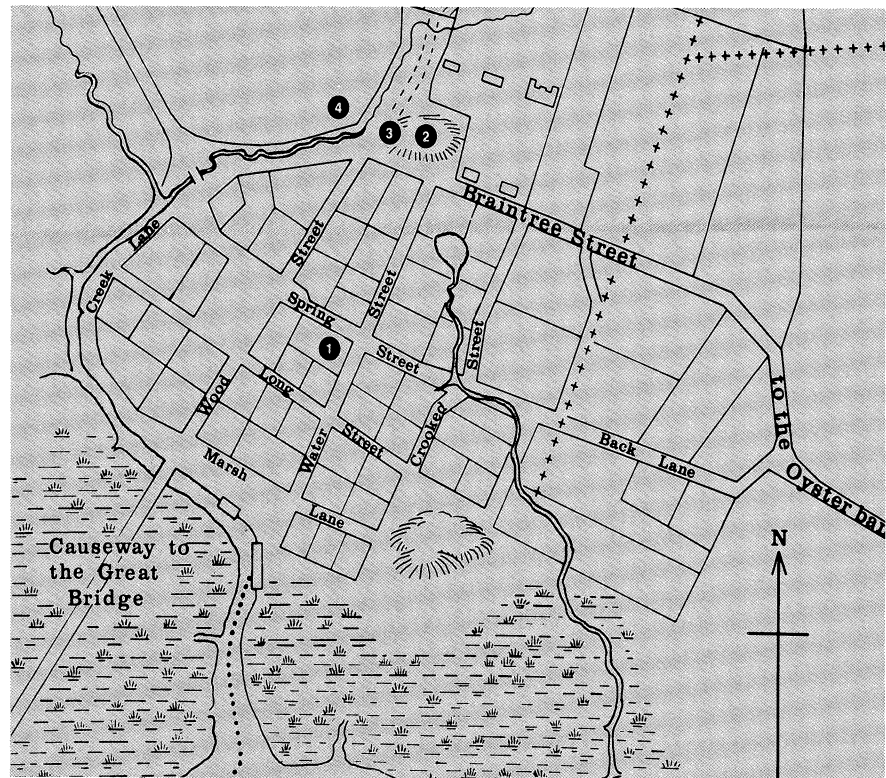
For the first two hundred years, Cambridge town meetings were held in a succession of meetinghouses and courthouses in what is now Harvard Square (Fig. 1). None of these early buildings has survived, but their history and changing uses illustrate the development of the town government from a closely knit religious community to a strictly secular body following the legal separation of church and state in 1833.

When the Puritan founders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony formed their towns and churches, they entered into two solemn agreements known as covenants. A civil covenant united the early inhabitants of Cambridge as a political body; a church covenant established religious unity. In this civic and religious establishment, known as the Standing Order, meetinghouses were built with public funds and used for both town meetings and religious purposes.

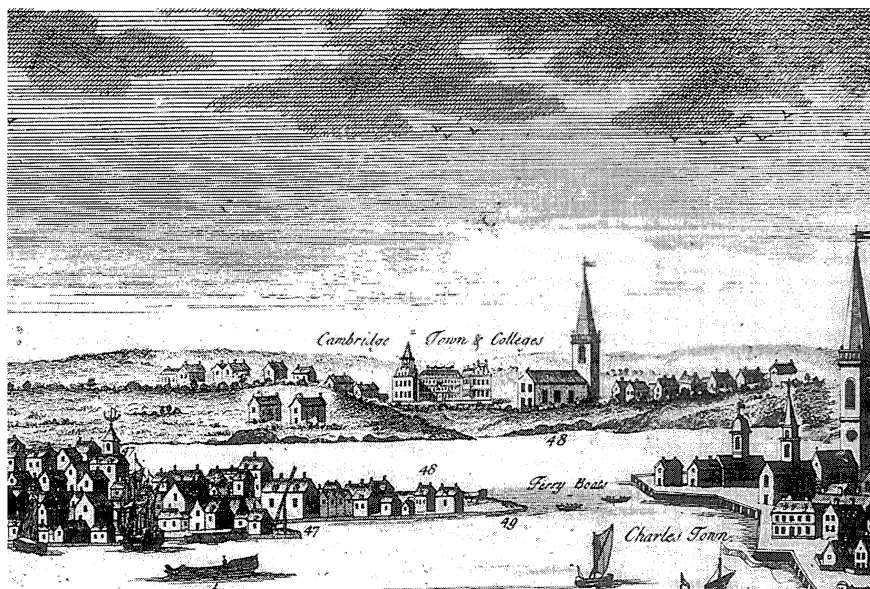
Under the Standing Order, the inhabitants of every town were required by law to support public worship, and town government consisted of church members voting on secular concerns. Eventually, the population of Cambridge included growing numbers of people who were not church members but who were nevertheless required to pay taxes to support the meetinghouse and the public teaching of religion. This arrangement lasted in Massachusetts until 1833, when taxes ceased to be levied for support of the church.

The first meetinghouse in Cambridge was built in 1632 at the southwest corner of Dunster and Mount Auburn streets, the highest point of land in the

1. The village of Cambridge in 1670, showing the location of successive meetinghouses and courthouses. (1) First meetinghouse; (2) second, third, and fourth meetinghouses; (3) third courthouse; (4) fourth courthouse.



2. Detail of Burgis-Price view of 1743. At right, the third meetinghouse, 1706, demolished 1756



village. Although its exact appearance is unknown, 17th-century accounts describe it as a log-frame structure with a bell. The square pews had hinged seats that could be raised to provide room for standing during prayer. In front of a speaker's desk were seats for the deacon and the elders as well as rows of benches, with men and women seated on opposite sides of the room. After the opening of Harvard College in 1638, the town and college both used the meetinghouse for Sunday worship and other community and college events.

By 1650, the first meetinghouse had deteriorated, and a second, larger meetinghouse was erected on Watch House Hill, now the site of Lehman Hall, in the southwest corner of Harvard Yard. This meetinghouse is known only from references in the *Towne Book* and is thought to have been 40 feet square, with a truncated hip roof. Members were seated on long, narrow benches, with the choicest seats assigned to important members of the community; men were seated apart from women and adults from children.

By 1703, this meetinghouse had become so dilapidated that the citizens voted to replace it. The cost of a new meetinghouse was met by a levy of £280 on the inhabitants of Cambridge. Harvard College contributed another £60, with the stipulation that one gallery be reserved for its students.

The third meetinghouse, completed in 1706, was the last religious building in Cambridge to share space with the town government on a regular basis, although civic meetings with an unusually large attendance were often held in

3. *The fourth courthouse, built in 1758, was used for town meetings until 1832. It was moved in 1841 and demolished in 1930.*



the meetinghouse until the first town hall was opened in 1832. A 1743 engraving, as well as written descriptions, reveal the third meetinghouse to have had a rectangular plan with a tower and a spire (Fig. 2). It was demolished in 1756.

In 1708, the town granted land for a courthouse, the third in Cambridge, to be erected for the use of both county and town. Built on the site of the second meetinghouse at the south end of Harvard Square, this small frame structure, 30 by 24 feet, contained a single courtroom on the second floor and shops on the ground floor and in the cellar, recalling somewhat the arrangement of late medieval town halls in England. It served for both court business and town meetings until the 1750s.

Beginning in 1758, town meetings were held in the fourth courthouse in Cambridge. It was built as a cooperative venture between the county and the town, which also contributed timbers salvaged from the third meetinghouse. Located on the site of the present Harvard Cooperative Society, the courthouse was a 30- by 40-foot frame structure with a stair tower at the west end, crowned by an open octagonal spire resembling that of Old South Church in Boston (Fig. 3). In 1780, this courthouse was the site of the

first popularly elected state constitutional convention. The Massachusetts constitution, drafted on this occasion, is the oldest written constitution in the world still in effect; it was used in 1787 as a model for the United States Constitution.

After Middlesex County moved its judicial activities to East Cambridge in 1816, the courthouse continued to be used for town meetings until 1832, when the first building erected solely for town functions was completed. In 1841 the old courthouse was moved to the corner of Brattle and Palmer streets, where it served a number of commercial purposes and a stint as the first gymnasium of Radcliffe College. It was demolished in 1930.

In 1830, after a particularly large and heated town meeting that had to be held in the meetinghouse because the courthouse was too small, members of the parish began discussing the desirability of erecting a town hall large enough to eliminate the need to use the church for secular business. A committee of prominent citizens representing each section of the city reported in March 1831 that

it is, in their opinion, expedient that a town-house should be erected on the easterly part of the almshouse lot in the parish of Cambridgeport, as more central to the population of the town than the present house, and . . . that when such house shall be finished, all town meetings should be held therein.

Cambridgeport, established after the opening of the West Boston Bridge in 1793, had experienced rapid growth in the early 19th century. By 1820 the population of the village exceeded that of Old Cambridge, and the area had begun to challenge the traditional center of power and influence in Old Cambridge.

The decision to build the new town hall in centrally located Cambridgeport, and the resulting shift of leadership away from Harvard Square, sparked much controversy. The rivalry between the two villages was not resolved until Cambridge was incorporated as a city in 1846.

Following the recommendations of the committee, the town hall was sited on the southwest corner of Norfolk and Harvard streets, near the almshouse and across from an area known as "eight block place," which had been proposed as a civic center for Cambridgeport. To design the building, the town engaged Asher Benjamin, one of the leading architects in early-19th-century New England. Benjamin was well known as the author of numerous handbooks on architecture, which were widely circulated among members of the building profession. It is an indication of the importance the Cambridge

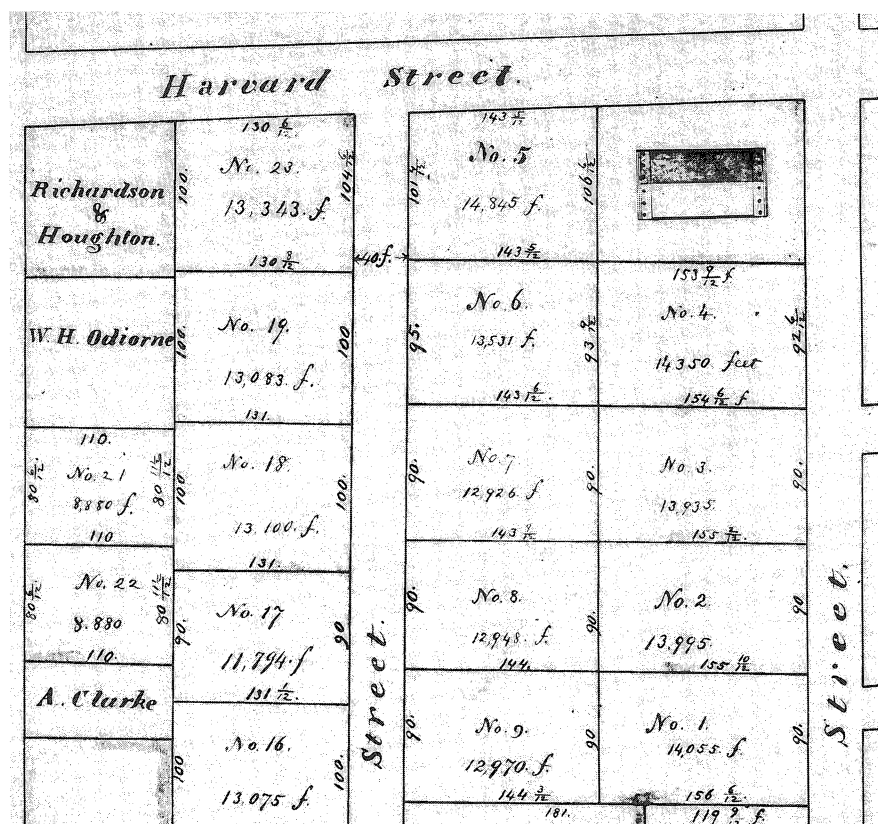
officials placed on their new town hall that they chose such a distinguished architect.

Benjamin's design was a Greek Revival building based on the Doric temple form with a portico on each end (Fig. 4). No drawings or photographs of this building are known, but the city's eminent historian and City Clerk, Lucius Paige, preserved the complete handwritten specifications for its construction (Fig. 5):

The [town] house is to be of wood, forty-six feet in front or breadth, and seventy-six feet long, with posts twenty feet four inches high and the roof one-fourth of its base in height; on each end of the building, (in addition to the aforesaid length) will be a portico of six feet in width, consisting of six fluted Doric columns, with an entablature and pediment.

The interior consisted of one principal hall 59 feet long, the whole width and height of the building. At the rear or west end were two connected

4. Ground plan of the first town hall, Norfolk and Harvard streets, 1836, as shown on a plan of "Town Lots in Cambridge-Port" drawn by surveyor James Hayward in 1836



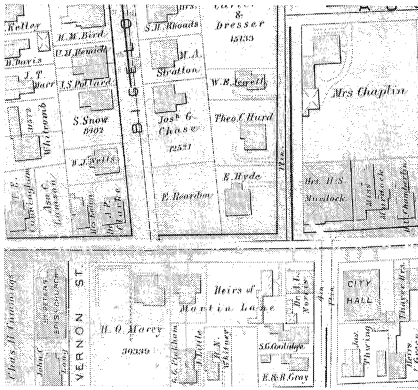
5. Excerpt from specifications for Cambridge's first town hall, 1832

The subscribers, a committee of the town of Cambridge, for building a town house, on the north easterly corner of the Alms house lot, so called, in said town, will receive proposals for furnishing the materials and labor for building the same, according to a plan, drawings and specification thereof, made by A. Benjamin Esq.

Separate proposals are requested for furnishing the materials of wood, iron, and hardware (except door locks) and the carpenter's work; for the mason's work, including lead and lathing of chimnies; and for the painting, glass, and glazing: each kind of work being proposed for by itself. ^(except painting of doors) Proposals must be sealed and delivered to some member of the committee on or before the second day of May next; at which time they will be examined and the lowest offers accepted.

The plan and drawings may be seen at L. S. Cushing's office in Cambridgeport.

The specification is as follows, namely: The house is to be of wood, forty six feet in front, or breadth, and seventy six feet long, with posts twenty feet and four inches ~~high~~ high, and the roof one fourth of its base in height. On each end of the building, in addition to the aforesaid length, will be a portico, of six feet in width, consisting of six fluted Doric columns, with an entablature and pediment, as delin-



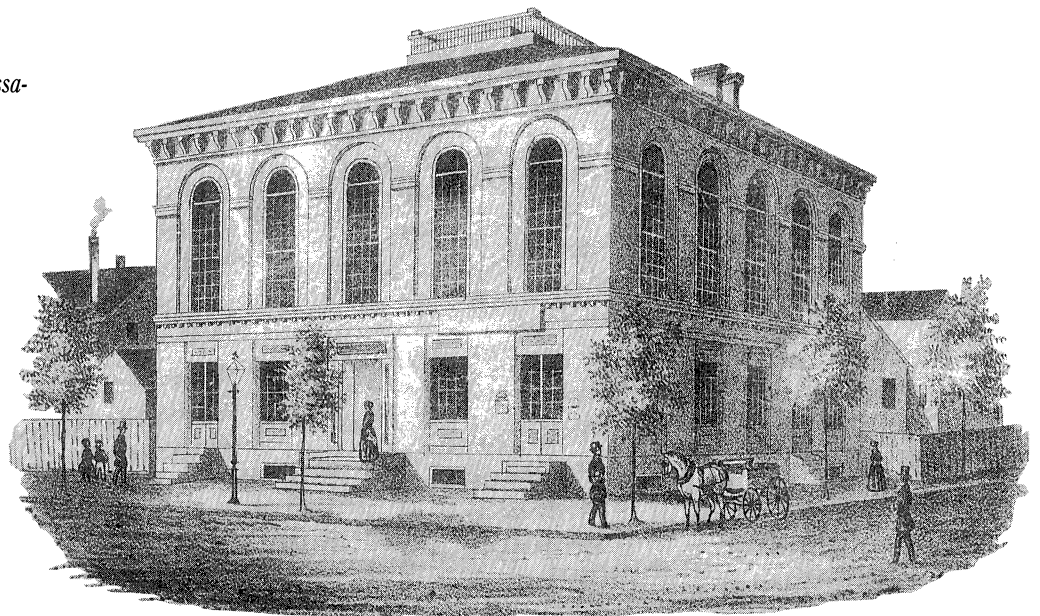
6. Location of the Cambridge Athenaeum in 1873

rooms, each 18 feet long, 15 feet wide, and half the height of the hall; these rooms must have housed the town offices. Above them was a third room, which was reached by two flights of stairs leading up from the principal hall.

The first meeting was held in the new town hall on March 5, 1832. After Cambridge was incorporated as a city, the Mayor and Board of Aldermen continued to use the building until it was destroyed by fire during a blizzard on December 29, 1853. All the papers, books, and records were rescued from the fire, but the building was a total loss.

The city arranged to relocate its offices to the Cambridge Athenaeum, a private library at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Pleasant Street (Fig. 6). Designed in 1851 by Henry Greenough, a local architect, the Athenaeum was a two-story, hip-roofed building, five bays square (Fig. 7). Initially, the city rented rooms there, but the building proved so suitable as a city hall that in 1858 it was purchased for that purpose. When the present City Hall was completed in 1890, it was suggested that the Athenaeum be used as an art gallery or school for training domestic servants. Instead, it became the headquarters of the Prospect Union, an evening school for working men and women. It was demolished in 1922 and replaced by a block of stores.

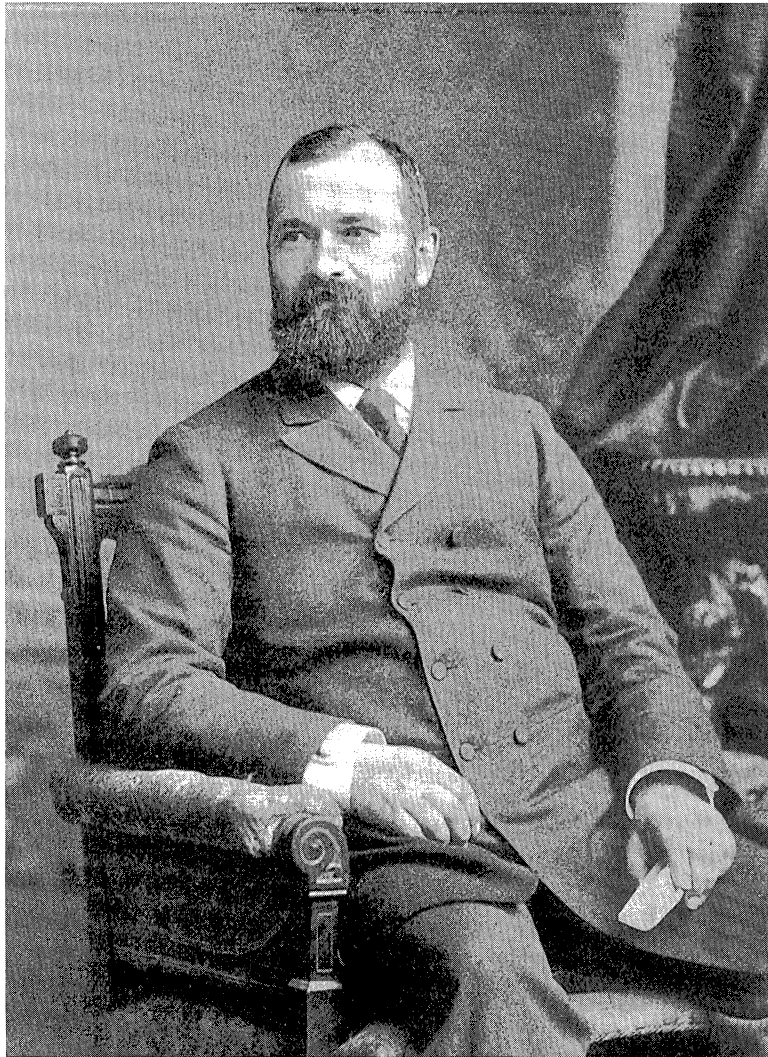
7. Cambridge Athenaeum, 736-750 Massachusetts Avenue, 1851



A Generous Benefactor

During the last quarter of the 19th century, the city experienced unprecedented growth, and the need for additional civic buildings became apparent. The first focus was a new public library, and members of a committee appointed by Mayor William E. Russell sought “wealthy, generous and public-spirited citizens” to contribute to this project. As part of this campaign, Mayor Russell approached his former classmate Frederick Hastings Rindge (Fig. 8), whose response surpassed all expectations. In July 1887, he wrote

8. *Frederick Hastings Rindge (1857–1905)*



to the Mayor, offering land and full funding for a new public library. Later in the year, he offered to build the city three additional civic buildings: a new city hall, a manual training school, and a high school (which was not realized with Rindge funds). The library, designed by Van Brunt & Howe, and the Rindge Manual Training School, designed by Rotch & Tilden, were begun in 1888. Rindge also became a major contributor to the building fund of the Harvard-Epworth Methodist Church, at 1553 Massachusetts Avenue (A. P. Cutting, 1891).

Frederick Hastings Rindge was born in Cambridge in 1857, the son of Samuel Baker and Clarissa Harrington Rindge. His father was a successful businessman, venture capitalist, and owner of a dry goods business in Boston; he also served as president of the Charles River National Bank.

Frederick was the fourth of six children born to his parents and the only one to live to adulthood; his siblings died of scarlet fever as children. He was born at 55 Thorndike Street but grew up at 334 Harvard Street, at the corner of Dana Street, where his family had moved by 1861. Rindge entered Harvard College in 1875, but he was forced to spend much of his senior year in Florida because of illness; he later graduated as a member of the class of 1879. He then spent several years traveling through Europe and America, and enjoyed a brief period as a sheep rancher in Colorado. In 1883 his father died, followed by his mother in 1885.

Two years later Frederick Rindge's life changed dramatically. At the age of twenty-nine, Rindge inherited his parents' estate of nearly \$3 million, married Rhoda May Knight of Michigan, and moved to California, hoping the climate would improve his health. Just before he left Cambridge, Mayor Russell approached him about the public library, and Rindge, wishing to use part of his new wealth for the public good, decided to concentrate his philanthropic efforts in his native city. Recalling conversations with his father about wanting to benefit the citizens of Cambridge, he later wrote:

I am persuaded that had my father lived until now, he would have made some such gifts to Cambridge, and that I have used a portion of the wealth which he amassed in a way that would have met his cordial approval.

Rindge also explained his personal goals: "What I am aiming to do is to establish certain didactic public buildings." All of his gifts came with the condition that morally instructive inscriptions related to the themes of religion, patriotism, education, and industry be included in the designs and that his name never appear on the buildings.

Rindge proved to be a shrewd businessman in California, multiplying his inheritance by investing in oil, real estate, and the insurance industry. He died in California in 1905, at the age of forty-nine. His obituary in the *Los Angeles Times* concluded:

His was a grand and lofty character in the best sense of the terms. He helped make the world move and make it better. They are mourning for him this morning on the shores of the Atlantic as well as on the Pacific. Christian civilization will have a well-marked niche for him in its memoirs. Progress will lay a wreath on his bier.

Choosing a Site

The terms of Rindge's gift for City Hall stated that the city had to provide "a worthy site" for the new building. The site selected, on Massachusetts Avenue between Inman and Bigelow streets, had originally been part of a 17th-century land grant to Governor Thomas Dudley, who used it primarily for cutting timber and grazing livestock.

In 1756, 180 acres were sold to Ralph Inman, a prosperous merchant, who built a large, three-story mansion facing Inman Lane (now Inman Street). The house was reached by a long carriage drive bordered by ornamental locust trees, and the grounds were handsomely landscaped with a pond surrounded by willow trees. Because of his Tory sympathies, Inman fled during the Revolutionary War, and the mansion was taken over as military headquarters for General Isaac Putnam. Not until 1788 did Inman return to Cambridge to reclaim his house. In 1801 the estate was seized from a subsequent owner, Leonard Jarvis, for nonpayment of taxes, and the government divided the land into smaller parcels that were sold at public auction.

Over the next fifty years, however, the area developed slowly. Nearby Central Square became the city's most prosperous business district, but it was not until after the Civil War that significant building activity occurred along Bigelow Street and lower Inman Street. Here large, comfortable houses were built in the prevailing Mansard style, and the neighborhood became a fashionable address for members of the middle class that emerged during the prosperous postwar period.

To acquire the land for City Hall, the city had to take several of these fairly new residences by eminent domain. Four of them were auctioned by

3965
 5030
 30
 45
 19
 19
 13
 11
 9
 9
 7
 5
 5002
 703
 697
 693
 8 in.

Jos. H. Jessor
 4936
 2000
 R.L. Snow
 2962
 David Wilcox
 5988
 John C. Bullard
 5921
 Martha
 Whittlemore
 M. Ediz. Noyes
 5934
 4500
 Kelley
 6466
 Hrs. H.M. Bird
 2821
 R. E. Demmon
 3578
 Jno. S. Pollard
 Simeon Snow
 8344
 Henry J. Wells
 5175
 Eva A.
 Kochshart
 3150
 Mary C. Clarke
 5012

3040
 1941
 3040
 1941
 28
 24
 22
 18
 16
 14
 12
 10
 8
 6
 5
 6 in.

Jas. M. Peabody
 1719
 Ella Bowles
 4891
 Albin M. Richards
 4000
 F.A. Dole
 4000
 A.N. Brazier
 4000
 Mary P. Vee
 4000
 Theo. C. Aurd
 6200
 W. O. Barbour
 6537
 Hrs. Martha Stratton
 6516
 1941
 Jas. Lake Jr.
 2633
 4528
 B. P. Clarke
 C.G.H. Bennett
 4993
 4912
 Jas. Lake Jr.
 3115
 7844
 Jas. H. Bennett
 Martha Wellington
 7064
 Edwin Dresser
 7594
 CITY HALL
 47.878

2
 26
 24
 22
 19
 17
 152
 14
 12
 8
 6
 5
 12 in.

Hrs. Otis Howe
 9755
 C.I. Thompson
 5900
 Hiram Newby
 8527
 Francis Maguire
 6379
 Maria Heywood
 5971
 Adolphus Osborn
 35.869
 6 in. AUST
 Martha B. Phillips
 21.466
 FIRST
 UNIV. CHURCH
 15.312
 CAMBRIDGE
 MUTUAL
 FIRE INS. CO
 6620
 UNION
 M.E.CH.
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 J. Dr.
 Chamberlin
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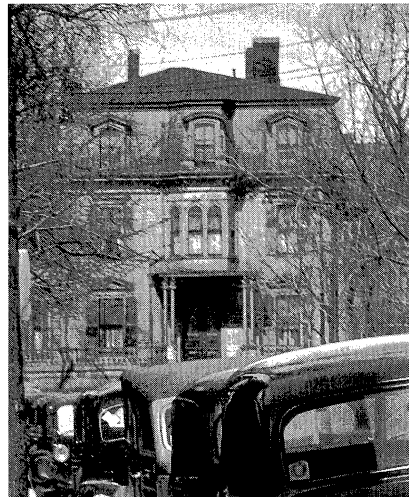
9. *City Hall and surroundings in 1894*

the city and relocated within the neighborhood to clear the site (Fig. 9). Two of these houses still exist. The Edward Hyde House (1870) was relocated to 20–22 Bigelow Street (Fig. 10), and the Fuller-Hurd House (1870) was moved to 15 Inman Street, where it has recently been restored (Fig. 11). The other two houses were relocated to 136 and 144 Austin Street (now Bishop Allen Drive) but were demolished in 1962.



10. *Edward Hyde House, 795 Massachusetts Avenue; now located at 20 Bigelow Street. Photograph 1886*

11. *Fuller-Hurd House, 15 Inman Street, 1870. Photograph 1940*



Designing the Building

Once a site was chosen, the city held a limited design competition for City Hall. Rindge appointed a citizens' committee to oversee the design and construction of the new building. He also established some constraints:

The building is not to be palatial, but comely and substantial, its architecture expressing honesty and strength. Elaborate decoration, interior or exterior, is not desired.

With these goals in mind, the committee solicited designs from several prominent architectural firms, including Peabody & Stearns, Van Brunt & Howe, Chamberlin & Whidden, John Lyman Faxon, and Longfellow, Alden & Harlow.

In 1888, the committee selected the Richardsonian Romanesque design submitted by Longfellow, Alden & Harlow, and Rindge soon gave his approval (Fig. 12). The Romanesque Revival style refined by the renowned architect Henry Hobson Richardson was popular for public buildings in the 1880s, and all the buildings Rindge donated to Cambridge were in this style, although each was designed by a different architect.

The firm of Longfellow, Alden & Harlow had been established in 1887 and lasted for ten years. Alexander Wadsworth Longfellow (1854–1934), a son of the poet who had grown up in Cambridge, began his career as a draftsman in Richardson's office. Frank E. Alden (1859–1908) was a local architect who had been sent by Richardson to Pittsburgh in 1885 to supervise the construction of the Allegheny County Courthouse. Alfred B. Harlow (1859–1927) had worked for McKim, Mead & White in New York during his early career.

Cambridge City Hall was one of the firm's most notable commissions. Their other work in the city included a number of substantial houses for well-to-do residents of Old Cambridge, Winthrop Hall for the Episcopal Divinity School, and at least eight buildings for Harvard and Radcliffe.

Laying the Cornerstone

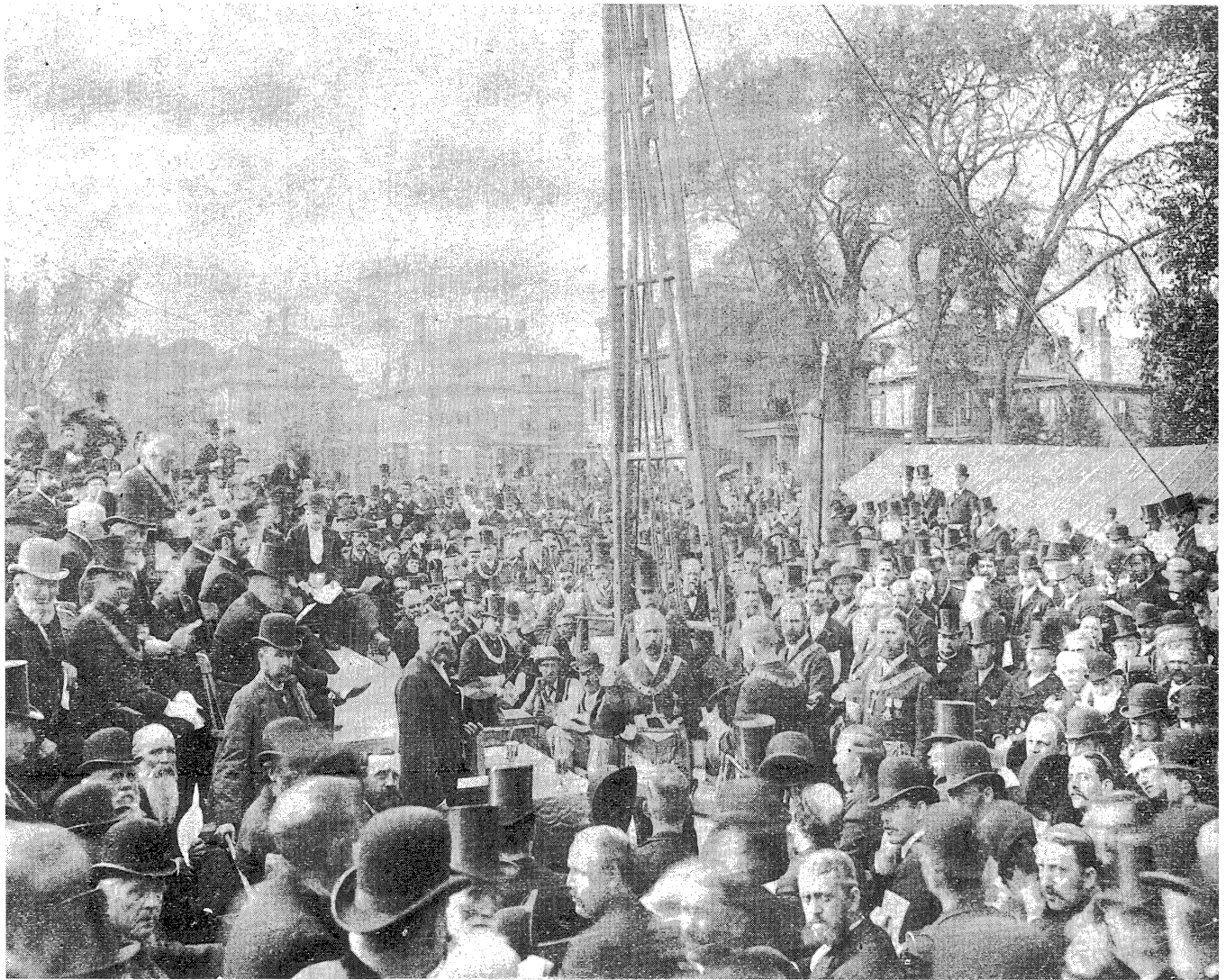
On February 1, 1889, ground was broken for City Hall, and on May 15 the cornerstone was laid with great fanfare (Fig. 13). One newspaper described the day as "a beautiful spring afternoon; nature smiled on the proceedings." A brass band led the procession from Central Square to the building site, where hundreds of people attended a ceremony presided over by the mayors of Cambridge and Boston.

ACCEPTED DESIGN FOR
CAMBRIDGE CITY HALL

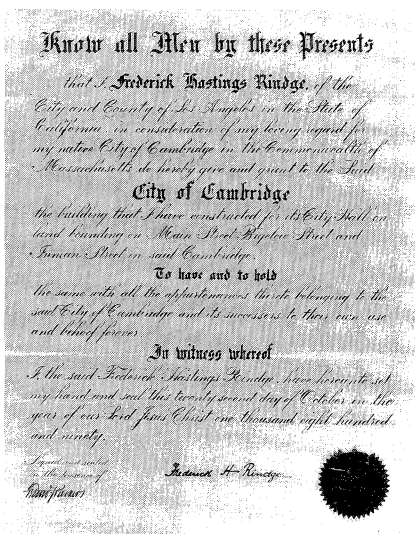


*Longfellow Alden & Harlow
Architects*

12. Sketch for Cambridge City Hall, 1888, by Longfellow, Alden & Harlow



13. *Laying the cornerstone, May 15, 1889*



14. Deed of Gift from Frederick Hastings Rindge, 1890

During the late 19th century, it was customary for Masonic lodges to conduct dedications and lay the cornerstones of public buildings. Similar rites were supposed to have been used to consecrate cathedrals in medieval Europe. The rites for laying the cornerstone of Cambridge City Hall were directed by the Most Worshipful Henry Endicott, the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts. After a prayer by the Grand Chaplain, the City Clerk laid under the cornerstone a box containing mementos of the period: a map of Cambridge, documents relating to the Rindge gift, an 1889 city directory, Cambridge newspapers dated May 11, 1889, the City's annual report for 1888, ballots from the 1888 municipal election, and reports of other city organizations. Using a trowel, a level, a plumb, and a square, the tools of the mason's trade, the Mayor and officials of the Masonic lodges spread a layer of mortar that was anointed with the traditional libation of corn, wine, and oil as the cornerstone was laid in place. The ceremonial tools were then presented to the architect.

Although Rindge himself was not present, he was well remembered. Mayor Henry H. Gilmore eloquently declared as the cornerstone was laid that "the solid foundations are in position before you, and the name of Frederick H. Rindge will be held in grateful recollection longer than this quarried granite shall withstand the ravages of time." Speeches by Grand Master Henry Endicott, former Mayor William E. Russell, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, and General Edward W. Hincks concluded the celebration.

The New Cambridge City Hall

Frederick Rindge formally deeded the completed building to the city on October 22, 1890 (Fig. 14). City Hall stands imposingly on a terraced hilltop facing Massachusetts Avenue but separated from it by a 50-foot-deep expanse of lawn (Fig. 15). The three-and-one-half-story, hip-roofed building is organized symmetrically around a monumental central tower. It follows a U-shaped plan with an open court on the north side to ensure abundant natural lighting.

In accordance with Rindge's wishes for a relatively plain building without elaborate decoration, the principal exterior ornamentation is provided by the contrasting colors of masonry. All the exterior walls are pink Milford granite ashlar with rough-hewn surfaces. The foundation, belt courses between the floor levels, and window and door surrounds are all a deep brown Longmeadow brownstone. The contrasting colors of masonry, the horizontal bands



15. *Cambridge City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue. Photograph 1910*

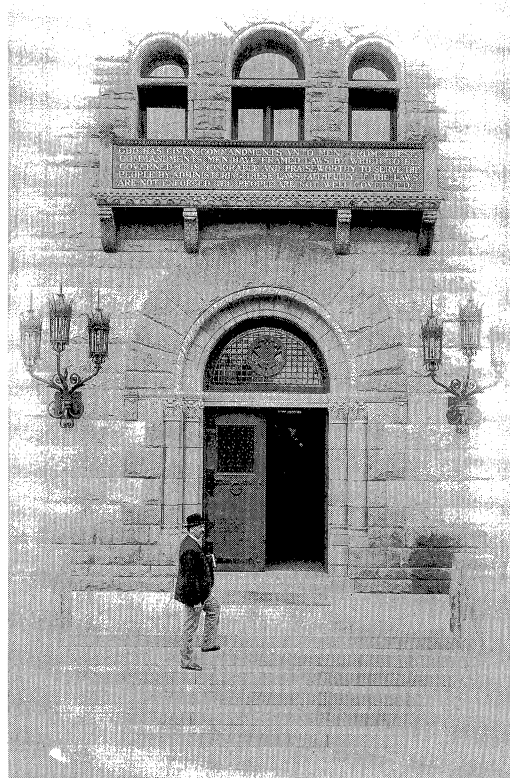
of windows, and the arched entrance flanked by stocky engaged columns are all characteristic of the Richardsonian Romanesque style.

City Hall is approached by a ceremonial flight of stairs leading to the base of the tower and the arched center entrance with its medieval-inspired ornament (Fig. 16). The original oak entrance doors had heavy decorative wrought-iron strap hinges. The entrance is flanked by paired engaged columns with foliated capitals and by ornate wrought-iron lanterns. Above it is a balcony with a panel containing an inscription chosen by Rindge:

God has given Commandments unto Men. From these Commandments Men have framed Laws by which to be governed. It is honorable and praiseworthy to faithfully serve the people by helping to administer these Laws. If the Laws are not enforced, the People are not well governed.

Above the entrance, the massive tower rises almost 160 feet and forms the central, organizing focus of the design. The belfry has tall, open arcades

16. *Front entrance, Cambridge City Hall. Photograph 1891*





17. Main staircase, Cambridge City Hall.
 Photograph 1891

and thin columns of brownstone and contains a two-ton bell, made by the Meneely Company of West Troy, New York. An inscription is cast in raised letters on the bell:

Cheerfully I ring the hour
 From my house within the tower
 But I would a lesson teach
 Even bells men's hearts may reach.

The Lesson:
 The ballot free and pure
 The rights of all secure
 Wrong finds antidote
 When each voter casts his vote.

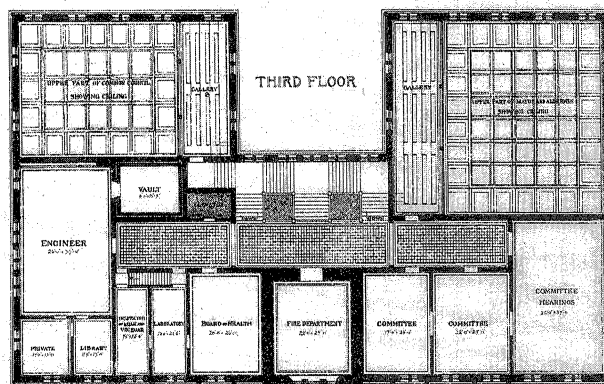
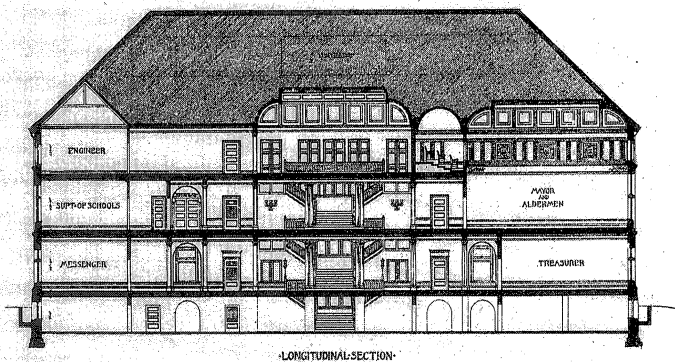
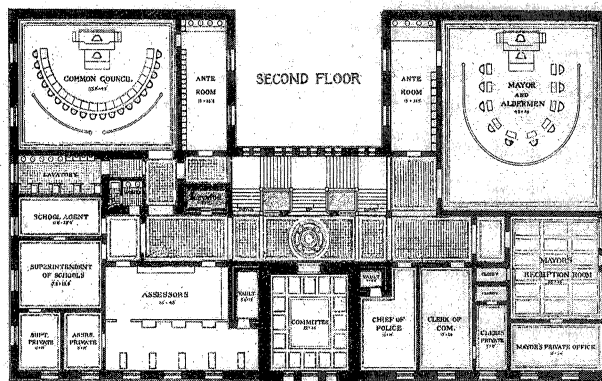
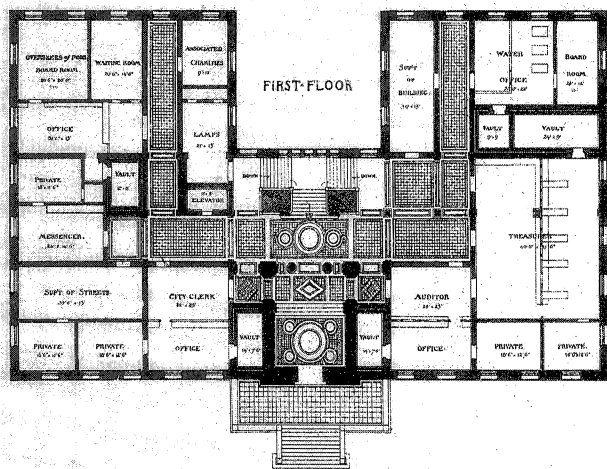
Below the belfry is a clock manufactured by the E. Howard Watch & Clock Company of Waltham with a clock face on each side of the tower. The tower, with its belfry and clock faces, marks the building as the center of civic life.

The vestibule has brick walls inset with marble panels and a floor mosaic of marble tiles; it is lighted by an intricate wrought-iron chandelier. The vestibule opens into the large formal entrance hall, where four Romanesque columns mark the base of the tower. A wide central stair with handsome turned balusters, carved posts, and wainscoting all in oak dominates the interior space by dividing at a landing and reaching the floors above in two runs along the back wall of the building (Fig. 17). Like the staircase, the halls, doors, and trim are oak.

Inside, the first and second floors originally contained all the principal city offices except the Fire Department, which was in the tower room on the third floor. The Mayor's office and reception room, the Aldermanic chamber (now the City Council chamber), the Common Council chamber, and additional offices were on the second floor (Fig. 18). The basement contained a machine shop for the Water Department.

The furniture for City Hall was manufactured in East Cambridge by Kee-ler & Company and has Romanesque motifs to complement the architecture. Many of the original quartered oak desks, benches, and chairs are still in use.

Although the structure of city government has evolved since the building opened in 1890, much of its original interior, including the furnishings, remains remarkably intact. The greatest alteration has been to the chamber of the Common Council in the east wing, where an additional floor was inserted



18. Floor plans and sections of Cambridge City Hall, Longfellow, Alden & Harlow



after a unicameral system was adopted in 1915. Other alterations have consisted mainly of partitioning large interior rooms to create additional offices, but much of the handsome paneling and elaborately carved trim of oak and ash has recently been restored.

The City Council Chamber

The richly ornamented City Council chamber is the most important ceremonial room in City Hall, and its late-19th-century decorative scheme is one of the few remaining in civic buildings in the Boston area (Fig. 19). Handsome paneled oak doors lead into the chamber, which measures 42 by 48 feet and is furnished in oak. The area for the Mayor and City Councillors is separated from the spectators by a curved railing, and additional seating is available in a gallery with Corinthian columns along the west wall.

The elaborate stenciling on the walls above the paneling that encircles the chamber is not original. Perhaps because of Rindge's stipulation about avoiding excessive decoration, the walls were originally painted a solid color. Not long after the building was completed, however, the lower walls were stenciled in a repeating geometric and floral pattern in ochre and dark red and the upper level given green painted panels edged in tan floral stenciling. Above the windows, the room rises to a lofty coffered ceiling.

In 1979 the chamber was restored, with an intent to preserve the room's most distinguished features and still meet contemporary needs. The stenciling was handsomely reproduced, and the upper walls and ceiling were painted their original colors. The lighting and sound systems were upgraded, the wainscoting was restored, and the portrait collection was cleaned and rehung.

In connection with the centennial of City Hall, in 1990 the city commissioned a study of the entire building. Based on this report, restoration efforts will be extended beyond the Council chamber. Among the main tasks will be to repair masonry damage in the tower, repair the original wooden windows, restore the interior finishes in the public spaces, and return the clock to working order.

19. Restored City Council chamber, Cambridge City Hall. Photograph 1979

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1. Cambridge Historical Commission

2. American Antiquarian Society

3. Cambridge Historical Commission

4. James Hayward, "Town Lots in Cambridge-port, Surveyed September 20, 1836." Middlesex County Registry of Deeds, Plan Book Room. Formerly filed in Book 357, end page.

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10. Cambridge Historical Commission

11. Cambridge Engineering Department Collection, Cambridge Historical Commission

12. *American Architect and Building News*, July 28, 1888

13. *Cambridge Chronicle Semi-Centennial Souvenir*, 1896

14. City of Cambridge

15. Detroit Publishing Company collection, Library of Congress

16. Frederick Hastings Rindge Photo Album, 1891, Cambridge Public Library

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18. Frederick Hastings Rindge Photo Album, 1891, Cambridge Public Library

19. James Higgins photograph, Ann Beha Associates

Cambridge Mayors, 1846–1990

Inaugurated

James D. Green	May 1846	Alpheus Alger	January 1891	Francis H. Duehay	January 1980
Sydney Willard	April 1848	William A. Bancroft	January 1894	Alfred E. Vellucci	February 1982
George Stevens	April 1851	Alvin F. Sortwell	January 1897	Leonard J. Russell	January 1984
James D. Green	April 1853	Edgar E. Champlin	January 1899	Francis H. Duehay	July 1985
Abraham Edwards	April 1854	David T. Dickinson	January 1901	Walter J. Sullivan	January 1986
Zebina L. Raymond	January 1855	John H. H. McNamee	January 1902	Alfred E. Vellucci	January 1988
John Sargent	January 1856	Augustine J. Daly	January 1904	Alice K. Wolf	January 1990
James D. Green	January 1860	Charles H. Thurston	January 1906		
Charles T. Russell	July 1861	Walter C. Wardwell	January 1907		
George C. Richardson	January 1863	William F. Brooks	April 1907		
Zebina L. Raymond	January 1864	J. Edward Barry	April 1911		
J. Warren Merrill	January 1865	Timothy W. Good	April 1914		
Ezra Parmenter	January 1867	Wendell D. Rockwood	January 1916		
Charles H. Saunders	January 1868	Edward W. Quinn	January 1918		
Hamlin R. Harding	January 1870	Richard M. Russell	January 1930		
Henry O. Houghton	January 1872	John D. Lynch	January 1936		
Isaac Bradford	January 1873	John W. Lyons	January 1938		
Frank A. Allen	January 1877	Francis L. Sennott	July 1941		
Samuel L. Montague	January 1878	John H. Corcoran	January 1942		
James M. W. Hall	January 1880	Francis L. Sennott	December 1945		
James A. Fox	January 1881	John D. Lynch	January 1946		
William E. Russell	January 1885	Michael J. Neville	April 1948		
Henry H. Gilmore	January 1889	Edward A. Crane	January 1950		
		Joseph A. DeGugliemo	January 1952		
		John J. Foley	January 1954		
		Edward J. Sullivan	January 1956		
		Thomas M. McNamara	January 1958		
		Edward A. Crane	January 1960		
		Daniel J. Hayes, Jr.	January 1966		
		Walter J. Sullivan	January 1968		
		Alfred E. Vellucci	March 1970		
		Barbara Ackerman	January 1972		
		Walter J. Sullivan	February 1974		
		Alfred E. Vellucci	February 1976		
		Thomas H. Danehy	January 1978		

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Designed by Steven B. Smith



City of Cambridge

Committee Report #2a

IN CITY COUNCIL

March 29, 1999

COUNCILLOR BORN

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to provide the City Council with a description of the work planned for City Hall and a description of how a plan for improving public meeting space is being developed, including how members and staff of major boards and commissions (Planning Board, License, BZA and Historical) will be involved in the planning, as well as staff of the Senior Center whose space may be affected.

In City Council March 29, 1999.

Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D. Margaret Drury".

D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk



City of Cambridge

Committee Report #2b

IN CITY COUNCIL

March 29, 1999

COUNCILLOR BORN

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to ensure that whatever work is done in City Hall be done with the provisions that it not preclude restoration of the Common Council room and that the finishes be preserved.

In City Council March 29, 1999.

Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "D. Margaret Drury".

D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk

Mr. Healy described the plan. It will deal with exterior pointing and window replacements, fire safety issues, and some landscaping. They will look at possible changes to the back to create more parking. He then asked Mr. Boyle to provide additional information regarding the renovation plans.

Mr. Boyle reviewed the original plan for complete renovations as of 1992. He said that thereafter a decision was made not to go forward with the entire plan and instead to do some partial rehab; mostly the bell tower restorations, exterior masonry repair, and some interior renovations in offices with the worst overcrowding. Now the City Council has decided to go ahead with the most pressing rehab. Plumbing, heating and electrical systems must be addressed.

Councillor Reeves said that he remembered the decision not to go ahead as being related to economic issues. Mr. Healy agreed that the economic downturn was a big factor. Councillor Reeves asked whether this meeting is to reconsider the larger plan.

Councillor Born stated that she called the meeting because as more rehab is being started, she is very concerned about preserving City Hall as an historic resource. In addition, with the recent discussions at City Council meetings about putting this department here or there, she does not want the City to lose the ability to restore the Common Council Chamber because of decisions made in the course of this partial rehab.

Mr. Healy stated that at the time that the renovations were being considered there was the opportunity of the acquiring of the building at the corner of Prospect Street and Massachusetts Avenue. That did not come to pass. He then described the negotiations with the Local 195 city employee's union that have allowed the use of a dedicated crew of Local 40 carpenters to do the most needed office renovations.

Councillor Reeves asked how the change from the plan to have individual offices for city councillors came about.

Mr. Boyle stated that the decision not to renovate the fourth floor immediately created some changes, especially in the short term.

Councillor Reeves stated that the present Council does not seem to be as interested in individual offices and would probably be willing to give up the office space at the end of the hall if need be to solve pressing space needs. His major concern is to find a way to provide adequate public meeting space. To that end he is interested in hearing more about restoration of the Common Council Chamber. He said that he would also like to see more coherent delivery of services to the public, for example not having to send people to 57 Inman Street to pay parking tickets.

Mr. Healy said that there are plans to accept payment for routine parking tickets at the Treasurer's Office beginning within the next couple of months. He said that there are other solutions to the problem of public meeting space, most especially, use of the Senior Center, the larger ballroom and other space. There are two floors of offices that would have to be relocated to reclaim the Common Council Chamber as public meeting space.

Councillor Reeves said that relegating meetings to the Senior Center may not be an adequate solution. He encouraged City staff to take a look at the renovations of the Harvard Freshman Union building. It shows how you can re-use an historic building very well by using updated classic furnishings.

Councillor Born stated that she believes that it would be very useful to have a facilities master plan.

Mr. Healy agreed that this is an important issue, but noted that the costs are significant, and the capital plan priorities adopted by the City Council are for a police station and a new library. Implementation of a master plan would inevitably call for acquisition of additional space. Before we have a recommendation for a third new building, he would like to make progress on the first two. Mr. Healy then mentioned the possibility of moving the DPW facility to the Fresh Pond Mooney Street area.

Councillor Born stated that when there are so many separate pieces of municipal sitings being discussed, it is important to have an overview, a master plan.

Mr. Healy stated that nothing done in the Phase 2 renovations would foreclose the ability to eventually restore the Common Council Chamber. But in the short term, there is no place to relocate the offices presently located in that space without acquiring another building. The public wants a library; the public doesn't care where City employees have their offices.

Councillor Born noted that the YMCA wants to sell its building. Mr. Healy stated that the City staff are meeting with the YMCA officials. However, the YMCA wants to get the money to build a new YMCA.

Councillor Reeves stated that he agrees that there are a range of space needs, and the City owns a variety of buildings, some of which could use some rethinking. He noted the availability of 678 Massachusetts Avenue. Mr. Healy described the parking issues.

Councillor Reeves emphasized the importance of communication among staff and elected officials. He suggested using this committee for such an exchange.

Both Councillor Born and Councillor Reeves affirmed their lack of interest in micromanaging design. Mr. Boyle suggested having the committee meet quarterly to receive updates on these matters.

Councillor Born moved that the City Manager provide the City Council with a description of the work planned for City Hall and a description of how a plan for improving public meeting space is being developed, including how members and staff of major boards and commissions (Planning Board, License, BZA and Historical) will be involved in the planning, as well as staff of the Senior Center whose space may be affected. The motion was referred to the full City Council.

Mr. Dunphy stated that there has been some success with user group meetings regarding building issues. He agreed with Mr. Boyle that quarterly meetings of this Committee to discuss these issues would probably be helpful.

Councillor Born then invited public comment.

David Chilinsky, 3 ½ Wendell Street, said that he is an architect who works in Cambridge, and stated that he has a certain pride in the city and is concerned about how Cambridge represents itself and treats its public servants. Cambridge may have to accept the fact that the location of its government will always be fragmented, there may always be six different buildings. What those buildings are and what they say about the City is more important to him.

Hubert Murray, Erie Street, an architect who is working on a public facilities strategic plan for Boston, stated that he agrees with the comments on civic pride. Treating people well where they work is also very important. There is a very strong link between physical space and capital planning and that needs to be made more transparent. An advantage of a master plan is the establishment of a set of objective criteria.

Eric Pfeuffer, Sycamore Street, architect, stated that he is concerned about how anecdotal the subject remains. There are big advantages to defining a strategic approach rather than solving problems as they come up.


Councillor Born stated that it occurs to her that no one has done a mission statement for City Hall. Of all the functions of government, which ones should be located in this building?

Mr. Murray noted that with the City's thoughts about a new library and police station, it is now a participant in the development market.

Councillor Born made a motion that whatever work is done in City Hall be done with the provisions that it not preclude restoration of the Common Council room and that the finishes be preserved. The motion was referred to the full City council.

Councillor Born thanked all those present for their interest and participation. The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

For the Committee,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathleen L. Bern".

Councillor Kathleen Leahy Bern,
Chair

City of Cambridge

In City Council March 29, 1999

The Public Service Committee held a public meeting on March 16, 1999, beginning at 5:52 p.m. in the Sullivan Chamber for the purpose of receiving a presentation from the Director of the Historical Commission regarding the architectural history of City Hall and the availability of grant funding for historic renovations, and for a discussion on the advisability of preparing an analysis and strategic plan for the City's office infrastructure.

Present at the hearing were Kathleen Leahy Born, Chair, Councillor Henrietta Davis, Councillor Kenneth E. Reeves, and City Clerk D. Margaret Drury. Also present were Robert W. Healy, City Manager; Richard Rossi, Deputy City Manager; Charles Sullivan, Executive Director of the Historical Commission; Ralph Dunphy, Commissioner of Public Works; and Gerald Boyle, Supervisor of Public Buildings.

Councillor Born convened the hearing and explained the purpose. She stated that the city administration is about to embark upon the next phase of restoration of City Hall. As chair of the Public Service Committee, she decided that this is an appropriate time for a review of the renovation plan, the overall plan for historical preservation of the building and the City's plan to improve public meeting space and meet administrative needs. Councillor Born requested that the city staff present introduce themselves, and they did so. She then invited Charles Sullivan to make a presentation on the history of Cambridge City Hall. Mr. Sullivan presented an informative slide show and described the origin of the present City Hall, which Frederick Rindge commissioned and donated City Hall to the City, as well as the Public Library and some additional public space. All of the furniture was built for the Sullivan Chamber, to Mr. Rindge's specifications. The colored stenciling was added later.

Mr. Sullivan informed the committee that last summer the Rindge family donated Frederick Rindge's papers to the Historical Commission, and among the material were plans for City Hall, and bills from the construction of the building. Cambridge had a bicameral government until 1916, and the original building had two chambers, one of them, the Alderman's Chamber, which is now the Sullivan Chamber, and another on the second floor for the Common Council. Sometime after 1916, the Common Council Chamber was given a ceiling/floor to create third floor office space.

Councillor Born thanked Mr. Sullivan for his presentation and requested an update on the plans for City Hall renovations.

Committee Report #2

2225

A report from Councillor Born, Chair of the Public Service Committee, for a meeting held on March 16, 1999 for the purpose of receiving a presentation from the Director of the Historical Commission regarding the architectural history of City Hall.

In City Council March 29, 1999

Report Accepted

ORDER^S ADOPTED

PLACED ON FILE