

FORM B – BUILDING

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

31B-261 Easthampton NTH.712

Town: Northampton

Place: (*neighborhood or village*)

Photograph



Address: 38 Gothic Street

Historic Name: People's Institute

Uses: Present: community building

Original: club

Date of Construction: 1904

Source: S.D.R.

Style/Form: Neoclassical/Classical Revival

Architect/Builder:

Exterior Material:

Foundation: granite

Wall/Trim: brick, limestone, granite

Roof: asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

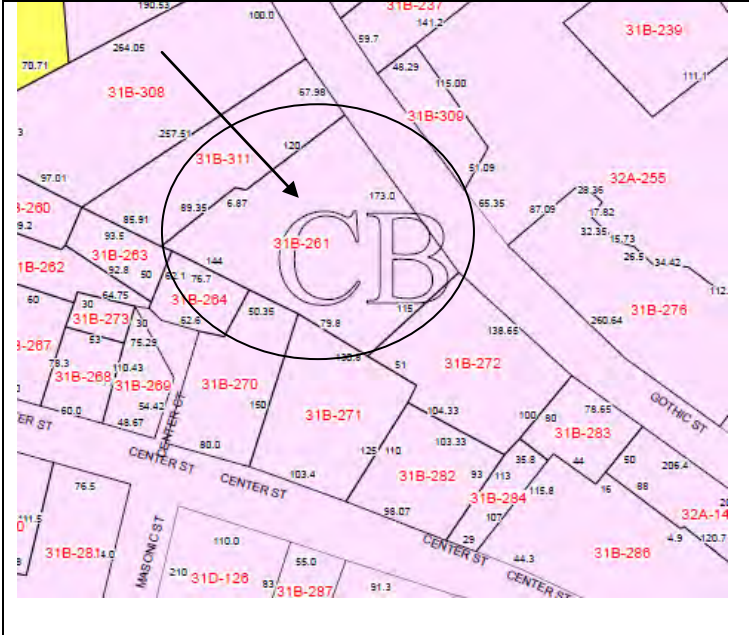
Condition: good

Moved: no | x | yes | | **Date** _____

Acreage: 0.68 acres

Setting: This is an east-facing building on a mixed residential-institutional street.

Topographic or Assessor's Map



Recorded by: Bonnie Parsons

Organization: Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

Date (*month / year*): March, 2010

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

[NORTHAMPTON]

[38 GOTHIC STREET]

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

NTH.712

___ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

The People's Institute is a fine example of a Neoclassical or Classical Revival style building. Its proportions are grand so that its two-and-a-half stories have become monumental. The brick and limestone trimmed-building has a side gable roof with end wall chimneys extending through a parapet wall. The east façade is seven bays long with the three center bays recessed and their roof supported on two single and four paired, colossal fluted columns. The column capitals follow no classical precedent but are composed of a drum ornamented with brackets. Flanking each side of the recessed porch are projecting, front-gabled pavilions with open pediments in whose gable fields are rondel windows above arched windows and entries at the first floor under hoods supported on consoles. The red brick building sits on a raised basement of rough-faced granite blocks. Its cornice is heavily molded with a dentil row on the outer bays and modillion blocks on the pavilions and center bays. The three bay openings of the center porch have limestone lintels and stringcourses. They are arched on the first floor and straight on the second floor with splayed lintels. A small balcony on consoles ornaments the second story center bay. Across the roof is a row of seven, front-gabled dormers framed by pilasters.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

From Form B of 1980: "George Washington Cable moved to Northampton in 1884. The foremost Southern novelist of his day, he was also an outspoken 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 Street 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 the annual award.

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

The name was changed to the People's Institute of Northampton in 1909 and the building became a full-fledged 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 from 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 were at work.

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

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

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BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Beers, F. W. County Atlas of Hampshire Massachusetts, New York, 1873.

Hales, John G. Plan of the Town or Northampton in the County of Hampshire, 1831.

Miller, D. L. Atlas of the City of Northampton and Town of Easthampton, Hampshire County, Massachusetts, Philadelphia, 1895.

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Walling, Henry F. Map of Hampshire County, Massachusetts, New York, 1860.

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National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

- Individually eligible Eligible only in an historic district
- Contributing to a potential historic district Potential historic district

Criteria: A B C D

Criteria Considerations: A B C D E F G

Statement of Significance by Bonnie Parsons
The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.

The People’s Institute is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places as an example of the late 19th-early 20th century’s interest in public education as a means of improving the citizenry of the country both morally and intellectually. This movement was undertaken by many of the country’s most wealthy individuals as a matter of noblesse oblige and ended up with long-lasting institutions that indeed contributed to the country’s development.

The building is a fine example of the Classical Revival style in Northampton.