

# THE GREENFIELD COMMON COURT SQUARE BANK ROW



Andrea & Robert Moorhead

Timothy Blagg

GREENFIELD HISTORICAL COMMISSION



REVEREND ROGER NEWTON HOUSE  
Arthur C. Haskell, Photographer,  
April 1934

*Historic American Buildings Survey,  
Library of Congress*

THE GREENFIELD COMMON

COURT SQUARE

BANK ROW

Andrea Moorhead

Robert Moorhead

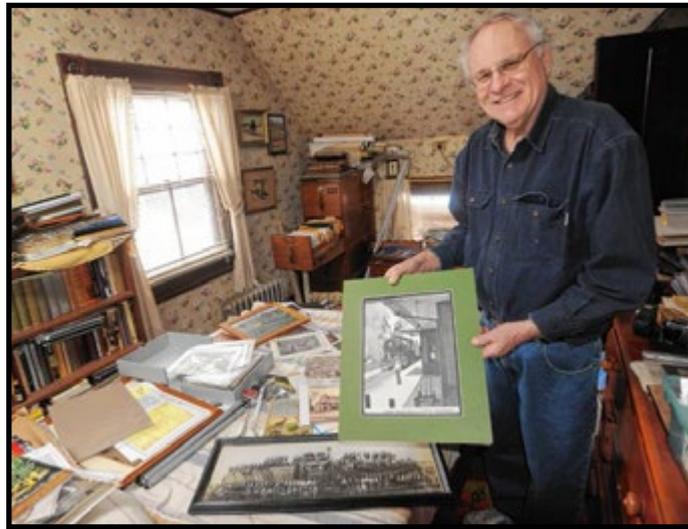
Timothy Blagg

2022

Greenfield Historical Commission

Greenfield, Massachusetts

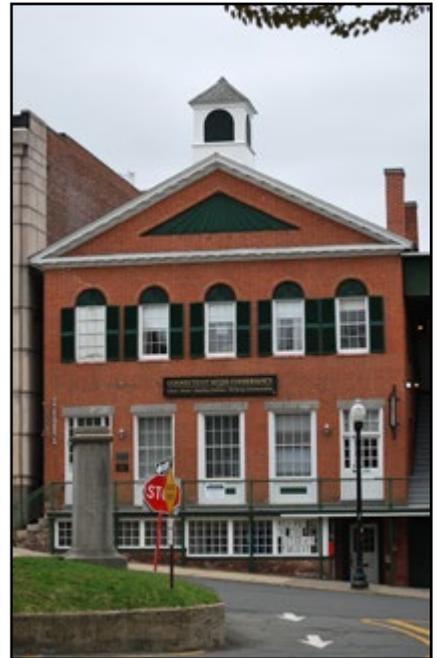
This book is dedicated to Peter S. Miller,  
Greenfield's Town Historian, whose love of this city and  
its people has kept Greenfield's history alive.



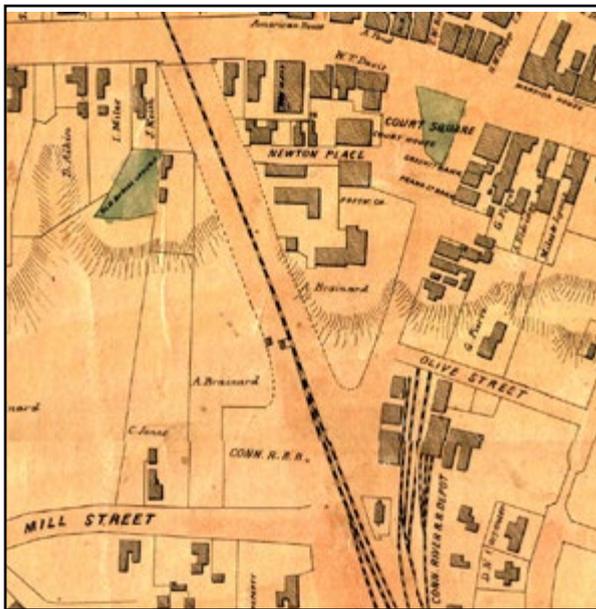
PETER S. MILLER  
1938-2021

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FRANKLIN COUNTY'S  
FIRST COURT HOUSE, 1813



MAP OF 1852 - DETAIL

Note 1841 Depot on Olive Street.



MAP OF 1895 - DETAIL

Note 1881 Union Station at bottom of Miles Street and the  
turntable south of Olive Street.

## GREENFIELD'S BIG DIG

**I**N THE EARLY 1800S, VISITORS TO GREENFIELD could have walked along the Common and looked east toward a comfortable row of buildings bordering the public space. The street in front of the buildings—now called Bank Row—ran south to Deerfield along what is now Deerfield Street, paralleling the Green River. As it gently sloped down toward the river, it exposed layers of slippery clay—once the bottom of Glacial Lake Hitchcock, formed by the melting of the glaciers that covered the area during the last ice age, which had submerged the town under 300 feet of frigid water about 12,000 years ago.

Those layers of clay—which gave the slope the name of “Clay Hill”—made the road a quagmire in wet weather. In fact, in the 1840s, one former resident recalled seeing a horse buried up to its belly in the sticky mud, forcing a gang of men to pry it loose from the muck.

In the middle of that row of buildings stood Franklin County's first courthouse, built in 1813-14, which still stands today as the headquarters of the Connecticut River Conservancy. In those days, an observer would have seen a neat flagstone sidewalk running along the front of the building, as illustrated in James Coffin's 1836 sketch of the Common, which can be seen on Page 8 of this monograph. But if you look at the contemporary photo shown here, you can clearly see how much of the street has been removed from the downhill side of building, forcing the construction of a large, exposed basement under the old courthouse.

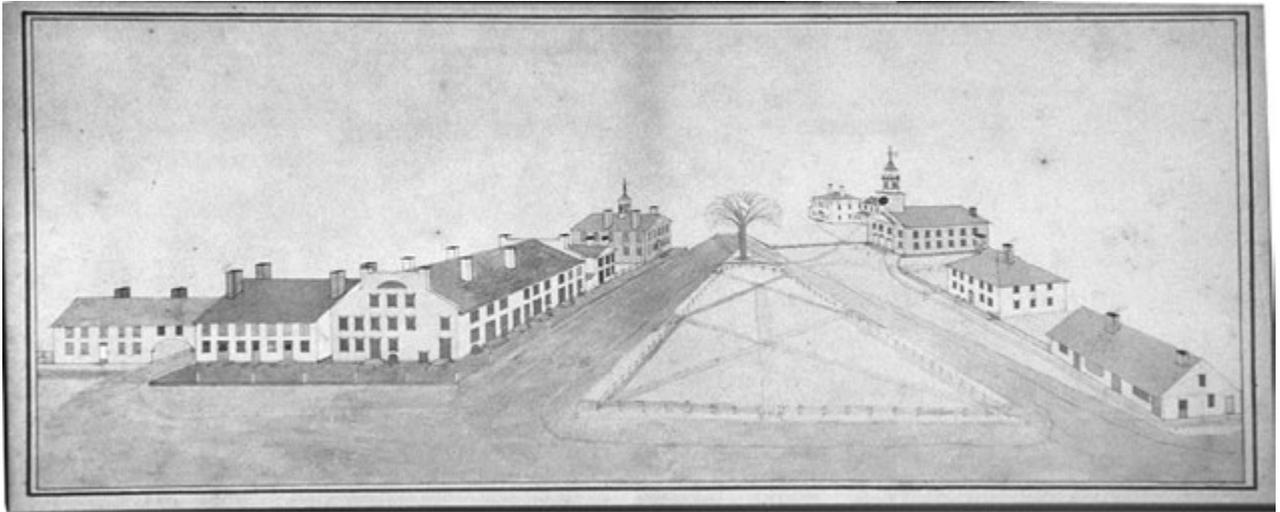
The dirt removed from the lower end of the Common created a large, broad trench that allowed the street to dip under two sets of railroad tracks, removed the gently sloping lawn in front of the Coleman-Hollister house, and made room for the row of small businesses that are tucked in there today.

Behind the mansion, another, even larger trench was dug to provide room for the tracks to run parallel to each other, with a “union” station between them handling both passengers and freight. The north-south line dipped under Main Street in a tunnel which still exists, while the east-west line curved around to run parallel to Main Street. The abandoned station was razed in 1966, and has been replaced by the Greenfield Energy Park.

Earth removed in the process of this “big dig” was used to build up the embankment that still carries the east-west line as it travels toward the Hoosac Tunnel and Troy, New York. In the late 19th Century, a railroad switch yard was built between the south side of the embankment and Water Street, replacing the earlier sidings and roundhouse off Olive Street.

The second trench required the removal of “The Old Burying Ground” that had been located behind Second Congregational Church at what is now Miles Street. Occupants of the cemetery, many of them the founders of the town, were moved to other graveyards at the town's expense.

Timothy Blagg



1836 VIEW OF BANK ROW & COURT SQUARE BY JAMES COFFIN

*Historical Society of Greenfield*



THE GREENFIELD COMMON, 1838

*Historical Society of Greenfield*

## THE GREENFIELD COMMON

**T**HE PRESENT COMMON was laid out in 1749 while Greenfield was still part of Deerfield. Green River Street, now Main Street, was established, and as the road system improved, the Common became the center of the town's trade and commerce. The 1760 Trap Plain meetinghouse/town hall at the intersection of Silver Street and the Bernardston Road (now Federal Street), where soldiers had mustered for the Revolutionary War, slowly atrophied as an important town center.

The earliest known drawing of the Common is the 1836 rendering by James Coffin. The drawing shows Court Square with the Greenfield High School for Young Ladies (the 1797 Coleman-Hollister House, now the McCarthy Funeral Home), the 1819 brick Second Congregational Church, replaced in 1868 by the present sandstone church, and the Reverend Roger Newton's house and store. Across the Common on Clay Hill (Bank Row) was the S. Allen Building and the 1813 Franklin County Court House, today the home of the Connecticut River Conservancy and The Literacy Project.

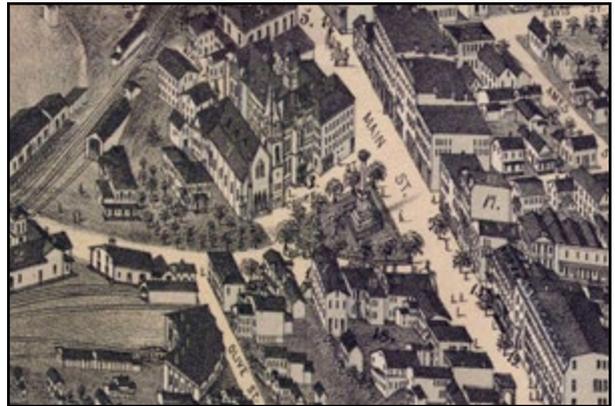
A fence surrounded the entire Greenfield Common, which was originally much larger and featured a drinking fountain and a watering trough, now in Shattuck Park off Federal Street. During the "Big Dig" c1846, the south end of the Common was shortened. In March

1871, the town voted \$200 to erect an iron fence around newly dedicated Soldiers' Monument. The following year, the town filled in the old well on the former site of the Town Pump at the northwest corner of the Common. Eight years later, the town voted to sell the Common's iron fence at auction. A "public comfort station," built in the 1920s under the south end of the Common was operational for forty years.

The Common has been the focus for community activities for over two hundred years. County fairs were held here until the mid-1800s when the Franklin County Fair became an annual event with grounds of its own. In 1922, the tradition of decorating the Common with ice sculptures for the annual winter carnival began. During the Christmas season, the town's nativity scene graces the Main Street side of the Common.

In recent years, the Common has served a wide variety of social and political functions. The Farmers' Market, held every Saturday from the end of April to the end of October, has been a mainstay on the Common since 1975. The Winter Farmers' Market is held at the Four Corners School, a stone's throw from the old Trap Plain Common. The Common is also a site for the expression of social awareness, election information, and for protest, including the January 2017 Women's March on Washington and the August 2017

COURT SQUARE, BANK ROW, & COMMON, 1877  
(DETAIL)



GREENFIELD MAIN STREET, 1830  
(DETAIL)



GREENFIELD COMMON, 2022



COMMON & COURT SQUARE, 2002

*The Greenfield Recorder*

GREENFIELD HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Black Lives Matter rallies. Every December since 2017, the Scarf Project hangs winter scarves, hats, and mittens on the fence for those needing warm clothes.

Over the past decade, the Common has been slowly returning to the active community space that it was in the 19th century. Between May and October, the area is now closed to traffic. There are festive tables and chairs set up as an outdoor café in the space between the Common and the Arms Building where people can relax and enjoy the company of friends.

Like most pre-revolutionary towns in the 1770s, Greenfield had a Liberty Pole. In his reminiscences, recorded in Francis M. Thompson's *History of Greenfield, Shire Town of Franklin County, Massachusetts*, John E. Russell, who served in the U. S. House of Representatives from 1887-1889, describes the Liberty Pole as standing on Main Street at the north end of the Common. It was rotten, he recalls, and a carpenter who climbed it was killed when the top broke off. He says the carpenter was standing on the "stage," which seems to indicate that the pole was in the form of a mast, with a topmast sort of construction to make it taller, and probably a flag rope.

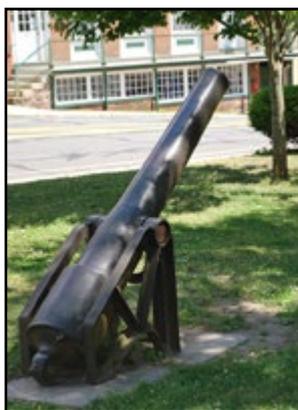
Everyone loves stories about buried treasure or time capsules. In 2000, at the south end of the Common, the city buried a time capsule to be opened in 2100. A granite tablet marks the spot. Tradition says that there is at least one earlier time capsule somewhere under the Common or the Second Congregational Church.



FARMERS' MARKET, COURT SQUARE, 2022



WINTER CARNIVAL  
Winter Carnivals started in 1922



PARROTT FIELD GUN, c. 1862-1863

The cannon sat in front of the Edwin E. Day Post of the G.A.R. on Hope Street until the Main Street courthouse was built.



SOLDIERS' MONUMENT  
The Town Common with the Mansion House, 1872



SOLDIERS' MONUMENT  
Designed by George Keller & James G. Batterson



SOLDIERS' MONUMENT, 2022

## SOLDIERS' MONUMENT

**A**T THE GREENFIELD TOWN MEETING in March 1869, a committee was authorized to commission a Civil War monument to “honor the five hundred men whom Greenfield sent into the field, for they all offered their lives. It is especially designed to honor the fifty men from Greenfield who gave their lives [...] on the altar of national unity.”

The Soldiers' Monument was designed by George Keller, designer of the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Arch in Hartford, Connecticut, and James Goodwin Batterson, contractor for the Library of Congress, and owner of the New England Granite Works.

Batterson was an interesting person with broad interests who had spent several years in Egypt and was the honorary secretary of the Egyptian Exploration Fund. He was also a founder of Travelers Insurance Company, and designed many of the most important Civil War monuments. He and Keller worked together on the American Volunteer at Antietam National Cemetery and the Soldiers' National Monument at Gettysburg National Cemetery.

The 27-foot shaft is made of granite from Aberdeen, Scotland, and is surmounted by a bronze eagle, made in Paris, with poised wings in the act of seizing and destroying copperhead snakes that had invaded its nest, symbolizing the national government's suppression of the rebellion. The total cost of the monument, including grading and fence, was \$8,902.41.

General Charles Devens, prominent Massachusetts jurist and Attorney General under President Rutherford B. Hayes, delivered the address at the October 6, 1870, dedication, and Frederick Goddard Tuckerman, whose manuscripts are in the Houghton Library at Harvard University, composed this ode for the ceremony:

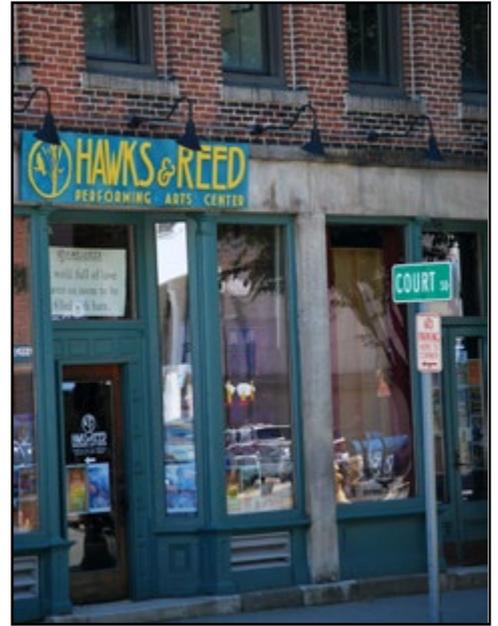
*This slender spire of glossy stone,  
A nation's emblem poised above,  
Speaks it to bleeding hearts alone?  
Ensign of sorrow and of love?*

*Or here, upon this village green,  
In half-light of the autumn day,  
Meet we to mourn for what has been,  
A tale, a triumph passed away?*

*Yes, more: our gift is generous  
As theirs who gave their lifeblood free;  
Not to the dead alone, to us  
Ourselves, and ours that yet shall be*

*We consecrate for distant years—  
No idle rite, our deep hearts stirred,  
And tenderly, with prayers and tears—  
The gleaming shaft! the Eagle bird!*

HAWKS & REED PERFORMING  
ARTS CENTER, 2022



GEORGE A. ARMS BLOCK, c2020  
289 MAIN STREET

## GEORGE A. ARMS BLOCK

**G**EORGE ALBERT ARMS, a fuel wholesaler dealing in anthracite, bituminous, and clear coal, constructed this four-story brick commercial building in 1876 on the site of a Greek Revival building where he had operated a hardware and agricultural supply store for many years. When his business expanded, he torn down the store and built the present building for \$10,000.

The building has an elaborate corbeled cornice with Queen Anne detailing. Its double-hung windows with original sash have segmental brick arches and granite sills. Its significance, however, is commercial, not architectural. The site, at the corner of Main Street and Court Square, has been an important commercial location for two centuries. Its proximity to the railroad was an important factor throughout the nineteenth century.

George Albert Arms was born in Deerfield March 7, 1815. When he was fourteen, he went to Canada with his father to work in the woods. Four years later, he returned to Deerfield to farm for a relative and then began a long and diverse career in commerce. He began as a grocery clerk in Boston, then went to Northfield, MA, where he established his own store. He returned to Canada in 1853 as a contractor, and three years later, went to Ohio, where he operated a coal mine. His first wife, Eunice (Stratton Moody) of Northfield, died the following year. In 1859, he returned East to settle in Greenfield. He acquired extensive real estate holdings in town.

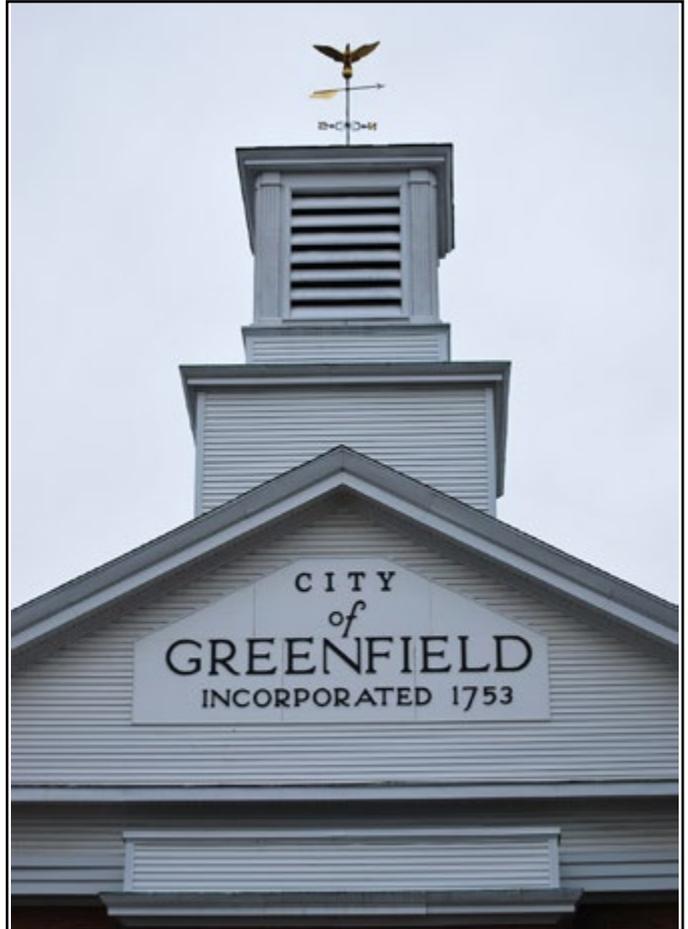
In 1882, he sold his entire business to his son-in-law John Sheldon and Eugene Newcomb. Arms, a versatile and skillful businessman, was a founding trustee of the Greenfield Savings Bank and a director of the Millers Falls Manufacturing Company. He died May 15, 1897.

His daughter, Jennie Maria Arms Sheldon, one of the first women to attend MIT, was a distinguished scientist, educator, and trustee of Deerfield Academy. As a tribute to her father, whom she described as “a mechanical man who believed in the kind of education that would make every boy and girl self-supporting,” she funded the Arms Building, Deerfield Academy’s first modern science center.

In 2007, Edward Wierzbowski bought the Arts Block (formerly Arms Block) for \$390,000. The renovations received the Massachusetts Historical Commission’s Historic Preservation Award in 2012.

In July 2015, Steve Goldsher purchased the building and renamed it the Hawks & Reed Performing Arts Center, in honor of the Hawks and Reed families that ran a clothing store there in the 1800s. The Silverthorne Theater is in residence in the “Perch,” the black box theater on the fourth floor of this dynamic “multi-venue performance center and event rental space.” The building remains a cornerstone of Greenfield’s downtown life and contributes significantly to the quality of the city’s cultural life.

GREENFIELD CITY HALL, 2022



GREENFIELD CITY HALL, 2022

Built in 1848, extensively renovated in 1872, and remodeled in 1954, it also served as Franklin County's Second Courthouse until 1932.



GREENFIELD CITY HALL, 2022  
14 COURT SQUARE

## GREENFIELD CITY HALL

**T**HE PRESENT CITY HALL at 14 Court Square, Greenfield's third town hall, began its life as Franklin County's Second Courthouse. It replaced the original 1813 courthouse on Clay Hill (Bank Row) and served as a courthouse until 1932 when a new building was built on East Main Street. It then served as The Town Hall Annex and eventually replaced Washington Hall as the Town Hall.

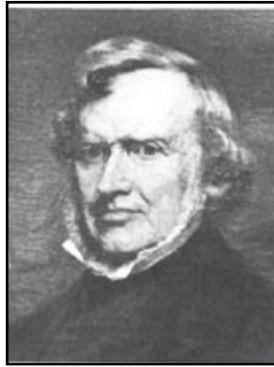
Its story began in 1848 when Issac Damon, an important Northampton architect, contractor, and bridge builder, erected a wooden structure in the Greek Revival style, with a cupola, on the site of Reverend Roger Newton's house. This building is the ancestor of the present city hall.

In 1872, Architect Joseph R. Richards and contractors Timothy E. Stuart and Asa Lewis conducted such extensive renovations to the Damon courthouse to bring it up to state fire codes that very little remained of the original wood structure. The remodeled building, in the Gothic Revival style, was brick, stone, and concrete.

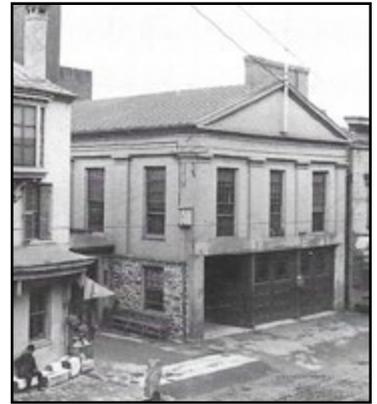
The decade of the 1940s was a busy time for the development of public buildings in Greenfield. In his *History of Greenfield, 1930-1953*, Charles Sidney Severance discusses the town's various ideas for a new town hall and a library. He states "The Federal Works Agency announced in October, 1945, that preliminary plans for a new town hall and library would be underwritten to cost some \$24,500, the town reimbursing it if the plans

should be later accepted." Although plans for a town hall and library "were developed by the federal government and scale-models fabricated for the first two units of a colonial-style, brick and cement civic center," this idea was discarded because projected costs were too high.

On November 5, 1946, the Franklin County Commissioners voted to sell the "Old Court House" to the Town of Greenfield for \$35,000. Little by little, the building assumed more functions of the town hall. In 1954, the building was renovated by Thomas Cranstons Albro, III, this time in the Colonial Revival style. The façade of the 1954 renovated building, in many respects, echoes the façade of the original 1848 Issac Damon building.



HENRY WELLS CLAPP



GREENFIELD'S FIRST TOWN HALL

Built in 1839 on land on Federal Street donated by Henry Wells Clapp, who also financed the building, it served as a fire station from 1854-1937 until it burned.

GREENFIELD CITY HALL, 2022



WASHINGTON HALL, Greenfield's Second Town Hall

Built by the town for about \$20,000 in 1854, it stood on the site of the present Veteran's Mall. On February 22, 1854, the town held a ceremonial ball, attended by more than 1,000 people, as part of the dedication festivities. The Hall was used for debates, amateur theater, dance classes, balls, and even early motion picture shows. The building was razed in 1964.



WASHINGTON HALL



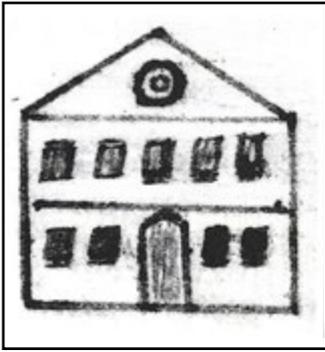
FRANKLIN COUNTY'S SECOND COURTHOUSE, 1848  
Architect Issac Damon



COURT SQUARE, c1880



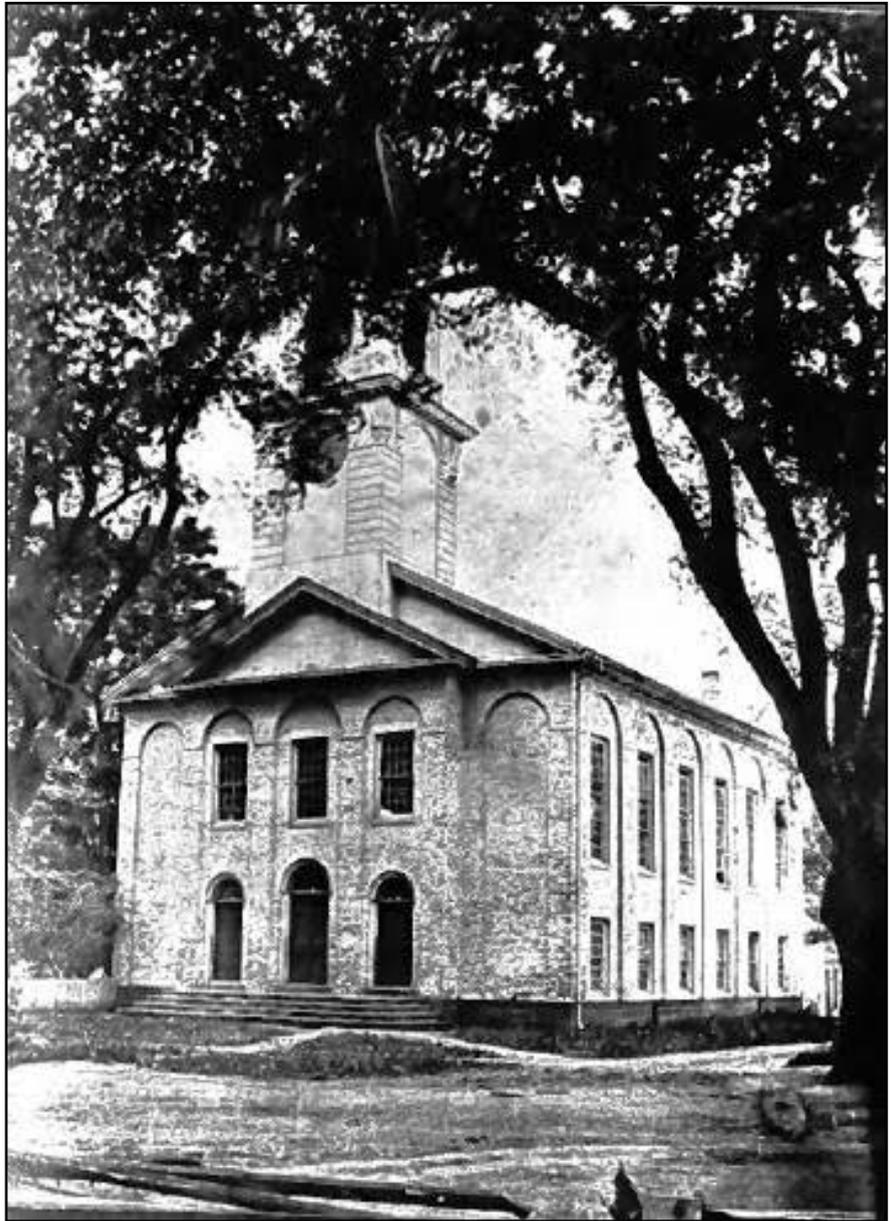
FRANKLIN COUNTY'S SECOND COURTHOUSE, c1900  
Renovated by Joseph R. Richards in 1872.



1760 TRAP PLAIN  
MEETING HOUSE  
*Early Maps of Greenfield 1717-  
1918*

*There were galleries on three sides of the structure and sheds for horses on the northwest side. Thayer Tavern and a school-house were nearby. In severe winter weather, parishioners went to the tavern for warmth and refreshment in between morning and afternoon services.*

*The building was razed in 1831.*



THE SECOND CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF 1819

The building was razed in 1868.  
Architect Isaac Damon

## THE SECOND CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

**A**S THE POPULATION CENTER and commercial activity gradually shifted from the Trap Plain area of town south to the Main Street-Court Square area, the 1760 Trap Plain Meetinghouse at the intersection of Silver Street and the Bernardston Road ceased to be the primary civic and religious center of the community. By 1815, the building was quite dilapidated and the town held a meeting on February 7, 1816, to decide whether it should repair the building or build a new meetinghouse. The people voted for a new building, but there was considerable dissension over the site. In October, the selectmen again called people together to vote on the proposed sites.

In *The Conservative Rebel*, Paul Jenkins discusses the conflict between “the lawyer-merchant crowd” and the agricultural community whose social and economic interests differed considerably. The congregations ultimately split into a First Congregational Society and a Second Congregational Society. The First Congregational Society even went so far as to petition the state legislature for the right to form an independent community called Green Meadow. The request was denied. The old Trap Plain meetinghouse was finally torn down in 1831.

Francis Thompson says in the *History of Greenfield*, “The (Second Congregational) society was incorporated December 5, 1816, and the church was organized January 15, 1817, the most of its forty-eight

members withdrawing from the First Church ‘purely on the ground of convenience, and the prospect of a rapidly increasing population.’” The new society met in the courthouse, the present E. A. Hall Building, until a church was built.

In 1819, Issac Damon, a prominent Northampton architect, built the Second Congregational Church, a brick building in the Federal style, at the south end of Court Square, facing the Common. On November 3, the Reverend Mr. Huntington presided over the dedication ceremony. Five years later, influenced by Damon’s work, Winthrop Clapp designed the First Church of Deerfield, the Brick Church, which still stands at the north end of the old Deerfield Common.

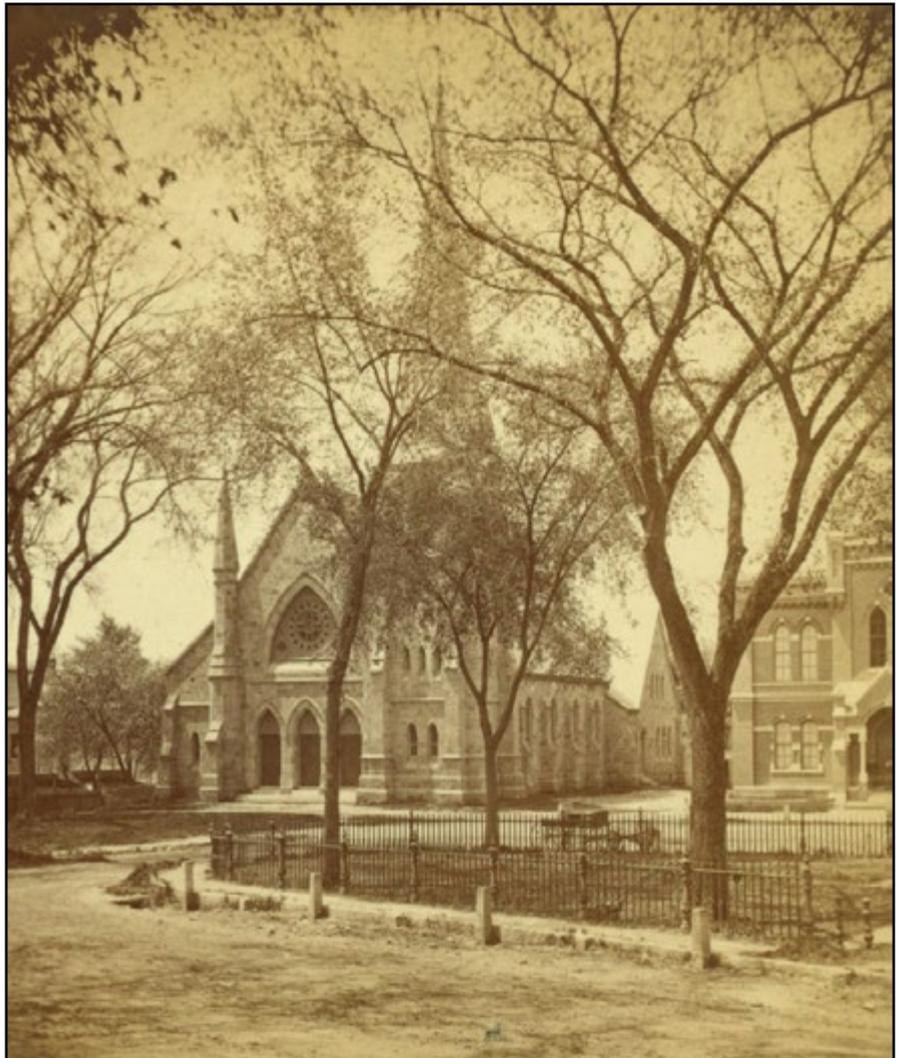
In 1868, the brick church was razed and the site cleared by G. W. Goss of Montague. The Boston architectural firm of Richards and Park then built the present Second Congregational Church, in Gothic Revival style, from sandstone quarried from Henry Clapp’s quarry south of Highland Park. “The corner stone of the present church edifice was laid July 28, 1868, at which time Judge Grennell, the senior deacon of the church delivered an historical address.”

Until the late twentieth century, the clock in the steeple was owned by the Town of Greenfield and



THE SECOND CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH  
DEDICATED 1868

The church is part of the Main Street  
Historical District on the National  
Register of Historic Places.



not by the church, a custom that dates back to medieval times when the clock was usually the only timepiece in the community. In 1868, The town paid \$598.54 for the clock, which was built by E. Howard Watch and Clock Co. of Boston, and \$675.80 for its installation. In 1953, the clock was electrified and ran smoothly until its motor burned out in 1965. The clock sat idle for several years until contributions from private citizens paid for the necessary repairs. In 2013, work was undertaken to restore and repair the four clock faces, which had warped so badly that the hands could not move. GB Restoration of Belchertown was the contractor, D. Hayward Restoration of Greenfield restored the wood frame, and Mark Liebowitz of Wilmark Studio in Shelburne Falls worked on the stained glass.

The original 1832 bell, cast in Boston and brought safely to Greenfield after a mishap in the Connecticut River, had cracked. For several years, no bell rang. In 1936, the Christian Science Church of Greenfield purchased the Colebrook Springs Baptist Church and donated its bell to The Second Congregational Church. The 1832 bell was melted down by the Bevin Bell Co. of Connecticut and recast into several hundred souvenir tea bells with 1832-1942 and the church's name stamped around the base. The sale of the bells raised funds for the church.

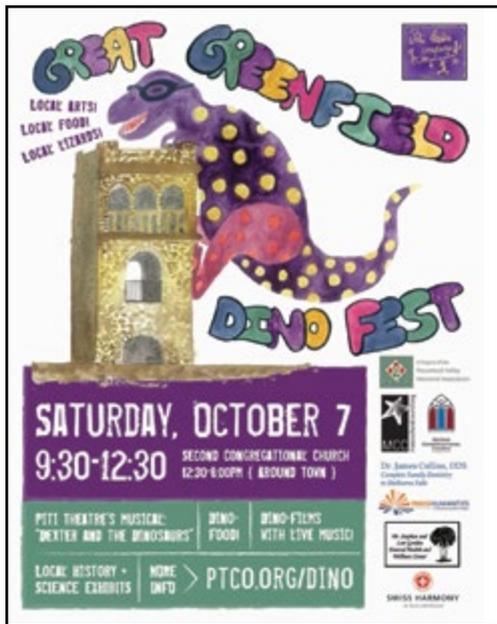
The Old Burial Yard Cemetery, established in 1753 and completely removed around 1883, was located at the end of Newton Court, on lower present-day Miles Street. In 1803, the town began moving many graves to the 1802 Federal Street Cemetery, also known as the Greenfield Village Cemetery. The 1820 North Meadows Cemetery and the 1851 Green River Cemetery on

Wisdom Way also received graves from the Old Burial Yard. Unfortunately, most of the records of the grave transfers have been lost.

A tablet to the left of the church's front door honors the Reverend Lorenzo Lorraine Langstroth, minister of Second Congregational from 1842-1848 and "Father of Modern Beekeeping." Langstroth was born in Philadelphia, studied mathematics at Yale University, and completed his theological studies at Andover Seminary. When he moved to Greenfield, he bought a swarm of honeybees in a hollow log. His observations led him to theorize the existence of "bee space," which would be an essential element in his invention of the movable frame beehive, used today throughout the world. He wrote several books on apiculture, including *The Hive and the Honeybee* (1853), which is still in print. The original book was printed by Charles A. Mirick who had an office on Newton Place. Langstroth eventually moved with his family to Oxford, Ohio, where he worked his "Honey Farm," some 125 hives on ten acres.

In the spring of 2010, the Second Congregational Church held the first Greenfield Bee Fest, as part of the 200th birthday celebration of the church. The Fest features lectures, music, crafts, games, and a costume parade, all designed to teach the essential role of bees and other pollinators in sustaining our environment. Free seeds and seedlings are distributed to encourage people to start pollinator gardens. Local beekeepers share their knowledge with beginning beekeepers.

GREENFIELD BEE FEST, 2022



GREENFIELD DINO FEST



GREENFIELD BEE FEST, 2022

The church's sexton, Dexter Marsh, a stonemason and close friend of Langstroth, is a fascinating person. His house was across the street from the church on the site of the present 39 Bank Row. His father, Joshua Marsh, was an "abolitionist to the core." In 1835, while quarrying stone in Turners Falls for sidewalks in Greenfield, Dexter discovered odd bird tracks, perhaps those of giant wild turkeys. They turned out to be dinosaur tracks. Marsh had an extensive collection of fossils and displayed them in his home-museum. He also supplied specimens to scientists around the world. Robert Herbert's biography of Dexter Marsh, *Dinosaur Tracks of Dexter Marsh, Greenfield's Lost Museum, 1846-1853*, in collaboration with Sarah L. Doyle, tells the fascinating story of Marsh's life and work.

The first Great Greenfield DinoFest was held in 2017. The festive weekend, co-hosted by PVMA (Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association in Deerfield) and Piti Theatre Co. of Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts, encourages people, especially children, to take an interest in science and become more aware of current environmental issues. The DinoFest brings the community together in a fun educational setting to celebrate its past and assume an active role in the stewardship of the planet. Events vary from year to year, but include dinosaur movies, sidewalk art, mask making, face painting, dino games, a Brontosaurus Brunch, interactive exhibits staffed by experts in fossils and dinosaurs, children's theatre activities, and, in 2021, the amazing "Dexter and the Dinosaurs," the film adaptation of the musical by Jonathan Mirin and Carrie Ferguson of Piti Theatre, was shown.



SECOND CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, 2022  
16 COURT SQUARE



WILLIAM COLEMAN-J. H. HOLLISTER HOUSE OF 1797  
ARCHITECT ASHER BENJAMIN  
26 BANK ROW

*Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress*

## WILLIAM COLEMAN- J. H. HOLLISTER HOUSE (*McCarthy Funeral Home*)

**I**N 1687, ON THE SITE OF THE PRESENT McCarthy Funeral Home, John and Edward Allen built a log house, which served as house, fort, and public house. The site has a commanding view of the Pocumtuck hills and the Green River valley; its meadow was “covered with many lofty walnuts, sprinkled over the soil like an orchard.” In 1796, the Reverend Roger Newton, minister of the Trap Plain Meetinghouse, sold the lot to William Coleman, Greenfield’s first lawyer and founder of the *Impartial Intelligencer*, Greenfield’s first newspaper, for approximately \$1,500.

Coleman hired the young Asher Benjamin to design a house worthy of such an exceptional site. The lot was one acre and twenty-five rods; the house measured fifty by forty feet. Benjamin designed a Federal style building with a Palladian five-part plan. Unfortunately, construction stopped abruptly before the two wings envisioned by Benjamin were constructed when Coleman lost \$30,000 in one of the infamous Georgia land scams. In 1797, Coleman transferred ownership of the house to his creditor, Vermont Senator Stephen Rowe Bradley. Ironically, the money Coleman had invested in Georgia was returned in 1805 when he was working in New York.

The house changed hands frequently until 1828 when Colonel Spencer Root, who operated the Franklin House Tavern at the house, sold it to the Greenfield

Academy, which became the Greenfield High School for Young Ladies. The school operated from 1829 to 1843. Reverend Lorenzo Langstroth, minister of Second Congregational Church from 1842-1848, was the school’s last headmaster. His brother-in-law, Almon Brainard, the county treasurer, register of deeds, and state senator, acquired the property.

The house underwent a series of modifications for the next four decades. In 1851, Brainard removed the north wing and moved it behind the Second Congregational Church. It was renovated into a printing office with a meeting hall upstairs in which the town band held their practices.

In 1864, Joseph Harvey Hollister, a prominent Greenfield silversmith and watchmaker whose store was on Main Street, bought the house and totally remodeled it. He removed the southwest wing that the high school had built, added an ell on the west side, and repainted the interior. Three years later, he painted the house white and added a portico on the east side. In his 1997 monograph, *A Brief History of the Coleman-Hollister House*, Peter S. Miller describes the numerous architectural changes made to the house from 1796 to the present.

In 1911, Hollister’s son Edward sold the house and its land to the Second Congregational Church, which wanted fifty feet of the Hollister land to expand the parish



WILLIAM COLEMAN



FRONT HALL SPIRAL STAIRCASE

*Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress*

FRONT HALL

*Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress*



GREENFIELD HISTORICAL COMMISSION

hall. The following year, the church sold the house to Walter Pond. Two years later, the house was sold to the Chevalier family who constructed a commercial building on Bank Row below the house. Stairs were built to connect the sidewalk and the Coleman-Hollister House.

In 1918, Charles Eugene McCarthy bought the house and opened a funeral home, the first of its kind in Franklin County. The family operated the business for almost seven decades. In 1986, John and Suzanne Riel Davis bought the property, which they continue to operate as a funeral home. They renovated and restored the interior, and replaced the roof. The roofers removed ten layers of roofing and discovered a metal roof dating from the 1830s.

Over the past two hundred-twenty-five years, there have been many changes to the building. It has been a continual challenge for each owner to balance practical and aesthetic concerns. The removal of the side porches, for example, and the installation of aluminum siding changed the formal appearance of the building. Despite the changes, the Coleman-Hollister House remains one of Greenfield's architectural treasures. Miller describes the exterior as *a two-story, 5-bay hipped roof structure with a four-square central hall plan. The five bays are delineated by four, two-story ionic pilasters, which rise from a foundation and "support" a cornice embellished with modillions. The 8 double-hung windows in the four outer bays retain their original 6/6 sash. Between the floors in these bays are found decorative rectangular panels with festoon motifs.*

Fine architectural features include Benjamin's Palladian window over an extended portico with Ionic columns and handsome cornice detailing. The main door

has a fanlight, side lights, and fluted pilasters. Pilasters also appear on the facade between bays separating the first and second floors windows.

Other features include a pentagonal solarium with pilasters and the pediment of a boarded-up door on the north side. An elaborate central staircase in the front hall is typical of Asher Benjamin's fine design.

It was one of the first homes in town to have a separate dining area, which is not surprising when one considers the prominent social position of William Coleman, one of Deerfield Academy's original trustees and founder of the *New York Post* with Alexander Hamilton. Historian David Willard described Coleman as *a man of genius, talents, and taste; enterprise and perseverance. He excelled in every thing, even in athletic exercises; in music, dancing, skating, ball playing; in writing, not one of our modern teachers, who can learn any and every body to write a good hand in 12 hours, could equal his neatness of style—in everything first and foremost, and finished everything he undertook, except the house he began to build.*



GREENFIELD HIGH SCHOOL FOR YOUNG LADIES  
Courtesy Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association's  
Memorial Hall Museum, Deerfield, Massachusetts



CHEAPSIDE VILLAGE

*Courtesy Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association's  
Memorial Hall Museum, Deerfield, Massachusetts*



S. ALLEN'S SONS BLOCK, BANK ROW AND MAIN STREET, c1880

## S. ALLEN BLOCK

**T**HE S. ALLEN BLOCK, one of Greenfield's oldest commercial buildings, has deep roots in the town's past and is intimately associated with the heyday of river trading at the port of Cheapside on the Connecticut River.

The lot was originally owned by Ruel Willard, a trader and businessman who operated the old Aaron Denio Tavern and had extensive property in Bernardston. He and his wife Margaret (Wells) had seven children, many of whom became prominent citizens of Greenfield. Willard died in 1806 and his family lived in Bernardston for the next ten or eleven years before returning to Greenfield. After her mother's death in 1827, Charlotte Willard erected a brick building housing three stores on the corner of Main Street and Bank Row. She sold the first store to Sylvester Allen, the second to Elijah A. Gould, and kept the third storefront for herself.

It was originally a white two-story Georgian structure whose ends were adorned with arched wooden panels. The building underwent several modifications after 1860. In 1880, the roof was raised and a third floor added to enlarge the store rooms on each floor and numerous signs were painted on the facade to advertise the stores. Some of these signs can still be seen on the northern façade. The third story was torn down when the First National bank was built in 1929. A slight difference in the coloring of the brick on the third story of the north façade indicates the original lines of the building.

In 1884, the slope of the roof was changed and it was painted bright red.

Sylvester Allen's story typifies the spirit of entrepreneurship that characterized Greenfield in the first part of the nineteenth century. In 1811, twenty-nine-year-old Sylvester came to Greenfield from Brookfield, Massachusetts. He set up a small tailor's shop opposite Munn's tavern (on the corner of present day Main and Federal Streets), most likely in a wooden structure owned by Ruel Willard. When he married Harriet Ripley, whose brother George was the founder of the utopian community of Brook Farm in West Roxbury, he built a beautiful colonial house on the site of the present post office on Main Street.

In 1827, when Allen bought Charlotte Willard's storefront, he rapidly moved away from the tailoring business and into trading river goods brought by barge from Connecticut and Vermont. His store sold, among many other things, hardware articles, crockery, candlesticks, teakettles, harness trimmings, Malaga wines, New England rum, and Sultana raisins, all of which were hauled from the Cheapside docks on the Deerfield River near its mouth on the Connecticut River up Deerfield Street and into town.

In 1835, Allen and his partner Cephas Root built a store on the riverbank, almost opposite the old River Tavern, then owned by Issac Jr., Ira, and Asiel Abercrombie. Allen and Root refitted an old steamer, the



S. ALLEN BLOCK, 2009  
285-291 MAIN STREET



S. ALLEN BLOCK, 1922

“Greenfield”, and utilized the boat as the freight transport of their company until its boiler exploded in 1840.

Over the next decade, the railroad had changed the face of commerce in the area, and they moved their storehouse into Greenfield. Cephas Root retired from the business, and Allen’s eldest son, William Henry, joined the firm. When Sylvester died in 1848, William Henry and his brother Franklin operated the business as a hardware store under the name S. Allen’s Sons. The firm remained in family hands for three generations.

Buildings have a life of their own. In his 1912 monograph *History of S. Allen’s Sons: One Hundred Years*, Franklin Allen describes the interior of the store: *Formerly, immediately upon entering from Main Street, the visitor found himself directly under openings in the floors above, through which from a windlass on the top floor hung a chain and grapple by means of which the loaded nail kegs and other heavy merchandise were hoisted to the upper stories, a laborious exercise and likewise a perilous experience, as the cargo has been known to have escaped and come crashing to the first floor. However, there is no record of accident from this cause.*

He goes on to describe the wonderful corner room upstairs *devoted to the wall paper department and to competitions in high jumping, the contestant armed with a piece of blue chalk seeking to make his mark as high up on the wall as possible, room also much sought after as an observation point for circus parades and similar spectacles.*

After World War II, the S. Allen Block gradually fell into disrepair and rapidly became structurally unsound. In 2009, Northampton developer Jordi Herold paid \$424,000 for the Allen, Pond, and Siano blocks,

which the Greenfield Redevelopment Authority had seized through eminent domain. Herold received \$500,000 in state historic tax credits; his total costs in redeveloping the buildings for mixed use ran to around \$3 million.

Herold’s development firm, Icarus, Wheaten & Finch (IWF), worked with Thomas Douglas Architects of Northampton, Renaissance Builders of Gill, Massachusetts, Concord Square Planning and Development of Boston, and the Massachusetts Housing Investment Corporation to renovate the buildings. When the work was completed, the Allen Block housed lawyers’ offices, loft style residential apartments, and businesses.

In 2012, both the Massachusetts Historic Commission and Preservation Massachusetts gave the projects awards *to recognize and celebrate the effort and accomplishment of those individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions to preserving the Commonwealth’s historic resources.*



FIRST NATIONAL BANK  
9 BANK ROW

*Carol McKinney Highsmith, Library of Congress*



THE FIRST NATIONAL BANK, 2022

GREENFIELD HISTORICAL COMMISSION

## FIRST NATIONAL BANK

**A** BANK HAS OCCUPIED THIS SITE on the Common for over one hundred years. The present bank, completed on May 29, 1929, attests to the fact that while the rest of America was reeling from the stock market crash, the town of Greenfield, with its diversified economy, was financially secure. According to local lore, on March 4, 1933, the bank operated a semi-clandestine teller's window in the Mansion House on Main Street until 12:30 p.m. so that people could cash their paychecks after the main bank building had closed that morning in accordance with Franklin D. Roosevelt's bank holiday. After the Depression, the bank commissioned a commemorative silver bowl from Lunt Silversmiths to honor its work during the national emergency.

The building is an outstanding example of Art Deco architecture. It captures a time period that is otherwise unrepresented in Greenfield. Its octagonal clock and recessed doorway are particularly noteworthy.

The building was designed by the New York architectural firm Dennison & Hiron. Frederic Charles Hiron, who had studied at MIT and the École des Beaux Arts in Paris, and Ethan Allen Dennison, member of the Beaux Arts Society and the Architectural League of New York, designed many important American buildings in the Beaux Arts and Art Deco styles, including the 1928 Beaux-Arts Institute of Design in Manhattan.

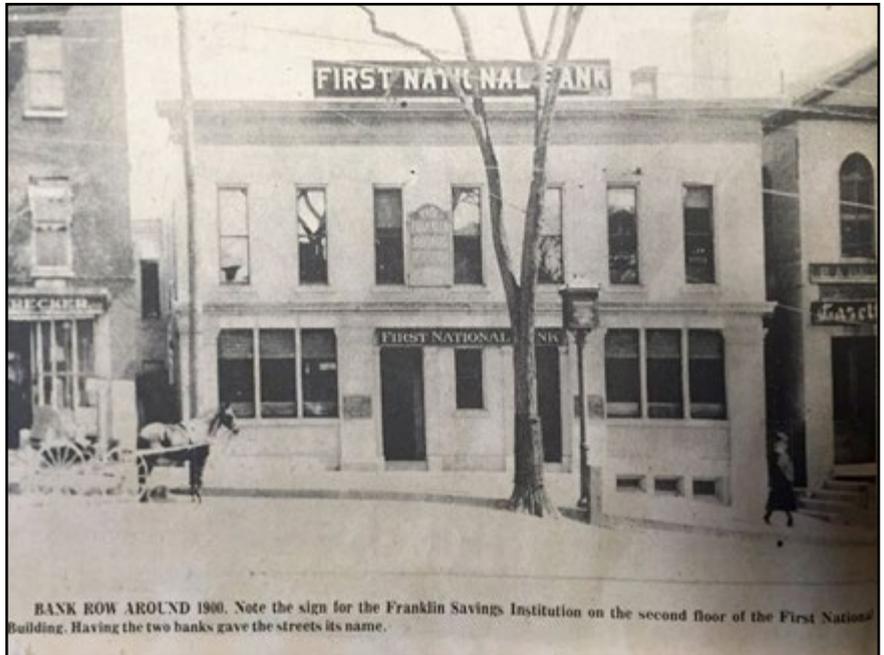
The Massachusetts Historical Commission

(MHC) describes the building:

*The front of the building was made of Swenson pink granite from Concord, New Hampshire. The base and trimmings around the windows and the main entrance are of Rockwood Sea Green marble. At the main entrance, is a large ornamental iron gate of special hand wrought material. At the top of the building is a large bronze clock, 6 feet in diameter, with bronze hands and an illuminated glass dial. There are marble floors and walls in the vestibule. The banking room itself has a 35-foot ceiling with walls constructed of imitation limestone.*

According to the MHC, the 1929 building replaced two older buildings that stood on the same site. The first was the third store of the S. Allen Block, which contained Fiske & Strecker Drug Store. The second comprised two buildings joined together; the northern part had housed the Franklin Savings Institution upstairs, and the southern part, built in 1852, at one time housed Lamb's Music Store. In 1904, the bank joined the buildings.

The bank operated until 1972, and then fell into a state of neglect and decrepitude. In 2002, the Franklin County Community Development Corporation (CDC) acquired the building and spent a million dollars to stabilize the structure. The 2014 Comprehensive Master Plan for Greenfield called for downtown to be "a welcoming, attractive, and vibrant mixed-



BANK ROW AROUND 1900. Note the sign for the Franklin Savings Institution on the second floor of the First National Building. Having the two banks gave the streets its name.

THE FIRST NATIONAL BANK, c1900

*Historical Society of Greenfield*



THE 1929 FIRST NATIONAL BANK

*Historical Society of Greenfield*

use urban space, with the First National Bank building as a cultural center with flexible performance and event space.”

In 2017, ownership was transferred to the Greenfield Redevelopment Authority and an advisory board was formed, Friends of First National Bank (FoFNB). In 2019, Taylor & Burns Architects of Boston were hired to “prepare architectural designs, engineering and cost studies for redeveloping the building as a performing arts facility.” After the Taylor & Burns study was completed, FinePoint Associates conducted a market analysis and an assessment of “the feasibility of operating a community-use facility for the performing arts in a redeveloped FNB building.” A major element in all planning continues to be the cost of renovating what had been a severely neglected structure.

In December 2021, the city received funds to explore options for the redevelopment of the FNB. MassDevelopment is working with the city to develop a Request for Proposals that will invite developers to submit proposals for different uses of the building. Because several new performance and event spaces have been established downtown in the past five years, it is now unlikely that the FNB will house performance spaces.



THE FIRST NATIONAL BANK  
*Front Entrance, 2022*



THE 1813 FIRST FRANKLIN COUNTY COURTHOUSE, 2022  
15 BANK ROW

## FIRST FRANKLIN COUNTY COURTHOUSE

**T**HE FIRST FRANKLIN COUNTY COURTHOUSE was built in 1813 by Captain Timothy Billings, Elijah T. Hayden, and Thomas Pratt. The Federal design was heavily influenced by Asher Benjamin's work. It was Benjamin who supplied the glass for the windows. The building served as the county courthouse from 1813 until 1848. Because the courtroom was on the second floor, the building served many other purposes. The Greenfield Unitarian Society met in the courthouse for twelve years until it erected a small wooden building at the corner of Main and Hope Streets in 1837. The Greenfield Debating Society held its Washington's birthday celebration there in 1827.

The town newspaper was the most important group to use the old courthouse after the Second Courthouse (Town Hall) was built. The building is often referred to as the E. A. Hall building. In 1876, Eben Allen Hall acquired control of the *Greenfield Gazette and Courier* which was absorbed by the *Greenfield Recorder* in 1932. After the 1935 fire at the newspaper's offices on Main and Hope Street, the newspaper was printed at the old *Gazette* printing plant in the E. A. Hall building until a new building could be erected on Hope Street. Hall ran a job printing business there for many years. In 1999, The Connecticut River Conservancy (CRC), one of the country's earliest watershed associations, purchased and renovated the building.

The courthouse's three floors are capped with a classic portico, in the center of which is a wooden fan. The ridgepole of the original section is one whole tree. The Massachusetts Historical Commission describes the ornamentation: *Each of the five double-hung, original sash windows on the third floor is topped with a wooden fan outlined in brick. Second floor windows have granite lintels. A wooden porch with wrought iron railing provides access to the second floor entrances, which have side lights and huge granite lintels.*

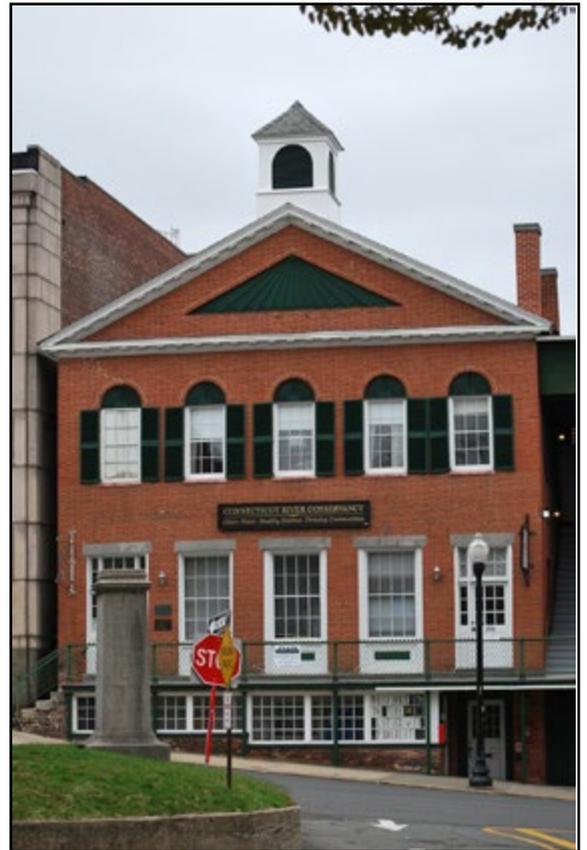
Originally, there were four fireplaces and chimneys; today, one fireplace and two of the original chimneys remain, although covered from the inside. A rear addition was added in 1836; in 1849, the center door was removed, two doors were added, and the windows and second floor entrance were renovated. The courthouse originally stood at the same level as Main Street. In the late 1870s, Clay Hill (Bank Row) was lowered for road construction. As a result, the outside stairs were removed, a front porch was added for access to the main floor, and the building was braced and reinforced.

The bell in the cupola today, however, is not the original bell. The city rebuilt the cupola during the Bicentennial celebrations and a new bell was hung.

The saga of the 1810, 400-pound, iron and bronze bell cast in Seneca Falls, New York, involves



THE FIRST FRANKLIN COUNTY COURTHOUSE, 2022



THE 1813 FIRST FRANKLIN COUNTY COURTHOUSE, 2022

many dead ends. It is not really known how the bell ended up. Theodore Leonard bought the courthouse bell in 1857 and installed it in his woolen mill in Factory Hollow. In 1872, Turners Falls Company bought Leonard's mill to gain access to the Falls River, whose water was needed to supply new paper mills. The bell was given to the German Methodist Church on Hope Street, where it hung until the mid-1960s when they moved to a new church on Long Avenue. The Massachusetts Historical Commission states, however, that it was melted down in World War I.

Another version of the story recounts that John Greene, Greenfield's Bicentennial Commission Chairman, bought the bell from the church for \$25. There was some discussion about hanging the bell in Town Hall, but the project was not undertaken. There is much speculation about the bell's fate. It might have been given to the old Montague fire station, or it might have been smelted in Boston. Luckily, the beautiful building for which it was made is still standing.

The building has undergone extensive renovations throughout its history. The 2001 changes included the addition of structural steel supports in the basement, the replacement of the mechanical systems, general work to bring the building into compliance with ADA, and the rebuilding of the front entry porch. Despite the numerous and significant changes to its exterior and interior, the simple beauty and historical significance of this building make it a jewel in Greenfield's architectural crown. The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



THE 1813 FIRST FRANKLIN COUNTY COURTHOUSE, 2022



THE POND BLOCK, 2022



THE POND & SIANO BLOCKS, 2022

## POND BLOCK

**I**N 1874, FRANKLIN A. POND, a prominent Greenfield developer, built this traditional three-story brick building. Although the building is handsome, with its six double-hung, sash windows with brick arches and granite sills, and its massive granite blocks separating the upper floors from the street level, it is not architecturally significant. The story of its builder, however, is an important part of Greenfield's history. His life is a tribute to civic mindedness and entrepreneurship.

Pond was born in Keene, New Hampshire, May 11, 1843. His family moved to Greenfield the following year. According to Lucy Cutler Kellogg's account, before he became a real estate developer, Pond was in the clothing business. She praises his character saying, *He probably did more to promote the growth of Greenfield in population and industrial activity than any other single man. He had built nearly five hundred houses and his name appears on the registry of deeds records about seventeen hundred times. He persistently built individual homes, declining steadfastly to put up rows of tenement blocks as many towns have.* At this time, Greenfield was experiencing considerable growth in the commercial and industrial sectors and houses for workers were needed.

Pond and his wife Hattie (Kimball) made their home on Federal Street. They were active in the Methodist Episcopal Church to which Pond left \$35,000. Pond served as town treasurer and, in 1903, as Director of the Greenfield Board of Trade.

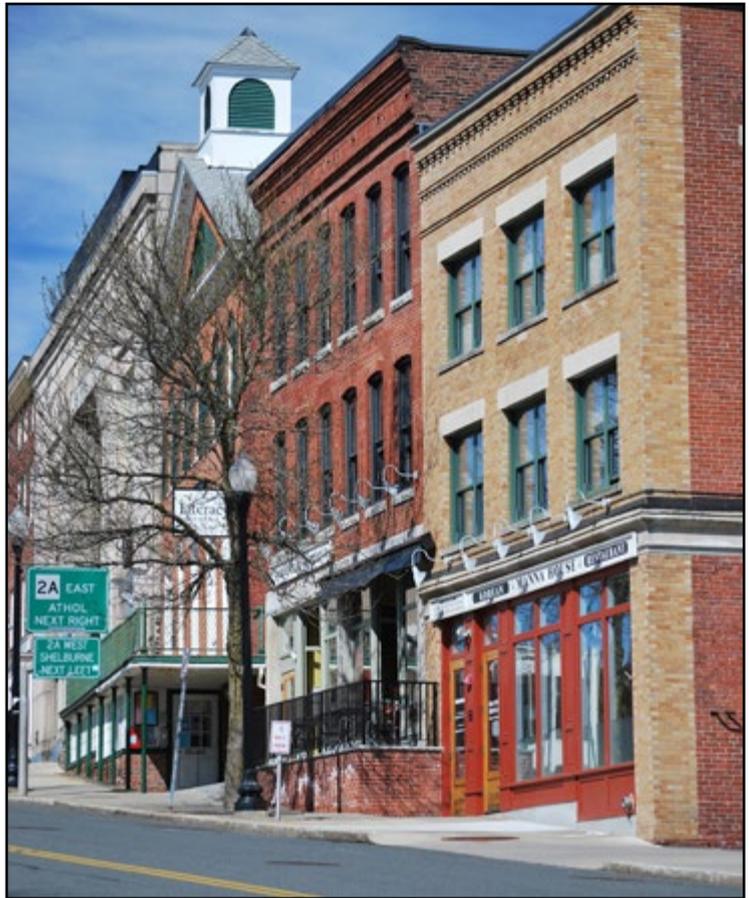
His brother George G. Pond, described by Kellogg as "a man with a whimsical sense of humor," was one of the town's large property owners and worked with Franklin on numerous projects.

The brothers developed the old Pierce Grove between what is now Garfield and Pierce Streets. Pond Street was named after their father, Amos Pond, and Garfield Street after their mother, Mary Garfield. In 1901, the Pierce family had offered to sell the land to the town for a town park, but the offer was refused at town meeting. Franklin Pond then bought the land for home lots. Five years later, the town bought twelve acres, now Shattuck Park.

In 1889, when fire destroyed the Montague shop of Rugg Manufacturing, makers of white ash hay rakes and snow shovels, Greenfield encouraged Rugg to move to Greenfield. Pond's offer of the former J. M. Munson carriage-parts shop on Newton Street was the determining factor in the move.

In 1907, three years before he died, Franklin Pond bought the main building of Rev. John F. Moors' defunct Prospect Hill School for Girls. He converted the Armory Street school building to rental apartments.

Franklin Pond was a dynamic business man who made important contributions to Greenfield, both in terms of developing affordable housing and in community service.



THE SIANO BLOCK, 2022  
25-27 Bank Row



## SIANO BLOCK

**T**HE SIMPLE BEAUTY of this 1921 graceful three-story yellow brick building provides a soft counterpoint to the Allen Block and the First National Bank. The second and third floor windows have sandstone sills and lintels. White bricks simulate quoins around the windows and the building's edges.

Michele Siano and his sons Lucian and Joseph removed an 1870 building constructed by Jesse Coombs. The new building housed eight apartments and street level commercial space. The firm Siano & Sons was founded in 1905. Located at 297 Deerfield Street, the firm was first in this area to produce concrete blocks for use in construction. Their work was not confined to masonry but also included bridge work.

In 1932, the town of Greenfield contracted the firm to repair the cracks in the 1911 Rocky Mountain reservoir that was losing approximately 50,000 gallons of water a day. Months of wrangling over how to repair the reservoir had resulted in a special town meeting to allow the selectmen to appoint a committee to study the problem. A proposal to construct an \$18,500 standpipe to drain the reservoir so it could be correctly repaired sparked more controversy. On June 29, the town meeting voted the proposed standpipe; once again a referendum was called. The town at large rejected the standpipe proposal. On August 25, the \$3,328.95 repair contract was awarded to Michele

Siano & Sons.

The 2008 Greenfield Urban Renewal Plan described the condition of the Siano building as very good, and suggested that only minor improvements be made. Uses could include retail establishments, including restaurants and bars, professional and business offices, personal and consumer services, philanthropic or charitable institutions, and residential.



JOHN W. OLVER TRANSIT CENTER, 2022  
BANK ROW AND OLIVE STREET

Designed by *Charles Rose Architects, Inc.*

## JOHN W. OLVER TRANSIT CENTER

**T**HE JOHN W. OLVER TRANSIT CENTER, “rising up from the embankment at the southwestern tip of Greenfield’s Bank Row Urban Renewal District,” opened on May 7, 2012. The facility, designed by Massachusetts-based Charles Rose Architects and Arup Engineers, is the first net-zero transit center in the country.

The Center was named after former US Representative for Massachusetts’s 1st Congressional District John W. Olver, who was a vocal advocate for public transportation and energy conservation. Funding was secured through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

In the mid-1800s, a depot, a steam engine turntable, a freight house, and a locomotive house were located on this site. The railroad station was behind the Abercrombie Building in what is now Energy Park.

The Franklin Regional Council of Governments’ website explains that the JWO Transit Center is “designed to create and utilize its own power through such renewable energy innovations as geothermal wells and an industry-waste wood pellet boiler to heat the building’s air and water, solar arrays for electricity, “chilled beam” air conditioning, and occupancy sensor lighting, among others.”

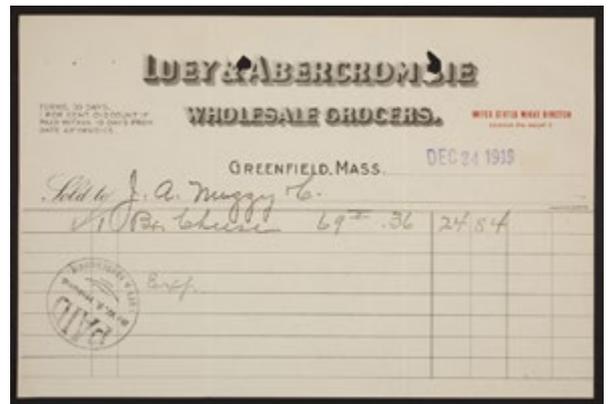
The architects emphasize the innovative integration of aesthetic elements with the imperative to

create a carbon-neutral building. While the materials chosen for the exterior—brick, copper, and locally sourced stone—are *a respectful nod to the downtown business district and its stately dark-brick buildings*, [...] *the main purpose of the dark-brick cladding the western side is green: a high-tech strategy in managing the building’s exposure to afternoon sun. In parts, the brick dissolves and the façade becomes a kind of screen; these patterns are computer-generated and control the amount of heat entering the building’s interior in summer and winter.*

The building’s appearance changes with the seasons and time of day. While the exterior modulates energy, the interior provides spacious, bright areas for FRTA offices, a meeting policy room, and waiting room with a snack bar. From the Transit Center one has an arresting view of the Coleman-Hollister House, the Second Congregational Church, and City Hall. A sense of topography has been admirably maintained.



ABERCROMBIE BUILDING, 2022  
56 BANK ROW



## ABERCROMBIE BUILDING

**A**CROSS FROM THE 2012 JOHN W. OLVER TRANSIT CENTER, is the recently renovated 1892 Abercrombie Building, formerly the W. N. Potter and Sons Grain Mill. The property was originally part of the Coleman-Hollister property. Joseph H. Hollister deeded the land to the Potter family.

The story of the Abercrombie Building involves the history of three prominent Greenfield families—the Potters, the Lueys, and the Abercrombies.

Waymes Noble Potter, originally from Charlemont, established a flour and grain firm in 1884 which his sons Lucius and Arthur continued after his death. In 1911, Potter's heirs, Arthur, Lucius, and Annie E. Dickinson, sold the land and building to Lester Albert Luey and James Douglas Abercrombie.

Arthur Potter was "a grain merchant of wide reputation" and lived in the Gould-Clapp House on Main Street from 1892 to 1954. His brother Lucius' wife, Rowena (Russell), had an extensive collection of fine furniture and American paintings. It was a cultivated family.

In 1898, Abercrombie and Luey formed Luey and Abercrombie Inc., a wholesale food and beverage business, which began at 158 Hope Street and then moved to the former Potter grain mill. Both men's families were active in the Connecticut River trade. Lester Luey, the last of the true rivermen and station master

for the CT River Railroad, was a legend in his time, and Abercrombie's steamboats *The Voyager* and *The Donner* made regular runs between Cheapside and Hartford, transporting cider brandy, brooms, wood, cotton, and West India goods.

In 1918, Abercrombie bought out Luey. After his death in 1946, his widow, Ella, and their son, James Douglas, incorporated the business. J. Douglas was as civic-minded as his father and served on the boards of many institutions, including The Greenfield Savings Bank and the Deerfield Finance Board. He was a member of the first graduating class of the Eaglebrook School. His father had been a founding director of the 1903 Greenfield Board of Trade, chairman of the town's Finance Committee, president of the Chamber of Commerce, and incorporator of Franklin Savings Institution. He and his wife Ella (Bingham) lived on Highland Avenue with their two children.

In 2017, Thomas Douglas Architects of Northampton renovated the Abercrombie Building. The owner had described the property as "a blighted historic property that was structurally failing." TDA's innovative solutions to reconfiguring the interior to create viable modern office spaces for the Northwestern Massachusetts District Attorney included "highlighting the existing wood structural timbers and brick in the interiors" as well as focusing on energy improvements.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank all the people who have helped us put together this monograph. Casual conversations were supportive and encouraging and often pointed us in the right direction to track down relevant information. We realized early in the project that Greenfield citizens care deeply about their city and their heritage, and support the work of the Greenfield Historical Commission.

We would also like to thank *The Greenfield Recorder*, for their informative reporting on historical people and events, the Historical Society of Greenfield, the Greenfield Public Library, the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, and the Massachusetts Historical Commission for their wonderful on-line archives.

Andrea Moorhead  
Robert Moorhead  
Timothy Blagg

July 2022

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H. J. DAVIS, PHOTOGRAPHER

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