Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System
Scanned Record Cover Page

Inventory No:	SBR.30
Historic Name:	Southborough Town House
Common Name:	
Address:	17 Common St
City/Town:	Southborough
Village/Neighborhood:	Southborough
Local No:	54-4
Year Constructed:	
Architect(s):	Barney, George F.; Blair, John; Esty, Alexander Rice; Hyde, Curtis; Leach, M.; Strauss, C. W.
Architectural Style(s):	Italianate
Use(s):	Town Hall
Significance:	Architecture; Art; Community Planning; Politics Government; Recreation
Area(s):	SBR.AG: Southborough Town Center SBR.A: Main Street Area
Designation(s):	
Building Materials(s):	Roof: Asphalt Shingle Wall: Brick; Stone, Cut; Wood; Sandstone; Concrete Unspecified Foundation: Stone, Cut; Granite

This file was accessed on:

FORM B - BUILDING

	Assessor's number	USGS Quad	Area(s)	Form Number
	54-4	Marlborough	A	30

Massachusetts Historical Commission
Massachusetts Archives Building
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, MA 02125

Town _____ Southborough _____

Place *(neighborhood or village)* _____

Southborough center

Address _____ 17 Common Street _____

Name _____ Southborough Town House _____

Present _____ town offices _____

Original town offices, meeting hall, library

Construction _____ 1870 _____

Town Reports

Style/Form _____ Italianate _____

Architect/Builder _____ Alexander R. Esty _____

Exterior Material:

Foundation _____ granite block _____

Wall/Trim _____ brick _____

Roof _____ asphalt _____

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures _____ none _____

(on same parcel as Flagg School, Town Pound,
and playground.)

Major Alterations (with dates) Rear addition for

handicap entry and elevator--1990s

Condition _____ excellent _____

Moved [x]no [ ] yes Date _____ N/A _____

Acreage _____ 1.99 acres _____

Setting Between two churches, overlooking town

common. Landscaping and flagpole at front;

parking lot to side and rear. Town pound to rear.

Photograph

*inventory forms have been completed. Label streets,
including route numbers, if any. Attach a separate
sheet if space is not sufficient here. Indicate north.*

N
#30
COMMON STREET
ST. MARK'S ST.
TOWN COMMON
MAIN STREET (RTE 30)
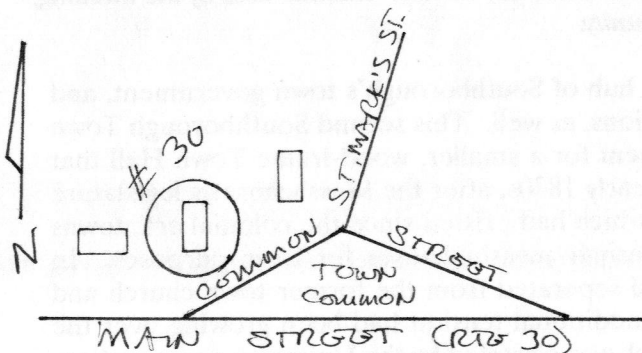
Recorded by ___ Forbes/Schuler, consultants

Organization Southborough Historical Commission

Date _____ April, 2000 _____

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION [ ] *see continuation sheet*
Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

The Southborough Town House is a well-preserved two-story, rectangular Italianate brick building, with sandstone trim and a granite foundation of rough-faced blocks. It has a shallow mansard or double-hipped roof, and a profusion of heavily-proportioned, stylish detail that was popular in municipal architecture in the years after the Civil War. The building has a symmetrical, three-bay facade arranged around a projecting, triangular-pedimented center pavilion. The original four-panel doors of the round-arched center entry have been replaced by late-twentieth-century double-leaf wood and glass doors, but the rest of the facade is substantially intact. Two 4-over-4-sash windows flank the pavilion at the first story; the second story has very tall 4-over-4-sash--single on the outer part of the wall, and paired in the center of the pavilion. The five-bay sides of the building have single 4-over-4-sash windows at the ends, and paired 4/4s in the center at each story. On each side, a 6-panel transomed door occupies the north end bay.

Southborough is fortunate that this important municipal building has retained all its distinctive wood and stone architectural trim. The building is ringed by three sandstone string courses and a prominent water table, and large single and paired two-foot-high brackets adorn the broad overhang of the eaves under the molded wooden cornice. About one foot below the main cornice is a wooden architrave molding. Stone quoins articulate the building corners at the first story, and paired, flat stone pilasters flank the main entry. Above the entry is a heavy entablature surmounted by a parapet-like arrangement of alternating stone and brick panels under the central window. The pavilion pediment has a segmental-arched window opening with a heavily-molded stone hood. This opening is now filled with a louvered vent. The surrounds of the other windows are somewhat simpler, consisting of wide stone label moldings at the top, and a pair of volute-like stone brackets at the outer corners of the bottom of the sash. The window bays on the sides of the building are separated by wall pilasters which are sandstone at the first story, brick at the second.

Two heavy, paneled brick interior chimneys rise from each side wall. Another, simpler brick chimney is located at the center of the rear roof slope. Historic photos indicate that the copper-and-glass lantern mounted on a long bracket over the entry is of an early date. The only addition to this building is at the rear, where a two-story-high brick, concrete, and glass enclosure houses the new, handicapped-accessible main entry and an elevator shaft.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE [x] *see continuation sheet*
Explain 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.

For a hundred and thirty years, this building has been the hub of Southborough's town government, and for many decades, it served several other community functions, as well. This second Southborough Town House was completed in the spring of 1870 as a replacement for a smaller, wood-frame Town Hall that had been built in 1840 on the same site. Beginning in the early 1830s, after the Massachusetts legislature officially ended the connection between church and state which had existed since the colonial era, towns were experiencing increasing conflicts over using their former meetinghouses for town purposes. In Southborough, where the orthodox Congregationalists had separated from the former town church and constructed their own sanctuary on Main Street in 1834, additional tension had been growing over the continued municipal use of the Second Meetinghouse, which was occupied by the Unitarian congregation.

Those tensions were resolved in 1840, when a small Town Hall was constructed on part of the original town common land just west of the Second Meetinghouse. While most of it was occupied by the public meeting hall, when the Fay Library was founded in 1852, its collection was housed in a small room at the rear of the building. (See Form #42).

[x] Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. *If checked, a completed National Register Criteria Statement form is attached.*

Masschusetts Historical Commission
Massachusetts Archives Building
220 Morrissey Boulevard   Area(s)   Form No.
Boston, Massachusetts   02125   A   30

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE, cont.

In 1869, a fire gutted the building. Plans for its replacement were immediately underway, with town benefactor Joseph Burnett chairing the Building Committee. He also made a large contribution to the building fund. After what appears to have been a brief review of preliminary plans drawn up by architect Elbridge Boyden of Worcester, Alexander Esty, the architect who had been hand-picked by Joseph Burnett to design St. Mark's Church several years earlier, was hired to design a new brick and stone Town House.

Among those who worked on the construction of the building were local stone mason John Blair, who was responsible for the foundation, steps, etc., and brick mason M. Leach. Curtis Hyde, a member of the Building Committee, a master builder and later the longtime custodian of the building, worked many days on the site work, apparently did much of the interior carpentry, and was responsible for a crew of several men. The building was opened in the spring of 1870, with many modern conveniences, including gas lighting, and indoor plumbing for water closets and a downstairs kitchen. Building contracts reveal that the windows originally had shutters, and that at least some of the interior was frescoed, by painter C.W. Strauss. The principal painter for most of the building was George F. Barney. While the main meeting hall occupied the upper floor, the first story of the building was divided into several spaces, including a smaller hall, a Selectmen's room, and the Fay Library.

Over the years, the commodious meeting hall on the second floor was the site not only of town meetings, but of a wide range of functions, including meetings of local organizations, social gatherings and theatrical performances. Town records show that in the 1870s the upper hall was rented out for concerts, lectures, exhibitions, parties, and the occasional ball, which brought in the highest rental fee--$20 for the evening from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m., and five dollars per hour after that.

The smaller hall on the lower floor was rented at a special rate to the Southborough Farmers Club, but was also a popular site for parties, lectures, exhibits, and a dancing school. These rentals were an important source of revenue for the town. In its first year the upper hall was rented out 24 times, and the lower hall 48.

The building continued to be used for more than municipal purposes well into the twentieth century. In the early 1920s, for instance, the Farmers' Club sponsored silent movies in the upper hall, accompanied by local players on the building's piano.

The grounds of the Town House were also a frequent destination for parades and processions. In 1892, for instance, during President Grover Cleveland's reelection campaign, the candidate was escorted by a large procession from Deerfoot Farm, where he was staying with the Edward Burnetts, to the Town House, where he gave a torchlight speech in front of the building.

Over the course of the twentieth century, spaces within the Town House were gradually specialized and subdivided for town offices, which still occupy the building today.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES [ ] *see continuation sheet*
  Maps and Atlases: 1856, 1857 (former Town House); 1870, 1898 (present Town House).
  Noble, Richard. Fences of Stone: a History of Southborough, MA. Portsmouth, NH: Peter Randall,
           1990.
  Town of Southborough: Annual Reports.

Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Community   Property Address

Southborough   Southborough Town House

Area(s)   Form No(s).
A   30

National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

[x] Individually eligible   [ ] Eligible <u>only</u> in a historic district
[x] Contributing to a potential historic district   [ ] Potential historic district

Criteria: [x] A   [ ] B   [x] C   [ ] D

Criteria Considerations: [ ] A   [ ] B   [ ] C   [ ] D   [ ] E   [ ] F   [ ] G

Statement of Significance by   <u>Forbes/Schuler, Consultants</u>
The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.

The Southborough Town House is eligible for the National Register at the local level under Criterion A as the center of the town government for 130 years, and for its first several decades as the center of the community's social and organizational life as well.

It also fulfills Criterion C for its well preserved 1870 Italianate architecture, an outstanding example of the work of architect Alexander Esty.

For all the above reasons it is also eligible as a contributing property in a National Register district encompassing the historic residential and institutional meetinghouse center of the town.

The property retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, setting and association.

PHO 30

(A)

PL SOUTH
USGS MARL

... URVEY

... L COMMISSION

... House, Boston

... significant to:
Nation

... ection with the
... everse side):

... /industry
... vention

Art/Sculpture   Travel/communication
Education   Military affairs
(Government)   Religion/philosophy
Literature   Indians
Music   Development of town/city

2. Town _Southborough_

Street address _Common St._

Name _Town Hall_

Original use _____

Present use _____

Present owner _Town of Southborough_

Open to public _Yes_

Date _1871_ Style _____

Source of date _Town Records_

Architect _____

- -

3. CONDITION: Excellent (Good) Fair Deteriorated Moved Altered Added _____

- -

4. DESCRIPTION

FOUNDATION/BASEMENT: High Regular Low   Material: _____

WALL COVER: Wood _____   Brick Stone Other _____

ROOF: Ridge Gambrel Flat Hip Mansard _bracketed_
       Tower Cupola Dormer windows Balustrade Grillwork _____

CHIMNEYS: 1 2 3 4   Center End Interior Irregular   Cluster Elaborate

STORIES: 1 (2) 3 4   ATTACHMENTS: Wings Ell Shed _____

PORCHES: 1 2 3 4 _____   PORTICO _____ Balcony

FACADE: Gable end: Front/Side Ornament: _____
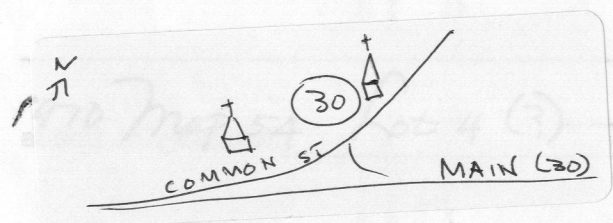
  Entrance: Side Front: (Center)/Side Details: _____

  Windows: Spacing: (Regular)/Irregular (Identical)/Varied _____

  Corners: Plain Pilasters Quoins Cornerboards _____

- -

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

6. Footage of structure from street
   Property has _____ feet frontage on street

Recorder _____

For _____

Photo _1-23A_ Date _1971_

SEE REVERSE SIDE

RELATION OF SURROUNDING TO STRUCTURE   SBR.30

1. Outbuildings_____

2. Landscape Features: Agriculture Open Wooded Garden: Formal/Informal
      Predominant features_____
      Landscape architect _____

3. Neighboring Structures
      Style: Colonial Federal Greek Revival Gothic Revival Italian Villa Lombard Rom.
           Venetian Gothic Mansard Richardsonian Modern

      Use: Residential Commercial Religious   Conditions: Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated
- -
GIVE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF HISTORIC IMPORTANCE OF SITE (Refer and elaborate on
   theme circled on front of form)

This handsome brick building was built in 1870 to replace
the original Town House which burned in 1868. It still houses the
town's governmental offices ①

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND/OR REFERENCE

① HDSC Report 1972.

RESTRICTIONS_____

Original Owner:_____
Deed Information: Book Number_____ Page_____,_____ Registry of Deeds