

**NEWTON PUBLIC BUILDINGS SURVEY  
PHASE II – ANALYSIS OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

**Building Analysis**

**Police Annex**



Address: 25 Chestnut Street

Year of Construction: 1925

Level of Significance: High

Contributing building in the West Newton National Register Historic District

Recommended Treatment Level: Preservation/Rehabilitation

## **PART I - Analysis of Historical Significance**

### *Building History*

Formerly the West Newton Branch Library, this building was the first of five branch libraries funded by citizen subscription between 1926 and 1939 and turned over to the city. Like most of the others, it is a small-scale, one story brick library of a Tudor Revival style. The building was designed by the firm of Edward B. Stratton and constructed in 1926. At the ceremony on September 29, 1926 it was dedicated in the memory of the devoted citizens and men who gave their lives during the first World War. It is contributing structure in the West Newton Village Center National Historic District.

Upon the closure of this branch library in 1984, the building was leased to the Barry Price Rehabilitation Center. Today the West Newton branch serves as the Newton Police Annex.

Architect Edward B. Stratton was a resident of Newton Centre, with a summer residence at Clifton Heights, Marblehead, MA. A member of the Boston Architectural Club since at least 1895, Stratton maintained an office in Boston, in varying locations over the years. Stratton collaborated with other architects at times, most notably with Arthur Bowditch from 1903-1907, but often was a sole practitioner. Stratton designed many buildings in and around Boston, including the Vermont Building in Boston (on the National Register) and the First Ward National Bank in East Boston (in a Boston Landmark District and eligible for listing on the National Register).

### *Level of Significance*

A well-designed building of high-quality materials that was produced by an important civic movement within Newton. A contributing structure in a National Register District.

### *References*

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The American Contractor. March 11, 1922. p.40

**PART I - Analysis of Historical Significance: Historic Images**  
Additional Information Sources for Future Research

Historic Images

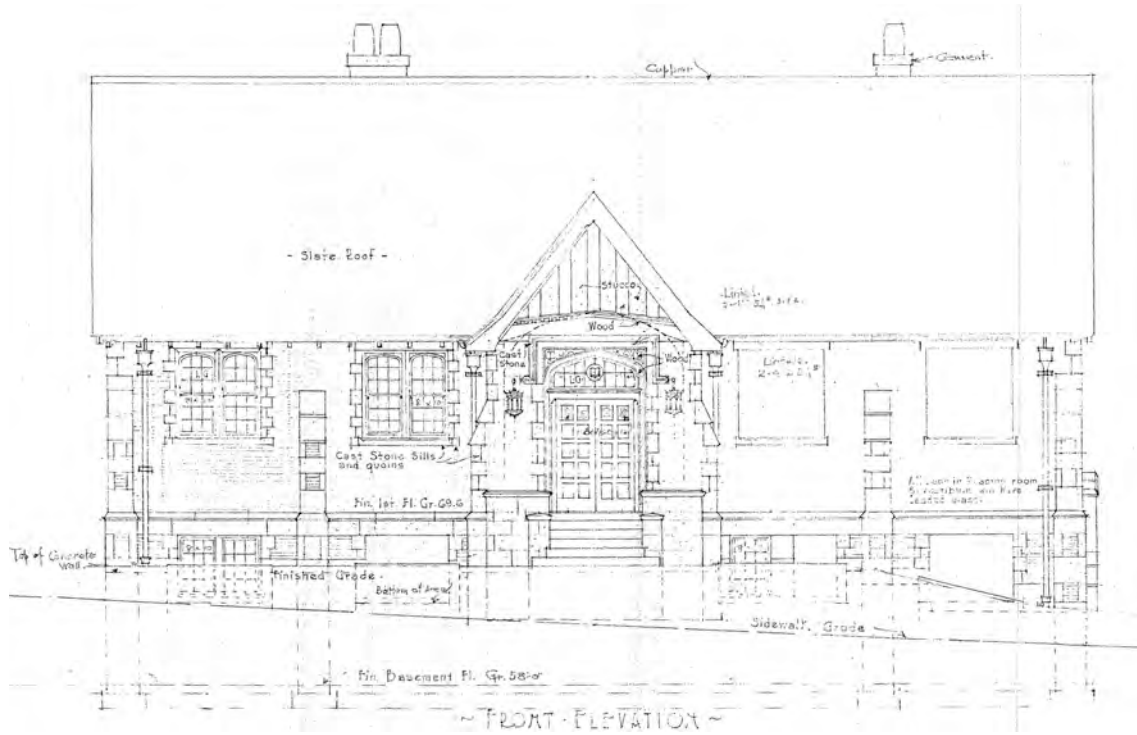


Figure 1: front elevation as designed by Stratton. Note the front doors, the leaders with conductor heads and the front entry prior to the construction of the ramp.

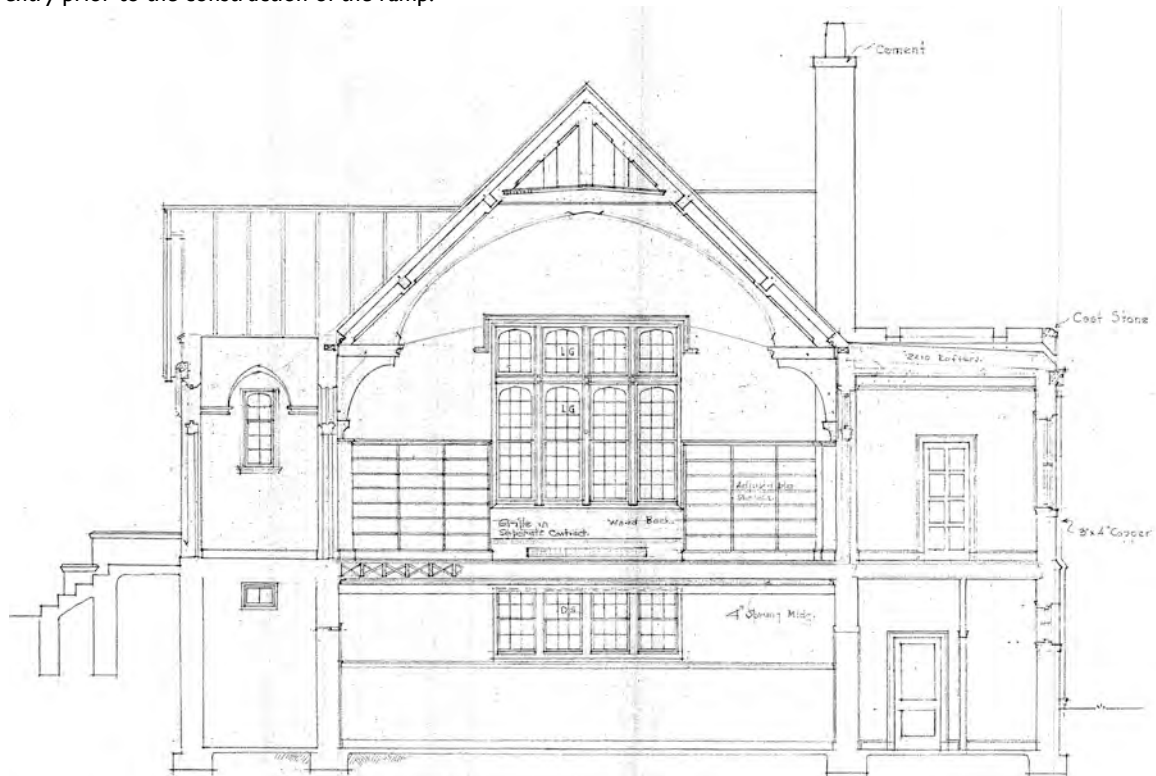


Figure 2: section as designed by Stratton. Note the vaulted ceilings with prominent trusses and brackets. The bookshelves along the gable wall have been removed.

## **Part 2 – Description of Historically Significant Features**

### **Exterior Visual Character**

#### *Setting*

- Facing east towards Chestnut Street. The building is set on a slope, with one story in the front, two stories at the rear.

#### *Shape*

- Two-story structure with a projecting center main entrance bay and a rectangular rear projection for ancillary spaces including stairs.

#### *Roof and Related Features*

- Steeply pitched side-gabled slate roof with center cross gable over main entrance. There is a flat roof at the rear (west) projection and two chimneys at the west side of the building. Ancillary elements include copper flashing and ridge caps; exposed wood rafter tails; wood gutters on the west elevation; and replacement gutters and leaders.

#### *Openings*

- Each quoined cast stone window surround typically encloses multiple wood frames and sashes with lead comes. The upper sashes generally have Tudor arched glazing. Aluminum exterior storm windows and/or screens have been set over the original windows.
- Windows at the front and rear are typically in pairs of tall, narrow double-hung sashes. Most are 9-over-9; at the front entry vestibule the windows are 4-over-6.
- At the north and south gable ends, a set of four 9-pane fixed transoms over four 12-over-12 double-hung windows are grouped within a single opening.
- The basement windows are typically 6-over-6 double-hung. At the east elevation they are set within concrete areaways. One has been replaced with plywood infill and louvers. The 2-pane basement windows at the front projection sides have been bricked up from behind.
- The pair paneled wood doors at the main entry and the pair of paneled, multi-light doors at the north basement entry have each been replaced with single aluminum doors with sidelights. The main entry retains its wood frame with Tudor arch transom.

#### *Projections:*

- The brick and precast concrete stairs and ramp to main entrance are modern additions.
- The north entry at the lower level is set within a projecting bay with a crenellated parapet.

#### *Trim and Secondary Features:*

- Brick buttresses with cast stone caps between window bays and at corners.
- Cast stone trim, including: corner quoins, quoined window surrounds, window hoods, cornice and crenellated parapet coping.

#### *Materials*

- Running bond brick with Flemish bond every 6<sup>th</sup> course and klinkers mixed in. Cast stone trim, decorative half timbering with stucco at all three gable ends. Concrete foundation.

#### *Craft Details*

- The roof pitch lifts up at the eaves; the exposed wood rafter tails are decoratively cut.
- The leaded glass transom at the front entry contains an image of an oil lamp and is set within a wood Tudor arch with carvings at corners. The entry is flanked by decorative sconces, and “Memorial Library” is carved into the wood element above the entry.
- “A.D. 1926” is written into the concrete of the southeast buttress.
- The chimney tie rods have wrought iron ornamentation.

## **Interior Visual Character**

### *Individually Important Spaces*

#### Main Space, First Floor

- The first floor, as originally designed, was one large room. It is currently subdivided with full-height partition walls for two offices; the rest contains low cubicle walls.
- The exposed wood trusses and vaulted ceiling are currently hidden by a Kalwall dropped ceiling, set in a heavy, painted steel frame.
- Wood brackets at the base of the wood trusses rest on plaster corbels. Typical (6) per side, east/west.
- Thin wood trim serves as a window hood to the large sets of windows on the north and south walls
- Doors to the entry vestibule and stair hall have been replaced with aluminum glazed doors. Multi-pane transoms are set within wood frames.
- The floor is covered with non-original vinyl tile flooring.
- The built-in bookshelves shown in original drawings are no longer extant.

### *Related Spaces*

#### Entry Vestibule

- The barrel-vaulted ceiling and the flat walls are finished with textured plaster.
- The Tudor arch transom over the front door contains an image of an oil lamp.
- The floor is currently carpeted, presumably covering the tile floor with recessed mat shown in the original drawings.

#### Stair Hall

- Stained wood stairs are currently covered in commercial carpet. The vertical balusters and handrail are matching stained wood.

### *Other Significant Interior Features*

- A fireplace is set along the west wall of the main space, currently within one of the two partitioned offices. It has a carved limestone Tudor arched surround with a brick interior and a quarry tile hearth. Tall, wood paneled wainscot with Tudor arched panels surrounds the other elements.



**Part 2 – Images**



Figure 3: the north gable end exhibits many character-defining features. Note the roofline with the subtle splay at the eaves; the wood and stucco pediment; the large set of leaded glass wood windows set within a cast stone surround; the buttresses shaping the north and south profile of the building; the projecting basement entryway.



Figure 4: "Memorial Library" carved into the wood above the front door. Note also the oil lamp image in the leaded glass transom.



Figure 5 (left): (rotate/straighten and reinsert) original wood brackets on plaster corbels still extant. Inappropriate steel and Kalwall dropped ceiling obscures rest of trusses and ceiling

Figure 6 (below): ornamental wrought iron chimney wall tie



### **Part 3 – Treatment Recommendations**

#### **Preservation Treatment Level**

The Newton Police Headquarters Annex, with its origin as one of the citizen subscription-funded branch libraries built in the 1920s-30s, is significant to the civic history of Newton. While the building's use has changed and spaces have been altered, many of the most significant features remain intact and in good condition. It is recommended that the most important spaces and the historically significant features (listed in Part 2 of this report) be treated at the "Preservation" Level outlined in the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. The Preservation treatment level places a premium on the retention of historic fabric through conservation, maintenance and repair.

In related spaces and ancillary spaces not directly contributing to the historic character, the "Rehabilitation" level of treatment from the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* may be more appropriate. At this level, the emphasis is placed on protecting and maintaining historic building material and significant features while providing an efficient contemporary use of the building.

The following bulleted list contains an analysis of existing conditions and recommended treatments for the significant features catalogued in Part 2 of this report.

#### **Exterior Recommendations**

Critical/Urgent (Timeframe: As soon as possible)

- Locate and repair leaks at northwest corner of entrance projection roof.
- Direct ends of leaders away from building or into the sewer system to prevent further water damage
- Repair and reattach loose wood gutter at west elevation.
- Reconnect all disconnected leaders, including at west elevation.

First Priority (Timeframe: 1-3 years)

- Replace rotted wood elements in kind, including rotten rafter tails below leak at entrance roof. Paint all wood elements.
- Paint all ferrous elements, including pipe rail at basement stairs, west elevation and decorative tiebacks at chimney.
- Determine cause of structural concerns. Remediate if still active, and repair. Includes:
  - Vertical cracks in buttress coping stones
  - Large crack through multiple repairs of replacement cast stone lintel at basement window, south elevation
- Water staining and efflorescence are visible below each joint in the cast stone cornice. Install weathercaps at all sky-facing joints.
- Repair severely spalling concrete. Remediate causes of water damage. Locations include:
  - concrete foundation
  - exterior basement door
  - concrete areaways
- Conduct thorough survey of window condition, including sash, frame, lintel and hardware. Building occupants have complaints of leaking windows. Repair as necessary.
- Replace the few missing, broken or spalling roof slates.
- Gutter at south side of entry projection was cut into the rafter tails. Restore full roof and rafter tail profiles. Move gutter to edge of roofline.
- Replace all leaders with copper leaders and conductor heads to match original. Refer to original construction drawings. Includes replacement of rusting ferrous leaders and visually obtrusive white leaders at west elevation.

- Remove ivy from building exterior.
- Investigate and remediate the cause(s) of shifting, settling and water damage at the new entrance ramp. Repair, including step cracks, cracks at concrete landings, efflorescence on ramp piers, and displaced recessed light fixtures.

Second Priority (Timeframe: 3-5 years)

- Provide Dutchman repair at large spalled piece of cast stone at buttress.
- Reset shifted piece of cast stone in the water table. Repoint.
- Remove extraneous ferrous elements. Patch.
- Repoint brick walls, including:
  - northwest corner of entrance projection
  - missing mortar at many buttresses
  - general repointing
- Reroute pipe directly in front of dated “cornerstone” to a more appropriate location.
- Replace the cracked glass on the exterior wall sconce.
- Clean building exterior, including:
  - Biological staining, specifically at moist locations, such as northeast where in shadow, at ends of leaders and below roof, gutter and leader leaks
  - general atmospheric staining
  - water staining- within north doorway

Maintenance (Timeframe: Ongoing)

- Remove leaves from areaways. Maintain unclogged areaways and drains.
- Continue regular maintenance of character-defining features.
- Slate roof is showing age, but generally in good condition. Monitor for replacement in the future.

**Interior Recommendations**

Critical/Urgent (Timeframe: As soon as possible)

First Priority (Timeframe: 1-3 years)

- Water damage at plaster ceiling and walls of vestibule, northwest corner appears to be related to similar damage on the exterior. Repair roof. (See exterior recommendations). Repair and repaint damaged plaster surfaces.
- Remove non-original, inappropriate and sound-reflective Kalwall dropped ceiling and its frame. Coordinate with the reevaluation of the HVAC system, beyond the scope of this study. Restore space back to its original ceiling height. Repair any damage caused by or hidden by dropped ceiling, including where steel frame was fastened to wood brackets and trusses.
  - The acoustics are currently very poor for a work environment; there is no sound privacy. Removal of the dropped ceiling and its framing would help to ameliorate this problem. Investigate further, appropriate acoustical measures, such as the plaster finish at the restored, original ceiling height.

Second Priority (Timeframe: 3-5 years)

Maintenance (Timeframe: Ongoing)

- Continue regular maintenance of character-defining features.



Phase II: Analysis of Historically Significant City Buildings, Newton, Massachusetts  
Police Annex  
DRAFT 2/17/2012