

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

Building Analysis

Police Headquarters



Address: 1321 Washington Street

Year of Construction: 1932

Level of Significance: High

Contributing building within the West Newton Village Center National Historic District

Eligible for Individual Listing on the National Register of Historic Places

Recommended Treatment Level: Preservation/Rehabilitation

PART I - Analysis of Historical Significance

Building History

When Newton became a city in 1873, the Police Headquarters were set up within City Hall, then located on the corner of Washington and Cherry Streets. The police and the courthouse were later located in a wooden building intended as a schoolhouse. (*check this...*) By the 1920s it had become antiquated.

The new Newton Police Headquarters and New District Court buildings were constructed using Public Works Administration funds and opened on December 4, 1931. Each of the two buildings cost \$115,000, with an additional \$5000 in furnishings.

The Public Works Administration was a New Deal program designed to provide employment, stabilize purchasing power, improve public welfare and contribute to reviving American industry. It was created by the National Industrial Recovery Act in 1933 and was terminated in 1941, by which time it had become irrelevant. The PWA funded the construction of more than 34,000 projects, including 70% of the new schools and 1/3 of the hospitals built during this time period.

The Classical Revival masonry building was designed by James H. Ritchie & Associates as one of a pair of buildings with the adjacent Newton Courthouse and is connected to that building by an exterior plaza and an underground tunnel. Today it is a contributing structure in the West Newton Village Center National Historic District.

Architect James H. Ritchie was born and educated in Scotland. From 1908 until his death in 1964, he practiced in Boston. During his career, he designed many institutional buildings, including several in Newton, and two houses for himself in Newton. From approximately 1923-1927, Ritchie was in a partnership of Ritchie, Parsons & Taylor; during these years, his firm remodeled the Somerville City Hall (1923-4) and designed the Lexington High School (1924) and the Newton Centre Branch Library (1927). In the years following this partnership, James H. Ritchie and Associates designed the Ward Elementary School (1928), the Police Headquarters and Courthouse (1931) and built an addition on the F.A. Day Junior High School, now known as the Education Center. Ritchie remained active until the early 1960s. His firm, later named The Ritchie Organization, is still in practice today, as TRO Jung|Brannen, one of the largest international architecture/engineering firms in the northeast.

The Police Headquarters building was renovated in the mid 1990s by Finegold Alexander & Associates, Inc., and the ultra modern Newton Emergency Telecommunication Center was located here; the latter was the result of Chief Gorgone's efforts to pool resources between departments for the benefit of all.

Level of Significance

An imposing and elaborately-designed civic structure with a high degree of integrity. A contributing structure within a National Register Historic District and eligible for listing as an individual building along with the adjacent courthouse under criteria A and C.

Bibliography

- The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project. The Department of History of The George Washington University, Washington, DC. <<http://www.gwu.edu/~erpapers/teaching/glossary/pwa.cfm>> (accessed 29 November, 2011)
- Massachusetts Historical Commission, "Form B NWT.3888—1321 Washington Street". 1997, 1987, 1978.
- Newton Police Department. History. <http://206.40.161.218/npd%20history/x_history_1.htm> (accessed 5 December, 2011)
- TRO Jung|Brannen. History. <<http://www.troj.com/history.aspx>> (accessed 12 December, 2011)

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

Historic Images



Figure 1: Image of unknown date. (Credit: Historic Newton)

Part 2 – Description of Historically Significant Features

Exterior Visual Character

Setting

- Facing south towards Washington Street. The adjacent courthouse is to the east, the small, Captain John Ryan Memorial Park is to the west.

Shape

- Two story rectangular structure, raised above street level, with a projecting frontispiece containing the main entrance.
- A basement level firing range projects above grade along the west elevation.

Roof and Related Features

- Flat roof hidden by a high parapet with engaged cast stone balusters and cast stone panels above entrance. The parapet has a metal cap.
- The firing range has a flat, gravel-ballasted roof with copper flashing.

Openings

- Windows are typically single openings with steel lintels and cast stone or brick sills, containing appropriately designed replacement double-hung sashes.
- Most windows are 6-over-6. 8-over-8 sashes are found at much of the north elevation; 4-over-4 windows are found at the north end of the east elevation.
- Aluminum screens have been installed over the basement windows.
- The 9-light wood main entrance door has two 4-light sidelights, and a 5-light transom, all within a wood frame. It is recessed within an elaborate cast stone surround.
- The 9-light metal rear door is set within a wood frame.
- A single garage door and a large louver panel are at the east end of the north elevation.

Projections:

- The building and the adjacent courthouse share a raised plaza with a pink precast concrete balustrade, cast stone stairs and a ramp. 8" pavers are edged with brick and slate.
- The chimney at the north has a decorative top with beveled cast stone coping and cornice.
- A copper-roofed concrete ventilation shaft projects from the firing range southeast corner.

Trim and Secondary Features:

- The building has brick corner quoins.
- The center cast stone bay has pilasters with Corinthian capitals, a decorative frieze at the front within the door vestibule, and a large flagpole. The entry is flanked by decorative cast stone grilles, wall sconces, and small windows protected with heavy wrought iron grilles.

Materials

- Brick with cast stone trim and a cast stone center bay. The north infill bays have a split face CMU foundation.
- The cast stone's white marble aggregate and creamy white binder sparkle in the sunlight. The water table has additional specks of black aggregate. The newer raised piazza cast stone has white and gray aggregate in a pink binder.

Craft Details

- Detailing differs between the police headquarters and the courthouse, yet they read as a well-matched pair.
- "NEWTON POLICE HEADQUARTERS" is carved into the cornice above the front entry.
- Decorative cast stone panels are centered at each window bay.

Interior Visual Character

Individually Important Spaces

Entry Vestibule

- The textured plaster ceiling has a carved wood cornice.
- The walls are stained, paneled wood.
- The floor is vinyl tile with a vinyl baseboard.
- The exterior door is to the south; the 10-light wood interior door to the main lobby is set within a metal frame with two full-height (4-light) sidelights.

Main Lobby

- The textured plaster ceiling has exposed beams with carved wood trim.
- A square oculus to the second floor reception space is centered on the skylight above, and is directly above the non-original information desk.
- The primary walls are stained, paneled wood; others are metal-framed glazed walls with obscured glass.
- The floor is vinyl tile with a vinyl baseboard.
- The pair of doors to the front stairs, with 10 lights each, are adjacent to the vestibule door.
- Plaques, a display case, and a clock are prominently displayed.
- Non-original, recessed linear fluorescent lighting surrounds the oculus; suspended linear fluorescent are otherwise used.

Related Spaces

Front Stairs

- The painted metal pan stairs are clad with non-original resilient flooring, and have painted ornamental metal balusters and a profiled wood handrail.
- The ceiling and walls are plaster, with a stained plywood-paneled wainscot.
- The stairs open directly to the second floor reception space.

Rear Stairs

- The walls are clad with buff-colored glazed ceramic tiles.
- The painted metal pan stairs have vertical metal balusters, a round wood handrail, and non-original resilient flooring.
- At each floor, the stair is separated from the corridor by a metal-framed glazed wall, consisting of a pair of painted bronze doors with 9 lights each, flanked by 6-pane sidelights and a multi-pane transom.

Second Floor Reception

- A lozenge-shaped plastic skylight in a splayed rectangular opening is centered in the space.
- A metal guardrail with wood handrail surrounds the opening to the main lobby below.
- The primary walls are plaster or gypsum wallboard; others are metal-framed glazed walls.

Other Significant Interior Features

- The interior was renovated in the mid-1990s. Most other spaces typically have modern finishes, including:
 - dropped acoustic tile ceilings
 - plaster exterior walls with a wood chair rail
 - moveable partition walls
 - vinyl tile or commercial carpeted floors

Part 2 – Images

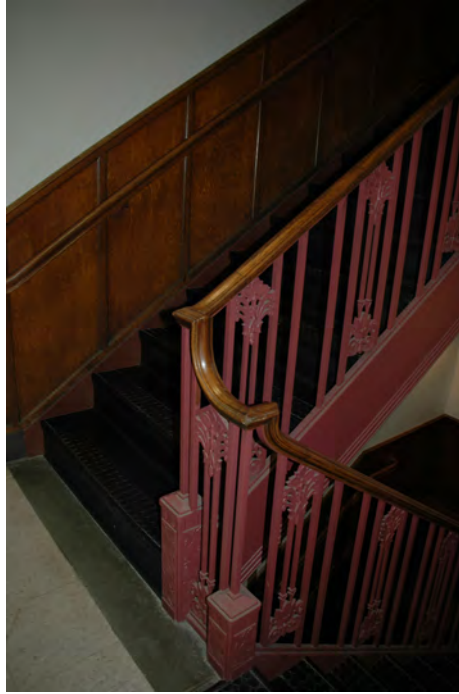
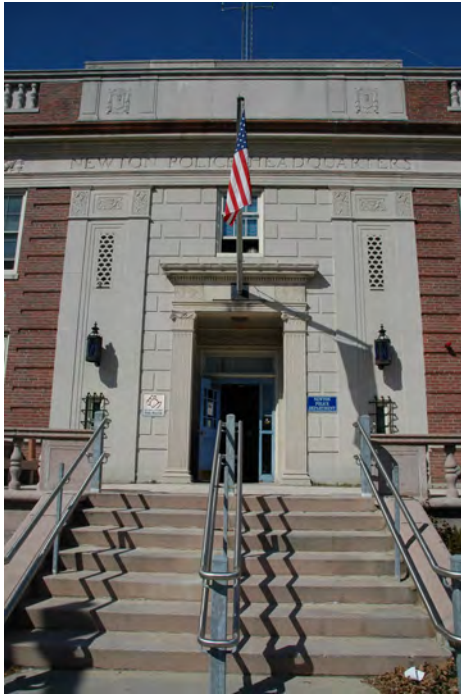


Figure 2 (top left): main entrance

Figure 3 (top right): front stairs

Figure 4 (center): ornamental cast stone panel centered between the first and second floor windows

Figure 5 (bottom): main lobby, looking south towards the entry vestibule (left) and the front stairs (center)

Part 3 – Treatment Recommendations

Preservation Treatment Level

The Police Headquarters is a significant building within the City of Newton, and it continues to serve its original function. The building exterior is generally in good condition, and the significant features are intact. It is recommended that any work on the exterior and in the significant spaces on the interior be performed according to the “Preservation” level of treatment, as 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 all historic fabric through conservation, maintenance and repair.

Much of the interior has been significantly altered during the mid-1990s renovation. In spaces not directly contributing to the historic character, the “Rehabilitation” level of treatment 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)

- The roof was not accessible for survey. No indication of leaks are visible from the ground. Water damage at interior may indicate roof leaks. Inspect the roof and repair as required.

First Priority (Timeframe: 1-3 years)

- Structural cracks. Determine cause, remediate if still active, and repair. Includes:
 - North wall of the firing range, displaced by approximately 1” at top. Gaps at repointed, enlarged joints indicate it may still be shifting.
 - The steel lintel at the garage door doesn’t engage in brick walls at the sides. Confirm the structural integrity.
 - Step-cracking at tops of north windows and at south cast stone panel.
 - There are typically cracks in the concrete foundation below the east windows.
- Remove rust and repaint all ferrous elements, including pipe rails, guard rails and brackets, wrought iron window grilles, rear door, and non-original steel-framed roof over rear door.
- Survey the condition of all steel lintels. Replace severely rusted lintels, including at the basement windows. Reset and repoint displaced bricks where rust jacking has occurred and where removed to replace lintels, including at the north infill bays. Repaint all lintels.
- Repair, resecure, or replace deteriorated wood elements as necessary, including plywood roof sheathing at rear door. Paint all wood elements, including door jambs.
- Properly prepare and repoint cracked and missing mortar joints and poor mortar patches. Includes at the chimney and parapet, as well as generally around the building perimeter.
- Repair cracked and spalling concrete, including at the coping and the ventilation projection. Replace missing concrete, including at ramp. Repair minor cracks, including at the site wall and below basement windows.
- Repair or replace as necessary missing, broken, poorly patched and mismatched cast stone. Includes at the continuous first floor sill, at the parapet and coping, the plinth, and front vestibule floor. Reset displaced cast stone blocks.
- One ferrous corner guard at the garage has popped the concrete out with rust. Remove rust and repaint. Reset within a new concrete patch.
- Repaint the shaped metal cap on cast stone cornices. Repaint exterior conduit painted to match brick.

- Repair or replace as necessary the bent and broken pieces of flashing at the firing range roof. Replace wood backing where it is deteriorated.
- Investigate the cause of severe efflorescence and cracking at concrete foundation of plinth. Remediate as necessary.

Second Priority (Timeframe: 3-5 years)

- Replace in kind broken bricks, including at pipe penetrations.
- Restore the wall sconces, including cleaning, repainting, and replacing missing components.
- Repaint the metal grille and the infill behind at the east elevation.
- Remove extraneous ferrous elements from building exterior. Patch as required.
- Properly prepare and repoint mismatched and sloppily installed mortar. Includes locations at the chimney, north and east elevations, and site wall.
- Replace mismatched sealant, at the north and east elevations.
- Clean building exterior, including:
 - Efflorescence: bottom of cornices; at west basement; within north and east brick infill panels
 - Water staining: bottom of cornices, especially below cornice joints and at tops of windows, east water table (pronounced), below flagpole
 - Mastic: at firing range roof
 - Biological staining: at basement, north and west; north below water table
 - Moss growth: northeast corner of chimney
 - Rust staining: below rusting ferrous elements, including pipe rails, guard rail brackets, wrought iron grilles. Staining is severe at north-most east basement window, possibly from a previous window.
 - Copper staining: at ventilation projection

Maintenance (Timeframe: Ongoing)

- Continue regular maintenance of character-defining features.
- Maintain all gutters, leaders and drains to keep clog-free.
- Remove birds nests from cast stone grilles at the front elevation.
- Monitor spalling concrete at front entry for further spalling. Use non-salt deicer to prevent further damage.

Interior Recommendations

Critical/Urgent (Timeframe: As soon as possible)

First Priority (Timeframe: 1-3 years)

- Determine and remediate the cause of water damage:
 - at the exterior wall of front stairs
 - at the exterior wall of rear stairs
 - at the skylight
 - at the first floor kitchen ceiling
 - at the second floor corridor ceiling
- Replace the missing resilient flooring tread at the front stair.

Second Priority (Timeframe: 3-5 years)

- Repair and repaint water damaged plaster at exterior wall of front stairs.
- Repaint the glazed door and window walls at the rear stair.
- Repair and repaint the water-damaged plaster at the skylight.
- Replace the missing pieces of roping at the entry vestibule wood cornice.
- Replace water-damaged acoustic ceiling tiles.

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- A pipe runs through the rear stair transom pane at the second floor. Review plumbing for the possibility of restoring the transom to its original configuration.
- The rear stair transom at the first floor is obscured by a dropped acoustic tile ceiling at the stair and corridor. Investigate conditions and restore visibility of full height of transom if possible.

Maintenance (Timeframe: Ongoing)

- Continue regular maintenance of character-defining features.