

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

Building Analysis

Winchester Street Garage



Address: 525 Winchester Street
Year of Construction: 1938

Level of Significance: Moderate

Recommended Treatment Level: Rehabilitation

PART I - Analysis of Historical Significance

Building History

The building known as the Winchester Street Garage was originally constructed in 1938 as a tool house for the Newton City Infirmary. This small one-story brick building is now the last remaining structure from a site with a long history of institutional use within Newton.

The site was developed in 1900 as an almshouse administered by the city's Charity Department. This was the fourth iteration of the almshouse in the City. In 1731 citizens had voted to build the original workhouse for the poor in Auburndale. The first Board of Overseers of the Poor was chosen three years later to carry out the construction and administration of the project and in 1763 the town constructed a 24-foot by 26-foot single story workhouse on town land. In 1818, a building and 43 acres of land in Auburndale were purchased for a new poorhouse. Rising real estate values and the undesirability of the poorhouse as a neighborhood feature drove the city to move the poorhouse from Auburndale to the less developed area of Waban in 1837.

Increasing development in Waban at the end of the 1800s motivated the City to move the poorhouse once again. The City purchased 35 acres along Winchester Street from the Burney estate in 1890 for the construction of a new facility. The new City Almshouse and Poor Farm building was designed by Kendall, Taylor and Stevens and in 1900, the 16 inmates of the institution in Waban were moved to the new building, considered a model institution of its kind. By the 1900s most cities, including Newton, contained a large number of public and private charitable institutions. The city almshouse inmates were typically people who could no longer support themselves and had no family members to support them and who could not be housed at other institutions for more specialized groups. These inmates were admitted voluntarily by the overseeing body of the charitable system. Inmates were expected to work in the institution's farm and gardens or within the house. In 1909 the name of the almshouse changed to the Newton City Home & Farm. An addition to the building was constructed in 1917. In 1946 the building's name was changed again to the Newton City Infirmary. Per a building permit filed with the City, the brick tool house building was constructed in 1938 to support the City Home and Farm. The building was constructed on the site of an unidentified smaller structure that was part of the original complex in 1900.

The City Infirmary closed in 1964 when the City welfare department was absorbed by the State of Massachusetts. The site was transferred to Newton's Recreation Commission in 1968, but was not developed. The Almshouse building burned down in 1976. In 1980 the site, with its remaining tool house, was added to an additional 32 acres of land purchased by the City from the Xaverian Brothers to create Nahanton Park. The tool house building is owned by Newton's Public Buildings Department has been used primarily for as a carpentry shop and storage facility since the early 1980s.

Level of Significance

The Winchester Street Garage is significant under National Register Criterion A as the last remaining structure in Newton's City Infirmary complex and for its association with the history of public welfare and charitable institutions within Newton.

Bibliography

- Clarke, Michael. "Form B Draft – 525 Winchester Street" (February 2012).
- Johnson, Alexander. *The Almshouse Construction and Management*. Russell Sage Foundation. Charities Publication Committee. New York. 1911.
- Massachusetts Historical Commission, "Form B NWT.5814—525 Winchester Street" (1997).
- Smith, Samuel Francis. *History of Newton, Massachusetts*. The American Logotype Company. Boston. 1880.
- Newton City Directories: 1903, 1927, 1934
- Shea, Deborah. "The Growth and Development of Newton Highlands and Waban." In *Newton Historical Properties Survey*, Historic Newton, Inc. 1982. <http://www.wabanimprovement.org/oldsite/Architectdocs/Architect2.html> (accessed 11/21/2011).

PART I - Analysis of Historical Significance: Historic Images



Figure 1: Detail of 1920 map of Newton, showing the Alms House. The associated tool shed had not yet been built (Map Reproduction Courtesy of the Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library).



Figure 2: Almshouse building designed by Kendall, Taylor and Stevens (Credit: Johnson, Alexander. The Almshouse Construction and Management. 1911).

Part 2 – Description of Historically Significant Features

Exterior Visual Character

Setting

- The building is set on a wooded, west-facing slope in Nahanton Park. The main level is accessed from the parking area clearing to the east; the lower level is accessed from the north.
- A fieldstone site wall running north and south from the building accommodates the dramatic grade change. The garage is surrounded by fieldstone site walls and foundations of various other, non-extant buildings including the Almshouse building and barn.

Shape

- The structure is rectangular, with one story at street level and an unoccupied attic. An additional basement level is located within the stone foundation at the rear of the site where the grade is lower.

Roof and Related Features

- The garage has a gable roof with asphalt shingles and wood gutters.

Openings

- The windows are wood, double-hung and set behind exterior grilles. The north window opening contains an 8-over-2 sash. Window openings have brick sills and steel lintels.
- There is a single attic window at the south and north gable ends.
- On the main level, the building has one large door opening with a modern metal garage door (with a short concrete ramp to grade) and one small door opening with a wood batten door.
- On the lower level, there is a large garage door opening with a concrete lintel in the north elevation of the stone foundation. This opening is infilled with wood planks and has a standard metal-framed exterior door installed.

Projections:

- There are charred remnants of what appear to have been a wood-framed roof with copper flashing over the north door, lower level.
- A tall, narrow brick chimney projects from the center of the west roof.

Trim and Secondary Features:

- Brick piers flank each door opening. The gable ends are trimmed with wood fascia boards.

Materials

- The building brick is laid in common bond with sixth course headers over a fieldstone foundation.
- The cornice, fascia and gutters are wood.

Craft Details

- There is a brick header course above the stone foundation.

Interior Visual Character

Individually Important Spaces

Main Floor- Workshop

- The workshop ceiling is rough-finished plaster on metal lath; the two north-south attic floor joists are exposed.
- The hatch to the attic is still present, but is covered with sheet of plywood.
- Walls are the painted exposed brick exterior walls.
- There is a 5-paneled door to the attic at what appears to be a non-original plywood landing. Remnants of painted beadboard paneling at the landing indicate that this area was once more finished.
- There is a sliding door of vertical wood planks on an overhead track that accesses the south room

Basement

- The circular-sawn wood floor joists to main floor above are exposed.
- The exposed stone rubble exterior walls are painted.
- There is an exposed brick partition wall to the mechanical room, to the south of the stairs.
- The garage door opening at the north wall has been infilled with oriented strand board and a standard-sized door. A track for a non-original overhead garage door remains.
- All window openings are infilled with oriented strand board.
- There is a rusted flat-seam metal covered door to mechanical room.

Related Spaces

Stairways

- Utilitarian wood stairs lead from the main level to concrete landing. Additional utilitarian wood stairs lead down to main basement level.

Other Significant Interior Features

- The floor in the office space at the south side of the main level is wood.
- The attic, currently used as a storage space, is reached by wood stairs with winders and beadboard sidewalls. The attic ceiling consists of wood joists and board sheathing.

Part 2 – Images



Figure 3: North elevation of garage. Note the remnants of the projecting roof above the opening.



Figure 4: Close up view of the fieldstone foundation.



Figure 5: Interior of main level. Note the wood floor and exposed ceiling structure.



Figure 6: Interior of the basement level.



Figure 7: Stairway to the attic with beadboard walls.

Part 3 – Treatment Recommendations

Preservation Treatment Level

The Winchester Street Garage is significant primarily for its association with the Almshouse property. The building is being used in a manner similar to its original purpose but has not been continuously maintained and has the appearance of an abandoned building. While a great deal of original historic material remains significant repair work is required, particularly to prevent further deterioration of the wood elements. The building has the potential to be a valuable resource within the park, particularly as a tool for historic interpretation. It is recommended that future work at the building be performed according to the “Rehabilitation” Level of treatment outlined in the U. S. Secretary of the Interior’s *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. The Rehabilitation treatment level assumes that more repair and replacement of historic material will be required than is called for in a more preservation-based approach. 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)

- Replace and reconnect missing gutters and leaders. Reconnect to cast iron leader shoes. Replace in kind broken cast iron leader shoes.
- Replace rotting wood elements in kind, (including wood gutter, eaves, fascia), and repair salvageable components.

First Priority (Timeframe: 1-3 years)

- Inspect the drainage system to confirm water runoff is directed away from the building. Repair as required.
- Repaint all wood elements.
- Repaint ferrous elements, including protective grilles at windows.
- Repair or replace damaged and deteriorated thresholds.
- The asphalt shingle roof is reaching the end of its life cycle and should be replaced.

Second Priority (Timeframe: 3-5 years)

- Replace areas of poor cementitious repairs at the brick walls, including a large concrete patch at the east elevation, with new brick to match existing adjacent brick. Evaluate poor patch repairs at pipe penetrations. If penetrations are needed, replace patch. Otherwise, provide brick and mortar to match existing adjacent.
- The steel lintel at the south attic window opening is rusted and is causing the surrounding brick to crack. Remove the brick from above the lintel, replace the steel element and rebuild area of remove brick with new brick to match existing.
- Repoint mortar joints at the brick and stone walls.
- Clean the building exterior, including:
 - smeared mastic at window openings
 - biological growth at grade, at the east elevation, and at the north elevation next to site wall. Remove ivy from the west elevation.
 - efflorescence
 - rust staining below ferrous elements
- Conduct thorough survey of window conditions, including sash, frame, lintel and hardware. The original windows should be retained to the largest extent possible, repaired and made weathertight. Replace damaged or missing wood elements in kind. Areas of minor

deterioration should be repaired with dutchmen or through consolidation. Glazing putty will need to be replaced. The wood should be stripped and repainted in a color matching the original color. Windows that are too deteriorated to repair should be replaced in kind.

- Maintain surrounding site walls. Conduct further investigation to determine original purposes. Consider installing interpretive signs for the Tool Shed and surrounding site walls.

Maintenance (Timeframe: Ongoing)

- Develop a regular maintenance plan with the intent to preserve character-defining features.
- Maintain all gutters, leaders and drains to keep clog-free.
- Remove insect nests, including wasps nest at east eave.

Interior Recommendations

Critical/Urgent (Timeframe: As soon as possible)

- Remove flammable material from basement and attic. Inventory stored items in case there are materials related to the almshouse and store any found in a more secure location.
- Store flammable and combustible materials belonging to the carpentry shop work in an appropriate storage cabinet.

First Priority (Timeframe: 1-3 years)

Second Priority (Timeframe: 3-5 years)

- There is evidence of previous water damage to the plaster ceiling in workshop (staining, exposed metal lath), and also at the southwest corner of the office ceiling. After verifying that these are no longer active leaks repaint the walls, replace the damaged ceiling tile, and repair the damaged plaster.
- Replace the missing wood panel on the original door to the attic (currently replaced with plywood).
- Clean graffiti from attic structural elements and stairs.

Maintenance (Timeframe: Ongoing)

- Develop a regular maintenance plan with the intent to preserve character-defining features.