

Existing Conditions Survey

Site

Trees on the southeast side of the building (between the building and the pond) and along the southwest side are shading the building such that there is inadequate air circulation. This has caused mildew to accumulate on the roof and siding.

Foundation

The existing foundation (unmortarted granite blocks and stones) rests on a combination of ledge and soil. There are also areas of crushed stone, which were added in 2006 to improve drainage. Building elevation measurements taken around the building over the last two years suggest that the foundation is reasonably stable.

In 2006, the town contracted with JR Graton and Kevin Fife to repair the stone foundation. They removed a portion of the original stone work and replaced it with early 19th century split stones. Photographic documentation from that time indicates that the building was “held in place” and stones were removed and then replaced in areas that had shifted or otherwise changed. Some crushed stone was added to allow for drainage.



The east corner of the Meeting House showing the post-2006 foundation.

Because the siding, trim and windows had been replaced in the 1980s (and made plumb and level), a full jacking of the structure was not carried out, as those sections would have to be “released and/or removed” first. While the good-faith effort to stabilize the foundation in 2006 was successful, the jacking of the building will still need to be addressed so that the posts/plates/rafters can be at the appropriate elevations.

Structural Systems

Sills and floor joists: The sills and floor joists have been repaired and/or replaced over the years. The only original members still in use may be select portions of the sill. A new sub-floor was installed during the 1987-1990 renovation. When the building was cut down, it was probably

lowered onto the original ground level flooring system. (Logistically, if they had removed the ground level floor system first, they would not have had a very good surface from which to operate. Also, since the second floor had a gallery, they would have had to patch in new framing and flooring in the open area.)



Existing floor finish dating from ca. 1990

Posts, girts and plates: These framing members appear to be in reasonable condition, although there may be exterior surface damage to the “plates” (remember that the building was cut-down, so that we currently are looking at the original *second* floor sidewall framing).

Roof truss systems and purlins: After the building was cut down to a one-story structure, the wind braces were removed from the interior of the middle bents (their original purpose was to help brace and keep the collar ties in place). This was done to create a typical, open meeting space.

Physical evidence indicates that the ceiling was likely lathed/plastered for the first and only time during this period. The weight of the additional ceiling joists/lath/plaster, coupled with yearly snow load pressure on the rafters, caused the collar ties to sag and the ceiling to flex, thereby breaking the “keys” of the plaster, allowing the plaster to disengage and fall down.



Attic roof system and bracing, with later additional bracing.

Originally, the braces going from the top of the collar tie to the rafters did not need to be pegged since they were always under compression and could therefore not fall out. However, once the wind braces were removed from the middle bents (as described earlier) and the ceiling joists were added and plastered, the roof truss system lost part of its support. Therefore, while the original brace did not require a pegged connection where the collar tie meets the rafter (particularly near the middle of the truss), the altered configuration should have had a pegged connection. The sagging of the collar ties from the weight of the additional ceiling joists, boards, lath and plaster, as well as the removal of the wind braces between the collar ties and posts, have caused the other braces to drop out and new, longer braces were needed.



Looking up at the joists and lath of the ceiling, where the plaster has fallen away.

The rafters appear to be in reasonably good condition. One rafter has been replaced and others show a discoloration that indicates water damage that may need to be addressed. The purlins also appear to be in reasonably good condition with some replacement/repair and discoloration indicating potential repairs needed. Some of the purlins evidence deflection/sagging, which is not unusual in an 18th century building.

Roof Sheathing/Finish: The roof sheathing appears serviceable. One side has been replaced recently. However, it, too, should be checked the next time the roofing is replaced. The existing asphalt roofing does not appear to be leaking. The asphalt shingles have been replaced more recently on the southeast side. The northwest side shows more wear.

Exterior Architectural Elements

The exterior surfaces of the building (trim, windows, doors and clapboards) were replaced in the late 1980s with new materials. The replacement window units (frame and sash) are slightly smaller than the original openings. A window sash found in the building is probably a second generation sash (circa 1792), but could possibly date to the original construction of the building. This sash is important for two reasons. First, it helps define the sash configuration (twelve-over-twelve) and also the individual glass size (7" x 9"). Second, paint samples can help determine the color history of the exterior and/or interior of that sash. If the clapboards, windows and trim are removed in the future, additional paint analysis may be possible where paint may have adhered to the original sheathing boards.



Historic window sash

Interior Architectural Elements

The interior architectural elements appear to date from the 1838 to 1847/1848 time period, which is after the building was cut down to a one-story structure. The only exception is the perimeter wainscot, which appears to be from ca. 1792. These boards (unpainted or with a slight wash) are held in place with hand wrought nails and in some areas they are held in place with a mixture of hand wrought and cut nails, which may indicate a re-use of older material, including nails.

The interior post covers and perimeter wainscot cap are unpainted and are held in place with cut nails also consistent with the 1838 to 1847/1848 date.



A section of the first floor wall showing wainscot with cap and a covered post



Detail of a butterfly, wrought iron nail in the wainscot

The configuration of the interior partitions and the moderator's box (extant) and elevated speaker's platform (no longer in place) corresponds with the 1847/1848 work relating to the building being converted to town hall space.



Looking southwest toward the moderator's box. Note also the ceiling joists, seen where the plaster has disengaged. Remains of the stove chimney can be seen in the center of this image, above the moderator's box.

The structural supports for the ceiling lath and plaster are re-used water-powered sawn floor joists that have been roughly split and then attached to the collar ties with cut nails. These floor joists most likely were the floor joists from the galleries and were split and re-used after the building was cut down to one story in 1838. The lath is attached to these added floor joists with cut nails, and no earlier nail holes appear in these ceiling joists.



A view of the ceiling joists from above.

The chimney appears to date to 1847/1848 as well. The small openings in each of the two smaller rooms indicate a stove in each room. Each stove would have its own stove pipe that exited through the hole in the wall and then run along the ceiling in the meeting room to connect together before entering the chimney.



Looking northeast toward the two small rooms at the front of the building. The square openings once held stove pipes connecting the stoves in the small rooms with the chimney on the southwest wall.

Mechanical and Electrical Systems

There are currently no existing electrical, plumbing, heating and/or cooling systems. Electricity is supplied to a pole located outside the building. When electricity is needed for a function or event, a large extension cord is run into the building. Historically, an exterior outhouse would have provided the necessary bathroom accommodations, oil lamps the illumination and wood stoves and the pipes running across the ceiling would have provided the heating. Cooling would have been accomplished by opening the windows on a hot day.

ADA

Current ADA access is through the door on the rear gable end, facing the woods.