

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

Scanned Record Cover Page

Inventory No:	CON.32
Historic Name:	Concord Armory - Concord Veteran's Building
Common Name:	Concord Orchestra and Performing Arts Center
Address:	51 Walden St
City/Town:	Concord
Village/Neighborhood:	Concord Center
Local No:	209
Year Constructed:	1887
Architect(s):	Blackall, Clapp and Whittemore; Blackall, Clarence Howard; Chapman, John H.; Little, Harry Britton; Miller, Hans; Orendorff, Harold
Architectural Style(s):	Queen Anne
Use(s):	Administration Office; Armory; Community Center; Meeting Hall; Theater
Significance:	Architecture; Community Planning; Military; Music; Performing Arts; Politics Government; Recreation
Area(s):	CON.DU: Main Street Historic District
Designation(s):	Local Historic District (03/12/1962); Nat'l Register Individual Property (09/12/2007)
Building Materials(s):	Roof: Asphalt Shingle; Slate Wall: Concrete Cinderblock; Wood; Wood Clapboard; Wood Shingle Foundation: Brick; Concrete Cinderblock; Stone, Uncut



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Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125
www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc

FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary. State House. Boston

HD-3112162
BI-CONCORD
USGS-CONCORD
SECT B

CON-32

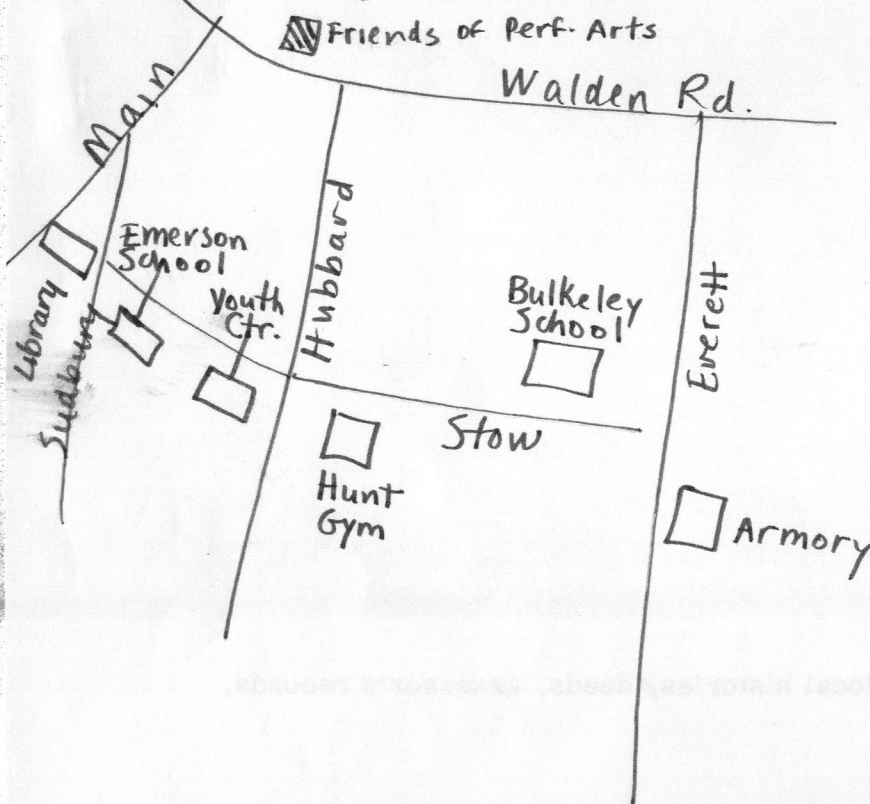
In Area no. <u>DU</u>	Form no. <u>20932</u>
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Town Concord
Address 51 Walden Street
Name _____
Present use home of Concord Orchestra
Friends of the Performing Arts.
Present owner Town of Concord
Description: _____
Date _____
Source _____
Style Queen Anne-Colonial Revival

4. Map. Draw sketch of building location in relation to nearest cross streets and other buildings. Indicate north.

March 1992



Architect _____
Exterior wall fabric clapboard & wood
shingle
Outbuildings (describe) _____
Other features 2 1/2-story rectangular w/
very large barn attached by long
2-story connecting corridor.

Altered _____ Date _____
Moved _____ Date _____

5. Lot size:

One acre or less X Over one acre _____

Approximate frontage 40'

Approximate distance of building from street
5'

6. Recorded by Harriet White

Organization MAPC

Date 8/30/78

7. Original owner (if known) _____

Original use _____

Subsequent uses (if any) and dates _____

8. Themes (check as many as applicable)

Aboriginal	_____	Conservation	_____	Recreation	_____
Agricultural	_____	Education	_____	Religion	_____
Architectural	_____	Exploration/	_____	Science/	_____
The Arts	_____	settlement	_____	invention	_____
Commerce	_____	Industry	_____	Social/	_____
Communication	_____	Military	_____	humanitarian	_____
Community development	_____	Political	_____	Transportation	_____

9. Historical significance (include explanation of themes checked above)

10. Bibliography and/or references (such as local histories, deeds, assessor's records, early maps, etc.)

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: Concord	Form No: 207 32
Property Name: 51 Walden St.	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

Other features:

Slate hipped roof.

Gabled center entrance pavilion with recessed entrance door within Syrian arch. Fanlight in gable, which is bracketed.

1st story is shingled. 2nd story is clapboard with some stick-work or half-timbering.

Windows are 6/6 divided sash.

Gablet on each side slope of roof. Brick chimney on rear slope.

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

RECEIVED

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Community

Property

JUL 15 1993

CONCORD

Concord Armory
Veteran's Building

MASS. HIST. COMM.

Massachusetts Historical Commission
80 Boylston Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02116

Area(s) Form No.
32

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE, cont.

51 Walden Street is highly significant both for its functions as a late-nineteenth-century armory and early-twentieth-century community theater, and for its eclectic Queen Anne/Shingle Style architecture, designed by architect **John Chapman** (see #350 Main Street.) Even its additions, designed by Clarence Blackall and Harry Little, enhance the building's architectural importance.

In the mid-1880's attempts were made to gather town support for the building of a new armory for the local volunteer militia, which since 1868 had occupied a room in the Town House. Proposals for various sites were presented, and a lengthy conflict ensued between those who insisted the site should include enough space for a drill field, and a group that advocated this smaller Walden Street site. However, Samuel Hoar, the leader of the latter group, who had purchased the land at #51 in 1886, made it quickly available, and with the support of the building committee composed of Concord Artillery Captain Frank E. Cutter and the Selectmen, a paint shop standing on the property was removed, and the front section, or "head house," was standing by the December 1887. The rear section was built the next year for a drill shed.

The local military companies were extremely active during the 1880's and '90's, and the newspaper continually carried news of their drills, camps, and inspections. In 1893 a contest was even held here at the armory between the Concord Artillery Co. under Captain Cutter and the Empire Drill Squad, an all-female group composed of seventeen young ladies, led by Mrs. Cutter.

The building was partially damaged by fire in 1912. Parts of the head house and the drill shed roof were rebuilt, but in 1915, with the construction of the new state armory on Everett Street, the building entered a period of less active use. Over the next several decades, however, it served the community in many capacities. In 1920, for instance, the town appropriated \$10,000 for repairs, re-named it the Veterans Building, and opened it for the use of veterans organizations. The American Legion assumed responsibility for the building's operation for a while, the WPA occupied it in the 1930's, and for many years movies were shown here by the Red Cross and other organizations. Town Meetings were even held here from 1933 to 1946.

51 Walden is best known today, however, for the performing arts organizations that have occupied it, transformed it, and literally saved it from demolition. The Concord Players, the town's amateur theatrical group, was formed in 1919, and staged its first performances in private homes and the Town House. Although the Town House had a large open public hall, the need was imperative for a building that could accommodate a stage and ample storage space, and in 1920-22 the association moved its operations here. Happily, the father of Marian Miller, one of the Players' board members, was **Clarence Blackall** (1857-1942), the architect of many of Boston's public buildings, including the Winthrop Building at 276 Washington Street, the Copley Plaza, (in association with Henry Hardenberg,) and fourteen theaters, among them the Wilbur and the Wang Center. When the town purchased the adjoining land behind the building, he quickly designed an addition to the east end of the building for a stage that was a smaller replica of the one he did for Boston's Colonial Theater. (Cont.)

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Community

Property

CONCORDConcord Armory
Veteran's BuildingMassachusetts Historical Commission
80 Boylston Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02116Area(s) Form No.
32

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE, cont.

The new performance space was an important catalyst in the maturing of the Concord Players, as they took on more and more ambitious productions, most receiving excellent reviews. Walter Prichard Eaton of the New York Herald called the company "one of the best amateur groups in New England." The building became the Concord area's major local performing arts center of the early twentieth century, and it was here that, in the words of David Little, many Concordians received "their chief exposure to live theatre during the 1920's and 1930's."

In 1926 the roof of the hall was raised five feet, and in 1927 the rear of the building was again extended, by the addition of a scene dock, designed by Concord architect Harry Little, behind the stage.

The building was used both by the town and the Concord Players until 1958. The next year, however, the poor condition of the building prompted the town to authorize demolition of the building. A public outcry was raised against the proposal, however, and in 1961 Town Meeting voted \$5,000 to repair the building and convert it to a youth center. In spite of the repairs, the next year a town committee again recommended it for demolition, while others fought to save it. In the early 1970's, while the structure deteriorated further under the youth center use, the non-profit Friends of the Performing Arts in Concord (FOPAC) was formed by representatives of the Concord Players and the Concord Orchestra to search for an appropriate performance space. In 1972 they presented a proposal for renovating the building for a Center for the Performing Arts, and began leasing the property from the town later that year. The organization has operated it ever since as the headquarters and performance hall for both organizations. In 1974, the Concord Band became the building's third major tenant. In 1975, the rebirth of 51 Walden was celebrated by its dedication as Concord's Permanent Bicentennial Memorial, to "foster the growth and development of the creative talents of Concordians and extend the reputation of the arts in Concord to the rest of the Nation."

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Concord Chronicle.

Keyes/Tolman.

Garrellick and Bailey. Concord in the Days of Strawberries and Streetcars.
1985. Pp. 112-116.Southworth, Susan and Michael. AIA Guide to Boston. Chester, Ct.: Globe Pequot Press,
1987."A Brief History of 51 Walden Street, Concord, MA."
-----Recorded by: A. ForbesOrganization: for Concord Historical CommissionDate: July, 1992

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Town

Property Address

Concord *915 Main St*

Area(s)

Form No.

<i>CON</i>	<i>428</i>
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32

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
DIVISION OF INSPECTION
PLAN RECORD

CASE *B* RACK *9* APART. *18* NO. *17100* ✓

BUILDING *Concord Armory* STORIES *---*

CITY OR TOWN *Concord, Mass.* STREET *---*

TO BE USED FOR *Amusement Purposes* CLASS *3rd*

OWNER *Town of Concord.* PUBLIC HALL

ARCHITECT *Blackall, Clapp & Whittemore*

CERTIFICATE APPROVAL—SPECIFICATION REQUIREMENTS—REFERRED

DATE *Aug. 2, 1922.*

INSPECTOR *Beyer.*

American Legion Hall

FORM 41 1000 11-9-21



August 1978



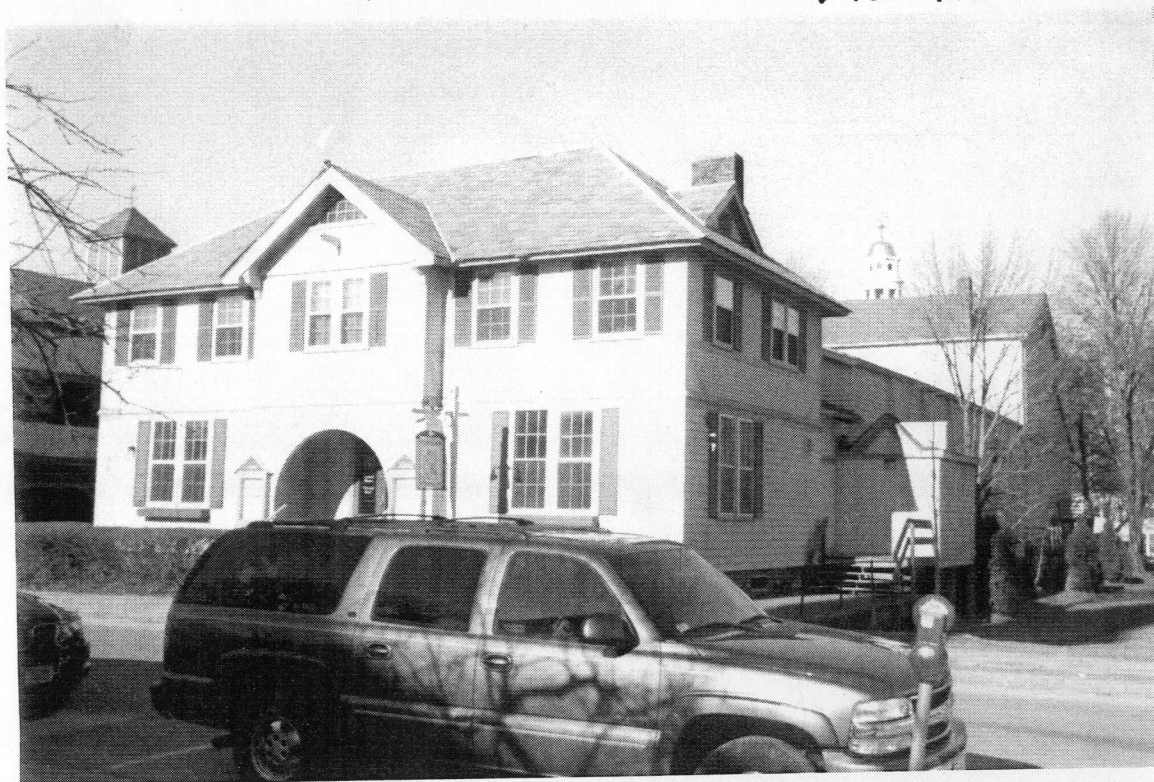
August 1978



51 WALDON ST.
CONCORD

- view Southeast

- view northeast

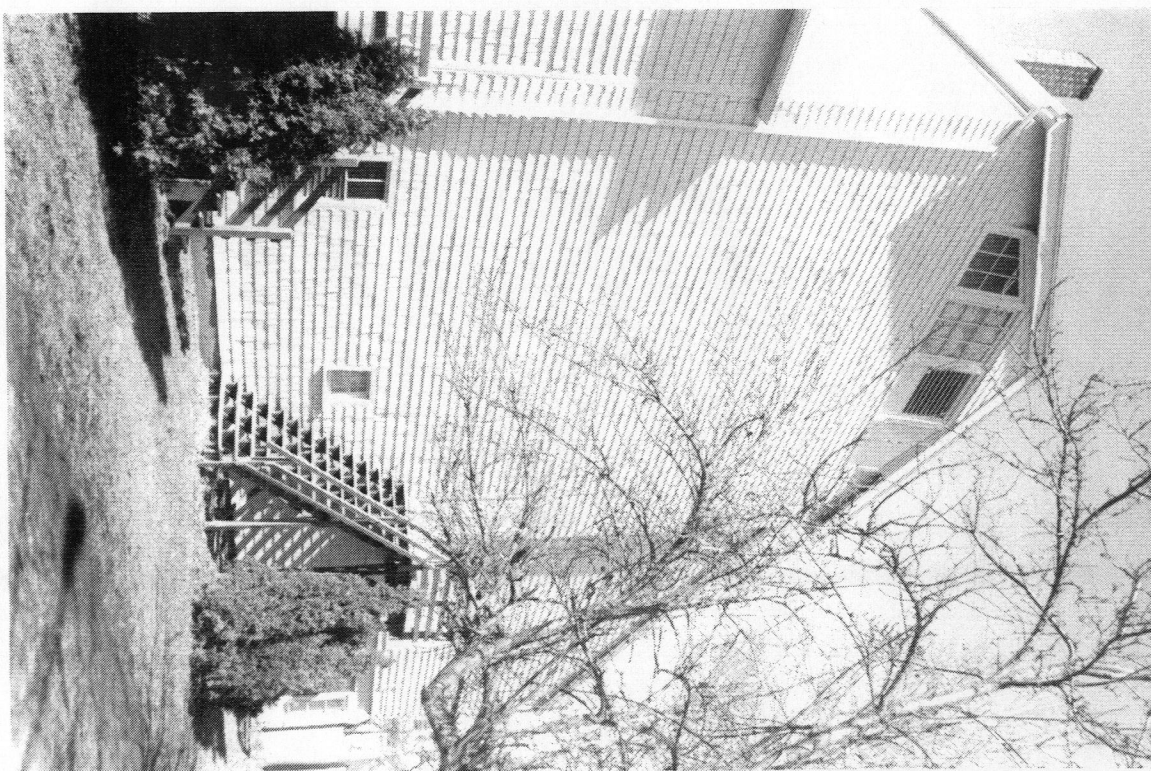


CONCORD ARMORY



51 WALDEN ST.,
CONCORD

- view northeast

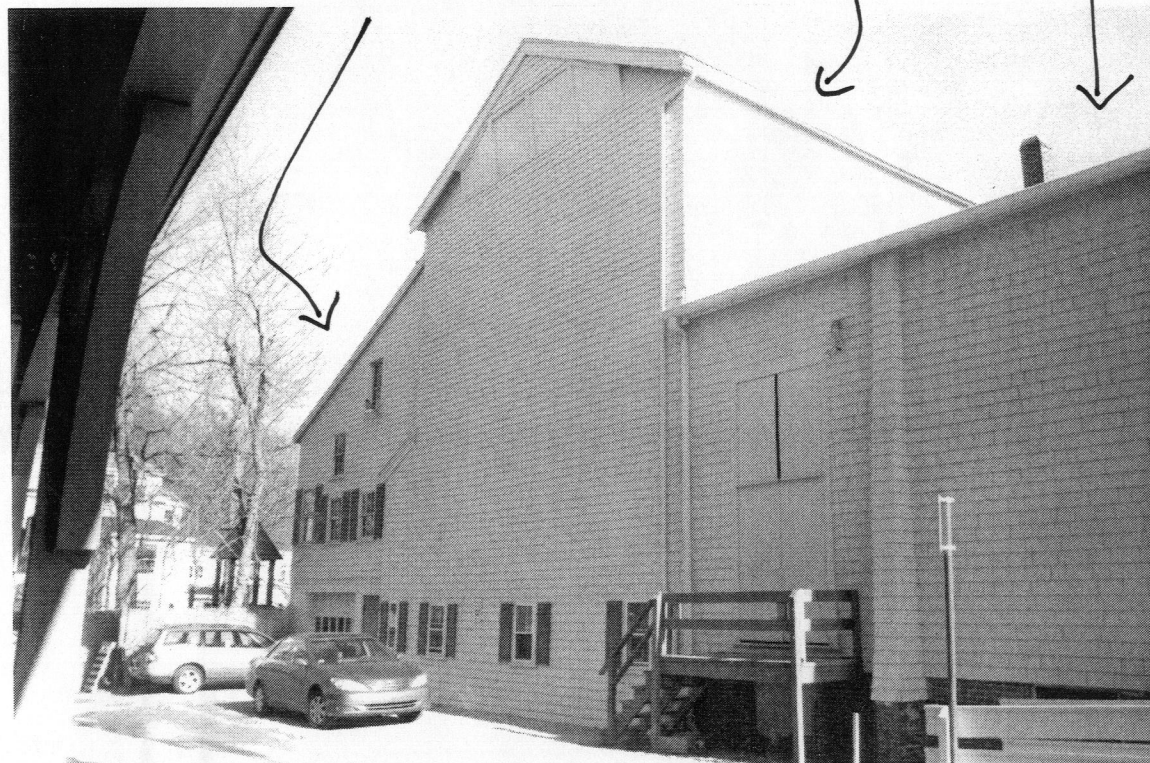


- Stage Addition: South Wall
1922



Head house -
51 WALDEN ST., - view South
CONCORD

1927
Scene dock, Stage addition, drilled - view SE

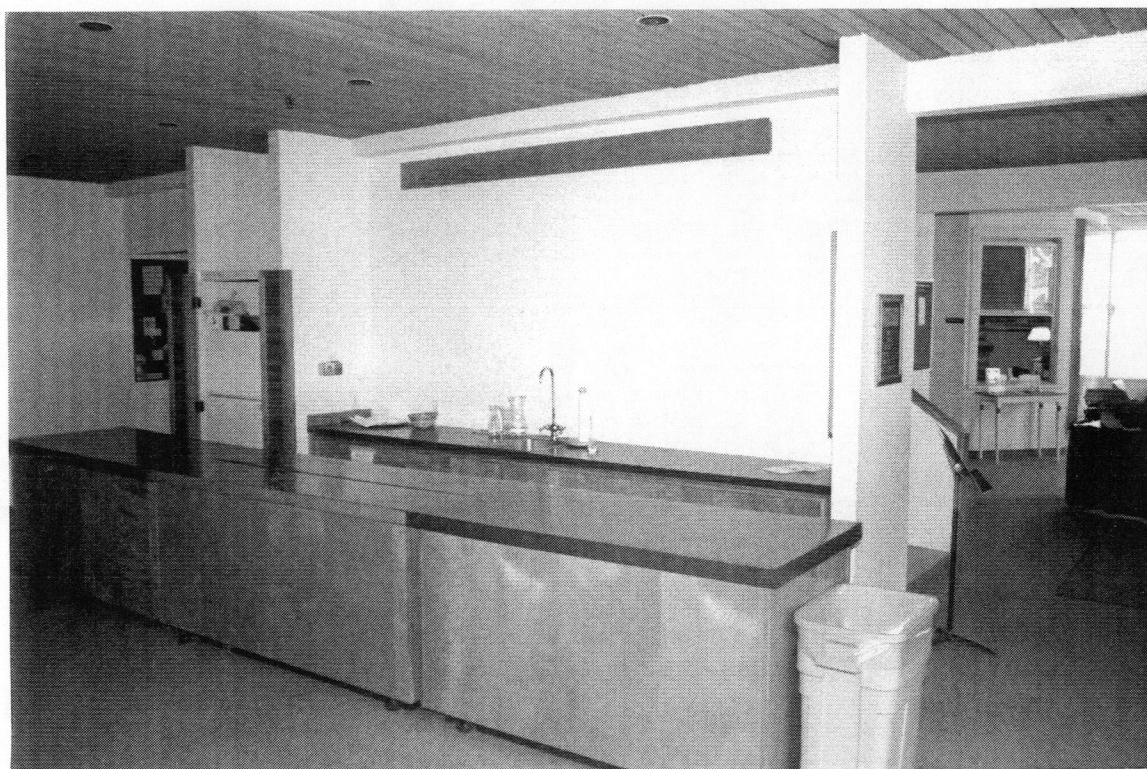


CONCORD ARMORY



- view north to stairway

HEAD HOUSE: 1st story: alterations to interior
1887



- north reception area, looking south
to office

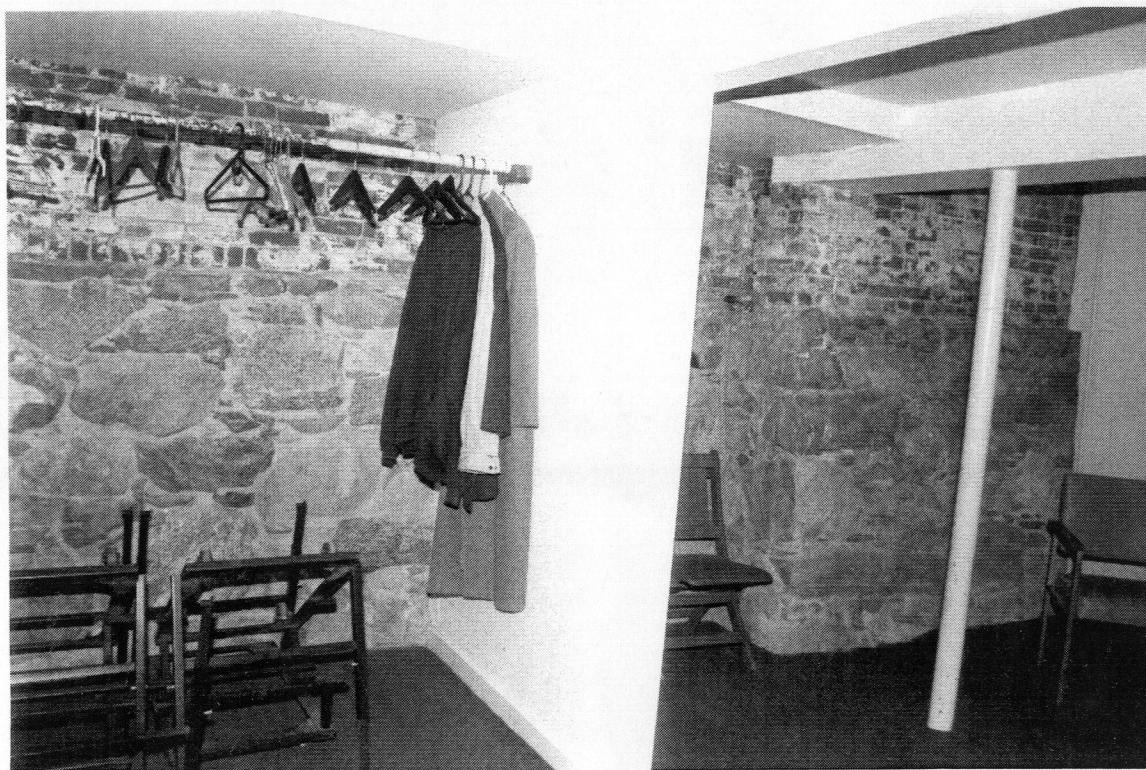
CONCORD ARMORY
51 WILSON ST.

-bricked door opening:
near 1st story

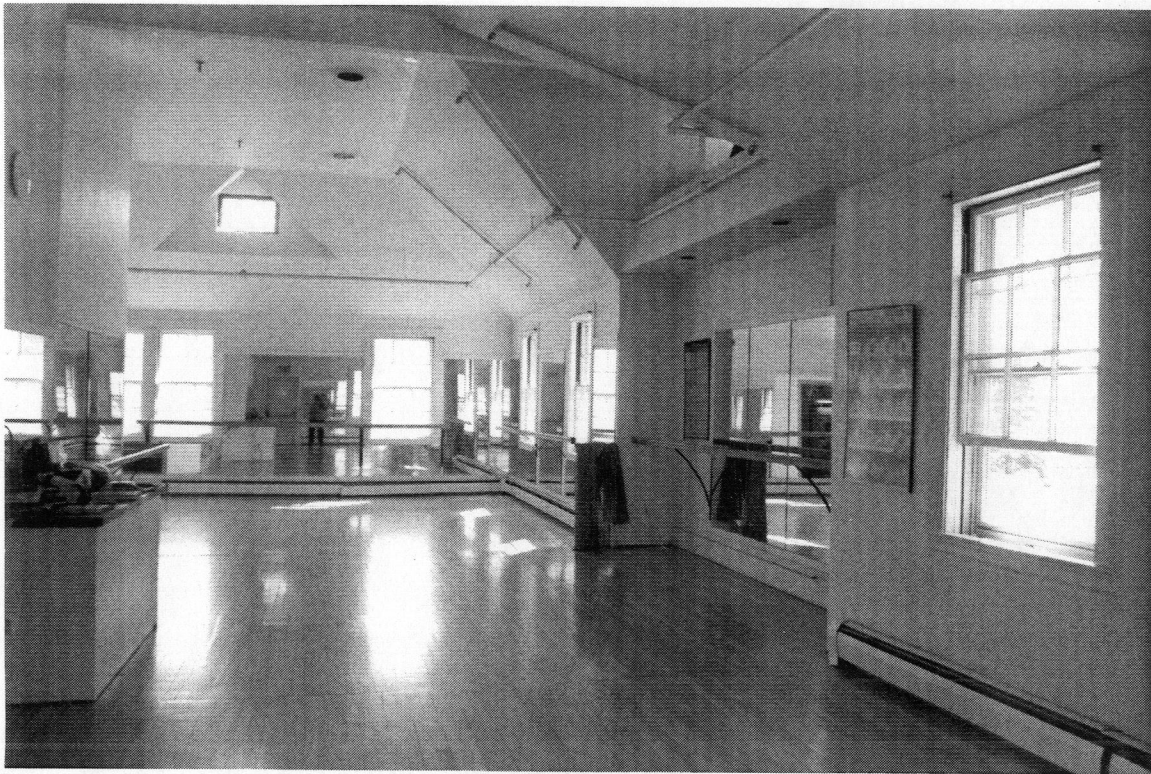


HASAD HOUSE
1887

CONCORD ARMORY
51 WATSON ST.



basement: front foundation wall



HEAD HOUSE, second story: view south
1887

view north

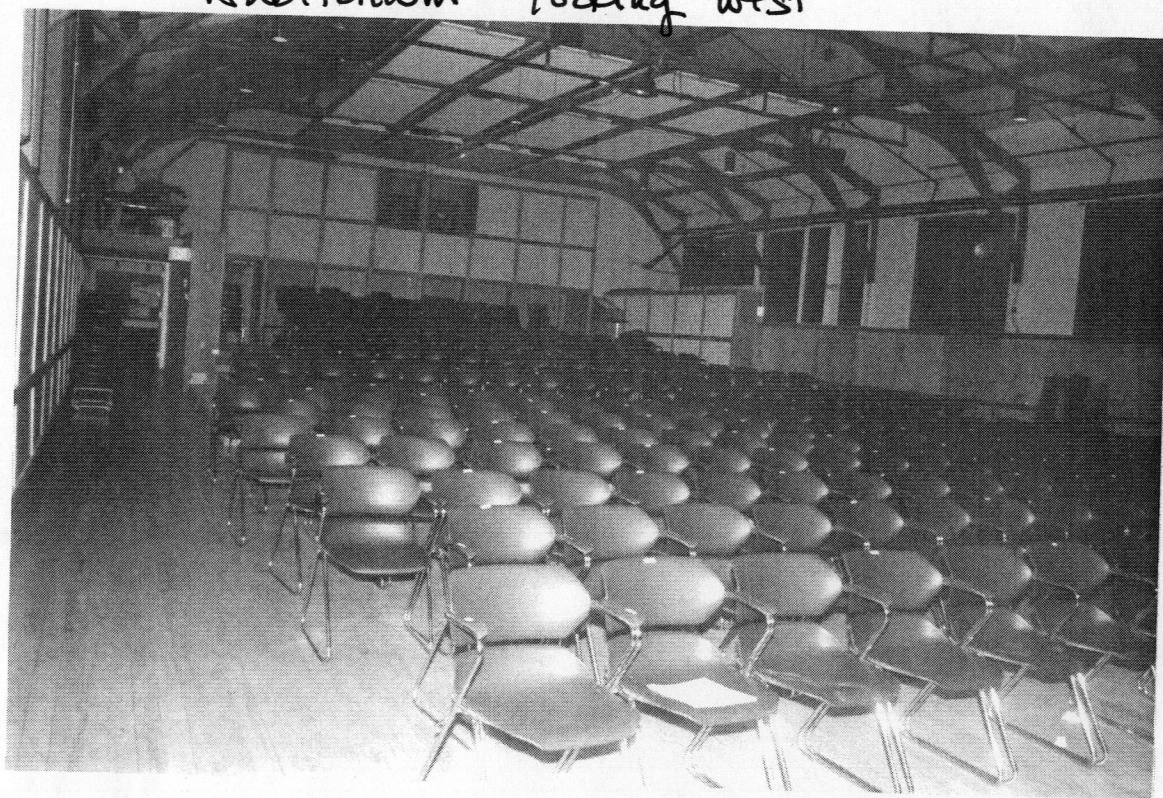


Cencond Amory
51 WARD ST.

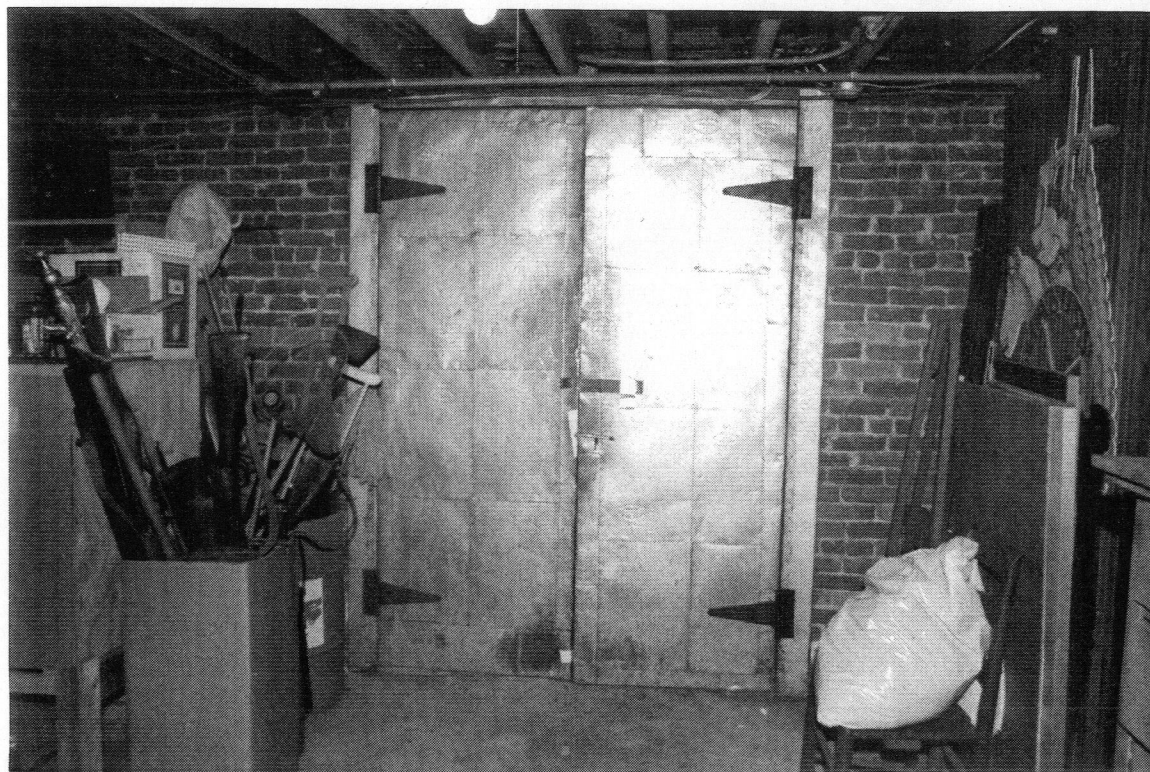


AUDITORIUM - looking east, to stage
DRAWN SHOD: 1888

AUDITORIUM - looking west



CANCON ARMORY
51 WYNDEN ST.



CENCON
51 WILKINSON ST

DRILL SHED; main basement:
1888 ground level

— metal fire doors
(early 20th c.)



ARMORY

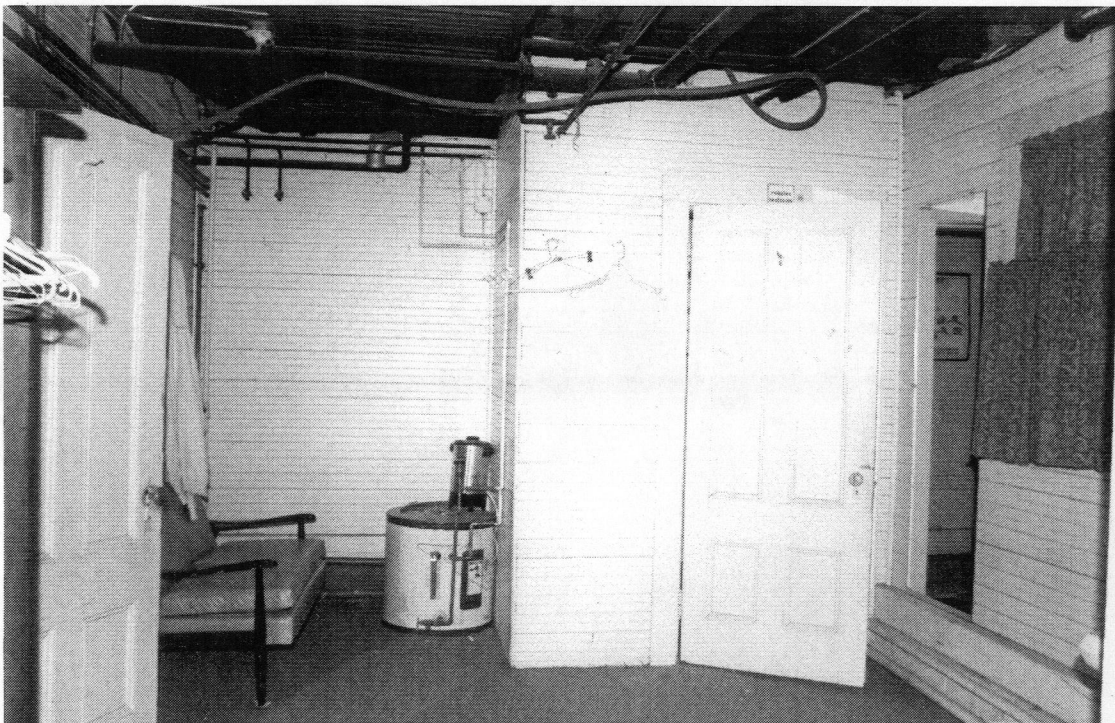
— south doors for artillery
equipment



"Green room"

STAGE ADDITION, GROUND LEVEL:
1922

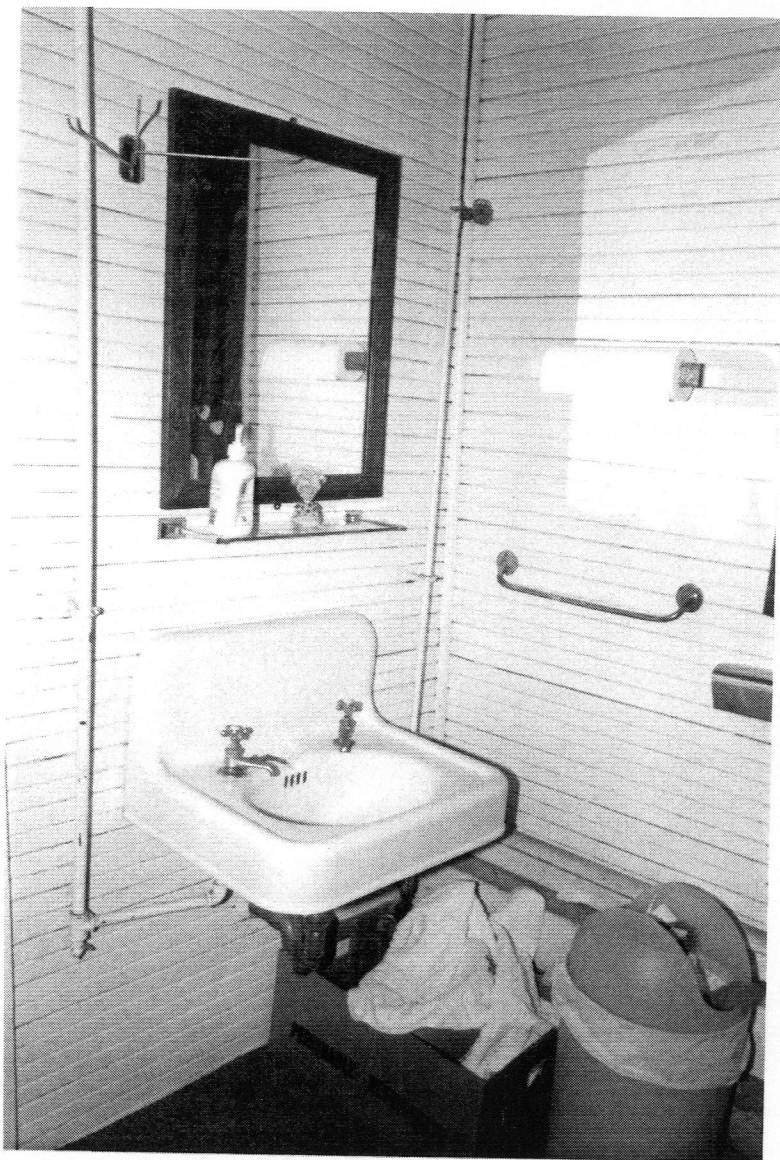
-southeast dressing room



CONCORD Armory
51 WILKINSON ST

CONCORD ARMORY
51 WALDEN ST.

CON-32



STAGE ADDITION, GROUND level:
1922
northeast dressing room



STAGES: ca. 1922 2-panel
doors with face-veneer plywood

2004

CON.32

Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Community	Property Address
Concord	51 Walden Street (Concord Armory/Veterans Building)
Area(s)	Form No(s). 32

National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

- ☒ Individually eligible ☐ Eligible only in a historic district
☒ Contributing to a potential historic district ☐ Potential historic district

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APR 01 2004

Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

MASS. HIST. COMM

Criteria Considerations: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Statement of Significance by A. Forbes, 3/2004

The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.

Both historically and architecturally, this one building represents several entire chapters in the story of Concord's commercial and institutional downtown. Built in 1887 as the town's first armory, 51 Walden Street was the focus of the kind of frequent local military activity and its accompanying social events that were an important aspect of life in many New England towns in the years between the Civil War and the turn of the 20th century. Even after the Commonwealth built a larger armory nearby in 1915, 51 Walden's military use continued. After World War I it was renamed the Concord Veterans Building, and for decades was the headquarters of the local veterans' organizations and the Red Cross.

A highly adaptable structure, the building also evolved in the 20th century into Concord center's primary entertainment and performing arts facility. With the 1920s conversion of the former rear drill shed to an auditorium, the building became the most appropriate space in town for showing movies, a public function that continued through the years of the Great Depression, when the town held its Town Meetings here, as well. The Concord Players, the best-known amateur dramatic group in the Concord area, took up residence at 51 Walden in 1922, and still stages its productions in the former drill shed/auditorium, sharing the performance space with the Concord Orchestra, the Concord Band, and other performing arts groups. For all these important associations with the town's military, social, civic, and arts development, the building meets **Criterion A** of the National Register of Historic Places.

51 Walden Street is equally significant under **Criterion C**, both as a well-preserved example of a late 19th-century wood-frame armory in an eclectic Queen Anne/Shingle Style, and as an illustration of the work of three notable architects. The building was designed by John Chapman, a local resident whose mark is left on Concord in the handful of handsome houses he designed or renovated in the 1880s in Queen Anne, Shingle, and early Colonial Revival styles, as well as in two churches--the wood-frame St. Bernard's Church at Monument Square (NR), and the stone English country gothic Trinity Church. The

Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Community	Property Address
Concord	51 Walden Street (Concord Armory/Veterans Building)
Area(s)	Form No(s).
	32

1922 stage at the east end of the former drill shed was designed by Clarence Blackall, whose daughter was one of the Concord Players. Mr. Blackall is best known for the fourteen Boston theaters he designed, including the Wilbur, Wang, and Colonial Theaters. Finally, the scene dock east of the stage was added in 1927 by another Concord architect, Harry Little, who added this humble structure to the long list of prominent buildings he designed over the course of a career that included the Trinitarian Church directly across Walden Street, the Concord Museum (NR), the transformation of the Concord Free Public Library on Main Street and the Middlesex County Courthouse on Monument Square (NR), as well as a major portion of the National Cathedral in Washington.

In spite of the varied uses that have taken place in the building since it ceased functioning as an armory in the early 20th century, the property retains integrity of setting, location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Original yellow form: Eligibility file
 Copies: Inventory form
 Town file(w/corresp.)
 Macris
 NR director _____

Community: Concord

MHC OPINION: ELIGIBILITY FOR NATIONAL REGISTER

Date Received: January 26, 2004 Date Due: Date Reviewed: February 4, 2004
 (amended 4/7/04)

Type: X Individual District (Attach map indicating boundaries)

Name: Concord Armory/Veterans Building Inventory Form: CON.32

Address: 51 Walden Street

Requested by: Friends of the Performing Arts

Action: X Honor ITC Grant R & C Other:

Agency: Staff in charge of Review: BF

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

X Eligible
 ___ Eligible, also in district
 ___ Eligible only in district
 ___ Ineligible
 ___ More information needed

DISTRICTS

___ Eligible
 ___ Ineligible
 ___ More information needed

CRITERIA: A B C D

LEVEL: Local State (possibly) National

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: by Ryan Maciej

This 1887 Shingle-style wood-frame structure is clad with wooden clapboard (at the first story) and shingles and minimal half-timbering and horizontal wooden banding (at the second story) and features a hipped slate roof, single and paired 6/6 windows, and a splayed central bracketed gabled entry containing a deep Syrian arch. The 2 ½ story rectangular building is attached to a very large shingled barn via a shingled two-story connecting corridor. Designed by architect John Chapman, portions of the head house and drill shed were rebuilt after fire damage in 1912. Later additions by Clarence Blackall and Harry Little include, in the 1920s, an east extension to the barn, in 1926, the barn's roof raising of five feet and, in 1927, the barn's rear extension.

Town support for a new armory for the local volunteer militia grew in the mid 1880s. Samuel Hoar quickly made this land he purchased in 1886 available. The 1887 front section (head house) and the 1888 rear section (drill shed) were actively used by the local military companies through the 1890s. Partially fire-damaged in 1912 and rebuilt, the building received less-active community use after the new state armory's 1915 construction. The town's \$10,000 repair-appropriations and renaming to the Veterans Building in 1920 opened an era of veterans organizations—including the American Legion. In the 1930s the WPA occupied the building, the Red Cross showed movies here for many years and, from 1933 to 1946, town meetings were held. Founded in 1919, the Concord Players, the town's amateur theatrical group occupied, transformed, and saved the structure from demolition, and in 1920-1922 installed its operations. After the town purchased adjoining land behind the building, Clarence Blackall, architect of the Boston's Copley Plaza and the Winthrop Building at 276 Washington Street, designed an addition at the barn's east end—a smaller replica of his Boston's Colonial Theater design. New York Herald's Walter Prichard Eaton stated the group was "one of the best amateur groups in New England". Utilized by the town and the Concord Players until 1958, public outcry facilitated public repair/conversion expenditures into a youth center. Although recommended again for demolition, the non-profit Friends of the Performing Arts in Concord renovated the building in the 1970s and continue utilizing the structure.

Current exterior and interior photographs of the Concord Armory/Veterans Building and a description of the 1950s and 1970s renovations will assist the MHC in providing an eligibility determination.

(over)

NOTE: Additional information received 4/1/04 confirmed that the 1950s and 1970s renovations were minor, and that the building continues to retain integrity.

As noted on the National Register Criteria Statement Form, this property represents several chapters in the story of Concord's commercial and institutional downtown, both historically and architecturally. A highly adaptable structure, the building began as the town's first armory, served for decades as a veterans' and Red Cross facility, and evolved in the 20th century into the community's primary entertainment and performing arts facility. On the interior, the property retains the former drillshed (since the 1920s the auditorium), as well as such theater-associated features as the stage, proscenium arch, scene dock, and "green room." The property meets criteria A and C on the local level and possibly the state level as a rare surviving example of wooden armory construction and for its longstanding associations with a community theater group, the Concord Players.

BF 4/7/04

BF 4/7/04