

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Concord Armory

other names/site number Concord Veterans Building; 51 Walden

2. Location

street & number 51 Walden Street N/A not for publication

city or town Concord N/A vicinity

state Massachusetts code MA county Middlesex code 017 zip code 01742

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination
☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of
Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property
☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant
☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Brona Simon
Signature of certifying official/Title Brona Simon, SHPO, MHC Executive Director

July 12, 2007
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional Comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

☐ entered in the National Register
☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the
National Register

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register

☐ removed from the
National Register

☐ other (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Concord Armory
Name of Property

Middlesex, MA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

☐ private
☒ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Non-contributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed

in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DEFENSE: arms storage

RECREATION and CULTURE: theater, concert hall

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: theater, concert hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN: Queen Anne

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: fieldstone; BRICK

walls WOOD: weatherboard and shingle

roof STONE: slate; ASPHALT

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Concord Armory
Name of Property

Middlesex, MA
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

MILITARY

PERFORMING ARTS

Period of Significance

1887 to 1957

Significant Dates

1887-1888

1922; 1927

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

John Chapman

Clarence Blackall

Harry Little

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:

Middlesex, MA
County and State

Acreage of Property less than one acre

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1. 19 306820 4703180
Zone Easting Northing

2.

Zone	Easting	Northing
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3.

Zone	Easting	Northing
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4.

Zone	Easting	Northing
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See continuation sheet

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Anne Forbes, consultant, with Betsy Friedberg, National Register Director, MHC
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organization	Massachusetts Historical Commission	date	July, 2007
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street & number 220 Morrissey Blvd. telephone 617-727-8470

city or town	Boston	state	Massachusetts	zip code	02125
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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white** photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Town of Concord

street & number 22 Monument Square telephone 978-318-3000

city or town	Concord	state	MA	zip code	01742
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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Concord Armory
Concord (Middlesex), MA

Section number 7

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Portions redacted

7. DESCRIPTION

SETTING

The Concord Armory (today called “51 Walden”) nearly fills its narrow lot on the northeast side of Walden Street at the southern edge of Concord center’s commercial downtown. The building faces southwest toward the foot of Hubbard Street. Directly across from the building is the 1920s rebuilt Trinitarian Church; on the northwest corner of the Hubbard Street intersection is the town’s early 20th-century brick post office. Land belonging to another reconstructed church, the 1901 First Parish, 20 Lexington Road (NR, 1977), abuts the rear boundary of the armory property. Extending west from the rear of the church, the First Parish lot spans the Mill Brook that flows behind or under the properties on the northeast side of Walden Street to include a small wood-fenced playground situated against the rear wall of the armory building, as well as a long grassed strip of land running southwest along the armory’s southeast side from the brook to Walden Street. That narrow strip of land is the only real piece of landscape around the armory. Today it is used as a foot path to and from the rear of the church and as a small seating and strolling area for attendees at performances in the auditorium at 51 Walden. On the abutting lot to the southeast is a one-story 1948 brick bank building with a rear parking lot. Abutting the armory to the northwest is part of the U-shaped driveway which encircles a large clapboarded former livery stable of the 1890s, now converted to a block of stores.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION (Photos 1-3; 7-9)

The late Victorian building that began as the Concord Armory is a long rectangular, largely wood-frame structure. Its present form is the result of five building campaigns. The three earliest sections, built between 1887 and 1896—the headhouse, drill shed, and a rear drill-shed addition--rest on a fieldstone foundation which is topped with brick above ground level. The other parts of the building--the 1922 stage and the 1927 scene dock--have high concrete-block foundations. Due to the gradual downward slope of the ground toward the Mill Brook, along the rear portions of the building the foundation wall rises to become a low ground-story wall, reaching full height in the easternmost scene dock section. Most of the building is clad in wood shingles, although the upper section of the front portion (the original headhouse,) is clapboarded. The headhouse roof is slate; the other roofs are asphalt.

Summary of the building’s evolution. The armory was updated and expanded several times during its first few decades. To help make the rear drill shed usable in winter, in 1890 it was lathed and plastered on the interior. To meet the space requirements for a new “extended order drill,” in 1896 the drill shed was lengthened by 36 feet at the northeast end. A fire in 1912 caused considerable damage to the front portion of the building, leading to some roof replacement and possibly to the installation of new window sash. In 1922 the drill shed was converted to a theater/auditorium, and a stage, with dressing rooms beneath it, was added, again to the northeast end of the building. In 1926 most of the roof of the former drill shed was raised five feet, and in 1927 the two-level, shed-roofed scene dock was added against the northeast rear wall of the stage.

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In 1972 the entire building was saved from demolition and renovated to become a performing arts center. At that time the interior of the headhouse was reconfigured to incorporate an open reception area at the first story and a large dance studio at the second, with an open stairway connecting all three levels. A new concert stage of hardwood risers was installed at the west end of the former drill shed/auditorium, and new side entrances built. The 1926 plaster ceiling was removed, revealing the roof structure. Shortly afterward, the auditorium space received an acoustical upgrade with the installation of acoustical baffles and wood paneling.

The Concord Armory, 1887-1888

The 1887 **headhouse**, 51 feet wide and 26 feet deep, is a two-story, hip-roofed building. (Photos 1 and 2) The symmetrically arranged façade is articulated by a broad, shallow center pavilion which rises to a gabled dormer. At first-story level, the pavilion incorporates a broad round-arched opening which shelters the recessed center entry, lending a hint of the Romanesque Revival to this otherwise Queen Anne building. The gable of the pavilion is echoed by two small gabled roof dormers --one each on the end roof slopes, set back from the eaves. The headhouse is clad in wood shingle at the first story and wood clapboard at the second, enhanced with horizontal and diagonal boarding (also called "stick work" or half-timbering), a feature that was popular with the Queen Anne style of the 1880s. The wall surface of the pavilion gable above the main roof eaves is filled with several courses of patterned hexagonal shingle—another hallmark of the Queen Anne. The walls inside the entrance arch are lined with horizontally mounted tongue-and-groove boards. Two glass-front, pedimented signs dating to the 1970s are mounted on the exterior wall to either side of the archway,

The main windows in the headhouse are 6/6-sash, set into flat casings. Some of the window sash at the five-bay second story, including a pair of 4/4-sash in the pavilion, appear to be original; others date to the 20th century. The paired sash in the main façade wall of the first story to either side of the pavilion, however, are late 20th-century wood replacements, slightly longer than the originals. Historic photographs indicate that through the early 20th century at least, the building had no window blinds (shutters.) The louvered wood blinds currently on the building appear to date to the mid- and late-20th-century.

The fenestration of the northwest and southeast end walls of the headhouse has been changed somewhat over the life of the building. Tall 6/6 windows now occupy the front section of each side elevation at the first story--single on the northwest, and paired on the southeast. It is not known what the former window arrangement of the northwest wall was, but for the first story of the southeast wall, historic photos show a fixed sash of about 16-18 small panes toward the front, and a larger window in the rear part. At the second story, a 6/6 window in the front part of the north wall may occupy an original window opening; a fire door and a metal fire escape just northeast of it, however, are 20th-century features. At the second story on the southeast end, the arrangement of a single 6/6 toward the front and a pair of 6/6's toward the rear appears to be the original configuration, although the sash there dates to the 20th century. At least one dormer window, the multi-light triangular window that fills the peak of the façade dormer, is also in its original position.

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The eaves of the building are unboxed, and the cornice is largely unadorned except for the pair of large wood consoles at the corners of the main façade gable. One large brick chimney rises up the southeast rear wall of the headhouse.

Twentieth-century exterior changes to the headhouse include the replacement of the main center entry with paired wood doors, each with a large glass pane, and the loss of decorative copper cresting along the ridge of the roof and the gable of the pavilion. There was also a prominent flagpole mounted on the front of the pavilion gable for which one horizontal brace remains.

The 1888 **drill shed**, now the theater/auditorium, is a long one-story, windowless section. (See Photos 1, 2, 7, and 8) Completely clad in wood shingle, this part of the building extends northeast from the rear of the headhouse under a shallow-pitched gabled roof with a ridge that is slightly lower than the headhouse eaves. The roof of all but the first bay of the drill shed was raised five feet in 1926, at which time its windows (one each, centered between the shallow shingled buttresses which still articulate the side walls) were removed. The main roof of the first bay of the former drill shed, which now forms a transitional area between the headhouse and the auditorium, is lower than the rest, but incorporates a higher enclosure in the center where the projection booth is located. Attached to the southeast end of this transitional section is a small projection which formerly provided an early 20th-century entrance to the auditorium and enclosed a small kitchen. Today it houses a special room for the grand piano. In its southwest wall is a pair of hinged doors, with a shingled parapet with a center gable mounted above them. (Photo 2) A pair of modern wood doors is set just forward of the piano room in the main wall of the front section of the drill shed.

Toward the front end of the northwest wall of the drill shed is another modern door, accessed by a long wood ramp running along most of the wall. At the northeast end of that same wall is another high, paired modern door, fitted with a wooden flight of stairs rising to a landing. (Photo 7)

The 5½-foot-high brick wall of the basement story is a prominent feature of the drill shed. Historical records tell that the basement story, and hence the floor level of the drill shed, were raised after construction began due to the discovery of a spring under the building. On the southeast basement wall a 6-pane, fixed-sash window is centered between each of the three easternmost sets of buttresses. Set into the two bays southwest of those windows are paired, hinged vertical-board doors which apparently provided access for the Concord Artillery's cannon and other field equipment. (Photo 8) The westernmost pair of doors opens inward; the doors northeast of it open outward. The northwest side of the drill shed also has 6-pane fixed windows set into the brick foundation wall, where they are now somewhat obscured by the ramp.

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The 1922 **stage addition**, designed by eminent theater architect Clarence Blackall (see Section 8), abuts the northeast end of the drill shed. (Photos 1, 2, 7, 9) This is a tall, nearly windowless structure, with a high gabled roof perpendicular to the roof of the drill shed. It betrays its function as a stage both by its towering height and by a classic theater feature—the outward-slanting wall surface under the peak of the end walls. In the southeast end gable, the slanting wall retains two of what were originally four multi-light fixed sash providing daylight to the upper reaches of the stage. The windows of the north gable have been boarded over. At the ground story, the southeast wall below the stage has two windows which may occupy the original openings—a 2/2-sash window to a furnace room toward the front (its lower sash now replaced with a louvered vent), and a 6-pane fixed-sash window just northeast of center. The narrow brick furnace chimney pierces the lower southwest section of the roof. In the rear corner of the southeast wall, a modern plywood door added at the level of the stage opens onto a wooden fire escape. On the northwest elevation of the stage addition, three 2-over-2-sash windows occupy the lowest level. They are presently fitted with wood blinds.

The **scene dock**, added in 1927 against the rear wall of the stage, with its side walls stepped slightly in from the planes of the side stage walls, has a high, steep shed roof with a shallow shed dormer in the center. (Photos 1, 2, 3, 7, 9) Here the full-height ground story, which was originally open to vehicle access, at least on the sides, is concrete block. The upper walls are clad in wood shakes rather than shingles. The southeast ground-level concrete wall has a large modern steel door and two metal 1/1 sash windows. In the upper southeast wall, a former loading door is now covered with plywood. The northwest end wall of the scene dock incorporates a shallow, shed-roofed lavatory and stairway enclosure that was part of the original stage addition. This section has a narrow, shuttered 1/1 sash window at ground level. Behind it, the concrete-block lower wall of the main scene dock has a modern steel door and an overhead wood-panel-and-glass garage door. The fenestration of the upper part of the northwest wall of the scene dock is irregular. A line of three 6/6-sash windows of two different sizes, with ill-fitting blinds, occupies the main level. Above the center of those windows is another 6-over-6-sash; a fifth 6/6 window is located high in the wall aligned above the westernmost lower window. The rear wall of the scene dock is windowless. The concrete block wall of its ground story is presently decorated with a painted mural which forms a backdrop for the playground located against it on church property. Plans for the scene dock were drawn up by Concord architect and Concord Players member **Harry Little** (see Section 8.) Two other Concord Players, Hans Miller (son-in-law of Clarence Blackall) and Harold Orendorff, supervised and executed most of the construction.

INTERIOR DESCRIPTION

Headhouse, 1887

The two-story headhouse, which in the mid-20th century was being used for meeting rooms and town office space (see Section 8,) was renovated in the early 1970s as part of the armory's conversion to a performing arts center. At that time, interior partition walls were removed, creating what is largely a single open space at both first and second stories, with some small subsidiary rooms, and a broad open stairway positioned just northwest of center.

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In spite of the 1970s renovations, which include a long bar/reception area north of the stairs, some original interior features are still extant on the interior. While most of the exterior rear headhouse wall was removed, the brick chimney near the southeast end was retained. The chimney is now exposed at the first story, forming the brick rear wall of a small office and restroom area. In its surface is an arched brick niche that apparently was built to receive the end of a stovepipe that was part of the original heating system. (Photo 11)

Most of the second story of the headhouse is now a 720 square-foot dance studio, with a dressing room and storage room to its east. (See Sketch Plan and Photo 10) However, the narrow-board hardwood floor of the studio remains, its joints giving clues to the positions of former interior walls. The headhouse cellar was also renovated in the 1970s with restrooms, the bottom flight of the open stairs, and plastered ceilings and interior walls partially enclosing a conference room. Much of the mortared fieldstone foundation, however, has been left exposed. (Photo 12) A large furnace room at the southeast end remains completely unplastered, retaining the general appearance it has had since at least the early 20th century.

Drill shed, 1888; lengthened 1896

The dimensions of the drill shed, 49 by 60 feet, represent the footprint it had attained when lengthened in 1896, and the height it achieved in 1926, when the roof was raised five feet. Today, with most of the rear wall of the headhouse removed, the first drill shed bay is incorporated into the interior of the lobby area of the headhouse at the main story. While its ceiling and roof are lower than that of the rest of the drill shed, a raised projection booth over the center of this section rises above the level of the rest of the roof.

The auditorium space, as renovated in the early 1970s, occupies the rest of the drill shed. (Photos 4 and 13) Its double-ended design is uniquely adapted to the needs of the main user groups of the building—the Concord Players, Concord Orchestra, and Concord Band. Risers at the southwest end are used for the performers during band or orchestral performances, but they support rows of chairs for the audience during theatrical performances. The chairs that fill the rest of the auditorium thus usually face southwest during orchestral performances, and northeast toward the drama stage for theatrical performances. The space is open to the roof trusses; the walls are fitted with large wood panels and acoustical baffles to a design by acoustical specialists Bolt, Beranek and Newman.

As with the headhouse, it is the basement level of the drill shed, which is used for storage space by the Concord Players, the Friends of Performing Arts in Concord (FOPAC), and the Concord Band, that is closest to its early appearance. (Photo 14) Seven rows of 16-inch-square brick piers support the building and divide the basement into twelve-foot-wide storage bays. The original northeast foundation wall of the drill shed forms part of the fifth row of piers. Two large storage areas in the middle and northeast sections of the basement are enclosed in vertical-board partition walls. Both apparently date to the early 20th-century, when one enclosure was built for the scenery belonging to the Concord Players, the other for the scenery owned by the Town.

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Stage addition, 1922

The stage designed by Clarence Blackall for the Concord Players is remarkably intact. A rare example of a surviving all-wood stage, it is reported to be a smaller replica of the stage he designed for the Colonial Theater in Boston. By the end of the 20th century it was still the only stage in the greater Concord area with both fly space and wings.

The broad center part of the 890 square-foot stage platform projects a few feet into the former drill shed, raking slightly downward toward the auditorium. (Photo 4) When the stage was constructed, the northeast end wall of the drill shed was removed; its former location is now spanned by the full-width, lightly built wall of the proscenium, which includes a door at floor level east of the stage. In 1999, the proscenium was stabilized by the addition of a new full-height wood wall frame attached to its southwest face, and the wood-frame “grid” above the stage was also strengthened.

Beneath the stage is a slightly sub-ground-level story specifically designed to provide space for the actors. It consists of a large, 700 square-foot central space, “the Green Room” (Photo 5) and three smaller enclosed rooms against the northwest and southeast outer walls. The rooms on the southeast side, (reading front to back) are a small furnace room, a large two-part dressing room, and a lavatory. (Photo 17) Northwest of the Green Room are a storage space (now the office of the Concord Players), two dressing rooms (Photo 16—northeast dressing room), and, in a shallow projection off the northeast corner, another lavatory under a flight of enclosed stairs to the stage. The floor level here is a few feet higher than that of the adjoining drill shed cellar. The ceiling is largely plastered, and most of the interior walls are lined with narrow, horizontally laid tongue-and-groove boards. Portions of the walls of the Green Room have been altered somewhat by the addition of enclosed cabinets and by a small kitchenette area. A long dressing counter lines the lower part of the room’s southeast wall. Most of the interior doors in this part of the building, which are four-panel wood doors with applied moldings of a late Victorian type, appear to have been recycled from other locations. However, two doors here, as well as others at the rear of the stage (see Photo 15) are a common early 20th-century type that is rapidly disappearing—the two-panel door with large three-ply veneered plywood panels. Some of the ceramic plumbing fixtures—a sink in the northeast dressing room and one of the toilets—appear to be original to the building of the stage addition. A significant original feature of this ground-level space is the galvanized firewall between it and the main basement under the auditorium, which incorporates a large sliding door. Stamped on portions of the metal sheeting are the words “22 lbs. Keystone ‘copper steel.’” (The same type of metal cladding appears on portions of the proscenium, facing the stage.)

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Scene dock, 1927

The tall scene dock, which was added against the rear exterior wall of the stage in 1927, preserves in excellent condition the black 1922 shingles that briefly functioned as the exterior cladding of the stage's northeast wall. The framing of the rest of this space is exposed on the interior, revealing its lightly built, dimensioned lumber construction. Space against the rear wall of the scene dock is used for storage of flats.

When this section was constructed, the original ground-level back door to the Green Room became an interior door opening through the stage foundation wall, and two new doorways were cut through on the main level to the stage. Above that area is a small light stage. In its west corner, the scene dock incorporates the projecting part of the stage addition which houses the east lavatory and the enclosed actors' stair leading up from the Green Room to the stage.

When built, the ground story of the scene dock was open on the ends, allowing vehicles to drive in. The space was enclosed and fitted up as a large ground-level carpentry shop for scenery production by the Friends of the Performing Arts in the 1970s. Here the walls and ceiling are lined with late 20th-century wallboard, and the space is occupied by workbenches and tool cabinets.

Archaeological Description

One ancient Native American site has been recorded on the Armory property and 42 sites have been identified in the general area (within one mile).

Much of Mill Brook has been channeled through culverts in the area, buried, and then built upon.

Environmental characteristics of the property represent locational criteria (slope, soil draining, proximity to wetlands) that are favorable for the presence of Native sites. The Armory is located on a well-drained, level to moderately sloping stream terrace that slopes downward from the northern boundary of the Armory property to Mill Brook. Historical records during initial construction of the Armory indicate the presence of a spring originally located underneath the building.

In spite of the information presented above, the potential for locating significant ancient Native American resources on the Armory property is low. Construction of the Armory, which has a basement and covers nearly the entire 0.35-acre lot, and an earlier paint shop would have destroyed any ancient resources that were located on the property.

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A low potential also exists for locating historic archaeological resources on the Armory property. Construction of the Armory would have destroyed any evidence of the 19th-century paint shop that survived after its removal prior to construction of the armory headhouse and drill shed in 1887

(end)

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Concord Armory
Concord (Middlesex), MA

Section number 8 Page 1

8. SIGNIFICANCE

The Concord Armory (Concord Veterans Building/51 Walden) is significant at the local level as a rare and well-preserved wood-frame late 19th century town armory converted in the early 20th century to a regional theater. The building represents several chapters in the history of Concord's commercial and institutional downtown. Built in 1887 and 1888 as the armory and headquarters for the town's military company, the Concord Artillery, the building was the main venue in Concord for local military activity and the associated 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 it was replaced by a larger state armory in 1915, the building's military associations continued. After World War I it was renamed the Concord Veterans Building, and for decades it 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 1888 drill shed to an auditorium and theater, the building became the most appropriate space in town for showing movies and for staging theatrical and musical performances--a public function that continued through the years of the Great Depression, when the town also held its Town Meetings in the building. The Concord Players, the best-known amateur dramatic group in the greater Concord area, took up residence in the building in 1922, and still stages its productions there today. For all these important associations with the town's military, social, civic, and cultural development, the building meets **Criterion A** of the National Register of Historic Places.

The armory also qualifies under **Criterion C**, both as a rare and well-preserved example of a late 19th-century wood-frame armory in an eclectic Queen Anne 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 two extant churches and in a handful of handsome houses he designed or renovated in the 1880s in the Queen Anne, Shingle, and early Colonial Revival styles. The 1922 stage added to the east end of the former drill shed was designed by architect Clarence Blackall, who is best known for the fourteen Boston theaters he designed, including the Wilbur, Colonial, and Metropolitan (Wang) Theaters. The scene dock east of the stage was added in 1927 to a design 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.

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Introduction

Located 15 miles west-northwest of Boston, the town of Concord was incorporated in 1635 as the first inland settlement in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Situated at a major confluence point where the Sudbury and Assabet Rivers join to become the Concord, before the town's area was reduced in the 18th century over nine miles of river within its borders were a major attraction for trappers, fur traders, and farmers. By the 18th century, the original English settlement between a sheltering ridge and a secondary brook, the Mill Brook, had grown into the bustling core of an important shire town, where the Middlesex County courts convened on a regular basis and a variety of colonial trades were carried on. On April 19, 1775, Concord was catapulted into the worldwide spotlight, (a position it has never lost,) when the first full battle between the American colonists and British soldiers took place at the North Bridge at the opening of the Revolutionary War.

By 1800, the original clustered village had further evolved into a thriving commercial, civic, and institutional town center. Churches, schools, several taverns/inns, and a handful of stores commingled with the courthouse and other county buildings around the town common (which also served as a training field) just northeast of the Mill Brook. More small industrial- and craftsmen's shops were concentrated southwest of the common on the other side of the brook (and actually astride it) on the road that crossed the broad dam, "the milldam," which held back a shallow pond. A radical change occurred at the town center in 1828, when a group of businessmen, organized as the Milldam Company, filled in the millpond and began replacing the buildings on and west of the dam with brick and wood-frame business blocks. This was the beginning of a true "downtown" which gradually spread west along today's Main Street and southeast on Walden Street over the middle of the 19th century, as residences and small manufacturing buildings were replaced by more substantial commercial structures.

Town business was conducted in rooms in the late 18th-century county courthouse on the common until 1849, when that building burned down. In 1851 two buildings were constructed side by side to replace it—a new **courthouse** (NR) for the county, and a commodious brick **Town House** (NR) for the town. Shortly before their construction, a lane to their east between the common and the North Center Schoolhouse (now the first block of Bedford Street,) had been developed with a few houses and the Universalist Church. While it is not known when Concord's first armory was built, by 1830 a small "gun house" (later referred to as an armory) was standing a short distance east of the church, opposite the schoolhouse and the west end of the 1823 New Burying Ground. (That gun house was eventually moved east to a residential property on Lexington Road.)

The Concord Artillery.

In 1804, a group of local men successfully petitioned the state legislature for permission to establish a second military organization in Concord to operate in addition to the longtime Concord Light Infantry. The legislature quickly authorized the formation of a new company, to be known as the Concord Artillery and attached to the battalion of artillery in the First Brigade, Third Division, of the Massachusetts Militia. The legislative resolve also ordered that the company be provided with two brass cannon, on which an account of the "Concord Fight" at the North Bridge on April 19, 1775 was inscribed, along with the names of the colonial leaders of that day, Maj. James Buttrick and Capt. Isaac Davis.

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The Concord Artillery held its first parade on July 4, 1804, and first saw active duty during the War of 1812, when together with the Concord Light Infantry and the Acton Blues they marched to Boston on September 10, 1814, remaining until October 30. From that time until the start of the Civil War in 1861, however, the company saw no military action, engaging mainly in drills and musters, ceremonies and salutes, and many parades. To quote the Concord Selectmen's Report for 1862, the Artillery was "an organization which not a few persons have long regarded as far more ornamental than useful."

In 1840 the system of compulsory militia which had long prevailed in Massachusetts was ended, and an entirely volunteer active militia was organized. In 1842 the affiliation of the Concord Artillery was changed, and it was designated as Company A, First Regiment of Artillery, Third Brigade, Second Division. In 1855, the designation was changed again, from artillery to infantry (as were many companies in the state), and the company was attached as Co. A. to the Fifth Regiment of Infantry in the Third Brigade.

For nearly 40 years both the Artillery and the older Light Infantry existed in Concord, often as rivals. In the 1840s, however, the Concord Light Infantry, having been in operation since 1669, was disbanded, leaving the Artillery as the town's sole military organization. It is not clear whether the early gun house on Bedford Street had housed the equipment of both the Light Infantry and the Concord Artillery. But, in 1850 the Town paid to rent a building from farmer George Barrett for the equipment of the disbanded Light Infantry, and throughout the 1850s and early 1860s several of the residents of lower Bedford Street were paid for maintenance work on the small armory there, as well as for the care of the Artillery's cannon. In 1866, Samuel Staples, the primary real estate developer of lower Bedford Street, bought the building, and rented it back to the Town for the next few years.

If the Concord Artillery had lost the respect of some in town during the years after the War of 1812 in which it saw no military action, its reputation was restored in 1861, when under the able leadership of Lieut. (later Captain) George Prescott it answered the first call for troops at the start of the Civil War. The company marched to Boston on April 19, 1861, proceeded to Washington, and in its first "three-months' service" participated in the Battle of Bull Run. Most members of the Concord company served throughout the war. Many died, and several were imprisoned in Confederate camps including the notorious Andersonville. Having already undergone two changes in affiliation since its initial organization, in 1862 the Artillery was attached to the 47TH Massachusetts Volunteers as Company G, whereupon they were stationed at New Orleans for nearly a year. The letter of their company again changed several times during and after the war. Finally, in 1878, when the Massachusetts Militia was reorganized, they took on the affiliation they were to hold for the rest of the century--Co. I of the Massachusetts 6th Regiment.

Over the years, the Commonwealth periodically changed the standards for the accommodations that local communities were required to provide for their military companies. Shortly after the Civil War, it appeared that Concord could provide an upgraded facility for the Artillery when the Town bought the former Middlesex Agricultural Society grounds, which occupied eight acres between the old "New" Burying Ground and the 1855 Sleepy Hollow Cemetery (NR).

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The exhibition building for the Society's annual agricultural fairs was quickly fitted up as a new armory and drill shed in 1867, but its use by the Concord Artillery Company was short-lived. It was clear that the agricultural grounds would serve the town better if incorporated into the cemetery, and on the recommendation of the powerful Cemetery Committee, the 1869 March Town Meeting voted to annex the property to Sleepy Hollow. The town High School, which had occupied rooms in the first floor of the Town House, moved into its own building in January, 1869, and its vacated quarters were quickly converted for use as the town armory.

Only a few months after the 1869 Town Meeting vote, in one of its periodic attempts to reorganize the state militia, the legislature ordered the town to disband the Concord Artillery. With the company's Civil War service still close to the hearts and minds of Concord residents, however, the Selectmen vigorously appealed the Commonwealth's decision, locking up the company's equipment in the Town House until the matter was settled. The Adjutant General soon rescinded the order to disband, and the company was reorganized instead.

While the Town House served the Artillery well for many years as meeting space, indoor drill space, and a place to store uniforms and equipment, it did not provide a suitable area for housing the cannon. In 1871, the Town fitted up a new gun house at the rear of the Town House lot, at a cost of just under \$400.

Concord Armory, 51 Walden Street

In 1887, two developments led to the construction of the new armory at 51 Walden Street. First, the Commonwealth, which had subsidized the expenses of maintaining local armories in the past, again revised its standards for the local companies, and passed new legislation requiring communities with military companies "to provide a suitable armory for the purpose of drill, and for the safe keeping of the arms, equipments, uniforms, and other military property furnished by the state." The existing combination of the first floor of the Town House and the gun house at the rear was officially found by the state to be "unsuitable," and an article subsequently was placed on the Town Meeting warrant to fund the construction of a new, much larger facility. Second, a controversy of several years' duration over the ownership of the company's cannon was finally resolved. In 1846, the original pair of brass cannon conveyed by the legislature for the Concord Artillery's use had been condemned as unsafe, and they were dismounted and placed on display in the Doric Hall of the Massachusetts State House in Boston. The Commonwealth replaced them with a nearly identical pair of field pieces, but after four decades of use by the Artillery, their ownership by the Town had been called into question.

The Selectmen petitioned the legislature on the matter; and in 1887 the Governor formally conferred the 1846 cannon to the town, "with their carriages and equipments, in perpetuation of the historic renown of said town and in recognition of the services of said Concord Artillery Company."

Clearly, it was time that both the honored military company and their valuable field pieces had accommodations commensurate with their stature. Most instrumental in the successful effort to construct the new building was the Chairman of the Selectmen, Samuel Hoar, 2nd. While not a member of the Artillery, he had served when a teenager with both the Maine and Massachusetts Militias during the Civil

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War, he had spearheaded the construction of the town's Civil War monument, and he belonged to one of Concord's most influential families. While others advocated another site with enough space to include a drill field, Mr. Hoar successfully negotiated the purchase from the First Parish Church of a small plot of land on the southwest bank of the Mill Brook, facing Walden Street. The parcel was only 73 feet in width, however, since the Church wished to retain a pathway west over the brook to Walden Street.

The land purchase was approved at Town Meeting in March 1887. The Armory Building Committee, composed of the Selectmen, Mr. Hoar (no longer a Selectman) as Chairman, and Concord Artillery Captain Frank Cutter, had a paint shop standing on the property removed, and the front section of the armory, the 51 by 26-foot "headhouse," was standing by December. The 60-foot long drill shed was completed a few months later. The architect they chose was **John H. Chapman**. A Concord resident who had earned the favor of the town leaders through his designs for Trinity Church (1884) and several stylish houses, Mr. Chapman's most recent project, the West Concord School, had just been completed. A graduate of Yale and the Stuttgart Royal Academy, John Chapman is considered the first true architect to make his home in Concord, and his influence on the appearance of the town in the late 19th century was considerable. Known for a specialty in "artistic country houses," he was to go on to renovate the former Universalist Church to become St. Bernard's Catholic Church in 1889, and to design the 1890 town High School on Stow Street (like the West Concord School, no longer extant) before failing health resulted in his moving to Florida.

The principal builder of the armory was Andrew S. Lowden, a carpenter from Nova Scotia who had already put up many houses at Concord center. Other contractors on the project were also Concord residents, including painter and glazier Mark Mara (owner of the paint shop formerly on the property) and plumber Myrick L. Hatch. The total cost to the town of the building and land was \$6,730.87.

The floor plans, which were duly approved by the Adjutant General of the Commonwealth, were for a commodious building designed to meet all the needs of a late 19th-century military company. On the first floor of the headhouse were a company room (17 ½ by 25 feet), a hall (14 by 12 ½ feet), a 17 ½ by 15 ½-foot store room, and a lavatory. At the second story were a large "clothing room" (17 ½ by 25 feet), an officers' room, a non-commissioned officers' room, and a small armorer's room.

The Concord Artillery: later years.

For ten years after the armory was built, the United States was at peace, but it was an active period for the Concord Artillery. Since the year the building was constructed they had been drilling on the nearby Emerson Playground, initially a four-acre plot donated to the Town by the heirs of Ralph Waldo Emerson in part as a drill and parade ground. The local newspapers carried frequent reports of their drills, camps, and inspections. Much of their activity was social, however. While they had held military balls and other events in the past, the company's social life was given a boost by the establishment of the Empire Drill Squad, an all-female group. It had seventeen young ladies as members when, in 1893, a contest was held at the armory between the Drill Squad and the Artillery. The leader of the Artillery Company was still Capt. Cutter. The Captain of the Empire Drill Squad was his wife, Caroline.

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The Concord Artillery shifted again to active military status with the coming of the Spanish-American War in 1898. Under a new leader, Capt. Cyrus Cook, the company was mustered into the U.S. service in Framingham as Co. I, 6th Regiment, Massachusetts Infantry, and was attached to the second brigade, first division, Second Army Corps. With 106 men, the company shipped out to Cuba and Puerto Rico for three months. In January of 1899 the company was mustered out of the U.S. service, and re-entered the Mass. Volunteer Militia, again as Co. I, 6th Infantry.

The Concord Artillery celebrated its 100th anniversary on Patriot's Day, 1904 with a grand dinner at the Town House and a parade that began and ended at the armory. Among the observations made by the notable speakers at the occasion was that it was again time to upgrade to a first-class armory to train Concord's coming generation of young men. A fire that damaged the headhouse and the drill shed roof in 1912 helped to usher in the fulfillment of that prediction. Although the building was repaired, plans were already underway to replace it with a new state-built armory. In 1915, the large brick **Commonwealth Armory** (MHC #430, 91 Everett Street) was dedicated a few blocks to the south, and 51 Walden ceased to function as the headquarters and drill shed of the local military company.

20th century adaptive reuse of the armory: the Veterans Building

After the Artillery moved to the Commonwealth Armory, 51 Walden Street was virtually unused for several years. In 1920, after World War I was over, the town appropriated \$10,000 for more repairs, and, under a new identity as the Concord "Veterans Building," it became the headquarters and meeting space for several veterans organizations including the Grand Army of the Republic, the Camp 55 Spanish War Veterans Association, and the American Legion. Among the renovations to the building at that time were the addition of a window on the south end of the headhouse and a new heating plant for that part of the building. The 1920 Town Report also stated that there was a fireplace at that time in the "large room" in the south part of the headhouse.

The James J. Mansfield Post of the American Legion managed the building from 1922 to 1932, and still maintained a meeting room there into the 1970s. The Town resumed responsibility for the building in 1933. In 1935, during the Great Depression, the local offices of the W.P.A. rented part of the building, and the local chapter of the Red Cross was situated there for many years.

The Concord Players

While the veterans organizations occupied the former Artillery rooms in the headhouse, the impetus for converting the drill shed to a theater/auditorium came from a very different group, the Concord Players--the organization that has been the primary force behind the preservation of the building ever since. The Players were founded in 1919 as a local dramatic club of 22 members. The first President was novelist Samuel Merwin, who initiated the formation of a syndicate that would acquire the assets and pay off the debts of a former theater group, the Concord Dramatic Club.

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The new theatrical organization had a long legacy to live up to—one which harked back to the 1850s amateur productions staged by the Concord Anti-Slavery Society, and to the plays put on in the 1860s and 1870s by Louisa May Alcott and her friends in the Town House and in the barn at “the Wayside,” the Alcott family’s former home. That drama group began staging plays under the name of The Concord Dramatic Club in 1875, and averaged two- to three productions a year through the end of the 19th century. Among their most enthusiastic participants, in the years before he moved to New York, was sculptor Daniel Chester French. In 1900, the Dramatic Club formalized their organization, offering memberships and electing officers. From then through 1917, they staged 41 productions. The club foundered during the years of the First World War, however, and with the decision to transfer their scenery and other assets to the Concord Players, in 1918 the Dramatic Club was officially dissolved.

The initial members of the Concord Players, ten of whom had been active in the old Dramatic Club, included several young men who went on to become some of Concord’s most prominent citizens. Among them were attorney Raymond Baldwin, publisher Henry Laughlin (later President of Houghton Mifflin,) and architect Harry Little. Several of the players were continuing an interest in the dramatic arts developed during their college days. The longtime Director and Stage Manager, Hans W. Miller, for instance, who had graduated from Harvard in 1912, had been President of the Harvard University Dramatic Club as an undergraduate.

The Players’ first performance took place in November 1919 in Concord. Like the Dramatic Club had done before them, the Players staged productions in private homes and in the meeting hall of the Town House. They also put on performances in **Monument Hall**, 58 Monument Square (NR), and staged road productions in Belmont and West Newton.

From the first, one goal of the organization had been to obtain a permanent home for the Players--a resident theater that would include a fully equipped stage, dressing rooms, and storage facilities for costumes and scenery. In 1922 they approached the Selectmen with a proposal to build a two-level stage addition onto the east end of what was then known as Veterans Hall—the former drill shed of the armory at 51 Walden Street. They raised considerable private funds, approximately \$4,100, to match what might be appropriated by Town Meeting, and in the spring of 1922 the Town approved \$4,000 for the purpose. In 1923, the stage was completed with funds from another Town Meeting appropriation.

The stage construction entailed the purchase of another small piece of land from the First Parish Church. Architects’ fees for the addition were waived, however, as the chosen architect was Clarence H. Blackall of Boston, father of one of the founding members of the Concord Players, Marian (Blackall) Miller, wife of stage manager Hans Miller. **Clarence H. Blackall** (1857-1942) was one of America’s most prolific theater designers in the late 19th- and early 20th centuries. He had studied architecture at the University of Illinois and at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. Starting out with the firm of Peabody & Stearns in Boston, his own firm was Blackall, Clapp, & Whittemore. By 1920 he had exerted a profound influence on the architecture of downtown Boston, especially in the theater district, where he designed fourteen theaters including the Colonial (1889-1900—NRMRA 1980) and the Wilbur (1914—NRIND/MRA 1980.) One of his best-known theaters, the Metropolitan (later the Wang Theater—NRIND/MRA 1980,) opened in 1925.

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Other buildings he designed included the Tremont Temple (1896-NRDOE 1986), the Winthrop Building (1893—NRIND 1974) at 276 Washington Street, the Copley Plaza Hotel (NRDIS-1973, in association with Henry Hardenberg,) and two synagogues, Temple Israel (1907 [now Morse Auditorium, Boston University]), and, later in the 1920s, Temple Ohabei Shalom in Brookline (1925-27—NRDIS/MRA 1985).

For the former armory, Mr. Blackall designed a stage which was a smaller replica of the one in the Colonial Theater. Their new home performance space was an important catalyst in the maturing of the Concord Players. Not only did they now have a professional stage, but dressing rooms below it at ground/basement level as well, which are still largely intact today. The large communal “Green Room” under the center of the stage, especially, contributed over many decades to the camaraderie among the actors and crew. With the new facility, the Players were able to take on more and more ambitious productions, most of which received excellent reviews. Walter Prichard Eaton, writing in *The New York Herald* in the 1930s, called the company “one of the best amateur groups in New England.” 51 Walden Street quickly became the major 20th-century performing arts center in the Concord area, and it was there that, in the words of Harry Little’s son David Little, many Concordians received “their chief exposure to live theatre” during the 1930s and 1940s, a statement that is still true for many young Concord residents today.

The first night of the opening production on the new stage (which was not quite completed), on November 22, 1922, was a benefit performance of Frank Ballard’s comedy “Believe Me, Xantippe” from which the proceeds were turned over to the James J. Mansfield Post of the American Legion. The next performance, in the spring of 1923, was perhaps the most famous ever staged by the Players. It was a production of Booth Tarkington’s “Clarence.” The actor in the title role was reigning U.S. tennis champion William T. (“Big Bill”) Tilden, II. Fresh from having won two of what were to be 31 U.S. singles championships and eleven Davis Cup titles, he had been called “the John Barrymore of the courts” for his histrionics during tennis matches. His performance as the lead actor with the Players, which took place during a recuperation from hand surgery, was both well received by the critics and attracted several nights of standing-room-only crowds.

Also in 1923, the Concord Players purchased one of several lots of existing stage sets. The entire scenery from the Wilbur Theater production starring Helen Hayes, “To the Ladies,” was shipped to Concord from a New York warehouse. The building already housed some theater sets that belonged to the Town, including some donated for general community use by the Concord Players, and the basement storage area was soon divided into locked enclosures maintained by the different scenery owners. The construction, adaptation, and handling of scenery was a major aspect of staging the Players’ dramatic productions, however, and another addition to the building was soon necessary—this time for a scene dock on the same level as the stage. In 1927, the Players raised \$2,900 to acquire another small parcel of land off the east end of the building, and utilized volunteer labor to construct a scene dock on it behind the stage. After the construction was completed, the Players deeded both the land and the scene dock to the Town.

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A third notable architect, **Harry Little**, designed the scene dock. A resident of Concord, Mr. Little was also one of the founding members of the Concord Players, and had designed their official seal in 1921. He was later President of the organization in 1936 and 1937. Most of the construction supervision of the scene dock, and possibly some of the designing, was done by Stage Manager Hans Miller and Concord Player member Harold E. Orendorff.

Other uses of 51 Walden Street, 1922-1950s

Although the former armory had become the permanent home of the resident theater group, the Concord Players, the Town rented out the auditorium for use by others, as well. The 1922 article on the Town Meeting Warrant and the accompanying fund-raising literature promoted the proposed stage addition partly as “an adequately equipped stage that may be used by the Legion and other organizations.” Other groups did indeed put on their own productions on the new drama stage, paying rent to the American Legion to do so. In 1924, members of the Concord Artillery even performed a minstrel show on the stage. While the rooms in the headhouse continued to be used for office- and meeting space for the various resident organizations, under the local chapter of the Red Cross the converted drill shed became the main venue in Concord for the showing of first silent movies, and then “talking pictures.” For many years the Red Cross rented the auditorium on Saturday nights to show movies, and it was largely for that use that the Town appropriated \$3,917 in 1926 to raise the drill shed roof by five feet, and to upgrade the building’s kitchen and toilet facilities. A projection booth is still in place at the west end of the theater/auditorium. The converted drill shed was larger than the main meeting room in the Town House, and from 1933 to 1946, Town Meetings were held there as well.

Later history

The Town resumed responsibility for managing the building in 1933, and for the next 35 years 51 Walden Street was heavily used by the Town, the Concord Players, and other organizations. As late as 1952 its auditorium was still the only town-owned space that could seat 500 people or more. The building’s condition deteriorated in the decade after World War II, however, and in 1959 Town Meeting authorized the Selectmen to demolish the building. A public outcry was raised against the decision, and in 1961 Concord Town Meeting approved \$5,000 to repair the building and convert it, in part, to a youth center.

That same year the building lost its last connection with the Concord Artillery company, when the cannon were finally moved out of the basement to a new Gun House on Lexington Road built for the Artillery’s still-active successor, the Concord Independent Battery. Proposals for demolition, including one in 1962 by a town advisory committee, continued to be brought forth. In the early 1970s, while the Concord Players continued periodically to put on productions in the auditorium and stage, the building deteriorated further under a varied mix of uses--the youth center and town offices in the head house, and practice space for the American Legion and Concord Minutemen, as well as a dog-training club in the theater/auditorium.

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In 1970, a new non-profit organization, the Friends of the Performing Arts in Concord (FOPAC,) was formed by members of both the Concord Players and the Concord Orchestra for the purpose of encouraging the musical and dramatic arts in Concord and the surrounding communities. The group was incorporated in 1972 while engaged in an ongoing effort to find an appropriate joint performance space. After rejecting the idea of constructing a new facility, and having expanded their committee to include representatives of the Concord Minutemen, FOPAC successfully sought permission from Town Meeting to renovate the former armory and operate it as a performing arts center. After a vigorous fund-raising campaign, FOPAC signed its first 5-year lease with the Town, for \$1 per year, in 1972.

To renovate and restore the building, nearly \$100,000 was raised in contributions, a sum which was augmented by grants and the proceeds from special fund-raising events. Joseph J. Schiffer & Associates were engaged as architects for the renovation, and E.A. Comeau was the building contractor. Much of the construction work, however, was again performed by devoted volunteers.

In 1975, on the recommendation by a town subcommittee charged with seeking a memorial that would reflect Concord's cultural heritage at the 200th anniversary of the Concord Fight, 51 Walden Street was designated by the Town of Concord as its Permanent Bicentennial Memorial. (Daniel Chester French's Minuteman statue had been chosen the town's Centennial Memorial in 1875.) Appropriately for a building that was built as Concord's armory, the 200th celebration of the battle of April 19, 1975 began with a military ball in the former drill shed. As part of the bicentennial commemoration, four works were commissioned from notable artists and performed by Concord resident groups. "A Flurry of Birds," which later won the Moss Hart Award for drama, was written by playwright David Fielding Smith and performed by the Concord Players at 51 Walden on the eve of Patriot's Day. For the Concord Orchestra, Joyce McKeel composed "Toward the Source," which was based on a passage in the 1698 Bay Psalm Book and tied to the theme of the Concord River. Randall Thompson wrote "The Gift Outright," partly based on Robert Frost's poem of that name, to be performed by the Concord Chorus, and Norman Dello Joio composed "Satiric Dances" for the Concord Band, which had become the third major user of the building in 1974.

In 1976, Town Meeting granted \$40,000 more for improvements to the building (the income from the sale of Bicentennial medals). The second-story dance studio and the first-floor office, both designed by local architect Paul D. Minor, were completed in 1979.

Today, under the name 51 Walden, the old armory is a thriving performing arts center and a sound, well-maintained building. The Concord Players present three plays each season, as well as a drama workshop and other events. The Concord Orchestra runs a five-concert subscription series with twelve separate performances. The Concord Band performs three symphonic concerts and two pops concerts, and uses the auditorium as rehearsal space for the summer concerts they give at Fruitlands Museum in Harvard, MA. Regular renters include the Acton Community Chorus, Dance Prism, and the Cambridge Folk Art Center. The building is also rented out for other types of performances, dances, and receptions when the calendar allows. Several dance instructors use the dance studio in the headhouse for both daytime and evening classes. While the Town still owns the property, FOPAC manages the building under a part-time Manager and a Board of Directors composed of representatives from the three main user groups and from the community at large.

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Town of Concord documents

Concord Annual Reports: various years, 1851 through 1970s.

Forbes, Anne M. Narrative Histories of Concord and West Concord. Concord: Concord Historical Commission, 1995.

Maps, plans, and atlases

Beers, F.W. *Atlas of Middlesex County*. New York: 1875.

Blackall, Clapp, & Whittemore. Alterations to the Concord Armory. 8/2/1922.

Orendorff, H. E. Alterations to Concord Veterans' Building. 3/2/1928.

Walker, George. *Atlases of Middlesex County*. Boston: 1889, 1906.

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Concord Armory
Concord (Middlesex), MA

Section number 9 Page 2

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES, continued

Other sources

Concord Free Public Library, Archives/Special Collections: photograph files, pamphlet files.

Friends of the Performing Arts, Concord: miscellaneous files.

(End)

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA, continued

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the nominated property are those of the parcel shown as Parcel 0008, Concord Assessors Map #H-9, at 51 Walden Street.

Boundary Justification

The National Register boundaries encompass the entire parcel on which the building at 51 Walden Street stands.

(End)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Concord Armory
Concord (Middlesex), MA

Section number photos Page 1

PHOTOGRAPHS

Unless otherwise noted, all photographs by Anne Forbes, 2004.

Photo locations for #s 1 through 4, 7 through 9, and 11, 13, and 15 are marked on the Sketch Plan.

8 x 10" photographs

1. **Concord Armory, 51 Walden Street:** View east
2. **Concord Armory, 51 Walden Street:** View north
3. **Concord Armory, 51 Walden Street:** Rear (northeast) wall of scene dock
4. **Concord Armory, 51 Walden Street:** Interior of drill shed/auditorium, view northeast to drama stage
5. **Concord Armory, 51 Walden Street:** Interior of ground story, stage addition: "Green Room," view southeast
6. "Armory of Company I, Sixth Regiment." Ca. 1908. (Concord Free Public Library; photographer unknown)

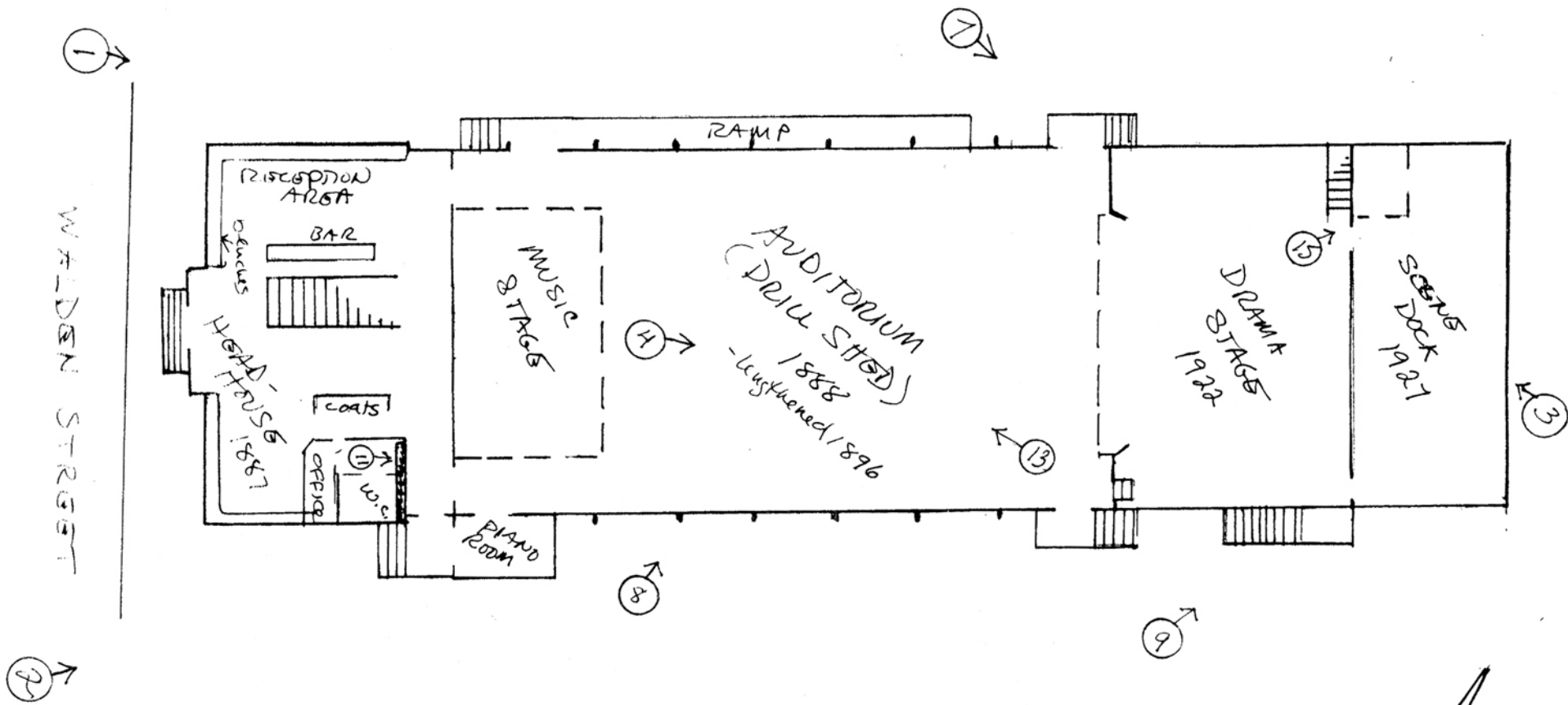
4 X 6" supplementary photographs of Concord Armory, 51 Walden Street

Exterior views:

7. View east to scene dock, stage, and northeast end of drill shed/auditorium
8. Drill shed/auditorium: southeast side, with utility doors
9. Stage addition: southeast end wall, with scene dock to rear

Interior views:

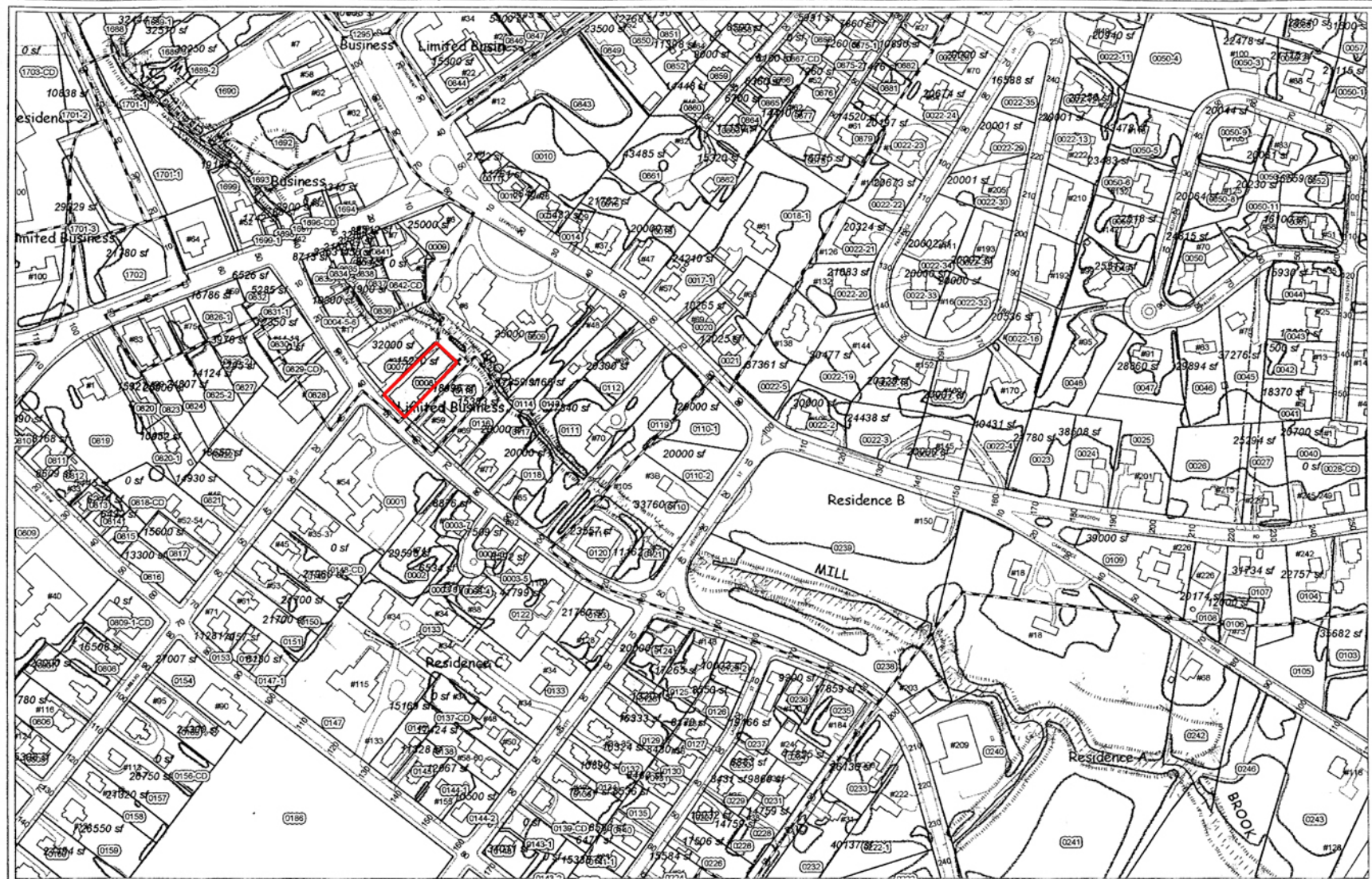
10. **Headhouse:** second floor dance studio, looking west
11. " : arch in brick wall
12. " : cellar: front wall
13. **Drill shed/auditorium:** view southwest toward music stage
14. " " " : basement story, view northeast
15. **Stage:** north doors to stairwell and scene dock
16. **Stage addition:** ground story, northeast dressing room
17. " " : " " , southeast dressing room and lavatory



CONCORD ARMORY: Main level
51 Walden Street, Concord

(not to scale)

ST WALDON ST
 CONCORD, MA

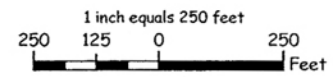


Prepared by Photogrammetric Methods
 from Aerial Photography of 1960 by
 Air Survey Corporation
 Arlington, Virginia
 Map Data as of: January 1, 2003.

Converted to GIS from Aerial Photography
 of 1995. Parcel information updated on an
 as needed or annual basis. All data in Massachusetts
 State Plane Mainland Coordinate System (Feet)
 North American Datum (NAD) of 1983.

Index to
Adjoining Sheets

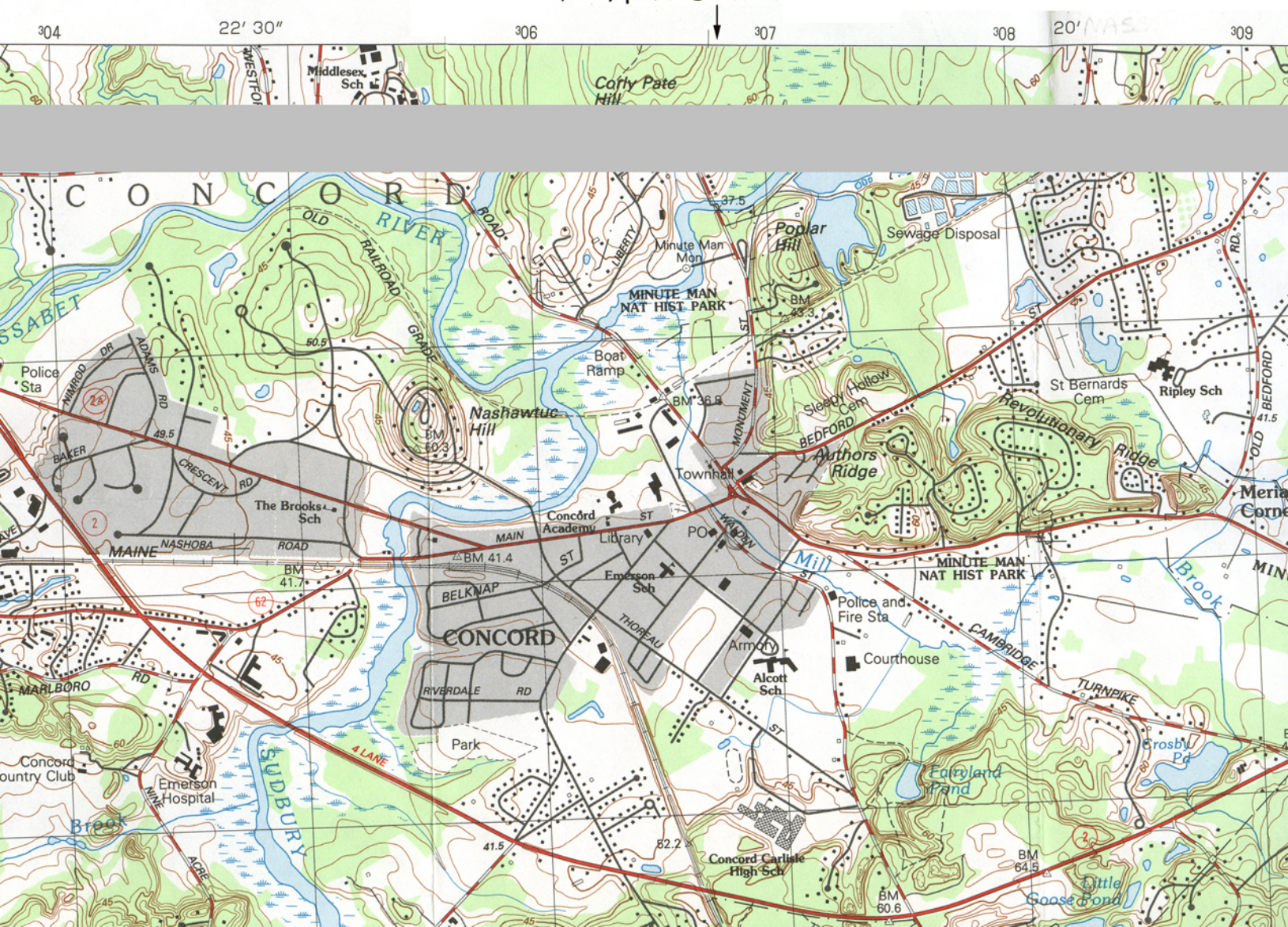
68	H8	I8
69	H9	I9
G10	H10	I10



This map was created by
 Concord Public Works.
 The information is provided as a
 reasonably accurate point of
 reference, but is not guaranteed
 and is not to be used for conveyances.
 The Town of Concord shall not be
 held responsible for the accuracy
 or misuse of these data.



51 WATSON STREET
CONCORD, MA
E: 19 306820
N: 19 4703180





1. Concord Armory, 51Walden Street: View east (Photographer: Anne Forbes, 2004)



2. Concord Armory, 51 Walden Street: View north (Photographer: Anne Forbes, 2004)



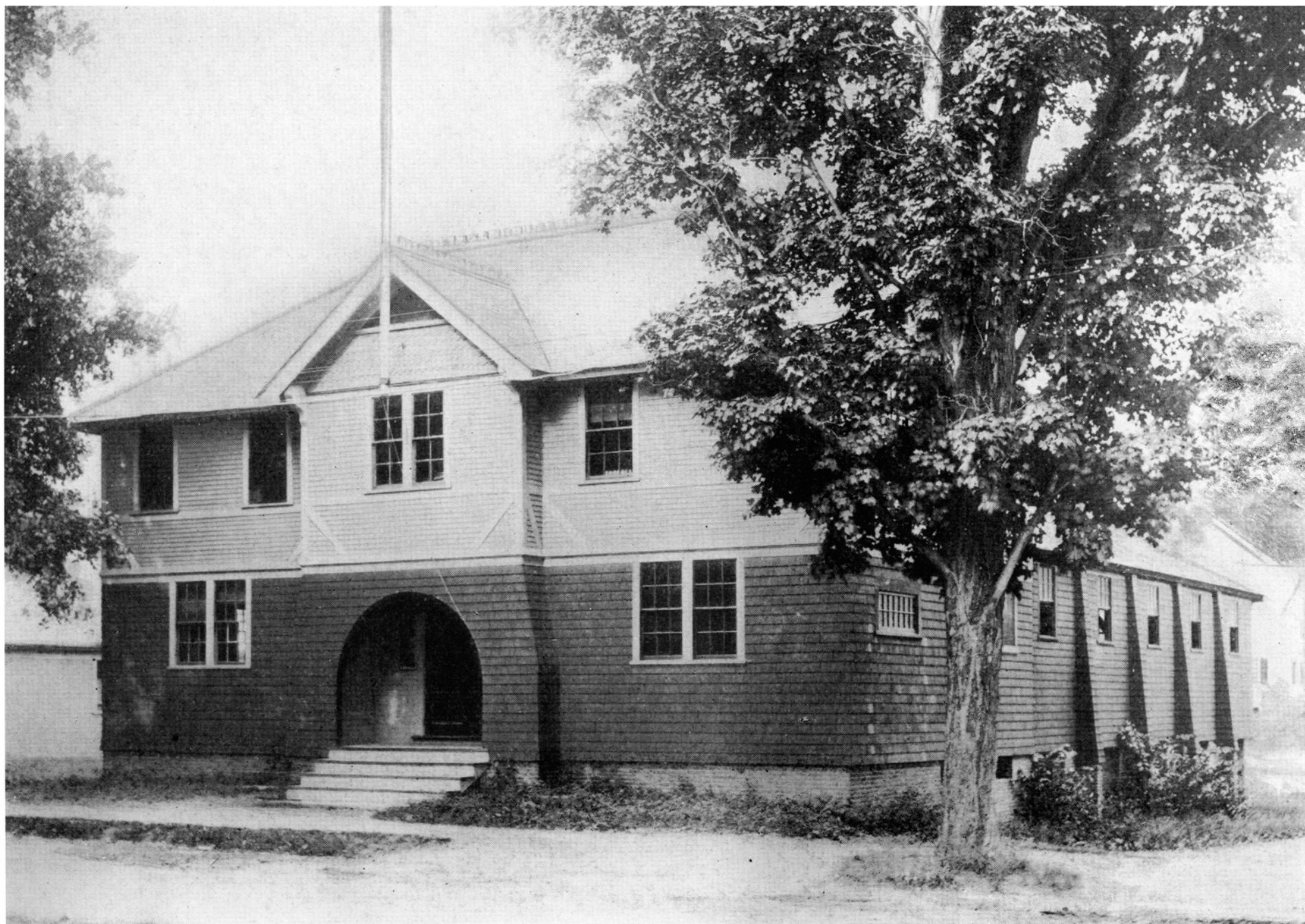
3. Concord Armory, 51 Walden Street: Rear (northeast) wall of scene dock (Photographer: Anne Forbes, 2004)



4. Concord Armory, 51 Walden Street: Interior of drill shed/auditorium, view northeast to drama stage
(Photographer: Anne Forbes, 2004)



5. Concord Armory, 51 Walden Street: Interior of ground story, stage addition: "Green Room," view southeast
(Photographer: Anne Forbes, 2004)



6. "Armory of Company I, Sixth Regiment." ca. 1908. (Concord Free Public Library; photographer unknown)



7. View east to scene dock, stage, and northeast end of drill shed/auditorium
(Photographer: Anne Forbes, 2004)



8. Drill shed/auditorium: southeast side, with utility doors
(Photographer: Anne Forbes, 2004)



9. Stage addition: southeast end wall, with scene dock to rear (Photographer: Anne Forbes, 2004)



11. Headhouse: arch in brick wall (Photographer: Anne Forbes, 2004)



10. Headhouse: second floor dance studio, looking west
(Photographer: Anne Forbes, 2004)



12. Headhouse: cellar: front wall
(Photographer: Anne Forbes, 2004)



13. Drill shed/auditorium: view southwest toward music stage
(Photographer: Anne Forbes, 2004)



14. Drill shed/auditorium: basement story, view northeast
(Photographer: Anne Forbes, 2004)



15. Stage: north doors to stairwell and scene dock
(Photographer: Anne Forbes, 2004)



16. Stage addition: ground story, northeast dressing room
(Photographer: Anne Forbes, 2004)



17. Stage addition: ground story, southeast dressing room and lavatory
(Photographer: Anne Forbes, 2004)