

TOWN HALL PAINT PLAN

Working with the Department of Public Works, the West Newbury Historical Commission and the West Newbury Historic District Commission—with expert advice from Historical Commission member Jen Munson, who is an artist and an exhibition designer at, among other institutions, the Boston Athenaeum, and lecturer at Tufts University’s School of the Museum of Fine Arts—have determined an historic paint plan for the original Town Hall building, located at 491 Main Street. Town Hall is our oldest civic structure, and an anchor for the Training Field Historic District, but is in much need of restoration. After the Town received a Community Preservation Act grant to restore the exterior of this important civic building, the Commissions looked closely at the available historic photography and written descriptions of the design of the Town Hall architecture after its last major 1880s façade remodel.



In the 1880s with architectural details highlighted.



In the 1940s with architectural details in white.



In the 1960s all white.

A photograph from the 1880s shows the building with its original paint plan in a sepia-toned photograph that highlights the Greek Revival pediment, pilasters, roundels, and “x” details between the windows, and curved canopy of the Italianate portico. There are no shutters, there is fabric bunting covering the entrance. The clapboards are painted a light color and the architectural details are contrasted in a dark hue. The next photograph is dated from the 1940s and shows the clapboards painted a medium tone (possibly gray) and the architectural details are white. These details remain the same and there are no landscape elements such as plantings in front to block the view of the façade. The final photographic record is from the 1960s and shows the entire building painted white with no architectural details highlighted. There are no plantings around or in front of the building, and it has no shutters.

The original aesthetic intent for this municipal building clearly expresses classic Greek Revival pediment and pilaster elements, an Italianate center portico, and most uniquely, distinct “x” patterns that occupy the space between the front windows vertically. This design is also present in a photograph of the now lost West Newbury fire station that was also located on Main Street.

The Commissions considered existing conditions in the Town as well as civic buildings in surrounding historic towns and noted the prevalence of strong white and black color schemes applied to historic civic buildings. Additionally, they recognized the 20th– 21st century experience of the building, which has been painted a simple white scheme for at least half a century. The Commissions recommended that overgrown plantings be removed and that the architectural details (pediment, pilasters, roundels, “x” patterns, canopy, and door) be painted an historic black to return the building’s façade to its original civic significance. The vinyl shutters have been removed, and future plantings should be considered after the paint project is completed to ensure that the façade is fully in view and that overgrowth does not compromise the structure.



Paint plan graphic by Jennifer Munson.