

ANTIQUUE CHAIR SETS FROM WEST NEWBURY OLD TOWN HALL

In his fifth annual report of the work of the Central School for the year 1921, Dr. John C. Page observed, "It seems to me that it will soon be impracticable, if not impossible, to continue to hold Memorial Day exercises as in the past, owing to the large number of school children and the small seating capacity of Town Hall."

Thus prompted, the Town voted at its March 6, 1922, Annual Town Meeting "that the selectmen be instructed to purchase a sufficient number of seats for the town hall and to appropriate a sum



of money not to exceed \$600 for that purpose." The Annual Town Meeting held on March 5, 1923, included a Special Appropriation "for chairs for town hall," as follows: "William M. Horsch [[proprietor of a furniture store](#)

[on Newburyport's Pleasant Street](#)], 172 chairs for town hall \$600.00."

These chairs, which are connected in twos



(with seven sets of fours), are of solid maple and largely in very good used condition. The chair seats fold individually and the set folds flat.

Paper labels still visible on some of the chairs show that they are a product of [Heywood-Wakefield Company](#) of Gardner, MA. This manufacturer was known for Victorian era wicker furniture, and quality maple auditorium seating in the early 20th century. Heywood-Wakefield is now prized for its fine mid-century modern designs.



This version of the manufacturer's name predates the 1921 change to Heywood-Wakefield, indicating that these chairs are or are close to 100 years old. Also, some chairs feature wire under-seat hat racks.



These chairs laid unused, stacked some four to five feet high behind the Town Hall stage, for about a decade,



since the time that Town Meeting was moved to the Annex around 2000.

In September of 2019, the Selectmen declared the chairs surplus and in November,

most of the chairs were sold, with some saved to serve in Town buildings.



Virginia Lee Burton used one of these chairs when she attended West Newbury's 1938 Town Meeting and sketched the West Newbury characters and town hall that found their way into the children's classic, [*Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel*](#).

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