

A. MESSER BUILDING
26 South Main Street
Franklin
Merrimack County
New Hampshire

HABS No. NH-220

HABS
NH
7-FRANK,
4-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
Northeast Region
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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LOCATION: 26 South Main Street, Franklin, Merrimack County,
New Hampshire

USGS Franklin, New Hampshire Quadrangle,
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:
19.284825.4813030.

PRESENT OWNER: Iona Savings Bank

PRESENT USE: Vacant. To be demolished.

SIGNIFICANCE: The Messer Building is a contributing element in the West Franklin historic district, a residential and commercial neighborhood in the city of Franklin. The Messer Building, which dates to circa 1890, is one of the small-scale, frame commercial buildings which characterize the northerly portion of the district.

I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of Erection: The front block of the Messer Building was erected between 1884 and 1892 according to the Sanborn Insurance Maps for those years. The construction date of the rear section cannot be determined from available documentary sources.

2. Architect: Unknown

3. Original and Subsequent Owners: References are to deeds and other documents in the office of the Registry of Deeds and Registry of Probate, Merrimack County Administration Building, Concord, New Hampshire.

- 1847 Deed, 7 January 1847, Book 83, p. 233. James Clark, as representative of the Proprietors of the Republican Bridge, to Stephen B. Foster.
- 1859 Deed, 15 April 1859, Book 151, p. 265. Stephen B. and Nancy B. Foster to William Hancock.
- 1865 Deed, 21 March 1865, Book 169, p. 270. William W. Hancock and wife to William F. Pearson and wife.
- 1869 Deed, 25 September 1869, Book 196, p. 92. William F. Pearson and wife to Alonzo Messer.
- 1907 Deed, 15 November 1907, Book 379, p. 295. Alonzo Messer and wife to Omar Towne.
- 1908 Deed, 26 February 1908, Book 379, p. 406. Omar A. Towne to Leontine Woods.
- 1908 Deed, 25 February 1908, Book 377, p. 309. Leontine and George Woods to Omar A. Towne.
- 1911 Deed, 29 December 1911, Book 402, p. 204. Leontine and George Woods to Ellen Provo and husband.
- 1913 Deed, 16 May 1913, Book 413, p. 67. Ellen Provo and husband to Omar A. Towne.

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- 1920 Deed, 13 March 1920, Book 442, p. 472. Omar A. Towne to Otis C. Bailey and wife.
- 1922 Deed, 6 July 1922, Book 456, p. 470. Otis C. Bailey and wife to Georgianna Hawley.
- 1924 Deed, 20 October 1924, Book 470, p. 423. Georgianna Hawley to Joseph and Zenaide Blais.
- 1927 Deed, 23 September 1927, Book 491, p. 432. Joseph and Zenaide Blais to John S. Heath
- 1930 Deed, 4 December 1930, Book 514, p. 367. John S. Heath to Eve Loverain.
- 1936 Deed, 6 April 1936, Book 544, p. 215. Eve Loverain to Albert and Mary N. Merrifield.
- 1944 Deed, 7 March 1944, Book 606, p. 43. Mary N. Merrifield to James B. Morse.
- 1946 Deed, 15 January 1946, Book 623, p. 18. James B. Morse to Jennie Hutchins.
- 1967 Deed, 4 August 1967, Book 1016, p. 395. Jennie Hutchins to Donald and Margaret Powell.
- 1969 Deed, 28 October 1969, Book 1060, p. 358. Donald and Margaret Powell to Richard Powell.
- 1971 Deed, 30 November 1971, Book 1118, p. 250. Richard Powell to Stephen and Mildred Preston.
- 1972 Deed, 5 May 1972, Book 1131, p. 213. Stephen and Mildred Preston to Robert F. Kidder and Susan Jane Kidder.
- 1974 Deed, 10 May 1974, Book 1210, p. 290. Robert F. Kidder and Susan Jane Kidder to Roger and Donna Decker.
- 1979 Foreclosure, September 1979, Book 1356, p. 314. Roger and Donna Decker to Franklin Savings Bank.

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- 1979 Deed, 22 October 1978, Book 1359, p. 631. Franklin Savings Bank to Mark Baldwin.
- 1983 Deed, 11 January 1983, Book 1433, p. 119. Mark Bardwin to Aerotronics Corporation.
- 1986 Deed, 20 August 1986, Book 1586, p. 820. Aerotronics Corporation to Morway & Rice, Inc.
- 1988 Deed, 15 July 1988, Book 1732, p. 794. Morway & Rice, Inc. to John L. Wogan.
- 1990 Foreclosure, 27 September 1990, Book 1812, p. 1041. John L. Wogan to Iona Savings Bank.

4. Builder, Contractor, Suppliers: Unknown

5. Original Plans and Construction: No documentary evidence indicating the original appearance of the building has been located.

6. Alterations and Additions: A second block was attached behind the main block at some time after 1892. The two, two-story portions are joined by a two-story hyphen. A historic photograph in the collection of the Franklin Free Library, taken circa 1890, shows the front block as well as the large Messer dwelling, formerly located behind the existing building, oriented toward Central Street. The rear block of this connected-plan dwelling is a two-story, gable roofed block oriented toward Main Street and set directly behind the Messer building and slightly offset to the north (Franklin Free Library, photograph T-6). This arrangement corresponds to the existing arrangement of the Messer building's two blocks and suggests that the rear block of the current building may be the former carriage house of the earlier Messer dwelling or that the block may have been constructed on the foundation of the earlier carriage house.

During the twentieth century, a two-story shed-roofed addition was constructed across the rear of the building. The first floor of the building was used for commercial purposes until the 1940's when it was converted into a single apartment. Later, the upstairs was divided into two apartment units.

B. Historical Context

The town of Franklin was incorporated in December 1828 from adjoining portions of four towns (Salisbury, Andover, Sanbornton and Northfield), largely at the behest of those wanting to exploit more fully the manufacturing potential present along the lower Pemigewasset and Winnepesaukee rivers and tributaries thereto (Hurd 1885:310-311).

At the time of incorporation, the principal village then in existence was located on the west bank of the Pemigewasset. This small community had risen around the activities of Ebenezer Eastman, who after coming to this area from Concord in 1797 established a dam and sawmill on Chance Pond Brook, opened a tavern, and commissioned construction of a toll bridge across the Pemigewasset on the road to Sanbornton and Northfield in 1802 (Hurd 1885:310; Nadeau 1978: 8). At the time, the village was part of the town of Salisbury, and was called variously Pemigewasset or "East Village", the latter due to its location within that town (Farmer & Moore 1823:232). In 1824, four years before the creation of the town of Franklin, the village of Pemigewasset boasted a meetinghouse, two stores, a tavern, post office, tannery, several cooper shops and a blacksmith shop. The village's industrial activity was concentrated primarily along Chance Pond brook, which flowed from the "great pond in Andover" (Webster Lake) southeast to the Pemigewasset a short distance above what is now Webster Street. Along the brook were, in 1824, three sawmills, a grist mill, and a blacksmith shop "with trip-hammers" as well as one unspecified "manufacturing establishment" (McClintock 1880:133).

The major industrial development of Franklin ultimately centered on an area to the east, known as Franklin Falls, on the Winnepesaukee, bringing with it a concentration of commercial and residential activity. However, the village on the Pemigewasset, also known as "West Village" and Franklin, remained a distinct and viable community through the 19th century. Not only did it have its own, nearby mill privileges, but also the Boston & Maine railroad, which extended its line north to the village in 1846; in addition, due to its location at a major river crossing, it was able to reap economic benefits from passing travelers. In 1855, the community called Franklin still remained the town's "principal village", with two hotels, seven stores, two meetinghouses (Congregationalist and Christian Baptist), a fire house, and an academy (McClintock 1880:133). Its industrial base, as of 1858, included a tanney, forge, foundry, grist mill and wool carding mill (Walling 1858).

By 1880, fourteen firms were listed with premises along Chance Pond Brook, including a sawmill, grist mill, iron foundry, brickmaker, carriage manufacturer, knitting machine factory, needle factory, and wool dyer (McClintock 1880: 137-138). Although the village never boasted the rows of attached brick commercial buildings which were built along Central Street in Franklin Falls, it did have several detached "blocks" from which local merchants purveyed goods and services, such as the brick Pike's Block, Messer's Block, and the Sturtevant Block (Sanborn 1884; Hurd 1892). From such premises, as well as from small building containing both shop areas and residences, the merchants of Franklin village offered such items as boots and shoes, harness and wagon robes, groceries and "India goods", hardware, furniture, and the all-encompassing "general merchandise" (McClintock 1880:140).

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As Franklin Falls became more heavily industrialized, and urbanized in the later 19th century, Franklin retained its village character and informal, linear plan along Main Street. Manufacturing tended to cluster in its traditional location along Chance Pond Brook toward the north end of the village, and the south end was primarily residential; between and within these areas, however, the mingling of function (housing, religion, commerce, public services) persisted, although most of the commercial activity was oriented around the west end of the bridge and north to Webster Street (Sanborn 1884, 1892).

Franklin was incorporated as a city in 1894; this change in municipal status was reflected in the village primarily by its designation as "West Franklin". In the 20th century, with the rest of the city, West Franklin experienced industrial and population decline as manufacturers closed or relocated their operations elsewhere. In April 1931, the old covered bridge across the Pemigewasset, known as the Republican bridge and built in 1839 by Boston John Clark to replace the earlier structure, was dismantled, its timber removed by the city for other uses, and the stone of its piers laid along the riverbanks as riprap. The new bridge, erected by the Eastern States Bridge Company of York, PA and Concord, was named the Daniel Webster bridge by vote of the city council (Franklin Journal Transcript, 16 April 1931, 30 April 1931; City of Franklin, 1930).

The Messer building, fronting on S. Main Street, was constructed by Alonzo Messer between 1884 and 1892 (Sanborn 1884, 1892). Messer was an established jeweler who also sold clocks, watches, silver, and sewing machines. His original store was located at the northern corner of his property, the corner of S. Main and Central Streets, in a building constructed by Stephen Foster circa 1850. Behind the store was his dwelling, a large, connected-plan building that was oriented toward Central Street. The original store, along with a parcel at the corner, was sold to George Nixon, a "colored" barber, in 1884 (Shepard 1957:552).

Between 1895 and 1902 Messer retired to a house at the corner of Main and Depot Streets (Towne & Robie 1895; Goss 1902). Another jeweler, Cyrus Adams, occupied the Messer Building by 1897 (Shepard 1957:575). Messer sold the property in 1907 to Omar Towne, a local publisher who specialized in printing business advertisements on wood pulp fans and lampshades (Shepard 1957:450). He also worked as a real estate agent in the 1910s (Union Pub. Co. 1914). Towne established joint ownership of the Messer Building shortly after acquiring the property. His partners, Leontine and George Woods, sold their half of the property to Ellen Provo and husband in 1913, and that partnership lasted until the property was sold to Otis C. Bailey and wife in 1920. It is unknown what capacity the building served during the years between 1907 and 1924.

In 1924 Joseph and Zenaide Blais purchased the Messer Building, opening a grocery in the first story and residing upstairs (Lothrop 1926). They occupied the building until

1927 when it was purchased by John Heath. Heath and his wife operated a filling station and luncheonette on the premises (Lothrop 1929). The building changed hands twice between 1930 and 1937. In 1937 owners Albert and Mary Merrifield rented the first floor to "Frank's Lunch," operated by Frank Clark, and the second floor apartment to Kenneth Kimball, a driver (Manning 1937). The building was listed as vacant in the two subsequent directories for the years 1939 and 1942 (Manning 1939, 1942). Between 1944 and 1990, when the present owner purchased the building, it changed hands twelve times. In later years the first floor was converted into a dwelling and the building was rented as three apartments.

II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural Character: The Messer Building is a free-standing structure, formerly housing a commercial business on the first floor and an apartment on the second. The building's parpetted false front with bracketted eaves, evokes late Victorian commercial architecture.

2. Condition of Fabric: The building has been poorly maintained in recent years and is in fair condition.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Overall Dimensions: The Messer Building is composed of two, two-story, front-gabled blocks joined by a two-story hyphen. The front block measures approximately, 15 feet by 22 feet with a three foot wide enclosed exterior stair attached to the north wall. The rear block is 19 feet square with a shed-roofed addition, 7 1/2 feet deep, covering the east elevation. A hyphen, measuring 8 1/2 feet by 3 1/2 feet, joins the two blocks.

2. Foundations: The concrete foundation of the Messer Block rests on a base of large rubble stone. The rear, shed roof addition rests on concrete corner blocks.

3. Walls: The north, east, and west sides of the Messer Building have been sided with wide, pressboard "clapboards." These were applied over asphalt shingles which in turn were placed over narrow clapboards. Only the south side of each block retains exposed the original, narrow clapboarding.

4. Structural Systems: The Messer Building is a wood frame building. At the time of recordation access was possible only to structural members in the crawl space

below the rear block. All of these elements were circular sawn, and the heavy beams were tenoned into the sills.

5. Porches, Stoops, etc.: None present.

6. Chimneys: Two interior brick chimneys rise from the roof of the Messer Building. The first is located on the ridge at the rear of the front block. The second chimney is located on the ridge toward the front of the rear block.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and Doors: Two doorways are located in the outside bays of the Messer Building facade. Modern, hollow-core doors set in plank surrounds fill both. A four-panel wooden door provides ground floor access in the west elevation of the rear block, and a multi-paned wooden door is located in the north elevation of the front block. The original door surrounds have been obscured by the application of modern, wide "clapboard" siding.

b. Windows: Two double-hung windows (2/2sash in the first story and 1/1sash in the second story) are regularly placed in the center of the building's facade. Banks of 2/2sash dominate the second story of the north elevation and the first and second stories of the east (rear) elevation. Additional windows are randomly placed around the building. Window surrounds vary in treatment. Some are simply flat planks, others have narrow moldings at the outer edges, and those on the second story of the facade are topped with small cornices.

8. Roof:

a. Shape: Both the front (west) and rear (east) blocks of the Messer Building, as well as the hyphen joining them have gable roofs. A shed-roofed addition covers the building's east elevation and an enclosed, shed-roofed porch covers much of the second story of the north elevation. All of the roofs are surfaced with asphalt shingles.

b. Cornice, Eaves: The Messer Building facade is highlighted by the bracketed cornice of the parapetted false front. Large curlique brackets are found at the outer edges of the facade cornice. Boxed eaves and wide frieze panels top the side walls of both the front and rear blocks.

c. Dormers, Cupolas, Towers: None present.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor Plans: See floor plans for existing room arrangement. The first story apartment is divided into four large rooms plus a bathroom. The front block is divided east-west. Behind the large front room, a bathroom and long closet flank a hallway. The closet is located beneath the exterior enclosed stairs that accesses the second story. The rear block is divided east-west into a bedroom and a kitchen with the addition forming a second bedroom across the rear. On the second story, the front and rear blocks are entered by way of an enclosed porch at the top of the stairs. The front block is divided into three rooms (kitchen, living area, and bathroom) plus a small closet in the northwest corner of the block over the entrance to the staircase. A kitchen occupies the front half of the rear block with two rooms behind it, and the rear addition is also divided into two rooms.

2. Stairways: An enclosed wooden staircase along the north wall of the building provides access to the second-floor apartments.

3. Flooring: The original variable-width, board floors are visible in both the first and second story apartments. However, most of the floor area has been covered with carpet, vinyl, and linoleum.

4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: Some evidence of the original plaster wall and ceiling finishes remains. However, many of the surfaces have been covered with plywood paneling and pressboard tiles.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and Doors: The doorways are framed with plain plank surrounds. Filling the openings are an assortment of modern hollow-core doors. One salvaged, four-panel, wooden door with a thumb latch was found in the rear, second-story apartment, and a five-panel door with polished wood knob and cast iron hardware was extant on the first floor.

b. Windows: All of the window openings are framed with plain plank surrounds.

6. Decorative Features and Trim: No decorative features or trim remain extant in either the first or second story, and no evidence of the original first story commercial storefront could be identified.

7. Mechanical Equipment:

a. Heating: Modern ceiling vents and heating ducts were found throughout the building.

b. Lighting: Some ceiling light sockets remained; however, no historic lighting fixtures were extant.

c. Plumbing: Only modern plumbing fixtures were found in the building.

D. Site

1. General Setting and Orientation: The Messer Building is located on the east side of South Main Street, south of the intersection with Central Street. The surrounding commercial and residential buildings recall the history of the area as the nucleus of a nineteenth century, industrial/commercial village. Housed predominantly in nineteenth century buildings, the area recalls its history as the nucleus of the village of West Franklin.

2. Landscape Design: There is no designed landscape associated with the building. The building is set at the front of the lot at the edge of the sidewalk. Behind the building the ground drops off sharply toward a terrace along the bank of the Pemigewasset River.

3. Outbuildings: None present.

III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Courier Steam Press

1894 City of Franklin, New Hampshire, Directory. Courier Steam Press, Haverhill, New Hampshire.

Farmer, John and Jacob B. Moore

1823 Gazetteer of the State of New Hampshire. Jacob B. Moore, Concord, NH.

Franklin, City of

1930 City of Franklin Annual Report.

Franklin Journal-Transcript

1930-31 Issues for 6 November 1930, 26 March 1931, 16 April 1931, 30 April 1931.

- Goss, Irving V. (comp.)
1902 Business Directory of the City of Franklin. Towne & Robie, [n.l.].
- Hurd, D. Hamilton (ed.)
1885 History of Merrimack and Belknap Counties, New Hampshire. Lewis & Co., Philadelphia.
- Hurd, D.H. & Co.
1892 Town and City Atlas of the State of New Hampshire. D.H. Hurd & Co., Boston.
- H.A. Manning Co.
1932 Manning's Franklin, Tilton-Northfield, Belmont, Boscawen, Canterbury (NH) Directory. H.A. Manning Co., Springfield, Massachusetts.
- 1937 Manning's Franklin, Tilton-Northfield, Belmont, Boscawen, Canterbury (NH) Directory. H.A. Manning Co., Springfield, Massachusetts.
- 1939 Manning's Franklin, Tilton-Northfield, Belmont, Boscawen, Canterbury (NH) Directory. H.A. Manning Co., Springfield, Massachusetts.
- 1942 Manning's Franklin, Tilton-Northfield, Belmont, Boscawen, Canterbury (NH) Directory. H.A. Manning Co., Springfield, Massachusetts.
- 1947 Manning's Franklin, Tilton-Northfield, Belmont, Boscawen, Canterbury (NH) Directory. H.A. Manning Co., Springfield, Massachusetts.
- McClintock, John
1880 "Franklin, New Hampshire", Granite Monthly 3 (January), pp. 132-143.
- Nadeau, Andrew N.
1978 History of the Franklin Fire Department. Privately printed.
- Price Lee & Co.
1874 Directory of Franklin, New Hampshire. Price Lee & Co., New Haven, Connecticut.
- Roscoe E. Collins Pub.
1881 Directory of Franklin and Franklin Falls, New Hampshire. Roscoe E. Collins Pub., Franklin Falls, New Hampshire.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Co.

1884 Fire Insurance Map of Franklin, New Hampshire. Sanborn Insurance Co.,
New York.

1892 Fire Insurance Map of Franklin, New Hampshire. Sanborn Insurance Co.,
New York.

1929 Corrected

to 1954 Fire Insurance Map of Franklin, New Hampshire. Sanborn Insurance Co.,
New York.

Shaw, Will E.

1888 Franklin & Tilton Directory. Vol. 1. Will E. Shaw, Haverhill, NH.

1891 Franklin Citizens' Directory. Vol. 2. Will E. Shaw, Haverhill, NH.

Shephard, Alice M.

1957 "History of Franklin, New Hampshire." unpublished manuscript, on file at
State Historical Society Library, Concord, New Hampshire.

Towne & Robie

1895 Souvenir Directory of the City of Franklin. Towne & Robie, Franklin Falls,
NH.

Union Publishing Co.

1912 City of Franklin, New Hampshire, Directory. Union Publishing Co., Boston.

1914 City of Franklin, New Hampshire, Directory. Union Publishing Co., Boston.

1917 City of Franklin, New Hampshire, Directory. Union Publishing Co., Boston.

1926 Lothrop's City of Franklin, New Hampshire Directory. Union Publishing
Co., Boston.

1929 Lothrop's City of Franklin, New Hampshire Directory. Union Publishing
Co., Boston.

Walling, Henry

1858 Map of Merrimack County, New Hampshire. Smith & Peavey, New York.

Warren, J.B.

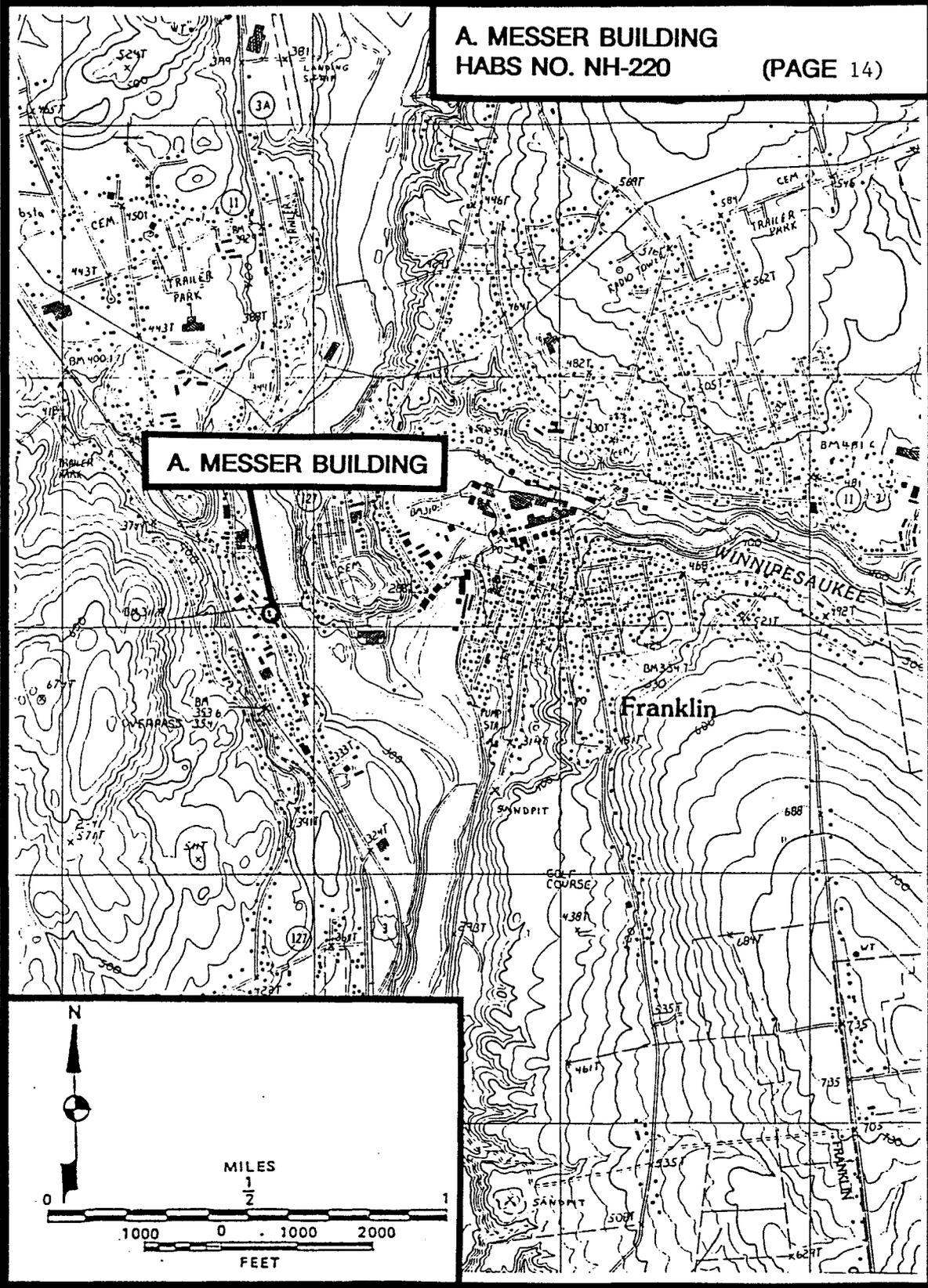
[n.d.] Photograph T-6, in the files of the New Hampshire Room of the Franklin
Free Library, Franklin, NH.

IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

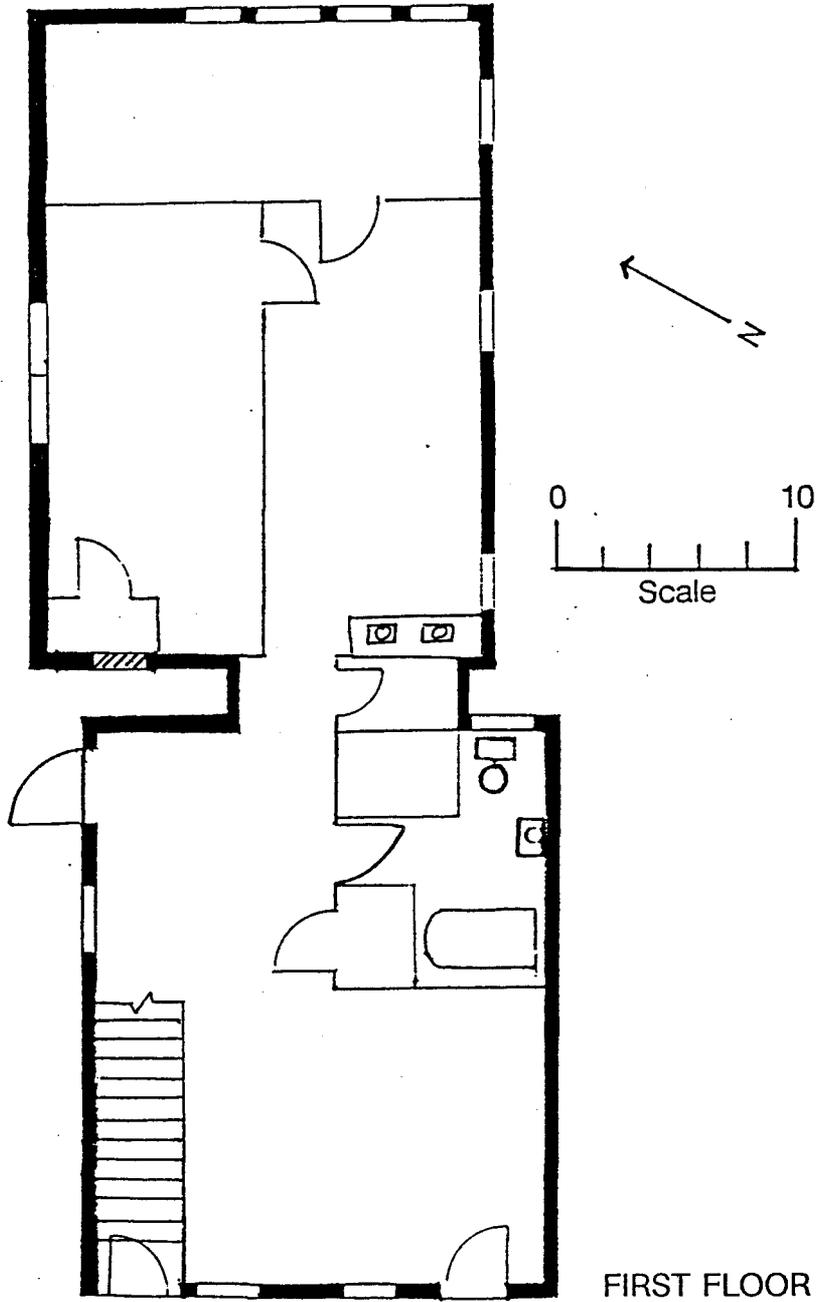
The Messer Building was recorded in October 1991, by the Cultural Resource Group of Louis Berger & Associates, Inc., East Orange, New Jersey, for the New Hampshire Department of Transportation. The documentation was undertaken pursuant to a Memorandum of Agreement between the Federal Highway Administration, the New Hampshire Department of Transportation, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. The project for which the MOA has been prepared is the replacement of the Daniel Webster Bridge over the Pemigewasset River and redesign at the intersection of Central Street with Main Street (U.S. Route 3). The project team included: Martha H. Bowers, Project Coordinator; Elizabeth Rosin, Architectural Historian; and Rob Tucher, Photographer.

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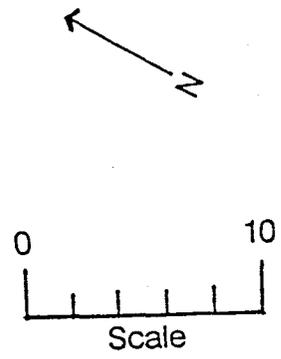
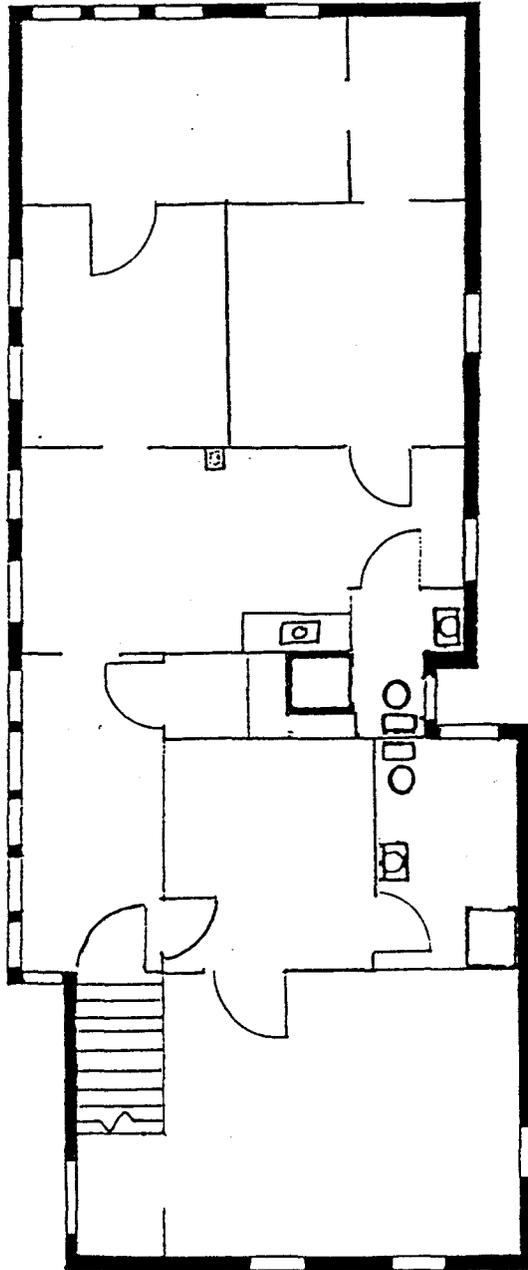
(PAGE 14)



SOURCE: USGS 7.5 Minute Series Franklin, N.H. Quadrangle
(Preliminary Edition 1987)



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN