

TEWKSBURY GAZETTE

TEWKSBURY'S FIRST NEWSPAPER

Tewksbury Memorial Town Hall



A new name for our 106-year-old treasure.

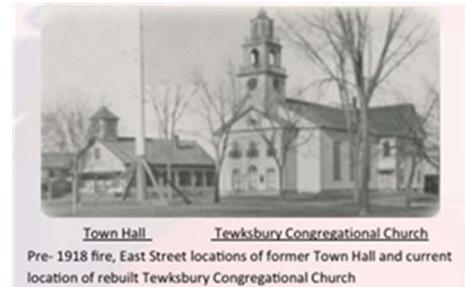
The Tewksbury Historical Society is pleased to announce that our Select Board has added 'Memorial' to the name of Tewksbury's Town Hall.

A Memorial to World War I and National Role

The story of the beginnings of our current Town Hall starts on Sunday morning, October 13, 1918, when the Tewksbury Congregational Church and the Town Hall next door, both burned down in a devastating fire.

In February of 1919, Town Meeting was held in Pickering Hall at the Foster School in Town Center. It was voted that a committee of seven would find a site for a future new town hall. It was also voted that a committee investigate records of the World War and dedicate a memorial to those of the town who have been in service during this War.

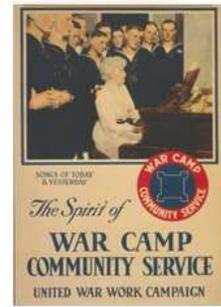
The Enoch Foster home in the Town Center was chosen as the new site, and it was voted in March 1919 to build the new town hall and appropriate \$1000 for a War Memorial therein. Design, building and construction were completed in May 1920.



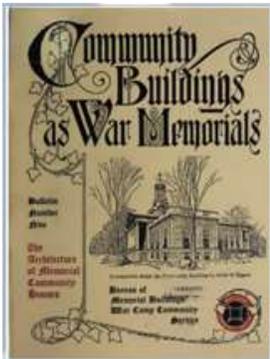
World War Memorial Tablets at Town Hall with soldiers' names

A Dedication ceremony for the new Town Hall took place on May 19, 1920. The World War Memorial Tablets, shown above, hanging in the lobby of the Town Hall, listing the town's service members were dedicated at the Welcome Home ceremony on May 31, 1920. All of this was occurring at the end and after World War I, with the War ending in November 1918.

War Camp Community Services had been formed in 1917. They were a national organization committed to boosting morale and welfare of the war troops across the nation. They would set up near training areas so that soldiers on leave from training would have social and recreational opportunities. The Services also held community dances and dinners for citizens and soldiers to promote friendships. Other activities included forming citizen and soldier sport leagues, opening swimming pools and organizing patriotic song rallies.



In 1919, the War Camp Community Services merged with the National Committee on Memorial Buildings to assist with the nation-wide movement of constructing community buildings as War Memorials. This new committee was comprised of 100 men and women from all around the Country to advise the War Camp Community Services in the production of 12 Volumes of Bulletins, entitled; *Community Buildings as War Memorials*, containing expert opinion and knowledge about the design, use and layout of these Community Buildings.



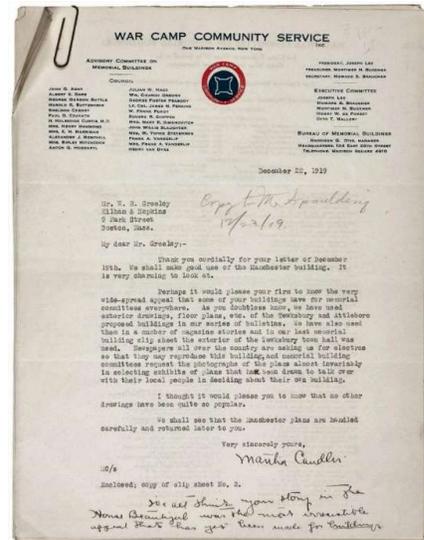
Note architect's title on the plan:
"MEMORIAL TOWN HALL"

Tewksbury's new Town Hall, designed by Architects, Kilham and Hopkins of Boston MA, was one of several Community Buildings, from around the Country, featured in these 1919 War Camp Bulletins. The building's exterior sketch and floor plans of the basement and first floor were included, as well as a narrative about the use of the rooms.

During this same time, The Architectural Record Magazine of December 1919 presented a lengthy article entitled, *War Memorials and Community Houses for Towns and Small Cities*. The design of Tewksbury's Town Hall was featured, again, with sketches of the exterior and floor plans by Kilham and Hopkins Architects. The narrative also covered several community houses from around the U.S. in a similar way. Tewksbury's Town Hall layout was described as having a lobby with central circulation to the large assembly room, holding up

to 600 people, a library and reading room to the left and town offices to the right. In the basement there was a large banquet hall and kitchen, with a lift to the first floor for serving food there as well. There was a need for indoor meeting places for social interaction, entertainment and dining in these types of buildings.

Another document in this collection is a copy of a letter to the architect of the Town Hall, W.H. Greeley of Kilham and Hopkins, Boston MA, dated December 22, 1919, from War Camp Community Services, New York. The letter expressed to Mr. Greeley that the Tewksbury Town Hall exterior drawings and floor plans in the Bulletins had received wide-spread appeal. They have been used in magazines, and newspapers from around the country are requesting copies (electros) to be used by their towns when making decisions about their new community buildings. It is noted in handwriting in the letter that it was copied to Mr. Spaulding, 12-23-19. (Benjamin Spaulding was the Chairman of the Tewksbury Town Hall Building Committee 1919.)



“One of the contributing reasons for the unreserved endorsement of the community house is the fact that latent possibilities have been largely developed by and through conditions arising from the War. ... a building was required which would serve all the purposes of a club for soldiers during their hours of recreation. ... The challenge for the architect is bringing the two qualities of the building, informality and commemorative character, together. Each Community House’s success depends on the function it performs and the unique needs of each town. The Community House will serve as a center for meeting for civic, educational and recreational activities. It may also serve as a town hall, where public hearings are held and municipal authority would be headquartered.

The idea of raising living memorials to the men who have died for a great ideal, memorials whose function it will be to keep alive that ideal and, holding it aloft, pass it on to generations to come, makes an appeal to all who feel that the causes of this war should never be forgotten. ... no other purpose would be more eminently served by a memorial community building than the encouragement of the meeting of the minds of all classes, united by the bonds of common interest, created by a highly developed community spirit.”

Cornelius, Charles O., *War Memorials and Community Houses for Towns and Small Cities*, The Architectural Record, December 1919, pages 535 – 555.

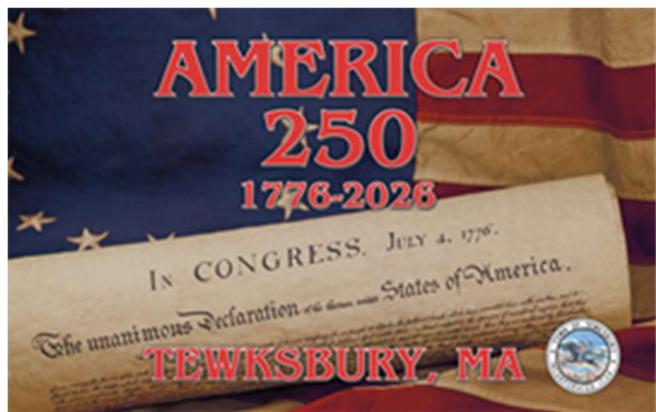
There are copies of the documents mentioned in this article and others, for public review, in two large prints at Tewksbury Town Hall, across from the World War Memorial tablets, near the lobby. It is heartening to realize Tewksbury’s role in memorializing the causes and sacrifices made during World War I and continuing to uphold those hard fought for ideals. These are represented by the day-to-day activities within the physical building that is our Town Hall.

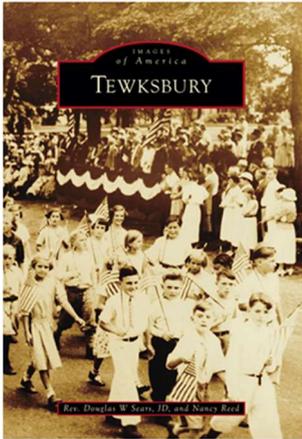
Celebrate
‘America 250, Tewksbury MA’

Banners are available to purchase through the Society.
Price per banner is 50 dollars,
cash or check to the Society.

The banners are 3 by 5 feet wide and heavy duty for
outside use with 4 grommets.

Please contact:
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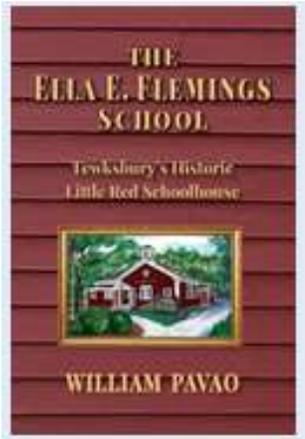
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Tewksbury Historical Society
P.O. Box 522
Tewksbury MA 01876
MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose for which the Society is organized is to act as a repository for Tewksbury history. It shall maintain any property entrusted to it and collect, preserve and interpret items of historical and traditional significance. The Society shall encourage research and involvement in these efforts by its members and the community at large. The Society shall sponsor history-based activities in the town on a regular basis. In so doing, it shall promote a better understanding of history as an important factor in the everyday affairs of the Town of Tewksbury and its residents.

Headquartered in Tewksbury, Massachusetts, the *Tewksbury Historical Society* was founded in 1993 as a 501.C.3, tax-exempt non-profit.

Tewksbury Historical Society

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

The Tewksbury Historical Society is an IRS 501 (c) (3), not-for-profit corporation, founded in 1993.

Board of Directors and Members serve as volunteers.

All Donations and Membership dues go directly to maintaining the Society’s collections, archive materials, storage costs, postage and stationery.

For information about Membership, please visit our website or contact a Board member listed on the left.

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