



Town of Duxbury

Massachusetts

Planning Board

Date: November 8, 2022

To: Massachusetts Historical Commission

From: Planning Department

Re: Revised Preliminary Study Report – November 2022

Attached is the revised Preliminary Study Report for the proposed new Alden Local Historic District in Duxbury. The proposed district is expected to be brought to the Spring Annual Town Meeting 2023 on Saturday, March 11, 2023.

On behalf of the Local Historic District Commission, we kindly request approval of the proposed district from the Massachusetts Historical Commission. We also request that the Duxbury Planning Board provide a recommendation to Town Meeting on the proposed district.

Please contact the Local Historic District Commission if you have any questions. Contact information can be found on Page 1 of the attached Report.

Thanks!

cc: Planning Board
Local Historic District Commission
Town Manager

878 Tremont Street, Duxbury, MA 02332; Telephone: 781-934-1100 x 5476; www.town.duxbury.ma.us/planning

The mission of the Town of Duxbury is to deliver excellent services to the community in the most fiscally responsible and innovative manner while endeavoring to broaden our sense of community and preserve the unique character of our town.

PRELIMINARY STUDY REPORT

Proposed New Alden Local Historic District

To include
Duxbury Free Library
Wright Building

By:
The Duxbury Local Historic District Commission

November 2022

Preliminary Study Report

Proposed Alden Historic District:

Duxbury Free Library, 71 Alden Street

Wright Building built 1909, 147 Saint George Street

Duxbury, MA 02332

By: The Duxbury Local Historic District Commission

November 2022



The Wright Building, built 1909

Duxbury Free Library, built 1927



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Summary Sheet

The contact person for this Local Historic District Submission is:

Pamela Campbell Smith, AIA
Chair of the Duxbury Local Historic Commission
243 Saint George Street
Duxbury, MA 02332
C: (339) 832-1879

Commission Members:

Pamela Campbell Smith, AIA, Chair
Georgia Taft Pye, Board of Realtors, Duxbury Rural and Historical Society Representative
Janet Ritch, Duxbury Resident from a Local Historic District
Robert C. (Terry) Vose III, Duxbury Resident from a Local Historic District
Phil Tuck, Alternate
Evelyn Walker, Alternate

Study Committee Members:

Pamela Campbell Smith
Georgia Taft Pye
Evelyn Walker
Janet Ritch

Important Dates:

The expected date of the Public Hearing for the proposed new Alden Historic District and its two new proposed properties and for the two expansion properties for two existing Districts in Duxbury is January 9, 2023.

The expected date of the Annual Town Meeting is March 11, 2023.

This Preliminary Study proposes a new District to be called the Alden Local Historic District, consisting of the Wright Building and the Duxbury Free Library.

Introduction:

In Duxbury, Massachusetts, a small coastal community with a long and significant agricultural and shipbuilding history dating back to its settlement by a number of original Mayflower families, a By-Law has been enacted by Annual Town Meeting to protect the homes and structures that make the town remarkable. The By-Law, created by the Local Historic District Commission (LHDC) after a two-year study, is used to determine which structures are believed to have historical value and subsequently place those structures under protection from demolition and building alterations that would significantly change their appearance and character.

Duxbury structures under protection of the By-Law are established as part of a number of Local Historic Districts (LHD). A number of LHD properties exist in the town today and many more property owners are considering designating their homes as well. Properties are volunteered by their owners and then added to LHD's by warrants proposed and then voted on at the Annual Town Meeting. The work of the LHDC to add properties to LHD's is crucial for encouraging the protection of historical buildings that lend the Town of Duxbury its unique charm. Some community benefits of LHD's include:

Preserving the character and aesthetic of Duxbury

Protecting the rich history and beauty of Duxbury

Fostering a sense of pride within the community

Providing educational opportunities for generations to come

Connecting Duxbury residents to the history of their town

In Duxbury to date, there are thirteen LHD's:

<u>Name of District</u>	<u>Year Established</u>	<u>Number of Properties so far</u>
Bradford District	2011	15
Bay Road District	2016	1
Bay View District	2016	1
First Parish District	2011	1
King Caesar District	2018	1
Keenes Brook District	2022	1
Millbrook District	2016	1

Powder Point District	2016	2
Surplus Street District	2017	3
Tarkiln District	2022	1
Temple Street District	2022	1
Washington Street District	2018	2
Winsor District	2011	9

Each of these properties in the above LHD's was volunteered by their owners. Subsequently they were presented as warrants and voted on at the Annual Town Meeting. Currently, there are four properties to be proposed as LHD structures for the Spring 2023 Annual Town Meeting. Two properties, the Bluefish Fire House and the Reuben Drew House, are being separately proposed for addition to existing LHD's. The Duxbury LHDC is also proposing that the Alden Local Historic District, a new LHD for Duxbury, be created and two properties, the Wright Building and the Duxbury Free Library, be made LHD properties in the new district. These two properties are owned by the Town of Duxbury and are already in MACRIS and the Wright Building is in the Old Shipbuilders District of the National Register of Historic Places as noted in this preliminary study. The Town wishes to start this new LHD and include these properties to protect their historic role through the years in this Town as well as preserve their historic architecture in the future. It is the Duxbury LHDC's hope that additional historic properties in this immediate location will be added to the Alden District in coming years.

The Proposed New Alden Local Historic District

The Study Committee recommends that the Wright Building and the Duxbury Free Library be placed in a new district to be called the Alden District. The late the Lamont R. Healy, land surveyor and consultant on deeds, was an expert on the early land divisions of 17th-century Duxbury. It is clear from his map in his article "Duxbury's Early Lands & Leaders" in Duxbury's 2020 book, *Duxbury Our Pilgrim Story*, that Mayflower Pilgrim John Alden owned the land on which these two properties are located.

Healy helpfully outlined Alden's acreage upon a map on which the currently named streets are shown. Alden land included both sides of what is now Alden Street, the south side of St. George Street, Bow Street, and a small segment of what is now Tremont Street. The Duxbury Free Library, which is on Alden Street, and the Wright Building, which is on the south side of St. George Street, clearly are on Alden's acreage.

Alden officially received his Duxbury acreage in Plymouth Colony's Second Land Division, which occurred in 1627. Each qualified recipient received land that had access to the Bay, so that transportation by water could be had. Twenty acres were provided for each man, his wife, and for each of his children. Servants were not qualified to receive their own land, but could receive land from their masters. It is known that Alden received about one hundred acres, his land connecting to the Bay via Blue Fish River. In the 2012 edition of *Duxbury Ancient & Modern* by Henry A. Fish, a note by Carolyn Ravenscroft of the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society described the Duxbury Schools campus as "being on Alden's farm." For decades the school campus was only on the south side of St. George Street and on Alden Street. (In later years the school campus expanded to the north side of St. George Street, where the Aldens' neighbors, the Philip De la Noye or Delano family lived.)

It is believed that even before the 1627 Land Division, Aldens were using Duxbury land for farming and lived there during much of the planting, growing and harvesting seasons. With the growth of the Pilgrims' families and the arrival of newcomers, more tillable land was needed than what was available to the Pilgrims in Plymouth alone. Prominent early settlers moving to Duxbury from Plymouth included John Alden, Myles Standish, and Jonathan Brewster.

A small cellar hole behind the Alden School on Alden Street, investigated by archaeologist Roland Robbins in the 1960's, is what remains of what has been

considered the Aldens' very first Duxbury home. It is likely that when John Alden first began farming in Duxbury, he built a temporary shelter for the growing and harvesting seasons. Governor Bradford recorded in his history, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, that he exhorted those who had moved away to Duxbury and Marshfield to still return to Plymouth for worship on the Sabbath. In 1632, however, he gave the Duxbury settlers permission to remain in Duxbury year-round. The cellar hole of the First Site together with the Alden House is now a National Historic Landmark. The date of the Alden House, traditionally 1653, is now thought to be closer to 1700, based on dendrochronology.

The Local Historic District Commission will continue to try to expand the Alden District in the future. In addition to the Duxbury Free Library and the Wright Building, possibilities include the aforementioned National Historic Landmark of the First Site and the Alden House, the distinctive Art Complex Museum and the Judah Alden First Period house on the Art Complex grounds, all on Alden Street, and several eighteenth and nineteenth-century houses on St. George Street. All homeowners in the geographic area were invited to place their homes in a District, but none have yet agreed to do so. Fortunately, the Town Select Board has agreed to support the creation of this new district with the inclusion of the two Town-owned historic buildings: the Wright Building and the Duxbury Free Library.

Duxbury Free Library Duxbury Free Library

Methodology:

These two buildings were selected as the initial properties designated for the new Alden Historic District because of their importance to the town for their history and their architectural significance.

- A. **The Duxbury Free Library** was originally the Duxbury High School and then Alden Upper Elementary School. The building is part of the school campus and sits on land that in early “Duxborough” was part of the original 100 acres granted to John and Priscilla Alden. The Duxbury Free Library abuts the Alden House Historic Site and Museum, a National Historic Landmark. The building is also situated in the section of Duxbury known as Millbrook and it is built in the Colonial Revival style and is of brick construction. The address is 71 -77 Alden Street. It is owned by the Town of Duxbury. The Duxbury Local Historic District Commission supports the inclusion of this important building in the Alden Historic District.

A. The Duxbury Free Library

Significance:

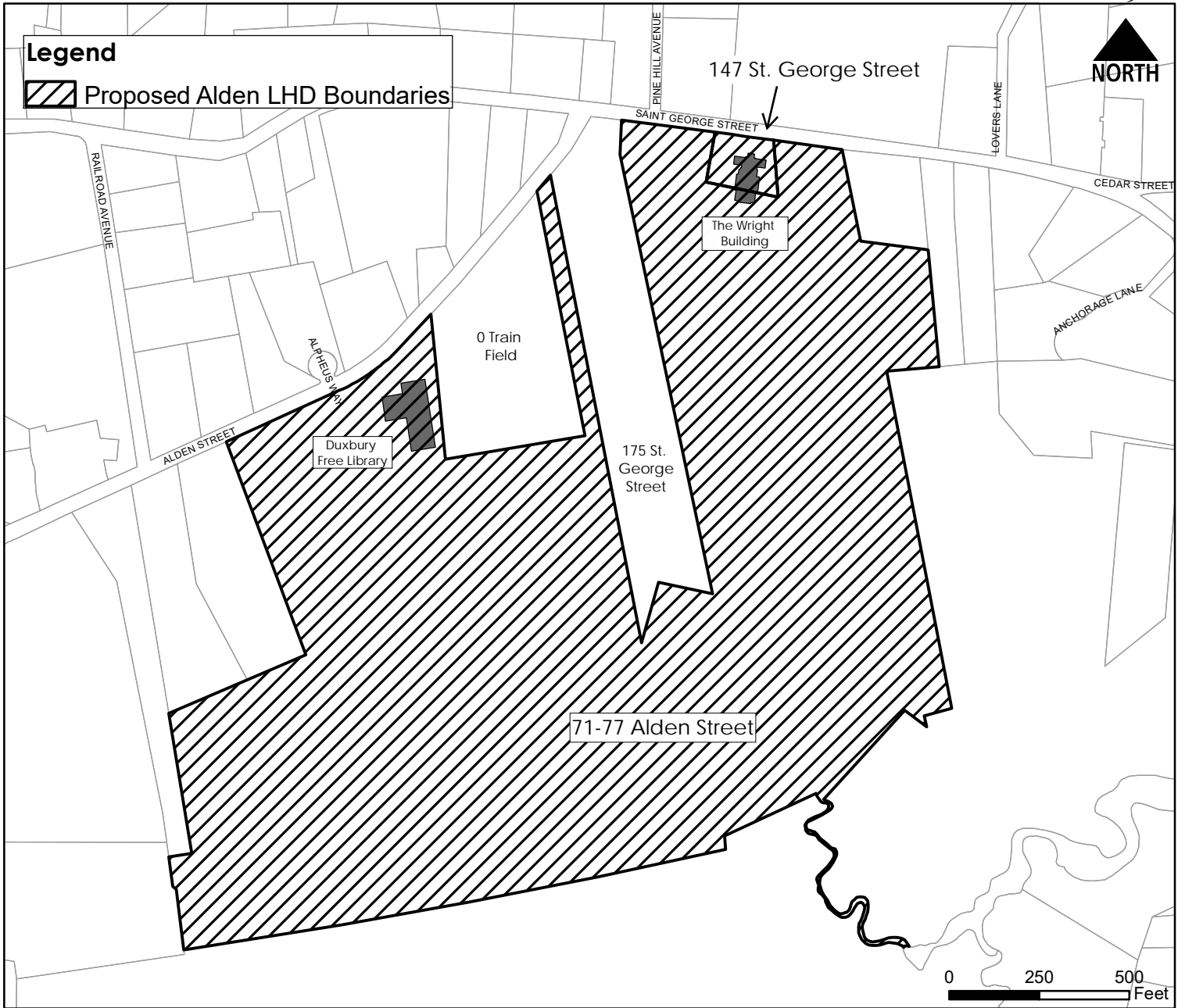
The current **Duxbury Free Library** was designed by architects Galliher, Baier and Best in the classic "Colonial Revival" style. It was built in 1927. The construction materials are red brick and wood. It was designed to be the first Duxbury High School and it opened for classes in 1929. There was an addition added to the original building in 1952 to provide additional class room space. Over time, a newer high school was built on the same campus that was once all part of John and Priscilla Alden's 100 acre grant for their farm and homestead. This building later was renovated to become part of the adjacent elementary school and was called Alden Upper Elementary School.

Later, the building underwent another extensive renovation to become the Duxbury Free Library, which is part of the Old Colony Library Network (OCLN). The town had grown and there was need for a larger public library. In November 1997, the library started a fund raising drive to triple its space and site the larger library space in the handsome old school building in the same campus setting. The building was completely rebuilt into an open, airy, new facility. The library's new location, in a commanding position on a hill overlooking most of the other school buildings, emphasizes the library's importance and role in helping to fulfill so many of the Town's needs. This classic building is currently a vibrant cultural and meeting center for the Town of Duxbury residents as well as a well-equipped library for research and educational needs. The Library has served the public, adapting to changing needs and endeavoring to offer the best services, for over 120 years. The Library building is rectangular in shape with an ell on the rear. It is three stories in height. It has a gabled entrance with a cornice return. It also has the original 12/12 double hung windows, each with a multi-paned side light. The balustrade over the center entrance front door. There are also four gabled roof dormers, four end-chimneys and an elaborate cupola with window bents. With its history and many important town uses, as well as its location, architecture and design, the Duxbury LHDC believes it is a significant addition to the Alden Historic District. This property is also included in the MACRIS Resource System under Dux.65.

Justification of the Boundaries:

The Duxbury LHDC is proposing a new LHD named in recognition of its location as part of the original Alden Homestead Grant. There are two properties volunteered by the Town of Duxbury for inclusion. There are no properties that are excluded from this new LHD. The Duxbury LHDC will be working to get more property owners to volunteer their properties for inclusion in this LHD.

The Duxbury Free Library at 71-77 Alden Street sits on a five-acre town-owned parcel which is part of the public school campus. This location is identified as Town Parcel 106-510-007. The area includes other school and public buildings, including the Performing Arts Center, the Walker Pool and the Wright Building. The Library's approximate frontage is 180 feet facing school playing fields and it is approximately sixty-five feet from Alden Street. The land of the Alden House Historic Site and Museum is located approximately 100 feet to the West.



**PROPOSED NEW ALDEN
 LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT -
 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 2023**

Proposed District	Address	Parcel ID	Owner
Alden LHD	Duxbury Free Library - 71 Alden Street	106-508-007	Tow n of Duxbury
Alden LHD	The Wright Building - 147 St. George Street	106-506-010	Tow n of Duxbury

Property Index

Street Address	Parcel ID	Historic Name	Date of Construction	Architectural Style	MHC ID
71 Alden Street - Duxbury Free Library	106-508-007	Duxbury High School	1927	Colonial Revival	DUX.65

Selective Bibliography

Bradford, William. *Bradford's History "Of Plymouth Plantation."* Boston: Wright & Potter, 1898.

Demos, John. *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony.* London: Oxford University Press, 1970.

Duxbury Our Pilgrim Story : A 2020 Perspective. Duxbury, Mass.: Duxbury 2020 Inc., 2021.

Fish, Henry A. *Duxbury Ancient & Modern.* Rev. ed. Duxbury, Mass.: Duxbury Rural & Historical Society, 2012.

Long, E. Waldo. *The Story of Duxbury 1637-1937.* Duxbury, Mass.: Duxbury Tercentenary Committee, 1937.

Robbins, Roland Wells. *Pilgrim John Alden's Progress: Archaeological Excavations in Duxbury.* Plymouth, Mass.: Pilgrim Society, 1969.

Wentworth, Dorothy. *Settlement and Growth of Duxbury 1628-1870.* Duxbury, Mass.: Duxbury Rural & Historical Society, 1973.

Duxbury Free Library



Duxbury Free Library built 1927, east elevation, above
north elevation, below



Duxbury Free Library



west elevation, above

west elevation and south elevation, below

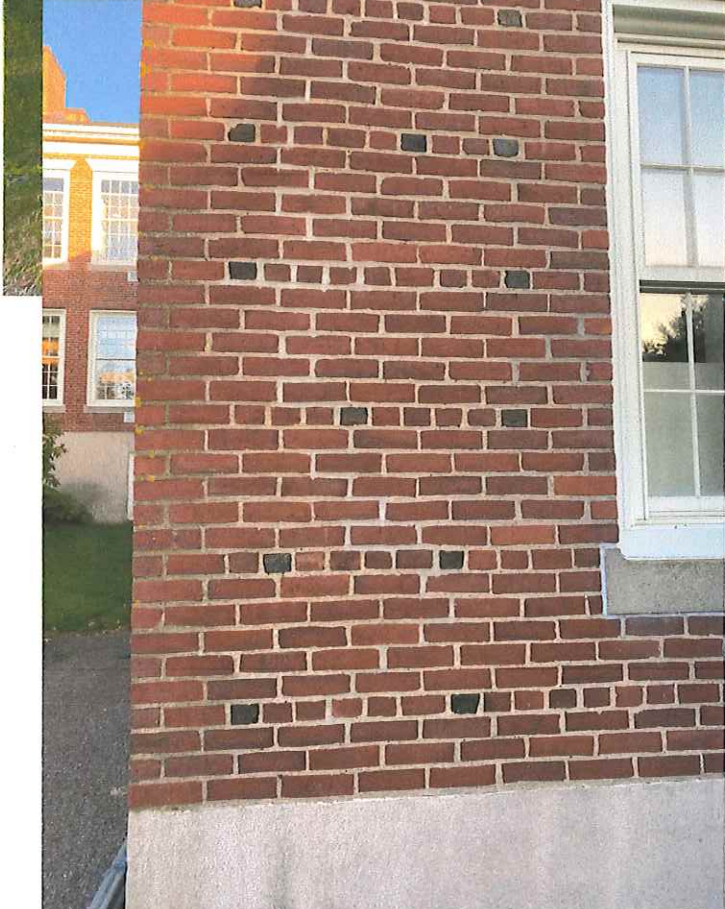
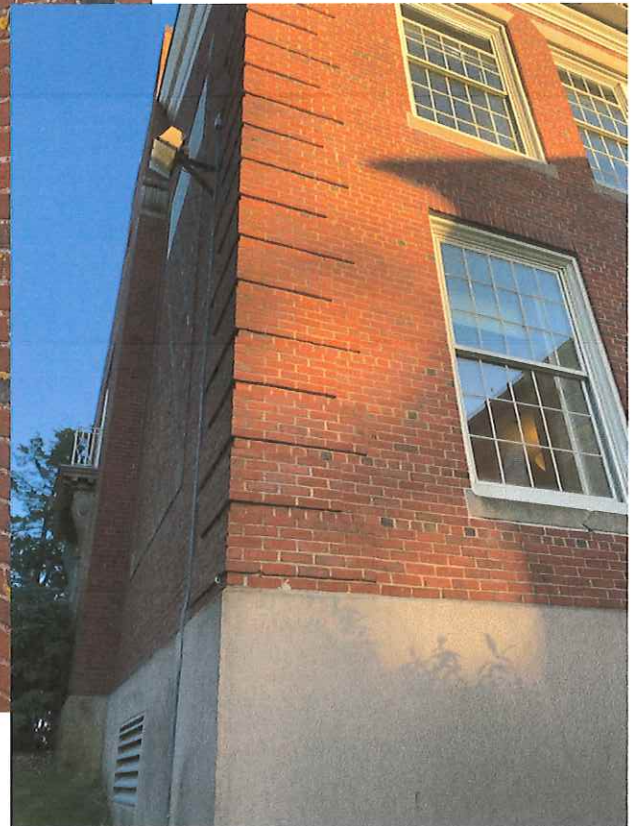


Duxbury Free Library



Left: detail of brick water table

Below: detail of brick Quoin corner



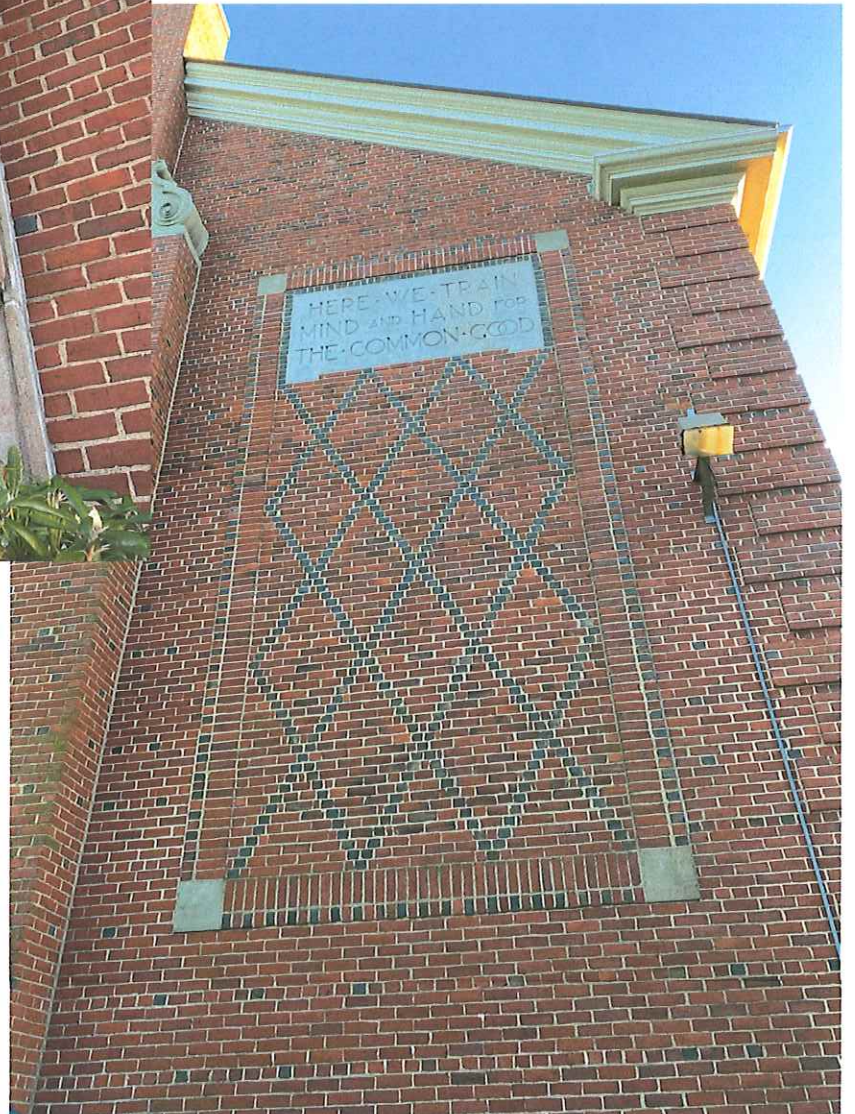
Left: detail of Common Bond brick pattern and base is limestone water table

Duxbury Free Library



Left: Limestone balcony brackets

Below: Brick embellishments pattern



The Wright Building The Duxbury Free Library

Methodology:

These two buildings were selected as the initial properties designated for the new Alden Historic District because of their importance to the town for their history and their architectural significance.

- B. The Wright Building** is located at 147 Saint George Street and is also part of the school campus and sited on the original Alden Homestead grant. It was Duxbury's original town Library. Now it serves are the Archives of the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society and a newer addition off the rear of the building is the Duxbury Student Union. As an historic building, it is in the National Register (07/11/2007) and is also a town landmark. As such, The Duxbury Local Historic Commission has voted to seek to have it place in the Alden Historic District.

Significance:**B.The Wright Building**

The Wright Building has been a focal point for the Duxbury community since it was built in 1909. As the town library, it served residents and local students as a source of learning, research and entertainment and was a gathering place for many community groups. Even after the library was moved from this building to the larger former high school building which had more meeting space and was updated for today's technological needs, the Wright building continues to serve the town as an important archive of the town's history and as the depository of the records and documents of the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society. The newer wing, added in 1968, is now the Student Union, an important part of the public school campus.

The building itself is a significant example of Classical Revival architecture. The brick building, with its impressive copper dome with quoins and attractive cast concrete finishes, was placed in the National Register of Historic Places as an individual property in 2007. It is also included in the MACRIS database file, Inventory Dux.62. It was designed by architect Joseph Everett Chandler of Plymouth and is one and a half story in height and seven bays wide and two bays deep. The west-facing façade faces Saint George Street. The central entry is protected by a pedimented portico and the door is topped with a star-motif transom. Above the transom is an entablature decorated with medallions and dentils supported by scrolls. The copper plated dome is encircled by a balustrade with a palmetto pattern. There are symmetrical flanking wings punctuated by 1/1 tall, thin windows which are topped with decorative transoms echoing the star motif of the central entry. To the rear of the Wright building is the flat-roofed 1968 addition which was designed by John Chesley of the architectural firm Morehouse and Chesley. This addition has single pane windows, occasionally paired. The brick façade is segmented by horizontal cantilevered concrete bands. A wheelchair accessible ramp was constructed on the south elevation.

The history of the Wright building begins before it was built. Early attempts to establish a library in Duxbury began in 1889 with a monetary gift from the late Henry Winsor which provided \$5,000 for "the foundation and support of a free library for the use of the inhabitants of the town of Duxbury." The money was given in a deed of trust to six men, with a seventh to be elected. Those men also served as Trustees of Duxbury's Partridge Academy.

Seven months after the receipt of the Winsor gift, George and Georgiana Wright signed a deed of trust and donation giving the Trustees “a parcel of land and the dwelling house thereon” and the library now had a site and building. Appended to the deed, which was executed in October 1889, was a paragraph stating that the library was intended as a memorial to their son, George Buckham Wright, who had died in an accident at age 21. The Wright family, who were to become important in the development of the library, had moved to Duxbury in 1868 and purchased the mansion formerly owned by Gershom Bradford Weston, son of the shipbuilding magnate, Ezra Weston, Jr. The estate, known as Pine Hill, had about 20 acres of land on the grounds that are now occupied by the high school sports fields and field house. The Wrights were to become benefactors to the town in many ways. The Wright men were influential and very active in town affairs.

The land deeded by the Wrights to the Winsor Trustees was three-eighths of an acre which is the present site of the building named in honor of George Wright, Jr. It is located across the street from where the Wright estate and mansion were sited. The building the Wrights gave and refurbished as the Free Library had been moved there earlier from across the street. The deed for that gift instructed the Trustees to use the land and the house to establish the library. It also stated that the Wrights wished that the premises also be used for social gatherings and meetings “tending to the education and elevation of our townspeople.” The Wright bequest also included a large collection of pictures, books, bookcases and furniture for two reading rooms. Several Wright family members also contributed books and periodicals. Georgiana Wright, who was widowed by this time, financed the new library building in 1909. When she died in 1917, the library received a bequest of several thousand rare books from her estate.

The Wright Building has served the Town of Duxbury well in many capacities through the many years since its construction in 1909. The Duxbury LHDC is in favor of placing it in the new Alden Historic District.

Justification of the Boundaries:


The Duxbury LHDC is proposing a new LHD named in recognition of its location as part of the original Alden Homestead Grant. There are two properties volunteered by the Town of Duxbury for inclusion. There are no properties that are excluded from this new LHD. The Duxbury LHDC will be working to get more property owners to volunteer their properties for inclusion in this LHD.

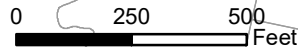
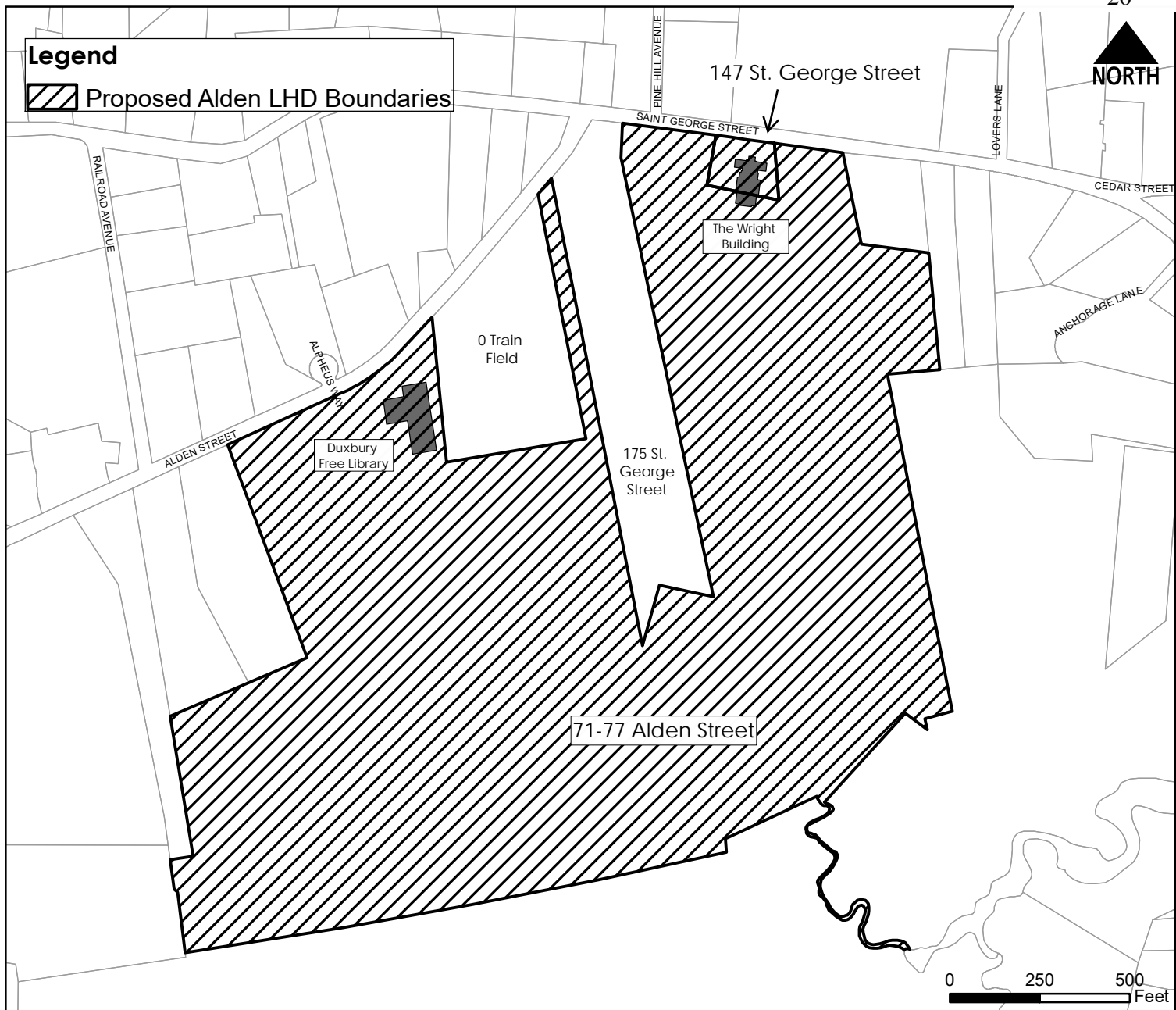
The Wright Building is located at 147 Saint George Street, Duxbury, Massachusetts. It is sited on Town Parcel 180.0-0506-0010.0 This is the location of the original home that George and Georgiana Wright gave to the town to serve as its first public library. That building was replaced by the current Classical Revival structure that was constructed in 1909 to provide a larger library for the growing town.

The building faces on Saint George Street and abuts the town's school campus. It is in the heart of the Millbrook neighborhood of Duxbury. It is shown on the Duxbury Assessor's Map herewith.

The Wright Building is proposed to become part of the Alden Historic District as it is located in the very near vicinity of the John and Priscilla Alden Homestead, which is the home they lived in that was built in 1660 and is currently the headquarters of the Alden Kindred of America. It is also close to the cellar hole which marks and is all that is left of the original home the Aldens lived in before building and moving to the 1660 house.



Legend
 Proposed Alden LHD Boundaries



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 LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT -
 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 2023**

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Alden LHD	The Wright Building - 147 St. George Street	106-506-010	Tow n of Duxbury

Property Index

Street Address	Parcel ID	Historic Name	Date of Construction	Architectural Style	MHC ID
147 St. George Street - The Wright Building	106-506-010	Wright Memorial Library	1909	Classical Revival	DUX.62

Selective Bibliography

Bradford, William. *Bradford's History "Of Plymouth Plantation."* Boston: Wright & Potter, 1898.

Demos, John. *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony.* London: Oxford University Press, 1970.

Duxbury Our Pilgrim Story : A 2020 Perspective. Duxbury, Mass.: Duxbury 2020 Inc., 2021.

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Robbins, Roland Wells. *Pilgrim John Alden's Progress: Archaeological Excavations in Duxbury.* Plymouth, Mass.: Pilgrim Society, 1969.

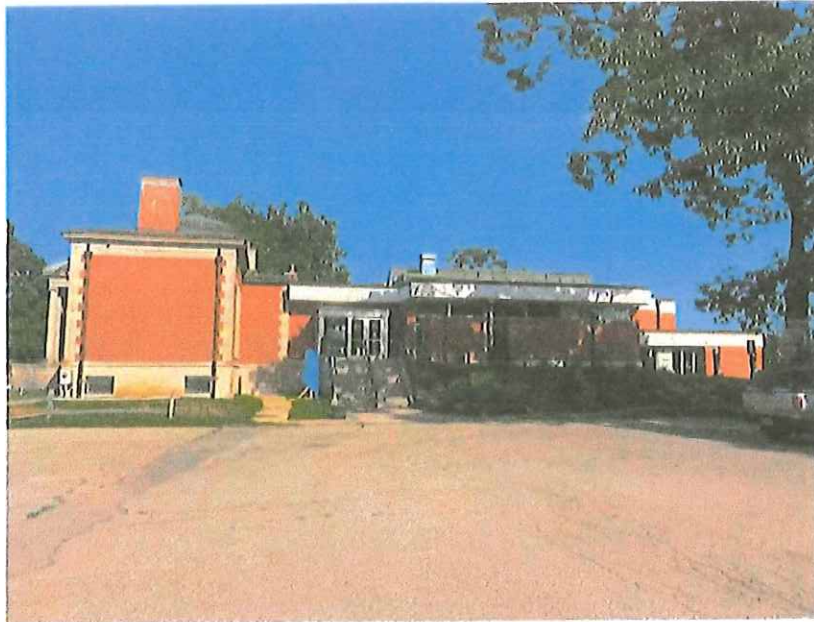
Wentworth, Dorothy. *Settlement and Growth of Duxbury 1628-1870.* Duxbury, Mass.: Duxbury Rural & Historical Society, 1973.

CURRENT PHOTOS

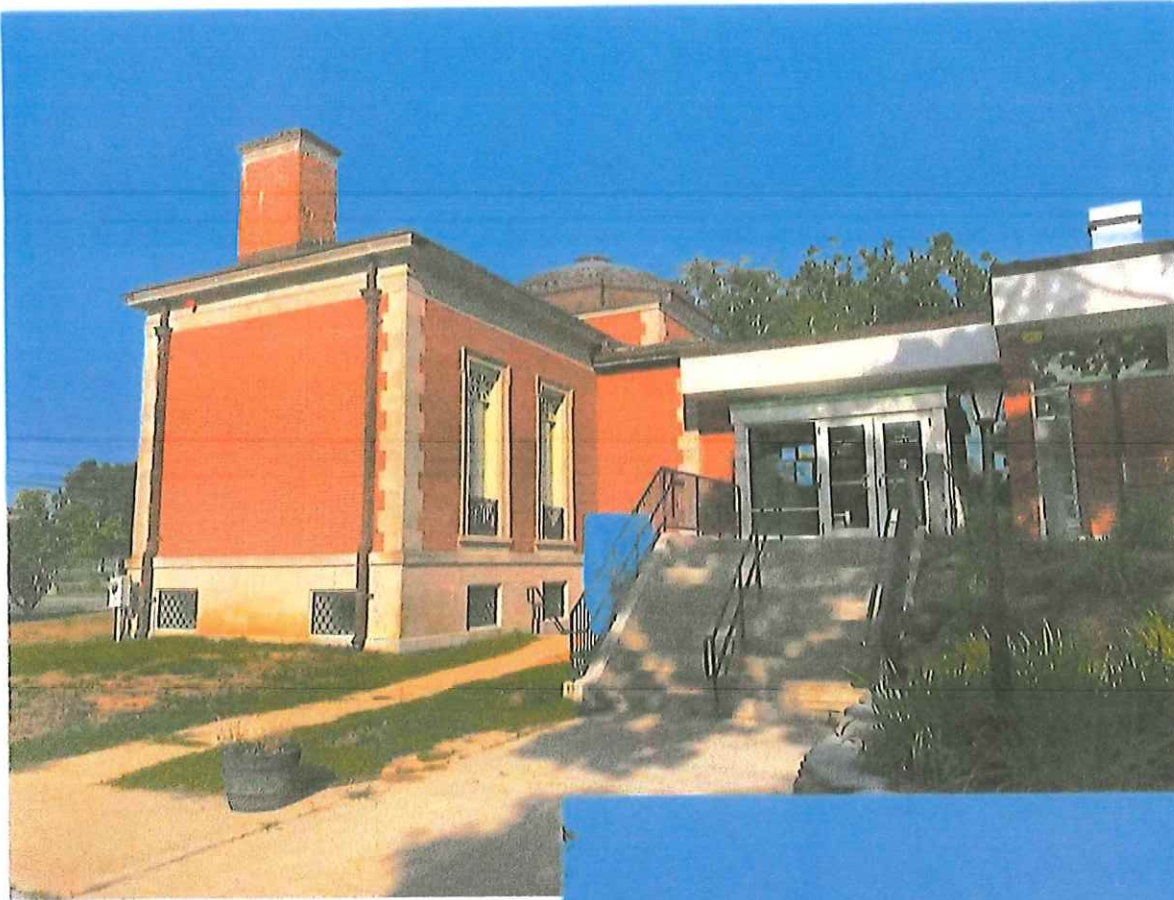
The Wright Building



North



West



West



South

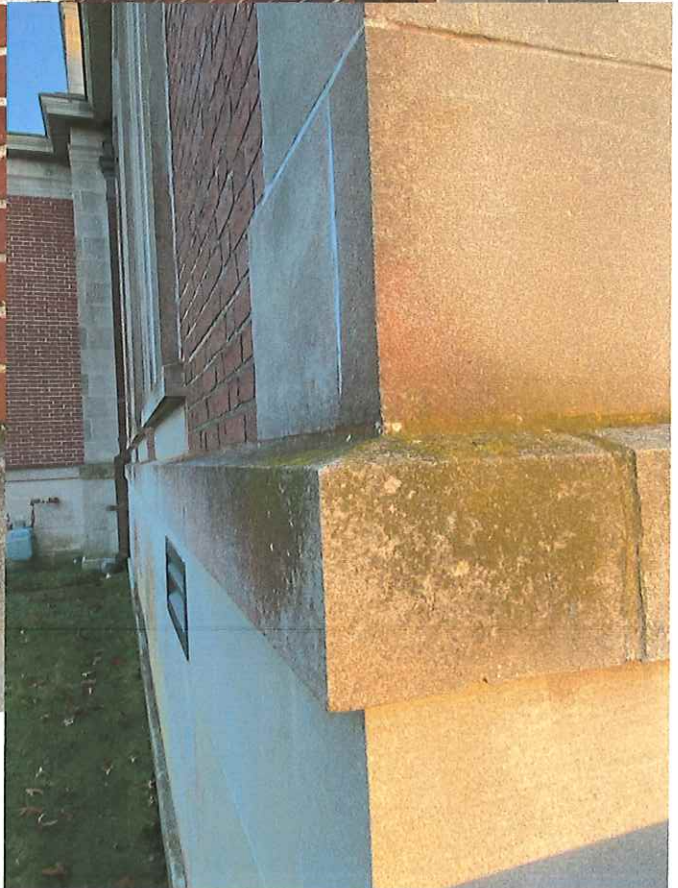
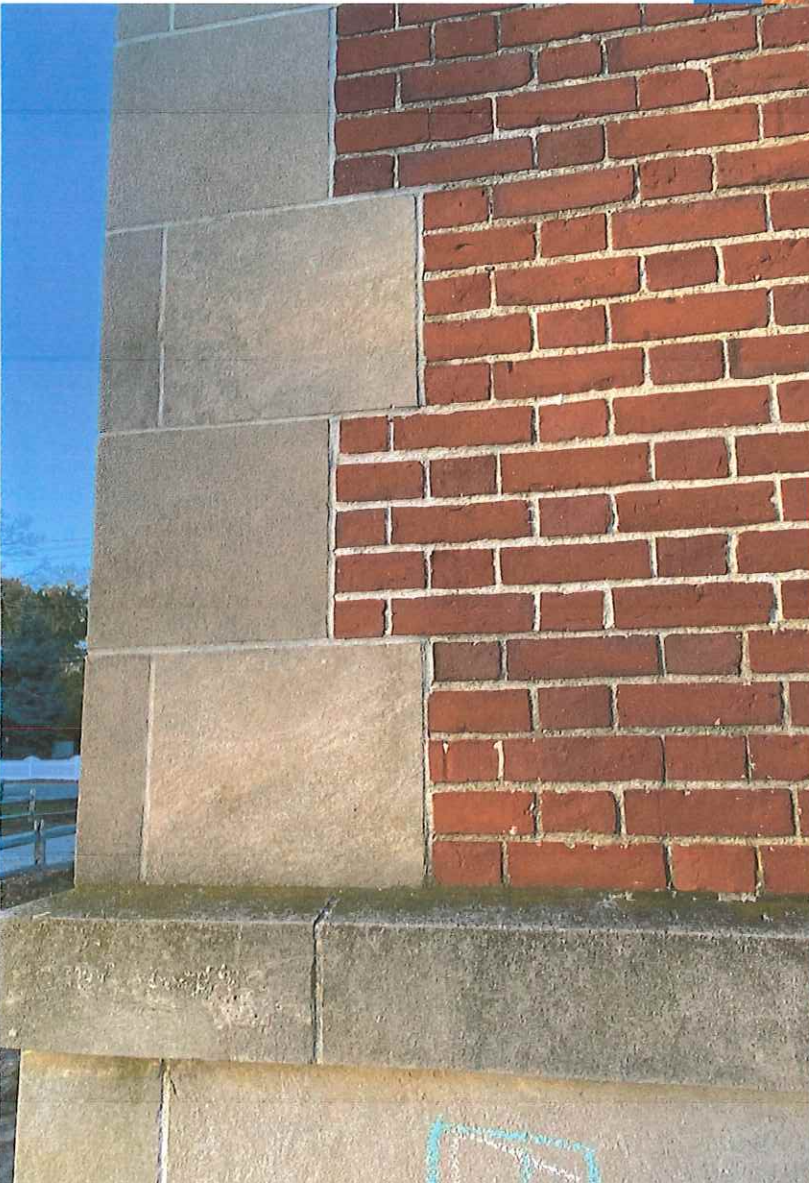
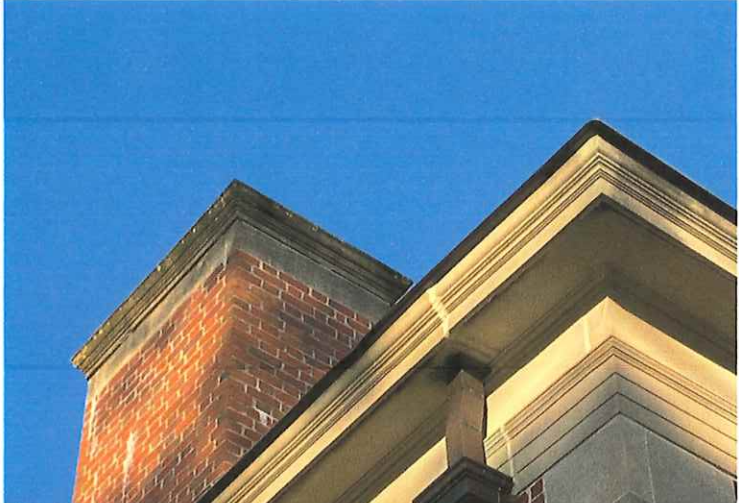


East

Wright Building

Right: Chimney detail with molding craved in limestone used at soffit and entablature

Below: Limestone Quoin and Flemish Bond brick pattern



Right: Limestone water table and base

Wright Building



Egyptian Revival Window opening
and wrought iron embellishment



Options and Recommendations for the By Law:

In adding this property to the existing Winsor Historic District, there is not a need for options or recommended changes to the Bylaw.

Ordinance and recommendations for the Ordinance or By Law:

There is no need for any recommendations to the ByLaw with adding this property to the Winsor Historic District.