

Center of Town

Princeton Center Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on February 26, 1999 by the National Park Service and included Princeton Common. On March 10, 2006 the boundaries were increased to include portions of Boylston Ave, Gregory Hill Road, Hubbardston Road, Mountain Road, Prospect Street, and Worcester Road.

Center of Town

(Princeton House File-card 94)

North side of Common

Built: 1882 - 1883

Goodnow Memorial Library in memory of his family

(Princeton House File-card 95)

North side of Common

Built: 1885

Bagg Hall - Town Hall

Named for two daughters of Dr. Bagg, wives of Edward A. Goodnow, who gave \$3000. Town gave \$9000. Citizens raised the balance.

First district meeting held 1759 in Abijah Moore's Tavern. Town meetings held in First Meeting House from 1764 - 1796. Jonas Beaman bought old building after new Meeting House was erected. Used as Town House until Boylston Hall was built in 1842 on site corner of Wachusett and Prospect Streets. Boylston Hall burned 1883. Town Meetings then held in Beaman Hall (part of Wachusett house) until Bagg Hall was finished in 1885.

Princeton House File transcribed by Alex Fiandaca, Princeton Historical Commission 2007

Map transcriptions: Joyce Anderson, Princeton Historical Commission 2007

The following information, compiled by Joyce Anderson, was taken from the Princeton Center Historic District National Register nomination.



2 Town Hall Drive

In 1884 Edward A Goodnow (1810-1906), donated the Goodnow Memorial Building, in memory of two of his four wives and only son. This Richardsonian Romanesque building was designed by Stephen Earle, of Worcester, in 1882, and construction was completed in 1884. An outstanding architectural feature is the clock tower with words inscribed, Goodnow Memorial Building, A.D.1883. Above the inscription is a

Howard tower clock, which strikes the hours, on a one thousand pound Meneely bell. The bell is inscribed “Goodnow Memorial Building - Knowledge is Power”. Mr. Goodnow gave money in the sum of \$25,000-\$30,000 to equip the building, with an additional \$5,000 to go toward the purchase of books and equipment. A large fireproof vault for the preservation of town records was built in the reading room. Terms of the gift stipulated that the building would serve jointly as library and public school until the library required additional space. Including the library and reading room, the building also contained two sizable school rooms with separate entrances for boys and girls in grades 1-12. The school was closed in 1906, and the building was used exclusively for the library. The building served as a library from the time of its completion, as well as a school for twenty-five years or more.



6 Town Hall Drive

When Boylston Hall burned in 1883, local benefactor Edward A. Goodnow offered a matching grant to the town to construct a new town hall on Princeton Common. It was located next to the Goodnow Memorial Building and northwest of the Congregational Church. Architect Stephen C. Earle, whose design for the new Goodnow Memorial Building, which had recently been constructed, was commissioned to design the new town hall for Princeton. Goodnow also financed the relocation of the Congregational Church to its present site at a cost of \$5,000. The move was accomplished in 1884, and the new town hall hosted its first town meeting in December of 1885. Goodnow requested that the building be named Bagg Hall in honor of his deceased first and second wives, sisters whose maiden name was Bagg.

Town meetings, voting, and elementary school graduations were held in Bagg Hall from March of 1886 until the 1970's. It currently serves as offices for town employees.



War Memorial Bench

This rustic stone bench, built in 1950, has a backrest of a low curved shape and a block rectangular arm rest on either side of the seat. It is built of naturally rounded granite stones set in concrete. On the face of each armrest is a bronze plaque trimmed with laurel wreaths and a bow set in low relief. A large plaque with a curved top is set in the center of the backrest, and is inscribed with the following words: “IN MEMORY OF ALL THE MEN AND WOMEN OF PRINCETON WHO HAVE SERVED IN THE ARMED FORCES IN TIME OF WAR”.



Princeton Electric Light Building

Located on town property near Hubbardston Road is the Shingle Style Princeton Electric Light Building. In 1911 the citizens of Princeton voted to appropriate \$450.00 to pay for kerosene street lights to be placed in certain areas of the town. At the same meeting the voters authorized a committee to investigate the construction of a municipal lighting plant to generate electricity for the town. After a full investigation, the committee recommended that the town proceed with a community-owned light plant. On September 14, 1912, by an overwhelming majority vote of 88-12, the voters approved the establishment of Princeton's own municipal electric utility. A Board of Commissioners was elected and authorized to borrow \$15,000 to construct Princeton's first municipal power plant. In 1914, the first full year of operation, Princeton Light Department had 56 customers, gross revenues of \$895.00, and 130 streetlights. This building functioned as the Princeton Light Dept. until approximately the 1950s.

George Smith Lewis and Ellen Sears Lewis Flagpole

A flagpole stands between the library and the town hall on the north side of Town Hall Drive. The flagpole was donated by Dr. Elisha Sears Lewis (18 Mountain Road) in 1917, in honor of his parents, George Smith Lewis and Ellen Sears Lewis. Their names are inscribed on its base.



Bandstand

The Common gradually rises up to the north toward Bagg Hall. Located on this rise is a Colonial-Revival style bandstand designed by architect Keith Chenot in 1992. Band concerts are held here in the summer, as well as the occasional wedding.

Princeton Common

The Town Common is a triangular public park bounded by Mountain Road on the east, Hubbardston Road on the west, and Town Hall Drive on the north. It is part of an 11-acre town-owned parcel in Princeton Center that includes the Goodnow Memorial Building (the public library) and Bagg Hall (the town hall). The basic size and shape of the Common has remained essentially unchanged since the 1830s, and still retains its mid-19th century appearance as a grassy open space. Town Hall Drive has marked the northern edge of the Common since the 1970s.

History of the Common

Historic images indicate that the Common has been maintained as open space since at least the late 1830's. As early as the late 18th century, a small commercial node had formed at the intersection of the five roads converging at what is now the southern end of the Common. Town records do not indicate specifically when the land at this intersection was set aside for that purpose, but it appears to be related to a donation by Ward Nicholas Boylston in 1818 of lands intended to be used for construction of a new

town house and meetinghouse. This location was far more convenient to worshippers than the site of the previous meetinghouse, half a mile uphill on Mountain Road. In 1838 the third Congregational Church was erected at the north end of the Common. To accommodate the new church, the Rev. Samuel Clarke's house (10 Mountain Road) was relocated across the street. The church itself was later moved, in 1884, to open up views to the new Goodnow Memorial Building (built 1882) and to accommodate construction of the present town hall, Bagg Hall in 1884.

In 2001 the Massachusetts Historical Commission conducted an archeological dig on the Common to determine the former locations of the Clarke House and the Congregational Church. These two foundations were located, and are visible as indentations in the ground south of the road that passes in front of the library and town hall.

Goodnow Park

Goodnow Park, located behind the Town Hall Annex, is named for Edward Augustus Goodnow, a third generation resident of Princeton. Mr. Goodnow, a successful businessman, donated this 4.5 acre town-owned public park on the west side of Mountain Road, north of the 11-acre town hall complex. The gift was accepted by the town on Dec. 24, 1892 along with \$1,000 for future repairs. Both the town hall and the library are buffered by parks: Goodnow Park on the north and Princeton Common on the south.