

55 Woodsville Opera Building

65 Central Street, Haverhill, New Hampshire



The Woodsville Opera Building is often referred to as the “Woodsville Opera Block,” due in part to its size and the number of different organizations and businesses located within it over the years. In its glory days, the Opera Building was home to plays, vaudeville acts, small operas and a one-ring circus. A stage access door in the hall enabled the circus company to hoist an elephant 20 feet to stage level during circus performances. The Opera

Block served as the center of community activities including high school graduations, proms and other similar events throughout the many years of use.

Bound by Central Street on the north and Court Street on the east, the Opera Block stands three stories tall with street level storefronts, upper level offices and a commanding opera wing. Next to its size, the most eye catching aspect of the Woodsville Opera Block is its large, white clock tower.

Construction of the Woodsville Opera Block began in 1890, and was built to house the offices of the newly founded Woodsville Guaranty Savings Bank in 1889. The original cost of the building was \$25,000. A local entrepreneur and drug manufacturer, Ezra B. Mann, funded the building’s construction and it was completed under the auspices of the Woodsville Opera Building Association. In addition to funding the construction, the timbers used to build the structure were harvested from Mann’s land in Benton, New Hampshire and transported by an ox team to the construction site. Two architects from Haverhill, New Hampshire, C.W. and C.P. Damon, designed the building in dual Romanesque Revival and Panel Brick architectural styles.

Upon completion, the original tenants on the first floor of the Woodsville Opera Block were the Woodsville Guaranty Savings Bank, the Woodsville Loan and Banking Co., the drugstore E.B. Mann & Co., the U.S. Post Office, and Howe & Gordon, a general merchandise store. On the second floor were offices for Attorneys C.H. Hosford and Fred S. Wright, as well as the dental offices of Drs. F.G. Weeks and P.E. Speid. Finally, the third floor was home to the Railroad Club, an organization made up of railroad employees.

The Woodsville Opera Block has been modified since its 1890 construction. In 1918, an addition was added to the building to accommodate the expansion of the Woodsville Guaranty Savings Bank. The clock tower was installed in 1927, following four years of fundraising by the Woodsville Women’s Club and presented to the Precinct of Woodsville. The event was commemorated with a plaque found on the northeast corner of the building. After almost 70 years of use, the clock stopped working. In 1990, the original parts were removed, and the clock was electrified. The original works of the clock, however, were eventually repaired and are now owned by the Haverhill Historical

Society. During the years of 1979 and 1980, the building was sold and remodeled to be used as apartments for the elderly and disabled. The Woodsville Opera Building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.

Sources:

National Register of Historic Places. Woodsville Opera Building. Town of Haverhill. Grafton County. New Hampshire. Reference # 80000288. <http://pdfhost.focus.nps.gov/docs/NRHP/Text/80000288.pdf>

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