

# Soldiers Memorial Hall (Opera House, Town Hall, and in 1895, City Hall) at 316 Central St.

The hall was built in 1892, opened in 1893, to honor those who served for the Union cause in the Civil War. It was designed by William Butterfield in a Richardsonian Romanesque style and functioned as the town hall for annual meetings until the town became a city in 1895. Then the mayor and city council held monthly meetings to conduct the city's business. The opera house could originally seat over 800 for plays, musical performances, and various turn of the century entertainments. On the second floor, was the Grand Army of the Republic (Union Veterans) meeting hall, which is still almost exactly like it was created in 1893. After the G.A.R. disbanded, the space was utilized by the American Legion, until the post's merger with the Tilton American Legion in the mid 1980's. For many years the Opera House was closed up and used only for Council Meetings, the local courts and Ward 2 voting. In 1999 the Opera House Restoration Committee formed and opened up the stage and seating for theater performances.

**Franklin Journal.**  
 FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1893. FIRST WEEK.

**Franklin Town Hall. Erected in 1893.**

A Town Hall in Franklin is at last a reality, and stands before us so nearly completed that we have a correct idea of what it is. There have been some changes from the original plan submitted, and the committee have shown excellent judgment in modifying the first plan. The *JOURNAL* has great pleasure in presenting to its readers a fine sketch prepared expressly for us which gives an absolutely correct idea of the structure, both exterior and interior.

The outside dimensions of the building are 123 1/2 feet long by 37 3/4 feet wide, and the area of the large hall shows about 3360 square feet. Work is being pushed on the interior rapidly but it is not likely that it will be completed until late in the summer.

The hall will seat about 1000 people.

The floor of the balcony is so inclined that an unobstructed view may be had of the stage from the farthest seat in the gallery as from the front seat on the floor. The balcony seats are arranged in rows of four deep on the sides and six and seven deep in the rear, and the whole will easily seat 340 persons, all in individual chairs. The stage, of which a good view is given, and about which there has been a good deal of criticism, is twenty-one and a half feet deep and has an opening of twenty-six feet for the curtain, making it nearly twice as large as any other stage in town.

The orchestra pit is reached by steps from under the stage and is well arranged to prevent the musicians from being more prominently in view of the audience than the occupants of the stage. The stage is probably large enough to answer all ordinary requirements and is in good proportion with the rest of the building.

The plan of the basement shows the location of the cells for prisoners, etc. and readily explains itself.

The Soldiers Memorial Hall is a large square room, well lighted and high at the right of the entrance can be used as a police court and the other front room on the left of the entrance is intended for the selectmen.

The firm of Kimball, Danforth & Forrest of Concord are the builders and the *JOURNAL* is under obligations to them for plans and information in regard to the same. Mr. D. M. Page of Tilton has had charge of the wood work.

The committee on the part of the town, who have made the building such an appropriate recognition of the needs of the town and Grand Army and who have spent much valuable time with the plan, are Hon. A. W. Sillaway, Hon. F. N. Parsons, E. H. Sill, C. C. Paige, Hon. E. B. S.

