

Recommendations to the Board of Selectmen 2018 SEP 19 A 11: 25
Regarding the Decommissioned Pinney School

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TOWN CLERK

September 2018

Report 2 of the Stafford Historic Advisory Commission

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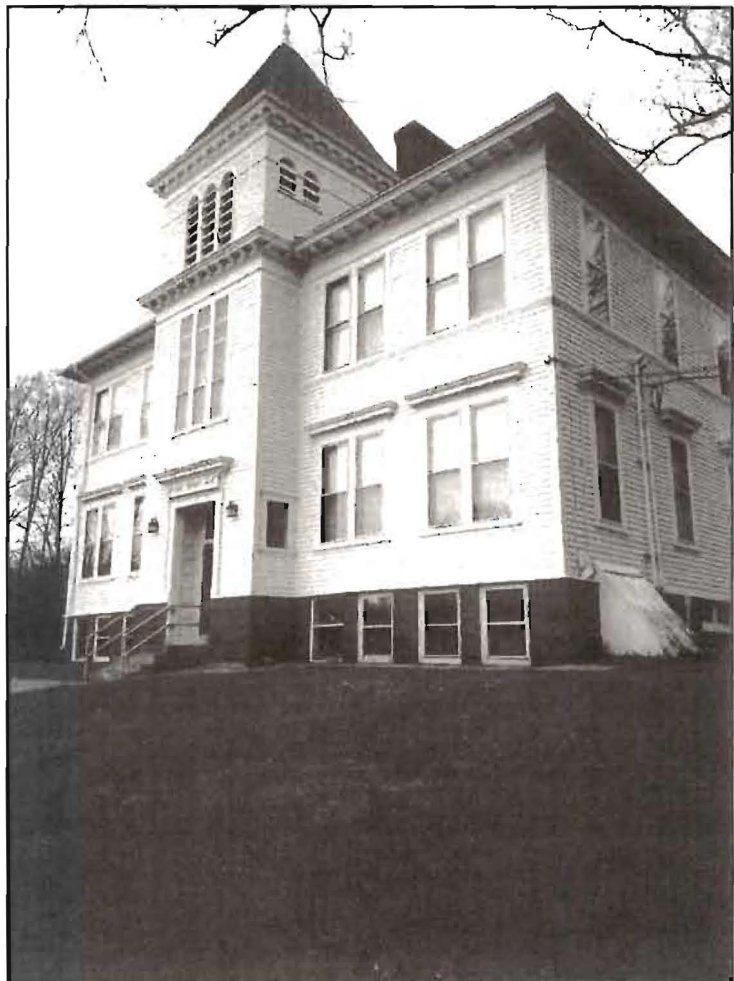
A brief history of the Pinney School

In 1895, textile manufacturer Edwin C. Pinney (1838–1917) and his wife Esther deeded about 2 acres to the Town of Stafford upon completion of the four-room schoolhouse that had been built to consolidate the two district schools in Stafford Hollow and Hydeville.

*The architectural firm of Curtis and Johnson of Hartford was chosen to design the new school. This group had designed commercial and industrial buildings, residences, schools and churches throughout Connecticut. **William D. Johnson, a principal in the firm, was born in Stafford and had attended the public school in Hydeville.***

Many generations of students attended classes here until June 1982.

The school's interior was extensively renovated to accommodate the Board of Education offices in 1986. These offices were moved to a building within the Orcuttville Road school and library complex in 2013, leaving the Pinney School unoccupied since then. The building's interior and exterior are in relatively good condition at this time. ♦



Photos of the Pinney School by Roger Ingraham

Introduction

Appointed in June 2017, the Stafford Historic Advisory Commission (SHAC) has met once a month during the past year to study the circumstances surrounding the decommissioned Witt and Pinney schools in an effort to assist the Board of Selectmen in finding a resolution to the financial drain that these Town-owned, decommissioned buildings represent.

Selectmen have stated their wish to get the buildings on the tax rolls, whereas certain citizens have expressed interest in finding a way to gainfully use these two Town-owned buildings for civic purposes. SHAC has taken into consideration both viewpoints.

During the past year, representatives of the State Historic Preservation Office and the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation have accompanied SHAC members and Town Selectmen on tours of both schools. These historic preservation experts view both structures as having potential for reuse that would maintain the buildings' historic integrity. However, each structure requires different levels of investment.

Assessing the compatibility of any proposed uses with the prevailing character of each building's neighborhood has been an ongoing concern for the Commission.

Report 2 focuses on SHAC's deliberations and recommendations related to the Pinney School, a landmark structure in a State and National Historic District.

Considering the Pinney School

This decommissioned school is in the Stafford Hollow Historic District, established in 1987, and is on the State and National Register of Historic Places. Thus, **a prospective buyer of the Pinney School may be eligible to receive historic preservation tax credits for restoration that maintains the historic integrity of the exterior.**

The Commission wishes to point out that the Stafford Hollow Historic District lacks a local Historic District Commission to monitor the status of historic structures located within its precincts. As a result, **any alterations to the Pinney School will likely be overseen by the Planning and Zoning Commission's customary procedures, as described in Section 5.13 through Section 5.13C of the Town of Stafford Zoning Regulations.**

Recommendation

SHAC recommends appending easements to the Pinney School deed to preserve the rich diversity of Victorian architecture exhibited in the façade and sides of the building before a sale of the property occurs. Historic District documentation for Stafford Hollow states that the 1895 building is architecturally significant, because "it is a good example of an eclectic Queen Anne-style school." As such, **the easements are intended to protect the exterior of this unique property. (See Figures 1 and 2 on pages 3 and 4 for photos and architectural terms.)**

Easement 1: Features earmarked for preservation are, as follows: the five-bay façade; the square-plan tower; the molded cornice with dentils; the paired and single windows with 1-over-1 sash; the molded pediments over the first-floor windows; the molded stringcourse at the second-floor window sill level; the full entablature under the eaves with dentils and modillions; the corbelled chimneys centered on the ridge, and the plain stringcourse at the transition from siding to patterned brickwork on the foundation's exterior, and the 3-dimensional, patterned brickwork itself. Tower details to be included in the easement are, as follows: a group of three tall narrow lights with 1-over-1 sash; two smaller lights above each window on the second floor; three arched openings with louvers and fishscale shingles on the third floor; and the finial atop the roof.

Easement 2: No parking lot shall be permitted in the front yard of the Pinney School building.

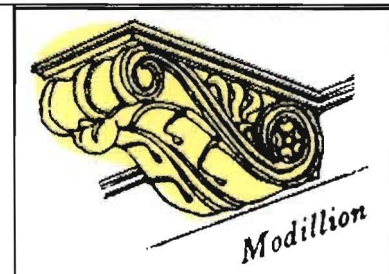
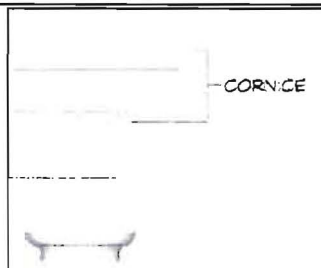


Figure 1. Among the distinctive architectural details recommended for inclusion in an easement on the Pinney School deed are the molded cornice with dentils; the full entablature under the eaves with dentils and modillions; and the three arched openings with louvers and fishscale shingles.

↓ Selected Architectural Definitions ↓



↑ White bracket above denotes the area known as the entablature.



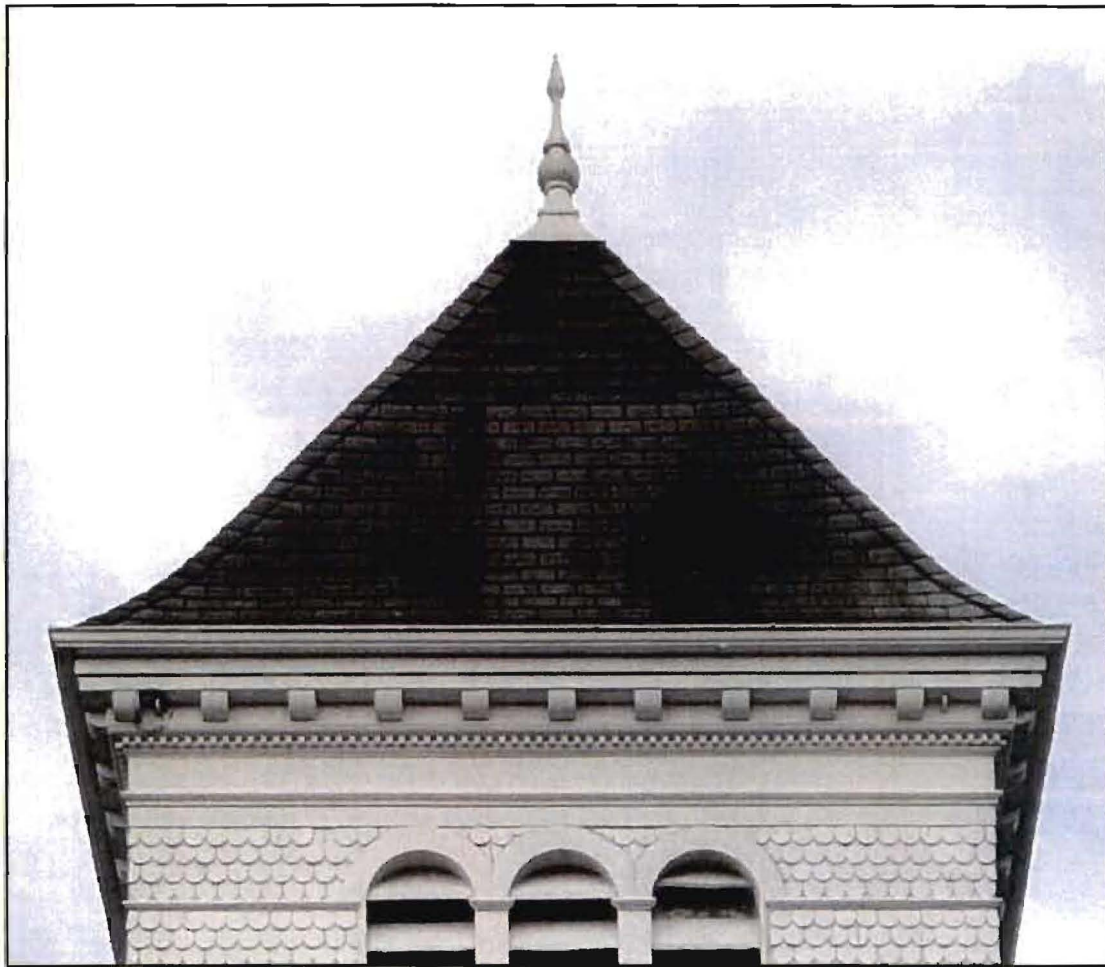


Figure 2. The square plan bell tower topped by a finial is also recommended for preservation by means of an easement added to the Pinney School deed.



↑ A postcard of Pinney School circa 1908



↑ An early photo of the Pinney School

(Old photos courtesy of the Stafford Historical Society)