

FORM B - BUILDING

NRDIS 8/2/1984

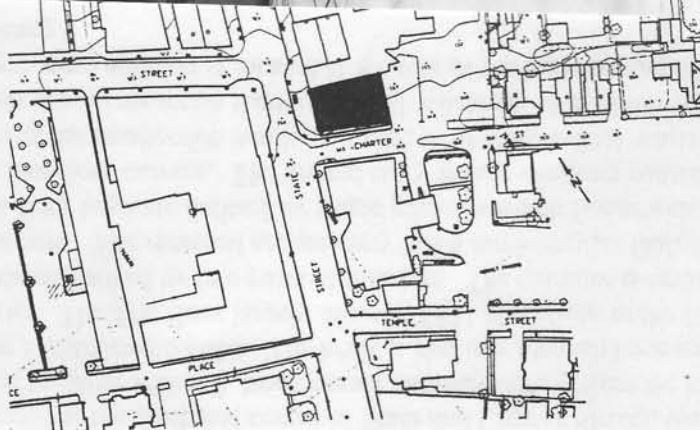
Assessor's number  
6-30

USGS Quad  
Newburyport

Area(s)  
L,U

Form Number  
361

Massachusetts Historical Commission  
Massachusetts Archives Building  
220 Morrissey Boulevard  
Boston, Massachusetts 02125



Town Newburyport

Place (neighborhood or village)

Address 59-61 State Street

Historic Name Merchants National Bank Building

Uses: Present Commercial

Original Commercial

Date of Construction c.1800

Source visual inspection

Style/Form Federal (with Col. Revival alterations)

Architect/Builder original building - unknown; 1921

renovations - Hutchins & French (Boston)

Exterior Material:

Foundation Granite

Wall/Trim Brick

Roof Asphalt Shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures

none

Major Alterations (with dates) 1921 - Colonial style

alt. including new entrance; 1963 - small paned windows

Condition good

Moved  no  yes Date

Acreage 3840 SF

Setting central business district

Recorded by Lisa Mausolf

Organization Newburyport Historical Commission

Date (month/year) April 1999

## BUILDING FORM (59-61 State Street)

### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

*Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of the building in terms of other buildings within the community.*

Located at the northeast corner of State and Charter Streets, the former Merchants National Bank is a three-story, 5 x 4-bay brick building with tall, brick corner chimneys rising from the low, hip roof. The Federal-style building is believed to have been constructed c.1800. The brick is laid in a Flemish bond and marble belt courses wrap around the building between the stories. The first floor largely dates to 1921 alterations in the Colonial Revival style. Centered on the facade is a pedimented entrance flanked by two pairs of pilasters. The entrance is embellished by oval medallions, keystones and guttae-like ornament. The recessed arched entry has a semi-circular fanlight with wooden tracery and a scalloped outer edge. The other first floor bays are defined by single pilasters which frame wide modern 6/6 windows with flat arch brick lintels extending to the first floor cornice. The second story facade windows consist of modern, wooden 6/6 sash with molded surrounds. The tops of the smaller 6/6 windows on the third story extend nearly to the dentil and modillion cornice. The windows on the lesser elevations retain their 1920s 2/1 windows. A c.1960 walk-up window is located on the south end of the building. A single-story addition is located at the rear of the building and displays a belt course which is continuous with the original building.

### HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

*Describe the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.*

This brick block was reportedly erected about 1800. There has been a bank in this location ever since 1803 when the Newburyport Bank was established. The Newburyport Bank was succeeded by the Merchants Bank in 1831, which became the Merchants National Bank in 1865. Originally the bank was located upstairs; in the 1880s it moved to a portion of the ground floor. In 1921 the bank took over the entire ground floor.

The first floor storefront housed Henry C. Plumer's dry goods business for many years (c.1870 to c.1900). Plumer lived on Orange Street and served as an alderman for Ward 3 in 1892. In 1898 Charles Goodwin bought out Henry C. Plumer's business and was located here until 1903 when he moved next door to 57 State Street. Kennedy & Co., butter and cheese merchants, later occupied the space. Printer Albert Hunt was also located briefly at 59 State Street. Over the years, the upper floors of the block have also housed a number of other institutions. In 1852 the Merrimack Library Association occupied rooms in the Merchants Bank Building. The association's library was transferred to the Newburyport Public Library when it was established in 1854. In June 1853 the hall on the third floor of the building was leased by the Independent Order of Odd Fellows and used by them as a lodge room. The space was thoroughly renovated by the Odd Fellows and used by them until 1905.

The Merchants National Bank building underwent extensive renovations in 1921, according to designs by architects Hutchins & French of Boston. MacDonald & Joslin of Boston served as the general contractors; Benjamin F. Tripp of Boston was the vault engineer. The work included the addition of steel girders to support the upper stories, the addition of columns throughout the banking space and the sandblasting of the exterior to remove the paint from the brick. Inside the banking rooms were enlarged to double their size by joining to them the store which was formerly occupied by Kennedy & Co., removing the stairway that led to the upper stories and making a new entrance to the upper floors on State Street. The large plate glass windows were removed and smaller panes (2/1 and 3/1) were substituted to give the building a "Colonial" feeling. As part of the renovation, the main entrance of the bank was relocated to the center of the State Street facade and a vestibule was constructed. A rear addition containing a large vault was also constructed at this time.

Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. *If checked, you must attached a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

## INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

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NewburyportProperty Address  
59-61 State Street  
Area(s) Form No.Massachusetts Historical Commission  
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## HISTORICAL NARRATIVE (continued)

Additional renovations to the building were made in 1955 to "streamline" its appearance. The nature of these alterations is not known. In 1963 the facade windows were changed from large panes to small panes with shutters. The work was performed by City Builders.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

"Bank's 'New Look' Observed by 600", Newburyport Daily News, April 28, 1955.  
Irving, Ron. Unpublished research on State Street.  
The Merchants National Bank. Newburyport: 1921.  
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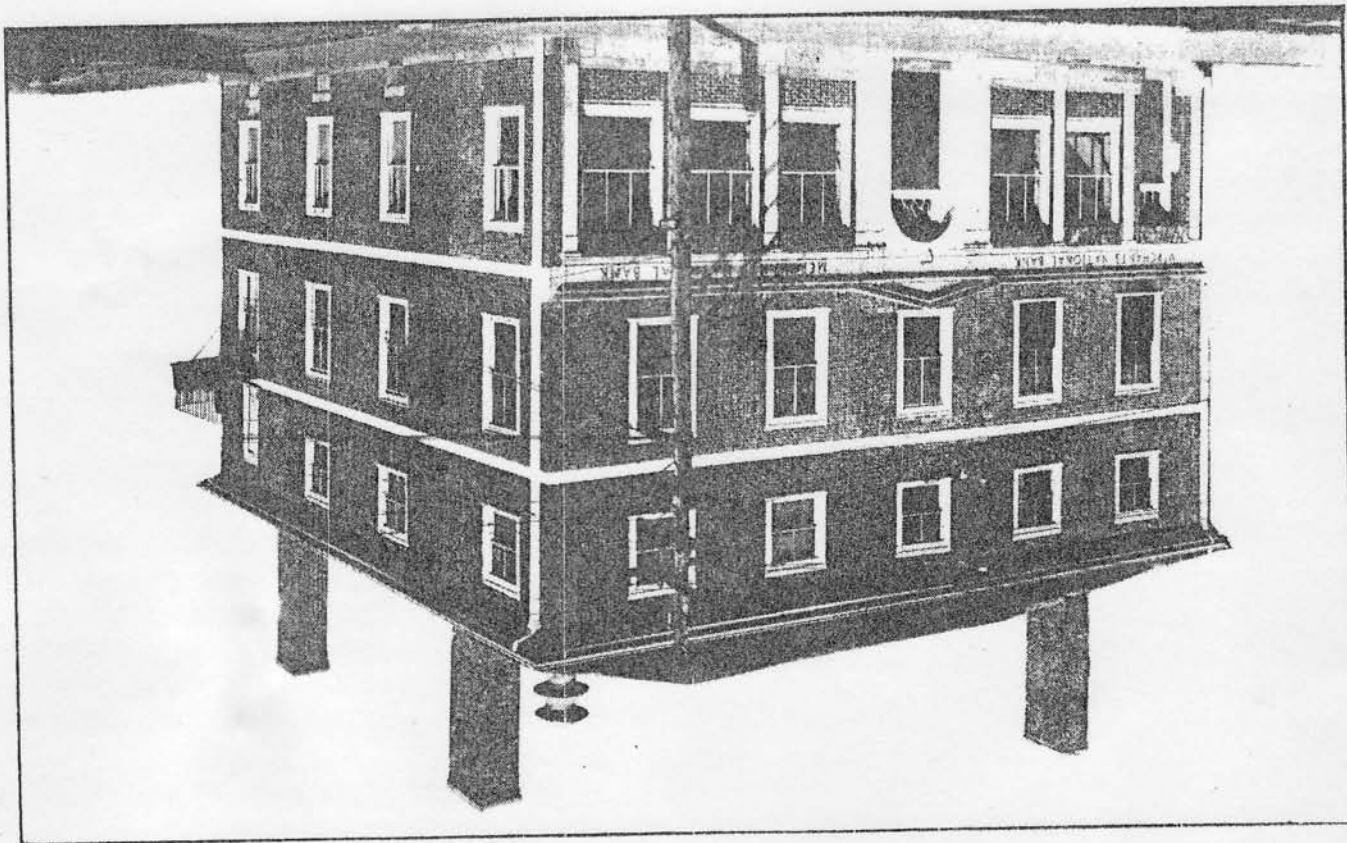
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Source: The Merchants National Bank. Newburyport. 1921.