



Postcard photo of the building, taken after the rear stage was added (in 1904) but likely before electricity came to the building in 1922.

## The Andover Hub—the First 116 Years

Larry Chase

*From: History of Andover, New Hampshire 1900-1965, by Ralph H. Chaffee, published in 1966 by Equity Publishing Corp., Orford, N.H.*

A number of area residents have expressed curiosity about the history of the building at 157 Main Street, now called The Andover Hub. The following tells the story from its beginnings in 1879 until 1965. (Look for an account of its later history in a future Beacon.)

For many years, and at many town meetings, the rival citizenry of Andover and East Andover tried unsuccessfully to agree upon some location upon which to build a “town house”. The battle raged back and forth until finally, in 1879, agreement was reached upon the one-half acre site in the central Andover village. Complete with stoves, fixtures, and the big iron safe since moved to the new town office, the original part of the town hall cost \$1,987.20. The only stage was a platform in the middle of the west side of the hall. For building the structure itself, Hamilton & Woodbury were paid \$1,223.15, the Hamilton being the same Albert R. who also built three of the town’s seven covered bridges.

An extension was added in 1904, providing the present stage area and a kitchen in the basement. Running water was piped in six years later in 1911 after the Andover Village District was formed. Electric lights came in 1922 when the lines of the East Andover Light & Power Co. reached the village.

Few other improvements were made until the Andover High School was built in 1934. This had no facilities for basketball and the town hall became the school gymnasium. The cracking plastered walls were covered with plywood to better withstand the bouncing balls. In one last final improvement, a steam heating plant was installed beneath the stage in 1948, with toilets, showers and dressing rooms. The original tall double doors at the front entrance were replaced by two shorter ones of rosewood salvaged from the Hotel Touraine in Boston.

For another fifteen years, the old town hall continued to be the center of town and school sports activity. Little was ever done to beautify the front yard, as the lot had become completely surrounded by garages and an automobile graveyard. All available space was

See Hub on page 27



The iconic “gasholder” just off of Route 93 in Concord has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is the only one of it’s kind in existence. Photo: NH Division of Historical Resources

## Concord’s Gasholder Building Named to National Register

One of a kind gasholder house

Press release

The New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources is proud to announce that the Concord Gas Light Company Gasholder House has been honored by the United States Secretary of the Interior with placement on the National Register of Historic Places. It is the last remaining gasholder house in the United States that retains its original equipment, including the gasholder tank.

Built in Concord’s south end in 1888 when coal gas was a major source of light and heat, the red brick Concord Gas Light Company Gasholder House is 88 feet in diameter, with 72 feet above grade and 24 feet below. Its distinguishing features include Italianate architectural details, a large conical roof held in place by compression and thrust rings, an octagonal wood cupola with arched windows on each side and a prominent copper weather vane. Valve houses on the building’s south and west provide entry.

A 120,000 cubic foot wrought-iron

gasholder tank is located inside. Its sheet metal bell was designed to raise and lower into a below-grade brick water tank on eight iron rails as gas entered and left the building; any gas escaping the bell would vent through the cupola. Currently, the bell is empty and resting below grade in the water tank, forming a floor.

The City of Concord sponsored the nomination of the landmark structure amid public concerns for its preservation after a tree fell on it during a storm, piercing the north roof slope, structural members and the wall cornice. The building has been temporarily stabilized but not repaired.

Use of coal gas in the U.S. began in the early 19th century. By 1876, most towns and cities with more than 10,000 residents were served by gas plants, which had become an important fuel for municipal, industrial and residential illumination, as well as for heating and cooking.

Gasholder buildings played a significant role in the growth of American cities and were unique visual reminders of urban progress. The adoption of natural gas ended coal gas production. Coal gas was last produced at this site on August 13, 1953 and the Gasholder House has remained empty since that day.

Administered by the National Park  
See Gashouse on page 27

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