

FERNANDINA BEACH CITY HALL: HISTORY IN PHOTOS



Prepared by the City of Fernandina Beach Department of Planning & Conservation

204 Ash Street Fernandina Beach | 904.310.3480



Why is this property significant?

- Built to replace an earlier City Hall that was located on N. 2nd St. that was destroyed in the 1876 Fire.
- Constructed in 1904, this building has served as the hub of civic life in Fernandina for 116 years. It originally housed all local government function including Police, Fire, Public Works, and the City Managers offices.
- The building has significant cultural value in that it served an important function during our National Register listed downtown's period of significance.



2nd Street looking north from Centre Street before the great fire of 1876

Amelia Island Museum of History
2001.002.107



Nearly 40 buildings were destroyed by the fire March 23, 1876 including the Post Office, City Offices, the Probate and County Clerks Office, Offices of the Charleston Steamship Company, and the Observer printing office.

Amelia Island Museum of History
2001.002.109

Current Concerns

- The building was significantly altered in 1956, in an effort to “modernize” the structure. The new design removed and obscured the original design of the structure in favor of a mid-century modern design, which was the architectural style chosen for all Fernandina Beach’s civic buildings, such as the Atlantic Rec Center.
- As a number of the later additions were of poorer quality and materials than the original portion of the building, they have begun to deteriorate and fail.
- Between the failing additions and the space constraints that challenge housing a growing city staff, actions will need to be taken soon.
- Development pressure is high for downtown, as developers are seeking land downtown to construct residential projects. This parcel consists of 8 underlying platted lots of record.
- As the historic nature of the structure has been obscured for over a generation, many people lack an understanding of the history and significance of this site. This is concerning, because when people understand and are invested in the history of a site, there is more will to rehabilitate and maintain these structures.

1904 - Dedicated (cost unknown)

- Originally housed all City departments including Police, Fire, and Public Works.
- First City Council Meeting held at City Hall July 6, 1904.
- Facility included the Public Works Garage, City Jail, and the City Commission Chambers.
- Fire House was equipped with a state of the art Gamewell fire alarm system
- Throughout the mid-1900s, various City Departments were moved from the building, including the Police Station, Public Works Department, and, in later years, the City Commission Chambers.



City Hall under construction. 1904

City of Fernandina Beach Collection



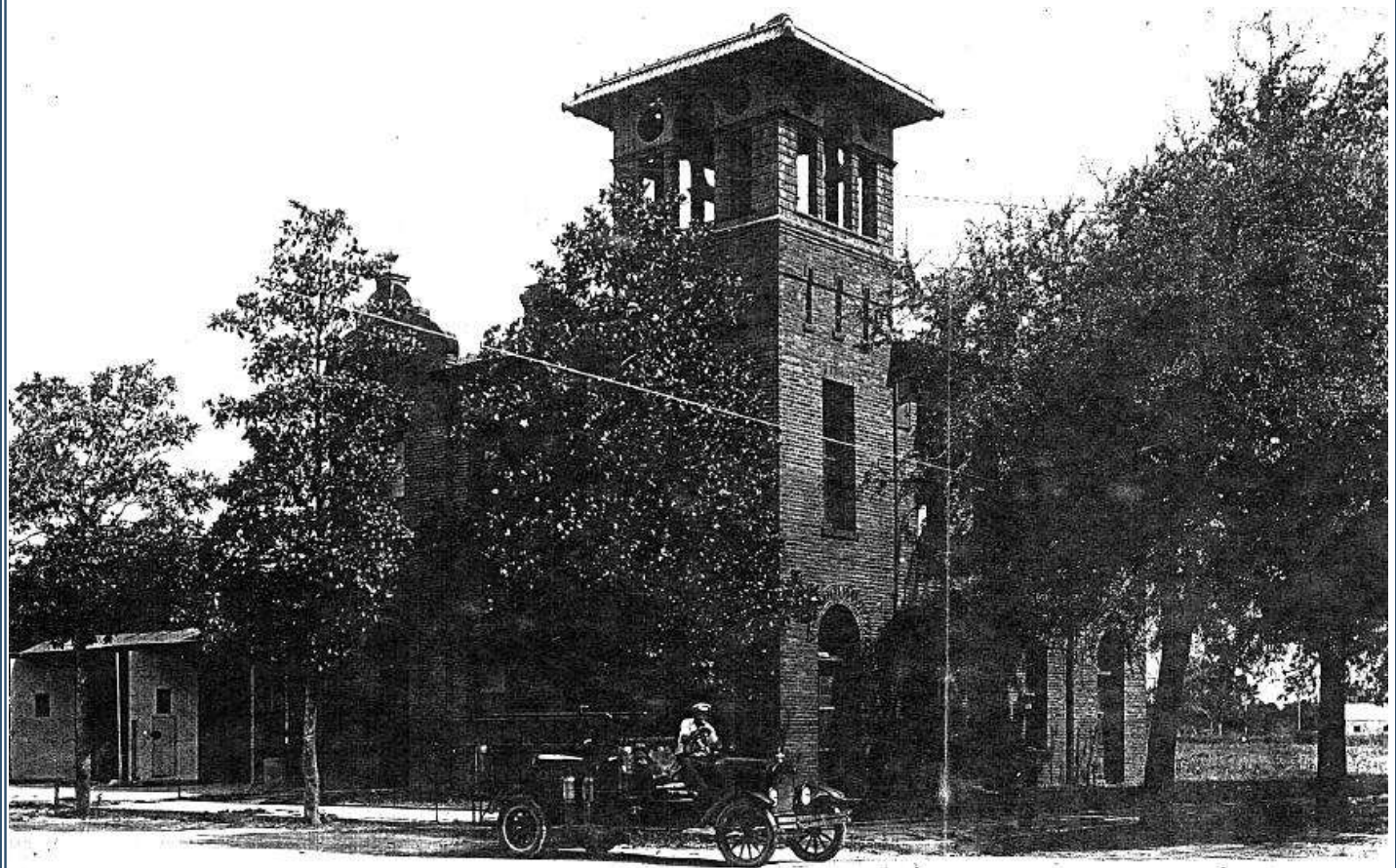
City Hall and Fire Station

Amelia Island Museum of History 2017.059.125



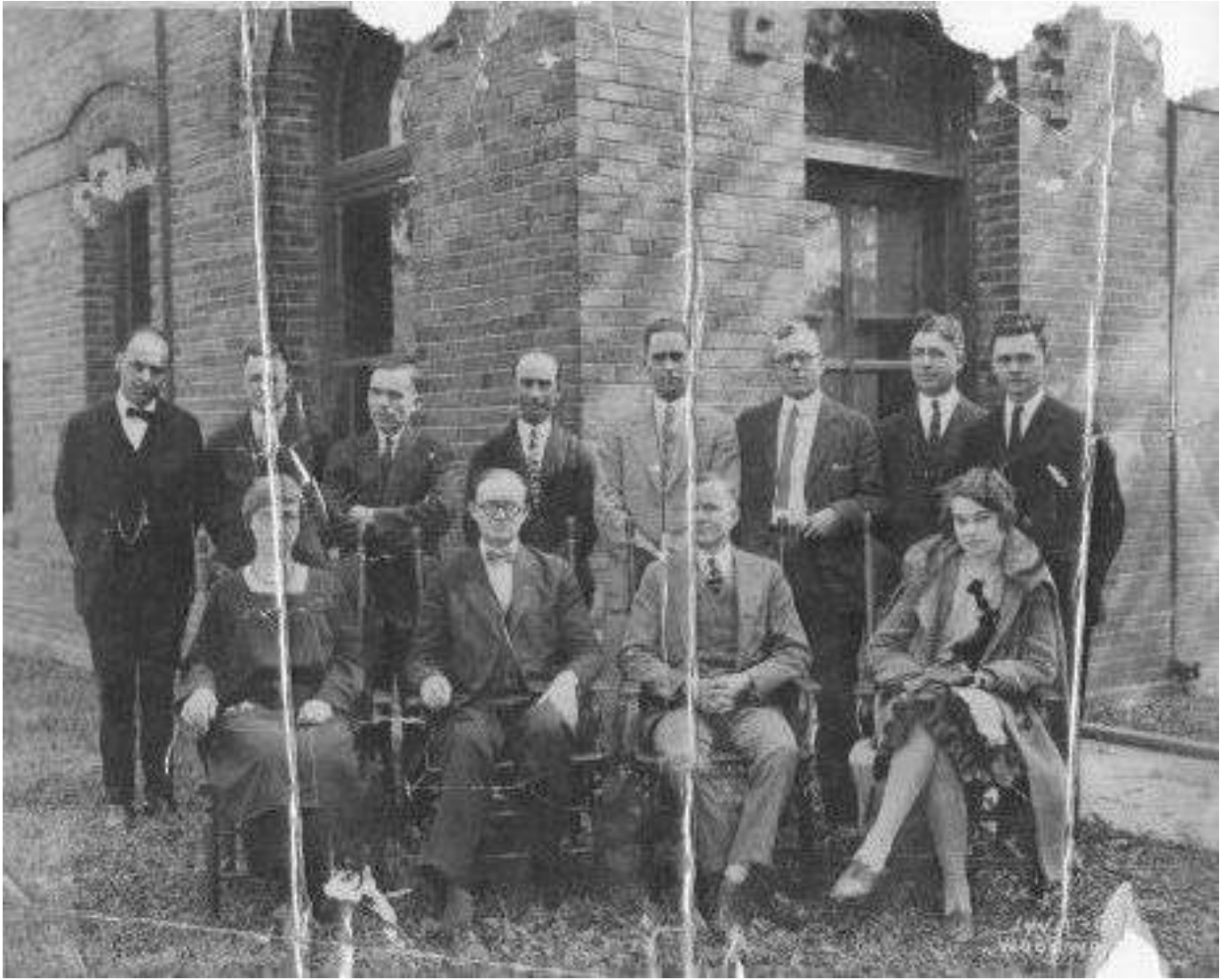
City Hall and Fire Station 1915

Amelia Island Museum of History 1991.053.012



Fernandina City Hall. Date Unknown.

City of Fernandina Beach Collection



Photograph taken at City Hall in the late 20s or early 30s.

Back row, left to right: Prewitt, Cricket; Livingston, Henry; Goldstein, Louis; Bruni, Joe; Ozmer, Tom; Mr. Russel (?) City Manager; Ferreira, Johnny; Lohman, Harry.

Front row, left to right: Ray, Florence; Mr. Goodwin; Partin, Dave; Ward, Dorothy.

Amelia Island Museum of History 1997.008.001



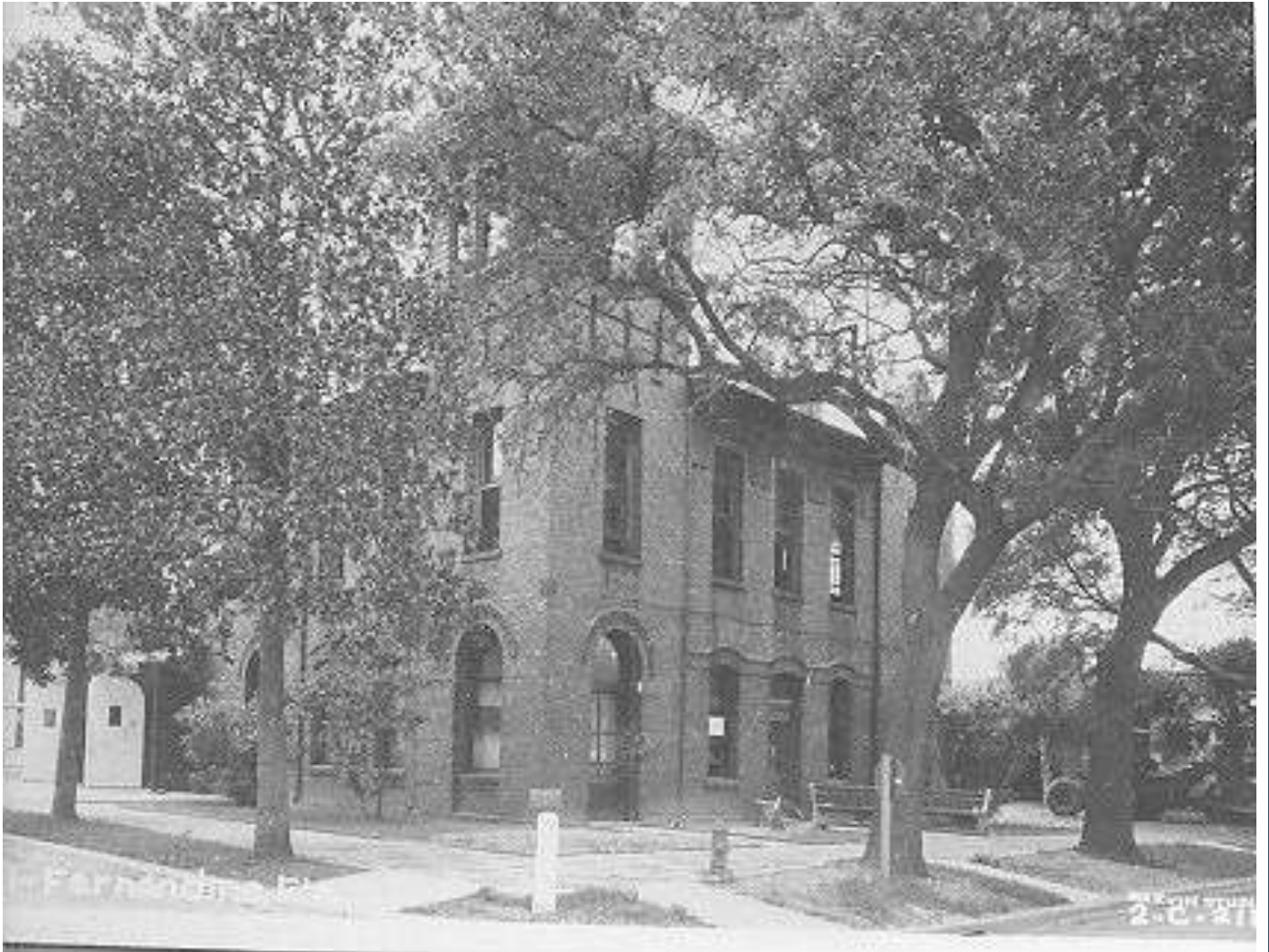
City of Fernandina Fire Engines parked in front of City Hall/ Fire Station on Ash Street. Presumably, volunteer fire fighters sitting in and standing around the Fire Engines. From left to right: Carl Klotz, Tom Hernandez, Clement Rutishauser, Al Rinck, Pete Nagel, Herbert Youngblood, Chief Frank Surency, and Lewis Nolan. 1930s.

City of Fernandina Beach Collection



City of Fernandina Maintenance Truck at City Hall, 1940s

City of Fernandina Collection Beach



Fernandina City Hall 1945

Amelia Island Museum of History 1995.017.004



Boy scouts touring City Hall in 1950.

Amelia Island Museum of History 2018.026.045



Fernandina City Officials and Businessmen sitting around conference table. Man third from left is Exteen Corbett (Pogy Plant Manager). Man third from right is Hymie Fishler.

City of Fernandina Beach Collection

1956 Renovation – (cost =\$19,572)

- New wing constructed on the west elevation;
- Building altered to remove archways, towers, and chimneys;
- Brick resurfaced with stucco;
- Windows replaced;
- Re-roofed;
- Courtroom remodeled to serve as Courtroom/ Commission Chambers.
- Vault installed for City records, which had previously been kept in the attic.



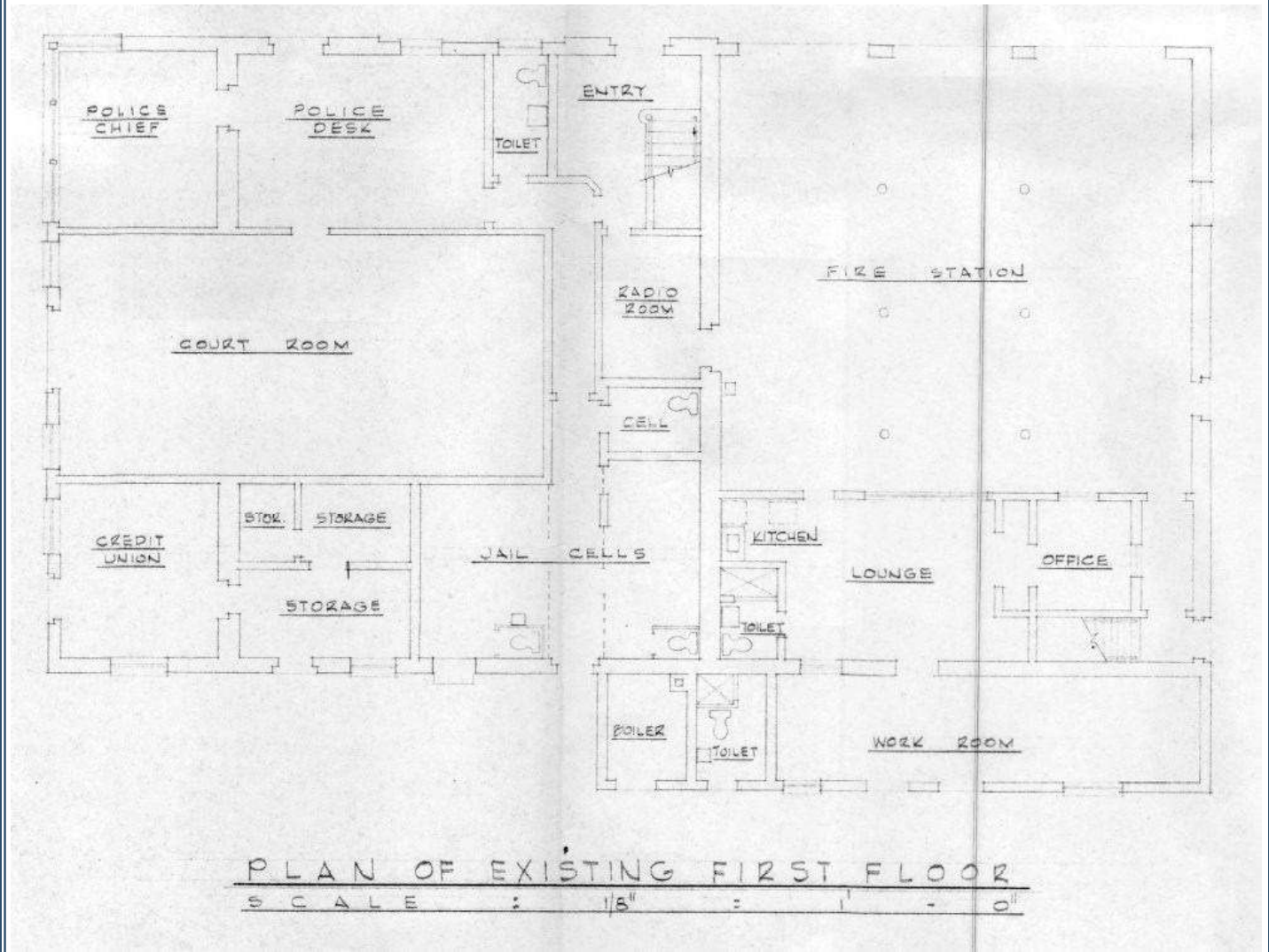
City Hall 1950s

City of Fernandina Beach Collection



Boy Scouts sitting around table in Fernandina City Manager's conference room. Scouts take over the function of city management for the day. Scouts are from Troop 212 (Herb McKendree scoutmaster - not pictured) and Troop 89. From left forefront, clockwise around the table: John Griffin, Dennis (last name unknown), Marion Clark, Jack D'Amato, Frank Barnhart, City Manager's Secretary (name unknown), Unknown scout, Thomas Gordon Hall Jr., Floyd Glisson (City Manager), Bill Melton, Unknown City Official, E. J. Smith, Bill Crane and Bud Rice (sitting against wall), unknown scout leaning forward in profile, Wayne Tyner and Charlie McKendree (sitting against wall), Dan Pipkin (sitting extreme right) and Joel (unknown last name) sitting at front end of table.

City of Fernandina Beach Collection



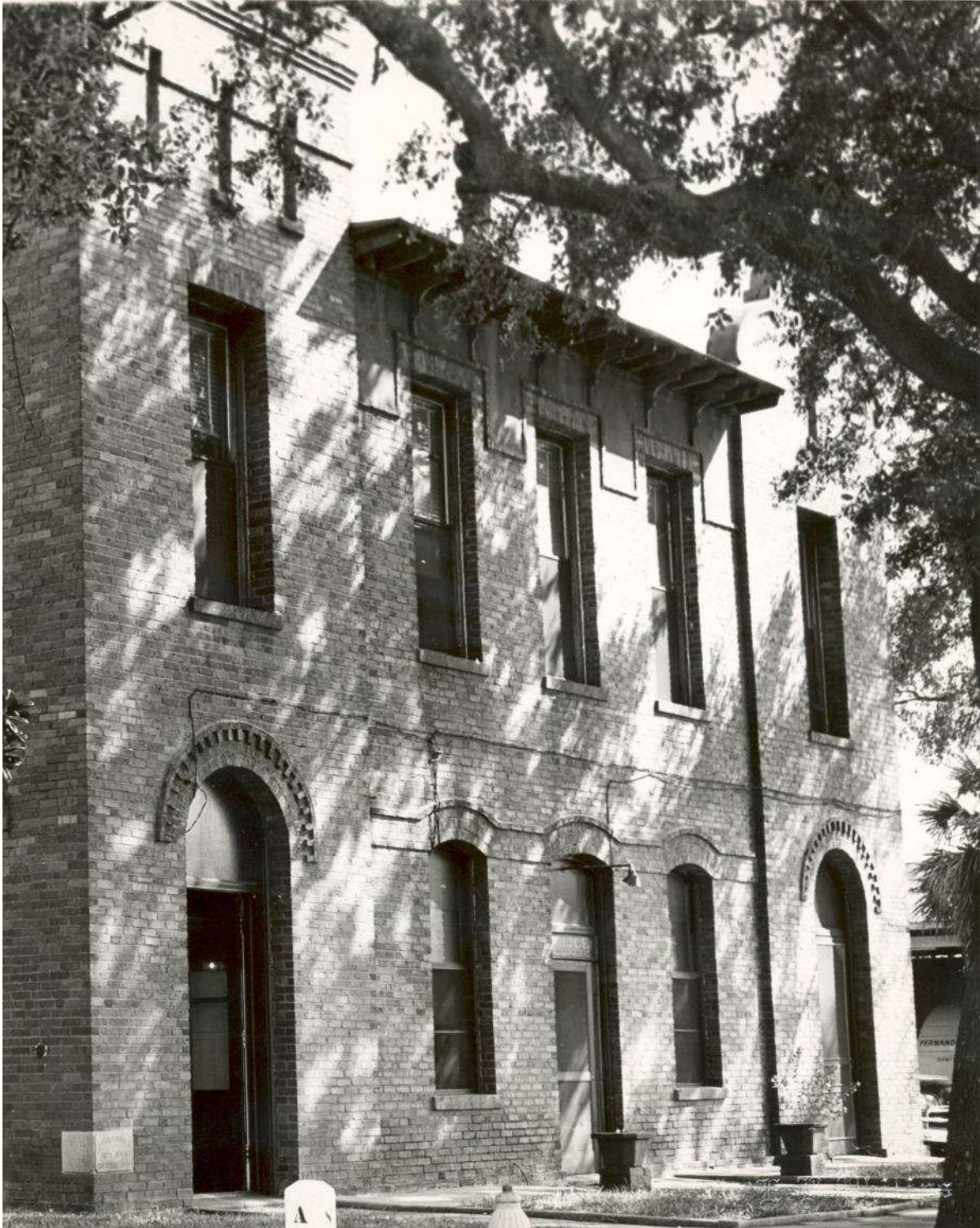
City Hall and Fire Station Floorplan (after 1956 addition to west elevation)

Amelia Island Museum of History 2017.059.125



City Hall (1951 -1952). Original single story section of the west (left) has been remodeled to include a 2nd story with white stucco exterior.

City of Fernandina Beach Collection



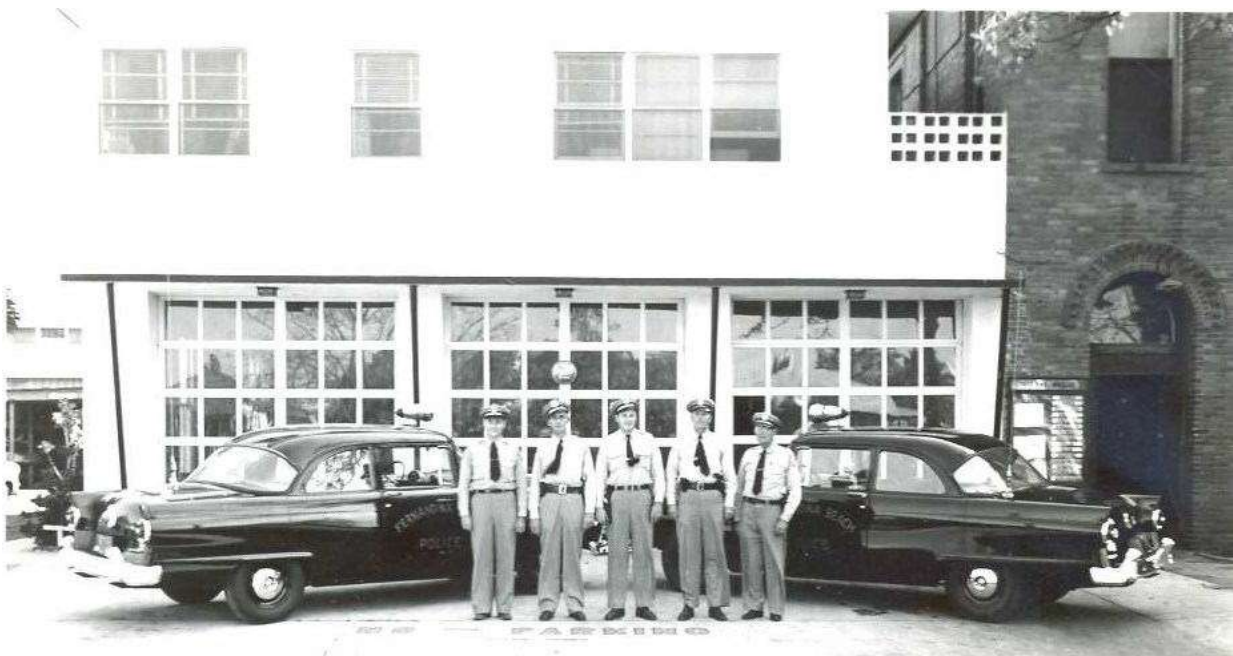
City Hall West Elevation (1951 -1952). Note cornerstone and bronze geodetic benchmark disc.

City of Fernandina Beach Collection



City of Fernandina Police Outside City Hall

City of Fernandina Beach Collection





Boy Scouts visiting City Hall. 1953.

Amelia Island Museum of History 2018.026.017



City Hall 1950s.

Amelia Island Museum of History 2018.026.006

1971 renovation – (cost unknown)

- East wing added to the building to accommodate the Rescue unit and provide an office for the Fire Chief.
- Relocated a number of times throughout the building, City Commission Chambers moved to the Police Station across the street in 1972.



City of Fernandina Beach Fire Station/ City Hall

City of Fernandina Beach Collection



City Hall. Late 1980s– Early 1990s.
City of Fernandina Beach Collection



1995 Renovation - (cost \$350,000)

- City approves relocation of Fire Department to new Fire Station #1 on 14th Street. This allowed for the reunification of City Commission Chambers with City Hall
- Replacement of all building components including HVAC, plumbing, electrical, and communication lines.
- Addition of ADA restrooms, elevator, landscaped parking lot, three interior customer service counters, a drive-up window with night depository, and a drive up public notice board.
- Most work performed by City employees through the Public Works Department.

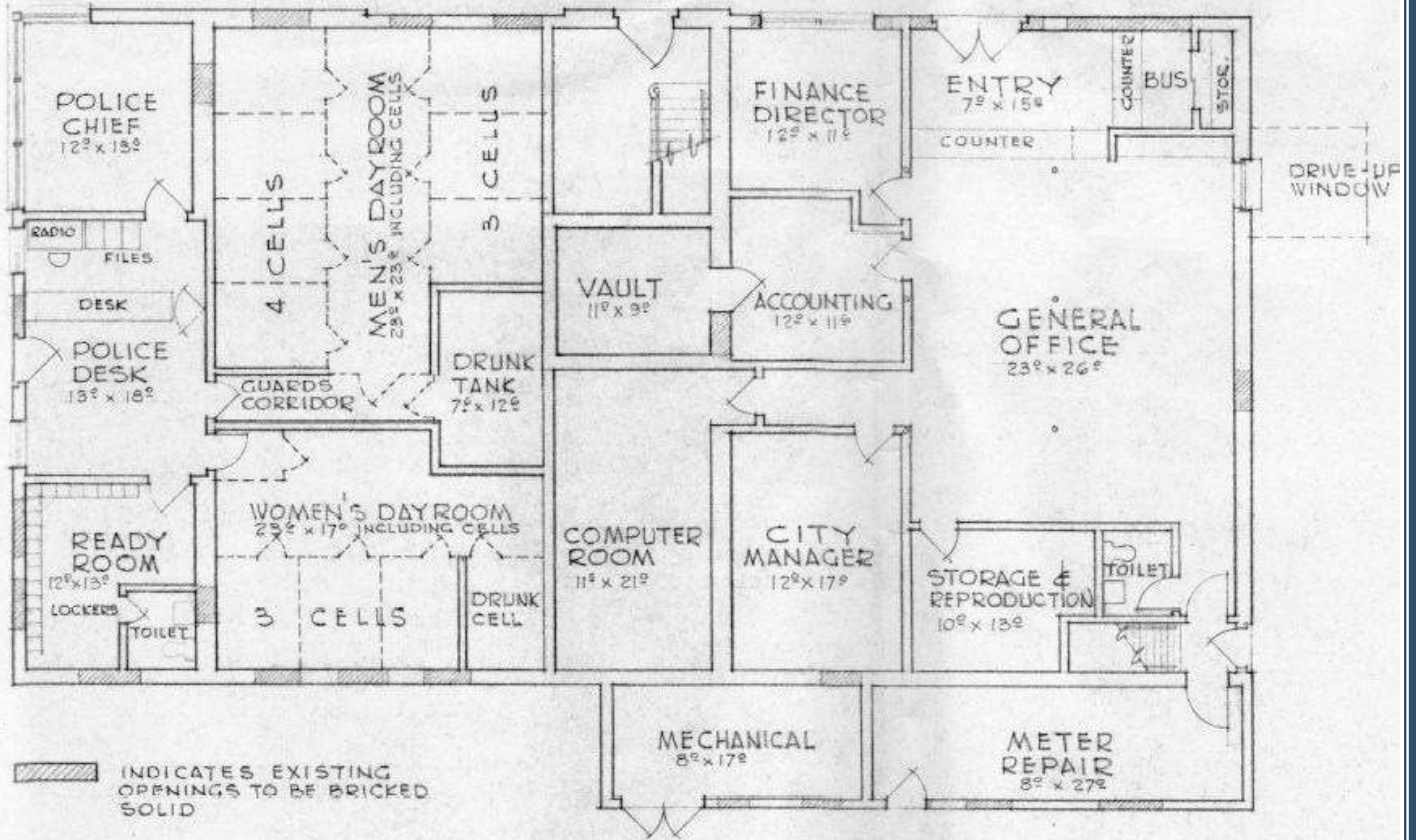


“The City Hall will serve the citizens of Fernandina Beach for many decades to come. Hopefully, it will serve the community in the 21st century as well as it has done in this century. The building has a rich history and this renovation project will usher in a new era in the history of the City of Fernandina Beach” - City Hall Rededication Program. October 29, 1996



City Hall Before Fire Department Bays Converted to Commission Chambers. July 20, 1995

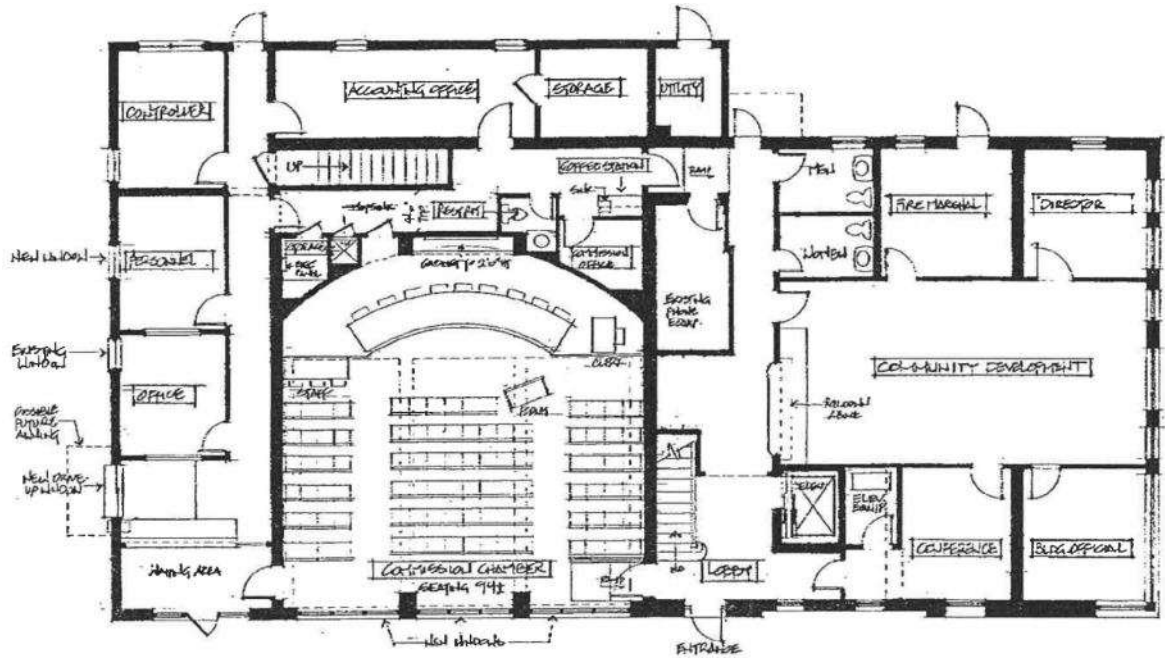
City of Fernandina Beach Collection



PLAN OF PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

Early Concept Drawings for City Hall Remodel Keeping Police Station in City Hall. Undated.

City of Fernandina Beach Collection



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

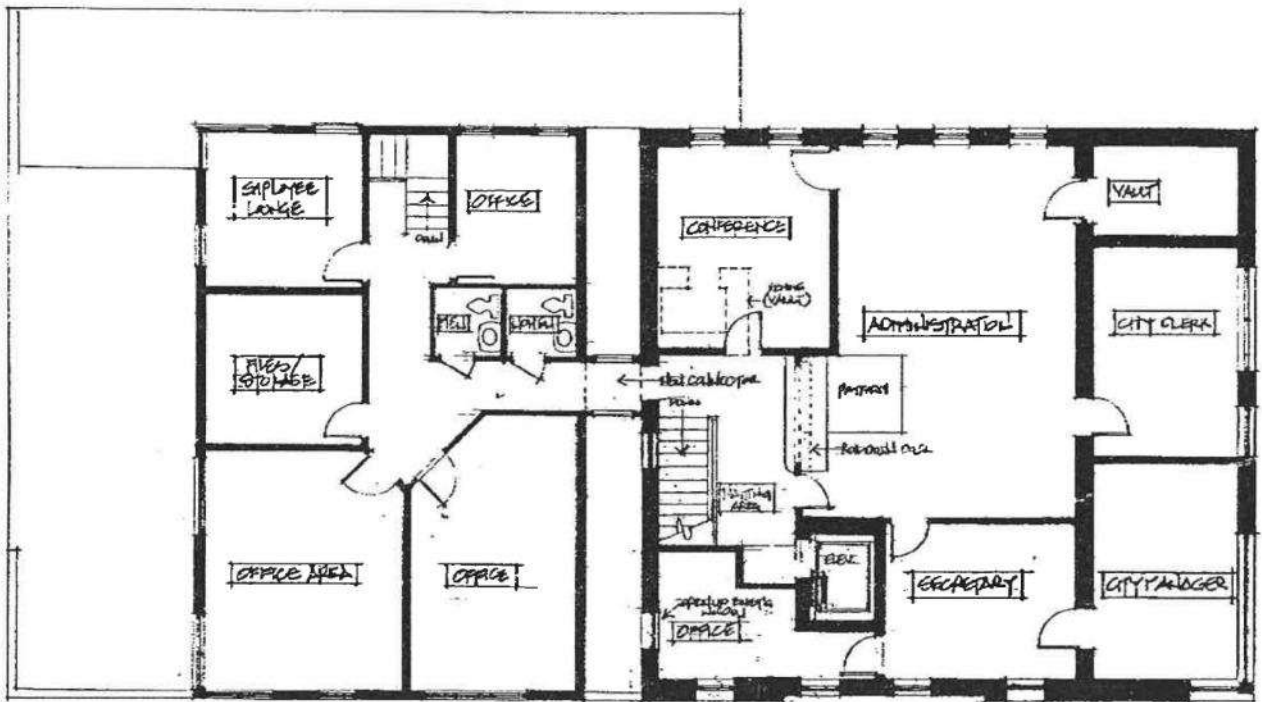
CITY HALL - FERNANDINA BEACH, FLORIDA

1" = 10'

AUGUST 8, 1995
 REVISED 3/17/96
 REVISED 4/30/96

City Hall Renovation Floorplans. April 30, 1996. Beer Stauffer & Associates.

City of Fernandina Beach Collection



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

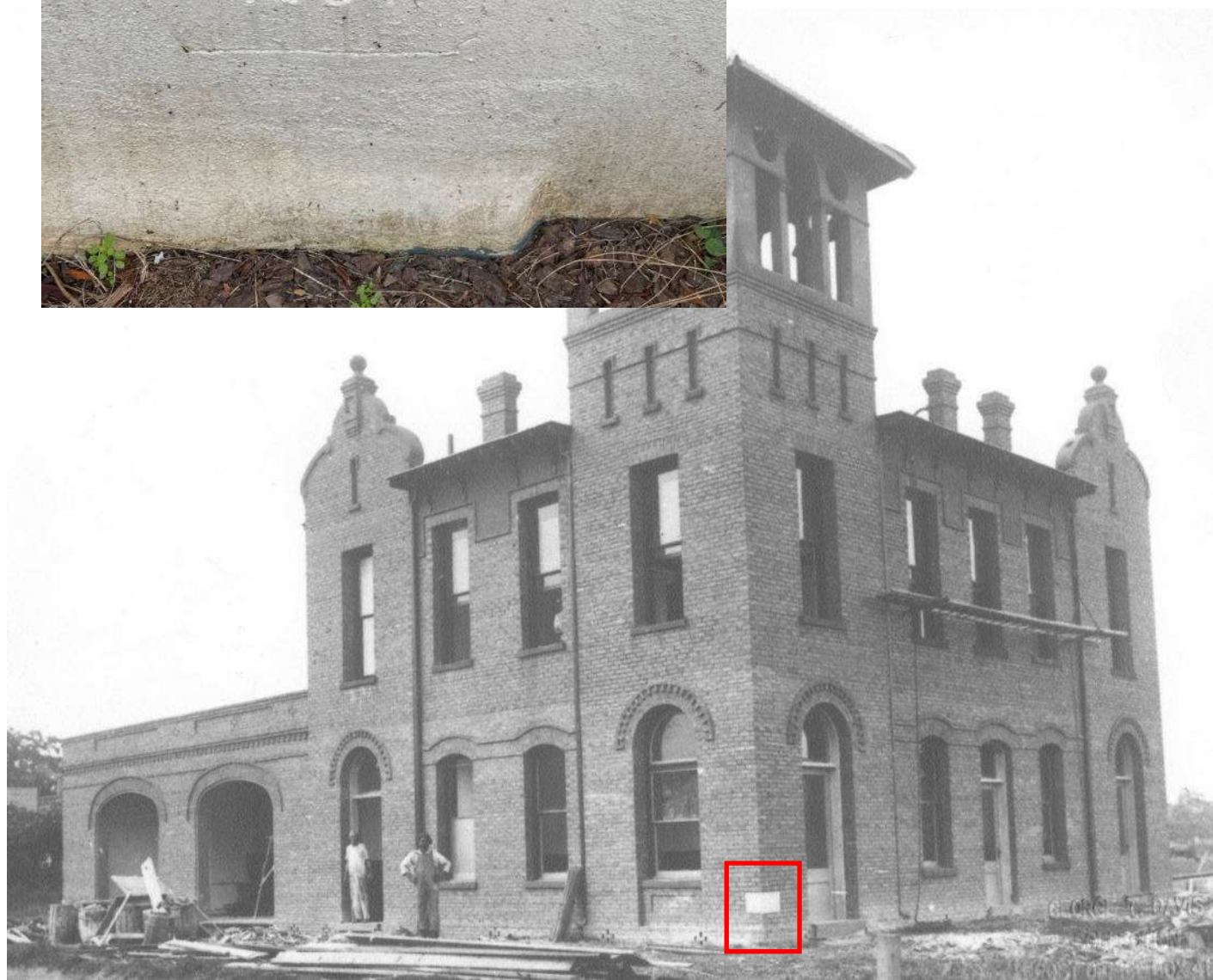
CITY HALL - FERNANDINA BEACH, FLORIDA

1" = 10'

AUGUST 8, 1995
 REVISED 4/30/96

Character Defining Features

- **North face of original cornerstone laid in 1904.** West face is currently obscured by the 1956 addition.



Character Defining Features

- Geodetic Survey Benchmark — Installed 1923
 - Set vertically in the north face of City Hall at the corner of Ash and Second Street, 29.5 feet east of the east curb of Second Street, 24.7 feet south of the south curb of Ash Street, 15.0 feet east of the northwest corner, 2.2 FEET west of the west entrance into City Hall, about 4 feet above the level of the ground.
 - “NOAA’s National Geodetic Survey (NGS) defines, maintains, and provides access to the National Spatial Reference System (NSRS) — a consistent coordinate system that defines latitude, longitude, height, scale, gravity, orientation, and shoreline throughout the United States and is designed to meet our nation’s economic, social, and environmental needs. For 200 years, NGS and its predecessor agencies have collaborated with public and private organizations to establish reference stations at precisely determined locations. Traditionally, these locations have been identified by setting a survey mark —usually a brass, bronze, or aluminum disk.” - www.geodesy.noaa.gov



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National Geodetic Survey, Retrieval Date = JANUARY 4, 2020
BC0160 *****
BC0160 TIDAL BM - This is a Tidal Bench Mark.
BC0160 DESIGNATION - 872 0030 TIDAL 36
BC0160 PID - BC0160
BC0160 STATE/COUNTY- FL/NASSAU
BC0160 COUNTRY - US
BC0160 USGS QUAD - FERNANDINA BEACH (1992)
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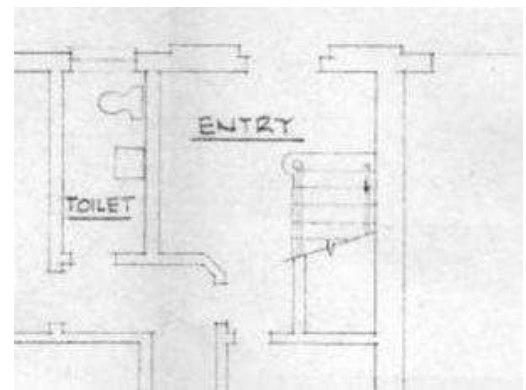
Character Defining Features

- As the building evolved and expanded, many of the original doorways and windows were sealed off. Many of the built in bookcases throughout the building were constructed to fill in these openings and were designed to be reversible.



Character Defining Features

- Entry staircase - original to the 1904 design.
- Wood paneling is a character defining feature of the 1956 renovation.



Character Defining Features

- The building retains a number of its original doors trimwork



City of Fernandina Beach Comprehensive Plan Related Policies

Policy 11.03.08. The City shall continue the use of historic buildings for governmental purposes and shall consider the acquisition of historic buildings for adaptive reuse for municipal purpose when additional space is required. Any building fifty (50) or more years old considered for surplus by the City shall be submitted prior to sale for review by the applicable review board. Any such building determined to have historic or architectural significance, if considered surplus, shall be sold or otherwise conveyed by the City with protective covenants to ensure its preservation and proper rehabilitation.

Policy 11.03.14. The City shall continue to monitor and seek support from state and federal programs related to historic preservation, and shall pursue grant funding where feasible to complete projects in the City related to historic, cultural and archaeological resource protection.

Policy 11.03.19. The City shall encourage retention of essential public services, such as a post office, library and other government functions, in the historic downtown district, and encourage reuse of historic buildings for these functions where feasible.

Policy 11.07.02. The City shall provide for the interpretation of City-owned historic resources, including but not limited to, media outreach, interpretive kiosks or plaques, and staff outreach.

Policy 11.09.01. The City shall encourage historic preservation as a sustainable building practice that encourages reuse of existing resources and helps reduce energy consumed and waste created as part of the demolition and building process.

Policy 11.09.02. The City shall review the Land Development Code for regulations that encourage teardowns of existing structures and make recommendations to the City Commission regarding changes or alterations to the Land Development Code that will assist in prevention of teardowns and retention of existing structures, including identifying incentives such as tax exemptions, expedited permitting, or reduced fees, to promote reuse of existing structures.

Resources

- Amelia Island Museum of History Digital Archive
- City of Fernandina Beach Photo Collection
- *Annual Report of City of Fernandina Beach, Florida: 1955*
- Undated *News Leader* Article Announcing Bid Acceptance for City Hall Renovation. 1956
- *Budget Message FY 1995-96*. Page 19
- *City Hall Rededication Program*. October 29, 1996.
- “New Annex to Be Completed May 1 on Fernandina City Hall.” *Fernandina Beach News Leader*. 1952.
- ORDINANCE NO. 95-12 “An Ordinance of the City of Fernandina Beach, Florida, Expanding the Boundaries of the Historic District to Include City Hall”
- *City of Fernandina Beach Building Permit 9684B*. March 19, 1996.
- Historic District Council HDC96-42 Staff Report.

