

The Old Town Hall

By Barbara Glakas

Located in the center of Town on the Town Green, the building we now call the Old Town Hall has had many uses in its 73 years.

Sitting proudly at the corner of Elden and Station Streets is Herndon's first official municipal building, now commonly referred to as the Old Town Hall. But long before the building was erected in 1939, the Town Hall property served as a center of commerce, government, and community activity.

In 1856, the Alexandria and Washington Railroad Company installed a railroad turntable on the property to re-route train traffic. Later, that piece of land became known as a railroad park, a community gathering place. Picnics were held there, and later there were fundraising carnivals sponsored by the Fire Department.

The land was owned by Daniel Calyer. In 1861, he sold one half acre of triangular-shaped land to the Alexandria, Loudoun and Hampshire Railroad Company for \$80. Later, the Southern Railroad Corporation owned the land. In 1938, .235 acre of that tract was sold to the Town of Herndon for \$1,000. The Town also bought .117 acres from Mary McMillen. Added to that later was a .17-acre parcel that was a public street that ran in front of Town Hall until 1974. Those three tracts combined made up the parcel of land that we currently refer to as Town Square.

The Town Hall was constructed as a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project, part of the New Deal, aimed at employing millions of unskilled workers to carry out public works projects, including the construction of public buildings. The new building housed Post Office on the first floor, the jail was in the basement, and the mayor and town treasurer had offices on the second floor. The Georgian style architecture was compatible to the colonial and Victorian style of architecture that was prominent at that time. The exterior of the building remains unchanged from its original construction, although the interior has gone through many changes and uses.

The building has three levels, with one below ground and two above ground. The basement originally contained three jail cells, a boiler room, a clinic, a waiting room, and a civic activity room that was used as a meeting and activity area for such organizations such as the Herndon Womans Club. Travelling doctors used the clinic for office space and as an examining room. In later years the basement housed the Herndon Police Department and the Planning and Zoning (now Community Development) Department. It now houses the Herndon Community Television (HCTV) studio. The three jail cells still remain, and are used for storage.

The first floor originally had an open floor plan and was used as the post office from 1939 to 1962. Later, after the post office moved to a new location, the Finance Department occupied the space. Currently, the first floor spaces are used by the Mayor, an aide to Dranesville District

Supervisor John Foust, and the Town Attorney and his staff. Shortly after locating in the building, the Town Attorney had the open space partitioned into smaller offices.

Originally the second floor had a large room for Town Council meetings and public hearings. Other spaces on that floor were occupied by the Mayor, the Town Clerk, and the Town Sergeant. Later, the Town Manager's office was housed there. That space today houses the constituent services office for Delegate Rust, HCTV, and the Council for the Arts of Herndon. The Dulles Regional Chamber of Commerce has space there as well. There also is a shared conference room.

At different points in time the Department of Public Works and the Department of Parks and Recreation also occupied space in Town Hall. Now, most of the administrative offices for the Town have been moved to the Herndon Municipal Center.

In the 1970s the grounds in front of the Town Hall were enhanced with brick walkways and a fountain. The old fountain has since been replaced by a flower bed. The area continues to be used as a focal point for community events, including the Herndon Festival.