

This is the portion of the 1997 application that applies to your building:

"The Princeton downtown Historic District consists of a fine collection of late nineteenth century and early twentieth century one to three-story commercial buildings that form the Historic commercial core of the city of Princeton."

American House Hotel Building (Contributing) 440-444 W. Water St. 1885/1894 Map No. 28.

The present American House Hotel was built in two stages. The older part of the building, which occupied the northeast corner formed by the intersection of Washington and W. Water Streets and whose six-bay-wide main facade faces south onto Water Street, was built in 1885 to replace an earlier building of the same name that was destroyed by fire early in that year.<sup>24</sup> In 1894, this 45 foot-wide x 120-foot-deep L-plan building was expanded by the addition of a rectilinear plan 18-foot-wide by 120-foot-deep two-bay-wide wing, which gave the completed building an eight-bay-wide facade facing onto Water Street and a U-shaped plan.<sup>25</sup>

The American House is two-stories-tall and has rubble stone foundation walls that enclose a basement story. The exterior walls that rest on this foundation are of brick, an orange-brown brick on the side elevations and cream brick on the main facade. As noted above, the main facade consists of the combined facades of the 1885 building and the 1894 addition. The commercial vernacular form 1884 facade was originally symmetrical in design and six-bays-wide and it consisted of a full-width first story double storefront which featured two three-bay-wide storefronts placed on either side of a centered segmental-arched entrance. Each of the storefronts had two large plate glass display window openings placed on either side of a deeply inset entrance, and an overhanging wooden cornice supported by brackets spanned the entire width of the facade just above these storefronts. Today, both of these storefront openings have been filled with modern materials but the centered entrance between them, with its original two-light segmental-arch transom, is still intact. The second story of the 1884 facade is six-bays-wide and each bay consists of a segmental-arched window opening having a cut stone sill and a corbelled brick hood mold. Early photos show that these openings originally contained flat-arched four over-four-light double hung wood sash windows and these windows were carefully replicated using modern materials when the building was renovated in 1994. These windows are grouped in widely spaced pairs and a broad but narrow indented decorative panel is inset into the wall surface above each pair by way of emphasis. The facade is then crowned by an overhanging wooden cornice supported by pierced and carved brackets.

The Water Street facade of the 1894 addition is two-bays-wide and forms a continuation of the 1885 facade, which it adjoins, and its is purposefully similar in design with one striking exception. The first story originally consisted of a

<sup>24</sup> Princeton Republic. February 5, 1885, p. 5; October 3, 1885, p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. March 22, 1894, p. 5; June 7, 1894, p. 5; August 2, 1894, p. 5.

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single storefront, this one originally being identical in design to the two on the earlier portion with display windows on either side of an inset entrance. Like the others, this one has also now been rudimentary altered by the insertion of new materials and its inset entrance is now set to the left of two display windows. The second story, however, is almost totally intact and is two-bays-wide. The right-hand bay contains a segmental-arched window opening that is identical to those found on the 1885 facade described above. The left-hand bay, though, consists of a large polygonal wooden briel window of Queen Anne style design, which extends upward and through the simple bracketed wooden cornice that crowns the remainder of the facade. The briel has a flat-arched double hung window set into each of its three sides, this portion being surmounted by a flared section clad in fish-scale and

diamond pattern wood shingles, the whole then being crowned by a tall pavilion style roof, which has raised eaves.

The west-facing Washington Street side elevation of the building is also two-stories-tall and highly intact and features a six-bay-wide front (south) block and a shorter seven-bay-wide rear (north) block. All of these bays consist of segmental-arched window openings that are identical to the ones described earlier and both blocks are also crowned by overhanging wooden cornices supported by pierced and carved brackets.

The American House was always the largest and most important hotel in Princeton and its construction was closely reviewed in the local paper.

The new hotel is about ready to receive the finishing touch of both carpenter and painter. The cellar walls and foundation of the building, the stone work, was about completed the first of August. About that date George H. Chase, of Berlin, commenced laying out the carpenter work and the rebuilding of the American House began to move rapidly forward under his supervision. About August 4 the brick-work was commenced by A. H. Oakey, of Portage, and in just a fortnight Oakey and his six masons had the brick-work completed of a building 44 feet front on Water Street and 110 feet on Washington Street, two stories high. As' noted above Mr. Chase is drawing the work to a close, John Snow and helpers having completed the plastering some days since. The planning of the inside arrangements of the hotel are excellent and the whole thing, both in design and workmanship, reflects credit on those having the matter in charge. The furniture and upholstery of the new hotel is being furnished by H. H. Harmon, our popular-furniture dealer. It is only a matter of a few days when the hotel will be completed and the wants of the travelling public anticipated.<sup>26</sup>

In the last two years the exterior of the hotel has been carefully restored and the interior converted into apartments for the elderly.

<sup>26</sup> Princeton Republic. October 3, 1885, p. 5.

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Dues: 10\$/year; Lifetime: 100\$

**Museums are open the 3rd Saturday of June, July and August from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. or by appointment. Meetings: 1:30 pm 3rd Monday of month; Workdays: 1:00 pm 2nd and 4th Wed. of month at 630 W. Water Street. This may vary, please call to confirm.**