

1971 Governor Fitch Law Office Restoration

If Thomas Fitch V, the fourteenth governor of the Colony of Connecticut (1754-1766), were with us today, he would find himself quite at home in the familiar surroundings of the restored law office. He would recognize the warmth of the pine boarding and the aroma of linseed oil paint, as well as the friendly scale of the small building and the spaces within. To him, all would seem as it should be, except for the electric lamps and the exposed hewn timbers. The lamps, he simply would not believe. The exposed hewn timbers, visible in the cellar and attic, would appear to him to be strangely aged with a dusty-brown pallor brought on by the wear and tear of two centuries.

In his use of the building today, the Governor would have no idea that his office was being heated by electric coils buried in the ceiling, or that there were devices called convenience outlets concealed in walls and floors. Aside from the twentieth-century metal dampers in the fireplaces, he would find no further visible changes in the law office building.

Typical of reconstruction of all historical buildings, this restoration involved a tremendous amount of research and investigation to determine the layout, design and detail. To this was added the work of locating sources for materials and arriving at the correct methods in their installation. The result is the two-room law office completed in November of 1971.

The following notes present some of the more interesting facts about the restoration.

Stones from the cellar walls of the original Fitch House were used in constructing the foundations and chimney of the law office. The small screened openings in the tops of the walls are not traditional however, and are installed to provide ventilation.

More important than building a new town house after Norwalk was burned was rebuilding homes and mills. It was fifteen years before there were resources to build the next town house. Finally built in 1794, the next town house lasted for 40 years, until 1834, when it was torn down. The present Town House was built in 1835 by Captain Lewis Raymond, who had brought brick to Norwalk as ship ballast. This Town House was the seat of government until June 30, 1913.

At that time, Norwalk and the city of South Norwalk consolidated and the government moved to South Norwalk's City Hall. The Norwalk Chapter of the DAR leased the building beginning in 1924 and added the kitchen and bathroom comprising the rear wing, with the basement. Today the Town House continues to be used for meetings, social occasions and educational programs. It is maintained, with the rest of Mill Hill Historic Park, by the Norwalk Historical Society.