

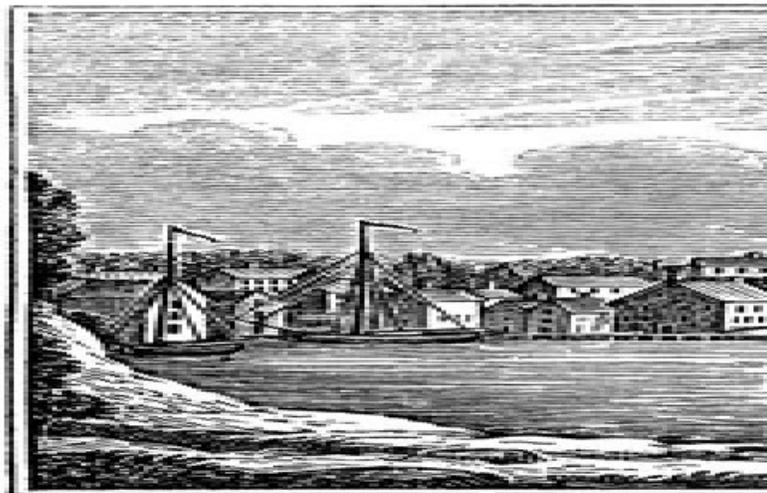
Town House at Mill Historic Park Part I - Overview

During the 1600's Norwalk was governed by Reverend Thomas Hanford, the Pastor of the Congregational Church, and the church was used as the town's meeting house. Besides administering to spiritual and civic duties, Hanford was also the schoolmaster.

In the early 1700's the town grew and became more diverse religiously and more democratic. In 1726 town government started, with all landowners eligible to vote. It was at this time that meetings started to be held in places other than the church.

Until 1736 meetings may have been held in private homes. After that they were held in the Uptown Schoolhouse, built in 1736. Then the meetings were moved to the first Town House, located at the corner of Wall and Knight streets. Later this was the site of the Old Trolley Car Barn. Next the meetings were moved to a Town House built on this site. It was destroyed during the Revolutionary War when the British burned Norwalk on July 11, 1779.

Two weeks after the burning, Colonel Thomas Fitch (of "Yankee Doodle" fame) and two other citizens were appointed to a committee to make arrangements for a new Town House. Fitch acquired the title "Yankee Doodle" during the French and Indian War, which was from 1755 to 1762.



South view

Illustration showing Mill Hill at center right, at the top of Wall Street.
From *Connecticut Historical Collections* by John Warner Barber, 1836

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 the Mill Hill Historic Park, by the Norwalk Historical Society and the Norwalk-Village Green Chapter of the Daughters of the Revolution.