



Architectural Heritage of the Republican Era: Karamürsel (Kocaeli) Old Municipality Building¹

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Abstract

During the Tanzimat period, the concept of modern municipalism emerged in the Ottoman Empire, leading to innovations in the administrative organization of municipalities in the 19th century. The Istanbul Beyoğlu Sixth Department Building, built in a Neo-classical style and masonry technique, was the first municipality building in Turkey. Subsequently, with the implementation of the Tuna Vilayeti Nizamnamesi (provincial regulations), this exemplary municipal building design spread to other provinces in the Ottoman Empire. During the Republican era, the municipal organization continued to develop. The first quarter of the 20th century was marked by the construction of public buildings in the style of the I. National Architecture Movement, including municipal buildings. This movement had a profound influence on the Turkish architectural movement during the first years of the Republican period. The national style, which appeared in parallel with the Turkism understanding of the period, was emphasised with a strong nationalism in public buildings during the first decade of the Republic. Elements characteristic of Seljuk and Ottoman architecture, such as wide eaves, domes, pointed arches and muqarnas capitals, were employed in the public buildings of the Early Republican period with a revivalist approach. In the Republican period, public buildings were constructed, city plans were drawn up and squares were organised to develop the city. Many municipality buildings dated to this period can be seen in various regions of Anatolia, constructed using different building materials. The national style reached its modern form in the 1930s. In modernising Turkish architecture, the architectural character with a simple facade understanding and wide window openings will be preferred. The municipality building in the Karamürsel district of Kocaeli, built between 1926 and 1929, reflects the aforementioned architectural style. The historical significance of Karamürsel as an ancient naval city and its maritime trade with the capital elevated municipal services to an important position. The building exemplifies the architectural style of the period in both its plan and facade design. Additionally, it is situated in the centre of a residential area and blends well with its surroundings, much like other public buildings. The symmetrical arrangement of its side wings and the elevated central axis of the two-story structure highlight the typical facade design of public buildings. This study aimed to explain the history, architecture, and facade design of the Karamürsel Old Municipality Building, emphasizing the changes that occurred over time and comparing it with other public buildings of the period. The goal was to determine the place of the building in the modern municipality's understanding of the young Republic of Turkey. Given the absence of a comprehensive study on the subject, it is particularly important to introduce and document this structure in Turkish literature.

1. INTRODUCTION

The 'hisbe institution', which is known as a sharia institution in the Islamic world, formed the basis of the municipal order [1]. In this institution, officers were appointed with the obligation to protect public order. Services were provided within the framework of general and individual rights. It is documented that Hazrat Umar, Uthman and Ali conducted city and market inspections in person. [2]. As the Islamic world expanded geographically, the duties of the muhtesip also expanded in lands such as Damascus, Baghdad

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and Iran. In Seljuk and Ottoman cities, it is known that there existed a group of representatives, comprising the heads of artisan guilds and ayan officials [1]. During the Ottoman period, an official known as “*şehremini*” (mayor) was responsible for repairs and construction after the conquest of Istanbul [3]. In the first half of the 19th century, this position was abolished and replaced by the Ebniye-i Hassa Müdüriyeti (Directorate of Ebniye-i Hassa). Municipal duties were then undertaken by kadıs [4], muhtesibs, architect aghas, and state officials [3]. Under the office of kadıs, muhtesibs and officials of the janissary quarry provided security, cleaning, and reconstruction in the city administration [1]. The Tanzimat period brought a new understanding, resulting in social and political transformations. Municipal institutions emerged in a modern style and spread to all provinces of the Ottoman Empire, starting from Istanbul, the capital city, and port cities [5]. The Şehremaneti (municipal institution) [6], established in 1854-55, was reported to be inadequate in terms of municipalization [7]. Ortaylı argues that Şehremaneti is not a good example of modern municipalism [1].

The Sixth Municipality of Beyoğlu was established in 1857 by Architect Barboni as the first municipality building to provide municipal services for foreigners concentrated in Galata and Beyoğlu [8]. The 1857 “*Regulations of the Sixth Municipality*” and 1858 “*Regulations of the Beyoğlu and Galata Department*” regulated the duties and financial structure of the municipality [7]. Its design was inspired by the modern sixth district of France, to resemble the European capital [9]. The municipal building was constructed using the masonry technique and is three storeys high. The Bursa Municipal Building, built during the same period, also exhibits a similar Westernisation in its construction technique and facade design [10]. The architectural and ornamental features of Bursa Municipality are empirical, as observed. In the year of its construction, the first regulation was announced in the *Takvim-i Vekayi Newspaper* [11].

During the Turkish Republic period, the municipal organization remained significant despite the economic and administrative challenges faced in the early years of the Republic. Municipal organizations were deprived of many facilities as a result of these difficulties. Only 4 out of 389 municipal organisations during this period had electricity installations. Additionally, 20 had regular drinking water, 17 had slaughterhouses, 7 had sports fields, 29 had parks and gardens, and 90 had regular marketplaces. During these early years, municipalities were responsible for urban planning and water management in cities devastated after the War of Independence. [12].

The architecture of the Early Republic was guided by the nation-state identity. Public buildings, such as municipal buildings, post offices, government houses, public houses, police stations, and hospitals, were constructed under the target of urbanisation. These buildings were constructed in a flamboyant manner, especially in the provinces [13].

The First National Architectural Movement developed in line with the national ideology of the Republic. It was particularly evident in official buildings until the 1930s and had a significant impact on early architectural activities [11]. The movement's influence was visible in the architectural elements and ornamental details, particularly on the facades of the buildings [14]. Although examples of this movement were found extensively in the capital city, buildings such as municipal palaces, government buildings, schools, and post offices were also constructed in other cities during the 1920s [15].

2. AIM AND METHODOLOGY

The Old Municipality Building in Karamürsel reflects the early period of the Republic's National Architecture in Anatolia. This study evaluated the building's history, facade, and architectural design. It was significant as an example of the First National Architecture style for municipality buildings in the provinces. The field and archive work revealed that the ground level of the building differed from its original state. It was discovered that the entrance level was lower in the original state and was subsequently filled in over time. Restitution studies involved partial plaster scraping and wall removal, revealing the original plan scheme of the ground floor. It is understood that the staircase on the southwest facade of the building does not exist today. The building currently serves as the district governorship building. The study involved an on-site visit, collection of necessary literature, and

obtaining drawings, photographs, and other archive information about the building from Karamürsel Municipality and Bozdağ Architecture Company.

Initially, Its monographic importance and location within the region were underlined. After, the history of the building was discussed followed by an introduction to its architectural and facade features, taking into account the changes that have occurred over time. Finally, the building was compared with other public buildings, highlighting both similarities and differences.

3. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF KARAMÜRSEL

The structure is situated in the Camiatik neighbourhood, which provides access to the sea. To the north of it, there are beaches and parks, while Atatürk Street is located to the South. The building is situated in the heart of the residential area, adjacent to the historical government mansion as seen in Figure 1. These two public buildings form the nucleus of the regional centre. Unfortunately, the historical post office building and customs agency, located nearby and estimated to have been built in the late Ottoman period, no longer exist. However, it can be argued that the central settlement in Karamürsel maintained its influence during the early Republican period. The old municipality building is situated within the aforementioned square arrangement. The Kara Bâli Bey Complex (16th century), one of the earliest immovable assets of Karamürsel, is located in an area close to the sea, which was preferred as it became privileged as a naval city [16]. Thus, it can be suggested that the coastal area of the district gained significance due to the construction of religious, commercial, and public buildings. This trend also continued into the Republican period (Figure 1).



Figure 1. View of the building from the south-west in the 1930s and the Government House next to it [Oral, 2009, 162] [17]

4. MUNICIPAL ACTIVITIES IN KARAMÜRSEL AND THE HISTORY OF THE OLD MUNICIPALITY BUILDING

Karamürsel is a district situated on the southern coast of Kocaeli province. It holds a significant historical position as the first naval city of the Ottoman period. In the first half of the 14th century, Mürsel Alp (Karamürsel Bey), the first Kaptan-ı Derya (chief admiral) of the Ottoman Empire, captured Karamürsel (Prainetos) and established his navy by developing thin and fast ships known by his name in the town he settled [18]. The city maintained its significance in the following years and experienced a surge in demand for sea crossings during the 16th century [19]. It is believed that foreign-flagged ships [20], which gained superiority in Ottoman waters, also docked at Karamürsel pier in the first quarter of the 20th century. As a result, the city gained an important position for municipal services in the early years of the Republic.

The first municipal organization was established in Karamürsel in 1902. In 1922, as a sign of the modern urbanism understanding brought by the period, Karamürsel Municipality implemented the first zoning plan. The city's new boundaries were determined by the council decision on 8 June 1926 [21] (Figure 2).



Figure 2. The 1922 zoning plan of Karamürsel Municipality [Özdemir, 2017, 228][18]

As is well-known, municipalities did not have a specific building when they were established. Municipal organizations in both the capital and provinces continued to function in rented or other public buildings [4]. Karamürsel Municipality was first established in a rented shop in the bazaar, and Hafız Selahattin Bey, the head of the Mudafa-i Hukuk Society, was appointed as the mayor [18]. There is no definitive information or documentation on the date of the municipality's establishment. However, according to sources, the building was constructed between 1926 and 1929 under the initiative of the mayor. The construction work was carried out by Nuri Akalın as the technician and Süleyman Kalfa as the construction master [22]. Additionally, it has been reported that the municipality was founded in 1927 [23]. On the front facade, there is a panel with the sentence “It is the place where M. Kemal Atatürk first set foot when he visited Karamürsel on 27.7.1933” written in Latin letters. Archive photographs show that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was welcomed and seen off on the pier of the building on this date (Figure 3) [24].

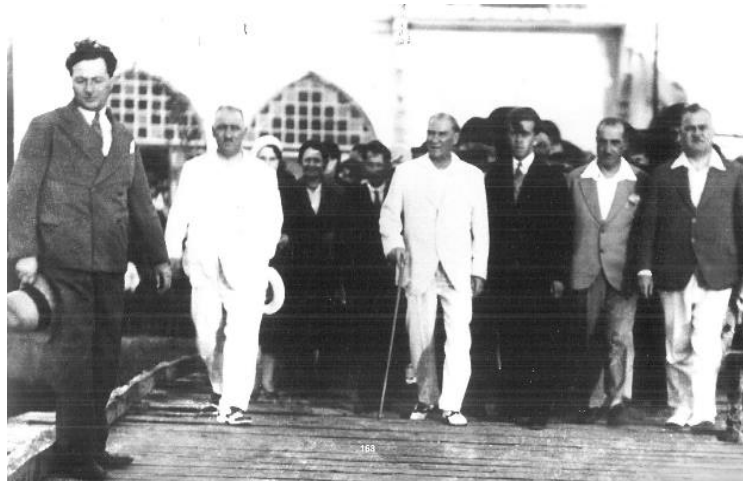


Figure 3. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's Visit to Karamürsel Municipality (1933), [Oral, 2009,163][17]

The building served as the ticket and passenger hall of the pier until 1960. The lower floor was later converted into a restaurant and the upper floor into a hotel for two years. In 1968, it was used as a wedding hall. The building was damaged during the 17 August 1999 earthquake and municipal services on the second floor were evacuated. It was renovated twice, first in 2013 by Karamürsel Municipality in cooperation with the Board of Monuments, and then again in 2015 to restore it to its original state [22]. It temporarily serves as the district governorate building today.

3.1. Plan and Facade Features

The building is registered under 2 Pafta 145 Block 1 Parcel, with the decision of Bursa K.T.V.K.K. dated 18/01/2001 and numbered 8733. The building was constructed as a rectangular prism with a plan oriented in the northeast-southwest direction. It has one storey above the ground floor. A rectangular hall running in the northwest-southeast direction divides the main mass into two parts. To determine the wall material, partial plaster scraping was carried out on the ground floor walls during the restitution studies. The ground floor's original plan scheme was uncovered after the walls were removed. Symmetrical spaces are present on both sides of the ground floor. In the northeast of the entrance hall, there is a wooden staircase adjacent to the southeast wall that connects to the upper floor. A unit was formed in the northeast-southeast direction and used as a latrine (Figure 4).

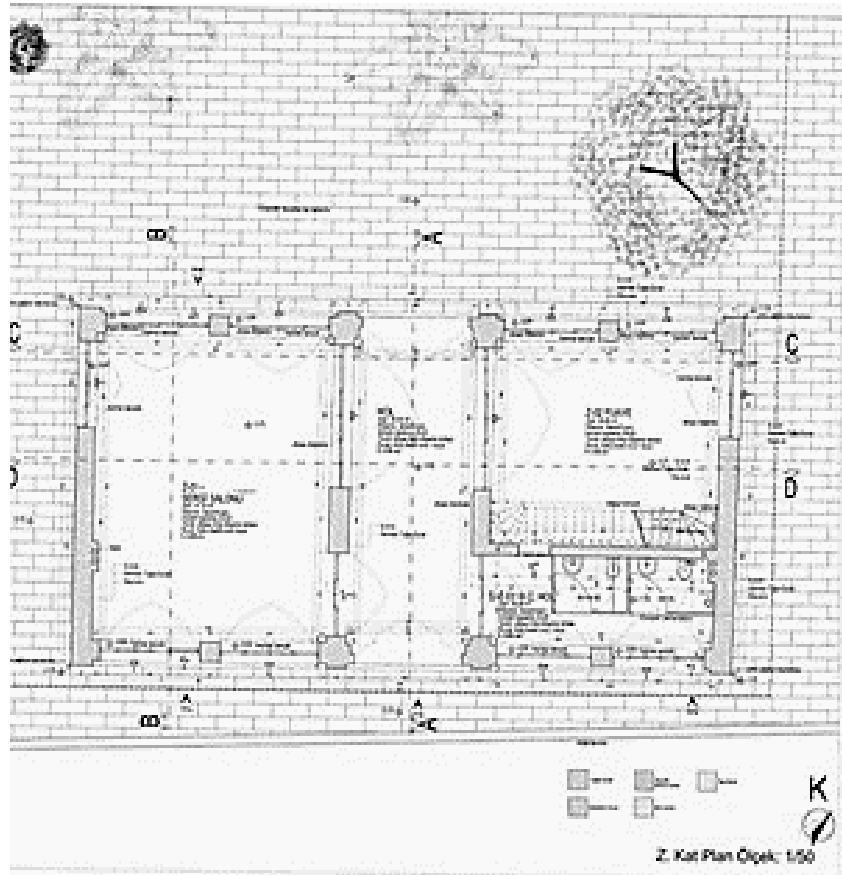


Figure 4. Ground Floor Plan (Restoration Project), [Bozdağ Architecture Company] [25]

The first-floor plan of the building has survived to the present day with only minor changes. A restroom was discovered during the restitution works in the northeast. The first floor is divided into two sections by a hall, with a small perpendicular corridor. The units at the corners of the corridors and the hall were used as service spaces. These spaces are bounded by thin walls. The north corner serves as the presidency room, while the east corner is designated as a meeting room (Figure 5-10).

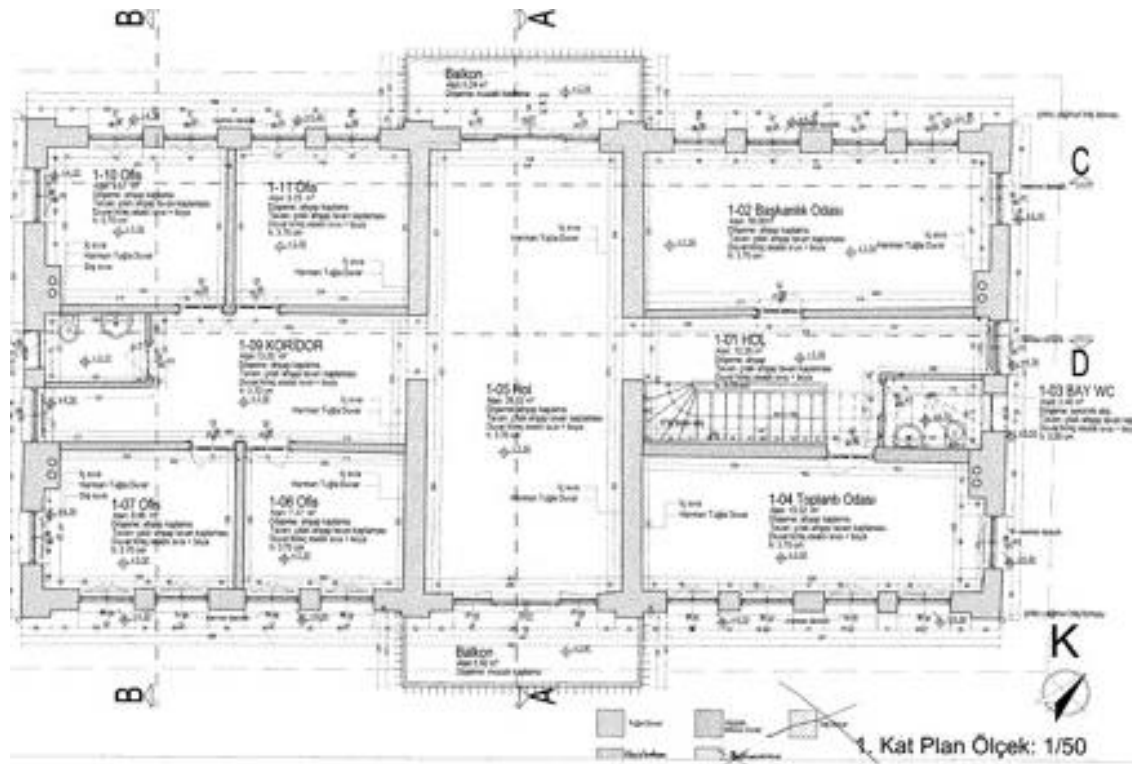


Figure 5. First-Floor Plan, [Bozdağ Architecture Company] [25]



Figure 6. General View of the Ground-Floor Hall



Figure 7. General View of the First-Floor Hall



Figure 8. A wooden staircase for the passage between floors, leading from the room in the northeast



Figure 9. Presidential Room, North Corner, First-floor



Figure 10. The Southwest Room on the ground floor was previously used as the "Municipality Casino".

According to an old visual source of the building, the coastal edge line differed from its current position, and the municipality building was situated right on the edge of the sea. A connection was established from the centre axis of the building towards the pier. It is apparent that the ground level of the building also differed from today, indicating that the surrounding area was filled over time (Figure 11-12).



Figure 11. 1930s [Oral, 2009,162] [17]



Figure 12. An Old View of Karamürsel Municipality Building [Karamürsel Municipality Archive] [26]

The building's primary facade overlooks the sea. The entrance is highlighted by a rectangular mass raised on a hipped roof and partially recessed. The main door features a segmented arched opening, with a balcony supported by consoles above it. On either side of the door at the lower floor level, there are two arches. The upper floor level has four longitudinal rectangular window openings. The mass arrangement of the building is very symmetrical. A thin partially projecting moulding separates the two levels (Figure 13). The south-eastern facade shares the same features as the north-western facade. The side facades appear more massive than the other facades. Near the entrance facade, there is an opening with pointed arches on the lower side of the facades. At the upper level, there are four windows, one of which is smaller in size. The facades exhibit complete symmetry (Figure 14-16).



Figure 13. Entrance Facade - Northwest Façade



Figure 14. Rear Facade - Southeast Facade



Figure 15. Southwest Facade



Figure 16. North-East Facade

The building was originally constructed with masonry mortar bricks, although it is currently painted over plaster. The interior features a flat wooden interlocking ceiling, with thin slats nailed to the joints. The floor coverings were renewed during the last works and are also made of wood. The tile mosaic covering the centre of the ground floor of the building is observed (Figure 17-18).



Figure 17. Interior Ceiling Coating



Figure 18. *Ground Floor Tile Coating*

4. ASSESSMENT AND COMPARISON

The Karamürsel Old Municipality Building, constructed during the early Republican period, is the sole historical public building that has survived in the district. Therefore, it is significant in terms of reflecting the architectural features of the era. The plan features, mass, and facade composition of the building exhibit typical characteristics of the I. National Architecture period. It reflects the common plan scheme used in public buildings, which includes a central hall and rectangular rooms around it. This design was applied to both the first and ground floors of the Amasya Municipality Building (1913-1923) [27]. Although this plan resembles residential architecture, there are differences in the units [28].

During the late and early Republican period, several municipal buildings were constructed in the national style. These include Fatih (Istanbul, 1913), Kadıköy (Istanbul, 1913), Afyonkarahisar (Karahisar-ı Sahip-1919-1922), Amasya (1913-1923), Tokat (1916-1922) and Kastamonu (1921-1925) [13] municipality buildings which feature wiping belts that separate the floors, raised facade emphasis, wide eaves, and flattened or pointed arched windows.

The main facade of the building is highlighted by its height in comparison to the side facades. This design feature is also present in other municipal buildings such as İzmit Municipality Building (1933), Amasya Municipality Building, Afyonkarahisar Municipality Building, Fatih Municipality Building, and Kadıköy Municipality Building. The Balıkesir Havran Municipality Building (1924-1928), which dates back to the Early Republican period, also exhibits similar characteristics in terms of facade and mass design [29].

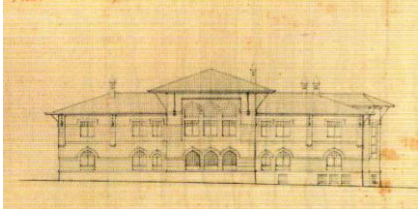
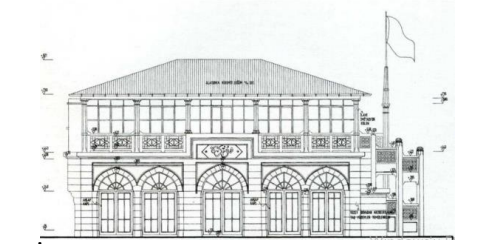
In addition to the municipal buildings, other public buildings such as Bostancı İbrahim Paşa School, Istanbul Hamid-i Evvel Madrasah [30], Balıkesir Governor's Mansion [31], and İzmir Turkish Quarry [11] also showcase this characteristic on their main facades (Table 1).

Table 1.

 <p><i>a-Karamürsel Old Municipality Building (1926-1929)</i></p>	 <p><i>b. İzmit Municipality Building (1933), [32]</i></p>	 <p><i>c-Havran Municipality Building (1924-28), [29]</i></p>
 <p><i>d-Afyon Karahisar Municipality Building (1919-1922), [13]</i></p>	 <p><i>e- İzmir Turkish Quarry (1927), [33]</i></p>	 <p><i>f-Balıkesir Governor's Mansion (1928-1930), [31].</i></p>

Similarities exist between Hamid-i Evvel Madrasah [30] and Moda Pier [34], as both feature a double-centred pointed arch on the ground floor and modern windows on the upper floor. Additionally, Hamid-i Evvel Madrasah has geometric moulding on the upper floor windows, similar to the municipality building (Table 2).

Table 2.

 <p><i>a-İstanbul, Hamid-i Evvel Madrasah (1911), [30]</i></p>	 <p><i>b-İstanbul, Moda Pier (1916-1917), [34]</i></p>
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5. CONCLUSION

The Old Municipality Building in Karamürsel holds great importance as the only remaining public building in the district. Prior to the construction of the municipal building, municipal activities were conducted in a rented shop. However, as the municipality's needs increased and the existing shop could not meet these needs, the municipality building was constructed under challenging circumstances with a limited budget. Concurrently, the city's zoning plans were drawn up under the leadership of the mayor's office, and significant efforts were made in terms of modern municipalism. It is known that other public buildings in the city were demolished over time. The municipality building, situated near the sea, serves to exemplify the nucleus of the city, in conjunction with the government mansion, post office building and customs building. This illustrates that the administration of the early period of the Republic was not concentrated outside the city, but rather on the main axis where the heart of trade was located. The municipal building shares architectural and functional similarities with other public buildings of the period, including the government mansion located next to it. This highlights the impact of municipal buildings on the city's overall appearance. Furthermore, it can be posited that the centre opening on the ground floor of the municipal building was also utilised as a pier in the past, with the aid of visual sources. From this perspective, it can be posited that the hall in the centre was utilised as a waiting area for passengers for a period. Over time, the edifice was utilised for a variety of purposes, including as a restaurant, hotel, wedding venue and other spaces with social functions. This resulted in a series of

alterations to the ground floor plan, which was then restored to its original configuration following the completion of the restoration works. The municipality building has since been relocated from its original position along the shoreline. It can be understood that the area has been filled in and the building has been relocated from the shoreline.

It reflects the characteristic features of the First National Architecture Movement in terms of facade and plan. The hall's principal characteristics include its rectangular shape, the windows with pointed arches, the moulding belt dividing the façade into two, the balconies overhanging the entrance door, and the height of the central axis. These features are indicative of the national architectural movement. It is known that similar public buildings existed in the capital and provinces of the period. The building was constructed between 1926 and 1929 and serves as an example of the movement outside Ankara. Our primary objective is to maintain the original function of the structure.

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