

# Discover Historic AUBURNDALE

around a central entry. Its wood shingle wall covering and lack of classical detailing creates a more informal tone than that of its more ostentatious cousin.

**Groveland Street** was created in 1896 when the seven-acre J. Willard Rice estate was subdivided. The main house stood where the street now runs, and it faced Grove Street. The steadily rising demand for house lots in Auburndale at the turn of the century rendered several of the village's largest estates vulnerable to development pressure. **Cheswick Road**, running between **Woodland Road** and **Commonwealth Avenue**, was created in the same manner.

Architect George D. Rand designed **40 Groveland Street** for himself in 1902 while a partner in the firm Rand and Taylor. The dark-stained wood-shingle wall covering and deep gambrel roof identify this house as a late example of the Shingle Style, which achieved popularity in seaside resort towns such as Newport, Rhode Island, and Bar Harbor, Maine, in the 1880s.

The house at **60 Grove Street** (ca. 1896) is another Shingle Style residence. Paired Tuscan columns and a deck balustrade are Colonial Revival style elements which were commonly integrated into Shingle Style houses in this area. Design features shared by this house and **40 Groveland Street** suggest that it is also the work of Rand and Taylor.

The building at **49 Grove Street** was known as the Nye Park Inn at the turn of the century. The south wall of the structure originally faced Grove Street. The Inn was moved (ca. 1910) to create room for Central Terrace. Steep gables and tall chimneys with corbeled caps

emphasize the building's unusual height.

Auburndale's **H.H. Richardson-designed railroad station** (ca. 1881) stood just north of Central Street until its demolition to make way for the Massachusetts Turnpike Extension in 1962. The turnpike also claimed Nye Park, which was adjacent to the station, and Burr Park, which lay at the foot of Hancock Street.

The corner of Lexington and Auburn Streets has always been the center of Auburndale's commercial area. The business district first evolved to meet the needs of the residential population during the Civil War era. Known as the **Plummer block**, **293 Auburn Street** dates back to this period and was originally capped by a mansard roof. Its "skirt" of storefronts is part of the original design, although the brick facing and angled plate glass windows are twentieth-century alterations.

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David B. Cohen, Mayor

Photos courtesy of the Jackson Homestead

Today's village of Auburndale began as a remote district of farmland, rolling wooded hills, and marsh. Even as late as 1831, only seven families held title to all of Auburndale's land area. This all began to change, though, when the Boston and Worcester Railroad introduced passenger service to Newton, which ushered in a dramatic new era of development. By 1837, the railroad had been extended through Auburndale.



Auburn Street

As suburban development occurred in Newton Corner and West Newton, sharp-eyed real estate speculators looked elsewhere for more opportunities. In 1847, William Jackson and his North Auburndale Land Company opened up Auburndale for a new type of Newton resident - the suburban commuter. Jackson's company laid out many of the streets north of Auburn Street, a colonial highway established in 1729, and similar development to the south began almost simultaneously.

Auburndale's main asset, besides its favorable location for transportation, was the languid reach of the Charles River which bordered it to the west. The village was firmly established by the 1860s, and Auburndale residents and visitors looked to the river for recre-

ation. Canoeing and skating were popular pastimes, and several formal boat clubs built boathouses at the river's edge.

River activity was greatly increased in the 1890s when the Newton Street Railway opened Norumbega Park, a 21-acre recreation facility boasting a restaurant, deer park, concert hall, and canoeing areas. In the 1930s and 1940s, the Totem Pole Lounge featured the sound of the Big Bands. Access from Boston by streetcar made the Park an immensely popular family playground.

Although adversely affected by the construction of Route 128 and the Massachusetts Turnpike Extension, Auburndale has retained an important collection of nineteenth-century architecture. This tour explores just one of Auburndale's neighborhoods, the Lasell Neighborhood, where several phases of community development are represented by houses ranging from eighteenth-century farmhouses to twentieth-century Colonial Revival style suburban residences. The tour begins at the **Plummer Memorial Library**, built in 1927 on the site of Auburndale's first railroad station, which also served as the village post office. None of the sites on the tour are open to the public.

William Robinson, Jr., whose father is considered to be Auburndale's first white settler, built the house at **473 Auburn Street** around 1724. Known as the **Bourne House, or Whittemore's Tavern**, the house exhibits several features common to simple, Pre-Revolutionary farmhouses. It is a south-facing, two-story wood frame structure with two smaller wings projecting from its north wall. The main section of the house is only one room deep. Rather than being organized around the typical massive central chimney, it has a pair of interior chimneys which are visible from the street. Each room in the main portion of the house has a fireplace on the north (cold) wall, allowing sunlight to penetrate through windows on the remaining facades.

Shortly after Auburndale was opened for suburban development, the Greek Revival residence at **33 Woodland Road** (ca. 1848) was constructed for Ebenezer Bradbury, the father of 21 children. Broad, flat pilasters at each corner of the house, a doorway with full sidelights and a transom window, and an Ionic portico, are among the elements which define the Greek Revival character of the house. The wooden fretwork set in broad, shallow arches between the porch columns is a rare feature, imitative of wrought iron ornament fashionable on more elaborate houses of the time.

Like the Bradbury house, the Greek Revival residence prominently sited at **59 Woodland Road** was constructed in the late 1840s. Its first owner, Reverend Isaac R. Worcester, was the editor of the *Missionary Herald* for many years. The symmetrically designed house was altered in the 1880s by the addition of bay windows on the north

and south ends. An oriel window resting on pillars which frame the main entrance was also added at that time. The present doorway, with its elaborate leaded sidelights and transom, was installed at the turn of the century.

Constructed in 1857 from a design by architect Charles E. Parker, the Romanesque Revival style **Auburndale Congregational Church (now the United Parish of Auburndale)** is a village landmark. The main doorway and south porch both feature richly carved moldings. Covered in patterned slate, the spire rests on a broach (the pyramidal style sloped section which transitions the square tower to the octagonal spire) with clockfaces on each side of the tower. The open belfry below the clocks carries the round-arched theme established by the church's window and door openings.

Mrs. Eliza Harding Walker began the Home for Missionaries Children in the house at **103-107 Hancock Street** (ca. 1859). The widow of a missionary herself, Mrs. Walker devoted much of her life to providing for the children of missionaries stationed in outposts lacking health care and educational facilities. Brackets at the eaves, chamfered porch posts, bay windows, and projecting cornices over the windows mark this house as an example of the Italianate style. Evidence of the Home's continuous expansion is seen on all four sides of the structure, particularly in the three-story addition at the southwest corner and the two conical-roofed dormers on the front façade.

The playfield across the street from Mrs. Walker's house was the site of the picturesque **Queen Anne style Williams School** (ca. 1883),

demolished in 1950 when the present grammar school fronting Grove Street was constructed.

The ca. 1970s wing at the northwest corner of the Queen Anne style house at **119 Hancock Street** (ca. 1881) matches the original section in scale, materials, and detailing, yet has a modern character of its own. This is a nice example of a new addition to an old house that is not obtrusive.

Charles E. Parker, the Boston architect who designed the **Auburndale Congregational Church (now the United Parish of Auburndale)**, lived at **7 Williston Road** (ca. 1850, addition ca. 1865). The original section of the house is the southerly portion facing **Williston Road**. It was built as a gardener's cottage for the 70-acre J.J. Walworth estate, which included land to the west of Hancock Street. Parker, who doubled the size of the house with the addition of the north wing, was the father of Horatio Parker, a noted composer of church music.

The gambrel-roofed brick building at **144 Hancock Street** was constructed in 1913 for the **Walker Missionary Home, now the Walker Center for Ecumenical Exchange**. The institutional building's Colonial Revival design, choice of materials, and restrained detail, help it to blend well with the residential character of the neighborhood.

The five Italianate, mansard-roofed houses along the west side of the intersection of **Hancock and**

**Grove Streets** were built in the 1870s and 1880s by Samuel F. Pickering, a real estate agent. Similar in plan and form, each house has distinctive trim and detailing. The generous spacing between each house is typical of the Victorian era, when a "garden setting" was a very desirable feature.

The house at **176 Grove Street** (ca. 1860s) exemplifies the hybrid character of many residences of this period. The Second Empire design features a bellcast mansard roof and front dormer but is combined with paired brackets, an ornate entrance porch, and double doors more typically associated with the Italianate style. Adjacent to the house is a picturesque carriage barn clad in board and batten siding.



The Bourne House, or Whittemore's Tavern

Simple and elaborate versions of the Italianate style which achieved great popularity among Auburndale's first suburban villagers stand across from each other at **160 and 161 Grove Street**. Both ca. 1850 structures are clapboarded and feature the brackets, deep eaves, and rounded accent windows which are the signature of the style. Several additions are apparent on 161 Grove Street, which is part of the Walker Center compound.

The site of **Bragdon Hall** (ca. 1850, demolished 1973), which crowned a sloping, tree-shaded lawn, is visible from the corner of Grove Street and Woodland Road. Founded in 1851 by Edward Lasell, who was backed financially by a syndicate of prominent Auburndale men, the **Auburndale Female**



