

Discover Historic WABAN

32 William C. Strong commissioned local architects Bacon and Hill to design the Dutch style commercial block at **1637-1651 Beacon Street**. An architect's rendering of the distinctive design appears in the Oct. 31, 1896 issue of *American Architect and Building News*. The crow-stepped gable extending above the roofline characterizes

the style. The "false front" store, a symbol of the Wild West, also evolved from Dutch style motifs. Tasteful, one-story Dutch style additions have

been added to the east elevation as the need for more commercial space arose in the 1920s.

33 The 1896 Church of the Good Shepherd at **1671 Beacon Street** has an unusual history. The structure was originally owned by the Waban Church Corporation, a private corporation composed of members of the Waban Christian Union and the Improvement Association who realized the need for some sort of organized religion in the village. William F. Goodwin, a member of the group, donated his skills to design the Medieval Revival style church. The Reverend William Hall Williams was engaged as the rector. He leased the church for a yearly fee of \$200.00, and organized the present Episcopal parish. In 1907, the Church Corporation transferred title of the property to the parish.

34 The Frederick Collins House at **1734 Beacon Street** is a splendid example of the Greek Revival style built just after Frederick's marriage to Amelia Revere in 1847. A monumental two-story portico with supporting Ionic columns transforms the street facade into a Greek temple. The facade is faced with flush

siding, imitative of the smooth masonry construction of the Greek originals. Other distinguishing features include: pilasters framing the corners of the structure and carrying a full entablature along the side elevations, floor-to-ceiling triple hung sash on the street façade capped with shaped lintels, and an entrance framed by sidelights.

The Collins family settled in Waban during the late 18th century. The estate was passed from father to son and in 1855 to grandsons Frederick, Edward, and

Amasa. During the late 19th century this section of Beacon Street came to be known as the "Collins neighborhood" for the row of Collins houses, of which only No. 1734 remains.

Real estate speculators developed the 200-acre Collins farm during the late 1880s. Ernest Bowditch, a well-known civil engineer, laid out the region's hilly topography into several winding, complicated streets lined with large spacious lots. Prior to this period of development there were very few houses along this section of Beacon Street. The Frederick Collins House is one of the best preserved local examples of Greek Revival style architecture, warranting its designation as a Newton Landmark Preservation Site.

Text taken from *Discover Historic Waban*. Revised and updated by Newton Planning and Development Department in conjunction with the Newton Historical Commission. December 2005.

David B. Cohen, Mayor

The village of Waban was named after a Nonantum Chief who had previously resided atop Nonantum Hill on the Newton-Brighton line. This location is believed to have been a favorite hunting ground for Waban (the Wind) and his people. William C. Strong, a Newton resident active in Waban's development, suggested the name for the fledgling village.

Colonial settlement was slow to come to Waban. Though settlers came to Newton as early as the 1630s, more than a generation passed before John and Rebecca Woodward established themselves in Waban. The couple received title to a 30-acre parcel of land as a wedding present in 1681. Eight generations later, family descendants continued to occupy the house John and Rebecca built. The structure still stands at 50 Fairlee Road, and today it is one of only sixteen properties within the City designated as a Newton Landmark Preservation Site. Other settlers soon followed the Woodward's, and by the 18th century several large farms had been established along the winding Sherborn Road, now Woodward Street and Beacon Street.

Throughout much of the 19th century, Waban remained a quiet agricultural region. As late as 1874, fewer than 20 families held title to all of its land. In the mid-1880s, however, interest in suburban developments near the Boston and Albany Railroad became increasingly widespread. Real estate investors purchased large tracts of land along the new Highland Branch of the railroad, laying out several new streets and house lots.

The completion of the Highland Branch in May 1886 was hailed as one of the most important events in the history of Newton. It stimulated suburban development around the Newton Highlands, Elliot and Waban stations, uniting these villages with the northerly Boston and Albany line via a connection at Riverside. Laid out along



a looping pathway, the new rail line soon became known as the "Circuit Road." Henry Hobson Richardson, the architect best known for Trinity Church in

Boston's Back Bay, was commissioned to design the new train stations. The Waban station, completed in August 1886, was of rough cut pink granite, with a broad, sweeping slate roof. Since demolished, it was one of Richardson's last designs, as he died in April of the same year, prior to the station's completion. Only one Richardson designed train station currently remains in Newton: the Woodland station (although this station is no longer in use, it is still standing in its original location just north of Washington Street). Daily commuter trains linking the village to downtown Boston soon brought a steady influx of businessmen, professionals and tradesmen. These newcomers to Waban built houses ranging from simple wood framed structures to large, elaborate residences, many of which were designed by architects and set on spacious lots.

The residences, churches and public buildings featured in this walking tour represent several phases of Waban's development. The village contains many fine examples of well-pre-

served architecture including 18th century farmhouses, a Greek Revival style structure complete with monumental portico, and richly ornamented turn-of-the-century Colonial Revival, Queen Anne, and Shingle style houses. Twenty-three of the buildings and residences featured are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Waban Library and the businesses located in the Strong commercial block are the only sites open to the public.

1 The first Waban Library was established at the request of residents in April of 1892. Located in Waban Hall as a 'station' of the Newton Free Library, it soon outgrew its environs and hence moved to the post office. Increased circulation and lack of space precipitated several more moves, prompting residents to establish a permanent home for the facility. Through the efforts of the Waban Improvement Society, the local Women's Club, the Waban Land Trust, and local contributions, the present building was constructed. Designed by Denmore, LeClear, and Robbins of Boston, the **Waban Library** was completed and presented to the city in May 1930. Located at **1608 Beacon Street**, the library is distinctive for its steeply pitched cross-gable form, granite quoins at the corners, and half-timbered façades under the eaves.

2 The **Cochituate Aqueduct** was built in 1846 to supply water to the rapidly growing City of Boston. Approximately 18 miles in length, the aqueduct transported water from a series of reservoirs in the Framingham area to the Chestnut Hill Reservoir in Boston. The underground line is now a part of the Newton sewer system, though joggers and hikers alike enjoy its grassy slopes.

3 Eleazer Hyde, Jr., whose grandfather Jonathan was one of Newton's earliest and most prolific settlers, built the Georgian style house at **401 Woodward Street** between 1720 and 1730. Designated a Newton Landmark Preservation Site in 1994,

the house exhibits several features common to Colonial farmhouses in the period leading up to the Revolutionary War. The main block of the south facing, wood frame structure was originally one room deep. Whereas many early houses were organized around a massive central chimney, the Hyde farmhouse has a pair of interior chimneys, enabling the placement of a central passage. This passage helped to define the public and private realms of the dwelling. 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. The house has been altered significantly over the years. H. Langford Warren, founder and longtime Dean of the Harvard University School of Architecture, occupied the house in the late 1880s and added the large rear ell. His appreciation of architectural history prompted him to leave the main façade relatively untouched, and thus the Hyde House retains much of its original appearance from the street. The house and its surrounding land figure prominently in Waban's development. In 1886, Dr. Morrill Wyman, founder of Mount Auburn Hospital in Cambridge, sold the house and 150 acres of farmland to real estate speculators. The speculators, Charles Page and Frederick Henshaw, proceeded to subdivide the land into 87 house lots, creating the suburban neighborhood existing today.

4 Charles Page and Frederick Henshaw commissioned H. Langford Warren to design several houses in their subdivision. The distinctive Shingle style residence at **414 Woodward Street** and the Queen Anne style residence at **389 Woodward Street**, both constructed in 1888, are examples of his innovative designs. The Queen Anne style is typically defined by several architectural elements found in these structures, specifically their asymmetrical massing, complicated forms, and a lack of rules governing detail and proportions. Note how the



Frederick Collins House

walls are composed of clapboards on the main block while cut shingles add visual texture to the gables. The house at 389 Woodward Street is a unique example in that it incorporates Classical features such as Palladian windows and entablatures enriched with garlands into the overall design.

5 Turn right at the corner to reach **703 Chestnut Street**. The design of this ambitious 1889 Shingle style residence is attributed to its first occupant, Lewis H. Bacon. Balloon frame construction introduced in the northeast in the 1850s featured uniformly sized wood studs. The technique made this house's complex, towered form possible. Its wall planes are broken with projections, recessed windows, and sweeping curves.

6 Double back on Chestnut to view the informal massing, half-timber work in the gable field, and bargeboards at the eaves that constitute the important features of **677 Chestnut Street**. Termed Medieval Revival in style, the design of this 1897 residence continues the picturesque strain of architecture popularized during this period. Missing from the gable roof peak is a finial: a pointed, vertical ornamental treatment common to this house style.

7 Although modest in stature, the house at **658 Chestnut Street** features several noteworthy characteristics. Architect William F. Goodwin designed the house in 1888 as his residence. Four-square in form, the main block is capped by a low hipped roof. Triangular

shaped dormers allow light to penetrate the attic. The shallow bay contains thin mullion strips (which hold the glass planes in place) arranged in a decorative pattern, with a clapboard fan set into a pediment over the entry.

8 As Shingle style houses continued to be built in the 1890s, several variations developed. The off-street setting of the Ida E. Davidson House at **24 Plainfield Street**, constructed in 1897, enhances the quiet, informal effect typical of later adaptations of the Shingle style. The broad gambrel roof is an important feature in this design, and is often carried down to the level of the second floor and cross-gabled. Architectural trim details are typically simplified from the ornate examples found in the Queen Anne style, but the Shingle style continues the Queen Anne style's tradition of asymmetry in form.

9 A hallmark of the Shingle style is the use of natural or brown stained wooden shingles as a wall covering. Though the massing of the 1898 Nathaniel Knott House at **30 Plainfield Street** is complex and more closely tied to the Queen Anne style, its uniform shingled wall surface evokes a quieter appearance. Also typical are the curved forms of the bay and recessed window in the gable.

10 Built in 1899, the house at **36 Plainfield Street** demonstrates yet another variation of the Shingle style, characterized by its blocky proportions and broad, hipped roof with deep overhanging eaves. Also incorporated are popular Colonial Revival style elements, such as a veranda supported by columns and an entrance bracketed by fluted pilasters and capped by a cornice with dentils.

11 The Belle M. Wardwell House at **42 Plainfield Street** is a catalog of Georgian Revival style ornament. Constructed in 1898, its wide cornerboards frame the structure and

