

designed by the firm Ritchie, Parson, and Taylor, of whom James Ritchie was a Newton resident. The building is constructed in the Classical Revival mode and is noteworthy for its classically inspired stone door surround.

**37** Land for the **Newton Centre Common** is thought to have been a gift from the Hyde and Wiswall families to the town when the meeting-house was moved in the 1720s. It was originally used as a militia training field. Several structures were built on the Common, including a powder-house and two "noon-houses" used by parishioners who lived far from the meeting house as places for their Sunday noon meal. None of these structures remains. The Common was a focus for the efforts of the Newton Centre Improvement Association, which planted trees there in 1880 and constructed the town horse and dog trough (now used as a flower planter) at the southwest corner of the Common in 1907. A large flagpole, designed by Newton Centre resident Albert S. Kendall, was dedicated in 1921 as a memorial to those who died in World War I. The triangular plot of land next to the Common, now a municipal parking lot, was formerly the site of the Mason School.

**38** Union Street was laid out in the late 1880s to provide direct access to the new Newton Centre Railroad Station and rapidly became a focus for commercial activity. The **Bradford Court Apartments**, developed by prominent Newton inventor and real estate speculator Mellen Bray in 1913, was the first apartment building in Newton Centre. It is built in the Jacobean Revival style, which enjoyed a short

period of popularity during the early part of last century.

**39** **Bray's Block** or Bray's Hall, was built by Mellen Bray in 1893 as a commercial building, bowling alley, indoor tennis court, and public meeting hall. This is an example of Classical Revival architecture and is especially noted for its many dormers, buff-colored masonry work, and copper clad roof. The **Union Building** to its right was similarly built as a combination commercial building and meeting hall. It was constructed in 1896 and is a fine example of Georgian Revival commercial architecture featuring a modillioned cornice, keystone lintels over the second story windows, and a large Palladian window over the main entry. Today, both structures house a variety of shops, offices, and restaurants.

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David B. Cohen, Mayor

# Discover Historic NEWTON CENTRE

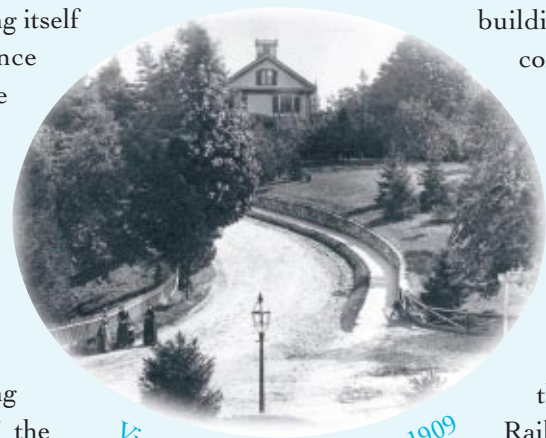
Present day Newton has its origins in the mid-1630s as an early offshoot of Cambridge. As the early settlement was sparse, residents were forced to travel to Cambridge to attend religious services. However, as the number of settlers increased, sentiment grew for the establishment of a church in Newton. In 1660, the colonists were granted their independence from Cambridge and a meeting-house was built at the corner of what is now Centre & Cotton Streets.

While the building itself has long since disappeared, the East Parish Burying Ground is still in existence and a monument marks the location of the early building near the top of the hill.

By 1774, the population of the settlement had shifted south and the remoteness and inconvenience of the first meeting house's location resulted in the construction of a new meeting house at the corner of Centre and Homer streets, which was then considered to be the approximate center of the town. This marked the founding of the area now known as Newton Centre. A militia training field which had been located at the old meeting house site was also moved at this time and eventually became the Newton Centre Common. Newton's first Baptist church was also established in Newton Centre in 1781.

While Newton Centre was developing as a religious center for the town-

ship, it lagged behind the more accessible northern villages in the development of residences and business enterprises. In 1848, town meetings were shifted to the more prosperous village of West Newton, cementing a long-standing rivalry between the two villages. At the same time, Newton's growing industrial community was focused on the villages along the Charles River. As late as the mid-19th century, Newton Centre was a sparsely



View of Pleasant Street ca. 1909

settled village with only ten buildings facing the common and a few structures located along the outlying roads.

This trend began to change with the establishment of the Charles River

Railroad in the 1850s.

Development was moderate at first as the service on this line was infrequent and unreliable - it had primarily been built to serve the needs of the Upper Falls industrial community and to transport fill for the development of the Back Bay beginning in the 1860s. In the early 1870s, however, improvements were made to the railway line that resulted in frequent commuter service between Newton Centre and Boston. This, in turn, triggered constant and steady growth in Newton Centre resulting in its transformation from a small agricultural crossroads into a relatively affluent railroad suburb. It is this rich, late nineteenth-century suburban architecture which defines Newton Centre today and is the focus of this walking tour. None of the houses on the tour are open to the public.

**1** **Newton Centre Railroad Station** - The Charles River Railroad was originally constructed through Newton Centre to Upper Falls in 1852. The original passenger station was located at Langley Road (formerly Station Street) and the railroad tracks. In 1886, the Boston and Albany, successors to the Charles River Railroad, incorporated the old railroad into the Circuit Railroad commuter line. As part of this project, a prominent Boston architect, H. H. Richardson, was commissioned to design twelve suburban rail stations for the new line, one of which was the Newton Centre Station. Richardson died before the project was completed but the station was eventually constructed in 1890 by Richardson's successor firm of Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge. The original station is an excellent example of Richardsonian Romanesque architecture. Its simple massive design, rough-hewn stone block construction and contrasting coloration are all typical of Richardson at his best. A companion structure, a baggage and railway express building also built in 1890 by Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge, is still partially visible to the left of the station. Although incorporated into a late twentieth-century structure, its distinctive stone block construction is discernable.

**2** **Sumner Street** - Until the 1860s the area which now comprises the Sumner Street National Register District was made up of several large estates, including that of Marshall S. Rice, a prominent Newton resident in the mid-19th century. As Newton Centre expanded in the latter half of the 19th century, sections of these estates were sold. Sumner Street became the site of many large suburban homes owned by Boston businessmen who commuted to work from the Newton Centre Station. The section of Sumner Street between Willow Street and Cotswold Terrace

retains most of its late 19th century character and is one of the best collections of Victorian residential architecture in the City.

**3** **180 Sumner Street** was built in 1894 and is typical of the large suburban residences that were developed in Newton Centre during the late 19th century. It is an example of Shingle style architecture and is particularly noteworthy for its heavily braced front gables with an adeptly inset pointed arch and excellent fieldstone porch.

**4** **166 Sumner Street** is one of the earlier buildings on Sumner Street, dating from around 1870, and is a modest example of the Stick style which was popular in the early 1870s. The term Stick refers to the heavy timbers used as decorative elements such as in the bargeboards and gable trim on the front gable. The original carriage house is located just to the right of the house and mirrors many of the Stick style elements seen in the main structure. The house was built as a speculative investment by Sidney P. Clarke, a local carpenter/builder who is responsible for many early residences in the area.

**5** The large Queen Anne style house at **156 Sumner Street** was built in 1888 and serves as quite a contrast to the more modest Stick style house across Everett Street. By the late 1880s, Sumner Street had become a fashionable address and the scale and richness of this house serves to illustrate this change. It is noteworthy because of its complex massing, asymmetrical façade, and decorative shingle patterning which is characteristic of the best Queen Anne designs.

**6** The simple, symmetrical facade of the house at **155 Sumner Street** serves to illustrate the evolution in tastes that accompanied the Colonial Revival movement of the 1890s. This is particularly apparent when contrasted with the flamboyance and complexity of 156 Sumner Street. Unlike most

Colonial Revival style buildings, though, the structure is not symmetrical. Although it was built in 1897, well into the Colonial Revival period, it has a wrap-around porch with a rough-faced stone foundation which is more characteristic of the Queen Anne style.

**7** **148 Sumner Street** is a transitional building, built ca. 1890, which displays elements of both the Shingle and Colonial Revival styles. The overall design and massing of the house, its use of shingle siding, and its steeply pitched gambrel front gable are all elements of the Shingle style. The detailing, though, as seen in the gable front Palladian window, the porch details, and the swag motif on the door and window lintels, are characteristic of the Colonial Revival style.

**8** A late example of the Stick Style, **147 Sumner Street** was built in 1883 and is a nice example of the style at its most varied. Its exuberant porches feature a wealth of Stick style decoration, including turned posts and jig-sawn brackets. The roof configuration, which incorporates a shed roof, a hipped dormer, and a high hipped roof, is also notable.

**9** **140 Sumner Street** is one of the most enthusiastic and best preserved examples of the Queen Anne style in the area. Built in 1884 for M. J. Lynch of Boston, this house utilizes six types of sawn shingles, as well as many carved details to highlight its complex facade of interlocking gables, bays, and porches.

**10** **139 Sumner Street** dates from ca. 1867 and is one of the oldest surviving structures in the area. It is a Second Empire style building which has



Centre Street

retained a fine bellcast or concave mansard roof with pedimented dormer windows on each facade. The Queen Anne style porch is a later addition.

During the first decade of this century this house was the home of Miss Ellis' School, a finishing school for young girls.

**11** **154 Sumner Street** is a fine example of the

Colonial or Georgian Revival style popularized in the 1890s, although the brick construction in this ca. 1891 example is unusual. During the 19th century, brick was rarely used as a building material in Newton; the preferred material was wood, which was much less expensive and readily available. The original owner of this house was Austin C. Benton, a Boston businessman, and it may have been designed by his son, Edward Benton, who was a local architect. Its design is based on Georgian examples from the southern U.S. and is notable for its parapet design along the top edge of the roof, its brick cornice, and its large balustraded porch.

**12** **126 Sumner Street** is a typical example of a large, middle-class, suburban Queen Anne home. Dating from 1886, this house possesses an eclectic mix of decorative elements, including varied shingle patterns, carved sunburst panels, and a double tier of columned porches on the front facade which enhance its simple cross gable design.

**13** The ca. 1885 house located at **120 Sumner Street** is highlighted by several elements that are unique to the Shingle style. The flat arched porch openings on the second floor and the curved turret dormers are each typical of the clean lines of the Shingle style as perfected by the famous firm

of McKim, Mead and White. In addition, a mixture of clapboard and shingle siding and bright bands of color add texture and depth to the façade.

**14** Built in 1899, **106 Sumner Street** may be the purest and most extravagant example of the Colonial Revival style in the area. The perfect symmetry of the front façade is a typical turn of the century motif. The large bow window, the decorative dentil work and moldings under the eaves, and the long verandah with pointed Doric columns create a striking combination. Also of note are the broken or swan's neck pediments located over each of the dormer windows. This house was built for Abbot B. Rice, a prominent businessman involved in the textile industry who served as a Newton Alderman from 1913 -1915.

**15** The grand dame of Sumner Street, is undoubtedly the monumental **105 Sumner Street**, a Colonial Revival home that is an 1890s remodeling of a ca. 1863 house. Its dominant feature is a two-story circular portico with large Ionic columns that were purportedly filled with salt as a ballast. Its roof is accentuated by a veritable forest of high peaked dormers. The house is articulated by pilasters at each corner, two bays with Palladian windows, and a delicately balustraded stone terrace. This house was the home of the Bowen family for whom Bowen Street was named. It was probably Edward Beecher Bowen, a successful boot and shoe merchant, who remodeled the house.

**16** **115 Sumner Street** was originally the home of Daniel T. Kidder, a Boston glass merchant. This 1884 Queen Anne house is reputed to retain many glass fittings which Mr. Kidder imported from Austria. On the exterior, the house is an example of the transition between the Queen Anne and Shingle styles. The façade of the house is dominated by a truncated corner tower with a conical roof. The front verandah is similar to

that of 120 Sumner Street and is enlivened with turned posts and a jigsaw cut frieze. The large hip roof is complemented by a similarly large dormer and several false eyebrow windows.

**17** **123 Sumner Street** is a somewhat idiosyncratic example of vernacular Queen Anne architecture. It is a simple structure with two large gables facing the street decorated by a patterned shingle exterior. Each gable has an accentuated wooden cornice and an oval shaped window in a sunburst motif. The first floor has a full-length, open porch supported by ionic columns.

**18** A typical example of the Mansard style, **131 Sumner Street** was built ca. 1870 and modified in the 1890s with the addition of a large Colonial Revival porch. There has been speculation that this house was built by a local carpenter based upon a design found in a pattern book that was a popular method of house construction and design in the last century.

**19** Originally an extension of Bowen Street, Gibbs Street was laid out in the 1860s as part of the spurt of growth that followed the establishment of the Charles River Railroad. **184 Gibbs Street** is a Mansard style house, which has retained a high degree of historical integrity. Built in 1865, it is the oldest documented house in the area to retain so much of its Second Empire detail, including a fine polychromatic slate roof, double entrance doors, long windows, and a large wrap-around porch. All of the windows retain their original moldings and surrounds.

**20** Originally the house at **181 Gibbs Street** was one of the most unusual examples of Shingle style architecture in the City. While much of its original architectural detail is now hidden beneath aluminum siding, it still exhibits a distinctive, conical roofed center dormer and a flat arched front porch.

**21** **191-193 Gibbs Street** is a simple vernacular example of the Second Empire style displaying an attractive bellcast mansard roof and arched dormer windows. Built ca. 1870, this building is noteworthy not so much because of its architecture but rather because it is an early example of multi-family housing in Newton Centre. While most of the early houses in this area were single family residences, this house was designed as a two-family residence.

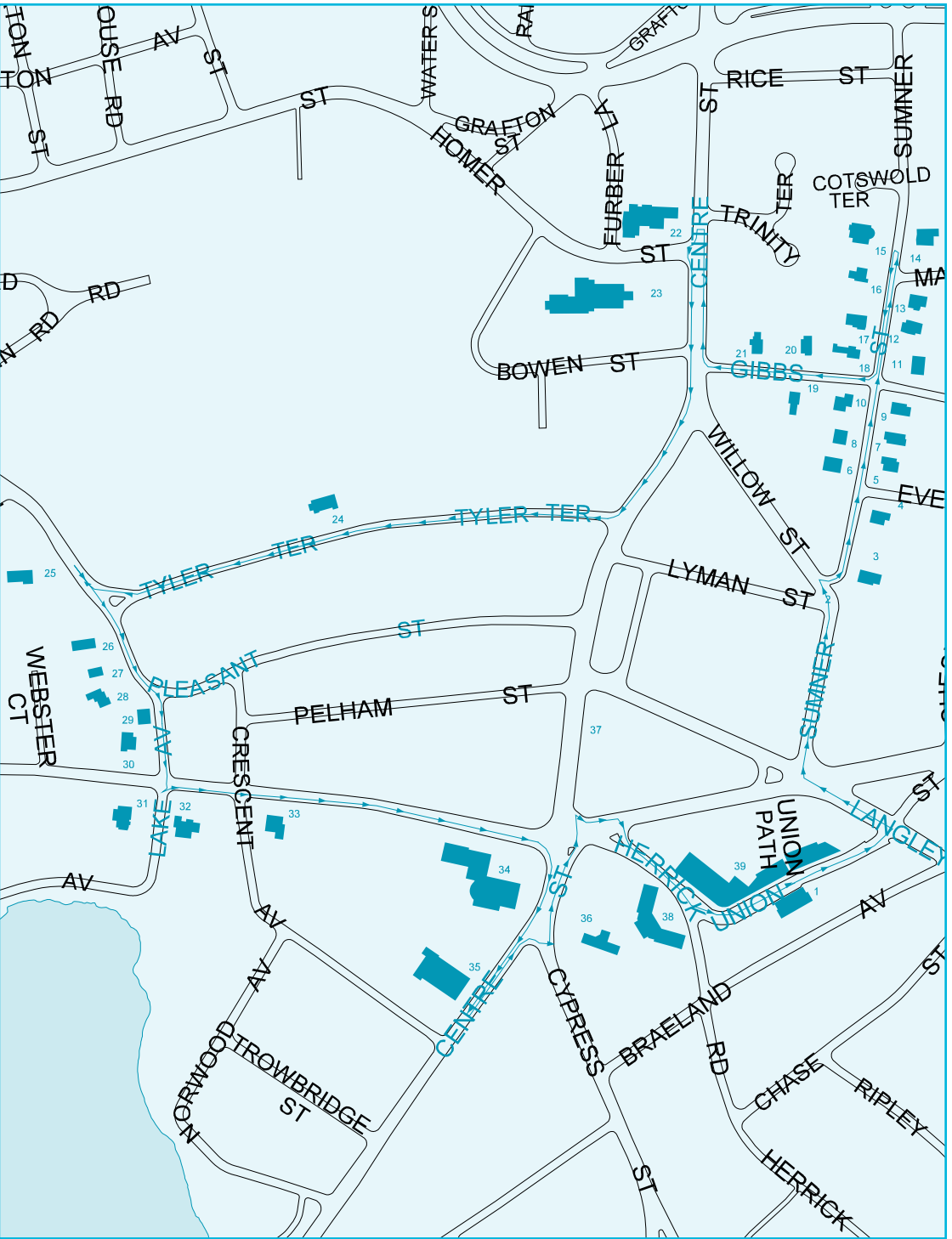
**22** The Trinity Association was established in 1889 by a group of Newton Centre residents who wished to hold Episcopal services in Newton Centre. They first established a house of worship on Pelham Street. This building was later moved to the site of the present church at the corner of Homer and Centre Streets. The half-timbered parish house to the rear of the present church was built in 1911 and the current church building followed in 1915. **Trinity Church** is a good example of the English Perpendicular form of the Gothic Revival and is reminiscent of King's College Chapel at Cambridge University in England. It is built of buff-colored limestone and is divided into nine bays, each containing a pointed gothic window and separated by decorative buttresses. The Centre Street facade consists of a sizable projecting entry surmounted by a large arched window. Pinnacles decorate each of the four corners of the main chapel. The building was designed by George Chickering of Boston.

**23** The First Congregational Church (now the **Greek Evangelical Church**) is located on the site near the center of Newton on which the Third Meetinghouse was built. In 1847, a new church built in the Carpenter's Gothic style was erected on the site which the current church building replaced in 1904. This imposing Tudor style structure was designed by Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge, the successor firm to H.H. Richardson.

**24** The Newton Centre Improvement Association was established by a group of citizens in 1878 for the purpose of improving public facilities in Newton Centre. One of their finest achievements was the creation of the **Newton Centre Playground** in the 1890s. They hired Frederick Law Olmsted, the nation's foremost landscape designer, to lay out the playground. While little of Olmsted's original design remains, the playground remains a valuable asset to the community. Of particular interest is the Recreation Hut, located on the southern edge of the playground. This building is the original Trinity Church which was moved to this site in 1915 when the new Trinity Church was built.

**Pleasant Street** was laid out in the late 1850s. At about the same time, a large piece of property to the west of Pleasant Street between Beacon Street and Bracebridge Road was purchased by Charles S. Davis. Over the next 15 years, Mr. Davis built several small country cottages in a number of styles which he rented out and eventually sold. These houses remain very much intact and are perhaps the best collection of mid-19th century residential architecture in the city.

**25** Built ca.1860, **140 Pleasant Street** is an example of the Gothic country cottage popularized in the 1840s and 1850s by Andrew Jackson Downing in his pattern books on country architecture. This particular house is noteworthy for its profusion of steeply pitched gables and gabled dormers, all of which possess characteristic scalloped bargeboards. It is also accentuated by a large bracketed bay and a full front porch with decorative carved posts.



**26** **120 Pleasant Street** was built ca. 1864 and is another example of a Gothic cottage. This is a smaller example but is nonetheless a fine specimen, displaying scalloped bargeboards and flattened arches surrounding a bracketed front bay.

**27** The small Mansard style cottage located at **112 Pleasant Street** was built by Charles Davis and dates from roughly 1865. Particularly noteworthy is the bellcast mansard roof with indented full height dormers and molded cornice.

**28** **106 Pleasant Street**, an L-shaped Gothic cottage, is the best preserved of the houses on Pleasant Street. Gables of varying sizes, all accentuated with scrolled bargeboards, give the house a varied roofline. The east bay and verandah retain similar scrollwork and the gabled entry portico displays carving in a floral motif.

**29** **3 Lake Avenue** is a highly colorful structure that may have originally been a

boathouse located on nearby Crystal Lake. It was moved to this site in the 1870s to serve as a stable for the large Gothic house at 921 Beacon Street. The building was later converted into a single-family residence and is an excellent example of the potential that adaptive reuse affords older structures.

**30** The large 2 story Gothic house at **921 Beacon Street** was another Charles Davis property. While the structure has retained its original form, including an unusual rear tower, much of its architectural detail has been lost over the years.

**31** **21 Lake Avenue** is an example of the High, or Bracketed, Italianate style. It was built in 1858 by Charles Davis and served as his home from 1891 until his death in 1907. It is a T plan structure with a cross-gable roof, deep bracketed eaves, and short gable returns. This house may originally have been oriented toward the lake.

**32** **908 Beacon Street** built in 1886, is one of the best remaining examples of the Stick style in Newton. The prominent structural system of large half-timbers, which is the trademark of the Stick style, can clearly be seen on this imposing edifice. The heavy bracing evident on the porch and the massive proportions of the central tower with its pyramidal roof are also typical of this style. The structure is in impeccable condition and the owners have received a Preservation Award from the Massachusetts Historical Commission for their rehabilitation efforts.

**33** **888 Beacon Street** is a near textbook example of the high style Queen Anne decorative motif and sawn woodwork. The balanced facade is offset by a conical corner tower while the hipped roof achieves its Queen Anne asymmetry by using a variety of differently shaped dormers and a two story bay. The variety of this structure is emphasized by the use of clapboard siding on the first level with

patterned shingles above. The house was built for Col. Edward B. Haskell, who was a civil war veteran and a director of the Great Northern Paper Company.

**34** The Baptists built their first church in Newton in 1781 on property donated by the Wiswall family near Crystal Lake. Crystal Lake soon became known locally as Baptist Pond due to the number of baptisms held there. By the early 19th century, the Baptists had become a significant force in Newton Centre. In 1826 the Newton Theological Institution was established to train Baptist ministers, and in 1836 a new church was built on the corner of Centre and Beacon Streets. The present **First Baptist Church**, located on the site of the 1836 structure, is a stunning example of the Richardsonian Romanesque style. It was built in 1888 and was designed by John Lyman Faxon. Particularly praiseworthy is the unique octagonal belfry which utilizes an impressive array of hewn and carved stone elements. The simple, heavy massing of the architectural elements, the arches and the highly animated contrasts between light and dark stone are characteristic of Richardson's style. Indeed, this structure is often mistakenly identified as the work of H. H. Richardson.

**35** **Sacred Heart Church**, built from 1891 to 1899, was the first major Catholic institution to be established in Newton Centre. It is one of only a few examples of the Italian Renaissance Revival style of architecture in Newton and is most notable for its paired bell towers, tile roof, and highly animated use of patterned brickwork. It was designed by the firm Rand and Taylor.

**36** The **Newton Health Department, 1294 Centre Street**, is located in one of the original five village branch libraries constructed by citizen subscription between 1926 and 1939. The Newton Centre Branch was