

Discover Historic NEWTONVILLE

North High School was completed.

37 Because the streetcar provided cheap, easy access to places of work, it brought a heavy influx of new residents to Newtonville. Syndicates and enterprising individuals found opportunities for speculative real estate development on the village's remaining open land. Walnut Street neighbors Henry Ross and Charles T. Pulsifer built up **Clyde Street** on former Pulsifer farmland between 1890 and 1900. The houses constructed here are variations on the Colonial Revival style, each trimmed with classically derived ornament that was probably manufactured at Ross's Crafts Street mill. Together, the houses create an unusually fine streetscape.

38 Prosperous Boston businessmen resided in the large, west-facing houses along Walnut Street as it winds towards Bullough's Pond. The Queen Anne house at 462 Walnut Street (ca. 1884) was built for E.K. Wilson, a paper merchant. Its dominant feature is an offset, projecting gable with curving vergeboards and a carved balustrade. **39** **472 Walnut Street** was built ca. 1892 for Charles Briggs, who was in the piano business. Its double front gable contains a pair of Palladian-style windows, a popular Colonial Revival feature. This imposing residence has a twin at 275 Mill Street that was constructed at the same time.

40 The picturesque house at **480 Walnut Street** was built in 1848 as a summer cottage for Miss Priscilla Frothingham of Boston. The original design for this house blended two architectural styles. The Greek Revival style is represented through the house's sidehall plan, ground floor window and door openings, and the Doric columns which support its inset veranda. The steep, flared gable roof reflects the romantic Gothic Revival style. To further complicate matters, the three dormer windows on the front slope of roof were added in the last quarter of the century and are Queen Anne in style and character.

Text taken from *Discover Historic Newtonville*. Revised and updated by Newton Planning and Development Department in conjunction with the Newton Historical Commission. July 2002.

The Newton Neighborhood Brochure Program has been financed in part with federal funds from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, through the Massachusetts Historical Commission, Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin, Chairman. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior, or the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

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David B. Cohen, Mayor



Newtonville developed as a suburban village during the second half of the 19th century. Like the neighboring villages along the "rushing and thundering Boston and Albany railroad," Newtonville owed the impetus for much of its growth to its favorable location for transportation. Daily commuter trains linking the village to downtown Boston brought a steady influx of businessmen, professionals, and tradesmen, who built houses ranging from simple wood frame structures on small lots to large, elaborate residences set among formal gardens.

Prior to the advent of suburban development, several farms occupied the broad, well-watered plain that underlies most of Newtonville's Victorian neighborhoods. Judge Abraham Fuller, a grandson of one of the territory's first settlers, operated one of the larger farms here in the 18th century. Judge Fuller was an important Revolutionary-era citizen of Newton, serving as a town selectman and treasurer, a member of the State Legislature and a representative to the Constitutional Convention. His son-in-law, General William Hull, retired to the Fuller Farm after the War of 1812, and enlarged the farmhouse that once stood on today's Newton North High School athletic fields.

During most of the first half of the 19th century, Newtonville remained a quiet agricultural region known prima-

rially as the site of the Hull farm. In the late 1840s, however, real estate operators, observing widespread interest in suburban developments in Newton Corner and West Newton, purchased small tracts of land near the railroad line and laid out houselots along several new streets.

Newtonville offered no compelling attractions to lure potential suburban residents, so its first decade of growth was slow. This changed, however, in 1859 with the decision to build Newton's first high school in the centrally located village. By the time of the Civil War, the village was firmly established, with several distinct neighborhoods and a small commercial center serving the needs of its families.

Residences, churches and public buildings from several phases of Newtonville's 19th century development are discussed in this walking tour. The village contains a fine collection of well-preserved Victorian architecture, ranging from the austere Greek Revival of the 1840s through the richly ornamented Colonial Revival of the 1890s. The buildings, situated among gracious, tree-lined parks and streets planned by foresighted Victorians, tell a story of changing culture, technology and taste which is essential to the identity of 21st century Newtonville. None of the houses on this tour are open to the public.



Newtonville Centre towards Washington Street

1 The tour begins at the **Newton Senior Center at 345 Walnut Street**, which was formerly the Newtonville Branch Library. The first building to occupy this site was the Newton Club, founded in 1887 to promote a greater sense of community spirit, although membership was restricted to men. When the Classical Revival Newtonville Branch Library was built on the site in 1939, it featured stained glass windows and large, comfortable meeting rooms. In 1993, the building was rehabilitated and became the new home of the Newton Senior Center.

2 The **Swedenborgian Church at 19 Highland Avenue** was organized in Newtonville in 1860 when a wood frame chapel was constructed here. The stone church was built in front of the chapel in 1893. Features that identify the church as a Gothic Revival style building include pointed arch window and door openings, a square entrance tower with a crenellated parapet (the fortress-like upper edges of the tower walls) and buttresses which brace the walls.

3 The apartments at **25-31 Highland Avenue** were operated as "Highland Villa," a private residential hotel at the turn of the century. Rounded bay windows and twin towers recall the building's picturesque Queen Anne style design, although its verandas have been removed and brick facing covers the original patterned wood-shingle exterior.

4 **Highland Avenue** was one of the first suburban streets to be laid out in Newtonville. The earliest streets, which include Madison Avenue and Austin, Otis and Bowers Streets, ran roughly parallel to the railroad tracks and were lined with large building lots. Spacious 100' x 200' houselots remain visible along the south side of Highland Avenue. Beginning with

No. 40 and extending westward to Lowell Avenue, several popular Victorian architectural styles may be observed. Common to these styles is the emphasis placed on certain parts of the house - window and door openings, rooflines, and porches - by the application of carved wooden ornament. **40 Highland Avenue** (ca. 1870) represents the Mansard style, while next door at **5** **No. 50** (ca. 1872), the bay window, paired brackets and round-arched gable windows mark the Italianate style.

6 Italianate style detailing was applied to a variety of house forms during its long period of popularity in Newtonville (1850s-1880s). The square house at **63 Highland Avenue** (ca. 1872) features bracketing at the porch and eaves, and its low hip roof is capped by a lantern with round-arched windows and curving wood skirts. **7** Across the street, **66 Highland Avenue** (ca. 1878) is an L-shaped plan residence with a highly ornamented entrance porch and bracketed eaves. This historic house is currently being renovated and will be developed into townhouses.

8 The sidehall plan house was well suited to long, narrow urban and suburban houselots. The residence at **90 Highland Avenue**, with its gable end to the street, is an unusually large example of this plan type. Its Italianate style design features include several two-story bay windows. The bay was an element introduced in that period which remained popular through the rest of the 19th century. This property is being converted into a three-family dwelling.

As **Highland Avenue** climbs West Newton Hill, the scale and character of the street begins to change. During the Victorian era, wealthier families were attracted to picturesque areas that offered vistas and park-like settings.

Several prosperous Boston businessmen built imposing residences on Newtonville's side of the hill.

9 Architect William C. Richardson designed the house at **109 Highland Avenue** for himself in 1888. As a partner in the Boston firm Hartwell and Richardson, he designed several of Newtonville's major buildings. The Richardson house presents a marked contrast in character to the Italianate style residences on lower Highland Avenue. Its wood-shingle wall covering, sweeping bays and window hoods are characteristic features of the Shingle Style, first popular in New England resort towns like Bar Harbor and Manchester-by-the-Sea in the 1880s.

10 The construction of the Massachusetts Turnpike Extension in 1962 took a heavy toll on Newtonville. Fifteen houses on the north side of Austin Street were demolished for the highway. The modest Italianate style double house at **66-68**



171 Lowell Avenue

Austin Street (ca. 1860) is typical of the working class housing that once lined Austin Street adjacent to the railroad tracks.

11 The well-preserved Gothic Revival John Fenno House at **171 Lowell Avenue** was built ca. 1854 at the corner of Walnut Street and Madison Avenue and was moved to its present location around 1885. The house, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, features eared moldings over the windows, diamond-shaped windows, a bracketed bay window and an uncommon

wall dormer over the entrance porch. **12** Though additions to a house can provide insight into its ownership patterns, they can also obscure the original structure. Careful observation of the residence at **157 Lowell Avenue** reveals the original south-facing farmhouse, built ca. 1833, which is sandwiched between wings added later in the century. An overall covering of wood shingles helps to unify the rambling structure.

13 The Queen Anne style house at **79 Lowell Avenue** was built by builder Henry Ross in 1884 and was soon purchased by Edwin Cram, a bookkeeper in Boston. The Cram House, one of the best preserved 19th century homes in the neighborhood, displays many distinctive Queen Anne features, including decorative shingling, an offset gabled pavilion, an inset arched entrance porch, belt courses, a carved wood sunflower ornament, and an exterior chimney with molded terra cotta tiles.

14 **25 Prescott Street**, constructed in 1871, is the oldest house on the street and was built by J. E. Abbott, who owned adjacent parcels of land. George Morse, a Boston lawyer, purchased the house in the 1880s. The well-maintained house exemplifies the Second Empire style with its polychrome slate-covered mansard roof, boxy massing and double doors with long glass panels.

15 The Italianate style house at **53 Central Avenue**, built in 1871, is capped by an offset gable roof. A boxed cornice with slotted, paired

