

THE VILLAGE OF WABAN

A farming area transitions to a community crossroads

This village is named for Waban, a 17th century leader of the Massachusetts people. His ancestors had lived in this region long before the arrival of European settlers. In 1886, William Strong, a prominent community leader, proposed the name Waban for this village.



EVOLUTION OF A FARMHOUSE

In 1688, English colonists John and Mary Craft Staples built their farmhouse on what is now the corner of Beacon Street and Windsor Road. A weaver by trade, John Staples also served as schoolmaster, town clerk, and deacon.

This property with its 100-acre farm was acquired in 1875 by William and Mary Strong, who expanded the nurseries. Later they subdivided their land, opening up lots for new families.

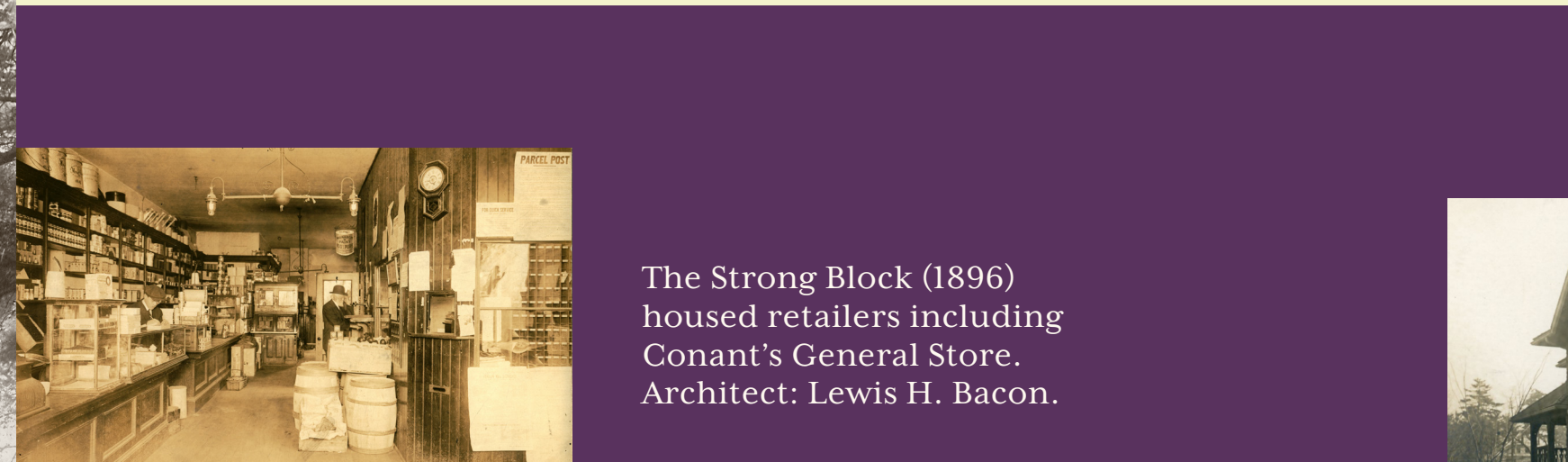
The original farmhouse continues to be adapted for new uses in the community.



The development of the village was actively shaped through the vision of William and Mary Strong (photo c. 1900).



The Staples-Craft-Wiswall farmhouse*† dates to the 18th century. This City Landmark entered a new chapter in 2019 as home to the Suzuki School of Newton.



The Strong Block (1896) housed retailers including Conant's General Store. Architect: Lewis H. Bacon.



Made Stores & Apartments for Mr. William C. Strong - Waban Mass. Lewis H. Bacon Architect

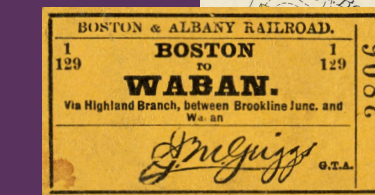
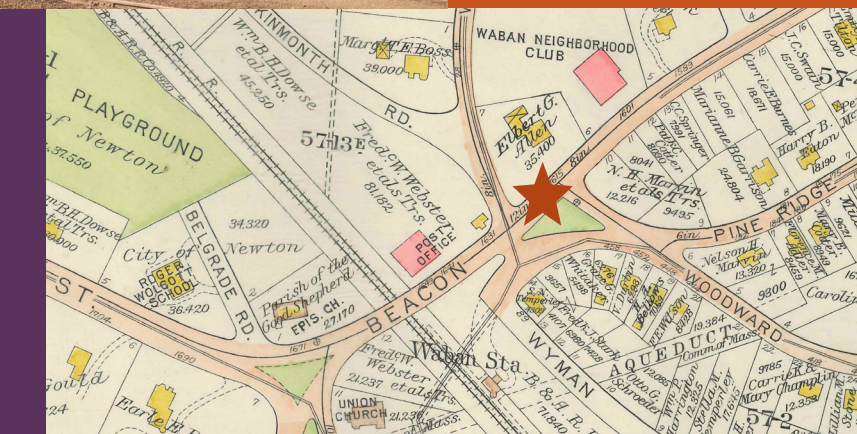
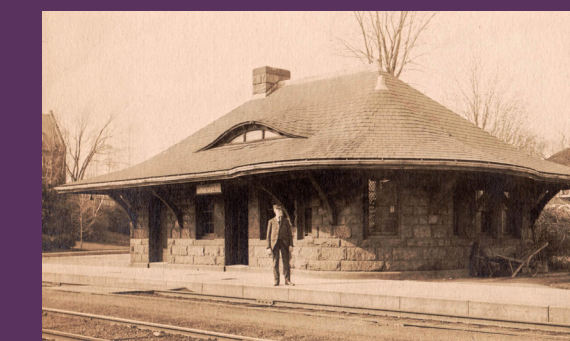
EARLY INFRASTRUCTURE IN WABAN

The Strong family was instrumental in bringing the Circuit Railroad here in 1884, now the D line. The original station (since demolished) was one of a series designed by renowned Waban-based architect, Lewis H. Bacon, who worked for H.H. Richardson.

Rail service sparked rapid growth. The village grew from 20 families in 1885 to 350 in 1915. In 1889, residents formed the Waban Improvement Society with William Strong as President. They called for gas lines, street repairs and wooden sidewalks. They secured financing for the first commercial and community building, Waban Hall (1890).

The Strong Block* (1896) is one of Newton's few intact 19th century brick commercial structures. With its distinctive stepped gables, it forms a visual anchor for the village.

By 1890, more than 30 trains a day stopped here.



Waban Hall (1890), with its arched windows, housed a grocery store, a laundry, community meeting space, and the first village school.



The Waban Library Center* is run by the Waban Improvement Society.

CULTURAL LIFE AND OPEN SPACES

In 1918, social clubs combined efforts to build a Craftsman-style clubhouse, now the Windsor Club.

Demand for public libraries burgeoned in the US in the early 1900s. Residents joined together in 1929 to donate land and raise funds to build the Waban Library.* Dr. Fanny McGee, a qualified physician, served as the long-standing village librarian.

Open space became a priority. In the 1950s, textile industrialist Warren Lincoln championed the purchase of land behind the Windsor Club to remain open in perpetuity as a park.



Residents held a theatrical performance in 1917 to raise funds for a neighborhood club.



Many of the buildings that define Waban appear on this 1917 map. The star marks the location of this sign.

City of Newton

This sign was created through a collaboration of the Waban Improvement Society, the Waban Area Council, Waban Common Inc, and Historic Newton. Discover a second sign a few blocks to the west.

LEARN MORE: www.NewtonMA.gov/HistorySigns

IMAGES: Cynthia Cole, Laura Foote, Agnieszka Grosso, Christopher Pitts, Bruce Wilson, Historic Newton, Newton Free Library, Norman B. Leventhal Map Center Collection at the Boston Public Library. Design: Ellen Weinberger

* ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
† A NEWTON CITY LANDMARK

