

LENOX

*Residential development in Worcester
in the early 20th century*



ENTRANCE TO CHAMBERLAIN PARKWAY AT LENOX

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Residential development in Worcester in the early 20th Century

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Preface

When I moved to Worcester in 1977 with my wife Linda and our two children, we purchased a home on Maplewood Road in what I soon learned had formerly, though not for many years, been called the Lenox area. It was known then as the “Chamberlain Parkway area.” Our acquisition was a two and a half story, ten-room, shingled “older” house, sitting well above the street, with on-street parking and a nice view of the hills to the west. It was affordable, frankly, because the neighborhood looked as if it had entered a shaky and uncertain phase of its advancing age, possibly a candidate for decline, but also a candidate for being lifted out of its lethargy if and when economic conditions improved. The seventies were not, on the whole, a time of strength and optimism for or about cities. Housing in Worcester at that time was very inexpensive compared with what was to follow, beginning a decade later. But we wanted the house and felt up to the task.

We soon became interested in the history of the house – who built it, or had it built and when, who had lived in it, and the like – in much the same way that so many people wonder about the histories of their homes. It took a good while, but this interest eventually led to our piecing together an outline of the story of the first owners of the house, Edmund and Sarah Scott and their four children, who had the house built and moved into it in 1912. Their story, in thirteen pages, is part of what follows.

Soon the interest spread to the neighborhood of which our house was a part, and I began spending some spare time at the Worcester Public Library researching its development. I learned that it had been a subdivision planned and developed by the O’Connell Real Estate Company, which had purchased the land of two adjacent farms in 1909. Then my interest broadened to incorporate the farms and the families of the land thus acquired, and that ended up taking me back to the early days of the settlement of the town and the arrival of a Scots-Irish family named McFarland about 1729. They are the subject of the first of four parts, or chapters, of the account of Lenox which are ready at this time.

In the early days of this project, I benefitted greatly from the work of Gregg Belevick, for whom Lenox was his “interactive qualifying project” at WPI. I hereby offer my belated thanks for his good work, nearly four decades later.

All this began back in 1977-78, but life and its various chores and pleasures got in the way for a little over three decades, during which time my notes on Lenox, including what I got from Gregg, gathered dust on the shelf. But the idea remained in the recesses of my mind, and eventually it was to become an object of my hobby focus in retirement, and late in 2008 I finally got the writing project underway. How then to account for the eight-plus years that have passed since then? The project moved along in fits and starts, with stops occasioned by travel, family activities, other hobbies, and by plunges into genealogy as well as other facets of the history of Worcester. The latter focus included a fair amount of time spent researching and writing about places, buildings, and people of Worcester on a variety of projects with Preservation Worcester as a docent and self-appointed researcher. Much of what I did in this latter capacity is or will be reflected in this website, WorcesterThen.com, which I hope will become a repository for all my efforts, past, present, and future (regardless of the extent of readership).

Despite all the time required to get this far, my story of Lenox is still not finished. It now

comes to what is hoped will be a temporary halt at about 1929, leaving the final chapter, which I hope to complete in the not-too-distant future, to carry the story into the 1960s, the totality of it covering about half of the lifetime of the neighborhood. Lenox is a historical account, meaning that it focuses on and stays in the somewhat distant past, and as such it may not satisfy readers looking for more intimate details about the people who have lived here more recently, during that part of the past that is still in anyone's memory.

So here, thirty-nine years after the idea was first conceived, is the product of the effort, my story of the making of Lenox and its evolution through its first two decades.

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