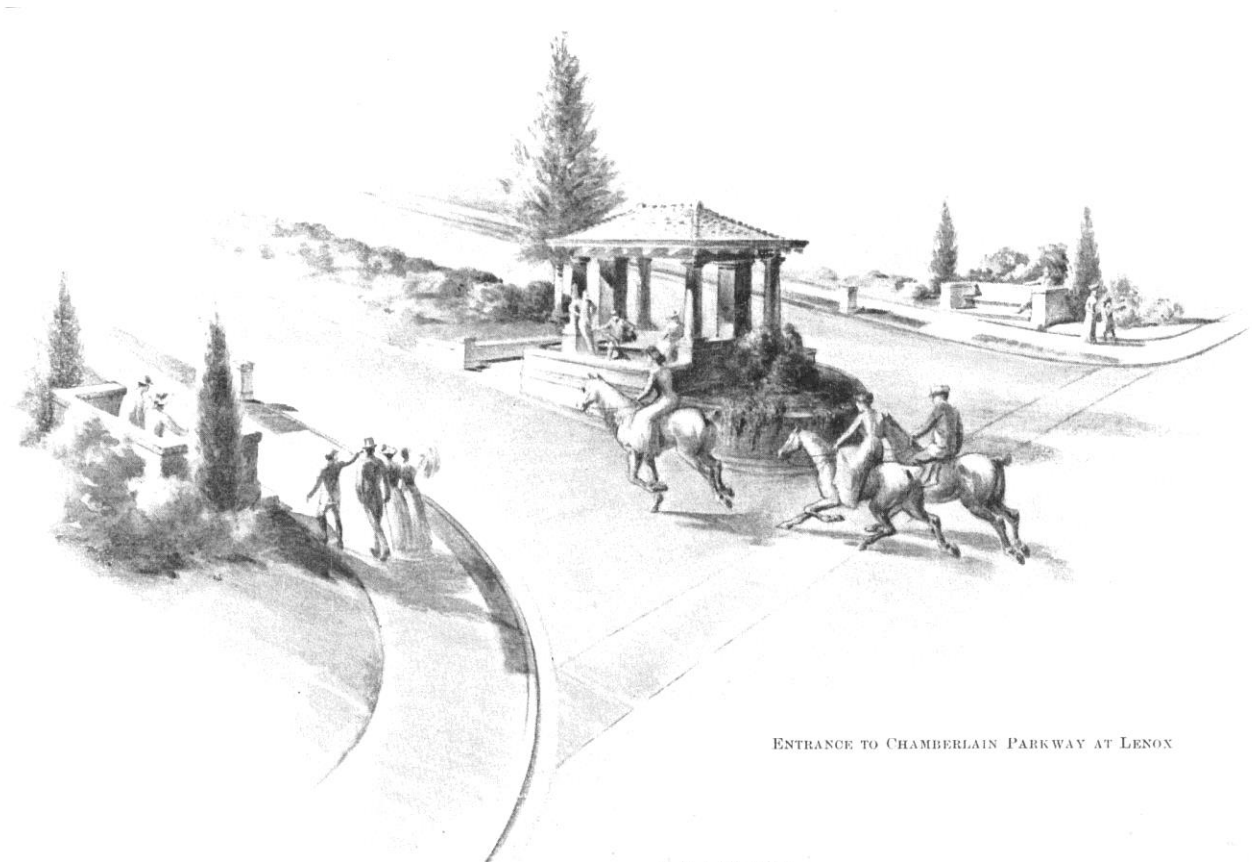


3

**LENOX**  
**A Land Development Enterprise**  
**Planning, Marketing, Selling, and Building**  
**Phase One, 1909-1916**



ENTRANCE TO CHAMBERLAIN PARKWAY AT LENOX

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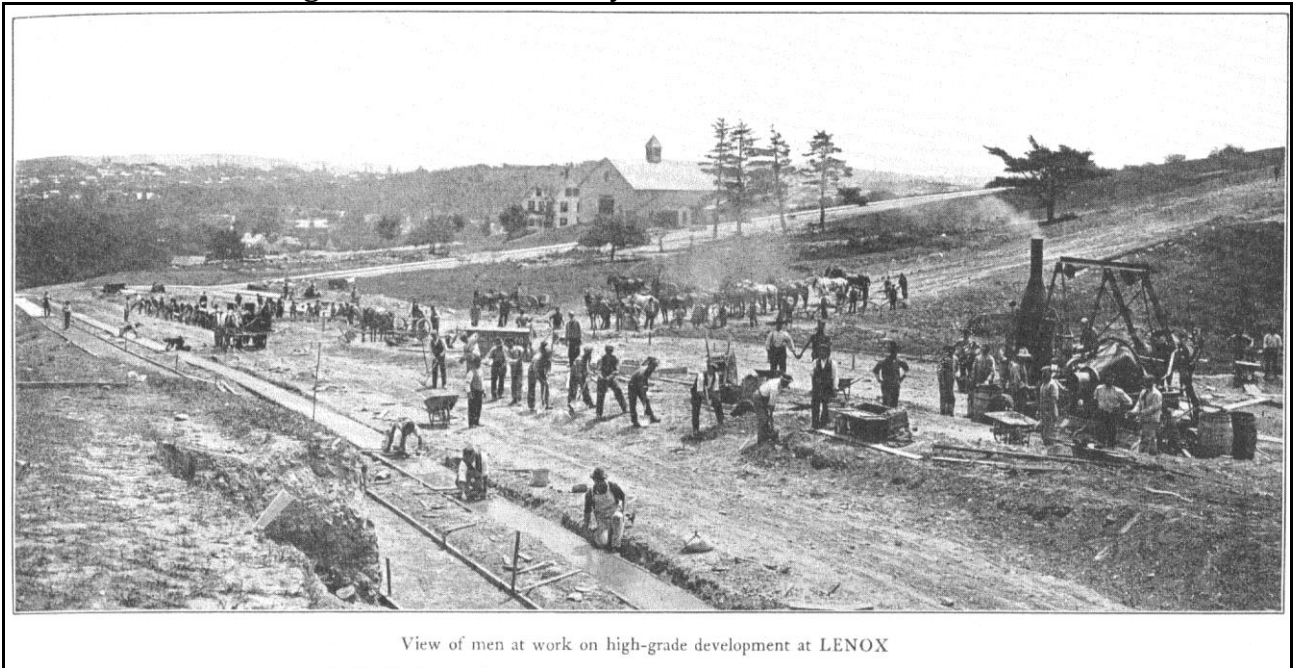
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Within a short time after the land sale announcement in the press in early November, 1909, the O'Connell Real Estate Company had men hard at work laying out Chamberlain Parkway and the associated islands, drainage gullies, medians, and "granolithic" sidewalks of the right-of-way. In today's vernacular they "hit the ground running."

### 3.1 Workmen Building Chamberlain Parkway



Source: advertisement, *Worcester Magazine Illustrated*, February, 1910 The lack of snow or coats on the men, and the fact that they are working with freshly poured concrete, suggest a day of moderate temperatures, likely in October or November. ([Images of Lenox](#), item 6)

The vantage point of the photograph is the north side of the street, at or about the high point of the parkway, what is now number 38 or number 40. The Hammond barn, reconstructed on the site only about 15 years earlier, stands in the background between what would become South Lenox Street, running uphill on the its high side of the barn, and Morningside Road, below it on the low side. Two sides of the Hammond residence are behind the barn.

Some of the workmen are digging the contour of the parkway and its islands, while others are troweling poured concrete of the drainage gullies, the aggregate coming from the steam-powered mixing apparatus at the right. Those gullies are still in place, although usually covered over by macadam or asphalt. The median strip between the gullies and the sidewalk will later be planted in grass and lined with maple trees.

It is easy to visualize the parkway curving toward the right in the background (downhill), but actually Chamberlain takes a turn to the left at that point, before or about where the clump of trees is seen at the far left. Note the stand of four spruce trees, and the occasional fruit or small ornamental tree, otherwise the absence of trees. The land most likely had been used by the Hammonds for hay and grains or pasturage.

Besides having workmen toiling on the site, the O'Connell team was busy on several fronts. To publicize the development, they were quick to follow the November announcement of the project in the *Telegram* with a two-page ad in *Worcester Magazine*, and a few months later the same Board of Trade publication would run a cover story on the project. The site plan for the project was being readied for submission to the City for approval by the contracted civil engineer, and the general outline, if not all the details, had to have been in place before the work could begin. Various contractors, city departments, and utilities were being lined up to carry out the site improvement process, and the O'Connells were taking care of acquisition and financing details.

Before it could become a neighborhood, or *residential district*, as was the preferred term at the time, Lenox was first a business venture and a construction project. The essence of the O'Connell business plan consisted of an investment of capital for the purchase of a tract of land to which infrastructure improvements would be made, including roads and utilities, to create for sale a set of more than two hundred homesites suitable for modern urban living. For the brothers Cornelius and Thomas O'Connell, the venture carried considerable risk as well as the possibility of substantial reward. They stood to make, or lose, money on the venture depending on their ability to sell enough lots, quickly enough, for a high enough price. They were not home builders. Buyers were to be responsible for seeing to the construction of their homes, typically by contracting with a home-builder. Alternatively, builders would sometimes purchase lots and build houses on them for sale to buyers, what is usually called building "on speculation." Very likely, the O'Connells made a practice of introducing buyers to builders, and their office probably had numerous plan books and house style fliers to catch the eyes of prospective buyers.

## Publicity

Both the report of the land sale in the *Telegram* in November and a very positive feature story in *Worcester Magazine* in June were instrumental and uncommon contributors to the marketing of the project. The two-page ad in *Worcester Magazine* in the February issue (Figure 3.2) likely was well worth whatever it cost.<sup>1</sup> In those pre-radio days, when newspapers still consisted primarily of text with few pictures, there were not many ways to advertise a project of this nature, one in which the creation of an image was so important. The most viable alternative to such an ad might have been a hand-circular consisting of material similar to the ad shown, or wide distribution of their booklet on the project, "The Beauty Spot of Worcester."<sup>2</sup> *Worcester Magazine Illustrated*, seems to have provided a vital and not easily replaced venue for advertising to its elite readership of local movers and shakers, the expected clientele of Lenox.

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<sup>1</sup> Published by the Worcester Board of Trade between 1901 and 1916, *Worcester Magazine* was a very important, and no doubt effective, medium for communications among the commercial class of the city. In its day it offered an unparalleled means of communication for local merchants and professionals seeking to reach a local audience with their messages, offering the inclusion of photographs, maps, artists' renderings, and the like, along with eye-catching advertising text in various fonts and varying sizes. It was the print medium when print was king, especially the magazine format. Newspapers did not yet include much of the graphical capabilities needed by merchants and others wishing to portray an image along with a message. To reach the middle and upper parts of the social and economic scale of the community, there probably was no better medium in Worcester than *The Worcester Magazine Illustrated*. The O'Connell Real Estate Company used it for advertisements in several issues in 1910, beginning with the February edition.

<sup>2</sup> A copy of the booklet, or brochure, "Lenox: The Beauty Spot of Worcester," is in the collection of the Worcester Historical Museum.

3.2 Two-page ad in Worcester Magazine, February, 1910


A MAN'S house should be on the hilltop of cheerfulness and serenity, so high that no shadows rest upon it, and where the morning comes so early and the evening tarries so late that the day has twice as many golden hours as those of other men.—Henry Ward Beecher.

**G**OVERNED by the principle of offering an ideal and desirable home-site, where the discriminating business and professional men of Worcester might buy or build homes, THE O'CONNELL REAL ESTATE COMPANY offers

## LENOX


the home-site beautiful, on Pleasant Street, opposite Richmond Heights, ten minutes from City Hall. Endowed by nature with beautiful location, superb outlook and invigorating air, and developed with an idea of appealing to those who appreciate healthful and refined surroundings.

Executive Offices corner Main and Pleasant Streets  
Members Massachusetts Real Estate Exchange



Representatives at LENOX daily and Sundays to show you the property. Call or send for plans, prices and particulars, and our booklet entitled "The Beauty Spot of Worcester."

You Say Good Morning to our Neighbors  
**LENOX**



View of men at work on high-grade development at LENOX

Over \$60,000 are being expended in improvements at

## LENOX

### The Home-site Beautiful

Ten minutes from City Hall      On Pleasant Street, opposite Richmond Heights

**T**HE granolithic walks, curbing and gutters, the handsome entrance scheme, the beautiful Chamberlain Parkway represent the finest type of development work and public improvements. Large lots, wide streets, water, sewers, gas, electric lights, every city convenience. The natural charms and ideal surroundings combine to make LENOX home-sites the best residential real estate offerings in Worcester for home-seekers and investors. They are THE BEST AT THE PRICE OF THE ORDINARY.

Representatives at LENOX daily and Sundays to show you the property. Call or send for plans, prices and particulars, and our booklet entitled "The Beauty Spot of Worcester"

You Say Good Morning to our Neighbors  
**LENOX**

**THE O'CONNELL REAL ESTATE COMPANY**  
Members Massachusetts Real Estate Exchange  
Executive Offices corner Main and Pleasant Streets  
Telephone 2088

In the lower-right corner of the left-page part of the ad, the text reads: "Call or send for plans, prices, and particulars, and our booklet entitled "The Beauty Spot of Worcester."

Clearly this advertisement was designed to appeal to a targeted audience, essentially the upper-middle portion of the social scale of the city. Lenox was described as "an ideal and desirable home-site, where the discriminating business and professional men of Worcester might buy or build homes." Part of the O'Connells' strategy was to try to achieve public recognition and acceptance of a neighborhood name and an associated slogan: "Lenox: The Home-site Beautiful." They also tried to coin a catch-phrase to help create the desired image, shown here "lifted" from the two places it appeared in the *Worcester Magazine* ad.



The photo of the workmen provided a strong visual image, not yet common in local media. It imparted a sense that the project was real, in progress, with countless men and horses hard at work getting the site ready. The cluster of photographs of existing homes in the city, which were expected to be approximately the types and sizes one would see in Lenox, helped instill the desired image in the mind of the reader.

**Site Design**

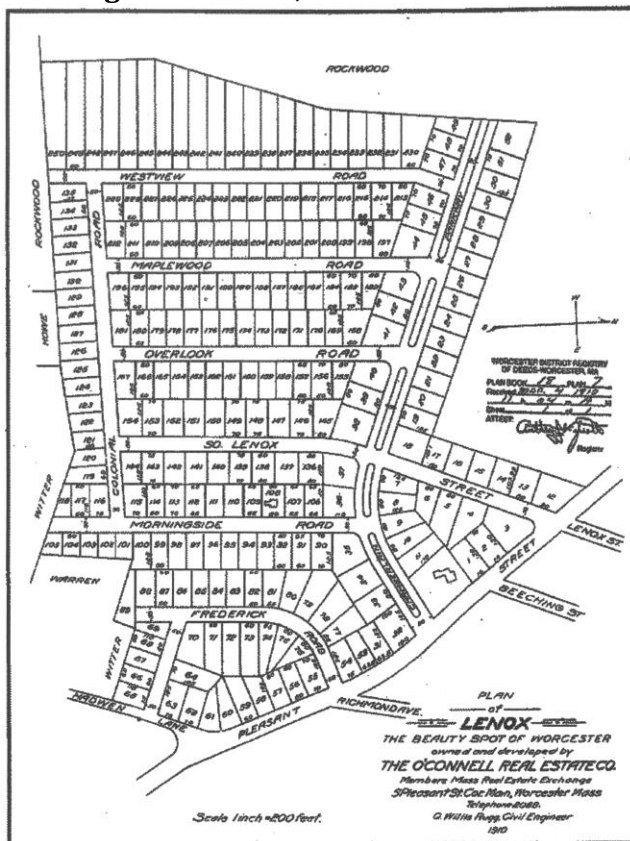
The fact that men were working so soon after the announced land sale means that a great deal of planning and preparation had preceded the *Telegram* story, probably dating back several months. The

key was the design of a site plan: a precise layout of streets lined with building lots, carefully fitted to the topography, and suitably situated for the delivery of planned utilities. The site plan was the work of a registered professional civil engineer, O. Willis Rugg of Worcester.

Entitled “Plan of Lenox, the Beauty Spot of Worcester,” the original site plan was approved by the City and recorded in the Registry of Deeds as Plan 7 of Plan Book 18, dated March 4, 1910. (Figure 3.3) It proscribed 250 home sites along nearly two miles of street frontage. Most were in the range of 7,000 to 10,000 square feet, which was moderately large by standards of the day, with some running to 15,000 feet or more. Many of the largest lots were those on the corners along Chamberlain Parkway, which was clearly intended to be the premier, showcase, street of the development. Lots typically

ranged from 100 to 175 feet in depth from the street, with some on Westview Road having much greater depth because of steep slopes down to the westerly edge of the parcel, which required the street to be situated farther from the back edge of the lots.

### 3.3 Original Site Plan, 1910



Worcester District Registry of Deeds,  
Plan Book 18, Plan 7, Mar-04-1910.

([Images of Lenox](#), item 5)

The solution to the problem of the steep slope along the eastern side was to lay out two streets traversing the side of the hill at different elevations, more or less parallel to each other. At the higher elevation was Morningside Road, accessed by Chamberlain Parkway, and at the lower was Frederick Road (soon changed to Saint Elmo), connecting to Pleasant Street. Since the two did not connect because of topography, it was probably inevitable that there would be a separation into two distinct sub-areas - an uphill part accessed by Chamberlain Parkway or South Lenox Street, and a downhill part, the Saint Elmo-Ivanhoe-Hadwen loop.

Given the comparatively difficult terrain, Mr. Rugg, the engineer, managed to fit a large number of lots into the available acreage, some of which could fairly be described as optimistic because of the topography, and the result was a planned environment of considerable diversity

in sizes, shapes, and contours.<sup>3</sup> The plan was revised the following year to incorporate some reconfigurations of lots and a few other minor changes. The revised plan, recorded at the Registry as Plan 79

<sup>3</sup> Some of the lots along the lower side of Westview, as well as a few on the lower side of Morningside, were (and are) steep enough to render landscaping for housing construction very difficult, and to make backyards little more than edges from which to peer downhill. Including in the plan the last five lots on Chamberlain, which was soon reduced to four, two on each side, could be described as “extremely optimistic,” and not even modern equipment or any of the recent housing booms in the city has brought any of this land (now held by the Worcester Conservation Commission) into play.



of Plan Book 19, dated July 27, 1911, still had 250 lots and there was little substantive difference between it and the original. (The original plan is shown here because it is much easier to read than is the amended, in part because it does not include lot widths and depths, which would clutter the image, as does the accessible version of the final plan.)

A visualization of what was being planned for Lenox is available in the unique perspective of the “bird’s eye view” presented on the cover of the June issue of *Worcester Magazine*. The “bird” was

### 3.4 Bird’s Eye View of Lenox, Artist’s Rendering, Before Development



Source: cover of *Worcester Magazine*, June, 1910. ([Images of Lenox](#), item 1)

The cluster of streets in the left foreground, consisting of the Kensington-Kenilworth area, was not part of the land transaction or the plan for Lenox. A number of homes were already present in this area, as they were along Pleasant Street and some other places shown. Note the triangle formed by Chamberlain, Lenox, and Pleasant Streets, with a residence at the corner of Chamberlain and Pleasant. Note also the five streets crossing or originating at Chamberlain Parkway and wrapping up and over the hill, connecting to Colonial Road, which is barely visible yet appears to run all the way down to Morningside.<sup>4</sup> See also the tree plantings shown along each street, some of which still exist. A row of mature trees, interrupted by the planned new streets, runs along the border of the Chamberlain and Hammond properties. These pre-existing trees, many of them pines, may have separated orchards from hay fields, and a few of those trees still exist. Pleasant Street can be easily followed down to Newton Square, where Newton Hill rises in the background.

The house, or cluster of buildings comprising a residence, depicted in the Chamberlain-Lenox-Pleasant triangle, was the home of Judge Frederick Chamberlain and his siblings. The other house within the plan area, on what would become Morningside Road, was the residence of Frederick H. Hammond and his family. The Hammond barn, mentioned in the *Telegram's* account of the sale of the land in 1909, and again in the *Worcester Magazine* story of June, 1910, is not shown.

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<sup>4</sup> Until September, 2008 when it was paved for the first time, the segment of Colonial between Tahanto and Morningside was unfinished and almost unpassable without four-wheel drive.

placed by the artist above and a bit north of the end of Chamberlain Parkway, looking more or less southeasterly across the mostly bald hill over which the streets of Lenox appeared as stripes.

The February advertisement in *Worcester Magazine* proclaimed that over \$60,000 was to be spent on site improvements: “*granolithic walks, curbing, and gutters, the handsome entrance scheme...*” plus “*... wide streets, water, sewers, gas, electric lights, every city convenience.*” The entire cost of these promised services would have to be paid by the O’Connells, regardless of how many lots they would sell or how quickly. Therefore, the greater the number of lots sold, the less the average per-lot cost of the improvements. Given their best estimate of the site improvement costs, the O’Connells had to have a good feel for the number of lots they might actually sell, and at what prices, and they had to get a purchase price for the two tracts which, when added to the infrastructure and other costs, such as advertising, realty management, and taxes, would yield a profit margin sufficient to make the project worth the risk. And risk there would be. By any calculation of costs and prices, the O’Connells could expect to lose a great deal if for any reason the project did not attract enough buyers and attract them quickly enough. Real estate development then, as now, was a high-risk, high-reward venture.

### **Infrastructure Work and Contracting**

In addition to matters of financing and publicity, the early phase of the project included the general contractor’s tasks of planning, scheduling, and oversight of the work in progress. They had to hire and manage work crews to carry out the various site improvement functions, including sub-contractors for certain tasks such as the laying of concrete, and they had to make the necessary arrangements with city agencies, such as the water and sewer departments, as well as public utilities, including the electric, telephone, and gas companies. Whether by sub-contract or through tradesmen and laborers employed by a general contractor working for the O’Connells, the immediate tasks included street grading, pouring concrete for sidewalks and drainage gullies, planting shade trees along the grassy medians, and digging trenches along both sides of the streets for the water, sewer, and gas lines.

The total cost of these “site improvements,” estimated at \$60,000, according to press accounts, had to be apportioned over the building lots available for sale in order for the O’Connells to gauge the total cost attributable to each lot and therefore know what the minimum sale prices had to be to make the project yield sufficient profit. It is feasible here only to devise a rough measure of the costs attributable to the lots based on their size, or, more specifically, the linear feet of street frontage. All of the site improvements had in common is that they could be expressed in terms of linear feet of construction required, be it for the granolithic walkways, drainage gullies, or the graded, though unpaved, streets of specified widths, or the pipes and wires for water, sewerage, electricity, and gas service. Along each side of the roughly 1.8 miles new streets being created by the subdivision, trenches had to be dug, laid with pipes or wire conduits, and refilled.

Using an estimate of 19,000 feet of frontage (along both sides of the streets), the claimed \$60,000 in site improvements yields a total cost per linear foot of about \$3.16. Added to this figure would have been an amount to cover the carrying costs of properties not yet sold as time passed after the investments in the site improvement package. In their determination of the investment, or “sunk costs,” attributable to each property for the package of site improvements, this part logically would be based on street frontage rather than total lot size. Thus, if a property were built on a 70-foot wide lot, at a utility cost of (say) \$3.50 per foot, the O’Connells needed to recoup at least \$245 to break even on the lot, and this was just for the utilities. The single biggest cost, not unexpectedly, would be that of land acquisition,

and additional amounts would have to be allocated to each lot for its fair share of the advertising costs, salesmen's commissions, office-related expenses, and other overhead costs of the project. Also, and of critical concern to the developers, was the matter of a margin of profit – theoretically attributable to each lot. In reality, of course, some lots would contribute more than others to the success – or failure – of the project.

### 3.5 Laying Sidewalks and Gullies on Chamberlain Parkway, 1910



Source: *Worcester Magazine Illustrated*, June, 1910, p.179. This photo, apparently taken later than the other (Figure 3.1), shows work underway on a section of the 'granolithic' sidewalks, as well as the drainage gullies along the edge of the out-bound lane of Chamberlain Parkway. ([Images of Lenox](#), item 7)

### Land Acquisition Financing and Use Restrictions

The land purchases for Lenox involved mortgages given by the O'Connells separately to the Chamberlains and to the Hammonds, plus a third, to the Worcester County Institution for Savings (WCIS), involving the portion of the Hammond land on which the family residence and the barn were located.

The Chamberlain transaction occurred first. On October 29, 1909, Agnes H. Chamberlain, acting as Administrator of the estate of her mother, Maria, who had died within the past year, deeded to Thomas E. and Cornelius O'Connell the tract of land consisting of approximately 30 acres, excluding a parcel of 0.62 acres containing the residence of the four Chamberlain siblings, the old McFarland-Chamberlain homestead. The O'Connells assumed a mortgage with the Chamberlains for \$25,000, to be repaid in annual payments over five years at a rate of five percent per annum.<sup>5</sup> A cash payment of some amount may also have been made, representing initial equity in the purchase, as has usually been standard practice in real estate over the years. The possibility of such an unknown cash payment makes it impossible to ascertain the real cost of the land, although it seems likely that the \$25,000 mortgage represented most of it.

<sup>5</sup> Worcester District Registry of Deeds, 1918: 321., Oct-29-1909.



Aside from the basic change of property ownership, there were aspects of both the property transfer deed and the corresponding mortgage that are of particular interest for what they say about how subdivision planning was done. In the transfer deed, the Chamberlains specified, and the O'Connells agreed to, restrictions on the uses of the land which were to remain in effect for twenty years from the date of the sale. Usage of the land was to be limited to one- or two-family residences, with a minimum cost of \$3,000 per house, and all homes were to be constructed a minimum of 30-feet from the street line (known as the "setback" requirement). These restrictions were said to be "...for the mutual benefit of the parties to this instrument and all persons purchasing lots on said tract."

The Chamberlains, apparently with the Judge playing the lead role, were agreeing to sell their land only for specified and limited purposes, to effect an upscale residential environment. This had been made clear in an article in the local press.<sup>6</sup> Referring to the sale of the land to the O'Connells, it said:

*Many overtures had been made to Judge Chamberlain to name a price on the property, but on account of his personal desire that the refined character of this West side neighborhood should be permanent, these opportunities to sell were not entertained. The O'Connell Company succeeded in its efforts to acquire this large tract of land because the former owners were satisfied that the purchasers were a strong, progressive, local concern — ed [illegible] with the city's best real estate interests.*

The intent of the deed restrictions was to create an enforceable covenant, binding on both parties, which would have the effect of doing what the practice of *zoning*, which was not yet established in Worcester, would later be designed to do. Such an agreement offered a set of protections for buyers, safeguarding them from non-conforming uses on nearby sites, and providing the closest available approximation of a guarantee that, for at least a period of time, the neighborhood would be as advertised. From the vantage point of the developers, including the Chamberlains and the Hammonds, as well as the O'Connells, it enabled them to offer a higher degree of certainty that the intended style and character of the neighborhood would be realized in fact. The effect was to make it possible to market the area in more precise, more clearly defined language than otherwise would have been possible, almost surely a key factor in their ability to lure the savvy investors of the city's burgeoning middle and upper classes this far out into the "suburbs."

If the pace of lot sales proved rapid enough, then everything should be fine for buyers and sellers alike, but the question remained as to what would happen if they did not. If, as the twentieth year of the agreement approached, sales of home sites were running behind schedule, the question might then arise as to whether the sellers would then seek to encourage development of a somewhat different character, such as allowing three-deckers or apartment buildings, or narrowing the lots, in order to try to recoup their investment. Such actions obviously could prove detrimental to the interests or the desires of the earlier buyers.

The mortgage given by the O'Connells to the Chamberlains included more than just a standard five-year payback with interest. It also required that partial payments be made by the mortgagors each time a building site was sold, based on a specified rate per square foot, the rate depending on where the lot was located, and in turn, the Chamberlains would write partial releases, recorded in the

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<sup>6</sup> From a photocopy of the article, undated and with no mention of which newspaper it was. Extensive efforts to find the article in either the *Telegram* or the *Evening Gazette* proved futile. It is clear, however, that the article was in one or another edition of local news media.

Registry and cross-referenced to the mortgage. The per-foot rate was eight cents (\$0.08) along Pleasant Street, Hadwen Lane, and “... upon any street hereafter constructed westerly of the house now occupied by said grantee,” meaning Chamberlain Parkway and South Lenox Street to Chamberlain. For the remaining properties, meaning those on Frederick (Saint Elmo) and Ivanhoe Roads, the rate was three cents (\$0.03) per foot.

The Hammond land constituted an integral part of the plan from the beginning, but the actual purchase had not yet been consummated when work began on Chamberlain Parkway late in 1909. Some kind of agreement had to have been in place in those early months in order for work to proceed. On March 30, 1910, the O’Connells gave a mortgage to Frederick H. Hammond for \$14,000, payable in five years at an annual rate of five percent, in exchange for the tract of land except for a cluster of five lots between Morningside and South Lenox on which sat the Hammond residence, barn, and whatever other farm buildings were standing.<sup>7</sup> A partial payment scheme similar to that of the mortgage with the Chamberlains was included, but it specified only two cents (\$0.02) per square foot, a quarter of the rate applied to most of the lots on the Chamberlain land. The higher rates for lots along the parkway and the lower part of South Lenox Street suggested that these were expected to be somewhat more prestigious homesites, and, of course, more expensive.

For the cost of the Hammonds’ home site the O’Connells took out another mortgage for \$4,000 with the Worcester County Institution for Savings.<sup>8</sup> The total sale price of the Hammond property then was the combination of the two mortgages, \$18,000, plus any additional amount in equity that might have been required through a cash down payment.<sup>9</sup>

### **Site Improvements: Public Utilities**

While the financial and sales activities of the early stage of the project were taking place, workmen on the site were executing the hard, dirty tasks of digging, grading, filling, pouring, troweling, and the like, as well as lifting heavy items onto and off of wagons pulled on, off, and around the site by draft horses, mules, and oxen. A great deal of manual labor went into the development of Lenox, much of it by grandfathers and great-grandfathers of some of today’s residents of the Worcester area, and the work didn’t pay all that well by current standards. The task facing the O’Connells and their contractors, and all the workers employed, was to build a network of graded neighborhood streets, properly drained; grassy medians lined with sugar maples; and the promised wide sidewalks covering trenches lined with pipes for water supply, sewage disposal, and gas for cooking and heating. There was also the matter of electric power and telephone service and the wiring required to deliver them.

Telephone and Electric Power. City policy by this time was to bury wiring in underground conduits where necessary and to place utility poles along the back yard lines of residential and commercial

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<sup>7</sup> Worcester District Registry of Deeds, 1929: 61-62, Mar-30-1910.

<sup>8</sup> Worcester District Registry of Deeds, 1929: 75-76, Mar-30-1910. The loan was at an annual rate of five percent over a term of five years.

<sup>9</sup> In July, 1911, sixteen months after the first mortgage, the O’Connells took out a second mortgage with the Hammonds for \$3000. The same partial payment stipulations were included as had been used in the original mortgage, and each lot sale thereafter was recorded on both mortgages. This reason for this second mortgage is unknown to us but may have been for cash for project management purposes, rather than an adjustment to the selling price of the land.

properties rather than along the streets. In a program of voluntary compliance initiated in 1896, the three major purveyors of the growing maze of wires evident throughout the more developed parts of the city, the Worcester Electric Light Company, New England Telephone and Telegraph Company, and Western Union Telegraph Company, began burying cables in underground conduits and removing much of the wiring.<sup>10</sup> In 1902, the Massachusetts General Court enacted legislation enabling Worcester to put the force of law behind the previously voluntary program of underground and backlot wiring, and the ordinance required to activate the law was passed early in 1903.<sup>11</sup> An important feature of the new ordinance was that it established the geographic extent of the policy, stating that cables were to be buried within a two-mile radius of the intersection of Pleasant and Main Streets at City Hall. Also, where utility poles were needed they were to be placed along the back lines of the properties, rather than along the streets.<sup>12</sup>

In practice, this meant underground cabling to a first pole on each block in residential neighborhoods without having wires overhead along the streets at any point. Accordingly, on each of the blocks defined by the streets of Lenox, utility poles were placed, and still stand, at intervals down the backyard lines of the properties. Main lines first had to come into the area, underground, from junction points on the main line along Pleasant Street. Service had to be delivered in this manner to four distinct areas of the Lenox development: (1) the St. Elmo-Ivanhoe block; (2) the uphill section of the south side of the parkway; (3) the Chamberlain-South Lenox triangle; and (4) properties along the north side of Chamberlain and the west side of South Lenox. Evidence of this can be seen at the bases of the first poles on each block: for example, at the backyard junction of 23 Chamberlain, 5 Maplewood, and 6 Tahanto. As a result of this policy, there are no overhead wires in sight anywhere in the neighborhood (or in other locations within the two-mile radius), aside from the backyard lines of the properties along each block. The positive effect of this policy for the visual quality of the city's streets and neighborhoods would be hard to exaggerate.<sup>13</sup>

Electric power for residential use, and some street lighting, was locally generated and distributed by the Worcester Electric Light Company, located on Faraday Street and on Curtis Pond at "New Worcester" (now Webster Square). The larger power needs of some industrial firms were supplied by a different source, the New England Power Company, which at this time drew its power from a hydroelectric dam on the Connecticut River at Vernon, Vermont, and which by 1917 would become a subsidiary of the five-state New England Company Power System.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> City Documents, Annual Report of the Wire Commissioner, 1890s, early 1900s. In each year during this period and through the 1920s, the reports cited numbers of miles of wiring that had been taken down by the various companies, replaced with underground and backlot wiring.

<sup>11</sup> Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 372, Acts of 1902 (approved May 6, 1902). The ordinance passed by the city (January 2, 1903) created a Commission on Wires and Electrical Appliances, the purpose of which was "to cause to be removed from the streets of the city of Worcester telegraph, telephone, electric light, motor and power wires, cables and conductors, and poles and structures in streets within the district prescribed...." (City Documents, 1902, Appendix, p. 27)

<sup>12</sup> City Documents, *Annual Report of the Supervisor of Wires*, 1902, p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> Traveling westerly on Pleasant Street beyond Lenox, the first utility pole one sees along the street is at the intersection of Moore Avenue on the left, or south side, where the pole sends cables in only one direction after bringing them up from underground.

<sup>14</sup> Nutt, vol. II, pp. 996-999. Nutt provides an interesting description of the festivities, including a parade, occasioned by the coming of electric power to the street lights of downtown Worcester in 1914.

By 1910 the New England Telephone and Telegraph Company had about 13,000 telephone subscribers in Worcester, which translated to more than 50,000 people, over a third of the city's population of about 146,000. The yearly cost of a private line providing unlimited local service in Worcester then was \$42, according to an article in *Worcester Magazine*.<sup>15</sup> What they got for the money in 1910 was a much more limited service than what is commonplace today, but it must have seemed like a mighty gift of technology at the time. Clearly, families of lesser income had to think twice about taking on such a cost, and to reduce the costs they could have taken a party line, wherein as many as six subscribers would share a single line. Most of the comparatively affluent families moving into Lenox could have afforded to subscribe.

Water Supply and Sewage Disposal. The dual line of pipes laid in trenches dug in the streets for water and sewer service to the neighborhood were made of clay. Water supply pipes were of eight-inch diameter on most of the streets, 10 inches on Colonial, and 12 inches on Chamberlain and Morningside, the larger pipes being used closer to the trunk lines along Pleasant Street because they had to carry more water prior to being divided "downstream" (which meant uphill in most parts of Lenox). For each house lot, a connection joint with a shutoff valve had to be installed, whether or not there was a house yet in place to make the hookup. When a house under construction was at the right stage, water

### 3.6 Austin Trenching Machine, ca. 1915



The trenching machine, a relatively new innovation in the mid-teens, was made for efficient digging of trenches for utilities, such as water and sewer conduits, as well as gas lines. F. C. Austin, the manufacturer, was based in Chicago. It is not known when such machines first became available, or whether any were used in the building of Lenox.

It is also unknown where this photo was taken, and it may not have been in Worcester.

Source: City Documents, 1915, after p.286

and sewer pipes would be connected and run underground to the house, at the owner's expense, of course. As for the initial cost of the installation in the streets, they constituted an immediate liability of the developer who had to retrieve the investment somewhat later at the point of sale.

Gas Service. Smaller diameter lead pipes were used to bring "coalgas" provided by the Worcester Gaslight Company to the houses, running under the sidewalks with the water and sewer lines. Naturally, they, too, had connection joints and valves for each lot, presumably in the same locations as the water and sewer hookups. Gas was used mainly for cooking, and possibly in some cases for

<sup>15</sup> *Worcester Magazine*, vol. 13, March, 1910.



heating the boilers of radiator systems. By this date, lighting in the modern home was mostly by electricity, and certainly was in newly-constructed homes. The normal means of providing central heat was the coal-fired furnace driving steam or hot water radiator systems. Forced hot air systems using fans powered by electricity came later, beginning in the late 1930s, and eventually drove radiator systems into their current status as relics of an earlier age, a few of which are still in service.<sup>16</sup>

### Early Lot Sales

The first sale of a homesite in Lenox occurred in mid-November, 1909, when Mr. and Mrs. Frank T. Williams purchased lot number 32, which would become 828 Pleasant Street. Mr. Williams, a foreman at the Crompton and Knowles Loom Works, was also the first to receive a permit for construction of a new house in Lenox, issued May 10, 1910, with an estimated cost-to-build of \$6000. The builder was said to be Mr. Williams himself.<sup>17</sup> The style of the house was “American Foursquare,” a newly popular design that had originated in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in the midwest, a variation on the “Prairie” style associated with Frank Lloyd Wright. It would be a stretch, however, to say that this house was “a Frank Lloyd Wright design.” As it was a sizeable and prominent structure set well above the street, the house provided an impressive first view of the new residential district for people arriving at the base of the parkway. It was possible to build at this location earlier than at other homesites in Lenox because it was on Pleasant Street, where the street and the utilities were already in place.

The size of the lot was 12,500 square feet. At eight cents per square foot, this translated to a partial mortgage payment by O’Connell of \$1,000, and in exchange the Chamberlains issued a partial release on the O’Connell mortgage in that amount.<sup>18</sup> The House Directory of 1912 showed the property consisting of a house valued at \$7500 and land valued at \$2000, or twice the mortgage payment, probably representing the actual sale price, or close to it.

The second sale was recorded in March, 1910 when George M. Thompson, superintendent at Spencer Wire Company and a member of the Board of Directors of the Worcester Bank and Trust Company, purchased the lot on the northwest corner of South Lenox and Chamberlain, which became 28 South Lenox Street.<sup>19</sup> It was a moderately large house, another “Foursquare,” and was set upon a 12,250 square foot lot, for which the O’Connells made a \$1000 mortgage payment, duly recorded.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> It is worth pondering the delivery of coal to homes constructed high above the street, in some cases requiring 20 to 30 steps from the street to the front of the house, then often involving a trek around to the back of the property before dumping the coal into a chute or some other entry to a storage bin accessible to the furnace. If furnaces for gas heating were yet available, they must have been viewed as a mighty step forward to avoid such burdens, unless it was too expensive. A 1916 advertisement in Worcester Magazine by the Worcester Gaslight Company proclaimed a price of 75 cents per 1000 cubic feet of gas. How expensive this was in relation to the costs (including delivery and the need to shovel it into the furnace several times per day) is indeterminate (here, at least) because there are too many unknown factors, including the amount of coal required to provide the same BTUs as quantities of oil, natural gas, or electricity today.

<sup>17</sup> City of Worcester, Office of Inspectional Services, Building Permit 598, May-10-1910.

<sup>18</sup> Worcester District Registry of Deeds, 1920:371, Nov-24-1909.

<sup>19</sup> Worcester District Registry of Deeds, 1927:390-91, Mar-17-1910.

<sup>20</sup> By the time these sales had occurred, the approved site plan (or sub-division plan) had been recorded with the Registry and was serving as the reference for parcel sales. When a homesite was sold, the property transfer deed recorded the lot number or numbers, as well as measures of linear feet from reference points established in the site plan.

Mr. Thompson then received the second building permit issued for Lenox, and the 1912 House Directory showed assessed valuations of \$5800 for the house and \$2000 for the land, the latter being twice the amount reflected in the mortgage payment. The Thompsons resided there briefly before selling the property to John and Sarah Legg, who relocated from a larger and more opulent home on Claremont Street, effectively “downsizing,” in 1912.

Two more lots were sold during March to the same buyer in a combined transaction. Adjacent lots 7 and 8, on the northeast corner of Chamberlain and South Lenox, totaling 16,250 square feet, were acquired by a Flora I. Hall (and her husband, but in her name). The O’Connells then made the requisite partial mortgage payment of \$1300, and the Chamberlains issued a partial release.<sup>21</sup> The 1912 House Directory showed the land assessed at \$2600 – again, twice the amount of the partial payment on the mortgage. The Halls sold lot 8 to F. W. White, who waited four years before taking out a building permit in June, 1914 for the construction of 8 Chamberlain Parkway, which first appeared in the House Directory of 1916. The other lot, number 7, on the corner opposite the Legg house, was sold to W. A. Sweet, who took out a permit in February, 1916, and had a house erected there as 25 South Lenox Street.

On the basis of the first three sales, the pattern appeared to be one of assessed valuations being twice the amounts paid on the mortgage by the agreed formula. Thus, a \$2000 lot sale led to a \$1000 payment on the mortgage, leaving \$1000 to cover site improvements and other costs attributable to the development before there could be an operating profit. It is possible, but not known for sure, that the assessed valuations equalled the selling prices of the lots. In most cases it was not possible to discover the selling price in the transfer deeds because the common practice was that in property sales involving mortgages, the grantor was said to convey the land “... in consideration of One Dollar and other valuable consideration paid by [buyer’s name]....” Since mortgages were involved in the vast majority of property transactions, this policy had the effect of rendering it impossible to ascertain the actual selling prices of the properties.

The pace of sales then began to quicken. Seven lots were sold in April, another seven in May, and by the end of the year thirty-two purchases had been registered, encompassing approximately fifty of the lots on the plat plan.<sup>22</sup> In several cases, buyers purchased multiple lots, apparently as speculative investments, and eventually for the construction of homes. One such location was the peak of the hill at the top of Tahanto, Colonial, and Maplewood Roads, where three separate acquisitions encompassed ten adjoining lots, more or less.<sup>23</sup> About half of the lot sales involved modifications of the original plan, as when a buyer would purchase all of lot A and a strip, so many feet wide, of lot B, thus yielding a wider homesite, often with a narrow one next to it. Many buyers investing in homes in the new “high value” Lenox area preferred wider lots, as was already becoming the norm for suburbs. For the O’Connells, such redefinitions of their original plat plan essentially made little difference, since they depended on some combination of square footage and linear feet of street frontage to yield the prices they required to succeed in the project, and the number of building lots was not important to them. However, they did

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<sup>21</sup> Worcester District Registry of Deeds, 1927:312, Mar-14-1910.

<sup>22</sup> Divisions of lots at the point of sale, as reflected in the deeds, make it difficult to provide an accurate count of lots.

<sup>23</sup> What came of these lots will be seen in due course. By “more or less” is meant that the purchases involved some rearranging of the lot boundaries, such that parts of additional lots on the plan were involved.

have to be careful to avoid having such lot divisions result in unsaleable or unbuildable lots, something which eventually did happen in a small number of cases.

The deeds transferring the properties from the O'Connells to the buyers included covenants which placed restrictions on what could be built and where, applicable for a specified period of time. These restrictions reflected the intentions made explicit in the original deal struck by the O'Connells with Judge Chamberlain and with Fred Hammond. A typical deed, written in 1910, included the following language:

*... and is conveyed subject to the following restrictions, which terminate January 1, 1930: - All buildings shall be placed and set back not less than 35 feet from the street line, providing that steps, windows porticoes and other projections appurtenant thereto are to be allowed in said space; that no house with a flat roof, nor to accommodate more than two families, shall be built upon said premises; that any one family house erected thereon shall cost not less than three thousand dollars; and any two family house erected thereon shall cost not less than five thousand dollars; that no stable, garage or outbuilding shall be erected nearer than 75 feet to the street line; nor accommodate more than three horses, and to be used only for private purposes; that no building shall be erected thereon for manufacturing purposes.<sup>24</sup>*

Lot sales continued throughout the following year, 1911, at a moderate and more or less consistent pace, and by year's end a small number of houses had been built or were under construction. The Atlas of 1911 showed a number of new house "footprints" on lots in the new neighborhood, but it is not clear in what state of readiness those houses were. Several did not qualify for inclusion in the listings of assessed properties in the House Directory of 1912.<sup>25</sup>

### **The Passing of a Partner**

Near the end of 1911, Cornelius O'Connell, the older of the two brothers, died at the age of fifty-three, of cause unknown.<sup>26</sup> About two months later, in January, 1912, his wife Philomene, acting as executrix of his estate, sold his half-interest in all remaining properties in the three Worcester developments then in progress to Patrick O'Connell of Watertown, another brother of Cornelius and Thomas.<sup>27</sup> Patrick then deeded the same properties to William G. O'Connell, the eldest son of Cornelius and Philomene, who probably was then tending to the firm's activities in Boston. William thereafter was named in all deed transactions of the O'Connells in Worcester into 1915, at which time he deeded

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<sup>24</sup> Worcester District Registry of Deeds, 1949: 148, Nov-14-1910, pertaining to transfer of ownership from O'Connells to Edwin F. Barnes, for lot 137, which became 41 South Lenox Street.

<sup>25</sup> L. J. Richards *Atlas of Worcester, 1911*.

<sup>26</sup> His last signature on a property transfer deed was on October 26, 1915 (1977: 191)

<sup>27</sup> Worcester District Registry of Deeds, 1984: 283, Jan-08-1912. According to the census of 1910, Patrick O'Connell was a real estate agent, age 40, born about 1870 in Maine of Irish parents, which clearly suggests that he was a brother of Cornelius and Thomas. For a half-interest in a total of 284 properties listed in the deed, including 167 in Lenox, Patrick paid \$36,000 to his sister-in-law, and he also took out a mortgage with her for \$10,000 (Source: Registry of Deeds, 1984: 284). The fact that the deed identified every lot in each of the three Worcester developments to be transferred offers a good measure of the overall progress in sales made by the O'Connells by about the end of 1911 in each of the three projects. In Lakemont (off Belmont Street), which had begun in 1905, there were 56 lots of an initial total of 170 still unsold (about one-third); in Hillside, begun in 1907, there were 60 lots remaining of some 175, again about one-third; and in Lenox, the most recent to get underway, there were 167 lots still unsold by this date, leaving total lots sold after a year and nine months at 83, or about one-third of the 250 in the plat plan.

his interests in company affairs back to his mother. Apparently this action was due to serious illness, since he died within a year.<sup>28</sup> Philomene O'Connell then remained active in the business until 1924, when she bowed out, transferring her portion of the remaining properties to Thomas, thus leaving him the sole remaining proprietor. Thomas had always been the principal agent of the firm in Worcester.

### **Home-Building in Progress, 1910 to 1916**

Given the information available to the purpose, it is possible to give an approximate, but not perfect, accounting of when the various houses of the neighborhood were built. The two main sources available to the task are: (1) building permits issued by the city, and (2) tax assessment and occupancy information accessible through the House Directories (every other year). Certificates of occupancy, which certify that a home has been inspected and declared officially suitable for occupancy, would have been an ideal source but they were not issued by the city until 1979.

As an aid to illustration of the development of Lenox over time, the "base map" in Figure 3.7 displays the present-day house-lot configuration, with the numbers currently in use, as they have come to exist, rather than as was originally planned or assigned. Changes have occurred in the shapes of some of the lots over the decades, most of them during the early years when lots were frequently redesigned to suit the needs of original buyers.

Another factor affecting the difference between what was planned and what actually happened has to do with the homesites in the original plan at the end of Chamberlain Parkway and along the steep slope at the lower end of Westview. Ten such lots have been marked off by a heavy black line, on the presumption that they were, and remain, essentially unbuildable lots. These lots, as well as one on the east side of Morningside between numbers 45 and 53, are now held by the Worcester Conservation Commission and are precluded from development. There are also two bounded lots, one on Tahanto and one on Maplewood, that are vacant and would require a zoning variance due to lot dimensions (width) not meeting the RL-7 zoning specification of a fifty-foot minimum.

At the date of this narrative (2015), there are a total of 202 lots in the neighborhood with houses standing on them. In several cases, lots which appeared to potential buyers as single houselots in the early years have since been subdivided to yield additional lots.<sup>29</sup> Not included in the count is 830 Pleasant Street, the Chamberlain residence at the time of the development, because it was not purchased by the O'Connells, was not for sale until many years later, and was never assigned a lot number on the plan. The former Hammond house on Morningside, on the other hand, is included because it was part of the marketable property of Lenox.

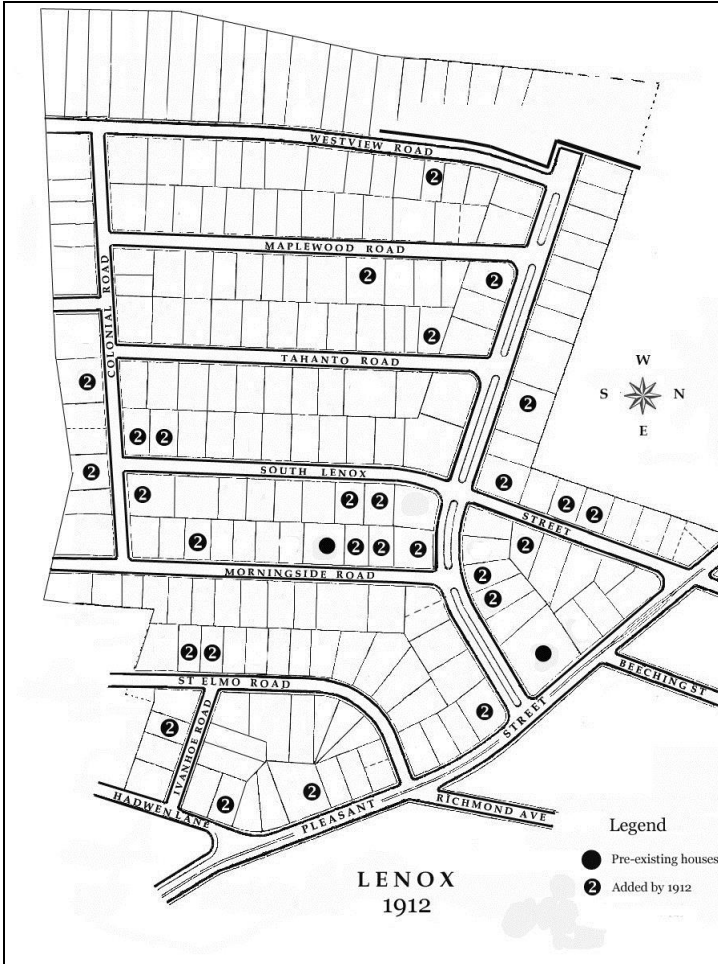
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<sup>28</sup> That he died about this time is known from references to him in subsequent deeds as the *late* William O'Connell.

<sup>29</sup> These are the lot divisions creating numbers 11 and 13 Colonial Road; 7 and 9 Chamberlain Parkway; 4 South Lenox plus 860 and 862 Pleasant Street out of one original corner lot; 3 and 9 South Lenox from the opposite corner lot; and the division of 4 Maplewood to create number 4A.



### 3.8 Houses Standing, 1912, per Bldg Permits



By the end of September, 1912, twenty-eight new houses were standing in Lenox, plus the substantially renovated Hammond farm house, for a total, including the Chamberlain house, of thirty homes in the emerging residential district. (Figure 3.8) Most of them were positioned along the easterly slope of the hill, providing resident owners closer proximity to Pleasant Street and the streetcar line, as well as an impressive view of the city skyline.

Of the twenty-eight new houses, twenty-three, including the first fifteen, were single-family structures. The builder, in two cases, was Thomas E. O'Connell himself (9 Colonial and 37 South Lenox). Most likely, he employed the services of a contractor under the company's supervision. These were the only two such cases throughout the O'Connells' involvement with Lenox. In two other cases, the O'Connell firm was identified as the property owner: two properties on Chamberlain Parkway, 16 and 25-27, built by William H. Cresswell, each of which was quickly sold for owner-occupancy. This pattern was never repeated.

Figure 3.9 shows building permits issued by the city for Lenox through September 30, 1912.

### 3.9 Building Permits Issued for New House Construction in Lenox, 1910-1912

Seq. No.	Permit Date	Num.	Street	Owner	Builder	Type	Rptd Cost
1	May-10-1910	828	Pleasant	Frank T. Williams	owner	S	\$6,000
2	Jun-30-1910	28	South Lenox	George Thompson	Homer Coderre	S	\$6,650
3	Jul-23-1910	69	South Lenox	Louise Robertson	Homer Coderre	S	\$8,000
4	Aug-09-1910	15	Colonial	Mrs. F. W. Wellington	Harry S. Cutting	S	\$8,500
5	Aug-24-1910	11	Chamberlain (#7)	Robert Hunt	James Miles & Son	S	\$15,000
6	Sep-13-1910	6	Tahanto (Overlook)	George N. Hall	F. D. Pierce	S	\$5,000
7	Sep-23-1910	37	South Lenox	J. Wheeldon	Thos. E. O'Connell	S	\$6,500
8	Oct-19-1910	9	Colonial	William MacKay	Thos. E. O'Connell	S	\$6,500
9	Dec-20-1910	18	South Lenox	George Brooks	Urgel Dorais	S	\$7,000
10	Apr-22-1911	8	Morningside (#2)	Ida McDonald	T. D. Foley & Co	S	\$6,000
11	May-09-1911	40	Morningside (#16)	Carl D. Knight	owner	S	\$3,500
12	May-15-1911	6	Chamberlain	Elmer G. Tucker	Harry Cass	S	\$4,000
13	Jun-05-1911	41	South Lenox	Edward F. Barnes	John Taylor	S	\$5,600
14	Jun-05-1911	14	South Lenox	William Little	John Taylor	S	\$8,500
15	Jun-09-1911	4	Chamberlain	Walter Hunt	Harry S. Cutting	S	\$4,600
16	Jul-21-1911	4	Hadwen Lane	Mary H. O'Connor	Wm H. Cresswell	2F	\$6,500
17	Nov-16-1911	68	South Lenox	Charles H. Harvey	George Hubbard	2F	\$8,300
18	Dec-04-1911	22	St Elmo (Frederick)	Horace Putnam	Fred. E. Richardson	S	\$3,000
19	Dec-09-1911	7-9	Ivanhoe (Frederick)	Arnold J. Booth	Wm H. Cresswell	2F	\$8,000
20	Dec-19-1911	12	Morningside (#4)	Stone & Mahlert	Joseph Tetrault	2F	\$6,100
21	Feb-08-1912	21	South Lenox	H. Goulding	John Taylor	S	\$9,500
22	Apr-05-1912	66	South Lenox	Clarence Lovell	E. Gulberg & Son	S	\$5,000
23	Apr-11-1912	24	St Elmo (Frederick)	Harry Black	Fred. E. Richardson	S	\$3,000
24	May-20-1912	9	Westview	Helen Merkt	George Hubbard	S	\$4,200
25	May-21-1912	796	Pleasant	Benjamin F. Marsh	owner	S	\$12,000
26	May-29-1912	25-27	Chamberlain	O'Connell Real Est Co	Wm. H. Cresswell	2F	\$10,000
27	May-29-1912	16	Chamberlain	O'Connell Real Est Co	Wm. H. Cresswell	S	\$7,500
28	Jun-14-1912	13	Maplewood	Edmund D. Scott	E. Gulberg & Son	S	\$7,900
29	Aug-02-1912	16	Morningside (#6)	O'Connell Real Est Co	Wm H. Cresswell	S	\$2,500

Source: Buildings Division, Department of Health and Human Services, City of Worcester

House numbers are shown as what they are at present. In many cases no number was recorded on the permit application, usually because it was not yet known. In cases in which an original number was assigned but was later changed, that number is shown in parentheses after the street name. For example, 11 Chamberlain Parkway was originally number 7.

Builders' names have been standardized to make each repetition of the same builder read the same, which was not always the case in the permit journal. Also, the terms "owner" and "day work" were often used in the builder column when the work was being done or managed by the owner. Such cases have been standardized using the term "owner" except when the builder was known to be a professional builder clearly building the house for sale to an owner-occupant.

The type "S" refers to single-family houses; "2F" means two-family. Reported costs are as listed on the permit applications.

After Fred Hammond and his family moved to Wetherell Street in 1912, the house which they had built on the farm land in 1896, known by this time as 6 Morningside Road and owned by Thomas O’Connell, underwent substantial renovation. The building permit for the changes, taken out by O’Connell in August, 1912, gave an estimated cost of \$2500, and the work to be done was described as the construction of a piazza across the front of the house and “roof changes.”<sup>30</sup> The changes in the roof amounted to a conversion to the then-popular hip roof style, with centered dormers on the front (east), as well as the north and south sides of the house, effectively converting it to a variant of the American Foursquare, with an off-center entry and a piazza above the full-length front porch. Figure 3.9 shows the house before the changes made in 1912, from a photograph from the O’Connells’ brochure, *The Beauty Spot of Worcester*,<sup>31</sup> and nearly a century later, as seen in 2009. Extensive roof changes implied an array of modifications to the interior of the house, and other elements of modernization were likely carried out as well.

### 3.10 The former Hammond Farm House, ca. 1910, and contemporary appearance

As farm house prior to conversion in 1912



Source: O’Connell Real Estate brochure, *The Beauty Spot of Worcester*, courtesy of the Worcester Historical Museum. This is the north side of the house (facing the parkway). A gable that is not visible here faces south and constitutes the left (south) part of the current view to the right. Compare also with views in Figures 3.1 and 3.4.

As 16 Morningside Rd. in 2009



The same house in 2009 viewed from the east side, showing evidence of the 1912 conversion to hip roof with centered dormer and piazza on the second floor. Photo by author.

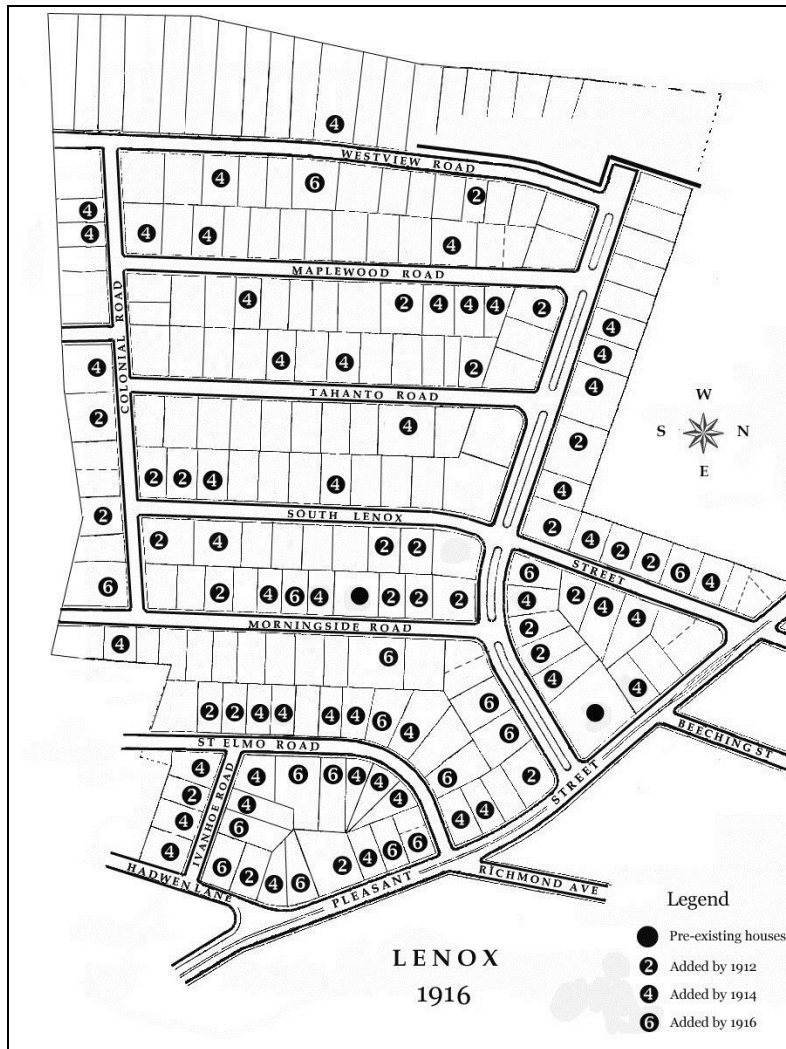
Seated on its lot in a manner similar to others on the street, its foundation aligned parallel to the street, as are others, it gives the appearance of having been constructed to conform to the civil engineer’s site plan, which it preceded by some fourteen years. Late in 1914, the newly remodeled house was sold to a couple who resided there until 1917 before selling it back to the O’Connells, who

<sup>30</sup> Worcester City Directory, 1912, 1913. City of Worcester, Department of Health and Human Services, Building Permit No. 1133, Aug-12-1912, owner: T.E. O’Connell.

<sup>31</sup> O’Connell Real Estate Company, brochure entitled *The Beauty Spot of Worcester*, courtesy of the Worcester Historical Museum. Every page of the brochure had written across the bottom: “LENOX is the Beauty Spot of Worcester.” The former Hammond house was shown on the tenth page of the unpaginated brochure.

then held it for almost a year before selling it again. Mr. and Mrs. Henry F. Forbes, owned the home and resided there until the late 1920s. Mr. Forbes was identified in the 1920 census as a toy manufacturer.

### 3.11 Houses Standing, 1916, per Building Permits



After 1912, development of the area continued at a brisk pace, especially in the banner building year of 1913 when 34 building permits were issued. By the end of 1916 a total of 66 houses had been erected, bringing the total for the area to 95. Figure 3.11 shows the evolving physical pattern, adding ball symbols with a “4” for houses added between October, 1912 and September, 1914, and a “6” for ones added 1915-1916, while still showing the “2-ball” symbol for the earlier houses.

The 95 houses standing by the end of 1916 represented just under half, about 47 percent, of the eventual total of 202. The most built-out sections were the Saint Elmo Road area at the base of the hill and the east and south-facing properties situated lower on the hill, along Chamberlayne, Morningside, and South Lenox. Numerous corner lots remained vacant, and there were still open sites facing east on the upper part of South Lenox, and on Tahanto at the crest of the hill, which remained mostly empty. The westerly side of the hill was developing more slowly, accounting for about fifteen houses by 1916.



Figure 3.12 continues the list of building permits issued for new home construction in Lenox between September, 1912 and the end of 1916.

### 3.12 Building Permits Issued for New House Construction in Lenox, Oct-1912-1916

Seq. No.	Permit Date	Num.	Street	Owner	Builder	Type	Rptd Cost
30	Oct-01-1912	6-8	Ivanhoe	Wm H. Cresswell	Wm H. Cresswell	2F	\$8,500
31	Oct-21-1912	20	St Elmo (Frederick)	Arnold J. Booth	Fred. E. Richardson	S	\$3,000
32	Oct-30-1912	12	St Elmo (Frederick)	Wm A. Robertson	Henry Fraser	S	\$5,500
33	Nov-04-1912	20	Chamberlain	John Russell	Harry Cass	S	\$5,000
34	Nov-08-1912	824	Pleasant	John L. Wyman	John E. Taylor	2F	\$7,500
35	Dec-06-1912	32	Maplewood	Mrs. Nellie Bush	Wm H. Cresswell	S	\$8,500
36	Dec-06-1912	28	Maplewood	H. L. Dow	Wm H. Cresswell	S	\$8,500
37	Dec-18-1912	6-8	St Elmo (Frederick)	L. A. Trombly	P. Trombly & Sons	2F	\$10,000
38	Feb-26-1913	2	Chamberlain	W. A. Robertson	H. Fraser	S	\$11,000
39	Mar-19-1913	18	Tahanto	Henrietta Dadmun	Fred. E. Richardson	S	\$3,100
40	Mar-22-1913	22	Chamberlain	Isaac York	Fred. E. Richardson	S	\$4,500
41	Mar-24-1913	790	Pleasant	Thos. F. O'Flynn	T. D. Foley	S	\$3,500
42	Apr-09-1913	11	Tahanto	Edwin P. Cerie	owner	S	\$8,000
43	Apr-12-1913	22	Morningside (#8)	Elizabeth Ballou	S. Larson	2F	\$12,500
44	Apr-21-1913	1	Ivanhoe/ 8 Hadwen Ln	N. F. Tucker	N. F. Tucker	2F	\$8,000
45	Apr-22-1913	18	St Elmo	Arnold J. Booth	Fred. E. Richardson	S	\$3,000
46	Apr-29-1913	59	South Lenox	George Hatch	Eli Rogers	S	\$4,500
47	Apr-29-1913	19	South Lenox	George Hatch	Eli Rogers	S	\$5,500
48	May-08-1913	30	Morningside	Fred Cerie	F. D. Pierce	S	\$5,000
49	Jun-14-1913	25	Colonial	E. C. Storrs	Wm H. Cresswell	S	\$7,800
50	Jun-14-1913	27	Colonial	Harry Walker	Wm H. Cresswell	S	\$7,500
51	Jun-14-1913	11-15	Ivanhoe	Arnold J. Booth	Wm H. Cresswell	2F	\$9,000
52	Jun-16-1913	6	Maplewood	Herbert Hall	Harry Cass	2F	\$8,600
53	Jun-19-1913	14	Tahanto	Fred. E. Richardson	Fred. E. Richardson	S	\$5,000
54	Jun-20-1913	53	Morningside	Ralph Currier	Wm H. Cresswell	S	\$6,500
55	Jun-20-1913	12	Ivanhoe	Wm H. Cresswell	Wm H. Cresswell	S	\$7,500
56	Jul-01-1913	17	Colonial	George H. Hill	A. P. Robbins	2F	\$7,500
57	Jul-14-1913	27	Maplewood	John A. Farnum	owner	S	\$3,500
58	Aug-04-1913	842	Pleasant (#832)	Dr. John J. Cummings	R. P. Keefe	S	\$7,000
59	Aug-21-1913	22	South Lenox	William Toner	owner	S	\$5,000
60	Sep-03-1913	20	Westview	Carl Anderson	N. Nelson	S	\$3,500
61	Sep-10-1913	800	Pleasant (#798)	Wm & Eliz Waugh	R. P. Keefe	2F	\$10,500
62	Sep-23-1913	15	South Lenox	Alfred Wesson	Fred. E. Richardson	S	\$5,800
63	Sep-30-1913	822	Pleasant	Arnold J. Booth	Arnold J. Booth	2F	\$5,000
64	Oct-08-1913	5	Maplewood	George Hatch	George Hatch	S	\$4,500
65	Oct-08-1913	7	Maplewood	George Hatch	George Hatch	S	\$4,500
66	Dec-01-1913	9	Maplewood	Edmund D. Scott	Wm H. Cresswell	S	\$6,500
67	Dec-15-1913	6	South Lenox	Mrs. L. A. Peters	Charles Peters	S	\$5,000
68	Jan-07-1914	3-5	Ivanhoe	Wm H. Cresswell	Wm H. Cresswell	2F	\$8,000
69	Apr-08-1914	46	South Lenox	F. Skelhorn & H. Cass	Skelhorn & H. Cass	S	\$6,500

70	Apr-18-1914	12	Chamberlain	T. Foley	J. J. Gallagher	S	\$12,000
71	May-11-1914	34	Chamberlain	Mary E. McGourty	Nils Peterson	S	\$5,300
72	May-22-1914	64	South Lenox	John Stephan	E. Gulberg & Son	2F	\$8,000
73	Jun-09-1914	31	Westview	Michael J. Doyle	owner	S	\$3,500
74	Jun-24-1914	8	Chamberlain	F. W. White	owner	S	\$7,500
75	Jun-24-1914	14	St Elmo (Frederick)	Raymond N. Newton	Wm H. Cresswell	S	\$5,000
76	Jul-09-1914	5	Saint Elmo	Arnold J. Booth	Arnold J. Booth	S	\$4,500
77	Sep-24-1914	7	Saint Elmo	Arnold J. Booth	Arnold J. Booth	S	\$3,500
78	Sep-24-1914	9	Saint Elmo	Arnold J. Booth	Arnold J. Booth	S	\$3,500
79	Nov-09-1914	10	South Lenox	Otis Parker	Charles Peters	S	\$6,000
80	Nov-17-1914	3	Chamberlain	Malvina A. Lombard	Wm H. Cresswell	S	\$7,500
81	Jan-05-1915	2	Ivanhoe	Arnold J. Booth	Arnold J. Booth	S	\$6,300
82	Jan-05-1915	54	Morningside (#28)	Frank MacNeill	Arnold J. Booth	S	\$4,500
83	Mar-13-1915	21	Westview	Louis M. Groves	owner	S	\$3,500
84	Mar-16-1915	792	Pleasant	Arnold J. Booth	Arnold J. Booth	S	\$3,500
85	May-14-1915	26	Morningside (#10)	Elizabeth Ballou	Swan Larson	S	\$5,000
86	Jun-14-1915	10	Saint Elmo	Mary J. Smith	H. J. Gould Co.	S	\$4,000
87	Jun-30-1915	5	Chamberlain	Arnold J. Booth	Arnold J. Booth	S	\$5,500
88	Jul-21-1915	4	Saint Elmo	Arnold J. Booth	Arnold J. Booth	S	\$4,500
89	Aug-27-1915	13	Saint Elmo (#15)	Arnold J. Booth	Arnold J. Booth	S	\$3,800
90	Nov-19-1915	11	Saint Elmo	Arnold J. Booth	Arnold J. Booth	S	\$4,000
91	Nov-29-1915	804	Pleasant	H. W. Trulson	Arnold J. Booth	S	\$5,000
92	Dec-06-1915	11	Morningside (#5)	Josephine Bieberbach	Nils Peterson	S	\$4,500
93	Feb-25-1916	25	South Lenox	W. A. Sweet	George Hatch	S	\$8,000
94	Jul-18-1916	1-3	Saint Elmo	Arnold J. Booth	Arnold J. Booth	2F	\$6,000
95	Nov-17-1916	6	Hadwen Ln	Wm H. Cresswell	Wm H. Cresswell	2F	\$6,000

Buyers of lots in Lenox had their choice of architectural styles for their new homes, aside from the deeded restrictions on houses of more than two units, and the ban on flat roofs. On the whole, home builders seemed to have been inspired by popular new trends in residential architecture, rather than the dominant styles of the past, such as the various colonial, classical, or Victorian era styles. This apparently was part of a national trend. Virginia and Lee McAlester, in *A Field Guide to American Houses*, speak of a "... first wave of architectural modernism which, in the form of the Craftsman and Prairie styles, dominated American houses built during the first two decades of this century."<sup>32</sup> The closest thing to a predominant style in the early years of Lenox was the American Foursquare, a derivation of the Prairie style, sometimes called a "Prairie Box." Approximations of the foursquare, and a small number of houses that were, and remain, a step closer to the Prairie style, encompassed at least a third of the houses built in Lenox by 1916, although with considerable variation, some incorporating distinctive elements of other styles, and some being larger and more deluxe than others. Also popular, especially for smaller homes, was the Craftsman style, which the McAlesters cite as another variation of the Prairie style. There were a few homes built during this period featuring cross gables and shingles, with Craftsman-style elements, most of which were among the larger homes built in Lenox.

<sup>32</sup> Virginia and Lee McAlester, in *A Field Guide to American Houses*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011, p. 319.

Notable for its absence were examples of the Queen Anne style that had been so popular only a few years earlier. There were also other house types to be found, including a few colonial revivals, some of which were in the “Dutch” (gambrel roof) format. On the whole, Lenox seemed at the end of 1916 to be taking a generally modern direction in house architecture.

### **Building Contractors**

As the developer of Lenox, the O’Connell Real Estate Company’s principal role was that of facilitator – the entity which made possible the building of homes on lots that had been “improved” by their frontage on passable streets with sidewalks, drainage systems, conduits for water supply and sewerage, gas for heating and cooking, electric power, telephone service, and street trees. As a rule, with exceptions in a small number of cases, the firm did not engage in the home-building process itself.

There were two predominant patterns by which the building process operated in Lenox, and probably in most other developments in the city as well. In one, the majority case, homesites were sold to individual buyers intending to reside there, who then contracted with builders, or general contractors, to construct their homes. In some cases house plans were drawn up by an architect, but more often homes were built from pre-designed plans purchased by the buyer. In the other format, builders, or what might be called “sub-developers,” would purchase one or more lots from O’Connell, then either build-to-sell or sell-then-build-to-order, for buyers intending to reside there.

A total of 28 different building contractors constructed 86 of the houses standing by 1916, and another nine were built by property owners for their own occupancy (or the names of the actual builders were not included on the building permits). The three most active home builders in the area were William H. Cresswell, who built seventeen new houses and did the renovation of 16 Morningside; Arnold J. Booth, who was responsible for thirteen houses, most of them in the area of St. Elmo, Ivanhoe, and Pleasant Street; and Frederick E. Richardson, who built eight houses, most of them single-family residences in the Craftsman bungalow style. Cresswell and Booth can also be considered sub-developers, in that they purchased lots and either built or had built on them houses for sale to others. For example, Cresswell purchased all of the lots on the east side of Ivanhoe Road, then built and sold homes to buyers. Forty-seven houses were built by twenty-five different professional builders, and the remaining nine were said on the permits to be erected by the owners. In some of these cases, contractors may have been hired to do the work while the owner maintained the role of the “responsible party,” while other houses may have been constructed by “do-it-yourselfers,” likely with the aid of sub-contractors for specialized tasks.

### **A Second Look by Worcester Magazine**

In its May, 1916 issue, *Worcester Magazine* featured as its cover story an account of “The New Homes of Worcester.” The seven-page article began by extolling the virtues of upper and middle-value owner-occupied housing, and discussed nineteen different named developments that were then underway in the city, including Lenox, as well as several other products of the O’Connell Real Estate Company. Other developments discussed included “Newton Square” on part of the old Wetherell farm, the “Indian Hill” development sponsored by the Norton Company for its employees, and “Forest Park” on the site of the former Highland Military Academy. To the neighborhood of Lenox the author

attributed great stature as a masterpiece of design, a valued asset of the entire city, and the standard against which other developments should be compared. From *Worcester Magazine*, May, 1916:

### LENOX

*The masterpiece in real estate development was wrought by the O'Connell Real Estate Trust on the slightly hill opposite Richmond Heights. It was a pioneer move in Worcester to develop this farm land in the modern way, to put nearly \$100,000 into streets, sewers, sidewalks, grading, trees and other improvements, and its success has been monumental. By the end of this season a hundred of the most costly and beautiful dwellings in the city will have been finished and occupied. And this has been accomplished in about five years. Practically all the lots have been sold to persons who intend to build as soon as they can. Lenox has served as an example to all real estate owners and set the pace for all competition.*

*The city has benefited, not only from hundreds of thousands of new taxable property but from the practical model in sight of all, demonstrating that the best is not too good for this community. The beautiful parkway, the imposing gateways, the broad streets, the adaptation of the buildings to the steep grades of the hill make Lenox one of the sights of the city. It has already been described as one of the most perfect residence parks in the country. Every house owner in Lenox is proud of his home and of the community in which he lives. Of course, its chief asset, after all, is the magnificent view in all directions. The hills of Worcester are worth more than can be told in prose. From Lenox one gets a panorama of infinite variety and beauty.<sup>33</sup>*

No advertisement written by the O'Connell team could have paid greater tribute to their effort. By this account, Lenox was a *monumental* success. The claim that Lenox had “*already been described as one of the most perfect residence parks in the country,*” may have reflected a bit of marketing hyperbole, and the source remained unnamed. Another remark of special interest was the mention of the neighborhood’s “*imposing gateways.*”<sup>34</sup>

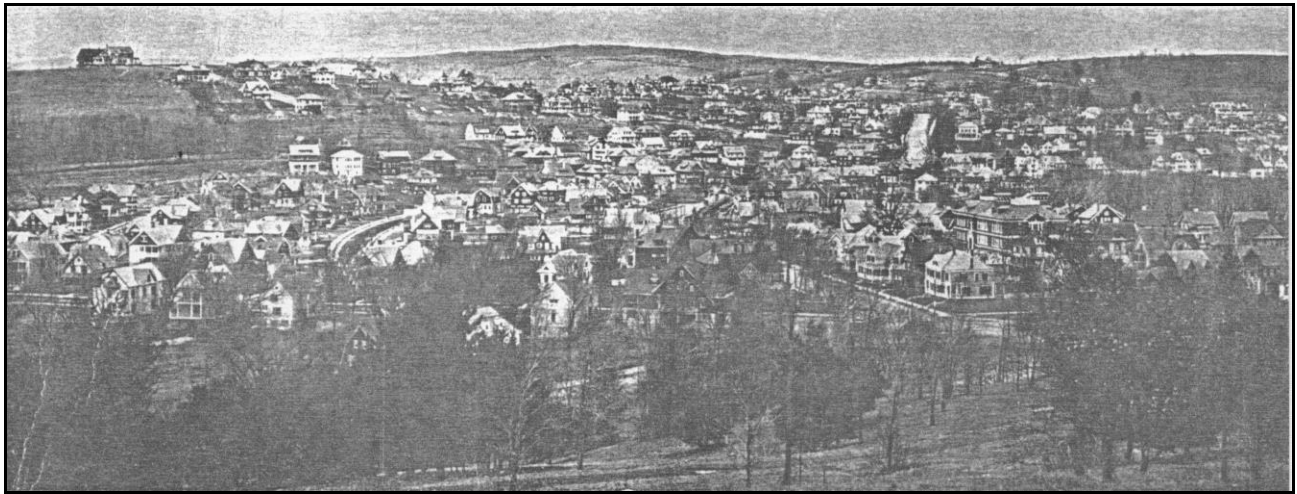
The area’s “*chief asset,*” according to the article, was the “*magnificent view in all directions... a panorama of infinite variety and beauty.*” In fact, the views appear in fact to have constituted a major factor in the early phase of development. Sites along the uphill sides of Saint Elmo and Morningside Roads were popular among early builders, as were other locations with good easterly views, such as along the steeply sloped Colonial Road and at the upper end of South Lenox Street. To an extent, the houses positioned along these streets gave the appearance of “*tiers*” of housing overlooking the city to the east. A view of the emerging neighborhood *from* the east, in which the houses in view are those with the best corresponding views *to* the east, can be seen (with a little effort) in the photograph in Figure 3.13. This picture was taken in 1916 and was used on the cover of *Worcester Magazine* for a direct comparison with a comparable view taken in 1891.

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<sup>33</sup> *Worcester Magazine*, May, 1916, “The New Homes of Worcester,” pp. 103-109.

<sup>34</sup> Efforts to find photographic evidence of the pavilion were unsuccessful..

### 3.13 View of Lenox and the Newton Square area from Newton Hill, 1916



Source: *Worcester Magazine*, cover photo, June, 1916.

This 1916 perspective on the area corresponds to another photograph on the same *Worcester Magazine* cover, which had been taken about 1891, as was shown earlier in Figure 2.6. Considerable detail of the houses of early Lenox can be seen in the upper-left portion of this photograph ([Images of Lenox](#), item 8)

comparison with the shot taken from the same location a quarter century earlier, 1891 (See Chapter 2, Figure 2.7)

By 1916 development was also occurring at a faster rate on the other side of the hill where views could be had of the hills to the west, ranging from Leicester to Paxton. It was somewhat ironic that much of that view would largely disappear, at least for six months out of the year, as the newly-planted trees grew to block it. In New England the natural tradeoff between views and shade trees tends to favor the latter; in due time, it would be so in Lenox.

The Saint Elmo area, with its easy walk to Pleasant Street and the trolley, was nearly built out by 1916, with only a handful of sites still awaiting construction. Homesites along Pleasant Street, lower South Lenox, and the north side of the parkway were also popular. The “front view” of Lenox, along its Pleasant Street boundary, spanned seventeen house lots between Hadwen Lane at the corner of Ivanhoe Road, and the far side of South Lenox Street, not counting the Chamberlain house at number 830. Twelve of the seventeen had houses standing by 1916. Curiously, the five lots still vacant included those on both sides of South Lenox Street. Aside from the corner lots, the lower part of South Lenox was nearly built out along both sides, and the north side of Chamberlain Parkway was largely complete through the number 34, then vacant down to the sharp drop off beyond Westview.

The south side of the parkway, on the other hand, remained largely undeveloped, even though most of the vacant lots were corner properties. Of the ten corner lots on the south side of the Parkway, excluding the downhill side of Westview, which was non-developable, only three had houses standing by 1916. One was 828 Pleasant Street, and between the two corner houses standing along the parkway, numbers 11 (then 7) and 25-27 Chamberlain, lay an expanse of more than 300 feet (including the widths of South Lenox and Tahanto). Also curious, and probably surprising to the developers, was that the two corner lots on the north side of the parkway at South Lenox Street both had houses on them by 1916, but both were facing not the parkway but South Lenox Street (numbers 28 and 25). In view of

the special attractions of the parkway, as well as its higher costs and valuations, one might have expected the corner lots along it to be among the most desirable and prestigious homesites in the development, as well as the most expensive, and that houses on them would be oriented to the parkway. As of 1916, however, it was not working out that way.

Although development was gradually spreading around the hill by 1916, a number of fairly large expanses of land remained vacant. At the peak of the hill, where Tahanto intersects Colonial, only two houses had yet been constructed: 17 Colonial, adjacent to what would become Havelock Road a few years later, and number 15 next door to it. In the photograph taken in 1916 from Newton Hill (Figure 3.13), the two are visually intertwined, giving the combination an immense appearance. These two homes undoubtedly enjoyed some of the most impressive views of the city skyline available anywhere in Worcester at the time. For the initial owner and resident of number 17, Chief of Police George H. Hill, it might have been called a “commanding” view of the city.

Across from the Chief’s house, five lots at the end of Tahanto Road on its east side, lots 163-167, offering great views from the top of the hill, remained vacant in 1916. They had been purchased in 1910, presumably on a speculative basis, by a single buyer, the prominent Worcester attorney, former City Solicitor, and now justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, Arthur P. Rugg.<sup>35</sup> Having been appointed a justice in 1906, Rugg was appointed Chief Justice in September, 1911, a position in which he served for nearly 27 years until his death in 1938. The Chief Justice was a younger brother of O. Willis Rugg, the civil engineer who designed Lenox for the O’Connells.

On the west side of Tahanto Road, a cluster of lots encompassing the upper end of the Tahanto-Maplewood block had been purchased by a Lester V. Bailey in 1910, and later sold to John Legg, of 28 South Lenox Street. By 1916, only a single house was standing in this cluster: 27 Maplewood Road. Otherwise, the block remained vacant at the crest of the hill, and below number 27, the middle section of Maplewood was empty on both sides as well. The western slope of the hill offered a view of the Tatasset range, Leicester to Paxton, including the site of what would become the Worcester Municipal Airport a few years later. By 1916 there were about fourteen houses situated to take advantage of this view, including three near the top of Maplewood and two on the westerly end of Colonial, plus half a dozen houses at the lower end of Maplewood to the corner of Chamberlain Parkway. On the whole, the westerly side of the hill remained more sparsely developed than the easterly side, possibly in part because it was a considerably greater distance uphill from the trolley on Pleasant Street.

\* \* \*

### **Some People of Lenox, circa 1916**

The “mini-biographies” below consist of minimal descriptions of a few selected persons and families of Lenox, drawn from data in the public domain. No claim is made to knowing anything about the lives, personalities, or character of these people aside from the elementary facts available in the documents. The statements below are based on information readily available in the U.S. census, city directories, published biographies, such as those of Charles Nutt and Ellery Bicknell Crane, and in some cases, obituary notices.

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<sup>35</sup> *Worcester Magazine*, October, 1911, p. 617-18. Also see memorial tribute to Justice Rugg at <http://www.massreports.com/memorials/302ma625.htm>



Judge Frederick H. **Chamberlain** and his two sisters were still in residence at the old “homestead” in which they had been reared, the house now somewhat transformed for its new life in a suburban environment as number 830 Pleasant Street, and the second house in the rear having been removed. The 1920 census showed Frederick at age 59, still on the bench in Probate Court, residing with his sisters Agnes, 69, and Bertha, 50, neither of whom was said to be employed.

A few houses down Pleasant Street, between St. Elmo Road and Hadwen Lane, at number 796, was the substantial and comparatively expensive home built in 1912 by Benjamin F. **Marsh**, proprietor of the B. F. Marsh Company, dealers in masonry supplies. In his mid-sixties, Marsh moved into the house about 1913 and in 1915 he died. The house was then sold to Albert E. Newton, a machine tools manufacturer, and his wife, Minnie. By 1918 the Newtons had purchased the adjacent, unbuilt lot, bringing their property size to nearly 21,000 square feet. In later years the house was used as a respite care facility as well as an ordinary residence. By the year 2000 the property had been purchased by the Seven Hills Foundation, and shortly thereafter the house was demolished, and a new, pre-fabricated, house considered more suitable for the purpose of the home, was erected. Not required to comply with the setback requirements under the RL-7 zoning designation, or the original Lenox deeds, the house was sited only a few feet from the sidewalk along Pleasant Street.

John **Legg**, who was mentioned earlier regarding his ownership of several lots near the top of the Maplewood-Tahanto block, moved with his wife Sarah into 28 South Lenox about 1912. He was President of the Worcester Woolen Mill Company on Southgate Place, which had been owned by his father, James Legg, prior to his death in 1890. The Leggs were prominent members of Worcester society, apparently well known for their entertaining at their large and luxurious home at 5 Claremont Street, and they represented the people of high social standing in the community that the Lenox marketing plan had seemingly sought to attract.

Nutt’s biography of John Legg (presumably written by Legg himself, or by someone close to him, possibly edited by Nutt) made note of the modern plant and equipment of the mills, the up-to-date production methods, and the company’s high degree of concern for and attention to the health and well-being of its workers.<sup>36</sup> It also noted the existence in Mr. Legg’s office of a “...*framed testimonial signed by the workers thanking Mr. John Legg for the increase in wages, for the reduction in work hours, and for the brotherly sympathy he had shown in the interests of the employees.*” [p.25]

The year 1910, according to Nutt, was devoted to travel by the Leggs. First they drove across the country from Worcester to Los Angeles by automobile, which in 1910 was something of an accomplishment, considering the quality of roads and the reliability of the machines, and the task must

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<sup>36</sup> It is widely assumed that the people being profiled in the histories written by Nutt, as well as E. B. Crane (1907), F. P. Rice (1898), and D. Hamilton Hurd (1889), wrote their own biographies, or someone designated by them wrote them, leaving the author-as-editor responsible for editing. Rather than diminishing the value of the works, this fact in some ways strengthens it, since it enables the reader to learn what that person wanted him or her to think, which, at least in some cases, provides insight into the personality and mindset of the person. If it were otherwise, that Mr. Nutt had to do all the biography sketches himself, it is unlikely that such, “objective” biographies could offer much depth or insight on more than a small number of people.

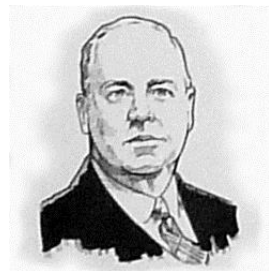
have challenged the endurance of the travelers. The Leggs, in their upper-fifties, then spent six months in the Orient and another six months in Alaska before returning to their home on Claremont Street in Worcester. Within about a year they sold that property and moved to their new home in Lenox, the change amounting to a high-end case of “downsizing.” Their home at 5 Claremont was at least twice the size of the one on South Lenox, and the valuation placed on the building by the city for tax purposes was \$25,000, compared with \$5,800 at their smaller new residence. The Leggs resided on South Lenox for about a decade before relocating in 1923 to their son’s home on Berwick Street, and about 1926 they left Worcester and moved to Pasadena, California.

Two other adult members of the Legg family came to Lenox as well. In 1912 or 1913, their son John Francis Legg and his wife moved into a new home at 68 South Lenox, at the corner of Colonial Road., but they remained there only a year or two before relocating again to 27 Berwick Street, only a few blocks away. Their daughter Bessie, who was trained in music at the New England Conservatory of Music, and was a soprano soloist who sang with the choirs of various churches in the city, married William Gray **Harris**, an agent for a life insurance company, originally from Vermont, who also made his mark in music as an accomplished organist with the choir at the Plymouth Church.<sup>37</sup> The Harrises had a home built at 37 South Lenox and moved into it about the same time as her parents moved into theirs across the intersection. They would reside there until about 1940.



WILLIAM GRAY HARRIS

W. Gray Harris  
*Worcester Magazine*,  
April, 1913



Wall display at  
St. Vincent  
Hospital,  
photograph by  
author

Next door to the Chamberlains, Dr. John J. **Cummings** and his wife and three sons moved into their new home at 832 Pleasant Street (later 842) in 1914. Dr. Cummings was a surgeon and physician, specializing in obstetrics at Saint Vincent and Mount Saint James Hospitals. He was of Irish descent, in his mid-forties at the time of the move. He was described by Nutt as being “fond of nature and out-door life,” and as one who “seeks recreation and rest in his automobile.” (p139) We can only wonder if the doctor had the opportunity to talk automobiles and traveling with his neighbor, John Legg. In the mid-1940s, Dr. Cummings was President of the Saint Vincent Hospital Medical Staff, and his name and a sketch are among other past presidents on a wall in the main concourse of the St. Vincent’s - Worcester Medical Center today.

The Cummings’ youngest son, Paul, who was born about the time the family moved to Lenox, continued living in the house after his parents were gone. Married and working for many years with the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, he lived there until the mid-1990s, a period covering approximately eighty years.

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<sup>37</sup> *Worcester Magazine*, v. 16, April, 1913, pp.106-108.

George and Josephine **Bieberbach** moved into their new home at 5 (now 11) Morningside Road in 1916. George's grandfather, also named George, had immigrated to the United States as a skilled brewer from Bavaria in the mid-1800s, narrowly escaping German authorities who are said to have had a "kill if captured" order on him for his involvement in subversive political activities during the turbulence of 1848.<sup>38</sup> In New York, he worked with the F. & M. Schaffer Brewing Company, and later moved to Boston where he brewed lager beer for the Roessle Brewery. In 1867 Bieberbach moved to Worcester where he leased and operated the International Hotel on Front Street, and was the proprietor of a "beer saloon" on Mechanic Street. Following the success of a wholesale liquor business on Summer Street, he established in 1882 the George Bieberbach Company at 111 Summer Street, across from the old County Jail (site of the current Hampton Inn), bottlers of "Ginger Ale, Soda and Mineral Waters."<sup>39</sup> Two of his sons worked with him in the bottling enterprise, George, Jr. and John, while another, Richard, was an upholsterer with a shop on Grafton Street.<sup>40</sup> Maintaining his ties with the brewer's art, George, senior, was also a member of the Board of Directors of the Worcester Brewing Company on East Worcester Street and served for a time as its President.

After George's death in 1900, the two sons, George, Jr. and John, continued the business, renaming it Bieberbach Brothers and Company, with their sister's husband, George Sandner, a third partner. Richard continued working as an upholsterer. It was Richard's son George and his wife Josephine who purchased a lot on Morningside Road in 1912, and moved into their new home in 1916. This George was a brewer, employed by the Worcester Brewing Corporation at 75 East Worcester Street, the original trade of his grandfather, whose primary business enterprise had not been brewing, but bottling soft drinks.

The Bieberbach Brothers bottling company was sold that same year, 1916, to an enterprising and successful first generation Irish-American, operator of a liquor store and a saloon in the Salisbury Building at Lincoln Square, which he owned and where he and his family also resided. The buyer, Dennis M. Crowley,<sup>41</sup> was shown in the 1910 census as a wine merchant, age 47, with his wife Mary, 45, and their five sons, ages 22 to 13, plus a servant girl from Russia. Two years later, Crowley acquired the Leicester Polar Spring Company and the combined bottling enterprise became the Bieber Polar Ginger Ale Company. The bottling of soft drinks became Crowley's principal concern after ratification in 1919 of the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment banning all sales of alcohol, previously his most profitable enterprise. The plant remained in operation on Summer Street under that name until 1968 when the property was sold to the Worcester Redevelopment Authority, a new facility was opened on Walcott Street along Interstate 290, and the name of the company was changed to the Polar Corporation. The President at this writing is Ralph Crowley, a great grandson of Dennis Crowley.

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<sup>38</sup> Charles Nutt, v. II, p.440

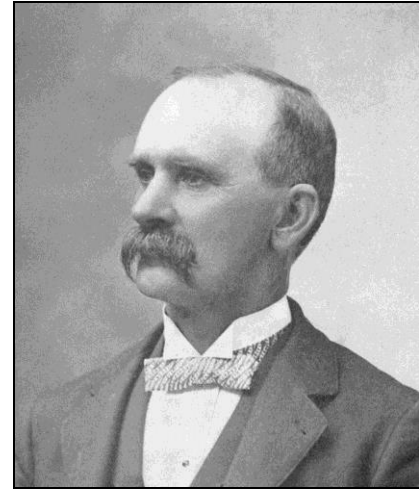
<sup>39</sup> From an advertisement in the 1892 City Directory, p. 719.

<sup>40</sup> Crane, p. n. Using only the various censuses of the period, it can not be shown conclusively that Richard was a son of George and brother of George, Jr. and John. The 1870 census listed "Bridgit," age 17, working in an upholstery store, and omitted Richard, who is known from later censuses to have been born about 1853 and to have worked in upholstery, while there was no further mention of Bridgit in later years. In view of the information provided to E. B. Crane by the family, it is clear that this was a case of census taker's error – presumably hearing "Bridgit" and recording a female when the respondent actually said "Richard."

<sup>41</sup> "History: How We Started," The Polar Beverages website, [www.polarbev.com/Default.aspx?tabid=120](http://www.polarbev.com/Default.aspx?tabid=120)

In 1953, Josephine Bieberbach, sold the property on Morningside Road which since 1933 had consisted of two adjacent lots, giving the homesite a wide face to the street, and relocated to Fiske Road. Her daughter Phyllis M. Bieberbach, born in 1914, taught and served as guidance counselor for many years at South High.

In 1911, George **Hatch**, the senior partner in Hatch and Barnes, specialists in staircases and interior woodworking on Union Street, retired from the business, selling his interest to his partner, Fred W. Barnes. At age 68 and having lost his wife a few years prior, Hatch then involved himself in real estate development, including five houses in Lenox built in the early phase of the development. Residing at 760 Pleasant Street, one of a group of houses built on the site of the former Catholic Cemetery, Hatch first built two homes simultaneously, one at 19 South Lenox, into which he and his daughter moved and remained for a few years, and another at 59 South Lenox. In late 1913 and 1914 he built numbers 5 and 7 Maplewood Road, and in 1916 he oversaw the construction of 25 South Lenox while living next door to it at number 19. In 1918, at the age of 75, he moved into 5 Maplewood.



George Hatch  
from Charles Nutt, opp. p. 171

In 1914, Ann **McGourty** and five of her twelve children (nine surviving) moved into their new home at 34 Chamberlain Parkway. Ann was a widow, then in her seventies, and the five children ranged from 51 to 33, all single. Her husband Owen McGourty had immigrated from Ireland in 1850, worked as a wire drawer, retired by 1900, and died about 1903. Also born in Ireland, in 1842, Ann immigrated with her family as a child in 1845. The McGourty's owned a home on Oak Avenue next to the Belmont Street School which Ann sold about 1914 when she and the five grown children moved to Lenox. The 1920 census listed daughter Mary (57), with no occupation outside the home; Alice (54), a private family nurse; John (50), a plumber, and the census-designee as head of household; Elizabeth (49), a teacher in a private school; and Frederick (38), a dentist; as well as Ann.<sup>42</sup> In 1930, four of the five siblings were still in residence, but Ann was not, and there was a seven-year-old girl identified as a niece of Mary, now considered the head of household. In May, 1958, Elizabeth Ann McGourty, in her eighties, sold the home on Chamberlain Parkway in which she had lived since 1914, and three weeks later she died.

At 14 Tahanto Road, a substantial two-and-a-half storey single-family house built in 1913 by Frederick E. Richardson, the family of Edmond and Theodora **Belisle** was in residence by 1914. Mr.

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<sup>42</sup> Most of the ages given for the members of the family in the 1920 census conflicted with those taken from the census of 1900 in which the months and years of birth were provided, suggesting a higher probability of accuracy. That earlier census showed Ann having been born in April, 1842, in Ireland, which would have had her 77 in January, 1920 when the census of that year was taken. The 1920 census said she was 85, and had non-conforming ages for several of the siblings as well.

Belisle was one of six sons, along with three daughters, of Alexander and Marie Belisle, each of whom had been born in Quebec and moved to this area at different times in the mid-1800s. The elder Belisle was a shoemaker, and the large family clearly was far from affluent, but the family achieved the “American Dream” in a very impressive manner, many of the children becoming prominent members of the Worcester community in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in the fields of law, journalism, and publishing.

In 1893 the brothers formed the Belisle Printing and Publishing Company, the chief product of which was the French language daily newspaper, *L’Opinion Publique*. Eldest brother Alexander, Jr., who had been business manager for the earlier French paper *Le Travailleur*, served as President of the Company, and Edmond, who had learned the printing trade in Worcester, Boston, and New York, was its Treasurer, both heavily involved in the content of the daily. Their brother Felix had also been a journalist with French newspapers here and elsewhere, and in the 1880s became a lawyer, establishing a successful practice serving primarily the French-speaking community of Worcester. His career, however, was cut short by death in 1905.



Edmond Belisle  
from Charles Nutt, v. 3, p. 75

Another brother, George, attended Holy Cross College, earned an L.L.B. at Georgetown University, and joined his brother in practice, and, after the latter’s death, continued in successful practice for many years. Eugene L. Belisle was a journalist for *L’Opinion* for a time, and in 1906 was appointed by President Roosevelt as the American consul in Limoges, France, a position he held into the 1920s. The sixth brother, Hector, entered the field of education and by the date of Charles Nutt’s *History of Worcester and Its People*, had become Superintendent of Schools in Fall River.

The 1920 census showed at 14 Tahanto Road the family of Edmond and Dora Belisle, consisting of their four children, ages two to seven, Edmond’s brothers George and Eugene, and one of his three sisters, Anna, a music teacher. After Edmond’s death about 1922, his wife Dora relocated to Spencer. By the 1930

census she had married Edmond’s brother George, the attorney, and was residing at 8 William Street in Worcester. The Belisle Printing and Publishing Company, and its principal publication, *L’Opinion Publique*, came to an end in the mid-1930s, likely a casualty of the Depression.

Thomas F. **O’Flynn** and his wife Julia purchased Lenox lot number 66 and had a bungalow in the craftsman style built on it in 1913, becoming 790 Pleasant Street. He was a son of the late Richard O’Flynn, a well known and highly esteemed figure, considered the city’s unofficial historian of Worcester’s Irish, and of Ireland. The proprietor of a bookstore on Front Street, he was a collector of American Indian artifacts as well as books on Ireland and the Irish, donated some 800 volumes to the Worcester Public Library. Mr. O’Flynn was one of four founders, in 1875, of the Worcester Society of Antiquity, now known as the Worcester Historical Museum. The elder O’Flynn’s interest in books and learning was carried on by his son Thomas, who received degrees from W.P.I. (1882) and the state Normal School (1898) and was a teacher and principal in the Worcester Public Schools for many years.

In 1910, Thomas O'Flynn authored a primer for local history instruction in the public schools, entitled *The Story of Worcester*.<sup>43</sup>

A son of Thomas and Julia, George Bernard O'Flynn, was educated at the Massachusetts Agricultural College (part of UMass-Amherst) and at Clark (A.M. 1913), and, like his father, taught in Worcester Public Schools for many years. In 1914 he was appointed head of the biology department at Classical High. In 1934, as vice-Principal of the Providence Street School, he co-authored, with Albert Farnsworth, an updated version of his father's schoolbook history, *The Story of Worcester, Massachusetts*.<sup>44</sup> George resided with his parents at 790 Pleasant Street until about 1922, when he relocated to 7 Fiske Street. His parents, Thomas and Julia, moved with him and remained there the rest of their lives. Thomas died February 16, 1932.

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<sup>43</sup> Thomas F. O'Flynn, *The Story of Worcester*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1910..

<sup>44</sup> Albert Farnsworth and George B. O'Flynn, *The Story of Worcester, Massachusetts*, Worcester: The Davis Press, 1934.