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READING HENRY HOBSON RICHARDSON'S TRAINS STATIONS:  
THE CONTEXT OF LOCALE

Janel Elizabeth Houton

A THESIS

in

Historic Preservation

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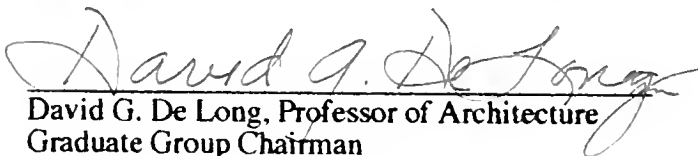
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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis will explore the relation of setting to Henry Hobson Richardson's Massachusetts train station designs, and their landscaping by Frederick Law Olmsted. It seeks to illuminate the distinct relationship of place to building design and implementation, and to suggest motives and aims of their corporate commissioners, building and landscape designers as they relate to the users of these stations. The primary evidence for this study is contemporary criticism found in magazines, journals and newspapers.

The first chapter briefly establishes those involved in the conception of the station program; Richardson, Olmsted, and the men of the Boston & Albany Railroad who were instrumental in the implementation of the program. The second chapter offers a short account of the differences between Railroad suburbs, villages, and towns, and the suburban development and transportation revolution that helped to create them. The third chapter provides a short review of American railroad stations, different station typologies and an introduction to Richardson's stations with a short account of the Railroad gardening movement in America, and Olmsted's landscaping scheme for the Boston & Albany. The fourth chapter discusses a series of similar towns and stations: Newton, Brighton, Wellesley, and North Easton, and the fifth chapter discusses three different locations and their stations: Holyoke, Palmer, and South Framingham. The sixth chapter ends with a discussion of preservation questions, and conclusions.

A variety of sources provided material for this broad topic, but the list is hardly exhaustive. Local newspaper accounts, town histories, contemporary railroad and engineering journals provided the most telling clues to contemporary settings and sentiments; local town libraries were frequently the only repositories for these materials. Town atlases further enhanced attempts at understanding settings, and site and town visits were valuable for reviewing current station conditions.



Richardson's stations reveal much more than simply innovative architectural treatment; they tell of corporate and private aspirations, town boosterism, and people's desires and fears. They were developed as a result of very specific and meaningful social, financial, and cultural relationships which could only have occurred at one time, and location.





**CHAPTER ONE:**  
**RICHARDSON, OLMSTED, AND THE BOSTON & ALBANY**



## CHAPTER ONE: RICHARDSON, OLMSTED, AND THE B & A

This chapter begins with an introduction of Henry Hobson Richardson with some brief background information about his career and life, and follows with a discussion of Frederick Law Olmsted in the same manner. Last is a short review of Richardson's personal connections with the men of the Boston and Albany railroad, and its relevance to the station commissions.

### HENRY HOBSON RICHARDSON

H. H. Richardson was born in New Orleans on September 29, 1838.<sup>1</sup> He attended Harvard University, entering the freshman class in 1856, with intentions of studying civil engineering. At Harvard he formed strong friendships that would prove instrumental to his future as an architect, specifically with James A. Rumrill, the future vice-president of the Boston & Albany, who would give Richardson his very first commission. It was Richardson's stepfather, John Bein, who encouraged him to pursue architecture, supporting him financially as he set off for training at the Ecole Des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1859, where Richardson remained throughout the Civil War. Upon his return he first settled in New York where he married and lived for some time in Staten Island. In 1874 he returned to the Boston area in order to supervise the building of Trinity Church.

For their home, the Richardsons chose Brookline, an attractive and wealthy suburban town, with prominent neighbors including Charles Sprague Sargent, Harvard alumnus, dendrologist, and director of the Arnold Arboretum. Sargent was also a member of the Boston & Albany board of directors and, along with James Rumrill, would be most concerned with the railroad's construction of new stations in the 1880s. In Brookline Richardson met and entertained some of the most socially prominent people of his day:

<sup>1</sup>For a fuller biography, see James O'Gorman, *H. H. Richardson: Architectural Forms for an American Society* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987).



clients, friends, associates and students formed one large circle, and provided essential connections for many of his most important works. Though his professional career spanned two decades, Richardson's work has been recognized by both his contemporaries and modern scholars as having been distinctly different from anything preceding him in American architecture.

O'Gorman makes the argument in *H.H. Richardson: An American Architecture for an American Society* that Richardson worked "to create a monumental architecture appropriate to post-Civil War America," and that the English and French sources he struggled with initially were alien or inappropriate for these needs.<sup>2</sup> This resulted in a shift to another more distant source for inspiration, that being in the great stone monuments of Romanesque Europe, forming an elemental core, a clay from which he could mold and adapt his forms as needed. These were not the only places Richardson sought inspiration from; New England and North American continental sources were also important. Richardson seemed not to have a scholarly approach highly attuned to the fine points of historic detail, rather, detail was subordinated to a whole composition, which was fundamentally the assemblage of large simple forms.<sup>3</sup>

With American society becoming progressively more delineated into urban and suburban zones, Richardson defined respectively appropriate solutions to problems presented with each commission. Finding inspiration in sources from the continent, he built upon these sources while avoiding mere mimicry, his answers varying widely depending on site and function. Richardson can be seen as having worked in the vein of Ralph Waldo Emerson's call for an American cultural independence, for new art forms based on new sources of inspiration; influenced by American conditions, sites and materials.

<sup>2</sup> O'Gorman, *H. H. Richardson*, p. 53.

<sup>3</sup> See O'Gorman, pages 91-111, for a detailed discussion of this.



The era following the Civil War was characterized by an American interest in exploration of the West. This enhanced the cause of cultural nationalism with the increasing visual testimony of the natural phenomena of the Rockies, Yosemite, and Yellowstone as rivals to the man-made landmarks of Europe.<sup>4</sup> O’Gorman suggests that Richardson, especially in his collaboration with Frederick Law Olmsted, may have been taken with the idea of turning the architectural image in nature and making it into a geological image in architecture. The architecture at times certainly invokes such imagery, the Ames Monument being one of the clearest examples. Around 1880 Richardson created a series of houses for suburban and rural sites in the satellite suburbs and towns of Boston, in which this natural imagery took precedent over history for inspiration, as at the Ames Gate Lodge in North Easton and the Gurney House at Pride’s Crossing. His domestic designs of this period owed something to the work of W.R. Emerson. Richardson placed great importance in the natural colors and textures of stone; the juxtaposition of natural and man-made forms, the contrast of textures and shapes, and the resolution of building and environment. Lewis Mumford called him “the last of the great medieval line of master-masons.”<sup>5</sup>

Richardson has also been loosely connected with the Aesthetic Movement, along with the Arts and Crafts Movement in the United States. The two movements have been seen as having stimulated the development of a novel way of planning and massing volumes, initiating an unprecedented integration of architecture and interior design, and creating a new sense of the importance of domestic, vernacular, and indigenous architecture. The change in treatment of space and mass greatly distinguished the American from the British Aesthetic movements, and the consequential effect on subsequent

<sup>4</sup> O’Gorman, p. 94.

<sup>5</sup> Lewis Mumford, *Sticks and Stones* (New York: Horace Liveright, 1924 [Revised ed., 1955])





architecture is still felt. The new planning and massing of volumes eventually made architects think in terms of varying room heights and levels rather than floors, in areas versus rooms, and in movable partitions instead of walls. Additionally a new relationship was formed between indoor and outdoor living spaces. Many of these characteristics are typical of Japanese architecture, prints of which may have helped to shape these developments.<sup>6</sup> Richardson is characterized as the person responsible for introducing these innovations in planning and massing, as well as other features of aestheticism.

### FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED

By the 1880s Olmsted was regarded both in America and abroad as the nation's principal landscape gardener. Frederick Law Olmsted was born in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1822. Because of childhood illnesses his formal education was intermittent; he studied engineering and surveying, and attended some lectures at Yale University. With the help of his father he established a model farm on Staten Island where his experiments would later help him create his parks. He traveled to England to study agriculture, and visited Sir Joseph Paxton's Birkenhead Park to see the open landscaped spaces incorporated into urban fabric, and his travels in the Southern United States educated him about rural areas. Part of Olmsted's great success and influence can be attributed to his ability to support his ideas in writing.<sup>7</sup>

At the heart of Frederick Law Olmsted's work lay social concern. Olmsted saw a need to develop and preserve areas of nature as a foil to urban density, having foreseen the relentless development of urban America. From his youth he had derived a romantic

<sup>6</sup> Richardson was also surely acquainted with Japanese architecture, and upon his death had a copy of Edward Morse's book in his library, *Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings*, 1885. See James F. O'Gorman, "Documentation: An 1886 Inventory of H.H. Richardson's Library, and Other Gleanings from Probate" *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 41 May 1982: 153.

<sup>7</sup>The information in this paragraph was taken from Leland M. Roth, *A Concise History of American Architecture* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1979) 143-147.



idealism, like many nineteenth-century Americans, that saw in unspoiled nature a great source for the rehabilitation and rejuvenation of the human spirit, drained by the pressures of modern life. Olmsted believed implicitly that a close relationship with nature was one of the most necessary elements of human life. It was no coincidence that the introduction of the landscape architect coincided with America's industrial revolution. As the world's oldest democracy, it was the view held by Olmsted and his coterie, that America ought to seek innovative responses for directing the physical landscape as a means for taming the social problems of an urbanizing and industrializing nation. Olmsted did not retreat from the growth of industrial America, rather his goals were a necessary corollary to that growth. This was, in some ways, a test to see if a democracy that had been organized in the eighteenth century to meet the needs of a rural population, could still retain the core of Jeffersonian ideology for the new needs of urban life.<sup>8</sup>

The theme of democracy resounds throughout contemporary discussions of the role and need for natural spaces in cities, and their developing suburbs. Social progress in America could only come with the widespread advancement of its people, and not with that of any single class or group of individuals. This emphasis on national unity was partly a reaction to the frequently heard doubts and fears expressed by foreign observers such as Tocqueville, Dickens, and Macauley. They questioned whether a consensus could be achieved within a democratic system of representative government that included such varied social elements as in America.

With the advent of much science and technology in the 19th century, it was a common belief to hold faith in scientific analyses of society as a step toward the amelioration of social ills. There exists a considerable literature from this time on crime, alcoholism, poverty and mental illness which places great emphasis on environmental

<sup>8</sup>The information from this paragraph was taken from Julius T. Fabos, Gordon T. Milde and V. Michael Weinmayr, *Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.* (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1968) 10-13.



cures. City slums were described as diseased urban tissue, suffering from deficiencies of fresh air and water, sunlight, and open space. Until Robert Koch's demonstration of the cholera vibrio in 1883, environmental planning was highly dictated by the primitive fear of death from epidemic diseases such as cholera, small pox and yellow fever, that had so frequently paralyzed cities.<sup>9</sup>

Olmsted in his studies and analysis of the process of urbanization recognized that the character of social and industrial life called for a functional separation of work and home, which in turn demanded a physical division between places of work and residence. With an increasing pace of life, particularly in cities, a new need for alternative environments was born, fulfilled in tranquil places for recreation; public parks, streets, campuses, and hospital grounds.

Olmsted collaborated with H.H. Richardson on private residences, train station grounds, the Buffalo State Hospital for the mentally ill, the North Easton Town Hall, the Albany State Capitol, and a master-plan for Staten Island, New York. The ease of their union was in part from their similar views regarding the design process; they saw a design as the end result of an analytical, problem-solving process.<sup>10</sup>

### RICHARDSON AND THE B & A

The importance of Richardson's connection with the men of the Boston & Albany cannot be underestimated, and was requisite to his receipt of the station commissions. James A. Rumrill was a good friend of Richardson's since their days at Harvard. Richardson had received his very first commission upon his return to America for the Unity Church through Rumrill, and because of the success of this received additional Springfield

<sup>9</sup>This and the information in the preceding paragraphs were taken from Albert Fein, *Frederick Law Olmsted and the American Environmental Tradition* (New York: George Braziller, 1972) 28.

<sup>10</sup>The information in the preceding paragraph was taken from Fein, pp. 18-33



commissions, including the Western Railroad Offices in 1867 and the Agawam Bank in 1869, which had been founded by the one-time president of the B&A, Chester Chapin. Charles Sprague Sargent, another B & A board member, had also been graduated from Harvard, and became a leading merchant in the East Indies trade. Like Richardson and Rumrill, he had been a member of the Hasty Pudding Club. He served in the Civil War, traveled in Europe, and then settled in Brookline. He developed an interest in botany and horticulture, and became a professor of horticulture at Harvard from 1872 to 1873, and professor of arboriculture from 1879 until his death in 1927.<sup>11</sup> In 1873 he was named director to the new Arnold Arboretum, which was planned by his future Brookline neighbor, Frederick Law Olmsted. Ultimately Sargent devoted his life to trees and forests, and when he became a director of the B&A in 1880, it was only natural that he develop an interest in railroad beautification. Beginning in 1888 Sargent edited and published *Garden and Forest*, which spawned a national interest in arboriculture and forestry. *Garden and Forest* also featured some of the landscaping programs of the B&A. When Richardson moved to Brookline in 1874 his house stood opposite the Sargent estate, and the two men became good friends. Their relationship was furthered by their shared admiration for, and friendship with Olmsted, who would become their neighbor in 1883.

<sup>11</sup> Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, *H.H. Richardson: Complete Architectural Works* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982) 242.





**CHAPTER TWO:  
THE RAILROAD SUBURB, VILLAGE AND TOWN,  
AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SUBURB**



## CHAPTER TWO: THE RAILROAD SUBURB, VILLAGE, AND TOWN, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SUBURB

This chapter will begin by distinguishing the differences between railroad suburbs, villages, and towns, and the socio-economic differences of these entities. Following will be a brief examination of the changes in transportation in the mid-nineteenth century that led to the development of suburbs, and urban deconcentration.

### CITIES, VILLAGES, AND SUBURBS

American railroads and their stations in the last quarter of the nineteenth-century served significantly different purposes for different places, those divisions having been at the time, primarily urban, suburban, and rural. Likewise, town development and growth followed a radically different pattern around suburban commuter stations, industrial and urban stations, and rural stations. Richardson's stations were meant to serve specific groups, which was reflected in both station design and landscaping.

Industrial and commercial towns and cities were entirely dependent on the railroads, and required that stations be located centrally to business. This meant easy access for goods and in the case of passenger depots, easy access for workers--both middle-class commuters (less often) and arriving laborers. These areas were primarily centers for business or industry and were not considered desirable places to live except as sites for lower-class tenements built for laborers and industrial workers. In these towns or cities the upper-classes, if they were to be found at all, might be found within an outer ring around the city or town, the downtown remaining accessible to these groups by carriage. Richardson's station at Holyoke, which served an industrial location, will be examined within this context.

Villages and small towns developed directly from the establishment of railroad lines



and stations and grew as a result. Usually the commercial area of a town, and industrial if there was one, were situated around a depot, since the town depended on the depot for shipping and receiving goods. Many villages also served as cross-roads to the east and west, and depended on their livelihood to some degree on traveler's visits, primarily businessmen. Frequently, in more attractive locations, resorts were established to draw tourists. Residences were often mixed within commercial centers around the depots. The less commercial and industrial activity there was near depots, usually the more residential development there was, land there having been considered valuable and used quickly. Richardson's stations at South Framingham and Palmer fall within this category.

In suburbs an entirely different situation was presented. Stations built in suburbs primarily served commuters, not commerce. When suburbs had grown from pre-existing villages, depots might be situated around a village center along with post office, school, and churches. Most of the time it was considered highly desirable to live within close proximity to a depot, thus minimizing commuting time. Often when new stations were established for the purpose of suburban development, streets and lots were arranged in accordance with the location of the depot. In these cases, very homogeneous groups were being served, usually upper-classes. If lower socio-economic groups lived within these suburbs, their residences were located to minimize or prohibit contact with the upper classes or their serving depots. Working-class members who lived in or on the perimeter of the suburbs used the streetcar, not the railroad.<sup>1</sup> The areas of town these working-class people lived in provided both employment in factories or mills, and accompanying tenements or neighborhoods of them nearby, often provided by the industry's owners. Only with widespread use of the streetcar would these lower-classes be able to afford transportation for the purpose of commuting to work. Richardson's suburban stations

<sup>1</sup> Contemporary atlases show that these areas were often hidden from most of the suburb, cloistered off in an area where upper-class residents did not have to go to. Often industry had long been established along the rivers, and stayed there.



were located in Newton, Wellesley Hills, Brighton, and North Easton (an anomaly), and will be examined from this perspective.<sup>2</sup>

## SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT

Only during the second half of the nineteenth-century did developers and commuters grasp the potential of rail lines for suburbanization; the growth of commuting far surpassed anyone's expectations. The rail system, especially the steam railroad, offered not only accessibility, but inaccessibility, providing rapid access to the city center while insulating its bourgeois ridership from lower-class invasion. Income groups were distributed throughout the system according to how far they could afford to travel from the center, and which particular line they could afford to take. Rail systems limited accessibility in another way: since development proceeded along rail lines, commuters usually lived within a fifteen-minute walk from a station. Also, the faster the mode of transportation, the farther the potential for land development. Railroad villages were created, having their own distinct identities, limited in size, and surrounded by open country. Additionally, rail systems were most often radial (such as the B & A's Circuit, to be discussed) and organized around a hub, focusing the suburban communities toward an urban center. Until the streetcar had a significant impact following the 1880s, working and lower-classes were unable to take advantage of railroad transportation. In being accessible both physically and economically to lower socio-economic classes, the streetcar would become instrumental to the process of urban deconcentration.<sup>3</sup>

The "mobility revolution" did not occur overnight.<sup>4</sup> Like the revolution in industry,

<sup>2</sup>While the station at North Easton could also be fit within the category of village, I have chosen to evaluate it within the suburban category because its unique situation meant it served a purpose similar to other suburban stations.

<sup>3</sup>Much of the information in this paragraph was taken from Henry C. Binford, *The First Suburbs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985) 84-141.

<sup>4</sup>Binford, p. 84.





it affected different people at different times, and to different degrees. While a relatively small number of people before 1860 rode omnibuses, trains, or horsecars, the activity and changes initiated by those few soon changed urban geography at large. Early suburban residents played a crucial role in launching change through a strong and persistent interest in better access to cities. Until the mid 1840s, it was the peripheral residents and not Bostonians who led the way in promoting advances in local transportation.<sup>5</sup> The rise of the “commuter” contributed to this transformation. The word’s origin lay in the “commutation” of fares, a practice that reduced the price of tickets sold in package lots. This practice began with omnibus proprietors in the 1830s and 1840s, but the word was coined later by railroad and streetcar companies.<sup>6</sup>

As first conceived, trains had little to do with the suburbs, and were meant to be links to distant markets and resources. The wealthiest and most powerful men of all major cities initiated these massive ventures with visions of hinterland connections. The first passenger railway in Massachusetts--the Boston and Lowell--opened in 1835 joining Boston to the Merrimack Valley textile mills.<sup>7</sup> From 1834 onward The Boston and Worcester opened in stages, first through the Connecticut River Valley and then toward Albany and the West.<sup>8</sup> In the ten years time between the opening of the Boston and Lowell

<sup>5</sup>Binford, p. 84.

<sup>6</sup> Binford, p. 89.

<sup>7</sup>Binford, p. 91.

<sup>8</sup> Binford, p. 89. The railroad’s progress in Massachusetts followed the national pattern. In the 1820s, proposals were being made to connect Boston with Albany; for several years before that there was interest expressed in linking Boston and its port with the Hudson River. The Middlesex Canal joined Boston to Worcester, but the new Erie Canal was drawing off trade; some visionaries saw a Canal from Boston to Albany. Advances in railroad technology enabled development to occur, with Governor Levi Lincoln endorsing a rail line in 1829. In 1830 charters were granted to the Boston & Lowell and Boston & Providence Railroads, and the following year one was granted for the Boston & Worcester, eventually becoming the eastern section of the Boston & Albany. Construction was begun on the Boston & Worcester in 1831, opening from Boston to Newton (Needham at the time) in 1834, Needham to Hopkinton, and last Hopkinton to Worcester, the entire 44 mile mainline opening in 1835. In Boston three train lines were leading out of the city by 1835; the Boston & Worcester, the Boston & Lowell, and the Boston & Providence.



and the arrival of the Boston and Maine, railroad managers experienced a complete change in thinking about local passengers. Managers had originally envisioned carloads of Vermont produce, Lowell textiles, and New York wheat, with no interest in local travelers. An unexpected demand emerged for passenger accommodation, particularly in the suburbs. It was not until the economic depression of 1837-42, when some train companies were paralyzed with train lines half-built, that companies recognized passengers as an easy source of revenue. The result was that between 1839 and 1845, facilities were rebuilt to *encourage* suburban travelers. Then efforts were put into advertising, specially designed and scheduled commuter trains were introduced, commutation packages became obtainable, and suburban house lots were offered for sale.<sup>9</sup> This land was often owned by either the railroad itself, or individual board members.

Towns competed to be included on routes. Some saw the trains suspiciously as a tool of Boston domination, as railway entrepreneurs continued to resist local passenger demands for some time. Trains such as the Boston & Lowell built its line on a route which excluded existing population centers, and early trains ran straight through without stops, largely suited to the needs of Bostonians having business at the mills. Eventually the railroad gave way to resident pressures, and in 1837 Lowell established its first intermediate station.<sup>10</sup> By the beginning of 1844 they frankly admitted a change in policy, recognizing their own interests as well as popular demand. They claimed benefits included the

The Western Railroad of Massachusetts formed the second component of the Boston & Albany system. This line was incorporated by the directors of the Boston & Worcester in 1833, with the intent of providing a through route from Boston to Albany in order to divert boat and rail traffic from the Hudson River route, between Albany and New York City. By the end of 1839 the line had opened to the Hudson River, and was substantially complete by 1842. From then on, the Western Railroad served as New England's chief connection with the West.

<sup>9</sup>Binford, p. 89.

<sup>10</sup>Binford , p. 92.



accommodations it affords to a large population who had heretofore been debarred from railroad conveniences; in the increased value of property in the towns through which it passes, and the opportunity it affords to the crowded population of the north part of the city, to avail themselves of a conveyance into the country, where lands and buildings are cheap, in comparison with other sections of the country in the vicinity of Boston.<sup>11</sup>

In 1843 the Boston and Worcester “Newton Special” arrived; the following year the company sold house lots.<sup>12</sup> As the Boston and Worcester encouraged the new commuter lifestyle, they described a typical schedule as follows:

Persons residing out of town, & having business in the city are enabled to come in on the morning train at 7: Go out at 12 to dine: Return at 2; and go out to sleep at 5 1/4 or 7.<sup>13</sup>

Old farms and estates were divided into large house lots beginning in the mid 1830s, and after the depression years, development continued in the early 1840s.<sup>14</sup> Before the mid-1840s, there was no massive out-migration of transit riding Bostonians; in the early nineteenth century the mercantile elite only ventured into the suburbs for entertainment, retirement, or burial. While there had been a limited amount of summer rentals in suburban farmhouses and the very wealthy estates, the peripheral residence was still seen as a kind of rustication, as well as a cheaper solution to the price of housing in the city. Successful and active men resided in the heart of the commercial city.

By the middle of the 1840s, residential divisions formed two clusters of settlement near omnibus and railroad lines. Boston merchants, local tradesmen and young opportunists formed alliances addressing residential promotion that would shape suburban growth throughout the rest of the decade. Commuters, along with land speculators and suburban tradesmen, sought better access to cities while retaining a taste for city amenities,

<sup>11</sup>Binford, pp. 92-93.

<sup>12</sup>Binford, p. 95.

<sup>13</sup>Binford, p. 95.

<sup>14</sup>Binford, pp. 96-97.



and worked to strengthen the suburban-city connection.

The full impact of the mobility revolution and the suburbanization of villages for the upper-classes came with developments in the 1840s and 1850s, as various suburban interest groups joined to strengthen local governments, making them agencies of a new kind of suburban growth. A second development resulted from a second wave of Irish immigration. Crowding in Boston encouraged large numbers of people from the upper socio-economic stratum to the suburbs, and between 1845 and 1860 the number of Boston workers living outside of the city grew from a few hundred, to more than ten thousand.<sup>15</sup> This migration was part of a wholesale reorganization of the city. It was accelerated in the 1840s through rail-based marketing, factory production, and the arrival of immigrant labor. Additional factors that helped to displace housing in the central city included the construction of warehouses, larger offices, and railroad facilities. New transport innovations would later culminate in the streetcar, which was to become a symbol for the process of urban decentralization.

From 1845 until the mid 1850s, the suburbs experienced a mass exodus with wealthier Bostonians fleeing the city. Boston writers, having earlier ignored the suburbs, suddenly became aware of the number of “Bostonians” who lived on the periphery, and by 1850 both realtors and railroads were churning out propaganda in favor of suburban living. An advertisement for the Boston and Lowell claimed

Somerville, Medford, and Woburn present many delightful and healthy locations for a residence, not only for the gentleman of leisure, but the man of business in the city, as the cars pass through these towns often during the day and evening, affording excellent facilities for the communication with Boston. Convenient tenements can be obtained at reasonable rates, which, together with the low price charged for the Season Ticket, make it an object of economy, as well a health and happiness, to reside in these places.<sup>16</sup>

Excellent transportation was stressed by land developers, and schedules for trains and

<sup>15</sup>Binford, p. 126.

<sup>16</sup>Binford, pp. 127-128.





omnibuses accompanied advertisements for suburban lots. Good transportation was not the only requirement for the successful development of suburban land, and during the nineteenth-century sanitation and power services became prerequisite for most homes.

The core of the transitional commuter population in the 1840s were wholesale merchants, soon joined by bankers and lawyers. Tellers, bookkeepers and clerks as the middle ranking staff of Boston's banks began to commute, but before the 1850s there were many kinds of workers who had no place in the migration. Working-class families dependent on crosstown transportation were usually the last to arrive in any suburb.<sup>17</sup>

The suburb was defined by both what was included as well as excluded. One can easily discern the fear of "native" Americans being overwhelmed by an immigrant wave who, in their eyes, lacked their values. In this light the late nineteenth-century suburb can be seen as an "Anglo-Saxon preserve", a safeguard where the true *American* family could prosper and procreate itself, holding off the alien invasion; yet this group of elite also included Northern and Western Europeans who wanted to appear, and live like Anglo-Americans.<sup>18</sup> Landscaped leafy streets and comfortable homes were formed from both aesthetics and prejudice; this utopia was not for everyone, and antithetical to the American democratic vision. The suburb was the classic representation of the bourgeois dream of property, family, and union with nature--a dream built on fear as well as hope.

<sup>17</sup>Binford, p. 134.

<sup>18</sup>Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1987) 142.



**CHAPTER THREE:  
RAILROAD STATIONS**



## CHAPTER THREE: RAILROAD STATIONS

Chapter three will begin with a stylistic history of American railroad stations. Richardson's station program then will be outlined, followed by a review of typical station typologies as defined by contemporary critics. The railroad beautification movement will be discussed along with Frederick Law Olmsted's landscaping commissions for the Boston and Albany.

### THE AMERICAN RAILROAD STATION AND ITS STYLISTIC EVOLUTION

The form of the American railroad station was born from a combination of vernacular and colonial buildings; it swiftly evolved to display revivalist and hybrid styles formed from architectural grafting. Trains often ran down main streets, and early stations were sometimes simply the street corners themselves, with a small ticket booth provided, or a ticket office established in a nearby shop. Old houses were converted, simple single-room frame shacks were built, and inns and hotels were reused as stations. In 1866, a hotel in Martinsburg, West Virginia, was transformed into a station, while in 1835 Washington D.C.'s first station was a converted house.<sup>1</sup> Occasionally in the West, early stations--such as one at Lariat, Colorado--were old railway cars removed from the tracks, or built into a siding.<sup>2</sup> In the 1840s and 1850s American railway capital and building energies were focused on tracks and engineering, and it took some time for the stations to catch up with companies grand schemes.

The first building constructed expressly as a railroad station was Mount Clare in Baltimore built in 1830, a small octagonal street-corner building akin to a toll-house, no more than a ticket booth. In the 1830s and 1840s architects of stations in Baltimore and

<sup>1</sup>John M. MacKenzie and Jeffrey Richards, *The Railway Station: A Social History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) 39.

<sup>2</sup>MacKenzie and Richards, p. 39.



Washington D.C. area used principally the Greek Revival and other classical modes. In New England, colonial Georgian and Federal styles provided inspiration. Many early stations were simple and large barn-like structures, a form used for several decades. Railway architects of this time seem to have been interested in the notion of integrating station offices with train-sheds. With the end of the 1840s a new and distinct type of station appeared, in New Haven, Connecticut, designed by Henry Austin. The platforms lay below street level and the buildings were constructed across a cutting; their style combined Italian, Moorish and Chinese elements, and constituted a dramatic break with earlier designs. From this time the American station would develop into complex hybrid forms, particularly after the Civil War; stylistic influence would be more European than English or colonial, with a recycling of different styles into Italianate Gothic, Romanesque, Queen Anne, and Venetian forms. Verticality was increasingly emphasized, with towering pinnacles in direct contrast to the horizontality of the railroads, creating dramatic landmarks in cities--and replacing church spires. Many of the stations to emerge with the larger developments of the 1850s and 1860s consisted of side buildings with trains running through the interior in grand portals. Once sheds acquired separate buildings, a railroad style was formed resembling Italianate villas with square, squat towers.

Following the focus on exterior design up to the 1870s, new attention was paid to the interior arrangements of stations. Strong competition between railroad companies initiated their interest in communicating their power, success and prestige to patrons. It was also understood that travelers wished to depart and arrive in a grand manner; the result was that many American stations had lavish facilities and decoration, often far exceeding their strictly functional requirements. Stations could include concourses, restaurants, shops, information centers, medical facilities, theaters and later cinemas, creating virtual civic centers.

For larger stations, the Beaux-Arts style would come to embody grandeur. The





“office-block” station in the Beaux-Arts would totally supplant the eclectic styles of earlier American train stations.<sup>3</sup> Designers may have felt that the Beaux-Arts scale and style was ill-suited to smaller stations, since Richardson’s stations and the Romanesque styles proved a more popular influence, amenable to both small and large scale treatment.

Stations largely reflected the social tone of the areas they served, with more prosperous locales investing more attention and money than others; places like Glen Ridge in New Jersey had an elegant shingle lodge in 1887, and Tuxedo Park in New York had a pagoda-styled building with steep-pitched roofs and fine woodwork.

### Smaller Stations

For years the train station, or railroad depot as it was usually called, was the heart of activity for most small towns where the railroad played any role.<sup>4</sup> The suburban station usually only offered a brief and fleeting impression to the tired, rushed commuters boarding trains in the morning and rushing home to dinner at night; train travel quickly lost much of its appeal for these people.

In some towns, and it seems in the early stages of town/railroad development particularly in rural and suburban commuter towns, it was an advantage and considered desirable to live close to the train station. However as towns grew larger, there was a tendency for people to move away from railroad tracks so as to develop “better” parts of the town, away from the sounds and steam of the locomotive and noisy transfer activities. In contrast, industrial towns often built the station close to the mills.

Nonetheless, the railroad station and its immediate environment was for a long time a very important part of every community, often the town’s most dramatic and forceful center of activity.

<sup>3</sup>MacKenzie and Richards, p. 43.

<sup>4</sup>George H. Douglas, *All Aboard* (New York: Paragon House, 1992) 269.



## RICHARDSON'S STATIONS

Six of the eight stations to be examined were designed by Richardson for the Boston & Albany railroad. In 1881 the Boston & Albany began a campaign of investment and improvements on the line that included the construction of new passenger stations. Considering Richardson's status as an architect at the time, and his friendship and professional relationship with Rumrill, he was the natural choice as architect. Richardson was given nine station commissions between 1881 and 1885, and Frederick Law Olmsted collaborated with him on many of the settings, contributing to the establishment of a program of "railroad gardening".

The commissions were clearly initiated by Rumrill and Sargent; they were diverse, and included stations, other railroad buildings, and private passenger cars.<sup>5</sup> The first station Richardson was commissioned to design was for Auburndale in Newton in February, 1881, just after Rumrill had become vice-president of the Board of Directors. The Newton stations, two commuter stations and three flag stops, were part of the Circuit line. The second commission was at Palmer on the main line, (FIGURE 1) commissioned in August, 1881. Chestnut Hill in Newton followed in April, 1883, then in the same year the station at South Framingham--and for the Connecticut River Railway Company, a station at Holyoke.<sup>6</sup> Between July, 1884 and July, 1885, stations followed at Brighton, Waban, Woodland and Eliot in Newton, and last at Wellesley Hills, on the mainline just west of Newton. This was one of the last projects Richardson lived to see completed.

<sup>5</sup>Little is known about these commissions for private passenger cars. See Ochsner, *Complete Works*, and James F O'Gorman, *H.H. Richardson and His Office: Selected Drawings* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1974).

<sup>6</sup>An employee of Richardson's office from 1880 to 1885, Alexander W. Longfellow Jr. (1854-1934), apparently worked on a number of stations. A letter he wrote to his mother mentioned his work on the Chestnut Hill station. See Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, "Architecture for the Boston & Albany Railroad: 1881-1894." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* XLVII June 1988:109-131.



The construction for the Boston & Albany stations was done primarily by the Norcross Brothers of Worcester, Massachusetts. Active partner, Orlando Whitney Norcross (1859-1920), was called Richardson's "Master Builder" by James O'Gorman, since he was responsible for so many of Richardson's buildings. Norcross built all but one of Richardson's B&A stations, the exception being at Palmer, which was done by W.N. Flynt Company.

## STATION TYPOLOGIES

Physical typologies for Richardson's Massachusetts train stations do not vary significantly. Two contemporary accounts help sum up the critics' views at the time. "Picturesque Suburban Railroad Stations" by Bradford Lee Gilbert appeared in *Engineering Magazine* in December, 1891.<sup>7</sup> He advised that

...nothing advertises a road better than tasteful station buildings; nothing helps to attract and build up local traffic more quickly. In this age of progress in railroad construction, it is not only in the end the most economical, but throughout, the most advantageous and best paying policy to provide the most convenient and best equipped stations for the public, regardless of cost, considering also the questions of economic, efficient and practicable service as paramount.<sup>8</sup>

Gilbert was critical of those responsible for "the erection...of buildings which are a public nuisance and disgrace."

In many cases a 'penny wise but pound foolish' policy has been followed, in utilizing the cheapest material and poorest construction, producing what might be termed in politics a 'mugwump;' or the buildings erected might justly be criticized as being 'Queen Anne' in front, and 'Mary Ann' in the rear, the exterior effect gained by expensive 'gingerbread' work, costing more than if tastefully designed and properly executed by some competent

<sup>7</sup>*Engineering Magazine: An Industrial Review* specialized in scientific management, and in 1916 changed its name to *Industrial Management*, ceasing publication in 1933. See Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines, Volume IV: 1885-1905* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957) 321.

<sup>8</sup>Bradford Lee Gilbert, "Picturesque Railroad Stations," *Engineering Magazine* December 1891: 336.



architect.<sup>9</sup>

Gilbert included illustrations of exemplary station design; included were examples of stone stations at Laconia, New Hampshire, Evanston, Illinois, Bowenville Station at Fall River, Massachusetts, Grass Lake, Michigan, a Gothic station at Ardmore, Pennsylvania, and Richardson's station at North Easton. Also shown was a station at Acambaro, Mexico, of brick with accommodation for three classes of passengers.<sup>10</sup> A southern station at Grovetown, Georgia, included a windmill in its design, and "class-rooms for white and colored passengers." A large proportion of the buildings Gilbert included were made of stone, which was the material least used for stations according to Walter Berg (see below). Gilbert then described "general principles and requirements" for the successful design of smaller, and suburban stations.

First, a station should be "designed in connection with its proposed location, the actual requirements of traffic, the proper material most readily obtainable, and *not to exceed the limit of appropriation.*" Stylistically, whatever effect desired "should be gained entirely by a bold, original treatment, suitable to the surroundings and conditions, and by means of constructional outlines and a graceful contour, not by ornamental or 'fancy' detail work." No matter what material used, it should be "first-class," and appropriate to the locality.

Ground plans should be determined by the number of users, probable growth of the area, and the number of trains daily. While room arrangement could be quite variable, he offered a few general suggestions. Women (Gilbert preferred this term saying "let us discard using the much abused word 'lady' in connection with public buildings") should always have some private area; if a separate women's room was not possible, a smaller one aside a general waiting room, with the bathroom, should be provided. Men should have a

<sup>9</sup>Gilbert, p. 336-337.

<sup>10</sup> See Chapter 5 for the discussion of the Holyoke station for an example of class segregation in American station plans.





separate smoking room apart from the general waiting room, since smoke often “becomes exceedingly objectionable to men who do not smoke...and a good ‘smoke’ attracts the least desirable element (laborers, hackmen, etc).” In addition, “Large pleasant open fireplaces, of tasteful design” were advised, for use on chilly, damp days and also for ventilation. Another suggestion was that “[s]mall alcoves arranged off the general waiting-rooms, by means of screens, are much appreciated for the convenience and privacy of wedding or funeral parties.”<sup>11</sup>

Ticket offices were best located on the track-side of the building, in a projecting window that allowed views of all tracks, and elevated so as to see over standing passengers. This would allow for one agent to handle both tickets and telegraphs. Berg suggested that offices should have “ample light and generous counters”. Baggage rooms should be easily accessible and a small mail-room was desirable, as well as rooms for conductors, trainmen, and restaurant accommodations. Plumbing and sanitary work, heating and ventilation “should be first-class in every particular.” Marble and slate floors and walls for dressing rooms, while expensive, were recommended as a good investment. “Ample provision should be made for covered concrete platforms”, extending around the building, wide enough to accommodate both passengers and baggage. Accommodation for carriage traffic was recommended, with either projected awnings or “a generous *porte-cochere*.”<sup>12</sup>

Walter Berg’s *Buildings and Structures of American Railroads*, (1893) was an extensive account and critique of American station design, categorizing buildings into typologies, two of which suited Richardson’s station variations: “flag depots” and “local passenger depots.” Many of Berg’s suggestions echoed Gilbert’s. Berg devoted one chapter to “Flag Depots”, described as:

<sup>11</sup>Gilbert, p. 348.

<sup>12</sup>The quotes listed in the preceding paragraphs were taken from Gilbert, pp. 336-349.



Flag-stations on railroads are stations of minor importance at which only a limited number of trains stop, usually on flag; hence, the name. In reality flag-depots are small passenger depots at unimportant local stations, and they are frequently called second, third, or fourth-class passenger depots, according to the classification adopted by the railroad company.<sup>13</sup>

Flag depots varied from an open or covered platform to a building containing one or two waiting rooms, a small baggage room, a telegraph office, bathrooms, and more rarely living quarters for an agent. Flag-depots most often lay alongside passenger tracks. Good design, according to Berg, included a waiting room with adjoining ticket-office, preferably a bay-window extension of the office track-side. Baggage rooms, according to Berg, were usually best placed facing the track. In terms of determining style for these stations, Berg wrote

...the importance of the locality will govern. Flag-depots in cities or at important suburban settlements are frequently built very substantially and artistically, while similar buildings in thinly populated districts on a pioneer railroad need not to be anything more than the cheapest frame suitable for the purpose.<sup>14</sup>

While he noted there was no general rule for materials used for flag-depots, “stone buildings exist in isolated instances.”<sup>15</sup> Of Richardson’s stations, Berg considered those at Chestnut Hill, Woodland, Waban, and Wellesley Hills to fit within the flag-depot category. He did not mention the station at Eliot.

Another chapter in Berg’s book was devoted to “Local Passenger Depots,” which he defined as

Passenger depots solely for the accommodation of the passenger business of a railroad are used at all local stations of railroads where the passenger business is of sufficient importance to warrant a separate building, or where

<sup>13</sup>Walter Berg, *Buildings and Structures of American Railroads* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1893) 264.

<sup>14</sup>Berg, p. 264.

<sup>15</sup>Berg, p. 264.



the freight business is handled in a separate building.<sup>16</sup>

Depending on the “local conditions and importance of the station”, variations would occur in terms of size, design, and type of structure. Berg clarified that “flag-depots are simply small local passenger depots, the distinction between the two being very hard to maintain, as the change from one group to the other in practice is frequently imperceptible, and not clearly defined.”<sup>17</sup>

Berg explained that railroads usually divided station designs into “classes,” with flag-depots being the cheapest and smallest of passenger stations. As noted previously, passenger depots varied greatly and could include waiting rooms (small to large), ticket-offices, baggage-rooms, express rooms, mail rooms, telegraph offices, parcel rooms, news stands, supply rooms, offices, and rooms for conductors and trainmen. The larger stations that contained a number of these features approached the character of “terminal side-stations.” Berg summarized that “in discussion of local passenger depots the remarks are necessarily general, and no special rules can be established, as the range of buildings embraced under the term of local passenger depots is very extensive.”<sup>18</sup> Stylistically Berg advised

...it is very difficult to make any general recommendations. The importance of the station, the surroundings, the desires of the railroad management, and sometimes the wishes of the community, the prevailing class of architecture and building materials in each particular section of the country, will all influence the final choice.<sup>19</sup>

All of Richardson’s stations fitting this category were “side-stations,” which, in being set along one side of the tracks, obliged passengers to cross the tracks in order to reach trains on the other side. Some had covered platforms on the opposite side of the depot building,

<sup>16</sup>Berg, p. 278.

<sup>17</sup>The quotes in this paragraph were taken from Berg, p. 278.

<sup>18</sup>The quotes in this paragraph were taken from Berg, p. 278.

<sup>19</sup>Berg, p. 278.



which was usually the out-bound side.

Berg described factors that affected efficient station plans. Like Gilbert, he believed that ticket offices, when used as telegraph offices, were best placed at the front of a building, facing the track, with a bay-window projection, so that moving trains would be visible from within the office. He called for separate ticket windows for separate waiting rooms and good light, day and night, on both sides of the ticket windows. He debated the merit of tickets sold in a lobby or large waiting room. Offices should be “comfortable and convenient for the employés.[sic]” Separate waiting rooms for men and women were most desirable, but when this was not the case, there should be “at least a small ladies’ parlor with toilet room attached.” Berg argued that it was essential that the doors to both men’s and ladies’ bathrooms did not enter directly into a general waiting room. Great advantage could be gained in a “generously proportioned and comfortably fitted-up smoking-room.” which according to Berg (echoing Gilbert), “will not only accommodate smokers, but it will draw off from the waiting rooms quite an undesirable element, as emigrants[sic], laborers, hackmen, and loungers around the depot.”<sup>20</sup>

Doors in the waiting rooms were best placed so that passengers could enter from the rear of the building, pass through the ticket-window, and exit out to the train in as direct route as possible. Baggage room location should enable baggage to be easily received from the street side, as well as delivered from track side. Platform space should allow baggage to be stored under cover and would leave room for passenger traffic. When there was a general waiting room, it was best to allow an opening from that room to the baggage room so that passengers could make their arrangements without having to go outside, but in smaller stations this was not as important. With limited help in a smaller station and sometimes one person responsible for tickets and baggage, easy access to and from these rooms was most sensible.

<sup>20</sup>This and all quotes in the preceding paragraph were taken from Berg, p. 281.





In the case of dining rooms, when a building was two stories, it was best to have kitchen and serving rooms on the second floor, so as not to disrupt passenger flow on the first level. Also in buildings with two floors, the upper floor was often used for offices for the telegraph department, train-dispatcher, clerks, trainmen's rooms, etc.

Heating, ventilating, plumbing and lighting was to be the best available, and "...large fire-places of quaint and artistic design in the waiting-rooms add not only to the general artistic effect and finish of the interior, but afford a good chance to warm the rooms and brighten them up in damp weather" as well as offering good ventilation.<sup>21</sup>

Conveniently located covered platforms accommodated crowds and decreased the size required of a waiting room. Also when benches were provided on platforms, "a large number of travellers, and especially depot loungers, will congregate on the platforms in place of the waiting rooms."<sup>22</sup> Another benefit to passengers were drinking-fountains.

The Richardson-designed stations Berg fit within this category included the stations at Palmer, Old Colony in North Easton, Holyoke, Auburndale, South Framingham, and Brighton.

Berg concluded his introduction to "Local Passenger Depots" in part recognizing the impact of Richardson's stations in the seven years that had passed since his death.

Relative to the design for the exterior of depots, much stress has been laid within recent years on providing artistic and picturesque structures for local passenger depots, especially at suburban points where the travel consists largely of wealthy patrons of the road. The artistic designs prepared by the late Mr. H. H. Richardson, the well-known architect, of Boston, Mass., and a gradually increasing demand for artistic structures at passenger stations have given an impetus to the designing of more artistic structures, with the result that architects of established reputation have been called on by railroad managers for designs.<sup>23</sup>

But Berg reminded the reader, that "in order, however, to produce quaint and artistic

<sup>21</sup>Berg, pp. 283-284.

<sup>22</sup>Berg, p. 284.

<sup>23</sup>Berg, p. 284.



features in the exterior of a railroad structure, the practical requirements for the ground-plan layout should not be sacrificed,” and while “picturesqueness of design in a small suburban depot is an important consideration...in large depots the style of architecture adopted should be more indicative of the purposes to which the building is devoted.”<sup>24</sup> When designing a series of stations, minor details should be modified,

...so as to avoid a monotonous sameness of similar structures along the road. This can be easily accomplished by making modifications in the details of the exterior finish, gables, dormer-windows, ridge-cresting, finials, roof-brackets, chimneys, etc., without in reality changing the ground-plan or the frame or the walls of the building.<sup>25</sup>

Berg mentioned that the employment of a landscape architect had produced many cases of “picturesque and artistic depot surroundings.” With ground planting around buildings, well maintained flower beds and shrubberies, neat railings, graveled walks and roads, good results had been seen to the advantage of “a large number of railroads.” He cited the Pennsylvania Railroad’s Ardmore Station, and the B & A’s Auburndale Station as admirable examples.<sup>26</sup>

Marianna Van Rensselaer explained in her book on Richardson that one look at any of Richardson’s stations instructed the viewer of the building’s purpose, as

...not a house but a shelter, not a place to live in but, so to say, a place to wait under. The roof is the chief feature, not the walls. These are always low and the plan as compact as possible, while the roof is always massive and broad.<sup>27</sup>

Van Rensselaer pointed out that while no two station designs were alike, there was in all an “expression of temporary shelter as the main thing to be supplied, together with a sturdy air

<sup>24</sup>The quotes from this paragraph were taken from Berg, p. 284.

<sup>25</sup>Berg, p. 285.

<sup>26</sup>The quotes from this paragraph were taken from Berg, p. 285.

<sup>27</sup> Marianna Griswold Van Rensselaer, *Henry Hobson Richardson and His Works* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1888) 98.



of permanence.” She saw simplicity in design and minimal decoration as appropriate, criticizing the trend of “country railroad stations” as having been “hideous make-shifts or futile attempts at prettiness.”<sup>28</sup> She stressed that Richardson’s station designs did not compromise efficient design for aesthetic appearance, with parts carefully built and plans carefully studied for convenience and compactness. While Van Rensselaer’s evaluations would be echoed by some in critical reviews, others would dispute her approval.

### THE RAILROAD BEAUTIFUL MOVEMENT AND FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED

Railroads began to beautify station grounds not out of an interest in philanthropy, but in order to increase traffic. The railroad gardening movement was successful in that corporations were able to convince the public that they cared for beauty, and that landscape architects could do more than make cemeteries, parks, and home grounds attractive. The gardens and grounds did meet the satisfaction of commuters, and represented a creative attempt by landscape architects to synthesize the needs of corporations, municipalities, civic improvement groups, and individuals.

An early advocate of railroad gardening working in the latter half of the nineteenth-century was Donald G. Mitchell, a Connecticut agricultural reformer and landscape architect familiar with European railroad gardens.<sup>29</sup> Mitchell insisted that these gardens not simply be attractive, but could also provide railroad employees with money from the sale of freshly cut flowers such as roses, heliotropes, and marguerites. Not only would these efforts reflect well on the railroad company, but act as a powerful promotion for landscape architects, and perhaps create new opportunities for their practice. As his guiding principle, Mitchell suggested that the garden existed for both the observer *of* the station and

<sup>28</sup> The quotes from this paragraph were taken from Van Rensselaer, p. 98.

<sup>29</sup> John R. Stilgoe, *Metropolitan Corridor: Railroads and the American Scene* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983) 230.



the train, as well as for the observer *in* the station and the train. Architect designed stations and landscape architect designed grounds reflected railroad company's effort to understand and cater to the psyche of the riders. Their hope was that riders would find the commute nice enough so as not to return to the city, and thus lose business.

Articles in contemporary periodicals such as *Scribner's Monthly* (1881) and *Landscape Architect* (1911) stressed the potential of station grounds as public parks.<sup>30</sup> Problems discouraging railroad parks included the narrowness of land available at most sites as it was rare for railroad companies to own land on the street side of stations, especially with the location of many stations away from town centers. Since the typical suburban station often consisted of two structures, one a heated building and the other, a covered platform, most patrons spent all of the time at the station building awaiting the trains in the morning; virtually no one lingered after arrival in the evening. It was not clear, therefore, if a railroad station park should extend to both sides of the tracks. Contemporary articles revealed a growing concern on the part of the railroads in creating grounds that would attract children and casual pedestrians with the subsequent fear of liability resulting from accidents. In the corporate mind, station grounds were ornamented to please those waiting to board trains, people leaving trains, and people waiting for the arrival of friends and family, and to display the congenial attitude of the railroad company. From these roots the railroad gardening movement grew into a "new spatial aesthetic neither rural or urban," peculiar to suburbs and appealing to those commuters "torn between rural and urban aesthetic values."<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup>See Samuel Parson, "Railway, Church-Yard, and Cemetery Lawn-Planting," *Scribner's Monthly* 22 July 1881: 415-419, and E. L. Chicanot, "Beautifying a Railroad System," *Landscape Architect* 15 1911: 185-194.

<sup>31</sup>Stilgoc, p. 243.





## OLMSTED AND THE BOSTON AND ALBANY COMMISSIONS

The Boston & Albany must have decided that the benefits of railroad gardening outweighed the risks. Because of baggage master E.L. Richardson's individual efforts to beautify the station grounds in Newtonville, Charles Sargent presented to the Boston & Albany board a proposal in September, 1881 for improving station grounds along the entire line.<sup>32</sup> The program was accepted, and E.L. Richardson underwent formal training at the Arnold Arboretum to become the head of a department of station gardens. The railroad developed and maintained its own nurseries for its landscape program, and Frederick Law Olmsted was engaged to develop plans for the grounds of a select number of stations, and also to develop programs for some older stations. The Boston & Albany stations that Olmsted collaborated with Richardson on included ones in Newton, Brighton, Wellesley Hills, North Easton, and Palmer.<sup>33</sup> After Richardson's death, his successor firm of Shepley, Rutlan, and Coolidge continued to build stations for the Boston & Albany, in the style of Richardson's designs, including this landscape program.

Olmsted worked on a small budget; in the beginning he planted grounds with perennials such as wild roses, bridal wreath, and Japanese Ivy, and shade trees such as white willow, American beech, and white pine.<sup>34</sup> Other trees included oaks, spruces, maple, and forms of dwarf growth. Shrubs and bushes included red dogwood, sweet fern, bayberry, sumac, woodbine, honeysuckle and bittersweet.<sup>35</sup> Requiring little for maintenance, the rugged plants withstood New England's harsh winters, and since they

<sup>32</sup>Ochsner, "Architecture for the Boston & Albany Railroad: 1881-1894," p. 120.

<sup>33</sup>Olmsted may have done a small amount of landscaping for South Framingham as well, since some landscaping was done (see Charles Mulford Robinson, "Suburban Station Grounds," *House and Garden* 5 April 1904: 182-187,) but no mention is made of who was responsible.

<sup>34</sup>Stilgoe, p. 234.

<sup>35</sup>Described in Frank Atkinson Arnold, "A Study in Railroad Gardening," *Suburban Life*, May 1905: 19-23.



were mostly low-growing, they accented the design of Richardson's relatively low-level stations. Along the right-of-way on either side of the stations, Olmsted planted hardy shrubs, particularly wild-roses, providing a pleasant view for passengers aboard waiting trains.

The Boston & Albany's railroad gardening program and Olmsted's involvement received immediate praise, inspiring articles in *Garden and Forest*, *Architectural Record*, *Suburban Life*, and *House and Garden*.<sup>36</sup> Local newspapers praised the landscaping early on, while the first Journal articles to feature Richardson's stations appeared in *Garden and Forest*, in April and March of 1889. The Chestnut Hill and Auburndale stations were featured in these two articles by Charles Sargent, publisher of *Garden and Forest*. The articles are full of praise for Richardson's designs, Olmsted's landscaping, and the Boston & Albany's savvy sensibility in implementing such a program. Sargent, writing of Richardson, proclaimed that "when the Boston and Albany Railroad Company asked him to design their station at Auburndale he showed for the first time what such a building ought to be," and that the Railroad was equally wise in selecting Mr. Olmsted for landscaping.<sup>37</sup>

Oddly, in her biography of Richardson M. Van Rensselaer made no note of Olmsted

<sup>36</sup>*Garden and Forest* (1899-1898) was a modest but high-grade Boston weekly consisting of twelve or sixteen pages without illustrations and edited by Charles S. Sargent." Mott, *Volume IV*, p. 342.

*Suburban* magazine was founded in January 1903 as a Cambridge monthly by George Marsh. It moved to Boston shortly thereafter, and was made into a weekly with local news of various suburbs as its chief feature, with some home and garden material. It later became a widely circulated monthly magazine, *Suburban Life*, in 1905. Mott, *Volume IV*, p. 82. After becoming *Countryside*, it was absorbed by the *Independent*. in 1916. Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines Volume II: 1850-1865* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957) 378.

*House and Garden* was one of a number of magazines about house building serving primarily women, founded in 1901 by three Philadelphia architects (Wilson Eyre, Jr., Frank Miles Day, and Herbert C. Wise). It was a richly illustrated high-grade magazine said to be from the point of view of the architect. Mott, *Volume IV*, p. 324.

<sup>37</sup>Charles Sprague Sargent, "The Railroad Station at Auburndale, Massachusetts," *Garden and Forest II* 13 March 1889: 124.



having been the landscaper of any station grounds.<sup>38</sup> While not mentioning any landscaping specifically, she did state that each station was “designed with reference to its effect on its own particular site,” and cited the idyllic union of “artistic and natural beauties” achieved at the station at Chestnut Hill.<sup>39</sup> Also, sketches of the stations appearing in her book clearly revealed a concern with landscaping.

From 1889 on, the B & A landscaping program was mentioned in articles describing the stations, with the entire landscaping program featured in “A Railroad Beautiful” by Charles Mulford Robinson. Appearing in *House & Garden* in 1902, Robinson’s article focused on stations along the Circuit Railroad. Robinson offered great admiration for the Boston & Albany’s efforts in the article, suggesting that the idea of planting attractive grounds for railroad stations was quite novel, and arguing that the usual opinion being that “railroads, with their strictly utilitarian purpose and common ugliness seem naturally at the antitheses of esthetic endeavor.”<sup>40</sup> Robinson aligned the recent trend in railroad gardening with the development of “city and town improvement” and he praised the Boston & Albany’s efforts as the most successful of any of the railroads, criticizing “the Old Colony and the Pennsylvania” as being not as inventive or nice.<sup>41</sup>

Robinson, while full of praise, did offer some criticism. Robinson found the lighting apparatuses, “an electric globe on the end of a long curved arm of iron which is fastened to a wooden post...about as uncouth as could well be planned.” Elaborating on the disruptive effect this caused at the stations, he suggested that “the company had suddenly failed.” He also found the “unshaded condition of the platform[s]” unsatisfactory,

<sup>38</sup>It is in part peculiar since it was Olmsted who strongly encouraged Mrs. Van Rensselaer to write the Richardson biography.

<sup>39</sup>The quotes from this paragraph were taken from Van Rensselaer, p. 101-102.

<sup>40</sup>Charles Mulford Robinson, “A Railroad Beautiful,” *House and Garden* 2 November 1902: 564 - 570. Reprinted in *The Newton Journal* 13 March 1903.

<sup>41</sup>The quotes in this paragraph were taken from Robinson, reprinted in *The Newton Journal*.



suggesting that large trees would provide shade and make the outdoor wait much more pleasant. The asphalt driveways at the stations were also inappropriate introducing “a jarring urban note in a strictly rural scene that is otherwise wholly delightful.” He suggested that “light travel to which the roads are subjected gravel had been not merely an excusable but even a preferable cover.”

However, Robinson admired the “absence of bill boards” from the circuit, due to “the good taste of land owners” along the way. He observed a “tendency to conceal the station, in the view from the town, rather than to emphasize its presence.” Accompanying this was a photograph of the station at Woodland, showing the small station’s “half-concealment behind the beautifying bushes.” The use of landscaping to hide railroad accoutrements would become a repeated theme in critical reviews of the gardening.<sup>42</sup>

In another article for *House & Garden* in 1904 “Suburban Station Grounds” published in 1904 Charles M. Robinson expanded his account of the B & A’s landscaping program beyond Newton. Robinson described how attention to suburban stations and their grounds expanded one’s sense of home upon return from a commute, explaining that the railroad

...is doing no more than its share, no more than it owes to itself, in making its part of the town--which is also the town’s official entrance--attractive. And when it does this, it does much for the commuter;--its own gain is dependent upon his--pleasing even his expansive ideas. It makes his home seem considerably nearer his office, and that means a great deal to railroad and to commuter.<sup>43</sup>

Further on in the article he helped define the landscape architect’s perspective to railroad gardening.

A landscape architect does not consider a road as a thing to be emphasized

<sup>42</sup>The quotes in the two preceding paragraphs were taken from Robinson, as reprinted in *The Newton Journal*.

<sup>43</sup>This quote and those from the preceding paragraph were taken from Charles Mulford Robinson, “Suburban Station Grounds,” *House and Garden* 5 April 1904: 182.





any more than is necessary, and to get a good picture he has to define--or, in a measure shut in,--his design. Faithful adherence to an artistic conception, without permitting the railroad ideal of sheer directness, utility and dead level to intrude, seems to be the secret of the good effect here secured. The station grounds, small as they are, are like a little park.<sup>44</sup>

The article featured a number of stations done for the Boston & Albany by Richardson's successor firm, which were largely adaptations of his original designs.

"A Study in Railroad Gardening" by Frank Atkinson Arnold published in *Suburban Life*, 1905, included a large photo of Auburndale's vine-clad porte cochere. Arnold described the mass exodus of "over seven hundred thousand people" who had left cities for the suburbs, "thus combining all the pleasures and advantages of the country with the attractions and conveniences of city life." He recalled the efforts of a number of railroads to beautify their stations, creating a "Garden Railroad", which "seem[ed] almost paradoxical for is not the average railroad more frequently remembered by its association with dust, soot and cinders, rather than anything which would breathe of the garden with its fragrance and welcome shade?" While he credited the Pennsylvania, Old Colony and Boston & Maine railroads for their efforts, he praised the Boston & Albany foremost for "demonstrat[ing] the practical value of the scheme by long years of study and application, which have brought the plan far beyond the experimental stage."

Again described were efforts made in the landscaping to "obscure all unsightly approaches to the railroad station." The station at Auburndale, "form[s] in spring and summer an almost impenetrable screen from what would otherwise be an unsightly cut through one of the prettiest suburban towns on the road," while at Wellesley Hills "necessary ugly cuts in the solid rock...have been skillfully obscured as far as possible by shrubs and vines..."<sup>45</sup>

Much praise was paid to the Boston & Albany as the founders of the railroad

<sup>44</sup>Robinson "Suburban Station Grounds," pp. 183-184.

<sup>45</sup>The quotes in the preceding paragraphs were taken from Arnold, pp. 19-23.



gardening movement, and in initiating wide-spread efforts throughout the country, and the author hoped that

...in outlining what has been accomplished in a comparatively circumscribed area by what is now one portion of a vast railroad system, we trust there has been brought before our readers not only a sense of what has already been accomplished, but also the necessity for supplying a proper public spirit, which shall ensure its continuance as a permanent feature of railroading, not only in New England but throughout our entire country.<sup>46</sup>

J.H. Phillips in "The Evolution of the Suburban Station," published in the *Architectural Record* in 1914 praised the Boston and Albany's as "pioneers" in raising the standards of suburban stations and their grounds, in "starting a comprehensive effort in the artistic treatment of its stations and their surroundings...expressing the standing of the suburb as a progressive and cultivated community." Phillips claimed that the "two famous artists," Richardson and Olmsted,

...held very properly that rural way stations were not for show. Ostentation, therefore, was to be avoided. Their chief purpose was to provide comfortable and pleasant shelters for passengers while waiting for their trains...The stations...have a quiet picturesqueness...ample grounds, laid out with pleasant modulated surfaces of turf, ornamented with diversified shrubbery disposed in masses and in such a way as to give most pleasing impressions....The shrubbery was selected with a view to a pleasing effect not only throughout the growing part of the year, but as far as possible through the winter months as well.<sup>47</sup>

Phillips went on to point out that "the unsightly objects that often offend in the neighborhood of a railway were hidden with trees and all embankments were planted. The scars left where the railroad ploughed through a picturesque landscape and the cuts where gravel and rock were left exposed were covered with vegetation. Ledges and retaining walls were adorned with climbing plants and vines that produced a natural impression

<sup>46</sup>Arnold, p. 23.

<sup>47</sup>This quote and those in the preceding paragraph were taken from J.H. Phillips, "The Evolution of the Suburban Station," *Architectural Record* 36 August 1914: 122-127.



consistent with conditions of a certain rustic formality.”<sup>48</sup>

The B & A efforts in railroad gardening helped lead other railroad companies to do the same, the more well known including the Boston & Maine, the Lackawanna, and the Michigan Central.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup>The quotes in this paragraph were taken from Phillips, pp. 124-125.

<sup>49</sup>See Susan Elizabeth Ellis, “‘The Route of Scenic Charm’: A Case Study of the Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western Railroad in the American Landscape, 1880-1940,” Master’s Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1990.



**CHAPTER FOUR:  
EXCLUSIVE SHELTERS**





## CHAPTER FOUR: EXCLUSIVE SHELTERS

The stations designed by Richardson in Newton, Wellesley Hills, and North Easton received the most attention, especially those on the Newton Circuit. The reasons for this included the towns along the Circuit being the most prosperous suburbs west of Boston and in the case of North Easton, that the station was part of a larger, unique series of commissions for the Ames family and located in a village a short distance southwest of Boston.

### THE STATIONS AND NEWTON

Richardson's stations for the B & A in Newton greatly contributed to an image the town actively sought to promote. They were seen as charming, stylish, picturesque, artistic, and sophisticated presentations of what had previously been considered utilitarian and given little consideration. The B & A's Circuit was unusual in that it was created *solely* for the purpose of providing commuter transportation for the wealthy western suburbs of Boston, and the railroad understood that it was in its own best interest to address this clientele sensibly, mirroring the image the developing communities were promoting. At the same time, many of the railroad directors *lived* in these places, and understood clearly what was desired by their fellow suburban residents. Commuters did not wish to be bothered with trains, but they had no choice in the matter, and a pleasant presentation helped to make the ride as painless as possible. An article in *The Newton Graphic* of April 2, 1887, entitled "The Suburban Resident: A Graphic Description of his Tribulations," described the drudgery experienced early on by commuters.

I spend my life in catching trains....I live in the country because I like it better than living in the city, but it is not all pleasure...the botheration of my life is the catching of trains for home in the afternoon. I make up may mind what train I am going to take, and them I begin doing business with the clock....The train on which I ride home is filled with suburban passengers who have, probably, been doing about as I have, and are, as a



consequence, in no better frame of mind than I am...suburban passengers are the meanest lot of stock that is ever shipped over that road or any other.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter will begin with a discussion of the town of Newton, its residents, its divisions, Richardson's stations there, and how they reflected these factors. After a short look at Brighton, a neighboring area the site of another Richardson station, a similar evaluation of Wellesley Hills will follow of suburb and station. Last will be a look at North Easton, something of an anomaly but with parallels to the examples in the preceding suburbs.

## NEWTON

Newton presents unparalleled attractions as a place of residence for a business man of Boston, among the attractions are frequent and expeditious communication, citizens of intelligence and refined culture, an honest, upright government, well disciplined police and fire departments, an ample supply of pure water, a large free library, excellent schools, active, flourishing churches, a community remarkable for its healthfulness, and, not least, a beautiful and diversified scenery, not excelled by any place in New England.<sup>2</sup>

*King's Handbook of Newton of 1889* (FIGURE 2) must have beckoned those considering joining the ranks of prominent Bostonians (some 20,000 by 1885) who had made the move to a more "civilized" life in the suburbs.<sup>3</sup> The handbook ceaselessly promoted the excellence of such an environment, frequently citing statistics regarding health, street lengths, and ethnicity. Newton recovered quickly after the Civil War, with an increasing number of new houses built annually, to reach a peak in 1870.<sup>4</sup> In 1869 the Boston and Albany Railroad was established, and the New York, Hartford and Erie

<sup>1</sup>"The Suburban Resident,"*The Newton Graphic* 2 April 1887.

<sup>2</sup>Real Estate Supplement,*The Newton Graphic* 29 August 1885.

<sup>3</sup>Moses Foster Sweetser, editor, *King's Handbook of Newton* (Boston: Moses King 1889) 30.

<sup>4</sup> Due to railroad improvements. Newton Tricentennial Corporation, *Newton Massachusetts 1688-1988* (Newton, MA: 1988) 52.



Railroad expanded services to southern Newton, thus increasing passenger service.

A description of Newton in *King's Handbook* began with its boundaries; located in the southeastern end of Middlesex County, Newton was surrounded by "Waltham and Watertown on the North, Brookline and the Brighton and West-Roxbury wards of Boston on the East, Needham on the South and West, and Wellesley and Weston on the West."<sup>5</sup> (FIGURE 3) From the Charles River winding around Newton for more than sixteen miles, came water-powers at its upper and lower falls, and streams and ponds providing scenic landscapes, boating, bathing, and fishing. Newton claimed seven hills "like ancient Rome": Nonantum Hill, Waban Hill, Chestnut Hill, Institution Hill, Skinner's Hill, Moffat Hill and Sylvan Heights.<sup>6</sup> Because of its attractive and picturesque landscape, Newton was called the "Garden City."

Newton was actually an assemblage of villages; (FIGURE 4) Newton, Newtonville, Nonantum (or North Village), West Newton, Auburndale, Riverside, Newton Lower Falls, Newton Upper Falls, Newton Highlands, and Newton Centre, along with less developed areas around Waban, Eliot, and Oak Hill. By the 1890s fourteen railway stations accompanied the villages; those designed by Richardson included Auburndale, Chestnut Hill, Woodland, Waban, and Eliot. Newton in the last quarter of the nineteenth-century was described as a "compactly settled residence quarter;" it was still primarily a walking city, or a collection of walking villages.<sup>7</sup> Room for building near stations had become increasingly scarce, and many owners of larger properties began to create lots on the peripheries of their estates.

Writing of Newton's residents, Sweetser observed that "the local society, being made up of professional and city men, escapes all rural provincialism, and is in a good

<sup>5</sup>Sweetser, p. 29.

<sup>6</sup>Sweetser, p. 30.

<sup>7</sup>Sweetser, p. 34.



sense select, without clannishness.”<sup>8</sup> For those interested, Sweetser in *King’s Handbook* gave statistics describing the homogeneous ethnic composition of Newton. Sweetser cited an 1885 local census, which accounted for 8,849 white males, 10,919 white females, 71 Black males, 65 Black females, 20 mulatto males and 34 mulatto females. Furthermore 10,950 of these residents were natives of Massachusetts, 3,315 of other states; foreigners were comprised of 2,891 people from Ireland, 598 from England, 1,563 from the British Colonies, 121 from Scotland, 99 German, and a total of 109 from Sweden, Denmark, France, Switzerland, the West Indies, Italy, Norway, Portugal, China, Wales, Poland, Spain, Russia, Holland, Turkey and South America.<sup>9</sup>

The majority of Newton’s residents saw themselves as “industrious, prosperous, and well-to-do citizens.”<sup>10</sup> Most were Yankee Boston businessmen and their wives and children. Migrating from the city, they sought a more tranquil existence as cities were increasingly perceived as squalid, morally depraved, and generally unhealthy. With better and more frequent train service and with the opening of the Circuit Railroad, more urban residents saw an easy way out of Boston without having to compromise business there.

As to their politics, Sweetser noted “the citizens preserve a strong fealty to the Republican party, on National questions, while in their local elections they manifest a notable independence, somewhat akin to the aberrations of the Mugwumps.”<sup>11</sup> In terms of crime, a vigilant police force made five to six hundred arrests a year. The cause for arrest, according to Sweetser, was about a third for drunkenness, about one hundred disturbances of the peace, and fifty or more larcenies. He was quick to note that “most of these rueful

<sup>8</sup>Speaking of Auburndale village, Sweetser, p. 190.

<sup>9</sup>All of the information in this paragraph was taken from Sweetser, pp. 36-38.

<sup>10</sup>Sweetser, p. 32.

<sup>11</sup> Sweetser, p. 34. The Mugwumps were a group of Independent Republicans who bolted their party in the presidential election of 1884 to vote for Grover Cleveland on the Democratic ticket. The Independents had hoped to win the Republican nomination for Cleveland, whom they championed, somewhat inaccurately, as a fighter in the cause of reform.





culprits are foreigners, some of whom are also represented among the 1,200 tramps that are yearly cared for by the city authorities.”<sup>12</sup> These foreigners lived in the North Village section of Newton, where a working-class community had been developing since the 1850s, mostly composed of, Irish Catholic immigrants. This area was developed at about the same time as the establishment of manufacturing hosiery mills. One of the owners of these mills, Thomas Dalby, also built houses for the workers in this area. In the early 1880s the Nonantum Worsted Company took over the Darby Mills, and the village became known as “Nonantum.” The company expanded its facilities and built more housing for their workers, as French Canadians began to arrive in large numbers. Upper Falls was another area to develop industrially, first employing young Yankee men and women from small towns, who were later replaced largely by Catholic immigrants. It was in this section of Newton that the town’s first Mass was celebrated in a private house in 1843.<sup>13</sup>

West Newton, which saw slow development compared to other areas, was home to the first Black families, many of them joining the Lincoln Baptist church built in 1869. The West Newton Land Company lots sold quickly, most being built on within ten years. On West Newton Hill the process of breaking up the larger estates began in the 1870s.

Newton’s villages were thus home to a prosperous, Yankee majority, with small segregated areas of industry as home to the small population of immigrants and Blacks. The railroads did not serve these populations, allowing them to live separately in well-delineated areas where they were permitted, albeit unwelcomed. A letter sent to The Newton Graphic in 1887 entitled “What Does Newton Want Most?” illustrated the ill-feeling toward Irish in the town. The writer criticized this sort of sentiment, expressed in reference to the building of an additional railroad station at “Mt. Ida,”

opposed by a small handful of individuals who logically (?) argue that the

<sup>12</sup>Sweetser, p. 36.

<sup>13</sup>Newton Tricentennial Corporation, p. 88.



Boston & Albany railroad corporation has no right to interfere with their peace of mind by conceding anything that might proximately [sic] induce those "Dreadful Irish," you know, to ride on this road instead of the other.<sup>14</sup>

While this is an excellent example of the existence of such sentiment of the time, it is also significant in that the writer questioned such thought as an impediment to progress.

Health was frequently mentioned in contemporary discussions of the quality of life in Newton; an article from the August 29, 1885 issue of *The Newton Graphic* claimed that Newton's "statistics show...the very low per cent of death rate, or cases of contagious diseases (largely owing to the purity of our water supply and the general healthfulness of the situation)."<sup>15</sup> The town was "blest with abundance of pure air," an excellent water-supply system, and claimed by King's Handbook as the healthiest city in Massachusetts, with a death rate below fourteen for each thousand of the population.<sup>16</sup> Water supply was of great public concern because of the (gradual) acceptance of germ theory.

### The Amenities of the Suburb

By 1885 all but two of Newton's villages were well established; the city had newspapers, gas lighting replacing oil lamps, the first streetcar company was operating and a woman was elected to public office to serve on the school committee. In 1886 a newspaper article announced that Newton would soon have electricity.<sup>17</sup> Along with growth in population, was an advance in the town's "material prosperity and beauty."<sup>18</sup> By 1889 the town had "110 miles of...streets...carefully constructed on scientific

<sup>14</sup>Letter to the editor, *The Newton Graphic* 23 April 1887.

<sup>15</sup>"Boston and Albany Railroad," *The Newton Graphic* 29 August 1885.

<sup>16</sup>Sweetser, p. 30.

<sup>17</sup>*The Newton Graphic* 11 September 1886.

<sup>18</sup>Sweetser, p. 30.



principles, and macadamized with the best and most durable materials.”<sup>19</sup> The result being

...the drives are both numerous and beautiful. The streets are so well-kept and so free from dust that that alone would make driving a pleasure....The streets and sidewalks are thoroughly appreciated by ‘cyclists.’<sup>20</sup>

In the Newtonville Village area a great demand for houses close to the station developed, so that some first generation residents were tempted to divide up their properties. Devices developed to provide access to new lots in backyards, some with little space, resulting in “courts,” “places,” and narrow angled streets. Modest Gothic Revival, Italianate, and early Queen Anne styled houses were built here.

### THE CIRCUIT RAILROAD

No more picturesque route can well be imagined than that over the Boston circuit of the Boston & Albany Railroad through what is universally considered the most beautiful residential district of Greater Boston. Such a trip, taken on some bright morning in spring or early summer, is an occasion long to be remembered.<sup>21</sup>

Plans for a Circuit Railroad by the B & A to extend service to Newton Highlands from Brookline were long anticipated, having been slowed by economic slump. Newspaper articles recognized the development potential that would be introduced with the Circuit, speaking enthusiastically for such changes, and anticipating a building boom. As they hoped, new and explosive development would begin with its opening in 1886, and following the arrival of the electric streetcar in 1889. The Circuit consisted of a loop running from Boston outward through Longwood, Brookline, Chestnut Hill, Newton Centre, Woodland to Riverside, and then through Auburndale, the Newtons, Brighton,

<sup>19</sup>Sweetser, p. 30.

<sup>20</sup>“Auburndale’s Attractions,” *The Newton Graphic* 6 January 1888.

<sup>21</sup>Arnold, p. 19.



Allston, and back to Boston. The B & A was praised by the papers for their excellent management and willingness to accommodate patrons, and in providing frequent and reliable train services.

Not least among the many attractions of Newton as a place of residence is the frequent and expeditious communication via the Boston and Albany railroad, between this city and Boston. There is no better managed road in this country, and not one which makes such unbounded effort to accommodate its patrons.<sup>22</sup>

At the same time plans were being made for new train service in Newton, were plans for the construction of new stations. According to Van Rensselaer, the first commission was for Auburndale station in February 1881.

### AUBURNDALE STATION

Undoubtedly, one of the loveliest villages in America is Auburndale, occupying a peculiarly advantageous position between the shaggy hills that enwall the upper Cheesecake glen and the picturesque bays of the Charles River, which bends gracefully around its bold plateau in curves of surpassing beauty. <sup>23</sup>

*King's Handbook of Newton*

Moses Sweetser devoted a chapter of his guide about Newton, to Auburndale. The village, at the time, was home to about 2,000 people, and according to Sweetser, contained almost perfect sanitary conditions, admirable drainage, copious water-supplies, concrete sidewalks, and "an enlightened public vigilance."<sup>24</sup> The village was home to prosperous Boston businessmen, an atlas from the time shows an exclusively residential area.

(FIGURE 5) An article reprinted from *The Quincy Pond* in *The Newton Graphic* of January 6, 1888, "Auburndale's Attractions," described the village.

<sup>22</sup> Real Estate Supplement, *The Newton Graphic* 29 August 1885.

<sup>23</sup> Sweetser, p. 189.

<sup>24</sup> Sweetser, p. 189.





There are no busy wheels of traffic or rising industries or mammoth mills; no magnificent brick or stone business houses; no bank or enterprising local newspaper, and no poor-house. All these, however, can be found within a mile, at either Waltham, Weston, or West Newton, but Auburndale has never felt the need of them.<sup>25</sup>

The article described residences as being set well back from the street, surrounded with “unusually large grounds covered with fruit and shade trees. Few of the houses are small, and many are fine examples of modern architecture.” *The Graphic* said that because of Auburndale’s popularity, few or no houses were available to rent, and new ones were going up all the time. In leisure time, it was suggested, one could go to the Charles River, for boating and fishing or join the Newton Boat Club. In 1888 the Woodland Park Hotel opened where, according to *The Graphic* many people summered, some spending the entire year there. A short distance from the depot was Lasell Seminary, a college for young women. By 1888 trains through Auburndale ran close to every hour in both directions, the trip taking 35 minutes to Boston and the fare 19 cents a single ride, or 10 1/2 for hundred-ride tickets.<sup>26</sup>

Moses Sweetser introduced the railroad station in Auburndale as follows:

The charm of the place begins as soon as the visitor alights from the train, for the railway station is one of the prettiest on the line, a long, low structure of stone, in massive and attractive architecture, pleasantly bordered by verdant lawns. The architect of this dainty temple of travel was the famous H.H. Richardson, the foremost of Americans in his profession. Emerging from the broad arches of this handsome building, one sees on all sides the scattered houses of the village, embowered in trees and engirdled with gardens, favored by a fertile soil and genial climate.<sup>27</sup>

Richardson’s first commission in 1881, the design of the station was simple: a one-story granite rectangle covered by an encompassing hipped roof, extended to the track-side

<sup>25</sup>“Auburndale’s Attractions”*The Newton Graphic* 6 January 1888.

<sup>26</sup>*The Newton Graphic* 6 January 1888.

<sup>27</sup>Sweetser, p. 189.



platform on one side and on the other side forming a carriage overhang. Granite blocks were laid in random ashlar masonry. The roof was of slate, with terra cotta ridges, and supported by wooden braces.<sup>28</sup> The station ran parallel to the tracks. A ticket and telegraph office protruded out of the track-side facade. The interior was divided into nearly equal-sized waiting rooms for men (25 x 25 ft) and women (25 x 30 ft), with a ticket office between, and a baggage room on one end.(FIGURE 6) Interiors were wainscotted in brick and vertical wood sheathing with floors of wood. Doors and windows were symmetrically placed around the building and trimmed with red sandstone.<sup>29</sup> The total cost of the station, including furnishings, was \$ 16,290.<sup>30</sup> The grounds were landscaped by Olmsted.

It was not unusual to see notices in contemporary newspapers of fatal accidents that had occurred when people were crossing train tracks; it was a frequently expressed concern. An article in the *Newton Graphic* praised the station at Auburndale because “one can cross the track either by bridge or tunnel, so there is no danger of accidents.”<sup>31</sup>

Walter Berg had praised the station at Auburndale in his *Buildings and Structures of American Railroads* for its attractive landscaping. He offered no criticism, probably because the primary features of the station complied with his suggestions for functional station design; waiting rooms were segregated, the ticket /telegraph office was accessible from the waiting rooms and protruded track-side, and the baggage room faced the track.

<sup>28</sup>According to Charles Sprague Sargent in “The Railroad Station at Auburndale, Massachusetts.” *Garden and Forest II*. March 13, 1889 :124-125.

<sup>29</sup>Sargent, “The Railroad-Station at Auburndale, Massachusetts,” pp. 124-125. An article in the *Railroad Gazette* of November 5, 1886, stated that “All of these stations [Auburndale, Chestnut Hill, and Holyoke] are built of Braggville, Mass., granite, with brownstone trimmings. The roofs are of red tiles, and the posts of the sheds and all of the timber-work are of Georgia pine.” It should be noted that most of this article was a reprint of other articles, and it erroneously attributed the Union Passenger Station in Worcester by Ware and Van Brunt (1875-1877) to Richardson, actually calling it “Perhaps his most famous work of the kind.”

<sup>30</sup>Ochsner, *Complete Works*, p. 243.

<sup>31</sup>“Auburndale’s Attractions,” *The Newton Graphic* 6 January 1888.



In March, 1889, an article appeared in *Garden and Forest*, (FIGURE 7) "The Railroad-Station at Auburndale, Massachusetts," by Charles Sargent. Sargent frequently extolled the sensibility of the Boston & Albany's station program as exemplary, obviously speaking in his own interest, as much of the implementation of the program was the result of his own efforts. Sargent claimed that before Richardson, not one station had merited attention as "intelligent and pleasing works of art." He echoed Van Rensselaer's words that earlier stations were vulgar and exaggerated, "merely display[ing]...the railroad company's desire to expend as little money as possible." He wrote that Richardson was eager to find creative and artistic solutions to the challenge of solving the utilitarian problems of station design, hitherto "neglected by art." Sargent commended Richardson's design, for the "well proportioned" waiting rooms and the "well placed" ticket office. The interior wainscoting of brick was "cheap, durable, pleasant to the eye, and easily kept clean." While the woodwork was simple and without carving, "it is carefully distributed and profiled and gives a look of refinement very different from the parsimonious nudity or the cheap elaborateness which the average country station shows. Here, as well in the architectural features proper, we feel that the hand of an artist has been at work."<sup>32</sup>

The building's exterior was characterized by "simplicity, dignity, and solidity [and] its outlines and proportions are such that its true purpose could not be mistaken." Sargent emphasized that as a temporary shelter, the "roof...not the walls, should dominate in its expression, and this prime fact Richardson never forgot, no matter what was the size of the station he was designing." He explained how the unornamented wooden posts supporting the sheds, and divided into three braces, "express the nature of the material, and the slightly curved form of the braces prevents any look of stiffness or monotony in outline." Again,

<sup>32</sup>The quotes in the preceding paragraph were taken from Sargent, "The Railroad Station at Auburndale, Massachusetts," pp. 124-125.



these sentiments recall Van Rensselaer.<sup>33</sup>

Sargent emphasized Auburndale Station's setting and advised that the "railroad company was as wise in asking Mr. Frederick Law Olmsted to design its grounds as in asking Richardson to build it." He described the grounds as follows:

The high-road passes obliquely by the station and from it, towards the right, diverges the approach in an easy curve...the little lawns are so disposed towards the left as to admit of the passage of numerous vehicles without danger of over-crowding...lawns have been covered with neat turf and adorned with hardy flowering shrubs, naturally disposed yet grouped in effective masses. The boundary fence to the right is hidden by shrubbery, and masses of it are so disposed around the walls of the building that, with their luxuriant covering of Japanese Ivy (*Ampelopsis Veitchi*), they almost seem part and parcel of Nature's handiwork. In summer this effect is the most charming that can be produced in a rural situation, while even in winter the delicate tracery of the naked lines and the bare masses of the shrubs preserve it to a considerable degree.<sup>34</sup>

In contemporary discussions of the grounds, a noticeable attempt was made to present the stations and settings as appearing *natural*, as though they had sprung through the earth themselves. There is often an element of surprise expressed by observers at the fact that tracks and train were associated with such locations. This may reflect the ambivalent feelings people and commuters felt toward the trains. Were it not for the trains, those residents would not have been able to live and work in such contrasting settings. Yet the trains still had unpleasant, and rather threatening associations for many people. The disdain felt and openly aired for industry, after all, could not be so distant from its equally technological cousin, the train.

Charles Mulford Robinson also discussed Auburndale in "A Railroad Beautiful" for *House and Garden* in 1902, comparing it in beauty with the station at Chestnut Hill. Describing the use of landscaping to hide the practical aspects of the station, he wrote

<sup>33</sup>The quotes in the preceding paragraph were taken from Sargent, "The Railroad Station at Auburndale, Massachusetts," pp. 124-125.

<sup>34</sup>Sargent, pp. 124-125.





The flagged walk curves in picturesque indolence, while the tool-house--for which utilitarian structure the section of the road seems here to find need--has been put apart from the station in the most inconspicuous corner of the grounds, and then has been hidden with foliage.<sup>35</sup>

Frank Atkinson Arnold's "A Study in Railroad Gardening" in *Suburban Life* in 1905 highlighted the Auburndale station. (FIGURE 8)

The approach reminds one of one of the many winding paths through some park of the great Metropolitan system, and it is with surprise that the visitor finds himself, almost without warning, entering a vine-clad porte cochere, which is an artistic feature of the station. Partly overgrown by Virginia creeper and woodbine, this station possesses almost every feature of attraction which one could imagine. Not only have shrubs and bushes been used in profusion, but the natural resources of the place have permitted of calling into play lofty elms, maples, and other hardy trees, which have lent their many years of growth to the carrying out of this plan of beautifying the grounds.<sup>36</sup>

Perhaps a large part of the appeal of railroad landscaping was in its ability to hide what a station was, to protect a lovely community from the spoilage and messy soot of railroad transportation. People were leaving the cities to get away from the mess, density, and squalor of urban areas, and did not care for any semblance of this in the new suburbs. Auburndale station acted as an attractive and refined little gate-way in and out of the new suburb, where people could afford to shelter themselves from the increasingly gritty and cramped life of Boston.

### CHESTNUT HILL

Chestnut Hill was a less developed village of Newton, home for wealthy Boston businessmen living in attractive, generously-sized houses, with ample grounds. Chestnut Hill residents were slow to rely on public transport since improvements to the railroad were

<sup>35</sup>Robinson, "A Railroad Beautiful," as reprinted in *The Newton Journal*.

<sup>36</sup>Arnold, p. 22.



slight until the 1880s; even the opening of the Circuit Railroad had little noticeable effect on development there. As late as 1895 an atlas (FIGURE 9) showed that the estates surrounding the station grounds were large and hardly developed, with the land remaining exclusively residential. Few houses were built before that time, and those that were, were early examples of Colonial Revival. An exception was the house built in 1879 for Dr. Daniel Slad, an accomplished Newton resident, a zoologist who taught at Harvard Medical School and who was later connected with the Peabody Museum in Salem. His house was reminiscent of masonry houses in the English countryside built of red brick. Dr. Slad was an ardent conservationist and gardener, active in both the Newton and Massachusetts Horticultural societies, and the author of such papers as “How to Improve and Beautify Newton” and “The Treatment of Small Suburban Places.”<sup>37</sup>

Following the success of his station at Auburndale and then Palmer, Richardson was assured of additional B & A commissions; Chestnut Hill was the next.<sup>38</sup> Van Rensselaer said this commission came to Richardson in April, 1883. It was built by Norcross Brothers the following year.

Chestnut Hill was a side station; lying parallel to the tracks, its design was rectangular, with a pitched roof extending on both track and street sides, between gable end walls. (FIGURE 10) A track-side roof, with a dormer, created a porch supported by wood posts, with connected eaves extending on its two gable sides so that all three elevations provided a walkway and porch for those waiting outside for a train. This elevation appeared somewhat awkward.(FIGURE 11) The carriage side was more successful visually, distinguished by a long roof and supported by two mammoth arches springing

<sup>37</sup>Newton Tricentennial Corporation, p. 63.

<sup>38</sup>Alexander W. Longfellow Jr. was an employee in Richardson’s office from 1880 to 1885, who wrote in an 1883 letter to his mother that he was working on the Chestnut Hill station, and that he had worked on others. See Ochsner, “Architecture for the Boston & Albany Railroad: 1881-1894,” p. 119.



from the ground, continuing the station's side walls, and providing an entrance way, as well as a porte-cochere, for the carriages. The shape was reminiscent of a New England salt-box house. The interior plan was that of one general waiting room (21 x 36 ft) with a very small projected bay ticket-room track-side. Interiors were wainscotted with wood, unlike that in Auburndale, done in brick.<sup>39</sup> On one wall were ladies' and men's bathrooms, and a small baggage room by the porte-cochere. Windows and doors were symmetrically placed. The materials were granite laid in random-ashlar masonry, with brown sandstone trim, and a red tiled roof<sup>40</sup>. The 1884 Annual Report for the B & A listed an expenditure of \$11,860, while the Newton Graphic of 15 May 1886 listed that improvements (including track work) cost \$ 150,000.<sup>41</sup> Olmsted was responsible for the landscaping.<sup>42</sup>

The interior finishes of Richardson's stations did not appear to vary much in material or treatment. Since few photographs are known of the original interiors and what remains is mostly descriptive in nature, subtle differences in treatment are hard to account for. We do know that materials were either brick or wood, and evidence suggests that the presentations did not vary considerably from station to station.

The critics disagreed about Chestnut Hill. While the station received a large amount of praise for its design aesthetically, Walter Berg in *Buildings and Structures of American Railroads* recognized that "from a railroad-engineer's standpoint", there were "serious

<sup>39</sup> According to Charles Sprague Sargent in "The Railroad Station at Chestnut Hill," *Garden and Forest II* 3 April 1889: 159-160.

<sup>40</sup> The red tiled roof is mentioned in Berg, p. 27, and in an article in *The Railroad Gazette*.

<sup>41</sup> While the large difference in figures has been assumed to be a typo, the figure of \$ 150,000 was listed numerous times in newspapers, and was stated to have included significant amounts of track work.

<sup>42</sup> Much of the information in this paragraph came from Ochsner, *Complete Works*, p. 306.



defects in the ground plan.”<sup>43</sup> He criticized the fact that the men’s bathroom opened up into the general waiting room, preferring an entrance from the outside of the building, and added that the ticket office and baggage room were too small.

Van Rensselaer spoke of the station at Chestnut Hill as

...perhaps the prettiest example of a union of artistic and natural beauties...making an hour’s detention there a very different thing from that purgatory of discomfort and impatience which we are so often called upon to bear.<sup>44</sup>

Sargent echoed Van Rensselaer’s words. Less than a month after an article about Auburndale appeared in *Garden and Forest*, another article by Sargent was published in the same magazine, entitled “The Railroad-Station at Chestnut Hill.”(FIGURE 12) Sargent called the Chestnut Hill Station “perhaps the prettiest and most picturesque of all the great architect’s rural stations, nor are the grounds equaled in beauty by any others.”<sup>45</sup>

Sargent also described some of the trees planted on the grounds, including White Pine, White Willows, and American Beeches. He observed that “another American Beech...stands in the grounds of a neighboring residence, which, of course, the landscape gardener took care not to conceal from view.” Sargent’s statement implies an important relationship between the setting of the station and the surrounding residential setting; again, as Auburndale was meant to appear natural, Chestnut Hill was meant to appear connected with the residences, and the residents. This implies that the Boston & Albany wished to insinuate the station into the lives of the residents.

The other side of the track had a narrow strip of grass, and was “edged with trees and hardy flowering-shrubs, and everywhere these masses are neither stiffly arranged nor

<sup>43</sup>Berg, p. 277.

<sup>44</sup>Van Rensselaer, pp. 101-102.

<sup>45</sup>Sargent, “The Railroad Station at Chestnut Hill,” p. 159.





scattered without purpose, but carefully grouped so as to secure variety in unity, interest, grace and harmony.” The first feature of the station Sargent discussed was the massive arches so associated with this station; Sargent seemed to defend them, mentioning that the “extreme size and solidity of the arches which form the porch of the station have been criticized as inappropriate in so small a building.” He defended their place, reminding the reader as he did in discussing the station at Auburndale, that

...a station is essentially a shelter, not a dwelling-place, and its roof is therefore of far more importance in giving it the right expression than its walls. These arches sustaining only a roof, would indeed be inappropriate in a house, but they can be permitted in a station even by the most exacting of purists, if he remembers the true purpose of the design. Nothing could be more beautiful than their vigorous, simple curve, and nothing could be more hospitable and protecting than the air they give the building.<sup>46</sup>

Sargent described how shrubbery planted close to the building to make the walls “as though they sprang directly from the plantations,” as if growing from nature. This element was apparent in other buildings by Richardson, such as The Ames Gate Lodge, The Ames Monument, and the Gurney House. This was a vision clearly resulting from the union of Olmsted and Richardson.

Sargent concluded his article addressing the question,

Could there be a better advertisement for a suburban neighborhood than a station and grounds like these? They imply refinement, good taste and a regard for the amenities of life in the local community. They predict that the company which has provided them will care for its patrons’ comfort in other directions too....It is not too much to say that these stations of the Boston and Albany Railroad, taking buildings and grounds together, are the best of their class in the world; and the company which was wise enough to build them has found them a good business investment.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup>This quote and those in the preceding paragraphs were taken from Sargent, “The Railroad-station at Chestnut Hill,” pp. 159-160.

<sup>47</sup>This quote and those in the preceding paragraphs were taken from Sargent, “The Railroad-station at Chestnut Hill,” pp. 159-160.



Sargent's words are both self-congratulatory, advisory, and a clear statement of the program's purpose.

Charles Mulford Robinson's "A Railroad Beautiful" appeared in *House and Garden* in 1902, describing the landscaping program of the Newton Circuit. According to him, the approach to the Chestnut Hill station:

There is a park like approach, roads and path winding luxuriously down to the little station building, where a stunning stone arch throws its protecting cover from wind and rain over the carriage drive. The street is not visible from the railroad, and the little park is graded gradually to the low level of the station. Two noble old willows adorn a stretch of lawn, and the shrubbery here has been planted with unusual skill and artistic excellence.<sup>48</sup>

Robinson also commented on the motives for such a station, and the pattern of the Circuit stations as appearing almost *hidden*.

One can imagine a business man choosing Chestnut Hill for the thoroughness with which the work of beautifying the road has been undertaken--for what is done here must be more for the road than for the place--and as, again, to draw attention to the tendency to conceal the station, in the view of the town, rather than to emphasize its presence.<sup>49</sup>

In the same manner Frank Arnold's observed in his *Suburban Life* article in 1905, that at Chestnut Hill, one had the impression "that the station is nestling in the midst of a lovely park." Through landscaping, "all signs of the proximity of a railroad are lost sight of entirely on the approach, and it is not until one finds himself fairly on the platform, that the rails themselves become a reality."<sup>50</sup> Like the station at Auburndale, the desired effect was that the stations were to be as unobtrusive and as natural as possible, rather than disruptive reminders of the train and its associations. The stations and grounds were meant

<sup>48</sup>Robinson, "A Railroad Beautiful," as reprinted in *The Newton Journal*.

<sup>49</sup>Robinson, "A Railroad Beautiful," as reprinted in *The Newton Journal*.

<sup>50</sup>This quote and that in the preceding paragraph were taken from Arnold, p. 22.



to evoke feelings of comfort, refinement, and status, for those who resided in such a location, and for those viewing it from the train, as well. Residents, in a sense, had the best of both worlds; the ease of convenient and frequent access to the city, and the railroad's efforts to accommodate them comfortably, and respectfully.

### The Smaller Newton Stations

Richardson was commissioned to do a number of smaller stations for Newton as part of the Circuit, "flag-stop" or "flag-depot" stations, in the Eliot, Waban, and Woodland sections of the town. These areas were little developed, serving the residents of a small number of large estates, or in the case of Woodland, a country club--a similar clientele to those at Chestnut Hill and Auburndale. The stations were also built in anticipation of further development. According to Van Rensselaer the three stations were awarded to Richardson's office in October, 1884, but were not all completed until 1888. They were simple and small designs, all with one general waiting room, a baggage room, bathrooms, and ticket room. Built of granite, laid in ledge-stone masonry, trimmed with sandstone, and having slate roofs, they displayed similar elements to other designs. They are of particular interest in that their design and appearance seem to have taken precedence over the practical needs of the railroad. As expensive small stone stations serving a relatively small clientele, they had to be valuable to the railroad primarily for presentation and promotion of the Boston & Albany.

Frequent mention was made of progress on the stations in contemporary newspapers. In the May 15, 1886 issue of *The Newton Journal* of an construction update was given for the station at Waban.

A depot is in process of construction at Beacon street, and will be completed in several weeks. It is of Bragville granite, with brownstone trimmings. The ticket office is located in the corner instead of the centre, as in most stations, and there is but one waiting room. The interior finish will be cypress and spruce. Depots will also be located at Washington and



Boylston streets, and will probably be erected the present year. They will be of stone, and similar to the Beacon street depot.<sup>51</sup>

While in *The Newton Graphic*, the same day, it was reported that “the grounds of the new depots will be laid out and ornamented similar to those of other stations on the main line in Newton.”<sup>52</sup>

A month following its opening (FIGURE 13), the station at Waban was described as “a thing of beauty and an honor to Newton. The grounds have been artistically laid out and graded, and are very attractive.”<sup>53</sup> In April, 1888, mention was made that in Waban

Efforts are being made to have all the property owners here unite in having a topographical survey made of the desirable building sites, and engage Mr. Frederick Law Olmsted to lay it out.<sup>54</sup>

An article that March described how Waban had become known as an area with the most desirable building sites in Newton, anticipating perhaps “a hundred or more fine residences being built here in the course of a year or two.” (FIGURE 14) The article described the depot, promoting Waban.

...after the completion of a most substantial and expensive stone depot, [the B & A] commenced running regular trains, making thirty trips from Boston...every week day....It is on the line of what is known as the Circuit road...The river Charles is within a quarter of a mile, thus affording an opportunity for boating, bathing and fishing. The land is elevated, undulating, and location extremely healthy. Fine old shade trees, comprising elms, oaks, lindens, butternut and tall pines, lend variety, afford shade, and form picturesque elements to the beautiful scenery for which this place is noted. In fact, through all the Newtons now known as the Garden City, there is no portion which excels Waban in natural beauty. The Boston and Albany Corporation, with its usual generosity and liberal spirit, has laid out the grounds about the pretty stone station with trees, flowers, shrubs and grassy lawns, forming quite a little part, which is destined to be a

<sup>51</sup>*The Newton Journal* 15 May 1886.

<sup>52</sup>*The Newton Graphic* 15 May 1886.

<sup>53</sup>*The Newton Graphic* 11 September 1886.

<sup>54</sup>*The Newton Graphic* 6 April 1888.





constant delight to its patrons.<sup>55</sup>

New residents were described by their respective occupations and the stately costs of their attractive residences. Speaking of Waban, Walter Berg in *Buildings and Structures of American Railroads* noted that the “interior ground-plan has several objectionable features,” which--unfortunately--he neglected to mention.<sup>56</sup> He surely disagreed with the bathrooms opening directly into the general waiting room, which he had found objectionable at Woodland, along with arguing that the facade of the station at Woodland

...is designed entirely from an architectural standpoint. There are stone seats under the sloping roof, alongside of the bay-window extension to the main building, which serves as ticket-office. The interior is divided into a general waiting-room; a baggage-room; a ladies' toilet-room; a gentlemen's toilet room; and a ticket-office. The arrangement of the ground-plan has a large number of very objectionable features.<sup>57</sup>

Frank Arnold had described the station at Woodland where “one meets with almost primeval conditions. A flat stretch of country, a small but an artistic station, which one comes upon almost unexpectedly, and which seems set down in a virgin wilderness, so surrounded is it by the green turf, blossoming hedges and native birch and willow.”<sup>58</sup>

(FIGURE 15) An Atlas from 1895 showed virtually no development in the area.

<sup>55</sup>*The Newton Graphic* 9 March 1888.

<sup>56</sup>Berg, p. 277.

<sup>57</sup>Berg, p. 277.

<sup>58</sup>Arnold, p. 22.



## BRIGHTON

Brighton was technically a village in the western section of Boston, located close to Newton, and part of the Circuit Railroad. Van Rensselaer gave July, 1884, as the date of commission for Richardson; construction was completed by Norcross Brothers in 1885. An expenditure of \$13,267 was listed in the B&A Annual Report for 1885 corresponding to this, but the total cost was probably more. Residents of Brighton who lived in the area where the depot was located, were of a similar background as the majority of residents in Newton. An atlas from 1895 shows virtually no development near the station. (FIGURE 16) Brighton was closer to Boston, affording a shorter commute.

The Brighton station was rectangular in plan. It was built on an embankment, with a porch sloping down to the tracks, covering stairs and providing a shelter beneath. (FIGURE 17) A central track-side ticket booth separated the men and women's waiting rooms with bathrooms in each, while two tiny rooms next to the men's room provided for telegraph, and baggage. Doors exited track-side from the baggage room, the men's room, and the women's room. A hipped roof covered the main rectangular structure with a extended plane on an angle down to the tracks; this plane contained an eyelid dormer allowing light below. The materials were Bragville granite laid in random ashlar masonry, trimmed with Longmeadow "freestone" sandstone. Olmsted was responsible for the landscaping.<sup>59</sup>

An article appeared in the *Newton Graphic* on July 18, 1885, that had been reprinted from the *Brighton Independent*, and offers an informative and unusually critical account of the new station, "thrown open to the public at 2:05 pm. on Monday, July 6." The interiors were described as rich in appearance, "the lower part being of southern cypress wood the upper part of spruce and hard pine, the whole being finished in oil."

<sup>59</sup>See Ochsner, *Complete Works*, p. 354.



Information was given about the individuals responsible for roofing and plumbing.<sup>60</sup>

“Elegant drinking fountains of Tennessee marble” were in each waiting room, with the “latest improved filters,” as well as “modern improvements” in the bathrooms, and “very neat” gas fixtures.

However, the overall tone of the article was not flattering and “While much can be said in praise of the building, a great deal more can be said against it,” and the author summed up the project as “a very costly affair [and] badly planned in every respect.” Problems cited included the unnecessarily large size of the ladies’ room (with the men’s room sacrificed for telegraph and baggage rooms); the windows were too low and offered poor ventilation; the ticket office was both “a perfect sweat box,[and] at the same time...dark and gloomy”; and the baggage room door was “situated that, owing to the way the grounds have been laid out, all the baggage will have to be transported entirely around one end of the building”. Other problems included no overhead protection on three sides of the building, and “owing to the snowguards on the roof, in the winter time the gutters and gutter pipes will freeze up [and] the platform and vicinity will be covered with ice all the time.” Also, since the telegraph operator was often in charge of the ticket office, with a distance between them, “the latter’s duties are thereby increased.” The article ended on a sarcastic note, stating that in regards to the ticket and telegraph operator, that “in compensation for this, his wages have been reduced \$20 a month.” Interestingly, the architect is never mentioned in this article, despite criticisms specifically directed at his work.<sup>61</sup>

A number of the problems the article cited conflicted with Walter Berg’s suggestions for successful station design: a separate location of telegraph and ticket offices

<sup>60</sup> “The roofing was sublet to W.J. Maguire, who did a very neat job. The plumbing was also sublet to I.N. Tucker of Allston.” “The New Depot in Brighton,” *The Newton Graphic* 18 July 1885.

<sup>61</sup> “The New Depot in Brighton” *The Newton Graphic* 18 July 1885.



with only one employee, and adequate coverage for protecting people from weather. The lack of protective eaves was uncommon in Richardson's station designs. The location of the baggage room track-side in itself would not conflict with Berg's recommendations, but according to the article, it was because of the way the grounds were laid, that the problem arose. It was unusual for the women's waiting room to be larger than the men's, and in no place else does this appear in Richardson's station designs; the reasoning is unclear. Little mention is made of the landscaping in contemporary accounts.

### STATUS OF NEWTON AND BRIGHTON STATIONS

In Newton, Auburndale Station was destroyed in the early 1960s when the Massachusetts Turnpike was constructed, and while Chestnut Hill remains a commuter stop, the station was also demolished for a parking lot around 1960, as were the flag-stop stations at Eliot and Waban.(FIGURE 18) The station at Brighton was also torn down for the Massachusetts Turnpike.

The only station in Newton to remain is Woodland, but it has been neglected, and is today boarded up and used for storage. It is ironic that the stations that received the most attention, were the ones lost.





## WELLESLEY HILLS

Just West of Newton lay Wellesley; formerly known as West Needham, the town was incorporated in April, 1881, with a population of nearly 2,600.<sup>62</sup> Wellesley Hills, otherwise known as North Needham (part of West Needham), was the location of Richardson's last train station, completed in 1886. Wellesley followed a similar pattern of growth as seen in Newton, and prided itself and promoted its status as a prosperous community, made up of Boston's elite businessmen, much the same as in Newton. But again, like Newton, Wellesley had other lower-class residents, mostly industrial workers, who worked and lived within their own distinct areas. Many of these would be displaced when the town made a concerted effort to eliminate factories, transforming them for educational use (see below).

An article in *The Wellesley Courant* of November 5, 1885, described the prospect of a new downtown railroad, direct to Boston.

...its benefit in every way possible to the town would be great, more so than could any other event liable to occur....It will naturally bring into the town many new residents and manufacturing industries of which this town has long felt the need. Nature has done all that could be desired to make this as beautiful and healthy a town as any of those suburban to the great metropolis of New England....<sup>63</sup>

The very first passenger train to Boston had arrived in July, 1834. From that time on West Needham quickly became known for its "beautiful and healthful air."<sup>64</sup> With a relatively short 45 minute commute to Boston, the town attracted wealthy businessmen, bankers and lawyers buying summer homes, with some residing year-round. Slowly commuters' residences began to coexist with the established farming community. West

<sup>62</sup>Hon. Joseph E. Fiske, *History of the Town of Wellesley* (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1917) 82.

<sup>63</sup>*The Wellesley Courant* 5 November 1885.

<sup>64</sup>Elizabeth Hinchliffe, *Five Pounds Currency, Three Pounds of Corn: Wellesley's Centennial Story* (Town of Wellesley, Massachusetts, 1981) 27.



Needham also acquired a reputation as a place for convalescents, particularly for those with consumption.

With the influx of businessmen and their money, large properties began to be divided up and developed. The name *Wellesley* came from a wealthy man named Hunnewell, who adapted his family name of Welles to “Wellesley” in naming his estate. Hunnewell worked in banking and railroads and, with his love of gardening and nature, he transformed a neglected pasture into a massive and unique collection of plants from America and abroad. The gardens were opened to the public and received many visitors, including horticulturists from Europe.<sup>65</sup>

Through the mid-1800s, West Needham was a town of dichotomies. Eager to expand and stimulated by its wealthy and industrious residents, it was also home to progressive endeavors in communal living and education, and still to the farmers who had originally established the area.<sup>66</sup> Farming continued strong through the decades following the war, and the town remained isolated and rustic, scarcely changed from a century before. In 1874 a small number of gas street lamps were introduced, although kerosene still illuminated most paths and streets; the first telephone arrived in 1877. A building boom would occur in the town shortly after this, and by 1880, the population had only reached

<sup>65</sup>Hinchliffe, p. 28.

<sup>66</sup>North Needham, which would become Wellesley Hills, saw its first proposed housing development in the mid-nineteenth century: “Bostonville.” It was the vision of Daniel Ayer, inspired by the success of the railroads. The plan was for “...delightful and attractive homes” to cover 200 acres, with two railroad depots; over 300 lots were measured, and included among them a meeting house, a seminary, shoe factory, firehouses, schoolhouses and a common. Visibly publicized and promoted, Bostonville was unable to raise money, sustain interest, or clear land titles, and only two houses were ever built. Wellesley Hills also saw John and Mary Sawyer’s experiment in cooperative living in 1858, located close to the first Wellesley Hills depot. In their house “Eyre” was “high thinking and plain living”. The house would become a stop for such visitors as Harriet Beecher Stowe, Whitier, Channing, and Sumner, along with less traditional guests; it was also a station on the underground railroad.



The last of the notable wealthy men to come to Wellesley was Henry Fowle Durant from New Hampshire, a Harvard alumnus and a shrewd Boston trial lawyer. With his wife and son they made their summer home in West Needham, acquiring over 300 acres of land around Lake Waban. Following the death of his son from diphtheria, Durant announced plans for the education of women and he established the Wellesley Female Seminary, the future Wellesley College with classes beginning in 1875.

Wellesley was not without its factories, although the greater part of the mills and factories were on the Newton side of the river. Wellesley village was the home of the Turner & Smart Shoe Factory, and the Lovewell Shoe Factory, employing many out-of-town workers. Wellesley Village was dominated by the Lovewell Factory during the second half of the 19th century, which was followed by the building of other factories. As the business became larger in 1875 and modernized, it began to be seen as a nuisance to the town.

### Wellesley's Separation from Needham

By the 1870s the town had separated itself from Needham proper, defiantly calling itself Wellesley. The many wealthy and prominent people who had moved there wished to distinguish themselves from the eastern area of Needham whose residents they viewed as under-educated, under-achieving, and under-endowed; they sought to govern themselves.<sup>68</sup> In a petition for separation, Wellesley was described by one of its prominent

<sup>67</sup>*Outline Map of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts with populations in 1880* (Rand Avery & Company, 1882), Harvard University.

<sup>68</sup>An extraordinary and eccentric resident, William Emerson Baker carried to an extreme the self-indulgence and extravagance seen among the affluent in the area at the time. Having amassed a fortune in the sewing-machine business, he bought up a large amount of land from many small farms, and in this created an enormous artificial lake. On this estate he created what was a combination world's fair, amusement park, and museum. This included man-made caverns and lakes, underground rivers and fish, swans and bears, a castle and windmills, towers and coaches, steamboats, Greek Statues, Italian gardens, fountains and bowling alleys, grottoes, greenhouses, a saloon, a chapel and a crystal tower. He also had his



residents.

The charm of the Town of Wellesley consists in its refined rural atmosphere, its pleasant homes, its delightful drives and its beautiful landscaped scenery, and no enlarged description of its enchanting outlooks, its elegant residences, its public buildings, its hills and vales, its calm waters and rugged ledges can be otherwise than futile and unsatisfactory.<sup>69</sup>

Something that did not fit into this image of serenity was the four-story wooden shoe factory, with its loud and abrasive whistle, shattering the town's peace. To the residents of Wellesley's rescue came Hunnewell, owner of the grand gardens, who along with Mrs. Durant--co-founder of Wellesley college--bought the pair of factories, tore one of them down, and made the other building into a dormitory for the college.

Once Wellesley formally separated from Needham in 1881, progress began in instating modern conveniences. A water commission was established within three years, municipal street lights were installed every 125 feet, concrete sidewalks constructed, a fire department established, and illuminating gas introduced. Streets were laid out, and a park commission organized. A small hotel, the Elm Park, was renovated to attract wealthy summer visitors. Every expense and care was taken to impress those who came to visit, and the unattractive railroad stations were to be replaced with new designs, one by H.H. Richardson.

In the first issue of a weekly paper, *The Wellesley Courant* in 1885, it was proclaimed that

...few places in Massachusetts offer greater inducements to one who desires a pleasant home than does Wellesley. Within easy reach of a large city and surrounded by social and educational advantages unsurpassed, there are few towns its superior, either in material or intellectual wealth. Its advantages

own railroad run to the nearby Ridge Hill Railroad Station, and tried but failed to have his estate set off as a separate borough in itself. He bought from the 1876 Centennial Exposition a 159 room building, and brought it, piece-by-piece, to be reconstructed at the entrance of his "farm", where it was renamed the Hotel Wellesley. His guests included royalty, paying public, and hundreds of under-privileged children who had been treated by Baker to a week's stay at his estate.

<sup>69</sup>Hinchliffe, p. 50.





are too many and too varied to admit of special notice at this time, but the imposing structures that comprise what is known as Wellesley College, the library, a princely gift to the town from a single citizen, the beautiful estates within its limits that in their summer dress make Wellesley so attractive, are some of its adornments. Surely a good local paper is the one thing lacking.<sup>70</sup>

In a plate from Robinson's Atlas for 1888 of Wellesley Hills, modest settlement appears around the depot.<sup>71</sup>(FIGURES 19 & 20) A post office sat next to the depot, a school a few streets away, as well as the Elm Park Hotel in the other direction, next to the Unity Church. Otherwise, the area was entirely residential, with generous lots northwest of the tracks and depot, and more clustered and dense settlement in the southeast.

The Wellesley Hills station by Richardson replaced the previous station not out of necessity, but to suit similar needs that his designs served in Newton--it was meant to impress. Wellesley itself was founded by people who wanted to believe that the town was exceptional, that it was home to an exclusive, prosperous population that no longer wished to be associated with those less distinguished residents of West Needham. These demands called for a remarkable entrance into the town and Richardson's station and Olmsted's landscaping provided this gateway, with an appeal similar to those stations found in Newton. Commuters could feel that *their* suburb was special, and the railroads recognized this desire in the attention paid to the station.

### THE WELLESLEY HILLS DEPOT

The commission for the Wellesley Hills Station, Richardson's last for the B & A, came in July 1885, according to Van Rensselaer. Construction was begun in September of the same year, and completed in January, 1886, at a cost of \$ 10,054. The station replaced

<sup>70</sup>"The New Railroad to Boston,"*The Wellesley Courant* 5 November 1885.

<sup>71</sup>*Robinson's Atlas of Norfolk County*, Wellesley Hills, Plate 35 (New York: 1888). Wellesley Free Library.



an earlier undistinguished wooden station. Wellesley Hills was one of three Boston and Albany Circuit Railroad stations to serve Wellesley, the other two being Wellesley Farms, and Wellesley, both designed after Richardson's death by his successor firm, Shepley, Rutlan and Coolidge.

A smaller station similar to those in Newton, the plan was rectangular, measuring 21 x 40 ft.<sup>72</sup>, with two round projections at both track-side corners.(FIGURE 21) A general waiting room, almost square, formed the center of the plan, with men's and women's bath and rest rooms to the sides. Next to the men's room, occupying the circular track-side corner, was a baggage room, while the reverse track-side corner, next to the women's room, was the ticket office. Two doors provided an entrance to the waiting room, and two doors directly opposite provided exits. The baggage room could only be entered from a outside, track-side door. A sloping hipped roof contained two gables, one track-side and one opposite, with three identical windows. The roof extended outward to form wide sheltering eaves, supported by wood posts and brackets, and then extended into a plane down to the track at lower level, somewhat similar as at the station in Brighton. The building was made of granite, laid in ledge-stone masonry, had sandstone trim on doors, windows, and horizontal bands, and topped with a slate roof.<sup>73</sup>

Walter Berg in *Buildings and Structures of American Railroads* briefly described the station at Wellesley Hills, categorizing it as a "flag depot," one of the smaller passenger stations. Berg wrote of the interior, "it is cut up considerably so as to give a general waiting-room; a ticket-office; a baggage-room; a ladies' waiting-room, with toilet-room attached; and a smoking room, with toilet-room attached."<sup>74</sup> Berg did not specify further

<sup>72</sup>Berg, p. 277.

<sup>73</sup>See Ochsner, *Complete Works*, p. 400.

<sup>74</sup>Berg, p. 277.



assessment, but one might suspect that he thought the small size of the station did not comfortably accommodate the required needs. However, the station's plan does not appear to conflict with Berg's general recommendations for stations of this type.

In his discussion of the Wellesley Hills station, Frank Arnold in *Suburban Life* praised the "beautiful effect of street planting" found along the track-side of the fence dividing the railroad property from the highway, with "shrubs of almost every description grow[ing] in great profusion." (FIGURE 22) As in other discussions of railroad gardening, Arnold praised plantings for hiding elements of the railroad:

On the street side, a noble row of elms and maples, with here and there a walnut tree, forms a continuous side of shade, the combination of shrubbery and trees being such as practically to obscure the railroad track from the boulevard. Whenever possible, every bit of natural scenic beauty has been turned to good account by the ever watchful gardener. It may be that a tiny lake, fed by some hidden spring, is brought into the general scheme, thereby adding an element of unusual beauty to the general plan.<sup>75</sup>

#### STATUS OF WELLESLEY HILLS STATION

The small station at Wellesley Hills remains a commuter stop and is home to three businesses--a dry cleaners, a coffee shop, and a watch repair shop. (FIGURES 23 & 24) The station has suffered some dramatic alterations, with its street elevation severely compromised. It is surrounded by a parking lot, centered in a very busy and congested part of town. Considering its location, the station could be the site for many alternative uses, and would be an excellent candidate for restoration, although its location and the value of the land puts the building in jeopardy.

<sup>75</sup>This quote and those in the preceding paragraph were taken from Arnold, p. 22.



## NORTH EASTON

North Easton in the 1880s was more a village than a suburb, yet its situation was unique as a station commission for Richardson. (FIGURE 25) Part of a series of commissions for the Ames family, the station served a similar purpose to those stations in Newton, Brighton and Wellesley Hills. The difference lay in the fact that it served to promote a single family instead of a community.

North Easton is located about 20 miles southwest of Boston in Bristol County. Before the arrival of the Ames family in 1803, the "town" was little more than a crossroads lined with a few wooden structures, and was of little or no importance. Attracted by the area's barren land and abundant water resources from ponds and streams, the location was chosen by Oliver Ames, Sr., (1779-1863) as the site for an iron works and shovel factory, that would eventually become the village's main industry. In 1826 and 1828 additional stone shops were constructed, and in 1852 an immense "Long Shop" of over 500 feet was built. This large complex of simple stone industrial buildings formed the center of the village in the nineteenth century. By mid-century, the Ameses had twenty-four factories, producing three-hundred shovels per day, earning tax-free profits of roughly \$ 324,000 per year.<sup>76</sup>

The elder Oliver Ames and two of his sons, Oakes (1804-1873) and Oliver Jr. (1807-1877), who became partners with their father in 1844, were to become the world's largest producer of shovels, plows, and other earth-moving implements. The Ames firm supplied the tools for western expansion in the United States, and during the Civil War saw their government contracts doubled from four to eight million dollars. During peak operations, more than five hundred workers were employed in the factories. The result was a sizeable family fortune for the Ameses, and with it, considerable social influence and

<sup>76</sup>Larry J. Homolka, "*Henry Hobson Richardson and the 'Ames Memorial Buildings'*" Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1976: 25.





responsibility. North Easton had become a single-family factory town, its welfare largely dependent on Ames enterprises.

Despite the family's unprecedented new wealth, their Calvinist ethic of thrift and unyielding work was not immediately compromised, and life in the village during the 1860s was described by observers as austere, self-denying, and parsimonious (these qualities understood as applying equally to entrepreneurs *and* workers.) The firm's offices were actually attached to the senior Ames's dwelling. Later Ameses would describe life in his era as follows:

In his day, the town was awakened at ten minutes before five by the shop bell. The factories started at seven, by lamplight in the winter, and with an hour out at noon for dinner, continued until six, making a ten-hour work day. Usually, however, his sons and grandsons returned to the office in the evening to catch up with their correspondence...discuss business, and go over the accounts with the head bookkeeper. At nine, the shop bell sounded a curfew to advise bed time.<sup>77</sup>

The situation of the Ameses in some respects resembled architectural patronage "by the Medici in Florence during the early 15th century," or even a medieval monastery where bells signalled daily tasks and prayers.<sup>78</sup> While North Easton had not been organized as an exclusively industrial town like Lowell, the element was there, as was some paternalism, seen more overtly in other industrial towns. Oliver Ames Sr. was described as having a fatherly interest in the welfare of his employees, having abolished the village rum shop in the 1830s, and in the 1840s remodeling several obsolete wooden factory buildings to provide housing for immigrant Irish laborers.<sup>79</sup> There is no evidence of labor unrest, discord, or strikes in the town during the 19th century. Oliver Ames, Sr.'s public persona was patriarchal, even kingly, and when his two sons became partners in the firm, there was

<sup>77</sup>Homolka, p. 26.

<sup>78</sup>Homolka, p. 15.

<sup>79</sup>Homolka, p. 27.



an understanding that their father would never be over-ruled in management. With their father's death in 1863, the brothers largely rejected the paternal and provincial stance in business and community dealings, instead focusing their enterprises more nationally, and bringing greater wealth, prominence, and ultimately controversy and scandal to themselves. These events were to become motivating forces initiating Richardson's "memorial" commissions for the town.

The Ames family became involved in railroads beginning in 1855, when a rail line--the Easton Branch Railroad, later part of the Old Colony--was built to connect their factories with Stoughton and Boston. Oakes Ames was elected to Congress in 1862 as a Republican, and as a member of the Committee on the Pacific Railroad, he became involved with the plan to link the east and west coasts by railroad. His brother Oliver later became acting President (1866), and then President of the Union Pacific in 1868. Both Oliver and Oakes were experienced in railroad investments and together managed the eastern portion of the project, completing it in 1869.<sup>80</sup> Oakes Ames career suffered from scandal,<sup>81</sup> and it has been suggested that the recruitment of Richardson for the town's commissions was to appease the public for his reputed wrongdoings.<sup>82</sup>

Before the 1870s, the architecture of the village was undistinguished, with a drab factory complex at its center. The stone factory buildings were utilitarian two-story structures only articulated by repeated window openings; they were of sound construction and simply expressive of their industrial function. (FIGURE 26) The first attempt to create public architecture was in 1869 with a new public high school paid for by the Ameses. This conspicuous structure combined the Second Empire and High Victorian styles, and

<sup>80</sup>Homolka, p. 28.

<sup>81</sup>Congressman Oakes Ames was censured by the House of Representatives for offering Union Pacific stock to other members.

<sup>82</sup>Suggested by Larry Homolka in his dissertation.



undoubtedly drew attention as the only building for miles around of its kind. The building would have suggested to the viewer that “higher cultural ambitions and civic ideals were at work in North Easton.”<sup>83</sup>

While at the same time high styles were demonstrated in the private homes of the Ames family. The family homes evolved from Federal, to Greek Revival, to Italianate. Of the younger generation, F.L. Ames’s house became quite a showplace, begun when he was only twenty-four years old, and modeled in the tradition of the English Country house, near his cousin Governor Oliver Ames’s Second Empire mansion, built in 1862.<sup>84</sup> There was a marked distinction between the landscaped estates and mansions of the third generation of Ames family, from those single homes of their fathers and grandfathers along North Main Street. The family’s properties nearly enclosed the village in the shape of a horse-shoe open at the south. Although the Ames families had only been in North Easton for 50 years, their homes and estates took on a permanence and continuity usually only associated with landed gentry.

Following Richardson’s commissions, the town’s center focused his Memorial Hall and library. A short distance away and close to the depot were the Ames family factories and laborers’ residences.

#### NORTH EASTON’S OLD COLONY STATION

The original depot was probably little more than a shed near the factories; in 1886 an observer described the changes.

The visitor who came to Easton a few years ago by cars and stopped at North Easton, received an unpleasant impression of the place at once by alighting in a dark and smoky station, and seeing only dismal waiting rooms and surroundings singularly unattractive. He would now, however, in alighting find himself upon the platform of one of the most beautiful small

<sup>83</sup>Homolka, p. 36.

<sup>84</sup>F.L. Ames was Oliver Ames, Sr.’s son.



railroad stations in the country.<sup>85</sup>

As director of the Old Colony Railroad, F. L. Ames personally commissioned the station in 1881, which he presented as a gift to the railroad upon its completion.

Richardson secured the commission in November of that year, and construction began in 1882. Olmsted began the landscaping in August, 1883, and completed the work in April, 1884.

The design consisted of a rectangle parallel to the tracks on the east side. (FIGURE 27) The interior was symmetrically arranged with a lobby and ticket room in the center, opening into separate men's and women's waiting rooms, the latter including a dressing room. Both waiting rooms contained built-in benches. On each end of the waiting rooms were respective bathrooms, but on the men's side most of this space was given over to baggage. There was a spiral staircase leading to an additional room on the second floor, which may have been an apartment for the station-master or for storage. On the track side the hipped roof with two low dormers extended to create a shelter supported by wooden posts. On the opposite side, facing a pond, a projected hipped roof extended to form a porte cochere, supported by a broad open arch, sprung from the ground, set in large masonry piers, echoing two more arches behind in the walls of that elevation. The same arches formed the wall opposite on the track-side elevation as well, encompassing windows and doorways to the platform. Brown sandstone provided trim for doors and windows, a horizontal band, and water table. The main material was granite, rusticated in random ashlar masonry, with a red tiled roof; the same materials were used for the library and Memorial Hall. Wood framed members, stained dark, were carved in the form of animal heads--resembling wolves--on the exteriors, and on the transoms of the arched

<sup>85</sup>Homolka, p. 251.





windows of the waiting rooms.<sup>86</sup> Benches were carved with wooden lions' heads on the arm-rests. <sup>87</sup> (FIGURE 28)

Van Rensselaer described the three massive arches at the front of the station as "giants doing striplings' service," but excused them as being "so simple yet so picturesque, so dignified yet so rural looking."<sup>88</sup> Walter Berg praised the Old Colony Depot stating that "[t]he ground-plan layout and the architectural artistic features of the building are first-class."<sup>89</sup> Berg believed a design should not compromise a station's practical and functional requirements for aesthetics; and North Easton is one of the few stations by Richardson to receive Berg's praise, perhaps because the plan demonstrated many of Berg's suggestions for efficient station design.

The station was also selected as an example of successful station design in Bradford Lee Gilbert's "Picturesque Suburban Railroad Stations" in *Engineering Magazine* of December, 1891. With a photograph of the carriage-side facade, Gilbert described the

...charming station at North Easton, Mass., on the Old Colony road. The design is very effective. The wide arches at the porte-cochere and various openings seem to start from the ground as a base. The building is of granite with brown-stone trimmings.<sup>90</sup>

Similarly to the Chestnut Hill station in Newton, the arches here are commented on from observers as almost sprouting out of the earth, and with landscaping, could have appeared as a natural outgrowth of its setting. Olmsted and Richardson had a keen sensitivity to their sites, and wished to create the effect of a building simply growing out of

<sup>86</sup>Larry Homolka suggests these may be from Nordic sources.

<sup>87</sup>See Ochsner, *Complete Works*, p. 270.

<sup>88</sup>The quotes in this paragraph were taken from Van Rensselaer, p. 98.

<sup>89</sup>Berg, p. 323.

<sup>90</sup>Gilbert, pp. 337,345.



the earth. With landscaping serving in part to hide the less attractive elements of the railroads, one would simply discover a lovely picturesque shelter. Instead of disrupting its location, the station appeared as though it was found there naturally (perhaps growing overnight), the stone materials only emphasizing this. As the station at North Easton sat next to a pond, lying low and long, like its flat site, amidst trees and other plantings, it could have appeared from the opposite side of the pond as merging with the landscape. According to a letter from Fred Ames to F.L. Olmsted in 1884 mentioned some of the plants for the site, these included hemlocks, junipers, creepers, and birches; and full and leafy plane and locust trees.<sup>91</sup>

Factory buildings were cleared from the site to accommodate Richardson's new station, allowing it to merge with the nearby Ames estates. The building had the effect of creating a screen between the estates and factories, serving not only as a gateway to the village but also to the family's residences.<sup>92</sup> Architecture and landscaping proved to serve both the public environment and the Ameses' private needs.

#### STATUS OF OLD COLONY STATION

The Old Colony station at North Easton has been a fortunate. After being closed, abandoned and vandalized for years, the Ames family bought the station from the New York Central Railroad for \$ 15,000 in 1969, and gave it to the Easton Historical Society. For some time it remained in a state of neglect, but has subsequently been restored. Apart from the loss of the long passenger sheds, the station is in the best -maintained of all that remain. (FIGURES 29 & 30) It appears that the town takes pride in the buildings built by Richardson there, and were it not for the Historical Society and the Ames family, this building would probably be at risk for demolition.

<sup>91</sup>Homolka, p. 262.

<sup>92</sup>Homolka, p. 253.



**CHAPTER FIVE: INDUSTRIAL CENTER,  
RURAL STOPPING-POINT, AND ASPIRING SUBURB**



## CHAPTER FIVE: INDUSTRIAL CENTER, RURAL STOPPING-POINT, AND

### ASPIRING SUBURB

The three locales and stations described in this chapter varied in location from urban to rural, but all had similar designs and, to some extent, similar users. The first place to be discussed is Holyoke, which was an industrial center serving a very different clientele than the stations discussed previously. Next is Palmer, a village in a rural part of western Massachusetts, which served as a busy cross-roads to the west. The last town discussed will be South Framingham that had suburban aspirations but more the character of a commercial village, or small town.

### HOLYOKE

Holyoke was established on the east bank of the Connecticut River in Western Massachusetts, and by the 1840s the town was just entering the early stages of industrialization. (FIGURE 31) It would struggle for years before attaining the dubious distinction of becoming a full-fledged factory town.<sup>1</sup> The antebellum period saw numerous attempts to establish industry but all failed, and it was not until the Civil War and the years following that investors achieved some degree of financial success by establishing paper mills instead of cotton factories. The newly incorporated city was prosperous enough to survive the impact of the Panic of 1873. Holyoke's business record for 1874 was unequalled by any city its size in New England.<sup>2</sup> The boom in the paper industry led to

<sup>1</sup>Holyoke had first attracted people for its animal furs, as colonist planters sought to make a permanent settlement on the east bank of the Connecticut River in Western Massachusetts. In the late eighteenth century a traveler journeying along the western bank of the Connecticut River would have passed a tiny farming village with ample crops of hay, corn, rye, potatoes and oat. This provided a subsistence economy, with local farmers producing enough to meet their basic needs and a small surplus, which they brought to market at Northampton and Springfield, the region's principal trade centers.

<sup>2</sup> Constance McLaughlin Green, *Holyoke, Massachusetts: a Case History of the Industrial Revolution in America* (New Haven: Yale University, 1939) 138.





Holyoke's population growing from 14,000 in 1873 to 21,961 in 1880.<sup>3</sup> Concomitantly, Holyoke saw a construction boom in housing, and the establishment of subsidiary paper factories; producing blank books, pads, boxes, envelopes, and paper mill machinery.<sup>4</sup>

From the very beginning of the town and increasingly as industry gathered force at the end of the Civil War, a large proportion of Holyoke's residents were laborers, with no savings and no means of livelihood apart from the mills. Wages in Holyoke were always lower than in other factory towns and workers faced constant wage cuts, frequent accidents, long hours, and poor housing.

Irish and French Canadians comprised the chief ethnic groups in Holyoke until 1900.<sup>5</sup> Other laborers came from Scotland, England, and Germany. In the 1850s and 1860s mill heads imported such help, training and working them as hard as the law of supply and demand permitted. Despite the shortage of trained help, particularly after the Civil War, manufacturers had an endless source of supply in the numbers of unskilled who arrived each year. Many of the new immigrants found working and living conditions better than what they had known before regardless of the long hours at low wages.

With the spring of 1870 came a great wave of French Canadian immigrants lured by rumors of employment. *The Transcript* described the scene at the first passenger depot:

They come with all their worldly goods packed in boxes and bundles and the gents' room at the Connecticut Railroad depot is packed with their effects till it looks like a wholesale warehouse. Leaving the bulk of the articles at the depot, they start out with their arms full of bundles to find a place to stop. Some have friends or relatives here. Many have spent their

<sup>3</sup>Ilkovic and Tager, p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> The character and conditions of labor in Holyoke differed somewhat from one industry to another, the main categories being textile operatives versus paper. There were comparatively few workers in the paper mills; in 1869 all eleven Holyoke paper mills together employed fewer people than the Lyman Textile Mills alone, with its 1,100 hands. Another difference in paper mills was that there was little employment of minors, and of women. Green, p. 101.

<sup>5</sup>In the mid 1840s a devastating famine struck large regions of southern Ireland, spreading death and misery amongst an already impoverished people, and initiating a massive emigration.



last cent to get here, expecting to find plenty of work on their arrival. A crowd of emigrants arrived Thursday, having seen an advertisement of a paper company for 100 rag cutters, and clamored to be directed to the mill. Failing to find tenements, lodging rooms or work, some of them have gone on to Providence, Pawtucket and other points, but many have no money to go further. Some have located at South Holyoke, and many have crowded into "Canada Hill."...A troop of them, big and little, are seen starting out on foot from the depot after the arrival of nearly every through train from the North.<sup>6</sup>

In the later part of the nineteenth century Holyoke saw emigrants from Russia, Poland, and Italy. While the Russian Jews and Italians tended to establish small shops, the Poles entered the mills. Nearby Chicopee was home to the large Polish population. Holyoke had always had a few Black residents from its beginning, and a few Chinese students in the 1870s, but neither formed a substantial group.<sup>7</sup> By 1890 while the percentage of foreign born had shrunk slightly, Holyoke had the third highest percentage of foreign population in the country--47.67%--while native-born Americans made up only 17.03 per cent of the residents.<sup>8</sup>

Over half the population in Holyoke was employed in or about the mills. Because of transportation limitations before 1880, most mill hands lived within half a mile of their work or at the most two miles. Among the three largest national groups--the Irish, French Canadians, and Germans--living in ethnic enclaves was the rule. Native New Englanders were as self-contained as any of these groups. The remaining immigrant groups, too few in

<sup>6</sup>Green, p. 202. Of the 151 mill towns where child labor existed, between 5,000 and 6,000 children under fifteen were estimated as employed in mills and shops, of which about 60 percent could read or write. Green, p. 133. Mill owner Jared Beebe reported in 1870 that there were thirty-three children under 15 years of age employed in his woolen mills, all of whom worked a full sixty-nine hour work week. Green, p. 102. While there was no universal schedule of work, before 1873 Holyoke paper makers worked seventy-two hours a week at the most, and fifty-eight hours at the least, with less hours for women. Green, p. 102.

<sup>7</sup>Green, p. 366.

<sup>8</sup> Fall River, Massachusetts was first with 50.15 per cent, and Duluth, Minnesota followed with 48.17 percent. Green, p. 368.



number to form separate neighborhoods, settled wherever space was found. These neighborhoods permitted groups to preserve their religions, customs, and identities. Occupations specific to ethnic groups often determined the locations of these neighborhoods. The Irish in South Holyoke had settled there before the Germans, and in the sixties French Canadians also came. By the seventies, "Tigertown," as it was named for the rough Irishmen there, was polyglot, but the three groups did not mingle. Irish lived in other areas, near the Hadley Thread mill and the paper mills beyond, in mill tenements, the "Hill" or the "Patch", while the French Canadians herded together in "Frenchville".<sup>9</sup>

South Holyoke near the Germania mills was home to the Germans, who for forty years had lived apart from their neighbors. Germans were largely skilled workmen, devout Lutherans, and saw themselves as cultured beyond the uncouth "Paddies," as the Irish were called, or the poverty-stricken French Canadians, characterized as the "Chinese of the Eastern States" by the State Commissioner of Labor in 1881.<sup>10</sup> The Germans found both group's Catholicism equally unattractive. The German community through the Lutheran Church, the Turnverein, the German Benevolent Society, and their Lutheran parochial school was largely self-sufficient, and took pride in their homes with window boxes, gardens, and exacting standards of cleanliness.

The Patch was the home of the poorest Irish, the newly arrived, unskilled, day-laborers. In the 1850s it was common for a new arrival to construct for himself a crude shelter on the land of the Water Power Company. These were usually half board, half dug-out, often only one room and a loft without windows. As a family moved up, the abandoned house would be occupied by other newcomers. One pump and one oven served many households, and firewood salvaged from the river by the men of the Patch was

<sup>9</sup>Green, p. 112.

<sup>10</sup>Green , p. 369.



divided evenly among everyone.<sup>11</sup> Plumbing was an unknown luxury, and squalor and filth commonplace. A report from the Bureau of Statistics of Labor in 1875 described a scene:

Holyoke has more and worse large tenement houses than any manufacturing town of textile fabrics in the state....Our agents visited some tenements having bedrooms into which neither air nor light could penetrate, as there were no windows and no means of ventilation, and some of them were actually filthy. It is no wonder that the death-rate, in 1872 was greater in Holyoke than in any large town in Massachusetts, excepting Fall River, and if an epidemic should visit them now, in the state they are in, its ravages would be great.<sup>12</sup>

With the town's dramatic growth and high percentage of foreign born, there was probably less social interaction than elsewhere. Residents were devoted to their own churches and were too occupied with their struggles for sustenance to have time for leisure activities. Cultural societies were formed by every group early on, further perpetuating differences. Leisure clubs were generally not opened to Catholics, and when land was bought on the river bank for tennis courts and a ball-field, they were enjoyed only by the Protestant minority.<sup>13</sup> When the well-to-do spent their holidays at the seashore or in the mountains, the mill population sat on the benches in the public parks, and later in the 1890s took trolley rides in the evenings.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup>Green, p. 113.

<sup>12</sup>Green, pp. 116-117. The board had been specially appointed in 1866, establishing regulations to cut down sources of disease, publishing rules for keeping alleys and streets free from offal and garbage, for cleaning vaults, and building drains and sewers.Green, p. 118. Holyoke had seen two smallpox epidemics in 1870 and 1873, spreading facilitated more easily from infected rags in the paper mills, making rapid inroads in the community. Green, pp. 118-119 High mortality rates came from diphtheria, measles, scarlet fever, consumption and cholera.

<sup>13</sup>Green, p. 374.

<sup>14</sup>Green, p. 375.





## CONNECTICUT RIVER RAILROAD STATION

Besides his position as vice president and member of the board of the Boston & Albany Railroad, James Rumrill also served as a director of the Connecticut River Railroad, which led to Richardson's commission for the station at Holyoke that, according to Van Rensselaer, was awarded in November, 1883, with construction the following year and completion in 1885.

Holyoke offered a startling contrast to those suburban locales found along the Newton Circuit. Were it not for Rumrill's position with the Connecticut River Railroad, it seems most unlikely that Richardson, or any other similarly esteemed architect, would have designed a station for this city.

An atlas of the town for 1894 showed the depot was located amidst industry.<sup>15</sup>(FIGURES 32 & 33) The site lay close to two canals and was surrounded by factories and mills. The station was directly across from The Holyoke Water Power Company on one side, and the Daley's Hotel presumably for visiting businessmen on the other. One Atlas plate featuring industry and business in the area showed a paper company and the post office close to the station, and directly across the canal (easily crossed by a bridge), the huge operations of the Lyman Mills, the Whiting Paper Company and the Hadley Paper company among others. Another plate showed two nearby hotels, a bank, the "Endeavor Mission Church", schools, and a park. (FIGURE 34) Across the two canals, away from the station, was the center of town containing City Hall, banks, churches, schools, and two parks, one along the water. The nexus of Holyoke's industry was between the two canals, close to the station. A "Bird's Eye View" Map from the 1880s showed the location of industry in the city. (FIGURE 35) Green's map of immigrant neighborhoods in the late 19th century (FIGURE 36) showed that this same area was home

<sup>15</sup>*Topographical Atlas, County of Hampden, Massachusetts* Palmer and Holyoke, (Springfield Mass.: L.J. Richards & Co, 1894) Palmer Public Library.



to those groups, and a photo showing the construction of the station in 1884 showed apartment-type residences in the background.<sup>16</sup> (FIGURE 37)

There appears to have been no landscaping at the site. In such an urban and industrial setting, it is not surprising that efforts to beautify the grounds were not considered worthwhile. A photograph dated 1888 from Van Rensselaer's book reveals the slightest bit of grass along the edge of the yard but no other plantings. The station at Holyoke is the least mentioned of all Richardson's stations, due, to a large degree, to its locale.

The station was unique in one feature, an "immigrants' room," with its own separate entrance and exit. The room was similar in size to the baggage room, about a third in size of the general waiting room, and was not segregated by sex. The general waiting room was mostly, although not exclusively for men (see below), while the adjoining ladies room was smaller, and gave *certain* women the option of a separate space. Berg and Gilbert had both suggested this option, preferring also a separate "smoking room" for men, which here would have taken place in the general waiting room.

Richardson was commissioned to build the depot so that immigrant arrivals would be accommodated appropriately, along with the mill owners and railroad executives who used the trains for business and commuting. As director of the Connecticut River Railroad, James Rumrill could attest to the problems of the earlier, unsegregated station, packed full of foreigners. With a design segregating the immigrants into a *very* small area, businessmen would no longer need to come in close contact with laborers. Contemporary observations suggest that the hordes of immigrants arriving at the station every day comprised the majority of the depot's users. The large general waiting room, expressly for upper-class businessmen, must have been used a great deal less than the small

<sup>16</sup>Photograph taken by M.P Warner Photo, Holyoke, Massachusetts, 1884. Holyoke Public Library.



unsegregated immigrant's room, crammed with bodies and baggage.

The station itself was similar to those at South Framingham and Palmer in scale, having a long rectangular plan, measuring 40 x 140 ft. (FIGURE 38) A large general waiting room (36 x 60 ft), with high ceilings lit from high dormers formed the center of the plan, with a small bathroom to the side, and a central protruding ticket booth track-side. On one side of the waiting room was a lobby leading to a telegraph room, and a separate ladies' room and bathroom. On the other side of the general waiting room, inaccessible from inside, was the small immigrant's room with men and women's bathrooms, and next to that a corner baggage room, also only accessible from the outside. In the corner next to the baggage room was a small stairway leading to an upper level. Doors exited from each of the ladies, telegraph, general, immigrant, and baggage rooms. A hip and valley roof had single gable ends on the short sides, and a large central gable flanked by two smaller ones on the track and carriage sides; eaves projected evenly around the building beneath the dormers creating a shed surrounding the entire building, supported by wooden posts with curved bracket tops. The materials consisted of granite random ashlar masonry, sandstone trim for windows, doors and horizontal bands below the windows on the first level and above the dormer windows, and a roof of slate.<sup>17</sup>

Separate rooms for immigrants became common in the late nineteenth-century; at the Castle Garden immigrant center in New York, immigrants were often segregated by both sex and race, in order to "maintain discipline," as they were to be sent off in railroad cars to the West.<sup>18</sup> Immigrants rooms were often designated as "second-class," as at Spokane, Washington.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup>See Ochsner, *Complete Works*, p. 323.

<sup>18</sup>MacKenzie and Richards, p. 148.

<sup>19</sup>MacKenzie and Richards, p. 148.



Segregating waiting room by sex reflected the Victorian sensibility to protect women, with the provision of separate waiting facilities for women being almost universal. In larger stations, women's rooms might have a 'matron' available to help women and children fatigued by their journeys.<sup>20</sup> The status of smaller stations was in part determined as to whether there was a separate waiting-room for women. Class-niceties were well known to travellers, even when not recognized by signposts. Lower-class women were expected to wait in the general waiting-room, while "ladies," who were middle and upper-class, had a separate room.<sup>21</sup>

The provision of a separate room for immigrants effectively separated both social classes and racial groups. Racial discrimination was apparent in all stations in the South with Blacks having entirely separate rooms most often directly accessible from street and tracks to avoid racial mixing; comparable segregation is seen in the "immigrants' room" in the Holyoke station as well.<sup>22</sup> Another feature common to southern station design found at Holyoke was differing sanitary arrangements; while most men and women's waiting rooms had separate bathrooms, this was not the case for Black Americans.

A plan of the station and sketch was published in *The Sanitary Engineer* in September, 1886, and reprinted in the *Railroad Gazette* the next month, and the same sketch and plan was again printed in Walter Berg's book. (FIGURE 39) Commentary in the *Railroad Gazette* and Berg's book was only descriptive. While Berg offered no praise, he also offered no criticism, implying some degree of approval of the station design. The plan conceded with Berg's general recommendations for station design.

<sup>20</sup>MacKenzie and Richards, p. 158.

<sup>21</sup>MacKenzie and Richards, p. 158.

<sup>22</sup>MacKenzie and Richards, p. 146.





## STATUS OF THE CONNECTICUT RIVER RAILROAD STATION

Today home to an auto-parts shop, the station at Holyoke is in fair condition, despite an addition and alteration to the south elevation having had some windows replaced and others filled with cement blocks. (FIGURES 40 - 43) An employee of the shop informed me that the owner is aware of the building's history, is careful to make no irreversible changes, and that when change has been needed, it has been worked around the original components of the building. The area around the station is now desolate, as is Holyoke in general, with many vacant industrial buildings. If anything, the presence of this business is probably ensuring the building is not demolished. The trains no longer stop there.



## PALMER

The village of Palmer was a rather typical example of a railroad village that, having been established prior to the railroad, profited as a cross-roads to the west. Contemporary accounts of the town in the 1880s contain a tone of self-promotion, noting “ It may safely be said that few towns in the commonwealth, or in New England, have been more blessed with natural advantages, or are better situated to keep in touch with the outside world.”<sup>23</sup>

Palmer is located in Hampden County at the southern section of mid-Massachusetts. (FIGURE 44) The village was founded in 1716, but remained small, reaching only 4,012 inhabitants by 1855.<sup>24</sup> By then the village counted 6 churches, 13 school houses, 6 taverns, 3 grist mills 17 grocery and dry goods stores, and 4 cotton mills; 505 men were employed at the cotton mills, and 541 women.<sup>25</sup> Other manufacturing included a scythe factory, two saddle and harness factories, in addition to hat, soap, carriage, tin ware and boot factories. The straw hat and bonnet factory employed 15 males and 262 females.<sup>26</sup>

The strongest initiator of industry in Palmer was the construction of the Boston & Albany Railroad, which opened from Worcester to the Connecticut River in October of 1839.<sup>27</sup> The railroads eased the previously hard and costly transportation of raw materials and manufactured goods to Springfield and Boston. The railroad gave a new start to business and social life, creating a “Depot Village.” The original depot buildings “were small and cheap affairs,” with a freight house “equally small and inconvenient”.<sup>28</sup> As

<sup>23</sup>*Pictorial Palmer* (Palmer, Massachusetts: Carpenter and Cady Publishers, 1896) 1.

<sup>24</sup>Temple, *History of the Town of Palmer, Massachusetts* (Massachusetts: 1889) 257.

<sup>25</sup>Temple, p. 257.

<sup>26</sup>Temple, p. 258.

<sup>27</sup>Temple, p. 259.

<sup>28</sup>Temple, p. 259.



traffic rose, the tracks were doubled, the freight yard enlarged, an overhead bridge built, and a new "commodious and elegant passenger station" erected to replace the old.<sup>29</sup> Other railroads, including the New London Northern Railroad, the Ware River Railroad, and the Boston and Maine, reached the town as well, and by the last quarter of the 19th century there five rail lines ran through the town. As a result, goods were shipped through Palmer to Boston, New York, Vermont, and the West.

In 1886 *Pictorial Palmer* was published, a book of pictures and brief text about the town. Visitors presumably provided the audience, for much mention is made of Palmer's position as a stopping point for those traveling for business or leisure.

The commercial traveler is always present, and is so well known that the effect of his arrival need not be described. Another class, however, are those who travel for health, pleasure or necessity, and of these the town sees many. Sometimes they are detained because some obscure destination makes a long wait necessary. Many, however, make Palmer a stopping place for rest and relaxation....All these causes combine to give Palmer a daily number of visitors which is probably greater than is realized by the average citizen. The well-known propensity of the average American for doing business of some kind, wherever he may be, is not without its effect. Every merchant realizes that he is somewhat benefitted in this way, and a distinct effort to cater to this portion of the public is noticeable in every store in town.<sup>30</sup>

One could imagine *Pictorial Palmer* for sale at the depot, to weary travelers awaiting their next connection. Two years before *Palmer with Pen and Camera* had been published in the same manner. A "Bird's Eye View" photo from the book shows the town at the time.(FIGURE 45) By this time Palmer could boast of its utilities.

Palmer has, of course, electric lights....All their streets are lighted by this means, as are the highways running between....The company's plant at Blanchardville is an extensive one, and capable of furnishing far greater power than its present business requires...Water is the principal power used by the company, although steam has been added as an auxiliary. This makes it possible for the company to furnish almost unlimited power if

<sup>29</sup>Temple, p. 259.

<sup>30</sup>*Pictorial Palmer*, p. 5.



desired.<sup>31</sup>

Palmer at the turn of the century was little more than a stopping-point with enough industry to sustain itself, a small settled area in the middle of a largely rural county, made up of a rather homogeneous population.

### UNION PASSENGER STATION

In the Depot village a handsome union station has been erected, while the depot park is a spot to which every citizen points with pride. No private grounds in Palmer are better kept neat.<sup>32</sup>

The Boston & Albany Union Passenger Station served the New London Northern as well as the B & A. Richardson received the job in August, 1881; it was his second station commission<sup>33</sup>. The building was constructed by W.N. Flynt Company, and was not completed until May 1883, opening to the public in June 1884, at a cost of \$ 53,616. The landscaping was done by Olmsted.<sup>34</sup>

The station and grounds at Palmer were clearly a source of pride for the residents, whose livelihoods to some degree were dependent on the tourists and business men. Charles Eddy in *Palmer Illustrated with Pen and Camera*, wrote of the station that "It is without doubt the finest and most convenient depot in this part of the country, and one of which all should be proud."<sup>35</sup> As a stop along-the-way, the Boston & Albany must have had a large amount of traffic in order to commission the station and grounds from Richardson whose work replaced a previous one. The majority of Palmer's residents

<sup>31</sup>*Pictorial Palmer* , p. 5.

<sup>32</sup>*Pictorial Palmer*, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup>Ochsner, *Complete Works*, p. 262.

<sup>34</sup>See Ochsner, *Complete Works* , p. 262.

<sup>35</sup>Charles W. Eddy, *Palmer Illustrated with Pen and Camera* (Ware, Mass: 1884) unpagued.





probably rarely used the trains. In such a village, aside from serving visitors and travelers, the train served equally for the transport and receipt of goods. Palmer itself, while unexceptional, was a rural and attractive stopping point on the scenic route through Massachusetts to the west. Richardson probably hoped his station's design might evoke sentiments of rusticity and picturesque charm from sophisticated travellers.

The station at Palmer, along with those at South Framingham and Holyoke, received virtually no attention in articles about Richardson's stations. This was due in part to its location in Western Massachusetts and the town's undistinguished status compared to Newton, Wellesley, or North Easton. At the same time, Palmer was remarkable for its size, with probably the largest landscaped grounds of any of the stations.

An atlas for 1894 showed a densely settled Palmer.<sup>36</sup> (FIGURES 46 - 48) The large grounds of the station were marked on the atlas as "R.R. Park", with a church next to the grounds. Moderate sized plots with houses radiated north, northeast and southeast of the station, while to the west lay the Quaboag River, not far from the station were a construction yard, a foundry, and a woolen mill, while the Rogers Osgood Hat Company stood opposite the station. The center of the town was known as "Depot Village".<sup>37</sup> A photograph from *Pictorial Palmer*, titled "Park and Grotto at the Union Passenger Station" is a rare image of the "Railroad Park," comprised of the landscaped grounds of the station. The photograph (FIGURE 49) showed a large green lawn, surrounded with plantings next to the church, and a pathway with what appear to be two round benches. Each bench contained central wooden post brackets, supporting a round roof covering similar to the station in form, and designed specifically for the park.

The design (FIGURES 50 & 51) filled a trapezoidal area at the junction of two

<sup>36</sup>*Topographical Atlas, County of Hampden, Massachusetts* (Palmer and Holyoke. Springfield Mass.: L.J. Richards & Co, 1894). Palmer Public Library.

<sup>37</sup>*Pictorial Palmer*, p. 1.



crossing tracks, and was one of the largest stations along with those at South Framingham and Holyoke. Platforms extended beyond the building on both long track sides, surrounding the whole building. Entrances were on the wide end of the building. The interior had a large central two-story general waiting room, a dining room, smoking room, baggage room, kitchen, pantry, two agents rooms, ticket office, bathrooms and a telegraph office. The materials were Monson granite, with brown Longmeadow Sandstone for trim on doors and windows.<sup>38</sup> A wide hipped roof extended to become porches along the platforms, surrounding the building on all sides. High windowed dormers provided light for the interior, which was wainscotted in brick and wood. (FIGURE 52) Arched openings created divisions in the waiting room space. A separate structure was built about 35 feet east of the main structure for the B & A baggage.

*Palmer with Pen and Camera* devoted a page to the "Union Passenger Station," accompanied by a photograph. (FIGURE 51) The main waiting room was described as a "light, roomy, and comfortable place," forty by fifty feet in size, with light from the windows overhead. The Western Union Telegraph office occupied a glass room in the waiting room, "on the Boston and Albany side," opposite the "elegant drinking fountain of Tennessee marble" on the south side of the room. The interior decoration was described as being of "elegance and durability".<sup>39</sup>

Walter Berg briefly discussed the station at Palmer. While he offered no criticism, he probably disapproved the lack of a separate woman's room in the design of such a large station. Otherwise, the station generously accommodated the requirements for a station of that size.

<sup>38</sup>*Pictorial Palmer*, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup>The quotes in this paragraph were taken from Eddy, page entitled "Union Passenger Station."



## STATUS OF THE UNION PASSENGER STATION

The station at Palmer is in a precarious state, but in the process of change.(FIGURES 53 - 57) At the time of my visit, the station was home to a deserted flea market, but I was informed that new owners were opening a restaurant there. The exterior of the building was undergoing repair, as well. Unfortunately, work was beginning in the interior which appeared to be the start of the removal of interior features, specifically the ticket office. The town itself appeared somewhat depressed, so that the building's status is probably not a pressing issue. While the station undoubtedly will be compromised in its new uses, its future will be more secure than if vacant. The large grounds are now a parking lot.



## SOUTH FRAMINGHAM

South Framingham by the 1880s was an active village, approaching the character of a town. Contemporary newspaper articles reflected self-promotion as seen in nearby suburbs, and an ambition in wanting to be recognized as a distinguished community and developing suburb, with resident Boston businessmen. It was actually home to a population that varied from prosperous elite commuters to laborers, immigrants, and prisoners.

Framingham itself grew out of three villages--South Framingham, Framingham Center, and Saxonville.<sup>40</sup> Framingham lay a few towns west of the western suburbs of Boston, separated from Wellesley by Natick. (FIGURE 58) It was the advent of the railroad that changed the character of Framingham, giving great impetus to the economic life of the South Village and shifting focus away from the center of the town. Charters were granted in 1830 to the Boston and Providence, and the Boston and Lowell lines. The Boston and Worcester Railroad was incorporated in 1831; eventually become part of the B & A. South Framingham was the mid-way point of the Boston to Worcester road, and immediately established itself as an important stopping place. Early industry included straw manufacturing begun at the turn of the 19th century, and bonnet manufacturing established in 1813.<sup>41</sup> With the arrival of the railroad a long list of industries soon joined the straw manufacturers, predominantly rubber companies.

The first depot in South Framingham was a small frame Gothic Revival structure. In the following fifty years industry increased in the area around it, commercial buildings were built, and for travelers, hotels. In the second half of the century, the area became a

<sup>40</sup>As the Boston and Worcester Turnpike was developed the beginning of the nineteenth century, the fate of Framingham was unsure, but the road was completed in 1809. Designed to join Roxbury and Worcester, and crossing through Framingham Center, the place quickly became a horse-changing stop. At this time South Framingham was undistinguished, with only a handful of houses and a blacksmith's shop.

<sup>41</sup>James F.O'Gorman, editor, *Around the Station: The Town and the Train* (Framingham, Mass: Danforth Museum Exhibition Catalog, 1978) 6.





commercial and retail center, with the construction of more hotels and business blocks. With the merger in 1867 of the Boston and Worcester Railroad and the Western Railroad forming the Boston and Albany, it became possible to take the train to Albany, and on to Buffalo, Cincinnati, Cleveland, St. Louis, Detroit or Chicago. As at other B & A stops, four of these trains with parlor cars, coaches, and sleeping cars, ran through the town daily.<sup>42</sup> There were local trains to Worcester, Lowell, New Bedford, Fall River, and many other industrial sites in the area, and by 1888, according to the *Framingham Tribune*, "South Framingham has a hundred passenger trains stop at its station every day, coming from north, south, east and west, and fifty different mails arrive and depart."<sup>43</sup>

By 1880 the population of Framingham was 6,235.<sup>44</sup> An article in the *Framingham Tribune* from July 20, 1888, "The Building Boom: South Framingham Still Growing", described recent progress in the area's development, calling South Framingham "the Hub, Jr."<sup>45</sup> Framingham was just within an area considered close enough for a reasonable commute to Boston. South Framingham, or the south village, was described as the youngest and most important of the three villages of Framingham, the village itself composed of a number of villages or neighborhoods, "it having in a certain sense, suburbs, like a city." The three neighborhoods were Lokerville in the north, with about a hundred families, Coburnville to the west, and to the east the "rapidly growing" Sherborn, owing its growth to the Para Rubber Shoe Company nearby, with a large number of houses being built there in recent times, "well planned and...comfortable little homes for those who buy them".

<sup>42</sup>O'Gorman, p. 8.

<sup>43</sup>"The Building Boom," *The Framingham Tribune* 20 July 1888.

<sup>44</sup>*Outline Map of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts with populations in 1880* (Rand Avery & Company, 1882). Harvard University.

<sup>45</sup>*The Framingham Tribune* 20 July 1888.



The article described a new store being built in Lokerville by Mr. Butland, of whose own new residence of ten rooms nearby would be finished in a few days, "heated by steam, [with] hot and cold water, and all the modern improvements." The article also described recent building in the area, such as the new house of Henry T. Fales on Beach Street, with "eight rooms...heated by the hot water system, and though not a large nor very expensive house, is one of the most attractive in the village from an architectural standpoint." The article mentioned the recent installation of "a fine system of sewerage", while the "main streets of all three villages in town are lighted by electricity, as well as many of the factories, public halls and buildings". By this time the Framingham Union Street Railway Company had been established, thus giving "the streets a citified air."<sup>46</sup>

Photographs from *South Framingham Illustrated, Fourteen Views*, showed moderately-sized houses amidst large lots of land, with one view with the women's prison (see below) partly hidden in the background. Certain areas were more densely settled than others.<sup>47</sup> The book was part of a genre of books written on suburbs and rural towns and villages, with focused on self-promotion. While in part these were probably efforts at enticing remaining city-dwellers to move to the suburbs, they also served the purpose of a reminder to the residents of their own perceived privileged status.

## THE SOUTH FRAMINGHAM STATION

The South Framingham Station commission was the fourth station Richardson designed for the B & A, and the fifth station built. Of all his stations for the line, this was one of the largest, similar in size to the stations at Palmer and Holyoke, and one of the most active. The commission was awarded in October, 1883, but according to local newspaper

<sup>46</sup>The quotes in the two preceding paragraphs were taken from an article about South Framingham that appeared in *The Framingham Tribune* 20 July 1888.

<sup>47</sup>Undated, this was probably published in the 1880s.



accounts the design was not agreed to until February 1884.<sup>48</sup> Norcross Brothers were responsible for construction in 1885. Costs, including furnishings, totaled \$ 62,718.<sup>49</sup>

South Framingham seems to have had *suburban* aspirations; and the presence of numerous factories and manufacturers--and at least one prison--suggested that it was actually otherwise. Its early establishment as a railroad junction brought a substantial amount of commerce to the area. The station itself served a mix of commuters to Boston, and travellers to and from the west. Perhaps the pressure of South Framingham's more prosperous and influential citizens led the B & A to choose it as a location for one of Richardson's stations, combined with its importance as a junction. Richardson would not be the only prestigious architect to design for the town, Peabody and Stearns designing a building close to the station in 1897.<sup>50</sup> Richardson's station at South Framingham, like that at Holyoke, probably did not receive much attention since it was *not* in a picturesque and purely residential area, like those along the Newton Circuit.

Following the station's construction, South Framingham was proposed as the location for the Middlesex County jail because of ample railroad facilities. It was already located close to another prison, the women's reformatory institution at Sherborn, built in 1874. The decision of where to place the prison had been a precarious one; no one in the eastern part of the state wanted it, and it was suggested that it be placed in Western Massachusetts, which was for the most part undeveloped. When statistics found that two-thirds or more of the criminals came from Boston, Lowell, and Lawrence--the latter two of the largest mill towns in the state--the board was convinced that a location in the east was essential. They decided this because:

<sup>48</sup>Van Rensselaer gave the commission date as October, 1883.

<sup>49</sup>Ochsner, p. 320.

<sup>50</sup>O'Gorman, pp. 10-11.



...at South Framingham were excellent railroad facilities, it being in direct communication with every portion of the state. All the large cities, too, are situated upon lines which run through this village, and not only is South Framingham a railroad centre but it is centrally located between those districts which furnish the larger portion of criminals....It was desirable, of course, that the institution should be somewhat secluded, and yet at the same time, within a reasonable distance of the railroad station.<sup>51</sup>

Its location was about three-quarters of a mile from South Framingham. The prison, the first of its kind, gave women training as domestic servants; it was managed and directed entirely by women, having a total of 225 inmates in 1887.<sup>52</sup> It is interesting to note that while the station clearly received arriving convicts, this use was not reflected in the station plan.

The area around the station at South Framingham was commercial. An atlas for 1895 showed large commercial buildings located near the station and moderately settled areas beyond with medium sized lots and houses.(FIGURES 59 & 60) This was probably the reason that *extensive* landscaping was not done here although there was some landscaping done, perhaps by Olmsted. Charles Robinson's article "Suburban Station Grounds" for *House & Garden* in 1904 briefly discussed the landscaping, mentioning that ground for planting was restricted since the station was situated at a busy junction, and that "there is a very good building and wherever there does appear a corner that can be planted the opportunity is availed of."<sup>53</sup>

The article included a drawn plan of the position of the station and grounds. (FIGURE 61) Plantings of unspecified type served to hide areas of tracks, and the smaller storage facilities to the northwest of the station. Plantings also created islands between carriage path-ways entering and exiting the station to its east and west.

<sup>51</sup>"A Model Prison,"*The Framingham Tribune* 13 July 1888.

<sup>52</sup>"A Model Prison,"*The Framingham Tribune* 13 July 1888.

<sup>53</sup>Robinson, "Suburban Station Grounds," p. 186.





The station's design, like those already built at Auburndale, Chestnut Hill, and North Easton, was rectangular, measuring 40 x 120 feet. (FIGURE 62) The plan was divided in the center by a large general waiting room (33 x 60 ft) with high ceilings, and a ticket booth protruding along the track side. On the east side of the waiting room was an adjoining dining room and next to that, a serving room, smoking room and men's bathroom. On the west end of the waiting room was a ladies' room and bathroom, and small telegraph and agent offices. In the rooms to the east and west of the waiting rooms were stairs leading to a second level. The second level contained a kitchen and offices. The central waiting room was one large open space, two stories high, supported by a single column with exposed wooden trusses running along the diagonals of the room. (FIGURE 63) Broad rectangular windows were placed symmetrically around the building. The waiting room was wainscotted with brick, and sheathed in vertical oak boards, with an open-timbered ceiling. A monumental stone and brick fireplace was opposite the ticket booth.<sup>54</sup> (FIGURE 64)

The station was built of Braggville granite, arranged in random ashlar fashion, with Longmeadow red sandstone trim, set in red mortar, and a roof of slate. The cross gabled/hipped roof housed three triangular dormers on each of the two long elevations above deep overhangs; two smaller flanking dormers had smaller squat, Palladian windows for the second level rooms, and one central dormer with a large semi-circular arch with windows, which allowed light into the waiting room. Carved stone lion heads marked the ends of the central dormers, and the eastern slope of the hip contained a small eyebrow dormer. The roof extended beyond the building, as in other stations, to create a long horizontal eave and a platform shed supported by wooden piers, with curved brackets and a protective roof roadside. Another free-standing platform shed was built across the tracks on the north

<sup>54</sup>The *Framingham Gazette* 11 January 1884.



side. Porte cocheres were located on the north-east and north-west corners.<sup>55</sup>

The station at South Framingham received high praise from Walter Berg in his *Buildings and Structures of American Railroads*. He wrote that “the arrangement of the ground-plan can be considered as first-class for the purposes to be accomplished;” the only other station by Richardson to be judged so highly by Berg was The Old Colony Station at North Easton.<sup>56</sup> The South Framingham Station followed many of Berg and Gilbert’s suggestions for good station design including the placement of a bay ticket booth, a separate ladies room, dining facilities, a separate smoking room for men, a telegram office accessible to ticket booth, and a large fireplace in the center of the waiting room. It is interesting to note that while this station was regarded highly by Berg, it rarely received mention in articles about Richardson’s stations.

#### STATUS OF THE SOUTH FRAMINGHAM STATION

South Framingham’s station is now a restaurant and active commuter stop. (FIGURES 65 - 68)The area around the station is a busy and dense commercial center. Great changes were made in the interior to accommodate its new function with awnings placed above the windows on the exterior, along with signs and banners. Despite the alterations, the building appears well maintained.

<sup>55</sup>See Ochsner, *Complete Works*, p. 320.

<sup>56</sup>Berg, p. 325.



**CHAPTER SIX:  
PRESERVATION AND CONCLUSIONS**



## CHAPTER SIX: PRESERVATION AND CONCLUSIONS

The relationship between Richardson's stations and their respective settings was made clear through station presentation and plan. First, the presence or absence of landscaping indicated that certain locations were valued more than others because of their different character. In the suburban stations, such as Newton, Brighton, and Wellesley Hills, landscaping took precedence and was part of the station program. Villages like Palmer and North Easton were attentively landscaped. In these settings, landscaping created an attractive environment, acted as a buffer between train and town, blended the stations with their locations, and advertised the railroad's concern for appearances and customers.

Yet in the remaining locations like Holyoke, and South Framingham, landscaping was minimal to non-existent. This devalued the stations and suggested that as industry and commerce surrounded these stations, rather than using plantings to hide the trains, they were part of the urban landscape. Perhaps a lack of landscaping also suggested diminished concern for appearances and customer satisfaction.

Plans fit the location of the station. For the relatively small commuter stations in the suburbs, plans were kept to a minimum, with one or two waiting rooms for men and women, bathrooms, and ticket, telegraph, and baggage rooms. This was the case for those stations in Newton, Brighton, Wellesley Hills, and North Easton. These stations served a homogeneous commuter clientele made up of people who used the station for only a short time in the morning (stations usually being on the in-bound side of the tracks) and in the evenings, when was no interest in using the stations.

At junctions like Palmer and South Framingham the stations were meant to serve those people who were waiting for connections for some time, on longer journeys. Dining facilities and large, comfortable waiting rooms were created to accommodate them. These





stations served a more representative body of the population at large. While a ladies' waiting room was provided for women at South Framingham who were probably traveling to Boston, one was not provided at Palmer, leading one to conclude that such class-niceties were not considered as necessary there; and in-fact, class-divisions are less apparent there.<sup>1</sup> These stations also saw a good deal of commercial activity, and were large for that reason as well.

Holyoke's station was centered in industry, and rather than serving as a cross-roads it was intended to accommodate, separately, immigrants and businessmen. A majority of these businessmen, mill owners and railroad magnates probably lived closer Boston, traveling to Holyoke as needed. The plan of this station, more than any other, shows the clear class distinctions of the time.

The stations were also emblematic. Their designs and landscapes were meant to be representations of prosperity, sophistication, and progressiveness. Certainly the corporate commissioners intended that they be associated with these aims. The stations reflected, both intentionally and unintentionally, the communities in which they were located. Where in Wellesley Hills or Newton this meant refined and picturesque communities, in Holyoke it meant blatant class divisions. The railroads hoped to please customers (and board members,) to advertise the railroads, and to keep classes of riders properly placed.

Richardson and Olmsted offered artistic and creative solutions to the railroads' needs, managing in suburban locations to present the stations as belonging in their attractive natural settings, avoiding any appearance of disruption. The landscaping was both an attractive distraction and a tool for hiding the very railroad that the stations serviced. The combined efforts of Richardson and Olmsted created a natural, geologic image of architecture in its setting. In all locations, the attractive stone stations added an air of respect and permanence and the larger stations created grand entrances for the towns.

<sup>1</sup>Town atlases show the village as basically one dense arrangement of mixed use.



Contemporary criticism of Richardson's stations generally centered on whether his designs compromised functional efficiency for aesthetics. This is not exclusive to his station designs, as librarians were quick to criticize his library designs for the same reasons. Nor is this unusual for architects in general. According to critics his stations at North Easton and South Framingham appeared to be his most functionally successful ones. But his lack of sensibility in design function did not seem to be of much consequence. Despite grounds for criticism, few were made on the whole. People were more concerned with appearances. Richardson's achievement in aesthetic terms meant the most to both client and user.

## PRESERVATION

The Railroad remained well-utilized up until the beginning of the twentieth-century, as the automobile became more affordable and accessible to the public at large, and became the transportation mode of choice. Cars began as commuting vehicles in the 1930s, but did not take hold as an exclusive form for commuting until the 1950s with the establishment of highways and interstates. Railroad companies began to see declines in ridership, and then revenue. While commuter travel still remained strong the first half of the century, excursion and vacation traveling was sharply reduced. Automobiles offered convenience, and the ability to travel free of scheduled arrivals and departures, and the railroad companies had a difficult time convincing people otherwise.

By the end of World War II, railroads had decided that freight was easier than passengers, and once this was coupled with federal money for roads in the 1950s, the era of passenger service saw its end. While there was still a steady commuter patronage, there was no longer the possibility of increasing ridership. As a result, many train lines and stations were being abandoned, and former station gardens replaced with the ubiquitous parking lot.



Of the eleven stations discussed, five were demolished, and six remain (Wellesley Hills, Woodland in Newton, North Easton, Holyoke, Palmer and South Framingham.) All of the stations had to their advantage their stone material, which while more expensive initially, required less maintenance, and was more difficult and expensive to demolish than wood or brick buildings. It is interesting that the three largest stations survived, it is hard to believe that this has not been a factor.

The stations that remain are valuable cultural landmarks, representing an important time for the railroads and communities. While maintaining the physical stature of the buildings is extremely important, preservation of their contextual history is another issue. At their best, the stations and their settings were carefully cared for, proud symbols of railroad and town, and billboards for them. While it is not really difficult to find alternate uses for them, it is harder to find uses that are more appropriate to their historical context. The best uses would reflect the community in a positive way, reflecting and promoting it like a billboard. Ideally these train stations could be reused again for the same purpose, perhaps with small newsstands and coffee shops inside. Real-estate offices are good examples of alternate uses that have been tried in the Philadelphia area. They clearly have an interest in town presentation and promotion, and would create impressive offices for potential home buyers in a restored Richardson station. There would also be the opportunity for restoring the landscaping as well. Banks follow as an appropriate alternate use, for the same reasons and associations with the community, and would also provide the chance to restore the landscaping.

Commuter rail certainly has its appeal in these times, with the hassles and expenses of driving; the railroads could work to promote more rail travel in conjunction with a rehabilitation of the stations, improving the frequency and quality of train service, which around Boston currently remains high. Railroad transport has seen growth as the end of the century nears, and perhaps the stations could see a new life from this.



A frequently seen adapted re-use has been conversion of stations into restaurants. This has been done successfully at the South Framingham station, and while the interiors have been greatly compromised, it has kept the station there and maintained. The station is surrounded by a parking lot serving both the active commuter stop, and restaurant, situated in a busy part of town. One of the small accompanying buildings for the station has been converted to a coffee shop, which is an excellent use for such a sized building.

Apparently the station at Palmer was purchased last winter by someone with plans to convert it into a restaurant as well, and while the station's interiors were still intact before this, the station was very run down, so that the change, if successful, could ensure the future of the station place in the currently depressed town. As a restaurant, a large part of the old grounds, now paved, will serve as a parking lot, but there could be interest in restoring some of the landscaped grounds, perhaps as a joint effort of town and restaurant, to create a small park.

The station at Holyoke, considering the surrounding area, is fortunate to have use as an auto-parts business, with a relatively sympathetic owner, aware of the building's history. With the current conditions of the neighboring area comprised of deserted industrial buildings, there would not be much initiative for introducing other uses at such a site. Could the area be revitalized, the building could serve as an excellent place for a museum of industry and immigration for the area, and the city of Holyoke would be a great location for this.

The station at Wellesley Hills, while small, houses three small businesses (coffee shop, clock shop and dry cleaners) and remains a commuter stop. Located in a busy and densely developed part of town, the station sits on presumably very valuable land which could put it in jeopardy in the future. While well maintained, the station has long been compromised and taken on new features unrelated to the original design. A restoration would be very expensive, but under one owner, the station could serve as many uses: as a





retail store (bookstore), restaurant, offices, or a museum, bank or real estate office. Attempts at restoring the landscaping would be awkward and impossible at such a crowded, and developed commercial location.

The station at Woodland apparently houses supplies for a country club that owns the surrounding area. Under the same owners the station could serve nicely as an attractive bar, small restaurant, or snack house, serving a similar clientele in the same spirit. Or it could serve the same purpose for the town at large, with the restored landscape acting as a surrounding park.

The station at North Easton is perhaps the luckiest and serves the most ideal function, for the town historical society. The station is on the National Register. It is well maintained and the grounds are landscaped in the summer. It is a unique situation considering the town's history and all of Richardson's commissions there.

Smaller stations offer excellent opportunities for many businesses that have been mentioned, and could also be used by banks for ATM machines, which would provide along with functional purpose, distinguished character.

The stations should be nominated for National Register status as a multiple property group. This would enable them to qualify for funding to be rehabilitated, and give them the acknowledgement that they should be recognized for. From there a program could be established for a more sensitive approach to using the buildings. Plaques should be erected at the sites, and reproductions of photos of the buildings and their settings should be displayed with them.

Caring for and maintaining the stations is important for both architectural and town histories, and should be promoted as such. The stations were reflective of the town's socio-economic and cultural character in the late 19th century, and should be kept as reminders of that history. It is a history of value on both local and national levels, which needs to be preserved through these buildings.



## **ILLUSTRATIONS**



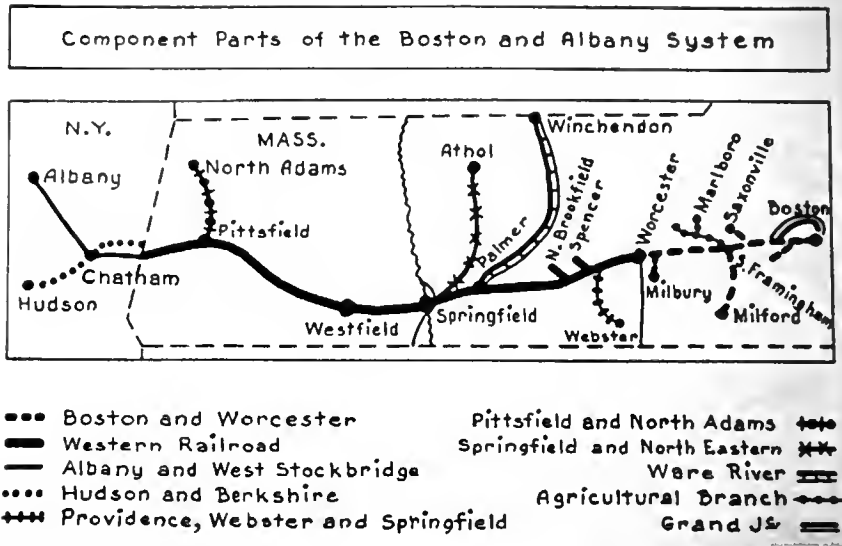


FIGURE 1: "Component Parts of the Boston and Albany System."

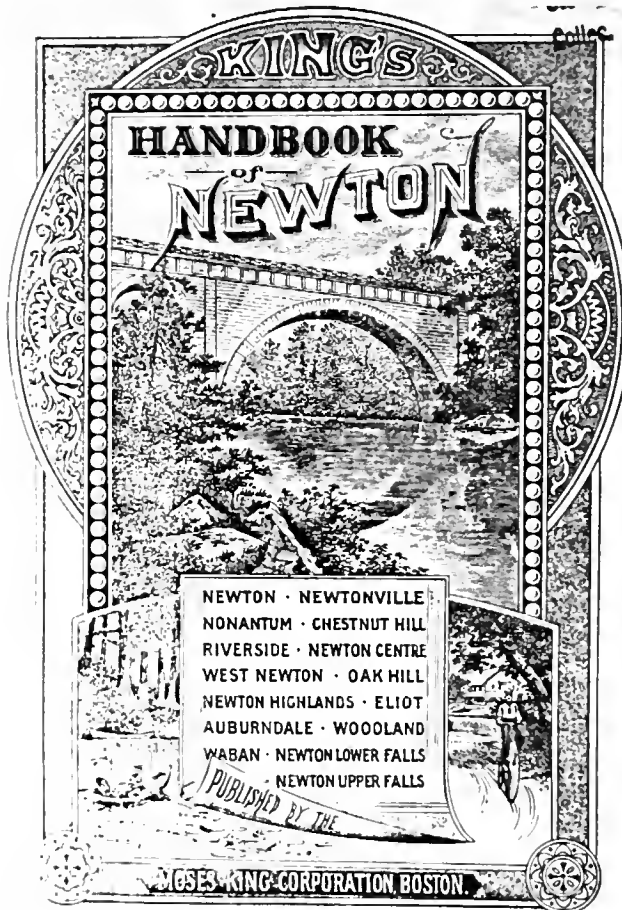


FIGURE 2: Title page from *King's Handbook of Newton*.



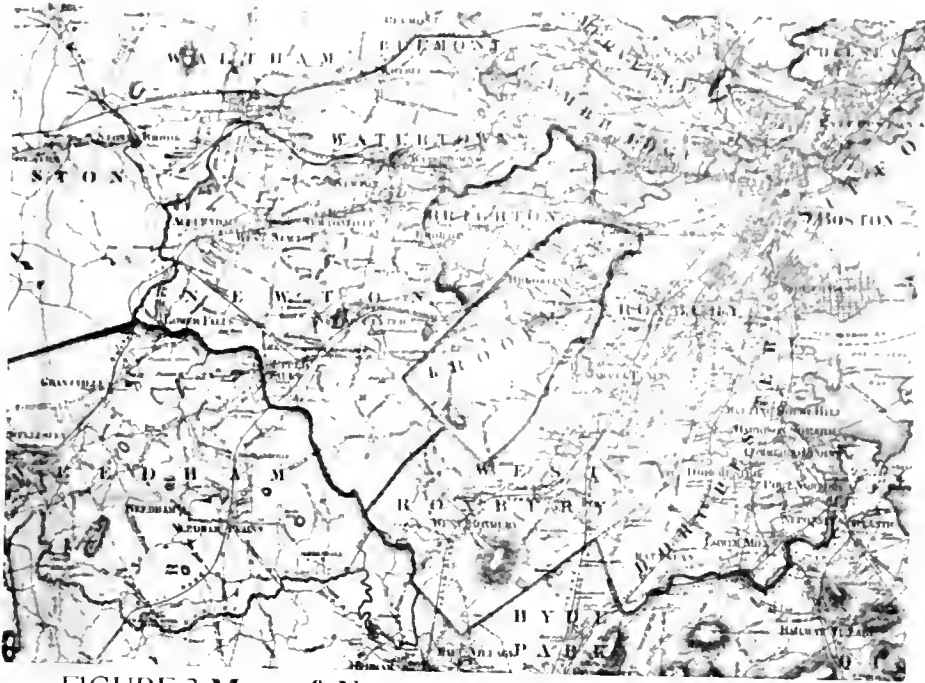


FIGURE 3: Map of Newton and surrounding towns.

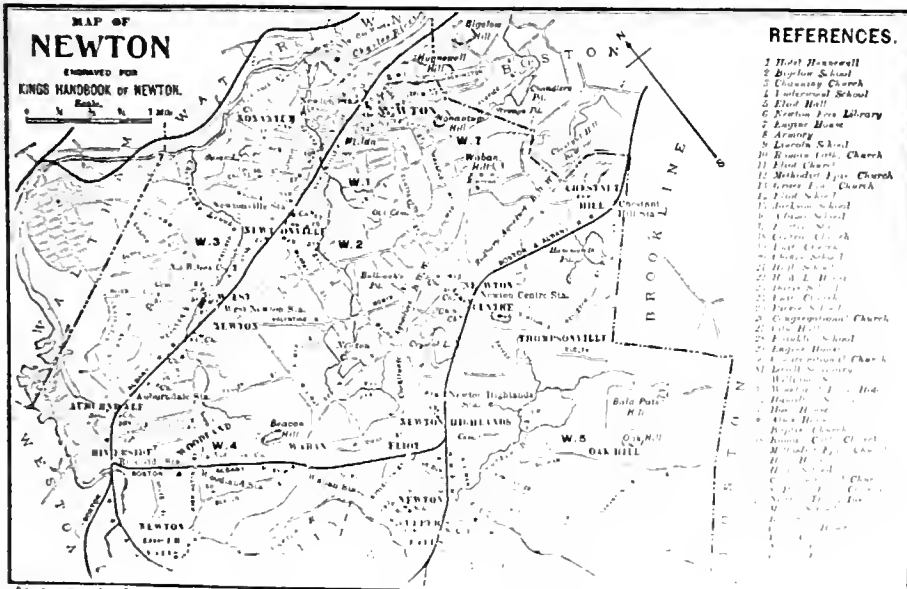


FIGURE 4: Map of Newton.





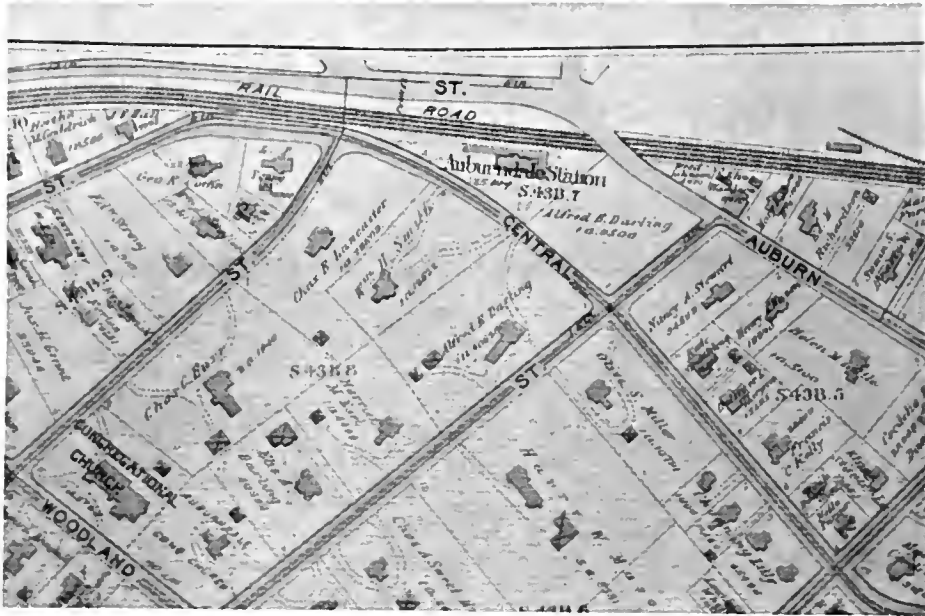
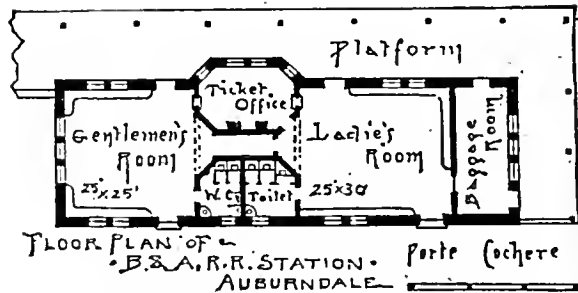


FIGURE 5: Atlas showing Auburndale Station.



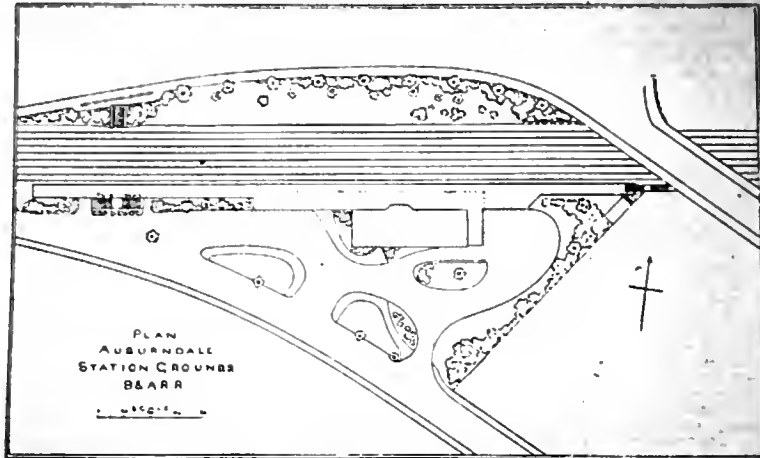
Ground Plans of Station Buildings.

FIGURE 6: Plan for Auburndale Station.



tely compound leaves, like a Horse-chestnut or  
 it is figured in the "Icones Plantarum," l. 1740, and  
 subt one of the most striking novelties from the

tions that looked like exaggerated crosses, and  
 wooden boxes which merely displayed the rail-  
 way's desire to expend as little money as pos-



Plan of Auburndale Station Grounds, Boston & Albany Railroad.

ct of Hupeh, though the flowers are not very  
 bral structure this does not differ from the genus  
 which is common in some areas all round the

no rural stations that gave pleasure to the pas-  
 senger's eye, accommodated him comfortably w-

**FIGURE 7: Plan for Auburndale Station Grounds.**



The entrance to the station through a new ad porte cochere

## A Study in Railroad Gardening

The Successful Combination of the Practical and Pic-  
 turesque and Its Value to the Suburban Community

**FIGURE 8: Photo of Auburndale Station.**



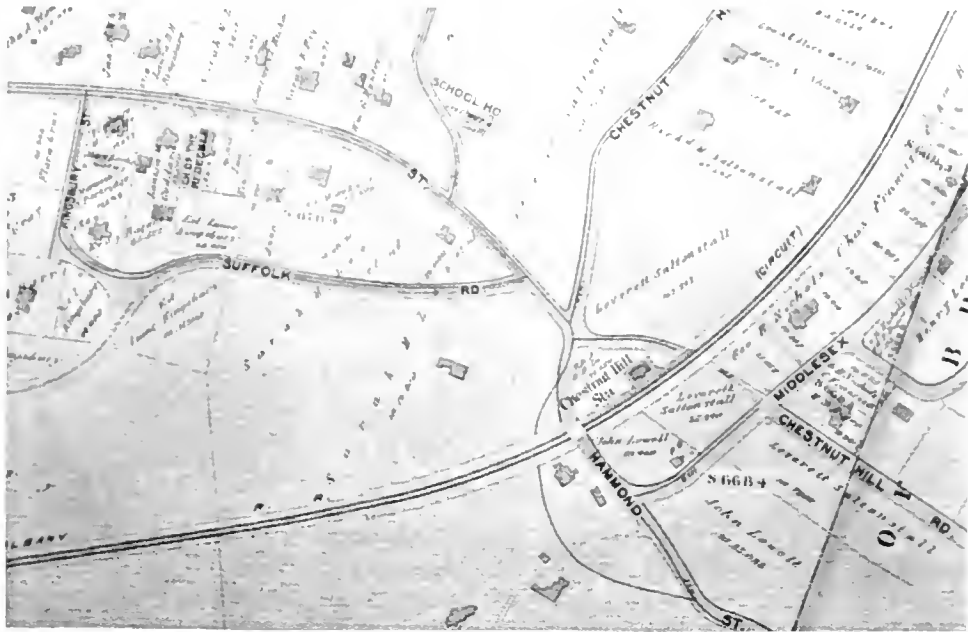


FIGURE 9: Atlas showing Chestnut Hill Station.

Flag-depot at Chestnut Hill, Mass. Boston & Albany Railroad, shown in Figs. 508 and 509.



FIG. 508.—PERSPECTIVE.

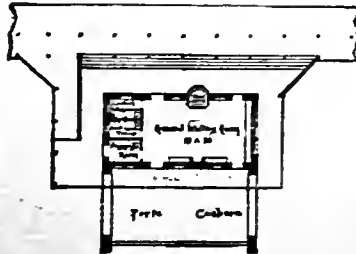


FIG. 509.—GROUND-PLAN.

designed by the late Mr. H. H. Richardson, architect, Brooklyn, Mass., plans for which were published in the *Railroad Gazette* of Nov. 5, 1886; in the *Sanitary Engineer*, Vol. 14; and in the *American Architect and Building News* of Feb. 26, 1887, is a small, single-story, granite building, with brown trimmings, and roof of red tiles. The principal and most striking feature of the design is a large

FIGURE 10: Plan and perspective of Chestnut Hill Station.





CHESTNUT HILL STATION ON THE BOSTON & ALBANY RAILROAD.  
H. H. Richardson, Architect

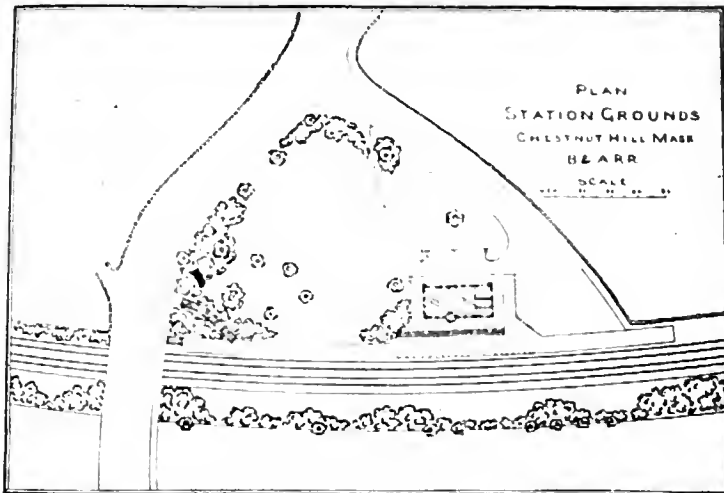
THE EVOLUTION OF THE  
SUBURBAN STATION  
BY J. H. PHILLIPS

FIGURE 11: Photo of Chestnut Hill Station.

... will in a surprisingly short space of time, be  
ought to market, and the danger of fire will increase  
proportion as they are built. Fires will spread from the  
road locations far into the interior, and the more  
sites more accessible, the number of fires set by hunters,  
campers and log-cutters will necessarily increase.

purpose, but carefully grouped so as to secure variety  
in unity, interest, grace and harmony.

The extreme size and solidity of the arches which form  
the porch of the station have been criticized as inappropriate  
in so small a building. But we may recall what  
has lately said of Auburndale—a station is essential:



Plan of the Chestnut Hill Station Grounds—Boston and Albany Railroad

... creation of railroad lines over private property cannot  
be prevented, but the state is able to protect its own  
rights and it is not wise to maintain an administration

shelter, not a dwelling-place, and its roof is therefore  
of more importance in giving it the right expression than  
the walls. These arches sustaining only a roof, would i

FIGURE 12: Plan for station grounds at Chestnut Hill.











FIGURE 15: Atlas showing Woodland Station.

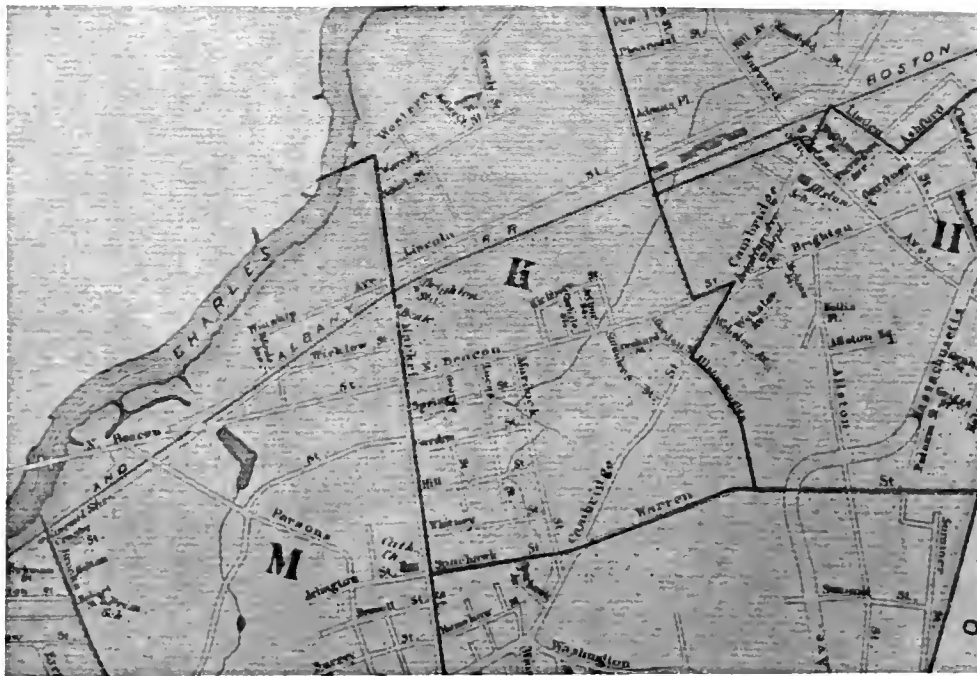
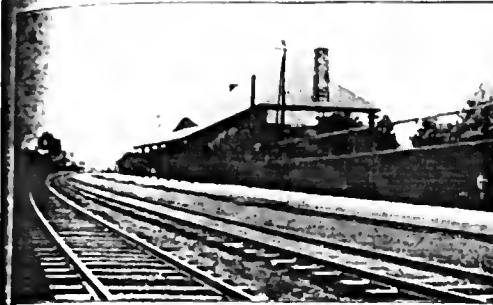


FIGURE 16: Atlas of the City of Boston; Charlestown and Brighton.





BRIGHTON STATION

BOSTON & ALBANY R.R.

may be found on the New York Central's Boston and Albany division, the road that forms that division having been one of the pioneers in the work—gradually developed into an art—of beautifying station surroundings, having far distanced one of its con-

lustrated in the p  
article is Waban. N  
pretty parklike effe  
and how much this  
hanced by the diago  
that comes into the fo  
of the picture. Two l  
lead past the station  
crosses over the t  
right angles, and to  
diagonal path leas  
effect far lovelier th  
ground between road  
tion had been cleare  
unnecessary little pla  
hind the bushes—  
bridal wreath, if one  
the memory of a

when it was all abloom,—the carriage leads into the highway, at the corner station grounds. An alternative plan have thrust the planting where the is, and have led the path beside the station. That would have been

FIGURE 17: Photograph of Brighton Station.



FIGURE 18: Photograph of the demolition of Waban Station.



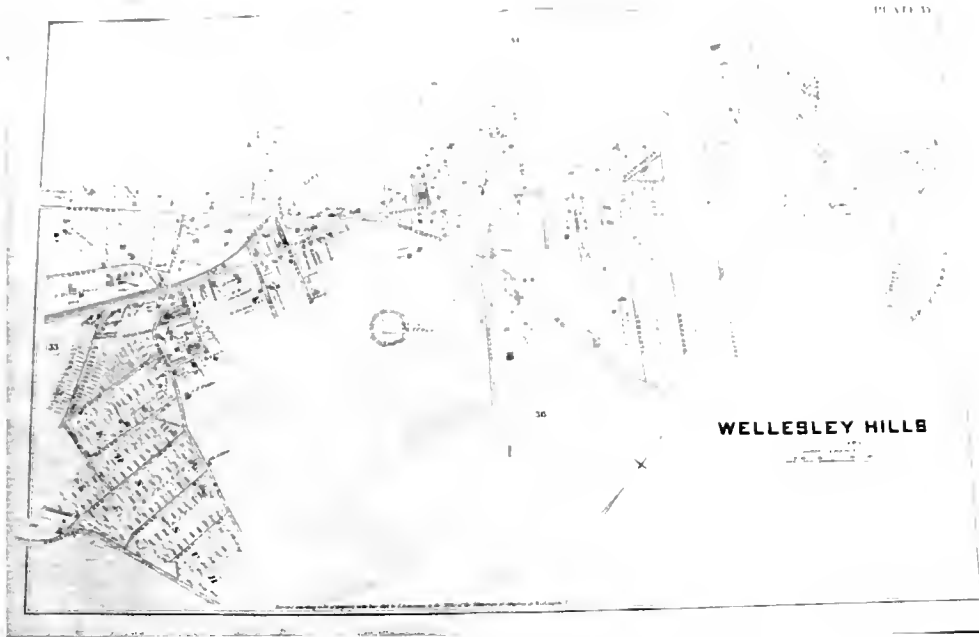


FIGURE 19: Atlas of Wellesley Hills.



FIGURE 20: Detail.





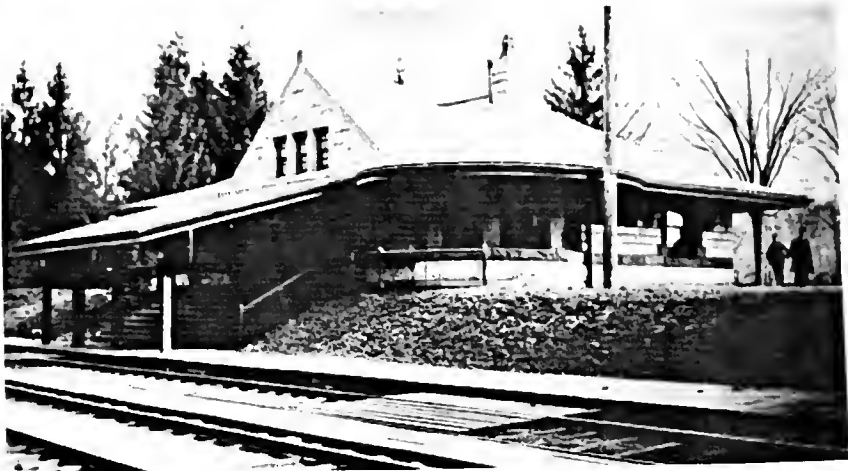


FIGURE 21: Photograph of Wellesley Hills Station.

124

A. RECORD



WELLESLEY HILLS STATION, NEW ENGLAND RAILROAD

The station was designed by the architect, and the 'substantial' walls of local stone gave it an air of permanence and stability. The station is a fine example of the New England style, and was built under the guidance of the architect.

FIGURE 22: Photograph of Wellesley Hills Station.





FIGURE 23: Street (west) elevation, Wellesley Hills Station.



FIGURE 24: South elevation, Wellesley Hills Station.





**FIGURE 25: Map of the town of North Easton.**



*O. Ames & Sons Corporation — Shovel Manufacturers*

**FIGURE 26: Lithograph of Ames Shovel Manufacturers, 1891.**



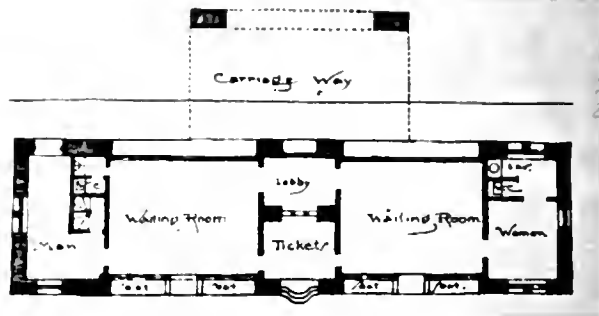


FIGURE 27: Plan for Old Colony Railroad Station.



FIGURE 28: Detail of exterior of Old Colony Railroad Station, track side elevation.







**FIGURE 29: Old Colony Station, carriage elevation.**



**FIGURE 30: Old Colony Station, track side elevation.**



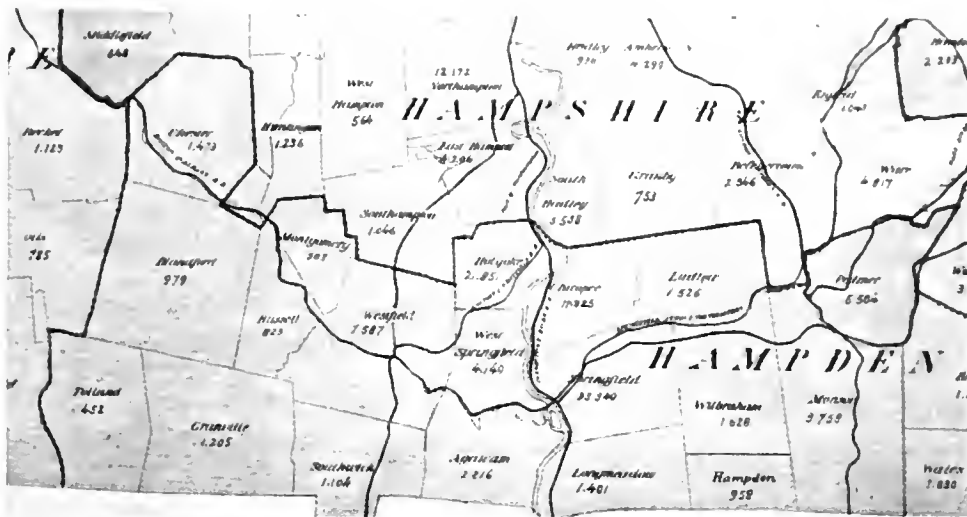


FIGURE 31: Outline Map of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts with

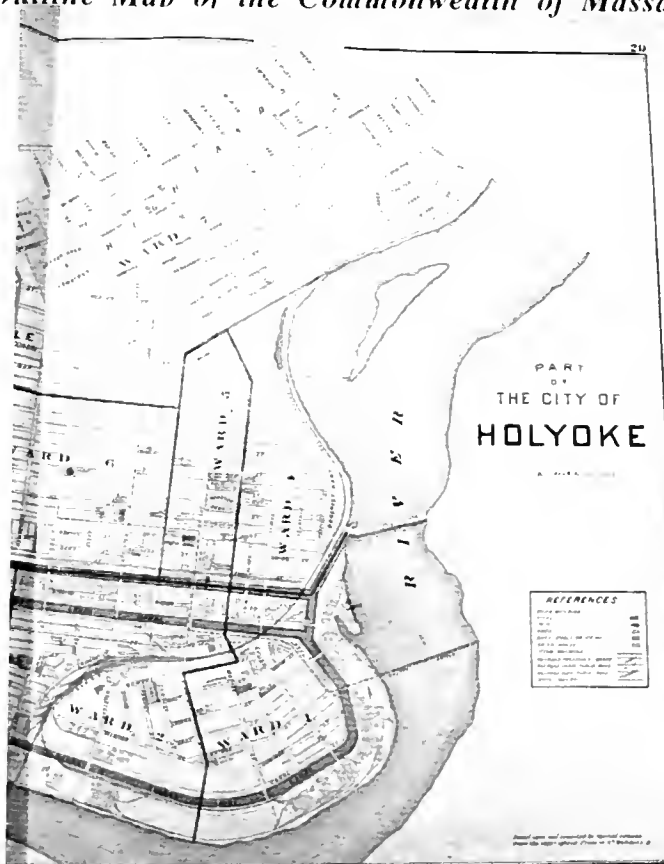


FIGURE 32: Atlas of the city of Holyoke.



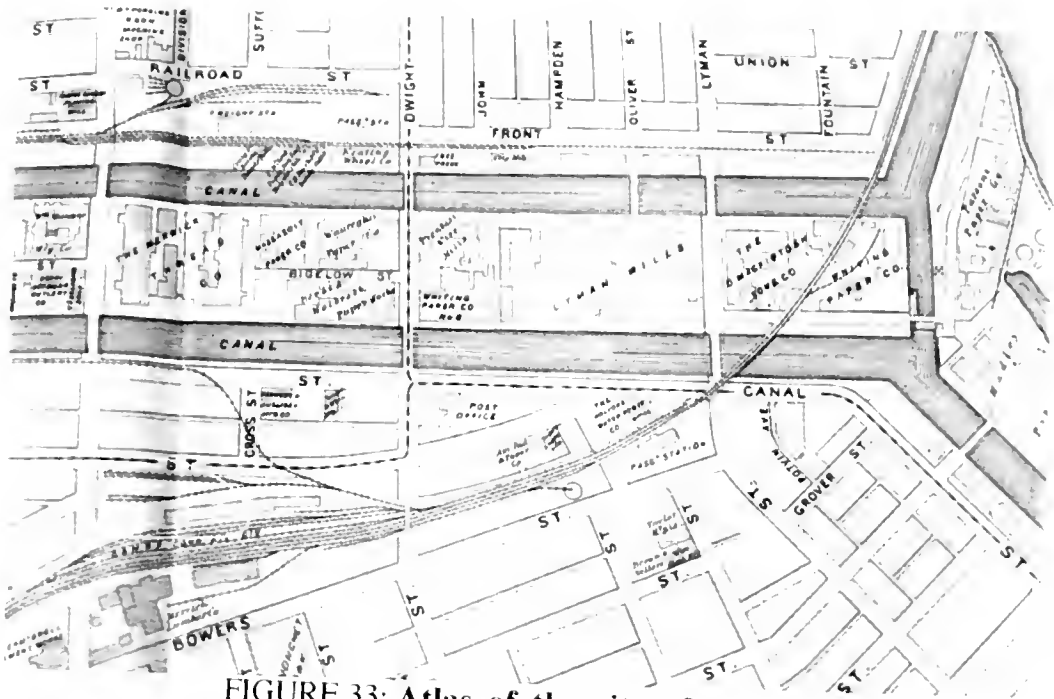


FIGURE 33: Atlas of the city of Holyoke.

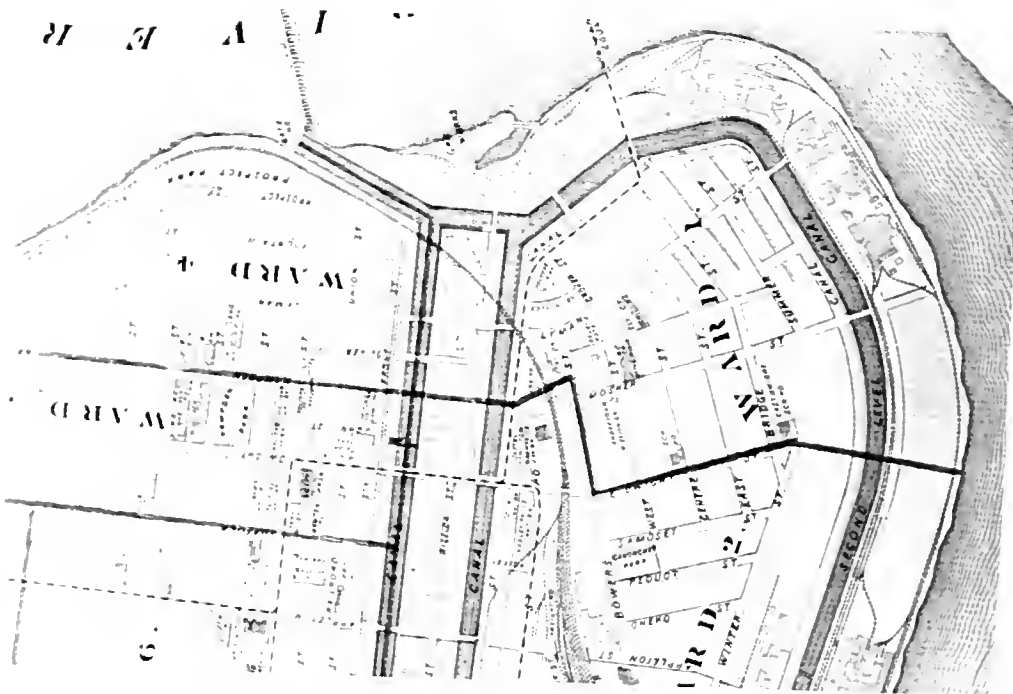


FIGURE 34: Atlas of the city of Holyoke.





FIGURE 35: "Bird's Eye View" of Holyoke.

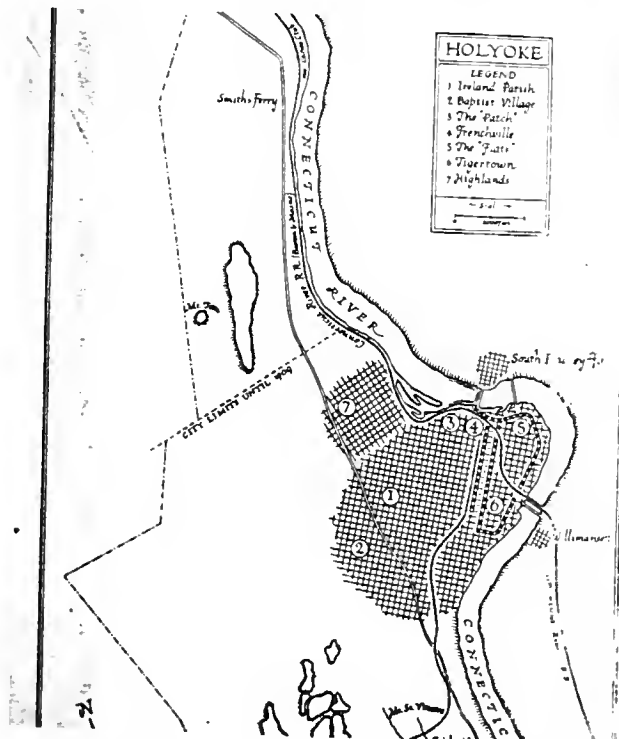


FIGURE 36: Map of Holyoke showing immigrant neighborhoods.





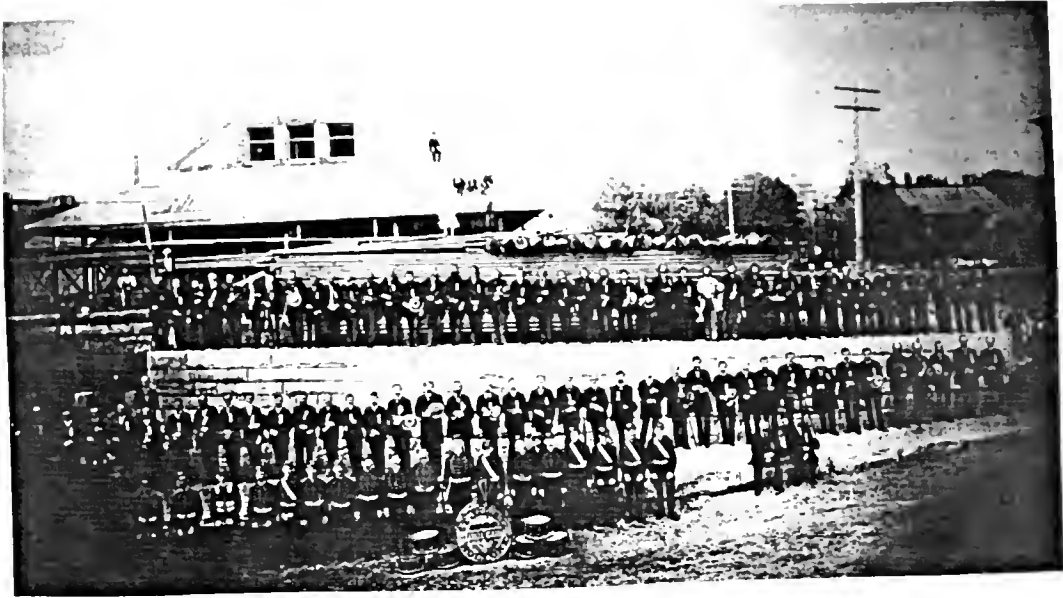


FIGURE 37: Photo of the Connecticut River Railroad Station.

Holyoke, Mass.—Connecticut River Railroad.  
 THE BOSTON & ALBANY AND THE CONNECTICUT  
 H. H. RICHARDSON, ARCHITECT.

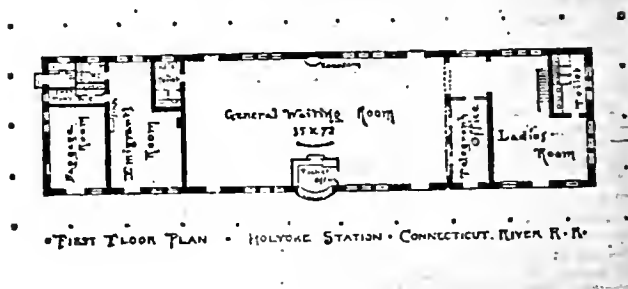


FIGURE 38: Connecticut River Railroad Station plan.



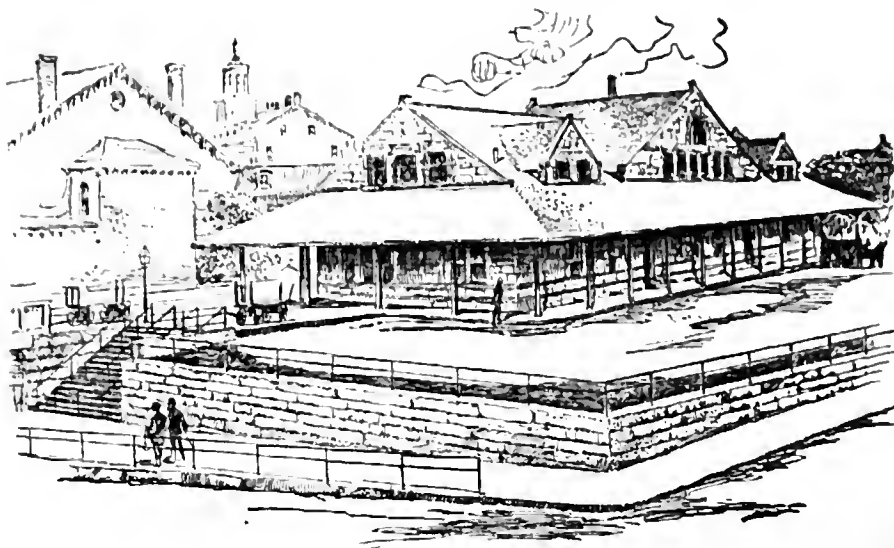


FIG. 592.—PERSPECTIVE.

FIGURE 39: Connecticut River Railroad Station perspective.



FIGURE 40: Connecticut River Railroad Station, now Auto-Parts shop.





**FIGURE 41: Connecticut River Railroad Station.**



**FIGURE 42: Connecticut River Railroad Station, cement-block filled windows.**





FIGURE 43: Connecticut River Railroad Station, alterations.

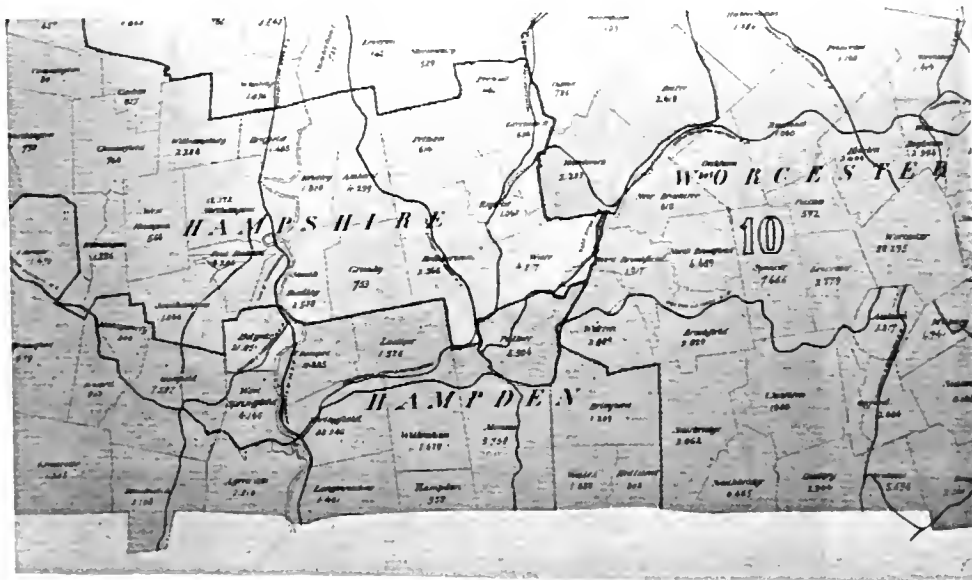


FIGURE 44: Outline Map of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts with populations in 1880.







FIGURE 45: "Bird's Eye View" photograph of Palmer.



FIGURE 46: Atlas of Palmer.



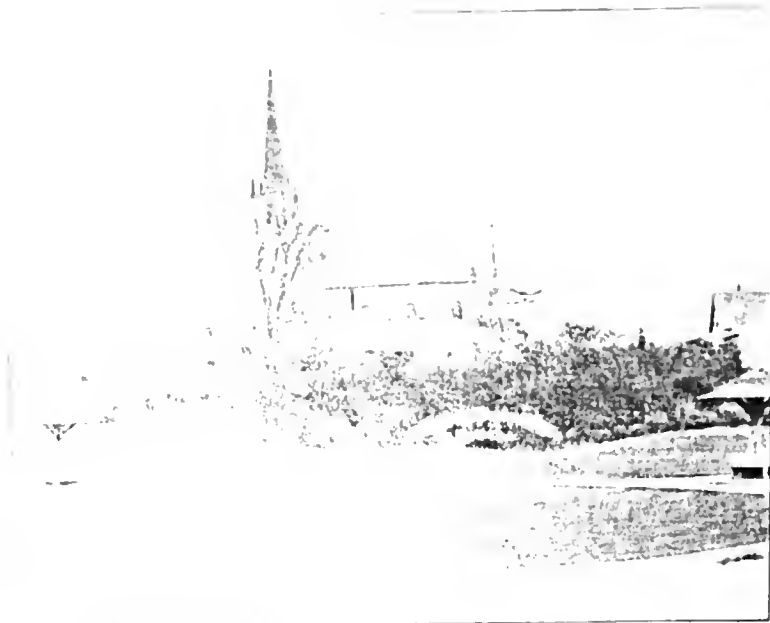


FIGURE 47: Detail.



FIGURE 48: Detail.





UNION PASSENGER STATION

FIGURE 49: Photograph of Union Passenger Station "Railroad Park."

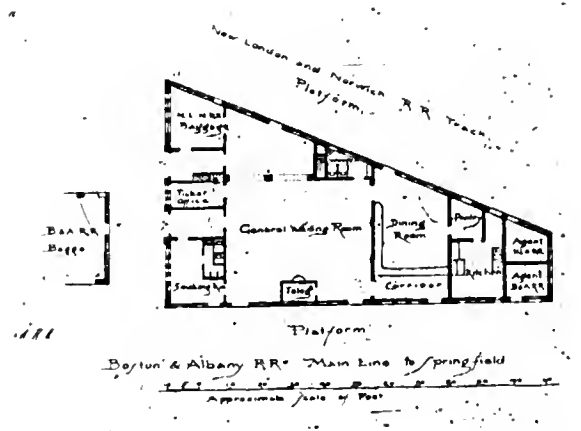
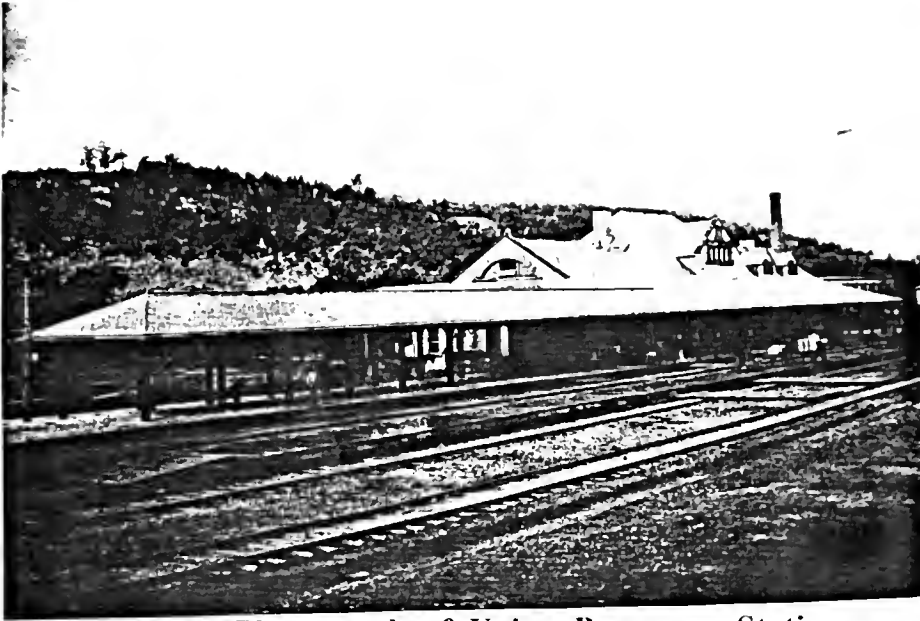
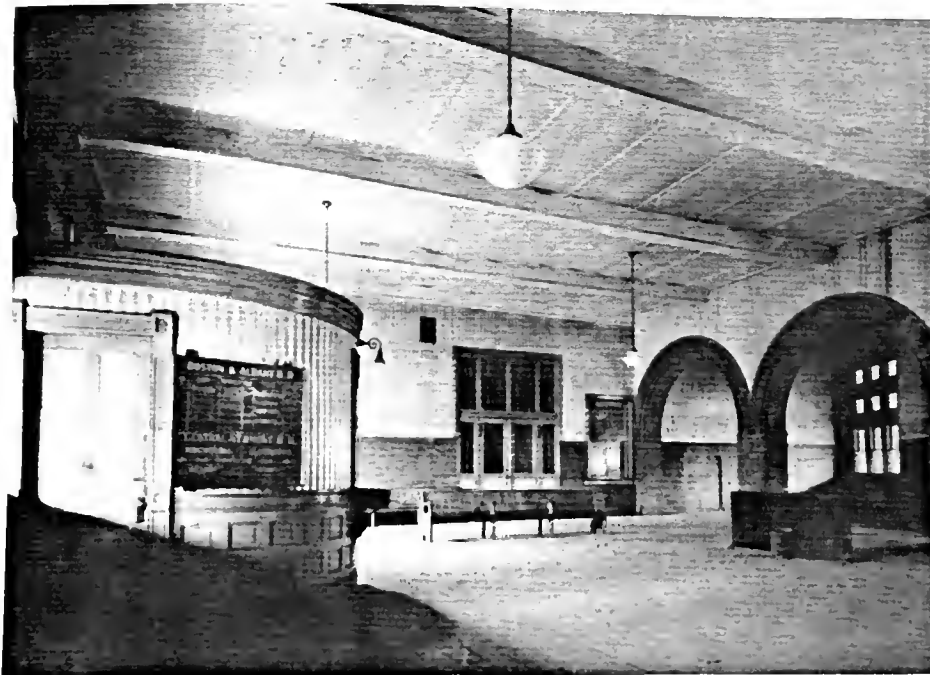


FIGURE 50: Plan for Union Passenger Station.





**FIGURE 51: Photograph of Union Passenger Station.**



**FIGURE 52: Photograph of interior of Union Passenger Station.**







FIGURE 53: Union Passenger Station.



FIGURE 54: Union Passenger Station.





**FIGURE 55: Union Passenger Station.**



**FIGURE 56: Union Passenger Station.**



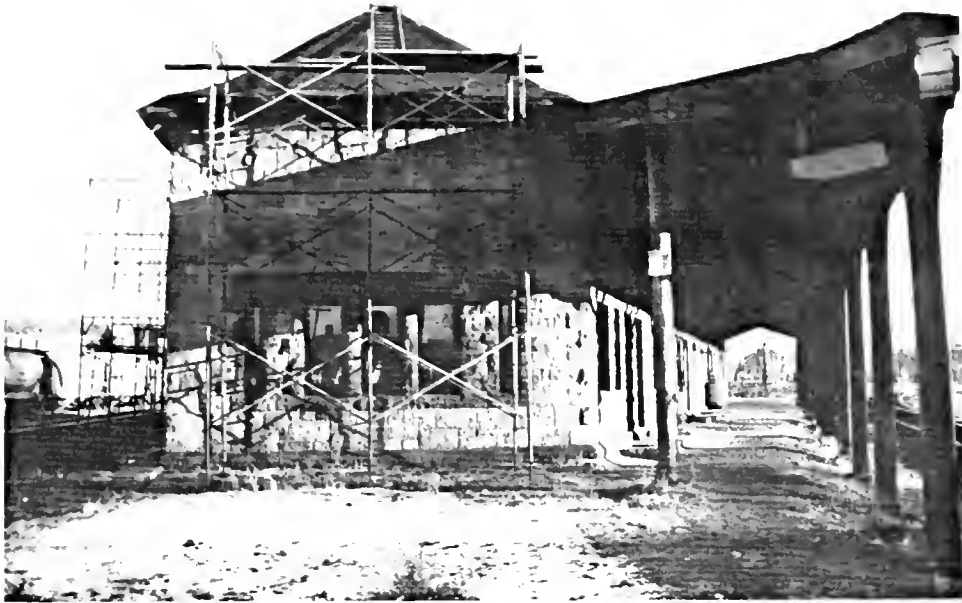


FIGURE 57: Union Passenger Station.

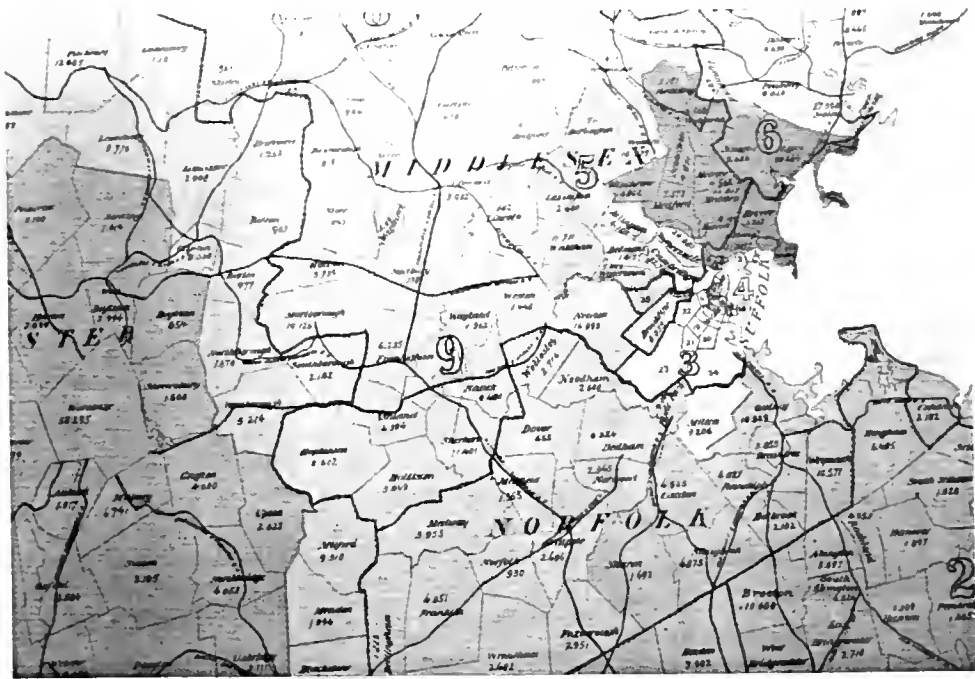


FIGURE 58: Outline Map of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts with populations in 1880.





FIGURE 59: Atlas showing South Framingham.

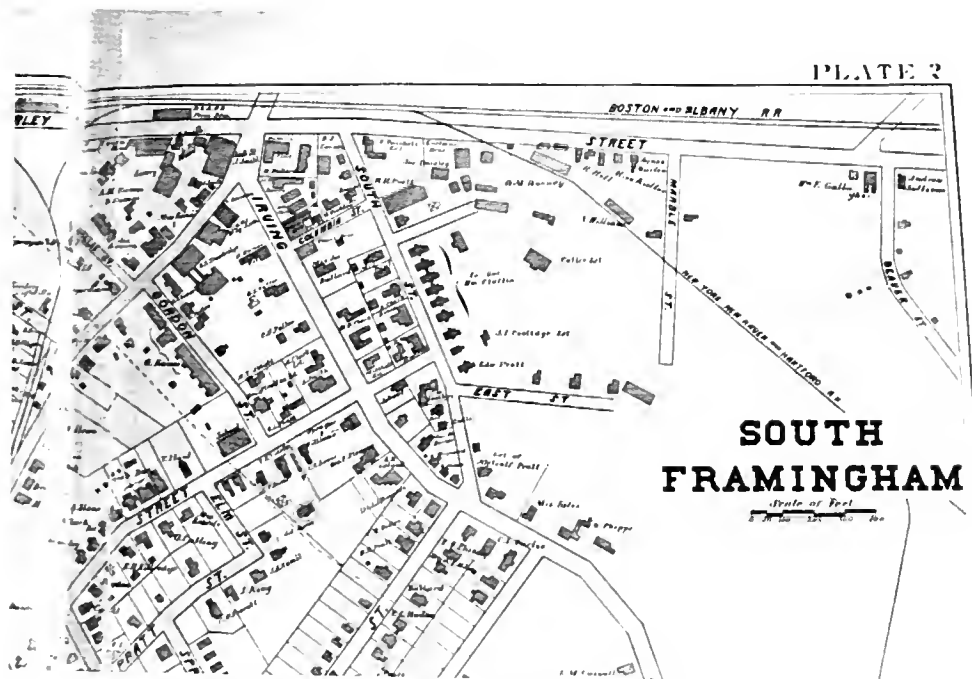
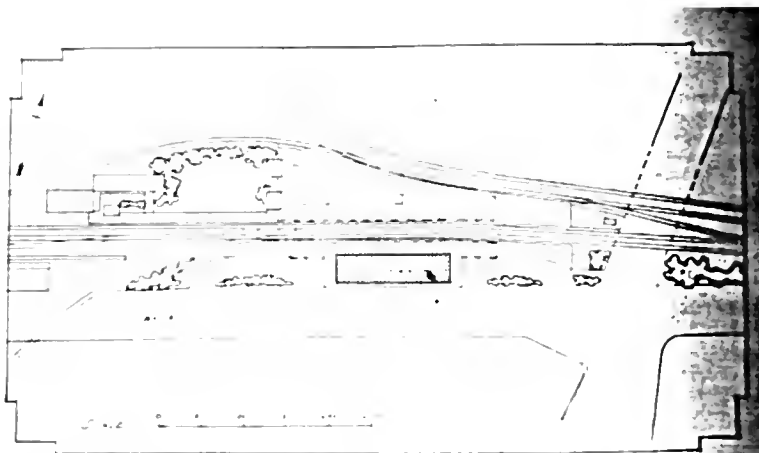


FIGURE 60: Atlas showing South Framingham Station.







PLAN SHOWING POSITION OF THE STATION AT  
SOUTH FRAMINGHAM

FIGURE 61: Plan showing grounds of South Framingham Station.

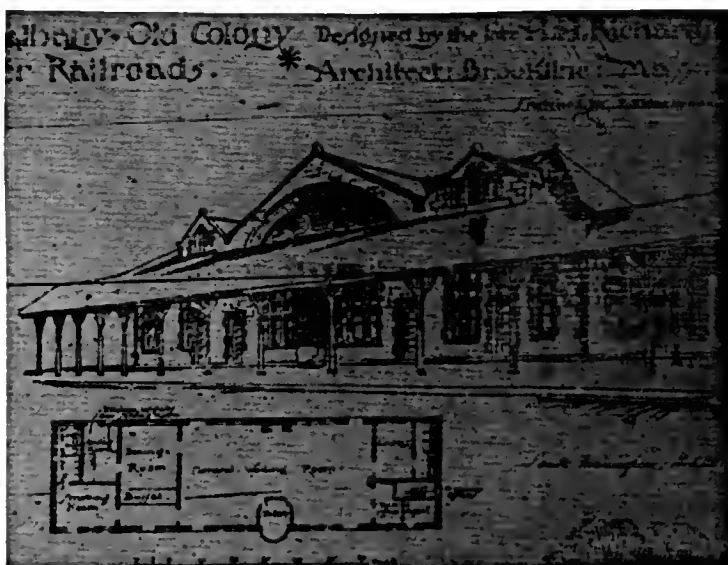


FIGURE 62: Elevation and plan for South Framingham Station.





FIGURE 63: Historic American Buildings Survey Photograph of South Framingham Station interior.

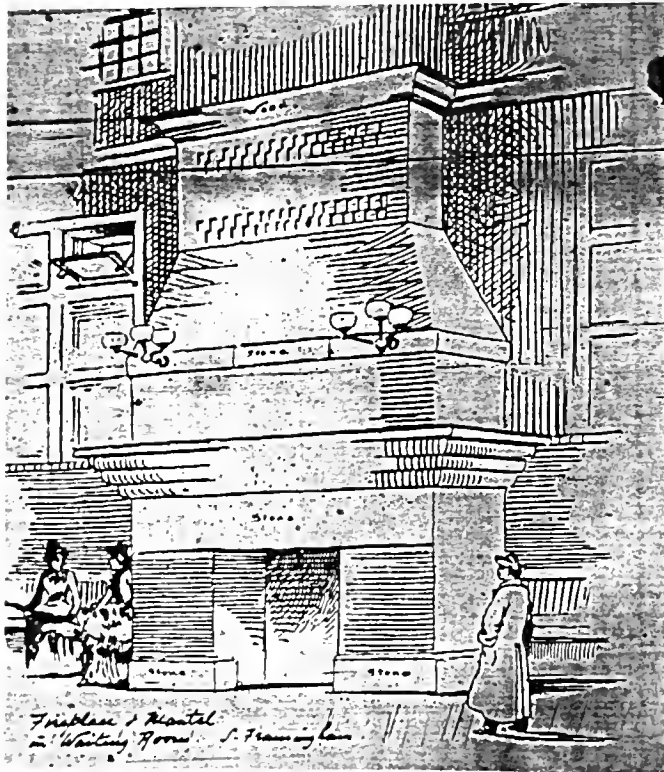


FIGURE 64: Plan for fireplace and mantel in station waiting room, South Framingham Station.





**FIGURE 65: South Framingham Station, street-side elevation.**



**FIGURE 66: South Framingham Station.**





FIGURE 67: South Framingham Station.



FIGURE 68: South Framingham Station, secondary building.





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