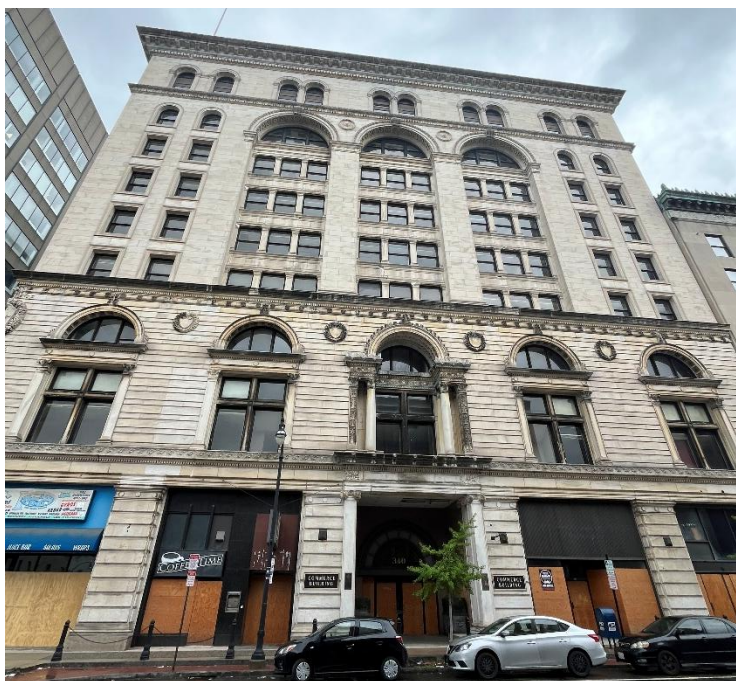




Commerce Building
340 Main Street | circa 1891

340 Main Street—long known as the Commerce Building—was constructed in 1891 as the new headquarters of State Mutual Life Insurance, the predecessor of today's Hanover Insurance Group, after the company outgrew its earlier offices at 240 Main Street. Designed by renowned architects Peabody & Stearns and builders Norcross Brothers, the nine story Beaux Arts structure was Worcester's first true skyscraper.

Distinguished by Renaissance Revival-inspired detailing, the building features arches, columns and pilasters capped with richly ornamented Corinthian capitals. As a prominent early highrise, it stood as a flagship of a thriving downtown commercial corridor and helped inspire several subsequent Beaux Arts projects in Worcester.

In the early 1930s, a utilitarian rear annex was added, lacking the architectural refinement of the original building and connected by two multi-story bridges spanning a service alley. State Mutual sold the property in 1957 when it relocated its headquarters to Lincoln Street. Thereafter, 340 Main Street remained in active use as office space for a succession of state agencies, law firms and local businesses until its sale in 2021.

Despite renewed ownership, deferred maintenance and ongoing deterioration have become increasingly apparent. Graffiti, debris, and vandalism have proliferated, particularly in the alley and rear annex, and the building has recently been shuttered, with windows boarded over. Once a proud symbol of Worcester's commercial prominence, 340 Main Street now presents as a highly visible and troubling reminder of downtown disinvestment.

While there have been discussions regarding redevelopment, meaningful progress has yet to materialize. Until a clear and viable plan for stabilization and reuse is underway, 340 Main Street remains one of Worcester's Most Endangered Historic Properties.





Joseph and James Cooney Cottage
155 College Street | circa 1870

Built circa 1870, this cross-gabled Queen Anne cottage is a historical home located at the highly visible corner of College and Electric Streets on the Worcester/Auburn line. Originally built and occupied by Joseph and James Cooney, it stands as the second or third house built on College Street, so named for the College of the Holy Cross. 155 College Street has a long history of occupants who worked as farmers, florists, and gardeners reflecting the agrarian past of the Mount Saint James area before it was fully developed. The architecture features classic Queen Anne elements, including original stained glass, intricate shingle patterns in the eaves and at the front entrance. The failing porch features the classic Victorian elements; however, the structure is currently in a state of distress with noticeable rot in the windows and shingles, a sagging porch, and a crumbling chimney.

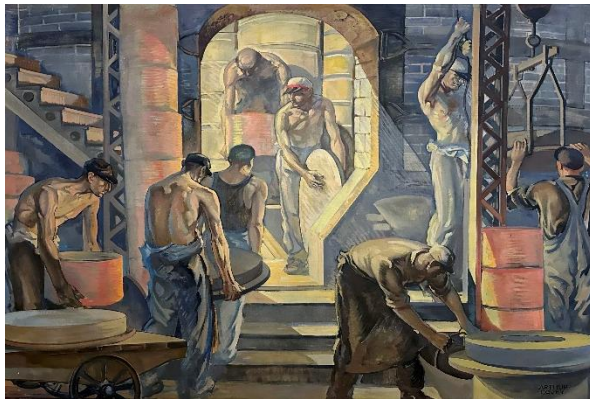




Arthur C. Perry Three Decker
86 Vernon Street | circa 1900

86 Vernon Street is a rare 4.5-story departure from the traditional triple-decker, built by Arthur C. Perry in the Queen Anne style around 1900. Its most striking feature is a bell-cast or flared roof tower topped with a copper finial, accompanied by a fourth-floor Palladian window and three unique "dual arched" porches, each featuring its own distinct styling. The facade showcases a high level of craftsmanship with four different shingle styles and original stained glass, though the exterior currently suffers from significant rot, missing siding, and water-damaged porches. 86 Vernon Street captures the Irish-American experience in Worcester's Vernon Hill at the turn of the century. Originally built and owned by prominent local developer Arthur C. Perry, its first residents included families like the Canavans and Flemings—a postal clerk and a Green Street saloon operator, respectively. Over the years, the building continued to house well-known Irish families, such as the Hickeys, McSheehys, O'Rourkes, and Keenans.





Norton Hall and Murals
One New Bond Street | building built 1913, murals
installed 1927

The Norton Company Administration Building at One New Bond Street displays the history of one of Worcester's most significant companies, Norton Company (now Saint Gobain). Founded in 1858, Saint Gobain is the world's largest manufacturer and supplier of abrasives.

Encased in the elegant brick and stone building is Norton Hall, Norton Company's stunning tribute to its workforce and Worcester's industrial legacy. In 1927, noted muralist Arthur Covey furnished a grand hall with an ornamental tree, large murals, and calligraphy. The tree chronicles the history of the company from its founders – which included WPI founders and trustees, and the ubiquitous surname Higgins – through acquisitions and expansions. The surrounding murals traverse the grand hall, detailing the development of grinding wheels: bauxite mining, kiln firing, and their use in forming automotive parts. The names of employees with twenty-five years of service are painted in large script adorning the tree and room panels. Two special panels pay tribute to Norton employees who gave the ultimate sacrifice for our country.

Preservation Worcester, along with Saint Gobain Abrasives, the Worcester Business Development Corporation, and Worcester Art Museum, are working to share this chapter of Worcester's entrepreneurial history with the public. A Community Preservation Act grant was awarded for the relocation and restoration process of the murals to the Worcester Art Museum should the building not be feasible for repurposing. More funding is still required, however, to ensure a future for these works of art.





Cow Tavern
274 Salisbury Street | circa 1780

Cow Tavern was built in the Federal style circa 1780. The building is a timber frame with a symmetrical façade, a center entrance, twin chimneys, and granite foundation. The building was operated as a tavern until approximately 1830. The original owner is unknown. The original property included a barn. Ample photographic and written documentation at the Museum of Worcester describes the building as an early 19th century tavern (1820), operating when the surrounding area was farmland and orchards. The house itself is in a state of chronic and extreme neglect with broken windows, holes in the clapboard siding, and critical foundation issues. Many areas of the house are open to the elements, most certainly causing interior degradation. The house remains vacant. Without urgent intervention, this property may need to be demolished.





Nellie Lincoln Cottage
222 Dayton Street | circa 1874

The Nellie W. Lincoln Cottage was part of the former Lincoln Estate/Sever Farm in the early 19th century. After Levi Lincoln Jr.'s death in 1868, three of his sons continued to develop the estate. His eldest son, William Sever Lincoln gave this parcel of land to his son Winslow Sever Lincoln and his wife Helen Blake Webber (Nellie W.) Lincoln. The house was built circa 1880 in the Carpenter Gothic Revival, the design of which is typically on a less grand scale than a High Gothic Revival design. Since the early 20th century, the façade has undergone significant alterations including incorporating a bay window, removing the cupola and all the gingerbread decorative trim.

No improvements to the exterior of the house have been made for multiple years and the overall condition of the house has deteriorated significantly. All the wood trim needs to be restored or replaced. The wooden porch and Tudor arches are deteriorating. Of the numerous homes designed by and owned by the Lincoln family in the Elm Park Local Historic District, this house is in the greatest need of intervention, its continued deterioration may result in its demolition.





Hyman Zive Three Deckers
135 and 137 Providence Street and 5 North Woodford
Street | circa 1926-1930

The Hyman Zive Three-Deckers, located within the Providence Street Historic District in Worcester's Vernon Hill neighborhood, are among the city's most significant examples of late-period three-decker development. Constructed between 1926 and 1930 by the Dworman Building Company, these buildings showcase well-preserved Colonial Revival and Craftsman architectural detailing, including distinctive three-story porches, decorative gables, and traditional wood-clad facades. By 1930, Worcester realtor Hyman Zive owned four of the district's ten three-deckers, reflecting the neighborhood's emergence as a desirable residential area for upwardly mobile middle-class families, many of whom relocated from more densely developed sections of the city. As some of the last three-deckers constructed during Worcester's prolific building era, the Zive properties represent the evolution and refinement of a housing type that became synonymous with the city's growth and identity. Worcester is widely recognized as the birthplace and capital of the three-decker, a building form that provided affordable, high-quality housing for generations of working- and middle-class residents while shaping the character of entire neighborhoods. Preserving the Hyman Zive Three-Deckers protects not only architecturally significant examples of this iconic building type but also an important physical reminder of Worcester's social, cultural, and economic development during the early twentieth century. These structures contribute to the unique sense of place that distinguishes Worcester from other New England cities and serve as tangible links to the city's immigrant, entrepreneurial, and residential history.





Cooney Block
10 Washington Square/211-213 Summer Street | circa
1883

Tucked in between the newly revitalized Mission Chapel and the Washington Square roundabout sits the Cooney Block building at 10 Washington Square/211-213 Summer Street. According to the Massachusetts Historical Commission, the building is a “typical but important piece of Worcester’s transformation into an industrial city, its immigrant-driven economic life, and the neighborhood-based commercial culture that defined urban America in the 1800s and early 1900s.” James Cooney, a saloon keeper, originally constructed the building around 1883 on land once part of Chapin’s Brass Foundry. Records indicate that the building originally contained individual apartments with business at street level.

The Summer Street façade exhibits Victorian Gothic elements and is constructed of hard-fired red brick walls. The original arched windows with stone keystone remain intact, albeit with some decay. There are vines and other vegetation encroaching from neighboring buildings. Despite this neglect, the structure seems architecturally sound and can be described as solid, historic and utilitarian, with just enough ornament to show craftsmanship.

Considering its strategic, convenient location (easy walkability to St. Vincent’s Hospital, the Homewood Suites Hotel, Union Station, the DCU Center, and countless restaurants) this would be a prime candidate for rehabilitation to inject more housing supply to Worcester - while preserving an historic property. The current owners petitioned the Worcester Historical Commission in July for its demolition and will likely do so within the next year.





Gas Street Lamps | circa 1897

Worcester was once a city of gas streetlamps. At its peak in the 1920s, the city boasted 2,000 of them. Now, only 27 remain, many of which are more than 125 years old. Their presence on our streets is history hidden in plain sight. The invention of the gas mantle by Baron Von Welsbach in the 1890s was a significant improvement over the gasoline lamps of that era. Within a few years they would all be replaced by this new style of gas lamp, what would become known as “The Welsbach”. The City of Worcester entered a contract with The Welsbach Company of Baltimore in 1897. They installed and cared for the lamps for the next 70 years. The popularity and lower cost of the incandescent bulb led to the steady demise of gas streetlamps. In 1936, Worcester’s mayor, Walter J. Cookson vowed to have all the gas lamps on Worcester’s streets replaced with incandescent ones and in the 1950s, City Manager McGrath had over 400 lamps replaced. A large quantity of The Welsbach lamps were removed from downtown during the period of urban renewal and in preparation for the new Worcester Mall. By 1967 there were only 68 streetlamps left in the city. Today’s remaining 27 gas streetlamps are scattered throughout the city. Some are in better shape than others; many are cared for by vigilant neighbors as well as City workers. The threat they face comes in many forms: encroaching development, snowplow and car accidents, vandals, construction, and maintenance and parts availability. These delicate, glowing mantles encased by glass globes sit atop of 400 pounds of Victorian iron, silently cast their moody glow. Their light is quickly being outshone by the artificial sharpness of the modern LED streetlight. These precious few remaining gas streetlamps harken back to the beauty of our city. They serve as beacons to our glorious past. As long as we care for them, they will continue to burn brightly.



Restoration Commendation

Before:



After:



Belulah Perry Foulder & Alexander Foulder House
27 Montague Street | circa 1915

This year, we are proud to highlight the Belulah Perry Foulder & Alexander Foulder House which is a wonderful example of a caring renovation project. This Prairie Style American Foursquare house was built in 1915 and appeared on our 2022 and 2024 Endangered Structures Lists, with some boarded up windows, the side porch in disrepair, shingles in terrible condition and a neglected roof. Despite its condition, much of the original structure had not been altered. The exterior, and possibly the interior, has undergone complete restoration transforming the property. The restoration is in keeping with the original style of the building and has given a huge boost to a neighborhood where there are several structures in various states of neglect.

