



Martin and Mary Tunney House
139 Vernon Street | circa 1916

The Martin and Mary Tunney House at 139 Vernon Street was built in 1916 as a two story (2 ½ decker) multi-family home. It is listed as a part of the historic Vernon Street Area, which encompasses the farm and suburban houses that predate the Three Decker housing boom that occurred on Vernon Hill in the early twentieth century. It has Craftsman-style elements with a wood frame, wood shingle siding, wood clapboards, a front gable roof, a detailed entrance porch that wraps around the side, side double gabled dormers and a bracketed cornice.

This house was part of "the lace curtain district" at the time; a fashionable address for financially successful, largely white-collar Irish families (and some Swedes), who were still excluded from the middle-class neighborhoods on the West Side. Martin Tunney was born in Worcester in 1871 to Irish immigrant parents and Mary Tunney (née Loftus) emigrated from Ireland in 1887 when she was about 13 years old. They married in 1895 and lived at 139 Vernon Street with their many children from 1916 to 1950. Martin was a saloon keeper/bartender at 594 Millbury Street for about two decades.

139 Vernon Street has been vacant for years (since at least 2020) and is currently facing serious deferred maintenance such as a sagging upper porch, deteriorating shingles and clapboards and broken windows. There is currently a "Red X" on the exterior indicating that it is unsafe. The house was included in a WGBH article in February of this year on vacant properties. It details some troubling interior conditions (knocked out walls, electric wiring hanging from the ceiling, broken glass on floor). This is this house's first appearance on the Endangered Structure's list.





Thomas Anderson House
206 May Street | circa 1892

Built in 1892, 206 May Street is a handsome and mostly unmodified example of late 19th century Shingle Style residential architecture. This single-family home retains much of its original intricately shingled siding around the entire second story. Its front-facing gable roof with multi-level eaves is a design that appears in less than 20% of all Shingle Style examples.

206 May Street was part of the 1890 subdivision plan of a section of May, Chandler, and Courtland streets commissioned by George A. Thayer and drawn up by the civil engineering firm of Fay and Burbank. In 1892, Thayer sold the lot to Thomas Anderson, a carpenter, who built the structure we see today. Anderson sold the house in 1893 shortly after its completion.

The home has been vacant for many years. City records indicate that permits were pulled for interior work in 2017, but since then the property appears to have suffered a fire that caused severe interior damage. There do not seem to have been any attempts to renovate the structure; it appears to be uninhabitable. The frontmost gable's two narrow double-hung windows have been removed and covered by plywood. Additionally, a 6-pane square window and a small square decorative paned window have also been boarded over.

The building is currently owned by an LLC. It appeared on Preservation Worcester's Most Endangered Structures List in 2020, 2023, and 2024.





J. Frank Quinn House
900 Main Street | circa 1887

900 Main Street is also known as The J. Frank Quinn House, a unique example of the popular Queen Anne style of its era. The side gabled design is not common with this style and the north facing side has features of the less common shingle style. This house was designed by the well-known Worcester architect Amos P. Cutting and built by Urgel Jaques in 1887. Amos P. Cutting was most known for his work on the Wesson House at 8 Clairmont Street and his many churches and municipal buildings throughout New England. J. Frank Quinn, son of Irish immigrants, was the longtime proprietor of J. Frank's Mens Furnishing stores with locations on Main, Front and Green streets.

The Quinn House exhibits classical characteristics of the Queen Anne style with an emphasis on surface textures. This structure's most unique feature is its use of many different shingle shapes. In addition, there are two recessed porches with spindle works and large brackets. The asymmetrical facade is framed by an unusual tower within a tower on the left and a more traditional tower on the right. The structure sits directly opposite the Pilgrim Church and is surrounded by many other Victorian era buildings that are well maintained. The property is suffering from long-deferred maintenance with signs of serious problems throughout its structure. This property is also in financial trouble with taxes owed to the City of Worcester.

Cow Tavern

272 Salisbury Street | circa 1780





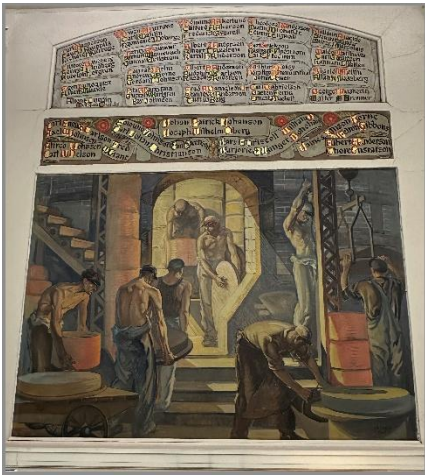
Cow Tavern
274 Salisbury Street | circa 1780

Cow Tavern was built in the Federal style circa 1780. The building is of 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 condition of the roof remains uncertain, however, given the overall neglect of the house, it is reasonable to assume that it may leak. The house remains vacant. Without urgent intervention, this property may need to be demolished.

Norton Company Administration Building





One New Bond Street circa 1980

The Norton Company Administration Building at One New Bond Street is an elegant commercial building built of brick and stone. Erected in 1890, the building is significant for its architecture as well for the important role it played in the life of one of Worcester's most significant companies, Norton Company (now St. Gobain). Founded in 1858, St Gobain is the world's largest manufacturer and supplier of abrasives.

Encased in the administrative building is Norton Hall, Norton Company's stunning tribute to its workforce and Worcester's industrial legacy. In 1927 noted muralist Arthur Covey adorned a grand hall with a stunning ornamental tree, large murals and calligraphy. The tree visually depicts the history of the company from the founders through acquisitions and expansions. The surrounding murals which traverse the grand hall contain a painted history of the original process of building grinding wheels with murals depicting the mining of bauxite through to shipment and industrial use of grinding wheels. The names of employees with twenty-five year's service are painted in large script and adorn the tree and room panels. Two special panels pay tribute to Norton employees who gave the ultimate sacrifice for our country.





J. Marcus Rice Block
29-35 Pleasant Street | circa 1874

The Lower Pleasant Street District—located between Main and Chestnut Streets—comprises the only surviving row of Victorian-era commercial buildings in downtown Worcester. Constructed between 1872 and 1890, the buildings on the north side of Pleasant Street are architecturally significant and were recognized as such with their inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.

While several of the interconnected structures along Pleasant Street exhibit varying degrees of deferred maintenance, the J. Marcus Rice Block, constructed circa 1874, merits particular attention. Not only does it stand out for its distinctive Second Empire–style front façade, but it also raises serious concerns due to the deteriorated condition of its rear elevation facing Pearl Street.

The Pleasant Street façade remains a strong example of its era, featuring a mansard roof, dormer windows, and prominent oriel windows. However, signs of aging are evident: cracked masonry, peeling paint, damaged windows, and a boarded-up storefront at #29 contribute to a perception of neglect. While these issues may appear primarily cosmetic, they can lead to further deterioration if unaddressed.

More concerning is the condition of the building's rear façade. The Pearl Street side features rusted, broken, or missing fire escapes and compromised railings—posing significant life safety hazards. Numerous windows and doors are boarded or lead to unsafe, inaccessible areas. The prevalence of graffiti, coupled with recurring issues of vegetation overgrowth and garbage accumulation raises concern about public safety, sanitation, and the building's broader impact on the surrounding neighborhood.





Victorian Porches | circa late 19th and early 20th century

Victorian-style porches are a defining architectural feature of many historic homes in Worcester, reflecting the city's prosperity during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These porches, often adorned with intricate spindlework, turned columns, and decorative brackets, embody the craftsmanship and ornate detailing characteristic of the Queen Anne and Stick styles popular in the period. They served not only as transitional spaces between the private home and the public street but also as social hubs, reflecting the era's emphasis on community and display of personal success. Preserving these porches maintains the historical integrity of Worcester's neighborhoods, offering a tangible link to the city's cultural and architectural heritage and illustrating the broader trends of American domestic architecture during its period of greatest growth and development.





Gas Street Lamps

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 Co 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’s were removed from downtown during the period of urban renewal and in preparation for the new Worcester Mall. By 1967 there were only 68 of 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. 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.





Carriage Houses, Garages & Other Ancillary Structures

The construction of carriage houses dates back to the early and mid-1800's at a time when roads became more established and horse drawn carriages were widely used. Carriage houses were free-standing structures, with large open space on the first floor, high ceilings and often a small living area for the driver or groomsman on a second floor or loft. As cars replaced carriages, garages replaced carriage houses.

Today, many of these historically and architecturally significant carriage houses and early garages have been torn down or are in a state of serious neglect. In addition to their historical significance, many of these structures have the potential to be converted for use as additional living or other use space.