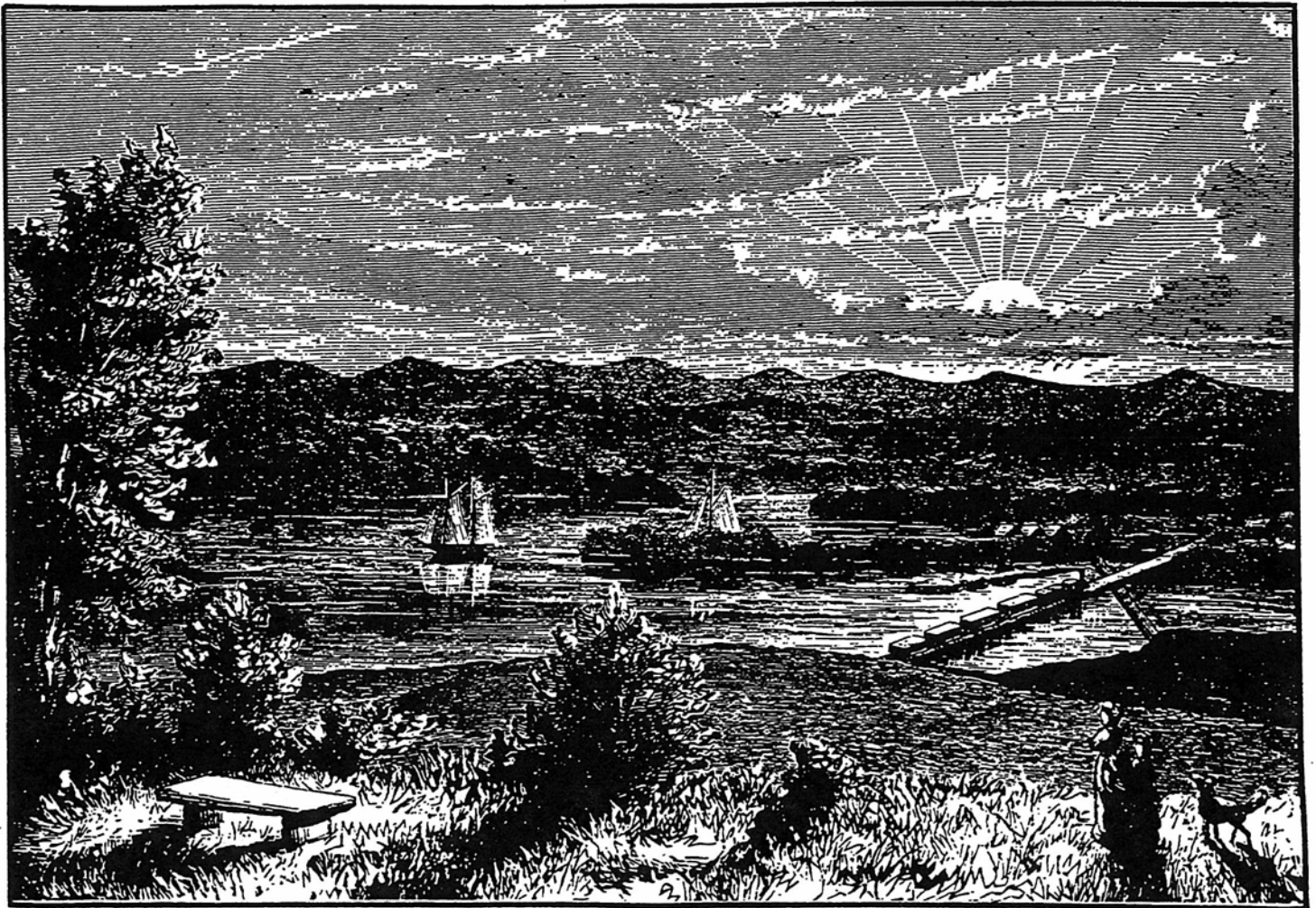
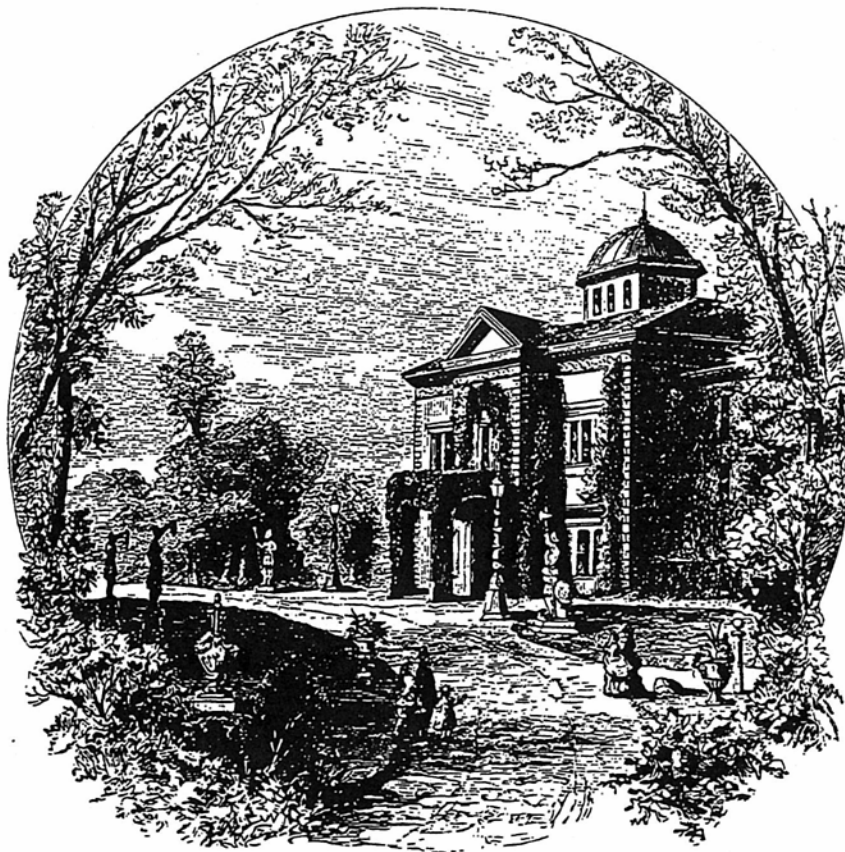


Guide to the
**Western
Promenade**
Portland, Maine



Prepared by:
Greater Portland Landmarks, Inc.



Bramhall - John Bundy Brown House, 1876.

HISTORY OF THE WESTERN PROMENADE

Portland's Western Promenade neighborhood occupies the edge of a plateau known as Bramhall Hill, named for George Bramhall, a 17th century land owner in the area. When the first Europeans settled Portland ca. 1632, the present-day Western Promenade area was heavily forested and contained a sizable swamp. As late as 1745, the area was so densely overgrown that the inhabitants of Falmouth Neck (as Portland was known until 1786) were compelled to clear it lest it provide cover for an expected Indian attack.

Throughout the 18th and early 19th century this western end of the Portland peninsula remained undeveloped and provided the residents of the town with a place to walk, picnic and shoot birds. Its then remoteness led to the establishment of the Maine State Arsenal there in 1824, on the site now occupied by the Maine Medical Center. Nearby, Portland's second public burial ground was laid out in 1829, as the Western Cemetery. The Western Promenade (along with its eastern counterpart on Munjoy Hill) was laid out in 1836, as a public walk and carriage way commanding the view over (then) unspoiled countryside to the White Mountains beyond, eventually giving its name to an entire residential quarter.

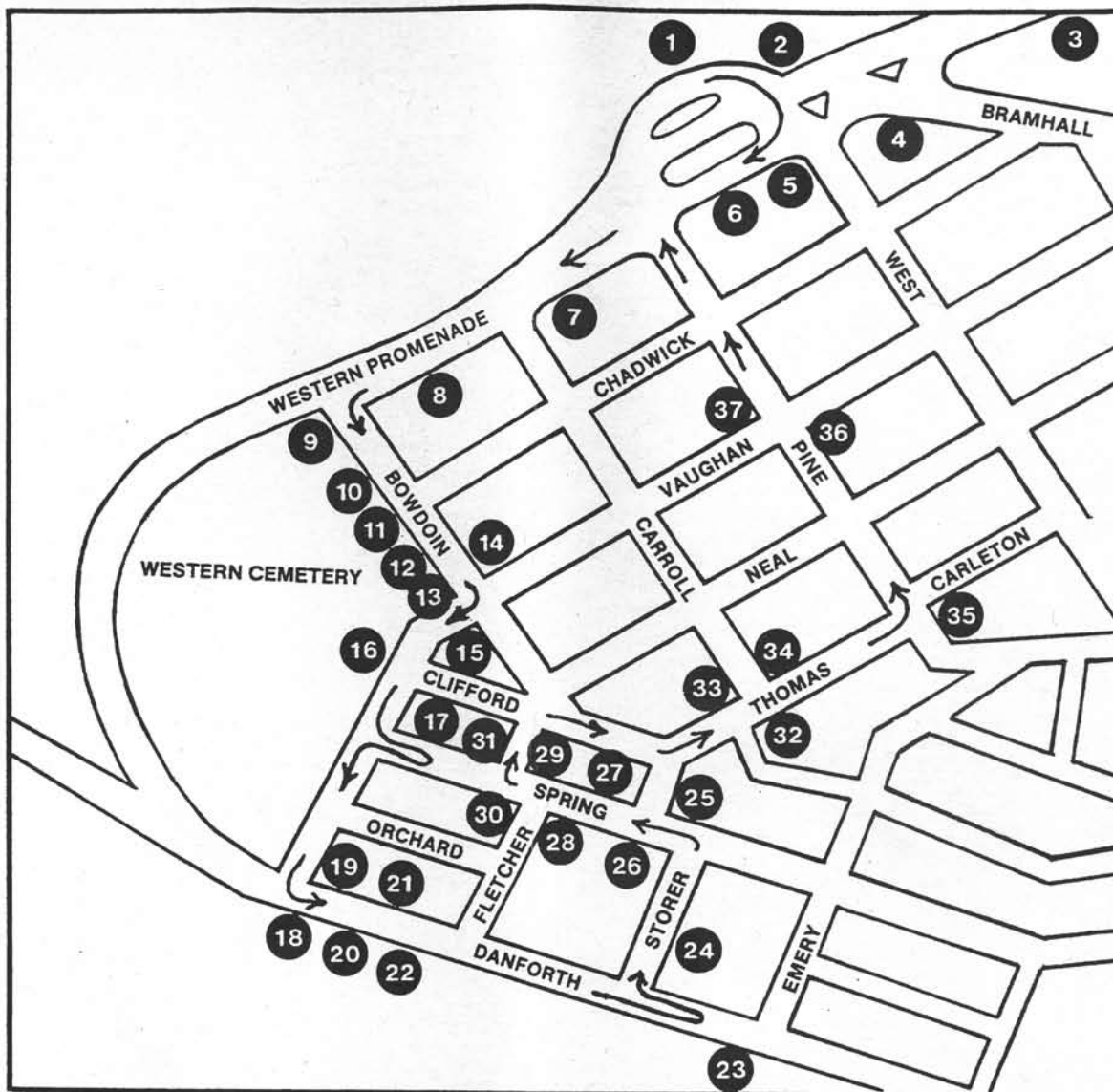
The residential development of the Western Promenade began in the late 18th century when William Vaughan, a wealthy merchant, began buying up land in the area. To increase the value of his 400 acre holdings he promoted the building of Vaughan's Bridge (opened in 1800) and laid out Bridge St. (now part of Danforth) to connect it with the town. Unfortunately for Vaughan, the Embargo Act of 1807 ruined Portland's commerce and his fortune vanished, his lands taken by creditors. Today William Vaughan is memorialized by Vaughan Street and is represented by his wooden house on Danforth Street, built in 1799, the oldest in the area.

The spectacular prosperity that Portland later enjoyed in the mid 19th century, fueled by its booming seaborne and rail traffic, sparked the first real development of the Western Promenade neighborhood. The 1850's and early 60's saw the construction of several elaborate private estates including the Storer House on

Danforth St. and the largest of them all, "Bramhall," the J.B. Brown estate which dominated the Promenade itself until its demolition in 1915.

However, it was not prosperity alone that finally opened up the area. The Great Portland Fire of July 4, 1866, laid waste to one third of the city and left 10,000 homeless. Virtually overnight new streets of houses, many sporting fashionable mansard roofs, sprang up in the west end of Portland. More imposing residences in a wide array of mid-Victorian styles favored lots closer to the Promenade or on Spring St. Firmly established as the city's showplace residential neighborhood after the 1866 Fire, the Western Promenade continued to develop throughout the later 19th and early 20th centuries and remains today as one of America's best-preserved Victorian residential neighborhoods. The area was entered on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

The high quality of the area's architecture is due in large part to a succession of talented architects. Charles A. Alexander (1822-1882) provided the designs for many of the earliest estates including "Bramhall" and the Spring mansions. Other architects who contributed to the early development of the area included Henry Rowe (1810-1870) whose specialty was gothic cottages and George M. Harding (1827-1910) whose ornate residential commissions equal his better known commercial work in Portland's Old Port area. Around the turn of the century, Frederick A. Tompson (1857-1906) designed many prominent area residences. By far the most influential and prolific architects of the Western Promenade area were Francis Fassett (1823-1906) and John Calvin Stevens (1855-1940). The undisputed leader of his profession in the 1870's, Fassett designed many of the major area structures of the day including the Maine General Hospital and the Williston West Church as well as several schools and his own home on Pine Street. From the early 1880's to the 1930's Stevens worked in a wide range of styles from the Queen Anne and Romanesque, popular at the beginning of his career, to the Mission Style of the 1920's, but the architect is best known for his pioneering efforts in the Shingle and Colonial Revival styles, examples of which abound in this area.



1. Western Promenade

First laid out in 1836, the Western Promenade represents an early effort at "civic improvement" in Portland. The present design dates from the turn of the century when it was incorporated by Mayor James Phinney Baxter. From an elevation of 175 feet above sea level, the Western Promenade commands a spectacular view of the highlands of western Maine and the White Mountains of New Hampshire. On clear days numerous distant peaks can be seen, including Mt. Washington rising on the horizon seventy-five miles to the northwest.

2. Thomas Brackett Reed Statue
1910

Thomas Brackett Reed, 1839-1902, served Portland in the House of Representatives, 1876-1899. A leader in the Republican Party, Reed was three times Speaker of the House and earned the nickname "Czar Reed" for his iron-fisted domination of that body. As late as 1910, this site on the Western Promenade was touted as a location for a new Maine Statehouse. After the capital was moved from Portland to Augusta in 1832, schemes were proposed periodically to lure the legislature back. Here in the 1880's John Calvin Stevens produced a design for an imposing medieval-styled structure, but to no avail.

3. Maine General Hospital, 1871-1894
22 Bramhall Street

Francis Fassett, architect
High Victorian Gothic

Built on the site of the Maine State Arsenal established in 1824, the Maine General Hospital first admitted patients in 1874 but was not completed until the 1890's. With its polychromed walls, high slate roofs, and spiky, crested tower, the Maine General Hospital is a fine example of Francis Fassett's work during his heyday as Portland's leading architect.



4. Adam P. Leighton House,
1902-1903

261 Western Promenade
Frederick A. Tompson, architect
Colonial Revival

Adam P. Leighton is considered the father of the American post card industry, whose Portland-based business accounted for a significant part of the city's trade in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. His house is a fine colonial revival performance by Frederick Tompson.

5.
William Widgery Thomas House, 1910
120 West Street

Waite and Copeland, architects — Colonial Revival

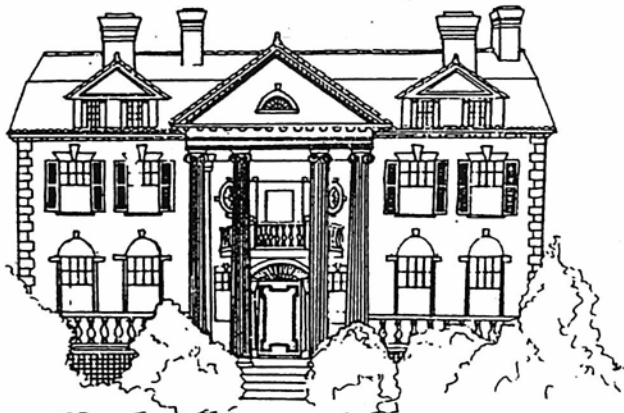
This imposing structure closely approximates a Federal-era mansion: four-square and three stories high, with an elliptical fanlight doorway, elaborate portico and cornice, and triple window at second floor level. Built as a residence for a prominent banking family, the house is now used by the Maine Medical Center.



6.
Cox-Chisholm House, 1898
Frederick A. Tompson,
architect

Second Renaissance Revival
Although originally built for
Henry P. Cox, the house was
later the home of Hugh Chis-

holm, leading promoter of the paper industry in turn-of-the-century Maine. The house is a handsome example of 1890's neo-classical design and boasts superbly crafted brickwork trimmed with orange terra cotta cast with delicate Renaissance-inspired detail.



7.
George C. West House, 1911
181 Western Promenade

Frederick A. Tompson, architect—Colonial Revival

An enormous yellow brick pastiche of "colonial" elements replete with gigantic gambrel roof and colossalic portico, the West House is one of the more grandiose examples of domestic architecture in the city.



8.
Site of "Bramhall," The John Bundy Brown Estate, 1856-1915
147-163 Western Promenade

Charles A. Alexander, architect—Italianate

To the rear of these three houses built in the 1920's stood one of Portland's most imposing residences, "Bramhall." Constructed on the profits of half a dozen successful ventures including real estate and an immense sugar refinery on the Portland waterfront, "Bramhall" was built for John Bundy Brown, Portland's leading 19th-century capitalist. Brown's estate extended north and south between Bowdoin and Pine Streets and stretched between the Promenade and Vaughan Street. At "Bramhall," Brown assembled a notable painting collection and filled the conservatory attached to his villa with sculpture.

9.
Chaplin-Small House, 1883
125 Western Promenade

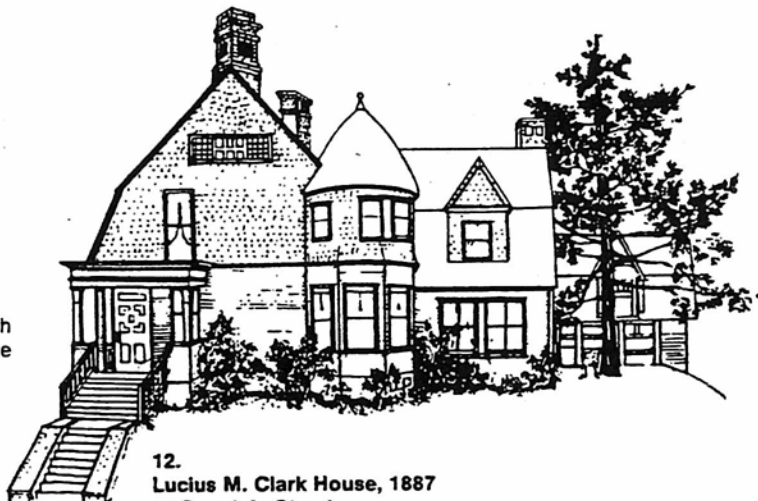
John Calvin Stevens, architect—Queen Anne

This picturesque pile was one of the earliest surviving residences on the Western Promenade. Already a large structure when first built, it was further enlarged in 1914 with the original architect John Calvin Stevens and son, John Howard Stevens, in charge of the alterations.

10.
John Calvin Stevens House, 1884
52 Bowdoin Street
John Calvin Stevens, architect
Shingle Style



11.
Montgomery S. Gibson House, 1885-1886
44 Bowdoin Street
John Calvin Stevens, architect
Shingle Style



12.
Lucius M. Clark House, 1887
40 Bowdoin Street
John Calvin Stevens, architect
Shingle Style

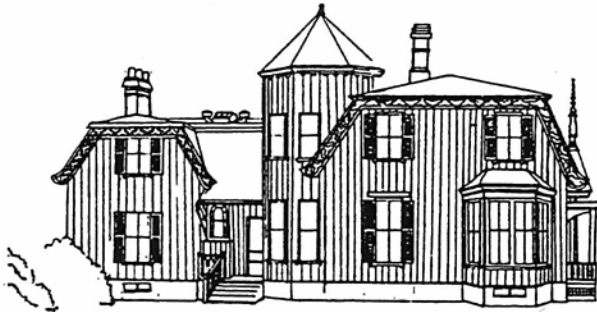
13.
Henry L. Houghton House, 1887
36 Bowdoin Street
John Calvin Stevens, architect
Shingle Style

Virtually every house on the block of Bowdoin Street between the Western Promenade and Vaughan Street is the work of Portland's most famous architect, John Calvin Stevens. Most notable is the row of early shingle style residences on the south side of the street, particularly number 52, the house the architect built for himself in 1884. The shingle style became popular in the 1880's as an alternative to the overwrought architecture of the Queen Anne and Stick Styles and is a reflection of the increasing sense of nostalgia that the people of the fast-changing late 19th century felt for a simpler time. They looked to early New England with its simple shingled houses hugging the sea, and John Calvin Stevens became one of the most skillful and influential exponents of the new style. Besides featuring an exterior that emphasized a uniform covering of shingles (at least on the upper stories) the shingle style favored a unity of outline with great enveloping roofs. Stevens was noted for his use of the old fashioned colonial "gambrel" roof which can be seen on his own house.



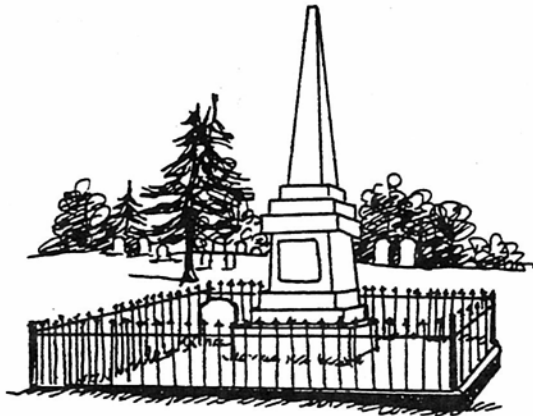
14.
Richard Webb House, 1906-07
 29 Bowdoin Street
 John Calvin Stevens and John Howard Stevens, architects
 Colonial Revival

Steven's use of colonial elements in the Shingle Style later gave way to a more overt imitation of colonial forms as can be seen by the numerous Colonial Revival houses that John Calvin and his son John Howard Stevens erected for clients in the West End in the early 20th century. A favorite of its architects, the Webb House was described in 1915 by John Howard Stevens as "one of the best examples of the Colonial Style, being very satisfactory in its proportions and detail, and yet not an historical copy of an old house, but a new creation of the same style and with the sure feeling that is evident in the best of old colonial work."



15.
William A. Goodwin House, 1859
 75 Vaughan Street
 attributed to Henry Rowe, architect—Gothic Revival

Virtually alone when first built, this "Gothic cottage" features board and batten siding, a pinnacle on its front gable, and an abundance of pierced vergeboards or "gingerbread" under the eaves. It is an excellent example of the Gothic Revival's appeal to the Victorian suburbanite. The house has been attributed to Henry Rowe, the architect of the Gothic House on Spring Street, but it is also possible that the owner, William Goodwin, who was a civil engineer, may have designed it himself.



16.
Western Cemetery, 1829

This fifteen-acre tract was purchased by the town of Portland in 1829, as its second public burying ground. It is the final resting place of many notable Portlanders. Members of the Longfellow family, including the parents of the poet, are buried in the row of Greek Revival tombs set into the banking just inside the Vaughan Street entrance.



17.
John J. Brown House, 1845
 387 Spring Street
 Henry Rowe, architect
 Gothic Revival

One of the few remaining works by Irish-born architect Henry Rowe, the Brown House, popularly known as the "Gothic House," originally stood approximately a mile to the east on Spring Street where the Holiday Inn now stands. Threatened with destruction in 1971, it was moved to its present location by Greater Portland Landmarks. The Gothic House exhibits a rich selection of stylistic touches including a steep central gable hung with carved vergeboards, a projecting second floor "oriel," and a Tudor-arched porch. Its wooden sheathing is cut to simulate masonry and while the projecting corner buttresses may be structurally redundant in a wooden building, they complete the catalogue of Gothic quotations that make the J.J. Brown House the finest example of its type in the state.



18.
Harrison B. Brown House, 1861
 400 Danforth Street
 Architect, unknown—Italianate

Harrison Bird Brown, 1831-1915, was late 19th century Portland's best known painter. Known for his dramatic renditions of the Maine Coast and vignettes of the New England countryside, Brown carried the traditions of the Hudson River and Luminist schools of American painting into the 20th century. Many of his works were executed in an attached studio.



19.
Charles A. Alexander House, 1859
 395 Danforth Street
 Charles A. Alexander, architect
 Mansard

The designer of many early West End estates, including the Spring Mansions and Bramhall, Charles Alexander erected this modest, though stylish residence in 1859. Modifications by subsequent owners include the removal of the original mansard roof (part of which remains on the rear wing) and porch.



20.
Edward A. Noyes House, 1870
 394 Danforth Street
 Architect unknown—Stick Style

Edward Alling Noyes was a leader in the business and civic life of late 19th century Portland and was responsible for the city's first electric street lighting. One of the best examples of the Stick Style in New England, his house is enlivened by a host of sawn wood decorations. Note the dogs' heads that appear at the ends of the gables over the front porch entrance. Originally clapboard, the Noyes house was covered with slate after 1904.



21.
William Vaughan
 1799
 387 Danforth Street
 Architect unknown
 Federal

This modest wooden house precedes the construction of

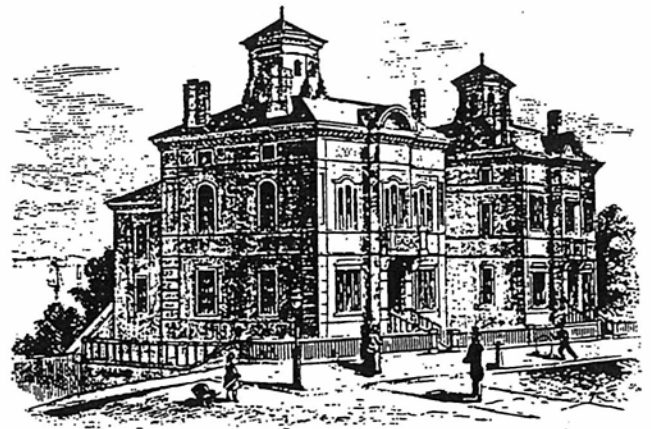
almost all other buildings in the area by fifty years and is one of the oldest on the Portland peninsula. The owner of a 400-acre tract on Bramhall Hill, Vaughan opened this part of Danforth Street hoping to spur its development. Today the symmetry of the house is a decided contrast to its Victorian neighbors.



22.
Samuel Rumery House, 1875
 380 Danforth Street
 Architect unknown
 Stick Style

A textbook example of the Stick Style, the Rumery house boasts an elaborate overlay of

skeletal decoration. Gables and porches are carefully "braced" as are the projecting bay windows. The gables are further enriched by applied vertical stick work.



23.
Andrew and Samuel Spring Mansions, 1855
 300-308 Danforth Street
 Charles A. Alexander, architect—Italianate

Financed by the profits of the hide and tallow trade with Buenos Aires, Andrew and Samuel Spring, uncle and nephew, built these "twin" mansions. They are prime examples of "cubical" Italian villas: square houses with a central cupola, not unlike the villas or casinos erected by Italian nobility during the Renaissance. At first glance identical, there are subtle differences between the two designs.

24.
Site of the Horace Storer House, 1862
 3 Storer Street
 George M. Harding, architect—Italianate

Built as the "suburban" residence of a prosperous businessman, the Storer house once commanded an unobstructed view of the harbor and was surrounded by landscaped grounds. In spite of the loss of its original cupola and the addition of a stair tower, many features of its "Italian Villa" styling survived until a devastating fire in 1987 forced its demolition in 1988, including the bracketed cornice, quoined corners, and classical portico. The building housed the primary grades of Waynflete School.



25.
Harry Butler House, 1892-94
 1 Thomas Street
 John Calvin Stevens, architect
 Richardsonian Romanesque

This finely sited residence

was built for banker and philanthropist Harry Butler. The solid brickwork, swelling tower, and rough stone lintels over the deep window openings suggest the massive Romanesque style; even the wooden veranda is a weighty construction and shelters a wide arched opening. The orange tile roof, which adds an interesting textural and color contrast, is an unusual appendage to a Portland building but is in keeping with the Romanesque tradition.



26.
Sidney Thaxter House, 1890
 356 Spring Street
 Albert Winslow Cobb, architect—Colonial Revival

This early Colonial Revival house, designed by Albert Winslow Cobb during his brief partnership with J.C. Stevens, was built for Civil War hero Sidney Thaxter, who removed his flour and grain business from Bangor to Portland in 1874. Mrs. Thaxter won fame in the 1910's as the leader of the Maine Association Opposed to Women's Suffrage.

27.
Benjamin B. Farnsworth House, 1867-68
 357 Spring Street
 Architect unknown
 Italianate



28.
George P. Wescott House, 1874
 364 Spring Street
 Architect unknown
 Italianate



29.
Ammi Whitney House, 1877-78
 365 Spring Street
 Francis Fassett, architect
 Italianate

30.
Jonathan H. Fletcher House, 1870
 366 Spring Street
 Architect unknown
 Italianate

These four nearly contemporary houses on Spring Street demonstrate the vitality and variety of the Italianate style in Portland. The Fletcher House strikes a Renaissance Revival pose with its symmetrical distribution of architectural features such as quoins and window surrounds executed in brick and originally stuccoed and painted to resemble stone. Next door, the Wescott House shows a similarly robust approach to masonry design and is notable for its generous complement of original ironwork. The Whitney House and the Farnsworth House demonstrate highly colored effects using different means. The Whitney House contrasts red brick with painted stone and wood details, while the Farnsworth House has its abundance of wooden ornaments picked out in different hues, authentically recreating its original Victorian appearance.



31.
Israel Washburn House, 1869-70
 375 Spring Street
 George M. Harding, architect—Italianate

Israel Washburn, 1813-1883, was a leading mid-19th century Maine politician. In the 1850's he served in Congress with two of his brothers, each representing a different state. Washburn is credited with naming the Republican Party at its founding in 1854, and was an early supporter of Abraham Lincoln for president. Governor of Maine at the outbreak of the Civil War, he was largely responsible for the State's enthusiastic response to Lincoln's call for troops. Named by the President to the lucrative post of Collector of the Port of Portland in 1863, Washburn moved from Orono, Me. and later built this house in which he spent the remainder of his life.



32.
Seth Hersey House, 1866-67
 35 Thomas Street
 Architect unknown
 Swiss

The Swiss style had been advocated by early Victorian promoters of picturesque design such as A.J. Downing, but actual examples of the style are very rare. The high roofs and elaborate pierced sawn woodwork of the Hersey House contribute to the look of the traditional Swiss Chalet.



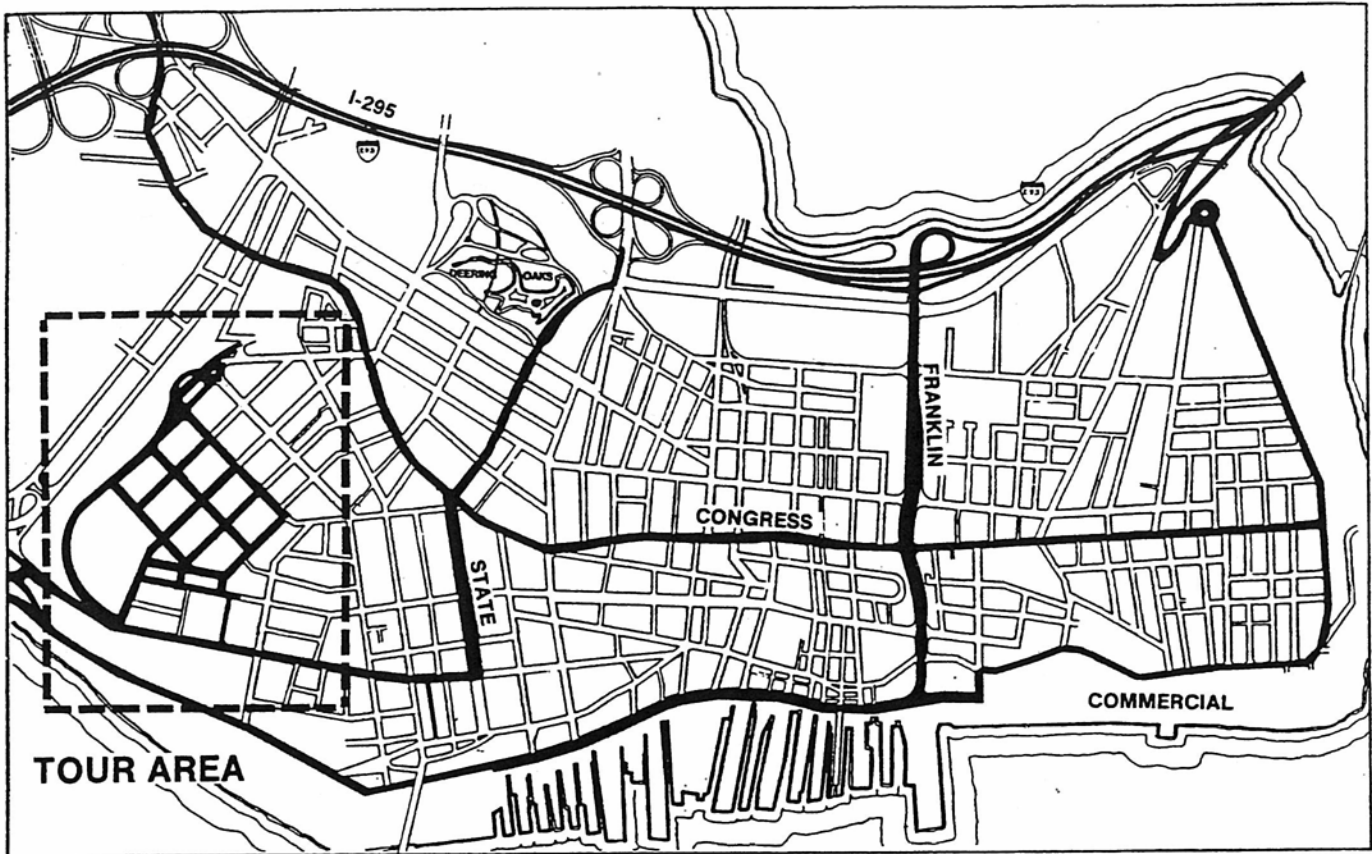
33.
Williston Congregational Church, 1877
 32 Thomas Street
 Francis Fassett, architect—High Victorian Gothic

The Williston Church is another fine example of Francis Fassett's work in the High Victorian Gothic mode, displaying flat red brick surfaces with cleanly-cut openings and bands of patterned brick work. Aside from being one of the most notable examples of ecclesiastical architecture of the era in Portland, the Williston Church is historically important as the site of the founding of the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor in 1881. J.C. Stevens added the parish house to the rear in 1906.



34.
Portland Tenement House Co. Block, 1872-73
 1-7 Carroll Street
 Architect, unknown—Italianate

This four-unit row house, a type of housing rarely found in this part of the West End, demonstrates a vigorously Victorian esthetic. Note the complex rhythm of bay windows, pediments, and porches complemented by a lively painting scheme that emphasizes the elaborate architectural effect of the brickwork.



35.
Francis Fassett House, 1876
117-119 Pine Street
Francis Fassett, architect
High Victorian Gothic

Francis Fassett built this duplex for himself and his son Edward, also an architect, in the Centennial year of 1876. Observe how simple materials such as red brick, freestone, wood, slate, and iron are combined within a consistently vertical framework that evokes the soaring architecture of the Middle Ages—the essence of the High Victorian Gothic.



37.
Richard S. Ward House, 1893
150 Vaughan Street
John Calvin Stevens,
architect
Queen Anne

In spite of the loss of part of its original curved porch, the Richards-Ward House remains a fine example of the more restrained forms of the Queen Anne style. Resembling a small English manor house, it is finely sited and its workmanship in brick, terra cotta and slate and stone is of the finest available to the Victorian builder.



36.
Elizabeth M. MacDonald
House, 1882
161 Pine Street
John Calvin Stevens,
architect
Queen Anne

An early effort by John Calvin Stevens while still a partner of Fassett, the MacDonald House is an unusually symmetrical residence in the Queen Anne Mode. Its Victorian origins, however, are evident in the contrasting colors, materials, and textures. The use of terra cotta ornament is worth notice, especially the pair of owls perched in the dormer pediments. Also note the original carriage house on Pine Street and the equally elaborate caretaker's cottage on Vaughan Street.

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