

The Atwater Neighborhood



WALKING TOUR

ATWATER NEIGHBORHOOD BROCHURE

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On the cover:

*George Atwater Estate (1854-late 1950's).
As photographed in 1934.*

The Atwater Neighborhood

Atwater is Springfield's smallest and one of its most attractive neighborhoods. The wooded area is primarily residential, with less than 1,000 inhabitants. Located on bluffs rising above the Connecticut River, Atwater is bounded by Baystate Medical Center, Van Horn Park, the Chicopee line, and Interstate-91.

Atwater is named for George M. Atwater, who established Springfield's streetcar system in 1869. George Atwater built an estate north of the city on bluffs over the Connecticut River traditionally called "Rockrimmon" after a mountain mentioned in the Bible. The estate covered over 300 acres, stretching from the Connecticut River at today's Brightwood into Chicopee.

Atwater's house at Rockrimmon, the first suburban house in Springfield, was built in 1854. Nationally-known architect, Richard Upjohn (who also designed St. George's Greek Orthodox Cathedral) designed the thirty-eight room house in the Virginia Colonial style, as Atwater was a native Virginian. Atwater originally used the house only in the summer, remaining downtown in the winter months. Abandoned for many years after Atwater's death, it became known as the "Spooky House" and burned to the ground in the late 1950's. A smaller house connected with the estate was used as a residence until construction of Interstate-91 cleared it away in the late 1960's.

In George Atwater's time, the Rockrimmon Estate was one of the finest nature preserves in the Springfield area. It was planted with 15,000 trees representing over thirty varieties. Eugene C. Gardner, architect and neighbor of Atwater's,

wrote in 1905:

This large tract belonging to the Atwater Estate has been virtually an open natural park for nearly half a century. It is wholly unadorned, some portions of it primeval, in fact, and thereby all the more delightful. There is no spot within many miles of the City where to judge from the natural conditions, the wild fox would be more likely to dig his hole unscared, where the deep forest songbirds find themselves so much at home....

Open to the public, the estate had narrow wagon paths, a golf course, and a stone patio outlook over the Connecticut River. After George Atwater's death, the Commonwealth considered making the preserve one of the first Massachusetts state parks.

The second person to move to the Atwater area was Atwater's friend and editor at the Springfield Republican, Dr. Josiah G. Holland. In 1862, Dr. Holland bought some property from Atwater at the head of present-day Holland Street and built an Italianate villa near the site of present-day 110 Atwater Terrace. The villa's architect was Leopold Eidlitz, who had designed Springfield's original City Hall (it burned in 1905).

Dr. Holland named the villa "Brightwood" because of its scenic setting facing west across the Connecticut Valley. When George Fisk, vice president of Wason Manufacturing Company, bought the house from Holland, the whole area where his company was situated took on the name of "Brightwood." The mansion remained in the Fisk family for four generations until being demolished in 1939 when the survivors could no longer maintain it.



"Brightwood" Estate, site of 110 Atwater Terrace (1862-1939). Rare photograph of Dr. Josiah G. Holland's estate before its demolition. Photographed by WPA, 1938.

At the turn-of-the-century, there were a handful of families living in this area. At Atwater's behest, the Glenwood streetcar line cut up from Chestnut Street at Atwater Terrace and Derby Dingle to continue along Atwater Road (tracks can be seen peeking through the pavement at Crestwood Street and Atwater Road) to Glenwood Circle and on to Chicopee Center. Many Springfielders rode the streetcar through the woods for outings from the congested city.

The area began to take on its current residential character after George Atwater's death in 1902. His will stipulated that his estate remain intact for ten years. During this period, the Massachusetts Institute for Technology considered moving from Boston and examined the Atwater Estate as a potential site, but MET decided on building its new campus in Cambridge.

Atwater's heirs decided to develop the area as a residential district of both "costly" and "modest" homes. They hired the firm of Boston's

Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., son of America's greatest landscape designer, to develop a plan which would "add to the beauty and the value of the realty." In 1912, the Atwater Realty Company erected the buff brick-and-sandstone gates at Springfield Street and Atwater Terrace and began developing the real estate.

In 1923, Atwater's daughter, Mrs. Howard Weaver, offered 72 acres rising above North Main Street to the City as park-land. This area remained in its natural state until the mid-1960's, when Interstate-91 was cut through. Before reaching the Interstate-391 turnoff and the bridge over the Connecticut River driving north, you will notice the remaining wooded parkland on both sides of the highway.

Exploring Atwater

Atwater can be entirely explored on foot in about two hours. Start your tour at the Atwater Park Gates at Springfield Street and Atwater Terrace and proceed up Atwater Terrace and Road all the way to Glenwood Circle. Return via Springfield Street with detours into Caseland, Cunningham, Shefford Streets and Derby Dingle.

The following landmarks are simply highlights. There is much more to discover.

Atwater Terrace

1. 26 Atwater Terrace (1925) - Designed by the architectural firm of Eugene C. Gardner & George C. Gardner, this brick structure combines Colonial Revival design with a Tudor gable on the south side of the house. Constructed by builder Charles S. Hardy, who was responsible for over twenty properties in Atwater.

2. 36 Atwater Terrace (1924) - The builder was Charles S. Hardy and the architect was Clifton West, who designed several attractive houses in Atwater. This house has a side gambrel roof and third-floor domers characteristic of the Colonial Revival Style.

3. 46 Atwater Terrace (1922) - Another handsome Colonial designed by Gardner & Gardner. The roof of this side-gabled colonial is similar to about 25% of all Revival houses.

4. 53 Atwater Terrace (1914) - It was designed by Gardner & Gardner and built by Joseph G. Roy, it is the only house in Atwater with a turret and shingles characteristic of the Victorian Queen Anne style. It was built for Walter Rice, a manager of Rice & Lockwood Lumber Company.



53 Atwater Terrace (1914). A Gardner & Gardner Queen Anne turret. Photographed by WPA, 1938-40.

5. 54 Atwater Terrace (1921) - This Tudor home was built by the team of Gardner & Gardner and J.G. Roy. Costing \$15,000, it was built for A. Linton Bausman, president of Alden Manufacturing Company.



140 Atwater Terrace (1917). An example of the Craftsman style. Photographed by WPA, 1938-40.

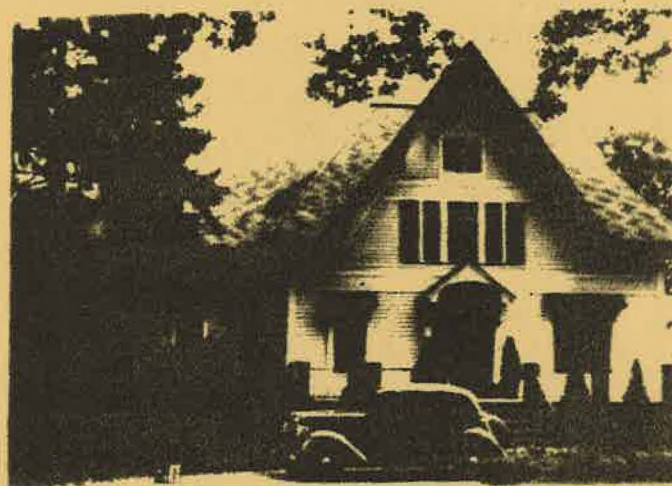
6. 140 Atwater Terrace (1917) - This house was built by George Fisk for a family member next to his "Brightwood" Estate. It is of the Craftsman style, which originated in California in the early 1900's and influenced the construction of innumerable low-pitched bungalows nation-wide. Some of the Craftsman features here include decorative beams under the gables, stained glass windows, and half timbering.

7. 163 Atwater Terrace (1908) - This is one of Atwater's more unusual houses. Its entrance is under a canopy over the driveway that extends as part of the second story. A rounded, balustraded porch projects from the end of the house. It belonged to Harriet Dickinson, then Henry C. Hyde, members of the family that owned the "Brightwood" mansion and developed Atwater Park as a residential area.

Atwater Road

8. 33 Atwater Road (1917) - This well-situated Colonial Revival house was designed by Fred Knowlton and built by C.S. Hardy for \$8,000. It once was inhabited by Bertrand J. Perry, president of Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company.

9. 43 Atwater Road (1915) - Designed by Gardner & Gardner and built by J.G. Roy at a cost of \$8,600. It has shingles on the upper story and brick below, reflecting a taste of the 1910's and 1920's to mix surface materials. Note the garage built into the basement. This was unusual for the period.



73 Atwater Road (ca. 1877). Oldest house remaining in Atwater. Photographed by WPA, 1938-40.

10. 73 Atwater Road (ca. 1877) - This is the oldest house in Atwater. George Atwater built it for family members. This cottage has elements of the Gothic Revival (cross gables) and the Stick Style (surface patterns of decorated stickwork). In the 1920's, Milton B. Reach, inventor of the "live" cork-centered baseball for Spalding Sporting Goods, bought the house.

Eugene C. and George C. Gardner:

Architects of Atwater

Two of the leading figures in developing Atwater as a residential area were Eugene C. Gardner (1836-1915) and his son George C. Gardner (1865-1930). Gardner had built one of the area's first houses for himself near the site of today's 83 Atwater Road in 1874 (it was demolished in 1936). The house was built in the Stick Style, which architectural historian Vincent Scully credits Gardner as popularizing nationally.

Gardner was Springfield's foremost architect at the turn-of-the-century, designing the Worthy Hotel, Technical High School, Bishop's Residence on Elliott Street, and numerous homes. Gardner loved the rustic quality of the Atwater area. In 1905, he proposed a beautification plan for Springfield and included parkways through Atwater and Van Horn Park as links in a system of boulevards encircling the city.

His son George played a major development role in Atwater as architect for more than a dozen homes. The high-quality Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, and Tudor houses set a standard for grace and spaciousness for Atwater during the 1910's and 1920's.

11. 102 Atwater Road (1911) - Designed by Gardner & Gardner for Dr. A. LeRoy Johnson. This house has elements of the Craftsman Style—the

low-pitched, side-gabled roof, the large second floor dormer, and the full front porch.

12. 125 Atwater Road (ca. 1907) - This early Atwater Road house was originally owned by Hiller C. Wellman, City Librarian. The shingled rectangular structure is an early Colonial Revival example with its hipped roof and Palladian detail.

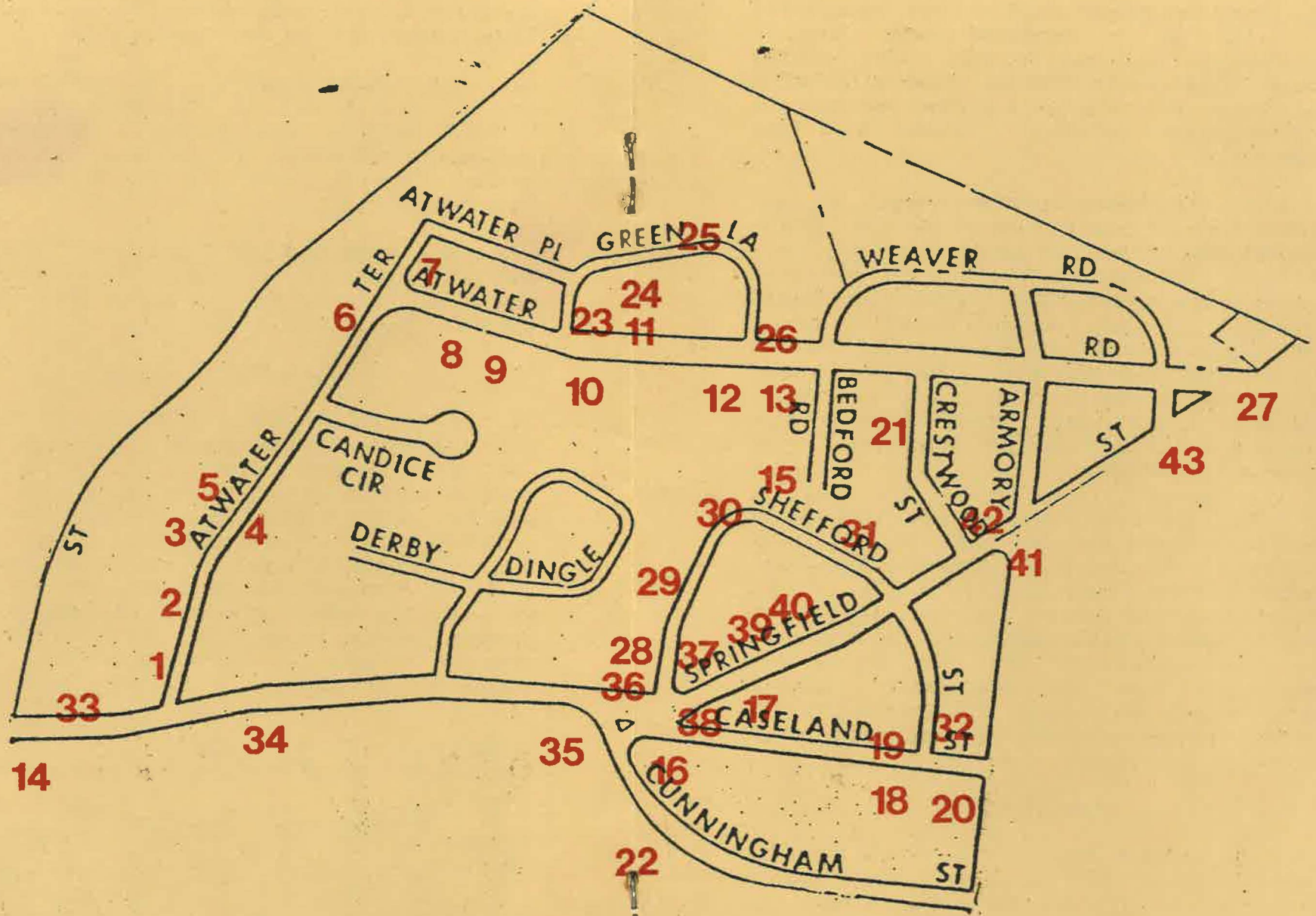
13. 143 Atwater Road (1924) - Another Gardner & Gardner commission in the Colonial Revival Style. Note that by the 1920's the full front porch had passed from favor.

Baystate Medical Center

14. 759 Chestnut Street- Springfield Hospital/Wesson Women's Hospital campus of the campus of the second largest hospital in New England. Baystate Medical Center defines one edge of the Atwater neighborhood and attracts medical personnel to the neighborhood as residents. The first Springfield Hospital was established in 1870 in a farmhouse near American International College. In 1888, the hospital moved to its present Chestnut Street site, which had been a farm. Gardner & Gardner designed the administration building, which has been replaced.



Springfield Hospital, Baystate Medical Center (1932). As photographed in the 1940's.



ATWATER

The first Springfield Hospital was established in 1870 in a farmhouse near American International College. In 1888, the hospital moved to its present Chestnut Street site, which had been a farm. Gardner & Gardner designed the administration building, which has been replaced.

In 1915, the present structure began to take shape with the construction of the F.W. Chapin (South) Wing fronting on Chestnut Street. It was designed in the Neo-Gothic Style by noted Springfield architects Guy Kirkham and Edward Parlett. The main building was filled out in 1932 by Steven & Lee of Boston. The Olmsted Brothers were responsible for the landscaping, most of which has been turned into parking spaces. Architectural Forum featured the hospital for its gracious yet functional use of space and furnishings.

In 1953, the brick Wesson Women's Hospital was erected. Additions were made to the main building in 1959 and 1972. Springfield Hospital merged with the Wesson Hospital in 1975 to form Baystate Medical Center. In 1985, the largest hospital addition was constructed. It has moved the main entrance to the rear of the main building. Note the post-modern eclectic architectural style with its towers and tall arched windows echoing the Neo-Gothic front wings.

Bedford Road

15. 28 Bedford Road (1902) - This secluded shingled house was home to Fred Lumis, Springfield's first Building Commissioner, and his wife Harriet, one of the area's leading painters. The house has an unusual form with a small entry porch at the corner of the house nearest the street and a three-storey side gable roof. Harriet Lumis's art studio is attached in the back.

Caseland Street

16. 43 Caseland Street (1921) - Caseland Street was one of the streets developed originally by Napoleon Russell. This house and 78 Caseland were the first houses built on the street. Previously, the street had been an extension of Sterling Street and the land had been covered with scrub. This Tudor Style house was built for Butterfield Ballroom owner, William J. Cook, at a cost of \$15,000.

17. 78 Caseland Street (1921) - This is one of several handsome houses designed by Max Westoff on Caseland and Shefford Streets. Westoff also designed the William Pychon Memorial Museum Building at the Quadrangle and the Shriner's Hospital. The Colonial Revival house at 78 Caseland Street is given distinction by the green-tiled hipped roof which appears Italian.

18. 101 Caseland Street (1926) - The columns on the front porch, the matching side porches, and the three attic dormers give this Colonial Revival home a sense of size. Architect J.W. Foster designed it for Luke Moran.

19. 104 Caseland Street (1921) - Another Max Westoff house. This one has a high-pitched Tudor cross gable facade, through the symmetrical layout of the house is Colonial.

20. 115 Caseland Street (1925) - This house was a model home constructed by the Building Trades Employers Association. This cottage was designed by Clifton West.

Crestwood Street

21. 44 Crestwood Street (1915) - Crestwood Street was originally called Crescent Street. Most of the houses on Crestwood were built in the early decades of the 20th century. This

house belonged to Mrs. Albert Weaver, a daughter of George Atwater. This shingled structure has a pleasant asymmetrical front porch under the overhang of the front-facing roof.

Cunningham Street

22. 51 Cunningham Street (1929) - Cunningham Street, which borders Van Horn Park, was developed later than the neighboring streets. This house was the first built on Cunningham. In the Tudor Style, it was built by J.G. Roy for his son Frederick L. Roy.

Green Lane

23. 25 Green Lane (1916) - Green Lane was laid out under the landscaping plan prepared by the Olmsted Brothers for the Atwater Realty Trust. The attractively-situated Colonial Revival house was built by J.G. Roy and owned by John M. Williams, an executive at Moore Drop Forge.

24. 51 Green Lane (1917) - This house is another collaboration of Gardner & Gardner and J.G. Roy. Among its Colonial Revival features are the three dormer windows and the full front porch supported by Doric columns.

25. 60 Green Lane (1914) - The facing gambrel gable reflects one of the Colonial Revival housing styles being built by Gardner & Gardner and J.G. Roy. Atwater Park was planned so that every house would be different, appealing to an affluent clientele. This house's first owner, Frank Whitney, a manager at Bosch Magneto Company, named it "Chestnut Ridge."

26. 100 Green Lane (1923) - Designed by Gardner & Gardner and built by C.S. Hardy. Notice how the cost of housing was rising at this time. The house at 51 Green Lane cost \$7,000 in 1917 and this house cost \$17,000 six years later.

Glenwood Circle

27. Glenwood Circle - Right on the Springfield-Chicopee border, Glenwood was named by George Atwater to describe the character of the area, which lies between Van Horn Park and Chicopee. The first building in this area occurred in the 1870's when several worker cottages were constructed on Hamburg and Farnsworth Streets.

The commercial buildings that ring Glenwood Circle date to 1918 and the establishment of A.H. Phillips Grocery Store. By the 1920's Glenwood Circle had a shoemaker, a dry goods shop, and a filling station. There even was an A & P Store. In 1985, the Circle itself was refurbished under the City's Neighborhood Open Spaces Program.

Shefford Street

28. 22 Shefford Street (1907) - Shefford Street was developed by Napoleon Russell on property he had purchase from John Stebbins. This Colonial Revival house was the first built in this area after Russell constructed his own house on the brow of Springfield Street hill.



50 Shefford Street (1919). Napoleon Russell's Tudor house, 1922-36. Photographed by WPA, 1938-40.

29. 50 Shefford Street (1919) - Napoleon Russell moved here from his Springfield Street home and stayed until he died in 1936. Fred Knowlton, a local architect and frequent collaborator, designed the massive Tudor house. Note the half-timbered and stucco second storey and the high-pitched front gables.

30. 62 Shefford Street (1916) Another home by Russell and Knowlton. It cost \$4,500. The Colonial Revival house has a suburban appearance with its spacious grounds.

31. 76 Shefford Street (1925) - Max Westoff designed this elegant Colonial Revival house. It cost Paul Langhammer, a superintendent at Package Machinery, \$17,500.

32. 170 Shefford Street (1917) - On the corner of Caseland Street, this house was the first built between Springfield Street and Van Horn Park. Napoleon Russell himself designed this large brick Colonial Revival house. The glassed-in entryway with a curved roof is particularly attractive. It was built for Harry M. Gray, Springfield's Chief City Engineer and cost \$6,000.

Napoleon Russell
Builder of Homes and Neighborhoods

One of Springfield's foremost home-builders between 1890-1920 was Napoleon Russell (1861-1920 was Napoleon Russell (1861-1935). Russell built approximately seventy homes and developed property in Forest Park, the North End, Hungry Hill and Atwater.

Russell was a French-Canadian, born in Vermont and educated in Canada. His houses form a primer of popular architectural taste, showing the many stylistic changes that took place during this era. Russell's first major commissions were six Victorian-style houses with shingles and turrets on the northern edge of Calhoun Park. He built the turreted Queen Anne manse at 672 Chestnut Street (1892) for himself.

You will find Colonial Revival and Neo-Classical elements on Russell houses on Chestnut Street and Springfield Street and Tudor Styles on Shefford and Springfield Streets. Many of Russell's houses were situated on corner lots to take advantage of the opportunity to show off their details.

Napoleon Russell also played a role in the real estate development of the Springfield, Shefford, and Caseland area of Atwater. His subdivision had minimum lot sizes setbacks to insure an attractive single-family residential area. Russell's Massassiot Realty Trust also owned the entire area between Carew, Parkside, Narragansett, and Springfield Streets in the 1920's. Russell had even proposed building a "Knob Hill Avenue" running from Carew and Prospect Streets to the corner of Springfield and Cunningham, but he sold the property and this connector was not built.



Springfield Street

33. 20 Springfield Street (ca. 1865) - This is the oldest house in the area. There had been a farm on this property at the northern end of Springfield dating to at least the early 1850's. This house, belonging to Daniel Hitchcock, has the Italianate styling of the Civil War era. Notice the brackets under the eaves and the arched top-floor window.

34. 133-35 Springfield Street (1911) - This two-family Napoleon Russell house resembles several Colonial Revival houses he built on Chestnut Street with its large front porch and Doric columns.

35. 177 Springfield Street (1924) - Perhaps Max Westoff's finest house in the Atwater area. Produce wholesaler Nicholas Zeo built this Italian Renaissance villa at a cost of \$25,000. The red ceramic-tiled roof and the arched windows and doorways typify Italian Renaissance Revival during the 1910's and 1920's. The house is particularly well-situated at the brow of Springfield Street hill opposite the modest water fountain at the Cunningham Street intersection.

36. 192 Springfield Street (1903) - One of Springfield's most strikingly situated houses. Napoleon Russell built this house for himself to open up the top of Springfield Street hill as a residential district. He lived here until 1922, when he sold the house to the Tait family. Maude Tait Moriarty, the nationally famous aviatrix, lived here until 1980. The eleven-room house is

in the Colonial Revival Style, just becoming popular at the turn-of-the-century. The Ionic columns on the full porch reflect the Classical influence. Note the attractive plantings and the hitching post in front of the house.



192 Springfield Street (1903). Napoleon Russell's Colonial Revival house, 1903-22. Photographed by WPA, 1938-40.

37. 216 Springfield Street (1921) - This must be the most elaborate two-family house in Springfield, and the only Neo-Classical house in Atwater. The recent clearance of trees from the front yard has revealed a magnificent two-story entry porch and a curved enclosed side porch.

38. 227 Springfield Street (1916) - At the top of Springfield Street hill where Caseland Street intersects, this house is one of the most dramatically situated in the neighborhood. Its large copper beech is magnificent. Designed by Fred Knowlton and built by Napoleon Russell.

39. 244 Springfield Street (1916) - Another Fred Knowlton-Napoleon Russell home. Its Tudor style derives more from Late Medieval English designs than the actual 16th-century Tudor styles.

40. 244 Springfield Street (1914) - This Colonial Revival home has twin full-front gambrel gables and a wide porch. This Russell home cost \$6,700 to build.

41. Old Glenwood School Site

Springfield-Armory-Silver Street Triangle (1904)
On this Triangle, the original Glenwood School once stood. In 1891, a one-room wooden structure was put up for \$1,400. It served about forty pupils, who came from the neighborhood. In 1910, this building was replaced by a larger brick structure, which was replaced by a yet larger structure on Morrison Terrace in 1930. The old school soon was torn down.

42. Grace Church of Christ

336 Springfield Street (1904) - This church was originally a non-denominational place of worship established by Mabel Weaver, daughter of George Atwater and wife of Albert Weaver (for whom Weaver Road was named). In 1919, it became affiliated with Assemblies of God. When the Bethany Assembly of God moved to Agawam in 1984, the Grace Church of Christ purchased the church.

The original wooden chapel was covered with Pema-stone and the open belfry was enclosed in 1956. The congregation outgrew this building and erected the larger brick structure at the corner of Crestwood Street in 1964.

43. St. Matthew's Catholic Cemetery, South side of Springfield Street, between Armory Street and Glenwood Circle - This cemetery dates to the 1840's when Irish immigrants began working at the mills of Chicopee (which was part of Springfield until 1848) and established St. Matthew's Church (changed later to Holy Name) in 1843. This cemetery was used until the late 19th century, when the current Calvary Catholic Cemetery was opened on Hampden Street on the Chicopee side of Glenwood Circle.