THE MALLEABILITY OF HOME: A GENEALOGY OF CLARK UNIVERSITY'S ENGLISH HOUSE

By Christina Rose Walcott and Justin P. Shaw, PhD

Today, the yellow house that sits at the junction of Woodland and Hawthorne Streets goes largely unnoticed by most students. Due to the pandemic, the once vibrant feeling of the house that professors reflect on with a nostalgic tone does not quite measure up to how it feels today. The feeling of "home" remains on the periphery, not quite out of reach but not quite recovered yet either. The house is "Clark far," office hours can now be conducted on Zoom, and the coffee pot sits unused. Seemingly unrelated, these features define what used to be a very lively home.

Figure 1: Anderson House at the corner of Hawthorne and Woodland Streets on the Clark University Campus; photo taken by the authors, 2022

The current house is one of the oldest in the neighborhood and sits on a small hill on a corner plot of land where it is surrounded by the grand Harrington House across Woodland Street, where Clark's Presidents reside, and the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies across Hawthorne. Beside the house on Hawthorne is the house containing offices for IDCE, and behind the house, and its parking lot, sits the stately Beck House occupied by the Philosophy Department and a small building known as the Carriage House, where the Graduate Admissions office is housed. Each of these homes, now owned by the University, is at least 100 years old, and the neighborhood now forms a portion of the Woodland Street Historic District.

Indigenous Land: Beginnings to 19th Century

Long before the University existed, the first inhabitants of what is now 12 Hawthorne Street were the Nipmuc, who called the broader surrounding area Quinsigamond. Main South as we know it today would look largely unrecognizable to the contemporary resident. In the mid-late seventeenth century, when the Nipmuc lived here, neither Hawthorne, Loudon, nor Woodland Streets existed. These were much later constructions of white settlers who cleared and partitioned the forests from land for development. The Nipmuc shaped their lives around the seasons, and likely had many forms of travel on unpaved roads traversing what became central New England.

We might need to rely on the wealth of Nipmuc stories to get a picture of what the place that is 12 Hawthorne Street may have looked like 350 years ago. Kimberly Toney, the American Antiquarian Society's Director of Indigenous Initiatives, makes the point that this land is traditional Nipmuc homelands. The institution of arbitrary borders as seen in a modern map of Worcester was a colonialist construction in the 1670s. While traces of Nipmuc architecture on this plot of land may be invisible or untraceable, it is still a part of Nipmuc homelands, and we should acknowledge this land as the fluid and borderless homelands of the Nipmuc people. We can recognize that there are unknowables because of the systemic suppression and oppression of Indigenous histories, which made it easier for the dispossession of land. We can imagine what this space that University students and staff now occupy may have looked like before colonialist settlement. We can dispute the erasure of the Nipmuc from the myth of the colonizers, pursue to include them in this written history, and give them a platform to speak truth and write their own stories. We can challenge ourselves to think outside issues of ownership, which comes with the *settler desire to control, order, and own things*.

Much of what we have been able to construct about the lives of the individuals who owned or lived at this property is due to privilege. Their racial and class status afforded them an advantage not only in their social lives but also in how they are (often over-)represented in the archive of genealogical and property records. This is especially true for the men who experienced this land as an instrument for gendered transactions and generational wealth-building. Jean O'Brien highlights the neglect of marginalized groups, particularly Indigenous people, in the reasoning for her methodology which resists using genealogy to reconstruct the histories of Indigenous people.[1] Marisa J. Fuentes focuses on the production of the archive and confronts the historical gaps that are present in the archive. Her methodology on how to read "along the bias grain"[2] shaped our readings of archival texts, specifically regarding the colonial construction of deeds and how they were used in the erasure of the Nipmuc. The fact that the Nipmuc do not appear in these deeds itself constitutes historical evidence.

With the ultimate goal of Indigenous justice in mind on the 300th anniversary of Worcester's founding, we approached this study about the histories of the House and land by diligently researching a variety of records such as property deeds, city directories, census schedules, early maps, oral histories, vital records, and geographical narratives. Despite the awareness that it was unlikely that the Nipmuc would be acknowledged or included somewhere in this record, we hoped with each passing owner that we would come across them somewhere in this history.

Attempting to disrupt the Nipmuc, seventeenth century men such as Daniel Gookin claimed the lands near Lake Quinsigamond for English settlement. His initial attempts failed but Gookin, along with Thomas Prentice and Daniel Henchman, renamed the Indigenous land here Worcester, likely to commemorate Oliver Cromwell's then-famous victory over the royalists in the English Civil War.[3] By 1684, the land was surveyed into 480 plots totaling some 43,000 acres[4], which likely included the land now associated with Clark University and English House. While Henchman was the only one of them to actually live in the new settlement, each of these men had been soldiers and were directly responsible for the displacement and genocide of the Nipmuc and other Native peoples in the region. Gookin himself arrived in the northern New England colonies from Virginia where he had polished his genocidal tendencies fighting the Powhatan Confederacy. While

promoting settlement in Worcester, he was charged by Cromwell to encourage New England settlers to colonize Jamaica and throughout his life, enslaved Africans such as a man named Jacob Warrow, along with his wife Maria and son Silvanus, on expansive plantations across Massachusetts and Virginia.[5] Gookin's vision for a continuously settled English colony of Worcester, absent the Nipmuc, would not be realized until the early eighteenth century, with settlers like John Wing and Jonas Rice.[6] By 1718, the original 43,000 acres for the town had expanded to the borders coterminous with those of the current city.[7] Wing's property alone constituted at least 18 ten acre lots worth of land.[8] With further investigation into this history of early white settler colonialism, one can begin to deduce who may have been the first English settlers on the land that is now 12 Hawthorne Street.

Neither Hawthorne nor Woodland Streets in Worcester existed prior to the mid-late nineteenth century as the city had not yet expanded to the southwest. Today's Main Street, which forms the southern junction of Hawthorne, continues to be a major thoroughfare likely consistent with what was known by white settlers as the Old Connecticut Path and another one called the Boston Post Road, or as John Winthrop, Jr. called it, the "King's best highway."[9] These roads were used by both settlers and Indigenous communities at various times for trade, migration, and communication between towns like Boston, Hartford, and New York City.[10]

Corner of Hawthorne and Woodland: 19th to Mid-20th Century

There exists no recent written comprehensive history of Worcester,[11] but it is common knowledge that by the mid-nineteenth century, Worcester was a powerhouse for industry and politics in the northeast. The mill and factory owners in town became quite wealthy, which is demonstrated by the mass amounts of real estate that they possessed, and by the fact of various streets being named for mill and landowners. One of these is Daniel Tainter, namesake of Tainter Street in Main South, who operated a large machine shop on that street and owned the land on which 12 Hawthorne now sits. Tainter's shop was included on Worcester maps in the 1860s and 70s as a distinguishable landmark, seemingly indicating its importance.

But before Tainter, one of the earliest landowners that we could conclusively find was a lawyer named David J. Brigham. In 1835, he sold a large span of land, some of which 12 Hawthorne St. now occupies, to Samuel Belyea, a box manufacturer.[12] One of the descriptors of where the land was to be divided involved the location of the Boston and Worcester Railroad. As a recognizable landmark, this indicates to us the early economic foundations of industry in Worcester.[13]

Not long after, in 1837, Belyea sold off his land to multiple men,[14] one of which was Henry Harmon Chamberlin.[15] In the deed of sale, they refer to the land that is being divided as "a certain lot of land situate[d] on the North side of Mechanick Street in said Worcester, bounded as follows on the North by the Boston and Worcester Rail Road on the West by land late of Isaac Davis and Thomas B. Eaton on the South by said Mechanick street to said Rail Road being the same estate of which nin undivided tenth parts were conveyed to the grantor from David Brigham…"[16] Before Brigham, men such as Charles J. Gunn (who sold the large plot of land to Brigham to settle debts) and David Andrews (who sold the land to Gunn on January 31, 1832) owned large swaths of land in southeast Worcester, in what is now Main South near what was then called "New Worcester."[17] Prior to Belyea's partitioning and Chamberlin's purchase and development, the property deeds

suggest that the land was largely forested "woodland" with possibly the only actual road in the area being a sparsely populated, almost rural Main Street.[18]

Ivan Sandrof, literary editor for *The Worcester Telegram* in the mid-twentieth century, postulates in his book *Your Worcester Street* that Charlotte Street was named for Chamberlin's wife Charlotte Clark, and that Loudon Street is named for John Claudius Loudon, the famed English horticulturalist. He also writes that, "Woodland and Maywood were full of woods, hence the names. Chamberlin was a bit of a writer himself; named Hawthorne Street after the author, [Nathaniel Hawthorne] whom he admired."[19] While Sandrof does not provide verifiable evidence for the basis of these remarks, it is plausible that some of his conclusions are accurate, especially Charlotte, given Chamberlin's obvious influence in the development of the area, his interest in landscaping and gardening, and his propensity for literary narration.[20] The street may have been actually named for the hawthorn plant given Chamberlin's interest in horticulture and its wide use in the eighteenth through nineteenth centuries to mark boundaries of land enclosures. In various maps, we see the spelling of the name vary from "Hawthorn" to "Hawthorne," indicating either the plant or the author as its namesake.

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz argues that setter colonialism requires violence and highlights the permeation of "Columbus" into different spaces of American society, emphasizing the naming of places, which aids in the erasure of Indigenous history. Chamberlain, and his successor on the property, was engaged in this phenomenon as well. The places that they "created" not only reflected themselves and those that they cared about, but also the borders that they wanted to construct for what they claimed was their land and home.[21] As landowner for nearly decades who sold off many parcels of this large tract of land, Chamberlin was legally free to remove forests, and plot and name streets as he saw fit to prepare for further development. He continued to acquire and lease real estate in what is now Main South up until his death in 1899.[22]

Figure 2: City of Worcester Atlas, 1870, plate 20 (Massachusetts State Library Digital Archives)

It was not until 1855 that the land that would be recognizable as 12 Hawthorne St. today began to take shape. Thirty years after his purchase, Chamberlin partnered with Henry Chapin, a prominent Worcester judge and former mayor,[23] to sell to Daniel Tainter (also spelled Taintor) the entire block from Main Street to the new Woodland Street. According to the June 1, 1855 deed, this property extended "northerly by Loudon street, westerly by Forrest Avenue, Southerly by Hawthorne Street and easterly by Main Street."

In the image to the left, Daniel Tainter's property occupies the entire

block of land bounded by all of Hawthorne and Loudon Streets, and stretching from Woodland to Main. The structure on this property seems to face or have its back to Woodland Street. (The current house only occupies the northwest corner of this plot.) Unfortunately, no blueprints exist of the structures that existed here. You may also notice that one of the previous owners of this property, Henry Chamberlin, retained some of his land on Charlotte Street, north of Clifton Street. While some homes and other structures were being built here, much of this land was farmland or forested. The more industrialized city continued to be centered around downtown to the north and east.

The document to the right may complicate our story. While it appears to be dated "ca. 1870," this date seems unlikely considering that Tainter sold the property to the Worcester Mechanics Savings Bank in 1870, long after Chamberlin's direct part in this story. It could be that Chamberlin, Chapin, Tainter, and the bank were communicating with each other about what they imagined this section of land should look like. On the other hand, to take the pencil markings such as "New Street[s]" at face-value, it would seem that this drawing is much earlier (around 1855) and presents an early image of Chamberlin and Chapin's vision for the property, including its future plots, grantees, and streets. The most compelling discrepancy here is that Charlotte and Clifton Streets were established and named by 1870, according to that year's edition of the *Atlas of the City of Worcester*. Whatever the events, this document informs us about the role that Chamberlin and Chapin played in constructing what these areas should look like.

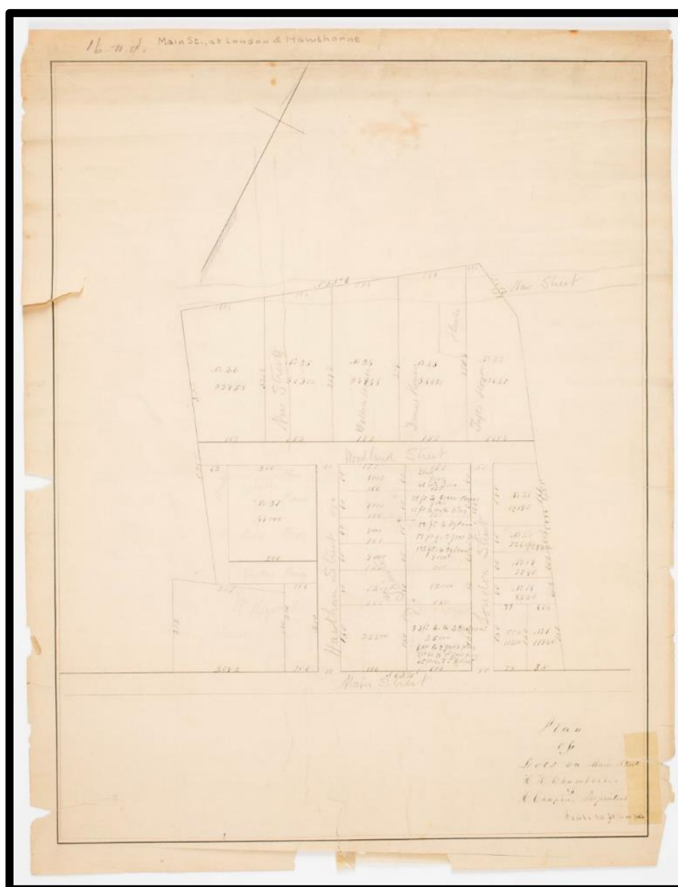


Figure 3: Henry H. Chamberlin and Henry Chapin's plan of lots on Main Street, c. 1870 (American Antiquarian Society collections)

In her book about the migration of formerly enslaved people to Worcester, *First Fruits of Freedom*, Clark University historian Janette Greenwood notes that in 1864, Daniel Tainter, who played an active role in the National Freedman's Relief Association, welcomed two freedpeople, Joseph Perkins and Jane Watts, into his home.[24] It is possible that these individuals might have stayed either at the Hawthorne Street property, or at Tainter's actual home at 73 Hanover Street in the heart of the city. On April 15, 1870, for reasons that are unclear, Tainter sold the Hawthorne property to the Worcester Mechanics Savings Bank for $5,500.[25] Furthering the entanglement of the characters in our story, Henry Chapin was the judge who certified the deed. Then on June 17, 1874, Tainter's machine shop burned down. The subsequent lawsuit that his wife Sarah filed in 1877 against the City of Worcester alleged that the city was responsible for the damages. The city's response included testimony that the Tainters had ceased paying the fees for the water supply and

the water was turned off on May 23, 1874.[26] Perhaps the Tainters had faced some financial troubles, which led to their sale of the Hawthorne St. property. Sandrof also speculates that Tainter had overextended himself financially.[27]

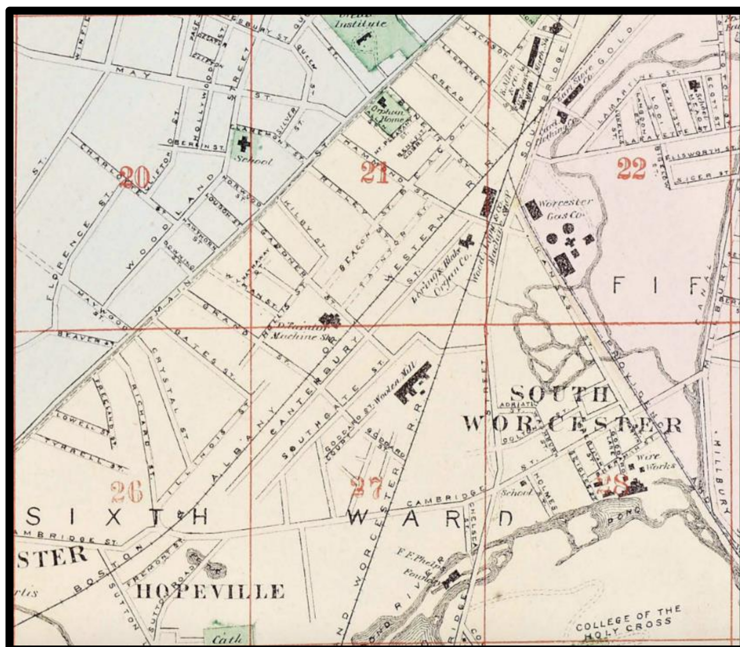


Figure 4: City of Worcester Atlas, 1870, plate 7 (Massachusetts State Library Digital Archives)

The property situated between Hollis, Grand, and Canterbury Streets, and adjacent to Gardner and Tainter Streets, is where Daniel Tainter's machine shop once stood. He was one of the leading manufacturers of woolen machinery in the country. As with many Worcester factories in the mid-nineteenth century, Tainter's shop was involved in some capacity in the engrossing American Civil War.[28] This would have been at the same time he owned the property between Woodland and Main Streets, and whatever money he made from the war effort likely helped to fund his large estate and other properties. Those familiar with the area will now see on this property the Table Talk Pies distribution center, a U-Haul storage facility, a Boys & Girls Club, and apartment complexes. Even though his machine shop had burned down in 1874, its impact and importance to the community remains clear. Tainter Street still exists, although its original width once extended to Gardner Street, which is now partly named for the Boys & Girls Club.

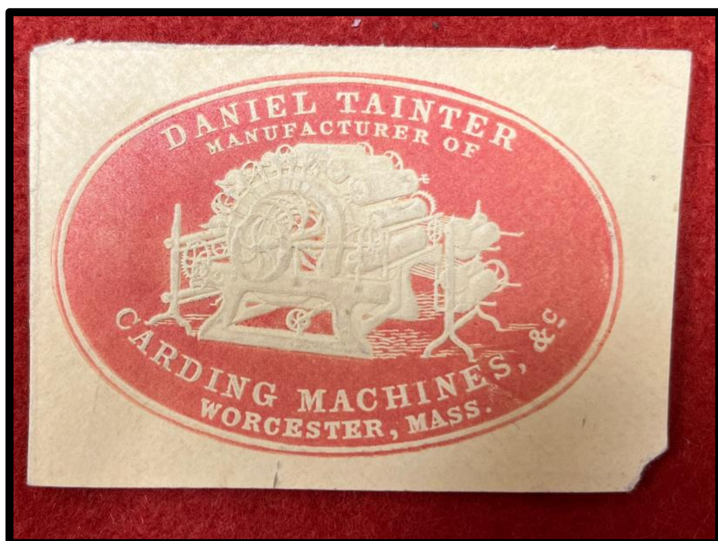


Figure 5: Daniel Tainter manufacturer of carding machines, &c. Worcester, Mass, trade card (c. 1850) (American Antiquarian Society collections)

There is no evidence to suggest that the Tainters nor any of the previous owners of the Hawthorne and Woodland St property actually lived there. Instead, they likely leased it out to tenants or maintained other types of structures on it. Like Chamberlin, both Daniel and his wife Sarah E. Tainter née Johnson owned properties around the city. After Daniel's untimely death in December of 1879 from apoplexy,[29] she remained in Worcester until her death in 1890 from heart disease. Originally, we thought that Sarah may have moved to 18 Richards St. based on the 1886 Worcester Atlas. However, the Worcester City Directories make it clear

that this was actually Sarah E. Tainter née *Burbank* on 42 Richards St., who was the widow of Harvey Tainter, Daniel's younger brother.[30] The Sarah Tainter of our story continued to live at 73 Hanover Street, where she, Daniel, and their family had lived.[31] She likely shared this large house with her daughter Calista who, until she died in 1875, was living there with her husband, Charles W. Gilbert, another prominent industrialist.[32] This house nor this street currently exist as they were eliminated in the construction of I-290 in the 1960s and 70s. See the image below of this now long-lost neighborhood, taken from the 1886 City Atlas, where Sarah likely spent her last years. The Gilbert (formerly Tainter) home is in the bottom right, between Hanover and Carroll Streets.

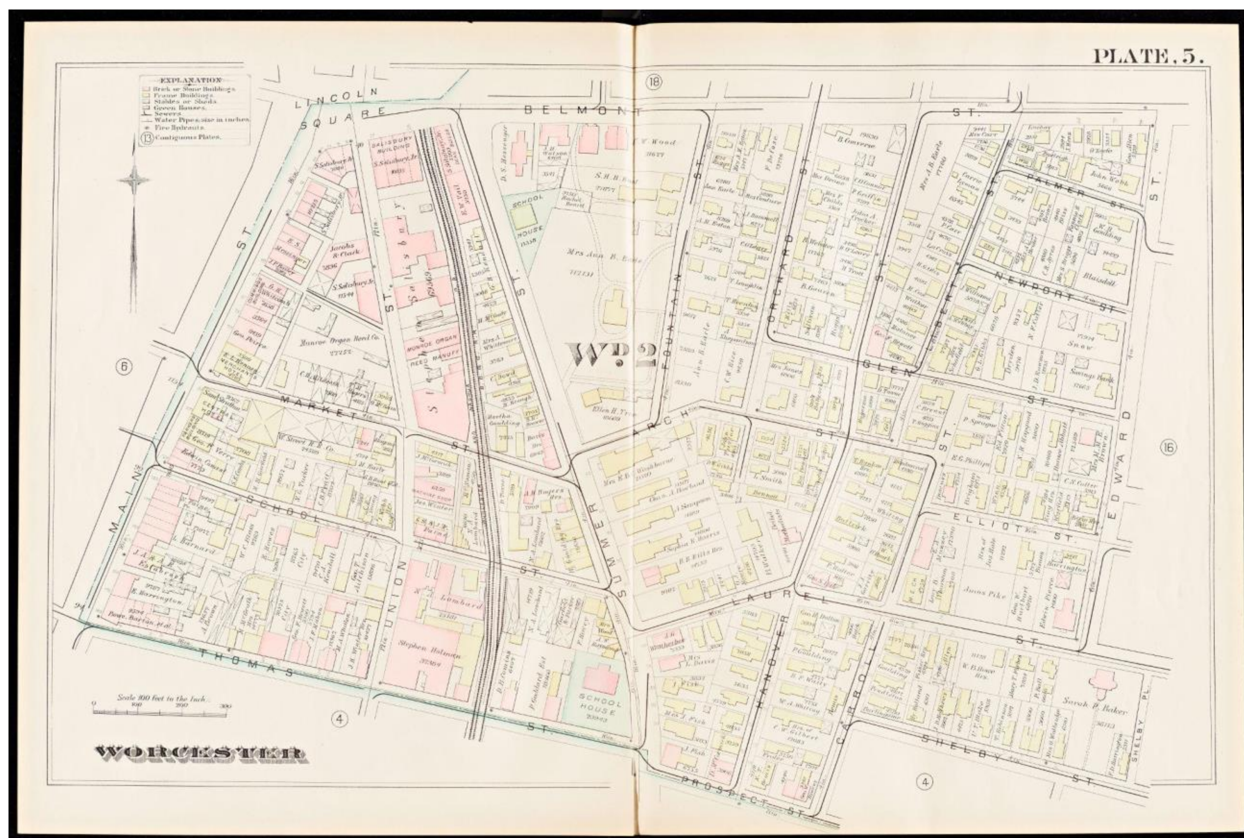


Figure 6: City of Worcester Atlas, 1886, plate 5 (Massachusetts State Library Digital Archives)

The Worcester Mechanics Savings Bank was started by the Worcester Mechanics Association, of which Tainter was a part. This group established and gave Mechanics Hall its namesake in 1857. The Bank, with which Tainter had several property transactions, kept the property for twelve years after they ultimately bought it from him. On August 4, 1882, Luther Slater, who worked in real estate, bought the property from the Bank for $9,405.

Figure 7: City of Worcester Atlas, 1886, plate 10 (Massachusetts State Library Digital Archives)

The image to the left, taken from the 1886 Atlas, shows the structure on Slater's property along Woodland Street and bounded by Hawthorne (spelled without an e) and Loudon Streets is generally identical to that from the Tainter years. There is another small structure on the land on Hawthorne Street, though it is indecipherable from this Atlas what that structure might have been. Moreover, this plate shows that at least by 1882, Slater was not the sole owner of this block of land like Tainter was. It is likely that during the nearly twelve years that the Worcester Mechanics Bank owned the property, they leased it, as well as divided the land into separate tracts. Moreover, land likely became more valuable due to the city's further expansion into this area. Slater is cited in property transactions throughout the Registry of Deeds and City Directories from this era. For example, in the deed from the Worcester Mechanics Savings Bank to Luther Slater, it records the property as leased to a William W. Cook. Slater will be, "free from all encumbrances, except a lease of said premises to William W. Cook, which expires July 1st, 1883."[33] Because there is no deed citing Cook's ownership of the property, perhaps this is an example of a tenant who leased the property under either the Bank's ownership or possibly Slater's.

Our knowledge about the lives of the Slaters is relatively limited, though he may have been a member of the famous and large Slater family of the Industrial Revolution. On September 8, 1841, Luther Slater married Martha Lazell who died on February 19, 1878 from epilepsy. The widowed Slater then married Ella S. Pierce, who herself was a widow. After having lived for many years on Providence Street, Luther Slater died from apoplexy on October 1, 1883, at their new home at 29 Richards Street, having left the property at Hawthorne Street[34] to his sisters: Mary A. Slater, N. Catherine Emerson, and Elizabeth A. Slater. After his death, Ella remained a resident of 29 Richards St.

The image to the right, from the 1896 Atlas, shows the property during the time it was owned by "L Slater Hrs", which is to say, Luther Slater's heirs: Mary, Catherine, and Elizabeth. The structure in yellow would be totally destroyed and replaced in two-years' time with what would resemble what we now know as 12 Hawthorne. Each of these women lived independently, whether unmarried or widowed, and are listed as the owners of this property. The pattern of female property ownership in Worcester was not exclusive to the Slaters or Sarah Tainter. It stretched back to the colonial period. Furthermore, according to the preceding Atlas of 1886, Susan Clark, not her husband Jonas, is listed as owning the land set aside for Clark University, which would be established a year later.[35] Notice also that, colored in pink on the left side of the above image, Clark University, then almost ten years old, had begun to take shape.

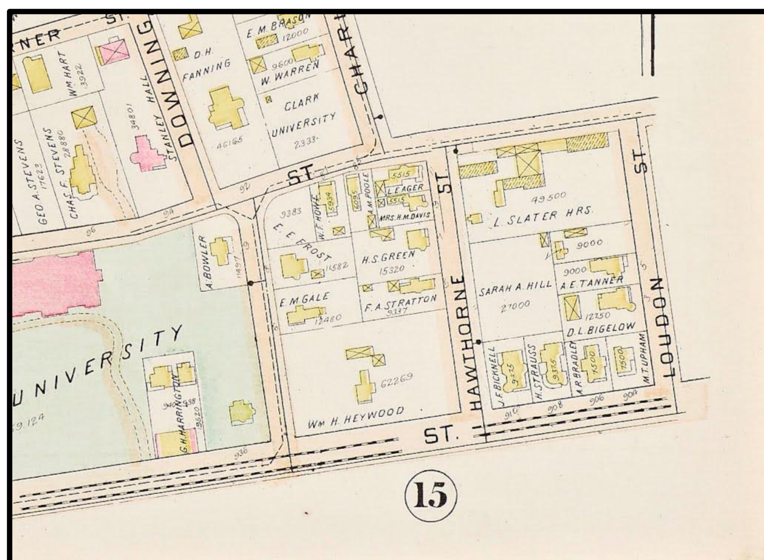


Figure 8: City of Worcester Atlas, 1896, plate 15 (Massachusetts State Library Digital Archives)

On April 13, 1898, Mary Slater and Catherine Emerson deeded a portion of the land to Irving Edward Comins, a manufacturer of woolen goods. They also exchanged a portion of the land with George Hill. This transaction illuminates the continued desire to divide up this land, perhaps for financial reasons. The nomination form survey for the Woodland Historical District claims that, "The pressure of increasing population and apparent rising land values led to the area's denser re-development. Between Loudon and Hawthorne Streets the 'Slater Estate' was demolished, and the land subdivided into smaller house-lots."[36] Following the transactions between the Slater sisters and other various individuals, a new house on the smaller corner plot was erected and oriented toward Hawthorne Street rather than Woodland Street, as the plot no longer took up the entire block. The property instead only covered about half of what the Slaters owned. There is not, however, clarity about when exactly the current Colonial Revival style house was built or who built it, whether that be the Slaters or the Comins.[37] It is possible that the Slaters constructed the current house because, as noted, they had made plans to remove their family's existing structure. Nonetheless, when the Comins moved into the house, which in 1899 did not yet have a formal address, they were already established as a wealthy family whose influence and affluence had been built up in the mill industry in the Oxford/Auburn area of Worcester County.

Also in 1898, as the property formerly owned by figures like Tainter and Chamberlin was further partitioned, the politician Eli Thayer purchased a plot and constructed a home at 10 Hawthorne Street (currently Clark's IDCE House), right next door to the building that became English House.[38] Thayer had built the Adriatic Mill, which was cited in Sarah Tainter's lawsuit in 1874, just two blocks away from Tainter's machine shop. Thayer himself was aggressively buying and selling property across Main South to finance his campaign to inundate the Kansas Territory with anti-slavery New Englanders. Though Thayer himself died in 1899, the house remained in the

Thayer name until at least 1922, being owned by his wife, Caroline, and his daughters.[39] For the duration of the Thayer tenure, they were neighbors of the Comins, who were most likely the first and only family to both own and occupy the property at the corner of Hawthorne and Woodland Streets as a primary residence.

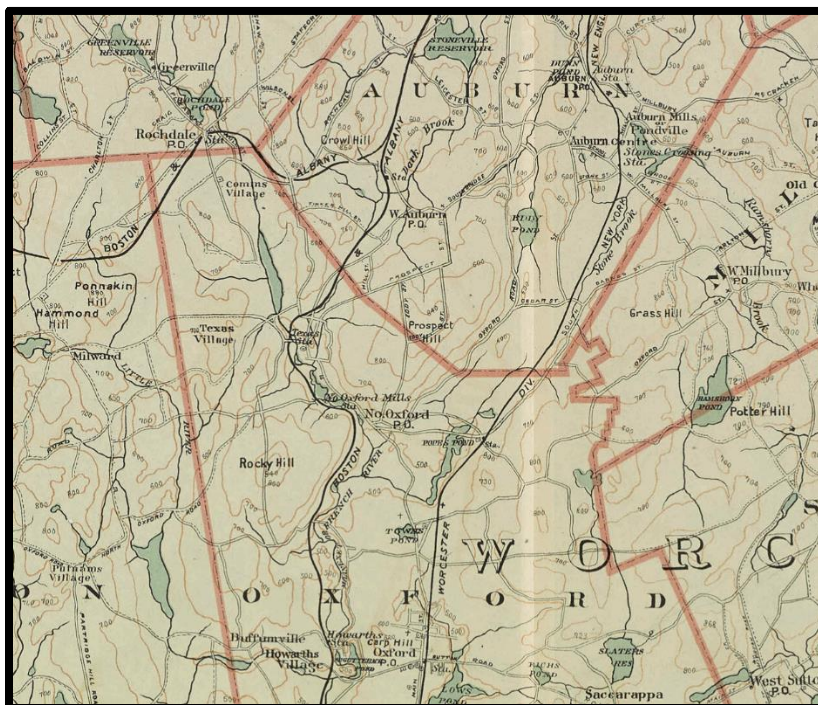


Figure 9: Atlas of Massachusetts, 1891, plate 16 (Massachusetts State Library Digital Archives)

Compared to previous landowners, we know quite a bit about the Comins family and their time in the House. According to Ellery Bicknell Crane's genealogical sketch of the Comins family, the progenitor, John Comins, bought a mill there in 1719 and established a homestead.[40] His descendant, Irving Comins, born in 1860, engaged in the family business of manufacturing woolen goods in nearby Rochdale, MA.[41] In this section of the 1891 state, within the boundary of Oxford towards the southwestern corner of Auburn, there is Comins Village just northwest of "Slater's Reservoir." By June 1, 1900, Comins had moved his family from his father's home at Wellington Street in Worcester to the address-less property at the corner of Hawthorne and Woodland Streets. Residents of this new home included his wife, Etta Leonard, son Edward Irving, sister-in-law Mary Leonard, and servant named Wilhemina Hanson, who emigrated from Sweden in 1893.[42] By 1910, the property finally carried the address "12 Hawthorne Street" and the Comins family was not recorded as having a live-in servant or housekeeper. This remained the case until 1920 where the census documents the residence of a servant named Helen Smith, whose parents were Swedish.[43] In those intervening years, World War I affected the family to some extent. Across the country, many men were drafted and sent abroad to fight, while women began filling men's jobs in factory work. This was not the case for the Comins's 28-year-old son Edward Irving who in 1917 did register for the draft but claimed exemption as a woolen manufacturer, working at the family mill.[44]

Figure 10: Dining room of 12 Hawthorne St, taken by Paul Tasse, c. 1910 (Worcester Historical Museum Library Collections)

In 1912, Edward Comins announced his engagement to Dorothy Rice.[45] Their living situation remains unclear after their marriage. Edward is recorded as living at 12 Hawthorne St. in the 1920 census, whereas Dorothy is not. In November of 1930, shortly after Irving's death in June, Edward and Dorothy bought 12 Hawthorne St. from Etta Comins for $1.00.[46] Edward had been made Irving's power of attorney, which gave Edward authority over his father's estate and transactions. This gave Edward legal control over the home and later, in 1959, allowed him to share with and transfer the deed to Dorothy. For six years after Irving's death, the only documented residents of 12 Hawthorne Street were his widow Etta, who herself passed away in 1936, and her sister Mary.[47] It was not until at least 1938 that Edward, Dorothy, and their children Edward Irving Jr., Priscilla, and Carleton moved into the home, though until 1945, they moved between there and their previous residence on Einhorn Street near the campus of Worcester Polytechnic Institute.[48] According to the 1940 Census, the family of six employed two live-in laborers, a nurse named Ann Goodwin and a maid named Bertha Fesenden.[49] This is likely the period when the greatest number of residents at once called 12 Hawthorne home and is the last time the family is recorded as employing live-in laborers. In 1942, Mary died. Having moved with the family into the home in 1899, she may have been the longest resident of the house.[50] More work is needed to discern the experiences of these people who lived in this house in the early twentieth century.

As with his father in WWI, Edward Jr. was drafted in 1943 to fight in WWII, but actually enlisted and a few years after returning to the U.S., left the East Coast for Phoenix, Arizona. His departure also indicated a time of growing up for the "children" of the house. Priscilla became a stenographer with Worcester County Trust Company[51] and Carleton was studying at WPI. By 1952, the remaining residents of the house were Edward Sr., Dorothy, Mrs. Mary Rice (who was likely Dorothy's mother), and Carleton, who split his time between there and his college dorm.[52] Edward Sr. died in 1959 shortly after adding Dorothy to the property deed. This gave her the legal capacity to sell her multi-generational family home to Clark University on November 30th, 1960.[53] Both she and her daughter Priscilla separately but eventually ended up in Arizona where they each died in 1989 and 2019, respectively. Edward Jr. passed away in Arizona in 1999 and the youngest Comins son, Carleton, passed away in 2021 in Sherborn, Mass. Sometime in the mid-1970s and

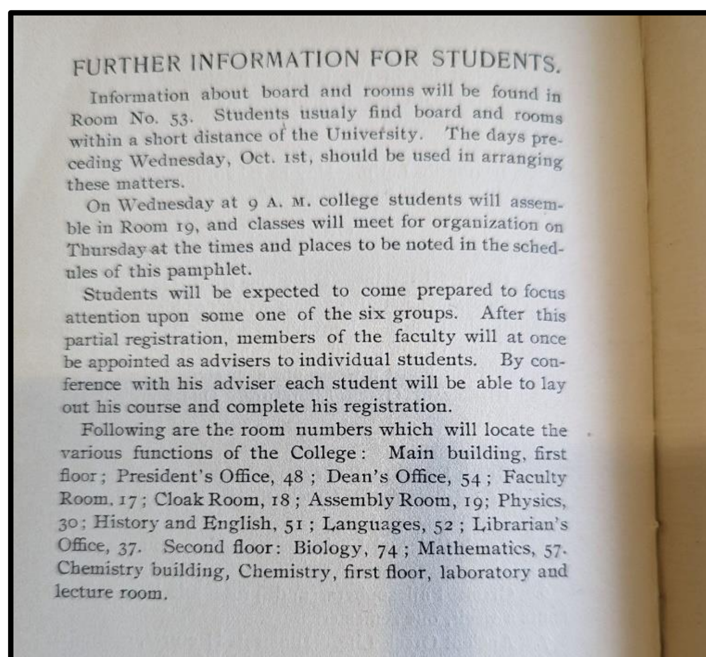
80s, the University formally gave the name “Anderson House” to the house occupying the land with over 400 years of history at 12 Hawthorne Street.

~~~

Home for the English Department: 1960 and Beyond

When Jonas and Susan Clark established Clark University in 1887, solely as a graduate school, an English master’s was not part of the program. It was not until 1902, when Clark College (the undergraduate college) opened, that an English program was introduced with Andrew J. George as its only instructor. After its small-scale beginnings, the department gained more faculty to build the undergraduate program. In archival course catalogs that showcase its early development, the English curriculum seems geared towards the “practical” as demonstrated by courses that are offered, for example, a focus on oratorical skills. There was also a clear emphasis on the “old standards” of British literature in the curriculum.

In 1960, when the Clark University Trustees purchased the house at 12 Hawthorne Street from Dorothy Comins, it was initially used as a graduate student dorm. It took another eight years before it was designated to house the English Department, which (as the image below shows) had previously been lodged Jonas Clark Hall, room 51, alongside the History Department. The move to 12 Hawthorne Street also coincided with the beginning of the English MA program, which first appears in the 1967-1969 university catalogs.



FURTHER INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS.

Information about board and rooms will be found in Room No. 53. Students usualy find board and rooms within a short distance of the University. The days preceding Wednesday, Oct. 1st, should be used in arranging these matters.

On Wednesday at 9 A. M. college students will assemble in Room 19, and classes will meet for organization on Thursday at the times and places to be noted in the schedules of this pamphlet.

Students will be expected to come prepared to focus attention upon some one of the six groups. After this partial registration, members of the faculty will at once be appointed as advisers to individual students. By conference with his adviser each student will be able to lay out his course and complete his registration.

Following are the room numbers which will locate the various functions of the College: Main building, first floor; President's Office, 48; Dean's Office, 54; Faculty Room, 17; Cloak Room, 18; Assembly Room, 19; Physics, 30; History and English, 51; Languages, 52; Librarian's Office, 37. Second floor: Biology, 74; Mathematics, 57. Chemistry building, Chemistry, first floor, laboratory and lecture room.

Figure 11: Clark College Catalog, p. 27, ca. 1900 (Clark University Archives and Special Collections)

In addition to the physical shift of the department across the expanding campus, there was also a noticeable shift in curriculum that occurred during the 1960s and 70s. The re-imagining of the early focus on courses like “Major British Writers” as now “British Literature” and an increasingly more inclusive representation of American, ethnic, and diasporic literatures signals a push towards a more representative curriculum.[54] We interviewed three emeriti professors who each spoke about courses and faculty specializations that evolved the curriculum, notably with the hiring of female faculty members like Professor Serena Hilsinger. The political shift in literary studies during this period happened across U.S. institutions, but the efforts of faculty members to generate change is unique to Clark. Professor Virginia Vaughan spoke of collaborating with Professors
~~~

Hilsinger and Cynthia Enloe to create a women's studies program, and also a course surveying women writers, which is still taught today.[55]

The motivations towards an interdisciplinary English program appear in the curriculum as well as in the construction of the English major, which now requires that all students have a specialization or a second major, minor, or concentration. Faculty also teach collaborative courses across departments that intersect the boundaries of their interests. Each emeriti professor that we interviewed navigated the realms of their interdisciplinary interests. Professor John Conron spoke of his interest in "reading landscapes," the classes that he taught at the environmental school at Clark, and introducing African American literature to students hungry for it in the department. Professor Vaughan taught a combined course with the theater department "Shakespeare from Page to Stage" and also mentored a successful interdisciplinary PhD student, who combined fields such as classics, French drama, and theater. Professor Jay Elliott taught a long-running class in conjunction with Professor Greenwood from the History Department called "A Perfect Game: Baseball as History and Literature."

The house bears witness to these relationships forged and memories made. This tight knit and collaborative community is expressed in a multitude of ways and encouraged by the faculty and students who share a common bond. When asked, "When was English house at its most lively?" professors offered a varied response. One speculated that it was during the winter holiday parties that used to take place in the house with faculty and students in attendance, whereas another thought it was in the early 2000s, due to the younger faculty and the thriving graduate program, which created a liveliness in the house. One shared a story about how Professor SunHee Kim Gertz, who led the master's program for years, started the now regular Chowder Fest tradition by holding afternoon tea in her office and counseling students. Each of these sentiments illustrates a scene of joy and laughter within a setting of scholarship and mentorship.

Since the spring of 2020, English House has felt empty, and for the most part, it is. Without the frequent bustle of students and laughter bouncing off the walls, the emptiness of the building with random and peculiar noises feels even more sinister. With events and meetings conducted virtually, the house goes relatively unnoticed and unoccupied. The cheerful yellow house begins to look more dominating, and for those who do dare to enter its halls, they face an austere welcome. The creaky floorboards, cracks in the walls, and the antique clawfoot bathtub occupying the third-floor bathroom all induce eerie feelings. Each professor has their own opinions of their respective hidden "creepy" or "cool" cabinets in their offices. Despite the varying levels of comfortability surrounding these somewhat quirky features, there is no explanation for the current utility of the bathtub on the third-floor restroom.

Some questions that remain: is Anderson House haunted? The creaky floorboards and cracks in the walls can all be explained by the aging of an elderly building. But why the bathtub? Is it merely too difficult to remove from the compact third floor restroom and carry down the narrow and steep flights of stairs? Is it a reminder of the house that it once was? Is it left over from when the Comins inhabited this family home, or is it from the days when 12 Hawthorne Street was graduate student housing?[56]

This feeling of "home" is relevant in many more ways than just the quirky bathtub, and our interviews with emeriti professors suggested to us that this departmental space still bears home-like qualities. When asked "What are your favorite memories at English House?", each professor reflected on their experience of teaching with a nostalgic and happy tone, sharing fond memories of the students who made their time at Clark cheerful. Professor Conron responded without hesitation, "The students by far and the colleagues. But the students, I just love them."[57] Professor Elliott shared that it was all: "about energy. That's where my memories really, really reside… the energy that I could sense, particularly from students, from graduate students, and from colleagues. One of the advantages of having a more confined living space, shall we say living space, study space, [and] working space is that you can pick up on that energy…. I always felt at home in the English department."[58]

This "home" exists in the less obvious physical spaces, as well. The rocking chair that sits in the lounge of English House was bought by Professor Vaughan and now goes unappreciated by those who come merely for office visits. Professor Vaughan specifically spoke about the impact of the department administrators who helped acquire the other furniture in the lounge over the years, and who, in more ways than one, continue to "make this house like a home."

One of the questions that we began this project with was: who is the "Anderson" of Anderson House? We felt that the name of a house mattered. The naming would reflect the values and history of the house. Along with this, one of our first questions in this project was, "did the Comins manufacture cotton in their mills, and if so, where did they get it?" For us, the meaning of the house would become more complex if the goods that they processed were bought from or sold in the South, especially during eras of enslavement, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow. While this question was not answerable, given our time frame, the sentiment behind it remains. The identity of the people who have inhabited this land in each of its forms matters. We have sought to understand how they each contributed to the history of this house, and this search remains true for the Andersons.

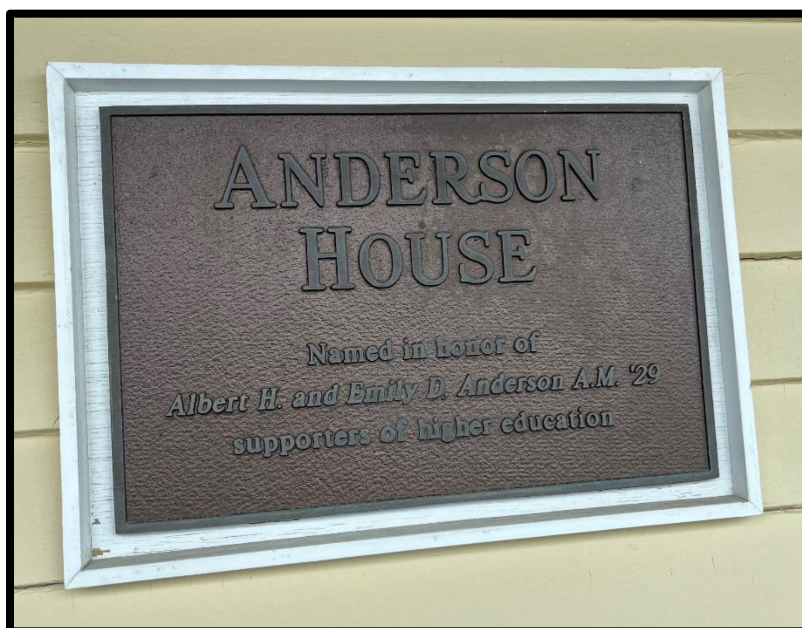


Figure 12: Plaque on the porch of the house; photo taken by the authors, 2022

As you climb the front steps up to English House, the plaque to the immediate right of the front door goes largely unnoticed. The plaque reads "Named in honor of Albert H. and Emily D. Anderson A.M. '29 supporters of higher education." We do not know who Albert and Emily Anderson were. Who were these Andersons, and were they in any way connected to the history of the English department?

We had our own theories about who Anderson might be. There was the unknown donor, who we thought was a likely figure in the naming, but we wanted this name to mean something. Roy and Barbara Andersen were two compelling members of the Clark community whose story we admired and hoped could be the namesake of Anderson House, although we assumed that it was unlikely considering the contrast in the spelling of their last name. In the 1940s, when Clark welcomed its first class of women, Barbara Norris and Roy Andersen met and fell in love. Before he was shipped out to serve in the Navy, they were married, with Dr. Loring Holmes Dodd of the English department, a treasured mentor of Barbara's, giving her away at the wedding.[59] After teaching at various universities, Roy was hired to be chairman of the physics department in 1961, and the couple returned to Clark.[60]

We also came across Karl Oscar Emmanuel Anderson, who was an impactful member of the English department at Clark. He was the chair of the department for nineteen years, and taught from 1945-1977. Even after he left the English Department, he taught at Clark's College of Professional and Continuing Education until 1988 at the age of 83.[61] Anderson's clear dedication to teaching made him a notable figure in departmental history, but it also distinguished him as someone who we thought would be a sensible namesake for the house. There was also a Dean of the Graduate School from 1970-1971 named Roy S. Anderson[62] who piqued our interest for a moment as a possible contender, as well as Albert G. Anderson Jr., who was the University Librarian from 1978-1984.[63]

Each person has a different story to tell about the origins of the namesake of Anderson House. Professor Elliott confidently told us that the house was named after the previous owners, which we know to be the Comins. We also asked Professor Elliott why he in particular was known for calling the house "English House," even up until his retirement last year. "It was English House because it was the place, you know, the house that housed the English department."[64] Professor Vaughan expressed that it was always called English House "although some students called it 'Anguish House.'" In her memory, one day a sign was simply "marched over" in front of the house that designated it "Anderson House."[65] Professor Conron speculated that it may have been named after the servants, from whom he had found a letter in his office during his time at Clark.[66]

Figure 13: Drawing of "English House" published in a 1976 edition of Clark's Pasticcio, p. 48 (Clark Digital Commons)

Because it was officially dedicated at some point between the mid-1970s and 80s, no current generation faculty or student who wanders the halls of "English House" today has firsthand memory of when it was exclusively referred to as such. While there is currently a sign that literally says *this* is Anderson House, there are still ways that *English* House exists. There is no one way to refer to this place. There is no right way to define it, except institutionally.[67]

This is not a "traditional" history, and this house encapsulates that. This is a story of people, land, architecture, universities, and businesses; each one of these requires a different archive and methodology. There are many unknowns, and there are stories that were likely taken to the grave.[68] In the settler colonial construction of history, this property began as a business and transitioned into a home, but it has always been and remains built on Indigenous land. It has endured as a place of humans, and in many ways that we have observed, it remains a home.

The values of English House are represented through the love of literature and education. Each of the emeriti professors we interviewed exhibited an admiration of their students, an encouragement of learning, and a love of teaching. It is with this same admiration that projects like this one are born. It is with that same pursuit of learning that we strive to tell the stories of all the inhabitants of 12 Hawthorne Street in its longevity. It is with that same love of teaching that we encourage our students to challenge themselves to question history as it is typically written.

If you are interested in our detailed timeline of the House, please visit the following link:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BoLLHZ-4iC4j5m0MUKYvz3HPqPZ2bseLd-QLPJiTbGE/edit?usp=sharing

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to archival assistance on this project from Kimberly Toney at the American Antiquarian Society, Wendy Essery at the Worcester Historical Museum, and Cynthia Shenette at Clark University Archives and Special Collections. We also thank the endless encouragement and support from the English Department faculty and staff, including Professor Meredith Neuman and Paula Flynn Connors.

NOTES

[1] O'Brien, pp. xi-xxxvi
[2] Fuentes, pp. 78.
[3] Gookin, pp. 168.
[4] *Atlas of the boundaries of the city of Worcester*, f. E, Y.
[5] Gookin, pp. 67, 85-103, 195-6.
[6] Kinnicutt, n.p.
[7] Lincoln, pp. 47.
[8] Rice, pp. 83-4.
[9] Jaffe, pp. 8-9.
[10] Hulbert, pp. 67-76.
[11] There has not been a comprehensive history of Worcester written in approximately a hundred years, the most recent history of Worcester being *History of Worcester County* written by E. Melvin Williams and edited by Ellery Bicknell Crane with three volumes published in 1924. This was preceded by Charles Nutt's *History of Worcester and its People* with two volumes published in 1919. In Ivan Sandrof's *Your Worcester Street*, he asserts that his collection is also a history of Worcester.
[12] *Deeds*, Book 310, pp. 628-629.
[13] In this same deed, the settlers create a "new street." This capacity and power to construct land as they see fit is a theme in each of the residents of this land that we came across.
[14] *Deeds*, Book 322, pp. 611-614.
[15] The spelling varies for Henry Chamberlin, also referred to as Henry Chamberlain. This variation of spelling is common across nineteenth and early twentieth century documents, largely due to human error.
[16] *Deeds*, Book 322, pp. 612.
[17] *Deeds*, Book 286, pp. 639.
[18] These deeds are so difficult to verify because they reach the point where the land is described as being next to someone else's, having a landmark such as a "white oak" or "maple" tree. With these descriptors, we do not possess the time or materials to verify them.
[19] Sandrof, pp. 57-8. One might visit the Chamberlin family papers in the library of the Worcester Historical Museum for further confirmation about the Nathaniel Hawthorne claim.
[20] Chamberlin gave a lecture for the Society for Antiquity in 1885 narrating his memories of the city from 1822.
[21] Dunbar-Ortiz, pp. 3-4.
[22] *Deeds*, Consolidated Grantee Index 1890-1900, 187-188.
[23] Chapin's activity seems to be motivated towards an eventual establishment of a mill town after observing his papers that are available at the American Antiquarian Society.
[24] Greenwood, pp. 105-6.
[25] *Deeds*, Book 806, pp. 644-646.
[26] Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, pp. 311-317.
[27] Sandrof, pp. 193.
[28] Crane, pp. 201.
[29] Federal Census Mortality Schedules, 1850-1885, Daniel Tainter, pp. 15.
[30] Tainter, pp. 58.

---

[31] *Worcester City Directory, 1886*, pp. 326, and *City Directory, 1889*, pp. 358. For information about Sarah and Calista's residences, see *1860 U.S. Population Census, Worcester, Mass. Ward 2*, pp. 104; and *1870 Census*, pp. 66B.
[32] Crane, *Volume IV*, pp. 200-02.
[33] *Deeds*, Book 1124, pp. 397.
[34] Also see *City Directory*, 1883, pp. 299. His sister, Mary, is listed as a boarder in the Providence St. home.
[35] *City Atlas*, 1886, Plate 11.
[36] Form A-Area Survey, March 1978.
[37] The City of Worcester Assessor's Office cites 1890 as the construction of the current house, which conflicts with the structures depicted in the aforementioned image from the 1896 Atlas, six years after said construction date. https://gis.vgsi.com/worcesterma/Parcel.aspx?pid=53054. More accurate might be the open access Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System, which dates the house to 1900, or a document from Clark University's Archives, which lists the date as 1898.
[38] *History of the Oread Collegiate Institute*, pp. 9-10.
[39] The 1900 census records them as living at Main Street, not Hawthorne, so there may be some discrepancy about the orientation of their house.
[40] Crane, *Volume II*, 1907, 254.
[41] Ibid, 256.
[42] 1900 U.S. Federal Population Census, Worcester Ward 7, Worcester County, Mass., pp. 7. This schedule lists Irving's birth date as July 1859, Etta's as April 1862, and Mary's as April 1865, dates which all seem inconsistent with other documentary evidence.
[43] 1920 U.S. Federal Population Census, Worcester Ward 8, Worcester County, Mass., pp. 5A.
[44] United States World War I Draft Registrations, 1917-1918. MyHeritage.com [online database], MyHeritage Ltd.
[45] *The Journal of the Worcester Polytechnic Institute*, pp. 160.
[46] *Deeds*, Book 2529, pp. 466-467.
[47] *City Directory, 1932*, pp. 315. This is also the case in 1934 (*City Directory*, pp. 326).
[48] *City Directory, 1939*, pp. 868.
[49] 1940 U.S. Federal Population Census, Worcester Ward 8, Worcester County, Mass., pp. 6B. Notably, the schedule records Bertha working 63 hours per week while Edward worked just 60 as mill owner in comparison.
[50] The headstone on her grave in Rutland Rural Cemetery lists 1855 as her birth year. She resided at 12 Hawthorne in 1941 (*City Directory*, 1941, pp. 538).
[51] *City Directory, 1949*, pp. 420.
[52] *City Directory, 1952*, pp. 243.
[53] *Deeds*, Book 4160, pp. 549.
[54] This change of a course title happened fairly recently, indicative that change is not always immediate. While the 1960s and 70s is an inflection point, it is not the only significant turning point for curriculum progress.
[55] Prof. Virginia Vaughan Interview, 7:42.
[56] *House Directory, 1973*, p. 158. In this directory, the house is listed as Graduate Student Housing for Clark. As of this moment, we have found little to no evidence as to what this may have looked like and how the house accommodated graduate housing to the transition towards faculty offices. Each emeriti faculty member did attest that there were no changes in construction to the offices or house in their tenure, except for when the house was made accessible in the early 2000s.
[57] Prof. John Conron Interview, 41:06.
[58] Prof. James Elliott Interview, 46:04.
[59] Keogh, n.p.
[60] Staff Writer, "Roy Anderson."
[61] Letter to the Members of the Clark Community from Provost Roger E. Kasperson, January 12, 1995. From Goddard Archives and Special Collections.
[62] Given that Roy Andersen was also dean of the graduate school at a point in time and there is a variation of spelling of his last name, it is likely that this was the same person, although we were not certain.
[63] Koelsch, p. 259-62.
[64] Prof. James Elliott Interview, 33:32.

[65] Prof. Virginia Vaughan Interview, 15:20.
[66] Prof. John Conron Interview, 31:54.
[67] Perhaps this itself is incorrect. In Clark's Archives and Special Collections, the folder of information on English House is labeled "Comins House." To put in a work request, the house is filed under "Anderson/English House." This indicates that even institutionally, there are those who call "Anderson House" by a different name and view it in a different way.
[68] There were stained glass windows in English House that were stolen at an unspecified time in the past fifty years. Professors remember that the windows were stolen but not precisely when or if any measures were taken to recover them. The windows that you see today are not a complete representation of what the house once held.

Bibliography

Primary Sources:

Atlas of the boundaries of the city of Worcester and towns of Auburn, Blackstone, Charlton, Douglas, Dudley, Grafton, Hopedale, Leicester, Mendon, Milford, Millbury, Northbridge, Oxford, Shrewsbury, Spencer, Sutton, Upton, Uxbridge, Webster, Westborough, Worcester County Hopkinton, Middlesex County, Harbor and Land Commission, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1908.

Beers, F.W. *Atlas of the City of Worcester: Worcester County, Massachusetts.* Map. F. W. Beers & Co, 1870. From the State Library of Massachusetts. http://hdl.handle.net/2452/127888.

Chamberlain, Henry H. and Henry Chapin. Plan of lots on Main Street: H.H. Chamberlin & H. Chapin proprietors, cartographic material, [ca. 1870], Catalog Record #512472, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA. https://catalog.mwa.org/vwebv/holdingsInfo?&bibId=512472&searchId=1470&recPointer=0&recCount=10.

Clark University, "1976 Pasticcio" (1976). *Pasticcios (Yearbooks), 1925-present*, 48. https://commons.clarku.edu/pasticcios/48

Conron, John. Interview by Justin P. Shaw and Christina Rose Walcott. Personal Interview. Worcester, MA, 16 April 2022.

Daniel Tainter manufacturer of carding machines, &c. Worcester, Mass, trade card, [ca. 185-], Catalog Record #537583, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA. https://catalog.mwa.org/vwebv/holdingsInfo?searchId=3359&recCount=10&recPointer=4&bibId=537583

Elliott, James. Interview by Justin P. Shaw and Christina Rose Walcott. Personal Interview. Zoom, 20 April 2022.

Hopkins, G. M. *Atlas of the City of Worcester, Massachusetts*. Map. G. M. Hopkins, C. E., 1886. http://hdl.handle.net/2452/127885.

Image of the dining room of 12 Hawthorne Street home, c. 1910, taken by Paul Tasse, courtesy of the Worcester Historical Museum Library collection. https://worcesterhistory.pastperfectonline.com/Photo/C535B9FF-70B3-4B77-8B62-341142481420

Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, *Massachusetts Reports: Decisions of the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts, Volume 123*. Jan 1878, pp. 311-317.

Massachusetts Vital Records, 1840-1911, [databased on-line]. Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2013.

Probate Records (Worcester County, Massachusetts); Index 1731-1881. Massachusetts, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1635-1991 [database on-line]. Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015.

Richards, Harold H. *Atlas of the City of Worcester, Massachusetts*. Map. Richards Map Company, 1911. http://hdl.handle.net/2452/127887

Richards, L. J. *Atlas of the City of Worcester, Massachusetts*. Map. L. J. Richards & Co., 1896. http://hdl.handle.net/2452/127886

Tainter, Dean W. *A History and Genealogy of the Descendants of Joseph Taynter*, 1859, 58; U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 [database on-line]. Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

The First Proprietors of Worcester, Massachusetts. Edited by Franklin P. Rice. Worcester Society of Antiquity, 1881.

Toney, Kim. Interview by Christina Rose Walcott. Personal Interview. Zoom, 3 March 2022.

United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009.

United States World War I Draft Registrations, 1917-1918. MyHeritage.com [online database], MyHeritage Ltd., n.d.

Worcester City Directory. U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 [database on-line]. Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

U.S., Find a Grave Index, 1600s-Current [database on-line]. Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012.

U.S., Social Security Death Index, 1935-2014 [database on-line]. Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2014.

Vaughan, Virginia. Interview by Christina Rose Walcott. Personal Interview. 12 Hawthorne Street Worcester, MA, 8 April 2022.

Worcester County, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Office of the Registry, *Book of Deeds* [database online]: Masslandrecords.com, 2022.

Secondary Sources:

Clark News and Media Relations. “English Department celebrates 50 years in Anderson House.” *Clark Now,* 20 Nov. 2018, https://clarknow.clarku.edu/2018/11/20/english-department-celebrates-50-years-in-anderson-house/

Crane, Ellery Bicknell. *Historic Homes and Institutions and Genealogical and Personal Memoirs of Worcester County, Massachusetts with a History of Worcester Society of Antiquity.* Lewis Publishing Company, 1907, pp. 254-257.

Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne. *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States*. Beacon Press, 2014.

Fuentes, Marisa J. *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.

Gookin, Frederick William. *Daniel Gookin, 1612-1687: Assistant and Major General of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, His Life and Letters and Some Account of His Ancestry*, 1912.

Greenwood, Janette. *First Fruits of Freedom: The Migration of Former Slaves and Their Search for Equality in Worcester, Massachusetts, 1862-1900*. University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

History of the Oread Collegiate Institute, Worcester Mass. (1848-1881), with Biographical Sketches, edited by Martha Burt Wright and Anne M. Bancroft. Tuttle, Morehouse, & Taylor Co., 1905.

Hulbert, Archer Butler. *Indian Thoroughfares*. The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1902.

Jaffe, Eric. *The King’s Best Highway: The Lost History of the Boston Post Road, the Route that Made America*. Simon & Schuster, 2010.

Keogh, Jim. “A league of their own: As World War II raged, Clark’s first women athletes brought their ‘A’ game to campus.” *Clark Now*, 15 Oct. 2010, https://clarknow.clarku.edu/2010/10/15/a-league-of-their-own-as-world-war-ii-raged-clarks-first-women-athletes-brought-their-a-game-to-campus/

Kinnicutt, Lincoln. “Historical Notes Relating to the Second Settlement of Worcester”, The Society for Antiquity, 1916.

Koelsch, William A. *Clark University: 1887-1987: A Narrative History*. Clark University Press, 1987.

Lincoln, William. *History of Worcester, Massachusetts, From Its Earliest Settlement to September, 1836, with Various Notices Relating to the History of Worcester County*. Moses D. Phillips and Co., 1837.

Nutt, Charles. *History of Worcester and Its People*. 2 vols. Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1919.

O'Brien, Jean M. *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England*. University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

Staff Writer, "Roy Anderson," *Telegram & Gazette*, 14 Oct. 2014, https://www.telegram.com/story/news/local/worcester/2014/10/14/roy-anderson/36175124007/.

Tainter, Dean W. *A History and Genealogy of the Descendants of Joseph Taynter, Who Sailed from England April, A.D. 1638, and Settled in Watertown, Mass.* David Clapp, 1859.

"The Life of Anderson House: The English Department's Home." *The Next Chapter*, Clark University English Department, 18 Jan. 2018, https://news.clarku.edu/next-chapter/2018/01/18/the-life-of-anderson-house-the-english-departments-home/

Wall, Caleb A. *The Historic Boston Tea Party of December 16, 1773*. Press of F. S. Blanchard & Co., 1896.