



# Forest Avenue and Stevens Avenue Portland, Maine

## Historic Context

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## General context

### Development of Colonial Falmouth

European settlement of the area that became the city of Portland, Maine, began with English settlers establishing homes on the islands of Casco Bay and on the peninsula known as Casco Neck in the early seventeenth century. As in much of Maine, early settlers were attracted by abundant natural resources, specifically fish and trees. Also like other early settlement efforts, those at Casco Bay and Casco Neck were tenuous and fitful, as British and French conflicts in Europe extended across the Atlantic to New England and both the French and their Native American allies frequently sought to limit British territorial claims in the lands between Massachusetts and Canada.

Permanent settlement did not come to the area until the early eighteenth century and complete security against attacks from French and Native forces did not come until the fall of Quebec to the British in 1759. Until this historic event opened the interior to settlement in a significant way, the town on Casco Neck, named Falmouth, was primarily focused on the sea with minimal contact with the interior. Falmouth developed as a compact village in the vicinity of present day India Street. As it expanded, it grew primarily to the west along what would become Fore, Middle, and Congress streets. A second village developed at Stroudwater, several miles up the Fore River. Roads to the interior were limited and used primarily to move logs to the coast for sawing or use as ship's masts.

The town on the peninsula broke off from the larger town of Falmouth (then comprising modern Falmouth, Portland, Cape Elizabeth, South Portland, and Westbrook)<sup>1</sup> and became the town of Portland in 1786, incorporating as a city in 1832. Westbrook broke off from Falmouth in 1814, extending from adjacent to the peninsula to the villages of Saccarappa and Cumberland Mills on the Presumpscot River, taking in Stroudwater and East Deering as well.<sup>2</sup> The sections of Westbrook closest to Portland became the town of Deering in 1871. The town incorporated as the city of Deering in 1892.<sup>3</sup> In 1899, the city of Portland annexed Deering combining the peninsula city with its suburban neighbor.

### Early Roads

With the opening of the interior and coastal regions east of Falmouth to settlement in the mid-eighteenth century came early roads connecting the peninsula town to areas to the south, west, and east.<sup>4</sup> Among the earliest roads were the beginnings of today's Stevens/Allen, Forest, and Deering/Ocean Avenues. Although now named as separate streets, Stevens and Allen Avenues were laid out as a single road in 1730,<sup>5</sup> as were Deering and Allen Avenues in 1735. Later in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a road was built running between the two roads and continuing on toward Windham. The section between the two future



This view showing Falmouth in 1775 shows the early roads that later became Deering Avenue and Stevens Avenue. at the upper center and upper left of image Image courtesy of Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine. (MHS)

- 1 Greater Portland Landmarks. *Portland*, Portland, Maine, 1972, 20.
- 2 Barry William David and Anderson, Patricia McGraw. *Deering*, Portland, Maine, 2010, 50.
- 3 Barnes, 124.
- 4 Barnes, Albert F. *Greater Portland Celebration 350*, Portland, Maine 1984, 83.
- 5 Barry & Anderson, 52.

avenues was called Bishop's Road and beyond Stevens/Allen Avenue it was called Windham Road. In the early nineteenth century, citizens petitioned for a new road to be constructed from Bishop's Road to where Deering's Bridge was to be built. This new road, Bishop's Road, and Windham Road to the Westbrook line are today's Forest Avenue. Over time, homes, farms, and shops were developed along these roads, generally moving from the town on the peninsula or Stoudwater outward over time. In the early-to mid-nineteenth century, some of this development took on a proto-suburban character for the area near Back Cove, just northwest of the peninsula. With the arrival of horsecars and later electric trolleys, the suburban development accelerated.

### Development at the Corners

Denser development occurred early on where these roads intersected, particularly at Woodford's Corner and Morrill's Corner. Deering/Ocean Avenue crossed Forest Avenue at Woodford's and Stevens/Allen crossed Forest at Morrill's Corner. Forest Avenue was the primary road to the lakes and mountains to the northwest and on to northern New Hampshire and Vermont. As inland settlement increased, this became a major route for farmers bringing produce to market in Portland. Deering/Allen Avenue was the primary route from the Portland peninsula to Falmouth and points east up the coast. Stevens/Allen Avenue was the primary route up



Morrill's Tavern was built at the intersection of today's Forest Avenue (left) and Allen Avenue (right) around 1805. It was approximately 100 years old when this image was taken. (MHS)

the coast from the south, bypassing the Portland peninsula. These intersections were natural locations for the development of inns and taverns to serve travelers as well as tradesmen's shops to supply their needs. Mainline railroads also established suburban railroad stations at these locations when their lines were built through the corners. Both the York & Cumberland Railroad (later the Portland and Rochester and then the Boston & Maine) and the Portland and Kennebec Railroad (later Maine Central) passed through both corners. More residential development followed the building of street car lines on Forest and Stevens Avenues in the mid-1860s and these corners became neighborhood centers with businesses and institutions catering to the residents. These included schools and churches as well as social clubs and a garden cemetery.

### Street Car Suburbs

The construction of a horse car line from the Portland peninsula to Morrill's Corner along Forest and Stevens Avenues triggered the development of the city's first "street car suburbs" starting in the mid-1860s. In the National Park Service's National Register Bulletin, *Historic Residential Suburbs*, the authors state, "The laying out of new transportation routes, using new technologies, spurred the outward movement of suburban development. New circulation patterns formed the skeleton around which new land uses and suburbs became organized. Farmland near the city was acquired, planned, and developed into residential subdivisions of varying sizes. Separate from the city, new subdivisions were designed as residential landscapes, combining the open space, fresh air, and greenery of the country with an efficient arrangement of houses."<sup>6</sup> In this national context document, the development of suburban neighborhoods is broken into four chronological eras: Railroad and Horsecar Suburbs (1830-1890); Streetcar Sub-

<sup>6</sup> Ames, David L. and McClelland, Linda Flint. *Historic Residential Suburbs: Guidelines for Evaluation and Documentation for the National Register of Historic Places*, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2002.

urbs (1888-1928); Early Automobile Suburbs (1908-1945); Post-World War II and Early Freeway Suburbs (1945-1960).<sup>7</sup> All of these phases of development occurred in Portland, Maine, within the same general time frames indicated for the national context. The Deering neighborhoods along Forest and Stevens Avenues that are included in the study area were developed through all four periods, with the majority of surviving historic resources from the 1860 to 1930 period. Development in the last two phases primarily occurred further out from the peninsula, but had large impacts on the study area nonetheless, particularly Forest Avenue.

Horse-drawn omnibuses were introduced in America's larger cities by 1830 and were the first form of what would eventually come to be called "mass-transit."<sup>8</sup> Omnibuses were large, enclosed, sprung vehicles seating a dozen or more passengers pulled by a team of horses. Because of their size and weight, they required paved streets and were largely restricted to developed city centers where pavement was most common. The first phase of suburban development utilizing "mass transit" followed the establishment of common carrier railroad lines between cities. In the areas immediately outside city centers, areas just beyond reasonable walking distance, railroad companies built passenger depots that triggered the development of residential neighborhoods for upper-middle and upper-class families whose breadwinner worked in the city and commuted several miles daily by rail.<sup>9</sup> The passenger depots that were established at Woodford's Corner and Morrill's Corner around 1846 were examples of this national trend and impacted development along both Forest and Stevens Avenues.



The Woodford's railroad station was built to serve the Portland & Kennebec RR when it came through in 1846, making it possible for well-to-do suburban residents to commute to their businesses in Portland. (MHS)

In the 1850s, omnibuses that were pulled on iron or steel rails began to appear in American cities. This provided a much lower rolling resistance and allowed the horses to pull a greater load for a longer distance, and did not require paved streets. In the *Historic Residential Suburbs* National Register Bulletin, the authors note:

Horse-drawn cars increased the distance one could commute in one-half hour from two to three miles, thereby extending the distance between the center city and land desirable for residential development from 13 to almost 30 square miles. Horsecar tracks followed the main roads radiating out from the center city toward the emerging railroad suburbs on the periphery. Transportation began to influence the geography of social and economic class, as the the cost of traveling between home and work determined where different groups settled. The middle and working classes settled in neighborhoods closer to the central city accessible by horse-drawn cars...<sup>10</sup>

The construction of the horsecar line along Forest and Stevens Avenues during the Civil War brought this

7 Ames and McClelland, 16.

8 Ames and McClelland, 16.

9 Ames and McClelland, 16.

10 Ames and McClelland, 17.



new and more affordable form of mass transportation to Portland and Deering.

The second phase of this development, the electrification of hosecar lines for use by self-propelled trolley cars, ushered in a new age of suburbanization starting with the first such system in Richmond, Virginia in 1887. The electric streetcar allowed a person to travel as far in ten minutes as they could walk in thirty. Once introduced, streetcar, or trolley, trackage in American cities increased rapidly. There were 5,783 miles of it in 1890, which increased to 22,000 miles by 1902 and to 34,404 by 1907.<sup>11</sup> The Bulletin quoted above states, "In older cities, electric streetcars quickly replaced horse-drawn cars, making it possible to extend transportation lines outward and greatly expanding the availability of land for residential development. Growth occurred first in outlying rural villages that were now interconnected by streetcar lines, and, second, along the new residential corridors created along the streetcar routes," noting further that, "Socioeconomically, streetcar suburbs

attracted a wide range of people from the working to upper-middle class, with the great majority being middle class. By keeping fares low in cost and offering a flat fare with free transfers, streetcar operators encouraged households to move to the suburban periphery, where the cost of land and a new home was cheaper." Writing of the later part of the streetcar era of suburban development, the authors state, "As streetcar systems evolved, cross-town lines made it possible to travel from one suburban center to another, and interurban lines connected outlying towns to the central city and to each other."<sup>12</sup> These efficient and affordable mass transportation systems affected the way communities were designed and built:

Concentrated along radial streetcar lines, streetcar suburbs extended outward from the city, ... Unlike railroad suburbs which grew in nodes around rail stations, streetcar suburbs formed continuous corridors. Because the streetcar made numerous stops spaced at short intervals, developers platted rectilinear subdivisions where homes, generally on small lots, were built within a five- or 10-minute walk of the streetcar line. ... Neighbor-



A horsecar enters Market (now Monument) Square on Congress Street in Portland, c. 1870. Image courtesy of Bangor Public Library, Bangor, Maine (BPL)



Early electric trolleys in Monument Square, Portland, c. 1895 (BPL).

<sup>11</sup> Ames and McClelland, 17.

<sup>12</sup> Ames and McClelland, 17.

hood oriented commercial facilities, such as grocery stores, bakeries, and drugstores, clustered at the intersections of streetcar lines or along the more heavily traveled routes. Multiple story apartment houses also appeared at these locations...<sup>13</sup>

All of these national trends related to the development of first horsecar lines and their later expansion as electric trolley lines occurred in Portland and Deering and greatly impacted the development of Forest and Stevens Avenues.

### Impact of the Automobile

The introduction of the personal automobile had an enormous impact on suburban development in greater Portland, which reflected nationwide trends. Around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the first automobiles were expensive toys for the wealthy. With the introduction of the Ford's relatively inexpensive Model-T car, automobile ownership soared and suburbanization entered its next phase. Between 1910 and 1930, automobile registrations in the U.S. increased from 458,000 to nearly 22 million. Eight thousand autos were in use in the U.S. in 1900, one half



Automobiles being delivered to the Portland waterfront, c. 1910. Image courtesy of Maine Historical Society.

million were in use in 1910, nine and a quarter million in 1920, and nearly twenty-seven million in 1930. Annual car sales increased from over two and a quarter million in 1922 to nearly four and half million in 1929.<sup>14</sup> Largely due to wide-spread adoption of the automobile, streetcar lines across the nation were shut down and abandoned by the 1940s,<sup>15</sup> as they were in Portland and its suburbs starting in the late 1930s. Along with automobiles came the "auto showroom" dealership to sell them from. Automobile companies built model, or "object lesson" showrooms in major cities for dealers to emulate in their own buildings across the country.<sup>16</sup> In *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, historian Chester H. Liebs describes the "birth of a new type of commercial district – automobile row":

The evolution of these marketplaces for motorcars usually began when a dealer – often motivated by company object lessons, along with a desire to forsake high rents or taxes and cramped quarters in the central city – relocated along a main road, farther out of town. Before long another dealer moved in nearby, then another. Soon speculators built small, one story showrooms in the gaps between the larger, more impressive sales buildings. These in turn were rented by agents of smaller, lesser-known automakers. Within a few years, a whole new Main Street was born, lined by walls of buildings whose shop windows, instead of being crammed full of jewelry, clothing, hardware, or groceries, showcased a single product – automobiles. By walking, driving, or riding a trolley down the street, shoppers could survey the latest cars available, while gaining an impression of dealers and the companies they represented from the appearance of their buildings.<sup>17</sup>

This description could have been written specifically about the development of the stretch of Forest

13 Ames and McClelland, 17.

14 Ames and McClelland, 18.

15 Ames and McClelland, 17.

16 Liebs, Chester H. *Main Street to Miracle Mile*. Baltimore, Maryland, 1995, 79.

17 Liebs, 83-84.

Avenue from Baxter Boulevard to Bedford Street between 1915 and 1930.

The fourth phase of suburban development followed World War II and is usually described as a “housing boom,” concentrated in bedroom communities further from the urban centers than the earlier streetcar suburbs. The development of interstate and arterial highways, especially following the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956, further fueled the development of suburbs farther from the urban core. The Act funded the construction of a 41,000-mile system of interstate highways that included five thousand miles of urban freeways.<sup>18</sup> As explored below, this large scale change in how American’s got from home to work, and elsewhere, significantly influenced the built resources of the study area, particularly along Forest Avenue.

The major historical themes represented by the surviving historic resources in the study area include transportation, community development (particularly suburban development), education, and religion.

## Forest Avenue

### Road to the Interior - Transportation

Prior to the construction of a bridge across the mill pond at Deering Oaks in 1806, the only road into Portland from the northeast was today’s Deering Avenue, which crossed the narrow land connection between the peninsula and mainland. Leaving the city, one would have traveled out Deering Avenue, cutting through the Deering estate, to what is now Woodford’s Corner, where the road west toward New Hampshire intersected Deering/Ocean Avenue. At this time, the city was concentrated between India and State streets on the peninsula, with the business center located in the southeastern portion of that area.



This drawing by Charles Goodhue was done late in the 19th century and represents Mr. Goodhue’s recollection of how Deering’s Bridge appeared in the 1840s. Image courtesy of Maine Historical Society.

### Deering’s Bridge - Transportation

The new bridge, a joint project of the towns of Falmouth and Portland, was agreed to in 1805 and became known as Deering’s Bridge after construction.<sup>19</sup> It crossed a portion of Back Cove that extended into Deering’s woods where today’s Deering Oaks pond is located. With the County Road (now Forest Av-

<sup>18</sup> Ames and McClelland, 28.

<sup>19</sup> Barry & Anderson, 44

enue) extended from today's Woodford's Corner over the new bridge and up the hill to Congress Street, the distance to the heart of the city was substantially reduced.<sup>20</sup> The bridge was combined with a causeway that served as a tidal dam and a tide mill was constructed alongside the bridge to make use of the waterpower. Over time, the area around the bridge became home to a number of industries, including tanneries and a stoneware factory. Eventually, fill was hauled in to create new land around the bridge, which is today occupied by a portion of Deering Oaks park, the Portland Post Office and Federal Building, and the intersection of Forest Avenue, State Street, Kennebec Street, and Marginal Way.

#### Early estates - Suburban Development



A detail from the 1886 bird's eye view of Deering showing several of the estates that extended from Forest Avenue to Back Cove. Image courtesy of Boston Public Library.

Beyond the new bridge, James Deering had built his mansion in 1804 and established Portland's first suburban "gentleman farmer" estate.<sup>21</sup> Deering owned all of the land west of the County Road (Forest Avenue) from the bridge nearly to what soon became known as Woodford's Corner. On the opposite side of the County Road, other prominent Portland businessmen followed Deering's example and built homes on sizable estates that ran down to Back Cove in the decades that followed.<sup>22</sup> The presence of these suburban estates prevented commercial development along Forest Avenue between Deering's Bridge and Woodford's Corner until the early twentieth century.

#### Woodford's Corner - Transportation and Suburban Development

A Connecticut merchant named Chauncey Woodford settled near the intersection of Forest Avenue and Deering/Ocean Avenue around 1799 and was later joined by his two brothers. All three were engaged in the tinware business and were soon joined by other businesses at the "corner," including taverns, blacksmiths, shoemakers, and stores.<sup>23</sup> Additional activity at the corner followed the arrival of the railroads, with passenger and freight depots to serve the developing community center.

The first railroad to come through Woodford's Corner was the Kennebec and Portland RR, chartered in 1836 and opened through to Brunswick in 1847. The line ran from a junction at Commercial Street with the Portland, Saco & Portsmouth Railroad which connected to other lines running to Boston. The K&P RR followed the Fore River around the base of Bramhall Hill (today's Western Promenade) before turning northerly to parallel St. John Street to Brighton Avenue and then passed between Deering Heights and Deering Avenue to cross Woodford Street and Forest Avenue at Woodford's Corner. From there it roughly paralleled Forest Avenue on the east to Morrill's Corner and then turned eastward toward Falmouth.

The York and Cumberland Railroad was built through Woodford's Corner in 1850, running from a depot

20 Barry & Anderson, 45

21 Barry & Anderson, 58.

22 Barry & Anderson, 59.

23 Barry & Anderson, 45.



on Back Cove across Forest Avenue at Deering's Bridge (on a wooden trestle) and roughly paralleling Forest Avenue to the west on a right-of-way taken from the Deering estate.<sup>24</sup> Just southeast of Woodford's, the railroad crossed back over Forest Avenue and continued westward crossing and then paralleling the Kennebec & Portland railroad to Morrill's Corner, where it re-crossed Forest Avenue to continue to Westbrook and points west. The Kennebec and Portland was eventually absorbed into the Maine Central Railroad and remains in use as part of the Pan Am Railroad. The York & Cumberland became part of the Portland & Rochester RR before that line was absorbed into the Boston & Maine Railroad. The Boston & Maine RR eventually owned or controlled multiple lines into Portland from the south and the redundant line through Woodford's was abandoned and removed in 1911.



Detail from the 1876 Portland bird's eye view print showing the Deering's Bridge area with the York & Cumberland (Portland & Rochester) Railroad line running through the Deering estate parallel to Forest Avenue toward Woodford's Corner. Image courtesy of Library of Congress.



Detail from the 1886 bird's eye view of Deering showing the Woodford's Corner area. The area was served by two railroads and the horsecar line by this date and suburban residential development was well under way. Image courtesy of Boston Public Library.

<sup>24</sup> Barry & Anderson, 73.

Construction of the four story brick Odd Fellows Hall with its tall clock tower in 1897 represented a new scale and urban character for what had been essentially a village center of two story wood buildings. At the same time the new Odd Fellows Block was being erected, the historic Federal style Ebenezer and Mary Woodford House on the opposite side of Woodford Street was raised a story and placed on a new brick base housing a commercial use with a storefront on Woodford Street.<sup>25</sup> For the few years between completion of the Odd Fellows Block and the annexation of Deering by Portland, the Deering city offices were housed in the new block.



Construction of the brick Odd Fellows Block at Woodford's Corner in 1897 introduced a new scale and urban character to the neighborhood center which had more resembled a rural New England village until that time. Other large masonry buildings followed. Image courtesy of Maine Historical Society.

Other new commercial development followed at Woodford's, including Albion Chapman's three story brick "flatiron" building of 1916 in the angle between Forest and Deering Avenues, the new fire station of 1907, and several one and two story brick commercial buildings. By 1920, the former "village center" had a decidedly urban character. Woodford's Corner continued to serve as a neighborhood center for goods and services through the middle part of the twentieth century. The Woodford's Club was built just up from the intersection in 1913 while the Odd Fellows and Masons both met in their halls in the Odd Fellows Block. In the 1950s, shops included Houle's Drug, the Economy Market, Buster Brown Shoes, two bakeries, a movie theater, a bank, and several restaurants.<sup>26</sup> Automobile traffic through Woodford's increased dramatically as new suburban development occurred further out in Portland, Westbrook, Windham, and Falmouth starting in the 1950s. Over time, changes were made to accommodate the increased traffic which decreased pedestrian access and safety, eventually making the location unsuitable for the types of businesses that had historically been located there.

Beyond Woodford's Corner, the land along Forest Avenue nearly to Morrill's Corner was again primarily occupied by large estates in the nineteenth century, including the F.O.J. Smith estate on the west side of the road (today's Baxter Woods is a part of this property) and other large properties extending toward Ocean Avenue and Back Cove. Development occurred along the east side of the street between Woodford's and Morrill's Corner after removal of the Portland & Rochester (Boston & Maine) railroad tracks in 1911. This was primarily commercial in use and character. The Maine Central Railroad tracks remained, separating these commercial buildings from the residential subdivisions being developed west of Ocean Avenue.

### Horse Cars and Trolleys – Transportation

The early suburban residential development along Forest Avenue was built for wealthy businessmen who commuted to offices in the city in private carriages with their own drivers. It was only after the construction of a horse car line that homes for middle class residents began to be constructed in any number. Horse cars could transport large numbers of passengers for a low fare, making it possible for those

<sup>25</sup> Barry & Anderson, 78, and City of Portland 1924 tax record for 661-667 Forest Avenue.

<sup>26</sup> Shettleworth, Earle G., Jr. Oral history interview by S.T. Hanson, August 7, 2015.

who were not wealthy to live off-peninsula and commute to work. The Portland and Forest Avenue Railroad Company (later Portland Railroad Company) was chartered in 1860 and began construction of a street railway line on India Street in 1863 with rails imported from Canada. The Civil War was underway and American rails were unobtainable. The company was chartered with \$100,000 in capital.<sup>27</sup> The first section of street car line extended from the Grand Trunk depot on India Street up Middle Street to Congress Street at Market (Monument) Square, west to High Street, down High to Spring and then westerly to Clark Street. The following year, a line was built from Market Square down Preble Street to Portland Street, west to Forest Avenue, along Forest to Woodford's, then along Pleasant Avenue to Stevens Avenue and northerly along Stevens to Morrill's Corner. Running 3.3 miles from Market Square, this line propelled substantial suburban development in Deering.<sup>28</sup> In the month of May 1865, the line carried 77,406 passengers.<sup>29</sup> By the time the lines were electrified in 1895, the system had expanded from Woodford's to Lunt's Corner and East Deering along Ocean and Washington Avenues, as well as up to Munjoy Hill and out to Stroudwater from downtown. There were 50 horse cars and 225 horses operating at the time of electrification.<sup>30</sup>

Once electrified, the lines in Deering expanded further along Stevens Avenue to Congress Street, across Woodford's Street from Woodford's Corner, and out Brighton Avenue to Westbrook. Although the section of Forest Avenue from Woodford's to Morrill's Corner never had a trolley line, a branch was extended along Forest Avenue from Stevens/Allen Avenue line at Morrill's Corner to Riverton, at the Westbrook city line, to serve the trolley company's recreational park there.<sup>31</sup> The Portland Railroad Company expanded by absorbing lines in surrounding communities, ultimately covering much of greater Portland and carrying 23 million passengers in 1923.<sup>32</sup> Within twenty years, the automobile would displace the trolleys and the system would be gone entirely.

#### Subdivisions - Suburban Development

The wealthy had been moving from the peninsula to large estates along Forest and Ocean Avenues for several decades before the construction of the horse car line in 1864. Most of these estates would remain intact into the twentieth century, forcing new middle class residential development further out

27 Barnes, 82.

28 Robertson, Edwin B. *Remember the Portland, Maine Trolleys*, Westbrook, Maine, 1982, 6,7.

29 Barnes, 81.

30 Robertson, 8.

31 Robertson, 11.

32 Barnes, 144.



Route of the Portland and Forest Avenue Railroad Company horsecar line, 1865 (BPL)



from the peninsula and to the west, along Deering and Stevens Avenues. The Great Fire of 1866, which destroyed much of the city center, spurred the demand for new housing both on and off the peninsula. Pleasant Avenue, connecting Forest and Stevens Avenues with the horse car line down its center, was among the first of these subdivisions. The land along both sides of the street was purchased by Dr. Eliphalet Clark, a director of the horse car company, and divided into house lots in 1866. Dr. Clark also donated a lot at the corner of Pleasant and Forest Avenues for the construction of a Methodist Episcopal church, now the Clark Memorial Church.<sup>33</sup> Just southeast of Woodford's Corner, Warren Sparrow had built his Gothic Revival style villa on a large estate reaching Back Cove in 1852. In the early 1870s, he began to subdivide the estate and build additional single family and double houses to sell on Arlington Street, Arlington Place, and the northwest side of Clifton Street.<sup>34</sup>



Warren Sparrow's Gothic Revival house on Arlington Street, just off Forest Avenue. Several decades after building this house, he subdivided his estate into lots and built other Gothic cottages to sell. 1924 Portland tax photo.

The most important residential subdivision bordering the section of Forest Avenue included in the study area was the Oakdale Plan for a 45 acre portion of the Deering family estate acquired in 1881 by a group of developers and investors called the Deering Land Company. Extending from Falmouth Street to Dartmouth Street and from Forest Avenue to Brighton Avenue, this large upper middle class subdivision is a classic nineteenth century "streetcar suburb." Across Forest Avenue and closer to Woodford's Corner, twelve acres of the former Coyle estate was subdivided to form 69 house lots on Belmont and Coyle Streets and the southeast side of Clifton Street in 1899. This development, called Coyle Park, was



This Victorian double-house on Forest Avenue was part of the Oakdale Plan development. It is one of the few houses on Forest Avenue to survive into the 21st century, with a c. 1925 commercial storefront built in front of the left side. 1924 Portland tax photo.

33 Barry & Anderson, 101-102.

34 Barry & Anderson, 88-90.



largely built out by 1911.<sup>35</sup> The west side of Forest Avenue, beyond the Oakdale Plan development that stopped at Dartmouth Street, remained largely undeveloped in 1886,<sup>36</sup> but was subdivided and filled with homes by the turn of the century.<sup>37</sup> Boulevard Park was a smaller subdivision, located along a new street called Deerfield Road, developed in the first decade of the twentieth century. It was bordered by Forest Avenue on the west, the William Wentworth Brown estate on the north, Baxter Boulevard on the east, and the Portland Stoneware Company property to the south. The last of the large estates on the east side of Forest Avenue, the Joseph S. Ricker and W.E. Gould-W.W. Brown estates would stand until the 1920s and 1940s, respectively, before making way for automobile-era development along Forest Avenue.

The houses built in all of these subdivisions reflected the architectural styles of the periods in which they were developed. The earlier ones featured primarily Italianate and Queen Anne style houses and the later ones Colonial Revival and Arts & Crafts styles. After the turn of the twentieth century, new residential buildings on Forest Avenue tended to be two-family American Four Square style houses and a few triple-decker apartment houses. Only four houses remain on Forest Avenue between Interstate 295 and Coyle Street, all of which have been converted to commercial uses. Seven residential buildings remain between Coyle Street and Woodford's Corner, all on the east side of the street.

### Churches - Religion

As Woodford's Corner developed as the "village center" for early suburban residents, those residents created churches in their neighborhood. A Methodist chapel was built in 1856 and quickly outgrown. A much larger, Stick style church was designed by John Calvin Stevens and built on a lot donated by developer Dr. Eliphalet Clark at the corner of Pleasant and Forest Avenues. It was later renamed in honor of Clark.<sup>38</sup> In 1871, a Congregational Church designed by Francis H. and Edward F. Fassett was built on Woodford Street, just up the hill from the intersection with Forest Avenue. This church



The Methodist Episcopal church at Woodford's Corner, named in memory of Dr. Eliphalet Clark. Clark was a director of the horsecar company and developed the house lots along Pleasant Avenue in the 1860s. Image courtesy of Maine Historical Society.

served until the congregation built a new church by Boston architect Arland A. Derlam across Woodford Street in 1957, next to the Miller, Mayo & Beal designed Parish House, which had been built in 1925.<sup>39</sup> The Episcopalians built Trinity Church at 113 Coyle Street in 1891, which has been expanded twice.<sup>40</sup> The most recent expansion, designed by architect Wilbur R. Ingall, Jr. and completed in 1963, gives the building a distinctly modernist façade and extends the building to Forest Avenue, over the one-time right-of-way of the Portland & Rochester Railroad.

35 Barry & Anderson, 160, 161.

36 A.F. Poole & Co. Bird's eye view of Deering, Maine, 1886.

37 City of Portland 1924 tax record collection on Maine Memory Network (mainememory.net).

38 Barry & Anderson, 130.

39 Barry & Anderson, 131.

40 Barry & Anderson, 131.

## Automobiles - Transportation

Maine's first automobile, owned by well-known photographer Maynard D. Hanson, was delivered to Portland's docks on July 19, 1899. Hanson attracted a crowd along the streets as he drove the steam powered car to his home on Beacon Street in Deering. Two years later, there were 27 automobiles in Portland.<sup>41</sup> These early autos were essentially toys for wealthy men and a very few women. Hanson's wife, Margaret Dorman Hanson, claimed to be the first female licensed driver in the nation.<sup>42</sup> In 1912, the Portland Sunday Telegram asserted that "hardly anybody turns around to take a second look at an automobile on Congress Street today," and that there were 2,765 cars in Maine that spring, up 618 from the previous year.<sup>43</sup> A decade later, automobiles had become affordable to the middle class and were impacting the revenues of the trolley company. In an interview, the manager of the Portland Railroad Company, "pointed out the inroad made by the motorist on street railway returns. In 1910, the autos operated in the city of Portland were valued at but \$389,000, while in 1923 the figure had increased to \$2,581,000. In the (10 communities) territory served by the railroad, including Portland, there were but 538 automobiles in 1910. In the same area in 1923, there were 10,534 cars assessed at over \$4 million."<sup>44</sup>

This dramatic change in the transportation patterns of Portland residents impacted the built environment of Forest Avenue significantly as the stretch from Deering Oaks to Belmont Street became known as the "Auto Row." Numerous car dealerships were built along this section of Forest Avenue in the nineteen-teens and twenties, along with garages and filling stations. The first car dealerships in the city had been located on the peninsula, primarily in buildings converted from others uses, but as a new form of building was created to house these new businesses, the largely undeveloped estates remaining on Forest Avenue became a magnet for dealerships. Car dealerships needed large-footprint buildings with significant enclosed interior space

for displaying and servicing autos and outdoor display space as well. Primarily one and two story buildings, with large plate-glass show windows on the street, these dealerships were among the first architectural building types developed in response to the automobile. As Patricia McGraw Anderson stated in *Deering*, "A building was required whose needs were unrelated to anything familiar – certainly not a barn – comprising and attractive and spacious showroom, office space, and an extensive maintenance and repair area, usually in the rear, and with access in at least two places. Fulfilling this building program created the earliest of the horizontal buildings that have come to dominate our suburban commercial



The first of the auto showrooms built on Forest Avenue was the Forest City Motor Company, built at the corner of Bedford Street in 1915. This building still stands in good condition. 1924 Portland tax photo.

41 Barnes, 128.

42 Barry & Anderson, 130.

43 Barnes, 128.

44 Barnes, 144.

landscapes.”

In 1910, there were six automobile dealerships in Portland, all on the peninsula.<sup>45</sup> But, with open space and thousands of commuters passing by daily on the crowded trolleys, Forest Avenue was recognized as an ideal location for dealers to display their cars and by 1924 there were seventeen buildings devoted to automobile sales and service between today's Interstate 295 and Falmouth Street. These included several tire and battery stores and another new building type, the filling station. The earliest of these buildings built as a car showroom was constructed in 1915, with three more built in the following two years. The other thirteen buildings were built between 1920 and 1924.<sup>46</sup> Auto Row was extended to Belmont Street several years later, when the Ricker estate was redeveloped with four auto dealerships along Forest Avenue and the Ricker Park apartment complex along Baxter Boulevard. While architect John P. Thomas was hired to design the apartment blocks, the auto dealerships and service garage were designed by contractor Frank Rumery, who was the builder of many Forest Avenue commercial buildings during this period as well as many residences in Deering.<sup>47</sup> Other important buildings built in this area during the same period included the Oakhurst Dairy building of 1922 and the T. A. Huston Bakery and A. H. Hind's Laboratory by John Calvin Stevens, both from 1920.

Another new building type that appeared at this time was the

45 Barry & Anderson, 170.

46 City of Portland, 1924 tax records.

47 Barry & Anderson, 175.



The Miles B. Mank Motor Company building of 1916-17 was one of the largest of the early automobile showrooms. It still stands in good condition. 1924 Portland tax photo.



Gilson Auto Company at 345 Forest Avenue was built in 1922. It remains standing and has housed the Palmer Spring Company for many years. 1924 Portland tax photo.



Gasoline stations were another new building type created by the automobile. This Socony station was part of the Forest and Falmouth Motor Company showroom complex on Forest Avenue. 1924 Portland tax photo.



residential garage in which to keep an automobile stored under cover. Many of the homes built in Deering after around 1910 had a garage built alongside, generally a small one or two car garage with a hipped roof. Many of these remain.

The last of the great nineteenth century estates along Back Cove was Oakland, built by banker W. E. Gould and owned for several generations by the William Wentworth Brown family. The Browns owned the Berlin Mills lumber and paper company in Berlin, New Hampshire (later renamed the Brown Company) as well as the Berlin Mills wharf in Portland. The site was not redeveloped until the early 1940s, when the Forest Park apartment complex was built along Baxter Boulevard for World War II shipyard workers and an A&P grocery store and Howard Johnson's restaurant were built along Forest Avenue.<sup>48</sup>

The residential units were designed by architect William O. Armitage and were completed in 1944.<sup>49</sup> Howard Johnson's was one of the earliest national chains of restaurants catering to an auto-centric public. By 1940 Howard Johnson had built himself an empire of roadside restaurants, with more than 125 restaurants stretching from Maine to Florida doing a gross annual business of fourteen million dollars a year.<sup>50</sup> The free-standing A&P store, surrounded by paved parking, was a step in the evolution from corner grocery store to the modern supermarket.

Further out Forest Avenue, at Woodford's Corner, the nineteen thirties and forties saw continued development of the area as a commercial center for the surrounding residential area. Donald Della Valle opened a sandwich shop in the flatiron building in 1933 and expanded into a building at the corner of Forest Ave. and Woodford Street immediately after WWII. This building had housed the National Groceteria grocery store in 1924.<sup>51</sup> A movie theater was built next to it by Ralph S. Snider in 1941.<sup>52</sup> Valle would eventually own a chain of 25 restaurants including one on Brighton Avenue near the turnpike exit, which remained in business until 2000.



Oakland, built by W. E. Gould and later occupied by the William Wentworth Brown family for several generations. Now the site of Forest Avenue Plaza and the Forest Park apartments on Baxter Boulevard. 1924 Portland tax photo.



The site of Valle's first steak house, 660 Forest Avenue was remodeled into Gigino's sandwich shop by Donald Valle after his large new steak house was built on Brighton Avenue around 1960. He had this building demolished and built the existing Modernist building on the site in 1964. It housed Gigino's briefly and then the Valle's corporate offices until 2000. Image courtesy of Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC)

48 Barry & Anderson, 125.

49 Barry & Anderson, 181.

50 Liebs, 200.

51 City of Portland 1924 tax records for 660 Forest Avenue.

52 Barry & Anderson, 134.



## Arterial to Outer Suburbs - Transportation and Suburban Development

The post-war housing boom that followed World War II led to the rapid development of numerous residential subdivisions in North Deering, Westbrook, Falmouth, and Windham. Forest Avenue became the primary commuter arterial road for the residents of these new homes, most of whom still worked and shopped in downtown Portland. The trolley system had been completely abandoned before the start of the war and, although it was replaced with bus service, the majority of the new suburbanites were traveling by automobile. Eventually, the increasing number of people living beyond the traditionally defined urban and suburban core triggered the development of modern shopping centers further out. One of the first was the Pine Tree Shopping Center on Brighton Avenue, built in 1959.<sup>53</sup> The nearby Exit 8 interchange of the recently built Maine Turnpike created a new focus for development and soon impacted Forest Avenue as the car dealerships began to leave their old showrooms for new buildings nearer the highway exit. Other modern shopping centers which included supermarkets soon were built at Northgate in North Deering, Westgate, in Libbytown, and just across the city line in Westbrook on Riverside Drive. Among the businesses drawn to the new interstate highway exit was Howard Johnson's which built a new hotel and restaurant on Riverside Street. Valle's Steakhouse also built a large new restaurant on Brighton Avenue, near the highway exit, and demolished their 1940s building at Woodford's Corner for a new building. Forest Avenue Plaza, a modern shopping center, set well back from the street with acres of parking in front, was built on the site of the Forest Avenue Howard Johnsons and A&P grocery store. Only a handful of other new buildings appeared in the study area along Forest Avenue at mid-century. These included a new Oakhurst Dairy plant by architect Earle Webster, and the 1964 Modernist Valle's Building at Woodford's Corner, on the site of the original Valle's Steakhouse. The new building briefly housed a Valle's sandwich shop, much like their original operation at Woodford's. It only lasted a short time and was replaced by Valle's corporate offices.<sup>54</sup> Between Coyle and Belmont Streets, three relatively small mid-century office buildings form an interesting group from that period and a nearby 1920s car dealership had a striking Mid-Century Modernist façade added.

### Significant surviving resources include:

Valle's Corporate Offices, 660 Forest Avenue

Odd Fellows Block, 643-651 Forest Avenue

Chapman Block, 650 Forest Avenue

Engine 8 Firehouse (Big Sky Bakery), 536 Deering Avenue

Merrill's Garage, 634 Forest Avenue

Studebaker complex, including rear garage, 517-533 Forest Avenue and 44 Indian Lane

Oakhurst Dairy, 364 Forest Avenue

Gilson Auto Company building (Palmer Spring Co.), 355 Forest Avenue

Mank Motor Car Company building, 330 Forest Avenue

A.S. Hinds building, 331 Forest Avenue

William C. Rowell building, 309 Forest Avenue

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53 Barnes, 205.

54 Shettleworth, Earle G., Jr. Oral history interview by S.T. Hanson, August 7, 2015.

## Stevens Avenue

### Road from Stroudwater - Transportation

The road that was to become Stevens Avenue began as a crude “mast road” for moving massive white pine trees to the mast landing at Stroudwater. It was laid out from Stroudwater to the Presumpscot River by Colonel Thomas Westbrook and his partner Samuel Waldo in 1730.<sup>55</sup> Westbrook and Waldo controlled the mast trade at Falmouth, which was of great significance to the British Navy. It is likely that the road was used to move mast pines that had been cut further up the Presumpscot and floated down to a landing at the east end of the road. Once transported along the road to the Fore River at Stroudwater by oxen, the mast trees could be sorted and stored at the protected mast yard near Westbrook’s house there.<sup>56</sup>

### Early industry on Stevens Plains - Pre-Suburban Development



Detail from the 1886 bird’s eye view of Deering showing the Stevens family homes and shops, Westbrook Seminary, Universalist Church, and other homes and shops along the road at Stevens Plains. A corner of Evergreen Cemetery is at the upper left. Image courtesy of Boston Public Library.

Among the earliest settlers along the new road was Zachariah Brackett (1716-1776), whose parents had a farm on Back Cove. His fifty acres of land ran on both sides of the road and were covered with pitch pine, which he cleared to farm the level land. His daughter, Sarah (1749-1830) married Isaac Stevens (1748-1820) in 1767. Between 1767 and 1769, the couple built a home on what became known as Stevens Plains Road.<sup>57</sup> The house, later known as Stevens Tavern, was a two-and-a-half story center chimney colonial style building that later got a rear ell and a two-story enclosed entry porch. Stevens’ land extended roughly from today’s New Street to the Stevens Avenue Armory.

Zachariah Brackett Stevens, son of Isaac and Sarah, built a home near his parents and established a blacksmith and tinsmith shop next to it in 1798. Historian William David Barry documents that in 1803, “the English tinsmith and decorator Thomas Briscoe bought land from Stevens and began operating a business. With his wife and five nieces, Briscoe joined the Stevens family in pioneering the painted tinware industry. Boxes, baskets, trays, and flower holders were produced on Steven’s Plains and peddled throughout the Northeast by local men with horse and wagon.”<sup>58</sup> Other metal works were attracted to the neighborhood, including noted pewterers Allen and Freeman Porter and Rufus Durham, all of whom arrived in Stevens Plains around 1830.<sup>59</sup> These craftsmen, and others who owned metal working shops

55 Sawyer, Theodore L. *Back Cove to Quaker Lane*, Portland, Maine, 2001, 12.

56 Barry, William David and Peabody, Francis W. *Tate House, Crown of the Mast Trade*, Portland, Maine, 1982, 7-15.

57 Martin, Gina and Tucker, Lois. *American Painted Tinware, Vol. II*, Historical Society of Early American Decoration, Inc., Cooperstown, NY, 2002, xxv.

58 Barry & Anderson, 48.

59 Martin and Tucker, xxviii

in the immediate vicinity, employed hired help and apprentices, creating an industrial village strung out along the road to the intersection with Bishop's Road/Windham Road (Forest Avenue), today's Morrill's Corner. Historian Esther Stevens Brazer called the lineal village a "swarming beehive of activity and trade."<sup>60</sup>

This small-shop industrial activity continued for several generations in the Stevens family, as more members built homes around the ancestral tavern. In the 1850s, two grandsons of Zachariah B. Stevens, each built an Italianate style house next to their parents home.<sup>61</sup> The 1887 Bird's Eye View of Deering clearly shows these buildings alongside the older Colonial and Federal style Stevens family houses. Across the street, flanking today's Walton Street at its intersection with Stevens Avenue, two cemetery monument shops with outdoor cranes and long stone sheds are visible, indicating that some element of industrial character remained in the area at that time.<sup>62</sup> This business would have appeared after the establishment of Evergreen Cemetery in 1852. Of the nearly ten houses built by four generations of the extended Stevens family along the west side of the avenue, only one small early 19<sup>th</sup> century Cape survives, in much altered condition. The others have been removed to accommodate the growth of Evergreen Cemetery and Westbrook College (now the University of New England Portland Campus).



Detail from the 1886 bird's eye view of Deering showing the development along Stevens Plains Avenue at Deering Center, south of the Stevens houses. The first Deering High School is at center with the Presumpscot Park racetrack to its left. Image courtesy of Boston Public Library.

The open plain to the south of the Stevens' family houses was used periodically by militia groups for musters and training between the War of 1812 and the Civil War.<sup>63</sup> It was also one of the first locations in greater Portland where horse racing occurred, often in conjunction with militia musters.<sup>64</sup> Further down Stevens Avenue, scattered small farms and residences extended to what is now Capisic Street.<sup>65</sup> North of the Stevens family houses and shops, was the site of Portland's first institution of higher education, Westbrook Seminary. Founded in 1831 as a Universalist school, the first building was built in 1833-34 on land purchased from Zachariah Stevens and James Hicks in 1832.<sup>66</sup> In 1859, Goddard Hall was added and Hersey Hall followed in 1869. Both buildings were Italianate in style. Shortly before the construction of Hersey Hall, Stevens donated land for the construction of a new Universalist church along Stevens Avenue, in front of the school buildings. The Gothic Revival style building was designed by Portland architect Francis H. Fassett.<sup>67</sup> These four buildings now comprise the Westbrook College National

60 Barry & Anderson, 47.

61 Buttrick, Norman L. "Report of Archaeological Activity at Stevens Plains and Stevens Tavern, Portland, Maine, July 6-14, 2000, np.

62 A.F. Poole & Co. Bird's eye view of Deering, Maine, 1886.

63 Barry & Anderson, 49.

64 Barry & Anderson, 47.

65 Barry & Anderson, 48.

66 "Westbrook Seminary," *Deering News*, June 27, 1896, np.

67 Barry & Anderson, 84.

Register historic district. Next door to the college, the Pine Grove cemetery was established in 1841.

A short distance north of the Stevens family land was Bishop's Corner, named for tavern keeper and grocer George Bishop and later known as Morrill's Corner. The later name likely derived from the tanners Rufus and Levi Morrill, whose family built and operated a large inn at the Corner called Morrill's Tavern. Dominating the northerly corner of Forest and Stevens Avenues, the brick structure may have been built as early as 1805.<sup>68</sup> Another three story brick Federal style dwelling, now 844 Stevens Avenue, was built at the intersection at about the same time. The 1924 Portland tax records indicate that the main block of the building was 120 years old at that time, and the rear ell 50 years old.<sup>69</sup> The building remained in residential use in 1924, owned by the heirs of Amelia C. Boothby. A third brick residence was built north of the Morrill Tavern (now 1241 Forest Avenue) around the middle of the nineteenth century. It is a two and a half story gable-end-to-the-street Greek Revival style house with a side hall plan. The heavy door hood hints at the Italianate style, and suggests a date of c. 1850.



Greek Revival style brick house at 1242 Forest Avenue, a short distance north of the site of Morrill's Tavern. This house remains in good condition. The heavy door hood and paired doors with arched lights are transitional Italianate style elements. 1924 Portland tax records.

Another substantial residence stood in the triangle formed where Stevens and Forest Avenues came together. The two-story L-shaped wood clapboarded house presented a five bay façade toward the intersection with a long six bay façade facing Forest Avenue. A one-story woodshed addition continued this elevation further along Forest Avenue, with a yard facing Stevens Avenue behind the main block. Around 1920, the owner of this house, Charles L. Hayes, built a two story, flat roofed commercial building in the triangular front yard, facing onto the Corner.<sup>70</sup> A much larger two-story flat roofed brick retail commercial structure with nine apartments on the second floor had been built at the corner of Forest Avenue and Bishop Street around 1910. The Forest Avenue elevation was 82 feet long and the Bishop Street elevation 128 feet long. Both the 1886 Deering bird's eye view and the 1924 Portland tax records show numerous residences in and



Federal style residence at the intersection of Stevens and Forest Avenues. A corner of the newly built commercial building in the triangular front yard can be seen at right in this 1924 view. Both buildings have been demolished. 1924 Portland tax records.

<sup>68</sup> Barry & Anderson, 47.

<sup>69</sup> When the 1924 Portland tax records are this precise about the dating of older building, it appears that the assessors were relying on first-hand information from owners or other informed sources. In most cases, the records are imprecise with the age recorded simply as "old" or "very old."

<sup>70</sup> 1924 Portland tax records for 835 and 839 Stevens Avenue.



around Morrill's Corner, as well as industrial, commercial, and railroad buildings. Morrill's Tavern was demolished in the 1950s to make way for a gas station and most of the other buildings documented in the 1924 tax records have been lost as well. Only the three story Federal style brick residence at 844 Stevens Avenue, the brick Greek Revival residence at 1241 Forest Avenue, the c. 1910 commercial block at Bishop Street, and a handful of smaller residences beyond the Corner remain in 2015.

### Horsecars and Trolleys – Transportation

As described above in the Forest Avenue section of this document, the first railroad to come through Morrill's Corner was the Kennebec and Portland RR around 1845. The York and Cumberland Railroad was built through Morrill's Corner five years later. The two lines came in from the east and west, respectively, and ran parallel from Morrill's Corner to Woodford's Corner. The shared passenger depot at Morrill's Corner served the lineal village stretched out along Stevens Plains Avenue and increased commercial, residential, and industrial development at the Corner. Prior to the separation of Westbrook and Deering in 1871, the depot at Morrill's Corner was called "Westbrook."

### Subdivisions - Suburban Development

A number of Greek Revival style homes were built along Stevens Avenue near Morrill's Corner before and during this period. With construction of the horsecar line from downtown Portland to Morrill's Corner via Pleasant and Stevens Avenues in 1864, increased development occurred further south on Stevens Avenue. New streets were built connecting Forest and Stevens Avenues north and south of the F.O.J. Smith estate, Forest Home, and were developed with suburban residences, primarily in the Stick Style and other styles of the post-Civil War era. Much more subdivision occurred after James Phinney Baxter purchased the late F.O.J. Smith's estate following the death of Mrs. Smith in 1880. Baxter had earned a fortune as a pioneer in the canning industry and lived in a mansion on Deering Street in downtown Portland. He demolished Smith's mansion and divided the estate, selling the northern-most portion to the Catholic Diocese of Portland, leaving the central portion wooded, and subdividing the southern portion on both sides of Stevens Avenue for residential development. Eight new streets were laid out, named Alba, Clinton, Florence, Hartley, James, Mable, Madeline, and Percival for his children.<sup>71</sup>



By 1924, this gas station stood in front of Morrill's Tavern at the intersection of Forest and Allen Avenues. Both buildings were demolished for a new gas station in the 1950s, which is now a Subway restaurant. 1924 Portland tax records.



Detail from the 1886 bird's eye view of Deering showing Morrill's Corner. Morrill's Tavern is the large building at upper right and the Charles E. Morrill tannery is at the lower left. The Portland & Rochester RR curves off to the left away from the Maine Central line. The shared depot is at their junction. The horsecar line is visible running along Stevens Avenue, through the Corner on Forest Avenue and continuing out of the image to the right along Allen Avenue. Boston Public Library.

<sup>71</sup> Barry & Anderson, 137, 138.

The 1887 bird's eye view of Deering shows many homes already constructed on these streets by that date, appearing to be a mixture of Queen Anne, Italianate, and Second Empire style houses.<sup>72</sup> One of the interesting features found on a number of houses built in Deering during this period is a decorative tripartite window found on primary elevations where a bay window would more typically appear. This "flat bay window" may have been used by a particular developer or contractor in the area. After the turn of the twentieth century, new residential buildings on Stevens Avenue tended to be one- and two-family Colonial Revival and American Four Square style houses, Arts & Crafts bungalows, and a few triple-decker apartment houses. A great many pre-World War I residential buildings remain on Stevens Avenue from Brighton Avenue to Morrill's Corner. A number of Greek Revival style houses survive, one at the intersection with Woodford's Street, a few at Deering Center, and a handful near Morrill's Corner. The remaining buildings are largely split between the Victorian styles of the horsecar era and the later styles that followed. A handful of post-World War II houses exist as well, including an exceptional post-war double house at 651-655 Stevens Avenue built in 1968.

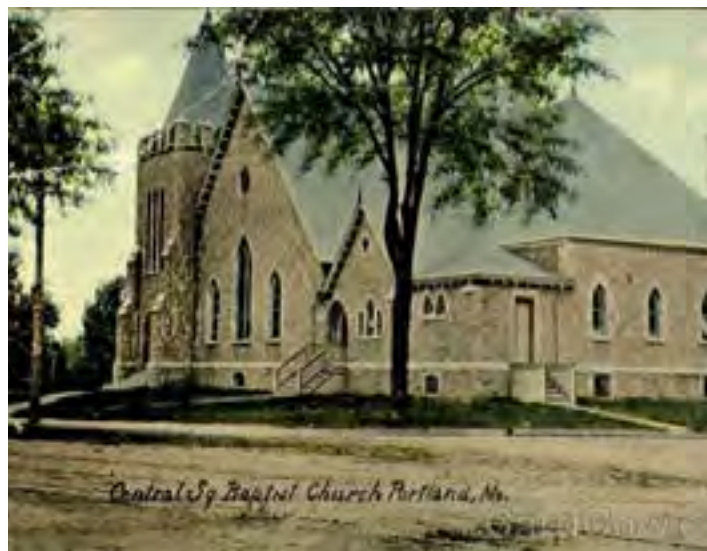


This Queen Anne style home built at the corner of Stevens Avenue and Concord Street is typical of the suburban development that followed construction of the horsecar line through Deering Center. 1924 Portland tax photo.

#### Churches and Schools – Religion

The earliest church within the study area along Stevens Avenue is the Gothic Revival building built for the Universalists in 1867, now the Ludcke Auditorium at the University of New England Portland Campus.<sup>73</sup>

The wood board-and-batten sided structure with its asymmetrically placed buttressed tower with a soaring spire was designed by Portland's leading Victorian architect, Francis H. Fassett. A short distance to the north, on the other side of the Westbrook Seminary campus, the Free Church of Deering was built in 1887 and became the Stevens Avenue Congregational Church in 1913.<sup>74</sup> The stone Gothic Revival Central Square Baptist Church (now the Deering Center Community Church) was built in 1906-1907. Located on the corner of Stevens and Pleasant Avenues, the building is at the heart of the Deering Center neighborhood. An addition by designed by the Portland architectural firm Miller, Mayo & Beal was built in the 1920s. The diminutive Swedenborgian Church of the New



Historic postcard view of the Central Square Baptist Church at Deering Center, c. 1920. (MHPC)

72 A.F. Poole & Co. Bird's eye view of Deering, Maine, 1886.

73 Barry & Anderson, 101.

74 Barry & Anderson, 147, 148.



Jerusalem at 302 Stevens Avenue was designed by Maine's leading architect John Calvin Stevens in the Arts & Crafts style and built in 1909. This congregation had its roots in the 1820s, when a small group of Portland residents gathered in private homes to worship and study *The Doctrine of the New Jerusalem*, by Emanuel Swedenborg. They were incorporated as a church in 1835 and acquired their first church building on Congress Street in 1837. Later in the nineteenth century, such prominent Portland residents as James P. Baxter and pharmacist H.H. Hay were members of the church.<sup>75</sup>

The most visible religious presence on Stevens Avenue is the complex of buildings that runs from Baxter Woods past Walton Street to include St. Joseph's Church and adjacent St. Brigid School. Originally part of F.O.J. Smith's Forest Home estate, James P. Baxter sold land between the woods and Walton Street to the Catholic Diocese of Portland in 1880. The property included the former Smith Home for Aged Indigent Women, designed by architect C.H. Howe in the Second Empire style in 1862, in which the Sisters of Mercy established St. Joseph's Academy, a parochial school for girls. In 1907, an additional 21 acres was acquired from the Baxter family for construction of the Sisters of Mercy Mother House, St. Joseph's Convent. The large building with a 130-foot tall tower topped by a gold dome was designed by the Boston architectural firm of Chickering & O'Connell. An addition was made to the building in 1915 to accommodate the newly founded St. Joseph's College for Women.<sup>76</sup> It was the only post-secondary college exclusively for women in Maine in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1949, the name was changed to the College of Our Lady of Mercy.<sup>77</sup> The college relocated to the rural Verrill Estate in Standish in 1956 and was then renamed St. Joseph's College. In 1969, St. Joseph's Academy girls' school and the Cathedral High School in Portland merged to form the Catherine McCauley High School for girls. A new building was built for the school, which also occupies a portion of the site near the corner of Walton Street. The Mother House was closed in 2004 and planning is underway for its conversion to apartments by a private developer in 2015.



Historic postcard view of St. Joseph's Convent and Academy prior to the 1915 addition with completed the symmetrical design of the main facade (MHPC).



Historic postcard view of St. Joseph's Church (1931) and Parish School (1929) (MHPC).

<sup>75</sup> "History" from The Church of the New Jerusalem website, <http://www.theportlandnewchurch.org/#!/history/c8de>, accessed August 11, 2015.

<sup>76</sup> Barry & Anderson, 137.

<sup>77</sup> Sisters of Mercy. *Missioned in Mercy*, brochure, Portland, Maine, no date.

The existing stone St. Joseph's Church, north of Walton Street at 673 Stevens Avenue, replaced an earlier wood building on the grounds of the mother house. In 1881, a small wood chapel that had served as the first Methodist church at Pleasant and Forest Avenues was being replaced by the current Clark Memorial Church and was relocated to the Walton Street side of the property after the purchase from J.P. Baxter.

<sup>78</sup> It was damaged by fire in 1898 but repaired and continued in use until 1915. In 1908, seventy-five families comprising 300 people were members of the church. The original building was replaced in 1915 with a new wood building that served as church and school until the current church was completed in 1931. The new Gothic Revival church was designed by Boston architect William B. Colleary and built by contractors F.W. Cunningham & Sons of Portland.<sup>79</sup> St. Joseph's Parish School was built next to the new church in 1929 and expanded with the Father Hayes Center, a Modernist building, in 1969. The school was renamed St. Brigid School in 2007 when St. Joseph's was combined with the parish schools of St. Pius and St. Patrick's.

## Schools – Public and Private Education

Educational buildings have contributed to the character of Stevens Avenue since the Stevens family donated land to establish the Westbrook Seminary in 1831. The building now known as Alumni Hall was built in 1834, utilizing the cupola from the Portland Town Hall in Market Square, which was then being remodeled in the up-to-date Greek Revival style following Portland's incorporation as a city. The institution was quite exceptional for the period in admitting both male and female students. In 1863, the state granted the school "the right to 'incorporate a course of study for your ladies equivalent to that of any female college in New England'."<sup>80</sup> Italianate style Goddard Hall and Hersey Hall were added by 1869. In 1900, the McArthur Gymnasium was built to designs by Portland architect Francis H. Fassett.<sup>81</sup> In 1925, the decision was made to stop admitting male students and the institution was renamed Westbrook Seminary and Junior College in 1929,<sup>82</sup> The school was accredited as a junior college in 1933-1934<sup>83</sup> and added a few additional buildings, including several existing residences, before the middle of the twentieth century. In the 1960s and 1970s, men were readmitted to the school and it became Westbrook College.<sup>84</sup> It was expanded considerably, with historic buildings demolished or relocated and modern buildings, including a gymnasium and an art gallery, constructed. The school was merged with the Biddeford-based University of New England in 1996 and has added several large new buildings along Stevens Avenue. Most recently, the school acquired the former Maine State Armory which stands just north of the campus.



Detail from the 1886 Deering bird's eye view showing the Westbrook Seminary campus at that time. The 1834 building is at right with the 1858 Goddard Hall at center and 1869 Hersey Hall at left. Image courtesy of Boston Public Library.

It is likely that the community on Stevens Plains in the early nineteenth century, commonly known as

78 Barry & Anderson, 103.

79 "St Joseph's, A Calm Pool of Blue," *Central Square Times*, April 1992, np.

80 Biber, Joyce K. *Westbrook College Campus*, Charleston, SC, 2009, 8.

81 Biber, 23.

82 Biber, 9 and Federal Writers Project. *Maine: A Guide 'Down East'*, Boston, 1937, 81, 82.

83 Biber, 9.

84 Biber, 9.



Westbrook, was served by a small wooden schoolhouse, but no documentation for it was found in researching this document. The brick building at 806-808 Stevens Avenue appears to have been built as a school in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It has a great deal in common architecturally with the 1844 Rosa True School and 1855 Staples School in nearby Portland, but its detailing is more Italianate. The building appears in the 1886 Deering bird's eye view, but is not identified as a school in that view.<sup>85</sup> The 1924 Portland tax records document that the building had been converted to residential use by that date, containing four apartments. A wood building on Stevens Avenue identified on the bird's eye view as "Primary School" was the former Deering High School. It was located in the same location as today's Longfellow Elementary School parking lot.

Deering High School was established in a rented room over Cobb's Grocery Store at Morrill's Corner in 1874. The first Deering High School building was erected in 1878 near the corner of Pleasant and Stevens Avenues in the heart of Deering Center.<sup>86</sup> In 1899, a new brick High School in the Romanesque Revival style was constructed to designs of architect Frederick A. Tompson. Although there were concerns that the new school was much larger than needed when it was built, it was soon filled as hundreds of new homes were constructed in Deering.<sup>87</sup> By the beginning of the 1920s the school was overcrowded and a fire in 1921 led to a decision to build a larger school on the former Presumpscot Park site a short distance south of the existing school. The 1899 building was reconstructed with a flat roof replacing the pre-fire hipped roof and it became the Deering Junior High School before being renamed Lincoln Middle School.<sup>88</sup>

The new Deering High School was designed by Portland architect John P. Thomas in



Brick building at 806-808 Stevens Avenue that appears to have been built as a school. It was in use as apartments in 1924 and today houses professional offices. 1924 Portland tax photo.



The first Deering High School building near the corner of Pleasant and Stevens Avenues in Deering Center. This view was taken after the electrification of the horsecar line in 1895 (MHS).



Historic postcard view of the second Deering High School by Fassett, prior to 1921 fire and rebuilding as Lincoln Middle School (MHPC).

<sup>85</sup> A.F. Poole & Co. Bird's eye view of Deering, Maine, 1886.

<sup>86</sup> Barry & Anderson, 84.

<sup>87</sup> Barry & Anderson, 135.

<sup>88</sup> Barry & Anderson, 136, 136.

collaboration with the Boston architectural firm Thomas M. James Company. Facing Deering Avenue, it is a long two-story building in the English Renaissance style with a slightly taller central block topped with a tall clock tower and projecting wings at each end, with projecting entrance porticos. The central block also has an entrance portico below a mullioned cast stone bay window. Between the central block and projecting wings, a wide mullioned bay window on each side adds depth and interest to the façade. At the south and west elevations, the grade is lower and it is a three story building. Additions were made to the rear of the building in 1932 and 1981.



Historic postcard view of the third Deering High School by Portland architect John P. Thomas and the Boston firm Thomas M. James Co., built on the site of Presumpscot Park horse racing track. View c. 1930 (MHPC).

Longfellow Elementary School was built in 1951-1952 to designs by the Portland architectural firm Miller & Beal. It is a cast stone and brick building clearly intended to relate to the English Renaissance style of the adjoining Deering High School. The use of materials and style for this building is particularly interesting when compared to other new school buildings being constructed in Portland during this period, which were Modern in style and material usage.

#### Evergreen Cemetery – Community Development

Evergreen Cemetery was established when the city of Portland purchased 53 acres of land adjacent to the Pine Grove Cemetery from the Stevens family in 1852. Crowded conditions in the city's Eastern and Western Cemeteries compelled the peninsula-bound municipality to look beyond its own borders to bury its dead. Victorian Garden Cemeteries had come into being earlier in the century, first at Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Massachusetts in 1829. Maine's first Garden Cemetery was started in Bangor in 1834. Unlike the colonial era burying grounds, which tended toward an austere aesthetic to the extent that they had one, Garden Cemeteries were intended to be park-like and attract people to visit with their dearly departed. Originally set well back from Stevens Avenue, with a line of Stevens family homes between the street and the cemetery, Evergreen was first expanded with additional land purchases in 1869 and 1883. The names on the monuments and tombs in Evergreen Cemetery are a "who's-who" of nineteenth and twentieth century Portland. In 1900, nearly all of the houses between the cemetery and street were purchased and demolished, bringing the cemetery to the street. The eighteenth century Stevens Tavern and one early nineteenth century Stevens house were left in private hands. The tavern survived for nearly another century, in much altered form toward the end. Only its granite foundation remains today, and the lot has been added to the cemetery property.<sup>89</sup> Dedicated in 1902, the stone English Gothic style Wilde Chapel in Evergreen Cemetery was designed by Portland architect Frederick Thompson and built near the corner of Leland and New Streets, with its own gate and drive from Stevens Avenue.<sup>90</sup> The granite wall and gate for the chapel and the four Egyptian Revival style stone gate piers at the main entrance to the cemetery, erected in 1854, give the cemetery a strong presence along Stevens Avenue.

#### Village Center – Suburban Community Development

<sup>89</sup> Barry & Anderson, 90, 91.

<sup>90</sup> Barry & Anderson, 168-169.



Deering Center at the intersection of Stevens and Pleasant Avenues in the 1940s (MHS).

Perhaps more than any other neighborhood in Portland, Deering Center has the feel of a typical late-nineteenth century small town downtown. The concentration of imposing civic and institutional buildings, small group of commercial storefronts, and interspersed residences with long streets of homes adjoining, gives Stevens Avenue this special character. The nearby Evergreen Cemetery and Baxter Woods Park add to the effect. Other areas in Deering once had a similar character, including Woodford's, Morrill's, and Allens Corners, but modifications to the streets in those locations to accommodate arterial traffic to the outer suburbs have altered their character and made them unsuited to pedestrian activities. Deering Center is still an entirely walkable neighborhood, which contributes greatly to its character.

The impetus for the development of this neighborhood center was the Portland Railroad Company's horsecar line that extended from the waterfront to Morrill's Corner. It entered Deering Center on Pleasant Avenue and turned sharply onto Stevens Avenue to continue to Morrill's Corner. With convenient access from downtown Portland and ample open ground on Stevens Plains, it quickly attracted attention as a location for uses that require significant space. These included the development of Presumpscot Park in 1875. A horse racing track with baseball grounds in its center, the park featured a three-story grand stand and attracted up to 10,000 people for events.<sup>91</sup> Following its heyday as a race track, the site hosted the State Fair several times as well as bicycle races. In 1920, it was purchased by the city as a site for a new Deering High School.<sup>92</sup> With increased accessibility from Portland, Evergreen Cemetery became increasingly popular as a final resting place and was expanded to more than 300 acres over the half-decade following the arrival of the horsecars. The most significant use requiring large tracts of land that followed the arrival of the horsecar line was suburban residential development. As the neighborhood filled with new residents, small-scale commercial development occurred near the corner of Pleasant Avenue and Stevens Avenue to accommodate their needs. These buildings, primarily built between 1860 and 1920, continue to serve the same function today. The conversion of a residential structure opposite Deering High School into the Deering Branch of the Portland Public Library has contributed further to the feeling of a small town center.

Significant surviving resources include:

Central Square Baptist Church, 466 Stevens Avenue

<sup>91</sup> Barry & Anderson, 85.

<sup>92</sup> Barry & Anderson, 135.



Deering High School, 370 Deering Avenue

Lincoln Middle School, 522 Stevens Avenue

Longfellow Elementary School, 423 Stevens Avenue

St. Joseph's Convent and Church, east side of Stevens Avenue

Westbrook College Historic District, west side of Stevens Avenue

Stevens Avenue Armory, 772 Stevens Avenue

Federal style brick house, 844 Stevens Avenue

### Current and Historic Views

Historic photos from 1924 Portland tax records unless otherwise noted.



A. S. Hinds Laboratory building at 331-337 Forest Ave. designed by John Calvin Stevens and completed in 1920. Several auto dealerships and Firestone Tires occupied the first floor storefronts during the "Auto Row" period. (MHS and SCC)



State Motor Car Company auto showroom at 349 Forest Avenue in the 1940s and today. (MHS and SCC)





Gilson Auto Company building at 355 Forest Avenue was built in 1922. Palmer Spring Company has occupied the building since 1932. (SCC)



371-373 Forest Avenue in 1924 and today. The building continues to be mixed use, with commercial on the first floor and residential on the second. (SCC)



Victorian double house at 430-432 Forest Avenue is typical of Oakdale Plan development. The commercial storefront addition on the 430 side dates to c. 1925. (SCC)



Miles B. Mank Motor Company building at 443-445 Forest Avenue, built in 1916-17 was the largest of the early auto showrooms on Forest Avenue. (SCC)



The Ricker estate was located between Dartmouth and Belmont streets. The Ku Klux Klan used the mansion as a club house for some years prior to the mansion burning in 1924. It was redeveloped with Ricker Park apartments along Baxter Blvd. and a row of auto dealerships along Forest Avenue, 1927-1929. (SCC)



The Studebaker dealership was part of the Ricker estate redevelopment. The company's logo was incorporated into the cast stone detailing of the building and remains in place. (SCC)





These turn of the 20th century residential buildings remain in their original use along the east side of Forest Avenue near Woodford's Corner. (SCC)



This early 20th century triple-decker is reflective of the urbanized character that came to Woodford's Corner following construction of the Odd Fellows Block in 1897. (SCC)



This early 20th century commercial building with apartments above and the one-story commercial building next door represent the electric trolley community center period at Woodford's Corner. (SCC)



Forest Ave. toward Woodford's. The trolley is crossing the Portland & Rochester RR tracks in the historic view. This line was removed in 1911, allowing more buildings on Forest Avenue. (SCC)



Commercial buildings at Woodford's Corner in the 1950's (above) and today. The Ebenezer Woodford house stood just to the right of these buildings. It was demolished c. 1965. (MHS and SCC)



The Odd Fellows Block at Woodford's Corner in 1924 and today. This building brought a new scale and urban character to Woodford's when it was built in 1897. (SCC)





The “flat iron” Chapman Block at Woodford’s Corner added to the urbanized character of the former village center when it was built c. 1916. It remains a gateway building for the city. (SCC)



The National Grocerteria occupied the building at the corner of Forest and Woodford Street in 1924. Valle’s first steak house opened here in the 1940s and was replaced by the Modernist building in 1964 after Valle’s built their large new restaurant on Brighton Avenue near the turnpike exit. (MHS and SCC)



The Engine 8 firehouse at Woodford’s Corner, looking along Deering Avenue toward Forest. Built in 1907, the brick firehouse added to the urban character of Woodford’s Corner. (SCC)



This early 20th century house at 260 Stevens Avenue is typical of the suburban dwellings being built in Deering at the time, fueled by the expansion of the electric trolley system. (SCC)



These triple-deckers on Stevens Avenue are relatively rare in Deering, where multi-family housing was more typically in the form of double-houses and two-family apartment houses. (SCC)



Single family house at 297 Stevens Avenue dates from the 1890s, when the streetcar system was electrified and extended. A nearly identical house remains at 1107 Forest Avenue. (SCC)





This Bungalow style house was built at 322 Stevens Avenue c. 1909. The style was widely popular for modest homes in the early 20th century. Many of these were built from catalog company kits, or by local developers copying the catalog homes. (SCC)



The Greek Revival style Elishu Higgins house at 361 Woodford Street, at the corner of Stevens Avenue, is the oldest house along this section of Stevens Avenue. (SCC)



Queen Anne style house of the 1890s at 339-345 Stevens Avenue. Likely built as a large single-family house, it was divided into apartments by 1924. (SCC)



Queen Anne style residence at 397 Stevens Avenue is typical of the large single-family suburban houses of the late 19th century in Deering. This house was within easy walking distance of schools, stores, and the streetcar lines. (SCC)



Queen Anne style house with Colonial Revival overtones at 409-415 Stevens Avenue. At the end of the 19th century, Colonial Revival houses became increasingly common in Deering. (SCC)



This buff brick commercial building with apartments on the second story is located at the corner of Stevens and Pleasant Avenues. It replaced a large Second Empire style residence around 1930. (MHS and SCC)





Small scale residential buildings (one converted to commercial use by 1924) at the heart of Deering Center. These houses likely date from the 1860 to 1880 period. The Quality Shop remains in business in 2015 in a neighboring building. (SCC)



Early 20th century false-front commercial building on Stevens Avenue. A c. 1950s addition to the front of the building encompasses the smaller building next door. The small businesses in Deering Center continue to serve the surrounding residential neighborhood in the 21st century. (SCC)



Another early 20th century false-front commercial building and neighboring Greek Revival style house on Stevens Avenue in Deering Center. (SCC)



Early 19th century Cape at 270 Stevens Avenue, with Lincoln Middle School behind. The early development of Stevens Plains extended from Morrill's Corner to this area of Deering Center. (SCC)



American Four Square style house at 542 Stevens Avenue is a good example of this type of house, which became popular after 1900. Many were sold as kits from catalogs. Built c. 1905. (SCC)



Triple-decker with monumental Colonial Revival portico front built c. 1915 at 548 Stevens Avenue. Three large apartments would have been built for lower-middle class families. (SCC)





Greek Revival style cape at 612 Stevens Avenue is the only remaining Stevens family home of the multiple houses built along the avenue by four generations of the family between 1767 and 1870. (SCC)



Several monument works companies located on Stevens Avenue at Walton Street following the establishment of Evergreen Cemetery in 1852. This site was redeveloped for residential use in the 1960s, when this Mid-Century Modern version of a double-house was built at 651-655 Stevens Avenue. (SCC)



While Greek Revival in form, the detailing on this c. 1860 house is Italianate, with a bracketed cornice, paneled and molded corner boards, and arched double entry door. (SCC)





Brick building at 806-808 Stevens Avenue that appears to have been built as a school. It was in use as apartments in 1924 and today houses professional offices. 1924 Portland tax photo. (SCC)



Built for pewterer Elizur Forbes in 1854, this Greek Revival style house was later owned by the Webber family for several generations. From 1979 until 2000, it was owned by Westbrook College, housing the school's presidents. (SCC)



The Portland and Forest Avenue Railroad Co. built a wooden carhouse and stable here for their horsecar line in 1864. In 1908, a brick carhouse was built for the electric trolleys serving the line. In the 1940s, Portland architect John P. Thomas made additions and alterations to convert the former carbarn into the Maine State Armory. (HA)



Modest story-and-a-half Greek Revival style residence at 805 Stevens Avenue is typical of early working-class dwellings along Stevens Plains, possibly built for a tin or pewter worker. (SCC)



This brick building at 806-808 Stevens Avenue that appears to have been built as a school. It was in use as apartments in 1924 and today houses professional offices. (SCC)



This modest Greek Revival style cottage at 820 Stevens Avenue was altered by Portland architect John Calvin Stevens in the early 20th century. (SCC)





Gothic Revival style house at 815 Stevens Avenue was likely built in the 1830s or '40s. Its lot originally extended to Forest Avenue, where the Cumberland Farms store now stands. (SCC)



Modest wood-framed commercial building on Stevens Avenue near Morrill's Corner. By the 1920s, commercial usage was mixing with residential use near the junction of Stevens and Forest Avenues. (SCC)



This large Federal style brick building at Morrill's Corner was built c. 1805 and is the oldest surviving building in the survey area. It was converted to commercial uses in 1937. (SCC)





This mixed use commercial and apartment block was built at Morrill's Corner around 1910. It is a good example of this type of mixed use building from the period. (SCC)



This fine example of the Bungalow style was built at 1231 Forest Avenue was built for Frank Godrich c. 1910. It is particularly interesting for the use of concrete columns on the porch. (SCC)



This substantial brick Greek Revival style residence just north of Morrill's Corner shows evidence of the Italianate style in the door hood and double doors. (SCC)



Built as the Unitarian church in 1867, this wood-framed Gothic Revival building by Portland architect Francis H. Fassett now serves as an auditorium for the University of New England Portland Campus. It is a contributing building in the Westbrook College local and National Register historic districts. (SCC)



The Central Square Baptist Church at Deering Center was designed by Bangor architect Victor Hodgins and built in 1907. In the 1920s, the Portland firm of Miller, Mayo & Beal designed an addition to the building. It is now called the Deering Center Community Church. (SCC)





Organized as the Free Church of Deering in 1886, the building was completed in 1888. Its name was changed to the Stevens Avenue Congregational Church in 1913 and it continues in use by the same congregation. (SCC)



St. Joseph's Catholic Church on Stevens Avenue as designed in the Gothic Revival style by Boston architect William B. Colleary and built by contractors F.W. Cunningham & Sons of Portland. It was completed in 1931. St. Joseph's Parish School was built next to the new church in 1929 and expanded with the Father Hayes Center, a Modernist building, in 1969. Both are now used by the St. Brigid School. (SCC)





The 130-foot tall tower of the St. Joseph's Convent Mother House dominates the skyline along Stevens Avenue. (SCC)

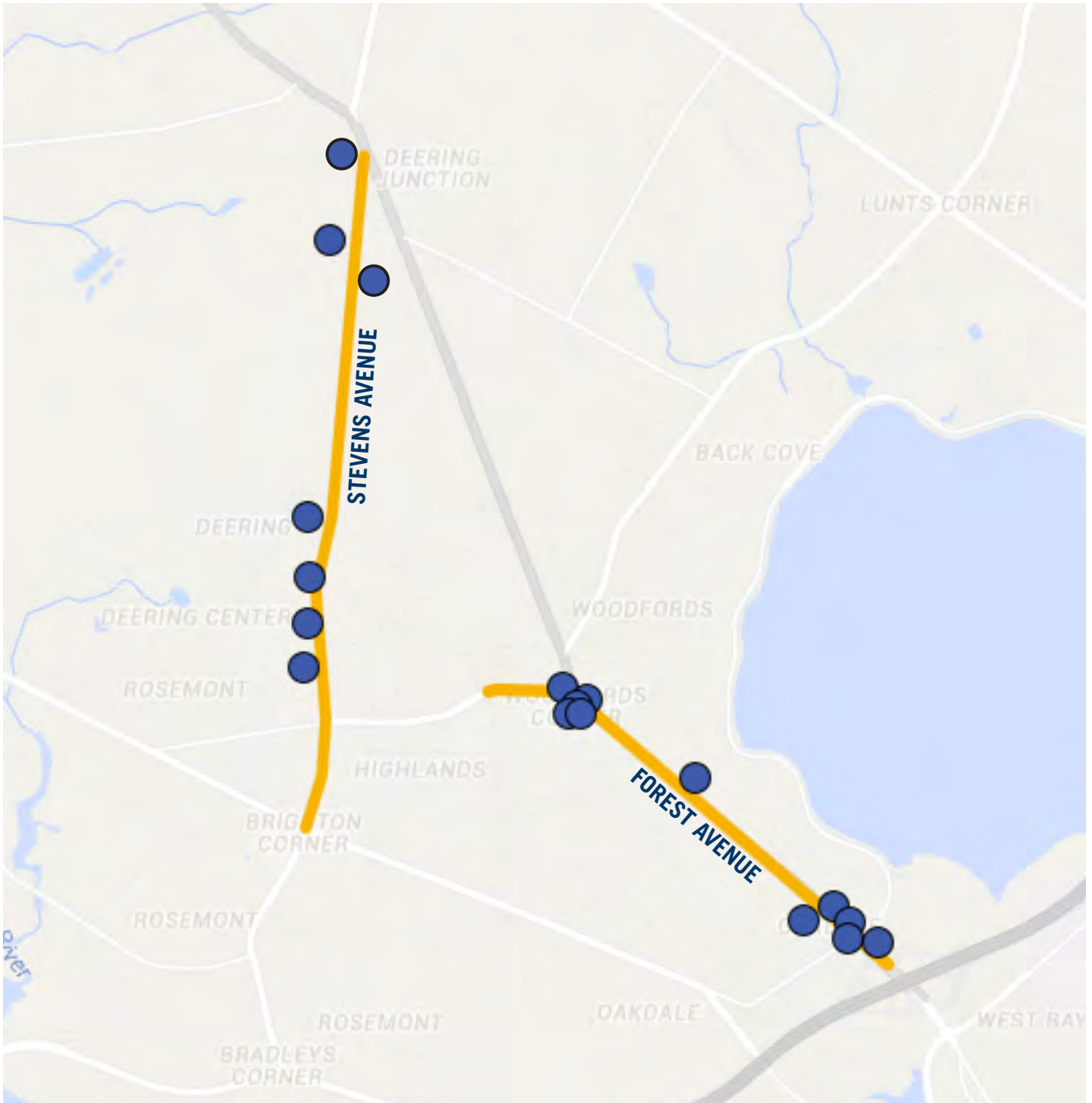
Historic images courtesy of Bangor Public Library, Boston Public Library, Maine Historical Society, City of Portland Planning Department, Maine Historic Preservation Commission.

Contemporary images by Sutherland Conservation & Consulting (SCC) and Hannah Allen (HA).

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# STEVENS-FOREST AREA ARCHITECTURAL INTENSIVE SURVEY RESOURCES







# VAN BLARCOM INCORPORATED AUTOMOBILE GARAGE

**ADDRESS**

330 Forest Avenue

**ARCHITECT**

Unknown

**DATES**

1919; interior alterations in 1934, 1959

**STYLE**

Art Deco/Moderne & Commercial

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The building at 330 Forest Avenue was built in 1919 for the Frank H. van Blarcom Company. Van Blarcom opened a public garage in this structure, one of the earliest automobile-related businesses on the length of Forest Avenue that would become Portland's so-called Auto Row. The property has undergone several changes of use but has always served as a commercial space.

The building is a one story brick structure with six bays on its primary façade, five of which are large showroom windows. Today, the flat roof retains the original parapet detail on its northwest- and southeast-facing façades and the heavy cornice with brackets remains in place. The tax assessor's photograph from 1924 shows a parapet along the primary façade as well (Fig. 1). This roof section contained the same Art Deco geometric ornamentation in stucco as on the northwest and southeast elevations and also featured an oval medallion on a triangular pediment centered above the building's entrance. The parapet detail no longer remains along the primary façade and the date of its removal could not be found.

A steel structure was added at the rear of the main building in 1921 to be used as an oil room for Cumberland Automobile Sales, the tenants at that time. In 1924, Forest City Motor Company sold Lincoln automobiles from this location. An addition in brick enlarged the boiler room in 1930 after the structure had changed use and had become the location for Ideal Cleansers and Dyers. John J. Cunningham became the owner of the property in 1932 and retained ownership through 1959. Dunlop Tire and Rubber Company operated at 330 Forest Avenue following Ideal Cleansers until 1934, when the building became a glass shop and office. The contractor for the required interior remodeling was New

Deal Stores Incorporated. The building's use changed again in 1935, this time to Littlefield and Greene Automobile Accessories. From the late 1930s until the late 1950s, the building functioned as showroom and garage space for several used car dealerships, including the Elliott Peterson Used Car Depot. Extensive interior alterations in 1959 modified the interior for use as a retail space; Brookline, Massachusetts-based Beacon Way Stores sold fabric here in 1962 until at least 1970, and the building was occupied by home furnishings retailer Pier 1 Imports in 1985. The building is currently houses Kitchen Cove Cabinetry and Design.



Fig. 1



## A. S. HINDS LABORATORY BUILDING

**ADDRESS**

331-337 Forest Avenue

**DATES**

1920

**ARCHITECT**

John Calvin Stevens and  
John Howard Stevens

**STYLE**

Beaux Arts Revival & Commercial

---

Noted Portland architects John Calvin Stevens and his son John Howard Stevens designed the building at 331-337 Forest Avenue for Aurelius Stone Hinds in 1920. Hinds worked for the apothecary of H. H. Hay & Company in downtown Portland until 1864. While running a drugstore of his own on the peninsula, Hinds perfected the formula for his world famous Honey and Almond Cream. He established A. S. Hinds Company in 1875, and began producing and selling his skincare products from the purpose-built laboratory space on Forest Avenue in 1920.

Hinds' Honey and Almond Cream was an extremely successful product, both domestically and internationally, and a branch laboratory was established in Montreal, Canada. In 1906, an advertising department was formed to handle marketing of the cream (Fig. 1). Although the company was acquired in 1907 by the Manhattan-based Lehn & Fink, who had brought Lysol from Germany to the United States market in 1890, the A. S. Hinds Company continued to operate independently for a number of years.

The A. S. Hinds Laboratory Building is a four story brick structure built in the Beaux Arts Revival and Commercial styles. The building's flat roof has a subtle parapet detail, the lines of which are highlighted by cast stone ornamentation. The heavy cornice features prominent brackets and dentils. Patterned brick ornamentation and small cast stone medallions grace the façade. Blueprints drawn by John Calvin Stevens are held in the collections at the Maine Historical Society in Portland (Fig. 2).



The laboratory occupied the upper floors of the building, while the first and second levels were reserved for retail and office use. In 1926, the A. S. Hinds Laboratory was no longer located in this building; operations had moved to Lehn & Fink plants in New Jersey. A wholesale druggist and the Marmon Company Autos automobile dealership operated at 331-337 Forest Avenue that same year. A number of automobile-related businesses, such as Firestone Tire & Rubber Company and Gemmer Motors Company, were tenants of the building from 1926 through 1932. From this point the building's commercial use shifted towards suppliers, including the Portland Pipe Line Company, and warehouse storage.

In 1926, three large show windows were installed to accommodate the automobile dealerships, and alterations were undertaken in a previously added private garage space to convert the building from its former manufacturing layout to retail and warehouse space. These alterations were designed by John Calvin Stevens and John Howard Stevens and were overseen by local contractor Frank A. Rumery, who would go on to design an automobile dealership at 517-533 Forest Avenue in 1927-30. A freight elevator was installed in 1930; by 1946, the main occupant was Reliable Furniture and the third floor was remodeled in 1955 to meet their needs as a used furniture retailer. The building served as a Discount Book Outlet in 1993, after it had lain vacant for two years. It currently contains 70 residential units as Bayview Court and maintains the first floor as retail space for Back Bay Cycle.



Fig. 1

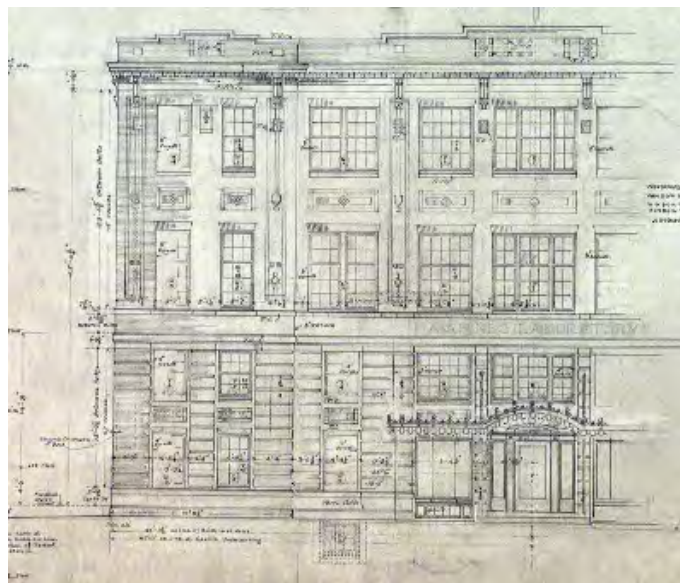


Fig. 2



## L. C. GILSON AUTOMOBILE COMPANY BUILDING

### ADDRESS

355 Forest Avenue

### ARCHITECT

Unknown

### DATES

1922; rear addition in 1981

### STYLE

Vernacular & Art Deco/Moderne

---

Originally occupied by the L. C. Gilson Automobile Company, the building at 355 Forest Avenue was built in February 1922. Gilson had already established an automobile dealership at 881-891 Congress Street by 1906, selling cars from Ford, Reo, and Stanley in what Portland's Board of Trade Journal called, "one of the largest, and most modern [garages] in New England." By 1924, the Congress Street block had been converted into apartments and the Gilson Automobile Company had relocated to the building owned by Frank W. Sparrow at 355 Forest Avenue (Fig. 1).

The one story brick structure has three bays, a flat roof, and ornamentation in contrasting brick on the façade piers. A rear ell was added in 1981. The building has always been utilized for automobile sales or servicing purposes. It was occupied by Brewster Tire Stores Incorporated in the 1927. In 1929, Forest City Tire Company shared the building with Firestone Tire Stores Incorporated, which continued on as the property's sole occupant in 1930-1.

The building has become best known as Palmer Spring Company building due to its signature orange façade (Fig. 2) and the company's presence at this address since 1932. Palmer Spring Company was established in 1849 and is thought to be the oldest spring company in the United States. Joseph Benjamin Palmer founded the company in Boston after bringing his trade from England and served as its first blacksmith. The company's Conestoga wagon logo reminds its patrons of the vehicles originally serviced by Palmer Spring Company.

In 1949, Palmer Spring Company operated a service station and spring manufacture from its building on Forest Avenue and completed interior renovations in 1950 to expand its manufacturing room. The company continues to operate at 355 Forest Avenue with a service garage and a blacksmith.



Fig. 1



Fig.





## OAKHURST DAIRY

**ADDRESS**

364 Forest Avenue

**ORIGINAL ARCHITECT**

Unknown

**DATES**

1922; additions in 1951-3, 1988,  
and 2005

**STYLE**

International (central building)

---

The Oakhurst Dairy at 364 Forest Avenue was constructed in phases to accommodate the growing needs of its successful business. The central building, recognizable by the Mid-Century Modern metal “Oakhurst” sign across its façade, was designed by architect Earle Webster and was built perpendicular to the Dairy’s original 1920s brick structure. Later additions from 1989 and 2005 flank this central building, forming a large complex on the lot.

The dairy has been in the Bennett family of Portland since Stanley T. Bennett bought the Oakhurst Dairy from Arthur Leadbetter in 1921. Leadbetter had established his dairy in 1902 on Woodford Street. After acquiring the dairy, Bennett relocated it from its original location to its current site on Forest Avenue; an announcement in the national weekly *American Machinist* from 1922 stated that the planned two story building and associated power plant unit would cost Oakhurst Dairy an estimated \$100,000. In 1933, Oakhurst Dairy became the first dairy distributor in the United States to require that the milk it processed did not contain tuberculin, used to test for bovine tuberculosis. Oakhurst Dairy has continued to oppose using additives such as bovine growth hormones in its milk.

Bennett’s son Donald oversaw the design and construction of the addition in 1951-3, working with architect Earle Webster to create a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in the International style. Constructed of brick, the two story building has a two bay façade with a large window at its center to ensure that people could view the plant’s operations (Fig. 1). The Portland Society of Architects gave this structure its 2009 50-Year Building Award in recognition of its Modernist design. Oakhurst Dairy bought the adjacent lot, owned by the Henley Kimball Automobile Dealership, in 1973 and built a cold storage

facility in 1988. The final addition to the lot was designed in 2005 by Pennsylvania-based Facilities Design, Incorporated and provided the dairy with new receiving and updated cold storage areas.

In 2014, Oakhurst Dairy was sold to Dairy Farmers of America, a national farmer-owned cooperative based in Missouri, after 92 years of family ownership.



Fig. 1



## STUDEBAKER AUTOMOBILE BLOCK & GARAGE

517-533 Forest Avenue and 44 Indian Lane

Contractor Frank A. Rumery is thought to have designed the buildings at 533, 525, and 517 Forest Avenue as a group, along with a second automobile dealership complex slightly further south on Forest Avenue. These projects were part of a plan to redevelop the former Ricker estate into apartments, a filling station, car dealerships with frontage on Forest Avenue, plans which included a shared power plant. The Ricker Mansion was built in 1855 for Joseph S. Ricker, a tanner who also served as director of the street's railroad system. The mansion was one of several large estates just outside the city along the less-developed Forest Avenue and boasted a "grapery" and greenhouses on its extensive grounds. The Ku Klux Klan's Portland chapter bought the property in 1923 and maintained it as a meeting and event space until the house burned down in the later 1920s. Redevelopment of the lot occurred between 1927-30 and the area was renamed Ricker Park.

Rumery was already well-known at this time for his active involvement in many development projects along Forest Avenue and was also the contractor for the Ricker Park apartments. John P. Thomas, the Portland-based architect who would design the Stevens Avenue Armory at 772 Stevens Avenue in 1940, was commissioned to address the design of the new apartment buildings the lot.





# STUDEBAKER AUTOMOBILE DEALER BUILDING

**ADDRESS**

533 Forest Avenue

**ORIGINAL ARCHITECT**

Frank A. Rumery

**DATES**

1928

**STYLE**

Commercial

---

The Studebaker Automobile Dealership at what is now 533 Forest Avenue (the historic address appears to be 531 Forest Avenue) was built in 1928 for the Hennings Motor Company. The car brand's logo depicting a "Studebaker" banner spread across a spoked wheel still remains at the apex of the parapet gable; this structure is therefore considered the primary building of the three adjoining structures on Forest Avenue. Together, these buildings form an "E", with the shorter arms oriented perpendicularly to Forest Avenue. Behind the long connected section of the buildings is the dealership's associated garage, located alone on the small alley of Indian Lane.

The two story brick building has three main bays, two large showroom windows at street level, and a flat roof with a centered triangular parapet gable. The texture created by the decorative pattern of variously projecting headers in the Flemish bond brickwork is carried through to the adjoining buildings at 525 and 517 Forest Avenue. Large bricked over bays run along each side of the building and feature squared ornamentations of cast stone above.

The Hennings Motor Company, formerly Gray-Son Motor Company and Waterville Motor Company, sold Studebaker and Erskine motor cars. Prior to its location at 533 Forest Avenue, its salesroom was at the edge of the Deering neighborhood at 26 Forest Ave while its main office and service department were on Allen Avenue in Morrill's Corner. In 1929 it appears to have shared its space at 533 Forest Avenue with a dentist's office. Hennings had moved to 511 Forest Avenue by 1934 and the building was then occupied by Couri Motor Company, a dealer in Pontiacs and later also GMCs, Tempests, and Vauxhalls. Couri still owned 533 Forest Avenue in 1969 and had acquired the neighboring 525 Forest Avenue building in 1955. Harold Wiley Pontiac joined with Couri, and in 1981, sold the building to Young's Furniture. This sale required alterations to the structure to accommodate a retail furniture business, such as the addition of a loading dock. Today it is occupied by Skillful Home Recreation, an outdoor furniture retailer.



## JOHN S. GOFF CHEVROLET BUILDING

**ADDRESS**

525 Forest Avenue

**ORIGINAL ARCHITECT**

Frank A. Rumery

**DATES**

1927-8

**STYLE**

Commercial

---

Although the John S. Goff Chevrolet Company building does not carry the mark of a specific automobile company on its façade, it is both physically and stylistically linked to its neighbor, the Studebaker Automobile Showroom at 533 Forest Avenue. As with the Studebaker Dealership building, the Goff Company building possesses a façade of Flemish bond brickwork with irregularly-positioned projecting headers providing texture and decoration.

In this building, the ends of these extending bricks are brought closer to the façade than at 533 Forest Avenue. It also closely shares its overall form and decorative elements with the one story building at 517 Forest Avenue, such as the cast stone ornamentation above the side bays, the low-pitched roof with slight parapet detailing, and the multi-light fenestration centered in the gable.

John S. Goff Chevrolet Company owned the building from 1927 until 1935; by 1955 the business had relocated to 628 Congress Street. In 1944, both 525 and 517 Forest Avenue held US Army Quarters. The structure at 525 Forest Avenue was still used by the US Army as a sales office in 1945 and was acquired in 1955 by Couri Motor Company, who had already occupied 533 Forest Avenue for 20 years. The building currently serves as a gym.



# CLIFTON R. SHAW AUTOMOBILE DEALERSHIP

**ADDRESS**

517 Forest Avenue

**ORIGINAL ARCHITECT**

Frank A. Rumery

**DATES**

1928

**STYLE**

Commercial

---

Clifton R. Shaw Automobiles relocated from 365 Forest Avenue to 517 Forest Avenue when the latter building was constructed in 1928. This building is the third in the group of three structures geographically and aesthetically related to the Studebaker Automobile Dealership at 533 Forest Avenue. Connected to 525 Forest Avenue at the rear of the structure, it demonstrates a strongly shared form, scale, and ornamentation program with this neighboring building and also draws on the stylistic motifs of the Studebaker Automobile Dealership at 533 Forest Avenue.

As with 525 Forest Avenue, the one story structure's low-pitched parapet gable roof emphasizes its horizontality and there is a multi-light fenestration in the gable. Slightly projecting brick headers interrupt the Flemish bond pattern in an irregular decoration, a motif that is repeated in each of the three related buildings. The degree of this façade ornamentation decreases as the street number decreases, resulting in a lower relief at 517 Forest Avenue than at 533 Forest Avenue.

Unlike its adjoining buildings, this structure was not consistently occupied. It was occupied by Fred's Motor Transportation Company in 1934 but lay vacant in 1935. In 1944, 517 and 525 Forest Avenue were utilized as US Army Quarters. The car dealership of Nash-Brown Incorporated and the Pattison Automobile Company, who marketed Dodge-Plymouth automobiles, operated at 517 Forest Avenue in 1945 and 1955 respectively, but by 1965 this location was again vacant. It currently serves as a dance studio for Casco Bay Movers.





## STUDEBAKER GARAGE

**ADDRESS**

44 Indian Lane

**ORIGINAL ARCHITECT**

Frank A. Rumery

**DATES**

1928

**STYLE**

Commercial

---

This structure sits behind the Studebaker Automobile Block and is thought to have been constructed for use as the dealership's garage. Today it is the sole building with an address on Indian Lane, a small alley that runs parallel to Forest Avenue, and it would have been part of the Ricker Park redevelopment. The one story concrete block building has a side ell and a flat roof with a parapet detail that mimics the roofs of 525 and 517 Forest Avenue. The mix of concrete and wooden structural elements is still visible in the open garage interior. It is currently used as a parking garage for the Ricker Park apartment complex.



# JORDAN AUTOMOBILE SERVICE & FILLING STATION

## ADDRESS

634 Forest Avenue

## ARCHITECT

Unknown

## DATES

1934; alterations in 1979

## STYLE

19th/20th Century Revival

The one story English Cottage style building at 634 Forest Avenue in Woodford's Corner was built to house Jordan's Automobile Service & Filling Station. It is currently occupied by Merlin Motors. The three bay building features brick quoins over stuccoed cement block, jerkinhead roof details, a small arched window above the two garage bays, and an enclosed front ell that was completed decades after initial construction. There is a large parking area on two sides of the building to accommodate its current commercial use as a used car sales lot and service center. The station has a nearly identical twin structure in Newburyport, Massachusetts, although the latter does not share the same front ell form. This building allows a more descriptive view of the original intent of the building's unique design (Fig. 1). Jenney Oil operated this service station in the mid-1950s and similarities between this structure and others in the region under Jenney's management may indicate that the company preferred the use of a standardized design.

At the time this building was completed in 1934, the lot was owned by Edward C. Jordan, a prominent civil engineer in Portland credited with designing a plan for 400 lots for the Diamond Island Association in 1882 and a design for Little Diamond Island's West End for the Maine Coast Realty Company in 1908. Jordan's property at 634 Forest Avenue included a tenement building, laundry, and grocery store when he was granted a permit to demolish all but the grocery store so as to erect an automobile service and filling station, complete with office and lubritorium, on the lot. The original form of two-car garage and office remains in place today. In 1936, the lot and newly built service station was owned by Henry I. Jordan, also a local civil engineer.

Although this building has been occupied by several commercial tenants, very few modifications have been made to the structure. Jenney Oil, also referred to as Jenney Manufacturing, owned the building in 1954 and was issued a demolition permit for the service station. It seems this was never acted upon as later retailers at this location were granted permission to erect signs of various types, including a rotating “bow-tie” sign in 1965. The original footprint included an open canopy that extended as a front ell from the main building; this was enclosed in 1979 by Pine Tree Auto Sound, a retail radio installation service center. That same year, an addition that would have extended beyond the original structure and encompassed the entire lot was proposed, although that plan does not seem to have garnered approval at the City Planning level as none of these modifications were made.

Since its construction in the mid-1930s through to its present commercial use, this building has been associated with the servicing of automobiles or the sale of automobile accessories.



Fig. 1





## CHAPMAN BLOCK

**ADDRESS**

646-650 Forest Avenue (alternate address is 543-547 Deering Avenue)

**ARCHITECT**

Unknown

**DATES**

C. 1916

**STYLE**

Italianate

---

Owned by Albion L. Chapman in 1924, this flatiron building at 650 Forest Avenue in Woodford's Corner was constructed in approximately 1916; the architect is not known. This block should not be confused with the Chapman Building at 447 Congress on the peninsula, often referred to as the Time & Temperature Building. That structure was designed by Herbert W. Rhodes was the tallest building in Portland at 12 stories when it was constructed in 1924.

Albion L. Chapman and his partner George Wyman were local to Woodford's Corner, and had an apothecary at 552-554 Deering Avenue on the corner of Forest and Deering Avenues in 1900. The Chapman Block on Forest Avenue is a three story brick flatiron structure with stacked bay windows on the second and third levels its façade, which project over the recessed entryway (Fig. 1). These bay windows are ornamented with decorative panels constructed of wood. A thick cornice is of cast stone with a parapet surround at its flat roof. The building complements the earlier flatiron block built across the street at 643-651 Forest Avenue for the Independent Order of Odd Fellows in its use of the Italianate style, but is more modest in scale. The pairing of the Chapman and Odd Fellows Blocks forms a gateway when entering Portland along Forest Avenue from the north.

The Chapman Block has housed a variety of occupants. In 1926, a milliner named Alberta L. Stickney and the Deering Loan and Building Association both operated from the Chapman Block's office spaces. Nearly ten years later the building's resident businesses had expanded to include a beauty shop, physician and dentist offices, a real estate and insurance agency, and a music teacher. Virginia Sweetser taught music in this building for at least ten years until 1936.

The Chapman Block also accommodated several eateries over the years, a function it shares with the Modernist structure located across the busy Woodford's Corner intersection at 660 Forest Avenue. This building housed the former Valle's Sandwich Shop from 1964 to 1966 and remained an integral part of the region's food service industry in its capacity as the Valle corporate headquarters until 2000. In the 1970s, Woodford's Tavern occupied space within the Chapman Block; today, the building accommodates the Bayou Kitchen restaurant.

In 1967, the upper floors of the Chapman Block changed use from office space to apartments and interior alterations were necessary. Bayou Kitchen expanded into space previously occupied by a tattoo parlor in 2011, which required significant interior remodeling.



Fig. 1



## ODD FELLOWS BLOCK

**ADDRESS**

643-651 Forest Avenue

**ARCHITECT**

F. H. Fassett & E. F. Fassett

**DATES**

1897

**STYLE**

Italianate

---

Built in 1897, the Odd Fellows Block was designed by Francis H. Fassett and his son Edward F. Fassett, well-known Portland architects of the time. Francis H. Fassett heavily influenced the architectural heritage of Portland through his use of the Victorian High Gothic, Queen Anne, and Italianate styles. Most famous for his grand residences, churches, and civic architecture, Fassett and his son designed this building for the Independent Order of Odd Fellows in the Italianate style.

The Odd Fellows Block is a four story red brick flatiron structure that sits at the center of Woodfords Corner and remains readily visible as the anchor of the main intersection of Forest Avenue, Woodford Street, and Deering Avenue due to its overall scale and corner-oriented clock tower. The tower, with its Doric columns and cupola, rises well above the flat roof (Fig. 1). Below the cornice on the Forest Avenue frontage, light bricks form the letters “I. O. O. F. Block”. Considered especially majestic when the building was completed in 1897 (Fig. 2), the citizens of a then-independent town of Deering wished for it to serve as their town hall; Portland annexed Deering by an Act of the legislature in 1899 and had two separate city councils for one transitional year, before fully absorbing Deering’s government in 1900.

The flatiron form of the Odd Fellows Block is repeated in a traditional manner at the Chapman Building on the opposite side of Forest Avenue and interpreted in a modern fashion in the diagonally facing Modernist building across the main Woodford’s Corner intersection. These structures serve as the architectural cornerstones of Woodford’s and form a gateway for those approaching the City of Portland from the north.





Fig. 1

The Independent Order of Odd Fellows is a fraternal organization with roots in 18th Century England. The charitable and service-based values held by the Odd Fellows may be visible in the variety of functions their building could accommodate. The 1926 Portland City Directory describes a multipurpose space that allowed for commercial tenants such as dentists and a tailor as well as gathering spaces for Masons and the Odd Fellows themselves in addition to an area for the Second Church of Christ (Scientist). By 1955, the uses seem to have been pared, with only one dentist on record, and halls only for the Masons and Odd Fellows. The Odd Fellows also owned the building at 645 Forest Avenue, adjacent to the rear of the main Block, which served as a bank and offices, and a social hall in downtown Portland at 21 Forest Avenue.



Fig. 2



## VALLE'S SANDWICH SHOP

**ADDRESS**

660 Forest Avenue

**ARCHITECT**

William Nelson Jacobs Associates

**DATES**

1964

**STYLE**

Modern/Contemporary

---

The building at 660 Forest Avenue was purpose-built in 1964 to house Valle's Sandwich Shop, a short-lived smaller-scale arm of Valle's Steak House, a very successful restaurant business with 25 locations along the East Coast that operated from 1933 to 2000. The building was designed by the Boston-based firm of William Nelson Jacobs Associates and it remains one of Portland's few extant and largely unaltered Modern/Contemporary structures.

Located in the center of Woodford's Corner, this Mid-Century Modern building faces the Chapman Building and the block erected for the Independent Order of Odd Fellows across the main intersection of Forest Avenue, Woodford Street, and Deering Avenue. Although distinct in both scale and architectural style from these older structures, the building at 660 Forest Avenue echoes their flatiron façades in its diagonally-oriented placement on the corner. Its dynamic positioning re-interprets their strong street level presence with a projecting three bay façade, large floor-to-ceiling windows capped with a tripartite parallel gable roof, and exaggerated angular overhangs. The rear ell of the building is rectangular and has a flat roof. Other Valle's locations also featured this unique three-bay façade and exaggerated roofline, a characteristic referenced in the company's mid-century logo (Fig. 2).

Donald Della Valle emigrated from Italy to Portland in 1912 and opened the 12-seat Valle's Café in the Woodford's Corner area at the end of Prohibition in 1933. The first steak house, located at 660 Forest Avenue after World War II, was a one story building and contained a large sign projecting from the flat roof above the front door (Fig. 1). In 1960, the restaurant business was moved from this location

in Woodford's Corner to Brighton Avenue and in 1962, Valle was granted permission to demolish a theater adjacent to his Woodford's Corner lot with the notation, "Land to be built on later". The current structure was built on the site of the former steak house and theater in 1964 and operated as a sandwich shop for a short period, before serving as the corporate offices for Valle's Steak House from 1966 until 2000.

As with the current building, the space at the rear of the earlier structure was shared with another commercial enterprise; in 1950, the popular New England chain Benjamin Franklin general store occupied the secondary space and today the commercial space in the rear ell is used by a combination dry cleaners and tanning salon. Since the building's construction, no major alterations have taken place. Valle's Incorporated, which retains ownership of the building, received permission in summer 2015 to convert the office space back into a restaurant; in the plans submitted, no major alterations will be made to the structure, and no business name or estimated opening date have been filed.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2





## DEERING HIGH SCHOOL

**ADDRESS**

370 Forest Avenue

**ORIGINAL ARCHITECT**

John P. Thomas

**DATES**

1922-3; alterations in 1932, 1981-2

**STYLE**

19th/20th Century Revival

---

Bordered by playing fields at the rear of its lot, Deering High School is located at 370 Stevens Avenue, in the Deering Center neighborhood. The site was previously the location of Presumpscot Park, a horse racing track and baseball field opened in 1875. The red brick building has a primary façade of two stories, with a change in grade resulting in three stories on the west and south elevations (Fig. 1). It was designed in the English Renaissance style by Portland architect John P. Thomas, in collaboration with the Boston architectural firm Thomas M. James Company as consulting architects. Thomas's partner, Charles O. Poor, died in a train accident at Woodford's Corner just after their firm won the commission for this project, and it is thought that Thomas's inexperience with school architecture prompted his partnership with the Boston-based firm.

The building's Tudor inspiration can be seen in the large bay window with heraldic motifs above the main entrance, its strong horizontal banding and its quoin detailing. This style was typical of Thomas's work and characterized his aesthetic, contrasting with his more contemporary design for the Stevens Avenue Armory less than twenty years later. While the neighboring Longfellow Elementary School was not designed until the early 1950s, its architecture complements that of Deering High School through similar style and ornamentation.

Prior to the construction of this building, Deering High School was located further north on Stevens Avenue in what is currently Lincoln Middle School. Construction of a new high school at 370 Stevens Avenue was necessitated in 1922 by a growing number of students and by a school fire that occurred one year earlier. This fire damaged much of what is now Lincoln Middle School and left

Portland's Fire Captain dead with six other firefighters injured. A wing was added to the current Deering High School building in 1932 and a large addition was designed in 1981 by the Portland-based architectural firm Wadsworth, Boston, Dimick, Mercer and Weatherill. This firm also designed Luther I. Bonney Hall for what is now University of Southern Maine-Portland in 1965.

Deering High School is the first of three public schools encountered when traveling north along Stevens Avenue towards Morrill's Corner and has always been an important community hub. The 1940 Portland City Guide notes that the music department at Deering High School was renowned throughout the state at that time; the Children's Theatre of Maine, based in the Engine Eight firehouse at Woodford's Corner during the early 1970s, performed at Deering High School regularly during the early 1940s. The city has another public high school, Portland High School, which is located on Cumberland Avenue and primarily serves students who live on the Portland peninsula while Deering High School serves nearly 1,000 students in the Deering neighborhood.



Fig. 1





## LONGFELLOW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

**ADDRESS**

432 Stevens Avenue

**ARCHITECT**

William R. Miller and Lester I. Beal

**DATES**

1951-2

**STYLE**

19th/20th Century Revival

---

Longfellow Elementary School at 432 Stevens Avenue was designed by the Portland-based architectural firm of Miller and Beal in 1951-2, and was intended to complement the adjacent Deering High School building, built approximately 30 years earlier. Miller and Beal used similar motifs, materials, and form to ensure these neighboring school buildings were harmonious. As with Deering High School, the Longfellow Elementary School building is a red brick structure, although it has only two stories compared to the high school's three. The building has ornamentation of cast stone painted to resemble limestone and features contrasting quoins and a projecting bay above the main entrance with Gothic decorative elements (Figs. 1 & 2). The school's design is markedly different from the numerous public elementary schools built in Portland at this time, most of which were designed in the Modernist style. Along with Lincoln Middle School further north on Stevens Avenue, Longfellow Elementary School and Deering High School form an important core of public schools for the Deering Center neighborhood.

One of the firm's earlier iterations was the partnership of Miller and Mayo, who designed downtown Portland's Central Fire Station in 1923-4, with assistance from then-draftsman Beal. During the 1920s Miller and Beal worked on other projects in the Deering neighborhood, designing the Thomas B. Reed School (1925) and the Woodfords Congregational Church Parish House (1926), and making alterations to Clark Memorial Church (1923), originally designed by John Calvin Stevens. As Miller, Mayo and Beal, the firm designed an addition for the Deering Center Community Church, one block north of Longfellow Elementary School on Stevens Avenue, during the 1920s.





Fig. 1



Fig. 2

In order to make room for the new construction at 370 Stevens Avenue, the pre-existing wood frame school that had functioned as a high school in the late 1800s had to be demolished; the City of Portland paid Brown Construction Company one dollar to undertake the demolition. Since the completion of the current building in 1952, no record of significant alternations can be found.

A memorial stone and plaque dedicated to Alan M. Argondizza, a former Longfellow Elementary School principal and beloved educator who died in 1989, rests under a tree between the building's northeast corner and Stevens Avenue (Fig. 3). Argondizza was recognized for his contributions to elementary science education with a named award established by the State of Maine Education Department.



Fig. 3



## DUNN MEMORIAL CHURCH

**ADDRESS**

466 Stevens Avenue

**ORIGINAL ARCHITECT**

Victor Hodgins

**DATES**

1906-7; addition in 1920s

**STYLE**

Gothic Revival/Queen Anne

---

The Dunn Memorial Church, later called Central Square Baptist Church and known today as Deering Center Community Church, stands at 466 Stevens Avenue near the main intersection of Pleasant Street and Stevens Avenue in the Deering Center neighborhood. The church was constructed in 1906-7 (Fig. 1) and named in memory of Reverend Albert Teele Dunn (1850-1902), who served as the State Secretary of the Maine Baptist Convention and was instrumental in raising building funds for the Central Square Baptist Church's construction from parishes across Maine.

Victor Hodgins, a prominent and prolific architect from Bangor, designed the church in the same style and using similar materials as his 1905 St. Mary's Catholic Church, which is listed in the Main Street Historic District in Orono, Maine. In 1914-15, Hodgins designed the Morse Building in Bangor, Maine, which is now used as the University of Maine's art gallery. This building and two of his other structures were included on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984 as part of Bangor's Great Fire of 1911 Historic District. Portland architects Miller, Mayo and Beal designed an addition for the church building in the 1920s. Miller and Beal also designed the Longfellow Elementary School building in 1951-2 that stands slightly further south on Stevens Avenue.

The stone church is built in the Gothic Revival style, as can be seen in the castellations of the tower below the spire, the quatrefoil exterior ornamentation, irregular trefoil interior form of the nave (Fig. 2), and the transoms above the pointed Gothic-arched doors. Elements of the Queen Anne style are visible in the decorative stonework which creates ornamentation by utilizing two different colors of rockfaced ashlar. The ashlar stone of the entire structure is laid in an irregular pattern adding rustic character to



an otherwise traditional form. The church's structure itself is also Queen Anne in style due to the tower and general asymmetry of the main Stevens Avenue-facing facade.

The church community had its roots in a communal Sunday school established in 1901 for all denominations but soon became more closely aligned with the First Baptist Church in Portland based on a predominantly Baptist membership.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2





## LINCOLN MIDDLE SCHOOL

**ADDRESS**

522 Stevens Avenue

**ORIGINAL ARCHITECT**

Frederick A. Thompson

**DATES**

1897; annex in 1913, reconstruction in 1921, gymnasium added 1962, renovations in 1996

**STYLE**

19th/20th Century Revival

---

The school building known today as Lincoln Middle School is situated in the Deering Center neighborhood at 522 Stevens Avenue. The oldest of the three public school buildings found on Stevens Avenue, it was designed by prominent local architect Frederick A. Thompson in 1897, approximately 25 years before the next school on this street was constructed. Thompson worked in Francis H. Fassett's firm from 1877 until 1891. He had completed a structure for Deering Oaks, the Castle in the Park, three years prior to designing the Lincoln School building and would go on to design downtown Portland's grand Masonic Temple building in the Beaux Arts style in 1911. Thompson's commission was announced in the January 1, 1898 edition of *The School Journal*, a teachers' magazine published from 1871 to 1916 by E. L. Kellogg Co. out of New York City.

The four story brick school building is set back from the street and has a three bay façade. The central bay features three large second story windows, above which two lunettes with decorative elements flank a central lunette identifying 1897 as the initial date of construction. The building also contains classical motifs wrought in ornamental brickwork and a small cupola set on its flat roof, which was originally hipped in form.

The building was dedicated in 1899 and was originally intended to serve as the town of Deering's high school. Many residents in the then-independent town of Deering did not support its construction, feeling that it was too large for their needs and would be too costly. Deering was annexed by the City of Portland that same year, however. An almost threefold increase in student population by 1913 required a plan to enlarge the building. A deadly fire in 1921 (Fig. 1), which left the Fire Chief dead and several firefighters

injured, and a consistently growing student body necessitated the construction of a new larger high school a short distance south of the this building, on the site of the former Presumpscot Park horse racing track. The damaged building at 522 Stevens Avenue was reconstructed, with the original hip roof replaced by a flat one (Fig. 2). In 1924, Deering Junior High School was formally opened in the reconstructed building, the first junior high school in Portland. The building's name was changed to Lincoln Junior High School the following year.

The Wagnis Memorial Gym was built in 1962 and named to commemorate teacher Joseph J. Wagnis following his untimely death. In 1981, the School Department considered closing the school but, in contrast to the building's initial reception in the late 1890s, Deering neighborhood residents rallied to keep the school open and its historic building functional; a significant interior renovation undertaken in the mid-1990s added much-needed classroom space and upgraded the facility to modern standards. During this construction, all classes and administrative functions during the 1994-1995 school year took place at 772 Stevens Avenue in the Portland Armory.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2





## PORTLAND ARMORY

**ADDRESS**

772 Stevens Avenue

**ARCHITECT**

John P. Thomas

**DATES**

Original structure c. 1908  
Significant renovation in 1940, with  
alterations in 1942, 1945-1949, 1961

**STYLE**

Art Deco

---

The Portland Armory, also called the Stevens Avenue Armory, is located at 772 Stevens Avenue, adjacent to the central quad of University of New England's (UNE) Portland campus. Originally a utilitarian brick car barn for the Portland Railroad Company's electric trolleys, the current appearance of the building is the result of alterations and additions designed in 1940 by Portland architect John P. Thomas. The Armory was once used by members of the 103rd Infantry during World War II and later became an important recruiting and mustering site for the Maine Army National Guard. In 1942, the second story was added; interior alterations and window replacements were made in the latter part of the 1940s, and in 1961. Across the façade, undersized vinyl windows have been installed, each with a surround of vinyl clapboard siding.

The building's architect, John P. Thomas, himself an experienced naval veteran who served on a submarine in the First World War and as a reservist during the second, was commissioned to design the building by the State Military Defense Commission. Thomas' style was often heavily influenced by early English Renaissance and Georgian architecture, as can be seen in his earlier designs for the Deering High School building further south on Stevens Avenue (1922-3), the Ricker Park apartment complex on Baxter Boulevard (1926-7), and the Walter G. Davis Summer House in Cape Elizabeth (1927-28). The Portland Armory is less stylistically typical for Thomas because of its then-contemporary American Art Deco form and ornamentation.



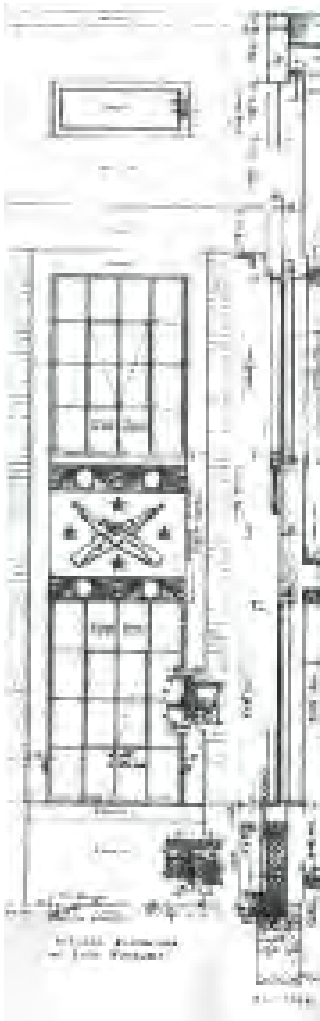


Fig. 1

The façade of the two-story Armory features a cast stone element which identified the building as the “State of Maine Armory” currently painted in contrasting colors. Vertical windows frame the main entryway; this main bay is flanked by two large wings with window spandrels depicting crossed rifles as yet another sign of the building’s military function (Fig. 1). This simple Art Deco ornamentation is also of cast stone that has since been painted.

The building stands on the site once occupied by the wooden Stevens Avenue car barn and stables, which served the busy Deering horsecar line. This route was the first line to run on electric power in 1891 and the last to close in 1942 when the trolley system died out in the Portland area. The City’s horse-drawn trolley system had turned to electric power by 1895 and the wooden car barn of this era was replaced on this site in 1908 by a brick structure that still stood in 1913. Remnants of the Deering trolley line can still be seen in the segments of track and Belgian block that curve from Stevens Avenue towards the Armory.

After 75 years of ownership, the Maine Army National Guard gave the Portland Armory to UNE in June 2015 in exchange for undeveloped land the University held in Saco, Maine. Though now part of the UNE Portland campus, the Armory is not included in the University’s Historic District designation. A Determination of Eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places was approved in 2014, prior to the building’s transfer of ownership. At the time of the ownership change, a Section 106 review was underway. Copies of the John P. Thomas blueprints and historic images (Fig. 2) of the Armory are held in the collections of the Maine State Historic Preservation Office in Augusta, Maine.

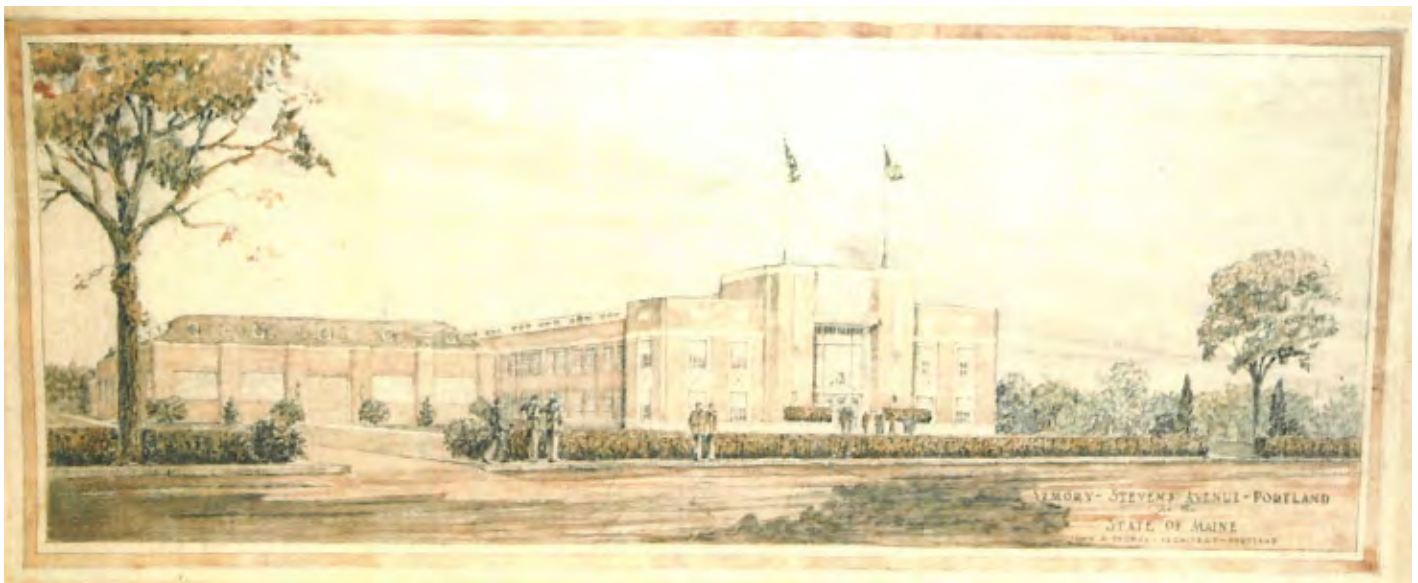


Fig. 2



## Forbes-Webber House

### ADDRESS

735 Stevens Avenue

### ARCHITECT

Unknown

### DATES

1854

### STYLE

Greek Revival

---

In 1851, Zachariah B. Stevens sold a lot of land to Elizur Forbes, who had this house built in 1854. Forbes and his family lived here until he died in 1884, according to writings by Dorothy Healy, UNE Historical Collection. Born in East Granville, MA, Forbes married in Hartford, CT and moved to Stevens Plains in 1840 to become foreman at the Porter Company. In the census of 1850, he is listed as a Britannia worker and ten years later as a pewterer. The area of Stevens Plains was poetically described in 1881 as “a place of ‘umbrageous’ elms and maples, of old time mansions mingled with more pretentious residences.” The home displays the simplicity and harmony of Greek Revival architecture with its temple-like pediment, Doric columns and paneled pilasters. The Greek Revival motif is carried around the interior with mantels of labyrinthine decoration including continuous fretwork in repeated geometric shapes.

In 1889, the Forbes estate sold the house to Justine Babcock O’Brien and husband, Horace. The property remained in the that family until the death of their daughter, Martha Babcock O’Brien Webber (1891-1979), who had married Dr. Millard C. Webber (1882-1960), in 1915. The Webbers raised two sons in the house. Dr. Webber was a Bowdoin graduate and well-known family practice doctor who practiced medicine in Portland for nearly 50 years,

serving on the staffs of both Mercy Hospital and Maine Medical Center. When Martha died in 1979, she bequeathed the house and land to Westbrook College (now University of New England Portland Campus). It served as residence for the President of Westbrook College for several decades. It has since been sold and returned to use as a private residence.

Some alterations have been made since the house was built, most notably the addition of a sun porch on the side elevation and glazing on the porch to create a vestibule at the main entry.

Text prepared by Barbara Adlard, Naples, ME and Christopher Closs, Greater Portland Landmarks



Fig. 1

1924 Portland tax photo of the Forbes-Webber House at 735 Stevens Avenue.





## 844 Stevens Avenue

### ADDRESS

844 Stevens Avenue

### ARCHITECT

Unknown

### DATES

C. 1805; alterations in 1937, and later

### STYLE

Federal and Colonial Revival

---

The three story brick Federal style building at 844 Stevens Avenue is the oldest building in the survey area. It was built c. 1805, around the same time as the nearby Morrill's Tavern (now demolished). No information was found about its early history.

According to the U.S. Census, in 1900 the residents were Elmer and Amelia Boothby and her brother, Stephen Cram. Following the death of Elmer Boothby, in 1910 and 1920, Mrs. Boothby and her brother were the only residents. Mrs. Boothby died later in 1920 and the house was converted into four apartments.

The building remained in residential use until 1937, when the first floor entry door and windows on the facade were altered to accommodate a retail store. The second story windows on the facade were also altered at this time or later. The existing Colonial Revival pilasters and cornice on the first story storefront may date from the 1937 work.

In the later twentieth century a small one-story addition in the rear and a drive up window were added when the building became a bank branch.



Fig. 1

844 Stevens Avenue as depicted in the 1886 bird's eye view of Deering.



Fig. 2

1924 Portland tax photo of 844 Stevens Avenue. At that time, the house had been converted to apartments, with four five-room units. It was owned by the heirs of Ameila C. Boothby.