

90 SUMMER STREET (HOUSE)
Pittsfield
Berkshire County
MA

HABS NO. MA-1302

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
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200 Chestnut Street
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

90 SUMMER STREET (HOUSE)

Location: Pittsfield, Berkshire County, Massachusetts.

HABS No. MA-1302

USGS Pittsfield West, Massachusetts–New York Quadrangle
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 18.643578.4701295

Significance: The area surrounding the house at 90 Summer Street is significant as a planned subdivision originally laid out on the Childs Farm between 1854 and 1862 and developed over the next half-century. The Italianate Style dwelling (1864-65) is representative of the nineteenth-century structures in this neighborhood of single and multiple family residences. The house is architecturally significant for its unusual Queen Anne Revival Style porch. Historically, the house is significant for its association with the local furniture industry. Members of the Lawton and Yon families who sold furniture on North Street resided here as did neighbor Stephen T. Whipple. Another resident of the property, Jennette B. Hayes, milliner, operated an early woman-run business in Pittsfield's Academy of Music Block. Alterations and demolitions reflect the neighborhood's decline, but significant structures remain at 108 and 124 Summer Street and the Octagon House is nearby at 58 Union Street.

Description: This neighborhood is primarily residential, although the south side of Summer Street was redeveloped by urban renewal in the 1970's. The Italianate wood-frame, clapboard house at 90 Summer Street is a two-story, gable-end entrance dwelling with rear wings on a 128-by-148 foot lot. It has a highly detailed wrap-around porch with barrel vaults on the south and east sides. Queen Anne Style turned posts and a spindle frieze remain largely intact; although the balustrade is missing, evidence remains in the form of silhouettes of balusters on the posts. The arched barrel vault of the porch fronting on Summer Street is aligned on center with the central, hooded first floor paired windows. Similar second floor windows are topped by a hood supported by two ornamental brackets, with a central occi window in the attic gable. Paired ogee brackets support the gable overhang. The floor plan of the picturesque telescope-form dwelling includes: 1) the main block with parlor, dining room and second floor bedrooms; 2) a kitchen ell with pantry, bathroom and back porch; 3) a store room; and 4) a privy. A full fieldstone foundation extends under the front two sections and the shed-roofed part of the dining room. During the later nineteenth century, the interior of the house was altered with the addition of partitions to accommodate multiple tenants. Three doors (six-panel - three long above three short) remain, one with oak graining.

History: Pittsfield was established as a permanent settlement in 1752 and incorporated as a town in 1761. As the seat of Berkshire County, the town grew steadily, particularly after the construction of the Western (later the Boston & Albany) Rail Road in the 1840s. Factories and mills built along the Housatonic River during the 1850s-1880s transformed Pittsfield into a manufacturing center. Summer Street was part of the development laid out on Childs Farm, ca. 1854-62, including Jubilee Hill and Circular Avenue. Summer, Union, Bradford and Linden Streets run east-west, just north of the former railroad yards and west of North Street, Pittsfield's main commercial thoroughfare. Victorian Italianate, Second Empire, and Queen Anne Style homes were built in this area between 1860 and 1890. Most multi-family dwellings in the area were built to accommodate an influx of factory workers between 1890 and 1915 when many single-family homes became boarding houses.

In 1864, James Sears, a Pittsfield tinner, bought the original 90 Summer Street lot from Abraham Burbank for \$1,000, built the dwelling and sold it in 1865 for \$3,100 to Egremont native Charles Stanton Lawton and his wife Roby. After her husband's death in 1869, Roby Lawton mortgaged the property to Stephen T. Whipple. In 1873, Lyndon Lawton, another family member, boarded on Summer Street. He worked as a clerk in the Lawton family furniture business at 147 North Street, owned by Joshua R. Lawton, Jr., a Rail Road Street neighbor. The house had its rear storeroom by the time of its sale in 1884 by Roby Lawton to Jennette B. Hayes, wife of George Hayes of Pittsfield. Jennette Hayes is listed in directories at "M. & J. Hayes, Milliners (8) Academy of Music Block, 104 North." Her husband George Hayes, who resided on Summer Street from 1884 to 1887, also worked at 104 North Street. The Queen Anne Style front porch appears ca. 1889-95 during ownership by Phebe Whipple, whose furniture-making family lived next door at 108 Summer Street. D.C. Bedell, a prominent Pittsfield contractor since 1870, built the adjacent high-style Queen Anne house at 124 Summer St. in 1889 and may have assisted in the 90 Summer Street remodeling.

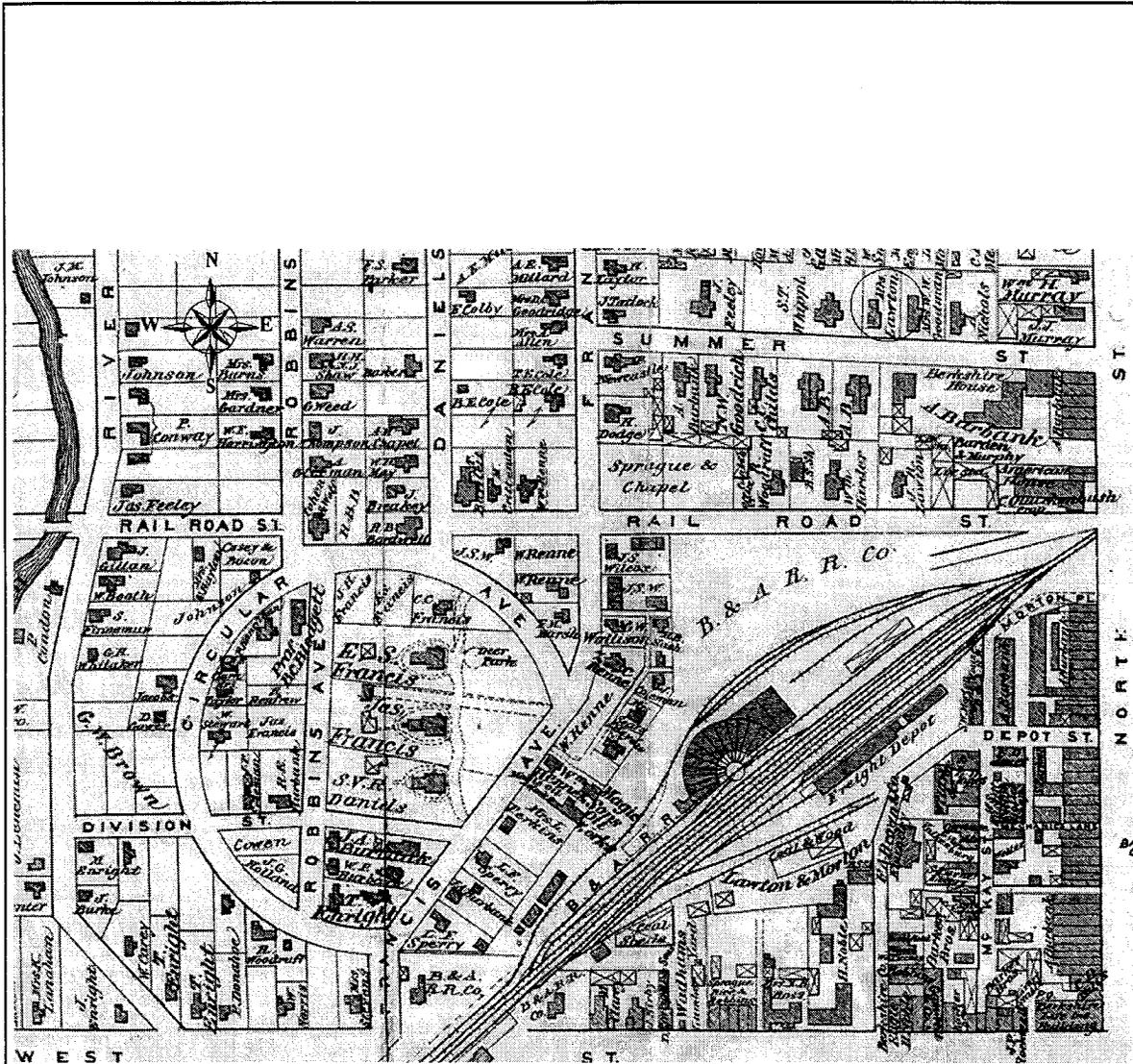
The house then went through several absentee owners: E.A. Clark, clerk of the Berkshire County Savings Bank; William W. Gamwell, steam & gas fitter; and Harry A. Demarest, a later resident of 108 Summer Street. Joseph T. Yon, who had occupied the house since ca. 1910, bought the property in 1914. Joseph, with his brother Simeon, ran Yon Brothers Furniture store at 42-44 Summer Street in the Yon Building from ca. 1910 to 1925. When the Yon Building was constructed ca. 1910 at 42-56 Summer, the house formerly at 54 Summer was moved to 102 Summer Street. Joseph T. Yon occupied 90 Summer Street, with other apartment tenants or boarders (in 1920 Mrs. Delia Trask, William M. Higgins, Mrs. Gertrude Shepardson, William Branstraw) until 1930; his wife Delia C. Yon remained in the house until 1940. By 1950, Philip Archambault, Ernest F Charbonneau and Homer Burbank are listed as residents continuing its multiple occupancy. James E. and Roy Stevens owned the house from 1960 to 1986. They sold it to Robert J. and Diana M. Sullivan from whom the Commonwealth purchased it in 1997.

Sources:

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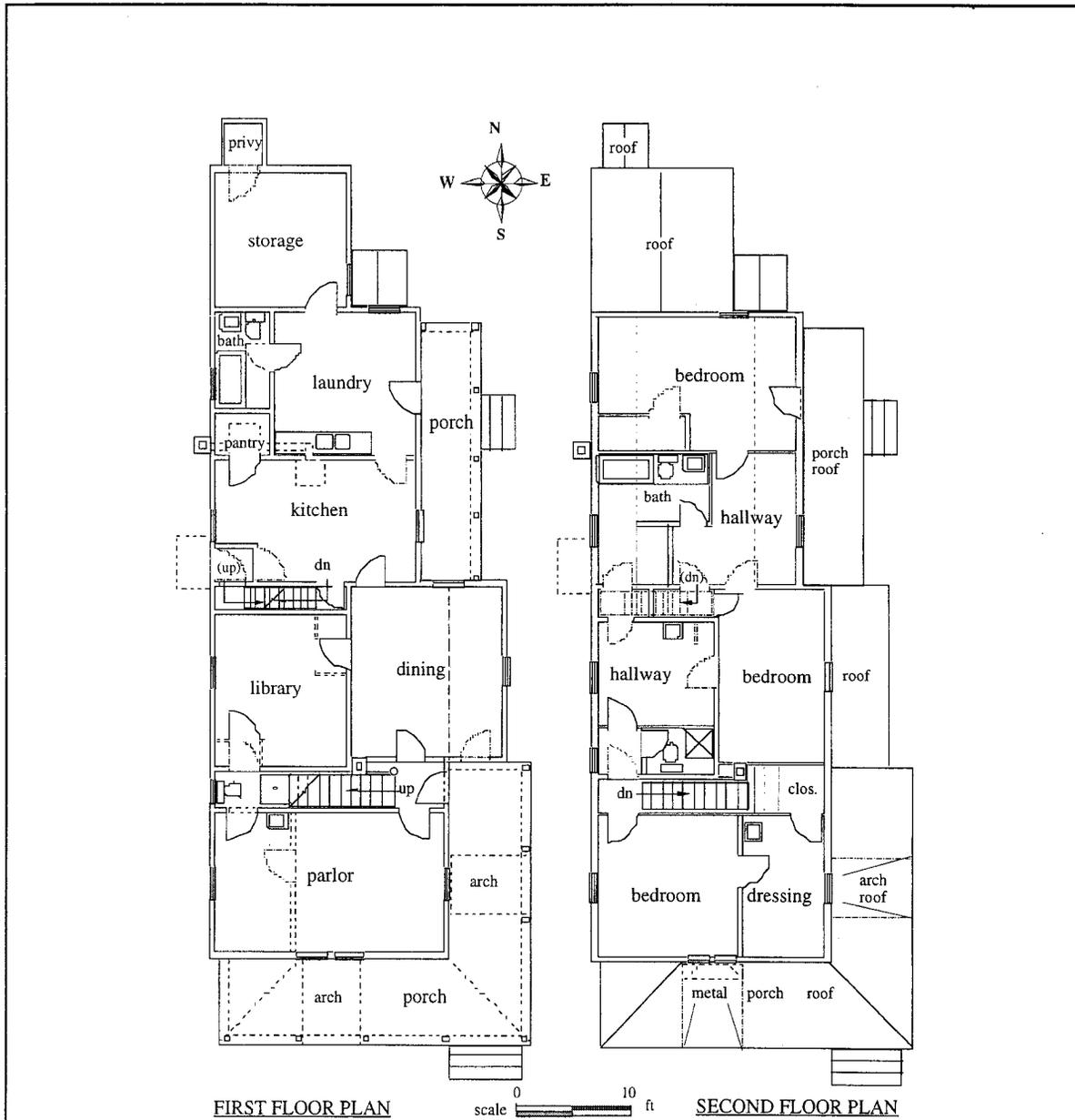
Historian:

Frederic C. Detwiller, McGinley Hart & Associates LLP, April, 2000



F.W. Beers - Pittsfield, Atlas of Berkshire County, 1876

The area between River Street and North Street including Rail Road Street and Summer Street was laid out between 1854 and 1862. Mrs. C. S. Lawton is on the north side of Summer St. next to S. T. Whipple, furniture dealer.



90 Summer Street House - Floor Plans, 1999

Sketch floor plans by McGinley Hart & Associates LLP, showing likely original room use.

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Pittsfield City Directory, 1873

Lyndon Lawton, who boarded on Summer Street, was a clerk at 147 North Street where Joshua R. Lawton, Jr., a nearby neighbor at 8 Rail Road Street, ran the family furniture business. Joshua Lawton, Sr. ran a railroad coal yard.



THE ACADEMY OF MUSIC.

The Academy of Music Block, Pittsfield, 1872 to 1912

History of Pittsfield: 1800-1876, by Joseph E.A. Smith, Vol. 2, p. 603

Two women owners of 90 Summer Street had connections with the Academy of Music Block. Jennette Hayes, Milliner, wife of George Hayes, operated "M. J. Hayes, Milliners". Phebe Whipple's family had a furniture showroom. Berkshire Athenaeum.

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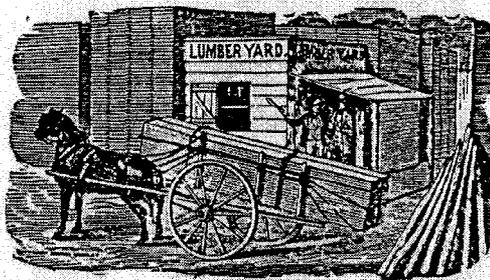
Pittsfield City Directory, 1876

Stephen T. Whipple, who lived next door at 12 Summer Street (now 108 Summer St.), had a furniture establishment nearby in the Academy of Music Block on the east side of North Street just south of the tracks.

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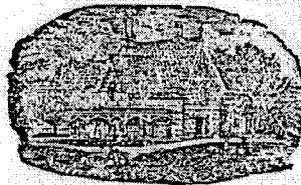


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D. C. BEDELL,
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DEPOT ST., COR. OF LIBERTY,
Residence, 14 Summer St., PITTSFIELD, MASS.



Pittsfield City Directory, 1890

Dillwyn C. Bedell, carpenter who built his neighboring home at 14 (now 124) Summer Street in 1888-9, may have had a part in the new porch added to the older home at number 90 Summer Street owned by Phebe Whipple.

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Pittsfield City Directory, 1910

Joseph T. and Simeon Yon ran Yon Brothers Furniture Store in the Yon Building at 42 to 44 Summer Street, near North Street. The business was not far from Joseph T. and his wife Delia Yon's home at 90 Summer Street.