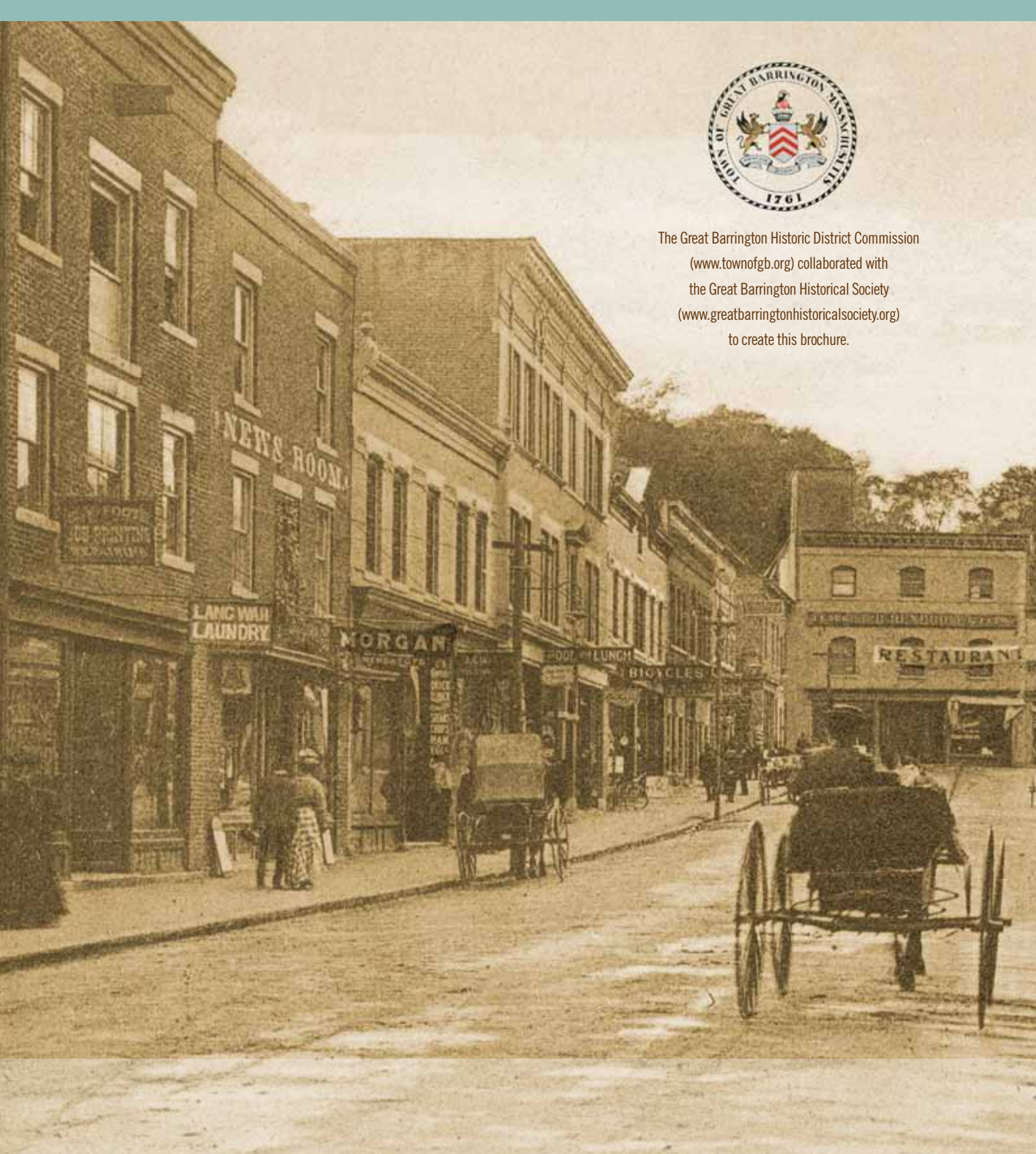




The Great Barrington Historic District Commission  
([www.townofgb.org](http://www.townofgb.org)) collaborated with  
the Great Barrington Historical Society  
([www.greatbarringtonhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.greatbarringtonhistoricalsociety.org))  
to create this brochure.



# HISTORIC GREAT BARRINGTON WALKING TOUR

# Welcome to Great Barrington, Massachusetts.

Named after Lord Barrington, an English aristocrat, the town was an important center of government and commerce during revolutionary times. In 1761, it was designated the shire town, or county seat of Berkshire county by the colonial government and a courthouse and jail were erected where the Town Hall stands today.

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century Great Barrington prospered as it developed manufacturing industries. The Berkshire Railway fueled growth and helped position the town as a major center of trade.

More than a dozen fires changed the downtown landscape during the 1800s.

Handsome Railroad Street devastated by fire in 1854 and again in 1896 stands today as a testament to the resiliency of the town's business people.

The compact downtown district is a charming area filled with interesting shops and restaurants. We hope that you will enjoy this walking tour and explore the many layers of history that make up the fabric of our town.

On behalf of the Great Barrington Historical Society and the Great Barrington Historic District Commission we invite you to share our heritage and encourage you to visit and support our local merchants.

## DEDICATION

The preservation of Great Barrington's rich heritage has helped make this town the very special place it is today. This effort had been extolled by many and exemplified by three women in particular: Lila Parrish, Barbara Syer, and Roberta Wheeler. Their decades of dedication to all things historical has made a difference in the community that can not be denied and to these three extraordinary women we dedicate this walking tour. Thank you!



### 1. TOWN HALL 1875

Georgian architecture is reflected in Great Barrington's stately Town Hall. Erected at a cost of more than \$50,000, the building was designed to contain a public hall, a registry of deeds, probate courtrooms, library, and town offices.



### 2. WINGED VICTORY MONUMENT 1876

The bronze statue of Victory by Truman Bartlett, was erected on its brownstone pedestal in front of the Town Hall in 1876 as a tribute to those fallen in the Civil War. The sculptor's visits to Italy inspired this classical style tribute which allegedly was based upon a replica of a figure excavated at Pompeii.

### 3. MEMORIAL STONE 1890

(REPLACED IN 2004)

North of the Civil War monument is the obelisk-shaped stone marking both the site of the first Court House of Berkshire County erected in 1764, and an act of open resistance to British rule that occurred in 1774.





#### 4. SEARLES CASTLE 1886

Located in the center of town is a magnificent residence built by Mary Hopkins, widow of the renown railway tycoon Mark Hopkins at a cost of \$16.5 million dollars. The castle, which boasts over forty major rooms, displays the luxuriant ambience enjoyed by the wealthy during America's Gilded Age. Her second husband, architect Edward F. Searles, was deeply involved in the design of the property and the mansion is known to this day as Searles Castle.





### 5. ST. JAMES CHURCH 1857-58

St. James Episcopal Church, noted for its magnificent altar with richly polychromed decoration done in late medieval style, was built in Gothic Revival style of blue dolomite from the local East Mountain quarry during 1857-58. The commodious Parish House, to the south, was added in 1911 at a cost of \$20,000 and is used by many community organizations.

St. James Rectory, a stone and shingle edifice in the Queen Anne Cottage, style was built between 1893-95.

### 6. DWIGHT HOUSE 1759

This salt-box house was built by Joseph Dwight, a brigadier general in the French and Indian War, and a man of prominence in legal and political affairs. In 1821 the famous poet, William Cullen Bryant, who was then the Town Clerk of Great Barrington, met, courted, and married Frances Fairchild in this house. This building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976.



### 7. TAYLOR HILL 1815



Great Barrington lawyer George Lves built this house in 1815. The poet William Cullen Bryant and his bride lived here. Bryant paid \$30 a year rent, plus 17 cents a week to pasture his cow. In 1826

Lves' brother-in-law, Ralph Taylor, purchased the house and named it Taylor Hill. On his death in 1886, it passed to his son, Charles, who was treasurer of a local bank, and author of The History of Great Barrington in 1882.

### 8. CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CHURCH 1851



Dr. Clarkson T. Collins migrated to Great Barrington from New York in 1850 due to ill health and lived in this villa, called Indiola Place, until his death in 1881. Collins was a prominent doctor and one of the first gynecologists in the country.



### 9. COLLINS HOUSE 1851

Dr. Clarkson T. Collins operated a sanitarium at this location for 16 years. Patients traveled by rail directly to the Collins House and while convalescing would drink mineral water brought in from Brush Hill.

### 10. NEWSBOY FOUNTAIN 1895

Colonel William Lee Brown, a prominent New York state senator, who had an interest in the first New York Daily News, attributed his success in enlarging the circulation of his paper to the vigor and devotion of his newsboys. He donated and dedicated this fountain on October 10, 1895.





### 11. THE WHEELER HOUSE 1771

This pre-Revolutionary house was home to Truman Wheeler, a captain in the Massachusetts Militia. He marched to Saratoga in the regiment of Colonel John Ashley and in October of 1777 he accompanied the captured British army back to Boston. As the prisoners camped in Great Barrington on their way to Boston, Captain Wheeler dosed many of the sick soldiers with medicine made from herbs he gathered and prepared himself.



### 12. WAINWRIGHT HALL 1768

This Queen Anne style mansion was home to Franklin Leonard Pope and William Stanley, inventors of the first electric alternator in the country. In 1886, Stanley demonstrated the feasibility of the use of alternating electric current for commercial purposes by lighting 20 businesses on Great Barrington's Main Street. Thus Great Barrington became the first place in the world to be illuminated by alternating current.

### 13. BIRTHSITE OF W.E.B. DU BOIS 1868

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (February 23, 1868 - August 27, 1963) the noted American civil rights activist, leader and scholar was born on this site. In 1891 Du Bois received his master of arts and in 1895 his doctorate in history from Harvard. During his career he wrote 21 books, edited 15 more, and published over 100 essays and articles.



### 14. CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH & MANSE 1888

The Acts of the Great and General Court of Massachusetts established the church in Great Barrington in 1742. The handsome church and manse, designed by architect W.C. Brocklesby, was dedicated on September 22, 1883. The building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1992.

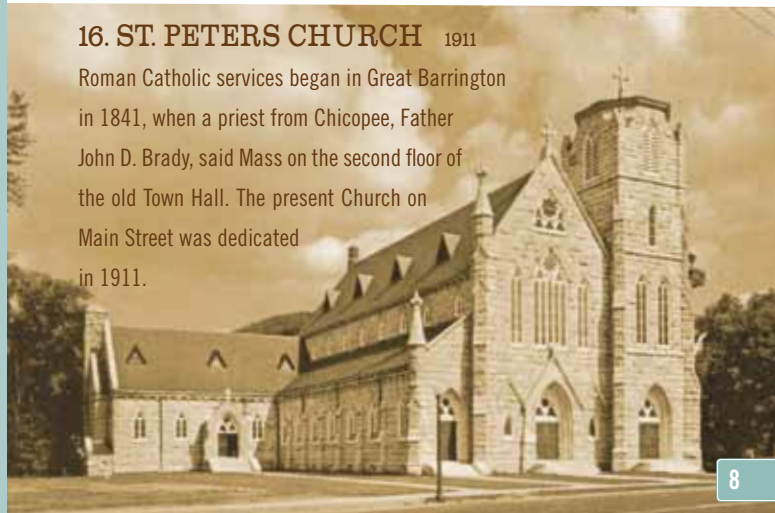


### 15. MASON LIBRARY 1913

The Mason Library was made possible by a bequest of Mary A. Mason of New York in memory of her husband, Henry Hobart Mason. The library was recently renovated and a new wing was also added.

### 16. ST. PETERS CHURCH 1911

Roman Catholic services began in Great Barrington in 1841, when a priest from Chicopee, Father John D. Brady, said Mass on the second floor of the old Town Hall. The present Church on Main Street was dedicated in 1911.



## 17. STANLEY MARKER 1974

In 1886, inventor William Stanley demonstrated the feasibility of the use of alternating current for commercial purposes by lighting 20 businesses on Main Street. Great Barrington became the first place in the world to be illuminated by alternating current. He went on to establish a manufactory of transformers and other electrical products in Pittsfield in the 1890s and this operation evolved into General Electric.



## 18. AHAVATH SHOLOM SYNAGOGUE 1879



Once the North Street School and later a carpenter shop, the building was purchased and converted into a synagogue in 1921 and chartered in 1926 as the Love of Peace Synagogue.

## 19. METHODIST CHURCH 1845

George Whitefield, an early leader of the Methodist Movement in England, came to Great Barrington on his last trip to America and preached for several days in 1770. However, it was not until 1833 that the Methodist Society was organized and the church built in 1845. The Methodist Church is the oldest standing church structure in Great Barrington.



## 20. MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH



The Macedonia Baptist Church was founded by Martha Crawford in 1944. In the mid-20th century, women from the Clinton and Macedonia churches joined with women throughout the county to form a branch of the Council of United Church Women to work for social justice.

## 21. CLINTON A.M.E. ZION CHURCH 1887

The A.M.E. Zion Society was founded in Great Barrington in 1870. It is the oldest Black institutional building in continuous use in the county. It was founded as a society in 1870 and opened as a church in 1887.



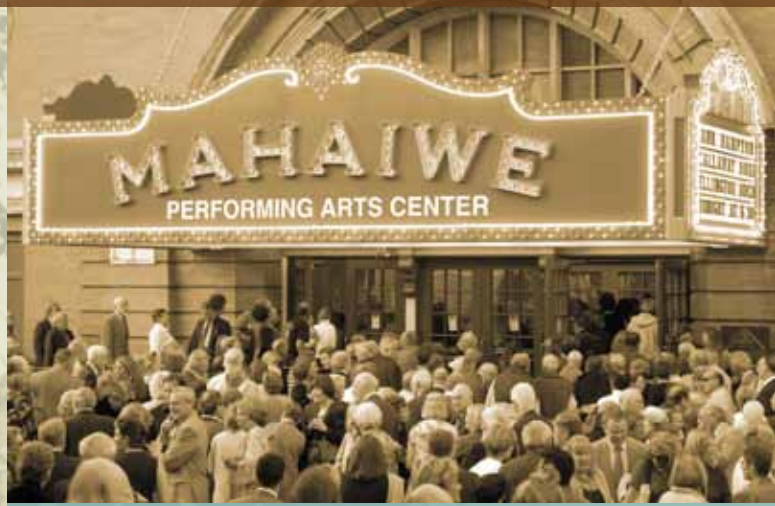
## 22. UNITED STATES POST OFFICE 1936

The post office was built in 1936 as part of a Works Project Administration (WPA) project. The building is a classical design and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



### 23. OLD BERKSHIRE COURIER BUILDING 1870

This structure was built by Marcus H. Rogers in 1870 to house the *Berkshire Courier*, a weekly newspaper that operated from 1834-1993. In 1916 a local bank acquired the property and added the tall columns.



### 25. MAHAIWE THEATRE 1905

The Mahaiwe, Great Barrington's first theatre, was built by a syndicate of local businessmen as part of the new Mahaiwe Block. The original block of 1846 was destroyed by fire in 1901. The Mahaiwe is one of the oldest surviving theatres in the country and is celebrated for its splendid acoustics. It was spacious enough to serve traveling Broadway shows of its time; it has also served as the venue for vaudeville, silent movies, "talkies" and concerts. The theatre has played an important role in the life of the area. The Mahaiwe was completely restored in 2003.

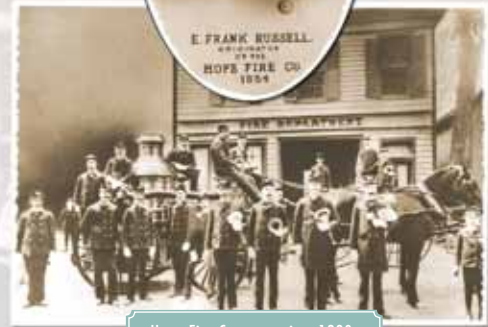


### 24. CITY STORE 1853

The City Store at the corner of Railroad and Main Streets was the first commercial block in Great Barrington. This building type is characterized by large glazed storefronts to showcase retail goods. It is also one of the few surviving structures of the great fire of 1896.



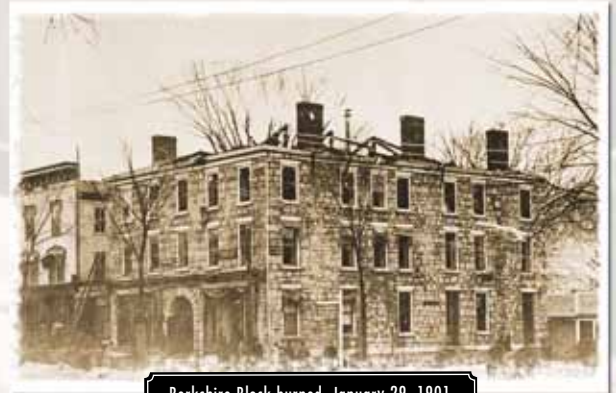
Reconstruction followed in the devastating fires which ravaged downtown Great Barrington between 1895 and 1900. Substantial Post-Victorian buildings, monuments to the prosperity of that era, created the architectural diversity on Main and Railroad Streets that we enjoy today.



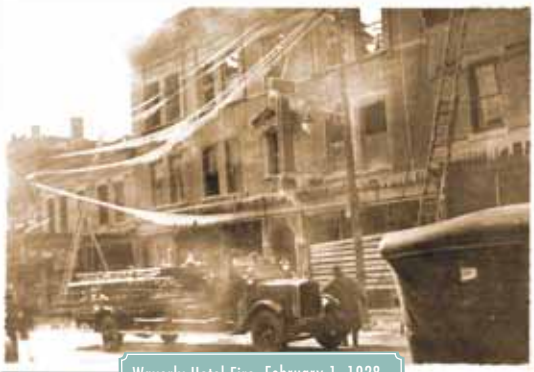
Hope Fire Company circa 1890.



Great fire on Railroad Street, October 12, 1896.



Berkshire Block burned, January 29, 1901.



Waverly Hotel Fire, February 1, 1928.

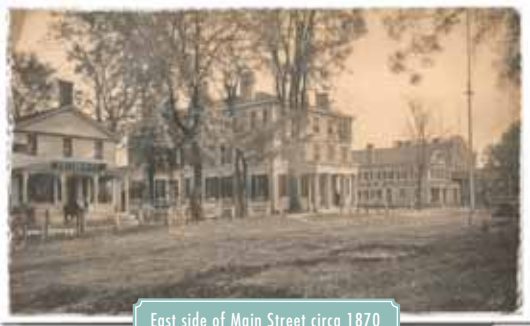


Hope Fire truck, circa 1921.



# Past & Present

They say that the only constant is change and this was very true of Main Street at the turn of the 20th century. Fire and prosperity were major factors that transformed the architectural landscape of downtown.



East side of Main Street circa 1870



East side of Main Street, circa 1900.



Southworth & Brewer circa 1890.



Southworth Building circa 1910.



Mahaiwe Block, circa 1890.



Mahaiwe Block circa 1905.

## 26. OLD FIRE HOUSE 1900

The eclectic engine house for the Great Barrington Fire Department was built in 1900. Constructed of red brick with granite trim, it was the fourth location for the Hope Fire Company, founded in Great Barrington in 1854.



## 27. TRAIN STATION 1901

Modern train transportation fueled the growth of agriculture, industry and commerce in and around Great Barrington. This train station replaced the freight/passenger station located at the top of Railroad Street.

## 28. RUSSELL HOUSE 1822

The graceful, dignified Asa C. Russell House was built in 1822 during the Federal Classical Revival era, and set against the hill in an inviting, sheltered location. The Russells were prominent residents of the town who owned the Berkshire Woolen Company, which operated between 1836-1895.

