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Missing Middle Housing in the Old North End

The city of Burlington is the largest city in the most rural state, meaning not only are the buildings here many, but the types of buildings as well. From single family homes to mid/high rise, the greater Burlington area is home to many varying structures and styles. Burlington also has a large amount of what is referred to as “missing middle housing.” These types of dwellings are house-scale, similar to single family homes, but are multi-unit and located in largely walkable neighborhoods. This type of housing includes buildings like duplexes, townhouses, triple-deckers, and so on.¹ An area of Burlington that is extremely representative of these types of housing is the Old North End neighborhood (ONE). In addition to plainly residential multi-unit housing, the North End is also home to many structures built to function as a store front at street level and housing on the upper floors. This is reflected in the Burlington zoning maps, where we see a strip of what is called “Neighborhood Mixed Use (NMU).” This strip runs practically through the center of the otherwise medium-density residential zoning in the ONE. The purpose of the mixed-use zoning areas is to encourage a specific type of “missing middle” housing, i.e., storefronts at street level and housing on upper floors. In addition to this, the zoning dictates that new development complement the patterns of historic development in the area.² This leads to what we see today: an Old North End that doesn’t appear to be all too different from years past.

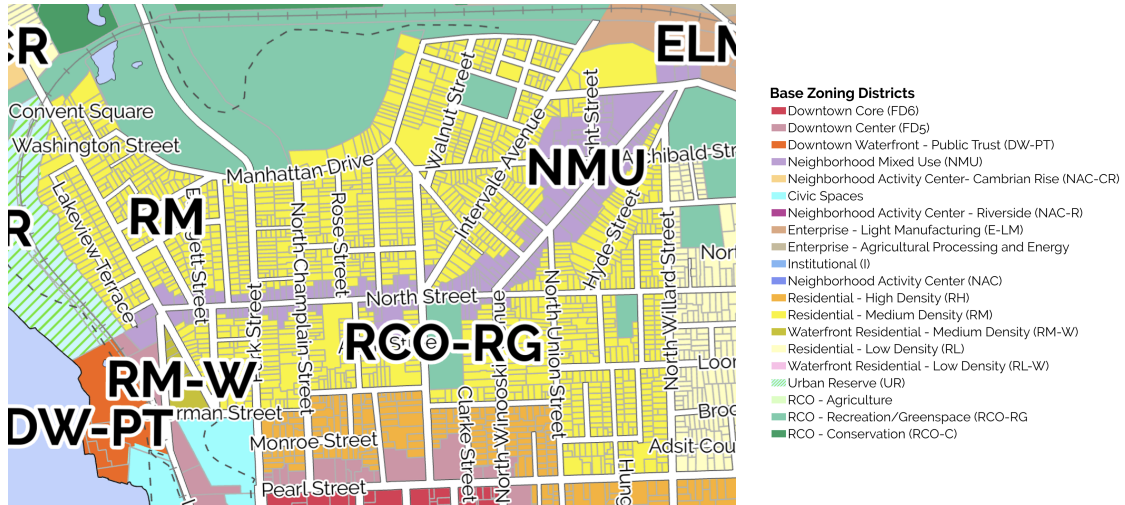


Fig. 1. Excerpt of the Burlington City Zoning Map dictating the Base Zoning Districts in the Old North End³

While the types of missing middle housing in the North End are many, we do see somewhat of a pattern in both structure and style. Although a majority of the structures in the Old North End would be considered missing middle housing, the buildings discussed here display a select array of the varying housing types the ONE has to offer, from duplexes and triplexes to decommissioned barracks. Several of these structures are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and likely several more in the area are eligible. These particular buildings have been selected as they reflect not only missing middle housing, but particularly interesting architectural styles, as well as being associated with events that potentially contributed to the greater Burlington history. The buildings in question are divided into three ‘sections,’ based largely on their location. These locations are based on the historic immigration patterns in Burlington, as many immigrants tended to settle near their fellow countrymen. This led to certain areas of Burlington being largely developed by different cultures in different areas. The buildings are thus divided accordingly.

The first group of houses is located in the southwest corner of the Old North End, including North Champlain Street, Peru Street, Johnson Street, and Sherman Street. This

area is representative of the Irish Enclave of the ONE, as it is largely where Irish immigrants settled in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century.⁴

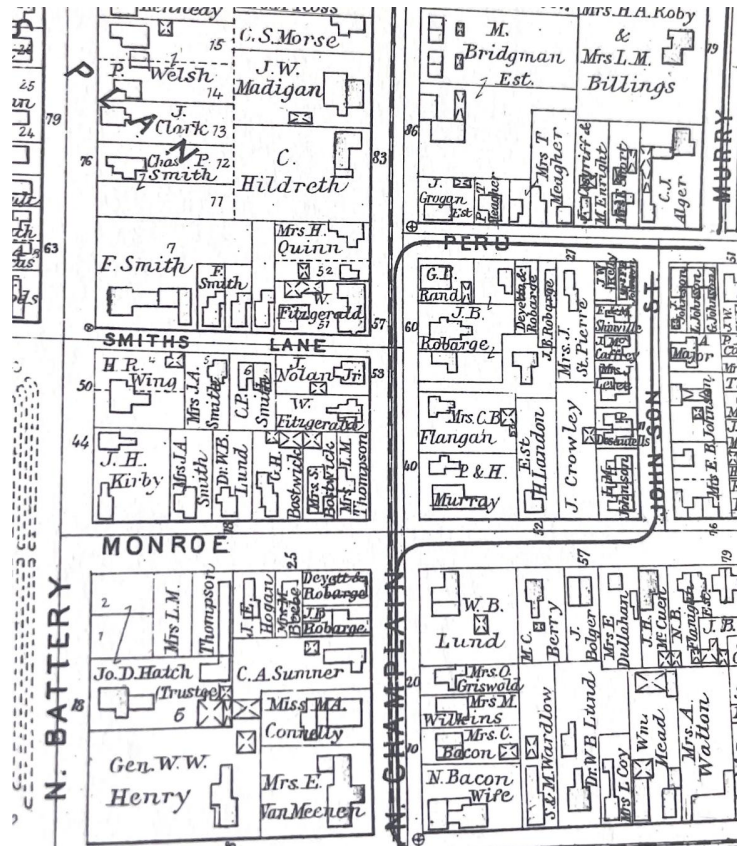


Fig. 2. View of the Irish Enclave Area of the Old North End via the *Map of the City of Burlington* by C.M. Hopkins, C.E.⁵

The first building in this group is located at 57-63 N Champlain Street and is otherwise known as the William Fitzgerald Block. This Italianate style structure stands at the corner of Sherman Street and North Champlain Street. A mixed-use building that was built in 1887, it is a rectangular structure with two stories, the first of which is used as a storefront. The building is largely dominated by housing units, with two on the first floor and three on the second, with the remaining space being for commercial use.⁶ The building was originally built as a grocery store, but today houses the Old North End Vet Clinic, as well as the original apartments.



Fig. 3. View of the William Fitzgerald Block as it stands today.

This structure was built by (and so named for) William Fitzgerald, Irishman, and proprietor of the Third Ward Market. He included residential space for his family members as well as space for rental units.⁷ In the Burlington City Directories, both William and John E Fitzgerald are listed as being both employed and housed here. According to the directories, William was the initial grocer, and John just a clerk; however, in later entries John is listed as the main grocer, and William without a position, maybe indicating his retirement and the passing down of the family business. In various entries the address is listed as both a retail grocery and a meat market when under their operation. By 1900, the Fitzgerald's had left Burlington and the storefront was rented by one T. G. Harvey and began operating his own retail grocery.⁸ While originally listed as occupying all the units, by 1902 T.G. Harvey was only in #57, with the other units being rented. This is also notably when a William Reeves moves into unit #61, where he operated as a druggist.⁹ The Fitzgeralds finally sold the property in 1904 to the Charette family, who moved their business into the store front.¹⁰ Perhaps the most historically important sale of the building was that of when the Charrettes sold it to Lucius and Edward Bostick in 1909, who opened the Bostwick

Brothers market in #57.¹¹ This store remained operational at this address until at least 1956,¹² despite the brother's selling of the building in 1944.¹³ By 1958 the storefront was occupied by the Geroux Sign Display Studio.¹⁴ In addition to several businesses throughout history, the William Fitzgerald Block also provided housing for not only the store owners, but for renters as well. This particular building was built in the Irish Enclave of the Old North End, where many of the Irish immigrants in the area settled.¹⁵ This is reflected in the several Irish surnames listed at this address throughout many years of Burlington city directory entries. Several of the tenants in these apartments were also employed at the businesses operating out of the building, and established long term residencies in the apartments, sometimes staying for over ten years.¹⁶ This building is a particularly fine example of the neighborhood mixed use type of structures that we still see operating in Burlington. Many buildings like the William Fitzgerald block exist within the Old North End, providing not only necessary commercial goods, but essential housing as well.

The next building of note in this particular area is the structure built at 58-60 N Champlain Street. This duplex, also referred to as the John B. Robarge Duplex, is a two and a half story Italianate style structure that sits just across the street from the aforementioned William Fitzgerald Block. Built around 1878 as an investment property for John D. Robarge, it was one of nine properties attributed to the local blacksmith.¹⁷ He owned and lived in the dwelling for some time, but by 1886 all the Robarges had relocated up the street to 216 N Champlain Street.¹⁸ After they vacated, John Shea occupied the house for a time. He was also a significant presence at the time, as he served as an alderman to ward #3 while living there.¹⁹



Fig. 4. View of the John B. Robarge Duplex as it stands today.

The building is an exemplary double house, or duplex, with a two-by-four bay main structure, and an attached one and a half story, two by three bay wing at the rear. Built at a time of great commercial, industrial, and manufacturing success, the building is directly linked to the booming economic growth in the city.²⁰ This was a time in history when immigrants were being lured from all over to work in the nearby mills and other local businesses. Given this increase in population, the need for housing also increased. Dwellings like the John B. Robarge duplex began popping up as a more permanent alternative to something like a tenement. Built in the Irish Enclave of the ONE, this building is a particularly good example of the multi-unit, missing middle housing developing at the time, as the somewhat grandiose architectural features allowed 'lower' status individuals like laborers and the like to imagine themselves becoming established here.²¹ The building still operates as a duplex today, and remains one of the great early examples of missing middle housing that we can find in this area.

The next property in this section is located at 54-56 North Champlain Street, and neighbors the last property discussed. It contains two main structures, at the front of the lot is the Roberge-Desautels Apartment House, and to the back is an additional apartment building at 52 North Champlain Street. The first structure at this site, reflected in Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, was a small, two-story structure with a one story ell to the rear.²² The original structure at what is now 52 N Champlain Street. By 1900 the original dwelling at 54 N Champlain was replaced with a larger structure of the same footprint that we see today.²³ In the early twentieth century, the building was expanded to add two adjacent bay windows on the south side. The third-floor expansion that we see today was likely added around the mid- to late-twentieth century, after the Great Depression.²⁴ This is because of the large influx of workers to the city who were in need of housing. Additional garages, dormer space, staircases, etc. were added in order to adapt the building to hold more units. Given the spread of these additions over time, the integrity of the house and its vernacular Queen Anne architectural style was somewhat lost. To combat this, the building underwent rehabilitation in 2012.²⁵



Fig. 5. View of the Roberge-Desautels House as it stands today.

Overall, this dwelling is a perfect visual example of missing middle housing. It is easily visible that the structure contains multiple units, as there are clearly distinct, multiple entryways, and yet the structure retains the scale of a single-family home. In addition to this, directory entries reflect that the front house largely housed individuals with slightly higher status professions, and the rear building housed individuals with more common jobs like laborers and things of the like.²⁵ Like the John B. Robarge Duplex, the Roberge-Desautels House was constructed to be appealing to upward-mobile immigrants who were coming to the area in search of work and thus housing.

The last house in this section is the apartment building at 27 & 31 Peru Street and 29 Johnson Street. This building is located at the corner of Peru and Johnson Street, about one block east from the last three buildings discussed. This dwelling contains both Italianate and Queen Anne style elements, with the structure standing three by six bays and two and a half stories tall. Containing three apartment units, the overall floor plan consists of 27 Peru Street, which occupies the second floor of the front block, 31 Peru Street, which occupies the first floor of the front block, and 29 Johnson Street, which occupies the two-story townhouse unit to the rear of the building.²⁶ The building was constructed in 1889, overseen by Eli Johnson, whom Johnson Street was named for. Johnson hailed from a prominent Burlington family and was a largely successful businessman in the area. While the Burlington City Directories never consistently list the addresses of 27 and 31 Peru Street and 29 Johnson Street,²⁷ Sanborn Insurance maps indicate that the lot initially contained two two-story residential units. It wasn't until later in the twentieth century in 1960 that the dwelling was converted from a duplex to a triplex.²⁸



Fig. 6.View of the Apartment Building at 27 & 31 Peru Street as it stands today.

This was when the original structure of the building addressed on Peru Street was separated to create the two-one story units reflected in the floorplan we see today. At the time of the building's inception, much of the Old North End had not yet been laid out, and in 1886 Eli Johnson was able to purchase the parcel of land on which Johnson Street now lies. While the subject building's address is located on Peru Street, the structure's history is much more closely related to that of Johnson Street and its development by Eli Johnson.²⁹ By the year of 1888, Johnson had laid out several lots, and by 1889 several structures had been developed, including several single family homes, three duplexes, and a four unit tenement.³⁰ This street and structure are essential examples of the key development of missing middle housing that was occurring in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The influx of working-class individuals in need of housing allowed more wealthy, prominent individuals such as Johnson to develop areas like Johnson Street into thriving, convivial working-class neighborhoods.

The next section of missing middle housing is located in the northeast of the Old North End and is located mainly on Intervale Avenue. This area is where many French-Canadian immigrants chose to settle and build. French Canadians were responsible for a large portion of the influx of mill workers, and thus made up an increasingly large percentage of residents in and around the Burlington area.³¹ The area was then subsequently settled in and developed by Russian/Polish Jewish immigrants. Jewish immigrants were so great in number between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that part of the north end, particularly along North Street, was deemed ‘Little Jerusalem.’ In large part this was due to the nature of Judaism, given the communal aspects of the religion: one needs others to pray with, access to kosher foods, Hebrew schools, etc. In order to accomplish this, it made the most sense for these immigrants to settle in close proximity to one another.³²



Fig. 7. View of the Intervale Avenue of the Old North End via the *Map of the City of Burlington* by C.M. Hopkins, C.E.³³

This section contains three neighboring houses, all listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The history of these houses is not unrelated, as not only did they share

residents, but their ownership is also somewhat intertwined.³⁴ The first structure in this section is located at 163-165 Intervale Avenue and is mainly known as the Normand House. This dwelling was built in 1869 and underwent alterations in both 1890 and 1940. Built by Louis LaValle, the 1877 Birdseye view of Burlington shows that the structure was originally a main structure and a rear barn.³⁵ This area of Burlington was laid out in a very specific way, so as to mock the turns of the Winooski River. This leads to not only the diagonal of Intervale Road itself but of the plots of land as well. This area is adjacent to the nearby Intervale, which is rich in fertile soil and long the site of Native American Settlements, and later the site of early successful farms. Given the prospering of the community, these areas, and Intervale Avenue in particular was developed to reflect the need for housing.³⁶ Based on directory entries, the building was updated around 1890 to include multiple units,³⁷ thus entering it into the realm of missing middle housing, and by 1903, at least three apartments were associated with the property.³⁸ The 1940 alterations included an exterior staircase being added to the north for the rear apartment, and the slate roof was also transitioned to asphalt.³⁹



Fig. 8. View of the Normand House as it stands today.

This area was home to many French Canadians, whose immigration peaked around the 1870s, as well as European Jews, whose immigration peaked around the turn of the century. The area was more rural at the time of the subject building's inception, and many French-Canadian immigrants were buying parcels of land to develop this more rural area into a more urbanized, working class neighborhood.⁴⁰ By 1900, Jewish immigrants were beginning to populate the area, and as the French Canadian generation moved away and died out, the Jewish generation was able to purchase much of the land and structures in the area for further development.⁴¹ This relationship between immigrant generations is reflected in houses like the Normand House and gives reason to why missing middle structures like these can not only provide housing, but provide lasting relationships between cultures and generations. The next house in this section neighbors the Normand House and is located at 171-173 Intervale Avenue. Also known as the LeFerriere House, this structure was originally built in 1888. A large, irregular Queen Anne style structure, it stands two and a half stories tall and contains three apartment units. The initial structure was constructed as a two-family home, and its vernacular Queen Anne style is reflective of not only the styles of the time but the workmanship of the builder.⁴²



Fig. 9. View of the LaFerriere House as it stands today.

In 1912, the LeFerriere House was sold to Rebecca Cohen, who owned it until her death in 1961. Her husband, Hyman, was a Jewish junk peddler, but is also a wonderful example of the Jewish immigrant population in the area. Soon after moving into the LeFerriere House, Hyman was able to purchase the aforementioned and neighboring Normand House, which he later deeded to his son.⁴³ The third and final dwelling in this section is the Mintzer House, which is located at 175-177 Intervale Avenue. A vernacular example of the Colonial Revival Style, this duplex was built in 1898 as a single-family home.⁴⁴ The structural history of this building is somewhat complex. To the rear is a small, one-story wing. In 1906, a small, street level grocery store was added,⁴⁵ and then removed upon interior renovations in 1939. These interior renovations included converting the single-family residence into a two-family dwelling.⁴⁶



Fig. 10. View of the Mintzer House as it stands today.

This was under the ownership of one Bessie Mintzer, wife to William Mintzer, who owned the home from 1906 to the late 1940s. This structure's relationship with the Normand and LeFerriere houses are largely in occupants, having shared a number of short-term residents

at different periods in time. It was at the time of the French Canadian immigrants that many family members are listed as living in not only the Mintzer, Normand or LeFerriere Houses, but other structures on Intervale Avenue as well.⁴⁷ Additionally, William Mintzer and Hyman Cohen (of the LeFerriere House) purchased a rental property together, further linking the two homes together.⁴⁸ Like the Normand and LeFerriere Houses, the Mintzer house is yet again a lovely example of Jewish immigrants purchasing and further developing French Canadian owned structures.

The third section of structures is something of a miscellaneous section, as it contains two buildings that currently qualify as missing middle housing but have not necessarily always fit these criteria. The first of these structures is what is known today as the McKenzie House, located at 43 Elmwood Avenue. This building is on the National Register of Historic Places, listed as the Martin L Kelsey House.



Fig. 11. View of the Martin L. Kelsey House as it stands today, operating as a senior living facility titled the McKenzie House.

This building is an example of a Late Victorian structure with stick style, French Second Empire, High Victorian Gothic, and Italianate Embellishment. The structure stands three stories high and was originally constructed as a single-family home.⁴⁹ Built in 1879, the house stands on what was regarded as a coveted residential street. Given the area's rapid development as one of the leading lumber manufacturers in the country, population was at an all-time high and housing needs were through the roof. That being said, certain streets like Elmwood Avenue were home to many single-family dwellings that housed the more upper-class professionals of the area. The Martin L Kelsey house was no exception to this, and housed many prominent figures in the city, such as Thomas Arbuckle of Arbuckle & Co., which at the time was the largest candy and cigar manufacturer in the state.⁵⁰ Despite these affluent and influential individuals living in and along these streets, urbanization took hold and many of the buildings neighboring the Martin L Kelsey House were demolished. Luckily, the structure at hand was simply converted into a multi-unit structure, not only allowing for more housing in the area but also contributing to the missing middle housing of the Old North End. Today the Martin L Kelsey House serves as the local McKenzie house, which is a senior housing complex.

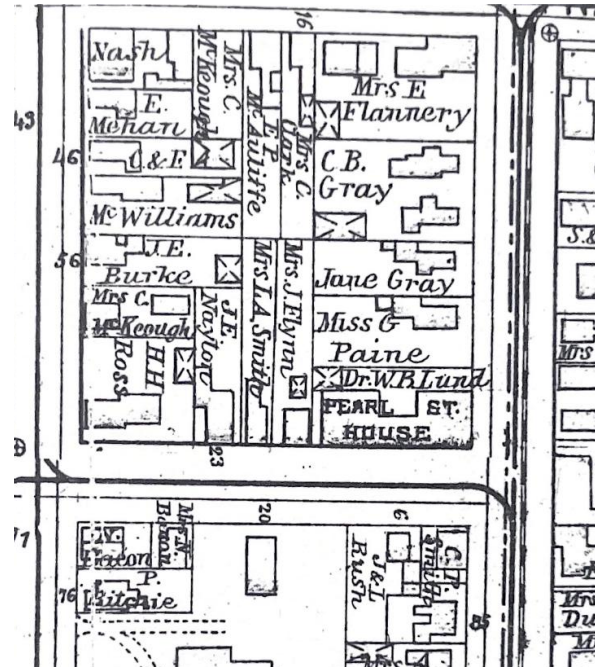


Fig. 12. View of 71-73 Pearl Street via the *Map of the City of Burlington* by C.M. Hopkins, C.E., showing the structure as operating as the “Pearl St. House.”⁵¹

The last structure at hand is the structure that currently occupies the addresses of 67-73 Pearl Street and 1-15 Pine Street. The portion of the structure that occupies part of Pine Street is a series of row houses connected to the main building on Pearl Street. The bricked-in archway that stands here is also the only known existing structure of this type from this era in Burlington.⁵² The city (then village) of Burlington played a large part in the War of 1812, and was used as not only a supply depot, but a hospital and campgrounds for the members of the U.S. Army stationed there. Much of the military owned land is said to be located between North and Pearl Streets, as well as Battery Park.⁵³ This building is of particular interest as the portion of the structure running along Pine Street is said to be the only remaining brick barracks that were originally constructed for the War of 1812.⁵⁴ In addition to this, an inn was located here sometime in the nineteenth century which was titled “Omnium Gatherum,” which is Latin for “all gathered together.” Postwar, the building was likely used as tenements for lumber workers coming to the area, as the central location

to downtown would be more than ideal.⁵⁵ The structure now operates as apartment buildings.



Fig. 13. View of 71-73 Pearl Street as it stands today.

Based on the buildings showcased here, one can see that the Old North End Neighborhood of Burlington is brimming with structures that qualify as missing middle housing. From structures like mixed use storefronts to decommissioned barracks, there are several types of structures to choose from in terms of housing. While this housing might be considered missing in many current day situations, it is evident that Burlington has not

only preserved these types of structures, but has even created zoning to allow for the continued use and development of these types of structures.

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