

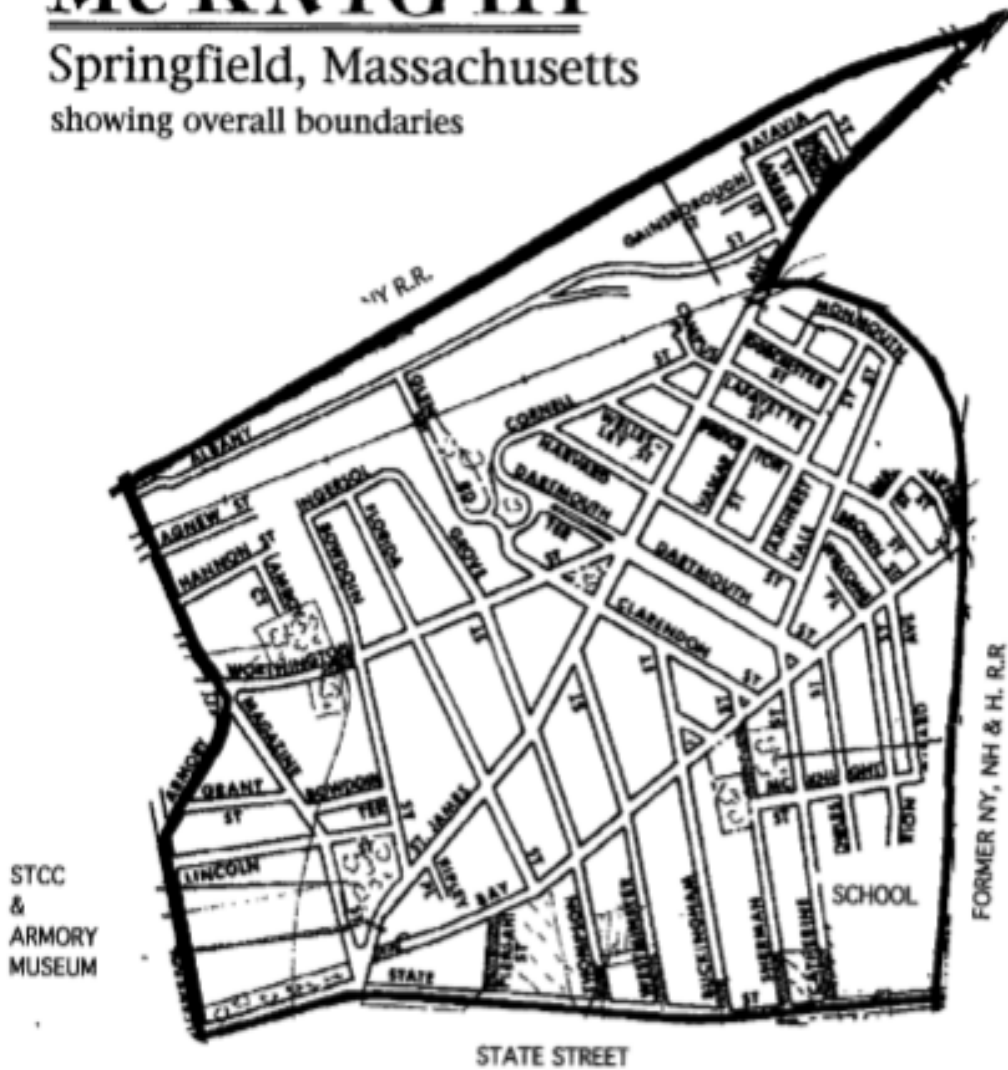
# Potential Tour of Sites to be Interpreted

in the  
McKnight National Register Historic District  
as part of the

“City of Homes Living Museum”

Prepared by David P. Gaby, in consultation with  
Frances Gagnon, based on decades of tours  
provided in the area in concert with local  
events and with the Springfield Armory  
Historic Site

**PLAN of  
McKNIGHT**  
Springfield, Massachusetts  
showing overall boundaries



**MAP OF McKNIGHT INCLUDING SITES OF INTEREST**

The above map describes the official McKnight District, which contains approximately 1,000 Victorian homes and related buildings. It has been characterized as one of the best-preserved 19<sup>th</sup> Century Streetcar suburbs in America. Since 1975 most of the residential portion of which has been designated as the McKnight National Register Historic District, and many of the homes have been restored.

## *Living Museum Philosophy*

The approach of the Living Museum will be that while the McKnight District, as an expression of the cultural vitality associated with one of America's fastest-growing and most-affluent cities, and as the first of Springfield's 'Streetcar suburbs', set many precedents and has many stories to tell present and future generations, this is still a living community and home to hundreds of families and thousands of people. Therefore rather than just being a display about the past the Museum will also work to accommodate the needs of modern residents, and will work to allow for sustainable restoration and renovation to be carried out in ways that preserve the legacy represented by the Historic Architecture of the community.

## *The Projected “City of Homes” McKnight Tour Experience*



*MCDC Photo*

*Welcome Center – The George Kibbe House (1850, 1896)*

1030 Worthington Street

The tour would begin at the Kibbe House, located in the northwest corner of Worthington and Bowdoin Street. The house was erected in 1851 and 1852 by one of the two brothers responsible for starting the Kibbe Brothers confection company, a concern that popularized penny candy and many other products in the region. The building consists of approximately 5,000 square feet of space, and the Welcome Center is projected to share the first level with the community meeting and education space that was originally constructed in 1938 by the Odd Fellows fraternal organization.

It is projected that visitors would enter either through the existing Bowdoin Street Porte Cochere or from a new ADA-compliant entrance to be built on the West side of the building, and enter the Entry Hall of the Welcome Center. (Shown on the following page) . The image below is one of one of the Kibbe Brothers delivery wagons, visits of which were highly anticipated in those days before refrigeration and readily-available ice cream.





The fireplace mantle in the Entry Hall probably dating from the 1895 renovation



A view of the custom reception desk hand-built at cost of over \$5,000 and donated for use by the City of Homes Living Museum

After interacting with Museum Staff visitors would then either access static exhibits in the gallery to be constructed to the West of the Entry Hall, and possibly depart on a self-guided tour, or immediately gather with other guests in the Auditorium, which is being restored based on its design by the Odd Fellows (See below).



In the orientation provided online or to visitors on guided tours the presentation will cover the historic background of McKnight and its relationship to the nearby Springfield Armory, and then in addition cover the importance of McKnight as a prototype “Streetcar Suburb” in which homes were built on land subdivided for that purpose a distance away from areas of commerce and workplaces. These areas were not ‘Suburban towns’ as we speak of them today, but neighborhoods within City limits that we newly developed on land accessible by the newly developed “Street railways”, which were initially built to accommodate cars drawn by horses, and then converted around 1890 to cars operating on electric motors and powered from overhead “Trolley wire”.

After leaving the visitors center to guests would proceed to the 1911 Stebbins House, designed by Architect Guy Kirkham, and located down Bowdoin Street to the South.



1939 WPA Photo

The Stebbins House

86 Bowdoin Street

The Architect had lived Springfield years previously, left to work for the prominent firm of Cass Gilbert, whose credits include the famous Woolworth Building in NYC and the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington, D.C.. This house was built for Judge Stebbins, who had previously been the Mayor of the City, in an “English” style similar to that used in 1907 in the architect’s own house, which will be visited later on the tour.

It is perhaps notable that Bowdoin Street had been built in 1870 separately but in line with the McKnight development, and that it was the location of homes for a number of prominent families, including the Smith’s, co-owners of Smith and Murray Department Store on Main Street in Downtown Springfield.

It is also perhaps notable that the Stebbins family, which has been prominent in the area since the time of the American Revolution, at which point they were associated with Deerfield, MA, was also involved in the events of Shay’s Rebellion, which happened nearby in 1787, and that the family has since the events of King Phillips War and the attack on Deerfield during that conflict

been divided into a protestant branch of the family, derived from those who remained in Massachusetts, and the Catholic branch, made up of those descended from those who were taken to Canada and converted to Catholicism at that time.



1939 WPA Photo

Stebbins House Summer House

86 Bowdoin

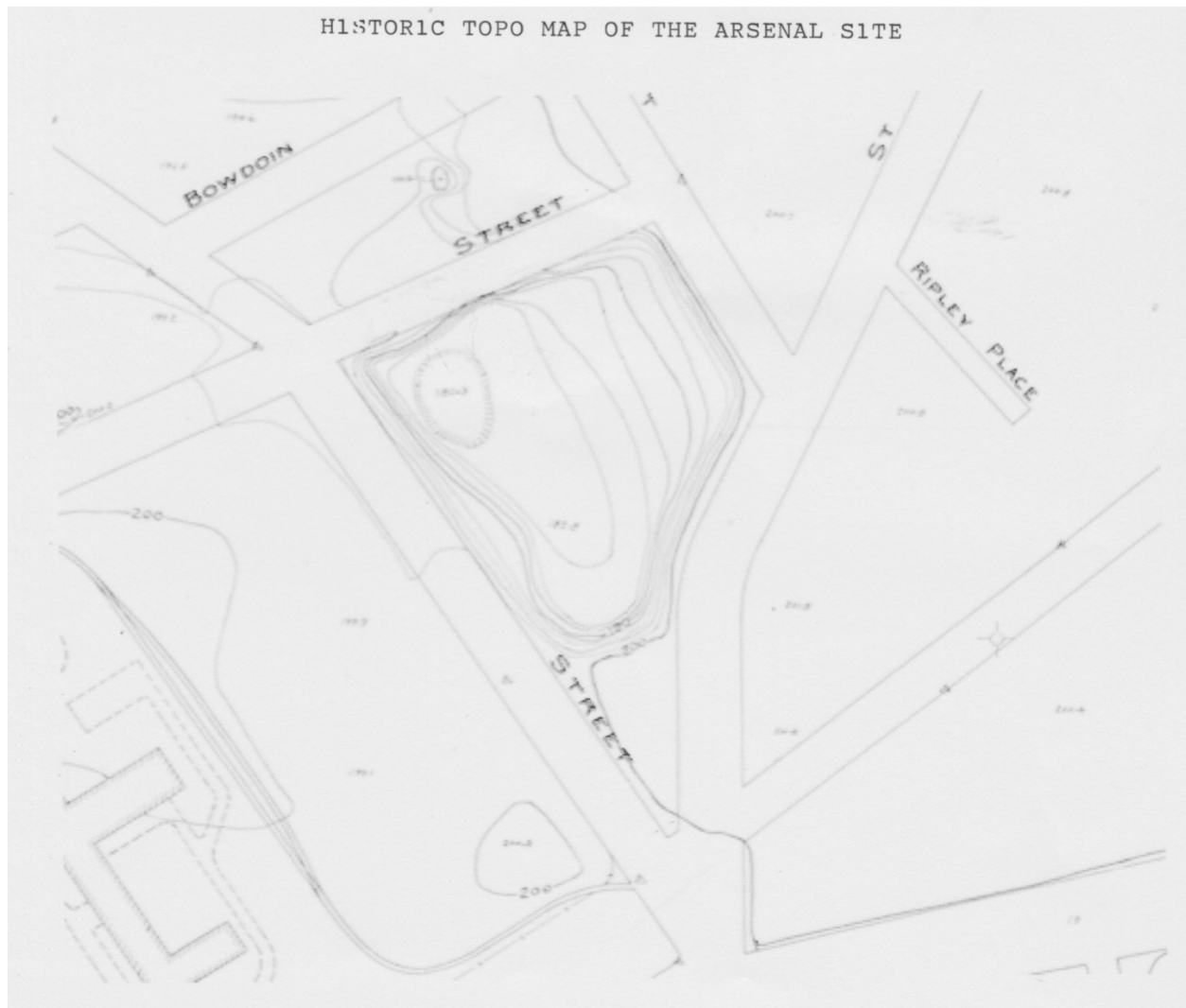


*Photo from 1939 WPA Files*

*The Newall Carriage House (1870)*

57-69 Bowdoin Street

The group would then move down Bowdoin Street to the Newall Carriage House, shown in a 1939 WPA photo. This was the shared carriage house that served the two Second Empire homes of Newall Brothers, built at the inception of the explosion of local home development. The structure is typical of those that accompanied most of the larger houses, and is now being restored and is used for automobile storage and restoration. In the future it is expected to be part of the exhibition and training space for the Gasoline Alley Living Auto Museum, which will highlight both historic auto technology and modern innovations and transport services.



*The (Site of) the Continental Arsenal*

St. James, Florida & Bowdoin St

Now Magazine Park

Image from early 20<sup>th</sup> City topo survey

After this the group would move to the site of the Continental Arsenal, now used as a city Park, The site was the original location of the Arsenal, est. 1780 by Gen. George Washington, on the recommendation of Gen. Henry Knox, who recommended the site as it was protected from British raids due to the conditions on the Connecticut River. After the end of the Revolutionary War the Arsenal became a focus of Shay's Rebellion and its culminating battle in January of 1787. The Rebellion was finally put down after a force raised privately by Massachusetts Governor Bowdoin was sent to protect the Arsenal, but the issues raised by the Rebellion prompted leaders of the young country to develop the U.S. Constitution as a substitute for the Articles of Confederation which were then in effect. The Arsenal became part of the Springfield Armory but was itself destroyed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Since the drawing above was made the site has been leveled to a degree to allow for construction of ball fields.





*The Haynes House*

*Photo from 1939 WPA Files*

*61 St. James Avenue*

The group would then move to view the residence of the Haynes Family as shown in its 1939 WPA photo, located across from the site of the Magazine Park and the then-newly constructed homes on Bowdoin Street. Haynes, a prominent Downtown merchant, hotel, and theater owner, lived in the house while it was owned by his family, one of the backers of the McKnight Brothers development effort in the 1870s. Used for many years as an institution the building has been unfortunately modified and is now targeted for restoration by local preservationists.

The house is located near the beginning of St. James Avenue, which is one part of a group of streets that has evolved from the old pre-colonial trail then called “Skipmuck” connecting the Village later known as “King Phillips Stockade” with the Falls at Chicopee , which was a site where fish could be caught.

The street built over the section of the old trail from the Springfield Armory to Chicopee was named “Factory Street”, as it connected with Ames Manufacturing in Chicopee Falls which provided a lot of products to the Armory.

Then, as the McKnight Brothers, with the backing of investors like the Haynes family, began to develop the area the name “Factory Street” gave way to the more stylish Saint James Avenue, which it remains today. As the community developed into the suburban residential community it became by the 1880s it was paved with granite paving stones, and was one of the streets used by street cars to connect residents of the new community with Downtown Springfield.



*Early 1870s Horse-Drawn Street Car*



*Rendering from Museum Files*

*The James D. Gill House (1888-1889)*

1105 Worthington Street

Following this the group would continue to visit the James D. Gill House. Gill was the owner of an “Art Block” on Main Street containing a first floor store as well as a second floor Art Gallery. Shown in a contemporary rendering, this was the “Colonial-style” residence that J.D. Gill had architects Richmond and Seabury design for his family just after they had completed what came to be called the Tapley School. The home, reported to cost \$15,000 to build, features such refinements as multiple species of woodwork, several patterns of Lincrusta-Walton wall and ceiling covering, ceramic “Art tile” by J & J.G. Low, terra cotta panels, and originally featured extensive stained glass by Wolf Brothers of New York. Information on Gill’s “Art Block” and his Annual Exhibitions of American Art would then be distributed along with information on the related current exhibits at the George Walter Vincent Smith Museum in Springfield’s famous Museum Quadrangle.



*MCDC Photo*

*The B. Hammett Seabury House*

188 Florida Street

The group would move to nearby Floridaa Street, to see the home of one of the architects of Gill’s 1888-1889 House. This home ws the residence of part of the architectural team of

Richmond and Seabury that built not only J. D. Gill's house, but Tapley School, and several other houses in the McKnight District, large houses on Union Street and Maple Street, as well as the Jefferson Avenue School, the Y.M.C.A. Training School at Winchester Square where Basketball was invented, and a number of prominent buildings in other communities around the United State, and then after the partnership broke up in 1890, the Buckingham Jr. High School that was located on Eastern Avenue and served the McKnight Area children for many years. He continued to be active into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century building such other buildings as the Van der Heyden Apartments facing on Winchester Squar, now re-named Mason Square after Primus Mason.

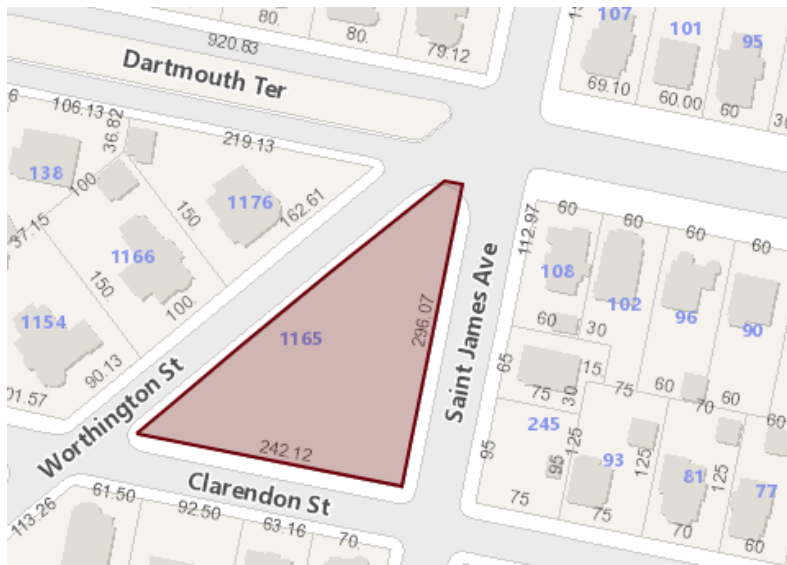


*Photo from 1939 WPA Files*

*The William McKnight House*

79 Ingersoll Grove

From Florida Street the group would move to 79 Ingersoll Grove, around the corner, Located just on the turn of Ingersoll Grove, this was the home that one of the co-developers of the neighborhood built for himself after the development effort expanded North of Bay Street after 1880. The area had been used for many years as a site for picnics and related events, and this history is memorialized in the street's name.



*Image from City GIS*

*The Thompson Triangle  
Avenue*

Worthington St. & St James

From Ingersoll Grove the group would travel down to Worthington Street and then to Thompson Triangle, which is the largest of the four triangle parks laid out by the McKnight Brothers as part of the effort to build a 'Picturesque' residential community for Springfield, after the post-1880 expansion of the development effort, and serves as the architectural focus of the neighborhood, sitting at the convergence of Worthington Street, St James Avenue, and Dartmouth Street, which was provided with wide lawns, as shown above.



*MCDC Photo*

*The Guy Kirkham House*

120 Clarendon Street

The group would then cross Clarendon Street to the West to visit the Kirkham House. This 'Modern English' style house architect Guy Kirkham built for himself facing the Thompson Triangle, built in 1909, is one of several houses Kirkham built in McKnight, inspiring the Stebbins House he built on Bowdoin Street in 1911 in a similar style. Besides these houses Kirkham is also noted for designing the main building of the Forbes and Wallace Department Store, a portion of which was reconstructed as part of the Monarch Place development, Commerce High School, and the Massachusetts Mutual Insurance headquarters building on State Street.



*Photo from 1939 WPA Files*

*The John McKnight House*

1176 Worthington Street

The group would then travel North to visit co-developer John McKnight's residence construct directly facing the Thompson Triangle, which served as focus for the expanded

*(Continued from prior page)*

planned community. The handsome house was widely admired and was featured in the National magazine “Scientific American” as an example of a modern home.



*Photo from 1939 WPA Files*

*The (Site of) Park Congregational/Faith Baptist Church*

*Clarendon St. & St James  
Avenue (now demolished)*

The group would then travel South from the Triangle to the site of Park Congregational Church. This handsome church was affiliated with South Congregational Church, and was remodeled several times after fires, the latest of which occurred in the 1970s. In its role as shown it was the site of the large community meetings in the late 1950s at which the key community organization that led the efforts to preserve the neighborhood, the McKnight District Improvement Association, was formed. Later, in its incarnation as Faith Baptist Church it became a landmark of the African-American Community in the City and the noted site of Gospel music concerts. Unfortunately it fell into disuse after the death of its Pastor, the Rev. James H. Hamer, and was demolished like many African-American-related sites, after a very racially divisive Historical Commission meeting. It is the feeling of the proponents that this important site should be properly memorialized.

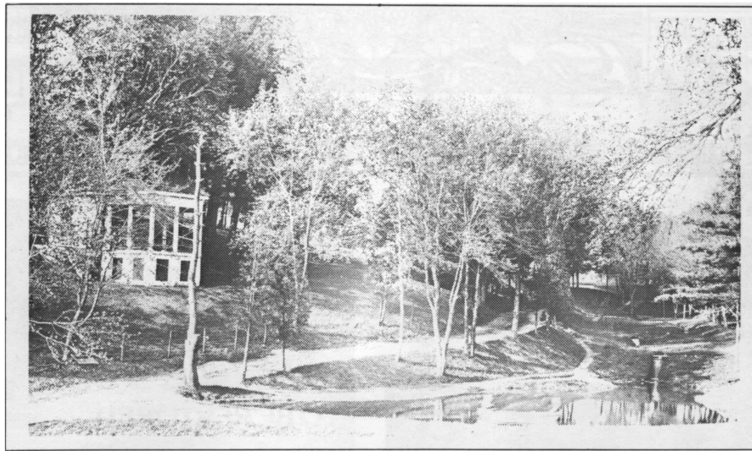


*MCDC Photo*

*The G. Wood Taylor House*

179 Clarendon St.

Then from the Triangle the guests would travel a block North to visit the last house on Clarendon Street, designed by G. Wood Taylor. Taylor was an architect who married into the McKnight family, and this distinctive Shingle-style house he built for himself and his family is well-sited facing the Dingle, or McKnight Glen. In addition to designing this house and several others in McKnight Taylor also designed many houses in the Ridgewood Terrace and Forest Park neighborhoods of Springfield, as well as houses in Hyannis on Cape Cod.



The McKnight Glen - Springfield, Mass.

*Period Photo donated by Neighbor*

*The Dingle (McKnight Glen)*

Clarendon St. & Dartmouth Terrace

The group would then visit the Dingle, shown in a contemporary photo reproduced from a glass positive print passed down by neighbors, this 3.2 acre park was one of the several parks planned as part of the McKnight District Improvement.



*Photo from 1939 WPA Files*

The Harry Knox House

4 Dorchester Street

from the Dingle the group would travel down Dartmouth Terrace back to St. James Avenue, and the Northwest to Dorchester Street, to the Harry Knox House. This charming bungalow was the residence of one of the lead inventors involved in the Knox Motorcar company, one of the many homes in the area built for participant in Springfield rapidly growing technology companies. It is located in the “College Streets” section of the McKnight District, and area where residents strongly supported creation of the McKnight Historic District but which is now left out of the local district but included in the National Register District.



The Knox “Waterless” Auto was one of the many innovations involving residents of the McKnight District





*The (Site of) the Mason House*

Dartmouth and Bay Streets  
*(Now demolished)*

From Dorchester Street the group would travel down Amherst Street to Princeton Street to Yale Street, and then down Dartmouth Street to the corner of Bay Street, where the Mason House used to stand. Shown in its WPA photo this was the home of the Mason family, “Free African-Americans, who, led by Primus Mason, moved to Springfield from Monson, MA and purchased the land on Dartmouth Street and the “Bay Road”, then the primary route to Boston, in 1844. The family also had a house on State Street on Goose Pond, and was involved in real estate development in the area. Primus Mason was widely known as a public benefactor and donated the land to establish Winchester Square, more recently re-named Mason Square, that gave its name to the commercial district on State Street, as well as leaving funds to establish the Mason Manor Home for Homeless Men, that survives to this day. The family collaborated with the McKnight Brothers in the Late 19<sup>th</sup> century development of the neighborhood, and family members resided in the house into the 1970s. It was, however, unfortunately demolished by the City just as the initial McKnight Historical District was being established. The site was more recently old by the City for use as a vegetable garden, but the Museum Committee would eventually like to see it reconstructed to house and exhibit on the original ‘Hayti’ settlement and the role of African-Americans in the development of McKnight and Springfield.



*Photo from 1939 WPA Files*

Gertrude Ackerley House

294 Bay Street  
*(adjacent to the Mason House on  
prior page)*

From the Mason House site the group's attention would be drawn to the house next door. This house was built by the Masons on their own land for one of the daughters of the family, and remained in the family until an unfortunate fire in the 1980s. It was restored but has now been altered superficially.



*MCDC Photo*

*The George W. Tapley School*

*221 Bay Street*

From 294 Bay Street the group would travel West to Sherman Street, where they would visit the Tapley School, built by local architects Richmond and Seabury in 1887 as the Bay Street Grammar School the school provided space for teacher training as well as elementary school

*(Continued from prior page)*

space, and served McKnight children until it was closed as a school in 1981 as part of the City's 'Racial Balance Plan'. It was renamed in honor of Tapley, a local resident and leader of the Milton Bradley Company, who was another one of the neighborhood's developers. Tapley sold the property to the City for the school and donated the playground for the use of neighborhood children.



*The (Site of) the Y.M.C.A. Training School*

782 State Street (where basketball was invented) *(Now demolished)*

From Tapley the group would travel down Shewrman Street to State Street to visit the birthplace of Basketball". This substantial brick structure was the site, designed by Richmond and Seabury for the Training School, which was Naismith's employer when Basketball was invented. The school later became Springfield College and moved to a site on the banks of Watershops Pond. The building was converted to commercial use and later demolished. The site is now occupied by a shopping center and McDonald's restaurant.



*Photo from 1939 WPA Files*

*The James Naismith House*

*92 Buckingham Street*

From State Street the group would go around the corner to Buckingham Street to visit the house once occupied by Mr. Naismith. This somewhat typical Buckingham Street home was the home of James Naismith, inventor of Basketball, during the period prior to his marriage. He reportedly rented a moved in the house prior to marrying the daughter of his hosts.



*Photo from 1939 WPA Files*



MCDC Photo

*Henry Washburn House*

62 Westminster Street

The group would then move from Buckingham Street one block over to the Washburn House, located on the West side of Westminster Street. One of the largest houses in McKnight, it is anticipated that the large carriage house on this property will be used as a hands-on exhibit of 19<sup>th</sup> Century building craft. It is the hope of the applicants that this facility can be used to house a craft training project aimed at 'Hands-on' training of a new generation of restoration workers.

*The group would then walk to the Dodge-Howard House on the way to the Kibbe House.*



*Photo from 1939 WPA Files*

*Dodge-Howard House*

*111-113 Bay Street*

This Bay Street was built in 1880 for a City Councilor but later was extensively renovated as the residence and headquarters of Dick Howard Fuel Oil, a prominent African-American oil dealer from the 1960s into the present Century. While located in the National Register Historic District it was not in the local district and was threatened with demolition in 2014. Demolition was halted by the City's then-new Demolition Delay Ordinance, and as a result a plan was developed by the McKnight CDC and Cooperative Development Institute to move the building to residentially zoned land as part of a plan to develop mixed income affordable housing in the area.