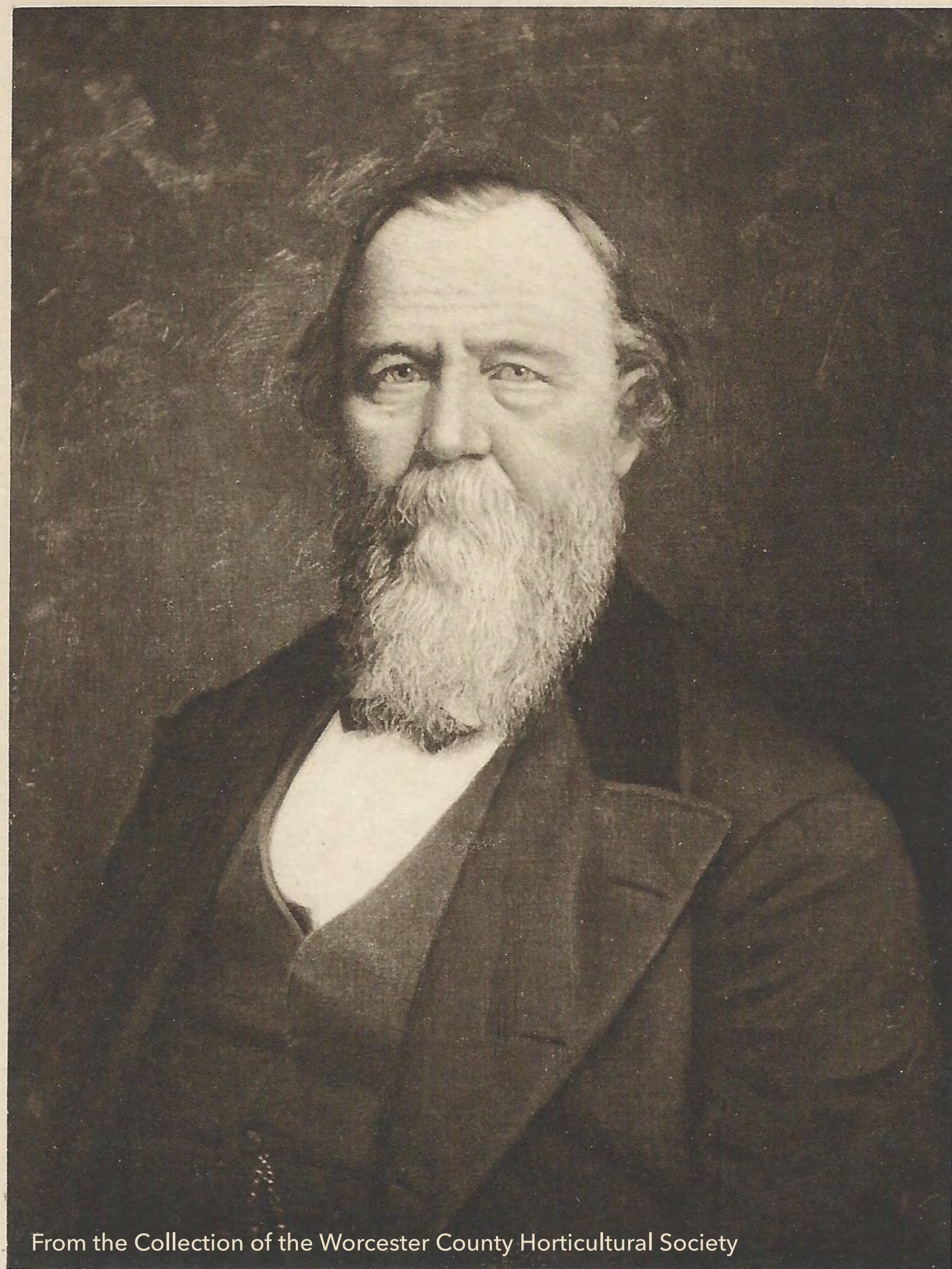




Speak Up for Trees!

Lessons from Worcester's Greatest Urban Forest Advocate

EVELYN HERWITZ | JUNE 10, 2024



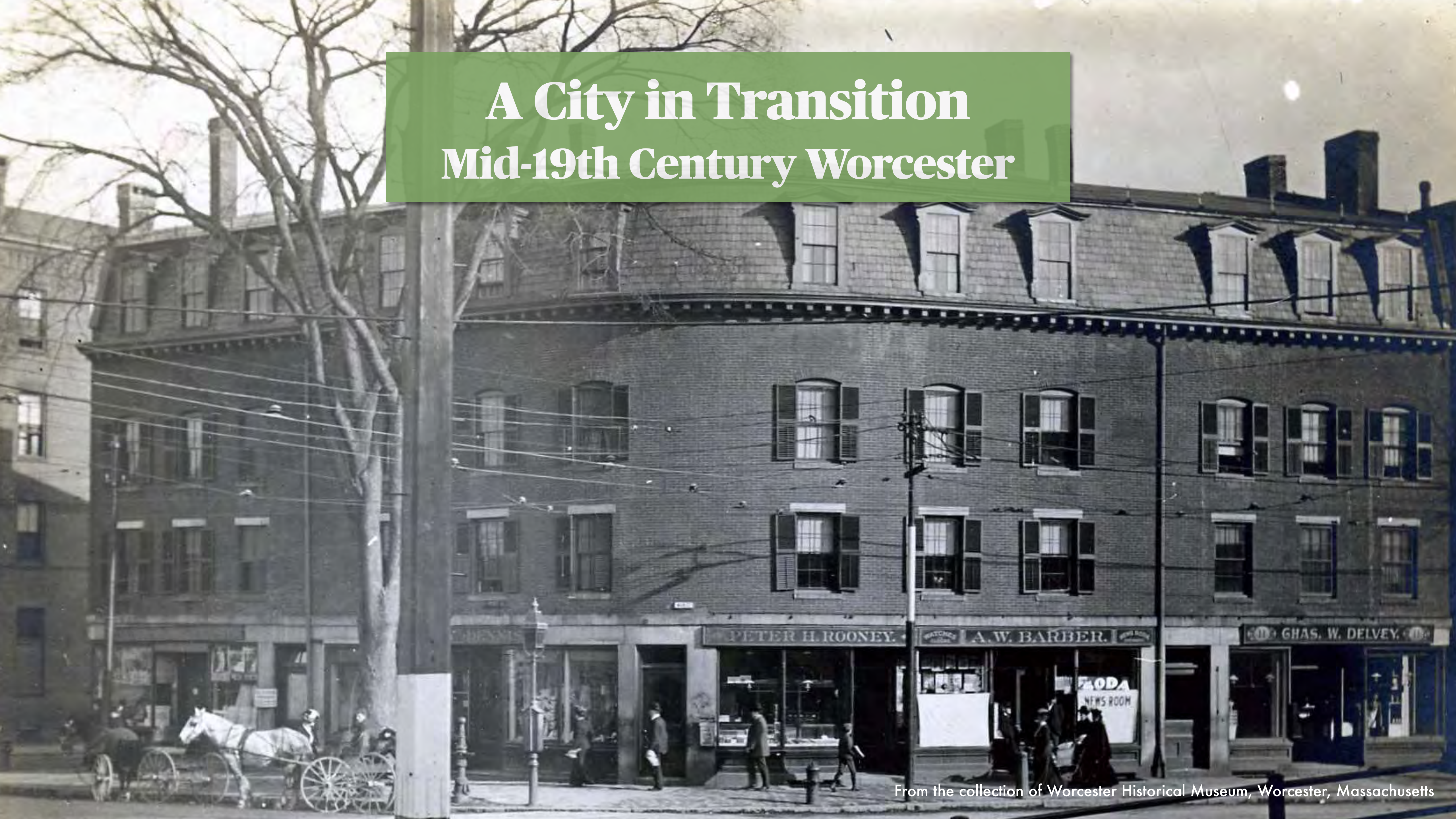
From the Collection of the Worcester County Horticultural Society

Meet Edward Winslow Lincoln

- Son and youngest child of Governor Levi Lincoln, Jr., and distant cousin of Abraham Lincoln
- Secretary of Worcester County Horticultural Society 1860 - 1896
- Chair, Worcester Commission on Shade Trees & Public Grounds/Worcester Parks Commission 1870 - 1896
- Mastermind of Elm Park and Worcester Municipal Parks System
- Curmudgeon and fierce advocate for trees in Worcester

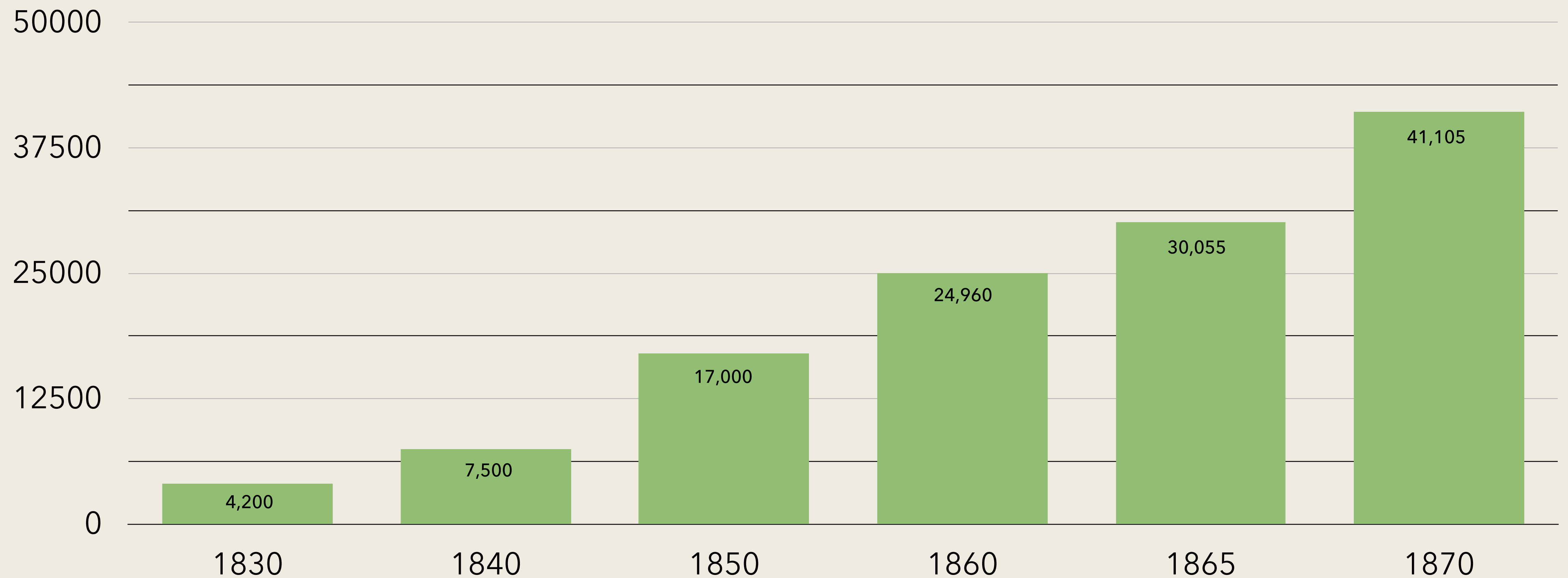
A City in Transition

Mid-19th Century Worcester



From the collection of Worcester Historical Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts

Worcester's Population Growth 1830 - 1870

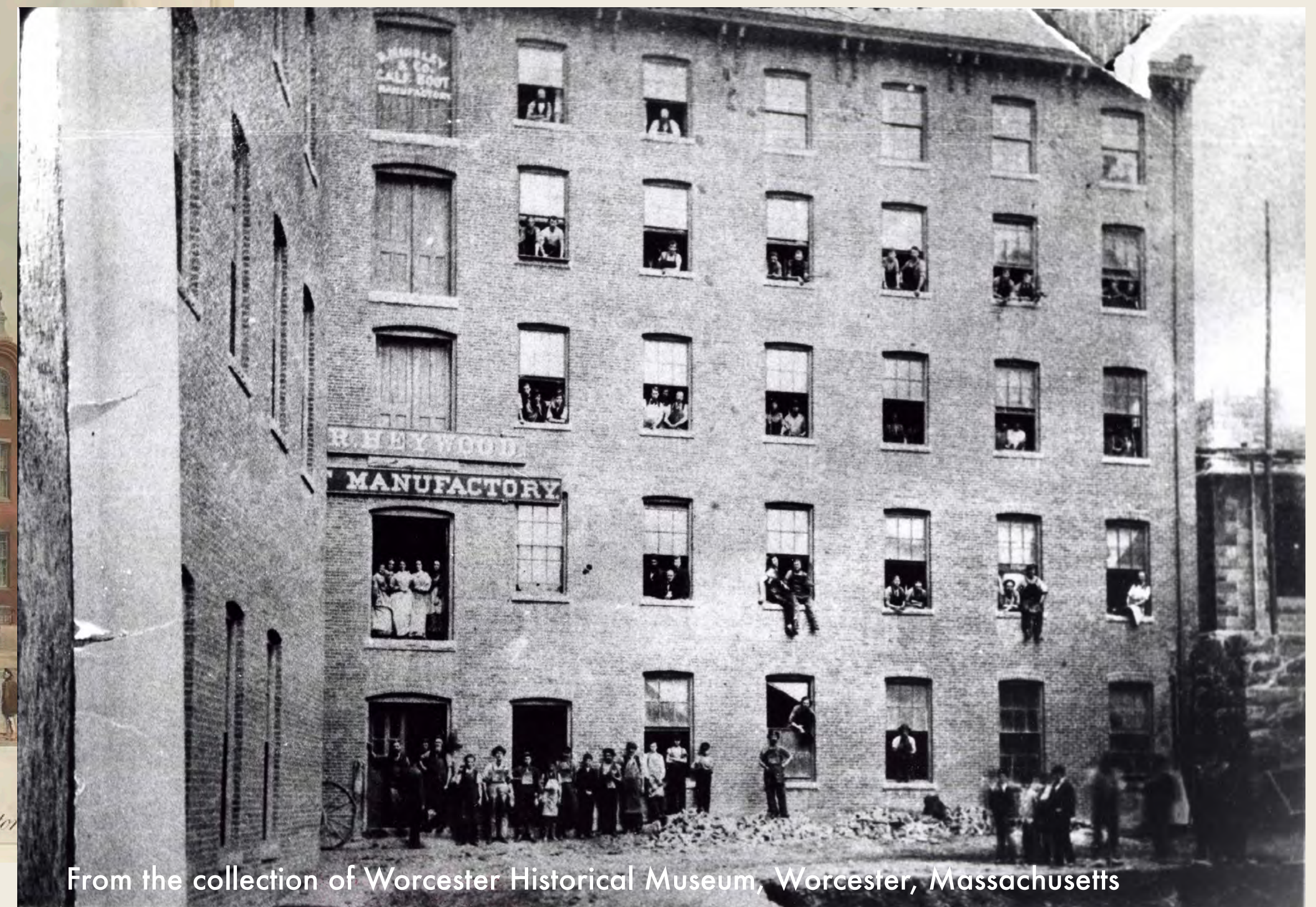


A Railroad “Break of Bulk” Point



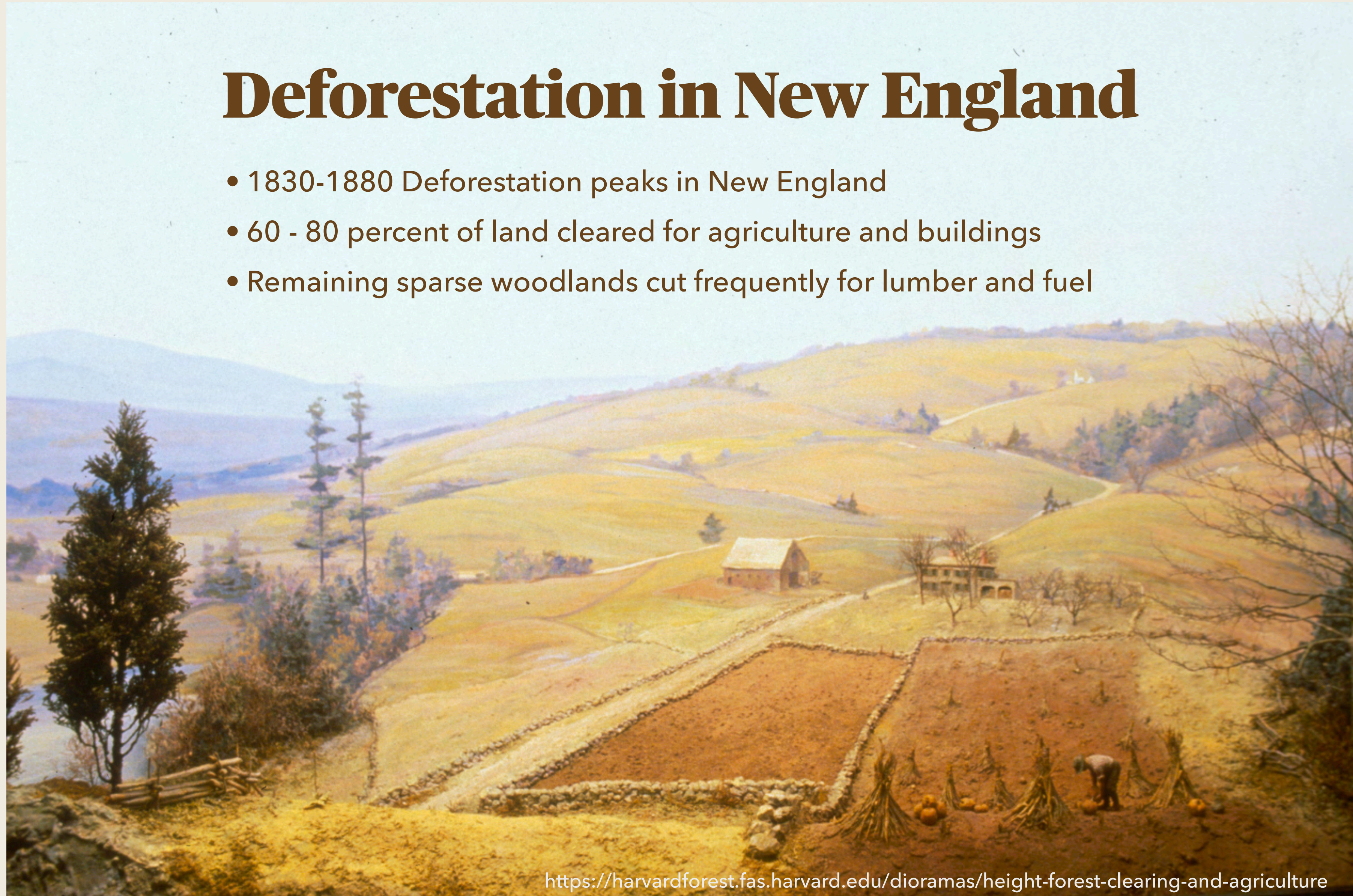
From the collection of Worcester Historical Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts

A City of Factories and Inventors



Deforestation in New England

- 1830-1880 Deforestation peaks in New England
- 60 - 80 percent of land cleared for agriculture and buildings
- Remaining sparse woodlands cut frequently for lumber and fuel




<https://harvardforest.fas.harvard.edu/dioramas/height-forest-clearing-and-agriculture>

Tree Planting in Worcester

Who is responsible?

- Civic-minded citizens took the lead in planting street trees.
 - First Worcester Tree Ordinance 1761:
“Voted That the Selectmen at the Charge of the Town take proper care for preserving ye growth of ye Trees sett out about the meeting House for shades by Boxing them & that the Inhabitants be desired not to Tye their Horses to them.”
 - Next 100 years, mostly a volunteer responsibility. Trees planted randomly.
 - 1850: Mayor Henry Chapin proposes City acquire more land for public green spaces.
 - 1851: Worcester Committee on Shade Trees and Public Grounds—one of first New England cities to designate street tree planting as municipal government’s responsibility
 - Conservative Republican small business owners and machinists wanted less government.
 - Working class Democrats, Irish immigrants, and elite Republicans wanted more activist government.
 - Who was in charge determined how much support for public tree planting and maintenance.
-



“Indeed, it may be regarded as a sort of necessity, in the growth of American cities, that, where brick and mortar, pavements, and underground conduits steadily increase their encroachments, trees are doomed.

“The law of the future promises nothing more favorable than that of the past. And so it must be—wherever Business frowns, this Commission reverently bows its head and retires.”

George Jacques, Chair, Commission on Shade Trees & Public Grounds



Enter Edward Winslow Lincoln

- Born John Waldo Lincoln 1820
- Graduated Harvard College 1839
- Attorney in Alton, Illinois, for next six years
- Part-owner *Aegis*, Whig newspaper 1845
- Worcester Postmaster 1849-1853
- WCHS Secretary 1860 - 1896
- Chair, Worcester Commission on Shade Trees & Public Grounds/Worcester Parks Commission 1870 - 1896

A Planter and Defender of Trees

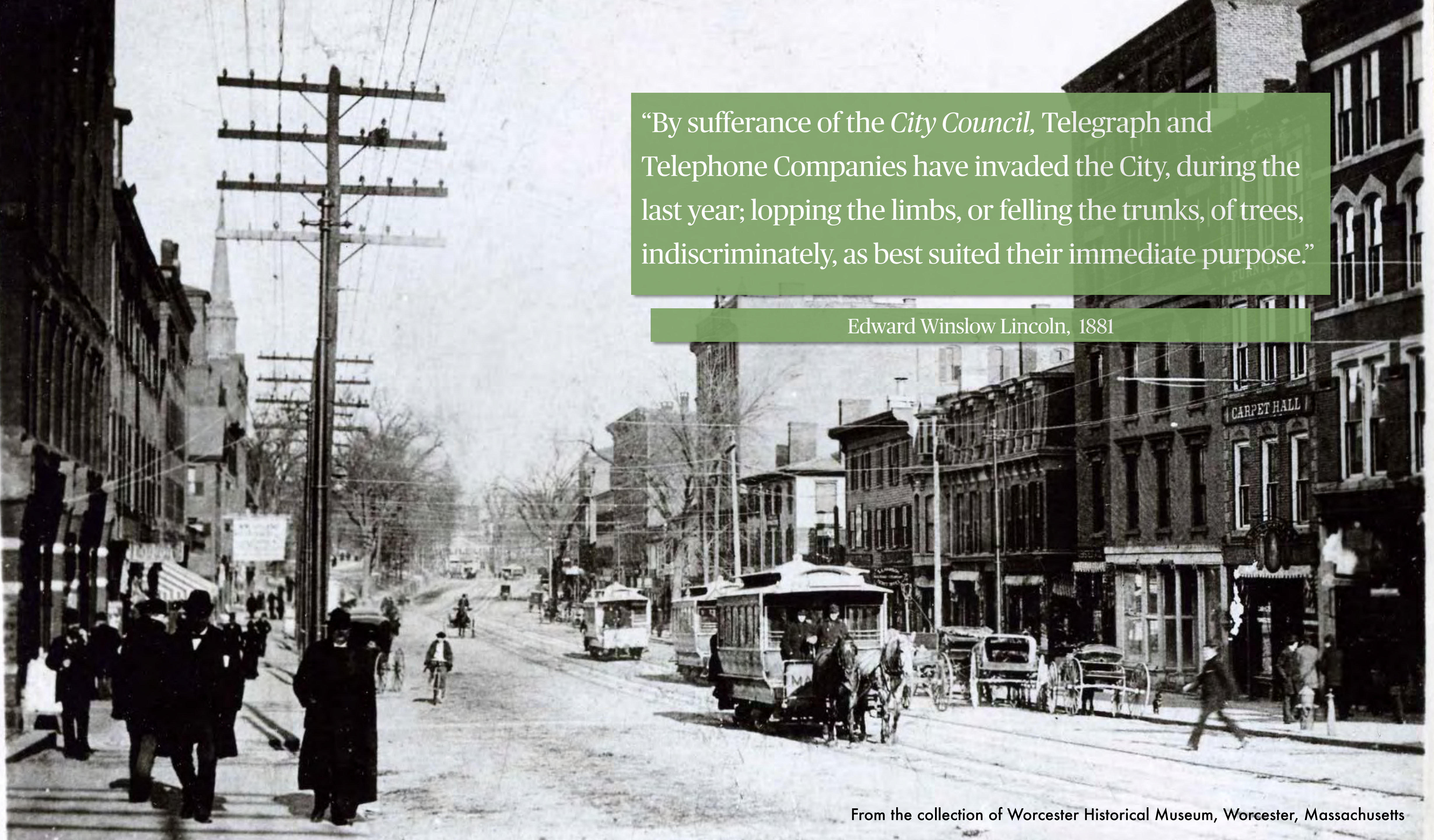
- 1870 Commission plants 100 street trees
- 1871 new municipal nursery in SW corner of Elm Park: 1,000 maples, 500 elms
- Immigrant neighborhoods had "greater need of Shade Trees than any other."
- By decade's end, Commission planting upwards of 700 street trees annually. Systematic tree planting on main streets and side feeders

Lincoln's advocacy included:

- Annual Commission reports
 - Personal visits and letters to city officials
 - Testy appeals to City Councilors
 - Endless queries to the City Solicitor
 - Fiery letters to the editor
-

“By sufferance of the *City Council*, Telegraph and Telephone Companies have invaded the City, during the last year; lopping the limbs, or felling the trunks, of trees, indiscriminately, as best suited their immediate purpose.”

Edward Winslow Lincoln, 1881



From the collection of Worcester Historical Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts



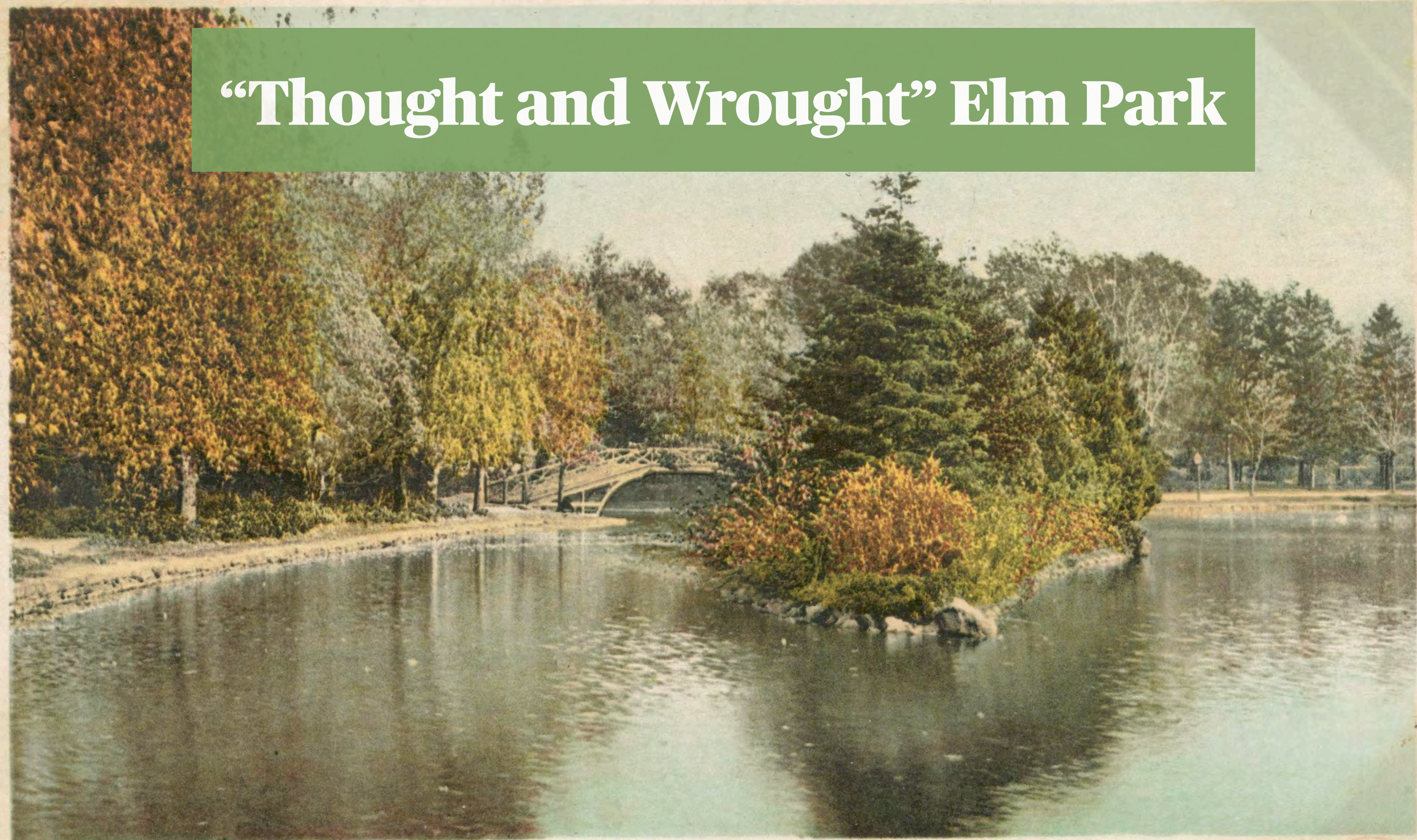
But Lincoln was no sentimentalist

“Trees were made for man: not man for trees. Yet too many still stand, spared of any lingering associations, or on account of their age and massive proportions, whose removal would be a great public accommodation and appease an increasing popular demand.”

From the collection of Worcester Historical Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts

MANSSION OF HON. LEVI LINCOLN, ON MAIN STREET, IN 1824.

“Thought and Wrought” Elm Park



10128 LAKE IN ELM PARK, WORCESTER, MASS

Lake in Elm Park, Worcester, Mass (NYPL b12647398-68640)



Draining the Swamp

“[We] look forward to a possible future when 50 or more years hence, the purchase of this now unneeded pleasure ground may be as much a subject of congratulations as it is today of regret. Who lives will see.”

– George Jacques, 1867

Budget Woes and Political Battles

- Activist Mayor James Blake, who had support of Republican business leaders, fatally injured in an industrial accident.
 - Former mayor Clark Jillson, clerk of police court and former machinist, fiscal conservative, reelected.
 - Public works spending slashed.
 - Commission's appropriation cut from \$5,000 in 1871 to \$3,000 in 1876.
 - Back to fiscal policies of 1850s.
 - Funding not fully restored until end of 1870s, when Citizens Coalition of Irish Democrats and elite Republican business leaders wins back the mayoralty.
-



Elm Park's Guardian

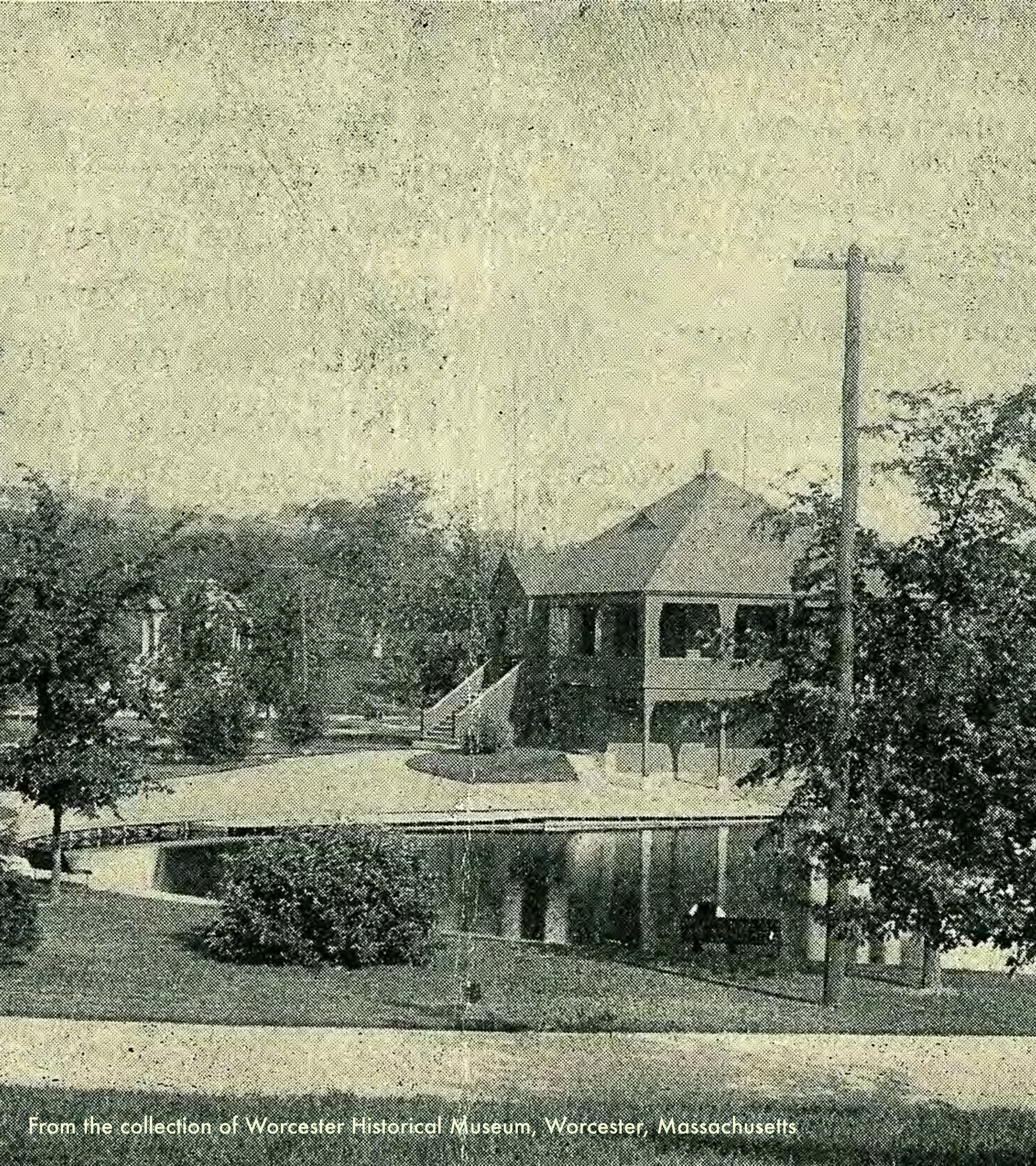
- Toured Elm Park every morning before arriving at his office at the Horticultural Society.
- Stored bulbs and "tender plants" at his home in winter
- Shoveled snow off the ice for skaters
- Helped with plantings and pruning
- Ensured ponds were shallow to reduce risk of children falling through ice



Municipal Parks Plan 1886

From the collection of Worcester Historical Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts

- 1882 Citizens Coalition Mayor Elijah Stoddard advocates for more land for public parks
- Lincoln tries to acquire Newton Hill by eminent domain, blocked by legal battles
- 1884 Horace Bigelow and Edward Davis donate 110 acres, including 1,000 feet of waterfront, for Lake Park
- 1886 Davis joins Worcester Parks Commission and drafts one of nation's first comprehensive municipal parks systems
- Plan balances East Side demands for recreational play space with West side desires for genteel pleasure grounds



Land for 7 New Parks Acquired in 1889

- Fairmont Square
- North (Burncoat) Park
- East Park
- Crompton Park
- University Park
- Institute Park
- Newton Hill added to Elm Park
- Green Hill Park donated by Green family in 1905

“[T]he City should, by no means, rest supinely content with what it has,
so long as aught remains attainable for completer fruition.”





Assumption College damage from 1953 F4 Tornado, National Weather Service

Nature's Stresses

- Chestnut tree blight 1910s
- Hurricane of 1938
- Dutch Elm Disease 1951
- Tornado of 1953
- Ice storms
- Asian Longhorned Beetle infestation 2008
- Emerald Ash Borer today

Our Vulnerable Urban Forest

- Urban environment hostile to trees
- More trees lost to development than ALB during same period
- Aging trees not always replaced
- Heat islands
- Global warming





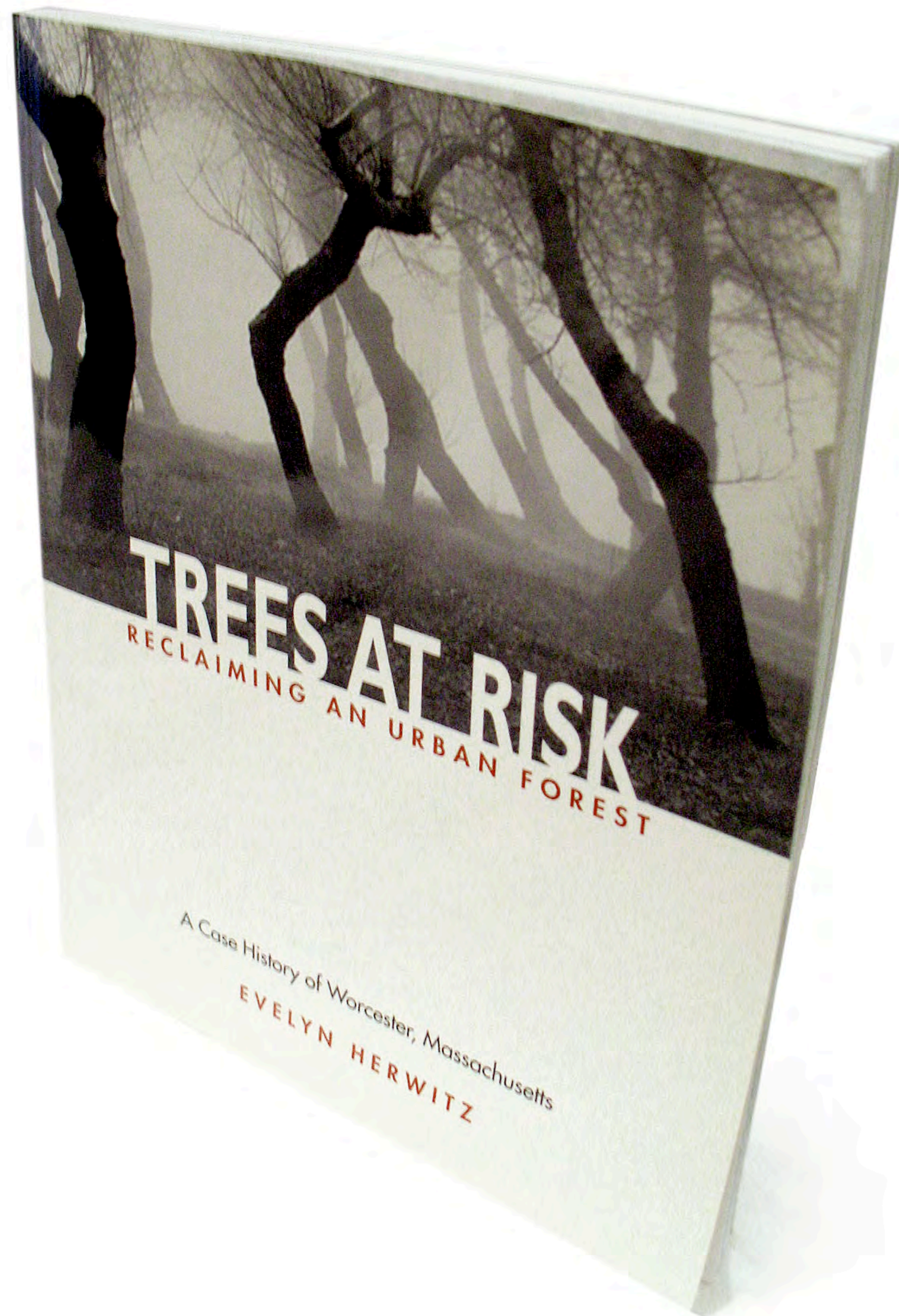
The Good News!

EWL's Legacy Lives On

- Urban Forester hired for Worcester
- 30,000 trees replanted after 2008 ALB infestation
- Green Worcester Plan; Dept. of Sustainability & Resilience (2021)
- Green Worcester Advisory Committee (2022)
- Urban Forestry Tree Commission (2022)
- Worcester Heat Risk Assessment (2023)
- Urban Forest Master Plan (2024)
- Miyawaki Forest Pilot Projects and CoolPocket Designs (2024)
- Citizens speaking up for trees!



Questions?



Thank you!

- Evelyn Herwitz
- "Trees at Risk: Reclaiming an Urban Forest—A Case History of Worcester, Massachusetts" (2001)
- Copies available at treesatrisk.com