

**NOW!**



**Main Street Circle  
Boylston, Massachusetts**

## An Unremarkable Sign for a Remarkable Road

by Carrie Crane

*Shrewsbury land grant lot #39 was approved by the General court of Massachusetts, and granted to John Wheeler in 1718 (price unknown but by 1725 lots were valued at 12 pence an acre). This 60-acre piece of land lay between what is now Route 70 and what was once the Nashua River but is now the Wachusett Reservoir. If you travel north from the center of Boylston about half way between French Drive and Tahanto Regional Middle High School you will see a small road off to the left with a sign that says Main St Circle. This road was the main road (hence its name) from Boylston center to the village of Sawyers Mills and on to West Boylston and Sterling. Now in its diminished state, it quickly dead ends into Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation property with a gate and a dirt road that returns to Rt. 70. Lot #39 was on the left side of the road heading to Sawyers Mills.*

Over 190 years and numerous generations this parcel grew in size with the addition of acreage by various owners. According to the Boylston Historical series the property was “subsequently owned by Jonathan Page, Jonathan French, Captain Robert Andrews, Willard Andrews and finally by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.” Much of that time the land was held and farmed by the family of Capt. Robert Andrews. It was passed on to his son, Corp. John Andrews and then to his son Willard Andrews and then again to Willard’s son Theodore, who lived there until his death in 1888.

At this point, a large portion the property was sold and passed to numerous owners, one of whom had a grand development plan. On February 9, 1892 the Riverside Boylston Syndicate announced a new community to be built along the Nashua River, including 33 lots, two parks, one along the river, a hotel overlooking scenic *Dinner Pail Falls*, and all this was walking distance of the Boylston train station on the Central Mass Railroad. Advertised as being affordable, it sounded like a dream community.

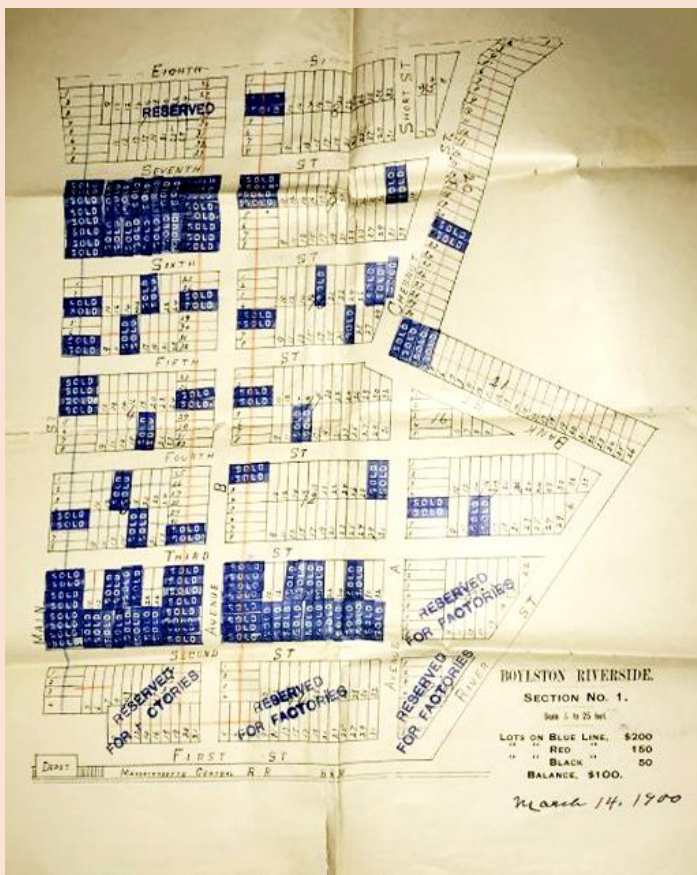


**New Development  
“BOYLSTON RIVERSIDE”**  
Describes house styles and costs  
February 1892  
(front view Advertisement)  
BHSM Archives Collection



**New Development  
“BOYLSTON RIVERSIDE”**  
House Lot and Industry Layout  
February 1892  
(back view of advertisement)  
BHSM Archives Collection

Just who was behind this plan is unclear but a few of the owners of record had experience building houses. The address given for Boylston Riverside Syndicate was Washington Street, Boston, Massachusetts which was the banking district. Why did this plan arise at the time of the Metropolitan Eminent Domain Taking?



Over the next several years the property changed hands a few more times. In 1894, it ultimately ended up in the ownership of John F. O'Brien. Who does not appear to have any previous connection to Boylston.

At this time, it was no longer a secret that the Metropolitan Water Board, responsible for the planning and construction of the Wachusett Reservoir had plans to acquire the land in question from John F. O'Brien by eminent domain.

According to the March 14, 1900 "Boylston Riverside" Section No. 1 plan, several lots had been marked sold and places for factories had been reserved, but with the eminent domain taking of the last of this property in 1900, the plans for "Boylston Riverside" were not to become a reality.



**Eminent Domain Taking**  
**ONE OF SEVERAL HOUSES AND BARN ON JOHN F. O'BRIEN'S PROPERTY**  
**AT THE TIME OF THE METROPOLITAN WATER BOARD TAKING**  
*Photograph dated September 11, 1896*  
*Digital Commonwealth Photograph Collection*



**Eminent Domain Taking**  
**BARN ON JOHN F. O'BRIEN'S PROPERTY AT THE TIME OF THE**  
**METROPOLITAN WATER BOARD TAKING**  
*Photograph dated September 11, 1896*  
*Digital Commonwealth Photograph Collection*



**Eminent Domain Taking**  
**STRIPPING OF THE O'BRIEN'S FARM**  
**METROPOLITAN WATER BOARD TAKING**  
*Photograph dated November 14, 1900*  
*Digital Commonwealth Photograph Collection*

**Acknowledgements:**

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