

The Chapin-Ward House

32 Gray Street (formerly at 53 / 291 North Pleasant Street)

Built on land bought from adjacent neighbors in what has become Kendrick Park, this house, new in 1903 and unique in Amherst, was the second home of William T. Chapin, his wife Mary L. (Hastings) and their son Fred. It was designed by local architect Roswell Field Putnam and built by neighbor George Bosworth, as was the Chapins' earlier (and larger) home, two doors to the north. William Chapin had joined the Amherst Savings Bank in 1888, and became treasurer in 1909 and later a vice-president. At home, he could often be found in the barn (now renovated here on Gray St.) at his hobby, woodworking. His only child Fred lived with his parents, suffered lifelong poor health and died in 1917 at the age of 30. William Chapin retired from the bank in 1936 and died in 1940, his wife in 1938. [Mrs. Chapin was the sister of Edward W. Carpenter's wife Esther; both daughters of Edmund Hastings, the younger brother of James and William Hastings, who built houses and a store here on Gray & adjacent Main Street. The Edmund Hastings farm subsequently became part of the Fort Hill farm, from which the house presently at the corner of Gray & Main Street was taken. The Carpenters had also lived on Gray Street in the 1880s.]

The Kendrick Trust did not acquire the Chapin house in 1940; it was sold to Charles B. and Evelyn F. (Brownell) Ward in May 1941. The Wards lived out their lives there; their two daughters, Linda and Virginia, grew up at home but moved away upon marrying. As girls they shared the third floor bedroom, while their parents rented three second floor rooms to Mass. State College (U.Mass. from 1947 on) students. Charles Ward also used the barn for his hobby of tinkering with old clocks. His lifelong career was with the First National Bank of Amherst. Mrs. Ward worked as secretary to the theatre arts department at Amherst College and later in life took a degree in art history at U.Mass. [Her account of the Chapins' houses and biography of their architect may be found in the Jones Library's Special Collections.] Upon her death in 1999, her husband having passed away in 1993, her daughter Linda Ward Wallace sold the place, which was bought by the Kendrick Trust, thus completing the acquisition of the park properties and necessitating removal of the house. It stood empty until 2007, when it was bought from the town by Barry Roberts and moved to Gray Street on November 27, 2007.

Research by Ed Wilfert, Nov. 2008