

The Jacob Winchester House (200 Pleasant Street, Framingham, MA) was built in 1842 by Dexter Hemenway. Interestingly, Hemenway, a member of the larger Framingham clan of Hemenway's who were long-standing political activists and community elders back in the early to mid 1800's, left his own commentary on the underside of the top stair tread leading to the second floor of the home. It reads, "Built by Dexter Hemenway, May 8, 1842. Poor hard Whig times." That stair tread is still in the possession of the current owners. 200 Pleasant is in the Jonathan Maynard Historic District.

As noted in the Cultural Resources Inventory, the house itself is one of the area's best examples of a unique Greek Revival Style architecture that was popular in the 1840's and 1850's, a period when many of this style house were built in Framingham. The house is sited facing east so that the main gabled entrance is side loaded facing the driveway, leaving a nicely symmetrical arrangement of windows (and recently added dormers) facing the street scape.

There is little information on the house's namesake, Jacob Winchester, except that he lived here from 1853 through the latter half of the century. Around 1892, J.J. Valentine, then president of the Framingham Bank, moved his family to this house, according to records, likely from the one next door at 208 Pleasant St., known as the J.J. Valentine House, and part of the Jonathan Maynard Historic District. The two houses are very similar in design, but with a different orientation to Pleasant Street. The Historic District stretches from the center west toward Southborough for about a half a mile along Pleasant St. The history of the town is entwined with the names of those who lived in these houses at the Common and along Pleasant Street.

Members of the Valentine family, from 1892 to 1975, enjoyed marriages, births and celebrations over the years in this wonderful home. In fact, the current owners purchased the home in 1975 from James J. Valentine, grandson of one of the original owners. The Valentine family at one time owned a large tract of land here on Pleasant Street, currently encompassing #'s 198, 200, 204, and 208, which were subsequently subdivided for children or sold off, as was the custom in the day.

200 Pleasant was built originally as a large single-family home. At some point in late 1930 to early 1940, the house was updated, razing the carriage house from the main house, and adding a separate living level to the back half of the house, which included a second bathroom. The lovely pedestal sink in that bathroom is original to that transformation and is a highly replicated piece in today's market.

In the early 1980's, a large family room was added to each the first floor and the second floor, opening the spaces from the respective kitchens, and providing a great deal of natural light to the areas. At the same time, a third full tile bath was added. Completing the renovation project, was the addition of three dormers.

The house has four open fireplaces with a fifth behind a wall. The one in the current living room has a gas insert and has been repointed for safety. It is also the one that would have supported the main cooking area for the early home with a brick, beehive oven and ash pit.

Today, the house can be either a large single family, as original, or used as a main residence with an in-law or guest suite. Currently, the back section of the house, with two bedrooms, a separate large kitchen, and a new bath, provides rental income.