

## ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: THOMAS M. HOWARD AND JAMES HUNT  
NINETEENTH-CENTURY HOUSEWRIGHTS: AN  
EXAMINATION OF THEIR WORK ON BEACON HILL,  
BOSTON, MA

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This thesis is a historical study of two housewrights who worked in the Beacon Hill district of Boston, Massachusetts, during the first half of the nineteenth century. The first decades of the nineteenth century were a turning point for the United States. The birth of industrialization created new wealth and housing shortages in urban centers such as Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. There were very few architects in the country, and the majority of the new housing was being designed and built by housewrights. Architectural historians and preservationists have long recognized the importance of the work by early housewrights, yet little is known about these artisans.

The thesis starts off looking at the changes that were occurring in the housewright trade as the architecture profession started to emerge and the economy grew. This is followed by a review of the lives of Howard and Hunt to see how they coordinated with the changes happening. The development of Beacon Hill and its architecture are examined to determine how they were affected by the growing economy and how much of a role Howard and Hunt played in their development. The housing being constructed on Beacon Hill was well designed and primarily for the upper class. The opportunities for education available to housewrights was reviewed to determine how they may have influenced the work being done. Finally, each of the houses designed and built by Howard and Hunt was examined individually.

Growing educational opportunities and the publication of builder's guides by Americans allowed housewrights to keep abreast of what their contemporaries were doing in other parts of America and overseas. These influences, in turn, allowed individuals to refine their own work. Industrialization and mass production allowed for speculative housing to occur and standardized designs to be created. The growing and changing economy opened up the opportunity for wealth and success to a few housewrights, but in general began the demise of the vocation. The emerging architect began to take over and by the end of the nineteenth century, the role of the housewright had changed dramatically. The work done by the early housewrights had laid a foundation for the architecture profession and set a precedent for many generations to follow.