

PITTSFIELD CITY REPORT



BICENTENNIAL ISSUE (1761-1961)

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Pittsfield grew up the hard way

This report, written in the year of Pittsfield's 200th Anniversary, provides a fitting occasion to relate the community's past with the present and to show, without writing or rewriting its history, something of how we grew up.

The implications of our history are clearly that Pittsfield grew up the hard way. The public services we take so much for granted today are the products of two centuries of inching progress. Adamant citizen rejection of community improvement was a conditioned reflex in the distant past, which turned down new ideas not once or twice or three times or for a decade, but more often than not for thirty to fifty years.

When a breakthrough was eventually won, it was owed either to a community catastrophe or crisis or to the undaunted exertions of a determined group of community leaders. Experience, vision and courage were the elements which eventually turned the tide against a vigorously independent and tight-fisted citizenry.

Even then, progress was held to mincing steps. Improvements were usually inadequately financed when sanctioned and, as the record shows, objects of concern to each succeeding generation. Numerous examples of providing less than enough to do half of what was required will be found in the history of the development of our schools, our fire and police departments and our public works utilities.

For 200 years Pittsfield has been the very model of the traditional New England community. It has always been warm-hearted and charitable toward human distress and, at the same time, reactionary and frugal toward civic improvement. We have been swift to do for others, agonizingly slow in doing what we ought for ourselves.

When our Allen Guards were called away at the beginning of the Civil War an overflow town meeting promptly appointed a committee to "provide ways and means for the comfort of the troops and the protection of their families in their absence." First year expenses for the purpose totalled \$4,634.00. In 1872, the town voted to send a \$5,000 donation to the sufferers "by the late Chicago fire."

From the beginning, Pittsfield cared for the unfortunate, the sick and the aged. Today, as in the past, we are generous to a fault in providing for our children. Our recreation centers, social welfare institutions, and our hospitals are monuments to Pittsfield's innate charity.

On the civic side, however, we have been, and to a degree remain, "damned Yankees." Years passed by before the fledgling town built a meeting house. The Town Hall, built in 1832, was a gift because Pittsfield's citizens refused to build one themselves. The issue of providing more adequate quarters for the Town and City Governments has been kicked around for eighty years. In 1883 an article in the Warrant for the Annual Town Meeting read: "To see if the town will make an appropriation to construct a Town Hall on the site of the present Town Hall." To date, Pittsfield has yet to say, "Yes."

In 1811, the town refused to buy a box engine for the fire brigade, and didn't consent to do so until 1814. Until 1844, this box engine, and two privately owned were the only protection against fire. It played hob with education, neglecting to provide sufficient funds for a grammar school as required by law until 1849, although it had been warned to do so in 1781. The town did not abandon the sovereign school districts until 1869, notwithstanding the urging of the illustrious educator, Horace Mann, in 1844. When a unified school system was finally adopted, a bitter controversy raged for almost a decade over the salary of the Superintendent.

Such matters as provision of a decent, sanitary, escape-proof town lock-up, restrictions against keeping hogs within the built-up Fire District, were perennial issues annually raised at Town Meetings, and annually rejected.

Allowing for blind spots, it is a fact that post World War II administrations have waded into problems which the town would surely have ignored and which many a former City Government would have put off for some other administration to worry about.

While caught up in whole series of immediate problems, the present city administration is by no means reluctant to provide for the future. There is some evidence that in an era of swift change, Pittsfield is moving out of the shallows into the deep, and that it has chosen to join the procession of progress. To this degree we are breaking with the past.

A healthy contrast

Old town records which describe the status of community sanitation in Pittsfield during most of the 19th Century are in the sharpest contrast with the high standards of public health which the city enjoys today. It can be safely assumed that today's citizen would not tolerate for a day insanitary nuisances which 19th century townspeople accepted as normal.

Despite the constant cajoling, warning and threatening of the Town's Board of Health, the Town of Pittsfield was reluctant in matters of cleanliness. The Board's report of 1884 is illustrative of the condition. "A majority of complaints made to the Board were of the pig-sty nuisance. The regulations of the Board permitting swine to be kept in pens, kept dry and clean, is practically a failure.

"The Board found in one of the thickest settled portions of the town twenty-three swine kept by one person, on premises very limited in area, and frequently find six to twelve in small pens, improperly cared for and sources of great annoyance to neighbors and the public. Unless the keepers of hogs pay more attention to the observance of the regulations concerning this matter, it may become necessary to make use of its power, given it by law, to prohibit the keeping of swine within the limits of the Fire District.

"The Board recommended last year an appropriation for placing traps in the manholes in the principal streets to prevent the escape of sewer gas, to the great danger and annoyance of the public. This inattention is truly remarkable for no one whose business calls him to North Street has escaped the foul gases which emanate from the several manholes which are very strong and unsavory in the early part of each day.

"The depositing of garbage in and along the highways of the town is a source of great annoyance, notwithstanding proper notices have been posted and the Board frequently has been obliged to call upon the Selectmen for funds to cover up and remove deposits made by persons it is hard to identify for prosecution. A small sum of money appropriated for the Board in securing a systematic removal and disposal of garbage could be used with great advantage for the public benefit.

"There have been reported to the Board fifty-two cases of Diphtheria, twenty-three of Scarlet Fever, and one of Measles. More than fifty percent of the cases of Diphtheria reported were along the West Branch of the Houstonic River and within fifteen rods from the streams ranging from Taconic to Pomeroy's mill. It is a well established fact, and demonstrated in the present instance, that a filthy, damp atmosphere is an important factor in the development of this disease, and particularly applicable to the above district is a thorough system of drainage and sewerage."

We have come a long, long way in the improvement of public sanitation from the conditions described above. A large part of the city is sewered; swine are located on a few farms on the fringes of the city; garbage is picked up daily at all restaurants and hotels in the center of the city and on a scheduled weekly basis at residences; few river outfalls now deposit raw sewerage into the river.

Today's department is staffed with trained personnel: nurses, sanitarians, bacteriologists, dentists and physicians. With the generous grant of power conferred by statute, the department has the right combination to safeguard the health of the city. Now, as in other years, the Health Department is constantly inspecting and re-inspecting restaurants, farms and sub-standard dwellings. It collects samples of milk, water and food for examination by the Bacteriological Laboratory; makes thousands of physical and dental examinations of school children. Since 1954, the department has made over 20,000 injections of Salk Vaccine and the threat of Polio epidemics has been reduced to a scattering few cases.

The maternal death rate remains low, along with the neonatal rate. The death rate has also followed the same trend, and now more than ten percent of the city's population is 60 years of age or over.

While conditions in the city today contrast sharply with those of the 19th Century, problems of environmental sanitation loom as a large area for attention. A very large number of houses in the older sections have long been substandard. As time goes on, few of these houses are substantially improved and the blight spreads. Despite an earnest effort to enforce the Minimum Housing Standards, the sub-standard housing problem requires more radical treatment than is available to the Health Department. Dr. Harold Stein has, therefore, urged early action on Urban Renewal for the blighted sections of the city.

To do no injustice to the worthy poor

"Policy and humanity suggest that, those of our population, whose labor has assisted to build up our town, should, when unable from sickness or other cause to provide for themselves and families receive some relief which will prevent them from suffering. The measure and form of relief has been carefully guarded, to keep within the bounds of economy, so that we might not patronize or breed pauperism, the great evil of the present, and yet be equally careful to do no injustice to the worthy poor. The past hard winter and the dullness in all branches of business have made the applications much larger than in former years, but brightening prospects for the future and the experience in dealing with the poor problem, will, we trust, result in the reduction of this item of town expenses in the future."

One of the earliest acts of the Town of Pittsfield after incorporation was to appropriate 10 pounds for a workhouse. "Paupers and vagabonds soon found their way into Pittsfield and there were frequent appropriations of money for the relief of the former class." From the earliest times the town showed a sincere sense of obligation to the "worthy poor," while taking precautions by strong measures to warn off those who attempted to take advantage of its charity.

The evolution of Public Welfare has seen the growth and specialization of programs for the needy. It is indeed a far cry from an annual appropriation of only \$1,200 in 1860 to \$1,350,000 in 1960, even with an allowance for the growth of population in the 100 year period.

Even Commissioner Charles H. Hodecker, who has directed the programs of Public Welfare since 1934, expressed concern with trends in 1960. He focussed attention on the swift increase in medical costs. In 1955, medical care provided by the department increased from a grand total of \$427,350 to \$671,029 in 1960. Under this heading hospital care had risen from \$115,478 in 1955 to \$210,144. Responsible for this sharp rise were increases in daily care rates in the city's three private hospitals from an average of \$13.60 to \$22.81 in the five year period. The most sizeable rise however, was for care in Nursing Homes. There was a 63% increase

in expenditure from \$179,164 to \$291,856 in 1960. The cost of drugs was \$57,678 in 1955; rising to \$88,817 in 1960. In commenting on the trend of Welfare Medical Costs, Commissioner Hodecker observes "this increase has transpired in spite of a decrease in the case load in the same five years. The largest increase is in the cost of drugs."

"For the most part," he continues, "local druggists are trying to keep these costs down; however their prices are controlled by the wholesale prices. It is certain that we are being charged no more than the general public for the same product. The drug costs are also based upon what physicians prescribe for their patients. In some cases, it is suspected that new untried drugs are sometimes used, when some better known drug would accomplish the same thing. It is a known fact that new drugs are usually very costly."

In 1960 in addition to the City Infirmary the Public Welfare program consisted of the following categories of relief: General Relief, Aid to Dependent Children, Old Age Assistance, Disability Assistance and Medical Assistance to the Aged. The gross cost of these programs was \$2,115,972.

For the comfort of the troops

From the time of the Plymouth Colony, Massachusetts has given special recognition to those who have served in time of war. The Veterans' Service Department is the agency which provides aid and assistance to the Pittsfield's 11,000 ex-servicemen.

Our city has always been swift to respond to the needs of veterans and their dependents. At the beginning of the Civil War, citizens quickly raised a fund to take care of the needs of the soldier and his family. In World Wars I and II, the same sentiments stirred the city, as volunteers and draftees left for training and combat.

The Veterans' Service Department is, therefore, based on statutes enacted with strong public support. The program provides financial assistance in case of unemployment or illness. In 1959 financial aid in Pittsfield totalled \$163,000, of which almost \$100,000 was expended for benefits to unemployed servicemen and

their families. With the employment situation improved, expenditures for benefits dropped to \$425,000 in 1960.

While financial assistance is an important factor when veterans are out of work, the department also provides a variety of advisory services. It advises in matters of education, employment, housing, insurance and retirement. It counsels Gold Star parents on their privileges under state and federal law to obtain medical care, pensions and real estate tax abatements. It provides legal advice on mortgages, contracts, fiduciary problems, guardianship and taxes. It assists veterans in cases of illness with medical care and hospitalization.

For those who are in the armed forces, the department aids in matters related to allotments, disability retirements, and medical care for dependents. When veterans leave the service, the department provides certificates in lieu of lost discharges and also records and reviews discharges.

To guarantee a fair deal

The Sealer of Weights and Measures is the consumer's inspector of all types of devices which weigh or measure commodities.

Annually, the Sealer tests and seals over 3,000 such devices throughout the city. When required, adjustments are made. A few are condemned.

In 1960 Sealer Francis J. Hughes' reweighings of food (including bread) confectionery, dry commodities, fruits, vegetables, meats and provisions totalled 5,409. His inspections of food packages, oil and coal deliveries, peddlers' licenses and clinical thermometers amounted to 8,216.

Fees received for sealing totalling \$2,661.75, were turned into the City Treasurer.

The unroyal road to better schools

*F*rom the beginning, 200 years ago, education has found no royal road in Pittsfield. If there has been any period when school problems were a little less frustrating than has been customary, the period since World War II to the present is the obvious choice.

In this period, the tide of events has favored education with progress measurable in many directions. Impelled by the giant strides of postwar science, the schools have been enabled to provide more intensive and extensive courses of study. With the constantly increasing numbers of youth to be educated, the building of new schools has been accepted with relatively minor resistance. The postwar period has also seen steady advancement in teachers' salaries after generations of delay.

The twenty-five years prior to World War II were something else. The junior high school system was adopted in September 1920, but it was not until 1953 that it was provided its own buildings, and full expansion of its educational program. In 1919, teachers' salaries established at \$700—\$1,080, inched forward slowly during the twenties, only to be cut back sharply during the depressed thirties.

The city temporized with the problem of overcrowded classrooms after World War I. The number of pupils per teacher was increased without regard for standards, until inevitably, double sessions were the order of the day, and portable additions had to be provided.

The overcrowding situation, recognized as bad at the High School before World War I deteriorated rapidly afterward. However, it took two special school commissions and eight long, frustrating years to arrive at a decision to build a modern high school. After years of seething controversy, the present High School opened its doors to its first classes in September of 1931.

The experiences of the 1920—1945 period followed the pattern of historic precedent for education in Pittsfield. Although the first settlers set aside a school lot and built a school building in accordance with a provision of their charter, by 1781 the town meeting warrant gave a hint of the controversy which would surround education far into the future.

"To see if the town will raise money to set up a grammar school to save the town from a fine." To this the town voted as follows: "That the selectmen be instructed to inform the grand jury-men that the town is not deficient in maintaining schools both summer and winter; although at present a grammar school is not maintained." In 1792 the town voted compliance with the law. Its true feelings in the matter were expressed, however, by meagre annual appropriations which brought the demise of the school as a public institution in 1824. It was continued as a private school until 1849 when the town voted that "a suitable building should be built on the old burial ground for a grammar or high school for the benefit of all the inhabitants of the town." The new grammar school was built in 1850 at a cost of \$3,000.

It was vainly urged in 1844 that the town adopt a recommendation of the State Board of Education to abolish the fifteen sovereign school districts. This was finally accomplished in 1869 when a unified system was established, with a superintendent of schools in charge. The appointment of a superintendent, however, initiated a new occasion for extended controversy.

The town authorized the School Committee to appoint a superintendent in 1868 with a salary of \$1,000, but in 1869 the town discontinued the office. In 1871, the town voted to permit the appointment of a superintendent of schools from one of the members of the School Committee with a salary of \$1,000. By 1873 the salary was raised to \$2,000 but in 1875 the salary was reduced again to \$1,000. The School Committee, using its legal powers, added \$500, but the action affronted the town which refused to vote any salary for a superintendent at the next town meeting. From 1876 to 1879, a member of the School Committee served in the capacity of superintendent at an annual salary of \$500. In 1879, the salary was raised to \$800.

Circumstances such as these tried the patience of educators beyond endurance. In 1876, a resigning superintendent blasted those enemies of the schools he described as "educational sceptics and ultra economists." He was but one of many succeeding school superintendents who would have sound cause to express equally vigorous sentiments.

Today the schools are being provided more promptly with what they need when they need it, even though these requirements

are great. Although progress has been made the needs are by no means at an end. Several elementary school buildings in the city are overcrowded and must be added to. Pittsfield High School also must be enlarged and the Vocational School program must be expanded. "Present salaries," states Superintendent Russell, "are at a stage in a long-term upward movement which has sufficient force to carry salaries up for years to come." In 1950 the minimum was set at \$4,200 per year and the maximum for a Bachelors degree was established at \$6,400. The per pupil cost of the Pittsfield's schools was \$330.59, average in comparison with other cities of the Commonwealth, and somewhat below average as compared with other American cities of like size.

Three hundred tons of books

The Berkshire Athenaeum is not alone a famous landmark on Bank Row, for it includes the Morningside Branch, the Book-mobile, school deposits and hospital libraries. In a far more important sense, it is the fulfillment of its founders' purpose: "an institution to aid in promoting education, culture, refinement and to diffuse knowledge."

The intense use of the city's Public Library is what makes it a vital part of the city's service. "If we were in business," Librarian Robert G. Newman reported to the Board of Trustees in 1950, "we could find been satisfaction in reminding customers and competitors that 118,542 volumes circulated 441,194 times, representing 300 tons of books carried away by readers. . . . We might point out that it would require 1,208 years, or from the time of Charlemagne to the present, to read this total annual circulation at the rate of a book a day, and that we have so many registered users (19,312) that they would completely exhaust our shelves (and our staff) by exercising full borrowing privileges simultaneously."

Pittsfield's use of its library facilities since the war has been greater, proportionately, than the increase in the city's population. Despite other diversions, and the keen competition of television, book circulation has advanced annually.

While the Athenaeum staff and its Board of Trustees are proud of their institution's record, they have a problem which is,

in part, due to the intense use of the Athenaeum, dedicated in 1876 when Pittsfield's population was but 12,000. Despite an addition built in 1897, the building is now outgrown and, as Mr. Newman points out, the city "deserves maximal facilities which can never be achieved in the present plant."

The Board of Trustees has concluded that the time for action to provide a new library is now. They have been supported in this view by a recent study by library experts. In the immediate future, the Board of Trustees trusts they may end the talk of needing a new library and start to build it.

Something for everybody

The program of the Park and Recreation Department, which was reinstated as a public service after the war, continues to gain popularity with each passing year. In 1960 attendance at events sponsored by the Department totalled more than 473,000. The program provides something for everybody, and few if any taxpayers begrudge expenditures which have done so much to enrich citizens' leisure time.

On an operating budget of \$3.85 per capita in 1960, the department offered a program which couldn't be bought for a hundred times as much if paid for out of pocket. The athletic program, for example, includes baseball, softball, bowling, speed skating, figure skating, skiing instruction, tennis, swimming and life-saving, providing an opportunity for youth and adults to participate.

The Golden Age Club, co-sponsored by the College Club, has 500 members and a program planned to engage the interests of all of them. On a club basis, lectures, travelogues, and films are provided. On a group basis, there is a sewing circle, art classes, choir, and monthly newsletter. As a community service, Golden Agers contribute time and effort for such charitable causes as the sale for the blind, bazaars and the hospital bargain shop. To find out what other similar organizations were doing, members attended the New England Conference on Aging, and the Conference of the American Medical Association. Bus trips to nearby picnic spots are popular. The club meets regularly and last year established a special fund for building and furnishing a future headquarters.

On twenty-one playgrounds, during school vacation, the Park and Recreation Department offers a variety of games, contests and special events. There are horseshoe and archery tournaments, arts and crafts exhibits, a Mardi-Gras parade, junior olympics, King and Queen contests, circus days and talent shows.

The Winter Carnival begins with the Berkshire Hills Speed Skating Championship. It is followed by the Carnival Ball, City Skating Meet, Figure Skating Show, Curling Demonstration, City Sled Races, Ice Fishing Derby, Queen's Contest, Teen Age Dance, and Contestants' Dinner.

These are examples of some of the Park and Recreation Department's program which have been responsible for its success and increasing popularity.

The basic structure of a city

It is impossible to conceive of a city without streets, sidewalks, bridges and sewer, water and drainage systems. Obviously, these facilities and systems are the structure upon which the existence of a community depends.

The first settlers of Pittsfield, who were notably reluctant to provide other public services, were prompt to tax themselves for roads and bridges. The struggle to get here may have had something to do with it, for as one settler from Westfield described the journey: "it was the roughest ride I ever rid."

While succeeding generations of Pittsfield citizens, (until the coming of the automobile) were sparing in providing funds for improving the town's streets, there were a whole series of efforts, mostly unsuccessful, to provide a water system. Progress in improving facilities began in earnest when Pittsfield became a city.

Although, according to custom, less was done at any one time than the circumstances required, the cumulative effect of a series of improvements has provided public works facilities equal to present needs. In the years since the war, the expansion of reservoirs, the extension of streets, and water and sewer mains has kept abreast of a growing and spreading city.

In the postwar period, despite administrative upheavals which have seen the comings and goings of four Commissioners,

the Public Works Department has done a better job than its critics give it credit for, if statistics are any measure of performance.

From 1946 to 1960, without any great increase in manpower or money, the Public Works Department has been responsible for the construction of 28 additional miles of sewer mains and 39 more miles of water mains. During the period, the department made 2,908 sewer connections and 6,221 water connections. It installed 1,727 main gate valves and 286 hydrants. In 1948 it assumed the responsibility for the collection and disposal of refuse and, despite a poor start, has managed the task well enough to reduce complaints to insignificance. With the completion of the Cleveland Reservoir in 1949, this facility became an additional responsibility of the department. In 1959 and 1960 the department has been deeply involved in the renewed expansion of the sewer and water systems.

Postwar growth has expanded the area of responsibility of the Public Works Department by approximately a third. Despite frequent teapot tempests, a normal condition in such operations, it has taken its added burdens in stride.

Buildings and babies

Experts figured that the post-war building boom wouldn't last very long, along with others who forecast an early down trend in the birth rate, but for Pittsfield 1959 was a record year for both building and babies.

Building construction in terms of permit value was \$1,500,000 greater than the previous high recorded for the city, totalling \$8,351,311. In 1960 the permit value decreased to \$6,718,707, but the number of dwelling permits was only five less than in 1951, the post-war high for home building in Pittsfield.

In the ten years from 1950, a total of 2,828 dwelling permits was issued, of which 2,040 were for single dwellings. With 272 dwellings demolished during the period, the net gain for the decade was 2,556 units. For Pittsfield, an average of 255 new dwellings per year was about equal to the boom which followed G.E.'s expansion here from 1900 to 1915, and post World War I construction which ended with the stock market crash in 1929. During the 1930's, the

construction industry was at a standstill, with less than 800 new homes constructed in the decade. The U. S. Census for Pittsfield in 1940 showed a gain of six in the city's population from 1930.

With the end of World War II, Pittsfield was faced with a pent-up demand for housing. A survey of housing showed a market for over 3,000 new homes. With materials available, home building began in earnest. In 1951, new dwelling permits numbered 381 and, except for the recession year of 1957, averaged over 250 per year throughout the decade.

For the Inspectors of Buildings, Plumbing and Wires, the last ten years have been a period of constant activity. Each inspector has a code to enforce and, in a period of boom building, a backlog of calls to make. No small part of their duties relate to the construction of complex industrial and commercial buildings, which often require more time and attention than twenty new dwellings.

Growth and consequences

In 1959 the Planning Board put an end to its struggle to do a full-time job on a part-time basis by hiring a Planning Director.

The unceasing development of new areas of Pittsfield since World War II had required more time and energy than unpaid appointees could be expected to contribute. From 1946 to 1959 the Board had shouldered the burden of detail involved in controlling the development of more than sixty new streets, subdivided into more than four thousand building lots.

In 1948, the Board determined to engage the services of a planning consultant for basic studies and continued his services until 1954. During this period, four neighborhood studies were prepared and adopted, along with street thoroughfare and land use plans. The most significant and time-consuming project undertaken by the Board and its consultant was a complete revision of the Zoning Ordinance, originally adopted in 1927.

The revision of the Zoning Ordinance began in 1951 was not finally adopted by the Mayor and City Council until March of 1953. During the interval, the Board held a long series of sessions

studying the revised map, drafting zoning classifications, and allocating permitted uses for the several residential, commercial and industrial zones. In addition, it held a series of public hearings in all sections of the city to give interested citizens an opportunity to comment on the revised zoning before it was finally adopted.

With this big chore out of the way, the board gave most of its time to subdivision control and the endless pile of plans for new residential developments. It was during this period that it became apparent that directing new development was but part of the Planning Board's concern.

The older part of the city, particularly downtown Pittsfield and its environs, was sorely in need of attention. The Traffic Commission, directed by the Ramp Survey, was seeking sites for development for off-street parking. The Coltsville Shopping Center was completed and there was also a movement of doctors' offices away from downtown Pittsfield. From one end of North Street to the other the effects of changing usage began to take its toll of commercial properties.

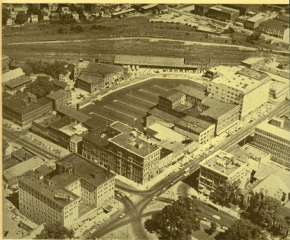
In 1960, the Planning Director proposed a complete study of the downtown business district to the Board, inclusive of preparation of base maps, valuations, land use, and density analyses, condition, occupancy and tenure of properties, traffic flow studies and sketch plans for redevelopment. Beginnings of this study were made prior to his resignation in November, 1960.

While this study required immediate attention, the Planning Director pointed out that subdivision control had consumed most of the Board's time in 1959 and could be expected to do so in 1960. Eight public hearings were held in this connection in 1959 and the construction of thirteen new streets, or extensions, were approved by the board. The amount of street approved was 5,740 feet, an increase of 242 per cent over 1958. Estimates of streets for which approval would be sought in 1960, the planning director pointed out, would mean an increase of 10,000 linear feet, or 250 per cent over the 1959 total.

Shifting population pattern - 1945 v.s. 1960

(of persons 20 years of age and over)

| <u>WARD & PRECINCT</u> | <u>1945</u> | <u>1960</u> | <u>INCREASE OR DECREASE</u> |
|----------------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| 1A | 1,830 | 1,386 | -444 |
| 1B | 1,636 | 1,506 | -130 |
| 1C | 1,802 | 1,504 | |
| 1D | — | 1,615 | |
| | <u>5,268</u> | <u>6,011</u> | <u>+743</u> |
| 2A | 1,164 | 1,505 | +341 |
| 2B | 1,848 | 1,432 | -416 |
| 2C | 2,347 | 1,371 | -976 |
| | <u>5,359</u> | <u>4,328</u> | <u>-831</u> |
| 3A | 1,852 | 1,368 | -484 |
| 3B | 1,549 | 1,725 | +176 |
| 3C | 2,174 | 1,681 | |
| 3D | — | 1,653 | |
| | <u>5,575</u> | <u>6,427</u> | <u>+852</u> |
| 4A | 1,584 | 1,358 | -226 |
| 4B | 1,630 | 1,253 | -377 |
| 4C | 1,366 | 1,190 | |
| 4D | — | 824 | |
| | <u>4,580</u> | <u>4,625</u> | <u>+ 45</u> |
| 5A | 1,665 | 1,210 | -455 |
| 5B | 1,581 | 1,310 | - 71 |
| 5C | 1,656 | 1,713 | + 57 |
| | <u>4,902</u> | <u>4,433</u> | <u>-469</u> |
| 6A | 1,480 | 1,200 | -280 |
| 6B | 2,076 | 1,886 | -190 |
| 6C | 2,091 | 2,071 | - 20 |
| | <u>5,647</u> | <u>5,157</u> | <u>-490</u> |
| 7A | 1,926 | 1,397 | -529 |
| 7B | 1,513 | 1,283 | -230 |
| 7C | 1,865 | 2,126 | +261 |
| | <u>5,304</u> | <u>4,806</u> | <u>-498</u> |
| Totals | <u>37,832</u> | <u>35,987</u> | <u>-1,845</u> |



Today

The Depot Street parking lot and environs. The demolition of several E. D. Jones and other structures opened a 250-car parking lot area in downtown Pittsfield. The cost of construction was about \$170,000, which will be paid off from parking meter receipts. This lot is a first step in an effort to re-invigorate business in the city's central shopping area.

Today and . . .

For Pittsfield citizens, picture at right represents the center of the city. For 200 years many historical and successful events have occurred here. It may forever be the hub of our community.



For now, at least, this building, built in 1878, is the cockpit of the city's government.



City Hall Park is a heritage from past generations to ours, a charming respite amid the swirling movement of a busy community.

Yesterday



Above, City Hall Park as it appeared in 1856. It was then two parts lower ground and one part forested recreation. With the dedication of the Soldier's Monument in 1872, plans shaped up for the park's development.



The fountain in the Park (1867) and the mansard-roofed Berkshire Life Insurance Company building.



Park, fountain, band stand, First Congregational Church, and Town Hall in 1883.

Today and ...



In September 1919 the Berkshire Life Insurance Company moved from 7 North Street to its new office building opposite the Pittsfield Country Club. This beautiful building, in its charming setting, gives visitors the best possible impression of Pittsfield.



At left, a single parking permitted on hilly West Street is unique since parallel parking is the rule on all other city streets.



Until the passenger wagon falls apart like the cars less than they, it will remain in its spot adjacent to the Berkshire County Savings Bank.

Yesterday

At left, Baptist Church, West's Block, and First Congregational Church in 1838. Corner of North and East Streets.



A quiet day on North Street in the 1850's. Note the old street light standards, the use of building walls for advertising, the awning signs, and the awnings. This is the east side of the street looking south.

Today and . . .

The Hotel Wendell at right is to Pittsfield a community facility providing an opportunity for group association. In this respect it is a civic institution as well as a private hostelry.



North Street below, is a section of Pittsfield subject to a heavy share of the difficulties which face the downtown areas of most cities, but visitors frequently state that it is a most attractive business street.





Yesterday

The United States Hotel stood on the site now occupied by the Wendell. Above picture shows the hotel as it looked in 1870.



This is North Street looking north from Bradford Street in 1870. Hitching posts along the right-of-way were then as numerous as parking meters are now.

Today and . . .



The New York Central Railroad has been a vital factor in the economic life of this city since the first train arrived here in 1841. But, like other formerly vital means of transportation, it is steadily losing ground.

Yesterday

Right, Pittsfield railroad yards looking east from Depot Street in 1860.



Left, landscape view of the B. & A. yards looking westerly toward Circular Avenue in 1870.



The Boston and Albany Round House in 1865. Here you see more engines than now pass through the city in a fortnight.

Today and . . .



Such in 1911, Pittsfield High School has met the needs of secondary education effectively up to now, but it must be expanded almost immediately if the burgeoning enrollments about to enter are to be taken care of without overcrowding or double sessions.

Elementary School on South Mountain Road is the last of more than 15 one-room schools. It was erected in 1839, and is still in use.



Yesterday

Left, the Longfellow House was located on the present site of Pittsfield High School. The picture was taken in 1875.



Above, Mapleswood Institute in 1880 was located on the east side of North Street, on the north side of the present Mapleswood Avenue.

Right, Pittsfield High School in 1888 was situated on the site of Memorial Park on South Street.



Today and . . .

This 1937 picture of England Brothers' 100th Anniversary illustrates the status of retailing in a busy city.



The "Apple" grew up with Pittsfield. Its imposing building, constructed in 1868, is a landmark of the city's financial section.

Yesterday



North Street, east side, looking south toward Band Row in 1860.



The town's droggist, M. S. Manning and Sons and Thomas Bebb's Harris Shop, located on the west side of North Street, 1872.



Corner of Depot Street, north of England Brothers present location, about 1870.



Today and . . .

The bulk of all traffic flows through the center of the city. Diverting such traffic is a prime planning problem.



Off-street parking followed the installation of parking meters on the city streets. This First Street lot is one of 5 now municipally owned.

Yesterday



At top, this is the way North Street appeared in 1858, looking north. In the foreground, left, is part of the old railroad station. The picket fence opposite marks an opening in the railroad bridge at Eagle Street.



North Street was dressed up with flags and hoisting for the dedication of the Soldiers' Monument in City Hall Park in 1871. The picture looks south to the Park from Depot Street.



The Duhamel Block, flanked by the First Baptist Church. In the rear may be seen the Grammar School, near the site of the Municipal Building.



Our 200th Anniversary celebration was strictly a "do-it-yourself" affair. It engaged the time, enthusiasm and talents of Pittsfield citizens who provided an occasion to share the civic, around the professional, and with the blessing of the weatherman for ten successful days.



The child's bedroom above, and the fireplace at the right are historical sets of the late 18th and early 19th Century when Berkshire County was very young.

Historical Exhibit

The Historical Exhibits at the Berkshire Museum attracted more than 12,000 visitors from July 3 through Labor Day.



This dining room reflects gracious living in Berkshire County at the turn of the 19th Century.



Rededication

Mayor Haughey speaks at Rededication Program in City Hall Park Sunday, September 3rd; Seated, around from left, Gov. Volpe, next, are two boys, Cong. Conte. Biscornonial chorus is seated at the left of the platform.



On Founder's Day, April 27th, a memorial elm was planted by Mayor Haughey, Francis Caswell and Gilbert West in City Hall Park.



Governor John A. Volpe, speaker at Rededication Program in the "Meeting of Citizenship."

Oklahoma!



Under the direction of Robert M. Boland, the creative genius of the entire Bicentennial Program, a company of 125 presented this long-to-be-remembered evening of Oklahoma! at Whiteoak Park.

In and surrounding the "Sage With the Fringe on Top," are the Oklahomans, Paul Fry—Jim Stone; Aunt Eller—Shirley Fowles; Ada Annie—Sara Davis; Will Parker—Paul Nixon; Laurey—Angela Talbot; Curly—John Gorman; Andrew Carnes—Stephen Allen; Gerie Cummings—Vickie Phillips; and Al Hutton—Marry Schuster.



Oklahoma!

... "It was not, for instance, because it didn't rain or speak of, or that for quite a spell the Big Dipper hung low and glorious out in night field. It was not merely that several hundred of our neighbors knickered themselves out for free in order to put on something worthy of Pittsfield's 200th birthday. It was not alone that there were voices ranging from the good to the exceptional, or performances ranging from the current to the splendid. It was not that "Oklahoma" is an eternal sort of thing. If any one reason could be found it was, I think, that people went away moved in many ways, but particularly with pride in the place they live."

REVIEW BY BEN FALL
BERKSHIRE EAGLE
AUGUST 30, 1961



John Gorman and Angela Talbot as Carly and Laurey.



Shirley Fowler as Aunt Eller

Oklahoma!



Sara Davis as Ada Annie Carnes.

The Farmer and the Cowboy should be friends.



Sara Allen, as Ada Annie Carnes, Paul Nixon (W.M. Parker), Ann Eller, and Company.



Gay millinery hats worn by Women's Club members were genuine!

Bicentennial Parade



Left, replica of the "Wonderful One Horse Show."

J. Bruce McIntyre, parade marshal, as British officer of the French and Indian War era.





Above, American Legion unit trupee the colors.



Above, the Rotary Club's entry—"Moby Dick, The White Whale," with Abah in hot pursuit.

Bicentennial Parade

Below, a 1908 Model T headed the procession of antique cars.



A crowd of more than 30,000 lined the streets.



Civil Defense Fire Division.

Bicentennial Parade

Monarchs drum and bugle corps of Pittsfield.



Knights of Columbus float shows growth of Roman Catholic Church here from 1835 to 1963.

These jolly cyclists are the Berkshire County Wheelmen from Williamstown.



Bicentennial Parade

Civil War marching unit, pride of George Benson, Eastover.



Left, Mounted Civil War unit from Eastover.

Right, Y.M.C.A. float depicted famous local Indian legend.



Left, Pittsfield Electric Shop entry.



This Town Players' first prize open air trolley was just the thing to ride in on a hot day like September 4, 1961.



Bicentennial
Parade



All Girl Immaculate Conception Rockettes
from Salem, Mass.

High wheeled bicycle ridden by Dr.
Rudolph Nissenmacher of Clark University,
Worcester, Mass.



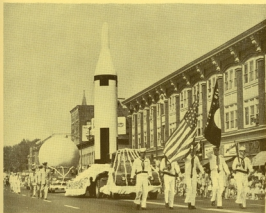
The Mallen Mayflower Company
float was judged the second most
beautiful in the line of march.



The cars of yesterday were not quite as fast as today's, but they had class and were built to last.

Bicentennial Parade

Full scale model of Polaris Missile, and U. S. Navy Color Guard, is followed by "world" polarispheres which launched 8-inch plastic missiles.



Bicentennial Parade

*Right, parade wound
up at the Common.
Crowd watched
Bearded Brothers
'Share-off'.*



*Left, crowd of 6,000 followed
drum corps drill coast
Sunday afternoon, Sept. 3.*



*Right, Richmond Bakers served slices
of their 2000-lb. 200th Anniversary
birthday cake.*



Bearded Brethren

Dick Cooper, right, Chairman of the Bearded Brothers of the Berkshires, confers with several members of his fraternity.



Above, family of Donald F. Andrews, a direct descendant of Pittsfield's first white child, Sarah Deming.



Above, the Bearded Brothers 'pass' a beardless outcast with a sentence to the stocks.



A distinguished trio of Berkshire County Bearded Brothers.

The Potential Image of Pittsfield



This is a plan of possible redevelopment of downtown Pittsfield, prepared by a committee of Pittsfield's architects under the general direction of the Bicentennial Special Projects Committee.

In the very center of the plan is the Woodell Hotel, then West Street and the Pittsfield National Bank. In the rear will be seen the Depot Street parking lot. The hotel and bank face out on a reconstructed City Hall Park in the immediate foreground. The lower border is reconstructed Woodell Avenue, merging into First Street. The left border is Hoarson Street and the top border is Center Street running to the right to Seymour Street. The right border is Railroad Street. The Eagle building, pie-shaped, is seen in the right hand corner of the plan. North and South Streets run through the lower center part of the plan.

In the description, the Architects' Committee states: "If we preserve with thoughtful care the existing buildings which enhance the city, we begin to re-create the city as it was in the past and as it would be in the future . . . but it is up to you to keep it alive, to support it with a concrete city plan, and to give Pittsfield the character and flavor it potentially has."

Mayor and City Council—1960-1961



RAYMOND L. HALSEY
Mayor



DANIEL EWSLAW, JR.
Pres., At Large



ROY F. BROWN
At Large



DONALD G. BUTLER
At Large



FRANK M. PIRO
At Large



LEO B. STEWART
Ward 1



RAYMOND E. GORE
Ward 2



BRUNO DELL GALLO
Ward 3



JOHN BURBANK
Ward 4



SAMUEL J. QUATTRONE
Ward 5



JOSEPH S. NOLLAN
Ward 6



JOHN F. FRAKER
Ward 7

School Committee (1960-1961) and School Superintendent



EDWARD J. RUSSELL, Supt.
1954 through 1960



JOSEPH W. OVERHOLSER
Chairman, Ward 5



MARY A. KIRKPATRICK
Ward 1



JOHN J. QUINN, Secy.
Ward 2



DONALD H. WELTON
Ward 3



ROBERT N. HART
Ward 4



PHILIP H. KRAUSE
Ward 4



EDWARD S. HANSEN
Ward 7

Mayor and city council

The administration of Mayor Haughey (1958 to 1962) has been characterized by a high degree of harmony with the City Council. Differences have been negligible.

In fiscal matters, the Council has gone along with the Mayor on school construction and water and sewer improvements. It has been in accord with Mayor Haughey on pay raises and more generous vacation allowances for city employees. The City Council has given city budgets ample study, but after a long series of hearings, has been able to reduce the Mayor's appropriations by only a small amount.

At the beginning of his second term, Mayor Haughey cited new schools and industrial development as the most pressing municipal problems. Since then, Mayor Haughey has established a building commission for Crosby Junior High School and has initiated action for additions to three elementary schools: Allendale, Highland and Williams. In these matters, the City Council has been in accord with the Mayor in principle, even though some Council members have been critical of the Crosby Junior High School Commission and have disapproved the commission first named by Mayor Haughey to direct the building of school additions.

In the matter of industrial development, the Mayor and Council have been in complete accord. After the presentation of a plan for a 107-acre industrial park on Merrill Road, by William A. Whittlesey, III, President of the Association of Business and Commerce, the Mayor and Council agreed to supply the funds necessary to bring city facilities to the site. They also agreed to consider the transfer of 27 city-owned acres to the industrial park. Later, Mayor Haughey requested the Public Works Department to make detailed estimates of the cost of providing public services for both the Merrill Road industrial park and the 43 acres on East Street, also owned by the Association of Business and Commerce.

After the Traffic Commission, under Chairman Hugh McKean, had worked out the preliminary details of acquiring the Depot Street property of E. D. Jones and others for a 250 car off-street parking lot, Mayor Haughey brought the Council up to date on negotiations and details for the lot's development. In due course, the

City Council approved the acquisition of the site and the plan for development. The only dissent was from Council members seeking assurance that action would be taken to provide off-street parking facilities northerly of Columbus Avenue. The parking lot was constructed at a cost of \$370,000, of which about \$60,000 was provided by downtown merchants.

The construction of Housing for the Elderly on Francis Avenue and Wahconah Street was under the direction of the Housing Authority, with the full support of the Mayor and Council. The cost of these projects are paid for by the State. The City provides only land and utilities. The Francis Avenue and Wahconah housing projects are both occupied, and there are waiting lists of would-be tenants.

In March 1958, Mayor Haughey suggested the consideration of Urban Renewal for downtown Pittsfield. He invited a representative of the Federal Housing and Home Financing Administration to Pittsfield for a joint meeting with the City Council and Capital Outlay Committee. In May of 1961, a second meeting was held to which 100 representative citizens were invited. Following this step, Mayor Haughey inspected possible areas for Urban Renewal, and brought the Housing Authority and Planning Board into the program. The Housing Authority will be the legal and technical branch. It will deal directly with the Federal Housing and Home Financing Administration. The Planning Board will be responsible for providing a master plan for the city's future development. In June 1961, a fourteen-page renewal application was received and referred to the Housing Authority and Planning Board for completion.

The City Council lost one of its prerogatives early this year when the Superior Court ruled that the administration of insurance premiums belonged to the executive branch of the government. Except for some grumbling from the Council on short notice appointments from the Mayor, relations between the two branches of the government have been consistently harmonious.

The city organization—1960-1961

Mayor: RAYMOND L. HAUGHY

Administration

City Clerk JOHN J. FITZGERALD
Administrative Services ROBERT U. JOHNSON, Director
City Solicitors WILLIAM R. FLYNN
JACOB S. ALBONSON

Finance

Assessors ANTONIO J. BUSCETTA, Chairman
JOHN F. CONNORS
RUTH E. SIZMAN
Auditor JOHN J. NORTON
Collector of Taxes JOHN W. MEEHAN
Treasurer JOHN J. FITZGERALD

Operating Departments

Berkshire Athenaeum ROBERT G. NEWMAN, Librarian
Schools EDWARD J. RUSSELL, Superintendent
Public Works JOHN F. DANIELS, Commissioner
Public Buildings DONALD E. FARR, Superintendent
Parks and Recreation VINCENT J. HENRY, Superintendent
Health HAROLD STEEN, M.D., Commissioner
Public Welfare CHARLES H. HODCKER, Commissioner
Veterans Service THEODORE J. HANDEK, Director
Civil Defense WILLIAM H. COONEY, Director
JOHN E. JOYCE, Jr., Admin. Assistant

Protection

Fire RAYMOND W. KILLACKEY, Chief Engineer
Police THOMAS H. CALNAM, Chief
Police and Fire Alarm
Signals JOHN H. STURGEON, Superintendent

Inspectors

Inspector of Buildings
Inspector of Plumbing
Inspector of Wires
Inspector of Animals
Sealer of Weights and Measures

WILLIAM A. MANDRELL
DONALD E. WECHTER
ERRA J. CURRINO
DANIEL J. COLLINS
FRANCIS J. HUGHES, Sealer
RALPH J. MASSARO, Deputy Sealer

Permanent Boards

REGISTRARS OF VOTERS

RICHARD W. DANCREY, Chairman
WILLIAM E. BARRY
GUY A. PELLEGRINELLI
VACANT

LICENSING BOARD

HARRY J. BURNS, Chairman
FRANCIS CALLAHAN
HAROLD W. BUEL

BOARD OF APPEALS (ZONING)

CHARLES L. PINCU, Chairman
VINCENT E. WALSH, Clerk
SIMON H. DISCELLES
LEROY J. WHITMAN
J. EDWARD BURKE
ROBERT H. BURRANK, Associate Member

PLANNING BOARD

JOHN J. DONNA, Chairman
ALBERT W. BARRIS
DENIS T. NOONAN, JR.
HENRY J. EULER, JR.
FRANCIS X. DOYLE

PARK COMMISSION

ROBERT J. KEVIN, Chairman
WILLIAM J. CARRIGAN
DANIEL R. LEE
DANIEL E. MARTIN
FRANCIS G. NICHOLS

"Our business is like an endless chain"

There is something about the nature of the work which tends to make philosophers of Police Chiefs. Their reports are studded with wise observations on the waywardness of human behavior, and salty comments on the obstacles confronting those charged with the duty of preserving law and order.

"I have been somewhat annoyed," reported Pittsfield's Police Chief, John M. Hatch in 1881, "by working in new men on the force as they do not think a policeman's life is a happy one, for after trying it awhile they leave to find employment of less hours and milder form." In the same report he also made the following sage comment. "It has become a fact that persons cannot get married or have a ball, or any entertainment without having an officer in attendance, and if a man and wife want to separate they call on an officer to divide the goods, and the officer is liable even then, to get the worst from both before he leaves, as pay for services rendered."

It was Chief Hatch who observed that "our business is like an endless chain." A precise description, indeed, of a round the clock, day in day out service which bridges the years without ceasing. Chief Hatch, at the same time implied that police work is quite routine, even as unpredictable as it may be from one day to the next. Police records of a century ago in Pittsfield and those of today bear this out, illustrating that there is no significant change in the amount or kind of illegal behavior.

Chief Hatch and Chief Calnan could safely predict at the beginning of any year that the greatest number of offenses which would occur would be those against public order. The most numerous arrests would be for drunkenness, followed by assault and battery and petty larceny. There would be a number of arrests on morals charges, and a smattering of persons brought in for "vagrancy." The department's chores turn up about the same number of unlocked business places, defective sidewalks, unlit street lights, and lost children (safely restored to their parents) each year.

However the besetting police problems of 19th century and 20th century do differ. Chief Hatch's problem was tramps. Chief Calnan's is traffic. Tramps obsessed Chief Hatch. "Still they come

from all quarters of the land," he reported, "and there seems no prospect of the procession coming to an end; so we take care of them as best we can. They are lodged at the lock-up, sleeping on a board platform and are fed a few dry crackers . . . The whole of these wanderers, outcasts, tramps, or whatever they may be called, lodged by this town in the time covered by this report (1876-77) is 1,801. Perhaps half of their number were young men, some, no doubt, honestly poor and ready to work and seeking employment, but a majority of them were thriftless, harmless, idle vagabonds to whom persistent bodily labor would be as terrible an affliction as death itself."

Later he was able to show a decrease in this problem from 2,240 in 1878 to 339 in 1881. Work did it, plus a recommendation that tramps be set to breaking coarse stone into small stone for repair of the town's streets. An attendant problem arising from the prosecution of tramps was the serious over population of the small town Lock-up. After years of pleading the town built a new Station House (now City Hall Annex) in 1879.

Chief Hatch was jubilant. "The long talked of Station House was built last fall, for which the town may feel thankful, as they have a Station House second to none in the State, for size and convenience. It is large enough for years to come, and I do not hear one word of fault-finding even from those who opposed its building. Some of them go as far as to say that it is the only building that the town ever erected where they got their money's worth; not even the prisoners complain . . . Myself and brother officers take pride in answering the questions new to strangers, 'Where is the Police Station?' by showing them the new brick building on School Street."

By 1910 another Police Chief took a very different view of Chief Hatch's Station House. He found it "old, outgrown, and unsanitary" stating with some optimism that "it seems only a short time when a new building will be provided." In 1939 Pittsfield built its present police headquarters with the assistance, of a federal Public Works Administration grant.

Today Chief Calnan's main concern is with traffic, although last year he did put up 74 lodgers at the police station, some of whom may well have been stragglers of the great procession which

in other days bewildered Chief Hatch. The traffic problem is decidedly not one of persons seeking to linger within the city's limits, but in the main, with those who are hell-bent to get through it. In 1960 arrests for speeding totalled 714, while 111 were charged with operating to endanger. The number of motor vehicle accidents increased from 569 to 704, from 1958 to 1960. Injuries from motor vehicle accidents numbered 432 in 1958 and 479 in 1960. Parking violations totalled 18,000 in 1960 bringing in \$7,586.00 in fines. Court actions for parking violations totalled 1238 and \$3,320 in fines.

"The immutable law of physics is being challenged by the volume of motor vehicles along with the statutes" states Chief of Police, Thomas H. Calnan. "On the same arteries which satisfied the need of a daily volume of 10,000 cars per day we impose traffic from 32,000 Pittsfield registered cars and trucks plus more and more transient traffic. While the load grows, the arteries remain the same, and although the problem becomes increasingly frustrating for both Police and for car owners there is no plan to relieve the situation."

The traffic problem is a plain matter of too many vehicles fruitlessly attempting to occupy the same space at the same time. It is also a problem which has become worse for years due to the multiplication of motor vehicles without providing for them. To control the situation the Police Department keeps four cruisers rolling round the clock. In 1960, police vehicles compiled 325,930 miles of driving, ninety per cent of which was in patrolling Pittsfield's streets. At the moment Pittsfield's Police Department is much further away from a solution to its traffic problem than Chief Hatch was to the tramp problem eighty years ago.

The solution seems to lie not with the department but with heedful attention to its recommendations for improvements. Over the years Police Chiefs have recommended, urged and pleaded with city governments on a variety of subjects only to have their exhortations ignored for a generation, and then eventually adopted too late to accomplish any significant improvement.

Where speedier action is a must

In any year the enacting and revising of ordinances regulating traffic consumes a considerable amount of time of the City Council and its sub-committees.

In his 1960 Annual Report, City Clerk John J. Fitzgerald points to the necessity for a speedier and more direct system of establishing such regulations. He states the case as follows:

"It is my opinion that the City Council must sooner or later face the fact that our present method of enacting traffic regulations is archaic and inadequate to meet the pressures of present day traffic problems. The situation calls for a speedier and more direct system of establishing regulations. To illustrate the problem, I cite the steps that followed the filing of a petition for the prohibition of parking on a portion of Silver Lake Boulevard:

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Feb. 18, 1960 | Petition filed in City Clerk's Office |
| Feb. 23, 1960 | Petition presented to City Council and referred to the Traffic Commission. |
| April 12, 1960 | Report and recommendation of the Traffic Commission received and referred to the Committee on Ordinances and Rules for the drafting of an ordinance. |
| June 14, 1960 | Ordinance submitted by the Committee on Ordinances and Rules and passed on the first reading. |
| June 28, 1960 | Ordinance read for the second time and passed to be ordained. |
| June 30, 1960 | Ordinance approved by the Mayor. |
| July 19, 1960 | Ordinance approved by the Massachusetts Department of Public Works. |
| July 26, 1960 | Ordinance finally became effective upon publication in the newspaper. |

"Thus, it took 160 days to put into effect a ban on parking in a small portion of a street where it was deemed to be dangerous. In many instances the span has been longer; this one has been cited because it is an example of the run-of-the-mill case not involving unusual circumstances.

"The problem, of course, is not unique to Pittsfield nor even to Massachusetts municipalities. Various solutions have been reached but they are all based upon recognition of the fact that such detailed regulation of the parking and movement of vehicles is not in any sense a legislative function but one that belongs in the administrative branch of government. In most larger cities it has become a function of the police department. Several cities in Massachusetts have, by special act of the legislature, established traffic commissions having the power to write traffic regulations that is now vested in the City Council. I recommend that a study be made to determine if there is some acceptable method of cutting out the excessive red tape and delay."

Providing for fire protection

*F*ire protection in the city today is a carefully organized combination of skilled fire fighters under expert direction, the best apparatus and equipment, and instantaneous communication systems. In contrast, fire protection of the town of Pittsfield was organized confusion, consisting of rambunctious volunteers, obsolete hand pumps, and ordinarily word of mouth alarms.

As in the case of other community services, the town was stingy in providing for fire fighting. Until about the middle of the 19th Century, dependence was placed on one engine purchased in 1814 and two others which were privately owned. In 1844 the town loosened its purse strings to the extent of granting \$580 for the purchase of land for a fire station, and \$1,360 for two fire engines. In the same year it appointed its first fire chief.

From 1855 to 1870 the voters reverted to their customary attitude toward fire protection, repeatedly refusing to provide the means to purchase steam engines. By use of the parliamentary device of the adjourned meeting, a distinguished citizen committee's report in favor of the purchase was finally adopted in 1871.

By the time Pittsfield became a city in 1891, it had grown up enough to broaden its attitude toward public service. The Fire Department soon became a permanent organization with paid personnel. As the department has grown, increasing emphasis has

been placed on regular drills for fire fighters and programs of fire prevention.

Drill sessions at the Peck's Road fire station are a regular part of the work of all fire companies. The fire prevention program consists of a continuous round of inspections of commercial buildings and safety education programs, held from time to time at the hospitals, nursing homes and schools of the city.

In spite of fire prevention efforts, fire alarms average two a day on an annual basis. Actually, most fires occur in the Spring when a rash of brush fires keeps the department on the road from morning to night. There were 314 brush fires in 1959, a total of 323 in 1960.

Residential fires are obviously more serious than those which occur out-of-doors. The chief causes of most of these fires are carelessness, overloaded wiring and faulty heating equipment. In 1960, carelessness was the cause of 115 fires; 102 were caused by wires; and 103 by heaters. During 1960 there were 981 fire calls.

Preventive maintenance

*M*ost services of the city government provide directly for the needs of citizens. There are two, however, which are agencies which serve city departments directly. These are the Department of Public Buildings and Police and Fire Signals Department.

In the 19th Century, the town provided little or nothing for such services. On one occasion when the Town Hall required repairs, the Selectmen were authorized to determine the extent of the improvements needed and to expend whatever was necessary from the Contingency Fund. At the next Annual Meeting, the Selectmen reported: "In accordance with authority granted us at last year's town meeting, we have examined the condition of Town Hall and have obtained costs for its repair. Since the expenditures required are greatly in excess of the amount available in the Contingency Account, your committee respectfully requests that it be discharged."

The School Committees of the 1860's and 1870's annually reported deplorably of the condition of the district schools, which

they described as being in a sad state of neglect and disrepair. After Pittsfield became a city, the Board of Public Works was assigned the task of maintaining public buildings. However, having innumerable direct and immediate duties, and neither the money nor the manpower to take on this added function, they made no pretense of successfully maintaining city structures.

With the adoption of the new City Charter in 1933, a department of Public Buildings was set up and given an adequate budget to maintain more than one hundred buildings owned by the city. Fortunately, the department has always been directed by competent superintendents and artisans equal to the unending demands placed upon them.

Day in and day out the department responds to requests for school repairs and during vacation periods takes advantage of the opportunity afforded to do extensive painting, carpentry and wiring. The modernization of school classrooms undertaken in the early 1950's was done by the Public Buildings Department. With expenditures in 1960 of approximately \$250,000, the department made repairs and improvements in the schools and buildings used by Fire, Police, Public Works and Public Welfare Departments.

When Pittsfield was a town, a bell or a hooter were the means of alarming Police or Firemen. Later these departments advanced to the use of the telephone and, in due course, a recall system was provided for the Police, with boxes from which Policemen on the beat reported directly to headquarters. The red fire box later became a means of direct alarm to fire stations. Today, however, private telephones are the usual sources of alarms, although fire boxes are used now and again by persons who spot a fire from the street. Since these alarm and communication systems were installed, an intricate and extensive system of traffic controls has also been added. These devices are the responsibility of the Police and Fire Signals Department. Its function is to make all extensions and improvements required in communication systems and to overhaul installations annually. In 1960 the expenditures of this department totalled about \$38,000.

Self insurance so far a success

In 1956, the City of Pittsfield adopted self-insurance for Workmen's Compensation after a study of such plans in other cities, although there were strong doubts as to how the new plan would work out.

In 1960 the Commissioners of Trust Funds, Howard D. Sammis, Edward M. Dorfman, and City Auditor John J. Norton, reported that to-date the program has proved successful.

Since 1956, the Mayor and Council have appropriated \$240,000.00 to the account. Earnings on investments have totalled \$14,514.84, making total receipts \$254,514.84.

Total claims paid from 1956 to 1960 were \$85,113.76. The balance in the fund at the end of 1960 was \$169,401.08.

Using 1954 as a base, and the premium of the former private carrier, Pittsfield would have paid a minimum of \$250,000 in premiums up to the end of 1960. This does not take into account the increase in municipal salaries upon which premiums are based, or the rise in Workmen's Compensation rates.

Without self-insurance, Pittsfield would not have the fund it now has, and would probably be out \$250,000.

Modern means of city accounting

I.B.M. punch card accounting, first used by the Public Welfare Department in 1952, is now used by all city departments.

After a two year shake-down test in Public Welfare accounting, the use of the equipment was extended to the street lists of the Registrars of Voters, to the School census, Assessors' tax rolls, real estate tax bills, water bills and for preparing the payrolls of the School, Police, Fire and Public Works Departments. Recently, poll taxes and motor vehicle excises are being prepared by I.B.M.

The I.B.M. Division is a function of the Department of Administrative Services, which is also the personnel department of the city government. The department is also responsible for pooled purchases and administrative research.

Protecting an investment

The Board of Assessors has recommended a reappraisal of real property to the Mayor and City Council, similar to the Clemenishaw revaluation completed in 1948. The 1948 study was undertaken after 40 years of urging by other Boards of Assessors, and a few courageous Mayors.

In support of the need for a full scale reappraisal, the Assessors point out that real estate values in different sections of the city have tended to either increase or decrease, and this is demonstrated continually in real estate sales recorded at the Registry of Deeds.

"This is a problem that exists on a national scale. . . . Here in Pittsfield conditions have reached a point where such a program is a definite MUST. This Board is well aware of today's probable cost of such a program—approximately \$90,000. However, the expenditure is necessary to correct any inequities which have crept into our system since the Clemenishaw program; and also to protect that original expenditure of sixty odd thousand dollars spent in 1948."

The Assessors urge the establishment of a fund for the purpose, to be available in five years. "Equalization of the tax burden is the goal of every Assessor."

Gathering in our taxes

Tax Collector, John W. Meehan, has a variety of collections to keep track of in addition to the biggest of all, real estate taxes.

Moreover, since the law gives some latitude, taxes of the current year are only part of his concern because charges such as apportioned street, sewer and sidewalk assessments, are payable over a period of years.

The Tax Collector's report is, therefore, a bulky one. In 1960 it numbered forty-one pages. Besides taxes such as real property, personal property and poll taxes and motor vehicle excises of direct concern to his office, he also does all the collecting for the Public Works, Schools, Health, Veterans' Service, City Infirmary and Public Welfare Departments.

Debt which must be met

| | PRINCIPAL | INTEREST | TOTAL |
|-------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1961 | \$ 885,000 | \$ 306,890 | \$ 1,191,890 |
| 1962 | 885,000 | 285,550 | 1,170,550 |
| 1963 | 880,000 | 264,210 | 1,144,210 |
| 1964 | 880,000 | 243,000 | 1,123,000 |
| 1965 | 845,000 | 221,790 | 1,066,790 |
| 1966 | 830,000 | 201,805 | 1,031,805 |
| 1967 | 830,000 | 182,230 | 1,012,230 |
| 1968 | 830,000 | 162,655 | 992,655 |
| 1969 | 645,000 | 144,775 | 789,775 |
| 1970 | 615,000 | 128,590 | 743,590 |
| 1971 | 615,000 | 112,955 | 727,955 |
| 1972 | 615,000 | 97,320 | 712,320 |
| 1973 | 400,000 | 83,405 | 483,405 |
| 1974 | 400,000 | 71,210 | 471,210 |
| 1975 | 400,000 | 59,015 | 459,015 |
| 1976 | 375,000 | 46,820 | 421,820 |
| 1977 | 325,000 | 35,585 | 360,585 |
| 1978 | 325,000 | 25,430 | 350,430 |
| 1979 | 290,000 | 15,275 | 305,275 |
| 1980 | 205,000 | 6,150 | 211,150 |
| Total | <u>\$12,075,000</u> | <u>\$2,694,660</u> | <u>\$14,769,660</u> |

A look at the ledger

In 1959 and 1960, the Mayor and City Council authorized new borrowing to build new schools, and to expand and modernize its sewer and water systems.

The commitment involved the largest investment in new public facilities in the the city's history, but the decision was rooted in continued city growth. In 1959 the birth rate was second highest on record, 2,111. In 1960, there were 2,255 births, an all-time high. The records of the Inspector of Buildings showed that the building boom which had added an average of 240 new dwellings since 1950 was by no means over. A total of 416 new dwellings were built in 1959 and 1960. The value of permits issued for all types of construction for the same years amounted to \$15,070,018.

On January 1, 1959 the outstanding debt of the city was \$6,885,000, the City Treasurer reported. On December 31, 1960 it had risen to \$12,085,000. New borrowing comprised \$1,875,000 for two schools; \$3,750,000 for the first phase of a nine million dollar sewer improvement program; \$600,000 for water; and \$200,000 for off-street parking. The grand total of new indebtedness was \$6,424,000. However, due to payments on old debt in 1959 and 1960, the outstanding debt has risen only \$5,200,000.

With the costs of providing public service constantly rising, additional indebtedness might well have been expected to add the last straw to the taxpayers burden. On the contrary, the 1959 tax rate of \$36.50 rose to only \$39.00 in 1960 and actually went down by \$1.50 per \$1,000 valuation in 1961.

Even at that, appropriations for city departments were a million dollars more in 1960 than in 1958. The 1960 budget was the first in the city's history to go over \$10,000,000. It was also double the city budget of 1943.

Several factors combined to hold the tax rate from zooming. Of prime importance was a two-year increase in real and personal property valuation, amounting to \$5,630,000. Revenues from the State also increased, along with Federal aid to schools and larger water rate revenue.

As compared with most cities in Massachusetts, Pittsfield's tax rate was among the lowest at the close of 1960. In the years ahead, however, it would take a combination of the favorable factors of the past two years to hold the line.

Departmental expenditures 1960

| DEPARTMENT | PERSONAL SERVICE | EXPENSE | TOTAL | 1960 FULL-TIME EMP. |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Schools | \$3,392,822.69 | \$ 522,164.60 | \$3,914,987.29 | 615 |
| 2. Public Welfare | 126,540.40 | 1,938,410.08 | 2,064,950.48 | 31 |
| 3. Public Works | 905,968.98 | 593,487.11 | 1,499,456.09 | 193 |
| 4. Fire | 690,983.68 | 35,495.32 | 726,479.00 | 153 |
| 5. Police | 479,279.93 | 31,246.50 | 510,526.43 | 87 |
| 6. Public Buildings | 129,998.00 | 127,092.15 | 257,090.15 | 26 |
| 7. Parks | 175,479.12 | 42,899.73 | 218,378.85 | 21 |
| 8. Veterans Service | 17,170.40 | 133,028.41 | 150,198.81 | 4 |
| 9. Athenaeum | 190,231.36 | 27,896.64 | 218,128.00 | 28 |
| 10. Health | 112,767.46 | 15,033.95 | 127,801.41 | 18 |
| 11. City Clerk-Treas. | 52,037.67 | 14,265.77 | 66,303.44 | 9 |
| 12. City Infirmary | 22,288.94 | 29,122.30 | 51,411.24 | 9 |
| 13. Admin. Services | 19,944.11 | 23,333.01 | 43,277.12 | 6 |
| 14. Assessors | 31,794.25 | 7,835.27 | 39,629.52 | 8 |
| 15. Fire & Police Signals | 21,641.15 | 14,658.18 | 36,299.33 | 4 |
| 16. Tax Collector | 26,933.48 | 5,954.93 | 32,888.41 | 7 |
| 17. City Auditor | 17,690.00 | 8,046.68 | 25,736.68 | 4 |
| 18. Inspector Buildings | 14,217.80 | 1,296.23 | 15,514.03 | 3 |
| 19. Registrar Voters | 12,153.00 | 2,639.17 | 14,792.17 | 1 |
| 20. Mayor | 12,681.20 | 1,177.47 | 13,858.67 | 2 |
| 21. Inspector Wires | 11,993.54 | 2,844.87 | 14,838.41 | 2 |
| 22. Civil Defense | 5,658.92 | 8,230.95 | 13,889.87 | 2 |
| 23. Sealer | 11,315.09 | 995.34 | 12,310.43 | 2 |
| 24. Elections | 6,896.00 | 4,863.03 | 11,759.03 | P.T.* |
| 25. City Solicitor | 8,997.49 | 2,086.88 | 11,084.37 | 3 |
| 26. City Council | 8,850.00 | 1,197.19 | 10,047.19 | P.T. |
| 27. Planning Board | 7,117.28 | 568.57 | 7,685.85 | 1 |
| 28. Inspector Plumbing | 6,268.00 | 968.26 | 7,236.26 | 1 |
| 29. Licensing Board | 4,535.20 | 516.39 | 5,051.59 | 1 |
| 30. Inspector Animals | 750.00 | 200.00 | 950.00 | P.T. |
| 31. Board of Appeals | 250.00 | 399.17 | 649.17 | P.T. |
| Totals | \$6,445,336.07 | \$3,551,444.20 | \$9,996,780.27 | 1,219 |

* Part Time

EPILOGUE

This report has related something of Pittsfield's past and present and has attempted to provide a degree of perspective of the city's future. The frustrating struggle of successive generations of citizens to make the community a better place in which to live has been recorded here. Our history shows that despite an inherent disinclination to step up the pace of progress, we have moved slowly forward.

Pittsfield is a good city with an exemplary record of honest and responsible government. It is a community which is innately disposed to respond cordily and generously to human distress and civil emergencies. Nevertheless, even today, our gait is altogether too pedestrian. We do act a little more promptly to meet a crisis but we lose sight of the fact that, in reality, we are only coming to grips with chronic civic problems. Today, as in the past, we are not above making a virtue of necessity.

Real progress is made of 'sterner stuff'. It comes to grips with those well known 'blind spots' which citizens of the past chose to ignore. It demands more civic leadership, courage and vision than we have ordinarily employed in the conduct of our affairs. It requires the kind of citizen interest and concern which is not reluctant to contribute more to our common society than we can expect to get out of it individually, or even collectively.

There are some signs of such progressive attitudes amongst us, but the fact remains that too few of us have a clear conception of our greater potential, which could be ours if we took concerted action to achieve it.

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