

# The Great Plain



*The Great Plain was mostly-empty land before the train line ran through in 1853. Development began shortly after, and accelerated in the 1870s.*

The Great Plain – where New Needham and Old Needham meet! Since 1711, the town center was on Central Avenue. When the railroad came to Needham in 1853, it was directed away from the Center and into the mostly-empty Great Plain. Within 25 years, the economy of Needham had shifted toward the railroad, and the Great Plain became the new Center.

Convenient train transportation brought new markets to Needham. Farm produce was easier to transport, other goods were easier to bring in. Manufacturing (especially in the Heights) became a significant part of the local economy. Needham also saw its first “commuters” – businessmen who were not part of the farming economy – who were able to live outside of the city.

Along with the new residents came new styles. The Kingsbury-Whitaker House (Site #4) is typical of the simple Colonial style that was common in Needham since its founding. The George Washburn House (#3) and the four houses near Marshall Street (#7) show the new, more elaborate Victorian design that began to appear in Needham after 1853.