

Bay State Road/Back Bay West

District Study Committee Report



Boston Landmarks Commission

REPORT OF THE BAY STATE ROAD STUDY COMMITTEE
ON THE POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF
BAY STATE ROAD/BACK BAY WEST
AS AN
ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION DISTRICT
UNDER CHAPTER 772 OF THE ACTS OF 1975
BOSTON LANDMARKS COMMISSION

Approved by: Maicao Myers 10/18/79
Executive Director Date

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Chairman Date

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INTRODUCTION

The Bay State Road Study Committee hereby transmits to the Boston Landmarks Commission its report on the designation of Bay State Road and adjacent areas as an architectural conservation district. The work of this committee was initiated in September of 1977, when a petition was submitted by the Bay State Road Civic Association to the Boston Landmarks Commission, asking that the Commission consider designating the Bay State Road area as an Architectural Conservation District under the provisions of Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975. The purpose of such a district is the recognition and protection of the architectural and historical characteristics which make an area unique.

As a result of the petition, and at the request of the Landmarks Commission, the Mayor appointed, and the City Council confirmed, a study committee to make recommendations to the Commission on the proposed district.

The committee, consisting of twelve local residents and five members of the Commission began working together in June of 1978, meeting regularly to evaluate the architectural and historical significance of the area, the potential boundaries of an Architectural Conservation District, and the kinds of design guidelines which would ensure the protection of the area. The committee was assisted by Marcia Myers, Executive Director of the Boston Landmarks Commission, and Jonathan Malone, student intern.

In May of 1979, having reached tentative conclusions on the matters before it, the committee held a meeting to which all property owners in the district were invited. Since that meeting, the committee has finalized its recommendations for submission to the Boston Landmarks Commission.

SUMMARY

Study Committee Recommendations

The committee has concluded that the Bay State Road/Commonwealth Avenue Area is significant as a substantially intact area of late 19th and early 20th century buildings in the "authentic revival" styles of the period; an extension and completion of the Back Bay - one of the nation's most architecturally important neighborhoods. It is also notable for the people and institutions, including prominent medical clinics, associated with the area.

Therefore, the study committee has recommended that an area roughly consisting of Bay State Road from Charlesgate West to Granby Street and Commonwealth Avenue from Charlesgate West to Kenmore Street (see map) be designated as the BAY STATE ROAD - BACK BAY WEST ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION DISTRICT.

The committee further recommends that a district commission consisting of local representatives and members of the Boston Landmarks Commission be appointed to review exterior changes to the outside of buildings in the district.

Design guidelines have been prepared which would serve to guide future physical changes to buildings within the district so that such changes would be compatible with the character of the area.

Local representatives on the Study Committee:

Janet Brown	Madeline Kasdon
Dr. John Boreske	Ruth McDonald
Elmer Carleson	Robert E. Moss
Dr. Demetre Decaneas	Dorothea Ryan
Dan Finn	Victor N. Themo
Mildred T. Gill	Frank S. Waterman (resigned)

Boston Landmarks Commission representatives on the Study Committee:

Virginia Aldrich	Margaret S. Smith
Thomas P. Hynes	Carl Zellner
Roger P. Lang	

I. Location of Proposed District

- 1.1 The proposed Bay State Road/Back Bay West Architectural Conservation District is located in the Back Bay section of Boston bordered roughly by Kenmore Square, the Massachusetts Turnpike, Charlesgate West, Storrow Drive, and Granby Street.

Initial investigation was directed towards protection of Bay State Road. The Study Committee expanded the district to include sections of Commonwealth Avenue, Beacon and Newbury Streets as logical extensions of development in the Back Bay contemporary with the growth of Bay State Road.

The final boundary of the proposed Bay State Road/Back Bay West Architectural Conservation District runs as follows:

beginning at the intersection of Back Street and Charlesgate West, running south along the center line of Charlesgate West to Newbury Street;

thence running westerly on the center line of Newbury Street to the intersection of Kenmore (a.k.a. Graham) Street;

thence running northerly along the center line of Kenmore Street, extending across Commonwealth Avenue to the center line of Raleigh Street, continuing northerly on Raleigh Street to the intersection of a private way which runs along the rear lot lines of properties fronting Bay State Road;

thence running along the center line of said private way in a westerly direction crossing Deerfield and Sherborn Streets to the intersection of Granby Street;

thence northerly to the central line of Bay State Road;

thence westerly along the center line of George Hart Way, an extension of Bay State Road;

thence curving northerly to the rear lot line of 233 Bay State Road;

thence easterly along the rear lot lines of 233 and 225 Bay State Road to Back Street, continuing easterly along the center line of Back Street crossing Sherborn, Deerfield and Raleigh Streets, and terminating at the point or place of beginning.

The boundary encompasses all property within the area described including numbers 7 to 233 and 20 to 214 Bay State Road, 583 to 623 and 590 to 632 Beacon Street, 461 to 497 and 464 to 496 Commonwealth Avenue, 517 to 545 Newbury Street, the westerly side of Charlesgate West, the easterly side of Kenmore Street and portions of Raleigh, Deerfield, Sherborn, Granby Streets, and George Hart Way which may fall within the bounds as described above.

- 1.2 Map Showing Location and Boundaries of Proposed District.

II. Description of Proposed District

The Bay State Road/Back Bay West proposed Architectural Conservation District is a visually cohesive area of approximately thirty acres comprised predominantly of brick three to five story rowhouses. Most of the structures were constructed between 1890 and 1914. The range of architectural styles is represented by simply detailed Classical Revival speculative rowhouses at one end of the scale to an ornately detailed High Georgian Revival mansion at the other.

Of the 197 buildings in the area, there are one free-standing house, three former hotels of six to eight stories (one standing vacant, one serving as a women's residence, and two serving as Boston University dormitories), two buildings constructed specifically for offices, one dormitory built by Boston University, and two apartment buildings (seven and eight stories). The majority of buildings are constructed of brick; there are only nine stone buildings in the area. The basement and/or first floor of eleven structures have been converted to commercial space on Commonwealth Avenue. Along Bay State Road, Boston University has purchased and adapted many buildings for use as offices and student housing. Throughout the area other single-family houses have been converted to apartments.

There is a basic uniformity to lot sizes in the district. Most lots are within the 2,100 to 3,300 square foot range, with lots of between 1,400 and 1,900 square feet on Beacon and Newbury Streets.

The flatness of the topography of the Study Area reflects its origination as filled land. The Charles River is the northern boundary of the area and provides pleasant vistas from points along Bay State Road.

Buildings on Bay State Road and Commonwealth Avenue were subject to uniform setback requirements when they were constructed. The front yards, numerous street trees, the mall of Commonwealth Avenue, vest-pocket parks (at the intersections of Bay State Road and Granby and Bay State Road and Deerfield), and the green space along Charlesgate West are all valuable amenities that significantly contribute to the ambience of the area.

The architectural styles (see photos)* of the district's buildings cover the range of Authentic Revivals. There are good examples of McKim Classical, Renaissance, Georgian, Federal and Tudor Revivals. Many of these are found on the water or northerly side of Bay State Road, which developed more quickly than the southerly side. Much of the southerly side was developed with speculative rowhousing, designed with Classical Revival Style detailing. Out of the 197 buildings, only ten were built after 1915. Therefore, the Bay State Road/Back Bay West is an unusually architecturally cohesive area.

The great majority of the district's buildings are in good to excellent condition. Only a very small number are in need of minor repairs, often limited to problems with cornices. The excellent state of repair of the majority of buildings reflects the pride and concern for the neighborhood of property-owners including Boston University.

III. Significance of Proposed District

3.1 General History

The proposed Bay State Road/Back Bay West Architectural Conservation District was part of the large scale nineteenth century land reclamation project which created the residential district known as the Back Bay. Early plans for the Back Bay provided for a series of water-powered mills. The original design, presented in 1813 by a group of entrepreneurs that included Isaac Davis and Uriah Cotting, required the construction of two mill dams. One was to run along the present line of Beacon Street from Charles Street to Kenmore Square. The other was to run to South Boston, thereby excluding tides from South Boston Bay. The scheme would allow high tide water to enter the Back Bay basin from the Charles River, run through raceways on the Roxbury Neck thereby powering the mills and flow into the South Boston basin and eventually out through the harbor at low tide. The plan was revised in 1814 to maintain the Back Bay as an empty basin with the South Boston basin full, thereby allowing a mill pond as well as a docking area. The charter for the project was granted by the state legislature on June 14, 1814.

The design actually implemented was less elaborate than that originally proposed. The main dam ran from Charles Street to Sewell's Point, Brookline (about the present site of Kenmore Square) along the line of Beacon Street. It measured fifty feet wide and one and one half miles long. Western Avenue, a toll road opened in 1821, ran the length of the dam. The cross dam connected to the Gravelly Point in Roxbury, running approximately along the line of Massachusetts Avenue.

Two city mills and some industry operated on Gravelly Point but the number of mills anticipated exceeded the number which were actually built. Beginning in 1834, several railroad lines were constructed in the City. Two of these, the Boston and Worcester Railroad and the Boston and Providence Railroad, intersected in the center of the Back Bay.

With the restriction of the tidal flow by the mill dam, the bay became a source of odors and an unsightly mudflat. In the interest of public health, it was determined that the area should be filled. In 1852, a legislative commission proposed that the Boston and Roxbury Mill Corporation and the Boston Water Power Company should cease mill operations and fill their land holdings under the direction of the state. Controversy ensued between the Commonwealth and the City of Boston on issues of land title. The eventual determination was that the state would hold title to all filled land in the Back Bay. By 1857, Commissioners appointed by the state were empowered to let contracts for filling operations, sell the newly-created land, and use the funds obtained for the next stage of filling. Arthur Gilman's plan for the Back Bay (1850) was used as the basis for development.

Gravel for the filling operation was hauled by train from Needham. Excavation was facilitated by the newly-developed steam shovel. By 1861, the fill reached Clarendon Street; by 1871, to Exeter Street on the south side of Commonwealth Avenue and Hereford on the north side of Commonwealth Avenue. By 1882, the area was filled to Massachusetts Avenue.

With the Receiving Basin of the old Mill Dam plan filled in, the Full Basin to the west of Massachusetts Avenue became a stagnant, useless body of water. The sewers of Roxbury emptied into it, along with sedimentation from the Muddy River. In the early 1880's, Frederick Law Olmsted incorporated the area into his farsighted plan for a city park system. The marshes around the Muddy River were contoured into the Back Bay Fens. The mouth of the Muddy River was channeled into the Charles River at Charlesgate. Commonwealth Avenue was extended on an angle to the northwest in order to avoid crossing the Boston and Albany Railroad tracks; the groundwork was laid for continued development.

The Charles River Embankment Company was incorporated in 1881. It was comprised of property owners from the Cambridge side of the Charles. This corporation was instrumental in arranging authorization for the construction of the Harvard Bridge (1891) between Boston and Cambridge. Dredging and filling operations were begun soon afterward west of the bridge on the Cambridge shore, but were suspended due to the hardness of the riverbed. The operation was shifted to the Boston shore onto flats owned by John Quincy Adams, President of the Riverbank Improvement Company. The dredging procedures here were very successful, and Bay State Road was laid out on the newly-created land. The first blocks were marked off in 1889, with the greatest number of houses being built during the five-year period of 1895 to 1899.

The Bay State Road Improvement Society was an organization comprised of neighborhood property owners. In 1900, they voluntarily agreed to prohibit commercial and industrial uses of their property for a period of fifty years. The agreement was not renewed in 1950 as a majority of the original members were deceased.

Improvements to the Charles River shore and basin paralleled development of the Back Bay and were important to the attractiveness and viability of Bay State Road as a residential area.

Construction of the Charles River Basin dam was undertaken in 1903 under the direction of George A. Kimball, Chief Engineer. The dam was completed in 1910 and served to exclude the tides and stabilize the water level of the basin. This served to improve the view of the houses on Beacon Street and Bay State Road as the tidal exposure of the mudflats was eliminated.

Further improvements were initiated under the auspices of Mrs. Helen Osborne Storrow, who donated one million dollars to the Metropolitan District Commission for the beautification of the Charles River

embankment. From 1931 to 1934, funds from this gift were used to double the area of the original Esplanade, build a boathouse, two breakwaters, a lagoon and four miles of footpaths. Arthur A. Shurcliff directed the project.

The concept of building a roadway adjacent to the Charles River emerged from time to time over the years. As early as 1844, Robert Fleming Gourly in his General Plan for Enlarging and Improving the City of Boston, included provisions for a roadway along the Charles. The first serious proposal was the recommendation of The Report on a Thoroughfare Plan for Boston of 1893 for construction of a road connecting Embankment Road at Arlington and Beacon Streets with Bay State Road near Kenmore Square. Protests prevented implementation of a similiar plan in 1929.

Finally, in 1949, the legislature authorized construction of the James J. Storrow Memorial Drive. Charlesbank was widened by five acres in 1951 as a result of the construction of Storrow Drive. Construction of the Massachusetts Turnpike Extension in 1964 completed the present physical appearance of the area.

3.2 Historic Associations/Specific to Study Area

In addition to its predominant residential character, the Bay State Road/Back Bay West area has been the site of several prominent hotels and two renowned medical clinics.

The Sheraton Hotel, 91 Bay State Road, was built in 1923. It was designed by the architectural firm of Strickland, Blodget and Lane in the Classical tradition. The Henderson family owned the facility and provided accommodations for transient as well as permanent guests. Playwright Eugene O'Neill lived at the Sheraton for a period of time. The hotel operated in the tradition of elegance, typified by a rooftop garden overlooking the Charles River. From here the strains of sedate dance bands could be heard throughout the neighborhood as well as by CBS and NBC radio listeners nationwide.

The Henderson family sold the hotel to the Hotel Corporation of America. The name was changed to the Shelton Hotel. Boston University presently owns the building and maintains the facility as a student dormitory.

The Myles Standish Hotel, located at the U-shaped intersection of Bay State Road and Beacon Street was constructed in 1925. Arthur H. Bowditch was the architect for the nine-floor brick structure. The Standish was considered one of the finest hotels in the country ranking equal, if not superior, to the Copley Plaza, the Ritz-Carlton, the Sheraton, Puritan, Somerset, Vendome and Lafayette Hotels in Boston.

The first floor of the Standish contained service and specialty shops. The Myles Standish Market, Bailey's Cleaners and Dryers,

Myles Book Shop, The Good Drug Company and The Clara Beck Dress Shop, among others, offered highest quality service and merchandise to guests and area residents.

The function rooms of the Myles Standish were social centers for weddings, political gatherings and business meetings of all kinds. The Captain's Cabin was decorated in the tradition of an ocean liner ballroom. The Glass Mirror Ballroom (later called the Esplanade Room) catered to debutante balls, society weddings and other exclusive gatherings. Upstairs was the English Room, noted for afternoon tea.

The Nordbloom Company, Sheraton under the Henderson family and Sonnebend Hotel Corporation, owned the hotel in succession. Boston University purchased the hotel in 1949, and it is presently a student dormitory.

The Hotel Kenmore was designed by the architectural firm of Blackall, Clapp and Whittemore to be "the last word" in modern hotel accommodation, according to the April 11, 1926, edition of the Boston Herald. The nine-story French Renaissance/Georgian style building contained 400 rooms decorated in several periods, including Georgian and Colonial Revival. The ballrooms were resplendant with crystal chandeliers, heavy draperies, and thickly-piled carpets. The kitchen was hailed as the most modern, sanitary and efficient hotel facility of its kind to date.

The Kenmore was also sold to an educational institution; Gram Junior College. However, with the demise of the college under bankruptcy proceedings (September 11, 1979) the building is now empty and deteriorating. Its future is uncertain.

Several medical doctors resided in the area. The practices of two of these doctors were the foundation for prominent medical clinics: the Joslin Clinic and the Lahey Clinic.

Number 81 Bay State Road was the home of Dr. Eliot P. Joslin, noted medical doctor and specialist in the treatment of diabetes. Joslin was educated at Yale and Harvard Medical Schools. As part of his training he served the South End district, at that time, the city's poorest. In 1896, he toured Europe's leading medical centers in Germany and Austria. In 1904, two years after their marriage, Dr. and Mrs. Joslin built the Classical Revival townhouse at 81 Bay State Road. It was this address that became known world-wide to sufferers of diabetes as well as to colleagues researching this debilitating disease. Dr. Joslin's books, The Treatment of Diabetes and The Diabetes Manual chronicle nearly fifty years of progress in treating this disease. Joslin's lifelong work was the basis for the Joslin Diabetes Foundation, a facility dedicated to teaching the medical profession and the diabetic as to the care of the disease. The Joslin Clinic, housed at 81 Bay State Road since the 1920's, moved to new quarters at 15 Joslin Road in 1956. Dr. Joslin died in 1962, aged 93, after a lifetime of dedicated service.

Frank Howard Lahey was born in Stoneham, Massachusetts, in 1880. A graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Medical School, he served on the staff of both Harvard and Tufts Universities. During World War I, he was a Major in the Medical Corps, serving as Chief of Surgery in France.

Lahey's first office was on Beacon Street. In 1925, he acquired the present site of the Lahey Clinic for his office practice. Lahey and his wife organized the clinic in 1934, an outgrowth of their philosophy of collective practice. Lahey is known to have said, "It is of great value to be able to go to another department and get an associate literally by the hand and lead him down to see and discuss a patient's problem".

Lahey was also the first to require that an anesthesiologist be a graduate physician.

Dr. Lahey died in 1953, having served the public from literally all over the world. In a re-organization of the clinic, Lahey's associates formed the Lahey Clinic Foundation with offices at 143 Bay State Road and along Commonwealth Avenue.

Several notable families lived along Bay State Road in the early years of its development. The William Lindseys resided at 225 Bay State Road. They were the parents of Leslie Lindsey, who drowned in the sinking of the "Lusitania", and in whose memory they gave the Lindsey Chapel of Emmanuel Church. The Dodges (of the Boston law firm, Palmer & Dodge) lived at 82 Bay State Road. Miss Sally Dodge, who grew up on Bay State Road, remembers their move to number 2 Raleigh Street in 1927. Dr. Joshua Clapp Hubbard, whose wife was related to the Dodges, lived at 79 Bay State Road. Across the street at number 78 lived Dr. Councilman and his wife; Dr. Councilman maintained an office in his home. The Lucius Beebes' lived at 96 Bay State Road. Their son Lucius became a writer.

Since the 1930's, Boston University has had an ever-increasing impact on the social characteristics of Bay State Road. The Back Bay experienced the leveling-off of population common to most city neighborhoods during the explosive suburban growth which followed World War II. As lifestyles changed, the demand for the city townhouse declined, and properties along Bay State Road began to come on the market. Boston University, took advantage of the availability of properties and began to acquire substantial holdings on the street.

An expert statement which summarizes the role of Boston University in the Commonwealth Avenue area is found in the words of the distinguished Boston historian Walter Muir Whitehill who stated in his book Boston: A Topographical History:

Boston University began life in a series of separate buildings around the top of Beacon Hill and later, with its great expansion, fanned out all over the city. Impelled by the energetic

determination of President Daniel L. Marsh it undertook in the nineteen thirties to create a central campus for itself on Commonwealth Avenue, east of Cottage Farm Bridge. Previous to this move Commonwealth Avenue west of Kenmore Square had proved a vain hope. The Temple Israel had built there on the corner of Blandford Street in 1907, in marble save on the west where cement was substituted in the confident expectation that the block would soon build up. It never did, for the street remained one of trolley cars, automobile salesrooms and vacant lots until President Marsh began its transformation. From its new buildings, Boston University had spread west to absorb the defunct Braves Field, and east to take in many of the larger houses of Bay State Road. The Lindsey House now accommodates the President of Boston University, the Weld House its Faculty Club. Altogether a street that never fulfilled its original promise is today coming into its own.

The expansion of the university has affected the make-up of the neighborhood by introducing a transient student population and creating administrative offices from former residential structures. However, through these purchases, the university has kept in use and maintained structures whose fate cannot otherwise be judged.

The Bay State Road Civic Association was formed in the 1950's and incorporated as a community group concerned with the expansion of Boston University. The Association was chaired by the late State Senator Charles Innes and included Doctors Gettings, Hopkins, Madilla and Sheridan, the Thayers, Businessman Themo, and others.

3.3 Architectural Significance

The architecture of the proposed Bay State Road/Back Bay West Architectural Conservation District represents a precise period in the development of American architecture. In the terminology of Bainbridge Bunting, author of Houses of Boston's Back Bay, (Cambridge, 1967), the architecture of the study area is part of the Authentic Revival period.

In the development of nineteenth century American architecture, the first phase was the Federal style, simple and graceful in design. The 1840's were the period of Greek Revival, with the style adopted nationally, often in a provincial manner. The 1850's were marked by the wider use of Renaissance details, though freely interpreted.

A fifteen-year period of French influence began in 1857. The era is typified by near exclusive use of the mansard roof, brownstone, and details rendered with an academic correctness. The 1870's usher in a period of architectural individualism presented in the sometimes extravagant Richardsonian Romanesque, Ruskinian Gothic and Queen Anne styles.

By 1890, American architecture was shifting back to the more restrained Classical forms, or Renaissance interpretations of Classical style. Within the study area, cohesive streetscapes with individual units of architectural significance remain as important examples of this major trend in American architecture. Two sets of speculative rowhousing in the study area dramatically illustrate the shift in stylistic perspective. Numbers 39 to 45 Bay State Road, built by Chadwick and Stillings in a picturesque Richardsonian Romanesque mode were the last non-Classical houses constructed in the Back Bay (1892). Only seven years later, rows of speculative housing in a classically-influenced style were laid out at 82-94 Bay State Road. The abruptness of this change to the Classical styles is underlined when one considers the conservative nature of speculative developers in adopting the latest style. But as these units illustrate, the shift to the Classical was far ranging and decisive.

The Bay State Road/Back Bay West area is important as a representative, intact example of American architectural development. The architecture of the study area completes the progression of nineteenth century architectural styles as illustrated by the Back Bay. The beginning point was along Arlington Street with the French Academic style. The end point is the proposed Bay State Road/Back Bay West Architectural Conservation District representing the Authentic Revival styles.

3.4 Individual Buildings of Architectural Significance

There are several houses in the study area that are architecturally significant as examples of the Authentic Revival styles.

Five major revivals are represented in the Bay State Road/Back Bay West study area. They are the McKim Classical, Renaissance, Georgian, Federal and Tudor Revivals. Elements of other stylistic traditions are also apparent in the detailing of some structures, such as the Chateausque effect of 468 Commonwealth Avenue.

Number 77 Bay State Road (1900) was designed by the architectural firm of Peters and Rice in the McKim Classical style. The name of the style is drawn from the firm of McKim, Mead and White whose work popularized the style. The identifying characteristics are a sober monumentality, symmetry, monotone color, stone material and decorative features that have been copied from actual Roman monuments. This archaeologically correct detailing is limited to doors and windows and the horizontal emphasis between floors.

The house by Peters and Rice at 77 Bay State Road incorporates these elements in its design to achieve a sober, unified effect. A monumentality is presented in the sheer, monochromatic stone facade. The limited sections of decoration at the cornice and in the panels are historically accurate. Peters and Rice also designed several other houses along Bay State Road.

Number 479 Commonwealth Avenue represents a more loosely interpreted example of McKim Classical. Winslow and Wetherell designed the house in 1895. The first floor and trim are in stone, but the fabric of the building is brick. The design is not an historically exact rendition of Classical architecture, but rather an adaptation of Classical elements to the space limitations of a townhouse facade.

Bainbridge Bunting describes the McKim Classical style as "a classification which is not so much a precise archaeological variation of Classical architecture as a manner of adapting Classical ornament to the requirements of a modern, vertically organized, multi-windowed structure".¹

Winslow and Wetherell also designed 121-125 Bay State Road (1899), this time working in the Renaissance Revival style. The architectural precedent for the style can be found in the Italian Renaissance Roman and Florentine palazzos of the fifteenth century. Symmetry, uniform color, restrained Classical decoration concentrated at entries, around windows and at roofline, horizontal emphasis of the facade and floor organization seen in the high basement and piano nobile are the chief hallmarks of the style. Number 121-125 Bay State Road illustrates this style in its U-shaped symmetry (possibly based on the Villard House in New York City) uniform color scheme and concentration of finely crafted Classical decoration at the doorway.

Other works by Winslow and Wetherell include the Baker Chocolate Factory in the Lower Mills section of Dorchester. Within the study area, they also designed 470 Commonwealth Avenue, 113 and 119 Bay State Road.

In 1900, W. Y. Peters designed two High Georgian Revival style houses for Dr. Charles Goddard Weld, a prominent surgeon, at 145 and 147 Bay State Road. The inspiration for this revival comes from mid-eighteenth century American and slightly earlier English architecture. The Weld mansion is typical of Georgian Revival architecture in its robust, monumental, and elaborate character. It is symmetrical in plan with boxlike proportion. Openings, corners, and outer edges are emphasized by classically derived ornament. The structure at 147 presently houses the offices of the President of Boston University and 145 houses the office of the Provost. Both buildings are maintained in their original condition and the original interior is intact, with its inlaid floors, ornate ceilings, wood-carved door frames and sculptured mantelpieces.

The Federal Revival style was used by Arthur Little of the firm Little & Brown when he designed his own house at 57 Bay State Road (1890). The house is characteristic of the style in its shoebox-like proportions, flat surfaces, red brick with white trim and low-hipped roof. The ground floor contains an unusual two story ballroom lit by a pair of Palladian windows. Historical precedent

1. Bunting, Bainbridge: Houses of Boston's Back Bay, Cambridge, 1967, p. 317

for this feature can be found in the Bulfinch designed Jonathan Mason mansion on Mount Vernon Street which had a comparable balroom. Bunting describes the Little residence as "One of the most charming residences in the Back Bay."² Little and Brown designed three other houses in the area located at 49, 117 and 191 Bay State Road.

Number 155 Bay State Road was designed by W.Y. Peters, also in the Federal Revival style (1889). The details of the facade are historically accurate. However, the ornateness of the doorway and fanlight surpasses Federal precedent.

A pair of adjacent buildings, 97 and 99 Bay State Road effectively illustrate the contrast between High Georgian and Federal Revivals. Number 97, by Rice and Peters exhibits the Georgian tradition with heavy stone carving, swags within the entablature, paneled balustrade and urns at the roofline and is, according to Bunting, one of the finest designs in the Georgian Revival manner³.

Number 99 uses the more restrained vocabulary of the Federal style. The detailing is accurate, the proportions are correct, and it lacks the plasticity of decorative detail found on its neighbor.

Within the Study Area, there are a greater number of buildings of Federal style than in the Georgian style. This pattern is true of Back Bay as a whole.

This conservative taste is contrasted by the unusually developed Tudor Revival home that Chapman and Frazier designed for William Lindsay at 225 Bay State Road (1905). Tudor Revival details are incorporated on other houses in the study area (497 Commonwealth Avenue, 71 Bay State Road) but not to the developed degree of the Lindsey residence.

The Tudor Revival style draws upon late sixteenth century English medieval architecture as its stylistic precedent. The revival is characterized by assymetry, unbalanced massing, heavy stonework with Gothic decoration and complicated roof structure. These features are skillfully integrated into the design of 225 Bay State Road; in fact, in Bunting's view, it "creates the most convincing medieval effect in the whole area."⁴

The Tudor Revival style is often found in Boston suburbs such as Brookline and Newton, but it is rarely built completely in stone or at such a large scale. Although the building stands apart from its contemporary Classical Revival counterparts, the trend towards historic accuracy is a factor common to all the Authentic Revivals.

2. Ibid., p. 327

3. Ibid., p. 345

4. Ibid., p. 308

Bainbridge Bunting sees the return to Classical architectural form, with a particular Bostonian preference for the Federal style, as indicative of the state of Boston society in the broader perspective.

He writes, "Indeed this return by later nineteenth century Bostonians to Georgian and Early Republican forms is not confined to architecture and the arts;... Boston business chose to content itself with commerce on a familiar and regional scale comparable to what it had known in the earlier nineteenth century;... Boston society preferred to conserve an Early Republican mode of simplicity in its mode of living; Boston First Families consolidated a caste system that is almost unique in America. And now Boston architects reverted to the Federal style of architecture associated with old values that were so much prized."⁵

Architecturally speaking, the nineteenth century ends in Boston as it began - with a decided preference for the grace of the Federal style.

5. Ibid., pp. 359-360

3.5 Relationship to Criteria for Designation

The proposed district meets the criteria for designation as an Architectural Conservation District, as established in Section 4 of Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975, in that it is associated significantly with the lives of historic personages, embodies distinctive architecture representative of the development of the Authentic Revival Styles and contains significant structures designed by architects whose work influenced the development of the City.

IV. Economic Status

4.1 Current Assessments

The average assessment on buildings in the Study Area is \$27,950 of which approximately one-third is for the land, and two-thirds for the building. Individual assessments range from \$9,000 on Newbury Street to \$45,000 along Bay State Road.

4.2 Property Values

Recent real estate transactions of properties along Bay State Road have consistently been above the \$100,000 mark. Sales of houses along Bay State Road have reached prices of \$102,000, \$110,000 and \$115,000. With the present housing market, \$100,000 appears to be the starting point for structures along the Bay State Road, Beacon Street and Commonwealth Avenue sections of the Study Area. Property values are lower along Newbury Street, the area with consistently lower assessments.

Several buildings along Bay State Road are being converted to condominiums. The units in one building are priced in the \$96,000 to \$109,000 range.

These data indicate a healthy real estate market with a trend toward rehabilitation and condominium conversion representing concentrated private investment in the area.

V. Planning Context

5.1 Background

For planning purposes the BRA has divided the City into 19 Neighborhood Planning Districts. Although the BRA has included the Bay State Road area in the Kenmore sub-area of the Fenway/Kenmore district, Bay State Road and Commonwealth Avenue have traditionally been considered a part of the Back Bay, having been developed as a continuation of the Back Bay landfill and having similar architectural and use characteristics to the rest of the Back Bay. The BRA's Kenmore sub-area includes Kenmore Square, Boston University, Audubon Circle and Bay State Road.

The Kenmore sub-area, saturated more than any other section of Boston by the student influence, is populated primarily by students from Boston University and, until recently, Gram Junior College. Boston University owns a number of properties on Bay State Road which are used for faculty housing, dormitories, fraternities and administrative offices.

Although the density of the Kenmore sub-area is twice that of Boston, much of the land use is nonresidential. Educational institutions own considerable property; Fenway Park occupies land near the Square; commercial structures and undeveloped lots prevail along Boylston Street and Brookline Avenue. There are four religious institutions on Bay State Road.

5.2 Current Planning Issues

The major planning issues for the Fenway/Kenmore planning district as a whole are: residential area stability, commercial area revitalization, open space improvement and access, traffic and parking, human services delivery and institutional expansion.

Residential stability and institutional expansion are of immediate concern to Bay State Road residents. In the last two decades, Boston University has acquired properties offered by property owners leaving the area and is now the major property owner on Bay State Road. Some long term property owners and residents fear that their street will eventually become a part of the University's campus and that buildings once populated by families and individuals will be turned into offices and dormitories. Residential occupancy of the non-B.U. owned properties has been generally stable. Property values of many of these buildings have increased significantly in recent years.

The majority of building owners of privately owned property on Bay State Road agree that:

1. No new dormitories should be created in the Bay State Road area from Sherborne Street to Charlesgate West.

2. Dormitories presently there with the exceptions of Myles Hall, Shelton Hall, and the Towers on Bay State Road should be made into faculty housing, Boston University affiliated housing (non-student dormitories), graduate married student housing and private market housing; all of the above should be taxable property.
3. The lot at the corner of Deerfield Street and Bay State Road should be a community mini-park.
4. Boston University should offer first refusal to residents of Bay State Road on any building which Boston University intends to sell.

The viewpoint of Boston University on these issues is as follows:

That Boston University agrees that no new dormitories in the traditional sense of residence halls should be created but wants the flexibility to be able to acquire additional properties for use by faculty and students in "the apartment mode" along with the maintenance of all existing dormitories. The University would also like the existing owners to offer their properties first to B.U. when selling in return for the University offering its properties first to other owners in the area in the event of a sale.

One of the City's most important objectives in this effort is to have Bay State Road strengthened and preserved as a stable, residential neighborhood.

Another major concern in the area is the character of the Kenmore Square commercial area which has emerged as a retail and entertainment center. The uncertain status of the former Hotel Kenmore reinforces the concern about the direction the square is taking.

A comprehensive, visible program of rehabilitation is required to re-establish a sense of balance and character to this important and well-located commercial center. Both public and private investment are needed. Basic to the improvement of Kenmore Square is the preparation of a comprehensive study and plan for the area geared toward introducing a more permanent, balanced population. A step in this direction was made within the last years as Boston University, the Red Sox, local banks and other major interests in the Square sponsored a consultant study which assembled data, analyzed existing problems, and made recommendations to identify the Square's future development potential.

Enforcement of existing ordinances (zoning, parking, sign, sanitation) is another necessary step in upgrading the Square.

Traffic circulation and parking is another district wide issue which affects the immediate neighborhood. The heavy traffic volumes and circulation and parking problems in Fenway-Kenmore affect not only drivers and pedestrians but also the district's air quality, noise levels and open space facilities. The situation is most critical

during the morning and evening commuter peak periods and when Red Sox games are being played at Fenway Park. Local streets as well as major roadways sometimes become impassable, and on game days virtually all available space is converted to parking use, legal or not.

5.3 Current Zoning

Bay State Road and Commonwealth Avenue are currently zoned H-4 for residential uses; single family, two family and multi-family occupancy. Lodging houses, dormitories, fraternities, sororities and hotels, motels or apartment hotels and medical offices are conditional uses in an H-4 zone.

VI. Alternative Designation Approaches

6.1 Type:

The Bay State Road/Back Bay West Study Area has been proposed for Boston Landmarks Commission designation as an Architectural Conservation District, which would provide for the review of proposed physical changes regarding most exterior alteration or repair as well as demolition and new construction.

Alternative designation categories under BLC legislation are Landmark District and Protection Area. The former provides a somewhat greater degree of protection, but requires that the area proposed for designation be of significance to the Commonwealth, New England, or the Nation. A Protection Area provides only limited design control on building height, bulk, setback, land coverage, and demolition, and is designed to protect areas which surround Landmarks, Landmark Districts or Architectural Conservation Districts and are essential to their character.

The level of significance of the Bay State Road/Back Bay West Study Area, in combination with the degree of protection sought by its residents, suggest that designation as an Architectural Conservation District be the appropriate category of protection.

6.2 Boundaries:

The proposed boundary for the Bay State Road/Back Bay West Architectural Conservation District was arrived at through careful consideration by the Study Committee. The area enclosed by the boundary includes the cohesive streetscape, architecturally significant houses and historically significant buildings key to the importance of the area.

In addition to Bay State Road, two other areas were considered for inclusion in the proposed district: Kenmore Square and the Commonwealth Avenue-Newbury Street area (see Map 1.1).

After study, the Commonwealth Avenue section was included in the recommendation as its architecture and historical development followed a pattern parallel to Bay State Road. The predominant three to five story residential streetscape with four larger hotel/apartment buildings corresponds stylistically to, and is in scale with the architectural character of Bay State Road. The area was laid out contemporaneously with Bay State Road and is a result of the same urban planning framework as Bay State Road and the rest of the Back Bay district.

The Kenmore Square area was excluded because of the fact that its commercial architecture was not generally in the same developmental framework as the residential character of Bay State Road, Commonwealth

Avenue and Newbury Street. Furthermore, early structures which do exist in Kenmore Square have been substantially altered at the basement and first floor levels to accommodate commercial enterprises.

VII. Recommendations

The Bay State Road/Back Bay West Study Committee makes the following recommendations:

1. that the Bay State Road/Back Bay West Study Area be designated by the Boston Landmarks Commission as an Architectural Conservation District under Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975.
2. that the boundaries shown in Section One of this report be adopted without modification.
3. that the attached standards and criteria recommended by the Study Committee for the sub areas within the proposed district be accepted.
4. that the Boston Landmarks Commission establish a Bay State Road/Back Bay West Architectural Conservation District Commission in accordance with Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975, which stipulates that there be five District Commission members: two members and two alternates from the District and three members from the Boston Landmarks Commission. The Study Committee further recommends adoption of the following provisions for the selection of members and alternates for the District Commission.
 - i) two members and one of the alternates from the District shall be owners of owner occupied properties within the District,
 - ii) one of the alternates shall be the owner of non owner occupied property within the District,
 - iii) no owner shall have more than one representative on the district commission.
 - iv) all members and alternates from the District shall serve three-year terms, except as provided below,
 - v) for the initial appointment of members and alternates from the District, the Bay State Road Study Committee shall by majority vote nominate one member and one alternate to serve a term of two years, and shall nominate one member and one alternate to serve a term of three years.
 - vi) nominations for subsequent members and alternates shall be solicited by the Boston Landmarks Commission from the Kenmore Area Action Council or its successor organization(s) representing of the District. Said organization will circulate a list of the nominations among property owners in the community. In the event that no such nominations are forthcoming within sixty (60) days of written solicitation by the Boston Landmarks Commission, the Boston Landmarks Commission shall make the nominations,

- vii) the same procedure as described in "vi" shall be followed for the replacement of a member who is unable to complete his/her term, and
- viii) so far as is possible, the Boston Landmarks Commission representatives to the District Commission shall be professionals in architecture, landscape architecture, urban planning or architectural history.

IX Bibliography

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Withey, Henry F. and Elsie Rathburn Withey, Biographical Dictionary of American Architects, Deceased, Los Angeles, 1956.

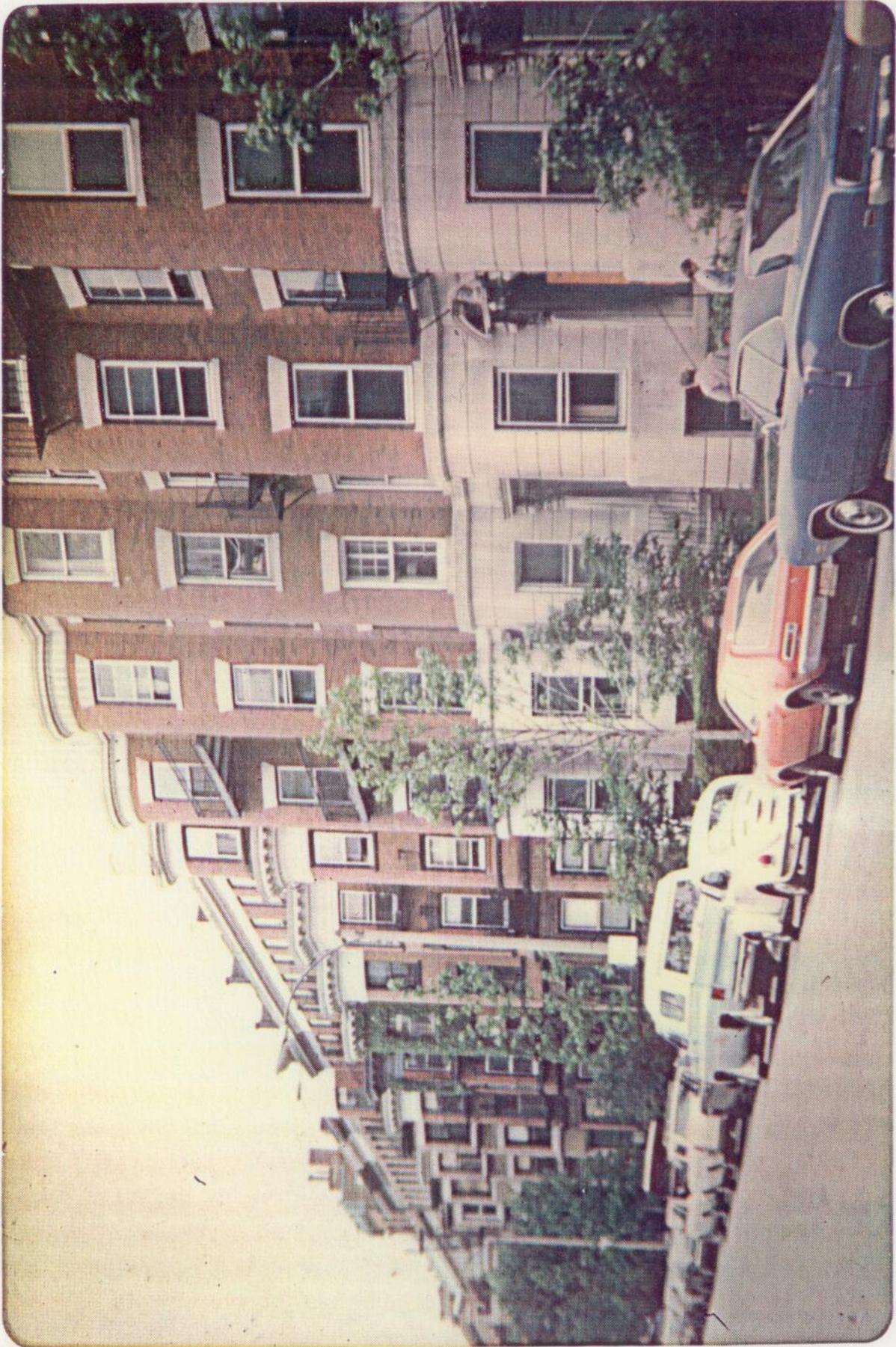
Note:

Extensive research on several buildings along Bay State Road was performed by graduate students in the Boston University Preservation Studies Program. Deeds, City Directories, atlases and probate records were checked on the following properties and their owners:

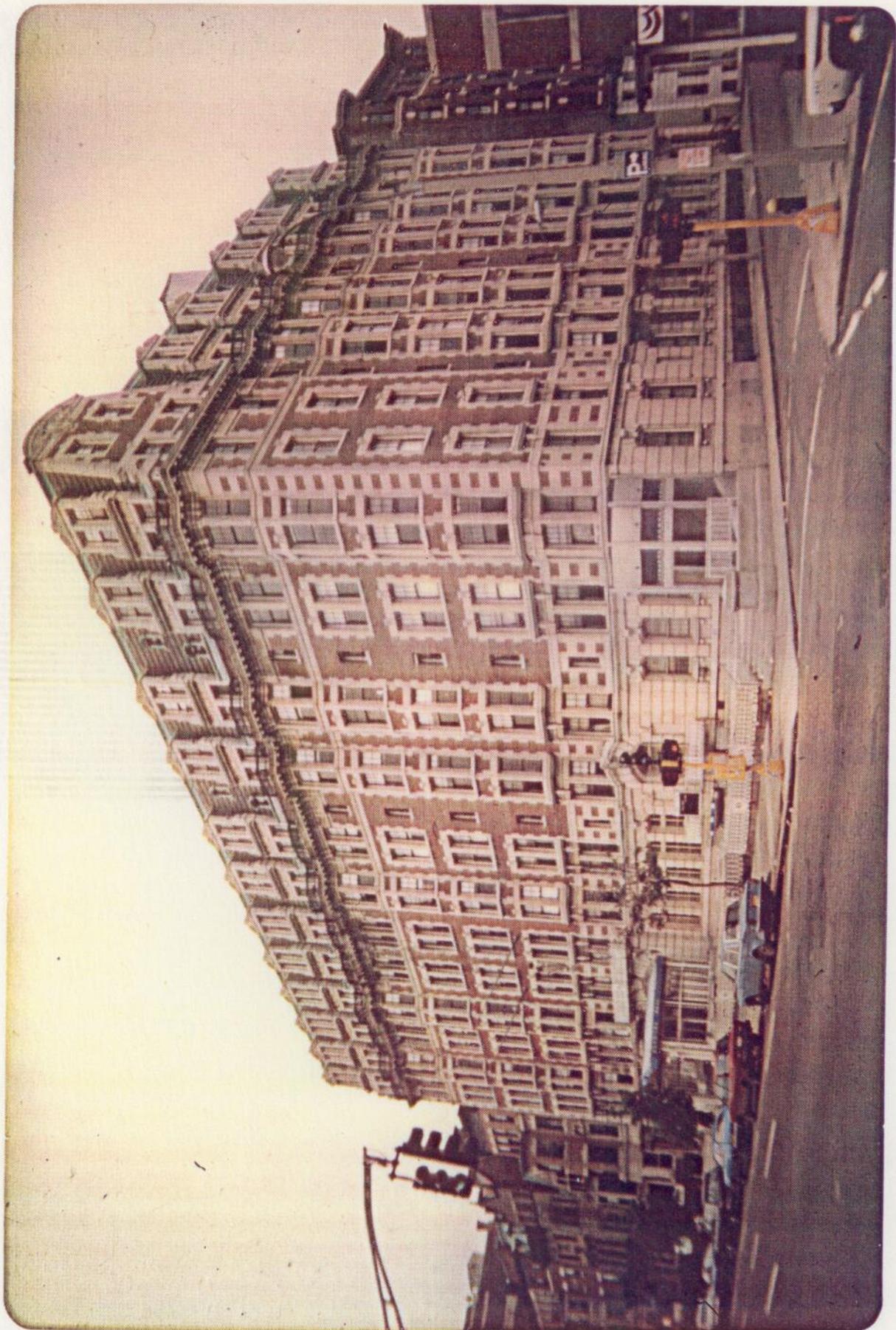
57, 110, 112, 116, 143-147, 157, 186 and 226 Bay State Road.

This information is on file at the Boston Landmarks Commission.

Additional oral history on the neighborhood was provided by Miss Sally Dodge and Mrs. George Lewis, as well as by members of the study committee.

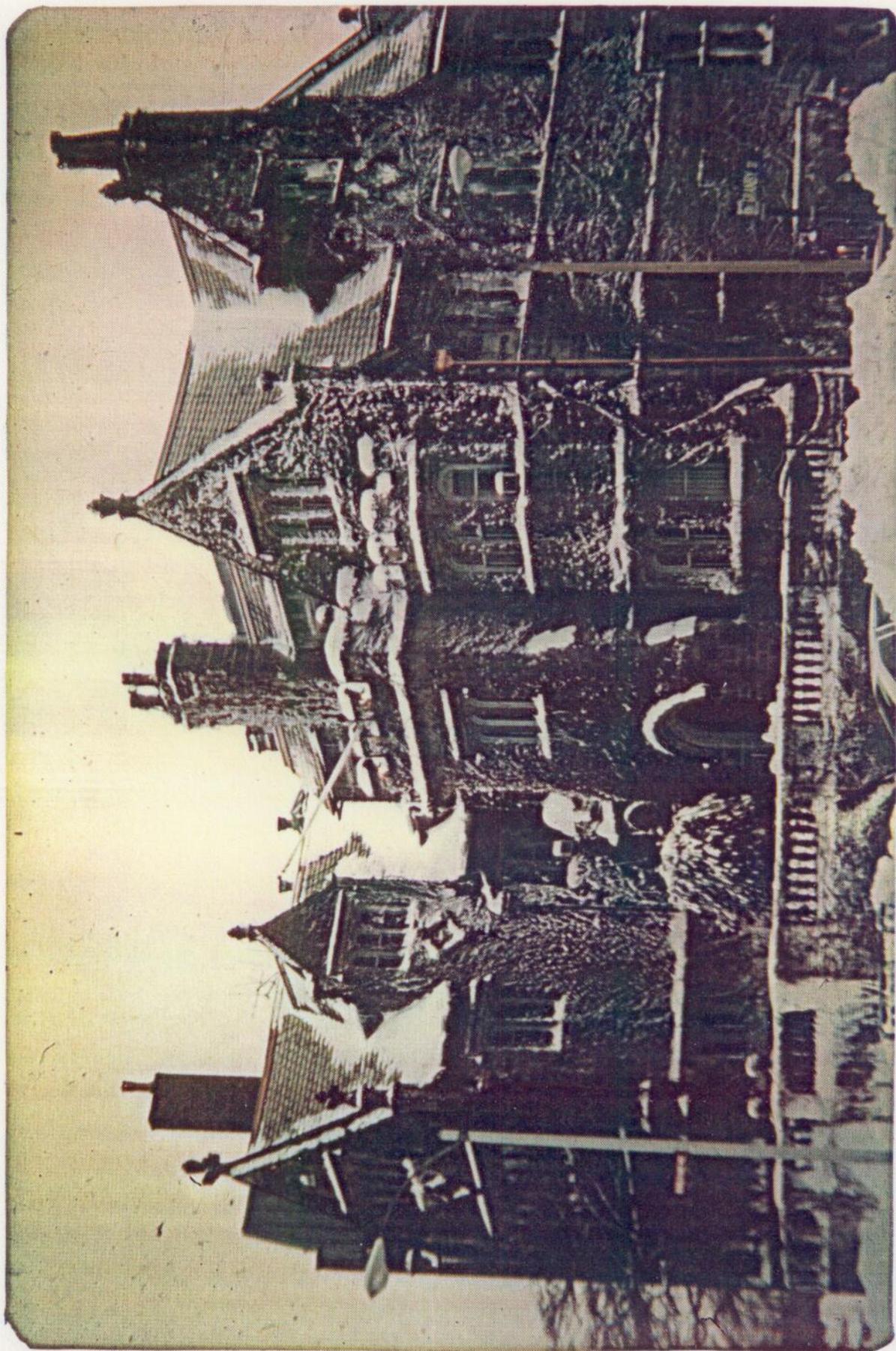


BAY STATE ROAD-BACK BAY WEST: 163-179 Bay State Road



BAY STATE ROAD-BACK BAY WEST: 490 Commonwealth Avenue (The Kenmore Hotel)

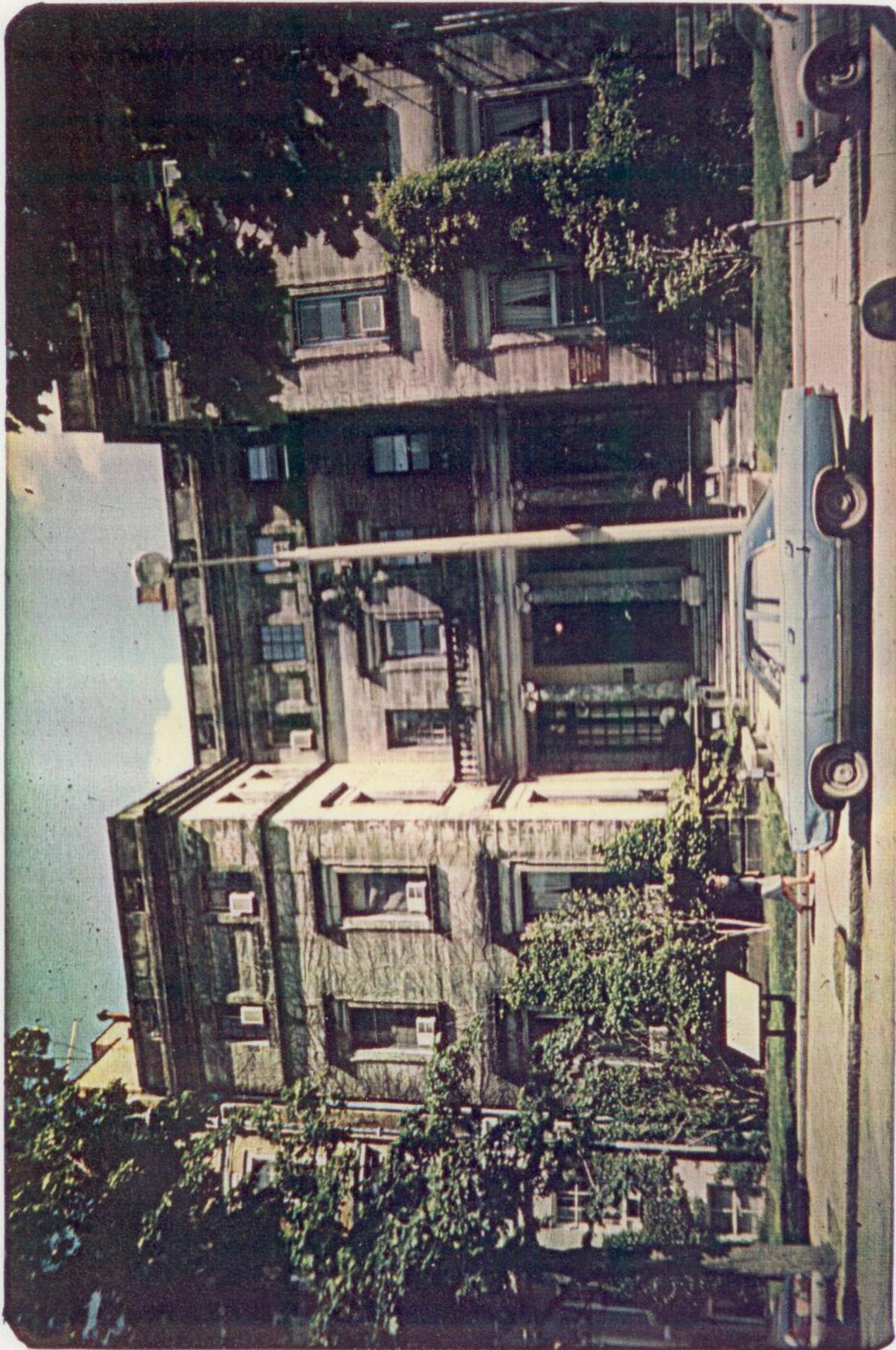
photo 1979 R. P. Burke



BAY STATE ROAD-BACK BAY WEST: 225 Bay State Road (Lindsey Mansion, "The Castle"). photo Jan. 1978 R. P. Burke



BAY STATE ROAD-BACK BAY WEST: 163-169 Bay State Road



BAY STATE ROAD-BACK BAY WEST: 121-125 Bay State Road

photo 1979 J.A. Harrell



photo May 1979

BAY STATE ROAD-BACK BAY WEST: 77 Bay State Road (Ezra Thayer House)



BAY STATE ROAD-BACK BAY WEST: 57 Bay state Road

photo 1979 R. P. Burke



BAY STATE ROAD-BACK BAY WEST: 15-19 Bay State Road