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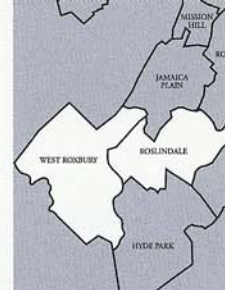
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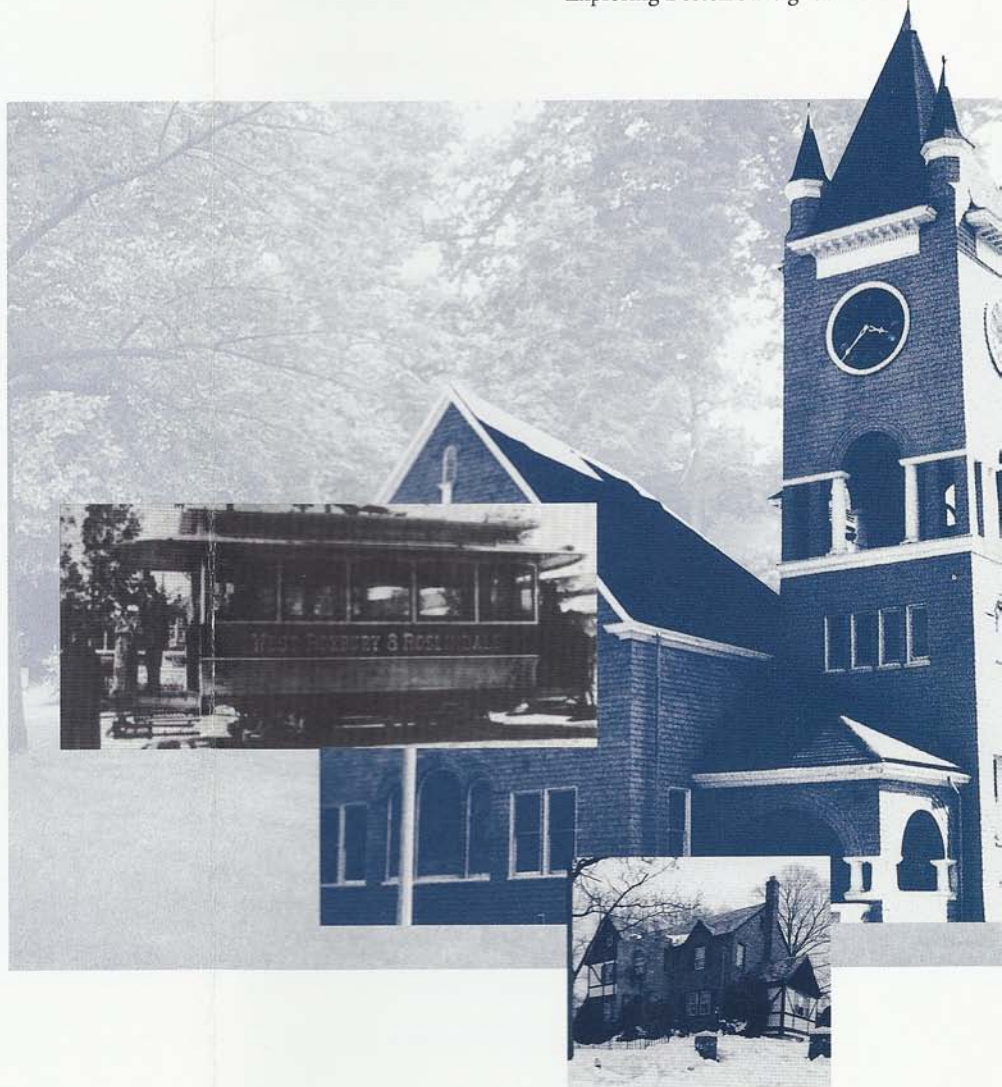


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WEST ROXBURY/ ROSLINDALE

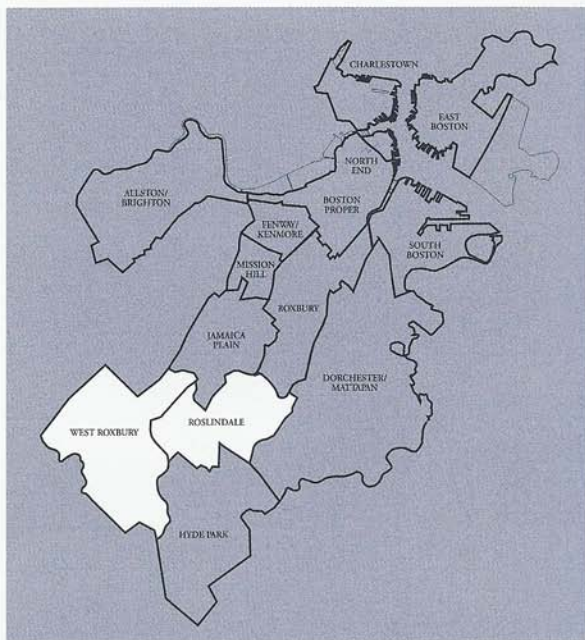
Exploring Boston's Neighborhoods



BOSTON LANDMARKS
COMMISSION

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originally part of the independent town of Roxbury, West Roxbury and Roslindale were farming areas well into the 19th century. The town of West Roxbury was incorporated in 1851 and became part of Boston in 1874. In the mid-19th century, the coming of the railroad, and later the



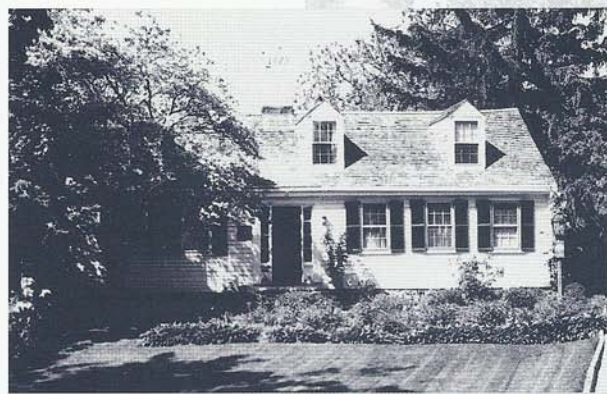
streetcar, turned farmland into suburban subdivisions and civic spaces. In the 20th century, parkways attracted further suburban development. Now, West Roxbury and Roslindale combine suburban and city living.

FARMING THE UPLANDS

The farming families who moved to the outskirts of Roxbury in the 17th and 18th centuries were pleased with the fertile uplands they found. But they resented having to travel to the Roxbury meetinghouse in John Eliot Square, and in 1711 they won permission to build their own house of worship on what is now Walter Street. By 1773, the congregation moved to Centre and Corey streets (see Boston Landmark panel), but the Walter Street Burial Ground, established 1711, and now located within the Arnold Arboretum, still re-

In this farm community, small villages grew up at the intersections of the earliest roads. South Street Crossing became the nucleus of present-day Roslindale; West Roxbury Village developed along Centre Street; and another settlement sprang up at Centre and Baker streets.

In addition to the population of farmers and tradespeople, the neighborhood was attractive to city dwellers, who built elaborate summer estates here. Among the earliest buildings still remaining in the neighborhood are the 18th-century Cape Cod house at 266 Poplar Street and the early 19th-century Federal-style farmhouse at 641 Baker Street.



mains near the site of the original meetinghouse. The Westerly Burial Ground, on Centre Street near Lagrange, is even earlier, dating to 1683.

UTOPIA ON THE CHARLES

Perhaps the most unusual and certainly the most famous neighborhood residents in the pre-Civil War period lived at Brook Farm on Baker Street. One of



Built by the members of the Brook Farm community, this building (no longer standing) was later named the Margaret Fuller Cottage for one of the group's intellectual leaders.



residents remember the Martin Luther Orphans Home, which operated until 1974. Gethsemane Cemetery, laid out in 1873, is still in use. The buildings associated with the Brook Farm community have been lost to fire and neglect, but archaeological excavations have been conducted on the site, which is now an official Boston Landmark.

THE COMING OF THE RAILROAD

The pastoral landscape was jolted in 1834, when the Boston & Providence Railroad opened its main line. The first station stops led to suburban subdivisions near Mt. Hope and Metro-

The coming of the railroad gave suburban development some unusual boosts. In 1887, a major rail-related disaster occurred at Bussey Bridge on South Street at Archdale Road. Neighborhood legend attributes the turn-of-the-century growth spurt to curiosity-seekers who came to view the scene and decided to move to the area.

In the 1890s, horse-drawn and electric streetcars came to the neighborhood, encouraging development all along their routes, rather than just clustered near railroad stations. Farms and summer estates were gradually subdivided for single-family and multifamily dwellings in the popular styles of the day – Stick, Queen Anne, and



politan Hill. The West Roxbury Branch, which opened in 1848, made the neighborhood even more accessible for suburban development. Large houses in the then-fashionable Italianate style on Mt. Vernon and Maple streets reflect this early suburbanization.



The Shingle and Queen Anne styles are combined in the house at 307 Lagrange Street, designed in 1897 by architect George E. Barton for the artist Sears Gallagher.

The neighborhood's oldest building, 266 Poplar Street was originally constructed as a half-cape about 1725 and extended to the right of the door about 50 years later.



America's most notable 19th-century utopian communities, the Brook Farm Institute of Agriculture and Education, was formed in 1841. The leader was George Ripley, a Unitarian minister who resigned his pulpit to pursue Transcendentalism, a humanist belief system that was centered in the Boston area and influenced such writers as Emerson, Thoreau,

Background photo of the Arnold Arboretum from East Drive courtesy of SPNEA

and Hawthorne. West Roxbury's Unitarian minister, Theodore Parker, was also attracted to Transcendental thought, and the Brook Farmers would sometimes travel to Centre Street to hear him preach (see Boston Landmark panel).

The communal social experiment at Brook Farm lasted until 1849, when the site was sold at public auction to the town of Roxbury, which used it as a poorhouse. In 1855, it was sold to a minister who loaned it to the Commonwealth during the Civil War for use as a training camp. After the war, it became a summer boarding house, and eventually it was purchased by the Evangelical Lutheran Church for use as an orphanage, nursing home, and cemetery. Many local



Colonial Revival, all inspired by the buildings of medieval England and pre-Revolutionary America. Good examples include the Stick-style houses at 49-51 and 50 Brown Avenue; the Queen Anne dwellings at 307 Lagrange Street, 16 Rutledge Street, and 26 Montclair Avenue; and the Colonial Revival homes at 942 and 950 South Street, 2-4 Florence Street, and 20 Montclair Avenue. A noteworthy row of architect-designed single-family Colonial Revival houses, built between 1892 and 1920, runs along Stratford Street near the Highland railroad station.

A second building boom took place in the 1920s and '30s, again in popular styles that recalled faraway times or places – Picturesque Tudor, Georgian Revival, and Dutch Colonial. Areas rich in these styles are located around Willow, Weld, and Schirmer streets and around Bellevue Street and St. Theresa Avenue. Many multifamily

houses, often Colonial Revival-style three deckers, were constructed on major thoroughfares such as Washington Street and Belgrade Avenue.

COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS

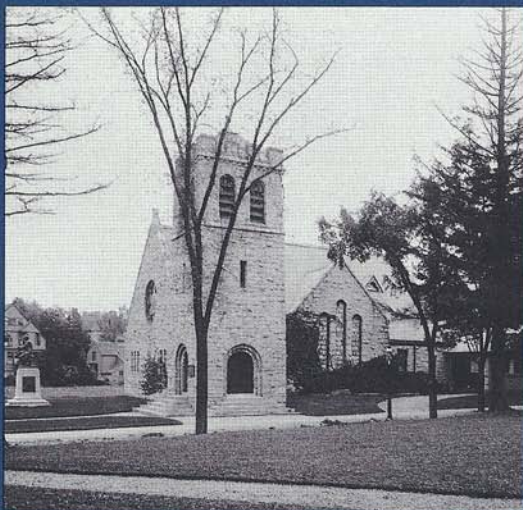
Suburban development brought with it the need for schools, civic buildings, and houses of worship, and the West Roxbury/Roslindale area is fortunate to have many fine buildings of these types.

The Henry W. Longfellow School (885 South Street) was designed by the Boston firm of Walker & Kimball in 1897. The design features an

◀
Hastings Street
contains fine
Colonial Revival
houses. Some are
two-families with
two "fronts," an
innovative way to
create a sense of the
single-family ideal.

BOSTON LANDMARK

Theodore Parker Unitarian Church



View of church c. 1910 Courtesy of SPNEA

Two Romanesque Revival-style buildings comprise Theodore Parker Unitarian Church, at the corner of Centre and Corey streets. The current parish house was built in 1890 as the main church after the 1773 meetinghouse on the same site burned. Just ten years later, the congregation had grown so much that the larger, current main church was constructed. Boston architect A.W. Longfellow designed the earlier building; the architect of the 1900 church was Henry W. Seaver, who began his career working in Longfellow's office. The relationship is evident in the way the second building echoes the style of the first. Adorning the church are seven stained

glass windows designed by Tiffany Studios. The church is named for the prominent liberal clergyman Theodore Parker, who preached in the earlier meetinghouse from 1837 to 1846. Today, the church is still home to an active Unitarian congregation.

As an official Boston Landmark, this building is protected from changes that would adversely affect its historic character. For information on designating local landmark buildings and districts, please contact the Boston Landmarks Commission at 635-3850.



◀ **The Roslindale Congregational Church shows the wood shingles and large, rounded forms of the Shingle style.**

unusual “cart-wheel” plan; the Farquhar Street wing was added about 1910. In 1926, Roxbury Latin School moved from Roxbury to its current location at 101 St. Theresa Avenue. Designed by Perry, Shaw & Hepburn, the school complex exemplifies the Georgian Revival style. The most architecturally innovative educational building in the neighborhood is the Art Moderne-style Conley School (450 Poplar Street), built in 1932 to the design of William W. Drummey.

Local church architecture displays the same styles popular in residential buildings. Sacred Heart Church (about 1893), on Cummins Highway at Brown Avenue, is the earliest Roman Catholic church in the neighborhood and the parent church of the five Catholic parishes set off between Jamaica Plain and Dedham from 1896 to 1952. Architecturally, it is a fine example of the Victorian Gothic style. The Roslindale Congregational Church

(1896) at 25 Cummins Highway is an outstanding example of the Shingle style. It was designed by Boston architect James Murray, whose family may have been members of its congregation.

OPEN SPACE

The farming heritage of open land in Roslindale and West Roxbury gave the neighborhood many land-use possibilities. Roslindale shares the Arnold Arboretum with Jamaica Plain. The establishment of Gethsemane Cemetery on the Brook Farm site gave rise to a green belt of Christian and Jewish cemeteries along the Charles River, and the related greenhouse and monument industries are still evident near Lagrange Street.

The open land near Dedham also found unusual uses. A unique 20th-century development is the area

known as The Grove (bounded by Centre, Grove, and Stimson streets), with winding, unpaved roads and small frame houses, many built as part of a camp dating from the 1910s and '20s. At about the same time, the Caledonian Club developed a recreational complex nearby along the Charles River, including a running track, grandstand, and dance hall; it is now the site of the Boston Trailer Park.

PARKWAYS AND MAIN STREETS

The parkway system came to the area with the turn-of-the-century West Roxbury Parkway. In the 1930s, the VFW Parkway was constructed in West Roxbury and the American Legion Highway was cut through Roslindale.

Even with the parkway system, much of the commercial streetscape has been maintained in Roslindale Village. In the 1950s, this was a retail center for all of southwest Boston, and Dedham and Milton as well. The 1968 opening of the Dedham Mall was a major blow to the area's commercial vitality, but fortunately buildings were not destroyed. Since the launch of the Roslindale Village Main Street Program in the mid-1980s, the commercial area has been gradually revitalized, and the reactivation of commuter rail service in 1987 has given the neighborhood the same kind of boost the Bussey Bridge disaster did 100 years earlier.



◀ **The Georgian Revival-style Masonic Building has marked the intersection of Birch and Belgrade streets in Roslindale Village since 1899.**