

# James Blake House

## Boston Landmarks Commission Study Report



Report of the Boston Landmarks Commission  
on the Potential Designation of

THE JAMES BLAKE HOUSE  
as a  
LANDMARK

under Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975

Approved: Mauro Myers Feb. 21, 1978  
(Exec. Director) (Date)

Approved: Pauline Chase Harnell Feb. 21, 78  
(Chairman) (Date)

## CONTENTS

- 1.0 Location of the Property
- 2.0 Description
- 3.0 Significance
- 4.0 Economic Status
- 5.0 Planning Context
- 6.0 Alternative Approaches
- 7.0 Recommendations
- 8.0 Bibliography
- 9.0 General Standards and Criteria
- 10.0 Specific Standards and Criteria

## 1.0 LOCATION OF THE PROPERTY

1.1 Address: 210 East Cottage Street, Dorchester  
Assessor's Parcel Number(s): 2942

1.2 Area in Which the Property is Located:

The James Blake House is located in Richardson Park, at the southeast corner of Edward Everett Square in North Dorchester. Edward Everett Square, a busy commercial intersection, is formed by the intersection of five arterials which connect to Columbia Point, South Boston's Andrew Square; the South End, Roxbury, and Upham's Corner.

The surrounding residential neighborhoods are characterized by a predominance of freestanding wood-frame single, two- and three-family dwellings dating from the 1870's to 1930.

The area is serviced by the Columbia Station on the MBTA Red Line, as well as by bus routes linking Edward Everett Square with South Boston, the South End, and Franklin Park.

1.3 Maps Showing Location: attached

**The James Blake House**  
Edward Everett Square, Dorchester



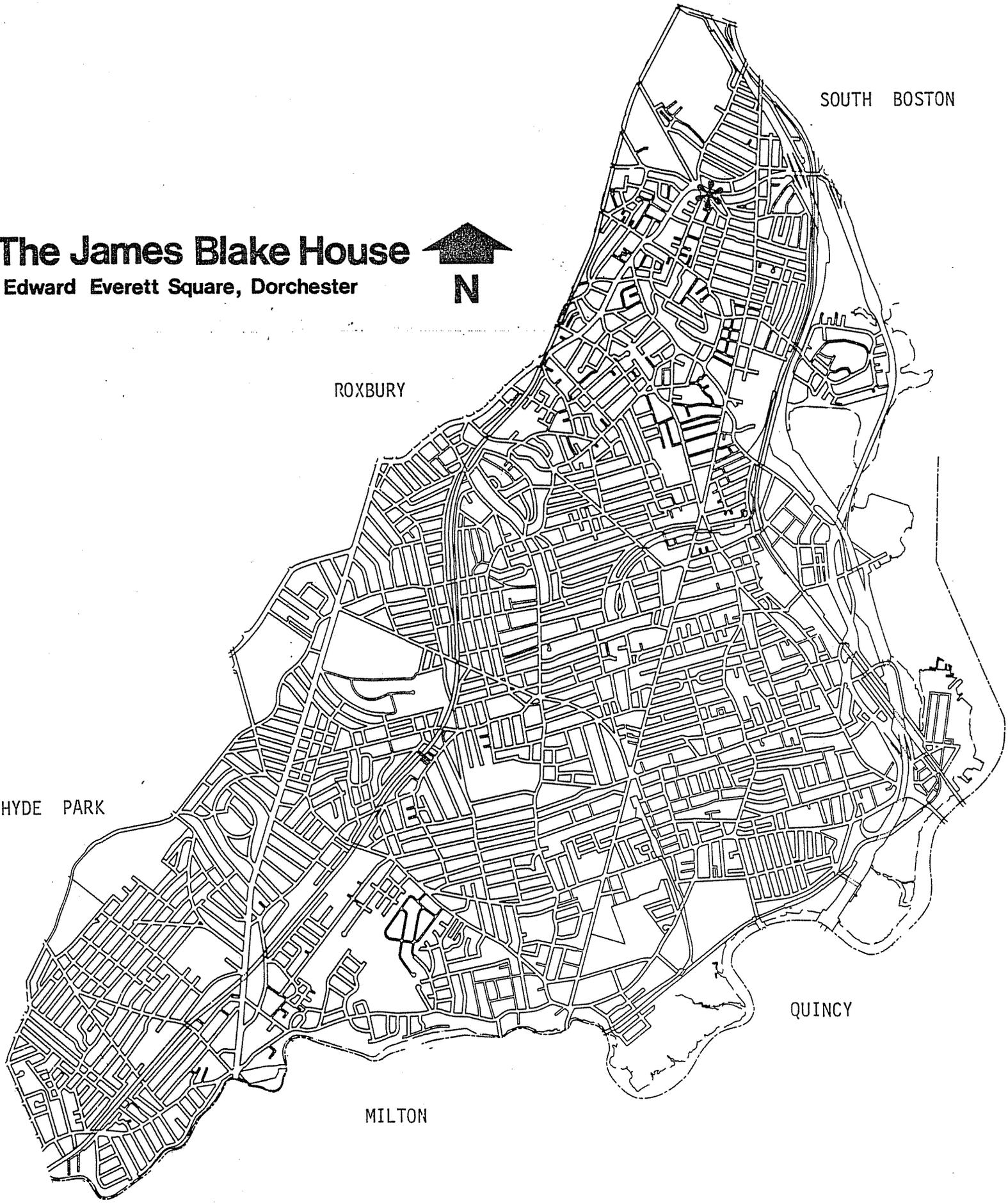
SOUTH BOSTON

ROXBURY

HYDE PARK

QUINCY

MILTON





**The James Blake House**  
Edward Everett Square, Dorchester



## 2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY

### 2.1 Type and Use

The James Blake House is a single-family dwelling of timber-frame construction dating from the mid-17th century, which is currently used as a house museum on the ground floor, with living quarters for a resident caretaker on the second floor. The house is situated within a small (46,000 sq. ft.) city-owned park.

### 2.2 Physical Description

The James Blake House is a two-story, central chimney, gable-roof dwelling of timber-frame construction, sited at the approximate center of Richardson Park, a small, triangular, city-owned park which slopes gently toward its center and contains a few scattered mature trees, a statue of Edward Everett and a 19th century flagpole near its apex. The Blake House is surrounded by a chain link fence and shrubbery, and is shaded partially by trees.

The house is on a rectangular plan, three bays wide and one bay deep. It measures 38 feet by 20 feet and faces northeast towards Pond Street. All elevations are covered by dark-stained wood shingles, with a slate roof which replaces earlier wood shingles. Eave and raking trim consists of a narrow wood frieze beneath a wooden gutter. The house stands on a non-original stone block foundation with a central entrance in the front surrounded by a simple raised molding, and a rear doorway set left of center. Windows are lead-set, diamond-pane casements with molded trim and slipsills. The front facade has nearly symmetrical fenestration, with pairs of equal-sized windows in the end bays of each floor and a single, second-floor window above the slightly offset central entrance. The remaining elevations are somewhat asymmetrical, with one off-center window on each floor and in the gables of the side elevations, and two offset windows on each floor in the rear.

Both the first- and second-floor, interior plans consist of a large room on either side of the central chimney, with a small room located in the space behind it. The central stairhall in front of the chimney contains an enclosed wooden stair running from cellar to attic and butting against the northeast face of the brick chimney. Floor planking is of modern hardwood on the first floor, and random-width, pine planking on the second. Doors are of batten construction, and all but one date to the turn-of-the-century restoration. Walls are finished with rough, painted plaster with the exception of the fireplace walls, which have painted, vertical sheathing of varying vintage - some early or original, and some dating from the 19th century, possibly from the period of the house's restoration. Main-framing members are exposed throughout the

house, with finely chamfered summer beams which have lamb's-tongue, chamfer ends, and chamfered and molded posts. First floor joists are exposed, while those on the second floor are covered by later plaster. Some original door hardware also survives, including large strap hinges on an early batten door, and butterfly hinges on an attic door. The present chimney stack is not original, and has four fireplaces; those on the first floor have splayed sides and side-beehive ovens, while those on the second floor are smaller and have splayed sides as well.

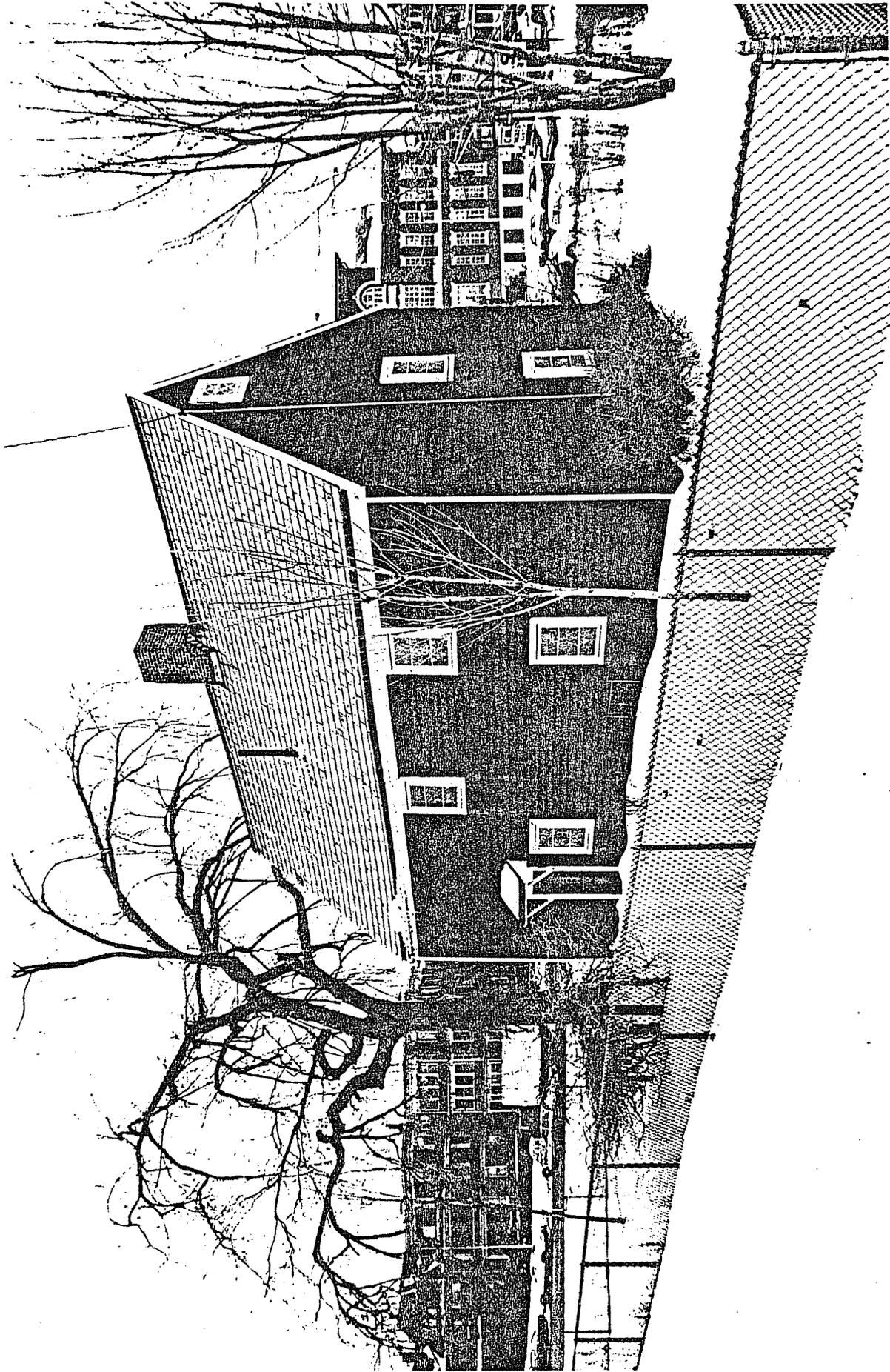
The house has a full basement, and an attic with exposed-roof framing which provides evidence of the house's original framing system, as well as of later modifications.

2.3 Photographs: attached



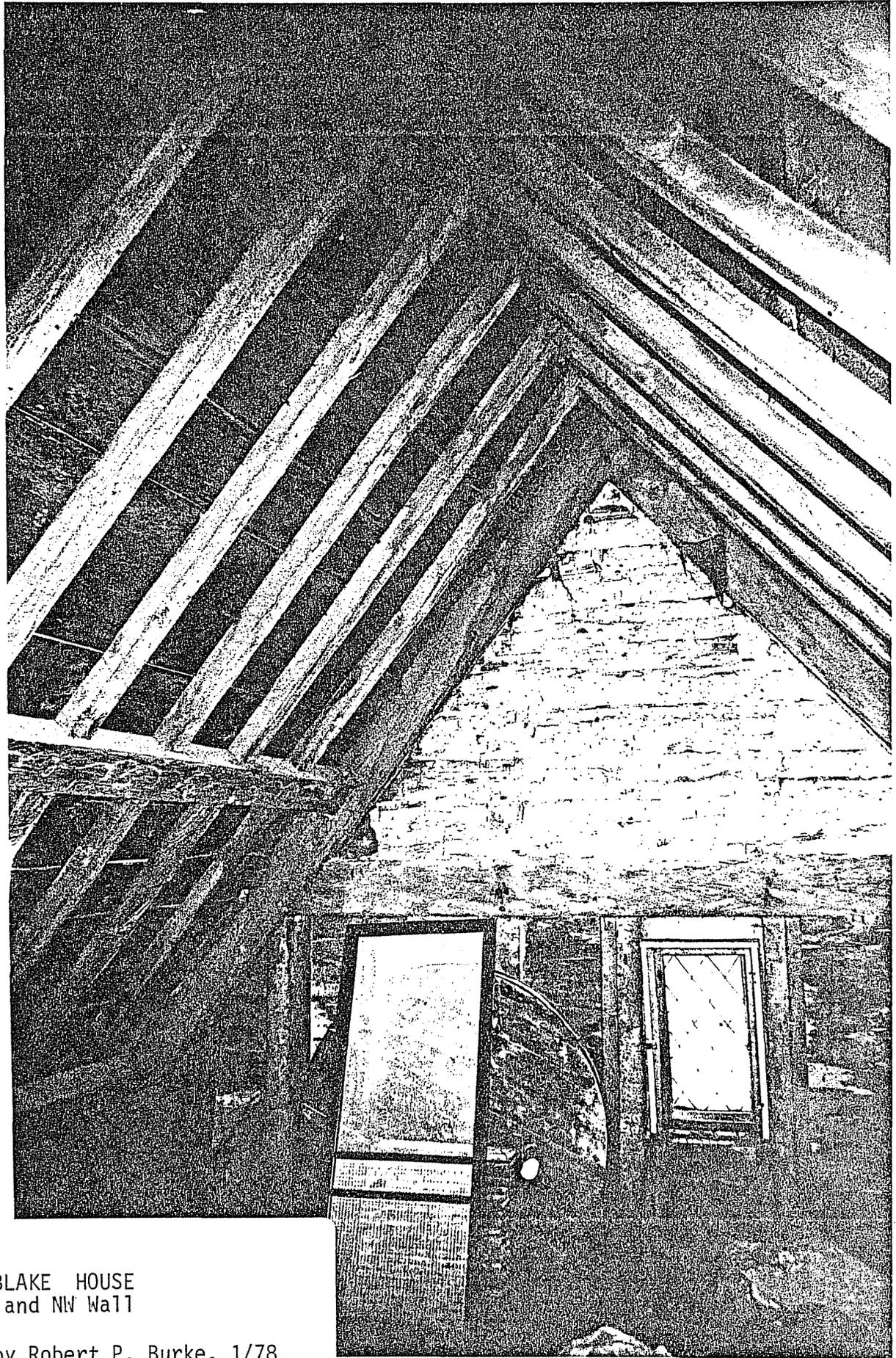
THE JAMES BLAKE HOUSE  
Front (NE) Elevation

B.L.C. Photo by Robert P. Burke, 1/78



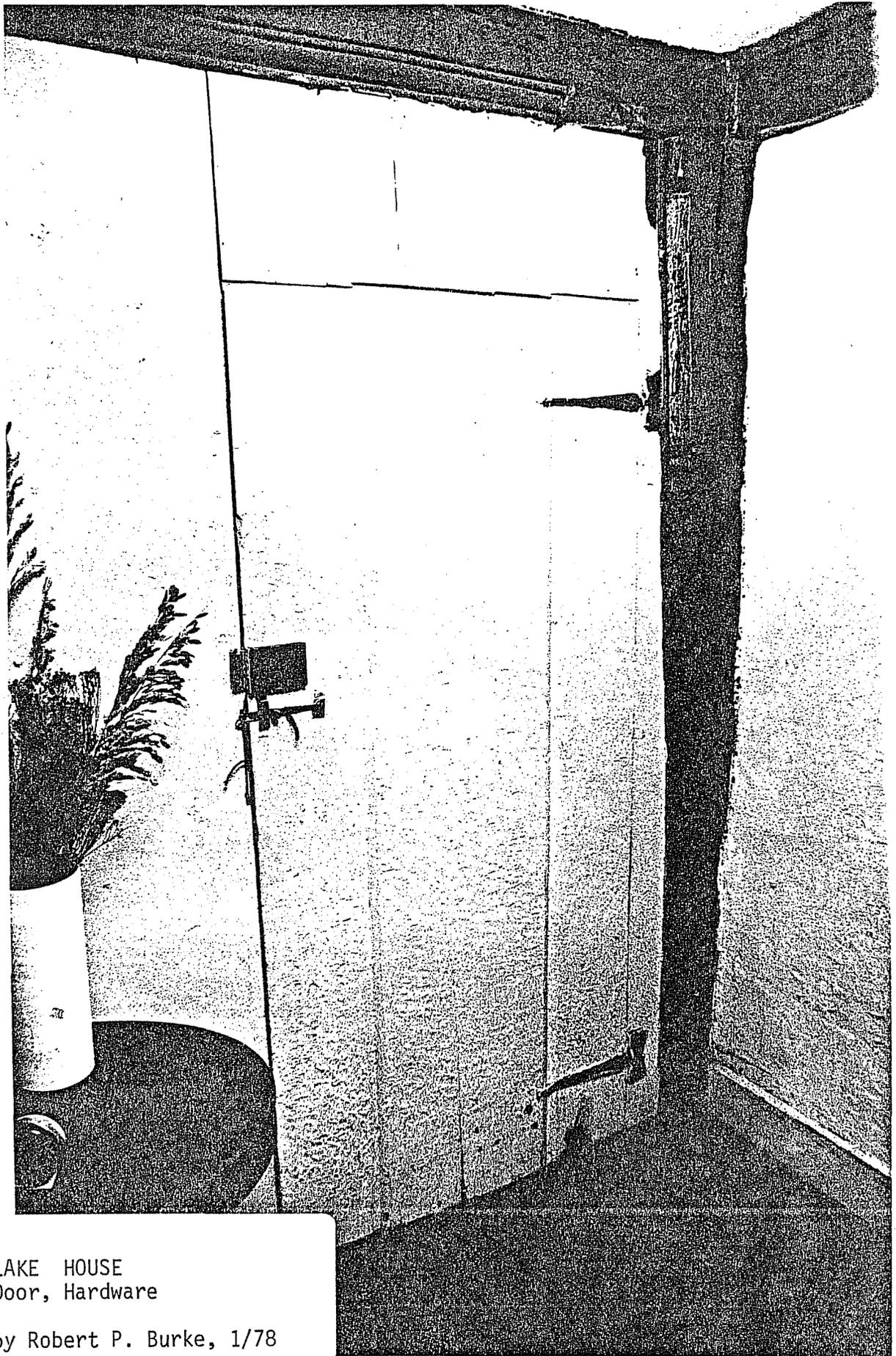
THE JAMES BLAKE HOUSE  
Rear (SW) Elevation

B.L.C. Photo by Robert P. Burke, 1/78



THE JAMES BLAKE HOUSE  
Attic Framing and NW Wall

B.L.C. Photo by Robert P. Burke, 1/78



THE JAMES BLAKE HOUSE  
Early Batten Door, Hardware

B.L.C. Photo by Robert P. Burke, 1/78

### 3.0 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROPERTY

#### 3.1 Historic Associations

The James Blake House, though not associated with any single person or event of major historical importance, nevertheless has historical significance purely by virtue of its age. Built in about 1650, the house is one of two Dorchester houses of the same approximate date which are the oldest standing structures in Boston. Furthermore, it is one of a relatively small number of its type - the post-Medieval, timber-frame house - surviving anywhere in New England. Occupied by the family which built it for over 175 years, the house is also rich in local historical associations.

The house has significance as well to the history of architectural preservation as a still-intact, early restoration attempt, and as the first historic building to be moved in order to prevent its demolition.

Though historical sources are insufficient to document positively the house's traditional 1650 construction date, extant deed, probate, geneological, and town records, as well as dating analysis of the house's construction techniques support the mid-century date.

The house's original occupant was James Blake, a deacon who was born in Pitminster, England in 1624, emigrating with his parents to Dorchester in the 1630's. James married Elizabeth Clap (the daughter of Deacon Edward Clap and niece of Roger Clap) in 1651, and it has been suggested that the house was built in anticipation of this marriage. Active in public affairs (serving, among other things, as Town Selectman, Deputy to the General Court, and constable) James willed the house to his son in 1700, who in turn divided it between his two sons in 1718. A subsequent Blake sold his half of the house out of the family in 1772, while the other half stayed in the family's ownership and occupation until 1825, when it was sold to the owner of the first half. After changing hands once again in 1892, the house was sold to the City of Boston in 1895, marking an end to the first phase of its history.

The Dorchester Historical Society, which had itself been incorporated only four years before, became interested in the house when it learned that the City planned to demolish it in order to build greenhouses. An agreement was reached giving the Society the house itself along with the right to move it at its own expense to a nearby city-owned park, which had been designed by the noted landscape architectural firm of Olmsted Associates, founded by Frederick Law Olmsted. In 1895 or early 1896, following the floating of a bond issue by the Society to fund it, the house was moved from its original site on the west side of present-day Massachusetts Avenue, just north of the Venetian Gardens Restaurant, to its present site

in Richardson Park, 400 yards to the southeast. This is the first recorded instance of a historic structure being moved from its original site in order to rescue it from demolition.

There followed a fifteen-year campaign to restore the interior and exterior of the house. During the moving and restoration process two side ells (one of which pre-dated 1750) were removed, the chimney was partially rebuilt, the existing sash windows were replaced with diamond-lead casements, clapboards were replaced with wood shingles, and much interior and exterior woodwork and hardware was replaced.

During this restoration, the two upstairs chambers were fitted for use as caretaker's living quarters, while one downstairs room was furnished as a library and meeting room for the Society, and the other as a museum containing the Society's collections of Colonial-era furnishings and memorabilia. Though no longer used as a meeting hall, the house is still maintained by a live-in caretaker as a museum, housing a large part of the Society's collection.

Very little of the house's fabric has been altered since this early restoration effort, with the result that it serves not only as an important 17th century artifact, but also as an interesting and informative example of turn-of-the-century restoration techniques and approaches.

The statue of the famed orator and statesman Edward Everett (1794-1865) was cast in Munich by the sculptor William Wetmore Story in 1867. It spent the next 25 years in the Public Garden, after which it was placed in the center of the newly re-named Edward Everett Square. By the early 1930s, it had become enough of a hazard to automobile traffic that it was removed and placed in Richardson Park, where it has remained to the present.

### 3.2 Architectural Significance

The Blake House is of major local, regional, and national architectural significance, particularly to the study of post-Medieval New England, timber-frame building, as one among only a handful of extant New England structures pre-dating 1665, and as the earliest of only two extant mid-17th century timber-frame structures using framing methods derived from the West of England.

Although no precise date for the house's construction can be documented, historical research, tradition, and a dating analysis of architectural features all indicate a date of 1650. The Pierce House, (located on Oakton Avenue, also in Dorchester) has the same approximate date, making these two houses by far the oldest standing structures in the City

of Boston. More importantly, this date places the Blake House's construction well within the first generation of English immigration to New England, a factor which is of considerable importance to 17th century scholars - it means that the house was built by immigrant carpenters. Because the 17th century timber-frame house was the earliest prevalent architectural form in New England, directly derived from English post-Medieval house building techniques, the fact that the Blake House was built in the New World by carpenters trained in England assumes great importance in illuminating the ways in which these Old World construction techniques were adapted for use under different conditions in America.

The fact that the house displays construction techniques characteristic of the West of England (which had its own distinct building tradition) further increases its value to scholars, since the great majority of extant 17th century New England houses (as the great majority of 17th century New England settlers) were East Anglian in origin.\* The Blake House is in fact the earliest of only two known West-of-England-derived houses to survive in Massachusetts - the other being the 1654 Coffin House in Newbury.

West-of-England-derived houses are characterized in general by their liberal use of timber (reflected both in the stoutness of individual structural members and their unusually close spacing, and resulting from the fact that the timber shortage in 16th century England was less severe in the West) as well as by the use of certain distinctive joinery methods. In the Blake House, the former is manifest in the thickness of the girts, summer beams, and posts, and in the size and spacing of attic framing members. Characteristic West-of-England joints appearing in the house include the bridled scarf joint used to splice the two segments of the front and rear plates together, and the use of four pegs to secure major mortise-and-tenon joints throughout the house.

The Blake House has a number of other noteworthy features as well. In addition to having much intact original material (particularly on the interior), including almost all of the structural frame, some door and other interior woodwork, hardware, and even wattle-and-daub attic insulation, the house also has at least two features which indicate its early date: door openings which were framed rather than just cut into partition walls, and narrowly-spaced floor joists. The telltale signs of original facade gables (removed between 1748 and 1857) are evidence that the house was a substantial one for its day.

---

\* East Anglia refers to the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Cambridgeshire, while the West of England (or 'the West country') comprises Somerset, Devonshire, Cornwall, and Wiltshire.

### 3.3 Relationship to the Criteria for Landmark Designation

The James Blake House is clearly eligible for Landmark designation, under the criteria established in Section 4, Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975, in that it is a structure which:

- a. is included on the National Register of Historic Places
- b. possesses elements of architectural design and craftsmanship embodying distinctive characteristics of a period, style, and method of construction which make it inherently valuable for study.

#### 4.0 ECONOMIC STATUS

##### 4.1 Current Assessed Value and Property Tax:

Land	\$46,000
Improvements	\$ 2,500
Total	\$48,500

Annual Taxes: The Blake House is tax-exempt due to its ownership by a private, non-profit organization; the land beneath it is publicly owned and is also tax-exempt.

##### 4.2 Current Ownership and Status:

The James Blake House is owned and maintained by the Dorchester Historical Society, while the land beneath and surrounding it, comprising Richardson Park, is owned by the City of Boston and maintained by the Parks Department. This somewhat unusual arrangement resulted from an 1895 agreement allowing the Society to move the house on to City property in order to prevent its demolition.

## 5.0 PLANNING CONTEXT

### 5.1 Background

Originally settled in 1630 by Puritans from Devonshire, England, Dorchester in the mid-17th century extended south from Boston almost to the Rhode Island border, with later towns such as Quincy, Dedham, and Foxboro being set off as population increased. The first nucleus of settlement was on Allen's Plain, the flat area between Savin and Meeting House Hills, leading up into Dorchester Neck - and more specifically, around the present-day intersection of Pond, Pleasant, and East Cottage streets, just outside of Edward Everett Square. Other 17th century roadways in the area include the present Boston, Crescent, and Stoughton Streets. The intersection of Boston with Cottage and Pond Street was originally referred to as "Five Corners". The North Dorchester Burying Ground, laid out in 1633 at the corner of Stoughton and Boston Streets, is the only other major topographical feature which survives in the area from the 17th century.

Dorchester throughout the 18th and early 19th centuries was essentially composed of small farms laid out in strips along a network of roads which connected small, rural settlements or milltowns (at Lower Mills and Mattapan Square). This area was also dotted with occasional country estates of the Boston gentry (though most of those were in Roxbury due to the lack of a direct land connection between Dorchester and Boston before the filling of the South Bay). One of these which survives is the impressive Shirley-Eustis House (formerly Shirley Place) off Dudley Street near the Roxbury/Dorchester boundary, built by the Royal Governor William Shirley in 1747.

Toward the middle of the 19th century, a number of events and circumstances combined to change the face of Dorchester from a cluster of rural villages to a more densely settled middle-class suburb. Firstly, the emergence of a large, middle-class of merchants and manufacturers contemporaneous with the immigration of successive waves of Irish poor during the Potato Famines of the late 1840s and 1850s, created tremendous housing pressure in the central city. The railroad and the streetcar provided the agents for relieving this pressure, by serving as relatively reliable and affordable transport into and out of town for the emerging middle class wishing to leave the congested central city but lacking the means or the time for a private carriage and team of horses.

Many of these middle-class families built homes on Dorchester's hilltops, particularly Savin and Jones Hill, commuting first along the 1844 Old Colony line (which ran along the present MBTA Red Line right-of-way, with stops at Crescent and Savin

Hill Avenues), and later by means of the post-Civil War New York and New England line (along the present Midlands Branch), with clusters of small, mansarded, wood-frame "commuter cottages" springing up around each railroad station.

In 1869, largely due to pressure from land speculators, Dorchester voted to annex itself to Boston, further opening itself to development. By this time, streetcar companies had begun to initiate regular service along major arteries. The first such line to pass through Five Corners was the Metropolitan Railway Company line along Boston Street between South Boston and Bowdoin Street, in existence before the Civil War. In 1878, Massachusetts Avenue (then called East Chester Park) was extended from Washington Street to Five Corners, and within a decade it too carried a streetcar line. By this time many of the farm and remaining large houselots around Five Corners had begun to be subdivided and built up with modest, single and double houses, first in Mansard and Italiante, and later in Queen Anne Revival styles.

With the emergence of a new class of tradesmen and small shopkeepers (many of them the sons and grandsons of the Irish, French Canadian, and German immigrants whose arrival had created pressure for Dorchester's early residential development), and with the expansion and electrification of the streetcar lines, a new building form began to proliferate in the area: The three-decker, or freestanding, wood-frame, three-family house. Particularly in the years between about 1900 and World War I, the side lots and gardens of existing houses, as well as newly-subdivided parcels on newly-laid out side streets in the Edward Everett Square area became filled with rows of three-deckers with Colonial Revival detailing and two- or two-and-one-half-story, front porches. (In 1894, the name of Five Corners was changed to Edward Everett Square in honor of the 100th anniversary of the birth of the great orator and statesman, who was born nearby).

Some amount of residential development on remaining parcels continued in the area after World War I, as well as some commercial development along major arteries and intersections such as Dorchester Avenue and Upham's Corner.

Since World War II, with the advent of highway construction, VA and FHA mortgages, widespread automobile ownership, and an influx of poor Blacks and Hispanics to the central city, new neighborhood growth has occurred chiefly in the suburbs, at the expense of older neighborhoods such as Dorchester. These older areas have in turn suffered from housing disinvestment and abandonment, population loss, and commercial center decline.

## 5.2 Current Planning Issues

The neighborhood surrounding Edward Everett Square and the Blake House is a basically stable white-ethnic, working-class community. Principal ethnic groups are Irish, Polish, Canadians, and Italians (in that order), with a median family income which approximately equals the city-wide average. The area has a slightly higher proportion of children under 18 years of age, and a slightly lower proportion of elderly than the city as a whole.

The area's housing stock is about equally divided between single- and two-family houses, and three-deckers. 75% of the housing is owner occupied, while 85% is in basically good repair (defined as needing less than \$1,000 of repair work). Abandonment is moderate, although there are a number of vacant lots where abandoned and/or dilapidated structures have recently been demolished by the City.

Major commercial areas such as Dorchester Avenue, Columbia Road, and Upham's Corner suffer from business exodus - a 45% loss on Dorchester Avenue since 1962 - and resultant physical blight, due to their inability to compete effectively with auto-oriented shopping centers and suburban malls.

Public transportation service in the area is good, with Columbia Station on the MBTA Red Line, bus service from Andrew Station in South Boston along Columbia Road to Ashmont, along Massachusetts Avenue between Edward Everett Square and Boston City Hospital, and along Dorchester Avenue, and easy auto access to the Southeast Expressway.

The Boston Redevelopment Authority, in its recent planning report, "Dorchester/Upham's Corner District Profile and Proposed Neighborhood Improvement Program" has identified three major problem areas for the Columbia-Upham's Corner neighborhood surrounding the Blake House: inadequate public and recreational facilities, housing disinvestment, and commercial center decline.

Public and recreational facilities which are needed in the area (or existing ones needing to be upgraded) include public indoor recreational facilities, neighborhood parks and tot lots, a branch public library in the Upham's Corner area, and substantial street, sidewalk, and lighting improvements. Funding is currently being pursued through the Community Development Block Grant Program and other sources, in order to meet these needs.

Two major aspects of the problem of housing decline in the area are seen as housing abandonment, and irresponsible ownership and maintenance by absentee landlords. The area

is fortunate in being included within the Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS) target area. A private, non-profit agency with public funding, NHS provides homeowner counseling, financial assistance, and rehabilitation assistance in conjunction with the city's Housing Improvement Program, in order to stabilize the neighborhood and upgrade its housing stock. In existence since 1975, NHS has already demonstrated its effectiveness in working towards these goals.

Finally, with respect to commercial decline, the BRA is currently involved in efforts on a number of fronts to revitalize neighborhood commercial areas, particularly Upham's Corner and Dorchester Avenue. These include: improved parking facilities, tot lot, traffic and lighting improvements, and the renovation of the Strand Theater, all in Upham's Corner, and a soon-to-be-published revitalization plan for Dorchester Avenue.

There are also two developments which will potentially have a much more direct effect on the Blake House. Most importantly, the Dorchester Historical Society, which owns the house, is currently considering raising funds to move it from Richardson Park to its own compound on Boston Street. The house is felt to be somewhat vulnerable in its present open, unprotected, and highly visible location, and has been the victim of occasional vandalism by neighborhood youths - mostly in the form of rock-throwing - as well as of unintentional damage from children playing ball in back of it. Arson is also considered a possible danger by the Society, which is inclined to feel that the house could be kept under much closer surveillance within the Society's own compound, an already fenced-in and protected area containing two other historic houses which the Society owns. The Society estimates that \$15,000 to \$20,000 would be necessary to move the house, requiring a sustained fundraising effort lasting several years. Partially due to scheduled improvements to Richardson Park (see below) and partially because incidents of vandalism have declined in recent months, the Society has deferred a final decision on the matter for the time being.

The City of Boston Parks Department has recently begun work on improvements to Richardson Park, scheduled for completion in early fall of 1978. These include regrading and sodding of the park, new tree and shrub planting, placement of timber bollards to direct pedestrian traffic through the park, and improvements to the flagpole and statue at the park's apex. These improvements, particularly the placement of trees, shrubs, and bollards, have been designed with an awareness of the need to protect and enhance the Blake House by screening it from pedestrian activity and ballplaying.

### 5.3 Relationship to Current Zoning

The James Blake House rests on the border between two residential zones; an R-.8 zone, which permits one- two- and three-family dwellings up to a maximum density of 8/10s of the site area, and an H-1-50 zone, permitting apartments or other dwellings with a maximum Floor Area Ratio of 1 and a height restriction of 50 feet.

## 6.0 ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

### 6.1 Alternatives

Both the significance of the Blake House, which is listed on the National Register, and chronological isolation from surrounding structures limit the designation category to that of Landmark. A separate designation of the house's extremely significant interior could be pursued in conjunction with this. The park itself, which surrounds the house, could be designated as a protection area for the purpose of creating a buffer zone around the house. The Commission also retains the option of not designating the building as a Landmark, or of designating only the exterior, or only the interior of the building.

### 6.2 Impact of Alternatives

Designation of the Blake House as a Landmark would serve at least two purposes; it would bring added recognition and public attention to the house, and it would give the Landmarks Commission a role in protecting and determining the house's future.

## 7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission recommend that the James Blake House be designated a Landmark under the provisions of Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975, and that the house's entire interior also be designated an Interior Landmark. The staff further recommends that the designation of Richardson Park as a Protection Area be explored. The standards and criteria recommended for administering the regulatory functions provided for in Chapter 772 are attached as sections 9.0 and 10.0.

## 8.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Blake, Francis E.: Increase Blake of Boston, His Ancestors and Descendants, with a full account of William Blake of Dorchester and his five children. (Boston: Press of David Clapp and Son, 1898).

Blake, Samuel: Blake Family. A Genealogical History of William Blake, of Dorchester, and His Descendants, comprising all the Descendants of Samuel and Patience (White) Blake. With An Appendix, Containing Wills, &c. Of Members of the Family, and Other Interesting Matter (Boston: Ebenezer Clapp, Jr., Printed by David Clapp, 1857).

Historic American Building Survey, "Historian's Work Sheet" for Blake House, 1963

Orcutt, William Dana: Good Old Dorchester: A Narrative History of the Town 1630-1893 (Cambridge, The University Press, 1893; second edition 1908).

James H. Stark: The History of the Old Blake House, (Boston, 1907)

Zimmer, Edward: A Documentary Study of the James Blake House in Dorchester: Title, Structure, and Restoration unpublished, 1977)

3/8/78

*James Blake  
Housh*

9.0 BOSTON LANDMARKS COMMISSION - STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

# 20

9.1 Introductory Statement on Standards and Criteria to be Used in Evaluating Applications for Certificates

Per Sections 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the enabling statute (Chapter 772 of the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for 1975), Standards and Criteria must be adopted for each Landmark Designation which shall be applied by the Commission in evaluating proposed changes to the property. Before a Certificate of Design Approval or Certificate of the Exemption can be issued for such changes, the changes must be reviewed by the Commission with regard to their conformance to the purposes of the statute.

The Standards and Criteria established thus note those features which must be conserved and/or enhanced to maintain the viability of the Landmark Designation. The intent of these guidelines is to help local officials, designers, and individual property owners to identify the characteristics that have led to designation, and thus to identify the limitation to the changes that can be made to them. It should be emphasized that conformance to the Standards and Criteria alone does not necessarily insure approval, nor are they absolute, but any request for variance from them must demonstrate the reasons for, and advantages gained by, such variance. The Commission's Certificate of Design Approval is only granted after careful review of each application and public hearing, in accordance with the statute.

As intended by the statute a wide variety of buildings and features are included within the area open to Landmark Designation, and an equally wide range exists in the latitude allowed for change. Some properties of truly exceptional architectural and/or historical value will permit only the most minor modifications, while for some others the Commission encourages changes and additions with a contemporary approach, consistent with the properties' existing features and changed uses.

In general, the intent of the Standards and Criteria is to preserve existing qualities that cause designation of a property; however, in some cases they have been so structured as to encourage the removal of additions that have lessened the integrity of the property.

Introductory Statement on Standards and Criteria  
page two

It is recognized that changes will be required in designated properties for a wide variety of reasons, not all of which are under the complete control of the Commission or the owners. Primary examples are:

- a) Building code conformance and safety requirements.
- b) Changes necessitated by the introduction of modern mechanical and electrical systems.
- c) Changes due to proposed new uses of a property.

The response to these requirements may, in some cases, present conflicts with the Standards and Criteria for a particular property. The Commission's evaluation of an application will be based upon the degree to which such changes are in harmony with the character of the property.

In some cases, priorities have been assigned within the Standards and Criteria as an aid to property owners in identifying the most critical design features.

The Standards and Criteria have been divided into two levels: (1) those general ones that are common to almost all landmark designations (with three different categories for buildings, building interiors and landscape features); and (2) those specific ones that apply to each particular property that is designated. In every case the Specific Standard and Criteria for a particular property shall take precedence over the General ones if there is a conflict.

3/8/78

BOSTON LANDMARKS COMMISSION

9.2 General Standards and Criteria

A. APPROACH

1. The design approach to the property should begin with the premise that the features of historical and architectural significance described within the Study Report must be preserved. In general this will minimize the exterior alterations that will be allowed.
2. Changes and additions to the property and its environment which have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history of the property and the neighborhood. These changes to the property may have developed significance in their own right, and this significance should be recognized and respected. ("Later integral features" shall be the term used to convey this concept.)
3. Deteriorated material or architectural features, whenever possible, should be repaired rather than replaced or removed.
4. When replacement of architectural features is necessary it should be based on physical or documentary evidence of original or later integral features.
5. New materials should, whenever possible, match the material being replaced in physical properties, design, color, texture and other visual qualities. The use of imitation replacement materials is generally discouraged.
6. New additions or alterations should not disrupt the essential form and integrity of the property and should be compatible with the size, scale, color, material and character of the property and its environment.
7. Contemporary design is encouraged for new additions; thus, they must not necessarily be imitative of an earlier style or period.

General Standards and Criteria  
Page two

8. New additions or alterations should be done in such a way that if they were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property would be unimpaired.
9. Priority shall be given to those portions of the property which are visible from public ways or which it can be reasonably inferred may be in the future.
10. Color will be considered as part of specific standards and criteria that apply to a particular property.

B. EXTERIOR WALLS

I. MASONRY

1. Retain whenever possible, original masonry and mortar.
2. Duplicate original mortar in composition, color, texture, joint size, joint profile and method of application.
3. Repair and replace deteriorated masonry with material which matches as closely as possible.
4. When necessary to clean masonry, use gentlest method possible. Do not sandblast. Doing so changes the visual quality of the material and accelerates deterioration. Test patches should always be carried out well in advance of cleaning (including exposure to all seasons if possible).
5. Avoid applying waterproofing or water repellent coating to masonry, unless required to solve a specific problem. Such coatings can accelerate deterioration.
6. In general, do not paint masonry surfaces. Painting masonry surfaces will be considered only when there is documentary evidence that this treatment was used at some point in the history of the property.

## II NON-MASONRY

1. Retain and repair original or later integral material whenever possible.
2. Retain and repair, when necessary, deteriorated material with material that matches.

### C. ROOFS

1. Preserve the integrity of the original or later integral roof shape.
2. Retain original roof covering whenever possible.
3. Whenever possible, replace deteriorated roof covering with material which matches the old in composition, size shape, color, texture, and installation detail.
4. Preserve architectural features which give the roof its character, such as cornices, gutters, iron filigree, cupolas, dormers, brackets.

### D. WINDOWS AND DOORS

1. Retain original and later integral door and window openings where they exist. Do not enlarge or reduce door and window openings for the purpose of fitting stock window sash or doors, or air conditioners.
2. Whenever possible, repair and retain original or later integral window elements such as sash, lintels, sills, architraves, glass, shutters and other decorations and hardware. When replacement of materials or elements is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
3. On some properties consideration will be given to changing from the original window details to other expressions such as to a minimal anonymous treatment by the use of a single light, when consideration of cost, energy conservation or appropriateness override the desire for historical accuracy. In such cases, consideration must be given to the resulting effect on the interior as well as the exterior of the building.

E. PORCHES, STEPS AND EXTERIOR ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS

1. Retain and repair porches and steps that are original or later integral features including such items as railings, balusters, columns, posts, brackets, roofs, ironwork, benches, fountains, statues and decorative items.

F. SIGNS, MARQUEES AND AWNINGS

1. Signs, marquees and awnings integral to the building ornamentation or architectural detailing shall be retained and repaired where necessary.
2. New signs, marquees and awnings shall not detract from the essential form of the building nor obscure its architectural features.
3. New signs, marquees and awnings shall be of a size and material compatible with the building and its current use.
4. Signs, marquees and awnings applied to the building shall be applied in such a way that they could be removed without damaging the building.
5. All signs added to the building shall be part of one system of design, or reflect a design concept appropriate to the communication intent.
6. Lettering forms or typeface will be evaluated for the specific use intended, but generally shall either be contemporary or relate to the period of the building or its later integral features.
7. Lighting of signs will be evaluated for the specific use intended, but generally illumination of a sign shall not dominate illumination of the building.
8. The foregoing notwithstanding, signs are viewed as the most appropriate vehicle for imaginative and creative expression, especially in structures being reused for purposes different from the original, and it is not the Commission's intent to stifle a creative approach to signage.

General Standards and Criteria  
page five

## G PENTHOUSES

1. The objective of preserving the integrity of the original or later integral roof shape shall provide the basic criteria in judging whether a penthouse can be added to a roof. Height of a building, prominence of roof form, and visibility shall govern whether a penthouse will be approved.
2. Minimizing or eliminating the visual impact of the penthouse is the general objective and the following guidelines shall be followed:
  - a) Location shall be selected where the penthouse is not visible from the street or adjacent buildings; set-backs shall be utilized.
  - b) Overall height or other dimensions shall be kept to a point where the penthouse is not seen from the street or adjacent buildings.
  - c) Exterior treatment shall relate to the materials, color and texture of the building or to other materials integral to the period and character of the building, typically used for appendages.
  - d) Openings in a penthouse shall relate to the building in proportion, type and size of opening, wherever visually apparent.

## H LANDSCAPE FEATURES

1. The general intent is to preserve the existing or later integral landscape features that enhance the landmark property.
2. It is recognized that often the environment surrounding the property has a character, scale and street pattern quite different from that existing when the building was constructed. Thus, changes must frequently be made to accommodate the new condition, and the landscape treatment can be seen as a transition feature between the landmark and its newer surroundings.

General Standards and Criteria  
page six

- 3. The existing landforms of the site shall not be altered unless shown to be necessary for maintenance of the landmark or site. Additional landforms will only be considered if they will not obscure the exterior of the landmark.
- 4. Original layout and materials of the walks, steps, and paved areas should be maintained. Consideration will be given to alterations if it can be shown that better site circulation is necessary and that the alterations will improve this without altering the integrity of the landmark.
- 5. Existing healthy plant materials should be maintained as long as possible. New plant materials should be added on a schedule that will assure a continuity in the original landscape design and its later adaptations.
- 6. Maintenance of, removal of, and additions to plant materials should consider maintaining existing vistas of the landmark.

I EXTERIOR LIGHTING

- 1. There are three aspects of lighting related to the exterior of the building:
  - a) Lighting fixtures as appurtenances to the building or elements of architectural ornamentation.
  - b) Quality of illumination on building exterior.
  - c) Interior lighting as seen from the exterior.
- 2. Wherever integral to the building, original lighting fixtures shall be retained. Supplementary illumination may be added where appropriate to the current use of the building.
- 3. New lighting shall conform to any of the following approaches as appropriate to the building and to the current or projected use:
  - a) Accurate representation of the original period, based on physical or documentary evidence.
  - b) Retention or restoration of fixtures which date from an interim installation and which are considered to be appropriate to the building and use.

General Standards and Criteria  
page seven

- c) New lighting fixtures which are contemporary in design and which illuminate the exterior of the building in a way which renders it visible at night and compatible with its environment.
4. If a fixture is to be replaced, the new exterior lighting shall be located where intended in the original design. If supplementary lighting is added, the new location shall fulfill the functional intent of the current use without obscuring the building form or architectural detailing.
5. Interior lighting shall only be reviewed when its character has a significant effect on the exterior of the building; that is, when the view of the illuminated fixtures themselves, or the quality and color of the light they produce, is clearly visible through the exterior fenestration.

J. REMOVAL OF LATER ADDITIONS AND ALTERATIONS

1. Each property will be separately studied to determine if later additions and alterations can, or should, be removed. It is not possible to provide one general guideline.
2. Factors that will be considered include:
  - a) Compatibility with the original property's integrity in scale, materials and character.
  - b) Historic association with the property.
  - c) Quality in the design and execution of the addition.
  - d) Functional usefulness.

## 10.0 SPECIFIC STANDARDS AND CRITERIA - THE JAMES BLAKE HOUSE

### 10.1 General

- a. Every attempt shall be made to preserve the structure's present form, construction details, and finish, particularly early material, or material dating from the house's 1895-1910 restoration.
- b. No alterations, additions, or removal of existing material will be permitted unless justified by need, public safety, or historical evidence. If undertaken, existing conditions shall first be carefully documented, and changes shall be supported by detailed physical and/or documentary evidence.
- c. Routine maintenance and necessary repair not materially affecting the house's architectural fabric shall be exempt from these regulations.

### 10.2 Exterior

- a. Exterior features, finishes on all facade elevations and the roof, including wood shingles, roofing slates, and window, door, and raking trim, shall be retained or replaced to match.
- b. Existing window openings and diamond-lead casements shall be retained or replaced to match. Protective window grates are acceptable, if required, but should be as unobtrusive as possible.
- c. All exterior masonry - stone foundation and brick chimney stack - shall be retained. Necessary repointing shall match existing mortar joints in size, color, profile, and mortar composition.
- d. No new facade or roof openings shall be permitted, except the restoration of previously-removed facade gables with dormer windows.

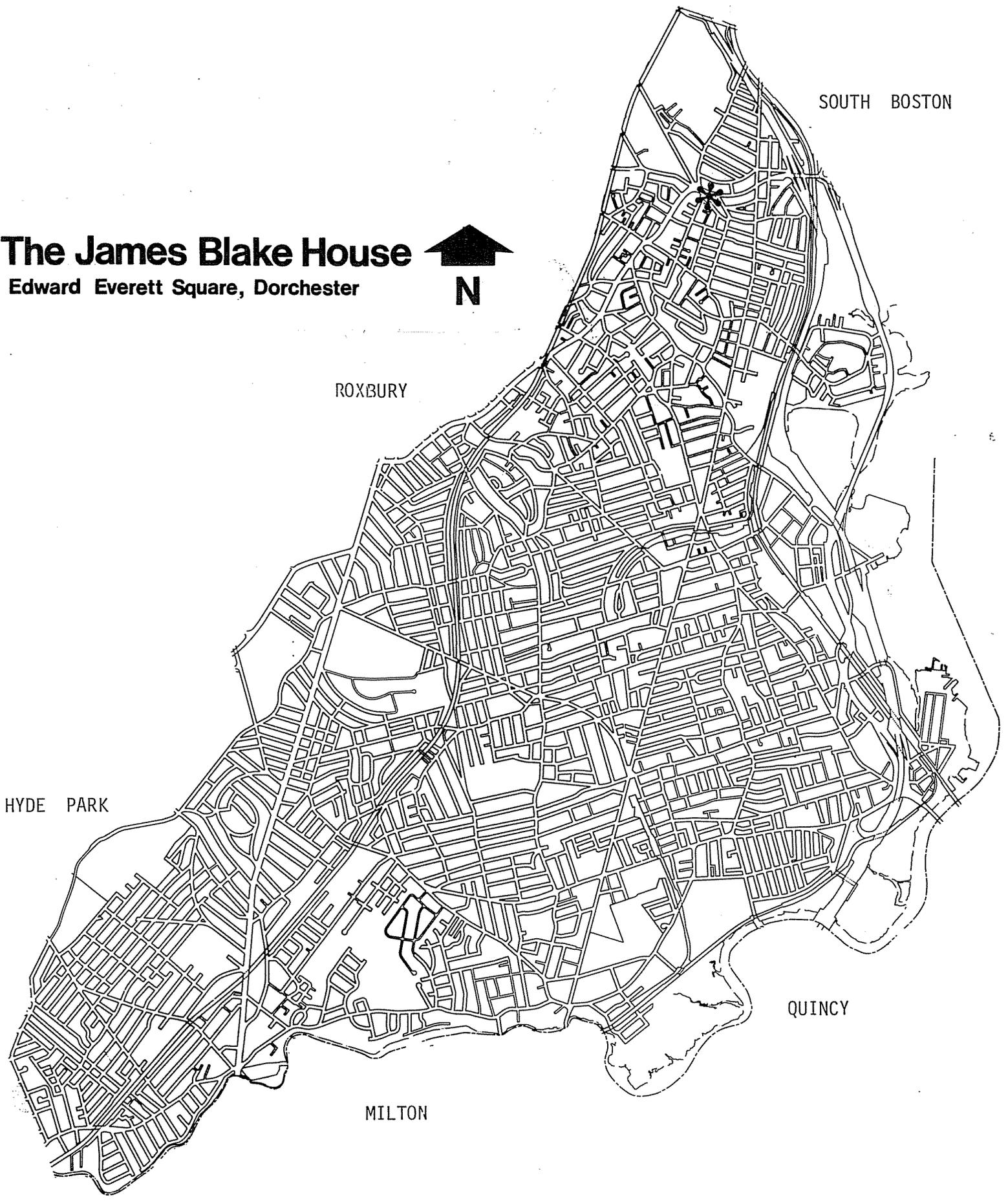
### 10.3 Interior

- a. All existing interior material and finishes in the basement, first and second floors, and the attic which date to the 1895-1910 restoration or before shall be retained in situ or replaced to match, including structural members, plaster walls, wood flooring, chimney and fireplaces, doors and other woodwork, hardware, paint, stain, and other finishes.

- b. Any material added after the restoration and no longer justified by need or historical evidence may be removed, provided it is carefully documented beforehand.
- c. Necessary installation of or repairs to mechanical systems such as plumbing, heat, or wiring should be undertaken in a way which minimizes their impact on the house's existing fabric. For instance, newly installed conduit should be exposed rather than concealed behind plaster walls.

# The James Blake House

Edward Everett Square, Dorchester



Small vertical text on the right edge of the map, likely a copyright notice or scale indicator.



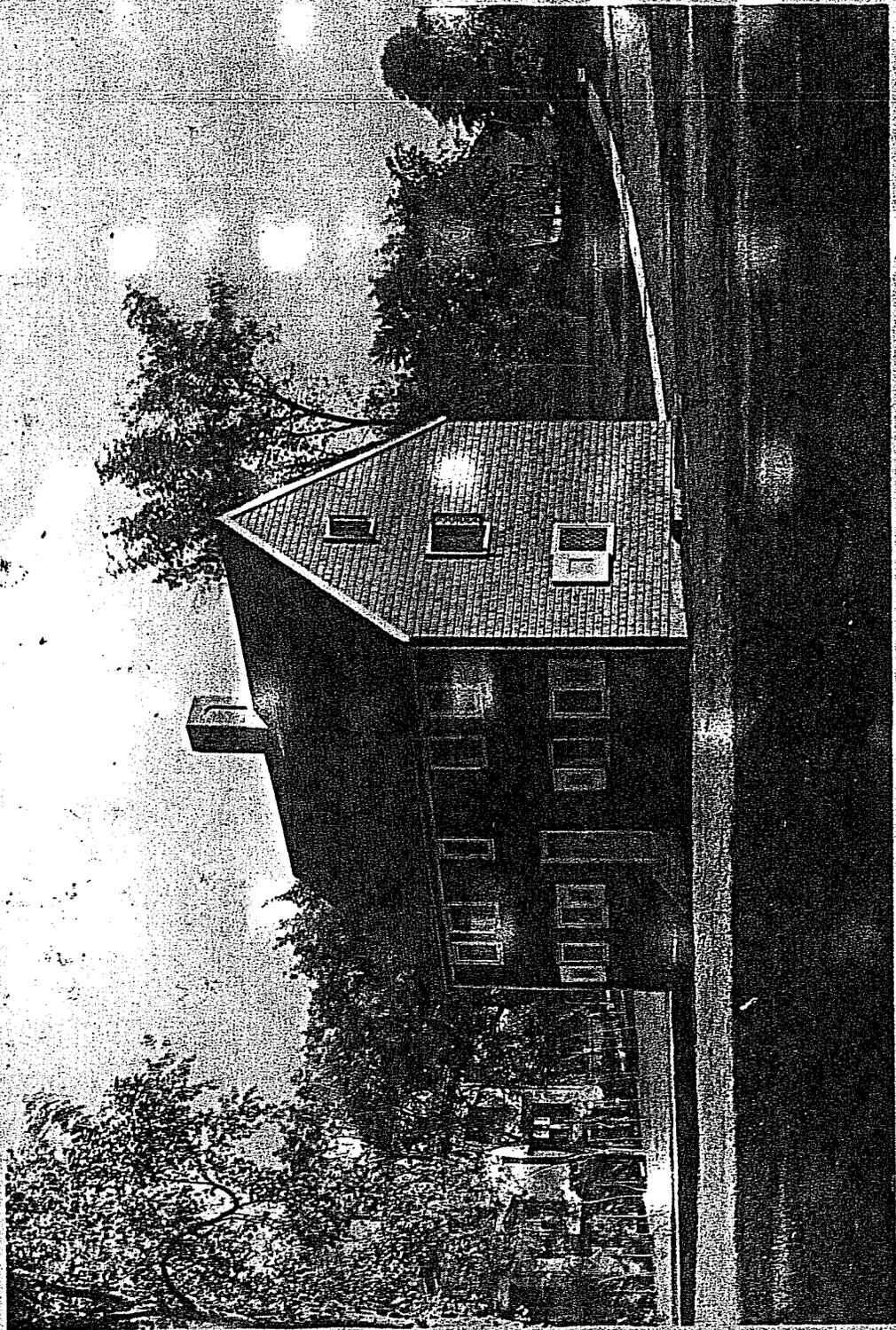
**The James Blake House**  
Edward Everett Square, Dorchester





THE JAMES BLAKE HOUSE  
Attic Framing and NW Wall

B.L.C. Photo by Robert P. Burke, 1/78



James Blake House, 1905  
Rochester Historical Society