

# East Boston Immigration Station

## Study Report

As amended July 13, 2010

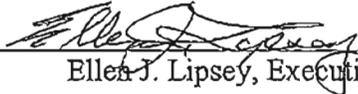


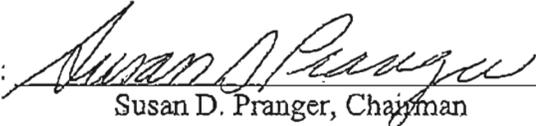
*Petition #195.00*

Boston Landmarks Commission  
Environment Department  
City of Boston

Report on the Potential Designation of  
**the East Boston Immigration Station**  
287 Marginal Street, East Boston

as a Landmark under Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975, as amended

Approved by:  5/18/2010  
Ellen J. Lipsey, Executive Director Date

Approved by:  5/18/2010  
Susan D. Pranger, Chairman Date

As amended July 13, 2010

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## **1.0 LOCATION OF PROPERTY**

### **1.1 Address**

287 Marginal Street, East Boston, MA 02128

The East Boston Immigration Station is Building 18 in the Boston Harbor Shipyard.

#### **Assessor's Parcel Number**

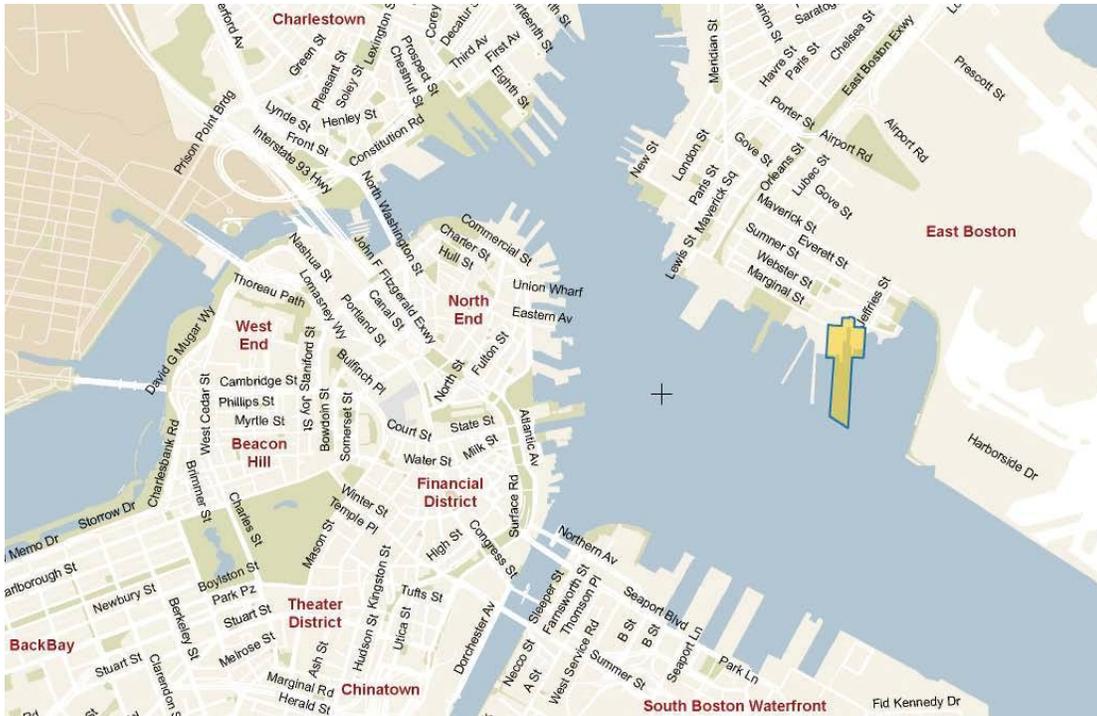
Ward 1, Parcel 0104443010

The parcel address is 218 Marginal Street; the parcel contains a number of buildings, including the East Boston Immigration Station, and 649,712 square feet of land.

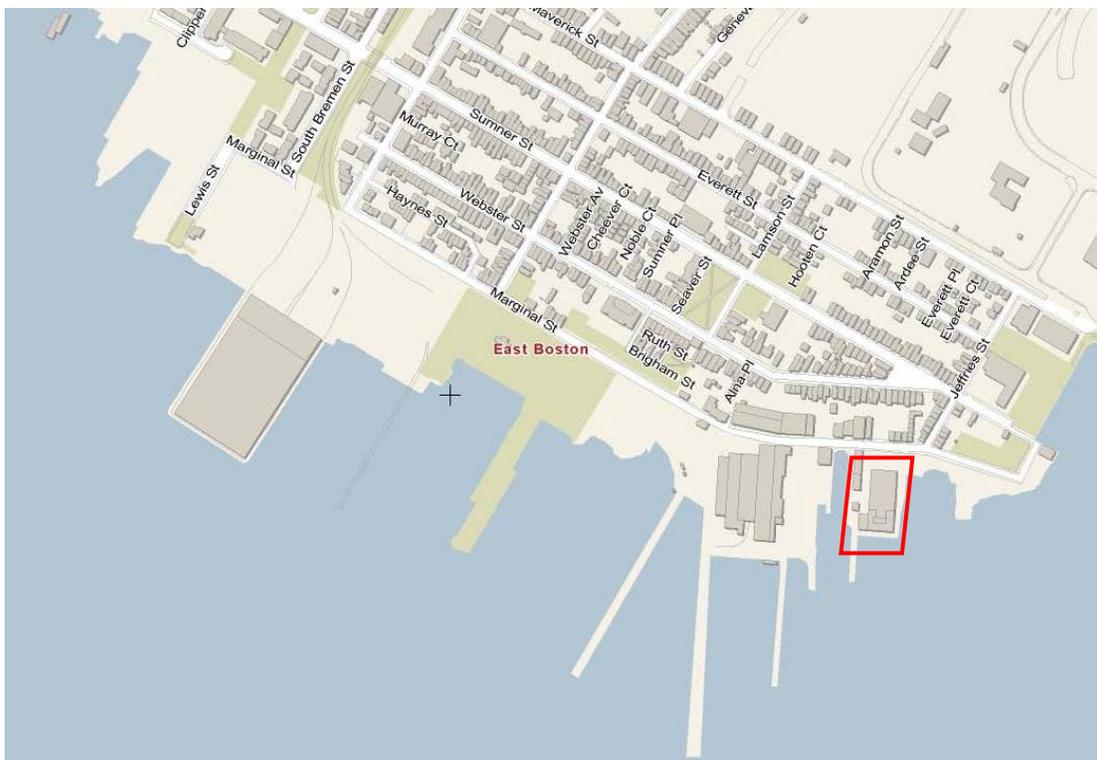
### **1.2 Area in which Property is Located**

The East Boston Immigration Station is located in the Boston Harbor Shipyard and Marina, bounded by Marginal Street to the north and Boston Harbor to the south, in East Boston.

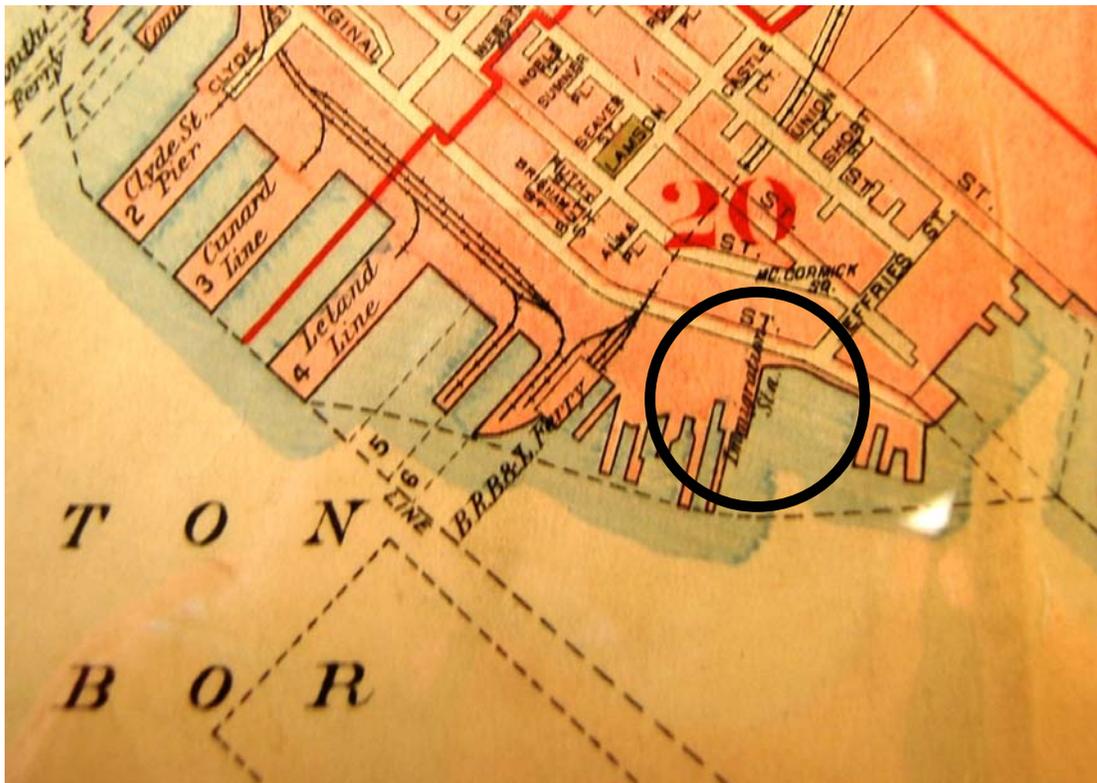
### 1.3 Maps Showing Location



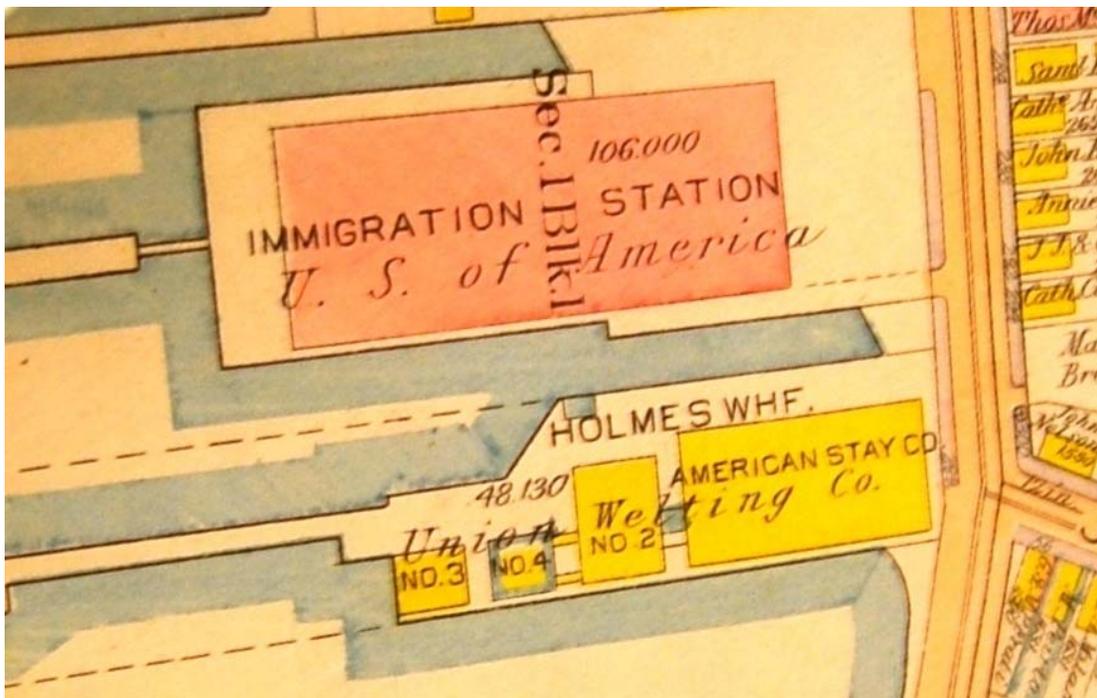
Map illustrating the location of parcel 0104443010 within the context of Boston. (Source: Boston Redevelopment Authority).



Map illustrating the location of the East Boston Immigration Station within the surrounding area. (Source: Boston Redevelopment Authority).



Map of East Boston illustrating the location of the East Boston Immigration Station, 1922. (Source: *Atlas of the City of Boston: Charlestown and East Boston*, G.W. Bromley and Co., 1922)



Map illustrating the building footprint of the East Boston Immigration Station, 1922. (Source: *Atlas of the City of Boston: Charlestown and East Boston*, G.W. Bromley and Co., 1922)

## **2.0 DESCRIPTION**

### **2.1 Type and Use**

The East Boston Immigration Station was constructed in 1919-1920 to serve as Boston's first purpose-built immigration station. Boston was the headquarters of Federal Immigration District 2, which included substations in Gloucester and New Bedford, Massachusetts; Portland, Maine; and Providence, Rhode Island.

The East Boston Immigration Station opened in April 1920. Originally one story, with later second and third story additions, the building housed detention facilities, men's and women's dormitories, recreation and dining rooms for detainees, baggage storage, offices and examination rooms for the Public Health Service, a rooftop exercise area, and offices and processing facilities for Immigration officials. The East Boston Immigration Station could accommodate a maximum of 582 immigrants.<sup>1</sup> The facility was declared surplus and sold by the United States Government General Services Administration in 1959.<sup>2</sup>

Now owned by Massport (the Massachusetts Port Authority), the current development proposal calls for the demolition of the building to create vessel repair lay down space for the Boston Harbor Shipyard.

### **2.2 Physical Description**

The East Boston Immigration Station was designed in the Stripped Classical style, a style that was often used for government and institutional buildings constructed in the United States and Europe between the first and second World Wars. Built atop partially in-filled land, the building has a rectangular footprint, measuring 250 by 105 feet, with a lot frontage of approximately 185 feet on Marginal Street. The Immigration Station is bordered by concrete and gravel walkways, and the area immediately surrounding the building is used for storage. The building's 1.6 acre site is surrounded by a chain link fence.

The Immigration Station is a reinforced concrete frame structure with masonry infill walls clad in glazed yellow brick veneer laid in Flemish bond. Originally constructed as a single story building with a partial basement, a second story addition was added to the southern portion of the building in the late 1920s or early 1930s. A small third floor headhouse and cupola sit atop the second story addition, and also appear to date from the late 1920s or early 1930s. The second and third stories and basement are currently inaccessible due to deteriorated stair conditions and standing water. The building features

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<sup>1</sup> *Annual Report of the Surgeon General of the Public Health Service of the United States for the Fiscal Year 1920* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1920), 181.

<sup>2</sup> General Services Administration Real Property Disposal Files, East Boston Immigration Station. National Archives, Northeast Region, Waltham, MA.

a flat roof, presumably tar and gravel. A standing seam metal cornice, painted black, was added to both the first and second stories sometime after 1963.

At the Immigration Station's southern elevation, facing Boston Harbor, the first story features three large central bays, flanked on both sides by one small and one large bay. At the second story, eight small bays are flanked by a large bay on either side. Each of the openings at the southern elevation features a cast stone sill. Openings have been infilled with concrete block at the first story and are covered with plywood or boards, or left open to the elements, at the second story. Historic photographs suggest that these openings once featured operable window sash. Two simplified yellow brick pilasters flank each of the large, outermost bays at both the first and second stories.

A single story, double-bay garage/shed partially clad in standing seam metal and partially clad in wood shingles abuts the building's western elevation, obscuring a small portion of this elevation from view; the shed's date of construction is unknown. The remainder of the western elevation of the East Boston Immigration Station features an irregular pattern of bays, alternating between individual single-hung 9/9 windows and ganged single-hung 9/9 windows. Various infill conditions exist at the western elevation; some openings have been infilled with concrete block, others have been boarded over, while others remain unaltered, with extant wood window sash in varying states of repair visible. Openings feature cast stone sills, and some windows have metal mesh mounted within the window reveal. Pilasters divide bays at both the first and second stories.

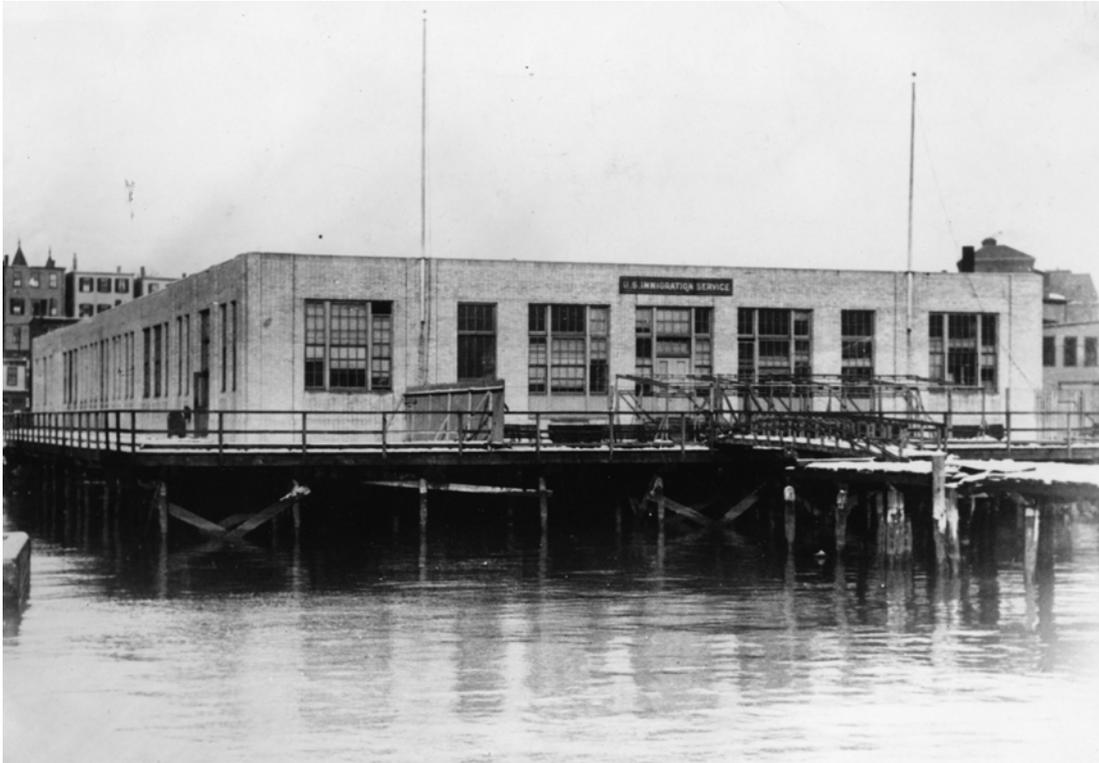
The building's single-story northern elevation, facing Marginal Street, features three large central bays, flanked on each side by two smaller bays. Pilasters flank either side of the central group of large bays. Two of the larger bays have been infilled, as have the four smaller openings, primarily with green corrugated metal. The easternmost of the large openings remains open, and is secured with a locked chain link gate, which functions as the primary means of entrance into the building. Evidence of replacement brick veneer is especially evident at the Immigration Station's northern elevation, as is the prevalence of plant growth, with vines covering large portions of this elevation.

The eastern elevation of the East Boston Immigration Station is similar to the building's western elevation in terms of the configuration of window bays and their division with simplified pilasters. The eastern elevation is, however, bisected by a large, square boiler stack, clad on four sides with yellow glazed brick veneer and detailed with a pilaster-like element. At this elevation, window openings are almost uniformly infilled with concrete blocks, but the upper portions of the window sash have been left visible, effectively creating improvised transoms. At least one opening at the eastern elevation is roughly infilled with large blocks of granite, placed diagonally within the opening.

The East Boston Immigration Station's exterior walls exhibit extensive damage to the masonry veneer, including cracking, bulging, water penetration, deteriorated mortar joints, spalling, and delamination. Damage to the

masonry veneer is especially prevalent at the southern elevation, facing Boston Harbor; in a number of locations it appears that the masonry veneer is close to falling from the building. It is unclear from the exterior of the Immigration Station if there is more extensive structural damage at the building's concrete frame and masonry infill walls. Deterioration of the building's concrete frame, including spalling concrete and exposed rebar, is visible at the building's interior.

## 2.3 Images



A waterfront view of the immigration station in East Boston, MA., 1922. (Source: Boston Globe/Landov)



East Boston Immigration Station, view from Marginal Street, 1925. (Source: Boston Public Library)



East Boston Immigration Station, view from Marginal Street, showing fenced rooftop recreation area, 1931. (Source: Boston Public Library)



Aerial view of East Boston and Boston Harbor (East Boston Immigration Station circled), 1934. (Source: Boston Public Library)



East Boston Immigration Station, view from Marginal Street, c.1955. (Source: National Archives, Northeast Region, Waltham, MA)

*another*  
**JOHN J.  
McGRATH**

*Auction*

**UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AUCTION**

By Order of General Services Administration

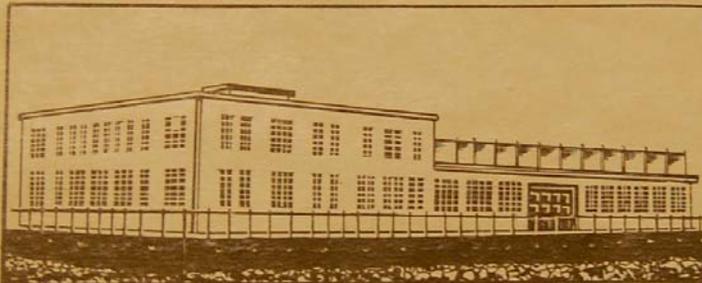
Thursday, October 22, 1959 at 11 A.M., EDST  
287 MARGINAL ST., EAST BOSTON, MASS.

**U.S. Immigration Station  
2 STORY BRICK BUILDING**

Plus 4 Car Garage & Small Stucco Building

TOGETHER WITH

**LAND AREA OF 92,500 SQ. FT., MORE OR LESS**



First floor of building contains 26,250 ft. Second floor was formerly used as offices and roof promenade.

This property was formerly used by the Immigration & Naturalization Service. The building and land are located near all the principal highways and can be used for many industrial and commercial purposes. Here is a rare opportunity to buy valuable business property at auction price!

Terms: \$10,000 deposit, by certified check, cashier's check or U.S. Postal Money Order made payable to General Services Administration, to be deposited with auctioneer prior to commencement of bidding. The Government reserves the right to reject any or all Bids. Subject to approval of the General Services Administration on the basis of suitable evidence of financial responsibility submitted by the prospective borrower, up to 80% of the purchase price may remain on mortgage for 10 years at 5% interest per annum on the unpaid balance. The property is being offered "as is, where is" with no warranties, express or implied. Other terms to be announced at the sale.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND INSPECTION  
CONTACT AUCTIONEER**

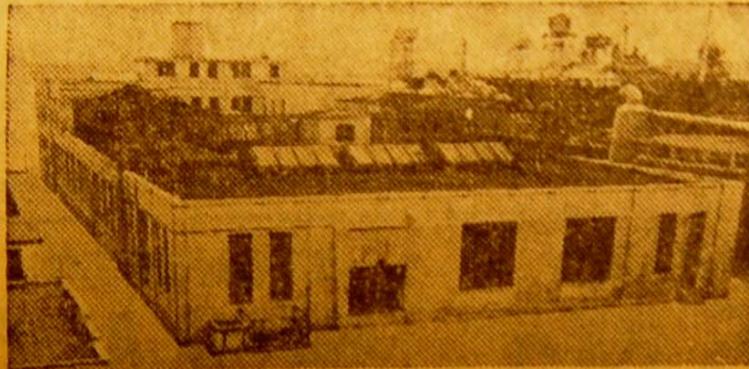
**JOHN J. McGRATH, AUCTIONEER**

**31 State St., Boston — CA 7-1125-6-7**

*NEW ENGLAND'S OUTSTANDING REAL ESTATE AUCTIONEER*

Notice of Auction of East Boston Immigration Station, held on Tuesday, October 22, 1959. (Source: National Archives, Northeast Region, Waltham, MA)

**MORTGAGEE'S SALE**  
**U. S. IMMIGRATION BUILDING**  
**287 Marginal St., EAST BOSTON, MASS.**



**BRICK AND CONCRETE BUILDING:** 105 x 250 ft.  
—26,250 sq. ft. first floor, 7900 sq. ft. second floor, 1100  
sq. ft. third floor; 2600 sq. ft. basement and boiler room.  
TOTAL FLOOR AREA OF 37,850 SQ. FT. Concrete floors.  
Tar and gravel roof. 4 car garage. Stucco frame building.  
**LAND:** Area of 106,000 sq. ft. Frontage on harbor of 185  
ft. and 185 ft. on Marginal St. Enclosed by 6 ft. wire fence.  
Located 1 mile from Logan Airport and Sumner and Callahan  
Tunnels.

Per order General Services Administration.  
Sale to take place upon the premises. A deposit of  
\$5000.00 in cash or certified check will be required, balance  
in 30 days. Inspection the day before and morning of sale.

*Henry S.* **ANTHONY** *and Co.*  
**AUCTIONEERS**

**219 CENTRAL ST., LOWELL, MASS., TEL. 452-4991**

Notice of Mortgagee's Sale of East Boston Immigration Station, held on Tuesday, November 26, 1963. (Source: National Archives, Northeast Region, Waltham, MA)



East Boston Immigration Station, southern elevation, view from pier in Boston Harbor Shipyard, April 5, 2010. (Source: Boston Landmarks Commission)



East Boston Immigration Station, western elevation, April 5, 2010. (Source: Boston Landmarks Commission)



East Boston Immigration Station, northern elevation, April 5, 2010. (Source: Boston Landmarks Commission)



East Boston Immigration Station, eastern elevation, showing boiler stack, April 5, 2010. (Source: Boston Landmarks Commission)

### 3.0 SIGNIFICANCE

#### 3.1 Historic Significance

Discussions related to the possible construction of a new Immigration Station in Boston began in earnest in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Immigration officials and officers of the Public Health Service had been working out of rented quarters on Long Wharf, with immigration and detention facilities housed at the second story of a freight shed located next to the Custom House Block.<sup>3</sup> These facilities were widely decried as being overcrowded, vermin-ridden, unwholesome, and unsanitary.

In 1906, the Long Wharf immigration station was described as a “fire trap” by the *Boston Daily Globe*.<sup>4</sup> At the time, the Commissioner General of Immigration did not wholly agree with this assessment but did note that a stone or brick Immigration Station, located on one of Boston’s Harbor Islands, would be preferable to the Long Wharf facility.<sup>5</sup>

Plans for the construction of a new station at Boston were formally undertaken in 1907, with the appropriation of \$250,000 for both the purchase of land and construction proposed to Congress.<sup>6</sup> Castle Island and Governors Island were both put forth as possible sites for the new station.<sup>7</sup> An island site was thought to be ideal, especially given the success of the Immigration Station at Ellis Island in New York. Many opposed use of Castle Island, however, as the City of Boston had recently made improvements there, and building over such improvements was deemed financially imprudent.

Put forth as bill H.R. 13851, entitled “An act providing for a site and the erection of a new immigration station thereon at the city of Boston, Massachusetts” the proposal resulted in split votes in the House and Senate, with the primary issue being a disagreement over “whether or not Castle Island should be removed from the provisions of the bill.”<sup>8</sup> A conference report, drafted to accompany H.R. 13851, put forth language allowing for the purchase of land for the proposed immigration station at “any site except Castle Island, now owned or controlled by the Government of the United States, or upon any site to be ceded.”<sup>9</sup> Ultimately approved on February 23, 1909, the act “authorized the Secretary of Commerce and Labor to erect, upon any site ceded to or purchased by the Government, a suitable fireproof

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<sup>3</sup> *Long Wharf and Custom House Block*. National Historic Landmark Nomination Form, 1989.

<sup>4</sup> “Sargent Not Enthusiastic; Boston’s Immigration Station Good Enough,” *Boston Daily Globe*, December 29, 1906, 5.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> “Castle Island Favored Site, Immigration Station There Probable,” *Boston Globe*, December 4, 1907, 6.

<sup>7</sup> Note: Castle Island was connected to the Boston mainland in the 1930s. Governors Island was incorporated into the reclaimed land that now comprises Logan Airport during the 1940s.

<sup>8</sup> Immigration Station at Boston, Mass. February 3, 1909 - Ordered to be printed, 60<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, House Report 2037.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

building for an immigration station at Boston, Mass.,” providing \$250,00.00 for both the purchase of the site and the construction of the building.<sup>10</sup>

With Castle Island removed from contention, Governors Island became the most likely prospective site for the immigration station. On June 3, 1909, however, Boston City Council approved a resolution protesting “the establishing of a detention or immigration station on Governor’s [sic] Island in Boston Harbor.”<sup>11</sup> The reasons for the City of Boston’s opposition to the use of Governors Island for an immigration station are unclear.

East Boston was then put forth as potential location for the immigration station. Officials focused on a parcel in Jeffries Point, owned by the Jeffries Point Yacht Club. This site, located “at the extreme southeast end of Noddle [sic] Island, between Marginal and Sumner Streets” consisted of approximately 52,012 square feet of land, one-third of which was infilled land, and two-thirds of which was marsh. The US Treasury department purchased this land from the Jeffries Point Yacht Club, along with 15,000 square feet of adjoining property, for a total of \$30,000.00 in April 1910.<sup>12</sup>

A complication arose when an Act of the Massachusetts State Legislature providing for alterations to the Harbor Line in Boston Harbor, which conflicted with the site purchased from the Jeffries Point Yacht Club, was approved on June 14, 1910. In response to this development, H.R. Bill 27144 was put forth in Congress and became part of the Public Building Act (H.R. 26987), approved June 25, 1910, authorizing the United States Secretary of Labor and Commerce to exchange “the site heretofore acquired for a United States immigration station at Boston, Massachusetts, for another suitable site” with the provision that “such exchange shall be made without expense to the United States.”<sup>13</sup>

A new site, owned by the East Boston Company and located at 287 Marginal Street, to the west of the parcel originally purchased from the Jeffries Point Yacht Club, was selected in 1911. The parcel of land at 287 Marginal Street measured approximately 1.6 acres and was a combination of infilled land and marshy flats. The U.S. Government deeded the former Jeffries Point Yacht Club land, along with an additional \$30,000 (despite the terms of the Public Building Act of 1910), to the East Boston Company in March 1911 in

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<sup>10</sup> *Immigrant station, Boston, Mass. Letter from the Secretary of the Treasury, relative to the erection of an immigration station at Boston, Mass. June 17, 1913, Referred to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed, 63<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, House Document 91.*

<sup>11</sup> *Reports of Proceedings of the City Council of Boston for the Year Commencing January 1, 1909, and ending February 5, 1910* (Boston: City of Boston Printing Department, 1910), 469.

<sup>12</sup> “Tip of Noddle Island, Jeffries Point, Freedom’s Gateway to Future Citizens,” *Boston Daily Globe*, April 10, 1910, 39.

<sup>13</sup> Letter to Commissioner of Immigration, Boston, Mass. from Daniel J. Keefe, Commissioner-General of Immigration, October 12, 1910, Miscellaneous Property Files, East Boston Immigration Station, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

exchange for the land at 287 Marginal Street, the ultimate site of the East Boston Immigration Station.<sup>14</sup>

An act approved on March 4, 1911 raised the appropriation for the purchase of the site and the construction and furnishing of the building from \$250,000 to \$375,000.<sup>15</sup> By 1913, it was clear that \$375,000 was not sufficient to cover all of these costs; in a June 14, 1913 letter to the Speaker of the House, Secretary of the Treasury W.G. McAdoo noted that the appropriation was inadequate to also provide for the construction of a pier and sea wall, which would be required at the site. Secretary McAdoo went further, writing that it

“is not believed that even by exercising the greatest care to eliminate superfluous details and by adopting an architectural treatment of the simplest character it would be possible to erect the [Boston Immigration Station] within the amount named.”<sup>16</sup>

Between 1913 and 1916, appropriations for the Boston Immigration Station were discussed at length, with two bills proposed, raising the proposed appropriation for the station’s construction from \$375,000 to \$465,000 and then again to \$495,000. As appropriations were debated in Congress, the office of James Alphonso Wetmore, Acting Supervising Architect of the Department of Treasury, began drawing up plans for the Immigration Station. Wetmore was not an architect (he had previously served as executive secretary to the Supervising Architect), but oversaw the design and construction of roughly 2,000 Federal buildings between 1915 and 1934.<sup>17</sup>

Numerous conversations between the Treasury Department, Wetmore’s office, the Department of Labor (which oversaw the Immigration Service), and Boston Immigration officials took place during this period as to the appropriate arrangement and size of the new building, but it is clear that the Department of Treasury controlled the project. Plans for the building vacillated greatly, with varying heights and internal spatial arrangements; early drawings depict a building with as many as five stories.<sup>18</sup> In the *Reports of the Department of Labor – 1917*, it was noted that during the past year

“no progress [had] been made toward the construction of the new station at the port of Boston, for which an appropriation was made several years ago. This project is under the direction of the Treasury Department; but congressional authority for increasing the original limit of cost has not been forthcoming, and this situation leaves the Immigration Service in the

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<sup>14</sup> Letter to Colonel George B. Billings, Commissioner of Immigration, Boston, Mass. from Assistant U.S. Attorney E. Mark Sullivan, May 22, 1911, Miscellaneous Property Files, East Boston Immigration Station, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>15</sup> *Immigrant station, Boston, Mass. Letter from the Secretary of the Treasury, June 17, 1913*, House Document 91.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Art: Cornerstone Man, *Time*, December 10, 1934.

<sup>18</sup> Building plans, East Boston Immigration Station, National Archives and Records Administration Cartographic Section, College Park, MD.

unfortunate position of continuing to occupy a rented building which long since was found unsuitable from the standpoint of sanitation and safety from fire. The embarrassing condition at this port found additional emphasis upon the entrance of the United States into the war, as several hundred interned aliens at Boston were then placed in custody of the immigration authorities and considerable difficulty attended the effort to place these people temporarily, the present station being wholly inadequate to care for them. Again, it is recommended that the new station be constructed as speedily as possible, that it may be ready for occupancy coincident with the commencement of increased immigration which probably will take place upon the conclusion of the conflict abroad.”<sup>19</sup>

In the *Annual Report of the Surgeon General of the Public Health Service of the United States for the Fiscal Year 1917*, continued overcrowding at the immigration station at Long Wharf is described in great detail, as is the inadequacy of its medical facilities. As local hospitals became overcrowded, immigrants with communicable diseases were forced to remain at the Long Wharf station, resulting in the limited but nevertheless troubling spread of many diseases, including diphtheria, scabies, measles, chicken pox, and mumps, amongst the immigrants being detained there.<sup>20</sup> The push to construct a new, modernized Immigration Station in Boston was fueled in large part by the desire to establish well-equipped medical facilities in order to adequately examine and treat those immigrants arriving at the Port of Boston with communicable diseases or other health problems. By 1917, however, plans for a new Immigration Station at Boston had proceeded sporadically for nearly a decade.

By May 6, 1918, plans and specifications for the Immigration Station had finally been completed, and advertisements for construction bids were placed on May 18, 1918.<sup>21</sup> Remaining wooden structures on the site at 287 Marginal Street were vacated by January 1, 1919; the contractor, Frank G. Coburn, began work on that date.<sup>22</sup> As construction proceeded, a number of changes were made to the plans for the Immigration Station, adding elements that had not previously been considered and subtracting elements that proved too costly. The insufficient amount expended for the construction of the East Boston Immigration Station was compounded by post-World War I inflation, with construction resulting in a single-story building that was smaller and less well-equipped than had originally been hoped and planned for.

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<sup>19</sup> *Reports of the Department of Labor – 1917: Reports of the Secretary of Labor and Reports of Bureaus Department of Labor, United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918), 134-135.

<sup>20</sup> *Annual Report of the Surgeon General of the Public Health Service of the United States for the Fiscal Year 1917* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1917), 162.

<sup>21</sup> Letter to the Secretary of Labor from the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, May 6, 1918, Miscellaneous Property Files, East Boston Immigration Station, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>22</sup> Letter to the Secretary of the Treasury from John W. Abercrombie, December 17, 1918, Miscellaneous Property Files, East Boston Immigration Station, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Upon its completion, the Immigration Station was transferred from the Treasury Department to the Department of Labor's Immigration Service, joining the nation's other immigration stations in New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New Orleans, and San Francisco.<sup>23</sup> Officially opening on April 12, 1920, the East Boston Immigration Station was certainly an improvement over the rented facilities on Long Wharf that had previously been in use. The new station was described as follows in the *Annual Report of the Surgeon General of the Public Health Service of the United States for the Fiscal Year 1920*:

“This building is of fireproof construction, one story high, and supposed to accommodate 582 aliens. The male dormitory has 35,300 cubic feet, with 272 folding bunks, affording when filled 134 cubic feet of air space per person. The female dormitory has 40,000 cubic feet, with 310 folding bunks, providing 130 cubic feet of air space per bunk.”<sup>24</sup>

The portion of the Immigration Station allotted to the Public Health Service consisted of one purpose-designed room and three generic offices that were deemed ill-suited to their purposes, and which were viewed as requiring “substantial changes... in order that the work may be properly carried out.”<sup>25</sup>

Because the new Immigration Station was smaller than had been originally intended, the process of inspection and review of prospective immigrants continued as it had when the offices of the Immigration Service and Public Health Service were based at Long Wharf. Passenger ships came into their respective piers, most notably South Boston's Commonwealth Pier No. 5, at which White Star Line and Hamburg-American Line ships docked, and the Cunard Wharf in East Boston, at which ships from the Cunard Line docked.<sup>26</sup> Ships requiring quarantine were not allowed to dock at their respective piers, but were instead forced to remain at an anchorage in Boston's outer harbor, at which they were visited by officers of the Public Health Service.<sup>27</sup>

Immigration and Public Health Officials would travel to the various piers on their boat, the *Marietta*, and would either board recently docked vessels or perform their inspections on shipping company docks (inspection rooms did exist at Commonwealth Pier), examining passengers and reviewing their documentation.<sup>28</sup> Those passengers requiring additional review, such as

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<sup>23</sup> Letter to Commissioner of Immigration, Boston, MA from United States Commissioner General of Immigration, December 23, 1919, Miscellaneous Property Files, East Boston Immigration Station, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>24</sup> *Annual Report of the Surgeon General of the Public Health Service of the United States for the Fiscal Year 1920*, 181.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Commonwealth Pier Five*. National Register Nomination Form, 1979.

<sup>27</sup> Workers of the Writers' Program of the Works Progress Administration in the State of Massachusetts, *Boston Looks Seaward: The Story of the Port, 1630-1940* (Boston: Bruce Humphries, Inc., 1941), 241-242.

<sup>28</sup> Letter to Commission of Immigration, East Boston, MA from W.W. Sibray, Acting Commissioner-General of Immigration, March 24, 1924, Miscellaneous Property Files, East Boston Immigration Station, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

young children travelling alone, those with health problems or carrying communicable diseases, passengers with inadequate or questionable documentation, the illiterate, the insane, those “likely to become public charges,” criminals, polygamists, anarchists, prostitutes or “other immoral women,” or young unmarried women travelling without guardians, were then brought to the Immigration Station for further review, more thorough medical inspection, and, as necessary, detention or deportation.<sup>29</sup> Stowaways were also detained at the Immigration Station.

It is important to note that the East Boston Immigration Station was not the entry point for every immigrant alien arriving at the Port of Boston. Only those requiring additional review were brought to the facility. Unlike Ellis Island, through which every immigrant entering the Port of New York was required to pass, Boston’s Immigration Station saw only a small percentage of the total number of immigrants admitted through the port each year.

Drastic changes were made to United States Immigration laws soon after the East Boston Immigration Station opened. The Emergency Quota Act of 1921, also known as the Immigration Act of 1921, for the first time placed yearly restrictions on the number of immigrants that were allowed to enter the United States; immigration was limited to 350,000 individuals per year.<sup>30</sup> The Immigration Act of 1924 further restricted immigration, limiting the number of immigrants allowed to enter the United States to 150,000 per year, based on a quota system. Quotas “were allocated to countries in proportion to the numbers [of] American people [tracing] their ‘national origin’ to those countries, through immigration or the immigration of their forebears.”<sup>31</sup> The *Boston Daily Globe* makes reference to the great rush of immigrants entering the United States at the outset of the quota system, hoping to ensure that their nation of origin’s quota had not yet been exhausted.<sup>32</sup>

The quota system did not apply to all immigrants, however. “Non-quota immigrants” included those with immediate family members who were U.S. citizens (naturalized or otherwise) or immigrants hailing from countries in North America, Central America, and South America. Asians were ineligible for American citizenship and were thus excluded from the quota system entirely.<sup>33</sup> This policy resulted in large number of Asian aliens, especially those arriving from China, who were detained at the East Boston Immigration Station.

The Immigration Station was basic and utilitarian, with minimal comforts, but efforts were made to ensure that those detained there were treated well and had some entertainment. Many of these endeavors were undertaken by women who were members of religious or social service groups, including the

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<sup>29</sup> *Annual Report of the Surgeon General of the Public Health Service of the United States for the Fiscal Year 1916* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), 203.

<sup>30</sup> Mae M. Ngai, “The Strange Career of the Illegal Alien: Immigration Restriction and Deportation Policy in the United States, 1921-1965,” *Law and History Review*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (2003): 70.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>32</sup> “Four Steamers Rush Aliens to Boston Under New Quota,” *Boston Daily Globe*, July 2, 1923, 1.

<sup>33</sup> Ngai, “The Strange Career of the Illegal Alien,” 75.

Catholic Welfare Aid Society, the Red Cross, the Council of Jewish Women, the Baptist Society, the Catholic Immigrant Welfare Association, and the Methodist Immigrants' Home.<sup>34</sup> Annual Thanksgiving dinners and Christmas celebrations were common. Newspaper accounts indicate that in the "day rooms" (one for men, and one for women and children) immigrants often gathered to play cards and other games.<sup>35</sup>

The station featured a player piano and efforts were made to ensure that detainees had access to exercise and fresh air, first on a fenced wharf extending out into Boston Harbor and later at the fenced rooftop promenade. Volunteers from the Cambridge YMCA came weekly to lead the men and boys detained at the station in calisthenics. Weekly concerts and movies were common and local newspapers, magazines, and books were available for those immigrants who could read English.<sup>36</sup> The Immigration Station had a staff of matrons to assist detainees, and, at least periodically, social workers were on hand; a Miss Amy Sherman, affiliated with the Women's Home Missionary Society, is known to have worked at the station.<sup>37</sup>

Despite these diversions, it was not a pleasant place. As the *Boston Daily Globe* noted,

"the treatment seems kind, but one can't help feeling that [the detainees] ought never to have been allowed to get this far. The immigration station is run on lines of economy and efficiency-machine operation; it is necessary that it be so. A place of cushions and rugs is, of course, impossible."<sup>38</sup>

Because the appropriation for the land purchase, construction, and furnishing of the East Boston Immigration Station was so small, the station's furnishings were simple. Beds were three-tiered fold-down bunks, meals were basic, and furniture was plain. Immigrants were sometimes held at the station for days or weeks, depending on how soon they could either be released or deported, but some detainees remained at the station for months. Mrs. Selina Chippendale, deported back to England in 1926, was detained at the Immigration Station for nearly seven months, and described her experience as such:

"I had a horrible time at the immigration station... The place was storming with cockroaches, the food was not fit for pigs and there was no privacy. My bed consisted of two planks and

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<sup>34</sup> "Christmas Joy Comes to 135 Homesick Immigrants Detained at East Boston," *Boston Daily Globe*, December 25, 1922, 8.

<sup>35</sup> Gardner Jackson, "Waiting on Christmas Day to Enter the Promised Land," *Boston Daily Globe*, December 24, 1922, E2.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Woman's Home Missionary Society (Cleveland: Woman's Home Missionary Society, 1931), 32.

<sup>38</sup> Jackson, "Waiting on Christmas Day to Enter the Promised Land," *Boston Daily Globe*.

I had no pillow. They call it a station but it was more like a jail, for there were guards at all doors.”<sup>39</sup>

Beyond its Spartan conditions, perhaps the most difficult part of being detained at the East Boston Immigration Station was the sense of uncertainty as to one’s future.

During the 1930s, the East Boston Immigration Station was increasingly used for the detention of “undesirable immigrants,” such as those involved in criminal acts. “Communist strike agitator” Edith Berkman, accused of instigating a workers’ strike at the American Woolen Company, was detained at the station for over a year, from 1931-1932, as she awaited deportation.<sup>40</sup> Charles Ponzi, the infamous swindler, was held at the Immigration Station for a number of months in 1934 as he awaited a ruling on his appeal to be allowed to remain in the United States.<sup>41</sup>

Although proposals for the relocation of the East Boston Immigration Station were raised as early as 1921 and 1922, when Boston Immigration officials suggested that the work of station be transferred to the North Pier Shed at the Army base or to a building owned by the Shipping Board in South Boston, a proposal to relocate the facility was made in earnest in early 1934. After years of working in inadequate quarters, and following the unification of the formerly independent Immigration Service and Naturalization Service to create the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization in 1933, many officials felt that a new station, in which all offices of the new Bureau could be housed, was in order.

A proposal to “erect a building in Boston for the housing of the Immigration and Naturalization Services of New England” was supported by Wilbur L. Cross, Governor of Connecticut, William J. Granfield, U.S. Representative from Massachusetts, John D. Clifford, Jr., United States Attorney, John W. McCormack, U.S. Representative from Massachusetts, and Marcus A. Coolidge, Senator from Massachusetts and Chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Immigration, among others. All wrote in support of such a move.<sup>42</sup> A site on Atlantic Avenue, opposite the Appraiser’s Stores (located at 408 Atlantic Avenue), was deemed an ideal replacement for the East Boston Immigration Station site, which Representative McCormack described as being in “a rather inaccessible location, not only to citizens but to steamship officials, attorneys, welfare societies, and others who have occasion to call at the station.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> “Alien Hits Boston Station,” *New York Times*, March 3, 1926, 22.

<sup>40</sup> “Edith Berkman Gets Deportation Stay,” *New York Times*, July 21, 1932, 5.

<sup>41</sup> “Ponzi Quits Prison, is Held as Alien,” *New York Times*, February 15, 1934, 40.

<sup>42</sup> Miscellaneous Property Files, East Boston Immigration Station, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>43</sup> Letter to Hon. Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor from Representative John W. McCormack, January 23, 1934, Miscellaneous Property Files, East Boston Immigration Station, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Despite the seemingly overwhelming support for the construction of new immigration facilities at Boston, plans never came to fruition, and the East Boston Immigration Station remained the site of the Port of Boston's immigration activities. Although immigration numbers dropped during the 1930s as a result of the Great Depression, the East Boston station was still active; during 1936 and 1937 "inspectors from the Boston Immigration Service boarded almost 3,000 ships and barred 22 aliens from entering the country," and for "the year ending June 30, 1938, the [East Boston Immigration Station] examined and admitted 997 immigrants and 4,700 non-immigrant aliens."<sup>44</sup>

In 1940, the Immigration Service was restructured, shifting from the Department of Labor to the Department of Justice. In Boston, the "office of local commissioner of immigration was abolished... and its activities were taken over by a district director of naturalization."<sup>45</sup> The local commissioner of immigration had previously been in control of the East Boston Immigration Station.

During World War II, immigration to the United States again slowed. The East Boston Immigration Station was used for the detention of individuals deemed potential threats to national security, including crews of two Axis ships from Germany and Italy, seized in March 1941, and a crew of Nazi operatives captured off the coast of Greenland, also in 1941.<sup>46</sup> Individuals were detained as enemy aliens, including Dr. Karl Otto Heinrich Lange, a German-born Harvard instructor.<sup>47</sup> European refugees, including a number of stowaways, seeking refuge in the United States during and after World War II were also detained at the Immigration Station as their cases were reviewed.<sup>48</sup>

By 1950, an Immigration Office had opened in Boston at 73 Tremont Street. The East Boston Immigration Station retained its detention function, but it appears that all clerical and administrative matters were removed to the Tremont Street office.<sup>49</sup> The United States Immigration and Naturalization Service was reorganized in 1954, which coincided with the closure of other immigration stations, including Ellis Island. The East Boston Immigration Station was likely also closed in 1954 in conjunction with this reorganization. The decision to close waterfront immigration facilities in the 1950s was presumably influenced by the rise in air travel and the decline in the number of immigrants arriving by ship.

Following the closure of the East Boston Immigration Station, the building was used in some capacity by the Army Corps of Engineers, the Civil

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<sup>44</sup> *Boston Looks Seaward*, 242.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> "2 Axis Cargo Ships Seized at Boston," *New York Times*, March 31, 1941, 2. "Brings Seized Ship from Greenland," *New York Times*, October 15, 1941, 6.

<sup>47</sup> "Report Dr. K.O Lange Held as Enemy Alien," *New York Times*, January 19, 1942, 9.

<sup>48</sup> "U.S. Asylum Urged for Five Refugees." *New York Times*, April 27, 1946, 9.

<sup>49</sup> United States Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, *Miscellaneous Series, Issues 24-28*, 1950, 45.

Aeronautics Administration, and the Public Health Service.<sup>50</sup> Efforts were made in 1955 and 1956 to have the building declared excess and surplus by the General Services Administration, but these proceedings were stopped in order to provide the Civil Aeronautics Administration and the Public Health Service with continued space until the construction of Boston's new Federal Building was completed.<sup>51</sup>

The East Boston Immigration Station was ultimately declared excess by the General Services Administration on February 19, 1959 and was declared surplus on April 30, 1959.<sup>52</sup> The building was auctioned on October 22, 1959, and although no bids were entered at auction, an offer was placed that day by Daniel A. Rossano, Trustee of Border Trust, 30 Bradley Road, Arlington, MA, for \$80,000. The U.S. Government had appraised the building's fair market value at \$97,000. The property was conveyed to Mr. Rossano on December 31, 1959, and he then entered into a mortgage held by the U.S. Government.

After Mr. Rossano failed to find adequate tenants for the building, leasing only a portion of it to Trans-World Airlines for storage space, he defaulted on his mortgage. A mortgagee's sale was held on November 26, 1963, at which time the building was sold to Lillian Tanger of Malden, MA for \$37,000.<sup>53</sup> Following Mrs. Tanger's purchase of the building, the East Boston Immigration Station changed hands a number of times, and was purchased by Massport, the current owner, in 1987.

While it is not known exactly how many immigrants were brought to the East Boston Immigration Station each year, it is estimated that perhaps 10% of the 230,677 immigrant aliens arriving at the Port of Boston between 1920 and 1954 required review or detention there. The *Boston Daily Globe* estimated in 1922 that the weekly population of the station ranged from 100-200 detainees.<sup>54</sup> The East Boston Immigration Station was open during a period in which pre-inspection abroad, mandated by the Immigration Acts of 1921 and 1924 and required in order to obtain a visa, effectively created a "pre-screening" process, helping to insure that fewer inadmissible immigrants arrived at the Port of Boston.

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<sup>50</sup> Sales and Disposal Plan, General Services Administration Real Property Disposal Files, East Boston Immigration Station, National Archives, Northeast Region, Waltham, MA.

<sup>51</sup> Memorandum to Chief, Real Property Division from William C. Oponiek, Acting Chief, Leasing Branch, RED, December 14, 1956, General Services Administration Real Property Disposal Files, East Boston Immigration Station, National Archives, Northeast Region, Waltham, MA.

<sup>52</sup> Sales and Disposal Plan, General Services Administration Real Property Disposal Files, East Boston Immigration Station, National Archives, Northeast Region, Waltham, MA.

<sup>53</sup> General Services Administration Real Property Disposal Files, East Boston Immigration Station, National Archives, Northeast Region, Waltham, MA.

<sup>54</sup> Jackson, "Waiting on Christmas Day to Enter the Promised Land," *Boston Daily Globe*.

### 3.2 Architectural Significance

The East Boston Immigration Station was originally built as a single-story structure, rectangular in plan, constructed with a reinforced concrete frame structure with masonry infill walls clad in glazed yellow brick veneer laid in Flemish bond. Built in the Stripped Classical style, the building was very utilitarian and lacked architectural detail. A 1927 map of East Boston, produced by the Sanborn Map Company, describes the building thusly: “Fire-proof, with Brick walls, concrete floors and reinforced 20” concrete columns with non-structural partition walls faced in 6” ceramic tiles.”<sup>55</sup>

Constructed between 1919 and 1920, the economy shown in the building’s materials and scale reflects budgetary constraints exacerbated by post-World War I inflation. The U.S. Government’s appropriation for the East Boston Immigration Station was acknowledged by many, including officials in the Immigration Service and Department of Labor, to be inadequate, resulting in a building that was smaller than originally intended. The building may purposefully have been left devoid of decorative or finish elements (such as a cornice or parapet) at the roofline in anticipation of the later addition of upper floors as funds could be appropriated for such work.

As built, the East Boston Immigration Station featured a large entry bay at its southern elevation (facing Boston Harbor) and three large entry bays at its northern elevation, each bay featuring a door surrounded by what appears to have been operable window sash (a combination of single hung or hopper windows). Signs reading “U.S. IMMIGRATION SERVICE” were mounted above the entry bays at the building’s southern and northern elevations. A stone plaque reading “WILLIAM C. McADOO / SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY / JAMES A. WETMORE / ACTING SUPERVISING ARCHITECT / 1918” was located on the building’s northern elevation, at its northwest corner. The eastern and western elevations were punctuated by an irregular series of bays. Simplified brick pilasters at each elevation were one of the building’s few concessions to ornament. A large boiler stack faced with one such pilaster exists at the eastern elevation.

Upon its completion, Boston immigration officials complained that the building was cheaply constructed and suffered from many defects, including poorly sealed windows, inoperable doors, a partially inoperable boiler, a broken electric pump and air motor system, flooding caused by inadequately drained shower rooms, and poorly designed electrical lighting systems, among other issues.<sup>56</sup> The site lacked a perimeter fence, allowing the building to be thronged by curious on-lookers, and featured window grilles that could easily be unlatched or removed.<sup>57</sup> An existing wharf at the site was additionally in

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<sup>55</sup> Sanborn Map Company. Insurance Maps of Boston, Massachusetts, Including Breed’s Island, East Boston, and Charlestown (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1927).

<sup>56</sup> Memorandum for the Commissioner-General, May 17, 1920, Miscellaneous Property Files, East Boston Immigration Station, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>57</sup> Letter to Commissioner-General of Immigration from N. Chester Macomber, Assistant Commissioner of Immigration, March 7, 1921, Miscellaneous Property Files, East Boston Immigration Station, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

need of approximately \$5,000 worth of improvements.<sup>58</sup> These issues were remedied, to greater or lesser degree, as funds became available.

A partial second story and a small third story addition were added to the structure after 1929.<sup>59</sup> A fenced rooftop exercise area, or promenade, was added to the building between 1925 and 1931.

The building's original appearance has been substantially altered, with most window and door openings modified and infilled with a variety of disparate materials, including concrete block, plywood, and corrugated metal. A few examples of what appear to be original wooden window sash remain extant (albeit with broken lites), but all original exterior doors have been removed from the building. The Immigration Station's original signage has also been removed. Many of these alterations appear to have been made as early as the mid-1950s or 1960s. By that point, the building had suffered significant interior and exterior damage at the hands of vandals, perhaps precipitating some of these changes as a means of securing the building.

Portions of the building's brick veneer have been replaced, and a standing seam metal cornice has been added. A shed and four-stall garage existed at the site in 1959, but both outbuildings have since been demolished.

As built, the East Boston Immigration Station did not exhibit exceptional craftsmanship, nor was it a fine example of a particular architectural style. Its current appearance reflects the alterations that have been made between c.1955 and the present day, which have resulted in the loss of the building's architectural integrity and which have stripped the building of what little detail it once possessed.

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<sup>58</sup> Memorandum for the Commissioner-General, May 17, 1920, Miscellaneous Property Files, East Boston Immigration Station, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>59</sup> Building plans, East Boston Immigration Station, National Archives and Records Administration Cartographic Section, College Park, MD.

### 3.3 Relationship to Criteria for Landmark Designation

The East Boston Immigration Station meets the criteria for Landmark designation found in section four of Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975 as amended, under the following criteria:

*B. as a structure at which events occurred that have made an outstanding contribution to, and are identified predominantly with, an important aspect of the cultural, political, economic, and social history of the city, the Commonwealth, the New England region, and the nation.*

As Boston's first purpose-built immigration facility, the East Boston Immigration Station was the entry point and holding place for those immigrants who required further review, detention, or custody prior to deportation, an estimated 23,000 (10%) of the total 230,677 immigrant aliens arriving at the Port of Boston between 1920 and 1954. Although the facility was in use for less than forty years, the East Boston Immigration Station is associated with the period of immigration during which ethnic quotas were developed and strictly enforced, under the Emergency Quota Act of 1921 and the Immigration Act of 1924. These Acts limited the number of immigrants from certain regions who were allowed admittance into the United States.

## **4.0 ECONOMIC STATUS**

### **4.1 Current Assessed Value**

According to the City of Boston's Assessor's records, the parcel that includes the East Boston Immigration Station (parcel 0104443010) has an assessed value of \$526,300.00, with the land valued at \$526,300.00 and the buildings valued at \$0.00.

### **4.2 Current Ownership**

Parcel 0104443010 is owned by Massport. Roseland Properties currently leases the parcel from Massport. Coastal Marine Management, LLC manages and operates the Boston Harbor Shipyard on behalf of Roseland Properties.

## **5.0 PLANNING CONTEXT**

### **5.1 Background**

The Boston Harbor Shipyard, in which the East Boston Immigration Station is located, is a working shipyard and marina. The area has historically been dedicated to marine-related activities, including shipping and ship-building, and was the point of arrival for thousands of immigrants during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries arriving at its steamship piers, which included the Cunard Wharf. The planning aim for the area is for it to continue to function in its current use. Zoning at both the municipal and state levels is designed to ensure that the area retains its existing marine-industrial function.

### **5.2 Current Zoning**

Parcel 0104443010, in which the East Boston Immigration Station is located, is subject to both municipal and state zoning regulations.

The parcel is located in the East Boston Neighborhood zoning district and a Maritime Economy Reserve (MER) sub district; both are municipal zoning designations. In the MER, the as-of-right maximum building height is 55 feet with a maximum floor area ratio (FAR) of 2.0. Most uses are forbidden in the MER sub district, unless they are marine-dependent or marine-dependent industrial uses.

Parcel 0104443010 is also located in a Designated Port Area (DPA), a Commonwealth of Massachusetts zoning designation. Because it is part of the state zoning code, the regulations of the DPA supersede municipal zoning regulations. In the DPA, allowable uses must be marine-dependent or marine-dependent industrial uses, or function in support of these uses. While DPA regulations do not regulate building height or FAR, Chapter 91 of the Massachusetts zoning code does regulate height and FAR in waterfront areas.

The regulations of the City of Boston's MER sub districts have been designed to be essentially equivalent to those of the state's Designated Port Areas.

### **5.3 Current Planning Issues**

Because both DPA and MER designated areas are restricted to marine-industrial or related uses, adaptive reuse options for the East Boston Immigration Station are limited. The number of 20x20 inch load-bearing reinforced concrete columns that break up the building's interior space would likely further complicate the building's capacity for marine-industrial reuse. Other reuse options that have previously been suggested for the building, which include reuse as a museum or community center, are not allowable under the building's current zoning. The building's large size also precludes it from many uses.

Vacant for at least 25 years, the building exhibits significant signs of interior and exterior deterioration. Much of the damage to the building appears to

have been caused by water infiltration and exposure to repetitive freeze-thaw cycles. The building has been condemned by the Fire Department, signifying that they will not enter the building in the event of fire unless human life is in danger.

Massport, the current property owner, has expressed its intention to demolish the structure to create increased vessel repair lay down space for the Boston Harbor Shipyard. Because Massport is not subject to municipal zoning, demolition of the structure would not be subject to Article 85 of the City of Boston zoning code, the City's demolition delay ordinance.

## **6.0 ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES**

### **6.1 Alternatives Available to the Boston Landmarks Commission**

#### **A. Individual Landmark Designation**

Designation shall correspond to the footprint of the East Boston Immigration Station, 287 Marginal Street, East Boston, located in Assessor's parcel 0104443010, ward 1, and shall address the following exterior elements, hereinafter referred to as the "Specified Exterior Features":

- The exterior envelope of the East Boston Immigration Station building.

#### **B. Denial of Individual Landmark Designation**

The Commission retains the option of not designating any or all of the Specified Exterior Features as a Landmark.

#### **C. Preservation Restriction**

The Commission could recommend the owner consider a preservation restriction for any or all of the Specified Exterior Features.

#### **D. Preservation Plan**

The Commission could recommend development and implementation of a preservation plan for the property.

#### **E. National Register Listing**

The Commission could recommend that the property owner pursue National Register listing, which would afford limited protection from federal, federally-licensed, or federally-assisted activities and render the property eligible, under certain circumstances, for historic rehabilitation tax credits. The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) determined in 2002 that the East Boston Immigration Station is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, with significance at the local and state levels.

#### **F. Site Interpretation**

Because the historical significance associated with the East Boston Immigration Station is not physically apparent, the Commission could recommend that the owner develop and install interpretive materials at the site and at other locations in East Boston.

## **6.2 Impact of Alternatives**

### **A. Individual Landmark Designation**

Landmark Designation represents the City's highest honor and is therefore restricted to cultural resources of outstanding architectural and/or historical significance. Landmark designation under Chapter 772 would require review of physical changes to the Specified Exterior Features of the property, in accordance with the Standards and Criteria adopted as part of the designation. Landmark designation results in listing on the State Register of Historic Places.

### **B. Denial of Individual Landmark Designation**

Without Landmark designation, the City would be unable to offer protection to the Specified Exterior Features, or extend guidance to property owner under Chapter 772.

### **C. Preservation Restriction**

Chapter 666 of the M.G.L. Acts of 1969 allows individuals to protect the architectural integrity of their property via a preservation restriction. A restriction may be donated to or purchased by any governmental body or non-profit agency capable of acquiring interests in land and strongly associated with historic preservation. These agreements are recorded instruments (normally deeds) that run with the land for a specific term or in perpetuity, thereby binding not only the owner who conveyed the restriction, but also subsequent owners. Restrictions typically govern alterations to exterior features and maintenance of the appearance and condition of the property.

### **D. Preservation Plan**

A preservation plan allows an owner to work with interested parties to investigate various adaptive reuse scenarios, analyze investment costs and rates of return, and provide recommendations for subsequent development. It does not carry regulatory oversight.

### **E. National Register Listing**

National Register listing provides recognition as well as limited protection from federal, federally-licensed, or federally-assisted activities. It creates incentives for preservation, notably the federal investment rehabilitation tax credits and grants through the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund via the Massachusetts Historical Commission. National Register listing provides listing on the State Register, affording parallel protection for projects with state involvement in addition to the availability of state rehabilitation tax credits. Tax credits are not available to owners who demolish portions of historic properties. Because the current property owner (Massport) is a state agency, the Immigration Station would only be eligible for state or federal rehabilitation tax credits or grants associated with listing in the State or National Register under certain circumstances.

### **F. Site Interpretation**

The installation of interpretive materials (such as interpretive panels) at the site would allow the history of the East Boston Immigration Station to be

made evident to the public. Interpretative materials could be installed at the site whether or not it is designated as a Boston Landmark. Thematic interpretive materials could also be installed at locations throughout East Boston, including the Boston HarborWalk, a system of trails, sites, and public open spaces that extends along Boston's waterfront, from Chelsea Creek to the Neponset River, through East Boston, Charlestown, the North End, Downtown, South Boston, and Dorchester. The installation of interpretive materials at the East Boston Immigration Station would ensure that the site's history is made apparent and would be consistent with the HarborWalk's aim to inform the public about significant locations along Boston's waterfront. The Boston HarborWalk is managed by The Boston Harbor Association and by the Boston Redevelopment Authority.

## 7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission finds that the East Boston Immigration Station does meet the criteria for Landmark designation as found in section four of Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975, as amended, for the reasons cited in Section 3.3 of this report:

***B. as a structure at which events occurred that have made an outstanding contribution to, and are identified predominantly with, an important aspect of the cultural, political, economic, and social history of the city, the Commonwealth, the New England region, and the nation.***

As Boston's first purpose-built immigration facility, the East Boston Immigration Station was the entry point and holding place for an estimated 23,000 (10%) of the 230,677 immigrant aliens arriving at the Port of Boston between 1920 and 1954 who required further review, detention, or custody prior to deportation. Although the facility was in use for less than forty years, the East Boston Immigration Station is associated with the period of immigration during which ethnic quotas were developed and strictly enforced, under the Emergency Quota Act of 1921 and the Immigration Act of 1924. These Acts limited the number of immigrants from certain regions who were allowed admittance into the United States.

However, due to the deteriorated condition of the building, its lack of architectural integrity and loss of what minimal detail it once possessed, combined with very limited potential for adaptive reuse due to the building's large size, stringent zoning restrictions, and the restrictive grid of interior structural columns, the staff withholds recommendation to designate the East Boston Immigration Station as a Landmark.

Instead, staff recommends that Massport develop an interpretive plan for the East Boston Immigration Station, in order to interpret, contextualize, and commemorate the building's history. It is recommended that this plan be completed prior to the demolition of the building. Interpretive materials should be installed both on site and at other publically-accessible locations in East Boston, such as Maverick Station, Piers Park, Logan Airport, and the HarborWalk. It is recommended that the interpretive materials incorporate salvaged building materials, public art, landscape elements, or other physical displays. Interpretive materials should also incorporate the plaque (now held in storage by Massport) that had originally been located at the East Boston Immigration Station's northern elevation. It is further recommended that interpretive materials address the wider context of immigration in East Boston, potentially linking to nearby sites associated with immigration history, including the Golden Stairs and the Immigrants' Home, both located on Marginal Street.

The historic documentation compiled in this study report and the historic documentation compiled as part of Massport's recordation of the East Boston Immigration Station prior to demolition should inform the content of these interpretive materials. It is requested that any proposed interpretive materials

be reviewed by Boston Landmarks Commission staff prior to fabrication and installation.

Massport is encouraged to ensure that a copy of the documentation and research findings compiled as part of their recordation of the East Boston Immigration Station is made available to East Boston residents; it is suggested that the East Boston branch library would be an appropriate repository.

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**9.0 APPENDIX: BOSTON IMMIGRATION STATISTICS, 1920-1954**

<b>Year (ending June 30)</b>	<b>Immigrant Aliens Admitted through Port of Boston</b>
1920	15,820
1921	51,565
1922	4,924
1923	12,212
1924	36,320
1925	9,023
1926	8,025
1927	8,080
1928	5,680
1929	5,002
1930	9,483
1931	3,053
1932	660
1933	422
1934	543
1935	522
1936	630
1937	704
1938	997
1939	875
1940	1,219
1941	879
1942	121
1943	7
1944	264
1945	278
1946	475
1947	849
1948	1,772
1949	14,318
1950	24,222
1951	3,787
1952	2,968
1953	2,248
1954	2,730
<b>Total:</b>	<b>230,677</b>

Data compiled from *Annual Reports of the Immigration and Naturalization Service* and *Statistical Abstract of the United States*.