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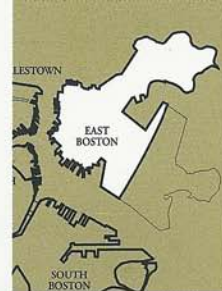


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EAST BOSTON

Exploring Boston's Neighborhoods



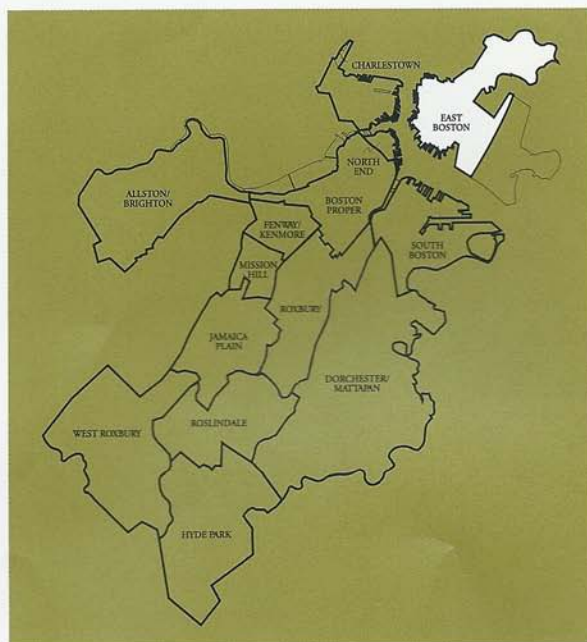
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ive islands in Boston Harbor, connected and extended by over 150 years of filling operations, make up the neighborhood of East Boston. Development of the area for homes and businesses began in the 1830s under the direction of the East Boston Company, making this community one of the city's



few neighborhoods created with a formal urban plan. East Boston's harbor location enabled it to become a center for shipbuilding and other marine industries, and some of America's most famous clipper ships were built here.

LINKING THE ISLANDS

For Boston's first 200 years, the five islands that now make up East Boston were mostly privately owned and used for farming, grazing livestock, and military fortifications. Noddle's Island and Hog (or Breed's) Island, the two largest of the group, form the basis of the current residential and commercial sections of East Boston. The three smaller islands – Governor's, Apple, and Bird – have been incorporated into Logan Airport.

PLANNING A NEW NEIGHBORHOOD

In 1833, General William H. Sumner, the owner of Noddle's Island, formed the East Boston Company to oversee the residential and commercial development of East Boston. The company shaped the neighborhood for nearly a century until it disbanded in 1928. The developers had a planned community in mind, with a grid of straight streets and squares to

provide open space. The original plan divided Noddle's Island into three sections, today's Jeffries Point, Maverick and Central squares, and Eagle Hill. The hilly terrain of the Orient Heights area (on the former Hog Island) prevented the company from extending the strict grid-like pattern there.

Believing that reliable transportation would be essential to the neighborhood's accessibility, the East Boston Company in 1833 established steam ferry service from Maverick Square to Rowe's Wharf in downtown Boston. The developers also planned for the community to contain a mix of homes, maritime and other industries, and recreational facilities.

CLIPPER SHIP DAYS

East Boston began to grow and prosper as a shipbuilding center virtually as soon as the neighborhood's first ship was launched in 1839. Shipbuilding and servicing industries came to line East Boston's waterfront, helping make Boston one of the leading ports in the country. East Boston was home to the Border Street shipyard of



Donald McKay, the designer of noted clipper ships, including the world-famous *Flying Cloud*, which broke the established record for a voyage around Cape Horn. Many other shipyards, wharves, and warehouses lined the waterfront, and around 1840, East Boston became the Boston terminal for the London-based Cunard line. Even after the age of wooden sailing ships passed, East Boston remained a center for shipping and marine repair. There was also a diversified base of non-marine industry, producing everything from paint to pottery.

IMMIGRATION AND DIVERSITY

As an arrival point with many employment opportunities, the neighborhood grew rapidly during the age of large-scale immigration. East Boston's immigrants came in waves – Canadians in the 1840s and Irish in the 1850s. Russian and Eastern European Jewish immigrants began to arrive in the 1890s, and in the first years of the 20th century the neighborhood had what may have been the largest Jewish community in New England.

Background painting, "East Boston Anchor Works," oil on canvas, by Mrs. Emory D. Leighton, courtesy of The Bostonian Society

Also at the turn of the century, Italian immigrants began to settle in East Boston, becoming the major ethnic group in the neighborhood by 1915. Today, East Boston continues this long tradition of diversity.

RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

The changing ethnic makeup of the neighborhood is visible in East Boston's religious institutions. The first Roman Catholic parish completed the Gothic Revival-style Church of the Most Holy Redeemer (70 Maverick Street) in 1857, during the decade of heaviest immigration from Ireland. The church complex also includes the nearby convent (1867), rectory (1867), and school (1893). In 1844, the first Jewish cemetery in Massachusetts was laid out on Wordsworth Street;

Ohabei Shalom Cemetery, affiliated with Temple Ohabei Shalom of Brookline, is still in use today. The Don Orione Brothers complex, including the highly visible Madonna National Shrine, was begun in 1952.

EARLY HOUSING IN EAST BOSTON

In the 1830s, the East Boston Company envisioned a neighborhood of single-family residences. Many of the surviving early dwellings – clustered in Eagle Hill, Jeffries Point, and Belmont Square – are in the Greek Revival style. Modeled after the temples of the Greek

The McKay House is typical of the Greek Revival style in having the entrance in the gable end. Builders' style handbooks may have been the source of many of its details.



The Church of the Most Holy Redeemer was designed by Patrick C. Keeley, architect of many Boston-area churches, including Our Lady of the Assumption at Jeffries Point.



▲
These buildings
in Orient Heights
are typical of
East Boston's
turn-of-the-
century multi-
family housing.

republic, houses of this type were popular throughout the early U.S. A notable example of this style is the wood frame house built by the shipbuilder Donald McKay in 1844 at 78-80 White Street, now a designated Boston Landmark. Belmont Square (now Brophy Memorial Park) was the location of some of the first lots sold by the East Boston Company because of its desirable hilltop views. Its Greek Revival dwellings include the row of nine brick bowfront houses at 177-193 Webster Street and the finely detailed brick double house at 224 Webster Street. East Boston also contains houses in other popular mid-19th century revival styles, including the Italianate and French-inspired Mansard cottages in Eagle Hill.

BOSTON LANDMARK

Trinity Neighborhood House



This handsome brick town-house at 406 Meridian Street was built about 1847 for Noah Sturtevant, a prominent local businessman. An asymmetrical plan with curved front and side window bays adds to its elegance. The design reflects the transition between the bowfronted facades and delicate details of the Federal style and the simpler, heavier forms of the Greek Revival.

In 1917, 406 Meridian Street became Trinity Neighborhood House and Day Nursery, an innovative social service and day care program begun by Trinity Church in Boston in 1881. At the turn of the century, this early example of a "settlement house" moved to East

Boston and incorporated as an independent charitable organization which in 1966 merged into the East Boston Social Center, Inc. The building has recently been rehabilitated to provide housing for elderly neighborhood residents.

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

NEW HOUSING NEEDS

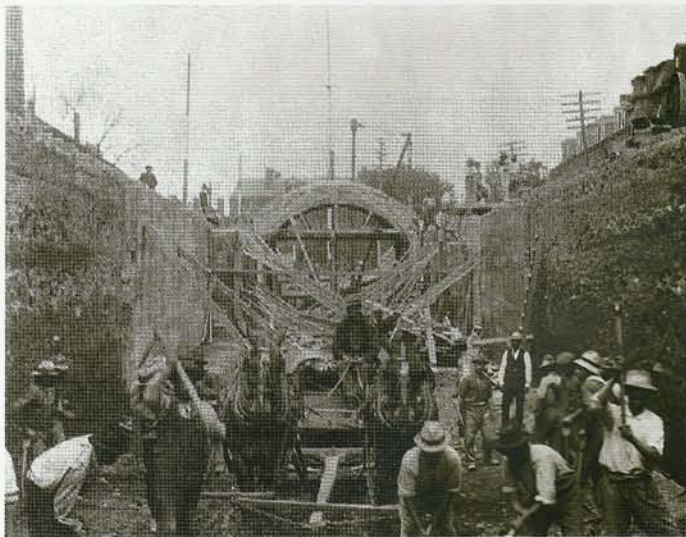
The influx of immigrants to East Boston between the Civil War and World War I created a need for multi-family housing. Many single-family houses were subdivided, and tenements were constructed in the older parts of the neighborhood. The brick apartment buildings in the six-block area between Porter and Maverick streets date to this period of expansion.

By the 1880s, the development of Orient Heights had begun on the former Hog or Breed's Island. This area and nearby Harbor View contain many examples of the Colonial Revival and related styles that recall the buildings of 18th-century America.



The growing importance of automobiles created demand for easier access to and from Boston by car. The Sumner Tunnel, Boston Harbor's first auto crossing, was completed in 1934, followed by the Callahan Tunnel in 1961. The Third Harbor Tunnel, scheduled to open in 1995, will link East Boston with the Massachusetts Turnpike and South Boston.

Commercial air travel is the most recent transportation technology to have had an impact on East Boston. The original airfield opened in 1923 on the filled flats of Jeffries Point, and passenger service began in 1929. Landfill on Governor's and Apple islands expanded the



Courtesy of The Bostonian Society

A photo dated 1900 shows workers digging the subway tunnel at Maverick Square.

This 1929 aerial view shows Logan Airport, then known as Boston Municipal Airport, during its first year of operation.

airport to 2,000 acres in 1948, and in 1966 Wood Island Park was given over for additional runway space. The airport operated under various city and state jurisdictions until the Massachusetts Port Authority was formed in 1959. Now named Gen. Edward Lawrence Logan International Airport, the facility is one of the earliest municipal airports in the country and its original General Aviation Administration Building (1927) is still in use, although greatly altered.

RESORTS AND RECREATION

At the time the East Boston Company was formed, both Chelsea and Nahant were popular resort areas, and the developers saw the same potential for East Boston. Their idea paid off when the 80-room Maverick House Hotel in Maverick Square began attracting visitors as soon as it opened its doors in 1835. Maverick House was the first of several hotel buildings on this site to serve vacationers and travelers transferring from ships and trains.

The tradition of recreation has continued in a variety of ways. Incorporated in 1879, Jeffries Point Yacht Club was the first chartered yacht club on the East Coast. In the 1890s, the city established a major recreational development in East Boston. Now, only the large trees shading Neptune Road recall the entrance to Wood Island Park (later known as World War Memorial Park). Designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, the landscape architect responsible for Boston's park system, Wood Island Park covered 46 acres. Its many facilities – men's and women's open air gyms and

running tracks, playgrounds, grandstand, field house and bath house – attracted 43,000 visitors in 1895. Unfortunately, Wood Island Park was taken by airport expansion in 1966.

In 1935, New England's first major horse race track opened in East Boston with 35,000 fans in attendance. The Suffolk Downs Race-track with its grandstand and clubhouse, all designed by engineer Mark Linenthal, was built in less than three months. The streamlined, modernist features of this complex (located off William McClellan Highway near the Revere border) characterize the International Style, rarely seen in Boston's neighborhoods.

Background photo of Meridian Street, 1930s, courtesy of The Bostonian Society

The clubhouse at Suffolk Downs exemplifies the International Style of the 1930s. Its sleek facade features continuous windows separated by white stucco bands.

