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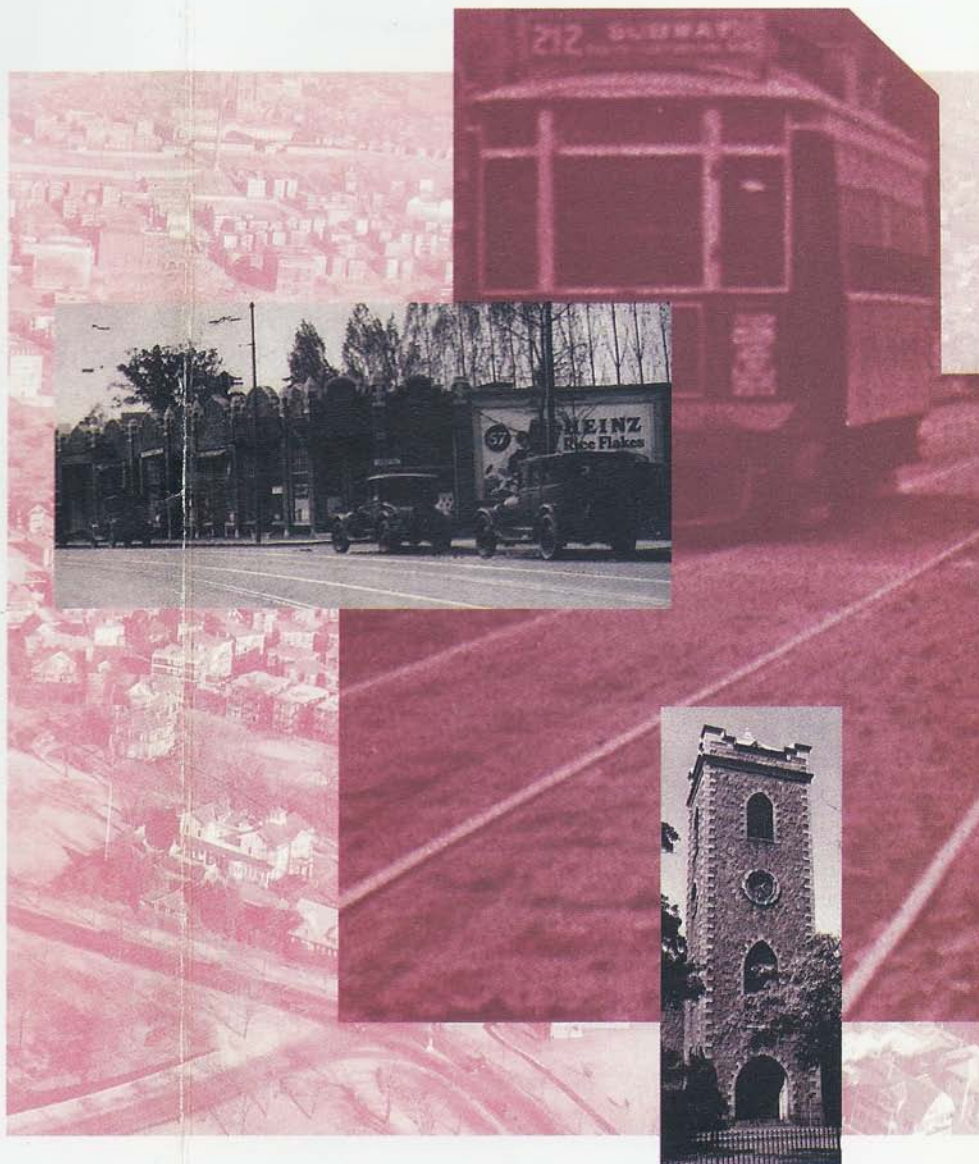


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# JAMAICA PLAIN

Exploring Boston's Neighborhoods

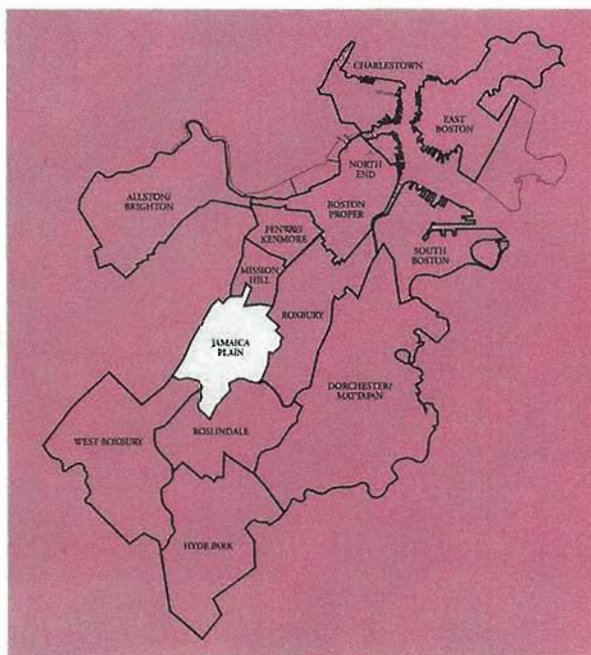


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originally part of Roxbury, Jamaica Plain was included in West Roxbury when it became independent in 1851, and was annexed to Boston in 1873. During the 19th century, transportation developments transformed Jamaica Plain from a farming community into a suburb. Thanks to the



railroad, streetcar, and parkway, commuters flocked to new single-family houses, two-family dwellings, and three deckers that lined the neighborhood by the early 20th century. By this time, Boston's Emerald Necklace park system included Olmsted Park, Jamaica Pond, the Arnold Arboretum, and Franklin Park.



## FARMS AND MANSIONS ON THE ROAD TO DEDHAM

As Centre Street winds its way through Jamaica Plain, it follows the path of the earliest road from Roxbury to Dedham, laid out by 17th-century English colonists. As early as 1680, a village formed in the vicinity of Eliot Square (now Monument Square), with scattered farms stretching out beyond. By 1769, enough families lived in the area to establish a separate parish with its own meetinghouse, built on the site of the present First Church of Jamaica Plain.

Wealthy Bostonians were also attracted to Jamaica Plain as a location for their summer estates. Of these, only the Loring-Greenough House of 1760 at 12 South Street remains. With its adjoining carriage house and

gardens, this grand structure retains some of the feeling of a country estate. The house was built for British Royal Navy officer Joshua Loring, who fled to British-occupied Boston during the Revolutionary War. American General Nathanael Greene set up temporary headquarters here, and the house was also used as a military hospital.

With its classical entranceways and hipped roof, the pre-Revolutionary Loring-Greenough House exemplifies the formal Georgian style.



## THE COMING OF THE RAILROAD

In 1834, the Boston & Providence Railroad crossed the Stony Brook Valley, and soon Jamaica Plain became an accessible, highly desirable suburb. The technology of the railroad coincided with a new vision of "the good life" for Americans – the suburban ideal of a single-family house with a yard, removed from the bustle of the city. Suburban housing developed in a progression of styles, as Americans searched the past for architectural inspiration.

## SUBURBAN ENCLAVES

Farms and estates within walking distance of the new railroad stations were carved into subdivisions. Among the earliest were Glenvale Park and Sumner Hill, divided by Green Street below Centre Street. The relationship of these residential areas to the railroad is now mirrored by the relocated MBTA Orange Line, whose Stony Brook and Green Street stops are on the sites of Boston & Providence line stations. Glenvale Park was created when Chestnut Avenue (originally Nebraska Street) and Lamartine Street were laid out in 1848. This area displays architectural styles popular from the 1840s through the 1890s. Similarly, Sumner Hill was carved out

of the Loring-Greenough estate in the 1850s. Its winding streets conform to the hilly terrain and show the influence of the picturesque landscape ideal that had been recently introduced at Forest Hills Cemetery. While not actually a subdivision, Pondsides, as the streets between Centre Street and Jamaica Pond are known, was built up at this time and contains some of Jamaica Plain's finest suburban architecture.

## SUBURBAN STYLES

The earliest suburban architectural style found in Jamaica Plain is the Greek Revival. Excited by the idea that their new nation shared ideals of democracy with ancient Greece, Americans in the 1830s and '40s built houses with columns and gable fronts modeled on Greek temples. The most elaborate is in Pondsides at One Dane Street, built around 1840 with a full porticoed front. More modest Greek Revival examples include the cupolaed Fowle House (1845) at 305-307 Chestnut Avenue, the double Williams House (1840) at



This villa at 8 Myrtle Street has the square tower characteristic of the Italianate style, a visual reference to the bell towers found in the Italian countryside.

33-35 Green Street, two buildings at 32 and 44 Burroughs Street and a trio at 14, 18 and 20 Seaverns Avenue.

The next style to catch the fancy of suburbanites was the Italianate, characterized by towers, brackets, and round-arched windows. The twin villas at 8 and 9 Myrtle Street in Pondsides, built about 1845, are modeled after Tuscan villas shown in architectural pattern books.

## INDUSTRIALIZATION

The Stony Brook attracted entrepreneurs to Jamaica Plain. Tanneries and breweries, both heavy consumers of water, were already well-established in Lower Roxbury, and continued developing in a band from Roxbury Crossing to Forest

Hills throughout the 19th century. Carriage-making and related trades also flourished after the Civil War. By the late 1870s, the Stony Brook was confined to a culvert, and industrial buildings were clustered nearby along Brookside Avenue and Green and Amory streets.

Jamaica Plain's most notable industrial site is the brick Haffenreffer Brewery complex at Germania and Bismarck streets. Begun in 1877 with various additions dating as late as 1962, the complex incorporates numerous architectural styles. Closed by Haffenreffer in the mid-1960s, the complex has now been rehabilitated for industrial and commercial uses, including the brewing trade. Nearby are a brick livery stable, built in 1879 at



180 Green Street, and Meehan's carriage factory, next door at 172-178 Green Street (1889-1895). A later example of brewery architecture is the Franklin Brewery (3179 Washington Street), designed by Chicago architect Charles Kaester and completed in 1895. This Queen Anne/Romanesque Revival building is a fine example of industrial architecture of its period.

### WORKERS' HOUSING

While the commuters tended to live near the railroad stations, those who worked right in Jamaica Plain clustered near the factories, breweries, and shops. Early workers' cottages, generally smaller than houses built by affluent commuters, still are seen along McBride and Jamaica streets, and later examples line the Stony Brook along Amory and Hess streets.

### A STREETCAR SUBURB

During the early 1870s, streetcar tracks were extended from Roxbury to Jamaica Plain along Washington and Centre streets. Jamaica Plain became a "streetcar suburb," attracting a larger and less affluent group of residents than the railroad commuters. In the last quarter of the 19th century, new cross streets were developed, and small cul-de-sacs were cut behind older streets, as at Greenough Park and Storey Place off Greenough Avenue. This development also brought multifamily housing to Jamaica Plain, with the popular three-decker and two-family houses in a variety of revival styles.



Courtesy of Barbara Kaplan, J.P.N.D.C

## BOSTON LANDMARK

### The Curley House



**A**t 350 The Jamaica way stands the home of one of Boston's most colorful political figures, James Michael Curley. Curley served four mayoral terms at intervals from 1914 to 1949; he was governor of Massachusetts for one term, and a four-term U.S. Congressman. Curley also spent time in prison – including part of one mayoral term – for financial improprieties. The Curley House in Jamaica Plain was a meeting place for both local constituents and international figures including Eleanor Roosevelt and Chiang Kai-shek. Built in 1915, during Curley's first mayoral term, this substantial brick house is a representative example of the suburban

Georgian Revival style of its time. It fits with its proper Yankee neighbors in every detail – except for its wooden shutters with their defiantly Irish shamrock cut-outs. The Curley house was designed by Boston architect Joseph McGinnis. It is now the property of the City, used for meetings and functions.

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

▶ **The earliest buildings at the Haffenreffer Brewery were designed for a vertical brewing system. The raw materials were hoisted to the highest point.**





### EXPERIMENTS IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Even in a time of multifamily development, the ideal of the single-family house remained strong. The philanthropist Robert Treat Paine and his Workingman's Building Association responded by developing a subdivision of modestly-scaled Queen Anne single-family houses in the early 1890s along Round Hill, Edge Hill, Gay Head, and Sunnyside streets between Centre and Heath streets. A decade later, a similar concern for affordability was the inspiration for Woodbourne, Boston's first planned "garden suburb." This development, along Southbourne Road and Florian and Wachusett streets near Forest Hills, was built in 1911-1912 for employees of the Boston Elevated Railway Company shortly after the "El" was extended to Forest Hills. The development, never completed, contains a mix of single-family and multifamily

This view of Round Hill Street shows how the affordable housing developed by Robert Treat Paine was handsomely decorated with the ornamental shingling and bracketed porches of the Queen Anne style.

dwellings arranged symmetrically around small parks or common yards. The existing houses, designed by the firms Kilham & Hopkins and Allen & Collens, are among the best local examples of the Arts and Crafts style, rarely seen in Boston's neighborhoods.

### 20TH-CENTURY SUBURBANIZATION

The suburban development of the 20th century was oriented to the automobile rather than the train or streetcar. The parkway near Jamaica Pond and the Arnold Arboretum, designed as a scenic carriage drive in the park, evolved into a major commuter road. Between the Jamaicaway and the older development at Monument Square, Prince, Dunster, and Orchard streets were devel-

oped in the 1910s. Across the Arborway, large estates on Moss Hill were subdivided and developed in a variety of suburban styles through the 1920s.

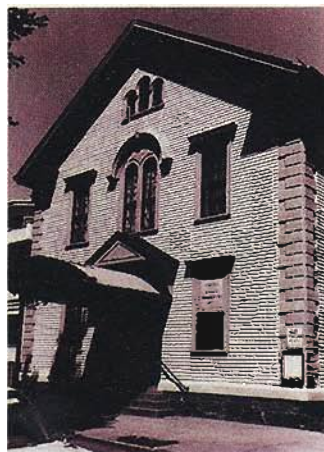
### COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS

Churches, schools, and social clubs followed suburbanites and industrial workers to Jamaica Plain. The First Church of Jamaica Plain, on the site of the 1769 meetinghouse at Monument Square, was designed in the early Gothic Revival style by Boston architect Nathaniel J. Bradlee in 1854. Later Gothic churches were constructed of native Roxbury puddingstone such as the Jamaica Plain Methodist Church (1870) at 40 Elm Street and the neighboring St. John's Episcopal Church (1882). German and Irish immigrants brought new

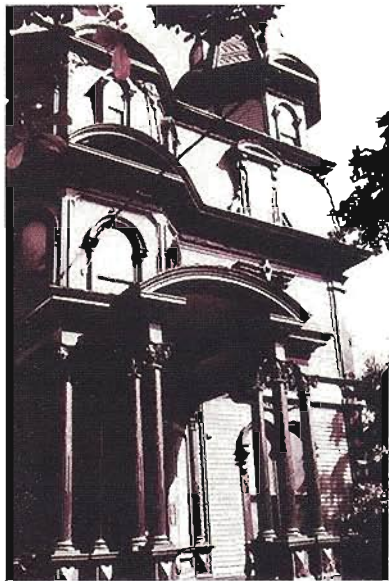
denominations and building traditions, evidenced by St. Thomas Aquinas Church (1870s) at South and St. Joseph streets, the German Methodist Church (1900) at 169 Amory Street, and the German Club (1896), now the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood House, at 276 Amory Street.

### CARE FACILITIES

Among the many care facilities for the elderly or infirm developed in Jamaica Plain since the late 19th century is the Adams-Nervine Asylum at 990 Centre Street. In the 1870s, merchant J. Gardiner Weld built a ruretted mansion in the popular Second Empire style on his Jamaica Plain estate, but died before moving in. The Weld estate and nearby properties were purchased by a trust estab-



The Italianate-style Eliot Hall at 7a Eliot Street was built in 1831 as a temporary town hall. Since 1878 it has been the home of the Footlight Club, the country's oldest amateur theatrical group.



lished by Seth Adams, another Boston businessman, for a facility for indigent people suffering from nervous disorders. The asylum, which opened its doors in 1880, was based on the newest theories of its time: that patients should be cared for in home-like settings that reflected normal community living and supported each patient's individuality and human dignity. When completed, the asylum included a "village" of buildings. Weld's mansion served as the administrative offices. The Adams House (1880), designed by Boston architect J. Pickering Putnam in the Queen Anne style, was the residence for female patients; an 1895 men's residence subsequently burned. The Director's House, also built in 1895, is in the Colonial Revival style.

◀ The J. Gardiner Weld House shows the elaborate details and distinctive roofline of the Second Empire style.

The asylum operated until 1976; it is now a condominium complex and a designated Boston Landmark.

### GREEN SPACES

In spite of dense suburban development, Jamaica Plain retains much green space. Forest Hills Cemetery (1848) was the inspiration of Henry A.S. Dearborn. Mayor of Roxbury and president of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, Dearborn pioneered the "rural cemetery" as a picturesque, parklike setting for city dwellers.

Forest Hills contains fine Victorian Gothic structures and well-designed monuments. Above Morton Street near Forest Hills is Yale Terrace, a winding, wooded street of architecturally notable houses built shortly after the cemetery.

The Arnold Arboretum (established 1872) is a 265-acre tract that is part of Boston's park system as well as a scientific study collection of 15,000 trees, shrubs, and vines managed by Harvard University. The Arboretum is the primary site in the U.S. for the study of woody plants. The local Bussey family contributed much of the land for the Arboretum, which was planned by Frederick Law Olmsted, the designer of Boston's park system, and Charles Sprague Sargent, the facility's first director.

Jamaica Pond, a natural kettle hole formed by a prehistoric glacier, has always been a notable feature of Jamaica Plain's landscape, but only in the last century has it been available for public enjoyment. Before

This 19th-century view shows ice houses, used for storing blocks of ice harvested from Jamaica Pond. Only a small strip of shoreline was open to the public at that time.

the City of Boston acquired the pond in 1892, it was ringed by private estates – of which only Pinebank, the Perkins estate, still stands. Until the mid-19th century, the pond was an important source of Boston's drinking water, and later it was used for commercial ice-harvesting. Olmsted incorporated the pond into the Boston park system in an 1892 plan; the boathouse and bandstand were added in 1910-1912.

