



BOSTON LANDMARKS COMMISSION
The Environment Department
1998

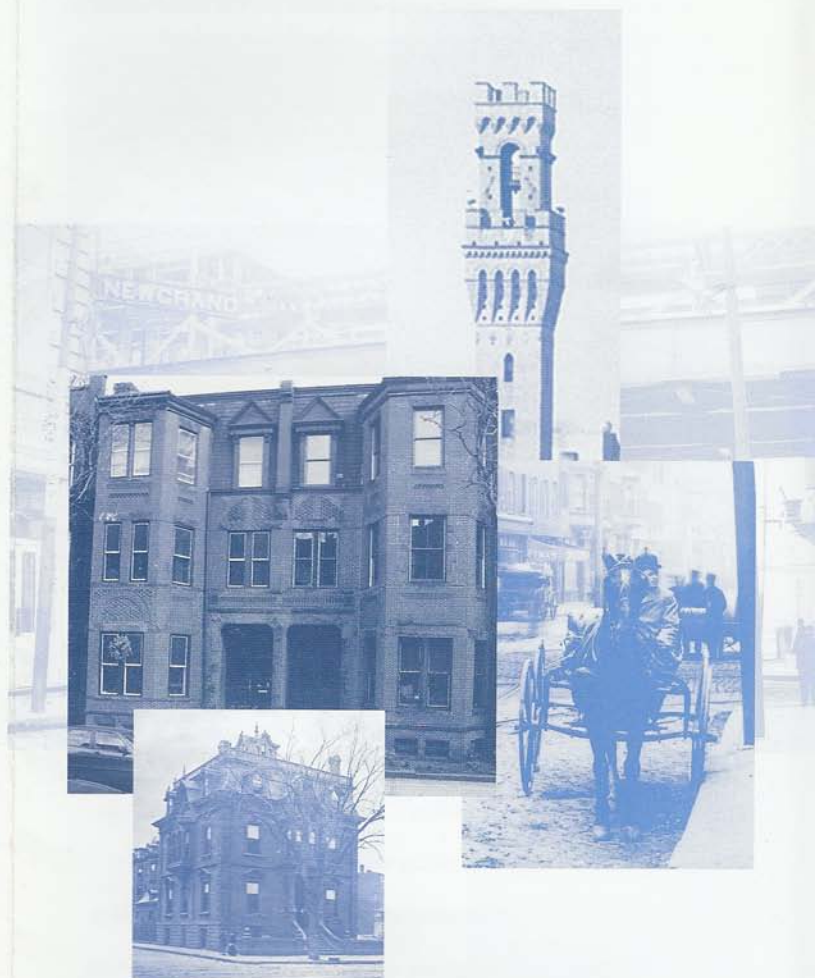
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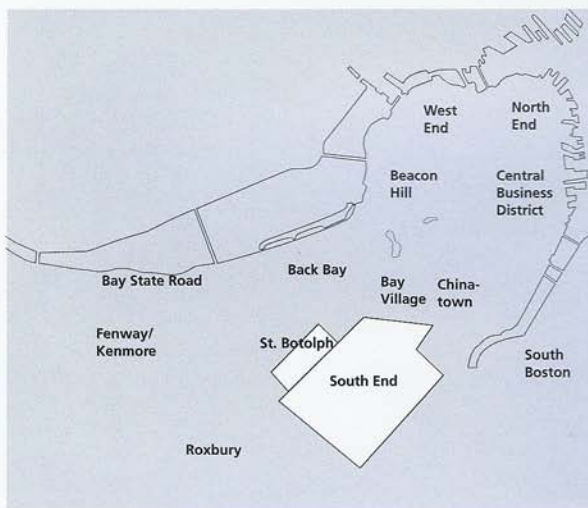
SOUTH END & ST. BOTOLPH

Exploring Boston's Neighborhoods



**BOSTON LANDMARKS
COMMISSION**

One of several large-scale landfill projects planned in Boston to create new residential districts, the South End was built on tidal marshes that flanked Boston Neck. Construction began in 1849. In the 1870s, the adjacent St. Botolph Street area was built on the southeastern



edge of the Back Bay. Both neighborhoods remain cohesive architectural districts of brick row houses with well-integrated institutional and commercial buildings. Today, the fine old buildings are being creatively renovated to accommodate a variety of uses, including housing, artist studios, small businesses and restaurants.



The Federal-era Porter House is distinguished from its Victorian neighbors by its symmetrical facade, Flemish bond brickwork and wooden details.

BOSTON NECK

In 1801, Charles Bulfinch (1763-1844), Boston's visionary Federal-era architect, conceived a plan to create a new residential community by filling in the marshes along Boston Neck, the narrow strip of land that connected colonial Boston to the town of Roxbury and beyond.

Bulfinch's plan was not immediately adopted, but several Federal-era mansions were built along the Neck. These included the austere Porter Houses at 1724 Washington Street, a pair of back-to-back attached brick houses built for distiller William Porter in 1806. Featuring a single balustrade designed to make them appear as one large house, they are the oldest surviving houses in the South End.

ENGLISH SQUARES AND FRENCH MANSIONS

In 1849, city engineers E. S. Chesborough and William P. Parrott were hired to refine Bulfinch's plan for the South End. They made house lots smaller and incorporated parks. Landfill began and the first lots were sold that same year.

The street plan of the South End is patterned after 18th-century English models. Blocks of townhouses overlook small parks in the centers of the residential streets. Union Park and Chester Square are fine examples. The parks with their ornamental plantings were designed to beautify the city as well

as create a sense of neighborhood. Worcester Square epitomizes this concept. In 1867, the private park was incorporated into the public vista by architect Gridley J. F. Bryant as part of his master plan for Boston Hospital.

In contrast, spacious Blackstone and Franklin Squares, laid out in the 1860s, were designed for recreation. Paths cross the parks in geometric patterns, converging at central fountains. Here ladies could stroll, children play and daring young men ride new-fangled bicycles. South Enders still flock to these urban oases at Washington and West Newton streets.

ROW HOUSE DISTRICT

The row house quickly became the predominant form of housing in the South End. Speculative builders produced whole blocks of houses for middle-class families. Built between 1850 and 1880, the typical South End townhouse incorporates a mix of architectural styles.

In 1864, architect
Gridley Bryant
placed City
Hospital at the
end of Worcester
Square, using the
bow-fronted
row houses to
frame the domed
pavilion.

The earliest blocks feature Greek-Revival bow-fronts with French-inspired mansard roofs. The later houses offer an eclectic blend of Renaissance Revival and Italianate ornamentation.

The district's most influential architect was Nathaniel J. Bradlee (1829-1888). A South End resident himself, Bradlee designed whole blocks of gracefully proportioned townhouses in the 1850s. Later, his Continental Block (built in 1868) featured a new apartment form called the "French flat." The idea of having all rooms on the same floor was a novel concept, brought to Boston from Paris in 1857. Union Park Street is an elegant example of a block of South End flats.

Despite the prevalence of townhouses, the South End boasted a few grand mansions. The magnificent Deacon House, begun in 1846 (now lost), was the first French Second Empire house built in Boston. In 1859, furniture dealer Aaron Hall Allen

built an Italianate brownstone manse at 1682 Washington Street. Decoration includes lion paws on the porch columns and a massive cornice. After 1871, the huge house became home to various organizations, including the Catholic Union and the Lebanese Men's Club—reflecting the changing ethnic mix of the district.



The Bostonian Society

The eclectic Allen
House, shown
here about 1870,
remains one of
Boston's most
exuberant houses.
The massive decor-
ation included
the family crest.





by the Bostonian Society

FIRST APARTMENTS

Avant garde 19th-century Boston families chose to live in residential hotels. Families maintained suites of rooms and were provided with food, linen and other services. The South End's Hotel Alexandria on Washington Street was among the most fashionable. Built in 1875-6, the hotel is distinctive for its richly patterned facade of colored sandstone. It is a rare Boston example of the Ruskinian Gothic style, which was popular in Britain at the time.

The St. Cloud Hotel at 565 Tremont Street, designed by Nathaniel Bradlee in 1870, is typical of "apartment hotels"—the first true apartment houses. Each flat was an independent unit maintained by a family and included its own kitchen in the basement. In 1987, the St. Cloud was renovated into condominiums.

The luxurious St. James Hotel (now Franklin House senior apartments) has the highly organized facade and mansard roof typical of the French Academic style.

HOSPITAL DISTRICT

Boston City Hospital served as a magnet for other medical institutions. Massachusetts Homeopathic Hospital was built in 1875 on East Concord Street. It emphasized fresh air cures and natural remedies. Patients needing surgery were wheeled across the courtyard to the Boston University School of Medicine, which merged in 1874 with the New England Female College, the first college in the region to admit women.

In the late 19th century, the South End became home to a growing number of African-Americans. While it admitted black patients, City Hospital would not allow blacks into their

training programs or hire black professionals. In 1908, Dr. Cornelius Garland, a black physician from Alabama, founded Plymouth Hospital and the Nurse's Training School on East Springfield Street. Plymouth Hospital closed in 1929, when City Hospital began admitting people of color into their medical and nursing programs.

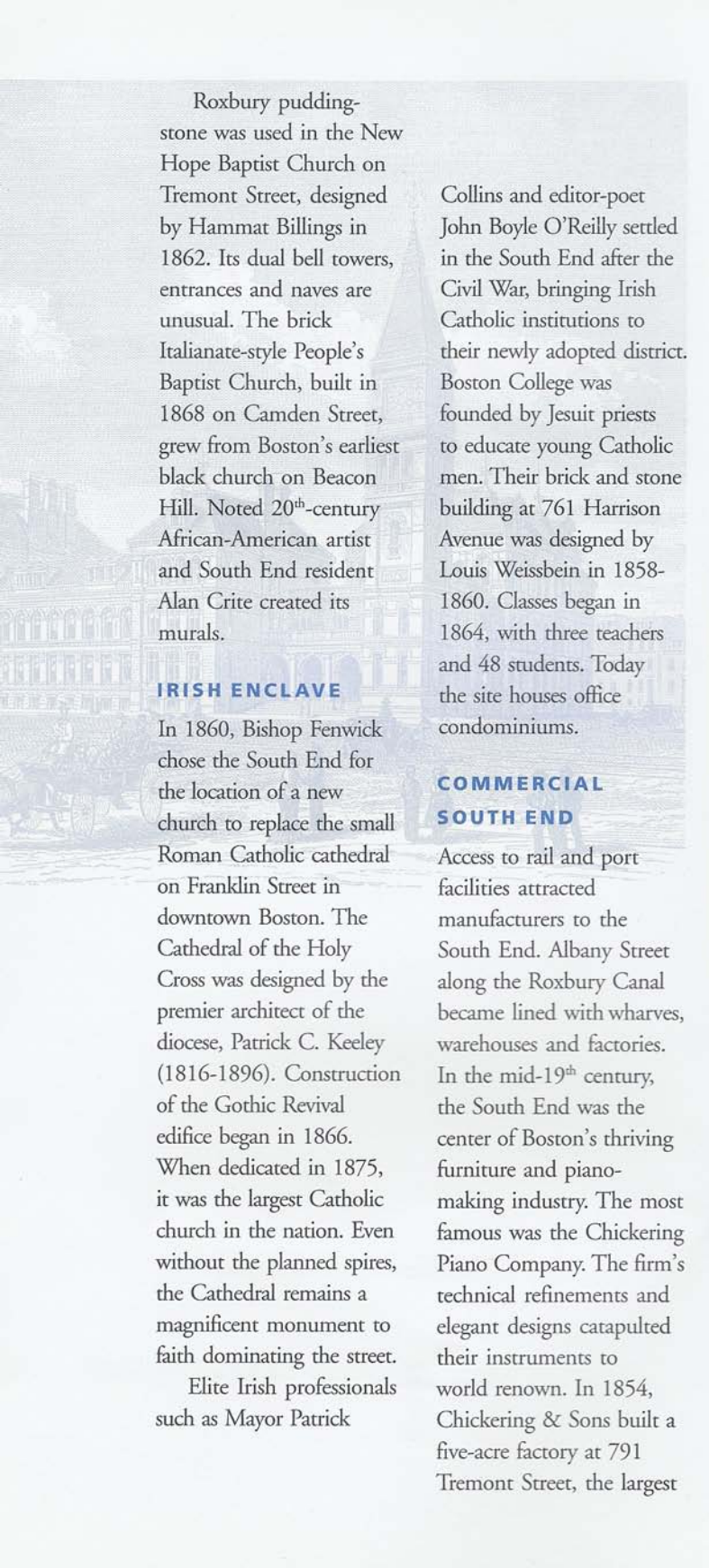
GRAND CHURCHES

Churches were among the first institutions to move into the new district. Nathaniel J. Bradlee designed the brick South Congregational Church in Union Park in 1862. Edward Everett Hale served as minister. As the

district's population has changed, the site has remained a house of worship but has served a variety of denominations. At the turn of the century, it became a synagogue and today serves a Greek Orthodox parish.

Built of Roxbury pudding stone in the form of a cross, the Cathedral of the Holy Cross is an early example of the English Gothic Revival style.





Roxbury pudding-stone was used in the New Hope Baptist Church on Tremont Street, designed by Hammat Billings in 1862. Its dual bell towers, entrances and naves are unusual. The brick Italianate-style People's Baptist Church, built in 1868 on Camden Street, grew from Boston's earliest black church on Beacon Hill. Noted 20th-century African-American artist and South End resident Alan Crite created its murals.

IRISH ENCLAVE

In 1860, Bishop Fenwick chose the South End for the location of a new church to replace the small Roman Catholic cathedral on Franklin Street in downtown Boston. The Cathedral of the Holy Cross was designed by the premier architect of the diocese, Patrick C. Keeley (1816-1896). Construction of the Gothic Revival edifice began in 1866. When dedicated in 1875, it was the largest Catholic church in the nation. Even without the planned spires, the Cathedral remains a magnificent monument to faith dominating the street.

Elite Irish professionals such as Mayor Patrick

Collins and editor-poet John Boyle O'Reilly settled in the South End after the Civil War, bringing Irish Catholic institutions to their newly adopted district. Boston College was founded by Jesuit priests to educate young Catholic men. Their brick and stone building at 761 Harrison Avenue was designed by Louis Weissbein in 1858-1860. Classes began in 1864, with three teachers and 48 students. Today the site houses office condominiums.

COMMERCIAL SOUTH END

Access to rail and port facilities attracted manufacturers to the South End. Albany Street along the Roxbury Canal became lined with wharves, warehouses and factories. In the mid-19th century, the South End was the center of Boston's thriving furniture and piano-making industry. The most famous was the Chickering Piano Company. The firm's technical refinements and elegant designs catapulted their instruments to world renown. In 1854, Chickering & Sons built a five-acre factory at 791 Tremont Street, the largest

SOUTH END LANDMARK DISTRICT AND ST. BOTOLPH ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION DISTRICT



Boston Athenaeum

The South End is the largest intact Victorian row house district in the country, comprising over 300 acres. The neighborhood was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. In 1983, the South End was created a Landmark District within the City of Boston. The adjacent St. Botolph Street Architectural Conservation District was created in 1991. The district is bounded by Harcourt and Albemarle streets, Huntington Avenue and the Southwest Corridor railroad tracks.

Neighborhood street-scapes are important community resources that need to be protected.

Local designation promotes the preservation of the architectural, aesthetic and historic character of these remarkably cohesive historic districts for the educational, cultural and economic welfare of the greater Boston community. To this end, each local district has an architectural review commission to ensure that changes made to buildings will be in keeping with the historic character of the neighborhood.

For information on designating local landmark buildings and districts, please contact the Boston Landmarks Commission at 635-3850.

Among the
Romanesque
features of the
eclectic Boston
Elevated Rail Power
Plant on Harrison
Avenue is the
central arch filled
with glass block.

JAZZ SCENE

The influx of African-Americans from the South after WWI enriched the black community in Boston, bringing with them the phenomenon of live jazz. "Mass" Avenue and Columbus Avenue became the center of the jazz scene, not only for a segment of the black community but for jazz lovers from across the city, including many returning WWII veterans. Clubs ranged from the sophisticated High Hat and Wigwam clubs, which featured entertainers like Josephine Baker and Duke Ellington, to more intimate places like Wally's Paradise Club.

in the nation. In 1972, the factory was renovated as an artist co-op.

The Boston Elevated Railway Co. Central Power Plant (540A Harrison Avenue) is a unique building which housed the huge generators that powered the city's streetcars at the turn of the century. It was built in 1892 on the site of the old Hinkley locomotive factory. Now part of the MBTA bus depot, the power station was designed by William G. Preston (1844-1910) and combines Romanesque and Gothic Revival details, including clustered arch windows and stepped buttresses.

MODEL HOUSING

The Lawrence Model Lodging Houses at 79-109 East Canton Street were established in 1889 to provide working families with quality housing. They were a bequest of Abbott Lawrence, who built the textile mills of Lawrence City. Cathedral Housing represents an innovative 20th-century public housing project, designed by Harold Field Kellogg in 1951 to help ease the post-war housing shortage.

In the 1960s, the South End's Puerto Rican community fought to develop their own affordable housing that would meet the community's unique cultural needs. The result is Villa Victoria at Tremont and West Dedham Streets, a complex of over 600 new and

renovated townhouses and apartment towers designed from 1972 to 1982 by John Sharratt Associates. The outdoor plaza, colorful brick and stucco, shops and private gardens are reminiscent of the Caribbean islands.

ST. BOTOLPH STREET

The St. Botolph Street development was conceived in 1871 by the Huntington Avenue Land Trustees. The speculative venture was planned on the mud flats nestled along the Boston and Providence Rail Road tracks, between the Back Bay and the South End. St. Botolph Street was named after the cathedral in the village of Boston, England. The district's first house lots went on sale in 1879. The small lots and narrow streets create an intimate neighborhood. While brick townhouses predominate, there are also double

As in their native
Puerto Rico, the
richly decorated
outdoor plaza is
the center of
community life
for residents of
Villa Victoria.





The lively facade of 18-20 Cumberland Street in the St. Botolph district is designed in the popular Queen Anne Revival or Paneled Brick style.

houses and small apartment houses built in eclectic Victorian styles, from the picturesque Queen Anne to the Romanesque. They incorporate dormers, bowfronts, octagonal bays and turrets. The decoration includes rusticated and colored stone as well as the predominant patterned brick.

As in the South End, entire rows of houses were built on speculation, lending a cohesive character to the district. In 1881, developer Ivory Bean selected the father-and-son firm of Joseph R. and William P. Richards to design three blocks of brick houses along West Newton, Durham and St. Botolph streets. A block of nine rusticated brownstone houses at 158-174 St. Botolph was designed in 1894 by Arthur Vinal.

AESTHETIC MOVEMENT

From its inception, the St. Botolph district had a Bohemian character. It was home to writers, musicians and artists, such as sculptor Bela L. Pratt (best known for the bronze figures at the entrance to the Boston Public Library).

Architect Louis Weissbein lived at "The Ilkley," an apartment house on Cumberland Street. A number of St. Botolph artisan studios were prominently associated with the Arts and Crafts Movement. This aesthetic reaction against industrial society, led by English designer William Morris (1834-1896), promoted hand crafts. The Harcourt Bindery, established on Harcourt Street in 1897, produced lavishly decorated hand-bound books. The bindery is now in the city's old Leather District.

The Aesthetic movement helped revive the art of stained glass. Many houses in the St. Botolph district were originally enhanced with decorative windows; most are now gone. The studio of master stained-glass craftsman Charles Connick was founded in 1912 at 9-11 Harcourt Street, where it continues today. Well-known commissions by this renowned studio include St. John the Divine in New York City.

Background photo: Boston Public Library

The Exploring Boston's Neighborhoods Series is published by the Boston Landmarks Commission.

Official Boston Landmarks are protected from changes that would adversely affect their historic character. For information on designating local landmark buildings and districts, please contact the Boston Landmarks Commission at 635-3850.

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