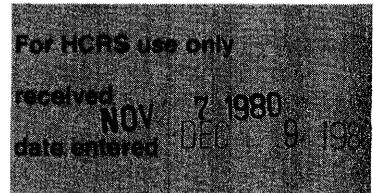


**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name Boston Theatre Multiple Resource Area

historic _____
and/or common (Partical Inventory: Architectural and Historical Properties)
Historic Resources of the Boston Theatre Area

2. Location

street & number Boston Theatre Area _____ not for publication

city, town Boston _____ vicinity of _____ congressional district 9th

state Massachusetts code 025 county Suffolk code 025

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
X-Multiple Resources		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name multiple ownership

street & number _____

city, town _____ vicinity of _____ state _____

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Suffolk County Registry of Deeds

street & number Pemberton Square

city, town Boston state MA

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Inventory of the Historic Assets of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has this property been determined eligible? X portions yes no

date June 1979 _____ federal X state _____ county _____ local _____

depository for survey records Massachusetts Historical Commission

city, town Boston state MA

7. Description

Condition (Mixed)		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> mixed	

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

A. General Physical Description

The theatre survey area is a subdivision of the Boston Central Business District which encompasses the major legitimate theatres and the two-block "adult entertainment zone" along lower Washington Street. It is a dense, predominantly commercial area characterized by an irregular street pattern and heterogeneity of building styles and types generally of masonry construction and low or moderate in scale. The area is located south of the major retail and financial districts, east of the commercial Park Plaza Redevelopment Project and residential Back Bay, north of Bay Village and the South End, and west of South Cove and Chinatown. The boundaries coincide with those of the "Theatre District" as presently defined by city planning agencies.

The identity of the area as a cultural and entertainment district is derived from the concentration of 18 theatres built for stage plays, vaudeville, burlesque and movies and including the city's finest examples of every 20th century theatre type. Historically, the area was also significant as the fashionable location for piano showrooms and music businesses which occupied the fine buildings along "Piano Row". The area achieved its greatest significance during the period from about 1890 to 1930, when most of the major surviving theatres and commercial buildings were constructed.

The flat and gently sloping terrain was part of the city's original land mass located at the south end of the Shawmut peninsula. The area is located at the junction of Washington Street, historically the city's principal north-south artery, and Boylston Street, the main east-west route since the mid-19th century expansion of the city into the Back Bay. The most important man-made geographical feature is the Boston Common, the city's major open space for nearly 350 years and the only significant open space in the vicinity.

In contrast to areas directly to the east, west and south - which were developed on filled land over a relatively short time span - the architecture of the survey area includes a wide range of styles reflecting a gradual and haphazard evolution from rural to urban and from residential to commercial. Distinctive individual buildings from the Federal to Moderne periods have survived here, along with cohesive ensembles of Victorian commercial buildings, brick "lofts", and turn-of-the-century skyscrapers.

Approximately half of the 145 buildings in the survey area* are 19th century in date, and most of the remainder were constructed in the early decades of the 20th century. Sixty-six percent have brick and nineteen percent have stone facades, with the remainder faced with cast concrete, terra cotta or aluminum and glass. Eighty percent of the buildings are between one and six stories, and only two buildings are over 12 stories. Because almost no large-scale modern apartments or office towers have been built here, the area has generally retained its late 19th century street pattern, scale, and sense of horizontal rather than vertical skyscrapers.

The area is presently the subject of revitalization and rehabilitation studies and programs aimed at reversing the deterioration of recent decades, which has led to a high building vacancy rate, deferred maintenance, a large number of vacant lots, and a dearth of quality new construction.

B. Topographical History

The physical characteristics and history of the survey area were shaped by its topography. The street pattern developed in response to early geographical features. The present-day streetscape is the result of the city's expansion, horizontally at

* As of December, 1978

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first, through elimination of open space and creation of nearby neighborhoods through land fill, and then vertically through replacement of small-scale structures with larger ones. This development can be chronicled in a series of maps beginning with the 1640's plot plan of the original settlement (Map VI) and the 1722 map by Captain John Bonner (Map V).

These early maps show the survey area at the southern end of the Shawmut peninsula between the South Cove and the muddy tidal flats of the Back Bay. The area was outside the original town center and close to the neck, that "slender stem" which provided the only land route connecting Boston with Roxbury and the mainland. The 1640's and 1722 maps show clearly the importance of Washington Street as the town's chief artery. Washington Street was called Newbury Street between West Street and Frog Lane (called Boylston Street after 1813) and Orange Street from there to the fortifications at the neck. For many years, Orange Street was little more than a footpath; and even after its widening, most shops, taverns and dwellings were concentrated north of Boylston Street. The Common, a versatile community resource used for pasturing cattle and public events, was defined geographically by adjoining property lines. A section of the Common along the north side of Boylston between Park Square and Tremont Street was privately-owned land later purchased by the town for a fourth burial ground established in 1756. The Bonner map shows a few other present day streets: West Street; Beach Street, so named because it ran along the water; Essex Street, which also followed the curve of the shoreline; and Rainford Lane, later the section of Harrison Avenue between Essex and Beach Streets.

The 1769 edition of Bonner's map (Map VII) shows a denser settlement with two new streets which have since been largely eliminated: Hollis, which ran between Tremont and Washington Street where the Music Hall plaza is today, and Pleasant (now Broadway) which followed the curve of the west shore where the Howard Johnson's is today. The section of Tremont Street south of Boylston also appears by that date.

Boston remained within the confines of the Shawmut peninsula until the early 1800's. The process of widening the neck began in 1804 with the creation of an additional section of Harrison Avenue, then called Front Street, parallel to Washington Street southeast of the survey area. To the west, expansion was blocked for several decades by ropewalks which were erected in 1774 near Park Square on the shores of the Back Bay to replace others burned at Pearl and Atkinson Street. The land for the ropewalks, which the city charitably gave away in the late 18th century, had to be bought back in 1824 to create the Public Garden and allow for westward continuation of Boylston Street.

The 1814 map by John C. Hales (Map VIII) shows a number of new streets in a pattern nearly identical to the present. Building density had increased since 1769, and the trend toward row housing is noticeable particularly along Tremont Street. Here a strip of land formerly part of the Boston Common was sold to developers in 1795 and was used for the construction of the handsome Bulfinch-designed "Colonnade Row" of 1810-12. In the process, a new street called Tremont was created which formed a straighter boundary for the Common than that formerly provided by Mason Street.

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During the 1830's and 40's, major transportation developments began to transform the former cove and mud flats immediately east and west of the survey area. Beginning in 1833, land was reclaimed in the South Cove to provide yard space and a terminus at Lincoln and Beach Streets for the Boston and Worcester Railroad, which by 1842 had been extended to become the Boston and Albany. The land fill operation, which also added new residential streets, can be seen on Map X dating from 1835 and Map XI of 1844. The land fill is easily distinguished from the original land mass by its regular grid street pattern.

West of the survey area a similar pattern emerged. In 1835, the new Boston and Providence Railroad opened for travel. This line crossed the muddy Back Bay and entered Boston at a depot built on filled land in what is now Park Square. About the same time, additional land fill to the south created the new residential streets known as Bay Village. Like those of the South Cove, these planned streets follow a regular pattern and were built up with modest late Federal and Greek Revival rowhouses, many of which survive today.

Within the survey area, the winding street pattern largely complete by 1814 has changed little except for street widening. In 1869, Tremont Street between Boylston and Stuart was widened by 15 feet, an improvement which involved moving the 6-story Hotel Pelham 15 feet to the west without disturbing its contents. In 1925, the block of Tremont Street between Stuart and Shawmut was also widened on the west side, destroying the buildings on that side except for the Shubert Theatre, which lost its original entrance facade. In 1914, Avery Street was widened from a 14' alley to a 40' city street, breaking up the 800-foot block between Boylston and West, called in guidebooks, "the longest unbroken business block in the United States." Widening Avery Street involved demolition of several buildings on the south side of the former alley and erection of new facades at 28-30 Avery and the Tremont Theatre (side entrance).

In recent years, Boylston Street has been rerouted to join Essex at Washington Street and several small streets, including Hollis and Broadway, have been interrupted or eliminated. Major changes have occurred in the Park Square area, where former railroad lands were redeveloped in the early 20th century as a business district. Here the block of Boylston Street between Park Square and Arlington is currently part of yet another major redevelopment effort. The construction of Massachusetts Turnpike and consolidation and relocation of railroad lines have greatly altered the physical appearance of the South Cove, which since the late 19th century has been the home of Boston's Chinese community.

C. Architectural Description

1. Building Styles

A description of building styles in the survey area must encompass more than a century of architectural fashion beginning with Federal residences and continuing into 19th and 20th century commercial architecture. No buildings survive from the Colonial Period.

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Drawings of Tremont Street in 1800 (Illus. 1) show that the predominant building type in the survey area at that time was the detached brick or frame single-family house. The earliest buildings to survive, however, represent a second phase - row housing - developed in response to increasing urbanization and rising land values. The Federal rowhouses were generally two or three-bay single-family brick dwellings between three and four stories in height with a pitch roof, rear ell, and flat facade which has earned them the appellation "boxy".

A good example of the late Federal style has been preserved almost intact along a secluded alley at 4 Boylston Place (TH-28). Now part of the Tavern Club, this three-story pitched-roof Flemish bond brick dwelling was originally part of a row and dates to about 1820. Typical Federal features include the elliptical fanlight over the door and the brick block cornice, which continued in use through the Greek Revival period.

The Greek Revival style is represented in the survey area by several brick residential buildings and a brick church. Granite commercial structures were also erected during the 1830's and 40's, but have not survived. Early Greek Revival dwellings were generally three-bay, 3½-story common bond brick row units with pitch roofs, six-over-six sash and a brick block cornice. The only Greek Revival dwelling to retain its original first floor configuration is the modest 2½-story example at 75 Stuart Street, where the entrance door is squared rather than rounded or elliptical as in earlier periods. Later Greek Revival residences break from the Federal "box" form into the swelled bowfront which produced a more sculptural effect and allowed more interior variation. The only remaining example is Jacob Wirth's (TH-57) which dates from 1844 and has a later 19th century cast iron storefront.

The most significant Greek Revival structure in the area and only non-residential example is the Fifth Universalist Church of 1838-39, now the Charles Playhouse (TH-53) (NR 1980). The monumental temple-front church was constructed in brick with a raised granite basement story designed to accommodate two stores. Its finely carved detailing includes two-story fluted Greek Ionic columns and floral window panels.

Contemporary with the Greek Revival bowfronts were Greek Revival/ Italianate row houses, of which the only remaining example is at 5-6 Boylston Place (TH-29), dating from 1844. The scale (3½-stories), type (gable across row) and material (brick) has not changed from earlier periods. Another transitional Greek Revival/Italianate example is the commercial Liberty Tree Block of 1850 (TH-45), which features quoins and pedimented lintels along with the octagonal dormers commonly associated with Greek Revival architecture.

By the mid-19th century, the survey area was changing from residential to commercial and institutional use. Rising land values are reflected in the increased height of the buildings, up to six stories in this pre-elevator age. Where residential buildings were erected, they were generally multi-family arrangements. Where earlier rowhouses remained, ground levels were often remodelled into cast iron storefronts like that of Jacob Wirth's. In style, the last half of the 19th century witnessed a parade of styles

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commonly referred to as Victorian, seen here in their commercial rather than wood-frame residential versions, constructed in brick or, with increasing frequency, in stone.

The late 1850's and 1860's were dominated by the Mansard Style. A residential example, the Evans House of 1860 (TH-13) is the only remaining building in the survey area with a formal French Academic Facade executed in brownstone. Commercial examples include the Adams House Annex (TH-2) executed in stone in the late 1850's and the building at 531-535 Washington (TH-4), a brick example dating about 1866 (the mansard has since been removed). In each of these cases, a mansard roof is combined with differing facade treatments, inspired by the French Renaissance, Romanesque or Italianate modes.

The 1870's and 80's have been described as the "decades of individualism", a period when architects could express themselves in a wide variety of styles. Urban architects adhered to a common setback, four-to-six story height standard, and regular fenestration pattern which resulted in a harmonious streetscape that was varied yet cohesive. The most flamboyant of style choices was the High Victorian Gothic, used particularly between 1865 and 1885. The corner of Boylston and Tremont was once a Gothic visual feast consisting of the Masonic Temple (1864-67), Hotel Boylston (1871), and Boston YMCU (1876)-the only one of these fine buildings to survive (TH-61). Another particularly well-detailed example of Gothic commercial building is 15-17 Essex Street (TH-43). The transition from High Victorian Gothic to a simpler brick commercial style can be seen in the 1888 former department store at 694-702 Washington Street, which features some polychrome banding and originally had peaked wall gables.

Other styles popular in commercial architecture during the period 1875-1890 are also represented in the study area by at least one example. The narrow Romanesque brownstone Hayden Building at 681-683 Washington Street (TH-59) was designed in 1875. The Panel Brick style is represented by the 1887 office building at the corner of Boylston and Park Square (TH-38). Here, geometrical patterns are built up in brick with characteristic advancing and receding brick planes. Although each of the above buildings falls within a different stylistic category, they all display quality design and craftsmanship and a clear sense of mercantile pride.

During the 1880's and 1890's, the trend toward replacing Federal and Greek Revival rowhouses with small commercial buildings accelerated in the lower Tremont, Boylston and Park Square areas. Because these new four-to-six-story structures replaced three-bay townhouses, they are generally tall and narrow in proportion. The most common building material in the 1890's was still red brick. In style, these late 19th century commercial buildings could be Panel Brick, Queen Anne, or "Victorian Commercial Style".

A whimsical design displaying the sense of architectural frivolity of the Queen Anne Style is the 1888 brick Ancient Landmark Building (TH-27). Another example at 150 Boylston (TH-34) was recently stripped of its most distinctive Queen Anne feature, an elaborate three-story pressed metal oriel terminating in a shingle wall gable. The use of unglazed terra cotta squares, also a Queen Anne feature, is seen at 136 Boylston (TH-31) and 90-92 Warrenton Streets. The narrow 6-story brick commercial building at

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130 Boylston (TH-30) with its stacked copper window bays and side copper oriels, also falls within this general stylistic pattern, although its lack of ornament suggests the Commercial Style.

Late 19th century utilitarian brick commercial buildings of masonry construction which lack decorative embellishment can be loosely categorized under the label "Victorian Commercial Style". In the survey area, these buildings were generally intended for warehousing or light manufacturing use, and a formal academic treatment was not considered necessary. Their character derives from the fenestration pattern, in which the total area of glass usually exceeds that of brick, and from their window types, either rectangular and segmental-headed single windows as in the Dill Building of 1887-88 (TH-58) or early pier and spandrel arrangements such as that of 25-29 Beach Street (TH-49) (1885).

The Victorian Commercial Style was further developed and refined in Chicago for use in the early steel frame "skeleton construction" skyscrapers. Examples of the Chicago Commercial style are rare in the survey area. Conservative Boston businessmen preferred to cloak their early skyscraper office buildings in the more traditional Renaissance Revival or Beaux Arts garb. One exception is the 1903 Oliver Ditson Building (also called the Lawrence Building) (TH-11) which could almost be described as "Sullivan-esque" in its use of interlacing naturalistic foliage in the grate at the second story.

Steel frame "palazzo skyscrapers" are among the most common styles in the survey area, recognizable by the two-or-three-story base, often rusticated, and cap consisting of a two-story colonnade or a row of smaller windows and a heavy cornice. Examples in the survey area include the 1899 Masonic Temple (TH-18), 1900 Colonial Building (TH-23), 1906 Boston Edison Electric Illuminating Co. (TH-62), 1912 Bigelow-Kennard Building (TH-7), 1912 Lawrence Building (TH-10), 1917 Oliver Ditson Building at 178 Tremont (TH-16), 1925 Music Hall (TH-55), and 1926 Union-Warren Savings Bank (TH-20). In a few cases, early skyscrapers were built in other styles: the Jacobethan Hotel Touraine of 1898 (TH-19) for example, or the Modern Gothic Little Building of 1917 (TH-22).

The development of steel-frame elevator buildings resulted in a significant change in scale in the survey area. Where formerly buildings were not more than six-stories, nine or ten-story buildings were becoming increasingly common by 1900. At the intersection of Tremont and Boylston Streets, the Hotel Touraine (1898), Masonic Temple (1899), and Colonial Building (1900) were built within three years of each other and radically altered the streetscape. Although the technology was available to make buildings even higher, the official city maximum height was 125 feet for commercial buildings during this late 19th and early 20th century period and 155 feet by the mid-1920's.

The advent of the 20th century brought change not only in scale but also in the variety of available building materials. In addition to the traditional red brick and stone, glazed terra cotta came into use for decorative accents like those on the 1896 Steinert Building (TH-37) and 1905 Siegal's Department Store, now the Washington-Essex Building. When a particularly dramatic effect was desired, terra cotta could be used for an entire facade like that of the Majestic Theatre of 1903, now the Saxon (TH-21) or the 1928 B.F. Keith Memorial Theatre now the Savoy (TH-3).

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Another building material becoming popular during this period was the so-called "cast stone", a Portland cement which could be tinted to imitate any given type of stone and poured into molds to form building stones or decorative cornices and trim. The best example of this inexpensive stone substitute is the facade of the Little Building (TH-22), where it is used in connection with another popular turn-of-the-century architectural feature - the stacked metal window bay with decorative pressed metal spandrels. Wider varieties of brick also become available, from the yellow "Roman" brick to tan, gray, and dark red types, the latter sold under the trade name "Tapestry Brick".

The term "Tapestry Brick" has been appropriated in this survey to designate a variation of the Commercial Style popular between about 1905 and 1920 and characterized by brick piers and spandrels laid in distinctive vertical, horizontal or diagonal geometrical patterns. This utilitarian style was most common for warehouses and lesser business establishments. The best example in the survey area is the 1909 Demmon Building at 27-39 Harrison Avenue, built as a drygoods store and warehouse in a design which anticipates the Moderne in its verticality and non-classical ornamentation. Another Tapestry Brick example more horizontal in emphasis is the Gayety Theatre (now the Publix) of 1908 at 659-665 Washington Street.

By the mid-1920's a flat, commercial version of the Classical Revival had been introduced into the area. These buildings retain the pier and spandrel system with one major difference: rather than recessing the spandrels, horizontal and vertical elements are kept in the same plane. To enhance the smooth flatness of the surface, these buildings are constructed in stone or cast concrete rather than brick and are decorated with shallow bas relief classical ornament. Motifs from the classical or American Colonial past are used freely in modified forms; for example, a bas relief broken scroll pediment adorns the topmost spandrel panel at 177 Tremont Street (TH-15), and the second floor at 154-156 Boylston Street (TH-35) features a Palladian motif. The best example of this free-classical adaption is the 1926 Fabyan Building (TH-9).

The flat surface continued to be popular in Moderne buildings of the 1930's. Moderne architects abandoned classicism altogether in favor of a new, stylized and original ornamental system exemplified in the Herald-Traveler Building of 1929-31 at 64-88 Mason Street. The thrusting verticality of the style is best seen in the 1929-31 Boston Edison headquarters at 180-182 Tremont Street (TH-17). A third characteristic, the use of reverse cable fluting to break up an otherwise flat surface, is seen on the exterior of the Paramount Theatre (TH-1), which also features the city's best example of the Art Deco interior.

Since the early 1930's, the area has experienced an economic decline reflected in the lack of significant new structures. The major buildings of the last three decades, the 12-story Hayward Place Parking Garage (1956), and the 27-story Tremont-on-the-Common (1968) are incompatible with their surroundings and of poor design quality. Recent buildings along lower Washington Street are generally crudely designed and out-of-scale in their one or two-story height, which breaks the visual rhythm of the streetscape. The principal effect of the modern movement has been the removal or obscuring of

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original cast iron or pressed metal storefronts with "modern" plastic and aluminum pastiches which have also contributed to the visual decline of the area.

2. The Streetscape

As mentioned earlier, the survey area is characterized by an irregular street pattern, horizontal density, and lack of open space.

The visual effect of the meandering early 19th century street pattern on today's urban environment is the creation of unexpected vistas where streets suddenly curve or abruptly end. Buildings appear in varying shapes and colorations depending on the direction from which they are approached. The excitement and visual importance of the Liberty Tree Block (TH-45), for example, is due in part to its position at the terminus of Boylston Street. The curve of Washington Street north of Essex brings into prominence the Washington-Essex Building and "Washington Street Theatre District". Occasionally, the shape of an individual building will follow the curve of the street. Examples include the High Victorian Gothic structure at 694-702 Washington Street and the brick loft at 9-23 Knapp Street (TH-52).

In the Colonial and early Federal periods, buildings were generally detached, setbacks were irregular, and building placement varied in relation to the street. By the mid-19th century, however, the value of land and corresponding density of building had all but eliminated freestanding structures in favor of rows of buildings set directly at the sidewalk and sharing a common party wall. Except for those on corner lots, buildings in the study area generally have only one public facade. Architects and builders were forced to address the problem of admitting light to interior spaces and asserting their individuality on facades intended to be part of an unbroken row. Many design options were off-limits to the area's commercial architects, including use of major projections such as towers and asymmetrical massing of elements - both impractical when buildings must occupy an entire parcel. As a result, most facades are relatively flat and fenestration patterns are symmetrical. Buildings appear from the street to be regular and rectangular in shape even when the parcels on the block look like irregularly-shaped puzzle pieces when viewed on the map.

The erection of rows of buildings set directly on the sidewalks of narrow winding streets creates a network of "street corridors" broken only occasionally by open space. Buildings of varied architectural styles exist in harmony as long as they follow the setback line, have regular window openings, and avoid extremes in height. Buildings less than three stories and greater than twelve tend to break the street rhythm of the area, as do vacant lots and windowless facades. Most such visual intrusions date from the past two decades.

The city's major open space, the Boston Common, defines the boundaries of the survey area on two sides and enhances the visual importance of buildings along its edges. The "Piano Row" district forms an architectural frame for the Common, and its rhythmic pattern of alternating low-to-moderate scale structures can be studied from distant vantage points.

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The only other planned public open spaces within the survey area are two paved plazas, one at the corner of Boylston and Washington Streets and a second between the Music Hall and parking garage off Tremont Street. Both plazas are planted with small street trees, as is the temporary park at Tremont and Stuart Streets. Otherwise there are no street trees, plantings, yards or green open spaces within the theatre area. The area does contain a number of vacant lots and parking lots which weaken the cohesiveness of the street corridor and expose the side walls of buildings never intended to have more than one public face.

Recent studies have pointed out the importance of three intersections within the theatre area. The intersection of Tremont and Boylston Streets is critical because of its position at a corner of the Common and junction of major north-south and east-west arteries. Topography also contributes to the importance of this corner, since both Boylston and Tremont Street slope gently downward from this point. The three early skyscrapers which dominate the intersection have a dignity and forcefulness befitting their prominent site.

A second focal point is the Washington-Boylston-Essex intersection, where the early street pattern opens up to break the corridor effect and highlight two landmark buildings, the 1850 Liberty Tree Block (TH-45) and 1887 Boylston Building (TH-60). This intersection is enhanced by a small plaza created when Boylston Street was rerouted to join Essex.

The third important corner, at Stuart and Tremont Streets, awaits eventual new construction on all four corners to eliminate vacant lots and marginal buildings and create an appropriate visual environment for the legitimate theatres clustered nearby.

3. Building Use

The survey area, which presently contains approximately five million square feet of building space, is predominantly commercial in use, with about one-quarter of the total space devoted to residential use and smaller percentages to institutions and warehousing/manufacturing. One-fifth of the building space, or one million square feet, is currently vacant. The following breakdown of uses was compiled by the Boston Redevelopment Authority in 1979 based on the predominate use of each building floor multiplied by the square footage:

Office	17.7
Hotel	7.3
Institution, Cultural or Performing Arts (inc. theatres)	13.6
General Commercial	5.7
Adult Entertainment	1.2
Residential	26.0
Parking garages	5.5
Storage	0.4
Manufacturing	2.4
Vacant	20.2

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Many of the buildings in the survey area have changed in their predominant use over the years, particularly in the case of residences which have been converted to stores, restaurants or institutions. Figures compiled on the original use of each building, defined as the use of over 50% of the original structure, show that 73% were built for commercial purposes (including hotels, offices, theatres and retail), 18% for residential use, 3% for institutional and 5% for warehousing/manufacturing use.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> music	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

A. Summary of Significance

The survey area achieved its greatest significance during the period from approximately 1890 to 1930, when most of the important hotels, theatres, institutions and office buildings were constructed. These buildings are of high architectural quality and are particularly significant to the city's music and theatre history.

B. General History

During the Colonial period, the survey area was a "rural, unsettled patch of country" defined geographically by the Common, Back Bay and South Cove. The most important transportation route and only land route to the mainland was Washington Street, which led from the town center through the survey area and over the "neck" to Roxbury.

One of the first important buildings in the area was the Hollis Street Church of 1732, built on land donated by land-owner and one-time Provincial Governor Jonathan Belcher, who may have hoped that a convenient house of worship would attract more settlers. While Belcher was providing for the spiritual needs of potential new residents, the tavernkeepers along Washington Street catered to the temporal needs of weary travelers at inns such as the 1745 Lamb Tavern, from which the first Boston to Providence stage coach departed in 1767, and the Liberty Tree Tavern at Washington and Essex Streets, which in the 1760's became the meeting place for the Sons of Liberty. This patriotic group took as their symbol and rallying point the magnificent American elm which stood just outside the tavern door and is now commemorated by the carved wooden plaque on the 1850 LIBERTY TREE BLOCK (TH-45).

The semi-rural appearance of the area as late as the turn-of-the-19th century is conveyed in sketches of Tremont and Boylston Streets in 1800 (Illus. I), which show scattered detached frame houses and outbuildings with an occasional brick Federal mansion, a tavern, schoolhouse, hayscales, tanning yard, bakehouse, hemphouse, ropewalk and the woodframe 1796 Haymarket Theatre, first to be constructed in the study area.

During the Federal period, Washington Street continued to develop as a commercial artery. The Boylston Market at Washington and Boylston Streets, designed by Charles Bulfinch in 1810, served the growing "South End" as one of the city's three major farm produce trading centers. The public hall above was used as the meeting place for the Handel and Haydn Society, formed in 1815. The 1810 Market Building was later replaced by the larger 1887 BOYLSTON MARKET (TH-60) which occupies roughly the same site.

The remainder of the survey area was generally residential through the mid-19th century. The most fashionable section was the row of 19 brick houses designed by Bulfinch in 1810-12 and extending from West Street to the curve of Mason Street. This "Colonnade Row" had a pleasing view of the Common and distant shoreline and was the home of wealthy Boston families including Lowells, Quincys, and Lawrences. The John Quincy Adams residence stood at the corner of Tremont and Boylston Streets where the Touraine is today. Further south, the area around Park Square remained the home of respectable middle-class Bostonians even after the Civil War, when areas closer to the city center had gone commercial.

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In the 1830's and 40's, the coming of the railroads increased the number of travelers who entered the city at one of three terminals just outside the survey area: the Boston and Albany Station at Lincoln and Beach Streets, the Old Colony Station at Kneeland and South Streets, and the Boston and Providence Station at Park Square. Travelers patronized an increasing number of hotels including the Lafayette Hotel (1824) which stood near the Liberty Tree site, the granite Greek Revival Adams House (1844, rebuilt 1883 and since demolished) which later added the ADAMS HOUSE ANNEX (TH-2), and the United States Hotel (1838) located just outside the survey area at Lincoln and Beach Streets and said to be the largest in the country when built. Later the Clark, Reynolds and International Hotels were erected on Washington Street, as well as the 1881 ESSEX HOUSE (TH-41), the 1898 HOTEL TOURAINE (TH-19) and the remodelled 1897 SHAKESPEARIAN INN (TH-47).

The presence of travelers seeking evening entertainment, as well as the location between business and residential districts, may have been a factor in the growing popularity of the area for theatres. Early theatres included the 1796 Haymarket, which survived only briefly, and the 1835 Lion, which combined equestrian and dramatic arts and was later transformed into the Melodeon (1839) concert hall. In the late 19th century, the area featured two theatres of national importance, the 1854 Boston Theatre, reputed to be "without question the finest theatre in the world", and 1894 Keith's Theatre, the "mother house of vaudeville," as well as fine playhouses like the Park, Tremont and Hollis Theatres. In the early 20th century, the major legitimate theatres of the present day were constructed in the vicinity of Tremont and Stuart Streets, and the important vaudeville, burlesque and movie theatres were constructed on Washington Street. The significance of particular theatres is discussed in greater detail in Section D, Part 2.

After the mid-19th century, important institutional buildings also began to be erected in the area, beginning with the first building of the Boston Public Library (1858) which stood where the Colonial Building is today. The Masonic Temple moved to the corner of Boylston and Tremont Streets in 1859. At that time the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, the oldest in America and highest Masonic authority in New England, moved into the brick Greek Revival Winthrop House. This building and a second Gothic-style temple of 1867 were both destroyed by fire, and the present stately Renaissance Revival MASONIC TEMPLE (TH-18) dates from 1897-99. Another late 19th century institution to settle in the area was the BOSTON YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN UNION, a fellowship and service organization which erected its present High Victorian Gothic structure in 1875 (TH-61). A number of smaller institutions established themselves along the secluded Boylston Place, including the Boston Medical Library at #19, Boston Library Society at #18, the TAVERN CLUB, a men's dining club for proper Bostonians of wealth and learning at #4 (TH-28) and the ANCIENT LANDMARK LODGE of Odd Fellows at #3 (TH-27). The Masonic Lodge, YMCU and Tavern Club still occupy their 19th century headquarters.

Residential building in the area changed in type and style after mid-century. Boston was becoming one of the most densely populated cities in America, having grown from a provincial town of 30,000 in 1800 to a city of 107,347 in 1840 and 250,526 in 1870. The 3½-story brick rowhouse popular in the Federal and Greek Revival periods gave way to the new "French Flats" or "continental system" of living in a one-floor apartment

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suite. The first apartment building on the eastern seaboard was the 1857 Hotel Pelham, located in the survey area where the Little Building stands today. Across the street, on the site of the present Hotel Touraine, was the 1870 Hotel Boylston, described in guide-books as "one of the most elegant of this class of dwelling houses." In 1878, one guide-book writer noted that demand far exceeded supply for the new apartments and owners could command large rents. The best surviving example of the multi-family trend is the brown-stone EVANS HOUSE (TH-13) which was erected in 1859 and doubled in size within ten years.

By mid-century the area was becoming increasingly desirable as a business location. Commercial buildings began to replace the earlier brick rowhouses or combined shops and residences along Washington Street and later along Tremont and Boylston Streets. Southward expansion of the Central Business District accelerated after the Great Fire of 1872, which stopped short of the survey area but created a shortage of downtown commercial space which drew merchants into previously residential areas.

The earliest surviving major commercial building in the survey area, the 1850 LIBERTY TREE BLOCK (TH-45), was erected by wealthy entrepreneur David Sears and featured small shops on the lower floors and public function halls above. By the 1860's and 70's, many businessmen locating in the area had more capital and chose to erect their own architecturally distinctive "commercial palaces" to house showrooms, storage, and sometimes manufacturing spaces. The most popular location for these mercantile showplaces was along Washington or Tremont Streets, particularly the blocks between West and 8 Boylston Street.

Many companies in the survey area during this period sold the higher-priced consumer products of the day: sewing machines, furniture and carpeting.

For example, the brick mansard at 531-535 Washington Street (TH-4) appears to have been completed about 1866 and first occupied by the WEED SEWING MACHINE COMPANY. Sewing machines were also available at 15-17 Essex Street (TH-43), an 1875 High Victorian Gothic building which housed the STERN & CO. sewing machine dealership from 1880 to 1910. The 1876 High Victorian Gothic building at 523-527 Washington Street (TH-5) housed four floors of furniture ware rooms until 1878, when it was taken over by the extensive carpet warehouse and showrooms of JOHN AND JAMES DOBSON. In 1891, John H. Pray and Sons, a Boston-based company which carried on a nationwide trade in carpets and upholstery, erected their impressive headquarters building at 646 Washington Street, part of which remains today.

By the late 19th century, the commercial mix on Washington Street was changing from consumer products to dry goods and clothing. Department stores and specialty-men's clothiers, hatters, and tailors moved into the earlier commercial palaces. Several large new department stores were constructed in the area, including R.H. White's in 1882 (located at 536 Washington Street, since demolished), Commonwealth Clothing in 1888 (694-702 Washington Street) and the Henry Siegal Company Department Store, an enormous modern emporium, in 1905 (590-622 Washington Street). Also in 1905, one of Boston's oldest and most exclusive dry goods establishments, Chandler & Co., moved from Winter Street to the former Chickering Building at 151 Tremont Street. By 1923, the firm had expanded into the two LAWRENCE BUILDINGS at 149 and 150 Tremont (TH-10 and TH-11). In less prestigious

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locations off lower Washington Street at the fringe of the garment district, large brick lofts were erected to accommodate the needs of wholesale clothing and dry goods dealers like the John R. Ainsley Co., which specialized in hosiery and underwear and occupied the 1909 Demmon Building at 27-39 Harrison Avenue.

The survey area achieved its greatest significance in this late 19th and early 20th century period. While clothing stores were expanding into the Washington Street area, piano dealers formerly located there were moving to the block of Tremont between West and the Hotel Boylston, which by the 1890's had earned the nickname "Piano Row". Showrooms for prestigious 19th century piano and organ companies like Chickering & Sons, Mason and Hamlin, M. Steinert & Sons, Henry F. Miller, Vose and Emerson were located here, as well as the Chickering and Steinert concert halls and the Oliver Ditson Company, a major music publishing firm. Around the turn-of-the-century, many showrooms relocated to the block of Boylston Street between Tremont and Park Square, which became the new "Piano Row". Fine buildings from this important period in Boston's musical history include the 1896 STEINERT BUILDING (TH-37), 1903 OLIVER DITSON BUILDING (also called the Lawrence Building) (TH-11) and 1917 OLIVER DITSON BUILDING (TH-16). (See also Section D, Part 3.)

The city's major legitimate theatres of the 20th century were constructed in the survey area during this period, including the COLONIAL of 1900 (TH-23), MAJESTIC/SAXON of 1903 (TH-21), SHUBERT of 1910 (TH-54), Plymouth/Gary of 1911, and WILBUR of 1914 (TH-56). Highly significant theatres were also built for vaudeville (the 1928 B.F. KEITH MEMORIAL/SAVOY (TH-3) and the movies the MODERN (TH-5); 1925 METROPOLITAN/MUSIC HALL (TH-55), and 1932 PARAMOUNT (TH-1). (See also Section D, Part 2.)

Major commercial buildings were also constructed during this turn-of-the-century period, particularly in the "Piano Row" area. These architecturally significant early steel frame skyscrapers include the 1891 and 1901 WALKER BUILDINGS (TH-24 and TH-25), 1898 HOTEL TOURAINE (TH-19), 1900 COLONIAL BUILDING (TH-23), 1903 and 1917 OLIVER DITSON BUILDINGS (TH-11 and TH-16), and 1917 LITTLE BUILDING (TH-22), as well as the 1899 MASONIC TEMPLE (TH-18), built for institutional rather than office or motel use.

An important milestone in the city's transportation history took place in the survey area in 1897 with the opening of the first section of the Boston subway between Park Street and Hadassah Way. The subway was the first in America to be constructed for trolley car operation and was needed to eliminate the traffic congestion on Boylston and Tremont Streets, which had made these streets virtually impassible.

Major commercial buildings were also constructed in the area through the early 1930's, including the METROPOLITAN/MUSIC HALL office building of 1925 (TH-55), the Elks Hotel, now the Bradford, of 1926, the new BOSTON EDISON HEADQUARTERS at 180-182 Tremont Street of 1931 (TH-17) and the Herald-Traveler Building of 1931, as well as the Keith Memorial (1928) and Paramount Theatres (1932) already mentioned. An immense new theatre and office complex, to be located where the Touraine still stands, was also in the planning stages when the Great Depression brought to a close this era of rapid growth and prosperity.

Since the Depression, the area's three major sources of vitality -the clothing trade, music and piano companies and theatres - have fallen on hard times. In some cases, these industries had already begun to decline. The number of downtown retail

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clothing outlets decreased, and those that remained were located closer to the earlier retail center at Washington, Winter and Summer Streets. The clothing manufacturing industry declined in Boston, with resulting repercussions for the wholesale trade. The custom-making of clothing by tailors and dressmakers, formerly common in the area, is now a bygone luxury.

Entertainment patterns also changed. Piano sales began decreasing nationwide in the 1910's and 20's, with resulting negative impact along "Piano Row". Many legitimate theatres in the area closed, and the number of productions at remaining theatres decreased. Vaudeville and "clean" burlesque died out, replaced by movies which can now be more conveniently viewed at suburban cinemas.

Since the 1950's, new office and residential construction in Boston has been concentrated in the West End, Downtown, Government Center and Back Bay areas. The decision in the 1960's to create an official "adult entertainment district" in the two blocks of Washington Street between Boylston/Essex and Stuart Streets has contributed to the declining desirability of commercial space in the area.

Presently, the area has been targeted for studies and programs aimed at reversing the downward trend. A new retail complex (Lafayette Place) and major office building (the State Transportation Building) are planned, the Savoy and Modern Theatres have recently reopened as opera and performing arts facilities, and a refurbishing of the Music Hall is planned. Efforts are being made to encourage recycling of buildings for residential use, to clean up the "Combat Zone" and to attract developers for vacant parcels.

C. Major Historical Figures and Events

The history of the theatre area was shaped largely by economic forces rather than by particular events or powerful personalities. The area does have a colorful Revolutionary War history relating to the Liberty Tree, but the only physical trace of this remote period is the 1850 plaque on the LIBERTY TREE BLOCK (TH-45). The area was spared the traumatic effect of natural disasters such as the Great Fire of 1872, although the fire affected the area indirectly by accelerating the change from residential to commercial uses. The most influential 20th century event - one which resulted in a decline from which the area has never recovered - was the Great Depression.

Generally the buildings in the survey area were erected as a result of individual decisions by businessmen, real estate investors, and area residents. Growth in the area was haphazard and uncoordinated rather than shaped by the guiding hand of politicians or community leaders. Several architects were influential in determining the appearance of the streetscape during the significant late 19th and early 20th century; their contributions are discussed in Section D, Part 1. Theatre history in the area was influenced by a number of forceful managers discussed in Section D, Part 2. But in general, the burst of theatre building and proliferation of entertainment forms in the early 20th century, and the comparative dearth of theatre and performing acts activity today, is again the result of economics.

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D. Areas of Significance

1. Architecture

The survey area includes buildings of high architectural quality which are particularly significant as works by architects of regional or national reputation or as notable examples of particular building styles, types, or construction methods.

The earliest important architect represented in the survey area is Asher Benjamin (1771-1845), whose imposing Greek Revival FIFTH UNIVERSALIST CHURCH (TH-53) (NR 1980) was erected in 1838-39 and is one of only three Benjamin churches remaining in Boston. Its prototype appears to have been Plates XVIII and LIX in The Builder's Guide or Complete System of Architecture of 1838, one of the last of Benjamin's influential series of carpenter's handbooks.

Two of Boston's best mid-19th century architects designed significant buildings in the area. Nathaniel J. Bradlee (1829-1888), founder of the Boston Society of Architects, designed the 1875 BOSTON YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN UNION (TH-61), considered by the Boston Landmarks Commission to be "the most accomplished building in the High Victorian Gothic idiom remaining in the Central Business District". The YMCU is now a Boston City Landmark, as is the 1875 HAYDEN BUILDING (TH-59), a small scale brownstone Romanesque building of exceptional importance as the only remaining commercial building in Boston designed by H.H. Richardson (1838-1886) and one of less than ten commercial examples by the eminent architect. In proportions and massing, the Hayden Building is considered a foreshadowing of Richardson's Chicago masterwork, the 1886 Marshall Field Warehouse Store. The influence of Richardson away from academic formulae in favor of a general simplicity of form can also be seen in two brick loft buildings by his successor firm, Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge, located at 17-23 BEACH STREET (TH-48) and 9-23 KNAPP STREET (TH-52), the latter organized with multi-story window arcades typical of the Richardsonian Romanesque.

The major commercial buildings erected during the area's period of greatest significance, 1890 to 1930, were the work of two large firms, Winslow and Wetherell (and later Winslow and Bigelow) and C.H. Blackall of Blackall, Clapp and Whittemore.

Walter T. Winslow (1843-1909) and George H. Wetherell (1854-1930) trained abroad and in the office of N.J. Bradlee, where Winslow was a junior partner at the time of Bradlee's death in 1888. The partners succeeded to Bradlee's practice and in the next decade designed a number of major buildings in the survey area which demonstrate their technical excellence and original approach to the varied stylistic traditions in use in the 1890's. These buildings include the 1891 Renaissance Revival WALKER BUILDING (TH-24), 1891 Renaissance Revival Pray Building, 1898 Jacobethan HOTEL TOURAINE (TH-19), and 1896 Beaux Arts STEINERT BUILDING (TH-37), which incorporated a recital hall located 35 feet underground and considered one of the nation's most acoustically perfect halls. The Steinert Building also featured technical innovations such as an electric generating plant in the annex and an advanced heating and cooling system for the concert hall.

In 1898 Henry Forbes Bigelow (1867-1929) joined the firm and three years later George Wetherell withdrew. Winslow and Bigelow continued to design major buildings in the survey area including the 1901 WALKER BUILDING ADDITION (TH-25), 1903 OLIVER DITSON

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BUILDING (also called the Lawrence Building) (TH-11) and 1906 BOSTON EDISON ELECTRIC ILLUMINATING COMPANY at 25-39 Boylston Street (TH-62). The Oliver Ditson Building in particular was singled out for praise by the editors of Architectural Review, who called it "one of the best examples of office design we have seen for a long time."

Other major turn-of-the-century buildings are the work of Clarence H. Blackall (1857-1942), best known as the architect of Boston's first steel-frame skyscraper - the 1894 Carter (Winthrop) Building - as well as 14 Boston theatres, of which six survive in the survey area. Blackall's most architecturally significant theatres are the 1900 COLONIAL (TH-23), 1925 METROPOLITAN/MUSIC HALL (TH-55) and 1914 WILBUR (TH-56). The Colonial, an exquisite jewel-like creation, is perhaps the finest of all Boston theatre interiors and is the oldest Boston theatre to survive intact. The Music Hall is the city's largest theatre and best example of the lavish "movie palaces" of the roaring twenties, of which the Wilbur is one of the city's best examples of the Federal style used in theatre design. Blackall's most significant office building in the area is the 1917 LITTLE BUILDING (TH-22), called the city's "most glamorous office building of the era of World War I". This Modern Gothic structure utilized the newly popular U-shape to admit additional light and air to interior offices.

Many of Blackall's buildings feature mechanical and structural innovations, and the technology of theatre and skyscraper buildings appeared to interest him as much as their design. In an autobiographical sketch published in 1930, he noted that the real excitement of his career was in the area of technological change:

Fifty years ago we had no steel for construction, no reinforced concrete, no real illumination at any price, no electricity, no science of steam heating, no telephone, no elevators.

Blackall's 1901 series of articles in American Architect and Building News on the Colonial Theatre, for example, is devoted almost exclusively to a discussion of the mechanical and structural guts of the building, with only a brief mention of style. He was also talented as an "integrator", able to choose stylistic elements and combine them in a well-conceived design. In addition, Blackall became involved in the business side of architecture, and, through alliances with builders and financiers, was able to bring his ideas to the construction stage. Other area buildings by Blackall or his firm include the 1908 Gayety/Publix Theatre, 1909 Demmon Building, 1911 Olympia/Pilgrim Theatre, 1911 Plymouth/Gary Theatre, 1914 Hotel Avery, 1914 MODERN THEATRE (TH-5) and 1917 WHITE BUILDING (TH-6).

Other architects of national reputation designed buildings in the area during the first three decades of the 20th century. The 1903 MAJESTIC THEATRE, now the Saxon (TH-21) is the only known Boston building by John Galen Howard (1864-1931), Dean of the University of California School of Architecture and well-known West Coast architect. The 1928 B.F. KEITH MEMORIAL, now the Savoy (TH-3) is the work of Thomas Lamb (1871-1942), a New York architect originally from Scotland who became the most sought-after and most prolific American theatre designer of his day. The Savoy is the only Boston theatre with both an original interior and exterior by Lamb. The 1917 OLIVER DITSON BUILDING (TH-16) was designed by C. Howard Walker (1857-1936), an architect who achieved an international

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reputation as an authority on architecture and fine arts. The 1926 FAYBAN BUILDING (TH-9), was designed by the firm of Coolidge, Shepley, Richardson and Abbott, whose senior partner, Charles Atherton Coolidge (1858-1936) was one of Boston's most prominent architects and a co-founder of H.H. Richardson's successor firm, Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge.

Other buildings in the survey area are outstanding examples of particular building styles or types. Important theatres include the Colonial, Majestic/Saxon, B.F. Keith Memorial/Savoy, Metropolitan/Music Hall and Wilbur Theatres already mentioned, as well as the 1932 PARAMOUNT THEATRE (TH-1) by Arthur Bowditch, which features what is considered the city's most elaborate Art Deco interior of any type. The stone mansard exterior of the 1889 TREMONT THEATRE (TH-14) now the Union Station, is obscured by modern sheathing but would be, if restored, the city's only remaining 19th century theatre facade and only remaining Boston example of the theatre work of J.B. McElpatrick (d. 1906), the New York architect who also designed the 1894 Keith's Theatre (since demolished).

Notable buildings also include the 1850 LIBERTY TREE BLOCK (TH-45), the earliest surviving major commercial building in the area, and JACOB WIRTH'S (TH-57), a Boston City Landmark important as the last surviving Greek Revival bowfront in the area.

Another Boston City Landmark, the 1887 BOYLSTON BUILDING (TH-60) is considered by the Landmarks Commission to be "an important example of the transition from traditional load-bearing masonry construction to the commercial style, skeleton-framed building type pioneered by the Chicago School."

2. Theatre

The survey area is significant because of its association with the development of theatre and the performing arts in Boston and because of the number of architecturally and historically important theatres which remain within its borders. It is the site of several of the city's most significant early theatres and the birthplace of American vaudeville. The area includes the major legitimate playhouses of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and a full range of other theatre types from vaudeville and burlesque houses to movie palaces, many designed by the nation's foremost theatre architects. These theatres have been the scene of performances by virtually every major national and international celebrity from the mid-19th century to the present day, as well as the Boston - and sometimes the national - premieres of grand operas, stage plays and films.

Early 19th century theatres in the area, all since demolished, included the Haymarket (1796-1803), Lion/Melodeon (1835-1878) and Boston Theatre (1854-1925), all discussed briefly in the general history (Section B). Of these, the Boston Theatre was by far the most significant, both architecturally, because of its technologically advanced design and visual splendor (the work of prominent Boston architects Edward and James Cabot and Jonathan Preston) and historically as the scene of the great 19th century dramatic productions performed by major American and foreign actors, Boston premieres of grand operas, and elegant fetes for foreign nobility and three United States Presidents.

By the 1890's, Boston had a reputation as one of the nation's best show towns, a "critical city" but one which would enrich the coffers of the successful theatre manager.

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From about 1875 to 1895 Boston supported as many as ten resident professional winter stock companies as well as productions by travelling troupes.

The 1890 Boston City Directory lists seventeen "theatres and places of amusement" of which seven were located in the survey area: the Bijou, Boston Theatre, Globe, Hollis Street Theatre, Park Theatre, Tremont Theatre, and World's Museum. Three have left physical traces. The Park Theatre opened on Washington Street in 1879 under the management of Henry Abbey, who, with his partner after 1880, John Schoeffel, was developing his reputation as an international manager who controlled the American tours of the world's greatest artists. In the early years, Abbey brought New York touring companies and foreign attractions to the Park; later it was used for lighter fare, burlesque, and most recently, adult movies. Although the theatre is important historically, it is no longer architecturally significant because both the interior and exterior have been totally rebuilt, and only the structural walls remain from the illustrious 1879 playhouse. The present theatre is now called the State (619-631 Washington Street).

In 1889 Abbey and Schoeffel transferred their interest to the new TREMONT THEATRE (TH-14), described as "one of the most beautiful and fashionable playhouses in Boston". The Tremont was host to the major touring companies and stars from England and the continent including the great Sarah Bernhardt. It was the scene of the Boston premiere of "Birth of a Nation" in 1915, showcased George M. Cohan musicals in the 1920's, and in the 1950's became the Astor, one of the city's top movie houses. The interior has been extensively remodelled but the stone mansard facade, now obscured, is highly significant as the city's only remaining 19th century theatre entrance.

The third 19th century theatre, the Bijou, opened in 1882 on the second floor of the ADAMS HOUSE ANNEX (TH-2). This intimate parlor theatre, designed by Boston architect George Wetherell, was the first in Boston to be totally illuminated by electricity. It was later leased to B.F. Keith for popular comedies and then converted by Keith into the Bijou Dream, which opened in 1908 as one of the city's earliest movie theatres. The theatre itself has been demolished but the facade of the annex remains.

By the turn-of-the-century, theatre was becoming big business. Entrepreneurs, many based in New York City, began building new playhouses in Boston. The first of the 20th century houses and oldest Boston theatre to survive intact is the 1900 COLONIAL THEATRE (TH-23) featuring a richly ornamented rococo interior by C.H. Blackall considered by many to be the finest of all surviving Boston theatre interiors. For many years, the Colonial was the premiere musical comedy theatre in Boston, celebrated for its associations with Rogers and Hammerstein, Irving Berlin and Sigmund Romberg. Florenz Ziegfeld reportedly started his Follies there in 1907.

Opening nearby just two years later was the MAJESTIC THEATRE (TH-21), now the Saxon, significant architecturally for its impressive Beaux Arts facade and interior designed by nationally prominent architect John Galen Howard. The Majestic was owned by leading Boston merchant and music patron Eben Jordan, who also built Jordan Hall and the Boston Opera House. Managers Stair and Wilbur, who controlled all the nation's largest theatre chains during this early 20th century period, used the theatre for drama and particularly for light opera and musicals.

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In the 1910's, three more playhouses were erected near the corner of Tremont and Stuart Streets, which was becoming the center for the city's legitimate theatre activity. The 1910 SHUBERT THEATRE (TH-54) has been managed since its opening by the powerful Shubert organization, which a few decades later controlled all of Boston's legitimate theatres. The Shubert has been the scene of outstanding productions of serious dramatic works, including the first Boston performances by British actors John Gielgud, Maurice Evans and Sir Lawrence Olivier, as well as performances by American stars such as E. H. Sothern, Julia Marlow and John Barrymore.

The Plymouth, later the Gary, opened in 1911 with the first American tour of the Abbey Theatre Company, accompanied by founders, William Butler Yeats and Lady Gregory. Among other works, they staged the American premiere of "Playboy of the Western World". Later controlled by George M. Cohan and Sam Harris and later still by the Shuberts, the Plymouth was used for Broadway tryouts of such hits as "The Time of Your Life" and "The Man Who Came to Dinner". Although important historically, the Plymouth was not one of Blackall's best theatre designs and was considerably altered. It was demolished in 1979.

The WILBUR THEATRE (TH-56), controlled by A.L. Wilbur and the Shuberts, opened in 1914 and is significant for its intact eclectic Federal Revival interior and exterior by Clarence Blackall and its history as another of the great dramatic houses, where Broadway hits like "Our Town" and "Mary Mary" were first seen, as well as stars like Katherine Cornell, Ethel Barrymore and Marlon Brando.

The legitimate theatres were not the only places of amusement patronized by turn-of-the-century Bostonians. The survey area also witnessed the birth of vaudeville in the early 1880's, when B.F. Keith leased a small storefront at 565 Washington Street for a museum of curiosities and soon expanded to a lecture hall upstairs, where he initially presented acts like "The Chicken With a Human Face" and the "Three-headed Songstress". Keith christened his variety show "vaudeville," improved its quality, and originated the concept of continuous performances. By 1894 he opened his 3,000-seat Keith's Theatre, called "the mother house of vaudeville," the first playhouse built specifically for vaudeville and an historic marker in American theatrical history. The elegance of this and later Keith theatres is credited with luring the middle classes into vaudeville houses and influencing the design of later movie palaces. Backstage areas were so comfortable that the great names of show business also were convinced to appear on the vaudeville stage. Keith organized a chain of popularly-priced vaudeville theatres and by his death in 1914 an estimated 400 theatres bore his name. He is also credited with introducing the first movies to Boston audiences beginning in 1896, although the quality of these early "Vitascope" films was so poor that they were used as chasers at the end of the program. Keith's Theatre was torn down in 1952, but the Washington Street and Tremont Street entrances have survived, considerably altered. The Washington Street entrance was through a storefront in the ADAMS HOUSE ANNEX (TH-2).

Keith's role as the father of vaudeville is memorialized in one of the area's most significant theatres, the B.F. KEITH MEMORIAL (TH-3), now the Savoy, erected in 1926-28 next to Keith's Theatre on the site of the Old Boston Theatre. The Keith Memorial was planned by Keith's long-time manager Edward Albee and designed by Thomas Lamb, the most

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prolific and best known 20th century theatre architect. Not only does the flamboyant Mediterranean baroque exterior and Adamesque interior achieve its goal of "surpassing all standards in splendor," but it is also important as one of the last great vaudeville houses, built in the dying years of that mass entertainment form.

While the B.F. Keith Memorial was being constructed, Keith's Boston Theatre (1925) opened nearly across the street in the Washington-Essex building and hosted local performances by Keith's touring circuit. Keith's Boston, later the RKO Boston, continued the live entertainment tradition through the 1940's in the resplendence of this Thomas Lamb interior, which unfortunately has been several times bisected and partially modernized.

During the late 19th and early 20th century, vaudeville shared the stage with burlesque, a combined variety, minstrel show and extravaganza which reached its golden age in the period of 1900 to 1910. At that time, New York managers like Weber and Fields were attempting to improve this light and convivial amusement by introducing new talent and more elaborate scenic displays. In 1903 Weber and Fields opened the Globe Theatre at 688 Washington Street, now the Center, a tasteful playhouse designed by Arthur Vinal and so acceptable to the needs of legitimate theatre that it was taken over a few months later by Stair and Wilbur and used for their touring productions. In 1908 the Gayety Theatre, now the Publix, opened at 667 Washington offering burlesque and "high class vaudeville" with the promise that "every effort will always be made to present performances of a light, merry, popular character of absolute cleanliness."

Two influences led to the downfall of burlesque after this brief heyday: the introduction of the more socially acceptable "revues" by Ziegfeld and others, and the advent of the striptease, which began to take over because of the influence of performers Ann Corio and Gypsy Rose Lee. The old Park Theatre reopened in the late 1930's as Minsky's Park Burlesque, one of a chain of theatres operated by the family credited with getting burlesque banned in New York. Similar fare was offered in the late 30's at the Gayety. Burlesque has continued as one of the principal attractions of today's lower Washington Street adult entertainment district.

As the 20th century progressed, motion pictures gradually replaced live entertainment as the principal popular art form. An example of the earliest cinema type, the simple storefront operation known as the nickelodeon, can be found in the study area at 700 Washington Street, where the 1907 Unique Theatre, modernized as the Pussy Cat Cinema, is probably the last surviving vestige from the nickel movie days. The facade of another early movie theatre, Keith's Bijou Dream of 1908, also remains on Washington Street (ADAMS HOUSE ANNEX, TH-2).

Also on Washington Street is C.H. Blackall's Olympia Theatre of 1911. Now the Pilgrim, it was built for combined film and vaudeville programs under the management of Nathan Gordon. Gordon was one of the earliest regional movie moguls and by 1918 operated 75 New England theatres. At this point in movie history, owners were unsure of the lasting popularity of films; and theatres like the Olympia followed the traditional balcony/mezzanine plan oriented to live performances, rather than the single balcony plan which results in less film distortion.

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The first area theatre built without a stage, exclusively for the showing of the new "feature films" was the 1913 MODERN (TH-5) designed by Clarence H. Blackall and erected within the walls of the 1876 Dobson Building. This theatre is significant not only because it was designed solely for movies, but also because the acoustics were carefully supervised by Wallace Sabine, the Harvard professor credited with developing the basic formula for predicting acoustical quality. Like other movie houses from the 1910's, the Modern attempted to impress its audience with its comfort, classical elegance and air of refinement disclaiming the "low birth" of the moving picture. Perhaps the most important historical occasion at the Modern was the showing of the first talking picture, "The Jazz Singer", in its Boston premiere in 1928.

As silent films improved and "movie madness" swept the country, promoters with high hopes for the future built the first picture palaces, inaugurating the days when a routine trip to the movies provided the pleasure equivalent to a tour of Versailles. The best Boston example of the new theatre type is the METROPOLITAN THEATRE (TH-55) of 1925, now the Music Hall. The Music Hall, which seats over 4,000, is the largest theatre in Boston's history and the last of C.H. Blackall's 14 Boston theatres. Appropriately advertised as the "public's castle," it offered the city's most grandiose public spaces and most extravagant entertainment fare including a resident orchestra, chorus and ballet company. Lavish stage shows were headlined over the years by stars like Rudy Vallee, Al Jolson, Jack Benney, Burns & Allen and Bob Hope. In the 1960's, the theatre was used for performances by the Royal and Bolshoi Ballets, Metropolitan Opera Company, and other national and international traveling companies.

The last of the major theatres constructed in the study area, the PARAMOUNT (TH-1) of 1932, was called Boston's "first deluxe picture house" and was indeed among the first large single-balcony theatres designed for the best possible film projection, sound and viewing conditions rather than for movie and stage show combinations. Its Moderne facade and virtually intact Art Deco interior by architect Aruthur Bowditch also make the building architecturally significant as the city's best example of 1930's theatre design as well as perhaps the city's most elaborate Art Deco interior of any type.

3. Music

The survey area contains individual buildings, sites and one district (Piano Row) of major significance to the development of the city's musical life and music-related industries. One of the nation's first important musical societies was founded here. Many of its first piano factories were located here, and at one point three-fourths of the city's piano dealers maintained their showrooms in the survey area. Other buildings were occupied by one of the nation's oldest and largest music publishing houses.

Early 19th century Boston has been described as a "musical wilderness" where singing was confined to church choirs and few families owned a piano. One of the first steps in the establishment of the present strong musical tradition was the founding in 1815 of the Handel and Haydn Society, one of the oldest musical societies in the country, which met in the public hall in Bulfinch's Boylston Market. That same space was used also by the Orpheus Music Society, established in 1853 and called "the pioneer of the glee clubs".

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Nearby, the Melodeon Theatre at 543-547 Washington Street, established in 1839 and considered acoustically excellent, was used for concerts and recitals by renowned musicians including the singer Jenny Lind. The Handel and Haydn Society performed the American premiere of the "Messiah" here in 1839. The first Boston performances of many 19th century grand operas took place at the historic Boston Theatre of 1852-4, on the site of the present Savoy. The list of celebrities who performed at the Boston Theatre includes renowned musicians such as Caruso and Paderewski and conductors including Gustav Mahler.

By the mid-19th century, Boston had also become one of the leading centers for the manufacture and sale of pianos and organs, an industry centered roughly within the survey area. Several piano factories were located on Washington Street in the 1860's and 70's including the Emerson factory, which stood on the site of the Hotel Avery, and the Vose factory on the site of the Bigelow-Kennard Building. From 1875 to 1885, the Henry F. Miller Piano-Forte Establishment occupied a combined factory and showroom in the cast iron building at 605-611 Washington Street.

Gradually the developing South End became the preferred location for factories because a large immigrant work force was available and raw materials could be conveniently transported there by water. Washington Street remained the favorite location for showrooms through the early 1870's. The 1870 Boston City Directory lists forty piano dealers, of which twenty were located in the survey area, fourteen on Washington Street. An additional ten dealers were located on Washington Street between Winter and West Streets.

By 1890, Tremont Street had become the fashionable location for piano dealerships, and the block between Boylston and West Streets had earned the nickname, "Piano Row". By this time three-fourths of the city's 34 piano dealers were located in the study area, twenty on Tremont Street and only five on Washington Street. Important companies located along Piano Row included Mason and Hamlin, the nation's foremost manufacturer of cabinet and parlor organs; Henry F. Miller, a company known for its superior grand pianos; Chickering & Sons, the oldest and largest of the Boston manufacturers; Vose & Sons, makers of pianos of "exceptional musical value and durability"; Emerson Pianos and M. Steinert & Sons, regional representative for the nation's most celebrated companies including Steinway & Sons.

Piano Row also featured two concert halls during this late 19th century period: Chickering Hall at 151 Tremont Street, for many years a place for elegant musicals and headquarters for the musical profession, and Steinert Hall, originally located in the Hotel Boylston and later constructed underground in the firm's new building on Boylston Street (TH-37). This second STEINERT HALL was considered to have nearly perfect acoustics and was the scene of recitals by many famous concert artists until its closing in 1941.

By the turn-of-the-century, showrooms began to relocate to the block of Boylston Street between Tremont and Park Square, and by 1910 this shift was virtually complete. That year, twenty-six of the city's forty-nine piano dealers were located in the study area, sixteen on Boylston, five on Washington and five on Tremont. The movement to

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Boylston Street seems to have been precipitated by the demolition of the Hotel Boylston (1894) and burning of the Second Masonic Temple (1895), both of which housed showrooms, as well as the building of four impressive new buildings, the 1891 and 1901 WALKER BUILDINGS (TH-24 and TH-25), 1896 STEINERT BUILDING (TH-37) and 1900 COLONIAL BUILDING (TH-23), each of which housed at least two music companies by 1910.

The study area was also an attractive location for other music businesses. In 1910, for example, the city directory listed thirteen companies specializing in either musical instruments or phonographs and fourteen music publishers or dealers, as well as musicians, suppliers, signing teachers, piano tuners, instrument repairmen and so forth.

The most important of these related ventures was the OLIVER DITSON COMPANY, a Boston-based firm which had been established in 1835 and by the turn-of-the-century was one of the nation's oldest and largest music publishing houses. In addition to the publishing and sale of sheet music and publishing of periodicals, the firm sold and repaired musical instruments and was an important early distributor of phonographs and records. Within the survey area, the Ditson Company built two architecturally significant and successively larger headquarters at 150 Tremont Street (TH-11) and 178 Tremont Street (TH-16).

As the 20th century progressed, piano sales began to feel the competition from victrolas (1910 on), radio broadcasting (1921 on) and outside entertainment like the movies. Manufacturers went out of business or moved to the Back Bay or suburban areas. Today the only companies remaining from the "Piano Row" era are M. Steinert & Sons, which still occupies its 1896 building, and the Boston Music Company, which has been located at 116 Boylston Street since 1926.

E. Survey Methodology

The theatre area survey was conducted by the Boston Landmarks Commission during the six-month period from December, 1978 to June, 1979 under a grant-in-aid from the Massachusetts Historical Commission, Office of Heritage Conservation and Recreation Services, with matching funds provided by the Boston Redevelopment Authority and the City of Boston.

The survey was conducted by Pamela Fox, architectural historian and consultant to the Boston Landmarks Commission. The project included preparation of 145 individual survey forms, four area forms and a multi-resource nomination for the survey area.

Because of the high level of development activity in the Boston Central Business District of which the survey area is a part, a decision was made to prepare an individual survey form for each building in the area, regardless of merit, using the standard Boston Landmarks Commission Building Information Form. All buildings in the area were photographed. Two 100-scale photogrammetric maps were prepared, the first showing building style and materials and the second indicating building significance. Buildings demolished since the beginning of the survey have been included in all documentation.

No subsurface archeological testing was conducted in this densely-built urban area. The nomination is considered to be comprehensive only in its architectural and historical components.

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Research for the project involved inspection of both primary and secondary source material. Primary documents included building permits, city directories, deeds, early photographs and contemporary newspaper accounts, periodicals and guidebooks. Principal secondary sources included books on Boston's topography and history, theatre histories, and previous surveys.

On the basis of visual evaluation and historical research, buildings were divided into three groupings:

1. Significant Buildings or Groupings, considered to meet National Register criteria for individual or district listing. Among the factors considered were the distinctiveness and integrity of the building, prominence of the architect, rarity of the building style or type, and historical significance of the building to the city, state or nation.
2. Notable Buildings, which contribute to the streetscape in their scale, massing and detailing or have historical interest, but are not recommended for National Register listing at this time.
3. Buildings of Minor or No Significance, including those of minor or no architectural merit or historical interest.

F. Preservation Activity in the Survey Area

Preservation projects have been rare in the survey area in the past two decades with the notable exception of two restorations by the Jujamcyn Company, that of the Colonial Theatre in 1960 and the Wilbur Theatre in 1969. In general, where investment in older buildings has occurred, the money has been spent on modernizing rather than restoring original storefronts or facades. In other cases, buildings are being allowed to visibly deteriorate, particularly in the area of the adult entertainment district.

Within the past year, a number of important preservation projects have been undertaken, and others are in the planning stages. Indications are that preservation activity in the area will increase over the next decade as a result of revitalization efforts by the city and the impact of National Register listing on private investors.

Preservation projects are presently concentrated in the "Washington Street Theatre District", a group of seven buildings listed on the National Register in 1979. The Savoy Theatre, originally the B.F. Keith Memorial, was purchased by the non-profit Opera Company of Boston and officially opened in the Spring of 1979 as an opera house, the only opera facility in Boston. The interior has been cleaned and a full-size orchestra pit constructed. Plans call for the extension of the stage across Mason Street beginning in 1980. Total expenditure will be over \$3 million. A few doors away, the Modern Theatre, now a performing arts center, also opened in 1979. The owner, Modern Theatre, Inc., is a non-profit group which is currently restoring the interior and exterior at an estimated cost of \$1.5 million. Negotiations are underway on possible conversions of the third theatre on the block, the 1932 Paramount, into a 900-seat dinner theatre at an estimated cost of \$1 million.

Another theatre renovation currently underway is the \$3.5 million overhaul of the Music Hall, originally the Metropolitan, by the Metropolitan Center, Inc., a tax-exempt group which would lease the building from the owner, Tufts New England Medical Center.

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The project will include refurbishing the theatre interior, extending the stage and adding new dressing rooms. When completed, the theatre is expected to again host national and international traveling troupes such as the Metropolitan Opera Company.

Work is completed on one large-scale adaptive use project, the conversion of the former Herald-Traveler Building at 64-88 Mason Street into 119 units of elderly housing by the State Street Development Company. A number of other buildings in the area are being studied for possible conversion to new uses including hotels, housing, and commercial space.

G. District and Individual Listings

The theatre area multi-resource nomination outlines four districts in addition to the "Washington Street Theatre District" already listed in the National Register. District boundaries have been drawn to encompass significant buildings in visually cohesive groupings. Boundaries have been drawn to exclude buildings of lesser architectural and historical merit if they are located on the fringe of such a grouping rather than between significant structures. The four new districts are as follows:

1.. Piano Row (29 Buildings)

28-30 Avery Street, TH-12	3 Boylston Place, TH-27
174-175 Tremont Street, TH-13	4 Boylston Place, TH-28
176 Tremont Street, TH-14	5-6 Boylston Place, TH-29
177 Tremont Street, TH-15	130-132 Boylston Street, TH-30
178-179 Tremont Street, TH-16	134-136 Boylston Street, TH-31
180-182 Tremont Street, TH-17	138-140 Boylston Street, TH-32
183-186 Tremont Street, TH-18	144 Boylston Street, TH-33
62 Boylston Street, TH-19	150 Boylston Street, TH-34
216-218 Tremont Street, TH-20	154-156 Boylston Street, TH-35
219-221 Tremont Street, TH-21	158-160 Boylston Street, TH-36
74-94 Boylston Street, TH-22	162 Boylston Street, TH-37
96-106 Boylston Street, TH-23	2 Park Square, TH-38
114-116 Boylston Street, TH-24	3 Park Square, TH-39
120-124 Boylston Street, TH-25	4 Park Square, TH-40
1-2 Boylston Place, TH-26	

2. West Street District (4 Buildings)

16-24 West Street, TH-8	148-149 West Street, TH-10
26-30 West Street, TH-9	150 Tremont Street, TH-11

3. Liberty Tree District (6 Buildings)

25-31 Essex Street, TH-41	11-13 Essex Street, TH-44
19-21 Essex Street, TH-42	628-636 Washington Street, TH-45
15-17 Essex Street, TH-43	640-644 Washington Street, TH-46

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4. Beach/Knapp District (6 Buildings)
- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 7-15 Beach Street, TH-47 | 5 Knapp Street, TH-50 |
| 17-23 Beach Street, TH-48 | 7 Knapp Street, TH-51 |
| 25-29 Beach Street, TH-49 | 9-23 Knapp Street, TH-52 |

In some cases, buildings of high architectural and historical merit were located outside the four districts and could not be grouped together to form other districts. Ten such buildings have been recommended for individual listing:

1. Charles Playhouse/Fifth Universalist Church* /r
2. Shubert Theatre
3. Music Hall/Metropolitan
4. Wilbur Theatre
5. Jacob Wirth's
6. Dill Buildings
7. Hayden Building
8. Boylston Building
9. Y.M.C.U.
10. Boston Edison Electric Illumination Co.

I. State and Local Planning

Information gathered as part of this survey, and judgments of relative significance used in determining National Register nominations, have been shared with Boston Redevelopment Staff working on Theatre District revitalization plans and will be on file at the Boston Landmarks Commission.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheets, Section 9

UTM NOT VERIFIED

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property see individual and area forms

Quadrangle name Boston South

Quadrangle scale 1"=25,000'

UMT References

A 19 329940 4690650
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

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H

Verbal boundary description and justification The southern boundary of the Theatre Area starts at a point on Washington St., 520' south of the intersection of Kneeland & Washington. From this point it runs due west along an arbitrary straight line to a point on Charles St. South 442' south of Stuart Street. From thence it follows Charles St. South one block north to the intersection of Stuart St.,

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Candace Jenkins, Registration Director by Pamela Fox
Boston Landmarks Commission

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date

street & number 294 Washington Street telephone (617) 727-8470

city or town Boston, state MA 02108

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Patricia W. Weslowski date 10/20/80

title _____ date _____

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

John W. Ray date 12/9/80
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: Patricia W. Weslowski date 12/9/80
Chief of Registration

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Area C: Piano Row District
Acreage: 4.28 acres
UTM Reference #: 19/329900/4690740

Boundary Justification: The part of the district west of Tremont Street takes in every building on the block which has not been demolished to make way for the planned State Transportation Building. East of Tremont Street, the district includes buildings facing Tremont and is bounded on the south by the Union-Warren Savings Bank, the last of the 8-10 story early skyscrapers which define the Tremont/Boylston intersection. To the north, the district stops at Avery Street because the next block does not have the same architectural and historical interest and visual integrity.

List of Buildings: (all considered contributing)

- TH-12 28-30 Avery Street - (1914, facade on 1874) 4-story brick commercial building by B.F. Dwight) contributes to scale of street.
- TH-13 174-175 Tremont Street - (Evans House) (1859-60, with addition 1866-69) 5-story French Academic brownstone with copper mansard, one of the city's early residential hotels.
- TH-14 176 Tremont Street - (Aster/Tremont Theatres) (1889, J.B. McElpatrick & Son) 4-story stone Mansard obscured by 1948 "modern" sheathing; also 1914 Avery Street facade with Beaux Arts entrance bay; one of two remaining 19th century Boston theatres.
- TH-15 177 Tremont Street - (c. 1928-1935) 5-story cast stone Classical Revival commercial building with good free classic detailing.
- TH-16 178-179 Tremont Street - (Oliver Ditson Building) (1917, C. Howard Walker and Townsend, Steinle and Haskell) 10-story marble Renaissance Revival office building built for the Oliver Ditson music publishing company.
- TH-17 180-182 Tremont Street - (Boston Edison) (1931, Bigelow, Wadsworth, Hubbard & Smith) 14-story limestone Moderne office building for Boston Edison Company.
- TH-18 183-186 Tremont Street - (Masonic Temple) (1899, Loring & Phipps) 9-story granite Renaissance Revival institution on corner site; third Masonic temple on the site and headquarters for first Masonic Lodge in America.
- TH-19 62 Boylston Street - (Hotel Touraine) (1898, Winslow and Wetherell) 11-story brick and limestone Jacobethan early skyscraper originally a luxury hotel.
- TH-20 216-218 Tremont Street - (Union Savings Bank) (1925, Thomas M. James Company) 9-story limestone Renaissance Revival bank building.
- TH-21 219-221 Tremont Street - (Saxon/Majestic Theatre) (1903, John Galen Howard & James M. Wood) 5-story grey terra cotta Beaux Arts theatre built for merchant and music patron Eben Jordan.
- TH-22 74-94 Boylston Street - (Little Building) (1917, Blackall, Clapp & Whittemore) 12-story cast stone Modern Gothic office building with interior arcade.

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- TH-23 96-106 Boylston Street - (Colonial Building and Colonial Theatre) (1900, C.H. Blackall) 10-story granite Renaissance Revival office building also housing fine baroque theatre interior, earliest in Boston to survive intact.
- TH-24 114-116 Boylston Street - (Walker Building) (1891-1893, Winslow & Wetherell) 6-story sandstone Renaissance Revival/Commercial Style office building once housing large dental supply company and several major piano companies.
- TH-25 120-124 Boylston Street - (Walker Building Addition) (1901, Winslow & Bigelow) 10-story sandstone Renaissance Revival/Commercial Style addition to 114-116 Boylston Street, also housed piano companies and other businesses.
- TH-26 1-2 Boylston Place - (c. 1920) 4-story brick rear addition to 130-132 Boylston Street probably used as restaurant.
- TH-27 3 Boylston Place - (Ancient Landmark Building) (1888) 4-story brick Queen Anne/Romanesque Revival structure built as a meeting lodge for the Independent Order of Odd Fellows.
- TH-28 4 Boylston Place - (c. 1820) 3-story brick Federal rowhouse serving since 1887 as the home of the Tavern Club, a dining club for socially prominent Boston men of letters.
- TH-29 5-6 Boylston Place - (1844) 3½-story brick Italianate double house.
- TH-30 130-132 Boylston Street - (Tucker or Ginter Building) (c. 1883-1890) 6-story brick Victorian Commercial Style building.
- TH-31 134-136 Boylston Street - (c. 1890-1895) 4-story brick Queen Anne commercial building.
- TH-32 138-140 Boylston Street - (S.S. White Dental Company Building) (1897-Winslow & Wetherell) 7-story brick and stone Renaissance Revival commercial building built for large manufacturer of dental supplies.
- TH-33 144 Boylston Street - (c. 1815-20) 3½-story brick Federal rowhouse altered on first two floors.
- TH-34 150 Boylston Street - (c. 1883-1890) 4-story brick Queen Anne commercial building.
- TH-35 154-156 Boylston Street - (1925, Little & Russell) 6-story cast stone Classical Revival commercial building.
- TH-36 158-160 Boylston Street - (Vose Building) (1899) 4-story tan brick Renaissance Revival structure built for the Vose Piano Company.
- TH-37 162 Boylston Street - (Steinert Building and Steinert Hall) (1896, Winslow & Wetherell) 6-story tan brick, limestone and terra cotta Beaux Arts/Commercial Style building still in its original use as the piano showrooms and national headquarters for M. Steinert & Sons; building houses acoustically fine concert hall not in use.
- TH-38 2 Park Square - (1889, Snell & Gregorson) 7-story Panel Brick commercial building.
- TH-39 3 Park Square - (c. 1890-95) 5-story brick Romanesque Revival commercial building.
- TH-40 4 Park Square - (c. 1890-95) 6-story brick Renaissance Revival commercial building.

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Piano Row Area Form

The Piano Row district is composed of 29 buildings, generally late 19th and early 20th century in date and commercial in use, located where the major arteries of Tremont and Boylston Streets intersect at a corner of the Boston Common. The area achieved its greatest significance during the period 1890-1930, when it was a favored location for piano dealers and music-related industries, along with major hotels, institutions and theatres. The area includes distinctive structures by prominent architects grouped in an ensemble which frames the Boston Common.

The district developed in the early 19th century as a residential neighborhood of brick rowhouses, two of which survive at 4 and 5-6 Boylston Place (TH-28 and TH-29). After mid-century the area became increasingly commercial. A dominant ground floor use was piano showrooms, which were concentrated along the block of Tremont between West and Boylston Streets in the 1870's and 1880's and later migrated to the block of Boylston between Tremont Street and Park Square. Both these blocks have been popularly nicknamed "Piano Row". (See Section D, Part 3.)

The most significant buildings built for music companies were the Steinert Building of 1896 (TH-37), which included an acoustically fine concert hall, and the Oliver Ditson Building of 1917 (TH-16), headquarters for one of the nation's oldest and largest music publishing firms. The following buildings also housed one or more piano or organ dealers during the late 19th or early 20th century: The Evans House (TH-13), Tremont Theatre (TH-14), Masonic Temple (TH-18), Colonial Building (TH-23), Walker Buildings (TH-24 and TH-25), Tucker Building (TH-30), 136 Boylston Street (TH-31), 138-140 Boylston Street (TH-32), 144 Boylston Street (TH-33), 154-156 Boylston Street (TH-35), Vose Building (TH-36), and Steinert Building (TH-37).

Other commercial uses in the area included hotels, offices and theatres. The 1898 Touraine (TH-19) was a first class hotel which featured a 4,000-volume library. The 1917 Little Building (TH-22) was called by Walter Whitehill "the most glamorous office building of the era of World War I". Nearby are three important early theatres: the Tremont of 1889 (TH-14), the Colonial of 1900 (TH-23) and the Majestic of 1903 (TH-21). (See Section D, Part 2.)

A number of institutions also settled in the area after the mid-19th century, including the first building for the Boston Public Library (since demolished). The present Masonic Temple of 1899 (TH-18) is the third on the site to be used as headquarters for the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, oldest in America. A smaller secret society, the Odd Fellows, built the Ancient Landmark Lodge in 1888 (TH-27). The Tavern Club, a proper Bostonian men's dining group with a distinguished membership including men like Charles Elliot Norton and William Dean Howells, has been occupying the Federal house at 4 Boylston Place (TH-28) since 1887.

The Piano Row area is also notable as the location of the first "French Flat" or apartment building on the East Coast, the Hotel Pelham of 1857, which stood where the Little Building is today. Across from it stood the equally renowned Hotel Boylston, also demolished. The only residential building of this type to remain in the area is the Evans House of 1860 (TH-13).

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The buildings along Piano Row are of high architectural quality and include fine examples by the major turn-of-the-century firms: Winslow and Wetherell (later Winslow and Bigelow) and Clarence H. Blackall of Blackall, Clapp and Wittemore. Works by the former include the Steinert Building (TH-37), Walker Buildings (TH-23 and TH-24) and Hotel Touraine (TH-19), while Blackall's work in the area includes the Colonial Building and Theatre (TH-23) and the Little Building (TH-22). Each of these designs was published in the literature and admired for style and technological innovation.

The area's three theatres are all architecturally significant. If the Tremont's stone Mansard facade (TH-14) could be restored, it would represent the oldest theatre facade in the city. The exquisite Colonial (TH-23) is the city's oldest intact theatre interior, and the monumental Majestic (TH-21) features a unique terra cotta facade and Beaux Arts interior by distinguished architect John Galen Howard.

The area's early steel frame skyscrapers are also notable, including the Hotel Touraine (TH-19), Little Building (TH-22) and Masonic Temple (TH-18) which together create a city focal point at the intersection of Boylston and Tremont Streets. Other important examples of this building style are the Renaissance Revival Oliver Ditson Building of 1917 (TH-16) by nationally prominent architect C. Howard Walker and the Moderne Boston Edison Building of 1931 (TH-17) by Bigelow, Wadsworth, Hubbard and Smith, one of the area's best examples of the Moderne style.

Piano Row also includes the survey area's best--and sometimes only--examples of particular styles including Federal and Italianate brick rowhouses (TH-28 and TH-29), and a French Academic brownstone (TH-13), Panel Brick office building (TH-38), and Queen Anne institutional building (TH-27).

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Liberty Tree Area Form

The Liberty Tree district consists of six buildings clustered around the corner of Washington and Essex Streets at the northern edge of Boston's "adult entertainment zone". The area is significant historically as the location of the famous Liberty Tree and architecturally as a small-scale ensemble of mid-to-late 19th century commercial buildings, many of individual distinction.

The corner of Washington and Essex Streets, known as Hanover Square before 1765, was the site of the Liberty Tree Tavern and the magnificent American elm known as the Liberty Tree. The tree and tavern were favorite gathering places for the Sons of Liberty, a group of patriots organized in 1765 to protest the Stamp Act. During the pre-Revolutionary War period, demonstrations against British rule were commonly held here, and the tree became a symbol of liberty and focal point of Boston's early struggles against tyranny.

The Liberty Tree is commemorated by a finely carved relief plaque on the Washington Street facade of the brick commercial building erected on the site in 1850. Called the Liberty Tree Block (TH-45), this building was owned by wealthy Bostonian David Sears and housed small shops on the ground floor and elegant public halls above.

The Liberty Tree Block and adjacent buildings also reflect the commercial development of the area during the mid-to-late 19th century period. Shops were still small and the upper floors of commercial buildings at 11-13 and 15-17 Essex Street (TH-44 and TH-43) were used as residences. Because Washington Street was for many years the only land route out of Boston, hotels and taverns were also located here. One of these was the 1824 Lafayette Hotel at 644 Washington Street (TH-46), named in honor of Lafayette's visit to Boston that year. It was remodelled in the early 1860's by philanthropist Robert Bent Brigham into Brigham's Hotel and remodelled again in the late 19th or early 20th century, at which time the present Adamesque facade was erected. The area includes another hotel, the Essex at 25-31 Essex Street (TH-41), probably erected in 1881. By that date, railroads with terminals in the nearby South Cove area were bringing even more travelers into the area.

The Liberty Tree Block (TH-45) is architecturally significant as a prominent corner building which serves as a visual focus for the area. The building itself is an unusual example of the transition from the Greek Revival to Italianate style in commercial architecture. 11-13 Essex Street (TH-44) probably dating from 1871, is highly significant as the only commercial building in the Boston Central Business District with a wooden facade. The thin wooden piers are chamfered in imitation of the more expensive cast iron storefronts popular at that date. 15-17 and 25-31 Essex Street (TH-43 and TH-41) are among the survey area's best surviving examples of High Victorian Gothic commercial architecture. 640-644 Washington Street (TH-46) is the best example of the Federal Revival style in the survey area and features fine details such as Flemish bond brick, iron balconies and splayed slate lintels.

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Area D: Liberty Tree District
Acreage: 3/5ths of an acre
UTM Reference #: 19/330080/4690710

Boundary Justification: The district is bounded by Essex Street on the north and Washington Street on the west. The southern boundary was drawn between #644 and #646 Washington because #644 was considered to be of comparable architectural quality to the rest of the district and #646, #648 and #660-672 were considered to be of lesser architectural quality. The eastern boundary is defined by a vacant lot and a heavily altered building of no architectural or historical significance.

List of Structures: (all considered to contribute to the district):

- TH-41 25-31 Essex Street - (Essex Hotel) (c. 1881) 5-story stone High Victorian Gothic building with scalloped slate mansard roof, probably built as a hotel.
- TH-42 19-21 Essex Street - (post 1928 facade) 3-story Greek Revival bowfront hidden by 20th century concrete Gothic-style facade.
- TH-43 15-17 Essex Street - (1875) 4-story polychrome stone High Victorian Gothic mercantile building which housed sewing machine company for many years.
- TH-44 11-13 Essex Street - (c. 1871) 3-story commercial building with wooden facade carved to imitate cast iron construction, built by wealthy merchant David Sears, probably for a kitchen supply company.
- TH-45 628-636 Washington Street - (Liberty Tree Block) (1850) 4-story brick Greek Revival/Italianate commercial building with plaque marking site of historic Liberty Tree.
- TH-46 640-644 Washington Street - (Lafayette Hotel) (1824, late 19th or early 20th century facade) 4½-story brick Federal Revival facade with slate Mansard roof. Unclear whether earlier hotel was totally rebuilt at turn-of-the-century or whether only the facade was remodelled.

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West Street Area Form

The West Street district is composed of four early 20th century commercial buildings located at the northern edge of the theatre survey area close to the heart of the downtown retail shopping area. Two of the buildings face Tremont Street, one of the city's major thoroughfares, and two are located on the south side of West Street, a secondary street extending between Tremont and Washington Streets. The buildings are of high architectural quality and illustrate important trends in the history of Boston's retail shopping trade.

During the first three decades of this century, Tremont and West Streets were part of the fashionable ladies' shopping area which also included Winter Street and Temple Place to the north. During this period Tremont Street was called "a shopping thoroughfare similar to the Rue de la Pais of Paris and Fifth Avenue of New York."

The four buildings in the district are historically significant as representatives of three types of businesses which catered to this trade: the large department store, then emerging as the dominant 20th century retail type; the small proprietor who continued the 19th century tradition of personal service; and the fashionable restaurant. The two Lawrence Buildings (TH-10 and TH-11) were once part of Chandler & Company, an exclusive department store founded in Boston in 1810 and popularly credited with selling the first ready-made dress in Boston. Chandlers moved from Winter Street to the Chickering Building at 151 Tremont Street (since demolished) in 1905 and by 1917 had expanded its operation into the adjoining 1903 Lawrence Building at 150 Tremont Street (TH-11), which had previously been occupied by the Oliver Ditson Company, of the nation's largest sheet music publishers. Five years later, Chandler's took over a third building, also called the Lawrence Building (TH-10) at 148-9 Tremont Street, corner of West Street.

Contrasting with Chandler's large-scale ready-made clothing establishment were the dozens of small businesses which occupied the 1926 Fabyan Building (TH-9). The 1930 Boston City Directory lists eighty-two tenants specializing in custom-made clothing and accessories, the cleaning, dyeing and repair of clothing, and personal care services, including twenty-one beauty salons. Shoppers also patronized the adjacent Schraffts candy store and restaurant at 16-24 West Street (TH-8), which operated three floors of tastefully decorated "tea rooms."

The four buildings are architecturally significant as distinctive examples of early 20th century commercial architecture. The 1903 Lawrence Building (TH-11), also known as the Oliver Ditson Building, was designed by the prominent Boston firm of Winslow and Bigelow and was praised in contemporary architectural periodicals as an office building "demanding keen appreciation." As one of the few representatives of the Chicago style steel frame skyscraper in the survey area, it forms an interesting comparison with the neighboring 1912 Lawrence Building (TH-10), a fine example of the Renaissance Revival "palazzo skyscraper" more common in conservative Boston.

Interior and exterior photographs of the Schraffts Building (TH-8) by the J.D. Leland Company were also published in contemporary periodicals. The Fabyan Building (TH-9) is one of the survey area's best examples of the Classical Revival style of the mid-1920's and is the work of the well-known firm of Coolidge, Shepley, Richardson and Abbott. The

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limestone facades on each building on the south side of West Street are also unusual in their harmony of scale and materials and the intact quality of the cast iron storefronts on two buildings, Schraffts (TH-8) and the Lawrence Building (TH-10), which faces Tremont Street but extends over 160 feet along West Street.

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Area B: West Street District
Acreage: 3/5ths of an acre
UTM Reference #: 19/330040/4691040

Boundary Justification: The area is bounded on the north by West Street and on the east by Tremont Street. To the south is Tremont-on-the-Common, a 27-story high rise apartment building which is clearly out of character with the district. The other buildings on the south and east (the Savoy Theatre and Bigelow-Kennard Building) are already on the National Register as part of the Washington Street Theatre District.

List of Buildings: (all considered contributing)

- TH-8 16-24 West Street - (Schraffts) (1922, Joseph D. Leland & Co.) 5-story limestone Renaissance Revival commercial building occupied over 50 years by Schraffts candy store and restaurant.
- TH-9 26-30 West Street - (Fabyan Building) (1926, Coolidge, Shepley, Bulfinch & Abbott) 6-story Limestone Classical Revival office building occupied by small personal service businesses.
- TH-10 148-149 Tremont Street - (Lawrence Building) (1912) 11-story limestone Renaissance Revival office building on corner site, once part of Chandler & Company Department Store.
- TH-11 150 Tremont Street - (Lawrence Building or Oliver Ditson Building) (1903, Winslow & Bigelow) 10-story brick pier and spandrel Commercial Style skyscraper built for the Oliver Ditson Company music publishers and later part of Chandler & Company Department Store.

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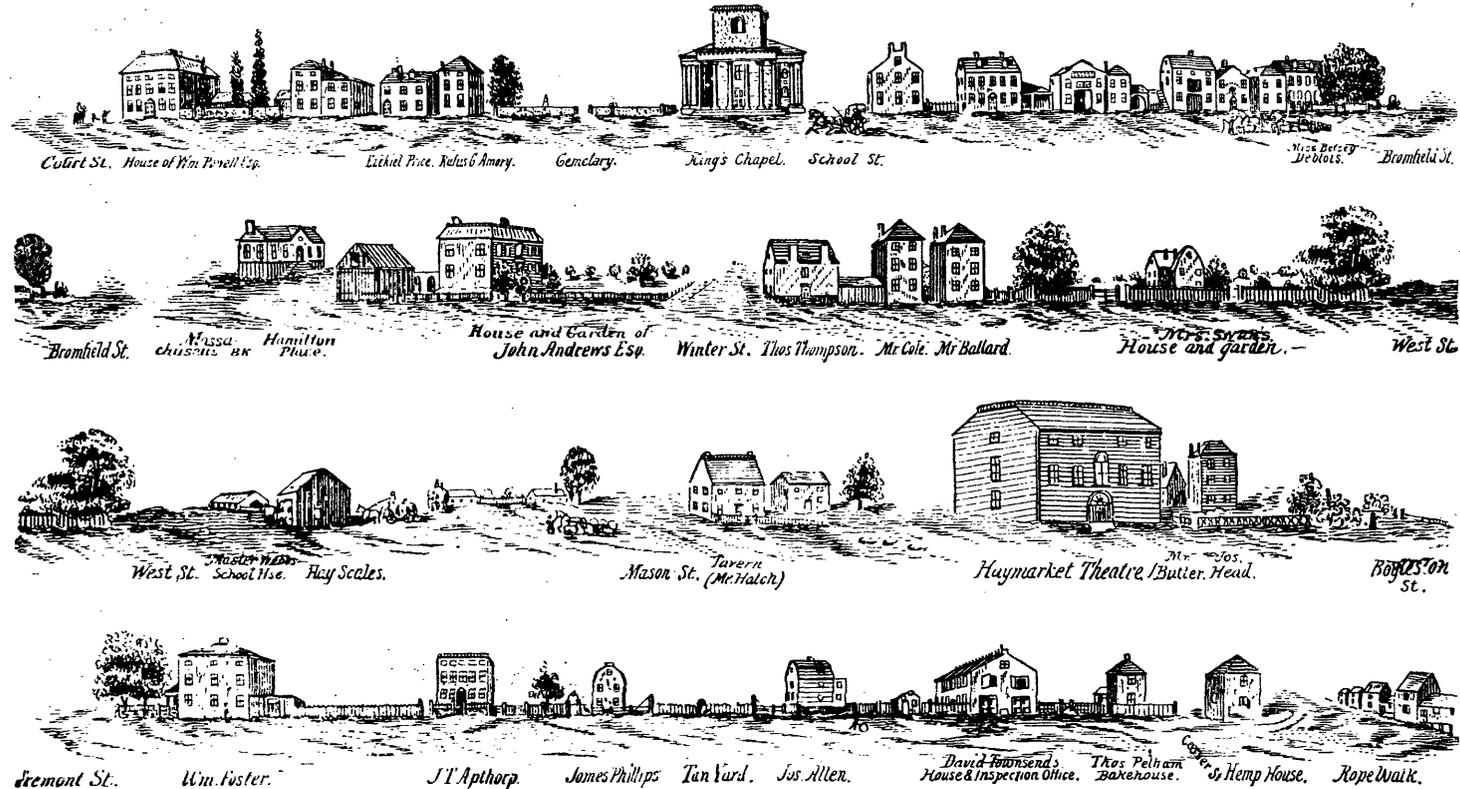
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10. Geographical Data continued

one block west on Stuart to the intersection of Broadway, one block north on Broadway to the intersection of Eliot, one block north on Park Square to the intersection of Boylston, two blocks east on Boylston to the intersection of Tremont, two blocks north on Tremont to the intersection of West St., two blocks southeast along West then Bedford Streets to the intersection of Harrison Avenue, five blocks south on Harrison Ave. to the intersection of Kneeland, two blocks west on Kneeland to the intersection of Washington, then south on Washington 520' to the starting point.



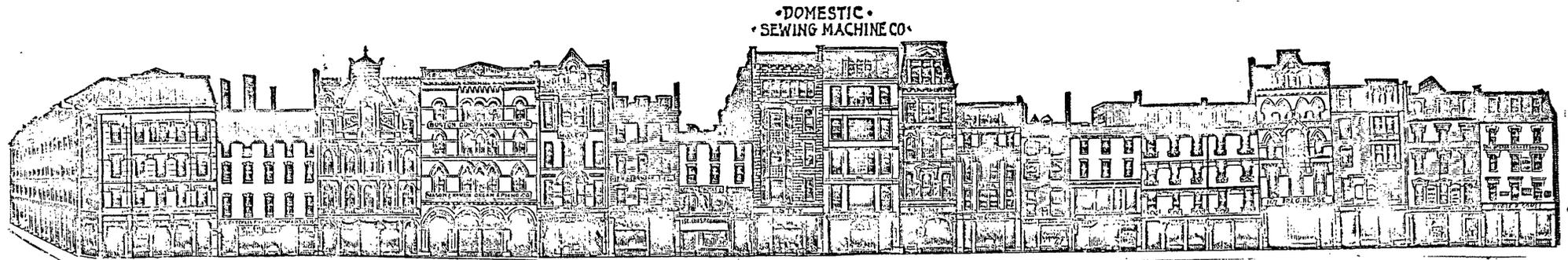
FIRST THREE VIEWS ON THIS PAGE show a panoramic view of Tremont Street (east side) from Court Street to Boylston Street, giving names, etc., of the various owners of the houses and buildings. The fourth view is that of Boylston Street from Tremont to Carver Street. All the originals of above drawings were made in 1800.

Illustration I: Tremont Street in 1800

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Illustration II : Tremont St. in the 1870's
 (From: BPL Fine Arts Dept)



•DOMESTIC•
 •SEWING MACHINE CO•

148-49 150 152 154 156 157 158 159 160 161 162 163 164* 165-6 167 168* 169 170

Getchell
 Pianos

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 Hamlin

Henry
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Estey
 Organ

Vose &
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NEW ENGLAND
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 Piano

Tremont
 Theatre

Knabe Piano
 Hallet & Davis
 Fairbanks & Cole

Hardman
 Pianos

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Hotel Boylston

* Buildings remaining
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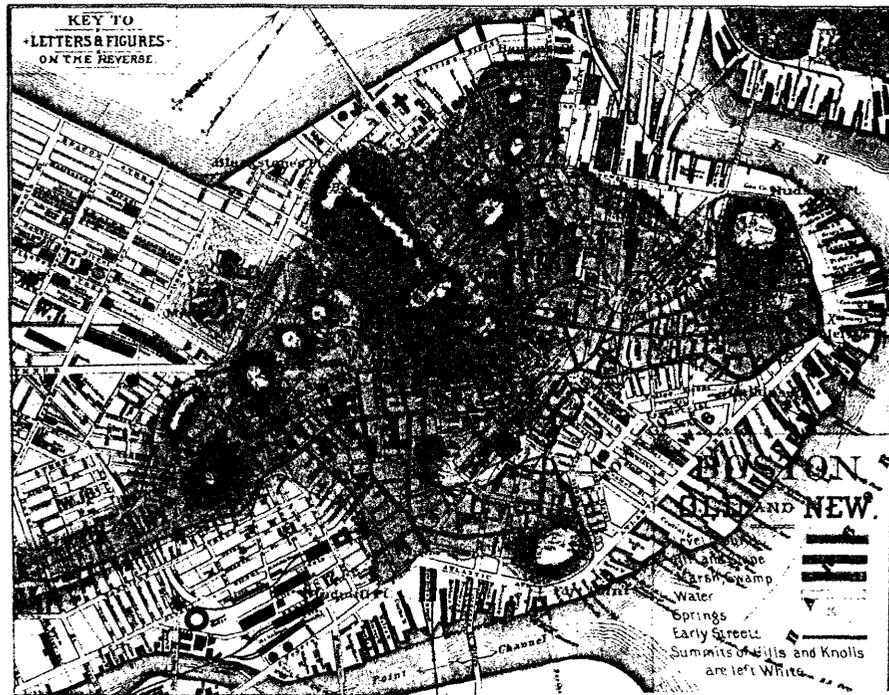
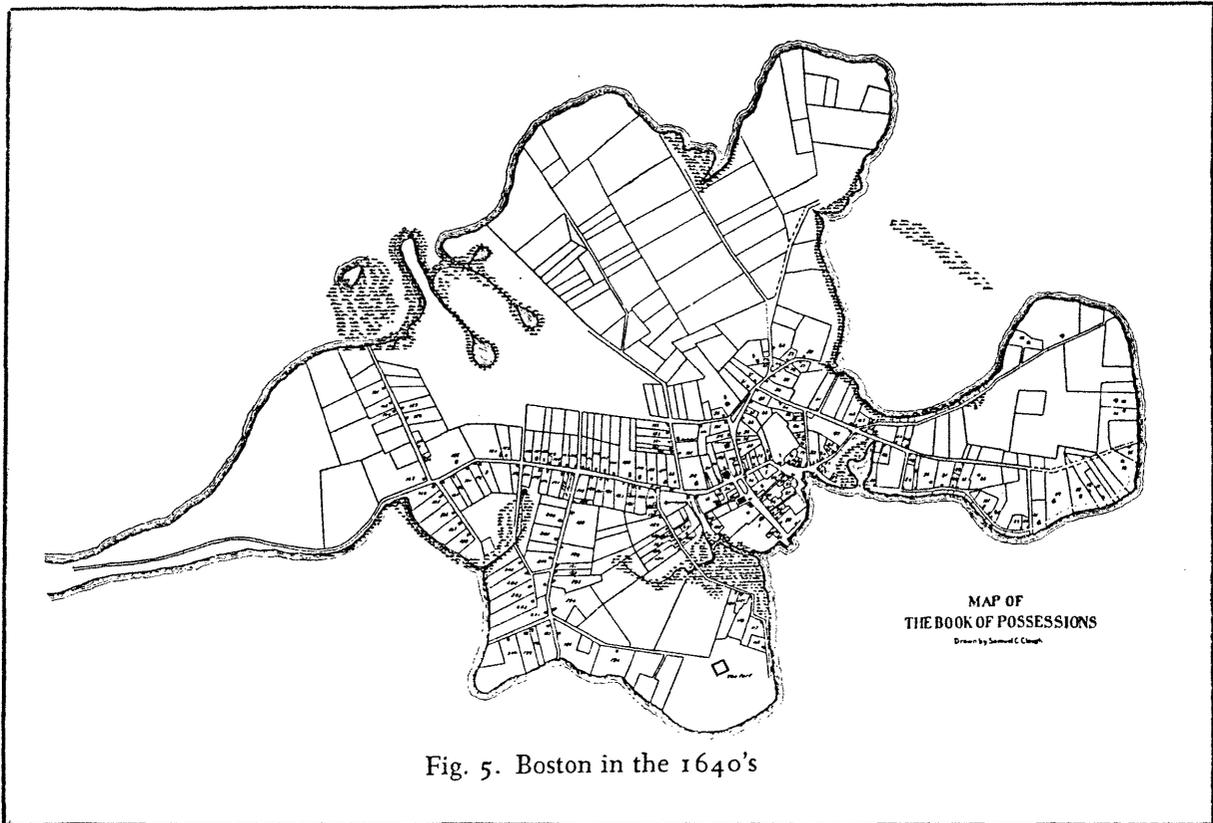


Fig. 1. Outline of the Shawmut peninsula superimposed upon a modern map

Map III

Reproduced from Whitehill, Boston: A Topographical History, p. 4

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Map IV

(Reproduced from Whitehill's Boston: A Topographical History)
p. 9.

1940

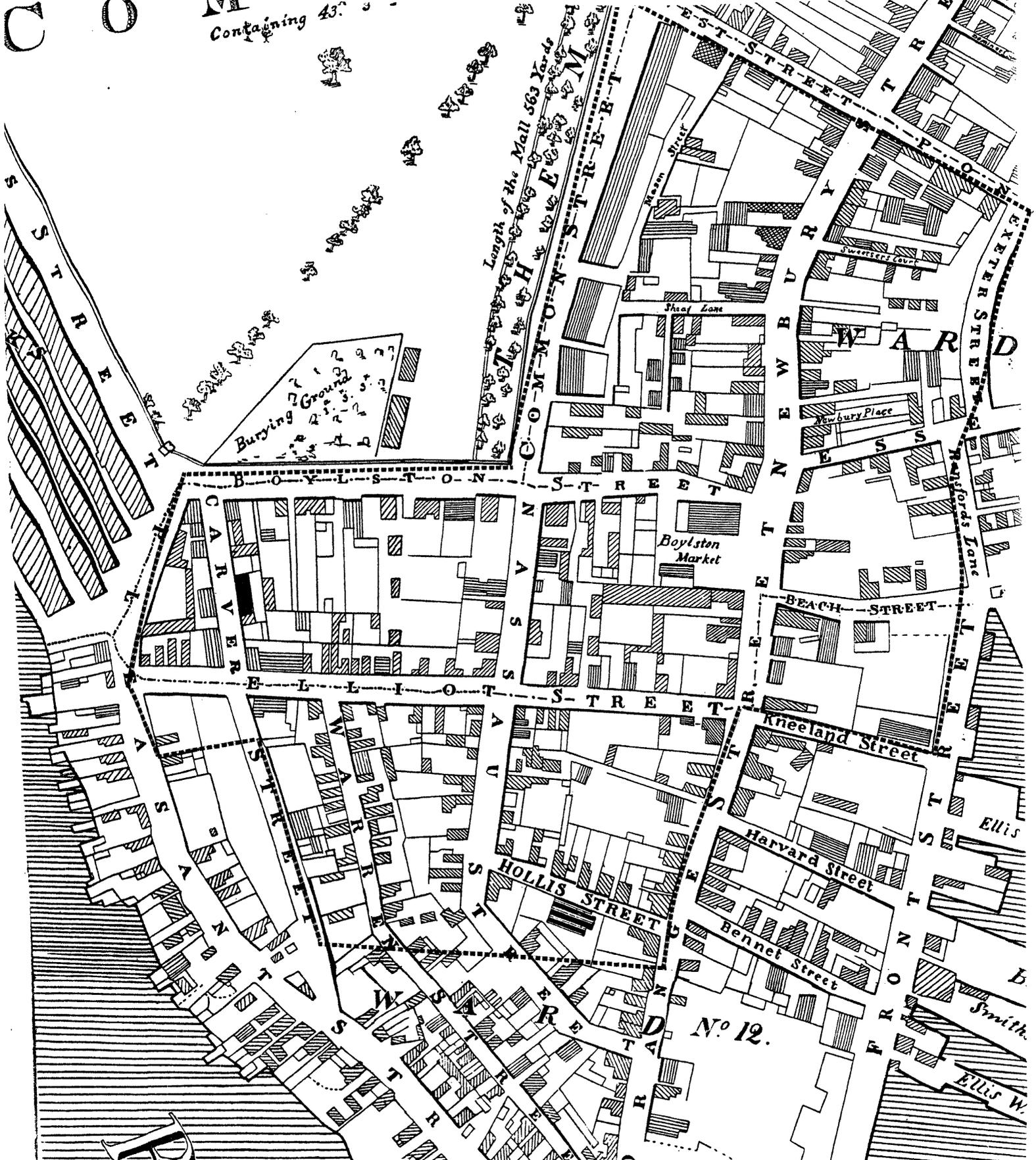


Fig. 17. The Burgis map of 1728

Map VI

Reproduced from Whitehill, Boston: A Topographical History, p. 25

Containing 43

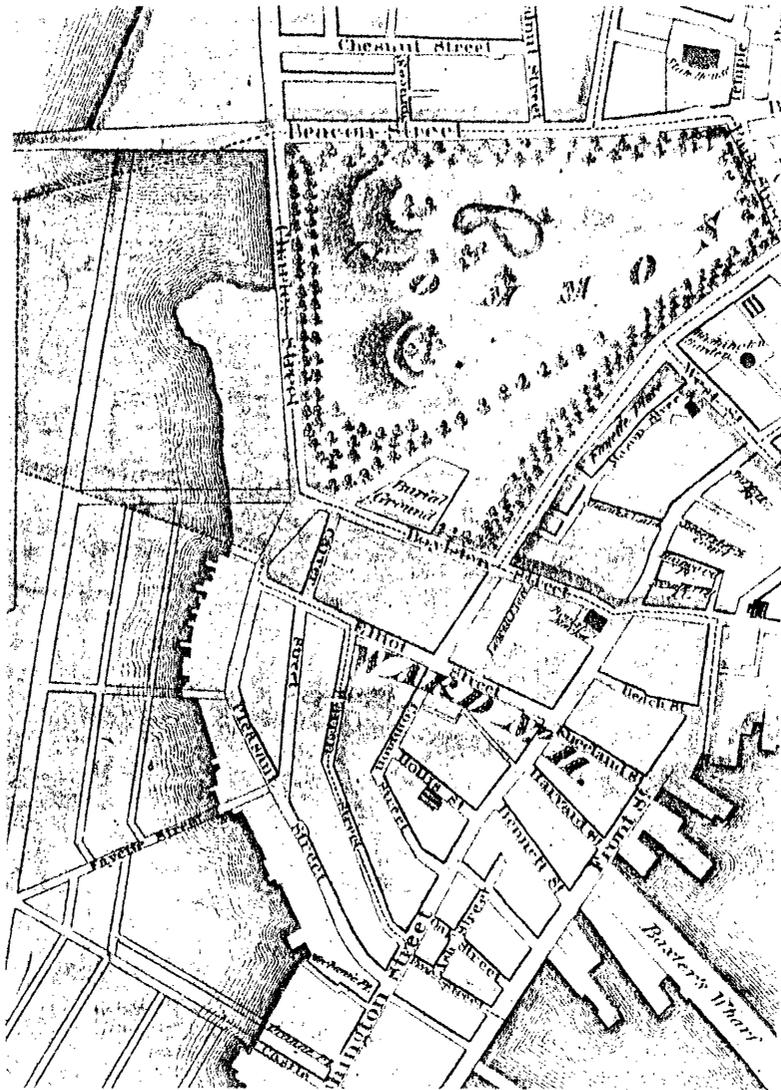


- Brick or Stone Buildings are erected parallel to their sides* thus
- Wood Buildings are erected diagonally*..... thus
- Churches and Meeting Houses*..... thus
- Taverns*..... thus
- School Houses*..... thus
- Divisions of Wards*..... thus
- In Blocks of Buildings the number of Divisions or dwellings are denoted thus*

N.B. The only buildings illustrated on this 1814 map to survive up to the present were 12, 14 and 16 Carver (marked) recently demolished

1814 Map of Boston by John G. Hales (BRA Map E-1166- detail)

May, 1979



Detail of theatre survey area, from
1826 Map of Boston

Map IX

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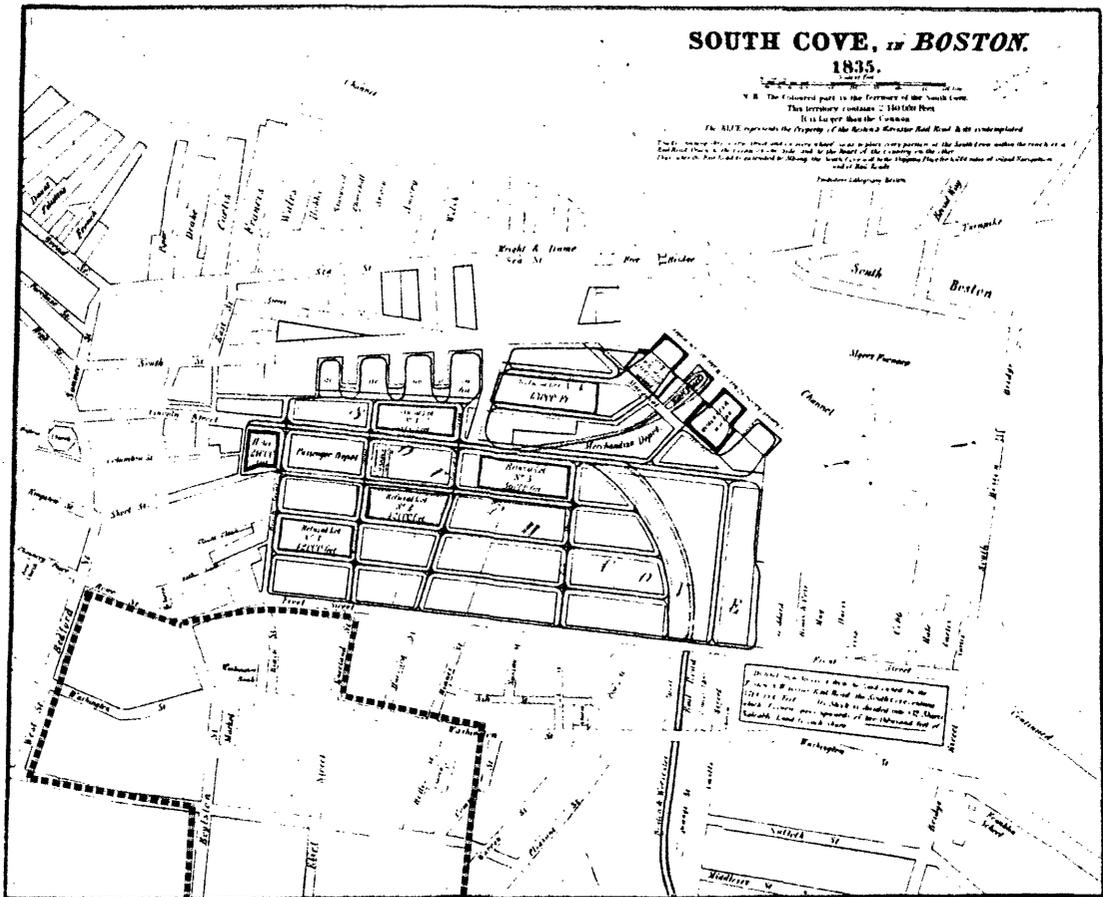


Fig. 55. Plan of South Cove in 1835

Reproduced from Whitehill, Boston: A Topographical History, p. 103. (Dotted line delineates theatre survey area. (

Map X

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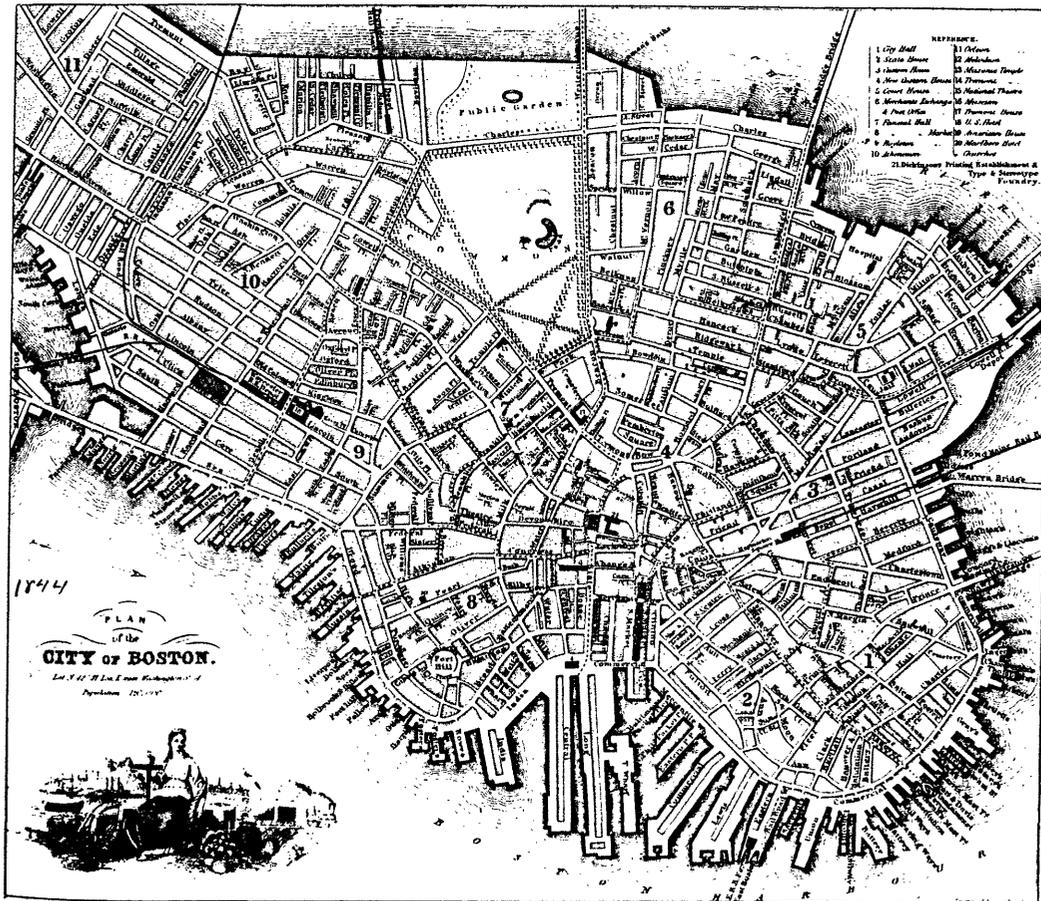


Fig. 63. The Boynton map of 1844

Map XI

Reproduced from Whitehill, Boston: A Topographical History, p. 121.

NOV - 1880

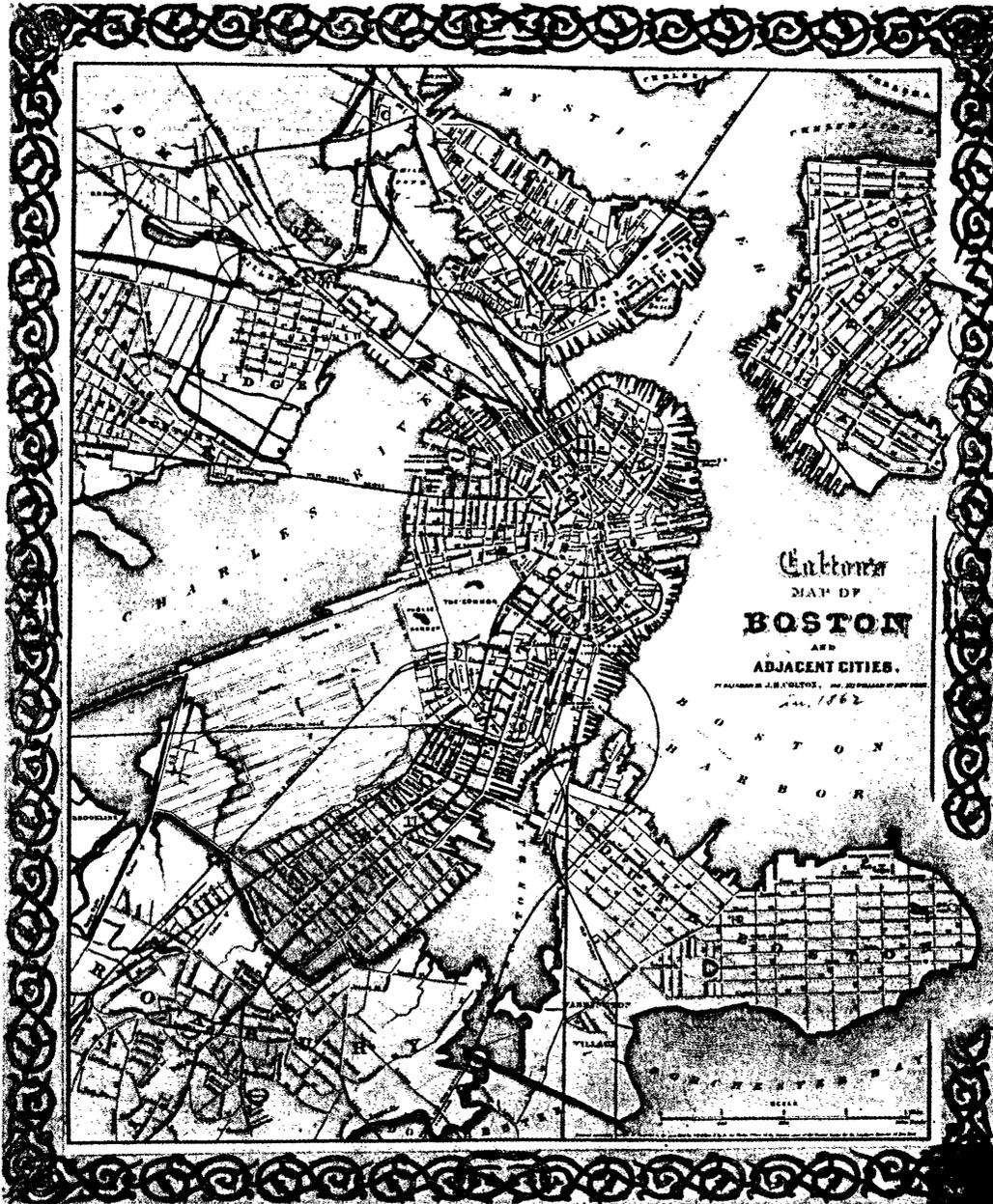


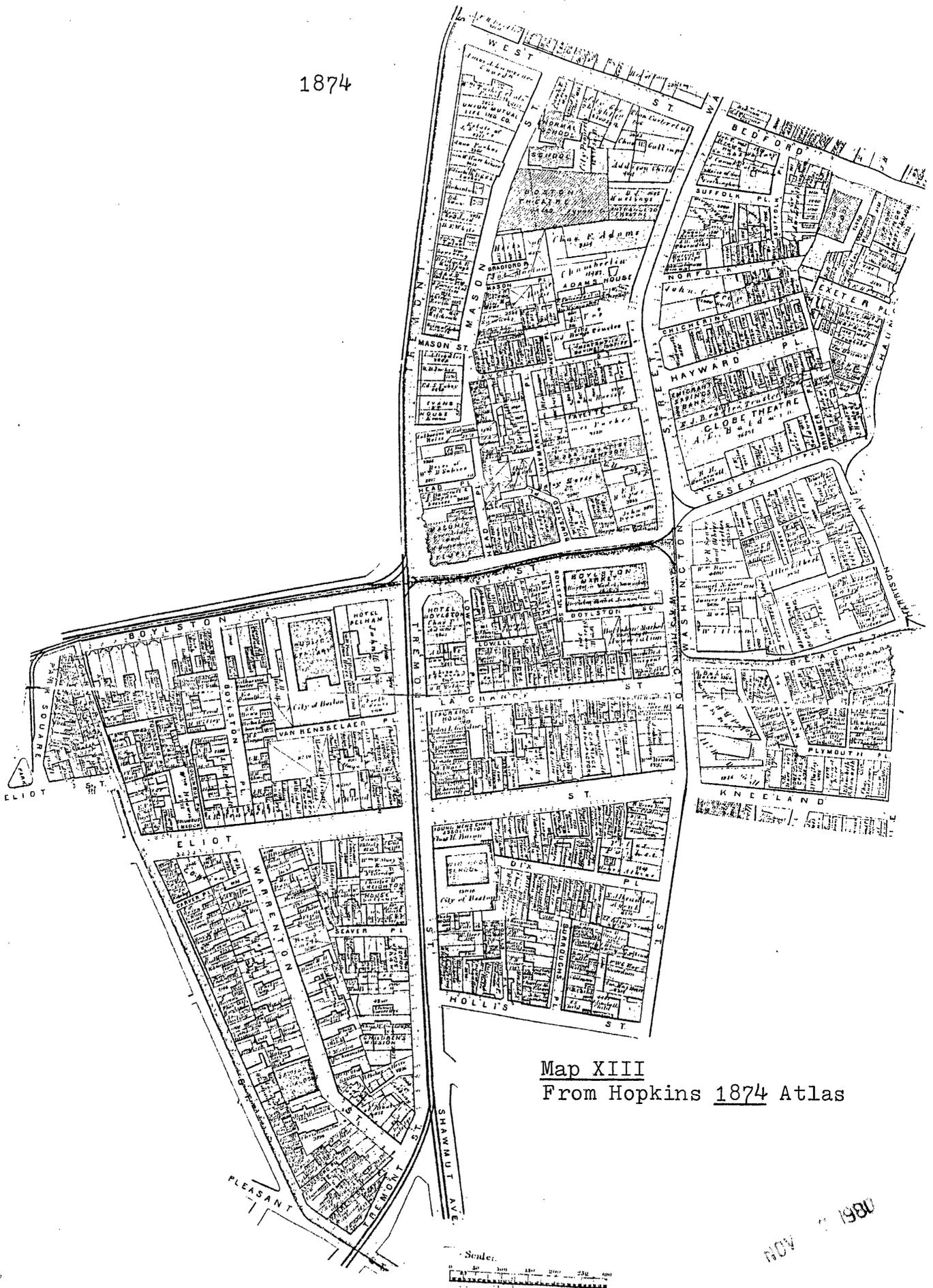
Fig. 69. The Colton map of 1855

Map XII

reproduced from Whitehill, Boston: A Topographical History, p. 130

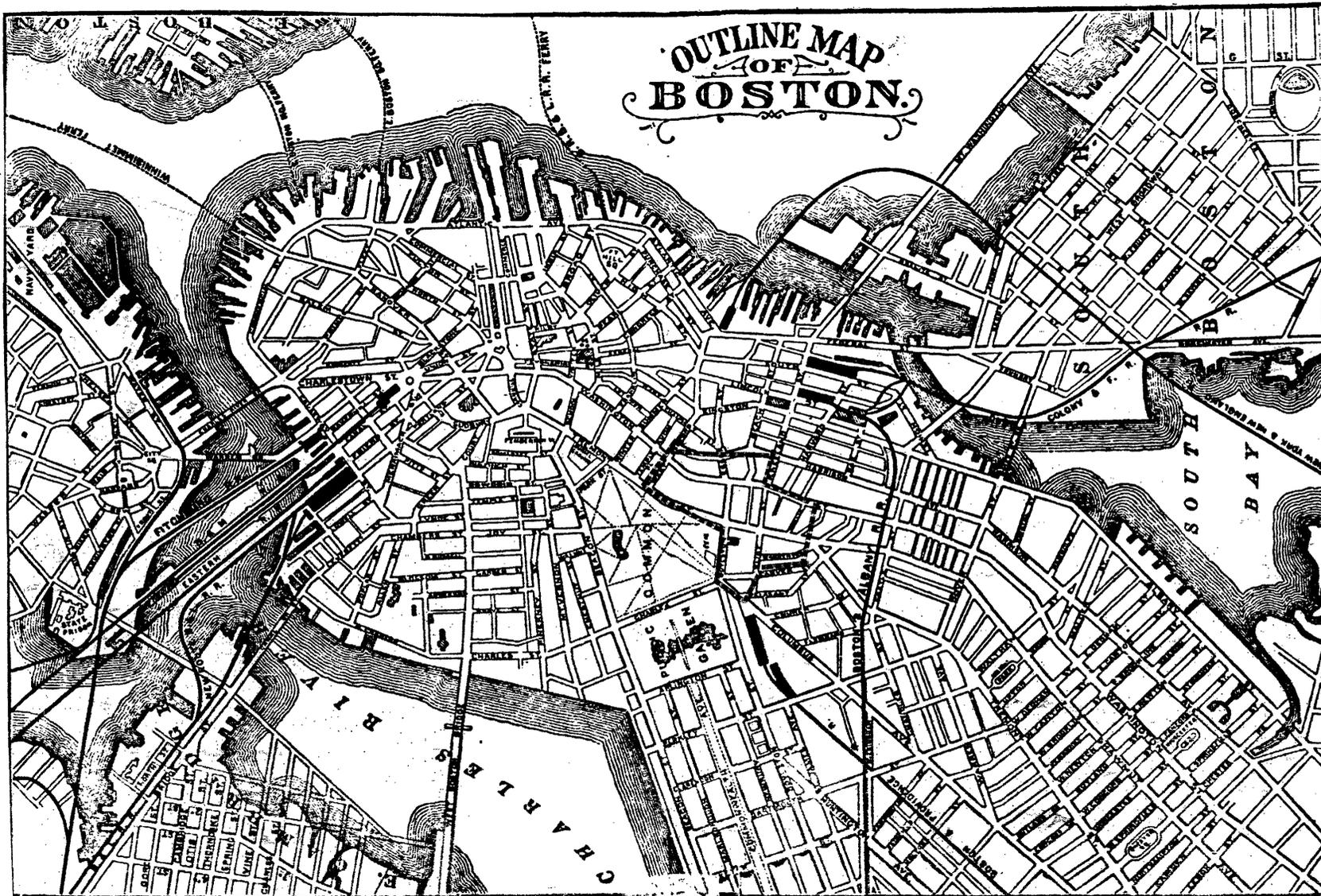
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1874



Map XIII
From Hopkins 1874 Atlas

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Map XIV : Boston, late 19th century
From: King's Handbook of Boston

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