

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

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

received **AUG 6 1985**
date entered **SEP 5 1985**

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

1. Name

historic 138-142 Portland Street (use for publication)

and/or common 85 Merrimac Street

2. Location

street & number 138-142 Portland Street n/a not for publication

city, town Boston n/a vicinity of

state MA code 025 county Suffolk code 025

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name 138 Portland Street Limited Partnership c/o Hamlin Collier & Company

street & number 10 Liberty Square

city, town Boston n/a vicinity of state MA

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

title¹ Boston Landmarks Commission
Central Business District has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date June, 1980 federal state county local

depository for survey records Boston Landmarks Commission, City Hall

city, town Boston state MA

7. Description

138-142 Portland St., Boston, MA

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

n/a

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

138-142 Portland Street is a five story brick commercial building with Beaux Arts ornamentation. It is located in the historic "Bulfinch Triangle", an area which includes approximately half of the triangular street pattern laid out by the architect Charles Bulfinch in 1808. Originally a mill pond, the area is now commonly known as the North Station area. Surrounding 138-42 Portland Street are 4- and 6-story commercial buildings dating from the late nineteenth century, many of which housed companies involved in the woodworking and furniture industries during this period. Because of its proximity to the railroads, the area surrounding 138-42 Portland Street developed as a center for manufacturers and wholesale dealers. 138-42 Portland Street stands directly on the sidewalk at the intersection of Portland, Traverse and Merrimac Streets. The northwest wall is a blank party wall which currently faces a parking lot.

The five-story building has a trapezoidal floor plan. It is five bays wide on Portland and Merrimac Streets and three bays wide on Traverse Street. Two corners of the building--at the intersections of Portland and Traverse Streets, and Merrimac and Traverse Streets--are rounded.

The building, faced with brick, has a combination wood and steel frame, which are the original materials. The building has a flat composition roof. There is a full basement with an original concrete foundation.

Three of the building's facades are ornamented in the Beaux-Arts style. Major elements include a bracketed cornice, curved ox-eye windows, carved stone cartouches over the windows, brick pilasters and ornamented brick spandrel panels. With the exception of the northwest wall, each facade of 138-142 Portland Street is very similar. The ground floor storefronts have plate glass display windows, transom lights, and unusual lights below the sill line. Located where the kickpanels would normally be found, these lights originally provided natural light to the basement through interior "area ways" at the perimeter of the first floor. The kick panel lights and "areaways" were covered during the ca. 1950 renovations, and remain covered. Floors 2 through 4 are treated as one vertical unit, with floor 5 treated as a separate unit. On floors 2 through 4, 3-story brick pilasters separate bays comprised of paired windows capped at floor 4 with segmentally arched openings. A limestone cornice line at the fifth-floor sill level incorporates limestone keystones for the segmental arches mentioned above. Above this cornice line, the fifth floor consists of paired windows articulating each bay, with a heavy bracketed cornice above capping each facade. Stone-framed curved ox-eye windows highlight the windows of the fifth floor.

(see continuation sheet)

8. Significance

138-142 Portland Street, Boston, MA

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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1896 Builder/Architect Stephen R. H. Codman

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The building meets National Register Criterion A because it was the home of the Boston Branch office of the National Casket Company during the formative years of that nationally important company's operations. The National Casket Company was formed in 1890 through amalgamation of the Hamilton, Lemmon, Arnold Company of Pittsburgh, PA; the Chappel, Chase, Maxwell Company of Oneida, NY; and the Stein Manufacturing Company of Syracuse, NY. Within the same year, the company purchased the Boston Casket Company, among others, and was on its way to becoming a national leader in the field of casket manufacturing. Although incorporated in the state of New York with its headquarters originally in Oneida, the company's Boston branch was of central importance throughout its history.

The building meets National Register Criterion C because it is an excellent example of commercial Beaux-Arts classicism, and is one of only two buildings of that style in Boston's North Station area. 138-142 Portland Street is an excellent example of Beaux-Arts commercial architecture, a style which was introduced in the United States at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. Borrowing elements from classical Rome, the Beaux-Arts style was taught at the French Ecole des Beaux Arts and was brought to this country by Paris-trained architects. The ornate detail and classical motifs of 134-42 Portland Street mark it as an early example of the commercial Beaux-Arts style; a design trend which soon became very popular for large-scale and public buildings.

At the time of the company's formation in 1890, the Boston branch of the National Casket Company moved into the former headquarters of the Stein Manufacturing Company at 137 Portland Street. When the Boston Casket Company was absorbed later in 1890, the owner of that company, P.B. Heintz, became the manager of National Casket's Boston branch office. Heintz would go on to play a key role in the company's rapid growth in future years.

When the building at 138-142 Portland Street was completed in 1896, the Boston branch of the National Casket Company moved from its space across the street at 137 Portland Street into the new building. This location, in the midst of Boston's woodworking and furniture industries, was particularly appropriate for a casket firm. The company apparently had its sales room on the second floor with a private entrance and

(see continuation sheet)

9. Major Bibliographical References

see continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 6000 square feet

Quadrangle name Boston South

Quadrangle scale 1:25,000

UTM References

A 19 330200 4692050
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

see continuation sheet

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

state NA code n/a county n/a code n/a

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sarah Zimmerman, Director of Preservation Planning William MacRostie & Byrd Wood, Langelier Properties Boston Landmarks Commission

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date 2/20/85

street & number 80 Boylston Street telephone (617) 727-8470

city or town Boston state MA 02116

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Valerie A. Talmage

title Executive Director of SHPO, MHC date July 15, 1985

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the National Register

Delores Byers
Keeper of the National Register

date 9/5/85

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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Inventory—Nomination Form**

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received

date entered

Continuation sheet 138-142 Portland Street Item number 8

Page 1

Boston, MA

elaborately ornamented stairway at 142 Portland Street leading up to that space. Storage apparently was located on floors three through five. These quarters would remain the home of the Boston branch of the company for the next three decades.

By the turn of the century, the capital stock of the National Casket Company had been increased to \$6,000,000 and plants had been opened in Nashville, Louisville, Indianapolis and Chicago. With the acquisition in 1906 of W. Lockhart and Company of Cambridge, Massachusetts--until then the leader in casket manufacturing in New England--the Boston branch of National Casket, headquartered in 142 Portland Street, became the largest casket manufacturer and supplier in New England. In 1919 the Boston branch of the company moved its executive offices to 3 Park Street, but 142 Portland Street continued to occupy the company's primary listing in the city's directory and serve as the primary sales facility for the branch. In 1922, P.B. Heintz, the manager at 142 Portland Street for more than 20 years, became the president of National Casket and moved the company's headquarters from Pittsburgh to Boston. Under Heintz's leadership, the company posted gross earnings in 1925 of \$5.2 million, and had sales branches in 26 major cities east of the Rocky Mountains. The company was by this time the largest manufacturer of caskets and funeral supplies in the country, a position it would occupy for nearly the next half century. Although leaving 142 Portland Street and moving into the old Governor Ames Mansion at the corner of Commonwealth and Massachusetts Avenues in 1927, the Boston office continued to serve as National Casket's national headquarters until 1969, when the company was purchased by Walco National of New York City.

The elaborate design of 138 Portland Street reflects the success and expansion of the National Casket Company. The building was constructed in 1896 by Catherine E. Tarbell, and the Boston branch of the National Casket Company moved in as tenants soon after its completion. Located directly across the street at the time of the building's construction, the Boston office no doubt paid close attention to the progress of the new, lavishly ornamented building and possibly had some input in the design. By 1906 the company was the largest manufacturer and supplier of caskets in New England. 138 Portland Street continued to serve as headquarters for the branch until 1919, and as the main sales facility until 1927.

(See continuation sheet)

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date entered

Continuation sheet 138-142 Portland Street

Item number 8, 10

Page 2

Boston, MA

Relative to other buildings in its immediate vicinity, 138-142 Portland Street is extremely prominent as a result of its high level of ornamentation. The stone architrave, ornamental window frames and cartouche; the bracketed cornice; and the ornamented brick spandrel panels on all three facades provide a texture and relief which contrast dramatically with the relatively austere buildings nearby. It is clearly a building which was designed to stand out from its surroundings.

138-142 Portland Street was designed by Stephen R. H. Codman, an architect who designed several other buildings in Boston including those at 166-174 Portland Street and 105-119 Merrimac Street in the North Station area. Codman went on in the early 20th century to form a partnership with the distinguished architect Desire Despradelle, who was the Rotch professor of architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Among the most notable of Codman and Despradelle's commissions were the 1911 Peter Bent Brigham Hospital and the 1906 Berkeley Building at 414-434 Boylston Street. The latter was described in 1908 by Architects and Builders' Magazine as "decidedly novel in design in this country".

10. Geographical Data

Beginning at the corner of the structure at the southeast corner of Portland and Traverse Streets, running approximately 64 feet southeast to the southwest corner of Traverse and Merrimac Streets, then running approximately 92 feet northwest along Merrimac Street, then turning and running approximately 100 feet northeast along the party wall to Portland Street, then turning and running approximately 72 feet southeast to the beginning point. The nominated area includes only the building as it is in its urban setting.

Archaeological Potential:

The property is located in the Mill Pond area of the original Shawmut Peninsula. This area was filled between 1804 and 1835. While the possibility of early 19th-century archaeological deposits does exist, subsequent development of the parcel in the late 19th c. most assuredly resulted in its destruction. Therefore, no significant material is anticipated.

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received

date entered

Continuation sheet 138-142 Portland Street

Item number 9

Page 1

Boston, MA

Bourne, Frank, A. "On the work of the late Desire Despradelle", Architectural Record, Vol. 34, 1913. Page 185.

Swales, Francis, S., "Master Draftsman, XI, Desire Despradelle, 1862-1912", Pencil Points, Vol. 6, May 1925. Page 59.

Stone, Orra L., Massachusetts Industries, Their Inception and Growth, S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., Boston, Chicago, 1930.

Withey, Henry F. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects, Hennessey and Ingalls, Inc., LA, 1970.

Moody, John L., Moody's Manuel of Corporation Securities, Moody Publishing Co., New York, Fifth Annual Edition, 1904, 1921, 1922, 1927.

Boston Directory, Sampson, Murdock and Co., Boston, MA, 1890, 1891, 1895, 1897, 1900, 1905, 1906, 1908, 1910, 1915, 1919, 1920, 1924, 1926, 1928.

Lynden, Donlyn, The City Observed: Boston-A Guide to the Architecture of the Hub, Random House, New York, 1982.

_____, History of American Funeral Directing, Habenstein Bulfin Printers, Inc. Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1955.

Telephone interview with George Lemke, Casket Manufacturers Association, Evanston, IL, August 25, 1983.

Telephone interview with Rudy Sanson, Gulf & Western Industries, Inc., New York, NY, August 26, 1983.

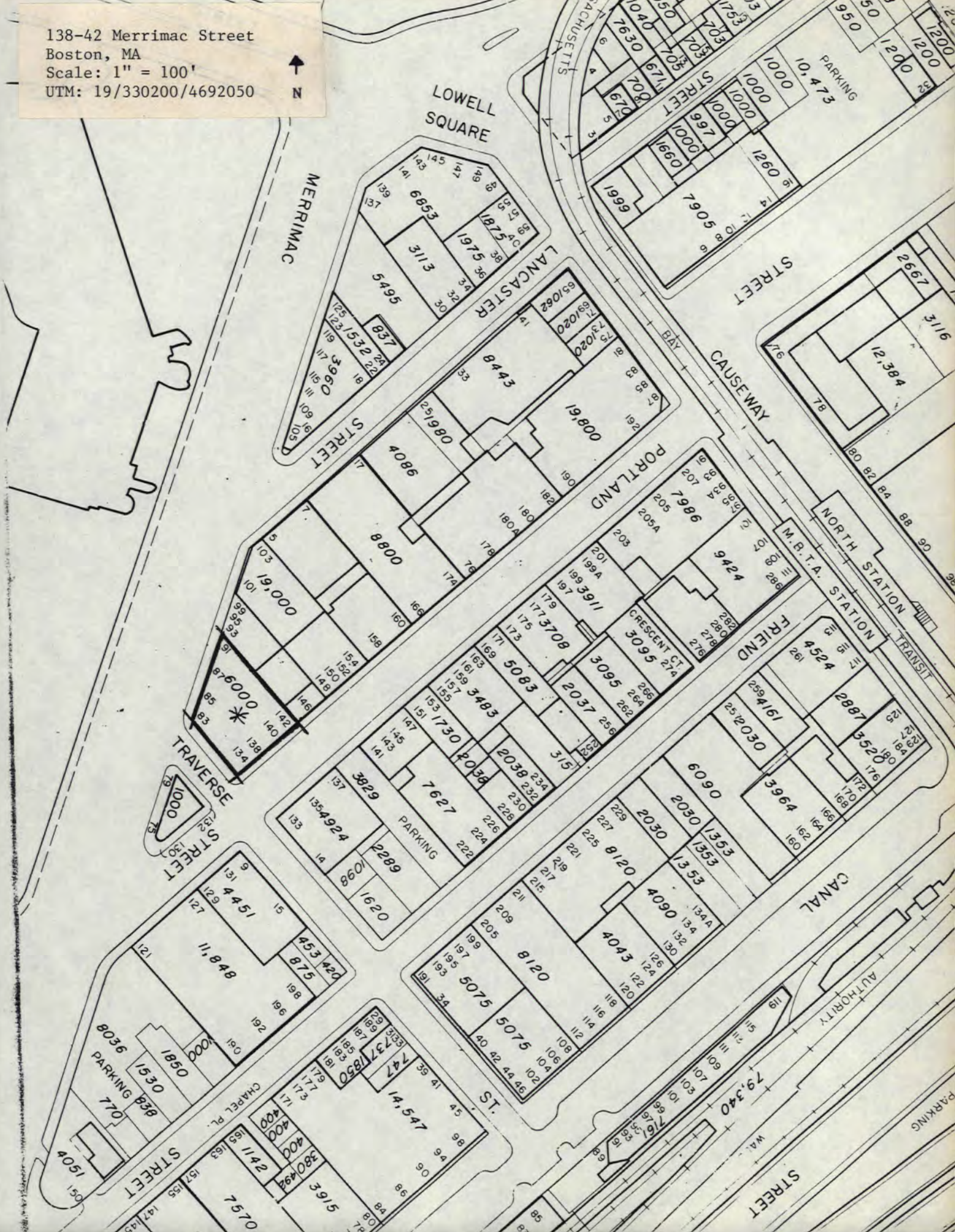
Telephone interview with James Lynam, Walco National Corporation, New York, NY, August 26, 1983.

Telephone interview with Spencer Hackett, Pittsburgh, PA, August 29, 1983. (Hackett was a member of the Board of Directors, National Casket Company and Walco National Corporation.)

_____, Architects Directory, William T. Comstock, Publisher, New York, 1903.

_____, "The Berkeley Building, Codman and Despradelle, Architects", Architects' and Builders' Magazine, Volume 9, No. 4, January, 1908.

138-42 Merrimac Street
Boston, MA
Scale: 1" = 100'
UTM: 19/330200/4692050



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

ok
Ref #
85002015

Building 138--142 Portland Street
Suffolk County
MASSACHUSETTS

AUG 6 1985

Working No. _____
Fed. Reg. Date: 2-4-86
Date Due: 9/15/85 — 9/20/85
Action: ACCEPT 9-5-85
 RETURN
 REJECT
Federal Agency: _____

Entered in the
National Register

- resubmission
- nomination by person or local government
- owner objection
- appeal

Substantive Review: sample request appeal NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria _____
Reviewer _____
Discipline _____
Date _____
_____ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: _____ technical corrections cited below
_____ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership Public Acquisition	Status Accessible	Present Use
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4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? yes no

7. Description

Condition

- excellent
- good
- fair
- deteriorated
- ruins
- unexposed

Check one

- unaltered
- altered

Check one

- original site
- moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- alterations/integrity
- dates
- boundary selection

8. Significance

Period _____ Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates _____ Builder/Architect _____
Statement of Significance (*in one paragraph*)

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- applicable criteria
- justification of areas checked
- relating significance to the resource
- context
- relationship of integrity to significance
- justification of exception
- other

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

UTM References _____

Verbal boundary description and justification _____

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

____ national ____ state ____ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature _____

title _____ date _____

13. Other

- Maps
- Photographs
- Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to _____

Signed _____ Date _____ Phone: _____

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet

GENERAL
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S. COHEN & S

138-142 Portland Street
Boston, MA

Leslie Larson, photographer 9/84
6 Joy Street
Boston, MA 02108

Photo 1 of 6

Corner of Traverse and Portland Streets
Photographer facing northwest

Photo By Leslie Larson
6 Joy St Boston 02108



138-142 Portland Street
Boston, MA

Leslie Larson, photographer 9/84
6 Joy Street
Boston, MA 02108

Photo 2 of 6

Portland Street facade
Photographer facing west



P
Alright
Parking

S. COHE

138-142 Portland Street
Boston, MA

Leslie Larson, photographer 9/84
6 Joy Street
Boston, MA 02108

Photo 3 of 6

Northwest wall of building
Photographer facing southeast

Photo By Leslie Larson
6 Joy St Boston 02108



Restaurant

P
Allnight
Parking

Now
LEASE
SPACE
for
4

138-142 Portland Street
Boston, MA

Leslie Larson, photographer 9/84
6 Joy Street
Boston, MA 02108

Photo 4 of 6

Corner of Merrimac and Traverse Streets
Photographer facing north

Photo By Leslie Larson
6 Joy St Boston 02108



Restaurant

138-142 Portland Street
Boston, MA

Leslie Larson, photographer 9/84
6 Joy Street
Boston, MA 02108

Photo 5 of 6

Merrimac and Traverse Street facades
Photographer facing north

Photo By Leslie Larson
6 Joy St Boston 02108



10 LIBERTY SQUARE BUILDING

55 Kilby Street

Boston, MA

photo: 2/14/81

photographer and negative filed at:

Leslie Larson

6 Joy Street, Boston, MA

view of drain pipe holder, Water St.
facade photo #5 of 6



138-142 Portland Street
Boston, MA

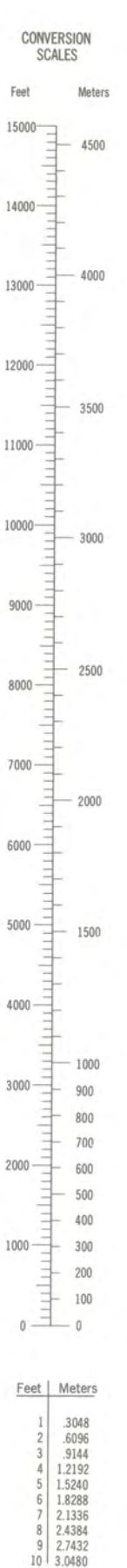
Leslie Larson, photographer 9/83
6 Joy Street
Boston, MA 02108

Photo 6 of 6

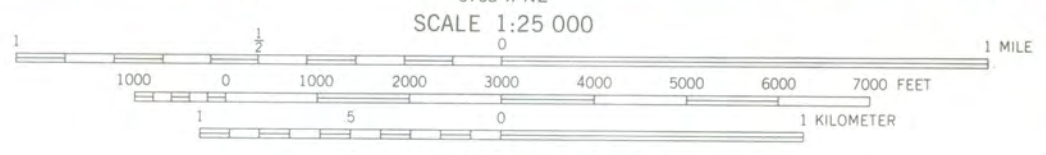
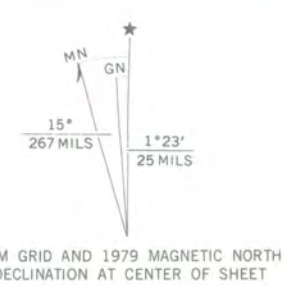
Portland Street entrance, interior
stairway

Photo By Leslie Larson
6 Joy St Boston 02108

138-42 Merrimac Street
Boston (So. Quad), MA
Scale: 1" = 25,000'
UTM: 19/330200/469050

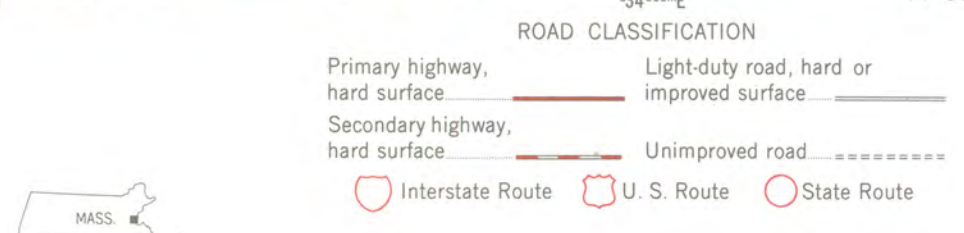


Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey
Topography by planetable surveys 1943. Revised from
aerial photographs taken 1969. Field checked 1970
Selected hydrographic data compiled from USC&GS Charts 246
and 248 (1971). This information is not intended for navigational
purposes
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts coordinate system,
mainland zone
1 000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid,
zone 19
Boundaries in tidewater areas from information supplied
by Massachusetts Department of Public Works
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET - DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO DATUMS IS VARIABLE
SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE ON MEAN HIGH WATER
THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 9.5 FEET

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of
the National or State reservations shown on this map
Revisions shown in purple compiled in cooperation with the State of
Massachusetts agencies from aerial photographs taken 1975 and other
source data. This information not field checked. Map edited 1979

BOSTON SOUTH, MASS.
N4215-W7100/7.5
1979
PHOTOREVISED 1979
AMS 6768 I SE - SERIES 9814