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E330610
N4691700Form 10-300
(July 1969)UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries in complete applicable sections)

STATE:

Massachusetts

COUNTY:

Suffolk

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

APR 26 1973

1. NAME

COMMON:

Blackstone Block

Historic District

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

Congressional District #9

STREET AND NUMBER:

Area bound by Union, Hanover, Blackstone and North Streets

CITY OR TOWN:

Boston

STATE

CODE

COUNTY:

CODE

Massachusetts

025

Suffolk

025

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY
(Check One)

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

ACCESSIBLE
TO THE PUBLIC
☒ District ☐ Building
☐ Site ☐ Structure
☐ Object

☐ Public
☐ Private
☒ Both

 Public Acquisition:
☒ In Process
☐ Being Considered

☒ Occupied
☒ Unoccupied
☒ Preservation work
 in progress

 Yes:
☒ Restricted
☒ Unrestricted
☐ No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Agricultural
☒ Commercial
☐ Educational
☒ Entertainment

☐ Government
☐ Industrial
☐ Military
☐ Museum

☐ Park
☐ Private Residence
☐ Religious
☐ Scientific

☐ Transportation
☐ Other (Specify)

☐ Comments

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:

public and private

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

Boston

STATE:

Massachusetts

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:

Registry of Deeds

STREET AND NUMBER:

Suffolk County Courthouse

CITY OR TOWN:

Boston

STATE:

Massachusetts

025

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

Historic American Building Survey Mass. -127,-128, -2-55, -2-55A

DATE OF SURVEY: 1934, 1935, 1943

☒ Federal☐ State☐ County☐ Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

Washington

STATE:

D.C.

CODE

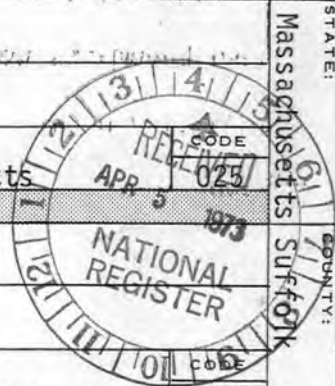
ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	☐ Excellent	☒ Good	☒ Fair	☒ Deteriorated	☐ Ruins	☐ Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	☒ Altered	☒ Unaltered	☐ Moved	☒ Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The area called the Blackstone Block contains 2.3 acres and is bounded by Union, Hanover, Blackstone and North Streets. It lies east of Boston's new City Hall and Government Center and north of previously registered Faneuil Hall - Quincy Market complex.

While the streets that bound the block have been widened to accommodate modern traffic, the narrow alleys which meander through the block's interior date from the 17th and early 18th centuries. These streets and alleys are lined with a curious blending of buildings dating from the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The building known as the Union Oyster House(1) 41-43 Union Street is the second building to occupy its plot. It was built between 1713, when the property line between 39 and 41 Union Street was adjusted, and 1717 when the "newly built Brick Messuage or Tenement" was sold. Only the facade is visible as it abuts neighboring buildings to the sides and rear. It is a five bay, 3 1/2 story brick building with a gambrel roof, dentil cornice, and windows with twelve lights in each sash. There are three dormer windows and shop windows on the ground floor level, all alterations of the original structure. The facade bends to fit the angle of Marshall Street to Union Street.

The Union Street facade is of Flemish bond with flat arches over the second floor windows and belt courses at the levels of the second floor. These features are missing from the Marshall Street facade, on which the bond has scattered headers in no definite pattern. Apparently, the brick work on the side of the building has been redone. No. 43 Union appears, from evidence in the attic, to be an addition to No. 41 made about a decade later.

Very few of the interior features remain. The second floor fireplace appears to have been rebuilt, and it is reported by the owner that the bar conceals another fireplace. An original fireplace on the third floor, in the manager's office, is not ordinarily seen by the public. The building has been in continuous use as an oyster house since 1826.

Ebenezer Hancock House(2) 10 Marshall Street. Though a brick "tenement" was built on the approximate site of the Ebenezer Hancock house prior to 1692, the present house, dating from between 1767 and the early Revolutionary period, is a handsome three story house of the Georgian style, with Flemish bond brick, a hipped roof, dentil cornice, flat arches over the second story windows, and brick belt courses. The original windows on the first and second stories have twelve lights in each sash; the smaller third floor windows have eight lights in each sash. The left front corner of the L-shaped house is sliced off at an angle to conform with the property line. In 1929, a one story brick addition was built, filling in the space originally left vacant by the L-shape of the building, and at some point an open carport was added at the rear. The upper two floors have retained their Georgian paneling and fireplaces. The first floor was remodeled for a store as early as 1796.

[continued]



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

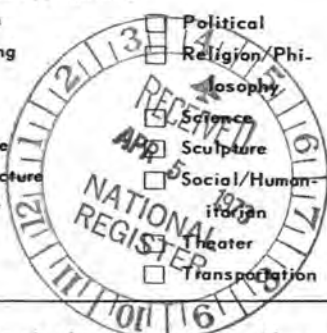
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- ☐ Pre-Columbian | ☐ 16th Century | ☒ 18th Century | ☐ 20th Century
☐ 15th Century | ☒ 17th Century | ☒ 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| ☐ Aboriginal | ☐ Education | ☐ Political | ☐ Urban Planning |
| ☐ Prehistoric | ☐ Engineering | ☐ Religion/Phi- | ☐ Other (Specify) |
| ☐ Historic | ☐ Industry | ☐ Philosophy | |
| ☐ Agriculture | ☐ Invention | ☐ Science | ☒ Urban Form |
| ☒ Architecture | ☐ Landscape | ☐ Sculpture | |
| ☐ Art | ☐ Architecture | ☐ Social/Human- | |
| ☒ Commerce | ☐ Literature | ☐ itarian | |
| ☐ Communications | ☐ Military | ☐ Theater | |
| ☐ Conservation | ☐ Music | ☐ Transportation | |



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Although the Blackstone Block is now more than a half a mile from Boston Harbor, the block had its start as a bustling waterfront district. It abuts the Town Cove which was where Dock Square and the Faneuil Hall-Quincy Market complex are now. The Town Cove was wharfed out in 1641, and until 1711, when Long Wharf was completed, it was the shipping center of the fledgling town, with goods for overseas and coastal trade being loaded, unloaded, bought, and sold.

The block also abutted a tidal mill race on which there were a number of mills. In 1633, the North or Mill Cove was dammed for tidal water-power, and a small natural stream was extended to connect the Mill Cove with the Town Cove, along the course of today's Blackstone Street. The flow must have been reasonably rapid, since this was the only part of town where butchers were allowed to dispose of entrails. This same Blackstone Street today is largely occupied by meat packers and wholesale and retail meat dealers.

The early commercial and industrial importance of the block is further attested to by the location in the block of the central marker, or the zero milestone, from which distances were measured to and from Boston. This marker, called the Boston Stone, was set up in Marshall Street in 1737, making the block the hub of the Hub.

The Boston Stone is actually an early mill for grinding pigments, imported from England in 1701 by a house painter named Thomas Child. The lower slab is a trough though the trough is not visible, and the ball a grinder. Only the slab part of the mill was used as a marker in 1737; the ball part was found when the "Blackstone Block" building was under construction (1835) and the two parts mounted in the wall of the new building. The same builder also preserved a wooden coat of arms of the London Guild of House Painters, also a former possession of Thomas Child, and mounted it on the Hanover Street facade of the new building. The coat of arms has been removed, for safekeeping and protection from the weather, to the quarters of the Bostonian Society in the Old Statehouse.

The most unique feature of the Blackstone Block is the survival of the 17th century street pattern in the interior of the block with narrow lanes, ranging down to the five foot width of Scott Alley. This alley, incidentally, does connect through to North Street but is roofed over with a door at the North Street entrance. Though there may be isolated instances in Boston of 17th century streets or alleys which retain their original conformation, the Blackstone Block is the only district where six such lanes survive.

[continued]

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

1. Final Report of the Boston National Historic Sites Commission. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1961.
2. Perkins, Nina. The Blackstone Block: Its Development from the 17th to the 20th Centuries. Prepared for the Waterfront Project by the Mayor's Historic Conservation Commission. July, 1963.
3. Whitehill, Walter M.. Boston: A Topographical History. Second Ed. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. Cambridge, Mass. 1968.
4. Windsor, J. ed. The Memorial History of Boston. James R. Osgood. 1880.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
CORNER	LATITUDE				LONGITUDE				
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	0		"	0		"			
NE	0		"	0		"			
SE	0		"	0		"	42	21	40.23
SW	0		"	0		"	71	03	25.36

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 2.3

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Lucille C. Sims, BRA, for Elizabeth Amadon, State Survey Director	
ORGANIZATION Massachusetts Historical Commission	DATE March 1973
STREET AND NUMBER: 40 Beacon Street	
CITY OR TOWN: Boston	STATE Massachusetts
	CODE 025

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☒ Local ☐

Name: John F. K. Danner
Secretary of the Commonwealth and
Chairman, Massachusetts Historical
Commission

Date: March 30, 1973

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

Robert M. Utley
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

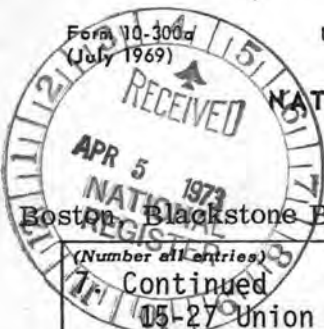
Date: 4/26/73

ATTEST:

W. D. [Signature]
Keeper of The National Register

Date: 4 20 73

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

Boston Blackstone Block (Continuation Sheet) #1

STATE Massachusetts	
COUNTY Suffolk	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

APR 2 1973

Continued
15-27 Union Street(3), a row of five buildings of two and three bays each was built at 15-27 Union Street about 1822. Three retain their Federal form and features. They are four story brick buildings with gable roofs, flared granite lintels, small cornices over the tops of square windows on the top floor. No. 15 has six lights to a sash on the second and third floor windows; the top windows have single six light sashes. The windows of 17-19 and 21 Union have modern single light sashes. These buildings, which were built as combination shops and residences, have had their store fronts modernized.

No's. 23 and 25-27 Union Street has been drastically "colonialized". The height has been reduced to 2 1/2 stories, under a gable roof, with multipaned windows and repointed brickwork.

To the rear of this group of buildings facing Salt Lane and Scott Alley(4), are some curious brick buildings of common bond, whose openings have been bricked up for some time. Those on Salt Lane have been reduced from 3 1/2 stories to a flat roofed two stories. Two brick buildings on Scott Alley are each 3 stories plus pitched roof. Connected to their four story counterparts on Union Street by low (one and two story) brick connectors, they are reminders of the time when a good many buildings faced the interior of the block.

20-22 North Street(5) (c1824) is the only remaining building on the street that displays Federal characteristics: two bay, four stories with standard fenestration pattern a gable roof set off by a modest patterned brick cornice. 37 Union Street(6) illustrates the elongated proportions of the Greek Revival style: only thirteen feet wide, the brick structure has two bays, three stories and a gable roof. Straight masonry lintels top the tall narrow windows. A similar Greek Revival building at 26 North Street has been reduced from 4 1/2 stories to 2.

Starting about 1835, a number of larger, taller, purely commercial buildings were constructed. These are brick, usually four stories with pitched or mansard roofs and regularly spaced windows (on the upper floors) with Brownstone lintels and six lights to a sash. The Blackstone Block(7) built in 1835, has been reduced from 4 stories plus mansard roof to three stories with a flat roof; some of its windows have been enlarged. The Wiggins Block(8) at 147-149 Hanover Street is four stories plus a mansard roof, and the Union Block(9) (1844) is four stories plus a combined hip and gable roof to fit the acute angle of its site. The brick buildings along Blackstone Street and 11 Marshall Street were probably similar in character to these buildings; most have lost two to three stories and retain little of their original character. All the buildings on Blackstone Street were in existence at the time that the 1873 Sanborn Atlas was published.

A more elaborate style can be found in a masonry fronted brick building built in 1861 at 31-35 Union Street(10). Its facade is decorated with European motifs such as an Italianate bracketed cornice and a French mansard roof illustrating a more plastic treatment of the facade in which the wall surface through decorative articulation actually becomes a window frame. #38-44 North Street(11) originally 4 stories with mansard roof, now 2 stories, is the only remnant of granite faced buildings on the block.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

STATE Massachusetts	
COUNTY Suffolk	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	APR 26 1973

Boston, Blackstone Block (Continuation Sheet) #2

(Number all entries)

7. Continued

The late 19th century saw even larger scale buildings built on North Street. #24 North Street(12) is a 6 story, 2 bay brick commercial building with a flat roof and arched corbel tables, designed by Peabody and Stearns and built in 1889. In 1899 #32 North, a 2 story (originally 6) 4 bay brick building designed by Mackay and Dunham, and #34-36 North Street, a 2 story, 2 bay structure designed by Charles B. Dunham were erected, both decorated with rather interesting Revival motifs.

The first three decades of the 20th century saw the erection of #14-22 Marshall Street (1916), a four story brick building with a flat roof and Chicago style windows designed by A. J. Carpenter; #18 North Street, a five story brick building designed by Gilbert Miles Ramsey in 1922 and extensively modernized recently with the enlargement of some windows and the addition of a glass penthouse for utilities; #1 Union Street, a four story brick building with flat roof designed by Shepard and Stearns in 1926; and #46-52 North Street, a 5-story brick building with flat roof by J. R. Worcester & Co. in 1928.

Set into the wall of the "Blackstone Block" building, facing Public Alley 102 and the Ebenezer Hancock House is the "Boston Stone"(13). As it is mounted one sees a rectangular stone slab incised with the date 1737, surmounted by a stone ball about 18 inches in diameter, most of which is sunk in the wall. The slab part was set up in Marshall Street in 1737 as the central marker from which distances from (or to) Boston were measured for milestones. In 1835 the ball and slab were mounted as they appear today.

8. Continued

The buildings within the block are a sampler of 18th, 19th, and twentieth century building types but, at the same time, display a cohesiveness in the universal use of brick (though some facades are stone) and in the modest scale of the buildings, both in regard to height and ground coverage. Though some buildings occupy lots which have been assembled from earlier smaller parcels, many of the buildings are oddly shaped, fitting together like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, to conform with the 17th century parcelization of the block.

Both the eighteenth century houses have connections with the Revolutionary War. From 1771 to 1775, The Massachusetts Spy was published by Isaiah Thomas on the second floor of what is now the Union Oyster House but was Capen's Dry Goods Store at that time. Thomas had conceived the novel idea for a paper of tabloid size that would appeal to "mechanics and other classes of people who had not much time to spare from business." This everyman's newspaper soon became turbulently patriotic, and Thomas prudently removed his press to Worcester only a few days before the Battle of Lexington and Concord. The Massachusetts Spy, with the subtitle "American Oracle of Liberty," continued to be published at Worcester throughout the Revolution and for many years thereafter.

The Ebenezer Hancock House is the only house owned by John Hancock remaining in Boston. He inherited half of an earlier house from his uncle, Thomas Hancock, in 1754, and purchased the other half of the house in 1767. It is assumed that he had the present structure erected

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

Boston, Blackstone Block

(Continuation Sheet) #3

STATE Massachusetts	
COUNTY Suffolk	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	APR 26 1973

(Number all entries)

8. Continued

shortly thereafter; for during the Revolution the new house was occupied by his brother, Ebenezer, who may have also been its builder, as he was a mason and bricklayer. During the Revolution, Ebenezer was Paymaster General of the Eastern Department of the Continental Army, and it was to this house in Marshall Street that two million silver crowns were brought in August of 1778. This money was a loan from King Louis XVI which had been negotiated in Paris by Benjamin Franklin.

Franklin, incidently, spent the better part of his boyhood just beyond the confines of the Blackstone Block. Josiah Franklin's Chandlery shop stood at the southwest corner of Union and Hanover Street, on a site now occupied by a widened Union Street.

The block gains further significance by its proximity to Faneuil Hall (1742) and the Quincy Market complex (1825-26). It is certainly fortunate to have this example of modest commercial buildings representing a wide range of dates in close proximity with the larger and more impressive public market buildings. Further, the whole area serves as an interesting foil to the still larger and more monumental scale public and private buildings of Government Center.



PROPERTY

Blackstone Block

STATE

Mass

WORKING NUMBER

45.73.2740

TECH REVIEW

Photos

4

Maps

CONTROL REVIEW

Continuation sheets are zexed

HISTORIAN

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

ARCHEOLOGIST

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

BRANCH CHIEF

KEEPER

National Register write-up

Federal Register entry

6-5-73

Send-back

Re-submit

Entered

APR 26 1973

Jaffo 1/16/73

CM

4-12-

73

OK

Accept - Amy
4/12/73

Shall

Accept 4-19-73

Accept
CH

4/18/73

OK 4/20/73

Wm
4/20



Boston, Blackstone Block (1)

(MASSACHUSETTS)

NPS Number 4/26/73

Title: Blackstone Block Dist.

Loc. Suffolk, Mass.

streetscape of Blackstone Block

①

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



RA PHOTO

MASSACHUSETTS,

BOSTON, BLACKSTONE BLOCK
(2)

960

BLACKSTONE BLOCK

NPS Number 4/26/73

Title: Blackstone Block Dist.

Loc. Suffolk, Mass.

Aerial view of Blackstone block

(2)

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



MASSACHUSETTS, BOSTON, BLACKSTONE BLOCK
(3)

NPS Number 4/26/73

Title: Blackstone Block Dist.

Loc. Suffolk, Mass.

Crane Square

③

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON, BLACKSTONE BLOCK (4)

CPS Number 4/26/73

Title: Blackstone Block Dist.

C. Suffolk, Mass

"Wiggins Block", looking south

ON HANOVER ST.

(4)

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY MAP FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with map)

STATE Massachusetts	
COUNTY Suffolk	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	APR 26 1973

1. NAME

COMMON: Blackstone Block
AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

Boston

STATE:

Massachusetts

CODE

025

COUNTY:

Suffolk

CODE

025

3. MAP REFERENCE

SOURCE:

USGS 7.5' Series, Boston South Quadrangle

SCALE:

1:24,000

DATE:

1967

4. REQUIREMENTS

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

1. Property boundaries where required.
2. North arrow.
3. Latitude and longitude reference.



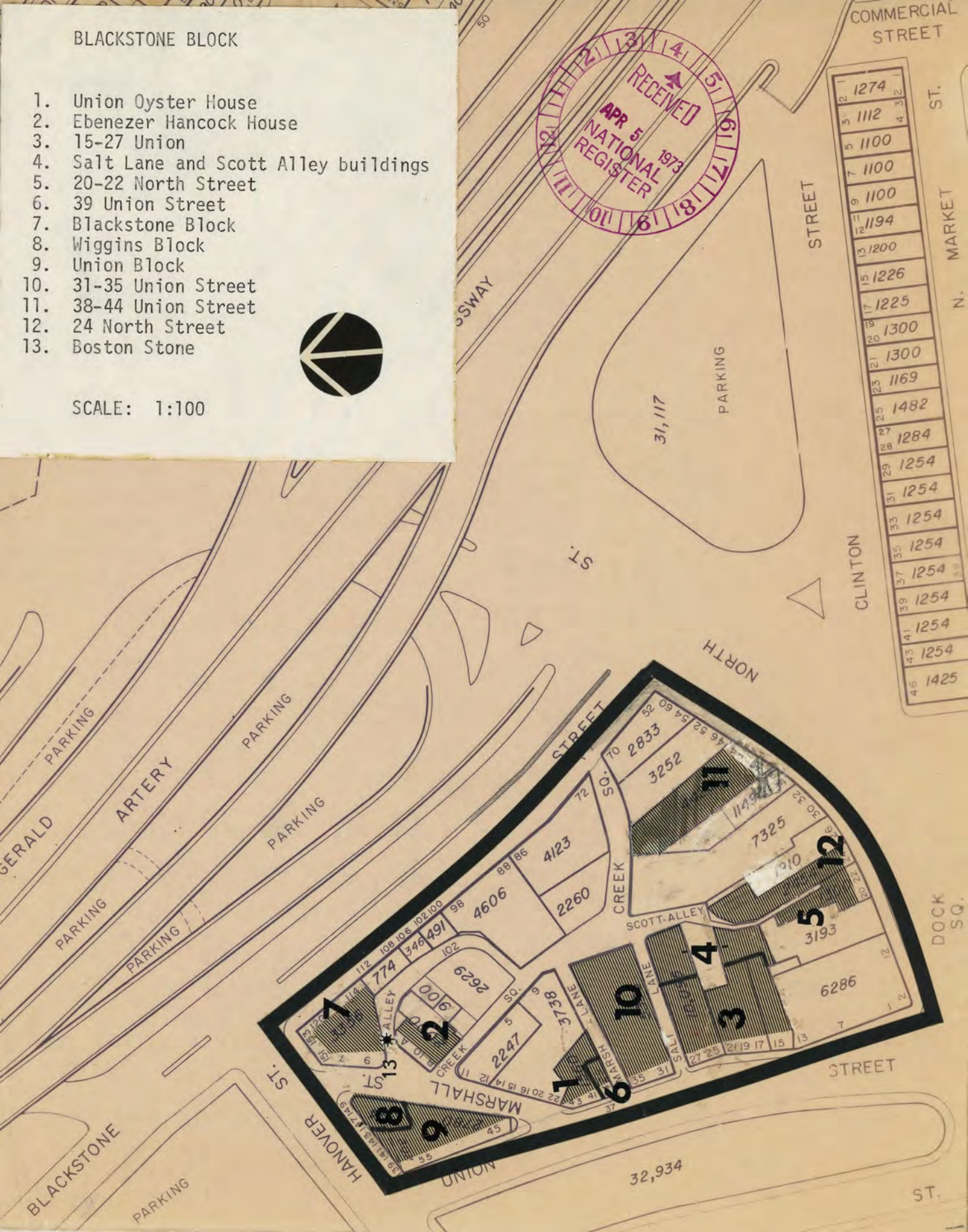
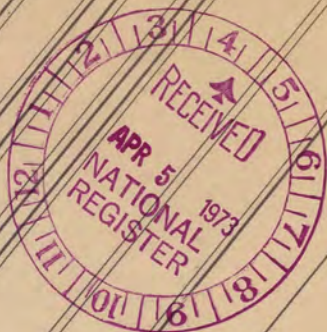
SEE INSTRUCTIONS

BLACKSTONE BLOCK

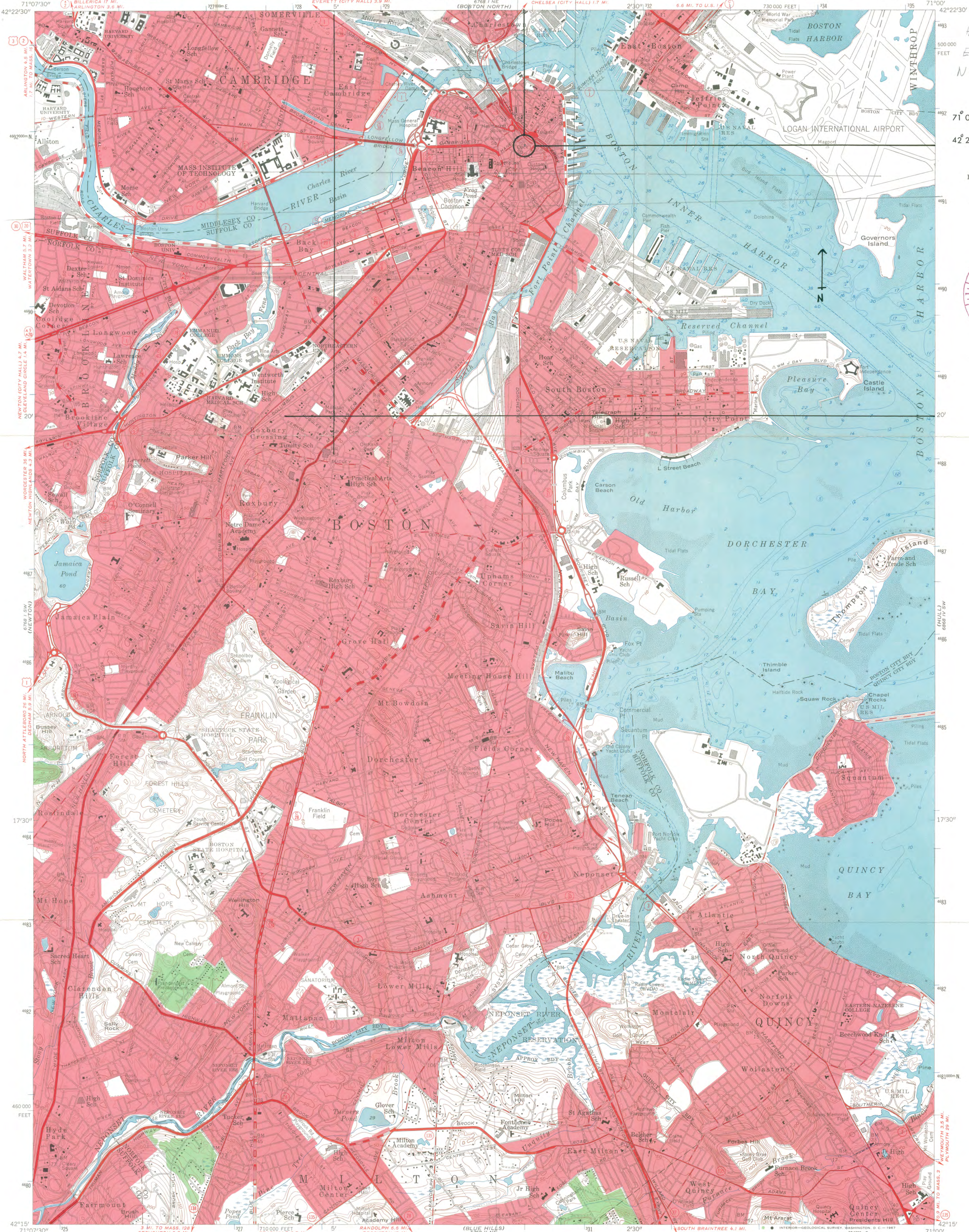
1. Union Oyster House
2. Ebenezer Hancock House
3. 15-27 Union
4. Salt Lane and Scott Alley buildings
5. 20-22 North Street
6. 39 Union Street
7. Blackstone Block
8. Wiggins Block
9. Union Block
10. 31-35 Union Street
11. 38-44 Union Street
12. 24 North Street
13. Boston Stone



SCALE: 1:100



1	1274
2	1112
3	1100
4	1100
5	1100
6	1100
7	1194
8	1200
9	1226
10	1225
11	1300
12	1300
13	1169
14	1482
15	1284
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41	1254
42	1254
43	1254
44	1254
45	1254
46	1425



45219
E 330610
N 467700

71° 03' 25.36"
42° 21' 40.23"

BLACKSTONE BLOCK
BOSTON



Maped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

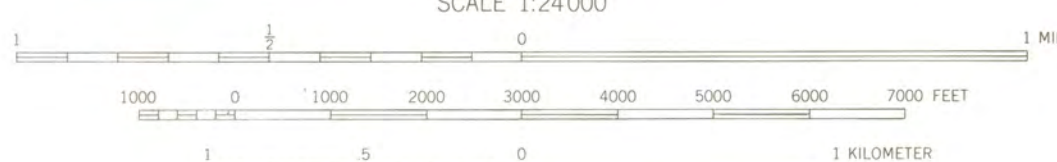
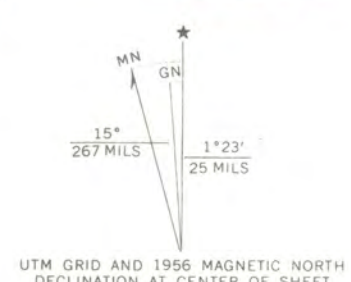
Control by USGS, USCGS, Mass. Harbor & Land Commission, and Mass. Geodetic Survey

Topography by planetable surveys 1943. Culture revised by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1955. Field check 1956.

Hydrography compiled from USC&GS chart 246 (1956).

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum. 10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts (Mainland) coordinate system. 1,000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 19, shown in blue.

Boundaries in tidalwater areas from information supplied by Mass. Dept. of Public Works. Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown.



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET

DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET—DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER
SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE OF 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, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Heavy-duty ——— Light-duty ———
Medium-duty ——— Unimproved dirt ———
U. S. Route ——— State Route ———

BOSTON SOUTH, MASS.
N4215-W7100/7.5

1956

AMS 6768 I SE-SERIES V814

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY MAP FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with map)

STATE	
Massachusetts	
COUNTY	
Suffolk	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	APR 26 1973

1. NAME

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CODE

025

3. MAP REFERENCE

SOURCE:

Topographic & Planimetric Survey of the City of Boston

SCALE:

1:100

DATE:

1967

4. REQUIREMENTS

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

1. Property boundaries where required.
2. North arrow.
3. Latitude and longitude reference.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

F. Y. 1973 APPORTIONMENT WARRANT NOMINATION

(DUE 1 APRIL 1973)



[IF YOU HAVE NOT RECEIVED ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THIS
NOMINATION BY 1 MAY 73, PLEASE NOTIFY US AT ONCE]

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE **MASSACHUSETTS**

Date Entered **APR 26 1973**

Name

Location

Blackstone Block

**Boston
Suffolk County**

Also Notified

Hon. Edward M. Kennedy
Hon. Edward W. Brooke
Hon. John Moakley
Director, Northeast Region

State Historic Preservation Officer
Hon. John F.X. Davoren
Secretary of the Commonwealth
Chairman, Massachusetts Historical
Commission
40 Beacon Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02108

PHR

NRowland:lmf 5-4-73

Jo: Robie Lange

Controlled Correspondence Tasking Profile

Control Number: 353142

Document Date: 08/18/2006

Received in DOI Date: 10/13/2006

Due Date: 11/24/2006

From: Margaret J. Cummings
115 Brook Stone
Charleston Parke
Cibolo, TX 78108

Subject Text: White House #560165. Constituent is concerned that Boston Stone has been forgotten. Can you replace the bronze plaque and re-dedicate it.

Required surname: NA

Action Office: Cultural Resources

Signature: Associate Director

Task: Please send a copy of final response to the Office of the Assistant Director, Business Services via fax # 202-219-3972.

Contact: Sherry Plowman, 202-208-5651

H34(2280)

Ms. Margaret J. Cummings
115 Brook Stone
Charleston Parke
Cibolo, Texas 78108

NOV 28 2006

Dear Ms. Cummings:

Thank you for your recent letter to President Bush concerning the Boston Stone marker located in the rear façade of that city's Blackstone Block. As Associate Director for Cultural Resources, and Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places, I have been asked to reply to your letter.

As you know, the Boston Stone is made up of a stone slab and a spherical stone ball that were originally used to grind pigments to produce paint in an earlier building possibly located on the site. Embedded in the alley-side wall when the current building was built in 1835, the marker was a zero-mile marker, which served as a central point from which distances were measured throughout the city. In recognition of the Blackstone Block's significance in state and local history, a historic district that includes the Boston Stone has been recognized as a city landmark by the Boston Landmarks Commission, and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places by the National Park Service.

Since the Federal government provides plaques only for designated National Historic Landmarks that are nationally significant, you may wish to contact either the Boston Landmarks Commission or the Massachusetts Historical Commission to determine if they would consider providing a replacement plaque for this element of the Blackstone Block Historic District. Similarly, if you believe the Boston Stone justifies individual state or local recognition beyond that of the larger historic district, you may wish to consult either of the commissions mentioned above.

Finally, proposals for commemorative postal stamps are considered by the U.S. Postal Service's Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee. Their criteria for selection may be found at:
www.usps.com/communications/organization/csac.htm.

Thank you for your letter, and for your interest in preserving our Nation's heritage.

Sincerely,

 Janet Snyder Matthews

Janet Snyder Matthews, Ph.D
Associate Director, Cultural Resources
and Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places

cc: Massachusetts/SHPO

bcc: 2285
2201
7256 Office of Congressional & Legislative Affairs
Blackstone Block HD (NR file, Boston MA)
Basic File Retained In 2280
FNP:RLange:OP:11-21-06:S:/nr-nhl/lange/BostonStone.ltr

RJR 11/24/06
Jm
11/22/06
A. Nee
11/28/06
Matthews
11/28/2006

Jo: Robie Lange

Controlled Correspondence Tasking Profile

Control Number: 353142

Document Date: 08/18/2006

Received in DOI Date: 10/13/2006

Due Date: 11/24/2006

**From: Margaret J. Cummings
115 Brook Stone
Charleston Parke
Cibolo, TX 78108**

Subject Text: White House #560165. Constituent is concerned that Boston Stone has been forgotten. Can you replace the bronze plaque and re-dedicate it.

Required surname: NA

Action Office: Cultural Resources

Signature: Associate Director

Task: Please send a copy of final response to the Office of the Assistant Director, Business Services via fax # 202-219-3972.

Contact: Sherry Plowman, 202-208-5651

August 18, 2006

WR AG/CASE WH 560165 DOI
WH 560168 USPS

The President
Mr. George W. Bush
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The Boston Stone has been forgotten. The original bronze plaque has been removed, lost and never replaced: neglected, shabby, sitting in a bed of weeds and totally unacknowledged to visitors and Bostonians alike. This significant marker predates Boston's famous Freedom Trail and thus has been lost! Only footsteps away the revered Union Oyster House is acknowledged and recognized as, "The Oldest Restaurant in America" and just celebrated it's birthday with The Boston Press.

Historically, this simple Stone is extremely relevant. You see, in Olde Boston, The Boston Stone measured distance. It was considered the actual center of the city, and all directions were given as, "15 miles, NE from The Boston Stone, etc. This measurement of distance and travel in a time gone-by needs the attention of our now, fast-paced country, so that we can remember and honor this travel icon.

May I suggest three possible steps to bring The Boston Stone back from it's forgotten past?

1. Replace the bronze plaque.
2. Rededicate The Boston Stone at local and national levels.
3. Create a United States postal stamp in it's likeness (see photo).

They say that, "One person can make a difference": I hope that I can?

With respect to you and the history of our nation, I am a former Bostonian and currant Texan.

Margaret J. Cummings
115 Brook Stone
Charleston Parke
Cibolo, TX 78108

cc: Mayor Thomas Menino,
City of Boston

Attachment: photo

MJC/me

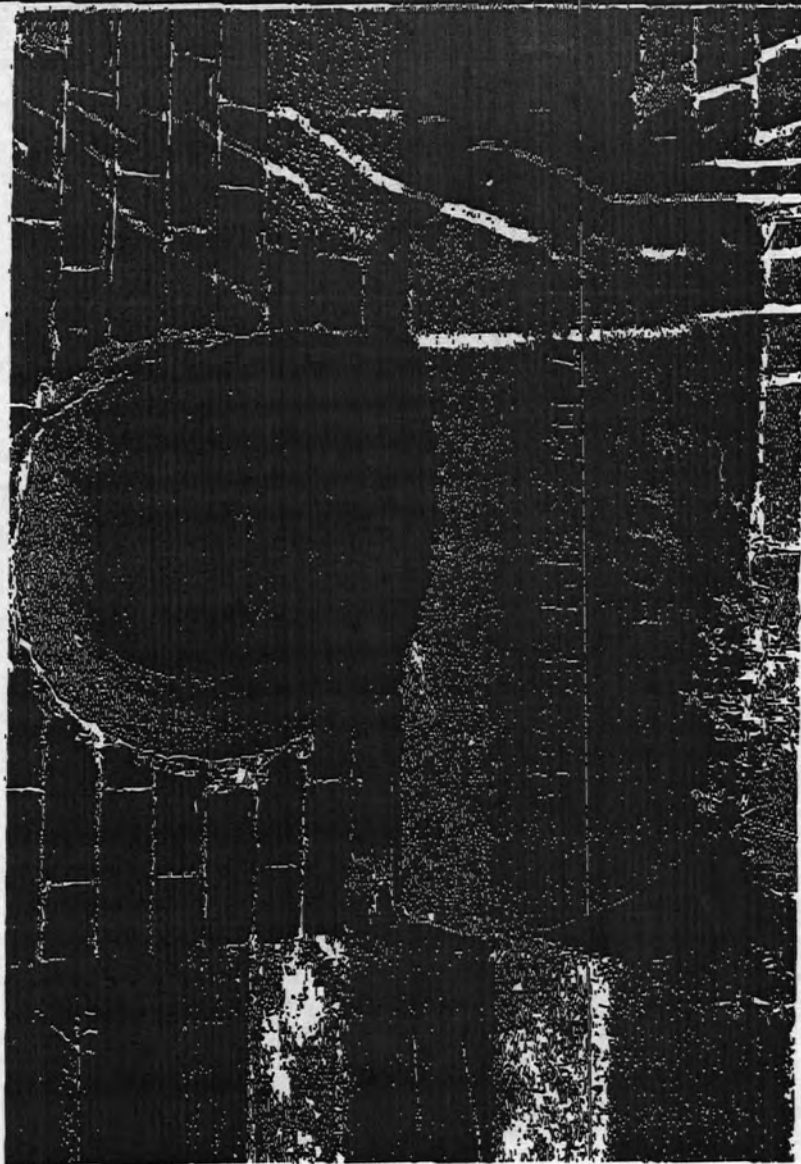
Margaret J. Cummings

OFFICE OF THE
EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

2006 OCT 13 AM 11:40

RECEIVED

000663



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:

Massachusetts

COUNTY:

Suffolk

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

APR 6 1973

1. NAME

COMMON:

Blackstone Block

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

Congressional District #9

STREET AND NUMBER:

Area bound by Union, Hanover, Blackstone and North Streets

CITY OR TOWN:

Boston

STATE

CODE

COUNTY:

CODE

Massachusetts

025

Suffolk

025

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY
(Check One)

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

ACCESSIBLE
TO THE PUBLIC

- ☒ District ☐ Building
☐ Site ☐ Structure
☐ Object

- ☐ Public
☐ Private
☒ Both

- Public Acquisition:
☒ In Process
☐ Being Considered

- ☒ Occupied
☒ Unoccupied
☒ Preservation work
in progress

- Yes:
☒ Restricted
☒ Unrestricted
☐ No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- ☐ Agricultural ☐ Government ☐ Park ☐ Transportation ☐ Comments
☒ Commercial ☐ Industrial ☐ Private Residence ☐ Other (Specify)
☐ Educational ☐ Military ☐ Religious
☒ Entertainment ☐ Museum ☐ Scientific

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:

public and private

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

Boston

STATE:

Massachusetts

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:

Registry of Deeds

STREET AND NUMBER:

Suffolk County Courthouse

CITY OR TOWN:

Boston

STATE

Massachusetts

025

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

Historic American Building Survey Mass. -127,-128, -2-55, -2-55A

DATE OF SURVEY: 1934, 1935, 1943

☒ Federal

☐ State

☐ County

☐ Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

Washington

STATE:

D.C.

CODE

STATE:

COUNTY:

FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY NUMBER
DATE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

PH002-6565

4691700
4330610
413419

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	☐ Excellent	☒ Good	☒ Fair	☒ Deteriorated	☐ Ruins	☐ Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	☒ Altered	☒ Unaltered	☐ Moved	☒ Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The area called the Blackstone Block contains 2.3 acres and is bounded by Union, Hanover, Blackstone and North Streets. It lies east of Boston's new City Hall and Government Center and north of previously registered Faneuil Hall - Quincy Market complex.

While the streets that bound the block have been widened to accommodate modern traffic, the narrow alleys which meander through the block's interior date from the 17th and early 18th centuries. These streets and alleys are lined with a curious blending of buildings dating from the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The building known as the Union Oyster House(1) 41-43 Union Street is the second building to occupy its plot. It was built between 1713, when the property line between 39 and 41 Union Street was adjusted, and 1717 when the "newly built Brick Messuage or Tenement" was sold. Only the facade is visible as it abuts neighboring buildings to the sides and rear. It is a five bay, 3 1/2 story brick building with a gambrel roof, dentil cornice, and windows with twelve lights in each sash. There are three dormer windows and shop windows on the ground floor level, all alterations of the original structure. The facade bends to fit the angle of Marshall Street to Union Street.

The Union Street facade is of Flemish bond with flat arches over the second floor windows and belt courses at the levels of the second floor. These features are missing from the Marshall Street facade, on which the bond has scattered headers in no definite pattern. Apparently, the brick work on the side of the building has been redone. No. 43 Union appears, from evidence in the attic, to be an addition to No. 41 made about a decade later.

Very few of the interior features remain. The second floor fireplace appears to have been rebuilt, and it is reported by the owner that the bar conceals another fireplace. An original fireplace on the third floor, in the manager's office, is not ordinarily seen by the public. The building has been in continuous use as an oyster house since 1826.

Ebenezer Hancock House(2) 10 Marshall Street. Though a brick "tenement" was built on the approximate site of the Ebenezer Hancock house prior to 1692, the present house, dating from between 1767 and the early Revolutionary period, is a handsome three story house of the Georgian style, with Flemish bond brick, a hipped roof, dentil cornice, flat arches over the second story windows, and brick belt courses. The original windows on the first and second stories have twelve lights in each sash; the smaller third floor windows have eight lights in each sash. The left front corner of the L-shaped house is sliced off at an angle to conform with the property line. In 1929, a one story brick addition was built, filling in the space originally left vacant by the L-shape of the building, and at some point an open carport was added at the rear. The upper two floors have retained their Georgian paneling and fireplaces. The first floor was remodeled for a store as early as 1796.

[continued]



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

STATE Massachusetts	
COUNTY Suffolk	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

Boston Blackstone Block

(Continuation Sheet) #1

APR 2 1973

7 Continued
(Number all entries)

15-27 Union Street(3), a row of five buildings of two and three bays each was built at 15-27 Union Street about 1822. Three retain their Federal form and features. They are four story brick buildings with gable roofs, flared granite lintels, small cornices over the tops of square windows on the top floor. No. 15 has six lights to a sash on the second and third floor windows; the top windows have single six light sashes. The windows of 17-19 and 21 Union have modern single light sashes. These buildings, which were built as combination shops and residences, have had their store fronts modernized.

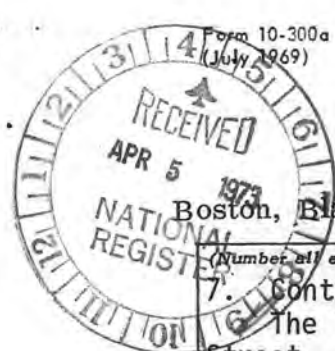
No's. 23 and 25-27 Union Street has been drastically "colonialized". The height has been reduced to 2 1/2 stories, under a gable roof, with multipaned windows and repointed brickwork.

To the rear of this group of buildings facing Salt Lane and Scott Alley(4), are some curious brick buildings of common bond, whose openings have been bricked up for some time. Those on Salt Lane have been reduced from 3 1/2 stories to a flat roofed two stories. Two brick buildings on Scott Alley are each 3 stories plus pitched roof. Connected to their four story counterparts on Union Street by low (one and two story) brick connectors, they are reminders of the time when a good many buildings faced the interior of the block.

20-22 North Street(5) (c1824) is the only remaining building on the street that displays Federal characteristics: two bay, four stories with standard fenestration pattern a gable roof set off by a modest patterned brick cornice. 37 Union Street(6) illustrates the elongated proportions of the Greek Revival style: only thirteen feet wide, the brick structure has two bays, three stories and a gable roof. Straight masonry lintels top the tall narrow windows. A similar Greek Revival building at 26 North Street has been reduced from 4 1/2 stories to 2.

Starting about 1835, a number of larger, taller, purely commercial buildings were constructed. These are brick, usually four stories with pitched or mansard roofs and regularly spaced windows (on the upper floors) with Brownstone lintels and six lights to a sash. The Blackstone Block(7) built in 1835, has been reduced from 4 stories plus mansard roof to three stories with a flat roof; some of its windows have been enlarged. The Wiggins Block(8) at 147-149 Hanover Street is four stories plus a mansard roof, and the Union Block(9) (1844) is four stories plus a combined hip and gable roof to fit the acute angle of its site. The brick buildings along Blackstone Street and 11 Marshall Street were probably similar in character to these buildings; most have lost two to three stories and retain little of their original character. All the buildings on Blackstone Street were in existence at the time that the 1873 Sanborn Atlas was published.

A more elaborate style can be found in a masonry fronted brick building built in 1861 at 31-35 Union Street(10). Its facade is decorated with European motifs such as an Italianate bracketed cornice and a French mansard roof illustrating a more plastic treatment of the facade in which the wall surface through decorative articulation actually becomes a window frame. #38-44 North Street(11) originally 4 stories with mansard roof, now 2 stories, is the only remnant of granite faced buildings on the block.



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

STATE Massachusetts	
COUNTY Suffolk	
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Boston, Blackstone Block (Continuation Sheet) #2

(Number all entries)

7. Continued

The late 19th century saw even larger scale buildings built on North Street. #24 North Street(12) is a 6 story, 2 bay brick commercial building with a flat roof and arched corbel tables, designed by Peabody and Stearns and built in 1889. In 1899 #32 North, a 2 story (originally 6) 4 bay brick building designed by Mackay and Dunham, and #34-36 North Street, a 2 story, 2 bay structure designed by Charles B. Dunham were erected, both decorated with rather interesting Revival motifs.

The first three decades of the 20th century saw the erection of #14-22 Marshall Street (1916), a four story brick building with a flat roof and Chicago style windows designed by A. J. Carpenter; #18 North Street, a five story brick building designed by Gilbert Miles Ramsey in 1922 and extensively modernized recently with the enlargement of some windows and the addition of a glass penthouse for utilities; #1 Union Street, a four story brick building with flat roof designed by Shepard and Stearns in 1926; and #46-52 North Street, a 5-story brick building with flat roof by J. R. Worcester & Co. in 1928.

Set into the wall of the "Blackstone Block" building, facing Public Alley 102 and the Ebenezer Hancock House is the "Boston Stone"(13). As it is mounted one sees a rectangular stone slab incised with the date 1737, surmounted by a stone ball about 18 inches in diameter, most of which is sunk in the wall. The slab part was set up in Marshall Street in 1737 as the central marker from which distances from (or to) Boston were measured for milestones. In 1835 the ball and slab were mounted as they appear today.

8. Continued

The buildings within the block are a sampler of 18th, 19th, and twentieth century building types but, at the same time, display a cohesiveness in the universal use of brick (though some facades are stone) and in the modest scale of the buildings, both in regard to height and ground coverage. Though some buildings occupy lots which have been assembled from earlier smaller parcels, many of the buildings are oddly shaped, fitting together like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, to conform with the 17th century parcelization of the block.

Both the eighteenth century houses have connections with the Revolutionary War. From 1771 to 1775, The Massachusetts Spy was published by Isaiah Thomas on the second floor of what is now the Union Oyster House but was Capen's Dry Goods Store at that time. Thomas had conceived the novel idea for a paper of tabloid size that would appeal to "mechanics and other classes of people who had not much time to spare from business." This everyman's newspaper soon became turbulently patriotic, and Thomas prudently removed his press to Worcester only a few days before the Battle of Lexington and Concord. The Massachusetts Spy, with the subtitle "American Oracle of Liberty," continued to be published at Worcester throughout the Revolution and for many years thereafter.

The Ebenezer Hancock House is the only house owned by John Hancock remaining in Boston. He inherited half of an earlier house from his uncle, Thomas Hancock, in 1754, and purchased the other half of the house in 1767. It is assumed that he had the present structure erected

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- ☐ Pre-Columbian | ☐ 16th Century | ☒ 18th Century | ☐ 20th Century
☐ 15th Century | ☒ 17th Century | ☒ 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| ☐ Aboriginal | ☐ Education | ☐ Political | ☐ Urban Planning |
| ☐ Prehistoric | ☐ Engineering | ☐ Religion/Philosophy | ☐ Other (Specify) |
| ☐ Historic | ☐ Industry | ☐ Science | |
| ☐ Agriculture | ☐ Invention | ☐ Sculpture | |
| ☒ Architecture | ☐ Landscape | ☐ Social/Humanitarian | |
| ☐ Art | ☐ Literature | ☐ Theater | |
| ☒ Commerce | ☐ Military | ☐ Transportation | |
| ☐ Communications | ☐ Music | | |
| ☐ Conservation | | | |

x Urban Form

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Although the Blackstone Block is now more than a half a mile from Boston Harbor, the block had its start as a bustling waterfront district. It abuts the Town Cove which was where Dock Square and the Faneuil Hall-Quincy Market complex are now. The Town Cove was wharfed out in 1641, and until 1711, when Long Wharf was completed, it was the shipping center of the fledgling town, with goods for overseas and coastal trade being loaded, unloaded, bought, and sold.

The block also abutted a tidal mill race on which there were a number of mills. In 1633, the North or Mill Cove was dammed for tidal water-power, and a small natural stream was extended to connect the Mill Cove with the Town Cove, along the course of today's Blackstone Street. The flow must have been reasonably rapid, since this was the only part of town where butchers were allowed to dispose of entrails. This same Blackstone Street today is largely occupied by meat packers and wholesale and retail meat dealers.

The early commercial and industrial importance of the block is further attested to by the location in the block of the central marker, or the zero milestone, from which distances were measured to and from Boston. This marker, called the Boston Stone, was set up in Marshall Street in 1737, making the block the hub of the Hub.

The Boston Stone is actually an early mill for grinding pigments, imported from England in 1701 by a house painter named Thomas Child. The lower slab is a trough though the trough is not visible, and the ball a grinder. Only the slab part of the mill was used as a marker in 1737; the ball part was found when the "Blackstone Block" building was under construction (1835) and the two parts mounted in the wall of the new building. The same builder also preserved a wooden coat of arms of the London Guild of House Painters, also a former possession of Thomas Child, and mounted it on the Hanover Street facade of the new building. The coat of arms has been removed, for safekeeping and protection from the weather, to the quarters of the Bostonian Society in the Old Statehouse.

The most unique feature of the Blackstone Block is the survival of the 17th century street pattern in the interior of the block with narrow lanes, ranging down to the five foot width of Scott Alley. This alley, incidentally, does connect through to North Street but is roofed over with a door at the North Street entrance. Though there may be isolated instances in Boston of 17th century streets or alleys which retain their original conformation, the Blackstone Block is the only district where six such lanes survive.

[continued]

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

Boston, Blackstone Block

(Continuation Sheet) #3

STATE Massachusetts	
COUNTY Suffolk	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	APR 2 1973

(Number all entries)

8. Continued

shortly thereafter; for during the Revolution the new house was occupied by his brother, Ebenezer, who may have also been its builder, as he was a mason and bricklayer. During the Revolution, Ebenezer was Paymaster General of the Eastern Department of the Continental Army, and it was to this house in Marshall Street that two million silver crowns were brought in August of 1778. This money was a loan from King Louis XVI which had been negotiated in Paris by Benjamin Franklin.

Franklin, incidently, spent the better part of his boyhood just beyond the confines of the Blackstone Block. Josiah Franklin's Chandlery shop stood at the southwest corner of Union and Hanover Street, on a site now occupied by a widened Union Street.

The block gains further significance by its proximity to Faneuil Hall (1742) and the Quincy Market complex (1825-26). It is certainly fortunate to have this example of modest commercial buildings representing a wide range of dates in close proximity with the larger and more impressive public market buildings. Further, the whole area serves as an interesting foil to the still larger and more monumental scale public and private buildings of Government Center.



9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

1. _____. Final Report of the Boston National Historic Sites Commission. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1961.
2. Perkins, Nina. The Blackstone Block: Its Development from the 17th to the 20th Centuries. Prepared for the Waterfront Project by the Mayor's Historic Conservation Commission. July, 1963.
3. Whitehill, Walter M.. Boston: A Topographical History. Second Ed. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. Cambridge, Mass. 1968.
4. Windsor, J. ed. The Memorial History of Boston. James R. Osgood. 1880.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
CORNER	LATITUDE				LONGITUDE				
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	0			0			42	21	40.23
NE	0			0			71	03	25.36
SE	0			0					
SW	0			0					

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 2.3

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Lucille C. Sims, BRA, for Elizabeth Amadon, State Survey Director

ORGANIZATION: Massachusetts Historical Commission

DATE: March 1973

STREET AND NUMBER:
40 Beacon Street

CITY OR TOWN: Boston

STATE: Massachusetts

CODE: 025

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☒ Local ☐

Name: John F. K. Danner
Secretary of the Commonwealth and
Chairman, Massachusetts Historical
Title: Commission

March 30, 1973

Date

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

Robert H. Utley
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 4/26/73

ATTEST:

W. H. H. H. H.
Keeper of The National Register

Date: 4 20 73

SEE INSTRUCTIONS