Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK 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

HISTORIC
Old South Meeting House

AND/OR COMMON
Old South Meeting House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
Washington and Milk Streets (northeast corner)   —NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN
Boston   —VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
Eighth

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
Massachusetts	025	Suffolk	025

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
—DISTRICT	—PUBLIC	X —OCCUPIED	—AGRICULTURE	X MUSEUM
X BUILDING(S)	X PRIVATE	—UNOCCUPIED	—COMMERCIAL	—PARK
—STRUCTURE	—BOTH	—WORK IN PROGRESS	—EDUCATIONAL	—PRIVATE RESIDENCE
—SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	—ENTERTAINMENT	—RELIGIOUS
—OBJECT	—IN PROCESS	X YES: RESTRICTED	—GOVERNMENT	—SCIENTIFIC
	—BEING CONSIDERED	—YES: UNRESTRICTED	—INDUSTRIAL	—TRANSPORTATION
		—NO	—MILITARY	—OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Old South Association in Boston

STREET & NUMBER
c/o Hale and Dorr, 28 State Street

CITY, TOWN
Boston   —VICINITY OF

STATE
Massachusetts

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE.
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.   Suffolk County Registry of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER
Suffolk County Court House, Somerset Street

CITY, TOWN
Boston

STATE
Massachusetts

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Historic American Buildings Survey (Mass.-960)

DATE
1968   X FEDERAL —STATE —COUNTY —LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS   Library of Congress, Division of Prints and Photographs

CITY, TOWN
Washington

STATE
District of Columbia

7 DESCRIPTION

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Old South Meeting House, located at the northeast corner of Washington and Milk Streets in downtown Boston, was built as the second home of the Third Church in Boston, gathered in 1669. The original building, known as the "Cedar Meeting House" because of its construction material, was demolished when it became too small for the growing congregation and the present structure was erected on the same site in 1729-30. The new building was designed by Robert Twelves and constructed by Joshua Blanchard, a master mason who later (1740-42) erected the original Faneuil Hall.

Though retaining the traditional side-entrance plan of the 17th century New England meeting house, Old South was undoubtedly influenced by the Early Georgian style of the recently completed (1723) Old North (Christ Church). A large structure for its day, Old South consists of a gable-roofed rectangle with a square tower at the center of its western (short) side. The brick masonry is laid in Flemish bond; belt courses surround the main block and tower at each floor level. Like Old North, Old South is lighted by two tiers of round-arched, multi-pane windows. The top of the three-stage tower is surrounded by a dentil cornice and a balustrade, above which rises a three-stage octagonal spire 180 feet high. (Old South's spire was copied in at least six other New England churches, the most notable of them constructed at Farmington, Connecticut in 1771). Entrances are located in the north, west, and south faces of the tower and in an enclosed, pedimented porch at the center of the south (long) side of the building; each consists of double paneled doors topped by a fanlight, the whole recessed in a molded surround.

The original interior of Old South followed the pattern of the early meeting houses with the main entrance at the side (served by the doorways in the tower). The paneled box pews were oriented toward a high pulpit with suspended sounding board centered on the long north wall; balustraded galleries extended around the other three sides, carried on Doric columns set on high plinths. A central aisle led across the auditorium from the pulpit to a second entrance at the center of the long south wall. A broad cornice bordered the coved ceiling. The windows were recessed in the walls and fitted with louvered blinds.

Old South suffered serious damage during the British occupation of Boston in 1774-76. At the order of General John Burgoyne, the pulpit, pews, and all other interior fittings except the eastern gallery were torn out and used for fuel, and the building itself was turned into a riding school for the King's cavalry. By 1783 the Old South congregation had reassembled and in that year the interior of the building was restored.

A number of changes were made in the auditorium during the 19th century, including the addition of second galleries at the eastern and western ends. Supported on attenuated columns (possibly of cast iron), the new galleries repeat the balustraded rails of the older ones but carry bands

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE
__1600-1699	X ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	__MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
X 1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER
__1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION
__1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	X POLITICS/GOVERNMENT *	__OTHER (SPECIFY)
		__INVENTION		

*Development of the English Colonies, 1700-1775

SPECIFIC DATES	BUILDER/ARCHITECT
1729	Robert Twelves

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Old South Meeting House, erected at Boston, Massachusetts in 1729-30, is an excellent example of a colonial brick church in which an Early Georgian exterior is combined with the traditional seating plan of the 17th century New England meeting house. Because of its large seating capacity, Old South became the scene of a number of significant town meetings and assemblies (many of them reconvened here when Faneuil Hall proved too small for the large crowds they attracted) in the period just prior to the outbreak of the American Revolution. Among the most important of them was the heated session of December 16, 1773, which culminated in the Boston Tea Party.

Old South Meeting House was built as the second home of Boston's Third Church, replacing the original building on the same site. During the British occupation of Boston, the building was stripped of its interior fittings and used as a riding school for the King's cavalry. Restored in 1783, Old South continued to be used for religious purposes until 1872 when the Third Church moved to a new building in the developing Back Bay area. Saved from demolition by public protest and a successful fund raising drive in 1876, the Meeting House was turned over to the newly incorporated Old South Association in Boston, which has since operated the building as a museum.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Boston's Third or Old South Church, the third body of Congregationalists gathered in the town, was established in 1669 and that year constructed its first building, known as the "Cedar Meeting House", at the corner of Washington and Milk Streets. In 1687 Governor Edmund Andros commandeered the meeting house for Anglican services; Judge Samuel Sewall appeared in 1696 to make public confession of his guilt in the Salem witchcraft delusion of 1692; and in 1706 Benjamin Franklin was baptized there. The South Church became Old South in 1717 when the New South Church was completed at the junction of Summer Street and Blind Lane (now part of Bedford Street). By 1729 the "Cedar Meeting House" was too small to accomodate the Old South congregation and it was replaced by a larger brick structure on the same site.

The new Old South Meeting House, dedicated on April 26, 1730, was designed

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Marlowe, George F. _Churches of Old New England_ (New York, 1947).
Morrison, Hugh. _Early American Architecture_ (New York, 1952).
Old South Association in Boston. "Old South Meeting House" (pamphlet, n.p., n.d.).
Pierson, William H. Jr. _American Buildings and Their Architects: The Colonial and Neo-Classical Styles_ (New York, 1970).
Wolkins, G.G. "Freedom and the Old South Meeting House" (Old South Leaflet No. 202; Boston, 1945).

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY ___less than one (p. 19)___

UTM REFERENCES

A|1,9| |3,3,0,4,6,0| |4,6,9,1,2,6,0| B|_,_| |_,_,_,_,_,_| |_,_,_,_,_,_|
  ZONE EASTING   NORTHING   ZONE EASTING   NORTHING
C|_,_| |_,_,_,_,_,_| |_,_,_,_,_,_| D|_,_| |_,_,_,_,_,_| |_,_,_,_,_,_|

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Boundaries of the National Historic Landmark designation for the Old South Meeting House (shown in red on the accompanying street map) are defined as follows: beginning at the intersection of the northern curbline of Milk Street and the eastern curbline of Washington Street; thence, bounded westerly by the eastern curbline of Washington Street 75 feet; northerly by the Milk Street M.B.T.A. subway station 110 feet; easterly by commercial property and a passageway (leading to Milk Street) 70 feet; and southerly by the northern curbline of Milk Street 130 feet.

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   Polly M. Rettig, Historian, Landmark Review Project; original form prepared by Charles W. Snell, Historian, 12/20/67

ORGANIZATION Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service	DATE 7/23/75
STREET & NUMBER 1100 L. Street, NW.	TELEPHONE 202-523-5464
CITY OR TOWN Washington	STATE D.C.

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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE   N/A National Historic Landmark

TITLE   DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
    I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

                                                   DATE 12/7/77
    DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST: DATE
    KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

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of Doric triglyphs on their lower edges. The present ornate pulpit
arrangement also appears to date from the early 19th century. The
pulpit itself, a wineglass shape, is set at the center-front of a high,
semi-circular platform. The base of this structure is decorated by
Corinthian columns carrying a full entablature with running floral band
which forms the railing of the platform. Between the columns are carved
panels, two of which contain doors to a staircase leading up to the plat-
form. A carved octagonal sounding board is suspended above the pulpit.
On the wall behind it is a single window set in a recess framed by
Corinthian columns carrying a round arch.

Though no serious damage was done by the attempted demolition of 1876
(see significance), some repair of the Meeting House was necessary.
Since that time the Old South Association in Boston has operated the
building as a museum. Display cases have been installed under the
galleries along the east and south walls and in the northwest corner;
a sales desk and office have been created in the southwest corner. The
latter unfortunately have a negative effect on the historic character of
the auditorium. Though a subway entrance is located immediately north of
the building, it is set well back from the street and constitutes only
a minor intrusion on the historic property.

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by Robert Twelves and constructed by Joshua Blanchard, the master mason
who later built the original Faneuil Hall (1742). Though it retained
the traditional side entrance "auditorium plan" of the 17th century
meeting house, the building was undoubtedly influenced by the Early
Georgian design of the recently completed (1723) Christ Church (Old North)
and, like it, had two tiers of round-arched windows and a square projecting
tower with 3-stage spire. Old South's spire, octagonal
rather than square like that of Old North, was copied in at least six other
New England churches, most notably that built at Farmington, Connecticut in
1771.

The practice of holding large public meetings at Old South began in 1761,
when Faneuil Hall was seriously damaged by fire and the town meetings
usually held there were temporarily transferred to the meeting house. There-
after, when town meetings and other gatherings drew crowds too large to be
accomodated at the reconstructed Faneuil Hall or the Second Town House (Old
State House) they were reconvened at Old South. Among these was the assembly
of June 14, 1768, moderated by James Otis, which compelled Governor Bernard
to secure the removal of a warship that had been stationed in Boston harbor
to enforce British impressment and customs regulations. A day-long session
following the "Boston Massacre" in March, 1770, forced the withdrawal of
the British garrison to Castle William in the harbor.

Of the many protest meetings held at Old South between the passage of
the Townsend Acts in 1767 and the outbreak of the Revolution in 1775,
perhaps the most significant were those late in 1773 which culminated
in the Boston Tea Party. On November 29 and 30 and again on December
14 an 16, several thousand inhabitants of Boston and neighboring towns
gathered at the meeting house to prevent the landing of three cargoes of
tea shipped to Boston by the East India Company under authority of the
Tea Act of May, 1773. When word reached Old South on the evening of the
16th that Governor Hutchinson had refused to allow the three ships--the
Dartmouth, Beaver, and Eleanor--to leave port without unloading the tea,
Samuel Adams rose to his feet and proclaimed, "This meeting can do nothing
more to save the country". At that pre-arranged signal, war whoops broke
out from the galleries and the meeting dissolved. A hundred or more men
and youths, thinly disguised as Indians, rushed from Old South to Griffin's
Wharf and within a few hours dumped some ₤ 18,000's worth of tea into Boston
harbor.

When the British occupied Boston at the outbreak of the Revolution, the
anti-tea sessions and other radical gatherings at Old South were not

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RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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forgotten. In 1775, at the order of General John Burgoyne, all the interior fittings except the east gallery were removed from the meeting house and the building was turned into a riding school for the King's cavalry. Old South's congregation reassembled after the British evacuation of Boston in 1776 and by 1783 was able to restore the interior of the meeting house. A number of changes were made in the building during the 19th century, including the addition of second galleries at the eastern and western ends.

By the late 1860's much of the Old South congregation had moved to Boston's new and fashionable Back Bay district and in 1869 the Old South Society, the corporate body of the church, purchased land for a building there (New Old South Church, dedicated in 1875). However, the congregation continued to worship at the old meeting house until it was damaged by the great fire of 1872. The building was then leased to the United States Government to house the Boston Post Office, whose own building had been destroyed in the fire. The area around Old South had been given over almost entirely to business and the land on which the meeting house stood had become extremely valuable. The congregation had attempted to preserve the historic building by selling it to the Massachusetts Historical Society in 1872, but that organization had not had sufficient funds to purchase at a competitive price. Thus, when the government lease expired, the congregation decided to demolish the meeting house and sell the land for commercial purposes.

Despite public opposition, the building (exclusive of the cornerstone and tower clock) was sold at auction on June 8, 1876, for $1,350, subject to removal within 60 days. The demolition crew was beginning its work when, on June 11, George W. Simmons, a dealer in ready-made clothing, bought the right to hold the building uninjured for seven days. During this brief period energetic efforts to save the building were organized. A mass meeting was held at Old South on June 14, at which Wendell Phillips delivered a resounding address in the florid style for which he was noted; a committee formed to solicit contributions received subscriptions for several thousand dollars on the spot. The first direct step in the case was taken when 20 Boston ladies purchased the building for $3,500. On September 15, the con-gregation agreed to sell the land for $400,000 in cash; the New England Mutual Life Insurance Company took a $225,000 mortgage, the committee paid over $75,000 which it had collected, and Mrs. Augustus Hemenway assured the success of the project with her contribution of the last $100,000.

The Old South Association in Boston was incorporated in May, 1877 to hold

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the meeting house as an historic site and has maintained the building since
that time. After necessary repairs were made, exhibits of objects connected
with the building and the Revolution were installed and Old South was opened
to the public. Special events were organized to raise the money needed to
amortize the mortgage on the property. Lectures, balls, and fairs were held;
Emerson, Holmes, Longfellow, Lowell and Whittier gave readings of their
poetry; and the young Thomas Edison exhibited his new phonograph. In 1879
John Fiske presented a popular series of lectures on American history, which
subsequently developed into the Old South Work in History program, a lecture
series designed specifically for teachers and school-children. In 1888 the
Old South Association began publication of its notable and extensive collection
of "Old South Leaflets", reproductions of significant original documents
with pertinent historical and bibliographical notes.
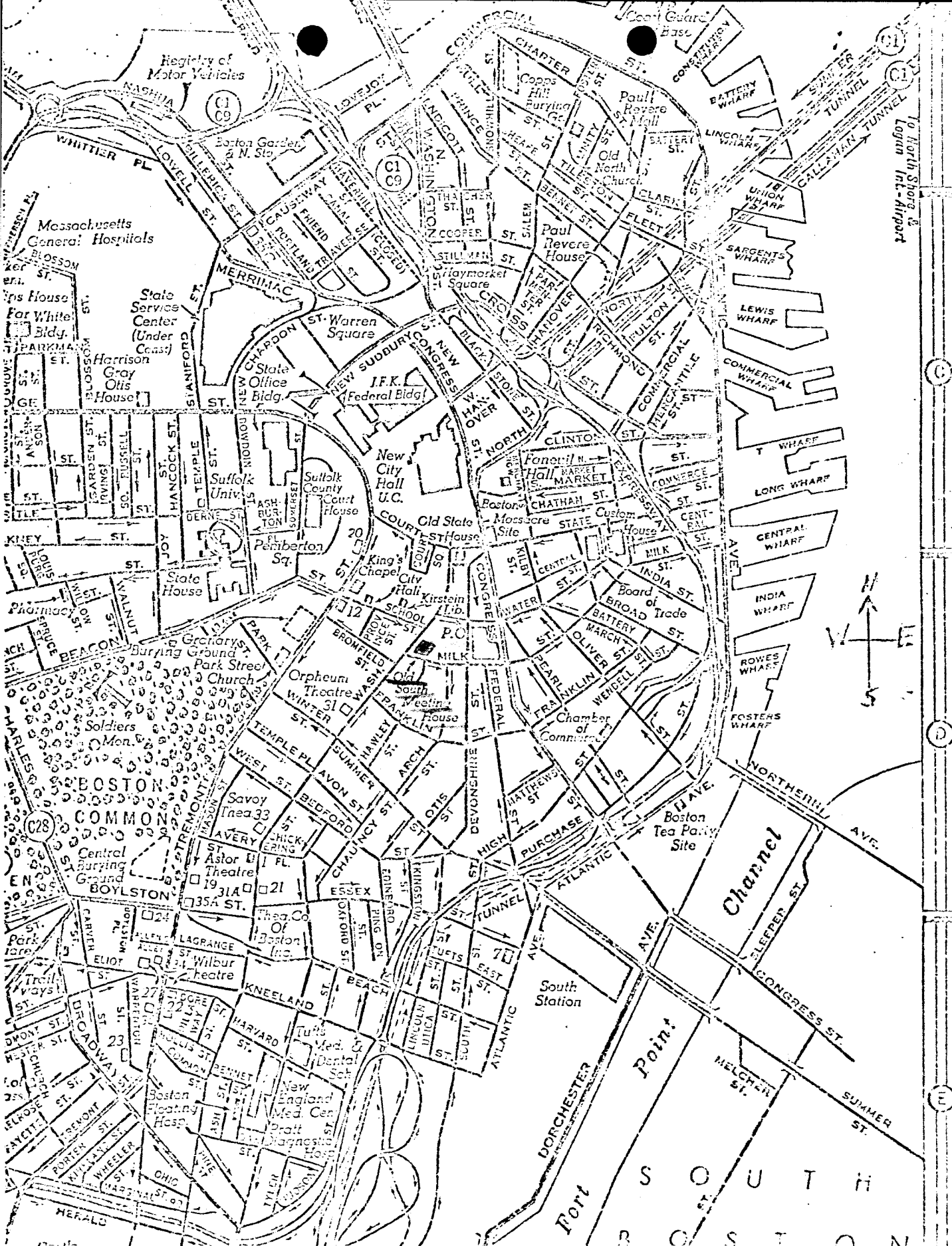
Registry of Motor Vehicles

NASHUA

C1 C9

WHITTIER PL

LOWELL ST.

BILLERICA ST.

Boston Garden & N. Sta.

CAUSEWAY

FRIEND ST.

PORTLAND ST.

TRAVERS ST.

CANAL ST.

CLOSED

Massachusetts General Hospitals

BLOSSOM ST.

MERRIMAC

State Service Center (Under Const)

STANIFORD ST.

CHARDON ST.

State Office Bldg.

N. STAFFORD ST.

Warren Square

J.F.K. Federal Bldg.

NEW SUDBURY ST.

New City Hall U.C.

HAVERHILL ST.

WASHINGTON ST.

ENDICOTT ST.

PRINCE ST.

THACHER ST.

Haymarket Square

COOPER ST.

STILLMAN ST.

CROSS ST.

BLACKSTONE ST.

NEW CONGRESS ST.

W. HANOVER ST.

NORTH ST.

Copps Hill Burying Gd.

UNITY ST.

HULL ST.

SNOW ST.

HEAD ST.

SALEM ST.

Old North Church

Paul Revere Mall

FOSTER ST.

CHARTER ST.

Paul Revere House

BENNET ST.

HANOVER ST.

PARMENTER ST.

RICHMOND ST.

NORTH ST.

CLINTON ST.

Faneuil Hall

FANEUIL MARKET HALL

CHATHAM ST.

Boston Massacre Site

Old State House

CLARK ST.

FLEET ST.

FULTON ST.

COMMERCIAL ST.

MERCANTILE ST.

COMMERCE ST.

STATE ST.

Custom House

CHIEF GUARD BASE

CONSTITUTION WHARF

BATTERY WHARF

LINCOLN WHARF

UNION WHARF

SARGENTS WHARF

LEWIS WHARF

COMMERCIAL WHARF

T WHARF

LONG WHARF

CENTRAL WHARF

INDIA WHARF

ROWES WHARF

FOSTERS WHARF

To North Shore & Logan Int. Airport

SUMNER TUNNEL

CALLAHAN TUNNEL

Harrison Gray Otis House

BLOSSOM ST.

PARKMAN ST.

State House For White Bldg.

ANDERSON ST.

GARDEN ST.

IRVING ST.

RUSSELL ST.

SO. RUSSELL ST.

HANCOCK ST.

TEMPLE ST.

BOWDOIN ST.

Suffolk Univ.

DERNE ST.

ASHBURTON PL.

Suffolk County Court House

Pemberton Sq.

CHARLES ST.

KEY ST.

LOUIS PERG.

ANDERSON ST.

WILLOW ST.

JOY ST.

State House

BEACON ST.

WALNUT ST.

SPRUCE ST.

Pharmacy St.

Granary Burying Ground

Park Street Church

PARK ST.

SCHOOL ST.

COURT ST.

King's Chapel

City Hall

Kirstein Lib.

CONGRESS ST.

KILBY ST.

Board of Trade

BROAD ST.

BATTERY ST.

MARCH ST.

OLIVER ST.

WENDELL ST.

MILK ST.

INDIA ST.

Chamber of Commerce

FEDERAL ST.

FRANKLIN ST.

COURT SQ.

20

12

Orpheum Theatre

WASH. ST.

Old South Meeting House

P.O.

MILK ST.

WINTER ST.

BROMFIELD ST.

PROVINCE ST.

Soldiers Mon.

BOSTON COMMON

Central Burying Ground

BOYLSTON

C28

TREMONT ST.

TEMPLE PL.

WEST ST.

AVON ST.

BEDFORD ST.

SUMMER ST.

HAWLEY ST.

ARCH ST.

OTIS ST.

DEVONSHIRE ST.

HIGH ST.

PURCHASE ST.

ATLANTIC AVE.

Boston Tea Party Site

31

Savoy Thea. 33

AVERY ST.

Astor Theatre

CHICKERING

19 31A 35A ST.

21

ESSEX ST.

CHAUNCY ST.

KINGSTON ST.

EDINBORO ST.

OXFORD ST.

BEACH ST.

LINCOLN ST.

UTICA ST.

SOUTH ST.

ATLANTIC AVE.

Thea. Co. Of Boston Inc.

24

Wilbur Theatre

LAGRANGE ST.

ELIOT ST.

KNEELAND

HARVARD ST.

Tufts Med. & Dental Sch.

TUFTS ST.

EAST ST.

70

South Station

Trailways

CARVER ST.

WARRENTON ST.

BROADWAY

23

27

Boston Floating Hosp.

New England Med. Cen.

Pratt Diagnostic House

ASH ST.

TYLER ST.

NORTHERN AVE.

Channel

SLEEPER ST.

CONGRESS ST.

MELCHER ST.

SUMMER ST.

DORCHESTER AVE.

Fort Point Channel

SOUTH BOSTON

HERALD