



## ROXBURY'S HIGHLAND PARK ARCHITECTURE TOUR

Tour starting point:  
MBTA Roxbury Crossing Station

### INTRODUCTION

This tour is designed to showcase Roxbury Highland's unusually rich collection of antique buildings. Overwhelmingly residential in character, the area is a museum without walls whose displays are comprised primarily of houses that represent the full range of architectural styles from the mid 1700s to the early 1930s and beyond. Not only do these buildings represent a range of construction date over two-and-one-half centuries but the quality of the design and craftsmanship of the buildings are consistently high. That this is the case has everything to do with the fact that affluent families who could afford high quality construction were drawn to the Highlands' picturesque natural beauty, as well as the area's proximity to Boston. In addition to the picturesque, still-rustic conditions of its "high land," the Highlands elevated terrain affords memorable vistas in which iconic structures such as church spires (Mission Church), a church steeple-like monument (Dorchester Heights Monument), factory chimneys (the breweries of the Stony Brook Valley), an Islamic minaret, and, above all, the Boston skyline all figure significantly in these panoramic views; views that make touring Roxbury Highlands such a singular experience.

This tour is designed to call attention to the setting of buildings as well as the forms and features of the buildings themselves. One can think about architectural styles in much the same way that one thinks of clothing as fashion statements. Why are pants tighter around the ankles one year and flared out as bell bottoms the next? Who is setting the style? Is it one of the fashion designer judges on a reality television show or in the case of buildings, a famous architect or the little known master builder or contractor who lives in the neighborhood? What are the cultural influences for the way our clothes and buildings look? Are these new "looks" surfacing in a particular country? Britain? Brazil? France? Many of us look to fashion magazines or other publications to see what movie stars are wearing on the red carpet. When it comes to buildings, what did architects and builders read for inspiration when designing a church or a house. One of the goals of this tour is to explain where these styles are coming from whether it might be from architectural pattern books, illustrations and photographs that depict archaeological discoveries in Egypt, Greece or Rome or from more direct encounters with buildings during the course of travel over seas. By the mid 1800s, thanks to steam ships and the new railroads people of means, could experience, first hand, Gothic castles, Swiss chalets or closer to home, Colonial houses in early coastal new England towns like Newport, Rhode Island or Plymouth, MA. Memories of faraway historic and modern buildings inspired homeowners and architects to back in America what they saw during their travels.

The buildings set forth below are discussed in several ways: how they work visually within the context of their surroundings, historical background on the origins and longevity of their architectural styles, as well as general remarks about the building's appearance: i.e. form, materials and key features such as doors, porches, roof shapes, etc. Three or four vocabulary terms that are relevant to a particular building will follow the text as bulleted items.

As you stroll through the neighborhood there are opportunities to learn about the history of the area



even if you do not have your guidebooks in hand. This is particularly the case at John Eliot Square where several historical markers are located at the north end of the First Church's park. Over time, local residents and others who cared deeply about the history of Roxbury have erected markers and plaques that speak to the Highlands' key role as a strategic military site at the very beginning of the American Revolution, and its role as the focus of the religious life of the community as embodied by the First Church of Roxbury (1803) or more recently the Islamic Cultural Center.

Our tour begins across Tremont Street from the Roxbury Crossing T-station to look at historical panels depicting maps that will provide a sense of where Highland Park fits in geographically with the rest of Roxbury as well as to trace the tour route. This stop will provide an opportunity to provide a thumbnail sketch of Roxbury history and development. We will then cross Columbus Avenue to point out the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center (1 Malcolm X Boulevard).

Built in 2006 from designs provided by Steffian Bradley in consultation with Dr. Sami Angawi architect and founder of the Amar Center in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center serves the growing Islamic population in Greater Boston, now numbering 70,000. The building has space for 20,000 worshippers, an elementary school serving 300 children, a social hall, funeral facilities and administrative offices. The building's distinctive appearance speaks to the fact that unlike all the other buildings in Highland Park, its design is not rooted in Western European tradition. While its red brick materials acknowledges Boston's favorite building material, its exotic roofline with a great dome and soaring minaret add much interest to the scenic vistas evident from the neighborhoods higher elevations.

Continuing westward along Columbus Avenue we will consider the buildings of the Roxbury Community College. Founded in 1973 and first housed in an old car dealership in Grove Hall, it moved to its present site in 1988. Architecturally, the College's building's celebrate Boston's centuries-old affection for red brick; a tradition that goes back to the early 1700s as seen in old buildings in downtown Boston such as the Old State House (1713) and Union Oyster House (1710s) which is located behind Boston City Hall. The College's building's distinctive A-shaped gable forms as well as the contrast between red brick and light-colored concrete trim recalls Queen Anne style school buildings of the late 1800s. Designed by Stull and Lee, these buildings house programs in liberal arts, business administration, health sciences, human services and technologies.

Turning left we will head towards Roxbury Street. We'll walk by a seven foot bronze statue created in 1990 by Roxbury artist John Wilson (1922-) who grew up in Roxbury and studied at the Boston Museum School. Depicting a Father and Child Reading, the stature is located between the Administration Building and Media Arts Center.

As we ascend Roxbury Street's gentle incline we'll walk past the Louis Prang Lithographic Factory at 280-286 Roxbury Street (1867) where the first Christmas card was printed in 1875. Just as Josiah Chickering lived around the corner from his Columbus Avenue piano factory in the South End, Prang lived behind his factory and we will see his house near the end of the tour. The design of Prang's factory is unusually fancy; perhaps due to the fact that Prang's product was considered to be artistic. Indeed, he was in the business of reproducing reasonably priced copies of great paintings in the form of chromolithographs. Architecturally, Prang's factory combines elements of the Italianate and Mansard styles.



## JOHN ELIOT SQUARE

### Dillaway Thomas House

183 Roxbury Street

Built 1750

The Dillaway Thomas House is the oldest house that we will view in the course of this tour. Flanked by one of the most memorable views of the Boston skyline on the south and the Art Deco James P. Timilty Middle School on the north, few historic streetscapes evoke the passage of time as memorably as this one. The first thing to notice about this house is its form or volume which is reminiscent of a school lunch box. Here, its rectangular form is crowned by a double-pitched gambrel roof. The gambrel shape was popular in New England from around 1700 until the 1780s. When this house was built during the middle of the 1700s, the gambrel was at the height of its popularity. Families liked the fact that a roof shaped like this provided more head room in an attic than was possible with a gable roof. Additionally, the gambrel roof was very practical when it came to dealing with extreme weather as snow did not linger and accumulate but rather slid easily off of its double-pitched slopes.

At the Dillaway-Thomas House, the main, street-facing wall is very balanced with a front door flanked by pairs of windows. The front porch or portico was added in the early 1800s evidently in an effort to make the house more up to date. The slender porch columns and the curved porch roof speak to proportions and forms that were popular in the Federal style that followed the Georgian style after 1790. The Doric pilasters flanking the front door appear to be more 1750 than 1803 as does the multi-panel front door. The Federal Style fell from favor as the Greek Revival came into its own after 1830. Also of interest are the raised and molded window surround that are typical of mid 18<sup>th</sup> century American houses. The window's glass panes are set off by narrow pieces of wood called muntins while the panes and muntins are contained within a wooden enframent called sash—in this case upper and lower sash. The 6/6 double hung sash probably replaced sash containing smaller panes with 12 glass panes contained within each sash.

In terms of architectural style, the Dillaway-Thomas House maybe categorized as Georgian. George was the name of the three Kings who ruled England for most of the 1700s. This style placed a great deal of importance on logical, well-balanced designs whose roots lay in the Italian Renaissance of the 1500s. This style was late reaching England's shores—gaining popularity after the re-building of London after the Great Fire of 1666. Renaissance influence in the Boston area first surfaces in the North End in 1690 at the Foster-Hutchinson House—so even before the Georges ruled England the style was percolating in coastal New England towns.

### Architectural Terms

**Clapboards:** Thin horizontal boards of tapering section used to seal houses against the wind and cold. The harsh New England climate made these overlapping boards necessary. Clapboards became one of the most common wall coverings in wood-frame houses.

**Column:** A vertical, round structural post. In styles derived from Classical architecture the column usually consists of a base, shaft and capital.



**Fanlight:** semi circular or elliptical windows that appear over doors to permit more light to enter front halls.

**Gambrel roof:** A roof with two slopes of different pitch on either side of the ridge.

**Pilasters:** Ornamental elements designed to look like flattened-out columns that frequently flank a front door Georgian

**Portico:** A formal porch with a roof supported by columns attached to the main entrance of a house.

## **James Timilty School**

On the north side of the Dillaway-Thomas House is the James Timilty School. Built during the early 1930s at the beginning of the Great Depression, this school is exciting for the Highlands to have because it really brings this interesting architectural story well into the twentieth century.

The Art Deco style relies heavily on distinctive ornament for maximum visual impact. The ornament is hard edged and rectilinear with much emphasis placed on unobstructed forms. Indeed verticality is stressed in most Art Deco buildings. Like a number of architectural styles, the Art Deco became fashionable after being featured at a world's fair—in this case the Decorative Arts Exhibition in Paris in 1925.

The Timilty School is a U-shaped three story building that is composed of concrete and brick. Bricks of two or more colors are frequently employed in this style to create an interesting polychromatic effect. Indeed, in evidence at the Timilty School are narrow horizontal courses of blackened brick that contrast with the dark red brick of the main body of the school. Countering this horizontal emphasis are three vertical lengths of angled brick which define two narrow window bays that are in evidence above the entrances. The entrances are sheltered by semi-circular marquees that were probably consciously designed to echo the semi-circular shape of the front porch's roof of the Dillaway –Thomas House next door. Architects frequently reference features of nearby buildings in designs for new buildings. The curved walls that flank the schools' entrances are laid up in glass brick—a material that was frequently used in Art Deco architecture.

The semi-circular marquees above the two entrances echo the shape of the Dillaway-Thomas House's front porch. Flanking the entrances, are curved walls of glass bricks which were also frequently used in Art Deco design.

### **Architectural Terms**

**Glass bricks:** Blocks of glass that are opaque rather than clear and are intended to be both decorative while permitting light to filter into an interior.

**Polychromatic brick:** Multi-colored brickwork



## **The First Meeting House**

John Eliot Square

1803-1804

William Blaney, Master Builder

The First Meeting House has the distinction of being the oldest wooden church structure in the City of Boston and is the fifth meeting house to occupy this site. The church's construction and design is attributed to William Blaney who was a member of the Roxbury building committee. He is said to have based the meeting house's design on the First Church in Newburyport—because of its rich inventory of architectural elements, this church provides a one-stop opportunity to learn architectural terms. These elements are rooted in the ancient Classical and Renaissance design traditions. Ancient cultures held great meaning for educators and students back in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century because learning to read Greek and Latin were required by the schools.

The 1803 Meeting House has two structural components that are 2.5 stories in height: a long rectangular sanctuary measuring seven-by-five-bays and a center pavilion containing a vestibule that projects from the main façade. The pavilion rises to a triangular pediment that contains a central lunette or “half moon” window. Set back from the pavilion's pediment atop the northern end of the sanctuary's roof ridge is a four-stage steeple. Particularly noteworthy for its circular clock faces, carved urns at the corners of its second stage as well as the fourth stage's small dome-shaped roof which is surmounted by a weather vane. Rendered in hammered metal, the weather vane takes the form of an unfurled pennant.

The sanctuary's side walls are of great visual interest because of the repeated forms of the windows' projecting lintels. In this case, the lintels take the form of small molded cornices that cast pleasing shadows on the wall surfaces. The center pavilion features a main entrance that set within a blind arch and is crowned by a graceful elliptical pediment while the flanking doors are topped by semi-circular fanlights. In evidence above the main entrance is a graceful Palladian window.

### **Architectural Terminology**

**Blind arch:** A shallow, arched recess designed to surround a door or window. Since this type of arch does not provide access into another space it is called blind. Frequently used in Federal Style architecture, the blind arch was used in high style residential and public building design.

**Lunette window:** A semi-elliptical window that is sometimes called a half moon window. Lunettes were frequently used in Federal style design for attic windows of both houses and public buildings.

**Palladian window:** A three-part composition for a window, in which a round-headed opening is flanked by lower flat-headed openings and separated from them by columns or pilasters. Named for Andrea Palladio who invented this window type in Northern Italy during the late 1600s

**Pavilion:** a projecting section of a façade designed to give architectural emphasis.



## **Ionic Hall**

149 Roxbury Street

Built 1800

Style: Federal with later Greek Revival elements

Built as a private residence in 1800, this house originally had a more Federal style appearance until its original low-hipped roof was replaced by a more Greek Revival side gable roof. This transformation probably occurred during the 1830s or 1840s. At that time the house's Ionic portico was added in a further effort to provide a more up to date appearance. The main entrance's porch is characterized by fluted Ionic columns that support a heavy entablature that, in turn, is crowned by a low-hipped roof. Flanking the front door are Ionic pilasters. Above the front door is an ornamental panel depicting a Greek design called an anthemion. While the Greek Revival elements of this house are clustered around the front door and evident in the pedimented attics, more typically Federal are the smooth, unadorned red brick walls and the delicate ornamental cornice detail in evidence above the third story windows. Part of the house's later make over may have involved widening the side walls from two bays to six bays.

After decades as the residence of a Captain Stoddard and later his daughter, a Mrs. Hammond, the house became Saint Luke's Home for Convalescents. Since the 1960s, the building has been used by St. John's / St. James Episcopal Church

## **Architectural Terminology**

**Anthemion:** a flat ornamental design arranged in radiating clusters usually based on the flowers of the honeysuckle; found in Greek architecture.

**Entablature:** in classical design. A richly detailed horizontal member resting on columns or pilasters. It is divided horizontally into three main parts: the architrave, the frieze and the cornice.

**Pedimented attic:** in classical architecture, the low triangular gable end of the roof, framed by raking cornices along the inclined edges of the roof and by a horizontal cornice below. In New England, pedimented attics could be quite steeply pitched, not necessarily following the low triangular gable favored by more "pure" forms of classical architecture.

## **St. Luke's Chapel**

149 Roxbury Street

Built 1901

Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson, Architects

Gothic Revival

Designed in 1901 by the eminent Boston architectural firm of Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson, much of this toy-like building's appeal lies in its small scale and formal architectural features that might otherwise seem more at home on churches many times its size.

Possessing a Latin cross shape, this diminutive house of worship is constructed of red brick with



dressed limestone trim—as seen in the belt course, window enframements and buttresses’ capstones. The main entrance is set within a pointed Gothic arch as are all windows of this building. The placement of the gothic arched windows set high on the walls allows light to enter the building from on high.

This charming ecclesiastical building is currently used for special occasions by St. John’s/St. James Episcopal Church.

### **Architectural Terminology:**

**Belt course** A horizontal layer of building blocks such as bricks or stones extending the full length and thickness of a wall. Belt courses usually mark the transition from a basement to the first story.

**Buttresses:** An exterior mass of masonry bonded into a wall that it strengthens or supports.

**Latin cross plan:** a cross-shaped plan with one long and three short arms. Usually used to describe the ground plans of Roman Catholic and Protestant churches.

From St. Luke’s Chapel cross Centre Street and turn right on to Putnam Street. We will walk by the Victorian era addition to the First Meeting House that is known as Putnam Chapel. Painted white to complement the meeting house, one needs to look closely to see elements such as door and window surrounds that identify Putnam Chapel (1879) as a Victorian era building. Victorian is an umbrella term that over arches numerous architectural styles popular during Victoria’s reign: 1837-1901.

*Rounding the corner on to Bartlett Street we’ll continue north to the intersection of Dudley and Bartlett Streets we’ll consider the Cox Building and the Norfolk House.*

### **The Cox Building**

1-3 John Eliot Square

Built: 1870

George D. Cox, builder and developer

Style: Second Empire

Rehabilitated in 1984 by Historic Boston, Inc., the Cox Building was built in 1870 as an interesting and innovative example of a mixed-use commercial/residential building. The Cox building’s central red brick and granite trimmed structural component originally contained stores and a hotel while the sides of the building encompass five luxury brownstone town houses.

In terms of style, the Cox building is a robust example of the Second Empire, an architectural mode that was typically employed in the design of high profile public buildings such as City Halls and Post Offices.

Sometimes designs for housing and commercial buildings achieved Second Empire categorization, moving beyond simple Italianate/Mansard classification into the Second Empire category of buildings that were unusually substantial, formal and ornate. The Second Empire style originated in Paris and was popular there from the late 1840s until the early 1870s.



In Boston, the Old City Hall on School Street (1861-1863) was an early example of an important American public building designed in this style. The Second Empire style's popularity waned in this country during the 1870s and disappeared altogether by c. 1885.

The Cox building's predominant feature is the octagonal bay. Note the graceful cast iron storefront enframements of the first floor with their fluted Corinthian columns. The upper floors of the corner façade feature trim elements (i.e. window sills and lintels) made out of granite which is a dense stone that is very difficult to carve. Brownstone, on the other hand, is much easier to carve but does not hold up well over time because water collects in the pores of this material expands and contracts due to freezing and war temperatures causing the material to flake and fall apart. The Cox building is enclosed by a straight-sided mansard roof.

### **Architectural terminology**

**Brownstone:** Highly porous sedimentary rock that is the color of dark chocolate came into vogue for facing entire main facades during the mid 1840s. Although brownstone is easy to carve, it does not stand up to the harsh New England climate over time. Water gets into its pores—freezes and melts—causing cracks in the stone's surfaces.

**Cast iron:** Iron shaped by a molding process, generally strong in compression, but brittle in tension. The use of cast iron in industry and bridge construction came to the fore in England during the mid 1700s and was perfected in this country by James Bogardus of New York City around 1840.

**Corinthian:** The type of capital atop a column that is very leafy and ornate, characterized by acanthus leaves and small volutes or turned forms.

**Rope moldings:** The entrance's to the Cox building's residential units are set off by well carved rope moldings that appears with some frequency around the door ways of mid 19<sup>th</sup> century South End row houses.

Next we will turn our attention northward across the street to the Norfolk House.

### **Norfolk House**

4-20 John Elliot Square  
1853

This red brick hotel replaced an earlier wooden hotel of the 1820s. Symbolic of the transformation of Roxbury from a rural community to a rapidly developing suburban city, the Norfolk House is a rare surviving example of early Boston area hotel design. Boston pioneered the concept of the modern hotel at the Tremont House (late 1820s, next to the Granary Burying Ground, demolished, 1896) with its "check-in" lobby, individual rather than shared guest rooms as well as modern amenities such as indoor plumbing and gas lighting.

The great bulk of this long rectangular building dominates the west side of Eliot Square. Representing an early Boston area example of the Italian Renaissance Revival style, the inspiration for this type of design lies in the Renaissance palaces of the 1500s in Italian cities such as Florence



and Rome. As well-to-do people from the Boston area began to travel to Europe they saw first hand the beauty of these palaces and wanted to create buildings like these at home. In Boston, the first Italian Renaissance building was a combination museum and theatre on Tremont Street, next to the Kings Chapel Burying ground. Designed by Hammatt Billings c.1845 it had quite an impact on those who were more accustomed to seeing the less ornate facades of Greek Revival and Federal style buildings.

The Norfolk House has a balanced or symmetrical façade. This hotel's main entrance is dramatically set off by rusticated stone blocks. The entrance's arch features a prominent keystone. The main façade is flanked by storefronts that showcased fashions sold by the H.S. Lawrence & Company Clothing Store. The corners of the building are enlivened by raised blocky forms called quoins. These quoins are composed of individual bricks rather than stone. The windows of the second story are taller than those of the upper floors, suggesting that they originally illuminated formal public rooms. Our eyes are drawn to the center of the third story because three windows are set within shallow blind arches that belie a lingering interest in Federal style architecture on the part of the architect. Particularly noteworthy are is the corbelled cornice above the fifth story windows whose arches shelter the small arched windows of this floor.

### **Architectural Terminology**

**Keystone:** The central wedge shaped stone at the crown of an arch.

**Corbelled cornice:** Projecting bricks on the face of a wall that are sometimes stepped or form repeated arches for the sake of adding design interest at the point where the main body of a building meets the roof.

### **Spooner Lambert House**

64 Bartlett Street  
Built 1780-1782  
Late Georgian

Built during the early 1780s, the Spooner Lambert House is a late example of the Georgian Revival. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century it transitioned from private residence to The Ladies' Unity Club Home for Aged People. Memorably sited on a corner lot, its front yard is held in place by a rubblestone retaining wall. Granite posts mark the corners of the retaining wall. Like the Dillaway-Thomas House that was built thirty years earlier, this house has a balanced, symmetrical main façade with a center entrance flanked by pairs of windows. The rectangular main block measures 5-bays-by-two-bays and is enclosed by a low-hipped roof. By c.1760, the hipped roof had begun to supplant the gambrel roof in wide spread use. The hipped roof became progressively less steeply pitched until, by 1790, it appears as almost flat in the houses of the new Federal style. At the narrow flat center of the roof is a small platform that is encircled by an ornamental wooden railing—this feature is sometimes called a widow's walk. Here, its encircling balustrade is more ornamental than practical. Flanking the widow's walk are substantial brick chimneys designed to be tall enough to keep sparks from setting the roof on fire.



This house's form is noteworthy not just for its well proportioned main block but for no less than five ells that project from three sides of the house. One of the rear ells may represent one of the first examples of a polygonal bay in New England.

As we have just seen at Ionic Hall, the front porch is not original but was added, probably around 1840. The wooden Ionic porch columns are fluted and rise to a flat roof. The roof is encircled by wooden railings. Corresponding to the three dimensional columns are Ionic pilasters that read visually as flattened columns.

### Architectural Terminology

**Ionic column:** A classical order distinguished by the shape of the capital, with a spiral scroll called a volute, on either side. Reportedly the distinctive shape of Ionic capitals was inspired by rams' horns

**Hipped roof** A roof with slopes on all four sides. The hips are the lines of meeting of the slopes at the corners.

**Widow's walk:** A small observation platform with a decorative railing around it, frequently found on the roofs of eighteenth and nineteenth century houses in coastal towns. These are popularly associated with seaman's families, but were also used to enjoy the view, even if not near the coast.

*After looking at the Spooner Lambert House we'll stroll along Dudley Street and turn left on to Highland Street. As we make our way up Highland away from John Eliot Square, we'll pass the charming Queen Anne town houses at **3 and 5 Highland Street** (ca.1880). These picturesquely rendered row houses would look at home on the side streets of Boston's Back Bay neighborhood and belie the fact that urban masonry forms introduced to the neighborhood after the Civil War always took the form of Mansard row houses. Note the ornate terra cotta panel located to the right of the entrance to 3 Highland Street. Depicted on this panel are apples that are carved in high relief. Also noteworthy is this house's Flemish gable that was typical of the Queen Anne style's penchant for combining references borrowed from turn of the eighteenth century English and Dutch design—during the reign of Queen Anne. During the 1860s, the British architect Richard Norman Shaw brought the Queen Anne style to the world's attention and it began to catch on in America during the late 1870s.*

*Next we will continue to head west on Highland Street until we reach its intersection with Morley Street. Morley Street is a dead end way whose streetscapes derive interest from the forms and types of its buildings that stand at odd angles to each other. The result is an interesting visual dialogue that came about because of a c. early 1870s development of urban row houses that were constructed within a suburban environment. The developer of the row houses at the head of the dead end way or cul-de-sac must have thought he was starting a trend for the proliferation of masonry row houses in the Highlands—a trend that never came to pass. That this was the case has to do in part, because families who moved here continued to prefer single and multi family houses constructed of wood. Small, groups of brick row houses are, however, scattered about Mission Hill and Jamaica Plain as well as Roxbury but were never represented to the extent that they are in Boston's South End.*

*Another reason why Morley/Highland Streets looks the way it does is because of, a major house moving between 1899 and 1906. House moving in New England was fairly common in New England from Colonial times moving forward into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. If one could gather a large group of strong neighborhood men capable of jacking up a house off of its foundations then the next step was to roll tree trunks under the building. After accomplishing all that*



*then off the moving party would go with the house to the new house lot. Buildings as large as churches were moved in this fashion. In the case of the Hale House at 12 Morley Street the house movers didn't have far to go—literally to an undeveloped lot located just around the corner. By the early 1930s, the former Hale House lot on Highland became host to the chapel scale Trinity Lettish Evangelical Free Church that has been known as the Timothy Baptist Church since 1967. It is fun and instructive to see two very different forms design traditions at odd angles to each other as is evident in the monumental Classicism of the Hale House and the Gothicism of the Baptist Church, complete with pointed arched windows and buttressed walls.*



## HIGHLAND STREET

### **Edward Everett Hale House**

12 Morley Street

1835

Style: Greek Revival

The Hale House was built ca. 1835, providing evidence that by that time Roxbury was transitioning from a rural farming community to a suburban town that became host to mansion house estates. This house was originally located around the corner at 39 Highland Street. The house's most famous owner was Edward Everett Hale, Unitarian minister, author and statesman who lived here from 1869-1909.

Architecturally, the Hale House is a substantial and early Boston area example of a Greek Revival residence. The main facade is dominated by a monumental Ionic colonnade that is more typical of the mansions of the Deep South than New England. The columns rise to support a long rectangular horizontal component called an entablature. The entablature is crowned by a triangular pediment. Visually the portico is meant to recall the temples of ancient Greece such as the Parthenon in Athens.

The Greek Revival style captured the imaginations of Americans in part because of the archaeological findings being made by the British in Greece which were illustrated in books. Americans also identified with the Greek struggle for independence against their Turkish oppressors during the 1820s.

Looking behind the columns one notices the central placement of the generously proportioned front door which is set off by side lights containing four glass panes. The front door is surmounted by a multi-pane transom. Flanking the front door are tall windows that contain 6/9 wood sash. The double dormers visible on either side of the porch pediment may have been added in 1914 when the building was adapted for reuse as apartments.

### **Architectural Terminology**

**Colonnade:** A series of freestanding or engaged columns supporting an entablature or simple beam.

**Sidelight:** A framed area of fixed glass alongside a door or window.

**Transom:** A narrow horizontal window unit, either fixed or movable, over a door. Sometimes called a transom light.

### **Timothy Baptist Church**

35 Highland Street

1932

Style: Gothic Revival



Originally built for a congregation whose members hailed from the Baltic nation of Latvia, this church like St. Luke's Chapel on Roxbury Street packs a lot of Gothic architectural detail on to a small chapel-scale church. Particularly pleasing is its straightforward rectangular form, contrasting red brick and white concrete trim elements and gable roof. Most of the interest in the main façade lies in its porch which is pierced by pointed keystone arches. The porch shelters front steps that leads to the front doors and is enclosed by a flat roof that is bordered by a low crenellated parapet. Directly above the porch's roof is a circular window—the one deviation from the building's celebration of the pointed arch window. The side walls are divided into \_\_\_bays by projections from the walls called buttresses.

### **Architectural Terminology**

**Crenellation:** A form of embellishment on a parapet consisting of indentations (crenels) alternating with solid blocks of wall (merlons).

**Lancet Arch:** An arch generally tall and sharply pointed, whose centers are farther apart than the width or span of the arch.

**Parapet:** A low wall at the edge of a roof, balcony or terrace, sometimes formed by the upward extension of the wall below.

*Continuing westward along Highland Street, we'll cross Cedar Street and head towards Alvah Kittredge Square. Plenty of seating in this out door "urban living room" makes this an ideal place to stop and talk about our surroundings. Like the intersection of Morley Street, Alvah Kittredge Square is surrounded by buildings that speak to the different stages of the Highlands' development. Served up for our consideration to the east is a group of five early 1870s row houses that address Kittredge Square on a diagonal (**1-5 Alvah Kittredge Square**). Characterized by high stoops (a New York City Dutch word for front steps), full length angled bay windows, door and window surrounds with incised lines and steep-sided mansard roofs. On the north side of the square is a lone wood frame mansard house of the late 1860s while on the south side of the square is a row of c. late 1890s multi-family buildings that share a single expansive façade. Here, much interest is derived from the repetition of arched door and window lintels.*

### **Alvah Kittredge Mansion**

Site of Roxbury Lower Fort  
12 Linwood Street  
1836

Like the Hale House on Morley Street, the Alvah Kittredge Mansion was moved—but in this case not very far from its original location. During the late 1800s it was turned 45 degrees to face Linwood Street where it lost its wings and distinctive landscaping as well as an unusual wooden observation tower (demolished) that was located behind this house. A vintage photograph in Jane Holtz Kay's *Lost Boston* shows the Kittredge mansion with no fewer than three contiguous side wings. Originally located between the main façade and Highland Street was a circular driveway that wrapped around a landscaped island that had a statue at its center. The important Boston architect Nathaniel J. Bradlee recognized the great beauty of this mansion's design. He owned and occupied



this house during the late 1800s.

The Kittredge Mansion is currently in poor condition but enough remains so that it could be brought back to a semblance of its original Greek Revival glory. Like the Hale House, the Kittredge place consists of a two-story rectangular box-like form whose main façade is dominated by a fluted Ionic columned portico. The columns rise two stories from a wooden platform to an entablature. Still visible at the center of the roof is the base of the house's original octagonal monitor. This low-slung structural feature had narrow rectangular windows on each of its sides. The monitor's roof was encircled by an ornamental railing that enclosed a flat roof.

The main façade is very balanced and symmetrical with a center entrance flanked by pairs of tall windows. The main façade is sheathed in flush boards that do not overlap in the manner of clapboards. Here, each board is laid flush one atop another—an effect that was considered desirable because from afar it suggested more expensive stone walls. The front door is flanked by side lights and a rectangular transom. The transom is set off by a bracketed door hood whose proportions are of interest because of a delicate, refined sensibility not always typical of the Greek Revival. The tall windows of the first floor probably originally had 6/9 double-hung sash—the lower sash could be pushed upwards so that one could make their way on to the porch from the formal rooms within.

### **Architectural Terminology**

**Flush boards:** Unlike clapboards flush which overlap each other, flush boards are a type of sheathing that are literally “flush” with boards located above and below. Flush boards were thought to suggest more expensive masonry materials—particularly when sand was mixed into the paint that was applied to these boards.

**Pedimented lintels:** Triangular structural member found in Greek Revival design that supports the wall over an opening such as a door or window.

**Roof monitor:** An extensive, low-slung feature on a roof that is typically enclosed by its own flat or shed roof. It may be located along one of the roof slopes or along the ridgeline and is usually pierced by a band of windows or vents.

*Returning to Highland Street, cross Cedar Street and continue westward to Fort Avenue. Here the street passes through rugged terrain that is tailor-made to be host to a picturesque carpenter's Gothic house such as 108 Highland Street. Across the street, perched atop a high rocky ledge are the buildings of St. Margaret's Convent.*

### **William Lloyd Garrison House (Rockledge)**

17 Highland Park Street (Main façade overlooks Highland Street)

Built 1854

Style: Italianate

Built for druggist Joseph W. Hunnewell, the second owner was none other than the great abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison. Looking up at this house from Highland Street it is not hard to



imagine Garrison, the editor of the famous anti slavery newspaper, the Liberator, sitting out on the houses south porch reading a book and enjoying cool breezes afforded by the house's elevated terrain. Few houses in the Boston area possess a surrounding landscape as dramatic as Garrison's House. Viewed from Highland Street, the house is perched high on a huge outcropping of Roxbury puddingstone. Between the iron fence bordering Highland Street and the ledge is a long rectangular lawn. Behind the house is the Olmsted Park containing the Gothic Revival Cochituate Stand Pipe. Measuring three-bays-by-two-bays, this house has a highly symmetrical main façade. Here the main entrance is set off by sidelights that culminate in round arches. The front door is also crowned by a molded round arch. What the pointed or lancet arch window is the Gothic Revival buildings the round arch is one of the identifying features of the Italianate style. The front door opens on to a full-length front porch whose roof is supported by paired posts. The porch roof supports a polygonal oriel of substantial proportions. The corners of the house are accented by scored blocks called quoins. The house is enclosed by a gable roof with deep-bracketed eaves. Rising from the roof are a pair of gable-roofed dormers whose side walls are ornamented with saw cut scrolls. Rockledge is part of a complex that now home to St. Margaret 's Convent and the DeBlois Conference Center.

### **Architectural Terminology**

**Polygonal oriel:** Angled bay projecting from an upper floor.

**Quoin:** One of the bricks or stones laid in alternating directions, which bond and form the exterior corner of the building. Sometimes quoins are simulated in wood and stucco.



## HIGHLAND PARK

### The Cochituate Stand Pipe

Fort Avenue, Centre and Beech Glen

1869

N.J. Bradlee, Architect

Style: Gothic Revival

The Cochituate Stand Pipe was built in 1869 on Fort Hill to store water and pump it to houses in Roxbury. The architect, Nathaniel J. Bradlee is variously listed as a resident of the South End and Roxbury and reportedly lived in the Alvah Kittredge Mansion from 187\_ to 1896. Bradlee's work included the Unitarian Church at Monument Square, Jamaica Plain (1853), houses on the Lawrence estate in eastern Brookline (1850s) and numerous commercial buildings in downtown Boston.

The stand pipe calls attention to the fact that it rises from the site of an important Revolutionary War fortification—the Roxbury High Fort that was a “strong earthwork” planned by Henry Knox and Josiah Waters and erected by the American Army in June, 1776. The park that surrounds the stand pipe dates to 1895 and represents a late work by the great American landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted.

The Boston area has numerous iconic hill top monuments. The Egyptian Revival obelisk called the Bunker Hill Monument (1825-1842) in Charlestown perhaps comes most readily to mind. Another hill top monument can actually be seen from Elliot Square—the Dorchester Heights monument that takes the form of a gleaming white marble church steeple.

The exterior of this cylindrical Gothic Revival structure is constructed of brick with a granite cornice.

At the base of the tower is an octagonal structure with steeply pitched gable roofs at each end. The walls at the top of the tower are pierced by lancet windows. The structure is capped by a pointed steeple with a cast iron finial. The tower looks like a remnant of a much larger castle that one might find in the Bavarian Alps or in Disneyland's Magic Kingdoms.

*After enjoying panoramic views afforded by the stand pipe's park we'll cross Fort Avenue and zigzag down to Centre Street via the L-shaped street called Highland Park. We'll admire the c.1870s carriage house that is part of St. Margaret's Episcopal Convent. Ornamental brickwork is one of the aspects of this structure that makes it so appealing. Here, raised, segmental arched lintels of doors and windows are connected to each other by lintel courses composed of angled bricks. In addition to the lintel course, a continuous band of angled bricks is in evidence beneath the roof eaves. At the center of the main façade is a carriage entrance that is surmounted by what was originally a hayloft door. The building is crowned by a slate shingle-sheathed Mansard roof.*

*Continuing north down Highland Park we'll see more evidence of an urban sensibility attempting to assert itself during the 1870s in the form of brick row houses on the west side of the street while the east side maintained its suburban character in the form of wooden Italianate houses of interest for their forms and carved wooden elements.*

*Before reaching the intersection of Fort Avenue, Cedar Street and Centre Street we'll pause on Fort Avenue to look down on the trio of originally identical Greek Revival houses that were built around 1850 as an upscale tract*



*development. Numbered 111, 121 and 123 Centre street, these generously proportioned wood frame residences stand with three-bay end gables to the street. Each of their main facades is enlivened by broad pilasters that strike stately, dignified notes. The position of their front doors suggests a side hall interior plan that corresponds with double parlors. 123 Centre Street is the house that is the most intact.*

*Continuing eastward on Centre Street we'll see more evidence of Roxbury Highlands as an early rural romantic suburb of Boston.*



## CENTRE STREET

### **James P. Flint House**

64 Centre Street

1845

James Haycock, housewright (attributed)

The James P. Flint House is noteworthy for its memorable combination of memorable siting and highly unique design. This architectural gem is essentially a cottage with a highly sophisticated design. Approaching this residence from the west one notices that it is situated on the side of a steep grassy knoll, its front yard held in place by a retaining wall composed of Roxbury puddingstone. Bordering a great bend in Centre Street, an ancient thoroughfare, the house and its parcel symbolize rural Roxbury on the verge of suburbanization in the 1840s.

Little is known of its likely housewright James Haycock who died in Sacramento, California in 1850. Either Haycock or his clients Boston merchant James P. Flint and his wife, Ann were familiar with English Regency design, The Regency style was England's version of America's Greek Revival—the English version typically was known for pilasters of much greater width than those of America as well as more profuse ornamentation in the form of panels and leafy, heavily carved brackets.

Much of the Flint House's architectural interest lies on its street-facing gable. Here, a truncated gable projects over the front porch and is supported by Ionic columns. The columns rise to meet an unusually broad entablature which is also in keeping with the Regency interest in generous proportions.

The front door features narrow multi-pane sidelights and the two windows to the right of the front door are taller than standard size. The unique aspect of this house is the truncated gable where four wooden piers are ranged across its face—from the corners as well as flanking center windows. Above these attic windows is an ornamental panel. The edges of the house are accented by corner boards—the corner boards, columns and piers of the front gable are vertical elements that imbue what is essentially a modest cottage with the stateliness of a residence three or four times its size.

Next door to the Flint House is a second, more substantial two-story house at 60 Centre Street that is also noteworthy for its Regency stylistic flourishes including wide corner and center façade pilasters and a recessed entrance porch.

### **Architectural Terminology**

**Regency:** The style of English architecture that was popular between the 1790s and 1830s. Regency style is perhaps best expressed in America in Savannah Georgia as seen in the houses of William Jay that date to around 1820, In New England, the Regency's influence arrives late and is brief, being mostly expressed during the 1840s. Regency design relies heavily on a combination of neo classical forms and picturesque character,

**Roxbury puddingstone:** A dense sedimentary rock that is less porous than brownstone and holds up fairly well under harsh weather conditions. Essentially a ledge stone typically seen in



outcroppings in Boston neighborhoods such as the Highlands, Jamaica Plain and especially Mission Hill. Local people thought the stone 's color was reminiscent of butterscotch pudding. Roxbury puddingstone was used to build retaining walls, house foundations and here and there facing material for first stories. Several modest rows of houses bordering and near Mission Hill's Parker Street are composed of this material.

### **The John Roessle House**

47 Centre Street  
1867

47 Centre Street is the house that lager beer built. Lager is a German word meaning to store, to age. Lager beer was known for its "effervescence, tang, and lighter, less-bitter-than-ale taste. The honor of brewing the first lager in Massachusetts, and-for that matter—the first in all of New England—goes to John Roessle who erected a small brew house in Roxbury in 1846. By 1879, six years before his death, he was among the top brewers in Boston. Indeed, in that year, the 42,800 barrels of beer that rolled out of his brewery made him the third largest producer of beer behind only Boston Beer Company and Suffolk Brewing Company. John Roessle was the owner of the Roessle Brewery at 1250 Columbus Avenue that was actively producing lager beer from 1846 until Prohibition temporarily put an end to legal purchase of alcohol. After Prohibition was repealed by Congress in 1932, Roessele Beer resumed production in 1933 until it finally closed in 1951.

Although altered it is possible to understand this building stylistically based on its form and roof configuration. Here, Italianate features such as sawcut brackets at the roof eaves and the monumental cupola are blended with the Mansard style. The cupola is pierced by typically Italianate arched windows and exhibits a dentil course beneath its eaves. A very similar cupola that once crowned a Roxbury mansion may be seen on the plaza in front of The Boston Center for the Arts on Tremont Street, near Clarendon Street—this cupola has been pressed into service as a bank machine, community bulletin board and refreshment stand. According to the first director of the BCA, he was on the lookout for some iconic structure to serve as a logo for his evolving arts complex. He received a call from a wrecking company early one morning. The wrecker knew the director was on the look out for such a structure, told him the availability of the cupola and the next thing the director knew it appeared in a flat bed truck on Tremont Street where it was subsequently installed in front of the arts complex.

At the Roessle House, the mansard or modern French roof bristles with segmental headed dormers and has a profile that is somewhere between bell cast and straight sided. The mansard roof is crowned by a hip roof. The hip-on-mansard roof became popular after 1865 as a way to provide more head room.

### **Architectural Terminology**

**Bell cast profile:** The mansard roof was introduced to the Boston area in 1847 at the Deacon Mansion that once stood at the corner of West Concord Street and Washington Street in the South End. Named for the late 1600s French architect Jean Mansart, the early Boston mansards were low-



slung and said to have the profile of a bell. After the Civil War, the pitch of the mansard's profile became steeper and was called staright-sided.

**Cupola:** A lookout or similar small structure on top of a building.

**Dentils:** A small ornamental block forming one of a series set in a row, A dentil molding is composed of such a series.

### **Louis Prang House**

45 Centre Street

Built: 1858

Style: Italianate

Built for Louis Prang, founder of the Prang art Publishing House, the building presently provides the community with 33 units affordable housing. Prang's factory is located nearby at 280-286 Roxbury Street. The chromolithographs produced in Prang's factory depicted great works of art at affordable prices. Prang was a political activist who was forced to flee Germany because of his advocacy of "social democracy." Prang's "chromos" found a nation-wide audience and are second only to Currier and Ives as a source of art prints for the mass market.

Prang's house is of interest for its formal design that features a towered center pavilion that is flanked by polygonal bays. The boxy three-bay-by-two-bay main block is clad with clapboards. Belt courses and band mouldings visually separate the house's floors. The main block is enclosed by a slate shingle-sheathed slate hipped roof. The corners of the pavilion are enlivened by quoins. The tower's third story is pierced by a contiguous trio of arched windows.

### **Architectural Terminology**

**Band mouldings:** The wooden equivalent of masonry string courses. Band courses on wooden buildings are generally narrower than other courses, extending across the façade of a building and in some cases encircling it.

**Hipped roof:** A roof that slopes inward from all four sides. The edge where ant two planes meet is called a hip.