

The South End Historical Society Newsletter

Winter 2014



South End Sun Masthead, *Boston Public Library*

The South End Sun

by Alison Barnet

Wanted: Women Living in the South End interested to hook rugs at Workroom of South End House Industry. Apply between 10 and 4 (except Saturdays and Sundays), 171 West Brookline St.

February 13, 1925

The name *South End Sun* was the result of a contest. The usual suggestions had been made: South End Weekly, South End World, Boston Advocate, and Boston Times, and, more adventurous, The Fascinator, The Illuminator, The Melting Pot, The Spark Plug, and the South End Optimist. The Board of Editors went with *South End Sun* and awarded \$10 to the man who thought it up. The *Sun's* original motto, "Published in the Interest of the Welfare of the South End and Back Bay" became: "Shines For All But Especially for Those Between Boston Common and Roxbury."

The *Sun's* territory may have been larger than the South End but most of the news and columns pertained to the South End.

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Check our website

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for upcoming programs, events,
and walking tours

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The SEHS newsletter is a benefit of membership in the Society; a nonprofit organization dedicated to recognizing, preserving and recording the historical buildings, monuments, parks and artifacts of Boston's South End and through advocacy, documentation and education to preserve them for future generations.

Individual membership is \$25 per year, Family/Dual memberships are \$40, and opportunities to support the Society at the Supporting (\$100), Patron (\$150) and Benefactor (\$250) levels are also available.

The opinions expressed by the contributors to the newsletter are not necessarily those of the SEHS. Ideas for stories and manuscripts are welcome. Unsolicited manuscripts submitted for possible publication and not used will be returned if they are accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Those interested in reprinting articles must obtain written permission from the editor.

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Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Members,

Happy New Year! I am very excited to bring you the first newsletter of my tenure as Executive Director of the South End Historical Society. Although I'm new to this position, I am not new to the SEHS. I first began working as a collections volunteer in December of 2011 to supplement my Masters work in History at Northeastern University. In my two years with the SEHS, I have come to see what a special neighborhood the South End truly is, and I am honored to be a part of preserving its rich and varied history.

Our featured article for this issue is by local historian Alison Barnet. Alison writes about *The South End Sun*, a local newspaper that circulated between 1924 and 1927. The Sun was an early innovator of the column-driven, South End-focused publication, a format that was continued in other, later newspapers such as *The South End News*.

Alison's article offers a wonderful jumping off point to explore the newspapers in our own collections. This newsletter also features an article by Catherine Choquette, a long-time volunteer on our collections project. Catherine writes about a 145 year-old copy of the *Boston Daily Journal* that we have in our own collections, with special attention paid to the rather dubious claims made in 19th century newspaper advertisements.

We are also blending old media with the new by bringing you a feature we call "South End Then and Now." This feature has been very popular on our social media, and is updated every week on our Flickr page. If you would like to see this and other fun weekly features between newsletters, you can like us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter @SouthEndHistSoc.

Happy reading!



Stacen Goldman,
Executive Director



Stacen and former Executive Director, Hope Shannon, together at an SEHS event.

(continued from page 1)

If you own a home in the South End and are not a subscriber to the local newspaper, we need not tell you that you are doing yourself an injustice.

You owe it to yourself to become acquainted with the more intimate details of South End life and South End people.

Robert A. Woods, Head Worker at South End House and a member of the *Sun's* advisory board, welcomed readers to the first issue with "A Neighbor's Paper."



Bust of Robert Woods, the Harriet Tubman House

The South End contains great numbers of neighborly people who have a poor chance of getting acquainted. They think with longing of the simple societies of the "good old days." They remember when they knew everybody that lived around about them. They would like to feel that they were members of a real community once more....

Its columns will be open to every agency that is re-enforcing the best interests of the districts. It will

persistently bring out and emphasize the great and powerful resources of this part of the city for popular education, wholesome enjoyment and inspiration to right living.

Published weekly between December 1924 and January 1927—while Prohibition was in effect—the *South End Sun* sold for five cents and was chock full of news, sports, and ads. Its most distinguishing feature, however, was the columns contributed by community groups as diverse as



Interior of Franklin Square House, 1930.
Property of the South End Historical Society

the Children's Art Centre, Franklin Square House, Boston Dispensary, Jewish Welfare Centre, South End Women's Club, and the Boston Rooming House Association.

Tickets are now on sale for the Dance of the Boston Rooming House Association; which event takes place in Robert Burns Hall, Caledonian Building, 53 Berkeley Street, on the evening of February 6.

There was a history column written by "An Old South Ender," a Who's Who of people who once lived in the South End, and another called "Seen and Heard," observations on neighborhood life.

The *Sun* took its history to heart. A controversy broke out in March 1925 when it seemed the South End had been neglected because Patriots' Day had "failed to take account of William Dawes' Passage Over the Neck... Did Mr. Dawes walk over the Neck to Roxbury in order to get a horse at Eliot Square? Did he go in a coach? Or did some one else carry the dispatch to Eliot Square, where it was delivered to Dawes?" It asked, "Are there not some among

our readers who can clear up the questions of how Mr. Dawes, or another, reached Eliot Square?”

Other notable events were the removal of “the statue of the discoverer”—Christopher Columbus—from the Cathedral of the Holy Cross to St. Anthony’s Church in Revere —“We Lose Statue”—and the sale of the Church of Our Lady of Pompeii, a fixture of the New York Streets.

The *Sun* listed real estate transactions but never mentioned the purchase price.

78 Emerald street—John W. Grooms and wife have bought from Veronica S. Gerrior et al. Three and one-half story brick house; 1045 square feet land; taxed \$4,100; land, \$2,100.

When the *South End Sun* began—or should I say when the *Sun* came up?—the publisher was Augustus Seaver, who lived at New Castle Court, 599 Columbus Avenue. He was the owner of the Wage Earner Publishing Company and editor of the Wage Earner Press at 263 Northampton Street (now “The Modern”), and this address became the *Sun*’s address. Seaver had an interesting background. In 1911, he had run for governor of Massachusetts. Thirty-six at the time, a graduate of the English High School, and president of the Workingman’s Club at 1125 Washington Street (Dover Street), he had hoped to establish a labor party. In July 1925, “finding that [the *Sun*] is demanding more of his time than he can justly take from his business,” Edmund R. Brown took over. Brown was the president of a gift shop at the corner of Stuart and Dartmouth Streets, and a resident of Sharon. The *Sun*’s address then became 454 Stuart Street.

Seaver continued to serve on the paper’s editorial board, along with Albert Kennedy and H. S. Upham, two prominent members of the South End community. Kennedy had worked with Robert Woods, doing the research that resulted in the publication of the books *Handbook of Settlements*, *Young Working Girls*, and *The Zone of Emergence*. He had been pivotal in starting the Children’s Art Centre. His wife was the *Sun*’s poetry editor. Harry Upham, a twenty-eight year resident of 127 Pembroke Street, was a hard-working member of the South End Improvement Society and head of the *Sun*’s public service department. According to Kennedy, Upham, who died in 1926, had intended to write a South End history. “It is to be regretted that he delayed too long.”

Another notable member of the *Sun*’s staff was the well-known artist Philip L. Hale of Roxbury, the *Sun*’s art editor.

When Robert Woods became ill, the *Sun* kept readers apprised of his condition, and, when he died in 1925, he was lauded in the paper for months.

Mourn Sudden Death of Robert A. Woods

Internationally Known Leader in Education and Social Work Dies Unexpectedly – He loved the South End – Funeral at St. Paul’s

The paper then began a vigorous campaign to raise money for a life-sized bust of Woods, which was eventually installed at 20 Union Park and is now at the Harriet Tubman House.

The *Sun* was big on directories: directories of playgrounds, gyms, public baths, municipal buildings, libraries, and boarding houses. There were long lists of advisory groups. Clubs got a lot of play; in addition to those already established, new clubs included the Widow and Widowers Social Club, the Little Brother and Little Sister Club (formed by Malden Street children) and, because there were so many older South Enders, a Three-Quarters of a Century Club was proposed.



Postcard of the East Armory, 1915.
Property of the South End Historical Society

Regional boxing and wrestling dominated the sports pages, but never to the exclusion of the small and local.

English H. S. and Mechanics Arts H. S. hold inter-class meets at East Armory

[site of Fuller Mental Health]. Several South end boys figured in the scoring.

Frank H. Connaghton of 48 Union Park, famous big league baseball player and real estate agent, was Big Time.

The *Sun* was tender-hearted toward many.

South End Newsboy Died in City Hospital

We will miss John D. Fuller, who just died. John was a familiar figure to hundreds of South End people, not only those who lived near the corner of Tremont and Dartmouth street, where he sold his papers every day, rain or shine...Despite his deformed body he was cheerful and on the hustle, and ready to smile upon the slightest provocation. The wintry blasts of the past week must have been to [sic] much for him...

The South Bay Union column was also quite homey.

We are sorry to hear that Mrs. Sontag, of Union Park street, fell down a flight of stairs last Monday, and was quite shaken up by the fall. Mrs. Melanaphy’s son, John, of 635 Harrison Avenue, has been very ill with tonsillitis.

“South End Roomer Ends Life” was not an uncommon headline.

Dennis A. Linehan Leaves a Fortune lived in “rather bare room” 54 E. Dedham started as a mechanic

Residents’ names were generally Irish or Middle-Eastern and occasionally Jewish, but the *Sun* apparently did not shine on the black community, unless it involved crime.

Thirty Year Sentence for South End Boy

Harry Alexander, colored, of 27 Fay Street, was handed a thirty year sentence...after he had pleaded guilty to a charge of manslaughter on the night of December 31st.

Alexander is accused of being the outside man in the robbery the night when Harry Hamburg was murdered in his little shop on Shawmut avenue.

The hospitals got their share of coverage.

Nurses Make 204 Calls in South End Last Week

City Hospital Greatly Over-Crowded Washington Home Asks for Increased Facilities: Dr. Gray says alcoholism on Increase



Postcard of the entrance to Mass Homeopathic Hospital, ca. 1915.
Property of the South End Historical Society

When the Homeopathic Hospital (now Boston Medical Center) started a new appointment system, it was cause for celebration. The *Sun* had editorialized on “the dull weight of suffering borne, the utter discouragement of watching the slow progress of waiting line.”

A fire in a Shawmut Avenue stable was a cause for outrage. Thirty horses burned to death, and the *Sun* kept on the case until “Owner of Fire-Trap stable convicted.”

A stable fire is as unlikely to happen today as the following:

Washington Street Accident

In a crash this week between a Boston Elevated car and a milk wagon at Groton and Washington...

In late 1925, the *Sun* began agitating for replacement of tenement houses as well as for the removal of the Washington Street El.

South End Houses Declared Unsafe

Many Fear Collapse of Houses: South End suffers hysteria over its habitations.

Many of the houses deemed unsafe were in the extended New York Streets area, Essex to Dover Street, Washington Street to the South Bay. Others were scattered throughout the neighborhood, on West Newton Street, Concord Square, and West Rutland Square.

There was no mercy for the El, which had been running above Washington Street since 1901.

The erection of the iron monstrosity, which disfigures a fine street, provided relief for Roxbury and the towns beyond at the expense of this district... Nothing can be done for the district that would fully repay it for what it has suffered from this infliction.

In subsequent issues, the *Sun* railed against the tong wars in Chinatown and against bootlegging.

What the Boot Legger knows

He knows that youth delights in what is forbidden—and profits by it...

Jazzy, semi-clad, flushed with passion, hilarious, giddy and gay—the scene, almost anywhere, the time almost any night...Is it your daughter?...Drinking from silver flasks, autoing in the moonlight, singing the toast “Here’s to Life, let’s create it” – is it a good thing to see? I tell you no...

The *Sun* set on January 15, 1927. Unfortunately, the Boston Public Library’s holdings go only to November 1925 and what happened later, I can’t say. As with the question on Mr. Dawes’ ride: I ask: Are there not some among my readers who can clear up the question of the *South End Sun*’s demise? ❧

Alison Barnet is the author of Extravaganza King, Robert Barnet and Boston Musical Theater, a biography of her great-grandfather playwright, and of the recently-published South End Character, a collection of her South End News columns over the last four years. She has lived in the South End since 1964.

The *South End Sun* might remind our readers of another column-driven local newspaper. When it started in 1980, the *South End News* featured a history column by SEHS founding President, Dick Card, John Sacco’s police report, as well as columns written by community institutions including SEPAC and Boston City Hospital. The *South End News* continues this tradition today with recognizable columns such as ‘Ask Dog Lady’ by Monica Collins and ‘South End Character’ by the author of this piece, Alison Barnet.

From the Collections...

By Catherine Choquette, SEHS Collections Volunteer

As someone who gets the majority of my news through my smartphone, I find the old newspapers in the SEHS archives particularly interesting. In fact, the other day, I was holding in my hands an original issue of the *Boston Daily Journal* from 1868. My mind was officially blown holding a 145 year-old newspaper. Just for a little perspective, in 1868 the president was Andrew Johnson; the first volume of Louisa May Alcott’s “Little Women” was published; Thomas Edison received his first patent for the electronic voice machine. In 1868 the price for a pound of butter was 44 cents and it cost 4 cents to buy the *Boston Daily Journal*.

The *Boston Daily Journal*, originally called the *Evening Mercantile Journal*, was published from 1833 to 1917, when it merged with *The Boston Herald*. At the time, the number of newspapers published in the United States was over 5000. The amount of work involved in producing these newspapers, some of them twice a day, is incredible. With the absence of modern technology, all the type, which is very small, was set by hand, letter-by-letter. In order to print pictures, woodcuts were made, sometimes from drawings and sometimes from photographs.

So what could you find in a newspaper in 1868? This particular issue of the *Boston Daily Journal* is only 4 pages. I found it interesting that the majority of the actual news articles are not on the front page, like today, but on the last pages of the newspaper. The front pages of these old papers are filled with advertisements for clothing, farming equipment, household goods, real estate, public houses (hotels), steamer and railroad schedules. Many of these advertisements do not list prices, but there a few that do. For instance, you could buy a 33 acre estate in Newton Centre for \$12,000. That’s about \$200,000 in today’s money...still a bargain!

While we can learn much from the articles, the advertisements are often the most fascinating, as many of them make great claims that we find very hard to believe today.

Exec. Director’s Note: With the help of volunteers, we continue our ongoing project to organize and catalog our collections. When this project is complete, objects like the copy of the Boston Daily Journal examined here will be easily accessible to our membership and to visiting researchers interested in the South End.

Like the advertisement for Empress, for those looking to get rid of their gray hair, which reads “It has long been known that the hair, by mental exertion, by excitement, by disease and imperfect circulation, loses its vitality, turns gray and falls off”. The advertisement claims that “it is not a dye” and “will restore gray hair to its natural color”. It’s also good to know that “it is free from the disagreeable smell of sulphur”. Another ad, this time for Pratt’s Astral Oil, states that it “Is the best. Is always uniform, burns odorless, is perfectly safe and will not explode.” One of the more questionable advertisements asks that you send them a 6 cent stamp and they will send you Genuine Vegetable Balm which will “immediately remove pimples, freckles, blotches, tan, blackworms, and all the eruptions and impurities of the skin”. And just to sweeten the deal, they will also send you “free instructions for providing a growth of hair on a bald head or a smooth face”.

And what was making news on May 15, 1868? Articles about the impeachment of President Andrew Johnson dominate this particular issue of the *Boston Daily Journal*. In fact, if we had the paper from the following day, May 16th, we would learn that he was acquitted by one vote in the United States Senate. There is also a lengthy article about the delegates from Massachusetts heading to Chicago for Democratic National Convention who were delayed by weather. Personally, I find the advertisements a lot more interesting.

I thoroughly enjoy my time volunteering with the SEHS, working on documenting the collections and combing through the archives. In the future I hope to share more insights into the exciting history of the South End and what you can find in our collection here at the SEHS. ❧



Programs and Events

A Conversation with Jerry Foley and Friends

Thursday, January 23

Doors open at 6:30 pm with the panel discussion from 7:00–8:00 pm

Location: J.J. Foley's, 117 East Berkeley Street, South End.



Courtesy of Mount Washington Bank, please join us for an evening of lively conversation centered around J.J. Foley's and its unique history within the South End. The SEHS is hosting a panel discussion with Jerry Foley, 3rd generation owner of J.J. Foley's, along with local guests, John Sacco, retired Boston Police Officer, and Dave Wedge from *The Boston Herald*. The conversation will be moderated by Stephanie Schorow, local author of *Drinking Boston: A History of the City and Its Spirits*, as she discusses the history of the pub from their perspectives. Each ticket includes one free signature cocktail and appetizers. A cash bar will be available throughout the event. Copies of Stephanie's book, *Drinking Boston*, will also be available to purchase for \$18.50. We hope to see you there!

General tickets are \$5 for members and \$15 for non-members. You may also combine the purchase of Stephanie's book, along with your ticket, for \$15 for members and \$25 for non-members. To purchase tickets, visit www.southendhistoricalsociety.org or call 617-536-4445.

Alison Barnet: South End Character

Thursday, February 6, 2014, 6:30 pm

South End Historical Society, 532 Mass Ave.

Alison Barnet discusses her new book, *South End Character: Speaking out on Neighborhood Change*

New Members Reception

Thursday, February 20, 2014, 7:00 pm

South End Historical Society, 532 Mass Ave.

Join us as we greet our newest members with a wine and hors d'oeuvres reception

Strong Boy: The Life and Times of John L. Sullivan

Thursday, March 27, 2014, 6:30 pm

South End Historical Society, 532 Mass Ave.

Christopher Klein discusses the subject of his new book, *Strong Boy: The Life and Times of John L. Sullivan, America's First Sports Hero*.

From the Beginning... (A Walking Tour)

Saturday, April 26, 2014, 10:00 am

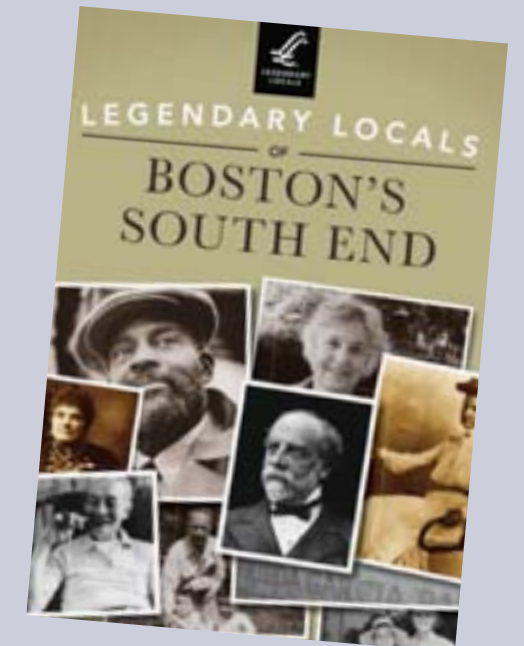
Meeting place to be determined

SEHS Historian John Neale presents a walking tour of the South End

For more information about these and other events, visit:
www.southendhistoricalsociety.org/events or call 617-536-4445

Forthcoming Publication about South End Residents

We are very excited about the upcoming publication of a new book, *Legendary Locals of Boston's South End*! Written by our former Executive Director, Hope Shannon, the book features the local characters that have made the South End such a rich and vibrant neighborhood over its 150+ years. The *Legendary Locals* series is published by Arcadia Publishing and a release date is expected for late spring of 2014. Stay tuned to our website and future newsletters for more details about the book and its upcoming launch!

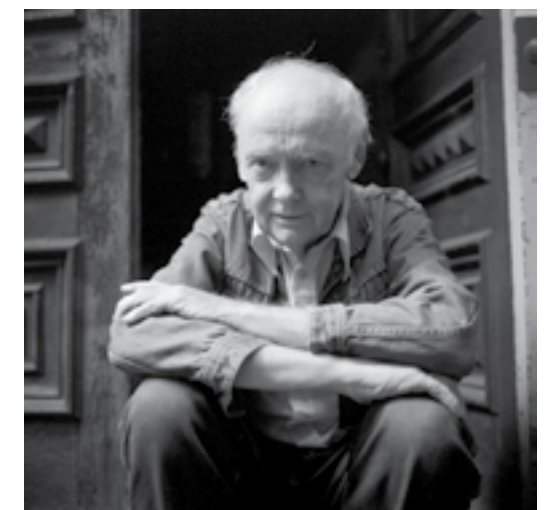


In Memory of Ralph Horne

We are sad to report the passing of Ralph Horne on December 14, 2013. Ralph was the subject of the featured article by Alison Barnet in our last newsletter. Of Ralph, Alison wrote:

“Politically and socially, Ralph Horne and I are often on opposite sides of South End issues. When he was a member of the ‘Balance Committee,’ calling for an immediate moratorium on all subsidized housing, I was wondering, in print, ‘What new committees do we have to look forward to? The Committee for Greed and Callousness?’ While he was throwing vegetables at Mayor Flynn for proposing the ‘Tree of Life’ for battered women, I was doing a satire on South End gentrification on cable TV. Nevertheless, I’ve gotten to know Ralph well and enjoy what we have in common: brains, a sense of humor, and a wee bit of eccentricity...”

To read more about Ralph, his extraordinary life, and his “quirky house museum,” you can read our Spring 2013 Newsletter at www.southendhistoricalsociety.org/newsletter/.



Ralph on his stoop.

MEMBERSHIP REMINDER

Our membership year runs from January 1 to December 31. If you have not yet renewed for 2014, please do so soon. Individual memberships are \$25 and family/dual memberships are \$40. Additional opportunities to support the Society include the supporting membership at \$100 (\$60 tax-deductible), the patron membership at \$150 (\$110 tax-deductible), and the benefactor membership at \$250 (\$210 tax-deductible). Checks for membership payments can be made out to South End Historical Society and sent to the same at 532 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston, MA 02118. Or you may visit our website at southendhistoricalsociety.org/membership and renew online with a credit card.

Volunteer Opportunities

Want to be more involved with the SEHS? We always need new volunteers! We have opportunities for volunteers in: the SEHS newsletter, fundraisers (Spring Ball and/or House Tour), collections, office tasks, preservation, history related projects, programs and events

Interested or have questions? Call Stacen Goldman at 617-536-4445 or email her at admin@southendhistoricalsociety.org.



Pictures from SEHS Collection Available for Reproduction

Pictures from the South End Historical Society's collections are available for reproduction. Fees vary depending on the photograph and the intended use.

Most reproduction requests ask for images from our popular 1972 South End Streets Survey. The Streets Survey includes approximately 3,000 images taken by the Historical Society in 1972 documenting every extant South End building. These images were used in the Historical Society's application to place the South End on the National Register of Historic Places, which was successful. Image reproductions from the South End Streets Survey carry a fee of \$30 each for a 300 dpi digital copy.

If you are interested in reproducing a SEHS image for personal, commercial, or research purposes, please contact us at 617-536-4445 or admin@southendhistoricalsociety.org for more information about our image collection, fees, and policies.



Image from the 1972 South End Streets Survey



Cast Iron Questions?

Need help restoring, repairing, or replacing your cast iron fence? The South End Historical Society can help! Call or email us at 617-536-4445 or admin@southendhistoricalsociety.org for more information.

Our 2013 House Tour!

by Maryellen Hassell,
House Tour Committee Chair

On a bright and sunny day in mid-October, over 600 ticket holders enjoyed viewing the gorgeous homes featured on this year's Tour — our 45th! Over the years, through the generosity of homeowners, the Tour has featured many beautiful and interesting South End homes, and this year's Tour did not disappoint!

Our Tour guests were treated to a grand townhouse, created from three condos; restored single family homes with modern conveniences that reflected their Victorian roots; a completely renovated home which maximized functionality, cohesion and efficiency; an expansive condo unit (one of two created by subdividing a spacious single family home) with a comfortable, contemporary, open-concept design; and a house of worship currently being transformed into multiple residential spaces. Each home had beautiful interiors incorporating the homeowner's personal style and interests while showing how

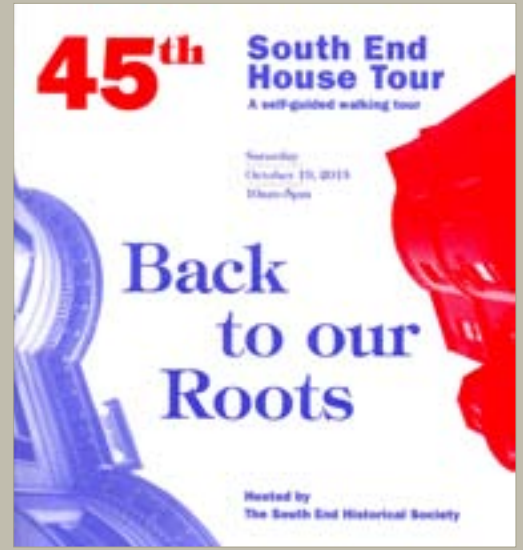
19th century buildings can fit the needs of 21st century homeowners through thoughtful restoration.

The House Tour, our largest fundraiser, is dependent on the generosity of many - our homeowners who graciously opened their homes for our Tour guests, our volunteers who 'house sat'; our corporate and individual sponsors for their financial support, as well as our house captains, graphic designers and committee members - all of whom are critical to the success of the Tour. Thank you!

Plans are underway for the 2014 Tour which will be held on Saturday, October 18th (note: the Tour is always on the third Saturday in October each year). If you are interested in having your home considered for the Tour, being a sponsor or volunteering to help with the House Tour, at 617- 536 - 4445 or email us at admin@southendhistoricalsociety.org



First Annual House Tour Guidebook (1967)



45th Annual House Tour Guidebook (2013)

South End Then and Now



525 Shawmut Ave

Then: Jim's Snack Bar (1972)

Now: Private Garden (2013)

1672 Washington St.

Then: Hite Radio and TV (1972)

Now: Zero Worcester Square (2013)



647 Tremont St.

Then: Eddie Cain's (1972)

Now: Tremont 647 (2013)

Corner of Berkeley St. and Appleton St.



Then: Parker Memorial Meeting House, a Unitarian Church (1870s)



Then: Sunny Corner Farms Convenience Store (1978)



Now: Apartments with Commercial Space (2013)