



The South End Historical Society NEWSLETTER

532 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02118-1402 — Vol. 24 No. 1, Spring 1995

Spring Ball

THE SEHS's Annual Spring Ball will be held Saturday, April 29, 1995 at the Boston Ballet. Adrienne Kimball, Susan Park, Nancy Parker Wilson, Lee Dunn, Jennifer Stevens, and Jeanne Galichich are the enthusiastic committee which has been preparing for this year's ball. The evening will begin at 8:00 P.M. and feature the sounds of Four Guys in Tuxes. East Meets West will be providing a delicious light supper. Invitations to the ball will be arriving soon, but mark your calendars and plan to bring a group of friends to this South End event.



Robert Campbell

Noted architect, author, and architecture critic for *The Boston Globe* will speak at The Annual Meeting of The SEHS New Hope Baptist Church 740 Tremont Street Thursday, June 8, 1995 7:45 P.M. Reception to follow RSVP by Monday, June 5 536-4445

Society Seeks Designation of Landmark District

BY ARTHUR F. HOWE

RECENTLY THE SOUTH End Historical Society presented a petition to the Boston Landmark Commission seeking designation of a section of the South End as a Light Manufacturing/Industrial Landmark District. The area, which is currently included in the present Landmark District as a protection area, is bounded by East Berkeley Street, Albany Street, East Concord Street, and Harrison Avenue. This designation gives the present South End Landmark Commission jurisdiction over demolition of existing buildings and control over height, massing, setback, and materials of new construction. The area contains a large number of factory buildings constructed in the latter part of the nineteenth century that are architecturally and historically important.

The history of manufacturing in America has always depended on the availability of power; from the earliest Colonial times water power was the most available source. Because of the absence of suitable rivers in Boston, the early settlers used tidal sources. A mill pond was created in the

continued on page 2



Arthur F. Howe, president of The SEHS, opening Down Washington Street exhibit.

photo: Ed Malitsky

Exhibition Extended from April until June

IF YOU HAVE not seen Down Washington Street: Visions of Past, Present, and Future, or if you want to see it again, the exhibit will be at The Old State House Museum, home of The Bostonian Society at 206 Washington Street, until early June 1995.

Brochures for the exhibition are still available for \$1.95 (price includes postage). The brochure is 28 pages long and features the text panels of the exhibition. To order your copy, call the office at 536-4445 or write to The South End Historical Society, 532 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02118. ♦

(Continued from Page 1)

seventeenth century by building a dam across one of the coves where Haymarket Square is now, but by the early nineteenth century it was being filled in to make more land. At that time plans were under way to harness the Back Bay by building a dam where Beacon Street is today. This major project was supposed to provide a site for some 180 mills, but progress in the form of the steam engine was to limit its life and capacity to a fraction of that number. While the toll road to Brookline along the dam, which opened in 1821, was a success, the construction of two railroads across the Back Bay in 1835 impeded the tidal flow and led eventually to the creation of such an unsanitary nuisance as to precipitate the filling of the Back Bay.

Meanwhile, filling of the South Cove had been going on, and the terminus of the Boston and Worcester Railroad after it crossed the Back Bay was established on this newly filled land, which included Chinatown and parts of Harrison Avenue and Albany Street in what was then called the South End.

Construction in 1805 of the South Boston bridge from the site of the city gates on the Neck, now Dover Street, led to further filling of land and the construction of a new street parallel to Washington Street called Front Street — renamed Harrison Avenue after the death of President William Henry Harrison in 1841.

POWER INDUSTRY FUELS SOCIAL HISTORY

THE POPULATION OF Boston doubled between 1810 and 1830, and artisans of all sorts moved into the city. In 1835 railroads to Lowell, Worcester, and Providence opened within weeks of each other. By mid-century Boston's dominance of the shipping field was in decline and with all the new land and increasing population, the industrial activity began to shift to the construction trades. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the Back Bay had been filled along with additional land on the south side of the neck and the extension of Albany Street. This area was an ideal location for the new factories needed for the building boom; they depended heavily on coal to run the steam engines, now the dominant source of power, and lumber, which was their raw material. By 1890 the docks along South Bay were lined with lumber and coal yards.

Many of the buildings constructed at this time are still standing. The building at **38 Wareham Street** was the first brick building erected for woodworking purposes in the South End. It was designed and constructed in 1863 for the **Novelty Wood Works** by John J. McNutt who came to Boston from Nova Scotia in 1842. By 1890 his company employed more than 200 workmen and had built many buildings including the Cyclorama in 1884. The Wareham Street façade has cast-iron beam anchors in the form of heraldic shields with a relief

image of the heraldic device of the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanic Association founded in 1795: a raised arm clutching a hammer.

In 1891 the expanding **Emerson Piano Company** built a new brick factory at the corner of Waltham Street and Harrison Avenue (No. 560) advertised as "one of the most completely equipped establishments for the manufacture of pianos in the world." The plant employed three hundred workers and had a capacity of 125–150 pianos a week.

The piano industry reached its peak in Boston around 1890 with 29 separate factories employing some 2000 workers. In addition, there were many woodworking factories as well as the extensive West End Street Railway Central Power Station at 540 Harrison Avenue, built there to generate electricity for the street railroad system, and the city of Boston's Public Work Yards on Albany Street. This influx of largely single workers coincided with the decline of the South End as one of the most recent and desirable residential areas in the city. In a copy of *The Boston Herald*, found under the floor in my South End house and dated 1884, there are many ads for rooms for rent. Following the panic of 1873 many home owners were forced to take in roomers in order to maintain their buildings. The large number of German workers who came to the South End following the piano industry led to the establishment of Holy Trinity Church on Shawmut Avenue, known as the German Church, which still has the original stained glass windows with German inscriptions. In addition, this large concentration of factories attracted women workers leading to the development of such institutions as the Working Girls Home, now St. Helenas House built in 1893.✧

The following descriptions are from "Industrial Archaeology of Boston Proper," by Peter Stott, an MIT Press Publication, 1984.

REED'S BLOCK

REED'S BLOCK is probably the earliest example in Boston of a building designed specifically to house a variety of small industrial firms. Built in 1880–81, the building is 634



Reed's Block, 2–26 Thayer Street
photos for this article: Arthur F. Howe

feet in length, stretching the entire block between Harrison Avenue and Albany Street. It was, its developer boasted, "the longest building in the city" and "the only complete building yet erected in Boston expressly for manufacturing." Four stories in height and 50 feet in width, the brick and granite building was divided into nine separate sections, with section one at Albany Street and section nine at Harrison Avenue. The middle (fifth) section housed the boiler and engine room, which supplied steam and motive power to the manufacturers in the building. Several of the original tenants later expanded into larger quarters. One of the most important of these was John Reece, whose buttonhole machinery company was housed on three floors of section nine. Thirty-nine other firms also had shops in the building in 1885. The building was named in honor of Gideon F. T. Reed (1817–1892), one of the original owners. Reed had been the Paris partner of what was then Tiffany, Reed & Co., the New York jewelry firm. In 1878 he retired to a house in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts. Although it was Reed's name that was displayed in granite letters on the Harrison Avenue façade, Eliot B. Mayo (1848–1896) was the building's chief developer, and the initials E.B.M. and the date 1880 figure prominently in the center of the long Thayer Street façade.



Emerson Piano Company: Waltham Street Factory
560 Harrison Avenue

EMERSON PIANO COMPANY

BETWEEN 1879 AND 1890 the business of the Emerson Piano Company expanded significantly. The company established branch stores in New York and Chicago, with sales agencies throughout Europe and America. In 1891 the company built a new brick factory at the corner of Waltham Street and Harrison Avenue, about 400 feet west of their earlier factory. The brick factory was between six and seven stories in height and 65 feet deep, with lumber yards and brick dryhouses in the rear. The builder and architect was Alonzo S. Drisko (1829–1914), a native of Addison, Maine, who had come to Boston in 1850 and had constructed a number of large buildings. In the 1880s he had established a shop in the

Reed Block. The company remained here until about 1922, when it moved briefly into the old Everett Piano Company building on Albany Street. In 1923 the firm moved to Norwalk, Ohio. Mason & Hamlin manufactured pianos here for nearly four years after Emerson left. About 1927 the building was subdivided and since then has housed a large variety of commercial and light industries. The building is now used for offices, Rebecca's Restaurant, and Mike's Gym.

NOVELTY WOOD WORKS

JOSEPH PAUL'S EARLIEST partner, John J. McNutt (1822–1894), was born in Truro, Nova Scotia. At the age of 20 he came to Boston, where two years later he joined Paul on Tremont Street. After the partnership was dissolved, McNutt formed the Novelty Wood Works, building a new plant on Wareham Street. The location, on the South Bay water front, was rapidly becoming the center of the woodworking industry in Boston. The McNutt Building, constructed in 1863, was designed and built by McNutt, who often acted as architect as well as builder. The building is a minor architectural landmark of the district. In addition to conventional buildings and interiors, the firm did all kinds of theatrical woodwork, and the building's design shows something of this interest. The building is three stories in height, and the principal Harrison Street façade originally featured a central cupola above the existing pair of round-arch brownstone windows. Still extant is the wooden second-floor balcony, with shaped balusters, running nearly the length of the building. The balcony is approached by an exterior stair on one end, originally curved.

For his generosity to brother builders and carpenters in financial difficulties, McNutt won the soubriquet "the father of Wareham Street." The firm built numerous buildings including hotels, theaters, and the Cyclorama as well as many large manufacturing plants in Chelsea, Revere, Roxbury, South Boston, and Neponset. After McNutt's death in 1894, the business was carried on for a few years by his son, though in smaller quarters on the opposite side of Wareham Street. ✦



Novelty Wood Works
38 Wareham Street

The Residential Squares of Boston's South End

BY LEE DUNN

MEMBERS WERE GIVEN a special look at the history of the South End squares in an informative members program in February. Phebe S. Goodman, landscape architect and administrator of the Friends of Copley Square, spoke to the standing-room-only crowd about the residential squares of Boston and their roots in the historic squares of London. Two projector screens were used in the presentation to show historic and modern day photographs and landscape plans of both London and the five South End squares.

Credit is given to Charles Bulfinch for transplanting the residential square to Boston. His Grand Tour of Europe in 1785 inspired him to become an architect and his first residential square, The Tontine Crescent, was completed in Boston in 1794. Whereas all the London squares were designed to be private, the streets and open space of the Tontine Crescent were designed to be accessible to the public, thus setting the precedent for the public squares of Boston.

Columbia Square, today's Blackstone and Franklin Squares, was laid out as part of Bulfinch's 1801 Plan of the Neck.

Columbia Square was Bulfinch's second attempt to transplant the London residential square to Boston and was to serve as a model for the planning efforts of the South End some fifty years later. Bulfinch created Columbia Square as an oval amid the grid pattern of the surrounding streets, an idea that he may have seen in Bedford Square in London.

In an attempt to help stem the tide of individuals moving to the suburbs, substantial filling of the Neck lands occurred between 1846 and 1853. The residential square archetype first suggested by Bulfinch was used as a framework in the subsequent development of Chester, Union, and Worcester Squares. The city felt that the South End squares would convey a sense of gracious living and comfort not unlike the English towns, therefore making the area more appealing to prospective buyers.

In 1913 the Olmsted brothers were hired by the City Public Grounds Department to draw topographical maps of the city's 43 squares and parks built before 1887, which included the South End squares. This suggested a concern on the part of the city for the deterioration of the squares which had occurred over time.

The South End squares were developed to serve the same purpose as the squares of London, that is to provide "breathing holes" in the city and to serve as ornaments for viewing and passive recreation. This is still the function of the

South End squares today. Although they are public land, much private funding by surrounding residents has resulted in recent restoration of four of the five South End squares. This proprietary interest on the part of the residents has resulted in the locking of the gates to these squares and not allowing the public to enter, except for those providing maintenance. Residents of Chester Square, the only one not currently in its original form, are working with the city to attempt to restore it to its pre-1952 size by submerging Massachusetts Avenue in that area.

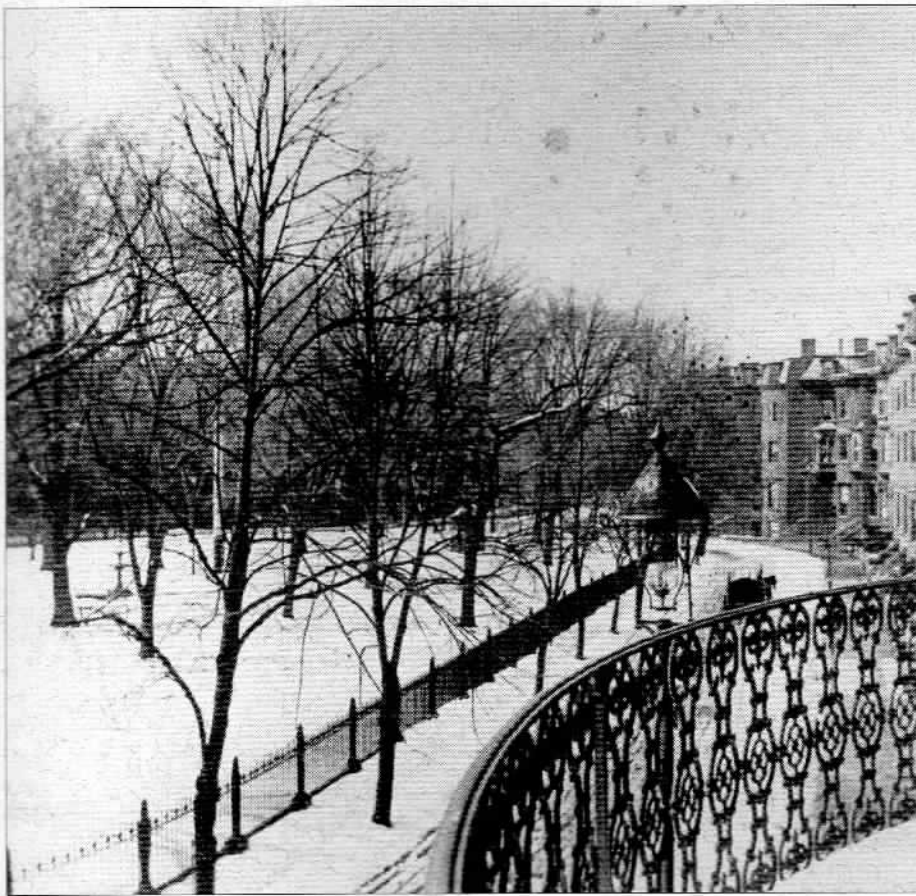
With the exception of portions of Franklin and Blackstone Squares, the residential architecture surrounding the South End squares remains intact; with the area designated as a Landmark District all the remaining architectural enclosures should remain secure. This is in direct contrast to the London squares, where much of the original residential architecture has been replaced by large institutional structures.

The South End squares are a unique feature of the South End Landmark District and should remain as much a focus for preservation as the architecture that surrounds them. ♦



Fountain in Chester Square

photo: The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities



Balcony on Chester Park and Massachusetts Avenue, 1896
photo: The SEHS

Ornamental Cast Iron in The South End

BY LEE DUNN

SOME OF THE most beautiful architectural details in the South End are the ornamental cast-iron forms which grace the windows and steps of the Victorian row houses. It is only fitting that The South End Historical Society chose the cast-iron scroll for its logo, but how did these beautiful embellishments come into existence and what is their historical significance?

In nineteenth century Boston, the American townhouse became popular and to enhance this very repetitive form of architecture, cast-iron work became a wonderful solution. Blacksmith shops had been creating wrought iron for centuries, but technological changes in the late eighteenth century made it possible to create large-scale castings of window adornments and stair railings still found on many South End row houses today.

The cast-iron design begins with an architect's rendering, which is turned into a wooden prototype or pattern. This pattern is set into the sand to create a mold, then removed. Pig iron, heated to 2,500 degrees, is poured into the mold, cooled,

and then bombarded with metal pellets in a machine called a wheelabrator that removes the sand. The iron can then be painted or polished.

Boston is rich with beautiful examples of cast iron; the oldest work is found on Beacon Hill, which was developed between 1800 and 1850. The early cast-iron designs held closely to the geometric feel of the wrought iron fencing. By the 1820s designers and artisans were beginning to understand the sculptural qualities of the cast iron and designs became more fluid and elaborate. A decade later the cast iron designs had really come into their own, with the anthemion, or Greek honeysuckle, being the central element specified by all the leading architects of the day.

By the late 1840s Beacon Hill was fully built, and attentions turned to the South End. The cast-iron industry had changed as well, with American firms sending out catalogues of patterns of aquariums, bedsteads, fencing, and other items. At \$1.00 a foot, cast iron was inexpensive, making it a great choice for the South End, which was built on speculation. One of the most prominent and beautiful designs found in the South End is the heavy acanthus scrolls cast in closed molds and used for stair rails by developers to create strong visual unity on the street. Much of the iron work of the South End is purely decorative,

supported by the fact that most of the stair railings are only one-and-a-half feet high and could be used only by a small child.

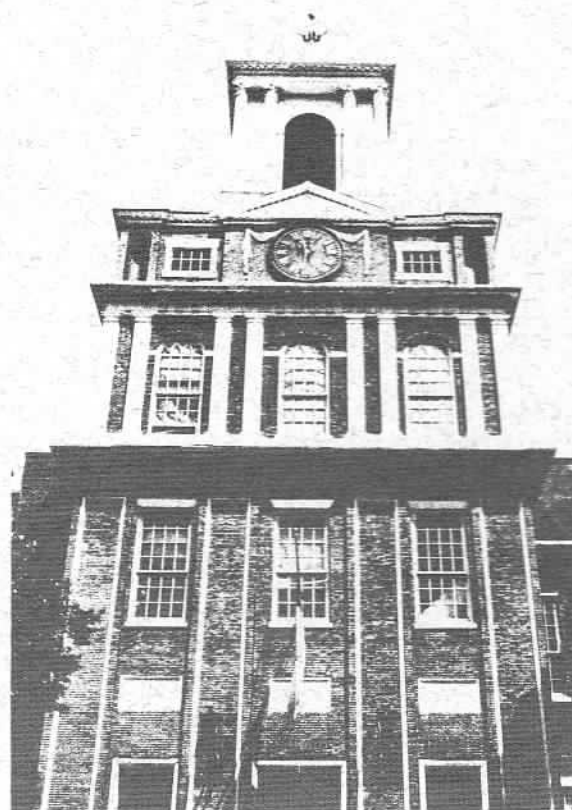
Cast iron foundries are still in existence today. DeAngelis Iron Works in South Easton, Massachusetts and Cumberland Foundry, Cumberland, Rhode Island are two New England resources for South End residents interested in replacing or repairing their current iron work. ♦

This newsletter is published by The South End Historical Society, 532 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston, MA, 02118; office telephone (617) 536-4445. The opinions expressed by the contributors are not necessarily those of The Historical Society. Every effort will be made to return unsolicited manuscripts submitted for possible publication if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Those interested in printing articles must obtain written permission from the editor. ©Copyright, The South End Historical Society, Inc.

Receipt of *The SEHS Newsletter* is a privilege of membership in The Historical Society, an association of people interested in the recognition and preservation of historic resources in, and recording the history of, the South End of Boston. Individual membership is \$15 per year; family and dual memberships are \$25.

Officers: Arthur F. Howe, President	E. Domurad, Editing & Design
Susan Park, Treasurer	Daniel Sugarman, Communications
Barbara Anderson, Secretary	& Publications Committee Chair

b e n e f i t



*You are invited to a gala concert
to benefit the*

Old West Restoration Fund

Friday, May 19, 1995

The Old West Church

151 Cambridge Street, Boston

*Proceeds will be used for the restoration and maintenance of
The Old West Church*

7:45 P.M.

*brief talk by Kimberly Alexander Shilland,
architectural historian,
about the Old West Church*

8:15 P.M.

*Concert on the Fisk organ by
Yuko Hayashi and William Porter*

*of the New England Conservatory organ faculty
Reception following*

Donations above \$10 are tax deductible as allowed by law.

For more information,

please contact Tom Handel at 266-2957.

Calendar

First Tuesday of every month:

SOUTH END LANDMARKS COMMISSION

Room 801, Boston City Hall

4 pm; public invited

For more information, call (617) 635-3850

Second Thursday of every month:

THE SOUTH END HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Board Meeting — Francis Dane House

532 Massachusetts Avenue

7:00 pm

May 7, 1994 — June, 1995

DOWN WASHINGTON STREET:

VISIONS OF PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Old State House Museum

(Exhibition has been extended)

COMING EVENTS:

APRIL 1995

Thursday, April 20

7:45 P.M.

MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM

SEWERS OF THE SOUTH END

Stephen Greene, first vice president of The SEHS

will take us on an armchair tour of
several South End sewers

The Francis Dane House

532 Massachusetts Avenue

Reception to follow

Saturday, April 29

THE SOUTH END HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPRING BALL

Boston Ballet Building, 19 Clarendon Street

Music by Four Guys in Tuxes

Invitations are in the mail

MAY AND JUNE 1995

Saturday, May 20; Saturday, June 10

2 P.M.

WALKING TOURS OF WASHINGTON STREET

in conjunction with the

Down Washington Street Exhibit

Tours meet at the kiosk in front of

the BostonCenter for the Arts

539 Tremont Street

Free to The SEHS members

NEWS • AND • EVENTS

The Black Jokers

presenting the Morris
(a traditional English ritual dance)

in celebration of the seasons

will be performing near

69 Berkeley Street

Saturday, May 6

at noon

and journeying through the streets of the South End to

Hayes Park

corner of West Canton Street and Warren Avenue

for their performance in the park

at 2:30 pm



❖New Members❖

Edward Jay Allan and
Michael A. Schofield
John N. Amodeo and

Brian DeLorenzo

Sally Anderson

Michael A. Baenen

Henry W.D. Bain

Scott A. Bartley and

Christopher T. Norris

Robyn Bell

Nancy Briton and

Michael Mooney

Michael L. Cogley and

Joseph G. Todaro

Larry Dudman and

Tom Grigsby

Philip L. Davis

Gladys R. DeCosta

Todd Fry

Betsy and Doug Johnson

Erma and Les Larson

Edmund P. Luciano, Jr.

Pamela S. McKinney and

Thomas F. Byrne

John Markham O'Connor

Charles Pacheco and

Roland Quiron

Maria Sauzier, M.D.

Brent Sverdlhoff and Craig

St. Clair

Gino Verzone

Stephen Yenger



cream tankard, sugar and cover, and tumbler by Geo. Duncan & Sons

The Odd Goblet

(Continued from Page 8)

manufacturers carried on through enormous difficulties — workers' striking in heat waves, horses sickened by pink eye, and factories' bursting into flame around the vast roaring furnaces that melted the glass in order to produce the ravishingly delicate tableware.

Past presidents and founders of the Bay State Heisey Collectors Club, Maloney and Fogg lecture at numerous glass conventions, clubs, and organizations around the country including presentations at the Wheaton Village Museum, Millville, New Jersey; the Jones Museum of Glass and Ceramics, Maine; and the Sandwich Glass Museum, Cape Cod. They have been invited back this summer as keynote speakers for the Old Morgantown Glass Convention in Morgantown, West Virginia.

Word has spread of their knowledge, and museums from around the country who realize the extent of their scholarship write them letters for help in identifying the odd piece of glass. They find it a challenge to come up with the right answer, an endeavor that is time-consuming but fun. They will also search for that one goblet that a customer may need to complete a set.

Berkeley Antiques stands out from the rest of the crowd as the only shop in this area to specialize in American-made glassware. The owners prefer to sell items that they are able to document as genuine. While quite a few shops concentrate on glass from the 1950s and '60s, Maloney and Fogg favor collectibles that are a bit older. Space limitations and a collection that, "Just grew like Topsy," in Maloney's words, have forced them to focus their inventory on the twentieth-century glass houses they know best: Duncan, Cambridge, Heisey, and Imperial. A rule of thumb has been to avoid dealing in glass that is still being made.

World imports eventually destroyed the glass industry in America. Maloney is saddened by the lack of a supplier for affordable American-made crystal. He toured the Tiffin Art Glass Corporation in Tiffin, Ohio the week before it closed in the 1980s. Purchasing a pair of cordials as a gift at what he felt was a substantial price, he returned to Boston to see the same pair at Shreve Crump and Low for considerably more.

With so little American glass being made, the inventory of Berkeley Antiques grows more valuable with each passing year. You can visit a glass-blowing demonstration at the Pierpoint Factory on Cape Cod under the Cape Cod Bridge. ❖

Glassware Shop Offers A Collectible Atmosphere

By E. DOMURAD

THE DISPLAY WINDOW OF Berkeley Antiques changes more often than the weather in New England. One minute furry chicks the size of gumballs are popping out of real egg shells to roost on the rims of opalescent dishes in pale Easter colors or nest in the grooves of a fluted berry bowl. The next minute everything may be turned upside down for April Fool's Day. There aren't enough holidays in the calendar year for Frank C. Maloney to celebrate with his window displays at 69 Berkeley Street. When no traditional festivities are on the horizon, he may offer passersby a lesson in how goblets are made or a guided tour of the Pittsburgh/Ohio valley area that was to glass what California is to wine today.



butter dish

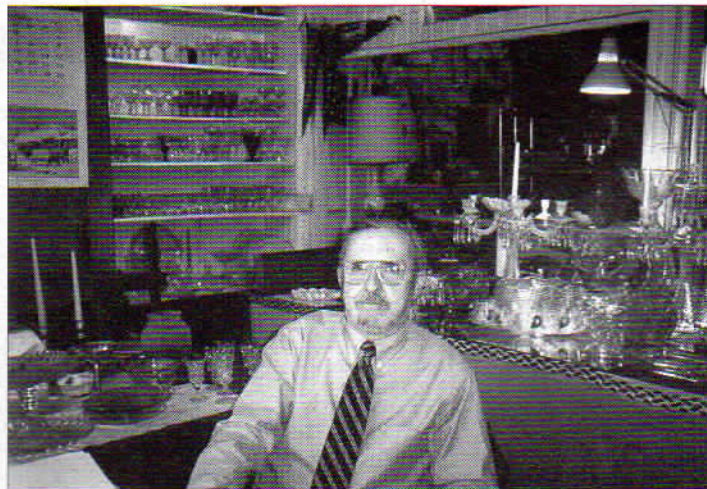
The store that Maloney owns with George A. Fogg has been in the neighborhood for more than a decade, moving into a space formerly occupied by the Canton First Class Laundry. For a while the co-owners of the glassware shop used left-over laundry tickets as sales slips for the store's antiques and collectibles. The laundry had supplanted the First National Grocery store that operated from that location for 25 or 30 years; inventory was kept behind the counter, and shoppers would request the items they wanted to purchase.



Crimped bowl.
Duncan's new line of 1887

Maloney's love of whimsy and lively imagination that are displayed in his shop window belie a scholarly devotion to the history of glassware. Maloney and Fogg are authors, with Neila M.

Bredehoft, of *Early Duncan Glassware*, a history of the



Frank C. Maloney. "To me this is a way to be involved in the neighborhood."

Geo. Duncan & Sons glass company from 1874 to 1892. In their research, the authors read every book they could find that mentioned the company, investigated all known patents, read trade journal reports of the late 1800s, company advertisements, catalogs, and price lists in order to make themselves expert in the legends and giants of the glass industry.

The authors tell the story of one of the most famous Pittsburgh glass houses of the era as it produced the pressed, blown, and engraved fine glassware that enlivened holiday tables and celebrated many a festive summer day in the last century. Imagine a bar room furnished with handled blown glass tumblers, no two alike in color. The prolific company constantly generated new and artistic designs, shipping them by riverboat, at first, until these were replaced by railroads that branched out to carry an amazing variety of glass goods to even the most remote communities. No American village was too small for the refinements of cheese plates, finger bowls, toothpick holders, and salt cellars shaped like miniature Panama hats. The

continued on page 7

1995 annual membership fees are due now.



The South End Historical Society

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BOSTON

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