



THE SEHS NEWSLETTER

532 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02118-1402

Vol. 23, No. 3 & 4

Historical Society Sponsors Braves

By Daniel Sugarman

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS is very pleased to announce that The South End Historical Society (SEHS) will sponsor The Braves this season. The Braves, a little league baseball team, is part of the South End Little League.

Under the direction of Owen Carlson, the league has administered youth baseball and other related activities to inner-city children since 1988. Last year the South End Little League Program



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Fire Damages the Porter Houses

By Kimberly Alexander Shilland

ON THE NIGHT OF MAY 23, a three-alarm fire broke out in the Porter Houses at the corner of East Springfield and Washington Streets. The oldest structures in the South End, the Porter Houses date to circa 1806 and display elegant Federal architectural details, inside and out. The property is currently owned by the Boston



PORTER HOUSES BEFORE FIRE PHOTO: K. SHILLAND

Redevelopment Authority (BRA). The blaze was well under way when I arrived on the scene that night. Dozens of people were clustered in groups between fire trucks and the houses. Concentrated in the rear kitchen and rapidly spreading along the roof and third floor, the fire blazed and crackled away. Before the fire, the Porter Houses had been declared unsafe for habitation and were subsequently marked with a red and white X. The dangerous conditions precluded the firefighters from going

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SCORCHED DEBRIS LEFT AT THE PORTER HOUSES AFTER THE FIRE PHOTO: JOHN NEALE

The South End Historical Society Celebrates its 28th Year

Exhibition News

ON FRIDAY EVENING, May 20, nearly 300 people gathered at the Old State House Museum, headquarters of The Bostonian Society, for the gala opening of *Down Washington Street: Visions of Past, Present, and Future*. A collaborative effort of The South End Historical Society and The Bostonian Society, the reception for the exhibit attracted many members from both organizations.

Numerous public programs were planned in conjunction with the exhibition and took place in June and July. In early June, Kimberly Alexander Shilland gave a talk entitled "A New Look at an Old Thoroughfare: Washington Street in Boston's South End," and John Neale presented "Great Houses of the South End." Each lecture drew over 50 people to the Old State House. A series of four walking tours also

had a wide appeal. More than 100 people showed up for a tour of Washington Street after the event was listed in the Calendar Section of the *Boston Globe*. John Neale, Brian Davidson, and Kimberly Shilland led the tours.

We are now planning an exciting series of events for the autumn and hope to see you then. Please see the Calendar on page 6 for more information.

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

SOUTH ENDERS ENJOY BLACKSTONE SQUARE IN THE 1920S. PHOTO COURTESY OF BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY, PRINT DEPARTMENT



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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

Thousands to Attend 1994 National Preservation Conference in Boston

THE NATIONAL TRUST for Historic Preservation will hold its 48th National Preservation Conference in Boston, MA, October 26-30. With the theme, "Preservation, Economics, and Community Rebirth," the five-day event is expected to attract over 2,500 preservationists from across the country.

"Our sessions will educate preservationists on issues that will help them obtain positive results in their communities," says Penny Jones, the National Trust's director of preservation programs. "Participants will come away with practical, down-to-earth information they can use tomorrow."

While in "Bean Town," conference participants, including heads of preservation organizations, government representatives, and community leaders, will exchange ideas, participate in more than 60 educational sessions, hear compelling speakers, and participate in local and regional workshops and tours. Topics such as downtown revitalization, affordable housing, financing preservation stewardship, and heritage tourism will be explored.

Historical Society Sponsors the Braves

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involved over 250 children from the South End as well as Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, Chinatown, and Dorchester. "Our perimeters are wide, as youth baseball leagues are not abundant in the inner city," said Carlson. "We work hard to provide an experience equivalent to those found in more affluent neighborhoods," continued Mr. Carlson.

The SEHS presented Owen with a check for \$650 at a recent board meeting. This will cover the expenses for a full team sponsorship including equipment and uniforms for 15 youths. The uniforms will sport "The South End Historical Society" on the back.

In addition to playing baseball, the League sponsors activities such as picnics, Red Sox Games, and outings. One special outing planned for this year will be a walking tour of the South End. The tour will be led by Kimberly A. Shilland and will be geared to familiarizing young people with the rich history of the neighborhood and perhaps spark a life-long interest and appreciation of local history.

The Braves play in Peters Park and the Carter Playground. See you there!



This year's education sessions will feature five tracks. The first, "The Impact of Planning," will provide useful sessions on preservation planning, land use and economics, and urban sprawl. The second will focus on "Financing Preservation" and includes sessions on innovative financing techniques. "The Positive Effect of Museums, the Arts, Tourism and Cultural Diversity" is the subject of the third track, with sessions on heritage tourism and maritime programs. The fourth and fifth tracks, respectively, will focus on "Preservation Practices for Rehabilitating Historic Structures," and on "Tools to Achieve Success," highlighting effective strategies for commercial revitalization.

Kicking off the plenary sessions on Thursday, October 27, will be two distinguished speakers from the world of architecture, Robert Campbell, FAIA, and Dolores Hayden. Campbell, an architect, is also *The Boston Globe's* architecture critic and an established author. Hayden, who will be joining Campbell on the platform, is a historian, architect, writer, and professor of architecture, urbanism and American studies at Yale University.

Other keynote speakers include Elizabeth Michaud, a grassroots activist who defeated Wal-Mart in Western Massachusetts; Reverend Thomas F. Pike, chair of Partners for Sacred Places in New York; U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT.); Glenn Loury, a leading expert on urban economics and a professor at Boston University, and State Rep. Byron Rushing, former president of the Museum of Afro-American History in Boston. Concluding the plenary sessions, on Saturday, October 29, will be Pulitzer Prize-winning historian, David McCullough, who is also a member of the National Trust's board of trustees.

"Plenary sessions provide a wonderful opportunity to hear from people who have stories to tell that all of us can learn from," says Peter Brink, the National Trust's vice president of programs, services, and information.

Local and regional tours of some of the Boston area's historic attractions feature places such as the Charles River Basin, a Boston streetcar suburb, Blackstone Valley Heritage Corridor, and communities in New England. Other conference highlights include mobile workshops, notably "Revolving Funds and Neighborhood Conservation," "Disabilities Act and Preservation Design," and "Public Art in Public Places: Conservation and Creation."

The conference headquarters is in the Boston Park Plaza Hotel, 64 Arlington Street, Boston, MA; (617) 426-2000.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, chartered by Congress in 1949, is a nonprofit organization with more than 250,000 members. As the leader of the national preservation movement, it is committed to saving America's diverse historic environments and to preserving and revitalizing the livability of communities nationwide. It has seven regional offices, owns 18 historic house museums, and works with thousands of local community groups in all 50 states.

Porter Houses Burn

(Continued from Page 1)

inside the structure, so they diligently worked from outside on the ground and from ladders to douse the flames.

The following morning there was an impromptu meeting on the street. Several of us ventured inside to inspect the damage and were surprised to discover some interior details had survived the blaze. However, extensive damage was caused by the fire — holes burned through roof and floor timbers, charred staircase and banister, scorched walls and fireplace surrounds. With all the water needed to extinguish the fire, the interior is now a burnt, soggy mess.

Alan Schwartz, chairman of the Landmarks Commission, and South End Landmark District Commissioners John Neale and Nancy Parker Wilson called an emergency hearing to discuss the situation. Since that first meeting in May, several have been held. City Councilors Richard Iannella and James Kelly have held two hearings to permit residents and interested parties to air their concerns and to monitor the BRA's efforts to resolve dilemmas facing not only the Porter Houses but the Allen House (also BRA owned) as well. A small task force has been formed, with The South End Historical Society as a participant, to explore economically viable reuse proposals.

Many residents approached me on the street the next day to ask if I knew that the Porter Houses were the oldest structures in the South End—illustrating their importance to the neighborhood. Stay tuned for more developments.



CHARRED STAIRCASE AT THE PORTER HOUSES. PHOTO: JOHN NEALE

Boston's Historic Burying Grounds Initiative Sponsor Event

Bicyclists Visit Historic Sites, Celebrate the Fifth Annual *Tour de Graves*

BOSTON PARKS AND RECREATION Department's Historic Burying Grounds Initiative is proudly sponsoring its Fifth Annual *Tour de Graves* on Sunday, October 23, 1994. The event is a 25-mile bicycle tour of Boston's historic burying grounds. It begins at 10 am at the Parkman Bandstand on the Boston Common and runs until 3 pm. In addition to the "grand" *Tour de Graves*, *Le Petit Tour de Graves*, a 15-mile outing, is available for the amateur recreational bicyclist. The events run simultaneously.



The event is reasonably priced with a minimum \$5 donation requested from participants; all proceeds will benefit the Initiative's ongoing restoration efforts. A 48-page *Tour de Graves Guidebook* and an informational scavenger hunt is included in the donation. A pre-shrunk, heavy-duty, 100 percent cotton T-shirt with the original *Tour de Graves* logo is available for an additional \$8.

The bicycle groups will stop at the historic sites to discuss some of the notables buried there and explore some of the remarkable symbolism and iconography, for which Boston is known. The goal of this autumnal sporting event is to bring bicyclists of all levels and interests to some of Boston's most historic sites, which few people have the opportunity to visit regularly. For further information or to receive a brochure/entry form, interested persons should contact, Beth Shepard, Historic Burying Ground Initiative, (617) 635-4505 ext. 6516.

Lectures on Architecture

THE IMPACT OF the 2008 Olympics on Boston, the new federal courthouse on the Fan Pier, the links between art and architecture, and the design of housing and cities in China are among the mysteries illuminated in Boston's preeminent public architectural lecture series, which inaugurates its 15th season in September.

Beginning on September 21 with a look at the phenomenon of waterfront development in Boston and elsewhere, the Boston Society of Architects' Lecture Series explores the fascinating horizons of architecture, city planning, urban design, historic preservation, and living in Boston.

All slide lectures are open to the public. For more information and a complete 1994-'95 lecture series schedule, call the Boston Society of Architects at (617) 951-1433 x 221 or, in Massachusetts outside Boston, (800) 662-1235 x 221.

Looking Forward to the House Tour

by Nancy Parker Wilson

PLANNING IS UNDER WAY for the Annual South End House Tour scheduled this year for Saturday, October 22 from 10 am to 5 pm. The details are to be finalized but featured this year are the streets adjacent to Washington Street to highlight the South End exhibit at the Old State House, Down Washington Street: Visions of Past, Present, and Future. A traveling exhibit will be featured at the South End Branch of the Boston Public Library. Opening October 1, the exhibit will be part of the tour that day.

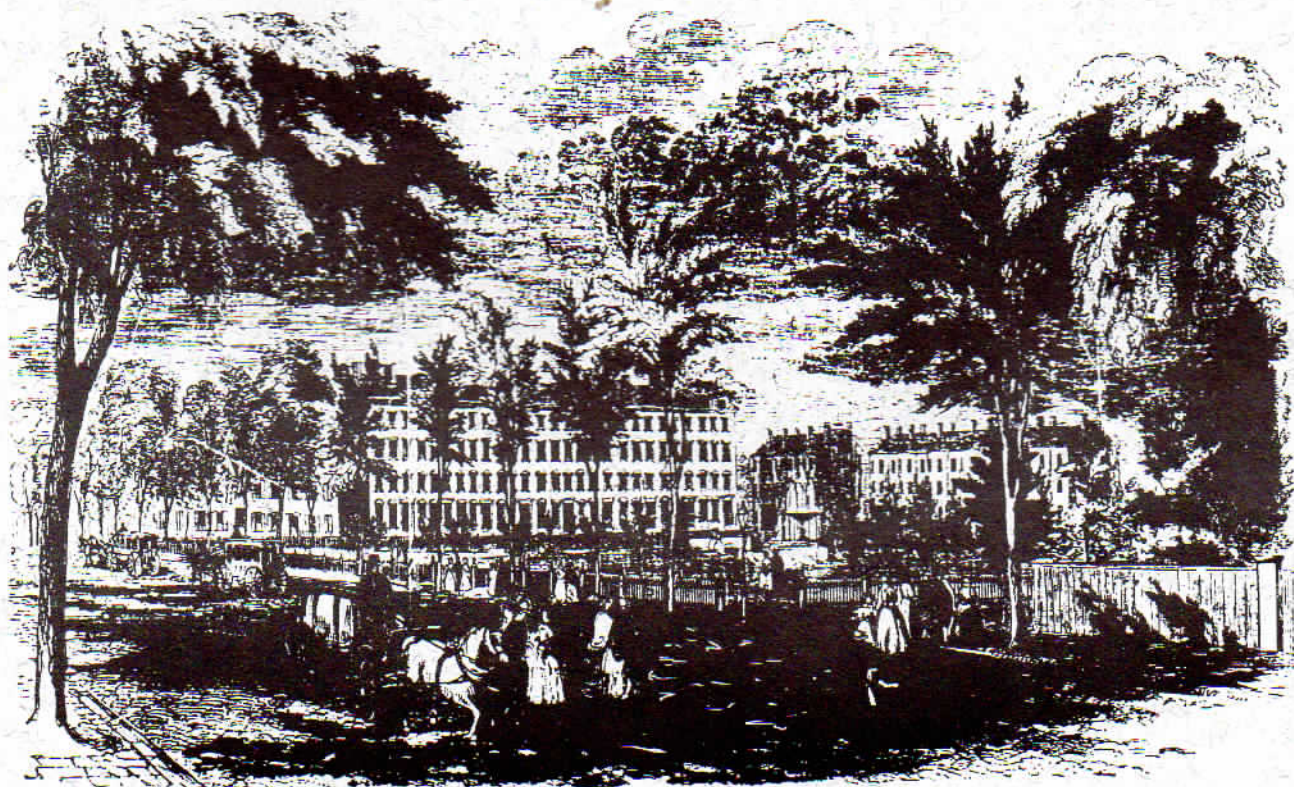
Other areas of considerable note are the newly refurbished Shawmut Avenue, Haven Street, and Blackstone Park and Franklin Square. Again this year we have the good fortune of South End enthusiasts who want to share their beautiful homes and gardens with other interested people, some new to the South End and some "regulars." The funds raised from the annual tour allow The South End Historical Society to continue to develop interesting programs for its membership and the general public, promote the preservation of this historic

neighborhood, and bring areas like historic Washington Street and the rehabilitation of important buildings such as the Allen House and Porter Houses on Washington Street to the forefront of the public's attention.

Among the highlights are the gardens and historic park; guided tours through Blackstone Park and Franklin Square; the Italianate brownstones of West Newton Street; beautiful homes; a tour through the South End Burial Ground, and the Community Gardens along Washington and Rutland Streets; and Worcester Square.

Ticket prices are \$15 in advance and \$18 the day of the tour. Tickets will be available at businesses throughout the South End and through The SEHS in advance. The day of the tour the tickets will be available only at the Kiosk in front of the Boston Center for the Arts. We also encourage individuals to be Sponsors of the tour. Sponsors' tickets are \$35, and there is a Sponsors' party after the tour at the Mills Gallery, Boston Center for the Arts. For further information, call the The South End Historical Society at (617) 536-4445.

VIEW OF BLACKSTONE PARK AND FRANKLIN SQUARE



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81 Montgomery Street, 02116

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Susan Park
166 West Canton Street, 02118

Assistant Treasurer

Karen Parker
136 West Concord Street, 02118

Continued on next page

C a l e n d a r

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
7:45 pm

May 7, 1994 – April, 1995

**DOWN WASHINGTON STREET: VISIONS OF PAST,
PRESENT, AND FUTURE**
Old State House Museum

COMING EVENTS:

Saturday, September 10 2 pm

Sunday, September 25 2 pm

WALKING TOURS OF WASHINGTON STREET
Tours meet at the Boston Center for the Arts
Plaza, 539 Tremont Street

Saturday, September 24

**THE SOUTH END HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S
FALL EXCURSION TO THE FRUITLANDS MUSEUM**
Harvard, Massachusetts
Members will receive an announcement
of this event

Wednesday, October 12 6 pm

LECTURE
The South End House
Maura Lyons
The Bostonian Society
Call 720-3292 for information

Saturday, October 22 10 am – 5 pm

TWENTY-SIXTH SOUTH END HOUSE TOUR
Sponsored by The South End Historical Society
Tour of Private Homes in the Historic South End

Wednesday, November 2 6 pm

FILMMAKER TIMOTHY WRIGHT
will give a screening of his
documentary about the El
The Bostonian Society
Call 720-3292 for information

Wednesday, November 9 6 pm

GALLERY TALK
Kimberly Alexander Shilland
The Washington Street Exhibit
The Bostonian Society
Call 720-3292 for information

Wednesday, November 30 6 – 7:30 pm

SPECIAL EVENING GALLERY TALK
by Kimberly Alexander Shilland
Louis Sullivan to SOM:
Boston Grads Go to Chicago
MIT Museum
Members will receive an announcement of
this event

Saturday, November 19 and March 18

11 am – 6 pm

Sunday, November 20 and March 19

11 am – 6 pm

**CYCLORAMA FLEA MARKET OF ANTIQUES AND
COLLECTIBLES**

Over 100 dealers
Cyclorama, Boston Center for the Arts
539 Tremont Street, Boston
Admission: \$5; \$4 with coupon
For more information, call 536-4445

NEWS • AND • EVENTS

*(Continued from Page 6)***Counsel**

Harvey Wolkoff, Ropes and Gray
One International Place, 02110-2624

Historian

John Neale
193 West Brookline Street, 02118

Curator

Kimberly Alexander Shilland
4 Lawrence Street, 02116

Fundraising Committee Chairman

Nancy Parker Wilson
7 Union Park, 02118

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612 Columbus Avenue, #5, 02118

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25 East Concord Street, 02118

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James McQueen
4 Haven Street, 02118

Fundraising Director-at-large

Adrienne Kimball
7 Worcester Square, 02118

Director-at-large

M. Rita Gallo
72 Montgomery Street, 02116

❧ New Members ❧

Ron Barkey
John E. Connolly, Jr.
Cheryl and David Cotney
Lee and Michael Dunn
Steven H. Fairchild-Portugal and Richard S. Erickson
Lloyd Fillion and Dacia Gentilella
Thomas G. Myers
Florence Nichols Litthcut
Marcia A. O'Meara
Bob Paschke
Juanita and William Tarnowski

Welcome

Greet A New Neighbor with a Membership To The SEHS

BECOME A PART of the effort to preserve the South End, one of Boston's most unique and important neighborhoods, by joining The South End Historical Society. Your dollars and membership will help us achieve our objective of preserving the physical fabric and interpreting the history of the South End for present and future generations.

Newsletters, publications, programs, tours, and numerous other activities are all part of The South End Historical Society. We hope you will support our neighborhood by joining our society and becoming part of these activities.

name or
names _____

address _____

zip _____

telephone _____

full-time student \$10.00 _____

individual \$15.00 _____

family/dual \$25.00 _____

patron \$75.00 _____

life (indiv.) \$300.00 _____

additional

contribution \$25.00 _____

..... \$50.00 _____

..... \$100.00 _____

total \$ _____

Please make checks payable to The South End Historical Society. All contributions are tax deductible.

Down Washington Street: Visions of Past, Present, and Future

A 28-PAGE BROCHURE FEATURING the entire text of the Down Washington Street exhibit is available by calling The SEHS office at 536-4445. Brochures are available for \$1.95 (including postage). Cover photo of the brochure is of the Washington Street Elevated from Franklin Square House in the South End with View of Northampton Station. Photo by Leslie Jones, May 26, 1931. Courtesy of the Boston Public Library, Print Department

Members: a reminder—don't forget to send in your membership renewal.



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