Mayor's Announcement Is a Milestone for Allen House

BY STEPHEN GREENE

ON SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 4, the South End was alive with activity. There was much hustle and bustle in the Worcester Square area, especially at Washington Street, as neighbors participated in the fall cleanup. At the same time they were sprucing up the outside of the Allen House for an important announcement.

As some of the neighbors worked on the front of the Allen House picking up trash from the now visible front yard and spreading bark mulch, passersby took notice and wondered what event was taking place. With the removal of the green shedding material, the front yard and entranceway were now prominent. Adding some borrowed flower pots and seasonal plants, the Allen House was ready for its moment in the limelight.

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Mayor Thomas Menino, on the steps of the Allen House, presenting Chris Hayes with a plaque showing the mayor's support for the crime watch program. photo: Stephen Greene
Mayor Visits Allen House to Make Announcement

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pumpkins to the Allen House offered an inviting appearance, welcoming the numerous South Enders who came to hear the mayor's important announcement.

Many had witnessed the slow deterioration of the Allen House and then watched the stabilization work and securing of the building. This day offered the opportunity to see the results of the work and to hear the announcement by Mayor Thomas Menino of the Washington Street Task Force with Randi Lathrop as its appointed chair. Randi and City Council President James Kelly spoke about their work and the importance of the Allen House. Boston's Chief Economic Development Officer Marisa Lago discussed the efforts that the Boston Redevelopment Authority has gone through in the stabilization of this building and the Porter Houses. Arthur Howe, past president, and Stephen Greene, president of The South End Historical Society, talked about the role the Society played in this preservation effort. Kimberly Shilland and Eben Kunz, board members of the Society, were recognized for their leadership efforts for the work on both buildings.

The South End Historical Society recognition awards were given to Mayor Menino, Council President James Kelly and City Councillor Richard Iannella for the role they played in moving this preservation work forward under emergency conditions. At the same time, Mayor Menino presented Chris Hayes with a plaque recognizing the importance of the crimestop program. This was an important milestone in the histories of the Allen and the Porter Houses. We might sigh in relief, but much work still lies ahead. These buildings need to be quickly developed in a way that preserves their historic and architectural character while also benefiting the neighborhood.
First Phase of Steeple Restoration Completed at Union United Methodist Church

BY JEANNE PELLETIER

The scaffolding is coming down at Union United Methodist Church on Columbus Avenue, ending phase one of the church’s ambitious multi-year steeple and building restoration project.

For the past five months, workers from Folan Waterproofing & Construction Company, Inc., under the direction of architects McGinley Hart & Associates, have scaled the 150-foot scaffolding to clean the all-stone steeple, incorporate lightning protection devices, apply a waterproofing solution to spalling sandstone detailing, and install an interior roof drain system. Folan also removed remnants of aged mortar, where it existed, from the steeple — in many cases the mortar had simply disintegrated — and repointed the open joints with a carefully selected mortar to match the original. Over its 123-year history, the church building had accumulated over eleven different mortar types.

The work was critical to the survival of the steeple. During a comprehensive building assessment commissioned by the church in 1994, Wendall Kalsow of McGinley Hart & Associates examined the unique steeple up close from a bucket truck. “The stone walls of the church exhibited many signs of deterioration due to deferred or inappropriate maintenance. The spire section of the steeple was in especially poor condition. Since water runs down the face of this surface, the masonry is asked to perform more like a roof than a wall. The large quantity of water which had entered the spire masonry allowed freeze-thaw action to greatly accelerate the rate of deterioration. The deterioration was so extensive that we recommended closing or protecting the main entrance at the base of the steeple,” said Wendall Kalsow.

In addition to the masonry work, the contractors also repaired and painted two of the four louvers at the base of the spire. A paint analysis revealed that the louvers had initially been painted grey-green, closely matching the color of the building’s original slate roof. This color was reapplied to the newly refinished louvers on the Columbus Avenue and West Rutland Street facades, and an innovative bird-repelling netting now protects the louvers.

A matching grant from Historic Boston Incorporated through its Boston Steeples Project and a matching grant from The South End Historical Society helped finance a portion of the $200,000 cost of Phase I. In 1996, the congregation will use a $40,000 matching grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission to begin Phase II of the project, which will include completing work on the steeple and possibly repointing critical areas of the main church building. Next year will also bring exterior lighting of the steeple and church facade through an additional grant from the Steeples Project.

Organizations Receive Grants for Local Projects

THE BOSTON FOUNDATION for Architecture, established in 1984 by the Boston Society of Architects and architects and allied professionals, has awarded its 11th annual round of grants to help underwrite the costs of public education programs that focus on the built environment and environmental awareness. This year, the Foundation specifically solicited proposals for programs that focused on “Investments in the Public Domain” and on ways in which communities throughout Massachusetts could strengthen public awareness and public investment in public community spaces and community infrastructure.

The Foundation’s board of trustees has made nine grants totaling $25,000. Included in this group are two projects with significance to the South End. MYTOWN will receive $3,500 to support the development of a one-mile walking tour that traces the history of the black community in Boston’s South End from 1895 to the present, and WalkBoston will receive $2,500 to support its South End Committee.

This newsletter is published by The South End Historical Society, Inc., 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.


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: Stephen Greene, President E. Donnord, Ed. & Design
Susan Park, Treasurer Daniel Sugarman, Communications
Barbara Anderson, Secretary & Publications Committee Chair

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House Tour Showcases the Eclectic South End

BY LEE DUNN

EVEN THOUGH THE 27th South End House Tour arrived on a wet and gloomy day, hundreds of people turned out to tour the eight homes and five public buildings, making it one of the most well-attended tours in recent years. The weather forced us into the newly renovated Boston Center for the Arts Theater lobby to sell our tickets, as opposed to the Kiosk. But even that turned out to be a benefit because friends and neighbors had an opportunity to meet and chat over doughnuts and coffee provided by one of our corporate benefactors, Visibility Inc.

This year's tour focused upon two very distinct neighborhoods. The English-style residential square of Union Park was a wonderful contrast to the narrower and more intimate feeling of the Bradford and Eight Streets neighborhoods. A sense of pride in their community was evident as volunteers stood in Ringgold Park the day of the tour to talk about the future of this former school site turned public park. And in the days and weeks preceding the tour, homeowners in the area worked hard cleaning their neighborhoods, along with the help of the Public Works Department of the city of Boston. It was a wonderful collaborative effort, and we thank them all for their support.

The tour consisted of a broad range of homes in various sizes and styles, including a dramatic work in progress on a five-story Victorian bowfront that is one of only two single-family homes left on Union Park. As one of the largest intact residences in the South End, this home captured the imagination of everyone who toured it. The most exciting news of all is that the owners have offered to place their home on the tour again next year so we can view its restoration progress.

Among the public buildings on the tour was the beautiful Cathedral of the Holy Cross, highlighting its recent multi-million-dollar chapel restoration. In addition to a new altar and tabernacle, the chapel now contains a fully restored E. & G. G. Hook and Hastings organ built in 1888 by the former South End organ maker. The Cathedral contains its original organ by the same manufacturer.

The Greek Orthodox Church of St. John the Baptist was also open, despite the collapse of a portion of its ceiling in late July of this year. The Byzantine artistry within the sanctuary and the beautiful stained-glass window left from its days as a Jewish Temple provided a delightful surprise to many who had never been inside this church. The building was designed by N. J. Bradlee and was one of two on the tour by this prolific South End architect. The other was the St. Cloud Hotel, where a spacious contemporary penthouse captured the entire tour from its dramatic rooftop view.

The Graham Gund designed headquarters building of the Boston Ballet was also on tour, with the costume shop in full production for the Nutcracker Suite. The Franklin Institute and portions of the BCA rounded out the tour of public buildings.
Many thanks to Lee Dunn and Adrienne Kimball for their work. To our volunteers, sponsors, tour house owners and to those behind the scenes: Mike Dunn; Joe and Susan Park; Arthur Howe, and Nancy and Bill Wilson, with much appreciation...

Capping the day was the traditional Sponsor's Party, held this year in the home of Nancy and Bill Wilson of Union Park.

Photos, left to right: 1. David Stein, House Tour home owner, and John Plitzcecker, House Tour sponsor; 2. William Shaw, House Tour home owner, and Susan Hamilton, House Tour sponsor; 3. John Amodeo and Brian De Lorenzo, House Tour sponsors; Adrienne Kimball, fundraising director at large; and Lee Dunn; 4. Lee Dunn, chairman of the fundraising committee, and Mayor Menino. 5. Stephen Greene, The SEHS president, and Nancy Wilson, House Tour sponsor.

photos: Mike Dunn
In Memory Of

We are saddened to report the death of a member of The South End Historical Society, Florence Williams.

Calendar

First Tuesday of every month:
South End Landmarks Commission
Room 801, Boston City Hall
4 p.m.; 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 p.m.

COMING EVENTS:

MARCH
Saturday, March 16
11 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Sunday, March 17
11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

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.

MAY
Saturday, May 4
The South End Historical Society
Spring Ball
Boston Ballet Building
19 Clarendon Street
Music by Four Guys in Tuxes
Watch for more information.

House Tour

As Fundraising Committee chairman I would like to thank the following people for helping to make this year’s tour a success:

Homeowners
Hunter O’Hanian and Jeffry Cismoski
Donald Morton and Michael Swartzell
David Stein and Ace St. George
William Ralph
Joe Todaro and Mike Cogley
Chester Woolley and Frank Girvan
Kelly Brown and Oliver Desmain
William Shaw

Corporate and Individual Sponsorship
Adrienne Kimball, Fundraising Director

Administrative Support
Fran Duffy

Ticket Sales
Susan Park and Conrad Agneta
Sarah Kunz and Mike Dunn
Ned Flaherty and Fran Duffy
Joe Park
Hunneman & Co/ Coldwell Banker
Kennedy Studios
M. J. Berries/Maggie Ballard Antiques
Mail Boxes, Etc.
Old South Realty
The Picture Store
Prudential/Gibson
A. E. Rondeau
South End Realty Group

Sponsor’s Party
Nancy and Bill Wilson

House Captains
Stephen Greene
Susan Hamilton
Cathy Marotta
Jim McQueen
Karen Parker
John Piltzecker
Marilyn Pond
Dan Sugarman

House Tour Flags
Arthur Howe
Susan Park
HOSPITALITY
Mike Dunn

HISTORIAN
John Neale

Special thanks to Tom Tinlin, Neighborhood Services, and Bill Stanton, Public Works Department, city of Boston, for public services support.

Sincerely,

Lee Dunn, chairman
The SEHS Fundraising Committee

A special thanks to our house sitters:

Barbara Anderson
Karen Anderson
Deborah Asbrand
Gordon Bebe
Mary Canby
Dick Card
Nancy Carleton
Ron Cheney
Ken Cronin
Paul Curtis
Geoff Davis
Phil Davis
Eric Dray
Mike Dunn
Pete Erbland
Bob Faulkner
Mark Ferbert
Monica Flaherty
John Goode
Alan Goosray
William Greene
Tom Grigsby
Cindy Grillo
Sheila Grove
Jeannette Hajjar
Pat Hall
Dan Heenan
Kay Herbst
Pam Howland
Gail Ide
Helen Jordan
Frank Jordan
Jane Joyce
Nan Kern

Jack Rizzo
Blake Roberts
Rick Roessle
Melissa Scher
Jane Schwerdtfeger
Geraldine Scott
Tracy Smith
Laura Spence
Bob Tanzie

Ken Tutunjian
Alice Verhoeven
Ken Watts
Larry Wenglin
Paul Whaley
John Whiteside
Carolyn Woollen
Nathan Yang
Winnie Zimmer

New Members

Gay Bailey
Paul Bingaman
Bertha & Robert Blicker
Linda Breckenridge & Wayne Rollins
Carl Brooks, Jr.
Rolf I. Carlson
Edward Chick
David Davidson & Stephen McGurl
Laird Elting
Julia Graz
Terrence Heinen
Helen Jones
Michael Kevin Lynch
Cynthia Chace MacNiel
Terry MacDonald
Charles McCormick
Donald McGrath
Andrea Papanek
Kevin D. Parker
Suzi and Thomas Parks
Payne/Bouchier
Marcia & Al Pertuz
Harold F. Pfister
Alison & Joseph Quinan
Blake Roberts
Martha L. Rothman & Elliot Paul Rothman
Mark Schwindenhammer
Dr. Beverly M. Shafer
Michael Shannon
Judith Sugarman
Lee Thornhill & Jacob Murray, D.M.D.
David Wayne & Paul Fortier
Peter Wild
Stephen W. Wolfe