



South End Historical Society Newsletter

www.southendhistoricalsociety.org



Judy Watkins and Paul Wright monitoring student presentations in Professor John's class, fall 2018 (Photograph by Maria K. John)

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Bancroft School Oral History Project Begins

By

Paul Wright, Judy Watkins, and Maria John

In 1968 a coalition of South End parents and public school teachers organized an alternative ungraded kindergarten-through-eighth-grade (K-8) school within the Boston Public School system. The coalition consisted of white families that had recently moved to the neighborhood—some of them education professionals, others community activists—and black, Latino, Chinese, and white families already living in the South End. They lobbied the school department and after some resistance gained access to the unused Bancroft School building at 150 Appleton Street—hence the Bancroft School name for the program. Eventually the program expanded to include the adjacent Rice School building at the corner of Dartmouth and Appleton Streets, but the Bancroft name would persist for the



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South End Historical Society
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The SEHS newsletter is a benefit of membership to the historical 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 \$30 per year, Family/Dual memberships are \$50, and opportunities to support the organization 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 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.

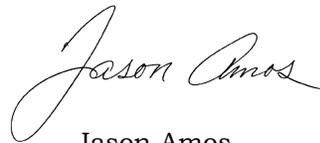
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From the Executive Director

The main article of this issue is about a project that students at UMass Boston undertook to interview individuals who were associated with the Bancroft School—teachers, students, and parents. It is our hope that their work can be expanded upon to capture more South End History before it is lost forever.

As we wind down the year I thought it would be a good time to recap some of our programs and events since the last newsletter. If you missed any of our programs, hopefully you can join us for the annual South End House Tour on Saturday, October 19th.



Jason Amos
Executive Director



Cathedral of the Holy Cross

September 2019

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whole operation, which at its apex enrolled approximately 200 South End families. The Bancroft School is featured in J. Anthony Lukas's prize-winning book, *Common Ground: A Turbulent Decade in the Lives of Three American Families* (1985)—two of the three families were South Enders and one was involved with the school. Eventually the near chaos of school desegregation wore the school down and it closed in 1981. The Bancroft and Rice buildings were subsequently rehabbed as a condominium complex called Dartmouth Square. The story is told in some detail in Paul Wright's "Louis Sullivan Woke Up Here" (*Massachusetts Review*, Summer 1987) and in his review of the Lukas book, "Here's Boston" (*Boston Review*, Nov. 1985). Paul and his wife Judi arrived in the South end in 1972, and their sons attended the school.



Bancroft School Kindergarten on a field trip, corner of Appleton and Dartmouth Streets, 1974-75 school year (Photograph by Paul M. Wright)

In 2018 (50 years on) discussion began with the support of the South End Historical Society (SEHS) on undertaking an oral history project on the South End to document the large-scale social, cultural, and economic changes that had taken place in the neighborhood during the 60s, 70s, and 80s—roughly during the period that the Bancroft School flourished. The discussion included Judy Watkins, a long-time resident and Bancroft parent, who could add her personal archive to life-time South End resident Clare Hayes's extensive files on the school as a resource for the project. Judy had worked at the South End Branch of the BPL from 1971 to 1981 and is a co-creator of the South End History Collection (SEHC) at the Branch. Because it in many ways represented a microcosm of the South End at the time, the discussants decided to make the Bancroft the focus of a pilot project to record the voices and memories of a representative sample consisting of two parents, five students, and four teachers. Inquiry was made to local universities with oral history and public history interests, and the Public History Program at the University of Massachusetts Boston (UMB) and the University of Massachusetts

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South End Little League

On a cool June 1st, members of the Board of Directors, our Executive Director, and volunteers watched as the South End Historical Society A's beat the Tigers 18-10 before we treated both teams to an after game pizza party. For more than 20 years we have been sponsoring a South End little league team. This year our team had a successful season and reached the semi-finals.



2019 South End Historical Society A's

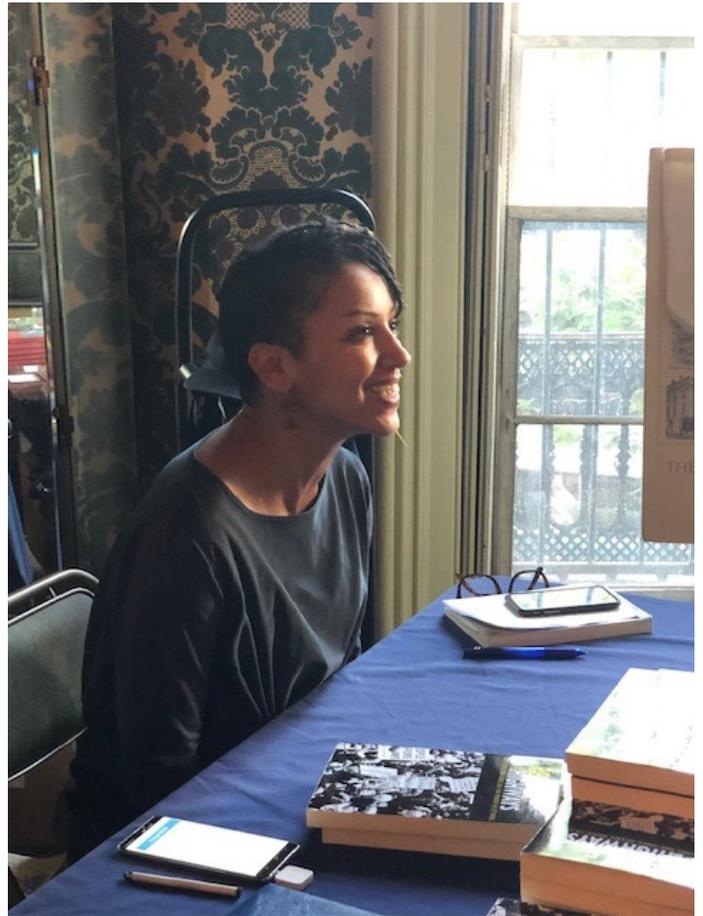
Front to Back and Left to Right: Front - Geo; Second Row: JJ and Yoskar; Standing: Coach Q, Henry, Edwin, Graham, Teudi, Alex, Coach Pete, Josh, Mula, Anel, and Coach Chris

In case you missed it...

Since the last newsletter, we have been busy at SEHS. Here are a few pictures of what has been happening.

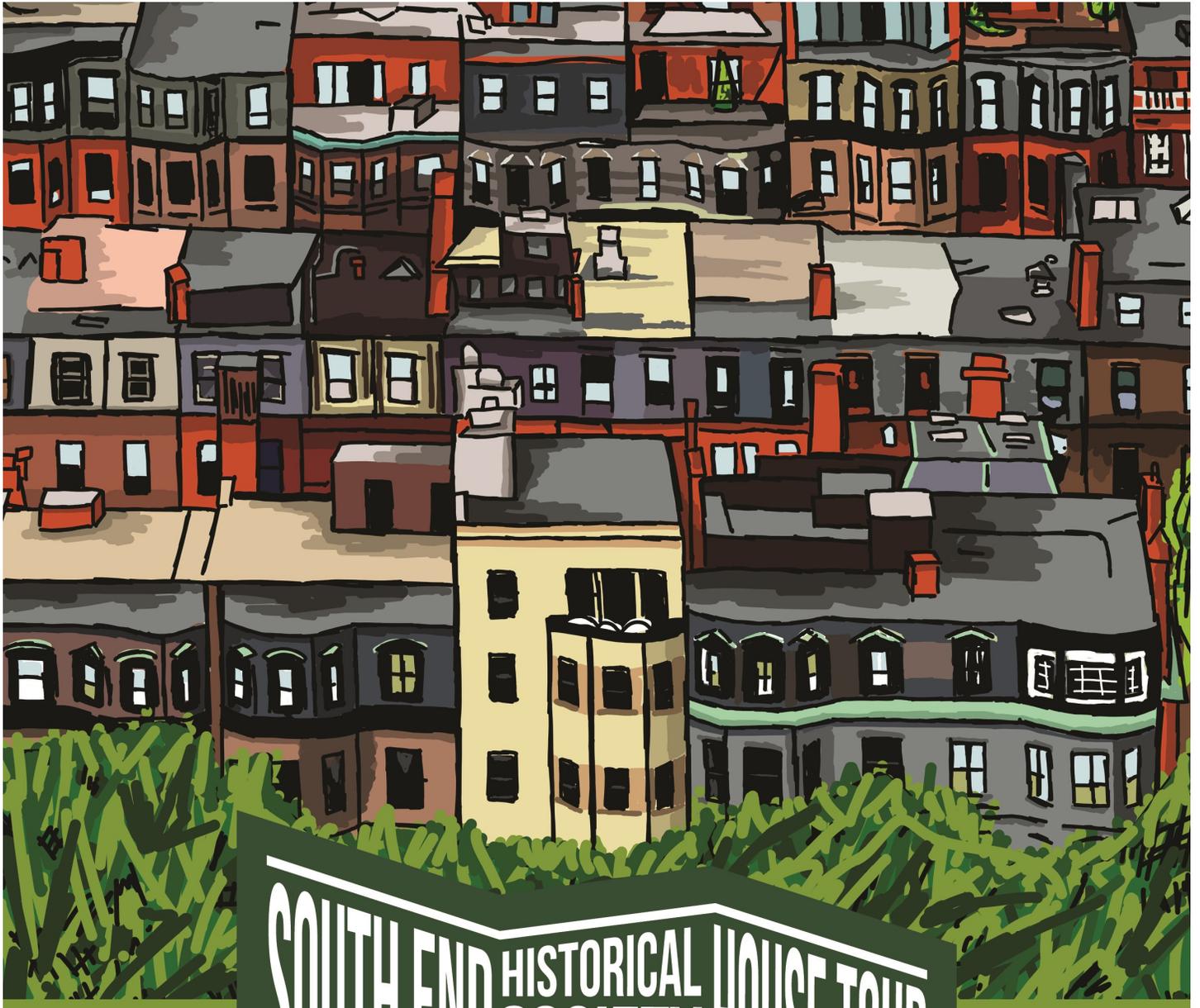
Right: At our annual meeting in June, Dr. Karilyn Crockett offered her reflections on writing her book, *People Before Highways*.

Below: In May, our Board member, Russ Lopez, talked about his latest book, *The Hub of Gay Universe*.



Below: In June, the South End Historical Society participated in the annual Pride Parade in Boston.





SOUTH END HISTORICAL SOCIETY HOUSE TOUR

A SELF-GUIDED WALKING TOUR • SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2019

Advance Tickets: \$30 • Day of Tour: \$35

**For advance ticketing and more information,
visit southendhistoricalsociety.org/housetour or call 617-536-4445.**

**Tickets can be purchased the day of the tour at
Sprogis & Neale Real Estate, 679 Tremont Street.**

New Collection Processed Finding Aid Online

By Alexandra Howard, spring 2019 archives intern

The Public Housing Collection at the South End Historical Society highlights the collective spirit of the South End community. The archival materials in this collection predominantly date from a period of urban renewal in the South End where city housing initiatives were met by community organizers who demanded a say in the future of their homes and neighborhood. The South End of Boston is unique because some of its public housing developments are owned and operated by community organizations. The records in the collection range from newspaper articles to brochures, community meeting flyers to



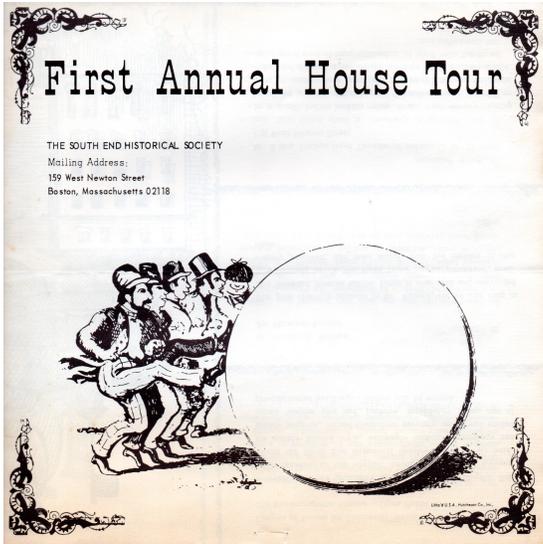
architectural design plans, blank housing applications to petitions. I hope the finding aid I created for this collection will help researchers and interested community members identify primary sources they can use to learn more about the history of public housing and community organizing in Boston's South End neighborhood.

Pictured here are some highlights from the collection [from the bottom counter-clockwise]: a photo from an unidentified newspaper of four Cathedral Housing tenant leaders – Ana Arroyo, Geneva Evans, Susan Snyder, Shirley Payne; a Boston Globe newspaper article from July 17, 1977 about the public housing development Villa Victoria, operated by the community organization Inquilinos Boricuas en Accion; Flyer from the South End/Lower Roxbury Ad Hoc Housing Coalition advertising an upcoming community meeting; page from a booklet about the Tenants' Development Corporation – a community development organization founded by low-income, black tenants who were dissatisfied with their living conditions and collectively bought their buildings, rehabilitated them, and managed the properties themselves.

Finding aids are available at www.southendhistoricalsociety.org/collections/



The Early House Tours

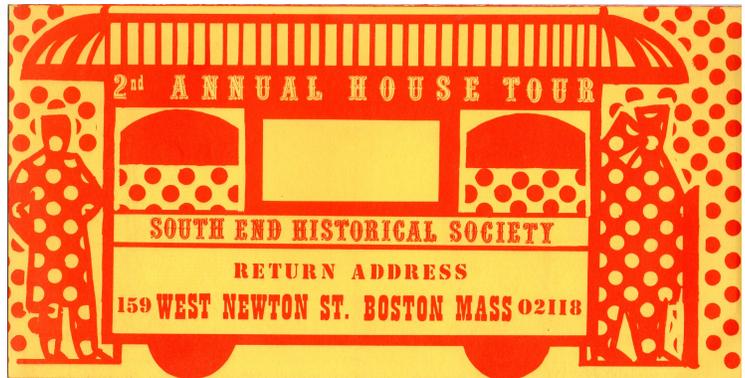


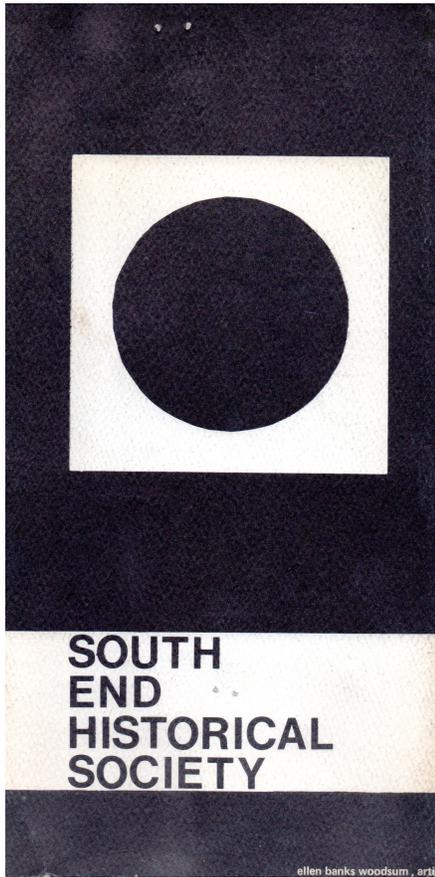
Above: *The first house tour was on June 10, 1967. The tickets for this year's event state "NO HIGH HEELS PLEASE"*

This year will be our 51st Annual South End House Tour. Originally, a ticket for the tour cost \$2.50 (or \$2 in advance) and the tour was held in the spring. It wasn't until the 17th tour in 1983 that we began holding it in the fall. The neighborhood has changed along with the tour over the years, but the support that we receive from our members, neighbors, and the homeowners who generously open their homes for the event has remained constant. Without that generosity, we would not be able to offer this annual event--or any of our other programs that the funds we raise support.

Every year we produce guidebooks, tickets, and posters for the tour, and over the years we have preserved a large sample of this material. While we do not have a copy of everything that was produced, we do have a complete run of guidebooks. If you took part in any of the early tours and have memorabilia or photographs that you would like to share, we would love to hear from you. You can reach us at (617) 536-4445 or email us at admin@southendhistoricalsociety.org.

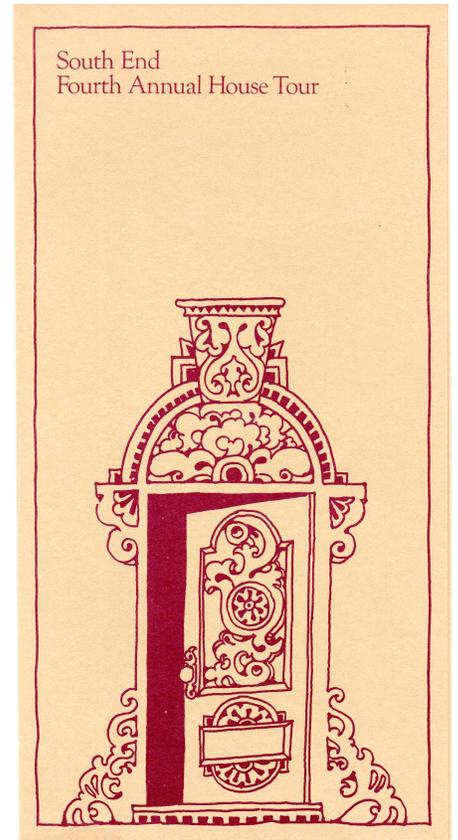
Right: *The second house tour was on May 18, 1968. The tour book for this year advertises that signed copies of the poster will be available for sale, a copy of which we have in our collection.*





Left: *The third house tour was on May 10, 1969. Again, there were 10 houses on the tour. In our material for this year are stickers that say "Guide." If you participated that year, perhaps you can let us know if there was an option to take a guided tour.*

Right: *The fourth house tour was on May 2, 1970. This year the price of the tickets rose to \$3.00 in advance and \$3.50 on the day of. For this tour, SEHS provided a list of places to grab something to eat and places to shop.*



Left: *SEHS held its fifth house tour on May 22, 1971. This year we had 16 stops, including 558 Massachusetts Avenue, the home of the League of Women for Community Service. There were also three groups that were selling refreshments on the route to help raise funds for projects in the neighborhood.*

Continued from page 3...

Boston Archives and Special Collections responded enthusiastically. By fortunate happenstance, Professor Maria John of UMB was planning an oral history graduate seminar for the fall 2018 semester and quickly agreed to make the Bancroft the subject of the seminar. After a summer of planning assisted by Professor John and her colleagues, during October, November, and December 2018 eleven 2- to 3-hour interviews were conducted, digitally recorded, and transcribed by the students in her class. The recordings and transcripts (still being edited) will be available at the UMB Archives and Special Collections and eventually online. Hard copy transcripts will also be available in the SEHS reference collection.

Looking ahead, the SEHS in conjunction with UMB is projecting in the near term a continuation of the Bancroft School Oral History Project. To that end SEHS is in active conversation with the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities (MassHum) toward a modest grant to support continuation of the pilot project. An evening public presentation at the SEHS is contemplated for the fall/winter 2019-20 to report on the pilot program. In the longer term SEHS is seeking substantial funding and community cooperation for a large-scale oral history, interviewing and recording those from all walks of life who experienced the often disruptive changes in our neighborhood during the period in question. Those interested in helping with this effort could contact us at admin@southendhistoricalsociety.org. SEHS wants this to become a basic archive and resource for those interested in social and cultural change in urban venues during the twentieth-century. It will accompany and supplement such fine recent work as SEHS board member Russ Lopez's *Boston's South End: The Clash of Ideas in a Historic Neighborhood* (2015) and the exemplary narrative work of Alison Barnet, *South End Character: Speaking Out On Neighborhood Change* (2013), and her forthcoming *Once Upon a Neighborhood: A Timeline and Anecdotal History of the South End of Boston*.

Volunteer Opportunities

Want to be more involved with the South End Historical Society? We have opportunities for volunteers in the SEHS newsletter, House Tour, collections, preservation, and history related projects.

For more information, email us at:
admin@southendhistoricalsociety.org

Self-Guided Audio Walking Tour

Now when you visit the South End, you can learn more about its history with an audio tour created by the South End Historical Society and UniGuide. Starting at SEHS in Chester Square, the walking tour takes you through 12 points of interest in this historic neighborhood (such as the Porter House, Blackstone & Franklin Square, and Union Park).

UniGuide is a free smartphone app that provides you with hundreds of audio tours across the United States. Access all tours in a single app, stream them or download ahead of time to save data.

Get the app for your phone and listen to a wonderfully curated tour of the South End. Visit <http://uniguide.me/> to download the app.



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



Image from the 1972 Streets Survey Collection.

Survey. The Streets Survey includes over 3,000 images taken by the South End Historical Society in 1972 documenting every extant South End building. These images were used in the

historical society's successful application to place the South End on the National Register of Historic Places. Image reproductions from the South End Streets Survey carry a fee of \$30 each for a 300dpi digital copy.

If you are interested in reproducing an SEHS image for personal, commercial, or research purposes, please email us at admin@southendhistoricalsociety.org for more information about our image collection, fees and policies.

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Learn about some of the
early South End House
Tours. (p. 8-9)



See what you may have
missed. (p. 5)

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