As you walk around your home, do you ever wonder who owned it before you? Or, who thought that the paint color you discovered while renovating was a good choice? Researching the past owners and occupants of your home might seem daunting. Familiarizing yourself with the types of records that are available and how to access them will help you as you learn more about your home.

**Land Records**

The first place to begin researching your home is the land records. For land in Boston, these records are located at the Suffolk County Registry of Deeds. The records include the deeds, mortgages, liens, and any other documents relating to the ownership of the property.

(continued on page 4)
Dear Friends,

What a year it has been! COVID-19 certainly affected what we were able to do in the last year. We started the year as we always do, with our new members reception, but had to cancel the one-woman show about Kip Tiernan. From that point forward, we haven’t been able to have any programming. The pandemic also meant that we needed to change the way we do our annual fundraiser, the South End House Tour. Because this is our only fundraising event, we have been working to bring it to you digitally. More information about our plans can be found on page 3.

Despite the challenges we faced with COVID-19, we are excited that this year, thanks to the efforts of some of our board members, we were awarded a $100,000 Community Preservation Grant from the City of Boston. The grant will be used to restore and replace the windows in our building. This project has been a long-term goal of the Society’s that is finally within reach.

Jason Amos
Executive Director

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Franklin Square House
November 2020
Rather than cancel the 2020 South End Historical Society House Tour, we made the decision to have the tour virtually. Over the course of the week of February 8 - 14, we will be sharing a video with sponsors and “ticketholders” via our YouTube channel. We want to thank all of the homeowners who graciously agreed to work with us while we make this pivot during these unique times. We know that this can’t replace gathering together to celebrate our neighborhood’s history, but we hope that you will enjoy it.
To trace a property backward, it is important to start with the current deed. If you don’t have a copy of the deed for the property readily available, you can find a digital copy online at [https://www.masslandrecords.com/Suffolk/](https://www.masslandrecords.com/Suffolk/).

The easiest method for locating a property’s most recent deed is to search on this website by address or by owner name. If you search by address, your search results will return all of the deeds, liens, mortgages, and other records associated with that property back to 1973. If you search by owner, you will get all of the records on which that name appears in Suffolk County.

Once you have the most recent deed, there are some things to make note of before beginning to trace the property backwards. They are:

- The grantor (seller)
- The legal description of the property
- Date of sale
- References (volume and page) to when the grantor purchased the property

It is likely that the deed you located will have some information about when the seller purchased the property. If the volume and page are listed, you can use that information to search for that deed by changing the search criteria to “Book Search.” If not, you can search the land records for the grantor and locate the deed on which they appear as the grantee (buyer) of that property.

Eventually, you will need to examine deeds from prior to January 1, 1973. If you have the volume and page number of the deed you are interested in, you need to change the search function to “Unindexed Property Search.” Even when you have a reference to a previous deed, it is important to remember the legal description of the property and the name of the grantee because occasionally mistakes are made – misspelled names, incorrect dates, or incorrect references to previous deeds are all possible.

If you reach a point where you are searching for deeds between 1973 and 1920 but don’t have the volume and page for the previous deed, or if the reference is incorrect, you will need to visit the Suffolk County Registry of Deeds in Boston. Information about their hours are available on their website: [https://massrods.com/suffolk/](https://massrods.com/suffolk/).
When examining deeds, if you have an incorrect or missing reference to a deed that is earlier than 1920, the grantor and grantee indexes are available from [http://www.Familysearch.org](http://www.Familysearch.org). After locating the entries in the indexes, you can use the “Unindexed Property” search function on the Suffolk County land records website to find the deeds you need.

**Directories**

Part of the South End’s history involves the change from single family residences to boarding houses. As a result, the person who owned the property may not have lived there. Directories will tell you who was living in our house.

An extensive collection of Boston city directories can be found on [http://www.Ancestry.com](http://www.Ancestry.com). Unlike [Familysearch.org](http://www.Familysearch.org), Ancestry.com is a paid subscription website; however, it is also available at the Boston Public Library (BPL). During the COVID-19 pandemic this resource has been made available for BPL card holders to use at home.

If you are using [Ancestry.com](http://www.Ancestry.com) to search for residents of your home, you need to keyword search the address. It is important to remember that street addresses may be abbreviated—E. Springfield instead of East Springfield, for example.

**Census Records**

Another source for information about former residents of your property is the U.S. Federal Census. Currently, the only census records that have been released to the public are

(continued on page 8)
The South End Then & Now

**Top:** Tremont Street looking north from its intersection with W. Springfield.

**Middle:** St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church on Shawmut Ave. and a building that was previously there.

**Bottom:** Columbus Avenue looking north with the Union United Methodist Church on the left and the steeple of the Second Universalist Church in the distance.
In Memoriam Dr. Clifford B. Janey (1946-2020)

By Paul M. Wright

All photos courtesy of Judith and Jennifer Watkins, and Lynn Weissberg.

Clifford Janey, who was an influential, charismatic teacher at the South End’s Bancroft School from 1974-1977, passed away at his home in Washington, DC, on February 13, 2020. CJ, as he was known, is remembered with affection and respect by his students, their parents, and his fellow teachers. He was one of the key interviewees in the first round of the South End Historical Society’s Oral History Project in 2018 that focused on the Bancroft School. The Bancroft was an alternative public school that flourished from 1969-1981, and CJ was one of the formative influences on the school’s innovative curriculum and practices. A native of Boston, he came to the Bancroft after earning a doctorate in education at Boston University, and went on to national prominence as superintendent of schools in Rochester, NY, Washington, DC, and Newark, NJ. At the time of his passing he was a Senior Research Scholar at Boston University’s School of Education. At a reception for the Bancroft oral history team in December 2018 CJ enjoyed an emotional reunion with several former Bancroft students, parents, and teachers. In a communication about his experience in the South End he said: “I taught three years at the Bancroft and enshrined in my classroom a celebrated soulful marriage between schools and communities. Let’s give more ‘space’ to the significance of the Bancroft and its remarkable contribution to the roots of public education!!”
1790 through 1940, with the exception of the 1890 census. That year’s census was damaged during a fire and then discarded.

Unlike directories, which tell you who was living there annually, the Federal Census records will only tell you who was in living at the house decennially. The census records will also provide additional information about each person living there.

As with directories, you won’t necessarily know who is living in the house on each census or which pages of the census to look at. To help identify which enumeration district to search, you can visit https://stevemorse.org/census/unified.html. By putting in the address you are looking for and the names of the nearby cross streets you can narrow down the enumeration district in which the address was recorded.

**I have names...now what?**

So, you now have a list of the people who owned the property and lived there, but how do you learn more about them? This can be difficult because you are starting with very little personal information. This is where recording all of the information that you have discovered about the occupants and owners becomes useful. You may have come across a deed that identifies the owners as a husband and wife, a census record that lists family relations, and directories that provide information about occupations – all of which is useful information for learning more. No one source will provide a clear picture about each person’s life, but when examined and evaluated together they will help paint a fuller picture.

**Vital Records**

Vital records record the birth, marriage, and death of individuals and are useful for finding additional personal information. Some types of information that you are likely to find on vital records are:

- **Birth Record**: place of birth, occupation of father, parents’ name and places of birth
- **Marriage Record**: residence, occupation, place of birth, parents’ names
- **Death Record**: cause of death, residence, place of death, occupation
**Census Records**

In addition to providing information about who was living at each house, census records also provide personal information about each resident. The questions that were asked each year varied, but some of the common questions were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Census</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>1850-80; 1900-40</td>
<td>Place of birth</td>
<td>1850-80; 1900-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>1850-80; 1900-40</td>
<td>Value of real estate</td>
<td>1850-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>1880; 1900-40</td>
<td>Value of personal estate</td>
<td>1860-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relation to head of household</td>
<td>1880; 1900-40</td>
<td>Parent’s place of birth</td>
<td>1880; 1900-1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profession</td>
<td>1850-80; 1900-40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As you dig deeper into the lives of the homeowners and residents, there is other information from the census records that you might find helpful. Census records from 1900 to 1940 often asked questions about a person’s naturalization status. There are also questions about how long a person has been married for and how many children they have, which can lead to additional records.

**Newspapers**

Using the information you find in census records and vital records, you might find additional information in newspapers. Many newspaper databases are full-text searchable, but they can be difficult to search if there is an error in the transcribed text. Some Massachusetts newspapers are available on https://www.Genealogybank.com, https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov, and from the Boston Public Library with a library card.

It is important to remember to also search for abbreviations (E. Brookline vs. East Brookline) and partial spellings (Hasting vs. Hastings). These techniques will help make sure that you are getting as many of the results as possible. It is also important to remember that you search newspapers from Boston first and then expand your search outward if relevant. For example, if a person had a connection to New Hampshire, you might find additional information in a newspaper from that state.

Announcements of marriages and deaths were often reported in the newspaper. If the person was prominent enough, you might also find a longer obituary that provides more details about his or her life. Newspapers can also provide information about a household’s lifestyle. The South End was designed to attract the growing merchant class of the city and some residents had maids or other household help. When they needed to fill a position, they would often place advertisements in the newspaper.
Part of the South End’s history is the transition from single family residence to lodging homes. Because of this transition, there are likely some people who lived in your home for only a short period of time who were not captured in directories or census records. Searching for the address in newspapers may help reveal those individuals.

**ISD Records**

A surprising potential source of information about the history of your home is the Boston Inspectional Services Department records. A majority of the records that they have will be related to the building – permits, applications, reports, etc. – but, occasionally other records, such as police reports, were mixed in. These records might also give you more information about the construction of the building (when and who built it), how the building was used (single family home vs. a multifamily home). The city of Boston makes these records available online at:

https://boston.gov/departments/inspectional-services/how-find-historical-permit-records

Researching your home and its owners and occupants can be both a rewarding and challenging endeavor. It is important to remember that the resources discussed here are not all of the resources that are available, but they will provide a good foundation to begin researching your house’s history.

**USEFUL WEBSITES**

**Familysearch.org**
A free website that allows you to search a variety of genealogical records useful to your research. The census, vital records, and land records will be most useful.

**Ancestry.com**
A subscription website that provides census records, vital records, directories, and other records that are not available on Familysearch.org. The Boston Public Library has an institutional membership that allows BPL cardholders to use the website.

**Americanancestors.org**
The website for the New England Historic Genealogical Society. They have more than 1.4 billion names in their databases. They also offer research for hire if you need assistance. To access some of their databases, you need to be a member.

**masslandrecords.com/Suffolk/**
Provides access to Suffolk County, Massachusetts land records.

**https://stevemorse.org/census/unified.html.**
This website will help you locate the enumeration district of the address for each census year that you are researching. With that information you can examine the census to find the right household.
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 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 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 300dpi digital copy.

If you are interested in reproducing a 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.

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.

Membership Reminder

Our membership runs from January 1 to December 31. If you have not yet renewed for 2021, please do so soon. Individual memberships are $30 and family/dual memberships are $50. Additional opportunities to support SEHS include the supporting membership at $100, the patron membership at $150, and the benefactor membership at $250. Checks for membership payment can be made out to the South End Historical Society and sent to 532 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston, MA 02118. Or you may visit our website at southendhistoricalsociety.org/membership and renew online with a credit card.
The 2020 House Tour is going virtual!

Learn more on page 3