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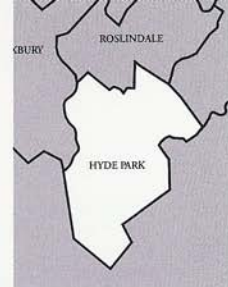
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HYDE PARK

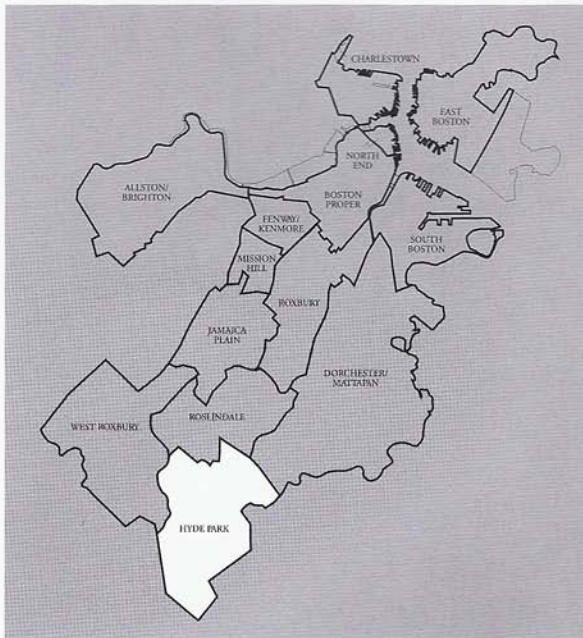
Exploring Boston's Neighborhoods



BOSTON LANDMARKS
COMMISSION

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Hyde Park was developed from farms and open land along the Neponset River in the towns of Dorchester, Milton, and Dedham. Suburban and industrial growth began in the 1850s as the Boston & Providence Railroad made this formerly remote area accessible to city dwellers looking for



affordable housing. Today, Hyde Park continues to be primarily a residential neighborhood, which includes local shopping districts, a thriving manufacturing area in the Readville section, and the green space of the Stony Brook Reservation.



ALONG THE RIVER

For more than 200 years after English settlement around Massachusetts Bay, the landscape was quiet along the Neponset River where the towns of Dorchester, Milton, and Dedham came together. In the 1660s, the road now known as River Street was laid out from Lower Mills to Dedham, and gradually a few farms bordered it. A bridge spanned the river at the site of the Neponset Valley Parkway by 1719. Attracted by the water power provided by Mother Brook at Dedham Low Plain (now Readville), some early industrialists set up mills. Otherwise, development in Hyde Park would have to wait until conditions were right. By the 1850s, the moment had arrived. All over the Boston area, families were pursuing a suburban

ideal, looking for opportunities to live away from the city, in detached, single-family houses in a country setting. Transportation to the city via the Boston & Providence Railroad made this suburban dream a reality. In the mid-1850s, a group of developers called the Hyde Park Company put up a small group of houses

▲ This Italianate-style house at 281 Fairmount Avenue was built by the Twenty Associates in 1856. It still has many of its original architectural features.

on speculation near the station, which stood near the intersection of Hyde Park Avenue and River Street. Soon afterward, 20 young men eager for affordable housing banded together as the Fairmount Land Company and Twenty Associates. They bought 100 acres of land along Fairmount Avenue and formed a village in which all the houses were built from the same design in order to save costs.

By the end of the decade, the Fairmount Land Company had merged with the successor to the Hyde Park Company and development proceeded briskly until the Civil War. The area had many attractions – affordability, convenient transportation, and scenic beauty.

The early development of the Fairmount section of Hyde Park featured two popular styles of the day. The Italianate style recalls villas in the Italian countryside, featuring bracketed cornices and porch moldings and narrow windows, often paired or arched. Houses of this type were first clustered in the early settlement around Fairmount Avenue and later appeared throughout the neighborhood. Also representative of early Hyde Park are the Gothic Revival cottages on Dana

Street, ornamented with pointed windows and large pendant drop ornaments on their gable peaks.

HYDE PARK'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE CIVIL WAR

The Civil War slowed the pace of Hyde Park's development, but it gave the neighborhood the opportunity to earn a special place in history. In 1861, the Commonwealth commandeered 125 acres of Ebenezer Paul's farm near Sprague Pond in Readville as a soldiers' training camp. Camp Meigs, as it came to be known in honor of the Quartermaster General of the Union Army, was the training ground for nearly 26,000 Massachusetts soldiers, more than any other camp in the state. The camp's facilities included 50 barracks, each with its own cookhouse and company headquarters, and stables for 1,000 horses.

Camp Meigs was the training field for many regiments, but most famous were the 54th and 55th Regiments and the 5th Cavalry – the first African-American troops to serve in the U.S. Army. The Army gave the governor

of Massachusetts permission to recruit African-American troops in January 1863, and, in spite of discriminatory conditions, the 54th Regiment was full and ready to begin training at Camp Meigs in May of that year. (In recent years, this regiment became nationally recognized as the subject of the film *Glory*.) The 54th

and 55th Regiments held out for the equal wages they had been promised, serving for a year without any pay in order to win their cause. One of the leaders of the protest was James Monroe Trotter, an African-American officer of the 55th, whose commis-



Courtesy of SPNEA

▲
**This photograph
of Camp Meigs
Memorial Park
was probably
taken about the
time of its dedi-
cation in 1892.**

sion the federal government refused to recognize because of his race. Trotter lived in Hyde Park after the Civil War and later served in Grover Cleveland's administration in Washington, D.C. His son, William Monroe Trotter, was a journalist and leader of the national African-American community at the turn of the century.

► Built in 1886, this architect-designed house at 46 Beacon Street shows the Queen Anne style in its asymmetrical plan, corner tower, and triangular pediment.



Camp Meigs was converted into an army hospital in 1864 and disassembled after the war ended the following year. In 1866, Ebenezer Paul sold his farm, including Camp Meigs, and the property was developed into house lots during the 1880s and '90s. In 1892, the developers deeded three acres of the site to the community for Camp Meigs Memorial Park.

THE POST-WAR BOOM

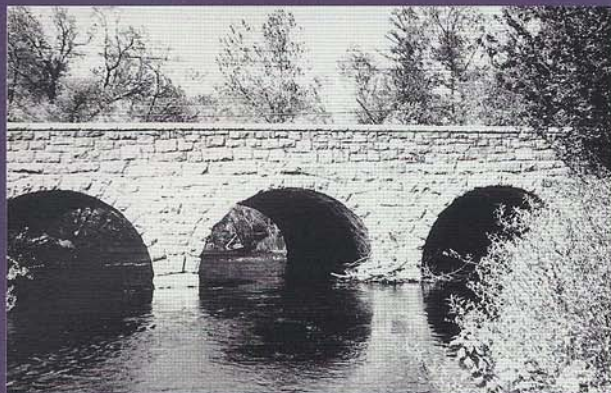
As soon as the war ended, Hyde Park development resumed in force – more than 100 houses were built in 1867 alone, and by that year there were six railroad stations in the neighborhood. Responding to the demands of growth, Hyde Park's residents petitioned the Commonwealth for town status, which was granted in 1868. Immediately following incorporation, the new

town embarked on a series of civic improvements including grading streets, organizing a fire department, and building four new schools.

During the post-war boom, people continued to build in the Italianate style and also added homes in the Second Empire style with its distinctive mansard roof line. Second Empire houses are found throughout Hyde Park, particularly in Fairmount, Mt. Neponset, and Sunnyside.

In 1873, a national financial downturn put a damper on the town's growth, but conditions improved by the 1880s and '90s. Many new dwellings were built in the Queen Anne style that recalled rural English housing of 200 years earlier. Notable examples of Queen Anne houses are found along Hyde Park Avenue, Beacon Street, and in Mt. Neponset. Many earlier houses were updated with wraparound porches in the Queen Anne style at this time. Civic improvements in this period included the

PAUL'S BRIDGE



Even before Hyde Park was developed, river crossings were important to farmers and travelers along the Neponset in Dorchester, Milton, and Dedham. By about 1719, a bridge linked Milton and Dedham at the site of Paul's Bridge on the Neponset Valley Parkway. The early wooden bridge was rebuilt several times during the 18th century, and it was known by the names of the various owners of the land abutting it. By 1784, it was called Paul's Bridge for the Paul family whose farm lay on the Hyde Park side of the river. In 1807, a new bridge combined stone abutments with a wooden roadway. Finally, in 1849, the stone bridge still standing today was constructed by Thomas Hollis, Jr., of Milton.

The handsome structure has three round arches of stone blocks joined by their carefully tapered shapes, without the use of mortar. Located within the Stony Brook Reservation, Paul's Bridge provides a link with the continuing green space of the Blue Hills Reservation to the south. The bridge was redesigned and widened for automobile traffic in the 1930s by landscape architect Arthur Shurcliff, who added the stone parapet to the top of the bridge and the regular courses of stone between the arches on the addition. The original side still contains irregular field stone between the arches.

introduction of electric lights in 1888, the street railway in 1894, and a new railroad station at Readville in 1898.

New residential areas with three deckers and bungalows flourished in Hyde Park around the turn of the century. The Colonial Revival style, characterized by classical details, was the primary architectural fashion in the early decades of the 20th century.

Since 1901, the Classical Revival-style Kennedy's Block has housed stores in Cleary Square. This photo shows the building before fire damage reduced it to a single story.

DOWNTOWN HYDE PARK

As the town grew, it developed a commercial center at Cleary and Everett squares. By the turn of the century, building codes mandated masonry construction in this area. Downtown Hyde Park acquired more of an urban feeling evidenced by substantial brick buildings such as Kennedy's Block, the Way Building, and French's Block.



By the 1890s, the growing Episcopal congregation of Christ Church – the oldest parish in Hyde Park, dating from 1860 – needed a larger building. It turned to the nationally known, Boston-based architect Ralph Adams Cram, the designer of many significant churches including the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City. The result is the Late Gothic-style church at the corner of River and Maple streets. Together with other churches by Cram, it influenced the design of church architecture throughout the U.S. for decades to come. The interior design includes a fine collection of stained glass windows gradually completed over the next 50 years. The original wooden church from the 1860s, remodeled by Cram, serves as the parish house.

Another important building in the civic center is the Public Library of Hyde Park, now the Hyde Park branch of the Boston Public Library (35 Harvard Avenue). Completed in 1899 by the Boston architectural firm of Clark and Russell, the library is an excellent example of the Classical Revival style, and it retains much of its original interior. It is significant also because of its association with the prominent anti-slavery author and lecturer Theodore Weld.

After the Civil War, Weld lived in Hyde Park and turned his attention to the development of a public library and other civic improvements.

HYDE PARK JOINS BOSTON

By 1912, Hyde Park had grown from a quiet suburban village to a small, bustling city. Feeling the need for more services, its citizens that year voted for annexation to the City of Boston. The benefit of this municipal change is evident in the 1917 Readville Fire Station (209 Neponset Valley Parkway). The Boston

Built of Quincy granite with brownstone and stucco trim, the Late Gothic-style Christ Church has undergone only minor alterations since its completion in 1894.

Fire Department built a substantial brick building in the Classical Revival style to replace the earlier fire station.

RECREATION IN HYDE PARK

The 1890s also saw new recreational land uses. In 1894, the Metropolitan Park Commission (now MDC) acquired a 600-acre tract of open land on the town's western edge, known as

LOCAL INDUSTRY

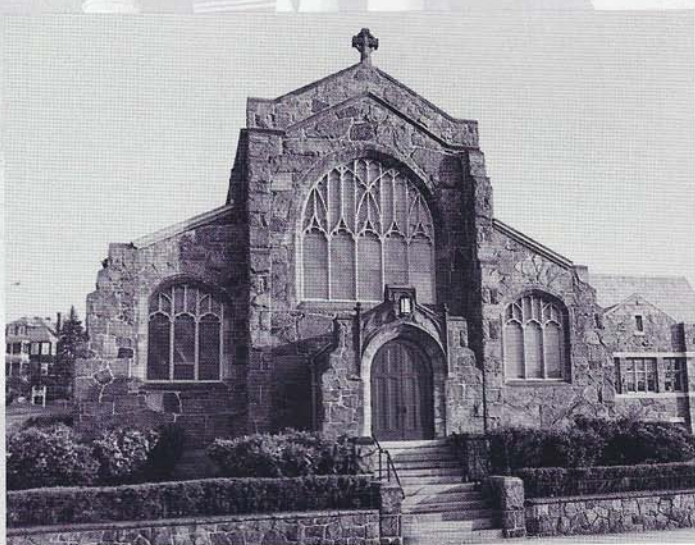
Although Hyde Park was founded as a primarily residential community, the neighborhood has a long and continuing history of manufacturing. The Sunnyside area encompassed the factory buildings of the Robert Bleakie Company on Hyde Park Avenue near Margin Street with the homes of both mill owners and mill workers. Robert Bleakie lived in the house he built around

Tileston & Hollingsworth, one of the earliest paper-making companies in the U.S. The company began operating here in 1806; the site itself had been used for papermaking as early as 1773. The buildings incorporated into the Diamond International complex date from the second half of the 19th century; the site also contains a freestanding Georgian Revival office building constructed in 1923 to the design of the Boston architectural firm of Appleton & Stearns.

The Dedham Manufacturing Company, whose complex survives at 1576-1608 River Street, was one of the earliest cotton mills in the country, beginning operation in 1815. Readville takes its name from James Read, one of the company's largest stockholders during the 1840s. The brick mill building now on the site was

constructed during post-Civil War prosperity in 1866-67. Under changing ownership and names throughout the 19th century, the mill was converted from water to steam power, and by 1893, it employed 200 workers and produced 100,000 yards of cloth per week. The mill building has recently been converted to condominiums.

Built of brick with post-and-beam framing, the 17-bay Dedham Manufacturing Company was one of the oldest and longest-running cotton mills in the U.S.



Stony Brook Reservation. Designed by the firm Olmsted, Olmsted and Eliot, this area augments Boston's park system.

Sports and amusement proved to be as important as natural beauty. The Stony Brook Reservation incorporates a popular golf course, and the regionally famous Readville Trotting Park opened its gates in 1896.

1870 at 57 Sunnyside, sharing views of the Great Blue Hill with the other industrialists who resided nearby. Workers in the Bleakie Mill lived in housing built by the mill around 1870 and still standing on Margin and Fulton streets.

In Readville, the current Diamond International complex at 864 River Street comprises the structures of

