



Upham's Corner Preservation Priorities Report

December 2011

BOSTON
PRESERVATION
ALLIANCE

In partnership with Historic Boston Incorporated and
The National Trust for Historic Preservation

Upham's Corner: Places Worth Preserving, Stories Worth Telling

A Historic Preservation Priorities Report by the Boston Preservation Alliance

December 2011

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1.0 About Us

This report was prepared by the Boston Preservation Alliance from October 2009 through August 2011. It grows out of a process led by the Neighborhood Preservation Partnership, a collaboration between two local historic preservation organizations, the Boston Preservation Alliance and Historic Boston Incorporated, in partnership with the National Trust for Historic Preservation and neighborhood organizations including Upham's Corner Main Streets.

Who We Are

- The Boston Preservation Alliance (the Alliance) is the primary non-profit historic preservation advocacy and education organization serving the city of Boston.
- Historic Boston Incorporated (HBI) is a revolving loan fund and non-profit real estate organization that rehabilitates historic and culturally significant properties in Boston.
- The National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) is a national membership non-profit organization dedicated to saving historic places and revitalizing communities. The NTHP Partners in the Field Program supports outreach into traditionally underserved communities throughout the U.S. – in our case, Boston's neighborhoods, in order to help save "places that matter."
- Upham's Corner Main Street (UCMS) is part of the national Main Streets program, which is an outgrowth of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. UCMS revitalizes the Upham's Corner commercial district by investing in its historic buildings.

Through series of neighborhood-based workshops, the Boston Preservation Alliance strives to identify neighborhood priorities for future historic preservation advocacy and education. The priorities discussed in this report reflect what we heard from people who live and work in Upham's Corner during a series of workshops and one-on-one communications from the fall of 2009 to the summer of 2011. This report will be circulated to key agencies and organizations in Boston and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, including the Boston Landmarks Commission, the

Massachusetts Historical Commission, the Boston Redevelopment Authority, and the City of Boston's Department of Neighborhood Development, and will inform the Alliance's priorities regarding potential advocacy in Upham's Corner in the years ahead.

In conjunction with this report, HBI has authored a Commercial Casebook chapter for the Upham's Corner Main Street District, which identifies priorities for its future real estate development and preservation of its historic commercial properties. The Upham's Corner Commercial Casebook chapter will be part of a Commercial Casebook for Main Streets districts throughout the city, which will be distributed to key agencies and organizations in Boston and the Commonwealth. The Upham's Corner chapter will inform HBI's priorities regarding potential real estate development assistance in Upham's Corner in the future.

This report represents the final product of a 21-month information gathering process in Upham's Corner, which included the following components:

- A Historic Preservation Walking Tour of the Upham's Corner Main Street District for residents and other interested individuals, co-presented by the Alliance and Upham's Corner Main Street in October 2009;
- HBI's preparation of a Casebook chapter on Upham's Corner;
- Interactive presentations at three Upham's Corner civic and neighborhood association meetings;

- Informal information gathering from one-on-one communications with a broad spectrum of neighborhood residents and community members;
- Primary and secondary source historical research, with sources including Boston Landmarks Commission Building Information Forms, existing neighborhood reports and surveys, and the Massachusetts Historical Commission's online MACRIS (Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System) research tool;
- A culminating workshop on June 9, 2010, called "Places Worth Preserving, Stories Worth Telling," at which community leaders and residents gathered to learn about the information gathered to date and to provide additional information toward the final report.

Upham's Corner community members have expressed the following hopes or visions for historic preservation efforts in Upham's Corner and surrounding residential neighborhoods:

- Increased public education, both within and beyond the local community, about the architectural and historical features of Upham's Corner and surrounding residential neighborhoods, including attention to Upham's Corner as a transportation hub and shopping center.
- Education of residents and other community members about existing and potential types of designation (including National Register listing and Boston landmarking), and the restrictions and benefits associated with these.

- Reduction of vacancies in historic buildings/lots, with owners/tenants that provide needed community services and/or contribute to the commercial district's revitalization.

The geographic boundaries of properties and places mentioned in this report encompass the Upham's Corner Main Street District and its immediate surroundings, including East Cottage Street, Humphreys Street, and Dudley Street; the Jones Hill and Virginia/Monadnock residential districts; and Pleasant Street. A limited number of properties mentioned in the report lie outside these boundaries, including Columbia Road at Kane Square and a nearby section of Dorchester Avenue.

The neighborhood priorities discussed in this report represent many voices from the Upham's Corner community; the information about each entry is drawn from a combination of the following: neighborhood residents' memories and knowledge, written records and reports; and discussions with representatives of neighborhood and city organizations and agencies. The properties and places mentioned in this report – the "stories worth telling," include both existing ones and places that no longer stand. In Upham's Corner as in any neighborhood, there are lessons to be learned from these past places, some of which were lost to neglect and/or demolition. These lessons can build a foundation for responsible preservation efforts in the future.

While the priorities identified in this report do not necessarily reflect the priorities of the Boston Preservation Alliance, the Alliance will use this report to help focus our educational and advocacy efforts in Upham's Corner in the near future.

At the culminating neighborhood workshop in Upham's Corner this June, community members stated their desire for a teaching tool that would identify neighborhood buildings with historic designations, and explain what those designations mean. Attached as an appendix to this report is a reference map illustrating historically designated properties and areas in and around Upham's Corner. This map is not all-inclusive of the geographic area and properties included in this report, but identifies a sampling of properties in Upham's Corner and in the adjacent Jones Hill and Virginia/Monadnock neighborhoods that are subject to regulatory review relating to historic preservation.

2.0 Historic Preservation Opportunities in Upham's Corner: an Introduction

The following sections represent themes that arose during this project's information gathering phase. Each section includes a brief introduction, followed by a short list of identified priorities, and then a more comprehensive listing of properties or issues mentioned by community members that relate to the theme.

Properties mentioned below that also appear in Historic Boston Incorporated's Commercial Casebook Chapter are marked with an asterisk ().*

2.1 Historic Preservation Opportunities: Upham's Corner Main Street District

Included in this section of the report are a wide variety of historical and contemporary neighborhood features. These include a church with roots in the neighborhood from the 1860s, a 17th-century burying ground, several commercial buildings, a century-old comfort station, a storage building, and a movie theater built in 1918.

2.1a Upham's Corner Main Street District: Priority



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

Pilgrim Church*

540 Columbia Road
(1892)

Founded in 1862 and recognized as an Orthodox Congregational Church in 1867, the congregation of Pilgrim Church first worshiped in rented space at the Dorchester Atheneum and later in a building on Stoughton Street. Stephen Earle of Worcester, MA, designed the current church building in the Romanesque Revival style. The foundations were laid in 1888 and the building completed in 1892. The structure is now in poor condition, in part because of a fire in 1970 that began in the attic and caused significant damage.

A looming presence in Upham's Corner, Pilgrim Church now functions primarily as a community center and social service facility as well as a worship space. Services for the congregation are now held in a small back chapel. The enormous main sanctuary houses a 120-bed shelter for homeless men as well as a 36-bed facility for men in transition. The congregation supports the shelter with food and clothing,

while also providing a free weekly community lunch at the church and a free hot meal for the homeless on Boston Common every Saturday. The building houses a food pantry, a thrift shop, offices for an organization that sends 300 inner-city children to camp each summer, and meeting rooms for community groups. A garden on the premises supplies fresh produce that a food truck distributes throughout the community on a weekly basis in the summer.

The Pilgrim Church falls within the Upham's Corner Neighborhood Design Overlay District, and has prepared and submitted a nomination for individual listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

2.1a Upham's Corner Main Street District: Priority



PHOTO COURTESY OF HISTORIC BOSTON INCORPORATED

Dorchester Fireproof Storage Company*

55 Humphreys Street (692 Dudley Street)
(1915)

This storage company building was one of the first non-residential structures built in the Upham's Corner/Humphreys-East Cottage Street area. Its irregularly shaped structure ranges from five to seven stories; the first floor may have been used for cold storage. The City and Upham's Corner officials' 2007 efforts to convince the owner to sell the lot were unsuccessful. The building remains the largest unused property in the district, with the lot at 29,735 square feet.

2.1b Upham's Corner Main Street District: Additional Properties of Note



Strand Theatre

543 Columbia Road
(1918)

Built in 1918 on the site of the former Clapp-Dyer House, the Strand Theatre is significant as one of Boston's first great "movie palaces," as opposed to earlier theaters that were built to accommodate live shows and were later adapted into cinemas. The Strand closed in the late 1960s in a state of disrepair. In the early 1970s, the City of Boston took the Strand by eminent domain to rehabilitate and bring life back to the theater. It reopened in 1979 and entered into a 25-year agreement with the M. Harriet McCormick Center for the Arts. The City has retained a management role for the Strand, investing nearly \$5 million in it while actively marketing it for urban arts performances.

Designation: Part of the Upham's Corner Neighborhood Design Overlay District



Dorchester North Burying Ground*

Corner of Columbia Road and Stoughton Street
(Burials began in 1638)

The Dorchester North Burying Ground was first established in November of 1634, and is the earliest man-made feature in this area of Dorchester. Unlike most historic Boston cemeteries, burials at Dorchester North extended well into the 19th century. It includes plots of such prominent figures as Lieutenant Governor William Stoughton and the Reverend Richard Mather. The size and lengthy period of active burials makes Dorchester North one of the more colorful and varied burying grounds in Boston. In 1834, Dorchester residents began taking a renewed interest in Dorchester North by laying out paths along the rows of graves, and planting trees, flowers, and shrubs. The last significant change occurred in the 1920s when the stone walls were replaced by those constructed of concrete.

Designations: Boston Landmark, National Register Individual Property, Preservation Restriction (held by the Massachusetts Historical Commission)

2.1b Upham's Corner Main Street District: Additional Properties of Note



Comfort Station at the Old North Burying Ground*

611 Columbia Road
(1912)

The one-story “mission style” building was built as a “convenience station” in 1912, and appears to have been built upon Dorchester North Burying Ground land. The comfort station was designed by architect William Besarick, who also designed the Roger Clap School on Harvest Street and the Municipal Building at the corner of Columbia Road and Bird Street (See “Municipal Building,” below). He is also known to have designed many of the triple deckers in the Boston Street, Jones Hill, and Virginia and Monadnock Street areas (including the George Milliken House at 44 Virginia Street; see “Success Stories,” below).

According to City of Boston building permits, the building’s plumbing and electrical systems were modernized in 1945, while the doors were restored to the “original conditions.” These efforts were part of a larger project throughout the Dorchester North Burying Ground area, in which the cemetery walls were repaired. By 1959, the building was used as an office, with four rooms on the first floor and a single room at the basement level.

The building has sat unused for an unknown amount of time and is in generally poor condition. The City began the process to put the building up for bid in December 2009. According to the Request for Proposal Database, as of September 2010 the City Department of Neighborhood Development was still looking for reuse ideas for the building.



Municipal Building

500 Columbia Road
(1902)

This curved four-story brick and granite Georgian Revival building was built in 1902, and sits at the southwestern end of the Upham’s Corner commercial district. It has served the community for over a century in various public capacities, housing ward committee meeting rooms, meeting space for veterans of the Spanish-American War, a draft board, a pool and gymnasium with public showers, and a health center. It currently houses the Upham’s Corner branch of the Boston Public Library, part of the Upham’s Corner Health Center, and the Bird Street Community Center.

Designation: Part of the Upham’s Corner Neighborhood Design Overlay District

2.1b Upham's Corner Main Street District: Additional Properties of Note



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

Wheelock Livery Building* and Associated Buildings

525 Columbia Road
(1831-1874)

Commonly known as “the Stables Building,” this wood frame livery building was constructed between 1831 and 1874, and is one of the earliest buildings still standing in the district. Both on maps and in historic images, it appears that wood frame buildings stood in front of the brick livery building and on a pointed parcel of land that thrust into the busy Hancock Street/Columbia Road intersection. The current three-story brick building, which was first used for a livery, was later used as a garage for automobiles. Currently, a large portion of the first and second floors is used by Furniture Mart, New York Fried Chicken and Pizza, and Rent-A-Center. The third floor houses karate and boxing clubs. There is also a one-story commercial building with two storefronts, and a vacant lot at 15 Wheelock Avenue that is currently used as parking by Rent-a-Center.

Designation: Part of the Upham’s Corner Neighborhood Design Overlay District



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

Wheelock Hall (Fox Hall)*

556 Columbia Road
(1890)

Constructed in 1890, this yellow brick building was named in honor of A.P. Wheelock, who operated a large livery stable at 531 Columbia Road. In earlier years, Wheelock Hall provided meeting spaces for local groups, and a dance hall (named Fox Hall) on the fourth floor. Today, the building includes residential units, retail space on the ground level, and at 558 a bowling alley on the third floor and a billiard hall on the second. The building’s fourth floor currently sits vacant.

Designation: Part of the Upham’s Corner Neighborhood Design Overlay District

2.1b Upham's Corner Main Street District: Additional Properties of Note



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

Columbia Square Building (Odd Fellows Hall)*

578-588 Columbia Road
(767 Dudley Street)
(mid-1890s)

Amos Upham (1788-1879) opened a general store on this site in the building known as Masonic Hall; the business was later run by three generations of the Upham family. The building was constructed on the corner of Boston Street (later named Columbia Road) and Dudley Street in the Federal style. The store stayed in business until the 1890s, when the building was replaced by the Classic Revival-style Columbia Square Building. The Columbia Square Building has also been known as “Upham’s Building.” According to the Boston Landmark Commission’s (1995) Inventory Form for Upham’s Corner (see “Upham’s Corner” in References), it is said that a descendant of Amos Upham installed in this building “the very first electric light in Dorchester.”

The Columbia Square Building currently houses retail businesses on the ground floor; the upper floors have served various functions over the years, including use as a Masonic hall and use as election offices, and in recent years have been underused. According to Earl Taylor of the Dorchester Historical Society, the cornice of this building is in danger of crumbling.

Designation: Part of the Upham’s Corner Neighborhood Design Overlay District



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

Dorchester Savings Bank

570-572 Columbia Road
(1929)

Residents have expressed an interest in this Art Deco style bank building, which stands beside the Columbia Square Building (above) and today houses Citizens Bank.

Designation: Part of the Upham’s Corner Neighborhood Design Overlay District

2.1b Upham's Corner Main Street District: Additional Properties of Note



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

597 Columbia Road

(ca. 1960s)

Community members have expressed an interest in this freestanding, one-story building across from the Columbia Square Building. The building today houses Sovereign Bank, one of several banks in the commercial district (See also Dorchester Savings Bank, above, and Dorchester Trust Company, to right).

Designation: Part of the Upham's Corner Neighborhood Design Overlay District



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

Dorchester Trust Company

555 Columbia Road

(ca. 1918)

The Boston Landmarks Commission's (1995) Area Form for Upham's Corner (see "Upham's Corner" in References) notes that this building was constructed "on part of the Clapp-Dyer House's lawn by 1918." (See "Strand Theatre" above for additional information about the Clapp-Dyer House.)

Neighborhood residents have expressed an interest in this building, which today houses Bank of America.

Designation: Part of the Upham's Corner Neighborhood Design Overlay District

2.1b Upham's Corner Main Street District: Additional Properties of Note



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

Pierce Building

592-598 Columbia Road
(ca. 1905)

This Classical Revival-style commercial block is one of the Upham's Corner commercial district's main buildings. The building was constructed by J. Homer Pierce (1840-1933), a major land developer in Dorchester, and is named after Samuel B. Pierce. The Pierce Building was designed to house storefronts on the first floor and professional offices above. As economic activity moved away from the commercial center in the post-World War II era, the building began to suffer, and by 1975 it was vacant. In 1985 the Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation began to restore the building for retail space, offices and artists' lofts. Following the restoration, Rix Drug Store occupied the first floor for many years.

Currently, the building's occupants include Payless Shoes on the first floor, the Dorchester Bay Economic Development Council on the second floor, and several housing loft spaces. Until recently, Upham's Corner Main Streets also had its offices on the second floor. The Payless lease expires in 2012, and some community members have expressed a desire to identify a new tenant for that space.

Designation: Part of the Upham's Corner Neighborhood Design Overlay District

2.2 Historic Preservation Opportunities: Commercial Property Outside the Main Street District

The commercial property mentioned in this section is a currently unoccupied building and lot with a multi-layered history of community uses, which has been a subject of discussion and concern among neighborhood residents since it was closed in 2010.

2.2a Commercial Property Outside the Main Street District: Priority



65 East Cottage Street

(Date Unknown)

For much of the 20th century, 65 Cottage Street housed a bread factory; in prior years, a farm occupied this lot.

The Department of Neighborhood Development (DND) has managed this building since December 2009, when the City of Boston foreclosed because of an outstanding tax lien. From 1996 to 2010, Maxwell Flea Market operated in the lot adjacent to this property, and the lot was also used for community gatherings and parties.

In August 2010, the Boston Fire Department filed a criminal complaint against DND because of fire code violations. Since then, the building has been in disuse, and its future use is unknown. Community residents consider this building and lot an important community space and would like to be involved in the decision-making process about its future use/development. Community members' visions for the place include development of the lot into a playground and community gathering place; development of artists' space; and development of the building into a community education center.

2.3a Residential Districts and Properties: Priority

2.3 Historic Preservation Opportunities: Residential Districts and Properties

This section presents a range of residential properties that have been identified by community members as significant and of interest or concern. Included are specific houses, categories of historic homes (e.g. homes designed by a particular architect), and historic residential districts. Listings here include a former Knights of Columbus Hall currently used as a church, a ca. 1880 house that contains an 18th-century staircase from the Old Trinity Church, the former home of a renowned early-20th-century civil rights leader, two late-19th-century apartment buildings, a number of well-preserved 19th-century homes that residents would like to see recognized and appreciated, and a tiny ca. 1830 house on a corner lot that some neighbors have rallied to save from demolition.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

125 Stoughton Street (1830 or earlier)

This small, early-19th-century Federal cottage, located on a sizable corner lot, is one of the oldest houses in the Jones Hill neighborhood. The Clapp family occupied the house during the last quarter of the 19th century.

Some community members have identified this house as endangered. They report that a neighborhood association recently opposed a developer that hoped to raze the house and construct a condominium building in its place; according to neighbors, former City Councillor Maureen Feeney helped to keep the lot zoned as a two-family lot. While some neighbors oppose the developer's building intentions because of density issues, some local residents also care about preserving this historic house.

This house is part of the Jones Hill Neighborhood Design Overlay District.

2.3b Residential Districts and Properties: Additional Properties of Note



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

Monadnock Street and Virginia Street homes (ca. 1880-1890) Bryant G. Smith House 29 Monadnock Street (1880)

The large, single-family homes built high on Virginia and Monadnock streets in the late 19th century overlooked the city. Because a number of doctors settled on Monadnock Street during that time, by 1900 the street was sometimes called “Pill Road.”

The first house built on Monadnock Street was the Bryant G. Smith House (1880), pictured above. This house, built in a combination of Mansard, Stick and Queen Anne styles, was built for the family of Bryant G. Smith, whose father, George W. Smith, owned GW&F Smith Iron Company. This Boston-based iron foundry made ornamental cast iron for buildings including the State House and Old City Hall, and created the fascias for the Longfellow Bridge. The company also provided structural iron for mid-rise buildings, made Boston manhole covers, and contributed prefabricated structures to lighthouses including the Saybrook Breakwater Lighthouse in Connecticut.

Unlike any other house in the neighborhood, the Smith House is adorned with ornamental cast iron railings on the peaks of its roof. The floral motif found here also appears on railings, posts, and grill work, and in details throughout the house’s interior (Bob Haas email to Erica Lindamood, 12/5/2011; see also Haas 2011 in References). According to neighborhood residents, this house has been sensitively restored.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

Joshua Garner House 978 Dorchester Avenue (1805) And Other Pre-Mid-19th-Century Houses

Neighborhood residents have expressed an interest in local homes built prior to the middle of the 1800s. Examples of these include the house at 978 Dorchester Avenue (shown above), which was constructed in the Federal architectural style. The building currently houses the Dorchester Baptist Church.

Some residents mentioned a house at Bowdoin and possibly Church Street that was built around the period of the Clapp House (See “Historic Preservation Success Stories,” below). More information is needed.

2.3b Residential Districts and Properties: Additional Properties of Note



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

Denmark Apartments

713 Dudley Street
(ca. 1890)

Denmark and Monadnock (see right) Apartments are two neighboring, large residential apartment buildings. They stand on the south side of Dudley Street.

Denmark Apartments was built for James W. Cook, proprietor of James W. Cook and Son, a piano moving company located at 20 Avery Street.

Designation: Part of the Upham's Corner Neighborhood Design Overlay District



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

Monadnock Apartments

3 Monadnock Street (715-723 Dudley Street)
(ca. 1898)

The Monadnock Apartments building stands on the corner of Dudley and Monadnock streets.

In its Inventory Form for the Upham's Corner neighborhood, the Massachusetts Historical Commission calls the Monadnock Apartments "one of the great architectural treasures of the Upham's Corner area," noting its high-quality Classical/Renaissance Revival facades.

Designation: Part of the Upham's Corner Neighborhood Design Overlay District

2.3b Residential Districts and Properties: Additional Properties of Note



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

Sylvester Parshley Houses

17-19 Cushing Avenue

(1893)

21 Cushing Avenue

(1900)

119 Cushing Avenue

(1886)

The Queen Ann style residence at 17-19 Cushing Avenue (pictured above) was built by McNeil Brothers and Sylvester Parshley and served as Sylvester Parshley's home. 21 Cushing Avenue was built by Sylvester Parshley for John Lyman Paine, rector of St. Mary's Episcopal Church. The single-family residence at 119 Cushing Avenue was built by McNeil Brothers and Sylvester Parshley in Queen Anne style.

Designation: Parts of the Jones Hill Neighborhood Design Overlay District

Top left: 17-19 Cushing; Bottom left: 21 Cushing; Right: 119 Cushing

2.3b Residential Districts and Properties: Additional Properties of Note



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

20 Cushing Avenue (1895)

Designed by Boston architect William Gibbons Preston, this Colonial Revival style house was built for Joseph Houghton Chadwick, president of Chadwick Lead Works (Boston) and a founding trustee of Boston University. The building currently houses the Cushing Manor Rest Home, a nursing home. According to neighborhood residents, this house was once considered the most beautiful house in Boston; plans for the house are in the Boston Public Library.

Designation: Part of the Jones Hill Neighborhood Design Overlay District



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

William Austen House 38 Pleasant Street (1884)

Known in the neighborhood as “Filene’s Mansion,” this Colonial Revival-style house on Pleasant Street at the corner of Victoria Street was designed by Tristram H. Griffin; Mead, Mason and Company. Currently a multi-family dwelling, the building has formerly been used as a single-family dwelling and a nursing home.

2.3b Residential Districts and Properties: Additional Properties of Note



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

Old Dorchester Club

48 Pleasant Street
(1892)

This large, Queen Anne-style house on the corner of Pearl Street is commonly known as the Knights of Columbus Hall (Council #16). Designed by William H. Besarick, the building formerly housed the Old Dorchester Club, and today houses a church.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

Lewis Norton House

118 Cushing Avenue
(1880)

This house was built for Lewis Norton, the sexton of the Trinity Church. Norton invented the door check, used to hold doors open or to close them; Norton Door Check and Spring Company made him a millionaire.

Built in the Victorian Eclectic style with elements of Gothic Revival, the Lewis Norton House includes a staircase which came from the Old Trinity Church (at the site of today's Filene's Building) and is one hundred years older than the house.

Designation: Part of the Jones Hill Neighborhood Design Overlay District

2.3b Residential Districts and Properties: Additional Properties of Note



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

41 Monadnock Street

(ca. late 19th century)

This Italianate and Queen Anne style building is characterized in MACRIS as “architecturally significant.” A neighborhood workshop participant noted that the house’s round tower used to rotate on bearings, and that a former resident was an astronomer.

29 Virginia Street

(ca. 1920s)

The house at 29 Virginia Street was previously owned by four women doctors, according to neighborhood workshop participants. One resident believes the first owner of the house was named Stedman, and was a doctor and an artist. This may be a reference to Charles Ellery Stedman, Harvard graduate (AB 1850, MD 1855), who according to his 1909 obituary in Harvard Graduates’ Magazine, settled in Dorchester and was well known for his pen and pencil drawings – although this would suggest an earlier date for the house’s construction. Residents also suspect that there is some connection between this house and St. Mary’s Hospital.

2.3b Residential Districts and Properties: Additional Properties of Note



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

Robert Uran House

10 Pleasant Steet
(1845)

This Greek Revival, single-family house at the corner of Pleasant and Howes streets is known in the neighborhood as “the Mayor’s daughter’s house,” as it is the residence of Mayor Thomas Menino’s daughter.

For additional historical information about this house, including structural changes and previous ownership, see “Self-Guided Walking Tour” [n.d.], p. 7-8.



PHOTO COURTESY OF EARL TAYLOR

32 Virginia Street

(ca. 1880s)

Some neighborhood residents have noted that the houses at 32 and 44 Virginia Street appear to be paired houses and are similar in style. 44 Virginia Street is known as the George Milliken House, and has been named a Boston Landmark (see “Historic Preservation Success Stories,” below). Unlike #44, #32 has not achieved landmark status.

Residents would like to learn more about the history of this building.

2.3b Residential Districts and Properties: Additional Properties of Note



IMAGE COURTESY OF DORCHESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY



PHOTO COURTESY OF DORCHESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Houses designed by John Andrews Fox

(ca. 1875-1910)

26 Trull Street

(ca.1878)

John A. Fox (1836-1920), known as the “Father of Stick Style” architecture in the United States, was born and raised in Dorchester. Fox designed numerous houses in Dorchester, including some near his residence at 25 Trull Street, as well as numerous other homes, firehouses, commercial and medical buildings in the Boston area.

Community members have expressed an interest in highlighting the works of this local architect.

Pictured above is an architectural elevation of a double house at 26 Trull Street designed by Fox, and a photograph of the same structure today, showing that it has lost one of the original houses and most of its detail. Both images courtesy of the Dorchester Historical Society.

2.4 Historic Preservation Opportunities: Religious Properties Outside Main Street District

The following two churches were mentioned as important to the community. (For a priority religious property, see Pilgrim Church entry in "Upham's Corner Main Street District" section 2.1a, p. 6 above.)

2.4b Religious Properties Outside Main Street District: Additional Properties of Note



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

St. Mary's Episcopal Church

14 Cushing Avenue
(1888)

As Dorchester's first Episcopal church (with first services and an original church building dating from the 1840s), St. Mary's is one of the earliest American works and only parish church in the city of Boston constructed by Henry Vaughn. It is said to be "Vaughn's most intricate wood roof and probably the finest timber wood roof of its type in the United States" (William Morgan—Vaughn's biographer, in Tucci's *The Second Settlement*). This English Revival and Victorian Gothic style church was listed on the National Register in 1998. The church includes Tiffany stained glass windows, and according to local lore, the writer of the song "O Little Town of Bethlehem" was baptized here.

Designation: Part of the Jones Hill Neighborhood Design Overlay District



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

Stoughton Street Baptist Church

50 Stoughton Street
(1866)

This Stick Style church was designed by Stephen Earle, as was Pilgrim Church. Stoughton Street Baptist Church is located in the Pleasant Street neighborhood between the Old North Burying Ground and Sumner Street. Today it is home to the Iglesia Adventista del Septimo Dia (Seventh-Day Adventist Church).

2.5a Unique Features: Priority

2.5 Historic Preservation Opportunities: Unique Features

Unique neighborhood features mentioned in the Upham's Corner neighborhood workshops include the historical streetscape of Columbia Road, traces of a former railroad, memories of past hotels, and a Works Progress Administration project.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

Columbia Road Streetscape

Columbia Road
(ca. 1897)

Tentatively part of the Olmsted-designed Emerald Necklace at the turn of the century, the Columbia Road streetscape of that era is now known by some as the “missing part of [Boston’s] Emerald Necklace.” The street was excluded from the strip of parks and arboretums due to its high density of buildings and streetcar tracks, which made it implausible to make the area a park.

In the past decade there have been attempts at improving the area aesthetically by planting trees and grass. The Emerald Necklace Conservancy maintains the desire to make Columbia Road part of the necklace by connecting Franklin Park, Marine Park, and Pleasure Bay. The Boston Redevelopment Authority published a plan to improve the Columbia Road streetscape in 2004, which included adding MBTA service along the road and street reconstruction. Some community members would like to see maps or images of this historical streetscape, during and after the 1897 widening of Columbia Road, possibly to inform future development and landscaping.

2.5b Unique Features: Additional Properties of Note



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

West End Street Railway

Carriage Barn

(1856)

West End Street Railway Stables

(1856)

Railroad Overpass

(date unknown)

There was also a railway carriage barn and stables at 500-510 and 512-520 Dudley Street respectively.

Residents have mentioned the historical railroad overpass and stairway at Bird Street as worthy of attention, since these remnants can tell part of the story of how the railroad impacted neighborhood development.

Pictured above Railroad stairs and overpass on Bird Street



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

101 Steps

Hancock Street to Downer Avenue

(1935)

These steps, which extend from Hancock Street to Downer Avenue, were constructed in 1935 by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Some residents have mentioned the steps as of historical interest.

2.6b Unique Features: Additional Properties of Note



POSTCARD COURTESY OF DORCHESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

St. Margaret's Hospital

90 Cushing Avenue
(1920s-1950s)

St. Margaret's Hospital began as an Infant Asylum in 1882, and later became a maternity hospital. The hospital complex occupies land that formerly belonged to the Dexter Green estate. The early-20th-century St. Mary's Infant Asylum and Lying-in Hospital was demolished in recent years because of asbestos-related concerns.

Located on Jones Hill, this historical hospital today houses clinics and other medical services. The hospital complex occupies a significant amount of space in the neighborhood. Some community members have pointed out that because of its large land area, the complex could potentially look attractive to developers in the future.

Designation: Part of the Jones Hill Neighborhood Design Overlay District.



POSTCARD COURTESY OF DORCHESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Former hotels and apartment buildings:

Hotel Gladstone
Hotel near Sovereign Bank

The Dorchester
577 Columbia Road

The Northwood
587 Columbia Road

Some community members have mentioned an interest in preserving the memories of former hotels (from the late 1800s) in Upham's Corner. At the time of this report's publication, no further information was available about these hotels.

Community members have also called attention to two former apartment buildings on Columbia Road between Cushing Avenue and Stoughton Street: the Dorchester and the Northwood. The Northwood appears in left foreground in the historical postcard of Upham's Corner above, with the adjacent Dorchester behind it and around the corner.

3.0 Next Steps for Neighborhood Historic Preservation: Additional Notes on Community Views, Interests, and Actions

Recently initiated and planned initiatives that impact Upham's Corner, and may intersect with the priorities and issues discussed in this report, include the following:

- The American City Coalition's Newmarket and Upham's Corner Planning Initiative. TACC has brought together a coalition to consider the development needs of this area. (<http://www.tamcc.org/projects/index.htm>)
- Boston Redevelopment Authority's recent announcement of a \$150,000 District Improvement Plan for Upham's Corner, a joint venture of the BRA, Department of Neighborhood Development, Boston Transportation Department and the Office of Neighborhood Services. (See Boston Redevelopment Authority, "Upham's Corner District Improvement Plan" (2011) in References.)

4.0 Historic Preservation Success Stories in Upham's Corner

The properties that appear in the following section represent highlights of historic preservation “successes” in the neighborhood, including successful re-uses of historical buildings that had fallen into disuse.

This is by no means a comprehensive listing of historic preservation successes in Upham’s Corner and surrounding neighborhoods, but rather a compilation of success stories that residents and other community members brought to light in the course of preparing this report.

4.0 Historic Preservation Success Stories in Upham's Corner



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

Upham's Corner Market Building

600-618 Columbia Road
(1890)

Built in the 1920s on the site of the former Columbia Road Automobile Station, the United Markets Inc. building housed the first one-stop “supermarket” in Boston. The market, which featured a parking lot behind the building, became extremely popular and had a large diversity of products and customers.

After the building stood vacant for nearly two decades, the New Atlantic Development Corporation worked with the local community to craft a re-use plan that includes new retail and commercial space with 45 apartments for low-income families and formerly homeless elders. This project was completed in 2001, and received a Preservation Award from the Massachusetts Historical Commission in 2002.

Designations: Part of Upham's Corner Neighborhood Design Overlay District, National Register Individual Individual Property

4.0 Historic Preservation Success Stories in Upham's Corner



Humphreys Street Studios

11 Humphreys Street
(1899)

11 Humphreys Street, the current home of Humphreys Street Artist Studios, was built in 1899 to house Daloz Cleanser, a dry cleaning business owned by Albert Roland Daloz, one of two sons of French immigrant Laurent Hippolyte. Daloz Cleanser operated as a successful business for nearly a century; the family abandoned the building in the 1990s following a failed attempt to clean up damage caused by a ruptured underground oil storage tank. Artists Gneal Widett and Joe Wheelwright purchased the front and rear buildings in 2001, and divided the space into 32 artist studios, which accepted their first tenants in 2002 and remain active today – housing painters, woodworkers, metalworkers and other artists.

4.0 Historic Preservation Success Stories in Upham's Corner



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

William Monroe Trotter House

97 Sawyer Avenue
(1890)

Harvard-educated publisher and civil rights leader William Monroe Trotter (1872-1934) moved into this single-family, Victorian Eclectic style house in 1899. In 1904, Trotter and W.E.B. Du Bois helped to found the Niagara Movement, which later became the NAACP.

Designations: National Historic Landmark, Boston Landmark, National Register Individual Property, and part of the Jones Hill Neighborhood Design Overlay District

(Above right) Boston Landmark and National Historic Landmark plaques in front of the house

4.0 Historic Preservation Success Stories in Upham's Corner



Anna Clapp Harris House

65 Pleasant Street
(1804)

Built by Samuel Clapp and once home of Animal Rescue League founder Anna Clapp Harris Smith, this house is understood to have been constructed on the foundation of the 1636 house of Thomas Jones, which burned in 1803.

Historic Boston Incorporated is currently serving as project manager for the restoration of this property, with North Bennet Street School providing carpentry and construction. (For more information on this project, see Historic Boston Incorporated, "Underneath It All" (2011) in References.)

4.0 Historic Preservation Success Stories in Upham's Corner



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

Jones Hill District and Virginia/Monadnock District

The Jones Hill neighborhood is named for Thomas Jones (ca.1590 -1667), who owned the hill's eastern slope and who is buried in Dorchester North Burying Ground. The neighborhood's boundaries are Columbia Road (Boston Street) and Stoughton Street to its north and northeast, Pleasant Street to its east and southeast, and Hancock Street to its west and southwest. The area contains residences from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with its primary period of development being between 1870 and 1890. The neighborhood includes Queen Anne, Shingle, and Colonial Revival style houses.

Pictured above is the intersection of Cushing Avenue and Wilbur Street in Jones Hill.

Designation: Neighborhood Design Overlay District

The Virginia/Manadnock District lies directly west of the Upham's Corner commercial area and is included in the St. Kevin's Parish area. It is bounded by the Penn Central railroad tracks to its west, the Dudley Street area to its north, Virginia Street to its east, and the intersection of Virginia, Manadnock, Bird, and Sayward streets to its south. The buildings in the district are primarily large, single-family homes constructed from 1880-1915. The area was owned by Ebenezer Sumner in the mid-19th century.

Neighborhood residents note that both the Virginia/Monadnock and Jones Hill districts have well-preserved historical streetscapes, with relatively few cases of aluminum siding or other changes to the appearance of historical buildings. Residents are interested in increasing recognition of these well-preserved historical districts.

4.0 Historic Preservation Success Stories in Upham's Corner



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA LINDAMOOD

George F. Milliken House

44 Virginia Street
(1881)

This Queen Ann and Stick Style, single-family house was designed by architect John H. Besarick for George F. Milliken, a well-known local inventor, and was designated as a Boston Landmark in 2007. From the mid-1950s to 2006 the house was owned by the Archdiocese and used primarily as a rectory; it has been privately owned since 2006.

Some neighborhood residents consider the preservation of this house a success story. The Archdiocese of Boston had intended to raze it to make way for a widened driveway, but it was protected through Boston Landmark designation. 44 Virginia Street is part of the St. Kevin Roman Catholic Church Complex.

Historical Designation: Boston Landmark

4.0 Historic Preservation Success Stories in Upham's Corner



PHOTO COURTESY OF EARL TAYLOR

James Blake House

735 Columbia Road
(1661)

The Blake House, Boston's oldest existing house, was built on what is now Massachusetts Avenue about 400 yards from its current location. It is one of the few surviving timber-frame houses of its type (built in the manner of western England homes) in New England.

The Dorchester Historical Society, incorporated in 1891, took on preservation of the Blake House as its first major project. The City of Boston granted the Society permission to re-locate the house in order to save it from demolition. Today, the house – which celebrates its 350th birthday this year - operates as a museum of early American home construction.

The above 2007 image shows the Blake House following restoration; the house received a Preservation

Award from the Boston Preservation Alliance in 2008.

Historical Designations: Boston Landmark (both exterior and interior), Individually Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, Preservation Restriction held by Massachusetts Historical Commission

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