

MTA from Harvard Sq, to Washington St.
Elevated from Winter St to Northhampton.

Notes in field

DOBER

6-25-56

SUBJECT: Field Trip from Boston City Hospital to
Old North Church, by foot, Monday, 25 June

NOTE: comments in parentheses are not part of the verbatim
transcription of the field notes.

Points are described by the clock system. 12:00
dead ahead, 6:00 direct rear, etc. Angles refer
to points above eyelevel and at the furthest
linear point.

{margin: →WALKING}

{margin: - - -> SIGHTING} Weather was hot and sunny.

{margin: ##### INCIDENT}

{margin: Δ} No pre-trip reference to map.

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Started down Harrison Street towards elevated
structure on Washington St. This was partly visible
through a screen of trees. {(500')(A)}

Entire length of street at about 7 feet height
no parking signs, perspective like points (receding
from one end of the block to the other)

Apartment for rent signs all along street

Funeral sign black against blue awnings

{(B.)} Above 30' from Corner of Mass Ave and Harrison
note central strip of trees on other side of
elevated structure

{margin: see drawing on PDF of original}

Turning corner struck with Puritan Theatre sign
at 2:00 (corner not turned actually still on
Harrison Street). {(C)}

Eye follows elevated structure up Washington Street
clump of trees seen at 2:00 at about 1000', at
12:00 a large brick facade is visible as a dominant
point above the elevated structure (farthest
visible linear point)

(on some street corner between Harrison and Worcester
Sq.) White Tower Hamburger Restaurant, stands out
white brick among all the reds and brown. Previous
(mentioned) brick facade at distant becoming a series
of three brick facades, brick walls, that is.

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Corner of Worcester Square. Studebaker 275hp {D circled} billboard, very bold graphic presentation. To the left square looks intriguing. decide to walk up one side and down the other.

Boston City Hospital at one end, end facing {C circled} Washington street strongly developed architecturally.

{A circled} Other end used as standing lot (parking) for a number of taxis, square seems to leak out The space that is) at this end. Triple parking on one side. {B circled} Shade trees along park strip rather good. elderly people and pregnant women, home painting job of brownstone botched by cheap paint. square itself not outstanding but a good enough relief, looks inviting from Washington St. end. Other end horrible, not architectural, seems capricious, truncated.

Fan shaped clump of trees running in an arch {(E)} from 12:00 to 2:00 behind gas station about {·}200' ft from point of observation. Notice most of my attention is captured by right hand side of the block (facing towards North Church). Realize elevated is present but do not feel it impinging on sight.

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About 30' from corner notice trees are behind grey stone wall – about 6 ½ – tall, space inside not readable – 30' feet is about right in judging, inscribed in wall notice sign 'fire plug 26'. Turn around see fire plug.

Middle of the block wall is broken by iron fence and gate. space is some kind of graveyard, a few headstones and what seems like vaults of a sort, rather curious arrangement of trees and structures, well manicured lawns, though shaggy at edges and at the bases of the vaults, buildings in back have no clue as to use.

Towards corner is sign, The Franklin Square House

Old man stops me, without introduction says, "I worked over there", pointing across the street, "in 1911". Asked him if notices any change in area, Looks at me. "Change ?","yes". He:"yes, much change." Walks on.

{margin: this goes on next page at →}

(View of John Hancock Bldg. visible at 11:00 church framed by trestle and limbs of tree (about 10,000 yds))

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(About {↓ A circled} 25' from corner can see Blackstone Square to my left. Through the trees can see John Hancock Bldg at about 10,000 yards etc.)

{B circled} At corner realize square at my right too, not noticed at previous observation point, scalloped fountain in center of right square, in an arc 300' feet beyond is yellow brick housing project.

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halfway past the square notice twin scalloped fountain to my left (in square to the left)

{C} at 10:00 is point of visual interest, greek temple facade (Roman ?) Neither square intrigues me as did Worchester Sq. (perhaps because I can "read" thee two paces quickly, the sense of adventure is not there, Worchester Sq, sort of leads one on, though there is a disappointment at the end.)

at about 500' (1:00) elevated seems to be turning {D circled} previously described brick facades are now rather distinct, fenestration visible, they completely lose their attraction, except as reference points once noticed and now being approached.

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sense of closure apparent at 1:00 and along roof lines at 45°

{E circled} attractive red-head, early-thirties ? talking to old man sitting on steps of apartment house,

brings to mind what Mencken said about red-headed widows.

Pacing "Post Office Station A", Cathedral and square begin to appear as edge of view at 12:00

Now crossing Msr. Reynolds Way. Keep Out sign {G circled} sticks out of landscaped square. Cathedral {H circled} massive holds interest, texture and color like Cubist paintings of early twenties, yellow, orange-brown and grey. elevated taken definite swerve to the left

{A circled} scaffolding around Cathedral
{margin: see drawing on PDF of original}
space in intersection of street North side of
Cathedral rather broken up in comparison to
other street corners along the way. {I}

hills and structures on them can be
seen to the right about 2 miles away. {B circled}

landscaping is rather clumpish

elevated takes definite swerve towards the left
{C circled} previously line of closure dead ahead was about
2000 ft at minimum, now maximum is 500' as elevated
and buildings heights merge to form a visual wall

{margin: see drawing on PDF of original}
Facade of Boston Penny Savings Bank discoloured
elevated swings sharply to the left {D circled}
at point of enclosure about 800' four story
greystone buildings sharply etched against red and
brown facades {E circled}

begin to feel an enclosure not previously discerned
are streets getting narrower or buildings taller ?
(both I believe) {F circled}

{margin: see drawing on PDF of original}
the Old Oak Tavern, an oddity. relic of the 90's
mahogany and brass, brass rail along windows at
hip height {C circled}

swing of the elevated is to the left 500' ft {H circled}
dead ahead little sense of what is going on
appear to be just about parallel to one side of the
John Hancock Building now visible over trestle {I circled}
and roof tops, area getting dirtier, noisier
more enclosed overhead.

been noticing a lot of X-Ray (TB) signs, rate
of incidence high here(?)

the syndrome is shaping: used clothing stores,
used furniture, barber schools, vending machine
establishment, empty stores, palm reading, marginal
stores, dirty windows, dirt, smell of urine.

{margin: see drawing on PDF of original}
hock shops on both {A+B} corners, another barber {C} school,
still the sense of a visual wall about 500' at {D}
12:00. little relief from what is similar
to mouting tension

the Red Fez {D circled} Cafe, intriguing café, fiving no
hint as what is inside, little noise coming out
as compared to otherbars on both sides of the
street that are blaring away

{margin: see drawing on PDF of original}
to the right {E circled} Laconia takes a suprising twist,
some trees on one side, blighted but façade is
intresting, rook line has some variety, probably
caught my attention because of the change in
street direction throwing the facade into view
at an off angle.

{margin: see drawing on PDF of original}
the nadir, a nether region, all enclosed
overhead the sun is shut out, a variety of
stores, neon signs in daytime, smeels varied,
sidewalks all marked with spittle, vomit,
cigarette butts, tension evident,

about fifty feet from corner must cross-over as
buildings to the right are being torn down {7 circled}

{margin: see drawing on PDF of original}
open spaces as buildings are under demolition,
at distance three strong buildings stand-out
at about 2000 yds, 100, yds, 1000 feet.
people watching work. {G circled}

{I circled} store front plam-reading and otherservices ?

{H circled} Grace and Hope Mission (a backward glance
as I felt someone was watching, they were)

{margin: see drawing on PDF of original}
Between Cobb and Castle people at the Wells Home
(indigenet men) have benches along walls watching
construction. Incongruity in middle of block,
whole buildings going down on one side of the
street, on the other a new facded going in on a
busy and noisy bar. Railroad tracks on other
side of Castle, John Hancock Bldg strong to the {J circled}
left. Cross on unusual iron lacework structure
at 1000' feet 11:00, 45° {K circled}
Greek store signs at one o'clock {L circled (750')}

{margin: see drawing on PDF of original}
{A} To the left 50' feet from corner blue and white sign Washington Street visually closed 800' feet at 12:00, swerves to the left. White office building edges latterly the left corner. To my right, 3:00, elevated begins to go underground {B circled}

{margin: see drawing on PDF of original}
At 3:00 undulating space, a relief from rt angle openings previously experience walking down most of Washington Street Statler Hotel facade forms visual barrier at 9:00. {C circled}

30' from corner Cambridge engraving company signs bends around and follws just below the {D circled} 3d story line the enetire length of the building

{margin: see drawing on PDF of original}
{E circled} Parking lot forms a crescent space from 9-12:00 background to steet facade with interesting staccato fenestration, buildings lines vary in pitch of roof stage hanging effect {F circled}

{margin: see drawing on PDF of original}
American Theatre sign pops out at edge of closure about 800' ahead {G circled}

Common Street to the left forms an another relief from the st. line street facade usually experienced at street corners; shaped thus in plan {H circled}

entering furniture wholesale retail district, {I circled} a mass of conflicting signs, visual tension, chaos, not an easily read area (visually)

{margin: see drawing on PDF of original}
atrocious and deceitful furniture designs in windows

sun's rays on instruments in Hollis music shop {J circled} make an interesting pattern of light and shadow, strong contrast between the utilitarian neatness and strength of the instruments and the garish floss that decorates the furniture windows on either side

{margin: see drawing on PDF of original}
{K circled} clock at 9'00 marks furniture store, grotesque but it stands out, so might be sucessful that way

{margin: see drawing on PDF of original}
movie house area, neon signs, bars, smell of {L circled} stale beer and food quite pronounced, a seemingly accelrated paced becomes apparent as one crosses Stuart street

{margin: see drawing on PDF of original}
striking hardware store sign 50' from corner at
{Δ circled} 11:00. composed of pieces of hardware, oversized,
silver on black background

again the sense of quickening of movement or
activity, smells and sounds begin to impinge on
the visual senses, a more different
types of stores and people sort of confuse the
area in the two blocks, difficult to categorize
it as being one thing or another land use wise

{margin: see drawing on PDF of original}
at Boylston decide to cross over to other side of
the street, movie signs quite pronounced especially
in Paramount {B' circled}

have feeling of solid block of movie facades
perhaps because even the shoe stores have a
movie-house front, i.e, neon signs,
flashy displays

{margin: see drawing on PDF of original}
at 3:00 just opposite the Paramount tearing
down passageway, overhead, in small alley
much noise and dirt {B circled 2 circled}

{margin: see drawing on PDF of original}
notice the edge of the Common on the right
9:00 at 500', can't see floor of Tremont Street {C circled}
would be difficult to estimate how wide street
is, and except for the hard edge of an office
building it would be difficult to define where
Bedford ends and the common begins

30' from corner the scene changes, less garishness
strong vertical feeling, vista ahead opened to
about 1000' no strong sense of closure

{margin: see drawing on PDF of original}
vertical signs changing to flags which are
rectangular shape, at the same time a sense of
broadening is felt though the street width itself
does not appear to become wider

{D circled} landscaping around Filenes at 30' level is fuzzy
though visually pronounced does not seem bold enough

the common view at 9:00 is not as strong architect-
urally as an edge it is at Bedford {F circled}

Overhead cover around Filenes again seems to be
weak though it covers the entire sidewalk {F circled}

decide to cross over to other side of street

In front of I. J. Fox's – 300' at 1:00 Old South Church juts out from building and street lines quite strong and dominant linear limits though are rather confusing as this places a strain on the feeling of a flow down and past the structure

Raymonds quite decorative with many flags hanging from the 2nd story line

{margin: see drawing on PDF of original}
at Milk street the vista ahead becomes closed again, to the right a sort of confusion, no one point snaps at out a first glance, Old South Building with its grey sculptured facade rather ornate

narrow crescent bending around Boston Globe Bldg Washington Street takes pronounced swing to the left many people in front of Globe Bldg. reading headlines

Yellow brick office bldg stands out a 1:00 {(13 stories)}

grey bldgs at head of street form one end of that linear canyon cross-over to other side of street {bye} again attached to (opposite) Radio Shack

{margin: see drawing on PDF of original}
at Brattle Street space opens, swells into ellipse, Fanueil Hall to the right

subway station rather dead area, un-busy, now a sense of a narrowing space as Washington St closes in again

{margin: see drawing on PDF of original}
bookstores, wholesale houses, dull, grey, but windows full of interesting things, a row of empty {C circled} store windows truck laying a smoke screen from its exhaust pipe

entering out into Union and Washington St oval

difficult area to cross, proceeding under highway, Bus terminal for Lynn- Salem busses at 9:00; {D circled} D'Mathew Bros stand 150' ahead, windy and dusty under the highway {F circled}

short turn towards Salem St. N. End Meat Mkt of {F circled} corner, uphill a vast cacaphony of sounds, smells, and colors. one doesn't feel like stopping and writing observations, feeling of hostility (?)

{margin: see drawing on PDF of original}
top of the hill after it turns a little to the left Old North Church, in front of church, at 12:00 {→ cont page 9 circled}

{margin: see drawing on PDF of original}

facing with Church at Back is rather quite looking street
with brick walls, Hull St. {A circled}

one can't walk up Salem without sensing a pulsating
dynamic neighborhood, life in a sardine can,
two of the famed North End blonde Italians, female,
raucous voices, blooming figures, yet with lots of
pace and romance in their gestures as they argue,
Anna Magnani vitality, Cadalacs in front of the stores,
the stores in front of the curbs, the people everywhere,
all ages and sexes, the Old Irish cop berating two young
girls for cursing, the plump Italian storekeeper upholding
the policeman for doing so.... noise, color, texture