

✓
MR

Mr. Weinberg
Post-walk Interview

It seems we started out at the corner of Berkeley and Boylston and walked up Boylston toward the Public Gardens. The first block was shops on either side. They were department stores, clothing stores on the righthand side, and on the lefthand side there were travel agencies for shipping companies. The shops on both sides were pretty much of a type, all first floor shops, with various colored signs. Most of the colors of the buildings were rather dark, green, gray, black. The street was wide, and there was a fair amount of people hurrying up and down. The traffic was heavy. Above the first stories where the shops were located -- well, the buildings weren't very high, they were various heights, and I think there was practically nothing to them except for the shops on the first stories. At the end of the first block there was a large light-colored building, the Arlington Bldg. or something like that. For it's size it was quite handsome -- give credit

Then we turned left onto Arlington St. This was alongside the Public Gardens. I don't remember what was on the left side, some sort of stores. Well, the left was nothing different from what we had been seeing and the right was the Public Gardens.

Then we went down the next street. I don't know what it was. But there some of the shops were more like Bonwit Teller. They were nearly all dress shops, as I remember. Rather elegant looking buildings. Individually, they would have been rather pretty. The architecture was pleasant, well cut out I'd say. Generally it was a very elegant looking shopping district. There was a flower shop and a book store. On the left side of the street I don't remember what was there. I don't think there were any stores at all, in fact.

We got to the end of that block and turned left again. Bonwit's on the right. A very elegant looking store. On the left nothing in particular, seemed rather nondescript.

Then we walked up a little alley between the two streets. I remember looking at the back of various businesses. There seemed to be shipping offices on the right, or rather travel offices for shipping companies. There was a camera shop on the left. Mostly garbage cans on the street. A few cars went through while we were there... One thing I missed was the parking lot as we went down the street parallel to Boylston St. - that was on our left, set in among the buildings, not very large. . . We passed among the garbage cans, and a few were turned out, the contents spilled out.

We finally crossed Arlington St. into the Public Gardens, which was glorious in winter. Some people were strolling around, some skating on the pond. Generally, it was covered with snow, with a number of bare trees around, and generally it was a very pleasant winter scene. In the background were big buildings on the other side of Tremont St., and the State House, the Traveler building, and several others which made an impressive looking background, so on the whole it was a very eye-catching scene. In the Public Gardens there were some teen-age kids, wearing jeans, etc.

Otherwise most of the people we ran across seemed to be -- we ran into a surprisingly small number of people to begin with. I would have expected a lot more shoppers. Perhaps many places are closed on Sat., but I can't remember whether most of them were men or women. Everyone seemed reasonably well dressed but certainly not particularly distinguished looking or refined in their dress, among their everyday clothes. There were a couple of Central Sq. types, kind of ragged clothes. But all I really remember up and down Boylston St. in that area were men in what looked like business suits and overcoats, and women dressed as if they were out shopping. We hardly saw anyone at all on Newbury St. I guess I didn't notice any difference though.

(Buildings?) There were some visible in the distance that I recognized, like N.E. Mutual Hall, which is an exquisite looking building. I like its white stone very much. It stands out from the surroundings, in addition to the fact that its functions are very desirable to the community. We saw the Hancock Bldg, one of the largest in Boston, very impressive looking in its setting. There were several churches. I don't think Trinity Church was visible; at least I didn't notice it. There were 2 churches on Newbury St., one sort of taller than the other, but both of distinctly church architecture. The architecture was a little more decorative, a little more frilly; very pleasant looking in ordinary surroundings, when they're set among ordinary architecture such as homes or businesses. There was a large colored church visible in the direction of the Common as we walked up Boylston St. It looked outstanding. There were several buildings in back, visible across the Common. I can't miss the gold dome of the State House.

(Sounds) I think that's something I missed altogether. It seems to me it was quite noisy as we walked up the little alley, but I don't remember what the sounds were from. Several cars came along honking. It was very quiet on Newbury St. and the Public Gardens. When we crossed Arlington St. there was a lot of traffic. Traffic is about all I can seem to remember. I can't remember any particular sounds of people talking, for example.

(Smells) Cold winter air. One might have expected smells when we were walking up the alley, with the garbage, but I can't remember of any particular. There was the smell of garbage as we walked by one particular overturned garbage can.

(Signs) All the shops we passed by had signs in front. Some of them were the flat, metal type that lay flush against the surface of the store; others were the hanging signs that jutted out into the street. They were all various colors. Probably some were neon and some were just painted on. In that respect the signs, shops and fronts were very much like Central Sq.. It was like looking at the Harvard Bazaar and the area around that. The area on Newbury St. was conspicuously devoid of signs. Some of the shops there just had the name of the shop lettered in small letters on the glass window. There were no large signs that I can remember. Then there was a sign in front of Bonwit Teller. I can't remember just what its nature was.

(Street furniture, sidewalk) Especially Boylston St., and also the others, were comfortably wide for traffic. The alley was just one lane. The sidewalks were also quite wide, at least on Boylston St. It looked like ordinary concrete sidewalk. As far as I remember, all the sidewalks were concrete. The roads were all blacktop and they looked in good repair, clean. . . There was one mailbox I remember, but nothing else. Sometimes there are _____ but nothing of that sort here, ~~not~~ Perhaps bus-stop signs but I don't remember.

(One area?) I'd say there were probably three. One was the shopping district between Copley Sq. and the Common or the Public Gardens - largely clothing stores, no food or hardware store, gasoline stations or things like that -- clothing stores and the shipping offices, real estate offices and insurance companies. Most of them were not very elegant shops, but perhaps middle-class shops. Another area was the more expensive dress shops and Bonwit's which was closer to the residential area, which I guess would be on Beacon St. and Commonwealth Ave. The third area was the Public Gardens, with an atmosphere of its own.

(Any particular character to these areas?) To some extent it had a particular character. It was a quiet business section. There were no food shops, grocery or fruit stores for example. For the most part it was the type of shopping area that would be fairly acceptable around a residential district. Today, at least, it had a very quiet air about it; not a lot of bustle or traffic on Boylston St. It may have been just passing through from Copley Sq. downtown. Those 2 things - the general quietness and the relatively elegant tones of the business were 2 characteristics.

(A sense of order) There was some unity in the architecture. Not really that either. In fact there was ~~some~~ disunity if anything, which ranged from the Georgian type or cylindrical front to the block, square-cut kind, which was dominant along Newbury St.

There was even the kind of shops along Boylston St. which hardly had any distinguishable type of architecture. They're all mostly shop front. So I guess there would be anything but unity in architecture there. (But no disorder?) Well, there wasn't violent disorder. Certainly there's much more architectural disorder to be found in many parts of the city. None of the buildings looked conspicuously old or ill kept, for example, nor particularly ancient in their style of arch. None of them were wooden like some of the buildings in Cambridge, and none of them were particularly modern. So I wouldn't call it conspicuously disordered, and of course there's a rather gradual transition. In any particular block the arch. was uniform except for an occasional church or something like. As we walked from one block to another, of course, the arch. changed.

(How would this section fit in with your conception of Boston?) I would say it was just one of several areas. As you pretty much elicited by your questions, it was set in the center of 3 areas. But it seemed to be just a transition among different areas of the city, and each one in its way was one that is well known as belonging to Boston, so I would say it just represented pieces of 3 different sections of the city through its own character.

(Any particular Boston character?) The Georgian arch. is typical of the Beacon St. area, typical of Boston in general, not because it's found throughout the city but because somehow Back Bay seems to epitomize Boston. Other than that there isn't anything particularly Bostonian about it. The church is typical of Back Bay, also, and perhaps Boston in general - not particularly, maybe some sections.

(Feel at ease in this section?) Yes. I wouldn't have felt, if I walked through it, that I was particularly either slumming or being impressed by the elegance of surroundings.

(Any particularly way you might change this area?) No, I don't think so. The only thing -- the most undesirable thing about the area I found was the unpleasant appearances of the shops, particularly on the right side of Boylston St., and I don't think that is a very serious matter. It's not something that any city would consider serious. Off hand, I wouldn't change anything.