

Destination Point Characteristics

Greater dispersal of destination points, which were located half downtown, half Back Bay, could have facilitated study of routes other than those extending from the five well-scattered origin points to the two general destination areas.

The heavy impact of the Central Artery upon the South Station - North End districts was made clear in the interviews. The importance of Beacon Hill, Scollay Square, Summer-Washington store complex, and the Common as key orientation points became apparant. Position of Tremont-Washington Streets as the spine of the city would be borne out in proposed-route maps. Color is relatively unimportant.

Dominent Characteristic

- ✓ John Hancock Building -- Size.
- ✓ Filene's Department Store -- Signs.
- ✓ Commonwealth Avenue -- Center Mall.
- ✓ Beacon Hill -- Gold-domed State House.
- ✓ Scollay Square -- "Typical" Mediocrity.
- ✓ Public Garden -- Park-like Confusion with Common.

Two destination points covered a great deal of space. When informant asked, "Where on Beacon Hill?" the answer was always, "Louisburg Square." When informant asked, "Where on Commonwealth?" the answer was always, "Massachusetts Avenue."

The following is not the result of careful analysis of each interview, but rather a searching of the memory three weeks following the field work. This method would seem to produce a more general "impression."

Filene's Department Store

The "downtown" symbol, best-known of the destination points, is always thought of as "down there with the rest of the department stores" and paired mentally with neighboring Jordan Marsh, both of which occasionally are thought located on Tremont Street. Directions are sometimes given only to the central shopping district, assuming that, once there, the finding is easy -- "just around the corner." Washington and Summer streets provide orientation for most; the Scollay Square-department store district relationship helps north- and west-enders. "Signs" comprise the only consistent characteristic physical features, notwithstanding occasional exceptions -- overhang, MTA entrance, store position among neighbors. Mention of name results in immediate facial recognition, whether or not its location is familiar. As characteristics, crowds or congestion are insignificant. Flags, or the unique clock, or the long dirty building are never mentioned, nor are any of the firm's suburban stores. Men react to the name as quickly as women, and generally offer superior instructions.

Commonwealth Avenue

Response to the name, less than instantaneous, comes after contemplation. Incorrect directions are erroneous more in detail than in general direction of route. A direct relationship occurs between the origin point-destination point distance, and the accuracy of the general direction, i.e., directions from Old North Church and South Station are often entirely incorrect. Those at great distance, but on line, are better oriented than those closer but at right angles such as Arlington Square and Columbus Square. Columbus-Warren natives are particularly confused by intervening railroad tracks and resultant limited access character of the "other side." Everyone knows Back Bay, a district popularly considered further away than ever actually the case, as the location. "A nice area" sums up the social impression. Those who know their way usually orient to the Public Garden. Directions, generally specifying a diagonal walk across the Common or the use of Charles Street, seldom recommend approach from the Tremont-Boylston complex. Center mall, trees, separated traffic -- all unique in Back Bay -- are consistently easy-to-describe features often overlooked by otherwise well-informed citizens unable to produce a description beyond a street sign. Prominence of stone housing, and the relationship to the John Hancock Building, are insignificant as characteristics.

not so.

John Hancock Building

First description is one of size: "Oooh, it's big," or the sweep of the arm to indicate immensity. To everyone, the name is synonymous with the biggest Boston building, whether or not it can be described further. The beacon constitutes the other dominant symbol, particularly at night and from origin points within view. Those out of eyesight of the beacon never mention it; those that do know it reflects weather conditions, though the meaning of its legend brings varied explanations. Description of an identifying sign "John Hancock Building" is an infrequent error. The building's function is never called to attention. Predominant mention of north-south directed Berkeley as the bordering street indicates lack of orientation to the larger east-west oriented street. Exact location, never considered Back Bay or "downtown," is well-known, though when out of sight, directions always describe a "long way." The nearby Common is seldom utilized for orientation. Familiarity varies inconsistently with origin points. North-enders reflect awe and uncertainty of whereabouts except that it is "downtown;" their directions bear out their belief that the department store area is the location. From South Station too, the building seems in a different world, though not to the degree the North End reflects this. Some people look directly at the structure, not knowing where it is or how to describe it.

Beacon Hill

Well-known at every origin point, Boston's premier landmark always constitutes a never-to-be-traversed barrier because of its streets' maze-like character. The distance from every origin point except nearby Massachusetts General Hospital is believed a "long way." The gold-domed State House, generally considered at the top of the hill, comprises the most significant feature. Those acquainted with Louisburg Square's location offer excellent descriptions of its fenced park. Implications of the existence of stairs to the top refers to those in the State House vicinity. Comparatively little mention made of the character of buildings denotes lack of personal acquaintance with the area. Those using social criteria, particularly North End residents, use the term "high class," with considerable respect.

Scolley Square

Everyone knows how to get ther, yet no one can describe it. Without a consistent characteristic, the best description either pictures the "end" of the approaching road or "another Boston square," sometimes facetiously. Lack of distinct physical highlights beyond the MTA entrance and the theaters occurs despite the public familiarity with the area. Use of the MTA is generally the first suggestion. The consensus of being "downtown" along with Filene's holds true particularly for North Enders; the feeling that almost "all roads lead to Scolley Square" persists. In the pre-Central Artery era, North Enders enjoyed a definite tie with their downtown orientation, but despite the now-confusing "overpass," they continue to use their now-severed Hanover Street as the link with "downtown" and "outside." He "goes down" to the Central Artery, then "up" to Scolley Square. Confusion with Bowdoin Square occurs only in the West End, while general access appears difficult only from the South Station area.

Public Garden

The Boston Common's "little brother," relatively unknown as a separate entity despite the dividing Charles Street, is confused with the Boston Garden in name. Those who do make the distinction generally describe the typical park, i.e., trees, benches, lakes, flowers. Abutting landmarks or buildings comprise insignificant descriptive devices, the relationship to the Common constituting the major orientation. Instructions are based on Charles Street or the Common, Boylston and other bordering streets seldom being mentioned. From the standpoint of interview interest, the Public Garden must be considered the poorest destination point.