

Celebrating the Rebirth of Boston's Theatre District

This July, Boston hosted the League of Historic American Theatres for its annual conference. In celebration of the event, and in recognition of the positive transformation of Boston's theatre district, the Alliance and the Boston Landmarks Commission have updated and reprinted a Boston Theatre Walking Tour, which was originally published by the Alliance 1993.

In the past decade, several of Boston's most significant historic theatres have experienced a remarkable revival. In 1995, Mayor Thomas M. Menino raised public interest in and awareness of the need for rehabilitation of the Boston Opera House, and the Modern and Paramount theatres, by naming them to the National Trust for Historic Preservation's

11 Most Endangered Properties list. In 1996, Mayor Menino, the Boston Preservation Alliance, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation organized the "Boston Historic Theatre Charrette." The goal of the workshop was to engage the public, organize development proposals, and implement strategies to preserve and revitalize Washington Street, one of Boston's most historic streets.

These awareness-raising efforts spurred new interest and investment in Boston's historic theatres and have been the direct inspiration for a number of highly significant historic theatre renovations. Some of the successes Boston has to celebrate are the following:

■ After being shuttered for nearly a decade, the Opera House—originally the B.F. Keith Memorial Theatre—was re-opened to the public after a multi-million-

dollar refurbishment by Clear Channel Corporation in 2004. Today the revamped Opera House regularly hosts big name artists and stage shows in front of sold out audiences.

■ In 2003, Emerson College completed an extensive restoration of the 1,200-seat Majestic Theatre, renamed the Cutler-Majestic, in honor of generous donors Ted and Joan Cutler. The project has won several prestigious awards for its magnificent revival of one of the country's finest theatres and for its outstanding contribution to the vitality of Boston's Theatre District.

■ In Spring 2007, Emerson College broke ground on the Paramount Center project, which will involve a complete restoration of the Paramount building and adjacent Arcade Building, formerly home of the Bijou Theatre, on Washington Street. The

continued on page 7

Boston Preservation Alliance

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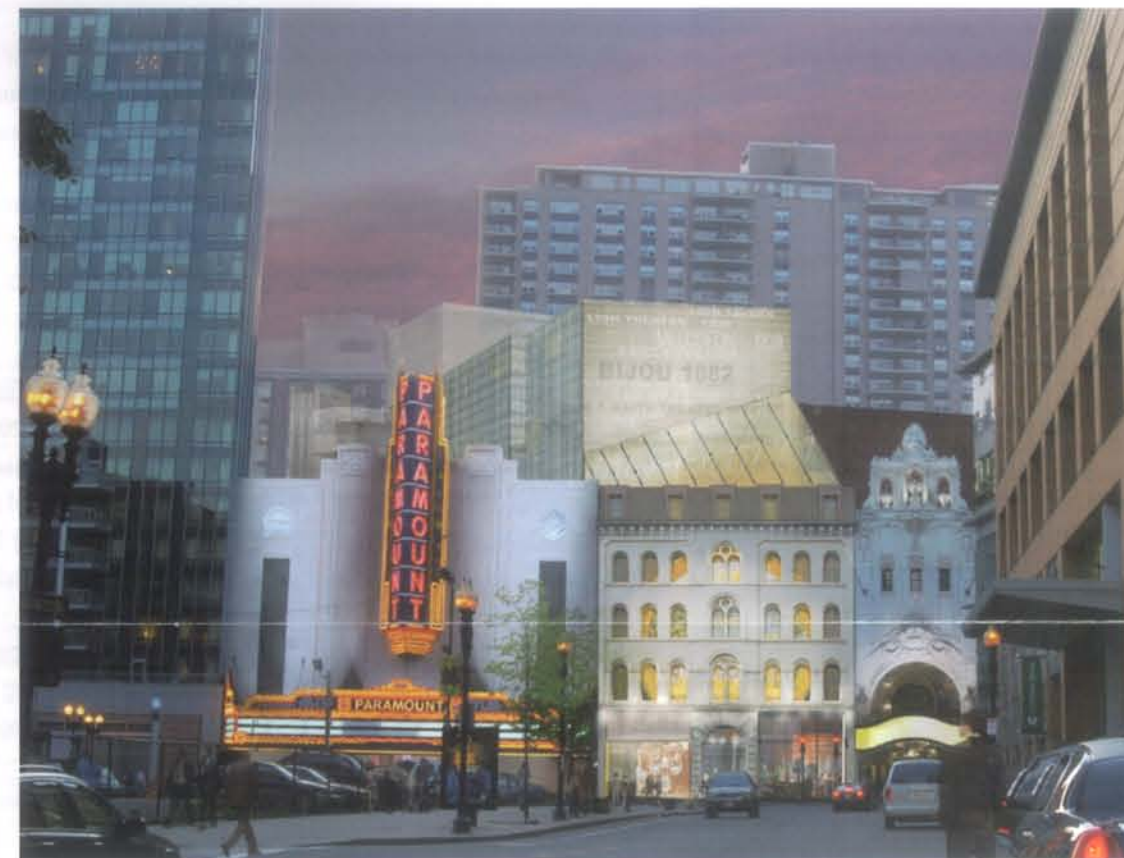
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Alliance Hosts Campus Heritage Planning Symposium

On October 18, the Boston Preservation Alliance offered "Campus Heritage Planning: The Urban Challenge," a day-long symposium that brought together leaders in higher education, campus planners, public officials, and other interested professionals from Boston and from institutions around the country. The goal was to share experiences and ideas on how colleges and universities can best take advantage of their historic and cultural resources. Speakers included Paul Byard, FAIA, Director, Historic Preservation Program, Columbia University; Robert Melnick, Former Visiting Senior Program Officer, Getty Foundation; and Rebecca Barnes, FAIA, Director of Strategic Growth, Brown University.

The Alliance will be reporting back to our members and participants on the day's proceeding soon.

For more information, visit www.bostonpreservation.org, call 617-367-2458, or email phartford@bostonpreservation.org.



Hub Area Colleges and Universities Plan for Growth and Change

Readers of local media have likely observed that many colleges and universities in Greater Boston are undergoing expansion and development. In the past year, stories about these institutions collectively document a drive to increase housing in student dormitories and to build state-of-the-art facilities to attract students. In response to changing demands and fierce competition for students and tuition dollars, local area colleges and universities are undertaking a diverse array of projects that promise to strengthen Boston's position as a national leader in higher education.

For Boston, home to the largest concentration of colleges and universities of any urban area in this country, this need for change and for growth affects over 40 campuses. It also has a ripple effect on surrounding neighborhoods and communities with whom these institutions have long-standing and interdependent relationships. While some institutions are concentrated within traditional campuses, many are dispersed throughout adjacent neighborhoods. For these more disaggregated institutions, campus buildings are integrated with non-campus buildings and growth often pushes even farther beyond existing campus footprints, extending into densely built historic settings.

continued on page 6

Rendering of Emerson College's Paramount Center Project

Courtesy of Elkus Manfredi Architects

In This Issue

Calendar	2
Alliance News	3
Liberty Hotel	4
Theatre District	8

The Auchmuty Building - 120 Kingston Street

The Auchmuty "Dainty Dot" Building

Courtesy of Dave Seeley



Advocacy News

these buildings must be considered as significant survivors of an important period in history, not only for Boston, but for the New England region.

Advocacy for the preservation of the Auchmuty building is ongoing.

Concern for Auchmuty ("Dainty Dot") Building Grows

Plans for the demolition of the majority of the Auchmuty "Dainty Dot" Building to make way for a large tower have been met with fierce opposition from preservation advocates and residents of Chinatown and the Leather District. In September, the building was listed as one of the Ten Most Endangered Historic Resources in Massachusetts by Preservation Massachusetts. It was the only property in Boston to make the list.

In July, the Boston Landmarks Commission voted not to designate the building as a Boston Landmark due to the loss of a sizeable portion of the building in the 1950s to make way for the Central Artery. The BLC staff's Study Report, however, found that the building has significant associations with the textile industry of the region and the nation for its association with Brown, Durnell & Company. Designed by prominent Boston architectural firm Winslow & Wetherell in 1889-1890, and combining Romanesque Revival and Classical styles, the Auchmuty Building is also valued as one of the best examples of its particular architectural aesthetic left in Boston's Textile District.

The Alliance and the majority of others who spoke at the hearing strongly supported the BLC staff's clear recommendations in the Study Report that the developer undertake the following:

- 1 work with interested parties to pursue an alternative project and preservation plan for the Auchmuty Building;
- 2 explore the use of state and federal tax credits to help finance a sensitive rehabilitation of the building;
- 3 consider donating a preservation restriction, which would ensure the preservation of the building and afford the property owner a tax deduction.

In addition to its contribution to the former Textile District, the Auchmuty Building is one of a limited, but important, collection of buildings that exhibits scars from the construction of the Central Artery/Southeast Expressway. Several other buildings in Boston—including the Mercantile Building at 73-117 Commercial Street and the State Street Block at 171-189 State Street, both designed by Gridley J.F. Bryant—also lost portions to make way for the Central Artery. In aggregate, these buildings have important stories to tell, stories that enhance the richness of their histories, and give them elevated significance as representations of the physical impact of large, federally funded infrastructure projects. Now especially, with the Central Artery buried underground,

Update: Lewis-Dawson Farmhouse

In the past several months, a broad coalition has come together to support the position of the Alliance and the Jamaica Hills Association that Harvard University should commit to an active use for the historic Lewis-Dawson Farmhouse. The Jamaica Hills Association has sent an open letter to Harvard University President Drew Gilpin Faust expressing grave concern about Harvard's plan to board up one of Boston's last remaining Federal Period farmhouses. The Lewis-Dawson Farmhouse, constructed in 1822 and located within the Arnold Arboretum at 1090 Centre Street in Jamaica Plain, is owned by Harvard. In its letter, the Jamaica Hills Association requests that Harvard immediately form a committee to examine constructive uses for the farmhouse and the availability of financial support for the building's renovation and maintenance.

The entire Boston City Council supported the open letter—with twelve Councilors signing onto it and the remaining Councilor, Rob Consalvo, writing an individual letter of support. Mayor Thomas M. Menino has also sent an individual letter urging President Faust to reconsider Harvard's proposal to mothball the building indefinitely. Additional signatories to the Jamaica Hills Association letter in-

clude State Representative Jeffrey Sanchez, State Senator Dianne Wilkerson and heads of neighborhood institutions, community groups, and preservation advocacy organizations.

"It is hard to believe that Harvard University owns a recently-designated Boston Landmark and plans to board it up!" said Dr. Steve Lerman, Chairman of the Jamaica Hills Association. "A Boston Landmark deserves better treatment than that. It will be an eyesore for our community. We want to work with Harvard to find a good use for the farmhouse. The way to save it is to use it."

The Boston Landmarks Commission voted to designate the Lewis-Dawson Farmhouse a Boston Landmark on June 26. While Landmark designation is an important first step in protecting this piece of Boston's history, as long as the building remains vacant and unused it will be vulnerable to deterioration and vandalism, pose a public safety hazard, and will become a blight on one of Boston's most treasured green spaces.

The Alliance believes that whatever good intentions Harvard may have to secure the farmhouse, if it is unused it will be subject to fires, break-ins, animal infestation and weather damage. By taking responsibility for this property, Harvard will demonstrate that it is a cooperative neighbor and a good steward of the historic buildings it owns in Boston

Liberty Hotel Opens at the Charles Street Jail

On September 5, the 300-room Liberty Hotel opened in the Charles Street Jail.



The \$150-million luxury hotel sits at the foot of Boston's historic Beacon Hill neighborhood overlooking the Charles River.

Completed in 1851, the original building was a collaboration between architect Gridley J.F. Bryant, widely considered Boston's most accomplished architect of the time, and Rev. Louis Dwight, a prominent Yale-educated penologist whose travels shaped his interest in and advocacy for prison reform.

"The building's decade-long transformation from abandoned jail to luxury hotel is a remarkable story of commitment and persistence," said Richard L. Friedman, project developer. The transformation of the site is the work of Friedman's Carpenter & Company, Inc., project architect Cambridge Seven Associates, Inc. and consulting historic preservation architect Pamela W. Hawkes, FAIA, of Ann Beha Architects, Inc. Working in tandem with historians and conservationists from the Massachusetts Historical Commission, the Boston Landmarks Commission, the National Park Service and the Boston Redevelopment Authority, this cooperative group effort ensured that the end result would be a careful balance between preservation and dynamic new use. The

Boston Preservation Alliance supported the project for Massachusetts Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits which helped to make the project possible.

The result is a remarkable rebirth for this historic building. Soaring 90 feet, the jail's central atrium was beautifully preserved and forms the core of the hotel, and features the building's trademark windows and historic catwalks. "Despite an overall modernization, many remnants of the landmark jail have been maintained to safeguard its authenticity," says Gary Johnson, AIA, Cambridge Seven Associates, referencing the preserved jail cells within the hotel bar and wrought-iron work on the windows. The jail's former exercise yard is now a private, beautifully landscaped courtyard that is destined to take its place among the beloved "hidden gardens" of the Beacon Hill neighborhood.

Like their counterparts from the nineteenth century, guests at the Liberty Hotel may find it very difficult to leave!

The Liberty Hotel

Courtesy of The Liberty Hotel