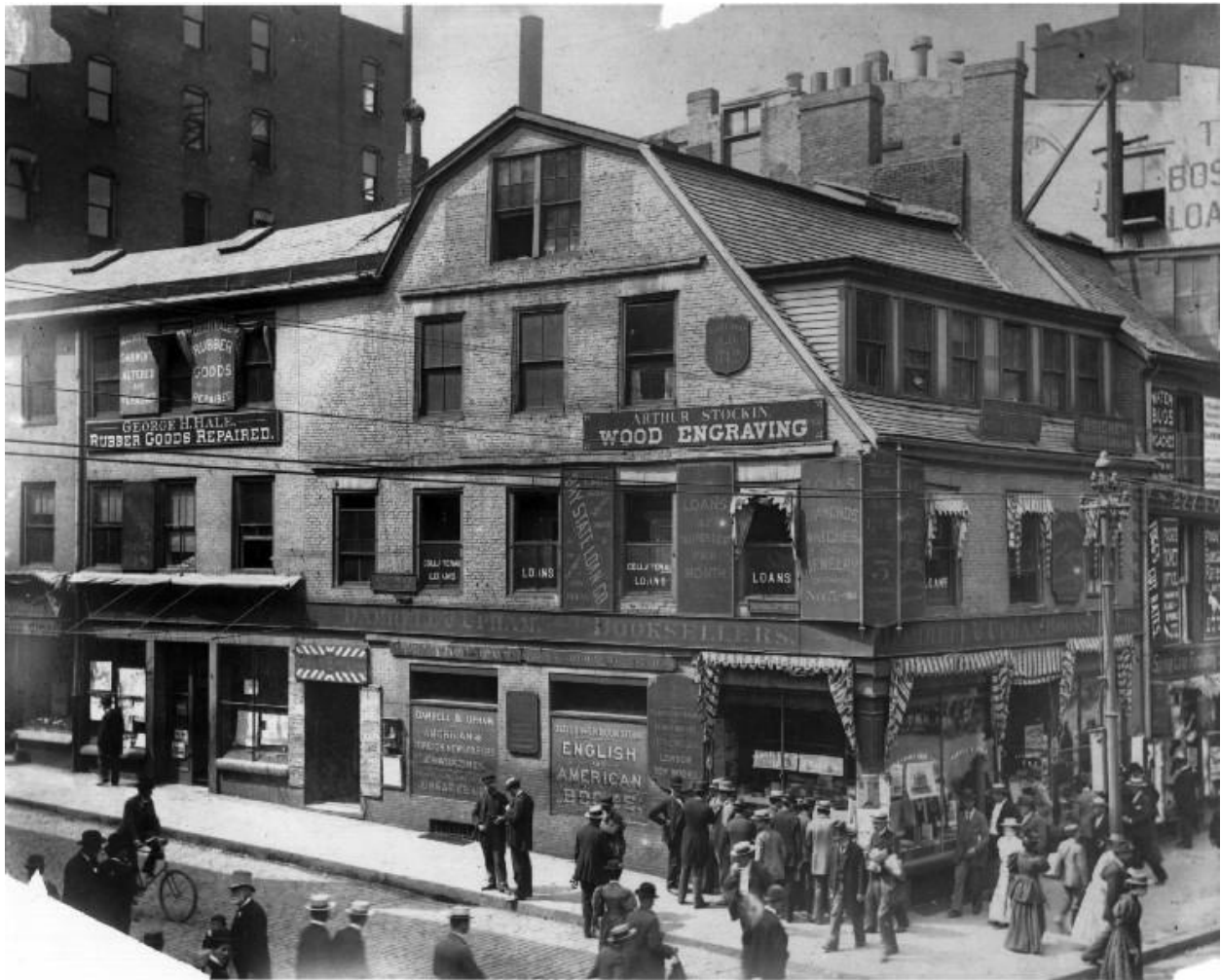


OLD CORNER BOOKSTORE & CUNNINGHAM HOUSE

283 Washington St. and 3-11 School St.;
277 Washington Street




BOSTON LANDMARKS COMMISSION STUDY REPORT

Petition # 181.94
Boston Landmarks Commission | Office of Historic Preservation
City of Boston

Corrected version (see p. 15)

Approved by:


Elizabeth Sherva, Executive Director

April 17, 2025

Date

Approved by:


Justine Orlando, Vice-Chair

April 22, 2025

Date

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Report posted on April 23, 2025

Cover image: Old Corner Bookstore, 1895. Photographer unknown.



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# 1. DESIGNATION

The Boston Landmarks Commission was established by Ch. 772 of the Acts of 1975 as amended to identify and safeguard the public's interest in preserving historic sites that represent distinctive features of the political, economic, social, cultural or architectural history of the city. As part of the process of designating a new Landmark or District, a Study Report is prepared to locate and describe the site; to provide a record of the rationale for creating the designation; to identify the character-defining features; and to list Standards and Criteria that will guide the Boston Landmarks Commission in evaluating proposed changes in the future.

The designation of the Old Corner Bookstore was initiated in 1994 after a petition was submitted by then-Commissioner Matthew J. Kiefer to the Boston Landmarks Commission asking that the Commission designate the property under the provisions of Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975, as amended (hereinafter "Chapter 772"). The purpose of such a designation is to recognize and protect a physical feature or improvement that in whole or part has historical, cultural, social, architectural, or aesthetic significance.

In 2023, Historic Boston Incorporated (Historic Boston Inc. or "HBI") proposed an amendment to the petition to include the designation of the adjacent Cunningham House. At a public hearing on February 14, 2023, the Boston Landmarks Commission voted to accept the amendment to the petition.

The Old Corner Bookstore (including 5-11 School Street) and the Cunningham House meet the following criteria for designation as a Boston Landmark as established in Section 4 of Chapter 772:

**A. Inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places as provided in the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.**

The Old Corner Bookstore is listed individually on the National Register of Historic Places (April 11, 1973), with significance in the areas of literature and architecture.

**B. Structures, sites, objects, man-made or natural, at which events occurred that have made an outstanding contribution to, and are identified prominently with, or that best represent some important aspect of the cultural, political, economic, military, or social history of the city, the commonwealth, the New England region or the nation.**

The Old Corner Bookstore at 283 Washington Street is locally significant as the oldest extant commercial building in Boston, and nationally significant as the former home of Ticknor and Fields, a prominent nineteenth-century book publisher that published the work of nearly every great American and British writer at the time, including Tennyson, Dickens, Hawthorne, Emerson, Thoreau, Longfellow and Harriet Beecher Stowe, among many others. The business practices of Ticknor and Fields also revolutionized the publishing industry at the time with new models of compensation for authors.

More generally, the corner of Washington and School Streets was a highly significant literary hub of Boston for decades. The Old Corner Bookstore was occupied by booksellers and publishers from 1828 to 1903, while the adjacent Cunningham House at 277 Washington Street was occupied by booksellers and publishers from 1828 to the 1880s.

**D. Structures, sites, objects, man-made or natural, representative of elements of architectural or landscape design or craftsmanship that embody distinctive**



**characteristics of a type inherently valuable for study of a period, style or method of construction or development, or a notable work of an architect, landscape architect, designer, or builder whose work influenced the development of the city, the commonwealth, the New England region, or the nation.**

The Old Corner Bookstore and Andrew Cunningham House are architecturally significant as rare surviving examples of residential Georgian architecture in downtown Boston. Although Georgian architecture was the dominant style of the English colonies between 1700-1780, very few examples remain in colonial cities such as Boston that grew rapidly during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Old Corner Bookstore and Cunningham House are among the oldest brick buildings in Boston. Although the buildings have undergone numerous changes to accommodate changing styles and uses, they still display many character-defining features of the Georgian style, including the Old Corner Bookstore's gambrel roof, corner quoins, and brick belt courses, and the Cunningham House's Flemish-bond brick walls, brick belt courses, gambrel roof, end wall chimney, and segmental arches over the second-story windows and splayed lintels over the third-story windows.

Therefore, Boston Landmarks Commission staff recommends that the Commission designate the exteriors of the Old Corner Bookstore and Cunningham House as a Landmark under Chapter 772; and further recommends that the boundaries corresponding to the Assessor's parcels 0302861000 and 0302883000 be adopted without modification. The effect of this designation shall be that review by the Boston Landmarks Commission and/or Commission staff shall be required for any proposed alterations to the exterior envelope of the buildings.

If designated, the Standards and Criteria in section 7 of this report will serve as guidelines for the Commission's review of proposed changes to the property, with the goal of protecting the historic integrity of the landmark and its setting. The designation would not regulate use or alterations to interior features.



## 2. LOCATION AND ZONING

The proposed designation encompasses two parcels with four integrated structures (see **Figure 1**):

- According to the City of Boston's Assessing Department, the Old Corner Bookstore is located at 283 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108. The Assessor's Parcel Number is 0302861000.
  - This parcel is also associated with several addresses on School Street; 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11 School Street appear to have been all active addresses at some point. Currently, 3 School St, 7 School St, and 11 School St are used as mailing addresses. All of the buildings historically numbered from 1 to 11 School Street, inclusive, are included in the designation.
- According to the City of Boston's Assessing Department, the Cunningham House is located at 277 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108. The Assessor's Parcel Number is 0302883000.



**Figure 1.** Map showing the boundaries of parcels 0302861000 and 0302883000.

The Old Corner Bookstore and the Cunningham House are located in downtown Boston at the northwest corner of Washington Street and School Street. Directly to the west of the Old Corner Bookstore are several commercial buildings of moderate scale; directly to the north of the Cunningham House is a parking garage with seven stories above grade. Across Washington Street, the presence of the Georgian Old South Meeting House and the Winthrop-Carter building, a Second Renaissance Revival-style skyscraper, maintain a historically commercial street wall while south of the Property, across School Street, a public open space contains the Irish Potato Famine Memorial. This pedestrian courtyard provides views from the Property to the historic Old South Meeting



House as well as a Brutalist addition to the Five Cents Savings Bank. This assemblage of historic buildings creates a dynamic, architecturally rich streetscape in the heart of downtown Boston.

The zoning for these two parcels is as follows:

Zoning District: Boston Proper

Zoning SubDistrict: B-10

SubDistrict Type: Commercial

Zoning Overlays:

- Restricted Parking District
- Shadow Impact Area (only the Old Corner Bookstore parcel)

Parking Freeze Zone: Boston Proper Zone

The Boston Planning and Development Agency (now the Planning Department) adopted PLAN: Downtown in December of 2023. As of March 2025, public comment is still being taken on the draft Downtown Zoning Map and Zoning Amendment. The most recent versions of the Downtown Zoning Map and Zoning Amendment, released on January 8, 2025, show the parcels under consideration in this study report in the “SKY-R” zone. This would allow for a maximum height of 500’ for a proposed project where residential use is greater than or equal to 60% of the gross floor area, and a maximum height of 155’ for all other projects.



### 3. OWNERSHIP AND OCCUPANCY

According to the City of Boston's Assessor's records, the Old Corner Bookstore and Cunningham House are owned by Historic Boston Inc, with a mailing address at 3 School Street c/o Old Corner Bookstore, Boston MA 02108.

The assessed values of each parcel as of Sunday, January 1, 2024, are:

Parcel 0302861000 (Old Corner Bookstore and 5-11 School Street)

|                              |                |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| FY2025 Building value:       | \$2,311,100.00 |
| FY2025 Land Value:           | \$2,640,800.00 |
| FY2025 Total Assessed Value: | \$4,951,900.00 |

Parcel 0302883000 (Cunningham House)

|                              |                |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| FY2025 Building value:       | \$1,034,700.00 |
| FY2025 Land Value:           | \$1,042,100.00 |
| FY2025 Total Assessed Value: | \$2,076,800.00 |

The ground floor of 283-285 Washington Street is occupied by a Chipotle Mexican Grill. The ground floor of 5-7 School Street was occupied by a Bruegger's Bagels until 2024 and is currently vacant. The ground floor of 11 School Street is occupied by a shop called Old Corner Christmas. The upper floors are occupied by offices.

The ground floor of 277 Washington Street is occupied by an eatery called Dig. The upper floors are occupied by offices.



## 4. IMAGES

### Photos



Photo 1. Old Corner Bookstore and Cunningham House, looking north, June 2024 (Gretchen Pineo, PAL, photographer).



Photo 2. Old Corner Bookstore, looking northeast, June 2024 (Gretchen Pineo, PAL, photographer).





Photo 3. Old Corner Bookstore (left) and Andrew Cunningham House (right), looking northwest, June 2024 (Gretchen Pineo, PAL, photographer).



## Historic Images

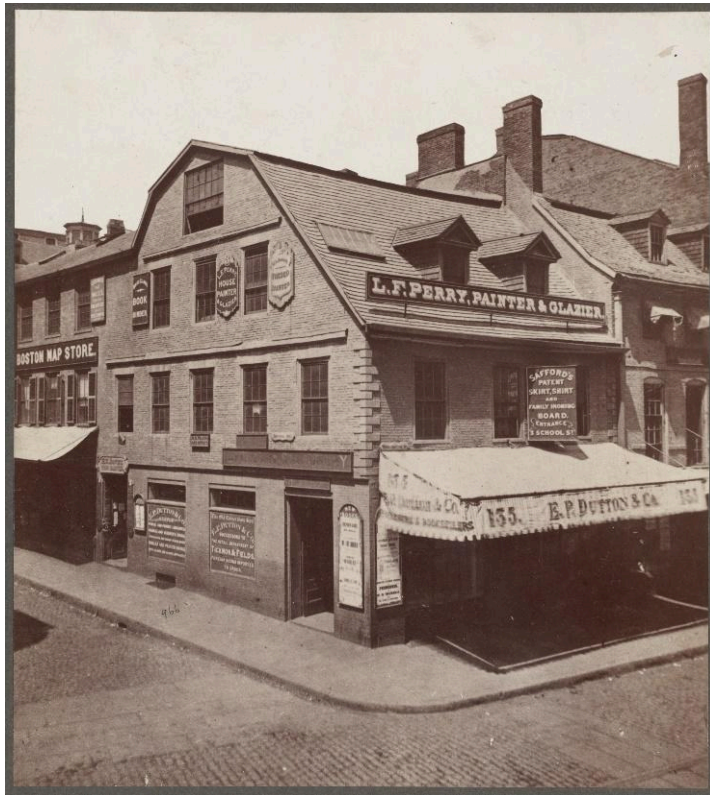


Figure 1. Old Corner Bookstore and west portion of Andrew Cunningham House, 1865. "Boston, Massachusetts. Old Corner Bookstore," Boston Pictorial Archive, Boston Public Library Arts Department, Boston, MA, 1865, <https://ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/xp68kp73m>.



Figure 2. Old Corner Bookstore and west bay of Andrew Cunningham House, ca. 1889-1894. "Old Corner Bookstore, cor. Washington & School Sts. Built in 1712," Boston Pictorial Archive, Boston Public Library Arts Department, Boston, MA, ca.1889-1894, <https://ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/xp68kp691>.





Figure 3. Old Corner Bookstore and School Street, 1920. Leon H. Abdalian, "Old Corner Bookstore, Boston, Mass.," Leon Abdalian Collection, Boston Public Library Arts Department, Boston, MA, 1920, <https://ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/fj236n047>.



Figure 4. Old Corner Bookstore and Andrew Cunningham House, ca. 1961-1965. George M. Cushing, "Old Corner Bookstore," Boston Pictorial Archive, Boston Public Library Arts Department, Boston, MA, ca.1961-1965, <https://ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/zw131w19j>.



## 5. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

### Context

The Old Corner Bookstore at 283 Washington Street is located on a corner lot where School Street meets Washington Street in downtown Boston, Massachusetts. The front façade of the building faces east, towards Washington Street. The southern façades of these buildings face a public park and open space that features a memorial to the victims of the 1845 Irish Famine. The Freedom Trail is represented on the southern perimeter of the building by a red line along the concrete portion of the sidewalk at 5-11 School Street and a brick course delineated on brick sidewalk along the southern side of the Old Corner Bookstore. The Old Corner Bookstore shares its northern wall with the Cunningham House at 277 Washington Street, which is abutted by a seven-story concrete public parking garage that visually disconnects both 277 and 283 Washington Street from the remainder of the buildings on the block.

### 283 Washington Street (built 1718)

Since its construction in 1718, the Old Corner Bookstore has been altered many times. A restoration by Historic Boston, Inc. in 1960 returned the structure to its 1828 appearance. The three-and-a-half story building faces Washington Street and has a distinctive side-gambrel slate roof with two off-center, six-over-six dormer windows on the east gambrel. The brick walls are laid in an English garden wall bond pattern with a header course every fourth row. The three wooden, twelve-over-twelve double-sash windows on the second story are topped with splayed common jack arches. The corners of the building are ornamented with Connecticut brownstone quoins. The ground floor of the eastern façade has one double door centered between two boxed bay windows, supported by two simple wooden brackets each, with a five-light transom above the door.

The south (School Street) elevation is five bays wide with two sets of double doors, each with a five-light transom and the western door topped with a stone lintel. Centered between the sets of doors are two boxed bay windows. The floor levels are delineated by a projecting brick string course above the second and third floors, each stringer consisting of three courses. Each window on this elevation is wooden double-sash with a brick splayed common jack arch; the five on the second story and three on the third story are twelve-over-twelve while the single window on the fourth story, centered in the gambrel, is eight-over-twelve. Quoining matching the east elevation also highlights the second story east and west edges of the south elevation.

### 5-7 School Street (built 1828)

5-7 School Street is a three-story, six-bay-wide building of brick construction laid in common bond. An infill triangle of brick was constructed where the building meets the sloping roof of the Old Corner Bookstore at 283 Washington. At the second and third floors, each bay contains a twelve-over-twelve window. At the ground floor, there are two storefronts: 5 School Street has a granite post-and-lintel storefront with a central pair of recessed wooden doors, while 7 School Street has four large single-pane windows above wood panels and a recessed door at the western end. The building has a flat rubber membrane roof.

### 11 School Street (built by 1828 but potentially earlier; see Historic Significance)

11 School Street is a three-story, three-bay-wide building with bricks laid in a Flemish bond pattern. Each bay has a twelve-over-twelve window with a stone lintel on the second and third floors. At the ground floor, double doors are inset between two large storefront windows. The building has a timber framed slate hipped roof.

### Rear Addition (built 1828, altered 1967)

A three-story wood building was also constructed ca. 1828 behind the brick buildings on School Street to house seven printing presses.<sup>1</sup> The ground floor of this building is now brick, but no

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<sup>1</sup> Turk Tracey & Larry Architects, LLC, "Historic Structures Report," 22.



documentation of this change in material has been found. In 1967, the upper two wood stories were replaced with a new second-story addition which was constructed of concrete masonry units.<sup>2</sup>

**277 Washington Street (Cunningham House, built ca. 1728)**

Adjacent to the Old Corner Bookstore on Washington Street is the Cunningham House at 277 Washington. The Cunningham House is a three-and-a-half story building with Flemish bond brick walls and projecting string courses between floors. The building is three bays wide, with the northernmost bay spaced asymmetrically further apart. The windows of the second and third floors and the gabled roof dormers all have six-over-six sash, although the windows get progressively smaller from the second floor up to the dormers. The windows at the second floor are topped with round brick arches. At the ground floor, the storefront consists of an inset double door surmounted by louvers and flanked by large windows. The roof is slate and has two chimneys at its south end.

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<sup>2</sup> Turk Tracey & Larry Architects, LLC, "Historic Structures Report," 31.



## 6. HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

### 6.1 Historic Significance

The downtown neighborhood of Boston is part of the traditional homelands of the Massachusett. They lived in the place we now call Boston for at least 12,000 years and are still here today. Archaeological investigations throughout Boston document surviving evidence of Native presence throughout the city, even in developed areas. See the Archaeological Sensitivity statement below for specific information about the known and potential ancient Native uses of this property.

In the earliest days of Boston's colonial settlement, the land currently occupied by what is historically known as the Old Corner Bookstore belonged to Isaac Johnson, one of the Puritan founders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and the person who gave Boston its name. In the 1630s, William and Anne Hutchinson acquired Johnson's land, but Anne was eventually banished from the colony because of her associations with the Antinomian movement and its controversial teachings. The house that the Hutchinsons built on this parcel was sold to a series of owners before Thomas Crease, an apothecary, purchased it in 1708. The house burned down in 1711 in a large conflagration that began at the corner of State and Washington streets and destroyed about 100 buildings, including the first Meeting House and Boston's Town House.<sup>3</sup>

The current Old Corner Bookstore building was built in 1718 by Thomas Crease and housed his apothecary shop and a residence above.<sup>4</sup> The building was situated to face Washington Street, known at that time as the "old road to Roxbury," and later as Orange Street.<sup>5</sup> In 1828, the Old Corner Bookstore's association with book publishing began when the ground-floor storefront was rented to publisher Timothy Carter (1798–1894). Carter appears to have held the lease on the building, but the bookselling business was overseen by Carter's younger brother Richard and Charles J. Hendee, operating under the name Carter & Hendee.<sup>6</sup> When Carter & Hendee began leasing the Old Corner Bookstore in 1828, Timothy Carter constructed the projecting bay windows on the street-facing elevations of the building. Carter also constructed the adjacent brick buildings at 5, 7, and 11 School Street around this time, after removing an earlier wooden ell along School Street.<sup>7</sup> In a letter written by Timothy Carter in 1894, he stated that he erected the School Street buildings "as they stand now" with a wooden building behind them for the printing presses; this suggests that 5, 7, and 11 School Street were built at the same time. However, 11 School Street has a slightly different appearance, and may have a different construction date.<sup>8</sup> In addition to differing from its neighbors in brickwork patterns and lintels, 11 School Street has a hip roof on its east side, which seems odd unless 11 School Street preceded 5 and 7 School Street. Further research may confirm a specific date of construction for this building. Regardless, the Boston city directory published in 1829 lists Carter & Hendee at the addresses of 5, 7, and 11 School Street, confirming that all three buildings were constructed by this date.

In 1832, Carter & Hendee sold off their bookselling business, which was purchased by John Allen and William Davis Ticknor, operating as Allen & Ticknor; they also took over the Old Corner Bookstore

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<sup>3</sup> Boston Public Library, "Great Fires of Boston," <https://guides.bpl.org/bostonfires>, January 2024; Russell Conwell, *History of the Great Fire in Boston, November 9 and 10, 1872*, (Boston, MA: B.B. Russell, 1873), 32–33.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph M. Bagley, *Boston's Oldest Buildings and Where to Find Them*, (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2021), 52.

<sup>5</sup> Bagley, *Boston's Oldest Buildings*, 52.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Winship, *American Literary Publishing in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: The Business of Ticknor and Fields*, (New York: University of Cambridge Press, 1995), 15.

<sup>7</sup> Keith N. Morgan, *Buildings of Massachusetts: Metropolitan Boston*, (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 60.

<sup>8</sup> Turk Tracey & Larry Architects, LLC, "Historic Structures Report," 22.



building. By the following year, the firm was known as William D. Ticknor & Co.<sup>9</sup> Initially, Ticknor's company only sold books and stationery, but soon the firm was publishing a variety of titles under myriad contract types – sometimes the publication was undertaken at cost by Ticknor, other times publication was paid for by the author, or by a third company. By 1834, however, Ticknor's partnerships had dissolved, and he was operating on his own, and at increasing financial risk. In June 1843, Ticknor formed a new partnership with James Fields and John Reed Jr., operating as William D. Ticknor & Co.<sup>10</sup> By mid-1854, the firm, now with principals William D. Ticknor and James Fields, became known as Ticknor & Fields.<sup>11</sup> Ticknor & Fields became a prominent publishing house, notably publishing books from English authors like Charles Dickens and Alfred Tennyson, and a who's who of New England authors including Henry David Thoreau, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Louisa May Alcott, and Julia Ward Howe.<sup>12</sup> Ticknor and Fields published such well-known and influential books as Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, and Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*. Much of Ticknor and Fields' success has been attributed to Ticknor's young partner, James T. Fields, whose innovations greatly altered the traditional relationship between authors and publishers. To ensure that his firm received the best manuscripts, Fields offered American authors royalties, sometimes as high as 20 percent. Fields also paid British authors a flat sum for their manuscripts or provided them with the same royalty scheme as American authors. This practice distinguished Fields in the industry, as the general practice at the time was to pirate English literature in the absence of international copyright protection. By the 1850s, these innovative practices made Ticknor and Fields the publisher of nearly every great American and British writer at the time. During these years the Old Corner Bookstore was so frequently patronized by native and visiting authors that it was popularly known as "Parnassus Corner." In 1859, Ticknor and Fields purchased the *Atlantic Monthly*, at the time one of the most influential American literary periodicals; with Fields as editor, it also became the most famous. In 1864, the firm acquired the *North American Review*, the oldest magazine in America.

In 1864, Ticknor died of pneumonia and Fields, now in charge of the company, was no longer interested in maintaining the retail store. In 1864, E.P. Dutton & Co. took over the retail bookselling business from Ticknor & Fields, remaining in the Old Corner Bookstore. Subsequently, Ticknor and Fields moved their publishing operations to a new office at 124 Tremont Street.<sup>13</sup> Dutton & Co. was later replaced by A. Williams & Co. in 1869, which remained in operation until 1883, when Williams retired. The firm continued, however, under the name Cupples, Upham & Co., and later JG Cupples Company by 1890; the firm folded in 1893.<sup>14</sup>

In 1898, John Inches acquired the Old Corner Bookstore, the School Street buildings and 277 Washington Street. The buildings had numerous tenants during the first half the twentieth century including restaurants, printing shops, management companies, tailors, and furriers. A men's clothing store appears to have occupied the first floor of the Old Corner Bookstore building in the 1920s and early 1930s. The space was occupied by United Cigar Store in the 1930s and 1940s and by Pizza City in the 1950s. Lawrence's Tavern occupied the ground floor of 11 School Street during the 1930s, 40s and 50s; the Rosen Talking Machine Company occupied the majority of the upper floors of these buildings (5, 7 and 11 School Street) for approximately 20 years during this time.

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<sup>9</sup> David Emblidge, "The Old Corner Bookstore: 'Rialto of Current Good Things, Hub of the Hub,'" *The Concord Saunterer*, Vol 16 (2008), 104.

<sup>10</sup> Winship, *American Literary Publishing*, 17–18.

<sup>11</sup> Winship, *American Literary Publishing*, 18.

<sup>12</sup> Winship, *American Literary Publishing*, 20–21.

<sup>13</sup> Winship, *American Literary Publishing*, 22–23.

<sup>14</sup> *Boston Globe*, "The Successors to A. Williams & Co.," April 15, 1883, 13; University of Reading, "Firms Out of Business,"

[https://norman.hrc.utexas.edu/Watch/fob\\_search\\_results\\_next.cfm?FOBCompanyName=A&FOBNote=&locSTARTROW=231](https://norman.hrc.utexas.edu/Watch/fob_search_results_next.cfm?FOBCompanyName=A&FOBNote=&locSTARTROW=231).



Immediately adjacent to the Old Corner Bookstore is the Andrew Cunningham House, 277–279 Washington Street, constructed ca. 1728. In 1752, Cunningham’s probate record indicated that he enslaved two people called Boston and Fanny; where Boston and Fanny were from, their relationship to each other, and when Cunningham enslaved them is unknown. Upon Cunningham’s death, all of his property went to his widow, Mary (nee Hirst).<sup>15</sup> Slavery was outlawed in Massachusetts in 1783, thus Boston and Fanny, if they were still alive, would have been emancipated by that point.

In 1795, the Andrew Cunningham House, by that time owned by Cunningham’s grandson John, was rented by publisher John West, who turned the first story into a shop and lived in the second and third stories. West modified the windows on the first story to better display his books and paper goods for sale.<sup>16</sup> By the mid-nineteenth century, the building was occupied by textbook publishers Jenks, Hickling, and Swan.<sup>17</sup> Through the end of the nineteenth century, the Andrew Cunningham House was occupied by publishers and booksellers.<sup>18</sup>

In 1917–1922, the Andrew Cunningham House property was combined with that of the Old Corner Bookstore and was administered by a single trust. While the Old Corner Bookstore remained associated with book publishing and sales, the Andrew Cunningham House began to house clothing stores until the mid-twentieth century.<sup>19</sup>

In 1946, the Inches family sold the Old Corner Bookstore, the School Street buildings and the Cunningham House to Katherine Ladd, who in turn sold the building to Boston real estate investor Elliot Henderson in 1956. The buildings themselves were of questionable value to most developers, but the land upon which they sat was extremely valuable. By early 1960, the Old Corner Bookstore and Andrew Cunningham House were slated for demolition to make way for a parking garage planned for construction as part of urban renewal activities in Boston. However, Henderson recognized that the buildings had historic significance and offered to sell them to the Bostonian Society. The Bostonian Society wanted the buildings to be saved but were uninterested in owning real estate, so they decided to organize a nonprofit organization called Historic Boston, Inc. (HBI).

In the fall of 1960, HBI was established by historian and director of the Boston Athenaeum Walter Muir Whitehill (1905–1978), who served as the organization’s first president, along with others including Bertram K. Little (1899–1993), then director of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (now Historic New England); Harvard University poet David McCord (1897–1997); realtor John Codman (1899–1989); and Roger A. Moore (1932–1990), the president of the Beacon Hill Civic Association.<sup>20</sup> HBI’s approach toward rehabilitating 283 Washington Street and the School Street buildings marked a significant shift in tactics employed by the historic preservation movement. HBI’s purpose was to demonstrate that historic buildings do not need to always be preserved as museums, but could attract tenants, generate municipal tax revenue and add value to the surrounding neighborhood. HBI’s first project was to take ownership of the Old Corner

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<sup>15</sup> Paul Singer, Talia Lissauer, and Westray Keeler, “Boston’s Old Corner Bookstore was originally an apothecary shop,” GBH News, August 9, 2023, <https://www.wgbh.org/news/local/2023-07-19/bostons-old-corner-bookstore-was-originally-an-apothecary-shop>; City of Boston Archaeology Program, *List of Known Enslaved People in Boston*, last updated November 30, 2023; Historic Boston, Inc., “Boston and Fanny Lived Here,” <https://historicboston.org/boston-and-fanny-lived-here/>, June 2024.

<sup>16</sup> Bagley, *Boston’s Oldest Buildings*, 63.

<sup>17</sup> Bagley, *Boston’s Oldest Buildings*, 64.

<sup>18</sup> Larson Fisher Associates, *Inventory Form B Continuation Sheet, Samuel Narcus Stationer/Andrew Cunningham House*, BOS.2126, Form prepared for Boston Landmarks Commission, August 2013.

<sup>19</sup> Larson Fisher Associates, *Cunningham House*.

<sup>20</sup> Edgar J. Driscoll Jr., “Old Corner Book Store Renewal Drive On,” *Boston Globe*, November 15, 1960, 2; Anthony Yudis, “Along the Building Front: Bank tenant added class for ‘Old Corner,’” *Boston Globe*, July 28, 1968, B33.



Bookstore and Cunningham House and restore them while maintaining them as rental properties; the success of this project led HBI to expand their portfolio in 1979 when they became a non-profit developer, investing in preserving properties across Boston.<sup>21</sup> See the next section (Architectural Significance) for more details about HBI's restoration work on these properties.

~~The Old Corner Bookstore building remained a bookstore until December 1979, when the Old Corner Bookstore officially closed as a result of competition from national bookstore chain, Barnes & Noble, which had a three-story building nearby at 395 Washington Street.<sup>22</sup> The last bookstore to occupy the site was the Globe Corner Bookstore, which opened at this location in 1982 and closed in 1997.~~ Following the closure, the space was occupied by a variety of retailers associated with the *Boston Globe*, a jeweler, and, finally, the building's current tenant, a Chipotle burrito restaurant. The Andrew Cunningham House was occupied by stationer Samuel Narcus shortly after its acquisition by HBI until the 1980s, after which it was occupied by The Body Shop and then a frozen yogurt shop.<sup>23</sup> The building's current tenants are a DIG restaurant and HBI's offices. Despite interior changes to accommodate modern uses of both properties, the Old Corner Bookstore and Andrew Cunningham House remain prominent, readily identifiable Boston landmarks, a remnant of the city's early architectural heritage and symbols of Boston's literary pedigree.

## 6.2 Architectural Significance

The Old Corner Bookstore and Andrew Cunningham House are architecturally significant as rare surviving examples of residential Georgian architecture in downtown Boston. Although Georgian architecture was the dominant style of the English colonies between 1700-1780, very few examples remain in colonial cities such as Boston that grew rapidly during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>24</sup>

After a fire in 1711, wooden construction was prohibited in the city center. As a result, both the Old Corner Bookstore and Cunningham House were constructed of brick, and are among the oldest brick buildings in Boston. Many contemporaneous buildings were lost as a result of the 1872 Great Fire, or through urban renewal clearance activities in the 1960s. Although the buildings have undergone numerous changes to accommodate changing styles and uses (**Figures 1-4**), they still display many character-defining features of the Georgian style, including the Old Corner Bookstore's gambrel roof, corner quoins, and brick belt courses, and the Cunningham House's Flemish-bond brick walls, brick belt courses, gambrel roof, end wall chimney, and segmental arches over the second story windows and splayed lintels over the third story windows. Although some alterations have been made to the first floors of the buildings' exteriors and portions have been reconstructed based on historic photographs and written documentation, the group of buildings retain their integrity of location, materials and workmanship.

In 1960, HBI paid \$275,000 for the group of buildings and spent another \$200,000 over the next ten to fifteen years to restore the exterior facades and rehabilitated the interiors into modern office space. The organization's intention was to rehabilitate the interiors for commercial use and to return the exteriors to their mid-nineteenth century state, based on the buildings' significance to the American literary movement at the time.<sup>25</sup> More specifically, Historic Boston, Inc. chose to restore the Old Corner Bookstore to its 1828 appearance, when the site was at the height of its literary

<sup>21</sup> Historic Boston, Inc. (HBI), "Our Mission," <https://historicboston.org/about/>.

<sup>22</sup> ~~Ben Bradlee, "The end of The Old Corner Bookstore: a quiet goodbye [sic]," *Boston Globe*, December 25, 1979, 20; David L. Harris, "Former Barnes & Noble site in Downtown Crossing could be sold in \$65M deal," *Boston Business Journal*, April 20, 2017.~~

<sup>23</sup> Larson Fisher Associates, *Cunningham House*.

<sup>24</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 140.

<sup>25</sup> Turk Tracey & Larry Architects, LLC, "Historic Structures Report for the Old Corner Bookstore Buildings, Boston, Massachusetts," 30.



prominence.<sup>26</sup> Shortly after HBI purchased the buildings, an engineering study that was completed that revealed that 283 Washington Street was in poor structural condition.<sup>27</sup> Francis N. Cummings, Jr., an associated at Perry, Shaw, Hepburn & Dean, was the architect who prepared the construction documents.<sup>28</sup> The majority of the restoration decisions were made by Francis Cummings and John Codman based on extensive research on the original appearance of the building using old photographs, Historic American Building Survey drawings and studying other buildings and details from the same period.<sup>29</sup>

Work on the restoration project was underway by 1964. R.M. Martin & Co., Inc. was the general contractor for the restoration of 283 Washington Street. New steel beams were installed throughout to strengthen the building, but all wood timbers original to 1718 were left intact. The wooden lintels over the five second-story windows on School Street were replaced with galvanized steel angles to prevent rot. All miscellaneous metal protrusions were removed from the brickwork, the bricks were cleaned by sand blasting, and a matching brick was selected to rebuild the first floor. Additional methods of cleaning were attempted for the bricks, but they were found to be so badly stained that sand blasting was deemed to be the best option. Rather than replacing the quoins on the southwest corner of the building with new brownstone, a cement mixture was used to save money. New electrical panels that would also serve as the School Street buildings were installed and a sprinkler system was installed. The fire escapes to all of the buildings were redesigned, the stair to 3 School Street was replaced with a steel stair, the dormers on the Washington Street façade were reconstructed, a new slate roof was installed and new period boxed bay windows were installed on the first floor and double-hung windows on the upper floors.<sup>30</sup> In 1984, the chimneys at the party wall between 283 and 277 Washington Street were recreated based upon numerous historic photographs. HBI thought the chimneys were essential in defining 283 and 277 Washington Street as eighteenth century buildings.<sup>31</sup>

Key commercial tenants also contributed funds to pay for the interior rehabilitation.<sup>32</sup> Liberty Mutual and Trust Company signed a twenty-five year lease for 5-11 School Street in 1967 and as part of their lease, agreed to complete the restoration of the School Street buildings' façades as designed by Francis Cummings, HBI's architect. Cummings prepared the construction documents for the façades of the School Street buildings, as well. This included rebuilding the storefronts, cleaning and replacing bricks and installing new period double-hung windows on the upper floors. There were very few historic photographs available that showed the appearance of the School Street buildings in the mid-nineteenth century. As such, the design for the storefronts did not resemble the originals at all; rather they appeared to be designed based on what someone might envision a colonial era storefront to look like. Cummings stated to John Codman that he believed that the Old Corner Bookstore building was the most historically significant building, even though all of the buildings were being restored to mid-nineteenth century.<sup>33</sup> In 1992 HBI installed a new rubber roof membrane roof on 5-7 School Street and replaced the tar roof on 11 School Street with slate. The most recent work to the buildings was in 1996 when HBI hired Shawmut Design and Construction to rehabilitate the second and third floors of 5-7 School Street, and Bruegger's Bagel Bakery took occupancy of the first floor of 7 School Street. Henry Moss, HBI staff architect, prepared the designs for the storefronts based on historic photographs from the mid-nineteenth century. An explicit effort was made to return the buildings to their original appearance as two separate buildings. The load

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<sup>26</sup> Turk Tracey & Larry Architects, LLC, "Historic Structures Report," 4.

<sup>27</sup> Turk Tracey & Larry Architects, LLC, "Historic Structures Report," 30.

<sup>28</sup> Memorandum, "Conference with Mr. Shaw and Mr. Cummings Re: Restoration," 21 December 1960. Codman Files, Box 19.

<sup>29</sup> Turk Tracey & Larry Architects, LLC, "Historic Structures Report," 30.

<sup>30</sup> Turk Tracey & Larry Architects, LLC, "Historic Structures Report," 31.

<sup>31</sup> Turk Tracey & Larry Architects, LLC, "Historic Structures Report," 33.

<sup>32</sup> Turk Tracey & Larry Architects, LLC, "Historic Structures Report," 29.

<sup>33</sup> Francis Cummings to John Codman, 17 February 1964. Codman files, Box 20.



bearing granite lintels and columns were reconstructed at 5 School Street, and a wooden storefront at 7 School Street.<sup>34</sup>

In the 1970s, as part of preparations for the American Bicentennial in 1976, the facade of the Andrew Cunningham House was restored by Samuel Narcus Stationer with guidance from Historic Boston, Inc.<sup>35</sup>

### 6.3 Archaeological Sensitivity

The Old Corner Bookstore and Andrew Cunningham House were built on the site of the seventeenth-century William and Anne Hutchinson house, which was destroyed by fire in 1711. The Old Corner Bookstore was constructed in 1718, and the Andrew Cunningham House was built ca. 1728. There are basements below both buildings; the basement walls of the Old Corner Bookstore are believed to be original.

The buildings at 5-7 and 9-11 School Street were completed by 1828-29. There is no basement below 5-7 School Street, but there is one below 9-11 School Street. Investigations done after a fire in 1936 revealed beneath 5-7 School Street the old foundation walls and first-floor joists of the Old Corner's original 18th-century ell, which had been torn down to make way for the extant buildings.<sup>36</sup>

Carter also built a three-story wood building ca. 1828 behind the brick buildings on School Street to house seven printing presses;<sup>37</sup> this building was later occupied by a trunk manufacturer's shop.<sup>38</sup> The ground floor of this building is now brick, but no documentation of this change in material has been found. In 1967, the Liberty Bank signed a lease for 5-11 School Street that included an agreement to restore the School Street buildings' facades and replace the upper two wood stories of the rear building with a new second-story addition which was constructed of concrete masonry units.<sup>39</sup>

The land upon which all of the buildings in this study report were built is part of the original Shawmut peninsula (not landfill), which suggests the strong possibility of intact historic and pre-contact deposits under and around the buildings.

Below-ground impacts to the buildings under consideration for designation in this report shall be avoided if possible within the landmark-designated area. All proposed below-ground impacts to the landscape, temporary or permanent, shall be reviewed by the staff archaeologists of the City Archaeology Program and the City Archaeologist to determine if significant archaeological resources may or will be negatively impacted by below-ground work. If impacts may or do exist, and they can not be avoided, mitigation in the form of archaeological monitoring, excavations, or other documentation may be required based on the recommendations and consultation of the City Archaeologist.

All archaeological work on the property shall be conducted under a state-issued State Archaeological Permit by an archaeologist meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards for Archaeology.

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<sup>34</sup> Turk Tracey & Larry Architects, LLC, "Historic Structures Report," 34.

<sup>35</sup> Bagley, *Boston's Oldest Buildings*, 64; Historic Boston, Inc., "Behind the Scaffolding: Improvements Coming to the Old Corner Bookstore," February 2023, <https://historicboston.org/behind-the-scaffolding-improvements-coming-to-the-old-corner-book-store/>.

<sup>36</sup> Turk Tracey & Larry Architects, LLC, "Historic Structures Report," 21-22.

<sup>37</sup> Turk Tracey & Larry Architects, LLC, "Historic Structures Report," 22.

<sup>38</sup> Turk Tracey & Larry Architects, LLC, "Historic Structures Report," 25.

<sup>39</sup> Turk Tracey & Larry Architects, LLC, "Historic Structures Report," 31.



## 6.4 Planning Context

The Boston National Historic Sites Committee was organized by the US Congress in 1955 to study whether an historical park should be established in Boston under the National Park Service.<sup>40</sup> As part of the committee's report, a historic area encompassing the Old Corner Bookstore, King's Chapel, and the Old South Meeting House was proposed.<sup>41</sup> However, before any plans came to fruition, Historic Boston, Inc. (HBI) stepped in to protect both buildings.<sup>42</sup>

Historic Boston Inc (HBI) purchased the Old Corner Bookstore, the associated School Street buildings, and the Cunningham House in 1960 with the intent to rehabilitate the structures to house commercial tenants. HBI paid \$275,000 for the group of buildings and spent another \$200,000 over the next ten to fifteen years to restore the exterior facades and rehabilitated the interiors into modern office space. Key commercial tenants also contributed funds to pay for the interior rehabilitation.<sup>43</sup> See Section 6.2 for more details.

The Old Corner Bookstore is listed individually in both the Massachusetts State Register of Historic Places (listed 6/8/1970) and the National Register of Historic Places (listed 04/11/1973). The Old Corner Bookstore is a designated Massachusetts Historic Landmark (MHL). In consenting to Old Corner's certification as an MHL in 1970, Historic Boston, Inc. agreed to comply with the Massachusetts Historical Commission's Standards for Care and Management of Certified Historic Landmarks.<sup>44</sup> A five-year preservation restriction enacted in 1999 was connected to a grant received to fund a portion of the historic structures report. As a result of the restriction, the Massachusetts Historical Commission had to be consulted before any significant alterations for five years.<sup>45</sup>

In 2024, HBI began working with MASS Design Group to plan a rehabilitation of the Old Corner Bookstore in accordance with NPS guidelines. The goals of the project include making the building fully accessible and code compliant, increasing its sustainability, and revitalizing the Old Corner Bookstore as a major revenue source for HBI. The planned work will include masonry repairs and window replacement, and may include interpretive facade changes.

HBI's interest in designating the Old Corner Bookstore and associated School Street buildings on parcel 0302861000 and the Cunningham House on parcel 0302883000 is a proactive planning measure. Following the structures' initial restoration, HBI has continued to consistently maintain the property's architecturally significant features and scale. The Standards and Criteria that the Commission may adopt through Landmark designation would provide fine-tuned design guidelines specific to the buildings that would ensure that future exterior work is completed in a manner appropriate to the architecturally significant group of buildings.

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<sup>40</sup> Seth C. Bruggeman, *Lost on the Freedom Trail: The National Park Service and Urban Renewal in Postwar Boston*, (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2022), 49.

<sup>41</sup> Bruggeman, *Lost on the Freedom Trail*, 75.

<sup>42</sup> Bruggeman, *Lost on the Freedom Trail*, 89.

<sup>43</sup> Turk Tracey & Larry Architects, LLC, "Historic Structures Report," 29.

<sup>44</sup> Massachusetts Historical Commission Notice of Certification, Suffolk County Registry of Deeds, Book 8372 Page 687.

<sup>45</sup> Turk Tracey & Larry Architects, LLC, "Historic Structures Report," 47; Preservation Restriction Agreement, Suffolk County Registry of Deeds, Book 24529, Page 247



## 7. STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

### 7.1 Introduction

Per sections 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the enabling statute (Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975 of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, as amended) Standards and Criteria must be adopted for each Designation that shall be applied by the Commission in evaluating proposed changes to the historic resource. The Standards and Criteria both identify and establish guidelines for those features that must be preserved and/or enhanced to maintain the viability of the Designation. The Standards and Criteria are based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.<sup>46</sup> Before a Certificate of Design Approval or Certificate of Exemption can be issued for such changes, the changes must be reviewed by the Commission with regard to their conformance to the purpose of the statute.

The intent of these guidelines is to help local officials, designers and individual property owners to identify the characteristics that have led to designation, and thus to identify the limitation to the changes that can be made to them. It should be emphasized that conformance to the Standards and Criteria alone does not necessarily ensure approval, nor are they absolute, but any request for variance from them must demonstrate the reason for, and advantages gained by, such variance. The Commission's Certificate of Design Approval is only granted after careful review of each application and public hearing, in accordance with the statute.

Proposed alterations related to zoning, building code, accessibility, safety, or other regulatory requirements shall require the prior review and approval of the Commission.

In these standards and criteria, the verb **Should** indicates a recommended course of action; the verb **Shall** indicates those actions that are specifically required.

### 7.2 Levels of Review

The Commission has no desire to interfere with the normal maintenance procedures for the property. In order to provide some guidance for property owners, managers or developers, and the Commission, the activities that might be construed as causing an alteration to the physical character of the exterior have been categorized to indicate the level of review required, based on the potential impact of the proposed work.

- A. Routine activities that are not subject to review by the Commission:
  - 1. Activities associated with normal cleaning and routine maintenance.
    - a. For building maintenance, such activities might include the following: normal cleaning (no power washing above 700 PSI, no chemical or abrasive cleaning), non-invasive inspections, in-kind repair of caulking, in-kind repainting, staining or refinishing of wood or metal elements, lighting bulb replacements or in-kind glass repair/replacement, etc.
    - b. For landscape maintenance, such activities might include the following: normal cleaning of paths and sidewalks, etc. (no power

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<sup>46</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, et al. *THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR THE TREATMENT OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES WITH GUIDELINES FOR PRESERVING, REHABILITATING, RESTORING & RECONSTRUCTING HISTORIC BUILDINGS*, Secretary of the Interior, 2017, [www.nps.gov/tps/standards/treatment-guidelines-2017.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/treatment-guidelines-2017.pdf).



washing above 700 PSI, no chemical or abrasive cleaning), non-invasive inspections, in-kind repair of caulking, in-kind spot replacement of cracked or broken paving materials, in-kind repainting or refinishing of site furnishings, site lighting bulb replacements or in-kind glass repair/replacement, normal plant material maintenance, such as pruning, fertilizing, mowing and mulching, and in-kind replacement of existing plant materials, etc.

2. Routine activities associated with special events or seasonal decorations that do not disturb the ground surface, are to remain in place for less than six weeks, and do not result in any permanent alteration or attached fixtures.

B. Activities that may be determined by the staff to be eligible for a Certificate of Exemption or Administrative Review, requiring an application to the Commission:

1. Maintenance and repairs involving no change in design, material, color, ground surface or outward appearance.
2. In-kind replacement or repair.
3. Phased restoration programs will require an application to the Commission and may require full Commission review of the entire project plan and specifications; subsequent detailed review of individual construction phases may be eligible for Administrative Review by BLC staff.
4. Repair projects of a repetitive nature will require an application to the Commission and may require full Commission review; subsequent review of these projects may be eligible for Administrative Review by BLC staff, where design, details, and specifications do not vary from those previously approved.
5. Temporary installations or alterations that are to remain in place for longer than six weeks.
6. Emergency repairs that require temporary tarps, board-ups, etc. may be eligible for Certificate of Exemption or Administrative Review. In the case of emergencies, BLC staff should be notified as soon as possible to assist in evaluating the damage and to help expedite repair permits as necessary.

C. Activities requiring an application and full Commission review:

Reconstruction, restoration, replacement, demolition, or alteration involving change in design, material, color, location, or outward appearance, such as: New construction of any type, removal of existing features or elements, major planting or removal of trees or shrubs, or changes in landforms.

D. Activities not explicitly listed above:

In the case of any activity not explicitly covered in these Standards and Criteria, the Landmarks staff shall determine whether an application is required and if so, whether it shall be an application for a Certificate of Design Approval or Certificate of Exemption.

E. Concurrent Jurisdiction

In some cases, issues that fall under the jurisdiction of the Landmarks Commission may also fall under the jurisdiction of other city, state and federal boards and



commissions such as the Boston Art Commission, the Massachusetts Historical Commission, the National Park Service and others. All efforts will be made to expedite the review process. Whenever possible and appropriate, a joint staff review or joint hearing will be arranged.

### **7.3 List of Character-defining Features**

Character-defining features are the significant observable and experiential aspects of a historic resource, whether a single building, landscape, or multi-property historic district, that define its architectural power and personality. These are the features that should be identified, retained, and preserved in any restoration or rehabilitation scheme in order to protect the resource's integrity.

Character-defining elements may include, for example, the overall shape of a building and its materials, craftsmanship, decorative details and features, as well as the various aspects of its site and environment. They are critically important considerations whenever preservation work is contemplated. Inappropriate changes to historic features can undermine the historical and architectural significance of the resource, sometimes irreparably.

Below is a list that identifies the physical elements that contribute to the unique character of the historic resource. The items listed in this section should be considered important aspects of the historic resource, and changes to them should be approved by commissioners only after careful consideration. The intent is not to freeze these character-defining features in place as they are today. The Commission acknowledges that changes to the character-defining features may be necessary or beneficial; the standards and criteria established in this report are intended to make these changes sensitive to the historic and architectural character of the property.

The character-defining features for this historic resource include:

- A. Old Corner Bookstore
  - a. Brick walls laid in an English garden wall bond pattern with a header course every fourth row
  - b. Molded brick cornice
  - c. Side-gambrel slate roof with two six-over-six dormer windows
  - d. Connecticut brownstone quoins (note: the quoins that separate the Old Corner Bookstore from 5 School Street are not original)
  - e. East (Washington Street) facade:
    - i. Three wooden, twelve-over-twelve double-sash windows on the second story topped with splayed common jack arches
    - ii. Double door centered between two boxed bay windows supported by wooden brackets
  - f. South (School Street) facade:
    - i. Projecting brick string courses
    - ii. Wooden double-sash twelve-over-twelve windows with brick splayed common jack arches
- B. 5-7 School Street:
  - o Brick walls laid in common bond
  - o Twelve-over-twelve windows
  - o Granite post-and-lintel storefront with recessed wooden doors at 5 School Street
  - o Storefront with wood panels and recessed door at 7 School Street
- C. 11 School Street:
  - o Brick walls laid in common bond
  - o Twelve-over-twelve windows with stone lintels



- Timber framed slate hipped roof
  - Double doors inset between large storefront windows
- D. 277 Washington Street (Cunningham House):
- Brick walls laid in Flemish bond
  - Projecting string courses between floors
  - Six-over-six windows
  - Round brick arches over windows at second floor
  - Gabled roof dormers with six-over-six sash
  - Slate roof with two chimneys at southern end
  - Double doors inset between large storefront windows

## 7.4 Standards and Criteria

The following Standards and Criteria are based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.<sup>47</sup> These Standards and Criteria apply to all exterior building alterations that are visible from any existing or proposed street or way that is open to public travel.

### 7.4.1 General Standards

Subject to review and approval under the terms of this report, the following standards shall apply:

1. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property shall be avoided. See the list of Character-Defining Features in the previous section.
2. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, shall not be undertaken.
3. The period of significance is not determined by this study report. However, proposals for alterations to the property should be presented to the Commission with a clear argument for how they fit the most current understanding of the property's period or periods of significance and their impact on historic or existing fabric of the building.
4. Changes and additions to the landmark that have taken place over time are evidence of the history of the property and its context. These changes may have acquired significance in their own right; if so, that significance should be recognized and respected. (The term "later contributing features" will be used to convey this concept.)
5. Distinctive or significant historic and architectural materials, features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature should match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. If the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

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<sup>47</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, et al. *THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR THE TREATMENT OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES WITH GUIDELINES FOR PRESERVING, REHABILITATING, RESTORING & RECONSTRUCTING HISTORIC BUILDINGS*, Secretary of the Interior, 2017, [www.nps.gov/tps/standards/treatment-guidelines-2017.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/treatment-guidelines-2017.pdf).



Replacement of missing features should be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.

7. The use of synthetic replacement materials is discouraged, except when substituted for perishable features exposed to the weather or when necessary to accommodate the effects of climate change.
8. Chemical and/or physical treatments (such as sandblasting) shall not be used in a manner that damages historic materials. The surface cleaning of structures shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible and the results should preserve the patina that characterizes the age of the structure. Applications of paint or masonry preservative solutions will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis; painting masonry surfaces will be considered only when there is documentary evidence that this treatment was used at some point in the history of the property.
9. Demolition of a designated structure can be allowed only as a last resort after all practicable measures have been taken to ensure preservation, or unless required to comply with requirements certified by a duly authorized public officer to be necessary for public safety because of an unsafe or dangerous condition.
10. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize a property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of a property and its environment.
11. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.
12. Original or later contributing signs, marquees, and canopies integral to the building ornamentation or architectural detailing shall be preserved, excluding references to building ownership, operations, tenants.
13. New signs, banners, marquees, canopies, and awnings shall be compatible in size, design, material, location, and number with the character of the building, allowing for contemporary expression. New signs shall not detract from the essential form of the building nor obscure its architectural features. New signs may attach to the building if approved by the Commission. The method of attachment shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and should cause the least damage possible to the building. (See the next section for guidelines on penetrating masonry.)
14. Property owners shall take necessary precautions to prevent demolition by neglect of maintenance and repairs. Demolition of protected buildings in violation of Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975, as amended, is subject to penalty as cited in Section 10 of Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975, as amended.

#### **7.4.2 Masonry at exterior walls (including but not limited to stone, brick, terra-cotta, concrete, stucco, and mortar)**

1. All original or later contributing masonry materials should be preserved.
2. Original or later contributing masonry materials, features, details, surfaces and ornamentation shall be repaired, if necessary, by patching, splicing, consolidating, or otherwise reinforcing the masonry using recognized preservation methods.



3. Deteriorated masonry materials, features, details, surfaces, and ornamentation or missing components of masonry features shall be replaced with materials and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, and detail of installation. If the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered on a case-by-case basis.
4. When replacement of existing materials or elements is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. Sound original mortar shall be retained.
6. Deteriorated mortar shall be carefully removed by hand raking the joints.
7. Use of mechanical hammers shall not be allowed. Use of mechanical saws may be allowed on a case-by-case basis.
8. Repointing mortar shall duplicate the original mortar in strength, composition, color, texture, joint size, joint profile, and method of application.
9. Sample panels of raking the joints and repointing shall be reviewed and approved by the staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission.
10. If the building is to be cleaned, the masonry shall be cleaned with the gentlest method possible.
11. A test patch of the cleaning method(s) shall be reviewed and approved on site by staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission to ensure that no damage has resulted. Test patches shall be carried out well in advance. Ideally, the test patch should be monitored over a sufficient period of time to allow long-range effects to be predicted (including exposure to all seasons if possible).
12. Sandblasting (wet or dry), wire brushing, or other similar abrasive cleaning methods shall not be permitted. Doing so can change the visual quality of the material and damage the surface of the masonry and mortar joints.
13. Waterproofing or water repellents are strongly discouraged. These treatments are generally not effective in preserving masonry and can cause permanent damage. The Commission does recognize that in extraordinary circumstances their use may be required to solve a specific problem. Samples of any proposed treatment shall be reviewed by the Commission before application.
14. In general, painting masonry surfaces shall not be allowed. Painting masonry surfaces will be considered only when there is documentary evidence that this treatment was used at some significant point in the history of the property.
15. New penetrations for attachments through masonry are strongly discouraged. When necessary, attachment details shall be located in mortar joints, rather than through masonry material; stainless steel hardware is recommended to prevent rust jacking. New attachments to cast concrete are discouraged and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
16. Deteriorated stucco shall be repaired by removing the damaged material and patching with new stucco that duplicates the old in strength, composition, color, and texture.
17. Deteriorated concrete shall be repaired by cutting damaged concrete back to remove the source of deterioration, such as corrosion on metal reinforcement bars. The new patch



shall be applied carefully so that it will bond satisfactorily with and match the historic concrete.

18. Joints in concrete shall be sealed with appropriate flexible sealants and backer rods, when necessary.

#### **7.4.3 Wood at exterior walls**

1. All original or later contributing wood materials should be preserved.
2. Original or later contributing wood surfaces, features, details, and ornamentation shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, piecing-in, consolidating, or reinforcing the wood using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated wood materials, features, details, surfaces, and ornamentation or missing components of wood features shall be replaced with materials and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, and detail of installation. If the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered on a case-by-case basis.
4. When replacement of materials is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. Cleaning of wood elements shall use the gentlest method possible.
6. Paint removal should be considered only where there is paint surface deterioration or excessive layers of paint have coarsened profile details and as part of an overall maintenance program that involves repainting or applying other appropriate protective coatings. Coatings such as paint help protect the wood from moisture and ultraviolet light; stripping the wood bare will expose the surface to the effects of weathering.
7. Damaged or deteriorated paint should be removed to the next sound layer using the mildest method possible.
8. Propane or butane torches, sandblasting, water blasting, or other abrasive cleaning and/or paint removal methods shall not be permitted. Doing so changes the visual quality of the wood and accelerates deterioration.
9. Repainting should be based on paint seriation studies. If an adequate record does not exist, repainting shall be done with colors that are appropriate to the style and period of the building.

#### **7.4.4 Architectural metals at exterior walls (including but not limited to wrought and cast iron, steel, pressed metal, terneplate, copper, aluminum, and zinc)**

1. All original or later contributing architectural metals should be preserved.
2. Original or later contributing metal materials, features, details, and ornamentation shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, splicing, or reinforcing the metal using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated metal materials, features, details, surfaces, and ornamentation or missing components of metal features shall be replaced with materials and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, and detail of installation. If the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered on a case-by-case basis.



4. When replacement of materials or elements is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. Cleaning of metal elements either to remove corrosion or deteriorated paint shall use the gentlest method possible.
6. The type of metal shall be identified prior to any cleaning procedure because each metal has its own properties and may require a different treatment.
7. Non-corrosive chemical methods shall be used to clean soft metals (such as lead, tinfoil, terneplate, copper, and zinc) whose finishes can be easily damaged by abrasive methods.
8. If gentler methods have proven ineffective, then abrasive cleaning methods, such as low pressure dry grit blasting, may be allowed for hard metals (such as cast iron, wrought iron, and steel) as long as it does not abrade or damage the surface.
9. A test patch of the cleaning method(s) shall be reviewed and approved on site by staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission to ensure that no damage has resulted. Test patches shall be carried out well in advance. Ideally, the test patch should be monitored over a sufficient period of time to allow long-range effects to be predicted (including exposure to all seasons if possible).
10. Cleaning to remove corrosion and paint removal should be considered only where there is deterioration and as part of an overall maintenance program that involves repainting or applying other appropriate protective coatings. Paint or other coatings help retard the corrosion rate of the metal. Leaving the metal bare will expose the surface to accelerated corrosion.
11. Repainting should be based on paint seriation studies. If an adequate record does not exist, repainting shall be done with colors that are appropriate to the style and period of the building.

#### **7.4.5 Windows (also refer to Masonry, Wood, and Architectural Metals)**

1. The original or later contributing arrangement of window openings should be retained.
2. Enlarging or reducing window openings for the purpose of fitting stock (larger or smaller) window sash or air conditioners shall not be allowed.
3. Removal of window sash and the installation of permanent fixed panels to accommodate air conditioners shall not be allowed.
4. Original or later contributing window sash, elements, features (functional and decorative), details, and ornamentation shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, splicing, consolidating, or otherwise reinforcing using recognized preservation methods.
5. Deteriorated window sash, elements, features (functional and decorative), details, and ornamentation or missing components of window features should be replaced with material and elements that match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration, and detail of installation. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered on a case-by-case basis.



6. When replacement of sash, elements, features (functional and decorative), details, or ornamentation is necessary, it shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
7. Exterior combination storm windows shall have a narrow perimeter framing that does not obscure the glazing of the primary window. In addition, the meeting rail of the combination storm window shall align with that of the primary window.
8. Storm window sashes and frames shall have a painted finish that matches the primary window sash and frame color.
9. Repainting of window frames, sashes, and, if appropriate, shutters, should be of a color based on paint seriation studies. If an adequate record does not exist, repainting shall be done with colors that are appropriate to the style and period of the building.

#### **7.4.6 Entrances/Doors (also refer to Masonry, Wood, Architectural Metals, and Porches/Stoops)**

1. All original or later contributing entrance elements shall be preserved.
2. The original or later contributing entrance design and arrangement of the door openings shall be retained.
3. Enlarging or reducing original or later contributing entrance/door openings for the purpose of fitting stock (larger or smaller) doors shall not be allowed.
4. Original or later contributing entrance materials, elements, details and features (functional and decorative) shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, splicing, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing using recognized preservation methods.
5. Deteriorated entrance elements, materials, features (functional and decorative), details, and ornamentation or missing components of entrance features should be replaced with material and elements that match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered on a case-by-case basis.
6. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
7. Original or later contributing entrance materials, elements, features (functional and decorative) and details shall not be sheathed or otherwise obscured by other materials.
8. Storm doors (aluminum or wood-framed) shall not be allowed on the primary entrance unless evidence shows that they had been used. They may be allowed on secondary entrances. Where allowed, storm doors shall be painted to match the color of the primary door.
9. Unfinished aluminum storm doors shall not be allowed.
10. Replacement door hardware should replicate the original or be appropriate to the style and period of the building.
11. Buzzers, alarms and intercom panels, where allowed, shall be flush mounted and appropriately located.



12. Entrance elements should be of a color based on paint seriation studies. If an adequate record does not exist, repainting shall be done with colors that are appropriate to the style and period of the building/entrance.

#### **7.4.7 Porches/Stoops (also refer to Masonry, Wood, Architectural Metals, Entrances/Doors, Roofs, and Accessibility)**

1. All original or later contributing porch elements shall be preserved.
2. Original or later contributing porch and stoop materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details, and ornamentation shall be retained if possible and, if necessary, repaired using recognized preservation methods.
3. Existing porch and stoop materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation that become deteriorated or missing should be replaced with material and elements that match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation. Alternative materials will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
4. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. Original or later contributing porch and stoop materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall not be sheathed or otherwise obscured by other materials.
6. Porch and stoop elements should be of a color based on paint seriation studies. If an adequate record does not exist repainting shall be done with colors that are appropriate to the style and period of the building/porch and stoop.

#### **7.4.8 Lighting**

1. There are several aspects of lighting related to the exterior of the building and landscape:
  - a. Lighting fixtures as appurtenances to the building or elements of architectural ornamentation.
  - b. Quality of illumination on building exterior.
  - c. Security lighting.
2. Wherever integral to the building, original or later contributing lighting fixtures shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, piercing in or reinforcing the lighting fixture using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated lighting fixture materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details, and ornamentation or missing components of lighting fixtures should be replaced with material and elements that match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration, and detail of installation. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered on a case-by-case basis.
4. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. Original or later contributing lighting fixture materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details, and ornamentation shall not be sheathed or otherwise obscured by other materials.



6. Supplementary illumination may be added where appropriate to the current use of the building.
7. New lighting shall conform to any of the following approaches as appropriate to the building and to the current or projected use:
  - a. Reproductions of original or later contributing fixtures, based on physical or documentary evidence.
  - b. Accurate representation of the original period, based on physical or documentary evidence.
  - c. Retention or restoration of fixtures that date from an interim installation and that are considered to be appropriate to the building and use.
  - d. New lighting fixtures that are differentiated from the original or later contributing fixture in design and that illuminate the exterior of the building in a way that renders it visible at night and compatible with its environment.
8. The location of new exterior lighting shall fulfill the functional intent of the current use without obscuring the building form or architectural detailing.
9. No exposed conduit shall be allowed on the building.
10. Architectural night lighting is encouraged, provided the lighting installations minimize night sky light pollution. High efficiency fixtures, lamps and automatic timers are recommended.
11. On-site mock-ups of proposed architectural night lighting may be required.

**7.4.9 Storefronts (also refer to Masonry, Wood, Architectural Metals, Windows, Entrances/Doors, Porches/Stoops, Lighting, and Accessibility)**

1. Refer to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings (Storefront section).

**7.4.10 Curtain Walls (also refer to Masonry, Wood, Architectural Metals, Windows, and Entrances/Doors)**

1. Refer to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings (Curtain Walls section).

**7.4.11 Roofs (also refer to Masonry, Wood, Architectural Metals, and Roof Projections)**

1. The original or later contributing roof shapes (visible from public ways) and original or later contributing contributing roof elements (visible from public ways) of the existing building should be preserved.
2. Original or later contributing roofing materials such as slate, wood trim, elements, features (decorative and functional), details and ornamentation, such as cresting, shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching or reinforcing using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated roofing materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation or missing components of roof features should be replaced with material and elements that match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered on a case-by-case basis.



4. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. Original or later contributing roofing materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall not be sheathed or otherwise obscured by other materials.
6. Unpainted mill-finished aluminum shall not be allowed for flashing, gutters and downspouts. All replacement flashing and gutters should be copper or match the original material and design (integral gutters shall not be replaced with surface-mounted).
7. External gutters and downspouts should not be allowed unless based on physical or documentary evidence.

**7.4.12 Roof Projections (includes satellite dishes, antennas and other communication devices, louvers, vents, chimneys, and chimney caps; also refer to Masonry, Wood, Architectural Metals, and Roofs)**

1. New roof projections shall not be visible from the public way. (This does not apply to solar panels, which shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis; see 7.4.16 Renewable Energy Sources.)
2. New mechanical equipment should be reviewed to confirm that it is no more visible than the existing.

**7.4.13 Additions (also refer to General Standards above)**

1. Additions can significantly alter the historic appearance of the buildings. An exterior addition should only be considered after it has been determined that the existing buildings cannot meet the new space requirements.
2. New additions shall be designed so that the character-defining features of the buildings are not radically changed, obscured, damaged, or destroyed.
3. New additions should be designed so that they are compatible with the existing buildings, although they should not necessarily be imitative of an earlier style or period.
4. New additions shall not obscure the front or street-facing facades of the buildings.
5. New additions shall be of a size, scale, and materials that are in harmony with the existing buildings.

**7.4.14 Accessibility**

1. Alterations to existing buildings for the purposes of providing accessibility shall provide persons with disabilities the level of physical access to historic properties that is required under applicable law, consistent with the preservation of each property's significant historical features, with the goal of providing the highest level of access with the lowest level of impact. Access modifications for persons with disabilities shall be designed and installed to least affect the character-defining features of the property; modifications should be reversible when possible and preserve as much of the original material as possible. Modifications to some features may be allowed in providing access, once a review of options for the highest level of access has been completed.
2. A three-step approach is recommended to identify and implement accessibility modifications that will protect the integrity and historic character of the property:



- a. Review the historical significance of the property and identify character-defining features;
  - b. Assess the property's existing and proposed level of accessibility;
  - c. Evaluate accessibility options within a preservation context.
3. Because of the complex nature of accessibility, the Commission will review proposals on a case-by-case basis. The Commission recommends consulting with the following document, which is available from the Commission office: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Cultural Resources, Preservation Assistance Division; Preservation Brief 32 "Making Historic Properties Accessible" by Thomas C. Jester and Sharon C. Park, AIA.

#### **7.4.15 Renewable Energy Sources**

1. Renewable energy sources, including but not limited to solar energy, are encouraged for the site.
2. Proposals for new renewable energy sources shall be reviewed by the Commission on a case-by-case basis for potential physical and visual impacts on the building and site.
3. Refer to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation & Illustrated Guidelines on Sustainability for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings for general guidelines.

#### **7.4.16 Building Site**

1. The general intent is to preserve the existing or later contributing site and landscape features that enhance the property.
2. It is recognized that often the environment surrounding the property has character, scale and street pattern quite different from what existed when the building was constructed. Thus, changes must frequently be made to accommodate the new condition, and the landscape treatment can be seen as a transition between the historic property and its newer surroundings.
3. All original or later contributing features of the building site that are important in defining its overall historic character shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired using recognized preservation methods. This may include but is not limited to walls, fences, steps, walkways, paths, roads, furnishings and fixtures.
4. Deteriorated or missing site features should be replaced with material and elements that match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation. Alternative materials will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
5. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
6. The existing landforms of the site shall not be altered unless shown to be necessary for maintenance of the designated property's structure or site.
7. If there are areas where the terrain is to be altered, these areas shall be surveyed and documented to determine the potential impact to important landscape features.
8. The historic relationship between buildings and the landscape shall be retained. Grade levels should not be changed if it would alter the historic appearance of the building and its relation to the site.



9. When they are required by a new use, new site features (such as access ramps) should be as unobtrusive as possible, retain the historic relationship between the building or buildings and the landscape, and be compatible with the historic character of the property.
10. Original or later contributing layout and materials of the walks, steps, and paved areas shall be maintained. Consideration will be given to alterations if it can be shown that better site circulation is necessary and that the alterations will improve this without altering the integrity of the designated property.
11. When they are necessary for security, protective fencing, bollards, and stanchions should be as unobtrusive as possible.
- 12.
13. The Boston Landmarks Commission recognizes that the designated property must continue to meet city, state, and federal goals and requirements for resiliency and safety within an ever-changing coastal flood zone and environment.

#### **7.4.17 Additional Guidelines**

The following are additional Guidelines for the treatment of the historic property:

1. Should any major restoration or construction activity be considered for a property, the Boston Landmarks Commission recommends that the proponents prepare a historic building conservation study and/or consult a materials conservator early in the planning process.
  - a. The Boston Landmarks Commission specifically recommends that any work on masonry, wood, metals, or windows be executed with the guidance of a professional building materials conservator.
2. Should any major restoration or construction activity be considered for a property's landscape, the Boston Landmarks Commission recommends that the proponents prepare a historic landscape report and/or consult a landscape historian early in the planning process.
3. When reviewing an application for proposed alterations, the Commission will consider whether later addition(s) and/or alteration(s) to the features or elements proposed for alteration can, or should, be removed on a case-by-case basis. Since it is not possible to provide one general guideline, the following factors will be considered in determining whether a later addition(s) and/or alteration(s) can, or should, be removed include:
  - a. Compatibility with the existing property's integrity in scale, materials and character.
  - b. Historic association with the property.
  - c. Quality in the design and execution of the addition/alteration.
  - d. Functional usefulness.

#### **7.4.18 Archaeology**

1. Staff archaeologists shall review proposed changes to a property that may impact known and potential archaeological sites. All below-ground work within the property shall be reviewed by the Boston Landmarks Commission and City Archaeologist to determine if work may impact known or potential archaeological resources. An archaeological survey may be required to determine if significant archaeological deposits are present within the area of impact of the proposed work. An archaeological survey shall be conducted if



archaeological sensitivity exists and if impacts to known or potential archaeological resources cannot be mitigated after consultation with the City Archaeologist.

2. Significant archaeological resources shall be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be required before the proposed work can commence. All archaeological mitigation (monitoring, survey, excavation, etc.) shall be conducted by a professional archaeologist. The professional archaeologist should meet the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards for Archaeology.



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