



# HBI *Insights*

News From Historic Boston Incorporated • Winter 2005

## Contents

Reviving Two Greek Revival Houses	1
Breaking News: Assessing Mattapan's Fowler-Clark Farmhouse	2
Letter from the Executive Director	3
Supporting Churches Through the Steeples Project	4
Working to Preserve Boston's Historic Roman Catholic Churches	4
What's New at the Old Corner	5
HBI & Post-Katrina Preservation Efforts	7
About Historic Boston	8

## Reviving Two Greek Revival Houses

HBI is in the process of performing engineering studies on two endangered Greek Revival houses in Roxbury's Highland Park neighborhood with funding raised from the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA). The Alvah Kittredge House and the Edward Everett Hale House are significant not only as iconic examples of the Greek Revival Style, but also because of their association with important figures in Boston's and America's history. Alvah Kittredge (1799-1876) was a prominent businessman and Roxbury alderman who helped found Forest Hills Cemetery. Edward Everett Hale (1822-1809), was a noted Unitarian minister who served as President of Harvard University, Governor of Massachusetts, United States Senator from Massachusetts, and chaplain of the U. S. Senate; Hale also wrote *A Man Without A Country* and is honored with a statue in the Boston Public Garden.

The most remarkable feature that the buildings have in common is their monumental porticoes. Unfortunately, rotted wood column bases and an accident or two has resulted in the loss of two of the Kittredge House's six ionic columns, and one of the Hale House's four.

HBI successfully lobbied to have the Kittredge House placed on Preservation Mass's Ten Most Endangered Historic Resources list in 2004, and we have been working with the owner ever since to help develop a strategy to preserve this important neighborhood landmark. The recognition the listing brought to the endangered status of Roxbury's Greek Revival buildings no doubt bolstered our fundraising efforts to help save them. So far, these efforts have yielded two grants from the National Trust Northeast Regional Office totaling \$3,000 and one for just under \$5,000 from the BRA to complete our studies.



The 1836 Alvah Kittredge House and grounds as it appeared in the 1880s. & ALVAH KITTREDGE HOUSE CURRENT PHOTO - CAPTION: A current photo of the dilapidated Alvah Kittredge House showing the two columns missing from its portico.



The scope of the survey work includes assessing and preparing a written report on the condition of the entire building envelope (but focusing on the portico and roof) of each property, outlining the potential causes of any structural or other deficiencies so that steps can be taken to help prevent future deficiencies, and preparing a scope of work and cost estimates for short-term emergency stabilization work as well as for long-term, permanent repairs. Armed with the facts that the engineering studies will uncover for both houses, we will continue to work with the owners to preserve these important buildings. ▮ *by Jeffrey Gonyeau*



The front façade of the endangered Fowler-Clark Farmhouse.

## Breaking News: Assessing Mattapan's Fowler-Clark Farmhouse

In early November, HBI commissioned an emergency structural assessment of Mattapan's historic Fowler-Clark farmhouse and barn to help the Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC) settle a dispute with the property owner concerning the structural integrity of both buildings. According to a BLC report on the property, the main house on the Fowler-Clark farm was built as a single family dwelling between 1786 and 1806, and the stable next to the house dates to circa 1860. The report highlights the site's significance by indicating that "the house, stable, and half acre of undeveloped land collectively known as the Fowler-Clark farm remain among the earliest, intact, vernacular examples of agricultural properties identified in Boston and in urban centers across the Commonwealth."

The owner is seeking to sell the slightly more than half-acre property for multi-family development and has argued that the BLC should allow the demolition of both structures given their alleged dilapidated state. As a result of the research completed

during the resulting demolition delay period, the BLC granted the property temporary landmark status. The Landmarks Commission then turned to HBI to arrange for an independent assessment of the buildings' structural status in response to the negative report of the home inspector hired by the owners and their representative. Historic Boston's executive committee responded by approving an emergency expenditure for a structural assessment of the eighteenth century farmhouse and nineteenth century barn/carriage house. HBI hired John Wathne, PE, president of Structures North Consulting Engineers, Inc., to complete the assessment. The findings of his report and of the owners' engineers' report will be presented to the BLC staff on December 9th for review in preparation for the Commission's January 10th hearing on the fate of the historic structures.

The Fowler-Clark farm house demolition delay battle is the latest in a number of demolition attempts, both successful and pending, that have plagued eighteenth and early

nineteenth century houses throughout Boston's neighborhoods. Developers target these properties for redevelopment, because they are usually located on larger lots that can support higher density development if they take advantage of the minimum setback and maximum dwelling unit allowances available under zoning. This "tear-down epidemic" has plagued a number of the nation's cities over the past decade and has made its presence felt in Boston in recent years. The new residences constructed in place of demolished historic structures are often unsympathetic to the rhythm, scale, siting, and materials of surrounding houses and thereby destroy the character and feel of their neighborhoods. Not only is there a danger of unsympathetic construction, but Boston, and Massachusetts, would be losing an intact example of Boston's early architecture and heritage. In a strong single-family housing market, this building should not suffer tear-down in pursuit of maximizing profit with no acknowledgement of the greater loss.

HBI is proud of its partnership with the BLC to help protect Boston's historic resources and is pleased to have volunteered its services in an effort to preserve the Fowler-Clark property as an important neighborhood landmark in Mattapan. We will continue to work with the Landmarks Commission, the Boston Preservation Alliance, and other local organizations and individuals to do what we can to stem the tide of the tear-down epidemic in Boston's neighborhoods.

U by *Eric Breikreutz and Jillian Adams*



New Executive Director Eric Breitzkreutz with Mayor Tom Menino at the dedication of a plaque sponsored by The Bostonian Society to commemorate the John Hurd House and HBI's role in saving and rehabilitating the pivotal historic structure on Main Street in Charlestown.

## Letter from the Executive Director

*CHANGE.* It's such a small word, and does not seem dramatic enough to convey all the many different things that have taken place with our organization since our last issue of *HBI Insights* in the winter of 2003. Yet, if allowed only one word to communicate to you the past two years in the organizational life of Historic Boston Incorporated, I would have to pick the word "change."

Our changes started with the retirement of Stanley Smith after twenty-five years of service to the organization as executive director. I was fortunate to have three weeks of orientation under Stanley before assuming the directorship of HBI in April of 2004, and I cannot thank him enough for his generous gift of time and knowledge in helping me learn the position. He left a rock solid foundation for the organization and a legacy of success that I will be hard pressed to equal.

Another major change for the organization was the creation of our first strategic plan, which the board approved in December 2004. It will guide HBI's work over the next five years with four main goals in mind: 1) expanding our role as thought leaders in historic preservation at the local, state, and federal levels; 2) increasing our collaboration with private developers, government, and other non-profit organizations; 3) improving our capacity to better accomplish our mission; and 4) developing programs and expertise using our successful Steeples Project as a model to comprehensively address the rehabilitation of specific building types and/or geographic areas that are most in need in Boston.

One improvement to our organizational governance that has resulted from the strategic plan is the creation of the Council of Advisors for HBI's Board of Directors. Chaired by former board vice-president Edward Lawrence, the Council is composed of a combination of former board members, experienced professionals, and community leaders that will offer guidance to the board and staff on key issues while helping HBI increase its influence and collaborative opportunities throughout the city. As of this writing, former board members William Osgood, Pauline Chase-Harrell, Andrea Gilmore, and David Rockwell have agreed to serve, joining architect Lynne Spencer, non-profit director Emily Axelrod, non-profit director and former city official Charles Grigsby, and Boston Parks Commissioner Antonia Pollack on the Council. The Advisors held their inaugural meeting in early November, which was an extremely productive review and advice session on HBI's priorities for the next several years. We appreciate our new Advisors' commitment to our mission and look forward to good things resulting from the Council in the future.

Speaking of governance changes, we have had several long-time members directors retire from or rotate off of our board over the past two years: Roger Webb, Ranne Warner, Pauline Chase-Harrell, Edward Lawrence, and Marcia Myers. We also lost Paula Groves to her fiancé in California and hope that she is enjoying her new life on the west coast. We thank all of our former directors for their years of leadership and dedicated service in helping HBI accomplish its important mission. The board has welcome Alex Krieger of Chan Krieger Architects and the Harvard University Graduate School of Design as a new member and is in the process of recruiting other new directors.

We also have had other changes in staff, saying goodbye to Angie Joffe and two-time employee Chad Perry and welcoming Jean Shildneck as our new Program Associate/Office Manager and Jillian Adams as our new Director of the Steeples Project and Project Manager.

Along with these major strategic and management changes, we have

experienced a major change in tenants at the Old Corner Bookstore Buildings (please see the article: *What's New at the Old Corner*).

Most exciting of all changes, however, is the Preservation Priorities Plan for Boston. In an effort to be more strategic in our approach to tackling the preservation and rehabilitation of historic structures, the board and staff have embarked upon a year-and-a-half effort to study the state of historic preservation in the city and create a thoughtful, comprehensive programmatic approach (similar in model to our successful Steeples Project) to the most pressing of preservation needs in Boston. Through the use of four workshops involving government officials, non-profit organization leaders, private developers, and a wide range of professionals from Boston and the eastern United States, our Projects Committee and staff have narrowed our concentration to three critical areas of need: historic neighborhood commercial centers, historic residential resources, and historic infrastructure elements (closed fire stations, bridges, water and sewer pumping stations, trolley system structures, etc.). Subsequent Projects Committee meetings have further refined our program priority to that of historic neighborhood centers, while seeking to use our focus on these centers to help us potentially develop programs for historic residential resources and infrastructure elements over time.

Much work remains to be done over the course of several more meetings between the Projects Committee meetings and outside experts to help us finalize our programmatic approach to the varied needs of historic neighborhood commercial centers. The Preservation Priorities Plan that emerges will be a thoughtful road map for HBI's strategic investments in Boston's communities that will enable us to maximize our resources to effect the revitalization of neighborhood centers while still allowing us the flexibility to serve as the developers of last resort for endangered individual cultural resources scattered throughout the city.

It is indeed an exciting time to be the

# Supporting Churches through the Steeples Project

2005 marks the twelfth year of the Steeples Project providing competitive matching grants to religious properties throughout Boston to assist them with the preservation of their historic religious properties. Under the supervision of HBI staff and trained preservation specialists, these grants are used for technical assistance, major repairs, and/or exterior lighting.



First Parish Church, Dorchester received a grant to repair its badly leaning steeple.

Since the inception of the program, HBI has raised over \$1.4 million from 15 charitable organizations. The matching grant requirement of the program has led congregations to raise an additional \$11 million on their own, for a total of almost \$12.5 million in Total Project Costs supported by the program. Not only is the program helping congregations address immediate issues of deferred maintenance, emergency repair, and safety, but it also teaches them about long-term planning for building maintenance and fundraising.

Now that the Steeples Project is in its second decade and the need for funding continues, we are developing our own long-term planning for the health and well-being of the program. A self-sustaining program often occurs through establishing a healthy endowment, which we are determined to create within the next five years. We are exploring planned giving and memorial gifts as two ways to build the endowment. Creating an endowment will not only help us practice what we preach, but will also allow for an expanded program.

This year the Steeples Project received applications from 16 congregations from 12 different Boston neighborhoods seeking \$530,000 in funding. We

awarded seven religious properties grants totaling \$84,800. Historic Boston congratulates the following grant recipients:

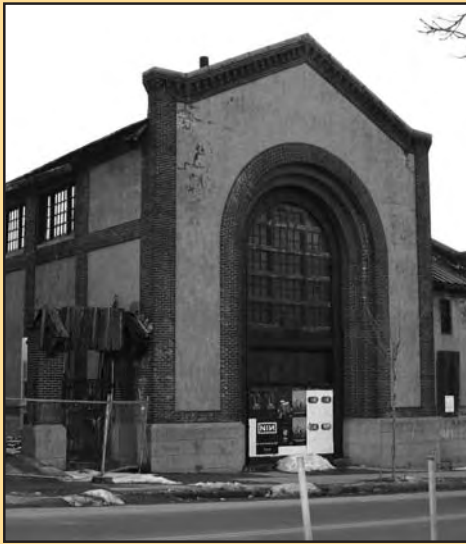
- First Baptist Church, Jamaica Plain
- Eliot Congregational Church, Roxbury
- Gate of Heaven, South Boston
- Saint John's Episcopal Church, Charlestown
- First Parish Church, Dorchester
- The Church of the Sacred Heart, Roslindale
- Ruggles Baptist Church, Fenway

Now, and in the future, our goal is to help congregations avoid the need to close or sell their historic religious structures due to overwhelming deferred maintenance needs and, instead, to create strong and active stewards who are dedicated to the preservation of their buildings. It is only in maintaining these properties that these congregations can house the vital community services that serve the needs of Boston's neighborhoods. It is only in preserving these buildings that these congregations can demonstrate their own vitality and provide symbols of community identity to their neighborhoods. ▮ by Jillian Adams

## Working to Preserve Boston's Historic Roman Catholic Churches

Given our Steeples Project expertise and our mission to preserve endangered historic structures in Boston, it should come as no surprise that HBI has been active in seeking ways to preserve the city's many historic Roman Catholic parish complexes that are being suppressed in the city by the Archdiocese. Since the initial announcement of imminent parish closures in late 2003, Historic Boston has joined the efforts of the Massachusetts Preservation Coalition, a group of fifteen preservation organizational members from throughout the Commonwealth led by PreservatiON MASS, to save historic

parish structures throughout the Archdiocese of Boston. HBI staff worked with fellow coalition organizations to produce *Preserving Historic Religious Properties: A Toolkit for Parish and Community Leaders* (a non-Massachusetts specific, summary version of which may be found on our website at <http://historicboston.org/toolkit.pdf>). We have helped distribute the toolkit to individuals and organizations in the affected communities in an effort to guide peoples' thinking about how to plan for the preservation and reuse of these iconic structures. HBI donated the services of our public relations consultant to help convey the



The Washington Street and side façades of the historic Egleston Square MBTA Substation.

## Egleston Square Collaboration

Since the spring of 2005, HBI has been providing pro-bono technical assistance to Urban Edge Community Development Corporation to rehabilitate the newly purchased former trolley car power substation in Egleston Square, a commercial center shared by Roxbury and Jamaica Plain. Urban Edge, in partnership with Boston Neighborhood Network (BNN), purchased the 1909 Arts and Crafts style substation from the MBTA and is working to convert the cavernous interior into multi-storied offices and studios for BNN with a ground floor retail component.

Their goal is to qualify for federal and state rehabilitation tax credits as a crucial component of their funding for the project. Drawing on our extensive historic rehabilitation experience and our specific knowledge gained through the 2002 feasibility study for the Roslindale Village MBTA substation, HBI staff has provided guidance to Urban Edge and BNN concerning the requirements of the rehabilitation tax credits and listing on the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places. We have also provided ideas on how to best meet the spatial and natural light needs of BNN while still qualifying for the tax credits.

Many of our readers may recall that this is not the first collaboration between Urban Edge CDC and Historic Boston. HBI worked with Urban Edge from 1983 to 1988 to rehabilitate the historic Cedar Street Marble Rowhouses in Roxbury's Highland Park neighborhood as condominiums for low-to-moderate income families.

Since the success of the rowhouse rehabilitation, Urban Edge has completed many additional bricks and mortar projects as part of its mission to help develop and sustain stable, healthy, and diverse communities in Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, and surrounding neighborhoods. HBI is pleased that Urban Edge recognized the historic character and importance of the iconic building and has committed to preserving and rehabilitating the substation in collaboration with the Boston Neighborhood Network. We will continue to offer guidance and encouragement as their partnership moves forward in completing what we all expect will be a highly successful project and a key to the further revitalization of Egleston Square. [U](#)



Heartfelt congratulations to Joan Goody, FAIA, Principal of Goody Clancy and Associates and member of HBI's board of directors, recipient of the 2005 Award of Honor from the Boston Society of Architects (BSA). The Award of Honor is the BSA's most prestigious honor, recognizing "extraordinary contributions to the profession and the community over a significant period of time." The BSA bestowed the honor upon Joan, pictured here accepting the award at a special reception held in the undercroft of Trinity Church on September 19, in recognition of her contributions that have enriched not only the Boston architectural community, but the city as a whole.

importance of these ecclesiastical buildings and the need for their preservation through the Boston Globe and other newspapers. We also supported the Coalition's effort to have the Archdiocese's historic structures included in the National Trust for Historic Preservation's 2005 list of *11 Most Endangered Historic Places*.

In Boston proper, we have supported our historic preservation allies at the Boston Preservation Alliance in their work with area residents to seek Boston Landmark status for suppressed parish complexes in Brighton, the South End, and Jamaica Plain. We also successfully lobbied the Jamaica Plain

Neighborhood Development Corporation to include historic preservation in their winning bid for the reuse of the five-building Blessed Sacrament parish complex in Hyde Jackson Square, Jamaica Plain. We will continue to monitor the Roman Catholic parish suppression process and use the many preservation tools at our disposal to help preserve and insure the sympathetic reuse of the many historic parish structures slated for closure within the city.

[U](#) by *Eric Breitreutz*

## Deferred Maintenance: A Common but Costly Mistake for Congregations

Whoever came up with the term “deferred maintenance” must have been a twisted marketing genius! It really is remarkable how what is, in essence, demolition by neglect is sugar coated by such a benign phrase. Through twelve years of the Steeples Project, our staff has seen numerous examples of the need for extremely costly repairs to historic religious structures that could have been detected and avoided by relatively simple and inexpensive repairs as part of a cyclical inspection and maintenance plan.

For more information on the basics of a cyclical maintenance plan, please visit an online article in the Old House Journal at <http://www.oldhousejournal.com/magazine/2002/november/planning.shtml>.

Simply having property committee members or other volunteers examine the church in the spring and fall every year goes a long way towards nipping small problems in the bud before they blossom into much larger and more urgent needs requiring thousands or hundreds of thousands of dollars to fix. A thorough check of gutters and downspouts to clear them of all leaves and other obstructions can help avoid leaks in roofs and walls. Looking for recurring moisture in the basement can identify the need for downspout extensions and slight regrading of the grounds next to the foundation. This work of re-routing water is relatively inexpensive and cannot be deferred for the sake of staying within budget in a given year without risking serious and costly structural damage to the foundation.

Patching small roof leaks found during seasonal examinations of attics and ceilings will stop water penetration that could otherwise go undetected for years and rot structural elements of the roof, wall, and foundation. Too often congregations miss signs of leaks that closer inspection might uncover, or let small leaks go as “inconsequential”—responding with buckets rather than repairs—until eventually it is discovered that the entire roof must be replaced.

Simply put, deferred maintenance is a losing proposition for both historic structures and congregations’ budgets and should be avoided at all costs. Cyclical inspections and maintenance plans are the smart alternative for congregations that will help them keep their historic buildings structurally sound and fully functional for decades to come. U by Eric Breitkreutz

## What Future for Which Churches?

“What Future for Which Churches” was the title of a thought-provoking international symposium on the preservation and re-use of historic churches attended by HBI staff in Montreal this past October. The symposium featured participants from throughout Western Europe and North America, including Historic Boston, presenting methods for resolving deferred maintenance problems on various styles and ages of historic religious structures. The symposium also addressed ways to successfully adapt former ecclesiastical structures for new uses. The organizers designed this year’s symposium to help the Canadian Province of Quebec deal with its large number of ailing or closing Roman Catholic parish structures, yet it provided a rich learning experience for all participants concerned with the preservation of religious properties.



: Preservation work at Gate of Heaven Parish in progress during the fall of 2005.

Although the symposium provided a host of interesting church reuse ideas, such as circus performers schools and municipal libraries, that have been successful in England, France, Belgium, and Quebec, it also highlighted the role deferred maintenance has played in the closure, sale, and reuse of churches on

both continents. Similar to the situation in Quebec and Western Europe, deferred maintenance concerns have contributed to recent decisions regarding church closings by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston. As we learned from numerous news reports, massive deferred maintenance costs were a factor in the parish suppression selection process. An article in the March 5, 2005, edition of The Boston Globe reported that the major repairs needs of Saint Augustine parish in South Boston played a part in the Archdiocese’s decision to suppress that parish. Friends from the Gate of Heaven parish in the South End have told us that their parish was initially under consideration for suppression because of the multi-million dollar maintenance issues that needed immediate attention.

Thankfully, Gate of Heaven used the fear of suppression to jump-start a comprehensive, six million dollar repair and restoration project for their historic, *continued on page seven*

# What's New at the Old Corner

It has been a busy (and loud and dusty!) past several months here at the Old Corner Bookstore Buildings, HBI's flagship historic property in Downtown Crossing.

In the past year, small but important projects have included the removal of the last vestiges of the old and inefficient steam heating system, ongoing roof and skylight repairs made necessary in part by last winter's severe weather, and the installation of automatic door opening mechanisms on two of our storefronts to make them more accessible to people in wheelchairs.

A more highly visible project was the repainting of all of the exterior wood elements of the building. The new color scheme draws attention to the fact that the Old Corner Bookstore Buildings are actually five separate buildings, although joined together in various ways in the interior. Two contrasting but subtle color schemes now allow the complex to be read as such rather than monolithically, as was the case prior to this, when all of the window sash and trim on the upper floors were painted a single color. In particular, the new colors draw attention to the differing window sizes and styles in the various buildings, and help give the oldest building—the 1718 gambrel-roofed building at the corner of School and Washington Streets—a more distinctive presence.

In addition, the exterior of the building is now illuminated by special light fixtures mounted on City of Boston street light poles. For this project, we have used the same cooperative lighting arrangement with the City that we used for our other historic property, the Hayden Building, as well as for several churches around Boston as part of our Steeples Project. The new lighting not only affords our picturesque building a greater

presence at night and helps increase neighborhood security, but adds the Old Corner Buildings to the growing list of nearby historic sites—including the Old State House, Old City Hall, King's Chapel, and, shortly, Old South Meetinghouse—that have been enhanced with exterior lighting in recent years.

Finally, the most dramatic change may be the elaborate fit-out that Ultra Diamonds recently completed in the former Boston Globe Store space. To increase their retail space on the second floor, they connected former office space to the existing retail space above The Body Shop. To better link these two areas and to encourage customers to move between the two, Ultra Diamonds created a new opening in the party wall between the buildings. Under the supervision of John Wathne of Structures North Consulting Engineers, they carefully removed hundreds of 18th-century bricks (which are now stored in the basement), and inserted a steel bracing system to support the walls. The industrial look of these structural elements is so interesting that it was decided to leave them exposed instead of hiding them behind wallboard and plaster. The result is a remarkable new retail space that even those not in the market for diamonds will find eye-catching.

What is interesting about these projects—even the most mundane of them—is the way they illustrate that, with constant care and the judicious management of change, historic buildings can remain architecturally compelling, culturally relevant, and commercially viable. The best way to preserve buildings is to continue to use them. ▫ *by Jeffrey Gonyeau*

## HBI & Post-Katrina Preservation Efforts

We have all seen pictures of the terrible destruction wrought by Hurricane Katrina - utter devastation that brought tears to our eyes and generosity to our hearts. In an unprecedented action for our Boston-focused organization, HBI's board of directors voted unanimously to support preservation-based recovery efforts in the Gulf Coast region. We were pleased to donate \$5,000 each to the Mississippi Heritage Trust (MHT) and the Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans (PRCNO), sister organizations in the Statewide and Local Partners network of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. We hope that our small contributions will assist MHT and PRCNO in preserving the unique cultural identities of the communities they serve, and we look forward to hearing of their successes. ▫

### *continued from page six*

cathedral-like church. HBI is pleased to support their efforts with a 2005 Steeples Project matching grant to help the parish restore and illuminate the church's beautiful copper flèche (the steeple-like structure atop the transept) which is visible from neighborhoods as far away as East Boston. This is one of two grants in the 2005 Steeples Project grant round that HBI awarded to Roman Catholic parishes in the city. These awards resulted from a special outreach effort, with the aim of reinvigorating good building stewardship by these parishes. Improved stewardship will allow these parishes to preserve their buildings as architectural landmarks and neighborhood icons for the inspiration of future generations of Bostonians, and will protect the vital social and community services housed in these structures. ▫ *by Eric Breikreutz*

## About Historic Boston...



Historic Boston Incorporated is a private, non-profit organization that puts people and resources together to preserve endangered historic sites in the city of Boston.

It gives priority to projects which will leverage additional

public and private commitments, embody thoughtful restoration standards, catalyze neighborhood renewal, and protect cultural resources.

To accomplish these objectives, Historic Boston engages in a variety of entrepreneurial activities which include buying property, making grants, providing technical assistance, lending money, building the capacity of other organizations with similar goals, and seeking new funds.

Historic Boston provides leadership, leverage and focus for people and organizations throughout the region who share the ideals and objectives of safeguarding America's heritage.

Currently, Historic Boston owns two properties: the Old Corner Bookstore Buildings, acquired in 1960, and the Hayden Building, acquired in 1993. Both of preeminent significance to Boston and the nation, threats to their future inspired Historic Boston to marshal the resources to purchase and rehabilitate them. Today they provide continuing income streams while serving as examples of the impact a proactive preservation organization can have upon a city.

*HBI is a charitable, non-profit organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and a private operating foundation under code Section 4942 (j)(3). Tax-deductible gifts or bequests may be sent to Historic Boston Incorporated at 3 School Street, Boston MA 02108.*

## Historic Boston Incorporated

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