

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received **AUG 6 1985**  
date entered **SEP 5 1985**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic 138-142 Portland Street (use for publication)

and/or common 85 Merrimac Street

**2. Location**

street & number 138-142 Portland Street n/a not for publication

city, town Boston n/a vicinity of

state MA code 025 county Suffolk code 025

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name 138 Portland Street Limited Partnership c/o Hamlin Collier & Company

street & number 10 Liberty Square

city, town Boston n/a vicinity of state MA

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Suffolk County Registry of Deeds

street & number Pemberton Square

city, town Boston state MA

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title 1 Boston Landmarks Commission  
Central Business District has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date June, 1980  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Boston Landmarks Commission, City Hall

city, town Boston state MA

## 7. Description

138-142 Portland St., Boston, MA

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	n/a
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

138-142 Portland Street is a five story brick commercial building with Beaux Arts ornamentation. It is located in the historic "Bulfinch Triangle", an area which includes approximately half of the triangular street pattern laid out by the architect Charles Bulfinch in 1808. Originally a mill pond, the area is now commonly known as the North Station area. Surrounding 138-42 Portland Street are 4- and 6-story commercial buildings dating from the late nineteenth century, many of which housed companies involved in the woodworking and furniture industries during this period. Because of its proximity to the railroads, the area surrounding 138-42 Portland Street developed as a center for manufacturers and wholesale dealers. 138-42 Portland Street stands directly on the sidewalk at the intersection of Portland, Traverse and Merrimac Streets. The northwest wall is a blank party wall which currently faces a parking lot.

The five-story building has a trapezoidal floor plan. It is five bays wide on Portland and Merrimac Streets and three bays wide on Traverse Street. Two corners of the building--at the intersections of Portland and Traverse Streets, and Merrimac and Traverse Streets--are rounded.

The building, faced with brick, has a combination wood and steel frame, which are the original materials. The building has a flat composition roof. There is a full basement with an original concrete foundation.

Three of the building's facades are ornamented in the Beaux-Arts style. Major elements include a bracketed cornice, curved ox-eye windows, carved stone cartouches over the windows, brick pilasters and ornamented brick spandrel panels. With the exception of the northwest wall, each facade of 138-142 Portland Street is very similar. The ground floor storefronts have plate glass display windows, transom lights, and unusual lights below the sill line. Located where the kickpanels would normally be found, these lights originally provided natural light to the basement through interior "area ways" at the perimeter of the first floor. The kick panel lights and "areaways" were covered during the ca. 1950 renovations, and remain covered. Floors 2 through 4 are treated as one vertical unit, with floor 5 treated as a separate unit. On floors 2 through 4, 3-story brick pilasters separate bays comprised of paired windows capped at floor 4 with segmentally arched openings. A limestone cornice line at the fifth-floor sill level incorporates limestone key-stones for the segmental arches mentioned above. Above this cornice line, the fifth floor consists of paired windows articulating each bay, with a heavy bracketed cornice above capping each facade. Stone-framed curved ox-eye windows highlight the windows of the fifth floor.

(see continuation sheet )



# 8. Significance

138-142 Portland Street, Boston, MA

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1896 Builder/Architect Stephen R. H. Codman

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The building meets National Register Criterion A because it was the home of the Boston Branch office of the National Casket Company during the formative years of that nationally important company's operations. The National Casket Company was formed in 1890 through amalgamation of the Hamilton, Lemmon, Arnold Company of Pittsburgh, PA; the Chappel, Chase, Maxwell Company of Oneida, NY; and the Stein Manufacturing Company of Syracuse, NY. Within the same year, the company purchased the Boston Casket Company, among others, and was on its way to becoming a national leader in the field of casket manufacturing. Although incorporated in the state of New York with its headquarters originally in Oneida, the company's Boston branch was of central importance throughout its history.

The building meets National Register Criterion C because it is an excellent example of commercial Beaux-Arts classicism, and is one of only two buildings of that style in Boston's North Station area. 138-142 Portland Street is an excellent example of Beaux-Arts commercial architecture, a style which was introduced in the United States at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. Borrowing elements from classical Rome, the Beaux-Arts style was taught at the French Ecole des Beaux Arts and was brought to this country by Paris-trained architects. The ornate detail and classical motifs of 134-42 Portland Street mark it as an early example of the commercial Beaux-Arts style; a design trend which soon became very popular for large-scale and public buildings.

At the time of the company's formation in 1890, the Boston branch of the National Casket Company moved into the former headquarters of the Stein Manufacturing Company at 137 Portland Street. When the Boston Casket Company was absorbed later in 1890, the owner of that company, P.B. Heintz, became the manager of National Casket's Boston branch office. Heintz would go on to play a key role in the company's rapid growth in future years.

When the building at 138-142 Portland Street was completed in 1896, the Boston branch of the National Casket Company moved from its space across the street at 137 Portland Street into the new building. This location, in the midst of Boston's woodworking and furniture industries, was particularly appropriate for a casket firm. The company apparently had its sales room on the second floor with a private entrance and

(see continuation sheet )

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

see continuation Sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 6000 square feet

Quadrangle name Boston South

Quadrangle scale 1:25,000

### UTM References

A 19 330200 4692050  
Zone Easting Northing

B           
Zone Easting Northing

C         

D         

E         

F         

G         

H         

### Verbal boundary description and justification

see continuation sheet

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state NA code n/a county n/a code n/a

state    code    county    code   

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sarah Zimmerman, Director of Preservation Planning William MacRostie & Byrd Wood, Langelier Properties  
Boston Landmarks Commission

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date 2/20/85

street & number 80 Boylston Street telephone (617) 727-8470

city or town Boston state MA 02116

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Valerie A. Talmage

title Executive Director & SHPO, MHC date July 15, 1985

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

entered in the  
National Register

Delores Byers date 9/5/85  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:    date   

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
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received

date entered

Continuation sheet 138-142 Portland Street

Item number 8

Page 1

Boston, MA

elaborately ornamented stairway at 142 Portland Street leading up to that space. Storage apparently was located on floors three through five. These quarters would remain the home of the Boston branch of the company for the next three decades.

By the turn of the century, the capital stock of the National Casket Company had been increased to \$6,000,000 and plants had been opened in Nashville, Louisville, Indianapolis and Chicago. With the acquisition in 1906 of W. Lockhart and Company of Cambridge, Massachusetts--until then the leader in casket manufacturing in New England--the Boston branch of National Casket, headquartered in 142 Portland Street, became the largest casket manufacturer and supplier in New England. In 1919 the Boston branch of the company moved its executive offices to 3 Park Street, but 142 Portland Street continued to occupy the company's primary listing in the city's directory and serve as the primary sales facility for the branch. In 1922, P.B. Heintz, the manager at 142 Portland Street for more than 20 years, became the president of National Casket and moved the company's headquarters from Pittsburgh to Boston. Under Heintz's leadership, the company posted gross earnings in 1925 of \$5.2 million, and had sales branches in 26 major cities east of the Rocky Mountains. The company was by this time the largest manufacturer of caskets and funeral supplies in the country, a position it would occupy for nearly the next half century. Although leaving 142 Portland Street and moving into the old Governor Ames Mansion at the corner of Commonwealth and Massachusetts Avenues in 1927, the Boston office continued to serve as National Casket's national headquarters until 1969, when the company was purchased by Walco National of New York City.

The elaborate design of 138 Portland Street reflects the success and expansion of the National Casket Company. The building was constructed in 1896 by Catherine E. Tarbell, and the Boston branch of the National Casket Company moved in as tenants soon after its completion. Located directly across the street at the time of the building's construction, the Boston office no doubt paid close attention to the progress of the new, lavishly ornamented building and possibly had some input in the design. By 1906 the company was the largest manufacturer and supplier of caskets in New England. 138 Portland Street continued to serve as headquarters for the branch until 1919, and as the main sales facility until 1927.

(See continuation sheet)

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date entered

Continuation sheet 138-142 Portland Street

Item number 8 , 10

Page 2

Boston, MA

Relative to other buildings in its immediate vicinity, 138-142 Portland Street is extremely prominent as a result of its high level of ornamentation. The stone architrave, ornamental window frames and cartouche; the bracketed cornice; and the ornamented brick spandrel panels on all three facades provide a texture and relief which contrast dramatically with the relatively austere buildings nearby. It is clearly a building which was designed to stand out from its surroundings.

138-142 Portland Street was designed by Stephen R. H. Codman, an architect who designed several other buildings in Boston including those at 166-174 Portland Street and 105-119 Merrimac Street in the North Station area. Codman went on in the early 20th century to form a partnership with the distinguished architect Desire Despradelle, who was the Rotch professor of architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Among the most notable of Codman and Despradelle's commissions were the 1911 Peter Bent Brigham Hospital and the 1906 Berkeley Building at 414-434 Boylston Street. The latter was described in 1908 by Architects and Builders' Magazine as "decidedly novel in design in this country".

10. Geographical Data

Beginning at the corner of the structure at the southeast corner of Portland and Traverse Streets, running approximately 64 feet southeast to the southwest corner of Traverse and Merrimac Streets, then running approximately 92 feet northwest along Merrimac Street, then turning and running approximately 100 feet northeast along the party wall to Portland Street, then turning and running approximately 72 feet southeast to the beginning point. The nominated area includes only the building as it is in its urban setting.

Archaeological Potential:

The property is located in the Mill Pond area of the original Shawmut Peninsula. This area was filled between 1804 and 1835. While the possibility of early 19th-century archaeological deposits does exist, subsequent development of the parcel in the late 19th c. most assuredly resulted in its destruction. Therefore, no significant material is anticipated.

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date entered

Continuation sheet 138-142 Portland Street Item number 9 Page 1

Boston, MA

Bourne, Frank, A. "On the work of the late Desire Despradelle", Architectural Record, Vol. 34, 1913. Page 185.

Swales, Francis, S., "Master Draftsman, XI, Desire Despradelle, 1862-1912", Pencil Points, Vol. 6, May 1925. Page 59.

Stone, Orra L., Massachusetts Industries, Their Inception and Growth, S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., Boston, Chicago, 1930.

Withey, Henry F. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects, Hennessey and Ingalls, Inc., LA, 1970.

Moody, John L., Moody's Manuel of Corporation Securities, Moody Publishing Co., New York, Fifth Annual Edition, 1904, 1921, 1922, 1927.

Boston Directory, Sampson, Murdock and Co., Boston, MA, 1890, 1891, 1895, 1897, 1900, 1905, 1906, 1908, 1910, 1915, 1919, 1920, 1924, 1926, 1928.

Lynden, Donlyn, The City Observed: Boston-A Guide to the Architecture of the Hub, Random House, New York, 1982.

\_\_\_\_\_, History of American Funeral Directing, Habenstein Bulfin Printers, Inc. Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1955.

Telephone interview with George Lemke, Casket Manufacturers Association, Evanston, IL, August 25, 1983.

Telephone interview with Rudy Sanson, Gulf & Western Industries, Inc., New York, NY, August 26, 1983.

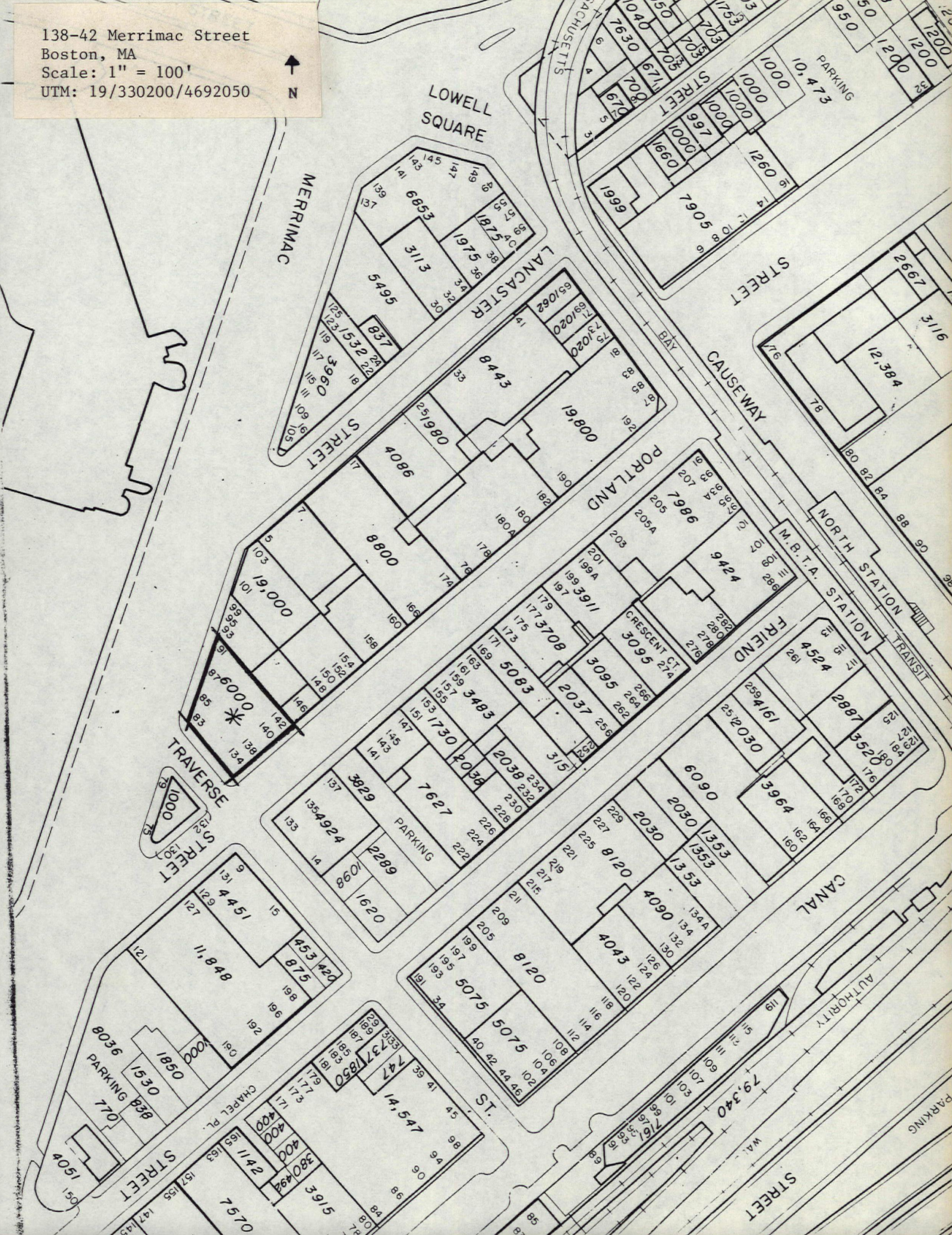
Telephone interview with James Lynam, Walco National Corporation, New York, NY, August 26, 1983.

Telephone interview with Spencer Hackett, Pittsburgh, PA, August 29, 1983. (Hackett was a member of the Board of Directors, National Casket Company and Walco National Corporation.)

\_\_\_\_\_, Architects Directory, William T. Comstock, Publisher, New York, 1903.

\_\_\_\_\_, "The Berkeley Building, Codman and Despradelle, Architects", Architects' and Builders' Magazine, Volume 9, No. 4, January, 1908.

138-42 Merrimac Street  
Boston, MA  
Scale: 1" = 100'  
UTM: 19/330200/4692050



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

*ok*  
*Ref #*  
*85002015*

Building 138--142 Portland Street  
Suffolk County  
MASSACHUSETTS

**AUG 6 1985**

Working No. \_\_\_\_\_  
Fed. Reg. Date: 2-4-86  
Date Due: 9/15/85 — 9/20/85  
Action:  ACCEPT 9-5-85  
 RETURN \_\_\_\_\_  
 REJECT \_\_\_\_\_  
Federal Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Entered in the  
**National Register**

- resubmission
- nomination by person or local government
- owner objection
- appeal

Substantive Review:  sample  request  appeal  NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria \_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_  
Discipline \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: \_\_\_\_\_ technical corrections cited below  
\_\_\_\_\_ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

7. Description

Condition

- excellent
- good
- fair
- deteriorated
- ruins
- unexposed

Check one

- unaltered
- altered

Check one

- original site
- moved date \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- alterations/integrity
- dates
- boundary selection

**8. Significance**

Period \_\_\_\_\_ Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates \_\_\_\_\_ Builder/Architect \_\_\_\_\_  
Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- applicable criteria
- justification of areas checked
- relating significance to the resource
- context
- relationship of integrity to significance
- justification of exception
- other

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References \_\_\_\_\_

Verbal boundary description and justification \_\_\_\_\_

**11. Form Prepared By**

**12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification**

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

\_\_\_\_ national      \_\_\_\_ state      \_\_\_\_ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature \_\_\_\_\_

title \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

**13. Other**

- Maps
- Photographs
- Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

*Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet*

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BER  
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ERAL  
RE

*flex*  
*elle*

S. COHEN & S

138-142 Portland Street  
Boston, MA

Leslie Larson, photographer      9/84  
6 Joy Street  
Boston, MA 02108

Photo 1 of 6

Corner of Traverse and Portland Streets  
Photographer facing northwest

Photo By Leslie Larson  
6 Joy St Boston 02108



138-142 Portland Street  
Boston, MA

Leslie Larson, photographer 9/84  
6 Joy Street  
Boston, MA 02108

Photo 2 of 6

Portland Street facade  
Photographer facing west



P  
Allright  
Parking

S. COHE

138-142 Portland Street  
Boston, MA

Leslie Larson, photographer 9/84  
6 Joy Street  
Boston, MA 02108

Photo 3 of 6

Northwest wall of building  
Photographer facing southeast

Photo By Leslie Larson  
6 Joy St Boston 02108



Restaurant

Lease Space  
in the  
4

SPACE  
in the  
4

P  
Allright  
Parking

138-142 Portland Street  
Boston, MA

Leslie Larson, photographer 9/84  
6 Joy Street  
Boston, MA 02108

Photo 4 of 6

Corner of Merrimac and Traverse Streets  
Photographer facing north

Photo By Leslie Larson  
6 Joy St Boston 02108



OHEN Restaurant

138-142 Portland Street  
Boston, MA

Leslie Larson, photographer 9/84  
6 Joy Street  
Boston, MA 02108

Photo 5 of 6

Merrimac and Traverse Street facades  
Photographer facing north

Photo By Leslie Larson  
6 Joy St Boston 02108



10 LIBERTY SQUARE BUILDING

55 Kilby Street

Boston, MA

photo: 2/14/81

photographer and negative filed at:

Leslie Larson

6 Joy Street, Boston, MA

view of drain pipe holder, Water St.  
facade photo #5 of 6



138-142 Portland Street  
Boston, MA

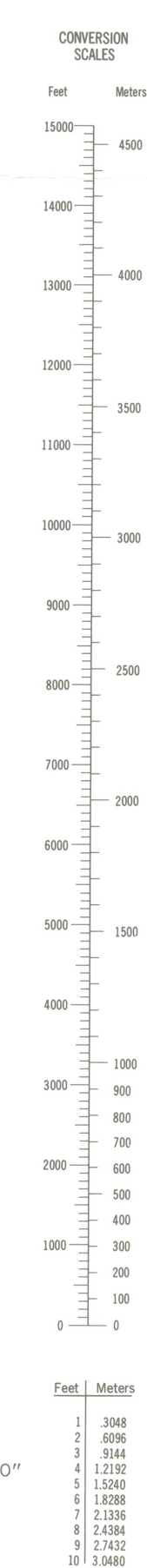
Leslie Larson, photographer 9/83  
6 Joy Street  
Boston, MA 02108

Photo 6 of 6

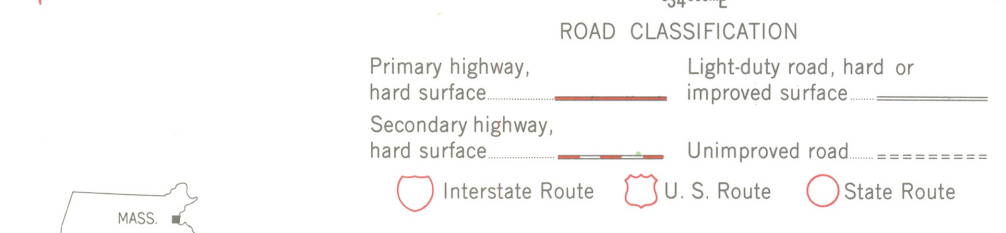
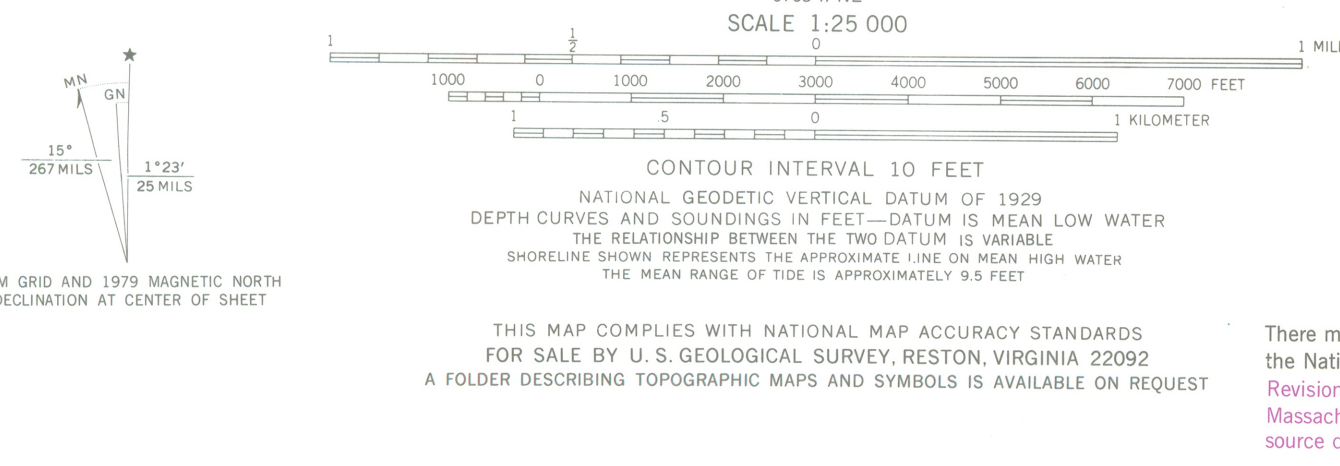
Portland Street entrance, interior  
stairway

Photo By Leslie Larson  
6 Joy St Boston 02108

138-42 Merrimac Street  
Boston (So. Quad), MA  
Scale: 1" = 25,000'  
UTM: 19/330200/469050



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey  
Topography by planetable surveys 1943. Revised from  
aerial photographs taken 1969. Field checked 1970  
Selected hydrographic data compiled from USC&GS Charts 246  
and 248 (1971). This information is not intended for navigational  
purposes  
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts coordinate system,  
mainland zone  
1 000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid,  
zone 19  
Boundaries in tidewater areas from information supplied  
by Massachusetts Department of Public Works  
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown



There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of  
the National or State reservations shown on this map  
Revisions shown in purple compiled in cooperation with the State of  
Massachusetts agencies from aerial photographs taken 1975 and other  
source data. This information not field checked. Map edited 1979

BOSTON SOUTH, MASS.  
N4215-W7100/7.5  
1979  
PHOTOREVISED 1979  
AMS 6768 I SE-SERIES 7814