

In packets 9/14/98



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

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EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

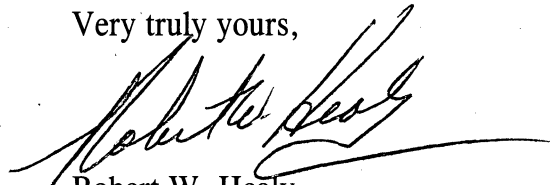
RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

September 14, 1998

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Please find attached for your information a communication from Executive Director of the Historical Commission Charles Sullivan, relative to the Central Square Oral History Project.

Very truly yours,



Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec
Attachment



Cambridge Historical Commission

831 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139. Telephone 617/349-4683
Fax 617/349-6165, TTY 617/349-6112, E-mail HistComm@ci.Cambridge.ma.us



William B. King, *Chair*, Allison M. Crump, *Vice Chair*, Charles M. Sullivan, *Executive Director*
M. Wyllis Bibbins, Suzanne R. Green, Helen F. Moulton, Robert G. Neiley, Jo M. Solet, *Members*
Jennifer Jones, Anthony C. Platt, *Alternates*

August 21, 1998

To: Robert W. Healy, City Manager

From: Charles M. Sullivan, Executive Director
Cambridge Historical Commission *CMS*

Re: Central Square Oral History

Please consider transmitting these documents to the City Council.

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August 21, 1998

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Thanks to funding approved by the City Council, the Cambridge Historical Commission recently inaugurated the Central Square Oral History Project. Sarah Boyer, the author of the recently published oral history *In Our Own Words: Stories of North Cambridge 1900-1960*, is the project coordinator. The project will examine Central Square from a historical perspective and through recollections of longtime residents, storeowners, workers, and shoppers from the 1920s to the 1990s. The resulting publication, to be illustrated with both historical and family photographs, will provide a unique record of this diverse neighborhood as it undergoes rapid change and development at the close of the 20th century.

Your remembrances of Central Square as well as referrals to longtime residents, former and current shop owners, and employees would be most welcome. Ms. Boyer's telephone extension is 6171.

Thank you again for your support of this project to preserve the history of Central Square.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles Sullivan", written over a horizontal line.

Charles Sullivan
Executive Director

enclosure



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THE CENTRAL SQUARE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT BOOK OUTLINE

The Cambridge Historical Commission has inaugurated the Central Square Oral History Project. Sarah Boyer, author of the recently published oral history, *In Our Own Words: Stories of North Cambridge, 1900-1960*, is the Project Coordinator. The Project will examine Central Square from a historical perspective and through the personal remembrances of residents, storeowners, workers, and shoppers from the 1920s to the 1990s. The resulting publication, to be illustrated with both historical and family photographs, will provide a unique record of this diverse neighborhood.

For this project, the Central Square retail/business district is defined as stretching along Massachusetts Avenue from Lafayette Square to Clinton Street, south of Massachusetts Avenue to Franklin Street, and north of Massachusetts Avenue to Bishop Allen Drive. However, oral history participants will include residents of areas adjacent to these boundaries and beyond, depending on the theme being developed.

A preliminary outline of the project's future publication is presented below. The outline will be subject to change during the course of the project as interviews determine more specifically the prominent themes in Central Square history.

Part I: The Development of Central Square as Cambridge's Downtown, 1793-1900

An introductory essay will narrate the development of Central Square and its emergence as a prominent business and industrial area. The text will highlight the construction of the West Boston (now Longfellow) and Harvard bridges, the railroads, and the subway, as well as focus on the developmental contributions of area landowners, workers, and residents. First person accounts will be included when possible.

Part II: Central Square as a thriving business and residential district, 1900-Present

Brief historical essays will introduce themes important to Central Square. Each theme will be complemented by oral histories from longtime residents, property owners, workers, and shoppers in Central Square.

Downtown

Narrative: The development of and changes to retail operations in Central Square from c. 1783 to the present will be highlighted.

Oral Histories: Small business owners, workers, and shoppers will discuss their experiences in the Square from the 1920s to the present; people's opinions on the future of Central Square may be discussed.

Transportation

Narrative: The development of different modes of transportation, including the West Boston and Harvard bridges, the Grand Junction Railroad, and other surface transportation (omnibus, horse railway, trolley, subway, automobile) will be described. This section will also explore the impact of transportation on the economic, social, and cultural life of the Square.

Oral histories: Cambridge residents and others coming to the Square to shop describe the retail stores and reasons for shopping in Central Square. Trolley, bus, and T drivers discuss their work experiences in Central Square.

The Changing Face of Central Square

Narrative: The ethnic diversity of Central Square will be presented through short histories of the predominant ethnic groups in the neighborhood from 1790-1900 and from 1900-present. The text will highlight the interrelationships among the various ethnic groups, and each group's contribution to the culture and economic development of the Square.

Oral histories: Immigrants from representative ethnic groups will recount their stories of coming to the United States and Central Square in the 20th century. Their contributions to the social and cultural life of the Square will be highlighted.

A History of Activism

Narrative: The text will trace the history of abolitionism in Central Square, as well as other reform/activist movements, including opposition to the Inner Belt in the 1960s, the antiwar movement of the 1960s and 70s, and the current debate about the revitalization of the Square and its future.

Oral histories: Residents, former and current store owners, and neighborhood activists recount their participation in 20th century activist movements in Central Square.

Industries/work

Narrative: Development of early industries, such as soap-making, bacon works, confectionery, furniture and cabinet-making, carriage and car manufacturing, and box-making will be discussed, as well as the impact of industrial changes on the economic and social development of the Square.

Oral histories: Small business owners, residents, and immigrant workers describe their job and work experiences.

The Meeting Place

Narrative: The text will include a history of the early social clubs, fraternal and ethnic organizations, taverns, etc. in the Square. Changes in the type of clubs and organizations over the years and the impact of these groups/clubs on the cultural life of Central Square will be examined.

Oral Histories: Members of various ethnic and social clubs in Central Square discuss the histories of their organizations.

Entertainment/Leisure

Narrative: The text will trace the early forms of entertainment, games, and leisure activities available in Central Square from the 1800s to the present.

Oral histories: Residents remember vaudeville and movies (Central Square and Olympia theaters), music clubs, parades and celebrations, children's games, and family activities.

Central Square during the Depression

Narrative: The impact of the Depression on the retail district, factories, businesses, and residents will be discussed.

Oral histories: Residents, store owners, and workers describe their experiences living through the Depression and other economic "hard times" in Central Square.

World War II

Narrative: The text discusses the impact of World War II on the economic and social history of the Square.

Oral histories: Central Square residents who served in World War II and women who worked in wartime industries recollect their experiences.

Institutions

Narrative: Short histories of municipal departments and Central Square institutions, i.e. the Police and Fire Departments, the Post Office, City Hall, the Salvation Army, YMCA and YWCA, and Central Square churches will be provided.

Oral histories: Longtime employees of the city and its institutions (active/retired cop on the beat, firefighter, church member/minister, Salvation Army volunteer, etc.) tell their stories.

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the Historical Commission Charles Sullivan,
relative to the Central Square Oral History
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