COPLEY SQUARE:
REALIZING ITS FULL POTENTIAL

REAZ HAQUE

Bachelor of Architecture
Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology
Dacca, Bangladesh.
1979

Master of Architecture
Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
1982

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEGREE
MASTER OF SCIENCE IN ARCHITECTURE STUDIES AT THE
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

SEPTEMBER, 1984

© Reaz Haque 1984

Signature of the author _____

Reaz Haque
Department of Architecture
June 15, 1984

Certified by _____

William L. Porter
Professor of Architecture and Planning
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by _____

John Habraken
Chairman
Departmental Committee for Graduate Students

COPLEY SQUARE:
Realizing its Full Potential

by
Reaz Haque

Submitted to the Department of Architecture on June 15, 1984 in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Architecture Studies.

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to form a basis for realizing the full potential of Copley Square, and also to establish an approach to the issues of preservation and revitalization of historic urban squares. The objective is achieved by:

- Examining the history of Copley Square. The focus of this portion of the study is on how the square was originated and formed, and the events which have shaped and changed it over a period of one hundred years.
- Developing criteria for the evaluation of proposals to redesign Copley Square. The criteria are developed based on observations and analysis of the square and its surroundings.
- Evaluating the two competition programs and winning designs which redesigned Copley Square in 1965 and 1984.
- Discussing the process of this study and its underlying theme, which also outlines an approach for the revitalization of urban squares in general.

Thesis Supervisor: William L. Porter

Title: Professor of Architecture and Planning

4

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Figure 1: The Back Bay and its neighbors

The area that in 1883 was named Copley Square, in memory of the favorite local painter who had migrated to England -- John Singleton Copley, is located at the meeting point of the Back Bay grid and the South End grid. Both grids, laid out on reclaimed land in the mid-nineteenth century, are today known as very remarkable examples of American urban design. The more important of these two grids was the Back Bay(1) which extended from the land west of the Public Garden over the tidal flats of the Charles River Bay. Similar to the rest of Boston's Back Bay, Copley Square was under water when Boston was founded in 1630. It was not until the 1860s when the city of Boston, responding to the demand for more space, filled in the marshy fens to form one of the first neighborhoods.

The draining, filling, and building up of the Back Bay marked a turning point in Boston's existence. The self-contained provincial town with its mainly English ancestry and background, turned into a multinational metropolis reaching out far beyond New England for cultural sustenance, and included within its new metropolitan framework many other historically independent communities, such as Lexington and Concord. The Back Bay, according to Lewis Mumford (1969), is a geographic area, and a cultural

---

(1) While the Back Bay went on to be a cultural, religious and educational center, as well as being a residential district, the South End remained as a residential neighborhood.

Figure 2: East of the Back Bay; Public Garden, Beacon Hill and the Central Business District.

symbol; there are moments when the Back Bay might also be identified as a state of mind. Its topographical outlines, however, are fairly easy to delimit: it is the area that begins with the Public Gardens on the east, and terminates at Fenway Park on the West, while the South End and the Charles River Form the other two boundaries. The dominant axis of this whole area is Commonwealth Avenue; designed in the 1850s, it was one of the first American boulevards to be actually built. While it was contemporaneous with the tree lined avenues that Haussmann was creating in Paris, it is not really an imitation.

Copley Square began to stumble into shape when a group of business and professional men, and city employees started formulating ideas to enhance the market value and quality of the site for the benefit of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The first group, known as the "Committee of Associated Institutions," proposed a Conservatory of Arts and Sciences. The second group, the city employees, proposed to reserve land in the Copley Square area for use as a public park. The work of both these groups helped structure the formation of a unique square which became known for its cultural, religious, educational, and commercial surroundings.

In the decade and a half after its creation, Copley Square was regarded aptly as a very prominent civic place. It was surrounded by: Trinity Church, Boston Public Library, Museum of Natural History, Museum of Fine Arts, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Harvard Medical School, and several other prominent churches. But the very success of Copley Square became the reason for its decline. By virtue of the presence of such prominent public institutions, the area was built-up quite quickly, and the land values increased considerably. When it was time for the public institutions to expand, not only was there a shortage of land, but whatever was available was quite expensive in comparison to some other parts of the city. Thus began a steady migration of the public institutions from Copley Square, which also caused a very

Figure 3: The Back Bay and its northern limit, the Charles River. The tree lined street is Commonwealth Avenue.

noticeable decline of the area. This decline continued until 1965, when Boston Mayor John F. Collins announced a competition to redesign Copley Square. This design, still in existence after its completion in 1970, was subject to rapid changes which occurred all around it. In 1983, one hundred years after its establishment, once again it was decided that Copley Square should be redesigned; in order to address "different needs, uses, and concerns in the changing and varying conditions of its borders".(1) Taking its name from the fact that the square was a hundred years old, the Centennial Committee was formed. This organization (composed of architects, urban designers, local citizens, businessmen, developers, and lawyers), gathered information, held workshops and meetings, heard debates, and finally came up with a program, along with the Boston Redevelopment Authority, to redesign Copley Square.

By the time this study had been completed, the final winner of the competition was also declared. Although this study has not been able to impact the competition, it now has the opportunity to evaluate the 1965 and 1984 competitions, and develop a good information base; should there be a third competition, this study could be a very useful document. This study, however, is not merely an information base for the redesign of Copley Square alone, it also deals with interventions on Copley Square's surroundings. It attempts to provide a holistic representation of the square and its surroundings, the assumption being that, to realize the full potential of Copley Square, the square, as well as its environment, has to be revitalized.

Part One of the study deals with the history of Copley Square: its origins, the underlying goals for its creation, and the events which affected its character and role. The objective of the historical background is to understand the significance of Copley Square in Boston, and confirm the fact that the square's edge conditions were a major

---

(1) Boston Redevelopment Authority. *Copley Square: Competition Rules and Regulations*, 1983. p.3.

Figure 4: Copley Place and the South End.

factor for its rise and decline. Photographs and maps are included to help the reader visualize the illustrious past and changing edge conditions.

The second part of the study documents the observations and analysis of Copley Square and its surroundings. What should be the character and role of Copley Square? Can its spatial quality be improved? How can the visual perception of the square be enhanced, and is there a good management strategy? These issues are discussed, and ways to deal with the problems are also suggested. Based on these discussions, criteria which address the above mentioned issues are formulated.

The criteria developed in Part Two are then used in Part Three to evaluate the two competitions for redesigning Copley Square. Each criterion is posed as a question, for example: Were the historic buildings emphasized? Did the program state such a criterion? Both the competition program and its winning design are evaluated with respect to each criterion. To what degree does the design satisfy the criterion? Not all the criterion were applicable to the designs, because neither of the two competition programs include all the criteria in my list. This allows the reader to assess what has been done so far, and what needs to be done in the future to realize the full potential of Copley Square.

Finally, in Part Four, the two evaluations are summarized, and are followed by some concluding remarks. The conclusion describes the process of this study, the method, and its underlying theme in relation to preservation and revitalization of historic urban squares. As it will be discussed in the conclusion, this study began with a few "false" starts, the lessons learned from these "false" starts are mentioned in the conclusion. The last paragraphs of the conclusion pose some questions with respect to time and place. an issue which I have not been able to yet resolve. They are issues which deserve further research and study.

22

PART ONE: HISTORY
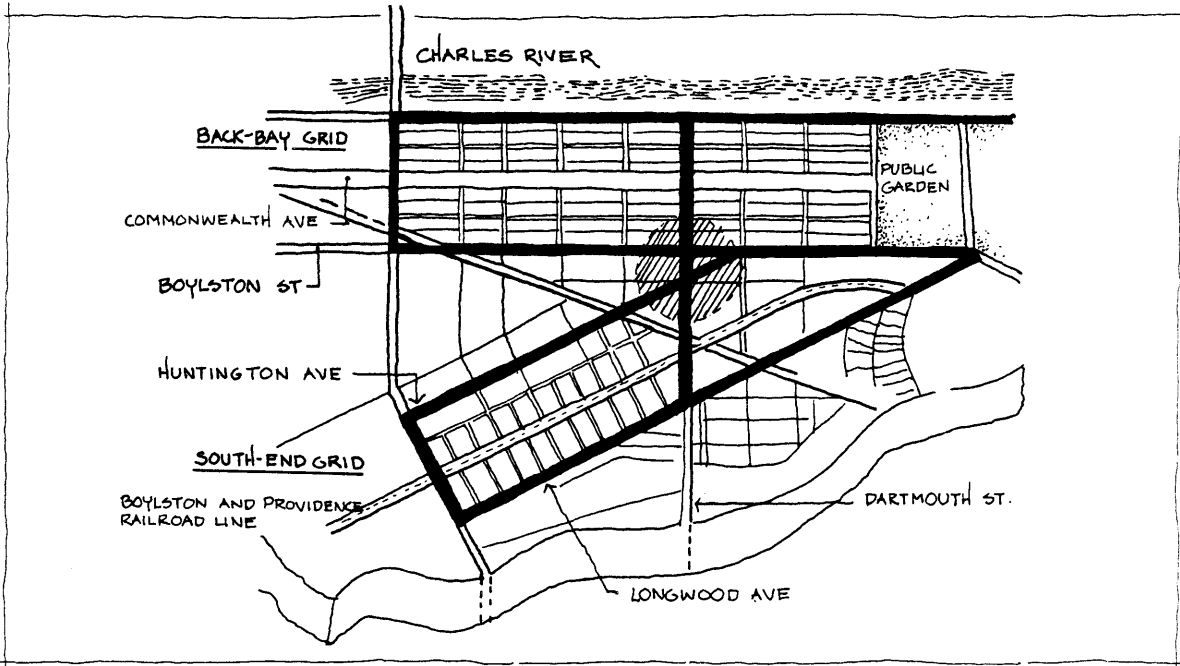
Figure 5a: The meeting point of the two grid systems
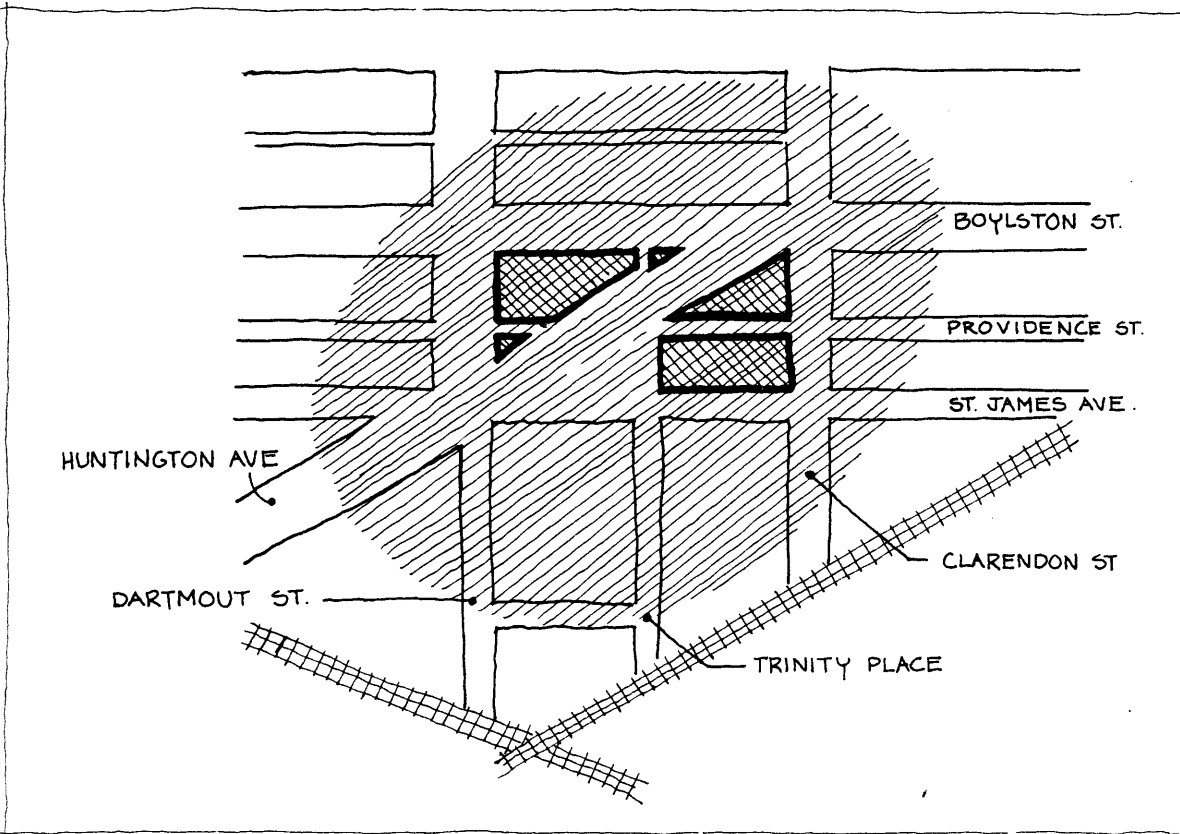
Figure 5b: The area that later came to be known as Copley Square

CHAPTER ONE: ORIGINS OF COPLEY SQUARE

The Copley Square we know today has its origins in a deliberate and conscious effort to create a cultural and educational center together with the effort to create a public park in that area. As a result of planned events, and some fortunate unplanned events, an urban square was established which was located at the meeting point of two grid systems (the South End grid and the Back Bay grid). The idea of a cultural center was not an instant idea; Boston was rapidly becoming one of the leaders in arts and music in the United States around that time (1859) when the first proposal to create a Conservatory of Arts and Sciences was submitted.

Bainbridge Bunting (1967) in his accounts of the cultural background of the Back Bay says that the 1840s and '50s saw the establishment of three associations of artists, founded, among other things, to organize yearly painting exhibits; in 1847 the new theatre, the Boston Museum, was provided with a large permanent collection of old, if somewhat questionable, masters. In 1850, the Athenaeum, settled in its new home on Beacon Street, devoted its entire third floor to a gallery for sculpture and painting. The fifties brought foreign picture dealers to Boston with stocks of modern French paintings which they sold at substantial prices; by the sixties and seventies several Boston artists travelled abroad to make purchases for Boston collectors at European sales. "This developing interest in art culminated in 1871," says Bunting, "in the founding of the long projected Museum of Fine Arts." The forties and fifties also
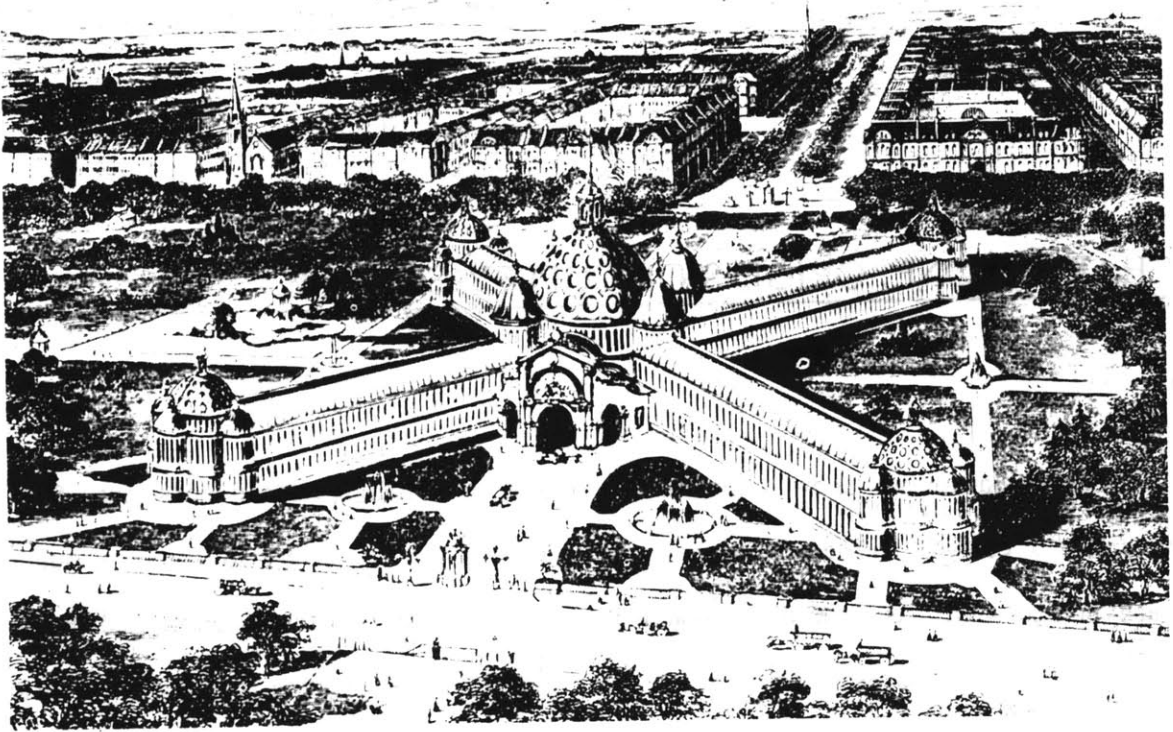
Figure 6: The proposed Conservatory of Arts and Sciences,
designed by William Waude.
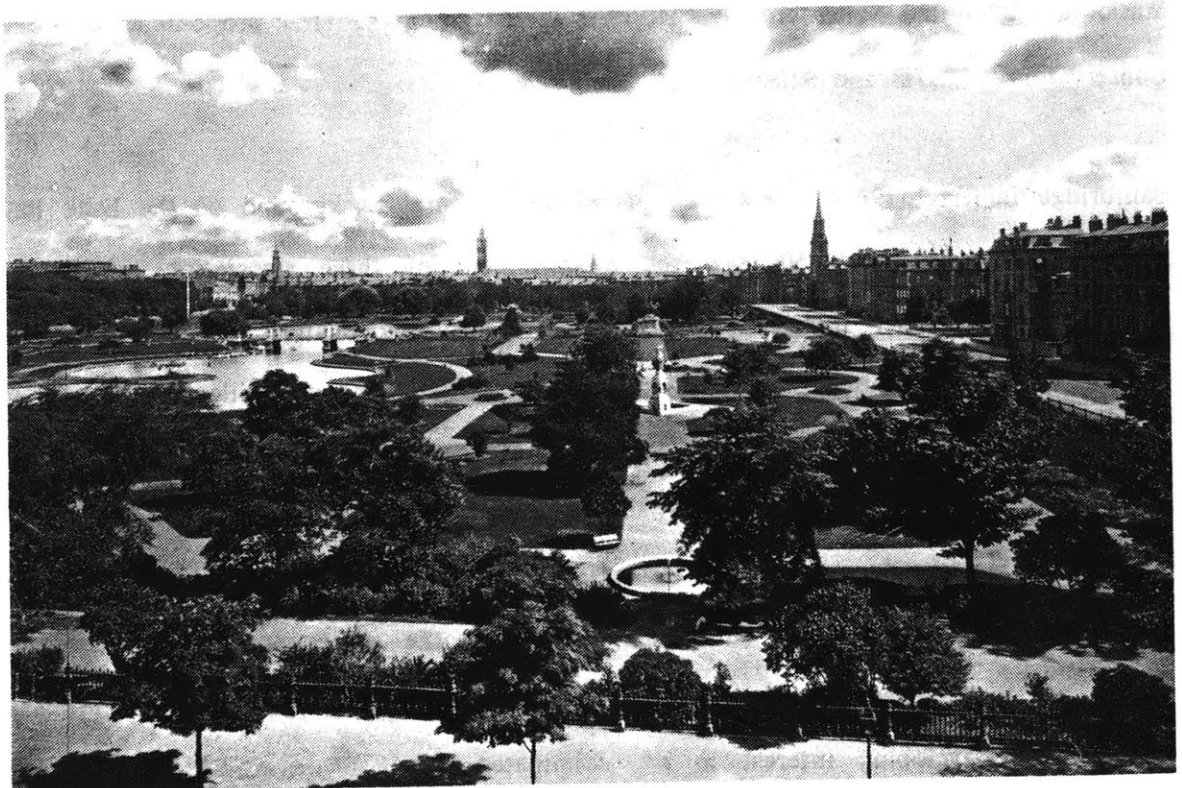
Figure 7: The Public Garden, from Beacon Street,
Arlington Street at right, ca. 1880

saw a pronounced, almost sudden development of musical interest too. Boston had its first season of opera in 1847...."(1)

Thus, it was not surprising when in 1859 a group of business and professional people formed an informal organization known as the Committee of Associated Institutions, and submitted the first Memorial plan. This Memorial plan was the first of the three in which the Committee proposed the construction of a Massachusetts Conservatory of Arts and Sciences in the Back Bay. Several factors contributed to the conception of such a space. First, Boston had awakened from a slumber and was growing fast, economically as well as culturally. The long list of civic improvements and new institutions since 1850 bear witness to this fact. Second, Governor Nathaniel Banks in 1859 declared in the annual message of the legislature that land in the Back Bay would be granted for educational improvements, "to keep the name of the Commonwealth forever green in the memory of her children."(2) Third, there was a notion in the mid-nineteenth century that the ideal public environment was the development of public spaces which included parks, parkways, and institutions devoted to the study of history, science and art.(3) Albert Fein says that this concept of the ideal environment containing parks and public institutions remains today as America's most significant contribution to nineteenth century urban design. The concept, adds Fein, was no less important to the United States as an expression of cultural identity than was the Acropolis to Athens, the forum and baths to Rome, or the cathedral to

---

(1) Bainbridge Bunting, *Houses of Boston's Back Bay.* The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. Cambridge, MA. 1967. p.13.

(2) Doreve Nicholaeff, *The Planning and Development of Copley Square.* MIT Department of Architecture Master's Thesis. 1979. p.9.

(3) Albert Fein, "The American City: Ideal and the Real." from *The Rise of an American Architecture,* edited by Edgar Kaufman Jr. Praeger Publishers, New York, N.Y. 1970. p.51.

GENERAL PLAN FOR ENLARGING & IMPROVING THE **CITY** OF **BOSTON.**
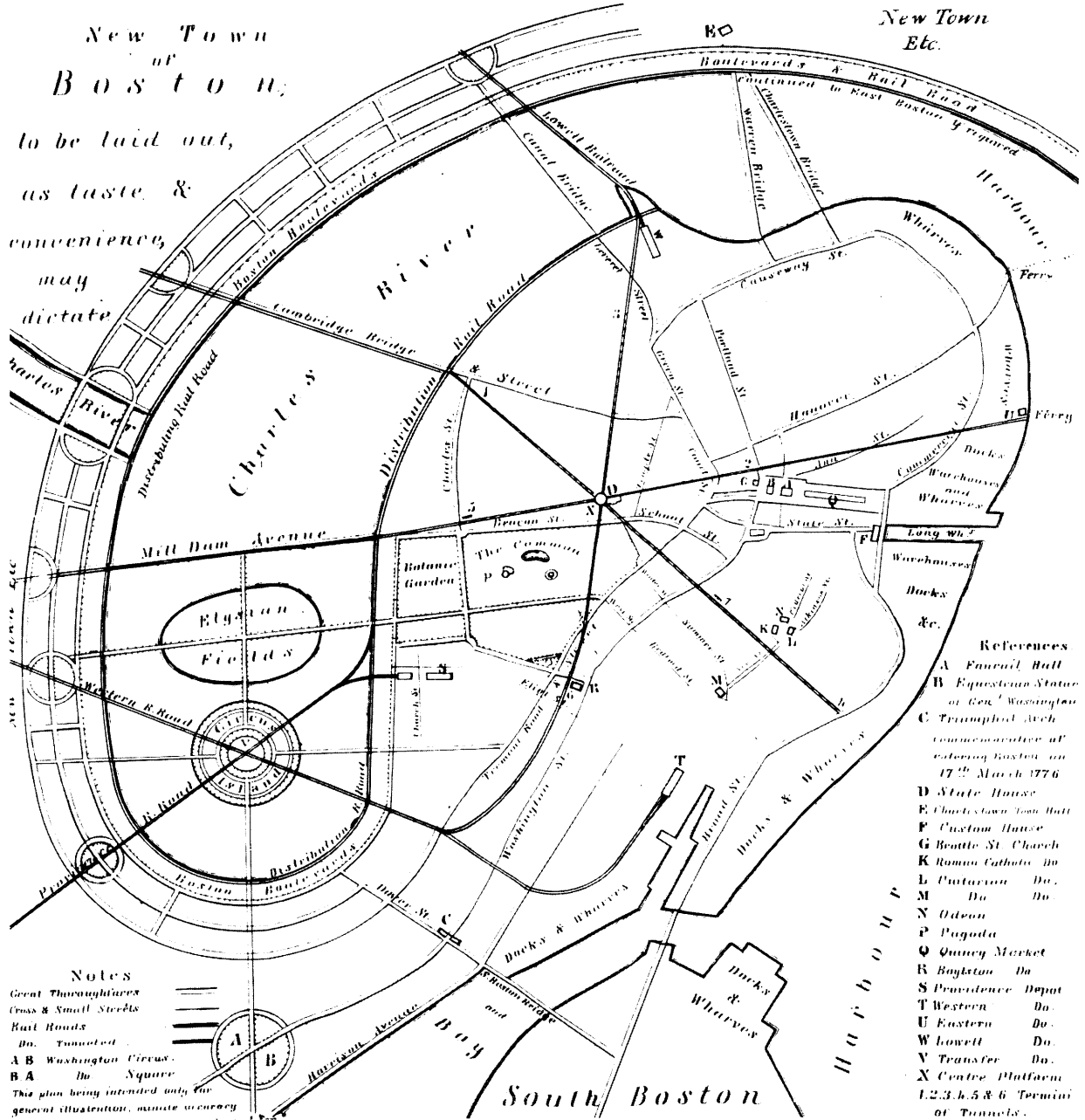
Figure 8: General Plan for enlarging and improving the City of Boston, proposed by Robert F. Gourlay, 1844

medieval France. The underlying assumption was that such an environment would dramatically alter social values and lifestyle of a changing city.

So it was no great surprise that the first Memorial plan of 1859 proposed to construct a cruciform building which contained the following four sections:(1)

1.   Societies devoted to Agriculture, Horticulture, and Pomology, and which would display the implements and models.

2.   Societies devoted to Natural History and Practical Geology, and which would provide museums of specimens.

3.   Societies devoted to Mechanics, Manufacturers, and Commerce.

4.   Societies devoted to Fine Arts and the History of the Human Race.

The cruciform building designed by William Waude was proposed to be located in the Public Gardens. This location was probably influenced by what Fein described as a mid-nineteenth century American concept and a precedent -- the Crystal Palace in England. The proposed conservatory was to be made in iron and located in a park, the same as the Crystal Palace.

The building was never constructed; the Act of 1849, Chapter 210 had already proclaimed that no building save a City Hall may be erected between Charles and Arlington Streets.(2) With the failure of the Memorial of 1859, William Barton Rogers (the founder of MIT) was requested by the members of the Committee to present another Memorial in 1860 which also was denied by the Legislature. In 1861, a more thorough and realistic proposal was made, in which a specific site was also mentioned: the section lying west of Clarendon Street between Newbury and Boylston Streets. In

---

(1) *Life and Letters of William Barton Rogers.*   MIT Museum, Cambridge, MA. p.10.

(2) Walter Muir Whitehill, *Boston: A Topographical History.*   The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA. 1968. p.156.
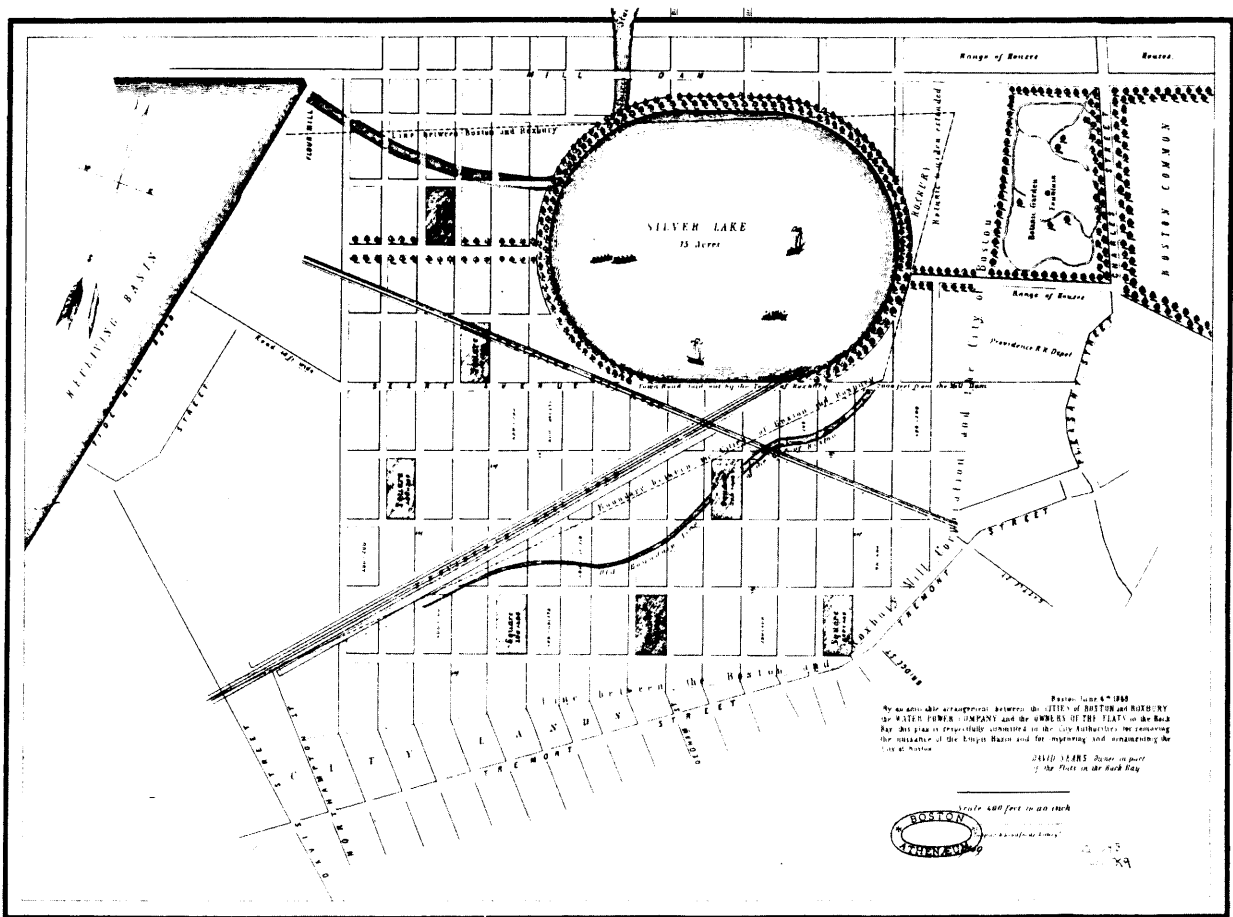
Figure 9: David Sear's plan for Back Bay Development

this proposal, a petition was also made to establish the Massachusetts Institute of Technology as a part of the Conservatory. The land was granted in which two sections of the Conservatory were to be built. One-third of the block was given to the Museum of Natural History, and the remaining two-thirds were given to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Meanwhile, another group of people who were engineers and surveyors of the city had quite a different idea as to what was to be done in the area which was later in 1883 named Copley Square. Their concerns were geared more to public health and safety. Prior to the filling of the Back Bay, parts of it had been the city dump, where ashes and other refuse were thrown by tipcarts into the bay; wharf rats scampered in and out of the sea wall on the westerly side of the Public Garden, while a common sewer entered the bay at the present corner of Beacon and Arlington Streets.(1) Recognizing the unpropitious quality of the site and keeping consistently with the original goals for the area — civic improvements of the Charles River Bay, they proposed a public urban space which was called St. James Park.(2) This idea, as in the case of the Memorial Plan, was not an instant creation either; precedents had already been set. Two solutions are worthy of mention since both of these solutions focused on a public park which would be located on the site where Copley Square came to be.

The first of these proposals was by a visiting Scotsman, Robert Fleming Gourlay, who in 1844 had proposed a grandiose and quite impractical solution intended for the improvement of the Back Bay. Walter Muir Whitehill (1968) says that this plan was based on a previous one that Gourlay had done for his native Edinburgh. He actually

---

(1) Walter Muir Whitehill, Op. Cit. p.145. For more details on this topic see Robert M. Lawrence, *Memoirs of a Happy Life*, p.3. and A. S. Wheeler, *Address on Boston, Fifty Years Since Delivered before the Commercial Club of Boston, November 21, 1896* (Boston, 1896), p.14.

(2) Doreve Nicholaeff. Op. Cit. p.22.

submitted several proposals to the City of Boston, of which only one is left in a lithographed publication titled *General Plan for Enlarging and Improving the City of Boston, 1844.* There were two foci in Gourlay's plan, one was the Circus Island centered on the crossing of the railroad tracks, and the other was the "Elysian Fields" on the intersection of what was then Dartmouth and Boylston Streets. The Elysian Fields, designated as a park, is today the approximate site of Copley Square.

The second proposal was by David Sears who had actually owned a number of mudflats in the Back Bay. This proposal of 1849 suggested filling the mudflats but leaving a 75-acre oval shaped "Silver Lake" in the center to secure the supposed sanitary benefits of fresh air passing over the water. Boylston Street, in this plan, would lead to the center of the eastern shore of the lake, while a new Sears Avenue would run south of it in the region of St. James Avenue.

The unrealized St. James Park went through several changes in size, shape and orientation in its planning stages, but it always stayed around the area we today know as Copley Square. The plan of 1863 showed St. James Park oriented toward Boylston Street. Its long axis paralelled Dartmouth Street, thereby reinforcing its prominence. This was to be the final vision for a park at the southern boundary of the area that 20 years later was proposed as a square.(1)

---

(1) Doreve Nicholaeff. Op. Cit. p.27.

CHAPTER TWO: 1860-1900

1860-70

The years between 1860 and 1870 saw the Back Bay very rapidly becoming an integral part of the enlarged hub of Boston. According to Bunting (1967) a record number of houses were built in 1870. The land filling operations which were influenced by the geometrical nature of each grid had followed two distinctive patterns. Initially it was a process of fill and build; after each block was filled the owners would come and build on their properties. But this sequential fill and build stopped when it reached the Copley Square area, from then on no more building was allowed until all the land was available by filling. The Back Bay had now also become a state of mind; it was being envisioned as the factor which would transform Boston from a provincial town to a great metropolis. Special emphasis was being given to its cultural character, which removed the issue of visualizing the new community as a viable self-supporting one. By 1870, there were four churches and two public buildings. The four churches which were built by 1870 are:

> 1860 Arlington Street Church, Architect: Arthur Gilman
>
> 1862 Emmanuel Church, Architect: A.R. Estey
>
> 1866 Central Church, Architect: R.M. Upjohn
>
> 1867 First Church, Architects: Ware and van Brunt

1806 Map of Boston superimposed in white on 1969 map of Boston

Figure 10: The filing of the Back Bay
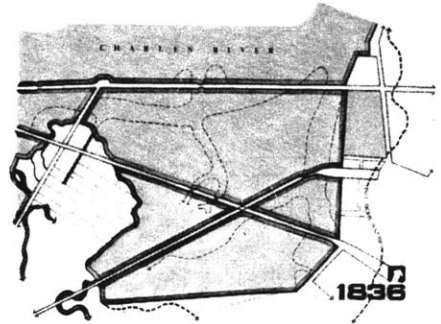
The Back Bay in 1836
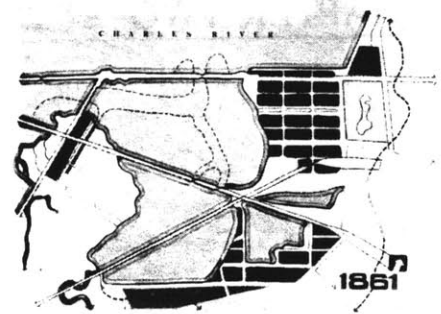
The Back Bay in 1861
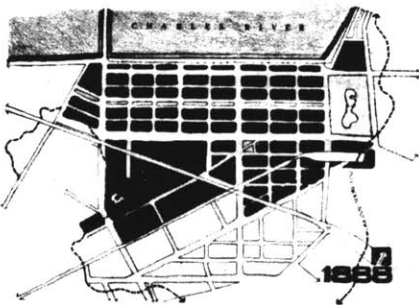
Fill basically complete, 1888
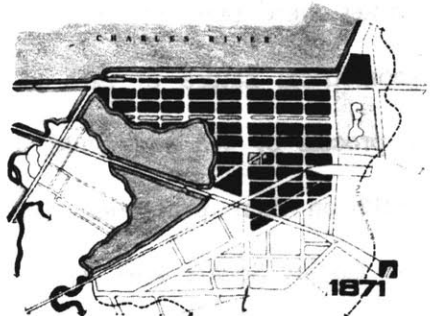
Extent of fill in 1871
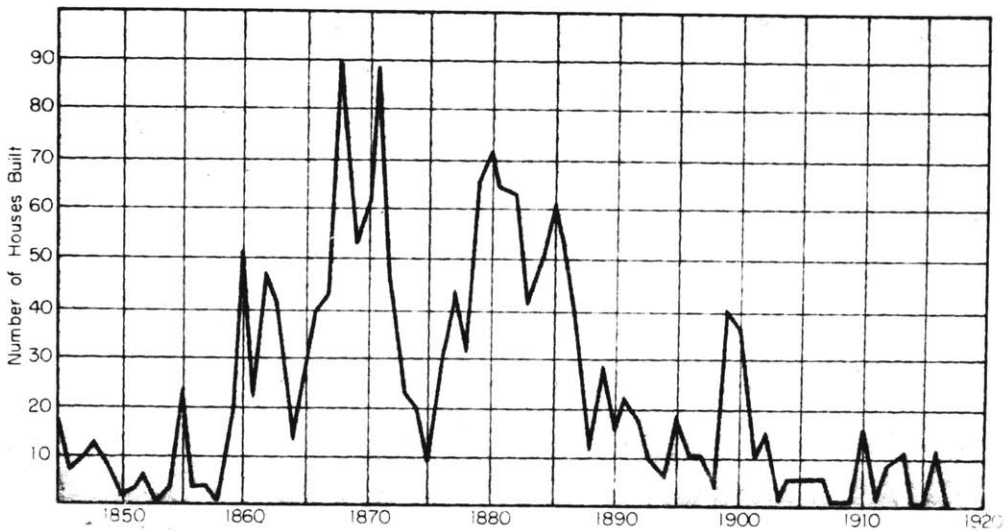
Figure 11: Building activity in the Back Bay between 1845 and 1917

1863 also saw the St. James Park (later named Copley Square) being located on what Doreve Nicholaeff (1979) has called the "collision" of the two grid systems. The St. James Park was now located on the intersection of Boylston Street, Huntington and St. James Avenues, bounded by Dartmouth and Clarendon Streets. The park as envisioned by the second group (engineers and surveyors) would not only be an urban design achievement but also increased the land value of the area. The location of St. James Park on the collision of the two grid systems was also a celebration of an event: the meeting point of two land-filled areas which would push Boston from being a provincial town to a metropolis.

In the same year, two public buildings were built in the Copley Square area which started a trend of public buildings in that area until the early 1900s. The first of these two was the Museum of Natural History designed by W.G. Preston. The two-story red brick building was started in 1863 and finished in 1864. In 1963, this building was taken over by Bonwit Teller, a fashionable ladies' apparel store. The rest of the site on which the Museum of Natural History was built was given to MIT (incorporated in the Memorial Plan of 1861). The first MIT building, named after its founder William Barton Rogers, was also designed by W.G. Preston. Whitehill (1968) observes that the building was in felicitous relation to its neighbor -- the Museum of Natural History. The Rogers building was completed in 1872. This set a precedent which was followed by a number of public institutions in the Back Bay, especially around Copley Square.

An event which today remains as a landmark in Boston's musical history happened in the years between 1869-1872. Although it was a temporary event, its sheer magnitude and glory made Copley Square a well-known area. P.S. Gilmore, a reputedly passionate and persuasive music promoter talked his fellow citizens and patrons into constructing a temporary coliseum in which a National Peace Jubilee was held in June
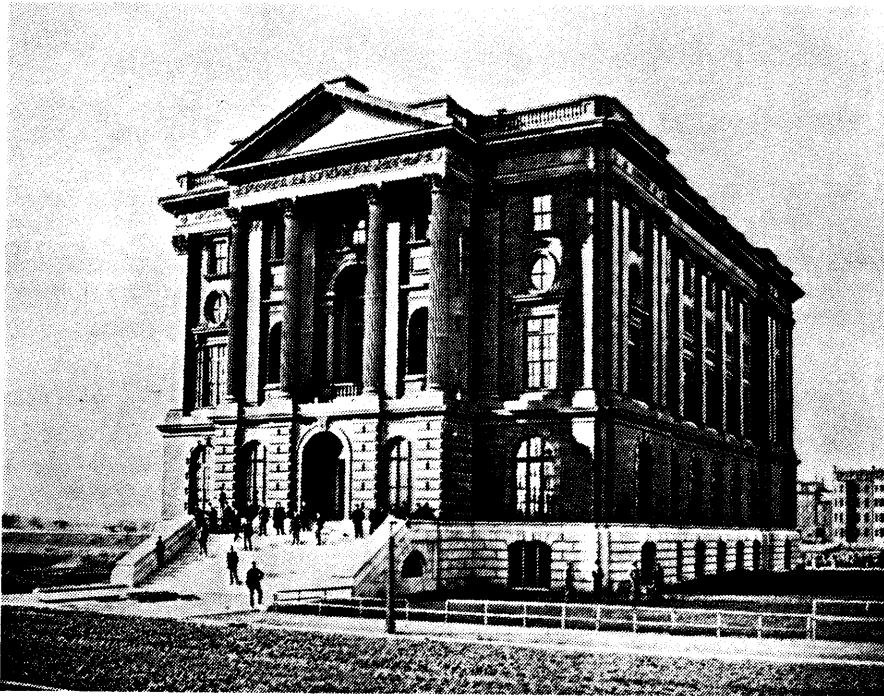
Figure 12: The MIT Rogers Building, Boylston Street, 1872.
Architect: W.G. Preston

Figure 13: The Museum of Natural History, Boylston Street, 1864.
Architect: W.G. Preston

1869. The structure was located on the site which today is occupied by Copley Plaza Hotel. The single performance of June 17, 1809, favored by the presence of President Ullyses S. Grant, was an incredible experience for those who were present. Says Whitehill (1968):

> Witness, for a single example, the performance on 17 June, 1869 of the Anvil Chorus for *Il Trovatore* by an orchestra of one thousand musicians, a chorus of ten thousand singers, supplemented by an organ, drum corps, the ringing of church bells and the firing of cannon (electrically controlled from the platform), and one hundred Boston firemen beating rhythmically upon anvils with sledgehammers."(1)

A similar International Peace Jubilee was held in June of 1872 to celebrate the conclusion of the Franco-Prussian War. Composer Johann Sebastian Strauss travelled all the way to Copley Square (still unnamed) to conduct his own music. The finances of this second effort went into a deficit from which it never recovered. The coliseum never appeared again, and its place was taken by the Museum of Fine Arts.

1870-80

The Back Bay had already become an integral part of Boston, and was establishing itself as one of the centers of the world of culture in arts and sciences. Here, characteristically, Mrs. Jack Gardner, a newcomer from New York, assembled in her palatial domestic museum the arts of the Renaissance, hitherto largely known only through prints. Here, assiduous collectors such as Ernest F. Fevollosa, brought back the marvels of Oriental art now in the Museum of Fine Arts; it was here that the fresh world of color opened up by the French Impressionists was displayed long before either the Metropolitan Museum or the Chicago Art Institute were in a position to show similar work. So it is not a surprise that Harvard's rejuvenation in

---

(1) Walter Muir Whitehill. Op. Cit. p.170.
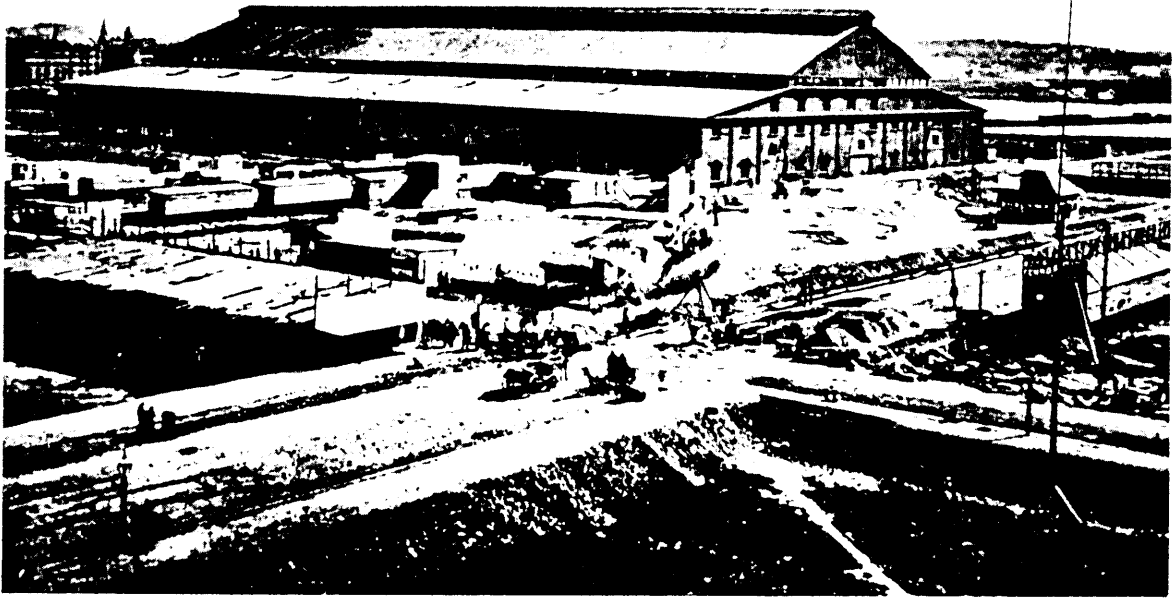
Figure 14: The Peace Jubilee Coliseum, 1872. Exterior and interiors.

science and scholarship under Charles Eliot coincided with the constructive enterprises of the Back Bay which ran from 1870-1900.(1)

Not only was there a rush of private residences of great quality and stylization, but also a series of public buildings started, the first of which was the Museum of Fine Arts. The commission for the design of this building went to Sturgis and Brigham after they were declared winners in a national competition. This building which occupied the site where Copley Plaza Hotel now stands was not merely a symbolic contribution to the area later known as Copley Square, but was also the first of the "walls" which would define the Square. The longer and main facade of the building faced the would-be Copley Square. It is said that Bostonians who were supposed to be very conservative never really liked the building. Whitehill (1968) says it was "one of those striped red brick and terra cotta Victorian Gothic structures that makes one wish that John Ruskin never visited Italy."(2) In 1876, the function of the Museum was extended from being a gallery and storehouse when a Museum School was launched as an adjunct of the new art museum. Today this school, located in the Fenway, is known to be one of the better art schools of Boston. The establishment of the school coincided with the opening of the new building in Copley Square.

While the Museum was being built, there was talk of forming an "Art Square" on the site which later became Copley Square. This is documented in an article of the 1878 edition of *Boston Illustrated*. The article read:

---

(1) Lewis Mumford, *The Significance of Back Bay Boston.* An essay in the Museum of Fine Arts publication titled *Back Bay Boston: The City as a Work of Art.* 1969. p.29. Mumford presents a case in essay form for the historic preservation of Back Bay.

(2) Walter Muir Whitehill. Op. Cit. p.170.

Figure 15: Trinity Church, designed by H.H. Richardson, 1874, and Copley Square, showing the Bristol Hotel apartments, the MIT Rogers Building, and the Museum of Natural History, on the left.
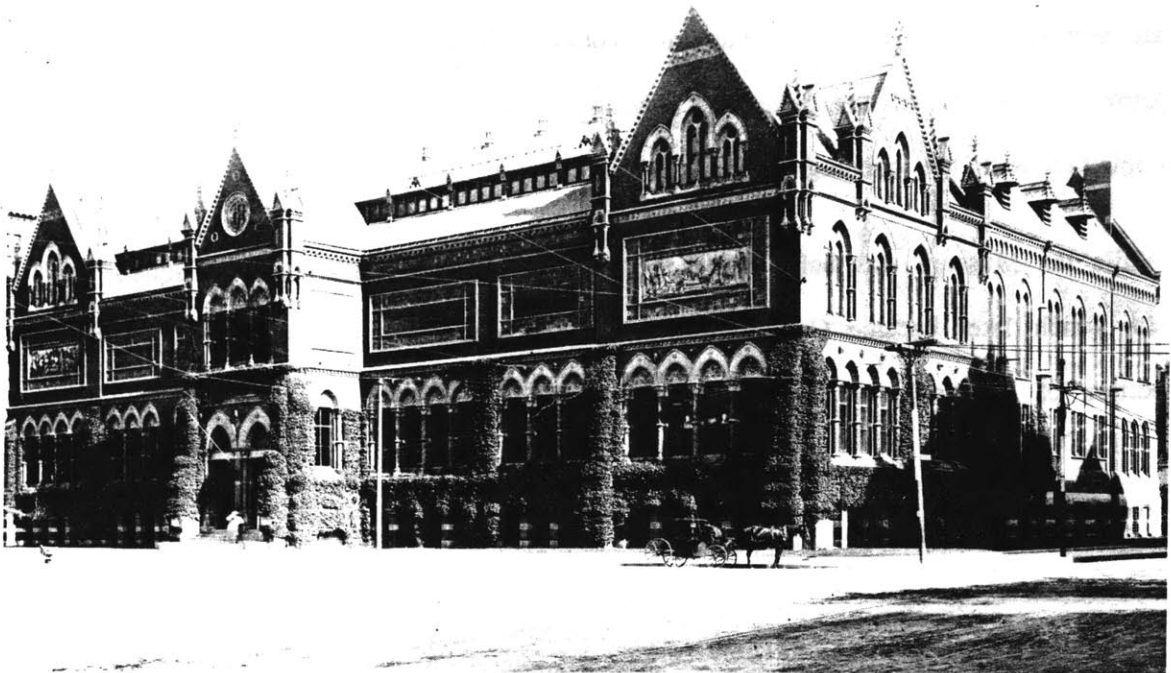
Figure 16: The Museum of Fine Arts, 1871-1876. Architects: Sturgis and Brigham.

The main front is already finished, and faces Art Square, with a projecting portico in the center, enriched with polished marble of columns. The right wing is adorned with a great bas-relief representing Art receiving the tribute of all nations: and the left wing is to have a companion piece, illustrating the union of Art and Industry.(1)

The next important public building which contributed to Copley Square's cultural image and spatial formation was Trinity Church. In June 1872, Trinity Church under the rectorship of Phillips Brooks, bought the triangular section of land on the Copley Site, bounded by Huntington Avenue, Providence and Clarendon Streets, consolidating it with a previous purchase (the rectangular piece bounded by Providence and Clarendon Streets, and St. James and Huntington Avenues), and formed the site for Trinity Church. The church designed by H.H. Richardson is now recognized as a masterpiece in American architecture. This building, which today is also a reminder of the road pattern in which Huntington Avenue bisected Copley Square, had achieved national importance even before it was completed. An article appeared in the *American Architect and Building News* (1876), which attested to the prominence of Trinity Church in New England.

The new Trinity Church in Boston, the most important church thus far built in New England, except perhaps its neighbor, the new Old South Church, is nearly finished. The interior decoration, which is already in hand, is a noteworthy undertaking, for it is one of the instances in which there has been a serious attempt among us to decorate a church with mural paintings: and it is the first instance we believe, when the whole decoration has been put under the direction of an artist of distinction, to be carried out by himself and his fellow artists, with the object of bringing the whole work — general colour, decorative detail and figures — into a consistant harmonious whole. The work is planned and directed by Mr. La Farage, who will himself paint some of the figure-subjects ....(2)

---

(1) *Boston Illustrated.* 1878 ed. p.52.

(2) *American Architect and Building News.* volume 1, Oct. 28, 1876. p.345.

Figure 17: Trinity Church from Boylston Street, ca. 1903. Museum of Fine Arts far right, and Westminster Chambers in the middle.

This great building, says Whitehill (1968), blends the Romanesque masses of Auvergne with the *Torre del Gallo* of Salamanca, and Portal of St. Gillen to provide the exterior for an auditorium capable of accomodating Phillips Brooks and his devoted followers. The church was consecrated on February 9, 1877.

The third important development of public buildings was actually the construction of two separate buildings. Both of these buildings were constructed on Boylston Street directly opposite to the Museum of Fine Arts. Thus the formation of the third wall of Copley Square was on the way. The first building was Chauncy Hall School finished in 1873, designed by A.C. Martin. This school which covered three Back Bay lots was also known to be one of the most prestigious private schools in Boston. The pre-existence of MIT probably influenced the location of this school. Many students who graduated from this school went on to continue their education at the neighboring MIT. This school was partially destroyed by a fire in the early 20th century, and was never rebuilt.

Next to the school was built a church which was finished in 1875. Designed by N.J. Bradlee, this spireless church occupied five Back Bay lots. Along with private residences and two other hotels, Hotel Bristol (1879), and Hotel Cluny (1876) the third wall, standing on Boylston street was complete. While Chauncy Hall School and Second Church were being built, another important church was built on the corner of Boylston and Dartmouth Streets -- the new Old South Church. It boasted a striking campanile, designed by Cummings and Sears, in the North Italian Gothic style. Thus by 1880, Copley Square had the following public buildings in its immediate surroundings:

1. Museum of Natural History – 1864

2. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Rogers Building – 1872
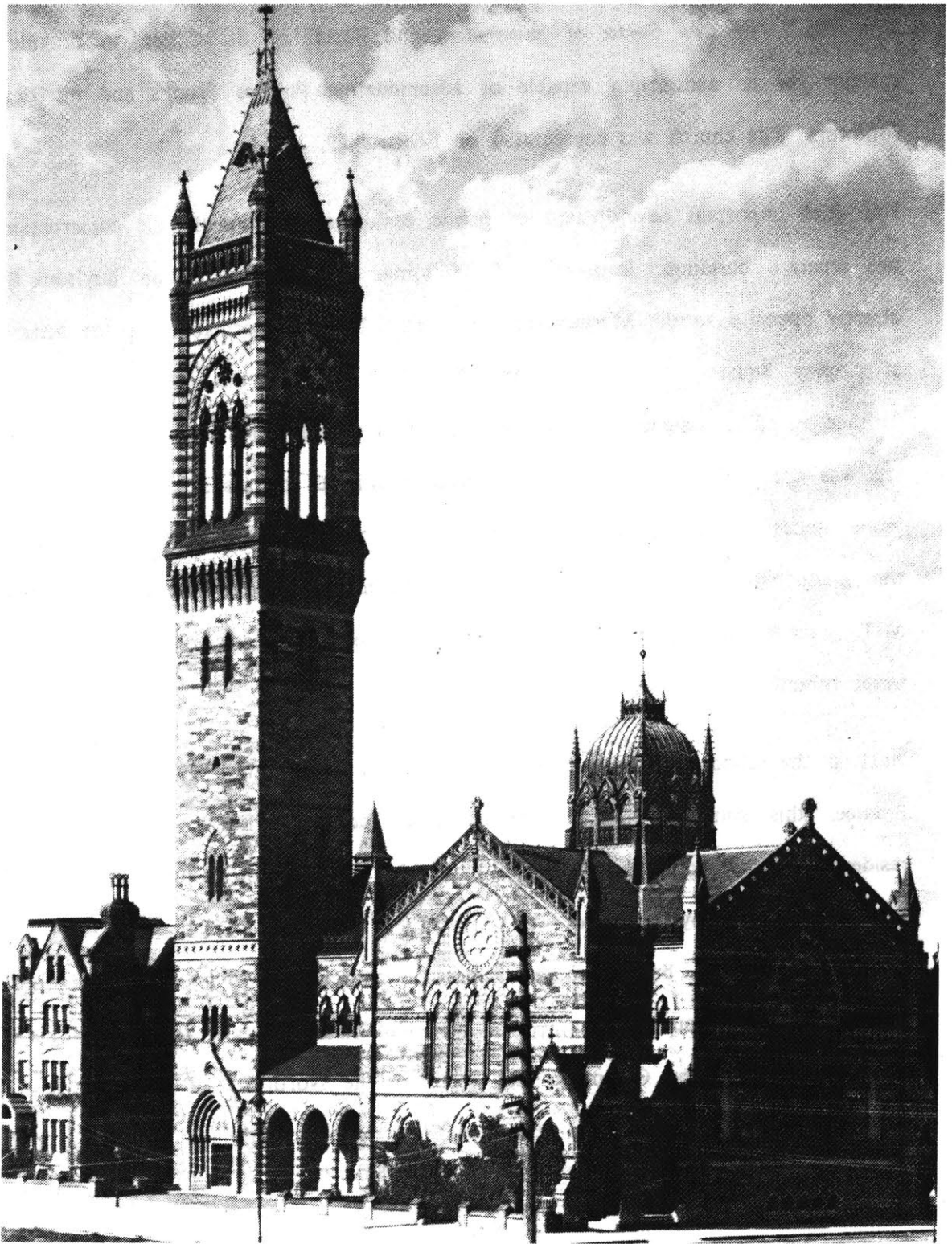
Figure 18: New Old South Church ca. 1900. Architects: Cummings and Sears

3.   Museum of Fine Arts – 1876

4.   Trinity Church – 1877

5.   Chauncy Hall School – 1873

6.   Second Church – 1875

7.   New Old South Church – 1875

In addition to these public buildings were some private residences and the following hotels:

1.   Hotel Cluny – 1870

2.   Hotel Bristol – 1879

3.   Hotel Huntington – 1877

Thus Copley Square was now an educational, cultural, religious and high-income residential center. The square itself, however, was still a composite of fragmented pieces of land bisected by Providence Street, Trinity Place and Huntington Avenue.

1880-83

In 1880, although three sides of the Copley site were fronted by prominent public buildings, the city had not acted on making it a square. Land value which had increased considerably around Copley Square was due to the existence of the several public buildings. Prior to 1880 there were proposals for hotels and a Chemical Institute on the pieces of land which later became Copley Square; fortunately these proposals were never carried out, because as early as 1875, the Park Commissioners had voiced an intention to create a public park around the area where the two grid systems met. The land they believed would be St. James Park was the corner parcel of Boylston and Dartmouth Streets, west of Huntington Avenue. Between 1880-83, several incidents occurred which led to a change of plans in which St. James Park
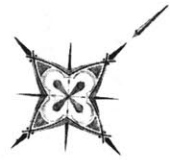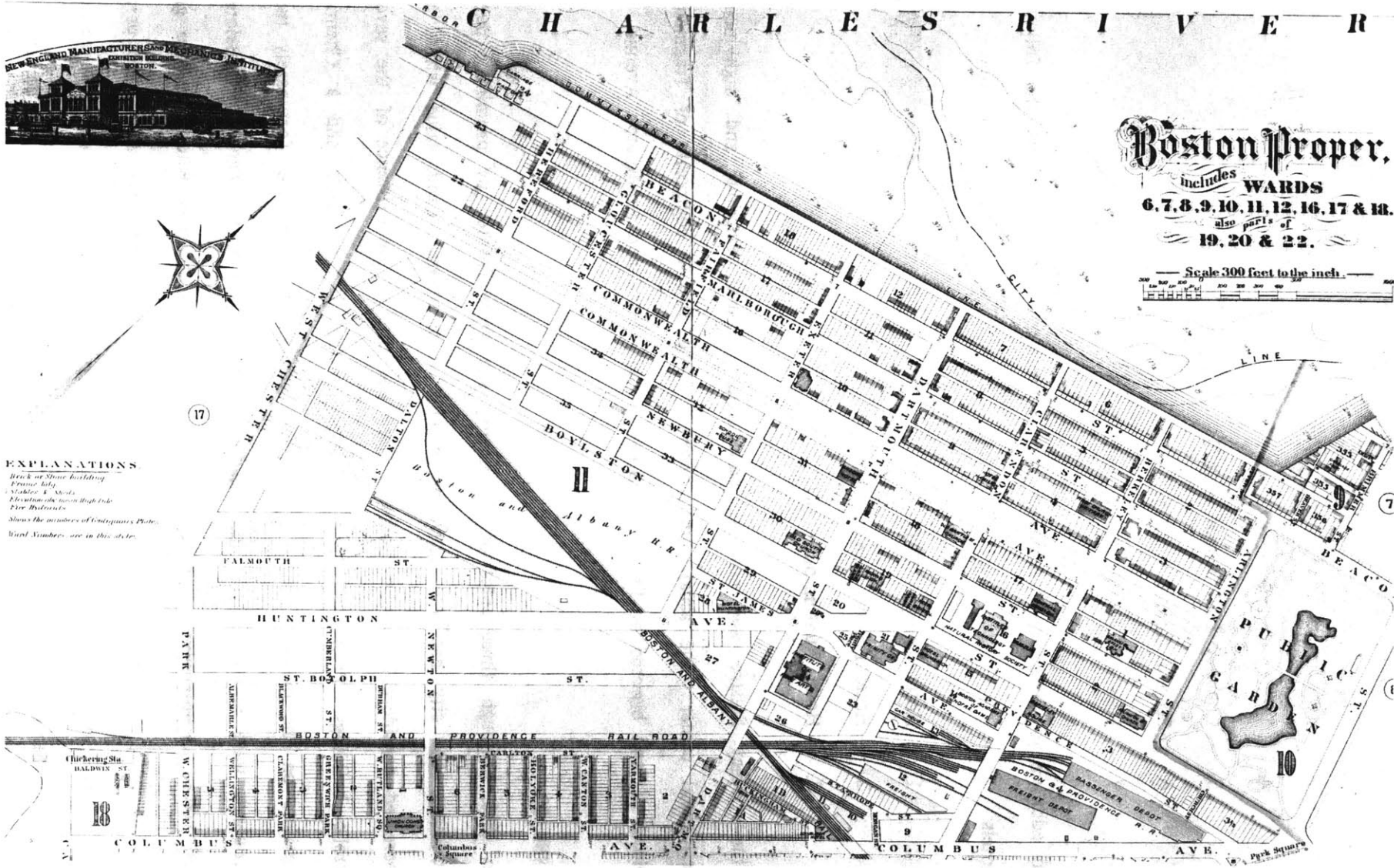
Figure 19: Copley Square and the Back Bay in 1882.

was forgotten and Copley Square established by consolidating the broken pieces of land which fronted Trinity Church. (see Figures 20a and 20b)

In 1880, the Trustees of the Boston Public Library received a grant of land bounded by Boylston, Dartmouth, and Providence Streets and St. James Avenue. Two years later Harvard Medical School moved to the Copley Square area, and built its facilities on the parcel next to the Boston Public Library, bounded by Exeter and Boylston Streets and St. James Avenue. In doing so, they also sealed their end of the alley called Providence Street. The city immediately acted, and sealed the rest of the alley. The Boston Public Library was now given additional land; the tiny triangular piece separated by Providence Street was joined to the trapezoidal section (see Figures 20a and 20b) thus creating a large triangular piece. The Harvard Medical School was completed in 1883, designed by Ware and van Brunt (who also designed Harvard University's Memorial Hall). This building substantially reinforced Copley Square's image as an educational center.

The time was ripe to create an urban square; three sides of the triangular piece of land were already fronted by very important public institutions, and a fourth side would soon be fronted by the Boston Public Library. Finally the city acted on its intentions to create a public open space and acquired the large triangular piece of land from the several owners on July 7, 1882. The city, however, did not buy the smaller triangle which was owned by the Boston Water Power Company. Then in 1883, the city consolidated all the land it had bought and named it Copley Square, after the favorite local painter, James Singleton Copley. On February 1, 1883, Mr. Whitney, a prominent businessman, bought the small triangle from the Boston Water Power Company for $25,000. In 1885, when he proposed to build a hotel there, the city acted immediately. They bought the land from Mr. Whitney for $30,000, thus saving

48
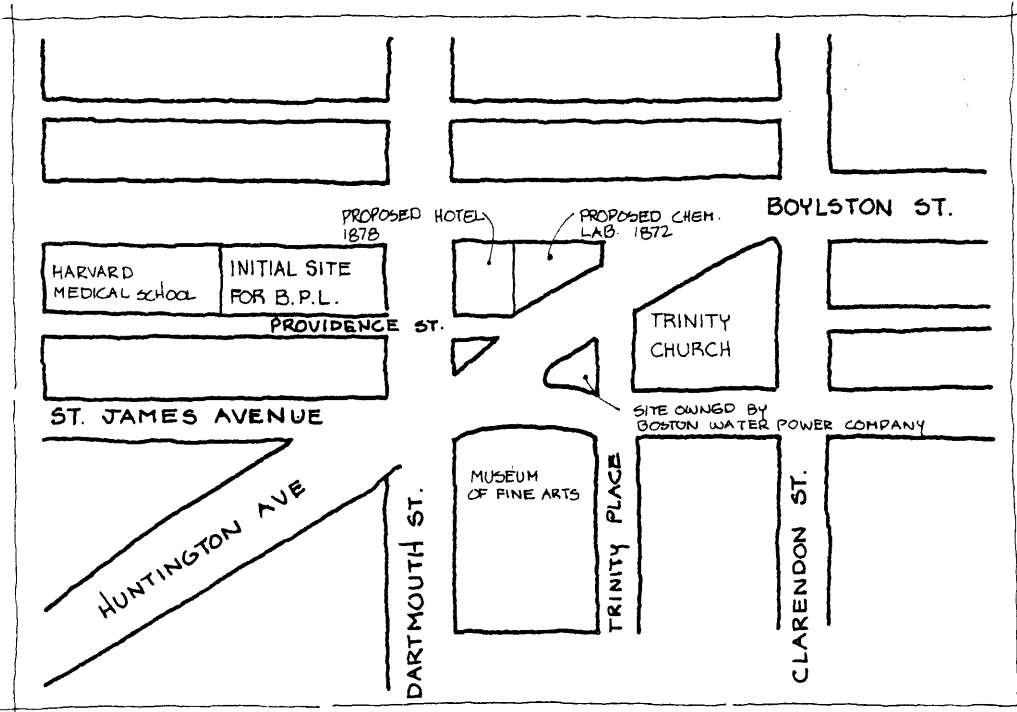
Figure 20a: Street pattern before land for Copley Square was consolidated, 1880.
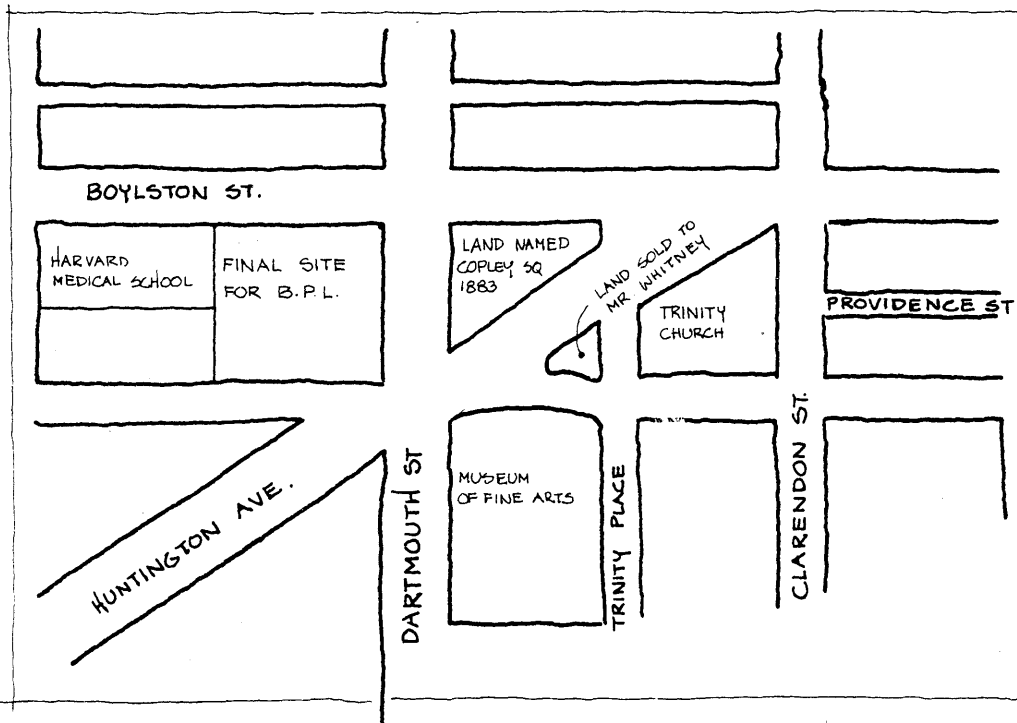
Figure 20b: Street pattern after the land was consolidated, 1882.

the facade of the Museum of Fine Arts and Trinity Church, which was voted to be the most beautiful building in the United States that year.(1)

1883-90

After Copley Square was named, a wave of apartment hotels were built in the area, probably anticipating the future increase of activity there. Hotel Huntington had already been built in 1878 in one of the south-west corner plots of Copley Square. Next came Hotel Oxford and Hotel Copley at the corner of Exeter Street. These hotels were considered to be the finest in Boston in 1885, and thus attracted only Social Registered citizens.(2)   Thus Copley Square was now not only surrounded by educational, religious and cultural buildings, but also by the finest hotels in Boston.(3) The next important development which greatly affected Copley Square was the construction of the S.S. Pierce building. Wallace Pierce, the owner of the company had already built a store in Scollay Square (now renewed as Government Center Plaza) in 1884. Recognizing the potentials of the land he owned at the south-west corner of

---

(1) Doreve Nicholaeff. Op. Cit. p.69.

(2) *Bacon's Dictionary*

(3) Brainbridge Bunting in his book provides a very thorough list of all the important houses, and public and commercial buildings built in the Back Bay area. According to his list, the following hotels or apartment buildings were built between the years 1883-88 around Copley Square:

1. Hotel Oxford. Corner of Huntington and Exeter. 1883. Architect: Snell and Gregerson.
2. Hotel Copley. Near the corner of Huntington and Dartmouth. 1884. Architect: Fred Pope.
3. Hotel Aubry. On Dartmouth Street. 1880. Architects: W.G. Preston and A.C. Fauld.
4. Hotel Kensington. At the corner of Boylston and Exeter. 1884. Architect: J.L. Faxon.
5. The Victoria (commercial hotel). At the corner of Dartmouth and Newbury Streets. 1884. Architect: J.L. Faxon.
6. Hotel Ludlow. At the corner of St. James Avenue and Clarendon Street. 1888. Architects: Walker and Best.
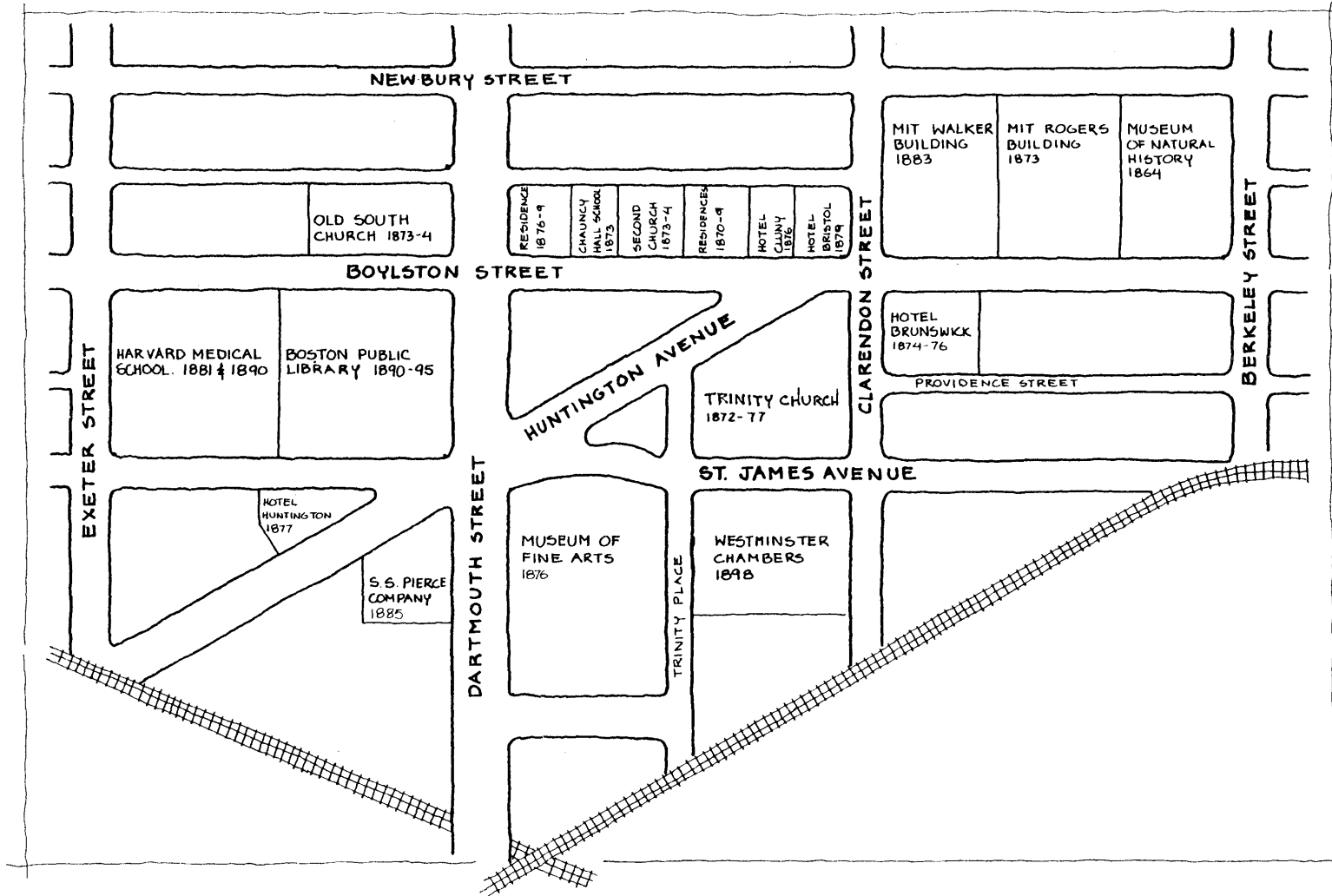
Figure 21: Copley Square area in 1905

Copley Square at the intersection of Huntington Avenue and Dartmouth Street, Pierce built a massive brick building there. The building, according to Whitehill (1968) did not have much architectural significance, but its mass and pivot position helped define the enclosure of the square and set a reference for height and mass for a later building – the Boston Public Library. The Pierce building contained a store on the ground floor and a number of offices on upper floors. This was the first commercial building in the Copley Square area, and was a very successful one. It caught the attention of the Boylston Street property owners, who petitioned for and received release from the clause which proscribed commercial activities on that street.(1) The wave of commercial buildings that came after 1888 considerably changed Back Bay's domestic and cultural image, and created some inconsistency in the architecture. The area most affected was Boylston Street which even today has not been able to achieve a level of architecture that is somewhat compatible with the rest of the architecture around Copley Square. Lewis Mumford observes:

> In the original plans for the Back Bay, domestic and cultural facilities were rightly considered the dominant needs, though perhaps too exclusively, for business activities were peremptorily relegated to the more disorderly older portions of the city, and when they were finally admitted, along Boylston and Newbury Streets, they carried with them some of their competitive disorder and officious self-advertisement.(2)

Construction of the Boston Public Library began in 1887, seven years after the land had been granted. The commission was given to McKim, Mead, and White.(3) Today this building is acknowledged as a masterpiece in American architecture. The building,

---

(1) Brainbridge Bunting, Op. Cit. p.483.

(2) Lewis Mumford, Op. Cit. p.28.

(3) Originally a national competition was called in which a winner was selected. The winning design, however, was discarded because it supposedly did not achieve a level of design which was appropriate for such an important building. After this incident the Trustees decided to abandon the idea of a competition and awarded the commission to McKim, Mead, and White, who had achieved considerable prominence across the country for their work.
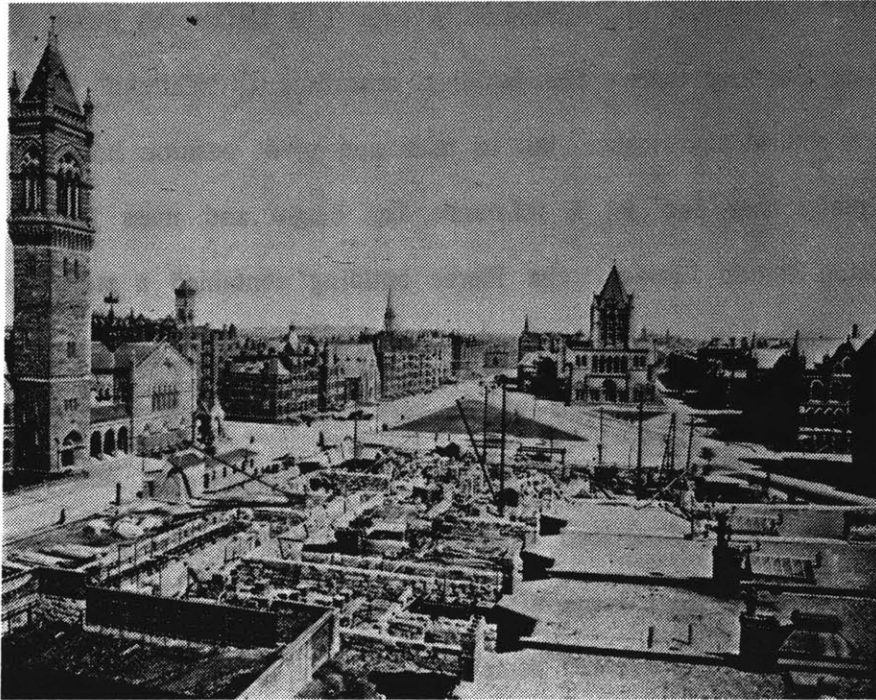
Figure 22a: Copley Square during the construction of Boston Public Library, ca. 1889.

Figure 22b: Copley Square in 1979, showing roofs of the original Boston Public Library, and the annex building.

modelled after the Paris Bibliotheque, is of the Italian Renaissance style, according to Bunting (1967); it may, however, also be seen as a product of the revival period of the classical style. Compared to Trinity Church, it is a much more conservative and quiet building. Fewer colors and facade elements are used in a repetitive and symmetrical composition. Its dignified facade began to act as a foil to the unchecked individualism of the preceding decades.(1) Whitehill (1968), states that Charles F. McKim, in planning the library must have taken into account the disparate masses offered by the Pierce building and by the Campanile of the new Old South Church.

1890-1900: THE RISE TO NATIONAL IMPORTANCE

Copley Square, within a decade and half of its creation, gained such prominence that it led to speculation all over the country. It was adverstised as a prestigious address by owners of commercial and private enterprises in the neighborhood in order to entice people to visit their buildings.(2) In addition to being a commercial, religious, educational and cultural center, Copley Square had also become a transportation hub – the streets around the square were thronged with electric cars and horse carriages. Although being a transportation center brought more people to the square and increased its prominence, the traffic lanes also began to disunify the square from its surrounding buildings by the continuous stream of movement. The completion of the Boston Public Library in 1895 was probably the ultimate event which escalated Copley Square to national significance.

> With the increased consciousness of people after the American victories in the Spanish-American wars, it was believed that a building ought to be the symbol of political or social value of Imperial America.

---

(1) Boston Society of Architects, *Architecture Boston,* Barre Publishing, Barre. MA. 1976. p.66.

(2) Doreve Nicholaeff, Op. Cit. p.195.
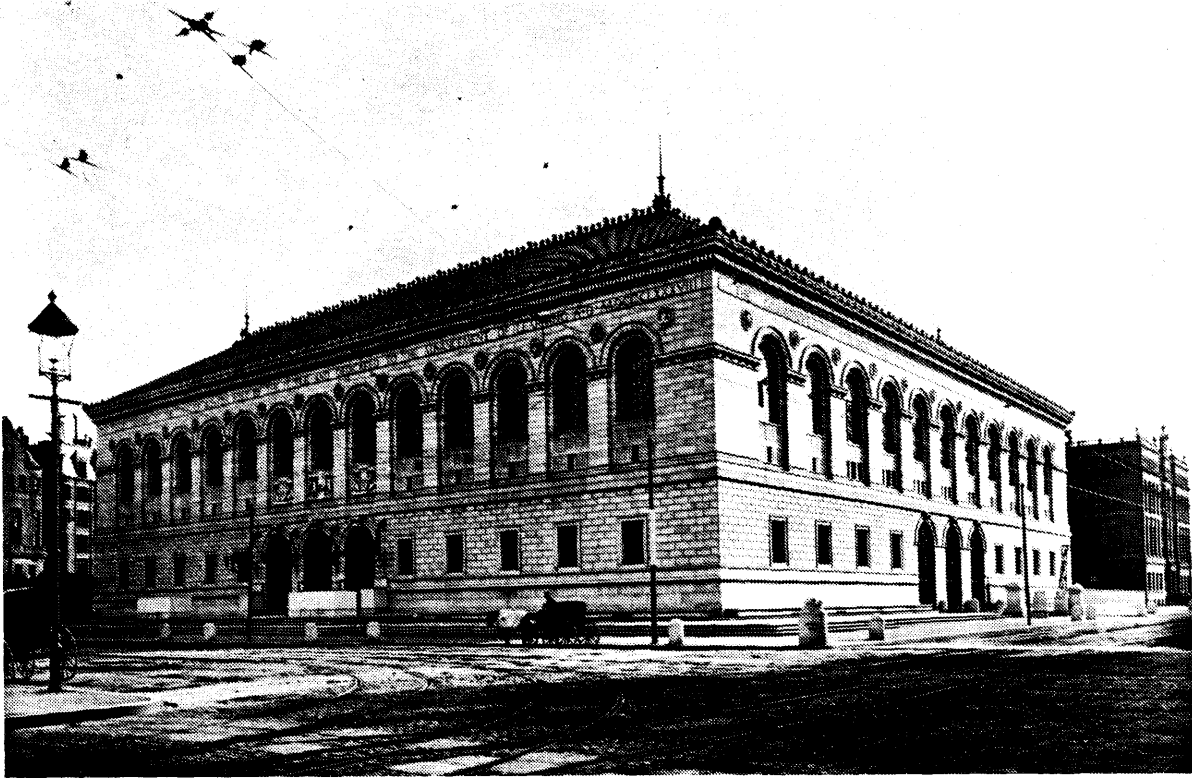
Figure 23: Boston Public Library, ca. 1905.
Architects: McKim, Mead, and White.

Celebrating symmetry and regularity as the solution to the facade on Dartmouth Street, the Library envisioned a future role for itself as such a symbol for the nation. In fact it came to be rated more significant than Trinity Church, and was voted the second most beautiful building in America, while Trinity Church had slipped to third place.(1)

Thus, Copley Square now had everyone's attention; it was considered a national space. In 1879, when the Westminster Chambers, a ten-story apartment house designed by H.A. Cragier exceeded the height limit of ninety feet (by six feet), opposition came from the Museum of Fine Art Trustees. They claimed the additional height rendered it difficult to view art works located beneath the skylights which were shadowed by the Westminster Chambers. Even before the Museum had objected, the *American Architect and Building News* had reacted while the Westminster Chambers was in proposal stage. Their concern was for Trinity Church, which they felt was being injured by this new tall structure.

The admirers of the late H.H. Richardson's greatest work, Trinity Church, Boston, will be sorry to hear that plans have been made for a building, a ten-story apartment house which cannot but be greatly injured by the new structure. Presuming that the apartment house will be carried to the maximum height permitted by law in Boston, one hundred and twenty-five feet, its cornice will rise higher than the stone-work of the central tower of the church. It is hardly necessary to point out how sadly the church will be dwarfed by the contrast.(2)

The Westminster Chambers was built only to a height of ninety-six feet,(3) to which the Museum of Fine Arts objected. In 1899, the Museum had transferred the ownership of the land to another party, and had dropped the charges. But the struggle

---

(1) Doreve Nicholaeff, Op. Cit. p.86. Although it seems that these comments were based on some documentation written around the turn of the century, Nicholaeff does not cite her sources. This is the second time in her thesis she has mentioned a voting of some kind to select the most beautiful building in America, and has not cited her sources. I have assumed that this information must have a source, although I have not yet been able to locate it.

(2) *The American Architect and Building News*, Volume LVII, September 4, 1877. p.77.

(3) In the editorial of the *American Architect and Building News*, the height limit of one hundred and twenty-five feet mentioned was the height limit for other areas in Boston, the height limit for the Copley Square area was only ninety feet.

was continued by other concerned individuals and the city; finally after twenty-two years of debating, the Westminster Chamber was forced to remove two feet of roof and four feet of cornice.

Although Copley Square had achieved prominence as a center for the arts, religion, education and commerce, it had also become architecturally or visually less appealing. The intensity of traffic had led to a separation of the open space and its surrounding buildings, which prompted more discussions from concerned parties. The *American Architect and Building News* once again expressed its concern for Copley Square:

> Copley Square, in Boston, is just now greatly attracting the attention of those interested in municipal improvement. Although, like nearly all the Boston "squares," it is at present really a compound, it is distinguished by being traversed by three important streets, through each of which many thousands of people are transported every day by several electric cars; and it is impossible to doubt that, before many years, it will become a very important business center, – probably the most important in the city, next to the area about the intersection of State and Congress Streets. The present condition of the square, as an object of artistic interest is simply lamentable. Two bare grass-plots, left, as it were, by an oversight, between the intersecting streets, constitute the ornamental portion of the area, and the appearance of fine buildings which surround it, including the Museum of Fine Arts, the Public Library, Trinity Church, and the new Old South Church, is sadly marred by the Huntington Avenue, which cuts diagonally across the foreground to all of them.(1)

The article in the *American Architect and Building News* went on to discuss possibilities of how to improve conditions. The apparent solution at that time seemed to be the suppressing of Huntington Avenue or rerouting it. Nothing came of the several suggestions (which will be discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis) until 1965, when the city of Boston announced a nationwide competition to redesign Copley Square.

---

(1) *American Architect and Building News,* Volume LVII, September 18, 1897. p.93.

CHAPTER THREE: 1900-65

Through a series of accidents and intentions by two groups of people -- the Committee of Associated Institutions and the City Municipal Corporation -- all the visions and ideas conceived were completed. The two civic improvements, one, the creation of a cultural/educational center, and two, the creation of a public park, conceived in the 1860's to enhance the quality and increase the market value of the most unpropitious site within the Back Bay --(the Copley Square area), undoubtedly influenced the shape it had taken by 1900. The initial goal of the Committee of Associated Institutions was to establish a Conservatory of Arts and Sciences which would increase the relative worth of the site, and also further the educational/cultural and civic improvement for the benefit of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Although it was an ideology and not a physical plan, the involvement of the members of the Association (businessmen and professionals) in the acquisitions of grants of land and in the buying and selling of land, had made them more directly responsible for the form of the area than the other group -- the city employees who envisioned a park.

Not all the buildings proposed to constitute the four departments of the Conservatory of Arts and Sciences were built at the Copley Square area. Two of its structures, the Horticulture Hall and the Mechanics Building, were built along Huntington Avenue, almost a mile away from the Square. Failure of one of the goals of the Association, to establish all the buildings of the Conservatory on one location, was offset by its success as a financial scheme to raise the market value of the land at the Copley site.

The years 1860-72 saw the construction of three departments of the proposed
Conservatory: MIT, the Museum of Natural History, and the Museum of Fine Arts,
all in proximity to each other. This not only enriched the value of the square but
also attracted other public buildings: Trinity Church, Second Church, New Old South
Church, Boston Public Library, and Harvard Medical School. Trinity Church, under the
nationally known ministry of Phillips Brooks, together with the New Old South Church
and the half dozen other churches within several blocks, also made Copley Square a
notable center of religion in the late nineteenth century.(1)

Thus by 1900, Copley Square had become a nationally acclaimed urban square which
was also a religious, cultural, educational, and transportation center. Ironically, at the
very peak of its glory, it began to show signs of decline:

1.   The Square's development as a transportation mode caused the disintegration of
      its visual perception as a defined enclosure.

2.   The land value of the area had gone up so high that the public institutions
      which existed there and needed to expand could not afford to do so.(2)

3.   The late, unplanned decision to allow commerce in the Copley Square area.(3)

A CHANGE IN EDGE ACTIVITIES

As early as 1899, the Museum of Fine Arts was bursting the seams of its building in
Copley Square. In that year, the Trustees bought twelve acres, running from
Huntington Avenue through to the Fenway, on which construction of the present
building, from designs by Guy Lowell, was begun in 1907.(4) After the Museum had

---

(1) *Copley Square: National Design Competition.*   Competition Program.   Dec.
    1983. Boston Redevelopment Authority. Boston, MA. p.2.

(2) For details on land value see (a) Brainbridge Bunting's *The Houses of Back Bay,*
    pp. 45, 93, 368-370, 393, 467, and (b) Doreve Nicholaeff's *The Planning and
    Development of Copley Square,* p.103-107.

(3) This is discussed previously in Chapter Two in connection with the S.S. Pierce
    Store.

(4) Walter Muir Whitehill. Op. Cit. p.186.

Figure 24: Copley Plaza Hotel, photographed from the entrance of Boston Public Library in 1984. Architect: Henry Hardinberg.

Figure 25: The Bonwit Teller (formerly the Museum of Natural History) on the left, and the New England Mutual Life Insurance Company on the right, photographed in 1984.

moved, the building was demolished, and in its place was built Copley Plaza Hotel (also known as Sheraton Plaza Hotel) designed by Henry Hardinbergh. This actually might have been a fortunate incident purely in terms of architecture, because the Museum building was never really appreciated by too many people. It was very loud in colors and seemed to attempt to emulate what Richardson did with Trinity Church, but failed miserably. Although Bostonians really did not like the building very much, the loss of the Museum as a cultural symbol which gave Copley Square certain prestige, was irreplacable.

The relocation of the Museum was followed by Harvard Medical School which had come to Copley Square with the expectation of getting ample room for expansion in a site approximately half way between the Massachusetts General Hospital and the City Hall. New buildings were constructed for the Medical School in 1906 on Longwood Avenue, west of the Fenway in Boston. The older building was leased to Boston University until it was demolished in the 1960's to make way for the Boston Public Library Annex designed by Philip Johnson.

Shortly after Harvard Medical School moved, a fire partially destroyed the Chauncy Hall School and the Second Church on Boylston street. Neither of these institutions were rebuilt in the Copley Square area; Second Church found a new home on Audubon Circle in Brookline. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology by 1902 was contemplating a move from Boylston Street. Ten years later it purchased land on the Cambridge shore of the Charles River, east of Harvard Bridge. The group of limestone buildings which were built, designed by Welles Bosworth, were first occupied in 1916. Meanwhile, the two existing buildings on Boylston Street, the Rogers and Walker buildings, were still in use. The Rogers building was occupied by the MIT Department of Architecture, and the Walker building was leased to Boston University.

After the First World War, a quite different kind of sociological force began to affect the character of Back Bay. The automobile began to transport the family to the suburbs, and the supply of domestic servants began to diminish.(1) In a very short time the large townhouse became outmoded; the Back Bay ceased for the time being to grow, and the large single family townhouses were converted to more modest uses -- apartments, offices, etc. Besides this sociological change, the Back Bay had become too crowded for some of the Boston elite. Mrs. Jack Gardner had already moved with her art collection to a new house in the Fenway as early as 1902. All of Back Bay was going through a change; the quiet residential, cultural, religious, educational district had started to let in more and more commerce.

This action naturally altered the use and image of Copley Square; the real change occurred, however, when the insurance companies started settling in the Copley Square area. In 1939, the MIT Rogers and Walker buildings were demolished to make way for the granite building of the New England Mutual Life Insurance Company. This inspired David McCord to compose the clerihew:

> Ralph Adams Cram
>
> One morning said damn,
>
> And designed the Urn Burial
>
> For a concern actuarial.(2)

As Whitehill (1968) observes, this move from the company's old French Renaissance building in Post Office Square formed part of a change of focus that had been taking place on the edges of Back Bay. The homes on Boyslton Street and many of those on Newbury Street were gradually being taken over by shops, particularly designed to appeal to the residents of the Back Bay. The John Hancock Mutual Life

---

(1) Bainbridge Bunting. Op. Cit. p.3.

(2) David McCord, *About Boston,* New York. N.Y. 1948. p.90

Figure 26: S.S. Pierce building on the southwest corner of Copley Square, before it was demolished in 1958.

Figure 27: Southwest corner of Copley Square after the S.S. Pierce building was demolished.

Insurance Company also started buying up parcels of land bounded by St. James Avenue, Stuart Street, Berkeley Street and Trinity Place. Construction on the block bounded by Clarendon, Berkeley, and Stuart Streets, and St. James Avenue was completed by 1948; this building featured a 34-story tower. This tower, for the first time, overshadowed the spires of the churches that had been for three quarters of a century the most conspicuous elements in the Back Bay skyline. By 1947, the John Hancock company had also bought the controversial Westminster Chambers and the land it occupied. This controversial building was demolished to accomodate another controversial building -- the 790-foot tower designed by I.M. Pei & Partners.

The period from 1958 and onward is one of even greater changes, marked by the demolishing of the S.S. Pierce building. As mentioned previously, the Pierce building was a basis for the mass and height of the Boston Public Library, and also a "cornerstone" of Copley Square; its destruction created a very noticeable void and imbalance to the spatial enclosure of Copley Square. The situation became worse when the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority built a maze of freeway junctions behind the empty Pierce building site, creating an eyesore for the square. Whitehill (1968) wrote that, at that time, the entire square looked as if it were washing away into a vast hole in the ground.

CHAPTER FOUR: 1965-84

THE RENEWED FAITH

Since late nineteenth century, the proper treatment of Copley Square had been a perennial subject for discussion by the Boston Society of Architects, the City Planning Board, Bostonians in general, and architectural journals. In 1897, an editorial appeared in the *American Architect and Building News*, which discussed possible improvements for Copley Square. At that time Copley Square consisted of two triangular plots of land which the editorial refers to as a defective arrangement.

> This defect in the present arrangement being generally acknowledged, two plans have been suggested for remedying it, either of which could be carried out independently of the other, since they are in no sense antagonistic of one another, the later scheme merely supplementing and adding new force to the elements of the original scheme. The earlier of these two schemes proposes the restoration of the "square" to a rectangular form by suppressing that part of Huntington Avenue which crosses the square diagonally, and diverting Huntington Avenue traffic into the streets — widened for this purpose — on which the important buildings in the square now front. This plan would give a symmetrical space between the Public Library and Trinity Church, which might be treated in various ways, but which the Boston Society of Architects hopes may in future be laid out as a sunken garden, after the Italian style. The later plan proposes to add value to Copley Square by introducing another broad avenue having its entrance into Copley Square at the southeast corner in such a way as to balance precisely Huntington Avenue on the other side, thus restoring symmetry to the square by doubling the feature which now renders it unsymmetrical. A street in this direction would furnish a short and very desirable connection between the upper part of Washington Street and the street-railway system diverging from Copley Square, and would make it possible to connect the latter, through Pleasant Street and Broadway, directly with South Boston systems.
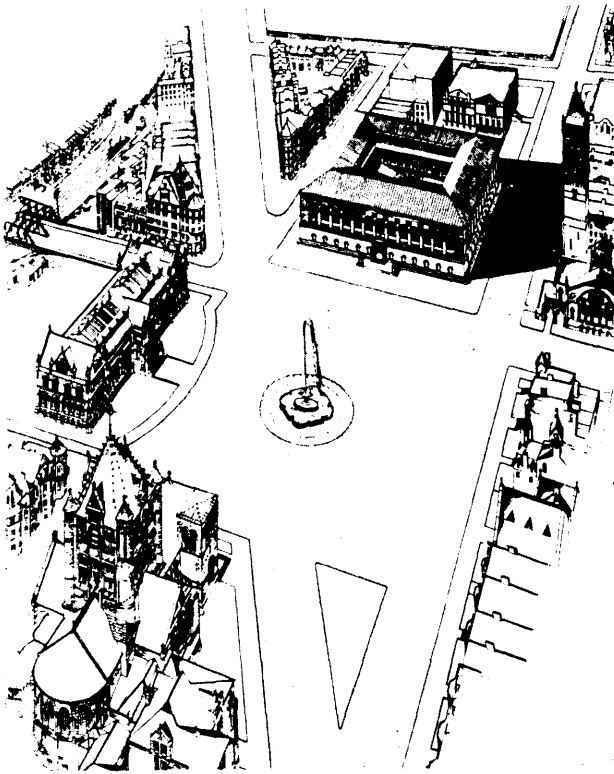
Figure 28: Proposal for the beautification of Copley Square.
Bird's eye view of projected plan. Architects: McKim,
Mead, and White, ca. 1900
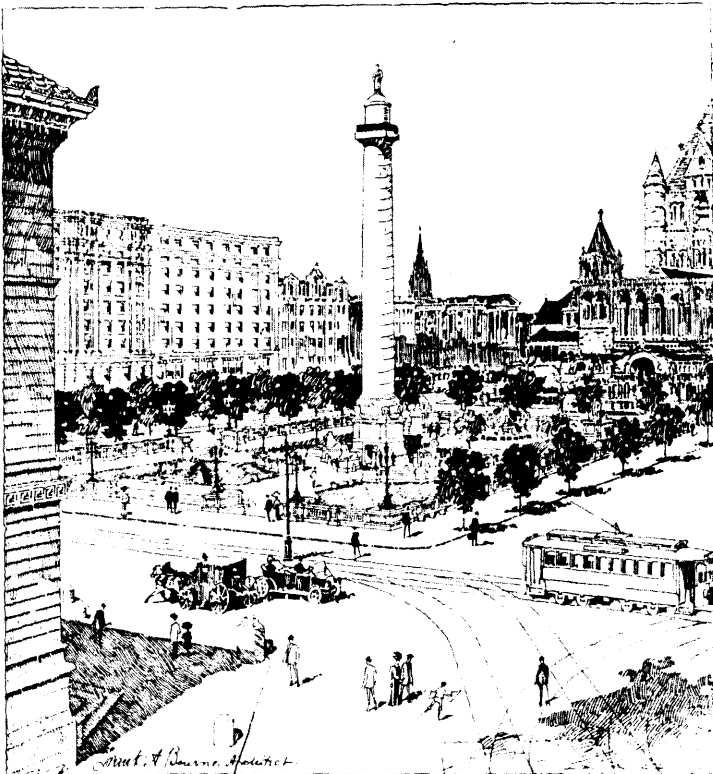
Figure 29: Copley Square as
rearranged, in the "Boston
Transcript," October 26, 1912.
Architect: Frank Bourne.

There were actually several proposals for the redesign of Copley Square around the turn of the century; it is not possible to be absolutely positive which solutions the above editorial was discussing, but Figures 28a, and 28b are the most likely ones.

Nothing, however, resulted from these proposals until approximately seventy years later when Mayor John F. Collins announced a national competition for the redesign of Copley Square in September 1965. Copley Square by then had fallen prey to the confusion of traffic and commerce. The cornerstone, the S.S. Pierce building, had been demolished; the Museum of Fine Arts had been replaced by the Copley Plaza Hotel (then called Sheraton Plaza Hotel); the MIT building had been replaced by the New England Mutual Life Insurance Company; the Museum of Natural History building still existed, but was being used by the Bonwit Teller clothing store; the Harvard Medical School building was occupied by Boston University, but was soon to move in order to make way for the Boston Public Library annex. Huntington Avenue which still bisected the square was a major connector to the Hospital complexes that were located in the Parkhill-Fenway area.

One of the major contributions of this competition was the city's decision to reroute Huntington Avenue and turn Copley Square into a "square." There were as much as six hundred and fifty registrations, out of which one hundred and eighty-three were allowed to submit entries. The winner of the competition was Sasaki, Dawson, and DeMay Associates Inc., landscape architects from Boston. There was a delay in the implementation of the project, because of the city's attempt to increase the budget, which was only $500,000. The project was finally completed in 1970, but the winning entry's fountain and terraces still could not distract the eye from the gaping void left after the demolition of the S.S. Pierce building.(1)

---

(1) The competition will be described in more detail in the form of an evaluation in Chapter Seven.

Figure 30: Aerial view of the "insurance district" showing Copley Square and the 34-story John Hancock Tower in the 1950s. This was the tallest building in the Back Bay before the Prudential Tower and the new 790 feet Hancock Tower was built.

Figure 31: Copley Square ca. 1970, after the implementation of the Sasaki, Dawson, and DeMay design. View from Boston Public Library.

By the time the 1965 competition design was completed, another large insurance company had settled in the Back Bay about a mile away from Copley Square, taking up a tract of land extending from Boylston Street. The Prudential Life Insurance complex featured the city's War Memorial Auditorium (later known as the Hynes Auditorium), a twenty-nine story Sheraton-Boston hotel, and the fifty-two story Prudential Tower which at that time became the tallest building in the Back Bay -- reaching much higher than the existing 43-story John Hancock tower. The entire Prudential complex was completed by 1965. While the city was in the process of implementing the Copley Square winning design, the John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Company, not to be outdone, announced its plans to build a 790-foot high, 60-story office building -- on the very site where the controversial Westminster Chambers had stood.(1)

Although the Hancock tower proposed to exceed the existing height limit many times over, it received special permission to proceed with its plans, despite strong objections from different groups of people in the city. When it was finally completed in 1974, it ran into very serious structural problems which caused the building to vibrate and glass to fly out of its skin. A large amount of money and time were spent to preserve this building which was designed by I.M. Pei & Partners. Finally in October 1976, this two million square feet, 52-story glass tower growing from an 8-story base was opened to the public. The tower actually contributed to the formation of a strong enclosure in Copley Square by reflecting the Trinity Church on its mirrored facade, but it also dwarfed the church, destroyed the focus, and created micro-climatic

---

(1) The Westminster Chambers was the building which had to chop off four feet of cornice and two feet of roof in 1901 because it had exeeded the Copley Square height limit of ninety feet. This building was demolished in the mid-1960s to make way for the 790-foot Hancock tower.

Figure 32: Copley Square and the Hancock Tower in 1984.

problems which will plague Copley Square forever.(1) In response to the construction of the towers by the two insurance companies -- Hancock and Prudential, Lewis Mumford states:

> The effect of piling up this enormous daytime overload of population in the Back Bay, further impeding vehicular circulation, will become increasingly evident and cause further demands for more space-eating expressways and parking garages. Already the aesthetic disintegration of Copley Square is virtually complete. As the glass monoliths rise, the one feature of Boston that is irreplacable -- its unmistakably urbane character -- becomes more completely obliterated; and it will take more than the new City Hall to recover the civic and aesthetic integrity that has been forfeited for the sake of profit, publicity, and technocratic panache.(2)

Obviously the city of Boston did not agree with Lewis Mumford. In 1984, another multi-storied complex -- Copley Place, was built on the southeast corner of Copley Square, on the Massachusetts Turnpike air rights site. Part of this site had been occupied by the S.S. Pierce building.

Before the 1965 competition to redesign Copley Square was announced, Philip Johnson had been commissioned to enlarge the Boston Public Library in 1964. Later it was decided that instead of enlarging the McKim, Mead, and White masterpiece, it would be preserved as a reference/special library, and an annex would be built to accommodate the general library with open stacks. The existing Harvard Medical School building, then being used by Boston University, was demolished to make way for the new Philip Johnson building. The library annex, considered one of Philip Johnson's better works, was completed in 1972. Although dramatically different from the existing library, Johnson's building does respect the exterior shape, mass and height of the McKim, Mead, and White building. The new building fronts Boylston street,

---

(1) Micro-climatic effects caused by the Hancock tower are discussed in Chapter Six.

(2) Lewis Mumford, Op. Cit. p.33.

Figure 33: Boston Public Library. Left: original building by McKim, Mead, and White. Right: annexe by Philip Johnson. In the background is the 790 feet Hancock Tower under construction.

with a very accentuated entry into a spacious lobby. Since this entrance is used as the main entrance today, it has led to minimal use of the original library entrance facing Copley Square. As a result, the rapport between the Boston Public Library and Copley Square has been greatly diminished.

FILLING THE "HOLE": COPLEY PLACE

In 1965, the Boston *General Plan* recommended a large scale development in the "hole" left behind by the S.S. Pierce store. Several developers and architectural groups attempted, without success, to create a feasible project on the Massachusetts Turnpike air rights site (the official name for the "hole"). The site's physical constraints, particularly the Turnpike and exit ramps, rail tracks and platform, and awkward vehicular access problems, discouraged serious development proposals. However, recent growth in the regional and local market, and improvements in the surrounding environment seem to have contributed to the present potentials of the site.(1) The local factors, according to UIDC (Urban Investment and Development Company), which helped create the potentials of the site were:

a) The succesful completion and rent-up of the 52-story John Hancock Tower.

b) The renovation of the Copley Plaza Hotel.

c) The completion of the Boston Public Library addition by Philip Johnson.

d) Market demand for office and retail space in the Back Bay, and demand for more hotel rooms to satisfy Boston's deficit in accommodations.

In early 1977, UIDC, the Copley Place developer, expressed to the State of Massachusetts its interest in developing the Turnpike site. In response, the State

(1) *Copley Place: Project Information,* Urban Investment and Development Company. October 1980. Boston, Massachusetts. p.1.
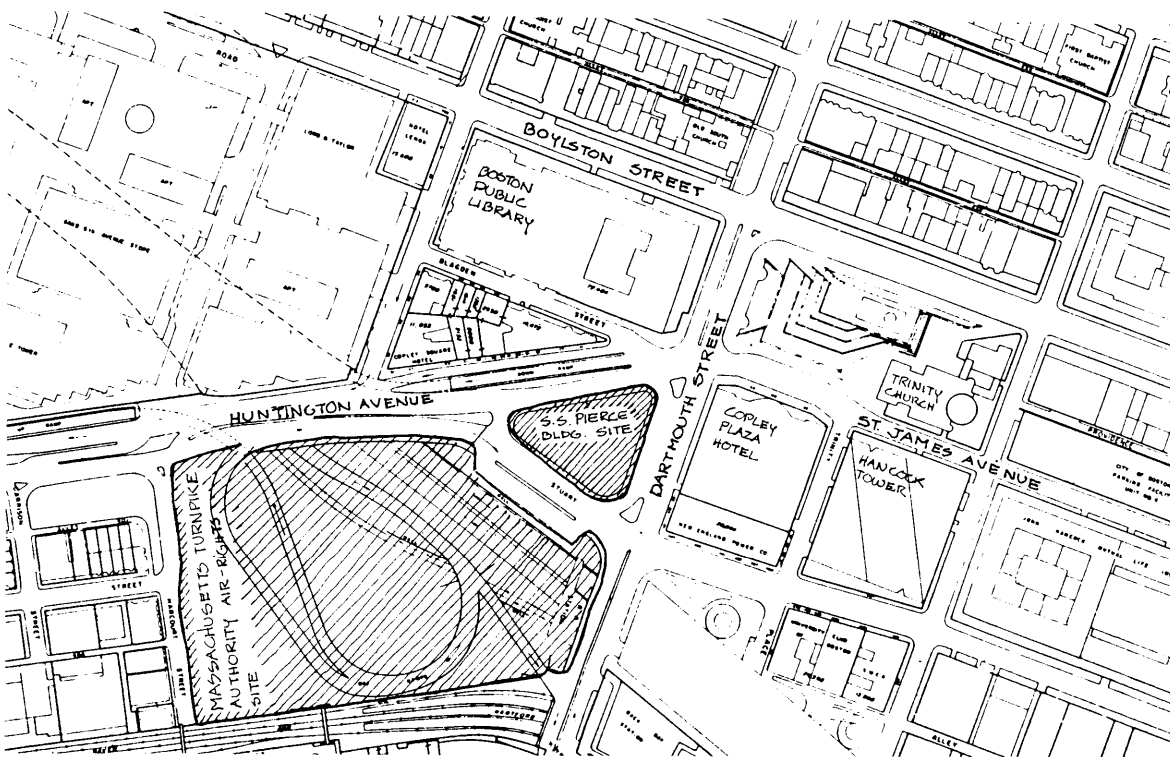
Figure 34: Map showing the site vacated by the S.S. Pierce building, and the Massachusetts Turnpike Air Rights site.
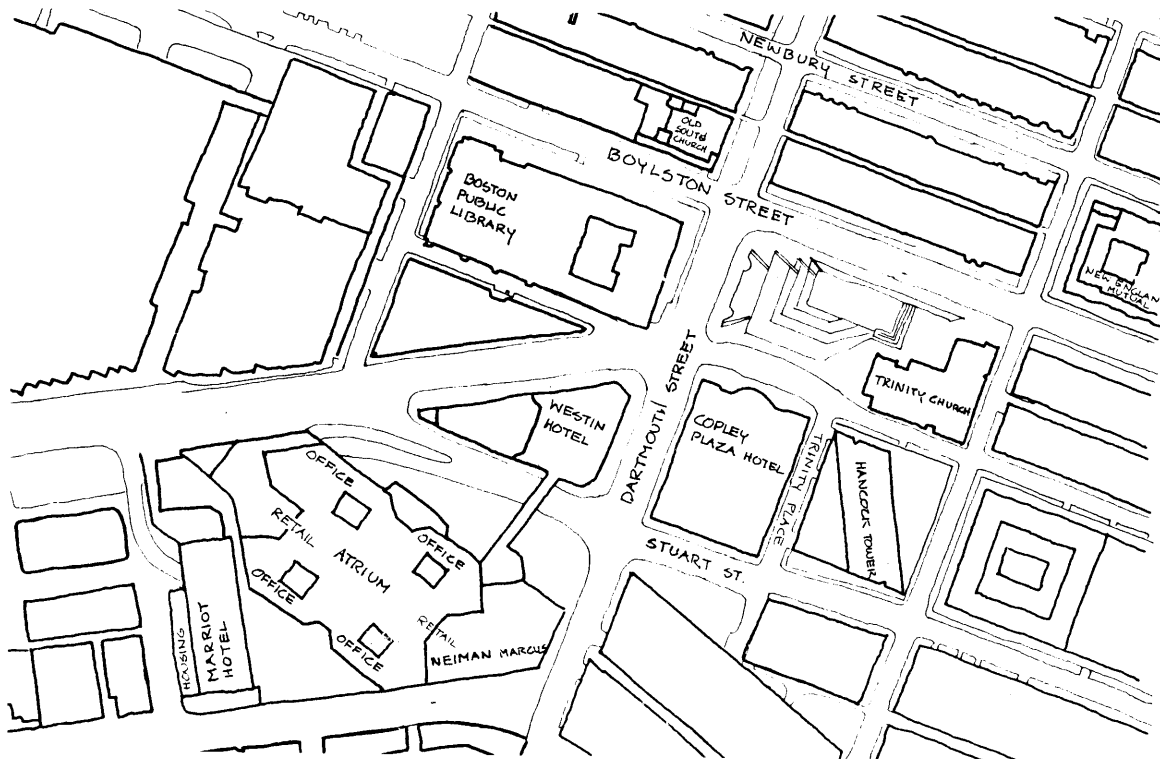
Figure 35: Map showing Copley Place on the S.S. Pierce building and the Massachusetts Turnpike Air Rights sites.

decided that instead of requesting competitive proposals for development, it would work directly with a single developer, which would be UIDC. After a long series of negotiations, protests, and controversies from the public and private sector, construction began in November 1980. The negotiations were conducted by the State Planning office and Copley Square's Citizen's Review Committee (CRC). By February 1984, the complex of mixed uses was opened to the public. The entire project, which cost an estimated $500 million, is composed of:

- an 804-room Westin luxury hotel

- a 1,109-room Marriot convention hotel

- 700,000 square feet of commercial office space

- a 370,000 square feet retail center – anchored by a 100,000 square feet Niemen-Marcus (one of the most expensive stores in the USA) specialty department store – with shops, cinemas and community oriented retail stores

- 100 mixed income apartments

- 1,432 parking spaces

THE CENTENNIAL EFFORT: Second Copley Square Competition

Along with the development of Copley Place, an on-going debate and discussion over the new problems of the Square itself was also in progress. In 1983, when Copley Square celebrated its 100th birthday, a committee was formed under the chairmanship of Kenneth A. Himmel (senior vice-president of UIDC) to address the question of redesigning Copley Square once again. The committee was aptly named Copley Square Centennial Committee. On December 15, 1983, Robert J. Ryan, Director of the Boston Redevelopment Authority, announced a nation-wide competition. The reason:

> The present design, in existence since 1969, has been subjected to great change and the influences of the newly built environment over the past 13 years. Current community expectations have taken hold. The New

Figure 36: Copley Place viewed from the southwest corner of Copley Square.

> Copley Square must address different needs, uses and concerns in the changing and varying conditions of its borders.(1)

The competition was set up in two stages. Five finalists were selected from the first stage. These five finalists worked closely with the BRA and the Centennial Committee, and entered the second stage of the competition, from which the final winner, Dean Abbot of Clarke & Rapuano Inc. of New York City, was selected.(2)

---

(1) *Copley Square: Competition Rules and Regulations.* Boston Redevelopment Authority, Boston, Massachusetts. 1983. p.3.

(2) Details of this competition will be discussed in Chapter Nine, in the form of an evaluation.

PART TWO:
OBSERVATIONS AND CRITERIA

INTRODUCTION

In this part of the study, criteria for evaluation of Copley Square are developed based on site observation, introspection and existing literature on Copley Square and urban squares in general. Although these criteria carry some general design and planning suggestions, they are actually formulated to evaluate design and/or planning proposals for Copley Square. The criteria developed in this part are used to evaluate the 1966 and 1984 Copley Square competitions, both the program and the winning designs. It should be mentioned that these criteria are naturally value-bound to the author's concepts of the normative qualities of urban squares and their relationship to the city. There are three chapters in this part: each chapter beginning with a discussion in relation to the criteria to be established, and ending with a list of the criteria.

Chapter Five addressed the historical context of Copley Square. Essentially this chapter reiterates some of the significant aspects of Copley Square which already exist in Copley Square and cannot be recreated. These aspects, however, can be lost if they are not reinforced or retained.

Chapter Six deals with the local context of Copley Square -- its quality of space, micro-climate issues, and the quality of its edge conditions. The criteria developed in

this chapter involve those aspects of Copley Square which can be changed or manipulated by short-term design or planning acts.

Chapter Seven establishes criteria which deal with Copley Square in the context of Boston. The issues discussed here concern the city of Boston and thus, are issues which involve the management and maintenance of Copley Square and long term planning decisions which will make Copley Square a more perceptible space in the city fabric of Boston.

CHAPTER FIVE: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

CHARACTER AND ROLE OF COPLEY SQUARE

The essential character of Copley Square is that of a historic and monumental space: a space which symbolizes great public architecture, urban design, city planning, education, arts, science and religion. Thus, its role is to create a purpose, a spirit for the city of Boston -- a symbolic gesture which is recognizable by all, a landmark for visitors which stands witness to the architecture, culture, and ideals of a city.

By being the unique and important space that Copley Square is, it becomes a very special place in Boston -- one which cannot be found or created elsewhere in the city. Boston has other important and historic squares, such as Dock Square/Faneuil Hall/Quincy Market, Christian Science Church Center, Louisberg Square and Government Center Plaza. Their character and role, however, are different from that of Copley Square.

Dock Square/Faneuil Hall/Quincy Market: On a market day, Dock Square would have been crowded with farmers' carts filled with produce from nearby as well as all across the surrounding countryside. They brought their goods to the market house built by Peter Faneuil in 1742, aptly named Faneuil Hall; it was a chance to compare quality and price. This was the first public market place in the city of Boston. Later, a meeting hall for town affairs was added to Faneuil Hall which also made it a political center. Partially destroyed by a fire in 1747, it was rebuilt in 1763. In 1806, the city commissioned Charles Bullfinch to enlarge it. In 1823, Mayor Josiah Quincy added another market hall now called Quincy Market. Today Faneuil Hall is called
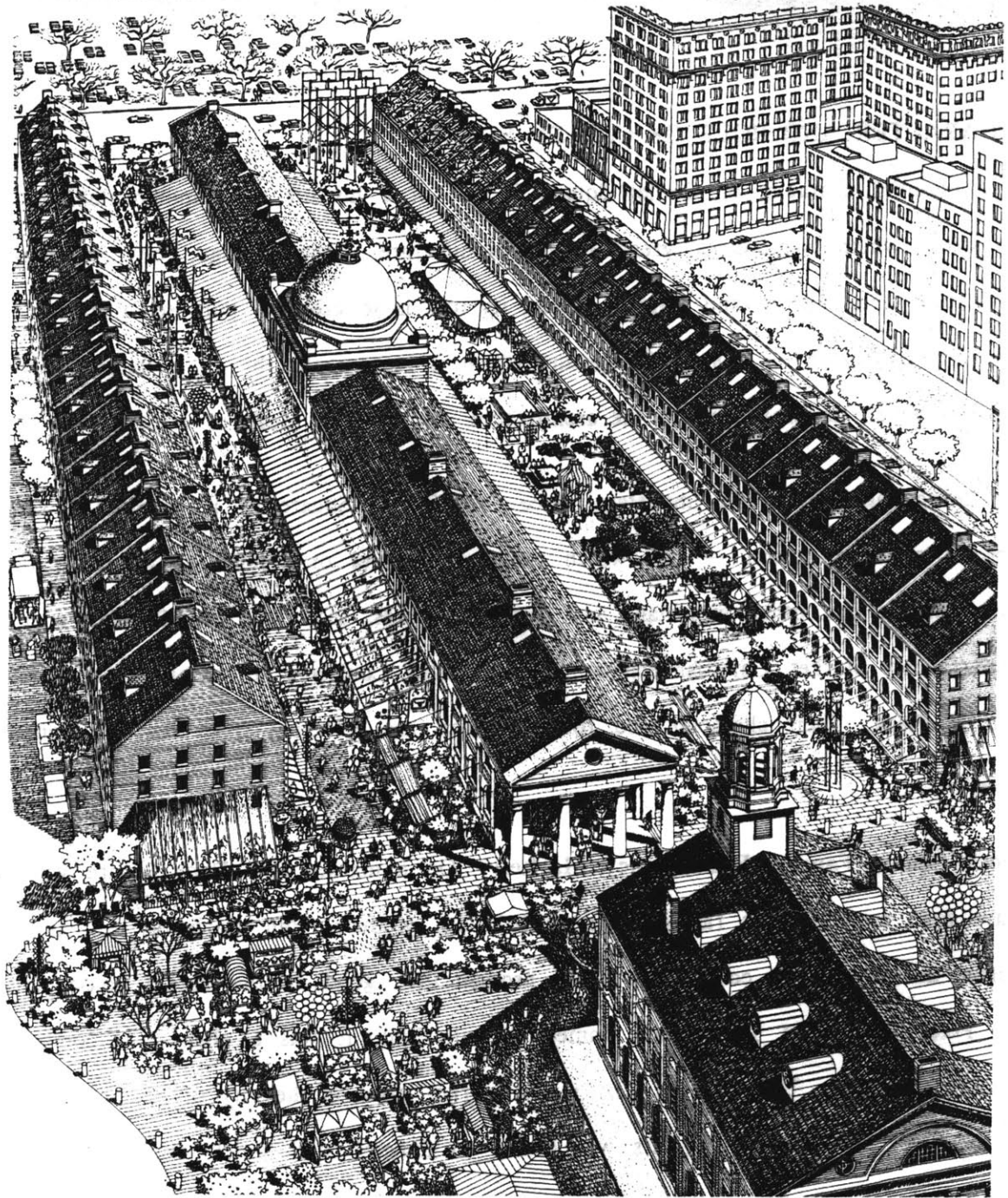
Figure 37: Dock Square/Fanueil Hall/Quincy Market.

the "Cradle of Liberty", but along with Dock Square and Quincy Market, it has been adapted to a twentieth century market place. It has specialty shops, fast food places, restaurants, and bars. Across Dock Square, one can walk up to the City Hall and Government Center Plaza. Thus, this place captures moments and traditions of the past and celebrates them every day.

Christian Science Church Center: This square was formed by clearing and relieving the Mother Church of the Christian Scientists of its "undistinguished" neighbor.(1) The Mother Church and its great Byzantine-Italian Renaissance limestone-domed extension were given prominence by clearing everything around it. A twenty-six story adminstrative building was added, along with a long colonnade building with offices and service functions. The long reflecting pool, which is part of the cooling system of the complex, is the focus of the square. On one side of the pool is a circular fountain, and a quadrant shaped building on the other. Together these elements indeed are a delight for the city-bound strollers, who also enjoy the colorful plantings, shade-trees, and benches. The complex, designed by I.M. Pei & Partners, is a very attractive piece of design, and typical of Pei's work -- explicitly geometrized shapes and lines. The square is located on the south side of Huntington Avenue, behind the Prudential center; an "instantly created" place, but nonetheless very effective in providing relief from the congestion and pollution of the city.

Louisberg Square: Laid out in 1834, and completely built up in 1847, it is a private residential square which epitomizes the special wonders of the Beacon Hill environment. The square is an oval-shaped piece of land between Pinckney and Mount Vernon

---

(1) Walter Muir Whitehill. Op. Cit. p.227. I put the word undistinguished in quote marks, because one gets the impression from Whitehill's book that, whatever is odinary looking and needs repair is undistinguished and ought to be removed. This was actually considered to be "urban renewal" in the 1960s, especially in Boston, where some poor sections of the city were demolished to make way for "clean and healthy environments."

Figure 38: Christian Science Church Center.

Figure 39: Louisberg Square in 1984

Streets. It is a justly famous piece of privately owned urban design, with the park in the center ringed by a cast-iron fence and cobbled streets. Elegant townhouses face onto the square from all sides. This is the area where John Singleton Copley (the painter after whom Copley Square was named) lived until he went to England. The park has small sculptures at each end facing out; Christopher Columbus to the North, and Aristides the Just to the South. Planting around the edges creates a layer of privacy inside the park with benches facing each other across the green. In summer the trees and shrubs here diminish the impact of the surrounding brick buildings and create a serene place of retreat.

Government Center Plaza: In 1959, the City Planning Board released a plan for a new Government Center in Scollay Square. Until 1835, Scollay Square was graced by the Gardnier Greene mansion, and later in the nineteenth century by the dignified neighbor Pemberton Square. In the twentieth century, Scollay Square became the Boston center for tattooing parlors, shooting galleries, and burlesque houses. Although dear to the hearts of enlisted men and merchant seamen of many nationalities, it had become a shabby and tumbledown area. Today, the new Government Center Plaza, instead of Scollay Square, proudly boasts the new City Hall designed by Gerhard M. Kallman, Noel M. Mckinnell, and Edward F. Knowles, who received an AIA gold medal for their design. To the north of the City Hall is the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Federal Building -- two 26-story towers fronting Cambridge Street and the plaza. The building was designed by the Architects Collaborative Group. When this whole project was completed, it sparked an urban renewal process unequaled anywhere for the quality of its architecture.(1) The plaza is paved in red brick and divided into several spaces by level changes, which are used for protests, political rallies, speeches, sports

_____

(1) Boston Society of Architects, Op. Cit. p.14

Figure 40: Government Center Plaza

celebrations, etc. It is a square which symbolizes the political freedom and committment of the city of Boston.

Copley Square is quite different from all of the squares just described. It is the place which made the Back Bay and Boston known in the Western world as a cultural center for the arts and sciences.

–   Here, stood the Museum of Natural History and the Museum of Fine Arts which exhibited the French Impressionists for the first time in America.

–   Here, one of the world's best educational and research institutions, MIT was established, where the famous Lowell Lectures originated.

–   Here, in the mid–nineteenth century, President U.S. Grant came to attend one of the greatest musical events in America; it was followed by another such event the next year, in which Johann Strauss came to conduct his own music.

–   Here, in the late–nineteenth century Trinity Church's rector Phillips Brooks, and the half dozen well known churches within a few blocks, made the Back Bay a notable religious center.

–   Here, two acknowledged masterpieces of nineteenth century architecture still stand today –– the Trinity Church and the Boston Public Library.

–   Here, two grid systems "collide" –– the South End and the Back Bay grid. These two land filled areas are considered to be among the finest examples of American urban design: "If it is impossible to write a history of city design or landscape architecture in the United States without reference to the Back Bay, it is equally impossible to write the story of American Architecture."(1)

Thus, Copley Square has the potential to offer a variety and choice among other public spaces in Boston. A variety which is essential to any city. After all, what is significant about a city? Not that it is a conglomeration of people for the convenience of working, shopping, eating, and so forth, nor is it an amalgamation of homogenized places which serve "functional" needs. The significance of a city is that it is a place where whatever is highest in a civilization is being most actively and vividly carried on. The city is the locus of a civilization's conscience; when it ceases

───────────────

(1) Lewis Mumford, Op. Cit. p.27.
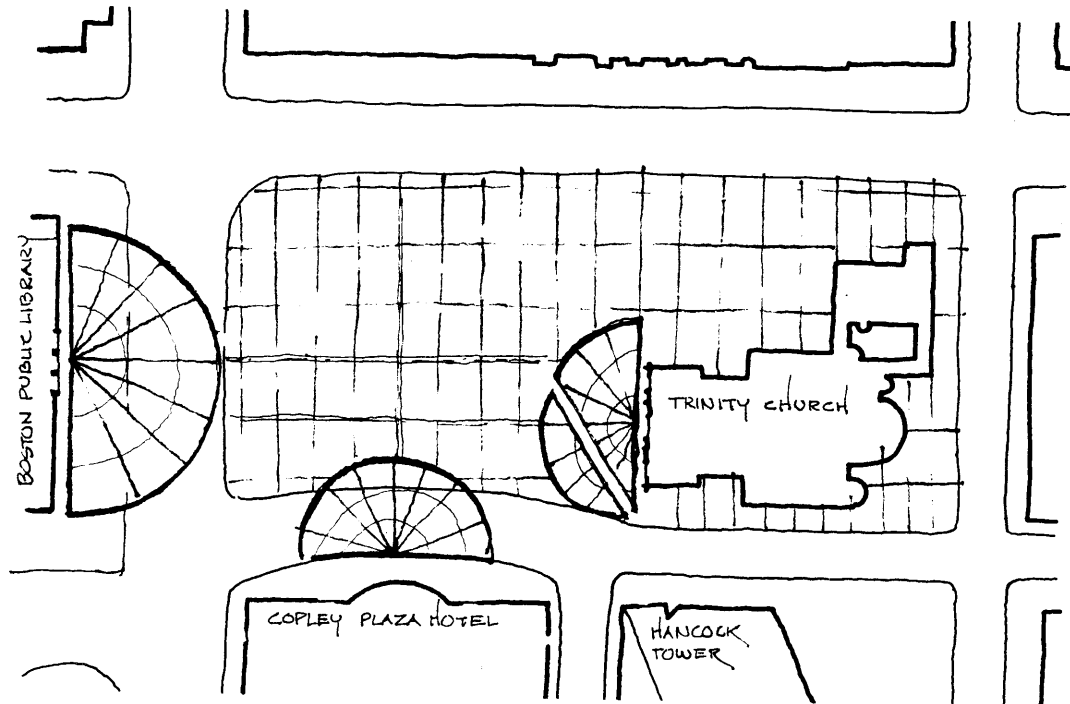
Figure 41: The historic buildings. emphasized
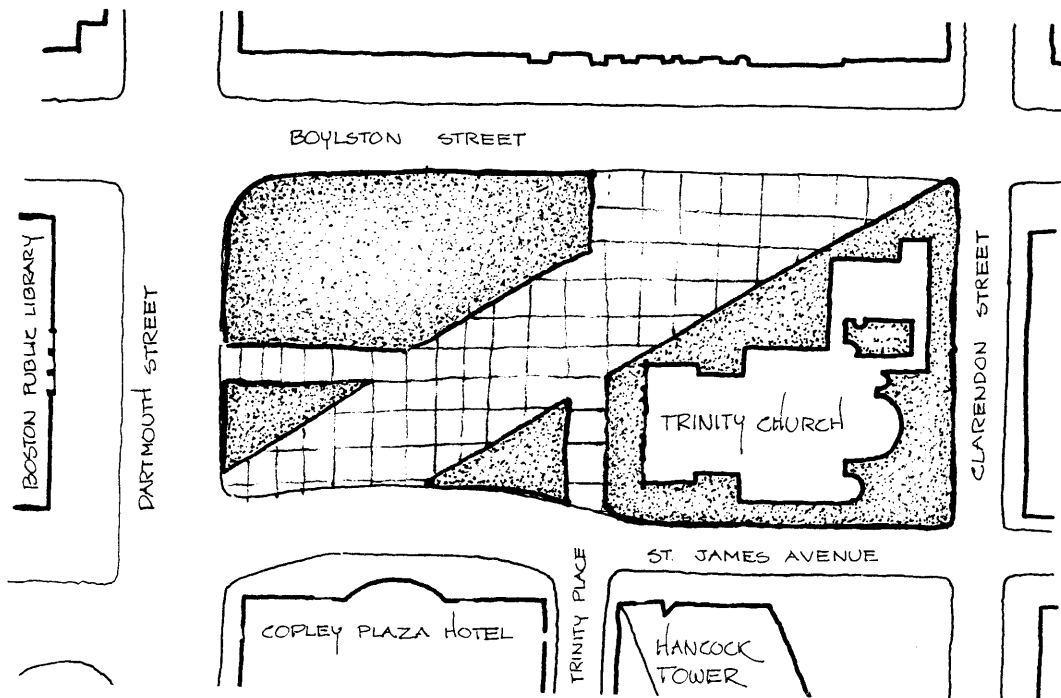
Figure 42: The old street pattern

to be so, it reduces itself into a mere population center. The implication of such a concept of the city is that the city must provide a variety of choice in the aspects of living and working as interpreted by groups whose preferences are wide at variance. Besides providing spaces where people can work, rest and be entertained, the city must provide spaces which also symbolize the spirit and ideals of the city.

CRITERIA BASED ON HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Any future plans for Copley Square should establish its distinct and identifiable character. Its historical context should not be glossed over by providing "trendy" features which have been proven to be succesful in drawing people elsewhere in the city. Copley Square's existence in the city of Boston is validated by its historical context and by being a square which is different from any other in Boston. Copley Square does not have to be a public gathering place in the fashion of Dock Square/Faneuil Hall/Quincy Market. Thus, the set of criteria which assures the proper character and role of Copley Square are:

1.   **The historic buildings should be emphasized:**   Three historic buildings --- Trinity Church, Boston Public Library, and Copley Plaza Hotel, and one important modern architecture building --- the Hancock Tower, form a major portion of the enclosing walls of the square. Their facades and entries should be visually accessible and emphasized by paving design or other elements which clearly express their relationship to the square (see Figure 41).

2.   **The past should be visible:**   Copley Square is located on the collision of two grid systems and was formed by consolidating one trapezoidal and two triangular pieces of land. The plan of the Trinity Church already expresses an old street pattern; through design of the surface, the complete street pattern could be expressed (see Figure 42). This will allow the square to tell part of

its own history and celebrate the collision of the two grid systems -- which are considered to be among the finest examples of urban design in America.

3. **The religious, educational and cultural origins should be given priority:** Through the choice of materials, motifs and color, and arrangement of night lighting, the Trinity Church and Boston Public Library could be given emphasis. The overall effect of the design should not give the feeling that one gets in Quincy Market. Food service, beach umbrellas, movable chairs, vendors on the square itself are ingredients which are suited to squares which are essentially marketplaces; they are inappropriate for a place such as Copley Square.

4. **Activities should be programmed which relate to the history of Copley Square:** Through design one can express the history and importance of a place to a certain degree; this must be reinforced by programming tours, and periodical festivals, specifically in conjunction with the surrounding institutions, to provide a learning experience and entertain people with Copley Square's architectural heritage and historical significance in the Back Bay. For example, Trinity Church and Boston Public Library are not only masterpieces of American architecture, but also are fine examples of the collaboration between architects and artists. Trinity Church, which is one of the first buildings in America to take advantage of such a collaboration, contains the work of John La Farge and his collegues. The Boston Public Library contains murals done by John Singer Sargent.

CHAPTER SIX: LOCAL CONTEXT

SPATIAL QUALITY

Although Copley Square is one of the country's most admired and well-known urban squares, it has always lacked the fine-tuned aspects of classic urban squares such as the Campo in Siena, Campodiogli in Rome, or Rockefeller Center in New York. The reasons for Copley Square's success despite its shortcomings in terms of quality space can be explained by: 1. the surrounding buildings do manage to give a sense of volume and enclosure; 2. the streets which form the boundary of the square make it a distinct entity; 3. the institutions and buildings which have existed in the past and exist at present have given the square an image which has over-ridden the aspect of a fine-tuned architectural space.

This does not imply, however, that one should leave Copley Square as it is and not venture in the possibility of making a better sense of enclosure in Copley Square. Based on the studies done by Paul Zucker and Camillo Sitte, there are several general ways of achieving a strong sense of enclosure or space. Three of the most common ways are as follows:(1)

(1) For details on how classic urban squares achieved enclosure and space, see: Paul Zucker, *Town and Square,* ch. II and III. The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA. 1959. Camillo Sitte, *City Planning According to Artistic Principles,* ch. I-V, Phaidon Press. London, England. 1965.

CLARENDON

TRINITY
CHURCH

BOYLSTON BLOCK

HANCOCK TOWER

COPLEY PLAZA HOTEL

DARTMOUTH

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

CLOSE PROXIMITY OF TRINITY
CHURCH AND THE BOYLSTON
BLOCK, PROVIDES A STRONG
SENSE OF ENCLOSURE

FEELING OF ENCLOSURE IS MAXIMUM
HERE, BECAUSE OF CLOSE PROXIMITY
OF ENCLOSING WALLS, AND THE
REFLECTION OF TRINITY CHURCH ON
HANCOCK TOWER.

ENCLOSURE WEAKENS
HERE; SURROUNDING
STRUCTURES ARE TOO
FAR APART

ENCLOSURE WEAKENS
HERE, SURROUNDING STRUCTURES
ARE TOO FAR APART

Figure 43: An analytical diagram of the enclosure of Copley Square. Darker areas show greater sense of enclosure.

1. By creating an enclosure, one can achieve a space which is self-contained. The square is closed off by surrounding structures except for street openings or entry ways. The enclosing structures can be colonnades, arcades, walls of buildings (see Figure 44a).

2. By establishing a dominant element, one achieves a space directed. The square contains a dominant element which may be a church, obelisk, or even contrasting vista, by virtue of the dominant element the space is held together or directed to it (see Figure 44b).

3. By placing a nuclear element, one can achieve a space which is centered around it. The sheer size, monumentality or visual quality of a central object will create a feeling of space and volume around it (see Figure 44c). The pyramids in Egyptian deserts achieve this quality, and so does the Washington Monument in Washington D.C.

Copley Square is definitely a closed square. As mentioned before, however, it does lack the fine-tuned aspects of a closed square, one of the reasons being that the surrounding streets are too wide. Figure 43 shows some of the weaker and stronger areas in Copley Square with respect to a feeling of enclosure. The actual correction of these weak areas imply additional structure or narrowing of the street openings, such as moving the Boston Public Library closer or the Boylston Street block closer -- none of which is feasible. Even if we cannot move blocks and buildings, however, we can refine the spatial quality by altering the facades which surround Copley Square. Rhythm and repetition in enclosing walls enhance the spatial quality of squares. In antiquity, from the Hellenistic agora to the Imperial Forum in Rome, continuity and context of the framing structures were achieved by the *Portelus (colonnade)*, the
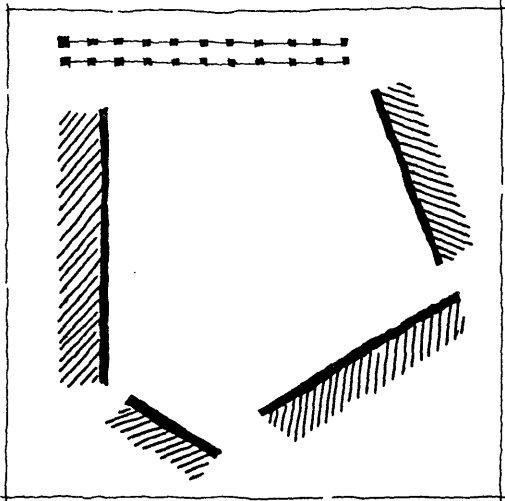
Figure 44a: The space self-contained
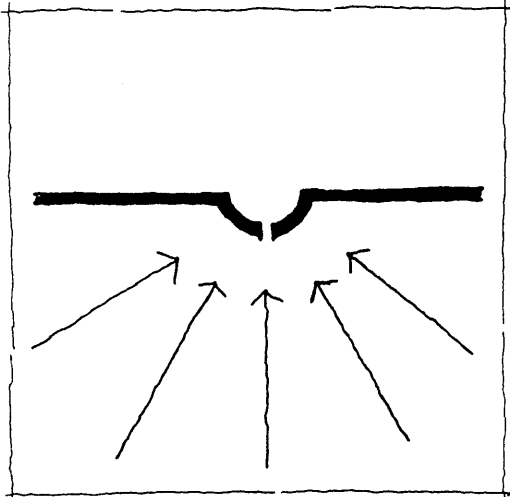
Figure 44b: The space directed
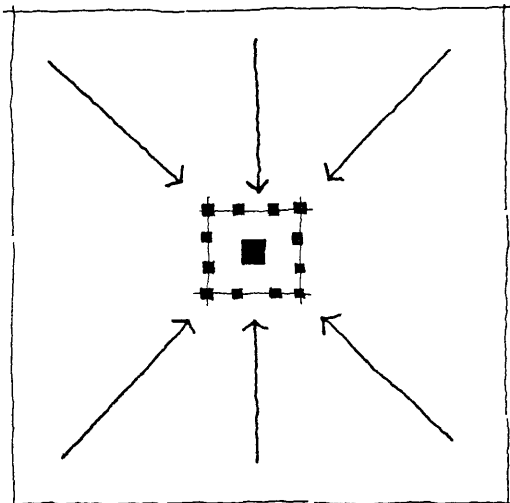
Figure 44c: The space centered

rhythmical repetition of the vertical direction, through columns.(1) A classic example is Bernini's colonnade in St. Peter's Square, Rome.

One cannot build a colonnade around Copley Square, but the facades of the Boston Public Library, Copley Plaza Hotel and Trinity Church give us a clue. Within themselves they have an order which is expressed by color and similar elements. The Boston Public Library has its string of windows, as does Copley Plaza Hotel, and Trinity Church has its arches, columns, and color. The buildings on Boylston Street, however, have no sense of order in color, height or facade elements. By inserting order in this side of Copley Square, its spatial form can be much more unified and perceivable. Precedents already exist in Newbury Street, where a certain sense of order is distinguishable. A similar treatment of the Boylston Street block facing Copley Square would significantly enhance the spatial quality of Copley Square.

MICRO-CLIMATIC FACTORS

Boston is known for its climatic atrocities: cold and windy in winter, hot and humid in summer. Copley Square is a victim of strong winds and shading caused by surrounding buildings in winter. Both in summer and in winter, winds hit the broad and narrow side of the Hancock Tower; the normal prevailing winds, when coming through any of the buildings around Copley Square, create very high speed wind zones (see Figure 46 for wind movement diagram).

Almost as perverse as the effect of wind on the square, is the effect of the sun. In winter, the square is in shade from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. In summer, the square is exposed to the sun for most of the day, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. The heat is absorbed by

---

(1) Paul Zucker. Op. Cit. p.10.

Figure 45: Facades of Boylston Street facing Copley Square, 1984.

the paving all day, and released in the evening (see Figure 47 for shading on Copley Square by surrounding buildings).(1)

How to deal with micro-climate in Copley Square is a design issue which must be weighed against other issues. For example: for the sake of protection against the weather, one could surround the square with semi-enclosed arcades, but that would also block-off the surrounding buildings from the square. Landscape elements can help, but they too will cause obstruction of view. A long-term goal may be to place activities under the plaza of the square. Considering the harshness of the climatic conditions, little can be done without creating visual barriers to the surrounding buildings or decreasing the visibility of the square from the streets. Serious efforts should be made to place activities below the square, such as, a general reading room of the Boston Public Library and/or an exhibition space. Franklin Court of the Independence National Park in Philadelphia, is a good precedent. It features a "ghost" house of Benjamin Franklin on the surface along with an eighteenth century garden, below which is a museum and an auditorium.(2)

PERCEPTION OF THE SQUARE FROM STREETS

When Copley Square was at the peak of its fame around the turn of the century, it was only a triangular piece of land covered with grass. One reason for its popularity was that it was surrounded by very prominent institutions. The other reason was probably that the perception of the square was much easier than it is now. This is because the movement system around the square was much slower -- perception time was longer. An additional factor to better perception of the square was that people

---

(1) The climatic data are taken from 1983 Boston Development Authority studies, done for the 1984 Copley Square competition.

(2) For a brief write up on this project, see *Progressive Architecture,* April 1976, p.69-70.

98

MODERATE BREEZE
UPTO 15 M.P.H.

MODERATE GALE
UPTO 25 M.P.H.

STRONG BREEZE
UPTO 20 M.P.H.

GALE
UPTO 33 M.P.H.

TRINITY
CHURCH

HANCOCK TOWER

BOYLSTON BLOCK

COPLEY PLAZA HOTEL

WINTER WIND

SUMMER WIND

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
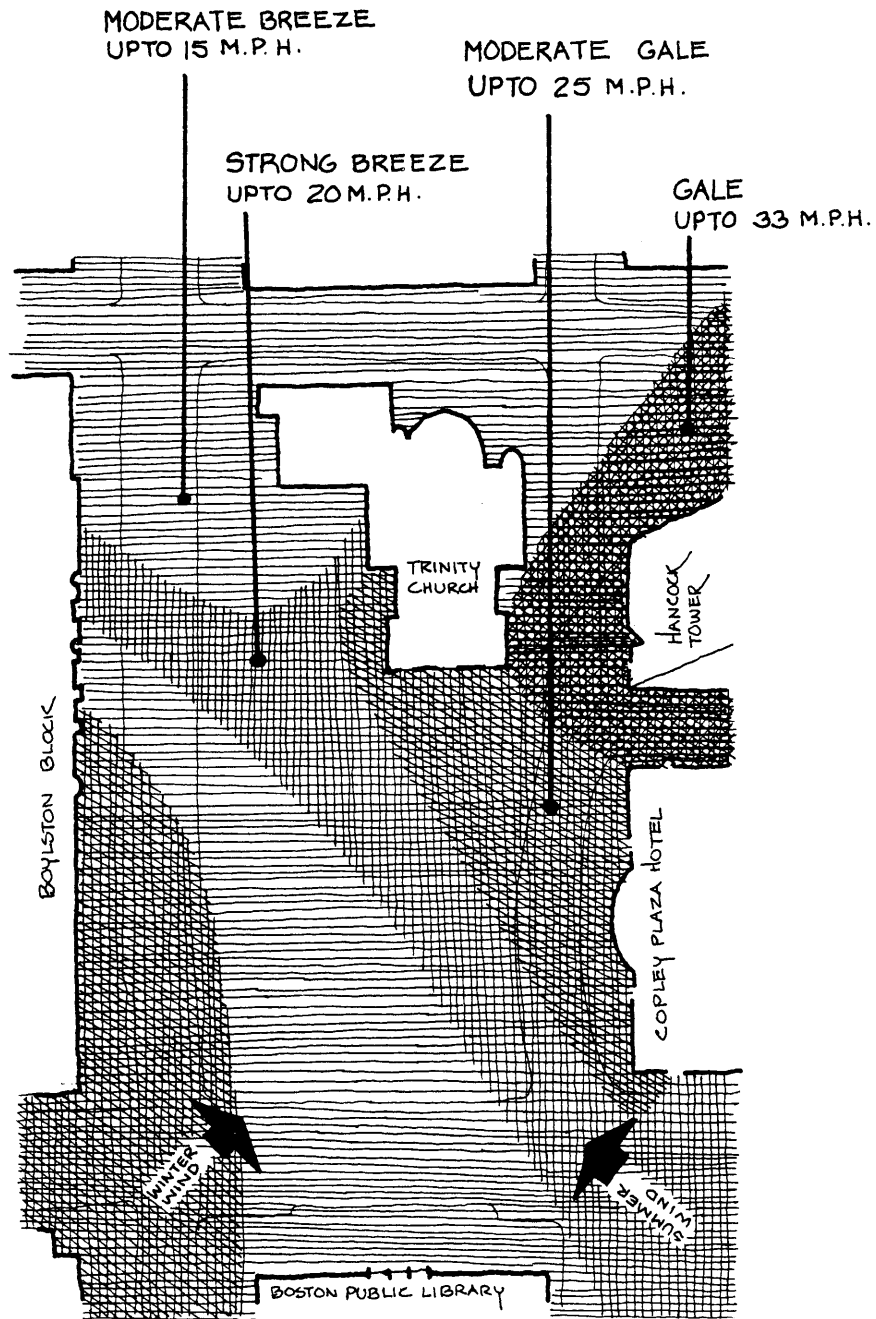
Figure 46: Wind movement in Copley Square

drove or walked through the square since Huntington Avenue used to bisect the square. When Huntington Avenue was closed off in 1965, it actually worked counter-productively to the perception of the square, at least for the person who was passing by. Today people pass around the square, and are not aware of it until they are actually beside it.

This new development must be considered in today's designs for Copley Square, because perception of the square from the streets is also very important. Urban squares, besides being gathering places, are also elements of a city by which one can orient oneself to the city. People should not have to be in the square to be aware of it. A final, very important reason for the square to be visually accessible to people outside the square is related to a social phenomenon. It has been found that places which are visually screened are prone to be inhabited by undesirables, and are also scenes of crime, such as muggings. One of the major problems of the 1966 design was that it was visually inaccessible from the streets. This caused the square to be a place for drug-dealers, winos, and muggers.

EDGE ACTIVITIES

To establish an image of a public square which is a symbol for the city, the edge activities of Copley Square should be complementary. At present, the activities on the edge of the square are very inappropriate; apart from Trinity Church and the Boston Public Library, all the other buildings are private enterprises (see Figure 49). The buildings on Boylston Street could be slowly transformed to uses which are more public in nature: museums, exhibitions, halls or small art schools which may even be privately owned. While the uses on Boylston Street can be transformed, the uses of the Hancock Tower and Copley Plaza Hotel probably cannot be transformed. These enterprises could at least insert some kind of function on the ground level which would be open to the public. The idea is to make the edges as much as public as the
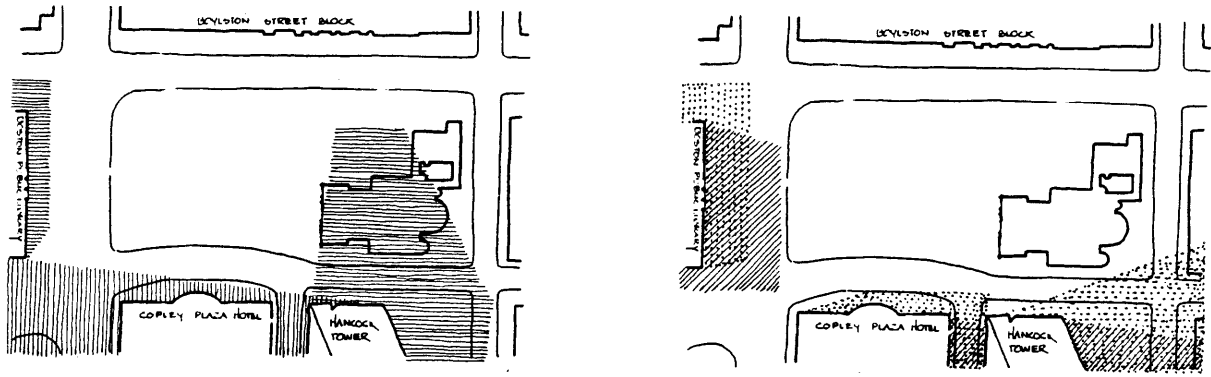
SUMMER
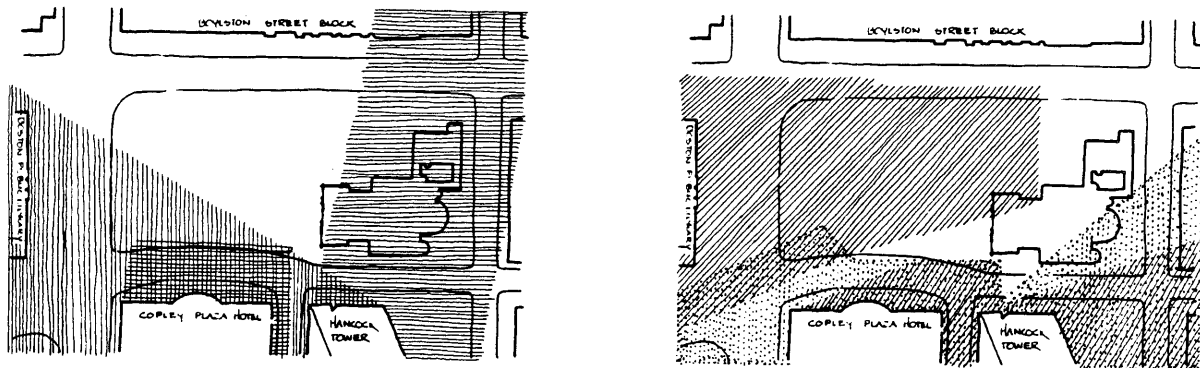
SPRING/FALL

WINTER

8 A.M.

12 NOON

2 P.M.

4 P.M.
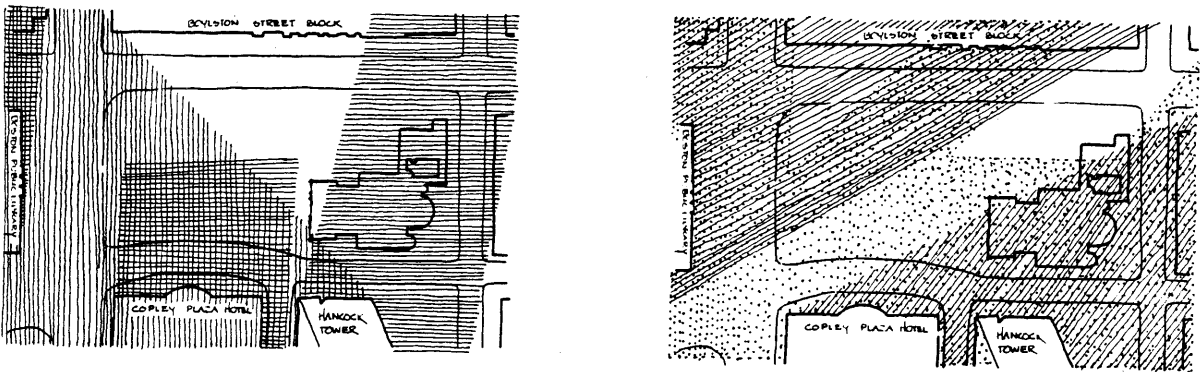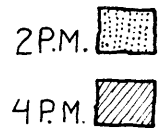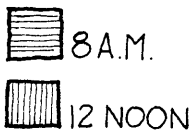
Figure 47: Shading on Copley Square

square itself; present uses on the ground level around the square are mostly office space and banks which are very insupportive to a public place. Just a block away from the square, Newbury Street boasts private art galleries, specialty shops, and restaurants which greatly foster the "publicness" of the street. Careful research will point to appropriate uses around Copley Square which can also induce a greater degree of "publicness" about the square.

CRITERIA BASED ON LOCAL CONTEXT

Copley Square can probably survive the way it is; redesigning the square itself will perhaps enhance its quality, but minimally. Significant improvements will occur only if redesign of the square and its edges are conceived together. While the changes in the square can be immediate, changes in the edges can be incremental so as to include variables that may come up later. The criteria which address changes in the square and its edges are:

1.   **The enclosing walls should be visually harmonious and ordered:**   At present, this applies to the block on Boylston Street facing Copley Square. If in the future, new buildings are built around the square, they should follow certain visual principles which are compatible with the image of the square.

2.   **Micro-climatic factors should be dealt with:**   Copley Square's hostile weather conditions can be dealt with limitedly using landscape elements. The possibility of placing activities below the square should be seriously explored.

3.   **The square should be visually perceptible from the streets:**   The floor of the square should be at least at the same level as the sidewalks which bound it, if possible, the level of the square should be a little higher. The paving of the square can spill over to the side streets; this will allow passers-by in
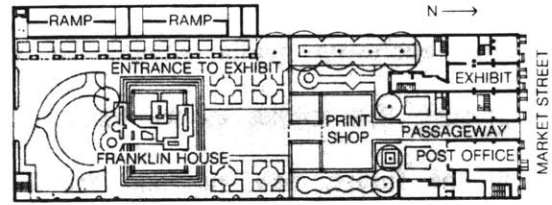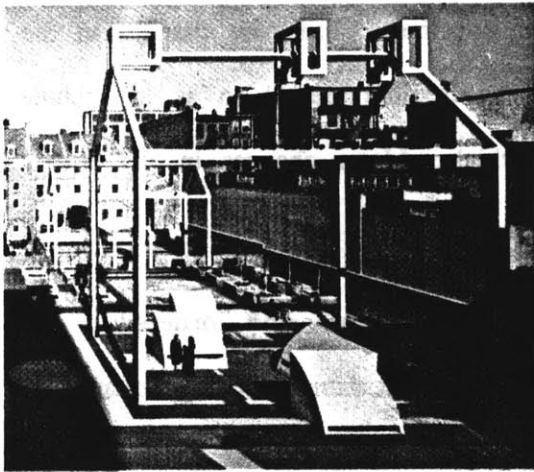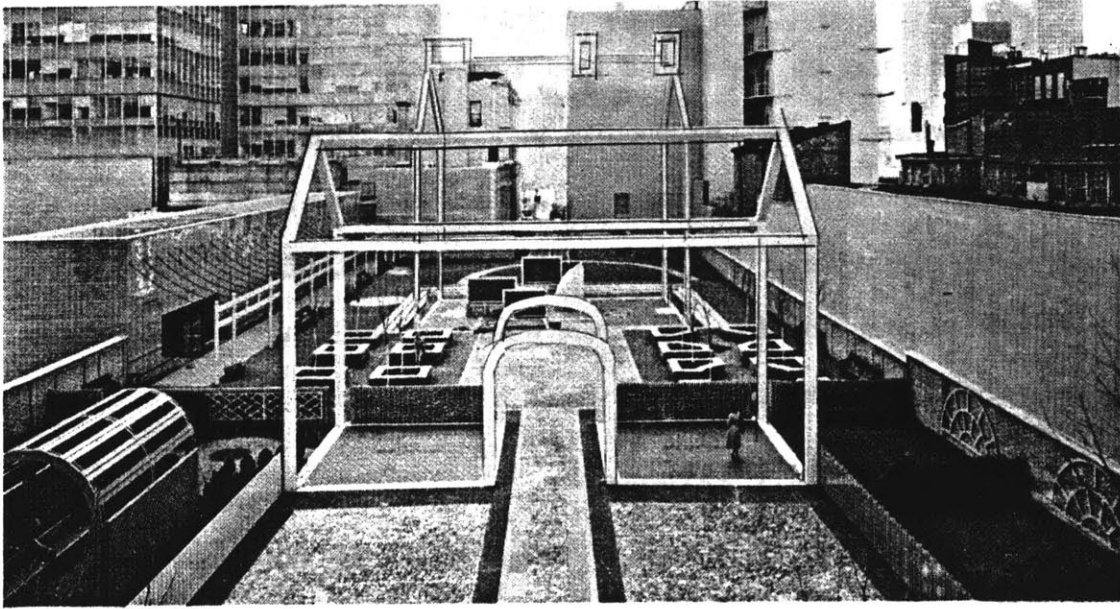
GARDEN LEVEL PLAN
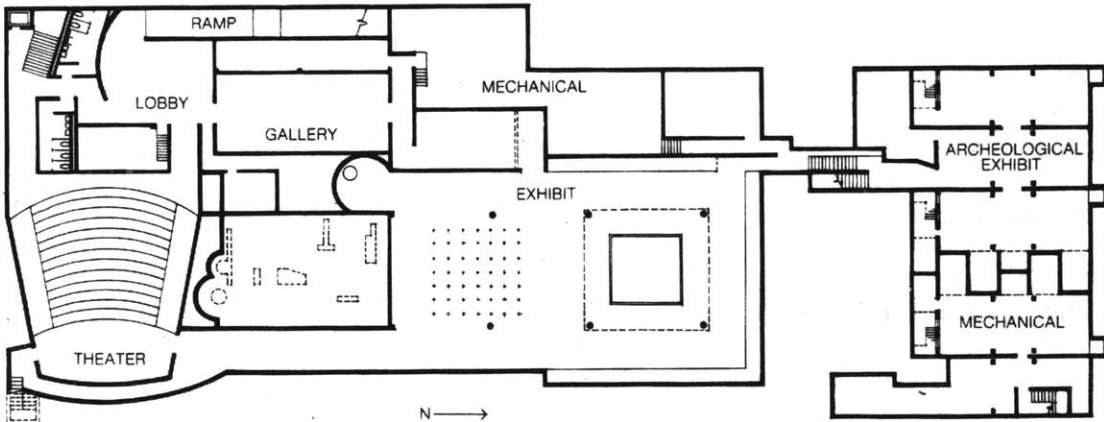
MAIN EXHIBIT LEVEL UNDERGROUND

Figure 48: Franklin Court, Independence National Park, Philadelphia, PA. Architects: Venturi and Rauch Associates.

vehicles to be aware of it. Night-lighting of buildings around the square will make it visually accessible from greater distances after dark.

4. **Edge activities should be compatible:** Uses such as offices and banks should be removed from the edges of Copley Square, at least on the gound level. Hancock Tower and Copley Plaza Hotel should introduce public activities on the ground level. Boylston Street facing Copley Square can be slowly transformed into uses which allow greater public use or participation.

PUBLIC : CHURCH & LIBRARY

COMMERCIAL: RESTAURANTS/BOOK STORES
ART GALLERIES/RETAIL STORES

OFFICE SPACE

HOTELS
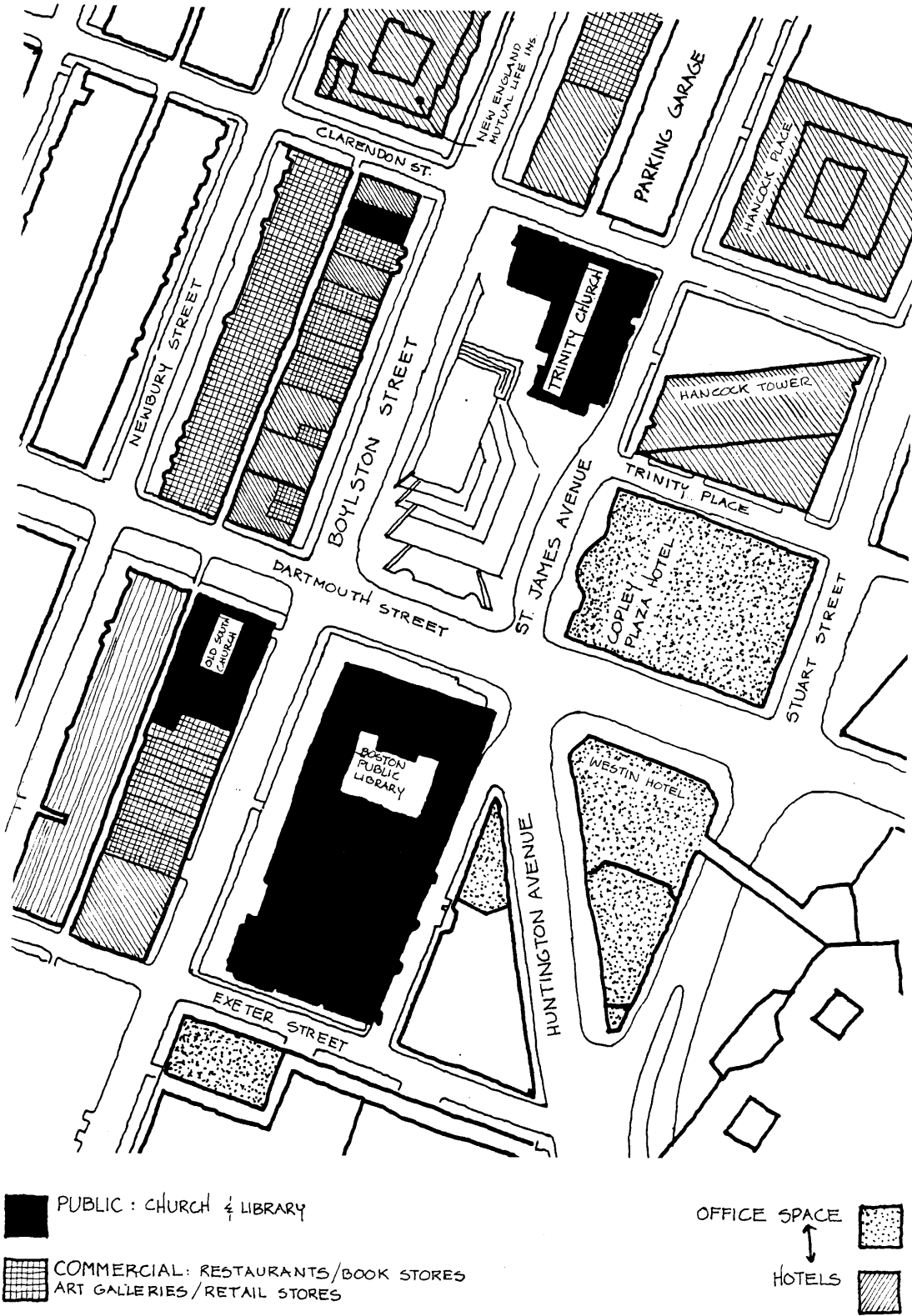
Figure 49: Edge activities of Copley Square

CHAPTER SEVEN: IN THE CONTEXT OF BOSTON

COPLEY SQUARE AS A PART OF BOSTON

As much as Copley Square is a place by itself in the Back Bay area, it is also a part of Boston. It is strategically located at the collision of the South End and Back Bay grid systems — a pivot point of two neighborhoods which can help one orient him/herself to the city. But the mere location is not enough, it must be reinforced by a perceptible connection with the movement system and other public open spaces — a connection which can be experienced by pedestrians and motorists. Our collective perception of cities depends on the landscape of open spaces.(1) Parks, playgrounds, waterfronts, etc., lace the city with their voids; it is these open spaces, says Halprin (1979), that we remember, rather than the buildings around them. The city is a choreography of open spaces, an ordering of movement through which we move and live our lives. Thus, the structuring and perceptibility of open spaces are very important for a city, it exerts an indelible and permanent legacy on a city and its inhabitants.

Although when viewed on a map, the major public open spaces in Boston seem to be connected, in actual experience they are not (see Figure 50). They can, however, be connected if the streets between the open spaces have a continuous and distinct image,

---

(1) Lawrence Halprin, "The Collective Perception of Cities." *Urban Open Spaces,* editor: Lisa Taylor. Rizzoli International Publications, New York, N.Y. 1979. p.4

GOVERNMENT CENTER PLAZA

PARK SQUARE

WATERFRONT PARK

COPLEY SQUARE

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CHURCH CENTER

COMMONWEALTH AVENUE

CHARLES RIVER ESPLANADE

PUBLIC GARDEN
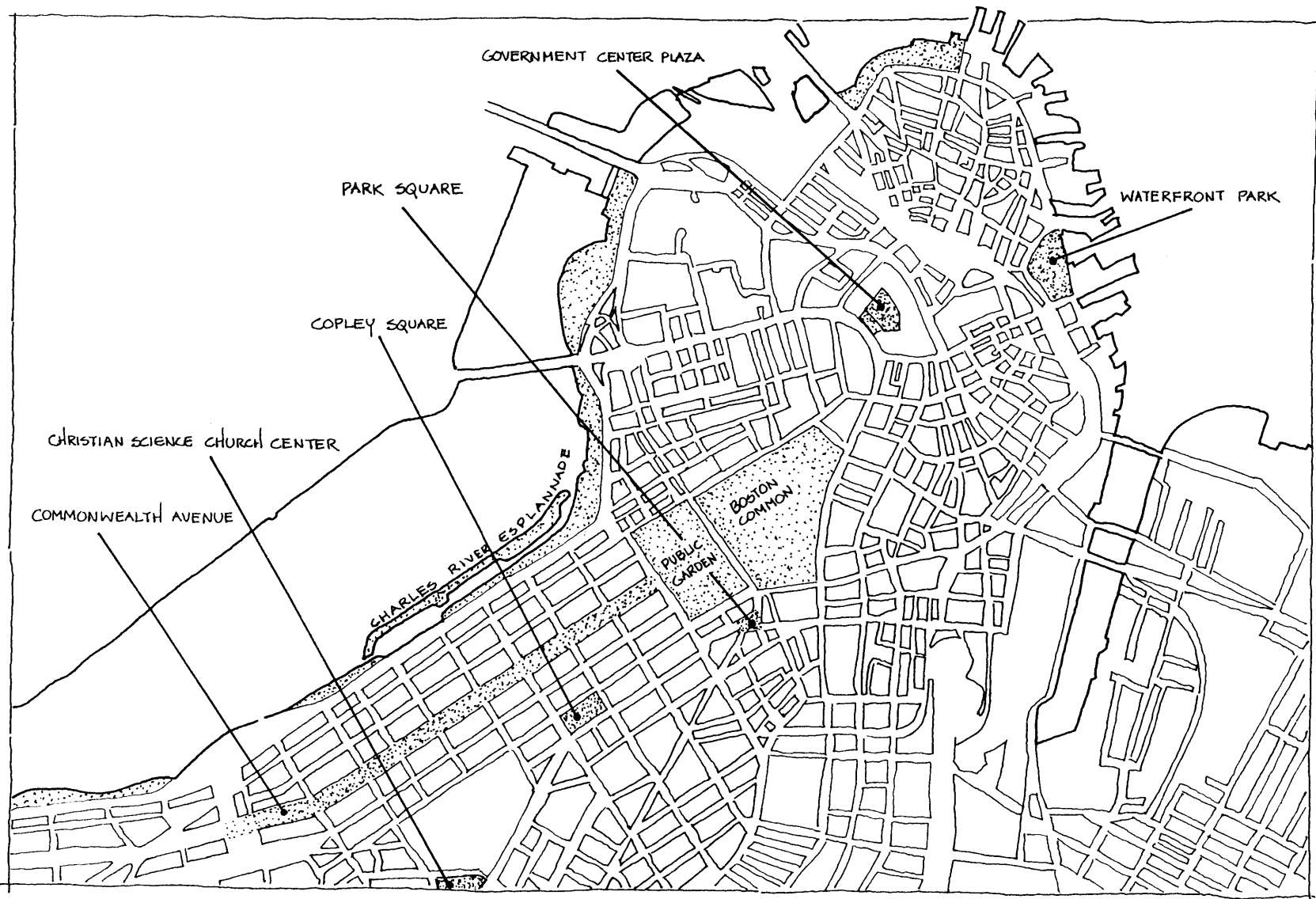
BOSTON COMMON

Figure 50: Some of the major public open spaces of Boston

and the open spaces themselves become part of the streets or movement system. For example, Commonwealth Avenue at present has a very distinct image starting from the Public Gardens and ending at the intersection with Massachusetts Avenue. This distinct image could be continued from the intersection at Dartmouth Street, all the way to Copley Square in the southern direction, and all the way to the Charles River Esplannade in the northern direction (see Figure 51). This would allow a person to feel a continuity when moving between the Public Gardens, Copley Square and the Charles River Esplannade. To reinforce this collective perception of these spaces, Copley Square should spill out in the streets: its plaza and landscaping should flow into Boylston, Dartmouth, Clarendon Streets, and St. James Avenue (see Figure 52). Unlike the contrasting and distinct image offered by Public Gardens and the Esplannade, Copley Square blends into the urban background to a greater degree. A sudden change in the material of the streets can heighten one's awareness of the square.

MANAGEMENT OF COPLEY SQUARE

When the 1965 design competition of Copley Square was finally executed and completed in 1970 it was accepted as a very successful solution. An editorial in the *Architectural Forum* of October 1970, commended the design and reiterated the praise of the jury. The editorial stated that the fountain and pool were sensitively chosen; in relation to the spaces through which pedestrians move, the plan was skillfully in scale, suggesting beautiful spaces. The design did work in the sense that people used Copley Square during the day and night, also there was general good feeling about the place. The fountain which was lighted at night, extended the use of the square beyond sunset. Photographs and comments of 1970 are a witness to this fact. The success may have been achieved, however, because of the dramatic visual improvement from the previous state, when Huntington Avenue bisected a Copley Square which was composed
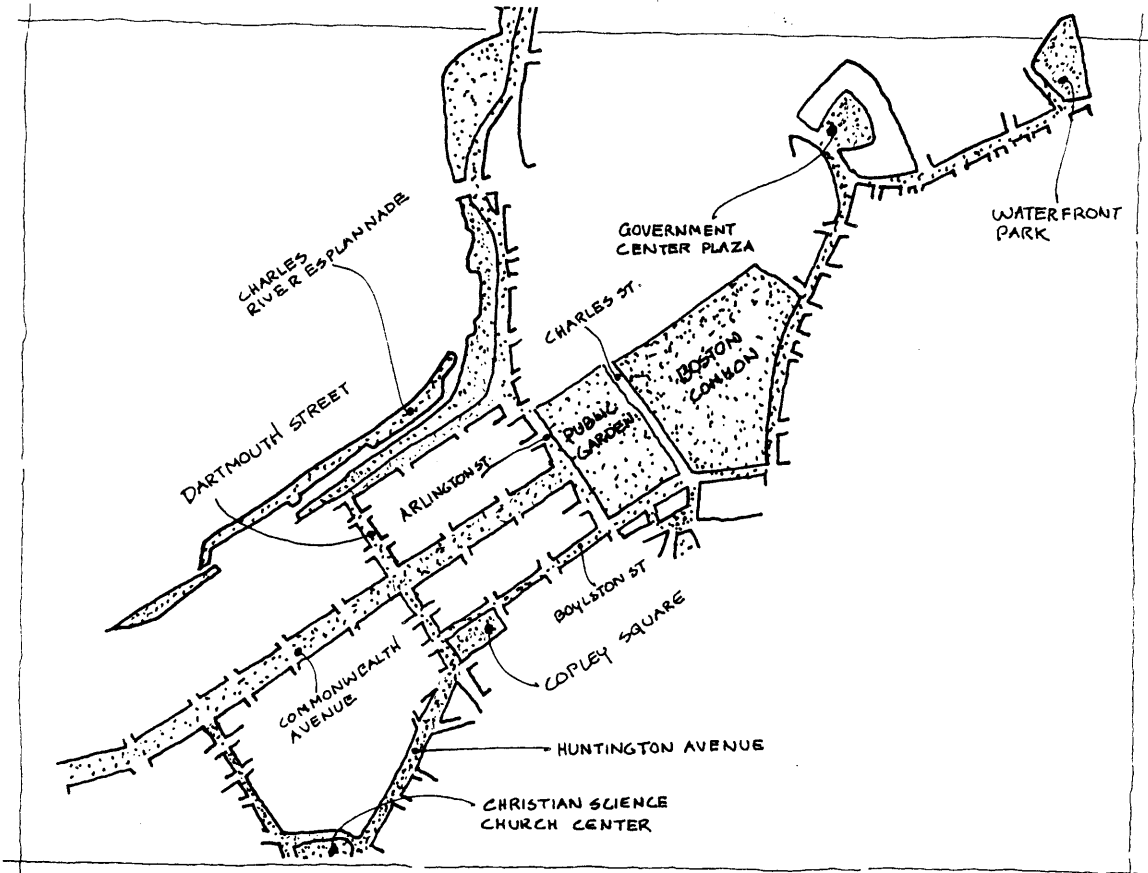
Figure 51: Streets which connect some public open spaces in Boston
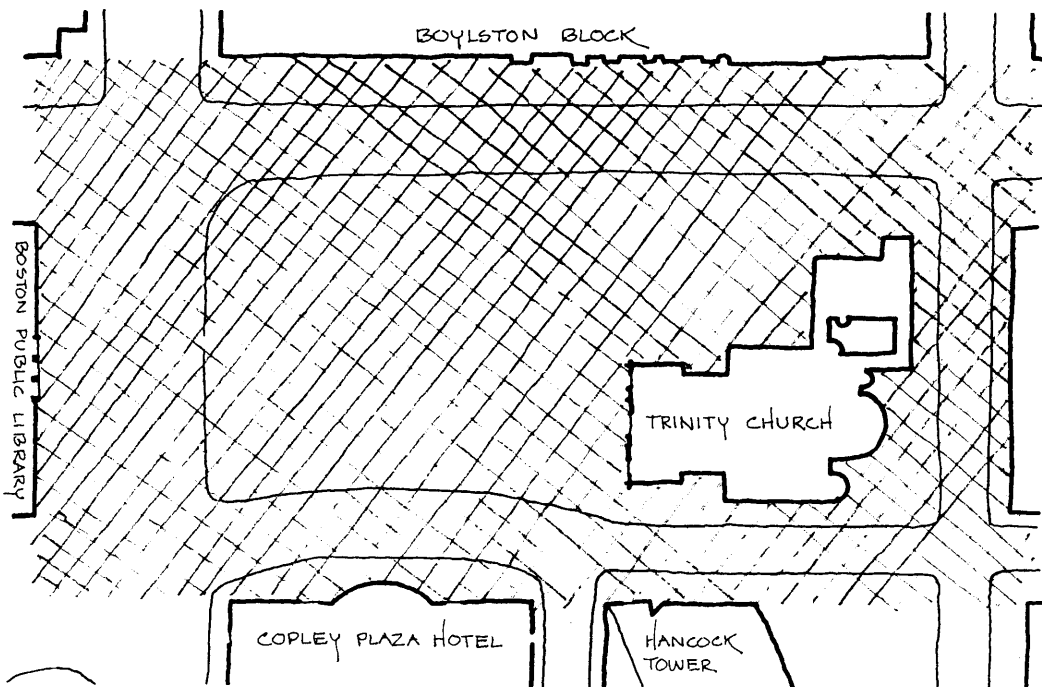
Figure 52: The plaza could "spill" into the streets

of two bare grass plots. Later, due to the shrinking city budget, Copley Square was neither maintained nor policed. The fountain stopped working, and night lighting was discontinued; the square had basically become a pedestrian crossing and a lunch-time place on weekdays. It had also gained the negative image of being a place where winos, drug dealers and muggers "hung out." This negative image, of course, did have some truth. This kind of problem needs attention in two areas -- design and management. Through design one could raise the plaza to make it completely visually accessible from the streets which would deter undesirables from inhabiting the square.(1) Raising the plaza level may facilitate social surveillance which, may in turn, reduce the amount of policing required, but somebody still has to maintain it. Professor Gary Hack (Chairman, Department of Urban Studies and Planning, MIT) stated that: The day of a city having undifferentiated responsibility for public spaces has passed.(2)

The 1965 design, says Hack, which put Copley Square below the street level and screened it from the side-walk, assumed policing which has since become too expensive to maintain. As a means to defray the cost of maintenance, and increase social surveillance, Hack suggests "privatization" of public places. This, however, should not be taken in such a manner as to suggest turning all squares into market places. In Quincy Market, small businesses, that is, vendors, are given an opportunity to profit from the image of the place while at the same time placing the responsibilty of policing on them. The small fee these vendors pay to be in Quincy market adds to

---

(1) That the visual accessibilty acts as a deterrant for use by undesirables is a generally accepted principle nowadays. William Whyte in his book *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, suggests that the visual accessibility must be complemented by inserting facilities (food service, seating, etc.) which will attract people and create a further deterrant for undesirables.

(2) *The Plan*, March 15, 1984. p.2. An MIT School of Architecture and Planning quarterly. Cynthia Ware, editor.

the funds for maintaining the place. This kind of arrangement is appropriate for Quincy Market which has been traditionally a market place. In Copley Square one should seek a different arrangement -- the square can become formal extensions of Hancock Tower, Trinity Church, Copley Plaza Hotel, Boston Public Library, and the enterprises on Boylston Street. Trinity Church already has an entry court from the square; entry courts functionally and visually distinct for Hancock Tower, Copley Plaza Hotel and the Boston Public Library could also be designed. At present, intense traffic makes it very unpleasant to cross the streets which surround Copley Square, so it would not be very impractical to think in terms of underground entries from the square to its surrounding buildings. Such an arrangement would be very beneficial to any of the institutions which surround Copley Square, and in return they could be asked to share the responsibilty of maintaining and managing the square.

CRITERIA BASED ON CITY CONTEXT

Copley Square is made more meaningful when it becomes a part of the city movement system. The city can no longer afford to maintain Copley Square, and thus, should ask private enterprises to share the responsibilities. This does not mean that the square has to be turned into a market place or restaurant, an arrangement can be made with the surrounding institutions which allows them to benefit from the image of the square in return for sharing the responsibility of managing and maintaining the square. The criteria are:

1.   **The square should be visually distinct in relation to the movement system:** The paving of the square should spill into the streets. The streets between major public open spaces in Boston should have definite and distinct visually imageable qualities which forge a link between the public places.

2. **Management of Copley Square should be functionally distinct:** The institutions around Copley Square should take the responsibilty of sharing maintenance and management of the square.

3. **The management should be visually distinct and imageable:** That the surrounding institutions are a part of the square should be visually perceptible. The relationship should be expressed in the design of the square, two dimensionally and, if possible, three dimensionally.

PART THREE: EVALUATIONS
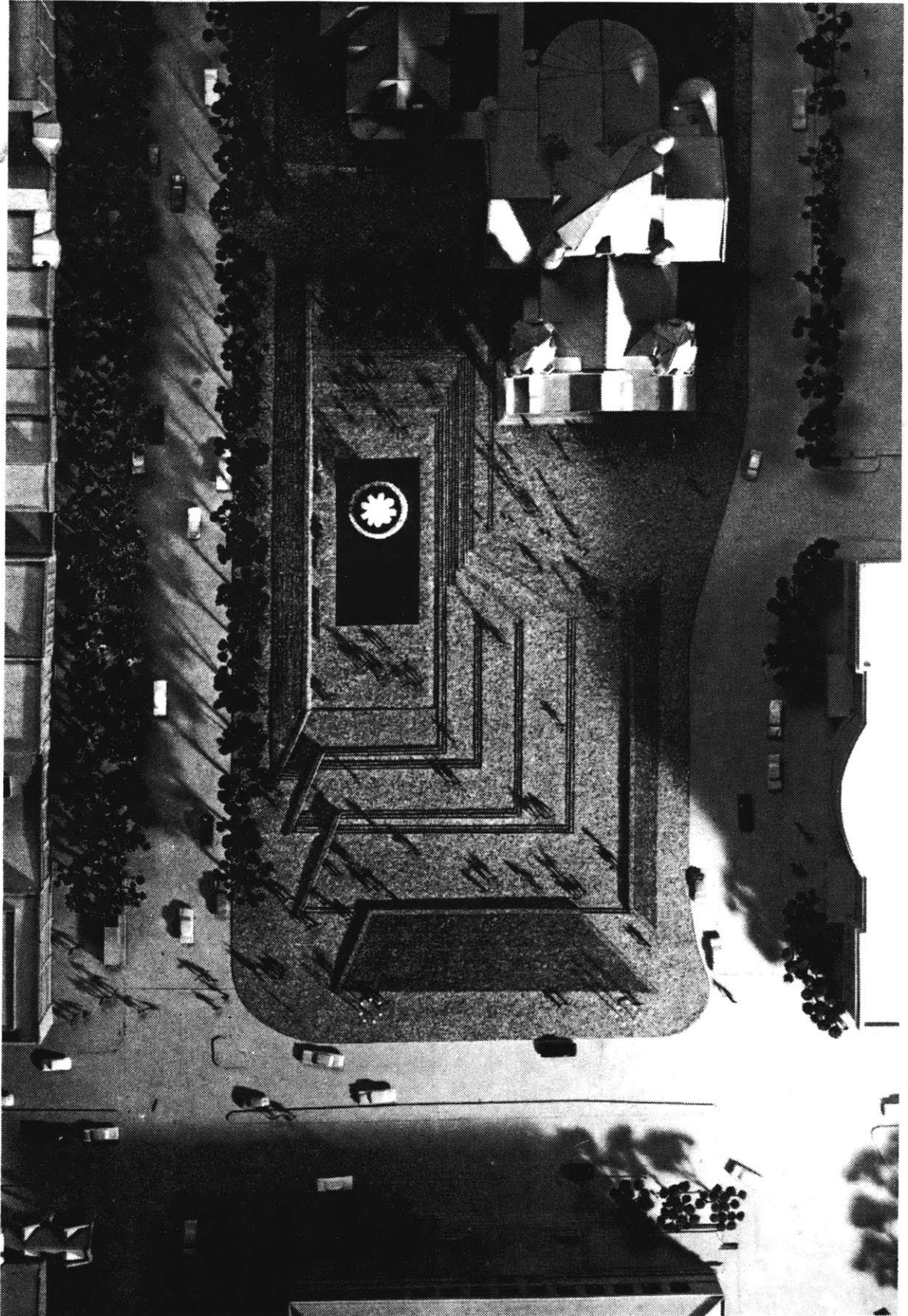
Figure 53: Model of the Sasaki, Dawson, and DeMay design which won the 1965 competition

INTRODUCTION

In this part of the study, the criteria developed in Part Two will be used in evaluating the two design competitions for Copley Square; both the program and the winning design. It should be mentioned that I have developed the criteria with the goal that they act as a checklist for realizing the full potential of Copley Square. Neither of the competitions, however, had that goal. Both programs were operating under limited funding, and were geared to immediate short-term actions. Thus, some of the criteria will not be applicable to the winning designs. Since one of the objectives, of this study is to form an information base which will serve as a reference for future actions on Copley Square, it will be very useful to see what has been considered and what has not been considered.

The evaluation of each of the competitions will begin with a brief background of each competition, followed by an evaluation in which each criterion will be posed as a question. Some detail information, such as, dates, design objectives and requirements, drawing requirements, etc., of each program is provided in the appendices to avoid cluttering the evaluation.(1)

---

(1) Appendix A and Appendix B provide the details of the competition programs of 1965 and 1984 respectively.
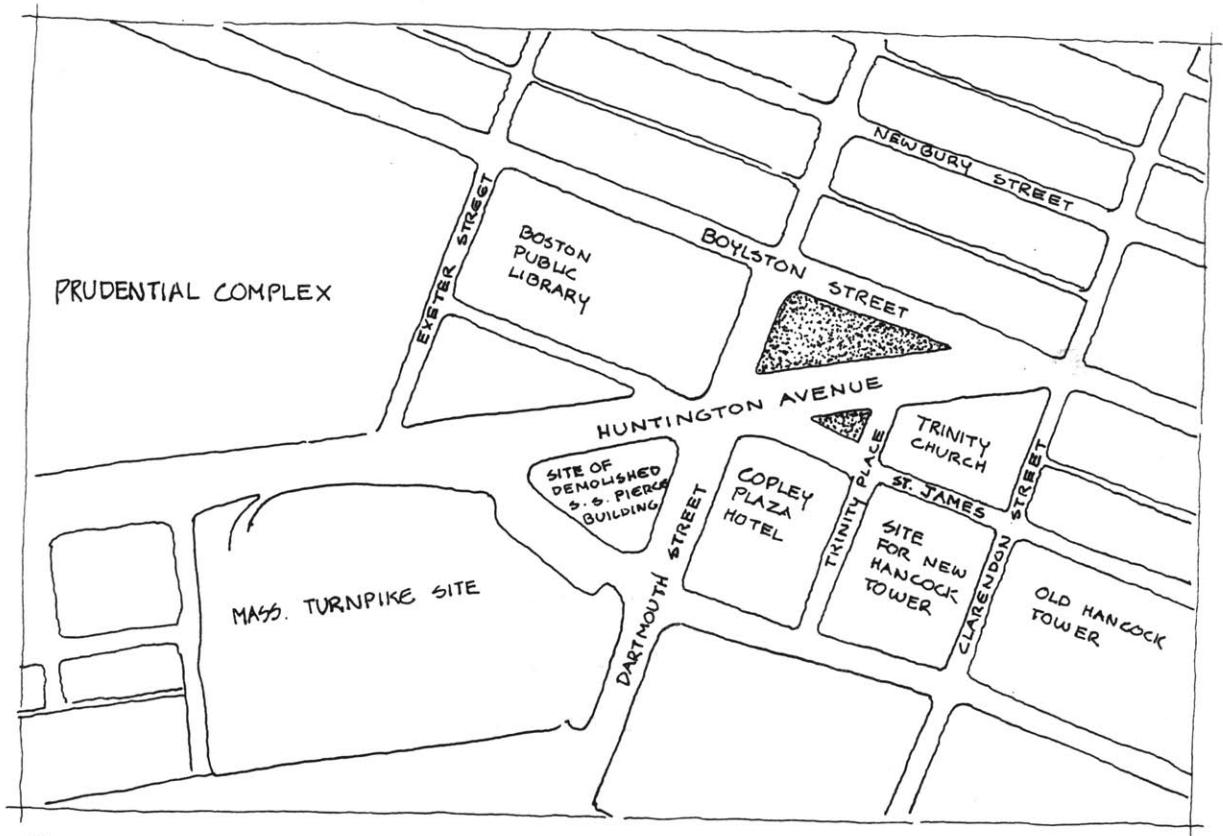
Figure 54: The Copley Square area before the 1965 competition
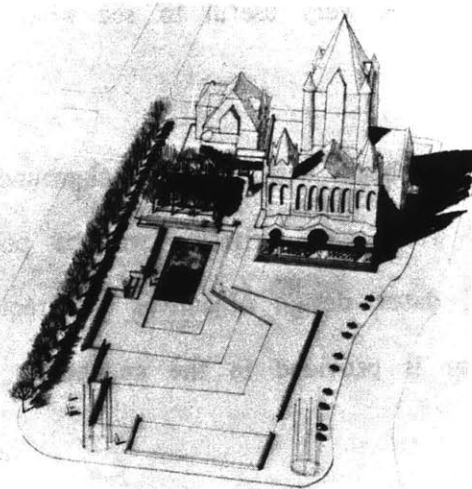
Figure 55: Sketches for the 1965 competition proposal by Sasaki, Dawson, and DeMay.

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE 1965 COMPETITION

BRIEF BACKGROUND

Until the announcement of the first Copley Square competition in September 1965, the square was defined by Boylston Street on the north, Dartmouth Street on the west, St. James Avenue on the south, and Trinity Place (a right of way), which passed directly in front of Trinity Church. The area contained two triangular parcels of land that were separated by Huntington Avenue. The discontinuation of Huntington Avenue was the major feature of this competition. The southwest corner of the square where the Pierce building once stood, was still empty, beyond which was the mess of expressway ramps and junctions.

The competition was won by Sasaki, Dawson, DeMay Associates Inc., and featured a sunken plaza descending from a series of broad steps, in which a fountain with a pool was placed. According to the *Architectural Forum,* (October 1970), the only weak point of the design was the frugality of the materials specified. To stay within a budget of $500,000, the Sasaki firm specified asphalt blocks for paving and concrete for steps. These materials were cheaper and easily serviceble, although they were incompatible with the surrounding building materials.

The design was not implemented until two years after the announcement of the winning design, during which the city attempted to acquire additional funding. Not

only did the city fail to acquire more money, but the existing budget lost 18% of its buying power because of inflation. Finally, when the work was started, another problem was encountered: a large water tunnel was discovered one-and-half feet closer to the ground surface than specified in the data provided in the program. Thus, in order to retain the effect of the sunken plaza as conceived by the designers, the banks of the plaza had to be raised by one foot. This added significantly to the visual screening of the plaza from the side streets. The end result of the sunken plaza and the raised banks was that motorists and pedestrians across the streets saw only forbidding banks and spottily planted juniper trees.(1)

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1.   Were the historical buildings emphasized?

Neither the program nor the design placed emphasis on the historic buildings around the square. The program had provided a brief historical account of Copley Square, but did not set it as a requirement that the historic buildings be emphasized. The designers main objective seemed to be the creation of a better enclosure which was achieved by the sunken plaza. The focus of the design was on the fountain and the pool. None of the axes or entries of the three buildings -- Trinity Church, Copley Plaza Hotel and Boston Public Library, were emphasized or expressed. The facades of these buildings, however, were given full visual access from almost all points in the plaza. The night-lighting of the design, however, was focused on the fountain and not on

(1) The raised banks and the juniper trees did not allow social surveillance, which would have taken place had there been a clear view into the square. Later, during the 1984 competition, this was believed to be one of the major problems of the Sasaki firm design.

any of the buildings. Thus both the program and the design failed to capitalize on one of Copley Square's most important features -- its historic architecture.

2.   **Was the old street pattern expressed?**

Neither the program nor the design made even an allusion to the old street pattern and the fact that Copley Square was the meeting point of two communities. The paving, steps and the entries into the plaza made no direct or indirect reference to the old street pattern, but actually gave the square a totally new appearance.

3.   **Were the religious, educational and cultural origins given priority?**

The program had mentioned the religious, cultural and educational origins of Copley Square, but did not specify the expression of these characteristics to be a design objective. The winning design seemed to reflect an idea which was first suggested back in 1897 when the Boston Society of Architects thought that Copley Square should have a sunken plaza in the Italian style.[1] The design did achieve an overall character of simplicity and elegance which was passively complementary to Copley Square's character. Food service, movable chairs, umbrellas, and so forth, were discouraged in the program and thus did not show up in the design.

4.   **Was there any programming of activities which related to the history of Copley Square?**

The city did not express any intention that it would program activities which related to the history of Copley Square. It did mention an optional requirement, that provision for temporary exhibits or events could be provided.

---

(1)   See Chapter 4, for a brief editorial by the *The American Architect and Building News*, in 1897, on the future of Copley Square. The sunken plaza in the Italian style is mentioned in this editorial.

The design responded by providing steps which could be used to set up an outdoor auditorium.

LOCAL CONTEXT

1. **Were there any plans to make the surrounding walls visually harmonious and ordered?**

    There was no consideration given to this criterion at all in the program. The enclosing walls were out of the jurisdiction of the competitors. Thus no suggestions or ideas were forwarded regarding this issue.

2. **Were the micro-climatic factors dealt with?**

    When the first competition was announced and carried out, neither the Hancock Tower nor Copley Place had yet been built, so there were no high speed wind zones or perversive shading problems, which is why the program did not mention this criterion at all. The design featured all of the plaza being paved in asphalt blocks. On hot days the paving absorbs the heat all day and releases it in the evening, which is not the most desirable situation. There was an attempt to compensate for this by installing a fountain and a pool, which was not really adequate. Trees were sparsely planted around the edges, which allowed good visual accessibility, but the problem of over-heating in summer still remained. This could have been avoided had large areas of grass been introduced.

3. **Was the square visually perceptible from the streets?**

    The lack of visual accessibility from the streets into the square was probably the single most important reason for redesigning Copley Square in 1984. In 1965, the study of social problems as related to urban design was not so much

widespread as it is today, which explains why this issue was overlooked in the program and the jury selection of the design. The visual accessibility of public spaces, however, is provided not only as a deterrent to crime, but also to allow pedestrians and motorists who pass by the square to be aware of it. Two things could have been done to allow greater visual accessibility: one, continue the paving on to the streets, which would allow visual perceptibility during the day; and two, arrange night lighting on the surrounding structures to enhance the visual awareness at night.

4. **Was there a plan to make the edge activities compatible?**

This is another issue which the city in its program did not consider at all, and ultimately did lead to the functional disintegration of Copley Square. Instead of trying to control the introduction of uses which operate only during weekdays, 9am–5pm, the city has allowed complexes like the Hancock Tower and Copley Place to be built around the square. This has necessitated massive amounts of daytime population (which in turn has caused parking garages to be built), and a lack of use after five o'clock and on weekends. This has considerably reduced the social surveillance which would have been normally done by people simply by their presence. Jane Jacob in her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* sets this criterion as one of the basic components in any kind of healthy urban situation. The best way to have public places policed is by introducing uses which extend beyond 5pm and continue through the weekends. This lack of compatibility not only affects Copley Square functionally, but also aesthetically -- here is a public square known to be a cultural and educational center, but it is mostly surrounded by insurance companies, banks, and office spaces.

IN THE CONTEXT OF BOSTON

1.   Is the square visually distinct in relation to the movement system?

The program did state that its long-term objectives were to create a significant pedestrian environment and walking system which linked other major public spaces in Boston to Copley Square. In the requirements for the competition, however, no such drawing, sketch or verbal description was asked to be provided. In fact, additional information or drawings were prohibited.(1) Thus, the design did not suggest or propose anything which dealt with this issue.

2.   Was the management of the square functionally distinct?

The city had assumed that it could bear the cost of maintenance and policing of Copley Square, and so it did not make this issue a criterion for design. The design responded accordingly. The fact that the city could not afford to maintain and police the square in the long run, however, led to its disintegration.

3.   Was the management of the square visually distinct and imageable?

Similar to the previous criterion, this one was not considered by the program or design.

OVERALL COMMENTS

During the investigations for the second competition, it was noted that one of the major problems of the 1965 competition was that it had required aerial perspectives of the design. This supposedly led the jurors to make a decision based on a view which would never be experienced, moreover, with such a

---

(1) See Appendix A for drawing requirements.

drawing nobody was aware of the visual screening effect of the design which featured a sunken plaza and raised banks. The failure to be aware of this issue should not be attributed to this drawing only, because cross-sections and a detail plan were also provided from which any competent juror should be able to notice the effect of visual screening.

The competition was conducted and implemented in consideration to a set of conditions which changed dramatically within a few years; as a result the design suffered from the new variables in the environment. Giving the allowance for change which cannot always be controlled or predicted, however, both the program and the design had some basic misconceptions about what an urban square is and what Copley Square is. It appears from the program that the city assumed that all would be well if Copley Square were to be redesigned. But a square is a product of its environment; to enhance a square, its environment must be enhanced too. This limited concept of a square led to a design which soon suscumbed to changes in edge conditions. The designers, on the other hand, failed to see Copley Square in its historical and city context, and thus failed to exploit its essential character and role. Copley Square was conceived as just another urban square, which resulted in a design modelled after the Italian sunken garden. The focus of the design, instead of being on the historic architecture around the square, was given to a fountain which never existed before, a fountain which did not symbolize any of Copley Square's legacy -- cultural or educational. The design of the fountain was also conceived in the "modern architecture" philosophy; it had no visually imageable relation in detail or decoration with any of the surrounding buildings.

COPLEY SQUARE
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
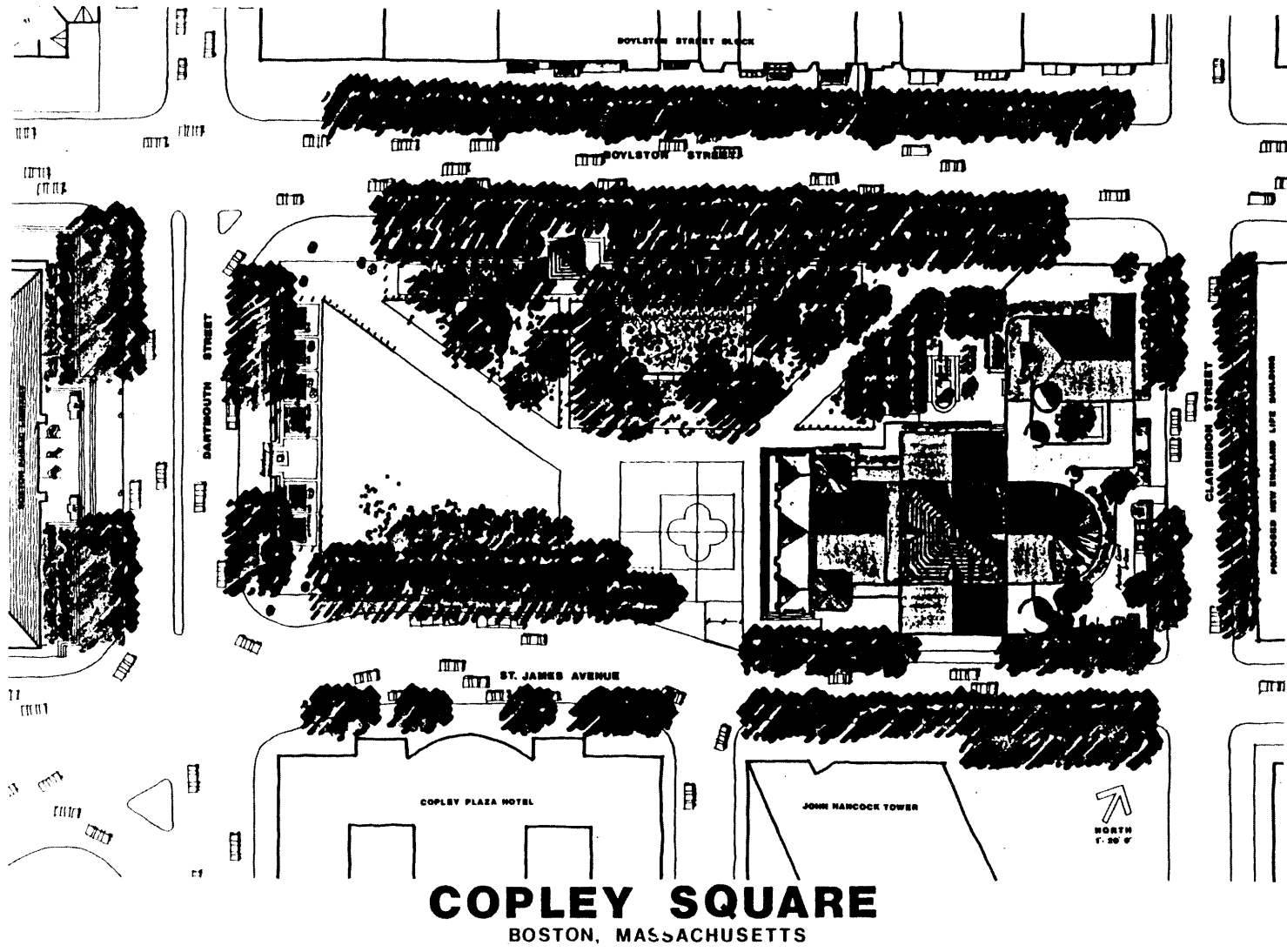
Figure 56: First stage entry by Dean Abbot for the 1984 Copley Square Competition.

CHAPTER NINE: THE 1984 COMPETITION

BRIEF BACKGROUND

In over thirty meetings and four public workshops, the Centennial Committee gathered information and heard debate concerning critical issues that were to be addressed in the effort to redesign Copley Square. The Centennial Committee, taking its name from the fact that the square was a hundred years old in 1983, was formed with representatives from the private and public sectors. The major reason for calling this competition was that Copley Square had supposedly fallen prey to "undesirables." The square had become a feared place to be in the evening. Drug dealers, winos and muggers found it to be a profitable place for their activities. This situation, however, was not due to the falure of the 1965 design alone, the city was no longer able to maintain or police it.

With the help of William H. Whyte as advisor, and Gary Hack and Tom Piper as principle investigators,(1) a very thorough and detailed program was devised. The competition was done in two stages. Five finalists were selected from the first stage, who then went into a second stage, from which the winner was chosen Dean Abbot of Clarke & Rapuano Inc. from New York City.

---

(1) William H. Whyte, author of *Great Urban Places* and *Social Life of Small Urban Spaces,* was the Ex-Officio advisor to the sponsors of the competition --Boston Redevelopment Authority and the National Endowment for the Arts. Professor Gary Hack and Tom Piper (MIT Laboratory for Architecture and Planning) represented the Centennial Committee.

COPLEY SQUARE
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Figure 57: Accompanying sketches with first stage entry by Dean Abbot

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1. **Are the historic buildings emphasized?**

    The program stated that the historical building should be considered, but special emphasis was placed on Trinity Church: "The design of the Square and the consideration of its use are inseparable from understanding the Church's formal relationship to the Square and accommodating the needs of the Trinity parishoners." The winning design did, however, emphasize all three historic buildings. Trinity Church was given the greater emphasis by forming a small court in front of it and expressing its axis with paving design. Boston Public Library and the Copley Plaza hotel were acknowledged by forming a vista to their entries with the help of trees, and expressing their axes. The axes were expressed by placing a small monument, aligned to the center of each building.

2. **Is the old street pattern expressed?**

    In relation to this criterion, the program had stated: "The design may wish to recognize the original Trinity Church triangular site which influenced Richardson's design." The design responded very aptly by clearly expressing the triangular site, which in turn partly expressed the old street pattern. None of the other street pattern was expressed, as a result the "collision" of the two grid systems was missed. There is, however, scope for expressing more of the old street pattern in the design.

3. **Are the religious, educational and cultural origins given priority?**

    The program did not specifically mention that the religious, cultural and educational origins be expressed. It emphasized that the new and changing conditions be expressed. But the design does visually emphasize the religious and educational/cultural origins by placing primary focus on Trinity Church,

BOYLSTON STREET BLOCK

BOYLSTON STREET

DARTMOUTH STREET

CLARENDON STREET

ST. JAMES AVENUE

COPLEY PLAZA HOTEL

JOHN HANCOCK TOWER

NORTH
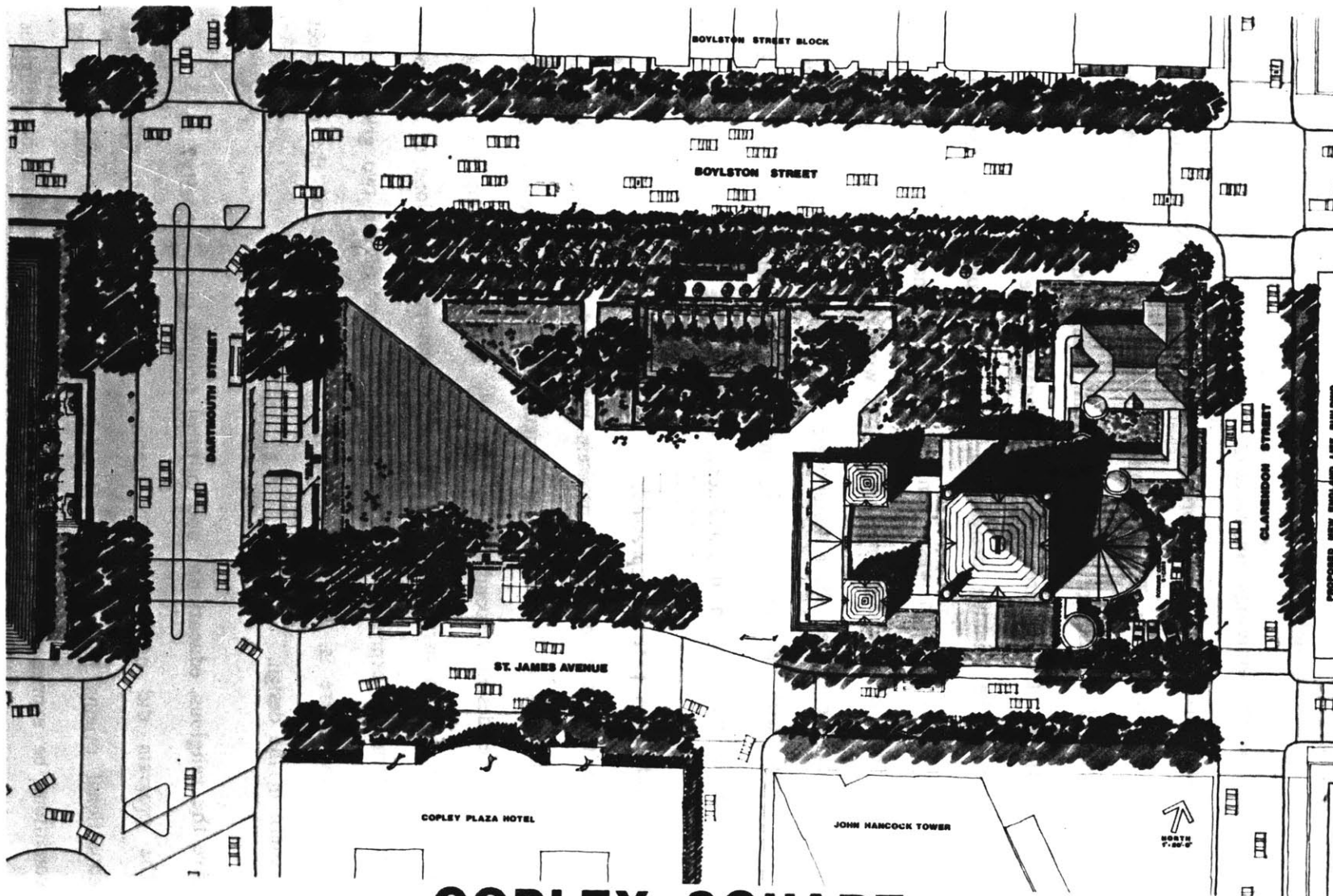
COPLEY SQUARE
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Figure 58: The final and winning design of the 1984 Copley Square Competition   by Dean Abbot.

and secondary focus on Boston Public Library and Copley Plaza Hotel. There is also an attempt to further reinforce the educational and cultural origins by dedicating the monuments in front of Boston Public Library and Copley Plaza Hotel to the legendary Persian poet Khalil Gibran, and journalist/activist Dan Ahern, respectively. While the dedication to Khalil Gibran, although questionable, is understandable because of the literary connection, I do question the dedication to Dan Ahern. This is not to play down Dan Ahern, who was a very active journalist in the affairs of the Back Bay in the 1960s, but why Dan Ahern when there are many other people who made significant contributions to the formation of Copley Square and the development of the Back Bay? Why not dedicate it to the city surveyors and engineers who wanted this land reserved as a public park, instead of allowing it to be developed for commercial purposes?

The design, following the requirements of the program, also provided food service provision, chairs, tables and umbrellas on the Boylston Street side of the square. This provision almost negates the quality achieved by the emphasis on the church and the library. The designer, however, made a good attempt to visually separate the food service area from the rest of the square, by enclosing the area with trees. Considering that the requirements of the program had to be followed strictly, the design arrived at a good compromise. Of course it would have been preferable not to have food service, chairs and tables at all on the square itself, they could have been placed on the north sidewalk of Boylston Street, and still enjoy the presence of Copley Square.

4.   **Is there any programming of activities which relate to the history of the square?**

The program stated, "a design for Copley Square should not rely on

highly-promoted events and attractions for its meaning and purpose." Instead, the program suggested that the square could be used for farmers' markets, political events, holiday events, musical events, and Christmas celebrations. If the touring of the interiors of Trinity Church and Boston Public Library, events to celebrate the significance of Copley Square, could be added to the list of the city, the program could really educate and enrich the lives of the people of Boston.

LOCAL CONTEXT

1. **Have any plans been made to make the surrounding walls visually harmonious?**

   Although no mention of this criterion was made in the program, the winning design tried to compensate by placing a dense row of trees on both sides of Boylston Street and St. James Avenue, creating a visual continuity along the sides. The row of trees on the sides of the square will enhance the enclosure, but will also create a visual barrier to the facades of the buildings surrounding the square. An alternative would be to improve the facades on Boylston Street, which could also enhance the enclosure of the square.

2. **Are the micro-climatic conditions dealt with?**

   The program stated the micro-climatic conditions of the square very clearly. Detail studies on the wind movements and speed, and shading diagrams were provided. The design responded the best it could, following the requirements of the program. Trees were used to abate the wind and make summer use of the square more pleasant. But these trees will not just give climatic protection, as mentioned previously, they will create visual barriers too.

3. **Is the square visually perceptible from the streets?**

    The criterion of visual accessibility from the streets was a very emphasized requirement in the program — mainly to facilitate social surveillance. Thus, the design responded by raising the present level of the plaza to the street level and specifying trees on which the foliage grows from at least eye level and upwards. Night lighting was shown on the plaza, but not on the surrounding buildings. Such an arrangement would have added to the visual perceptibility of the square at night from greater distances. The rows of trees on both side of the streets will give the square a very distinct image, but again, at cost of visual accessibility of the facades of the surrounding buildings. The visual perceptibility of the square from the streets could have been achieved by extending the paving of the square into the streets.

4. **Is there a plan to make edge activities more compatible?**

    Just as in the previous competition, the 1984 competition did not announce any plans to modify edge activities.(1)

IN THE CONTEXT OF BOSTON

1. **Is the square visually distinct in relation to the movement system?**

    The program stated that the jury would take particular account of the objective: "the aesthetic, architectonic, and landscape expression in the city setting," is maintained. As mentioned before, the design features rows of trees on both sides of all the streets surrounding the square; thus forming a distinct visual character which can be easily perceived by passing pedestrians and motorists. But the trees run only the length of the square. This does not allow

---

(1) See chapter eight under "Local Context" for discussion on edge activities.

one to perceive a link with other public open spaces in the city. In order to create a distinct relation with the movement system, all the streets between major public open spaces must have a visual continuity similar to the one proposed in the winning design for the streets which bound Copley Square.

2. **Is the management of Copley Square functionally distinct?**

The city once again has taken the responsibility of management of Copley Square, but in a different manner. It has proposed to form a separate organization to handle the management duties.(1) None of the surrounding institutions, however, will share the responsibility of this task. The effectiveness of this new arrangement is yet to be tested.

3. **Is the management of the square visually distinct and imageable?**

Since this criterion was not a requirement in the program, it did not show up in the design. However, the design features a court in front of Trinity Church, which would be a good example of making the management of Copley Square visually distinct and imageable. The same arrangement could be done for Copley Plaza Hotel, Boston Public Library, Hancock Tower, and the facilities on Boylston Street. In return they could be asked to share the responsibilities of the square.

OVERALL COMMENTS

Although this competition has been carefully programmed to address the problems and needs of Copley Square, it is not without conflicts. It states that the overall character of Copley Square should be one of "beauty and quiet enjoyment." But at the same time it has included mandatory requirements of placing a temporary food service stall,

---

(1) See Appendix B, under "Management" for details.

tables, chairs, and vendors. There seems to be a contradiction between the two requirements. Clearly the influence of William Whyte can be felt in this competition. Whyte believes, "the best way to handle the problem of undesirables is to make a place attractive to everyone else."(1) He advocates food service and abundant seating as a way of attracting people to urban squares. Since one of the major problems of Copley Square had been the "undesirables" and lack of people, the entire program of this competition focused on how to get people into the square.(2) The end result being that, Copley Square's unique character is being sacrificed to create a kind of place which can be found in Harvard Square in Cambridge or Dock Square/Faneuil Hall/Quincy Market and Washington Mall in Boston. The need for variety is clearly overlooked in this competition.

Management, although mentioned in the program, has not been thought over very carefully. It seems that Gary Hack's concept of "privatization"(3) has been taken too literally. Copley Square has been privatized by allowing vendors, food service and farmers' markets on the square itself. This, I believe, is inappropriate for Copley Square.

One of the most disappointing aspects of this competition is that very little seems to have occurred between the first stage and the second stage. Except for the clearing of a few trees in front of the entry of Copley Square Hotel, and the dedication of the two questionable monuments, no other developments were made. Finally, the city believes that by redesigning only the square, it can improve existing conditions. As

---

(1) William H. Whyte, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, The Conservation Foundation, Washington D.C. p.63

(2) See Appendix B, under "Functional uses of the square."

(3) See chapter seven, under "Management of Copley Square," for discussion on management.

mentioned previously, the square is a product of its environment, to enhance the square, its edges must also be improved. But the city has made no such plans. The jury selected a design which "shuts off" the undesirable edges by planting rows of trees. This is a very naive concept of urban design which will create only temporary improvement for Copley Square. The temporary improvement will be mostly from the novelty of the new design. As soon as the novelty wears off, the edges will take over Copley Square as has been the case in the past.

PART FOUR:
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

CHAPTER TEN: SUMMARY

The criteria developed in Part Two begin to suggest some design guidelines themselves. When they are used in Part Three to evaluate the two competitions, the criteria become more explicit. In this chapter, I shall point out the criteria in my list that the two competitions did not address, and the criteria from the two competitions that I did not pick up. It should be remembered that the objective of this paper is not to suggest a design or plan to revitalize Copley Square, but to form a basis which can serve as a reference for future actions, which aims to realize the full potential of Copley Square. Most likely, there will be compromises between the criteria I have suggested; the compromises, however, should be worked out on the drawing board. The criteria which were established in Part Two are as follows:

Historical Context

1.   The historic buildings could be emphasized.

2.   The past should be visible.

3.   The religious, eductional and cultural origins should be given priority.

4.   Activities should be programmed which relate to the history of Copley Square.

Local Context

1.   The enclosing walls should be visually harmonious and ordered.

2.   Micro-climatic factors should be dealt with.

3.   The square should be visually perceptible from the streets.

4.   Edge activities should be compatible.

In the context of Boston

1.   The square should be visually distinct in relation to the movement system.

2.   Management of Copley Square should be functionally distinct.

3.   The management should be visually distinct and imageable.

CRITERIA IN MY LIST WHICH THE TWO COMPETITIONS OMITTED

By far, the second competition had a more thoughtful and detailed program than the first competition, and thus, the Abbot design (which was the winning design of the second competition) addressed some critical issues of Copley Square more effectively. The first competition and its winning design did not address any of the criteria in my list; the Sasaki firm (the firm which won the first competition), focused on the creation of a new Copley Square. As a result, this design not only failed to address some of Copley Square's critical issues, but also failed to capitalize on some opportunities presented by the square's unique history and location.

Historical context: The second competition focused on issues which were considered by the sponsors(1) of the competition to be the major problems of Copley Square. The problems were lack of social surveillance and public use, and harsh climatic conditions. It did set criteria which addressed Copley Square with respect to its historical and city context, but in a very half-hearted manner. It partially dealt with criteria number 1, 2, and 3 from my list in the Historical Context, and did not address number 4 at all. The sponsors missed a great oppotunity by explicitly stating that, "the design should not rely on highly programmed activities for the meaning and

---

(1) The sponsors were the National Endowment for the Arts and the Boston Redevelopment Authority.

purpose of Copley Square." Instead, the sponsors have plans for hosting farmers' markets, political events, Christmas celebrations, etc. Although these activities will generate considerable use of the square, a great opportunity is being missed by not including activities, such as tours of the interiors of Trinity Church and Boston Public Library, and festivals which celebrate the history and significance of Copley Square. Tours are actually a very sound way of assuring constant use of a place, and also producing an income from the fees which could be used for maintenance. The Paul Revere House, and the First Harrison Gray Otis House in Boston have made use of this idea very successfully. There seems to be no reason why it cannot be done for Copley Square, in fact, one could ask: what could the city lose by making such an arrangement?

One could also ask, what would be lost if Trinity Church, Boston Public Library, Copley Plaza Hotel, and Hancock Tower were emphasized,(1) and the old street pattern were expressed? The Abbot design does emphasize the Trinity Church quite well, and, Boston Public Library and Copley Plaza Hotel partially. The rows of trees in front of these two buildings cause a considerable visual barrier to the facades, and de-emphasize their presence. Nothing would have been lost if these two buildings along with the Hancock Tower were fully acknowledged, instead, a stronger relationship between the surrounding buildings and the square could have been gained. Similarly, nothing would have been lost if the complete old street pattern were expressed, instead, a logical framework for landscape design could be established. This would also give the chance to allude to a very important event —the meeting point of two grid systems. These comments apply to the Sasaki, Dawson, and DeMay design too, which completely overlooked this opportunity. The criterion of giving priority to the religious, cultural,

---

(1) See Chapter Five, under "Historical buildings should be emphasized," for discussion.
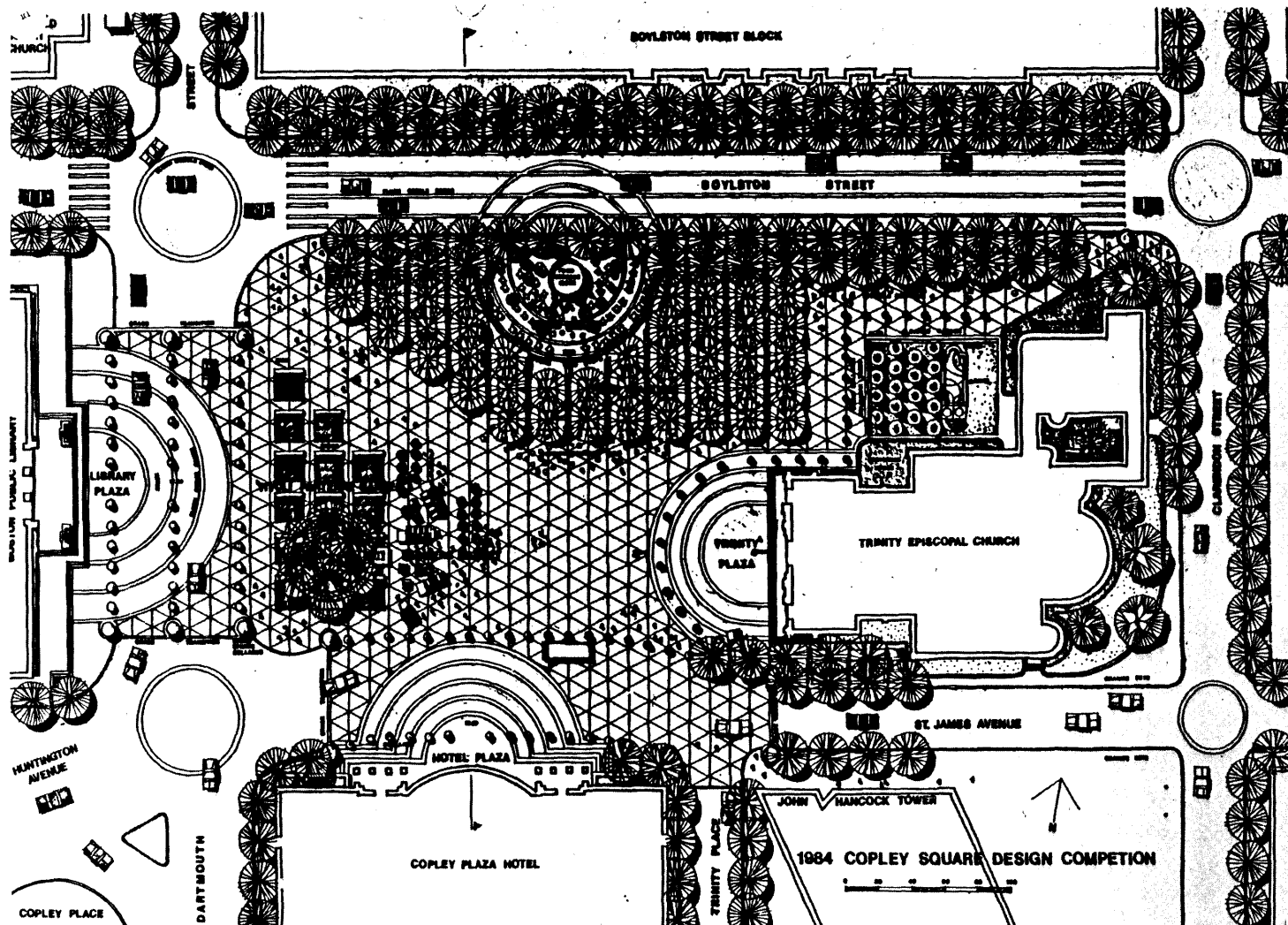
Figure 59: The proposal by the SWA Group for the 1984 Copley Square Competition. This was one of the five finalists for the second stage of the competition.

and educational origins was not handled with the greatest care. As discussed earlier in the evaluations, the monuments selected are very questionable.

Local Context: As for my criteria in the local context, the first competition did not address any of them, while the second competition did address them partially. Although the second competition did not have a criterion to refine the facades on Boylston Street, the Abbot design attempted to create a harmonious surrounding wall by placing a row of trees all along the streets which bound Copley Square. This, of course, created a visual barrier too. The micro-climatic issues were dealt with quite adequately, considering the scope of the program; only landscaping techniques were recommended for dealing with the climate, no structures were allowed. The visual accessibility of the square was a very important issue in the second competition, and the Abbot design responded quite well. Had the design proposed paving to be continued onto the streets, the visual awareness could have been further enhanced. One of the five finalists from the first stage of the competition -- the SWA Group, dealt with the criterion of visual perceptibility quite well (see Figure 59). The last criteria in my list under the Local Context --the compatibility of edge activities was not even mentioned in the program, and thus, did not appear in the designs.

In the Context of Boston: Neither of the competitions addressed any of the criteria in my list under -- "In the Context of Boston". The first competition did state that a long term goal of the city was to create a significant pedestrian environment which linked Copley Square to other public spaces in Boston:(1) no suggestions, however, were asked in verbal or visual form. With respect to the criterion of management, the, second competition did state that an organization has been proposed to manage and maintain the square. The program also stated that the design should have the capacity

---

(1) See Appendix A, under "Design Objectives."

to evolve over time. But no effort was made to involve the surrounding institutions directly with management of Copley Square, functionally or visually. The design by the SWA Group (Figure 59) however, did propose a scheme which would meet the criterion — the management of Copley Square should be visually distinct and imageable. The design featured a raised semi-circular entry plaza in front of Trinity Church, Boston Public Library, and the Copley Plaza Hotel. Unfortunately the Abbot design does not have this feature, but it is the one which is going to be implemented. This was probably the greatest opprtunity that was missed by this competition, because such an arrangement would not only assure good and continued maintenance, but also allow the surrounding buildings to be visually and functionally integrated with the square.

CRITERIA FROM THE TWO COMPETITIONS, WHICH ARE NOT IN MY LIST

The criteria which were not included in my list, but were present in both the competition programs are:

1.   A budget

2.   The construction of buildings

3.   Use of design elements such as pools, fountains, sculpture, lighting, etc.

4.   Functional uses of the square, such as seating, food service, market, vending, etc.

A budget was not included in my list primarily because it was beyond the scope of this study, although it would have been interesting to see how much it would cost to realize the full potential of Copley Square. I would like to add, however, that a fixed budget should not be a limiting factor when dealing with a space as important as Copley Square. Some of the criteria I have suggested, especially those under the local and the city context, are long term objectives, and can be achieved incrementally.

The construction of any kind of buildings with the exception of a food service stand in the second competition, was not permitted in either of the competitions. I did not feel that this restriction should be imposed. If the construction of a gatehouse or a similar structure could enhance the spatial and visual quality of the square, it should certainly be allowed. On the other hand, buildings do not have to be constructed on the square, they could go below the square as well.(1) A precedent already exists in Franklin Court, Independence National Park, Philadelphia, PA (see figure 45).

Details such as use of certain materials, fountains, pools, sculpture, and so forth, do not appear as a separate criterion in my list. These are design elements which are implied by the criteria I have listed. For example, the criterion -- religious, cultural, and educational origins should be given priority, implies that paving materials should relate to the Boston Public Library and Trinity Church. Motifs and sculpture, if used should symbolize the arts, sciences, and religion, the three aspects of Copley Square which made it so famous all over America. Moreover, these are deatils of which every qualified designer should be aware.

The functional use of the square was a very important criterion in the second competition. It specified in detail how many chairs, tables, running feet of informal seating, etc. should be provided. It also stated where farmers' markets, vendors, and food service should be placed. A great deal of care was taken to be sure that Copley Square should be a very intensely used place in as many ways as possible, which I do not believe to be a necessary criterion in the case of Copley Square. As previously discussed, Copley Square does not have to validate its existence by intensive use, it is more important to Boston as a symbol for the city, as the Great Court is for MIT, or Eiffel Tower is for Paris. Thus, my list of criteria focused on image and role of

---

(1) See discussion in Chapter Six, under "Micro-climatic Factors."

Copley Square, rather than number of chairs, tables, and placement of farmers' markets and food service. This does not mean that farmers' markets, seating and so forth, should be eliminated from the square, but that these are of secondary concern in the case of Copley Square. Moreover, these kinds of activitites can be accommodated in almost any place, one does not have to specifically design an urban square for such a purpose.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

This study started out with the objective of forming a general set of recommendations for the design of urban squares. A great deal of time and effort was spent studying existing literature on urban squares by authors such as Camillo Sitte, Paul Zucker, Kevin Lynch, Kidder Smith, William Whyte, Lawrence Halprin, and others. Over a hundred urban squares in Europe and America were examined with respect to physical ingredients, historical background, and existing conditions. As I began to understand more about urban squares, I also began to realize that any set of recommendations which could be applicable to all urban squares would be so general that the recommendations would have been of very little use. I modified my goals and decided to deal with only two squares which were inherently different --Harvard Square and Copley Square. Both of these squares were about to undergo major changes, which would allow an interesting comparison between my ideas and what was actually being done. The fact that these two squares were quite different with respect to background, size and shape would also allow me to demonstrate that one specific set of recommendations could not be applicable to both squares.

Once again, I realized that the amount of work needed for such an effort would take much more time than I had. Thus I settled for a study of only Copley Square. The previous efforts, however, were not wasted. Some important aspects of urban squares were learned which I will integrate into my conclusion.

Urban squares are all different from each other in the sense that they vary in size, shape, location, character, role, etc. This difference implies that all urban squares cannot be designed or redesigned using the same general set of rules and regulations. Urban squares are essentially given form, character and role by their historic development and the environment they exist in, which from time to time are modified by professional input. Together, these factors give urban squares a quality which makes each one of them unique. Thus, when one is about to intervene in an urban square, the criteria and priorities of interventions should be derived after a careful research of its history, local and city context, and the professional inputs (if any) which gave it the final form.

Since most of the time interventions on squares are undertaken to make it more "successful," and revitalize it, it is essential to understand: what is a successful square? Some believe that Dock Square/Faneuil Hall/Quincy Market is a successful square because it is always full of people, well maintained and brings the city income. Some believe that Harvard Square in Cambridge is a successful square because it has more variety in facilities (one can shop, eat, play chess, listen to music, watch people, etc.), caters to a larger range of economic and social groups, and is also thronged with people. Then there are people who have seen the Campo in Siena and are swept away by its architectural beauty and picturesque appearance; it, too, is always filled with people. All of them are successful squares in their own rights. Harvard Square probably gains success through variety, the Campo because of its architectural excellence and memorable history, and the Quincy Market area because of its tradition and history combined with good marketing strategy. My characterization of these places is perhaps too simplified and may be debatable, but the point I am trying to make is that these places are not successful for the same reasons. Therefore, in order to evaluate whether a square is successful or not, one has to consider what it is

capable of doing and what it was made to do. This implies that its historical development and environmental conditions have to be researched, after which an idea of what makes that square successful can be obtained. Consideration should also be given to the square's own unique features which make it different from other squares. As discussed before, it is important not to have successful squares only, but also a variety of squares. One should not create a square simply by including features which have been proven successful elsewhere, because this may very well lead to a very unsatisfactory square.

For example, the Government Center Plaza of Boston, modelled after the Campo in Siena, has achieved some of its physical characteristics, but it does not function as the Campo does. It is not a major public gathering place where people come to meet people, or people come to get news. The Campo was created more than 700 hundred years ago when the social conditions were very favorable for such a space. This was the place where people had to wait to hear the news of the Battle of Monteaperti. This was also the place where the town hall and the town market were located, people came to get news, exchange ideas; there was no television or Sunday newspapers. The Campo gained such prominence that although the same conditions do not exist, it thrives on its historical significance. The Government Center Plaza, however, was built in a different time and context. We have television and newspapers through which we keep in touch with society. We do not need to go to a special place to hear a speech, the television serves that purpose. Our social exchanges are quite exclusive too, we go to parties to which we are invited, or invite people to our parties. The evening stroll, the *passeggiata* − an essential communal and sensual public experience − is not

Figure 60: The Campo in Siena
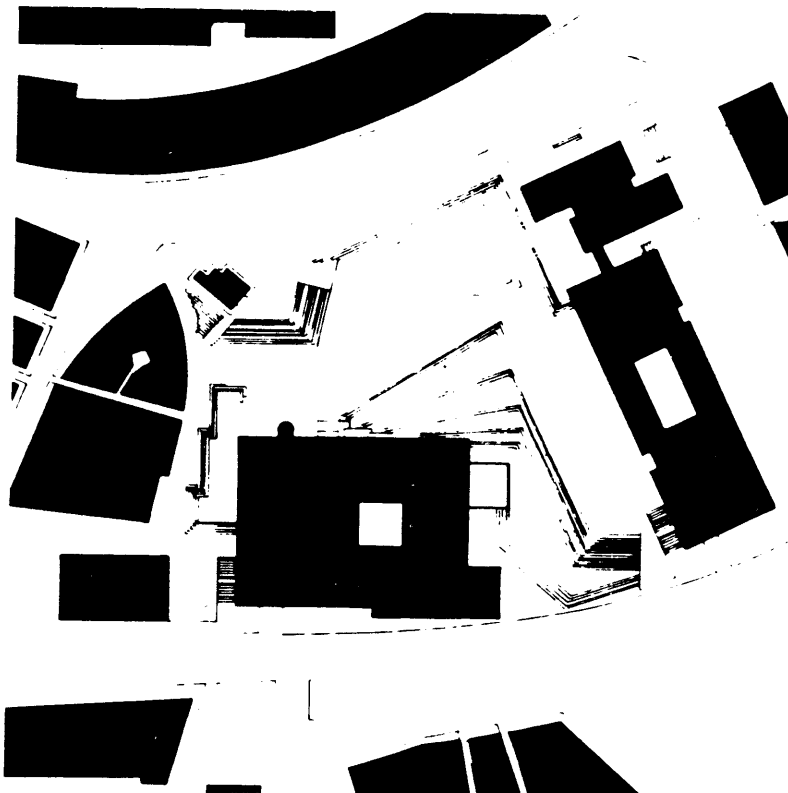
Figure 61: The Government Center Plaza in Boston

part of our lives.(1) Thus, the Government Center Plaza should not be expected to perform in the same manner as the Campo does.

In trying to develop a set of criteria for Copley Square, I first studied how and why it was initiated, and what it had been in the past. This allowed me to be aware of its historical significance and some of its unique features. I weighed its value as a public gathering place for entertainment and as public place which can serve as a symbol for the city of Boston. The role of being a symbol for the city of Boston, to my understanding, was far more crucial than the role of being a public place where one can be entertained by shops, food, and so forth. There are other public open places in Boston where one can shop, eat, sit, and be merry -- Quincy Market area and Washington Mall are two very well known places. Once I had established the character and role of Copley Square, I looked at the surrounding environment which I believed to be a critical factor in the functioning of the square. Studying the historical development of Copley Square, I realized that the success and failure of the square were largely dependent upon what happened around the square. As the surrounding environment changed, so did Copley Square, although the square itself remained the same for seventy years. Then the Sasaki, Dawson, and DeMay design enhanced the square for a while, until the surrounding environment took hold again. Thus, the criteria listed under "Local Context" deal with changes which affect not only Copley Square, but also its edge conditions. Redesigning the square will enhance the square to a certain degree; significant enhancement will occur only when the the surrounding environment is also enhanced.

In maintaining my objective of forming a basis for realizing the full potential of Copley Square, I also inquired into Copley Square's role in the city fabric of Boston.

---

(1) Robert Jensen, "Dreaming of Urban Plazas," *Urban Open Spaces.* Lisa Taylor, Editor. Rizzoli International Publications, New York, N.Y. 1979. p.53.

To address this issue, I adopted an idea from Kevin Lynch and Lawrence Halprin. Both of these urban design theorists and practitioners, I believe, have advanced the concept: in order to make our cities more meaningful, the city ought to be collectively perceptible to its inhabitants, and this collective perceptibility can be greatly enhanced when the open spaces of a city become visually distinct in relation to the movement system. Finally, I addressed the issue of management and maintenance, because the present system certainly does not seem to be feasible. Legally, the city has the responsibility, but it is no longer able to provide the level of resources that is required. Even if the city had the money, there are so many issues (housing subsidies, transportation subsidies, etc.) which have priority that it will never be able to politically justify large amounts of money to be spent on Copley Square. The answer, as Professor Gary Hack suggested, is to privatize Copley Square. Since the surrounding institutions benefit most from the presence of Copley Square, they should be the ones to share the responsibilities of Copley Square. This is not an unfair arrangement, because the proper functioning of Copley Square is greatly in their interest. In exchange they could be allowed greater functional and visual access to the square, as I have suggested in my criteria under "In the Context of Boston." This, however, is only an idea, the actual arrangement should be based on an analysis of how much the presence of Copley Square benefits the surrounding environment. This is a research effort which certainly deserves more attention.

This study has not been a very linear and straight-forward process, because Copley Square presented some of the classic dilemmas of urban design with respect to history. Should the past be forgotten and wiped out? Should the past be frozen and mummified? Are the values and ideals embodied in Copley Square, the values and ideals of the people of Boston today? My goal has been to strike a balance, I wanted the past to be visible, and at the same time let the square grow with considerations to

the new variables. Thus, my underlying theme has been the idea of "artificial excavation and construction": a theme used very effectively by Peter Eisenman and Jacqueline Robertson in the design for *"The City of Artificial Excavation,"* in the Berlin 1982 competition.(1) The historical context criteria imply the artificial excavation of Copley Square, by emphasizing the historic buildings and expressing the old street pattern, and thus allowing the past to be visible. The local and city context criteria deal with the construction of a new Copley Square with considerations for the present and the future.

In conclusion, I would like to leave the reader with some open questions which relate not only to Copley Square, but environmental design in general. What is a contemporary environment? How does one make a contemporary environment? Should we attempt to create contemporary environments? The dilemma of these questions can be explained by using the developments of Copley Square as examples. The Sasaki, Dawson, and DeMay design of 1965 was certainly contemporary with its time, but that led to a problem a few years later. On the contrary, Trinity Church is certainly dated, but it is still admired for what it is. This probably implies that one has to go beyond contemporary style and ingrain features which will survive time. If this is true, how are we going to determine what will weather the change of styles? Perhaps a distinction has to be made between "style" and "fashion": a style being something which has passed the test of time, and a fashion being something which evokes temporary popularity. Thus, according to these definitions, the Sasaki, Dawson, and DeMay design followed a fashion, and Trinity Church followed a style. This, however, is an observation which fits my value structure, because I believe that the "modern movement" of the 60s was a fashion, and Richardson's "romanesque–gothic" was a style.

---

(1) For a brief write up, see *Architectural Design*, number 53, 1/2–1983. p.91–93.
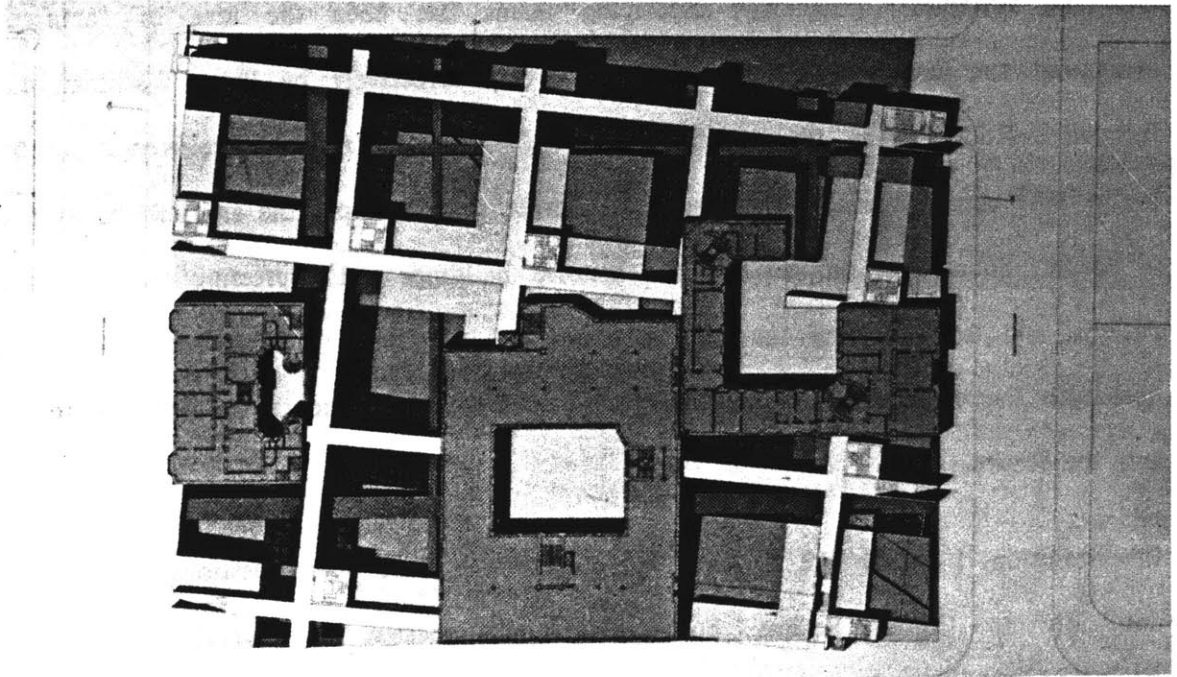
Figure 62: Ground Plan: City of Artificial Excavation

Figure 63: Perspective view
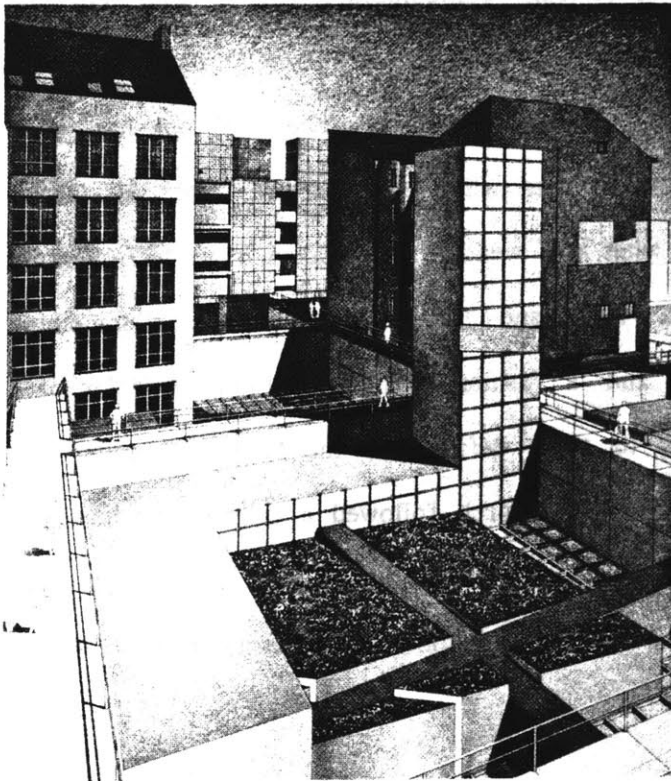
"The City of Artificial Excavation," the prize winning project for the 1981 Berlin Competition, designed by Peter Eisenman and Jacqueline Robertson. The project is both a construction and an excavation. The two are in a sense held in balance, which at no point, allows arrest on one foot or the other, between the unmaking and the unbuilding of the city, and the refoundation of it.

Even if we agree to what is style and what is fashion, we are still left with the dilemma of making a contemporary environment. If we do not conform to contemporary conditions and restrictions, we run the danger of creating problems which we cannot handle; the Pruitt Igoe symbolized a social condition which was unacceptable, and had to be dynamited. On the other hand, if we do conform to contemporary conditions and restrictions, we still run the risk of demolishment and reconstruction, because conditions and restrictions always change: Copley Square has taught us that lesson. Maybe, the answer lies in "flexible or temporary" designs, ones which can be easily changed and rebuilt every few years, which poses another dilemma. How often should we rebuild, every twenty years, fifty years or hundred years? I am not sure this a very good idea either, since the current trend of "disposables" has not produced the most agreeable environment. Thus, the key may be in being able to foresee changing social conditions, and including mechanisms in one's design which can accommodate those changes. This implies that designs at the time of their implementation may be out of context, but as time elapses, the design will have a stronger relationship with its environment. This issue of time and design is very critical, because the rate of change in our societies is ever increasing. It is certainly an area which deserves some serious thought.

APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF DETAILS OF THE 1965 COMPETITION PROGRAM

The following is only a summarized version of the 1965 competition program titled Copley Square. *This publication by the Boston Redevelopment Authority, is available for reference at the BRA Library and the Boston Public Library in the Fine Arts Section.*

SCHEDULE

September 15, 1965: Competition was announced
October 15, 1965 : Deadline for registration
February 15, 1966 : Deadline for submission of entries
March 15, 1966 : Announcement of winning design

DESIGN OBJECTIVES

Two design objectives were stated in the program, a long-term and an immediate objective. The long-term objective was to create a significant pedestrian environment and walking system that would connect in sequence the Back Bay Fens, the Prudential Center, Copley Square, the Public Garden and Boston Common into the the Government Center and Waterfront areas, and along Cambridge Street to the Charles River.

The immediate goal of the competition was the design of Copley Square itself. Until recently, as the program stated, this had been an almost impossible task because Huntington Avenue cut diagonally across the square, bisecting it into awkward parts and creating a hostile pedestrian environment. Legislation had been passed which allowed the closing of Huntington Avenue, thus making Copley Square into a "square." The competitors were allowed to design within the area bounded by St. James Avenue, Boylston, Clarendon and Dartmouth Streets. The competitors were also asked to make suggestions for all crossroads leading into the square and the public walks on the opposite sides of the streets from the square, thus taking into account the major pedestrian movements to, from and through the square.

Also stated in the program was that Copley Square could take any form proposed by the competitor within the design requirements of the program. Pools, walls, fountains, sculpture, lighting, trees, grass, planting and special landscaping effects were permitted.

MANDATORY DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

1. Construction budget is $500,000; all proposals must fall within this budget in order to qualify.
2. The construction of any buildings within the competition area is not permitted.
3. No curb elevations or positions may be changed
4. No parking is allowed in the square or on the side streets.
5. The 50 ft. right of way in front of Trinity Church called Trinity Place must be respected. Within this area only paving is allowed.

NON-MANDATORY DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

1. Commercial activities within the square, such as news-stands, restaurants, etc., are not permitted; Design elements that foster temporary exhibitions and activities are permissible.
2. No arrangment of utilities are required, since they already exist.
3. No toilet facilities are desired
4. Any landscaping on Trinity Church property is subject to approval by the Church.
5. The statue of Phillips Brooks can be repositioned.
6. Night-lighting arrangement is required.
7. Winter and summer uses should be considered.

MANDATORY DRAWING REQUIREMENTS

Three numbered 30"x40" stiff white boards are required, all drawings being in black and white.

Board one: A detailed site plan at 1"=20' using the architectural plan supplied as a guide – all buildings surrounding the square are to be shown in tone.

Board two: An aerial perspective showing the entire square, streets, and surrounding buildings, drawn from a supplied base drawing.

Board three: Sections in both directions, showing elevations of visible buildings. Details of sculpture, benches, night-lighting. etc. An eight-and-half by eleven inch booklet containing specifications and estimations is to be attached to the board.

Optional Drawings: Only two more sections may be provided. No additional drawings are to be accepted.

The program also provided a brief historical background of Copley Square, a detailed verbal land use description of the Back Bay and the immediate environment, and technical data such as soil conditions, datum planes, traffic movement, legal contract conditions, and so forth.

APPENDIX B

SUMMARY OF DETAILS FROM THE 1984 COMPETITION PROGRAM

The following information is a summarized version of the program. The official program is titled: Copley Square Design Competition: Competition Rules, Regulations and Program. *It is available for reference at the BRA library.*

SCHEDULE
December 8, 1983 : Competition announced
January 20, 1984 : Registration deadline
February 3, 1984 : First stage entries due
February 21, 1984 : First stage winners announced
March 5, 1984 : Second stage begins
April 26, 1984 : Second stage entry due
May 21, 1984 : Final winner announced

COMPETITION BOUNDARIES

Design impact area: This zone was defined as the area extending across all the bordering streets and sidewalks to the faces of the adjacent buildings. Although funds were available to improve the entire area, design concepts which address this area were asked for, in anticipation of identifying future resources. The suggestions were to be consistent with an overall approach to creating a design for Copley Square that unifies the district.

Project area: This area was bounded by St. James Avenue and Boylston Street, Clarendon and Dartmouth Streets.

BUDGET : $3,000,000

CHARACTER

1. The design should employ natural materials as well as high quality paving, and masonary materials to create a warmly human environment.
    The location of trees should define vistas, passages and activity areas. Other plant materials should be chosen to ensure a presence of seasonal color and green throughout the year.

Paved areas should be comprised of varying patterns and textures, reflecting functional use and sensitivity to color and the pattern and style of the surfaces of the surrounding architecture.

Flower beds should lend color to the space and reflect seasonal change.

2. The design for Copley Square should provide a public open space which is flexible and accommodating of various uses which will alter with the changing seasons. It should avoid emphasis on the fashionable and provide a suitable setting for a range of activities. There should be areas for quiet enjoyment and reflection as well as a place where a crowd can gather.

FUNCTIONAL USES OF THE SQUARE

1. **Informal use:** The design should primarily promote informal use of the square and reflect activities of a successful urban space:
    - ease of access to surrounding streets
    - multi-functional, flexible spaces
    - ease of public surveillance

2. **Seating:** Overall, at least 1,000 persons should be able to find accommodation of various kinds.
    Fixed seating: At least 1,050 linear feet of fixed seating should be provided in various spatial arrangements to accommodate up to 200 people.
    Flexible seating: Movable chairs should be provided for 300 persons.

3. **Food Service:** The provision of food and beverage should be accommodated on a seasonal basis from a temporary arbor-like pavilion structure. This structure should be de-mountable, sturdy and resistant to wind. The food service should be accommodated in an area for 150 seats around open air tables sheltered by umbrellas and/or trees.
    It is estimated that the design should accommodate from 300 to 600 square feet of serving area in a light frame, temporary, pavilion-like structure.
    The design should provide a space for 150 movable chairs and stationary tables in an open air layout.
    The food service area should be in proximity to sidewalk areas and not obstruct pedestrian circulation, nor should it conflict with access to Trinity Church and the St. James Avenue entrance of the Hancock Tower. Its overall character should contribute to creating a place of beauty and quiet enjoyment.

4. **Market:** Throughout the year, Copley Square could host a series of markets for the sale of seasonal products.
    Open space should be designated for a seasonal Farmer's Market-type operation, which, when not occupied by sellers, must serve the informal needs of visitors and be an attractive component of the square.
    Temporary market stalls, the location of which would be designated in some manner, should be provided, permitting daily set-up, take down, and removal.

5. **Vending:** A variety of locations should be designated which are consistent with the overall design approach and the dignity of the square, and which do not obstruct circulation patterns.

6. **Programmed activities:** A design for Copley Square should not rely on highly-programmed events and attractions for its meaning and purpose. It should serve primarily as a place of beauty which is quiet and empty but never dull and unattractive. Planned events can reinforce the meaning of local institutions and political process that shape daily routines. These might include festivals, political events, holiday events and cultural events such as, ethnic and neighborhood festivals, flower-shows, Christmas and New Years celebrations, theater, dance, musical performances, and so forth.

DESIGN INFORMATION

1. **Relation to streets:** Copley Square should offer an easy flow from the surrounding streets, having as many entrances and exits as possible. To facilitate ease of surveillance and social control, major seating and activity areas should be visible to passing pedestrians and motorists.

2. **Lighting and Environmental controls:** The design of the square should be beautiful and attractive day and night, and provide, where possible, design features which might mitigate harsh climatic conditions.
Adequate and attractive lighting to enhance night-time enjoyment of the square should be an intregal part of the design.
Wind comfort criteria should be met through wind abatement strategies, where possible, providing protection for outdoor eating, outdoor seating, walkways and outdoor performance areas.
Where appropriate, consideration should be given to the acoustical requirements for programmed activities.

3. **Management:** The competition to redesign Copley Square should produce a beautiful design which must have the capacity to evolve over time. An organization is proposed to manage and maintain the revitalized square. Management and maintenance costs are estimated at two dollars per square feet per year. Possible revenue sources to defray management and maintenance costs include income from endowment funds, concessions, a voluntary assessment district and normal expenditures from the city Parks Department.

To meet management and maintenance requirements, the designer should utilize design concepts and use construction materials which require minimum management and maintenance costs.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR DESIGN

The general principles to be observed in the design review by the jury were stated as follows:

1. The aesthetic, architectonic and landscape expression in the city setting
2. The clarity and efficiency of the total solution
3. The suitability of the entry to the program
4. The economy of the solution in construction and in practice

DRAWING REQUIREMENTS

Two boards each measuring 40"x28" of rigid white board or stock.
Board one: The master plan of the Design Impact Area. Scale: 1" = 20', in color or black and white.
Board two: Two eye level perspective or sketches (scale optional) showing eye level views of the square and its surroundings. One cross-section, scale 1' = 20' showing all design features. A drawn outline of Trinity Church in the background is a must. The location of the cross-section is provided in the base maps. A typed narrative on eight-and-half by eleven white paper, which explains how the scheme relates to the site and its surroundings and how it fulfills the functional requirements of the design of the square. The narrative should not exceed one type-written page.

The program also contained a brief historical background of Copley Square. Technical information such as wind speeds, shadow diagrams, slides of the square in the present condition, pedestrian movement diagrams, were also included.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

REFERENCES

American Architect and Building News.
1. volume I, Oct. 28, 1876. p.345
2. volume LVII, Sept. 4, 1877. p.77
3. volume LVII, Sept. 18, 1897. p.93

"Architecture in Progress". *Architectural Design.* vol. 53, no. 1/2. 1983. p.91–93.

Boston Redevelopment Authority. *Program for Copley Square: National Design Competition.* 1965. Boston, MA.

Ibid. 1983.

Boston Society of Architects. *Architecture Boston.* Barre, MA: Barre Publishing. 1976.

Bunting, Bainbridge. *Houses of Boston's Back Bay.* Cambridge, MA. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. 1967.

Fein, Albert. "The American City: The Ideal and the Real". *The Rise of an American Architecture.* Edgar Kaufman, editor. New York: Praeger. 1970.

Halprin, Lawrence. "Collective Perception of Cities". *Urban Open Spaces.* Lisa Taylor, editor. New York: Rizzoli International. 1979.

Jensen, Robert. "Dreaming of Urban Plaza". *Ibid.*

Life and Letters of William Barton Rogers. Massachusetts Institute of Technology Museum. Cambridge, MA.

McCord, David. *About Boston.* Boston, MA: Little Brown. 1973.

Museum of Fine Arts. *Back Bay Boston: The City as a Work of Art.* Boston, MA.

Nicholaeff, Doreve. *The Planning and Development of Copley Square.* Master's Thesis. MIT Department of Architecture. Cambridge, MA. 1979.

"Philadelphia '76". *Progressive Architecture.* April 1976. p.67–70.

Plan, The. MIT School of Architecture and Planning Quarterly. Mar. 15, 1984. p.2.

Urban Investment and Development Company. *Copley Place: Project Information.* Boston, MA. 1980.

Whitehill, Walter Muir. *Boston: A Topographical History.* Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. 1968.

SUPPLEMENTAL REFERENCES

Anderson, Stanford. *On Streets.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 1978.

Bacon, Edmund. *Design of Cities.* New York: Viking Press. 1967.

French, J.S. *A Brief History of the City Square.* Dubuque, IA: Kendall-Hunt. 1980.

Halprin, Lawrence. *Cities.* New York: Reinhold. 1964.

Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities.* Random House. 1961.

Lynch, Kevin. *Theory of Good City Form.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 1983.

Mein, Michel. *Design Analysis for Collective Spaces.* Master's Thesis. MIT Department of Architecture. Cambridge, MA. 1983.

Sekler, Eduard F., editor. *Historic Urban Spaces.* Reports and discussion from the seminar U.D. 1-5b. "The Shaping of Urban Space". Spring Term 1966. Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. 1966.

Sitte, Camillo. *City Planning According to Artistic Principles.* London: Phaidon Press. 1965.

Specter, D. *Urban Spaces.* New York Graphic Society Ltd. New York. 1974.

Zucker, Paul. *Town and Square.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 1959.