

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

For HCPS use only  
 received OCT 13 1980  
 date entered

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

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

**1. Name**

historic Leather District

and/or common same as above

**2. Location**

*roughly bounded by Atlantic Ave, Kneeland, Lincoln, and Utica, Beach, & East Streets*

street & number South, Lincoln, Atlantic Ave., Kneeland, Essex, Tufts N/A not for publication

city, town Boston N/A vicinity of congressional district

state Ma. code 025 county Suffolk code 025

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name Multiple - see continuation sheet

street & number

city, town N/A vicinity of state

**5. Location of Legal Description**

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

street & number Pemberton Square

city, town Boston state Ma

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title (a) Inventory of the Historic Assets of The Commonwealth of Mass. has this property been determined eligible?  DOE 9/3/80 yes  no

date June 1980  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Massachusetts Historical Commission

city, town Boston state Ma.

(b) see continuation sheet

## 7. Description

Leather District, Boston, MA

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved date N/A

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

The Boston Leather District is located in the southernmost portion of Boston's Central Business District, and is largely bounded and isolated by the railroad yards on Atlantic Avenue to the east, the Surface Artery to the west and north, and the Massachusetts Turnpike ramps to the south. South Station (NR-1975) lies to the northeast. The District contains fifty-four parcels of land, on which stand mostly commercial buildings, along with a few living and working loft spaces for artists. The area was re-developed from a low-rent residential/commercial district for the shoe and leather trade, primarily during the 1880s and 1890s, with some later construction in the first quarter of the twentieth century largely located in the southernmost blocks bounded by Kneeland Street. Romanesque Revival designs dominate the early years of construction, as does the Classical vocabulary at the turn of the century and beyond. Red brick and brownstone are the favored building materials, as well as lighter colored brick, terra cotta, granite, limestone and cast stone. The core of the district is remarkable for its intact quality, particularly its cast iron storefronts, and its harmony of design, scale, and materials. Most of these buildings are five or six stories in height and are characterized by continuous floor levels, band courses, and cornice lines. There are only three intrusions within the district: the buildings at 194-204 Lincoln Street (A), 47-51 Utica Street (B), and 154-156 Kneeland Street (C).

The major buildings are described below in chronological order.

Centrally located in the district is 90-100 South Street (1), designed in 1883 by A.S. Drisko. Romanesque Revival in style, it is significant as one of the two earliest extant structures within the Leather District. Actually a double building with identical treatments, it is constructed of red brick, retains its cast iron storefront, and features granite and brick corbelled belt courses, round arched fenestration at the 5th level, and a brick corbelled cornice. (Photo #2)

Close by is 114-122 South Street (2), at the corner of Beach Street, also designed in 1883 by Lewis Weissbein and W.H. Jones. (Weissbein designed the Morse Block in 1880, now destroyed, the first commercial structure built during the district's re-development.) Of red brick construction, it features an intact cast iron storefront, brownstone trim including panels in the spandrels over the 2nd level, cast iron window mullions, and a corbelled cornice course over the 4th level. (Photo #2)

Between these two buildings is 102-112 South Street (3), designed by Alden Frink in 1884, and unique as the only Queen Anne style structure in the entire Leather District. Another double building with virtually identical styling, it is rendered in red brick and features, in addition to its cast iron storefront, carved floral panels, terra cotta tiles, and stone sunbursts over the 3rd level. Round arched windows with sunbursts are located at the 5th level, and a triangular pediment caps each building. (Photo #2)

Facing these buildings on the west side of South Street is the block which is the most Richardsonian in nature. 141-157 South Street (4), prominently sited at the corner of Beach, is a Richardsonian Romanesque structure designed in 1884 by John H.

# 8. Significance

Leather District, Boston, MA.

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

Specific dates 1883 - 1919 Builder/Architect multiple

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Boston Leather District possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials and workmanship. It is associated directly with the industrial development of Boston and New England, and also reflects Boston's vernacular reaction to concurrent architectural developments in Chicago. The Leather District is outstanding as Boston's most intact and homogeneous district of late nineteenth century vernacular commercial structures, as well as one of only a few such remaining in New England. Thus, the Leather District meets criteria A and C of the National Register of Historic Places.

The Leather District, located in what was known as the South Cove, was largely under water until the 1830s. During the eighteenth century wharves were built out along its original shoreline, and by 1814 were located from the end of Essex Street, around Windmill Point, to Kneeland Street. By 1830, the South Cove was a thriving commercial area centered around the wharves and distilling industry. A pivotal event for the South Cove's future was the extension of Sea Street in 1828 across the Cove, resulting in the shortest route to the relatively undeveloped South Boston. The South Cove area thereby became a natural target for new commercial development. Its strategic location close to the business district, Fort Point Channel, and Boston Harbor were contributing factors, but perhaps most important were its physical characteristics: dry flats at low tide and its proximity to a deep-water channel. The area was planned as a visionary development incorporating much-needed railroad terminals and related commercial development. In 1833, the South Cove Corporation was given a charter to fill in the Cove and provide a terminal for the Boston and Worcester Railroad. By 1836, one-half of the Cove was filled in, and by 1839 the filling had been completed, adding seventy-seven acres (including the present Chinatown) and a railroad terminal to the city. In 1838, the United States Hotel, designed by William Washburn, had been constructed to accommodate the railroad passengers, the largest hotel of its day in the country.

However, unforeseen events prevented the planned commercial expansion in the area. The financial crash of 1837-38 created a tight money situation, causing the reluctance of commercial concerns to move into an unsure area; furthermore, the economic advantages of locating adjacent to railroad facilities were as yet unproven. Therefore, resulting from a need for low-cost housing to meet the great stream of immigration into Boston, housing which would additionally provide a sure income for the owners, the South Cove developed as a residential and related commercial area. Photographic evidence reveals that its architectural inclinations were probably similar to the original remnants of the Chinatown area: red brick row houses with pitched roofs, a vernacular version of the Greek Revival. The expendable nature of this low-cost housing, together with the area's independence from the railroads, were undoubtedly important factors contributing to the district's development in the 1880s.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 11

Quadrangle name Boston South

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A 

1	9	3	3	0	6	0	0	4	6	9	0	6	5	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

1	9	3	3	0	5	2	0	4	6	9	0	4	3	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

1	9	3	3	0	3	0	0	4	6	9	0	5	0	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

1	9	3	3	0	4	5	0	4	6	9	0	7	0	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet

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

state	code	county	code
<u>N/A</u>			

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Candace Jenkins, Preservation Planning Director by Mickail Koch  
Boston Landmarks Commission

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date 9/83

street & number 294 Washington Street telephone (617) 727-8470

city or town Boston state 02108

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

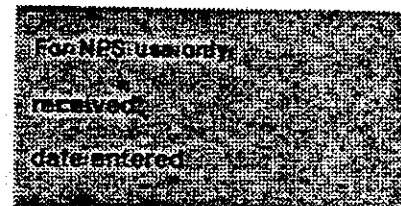
national  state  local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Peter Werbauskis date 9/30/83

title State Historic Preservation Officer, MHC date

For HCRS use only  
 I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register  
Carl D. Skelton date 12-21-83  
 Keeper of the National Register  
 Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

Continuation sheet Leather District, Boston, MA Item number 7

Page 1

Besarick. Its red brick and brownstone wrap-around facade retains its cast iron storefront, and features a curved corner and recessed corner entry. The facade is articulated by an arcade incorporating levels 2-5, with oculus windows accenting the corner and ends of the building.

121-123 South Street (5) is a narrow Richardsonian Romanesque structure designed in 1886, its 2nd-4th levels organized within a single monumental round arch enriched with ornamental terra cotta tiles in the spandrels. Brownstone sill and lintel courses, decorative brickwork, and stone ball finials capping corbelled end piers are other features of this small, handsome structure. (Photo #5)

Lincoln Street between Tufts and Beach was the next area to be developed after the corresponding block on South Street. Again, largely Richardsonian in style, its red brick facades present a homogeneous block, though the storefronts have all been remodelled. 116-128 Lincoln Street (6), designed in 1888 by Franklin E. Kidder, is a red brick and brownstone Richardsonian Romanesque structure, featuring a rusticated brownstone ashlar 2nd level. 3-story arches encompass levels 3-5, with Romanesque capitals capping the central piers, brownstone molded archivolts, and brownstone medallions in the spandrels. The building is topped by an arcaded orballed cornice. (Photo #1)

146-154 Lincoln Street (7), at the corner of Beach, was designed in 1892 by Winslow & Wetherell. Richardsonian in style, it also includes some classical detailing. Rendered in red brick with terra cotta trim, its 2nd level features coupled windows enclosed in segmental arches with flared brick lintels, and a denticular cornice course. The three central bays of levels 3-5 are articulated by piers terminating in terra cotta caps and round arches with molded archivolts.

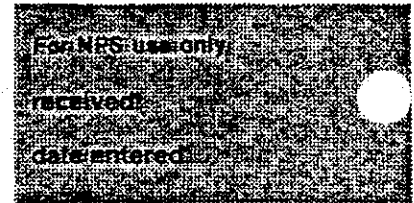
Large terra cotta medallions ornament the areas between the 6th level windows. The cornice is composed of brick dentils, a leafy terra cotta course, and surmounting copper cornice punctuated by lions' heads.

The Lincoln Building (8) at 66-86 Lincoln Street, at the corners of Essex and Tufts, has three formally finished facades. Designed in the 2nd Renaissance Revival style by Willard T. Sears in 1894, it is constructed of red brick with Indiana limestone trim. Its stone base contains two major entries, symmetrically located, and distinguished by console keystone arches springing from polished granite shafts. Its largely triple window bays are characterized by stone keystone lintels at levels 2-4 and round arched at level 5. A rusticated stone 6th level accents the entry bays by oval windows. (Photo #1)

The Albany Building (9), 155-205 Lincoln Street designed in 1899 by Peabody & Stearns, is a monumental Beaux-Arts structure which occupies an entire block. Constructed of white brick and limestone with cast stone ornament, it features bevelled corners, and 2-story round arched stone entries at the corners and long sides, elaborately embellished with swags, cartouches, and heraldic devices. Cast iron piers faced with Adamesque decoration divides the bays of the 2-story base. At the upper

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet Leather District, Boston, MA Item number 7

Page 2

levels, horizontal rustication emphasizes the entry bays, further accented with round arched windows at the 5th level. A complex terra cotta cornice with classical moldings crowns the building.

The Hotel Essex (10) located at 687-695 Atlantic Avenue, at the corners of Essex and East Streets, is a Beaux-Arts steel frame skyscraper, designed in 1899 by Arthur H. Bowditch. Its white brick base, horizontally rusticated, features a central entry surmounted by a round arched window flanked by stone cartouches, and a stone balcony supported by paired stone brackets. Projecting end pavillions are accented by white brick quoins. Ornamentation is concentrated in the white brick arcading of levels 3-5 of the central block, its spandrels embellished with cartouches.

The Fur Merchants Warehouse (11) at 717-719 Atlantic Avenue is a late example of the Romanesque Revival style, having been designed in 1901 by William Gibbons Rantoul. Its use of arcading at the 2-story base, coupled round arched windows at the 3rd level, Venetian arches at the 7th, and an arcaded top story, distinguishes this red brick structure, as well as its arcaded corbelling over the 3rd level and at the cornice. An interesting feature is the smaller scale treatment of the 1st bay, probably reflecting an elevator shaft.

The Chiam Building (12) at 739-749 Atlantic Avenue, at the corner of Beach Street, is a low, 3-story red brick and limestone structure designed in 1917 by James E. McLaughlin as the South Postal Station. Its Classical Revival vocabulary is exemplified at the building's curved corner by the original trabeated entry (now bricked in), its two Doric columns set in antis. The corner is emphasized by cast stone eagles, swags, and heraldic shields, and the modillion block cornice and brick parapet are further ornamented at the corner by swags and an oval shield.

One of the last sizeable structures to be erected in the Leather District is the Pilgrim Building (13) at 208-212 South Street, designed in 1919 by Monks and Johnson. An example of the steel frame skyscraper, it is here clothed in the ornamental vocabulary of the Classical Revival. Rendered in yellow brick and terra cotta, its 2-story terra cotta base features classically ornamented pilasters and a modillioned cornice course, and central entries with partially intact segmental arched pediments. A transitional 3rd level and plain brick shaft are topped by a 2-story arcaded terra cotta cornice, featuring rope molding and flanking pilasters. (Photo #2)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet Leather District, Boston, MA Item number 8

Page 1

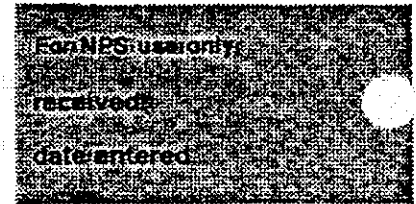
As far back as Colonial days, the boot and shoe industry was one of the State's leading industries. At first, the shoemaker dealt directly with the market, making shoes to order with his own or the customer's leather. During the next phase, he manufactured many boots and shoes for a merchant to market at his own risk and profit. By 1810, 10% of Boston's shoe products were exported, many to the West Indies. Severe competition for orders made specialization necessary in order to secure rapid work. After 1820, the central shop system quickly developed; here the leather was cut, given out to workers to complete the "uppers", and given out again to the "makers" who would last and sew the boots and shoes. These were inspected in the central shops and then turned over to the Boston merchants. Business expanded enormously and great fortunes were made. However, all this halted during the financial crash of 1837-38, when 90% of the shoe merchants failed.

By 1840, a new trade had developed and stiff competition resulted from increased demands for stylistic variation as well as insistence upon quality. More refined specialization, as well as the desire for economy, led to the introduction of machinery into the shoe-making process. Generally, the manufacturer put machines into the central shops and the workers followed these machines.

The post-1850 expansion and its emphasis on the increasing economy of large-scale production, hastened the transition to the factory system in which all the shoe-making was done under one roof. Immense orders pushed production to its limit, and while the southern and south-western markets remained firm, new markets opened in California and Australia, a result of the gold rush. Only the lasting and bottoming of shoes outside the shop continued into this period. But when the McKay machine for sewing soles was introduced in the 1860s, and the Goodyear Welting Machine in 1875, the last remnants of this cottage industry disappeared.

Boston had been the marketing center for the shoe and leather industry from the early 19th century; it had begun to assume large proportions as far back as 1828 when total sales from Boston jobbing houses were over \$1,000,000.

Buyers came from the shoe towns to purchase supplies, and by about 1830, the larger manufacturers began to open offices and stores in Boston. Soon, most of the leading merchants had established places of business there. For many years the American House on Hanover Street was the headquarters for the trade, its business center focused on the North and South Markets, Fulton, Blackstone, and Shoe and Leather Streets. By 1849, the trade had begun to move southward into Pearl Street, then principally occupied by wholesale dry goods houses; within a short time, this became its new center. Soon, "block after block of dwellings on High Street were levelled to make room for warehouses" (Herndon, p.8). In 1865, there were over 200 jobbing houses in Boston with annual domestic and foreign trade of over \$50,000,000, fifty times the amount of 28 years previous. By 1860, New England was making not less than 80% of the shoes for domestic trade.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

Continuation sheet Leather District, Boston, MA Item number 8

Page 2

The great fire of November 10, 1872, which levelled Boston's Central Business District, also devastated the physical center of the shoe and leather industry. All of the wholesale shoe and leather houses, except for a few on Hanover Street, were burned; 229 wholesale shoe dealers, 189 leather concerns, and about 100 firms in related businesses were destroyed. The warehouses were full of winter goods, and the loss in goods and machinery was over \$12,000,000, and in buildings, \$1,500,000. There was a concern as to whether the insurance companies could stand the enormous losses, but considering the scale of the disaster, a relatively small number of concerns were ruined. The fire destroyed almost all the finished leather in the Eastern states, resulting in a price increase for hides and leather all over the country. After the fire, the district was rebuilt, and for several years, the trade continued to cling to it. It then spread to Summer Street, around Church Green, the New England Shoe and Leather Dealer Association (incorporated 1871) occupying new quarters in the Church Green Building. By 1880, the trade began to take over the area now known as the Leather District.

Although the commercial re-development of the Leather District area was for the most part concurrent with architectural events in Chicago and New York, the stringent building codes resulting from the 1872 fire prohibited Boston's development along the same lines. The concern primarily for safety rather than linking safety with progress, led architects into a conservative reaction to the fire which severely limited development of new technology and use of new materials. Building heights were restricted by relationship to street widths, and party and fire wall regulations limited roof forms and structural types. These codes resulted in the predominance of mill construction, and precluded the type of structural innovations characterizing Chicago's post-fire rebuilding.

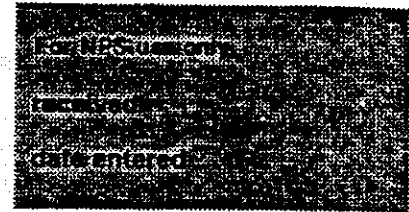
Along with restraints imposed by building regulations were functional demands imposed by the requirements of the leather industry, relating to efficient storage and movement of goods. The lowest section was often split level: both the high basement and display floor had huge glass windows set in cast-iron frames. These floors housed display of merchandise, reception areas, and fuel storage areas. In order to maximize floor space, entries were recessed into the buildings and located at the corners where possible, rather than sacrificing the floor area required by a building setback. The second floor, also given prominent windows, was occupied by the directors and was where business was transacted. The middle stories, characterized by generous floor space and large windows, served the storage or warehouse function for active merchandise. Because vertical transport was difficult, the top floor was generally reserved for storage of slow merchandise, and this function is usually reflected in the differing architectural treatment of this top level.

It is notable that although these buildings were constructed for general use rather than for a specific client, they were not speculatively built. Rather than simply hiring contractors to erect strictly utilitarian structures, there was real concern for architectural expression whereby architects were hired as designers. These architects were often lesser known, and the influences first of H.H. Richardson and later of Peabody & Stearns is apparent.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Leather District, Boston, MA

Item number 8

Page 3

The Leather District buildings were constructed primarily during the 1880's and 1890's, and the area embodies the most intact and homogenous commercial district of such a size in the City.

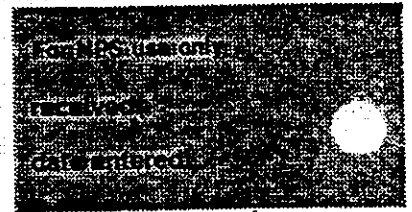
The district is characterized largely by red brick structures with flat roofs, uniformly set back from the street, and featuring continuous floor levels, band courses, and cornice lines. Ornamentation is generally rendered in brownstone. Buildings constructed around 1900 and after were generally of lighter brick, characterizing the more up-to-date Classical Revival styles. The heart of the district is South Street, especially between East/Tufts and Beach Streets, a block that was constructed principally between 1883-88 and which retains the highest degree of architectural integrity. The east side of South Street was developed first, of particular note being the double building at #102-112 (3), the only structure within the district using the decorative vocabulary of the Queen Anne style. The west side is the most Richardsonian in nature, its development initiated by J. Franklin Faxon with the buildings at #141-157 (4). His sponsorship of this structure along with #121-123 (5) and the Beebe Building at #127-131, as well as 103-2 Lincoln Street, make him the largest developer in the district in addition to his numerous development sites elsewhere in Boston. Noteworthy is 141-157 South Street (4), a Richardsonian Romanesque structure which strongly claims its corner site and provides an anchor to this harmonious late 19th century block. Perhaps the most reflective of the Richardsonian style is the narrow building at 121-123 South Street (5), its fenestration organized within a single, monumental round arch.

Backing onto this block of South Street is the area of Lincoln Street between Beach and Tufts, which was developed between 1888-1893, and although the storefronts have been remodelled, most are of sympathetic styling. The five buildings at 104-144 Lincoln Street (6) were all constructed by the firm of Woodbury & Leighton. The largest and most successful contractors in New England during this period, they specialized in large public works. Number 130-2 Lincoln Street was designed by William Ralph Emerson, leading Boston architect, considered by many to be the inventor of the "Shingle Style" of architecture. Winslow and Wetherell, another prominent Boston firm, were designers of the three buildings at 134, 138-144, 146-154 (7) Lincoln Street.

Several 19th century structures on a much larger scale are located within the district. Among these are the 1894 Lincoln Building at 66-86 Lincoln Street (8), designed in the 2nd Renaissance Revival style by Willard T. Sears. This is actually the second commercial structure on the site, the first having been destroyed in the fire of 1888. Sears is perhaps best known for his partnership with Charles A. Cummings, designers of several landmarks in Boston. An original occupant of this building was the Commonwealth Shoe and Leather Company, originator of the famous "Bostonian" shoe. Another such structure is the Classical Revival/Beaux Arts South

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Leather District, Boston, MA

Item number 8

Page 4

Street building at 79-99 South Street, designed in 1899 by the prominent firm of Winslow, Wetherell & Bigelow. This building is particularly distinctive for its steel framing, one of only three such structures in the Leather District designed prior to 1900.

One of the most outstanding structures in the District is the 1899 Beaux Arts Albany Building (9) at 155-205 Lincoln Street. Dominating its streetscape, it was one of the last major buildings to be erected in the District, and also utilizes the more modern steel frame construction techniques. It was designed by Peabody and Stearns, a partnership termed "the most important arbiters of building taste after H.H. Richardson" (Holden, p.114). Moreover, the construction was done by Norcross Bros., contractors for the majority of Richardson's works. It provides a striking though not incompatible contrast with the predominantly late-Victorian ambience of the District. Located here from 1901-1929 was the United Shoe Machinery Company, an 1899 consolidation of the three major shoe manufacturing companies, which by 1910, controlled 98% of the shoe machinery business in the United States, and by the late 1920s had subsidiary companies throughout the world. Another original occupant of the Albany Building was the Frank W. Whitcher Co., manufacturers of and dealers in shoe and leather findings. One of the oldest concerns of its kind in the United States, the business was originally founded by John Tillson who opened his shop in 1826 at 8 Hanover Street.

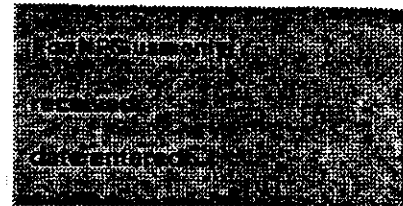
The Essex Hotel (10) at 687-695 Atlantic Avenue, designed in 1899 by prolific Boston architect Arthur Bowditch, was influenced by the design and structure of the Chicago School; however, its elaborate Beaux-Arts garb hides the very structural system that Chicago was attempting to emphasize. Formerly one of Boston's prominent hotels, it was built to receive the great flow of passengers from the newly erected South Union Terminal (South Station).

During the first twenty years of the 20th century, other buildings erected in the Leather District responded to the steel-frame skyscraper technique, though still clothed in classical garb. The Pilgrim Building (13) at 208-212 South Street, designed in 1919 by Monks and Johnson, is an excellent example of such a structure.

In 1929, the leather trade ranked 4th in total value of products, after printing and publishing, women's clothing, and foundry and machine shop products. At that time it was still "the great market, clearing house, and financial center for the entire New England shoe manufacturing industry" (Fifty Years, p.175), with over 100,000 pairs of shoes and slippers produced in a year. Today, the Leather District remains much as it did a half century ago, the architectural quality of the designs reflecting the importance of the leather industry to Boston's economy, while at the same time revealing Boston's conservative response to progressive technical developments elsewhere. Fortunately, much of the 20th century re-development passed it by, largely because of its siting, and it is currently the focus of City revitalization efforts.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet Leather District, Boston, MA Item number 9

Page 1

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Brook, Bruce S., George W. Steckler III, Paul Westlake, Jr., "The Evolution of Late 19th Century Commercial Architecture in Boston: An Analysis of 141-157 South Street", unpublished paper, copy at BLC.
- Fifty Years of Boston, A Memorial Volume, 1880-1930, Boston, 1932.
- Hazard, Blanche E., "The Organization of the Boot and Shoe Industry in Massachusetts before 1875", The Quarterly Journal of Economics, v.xxvii, No. 2, February 1913, pp. 236-262.
- Herndon, Richard, Boston of Today, Boston, 1892.
- Holden, Wheaton, "The Peabody Touch: Peabody and Stearns of Boston, 1870-1917", JSAH, Vol. XXXII, No. 2, May, 1973.
- McDermott, Charles H., A History of the Shoe and Leather Industry of the United States, Boston, 1918.
- Melish, Diane Carol, "Economic Growth and Urban Development: The Boston Leather District, 1640-1915", unpublished Honors Thesis for Wellesley College, 1974, copy at BLC.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet Leather District, Boston, MA Item number 10

Page 1

Boundary Description:

Beginning at the intersection of Essex Street and Atlantic Avenue, and running in a southwesterly direction along the westerly curb line of Atlantic Avenue to its intersection with Kneeland Street;

thence turning and running in a northwesterly direction along the northerly curb line of Kneeland Street, until its intersection with the Surface Artery;

thence turning and running in a northeasterly direction along the easterly curb line of the Surface Artery, until its intersection with Beach Street;

thence turning and running in a southeasterly direction along the southerly curb line of Beach Street;

thence turning and running northeasterly along the easterly curb line of Lincoln Street until its intersection with Essex Street;

thence turning and running in a southeasterly direction along the southerly curb line of Essex Street until its intersection with South Street ;

thence turning and running in a southeasterly direction along the westerly curb line of South Street until its intersection with East Street;

thence turning and running in a southeasterly direction along the southerly curb line of East Street;

thence turning and running in a northeasterly direction along the side lot line of 20-24 East Street and 215 Essex Street (the Essex Hotel);

thence turning and running in a southeasterly direction along the southerly curb line of Essex Street to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification:

The Leather District was thoroughly documented during a 1980 building by building survey of the Central Business District conducted by the Boston landmarks Commission. Boundaries are generally defined by the highways and railroad facilities which ring the district: railroad yards to the east, Surface Artery to the west, and the Massachusetts Turnpike to the south and the new Dewey Square Tower to the north. Within those boundaries only the vacant lot bounded by the Hotel Essex and Essex, South and East Streets; and a 1956 parking garage at the corner of Lincoln and Beach Streets have been excluded from the district.

DISTRICT D. SHEET

ASSESSOR'S  
PARCEL # Map #

HISTORIC NAME

STREET ADDRESS

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION

STYLE

4301	10	Essex Hotel	687-695 Atlantic Avenue	1899	Beaux Arts
4302		Essex Hotel	695 Atlantic Avenue	1899	Beaux Arts
4303			20-24 East Street	1919	Classical Revival
4304	8	Lincoln Building	66 - 86 Lincoln Street	1894	Renaissance Revival
4305		Lincoln Building	179 - 185 Essex Street	1894	Renaissance Revival
4309			711 Atlantic Avenue (11-17 East Street)	1892	Romanesque Revival
4310	11	Fur Merchants Building	717- 719 Atlantic Avenue	1901	Romanesque Revival
4311			727 Atlantic Avenue	1915	Tapestry Brick
4313			134 - 140 Beach Street	1889	Classical Revival
4314	2		114 - 122 South Street	1883	Early Commercial
4315	3		108 - 112 South Street	1884	Queen Anne
4316	3		102 - 106 South Street	1884	Queen Anne
4317	1		96 - 100 South Street	1883	Richardsonian
4318	1		90 - 94 South Street	1883	Richardsonian
4319			76 - 86 South Street	1895	Richardsonian Roman- esque
4320		Engine No. 7	9 East Street	1923	Commercial
4321			103 - 107 South Street	1886	Romanesque Revival
4322	5		121 - 123 South Street	1886	Richardsonian Romanesque

DISTRICT DATA SHEET

ASSESSOR'S PARCEL #	HISTORIC NAME	STREET ADDRESS	DATE OF CONSTRUCTION	STYLE
4323	Beebe Building	127 - 133 South Street	1888	Romanesque Revival
4324		137 - 139 South Street	1887 - 1888	Romanesque Revival
4325	4	140 - 157 South Street	1885	Richardsonian Romanesque
4326		106 - 112 Beach Street	1898	Warehouse with Roman- esque and Classical ornament
4327		10 Utica Street	1887	Utilitarian
4328	7	146 - 158 Lincoln Street	1892	Romanesque Revival
4329		138 - 144 Lincoln Street	1889	Romanesque Revival
4330		134 - 136 Lincoln Street	1889	Romanesque Revival
4331		130 - 132 Lincoln Street	1889	Romanesque Revival
4332	6	116 - 128 Lincoln Street	1888	Richardsonian Roman- esque
4333		104 - 114 Lincoln Street	1893	Victorian Commercial
5332	9	155 - 205 Lincoln Street	1899	Beaux Arts
5333		162 - 164 Lincoln Street	1840's	Greek Revival
5334		105A - 107 Beach Street	1892	1890's Mercantile
5335	B	47 - 51 Utica Street	1928	Utilitarian
5336		210 - 216 Lincoln Street	1920	Classical Revival
5337	A	202 Lincoln Street	1941	Utilitarian
5338	A	200 Lincoln Street	1941	Utilitarian
5339	A	194 - 196 Lincoln Street	1941	Utilitarian
5340		182 - 192 Lincoln Street	1922	Classical Revival

DISTRICT D/ SHEET

ASSESSOR'S  
PARCEL #

HISTORIC NAME

STREET ADDRESS

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION

STYLE

5341	Crawford Building	174 - 180 Lincoln Street	1905	Classical Revival
5342		170 - 172 Lincoln Street	1899 - 1901	Classical Revival
5343		166 - 168 Lincoln Street	1927	1920's Commercial
5344		109 - 111 Beach Street	1896	Federal Revival
5345		115 - 119 Beach Street	1897	Classical Revival
5346		161 - 173 South Street	1912	Mercantile w/Classical accents
5347		179 - 193 South Street	1901	Classical Revival
5348		195 - 201 South Street	1915	Commercial with Classical accents
5349		162 - 170 Kneeland Street	1915	Commercial
5350	Blue Diner	178 Kneeland Street	1947	Late Diner Genre
5351		158 - 160 Kneeland	1927	Classical Revival
5352	C	154 - 156 Kneeland	1955	
5357	Chiam Building	739-749 Atlantic Avenue	1917	Classical Revival
5358	Pilgrim Building	208 - 212 South Street	1919	Classical Revival
5359		192 - 194 South Street	1891	Simple Mercantile
5360		184 - 190 South Street	1891	Simple Mercantile