

# Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

## Scanned Record Cover Page

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <b>Inventory No:</b>           | BOS.2651  |
| <b>Historic Name:</b>          | Chauncy Hall Building   |
| <b>Common Name:</b>            |   |
| <b>Address:</b>                | 585-591 Boylston St   |
| <b>City/Town:</b>              | Boston  |
| <b>Village/Neighborhood:</b>   | Back Bay  |
| <b>Local No:</b>               |   |
| <b>Year Constructed:</b>       | 1908  |
| <b>Architect(s):</b>           | Blackall, Clarence Howard   |
| <b>Architectural Style(s):</b> | No style  |
| <b>Use(s):</b>                 | Commercial Block  |
| <b>Significance:</b>           | Architecture; Commerce  |
| <b>Area(s):</b>                | BOS.BT: Back Bay Historic District<br>BOS.BW: Back Bay Architectural District |
| <b>Designation(s):</b>         | Local Historic District (09/03/1966); Nat'l Register District (08/14/1973)    |
| <b>Building Materials(s):</b>  | Wall: Brick   |



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Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Massachusetts Historical Commission  
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125  
[www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc)

This file was accessed on: Monday, October 5, 2020 at 8:15: PM

[BT] NRD19-8/14/73  
ADDRESS: 585-591 Boylston ;near Darmouth[BW] -LHD-9/13/66  
NAME: present Chauncy Hall Building  
original

MAP NO.: 24N-11E

SUB AREA: BB commercial

DATE: by 1916; building dept. documents  
source

ARCHITECT: undetermined

source

BUILDER: undetermined

source

OWNER: (1916): Herbert E. Chushing, et al.  
original present

PHOTOGRAPHS 1-21; 1984



585-591

TYPE: non-residential; commercial

NO. OF STORIES (1st to cornice; plus): 4

ROOF: flat

MATERIALS: brick

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: Pier & spandrel early 20th century building of 3 large bays and additional narrow bay at right, which defines entry to upper floors. Simple parapet wall above 4th story. Entire area between piers altered by new fenestration; street level altered to neo-colonial format of 5 windows and arched recessed doorway.

EXTERIOR ALTERATION: drastic to fenestration; storefront

CONDITION: good

LOT AREA (sq. feet): 8064

NOTEWORTHY SITE CHARACTERISTICS: mid-block in commercial row; across from Copley Sq.

SIGNIFICANCE: (cont'd on reverse)

The Chauncy Hall building makes a minor contribution to the streetscape in its scale, but has had considerable alteration made to its storefront and window pattern.

V. CK; 12/84

Moved; date if known \_\_\_\_\_

Themes (check as many as applicable)

|               |        |              |       |                |       |
|---------------|--------|--------------|-------|----------------|-------|
| Aboriginal    | _____  | Conservation | _____ | Recreation     | _____ |
| Agricultural  | _____  | Education    | _____ | Religion       | _____ |
| Architectural | ✓_____ | Exploration/ | _____ | Science/       | _____ |
| The Arts      | _____  | settlement   | _____ | invention      | _____ |
| Commerce      | _____  | Industry     | _____ | Social/        | _____ |
| Communication | _____  | Military     | _____ | humanitarian   | _____ |
| Community/    | _____  | Political    | _____ | Transportation | _____ |
| development   | _____  |              |       |                |       |

Significance (include explanation of themes checked above)

Preservation Consideration (accessibility, re-use possibilities, capacity for public use and enjoyment, protection, utilities, context)

Located within Back Bay National Register District

Located within Back Bay Architectural District

Bibliography and/or references (such as local histories, deeds, assessor's records, early maps, etc.)

# INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

BOSTON

585-591 BOYLSTON STREET

## MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

BOS.BT  
BOS.BW

BOS.2651

This sheet is submitted by Lyle Nyberg, independent historian, March 2020. It specifies the date of construction, and adds information about the property, including the building's notable past tenants. This was the home of many significant suffrage organizations during the fight for women's right to vote.

This building, the Chauncy Hall Building at 585 Boylston Street, was built in 1908. The building was designed by Clarence H. Blackall (1857-1942), an architect who designed other buildings in Boston, including in the Back Bay.<sup>1</sup> The three stories in the original design of the building grew to four stories. It replaced the previous Chauncy Hall Building at the same site, which dated to about 1875. A notable tenant of the earlier building in the late 1800s, the New England Women's Club, became one of the first tenants of the new building when it opened in January 1909.<sup>2</sup>

The New England Women's Club had offices here from 1909 to 1919, continuing until 1922 if not later.<sup>3</sup> The club, founded in 1868, was one of the two oldest women's clubs in America. It moved here from the New Century Building (since demolished) on Huntington Avenue. Notable members included Julia Ward Howe and Lucy Stone, who were also involved in the woman suffrage movement. The club was a generally pro-suffrage organization.<sup>4</sup>

Other first tenants were significant woman suffrage organizations. They included the Massachusetts Woman Suffrage Association (MWSA), founded in 1870, and the Boston Equal Suffrage Association for Good Government (BESAGG), founded in 1901 by Pauline Agassiz Shaw, Maud Wood Park, and others. MWSA and BESAGG moved here from 6 Marlborough Street. They had offices here from 1909 until 1919 if not later. In 1919, BESAGG moved into the Little Building, a glamorous new skyscraper at 74-94 Boylston Street, now owned by Emerson College; it was designed by the same architect, Clarence Blackall, who had designed the Chauncy Hall Building. The leading suffragist newspaper, the *Woman's Journal*, was published here at the Chauncy Hall Building. The journal had been at 3 Park Street until 1908, then 6 Beacon Street from 1909 to 1910, then this building during 1911 to 1916, when the journal was renamed and moved to New York City.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Famous School Building Will Pass," *Boston Herald*, April 18, 1908, 2 (with history of school and building, and illustrations). For Blackall's other work, see "Back Bay Houses: Genealogies of Back Bay Houses," website, <https://backbayhouses.org/?s=blackall>, and <https://backbayhouses.org/clarence-howard-blackall/>; "Clarence Howard Blackall," FindAGrave memorial, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/151268584>.

<sup>2</sup> "School Hygiene," *Boston Globe*, January 29, 1875, 8; "Elect Officers, Review the Year's Work and Lunch at the Vendome," *Boston Globe*, May 31, 1891, 9; "Real Estate ... New Chauncy Hall Building to be Four Stories," *Boston Globe*, June 20, 1908, 9; "Real Estate," *Boston Globe*, December 29, 1908, 3; "Enters New Home," *Boston Globe*, January 5, 1909, 10.

<sup>3</sup> "Enters New Home," *Boston Globe*, January 5, 1909, 10; *The Boston Directory 1916*, 118; *The Boston Register and Business Directory 1922* (Boston: Sampson & Murdock Company, 1922), 601, <https://archive.org/details/bostonregisterbu1922bost/page/n14/mode/2up>.

<sup>4</sup> "New England Women's Club," Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_England\\_Women%27s\\_Club](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_England_Women%27s_Club); Katie Ana Baca, *Beyond the University: Elite Bostonian Women's Organizations as Sites of Science Learning, 1868-1910* (Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, 2019), 134-138, accessed February 15, 2020, <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:42013065>. The New Century Building was at 175 Huntington Avenue. It later became the Huntington Avenue Theater, then the Strand Theater, then the Capri. See City of Boston Archives photo of the Strand, "Huntington Avenue looking south between West Newton Street and Cumberland Street," [https://cityofboston.access.preservica.com/uncategorized/IO\\_20a3712e-36ba-4bc6-9cb4-b60c62bf4420/](https://cityofboston.access.preservica.com/uncategorized/IO_20a3712e-36ba-4bc6-9cb4-b60c62bf4420/); Cinema Treasures website, <http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/6302/comments>. It was demolished by 1972, when the Christian Science Church Administration Building was built (see BOS.15904, MACRIS).

<sup>5</sup> Author's continuation sheets in MACRIS covering previous buildings at 6 Marlborough Street, BOS.3080, and 3 Park Street, BOS.1935; author's search of *Woman's Journal* publication dates, using online *Woman's Journal*, courtesy of Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University; author's search of *Boston Globe* archives; David Ertischek, "Then and Now: The Little Building's Big History," *Emerson Today*, online, posted September 5, 2019, <https://today.emerson.edu/2019/09/05/then-and-now-the-little-buildings-big-history/>; Little Building, 74-94 Boylston St., BOS.2249, MACRIS (including author's continuation sheet, Feb. 2020); "Back Bay Houses: Genealogies of Back Bay Houses," website, <https://backbayhouses.org/clarence-howard-blackall/>.



# INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

BOSTON

585-591 BOYLSTON STREET

## MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

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Alice Stone Blackwell, editor of the *Woman's Journal*, had an office here in 1916.<sup>6</sup> The College Equal Suffrage League, founded by Maud Wood Park and Inez Haynes Gillmore in 1901, had an office here in 1916.<sup>7</sup>

The building's use for suffrage activity is described in a recent book. It quotes a 1913 newspaper as saying the building was a "busy bee hive full of workers for women."<sup>8</sup>

The anti-suffragists were headquartered by 1911 just up the street, in the Kensington Building at 687 Boylston Street<sup>9</sup>.

When the Chauncy Hall Building opened in 1909, it also attracted automobile-related businesses, as noted in periodicals of the time, and as shown on the photos discussed below.<sup>10</sup>

An early photo of the building, said to be from about 1909-1910, is held by the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University. It is titled "Building in which the Massachusetts Woman Suffrage Association and the Boston Equal Suffrage Association for Good Government had their headquarters."<sup>11</sup> The windows on the third story are labeled, left to right, Boston Equal Suffrage Association for Good Government, Massachusetts Woman Suffrage Association, and *Woman's Journal* (smaller window). The ground story contains large signs for Rainier (left bay) and Locomobile (middle bay). These were two early automobile companies. It appears from brief web searches that the Locomobile Company of America was in business from 1899, with its trade name used until 1929. The Rainier Motor Car Company was in business from 1905, with its trade name used until 1911.<sup>12</sup> This would date the photo to no later than 1911. Ironically, in front of the automobile dealership(s) is a horse-drawn wagon, with no sign of an automobile.

The City of Boston Archives has a detailed photo of the building from October 4, 1912.<sup>13</sup> It shows the building with windows on the third story labeled as on the 1909-1910 photo. Other stories have some differences. The first story no longer carries the Rainier and Locomobile names, but it carries signs of other automotive-related businesses. They include the New England Distributors of Flanders Motor Co. (gasoline and electric pleasure cars and trucks), the Detroit Electric (an early electric car offering a range of 80 or more miles on its batteries), Detroit Electric Edison Battery (an upgrade for the Detroit Electric car), Henderson Motor Cars (presumably the dealer for the Detroit Electric), Dayton Airless Tire

<sup>6</sup> *The Boston Directory containing the City Record ... 1916* (Boston: Sampson & Murdock Company, 1916), 288, <https://archive.org/details/bostonmassachuse1916112samp/page/n10/mode/2up>.

<sup>7</sup> *The Boston Directory 1916*, 112 ("Miss Eleanor Piper, pres.; Miss Lillian Landy, sec.; Miss Ethel Thayer, treas.")

<sup>8</sup> Nancy S. Seasholes, ed., *The Atlas of Boston History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 181, item 46, preview at [https://books.google.com/books?id=XcmrDwAAQBAJ&source=gbp\\_navlinks\\_s](https://books.google.com/books?id=XcmrDwAAQBAJ&source=gbp_navlinks_s).

<sup>9</sup> *The Remonstrance* (April 1911), Library of Congress website, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbcmil.scrp7010401/?sp=1>; "In search of the lost lion of the Kensington Building," archBOSTON forum, <https://archboston.com/community/threads/in-search-of-the-lost-lion-of-the-kensington-building.4565/>; "Part of Kensington Building, Boylston Street, Boston, Mass., May 15, 1912," photo, reference code PC017.01.01.03.1330, Historic New England website, <https://www.historicnewengland.org/explore/collections-access/capobject/?refid=PC017.01.01.03.1330>.

<sup>10</sup> "Brief Business Announcements," *Motor Age* (Chicago: The Closs Journal Company, February 18, 1909), 25, [https://books.google.com/books?id=GSQfAQAAAJ&source=gbp\\_navlinks\\_s](https://books.google.com/books?id=GSQfAQAAAJ&source=gbp_navlinks_s); "Minor Mention," *The Horseless Age* (New York: Horseless Age Company, January 20, 1909), 121, [https://books.google.com/books?id=y61X7I5Ge1AC&source=gbp\\_navlinks\\_s](https://books.google.com/books?id=y61X7I5Ge1AC&source=gbp_navlinks_s).

<sup>11</sup> Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, permalink <http://id.lib.harvard.edu/via/olwwork20007351/catalog>. A higher resolution copy of a detail of the photo, dating it to about June 1909, is at Gail Lee Dubrow, "Claiming Public Space for Women's History in Boston: A Proposal for Preservation, Public Art, and Public Historical Interpretation," in *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* (University of Nebraska Press, 1992), Vol. 13, No. 1, 111-148, at 135, DOI: 10.2307/3346948. The article discusses the Chauncy Hall Building at 136-137, and note 23 cites Plans (1908), Boston Building Department, Boston Public Library, A 61 08 676, which were not reviewed for this continuation sheet. Dubrow proposed the NRHP designation for the Ellen H. Swallow Richards House, 32 Eliot Street, Jamaica Plain, BOS.10273, MACRIS.

<sup>12</sup> "Rainier Motor Car Company," Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainier\\_Motor\\_Car\\_Company](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainier_Motor_Car_Company).

<sup>13</sup> "Buildings 601-585 Boylston Street," Boston Public Works Department, Boston Archives website, [https://cityofboston.access.preservica.com/uncategorized/IO\\_065f8c48-aa8a-472f-b9a8-7e60a7c5f6ea/](https://cityofboston.access.preservica.com/uncategorized/IO_065f8c48-aa8a-472f-b9a8-7e60a7c5f6ea/); Derek Strahan, "Chauncy Hall Building Boston."

# INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

BOSTON

585-591 BOYLSTON STREET

## MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

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Company of New England ("5000 Miles Guaranteed"), and Benz. In front of the building on the street are two automobiles with convertible tops.<sup>14</sup>

A 1912 atlas has a plan of the building.<sup>15</sup>

Historic New England has a photo taken January 17, 1913, from the Boston Transit Archives, of just the building's doorway on the right,<sup>16</sup> Later records of the Boston Inspectional Services Department say the building had a flat roof, granite foundation, and was 72' (front) x 92' (deep).<sup>17</sup>

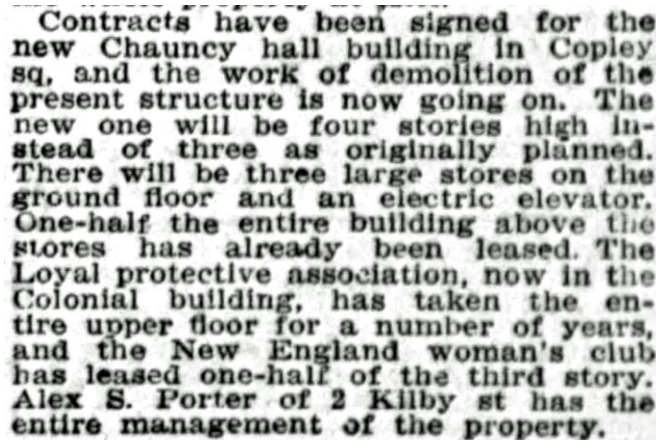
The building currently houses a CVS pharmacy on the ground level, with a business address of 587 Boylston, along with commercial properties/office condos. The property has four parcel numbers with multiple owners: 0501307002 (CVS), 0501307006, 0501307000, and 0501307004. The Boston Assessor's office database has no information on lot size. It says the building was built in 1910 (0501307000). The building's recent appearance on Google Street View and in the 2020 photo below matches the photo on the B Form from the mid-1980s. It appears the original cornice was replaced by a flat stone or concrete lintel, and the five decorative corbels below the cornice, marking the ends of the bays, have been removed and replaced by brickwork blending in with the surrounding façade. The original protruding window elements was replaced with modern, flat panels of windows.

### Bibliography (in addition to sources in footnotes above)

Derek Strahan, "Chauncy Hall Building Boston," Lost New England website, posted September 16, 2015, <http://lostnewengland.com/2015/09/chauncy-hall-building-boston/>

*Woman's Journal*, available online at "The Woman's journal and Woman's Journal and Suffrage News. Boston, 1870-1917," Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, <https://listview.lib.harvard.edu/lists/drs-422585198>

### Other



Contracts have been signed for the new Chauncy hall building in Copley sq. and the work of demolition of the present structure is now going on. The new one will be four stories high instead of three as originally planned. There will be three large stores on the ground floor and an electric elevator. One-half the entire building above the stores has already been leased. The Loyal protective association, now in the Colonial building, has taken the entire upper floor for a number of years, and the New England woman's club has leased one-half of the third story. Alex S. Porter of 2 Kilby st has the entire management of the property.

*Boston Globe*, June 20, 1908, 9

<sup>14</sup> "Buildings 601-585 Boylston Street," Boston Archives; "Detroit Electric," Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Detroit\\_Electric](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Detroit_Electric); "Thomas Edison was an amazing man," Detroit Electric Automobile website, [http://www.detroitelectric.org/edison\\_battery.htm](http://www.detroitelectric.org/edison_battery.htm).

<sup>15</sup> George W. and Walter S. Bromley, *Atlas of the City of Boston, Boston Proper and Back Bay* (Philadelphia: G. W. Bromley and Co., 1912), plate 20, State Library of Massachusetts, <https://archives.lib.state.ma.us/handle/2452/206005>. The 1908 edition of the atlas showed the previous Chauncy Hall Building, since it had a smaller and irregular footprint compared to the 1912 edition.

<sup>16</sup> Historic New England website, reference code PC017.01.01.03.4190, <https://www.historicnewengland.org/explore/collections-access/capobject/?refd=PC017.01.01.03.4190>.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.boston.gov/departments/inspectional-services/how-find-historical-permit-records>

# INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

BOSTON

585-591 BOYLSTON STREET

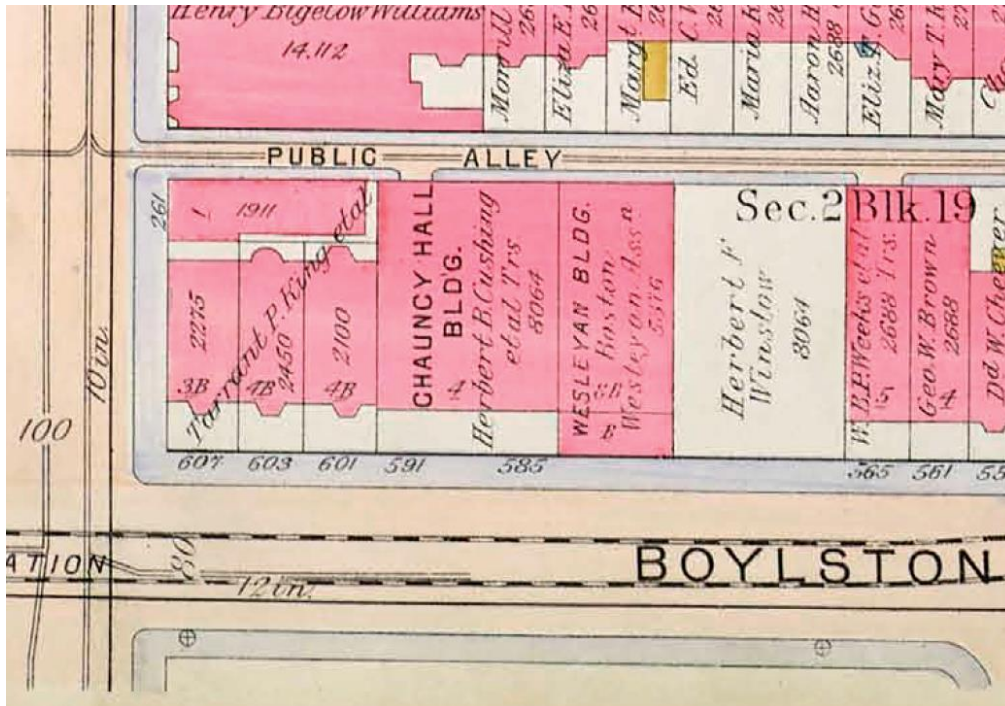
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

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Chauncy Hall Building is in center of this detail of 1912 Bromley atlas, plate 20



Chauncy Hall Building, October 4, 1912. Courtesy of the City of Boston Archives (and thanks to Lost New England).



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585-591 Boylston Street, Boston, February 26, 2020. Photo by Lyle Nyberg.



Continuation sheet 1

# INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

BOSTON

585-591 BOYLSTON STREET

## MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

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This sheet adds a document reference to the building inventory form. It is submitted September 2020 by Lyle Nyberg, independent historian.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES (continued)

Nyberg, Lyle, *Summer Suffragists: Woman Suffrage Activists in Scituate, Massachusetts* (Scituate, MA: by author, 2020), ch. 1, 4, 7, 8 (with more detail on the building and its uses for the women's suffrage movement)

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