

540 Main Street (circa 1892-1901)

From Boston Landmark Commission's Charlestown Historic Resources Study 1981 (E. W. Gordon, Consultant)*:



540 Main Street

2015

Number 540 Main Street is a handsome Renaissance Revival commercial block. It is formally finished on the Main Street

façade only. The ground floor is reworked with modern stone, glass and metal treatments. Still intact are the storefront's entablature and egg and dart modeling's of cast stone. The upper floors have four round arch vertical bays spanning floors two and three, defined vertically by five Doric pilasters. Double windows between the pilasters have wide stone lintels. Beneath the third floor center windows are two stone placques, which read "Cauley" and "Hall". The third floors arches are enclosed by metal infill panels and are accented by acanthus console keystones. In the spandrels on either side of the arches are recessed brickwork panels. The pilasters "support" a stone string course. Above the string course are four oculus windows, which appear on the sidewall also. The building's cornice is missing. It has a flat roof.

Original owner: John H Cauley

Cauley Hall is a remnant of old Sullivan Square. Almost completely obliterated by elevated railroad construction and demolition, highway construction, and urban renewal, Sullivan Square was an important Boston area transportation and industrial/commercial center at the turn of the century. Cauley Hall provides a physical link with this important chapter in Sullivan Square's history. Built circa late 1890s, it was constructed for John H Cauley, liquor dealer and resident of nearby Baldwin Street. Although this building retains a high percentage of its original design elements, an early 20th century photograph provides clues to its original appearance. No longer visible is its original rusticated stone façade with three display windows and round arch entrance with engaged columns and high relief floral/vegetal decoration.



A circa 1901 photo shows storefront signs reading: JH Cauley and Company and "wine and liquors". Other missing original features include the third-floor window arches' oculus and fan light sash, and the dentillated modillion block cornice.

Cauley Hall was evidently built in anticipation of elevated railway-related patronage. Cauley's liquor store was also near Van Nostrande Brewery-a brewery had been located at Alford Street and Arlington Avenue as early as 1821. The "Main line el," later the Orange Line, was begun in 1899 and was constructed by the Boston Elevated Railway at a cost of \$20.3 million. In June 1901 the first three-car electric train completed its 4.9-mile run from Sullivan Square station to Dudley Street, Roxbury, in 21 minutes. The Sullivan Square station was built in 1901 as a terminal station; 20 years later it had become a "through station". An early 20th century photo shows Cauley hall with a large painted advertisement on its north wall, which reads "The National Soda Cracker. Uneda Biscuit." further research is needed on this building's original owner, architect, and builder.

Bibliography:

Atlases-1892, 1901, 1911

Boston directories-late 19th century/early 20th century

Bostonian Society photo file

Public Works Department, Boston City Hall photo file

Boston buildings department-building permit information is evident on microfilm

*Digitized, and edited without change in content, from the scanned record in the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System, and with addition of current photographs.

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