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Women of Vision

Brighton Allston Women's Heritage Trail Guide



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Brighton-Allston Historical Society

Introduction

The Women's History Group of the Brighton-Allston Historical Society and Heritage Museum and BA 200 proudly celebrate in these pages the significant and inspiring contributions that women have made to our community over the past three centuries. This guide to the Brighton-Allston Women's Heritage Trail features 16 notable women and women's organizations that have enriched the life and history of our community.

We fully expect that the Women's Heritage Trail will expand over time as the Brighton-Allston Historical Society's Women's History Group continues making discoveries through its research and outreach events on the contributions notable women have made to our history. Though a work in progress, we are sure that the readers of this guide and visitors to the Women's Heritage Trail and Women of Vision Exhibition at the Brighton-Allston Heritage Museum will agree that women have contributed significantly to the history of Allston-Brighton.

Many thanks to BA 200, and to its co-chairs Theresa Hynes and Tim Schofield, for funding the publication of this handsome guide to the Brighton-Allston Women's Heritage Trail.

Veronica B. Smith Senior Center

Stop #1: Veronica B. Smith and the Veronica B. Smith Multi-service Senior Center

The Veronica B. Smith Senior Center is one of three local facilities named for prominent Allston-Brighton women (the others being the Alice Gallagher Park and the Harriet Baldwin School—see below). Veronica Smith was a lifelong resident of North Allston and a community activist who took the lead in advocating for Allston-Brighton's senior citizens. It was largely through her efforts that the city established, in the early 1980's, what was then called the Brighton



The Veronica B. Smith Multi-Service Center,
20 Chestnut Hill Avenue, Brighton

Senior Center. Mrs. Smith served as the Center's first director and guiding spirit. When illness forced her resignation in the mid-80s, the city renamed the Senior Center in her honor.

The bottom level of the Senior Center now serves as the home for the Brighton-Allston Heritage Museum, the community's unique local history museum.

Veronica B. Smith was the wife of another notable community activist,

Joseph Smith. In 1963, he became the founding president of the community's oldest surviving neighborhood association, the Allston Civic Association (ACA). He is the namesake of both the Joseph B. Smith Community Health Center and the Joseph Smith Theater in the Jackson/ Mann Community School.



Veronica Smith advocating for
Boston's senior citizens

Veronica Smith was a woman of remarkable courage and dedication. She was working closely with her husband and

other advocates for seniors, including Katherine White, wife of then Boston Mayor Kevin White, at the time of her husband's death in 1979. She continued thereafter her singular and highly effective efforts on their behalf, culminating in the establishment of the facility that now bears her name.



Portrait of Veronica Smith that hangs
in the Smith Senior Center

Hannah Webster Foster

Stop #2: First Parish Church site, northeast corner Washington & Market Streets

Hannah Webster Foster of Little Cambridge (now Allston-Brighton) was the first American born woman to write and publish a novel. *The Coquette*, or the *History of Eliza Wharton* (see illustration #1), appeared in 1797. *The Coquette* was a thinly veiled account (employing fictitious names) of the seduction, betrayal and eventual death in childbirth of Elizabeth Whitman. Elizabeth was the daughter of Reverend Elnathon Whitman of Hartford, Connecticut. Reverend Whitman was a distant relative of Reverend John Foster. Elizabeth's seducer, it was generally believed, was Pierpont Edwards, son of the great evangelical minister Jonathan Edwards. It was Jonathan Edwards who spearheaded the religious movement known as the Great Awakening. The reputation of Pierpont's father as a moral arbiter, of course, added spice to the Whitman scandal. Then, as now, scandal exerted a powerful attraction upon the reading public.



Title page of a recent edition of Hannah Foster's pioneer novel

The *Coquette* was said to have been, next to the Bible, the most popular reading material of early nineteenth-century New England. A recent commentator tells us that it was "one of the two best-selling American

novels of the 18th century." By 1840 it had appeared in some thirty editions!

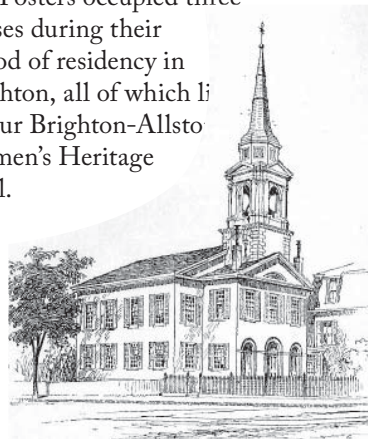
Hannah Foster was the wife of the



The Little Cambridge Meetinghouse (1744), the church of Hannah's husband, the Reverend John Foster

Reverend John Foster, minister from 1785 until 1827 of Brighton's only church. That church stood on the site now occupied by the Washington Building, which sits at the northeast corner of Washington and Market Streets in Brighton Center. It was in this church about 1800, that Hannah Foster organized the first women's club in Massachusetts.

The Fosters occupied three houses during their period of residency in Brighton, all of which lie on our Brighton-Allston Women's Heritage Trail.



The First Parish Church of Brighton, built in 1808 to replace the 1744 meetinghouse. Here Hannah Foster organized the first women's club in Massachusetts

Stop #3: 10 Academy Hill Road, the First Church Parsonage

It was in the second of these houses, #10 Academy Hill Road, the First Church Parsonage, dating from about 1790, that Hannah wrote both *The Coquette* and a second novel, *The Boarding School*, or, *Lessons of a Preceptress to Her Pupils*. The latter was published in 1799. This building was altered many years ago by the addition of store fronts to its western façade.



The much altered parsonage in which Hannah Foster wrote her pioneer novels in the period 1797 to 1799

Stop #4: The Ebenezer Smith House, 15-17 Peaceable Street

The first of the three houses the Fosters occupied was this ancient structure at 15-17 Peaceable Street. They lived here for about five years before moving into the nearby First Church Parsonage. The building dates from about 1720, and is the oldest surviving structure in Allston-Brighton. It was originally the farmhouse of a 200 acre farm belonging to Ebenezer Smith. About 1774, the Winships, the founders of the local cattle and slaughtering industries, resided in this



The Ebenezer Smith House, 15-17 Peaceable Street, c.1720, Allston-Brighton's oldest surviving building

building. The house was also the birthplace of Captain Jonathan Winship, founder of Winship's Gardens, Brighton's earliest horticultural establishment.

Elizabeth Rowell Thomson

Stop # 5: The Elizabeth Rowell Thomson House, 9 Mount Vernon Street

Elizabeth Rowell Thomson, renowned philanthropist, was born in 1821 in rural Vermont. She was one of twelve children of a very poor farmer. She worked, beginning at the age of nine, as a domestic servant for 25 cents a day. From all reports, she grew to be a very studious woman.

At the age of twenty-two Elizabeth married Thomas Thomson, a wealthy Harvard graduate, who was several years older than she. The couple moved to this house, which originally stood about fifty feet to the north of its present location, on the site now occupied by a large Colonial Revival style James A. Hathaway Mansion at 35 Chestnut Hill Avenue. It was moved to its present location in 1897.



Elizabeth Rowell Thomson, noted philanthropist

Thomas Thomson was a devoted patron of the arts who owned an extensive and valuable collection of paintings. Elizabeth also developed a keen interest in the arts and was very generous in supporting and fostering budding artisans. After Thomas's death in 1869, Elizabeth became the dispenser of the income from his vast estate. One of Elizabeth's most famous contributions was the presentation of F.B. Carpenter's famous painting, "The Signing of the Emancipation Proclamation by Lincoln" as a gift to the United States Congress. In appreciation, Elizabeth was granted the freedom of the floor of the House, a right which at that time was possessed by no other woman.

Her philanthropic ventures included support for a group from Chicago that

was the temperance aspect of their planned community that attracted Elizabeth's attention, and she became a valued benefactor of this utopian venture. The by-product was the establishment of the town of Longmont, Colorado. Today, one of Longmont's public parks is named for her. Elizabeth also gave generously to a group of settlers who established the town of Saline, Kansas.

Elizabeth was also a vigorous advocate of science. In 1883 she gave one thousand dollars to the American Association for the Advancement of Science. This was followed by a grant of twenty five thousand dollars in 1885, a vast sum at that time. It was also through her generosity that Vassar College was able to build a telescope and Observatory on its campus.



The Thomson House, relocated in 1897 from 35 Chestnut Hill Avenue to 9 Mount Vernon

Elizabeth continued her philanthropic efforts throughout her life. These included supporting wives and children of Civil War soldiers, funding research to eradicate yellow fever, and giving more than a million dollars to anti-slavery causes.

After her death in 1899, the Thomas Thomson Trust, which she established in memory of her husband, continued to support many worthy causes.

One in particular was health care for poor women,

had banded together in 1870 to form the Chicago-Colorado colony. They envisioned their community as a place of handsome parks, churches, government buildings, and schools. Their banner heralded, 'industry, morality, and temperance of alcohol'. It

primarily seamstresses and shopkeepers from her native Vermont. It was through this trust that these women received health care at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital, which opened in 1904.

Sarah (Sally) Worcester

Stop #6: The Noah Worcester House site, northwest corner of Foster & Washington Streets



The Worcester House, which served as Brighton's first post office from 1817 to 1837

Sarah (Sally) Worcester is a notable figure in local history. In 1817, she assumed the responsibilities of postmaster of the town of Brighton when her father, the great pacifist Dr. Noah Worcester, the "Apostle of Peace," was appointed the town's first postmaster. The Worcester family was impoverished and badly needed the income that this post afforded, but Dr. Worcester was so deeply immersed in the peace movement that he had little time for the duties of sorting and distributing mail. The responsibility



The Worcester House site today

devolved upon his efficient and capable daughter. For two decades (1817-1837), Sarah sorted and distributed the

town's mail from the Worcester family residence. The ancient Worcester House was thus Brighton's first post office. The house was located at the northwest corner of Washington and Foster streets. Sadly, it was demolished about 1920.

Sarah was deeply devoted to her father and the pacifist movement that he embodied. It was in the Worcester House in 1813 that Dr. Worcester wrote the first work of pacifism ever published in America, "A Solemn Review of the Custom of War". He also edited the journal of the Massachusetts Peace Society, an organization he had founded and of which he was the long-time secretary.

Stop #7 - The Brighton Evangelical Congregational Church, 404 Washington Street, Brighton Center

Sarah's devotion to her father did not diminish her decidedly independent



The original 1827 building of the Brighton Evangelical Congregational Church, of which Sarah Worcester was a founding member

spirit, as she demonstrated in 1827. While her father was a leading Unitarian, and a faithful member of Reverend John Foster's Unitarian

congregation at the First Parish Church, Sarah joined the evangelical minority that broke away to form the Brighton Evangelical Congregational Society. This is Brighton's second and longest surviving church, now the Brighton-Allston Congregational Church. Sarah was an active and steadfast parishioner there for many years. Unfortunately, no portrait of Sarah Worcester is known to exist.

Mary Jane Kingsley Merwin

Stop #8: The Kingsley House site, Washington Street, Brighton Center, between Leicester and Market Streets



The Kingsley House stood on the north side of Washington Street midway between present day Leicester and Market Streets

Mary Jane Kingsley Merwin contributed significantly to preserving the history of early Brighton by writing a series of reminiscences of the town in the 1820s and 1830s. These constitute the earliest lengthy historical account of Brighton and provide invaluable insights into its unique character.

Mary Jane Kingsley was born on September 6, 1814 to Moses and Mary Kingsley. She was one of six children. The Kingsleys resided in a house that stood originally on Washington Street near the Cattle Fair Hotel and the Brighton Stockyards, but was later moved to Baldwin Place.

The Kingsley family roots in Brighton dated back to the 1700's. They were very active in the civic and religious life of the community. The men of the Kingsley family served as treasurers/collectors of the Brighton Evangelical Congregational

Church for four generations after its foundation.

Mary Jane was well-educated and attended a select school. After graduation, she taught for several years, first at Bradford Academy and then in Brighton and nearby towns.

In 1845, she married Thomas Merwin of Philadelphia.

In 1860 the family moved to Newark, New Jersey. Three

years later Mary Jane founded a school there, which she continued to conduct until 1887, when she was 73 years of age.

In her invaluable recollections of early 19th century Brighton, Mary Jane described the Brighton of her girlhood, the period 1825 to 1835, in rich detail. This was the era when Brighton's distinctive cattle and slaughtering industries were at their height. Over twenty lengthy articles were published in the *Brighton Item* in 1886 and 1887. Her articles described the Cattle Fair Hotel, the adjacent Brighton Stockyards, the great agricultural fairs held in Brighton every year from 1816 to 1835 atop Agricultural Hill, the building of new roads and bridges, the introduction of rail service into the town in 1834,

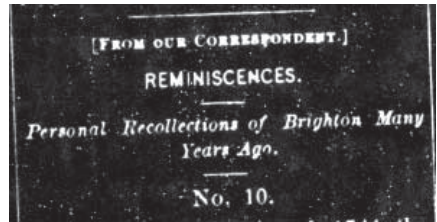
and the leading personalities of the time, including her contemporaries, Hannah Foster and Sally Worcester.

Showing keen insight, Mary Jane's writings provide detailed descriptions of the major physical changes Brighton was experiencing. For example, she described the elegant 1780 Winship Mansion, which once occupied the site of the Brighton Police Station, the residence of the founders of the local Cattle Market and horticultural industries. Her description includes its sale in 1820, and its subsequent renovation to become the Brighton Hotel. The hotel was representative of the transformation the community was experiencing in that formative period of its history.



Mary Jane Kingsley Merwin, early Brighton historian

Mary Jane became a regular correspondent of the *Brighton Item* under the title, "Personal Recollections of Brighton Many Years Ago". Later, when J. P. C. Winship published his two-volume history of the town (1899; 1902), he



Mrs. Merwin's by-line as it appeared in the *Brighton Item* in 1886

paid special tribute to her as the first systematic historian of Brighton.

Mary Jane Kingsley Merwin died in 1911, at the age of 97. To quote from her obituary notice in the *Brighton Item*, "Mrs. Merwin assisted the late J.P.C. Winship materially in the preparation of *Historical Brighton* and was a frequent contributor to the columns of the early *Item* on historical and reminiscent topics connected with early parish doings. Her memory of the early conditions was wonderfully accurate, and many historical facts owe their chronicling to this faculty".

Sarah Willis Eldredge (Fanny Fern) on Dighton Street behind the Brighton Allston Congregational Church.

Stop #9: The Eldredge House, Dighton Street, opposite the Winship School

“Fanny Fern” was one of the most widely read and influential American journalists of the 19th century. At the height of her career, in the 1850s and 1860s, her columns, which appeared in the *New York Ledger*, reached over a half million readers weekly. Her books included not only compilations of her columns, published under such titles as “Fern Leaves from Fanny’s Portfolio,” but also best-selling novels such as *Ruth Hall*.



Sarah Payson Willis Eldredge (Fanny Fern) as a young woman

Born Sarah Payson Willis in Portland, Maine in 1811, Sarah grew up in Boston where her family had relocated when she was still

an infant. Her father, Nathaniel Willis, Sr. was a religious and social conservative with a traditional view of what a woman could properly do in life. A prominent figure in Boston, Sarah’s father founded and edited the nation’s first religious newspaper, the *Boston Recorder*, and later established one of the country’s leading magazines, the influential *Youth’s Companion*. Sarah’s older brother, Nathaniel Willis, Jr., was a leading poet and literary light of his day. Sarah attended Catherine Beecher’s Hartford Seminary. Sarah Willis’ association with Brighton began in 1837 when she married Boston banker, Charles Harrington Eldredge. The newlyweds first moved into Charles’ parents’ home in Brighton. This house, which still stands, is located

In 1838, Sarah and her husband purchased a local estate, “Swissdale”, situated on Foster Street. The estate had previously belonged to John and Hannah Foster. The property seems to have included much of the lower end of BC’s new Brighton campus as well as much of the acreage that now comprises Rogers Park. The Eldredge family included three daughters. The family lived happily at Swissdale until the mid-1840s when tragedy struck. First their eldest daughter died; then Charles suffered bankruptcy. This forced him to move the family to rented premises on the unfashionable north side of Boston’s Beacon Hill. In 1846, Charles contracted typhoid fever and died, leaving Sarah an impoverished thirty-five year old widow with two small children to support.

Sarah’s father advised that she remarry, which she did. Her second marriage was to an unsympathetic older man named Farrington. He was a widower with children of his own. The marriage proved disastrous. Sarah eventually divorced him, which distressed and embarrassed her conservative



The Eldredge House, the home of Fanny Fern’s in-laws, and her first Brighton residence, still stands in much altered form at the upper end of Dighton Street behind the Brighton-Allston Congregational Church

relatives. Thereafter, they refused to extend her and her children any assistance. Thus the young widow and divorcee was thrown upon her own talents to furnish a living for herself and her young family.

Fortunately, Sarah could write. She began contributing pieces to the local press, eventually adopting the pen name “Fanny Fern.” These engaging columns, filled with good advice for women, came to the attention of a New York publisher. Moving to New York City in 1851, Sarah launched her highly successful career as a journalist and author. She also married the well-known biographer James Parton, living out the remainder of her life as a celebrated columnist and author. But her experiences in Brighton were not forgotten. Some of the episodes in her most successful novel, *Ruth Hall*, are said to have been based on her eight year long residency in Brighton.

Hannah and Fanny Converge: Foster Street Literary Landmark

Stop #10: The Foster-Eldredge House (Swissdale), 173 Foster Street

At different times, two of our notable women, Hannah Foster and Sarah Willis Eldredge (Fanny Fern) resided in this house at 173 Foster Street. The house stood originally on the opposite side of the road, on the site now occupied by the Franciscan Sisters of Africa Convent. About 1805, the Rev. John Foster purchased a 15-acre property on the country lane originally called Proprietor’s Way, which in 1848 was renamed Foster Street. The Fosters lived here for the next quarter century. The house served as a de facto parsonage for the First church, though it was privately owned. Here, according to early Brighton historian J. P. C. Winship, the Reverend Foster “erected a very large square house which faced the south, to the front part of which he added an L used as a library and reception room. The hilly land east of the house was terraced

and the daughters, who would themselves become authors in due course, became very industrious in keeping the ground well stocked with flowering shrubs and plants.”

In 1838 Charles Eldredge, husband of “Fanny Fern,” purchased the estate, to which the name “Swissdale” was given, an allusion to its Swiss-like scenery. By all accounts Charles, Sarah, and their three daughters loved Swissdale. Eldredge added another



173 Foster Street, was moved across the street to this location in the 1850s. At different times the home of Hannah Foster and Fanny Fern, this building is a major Allston-Brighton literary landmark.

twelve acres of adjacent land to the estate. After a few years, financial reverses having to do with his ownership of the “Boston Museum”, an early Boston theatrical venue, forced Charles to sell the property and move his family to Boston. A new owner of the estate, Horace Baxter, moved



Fanny Fern about 1860

the old building, minus its L, to its present location to make room for a handsome Greek Revival style mansion in the 1850s. The building, in turn, was demolished in the 1960s to make way for the brick convent structure that now occupies the site.

The Paul Revere Pottery

Stop #11: The former Paul Revere Pottery, 80 Nottinghill Rd.

We turn next to the Paul Revere Pottery, which was headquartered at 80 Nottinghill Road in Brighton from 1915 until it went out of business in 1942.

The pottery's story begins with the establishment of a club called the Saturday



An undated Paul Revere Pottery catalog showing the 80 Nottinghill Road building with Lili Shapiro, one of the of the original Saturday Evening Girls, decorating a bowl

Evening Girls Club, which operated out of the North End branch of the Boston Public Library, then situated in the North Bennett Street Industrial School.

Edith Guerrier, the twenty-nine year old North End branch librarian, established the Saturday Evening Girls Club to enrich the lives of the young women of the immigrant North End. Living conditions there were appalling. Guerrier's goal was to furnish constructive activities for the daughters of the district's mostly Jewish and Italian immigrant families.

In her memoirs, published in 1992 under the title *An Independent Woman*, Guerrier recalled the little speech she gave at the club's first meeting: "Someday you girls are going to enter the business world," she declared. "You will need to know how to use the tool called mind, so that you can do your own thinking... You will need to have a well-informed mind, and if you are to win positions with people you respect and admire, you will need to have a sense of the values of good literature, good music, and good recreation."

Another key figure in the Paul Revere Pottery story was Edith Brown. She and Edith Guerrier developed a close friendship while attending the Museum School and soon after become housemates. It was while they were traveling in Europe in early 1908 that they hit upon the idea of establishing a pottery to provide the Saturday Evening Girls Club with reliable, healthy, and financially rewarding employment. In 1909 Helen Osborne Storow, an important Boston philanthropist, threw her financial resources behind the venture by buying a tenement at 18 Hull Street in the North End to serve as the pottery's headquarters. This structure stood a short distance from the Old North Church where Paul Revere had hung his historic signal lanterns — thus the choice of the name Paul Revere Pottery for the enterprise.

Superior working conditions at the Paul Revere Pottery contrasted sharply with prevailing working conditions in sweat shops and the pitifully low wages that daughters of immigrants normally encountered. In contrast to the dreary and unhealthy factories of the day, the



work rooms at the Paul Revere Pottery were well-lit, well-ventilated, and always

decorated with flowers. As the Paul Revere workers created beautiful hand-crafted items, the works of Dickens, Shakespeare, and other great authors were read aloud to them for their intellectual edification.

Wages and benefits at the Paul Revere Pottery were also superior to those available in factories. The work day never exceeded eight hours, as compared to the 10 to 12 hours in other establishments. In addition, Paul Revere workers got a half day off on Saturdays (a full six day workweek was the norm) and a two-week paid vacation every year.



Job training at the Paul Revere Pottery was also enlightened. New girls learned by sitting beside and assisting more experienced workers, a method of training echoing the dying apprenticeship system that had dominated the handicrafts trades before the rise of the factory.

Since Paul Revere Ware proved immensely popular, the pottery's relatively cramped North End facility was soon outgrown, and the two Ediths began searching for more ample space.

In 1915 the Paul Revere Pottery acquired land in the Aberdeen section of Brighton, atop Nottingham Hill (later renamed Nottingham), the highest elevation in the community. Guerrier described the hill on which the pottery's new home was built as a "puddingstone mass" over which "the dust of centuries had drifted until the stone was covered with a carpet of forest grass, shaded by oaks and white birches." The new location was an "Elysian spot," she

recollected---a place of "lush grass(es) starred with innocence, cinquefoil, mouse ear, and violets; [in which] gray squirrels leaped from limb to limb of the tall oaks; and robins and bluebirds sang in the birch copse."

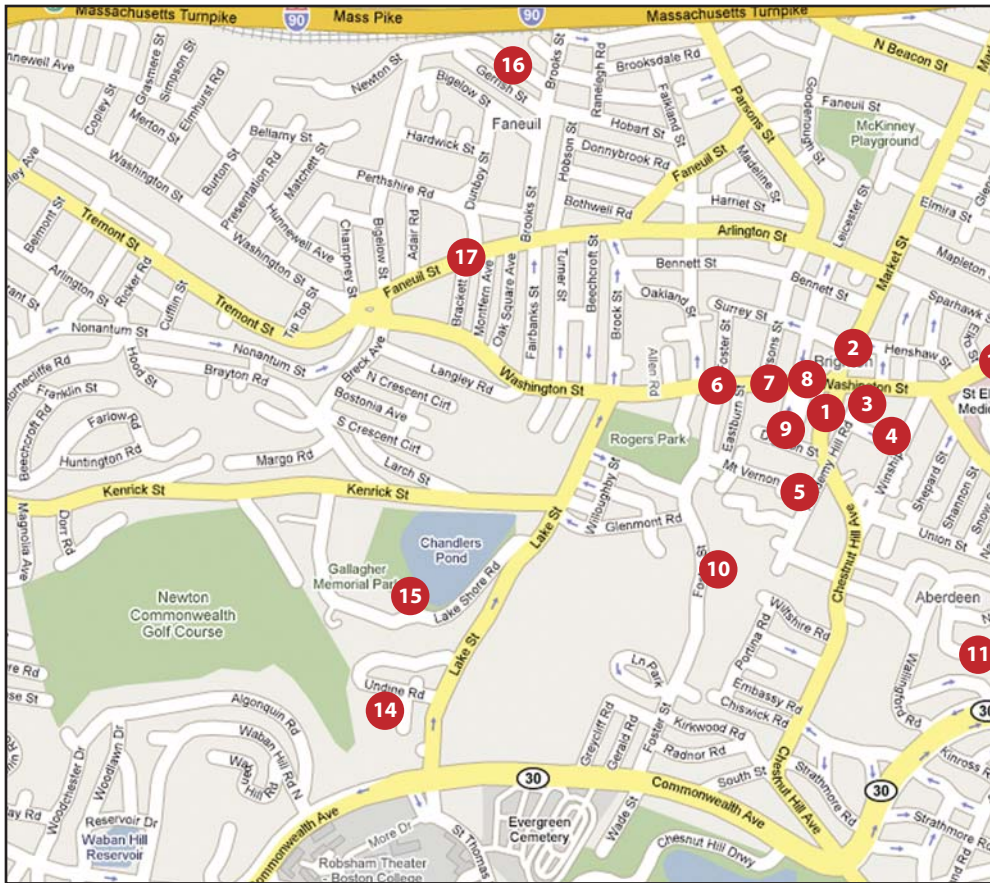
The Paul Revere Pottery's Brighton headquarters was built between September 16 and November 29, 1915---a period of only ten weeks! This English-style stucco cottage, which Guerrier and Brown themselves designed, sat on a three acre lot that commanded a stunning view of the surrounding countryside, a great improvement over the pottery's previous home in the congested and noisy North End.

The new site opened on Thanksgiving Day in 1915 with a workforce of twelve Jewish and Italian girls (who commuted from their homes in the central city), an English "jigger man" (a pottery wheel operator), two Italian potters, and an Italian Evangelical Minister, Antonio Santino, whose job it was to fire the kiln and to act as watchman. Shortly thereafter Guerrier and Brown took up permanent residence at the new Brighton facility.



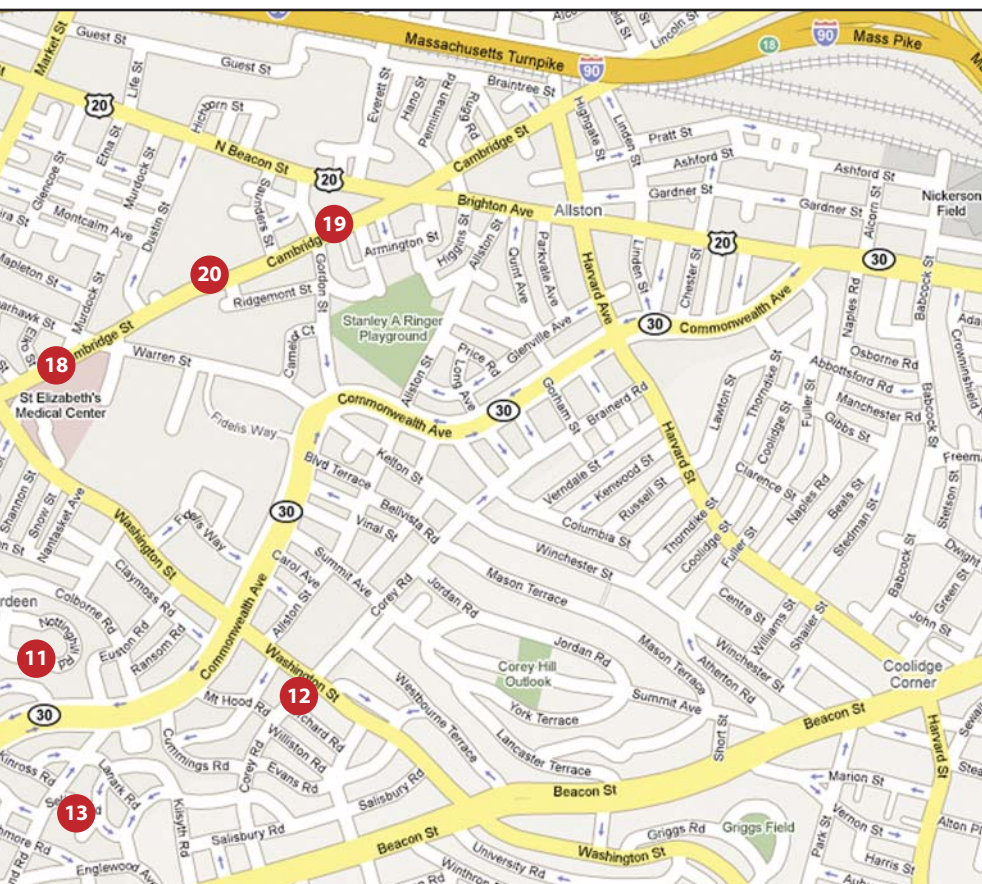
Interior view, Paul Revere Pottery

The Paul Revere Pottery operated at its Nottingham Hill Road headquarters until 1942, when its doors finally closed, ending a unique and inspiring experiment in social reform. The historic building still stands, having been converted about 25 years ago into condominiums.



Heritage Trail Stops

- 1 Veronica B. Smith Senior Center, 20 Chestnut Hill Ave.
- 2 First Parish Church site, 420 Market St.
- 3 The First Church Parsonage, 10 Academy Hill Rd.
- 4 The Ebenezer Smith House, 15-17 Peaceable St.
- 5 The Elizabeth Rowell Thomson House, 8 Mount Vernon St.
- 6 The Noah Worcester House site, 437 Washington St.
- 7 The Brighton-Allston Congregational Church, 404 Washington St.
- 8 The Kingsley House site, 395 Washington St.
- 9 The Eldredge House, 28 Dighton St.
- 10 The Foster-Eldredge House, 173 Foster St.



- 11 The former Paul Revere Pottery, 80 Nottinghill Rd.
- 12 The Harriet Baldwin School, 121 Corey Rd.
- 13 The Jennie Loitman Barron House, 24 Selkirk Rd.
- 14 The Gifford Home for Animals, 30 Undine Rd.
- 15 Gallagher Park Memorial, Lake Shore Rd.
- 16 Marie Augusta Neal birthplace, 16 Newton St.
- 17 The Faneuil Gatekeeper's House, 351 Faneuil St.
- 18 St. Elizabeth's Hospital, 736 Cambridge St.
- 19 Brighthelmstone Club Building, 541 Cambridge St.
- 20 Sisters of St. Joseph Mother House, 631 Cambridge St.

Harriet Baldwin

Stop #12: The Harriet Baldwin School, southeast corner of Corey Road & Washington St.

Harriet Hollis Baldwin, a prominent educational reformer, was born in Brighton in 1839. Her father, John Warren Hollis, was a wealthy butcher and sheep and wool dealer. Harriet's family home was on Cambridge Street, just north of Union Square.

She was well educated at the Abbott Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, founded in 1829, as the first school for girls in New England.

In 1861 Harriet married Henry Baldwin, member of another prominent Brighton family. Henry was a Yale educated attorney, who in 1874 became the first judge of the Brighton Municipal Court. The Baldwins resided in a Victorian mansion at 82 Harvard Avenue, at the center of what is now the Allston Village commercial district.



The home of Judge Henry Baldwin and Harriet Hollis Baldwin at 82 Harvard Avenue, Allston

In 1886, Harriet and Henry Baldwin became founding members of the Allston Congregational Church and contributed liberally to the construction

of a handsome church on Quint Avenue. The building was completed in 1890. Harriet was a charter member of that church's Women's Association.

As a founding member of the Brighton-Allston Equal Suffrage League, Harriet advocated for women's rights. Her key contributions to social reform were made under the auspices of the Brighthelmstone Club, the highly active local chapter of the American Federation of Women's Clubs. Harriet served as the club's second President from 1898 to 1902. Early in her presidency, Harriet Baldwin prevailed upon Alice Freeman Parker, then President of Wellesley College, to speak to the Brighthelmstone membership on the topic 'Impressions of Education at Home and in Europe', thereafter moving the club to vigorous advocacy of school reform.



MRS. HARRIET A. BALDWIN
Second President

In 1898, the club unanimously endorsed a petition to the Boston School Board demanding improvements in the conditions of Allston-Brighton's Webster and Winship Schools. Soon after, the School Board appropriated funds for the erection of a primary school on Webster Avenue, the Frederic A. Whitney School, Boston's



The Harriet Baldwin School, corner of Corey Road and Washington Street, Brighton, which opened in the late 1920s, commemorates Harriet Baldwin's valuable contributions to educational reform

first to have hot running water! Under Harriet's leadership, sanitary conditions in the new Brighton High School and the Washington Allston School were likewise improved, to the point that these schools were ranked as among the city's healthiest.

Harriet Baldwin's leadership and strong advocacy improved education from kindergarten through high school, including the arts and the special needs of deaf children at the Horace Mann School.

As fellow club member, Isabella Williams, said of her, "Harriet was a truly noble woman, of stately presence, and with the highest ambition for the advancement of the club. She showed a burning zeal and enthusiasm for the work of her office."

Harriet Baldwin died in 1918, at age 79.

Harriet Baldwin's legacy as a school reformer lives on in the Harriet A. Baldwin School on Brighton's Corey Road, which opened in the late 1920s. Interestingly the initiative to name the school in her honor came from the Brighthelmstone Club, and from Jennie Loitman Barron, another of our Brighton-Allston Heritage Trail women, who was then serving as the only female member of the Boston School Committee.

Jennie Loitman Barron

Stop #13: The Barron House, 24 Selkirk Road, Aberdeen

Jennie Loitman Barron (1891-1969), a longtime Brighton resident, was the first woman to serve as a full-time judge in Massachusetts.

Jennie hailed from modest beginnings. Her father had fled Russia for the West End district of Boston in 1887 to avoid



Judge Jennie Loitman Barron

conscription into the Tsar's Army, in which Jews were badly treated. Her parents were both employed in the "needle trades" or garment industry, and their home became a meeting place for new immigrants needing interpretation services.

Jennie graduated from the Boston Girls' High School in 1906 at age fifteen, the youngest in the entire city of Boston. She entered the College of Liberal Arts at Boston University in 1908, where she served as first President of the BU Women's Suffrage Association. Teen suffragist Jennie wrote, "I spoke from soapboxes, at corners of streets and from open autos, at times dodging ... stale eggs and overripe tomatoes," to demand for women the right to vote. She spoke to factory workers at noon-time breaks, at theaters during intermissions, and marched in suffrage parades. Despite this vigorous women's rights activism, she completed her undergraduate education in three years.

Jennie entered the Boston University School of Law in 1911, completing the three year program in two, while also working in the Women's Educational and Industrial Union's department of law.

Jennie was admitted to the bar in 1914, at age twenty-three. As she later recounted, no man was willing to take her into his law

firm, or even to allow her to rent a room in his suite of offices. Undaunted, she moved into a windowless room, took cases for free, and proving she could prevail against male lawyers, won an increasing number of clients. As Brandeis Chancellor Abram Sachar later noted of Jennie's struggle for professional recognition, she "slogged her way through the minefields of prejudice" and prevailed, in large measure owing to "the compassionate way she administered cases involving children, widows, and the disinherited, people who lived submerged."



The Barron residence at 24 Selkirk Road, in Brighton's Aberdeen section

In 1918 Jennie married childhood sweetheart, Samuel Barron, Jr., also a lawyer, and began a 51-year marriage. They formed a Boston law firm partnership that lasted until her appointment to the bench.

Their law practice must have prospered, for soon after their marriage, Jennie and Samuel purchased a large shingle style

house at 24 Selkirk Road, in Brighton's prestigious Aberdeen neighborhood.

In 1926, while living in Brighton, Jennie was elected a member of the Boston School

Committee. During her service, she was instrumental in bringing the handsome Harriet Baldwin School to her Aberdeen neighborhood.

Jennie Loitman Barron's legal career was marked by an

impressive array of firsts. During 1924-35, while serving as an Assistant Attorney General, she became the first woman to present a case before a grand jury as well as the first to prosecute major criminal cases. When she was appointed to the Boston Municipal Court in 1937, she became the first full-time woman judge in Massachusetts, and with her elevation to the Massachusetts Superior Court in 1959,

became the first woman to sit on the state's highest judicial tribunal.



Judge Barron and members of her family at the time of her appointment as a Justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court

A treasure trove of material on Jennie Loitman Barron is housed at the Brandeis University Archives and at Schelsinger Library, that along with interviews with Jennie's family, inspired the BAHS Women's History Group research and writing, for which we are most grateful.

Ellen Maret Gifford

Stop #14: The Gifford Home for Animals, Undine Road



The original building of the Ellen M. Gifford Sheltering Home for Animals at 30 Undine Road, Brighton, dating from 1886

Mrs. Ellen M. Gifford inherited, upon the death of her father, Philip Maret, an estate worth several million dollars. During her life she disposed of most of her fortune by donating to worthy causes, the largest share to institutions in Boston, New Haven and New York. When she died in 1889, her residual estate amounted to \$93,236.26, which was distributed by her trustees to institutions such as the Women's Charity Club of Boston, the New England Hospital for Women and Children, the Sunny Bank Home Boston, the General Hospital Society of Connecticut, the Home for Aged Colored Women in Boston, and the Home for Children and Aged Women in Roxbury.

In addition to her lifelong generosity toward people in need, Mrs. Gifford also demonstrated generosity toward animals in need. She became the founder and benefactor of the Ellen M. Gifford Sheltering Home for Animals in Brighton. The home got its start when, in July 1883, she made a donation of \$20,000 to the MSPCA for the purpose of building

and maintaining a home for animals abandoned by their owners. In 1884 she wrote, "If only the waifs, the strays, the sick, the abused, would be sure to get entrance to the home, and anybody could feel at liberty to bring in a starved or ill-treated animal and have it cared for without pay, my object would be obtained"

The home was built on land donated by Captain Nathan Appleton, Jr. of Brighton, son and namesake of the famous textile manufacturer, and brother-in-law of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, who owned a 14 acre estate at the upper end of Lake Street. The establishment of the Gifford animal shelter received considerable publicity. An 1886

Boston Globe article gave the details as follows: "The home occupies an attractive site under the shadow of Waban Hill and in turn overshadows Chandler's Pond and the Undine Spring. The site comprises one and a quarter acres upon which was built two years ago, a handsome two story brick and stone house at a cost of

"If only the Waifs, the Strays, the Abused would be sure to get entrance to the Home, and anybody would feel at liberty to bring in a starving or ill-treated animal, and have it cared for without pay, my object would be attained."

ELLEN MARETT GIFFORD.

March 27, 1884.

\$15,000. In the rear of the building are the kennels containing a wooden building of a single story connected with a series of yards designed for the accommodation of the inmates of the house."

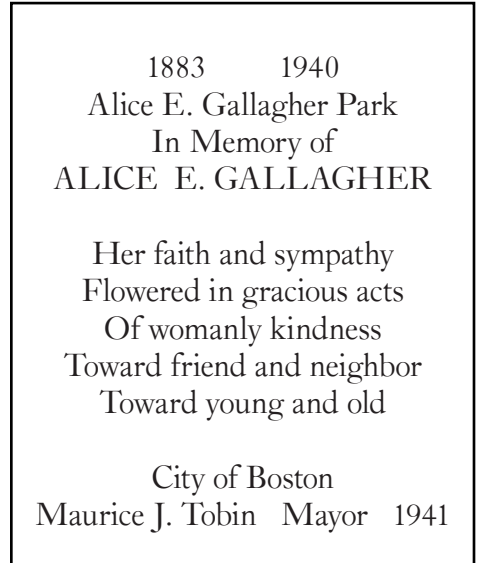
Ellen Gifford left an endowment for the care and shelter of all animals. However, due to hardships during World War II, care at the home was subsequently restricted to cats only, and today goes by the name Ellen M. Gifford Sheltering Home. The Gifford Home still exists at 30 Undine Road, off of Lake Street. It functions as a cageless, no-kill cat shelter.

Alice Gallagher

Stop #15: Gallagher Park Memorial, Chandler Pond

Alice E. Gallagher was the first woman in Boston's history to be honored by having a park, street or playground named in her memory. A posthumous dedication of the Alice E. Gallagher Park took place on Sunday, October 5, 1941 at the newly named park beside Chandler Pond in Brighton. Several thousand people attended this dedication ceremony, including state and city officials and prominent members of the clergy. Boston Mayor Maurice Tobin, in the dedication, noted "I think it most appropriate that this park be named in her memory, and I think also that a

suitable memorial should be erected on that park so that the name of Alice E. Gallagher will forever be recalled as an example of high, spiritual womanhood." Speakers at the memorial service included Mayor Tobin and Boston Police Commissioner Joseph F. Timilty. The three Gallagher children unveiled a stone tablet, which bears the inscription:



Gallagher Memorial inscription

The granite stone memorial still stands at the dedication site between Lake Shore Road and the southwest corner of Chandler Pond.



The Gallagher Memorial on Lake Shore Road overlooking Chandler Pond

Mrs. Gallagher was a longtime member and had served as President of the Brighton Women's Club. She had been Director of the Philomatheia Club, and was active in the Red Cross and the Community Fund of the Boston district. She was also an active parishioner of Our Lady of the Presentation Church and an associate of the Catholic League for the Blind. As reported in

The *Brighton Citizen Item*, Councilor Maurice Sullivan wrote, in support of his proposal to name the park in her honor, that Alice Gallagher had, “served for many years as an unpaid social worker, constantly striving for the welfare of the poor, the sick, the needy and the afflicted of the district.”



Alice Gallagher

Alice’s husband, Edward Gallagher, had served for many years on the Boston City Council. At that time, the City of Boston held the land that was later named for his wife. It became the property

of the city as a result of a foreclosure and was under the management of the Superintendent of Buildings. The Superintendent recommended that the property be sold, but Councilor Gallagher saw greater value in the land for Brighton than what a sale would bring. He successfully urged the City Council to approve an order that would transfer the land from the Superintendent of Buildings to the Park Department so that it could be developed into a public recreational area.

It is fitting that this park is named for Alice E. Gallagher. Both the land and the woman memorialized there share a history of service to the Brighton community. In the written order for the memorial, Councilor Sullivan described Alice Gallagher as “a lasting inspiration for the good of the Brighton-Allston District and a constant friend of the people of that district and the people of the city as a

whole who revere her in memory as they cherished her in life.” The beautiful park, which enhances the pond it surrounds, is a lasting tribute to the woman for whom it is named. It is a treasure that continues to serve the people of Allston-Brighton and the city as a whole.

Sister Marie Augusta Neal SND

Stop #16: Marie Augusta Neal birthplace, 7 Newton Street

A Sister of Notre Dame de Namur and a distinguished sociologist and educator, Marie Augusta Neal had a life-long association with Brighton. She was born Helen C. Neal, on June 21, 1921, daughter of Thomas and Helen Neal of Newton Street, Brighton. She attended Our Lady of Presentation Grammar School and worked in the Faneuil Library as a teenager. She earned scholarships to the Notre Dame Academy, Granby Street, and Emmanuel College. She received a Master’s degree from Boston College and a PhD in Sociology from Harvard University.



Marie Augusta Neal as a young woman

In 1953 she began teaching sociology at Emmanuel College and became Professor of Sociology in 1963. She was one of two religious representatives on the Governor's Commission on the Status of Women in 1965. In 1966 Sister Marie Augusta conducted the National Sister Survey of 130,000 Catholic religious women across the US. This study provided profound insights that challenged the traditional roles of women in the Church.

Over the course of her 40-year career, Sister Marie Augusta was known for her unconventional and antiauthoritarian stances. She was passionate about social justice, declaring, "The issues that were important to me have always been issues of justice. I was never afraid of what I



Marie Augusta Neal's birthplace,
at 16 Newton Street, Brighton

wrote or said because it was based on careful research and church documents".

Sister Marie Augusta was also one of the first Catholic intellectuals to advocate for a new role for the Church itself. "I understood the mission of the church to be to go to the poor in the most neglected places and question what created the poverty", she declared. From 1965 onward she opened her Sociology 101 class at Emanuel College with a question: *Why are there poor people in a rich society like the United*

States? In the 1970s when global inequalities were recognized, the question became: *Why is it that two thirds of the world is poor when we have the resources and technologies sufficient to provide well for all, but we do not?*

At the height of the civil rights movement in 1967, at a National Catholic Education Association conference, Sister Marie Augusta urged the church to improve the education of Catholics in matters of peace, poverty and civil rights. In 1970, she was asked to go to South Africa, to inspect Catholic Schools. The bishops expected her to study only white schools, but she insisted that to complete the research properly she would have to study both black and white institutions. Her report on the South African Catholic Education Study had a groundbreaking effect on that country's integration.

Sister Neal influenced three generations of Catholic social activists, including Kip Tiernan, founder of the Poor People's United Fund and of Rosie's Place, and Sister Helen Prejean, author of *Dead Man Walking*. Feminist theologian Mary E. Hunt noted that Sister Marie Augusta's legacy was her insistence that those of us who live with privilege are obliged in justice to *let go* so that the abundance of the earth may be shared.

Mary Faneuil Bethune

Stop #17: The Faneuil Gatekeeper's House, northwest corner of Faneuil & Dunboy Streets

Mary Faneuil Bethune was the niece of Peter Faneuil, the great Boston merchant, who in 1743 gave the town of Boston a splendid new town hall and market, now known as Faneuil Hall.

When Peter Faneuil died shortly thereafter, the bulk of his estate was inherited by his younger brother, Benjamin, Mary Faneuil's father. About 1760, the ailing Benjamin bought a 70-acre country estate in Little Cambridge, as Allston-Brighton was

By the outbreak of the American Revolution in 1775, the 72 year old Benjamin, in poor health and nearly blind, had long since retired from business and was living on his Brighton estate. He was cared for by his daughter, then a widow in her early forties. His sons, consignees of the British East India Company tea shipments that precipitated the Boston Tea Party, had fled to England.



The only surviving portion of the Faneuil Estate, the Gatekeeper's House, c. 1935

Facing the prospect of the seizure of her father's estate by the Revolutionary government, Mary Faneuil Bethune moved decisively to save her father's endangered estate from confiscation.

then known, on the site now occupied by the Crittendon-Hastings Hospital near Oak Square, replacing an old farm house with an imposing new residence. Benjamin Faneuil was a Tory, a strong supporter of England in its disputes with the Massachusetts Colony, as were his two sons, Mary's brothers, Benjamin, Jr. and Peter.

Learning that George Washington, the commander of the Continental Army, and several of his officers, including General Charles Lee, who had deserted the British service, were on the road in front of the estate (present day Faneuil Street), where they had stopped to pick cherries from overhanging trees, the plucky Mrs. Bethune, sent a servant into the road to

invite the general and his companions up to the house for refreshments. The invitation was gratefully accepted.



An early drawing of the Benjamin Faneuil Estate, which stood on Faneuil Street, east of Oak Square

What followed was recounted by Faneuil family historian, Mr. John A. Weisse:

She entertained them with fruit, wine and cakes [and] invited them to dine with her on a day she named, expressing at the same time her political sentiments, which were very patriotic. Her invitation was accepted.

When the day came, the guests arrived... and all went charmingly. The dinner was over, the dessert on the table, when the door was flung wide and old Mr. Faneuil, leaning on the arm of his attendant, entered... He took his place at the foot of the table and told his guests he was very happy to find that they had visited his house. Would they fill their glasses and allow him to drink to their health? After a time, when he had by listening, found where Washington and Lee sat..he turned toward Washington and said, "General Washington, I respect your character greatly; you act from patriotic motives; I have not a word to object to your course." But, turning short to where Lee sat, (he said) "You General Lee, are fighting with a rope around your neck, etc. etc." expressing plainly that he looked on him as a traitor to king and country.

The whole company arose from the table, and when they were taking leave General Washington said, "What does this mean, Mrs. Bethune?"

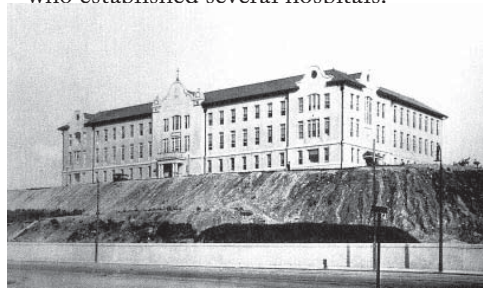
"Can you not see what it means?", she asked, "My father has been blind and out of the world for twenty years, and he is now giving you the ideas in which he was educated. It is an accident that he found out there was company here. It was I who invited you and my sentiments and those of my friends...are very different from my father's. I beg your pardon for what has happened.... I hope you and your friends will forget it."

Mary Faneuil Bethune's timely and courageous intervention had the desired effect; the Faneuil property continued in the hands of her Faneuil/ Bethune heirs for another thirty-five years.

St. Elizabeth's Hospital and School of Nursing

Stop #18: St. Elizabeth's Hospital

Perceiving a need for medical care and shelter at reasonable rates for "retired or feeble women who had grown old in domestic services," five lay Franciscan women established the first St. Elizabeth's Hospital on Waltham Street in Boston in 1868. Its name derives from St. Elizabeth of Hungary, a thirteenth century noblewoman and Franciscan laywoman, who established several hospitals.



St. Elizabeth's Hospital, Nevins Hill, Brighton, c. 1915

The hospital was incorporated in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, in 1872, as St. Elizabeth's Hospital for Women. Ten years later, services were extended to men and the charter was amended to St. Elizabeth's Hospital of Boston. The following year the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, New York undertook the administration of the hospital, which remained an institution of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Boston. The first Superior was Mother Mary Rose Enright, after whom the Mother Mary Rose Clinic on Washington Street is

named. In 1895 the Franciscan Sisters founded the School of Nursing. Its first Director was a graduate of the Boston City Hospital School of Nursing.

As services expanded, more space and buildings were needed. In 1914, two years after a ground breaking ceremony by William Cardinal O'Connell, St. Elizabeth's moved to its new location at the corner of Cambridge and Washington Streets in Brighton. The architect, Edward T. P. Graham, designed a plain, monastic building with a columned cloister walk and red-tiled roof. One of the buildings was given a U-shape design, enabling patients to be wheeled into the fresh air and still be protected by the surrounding building.

The hospital devoted its development to the three-pronged health issues of patient care, research and teaching. The

first Franciscan Superintendent, Sister Francis, was appointed in 1922. The hospital continued to grow. By 1927, there was a new chapel and a new auditorium and the nursing school had been registered with the Massachusetts Board of Registration and the Regents of the University of the State of New York. In 1945 the Franciscans were given formal charge of this diocesan hospital with Sister Martha Mary, FSA, as Superintendent. In 1951 the hospital was licensed by the Department of Mental Health, the first general hospital in Massachusetts to be so licensed. In 1953, St. E's became a teaching affiliate of Tufts University School of Medicine. The Sisters withdrew in 1965, and St. Elizabeth's Hospital continues as part of the Caritas Christi Health System. In 1997 the hospital celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its incorporation.



First Graduating Class, St. Elizabeth's School of Nursing

The Brighthelmstone Club

Stop #19: Brighthelmstone Clubhouse, 541 Cambridge Street

On Friday, November 19, 1896, in the Sparhawk Street home of Ms. Horace Marion, twenty-two women met to form a woman's club for Brighton and Allston. Mrs. Henry Baldwin presided. The club adopted its constitution and by-laws on January 4, 1897. After two false starts, members chose the historically significant name, Brighthelmstone, the original name for Brighton, England, after which Brighton, Massachusetts was assumed to have been named. Early club programs included presentations on history, government, poetry, international travel, art, music, the natural sciences, and current events. A discussion in November, 1897 on the



Early Brighthelmstone Clubhouse buildings

question, What can the Brighthelmstone do for the public schools?, brought results, which were later acknowledged by the Boston Public Schools as well as the community at large. As the club's historian noted, "Whether in insisting on the building of a new school house and the remodeling of others---in maintaining a summer vacation school until the city saw fit to continue it---in contributing funds

toward the education of a crippled boy or in decorating a school room---or in giving a yearly scholarship to the Brighton High School---the club has shown enthusiasm and zeal."

Throughout its history, the Brighthelmstone Club focused considerable energy on improving and expanding educational opportunities. Successful projects included the building of a new primary school and improved sanitary conditions in existing schools. The club was a pioneer of the vacation school movement. In July, 1899, the club appropriated money toward the maintenance of a vacation school and a playground and craft instruction were provided. In subsequent years the program was expanded until the Boston School Board assumed responsibility.

The extremely active women's club also developed Home Talent programs to encourage and draw on the myriad abilities of its members. An early annual report stated that "It is regrettable that so much talent is lying dormant in the membership of the club..... Many have responded nobly, others will do so if made to realize the powers they possess."

The Club's first regular meetings were held at Temple Hall in Union Square but that facility soon proved inadequate. After several years and numerous fundraising events, the club purchased a building at 541 Cambridge Street that had once been a Universalist Church. With renovations completed, the Brighthelmstone Club celebrated its tenth-year anniversary in this new home. When this building fell into disrepair, after a time, members debated whether to buy a new structure or renovate the old one. Deciding to renovate, the club

spent a substantial \$15,410.74. On December 3, 1917 the refurbished clubhouse reopened, becoming once again a scene of constant activity.



Catherine Sparhawk Marion, first President of the Brighthelmstone Club

In 1909, following a talk on “Women’s Status under the law in Massachusetts”, the Brighthelmstone Club formed a Legislative Department where members learned about bills endorsed by the State Federation of Women’s Clubs. In 1920, during the term of the club’s eleventh President, Florence M. Whitehill, mother of the noted Boston historian Walter Muir Whitehill, the 19th amendment passed, granting women the right to vote. The club’s written history noted of this landmark event only that now “...the knowledge of how to use the vote with fairness and intelligence was needed”.

The published history of this remarkable women’s organization, dating from 1923, covers only its first 27 years. That work ends not, as one might expect,

with self-congratulations over the club’s many tangible accomplishments, but rather with the gentle admonition to its members that “the talents of many are not used, and the latent powers of others are waiting to be awakened” and that it is “the duty of all to strive to develop and give forth the best talent that lies within us.”

The Sisters of St. Joseph and Mount St. Joseph Academy

Stop #20: Sisters of St. Joseph Mother House, 637 Cambridge St.

In 1873, thirty-year-old Sister Mary Regis (Annie) Casserly (1843-1917) arrived at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, Jamaica Plain with three companion Sisters of St. Joseph. They had come from Brooklyn, New York to establish an elementary school. During the next decade, the Sisters staffed five more parish schools. In 1885 Mount St. Joseph Academy was established at Fresh Pond in Cambridge. Elementary and high school girls occupied a building that was formerly a hotel, while Sisters used the other buildings. When Cambridge took the property by eminent domain, the Sisters obtained land



The original building, housing the Sisters of St. Joseph Mother House and the Academy, dating from 1891

on Cambridge Street in Allston Heights, and “The Mount” was opened in 1891. There Mother Th eresa organized a day school in connection with the resident academy. In 1912, due to need for more space for an increasing student population, and to improve the teaching facilities, a separate Academy building, the present Mt. St. Joseph Academy, was built. The architectural firm of Maginnis & Walsh designed the building in the Italian Renaissance style.



According to the *Boston Post* of September 28, 1913, the purpose of the Academy was to educate each girl to be a woman “with a strong self-reliant character, proud of her ability to enlist herself with the highest womanly service in whatever her sphere of life demands or her chosen field of labor calls



An early view of the library at Mount St. Joseph Academy

for.” The present gymnasium and cafeteria were added to the academy building in 1964. The high school continues to this day, educating girls of diverse backgrounds with a purpose similar to that described in 1913. It has been accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges since 1959.

The 1891 building was replaced in 1969. The architectural firm of Maginnis, Walsh and Kennedy designed the new Motherhouse, providing offices for the central administration, housing for Sisters and a large contemporary chapel. According to Harvey Salvin, the designer of the windows in the Chapel, the chapel style is reminiscent of the modern style of LeCorbusier. The coloring of the epoxy and glass chapel windows was inspired by the colors of nature—nightfall and autumn leaves in a pond.

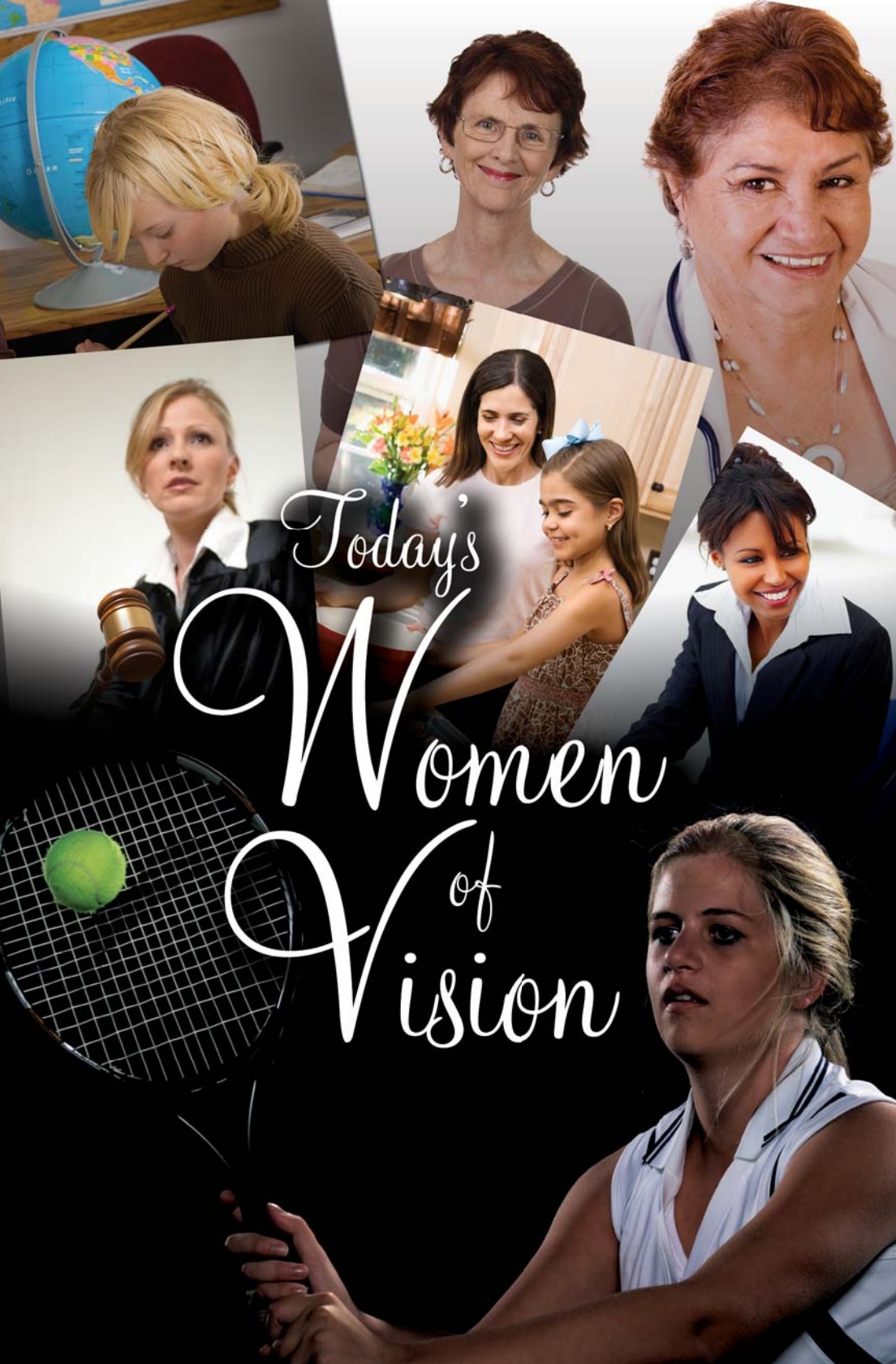
Mother Mary Regis, the founder of Mount St. Joseph

Between 2000 and 2004, the building and chapel

were remodeled to meet the current needs of the Congregation and the resident Sisters.

For many years congregation members staffed several parish elementary schools in the Brighton-Allston area--St. Columbkille, St. Gabriel and St. Anthony—as well as a high school in St. Columbkille parish.

The Sisters of St. Joseph and their Associates continue today to engage in many activities, including education, administration, social service and parochial work. Two of these activities are housed on the Brighton Campus: The Literacy Connection (TLC), which offers ESOL (English as a Second or Other Language) free of charge to members of the surrounding community and taught by volunteers; and The Spiritual Direction Internship, which aims at improving skills in pastoral ministry.



Today's
Women
of
Vision



Brighton
Allston
Heritage Museum

Women of Vision
May 28th, 2008 - April 29, 2009