

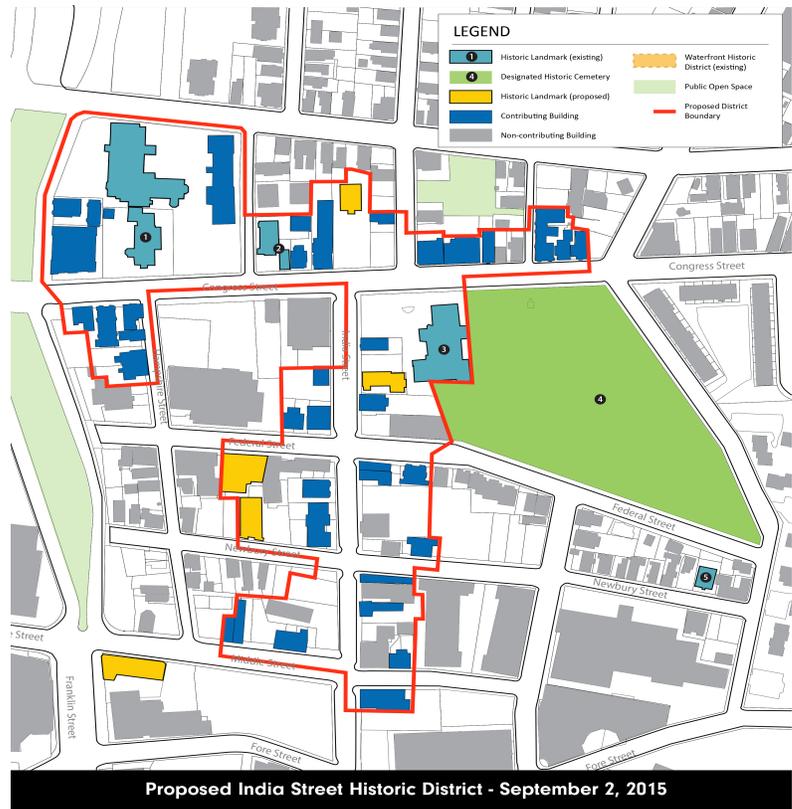
India Street Historic District Designation Report



General Description of the District

The India Street neighborhood as we know it today encompasses a 19-block area, extending west to east from Franklin Arterial to Washington Avenue/Mountfort Street and north to south from Congress Street to Commercial Street. Within this larger neighborhood boundary, the proposed **India Street Historic District** encompasses portions of 10 blocks and is focused on the major corridors (Congress, India and Middle) that define the historic core of the neighborhood and around which many of the neighborhood’s most significant institutional, commercial, religious and residential structures are concentrated.

Within or just outside the district



boundaries are located five previously-designated landmark structures or sites. These include the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, St. Paul’s Church and Parish Hall, North School, the Abyssinian Meeting House and Eastern Cemetery. Four additional landmarks are proposed for designation in conjunction with the district designation. These include the former Etz Chaim Synagogue (now Maine Jewish Heritage Museum), the former India Street Fire Station, St. Peter’s Catholic Church, the former Shaarey Tphiloh Synagogue, and the Abraham S. Levey Commercial Block. These structures are recommended for landmark status based on their significance in the development of the neighborhood, their architectural significance and/or their position at a key gateway into the neighborhood.

In addition to these individual landmarks, the district includes approximately 36 contributing historic structures and 13 noncontributing structures, as well as several surface parking lots or undeveloped parcels. Within the district are exhibited a wide variety of building types—institutional, religious,

commercial, and residential—reflecting the area’s history as a largely self-contained neighborhood settled early on by African Americans and later by successive waves of immigrant groups (including Irish, Italian, Eastern European and Scandinavian) who established their own places of worship, commercial enterprises and services to support the needs of their community.

Although the district includes a few scattered buildings that predate the Great Fire of 1866, most of the existing historic resources were built between 1866 and 1920. Existing historic structures are mostly brick, with the exception of a few wood frame structures. Predominant building styles include Italianate and Second Empire. Also represented in the district are several early 20th century commercial blocks and multi-family triple deckers which are typical of their construction era.

History of the India Street Neighborhood

The history of the India Street neighborhood is as old as the history of Portland itself, as it was the site of the first European settlement on the Portland peninsula. Nothing, however, exists from this first settlement or from other early attempts at settlement. The first settlement was destroyed during conflicts with Native Americans in the 17th century, rebuilt and then destroyed again in the late 18th century by the British. Even the waterfront no longer resembles its early configuration, having been filled in during the mid-nineteenth century to accommodate maritime and railroad development.

Notwithstanding the loss of structures and sites associated with the neighborhood’s earliest periods of development (with the exception of Eastern Cemetery), the remaining building stock provides a compelling story of the neighborhood during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—illustrating not only the wide range of activities that were supported in this area but also the unique resident mix that populated the neighborhood and gave it its rich, ethnically diverse character.

Life in the India Street neighborhood during the early 19th century revolved largely around waterfront activities. A significant number of the laborers and mariners were free black men who prospered in Portland’s maritime economy, settled in the India Street neighborhood, and built their own homes. In 1828 the community built their own church, the Abyssinian Meetinghouse on Newbury Street.

As the African American population prospered and moved out of the neighborhood, they were replaced by Irish immigrants who worked on the waterfront and in the construction of the Atlantic and St. Lawrence Railroad. The Great Fire of 1866 destroyed nearly all the neighborhood once again. Only a few brick dwellings and a small number of resources at the eastern end of Federal and Newbury Streets were spared. Rebuilding was swift, however. Nearly sixty percent of the extant historic resources in the neighborhood were built from 1866 to 1890. Architects from all over the region moved to Portland to help in the rebuilding efforts. Most of the buildings constructed immediately

after the fire were built of brick in the predominate styles of the period, Italianate and Second Empire. Almost all the residential buildings built after the fire were multi-family reflecting the increasing need for housing the City's growing population. The City's increase in population was significantly impacted by European immigration.

Following the Irish were immigrants from Eastern Europe and Italy. At the turn-of-the-20th century 4,000 immigrants a year were passing through the port city. Many settled in the India Street neighborhood, drawn by its close proximity to jobs on the railroad, on the waterfront, or at nearby industrial complexes, like the Portland Company and Thomas Laughlin Company. The cultural and economic impact of each of these immigrant communities on the India Street neighborhood can be found in the variety of the religious buildings that are the area's key landmarks and in the many family businesses established in the neighborhood, some that continue to the present day.



Reflecting the neighborhood's multicultural nature and tradition of living above one's place of business, this 3-family building on Middle Street with store on the ground floor was owned by Hyman Finklestein in 1924. The flanking brick buildings remain.

In the mid twentieth century abutting neighborhoods to the east and west of India Street were targeted for urban renewal. Demolition for the construction of Franklin Arterial and the Munjoy South development shrunk the historic boundaries of the India Street neighborhood. Although there have been physical changes in recent decades, many of the immigrant families and their family businesses continue to have a strong presence in the neighborhood.

For a more detailed history of the neighborhood, please see *A History of Portland's India Street Neighborhood*, researched and written by ttl-architects for the City of Portland. Historical and architectural information about individual structures within the district is provided in an historic resources inventory prepared by ttl-architects.

Significance of the India Street Neighborhood

Historical and Cultural Significance

The India Street neighborhood is significant for its association with the City's nineteenth century free African American population. Two thirds of Portland's African American citizens in the first half of the nineteenth century lived in the India Street neighborhood. The center of their community was the Abyssinian Church built in 1828. The church, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2006, served as the community's religious center, meeting hall, and school. Many of the homes and businesses associated with this community were destroyed in the Great Fire of 1866; however a small group of homes on or near Newbury Street and the church survived the fire. Although the Abyssinian Meeting House is located outside the proposed district boundaries (primarily because of its physical separation from the area of concentration of extant historic structures), it is individually designated as a local landmark and is strongly associated with the history, development and significance of the neighborhood.

The neighborhood is also significant for its strong role in Portland's immigration history. First settled by European immigrants and later joined by a by a strong concentration of free black citizens, these groups were followed by large numbers of Irish, Italian, and Eastern European Jewish immigrants. It was also home to immigrants from Canada, Scotland, Finland, Sweden and Portugal, although in smaller numbers. Its close proximity to the waterfront, the railroad, industrial centers like the Portland Company, and to the commercial center of the city that developed post-Fire along Middle Street provided these newcomers easy access to jobs.

The neighborhood's sites, structures, and areas express the significance of 19th and 20th century immigrants on the cultural history of Portland. Multi-family dwellings, like the neighborhood's many duplexes, triple deckers, and apartment buildings, built following the fire and into the early twentieth century accommodated large multi-generational families, making the area one of the city's densest urban neighborhoods. While many of these immigrant families lived in modest homes within the neighborhood, their influence is present in large landmark religious structures like St. Paul's Church and Rectory, the Abyssinian Meeting House, Shaarey Tphiloh, St. Peter's Catholic Church, and the Cathedral of Immaculate Conception.

While the neighborhood was home to nationally notable persons like Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and General Samuel C. Fessenden and locally notable persons like Ruben Ruby, Abraham W. Niles, and James McGlinchy, it was also the home and workplace of numerous members of the city's various immigrant communities. These immigrants have significantly shaped the culture, history, and development of Portland in a myriad of ways. Some through their public service, like City Councilor Richard Duddy and his son City Councilor Edward Duddy, or through their community engagement, like Dr. Elias Caplan, a WWI medical corps veteran and the city's second Jewish physician, who along with his wife, was active in local and statewide community organizations. Many of the immigrants became well known and prominent businesspeople. Giovanni Amato settled in Portland circa 1902 and created

the iconic sandwich known as the Italian in his bakery at the corner of Newbury and India Streets. At their home on Newbury Street, Vincenzo and Maria Reali started the Village Café, which was greatly expanded and operated by their son and grandson. Jacob Levinsky first established his military surplus store on Washington Avenue before moving to India and Congress Street in 1920.

Architectural Significance

The proposed district possesses a significant concentration of buildings and structures that are united aesthetically. The neighborhood contains many examples, both high style and vernacular, of the Italianate and Second Empire styles. Both styles were popular when a large portion of the neighborhood was rebuilt following the Great Fire of 1866. Almost sixty percent of the 117 historic resources surveyed in the neighborhood were built from 1866 to 1890. Like the adjacent Old Port area, rebuilt during the same period, the predominance of these styles creates a distinctive architectural identity for the neighborhood.

The remaining resources in the neighborhood reflect a variety of styles prevalent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Other styles present in the neighborhood include Federal (Joseph Barbour House,



The India Street neighborhood boasts an unusually high number of landmark buildings, many of which are religious structures built by various immigrant groups.

c 1846, 123-125 Newbury Street), Greek Revival (Woodbury & Dorcas Poole Hatch House, 1867-1873, 32 Hampshire Street), Gothic (St. Paul's Church and Rectory, 1869, 279 Congress Street), Renaissance Revival (St. Peter's Catholic Church, 1929, 82 Federal Street), and Beaux Arts (Shaarey Tphiloh Synagogue, 1904, 145-147 Newbury Street).

Several examples of four-bay brick double houses are present in the district. This multi-family building type, with paired central entrances, is present in the Greek Revival (25-27 Middle Street), Federal (123-125 Newbury Street), Italianate (45-47 Hancock Street), and Second Empire Styles (98-100 India Street).

Following the Great Fire of 1866 many architects from around the region moved

to Portland to work in the city. They worked in conjunction with local architects and builders to rebuild the city as quickly as possible following the devastating fire. Classically trained in the Beaux Arts method, most of the architects were facile at creating beautiful and well-proportioned buildings in the variety of styles popular in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Levi Newcomb was the architect for the 1867 North School as well as the 1867 First Baptist Church at 353 Congress Street. Construction of the Franklin Street arterial effectively severed the church from the India Street neighborhood it once served. His firm, Levi Newcomb & Son, was located in Boston, but after the Great Fire of 1866 he relocated his firm to Portland. The firm returned to Boston in 1868.

George Browne Pelham was an English born architect who immigrated to Canada before moving to the United States. He, like many other architects of the period didn't stay in Portland long, as he opened an architectural office in New York City in 1875. He designed the James R Lunt-Harriet W Weatherbee Block (1868) at 98-100 India Street and St. Paul's Church and Rectory (1869) at 279 Congress Street.

George M. Harding was a prominent Portland architect who designed the India Street Fire Station in 1867. (He was also responsible for the design of the Rackleff Block at 127-133 Middle Street (1867), the Thompson Block at 117-125 Middle Street (1867), the Woodman Building at 133-141 Middle Street (1867), the Boyd Block at 178 Middle Street (1868), and his own residence at 6 Deering Street.)

The Shaarey Tphiloh Synagogue of 1904 on Newbury Street and the Workingmen's Club Building of 1904 at the southern end of neighborhood on Commercial Street were designed by John James Cunningham. Cunningham had his start in Portland, working in the office of noted Portland architect Francis Fassett from 1892-1896. He left Portland to work in Boston, came back to Portland at the turn of the century and in 1905 established with his father and brother FW Cunningham & Sons, an architecture and construction firm. The firm was also responsible for a number of other Portland landmarks, including the Cumberland County Courthouse, the Federal Courthouse, the Fidelity Building, Mercy Hospital, Union Station, and the Nathan Clifford School.

Integrity of the District's Historic Structures

The historic character and integrity of the larger India Street neighborhood has been somewhat eroded in recent decades by demolition, introduction of large surface parking lots and incompatible development. This has had an especially marked impact on the neighborhood's interior blocks that abut the main thoroughfares. The area identified for historic district designation, however, which encompasses key stretches of the neighborhood's major vehicular corridors (Congress Street, the upper portion of India Street and Middle Street), has experienced less of this erosion and still exhibits a strong sense of the neighborhood's 19th and early 20th century character.

The district includes a relatively high percentage of local landmark structures that are not only historically and architecturally noteworthy, but which have also been well preserved. In addition, there are numerous other historic institutional, commercial, mixed use, and multi-family residential structures that, while not landmarks in and of themselves, nevertheless retain a high level of architectural integrity and lend a strong visual cohesiveness to this portion of larger neighborhood.

It is worth noting here that several blocks within the interior of the neighborhood—outside the boundaries of the proposed historic district--still exhibit a number of historic single-family and multi-family residential structures. Although a number of the buildings, particularly the wood-framed structures, have been altered by replacement windows and/or siding, most retain their original form, massing and scale and, in several cases, key architectural details such as front door surrounds and hoods. Although not architecturally noteworthy, these buildings reflect the nature of the area's population and represent the modest vernacular structures that made up much of the neighborhood's building stock during most of its history. Where small concentrations of these structures remain—on lower Hampshire Street and on Newbury Street, west of the Abyssinian--their similarity of scale and massing provides a measure of architectural cohesiveness and historic character to their respective blocks. Although the decision was ultimately made not to include these blocks within the final proposed district boundary due to the spotty nature of most of these blocks as well as other considerations, the preservation and stewardship of the area's historic vernacular housing stock is strongly encouraged.

Visual Character of the India Street Historic District

Although the district encompasses a wide variety of building types, a number of common visual characteristics serve to unify the district. A preponderance of brick buildings and an architectural vocabulary shared by the Italianate and Second Empire styles popular during the second half of the 19th century provide a level of visual consistency. Also, the substantial, blocky massing of the district's many duplexes provides a strong unifying form to the area's building stock. With few exceptions, the buildings fill their respective lots and sit directly at the sidewalk line. This is



The neighborhood's large number of brick Italianate and Second Empire duplexes, with their simple blocky massing, serves as a unifying visual characteristic of the district

especially true on India Street. Building heights on India and Middle are generally consistent as well; most of the historic structures are 2 ½ to 3 stories tall.

Within the district, the Congress Street corridor exhibits the greatest diversity of scale and form. Relatively massive buildings such as North School are located across the street from long, one-story commercial blocks. The stone façade of St. Paul’s Church, the matchboard wood exterior of St. Paul’s Rectory and the striking clapboard Italianate double house at the corner of Congress and Hampshire provide a level of architectural contrast and relief to the otherwise brick streetwall. Also, the otherwise consistent building setback (or lack thereof) is broken at several points along the street: at the Cathedral complex, Maine Jewish Heritage Museum and North School. Notwithstanding the more architecturally varied nature of Congress Street, its strong concentration of 19th century and early 20th century structures clearly communicates the area’s rich history. (The one notable exception within this historic fabric is the large 1971 shopping plaza on the south side of the street between Hampshire and India (which is not included within the district boundaries).

Classification of Individual Structures within District Boundary

Please see the India Street Historic Resources Survey for an architectural description and history of each structure within the district.

Street	Original Building Name or Use	Date	Classification
Congress Street			
223 Congress	James O’Brien’s Shoe Store & Apt. Building	ca. 1903	Contributing
225-227 Congress	Duddy Family Grocery Store & Dwelling	ca. 1870	Contributing
229-231 Congress	Duddy & McPhee Store & Apts.	ca. 1914	Contributing
235 Congress	Daniel Lucy Watch Store & Apt. House	ca. 1881	Noncontributing
239 Congress	E. Thomas Apts & Store	ca. 1875	Noncontributing
241 Congress	Edward Murphy Store & Apts.	1888	Contributing
243-247 Congress	Edward Murphy Block	1923 & 1924	Contributing
248 Congress	North Street School	1867	Landmark
249 Congress	Farris Bros. Dry Goods Store	ca. 1912	Contributing

251 Congress	Bakery, Cleansers & Dyers	ca. 1935	Contributing
267 Congress	Etz Chaim Synagogue	1921	Landmark
272 Congress	MMC Family Practice Center	1999	Noncontributing
273 Congress	John Swett House and Store	1865, 1923	Contributing
277 Congress	James Cunningham House	ca. 1875	Contributing
279 Congress	St. Paul's Church & Rectory	1869	Landmark
281 Congress	James Cunningham Carriage House	ca. 1900	Contributing
284 Congress	Catir Apartments	1928	Noncontributing
289 Congress (172-196 Cumb.)	Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception & Bishops House	1869	Landmark
312 Congress	Bristol Apartment Building	ca. 1910	Contributing
290 Congress	Congress Plaza	1971	Noncontributing
306 Congress	Captain Charles Chase House	1867	Contributing
316 Congress	George S. Swasey House	ca. 1867	Contributing
316a Congress	Dr. Elias Caplan Office Building	ca. 1914	Contributing
317 Congress	Guild Hall, Cathedral of the Imm. Con.	1923	Contributing
Federal Street			
56 Federal	Double triple-decker	1906-07	Contributing
63 Federal	Lewis Garage	1927	Noncontributing
69-71 Federal	John Gulliver Block	1868	Contributing
73-75 Federal	Horatio Quincy Block	1867	Contributing
68-76 Federal	St. Peter's Catholic Church St. Peter's ancillary bldgs.	1929	Landmark Noncontributing

Hampshire Street

60-62 Hampshire	John Barbour & Jane Staples Block	1867	Contributing
68 Hampshire	J. Davis House	ca. 1867	Contributing

India Street

45 India	Cartonio's Store	ca. 1930	Contributing
47 India	Commercial Fruit Building	1968	Noncontributing
50 India	Jenny Mfg. Co. Service Station	ca. 1938	Noncontributing
55 India	Commercial Structure	1968	Noncontributing
61 India	Larrabee House & Stable	1866-67	Contributing
65 India	Bowdoin College Edw. Mason Dispensary	1912	Noncontributing
67 India	Giovanni Amato's Bakery	1922	Contributing
71 India	Amato's	2000	Noncontributing
72-74 India	Peter Tabachnik Grocery Store	ca. 1915	Contributing
76 India	Mary Damery House	1884	Contributing
78 India	Franklin Simonds Block	1883-84	Contributing
85-87 India	Simonds Dye House	1868	Contributing
95 India	Franklin Symonds Block	1880	Contributing
97 India	India Street Fire Station	1867	Landmark
98-100 India	James R. Lunt-Harriet Wetherbee Block	1868	Contributing
105 India	Patrick Feeney House	ca. 1874	Contributing

Locust Street

2-26 Locust	Cathedral School	1927	Contributing
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Middle Street

25-27 Middle	George Jewett Block	1856-58	Contributing
39-37 Middle	James McGlinchy Block	1868	Contributing
59 Middle	Abrams Block	1867	Contributing
78-88 Middle	Abraham S. Levey Commercial Block	1922	Landmark (outside distr. boun.)

Newbury

73-75 Newbury	Abyssinian Meeting House	1828	Landmark (outside dist. boun.)
123-125 Newbury	Joseph Barbour House	by 1846	Contributing
129 Newbury	Dominic Reali Realty building	1977	Noncontributing
137-139 Newbury	Abel Chase & Emery Cushing House	ca. 1867	Contributing
145 Newbury	Shaarey Tphiloh Synagogue	1904	Landmark