



## CHAPTER FOUR

# A SELECTIVE MELTING POT

**D**URING THE years 1870–1900 one basic pattern organized the whole suburban metropolis: people were separated by income and mixed together with little regard to national origin. Although ethnic concentrations continually appeared, such groupings were strictly temporary and subsidiary clusters subject to the general movement of people by income capability and income identification. Indeed an observation of the timing and the degree of concentration of these clusters provides the historian with a good measure of the democratic openness of Boston society.

The overall metropolitan pattern of residences was achieved in three ways: by the division of the city into those who could afford new and recent construction and those who could not; by the division of the middle and upper classes according to their varying transportation needs; and by the force of historic conditions within small geographic areas upon the decisions of the individual builders. The first two can be observed by an examination of the relationship of the pattern of class segregation to the expansion of street railways within the area of the three towns. The force of historic conditions will then be taken up in an examination of three smaller cases: central Dorchester, lower Roxbury, and Roxbury highlands.

Throughout the last third of the nineteenth century the old walking city was predominantly the region of cheap secondhand housing. The outer edge of this region lay at a distance of 2 to 2.5 miles from Boston's City Hall. Beyond was the land of new suburban construction. This crude division of the metropolis into two parts manifested itself in several ways. The boundary between the two parts separated the

inner area of concentrated working class settlement from the outer area of middle class predominance; the land of the new immigrant from the land of the second generation and assimilated Americans. It was a highly visible boundary, a boundary between tenements and row houses on the one hand and the new detached wooden houses of the streetcar era on the other.

In metropolitan Boston from 1870 to 1900, if a house was new it was suburban. There were but two major exceptions to this rule: the new Back Bay row houses and the new workers' tenements. Both were special forms of the central city. Long after the row house had been abandoned elsewhere in Greater Boston, the Back Bay continued its special architecture. This area was able to develop as a handsome anachronism because it was isolated from the main nineteenth century commercial traffic of the metropolis, and because the state regulated its land use and construction practices.

Special conditions also fostered tenement construction. In this case building depended upon the continued and extensive immigration of

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FIG. 15. Speculator's 1887 Back Bay row houses, 517-523 Beacon street

cheap labor into the work center of the city. Here, in the crowded blocks of the North, South, and West ends, close to jobs and close to fellow immigrants, new life in America began. New tenements, like conversions of old houses, provided a financially possible system of housing for Boston's low-rent population because they allotted very little space to each person. Not only were the rooms small but several families often shared single apartments, or families would take in boarders.

Outside the old walking city the metropolitan population was further divided. In the suburbs segregation resulted from the varying income capabilities and transportation needs of the different segments of the middle and upper classes. This segregation was a complicated

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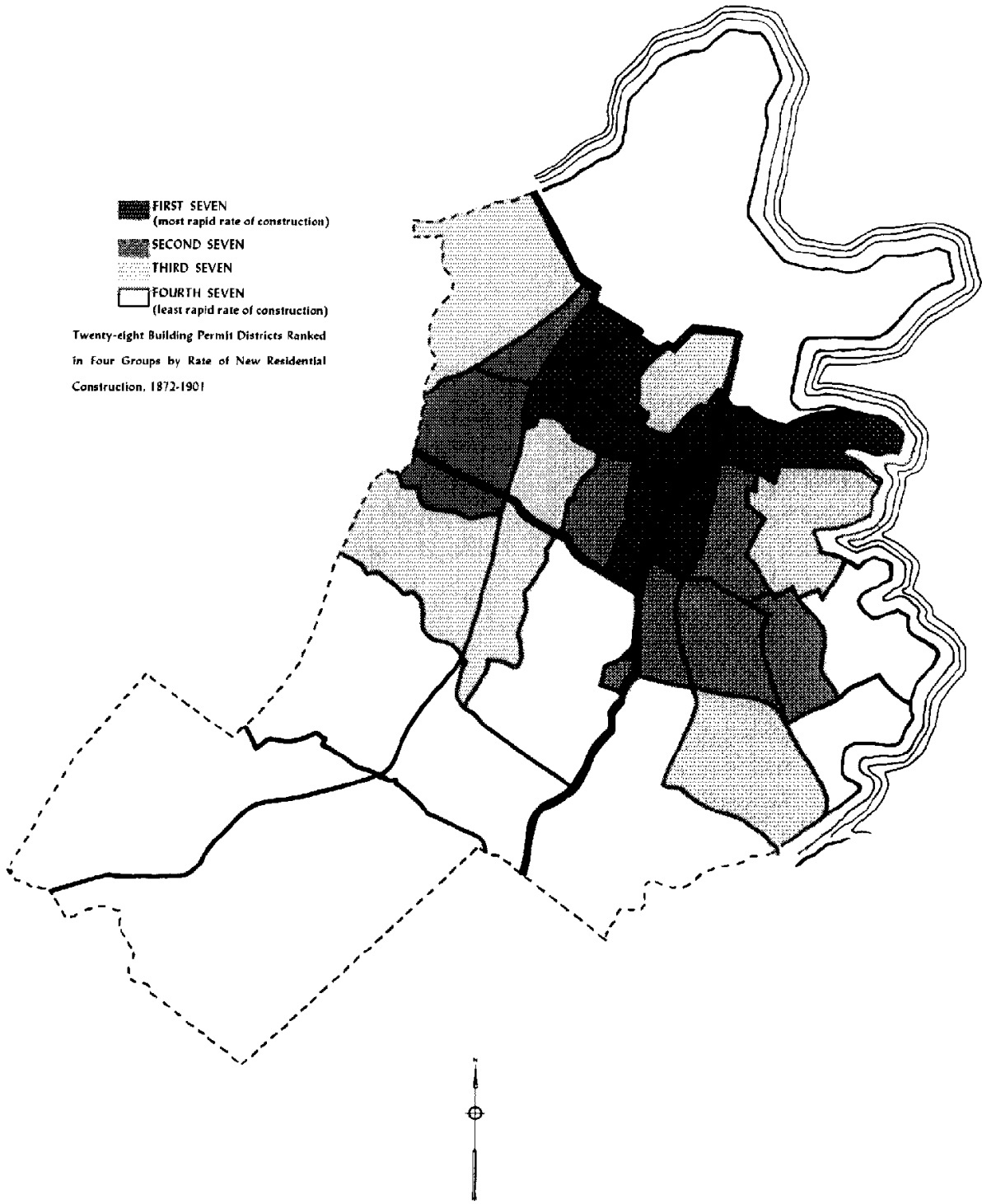
FIG. 16. Dense West End land plan, code tenements c. 1890. Buildings  
now torn down

process which depended upon the interaction of the arrival of various kinds of transportation service with the timing of the building booms.

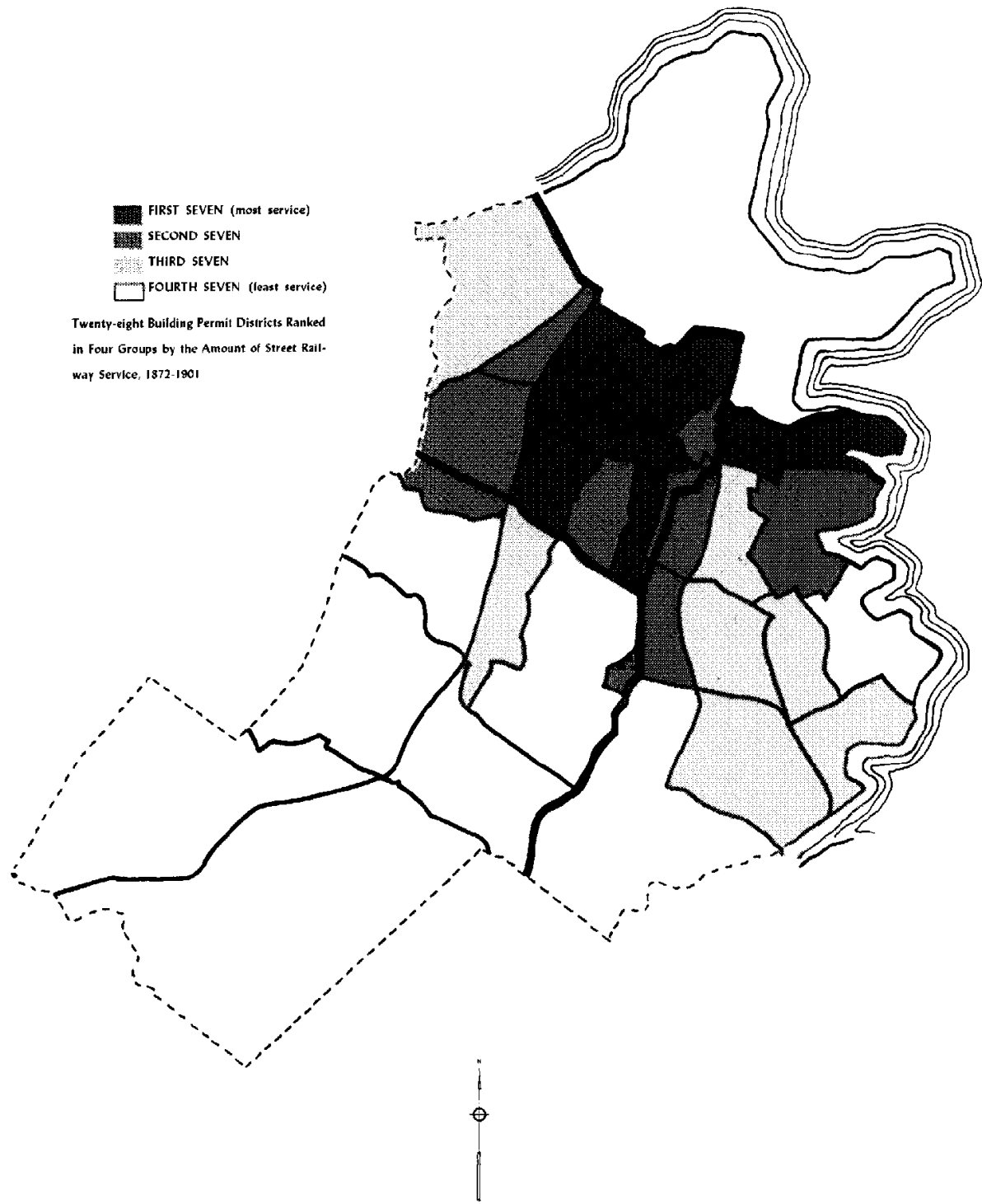
In one elemental way street railway service and suburban house building moved together: the more street railway service, the faster the rate of building. The early lines of the 1870's which ran through the fields and farms to the small villages 3 and 5 miles from downtown Boston were clearly in advance of active building. The first service on these distant lines offered only one car every hour. Later as traffic increased more cars were assigned to the run. Like the railroads these first tracks fanned out from the center of the city and lacked any suburban interconnections. Nevertheless, the more frequent stops of the streetcar gave its service a special quality. As opposed to the quarter-mile intervals between the railroad stations the streetcar provided an unbroken line of service from its suburban terminal to the downtown. In this way each line opened for building a continuous strip of land instead of isolated areas around each station. Indeed, until electrics were introduced in 1889, suburban horsecars slowed down for passengers anywhere along their route, coming to a full stop only for ladies.

In metropolitan Boston the street railway always offered three kinds of service and each kind of service attracted a particular pattern of residential building. Pioneering lines with infrequent service to outlying areas when first instituted merely supplemented the steam railroad's commuter service. After some years, however, homes would appear, not as formerly, clustered about the station villages, but in lines parallel to the streetcar tracks.

Next came the institution of good linear service, a car about every ten minutes. This increase in service generally brought a jump in the rate of building, but the pattern of building remained restricted to following the streetcar lines. The effect of the pioneering service and the good linear service was the same, but they may be usefully distinguished by the frequency of cars and the rate of building. For example, in 1872 a line ran out Washington street from Boston, through the South End to Roxbury, and thence out Centre street to Jamaica Plain. The Boston to Roxbury segment of the line gave good linear service, cars every eight minutes; the Roxbury to Jamaica Plain segment was a pioneering one: it had cars only every half hour. There was a marked difference in the rates of building next to the two segments, building along the Roxbury to Boston segment being far the most active.



MAP 7. Rate of new residential construction, three towns, 1872-1901. This map is a condensation of a house-by-house plotting of all new residential construction in the three towns. The source was the building permits for the years 1872-1901. The towns were divided into twenty-eight districts, shown in outline here. For a full series of maps giving house-by-house locations, further discussion of method, and statistical tables of dwelling location and its relation to street railway service, train service, population, school building, and churches see Warner, "Residential Development," Appendix E and Atlas.



MAP 8. Amount of street railway service in the three towns, 1872-1901. The street railway service was assumed to be that advertised by the companies in the Boston Street Directory and listed in "Boston Elevated and West End Street Railway, Historical Dates Since January 2, 1892" (MS, Boston Elevated Railway Library, Metropolitan Transit Authority, Boston, Mass.). Each building permit district was rated on the basis of the amount of service per hour at one theoretical point within its boundaries. All service on lines within and tangent to the boundaries of a district was counted as contributing to the service at the one theoretical point.

From 1870 to 1900 the outer limits of street railway service moved ever farther from Boston as new tracks were laid, but the relationship of the outer lines to building was always the same: it was linear service and encouraged building in parallel lines of development.

Finally, as land adjacent to these lines of linear service filled up with houses to a width of easy walking distance on each side, more service became necessary, both along the original route and along new routes which would connect these strips of new houses. Crosstown lines and complementary connections of villages lying at the same general distance from the city became profitable. At the time when crosstown service began to be established the extension of streetcar service ceased to be a predominant cause of house building. Now the building began to encourage the expansion of service as well as the service encouraging building. As time went on and this process continued, new tracks were laid ever farther from the center of the city, first in the linear pattern, then in the crosstown pattern.

By 1900, with the elevated and rapid transit still to be built, the outer limits of convenient street railway commuting stood about 6 miles from City Hall. By transferring one could travel 10 miles and even farther, but good linear service, with cars at ten- to fifteen-minute intervals, extended only 6 miles out. In 1900 a 6-mile trip, with a short walk to the car and the frequent stops of an ordinary surface ride, meant an hour's time from home to office. Beyond the 6-mile limit commuters depended upon the faster and more expensive railroad service. The number of people able to afford railroad transportation, however, was limited to a small prosperous segment of the population.

In terms of urban building the result of the 1870–1900 expansion of the street railway was to open up to the great mass of Boston's middle class that enormous expanse of land beyond the harbor which lay in the previously lightly settled zone of 2.5 to 6 miles from the downtown. The upper half of Boston's population enjoyed in the last third of the nineteenth century roughly a sixfold increase in its area of settlement.

#### THE STREET RAILWAY AND CLASS BUILDING PATTERNS

Now the opening up of this great tract of land did not come all in one year. The pace of building was not steady; there were boom

years and idle years. Moreover, owners of land did not offer their fields and estates all at once; some tracts were quickly sold to speculators; others remained in one family for long periods. These variations had by 1900 made some of the neighborhoods of Roxbury, West Roxbury, and Dorchester composites of the building patterns of the various segments of the middle class. Other neighborhoods had a design and character which reflected occupancy by only one segment of the middle class. To understand the relationship between transportation and building and the segregation which resulted it is useful to consider the suburban building process as if income and transportation were the two factors which affected the location of new houses. Many other factors combined to form the character of new neighborhoods: churches, home finance, and the like. These will be added to the story later.

The upper-income half of Greater Boston's population of the period from 1870 to 1900 may be divided into three categories: the wealthy, constituting 5 percent of the whole population; the central middle class, 15 percent; the lower middle class, 20 to 30 percent.

The first category included the richest 1 percent of the population, what in the nineteenth century might have been called "gentlemen of wealth and leisure," and the upper middle class: large storeowners, successful manufacturers, brokers, wholesalers, and prosperous lawyers. In terms of housing, their tastes advertised the fashions of the day and their habits presented models for the rest of the middle class. The richest among them sometimes purchased an expensive town house in the Back Bay, sometimes built estates in the country, sometimes even owned both. Many, however, took advantage of their greater control over hours of work and the fashion for suburban life to build big houses on the best streets and finest prospects of suburban Boston. Such houses appeared both at great distance from Boston where railroad transportation had to be relied upon, and closer to town in the old high-priced pockets of land where former estates had been cut up into large and expensive parcels. Sections of Jamaica Plain and Roxbury highlands throughout the last third of the nineteenth century enjoyed a steady building up of such enclaves. Dorchester and most suburban communities came to contain at least a few streets and houses of Boston's wealthy.

The central middle class—the owners of small downtown stores, successful salesmen and commercial travelers, lawyers, school teachers,



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FIG. 17. Upper middle class suburban street, c. 1890

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FIG. 18. Pre-suburban housing of the central middle class, c. 1850

and the large contractors—constituted about 15 percent of Boston's population during this period. This is the group that common opinion has rightly associated with the suburbs. They had stricter transportation needs. Their hours of work were long, but unlike the lower middle class their places of work tended to be stable so that they had a predictable route of travel. Nor was multiple employment a necessity for these families. As a result good linear streetcar service, or even railroad service if the stations were handy, was all they required.

Prior to the horsecar such families had lived in brick row houses in the West End, in the new South End, and along the former residential streets to the south and east of the Boston Common. Others of the group had sought inexpensive land in Charlestown, Cambridge, Roxbury, and South and East Boston from whence they commuted by omnibus or on foot. With the pressure of commercial expansion and immigrant workers on their old neighborhoods, and the simultaneous opportunity for suburban living, they moved in large numbers out of the old city and along the new horsecar lines. With the establishment in the period 1870–1900 of good linear service 2.5 to 6 miles

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FIG. 19. Suburban house of the central middle class, c. 1885

from downtown Boston came the construction of acres of suburban single- and two-family houses, houses that fulfilled many of the needs and desires of this central segment of Boston's middle class.<sup>1</sup>

The largest segment of Boston's population that could purchase new homes required good transportation service. Because of this requirement they were the last to arrive in the suburbs and lived by and large in the innermost districts. This income group, the lower middle class, probably 20 to 30 percent of Boston's population, included the small shopkeepers, skilled artisans, the better-paid office and sales personnel, and the like. Many artisans' work locations changed frequently. Men in the building trades moved from job to job about the city; others, like machinists, cloth cutters, piano makers, printers, and furniture workers, moved from time to time to the different shops and factories of the city depending on which were busiest. For salesmen, clerks, and artisans alike the regular hours were long and most occupations had periodic or seasonal rush times when extra night or even Sunday work was required. Ambitious families who depended upon multiple employment for their advancement required a good central location for the home. Few members of this, the lowest and largest segment of Boston's middle class, could readily move beyond the limits of crosstown transportation service. Before the horsecar these men walked to work; in the 1870's and 1880's with the rising prosperity of the middle class and the growing efficiency of the streetcar they could travel through and around the central part of Boston for ten to sixteen cents a day. For such men to move beyond crosstown street railway service meant to greatly increase the time consumed in getting through the city and thereby to severely tax their ability to make a living.<sup>2</sup>

Since the lower middle class was the largest group of homeowners, in their parts of the metropolis building went forward at the most rapid rate. Throughout the last third of the nineteenth century those areas just beyond the periphery of the old walking city enjoyed the most rapid growth. Here lower middle class construction filled all the farms, estates, and vacant lots. Here land tended to be the most expensive of any in the suburbs because of the large numbers of residential bidders. Land values were further driven up by the presence of crosstown service which attracted industrial and commercial land buyers. Prices of land in Roxbury, inner Dorchester, and inner West Roxbury were perhaps 50 to 100 percent above those in the

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FIG. 20. Some lower middle class suburban alternatives

outer areas of linear streetcar service and railroad commuting. On the other hand suburban land with crosstown service was probably but half the price of land in the intown tenement districts which lay next to the most expensive commercial and industrial land in the city.<sup>3</sup>

Thus the most numerous segment of the middle class, the group with the least income to devote to housing, had to pay the most for its land. In order to meet this cost, multiple dwellings, or very small single houses had to be resorted to. The jamming together of houses on small narrow lots characterized this group's building. Its principal architectural forms were the two-family house and the three-decker, a tall narrow detached wooden building of three apartments, one to a floor.

Though there were some similarities between the rich man's estate and the cheap two-families and three-deckers, the lesser product resembled its model in details only. The lots were so small and the pattern of living so dense that the rural setting was lost altogether. The advantages of incompleteness, the rural atmosphere that came from only partial occupation of suburban land, now disappeared when high three-deckers moved onto vacant lots. Just as the cheap row houses and tenements of lower Tremont street were so pinched as to be mockeries of the ample formal style of the best South End town

housing of the period preceding the Civil War, so the cramped suburban streets of three-deckers stand as an ugly joke against their models: the picturesque houses set on garden lots.

The growth of the transportation system influenced not only the kinds of houses built, but also their placement. The growing street railway system helped to create in Greater Boston areas of differing potential for new construction. The innermost region, the old walking city, was so built up by 1870 that the expansion of transportation service could only very slowly effect its new construction. In the region beyond the old walking city, however, there was plenty of space for new houses. Here the street railway changed the building potential of land according to the distinct transportation needs and income capabilities of each division of the upper-income half of the metropolitan population. The 1900 position of the bands of new construction, which were each one associated with a class division, can be seen in Map 9.

The band of the wealthy was at all times the farthest out, the largest in area, and the smallest in numbers of people. It was a zone of railroad service in which the streetcar played only a supplementary role even as late as 1900.<sup>4</sup> In 1870 this band of new construction for the wealthy fell within a radius from City Hall of 3.5 to 10 miles. By 1900 it had expanded and shifted outward so that it occupied a position 5 to 15 miles from City Hall. In this band farming continued and old villages remained, but sizeable quantities of land were taken up by the wealthy either for estates or as streets of large suburban homes. Today the visible remains of this band's former position can be seen in the Jamaica Pond section of West Roxbury, the Townsend street-Walnut avenue section of Roxbury highlands, and the Melville avenue-Carruth street and Savin Hill pockets of Dorchester. Because of a subsequent movement of cheaper construction into this outer band of expensive houses the old isolated structures of the wealthy have been obscured. The occasional estates and the patches of businessmen's "cottages" of the period 1840-1880, when Roxbury, West Roxbury, and Dorchester lay beyond good streetcar service, have been torn down or are so hemmed in as to be almost unrecognizable. Nevertheless, if one walks about the three towns looking for houses built before 1880 the image of former times emerges: scattered houses in a rural setting with a few prosperous streets connected to country villages. This was the form of the outer and wealthiest band of suburban building. The men who moved from Boston during these times were the only group

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FIG. 21. Businessman's cottage; house 1846, picture 1878

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FIG. 22. Lucy Stone House; house c. 1860, picture c. 1890

who got the setting that the ideology of the rural ideal demanded. In these years the communities were still small, the land plentiful, and the newcomers wealthy enough to build houses and gardens in a style consonant with their wishes.

For a number of reasons the street railway was extended to such sparsely settled areas. Probably most important was the desire of companies to prevent future competition. Horse-railway lines were inexpensive to lay compared to the steam railroad, and the costs of sending a car out to the farthest villages once an hour, or once every half hour, were also small. Some of these longest lines also had an interurban character. The addition of a few miles of track often meant connection to the lines of an outer industrial city. Thus, the long Neponset line in Dorchester connected with the Quincy trolleys.

Also, many of the founders and investors in street railways were real estate speculators who wanted to attract new customers for their land. Henry M. Whitney first established his West End line to Brookline for the sole purpose of promoting his Beacon street development. The Dorchester land speculators Nathan Carruth and Henry L. Pierce were both pioneer street-railway investors.

Finally, the special nineteenth century habit of Sunday rides to the parks and cemeteries outside the city made many of the most distant runs profitable. Until 1890 the suburban terminals at Grove Hall, Dorchester, and Forest Hills, West Roxbury, were situated on the edge of sparsely settled land. Their biggest day was Sunday, when thousands of Bostonians journeyed out from town to spend the day at the Castle Garden Amusement Park and nearby Franklin Park, or the Forest Hills Cemetery and Arnold Arboretum. With the establishment of metropolitan parks around the whole of Greater Boston in the 1890's, the farthest lines were pushed out to these new parks to take advantage of the Sunday traffic. Such lines encouraged building on metropolitan Boston's outer edges, near the beach sections of South Boston and Revere, and the park sections of Medford, Melrose, Newton, Dorchester, and West Roxbury.<sup>5</sup>

Once linear service was permanently established, the land through which it ran became a potential building area for the central middle class who built single and two-family houses. Their houses were either custom built or put up in small groups by speculative builders. The architecture was imitative of the most expensive fashions of the day, but money was lacking for lot and house sizes which could have made these designs as successful as their models.

There is no single rule of distance that describes the way land was taken up during this stage of transportation service, except to observe that middle class commuters spread themselves over the band of good linear service. Individual families building for themselves seem to have been a little more daring than the speculators: their houses appeared everywhere along the edge of established roads. Speculators, on the other hand, displayed a slight tendency in favor of building where land values were known, near established villages and closer to the intown edge of the linear service zone.

Both commercial house builders and individual families depended upon the prior work of land subdividers who cut up fields and laid out streets. The importance of this primary work cannot be overemphasized. The subdividers, by getting streets accepted as legal ways by the city of Boston, secured the modern water, gas, and sewer services so essential to small middle class developments. The main water and sewer lines, like the streetcar tracks, were run as rapidly as possible out to the principal suburban streets and thereby connected existing houses and villages with the central city system. Spurred by subdividers, the City of Boston completed the work begun by the streetcar companies. Together the streetcar service and the city utilities made every parcel within 200 and 500 yards of the old suburban streets potential building lots for the middle class.<sup>6</sup>

The advantages of the suburb to residents of this second, middle class, band lay largely in its wide choice of home sites, and the factors of incompleteness. The owners of these moderately priced houses could afford only relatively small lots, 4,000 to 6,000 square feet, but they enjoyed for a time the rural setting due to the presence of vacant fields and still-occupied estates that lay about their settlements.

In 1870 the band of new suburban construction for the central middle class lay in the area 2.5 to 3.5 miles from City Hall, although until the Depression of 1873 this group also continued building in the patterns of the walking city. The walking city districts of lower Roxbury and the South End were popular sites for new middle-income housing until 1873; then the central middle class shifted exclusively to suburban building. By 1900 the band of new construction for this income group had shifted from the area 2.5 to 3.5 miles from City Hall to an area 3.5 to 6 miles out.

In the three towns of Roxbury, West Roxbury, and Dorchester, the movement of this band of central middle class construction followed a somewhat irregular course. Its position at any moment depended

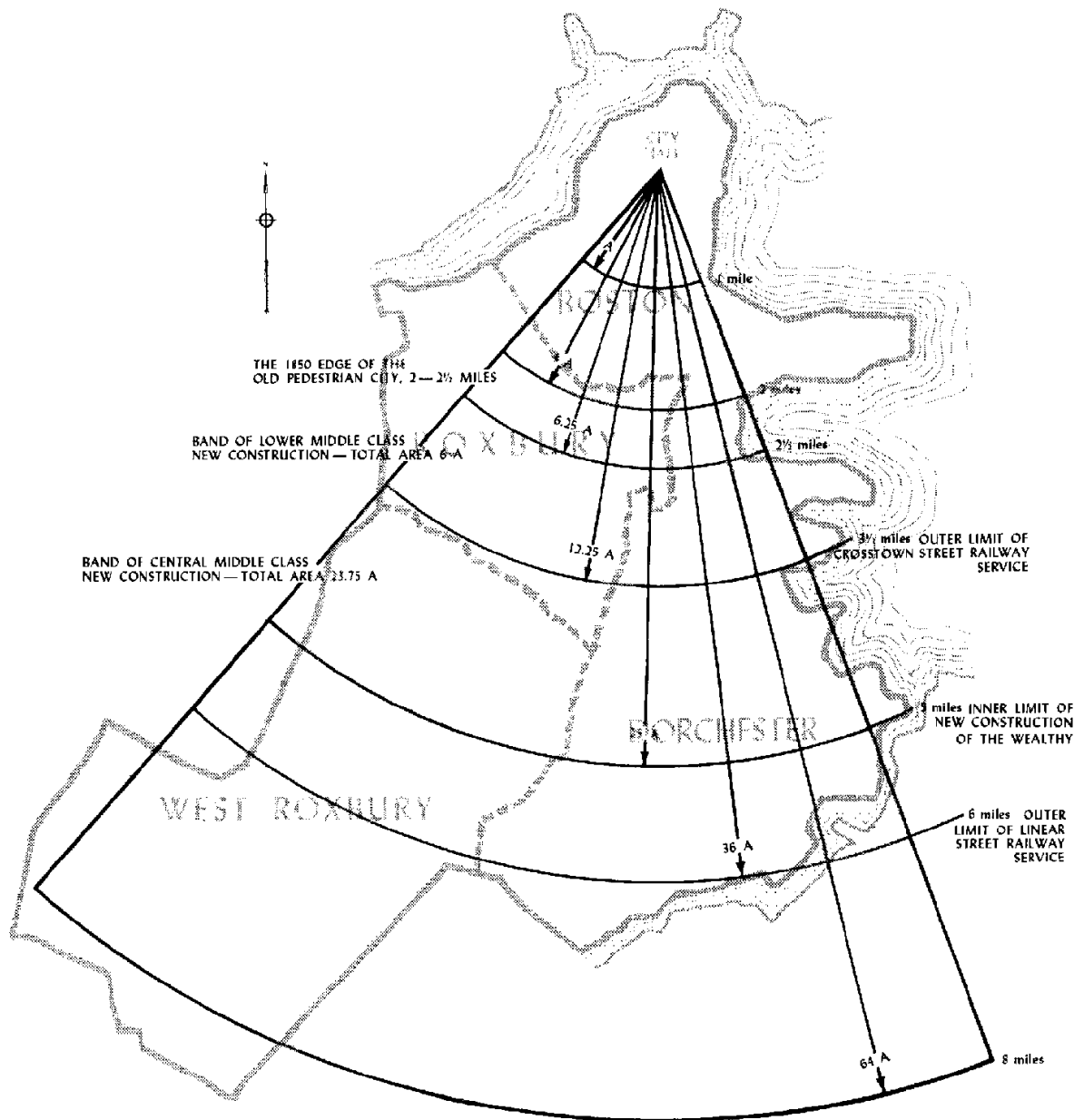


upon the rate at which large parcels were offered for subdivision, and upon the proximity of villages which, as settlements increased, justified the establishment of crosstown service. The lower middle class tended to move into all areas where crosstown service was established and the lower middle class habits of building tended to push the central middle class construction farther out. During the building boom of the 1880's and 1890's the lower middle class began building in sections of outer Roxbury and nearby Dorchester where formerly central middle class construction had predominated.

The inner parts of Dorchester, lying as they did in the path of a ring of villages that stretched from South Boston through Dorchester to Roxbury and Brookline, justified crosstown service sooner than did central Dorchester. Central Dorchester was separated from the village of Jamaica Plain by Franklin Park, and it was part of a ring of widely distant villages that ran through Brookline to Newton and Brighton. Thus, linear service and the central middle class band of building lasted much longer in central Dorchester and in parts of West Roxbury than in the more intown districts. Because linear service lasted here for twenty years before the addition of crosstown service, much of central Dorchester and Jamaica Plain was filled with moderately priced singles and doubles. When crosstown service did come to this area there was little space left for lower middle class construction. The long duration of the linear street railway service was one factor in the relative stability of property values in these sections.

The streetcar network grew in a roughly radial fashion out from the center of Boston. As a result each addition of crosstown circumferential service was more difficult to add than the previous one, since circumferential routes grew so much longer with each mile traveled out along the inbound-outbound radius. The problems of the final limits of crosstown service never materialized in the nineteenth century since such progress as the streetcar made provided a substantial increase in land for all segments of the middle class. The radial arrangement of the street railway, however, allocated very different amounts of land to each group within the upper-income half of metropolitan Boston's population. Map 9, which shows the 1900 class bands of new construction, gives a good approximate view of the relative areas of land open to each class division.

In 1870 the wealthy were building in an enormous tract on the outer edge of the metropolis. The area of land within this 1870 band was fourteen times the area of the old walking city of 1850. By 1900



MAP 9. Approximate class building bands of the three towns in 1900.  $A = 357.4$  acres. It is the area of a 64-degree segment of a circle whose radius is one mile, roughly the distance from City Hall to Dover street. The other radii are marked in miles from Boston's City Hall, and their area is given in terms of  $A$ .

the band of construction for the wealthy had moved to a region 5 to 15 miles from Boston's City Hall. The potential area open to this group was now thirty-two times the old city.

The central middle class had less land at its disposal, but it enjoyed a very substantial increase in its allotment. In 1870 those members of the central middle class who were building in the suburbs occupied a band 2.5 to 3.5 miles from Boston. The outward movement of good linear street railway service and the shift of the central middle class

to a predominant use of suburban styles gave this group twice as much land as it formerly was able to reach.

The lower middle class, because it depended upon crosstown street railway service, was confined to the inner parts of the segment of the metropolitan circle, and hence received much the smallest increment of land. In 1870 new lower middle class construction took place almost entirely within the confines of the old pedestrian city, in the West End, in inner South Boston, in East Boston, on the edges of the South End. By 1900 the expansion of crosstown street railway service had carried the band of lower middle class construction to a position 2.5 to 3.5 miles from City Hall. The gross area of this band was about equal to the area of the old walking city. The new land, however, was better than the old because it had been only partially built upon. Not only were there many open spaces for building but many houses in this region possessed large suburban lots which could be subdivided for further building. As a result, when the street railway brought crosstown service to the inner suburbs in the late 1880's and early 1890's it gave the lower middle class more land than it had ever commanded in the old pedestrian city.

If the streetcar with its further modification of rapid transit had not been succeeded in the 1920's by the automobile, perhaps a shortage of land like that affecting the walking city of the period preceding the Civil War might have developed. As it happened the progressive changes in transportation technology granted Boston's middle class a continuous enlargement of its supply of residential land. This abundance first began with the technological break made by the horsecar a hundred years ago and has continued without ceasing ever since. These successive transportation changes have made possible the shifting of fashions in middle class house lots from the first doubling of the walking city's row-house lots, to the parcels of 3,000–6,000 square feet common in the streetcar suburbs, to the present fashion of quarter- to full-acre, and even larger, lots.

#### THE 1900 SEGREGATION

By 1900 the interaction of the growth of the street railway and class building patterns had produced class-segregated suburbs. As the bands of new construction moved ever outward they impressed upon the land their own special architectural and social patterns.

The band of lower middle class building and good crosstown street

railway service had been roughly equivalent to the boundaries of the old town of Roxbury. Here during the thirty years from 1870 to 1900 cheap singles, doubles, and three-deckers had been jammed onto tiny lots. Within a limited and already partially occupied space of approximately 3 square miles the most numerous segment of the middle class had made its suburban home environment.

From 1870 to 1900 the band of good linear streetcar service had extended 3.5 to 6 miles from the center of the city; it included most of the towns of Dorchester and West Roxbury. Because of the radial arrangement of the streetcar lines this district held about 21 square miles of land and here more generous lot sizes had prevailed. Most commonly this area's new construction had taken the form of single and two-family houses for the central segment of the middle class, but there were also occasional streets and pockets of expensive upper middle class construction.

Of the 23,000 new residential buildings 38 percent had been built upon land of the inner band, 62 percent on the land of the outer zone. By 1900 the narrow confines of Roxbury were almost completely filled while the two towns of Dorchester and West Roxbury were only partially covered by commuters' houses.

Even the primitive statistics of the old state and federal censuses of the 1890's demonstrate the suburban divisions of the middle class. High-priced settlements included so few people that they were generally obscured by the large census areas of the day, but the division of the central and lower segments of the middle class invariably appear. Roxbury, with the exception of the highlands, was the home of lower middle class construction, and it showed a heavy concentration of small rental units, units of less rooms per family, and higher rents per room, than were common in the outer areas of Dorchester and West Roxbury. The higher rents reflected the competition for space in a district of crosstown streetcar service where the most populous segment of the middle class bid up land values. The smaller size of the units indicated the countervailing pressure of families of limited income keeping their total rent bills below those of more prosperous sections.

In a rough way occupational differences also appeared. In Roxbury there was a heavier concentration of those engaged in manufacture, and a smaller percentage of those in professions, than in the other towns.

Finally, the census showed the special suburban process of ethnic

integration and income segregation. Early twentieth century observers called the inner suburbs the “zone of emergence.” Here, first and second generation immigrant families moved from their original ethnic centers and began to take their place in the general life of the American middle class. In the 1870’s and 1880’s the Irish were Roxbury’s largest emergent group. In the 1890’s substantial numbers of Jews and Canadians began leaving the working class quarters of the old city.

Because of this habit of economic rise and outward migration the ethnic composition of suburbs often reflected the central city’s population proportions of about thirty years previous. It took about a generation for a new immigrant group to form a large middle class population, about a generation for Irish, Jews, Canadians, or Germans to have substantial numbers of their national group living in the zones of new suburban construction.

The census also told something about the varying rates of movement of each nationality. The Germans, English, and Canadians—major components of Boston’s old immigration—assimilated most rapidly and had heavier proportions of their numbers in the outer middle class suburbs than did the Irish or the Jews. Nevertheless, all immigrant aggregations, as predominantly groups with little property, began their life in the inner, low rent, sections of the city.<sup>7</sup>

Through the discipline of street railway transportation and the costs of new construction the suburbs displayed on an enlarged physical plan the dynamics of the metropolitan society. With the possibility for a more landed style of building Boston’s middle class families abandoned the old central city and built new neighborhoods in the modern suburban, commuter, manner. In so doing they clustered together by their income capabilities and transportation needs so that the class divisions of the society came to be represented in large areas of similarly priced homes.

The income orientation of the new suburbs meant that the integration of Boston’s immigrants took place roughly by generations. After one generation in the working class districts an immigrant group produced a substantial middle class which then joined other middle class families in the suburbs. The steady flow of new ethnic groups to the suburbs demonstrated the continued openness of the metropolitan society and its ability to provide a middle class competence to a big proportion of its immigrants’ children.