

Imagining Boston: The City as Image and Experience (1986).

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Imagining Boston: The City as Image and Experience (1986)

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Abstract

I want to discuss community and imagery, social division and poetry and prose. In most issues of *NEJPP* I will focus upon the our imaginations and help us shape our sense of local and regional history. However, I want to look back at the tradition of imagery that has shaped the history of Boston. Old ideas of Boston are quickly being buried under layers of cultural renewal. While the suburbs become more urbanized and more clogged, downtown Boston is in the midst of the greatest change since the fire of 1872. The graceful, Florentine Custom House, once a landmark, will soon be overshadowed by the massive International Place. The Bulfinch State House has long been crowded by glass boxes and the new Boston seems aggressive, glitzy, pricey, a consumer's fortress. The old and-new hotel complex called Copley Place. Still, other less looming landmarks as Henry James discovered after he found his home on Ashburton. Robert Lowell discovered amid the rubble of the excavations of Boston Common. Boston's real treasures, finally, are not its buildings but the permanence created in James's *American Scene*, Lowell's "For" and many other works. In this issue of *NEJPP* it would be timely to explore this informing body of imagery. Only by knowing who we have been and how to understand who we are and how each of us is linked to ideas of

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