

Orientation analysis, central Boston. Dec 31 '54:
impressions of orientation clues on going on foot to specified objectives

1. From el. station, Dover & Washington, to State House:

First orientation by direction of el, & thus by tracks returning. Openness to R indicates "bay". Sunlight helps, but an intellectual effort, & N-S orientation of Boston always uncertain.

Going on Wash., simply a matter of following el & traffic. Glimpse Hancock Bldg L @ Davis — also open again to R. Open cut @ RR. shows Hancock L & open trackage R. A pc. of P.O. (? see later) bldg ahead means "bear L." El goes off R while I must follow st.

@ Bury., some doubt, sense Wash. leads in by name, but see sign "Statler" @ end of Bury & this refers to Common (?) to me. Direction feels in betw. [Overheard: "Where wld. this take us?"].

Take Bury & arrive @ confusing sq., but Shawmut St. seems to go in compromise direct., & then see State Hse. @ end, recognizable by style, elevation & trees. Along Shawmut, a back orient. on Hancock. State Hse reveals more of new wing (wh. I might not have recog.) Diagonal sts: a broken crossing of grids here wh. I could neither draw

nor relate.

Then @ Stuart see the gold dome, very impressive. @ Common space opens; dome less striking; there is a queer twist of the Common's direction. Now in the familiar situation of Wash. to R., Common & Tremont — but how did I get on it? Feel as if I am sidling up to Common. Bldg. appears wh. earlier than the P.O. — by bulk & ht. it is greater than State Hse, but not as effective & somewhat anon. Must be @ Scollay, feel the space "down behind." Then the Park St spire, a very dramatic landmark Now in the easy visual set of Common, Tremont wall, State Hse, Pk St Chch. Cross @ West bec. lights w/me. In Common it is easy, since dome shines thru winter trees, walks lead toward, & slope indicates.

2. City Hall to Old North Church:

City Hall dn in confused pocket on side slope. Only clues are sun, slope & gen'l. knowledge (fm. memory of motion already accomplished); &, if look hard, a pc. of the "Scollay Sq Bldg". No guide but just "get out," so go downhill to Wash, & along slope on Wash, knowing this will lead me

out of concentration.

After curve see open ahead, know coming out but not sure where. Old State Hse not visible until right on it, when also glimpse Scollay Sq. Bldg & Custom Hse. Curve opens more & see new expressway & boat masts (?) far ahead. Then arrive & see Fanueil. Now feel must slip L by Fanueil & feel way thru markets to find the end of Hanover.

Thru maze cars. See expressway ahead & know must go under. Follow line of mkts. Custom Hse & Fanueil behind — the Fanueil area a well organized system but oriented to rest of city. @ edge mkts. recog. entrance of Sumner under expressway (wh. gives new dimension & punctuation like a wall). Think Hanover is R of Sumner, but then see green trellis of outdoor dining terrace on L & this fixes location Hanover.

Cross to Hanover, a bad break & very diff. to cross. Looking back: the Cust Hse, the gold principle of Fanueil, & the Scollay Sq Bldg over the expressway wall. Up Hanover is St Stephens, small quiet & distinct @ st. end. Very satisfying, since going directly to it & is @ my scale.

Along Hanover, occas. glimpses R of Atlant. Ave space. Then mall opens L & see broken

spire Old N Ch (I am not sure I cld find it except fm this direct.) Ahead see C.G. ships: "end of peninsula." Thence simply lead by confining walk itself, cut thru hses. Once there, am lost exc. very generally, since in closed sts. [1/2 blk. away, I was asked the way to Old N Ch].

3. Custom House Tower to Hatch Shell —

First orient. by sun, by glimpse Atl Ave space & masts & (by chance) look to Old State Hse. Know must go up there & get across Common. Coming up State, feel that passing thru area I know least — an undigested lump lg. bldgs & confused sts. betw. Wash. & bay. Glimpse Faneuil R. Arrive @ Old State Hse feeling lost — little bldg crushed by surround & of little help. Will keep ahead to try find Common.

Push ahead — back end City Hall no rel. to front. "Scollay Bldg" & the opening of the Sq. Slightly off mark? Bear L up hill. Come up to rear courthse. (In addition is the "Scollay Bldg") & in trap, rd. seems blocked off L. Continue zagging up hill & to L, going only by means of slope & genr. direction until out @ cor. Somerset & Beacon when surprised to see ahead the upper edge Common.

Then out to peak @ State Hse — out in open again. State Hse Common & Hancock. Fm this vantage can see spires Copley Sq. etc., & sense the slope dn. to river. Now feel shld. keep R & get over to Chas. R. Then around bend, & see dn Beacon to Cities Service sign @ Kenmore. First long straight run. See dist. hills over. Suddenly fall into Chas R. framewk.

On way. Common disintegrates more & more into formless space. Feel Beacon Hill on R. @ Chas St. bottom of slope & feel shld turn & break out to River — also know Chas St by name to come out on river. Slope used here. Looking back, tip of Cust Hse in line — not bad! R on Chas, feeling swinging me back out of way, so pressure go L where poss. L on Chestnut & sure enuf, trees & curve new footbridge ahead. Go to it, w/side glimpses Publ. Gard. — surprising so close to Chas Riv. Near end feel pressure river air as well as flatness of land. @ Storrow Dr. view opens out, see must backtrack slightly to go over bridge, but music shell just ahead & R. Drive & bridge cut off what wld otherwise be a commanding view — Saltpepper Bridge, MIT, BU, & hills. Looking back up Chestnut, a rise to Beacon Hill & gold dome over — very fine. @ foot footbridge can for 1st time see contact Common & Riv, w/ Cust Hse in dist. A key pt., wasted on cars.

[Note potential power of Commonwealth → Publ. Gard
→ Pk St Chch → Cust, Hse axis]

4. Front of Statler to Haymkt O:

A confused space dominated by Statler
I know fm exper. that Tremont (? see later) near &
away fm. Statler. Also see glimpse rear Trinity Ch.
this know direct. downtown. Will move away
fm. this & then L to Tremont (?).

Pk Sq itself utterly disintegrated, but Com-
mon seen thru gaps L & go to it. Here I face the
point of a corner, a diff. decision. Feel that L is too
far off, st. to R is better. But will choose catty-corner
path thru Common to State Hse dome. [Was Asked the direct.
to Statler & the bus terminal.]. Once on path, easy again
due to direct. path & flow people. Ahead see it leading
me right into "slot" @ subway stas., Pk St Ch, & Tremont.
Come onto busy Tremont "again", puzzling. Before
it must have been Boylston (note unconsc. equation
of Boylston toward Copley w/Tremont @ Common).

Go up slot, nothing visual exc. sense of
funneling, but know will lead to Scollay. On
arrival there, an exploded space: no indic. of wh.
way to go. But see Old State Hse R & know if bear L

will go to Cambridge St around Beac Hill to Riv. Thus feel shld compromise in direct. for Haymkt. Go diag. across Sq. w/ intent to go dn. Brattle.

But this bends back & not famil. Thus feel along further. The name "Hanover" means leading to R of Haymkt, & also see the expressway. I come to bend swinging L to Riv. & see a steeple assoc. as nr. Mass. Genl. Do decide go dn Sudbury & feel way.

This winds & seems to dead end. Un-famil. grnd for me. Tip Cust Hse over. Then @ Portland see Hot Manger L (assoc. N. Sta), Faneuil R, & expressway ahead. For moment think still a little to R, then see sign & low bunker of subway & know going into Haymkt. Here see N Sta L, expressway & open ahead not well related, & "Wash" coming in R. This last puzzling. Looking back up it see does actually lead back thru a confusing break, prob. Dock Sq.

5. Northern Artery O to S Sta:

A poor place for the ped., w/ cars swirling, the expressway, el, river rd. Mus of Sci nearby, &

openness of river space tho cannot feel it @ all (more like RR yds). In dist, green spire of a Chastown Ch & Bunker Hill Monmt. Otherwise formless here wh. shld sense sweep rivers & harbor.

Feel as if fm here to S Sta is farthest trip of all — thru vast unknown grnd. Uncertain how to begin. Cld start to N Sta & thence around by Atl Ave to S Sta. Decide might be shorter to cut thru. Will plunge in, pick up Cust Hse tower & go fm there.

For quite time, go dn Leverett by remembered direct. only. Top of tall bldg visible: anon design of 1930 modern — but not sure. @ Causeway troubled, feel bearing too far R. Thus dn Lyman @ Staniford, Hot Manger L. & gold dome & distinct (but new) facade rear State Hse R! Surprised. Up to Green trying zigzag. Then see open ahead, looks like Scollay, so bear to it. Come in, see the anon. bldg. is on Sq. but is not court hse. tho somewhat like it (also like P.O.) Now feel in some relation to stuff on R, but not to territory L. Feel must work to L but not too much. See tip Cust Hse @ Sudbury, decide bear L @ end Scollay. Feel I do not know well where

I came from.

St. swings dn to Old State Hse. Now have located Wash shopping & Cust Hse (tho not yet seen). Feel shld go betw. them as best can, despite grain of sts. Thus wk dn Congress, & see pking facil, another anon bldg, & st. going in "my" direct. : Pearl St.

P.O. Sq. cold, anon & lost place, somewhere back of Wash. Keep on Pearl, looking L so as not to overshoot. Nothing recog. R or L, feeling insecure. Cust Hse L rear. Demolition @ High & Purchase, glimpse of ramp L: figure must be end expressway & thus shld turn L soon for S Sta. But demol. forces me ahead one more blk & then find to gt. surprise come out perpendic. to Atl. Ave w/So Sta R 2 blks — where that going parallel to it or @ most angling in. Momentary whirl of framewk. before settled. Atl Ave recog by char. & famil. bldgs, & know space of So Sta to R tho cannot see bldg. Go to it, & when there: famil bldg, ahead see unknown Gothic spire on dist hill — to L little sense of channel wh. shld be there. "Up" & to R, thru a maze, is Wash shopping. If were going back to start, might take diff rte. — up to Wash & thence to Scollay?