

**Streetcar Suburbs, the Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1900; The Zone of Emergence**



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the original "Congregational Way" not only split the clergy but ignited a flame of religious enthusiasm which led to the Great Awakening. And here, with a glimpse into the future, the author ends his account.

To all of this Mr. Morgan addresses himself with the utmost clarity and perception. Although he does not pretend to deal "exhaustively" with the subject, he leaves few aspects untouched. Throughout we are presented with thoughtful original scholarship and with a skillful reinterpretation of a Puritan idea.

NORMAN PETTIT.

*Streetcar Suburbs, The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1900.*

By Sam B. Warner, Jr. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press and the M. I. T. Press. 1962. Pp. xxi, 208. \$6.50.)

*The Zone of Emergence.* By Robert A. Woods and Albert J. Kennedy, abridged and edited with a preface by Sam B. Warner, Jr. (Cambridge: Joint Center for Urban Studies of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University, distributed by the Harvard University Press. 1962. Pp. [vi], 183. \$4.00.)

In Lowell lectures of 1958, published as *Boston A Topographical History*, I described the manner in which a peninsula town almost completely surrounded by water became in the course of three centuries a mainland city. Within the rigid limitation of eight lectures I confined myself to the original peninsula, excluding those mainland settlements, once independent, that were annexed by Boston in the last third of the nineteenth century. In a Harvard doctor's thesis, written under the direction of Oscar Handlin, Sam B. Warner, Jr. has now studied the sprawl of Boston between 1870 and 1900 into three of these mainland annexations—Roxbury, West Roxbury, and Dorchester.

Public transportation made possible the sprawl. Prior to that, any Bostonian who did not own a horse had to live within walking distance of his work. Thus as waves of immigrants swept in, Boston became as congested as a wasp's nest. Professor Handlin estimates that by 1855, fifty thousand Irish—twice the entire population of Boston in 1800—were domiciled in the city, mostly packed into the

North End and Fort Hill, with some expansion into the West End. The outward extension of horsecar service between 1873 and 1877, and the subsequent electrification of these routes, uncorked the bottle.

The creation of the new suburbs was largely unplanned. The recollection of village life, whether in New England or Ireland, made overcrowded city blocks distasteful. The new carlines brought an approximation of the rural ideal within reach. Thus as public transportation made it possible to live within a ten rather than a two-mile radius of the center of Boston, the rush was on. Once street railways opened a hitherto rural area, the city extended water and sewer lines. As building began, the privately owned utilities—gas, electricity, and telephones—followed wherever there was a profit to be made. Normally the newcomers would build as nearly what they wanted as they could pay for. There were no zoning laws, and but few building restrictions. In the three formerly independent towns of Roxbury, West Roxbury, and Dorchester, which Mr. Warner studies as examples of streetcar suburbs, 22,500 houses—of which 6,000 were two-family and 4,000 three-family—were built between 1870 and 1900. These, which housed some 167,000 new suburbanites, were, Mr. Warner finds, put up by 9,000 individual builders. Some were carpenters and real estate speculators, but most were individuals who had to watch their pennies, building for themselves. “No legislation,” he writes, “save the law of nuisance and a few primitive safety codes prevented these 9,000 landowners from doing anything they wanted with their property.” As they came fast and moved individually, they created a jumble of buildings of various styles and types, which make these regions confusing in appearance.

Mr. Warner has studied these three suburbs carefully and thoroughly. He has unraveled many of the complex threads that went into their creation. His maps and statistical tables are clear and informative; his illustrations of typical buildings brilliantly chosen. His book will be required reading for everyone concerned with the social, topographical, and architectural history of Boston in the last third of the nineteenth century. Yet it is hard sledding for the reader, because of his attempt to compress 167,000 individuals into sociological generalities, with copious use of such catchwords as “discipline,” “decisions,” “aspirations,” “economic capabilities” and the like. The illustrations are vivid; the text is

not. Now and then a few individuals shine through the web of abstractions, like the contractor Neil McNeil who in 1887 built himself a gabled elegance on the top of Stanley Street hill in Dorchester with three-deckers hard by for his poorer fellow parishioners of St. Peter's Church. One meets briefly the Roxbury political boss Timothy Connolly, who proved that "what was good enough for him was good enough for his tenants" by living in one of shoddy three-family brick row tenements that he put up in 1894, and the philanthropic Robert Treat Paine who, to benefit the "substantial workingman" built, but did not live in, some mean and cramped brick rows in Sussex Street.

Paine's intentions were of the best. He was the founder of the Associated Charities of Boston. Yet the houses that he built, although fireproof and equipped with full plumbing, were so uninspired that they were abandoned as soon as possible by the solid workmen that they were intended to benefit. They, like *The Zone of Emergence*, which Mr. Warner has admirably edited, offer a sad commentary on the organized "doing of good" in Boston. Robert Archey Woods (1865-1925), the admirable and devoted social worker who, with the foundation of the South End House in 1891 introduced the settlement movement to Boston, published in his thirties two remarkable studies of Boston slums, *The City Wilderness* (1898) dealing with the South End and *American in Process* (1902), which applied the same methods to the North and West Ends. These, as Mr. Warner points out in his introduction, "were oriented toward the problem of making middle-class Americans out of immigrants with the greatest possible dispatch." In these depressed areas "the environment seemed to excuse every failure of individuals to meet the minimum standards of middle-class morality." Woods's ideal was "urban regeneration through the creation of a metropolitan social structure of hundreds of democratic villages." Yet when Woods, with Albert J. Kennedy and other associates of the South End House, investigated the streetcar suburbs, they were disconcerted by what they found.

Most of the people living in the zone of emergence [as they termed these nearby regions] were second and third generation Irish and Canadians, or even Americans of long standing. A high percentage of the residents spoke English; many had been to the public schools, which the settlement house authors were accustomed to viewing as the ideal agent of assimilation. The neighborhoods were reported as temperate, law abiding, church-going, and in

good physical condition. Yet there was no flowering of culture or of civic ideals. Rather, life in the zone of emergence was drab, its politics was sometimes as corrupt as that of the poor immigrant wards, and children were beyond the teaching and control of their parents.

Sadly enough, escape from the slums had not brought about the millennium. "The logical conclusion for *The Zone of Emergence*," Mr. Warner writes, "could only have been a general call for the reform of American life. The South End authors were not prepared to take this final step." So the manuscript was set aside more than forty years ago and forgotten, until it was in 1958 discovered in a coal bin of the South End House. Mr. Warner has now edited and published it in abridged form.

*The Zone of Emergence* should be read with *Streetcar Suburbs* as documents on the failure of the rural ideal. The escape from the city was to bring a new life, yet in the streetcar suburbs as in Reading Gaol "each man kills the thing he loves." What was there before 1870 was destroyed; what came in since has deteriorated. Through the automobile the same process is now being repeated over a far greater radius. A job lot of ranch houses, "Capes" and "splits" displace market vegetables or cows twenty or thirty miles from Boston; people hopefully move to them and only then find that the country they sought has been destroyed. They have less privacy than in a city block, with the added misfortune of a long journey to Boston in hair-raising traffic. To city and suburban slums we now add the rural slums of the future.

WALTER MUIR WHITEHILL.

*Saints and Sectaries: Anne Hutchinson and the Antinomian Controversy in the Massachusetts Bay Colony.* By Emery Battis. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture. 1962. Pp. xv, 379. \$7.50.)

In spite of its prominent position in Puritan history and its compelling grasp on the American imagination, the Antinomian Controversy has not, until now, received a full-scale historical presentation. The chief reason for this is the limited number of sources, which, as Charles Francis Adams most notably showed, may be synthesized incisively in a relatively brief study. *Saints and*