

# The Burrage House

## Study Report



Boston Landmarks Commission  
Environment Department  
City of Boston

Report on the Potential Designation of an Interior Portion of the

**BURRAGE HOUSE**

**314 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts**

as a Landmark under Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975, as amended

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Ellen J. Lipsey, Executive Director                      Date

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_  
John C. Bowman, III, Chairman                              Date

This report is dedicated to the memory of

**Leslie Larson**

and his legacy of service to the cause of historic preservation in Boston.

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Credits:

Photography: Warren Jagger, Grassi Design Group, and David Payne  
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## **1.0 LOCATION OF PROPERTY**

### **1.1 Address:**

314 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts

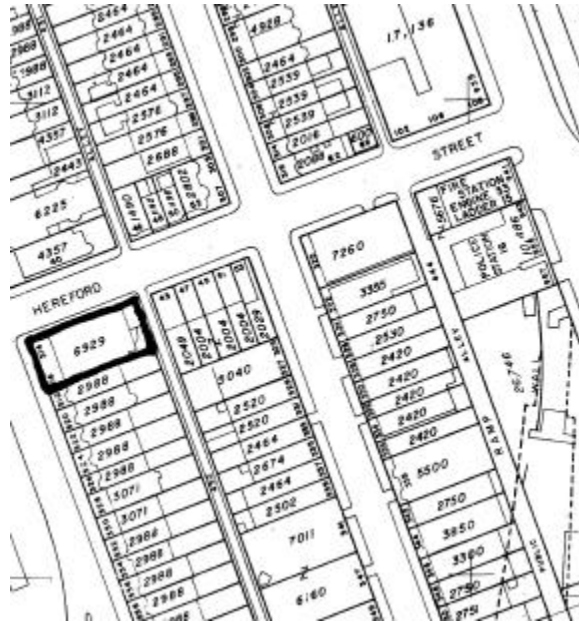
### **Assessor's parcel number:**

Ward 5, Parcel 3038

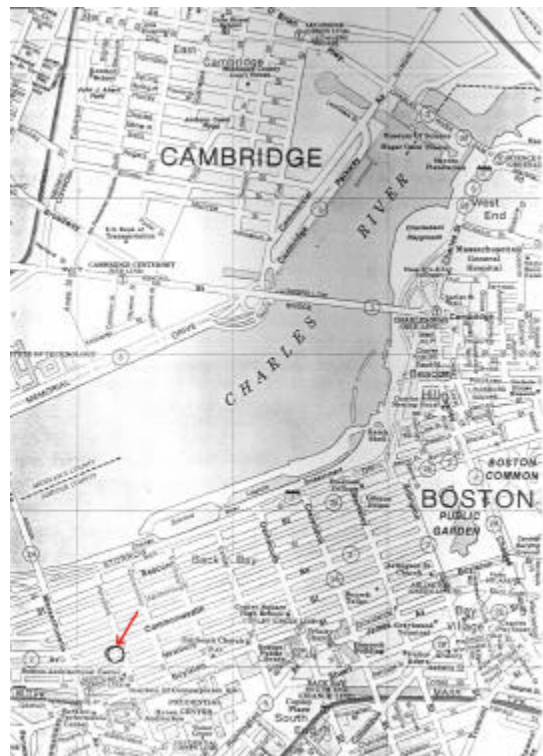
### **1.2 Area in Which Property is Located:**

The Burrage House is located in the Back Bay neighborhood of Boston and is included in the Back Bay Historic District and Back Bay National Register District boundaries. The site, consisting of a total of 6,929 square feet, is located in the northeast portion of the block bounded by Hereford Street, Commonwealth Avenue, Massachusetts Avenue, and Newbury Street.

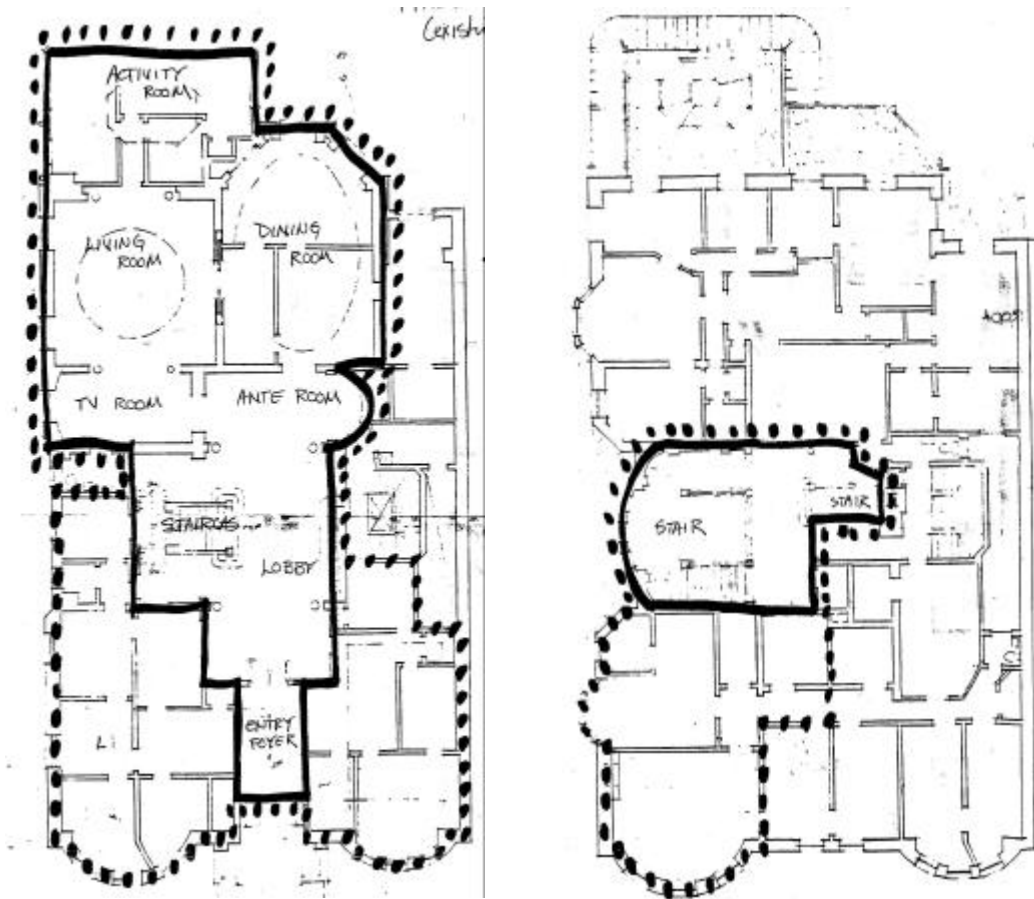
### 1.3 Map Showing Location



Boston Redevelopment Authority topographic map showing the Burray House



The Burray House (circled) in the context of Boston



The originally petitioned areas of the first (left) and second (right) floors are indicated by the dashed lines.

## **2.0 DESCRIPTION**

### **2.1 Type and Use**

The Burrage House was built in 1899 as the winter home for attorney, businessman, and philanthropist Albert C. Burrage and his family. It remained in the Burrage Family until the death of Burrage's widow Alice in 1947. At that time, the house was sold and converted into doctor's offices. The building underwent a subsequent renovation in 1959 to house the Boston Evening Clinic, which relocated from nearby 396 Commonwealth Avenue. In 1990, the building was purchased by Boston Back Bay Board & Care Limited Partnership and, using historic preservation tax credits, was renovated for use as a nursing home and elder care facility. The building is currently being renovated again, this time for use as 5 condominium units.

### **2.2 Physical Description**

“It has dignity and a certain grandiloquent beauty not to be denied, but it is the beauty of the palace, not the home. It is French and Italian, not American; and while true to styles and periods, fails to convince.”

This was the opinion of an anonymous architectural critic, writing in the February, 1905, issue of *The House Beautiful* magazine, on the home of Albert C. Burrage at 314 Commonwealth Avenue in Boston. Though the essay is less negative in tone than the series title, “The Poor Taste of the Rich,” would immediately suggest, it is seldom more than ambivalent in its assessment of the Burrage interiors. This attitude is revealed in the subheading of the piece, which avers that “wealth is not essential to the decoration of a house, and that the homes of many of our richest citizens are furnished in execrable taste”? Making his (or for all we know, her) point plainer still, the unidentified commentator asks, “Who would choose as a life companion a house like [this one], when simplicity, charm, peace and true beauty were to be had for a fragment of the money bestowed on the rich man's home?”

Such a question betrays a fundamental flaw in the writer's logic; namely, the assumption that either the architect of 314 Commonwealth Avenue or his client aspired to any of those homely virtues. For even the most cursory exploration of the exterior or interior of the Burrage house must reveal that complexity was favored above simplicity, magnificence above charm, and stimulation above peace. Moreover, the critic's proposition that a costly outpouring of elaborate design, sumptuous materials and consummate workmanship necessarily precludes the creation of true beauty is not, ultimately, an aesthetic judgment, but a political one. In our own day, in which high quality design, materials and workmanship are



but too seldom encountered, we may well form a different, and more positive, judgment.

Passing from the double-leaf street doors of bronze grillework backed with plate-glass, one enters a vestibule leading to the main hall, which bisects the ground floor of the house. The use of such doors was something of a novelty at the time of construction, eliciting the disdain of novelist Edith Wharton and architect Ogden Codman, Jr., in their influential treatise, *The Decoration of Houses*: “Even the front door . . . has lately had to yield its place, in the more pretentious kind of house, to a wrought-iron gateway lined with plate-glass [p. 48].” Interestingly, Brigham’s surviving original elevation drawing depicts a pair of double-leaf wood paneled doors, one of several discrepancies between the proposed and as-built conditions. In plan, the ground floor is arranged as follows. To the left (overlooking the corner of Commonwealth Avenue and Hereford Street) is the former drawing room, while to the right front, or northwest corner, is the former library. Running parallel to Commonwealth Avenue, the main stair, the treads, risers and banisters of which are entirely of marble, rises from the approximate midpoint of the hall’s depth. The stair is symmetrical in its configuration with double returns of 10 risers each ascending from the landing (at the level of the 18th riser), which is lighted by an oriel with stained-glass windows overlooking Hereford Street. Opposite the foot of the stair is a marble fireplace, flanked by paired semi-octagonal display cabinets of leaded glass, treated as oriels projecting from the wall. To either side of these is a pair of apsidal alcoves expressed in carved and paneled mahogany. Beyond the stair and to the left, an anteroom opens to the parlor (which is oriented parallel to Hereford Street). The conservatory occupies the left rear (southeast) corner of the house and opens off the parlor, overlooking Hereford Street and Public Alley 430. Set within an elliptically arched alcove at the rear of the hall, a pair of double-leaf doors open in to the dining room, which also communicates directly with the parlor and conservatory by means of pocket doors. The lateral dimensions of each space are given in its description below; with the exceptions of the stairwell volume and the lantern of the conservatory skylight, all ground-floor ceiling heights are 14 feet.

Ten feet wide (parallel to Commonwealth Avenue) and fifteen feet deep, the vestibule is intended as a transition between the building’s exterior elevations and its interior spaces. Thus the masonry expression of the exterior door surround is carried into the vestibule to a dimension equivalent to the width of each double-leaf door. A small stained-glass window in the right-hand reveal lights an alcove in the former library; this opening is balanced by a discreet door on the left which provided outlet from a stairwell (since demolished) leading directly to the principal bedroom on the floor above. Beyond this point, the walls are of heavily carved and highly figured mahogany paneling above a dado of green-veined marble rising to the height of the eight-riser entry stair that spans the full width of the vestibule. Each of the vestibule’s side walls is configured as a pair of round-arched panels divided by a pair of pilasters, which break the entablature and are

supported by marble plinth blocks. Similar, engaged, pilasters appear at the vestibule's corners. Each pilaster is topped with alternating male and female terms (a term is a pilaster, tapering to a narrow base and supporting a head or bust of a mythological, historical or grotesque figure above or in lieu of a capital); these are so arranged that those of the side walls face their counterparts of the opposite sex. The veneer panels of the side wall pilasters are interrupted at the midpoint of their height by foliate-carved roundels; similar half roundels appear at the head and base of the pilaster shafts. Mounted low on each panel is a shallow shelf, semi-elliptical in plan and supported by a console, whose surface plane aligns with the base of the central pilaster roundel; above each arch is a blank oval cartouche flanked by *putti* and foliate carving filling the deep spandrel below the cornice. These carved motifs answer a broad oval cartouche, set within an eared panel, above the outer doors. Its frame heavily carved with scrolls and guilloches and flanked by addorsed mermaids bearing urns above disporting *putti*, the cartouche is lettered to read "WELCOME YE COMING / SPEED YE PARTING GUEST," stacked, as indicated, on two lines of copy radiating to reflect the oval outline of the cartouche. A beribboned trident, a device of Neptune relating to the mermaids, appears between the lines, functioning as an ampersand. Centered at the crest of the plaque is a low, lobular urn while at its base a winged grotesque head appears. The vestibule ceiling is expressed as a segmental groin vault whose diagonal ribs, rising from the engaged corner pilasters, are treated as narrow panels, producing an octagonal effect. All ceiling surfaces are of plaster grained in imitation of the mahogany below. The pendant light fixture that hangs from the crossing of the ceiling ribs is not original, but a hexagonal brass and glass fixture of recent vintage. Directly opposite the outer or street doors, a pair of double-leaf mahogany doors similar in detail to the side wall panels but fitted with arched panels of glazing rather than the mahogany veneers of the side walls, lead into the inner or stair hall.

Little original fabric survives of the former **drawing room**, overlooking the intersection of Commonwealth Avenue and Hereford Street. Measuring 23 x 18 feet, the room's principal feature is the nine-foot-deep radius bay, lighted by three curved sash windows below decorative stained-glass windows, at its north elevation. A single window lights the east elevation. The room's original ceiling partially survives; areas of loss reveal the building's terra-cotta tile construction. Adamesque in feeling (making it more than 200 years later in inspiration than the exterior of the house), its central motif is an elongated ellipse, radiating about a rosette, enclosed by a rectangle defined by bands of laurel and beading, raised on a cove with vertical reeds of banded husks. Now soiled to a dirty ochre, the original ceiling may have been a straw yellow, enriched with pink and blue along its moldings of banded laurel. All colors have darkened with age and damage incurred through the construction of later partitions and suspended ceilings (since removed), introduced to subdivide the room during its occupancy by the Boston Evening Clinic. The ceiling of the bay is lower in plane than that of the main room, being set at the spring line of the cove, but is related in its detailing. Largely

intact, it is the only portion of the room's original ceiling that the present developers intend to retain in an exposed condition. The remainder of the ceiling is to be encapsulated. It is not known whether this room originally included a fireplace. It would have been somewhat unusual for a house of such lavishness to omit a fireplace in a principal room. Although a flue does exist on the east wall, there is no physical evidence along the interior wall or in the floor to suggest that a firebox or hearth has been removed, nor does the fenestration pattern readily admit the possibility.

Like the drawing room, the **library**'s surviving historic fabric is limited to its fenestration and ceiling. The three windows of its alcoved bay, set closer together than those of the drawing room, befitting the library's smaller dimensions (19 x 14 ft.) are set below decorative transoms of mottled stained glass. One is dedicated to astronomy, another to sculpture, while the third proclaims, "*Liber veritas*" (long live truth). The high dado surviving within the bay presumably existed throughout the room originally. It is also probable that the dado's height, approximately 6 ft. above the floor, was intended to align with the cornice level of bookcases, either built-in or free-standing, as would have been typical of late nineteenth-century library decoration.

The ceiling is divided into narrow rectangular coffers whose ribs run east-west (parallel to Commonwealth Avenue), raised on a vaulted cove. The fields of the rectangular coffers are painted with conventionalized scrolls in shades of gold and brown against an olive ground; the browns relate to the coloration of the ribs of the coffers and vaults as well as the cornice. Subdivided vertically by minor ribs, the vaults' pendentives are also painted with dense scrolls in browns and golds. Although the material of the larger members of the coffers has not been ascertained and may well be timber of some kind, it is evident that the rib vaults and cornice have been painted and grained to suggest a dark wood, possibly walnut or bog oak. Faux-painting of this kind also appears in the vestibule ceiling. Each vault opens to a lunette whose tympanum contains foliate scrollwork surrounding a tablet surmounted by a pair of *putti* holding aloft a laurel wreath. Each tablet is lettered with the name of a literary or historical figure; interestingly, given the exclusively European derivation of the architecture and decoration, these individuals are all American (e.g., Parkman, Lowell, Webster). More predictably, as one would expect during this era, all of the luminaries are white males. At the approximate midpoint of the room's west, or party wall, elevation the vaults and cornice project forward, presumably to accommodate a chimney breast, since removed. The decoration of the room and the depth of the projection suggest that the former fireplace may have featured a hooded overmantel, typical of the late Medieval/early Renaissance period.

The parlor or living room is approached in processional fashion from an **anteroom** opening off the hall. An apsidal recess on axis to the double-leaf doors from the hall is lighted by a single window on the east wall, overlooking Hereford

Street. The anteroom's north wall (parallel and nearest to Commonwealth Avenue) is organized symmetrically with two door openings flanking a panel of *boiserie*. The right door is false, fitted with a single sheet of mirrored glazing, beveled at its edges, while the right-hand opening is fitted with a multi-paneled door of stained mahogany which connected originally to the drawing room at the left front corner of the house. The use of a single sheet of mirror rather than either a multi-light mirror or sham door seems somewhat surprising in relation to the paneled operable door. At the same time, the stained mahogany finish of this door and its more robust and notably un-French design, comparable to the decoration of the entry hall or dining room, may well suggest that it has been reused from elsewhere in the house. Although the dimensions have not been compared, the anteroom door is certainly similar if not identical in design to extant and presumably original doors in the stair hall. Stained doors are proverbially incongruous in French-inspired rooms; as Edith Wharton and Ogden Codman, Jr., noted in *The Decoration of Houses*, "in France it would not be easy to find an unpainted door [The Decoration of Houses, page 58]." A paneled and painted door relating to the *boiseries* would have been more authentic to historic French models.

The decoration of the anteroom, which is 9 ft., 8 in. x 20 ft., is consistent with that of the larger (22-ft.-square) **living room**, to which it opens through a screen of untapered, stop-fluted Ionic columns in antis, raised on paneled plinths, to the right or south as one proceeds into the space from the hall. Though conceived as a formal French salon, a model favored for the parlors and drawing rooms of important American houses since the middle of the nineteenth century, the success of the living room's décor is diminished by its anachronistic quality. Not only is it a room of eighteenth-century inspiration in a house whose exterior and other major rooms are derived chiefly from sixteenth-century Renaissance precedents, its commingling of Louis XV and Louis XVI motifs produces an unconvincing effect, suggesting it may have been a result of compromise. It is tantalizing to speculate whether this may have been between Mr. Brigham and Mr. Burrage, or between Mr. Burrage and Mrs. Burrage. The room's rather severely neoclassical Ionic order, indicated in both the screen of freestanding columns and the companion pilasters that punctuate the walls, is uneasily overlaid with heavily scrolled Rococo-inspired *boiseries* and a coved ceiling organized into a pattern of low-relief arabesques enclosing a central circle.

Scattered at regular intervals about the room, *putti* (detailed so individually and sentimentally as to suggest Valentine cupids) backed with cartouches perch restlessly on the cornice that divides the comparatively strict entablature of the walls from the more fancifully curvilinear geometry of the ceiling. A fireplace set between Ionic pilasters is centered on the east wall, flanked by a pair of tall sash windows looking onto Hereford Street. Louis XVI in style, the deep fireplace mantel is of white marble with convex-cornered, stop-fluted jambs enclosing a coved firebox opening of ormolu densely decorated with low-relief *rinceaux*. A

*trumeau* mirror with gilt frame fills the space from the mantel to the entablature. Because the Louis XV elements on the east elevation are limited to the cartouche panels on the pilaster plinths, the more architectonic Louis XVI style appears virtually undiluted on the fireplace wall. Although it is thus the most successful of the elevations compositionally, its lack of relationship to the room's other walls serves to undermine further the integration of the decorative scheme. Flanked by matching panels of *boiserie*, a pair of tall pocket doors occupies the living room's opposite, west, wall, on axis with the fireplace. Much as the parlor's east and west elevations reflect one another, the south wall's freestanding columns in antis, framing a wide opening into the conservatory, echo the column screen of the north wall, which looks back into the anteroom.

The room's skirting boards, columns, pilasters and entablatures are now painted a light pistachio green, while the fields of the wall and ceiling panels are painted a light putty; projecting elements of the *boiseries* are picked out in a darker putty. Apparently original, the circular center of the ceiling is painted to suggest a cloud-studded sky. The original paint treatment of the walls is unknown, however white enriched with gilding would have been more typical for a French salon in a house of such pretensions. Nevertheless, until such time as seriation studies might be undertaken the original scheme cannot be ascertained. The fact that there appear to be few coats of paint may suggest that the existing treatment is consistent with the original; the detail certainly remains very crisp as a result. The floor, curiously, is not *parquet de Versailles*, again as one might expect in such a room, but plain strip oak. The more convincingly detailed Louis XVI ballroom at the Walter Baylies house at 5 Commonwealth Avenue (now operated as the Boston Center for Adult Education), completed to the designs of Parker, Thomas & Rice in 1912, features both a white-and-gold paint scheme and *parquet de Versailles* flooring. The relatively humble floor material and design may suggest, however, that the original paint scheme was comparably simple (whereas gilded *boiseries* would have virtually presupposed the use of more costly and elaborate parquet floors).

The **conservatory** is the simplest of the ground-floor rooms. Its dominant feature is its ceiling, open to the roof, which is topped with a lantern of octagonal plan, both with convex glazing set within a cast-iron framework. The major ribs of the lower roof are supported by pilasters that break the room's entablature. The diagonal ribs of the lantern's upper stage are detailed with a pierced running scroll, lightening their visual effect. Three bays across its south elevation (parallel to the alley) and two bays deep (parallel to Hereford Street), the glazing of the walls was replaced at an unknown date with blind panels, stuccoed on the exterior. Framed-down one-over-one light sash windows have been introduced into all but the curved corner bays. While consistently aligned in relation to each other, the head and sill conditions of these later windows do not relate to the room's entablature or dado elements. The glazing of the bays is to be restored to Brigham's original design, evident in surviving exterior elevation drawings. On

the north wall, a radius entablature thrusts into the room, supported by the columns and pilasters of the broad doorway opening back into the living room. Above and to either side of this feature, the walls are clad from floor to ceiling with coral, on which Burrage, a noted amateur horticulturist, raised orchids. The conservatory floor is not original, but unglazed terra-cotta tile of recent vintage, laid in a simple grid pattern, carried up the base of the walls for one course as a skirting.

Closing the axis of the stair hall is the approach to the **dining room**, which also communicates directly with both the conservatory and the living room. Similar in feeling to the hall in terms of its stylistic origins and materials vocabulary, the dining room is elliptical in plan, measuring approximately 30 feet long (on the north-south axis) and 19 feet wide. Its location at the rear of the first-floor accords with a planning preference long established in Boston, from which little deviation appears to have been exercised in Back Bay houses. The room is lighted by two windows of stained and painted glass, joined by a leaded-clear glass pocket door opening into the conservatory at the left. The stained-glass windows are identical, featuring within an outer border of conventionalized foliate banding paired terms supporting an entablature surmounted by a broken-scroll pediment above an ear-paneled base hung with a swag set within a pair of downward-tapering plinths, all in gold. The area between the terms is filled with geometric diaperwork, also in gold. The pocket doors to the conservatory share the outer foliate border and gold diaperwork overlay, but are in clear, rather than translucent glazing.

The limited window area and its expression in stained, rather than clear, glazing probably reflects a number of practical and visual considerations. The restricted natural light may indicate that the room was reserved for the service of the evening meal, with breakfast and lunch served elsewhere (possibly in the conservatory, to which the dumbwaiter communicating with the basement kitchen would have been conveniently located). Stained glass windows frequently appear in the alley-facing rooms of Back Bay houses, as a means of admitting light while excluding an unattractive prospect. The block west of Hereford Street between Commonwealth Avenue and Newbury Street having been built up as commercial and private stables (Burrage's own survives, in altered form, at 323-327 Newbury), the dining room windows were at risk for offensive odors as well.

The walls of the dining room are fully paneled, either in cherry or mahogany less richly figured than that used in the hall. The elevations are organized by pairs of unfluted pilasters whose capital and plinth carvings are similar, being generally of a Composite order, but of which no two are exactly alike. A rich frieze backs the capitals, supporting a simple cornice from which the coved ceiling springs directly, without an entablature. The paired pilasters support in turn pairs of mammalian-headed gryphons bearing blank armorial shields, above which paired ribs of gilt-plaster strapwork divide the cove into panels of further gilt plasterwork, in which large-scale scrolls and cartouches appear above pairs of

adorned avian-headed gryphons. Above the cove, the flat plane of the upper ceiling is configured as a long oval, painted and gilded to suggest a clouded sky at sunset, enclosed by a broad fillet about which pendant lighting fixtures, possibly original, radiate at intervals, centered on the pilasters. A large crystal chandelier of uncertain date hangs from a central rosette within the oval. Several gilt-bronze Rococo wall sconces exist in this room. As these fixtures, which trace their inspiration to the first half of the eighteenth century, are more than a century later in style than the room itself, it is believed that they originally existed in another room. As defined by the paired pilasters the walls are arranged in three tiers of panels to suggest the base, shaft and capital of a classical order. Centered on the long elevation to the west (parallel to the party wall), a fireplace once existed, of which only the firebox survives; its material and design are unknown. Following the removal of the fireplace mantel, the paneling on this elevation has been pieced and reassembled in a manner difficult to reconstruct and additional panels of lesser quality introduced to complete the scheme. Heavily paneled walls in cabinet-grade woods were favored in Boston dining rooms. Such rooms typically incorporated a built-in sideboard on the wall opposite the fireplace, a possibility precluded here by the existence of the pocket doors connecting to the living room. The lack of a sideboard, compounded by the loss of the fireplace mantel, has left the walls of the room looking somewhat under-decorated in relation to the richness of its ceiling. Although the missing mantel (and, presumably, overmantel) may have been of different visual character, the style of the room's surviving fabric suggests the heavy Italian influence of the first wave of English neoclassicism as introduced by Inigo Jones in the early seventeenth century.

The **great hall** is the most palatial of the Burrage interiors, being both the largest, at 40 by 16 feet, and the richest in both material and detail. Similar to, though smaller in size than, the 63 x 18-ft great hall of the Ames-Webster house at 306 Dartmouth Street (as redesigned by John Hubbard Sturgis and Charles Brigham in 1882), the Burrage great hall also recalls that of McKim, Mead & White's Boston Public Library, completed in 1895. Both are dominated by symmetrical, double-return stairs of tawny yellow Siena marble, however that of the Burrage house, in contrast to the Italian origins of the Public Library, reflects the lingering medieval character of the Northern European Renaissance. The space is arranged as a central atrium, with the staircase ascending toward the east wall balanced by the fireplace on the west defining the axis. Three elliptical arches, one of marble and two of mahogany, open off this focal area. The wood arches, which run transverse to the depth of the hall (or parallel with Commonwealth Avenue) are supported by unfluted Corinthian columns, raised on plinths each face of which is paneled in a vertical diamond, framed by coordinating pilasters. Leading back to the front entrance, a pair of double-leaf doors framed by pilasters matching those of the vestibule but raised on the diamond-paneled plinths common to the columns and pilasters of the hallway proper, is centered on the north wall. The doors are flanked by broad panels above the dado; below that line, ornamental grilles,

presumably of polished bronze and worked in a diapered quatrefoil pattern, cover the outlets for heating registers. The skirting is black marble.

On the west wall, the central feature is the marble fireplace with its high (approximately 6-ft.) mantel shelf, and frieze carved with *putti* and scrollwork, supported by Corinthian pilasters. A slab of honeyed marble, unornamented but for its rich veining and a pair of torch-like, four-light bronze sconces, extends from above the mantel shelf to the base of the entablature, which is of mahogany. To each side of the fireplace is a semi-octagonal niche of paneled mahogany from which, mounted on consoles of winged *putti* springing from the dado rail, project display cabinets, also semi-octagonal in plan, below a gadrooned frieze. Each cabinet is fitted with doors of beveled and leaded glazing, a single glass shelf, and backed with mirror to reflect the objects to be displayed within. It is believed that Burrage used these cabinets to display choice specimens from his collection of gems and minerals. Supported on unfluted Corinthian colonettes to either side of each cabinet is a double arch spanning the width of the semi-octagonal niche. From the center point of each arch hang addorsed S-scrolls of carved mahogany. Farther to either side, beyond the aforementioned groupings of plinth-mounted columns and pilasters, lie two alcoves, apsidal in plan. Each alcove features a decorative niche, whose head is a shell-carved hemisphere set within an outer arch hung with addorsed S-scrolls. Below each niche is a dado filled with a decorative bronze heating-register grille, matching those of the north wall in overall design but concave-curved in plane to follow the plan of the alcove. To the right within the far alcove (that nearer the rear of the house) and to the left within the near alcove (that closer to Commonwealth Avenue), is a door leading to a service core (originally containing a steel service stair, pantries and storage areas) running behind the fireplace wall along the building's west or party-wall elevation.

The field of the hall floor is paved in mosaic tile of variegated light gray, laid in a wavy grid, while its borders are laid in more richly colored and patterned mosaic, with three principal decorative bands in ochre, salmon and sage green separating the flooring of the main hall from that of the alcoves. Set just within these bands is a slab of highly figured red marble, beyond which the remainder of the alcove floor is set with Pompeian-red mosaic worked with a bow-knot motif in cream, framed by an outer border of banded laurel in green and black mosaic. Minus the red-fielded semicircles and bow-knots, a similar flooring pattern exists in the alcoves to either side of the main stair at the east wall, opposite.

The great hall's frieze is executed in plaster as a series of vertical oval portrait masks, set within scrolled cartouches hung with wreaths and ribbons supported by male and female figures in sixteenth-century court dress, all gilded against a ground of mottled brown. The masks depict a variety of historic and literary figures, but apparently were chosen somewhat indiscriminately, as duplicates exist among the group of Pliny, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, and Cervantes. Although one Asian, Confucius, is included, none of the portraits memorializes a female,



although several historical figures of the period (Elizabeth I, Mary Stuart, Catherine de Medicis and Isabella of Spain among them) would have been appropriate. The hall ceiling is coffered in intersecting octagons defined by deep mahogany ribs and filled with ornamental scrolls and cartouches in gilded plaster.

Beyond a marble segmental arch the spring line of which aligns with the base of the column and pilaster capitals enframing the apsidal alcoves, rises a symmetrical, double-return marble stair. Centered on the heavily molded and carved lip of the arch a pair of *putti* flank a cartouche of heart-shaped contours. To either side of the stair are paired alcoves, walled in richly veined marble coursing, on each elevation of which is centered an arched door opening with carved surround and console keystone. Although some of these openings may originally have been sham doors, some probably led to closets or service spaces; it is evident that a pair of doors, one on each face of the lower stair run's cheek walls, once opened to a passage to a basement stair. A stained-glass window at the landing of the basement stair was indirectly illuminated by a basement window at the Hereford Street elevation. The floor of the alcoves is laid in mosaic tile worked in diapered vines of buff against a Pompeian-red ground.

The stair to the second floor rises from west to east between paired newels of clustered pilasters, also of marble, at the level of the third tread (the first and second treads cascading around the cheek walls of the stair). The newels support bronze lighting fixtures in the form of *putti* bearing aloft electrified candle branches expressed as sprays of flowers springing from a pot. The banister of the closed-stringer stair is richly carved in the round with strapwork motifs incorporating gryphons, rams' heads and *putti* amid panels of scrolls separated by baluster elements carved to suggest turning. These baluster carvings also appear in the newels, where they separate the clustered pilasters, and are incorporated in the exterior detailing as well. A landing with rounded corners occurs at the level of the eighteenth riser; above that point, paired upper runs of box treads return, running east to west, to complete the ascent to the second floor. Above a high dado of marble that rises to the level of the second floor, the landing is lighted by an oriel, whose plan describes a shallow radius, with three flattened-arch windows. A pair of diminutive bronze sconces is mounted to the pair of Corinthian pilasters framing the oriel. Each of the oriel window depicts the stern of a sixteenth-century galleon in full sail flying the colors of (from left to right) England, Spain and France in stained and painted glass set on a blue sea within an architectural frame of gold in lead comes below a transom emblazoned with the respective country's coat of arms. Above the landing, whose floor is mosaic tile similar to that found in the lower hall, hangs a heavy chandelier of bronze, while at the newels of the landing stand female and male marble figures in sixteenth-century court dress. The male, at the right, wears a soft cap and flowing cape, and stares resolutely ahead while the mantilla-clad female on the opposite newel casts him a coquettish glance. It has been suggested, presumably on account of the female's Spanish headdress, that these figures may represent Ferdinand and

Isabella of Spain. As they appear to resemble no known portraits of those rulers and seem too conventionalized to represent historical figures of any kind, this suggestion is perhaps best regarded as a romantic notion.

On the walls of the stair cage above the second floor level, a blind balustrade continues the banister detailing, surmounted by marble coursing set within Corinthian pilasters matching the screen of paired Corinthian columns set atop the newels of the second floor landing. A marble balustrade, solid at its sides but carved in the round throughout its central section, spans the upper landing between the column-mounted newels. The columns and pilasters support a marble entablature enclosing wood coffers, which continue beyond the column screen into the second-floor great hall space. Set in a mahogany-paneled alcove to the left, within a pair of engaged, fluted Corinthian columns also of mahogany, a stair with base newel of clustered pilasters, closed stringers and banister of widely spaced colonettes rises to the third floor. The remainder of the second-floor hallway is taken up by mahogany doors and door surrounds arranged in an orderly and formally balanced, but asymmetrical composition.

### 2.3 Photographs



The Burrage House, at the corner of Commonwealth Avenue and Hereford Street (photo by Warren Jagger)



Chenonceaux, the Loire Valley chateau that inspired the Burrage House



Entry vestibule of the Burrage House



Vestibule plaque welcoming guests and wishing departing guests well



Library ceiling



Ceiling of the drawing room



Anteroom

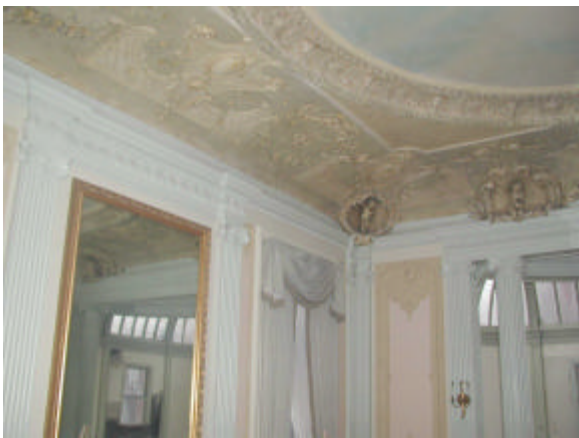




Living room, with views into the conservatory (left) and dining room



Living room



Living room walls and ceiling



Fireplace in the living room



Ceiling of the conservatory

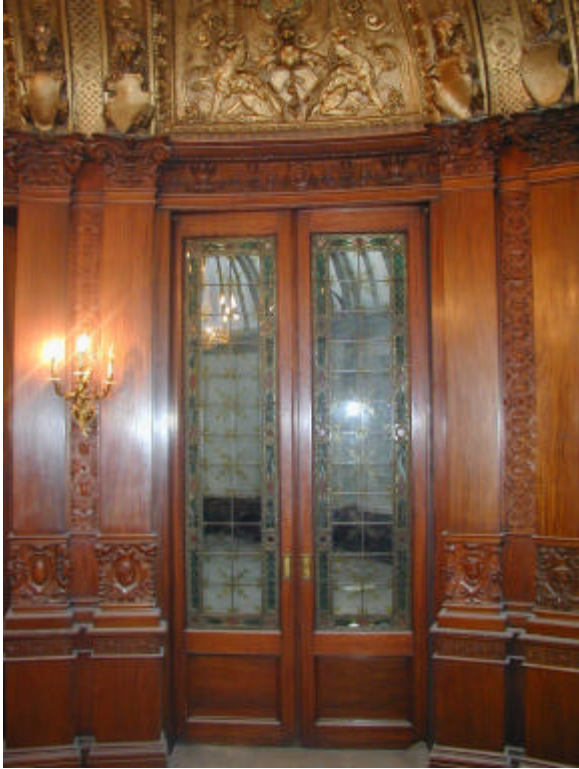


Coral used for growing orchids in the conservatory

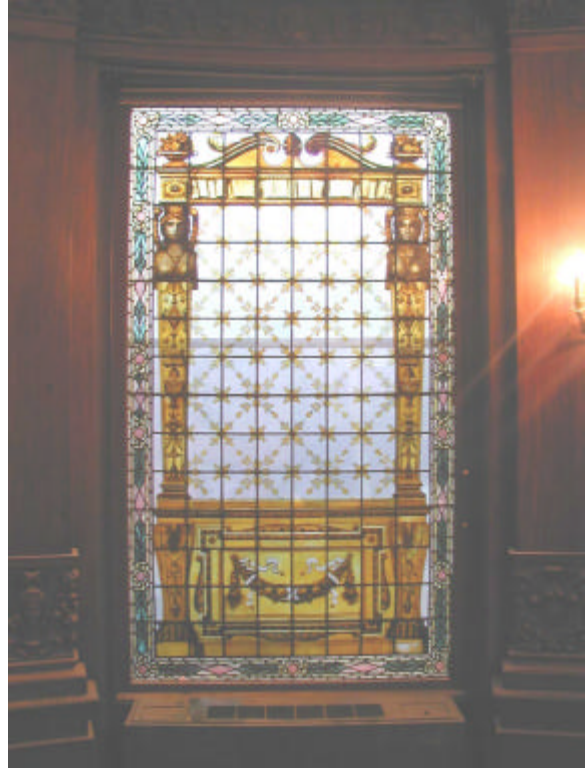


Dining room, looking into the conservatory (left)





Pocket doors in the dining room leading to the conservatory



Stained glass window in the dining room



Panel detail from the dining room

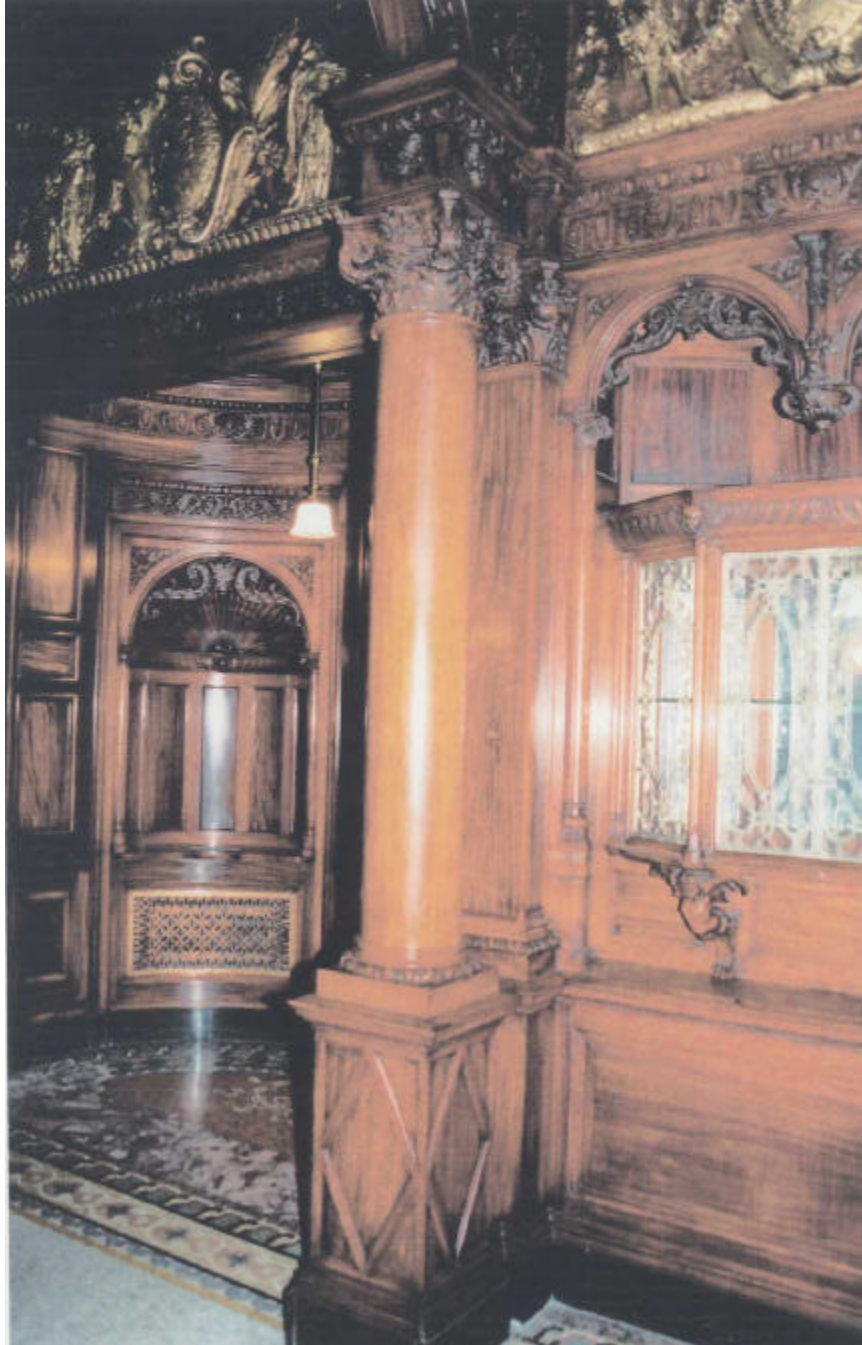




Great Hall, looking towards the main entrance



Great Hall fireplace



Detail of Great Hall showing an apse and the leaded glass display cases





Apse detail in the Great Hall



Niche detail in the Great Hall



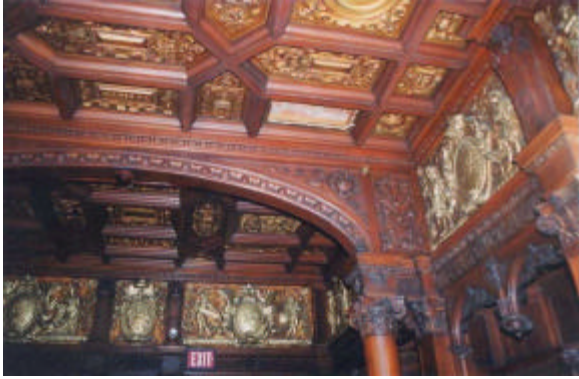
Floor detail of apse in Great Hall



Wood and column detail of apse in Great Hall



Wood details in Great Hall



Great Hall ceiling details

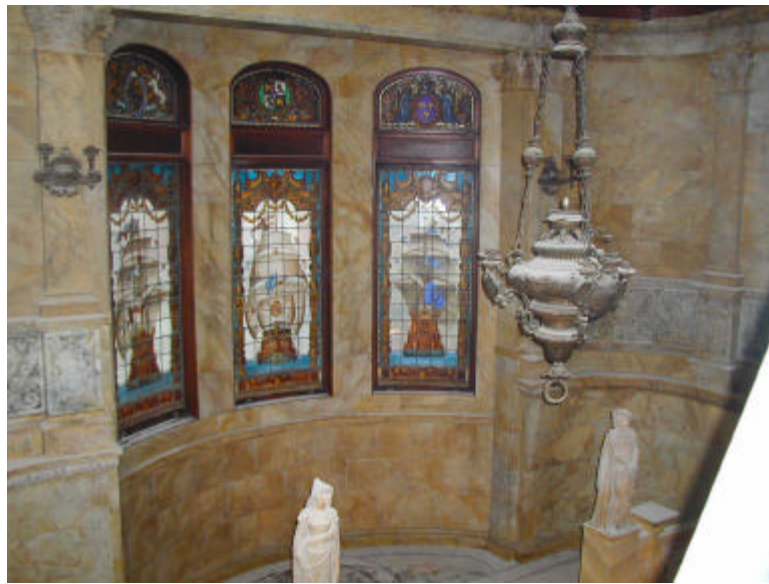


View up the grand stair towards the three stained glass windows on the landing





Details of the grand staircase



Stained glass windows on the first floor landing, from the second floor



Grand stair to second floor, from first floor landing



Second floor landing



Staircase to third floor

### **3.0 SIGNIFICANCE**

#### **3.1 Historic Significance**

The Burrage House was built in 1899 as the winter residence for Albert C. Burrage and his family. The building is located in the Back Bay section of Boston, which was the result of an ambitious plan by municipal and state authorities and private investors to fill in the Back Bay and construct a new district of uniform residential and civic buildings in the 1850s.

The plan for the Back Bay, which has been credited to Arthur Gilman, was the result of several factors, including the facts that the population of Boston was rapidly expanding, the city was running out of buildable space, and the Back Bay itself had become a public health hazard. By the 1850s, Boston was experiencing a wave of wealth and optimism and the filling of the Back Bay, which was actually executed over several decades, was an attempt to make Boston a world-class city, derived from currently fashionable French models. Under the direction of Emperor Napoleon III, much of Paris was then being redeveloped along monumental lines. A not too distant reflection of this imperial grandeur can be seen in the rationalism and restraint of the Back Bay plan.

The new neighborhood of the city was to be governed by strict building restrictions, which would insure a stately and dignified appearance for the area. The Back Bay was developed block by block and the rowhouses that were built gave the district a coherent appearance as well, thanks to such prescient controls as uniform setbacks, minimum cornice heights and mandatory masonry construction. A significant portion of the land was set aside for streets and parks, and this is the only section of Boston proper that exhibits a formal grid street pattern. The cross streets are organized alphabetically, from Arlington Street bordering on the Public Garden, to Hereford Street one block from Massachusetts Avenue. Commonwealth Avenue, the spine of the district, is designed as a grand boulevard in the Parisian style.

Both the interior and the exterior of the Burrage House represent the culmination of the ambition, wealth and optimism that led to the new development of the Back Bay. Albert Burrage hoped that the design of his palatial new home would create a new standard for residential design on Commonwealth Avenue. Unfortunately, by the 1890s, tastes had become more conservative than they had been when the Back Bay project began and his house stood alone then, as it does now, in its extravagance.

Albert Burrage had a remarkable impact on the city of Boston as a businessman, lawyer and philanthropist. He was born in 1859 in Ashburnham, MA, and was descended from John Burrage, who emigrated to the colonies from England in 1636. At age 3, his family moved to California and Burrage returned to



Massachusetts to attend college at Harvard University. After graduating in 1883, he entered Harvard Law School, from which he graduated in 1884, and began his law career.

By 1892, he had served for a year on the Common Council of Boston and got the Burrage Ordinance passed, which prohibited city employees from being members of a political caucus, committee or convention. In 1893, he was the head counsel for the Brookline Gas Light Company, to which the City of Boston awarded the contract for lighting the city in 1896. Burrage received a \$700,000 fee for negotiating the deal and became president of the Allied Gas Companies of Boston in 1896. He was appointed to the Boston Transit Commission, which was charged with building the subway system, in 1894. By 1898, he started to turn his eye towards mining interests and began to invest in copper mines. He later became the president of the Amalgamated Copper Company, which later became the Chile Copper Company.

Burrage married Alice Haskell in 1885, who bore him 4 children. After her husband's death in 1931, Mrs. Burrage continued to occupy the house until 1947. Burrage had two passions in his life, mineralogy and horticulture, both of which are reflected in his Back Bay mansion. In the Great Hall, special cases were built to display his collection of minerals, which were left to the Peabody Museum at Harvard University upon his death. The glass-ceilinged conservatory was specially designed to allow Burrage to grow and raise orchids and even included a wall covered with coral. He also raised orchids at two of his other Massachusetts houses on Boston's North Shore, *Orchidvale* in Beverly and *Sea Home* in Manchester. Burrage was the president of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, a member of the Orchid Society, the New York Horticultural Society, the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, and the Garden Club of America. He was awarded the Lindley Medal of the Royal Horticultural Society of UK for his work with orchids. His library was donated to the Massachusetts Horticultural Society after his death.

In addition to his business and personal interests, Burrage was a generous philanthropist. He donated all of the money to build the Burrage Hospital for Crippled Children on Bumpkin Island, one of the islands in Boston Harbor. For this project, he worked with Charles Brigham, who also designed his mansion on Commonwealth Avenue. Although the building burned to the ground in 1945, the hospital was an important medical institution in the city of Boston. During World War I, he loaned his yacht and other personal assets, as well as the hospital, to assist with the war effort. Although Burrage also owned the adjacent house at 49 Hereford Street in the Back Bay just across the alley between Commonwealth Avenue and Newbury Street, his mansion at 314 Commonwealth Avenue stands more so as a lasting reminder of this remarkable man who had such a significant impact on, and gave much back to, the city of Boston.

### 3.2 Architectural Significance

As the only fully executed chateau in Boston, the interior of the Burrage House has achieved major significance for its design, workmanship, and materials. It is a largely intact example of a turn-of-the century decorative design that has few, if any, rivals in Boston. Utilizing themes and motifs from the French and Italian Renaissance, the interior scheme used lavish materials on the first and second floors, including wood paneling, elaborate stone and wood carvings, intricate stained glass windows, mosaic tiles and bronze. Although the interior has been renovated several times since the Burrages last occupied the house in 1947, much of the design, workmanship and materials are still intact.

The architect of the Burrage House, Charles Brigham (1841-1925), a native of Watertown, Massachusetts, had no formal architectural education after high school. After serving in the Civil War, Brigham apprenticed in the Boston offices of Calvin Ryder and Gridley J. F. Bryant, well-known for his designs for the Charles Street Jail and Old City Hall, amongst many others. Once Brigham began working on his own, one of his first projects was designing subway stations, including the Scollay Square stations and Adams Square Station. He may have met Burrage on these projects, or when he and John Sturgis remodeled the Ames-Webster House at 306 Dartmouth Street in the Back Bay, which Burrage would have been familiar with.

Brigham's first partnership was with John Sturgis (1866-1886), and together they designed the first Boston Museum of Fine Arts (a competition winner), the Church of the Advent, and many private homes in the Back Bay. A subsequent partnership with John Spofford (1888-1905) resulted in the designs for the addition to Massachusetts Statehouse and the Maine Statehouse. Brigham's later projects included an extension of the First Church of Christ Scientist in the Fenway and St. Marks Church in Dorchester.

In addition to its design, the Burrage House was unusual in Back Bay and Boston for many other reasons. It occupies a double lot, and while #314 was never built on before the Burrage House, the construction of the building required the building at #316 to be demolished, which was seen as extravagant in conservative Boston. The existing house at 316 Commonwealth Avenue was a handsome structure designed by architect O.F. Smith in 1881, a mere 18 years before the construction of the Burrage House.

The Burrage House was unusually wide for Back Bay, with the Commonwealth Avenue frontage measuring more than 55 feet. It was built to be completely fireproof, with a steel frame and terra cotta floor arches. Because of its steel-frame construction, the Burrage House did not have masonry bearing walls, which

enabled it to have more windows than other buildings of a similar scale. L.D. Wilcutt and Son built the house for an estimated cost of \$200,000 and the final building report was issued on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 1901.

With the design and construction of the Burrage House, Burrage and Brigham were aspiring to the opulence of Fifth Avenue in New York, where the Vanderbilts and Astors had built magnificent mansions in the chateau style. Several of these houses were designed by Richard Morris Hunt, whose designs for the Vanderbilts began in 1879 in New York and culminated in 1895 with the design for Biltmore in Asheville, North Carolina – the largest private house ever built in the United States. The Burrage House was inspired by Chenonceaux, a French chateau built in the Loire Valley between 1513 and 1521. Although Burrage may have hoped that his new mansion would set a standard for new construction in the Back Bay, nothing that was built after it rivaled it in terms of its design or scale. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a handful of vacant house lots remained in the Back Bay and what little new construction took place there followed the more conservative lines of the Colonial and Classical Revival styles.

The craftsmen of the interior of the Burrage House are unknown, however, several artisans may be reasonably assumed to have played a role. Much of the decorative program may have been executed by Hugh Cairns, a Scottish artist who is listed in the 1904 Boston Architectural Club Yearbook as the sculptor of the Burrage House. His other significant projects included Trinity Church by H.H. Richardson, the Ames House in Back Bay, and St. Joseph's Church in Springfield. The intricate stained glass, which is found in many of the rooms in Burrage House, may have been the work of Frank Hill Smith's studio, which was later taken over by Arthur Cutter. They worked with Brigham on the extensions to the Massachusetts Statehouse and the First Church of Christ Scientist. In addition to stained glass, their work also included decorative ceiling and wall paintings. Despite the outstanding workmanship, attention to detail, and top notch materials, the Burrage House was not favorably looked upon by the press at the time of its construction. *The House Beautiful* magazine in 1905 examined the Burrage House as part of a series of articles entitled "The Poor Taste of the Rich." Excerpts from the article reveal that the authors may have admired the Burrage House, but thought that it was too showy:

"It has dignity and a certain grandiloquent beauty not to be denied, but it is the beauty of the palace, not the home." ... "In this house it is not so much a question of poor taste as a lack of taste. The rooms are in no way a consistent background for the people who live within them."

Referring to the rise of the more austere Colonial Revival style and criticizing the chateausque style of the Burrage House, *The House Beautiful* article mentions that "It (the simplicity of the colonial period) does not represent the dollar mark sufficiently." Questions surrounding the identities of its artisans or the

appropriateness of its taste notwithstanding, the interior of the Burrage House is a striking example of a carefully executed decorative scheme epitomizing the Gilded Age in America and remains the best, and only, example in Boston of the lavish chateau-esque style commissioned for a private residence.

### **3.3 Relationship to Criteria for Landmark Designation**

The Burrage House is a contributing element to the Back Bay National Register District that was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973 and is included in the Back Bay Historic District, a local historic district established by the General Court of Massachusetts in 1966. The Burrage House meets the criteria for Landmark designation found in section four of Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975 as amended, under the following criteria:

- A. *inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places as provided in the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.*** The Burrage House is a contributing element to the Back Bay National Register District that was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973.
- B. *as a property identified prominently with an important aspect of the economic, social and political history of the city, the commonwealth, and the region.*** Through his professional, philanthropic, and personal life, Albert C. Burrage is a noteworthy figure in the economic, social, and political history of Boston and Massachusetts. The house he built at 314 Commonwealth Avenue is a lasting reminder of his contributions and is therefore significant as a Landmark.
- D. *as a property representative of elements of architectural design embodying distinctive characteristics of a type inherently valuable for study of a period, style or method of construction or development, or a notable work of an architect, landscape architect, designer, or builder.*** The Burrage House was designed by Charles Brigham, a well known Boston architect who, along with his partner John Sturgis, also designed the Burrage Hospital for Crippled Children, the original Museum of Fine Arts, and the Church of the Advent. A later partnership with John Spofford resulted in the designs for the additions to the Maine and Massachusetts statehouses, as well as several other later works. The Burrage House is based on the design of Chenonceaux, a chateau located in the Loire Valley of France. While comparable designs were being built on Fifth Avenue in New York and at Biltmore, in Asheville, North Carolina, the Burrage House represents the only example of the lavish chateau-esque style in Boston.

## **4.0 ECONOMIC STATUS**

### **4.1 Current Assessed Value**

According to the City of Boston Assessor's records, the property located at 314 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, has a total assessed value of \$5,373,000.00, with the land valued at \$1,820,400.00 and the building at \$3,552,600.00.

### **4.2 Current Ownership**

This property is owned by Burrage House, LLC, 70 Long Wharf, Boston, Massachusetts 02110.

## **5.0 PLANNING CONTEXT**

### **5.1 Background**

The Burrage House was built in 1899 as the winter home for attorney, businessman, and philanthropist Albert C. Burrage and his family. It remained in the Burrage Family until the death of Burrage's widow Alice in 1947. At that time, the house was sold and converted into doctor's offices. The building underwent a subsequent renovation in 1959 to house the Boston Evening Clinic, which relocated from nearby 396 Commonwealth Avenue. In 1990, the building was purchased by Boston Back Bay Board & Care Limited Partnership and, using historic preservation tax credits, was renovated for use as a nursing home and elder care facility.

### **5.2 Current Planning Issues**

The Burrage House is currently undergoing conversion to condominium units. Many of the adverse changes during the previous renovations are being undone and the building is being restored to a residential use. Since many of the spaces in the petition will be in private condominium units in the near future, the Landmarks Commission is working to ensure that the common spaces of the condominiums will be accessible to the public on an occasional basis. The petition to designate the interior spaces of the Burrage House was submitted on March 10, 1989 and accepted by the Landmarks Commission for further study at its meeting of April 11, 1989. It has been the policy of the Commission, since its inception, not to designate private residential interior spaces.

### **5.3 Current Zoning**

Parcel 3038, Ward 5, located at 314 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston is zoned as a multi-family residential building and officially as H-3-65, which establishes an FAR of 3 and a maximum height of 65 feet.

## **6.0 ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES**

### **6.1 Alternatives available to the Boston Landmarks Commission:**

#### **A. Individual Landmark Designation**

The Burrage House is a significant building and has achieved national, regional, state, and local significance. The building is a contributing element to the Back Bay National Register District that was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973 and is included in the Back Bay Historic District, a local historic district established by the General Court of Massachusetts in 1966. This study report confirms that the interior portions of the Burrage House included in the study report are of sufficient importance to merit individual Landmark designation under Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975, as amended.

Landmark designation represents the City's highest honor and is therefore restricted to cultural resources of outstanding architectural and/or historical significance. Landmark designation under Chapter 772 would require review of physical changes to the following elements hereinafter referred to as the **Specified Interior Features**:

1. The **entry vestibule, Great Hall** (as originally configured), **Grand Stairway** and **Second Floor Common Hall**. See floor plans in section 7.0.

#### **B. Denial of Individual Landmark Designation**

The Commission retains the option of not designating any or all of the Specified Interior Features as a Landmark.

#### **C. Preservation Restriction**

The Commission could recommend the owner consider a preservation restriction for any or all of the Specified Interior Features.

#### **D. Preservation Plan**

The Commission could recommend development and implementation of a preservation plan for the Specified Interior Features.

#### **E. National Register Listing**

The Burrage House is already listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing building in the Back Bay National Register District.

## **6.2 Impact of Alternatives**

### **A. Individual Landmark Designation**

Landmark designation represents the City's highest honor and is therefore restricted to cultural resources of outstanding architectural and/or historical significance. Landmark designation under Chapter 772 would require review of physical changes to the Specified Interior Features of the Burrage House, in accordance with the standards and criteria adopted as part of the designation.

### **B. Denial of Individual Landmark Designation**

Without Landmark designation, the City would be unable to offer protection to the Specified Interior Features, or extend guidance to the owners under Chapter 772.

### **C. Preservation Restriction**

Chapter 666 of the M.G.L. Acts of 1969, allows individuals to protect the architectural integrity of their property via a preservation restriction. A restriction may be donated to or purchased by any governmental body or non-profit organization capable of acquiring interests in land and strongly associated with historic preservation. These agreements are recorded instruments (normally deeds) that run with the land for a specific term or in perpetuity, thereby binding not only the owner who conveyed the restriction, but also subsequent owners. Restrictions typically govern alterations to exterior features and maintenance of the appearance and condition of the property.

### **D. Preservation Plan**

A preservation plan would allow the owner to work with interested parties to investigate various adaptive use scenarios, analyze investment costs and rates of return, and provide recommendations for subsequent development.

### **E. National Register**

National Register listing provides an honorary designation and limited protection from federal, federally-licensed or federally-assisted activities. It also creates incentives for preservation, notably the federal investment tax credit for historic rehabilitation and grants through the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund from the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

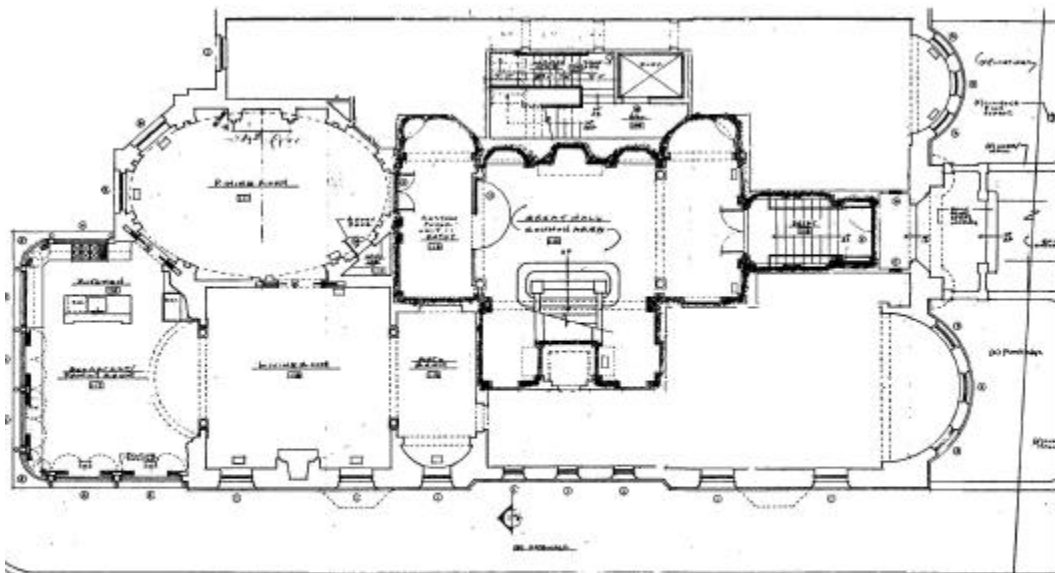


## 7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The interior of the Burrage House is significant on a national, state, regional, and local level. It represents the culmination of the ambition, wealth and optimism that led to the new development of the Back Bay and is a lasting monument to the noted lawyer, businessman, and philanthropist Albert C. Burrage. The interior is a striking example of a carefully executed decorative scheme that epitomized the Gilded Age in America and remains the best, and only, example of a fully executed chateau in Boston.

Therefore, the staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission recommends that the Specified Interior Features of the Burrage House be designated a Landmark under Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975, as amended. Designation shall correspond to ward 5, parcel 3038 as depicted on the City of Boston Assessor's map, and shall only address the Specified Interior Features of the Burrage House. The **Specified Interior Features** shall be described as follows: the **entry vestibule, Great Hall** (as originally configured), **Grand Stairway** and **Second Floor Common Hall**. See first and second floor plans that follow, dated September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2002.

The Standards and Criteria for administering the regulatory functions provided for in Chapter 772 are attached.

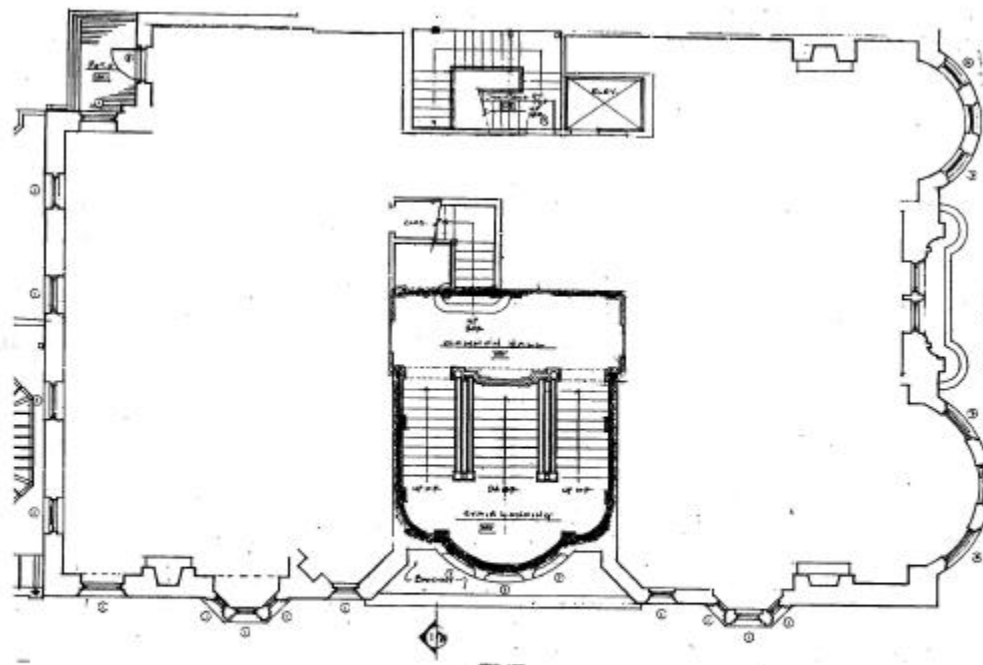


07/25/02

BURRAGE  
314 COMM. AVE.

FIRST FLOOR  
PROPOSED LANDMARK  
DESIGNATION AREAS

Designated area of the first floor, outlined with heavy line (courtesy of Grassi Design Group)



09/25/02

BURRAGE  
314 COMM. AVE.

SECOND FLOOR  
PROPOSED LANDMARK  
DESIGNATION AREAS

Designated area of the second floor, outlined with heavy line (courtesy of Grassi Design Group)

## **8.0 GENERAL STANDARDS AND CRITERIA**

### **8.1 Introduction**

Per sections, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the enabling statute (Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975 of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, as amended) Standards and Criteria must be adopted for each Landmark Designation which shall be applied by the Commission in evaluating proposed changes to the property. The Standards and Criteria established thus note those features which must be conserved and/or enhanced to maintain the viability of the Landmark Designation. Before a Certificate of Design Approval or Certificate of Exemption can be issued for such changes, the changes must be reviewed by the Commission with regard to their conformance to the purpose of the statute.

The intent of these guidelines is to help local officials, designers and individual property owners to identify the characteristics that have led to designation, and thus to identify the limitation to the changes that can be made to them. It should be emphasized that conformance to the Standards and Criteria alone does not necessarily insure approval, nor are they absolute, but any request for variance from them must demonstrate the reason for, and advantages gained by, such variance. The Commission's Certificate of Design Approval is only granted after careful review of each application and public hearing, in accordance with the statute.

As intended by the statute a wide variety of buildings and features are included within the area open to Landmark Designation, and an equally wide range exists in the latitude allowed for change. Some properties of truly exceptional architectural and/or historical value will permit only the most minor modifications, while for some others the Commission encourages changes and additions with a contemporary approach, consistent with the properties' existing features and changed uses.

In general, the intent of the Standards and Criteria is to preserve existing qualities that cause designation of a property; however, in some cases they have been structured as to encourage the removal of additions that have lessened the integrity of the property.

It is recognized that changes will be required in designated properties for a wide variety of reasons, not all of which are under the complete control of the Commission or the owners. Primary examples are: building code conformance and safety requirements; changes necessitated by the introduction of modern mechanical and electrical systems; changes due to proposed new uses of a property.

The response to these requirements may, in some cases, present conflicts with the Standards and Criteria for a particular property. The Commission's evaluation of an application will be based upon the degree to which such changes are in harmony with the character of the property. In some cases, priorities have been assigned within the Standards and Criteria as an aid to property owners in identifying the most critical design features. The treatments outlined below are listed in hierarchical order from least amount of intervention to the greatest amount of intervention. The owner, manager or developer should follow them in order to ensure a successful project that is sensitive to the historic landmark.

- ◆ **Identify, Retain, and Preserve** the form and detailing of the materials and features that define the historic character of the structure or site. These are basic treatments that should prevent actions that may cause the diminution or loss of the structure's or site's historic character. It is important to remember that loss of character can be caused by the cumulative effect of insensitive actions whether large or small.
- ◆ **Protect and Maintain** the materials and features that have been identified as important and must be retained during the rehabilitation work. Protection usually involves the least amount of intervention and is done before other work.
- ◆ **Repair** the character defining features and materials when it is necessary. Repairing begins with the least amount of intervention as possible. Patching, piecing-in, splicing, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing according to recognized preservation methods are the techniques that should be followed. Repairing may also include limited replacement in kind of extremely deteriorated or missing parts of features. Replacements should be based on surviving prototypes.
- ◆ **Replacement** of entire character defining features or materials follows repair when the deterioration prevents repair. The essential form and detailing should still be evident so that the physical evidence can be used to re-establish the feature. The preferred option is replacement of the entire feature in kind using the same material. Because this approach may not always be technically or economically feasible the commission will consider the use of compatible substitute material. The commission does not recommend removal and replacement with new material a feature that could be repaired.
- ◆ **Missing Historic Features** should be replaced with new features that are based on adequate historical, pictorial and physical documentation. The commission may consider a replacement feature that is compatible with the remaining character defining features. The new design should match the scale, size, and material of the historic feature.
- ◆ **Alterations or Additions** that may be needed to assure the continued use of the historic structure or site should not radically change, obscure or destroy character defining spaces, materials, features or finishes. The commission encourages new uses that are compatible with the historic structure or site and that do not require major alterations or additions.

In these guidelines the verb **Should** indicates a recommended course of action; the verb **Shall** indicates those actions which are specifically required to preserve and protect significant architectural elements.

Finally, the Standards and Criteria have been divided into two levels:

- ◆ **Section 8.3** - Those general ones that are common to all landmark designations (building exteriors, building interiors, landscape features and archeological sites).
- ◆ **Section 9.0** - Those specific ones that apply to each particular property that is designated. In every case, the Specific Standards and Criteria for a particular property shall take precedence over the General ones if there is a conflict.

## 8.2 Levels of Review

The Commission has no desire to interfere with the normal maintenance procedures for the landmark. In order to provide some guidance for the landmark owner, manager or developer and the Commission, the activities that might be construed as causing an alteration to the physical character of the exterior have been categorized into:

### A. Routine activities that are not subject to review by the Commission:

1. Activities associated with routine maintenance, including such items as: housekeeping, pruning, fertilizing, mulching, etc.
2. Routine activities associated with seasonal installations that do not result in any permanent alterations or attached fixtures.

### B. Activities which may be determined by the Executive Director to be eligible for a Certificate of Exemption:

1. Ordinary maintenance and repair involving no change in design, material, color and outward appearance, including such items as: Major cleaning programs (including chemical surface cleaning), repainting, planting or removal of limited number of trees or shrubs, major vegetation management.
2. In-kind replacement or repair.

### C. Activities requiring Landmarks Commission review:

Any reconstruction, restoration, replacement, alteration or demolition (this includes, but is not limited to, surface treatments, fixtures and ornaments) such as: new construction of any type; removal of existing features or element; any alteration involving change in design, material color, location or outward

appearance; major planting or removal of trees or shrubs, changes in landforms.

**D. Activities not explicitly listed above:**

In the case of any activity not explicitly covered in these Standards and Criteria, the Executive Director shall determine whether an application is required and if so, whether it shall be an application for a Certificate of Design Approval or Certificate of Exemption.

**E. Concurrent Jurisdiction**

In some cases, issues which fall under the jurisdiction of the Landmarks Commission may also fall under the jurisdiction of other city, state and federal boards and commissions such as the Boston Art Commission, the Massachusetts Historical Commission, the National Park Service and others. All efforts will be made to expedite the review process. Whenever possible and appropriate, a joint hearing will be arranged.

**8.3 General Standards and Criteria**

1. The design approach to the property should begin with the premise that the features of historical and architectural significance described within the Study Report must be preserved. In general, this will minimize alterations that will be allowed.
2. Changes and additions to the property and its environment that have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history of the property and the neighborhood. These changes to the property may have developed significance in their own right, and this significance should be recognized and respected. (The term "**later contributing features**" shall be used to convey this concept.)
3. Deteriorated materials and/or features, whenever possible, should be repaired rather than replaced or removed.
4. When replacement of features that define the historic character of the property is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence of original or later contributing features.
5. New materials should, whenever possible, match the material being replaced in physical properties and should be compatible with the size, scale, color, material and character of the property and its environment.

6. New additions or alterations should not disrupt the essential form and integrity of the property and should be compatible with the size, scale, color, material and character of the property and its environment.
7. New additions or related new construction should be differentiated from the existing thus, they should not necessarily be imitative of an earlier style or period.
8. New additions or alterations should be done in such a way that if they were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property would be unimpaired.
9. Priority shall be given to those portions of the property which are visible from public ways or which it can be reasonably inferred may be in the future.
10. Surface cleaning shall use **the mildest method possible. Sandblasting, wire brushing, or other similar abrasive cleaning methods shall not be permitted.**
11. Should any major restoration or construction activity be considered for the property, the Boston Landmarks Commission recommends that the proponents prepare an historic building conservation study and/or consult a materials conservator early in the planning process.
12. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved.

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## 9.0 INTERIORS - SPECIFIC STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

### 9.1 Introduction

1. In these guidelines the verb **Should** indicates a recommended course of action; the verb **Shall** indicates those actions which are specifically required to preserve and protect significant architectural elements.
2. The intent of these standards and criteria is to preserve the overall character and appearance of the Burrage House interior, including its size, configuration, proportions, relationship of rooms and corridors, relationship of features to spaces, and the spaces themselves.
3. The standards and criteria acknowledge that there will be changes to the interior of the building and are intended to make the changes sensitive to the architectural character of the building.
4. Each property will be separately studied to determine if later addition(s) and alteration(s) can, or should, be removed.
5. Since it is not possible to provide one general guideline, the following factors that will be considered in determining whether a later addition(s) and/or alteration(s) can, or should, be removed include:
  - a. Compatibility with the original property's integrity in scale, materials and character.
  - b. Historic association with the property.
  - c. Quality in the design and execution of the addition(s)/alteration(s).
  - d. Functional usefulness.
6. The **entry vestibule**, **Great Hall** (as originally configured), **Grand Stairway** and **Second Floor Common Hall** are subject to the terms of the interior guidelines herein stated.
7. Items under Commission review include but are not limited to the following:

### 9.2 Interior Volume

1. The full, unobstructed volume and spatial relationships of the designated interior spaces shall be maintained.
2. Existing designated interior spaces shall not be subdivided after the installation of the screen in the **Great Hall**.



3. No new openings in walls, ceilings and floors shall be allowed.
4. No original existing openings in walls, ceilings and floors shall be filled or changed in size.
5. No exposed conduit shall be allowed on any interior surface.

### **9.3 Interior Finishes**

#### **A. General**

1. All materials and finishes within the **entry vestibule, Great Hall** (as originally configured), **Grand Stairway** and **Second Floor Common Hall** shall be retained except insofar as their replacement or reinterpretation may be proposed, based on the existence of reliable physical or documentary evidence.
2. Except as provided with these Standards and Criteria, no existing surface material shall be removed, altered, or covered.
3. Cleaning of the interior surfaces shall be completed using **the mildest methods possible**.
4. The Boston Landmarks Commission recommends that the work outlined in sections B, C and D be executed with the guidance of a professional building materials conservator.

#### **B. Wood**

1. All mahogany doors, arches, ceiling ribs, columns, pilasters and paneling shall be preserved.
2. Original or later contributing wood surfaces, features, details and ornamentation shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, piecing-in, consolidating or reinforcing the wood using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing wood surfaces, features, details and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile and detail of installation.
4. When replacement of materials or elements is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.

5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
6. Cleaning of wooden elements shall use **the mildest method possible**.
7. Natural wood surfaces and elements shall not be painted.

**C. Architectural Metals  
(Cast Iron and Bronze)**

1. All bronze and cast iron elements, including grillework, sconces, heating grilles, lighting fixtures, chandeliers, and fireplace components shall be preserved.
2. Original or later contributing metal materials, features, details and ornamentation shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, splicing or reinforcing the metal using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing metal materials, features, details and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile and detail of installation.
4. When replacement of materials or elements is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
6. Cleaning of metal elements either to remove corrosion or deteriorated paint shall use **the mildest method possible**.
7. Abrasive cleaning methods, such as low pressure dry grit blasting, may be allowed as long as it does not abrade or damage the surface.
8. A test patch of the cleaning method(s) shall be reviewed and approved on site by staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission. Test patches should always be carried out well in advance of cleaning.
9. Cleaning to remove corrosion and paint removal should be considered only where there is deterioration and as part of an overall maintenance program which involves repainting or applying other appropriate protective coatings. Paint or other coatings help retard the corrosion rate of the metal. Leaving the metal bare will expose the surface to accelerated corrosion.

#### D. Plaster

1. All ceiling surfaces, friezes, ornamental scrolls and cartouches shall be preserved.
2. Original or later contributing plaster materials, features, details, surfaces and ornamentation shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, piecing-in, consolidating or reinforcing the plaster using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing plaster materials, features, details, surfaces and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile and detail of installation.
4. When replacement of materials or elements is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
6. If the plaster is to be cleaned, **the mildest method possible** shall be used.
7. A test patch of the cleaning method(s) shall be reviewed and approved on site by staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission. Test patches should always be carried out well in advance of cleaning.
8. **Sandblasting (wet or dry), wire brushing, or other similar abrasive cleaning methods shall not be permitted.** Doing so changes the visual quality of the material and accelerates deterioration.
9. Repainting should be based on paint seriation studies. If an adequate record does not exist repainting shall be done with colors that are appropriate to the style and period of the interior.

#### E. Masonry (Marble, Terrazzo and Mortar)

1. All marble and terrazzo elements and the mortar, including the treads, risers and banisters of the main stair, fireplaces, dados, arches, skirting, floors, walls, statuary, balustrades, and entablatures shall be preserved.
2. Original or later contributing masonry materials, features, details, surfaces and ornamentation shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by

patching, piecing-in, or consolidating the masonry using recognized preservation methods.

3. Deteriorated or missing masonry materials, features, details, surfaces and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile and detail of installation.
4. When replacement of materials or elements is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
6. Original mortar shall be retained.
7. Deteriorated mortar shall be carefully removed by hand-raking the joints.
8. Use of mechanical saws and hammers shall not be allowed.
9. Repointing mortar shall duplicate the original mortar in strength, composition, color, texture, joint size, joint profile and method of application.
10. Sample panels of raking the joints and repointing shall be reviewed and approved by the staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission.
11. Cleaning of masonry is discouraged and should be performed only when necessary to halt deterioration.
12. If the masonry is to be cleaned, **the mildest method possible** shall be used.
13. A test patch of the cleaning method(s) shall be reviewed and approved on site by staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission. Test patches should always be carried out well in advance of cleaning.
14. **Sandblasting (wet or dry), wire brushing, or other similar abrasive cleaning methods shall not be permitted.** Doing so changes the visual quality of the material and accelerates deterioration.
15. Waterproofing or water repellents are strongly discouraged. These treatments are generally not effective in preserving masonry and can cause permanent damage. The Commission does recognize that in extraordinary circumstances their use may be required to solve a specific problem.

Samples of any proposed treatment shall be reviewed by the Commission before application.

16. In general, painting masonry surfaces shall not be allowed. Painting masonry surfaces will be considered only when there is documentary evidence that this treatment was used at some point in the history of the property.

#### **9.4 Interior Walls**

**Refer to Section 9.3 B, C, D, and E regarding treatment of materials and features; and Sections 9.2, 9.10, 9.11 and 9.12 for additional Standards and Criteria that may apply.**

1. All marble and wood-paneled walls shall be preserved.
2. Original or later contributing wall materials, elements, features (decorative and functional), details and ornamentation shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, piecing-in, consolidating, splicing or reinforcing using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing wall materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation.
4. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
6. Original or later contributing wall materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall not be sheathed or otherwise obscured by other materials.

#### **9.5 Ceilings**

**Refer to Section 9.3 B, C, D, and E regarding treatment of materials and features; and Sections 9.2, 9.10 and 9.11 for additional Standards and Criteria that may apply.**

1. All wood and plaster coffered and flat ceilings shall be preserved.

2. Original or later contributing ceiling materials, elements, features (decorative and functional), details and ornamentation shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching or reinforcing using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing ceiling materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation.
4. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
6. Original or later contributing ceiling materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall not be sheathed or otherwise obscured by other materials.
7. Ceilings should be of a color based on paint seriation studies. If an adequate record does not exist repainting shall be done with colors that are appropriate to the style and period of the interior.

## **9.6 Floors**

**Refer to Section 9.3 B, C, D, E, F regarding treatment of materials and features; and Sections 9.2, 9.10 and 9.11 for additional Standards and Criteria that may apply.**

1. All marble and mosaic tile floors shall be preserved.
2. Original or later contributing floor materials, elements, features (decorative and functional), details and ornamentation shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching or reinforcing using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing floor materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation.
4. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.

5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
6. Original or later contributing floor materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall not be sheathed or otherwise obscured by other materials.

## **9.7 Windows**

**Refer to Sections 9.3 B, C, D, and E regarding treatment of materials and features.**

1. All stained glass windows and the leaded glass of the display cabinets shall be preserved. All repairs and restorations of the stained and leaded glass windows shall be subject to review.
2. The original window design and arrangement of window openings shall be retained.
3. Original or later contributing interior window elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, splicing, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing using recognized preservation methods.
4. Deteriorated or missing interior window elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation.
5. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
6. Interior storm windows may be allowed provided the installation has a minimal visual impact.
7. Interior storm windows shall have a narrow perimeter framing that does not obscure the glazing of the primary window. In addition, the meeting rail of an interior storm window must align with that of the primary window.
8. Interior storm window sashes and frames shall have a painted finish that matches the primary window sash and frame color.
9. Clear or mill finished aluminum frames shall not be allowed.

10. Interior storm windows may be allowed for arched windows, leaded glass, faceted frames, or bent (curved) glass.
11. Window frames, and sashes should be of a color based on paint seriation studies. If an adequate record does not exist repainting shall be done with colors that are appropriate to the style and period of the interior.

## **9.8 Entrances/Doors**

**Refer to Sections 9.3 B, C, D, and E regarding treatment of materials and features; and Sections 9.10, 9.11 and 9.12 for additional Standards and Criteria that may apply.**

1. All mahogany doors shall be preserved.
2. The original entrance design and arrangement of door openings shall be retained.
3. Enlarging or reducing entrance/door openings for the purpose of fitting stock (larger or smaller) doors shall not be allowed.
4. Original or later contributing entrance/door materials, elements, details and features (functional and decorative) shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, splicing, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing using recognized preservation methods.
5. Deteriorated or missing entrance/door elements, materials, features (functional and decorative) and details shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation.
6. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
7. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
8. Original or later contributing entrance/door materials, elements, features (functional and decorative) and details shall not be sheathed or otherwise obscured by other materials.
9. Only paneled doors of appropriate design, material and assembly shall be allowed.



10. Flush doors (metal, wood, vinyl or plastic), sliding doors and metal paneled doors shall not be allowed.
11. Replacement door hardware should replicate the original or be appropriate to the style, period, material and finish of the interior.

## **9.9 Stairs**

**Refer to Sections 9.3 B, C, D, and E regarding treatment of materials and features; and Sections 9.6, 9.8, 9.10, and 9.12 for additional Standards and Criteria that may apply.**

1. All marble and mahogany steps, balustrades, railings, columns, posts and statuary shall be preserved.
2. Original or later contributing stair materials, elements features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, splicing, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing stair materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation.
4. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
6. Original or later contributing stair materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall not be sheathed or otherwise obscured by other materials.

## **9.10 Interior Lighting**

**Refer to Sections 9.4, 9.5 and 9.12 for additional Standards and Criteria that may apply.**

1. There are three aspects of lighting related to the interior of the building:
  - a. Lighting fixtures as appurtenances to the interior or elements of architectural ornamentation.
  - b. Quality of illumination.

- c. Interior lighting as seen from the exterior.
2. Wherever integral to the interior, original or later contributing lighting fixtures shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, piecing-in or reinforcing the lighting fixture using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing lighting fixture materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation.
4. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
6. Original or later contributing lighting fixture materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall not be sheathed or otherwise obscured by other materials.
7. Supplementary illumination may be added where appropriate to the current use of the interior.
8. New lighting shall conform to any of the following approaches as appropriate to the interior and to the current or projected use:
  - a. Accurate representation of the original period, based on physical or documentary evidence.
  - b. Retention or restoration of fixtures which date from an interim installation and which are considered to be appropriate to the interior and use.
  - c. New lighting fixtures which are differentiated from the original or later contributing features.
  - d. The new interior lighting location shall fulfill the functional intent of the current use without obscuring the interior volume or architectural detailing.
9. Reuse of existing penetrations of wood, plaster and masonry surfaces is encouraged. The introduction of new penetrations for electrical fixtures shall be strongly discouraged.
10. No exposed conduit shall be allowed.

**9.11 Systems  
(Heating, Air Conditioning, Electrical, Security, Fire Suppression, Plumbing,  
etc.)**

**Refer to Section 9.3 C regarding treatment of materials. Refer to Sections 9.2, 9.4, 9.5, 9.6, 9.10 and 9.12 for additional Standards and Criteria that may apply.**

1. The commission acknowledges that the systems themselves (i.e. the compressors, boilers, generators and their ductwork, wiring, pipes, etc.) will generally either need to be upgraded, augmented, or entirely replaced in order to accommodate the new use and to meet code requirements. Therefore, the following Standards and Criteria are written to guide the changes so that they shall not destroy the historic character of the interior.
2. All heating grilles shall be preserved.
3. Original or later contributing systems, materials, elements, features (functional and decorative) and details shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, piecing-in, splicing or reinforcing using recognized preservation methods.
4. Deteriorated or missing system materials, elements, features (functional and decorative) and details shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation.
5. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
6. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
7. Original or later contributing system materials, elements, features (functional and decorative) and details and shall not be sheathed or otherwise obscured by other materials.
8. Installation of new systems shall cause the least alteration possible to the building's floor plan, interior volume and to the historic building material.
9. Reuse of existing penetrations of wood, plaster and masonry surfaces is encouraged. The introduction of new penetrations for mechanical systems shall be strongly discouraged.

10. Vertical runs of ducts, pipes and cables should be in closets, service rooms, wall cavities or other inconspicuous locations.

## 9.12 Accessibility

**Refer to Sections 9.3 B, C, D, E and F regarding treatment of materials. Refer to Sections 9.4, 9.6, 9.6, 9.7, 9.8, 9.9 and 9.11 for additional Standards and Criteria that may apply.**

1. A three-step approach is recommended to identify and implement accessibility modifications that will protect the integrity and historic character of the property:
  - a. Review the historical significance of the property and identify character-defining features;
  - b. Assess the property's existing and required level of accessibility;
  - c. Evaluate accessibility options within a preservation context.
2. Because of the complex nature of accessibility the commission will review proposals on a case by case bases. The commission recommends consulting with the following document which is available from the commission office:

U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Cultural Resources, Preservation Assistance Division; **Preservation Brief 32 "Making Historic Properties Accessible"** by Thomas C. Jester and Sharon C. Park, AIA.

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