

Freedom Trail

Boston, Massachusetts

Photographs by Alan Ward 1985, 2023, 2024

Notes on the Making of the Photographs

The Freedom Trail draws visitors to experience a series of sixteen historic sites related to early Boston history and the American Revolution. I lived in the Boston area for decades. As a resident, you tend to go out of your way to avoid the Freedom Trail. With almost four million visitors per year - it was primarily for tourists. I moved out of Boston and returned to photograph the Freedom Trail with a fresh eye – as an explorer and as a photographer aiming to make a series of compelling images, that document the wide range of significant and well-preserved sites from the past.

The Freedom Trail was created in 1951 and begins at the Boston Common; it is marked by brick lines and bronze markers along paths and sidewalks (1,4). The Massachusetts State House, by architect Charles Bulfinch atop Beacon Hill, overlooks the Common (2). The Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Regiment Memorial is across from the State House and honors a later chapter in Boston's history (3). The Park Street Church (5) at the corner of the Common is the first of four churches or meeting houses on the route. It is followed by the Granary Burial Ground (6-8), one of three Colonial-era burial grounds on the trail.

I embraced the challenge of putting together a series of images with a range of subjects that requires the photography of landscapes, architecture, as well as interiors of church buildings – along with one naval vessel. It was a self-imposed assignment to photograph the different sites, as well as the connecting brick lines and markers -

each with its own distinct requirements, and still make a coherent set of images in one portfolio.

Framing views of historic buildings were difficult and constrained because the locations were in downtown Boston with busy streets, parked cars, and large towers overshadowing these small historic structures, often competing for attention from most vantage points. I used a wide-angle, tilt shift lens (24mm), in order to get very close to the historic churches and other buildings to isolate them as much as possible from the competing context of the city (9,10,15,16). I sought out soft overcast skies to flatten the light and make simple and direct images, with each picture translating the available light into precise tonal relationships. Foggy conditions also helped diminish the presence of the large surrounding buildings. I elected to use black and white to help unify the collection of rather diverse sites. Perhaps it is because of historical associations, but black and white photographs tend to be perceived as more documentary or truthful in their content.

While visitors are a fundamental part of the story of the Freedom Trail, at peak times the historic buildings and grounds are overwhelmed by people. The image of the Granary Burial Ground illustrates the site along with a few individuals reading the interpretive plaques, portraying an appropriate balance between describing the characteristics of a place, along with how it is used and interpreted (7).

List of Photographs

1. Boston Common, line of Freedom Trail in path on the left, 2024
2. Massachusetts Statehouse from the Common, 2024
3. Monument to Robert Gould Shaw and 54th Regiment, 2024
4. Freedom Trail plaque and brick lines at the Common, 2024
5. Park Street Church from the Common, 2024
6. Granary Burial Ground from the entry gate, 2024
7. Granary Burial Ground, view toward entry gate , 2024
8. Granary Burial Ground and adjacent buildings, 2024
9. King's Chapel and School Street, 2023
10. King's Chapel Tremont Street façade, 2023
11. Interior of King's Chapel, 2023
12. King's Chapel Burying Ground and Old City Hall, 2023
13. King's Chapel Burying Ground and Chapel, 2023
14. Mosaic marking the site of the Boston Latin School, 2024
15. Site of Boston Latin School, now Old City Hall, 2024
16. Benjamin Franklin Statue, 2023
17. Old South Meeting House, 2023
18. Old Corner Bookstore, 1985
19. Old Corner Bookstore facade, 1985
20. Old State House and State Street, 2023
21. Old State House, 2023
22. Faneuil Hall and Congress Street, 2023
23. Paul Revere house, 2023
24. Paul Revere Mall and Old North Church, 2023
25. Old North Church from Paul Revere Mall, 2023
26. Interior of Old North Church, 2023
27. View north of Copp's Hill Burial Ground, North End, 2023
28. View south of Copp's Hill Burial Ground, 2023
29. Entrance to Naval Yard, Charlestown, 2024
30. USS Constitution Dry Dock 1, 2024
31. Bunker Hill Monument from Monument Avenue, 2024
32. Statue of William Prescott, 2024
33. Statue of William Prescott and Boston skyline, 2024
34. North side of Bunker Hill Monument and museum, 2024





































































Notes

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