

**THE PRESERVATION OF
PARK STREET CHURCH,
BOSTON. OCTOBER, 1903**

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The Preservation of Park Street Church, Boston. October, 1903 by Various

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VARIOUS

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PRESERVATION OF PARK STREET
CHURCH BOSTON

ISSUED *by the* COMMITTEE FOR THE PRESERVA-
TION OF PARK STREET CHURCH, OCTOBER, 1903

BOSTON
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1903

WHY PARK STREET CHURCH SHOULD BE PRESERVED.

1. Civic beauty is a valuable asset, and it is good public policy to expend money to make the city more beautiful and more attractive. This is a principle which has long been recognized.

1. It contributes to the happiness and health of her citizens.

2. Boston has spent millions of dollars on its park system, and the Metropolitan Park District has spent many millions more.

3. The limitation of the height of buildings on parks and streets, and the prohibition of bill-posting on or near parks, is a recognition of this principle.

4. Many millions have been expended to protect the beauty of the State House. Upon both sides large areas have been taken for parks, and upon one side the height of buildings has been restricted to seventy feet.

5. The projected Charles River basin illustrates the principle.

6. The Hooker, the Shaw, and the Channing monuments, the mural decorations of the Public Library and the State House, and countless other architectural and artistic features of the city are predicated upon this principle.

7. It is of value to the citizens of Boston from a financial point of view. Every merchant and hotel-keeper realizes that he derives pecuniary benefit from historical and architectural monuments, which add charm and attractiveness to Boston as a convention city.

8. The establishment of an Art Department for the city of Boston by the legislature of 1898 was a recognition of this principle.

II. If an office building is erected on the site of Park Street Church, the vast investment of the people's money expended in the effort to make Boston more attractive will be damaged to an appreciable extent. It is the acme of foolishness to spend millions to beautify your city, and then to stand by without remonstrance while that beauty is injured.

III. It is essential that a monumental public building of some kind should stand on the site of Park Street Church.

1. The importance of the site was recognized by the founders of the church. It was not intended originally to build a steeple, but *the public demand* was so strong "that a building occupying a position so conspicuous and imposing as this, and commanding such an extensive view in all directions and itself so prominent a mark of observation from all parts of the town and surrounding country, should be thus ornamented, it was determined that one of extraordinary proportions, extending much farther into the skies than was elsewhere to be seen on the peninsula, should be placed upon the meeting-house, as it were to serve as an index for all wayfaring pilgrims, pointing to that heavenly home to which the lessons and ministrations in the tabernacle below so distinctly directed. Indeed, there is a tradition now extant, and reasonably well authenticated, that one of the subscribers made it a condition of his gift that the amount of his subscription should be thus expended." (*Memorial of the Semi-centennial Celebration of the Park Street Church and Society.*)

2. The following condition appears in the original deed from the town: "Upon condition that all buildings to be erected on the said bargained premises shall be *regular and uniform* and of brick and stone and covered with slate or tile or some material that will resist fire." This shows that as early as 1795 the

citizens of Boston realized the necessity of having an ornamental structure on this site.

3. It is seen by more people to-day than any other building in the city: many more people pass the subway entrances and exits at this corner than pass any other point in the city. It is the most prominent feature in the landscape except the State House. With this one exception, it is the focal centre of more beautiful vistas than any other monumental building in Boston. It is visible from Commonwealth Avenue, as one looks across the trees of the Common and Public Garden. It adds a great charm to the view one gets looking up Tremont Street. When Mr. Huntington, the leader in the project for filling in the Back Bay, was asked for instructions with regard to laying out Columbus Avenue, he said, "Sight it exactly for the Park Street steeple"; and to-day one of the finest views of the church is to be obtained from Columbus Avenue.

4. It is almost exactly in the centre of the peninsula, and it is situated on one of the principal streets of the city.

5. The Old Granary Burying-Ground would be spoiled if anything but a church stood on this site.

6. The view of the State House would be irreparably spoiled if a high office building were placed on this site, because a high building here would mean high buildings the whole length of Park Street; and an optical illusion would be produced by this long high line which would make the wings of the State House appear to go up in the air.

7. A monument on this corner constitutes a part of the beauty of the Common. It stands at the head of the Common, and, as such, it stands also at the head of our city park system.

8. The peculiar charm of Boston lies in the fact that the centre of the city is so attractive. No other city in the world can boast of such a park area in so central a position. *The distinctive feature in Boston's attractiveness would be marred by the use of Park Street corner for any other than monumental purposes.*

9. If you do not have a monumental building on this corner, you weaken the hold on the Common, and make it easier for the

projected extension of Columbus Avenue and Commonwealth Avenue across the Common. *This would mean the utter destruction of the peculiar charm of Boston.*

IV. Park Street Church is the monument which should stand upon this site.

It already stands there, and it will cost less to retain it than to build another monument in its place.

It is a beautiful structure. The steeple is graceful, refined, and dignified. The façade presents a wonderfully fine solution of a difficult problem, and commands the admiration of all architects and artists.

1. "It is of brick with a fine spire." (King's Handbook of Boston, 1889.)

2. In Hayward's Massachusetts Gazette (1846) the church is described as "this beautiful house," and "the body of the house is very handsome."

3. "For a long time the handsome spire of Park Street Church was the highest object seen in approaching the city. As one of the monuments of the Common, it is inseparable from the landscape, the slender, graceful steeple rising majestically above the tree-tops from any point of observation." (Drake's Old Landmarks of Boston, 1900.)

4. "The conspicuous feature of the church on its completion was, as now, its tall and graceful spire. Until the building of the Somerset Street Church on higher ground, this spire was the highest in town." (Bacon's Dictionary of Boston, 1886.)

5. "The greatest care was bestowed upon the fashioning of the tall and graceful spire." (Boston, Illustrated, by Bacon, 1893.)

6. Charles A. Cumming, in the chapter on "Architecture in Boston" in the Memorial History of Boston, says that the steeple of Park Street Church is of "unusual height and of remarkable grace of composition."

7. "The steeple also has undergone a most thorough repair,

and bids fair to stand many years an ornament to the city, and the first endeared object to present itself to the eye and gladden the heart, not only of the home-bound mariner, but the weary traveller from any region or direction whatever." (Semi-centennial Celebration Memorial of Park Street Church, 1859.)

V. But, even if the site were not so important and the church of such architectural value, its historic associations alone would almost justify its preservation.

Park Street Church is identified with no less than six important movements in American history: the revival of Trinitarianism, or Calvinism; the inauguration of foreign and home missions; the growth of church music; the anti-slavery agitation; the peace movement; the introduction of Sunday-schools; and several other educational and reformatory movements.

1. The very purpose for which the church was founded was to combat the Unitarian invasion which followed the Revolution. Only one Congregational church in Boston, the Old South, remained true to the old doctrines, and even that had so little of the "spirit of revival" that it would not countenance an evening prayer-meeting. Dr. Edward D. Griffin, the first pastor, was a professor at Andover Theological Seminary, then recently founded for the same purpose. The sermons of Dr. Griffin and those of his successors were notable for their eloquence and for their influence in reviving the old doctrines. Unitarians and Trinitarians alike may now take the pleasure, which is the historian's, in reviewing this conflict at a time when each prefers the name "Congregationalist," and each looks forward to the near future when they shall worship God together, and when the Unitarian, perhaps more than the Trinitarian, is reviving an interest in the life and teachings of Calvin, whose memory each reveres.

2. It has been pre-eminently a mission church. About five months after the dedication of the church, Dr. Griffin took part in the ordination of the first missionaries of the American