

Wilderness House Literary Review 9/2

LOST BOSTON
by Anthony M. Sammarco
(Pavilion Books 2014)
www.anovabooks.com

Review by Doug Holder

Every now and then you might see one of those faded, archaic advertisements on a building wall. It appears because the elements eventually wear away layers of paint and collected sediment that covered it. You will see signs hawking elixirs, brand names that arise from the dead; stilted slogans that were once uttered by so many snake oil salesman. Anthony Sammarco, author of *Lost Boston*, is in a way like a force of nature in that he blows away the dust that covers the Boston that is lost to us. As it states on his website: "Even the most beloved buildings, lauded landmarks and treasured modes of transportation can't stave off changing taste, structural degradation and fires forever—and many famous landmarks have succumbed to the passing of time and favor." What this book essentially does is provide an archive of these vanished beloved places ; these institutions that have succumbed to the ravages of time. Through text, and often stunning photographs, Sammarco curates an exhibition of ghosts of the past including: Franklin Place, Old Boston City Hall, Cathedral of the Holy Cross, Boston Coliseum, Revere House(Hotel), Braves Field, and much more.



This book is rich with material, and of course I can't cover the whole waterfront. I treated the book like a buffet and picked and chose what appealed to my taste and fancy.

One such place that I focused on was *Gleason's Publishing Hall*. As displayed in an archival photo the hall was quite impressive. Sammarco writes that it had, "... a colonnade of six monumental Corinthian columns on the facade at the corner of Tremont and Bromfield streets." Frederick Gleason, the owner of the hall was a well-known publisher in the mid-1800s, and he was best known for his illustrated weekly *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room*. He was later known as the father of illustrated journalism. He also published a series of short novels including: *The Doom of the Dolphin*, and *Wharton the Whale-Killer* by Benjamin Barker and Mautrin Murray Ballou, that were read widely. Edgar Allen Poe was published in another well-regarded newspaper of his *The Flag of Our Union*. His weekly paper and the books he published became quite popular and the public would gather in the grand columned hall to browse in his newspaper.

Being an arts editor of our local paper the old *Boston Coliseum* caught my attention. It was located in Art Square now known as Copley Square. Sammarco writes, "William Gibbons Preston, one of the foremost architects in the city, was commissioned to design what was known as the Boston Coliseum. Although not as memorable as the one in Rome, it was 550

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feet long by 350 feet wide and cover 4.5 acres." The structure could seat 100,000. The Coliseum was up in June of 1872 and was demolished in July of 1872. The National Peace Jubilee and International Music Festival was held there in reaction to the carnage of the Franco-Prussian War. As music has charms that sooth the savage breast, the festival was conceived as a sort of balm as well as something to excite the senses. Sammarco writes that they had an impressive list of musical guests from Europe, "Highlights included the Grenadier guards from London, the Garde republican from Paris, the Kaiser Franz regiment from Berlin, as well as Franz Abt, the German songwriter and many famous soloists."

And for you baseball fans-- how about the lost Huntington Avenue Grounds? According to Sammarco: "The Huntington Avenue American league Baseball Grounds were one of the most popular and well-attended baseball fields in Boston in the early 20th Century." A photograph shows the wide expanse of the open-air field that was in the Fenway section of Boston. Cy Young, threw the first perfect game there in 1904. These hallowed grounds were the first home for the Boston Red Sox. Sammarco includes a photo of Mayor John F. Fitzgerald throwing out the first ball of the season in 1910.

As the prayer goes: "Dust to Dust, Ashes to Ashes," but just as Walt Whitman's blade of grass sprung from the ashes of our ancestors, so does Boston in the hands of Anthony Sammarco.

Highly Recommended.