

Part 6 Cambridge

Cambridge

It is difficult to decide where to place Cambridge in this history. Because it extended across our entire stay, starting from the first week. It, not Boston proper, was the center of our universe. Harvard where both mom and dad worked was in Cambridge as was the church we attended so we spent a great deal of time in Cambridge. Plus we always traversed Cambridge whenever we went into Boston. I'll insert it at this point in this volume, but remember that Cambridge was a weekly event for me, and a daily event for mom and dad.

It is difficult to even decide where to begin with Cambridge. It was so many things and each crowds the other out at the moment I start to write. Cambridge was actually a more dominant feature of our lives than Boston itself. Boston was certainly the center of gravity for the area but our lives only impinged on it. The traffic on Storrow Drive and Memorial Drive (both along the Charles River as it flowed eastward to the sea in Boston) was so bad that we didn't willingly venture that direction. Only when there was a specific reason for us to go did we drive. Otherwise we used the MTA to go down town. Cambridge was a place we spent a great deal of time in since mom and dad both worked there and because our church was there.

Mt. Auburn Street

When we drove into Cambridge one of the first streets we used in Cambridge was Mt. Auburn Street which ran through Cambridge and out through Watertown. We entered the street coming from the west on Trapelo Road, whether we drove from Waltham or Belmont. At that point there was a large Star Market on the north side, across from the cemetery. Star Markets were regular super markets, long single-level buildings selling the usual wide spectrum of things - among the new to me ones were large dill pickles in large jars, purchased individually to eat like an ice cream cone. This one is on Beacon Hill but looks like the one at the

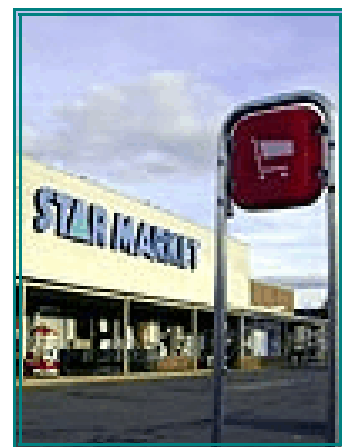


Figure 1

http://www.iamtonyang.com/0211/beacon_st_star_market.jpg

junction of Mt. Auburn Street and Belmont Street. We'd stop there on rare occasions to get something we needed for dinner because it was convenient on our way home from Cambridge.

The Star Market was located, in this map, just below the word Belmont in the bottom right corner of the following map. The "Belmont Street" in that corner is the same we lived on several miles further.

Mt. Auburn Cemetery

The cemetery is the light blue section in this map. The lower end that runs along Mt. Auburn St. is something over half a mile long. That street is a main street that runs from Cambridge to the left out into Watertown. It was 4 lanes with with parking on both sides and street car tracks in the center. Brattle St. coming in from the bottom left starts at Harvard Square but didn't have tracks. Belmont St. did have tracks, but it lost them at the junction with Trapelo Road. The tracks ran out to a turnaround in Waverly. Many

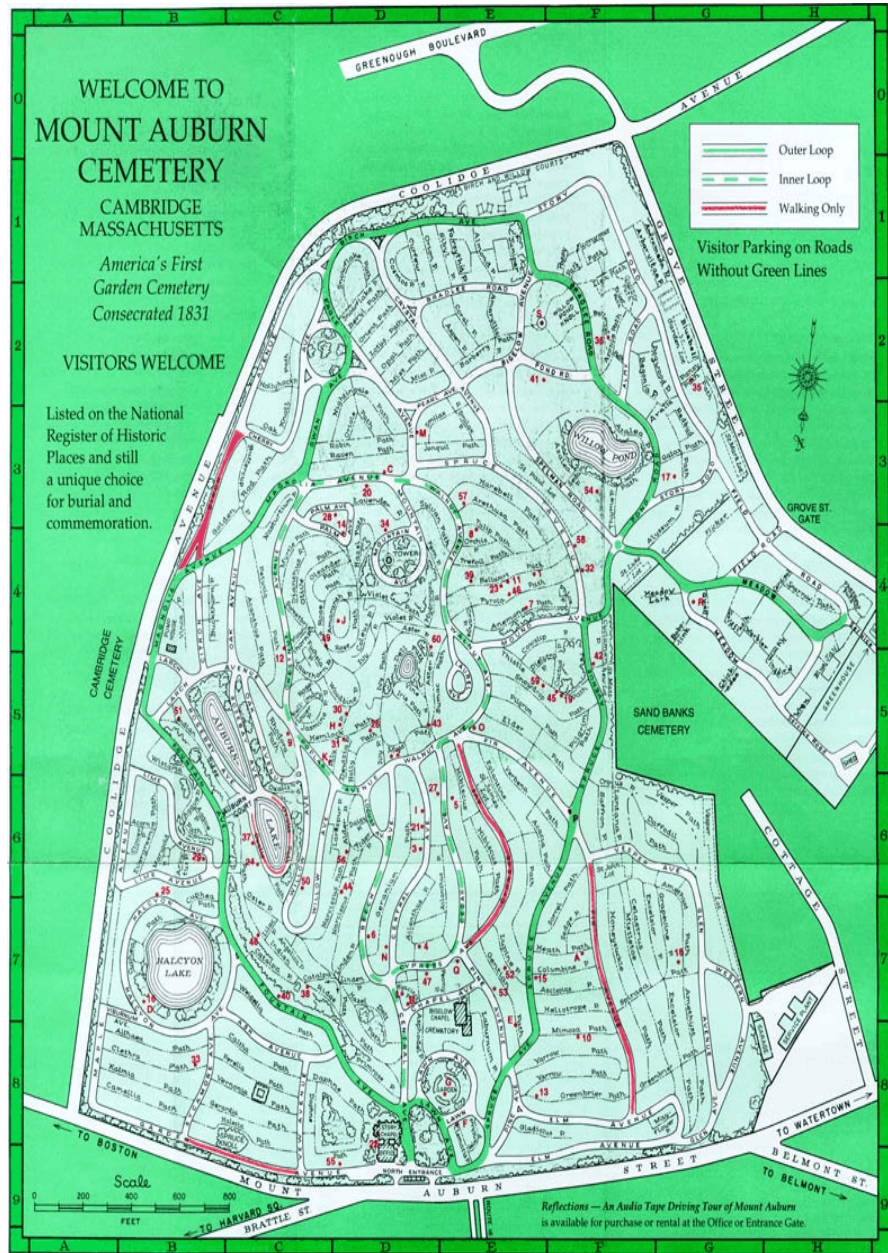
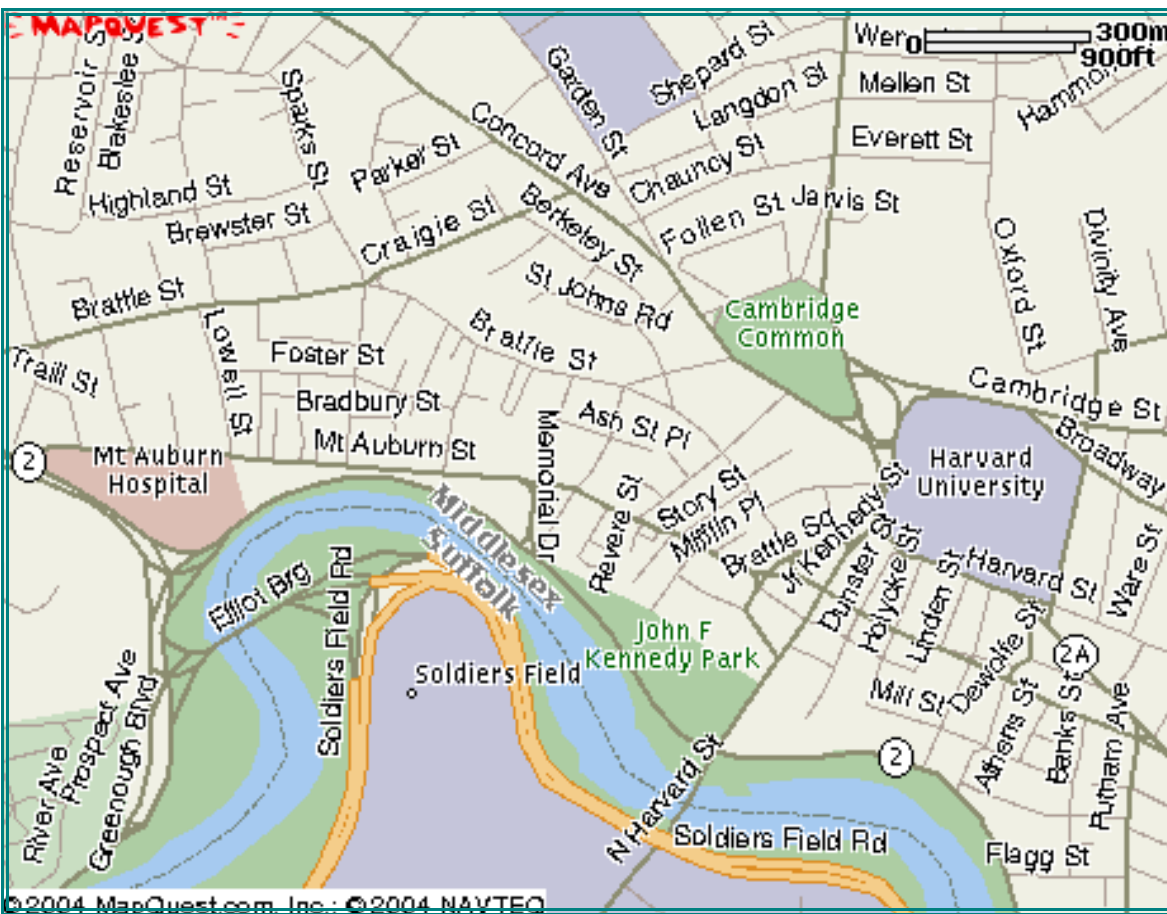


Figure 2 <http://www.lotsaweb.com/wangal/mtauburn/mtauburnmapweb.jpg>

dignitaries and famous people are buried here and attract large number of genealogists and sight-seers each year. We drove around one time I believe but otherwise just observed it each time we went into Cambridge.

Brattle Street

This map gives you a better sense of the geography that I spent a lot of time in because it includes Brattle St. and Harvard. Find the junction of Brattle



St. and Craig St.. That was one of the most confusing intersection we'd ever seen being the junction of five streets that came in from different angles. During work hours, there was always a policeman standing in the center of the large intersection in an elevated box, wearing white gloves, blowing a whistle and giving order to what would otherwise have been bedlam. Another new feature was the fact that during the Christmas Season, drivers who came through this intersection

daily, thereby becoming personally acquainted with this irascible policeman who got huffy and arbitrary when stressed, hurriedly got out of their cars and rushed up to his little stand. They didn't wish him Happy Christmans. They deposited conspicuous tall brown paper sacks, hoping he would remember them on some cold irritating morning in the future.

Brattle street curved eastward and joined what became J.F. Kennedy St. Which turned to the left one block and ended in Harvard Square. Harvard is the violet blocks. Dad worked off Oxford St. Which is located just above the right Harvard Block so he drove through this intersection every day. Mom worked for the married student housing for Harvard in an office that was located on J.F. Kennedy St. so dad would let her off on his way to the MCZ.

Longfellow's House

Find the word "Brattle" in the above map just below Craig St. and you'll notice a long loop drawn across from the "tle" of Brattle on the other side of Brattle St. That is Longfellow Square has a road shaped like that which allows you to drive through it. The Quaker Church was located on the left arm of the loop near the closed end, and our church was located across the loop out on Brattle St. Longfellow's House was located directly across from this loop. The photographer for this image was standing in the lawn that filled the loop, looking across shrubs along Brattle Street to Longfellow's place. The church would be directly to the right of the photographer as s/he took this photo.



Figure 4 <http://libraries.mit.edu/rvc/kidder/kjpegs/C2022-060.jpg>

Behind the photographer is a park that extends through the wide block to Mt. Auburn Street on the other side. The park was landscaped with bushes and trees and was divided into two levels, a concrete stairway of perhaps 5 steps leading from this level down to the other. I spent much time wandering around this little park with girls from the branch on Sunday and during the week when there were youth meetings.

Al Capp & Li'l Abner

What does Al Capp have to do with Brattle Street? Well, he lived there. Several houses west of Longfellow Park on the south side of the street in a large colonial house that had a large front porch with a large ornate globe hanging on a pipe. I never went into the house but I did sit in a car with Rich Hawkes and Dick while we waited for Al Capp's son to come out to go down into Boston with us.

I don't know if you kids liked the comic strip "Li'l Abner" or if it is even familiar to you but I grew up with it. In Vernal before we even went to Seward, lying on the floor on a hot Sunday afternoon trying to figure out what it was that made mom and dad when they read it. Li'l Abner was a big nice uneducated farm boy who had a gorgeous girlfriend Daisy May and an assortment of hilarious characters that Al used to entertain the US for years. This 1950 cover of TIME magazine reflects his fame and these two characters.

In this TIME cover you see Schmoos in the speech "bubbles" for Daisy May and Li'l Abner, creatures that I loved. Denis Kitchen's website has this to say about these creatures:

"Cartoonist Al Capp was already world-famous and a millionaire in 1948 when he introduced an armless pear-shaped character called the Shmoo into his daily "Li'l Abner" strip. The unusual creature loved humans. A Shmoo laid eggs and bottles of Grade A milk in an instant, and would gladly die and change itself into a sizzling steak if its owner merely *looked* at it hungrily. Its skin was fine leather, its eyes made perfect buttons and even

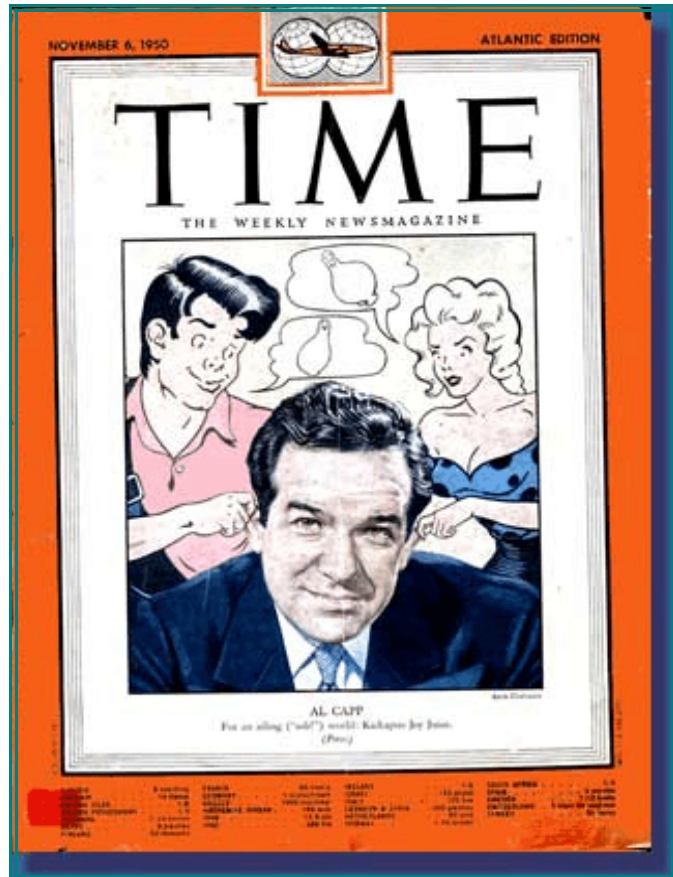


Figure 5 http://www.lambiek.net/capp_a.htm

its whiskers made excellent toothpicks. Shmoos multiplied much faster than rabbits, so owning a pair of Shmoos meant that any family was self-sufficient. " <http://www.deniskitchen.com/docs/new_shmoofacts.html>

This is a better image of the critter from the same website.

I never met Mr. Capp but did get to know one of his sons who was Dick's age. Rich Hawkes was the intermediary. Rich and the son attended the same private school. Private schools were a new phenomenon to me and intimidated the heck out of me. Rich went to "Brown & Nichols", probably the most snooty of the lot in the metropolitan area. The girl equivalent was "Buckingham". Both schools were located in Cambridge and had a formal dress uniform. Boys had to wear blazers, white shirts and ties to classes. My friend Jack Cranney went to "Belmont Hill", another of the private schools, located, not surprisingly, on Belmont Hill in Belmont. Another friend, Charlie Clayton, went to another in Newton named something like "River Country". I always felt like a poor country cousin even around the ones who were my friends.



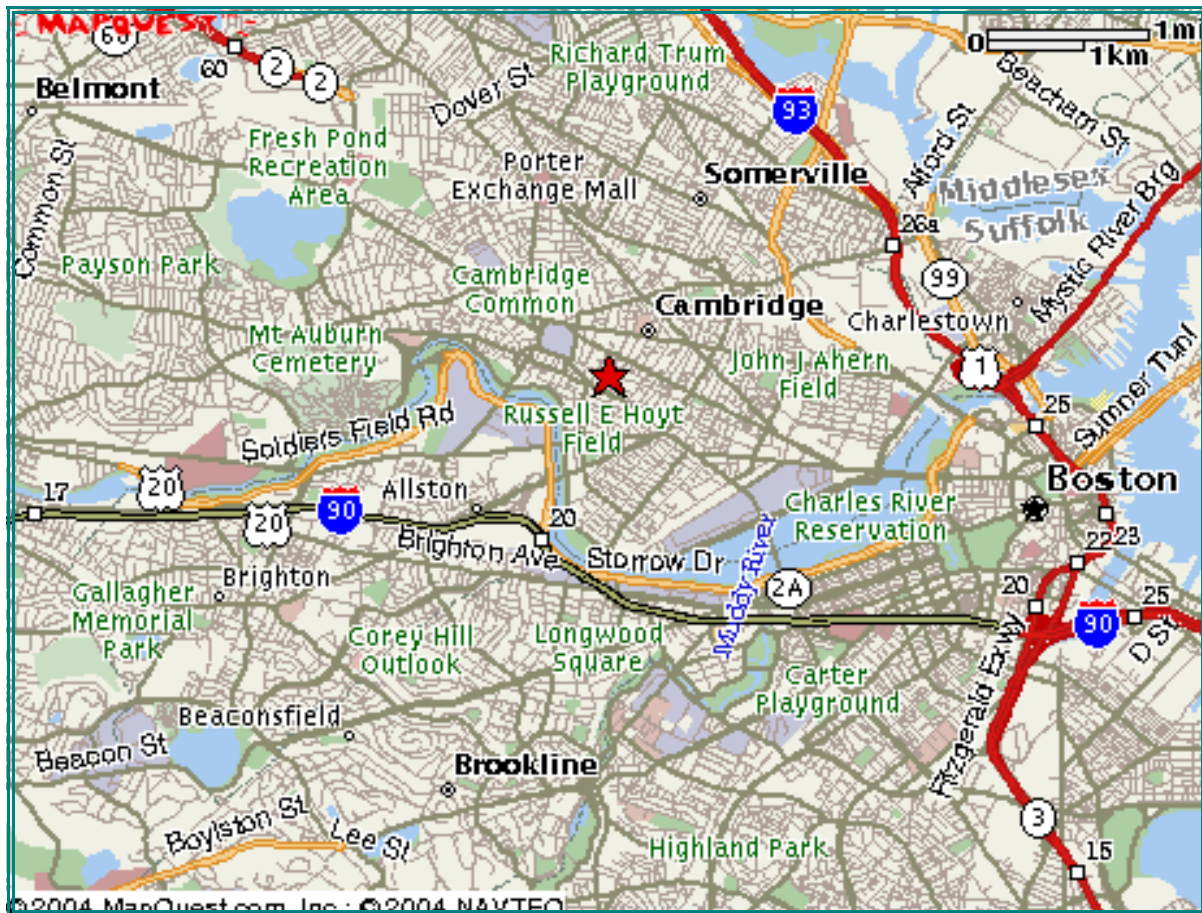
Rich was always getting free tickets to really neat events in Boston because his dad, Earl, was General Manager for the Hearst Syndicate operation in Boston, hence was always being schmoozed in hopes of some good advertising or some such thing. There's no such thing as a free lunch. On this particular Saturday, Rich had 4 tickets to ""Around the World in 80 Days", a lovely movie that you should watch sometime. Dick and I rode the MTA Harvard Square and then and then walked down Concord Avenue to Rich's apartment. Editha then drove us in the huge brand-spanking new gray Buick tank over to pick up Al Capp's son. I don't remember his name but he displayed the intellectual-nerdy humor of privileged private school kids. Sometimes their jokes meant about as much to me as a cover of the NEW YORKER magazine.

His joke of the day had to do with space shots and orbiting animals. Remember, this was a year or so after the Russians sent up Sputnik so space topics were topic du jour (There. Some of their snooty humor) The joke was an elaborate one that went on for a minute or so. The net result of the story was a collection of cows, horses and pigs up in space orbiting the earth. The punch line was something like "That was the first herd shot round the world." Of course, you have to remember the famous line from US History about the battle in Concord between the British and the colonist which has to do with the "first shot heard round the

world." If you didn't remember that, the joke meant nothing. The fact that we had been to Concord down the road a piece somehow added to the experience.

Charles River

The Charles River flowed from the west through Cambridge and Boston into the Atlantic. This map gives a good view of its path. Our home in Belmont is off



the map to the left. Harvard is located right under the word "Cambridge" so you can see how close it is to the river. Two major streets ran right along the banks of the Charles and were major thoroughfares to move traffic into and out of Boston. (You can see the Mystic River Bridge in the upper right corner, the one for which a 2003-4 movie was named.)

MTA

I don't know the name of the organization today but when we lived there the highly developed public transportation system was called the Mass Transit Authority or "MTA". The Kingston Trio immortalized this system in their 1959 hit "Charlie on the MTA", recounting his struggles at various stations along the route. These guys were one of the hottest groups of the time, riding the crest of the folk music wave. A song about our home town made them favorites. This is one of their albums, issued in 1959. I owned it of course as did half of my friends. This is the kind of music, along with Frank Sinatra, that we took to parties at friends' homes or played at school dances.

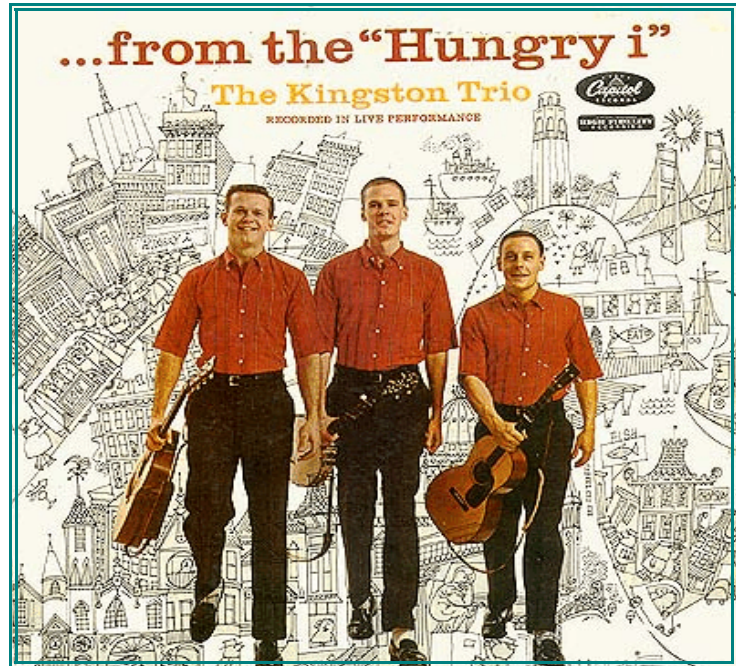


Figure 8

http://tralfaz-archives.com/coverart/K/kingston_trio_hungry.html

I need to spend some time on the MTA because it was my primary source of transportation in Boston other than the family car. It sprawled across the metro area serving what must be several suburbs through a large number of lines that used different kinds of rolling stock including trolleys, busses and subway trains. The system covered the metropolitan area with varying degrees of effectiveness. In the outlying suburbs like Newton, there were few lines to rely on but in Cambridge there were many lines so Cambridgites could basically park their cars and use the MTA if they wanted. Saved time and hassles and gas. However, the lines were basically very limited in their scope even though they may extent 15 miles.

This meant that to get to where you were going, you may have to transfer from one line to another, sometimes more than once. That was no problem, however, because you could get a Transfer Ticket from the conductor to use as your fare on the next line. These transfers were timed, however, so you couldn't save them for later use. You had something like half an hour to use it and if you

didn't, it wasn't considered valid by the next conductor who scrutinized it carefully, in which case you had to pay full fare again.

Trolley Cars

The trolleys were basically small trains that ran on rails set into the roadway powered by DC electric motors that got their power from over head wires through spring-loaded, flexible steel arms tipped with rolling wheels that rolled along the wire. When this wheel jumped across a junction where the line was opened by another connecting line, arcs were created that made noises and bright flashes but didn't cause any harm.



Figure 9 <http://206.103.49.193/boston/htm/bos170.htm>

This trolley is the Northeastern University line that I rode several times. They were designed to be driven from either end, hence the double arms. This one was driven from the left end as you can tell because the overhead arm contacting the overhead electric wire is the arm on the right end of this car. When the trolley hits the end of the line, the conductor raises the arm on the left end of the car and lowers this one, and then enters the "back" end of this car to drive it from that end.

This image gives you an idea of the size of the MTA. This is the trolley yard in



Figure 10 <http://206.103.49.193/boston/htm/bos170.htm>

Watertown, the town that abuts both Waltham and Belmont. This is just a small section of the system so you get an idea of how large it was.

This image shows a trolley on Mt. Auburn Street (which naturally is in Cambridge) at the entrance to the Harvard Subway Station, a line that we rode many times. I don't remember the lines well enough but imagine that this line is the one that we would ride when we walked over to Trapelo Road in Belmont and boarded a trolley to go to Harvard Square.



Figure 11 <http://206.103.49.193/boston/htm/bos170.htm>

Trolley Busses

These critturs are busses that run on pneumatic tires instead of on steel rails but they are powered by electric motors rather than internal combustion or diesel engines. Their power from the overhead lines like the train trolleys do. In this case , however, there are two spring-loaded flexible metal poles that extend upward to connect with a pair of electric lines. It was not unusual for one of both of these poles to pop off of the wires when the driver was making a turn, particularly a tight



Figure 12 <http://206.103.49.193/boston/htm/bos123.htm>

turn or one where he ran too far out away from the wires. In that case the bus just stopped functioning so the driver would disgustedly get out of the bus, go to the back, grab hold of the ropes that ran from reels on the back of the bus and up to the end of the poles. Then he'd pull the poles down below the wires and, while holding tightly to the ropes, maneuver that wheel-end of the pole over the proper

wire. Then he'd get back in the bus, trying to overlook the passengers who were pointedly holding out their wrists, exaggeratedly examining their wrist watches to see how late they were going to be THIS time. Hope they got paid enough for the guff they had to take.

Subways

This subway train is above ground obviously. That's how they ran in Boston, in underground tubes alternating with rails at ground level and other rails that were elevated, hence the term "elevated". This particular image shows the Gillette factory in the background, a familiar sight that I'd pass every weekend when I went downtown Boston to work for the Hearst Syndicate.



Figure 13 <http://206.103.49.193/boston/htm/bos123.htm>