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A Mirror of Boston: Faneuil Hall at the Turn of the Century

By

Christopher Harris

When, on October 27, 1902, Frederick Stimson, the Democratic candidate for Congress in the 12th District of Massachusetts said that “Socialism would be slavery,” he was probably talking as much from frustration as from belief. Socialism was on the rise in Massachusetts in 1902. For the Democratic Party, the Socialist vote, along with that of other splinter parties, such as the Prohibition and Labor Parties, frequently meant certain defeat by the Republicans. That November, the third party vote meant the difference between victory and defeat in many elections, including the governorship, lieutenant governorship and at least seven state senate seats. Socialist James Carey was elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives from Haverhill. Statewide, the Socialists polled over 10% of the vote, receiving close to 40,000 out of the 382,000 votes cast.¹

Stimson’s slur did not go uncontested. Within two days, William Mailly, the Socialist Party secretary, challenged him to debate socialism with a representative from the Party. While he begged off until after the election, Stimson did agree to debate after a second challenge, although he wanted the venue to be Harvard College rather than Faneuil Hall as Mailly suggested. Mailly persisted, and finally Stimson agreed to debate James Carey at Faneuil Hall on February 7th, 1903.

¹ *A Souvenir of Massachusetts Legislators, 1903*, Vol. XII (Stoughton, MA: A.M. Bridgman).

Much is known about the debate today because Stimson and the Old Corner Bookstore published an enlarged and enhanced version of his debate presentation for public distribution. While the debate presumably lasted a few hours in Faneuil Hall, the published booklet ran forty-eight pages and was replete with tables and statistics.² Unfortunately, the booklet leaves us in the dark as to what Mr. Carey had to say that night. It is significant that the Socialists felt comfortable in Faneuil Hall while Frederick Stimson opted for Harvard. By 1903, Faneuil Hall was not only Boston's icon of freedom, but also a heavily used meeting hall. All varieties of political groups, from Socialists to Unionists, Suffragettes, Anti-Imperialists, School Reformers and others found Faneuil Hall the appropriate forum for their meetings. This study examines Boston through the lens of one place: Faneuil Hall. By identifying and analyzing some of the events that took place in Faneuil Hall between 1865 and 1910, including two major debates over the use of the Hall, this study relates these events to the broader historical landscape and shifting political power of Boston during this period.

An examination of Faneuil Hall suggests another side of the story. Between 1865 and the beginning of the twentieth century, the use of the Hall evolved along with the political and cultural evolution of the city. These are years containing the story of Brahmin decline, rising Irish political hegemony and the relative decline of the importance of Boston itself. While the high culture of the old Boston families may have been in retreat, late Victorian Boston was a place of great change, full of ideas, groups, movements, reforms and political action. Popular culture was lively, vigorous, and widely experienced. If a democracy connotes a society and government with broad participation and public access for all types of individuals, the Boston of this period may have been more democratic than ever before or since. A broader range of public philosophies and ideas were more widely discussed than at any other time in Boston's history. Over 1500 events took place in Faneuil Hall between 1865 and 1910, with most them taking place after 1900. The number and type of events in Faneuil Hall is real evidence of the quality of public life during this period.

² Frederick Stimson, *Socialism: A Speech Delivered in Faneuil Hall* (Boston: Old Corner Book Store, 1903), i-iii.

Because the uses of Faneuil Hall had to be approved by the Board of Alderman, the City Council Minutes allow us to accurately detail the uses of the Hall between 1855 to 1910. Each event required an affirmative, sometimes *pro forma*, vote. For this study, each event had to be classified to one of eight categories. The names of the petitioning individuals or organizing group make clear what the purpose is for most events. Many entries in the minutes explicitly describe the purpose of the Hall use. Any event where the purpose was unclear or arguable have been classified as “other.” Nearly 85% of all events can be described by the seven discrete categories: religious, political, patriotic, fraternal, entertainment, trade convention, or union meeting.³

Before 1865, Boston was growing rapidly, in both population and in the physical land size of the city. Annexations of adjacent towns were one way to expand, and they increased the city size by more than twenty thousand acres between 1804 and 1874. Central Boston itself grew larger, as harbor areas, especially tidal flats like Back Bay, were filled in. The original Boston peninsula was increased from 783 acres to 1829 acres.⁴ At the same time, the population soared, pushed by a flood of immigrants. From 1810 to 1850, the population increased four-fold to 136,881. What’s more, by 1855, a third of the city was Irish. Between 1850 and 1880, the population tripled again.

This enormous growth not only changed the make-up of the population and ultimately the political balance of power, but also shifted the centers of population. These shifts and the growth of institutions that served these population shifts affected the use of Faneuil Hall. In earlier periods, the Dock Square area of Faneuil Hall was close to the living areas of those wealthier people who controlled Boston’s political life. By the Civil War, the once desirable Fort Hill area had become an Irish slum. Boston’s elite and their institutions had

³ Identifying the purposes of event meeting at Faneuil Hall is less than an exact science. Frequently, the Hall was rented in the name of the individual. To identify the particular use one needs to identify not only who the individual was, what the individual was likely to have been involved in at the time of the petition. With luck one can then locate some newspaper coverage or advertisement for the events. Many events have been identified as “Other” because of the difficulty of doing this with reasonable clarity.

⁴ South Boston was annexed in 1804; East Boston, 1833; Roxbury, 1868; Dorchester, 1870; Brighton, Charlestown and West Roxbury in 1874.

moved further west.⁵ The Faneuil Hall area stood in a market area at the foot of Long Wharf, at the edge of notorious Ann Street, which was not the type of neighborhood men and women of breeding would be eager to travel to, especially at night. By 1851, the wealthiest Bostonians were concentrated around Beacon Hill, Park Street, Temple Place, Pemberton Square, Summer Street and Colonnade Row along Tremont Street. Even the closest of these areas, Pemberton Square, was still closer to newer public halls built farther west than to Faneuil Hall. The Melodeon theater, Tremont Temple, the Music Hall and the Boston Theater all represented competition to Faneuil Hall for the public meetings of the day.

After 1865, as immigration continued, the population continued to swell and the population center moved west. By the 1880s, much of the immigration was non-Irish. Jews and Christians were coming from the countries of eastern and southern Europe. During most of the period from 1865-1900, Faneuil Hall was not a widely used forum for political, intellectual or patriotic meetings. While meetings of political importance sometimes gravitated to the Hall, the symbolism of the place was more honored as an icon of freedom than as a living forum. Only in the later years of the century, as governmental control passed from the Protestant Yankee aristocracy, did popular access to the Hall become a regular reality.

This was a period, however, that provided large middle-class audiences for meetings and discussions of virtually every conceivable topic. The famous high Boston culture was in full flower. Until 1875, intellectual forums continued as the major entertainment in Boston. Lyceums, lecture series (such as the Parker Lectures), courses (such as the Lowell Free Lectures), temperance and women's suffrage meetings, and religious lectures all flourished in settings such as the Music Hall, Tremont Temple, Horticultural Hall and Institute Hall. Only in the mid-1870s did this trend begin to decline under the weight of higher ticket prices and more frivolous topics. The high Brahmin culture began to retreat before a new popular culture in this period.⁶

⁵ For a thorough discussion of Boston's geographic and demographic growth and changes, see Walter Muir Whitehall, *Boston: A Topographical History*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1968).

⁶ The beginning of competition from more secular entertainments such as music, drama and lectures on subjects like mesmerism, spiritualism, as well as

Under the original City Charter and the changes of 1855 and later of 1887, the City Council exercised an amazingly detailed control of life in Boston. Virtually every public act in Boston required the approval of the City Council. Not even an electric light could be placed on the street or a wire hung without explicit action, and usually voting, by the Council. Under the charter changes of 1855, it was typical practice for the Council to have to explicitly license every concert, stage play or other entertainment that took place in Boston. Later, concert series could be licensed for entire seasons, but the licensing had to be re-applied for each year, and voted on by the Council.

At the same time, the political climate was beginning to change. Boston had been incorporated as a city under the City Charter of 1822. The Charter had been revised in 1855, but even under the revisions, most administrative control and power was invested in the City Council rather than in the mayor. By the early post-war period this City Council, with a Board of Aldermen elected at-large and a Common Council of nearly sixty elected by districts, slowly began to reflect the demographic changes occurring in the city. Ultimately, there were seventy-five Common Councilors. While Brahmins, composing an interesting political mix of Republicans and a few Democrats, still controlled both chambers, the new Bostonians, especially the solidly Democratic Irish, up a sizable minority. In the 1880s, this Irish minority began to gain control and assert its power.

While most people associate pre-Civil War Boston as the period of intense reform, civic involvement and reform movements had in fact proliferated much more widely by 1900. The Yankee classes had reacted in a number of ways to the flood of immigrants and the attendant problems that seemed to overrun Boston. Many began to focus on their business interests and retire socially to their own clubs and circles, and geographically to the suburbs or wealthy ghettos, like

the popular shows that became vaudeville, date to this period. One letter writer, complimenting a *Transcript* editorial, in 1876, bemoans the commercialization of the Lyceum culture, stating that “the effect of lyceum bureaus to `popularize’ their courses has led to much that is mere entertainment....If charlatans who pander only to the lower tastes occupy the platform, what may we expect as the result?....” *The Boston Evening Transcript*, October 9, 1876.

the Back Bay. Others, especially in the 1880s and later, focused their efforts on new types of reform or more sweeping expansions of past efforts.⁷ The Yankee reform model was ethnocentric, seeking to help only the “worthy” poor and assimilate them into the ranks of a Boston society ready to follow the leadership of their better classes. Some of the same philanthropists were deeply involved in nativist efforts to restrict immigration that started in earnest in the 1890s.⁸ At the same time, the immigrant Irish, through sheer numbers and time and familiarity with their adopted surroundings, began to organize, vote, and run for and hold office.

The Irish and Yankee battle for control of civic life were two of the forces that shaped turn-of-the-century Boston. Labor unions became a force to be reckoned with, especially with the rise of the American Federation of Labor member trade unions, the Women’s Trade Union League (1903), and later the formation of the Industrial Workers of the World (1905), who sought to organize the legions of unskilled and semi-skilled factory workers. In Boston, trade unions won wide acceptance, and by the administration of Josiah Quincy municipal contracts were to be bid out only to union contractors.⁹ Nationally, unions won about half the strikes called in the 1880s and 1890s. Some of the hundreds of work stoppages (1,486 in 1886 alone) led to violence and a rising fear of class violence and radicalism on the part of the middle-class.¹⁰

The 1890s were a period of great economic crisis. The Panic of 1893 and the resultant lingering depression saw widespread desperation among the poor in Boston and unemployment rates of 25%. Many of the intellectual liberal elite, never pleased by the rise of the crass, capitalist post-war culture they saw, moved toward advocating

⁷ See Nathan Higgins, *Protestants Against Poverty: Boston’s Charities 1870-1900* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing, 1971) and Arthur Mann, *Yankee Reformers* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1954).

⁸ Higgins, 155-156.

⁹ Higgins, 58.

¹⁰ Tom Juravich, William F. Hartford, and James R. Green, *Commonwealth of Toil: Chapters in the History of Massachusetts Workers and Their Unions* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 45ff.

Socialism, with men such as Thomas Wentworth Higginson, John Boyle O'Reilly and William Deans Howells openly espousing it. Indeed, the Catholic O'Reilly stated that "Socialism is the hope of the people."¹¹ The administration of Josiah Quincy was in many ways an experiment in municipal socialism, recognizing the city's role in providing work for the unemployed and building city facilities like bathhouses, playgrounds, schools and other improvements on an unprecedented basis.

If reformers, unions and politics represented three of the great forces in Boston, then the Catholic Church represented the fourth. It was the one that perhaps ultimately had the greatest influence over grassroots democracy in Boston. Starting with the influence of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *De Rerum Novarum* in 1893 and accelerating greatly with the episcopacy of the archconservative William Cardinal O'Connell, the Church became a force against radicalism and reform. Whereas Archbishop John Williams, O'Connell's predecessor, led his growing flock to keep a low profile and assimilate into the secular Yankee culture and economy, and opinion leaders like John Boyle O'Reilly sought to build bridges to the Yankee community, the Church began to turn against liberalism after *De Rerum Novarum*.¹² Indeed, socialism was denounced as one of the great evils of humanity. With O'Connell's ascendance in 1907, Catholics were governed under a mantle of a separatist, strict orthodoxy. O'Connell's Catholic Boston was rabidly anti-communist, anti-socialist, militantly pro-American and respectful of the rights of the wealthy and property. Mixing with Protestants was not only frowned upon: it was taught to be a great sin.¹³

All of these forces attempted to grapple with the changes wrought by immigration, industrialization and poverty. By 1900, there was a diversity of social and political action greater than any period prior and unlike any period since. Early reformers had focused on the newly

¹¹ Mann, *Yankee Reformers*, 37.

¹² Mann, 47-48.

¹³ Paula Kane, *Separatism and Subculture: Boston Catholicism, 1900-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of NC Press, 1994). Arthur Mann also describes in some detail the changes in Boyle's successor editor of the *Boston Pilot*, James Jeffrey Roche, after the influence of *De Rerum Novarum*.

arrived masses to educate, “uplift” and assimilate themselves. Brahmin social clubs proliferated, but so did the more “professional” social work of Robert Woods and the Settlement House movement and the “professionalization” of the old Brahmin poor relief charities.¹⁴ Popular culture thrived. The City Music Department sponsored 577 band and orchestra concerts at sites all over Boston in the six years between 1903 and 1908.¹⁵ Working people banded together in fraternal groups, trade unions and religious and ethnic associations. If democracy is measured by the opportunity of the masses to participate in the political life of their society, Boston in 1900 was a democracy unlike anything the city has seen since. No single political boss or even group of bosses held any lasting control over the city government since neither the Yankees nor Irish could gain power in the city without the help of the other. Neither the Democratic City Committee, nor the informal ward bosses’ Board of Strategy, nor the Yankee dominated Good Government Association exercised any lasting control during this period. Instead, an uneasy and ever-changing web of alliances influenced each election and worked in tandem, or against, to the personal popularity of individuals.¹⁶ All of this was reflected in the uses of Faneuil Hall.

In the post-Civil War period, access and control of Faneuil Hall was a prerogative of the Boston City government. Throughout the nineteenth century, city government was dominated by the City Council, more by the upper chamber, the Board of Aldermen, than the lower chamber, the Common Council. While public memory held Faneuil Hall out as an icon of free speech with access for all, the reality had always been something less. Use of the Hall had been denied a number of times before 1860, either by the city government or by direct mob action. In 1847, a temperance meeting was broken up by a mob. In 1850, a Free Soil meeting met the same fate. Because of the controversy surrounding his support of the Compromise of 1850, the

¹⁴ Higgins, 128ff.

¹⁵ Music Department Annual Report, *Boston City Records*, 1909.

¹⁶ Paul Kleppner, “From Part to Factions: The Dissolution of Boston’s Majority Party, 1876-1908”, in *Boston 1700-1980: The Evolution of Urban Politics*, ed. by Formisano and Burns (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984).

Board of Alderman had refused Daniel Webster use of the Hall to speak in 1850.¹⁷ Abolitionists were also turned away.

Since it was both an assembly place and a city-owned facility, this detailed control was a fact of life for anyone wanting to use Faneuil Hall. Under the rules of the Charter and the practice of the Council, to use Faneuil Hall one had to petition for it and obtain Council approval, usually by the Board of Aldermen only. Which chamber held authority for its use was never totally clear. There were specific rules for use. All petitions for use had to have at least fifty signatures. Petitioners had to pay the city for rental: \$20 for day use, \$25 for evening use and \$50 for a dinner. They were also required to absorb the costs of any police protection required as well as for any damages caused.¹⁸ In a period when the average wage was perhaps \$300 a year, these rental and ancillary costs were significant barriers to popular use.

In the 1880s, when the governmental balance of power began to shift, the rules began to be eased. Free use of Faneuil Hall was proposed to the City Council as early as 1878.¹⁹ The next year the rental fees were lowered to \$10 for a day rental and \$15 for an evening rental. In 1888, the practice of waiving the fees began, first for veterans groups, then for charitable groups. By 1895, the rules were changed to allow waiver of use fees for any groups that requested it.²⁰ Petitions with less than fifty signatures were also accepted. As the political balance in Boston government began to change, not only were the costs of using the Hall lowered over time in this period, but the officially sanctioned uses were broadened as well. Although religious observances had been rarely permitted previously, in March of 1874, the Board of Aldermen voted to “permit religious functions on an experimental basis.”²¹ The use of Faneuil Hall increased markedly between the 1870s and the 1890s. The types of groups that utilized

¹⁷ John Koren, *Boston: 1822-1922* (Boston: City of Boston Publishing Department, 1923).

¹⁸ *Boston City Council Minutes*, December 23, 1878; also April 28, 1879.

¹⁹ *Minutes*, April 14, 1879.

²⁰ *Minutes*, November 25, 1895.

²¹ *Minutes*, March 9, 1874.

Faneuil Hall changed as well, mirroring the changing political climate in Boston.

It is worth noting some of the singular events that took place in Faneuil Hall to more completely mirror the Boston of 1865-1910. The year 1870 saw the funeral of Anson Burlingame, the versatile diplomat perhaps best known for causing Preston Brooks, Charles Sumner's congressional assailant, to beg out of a duel. After the Great Fire of 1872, Faneuil Hall was used for several months as the replacement for the burnt-out Post Office. The Hall was used twice by the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanics Association for their month-long trade exhibitions in 1869 and 1874, prior to building their own building in the Back Bay area. When Ben Butler's followers shanghaied the State Democratic Convention in Worcester in 1878, the State Committee quickly called a new convention in Faneuil Hall and nominated Judge J.G. Abbott as the candidate of "Faneuil Hall Democrats." The Hall saw memorial services for the old Radicals such as Charles Sumner and Wendell Phillips (1883), was used as a Christmas soup kitchen for the homeless (from 1889 through the 1890s), and hosted a national Grand Army of the Republic encampment (1890). The period saw speakers such as Charles Sumner (1865), Frederick Douglass (1865 and 1873), Wendell Phillips (1865, 1873 and 1875), George McClellan (1876), James Garfield and James G. Blaine (both speaking on sound money in 1878), Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. (speaking on expanding public parks in 1876) and Josiah Quincy (1897). It was also the customary site for Boston mayoral inaugurations until 1918.

As the costs of using the Hall were lowered and the City Council make-up became more sympathetic to the average working-class citizen, the new groups were lent the use of the Hall. In the earlier years, the political users tended to be the Regular Republican and Democratic organizations. In later years, after some attempts to keep them out, the political groups were just as likely to be the Socialists, Prohibitionists and Colored Republicans. In 1870, the most likely labor groups would be teachers or firemen. In the 1890s, bootblacks, newsboys, garment workers, railroad ticket agents and conductors were likely users of Faneuil Hall. The 1890s also saw many more meetings of organized, rather than ad-hoc, charitable and fraternal groups, reflecting the growth of these groups in the late nineteenth century. Yankee groups were first, but after 1900, other ethnic

fraternal groups such as the Knights of Columbus, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, and the Catholic Order of Foresters were just as likely to be users. The Masons, Knights Templar, Order of the Eastern Star, Sons of the Revolution, Daughters of the American Revolution, and Salvation Army were all frequent users of Faneuil Hall.

Between 1869 and 1909 the average annual use of the Hall increased eight-fold, from less than thirteen events per year to more than ninety (see Table I). While religious and entertainment uses stagnated, usage for political and labor meetings skyrocketed after 1890.

The Boston of the early 1870s and the late 1880s were two different worlds. In the earlier period, traditional Protestant Bostonians still clearly held the balance of power. By 1887, the new forces were gaining control. Two incidents showcase Faneuil Hall as a mirror of these changes. The first was the initiative by a number of Yankee City Council members in 1876 to move the finest paintings in Faneuil Hall to the Museum of Fine Arts and replace them with copies. The second incident concerned the efforts of Protestant Bostonians and their allies to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Queen Victoria's reign with a banquet at Faneuil Hall and the subsequent reaction of the Irish-controlled Common Council.

The Museum of Fine Arts was founded in 1870. First housed in the Boston Athenaeum, a larger new facility was opened in Copley Square on July 3, 1876. With the memory of the Great Fire of 1872 still relatively fresh in mind, there had been discussion about the fire risk to Faneuil Hall in 1875.²² Despite this, only minor roof and floor repairs were done in May 1875.²³

The City Council had a standing joint committee on Faneuil Hall. In May of 1876, that committee made the recommendation that the Faneuil Hall paintings by Gilbert Stuart and by John Singleton Copley be moved to the new Museum of Fine Arts and that \$2000 be authorized to replace them in Faneuil Hall with copies. The reason given for doing this was the threat of fire in Faneuil Hall. Heated

²² Cited in *The Faneuil Hall Markets: An Historical Study*. Compiled by the Boston Redevelopment Authority (Boston: The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, 1969).

²³ *Boston City Council Minutes*, May 6, 1875.

debate ensued in both Council chambers. Those opposing the action came mostly from the poorer areas like the North End and West End. They argued that the Museum of Fine Arts was no safer than Faneuil Hall. Those supporting the move tended to represent more affluent districts such as Beacon Hill, Pemberton Square, West Roxbury and Dorchester.²⁴ They argued that the paintings could be better cared for and protected in the Museum of Fine Arts and that the Stuart painting of George Washington alone was valued at \$100,000. They also asserted that more people would see the paintings at the Museum since an average of 2,000 visitors a day went to the facility versus 200 a day at Faneuil Hall.²⁵ The Common Council vote to remove the paintings succeeded with a vote of 34-24, with 13 absent or abstaining.²⁶

The issue represented a clear Brahmin victory in privatizing what was essentially public property. The spacious new Museum of Fine Arts was in need of prestigious paintings, and the paintings by Stuart and Copley from Faneuil Hall fit that definition. Public access was an issue proponents of the move danced around. While Faneuil Hall admission was free, the Museum charged a quarter for admission, and was free on Saturdays and Sundays only.²⁷ If the Museum of Fine Arts was better attended, it was no doubt by the more affluent who could afford the admission. It is worth noting that at no time in the debate did anyone suggest fixing the stated problem: repairing, securing and fire proofing Faneuil Hall. Nor did anyone suggest the other paintings in

²⁴ See the *Boston Municipal Register*, 1876, 64-68 for the make up of the Common Council and Board of Aldermen.

²⁵ *Boston City Council Minutes*, November 2, 1876.

²⁶ Those voting for the removal included Uriel Crocker, brother of George Crocker, a founder of the Boston Memorial Association. See *Men of Progress: One Thousand Biographical Sketches and Portraits of Leaders in Business and Professional Life in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts*. Compiled under the supervision of Richard Herndon; ed. By Edwin M. Bacon (Boston: New England Magazine, 1896), 31-32.

²⁷ *King's Dictionary of Boston* (Cambridge: Moses King, 1883), 300.

the Hall, including the famous *Webster versus Hayne* painting by Healy, be moved.²⁸

While the new political forces clearly lost the battle over the paintings in 1876, by 1887 power had shifted in their favor. The first Irish mayor, Hugh O'Brien, was in office. Other Irish politicians like Patrick Collins were finding broader acceptance and success. The retreat of Yankee Boston to business, the arts and a more private life was in full stride. Running parallel to the intellectual shift from religion and politics to the arts was a renewed enthusiasm for things European, especially English.²⁹ The Episcopal Church began to replace Unitarianism as the Brahmin religion of choice. Educated Bostonians spent considerable time in Europe. While Darwin, Spencer, Dickens (who visited Boston in 1869) and others had much to do with this fascination with English culture, some of this new Anglo-philia grew in reaction to the rough, rising, aggressive Irish-American and other immigrants that Brahmins saw themselves being surrounded by.

At this later date, Faneuil Hall once again provided the backdrop for a clash clearly representative of the changing Boston scene. Quite unusually, on June 20, 1887, a petition was presented to the Board of Aldermen for use of Faneuil Hall that same evening. While the City Council minutes indicated no debate on the petition, some must have occurred off the record. The Board Chairman was noted as stating that no future petition would be acted on that was not submitted at least one week in advance, so there must have been some discussion of at least that issue, which was on a Monday.³⁰ On the following Thursday, when the Common Council met, there was plenty of debate, this time on the record. The Monday meeting turned out to be a celebration of

²⁸ In 1850, the Yankee dominated Board of Alderman refused to allow Webster access to Faneuil Hall. By 1876, they refused to let him leave.

²⁹ Van Wyck Brooks, *New England: Indian Summer 1865-1915* (New York: E.P.Dutton, 1940), 140ff., for a discussion of the Anglicization of Boston cultural and the growth of the Boston aesthete. When Walter and Elizabeth Cabot moved to their new house in Brookline, Mr. Cabot imported and planted more than 300 shrubs and trees from England (*More Than Common Powers of Persuasion: The Diary of Elizabeth Rogers Mason Cabot*, [Boston: Beacon Press, 1991]).

³⁰ *Boston City Council Minutes*, June 20, 1887.

the fiftieth anniversary of Queen Victoria's coronation. A resolution was presented for Common Council approval that:

...deeply deplores the fact that Faneuil Hall, consecrated to liberty by the words of Adams, of Otis, of Webster, of Sumner, and of Phillips, has been devoted to the laudation and homage of a government that has ever been the opponent of those democratic principles.³¹

Heated debate ensued. Defenders of the meeting described Victoria: "...The best queen that the world has ever seen is celebrating her 50th anniversary upon the throne of the country that leads the civilization of the 19th century."³² Ultimately, the resolution passed 37-19, as several Yankee members, reconnecting with the Anglo-phobia of their youth and the Democratic roots of their power, voted with the Irish majority in deploring the meeting. The vote would have been even more lopsided had not several members decided to oppose it in the interest of supporting free speech in Faneuil Hall.

The controversy underscored several developments now in full flower in Boston. Clearly, the new majority had the old Yankees on the run. Presenting the petition at the last minute without stating a purpose seems to have been an attempt to avoid debate and not risk being denied the use of the Hall. That the motion lost by such a margin shows the strength of the new governing majority. The issue also left the Common Council challenging the Board of Aldermen's right to control access to Faneuil Hall.³³

Nevertheless, the following year, the same British-American Association was able to use Faneuil Hall in order to celebrate the organization's fiftieth anniversary. This time the petition went to the Board of Alderman, where Yankees still held on, who approved the petition by a 7-4 vote.³⁴ No protest was made in the Common Council,

³¹ *Minutes*, June 23, 1887.

³² *Minutes*, June 23, 1887.

³³ *Minutes*, June 23, 1887.

³⁴ *Minutes*, May 7, 1888.

the political point having had been made the year before. There existed no need to actually try to restrict access to the Hall and risk broad public backlash for restricting free speech.

After that, only socialists actually had Faneuil Hall denied to them (the Jewish Socialist Labor Party in 1894). By the following year, socialist groups become regular users of the Hall. Censorship by the City Council was more subtle. Veterans and more mainstream groups were allowed to petition for use of the Hall at the last minute, in some cases getting formal approval even after the date of the event. But when the Colored National Baptist Convention petitioned for use in 1897, they waited almost six months to get approval, which came two days before the event.

Between 1875 and the 1890s, the condition of Faneuil Hall continued to deteriorate. Virtually nothing had been done to repair or improve it. By 1894, the building was in sad shape. The fire commissioners decided to cease using the bell in the Faneuil Hall tower because of the dangerous condition of the tower. A journalist reporting at the time found the building to be in a serious condition.³⁵ The Superintendent of Buildings examined the structure and recommended to the City Council that \$45,000 in repairs and improvements be made, which included fireproofing the building. Still, nothing was done until Mayor Josiah Quincy forwarded a letter from the Daughters of the American Revolution to the City Council deploring the condition of the Hall and asking the City Government to do something to save it. The D.A.R. had used the hall in September 1896 and found it not in keeping with their genteel and patriotic expectations. With the support of the activist Mayor, the Council moved to appropriate funds for repair and Faneuil Hall closed on October 18, 1898. It reopened in late 1899. By then, the \$45,000 estimate had grown into an \$80,000 appropriation that eventually cost \$105,000. Most of the interior wood framing was removed and replaced with iron. The front entrance was also improved. It is ironic, in a period of ascending Irish political power, that it took a Brahmin Mayor and the D.A.R. to get the work done to save Faneuil Hall.

After the reopening of Faneuil Hall in late 1899 following the renovation, use of the building climbed to record levels. Many of the events were of the same type as had been common in the post-Civil

³⁵ *The Boston Post*, May 17, 1894.

War years: veterans meetings, conventions, and state and city-wide political meetings. But many events represented new uses. As immigrants continued to flood into areas that were traditional for new arrivals like the North End and the West End, these tenement-filled areas became scenes of incredible crowding. The North End reached a population density of 125,000 people per square mile, higher than Manhattan's density at its peak.³⁶ In such crowded areas there were few community centers of any size. North End Catholic churches were few, old (and mostly recycled Protestant buildings, like St. Stephen's) and over-crowded. In such an environment, private space was rare and semi-public space, the type where people can meet, freely discuss issues, convince others to take action and/or organize themselves into groups, was scarce.³⁷

The City owned and rented out meeting rooms in many wards, but these were to be rented for non-political purposes only. Political clubs existed, such as Martin Lomasney's Hendricks Club in the West End, but they were obviously controlled by the organization whose club it was. One was not likely to form a new independent political or social action group under the hard gaze of the followers of an existing ward machine. The one neutral ground open to the working-man, public and private at once, was the saloon. Saloons provided environments where people could meet and discussions could take place. They frequently had meeting rooms where a new organization could meet, coalesce and grow.

Of course, saloons were anathema to the "better" classes of Boston and were steadily under attack from temperance advocates, both Protestant and Catholic. It was this pressure that led to the city ordinance in 1899 limiting the number of saloon licenses in the city to 1000. This had the effect of raising the cost of the license and the barriers to less wealthy men entering the business. Since more saloons than that were already in business and mostly downtown, it limited the number opening in the city's newer suburban neighborhoods. The

³⁶ Douglass Shand-Tucci, *Built in Boston: City and Suburb, 1800-1950* (Amherst, MA: University of MA Press, 1978), 95.

³⁷ See the discussion of Perry Duis on the distinction of private, public and semi-public spaces in *The Saloon: Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston, 1880-1920* (Urbana, IL: University of IL Press, 1983), 4ff.

licensing board also pushed to keep new establishments on main thoroughfares and tried to keep them out of the neighborhoods. This pressure, plus the need to recapture the high licensing investment, pushed saloons into high traffic areas. In fact, even before the license ceiling law, saloons were overwhelmingly concentrated in the busiest areas. For example, in the 1880s, there were ninety-five saloons within three blocks of City Hall.³⁸ The South Bay, with its railroad terminals and trains taking commuters to dry suburbs, was also an area of high saloon density.

In spite of all these efforts at control, saloons were incubators of democracy and political action in working-class Boston. Unions, dissident politicians, fraternal groups found saloons to be comfortable places and facilities in which to meet. The relevance of this to Faneuil Hall is two-fold. Before one can organize and assemble large groups, one needs to first organize smaller groups. People respond to a web of relationships and common beliefs to join groups, and for many functions, saloons provided the place to build those webs. It is no coincidence that a number of ward leaders, most notably Patrick Kennedy in East Boston, started as saloon keepers, and that usually several of Boston's Common Councilors were saloon keepers.³⁹

At the same time, with the population density of the adjacent South End and West End neighborhoods, the number of saloons per person were lower than found downtown. If saloons were relatively few in number and church and other halls were few and far between in the North and West ends, there was another inexpensive local alternative for meetings. The city wardrooms were only available for non-partisan purposes. Faneuil Hall, on the other hand, existed precisely for political meetings and debate. It had no use-restrictions and could be rented by anyone with the requisite twenty-five signatures for \$10 or \$15. In effect, in addition to traditional types of uses, Faneuil Hall began to function as a neighborhood meeting hall for local groups from adjacent neighborhoods.

The roster of groups using Faneuil Hall show that it was available to almost every group imaginable. During the entire decade, only one petition for use was turned down. Mayor Collins refused to allow a poultry club hold an agriculture show in Faneuil Hall on the grounds

³⁸ Duis, 188-189.

³⁹ Duis, 138ff.

such a use would be an undignified use for such an important hallowed setting.

Many organizations used Faneuil Hall as their neighborhood meeting hall. The Cigar Makers Local 97 would meet there as many as five times a year. Between 1902 and 1904, twelve socialist meetings took place there. The Music Department of the city staged over a dozen musical concerts there during the decade. Jews, heavily concentrated in the West and North Ends, held sectarian philanthropic and fraternal meetings there. Armenian societies, Polish fraternal groups, suffragettes, the Twentieth Century Club, veterans groups, and sons of veterans groups all regularly used Faneuil Hall during this period. Catholic groups were frequent users as well, especially before 1907. James Jeffrey Roche, Boyle O'Reilly's successor at the *Pilot*, rented the Hall in 1902. David Goldstein, the Jewish convert and leader of the Catholic Common Cause movement, rented the Hall twice. The Knights of Columbus and Catholic Order of Foresters were also regular and steady users. More meetings took place in Faneuil Hall between 1900-1910 than in the fifty years prior and likely in all the years since: 1,000 events in eleven years. Over 120 union meetings took place in Faneuil Hall during the period.

Yet among identifiable uses, political meetings were the most common in the periods examined. James Michael Curley's North End allies, Joseph Langone and Joseph Santosuosso, who served as State Senator and Common Councilor respectively, used Faneuil Hall several times. John F. Fitzgerald and his brothers used the Hall both when he was and was not mayor. Over the examined forty-five year period, use of the Hall for religious and entertainment purposes steadily declined over time, while labor unions made increased use in later periods as their activity increased.

It is more difficult to track the calendar of events taking place in Faneuil Hall after 1910, when the new City Charter eliminated the legislative control over use of the Hall. One can still estimate the relative level of activity there by examining the rental fee reports for the Hall, which were normally included in the annual reports of the Department of Public Buildings. Annual returns between 1904 and 1908 averaged \$938 a year, which works out to roughly \$10 per event rental fee. The equivalent figures for 1913 were \$1360; for 1920, \$1420; for 1923, \$892.50. By 1925, the fees dropped off to \$20 for the year and were only \$255 in 1929. After 1929, rental information is

either missing from the Department Annual reports or the reports themselves were never filed, perhaps a sign of the growing lack of controls in Boston City government in the 1930s.⁴⁰

The use of Faneuil Hall began to drop off in the 1920. The kind of public life described here had ceased to exist by this date. It died from a number of causes. The increasing conservatism of the Catholic Church and its strident anti-radicalism made it difficult for many faithful Catholics to consider participating in more radical forms of political and union life. The slow draining of the power of the ward bosses and the rise of Curley-style non-democratic politics of personality left little room for movements based on ideas.⁴¹ The Red Scares after World War I and the incessant anti-radical publicity of the popular media in the aftermath of the Haverhill Textile Strike of 1912, the Telephone Operators Strike of 1919 and most traumatic of all, the Boston Police Strike of 1919, left radical unionism in popular disrepute and politically repressed.

Moreover, by 1919, with the Volstead Act, saloons disappeared as well. Neutral semi-public meeting space was in short supply. City facilities were completely under the control of the Mayor, and with Irish control of city politics and Curley-ism and Federal power supplanting local control, the political atmosphere grew less nourishing to new groups. The conservatism and separatism of the Catholic Church under Cardinal O'Connell resulted in separate Catholic schools and organizations, under the authoritarian control of the Cardinal, where militant unionists, radicals, and free thinkers were not welcome. All of these factors added to limit the rise of new grassroots reform, political or radical organizations.

Over time, the Civil War veterans died out. The second wave of immigrant groups, Jews and eastern and southern Europeans moved on to better neighborhoods over time, building their own facilities in their new surroundings. Jews built their own synagogues and halls in Mattapan, Armenians in Watertown, and Italians came to dominate the

⁴⁰ Annual Reports of the Department of Public Buildings, *Boston City Records*, 1904-1940.

⁴¹ Curley's career showed a number of parallels to Huey Long: populist in his policies, authoritarian in his politics. See Jack Beatty, *The Rascal King* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1992), 152.

North End. They no longer needed to meet in Faneuil Hall. Temperance and suffrage were battles that had been won. The need for Faneuil Hall passed along with the demand need for mass popular meetings.

All of these factors may have affected the use of Faneuil Hall and led to what is believed was its decline in use. After 1918, Symphony Hall was used for mayoral inaugurations until Kevin White moved his inauguration back there in 1969.⁴² Had the symbolism and meaning of Faneuil Hall worn off in the public imagination through its use by so many groups? Or was Symphony Hall a more fitting icon for the Boston of the twentieth century? In either event, Faneuil Hall became less a peoples' hall and more a museum of Boston and American history. It remains so today.

Table I

Events in Faneuil Hall: 1869-1909

Per Year	Reform	Religious	Political	Patriotic	Fraternal	Labor	Entertainment	Trade	Other	Events
1869-1875	6	12	19	21	0	5	8	4	15	12.9
1880-1883	1	1	17	11	0	0	3	3	8	11
1887-1891	12	28	17	42	4	11	10	0	41	33
1894-1898	19	23	28	49	18	15	6	8	49	43
1902-1904	30	15	32	23	38	37	9	12	46	80.7
1906-1909	33	16	66	51	47	48	5	28	77	92.8

Table II

Types of Use of Faneuil Hall between 1865 and 1909 As a percentage of total uses

	Reform	Religious	Political	Patriotic	Fraternal	Labor	Entertainment	Trade	Other
1869-1875	6.7%	13.3%	21.1%	23.3%	0.0%	5.6%	8.9%	4.4%	16.7%
1880-1883	2.3%	2.3%	38.6%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.8%	6.8%	18.2%
1887-1891	7.3%	17.0%	10.3%	25.5%	2.4%	6.7%	6.1%	0.0%	24.8%
1894-1898	8.8%	10.7%	13.0%	22.8%	8.4%	7.0%	2.8%	3.7%	22.8%
1902-1904	12.4%	6.2%	13.2%	9.5%	15.7%	15.3%	3.7%	5.0%	19.0%
1906-1909	8.9%	4.3%	17.8%	13.7%	12.7%	12.9%	1.3%	7.5%	20.8%

⁴² Thomas O'Connor, *Building a New Boston: Politics and Urban Renewal* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 266.

Faneuil Hall (/ˈfɑːnjəl/ or /ˈfɑːn/; previously /ˈfɛn/) is a marketplace and meeting hall located near the waterfront and today's Government Center, in Boston, Massachusetts. Opened in 1743, it was the site of several speeches by Samuel Adams, James Otis, and others encouraging independence from Great Britain. It is now part of Boston National Historical Park and a well-known stop on the Freedom Trail. It is sometimes referred to as "the Cradle of Liberty".