

## A 1950's Walking Tour around the Boston Chapel 26 Dover Street Neighborhood

"The Boston Chapel story must be told", Eastern Nazarene College 1961 Class President James Swartz strongly encouraged in 2011, over a half century after the 9-years-labor of dedicated Evangelistic Association members gave birth to the first Church of the Nazarene in the great City of Boston.

The "Who", the "What", the "Why", the "When" -- proper emphasis upon these essential elements is critical in clearly delineating any story -- especially one historical. In rightly conveying and comprehending the history of the ministry and Christ-like works of dozens of dedicated 1950's ENC coeds in Boston's South End, it is critically important to give proper place to the place -- the "Where". Boston Chapel Evangelistic Association stalwart and pioneer Fred Wenger suggests that the young women and men who ministered at that 26 Dover Street location could be called "Holy Innocents".

This Boston Chapel archival history is largely (and appropriately) about the "Who" -- the Eastern Nazarene College students, the Sunday School children, and the faithful South End families who attended Boston Chapel. A wider unobstructed panorama of the Chapel's location and surroundings may be helpful in understanding the significance of and perils to those going at any time in to 26 Dover Street there in the South End. Understanding the dangerous exposure to risk of harm to ENC's coeds in their visiting the South End environs one or more times each week over a period of years embraces a crucial component of properly comprehending and appreciating the Boston Chapel story.

It was with reason that Police Station #4 and Police Station #9, bookending the South End neighborhoods area, for decades had regularly reported the highest crime rates in the city. A five-minute walk up Tremont Street from the Chapel would bring you to the office of a construction and contracting company operated by two notorious organized crime figures, who also powerfully controlled the daily lives and the night life in the South End, in a multitude of ways \*\*\* .

These 1950's nearby neighbors of the Chapel steadily enriched themselves through such means as income from male and female prostitution, narcotics trafficking, illegal gambling of many types, loan sharking (400% interest!), extortion, contract killings and other criminal enterprises, as well as their pseudo-legitimate ownership of all pinball and all vending machines in the South End. *One of these two "contractors" was deemed to have more money than anyone in the City of Boston.* (Incidentally, \$67,000 of the \$1.2 from the infamous "crime of the century" Brinks robbery was **found in 1956, blocks from the Chapel**, behind a false wall at their Tremont Street construction business-- the remaining money has never been found.) The competing criminal overlord rivals of this South End operation, the notorious *Cosa Nostra* Mafia family, were headquartered just 2 miles away from Boston Chapel, at 98 Prince Street -- a 30 minute walk which may or may not have been good for your health...

You may have read or kept earlier stories I wrote about incidents in and around Boston Chapel's 26 Dover Street building. These included "Blood on the Sunday Morning Sidewalk", as well as the recounting of a sudden attack when alone in the sanctuary by a criminally insane man and my wrestling him the 3 blocks to the 9<sup>th</sup> Precinct police station; the twilight ambush-type assault by a large man who jumped from the back seat of a tire-squealing Cadillac as I locked the Chapel's front door; the broken out large plate glass window of the Chapel's Dover Street front; the attempted strong-arm extortion of faithful Chapel family man Bill Harlow, who managed to have his entrepreneurial street pizza stand vending business across Dover Street from the Chapel open for only one day -- the day that new New England District Superintendent Fletcher Spruce visited the Chapel and bought and enjoyed a large piece of Bill's pizza; a man who casually walked up and fatally slit another's throat in revenge right on the corner of the Chapel's Village and Dover Street location, and others.

I plan to soon email to the ENC Archives copies of each of the stories in the paragraph above relating some of my personal experiences while pastor of Boston Chapel. You may wish to conclude for yourself which among these 1950's-1960's Boston Chapel area incidents while we were there could have been organized-crime related. **As Chapel pioneer Fred Wenger said in a recent e-mail, calling my attention to the Holy Scriptures at Luke 10:4, "For it is written: 'He will command his Angels concerning you that they will protect you'".**

\*\*\*Details of organized crime operations in the South End during the precise period when 1950s and 1960s ENC women and men students were ministering in Boston Chapel's Dover Street neighborhood may readily be found in such well-documented historical books as "The Boston Mob Guide" and "Boston's South End", as well as through Internet search engines, E-books, and Internet sites such as [www.HitMan.com](http://www.HitMan.com). #30