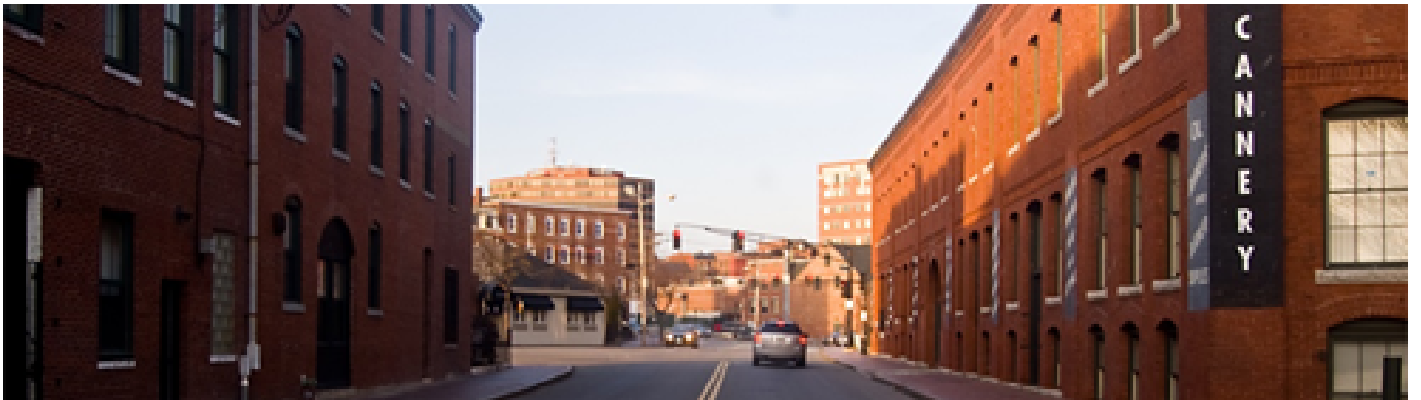


# GORHAM'S CORNER

post 1866 | Portland



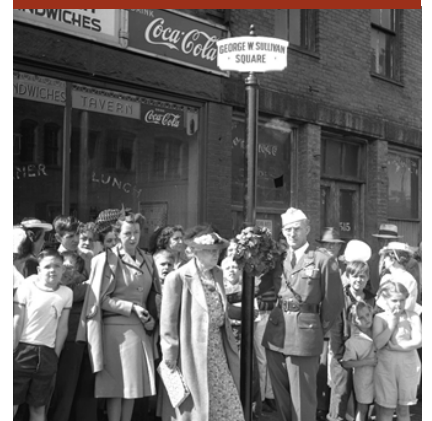
Gorham's Corner in downtown Portland is where Danforth, York, Pleasant, Union, and Fore Streets meet, and was a primarily Irish neighborhood beginning in the 1820s. Named for early resident William Gorham, a grocer, it was a working-class neighborhood that gained a reputation as an unsavory part of town, known for its saloons and tenements. Largely rebuilt west of Maple Street following Portland's devastating 1866 fire, it remained a predominantly Irish neighborhood well into the late 20th century.

Unfortunately, demolitions beginning in the 1970s reduced much of the historic neighborhood to parking lots, particularly west of Center Street. In the late 1980s the threatened demolition of 505-509 Fore Street, known as the Tracy-Causser Block, to provide a cleared development site led Landmarks to advocate for a demolition delay ordinance, approved in 1989, which saved the building.

**Top photos:** Images of Gorham's Corner looking towards the intersection of York and Danforth Street. Top image courtesy of Maine Memory Network c. 1904, bottom image courtesy Corey Templeton, 2010.

**Photo above right:** ca. 1895. Group of stonemasons working on Cross Street between Commercial and Fore Streets, laying cobblestone pavers with wheelbarrows, horse-drawn cart. Cross Street businesses include: Burnham & Company Ice, A. Libby & Company, H. K. Johnson Carpenter & Builder, James A. Colley Furniture; Willam H. Wescott Galvanized Iron and Copper Gutters and Cornices, and Forest City Roofing Company. Courtesy Portland Public Library Archives.

**Photo below right:** George W. Sullivan Square dedication (Gorham's Corner), with neighborhood group and military officer placing flowers on lamp post. Corner Lunch, 517 Fore Street, in background. Photo originally published in the Portland Press Herald, on 4 July 1945. Courtesy Portland Public Library Archives.



The individually landmarked Tracy-Causser Building between Cotton and Center Streets is now a vital bridge between the Old Port area and the Gorham's Corner neighborhood. While the parking lots to the south and east of the block may finally be developed, decades after they were first cleared for redevelopment, the fate of two of the three remaining buildings between Cotton and Center Streets is uncertain. MEMIC purchased several lots in the block to the north of the Tracy-Causser Block with an eye toward redeveloping the site. The proposed demolition of the vacant former Brian Boru building earlier this summer, without a replacement proposal in place, was met with broad public outrage. MEMIC also owns 10 Cotton Street, a former stable and garage, currently occupied by Rivalries restaurant and bar.

Unfortunately, there still remains a need to halt demolitions that result in only surface parking, not redevelopment, in Downtown Portland. Beyond the historic and cultural reasons this practice must cease are the environmental implications of landfilling demolished buildings, and the increased run-off and "heat island" effects of surface parking. Retaining one or both of the buildings, particularly the Cotton Street building provides historic context to the Tracy-Causser Block and the former Staples School at 70 Cotton Street. They also help to retain street character and bridge the gap between the Congress Street, Old Port and Gorham's Corner neighborhoods.

Further, there remains a need in Portland for smaller, affordable commercial space. As buildings of this nature continue to be demolished for new development, unique spaces for small, local businesses are hard to find. Historic buildings in neighborhoods like Gorham's Corner provide authentic spaces for community-centered business.

Photo above right: 59 Center Street in 1924 and today, better known as the Brian Boru building. The storefront has been significantly altered and the third floor removed.

Map: 1914 map showing the Gorham's Corner neighborhood.

Photo below right: The Tracy-Causser block, a local landmark, before and after rehabilitation.

