In his introduction to *Quincy's Market*, John Quincy, Jr., recalls his father telling him over lunch at Durgin-Park that their forebear Josiah Quincy was responsible for the establishment of a permanent marketplace on Boston’s waterfront in the 1820s. This conversation in the venerable Quincy Market restaurant sparked in the young John Quincy a lifelong fascination that culminated in the publication of *Quincy's Market* in 2003. He was not an academic—he went into his family’s real estate business, and this was the only book he ever published—but he was clearly a skilled writer, and *Quincy's Market* is an engaging and nuanced work. It would be easy to look at the author’s last name and lack of scholarly background and dismiss this book as an amateur’s pet project, but that would be a mistake. Quincy tells a satisfying story both of his ancestor Josiah Quincy and of what was initially known as “Quincy’s Folly” (because of the fantastic cost associated with building the marketplace) but has since become an enduring Boston landmark.

Quincy draws from multiple areas of study to create his portrait of the Faneuil Hall Marketplace, which from the start has been informally called Quincy Market despite being officially named for Faneuil Hall, the 1742 building it surrounds. His historiography is fairly traditional, relying mostly on public records and the correspondence of prominent figures. There are very few women in this book, nor are the experiences of the market’s vendors or customers much remarked upon, until the narrative reaches the author’s present day. However, he introduces a significant amount of architectural detail, unusual for an otherwise straightforward historical treatment. Quincy also situates his study of Quincy Market within the contexts of urban planning and renewal; he goes far beyond the most well-known (and most controversial) example of the changes wrought upon Boston’s West End in the 1950s to demonstrate that Boston has been transformed by design as well as by happenstance for nearly four centuries.

Historic buildings that might elsewhere stand at a remove, as monuments to the past, in Boston are incorporated into the quotidian activities of the present day. Although Quincy Market was a working marketplace well into the twentieth century, it has also served from the beginning as a point of interest for tourists who visited Faneuil Hall as an important site of Revolutionary-era patriotism. Although Quincy seems disappointed that...
the market’s revitalization in the 1970s shifted it away from a vision of a modern marketplace for Boston residents and toward a locus for tourist-oriented shops and restaurants, it is fairly clear that attracting tourists was at least partially behind the renovations. After all, they were planned to align with the 1976 bicentennial celebration, which heavily promoted patriotic tourism to places like Boston and Philadelphia that are strongly associated with the Revolutionary era. While Quincy Market today is predominantly populated with tourists, as it has been for the past several decades, its status as a site central to Boston’s history is consequently perhaps more elevated than it would be if it were a collection of buildings used primarily by locals.

Quincy Market continues to evolve as well. The venerable Durgin-Park restaurant, where the young John Quincy, Jr., first learned of his family’s connection to the marketplace, closed its doors in early 2019, after operating continuously since 1827, one year after the opening of the building it occupied. With it, Boston lost the last remaining link to the marketplace of Josiah Quincy’s day, besides the buildings themselves. Durgin-Park’s original patrons would have difficulty recognizing the Quincy Market of today, with its plate-glass windows, greenhouse-like awnings and high-end mall stores, although even the renovations are beginning to seem dated (the globe-cluster light fixtures have rooted the outdoor walkways firmly in the 1970s). As it enters its third century of existence, will the marketplace transform into a different kind of gathering place, or perhaps revert to something closer to its original usage? While the relatively new Boston Public Market and the long-running outdoor Haymarket operate separately nearby, it’s certainly not beyond possibility that they could combine forces back in Josiah Quincy’s market.

When John Quincy, Jr., wrote this book, Quincy Market was still cut off from the Boston waterfront by the Big Dig, the decades-long project to tear down the elevated Central Artery highway and put it underground. This was the highway Quincy blamed for contributing to the decline of the market in the 1950s, an era when car culture saw the building of expressways through cities, gutting neighborhoods and encouraging middle- and upper-class residents to depart for the suburbs. The Central Artery was a literal as well as a figurative gash through the city. Fortunately, Quincy lived long enough to see the Big Dig completed, the highway replaced with a linear park. It has been a decade since the Greenway officially opened—not much time at all in the history of Quincy Market, and not enough time to fully understand what effect it will have on the market. But in reconnecting the interior of Boston’s downtown to its waterfront, the Greenway has enhanced the experience of pedestrians enjoying the city, locals and tourists alike, and has opened up as-yet-unknown possibilities for the future of Quincy Market, to be written about in the next chapter of its history.

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