

A Walk in the Back Bay

The Image

For my final project I wanted to present some of Boston's famous architecture from the Back Bay. I decided to take several digital photographs of different Brownstones along Beacon St., Marlborough St., and Commonwealth Ave. and piece together a street of my own. While going to MIT (and spending most of my time on the Cambridge side of the Charles River), my favorite pastime has been running into Boston. Almost every day I have crossed the Harvard Bridge and run toward the Boston Common while admiring the old, elaborate homes that squish up next to each other and line the brick and cement sidewalks. I have noticed the architecture even more this semester as I have been looking for housing near the Back Bay. The result of my project is three Brownstones, which to me epitomize the feel of Boston's architecture, fused together to make a short block of my own.

The Process

I started by taking roughly 50 digital photos of Brownstones on a sunny Spring day. Since the Brownstones are next to each other, each image has a central home with parts of other buildings to either side. The perspective is a little off in the originals; since I was standing on the sidewalk, I had to tilt the camera up a bit to get the entire building in the photo. I found that taking the pictures on the sidewalk closest to the Brownstone produced the most consistent results, especially since this way I could avoid getting parked cars or street signs in the pictures. I tried to pick areas with similar lighting. One problem I ran into while taking pictures was the overlapping foliage; since I took the images in the height of Spring, everything was blooming. While the trees and flowers were beautiful, they made connecting the buildings harder as I had to try to match trees from one section to another.

After uploading the photos, I selected a few that looked like they could fuse together well. I avoided ones with too much foliage or ones that had too skewed perspectives. After picking my final three buildings, I used the polygon lasso tool to cut the individual houses out of their original images and paste them into a layer on my final image. The lasso tool was especially helpful since the house had many sharp edges; it made selecting the image much easier. I then transformed each house by adjusting its skew to make them as straight as possible, which proved to be the most difficult part of the project. This made lining up the buildings a bit easier. After aligning the buildings, I used the clone tool to fill in the gaps between buildings being careful to follow the shadows and shading. Using the regular lasso tool and the clone tool, I added bushes into the image. Finally, I created a background by copying and cloning a piece of light sky that had both blue and white areas. After merging the layers together, I cropped the image into a rectangle to create the final product.