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ALLSTON BRIGHTON, DOWNTOWN

Nearly 300-year-old milestone is felled in Allston

Posted by Matt Rocheleau August 9, 2011 06:17 PM

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Above where it has been cracked, the 282-year-old, temporarily-barricaded stone reads "Boston 6 miles." Below that, "PD" stands for Judge Paul Dudley who installed the stone along with some others around Boston.

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

For 282 years, even as a busy commercial district rose around it within the past century, a stone mile marker endured Allston's transformation from a quiet part of Cambridge to an energetic Boston neighborhood.

Now, the colonial-era milestone -- which reads "Boston 6 miles" -- has been severed from its base that rests, seemingly out of place, atop the curbside edge of a city sidewalk.

The top portion of the rock along Harvard Avenue was knocked over and sat on its side for at least several days after a truck backed into it on July 28, officials said today.

The stone is one of four remaining in Boston and one of 47 known statewide out of at least 99 that once existed.

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“They’re rare, surviving remnants of the old landscape. The fact that it survives in its current location is part of its uniqueness to me,” said Charlie Vasiliades of the Brighton-Allston Historical Society.

He said he hopes the stone will be fixed and maintain its curbside locale, but perhaps with more protection around it. And the state transportation department, which oversees the old milestones across the state, hopes to do just that.

After restoring the stone, spokesman Adam Hurtubise said the transportation department will, “continue to safeguard this mile marker from future incidents,” including considering new ways to protect it.

Some other stone mile markers in Massachusetts are surrounded by a wall or frame-like structure.

Officials said the transportation will consult with city and state preservation officials. The “couple-hundred pound” stone will either be moved in order to fix it or it will be repaired at its current spot.

The stone is part of a group of stones installed along a mail delivery system connecting the Hub and New York City.

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Though some, like the Allston milestone, were installed prior, the rocks became a standardized means of measuring distance between Springfield and Boston in 1767, when the Bay State was still an English colony. They were installed along the Upper Boston Post Road, which is now Route 20.

Each stone had a mileage figure carved into it to mark its distance from a stone near City Hall in downtown Boston. Over time, some of the rocks are believed to have been lost or moved because of factors including damage and development.

All of the boulders, which vary in dimension and weight, were listed as a group in the National Register of Historic Places in the early 1970s after a law was passed the decade prior directing the state to restore and maintain the heavy, informative rocks.

Stones are known to have been located in: Cambridge, Watertown, Waltham, Weston, Wayland, Sudbury, Marlborough, Northborough, Shrewsbury, Worcester, Leicester, Spencer, East Brookfield, Brookfield, West Brookfield, Warren, Palmer, and Wilbraham.

The stones range in height from one to five feet; in width from 18 inches to three feet; and in depth from four inches to more than one foot.

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