

The West End Museum

150 STANIFORD STREET, SUITE 7, BOSTON, MA 02114

Book Talk: *South End Character* by Anne Alison Barnet Reveals Parallels between Boston's South End & West End

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 20, 2014

Boston, MA—On December 4 at 6:30 p.m., the [West End Museum](http://thewestendmuseum.org) will host an evening with Anne Alison Barnet, author of *South End Character: Speaking Out On Neighborhood Change*, a collection of her columns for the [South End News](http://southendnews.com) over the last four years. Barnet, also a West End Museum member, will read from her book and lead a discussion about neighborhood change, gentrification and loss. The event is free and open to the public. Pre-registration is required at thewestendmuseum.org/whats_on/event-registration.

South End Character demonstrates a kinship between the South End and West End communities of Boston. Indeed, just as the West End was consumed by an urban renewal project, so was the South End before it. Some might argue, however, that the urban renewal project of the South End was not a “botched” effort.

Nevertheless, it caused the destruction and demolition of culturally significant areas, such as the New York Streets district. This residential section of the South End celebrated the railroad connection established between Boston and Albany, New York, by naming streets after cities along the route. It helped serve as a reminder of Boston’s potential as a port city in a competitive landscape that was increasingly dominated by New York.

Barnet’s talk will explore the history of the South End over the last several decades, tracing the changes the neighborhood has experienced. The discussion will also include anecdotes about Barnet’s unusual household as well as personal observations about changes in how the area is perceived. “Years ago, when I told people where I lived, they’d say, in horror, ‘Oh, you’d better get out of there!’” says Barnet. “They even offered to help me move. Years later, their pleased reaction to the same neighborhood was, ‘Oh, you must own a condo.’ And now they say, wistfully, ‘I wish I could live there, but I could never afford it.’”

Although originally hailing from Staten Island, New York, Barnet has deep roots in Boston’s South End, having first settled there as a Boston University student in 1964 and serving as the first editor of the *South End News* in 1980-1981. Barnet was an award-winning reporter for Boston Neighborhood Network’s (BNN) Neighborhood Network News in the mid-1980s, a proposal writer for the South End Community Health Center and a social worker for both Massachusetts General Hospital and the Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare in the 1970s. She earned a B.A. from Boston University and an M.Ed. from Cambridge College. In addition to *South End Character*, she is the author of *Extravaganza King: Robert Barnet and Boston Musical Theater* (Northeastern University Press, 2004), a biography of her playwright great-grandfather, a 19th century South End resident.

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About the West End Museum:

The West End Museum is dedicated to the collection, preservation and interpretation of the history and culture of the West End neighborhood. The Museum’s permanent exhibit, “The Last Tenement,” highlights the immigrant history of the neighborhood through its decimation under Urban Renewal in 1959; two additional galleries feature rotating exhibits. The Museum is located near North Station at 150 Staniford St. Suite 7. Hours: Tuesday - Friday 12:00pm - 5:00pm; Saturday 11:00am - 4:00pm. Admission is free.

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