

Professor Han

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## Agent 3

The second unfamiliar agent I chose is a resident from the town of Fairfield Connecticut. This person would have a unique experience of Boston because of the culture and layout of Fairfield. Fairfield is a township in Connecticut with a population of about 50,000 people. It is a wealthy town, and it shows through the way the town is set up but also because of how Fairfield's economic status is achieved. Like many wealthy towns in Connecticut, a lot of the generated wealth that feeds Fairfield is produced by people that work in or work for a company that is based in New York. Even though Fairfield was built during the Colonial Period, it essentially functioned as many suburbs do as a residential area for those who work in the city. Before New York, Bridgeport had been the economic hub for Connecticut from the industrial period all the way until the early 1900s until the arms factories and export businesses went out of business. Due to this economic isolation as well as the physical layout of Fairfield would undoubtedly create a unique experience for my agent.

It is my first time in Boston, which is a surprise considering it's one of the great cities of colonial New England. Growing up in Fairfield for most of my life has made me believe that seeing one colonial settlement means I have seen them all, that it should be easy to blend into Boston. I first took a trip to the Green Dragon Tavern as my friends said it was one of Boston's most important historic buildings. The first thing that stands out in my mind is the use of brick. I have seen brick used all my life, but it had been primarily used for ornamentation purposes. Even in Bridgeport where brick had been used during the industrial period I didn't find a series of structures that used brick to create an identifiable environment. In Bridgeport, the brick had clearly been used solely for the cost benefits and construction difficulty. This means that many of the brick structures stand alone in their environment as they are mixed in with colonial wood frame construction buildings. Boston was completely different as most of the structures surrounded by the GDT are made entirely out of brick. I also notice how this in an area that found a way to develop its own sense of site that has not been lost to time. Although the structures are old, they use that age to create a feeling of history to the area, rather than relics lost to the past. Again, I had seen this in Bridgeport with many of the brick structures falling into disrepair over the years.

I also notice that the roadways create a sense of destination around the Green Dragon Tavern. The fork at the end of Marshall Street naturally gravitates me towards the GDT, which is not something that I am used to experiencing. In Fairfield, the I-95 is the highway that controls all major traffic, and the

roadways around Fairfield seem to always split off of that highway or lead to it. The roads back home create a sense of constant movement, and I have never felt that any of these roads point to any of the surrounding buildings. I feel like a traveler in my own town, with a roadway that was not built with my town in mind, considering how the interstate system was constructed in the 1950's. On Marshall Street the roadways clearly were built for Boston around the time of its inception, which has created a sense of terminus for many buildings within the city. Interestingly enough, I feel more like a tourist in my own home than I do in a city I have never visited before.

While I spend my time traveling in the city, I stumble upon the Flats of D apartments located in the South Wharf. At first I didn't really pay attention to it, but after seeing the surrounding area I stopped to take a look. The flats are located on an old industrial zone, which I had again seen a lot of in Bridgeport. Back home these zones tended to be neglected and forgotten, which has caused them to fall into disrepair. At first I was glad to see the Flats, as I had not really seen anybody make use of these spaces back home, and it was finally nice to see some development. However, I changed my mind after sitting with the idea for a little bit. I realized that this area was a reflection of back home. This structure isn't a showcase of newer and better construction in an old industrial area, but was clearly rather built because of the isolation of the location. I did some research and as it turns out this area had been zoned for residential development as early as 1866, which was still at the height of the industrial area. These buildings were built for those with wealth so they could find themselves separated from the general public. Even though this concept spans over two places in my home state, it is still the same concept. Fairfield has become over the years the area outside of the city that people can reside in. When people left the city, they went to places like Fairfield so they could be removed from urban centers such as Bridgeport. Fairfield, like I mentioned, is also very expensive as to make sure only the wealthy could live there. Even the highway supports this as I-05 is built right through Bridgeport and leads to surrounding suburbs such as Trumbull, Monroe, and Fairfield. Even though I was in a different place, I still saw the seeds of what was going on back home in Boston.

My final destination on my trip was the Boston Tea Party Ships and Museum. When I first arrived at the site, I was greeted by the familiar tenets of New England construction. The building is made entirely out of wood, with heavy ornamentation on the window and roof trim. This was very familiar to me as many of the colonial structures in Fairfield utilized these construction practices. This was my first experience in Boston where I was actually able to see a familiar building, as the other structures I had seen were familiar in theory, but still different enough to the point where I had not quite seen something exactly like them back home. The ships in the rear for me did not serve as a memento to the history of

the Revolution, but rather as a tie back to the roots of many New England settlements. As Fairfield rests on the ocean, the early settlement had depended on sea trade much like Boston had to. For the first time, I actually felt like I was at home in Boston, wrapped in the cultural blanket of New England. After I was done observing that building, I noticed the Congress Street Bridge and the structures that are located on the ends of the bridge. My mind naturally circled back to I-965 back home, as that's really the closest thing to a bridge this size in that area. However, it felt completely different to the highway back home. The bridge felt like a tool to get from one place to another, rather than a pathway that was "built for itself" in a sense. The bridge blended into the fabric, rather than dominating it. This is important for newer construction as it is very easy to suffocate the existing site as I had seen with I-95 in Bridgeport and Fairfield. When I looked to the ends of each bridge, I saw how one side contained mostly historical buildings while the other side showcased newer construction. However, this created a very different experience than the one I had at home. Since the bridge created such a strong sense of connectivity and temporary travel, I saw these two eras of construction connect to each other rather than fight each other. In Fairfield and Bridgeport I saw how older structures had been completely abandoned and literally built on top of. It almost seemed as if Connecticut was trying to bury its colonial past. Despite the newer construction in Boston, I did not have that experience here. Instead, I saw a city that was making an active effort to reconcile with its past, rather than trying to forget about it.

In conclusion, my trip to Boston was a lot different than I thought it was going to be. As a New Englander, I thought that Boston would be a familiar place that I would somewhat recognize when I got there. However, that was not my experience at all. I saw a city that was not only set up differently, but also had a completely different approach to development and reconciling with the past. While home is marked by old buildings lost to time, Boston wears them proudly. However, the city is still struggling with people with wealth trying to separate themselves from the general populace, which is an issue I am all too familiar with. It will be interesting to see how Boston deals with this issue in the future, and maybe Boston will become the flagship for modern city construction if it can address the lingering issues.