

## Malcolm X in Roxbury

His street name was Red, and his Muslim name was El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, but when the infamous man best known as Malcolm X first moved to Boston in 1941, he was just 16-year-old Malcolm Little. Malcolm made the transition from naïve, country bumpkin to street-sawvy, small-time hustler after meeting his half-sister Ella for the first time in 1940. In his autobiography, Malcolm stated: 'She was the first really proud black woman I had ever seen in my life.' It was Ella who invited the young Malcolm to come and live with her in Roxbury.

The house Ella owned with her husband Frank was on Waumbeck Street in an exclusive neighbourhood, Sugar Hill. The Hill encompasses a section of upper Roxbury bordered by Humboldt, Blue Hill and Walnut avenues, branching up towards Franklin Park.

Though Malcolm lived on the Hill, he spent most of his time hanging out in bars, clubs and pool halls in what is today referred to as Lower Roxbury. This section of the neighbourhood flanks Tremont and Columbus Avenues and is intersected by the short block of Massachusetts Avenue. Here Malcolm was introduced to petty crime, the bursting jazz scene and young, zoot suit-wearing hipsters when he worked as a shoe shine boy in the men's room of the Roseland Ballroom on the corner of Huntington and Mass Avenues. Today, the Roseland has been replaced by an unspectacular hotel called the **Midtown Hotel**, but the spirit of the jazz scene is still very much alive up the street at **Wally's** on Mass Ave (see p226). One of the most

and has two false clocks built into its façade: one is set at seven o'clock and the other at five o'clock – brewers' hours.

Just down the street is the former home of the **Alley Brewing Company** (123 Heath Street). It's a massive brick structure, though it lacks the interesting architectural details of the American Brewing Company.

Other streets in the area worth exploring include Alleghany, Calumet and Iroquois Streets, and Parker Hill Avenue. These reveal a mix of once grand houses, some painstakingly restored, but others suffering the rude fate of a century of



X marks the spot where Malcolm was.

popular jazz clubs in the 1940s and 1950s, Wally's has stood the test of time and today still sponsors cookin' jam sessions. Around the corner from Wally's on the corner of Northampton Street and Columbus Avenue is another Malcolm favourite, **Bob the Chef's Café** (see p132). This soul food joint has gotten a serious make-over in the past couple of years, and now looks more upscale bistro than down home hangout, but it still serves quality soul food at reasonable prices, and features regular sets by popular jazz trios.

Sadly, with Boston's skyrocketing real estate prices and the expansion of Northeastern University, most of Malcolm's former stomping grounds have been bulldozed and turned into municipal car parks and student dormitories. To get a glance of what Roxbury was like during Malcolm's days, visit **Dudley Square**, near the corner of Washington and Dudley Streets. Most of the original architecture is intact, and both **Ferdinand's Furniture** building and **Dudley Station** are impressive examples of what Roxbury looked like in Malcolm's day.

neglect – or worse, vinyl siding. The impression is one of a neighbourhood struggling to regain its lost glory.

### Shirley-Eustis House

33 Shirley Street, at Massachusetts Avenue (442 2275). JFK/UMass T. Open June-Sept noon-4pm Thur-Sun. Oct-May by appointment only. Admission \$5; \$3 concessions. No credit cards.

Over the years this noble house has housed two Massachusetts governors (William Shirley, who served as the royal governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and Dr William Eustis, who served as governor from 1823 to 1825). It has received visits