



RESTORED ROPEWALK BUILDING

The transformation of a circa-1838 rope factory into an apartment complex was completed last summer in Boston's Charlestown Navy Yard. The granite-faced factory, one of the few remaining structures of its kind in the United States, produced rope for the U.S. Navy before the Navy Yard was decommissioned in 1974. A few years later, the Boston Redevelopment Authority (now known as the Boston Planning & Development Agency, or BPDA) took control of the site, but there was never much momentum when it came to reviving the Ropewalk, and it sat empty for decades. Not only did the building need a hefty number of repairs, but its unique design—it's more than a quarter-mile long and only 45 feet wide in most sections—also meant it wasn't suitable for many new uses. Eventually, the late developer and former Massachusetts State Sen. Joe Timilty sought to turn it into housing, which Gary Kane of The Architectural Team, the Chelsea, Massachusetts-based firm that designed the adaptive reuse project, describes as the "most valuable possible use" for the site. Timilty died in 2017, but a new developer, Vision Properties, came on board to purchase the site from the BPDA and finish the project, which was partly funded with state and federal historic tax credits. The ribbon-cutting for the Ropewalk apartments took place in June of 2021, and the first residents moved in last August. Thirteen of the 97 units in the complex qualify as affordable housing, and the number will rise to 24 over the next seven years. An exhibition detailing the history of the building is on display in the corridors.