The Boston Cottage Co., a group of white investors, filed a plat to subdivide 83 acres northwest of Winston off Old Town Road in 1892. On September 9 of that year, the Twin-City Daily Sentinel reported that a contract had been awarded to build 20 houses for Black buyers who could pay in installments. The neighborhood was about 1¼ miles from Depot Street, where the tobacco factories were located. Earlier housing for tobacco workers had sprung up around the factories, but it was substandard and living conditions were far from ideal.

New housing in Boston Cottages, at a distance from industry, provided cleaner air, less noise, and more space. A Black contractor named Reed was hired to build the earliest houses, and the first lots were sold in 1893.

None survive that predate 1900, but a handful of houses built before 1910 remain. Most of the existing houses were built between 1920 and 1960. They employ decorative techniques characteristic of their era of construction. Many houses from the 1920s and 1930s have Craftsman details like bracketed eaves, exposed rafter tails, and battered porch columns set on piers. Several Y-stair apartment buildings, a form characteristic of Winston’s early worker housing, also date to the 1930s. Y-stair buildings get their name from the front entry stairs, which form the shape of a “Y,” providing exterior access to the second-floor units. Minimal traditional brick houses began to appear in the 1940s, and ranches in the 1950s.

Newspapers show that a close community developed quickly in the neighborhood. In 1900, a July 4th celebration included “a big barbecue in the woods,” a baseball game between the Boston Quick Steps and Piney Grove Boys,
and a debate on the topic of “Pride and Ambition have caused more destruction than Ignorance and Superstition.” Newspapers also recorded the wins and losses of the neighborhood baseball team and social events.

Early residents of Boston Cottages were a mix of homeowners and renters, although homeownership increased through the first half of the 20th century. The majority of residents were Black couples, many of whom had been born outside of Forsyth County, and their children. Men and women worked as porters, teachers, shoemakers, plasterers, grave diggers, blacksmiths, drivers, landscapers, pastors, laborers, domestic servants, farmers, cooks, laundresses, barbers, and in tobacco factories. Some owned grocery stores or restaurants.

Trustees of Boston Cottage Methodist Episcopal Church, now Saints Home United Methodist Church, bought a lot in the neighborhood for $50 in 1900, perhaps using a portion of the $350 raised in 1899 to fund construction of the church sanctuary. The existing brick church replaced the earlier one in 1936. Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church, which was founded in 1893, was meeting in the area by 1894 when it was included in the city directory. The church cemetery remains on the west side of Cherry Street, south of 24½ Street; the current church was built in 1977. Friendship Baptist Church was founded in 1914 with assistance from members of Mt. Pleasant. The trustees of Friendship bought a lot on the east side of Cherry Street just north of its intersection with Old Town Road in 1916. The first frame church was built at a cost of $5,000; a new brick church replaced it in 1942. The current church was completed in 1994.

In 1901 the County Board of Education bought two lots at the southeast corner of today’s Taft Street and Cannon Avenue to use as the site for a new school. The frame school is shown on early maps as L-shaped. It likely had two rooms as early city directories name only two teachers. John W. Paisley was the school’s first principal. A Guilford County native, he attended Shaw and Columbia Universities before teaching and serving as principal in numerous local schools. In 1957, Paisley Junior-Senior High School was named in his honor. The Boston Cottage school house was used as a meeting place for the Colored Teachers’ Association of Forsyth in the 1910s; at the time, it was considered one of the best schools for Black students in the county.

This information is also available at the Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission web site: www.ForsythCountyHRC.org