

Freedom Trail Booth A Multi-Purpose Room

By CATHLEEN COHEN

Star Reporter

"This is the Freedom Trail Information Center and also the information center for all tourists who come to Boston," said Winnie Phillips, 19, to a lady with a baby strapped in a harness on her back, preparing to walk the Freedom Trail.

"A lot of people don't know anything about us," explained Winnie, who lives at 50 Camden St., Roxbury. "Some get off the subway at Park St., come over the booth and ask where the Freedom Trail Information Booth is."

The booth, located on Tremont St., near the Park St. subway station, is a Freedom Trail Foundation project whose construction costs were shared by the MBTA and the Boston Park Department.

STAFF OF FOUR

Winnie is one of four local girls that staff the booth, answering questions of tourists and natives.

The purpose of the booth is to help visitors find their way to fifteen historical sites comprising the mile and a half Freedom Trail. But that's not all:

Young mothers use the booth's couch to change diapers, tourists bring their lunches in and young couples agree to meet there.

Nancy Taylor, 21, of 109 Park st., Dorchester, says, "the best part of the job is the fantastic people who come in here." The typical day has 500 visitors and during the Summer it was 700 to 800.

The booth was dedicated on Sept. 8. Previously the girls operated from a makeshift wooden hut which Nancy referred to as "the chicken coop." "Although it would be too cold in the Winter, it was better because we had more contact with the people," Nancy said.

Yet the tourists seem delighted by the new building. Many walk over and peer in through the glass and wind up talking with the girls.

There are requests for directions to a post office, the bus station, Rte. 93, or a good restaurant. Booth operation is financed by a Boston Chamber of Commerce grant. The girls are forbidden to distribute business advertisements.

Each girl is given two days of training before beginning work. They learn names and locations of streets, study maps and take tours.

UNLIKELY QUESTIONS

However, they were not prepared for the man who walked in to ask where he can buy a change of underwear or the lady who wanted to know where to take an injured pigeon she had found in the Common or two sailors looking for a place to buy Boston baked beans in a ceramic pot.

The girls often enjoy just chatting with tourists, many of whom return later for more talk or to ask for a date. "I fell in love this summer because of my job," one girl confided.



GIVING DIRECTIONS to Wheaton College students Mary Keogh and Lynn Davis is Terese Sarno, 19, of Beacon Hill.