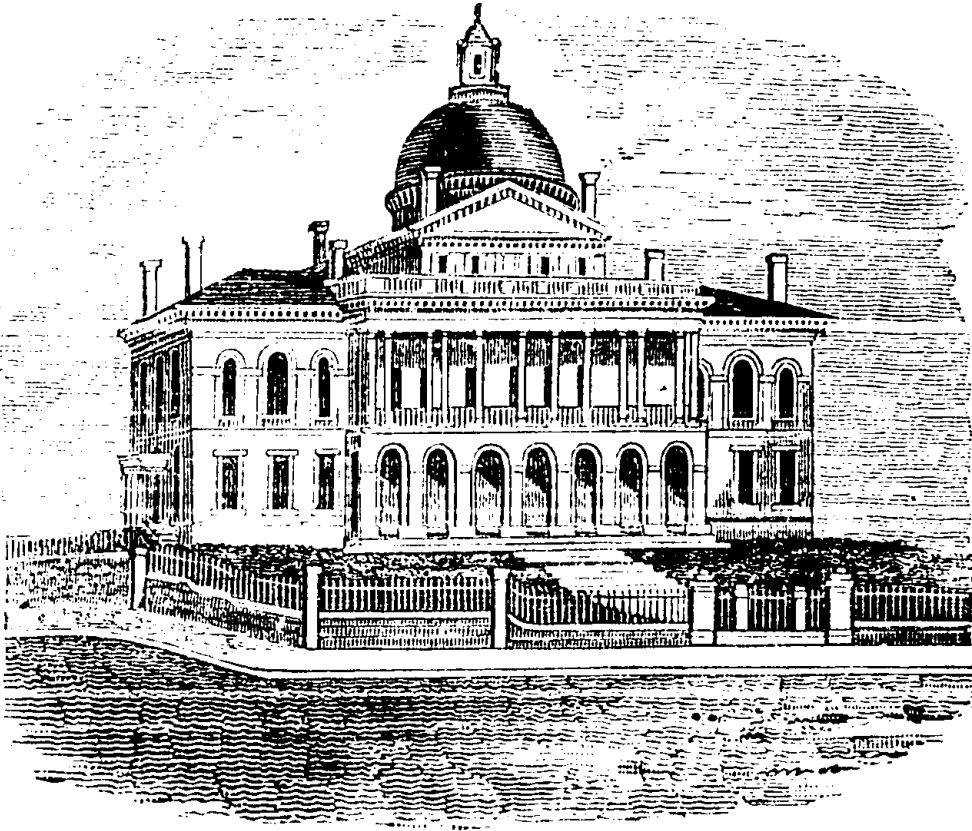


# HISTORY OF BOSTON.



BY ROBIN CARVER.

BOSTON :

LILLY, WAIT, COLMAN, AND HOLDEN.

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## CHAPTER IV.

*Increase of the town. Death of Governor Winthrop. Anecdote. Mr Cotton. Trial and Execution for Witchcraft.*

1. THE little town continued to flourish, and increase. After erecting their houses, and providing for their immediate necessities, the inhabitants began to think of adding to their possessions. They built small vessels, and sent them out on fishing voyages. Some employed themselves in sawing boards, and splitting staves, shingles and hoops. In time, merchants came over from foreign countries to trade with them, and the town began to wear quite an appearance of business.

2. Early in 1649, Boston suffered a sad loss in the death of Governor Winthrop. He had been an early and powerful friend of the town, was very frugal, charitable, and much beloved. A story is told of him which shows his character to have been kind and generous, though it seems to be at variance with his own strict and stern principles of honesty.

3. In one of the very severe winters, which the early settlers were obliged to endure, a man complained to the governor that his wood-pile had been robbed. 'Do you know the thief?' asked the governor. The reply was that it was a poor fellow in the neighborhood. 'Send him to me,' was the answer, 'and I will cure him of stealing.'

4. The thief appeared trembling with fear, and with his head hung down in shame and terror. He expected to be whipped in public, or placed in the stocks, at least. All that the governor said, however, was; 'Friend, the season is a very cold one, and I am afraid you are poorly provided with wood; you are welcome to help yourself at my pile till the winter is over.'

5. Governor Winthrop was buried in a tomb on the north side of the chapel burial ground. A portrait of him is still preserved. He was about six feet high, with a long beard, a high forehead, and dark hair. His memory has been cherished with much love and respect, for he was a good man and a wise governor.

6. In 1652, the first minister of the town died. This was the learned and excellent Mr John Cotton. He was a man of impressive appearance, with a fine, clear voice, and a plain natural style of preaching. His influence in the new settlement was very great, and he deserves to be remembered as one of the first and best of our clergy.

7. One of the most remarkable occurrences in the history of the colony took place in 1655. This was a trial and con-

demnation for witchcraft. In this time of general intelligence, a child would ridicule notions which were then firmly believed by men of standing, respectability, and reputation.

8. The person who suffered was a woman named Ann Hibbins. Her husband had been a merchant, and at one period was possessed of considerable fortune. In the later part of his life, however, he met with large losses which troubled him a good deal, and made his wife very cross and quarrelsome.

9. It was wrong in the old lady to be noisy, and to dispute with her neighbors: but if all cross people were to be hung for witches, it would thin the population of the world very considerably. Mrs Hibbins became at last such a scold, and so very unruly and turbulent, that the members of the church took notice of it, and rebuked her.

10. This seems to have had but little effect, and her neighbors began to suspect her of what they called witchcraft. She was prosecuted for this imaginary crime, and was finally convicted and condemned to be hung. Her execution took place in June 1656.

11. It seems strange that the good and intelligent men of the community could not have so far restrained the madness of the populace, as to prevent the commission of such an atrocious murder under the mockery of justice. This, however, was the third case of execution for witchcraft in

**New England.** The first was in Connecticut. The second was in Boston in 1648.

12. This moral plague afterwards raged with great violence in Salem, and many suffered death, for their supposed connection with evil spirits. So insane were the people on the subject, that a dog was publicly hung, as an accomplice of his master! The delusion, however, was one of the sins of the age, and not confined to a particular spot. It destroyed more in a single county of England, than it did in all the American colonies.