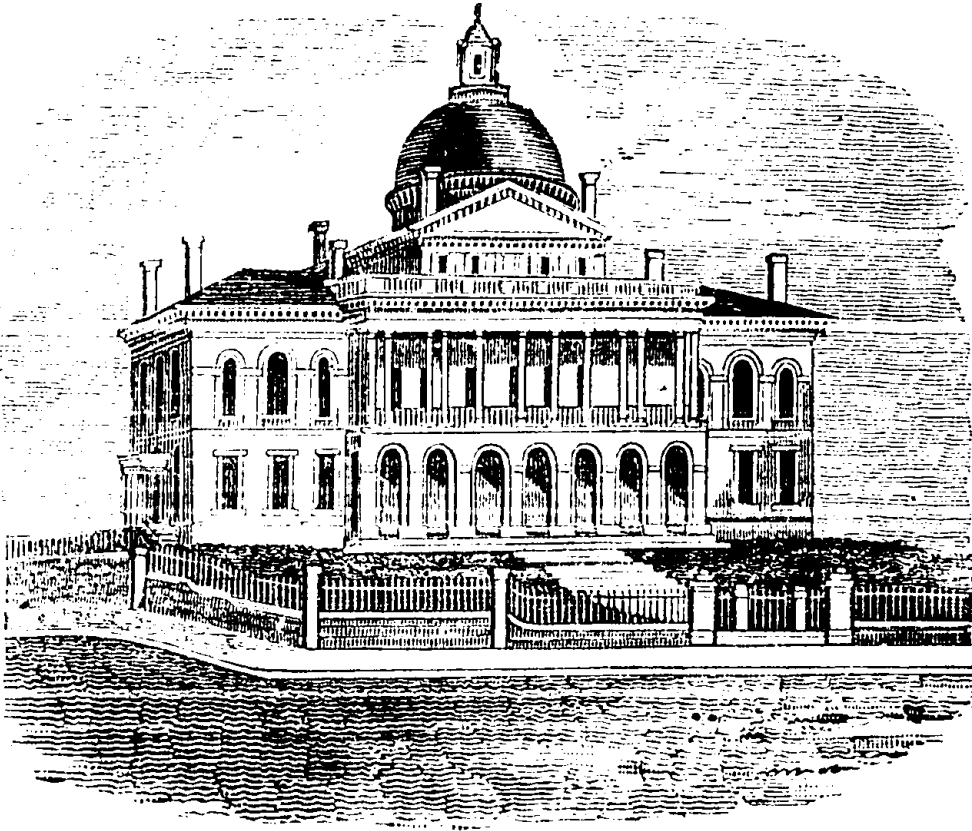


# HISTORY OF BOSTON.



BY ROBIN CARVER.

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## CHAPTER XI.

*Anecdote of the Boston boys and General Gage. Importations of tea. Meeting of the inhabitants. Anecdote of the Tea Party. Closing of the port of Boston. Arrival of soldiers. Their depredations. Alarm. Provincial Congress.*

1. It was at some time during the stay of the British troops in Boston, that a circumstance occurred which displays the spirit of the Boston boys. In the winter time, the boys were in the habit of building hills of snow, and sliding from them to the pond on the Common. The English soldiers, in the love of mischief, found no objects too small for their malice, and destroyed all their works. They complained of this injury, and set about repairing it, but on their return from school, they found the snow-hills again demolished.

2. Several of them now waited on the British captain, and informed him of the misconduct of his soldiers. No regard was paid to their complaint, and it was at length

resolved to call a meeting of the largest boys, and wait upon General Gage with a statement of their grievances. When the boys were conducted before the general, he asked, with some surprise, the occasion of their visit. 'We come, sir,' answered the leader, 'to ask for punishment on those who wrong us.'

3. 'Why, my little fellows,' replied the general, 'have your fathers been bringing you up rebels, and sent you here to talk rebellion?' 'Nobody sent us, sir,' answered the first speaker, 'we have never abused or insulted your soldiers; but they have spoiled our skating ground, and trodden down our snow-hills. We complained, and they only laughed at us. We told the captain, and he sent us away. Yesterday our works were again destroyed, and we can bear it no longer.'

4. General Gage looked at the boys in admiration, when turning to an officer by his side, he exclaimed, 'Good heavens! the very children draw in a love of liberty with the air they breathe.' To the boys he added, 'you may go, my brave lads, and if any of my soldiers disturb you in future, they shall be severely punished.'

5. You remember that I told you in the last chapter, of a determination to abolish the use of tea. But there was still a good deal of this pleasant article consumed, and a favorable license was granted to the English East India Company, to export a large quantity of it to America. A number of American merchants, at this time in London, were

very eager to obtain the privilege of furnishing vessels to carry this obnoxious cargo. These facts became known in Boston early in the October of 1773, and meetings were immediately held in various parts of the town to prevent the landing of it.

6. When the tea arrived, the people resolved that it should be sent back immediately. About the middle of December, a large meeting was held at the Old South, at which at least two thousand men were present from the neighboring towns. At this meeting, Mr Rotch was ordered to get his tea ship ready for sea that day, and proceed directly to the governor and demand a pass to go by the Castle.

7. The governor at that time resided in Milton, at the distance of seven or eight miles. Meanwhile the meeting adjourned till three o'clock in the afternoon. Mr Rotch did not return till nearly six, and in the interval, Josiah Quincy Jr., addressed the assembly with much eloquence, on the importance of the present crisis. The answer of the governor was, 'that for the honor of the laws, and from duty towards the king, he could not grant the permit until the vessel was regularly cleared.'

8. A great commotion in the meeting followed this reply. Some one in the crowd exclaimed, 'Who knows how tea will mingle with salt water?' There were about sixty persons present disguised in the manner of the Indians. One of their number at this moment raised the war-whoop, and the assembly immediately dispersed. Mr Samuel Adams cried

out, that it was a trick of the enemy to disperse the meeting, and requested the people to keep their places. But the disguised Indians rushed to the wharf, and went on board the ships loaded with tea.

9. Here they set to work in earnest, with boldness and hearty good will, and in a little less than two hours, they had made tea of half the water in the dock. About two hundred and forty chests, with a hundred half chests, were staved and emptied over the sides of the vessels. The affair was conducted without disturbance, and no injury was done to any thing but the tea. You will find a picture of this, at the beginning of the book.

10. This affair took place almost under the guns of the Castle, and in the presence of several ships of war, at that time floating in the harbor. It is a little singular, that the British troops were not called in, to put a stop to it. The names of the men, who had the boldness and spirit to engage in this plan, have never all been made public. The last surviving member of the party recently died.

11. The news of this transaction was received in England with great indignation. A bill was passed in parliament, which enacted, that from and after the first of June, the landing and discharging, lading or shipping of goods, in the harbor of Boston, should be discontinued. This act occasioned great distress in the town. All business ceased. The poor were thrown out of employment, and the necessaries of life rose to a very high price. It would have been almost

impossible for the very poor to have subsisted, if it had not been for the assistance and encouragement of the inhabitants of the neighboring towns.

12. During the summer of 1774, troops had been continually arriving, and were employed in building fortifications and barracks on the neck. The town's people would give them no aid in erecting these works, and laborers were hired from other places. Early in September two hundred of these soldiers sailed up the river Mystic, and stole from the powder-house on Quarry Hill, a large quantity of powder, which belonged to the province.

13. A number of the same party also went to Cambridge, and marched off with a couple of field-pieces. These outrages raised a great alarm, and several thousand persons assembled in arms in Cambridge, and obliged all the individuals, who were favorably disposed to the government, to forswear all offices under the new order of things.

14. General Gage was at this time governor, and had determined to assemble a General Court at Salem, on the fifth of October. The prevailing excitement alarmed him, and he deferred the meeting by proclamation. The representatives however appeared, assembled, and formed themselves into a provincial congress. This congress chose John Hancock for chairman, and Benjamin Lincoln for clerk. They then adjourned, to meet at Concord, on the eleventh of the month.

15. This congress advised the people to supply them-

selves with arms and ammunition. Governor Gage denounced the congress as an unlawful assembly, and one with whose recommendations it would be dangerous to comply. The same assembly, however, met again in December, and appointed a body which they termed a committee of safety. It was the duty of this committee to watch over the general interests of the State, to call together the militia when necessary, and to station them in such places as they should think proper.

16. In the neighborhood of Boston, the state of affairs was very serious. Every exertion was made to arm the people, and to provide them with such articles as they would need in war. In carrying these from the town to the country, the inhabitants were obliged to be very cunning and cautious, in order to deceive the guard on the neck. Cannon balls were concealed in loads of manure, powder and shot in the baskets of the marketmen, and in candle boxes.

17. Towards the close of 1774, there were eleven British regiments stationed in Boston. Five hundred soldiers paraded, and were on duty daily. The conduct of the troops was at first peaceable; but in the course of the winter they were guilty of several acts of outrage and riot.