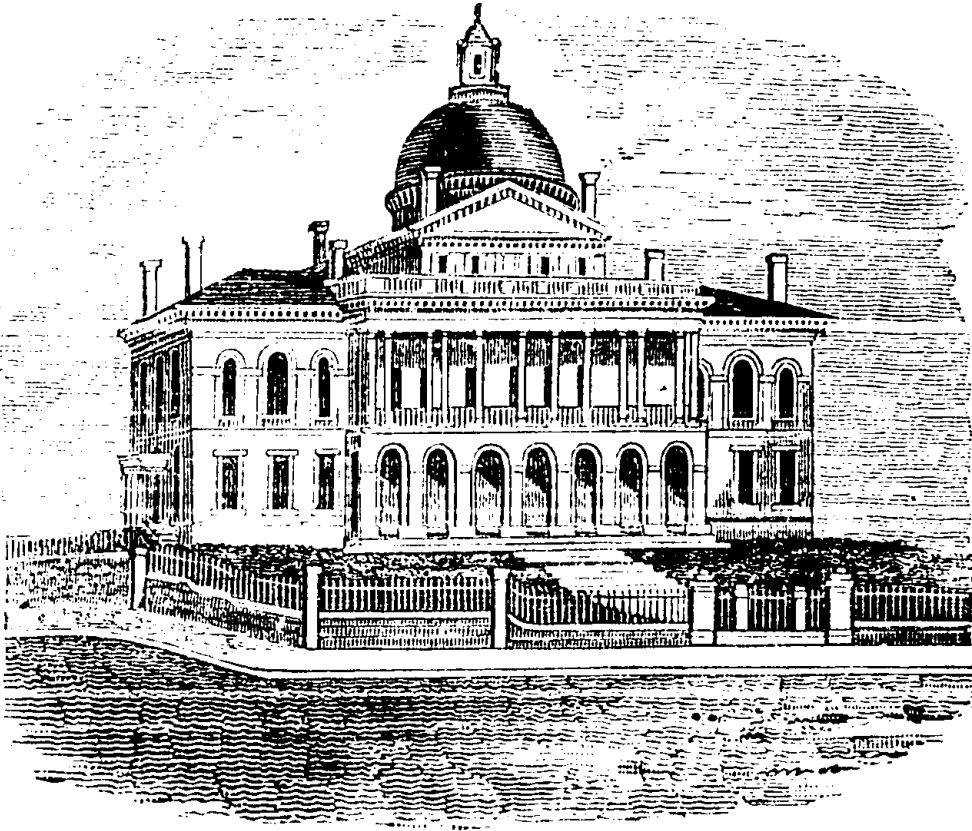


# HISTORY OF BOSTON.



BY ROBIN CARVER.

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LILLY, WAIT, COLMAN, AND HOLDEN.

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## CHAPTER XV.

*Early patriots. John Hancock. His birth and education. He receives a large fortune. Anecdote. Chosen president of Congress. Elected Governor. His death. Character. Anecdote.*

1. I AM now going to tell you a few anecdotes of the distinguished patriots, John Hancock, and Samuel Adams. They were early and active in the cause of liberty, and their names will ever be remembered with honor, in our history.

2. John Hancock was born at Quincy, in 1737, and received his education at Harvard College. His father died when he was a child, and he was then adopted by his uncle, the richest merchant in Boston, and a man of liberality and public spirit. This benevolent man took the entire charge of his young nephew, and, on the completion of his studies, received him into his counting house.

3. After a few years, he sent him to England, to become acquainted with business and foreign merchants. He died in 1764, leaving his nephew his extensive business, and the largest estate in the province. This sudden possession of great riches brought him at once before the public ; and his conduct gained him general good will and esteem.

4. In the course of his business, he employed great numbers of people, and by his habits of industry and liberality, acquired extensive influence. At length, he was made a member of the provincial legislature. An anecdote, connected with this event, is thus related by President Adams.

5. 'I was one day walking in the Mall, and accidentally met Samuel Adams. In taking a few turns together, we came in full view of Mr Hancock's house. Mr Adams, pointing to the stone building, said, 'This town has done a wise thing to-day.' 'What?' 'They have made that young man's fortune their own.' His prophecy was literally fulfilled, for no man's property was ever more entirely devoted to the public. The town had that day chosen Mr Hancock into the legislature of the province.'

6. This event decided his future fortunes. He devoted his whole property to the service of his country, and finally risked it all in her defence. He soon became an object of marked dislike to the officers of the English government, and they took every opportunity to display their enmity. This, of course, increased his popularity with his fellow-citizens, and placed him higher in their confidence.

7. I have already told you that General Gage issued a proclamation, a few days before the battle of Bunker Hill, in which he offered pardon to all rebels, except John Hancock, and Samuel Adams. While this proscription exposed them to disgrace, in case of ill success, it served to extend their fame, and make them more widely known as ardent friends of liberty.

8. In 1775, Mr Hancock was sent from Massachusetts, as a delegate to the congress at Philadelphia. In the next year, he was chosen president of that body, and was the first to sign the Declaration of Independence. His signature to that instrument is written in a fine, large, bold hand, which seems intended to remain a long time. The pen with which it was made, is still in existence.

9. In 1779 ill health obliged Mr Hancock to resign his seat in Congress. In the next year he was chosen governor of his native State; and with the exception of two years, he held this office till the time of his death, in 1793. Few public men have been more respected and esteemed, or more sincerely lamented.

10. If Mr Hancock had not neglected his private affairs, for the public service, he might have made immense additions to his wealth. He seemed to consider that he held his property for the use and benefit of his country. It was at one time thought necessary to burn Boston, in order to force the enemy to leave it. Mr Hancock was consulted about it. His answer was that 'although the greater part of his for-

tune consisted of buildings within the town, yet, if its destruction would be useful to the cause of the country, he wished it should be set on fire immediately.'

11. Many instances are related of his generosity of disposition. In the times of distress, it is said that hundreds of families were fed by his bounty. No one had it in his power to make greater sacrifices of wealth, and no one could have used that power with greater profuseness.

12. Mr Hancock seldom spoke in public, but his knowledge of business and of mankind rendered him peculiarly fit for public life. In private he lived with elegance and hospitality. He was a perfect gentleman of the old school, and dressed richly and fashionably. In many of these things, he differed much from his friend and fellow patriot, Samuel Adams; of whom I will now give you a short history.