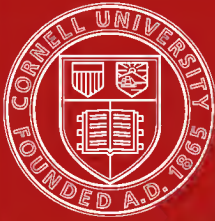


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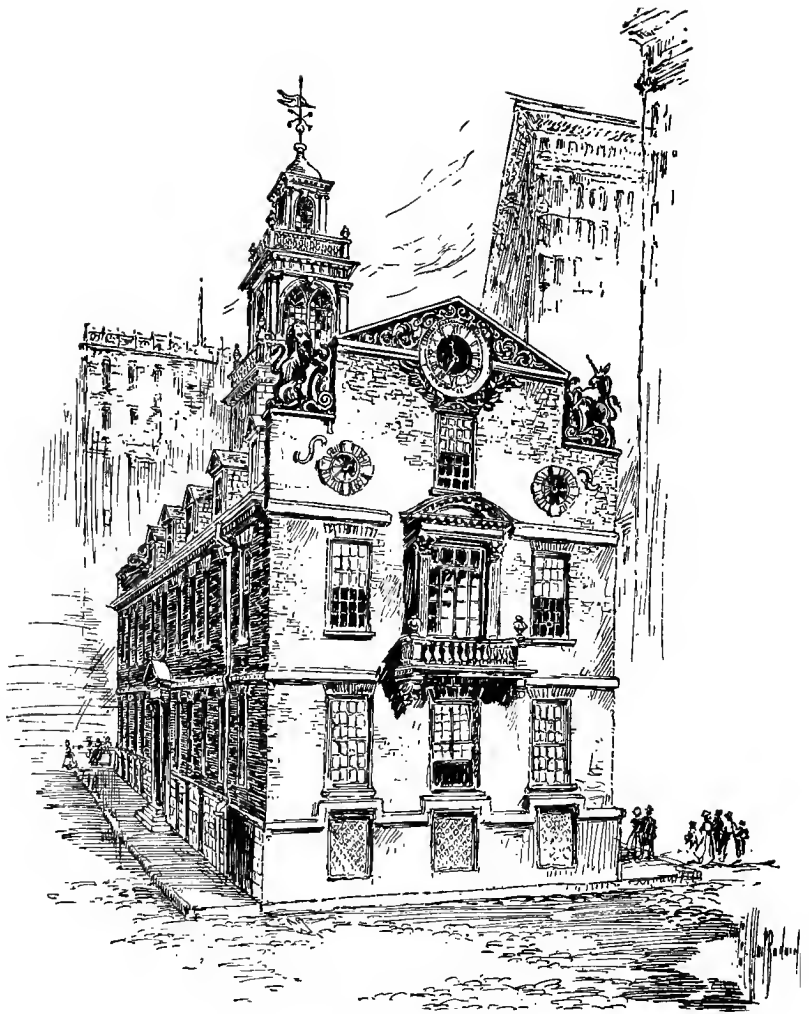
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THE OLD STATE HOUSE, BOSTON

# THE OLD STATE HOUSE

AND ITS PREDECESSOR

# THE FIRST TOWN HOUSE

By CHARLES F. READ<sup>o</sup>



PUBLISHED BY THE  
BOSTONIAN SOCIETY  
OLD STATE HOUSE  
BOSTON

ON THIS SPOT STOOD UNTIL ITS BURNING OCT. 3, 1711,  
THE FIRST TOWN HOUSE OF BOSTON,  
FOUNDED IN 1657 BY THE LIBERALITY OF CAPT. ROBERT KEAYNE.  
HERE IN 1713 WAS ERECTED THE SECOND TOWN HOUSE,  
WHOSE WALLS ENDURE TO THIS DAY, AS DO THE FLOORS  
AND ROOF, CONSTRUCTED IN 1747, AFTER A SECOND FIRE  
HAD DEVASTATED ITS CHAMBERS.

HERE THE LOYAL ASSEMBLIES OBEYED THE CROWN;  
HERE THE SPIRIT OF LIBERTY WAS AROUSED AND GUIDED  
BY THE ELOQUENT APPEALS AND SAGACIOUS COUNSELS  
OF OTIS, ADAMS, QUINCY, WARREN, CUSHING AND HANCOCK;

“HERE THE CHILD INDEPENDENCE WAS BORN;”  
HERE WASHINGTON RECEIVED THE TRIBUTE OF AN ENFRANCHISED PEOPLE;  
HERE WAS INSTALLED THE GOVERNMENT OF A NEW STATE;  
HERE FOR TEN YEARS OUR CIVIL RULERS ASSEMBLED;

AND HERE,  
BY THE VOTE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF 1881,  
HAVE BEEN RECONSTRUCTED, IN THEIR ORIGINAL FORM,  
THE COUNCIL CHAMBER AND REPRESENTATIVES' HALL.  
HALLOWED BY THE MEMORIES OF THE REVOLUTION,  
MAY OUR CHILDREN PRESERVE THE SACRED TRUST.

INSCRIPTION ON THE MURAL TABLET IN THE ENTRANCE HALL



# THE OLD STATE HOUSE, AND ITS PREDECES- SOR THE FIRST TOWN HOUSE.

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A PAPER READ BEFORE THE SOCIETY, DECEMBER 10, 1907,

BY CHARLES F. READ,  
CLERK OF THE BOSTONIAN SOCIETY.

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Among the few buildings to be seen in Boston of the twentieth century, which were erected before the Revolution, the Old State House stands pre-eminent in interest ; for go where we may within the confines of the city, and even through our broad land, we shall find no other building of which it can be said, to quote from a letter of John Adams, written in his later years, "Then and there was the first scene of the first act of opposition to the arbitrary claims of Great Britain. Then and there the child Independence was born."

It is therefore proper that the story of this famous shrine of liberty should be instilled into the hearts and minds of old and young, so that all may exclaim in unison "Touch it not, for it is sacred. Only the ruthless hand of time or disaster shall cause it to disappear from human sight."

To speak first of the site of the Old State House and the locality which it dominates. From the earliest days of Boston this small plot of ground, situated at the intersection of the "Fore street to Roxbury," now Washington Street, and the "Great street to the sea," now State Street, has been the scene of great activities. It was first used for the open marketstead, and this name is constantly used in describing boundaries of adjacent estates. We also find in the Boston Records under date of October 17, 1636, that it was ordered by the townsmen "that all the timber in the markt place shalbe taken away before the next meeting day, which is to be on the

1 day of the next moneth, upon the forfeiture of such timber as shalbe there then found, and that no more timber shalbe thither brought, upon the forfeiture thereof, and the markett place to be gotten cleane and cleare dressed by that time by William Brenton and John Sampford upon their forfeiture of x s in default thereof, and the sawe pitte gotten filled." We also find under date of April 17, 1655, that "it is ordered that the guns in the markett place shall be trimmed upp against the court of election annually att the townes charge."

Opposite the market-stead, where to-day Brazier's Building rears its height in air, the first settlers built their rude thatched meeting house, and of this fact, the passing thousands are reminded to-day by a tablet over the State Street entrance of that building, which reads, in part :

Site of the First Meeting House built in  
Boston, A. D. 1632  
Used before 1640 for Town Meetings and for  
Sessions of the General Court of the Colony

Across the way, at the corner of what was called for many years Wilson's Lane, and before that, Crooked Lane, lived the Rev. John Wilson, first teacher and pastor of the Boston Church. Although the present name of Devonshire Street reminds us of the mother country, this thoroughfare should have continued to retain the name of the first minister of Boston.

On the corners opposite the upper end of the market place two citizens lived in the early days, whose names have come down to us in history. Of one, John Coggan, merchant, it suffices to say that his fame rests upon two facts ; he built the first brick shop in Boston, where the "Pagoda building" now stands, and he married the widow of Governor Winthrop in 1651.

Of the other, Capt. Robert Keayne, more must be said, for his name is indissolubly connected with the building, in 1657, of the First Town House in Boston, the predecessor of the Old State House.

Robert Keayne, merchant tailor by trade, emigrated to Boston from London, England, in the year 1635, and became one of the leading citizens of the town. He had belonged to the Honourable Artillery Company of London, and such was his interest in military affairs that he was foremost in organizing in 1638 "The Military Company of the Massachusetts," which we know to-day, after the lapse of almost three centuries, by the name of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts. Keayne was elected its first commander, and was ever active in its interests. He represented the town of Boston in the General Court of Massachusetts for several terms between the years 1638 and 1649, and was a benefactor of Harvard College and the Town Library in Boston, of which I shall speak later. He died March 23, 1655/6, aged 61 years, and left behind him a will which for length has not been equalled in the history of Suffolk County. It fills fifty-four pages of fine type, in one of the Boston Record Commissioners' Reports. By this will he left the town of Boston a legacy of "three hundred pounds in merchantable pay to build a house to be used by the Town and County Government, to be shared by the Military Company and with convenience for a market and conduit near by."

The town soon gave consideration to the subject of accepting the legacy, evidently realizing that it was an opportune time to erect a suitable building in which to administer its affairs; and the records tell us that the mode of procedure was as follows:— At a meeting of the selectmen on December 29, 1656, "itt is agreed that the next day of our meeting some time be spent to consider of Capt. Keayne's will in respect of the legacies given to the towne." A month later, on January 25, 1656/7, the selectmen voted "that upon the perufall of Capt. Keayne's will respecting the legacies given to the town itt is agreed that forthwith the executrix and overseers of the said will bee advised with concerning the said legacies withoutt delay."

At the annual town meeting, held on March 9, 1656/7, it was

Voted that Capt. Savage, M<sup>r</sup> Stodard, M<sup>r</sup> Howchin and M<sup>r</sup> Edward Hutchinſon, ſen., are choſen a comittee to conſider of the modell of the towne houſe, to bee built, as concerning the charge thereof and the moſt convenient place, as alſo to take the ſubſcriptions of the inhabitants to propogate ſuch a building, and ſeaſonably to make report to a publick townes meeting.

In accordance with the above vote, ſubſcription papers were circulated with moſt excellent results, and it is an interesting fact that two of the papers are in exiſtence to-day. One is in the poſſeſſion of the Maſſachuſetts Historical Society, and the other forms an interesting relic in the collections of the Bostonian Society.

The queſtion of finance being ſettled, another, equally important, was the ſelection of a ſite, and on this matter the town records are ſilent. But we know that it was built on the market-ſtead lot, and rightly ſo, for all the affairs of the town and county, and the Colony, Province and State have had their beginnings and endings there or in the vicinity, until the cloſing years of the eighteenth century.

The firſt Town Houſe ſerved its purpoſe from 1658 to 1711, a period of fifty-four years, and during this time the following Governors of the Maſſachuſetts Bay adminiſtered their affairs within its walls: Endicott, Bellingham, Leverett and Bradſtreet, under the Colonial Charter; Andros, ſerving his Royal maſter James II, and Phips, Stoughton, Bellomont and Dudley, under the Provincial Charter. While it ſtood, it witnessed many interesting ſights. The anxiety during King Philip's wars, when the ſavage foes burned and ſlaughtered within a few miles of Boston; the troubles which preceded the vice royalty of Andros, and the annulment of the Charter in 1684, found expreſſion in excited gatherings in the old Hall. We catch a glimpse of theſe days in an account of a meeting of the Governor and Council on May 25, 1686, when Joſeph Dudley aſſumed the office of Preſident, under a commiſſion of James II; the exemplification of the judgment againſt the Charter was read in open court, "in the preſence of divers of

the eminent ministers, gentlemen, and inhabitants of the town and country," with his Majesty's commission to the new government; the President took the oath of allegiance; and the officers being seated, a speech was delivered by Mr. Dudley, in which, after referring to the allegiance which it was hoped would be shown, he proceeded to say :

The necessary alterations in the rule and form of His Majesty's government from the method late used by the government while it stood by the Charter, as they need be but a few, so we assure you shall with all care and prudence be continued as plain and easy as is possible, and we shall hasten humbly to lay them at his most gracious Majesty's feet, for his allowance and confirmation.

At the close of this speech, a proclamation was read, setting forth his Majesty's Commission, which was "published by beat of drum and found of trumpet," and ordered to be sent to every town. The overthrow of Andros followed in 1689, and the preparation of the unsuccessful expedition against Nova Scotia in 1711.

While the old Town Hall was standing, the witchcraft delusion was stirring the community, although happily none of the trials of that period were conducted within its portals; and during the same time it witnessed the growth of the population of Boston from less than four thousand to about nine thousand persons.

The building was sixty-six feet long and thirty-six feet wide, the second story being set on twenty-one pillars ten feet high, and projecting three feet over them. The roof, which sloped on all four sides, was surmounted by two turrets or cupolas. Josselyn, who visited Boston in 1663 and printed an account of his travels, speaks of the building as "a Town House built upon pillars, where the Merchants may confer; in the chambers above they keep their monthly Courts."

It is to be deeply regretted that no authentic picture of that first Town House is in existence, and yet it is wholly possible that some traveller to our shores made a drawing of it while

it was standing. What an historical event it would be, if research in the library of some stately castle or picturesque manor house of England should bring to the delighted eyes of Bostonians such a picture! Two representations of the building have been made from the specifications which have been preserved, but the pictures lack the stamp of authenticity.

During its existence the Town House was used from time to time for various other purposes than the administration of public affairs, and mention of them is appropriate.

It contained for some years the Town Library, an institution also established by the will of Boston's benefactor, Capt. Robert Keayne, of whom I have already spoken.

After providing in his will for a suitable room in the contemplated town building for a "Library & Gallere for Devines & Schollers to meete in," the testator in a subsequent item provided for the gathering of books with which to enrich it. This item makes interesting reading for antiquaries :—

I give and bequeath to the beginning of that Library my 3 great writing bookes w<sup>ch</sup> are intended as an Exposition or Interpretation of the whole Bible, as also a 4<sup>th</sup> great writing booke in which is an exposition on the Prophecy of Daniel, of the Revelations, & the Prophecy of Hofea, not long since began, all which Bookes are written with my owne hand so farr as they be writt & could defier that some able scholler or two that is active and dilligent & addiçttd to reading and writing were ordered to carry on the same workes by degrees as they have leasure and opportunity, & in the same methods and way as I have begun (if a better be not advifed to) at least if it shalbe esteemed for the profit of it to young students (though not so to more able and learned Devines in these knowing times) worth the labour as I have & doe finde it to my selfe worth all the paines & labour I have bestowed upon them, so that if I had 100<sup>lb</sup> layd me down for them to deprive me of them, till my fight or life should be taken from me, I should not part from them.

After arranging further that his wife and his son Benjamin Keayne, may select from his library such books as they desire, the testator wills that Mr. Wilson and Mr. Norton, respec-

tively pastor and teacher of the First Church, and the overseers of his will shall select from the remainder of his library such books as they think will be appropriate for the Town Library. He concluded the item by hoping that

After this beginning the Lord may stir up some others that will add more to them & helpe to carry the worke on by bookes of more valew, antiquity, use and esteem, & that an Inventory may betaken & kept of those books that they fet apart for the Library.

The Boston Records from 1683 to 1715, contain numerous references to the Town Library. Among them we find that on August 31, 1702, the selectmen "ordered that M<sup>r</sup> John Barnerd jun<sup>r</sup> be desired to make a cattalogue of all the bookes belonging to the Towns Libery and to Lodge the Same in y<sup>e</sup> f<sup>d</sup> Libery." About two years later Citizen Barnerd received payment for his services in the following terms as described in the selectmen's minutes, February 28, 1704: "M<sup>r</sup> John Barnerd jun<sup>r</sup> haveing at the request of the Selectmen Set the Towns Libery in good order, he is allowed for S<sup>d</sup> Service two of those bookes of w<sup>ch</sup> there are in y<sup>e</sup> S<sup>d</sup> Libery two of a Sort."

The Library came to an abrupt close in 1711, when the Town House was destroyed by fire, but it is probable that some of its books were saved from the flames and surreptitiously added to the private libraries of Boston citizens. Such proceedings being deemed illegal, the selectmen voted on June 2, 1713, more than a year and a half after the fire, that in effect, such undesirable citizens should "stand and deliver." The vote reads:

That an Advertizm<sup>t</sup> be printed desiring all persons who have any of the Towns Libery or can give notice of any bookes or other things belonging to y<sup>e</sup> Town House before y<sup>e</sup> Late fire to inform y<sup>e</sup> T<sup>r</sup> Treasu<sup>r</sup> thereof in ord<sup>r</sup> to y<sup>r</sup> being returned.

An interesting event occurred in the Town House in 1686, when, by the authority of Governor Andros, the first religious service in Boston of the Church of England was held within

its walls. Judge Sewall speaks of this innovation in the following words in his Diary, Wednesday, May 26, 1686 :

Mr. Ratliff the Minister waits on the Council. Mr. Mafon and Randolph propose that he may have one of the three houses to preach in. That is deny'd and he is granted the East End of the Town House where the Deputies meet ; until those who desire his Ministry shall provide a fitter place.

Again under date of " Sabbath, May 30, 1686," he writes :

. . . . wherein there is to be Worship, according to the Church of England, as 'tis call'd, in the Town House by countenance of Authority. 'Tis deferred 'till the 6<sup>th</sup> of June, at what time the Pulpit is provided ; the pulpit is movable, carried up and down stairs as occasion serves ; it seems many crowded thither, and the Minister preached forenoon and afternoon.

The result of these services was the gathering of the parish of King's Chapel, the first Episcopal church in Boston. Rev. Robert Ratcliffe, just mentioned, was the first Rector, serving from 1686 to 1689.

It is apparent that by the beginning of the eighteenth century the Town House had become the centre of a business section, and as a result the town constructed on the first floor numerous small shops. That these business quarters found willing tenants, the selectmen's minutes bear ample witness. To quote a few records out of many :

June 28, 1703. Granted to Benja Eliot the Shop under the Town House formerly Let to John Howard, Scribener, deceased, for the term of Seven years from this day at 40 Shill p annum June 28<sup>th</sup> y<sup>e</sup> dimentions are w<sup>th</sup> infide 9 foot 8 inches in length, and 4 foot 1½ inches in breadth.

This record is interesting as showing the extremely small size of the shops.

Feb<sup>ry</sup> 7, 1708. Voted by the Select men that the Sume of fifteen pounds sixteen shillings w<sup>ch</sup> the Treasur<sup>r</sup> Lately rec<sup>d</sup> for Dockage of y<sup>e</sup> Ship whereof Cap<sup>t</sup> Flint is master Shall be Layd out in inclose-



ing & fitting up Shops under the Shead at the westerly quarter of the Town Houfe in order to bring in Rent for the Town.

The Town House was totally destroyed in the great fire of October 2, 1711, which Hutchinson thus describes in his History of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay :

It broke out in an old Tenement within a back Yard in Cornhill near the First Meeting House, occasioned by the carelessness of a poor sottish Woman, one Mary Morse, by using Fire near a parcel of Ocum Chips and other cumbustible Rubbish. All the houses on both sides of Cornhill from School Street to what is called the stone-shop in Dock Square, all the upper part of King Street on the South and North Side, together with the Town House and what was called the Old Meeting House above it, were consumed to ashes.

When the next morning dawned, the people of Boston realized that the very heart of the town had been eaten out by the fire which had consumed about one hundred buildings, and made one hundred and ten families homeless.

It seems strange to us who live in the twentieth century that the Rev. Increase Mather believed that this great Boston fire was a judgment of God for the wickedness of the people. He said in a sermon which he preached immediately after the fire, "But has not God's Holy Day been prophaned in New England? Has it not been so in Boston this last summer, more than ever since there was a Christian here? Have not burdens been carried through the streets on the Sabbath day? Have not Bakers, Carpenters and other tradesmen been employed in fervile work on the Sabbath day? When I saw this . . . my heart said Will not the Lord for this kindle a fire in Boston."

It was of course imperative that a new building should be at once erected for the administration of public affairs, and consequently the selectmen of Boston petitioned the General Court on October 17th, two weeks after the fire, for "Advice and Direction for the Restoring and Rebuilding of the House for those Publick uses and about the place where to set the same."

As a result, a joint committee of four members of the Council and seven members of the House of Representatives was appointed, of which Councillor Elisha Hutchinson was chairman, and this committee recommended "that a new house be built in or near where the Old Town House stood, the breadth not to exceed thirty-six feet, the length so as to be convenient. The charges to be borne the one-half by the Town of Boston and County of Suffolk in equal Proportion."

This report having been accepted, a building committee was appointed consisting of two Councillors, Elisha Hutchinson and Penn Townsend, and three Representatives, Addison Davenport, Samuel Thaxter and Samuel Phipps, with two citizens of Boston, — the town having accepted the proposition, Thomas Buttolph and William Payne. It is well for us to hear the names of these prominent citizens of the community who built so true and well that their work endures to this day.

It is to be regretted that it is not known who drew the design of the Old State House, for even at the present time, when the art of architecture has made such tremendous strides, we must admit that the structure is of pleasing style and good proportion.

Eighteen months were required for its erection, and it was consequently ready for occupancy in the spring of 1713. It is interesting in this connection to find that Judge Sewall made the following entry in his ever open Diary on May 5, 1712: "I lay a stone at the South east Corner of the Town House, and had Engraven on it S. S. 1712." How interesting would it be if we could point to-day to this inscription; but alas! so many structural changes have been wrought in the building from time to time that, in all probability, the stone could not now be found in the basement wall.

A town meeting was held in the new building on May 13, 1713, and Judge Sewall again records on May 28th, "I declared to the Council that Prayer had been too much neglected formerly; we were now in a new House, we ought to Reform; without it, I would not be there. Mr. Secretary assented, and

I was desired to see it effected." The Judge's entry on the following day reads, "Dr. Increase Mather prays Excellently in the Council."

Daniel Neal, who visited Boston about the year 1720, in his book entitled "Present State of New England," thus writes of the Town House, which was then comparatively new:— "From the Head of the Peer you go up the chief Street of the Town, at the upper end of which is the Town House or Exchange; a fine piece of Building, containing besides the Walk for the Merchants, the Council Chamber, the House of Commons, and other spacious Rooms for the Sessions of the Courts of Justice. The Exchange is furrounded with Book-fellers' Shops, which have a good trade."

The first period of time in the existence of the life of the Old State House may properly cover the years from 1713, the date of its first occupancy, to 1747, when fire completely destroyed its interior construction; and during this time, a period of thirty-four years, Joseph Dudley, William Tailer, Samuel Shute, William Dummer, Jonathan Belcher and William Shirley, Governors and Lieutenant-Governors of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, administered their official duties in the Council Chamber.

Interesting events also took place here during the same period. In 1717 the funeral obsequies of Fitz John Winthrop were solemnized in this room, and of this solemn scene Judge Sewall made the following entry in his Diary:

Attended the Funeral of Major General Winthrop. The Corpse was carried to the Town House the night before: now buried from the Council Chamber. Bearers, his Excellency the Governor [Samuel Shute was then in office], Gov. Dudley: Lt. Gov. Dummer, Col. Taylor: Col. Elisha Sewall, Samuel Sewall. Scarfs and Rings. The Regiment attended in Arms. Mr. John Winthrop led the Widow. 'Twas past five before we went. The Streets were crowded with people: was laid in Gov. Winthrop's Tomb in Old Burial Place.

It was in the Council Chamber that the famous expedition was organized in 1746, which resulted in the capture of Louis-

burg from France. In the expedition the Provincial troops were very fortunately assisted by a British fleet, and the next year the conquering heroes, Sir William Pepperell and Admiral Peter Warren, here received the congratulations of the Government, and on their way thereto the plaudits of the people welcomed their safe arrival in Boston from a most successful campaign.

It was also in this same latter year, 1747, that the Old State House was the centre of an outburst of popular indignation, caused by the seizure of sailors and landsmen to supply the places of deserters from a fleet of British vessels, commanded by one Commodore Knowles, which had anchored in the harbor. The building, in which the General Court was assembled, was surrounded after dark by several thousands of excited citizens, who threw stones and brickbats through the windows into the Council Chamber. This act of violence caused Governor Shirley to appear on the balcony and address the people, promising to have the impressed townsmen released. The matter was arranged a few days later to the satisfaction of both sides, and the British fleet sailed away, Commodore Knowles being convinced, no doubt, that the citizens of Boston, even thirty years before the Revolution were very fond of asserting their rights.

One month later, December 9, 1747, the building was devastated by fire and on the next day the *Boston Weekly News Letter* published the following account of the catastrophe :

Yesterday morning between 6 & 7 o'clock we were exceedingly surpris'd by a most terrible Fire, which broke out at the Court House in this Town, whereby that spacious and beautiful Building except the bare outward Walls, was entirely destroyed. As the Fire began in the middle or second Story, the Records, Books, Papers, Furniture, Pictures of the Kings and Queens, &c., which were in the Council Chamber, the Chamber of the House of Representatives and the Apartments thereof, in that Story, were consumed ; as were also the Books and Papers in the Offices of the upper Story : Those in the Offices below were mostly saved. In the Cellars, which were hired by several persons, a great quantity

of Wines and other Liquors were lost. The publick Damage sustain'd by this sad Disaster is inexpressibly great, and the Loss to some particular Persons, 'tis said, will amount to several Thousand Pounds. The Vehemence of the Flames occasion'd such a great Heat as to set the Roofs of some of the opposite houses on Fire, notwithstanding they had been covered with Snow, and it was extinguish'd with much Difficulty. How the Fire was occasion'd, whether by Defects in the Chimney or Hearth as some think, is uncertain.

As was the case when the building was erected in 1713, the charge for its repair after the fire was divided between the Province, County and Town, each paying the same proportion as before. The amount expended was £3705 : 11s. : 4d., and that this sum was not a greater one was due to the fact that the brick walls were so well and heavily built as to warrant their continued use.

We have another pen picture of the building, written in 1750 just after its rehabilitation. The account is taken from the Diary of Capt. Francis Goelet, who visited Boston at that time.

They have also a Town House, built of Brick, situated in King's street. It's a very Grand Building, Arch'd all Round, and Two Stories High, Sash'd above ; its Lower Part is always Open, design'd as a Change, tho' the Merchants in Fair Weather make their Change in the open Street at the Eastermost End. In the upper Story are the Council and Assembly Chambers &c. It has a neat Capulo, sash'd all round, and which on rejoicing days is Illuminated.

The second period in the history of the Old State House may be said to extend from its rebuilding in 1748 to the time when it was abandoned by the State officials, who on January 11, 1798, marched in picturesque procession from its closing portals to Beacon Hill, where they took formal possession of the new State House erected on its summit. And by this time also, the various courts had been removed to the Court House on Court Street, and Boston town meetings were held in the larger Faneuil Hall.

During this period of fifty years the official affairs of the Province of Massachusetts Bay were administered in the Council Chamber by Governors Shirley, Pownall and Bernard, Lieutenant-governor Hutchinson, and General Gage, the last of the line of Royal officials.

In the Council Chamber, John Hancock was inaugurated as first Governor of Massachusetts when the State government was set in motion in 1780, and after him followed in succession James Bowdoin, then Hancock again, Samuel Adams, Increase Sumner and Caleb Strong.

It is only possible in this paper to mention the stirring events which crowded the years between 1761, when James Otis argued against the Writs of Assistance, and 1789, when the community paid homage to the First Citizen of the Republic, who was also "First in War, First in Peace and First in the Hearts of His Countrymen." Some, like the foregoing, took place in the Old State House, others, which happened elsewhere in Boston, cast their resultant effects into the grave deliberations of the Council Chamber.

Arranged chronologically they were as follows ; in 1770, the Boston Massacre, Samuel Adams demanding the withdrawal of the British troops from Boston and the trial of Captain Preston and his soldiers who participated in the massacre. In 1776, the Declaration of Independence was proclaimed from the eastern balcony to a great concourse of people assembled in King Street. The year 1782 was made memorable by a reception in honor of the French fleet and army, who were on their way home to France. In 1783, the Treaty of Peace was likewise proclaimed to a great multitude gathered in the street below. And to crown all, "Here the child Independence was born."

The next period, from 1798 to 1881, was the one in which, as has been well said, the old Town House fell on evil days. It is true that for the short space of ten years it served as the City Hall of the municipality of Boston, but for the remainder of that long period it was shorn of its historic fame, altered so

as to be almost unrecognizable, and put to the sordid labor of producing revenue for the town and city treasury.

To relate more in detail the vicissitudes and changes which came to the building : in 1803 the Commonwealth of Massachusetts having erected, a few years before, a suitable building for transacting its official affairs, sold to the town of Boston all of its rights in the Town House for the sum of six thousand dollars ; at the same time the Counties of Suffolk and Norfolk relinquished their claims for the sums of \$1923.43 and \$1176.58 respectively. By this arrangement Boston became the sole owner of the property. By vote of the town it was then leased to various tenants for a number of years ; and at this time, also, "the lanthorn," as it is called in the records, was used as an observatory for vessels entering the harbor.

The town voted on June 22, 1820, to lease the eastern half of the second story and the attic to the Masonic Fraternity for ten years, at an annual rental of \$600. During its occupancy by the Freemasons, Bowen published the following description of the building in his "Picture of Boston," first edition, 1828-9 :— "Old State House. The building first erected for governmental business was placed at the head of State street. It has been twice burnt. The last time it was destroyed was in 1747, and it was repaired in its present form in the following year. The building is in length 110 feet, in breadth 38 feet, three stories high, finished according to the Tuscan, Dorick and Ionic orders. The lower story of this building is now rented by the city for stores and offices ; the second and third stories except one room at the west of the second story (which is occupied for the City Treasurer's office), are occupied by the Masonic Lodges in Boston. The Masonic Hall is elegantly embellished ; the decorations and furniture are very rich and appropriate, and the room is sufficiently capacious for most Masonic purposes. It measures 43 by 32 feet, and is 16 feet high." Then follows a list of the several Masonic bodies occupying the building and the dates of their meetings. The description concludes : "This building, being

placed at the head of one of the first streets in Boston, has quite a pleasant and imposing appearance to the stranger as he approaches it from Long Wharf. In Hale's 'Survey of Boston and Vicinity,' the measures of distances are reckoned from this building."

While in use as a Masonic Hall the building had two narrow escapes from demolition. The directors of the United States Bank offered to buy the property in 1822, as a site for their contemplated bank building, but fortunately the offer was declined. In 1826 the Washington Monument Association, after deliberate consideration, decided that the site of the Old State House was the best that offered for the erection of Chantrey's statue of Washington. But this proposition was also declined, and the statue finds an appropriate place in Doric Hall in the present State House.

In 1830 the building was much altered and renovated, to become in part for a decade of years the home of the City Government of Boston, and to it was given a new title, City Hall. Porticos were added at both ends, and the interior was rearranged to give the required number of halls and offices. The dedication took place September 17th, 1830, the two hundredth anniversary of the settlement of Boston.

The first floor, the portion not used for municipal purposes, was devoted to uses closely allied to the business interests of a growing commercial city. A description of these is included in the following account of the building, taken from Bowen's "Picture of Boston," edition of 1838:—

On the first floor are three large rooms; that facing Washington Street is the United States Post Office. At the other extremity, looking down State Street, is Topliff's News Room, one of the best conducted establishments for the accommodation of merchants in the United States. The middle room, a lofty apartment supported by pillars, is the Merchants' Exchange, and common thoroughfare to the public offices.

From this central room is a flight of winding stairs leading to a suite of apartments in the second story. Directly over the Post Office is the hall of the Common Council, in which they ordinarily



meet on public business. In the opposite end of the building is the hall of the Mayor and Aldermen. In this room the Chief Magistrate of the city, together with the City Clerk, remain through the day in the discharge of their ordinary duties. The Board of Aldermen hold their meetings, also, on Monday evenings. Around the circular area of the stairs are a series of offices, viz. : the Auditor's, Treasurer's, Assistant City Clerk's, Clerk of Common Council, and the Health Office, which latter accommodates the City Marshal, Superintendent of Burial Grounds, Physician of the Port, Captain of the Port, Captain of the Watch, Superintendent of Lamps, and the Commissioner of Streets.

Another flight of stairs leads to the third story, in which is the office of the Chief Engineer of the Fire Department, City Land Commissioner, Messenger, a Committee Room, and a large hall, in which is a recently organized public Vaccine Institution for the gratuitous inoculation of the poor.

The whole is lighted with gas, as well as the lamps at the four corners of the building. Besides being ornamental to the city, the concentration of so many important offices under one roof renders the City Hall an object of peculiar interest.

This description of the "City Hall" also gives the following account of a fire which occurred in 1832, at which time the building narrowly escaped destruction :—

On the 21st of November, 1832, about five o'clock in the morning, this ancient building, the scene of so many interesting events, again took fire from an opposite (burning) building, under the stool of one of the Lutheran windows, which soon communicated with the under side of the roof, and had it not been for the uncommon exertions of the Fire Department, it must have been completely prostrated in a little time. As it was, however, the damages were easily repaired. The appropriation of the Council for the purpose was \$3,500.00. No papers of importance were lost, and the curious records of the city, from its first settlement, for a third time were safely rescued from a devouring element.

It is interesting that a copy in oil of Salmon's painting of this fire is in the Collections of the Bostonian Society. An engraving of this painting appeared for many years at the

head of the membership certification of the Boston Volunteer Fire Department.

When Mayor Harrison Gray Otis delivered an address at the dedication, he spoke with his customary eloquence of the inspiring history of the old Town House, and especially of the reading of the Declaration of Independence from the Council Chamber balcony to the people of Boston, a scene of which he was a witness in his boyhood. But his admonition to show proper respect to "the ancient Temple of Liberty," as he called it, fell on deaf ears; for when, ten years later, the authorities left the building never to return, — and that was eight years before Mr. Otis died, — the Old State House fell again upon evil days. In 1840, the city fathers voted once more to lease the building for business purposes, and during the next forty years it was so used, its condition meanwhile constantly deteriorating. An unsightly mansard roof, pierced with many windows, was placed on it, and it was further defaced by numerous business signs and telegraph wires. But all the time it was producing revenue, and in the eyes of many Bostonians of materialistic tendencies that was quite enough.

The year of redemption for the venerable structure came in due course of time, for the City Government of 1881 voted to restore the building to its original condition as near as possible, at a cost of thirty-five thousand dollars.

The battle in the Common Council for its preservation, for there the project met with great opposition, was led by a member from Ward 12, Mr. William H. Whitmore, who was well known as an antiquarian. He was President of the Council in 1879, and is still remembered as holding the position of City Registrar of Boston at the time of his death in 1900.

It is only just to say that to William H. Whitmore, more than to any other man, the Old State House owed its preservation in 1881. But it is only fair to add that, in the public hearings on the question, Mr. Whitmore was ably assisted by other well-known citizens, who eloquently urged that the building be preserved for the people as a memorial.

When the safety of the building had been assured, the Boston Antiquarian Club, then newly organized, was, at the suggestion of Mr. Whitmore, incorporated, becoming "the Bostonian Society," as the city authorities were willing to lease the renovated building to an incorporated historical society. The Bostonian Society incorporated in 1881, has occupied the venerable building since then, but even with such a guardian, materialism has been knocking at the doors of the Old State House, and as a result a minor portion is now in use as a subway station, and this occupation has wrought a change in its external appearance which is deeply to be regretted.

Additional space was demanded for the same purpose, and it was only by the combined resistance of the most pronounced kind that the demand was not enforced.

Legislation has now been enacted whereby no further desecration will be allowed, and under which the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has been constituted as an additional guardian, and with three such vigilant and interested custodians,—the State, the City, and the Society, which claims it as its home,—this historic building should long remain a monument to the forefathers and traditions of the Bay State. It remains then for us to be ever watchful that the Old State House be kept intact, well preserved, and unblemished, to remind us and "the Merchants who make their 'Change'" hereabout, of the loyalty and courage of a by-gone generation, and that here history has been made.













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