

**JAMES OTIS, THE PRE-
REVOLUTIONIST A BRIEF
INTERPRETATION OF THE LIFE
AND WORK OF A PATRIOT**

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James Otis, the Pre-Revolutionist a Brief Interpretation of the Life and Work of a Patriot by
John Clark Ridpath

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JAMES OTIS.

(See page 98.)



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A BRIEF INTERPRETATION OF THE LIFE AND WORK OF
A PATRIOT

BY

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Times of William E. Gladstone," etc., etc.



WITH ANECDOTES, CHARACTERISTICS AND
CHRONOLOGY

CHICAGO

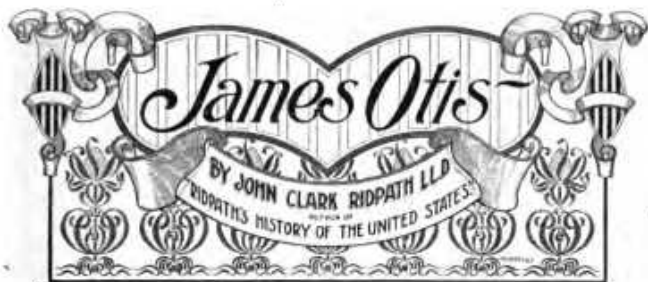
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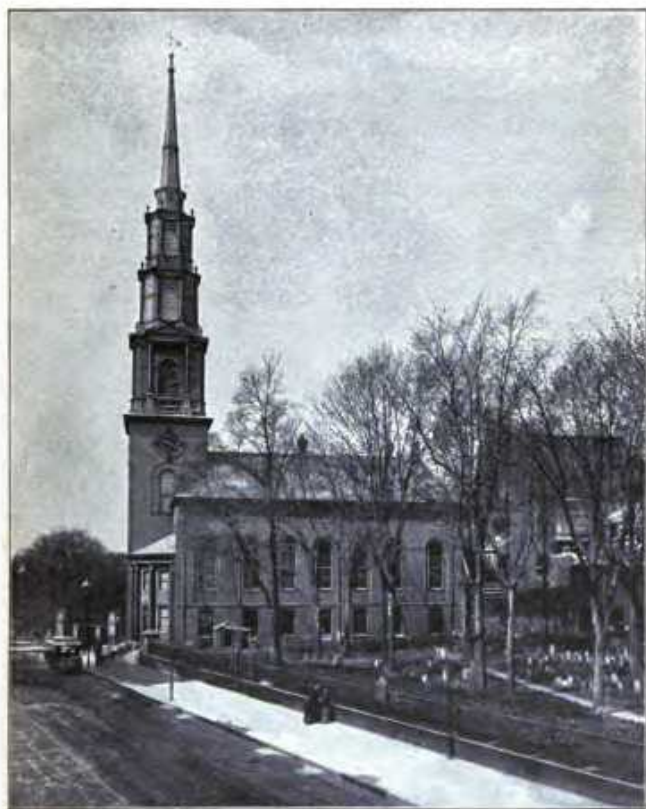
NEAR the northeast corner of the old Common of Boston a section of ground was put apart long before the beginning of the eighteenth century to be a burying ground for some of the heroic dead of the city of the Puritans. For some quaint reason or caprice this acre of God was called "The Granary"—and is so called to this day. Perhaps the name was given because the dead were here *garnered* as grain from the reaping until the bins be opened at the last day's threshing when the chaff shall be driven from the wheat.

Here the thoughtless throng looking through the iron railing may see the old weather-beaten and time-eaten slabs with their curious lettering which designate the spots where many of the men of the pre-revolutionary epoch were laid to their last repose. The word *cemetery* is from Greek and means *the little place where I lie down*.

In the Granary Burying Ground are the tombs of many whom history has gathered and recorded as her own. But history looks in vain among the blue-black slabs of semi-slate for the name of one who was greatest

perhaps of them all; but whose last days were so strangely clouded and whose sepulchre was so obscure as to leave the world in doubt for more than a half century as to where the body of the great sleeper had been laid. Curiosity, whetted by patriotism, then discovered the spot. But the name of another was on the covering slab, and no small token was to be found indicative of the last resting place of the lightning-smitten body of James Otis, the prophetic giant of the pre-revolutionary days. He who had lived like one of the Homeric heroes, who had died like a Titan under a thunderbolt, and had been buried as obscurely as Richard the Lion Hearted, or Frederick Barbarossa, must lie neglected in an unknown tomb within a few rods of the spot where his eloquence aforesaid had aroused his countrymen to national consciousness, and made a foreign tyranny forever impossible in that old Boston, the very name of which became henceforth the menace of kings and the synonym of liberty.

Tradition rather than history has preserved thus much. In the early part of the present century a row of great elms, known as the Paddock elms, stood in what is now the sidewalk on the west side of Tremont Street skirting the Granary Burying Ground. These trees were cut away and the first section of the burial space was invaded with the spade. Tomb No. 40, over which the iron railing now passes, was divided down as far as where the occupants are lying. Within the sepulchre were several bodies. One was the body of Nathaniel Cunningham, Sr. Another was Ruth Cunningham,



Old Granary Burying Ground, Boston.

his wife. The younger members of the family were also there in death.

When the lid of one coffin in this invaded tomb was lifted, it was found that a mass of the living roots of the old strong elm near by, had twined about the skull of the sleeper, had entered through the apertures, and had eaten up the brain. It was the brain of James Otis which had given itself to the life of the elm and had been transformed into branch and leaf and blossom, thus breathing itself forth again into the free air and the Universal Flow.

The body of the patriot had been deposited in this tomb of his father-in-law, the Nathaniel Cunningham just referred to, and had there reposed until the searching fibres of another order of life had found it out, and lifted and dispensed its sublimer part into the viewless air. Over the grave in which the body was laid is still one of the rude slabs which the fathers provided, and on this is cut the name of "George Longley, 1809," he being the successor of the Cunninghams in the ownership of Tomb No. 40.

Here, then, was witnessed the last transformation of the material, visible man called James Otis, the courageous herald who ran swinging a torch in the early dawn of the American Revolution.

The pre-revolutionists are the Titans of human history; the revolutionists proper are only heroes; and the post-revolutionists are too frequently dwarfs and weaklings. This signifies that civilization advances by revolutionary stages, and that history sends out her tallest