

**WASHINGTON STREET, OLD AND
NEW: A HISTORY IN NARRATIVE
FORM OF THE CHANGES WHICH THIS
ANCIENT STREET HAS UNDERGONE
SINCE THE SETTLEMENT OF BOSTON**

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Washington Street, old and new: a history in narrative form of the changes which this ancient street has undergone since the settlement of Boston by Edwin M. Bacon

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EDWIN M. BACON

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Of all the old streets of New England there is none which can boast of a more notable history than Washington Street, and no part of the present long thoroughfare is more interesting in this respect than the short section, or link, between School and Milk Streets and Summer and Winter Streets, known through Colony and Province days and till long after the Revolution as Marlborough Street, of which this little book especially treats.

The story of this street is the story of Boston's first thoroughfare and begins with the beginnings of Boston. As the first "High Way towards Roxburie," then the only avenue to the mainland, composed of the first twisting roads and paths struck out in succession through

the length of the originally "pear-shaped" peninsula and over its slender stem — the mile-long, tide-washed Neck,— this thoroughfare was distinctively the first Boston Main Street.

At the outset the highway was but the germ of a thoroughfare; and for more than thirty years from the town's start it extended no further than to the present Boylston Street line. Beyond that line, or above Essex Street, there was during this time only a footpath or rough cartway "towards Roxburie." And after further extension was effected Boylston Street yet remained practically the thoroughfare's terminus with respect to its occupation by shops, taverns, dwellings, and mansion houses, throughout the Colony period and for the greater part of the Province period. Beyond Boylston Street there were few houses upon it and fewer shops till after the Revolution. Above Dover Street there were before the Revolution very few inhabitants; and so late as 1800 only one or two houses were counted from the site of the present Cathedral of the Holy Cross to Roxbury.



CORNER SPRING LANE AND WASHINGTON STREET IN 1870



THE OLD SOUTH CHURCH IN COLONIAL DAYS, FROM AN OLD LITHOGRAPH



THE OLD STATE HOUSE IN 1796

The first link, which was marked out with the town's initial street-ways and lanes, comprises the bow between the present Adams Square and School Street. This led from the Town Dock, at Dock Square, around by the town's first central point, where were the "saw-pitte" for turning out the logs for the first houses, the first market-place, the first stocks and whipping post, and later the first Town-House, now marked by the Old State House; and thence to the house-lots and gardens of first settlers southward. The second link, shortly added, extended from School to Summer Street, then "The Mylne Street," or "Mill Lane," leading to "Widow Tuthill's Windmill" (she the relict of Richard Tuttle, miller, succeeding to his business) which stood near the point that became the "Church Green" of after days, at the present junction of Summer and Bedford Streets. The third link was an early extension to Boylston Street, at that time "Frogg Lane" running alongside the Common toward the Back Bay, which then made up to the present Park Square. At the end of this third link connection was made with the first path to Roxbury, a rough beach road, which ran from near the Essex Street corner along the South Cove beach. The South Cove then stretched westerly to within a short distance of the present line of Washington Street near Essex Street, and north of Beach Street, which originally was a beach; and here, turning southward, it ran parallel with the Washington-Street line up to the line of the present Dover Street and beyond, a strip of



THE OLD SOUTH CHURCH AS IT APPEARS TODAY