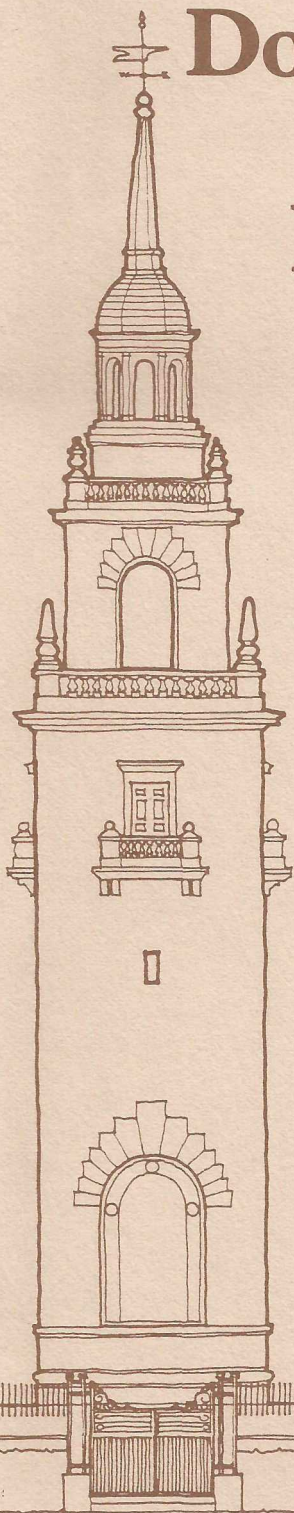


Dorchester Heights National Historic Site



Boston
National
Historical
Park

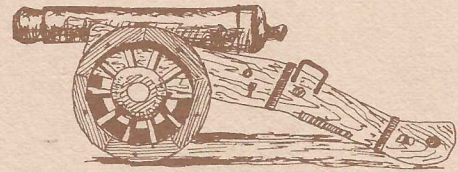
G. Stephen



... A survey of Boston Harbor circa 1711.

*“Our forces march’d on upon Dorchester Neck,
 Made fortifications against an attack.
 The morning next following, as Howe did espy,
 The banks we cast up were so copious and high,
 Said he in three months, all my men with their might,
 Cou’d not make two such forts as they’ve made in a night.”*

From a broadside entitled ON THE EVACUATION OF BOSTON by The British Troops, March 17, 1776.



One Revolutionary poet thus recounted the fortification of Dorchester Heights, which forced the British troops who had occupied Boston since 1768 to evacuate on March 17, 1776. The bloodless success was the first major victory for newly appointed Commander-in-Chief George Washington, and a triumph which raised the morale of the embattled colonists.

Driving the British from Boston had required months of grueling work on the part of colonists in New York and Massachusetts Bay. In November of 1775, Washington had dispatched Bostonian Henry Knox to retrieve badly needed cannon from Fort Ticonderoga, New York. Teamsters with eighty yoke of oxen made the three hundred mile journey bringing fifty nine cannon for the colonial army then encircling Boston.

George Washington at
Dorchester
Heights



Boston looking southeast from Beacon Hill to the “memorable heights of Dorchester, whose formidable appearance in 1776, discomposed the military nerves of Britain; and eventually necessitated a retreat from the capital of Massachusetts.”

THE MASSACHUSETTS MAGAZINE,
November 1790

Once they neared the city, the rebels faced a new challenge. How would they roll the guns into place without tipping their hand to the British? On the night of March 4, 1776, colonial militia and local volunteers stealthily fortified the summit of Dorchester Heights. Wrapping their wagon wheels with straw to deaden the sound, they moved the cannon from Roxbury and entrenched them on these hills south of Boston. British General Howe planned an attack, but a violent storm prevented his soldiers from landing. Within a few days, Howe, his troops, and a thousand colonial loyalists set sail for Nova Scotia, abandoning the city to Washington’s forces and its jubilant citizens.

The army improved the fortifications and again stationed troops on Dorchester Heights during the War of 1812. After 1814, however, the twin hills declined in military

importance. Since Boston had annexed Dorchester Neck in 1804, developers eyed the Heights as a source of raw material for the expanding city. During the second half of the nineteenth century the hills of South Boston underwent the same excavation that lowered Mount Vernon and Pemberton and Beacon Hills, the “tri-mountains” of the Boston peninsula.

In 1898, the General Court of Massachusetts commissioned a monument to stand on the remaining hill of the Heights. Designed by the architectural firm of Peabody and Stearns, the white marble Georgian revival tower commemorates the 1776 victory. In 1966 the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service added Dorchester Heights to the National Register of Historic Places. Twelve years later the National Parks and Recreation Act authorized the City of Boston to transfer the site to the National Park Service. At

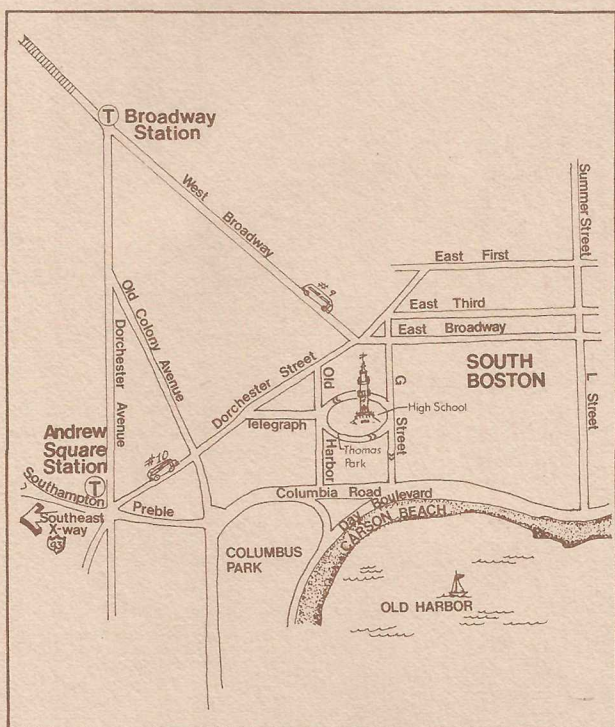
that time, it joined the eight other sites which comprise Boston National Historical Park, established in 1974.

Dorchester Heights adds a valuable dimension to the Park. Its historical significance and the development of the surrounding community vividly reflect the history and growth of the city of Boston. With the fortification of its summit in 1776, Dorchester Heights contributed significantly to one of Boston’s major victories and demonstrated the integral connection between the Boston peninsula and her neighboring community. The annexation of Dorchester Neck to Boston in 1804 strengthened that link. Building and landfilling operations cemented the tie by facilitating travel between the two areas. Today, as part of Boston National Historical Park, Dorchester Heights offers a broad perspective on the city of Boston, past and present.

DORCHESTER HEIGHTS

BY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION: From downtown Boston, take an outbound Red Line car (either Quincy or Ashmont) to *Broadway Station*. Take a *City Point* bus from Broadway to *G Street*. It is a short walk south from the intersection of Broadway and *G Street* to *Thomas Park*, which surrounds *Dorchester Heights*.

BY AUTOMOBILE: From downtown Boston, travel south on *Route 93* (*Southeast Expressway*). Take *Mass Pike* exit. Once on exit ramp, bear left at *Local* sign. Take a left at the 1st set of lights onto *Broadway*. Follow *Broadway* until the 4th set of lights. Bear left onto *East Broadway*. Take the 1st right onto *G Street* and the 2nd right to *Thomas Park*. *Dorchester Heights* is on the left after *South Boston High School*.



US DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR National Park Service

Dorchester Heights National Historic Site is a unit of Boston National Historical Park. For more information—

Call: 617-269-4275 or

Write: P.O. Box 75

South Boston, MA 02127