

OLD SOUTH MEETING HOUSE



E. Stephen

Boston National Historical Park

Old South Meeting House

The Old South Meeting House was built in 1729 to replace the old cedar meeting house which had stood on the same site for two generations. The new brick building housed the congregation of the Third Church of Boston, which had withdrawn from the First Church in 1669 to provide for more liberal entry into church membership and, consequently, a wider civil franchise.

When Boston came into collision with Great Britain in the years leading to the Revolution, the town-meetings of irate citizens often met at Old South because of the small size of the original Faneuil Hall. Here, in 1768, a meeting led by James Otis was held to compel Governor Bernard to remove the British sloop-of-war, *Romney*, stationed in Boston harbor to enforce the hated impressment and customs laws. Here, following the Boston Massacre in 1770, an overflowing crowd waited into the night until Samuel Adams succeeded in obtaining Governor Hutchinson's promise to withdraw the British regiments from the town. From 1771 to 1775, meetings were held here each March to commemorate the Massacre, with speeches by such men as John Hancock and Joseph Warren. And here, on December 16, 1773, a gathering of several thousand citizens sat listening to Josiah Quincy and Samuel Adams until, learning of Governor Hutchinson's unyielding position on the landing of the tea, members of the Sons of Liberty proceeded to the waterfront to carry out the Boston Tea Party.

In 1775, by order of General John Burgoyne, the building was made into a riding school for British cavalry, the pews and pulpit being broken up for firewood. Restored after the Revolution and saved from destruction in the last century when its congregation moved to a new church, Old South is now owned and operated by the Old South Association in Boston, a private, non-profit organization which also provides lectures and publishes a series of Old South Leaflets which contribute to the popular knowledge of American history. Today the Old South Meeting House is a unit of Boston National Historical Park, managed by the Old South Association in cooperation with the National Park Service.





National Park Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT
OF THE INTERIOR

