

## BOSTON

The capital of Massachusetts was founded in 1630 by John Winthrop and other Puritans as "the city on a hill" to be a beacon to show the world how true Christians should live. The religious convictions of the colonists naturally entailed a hatred of all forms of sexual "depravity." As early as 1636 the General Court of Massachusetts Bay asked Rev. John Cotton to draft a law code for the colony, which included the death penalty for "unnatural filthiness, whether sodomy, which is carnal fellowship of man with man, or woman with woman." Although this proposal was not accepted, another law—providing for the death penalty for male homosexuality only—was adopted in 1641.

Because of its exceptional harbor and enterprising merchants and shipowners, Boston achieved wealth and sophistication in the eighteenth century. Profits from the sordid triangle trade—molasses, rum, and slaves—were not disdained by these mercantile aristocrats. Secularizing merchants won their prolonged struggle against dour ministers, but the Puritan strain has never been completely eradicated. Boston's aggressive patriots, like the Adamses, remained more puritanical than the Southern deists with whom they were allied. After 1830 clipper ships and China trade brought new wealth and power to the Boston Brahmins, who gave the city the particular cachet it has long retained. The flowering of New England lifted the city—now called the Athens of America—to the front rank of American culture. Bostonians profited in the mid-nineteenth century from speculation in railroads, textile and leather manufacturing, banking and profiteering from the Civil War, while abolitionists, wrapping themselves in the mantle of moral superiority that their Puritan forebears had worn, berated both Southern slaveowners and Northern robber barons. President Charles William Eliot (1834–1926) raised Harvard to a leading position among American universities

and, by adopting the German Ph.D. system, turned it into a world center of scholarship.

Prominent homosexuals as well as bars and an emerging gay subculture can be traced to this period. The Imagist poet Amy Lowell smoked cigars and had a long-term relationship with a lesbian lover. Katherine Lee Bates, who wrote "America the Beautiful" in 1893 and was a professor at Wellesley (1885–1925), was also gay. In 1907 the *Monatsberichte* of the Berlin Scientific-Humanitarian Committee printed a letter which said that "Boston, this good old Puritan city, has homosexuals by the hundreds," Yankees being the most numerous, but French Canadians also well represented. Homosexuality extended into all social classes, from the North End teeming with immigrants to the fashionable Beacon Hill and Back Bay. The grapevine carried word of homosexual figures in the highest stratum of Bostonian life. However, the anonymous correspondent believed that the American homosexuals were "astonishingly ignorant about their own true nature"—which amounted to saying that while they were conscious of their physical desires, they had not yet been exposed to European concepts of homosexual identity and militancy. The political emancipation of the American gay subculture lay decades in the future.

With the coming of the subway, street-car, and electric tram, suburbs developed. World War I increased the cosmopolitanism of Bostonians and loosened their sexual mores. During Prohibition certain speakeasies, including the Napoleon Club and the Chess Room in the Hotel Touraine, attracted a gay clientele. Irish politicians such as James Michael Curley broke the power of the Brahmins who retreated to Beacon Hill or the suburbs, though they still held power in the financial district. One governor was reputedly gay, as were the son of another and two cardinals. A gay ghetto developed on St. Botolph Street, on the border between the Back Bay and the South End, the once-

fashionable district where George Santayana lived. Italians occupied the North End and blacks were displaced from the back of Beacon Hill to Massachusetts Avenue where they had their own speakeasies and jazz places, their numbers swollen by emigrants from the South.

World War II saw more black immigration and more sexual experimentation in the military by all classes of males and females. After the war, as the elite and upper-middle class fled the city to the automobile suburbs, the gay movement began with the formation of Boston's Daughters of Bilitis and the founding of the Mattachine Society of Boston in the late 1950s by the erratic and picturesque figure of Prescott Townsend, a scion of one of the great Brahmin families, who summered in nearby Provincetown, now a major gay resort. Gay bars in and near the "combat zone" and in Scollay Square continued the prosperity they had gained during the war.

Boston declined in the 1950s and 1960s for economic and social reasons. Later, a bitter dispute over school busing pitted Irish in South Boston and Italians in East Boston intent on protecting their ethnic neighborhoods against blacks and Hispanics, now the fastest growing element in Boston's mix. Economic recovery and urban renewal began in the late 1960s and have since accelerated. Homosexuals arrived in great numbers on elegant Beacon Hill and Back Bay and subsequently gentrified the South End and the Fenway.

After the Stonewall Rebellion in New York City in 1969 Boston's gay movement developed. The Mattachine Society had been replaced by the Homophile Union of Boston (HUB).

In 1977 the Boston Boise Committee organized to demand fair trials for a group accused of child pornography. The District Attorney was thrown out of office, and only two of the defendants were convicted. Out of the Committee grew GLAD (Gay and Lesbian Advocates) and the North American Man-Boy Love Asso-

ciation (NAMBLA), founded in 1978 and now a national group, although the Boston chapter disbanded subsequently.

*Fag Rag*, the second oldest gay periodical still published in North America, was founded in 1970 by an editorial group that included Charley Shively. Three years later appeared the *Gay Community News*, a lesbian/gay weekly unique in being a collective equally balanced between men and women. A successful gay book publisher, Alyson Press, was created by Sasha Alyson, who also founded a pro-religious paper *Bay Windows*.

Though deeply divided and often cantankerous, Boston's gay community ranks as one of the most important in North America. Its annual Gay Pride March has been held each year since 1971 in mid-June, before the one in New York. The Good Gay Poets was organized in 1972 and has continued to publish. If Boston has less of a Bohemia and is more discreet in its gay life than New York or San Francisco, as an educational center each year it attracts thousands of the brightest American youth. With over 200,000 students in numerous colleges and universities, large numbers of faculty, and outstanding medical and legal institutions, the city vies with Paris, London, and New York as one of the leading cultural centers of the world. Increasingly, it is also a tourist mecca that lures the gay vacationer in search of erotic pleasures.

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## BOSTON MARRIAGE

The term "Boston marriage" was used in late nineteenth-century New England to describe a long-term monogamous relationship between two otherwise unmarried women. The women were