

*From an etching by E. Horter*

**MADISON SQUARE, NEW YORK**

**THE  
PERSONALITY OF AMERI  
CAN CITIES**

BY **EDWARD HUNGERFORD** *Author of*  
*"The Modern Railroad," "Gertrude," etc.*

WITH FRONTISPIECE BY **E. HORTER**

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TO MY LITTLE DAUGHTER **ADRIENNE.**

## PREFACE

This book has been in preparation for nearly four years. In that time the author has been in each of the cities that he has set forth to describe herein. With the exception of Charleston, New Orleans and the three cities of the North Pacific, he has been in each city two or three or even four or five times.

The task that he has essayed—placing in a single chapter even something of the flavor and personality of a typical American town—has not been an easy one, but he hopes that he has given it a measure of fidelity and accuracy if nothing more. Of course, he does not believe that he has included within these covers all of the American cities of distinctive personality. Such a list would include necessarily such clear-cut New England towns as Portland, Worcester, Springfield, Hartford and New Haven; it would give heed to the solid Dutch manors of Albany; the wonderful development of Detroit, builded into a great city by the development of the motor car; the distinctive features of Milwaukee; the southern charm of Indianapolis and Cincinnati and Louisville; the breezy western atmosphere of Omaha and of Kansas City. And in Canada, Winnipeg, already proclaiming herself as the "Chicago of the Dominion," Vancouver and Victoria demand attention. The author regrets that the lack of personal acquaintance with the charms of some of these cities, as well as the pressure of space, serves to prevent their being included within the pages of his book. It is quite possible, however, that some or all of them may be included within subsequent editions.

The author bespeaks his thanks to the magazine editors who were gracious enough to permit him to include portions of his articles from their pages. He wishes particularly to thank for their generous assistance in the preparation of this book, R. C. Ellsworth, and Cromwell Childe of New York; C. Armand Miller,

D.D., of Philadelphia; Nat Olds, formerly of Rochester; Edwin Baxter of Cleveland; and Victor Ross of Toronto. Without their aid it is conceivable that the book would not have come into its being. And having aided it, they must be content to be known as its foster fathers.

E. H.

Brooklyn, New York, September, 1913.

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# THE PERSONALITY OF AMERICAN CITIES

## 1 OUR ANCIENT HUB

There are more things forbidden in Boston than in Berlin—and that is saying much. You may be a citizen of a republic, but when you come to the old Bay State town you suddenly realize that you are being ruled. At each park entrance is posted a code of rules and regulations that would take a quarter of an hour to read and digest; in the elevated and trolley cars, in public institutions and churches, even in shops and hotels, the canons laid down for your conduct are sharp in detail and unvarying in command. You may not whistle in a public park, nor loiter within a subway station, nor pray aloud upon the Charlesbank. And for some reason, which seems delightfully unreasonable to a man without the pale, you may not take an elevated ticket from an elevated railroad station. It is to be immediately deposited within the chopping-box before you

board your train. As to what might happen to a hapless human who emerged from a station with a ticket still in his possession, the Boston code does not distinctly state.

And yet—like most tightly ruled principalities—Boston's attractiveness is keen even to the unregulated mind. The effect of many rules and sundry regulations seems to be law and order—to an extent hardly reached in any other city within the United States. The Bos

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tonian is occasionally rude; these occasions are almost invariably upon his overcrowded streets and in the public places—until the stranger may begin to wonder if, after all, the street railroad employés have a monopoly of good manners—but he is always just. His mind is judicial. He treats you fairly. And if he knows you, knows your forbears as well, he is courtesy of the highest sort. And there is no hospitality in the land to be compared with Boston hospitality—once you have been admitted to its portals.

### **Boston's *Via Sacre*—Tremont Street—and Park Street church**

So we have come in this second decade of the twentieth century to speak of the inner cult of the Boston folk as Brahmins. The term is not new. But in the whole land there is not one better applied. For almost as the high caste of mystic India hold themselves aloof from even the mere sight of less favored humans, do these great, somber houses of Beacon street and the rest of the Back Bay close their doors tightly to the stranger. Make no mistake as to this very thing. You rarely read of Boston society—her Brahmin caste—in the columns of her newspapers. There are, of course, distinguished Boston folk whose names ring there many times—a young girl who through her athletic triumphs and her

sane fashion of looking at life forms a good example for her sisters across the land; a brilliant broker, with an itching for printer's ink, who places small red devils upon his stationery; a society matron who must always sit in the same balcony seat at the Symphony concerts, and who houses in her eccentric Back Bay home perhaps the finest private art gallery in America. These folk and many others of their sort head the so-called "Society columns" of the Sunday newspapers. But the real Bostonese do not run to *outré* stationery or other eccentricities. They live within the tight walls of their somber, simple, lovely old red-brick houses, and thank God that there were days that had the names of Winthrop

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or Cabot or Adams or Peabody spelled in tinted letters along the horizon.

A. M. Howe, who knows his Boston thoroughly, once told of two old ladies there who always quarreled as to which should have the first look at the *Transcript* each evening.

"I want to see if anybody nice has died in the *Transcript* this evening," the older sister would say as she would hear the thud of the paper against the stout outer door,—and after that the battle was on.

We always had suspected Mr. Howe of going rather far in this, until we came to the facts. It seems that there were two old ladies in Cambridge, which—as every one ought to know, is a sort of scholastic annex to Boston—and that they never quarreled—save on the matter of the first possession of the *Transcript*. On that vexed question they never failed to disagree. The matter was brought to the attention of the owners of the newspaper—and they settled it by sending an extra copy of the *Transcript* each evening, with their compliments. And that could not have happened anywhere else in this land save on the shores of Massachusetts



Bay.

Yet these old Bostonians the chance visitor to the city rarely, if ever, sees. They are conspicuous by their very absence. He will not find them lunching in the showy restaurants of the Touraine or in its newest competitor farther up Boylston street. They shrink. He may sometime catch a glimpse of a patrician New England countenance behind the window-glass of a carriage-door, or even see the Brahmins quietly walking home from church through the sacred streets of the Back Bay on a Sunday morning, but that is all. The doors of the old houses upon those streets are tightly closed upon him.

But if one of those doors will open ever and ever so tiny a crack to him, it will open full-wide, with the gen

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erous width of New England hospitality, and bid him enter. We remember dining in one of these famous old houses two or three seasons ago. It was in the heart of winter—a Boston winter—and the night was capriciously changing from rain to sleet and sleet to rain again. The wind blew in from the sea with that piercing sharpness, so characteristic of Boston. It bent the bare branches of the old trees upon the Common, sent swinging overhead signs to creaking and shrieking in their misery, played sad havoc with unwary umbrellas, and shot the flares from the bracketed gas-lamps along the streets into all manner of fanciful forms. In such a storm we made our way through streets of solid brick houses up the hill to the famous Bulfinch State House and then down again through Mount Vernon street and Louisburg square—highways that once properly flattened might have been taken from Mayfair or Belgravia. Finally our path led to a little street, boasting but eight of the stolid brick houses and arranged in the form of a capital T. The shank of the T gave that little colony its sole access

to the remainder of the world.

To one of these eight old houses—an austere fellow and the product of an austere age—we were asked. When its solid door closed behind us, we were in another Boston. Not that the interior of the house belied its stolid front. It was as simple as yellow tintings and bare walls might ever be. But the few pieces of furniture that were scattered through the generous rooms were real furniture, mahogany of a sort that one rarely ever sees in shops or auction-rooms, the canvases that occasionally relieved those bare walls were paintings that would have graced even sizeable public collections. The dinner was simple—compared with New York standards—but the hospitality was generous, even still compared with the standards of New York. To that informal dinner had been bidden a group of Boston men and

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women fairly representative of the town, a Harvard professor of real renown, the editor of an influential daily newspaper, a barrister of national reputation, a sociologist whose heart has gone toward her work and made that work successful. These folk, exquisite in their poise because of their absolute simplicity, discussed the issues of the moment—the city's progress in the playground movement, the possibilities of minimum wage laws, the tragic devotion of Mrs. Pankhurst and her daughter to woman suffrage. In New York a similar group of folk similarly gathered would have discussed the newest and most elaborate of hotels or George M. Cohan's latest show.

It is this very quality that makes Boston so different—and so delightful. She may look like a cleanly London, as she often boasts—with her sober streets of red brick—and yet she still remains, despite the great changes that have come to pass in the character of her people within the past dozen years—a really

American town. A few hours of study of the faces upon the streets and in the public conveyances will confirm this. And perhaps it is this very fact that makes a certain, well-known resident of the Middle West come to Boston once or twice each year without any purpose than his own announced one of dwelling for a few days within a "really civilized community."

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We well remember our first visit to Boston some—twenty years ago. We came over the Boston & Albany railroad down into the old station in Kneeland street. For it was before the day that those two mammoth and barnlike terminals, the North and the South stations, had been built. In those days the railroad stations of Boston expressed more than a little of her personality—even the dingy ark of the Boston & Maine which thrust itself out ahead of all its competitors along Causeway

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street and reached into Haymarket square. The Providence station in Park square and the Lowell and the Albany stations bespoke in pretentious architecture something of the importance and elegance of those three railroads, while as for the gray stone castellated station of the Fitchburg railroad—that sublimated passenger-house made timid travelers almost feel that they were gazing at the East portal of the Hoosic tunnel itself. It originally held a great hall—superimposed above the train-shed—and in that hall Jenny Lind sang when first she came to Boston. Afterwards it was decided that a concert hall over a noisy train-house was hardly a happy ingenuity and it was torn out. By that time, however, the Fitchburg station had taken its place in the annals of Boston.

But the Fitchburg railroad, even in its palmiest days, was never to be compared with "the Albany." Even the railroad to Providence, with its forty-five miles of well-nigh perfect roadbed,

over which the trains thundered in fifty-five minutes, even a half century ago, was not to be mentioned in the same breath with the Boston & Albany. There *was* a railroad. And even if its charter did compel it to pay back to the commonwealth of Massachusetts every penny that it earned in excess of eight per cent. dividends upon its stock, that was not to be counted against it. It had never the least difficulty in earning more than that sum and, as far as we know, it never paid the state any money. But the commonwealth of Massachusetts did not lose. It gained a high-grade railroad—in the day when America hardly knew the meaning of such a term. The stations along "the Albany" were rare bits of architecture while the average railroad depot, even in good-sized towns, was a dingy, barnlike hole. It ripped out wooden and iron bridges by the dozens along its main line and branches and set the

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pace for the rest of the country by building stout stone-arch bridges—of the sort that last the centuries. These things, and many others, were typical of the road.

The Boston & Albany was unique in the fact that each stockholder who lived along its lines received as a yearly perquisite a pass to the annual meeting in Boston. The annual meetings were always well attended. Staid college professors, remembering the joys of Boston book shops, old ladies wearing black bombazine, tiny bonnets and prim expressions—all these and many others, too, looked forward to the annual meeting of their railroad as a child looks forward to Christmas.

This is not the time or place to discuss the vexatious railroad situation in New England, but it is worth while to note that when the New York Central railroad leased the Boston & Albany—a little more than a dozen years ago—and began blotting out the familiar name upon the engines and the cars, a wave of sentimental

anger swept over Boston that it had hardly known since it had inflamed over slavery and laid the foundations for the greatest internecine conflict that the world has ever known. Boston held no quarrel with the owners of the New York Central—if they would only not disturb the traditions of its great railroad. But the owners of the New York Central did not understand. It was not them. It was that word "New York" being blazoned before Boston eyes that was making the trouble. The old town had seen the Boston & Providence and then, horror of horrors, the New England disappear before a railroad that called itself the New York, New Haven & Hartford. And after these the offense was being created against its pet railroad—the Boston & Albany.

The other day the New York Central saw a great light. And in that mental brilliancy it gave back to Boston its old railroad. As this is being written "Boston & Al

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bany" is reappearing upon whole brigades of engines and regiments of freight and passenger cars. A friendly sentiment, reared in traditions, has not been slow to show its appreciation of the act of the railroad in New York. And the men in charge of the great consolidation of the other railroads east of the Hudson river have not been slow to follow in their action. They have announced that they plan to build their railroads into one great system called the "New England Lines." It begins to look as if, after all these years, they have begun to read the Boston mind.

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We have strayed far from our text—from our long ago early visit to Boston. Our first impression of the town then came from a policeman whom we saw in the old Kneeland street station. The policeman had white side-whiskers and he wore gold-bowed spectacles. We have never, either before or after our first arrival in

Boston, seen a policeman adorned, either simultaneously or separately, with white "mutton-chops" or gold-bowed spectacles, and so it was that this Bostonian made a distinct impression. Boston, itself, made many impressions. Twenty years ago many of the institutions of the town that have since disappeared, still remained. True it is that the horse-cars were going from Tremont street, for the first of the diminutive subways that have kept the city years ahead of most American towns in the solution of her intra-urban transportation problems had been completed and was a nine-days' marvel to the land. The coldly gray "Christian Science Cathedral," with its wonderful Sunday congregations, could hardly have existed then, even as a dream in the mind of its founder. And the Boston Museum still existed. To be sure, many of its glories in the days of William Warren and Annie Clarke had disappeared and it was doomed a few months later to such attractions as the booking syndicates might allot it, but

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its row of exterior lamps still blazed in Tremont street: until in June, 1903, it rang down its green baize curtains and closed its historic doors for the last time.

And yet Boston has not changed greatly in twenty years—not in outward appearance at least. When she builds anew she builds with reverent regard for her ideals and her past traditions. Her architects must be steeped in both. Nearly twenty years ago she builded her first skyscraper—a modest and dignified affair of but twelve stories—and was then so shocked at her own audacity that she promised to be very, very good for ever after and never to do anything of that sort again. So when she found that a new hotel going up near Copley Square had overstepped her modest limit of seven stories—or is it eight?—she showed that she could have firmness in her determination. She chopped the cornice and the upper story boldly off the new hotel, and so it stands today, as if

someone had passed a giant slicing-knife cleanly over the structure.

So it is that Boston still holds to her attractive sky-line, the exquisite composition of such distinctive thoroughfares as Park street from the fine old church at Tremont street up the hill to Beacon street, the pillared, yellow front of the old State House; still keeps her meeting-houses with their delicate belfried spires standing guard upon her many hilltops; maintains the rich traditions of her history in the infinite detail of her architecture—in some bit of wall or section of iron fence, in the paneling of a door, the set of a cupola, the thrust of a street-lamp, and even in the chimney-pots that thrust themselves on high to the attention of the man upon the pavement. She cherishes her memories. And when she builds anew she does not forget her ideals.

She never forgets her ideals. And if at times they may lead her to regard herself a bit too seriously, they make

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for the old town one of the things that too many other American towns lack—a real and distinctive personality. For instance, take her public houses, her taverns and inns. They are notable in the fact that they are distinctive—and something more. In a day and age when the famous American hotels of other days and generations and the things for which they stood, have been rather forgotten in the strife to imitate a certain type of New York skyscraper hotel, the Boston hotels still stand distinctive. Not that the New York type of skyscraper is not excellent. It must have had its strong points to have been so copied across the land. But if all the hotels in every town, big and little, are to be fashioned in the essentials from the same mold what is to become of the zest for travel? You travel for variety's sake, otherwise you might as well go to the local skyscraper hotel in your own town and save railroad

fare and other transportation expenses.

But no matter what may be true of other towns, the Boston hotels are different. "I like the Quincy House for its sea-fud," said an old legislator from Sandisfield more than forty years ago, and as for the Tremont House, turn the pages of your "American Notes" and recall the praise that Charles Dickens gave that not-to-be-forgotten hostelry. It was one of the very few things in the earlier America that did not seem to excite his entire contempt.

### **Up Park Street, past the Common to Boston's famous State House**

The Tremont House has gone—it disappeared under the advance of modernity in the serpent-like guise of the first subway in America, creeping down in front of it. But other hotels of the old Boston remain a'plenty, the staid Revere House, Parker's, Young's, the Adams House,—ages seem to have mellowed but not lessened their comforts to the traveler. Where else can one find a catalogue of the hotel library hanging beside his dresser when he retires to the privacy of his room, not a library

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crammed with "best-sellers" like these itinerant institutions on the limited trains, but filled with real books of a far more solid sort—where else such wisdom on tap in a tavern—but Boston? And if the traveler fails to be schooled to such possibilities, we might ask where else in Christendom can he get boiled scrod, or Washington pie, or fish balls, or cod tongues with bacon, or that magna charta of the New England appetite, that Plymouth rock from which has come all the virtues of its sturdy folk, baked beans with brown bread? Eating in Boston is good. In these things it is superlative. And it is pleasing to know that Boston's newest hotel—the Copley-Plaza—perhaps the finest hotel in America,



since it has discarded new-fashioned details for the old—observes the traditions of the town in which it truly earns its bread and butter.

And if the traveler have magic sesame, the clubs of the old town may open to him, clubs with spotless integrity and matchless service, all the way from the stately Somerset and the Algonquin through to the democratic City Club—with its more than four thousand enthusiastic members. This last is perhaps the most representative of Boston clubs. Its old house—unfortunately soon to be vacated—stands in Beacon street, within a stone's throw of King's Chapel and Tremont street. It is a rare old house; two houses in fact, lending tenderly to the Boston traditions of delicate bow fronts and severity of ornament. Its rooms are broad and long and low, filled with hospitable tables and comfortable Windsor chairs. In its great fireplace hickory logs crackle and the New England tradition of an ash-bank is preserved to the minutest detail. Its dun-colored walls are lined with rare prints and old photographs—pictures for the most part of that old Boston which was and which never again can be. The dishes that come out from its kitchen are from the best of tradi

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tional New England recipes. And as your host leads you out from the dining-room he delves deep into a barrel and brings out two bright red apples. He hands you one.

"We New England folk think that most of the real virtues of life are seated in red apples," he says—and there is something in his way of saying it that makes you believe that he is right.

Another day and he may lead you to still another club—this one down under the roof of one of those solid old stone warehouses with steep-pitched roofs that thrust themselves abruptly out into the harbor-line. It is a yacht club, and its fortress-

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