



# The Hub: Boston Past and Present

*Thomas H. O'Connor*

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## **The Hub: Boston Past and Present** Thomas H. O'Connor

From The Revolutionary War to the Big Dig, Boston and its people have played a colorful and often controversial role in shaping the nation's political, economic, and cultural landscape. Now Thomas H. O'Connor, the dean of Boston historians, takes the reader on a fascinating journey through his native city's rich heritage in this long-anticipated history. O'Connor's narrative reveals an everchanging and resilient community that has adapted to many significant upheavals without losing its unique personality. Chronicling the events that formed the Hub's distinctive character over the centuries, he begins with Boston's origin in the Puritan settlement on the Shawmut peninsula in 1630, traces its expansion as a leading port and commercial center, and highlights its importance in the struggle for American independence. O'Connor recounts Boston's era as the "Athens of America," the Civil War period, the massive immigration of Irish Catholics, the development of the South End and Back Bay neighborhoods, and the new waves of immigrants arriving from eastern and southern Europe and China. He then deftly sketches the ascendancy of the Irish political machine, the major urban renewal projects of the "New Boston," bitter times of school desegregation and forced busing, the declining influence of the Catholic Church, and the rebirth of neighborhood organizations. He concludes with observations on how the Big Dig, Waterfront development projects, high tech industry, housing crisis, and population growth of African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians will again reshape Boston at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Filled with dramatic local events as well as intriguing characters, this engaging account vividly captures the spirit and soul of Boston, both yesteryear and today.

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