



**The Old Boston Statehouse c. 1900**

**The History Channel® Presents:  
Save Our History: Revolution in Boston  
An original documentary**

*“Then and there the child independence was born.”*

-John Adams on the Old State House c. 1761

*Save Our History* is The History Channel’s award-winning national campaign dedicated to historic preservation and history education. As part of this initiative, **The History Channel** produces documentaries and corresponding teaching materials for educators to incorporate historic preservation themes and concepts into their classrooms.

History is fundamental to understanding time, place, experience, and change. The city of Boston offers a rich laboratory for studying the formation of the United States and development of architecture during the Revolutionary era. Adorned with historic buildings and significant American sites, Boston was the epicenter of the American Revolution and remains a vibrant cultural center to this day. Many of the buildings that witnessed the foundation of democracy are in jeopardy, as 200 years of harsh New England weather have eroded their original facades and craftsmanship. Examining these structures, their architectural styles, and the methods used to restore them offers a compelling window into the past, and the tools we can use to preserve our history.

**The History Channel’s *Save Our History: Revolution in Boston*** explores two significant Boston buildings, The Old State House built in 1713 and the African Meeting House built in 1806. The Old State House stands as the oldest public building remaining from the colonial era, and was the site of many critical meetings in leading up the American Revolution. The African Meeting House was the home of many significant

abolitionist events and a major hub for Boston's black community in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Both buildings have suffered structural damage, as two centuries of snow, ice, rain and wind have pounded their exteriors. Using cutting edge 3-D computer modeling to show the erosion, the show explains the visible and unseen infrastructural problems the buildings now face. One may think that renovation and restoration are easily undertaken. However, the viewer sees the extensive labor that goes into everything from clearing water in the foundations to matching original paint in order to maintain historical accuracy.

## **Curriculum Links**

*Save Our History: Revolution in Boston* would be useful for high school and middle school classes on United States History, Colonial History, and Civics. This documentary fulfills several National Standards guidelines as outlined by the National Council for History Education including: (1) Values, Beliefs, Political Ideas and Institutions, (2) Human Interaction with the Environment, (3) Patterns of Social and Political Interaction and (4) Comparative History of Major Developments.

## **Vocabulary**

Agitated  
Chronicle  
Coarsen  
Congregation  
Foundry

Fragility  
Garner  
Pulpit  
Quixotic  
Redact

## **Comprehension Questions**

1. What is the historical significance of the Old State House in Boston?
2. Why is the Old State House eroding? What problems have the surrounding buildings caused for the Old State House?
3. How can water and leaks harm a building? What is the reaction between brick and water over an extended period of time?
4. What is the historical significance of the African Meeting House? How did events in this building shape U.S. history?
5. Who is William Lloyd Garrison? How did he play a significant role in the development of Boston and the American democracy?
6. How are the restoration workers able to match new paint colors to original paint colors?
7. What challenges do construction workers face in restoring the African Meeting House? How do these problems jeopardize the entire restoration process?
8. Who is John Hancock? What role did he play in the American Revolution and the establishment of American democracy?
9. How are bricks made? Why are certain bricks different colors than others?

10. What precautions do you see the construction workers taking in the Old State House and the African Meeting House to ensure historical accuracy? Why do you think historical accuracy is so important?
11. How did Frederick Douglass play a role in the history of the African Meeting House? Who is Lewis Hayden and what was his involvement with the African Meeting House?

## **Extended Activities**

### **The 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts**

The 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts was the first African American regiment to serve in the Civil War. An all-volunteer infantry unit, they were led by Colonel Robert Gould Shaw. Write a 2-3 page paper explaining the significance of the regiment or one aspect of their contribution to the Civil War. You may also want to connect their story to the history of the African Meeting House in Boston in your paper.

### **Helping Your Own Community**

Boston's notable buildings are significant not only for their architectural designs but for the events which took place inside. Ask students to choose a historic site or structure in Boston and create a short presentation in PowerPoint format or poster-board illustrating its significance. In a well-written 3-5 page paper, pick a famous Bostonian or someone who spent significant time there who had an important role in the American Revolution or the Abolition Movement. They may have signed notable documents or attended important meetings in the Old State House or the African American Meeting House, but that is not a requirement of your choice. Be sure to write a clear thesis and provide ample evidence to support it.

### **The Underground Railroad**

The African American Meeting House played a significant role in The Underground Railroad in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as it represented a safe haven for escaped slaves. Men like Frederick Douglass and Lewis Hayden played a role in hiding escapees in the Meeting House. On your own, research a specific person who was involved in the Underground Railroad, either an escaped slave or someone who hid escapees and write a 3-5 page paper discussing their contribution to abolition. Your selected person can be famous or relatively unknown as long as you provide sufficient evidence of their contribution to the Underground Railroad and/or the abolition movement.

## **Primary Sources**

Propaganda is one of the oldest ways to stir the emotions of people around the world. One of the greatest pieces of propaganda in American history was Paul Revere's depiction of the Boston Massacre. See George Mason University's website for an electronic copy of the image:

<http://chnm.gmu.edu/exploring/18thcentury/bostonmassacre/assignment.php>

After analyzing Revere's drawing as a class, create a piece of propaganda for a cause you deem worthy. The topic can range from saving the environment to a professional sports team to a major worldwide news story. The propaganda can come in the form of a recorded interview, a drawing, a photograph or any other form deemed acceptable by the instructor. After creating the piece of propaganda, write a 3-5 page paper discussing its relevance to the cause. Then, post your work around your school and see if you can garner support from other students.

## **Additional Resources**

### **Books**

Bordewich, Fergus M. *Bound for Canaan: The Epic Story of the Underground Railroad, America's First Civil Rights Movement*. Amistad, 2006.

Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*. Barnes & Noble Classics, 2005.

Hitchings, Sinclair. *Theatre of Liberty: Boston's Old State House*. Boston Safe Deposit and Trust Company, 1975.

Mayer, Henry. *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery*. St. Martin's Griffin, 2000.

McNulty, Elizabeth. *Boston Then and Now*. Thunder Bay Press, 2002.

### **Internet**

The Boston Historical Society Website on The Old State House:

[http://www.bostonhistory.org/old\\_state\\_hs\\_hist.php](http://www.bostonhistory.org/old_state_hs_hist.php)

Official Website of the African American Meeting House:

<http://www.afroammuseum.org/afmbeaconhill.htm>

Boston City History and Architecture: <http://www.iboston.org/mcp.php?pid=arch>

Library of Congress Website on Frederick Douglass:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/doughtml/doughome.html>

Official Website of the Paul Revere House: <http://www.paulreverehouse.org/>

