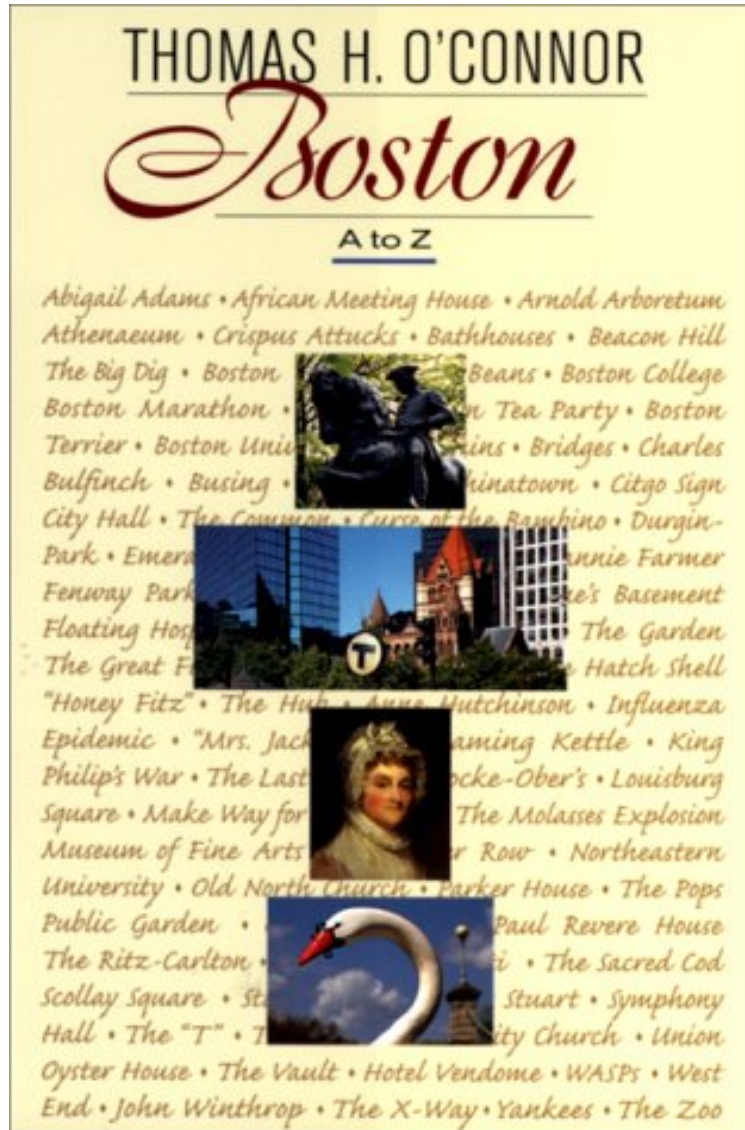


Boston A to Z

Thomas H. O'Connor

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Thomas H. O'Connor : Boston A to Z before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Boston A to Z:

23 of 26 people found the following review helpful. Boston's dean's list By Robert M. O'Grady Stepping out the front door of my office on 141 Tremont, I can glance slightly up and catch sight of the golden dome of the State House-the present one; the other and older one is a few blocks away on State Street. You would, of course, be looking through Boston Common. And past the "Park Street" T station, which as you realize you enter and exit from Tremont Street. The Park Street Church is just to your right, with a strain right you can see the Old Granary Burial Ground and with a

similar lurch left you can see the old cemetery at the corner of Boylston and Tremont Streets. This time of the year you can head bobbing and weaving on the frozen surface of the Frog Pond. If you start walking even a few blocks sights and sites multiply, geometrically. Dr. Thomas O'Connor, University Historian at Boston College and the "Dean" of Boston historians, has released just in time for Christmas giving a delightful dictionary of the city. Based on his long love affair with and wide knowledge of Boston, O'Connor's latest contribution to the Hub's story is an easy read, but as informative as it is delightful. He mixes people and places, legends and lives, sites and scenes. Selecting just the right number of each and the maintaining a proper balance of generations could be tricky. O'Connor has both the historian's training and the teacher's talent of keeping interest and passing on the stories. "The Rascal King" - James Michael Curley and his contemporary and one time publisher of this paper "Gangplank Bill" - the late Cardinal O'Connell's irreverent moniker appear together again. Sam Adams who actually owned and operated a brewery when he wasn't busy riling revolutions and his cousin John only slightly more diplomatic when compared to his kinsman are reunited in this tour of the city. O'Connor reveals that when he was a young lad his maiden aunt would take him on weekly walks through the city and explain the details of places and people, bits of history and bits of lore. Her influence on and challenge to the young Tom contributed mightily to O'Connor's initial and ongoing thirst for more and more of the "stuff" of Boston. Dr. O'Connor's latest addition is in dictionary form. You can read from A to Z as the title suggests or in any other order for that matter. You might pick it up and check out this or that name or person or event. You'll smile. You'll nod in memory. You'll be in awe of the city's story, her people and her life. If you're new to the city this will help you know some of the legend and lore and at least know some of people. If you're a lifer here you'll have new perspective on the Hub. Those visiting the city will have a different picture and be inspired to return. This would be a great Christmas gift for any Bostonian: old or new, young or old, home or away. 8 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Wonderful book By A Customer I am a tour guide in Boston. A friend gave me this book for Christmas. I would not be without it. It is really a wonderful book about Boston. Buy it! If you are coming to visit Bean Town.

From its origins as a Puritan settlement on the Shawmut Peninsula to the multicultural capital of the knowledge industry that it is today, the city of Boston has played a significant role in our nation's history. In this book, the preeminent historian of Boston, Thomas H. O'Connor, takes readers on a delightful tour of the city, past and present. Drawing on lifelong acquaintance as a native son and scholar, O'Connor has assembled a personal, informal, and eclectic series of essays about Boston's people, places, and events. Along the way you will meet figures of national significance and local heroes (or rogues), from John Adams and Phillis Wheatley to "Honey Fitz" and the Brink's gang; visit spaces sacred and profane, from the African Meeting House and Holy Cross Cathedral to Filene's Basement and the L Street Bathhouse; learn about institutions of civic importance and local color, from the Museum of Fine Arts and Massachusetts General Hospital to private clubs and nightspots; and be enlightened about the lore surrounding such quintessentially Boston topics as baked beans, the Curse of the Bambino, and the Steaming Kettle. Boston A to Z wears its learning lightly but never fails to inform as it entertains. While celebrating some of Boston's finest achievements, it doesn't shy away from darker episodes. Longtime residents will find enlightenment about familiar and arcane aspects of their city, and visitors or newcomers will enjoy an engaging introduction to the life, culture, and history of Boston.

From Library Journal Getting the low-down on Bean Town has never been particularly easy. Capturing the soul of this unique metropolis means that some compromises have to be made. Readers who want to wave the flag as they wander through Boston are not going to be thrilled to learn about its sordid racial tensions, while ethnic groups demanding that their leaders be placed just as prominently as the ol' white dudes must still contend with history. The author has done all sides a service by focusing on facts and ignoring wishes. His book may not please partisans, but for the rest of us, especially those who have not visited Boston before, the guide will provide a witty, balanced, well-researched look at the unique things that make up Boston. Readers will come away appreciate a writer who treats his subject and his readers with the same degree of respect. New England public libraries should buy several copies; other libraries will appreciate seeing just how a love song to a city is supposed to be written. DJospeh L. Carlson, Lompoc P.L., CA Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. Over the years, University Historian Thomas H. O'Connor had amassed enough anecdotes and yarns about Boston to fill Fenway Park... The result is his latest book, Boston A to Z, which features some 200 historical essays, legends and little known facts on Boston's people, places, politics and personality. Equally informative and entertaining, and intended for natives and newcomers alike, it is an affectionate look at the life and times of a city by its foremost chronicler. (Reid Oslin Boston College Chronicle) Thomas O'Connor, university historian and professor emeritus from Boston College, has done what all emeriti should do: made his vast learning available in a manageably brief and interesting form. In each several-pages-long entry, O'Connor paves the city with mini-biographies of its many historical figures, from John and Sam Adams to Quaker Mary Dyer (hanged on the Boston Common in 1660), to the outrageous jailbird-politician James Michael Curley. Institutions that characterize our town are detailed, including things Bostonishly proper (The Somerset and Chilton Clubs) and improper (sexily tawdry Scollay Square), as well as the many footprints on Boston's cultural and aesthetic landscape:

the earth-colored Trinity Church or the lovably garish Citgo sign...Always, as the book shows, there has been a sort of fire-and-ice dialectic between a Bostonian staidness of style on one side, and rebellion, opposition and innovation on the other. (Mopsy Strange Kennedy *The Improper Bostonian* 2000-11-01) Planning a trip to Boston?...If you want an insiders' view of the city, bring along Boston College historian Thomas O'Connor's entertaining new book, *Boston A to Z*. In eclectic essays arranged dictionary style--from Abigail Adams to the Zoo--O'Connor offers up nuggets of trivia that are informative and funny. (Atlanta Journal-Constitution 2000-11-12) At its best, *Boston A to Z* is neither revisionism nor hymn. It contrasts Boston's shameful parochialism with its very generous contributions to American life...Bostonians will want this book at hand, to answer inquisitive visitors and to know the minutiae of the city to which they are so devoted. (Mark Greif *Times Literary Supplement* 2000-11-24) O'Connor has now, in *Boston A to Z*, written a book about everybody's Boston...The 174 entries that make up 'A to Z' are topics O'Connor feels 'are representative of the fascinating, distinctive, and unique character of Boston.' All the expected things are there--the Public Garden and Fenway Park, the Tea Party and busing--along with others that it is a constant delight to come upon unexpectedly, like the Brink's robbery, the Steaming Kettle, and the Watch and Ward Society of 'Banned in Boston' fame...That is what Boston is all about--a place to wander, encountering both the grand and the curious. And one could not have a better companion than Tom O'Connor--if not in person, than in *Boston A to Z*. (Michael Kenney *Boston Globe* 2000-01-07) Like the city itself, [O'Connor's] book juxtaposes The Common and The Combat Zone, The Old North Church and The Old Howard, The Ponzi Scheme and The Pops. I came away from it with a fund of new and fascinating details about the hub of the solar system (so designated by Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.)...I'm not going to reveal...these wonders...You'll have to look them up yourself. O'Connor makes no claim to comprehensiveness and freely admits that another writer might choose different entries. That's another reason it's so good: It's personal. (Geoffrey Elan *Yankee* 2001-04-01) A truly engaging treatment of a fascinating city. Neither a dictionary nor encyclopedia, but a book for general readers who want a handy source on Boston's history, its unique terms and quirks along with selected notable personalities, *Boston A to Z* is a singular volume in the literature on Boston, written in O'Connor's usual appealing style. There are histories and memoirs and books which treat individual buildings and neighborhoods but nothing like this book. (Lawrence W. Kennedy, author of *Planning the City upon a Hill: Boston since 1630*)