



The Norman B. Leventhal

WALK TO THE SEA



BEACON HILL

Boston was born here, on the eastern slope of Beacon Hill, though early settlement skirted its steep terrain. In 1625, Reverend William Blaxton, refugee from a failed colony, settled here alone.

Five years later, Blaxton invited some of the hundreds of Puritans recently arrived in the Massachusetts Bay to share his peninsula with its excellent springs. By 1634, hundreds of Puritans had usurped most of Blaxton's land, leaving him with only 50 acres. He sold most of that land to the growing town for Boston's Common. Here, residents pastured their livestock, punished transgressors, and attended public assemblies.

intended the beacon to warn of hostile ships, particularly the ships of King Charles I of England, who wished to reclaim the colony from Puritan control.

After the American Revolution, Beacon Hill became central to Boston's rapid growth. The hilltop was carted away for fill, smoothing the way for new development. As portrayed at left, an elegant new State House replaced John Hancock's estate, and wealthy insiders bought up Beacon Hill to sell as house lots. Within a few decades, gracious townhouses lined the new streets of Beacon Hill, and Boston Common became a park.

Also in 1634, John Winthrop, governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, ordered a beacon placed atop the tallest peak of the original *Trimount*, giving Beacon Hill its name. He

