

Era 2: “Growth” to Boston in its Heyday, 1640’s to 1730’s

<i>Hub of Transportation</i>	Boston was the first North American port town to reorient its economy from agricultural to maritime commerce. It became the #3 port in the British empire by 1720. #1 in America.
<i>Boston Networking/ Cluster</i>	Merchants, sailors, fishermen, farmers, craftsmen, shipbuilders, and ironworkers all interacted to foster innovation.
<i>Local Demand</i>	Requirements of establishing new economies, trade routes, and towns came from within the colony.
<i>Entrepreneurship</i>	It took leaders to foster collaborations between Boston enterprises; it took entrepreneurship to take advantage of the newfound potential within them.
<i>National Global/ Market Demand</i>	Boston got it right with the salt cod trade, developing what the West Indies particularly needed. In this sense, Boston was the handmaiden of slavery.

The boomtown that was Boston in the later 17th and early 18th century developed and innovated by looking towards the sea for commerce, and trade, becoming a hub of transportation connecting the Atlantic World.

A hub of the salt cod trade throughout the Atlantic...The West Indies and the handmaiden of slavery...Boom Town... Hub of Transportation ...Largest Town in British North America ...Shipbuilding...

British North America's Port: Boston

By the turn of 18th century, the town of Boston was quickly establishing itself as *the* port of the British colonies. Creating a brisk trade in a variety of goods, notably salt cod, Boston swelled with newcomers, new goods, and a new economy. The challenges presented in the form of governmental constraints, religious inhibitions, and reorientation from an agrarian society to a trade-based merchant culture were met and overcome. Many were moving beyond basic thoughts of survival and taking steps to develop viable economic futures; often, they selected trading throughout the Atlantic as their path to economic longevity and wealth. The population of Boston swelled (from about 2000 in 1645 to about 16,000 in 1730) as new ranks of shipbuilders, merchants, and sailors joined the already established artisans, fishermen, and farmers in town. This growth made Boston the largest town in British North America, and soon the newcomers were pouring out of the towns and into the nearby villages and the woods of Massachusetts and New England. Boston had arrived.

Boston, handmaiden of slavery

British power on the continent of North America was spreading at the same time as lucrative trade routes within the Empire expanded. Early on, Greater Boston had a surplus of codfish, and developed a trade of salt cod with the British West Indies, as well as with Portugal and Spain. Figuring out the trade routes and how to benefit from them was a commercial innovation equal to none other. There is an immoral side to this as well, as one of the trade routes was the slave trade with Africa and Madagascar. Boston's trade with the West Indies led it to become a handmaiden to slavery in the Caribbean, according to Bernard Bailyn, the leading historian of colonial America. At the same time, although Boston was not as dependent on direct slave trade with West Africa as some other New England ports, Boston was very much involved in the trade. Peter Faneuil made some of the money that he later gave back to the town for the market/town hall (Faneuil Hall) from this trade. Massachusetts recognized and regulated slavery before any other colonies (1643), and in 1676 a group of Boston merchants established a route past the chartered companies of the West Coast of Africa to Madagascar. There, the ships took on captured men from the island and sold them to Virginians in 1678. By 1680, the Bostonians brought slaves to Connecticut and by 1696, to Rhode Island. The cheap grades of salt cod, taken from the Georges Banks off Massachusetts Bay, dried and

salted along the coast, traded in Boston, and brought to Caribbean sugar plantations to feed the slaves in return for molasses was the heart of the economy.

Era 2 Drivers – the Cocktail

A grouping of important factors drove Boston’s growth: the city was more than just a *hub of transportation*; it was also driving a local, national, and trans-Atlantic demand for salt cod and rum. *Local demand* compounded with a *global demand* resounded throughout the Atlantic world for cod. Demands at home to support the new trades resulted in the building of Boston Light and Long Wharf.

The home craft market had developed such surplus goods as shoes and leather goods that could be sold throughout the colonies and abroad. *Inter-regional competition* with New York and Philadelphia led to the pioneering of new trade routes that would prove vital in subsequent eras. This allowed for more tax revenue, improved trade routes and relations, and greater unity among the religious leaders. An *entrepreneurial* spirit that was an aspect of the Puritan culture fostered many of these economic innovations.

In 1686 Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth, Rhode Island and Connecticut was joined together by King William as a single “Dominion of New England” over the strong opposition of the largely self-governing colonies. With the news of the ascension of William and Mary, and an attempt to end the self-governing nature of the Massachusetts Bay Colony – a revolt in 1689 by Bostonians sent the British governor, Andros, back to England as a prisoner, and ended the Royal take-over. The *masses* were taking a lead role in determining the course of their governance and lives. It created a history of the necessity to be on guard against “tyranny” which the grandchildren of these revolutionaries harkened back to in the 1760’s and 1770’s. The only long-term impact was that Plymouth colony with its highly lucrative shipbuilding industry in Scituate became part of a new, larger Massachusetts colony.

The Right Ingredients for Growth:

Hub of Transportation

Whereas first generation Puritans utilized the Boston Harbor as a popular port for immigration, the second generation developed the port into a trans-Atlantic center of trade that led to many innovations. Initially developed in the mid-17th century through the lucrative **Salt-Cod Trade** with Europe and the West Indies, Boston-area fisherman became successful merchants. This trade route also enabled the future path for the Triangle Trade with the West Indies. Shortly after, the shipbuilding industry blossomed along the **North River** of the South Shore, as well as in Boston and the surrounding towns; the North River/Scituate complex was 3rd in the English shipbuilding world by the 1680’s. By the end of the 17th century, the Boston Harbor was the 3rd largest port in the British Atlantic world, next to London and Bristol.

Such innovations, as **Long Wharf** in 1715 - a 1/3-mile wharf planked out into the harbor - and **Boston Light** in 1716 - the first lighthouse in British North America - became notable innovations of the region. For both of these innovations, the large ships that

populated the seas sailed too deep into the water to sustain the rocky, shallow nature of the harbor. The townspeople of Hull initiated Boston Light to help navigate them safely to the shorelines, where there would be a Long Wharf that prevented inefficient rowboats from being the only viable offloading mechanism.

Being an important world-class port also brought new ideas, new people, and even new diseases into the town. A West African slave of Cotton Mather, Onesimus, influenced the concept of smallpox inoculation, which was first performed by Dr. Zabdiel Boylston in Boston in 1721.

Local Demand

The young colony presented its inhabitants with many needs. The people of Boston demanded new products and services to grow their town and fortify their lives. **Long Wharf** and **Boston Light** were created in order overcome the public difficulties of having an inefficient harbor; the people knew that the port could sustain a much higher volume of trade with easier and safer access to the shore if certain innovative modifications were made to ease ingress and egress for friendly ships. The same demand had led in the late 17th century to a barrier being built across the Inner Harbor to keep the French fleet out. The demand for local accurate news provided the order for the publishing of the newspaper **Publick Occurrences**, the first newspaper to be published in British North America.

Boston Networking/Cluster

Working together to establish the laws, politics, and on a significantly different function than its primary role of establishing a well-rounded society in the previous era. By the 1640's, collaboration across industries drove the development of a maritime economy by capitalizing on the diverse skill sets among its second-generation inhabitants. Fishermen worked with merchants to both develop locally the resources for **salting cod**, found in the nearby waters, and to map out a market for the its cross-Atlantic trade. Gloucester fisherman and merchants worked with Boston Merchants, sailors and townsmen together to develop the initiative. Collaboration between the town of Hull, its farmers, the Town of Boston, and its merchants and ship owners, led to the development of the first Lighthouse – then the cutting edge technology, in North America.

Inter-regional Competition/ Rivalry

New York, Philadelphia, Boston. The three major port towns of the British colonies were all vying for top billing as the most important port in the British colonies. Boston led the others because of its established population, codfish trade, and enterprising traders that utilized a coastal trading route that brought them port-to-port in small trades. The building of Long Wharf (1715) – then the longest wharf in North America and rivaling similar wharves in Europe- was motivated in part by the competition with New York's deep harbor that was more hospitable to ever-growing trans-Atlantic vessels.

National/ Global Market Demand

The demand for codfish had spread throughout Europe, but the salting process that allowed for the trans-Atlantic journey to Europe also allowed for the cargo to make it to the Caribbean. In the Caribbean the British planters of the islands used the fish to feed their slaves- allowing all the land to be used for the production of sugar. This demand combined with the growing demand in human chattel of African slaves on the islands and in the colonies, the sugar of the plantations was wanted in New England for the production of rum, and the finer salt cod made the trip across the North Atlantic, going to Portugal, Spain, England, and elsewhere. The many triangular trades that developed allowed for enterprising Bostonians to sell all of their goods at the highest prices.

Entrepreneurship

After government officials had performed much of the leadership role in the settlement period, this era ushered in privatized leadership – one that remained critical to the region’s innovative success throughout the next 300 years. Perhaps the greatest example of 17th century economic entrepreneurship was the thoughtful design of a world-renowned shipbuilding industry along the **North River**, which ultimately provided a self-sufficient maritime economy, as well as a ship of lucrative sales.

The case of Cotton Mather and Zabdiel Boylston (indirectly Onesimus) serving as proponents for the radical idea of **Smallpox Inoculation** commanded drastic attention to the possibilities of a few men creatively seeking a solution to a problem as large as smallpox pandemics. Leadership spread out beyond the functioning of politics and permeated the home and business life of all Bostonians.

Mass Participation

The nature of these colonial innovations wouldn’t have worked unless there was enough local demand for them. Bostonians did just that! When the other towns in British North America would have scoffed at the notion of accepting a slave’s idea for pandemic healthcare, Onesimus’ voice was heard in Boston. Learning across the racial and slavery divide was unusual, and Boston was unique. A portion of the people of Boston embraced the contributions of Onesimus’ **Smallpox Inoculation**. Not all. A bomb was thrown through Cotton Mather’s window. Newspaper editor James Franklin attacked Mather – who was violating the accepted quarantine paradigm of the 1720’s – and Mather, who was the single most powerful person in Boston, made sure that James Franklin was thrown in jail. (Ironically, it permitted the teenage younger brother, Ben, to edit the paper secretly, and get the experience which led to his success elsewhere). The debate and the acceptance in Boston, and Boylston’s ability to write it up and print it, led to its the inoculations reporting to the Royal Society in London, and, in part, to its adoption by the British royal family two years after the Boston innovation.

Looking Ahead

The slip in size and prominence of Boston did not hinder its rise in leadership during the Revolution. Known as the cradle of independence because of the role played in the war, what is often lost is the disease, collapse, and suffering faced in Boston before, during,

and after the siege of the town. Boston will rebound with enterprising forward thinking individuals and collective spirit riding the swells of the world's seas.

17th and 18th Century - Economic Era - Salt Cod and the Triangular Trade

The dark waters off the coast of New England abounded with a slow moving, amazingly rich fish: the cod. Namesake of Cape Cod, the fish that had beckoned explorers and seasonal fishermen, from the Vikings to the Basques, also provided the basis for Boston's reorientation from a farm town to a leading seaport. Cod not only fueled the colonists of the Massachusetts Bay, it also fueled the economy.

A nexus of factors provided the means for the rise of the early industry. The *Bountiful Natural Amenities* of the region included more than cod; there was also plentiful tall timber for shipbuilding, naturally protected harbors such as Boston's, and a group of interested parties that were able to bring the fish from sea to market. This *Cluster Collaboration* of related industries, from the shipbuilders to the salt work owners, the merchants to the sea captains, all responded actively to a *National/Global Market Demand*.

This demand connected the Atlantic world, developing several triangular trade routes. Most important was turning the cod from fresh to salt, and identifying the West Indies as a market for cheaper grade of salt cod, because fish and salt made it possible for sugar cane plantation owners to keep slaves alive and working at subsistence. The profits from this triangular trade made Boston an important hub of trade. Some of the trade was directly with West Africa for slaves. A wooden cod – named the “Sacred Cod” – was put up in the State House over the General Court symbolizing its importance to the colony.

This notability and wealth built the Boston port, helping it become the third largest in British North America. New flows of *Immigration* bolstered the economy and the cod industry. It can truly be said that the cod trade connected regions, promoting *Inter-regional collaboration*. The innovation's history – including the social breakthroughs -- are not all ones of which we approve.

Long Wharf - New Infrastructure to keep the Port competitive 1715

Less than a century after its founding, Boston was already a shipping epicenter; by 1710, it was the third largest port in the British Empire. But as the shipping industry grew, so did the ships themselves; soon the newer, larger ships arriving from London were too big to navigate Boston Harbor's shallow waters. Smaller boats had to be used to ferry goods on and off the large ships, in a time consuming process. Because the ships could not reach Boston, Boston reached out for the ships. Between 1711 and 1715, the city constructed a “Long Wharf” extending from King Street (now State Street), over a 1/3 of a mile from the shore.

Bostonians created this Long Wharf for a number of reasons. There was a strong *local demand*. Boston was the largest city in British North America, and roughly one-third of the population was invested in the shipping industry. Their success rested on their ability to trade efficiently. Within Boston, there was *cluster collaboration* of support for the Long Wharf's construction. The Long Wharf would benefit the fishing, shipbuilding and timber industries, in addition to shippers. Likewise *local government's funding of public projects* made the Long Wharf possible; city councilmen, recognized Boston's role as a *transportation hub*, a key link in the Atlantic shipping world. The city approved the Long Wharf not only because it would benefit shipping, but because it would also aid in the city's defense.

In response to the city's *lack of natural amenities*, Bostonians created a practical solution and allowed the city to remain an important Atlantic trading center.

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