

# charlestown

founded/ annexed	population	gross area	population density	housing units	median income
1630/1874	38,074	3.07 sq.mi.	12,402 ppsm	16,536	\$41,524

Information from 2000 U.S. Census data

## history

Founded in 1628 and named for King Charles I, Charlestown was the first capital of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and is the city's oldest neighborhood — older even than Boston itself. Slightly over one square mile today, Charlestown originally encompassed neighboring towns from Somerville to the Merrimack River. In 1629, an English engineer, Thomas Graves, laid out Charlestown's streets in an elliptical pattern centered on today's City Square in preparation for John Winthrop and his band (who settled in City Square before moving to the Shawmut Peninsula in 1630). And it was from City Square that Paul Revere set out on his famous ride on April 18, 1776 to warn the colonists of the march of the British troops.

Severely damaged by fire following the misnamed **Battle of Bunker Hill** (it actually occurred on Breed's Hill) in 1775, the town was rebuilt after the Revolution and became a center of transportation and maritime industry. The U.S. Navy opened a yard at Moulton's Point in 1800 and was one of Charlestown's top employers for the next 174 years.

Notable residents include **John Harvard**, a pastor who left half his estate in 1638 to a recently founded college in nearby Newtowne (today's Cambridge), which was renamed in his honor. **Elizabeth Foster Vergoose**, known to the world as "Mother Goose," is buried in the nearby Granary Burying Ground. And **Samuel Morse**, inventor of the telegraph and Morse code, was born in Charlestown in 1791.

One of the first Thanksgiving Day celebrations in the colonies was held in Charlestown on June 29, 1676.

## today

Today, Charlestown is known for its restored period houses, the re-developed Navy Yard, gas lamp districts, the Bunker Hill Monument, and as the home of the U.S.S. Constitution, the oldest commissioned warship in the world. The neighborhood's proximity to the Fi-

nancial District and the North End has made Charlestown an attractive residence for professionals working in those areas. Destination restaurants such as Constitution Grill, Figs, Meze, Olives, Tangierino, Tavern on the Water, and the Warren Tavern are a major draw in their own right.

## location

Charlestown is located northeast of downtown Boston on the Mishawum peninsula extending southeast between the Charles River and the Mystic River. Charlestown is connected to Boston's North End by the Washington Street Bridge, which is also the route of the Freedom Trail. Charlestown is bordered to the north by the town of Chelsea, to the west by Cambridge and Somerville, and to the east is divided by water from East Boston.

## housing stock

Charlestown is noted for its historic houses and industrial buildings that reflect the prominence of the town's maritime enterprises from the 17th to the 19th centuries. No other Boston neighborhood can boast such an extensive collection of Federal frame houses, which gives Charlestown its picturesque quality today. **Main Street** (esp. between City Square and Thompson Square) and **Bunker Hill Street** have been important commercial and residential thoroughfares. The old commercial and shipping area of town was concentrated around the present Henley and Wapping Streets.

From the 1790's to the 1860's, landholders on the southeastern slopes of Breed's Hill subdivided their land for development, laying out the streets that still bear their names: Cordis, Green, Soley, and Wood. Development gradually moved up the peninsula toward today's Sullivan Square in the 1830's, and the from Walker St. to Baldwin St. from the 1830's to the 1860's.

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## colleges

Bunker Hill Community College

## famous residents

Nathaniel Gorham • John Harvard • Samuel F. Morse • Elizabeth Foster Vergoose • John Winthrop

## culture & recreation

Bunker Hill Monument (1842) • Bunker Hill Museum • Charlestown Working Theater • Freedom Trail • Granary Burying Ground • The Phipps Street Burying Ground • U.S.S. Constitution • Warren Tavern (1780)

## transportation

Charlestown is conveniently located for both residents and commuters, and is well-served by public transportation and proximity to major transportation routes. Furthermore, the North End and Financial District are only a 10-30 minute walk from the Navy Yard.

**Car:** From Route 93, take Exit 25 (Causeway St./North Station) or Exit 28 (Charlestown/Sullivan Square). From Route 1, take the Charlestown/ Somerville Exit. From Storrow Drive, bear left around Leverett Circle. Take a right at the first light past the Museum of Science, which will bring you across the Gilmore Bridge.

**T:** Orange Line to Sullivan Square or Community College.

**MBTA Water Shuttle:** From Long Wharf or Lovejoy to the Navy Yard.

**Bus:** The 92 on Main St., and the 93 on Bunker Hill St.

## local news sources

[Charlestownonline.com](http://Charlestownonline.com)

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