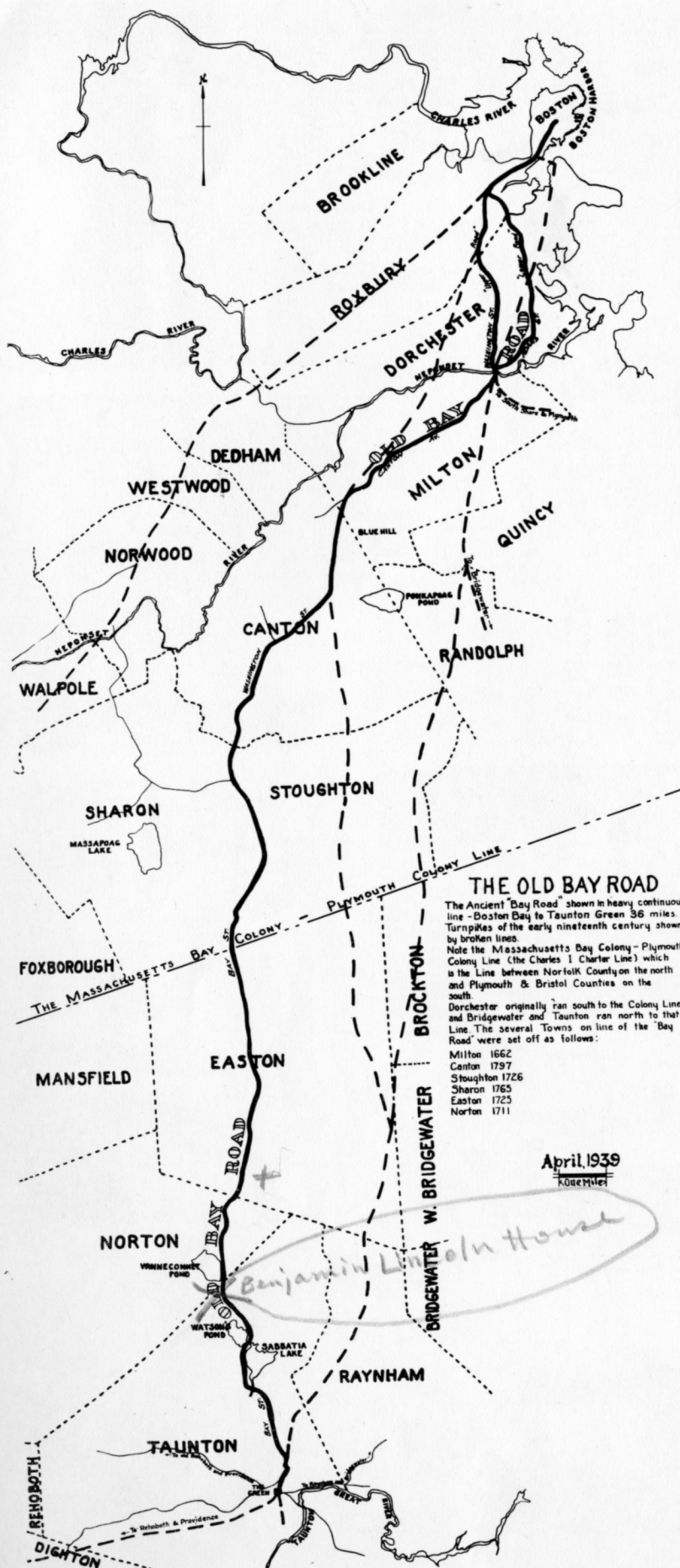


THE OLD BAY ROAD
Boston Bay to Taunton



THE OLD BAY ROAD from Boston Bay to Taunton and extending to the early settlements at Providence and the Island of Aquidneck and the whole contiguous border of Narragansett Bay was in general and much use as a through way for this whole locality for more than a century before the Revolution and a half century after -- until the "Turnpike" came in as a serious competitor.

It was doubtless an Indian trail for a thousand years before the white mans arrival.

It was called "Road to Rhode Island", "The King's Highway", "Road leading to Rehoboth", "The Great Road from Boston to Taunton", "The Taunton Old Way", "The Post Road" etc. It was spoken of in 1754 as "an important highway".

It was, in common with the Plymouth and a half dozen other famous ways leading from the "Bay", a trail or footpath described as well worn, about 18 inches wide, used by Indians and white men, by the early settlers, and their animals, by prospectors, traders, hunters, trappers, soldiers, missionaries and then it became a pack horse and then an ox team way, a "post riders" route, then with much labor and expense, both private and public, a carriage and a stage road.

Our trail, doubtless, witnessed the tramp of the feet of Massasoit, Philip, Miantinomo, Canonius and their men and women both in peace and war, and in 1637 Elizabeth and William Pole, delegates John Gilbert and Henry Andrews, Constable Strong, John and Walter Deane and Richard Williams tramped over it as did a hundred others (and with their animals) in the business of the settlement of Taunton. And beginning with 1621 we have records of the feet on our trail (at least in part), of such as Winslow and Hopkins, of John Oldham in 1633, Dorchester pioneers in 1635, Anne Hutchinson and her considerable party in their banishment, in April, 1638, and by 1640 we read of the tramping from the Bay to the Rhode Island settlements, all the way from Providence to Portsmouth and Newport, of Coddington, Throckmorton, Dr. Clarke, John Smith, Increase Stoughton, Hibbins, Oliver, Capt. Gibbons and Olney (and the names of a hundred others are extant), many or most of whom were, as they said, "balked and hampered" by the Puritan government of the Bay and sought "soul liberty" in the freer air beyond the confines of either the Boston Bay or the Plymouth claimed territory.

Many settlers were established on the line of our Bay Road in Dorchester, Milton, Canton, Norton and Taunton before 1700.

By the time of the Revolution our "important highway" was much settled and much used and we are told that on the evening and night of Apr. 19, 1775 more than a thousand "minutemen" were tramping our road responding to the "Lexington Alarm".

By this time there were a dozen taverns along our 36 miles of road, more than a dozen mills on our road and nearby, churches, schools, stores, blacksmith and other shops as well as many good houses and farms.

See the accompanying maps and pictures, both ancient and of today, designed with this narrative, to rescue from threatened oblivion and preserve the story of this noble road -- great in both history and romance -- for those who come after. "May its glory not grow dim".

Transcript from "The Old Bay Road - its History and Glory for a Thousand Years to 1940" by Channing Howard.

Presented to the Old Colony Historical Society at Taunton by the Bay State Historical League, June 17, 1939.