

Looking Upward!!!

American colonists needed practical devices to use in their seafaring ventures as well as their rural farming businesses. Weathervanes were crafted to fill that need. Deacon Shem Drowne was America's first documented weather vane maker. Of course, in order to actually SEE them, you'll have to take your life in your hands and keep your eyes looking skyward. Never mind the uneven pavement on the sidewalks, Boston's notorious Drivers, or the twists and turns of Boston's former cowpaths. The beautiful views of the interesting weathervanes make it all the worthwhile, even if you do risk life and limb to see them.



The famous grasshopper atop Boston's Faneuil Hall has been there since 1749. Although many folks believe it represents the food and grain that was sold in Boston's that first central Boston marketplace, it really comes from London's Financial Community symbol. It is an exact copy of a grasshopper vane used on top of the London Royal Exchange. This was one of the early creations of Deacon Shem Drowne. It was made of hammered copper has green glass eyes that have witnessed much of Boston's history.

Take a walk behind Faneuil Hall to Quincy Market and check out the Bull Weathervane on top of the dome. The wooden pushcart shopping vendors housed under the Quincy Market glass canopies is named in honor of the bull atop Quincy Market's weathervane.



Courtesy of The Bostonian Society

Back in July of 2008, Bostonian Society members returned the newly gilded “long-johns” weathervane to its perch atop the Old State House, so named because if you squint enough, it looks like a pair of long underwear flapping in the breeze. The compass was attached and then the spire was given a layer of grease to ensure the easy movement of the weathervane. The Old State House, originally British Headquarters, is Boston’s oldest public building. It was built in 1713 and is located in the middle of State Street where it crosses Congress Street.



The “long johns” weathervane on top of the Old North Church was also made by Deacon Shem Drowne in 1740. The swallowtail flag shape has many variations and is called by several various names as well. Drowne died in 1774 at the age of 91 and is buried in the Copp’s Hill Cemetery in the North End.

- Alan Maltzman at BostonCityWalks.com