MASSACHUSETTS

THE BAY STATE *Became a state February 6, 1788 (6th)*

Massachusetts is a small state where a lot of American history began. The Pilgrims landed on its sandy coast, and the first shots of the Revolutionary War were fired in one of its towns.



The Pilgrims and the Rock

In December 1620, about 100 English settlers called the Pilgrims began building Plymouth. In spring they made a peace treaty with Ousamequin, the Wampanoag leader also called Massasoit, that lasted the rest of his life. That fall about 90 Wampanoag men joined a three-day harvest feast. The story goes that the Pilgrims stepped ashore on Plymouth Rock, but none of them ever wrote about it.



The First Shots at Lexington

On the night of April 18, 1775, about 700 British soldiers left Boston to seize weapons stored in Concord. Riders, Paul Revere among them, raced ahead to warn the towns. At sunrise, about 80 local men with muskets stood on Lexington's town green. No one knows who fired first, but the Revolutionary War had begun.



A City Run by Falling Water

At Pawtucket Falls, the Merrimack River drops 32 feet. In the 1820s, builders dug canals to carry that falling water to big brick mills in Lowell. There it turned wheels that ran machines to spin and weave cotton cloth. Most of the workers were young women from New England farms. These "mill girls" worked 12 hours a day or more.



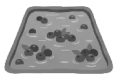
Peach Baskets in the Gym

In December 1891, a teacher in Springfield named James Naismith needed an indoor game to keep his class busy in winter. He hung two peach baskets from the gym balcony, wrote 13 rules and gave his students a soccer ball. Each team had nine players. Today the Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield is named for him.



Four Towns Under the Water

By the 1920s, Boston needed more drinking water. The state decided to dam the Swift River, about 65 miles west, and flood its valley. About 2,500 people had to leave. Houses were taken down. On April 28, 1938, the towns of Dana, Enfield, Greenwich and Prescott came to an end.



Berries That Float

Cranberries grow wild in sandy bogs that glaciers left behind in southeastern Massachusetts. Around 1816, Henry Hall of Cape Cod noticed that the vines grew better when sand blew over them, and he began farming them. Each berry has small pockets of air inside. At harvest, many growers flood their bogs and the berries float to the top.

BY THE NUMBERS

Population	About 7.2 million (16th most)
Size	About 10,600 square miles (44th largest)
Highest point	Mount Greylock, 3,491 feet
Counties	14
Neighbors	New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island

DID YOU KNOW?

- Massachusetts is named for the Massachusett people. The name is thought to mean "at the great hill."
- In an 1812 battle, cannonballs seemed to bounce off the USS Constitution's thick wooden sides. The ship was nicknamed Old Ironsides.
- Whale oil once burned in lamps in homes and lighthouses. In 1857, New Bedford had 329 whaling ships.
- North Atlantic right whales come to Cape Cod Bay each winter and spring to feed on tiny floating animals.

FIND IT ON THE MAP

1. Which city is the capital?
2. Which city is closest to the Basketball Hall of Fame?
3. How many gallons of water does Quabbin Reservoir hold?

Answers: 1. Boston 2. Springfield 3. 412 billion gallons