

Columbus and Warren to Beacon Hill

10-11 p.m.

Well-dressed man: You want Beacon Hill? Are you walkin' or drivin'? All right. You'll go down here (pointing east down Columbus Avenue) to the Common. Now, the Common will be on the right, the Public Garden on the left. Go left. Left. Go straight through to the first (with emphasis) street you come to. That'll be Beacon Street. Beacon'll take you right ... Where do you want to go on Beacon Hill? I used to live there years ago. Louisburg Square? Sure. Two blocks up ... Get that now. Straight down (pointing east down Columbus Avenue). The Common'll be here (drawing map with hands), the Public Garden here. Go straight through: Charles Street ... through the Common ... Charles Street will take you direct to Beacon Street. Two blocks. Go left after two blocks. It'll take you direct to Louisburg Square.

Oh, it's got brick pavements, and apartment buildings -- red brick buildings. It's an apartment district. Old-time Boston society, you know. It's got an iron fence around it -- Louisburg Square. You can't miss it. Oh, about fifteen minutes.

Old grizzled man with heavy foreign accent: Beacon Hill. Eh? Beacon Hill. State House. Not here. Downtown. Very far. I think 2 miles. Or one and a half. Go down (pointing east down Columbus Avenue. State House there. (Thinks.) Beacon Street. Back Bay. You go Back Bay (pointing north). Go Beacon Street to Beacon Hill. That State House. (Stops passing Negro man.) You know Beacon Hill?

Negro man: Beacon Hill? Gosh, you got me. It's not in this district ... not in this district. I think that's down that way (pointing east). You got me.

Old man: I think Beacon Hill is very far from here. He must find State House.

(Negro man stops another passing Negro man.)

First Negro man: Say, you know where Beacon Hill is? Beacon Hill. Is that anywhere near Scollay Square?

Second Negro man, continually walking: Beacon Hill. (Waves east down Columbus Avenue.) Yeah, near there, pretty close. Just this side of Scollay. Straight -- straight ahead. Down by the Common. Straight ahead. (Moves on.)

First Negro man: Do you know where the Common is? The Common is a big park. I tell you. Go over here (pointing south down West Newton Street) down there to Tremont Street. That's the next one over. Go along Tremont all the way. You'll go by the Common. Beacon Hill is right near there. You can ask someone.

Old man: It's at least 45 minutes. Couldn't he go down (pointing east down Columbus Avenue) to Park Square? And over? It faster to go to Park Square.

First Negro man: Yes, he could go by Park Square. Do you know Park Square? Trouble with Park Square: it divides. One way goes left, one right. He'd have trouble there, and get lost.

Columbus and Warren to Beacon Hill (continued)

Old man: He go to Park Square, and find Boylston. Go right on Boylston to Tremont. Faster.

First Negro man: No, I think he'd better go over here (pointing east down West Newton Street) to Tremont. It's straight all the way, you know? Go down Tremont until you come to Beacon Hill.

Oh, you see Common there. You see the State House on Beacon Hill. See State House easy.

About thirty minutes. Half an hour. Don't you think?  
(Old man nods approval.)

1-2 p.m.

Negro man with foreign accent: You're going the wrong way! (Points east down Columbus Avenue.) That's at the Common. Just go down here (pointing east down Columbus Avenue) to the Common. Do you know the Common? Well, just go down here to the end. That'll be the Common -- a big park. Go across to the State House. Do you know the State House? You must (with emphasis) know the State House. The big gold dome? Sure. Well, go down here to the end. Go down Charles Street. What address do you want on Beacon Hill? Louisburg Square. Well, you go on Charles Street to Beacon Street. Let's see ... (thinking) ... Joy Street ... Joy Street runs into Beacon Street like this (indicating right angle with hands). Joy Street is left of the State House. Better go to the State House and ask. When you come to the State House, ask around there where Louisburg Square is. Let's see ... you could go to Beacon Street. Beacon is the border on the far side of the Common. Take Charles to Beacon, then right two blocks. I think that's Joy Street. You'll be on the other side of the Common. Go to the top of Joy Street -- you'll be pretty near it. Better ask at the State House. You can't miss that -- a big gold dome. Ask someone there.

Oh, ask anyone at the State House to tell you. When you find Beacon Street, go two blocks right, to Joy Street. Go to the State House. Joy Street is just left of the State House, on Beacon Street.

Oh, about half an hour.

Negro woman: Oh. Ooooh. That's a long (with emphasis) way. Tell you. You have to go down this West Newton Street here (pointing north up West Newton Street). When you come to Huntington Avenue -- Huntington is big street -- you catch the subway. Someone at the subway can tell you where Beacon Hill is. That's the only way. It's too far to walk. Ooh, no. Ooooh. Ooooh. I wouldn't know. Maybe you could go on Huntington (motioning north) to Beacon Street. Beacon Street takes you (motioning west) to Beacon Hill. But I don't know how exactly. I know it's too far to walk.

Columbus and Warren to Beacon Hill (continued)

You have to take subway. Beacon Hill is there (motioning northwest). You go there (motioning northwest) if yo have to walk. Go Huntington to Beacon Street. 'Way, 'way over there (motioning north, then west).

I don't know. I have only gone there by subway ... never seen it. Only by subway.

Ocooh, I don't know. It's very far. Will take a long long time. An hour at least, maybe one and a half or two.

Arlington Square to Beacon Hill

4-5 p.m.

Man: That's Beacon Street (mumbling). You'll have to go through the Common, and find Beacon Street. Go down here (pointing east down Tremont Street) to Boylston. You know where the Common is? Well, just go down there (gesturing northeast) and anybody can tell you -- a big park. Beacon Street is right there.

Oh, do you know the State House? Well, the State House is right there.

Maybe thirty minutes.

(Note: The preciseness of this fifteen minute discourse is not guaranteed, due to the rapidity with which the too-helpful woman talked, and the length of the one-sided conversation.)

Woman: Beacon Hill, yes. Let's see. You would do best to go through the Common. Go down here (pointing down Arlington Street). No, better yet, see that sign (pointing east down Tremont Street)? Schlitz? Go left there. Wait a minute. See 'way down there? Broadway ... Hotel Broadway? Go left there. That's Broadway. Broadway will get you to the Common. Say, why don't you just go straight, straight down Tremont? Sure, right on around to the Common. See the Bradford Hotel? The Common's just the other side. Sure take Tremont all the way. It goes right past the Common. You'll see the Metropolitan Theater on the right, the Common on the left. Across the street. Cut right over the Common toward the State House. You'll see it easy. That's where Beacon Hill is. Just cut diagonally across the Common. You'll pass a tavern on the Common. A tavern on the green. Ha ha. Go right on over to the State House -- it has a big gold dome. Cross the street. That'll be Beacon Street. Cross the street. Where do you want to go on Beacon Hill? Sure. Just go left of the State House. No, the right. Ask somebody there where Joy Street is. Joy Street. Joy will take you right to Louisburg Square. Just go down here (pointing east down Tremont Street) to the Common. Cut across the Common. You'll pass a little tavern, right on the Common. You'll come to some stairs leading to the State House. Anyone should show you where Joy Street is. I could, if I were there, if I could see it. What are you going to do on Louisburg Square?

(Further directions, similar to above, are omitted.)

Oh, the State House is there. You won't miss that gold dome. Beacon Hill has stairs. You'll tell it easy. At the end of the Common, take the stairs up the hill. There's stairs beside the State House, and in back, too. Right on Beacon Hill. It's steep. The houses are different too. The best people live there. Beacon Hill is close to downtown. Just look for the State House. And stairs. You can't miss it.

(Further similar directions are omitted.)

Ah. For me, about twenty minutes. You -- fifteen. Probably about fifteen. Just follow Tremont (pointing east down Tremont Street) to the Common. You can see the hill from there.

(Interviewer starts in wrong direction.)

Woman: No, no. That way (pointing across street). (Stands on curb and watches interviewer disappear over bridge and down street, in right direction.)

Arlington Square to Beacon Hill (continued)

10-11 a.m.

Young woman: Beacon Hill. That's the State House, isn't it? I think that's where the State House is. You can go down Tremont here (point-east down Tremont Street) to the Common. Cross the Common and you'll see the State House. Beacon Hill should be right near there.

Oh, I don't know. Beacon Hill will be all around the State House, I think. Just look around there.

You should be able to make it in twenty minutes, walkin'.

Man: Beacon Hill? Lessee. Go down there (pointing north down Arlington Street). Wait. Tremont'll take you right there (pointing east down Tremont Street). See the Knicker Park Hotel? That's where the Metropolitan Theater is. See the Bradford Hotel? Go right down there -- that's all Tremont Street. Keep on Tremont. It'll take you right up the Hill. It'll curve around. Just stick to the left, the left hand side, all the way. Right to it. It'll go right up Beacon Hill.

Well, if you'll have trouble that way, better go that way (pointing north down Arlington Street). Straight over to the Common. Cross the Public Garden and the Common. You can't miss them. You'll cut diagonally. You'll come right to it. You can't miss it that way. Just go down and go right, to the Common. On the other side of the Common is Beacon Hill. You'll see the State House, a big hill ... You can't miss it. Go down here (pointing north down Arlington Street) and take a right. Straight ahead, and you can't miss it.

Oh, no more'n five minutes -- ten at the most -- walkin'. Just straight ahead (pointing north down Arlington Street) and over (gesturing east).

South Station to Beacon Hill

3-4 p.m.

Man: Beacon Hill, huh? Are you walkin'? Tell you what. Go straight through there (pointing up Summer Street). You'll have to go around (indicating construction pit). See that opening (pointing up Summer Street)? That's Summer Street. Go right on through to the Common. Go on across to Beacon Street. Where do you want to go on Beacon Hill -- Joy Street, or ...? Louisburg Square. Go straight up to the Common. You'll see the State House. It'll have a big dome, a big gold dome. Take a short right to Park Street, then left to the State House. Louisburg Square is right in back of the State House. Ask anyone there. At the end of this street (indicating Summer Street) will be the Common. You'll see it easy: a big gold dome. That's the State House.

It's a big hill. Right in back of the State House. Look for the big round gold dome. You can't miss it. It's at the foot of Beacon Hill. A big gold dome. Go straight up here (pointing up Summer Street) to what we call our Common. You'll see the State House right across. A big gold dome. You can't miss it. Ask anyone. Louisburg Square is right in back, but I couldn't tell you how to get there. Straight up here and you'll see the gold dome -- it's a big gold dome.

Oh, only fifteen minutes -- all the way to Louisburg.

Man: Right up this street (pointing up Summer Street). Straight ahead. Can't miss it.

At the end of this street is the Common, see. Ask anybody there. They can point it out to you. Go there and ask. They can see it.

Oh, about ten minutes.

Woman: Oh gee. You've got a long way. Go right up there (pointing up Summer Street). Do you know where Summer is? Where all the stores are? Gilchrist's and Filenes? Well, see where that orange truck is coming out. That's Summer. Take that straight through. Past all the stores and things. Right through. Straight through. And through. Untill you come to the Gardens, the Public Gardens. You'll see it. Ask somebody. You'll see the State House. Go through the Public Gardens, straight through. The State House is right there.

Oh, the State House is right there. You'll see a flight of stairs. Ask anybody there to show you. Cross the Gardens, and go up the stairs. Yes, they go up, you can't miss them. And the State House too.

Oh, maybe ten minutes.

Swedish girl: Just go straight through (motioning up Summer Street) to the Common. That's all I can tell you. Straight through to the Common. That's all there is to it. I do not know where you want to go, but you can ask someone there. That's all I can tell you: straight through to the Common, to Beacon Street. Beacon Street. That's Beacon Hill. Do you know the Common? The Common is a big park.

It is easy -- straight through to the Common. You can follow me. Beacon Hill is the highest part of Boston.

I do it in 11 minutes. I go there now.

Old North Church to Beacon Hill

5-7 p.m.

Old Italian woman: Oh, Beacon Hill. Oooh. I don't know. I tell you. Go in store there (pointing across street) and ask Joe. (Joe has been interviewed once before.) Joe knows everything. You ask Joe. Everybody knows Joe. He'll tell you. I go there now.

Italian woman: Oh, Beacon Hill. You've got a long way. You must go down (pointing west down Salem Street) Salem to the end, and through the underpass. That's Hanover Street. Ask somebody there. They can tell you better. It is very difficult to tell you from here. It is hard to find it from right here; it is so difficult to get out. Do like I say: go to the end (pointing west down Salem Street) and ask.

There is the State House. Oh, anyone down there can tell you.

Oh, about fifteen minutes, at least. It's pretty far. About fifteen or twenty minutes. Yeah.

Teenage Italian girl: You've got a long way. I couldn't even tell you.

Man: Walk straight down practically (pointing west down Salem Street). Ask anyone to tell ya.

Two Italian men:

One: How are you goin', car or ... ? Walkin'! You've got a long walk. Tell you, go straight down here (pointing west down Salem Street) to an overpass. Ask anyone there.

The other: What you're going to do: go straight down this here Salem Street, under the highway, to Scollay Square. Do you know where you are from there? Oh.

The one: Like I say, ask someone at the bottom of this street. They can tell you. It's too hard from here, and far. We could try, but it wouldn't do no good. You'd only get lost.

The other: It's easier down there. It's hard to tell you from here, hard to describe. You'll be lots better off down there.

Oh, anyone down there can tell you. You might see it from there. Keep asking. From here it's tough.

Old North Church to Beacon Hill (continued)

Maybe twenty minutes. It's far. Walkin' fast you might do it in twenty. O.K.?

Woman: Gee, I don't know.

Teen-age Italian boy: Beacon Hill. Gee. Are you walkin'? Well, you'll have to go down there (pointing west down Salem Street) to an overpass and then to Scollay Square. They can tell you better there. When you go through the overpass -- it's there for all sorts of construction work and stuff, you'll see -- you'll come to Hanover Street. Ask someone how to get to Scollay. When you get there, ask someone how to get to Tremont. Then ask someone how to get to the Common. Then ask how to get to the State House. Ask someone there where it is. It's right near there. It's at least four miles. Go to Scollay and ask where Tremont is. Then find the Common. You should find the State House easy from there.

Oh, Beacon Hill is nice. You'll tell it right away. The houses are different from here, the streets are different, everything is different. It's cleaner. Everything looks neater, and junk isn't in the streets (pointing to trash in the gutter). You know, it's a lot nicer (with emphasis). A lot nicer all the way around. High class. You know. High class people live there. Not like (hesitating, then laughing) this (with emphasis) place.

It's far. At least four miles. Maybe an hour if you walk fast. You can probably do it. Just find Scollay Square and ask. It's easy from there.



Mass General Hospital to Beacon Hill

11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Woman: Beacon Hill. It's up there (pointing across Cambridge Street). It's over there somewhere. Where did you want on Beacon Hill? Louisburg Square. You go straight up there (pointing up Grove Street on the hill) I think. Go up there, and go left. That's all I know.

It's not very big. Just a minute. (Opens purse.) I have a map. (Removes Esso map of downtown Boston, and conversation continues while looking and pointing at the map.) We're about here. No, here. About here. This ... here's Grove Street. It's not shown. Here's the State House. It's right around here ... between Grove Street and the State House. But it's not shown. (Returns map to purse.) It's small. It's on a small, short street. I think it's got trees around it. Go to the top there (pointing up Grove Street on the hill) and turn left near the top.

Oh, about fifteen or twenty minutes.

Old man: (Stops to think, finally whirls, facing south.) Yeah, yeah. (Laughs.) Yeah. You gotta go up there (pointing across Cambridge Street). Where you wanta go on Beacon Hill? Yes. You gotta go up there -- that street there (pointing up Grove Street on the hill), 'way up there. You go as far as you can go there, and ask anybody. You'll probably have to go a block beyond, but ask someone up there. You'll go right. Umam. I think that's right. I think it's on the right. Anybody there can show you.

Oh, it's got a sign. A sign: Louisburg Square. Oh, it's a little sort of park, with a couple of trees. All enclosed in. Oh, you can't miss it. Just go up there. See, 'way up (pointing up Grove Street on the hill). It's on the right somewhere, but I'm not sure where.

That's a good hike. Oh, ten minutes.

Man: Beac... (Whirls facing south, points across Cambridge Street.) That's it. That's it. (Pauses.) I would suggest ... Where do you want to go on Beacon Hill? Louisburg? Louisburg Square? I would suggest you go down here (indicating east down Cambridge Street) to Hancock Street and go right. That should take you just about to Louisburg Square. Got that? Go left down here (pointing to Cambridge Street), then take a right (using hands to indicate right angles). Hancock Street. Louisburg should be up near there.

It's a real little square, the only one up there.

Oh, about ten minutes.

Man: What part? That's Revere Street. Go right to the top, and then left (pointing across Cambridge Street). That's Beacon Hill. Right there (pointing across Cambridge Street). Go right up there, up Grove Street (pointing up Grove Street on the hill) to the top, and over one (indicating left). You can't miss it. That's the end of this street (pointing up Grove Street on the hill), and left. Let's see. Up two ... (thinking) ... that's up two ... Mt. Vernon ... Revere. Yes. Go up two blocks. Go left. That'll be the top.

Mass General Hospital to Beacon Hill (continued)

Go left, and Louisburg Square will be about 100 yards, on your right. That's the end -- the end of Grove Street -- and over (indicating left). You can't miss it. The first street up there is Mt. Vernon. See there; see that truck (pointing to truck coming out of Phillips Street) up there? That's Mt. Vernon Street. Well, the next street up, the last one, is Revere Street. Go left there. About 100 yards, on your right, will be Louisburg Square. That's right -- it's just straight up the hill, and left. You can't miss it.

It's a little green plot in the middle with an iron fence around it.  
Five minutes for you, half an hour for me. (Laughs.)