

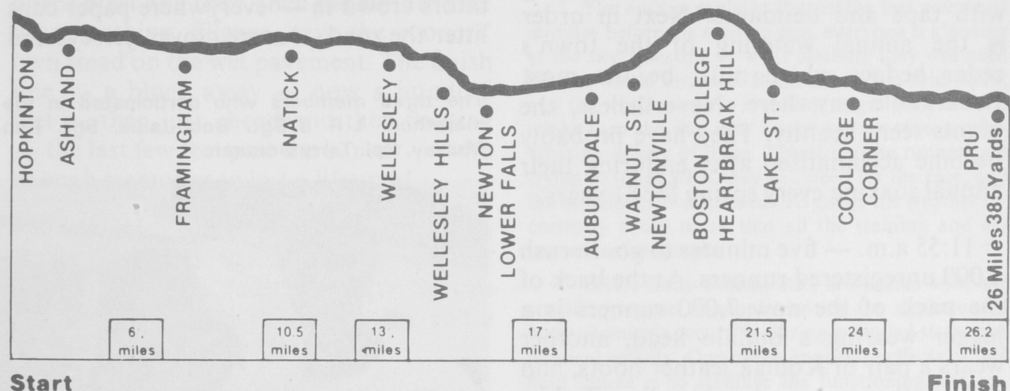
reason than that once a year, runners¹ congregate on the town square from all parts of the globe to await the starting gun of what has become the most famous long distance footrace in the world, the Boston Marathon.

April 15, 1978: the race is still two days away and already every available bed in Boston has been spoken for. An excitement permeates the city. Restaurants are filled with runners from fifteen countries. For this occasion, national dishes are sacrificed for chocolate milkshakes and heaping dishes of spaghetti. A newly landed maître d' asks what is happening, "I have lobster, fillet, pheasant under glass, and what does everyone want tonight? Pasta!" On Boylston St., the older restaurants and "delies" know all about carbohydrate loading and for \$2.50 you can have a 4,000-calory meal at a moment's notice. Rumours start spreading that last year's winner, Gerome Drayton, is just down the street eating something special. The tempo picks up, people yelling, old friendships renewed and new ones made. The restaurant is a great place, for in less than 36 hours, every runner will be thrown together, and in times of doubt, friends are good insurance.

April 16, Sunday afternoon: a warm beautiful day. Thousands swarm about the Pru picking up bus passes, running numbers and instruction sheets. A photographic display in the lobby shows Clarence H. DeMar winning the race

more times than any other runner. Gérard Côté, the durable French Canadian holds second place honours in the winners circle. Just to the left, a veteran stands silently in the corner, one of the great ones enjoying the sights. His Adidas jacket is covered with marathon badges, he looks about 45 years of age. Finally he moves and the button on his right sleeve reads "69 years old." You begin to hear the odd "Godspeed" and "good luck tomorrow." Those who have been in Boston before spend the day quietly relaxing. Joggers do one to two miles just to keep loose. The new runners grab any transportation available and head out to see the route, especially "The Hill."

"Heartbreak Hill" is part of a series of four hills that commence near the 18½-mile mark and terminate near Boston College at mile 21.5. An official of the race notes "the hill simply comes at the wrong time in the wrong place." Driving along, Heartbreak Hill looks peaceful and civil now. Cars are stopped while the occupants watch a university student jog up the steep incline. A hundred eyes follow him wondering "how far has he come", "he doesn't look too tired", "maybe it's not that bad after all." No one can forget the thoughts of the running expert, Dr. Sheehan, who notes that at the 20-mile mark right on "The Hill", runners hit the "wall."² The miles that have gone before are just foothills to this Everest, he notes in *Sports Illustrated* on April 17, 1978. At



The route of the Boston Marathon.