

STOW HISTORICAL SOCIETY

STOW, MASSACHUSETTS 01775
ESTABLISHED 1961



*A newsletter for all friends of Stow history.
Please feel free to pass it along to others who might be interested!*

April 30th, 2026

Welcome to the Spring 2026 Stow Historical Society Newsletter!



The Stow Minutemen and their entourage, while enroute to Concord to fight the Brits, decided to stop for a photo op in front of the Colonel James Barrett House on Barrett's Mill Rd in Concord. The Barrett house is a "witness house", meaning it witnessed the events of the Revolutionary War, including the Stow Minutemen as they passed by on April 19th, 1775. Beautifully restored to its 1775 appearance by Save Our Heritage, it became part of the Minute Man Historical Park in 2012.

Photo courtesy of Jonathan Daisy and the Stow Minutemen.

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Another Anniversary

Hello History Fans! Unless you're living under a rock, you are well aware that this is a special anniversary year in the history of our nation. As was last year! Last year was even more special for those of us lucky enough to live in towns that played a pivotal role in the early days of the Revolution, and even more so for Stow, who sent men off to those first battles of the War on April 19th, 1775.

It's now a year after the 250th anniversary of the start of the War, but you might be interested in hearing a couple of details that you may not have known about...

Stow's Role on April 19th

Did you ever wonder why the Concord fight was at the Old North Bridge? Well, the Concord minutemen had a tough decision to make as the British soldiers arrived in town after the fighting in Lexington on that fateful morning 251 years ago. Even though the Concord militia and minutemen had reinforcements from Lincoln with them, and more arriving from Bedford, they were still outnumbered 3 to 1 by the British companies. So, they decided to cross the river and muster on a hill northwest of the bridge, and wait there for reinforcements from Acton and Stow, the two closest towns to the west.

Concord's men were depending on us. But as soon as Acton's men arrived, the decision was made to advance to the bridge because smoke could be seen rising from Concord center. The colonial militia were fired upon by the Redcoats near the river. The minute men fired back, and the bloody war had begun. You can read an incredibly detailed description of how the events unfolded that day on the National Park Service website. Go to nps.gov, and search for "Concord's North Bridge".

Stow's men arrived at the bridge around noon, about an hour after those first shots were fired. And a 16-mile battle ensued. Stow's men helped chase the retreating Brits all the way to Charlestown, with fighting going on the entire way. Fortunately, minutemen from all the other towns in the area were now arriving along the route to help overwhelm the enemy. The minutemen and militias then blockaded the narrow land accesses to Charlestown and Boston, starting the Siege of Boston.

That was 251 Years Ago. What about 250 Years Ago?

The inhabitants of the Town of Stow were called to meetings almost every month in the first half of 1776. The warrants for those meetings show that there were a lot of routine town matters being discussed and voted on. But the War was evident. For example, at one meeting it was voted to reimburse the expenses of "the men that Delivereth two Tuns of hay to Cambridge", presumably for the War effort.

By this time in the War, April of 1776, a year after it started, the British siege of Boston was over - the Brits having been pretty much starved out, and threatened by those cannons on Dorchester heights brought from Fort Ticonderoga, NY that you heard about, of course. General Washington had moved his headquarters out of Cambridge and was moving his army to New York City to prepare for a British attack there. Remember, Washington's "army" was made up of all these minutemen and militia men who had dropped everything at home and marched or rode off to join in the fight.

On April 7, 1776, Captain John Barry and the *USS Lexington* captured the British ship, *Edward*, marking the first American naval victory in the American Revolution. The Navy was only 6 months old. From his headquarters in Cambridge during the British siege of Boston, General Washington had begun the establishment of a Continental Navy by the commissioning of two ships on October 30th for the defense of the colonies.

Time to Declare Independence

And by now it had become pretty clear to the colonists that it was time to officially sever ties with the motherland. In April 1776, following Britain's ban on trade with the colonies, the Continental Congress opened American ports, a critical economic step toward independence.

On April 12, North Carolina approved the Halifax Resolves, authorizing their delegates to the Continental Congress to vote for independence. This was the first formal call for separation from Britain.

Also in April, Congress dispatched a delegate to France in the hopes of securing their support in the war against Britain - and he did!

The Provincial government of the Massachusetts Bay Colony had begun asking local towns to vote on whether they were on board with the idea of declaring independence. By June it was posted on a Stow town meeting warrant for a vote on July 1st. Our ancestors here in Stow gathered on that day and voted to endorse independence (but only if the government of the colony and the Continental Congress thought that it was a good idea!). That was three days *after* the final draft of the Declaration was presented to the Continental Congress, and three days *before* it was signed on July 4th!

July 1, 1776 The town being met at time and place proceeded to the
Business of the meeting Henry Gardner Esqr was Chosen an moderator for said meeting
On the Second article in a Warrant Relative to Independancy Voted as the
opinion of this Town that a Government Independent of Great
Brittish might be formed if the Government of this Colony and
the Continental Congress shall think such a measure is Expedient.


That is an excerpt of the Town Meeting warrant and the vote taken. It says, "July 1, 1776 The town being met at time and place proceeded to the Business of the meeting. Henry Gardner Esqr was Chosen moderator for said meeting. On the Second article in the warrant Relative to Independancy, Voted as the opinion of this Town that a government Independent of Great Brittian might be formed if the government of this Coliny and the Continental Congress shall think such a measure is Expedient." Pretty cool, eh?

That was our "declaration" on July 1st. And this was everyone else's on July 4th... (Don't bother trying to read it here.)




Time to Celebrate

We hope you will join us in celebrating these two momentous events, starting with this presentation, which we hope will be very entertaining:



**Declaring
Independence**
THEN & NOW




Declaring Independence: Then & Now – Stow, MA

05.29.26 @ 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm (Free Event)

The [Stow Historical Society](#) will present "*Declaring Independence: Then & Now*" on Friday May 29th at 7 pm at Stow Town Hall. This is a public performance depicting how residents of communities in Massachusetts and New Hampshire debated the idea of declaring independence from Great Britain in 1776. The thought-provoking presentation explores what the Declaration of Independence meant to those who lived during the American Revolution and what it means to people today. The program is sponsored in conjunction with Freedom's Way National Heritage Area and will be followed by ice cream. Admission is free. Pre-registration is encouraged (so we know how much ice cream to buy!) at historystow@gmail.com.

This event is made possible thanks to [Freedom's Way National Heritage Area](#). *Declaring Independence: Then & Now* is supported, in part, by the Massachusetts Society of Cincinnati.



**Freedom's
Way**

Standby for more fun as we approach America's 250th in July!

What Else Happened in Stow on This Date in History?

1626 (400 years ago)

Stow didn't exist yet. The Nipmucs were stewards of this land, hunting for sustenance, and fishing in the rivers and waterways.

1676 (350 years ago)

Oh boy. We are in the midst of King Philip's War. After 16 years working their farms and raising families, Stow's first two settlers, Matthew Boon and John Kettell, ran for their lives in early 1676. Kettell removed his family to the garrison house in Lancaster and Boon removed his family to the garrison house on Water Row in Sudbury. Boon and his son, upon returning to Stow to gather more of their belongings, were murdered near what is now the State Fire Academy. Kettell was either killed, or left his family in Lancaster and went to Salem. Stories conflict.

1776 (250 years ago)

Have you been paying attention?

1876 (150 years ago)

April 22nd, the Boston Red Caps beat the Philadelphia Athletics, 6-5, in the first official National League baseball game.

On July 4th, America celebrated its centennial! As did we, here in Stow.

1926 (100 years ago)

The first Black-built, owned and operated golf course in New England, Mapledale Country Club, opens in Stow. Join us in celebrating this milestone! Learn more at rediscovermapledale.org. See more below.

1976 (50 years ago)

The Stow Fire Department established the town's first Emergency Medical Service, and the town's first ambulance went into service in March of this year.

And, America celebrates its 200th birthday! It was a big deal. Send us your photos of the Bicentennial! We may publish them in our next newsletter - if we like them.



Stow's first ambulance, 1976

From the David Herring archives.



Check out their website for this year's events, including:
"Reading Frederick Douglas Together at Stow Acres Golf Course, June 27;
The 3rd Annual Robert H. Hawkins Memorial Golf Tournament, August 29;
Followed by the "100 Years of Golf Gala", that evening, August 29.

Facebook

If you're not following us on Facebook, you don't know what you're missing! We have picked up a lot of followers lately, and folks seem to be enjoying our posts. For example, these two photos generated a lot of discussion!



Central Garage (circa 1967) above, and the Stow Filling Station (circa 1939) below.



Real Books

Don't forget that we have books for sale. The Stow Historical Society has published many books over the years, and they are all still for sale. You will always find them at our events, like the one coming up, *Declaring Independence: Then & Now*, on May 29th. They're also for sale every day at Nan's Kitchen in the former historic Stowaway Inn at 271 Great Rd. Look for this attractive display:



Spring Membership Drive!

If you're on our mailing list, you may have received a membership application in the mail recently. That was just a reminder that payment of your annual dues helps us to continue our mission to preserve, protect, enhance, and share Stow's unique history and its artifacts. The General membership fee is \$25 per year.

If you're already a member in good standing, having paid your dues, THANK YOU!

If you're not a member, please consider becoming a member! You don't have to be a resident of Stow to be a member.

If you don't care to use the application form and return envelope that was provided in our mailing, or you just want to save a stamp, you can join or pay annual dues via PayPal through our website.

Link- <https://stowhistoricalsociety.org/donate/>

PayPal- <https://www.paypal.com/ncp/payment/LEKYAB4MAM5L8>

Errata

Sometimes we make mistakes. Sometimes we're just trying to see who's paying attention.

When reading our last newsletter in January, Judy Anderson noticed that we said to look for the same 1775 map in the edition of this newsletter published 26 years ago, January 27, 2000. That was so wrong! It had been published in our newsletter 6 years ago in January 2020. Judy wins the prize. Did anyone else notice that? Who else is paying attention?

Random Rhetorical Question: How long do you suppose it took to deliver that message from Stow to Boston and then to Philadelphia after our Town Meeting voted to support independence on July 1, 1776? Do you suppose it made it there by July 4th?

Thank you for reading our Newsletter!

Your 2026 Executive Board,

Dorcas Brown Sefton, Bruce E Fletcher, Lora Moore, Rob Gardner, Kathy Sferra, Kelly Lawlor, Liz Moseley, and last but not least Tom Zavorsky.