

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!

September, 2026

WELCOME TO OUR FALL EDITION!



**The most significant event to occur on American soil since the ratification
of the Declaration of Independence occurred a mere 25 years ago.**

September 11, 2001

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Let's talk about Stow 25 years ago, in the year 2001. A lot happened!

- The **Community Preservation Act** was adopted this year by vote of Town Meeting - one of the first towns in the state to do so.
- David Soar was appointed as the new **Fire Chief**. Prior to this appointment, and since its inception in 1933, the Fire Department had been overseen by a Board of Fire Engineers, one of whom was elected by the Board to be the Chief.
- This same year, the **Fire Department** started staffing the fire station at 16 Crescent St full time, 24 hours a day, for the first time. Prior to that, "call" members responded to incidents from their homes when the station wasn't staffed. Fulltime staffing of the station had begun in 1989 on weekdays only.
- Joseph Rebello was appointed as the new **Police Chief** after John Scichilone's retirement.
- And Richard Roggeveen became our new **Building Commissioner** replacing George Scraggs. Three new public safety department heads in one year!
- And by the end of the year, **Compaq Computer Corporation** had moved out of town. The building they occupied on Old Bolton Rd was originally built by Stow's own Bob Collings for his Data Terminal Systems company, one of the first electronic cash register companies in the world. The building was later sold to Digital Equipment Corporation which was subsequently bought out by Compaq. Compaq donated \$3,000 towards Springfest activities that year, and \$5,000 towards the purchase of a new fire engine for the town before terminating its operation in Stow. The Bose Corporation occupied the building for many years after that. (Bose built a new road and moved the entrance to Great Rd and installed Stow's second traffic signal.) And now, 25 years later, in 2026, we have a new tenant on that campus, Masters Academy International, which held their Grand Opening earlier this month.

That would have been enough for one year, but then there was the deadliest terror attack in modern world history. It changed the course of world history. All of our lives have been affected, whether we realized it or not.

September 11, 2001, marked the 25th anniversary of when those two planes out of Boston crashed into the Twin Towers in New York City, one plane out of Washington, DC crashed into the Pentagon, and one plane out of New Jersey on its way to DC was deliberately crashed into a field in Shanksville, PA by the *astoundingly* heroic passengers aboard. This is the Town of Acton's plaque honoring those brave passengers' last words:



The coordinated attacks left nearly 3,000 people dead. The residents of this town came together, like all Americans, in solidarity. Tears were shed. Candlelight vigils were held. People stood in line to donate blood. US flags became ubiquitous. HOA rules across the country that banned flags were instantly amended to allow for the Stars and Stripes to be flown. Stories of heroism restored our faith in humanity, while at the same time we all held the disbelief that others could hate us so much that they could do such a thing.

The Stow Fire Department held a memorial service on this 25th anniversary of those horrific events. The photo on our cover page shows two granite posts at the Stow fire station signifying the north and south towers of the New York World Trade Center, accurately depicting one taller than the other. Affixed atop them is a piece of a steel beam cut from the actual wreckage of the towers, as a permanent reminder of that day. Let us never forget. The photo is from their Facebook page.

Okay, that was 25 years ago. What about a hundred years ago, Stow, 1926?

It was the middle of the Roaring 20's. Model T Fords had taken over the roads. Town meeting voted to appropriate \$950 for lighting the streets of the town the ensuing year, and \$100 to install heating appliances in the toilets of the Hale high school. Life was good! The Gleasondale Mill was in full swing. And **golfing** came to Stow! And not just at a typical golf course, but one of the first golf courses in the country to be Black owned and operated (as you know from our previous newsletters). A celebration of the 100th anniversary of **Mapledale Country Club** was held last month in its original location and in the same clubhouse at the Stow Acres Country Club on Randall Rd. The day's activities included a golf tournament, followed by an evening gala. By all accounts it was a wonderful event. See their website, rediscovermapledale.org, and their Facebook page for all the details.



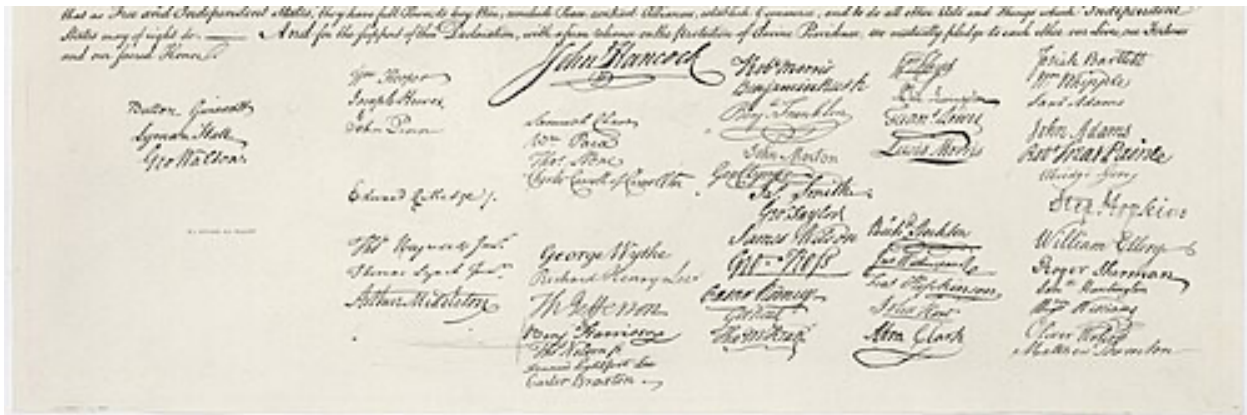
1926 wasn't that long ago, really. If you were born in 1926 you'd be a hundred years old this year. There are 101,000 centenarians in this country, and probably a couple right here in Stow.

How about we go back a little further, say 250 years ago, a quarter millennium, to 1776?

What was the most significant thing to happen in the world that year?

You may have heard about this... It was the ratification of the **Declaration of Independence** on **July 4th**, of course! (Or "*The Unanimous Declaration of the Thirteen United States of America*" as it was called back then). Don't forget, this is still America's **SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL** year for a few more months.

As we noted in our last newsletter, the *Declaration* wasn't signed on July 4th. It was **August 2nd** when delegates to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia began signing the official engrossed parchment copy of the document that had been ratified a month earlier. Most of the 56 signers signed on this day (50 of them), and five more signed later that year. Thomas McKean, the 56th signer, signed sometime after January 1777.



There is only one handwritten, signed Declaration of Independence. It is on display in the National Archives in Washington D.C. In case you were wondering.

What was the average age of signers, you ask? It was 44.

How long did it take to travel from Massachusetts to the Continental Congress? It depended on how fast you rode, of course! And how many stops you made along the way! No, seriously. It took John and Samuel Adams 19 days the first time they went. But the trip from Boston to Philadelphia could be made in 10 to 14 days back then, in 1776.

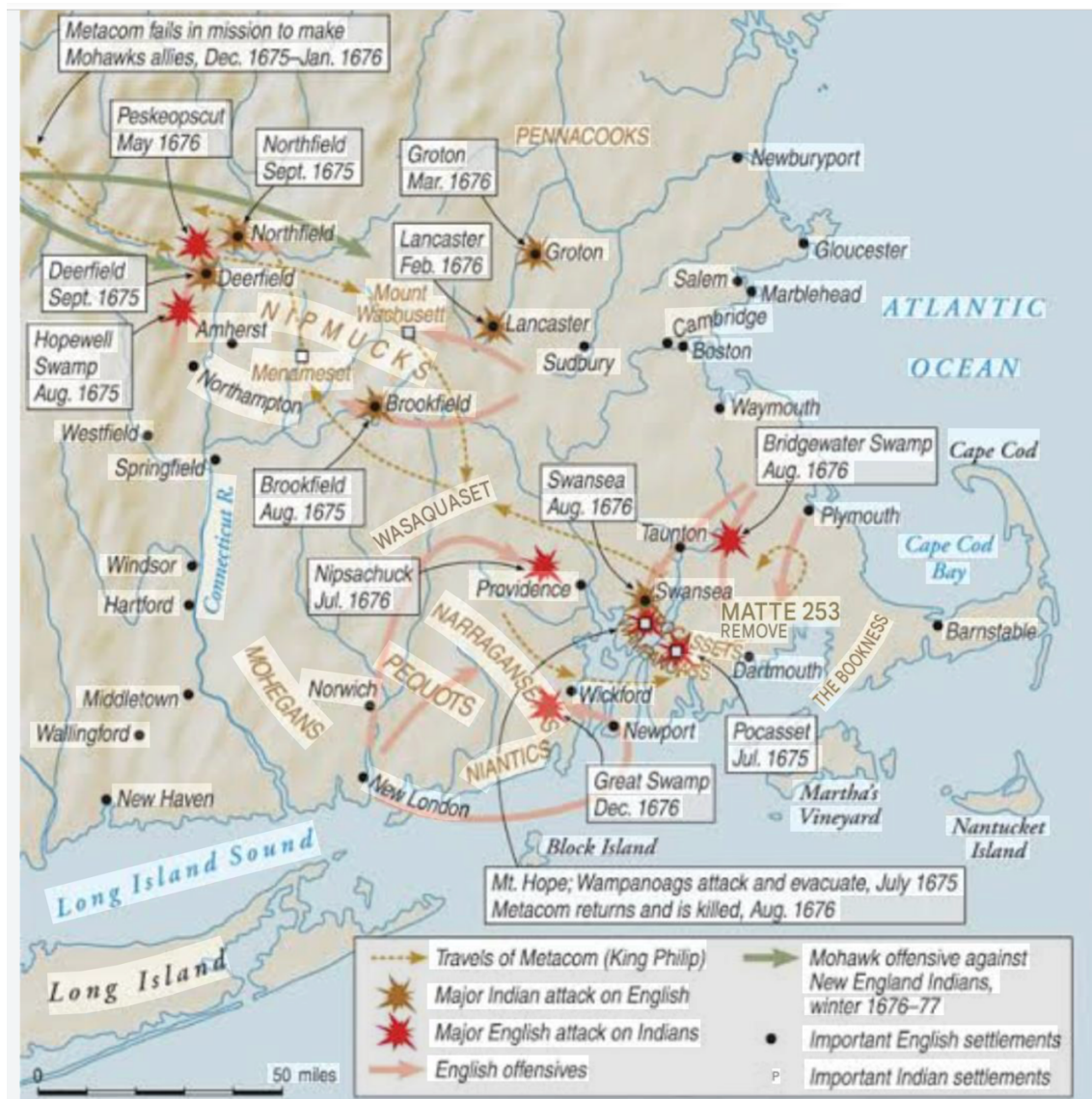
So, that same year, on September 22, 1776, Nathan Hale, famous for the last words he allegedly spoke, “**I only regret, that I have but one life to lose for my country**”, is hanged for being a spy for George Washington one day after being apprehended in a tavern in Queens, NY by the Queen's Rangers. He was 21. The War was in its second year.

Nathan Hale was from Connecticut, and he had no offspring, but he had **10** siblings! His family is related to the Hales of Massachusetts, according to online sources, so it is entirely possible that the was indirectly related to the Hales of Stow. (And even to some of us still living here today!)

Because that's what we're here for, let's go back to Stow a century before that! 100 years before the signing of the Declaration of Independence, to 1676, 350 years ago, just as we have in previous newsletters, because notable things happened...

On August 12, 1676, the Wampanoag Metacomet (King Philip) was killed in Plymouth by a "praying Indian" named John Alderman, essentially bringing the King Philip War to an end. It was just six months after Matthew Boone and his son were killed near where the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy is now on State Rd, and a year and 10 days after another of Stow's earliest settlers, Sydrack Hapgood, was killed near Brookfield on August 2, 1675, just two months into the war. (See the Brookfield battle on the map below.)

You never heard of Sydrack Hapgood? Well, he had taken up land on the Assabet River about a mile and a half from the "old Common", and was one of a dozen men who made the first move toward the organization of a town, on October 12, 1669. (If this makes you try to remember when Boone settled here, we'll give you a clue: it was 1660.) But tensions were already rising at that time between some of the Natives and some of the Colonists, so *fear* prevented Pompositticut Plantation from formally being settled until after the conclusion of King Philip's War. Here's a cool map from the *Battlefield History Network*:



Missing from the map on the previous page is the attack on Sudbury, on April 21st, 1676.

Even after King Philip was killed in 1676, that fear was still pervasive, keeping farmers and others from settling in this area for several more years, until about 1680 or 1681. Although it is common for folks to call this area Pompositticut Plantation, it did not really become a *plantation* until it was settled, of course. Seventeenth-century colonists used the term "plantation" to describe the physical act of *planting* a community. It actually described the planting of people, not crops! (Just another tidbit for your next trivia night. Stick with us, we can make you look smarter than the next guy.)

Back to more modern times. We know that not all of you are on Facebook. So, let's share a couple of stories and photos that we have posted on Facebook recently.

We shared photos of Stow's first dedicated post office under construction in January 1962. The Post Office occupied the building for 34 years, until 1996. This building at 22 Gleasondale Road is now the home of the H.H. Warren Insurance Agency.

Prior to 1962, Stow's Post Offices were located in The Store on Great Road in Stow Center, and in the Gleasondale Store on Gleasondale Road (aka Main Street) adjacent to the Assabet River.

Notice that there is no zip code shown on the front of the 1962 Post Office. That's because zip codes didn't start to be used until 1963!



Ruth Paterson photos.

We also shared a story about the history of traffic signals in Stow, which is too lengthy to include here. It included the photo on the next page, taken by Mal Fletcher in the 1940's, that appears to have been taken from the roof of Central Garage which sat at the opposite corner of that intersection. The other photo is one of the same location today, with traffic signals, pavement markings, and modern signs.



That was the **past**. Now we have some programs and events coming up in the **near future** for you. And they're all FREE! **Join us if you can!**

- **Friday September 25th**, 1:00-2:00 pm, **Stow History Talk**, at the Pompositticut Community Center Room 127. Join our Co-Presidents in a freewheeling conversation about Stow history.
- **Sunday September 27th** at 2:00pm, **Town Center History Walk**, starting on Common Rd at the Library terrace. Co-sponsored with the Randall Library as part of Good Neighbor Week.
- **Wednesday, October 14th** at 6:00 pm, at Randall Library Community Room. Hear the award-winning entrepreneur, and author of the book ***The Accidental Network***, talk about Stow's pivotal role in bringing broadband networks to the nation, beginning in the late 1980's with the (then-named) cable company Nashoba Valley Cable. Co-sponsored by Randall Library and the Stow Historical Society.
- **Thurs, October 22nd**, 6:00-8:00pm– Visit our booth at **Stowcase!**
- **Sunday October 25th**, 3:00-5:00pm – the **Annual Meeting** of the Stow Historical Society, which is open to all, not just members. Some of the presentations will include: The story of the Trolley - the Concord and Hudson Street Railway; Some History of the Gleasondale and Stow Fire Departments; a replay of the re-enactment of the Stow Town Meeting of July 1st 1776 at which Stow voted for independence; a presentation by the new Director of Freedom's Way National Heritage Area; Highlights of the past year's activities, acquisitions, the annual Election of Officers, and more!

Space Exploration

50 years ago, 1976, NASA publicly unveiled its first space shuttle, The Enterprise, on September 17th, during a ceremony in Palmdale, California, the desert city known as the "Aerospace Capital of America".

And you thought we were going to talk about our need for space, didn't you? Well, you're right. As of this writing, we're still exploring. Got a house you want to donate to us?

JOIN US!

Please consider becoming a member of the Stow Historical Society, or renewing your membership. The General membership fee is \$25 per year.

And, of course we accept donations that help us support our mission.

1. Join or donate via PayPal- Link: <https://stowhistoricalsociety.org/donate/>

2. Join via mail- To become a member by mail, print and fill out the form on our website and send it with your payment to: Stow Historical Society, PO Box 40, Stow, MA 01775

Thank you for reading our Newsletter!

Your 2026 Executive Board:

Bruce Fletcher and Dorcas Sefton - Co-Presidents

Lora Moore - Vice President

Kathy Sferra - Secretary

Rob Gardner - Treasurer

Kelly Lawlor - At Large

Liz Moseley - At Large

Tom Zavorski - At Large



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Today's News is Tomorrow's History!
