

Boylston's Historical Calendar

February

By Inga Milbauer

This Friday's Fascinating Finds article will highlight some notable events in Boylston's history which took place during the month of February.

FEBRUARY 4TH FIRE AT THE THIRD MEETING HOUSE- 1924



On the afternoon of this day in 1924, the Third Meeting House was destroyed by fire. The front-page headline of a newspaper article from the 4th of February read: "Boylston Church is Destroyed by Fire – Historic Edifice Built in 1835 and Entire Content Lost – Damage 25,000-40,000 – Worcester and Clinton Send Aid – Rebuilding Planned."¹ Work to rebuild the church began on 19 April 1924. The Fourth Meeting House (now First Congregational Church) was completed in 1927, with a dedication service held in November. For more information see: *FFF12012023 Third Meeting House.pdf*

**Third Meeting House
Engulfed in Smoke**
BHSM Photograph Collection

FEBRUARY 5TH SNOWSTORM SHUTS DOWN TRANSPORTATION & MAIL DELIVERY-1920

A fierce snowstorm which began on February 4th shuts down all transportation, including the steam train and electric trolley. According to town historian George L. Wright, the last trolley on the Clinton-Worcester line ran through Boylston on the morning of Thursday February 5th. Service between Worcester and Boylston was restored on Thursday March 18th, and on Friday March 26th service on the section between Boylston and Clinton was finally restored. No mail was received or carried from Boylston for six days. Mail from Boylston to Worcester was only carried once a day by private conveyance until the trolley service was resumed.

FEBRUARY 6TH LETTER TO THE STATE LEGISLATURE REGARDING THE EMBARGO-1809

On December 19, 1807 the United States Congress passed the Embargo Act of 1807, closing all United States ports to export shipping, and restricting imports from Great Britain. The act resulted in hardship on farmers, and especially the mercantile and maritime interests of New England and New York. Like other communities, Boylston was affected by the economic hardships. At a town meeting on August 29, 1808 a petition was addressed to the President of the United States to suspend the existing Embargo laws. "On February 6, 1809, the town drafted an even more strongly worded letter to the State Legislature demanding that the body use its influence with Congress to repeal the Embargoes."²

FEBRUARY 7TH OFFICERS OF THE SECOND PRECINCT OF SHREWSBURY HOLD SECOND MEETING [BOYLSTON GOVERNMENTAL ROOTS ARE ESTABLISHED]³-1743

The first meeting of the Second Precinct of Shrewsbury had been held on January 19, 1743 during which the Precinct officers were chosen: John Keyes, Sr., Esq. (moderator), Ensign John Bush (clerk), and the committee John Bush, Capt. Joseph Bigelow, Deacon Cyprian Keyes, Joshua Houghton, Abner Sawyer.

During the second meeting on February 7, 1743, "26 pounds, 8 shillings old tenor were granted to pay for preaching for eight days past which comprised each Sabbath since they had been incorporated as a precinct"⁴ (old tenor refers to paper money issued by the Massachusetts Bay Colony. In 1751 the colonial assembly ordered to remove this currency from circulation). In addition, "fifty pounds old tenor were granted for preaching in the future, and David Hastings, Abner Sawyer and Capt. Joseph Bigelow were chosen as a committee to provide a minister."⁵

Preparations to build a meeting house began, and it was voted "that the centre of the North Precinct of Shrewsbury, that is south of the Quinnepoxit River or the most convenient spot to the centre, except it be westerly, be the spot to set the Meeting House upon."⁶

FEBRUARY 7TH BLIZZARD OF 1978

The Blizzard of 1978, a two-day nor'easter, started on Monday February 6th into the evening of February 7th. Our next Friday's Fascinating Finds will cover this weather event, called by many at the time the worst snowstorm of the century.

¹ Mary French Scrapbook collection, Newspaper article Boylston Church is Destroyed by Fire – Historic Edifice Built in 1835 and Entire Content Lost – Damage 25,000-40,000 – Worcester and Clinton Send Aid – Rebuilding Planned, Newspaper unknown, February 4, 1924

² Filgate, Bruce, *Boylston Historical Series*, 2012, Boylston Historical Society, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts

³ In March 1786, the Second Precinct of Shrewsbury was Incorporated as the Town of Boylston, Massachusetts.

⁴ Filgate, Bruce, *Boylston Historical Series*, 2012, Boylston Historical Society, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts

⁵ Ibid, p.101

⁶ Ibid, p.101

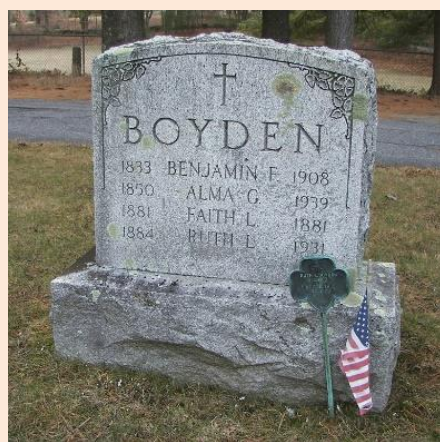
FEBRUARY 8TH BOYLSTON FORMS LOCAL CHAUTAQUA CLUB-1893

The national Chautauqua movement began in 1878 in New York state and spread around the country during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Its goal was to provide adult education, recreation, and popular entertainment. The first President of the Boylston Club was Mr. Daniel Lynch, he was joined by seven other members including Miss Fannie Bartlett, and Lucius French.⁷

FEBRUARY 10TH FIRST GIRL SCOUT TROOP REGISTERED-1922

Ruth L. Boyden formed the first Girl Scout Troop in Boylston. The troop called itself “The Pine Cone Troop.” Mrs. Maude Keck became the leader in 1930, and during the same year Girl Scout Troop #2 was formed in Morningdale. In 1933 a meeting house, named “Pine Cone Lodge”, was built on Keck property off Temple Street.

For additional information on Boylston Girl Scouts see *Early History of Girl Scouting*



**Girl Scout Marker
Ruth Boyden Gravestone
Founder of Pine Cone Troop
Photograph by Bruce Filgate**

FEBRUARY 12TH STEEPLE OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH FALLS DOWN-1903

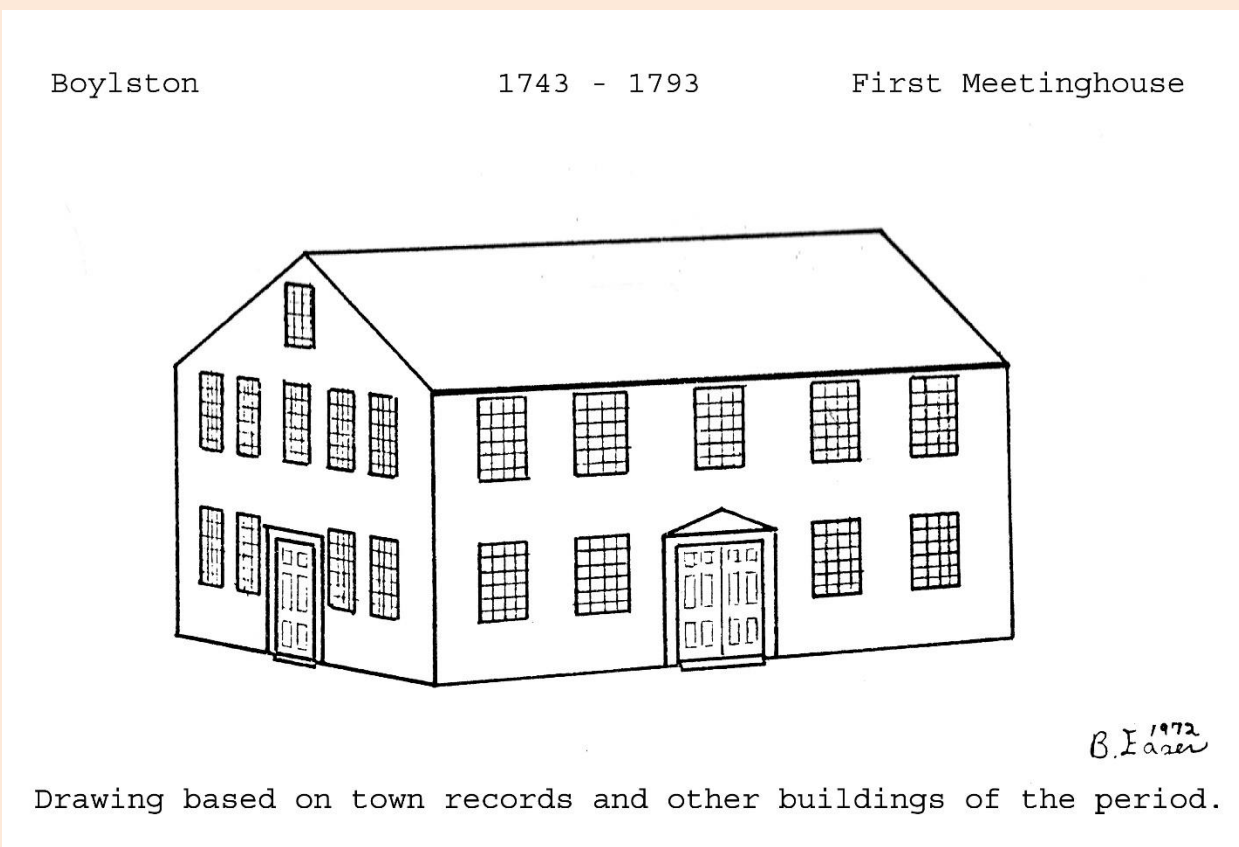


Just after 12 o'clock in the afternoon the steeple of the church was blown off the building in a storm. According to the “Special to The Telegram” of that day “People had been watching the spire for an hour as it swayed and bent before the gale, among these spectators being the ex-janitor H. Vickery, who for 20 years has rung the bell.”⁸ A new steeple with the town clock was erected in 1906.

**Third Meeting House with Steeple
BHSM Photograph Collection**

FEBRUARY 18TH SECOND PRECINCT OF SHREWSBURY VOTES TO BUILD A MEETING HOUSE-1743

Vote takes place to build a meeting house “45 feet long, 35 feet wide and 20 feet between the joints and that the meeting house should be up and covered with shingles and rough boarded around the sides by the first of the following June.”⁹



Drawing based on town records and other buildings of the period.

**First Meeting House Drawing
by b. Easer -1972
BHSM Collection**

FEBRUARY 18TH MAJOR EZRA BEAMAN RECEIVES LETTER FROM THE COMMITTEE OF DONATIONS-1775

After the events of the Boston Tea Party on 17 December 17, 1773, the British parliament passed a series of acts to quell the “commotions and insurrections”.¹⁰ On June 1, 1774 a blockade of the port of Boston went into effect. The colonies rallied to support the city of Boston, including the people of the Second Precinct of Shrewsbury. Major Ezra Beaman represented the North Precinct in this endeavor. He received a letter of acknowledgment on February 18, 1775 from John Avery of the Committee of Donations at Boston “...for 53 bushels of rye and corn sent by the North Precinct of Shrewsbury for the distressed inhabitants of this poor devoted town who are groaning under the rod of despotism...”¹¹

⁷ Ibid, p. 495-496

⁸ Mary French Scrapbook collection, Newspaper article *Steeple is Overthrown*, Telegram, February 12, 1903

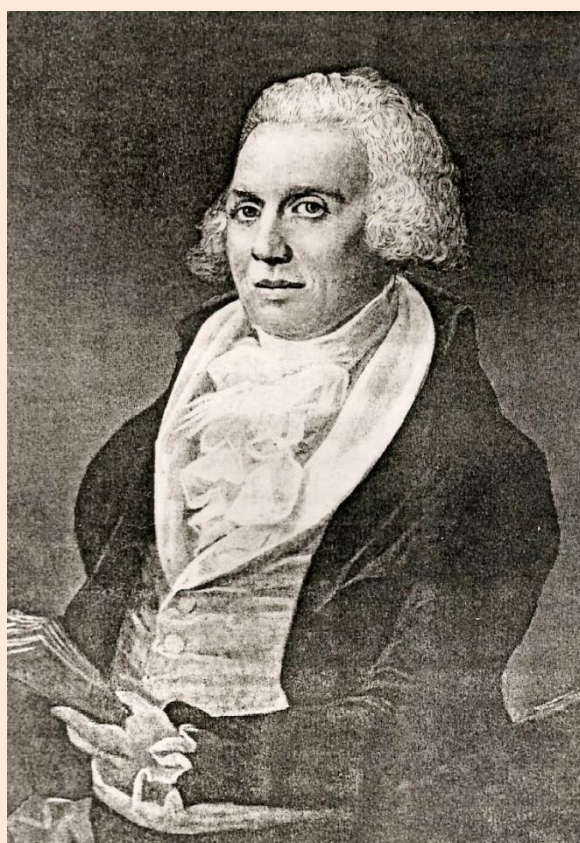
⁹ Filgate, Bruce, *Boylston Historical Series*, 2012, Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc., Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, p.101

¹⁰ <https://www.masshist.org/revolution/coercive.php>

¹¹ Boylston Historical Series, p.118

FEBRUARY 23TH SECOND PRECINCT OF SHREWSBURY VOTES ON MINISTER-1743

The appointed committee to find a minister had been installed on February 7th. This search was usually done by listening to various ministers deliver their sermons, and to judge them on their oratory and orthodoxy. At the February 23rd meeting, a vote was “tried whether they would hear any more ministers preach to them before they made choice and it was passed in the negative.”¹² It was then decided to invite Mr. Ebenezer Morse to negotiate the terms of his employment. This precinct would in March 1786 become incorporated as the Town of Boylston.



Reverend Ebenezer Morse
First Minister of the North Parish of Shrewsbury
BHSM Photograph Collection

FEBRUARY 27TH CAPT. ROBERT ANDREWS COMPANY OF MILITIA & MINUTE MEN FORMED-1973

The Minutemen from the Second Precinct of Shrewsbury who assembled, and marched on April 19, 1775 to Cambridge, were commanded by Capt. Robert Andrews. On November 6, 1972 the Board of Selectmen re-activated the Capt. Robert Andrews Company of Militia & Minute of Boylston. On February 27, 1973 the first meeting of this group to study and re-enact the years of the Revolutionary War took place at St. Mary of the Hills Church. Five officers were elected for 3 years. The group also marched in parades, and initiated the yearly celebration of Patriot’s Day in town from 1974 until 1978. Some of the members of the Captain Robert Andrews Reenactment Company were: Capt. Raymond Duffy, Kenneth Banse, Marc Beaupre, Joshua Bradford, John Burkhardt, Daniel Duffy, drummer Ray Duffy Jr., Marc Dupuis, William Dupuis, David Fehser, John Fellows, Brent Fisher, Warren Fisher, Norman French, Davis Hobbs, Garrett Hollands, Paul Kalinowski, Edward King, Donald MacKenzie, Joseph Nedder, William Noonan, Roald Olsen, Knollin Spencer, Roger Wentzell, Edward Wirt, Ronald Zapatka, and Reverend Paul Tougas, chaplain.



Capt. Robert Andrews Company of Militia & Minute - Memorial Day 1973
BHSM Photograph Collection



Capt. Robert Andrews Company of Militia & Minute Men-1775 Detail Memorial Mug
BHSM Collection

Acknowledgements:

Filgate, Bruce, *Boylston Historical Series*, 2012, Vol. IV History of Boylston 1742-1786, Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc., Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts
Filgate, Bruce, *Boylston Historical Series*, 2012, Vol. XII History of Boylston 1786-1886, Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc., Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts
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<https://www.britannica.com/topic/chautauqua-movement>
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Embargo-Act>
<https://www.monticello.org/research-education/thomas-jefferson-encyclopedia/embargo-1807/>
Mary French Scrapbook Collection, Archives of the Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc.
The Minute Men 1775-1975 by Lt. Norman Castle, chairman of Historic Committee Council of Minute Men, 1977, Yankee Colour Corporation, Southborough, MA
Photograph Collection, Archives of the Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc.
Editor, Nancy A. Filgate, Director, Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc., Boylston, Massachusetts

¹² Boylston Historical Series, p.102