

# Boylston's Historical Calendar

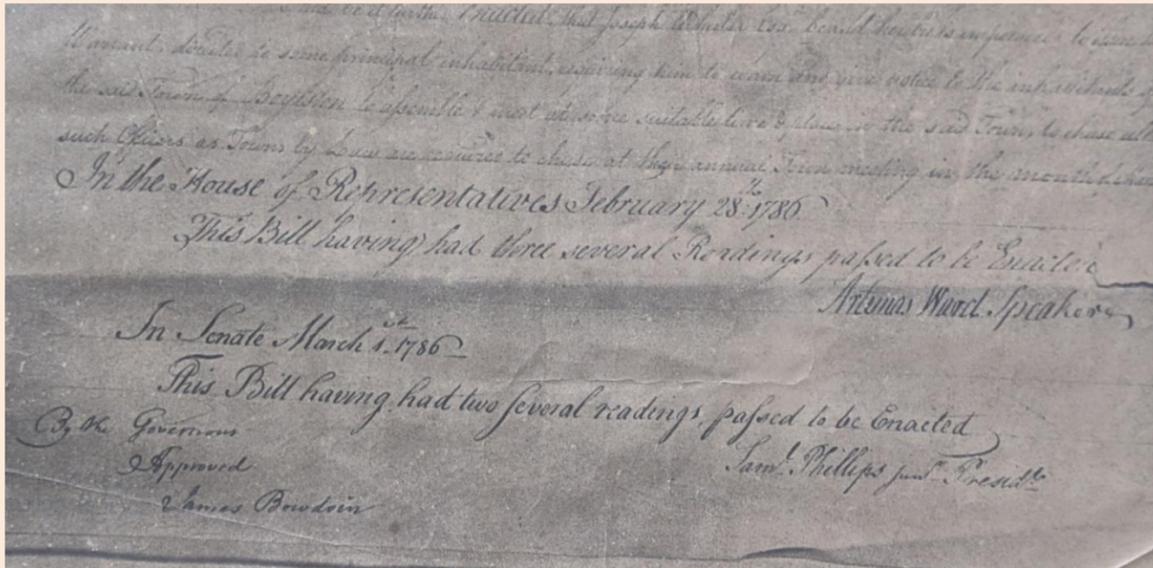
## March 1743-1799

By Inga Milbauer

This week's Friday's Fascinating Find highlights some notable events in Boylston's history which took place during the month of March in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### MARCH 1<sup>ST</sup> INCORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF BOYLSTON- 1786

The northern part of the town of Shrewsbury was made a separate parish on 17 December 1742 by the act of the Legislature. It would be called the North Parish or Second Precinct of Shrewsbury. After long and repeated trials, the North Parish obtained incorporating acts on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 1786 and became the town of Boylston.<sup>1</sup> "After three several readings in the House of Representatives" the act of incorporation was passed on 28 February 1786.<sup>2</sup> In the Senate it passed on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1786: "This Bill having had two several readings passed to be enacted."<sup>3</sup> The town was named in honor of the wealthy and generous Boylston family from Boston, Massachusetts.



DETAIL OF LEGISLATIVE ACT OF INCORPORATION  
BHSM Collection

### MARCH 9<sup>TH</sup> PROPOSAL FOR A POWDER HOUSE IN THE SECOND PRECINCT-1772

The tensions between the Colonists and the British in Massachusetts continued to grow after the Stamp Act of 1765, the Townshend Acts of 1767, and the occupation of Boston in 1768. This led to what became known as the Boston Massacre: "On March 5, 1770, seven British soldiers fired into a crowd of volatile Bostonians, killing five, wounding another six, and angering an entire colony."<sup>4</sup> The Second Precinct had a common stock of ammunition with Shrewsbury. At the Town Meeting on March 9, 1772 a proposal was made to allow the Second Precinct to build its own powder house. This would enable the inhabitants to store the musket balls, flints, and



POWDER HOUSE ON COMMON  
Photograph taken -1886  
BHSM Photograph Collections



powder to a centralized location in the precinct. Money was collected and a petition was presented to the Shrewsbury Selectmen to transfer the ammunition. On November 5, 1772 the Selectmen issued an order for the transfer, which was completed on November 30<sup>th</sup> when David Taylor was given the key to the new Powder House. "A memorial marker was placed by the Boylston Historical Commission on the South Common in April 1972 commemorating the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the building of the Powder House."<sup>5</sup>

POWDER HOUSE & MEMORIAL MARKER  
October 6, 2022  
Photograph by Inga Milbauer

<sup>1</sup> *History of the Town of Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, From its Settlement in 1717 to 1829* by Andrew H. Ward, 1847, p.205

<sup>2</sup> Legislative Act of Incorporation, BHSM collection

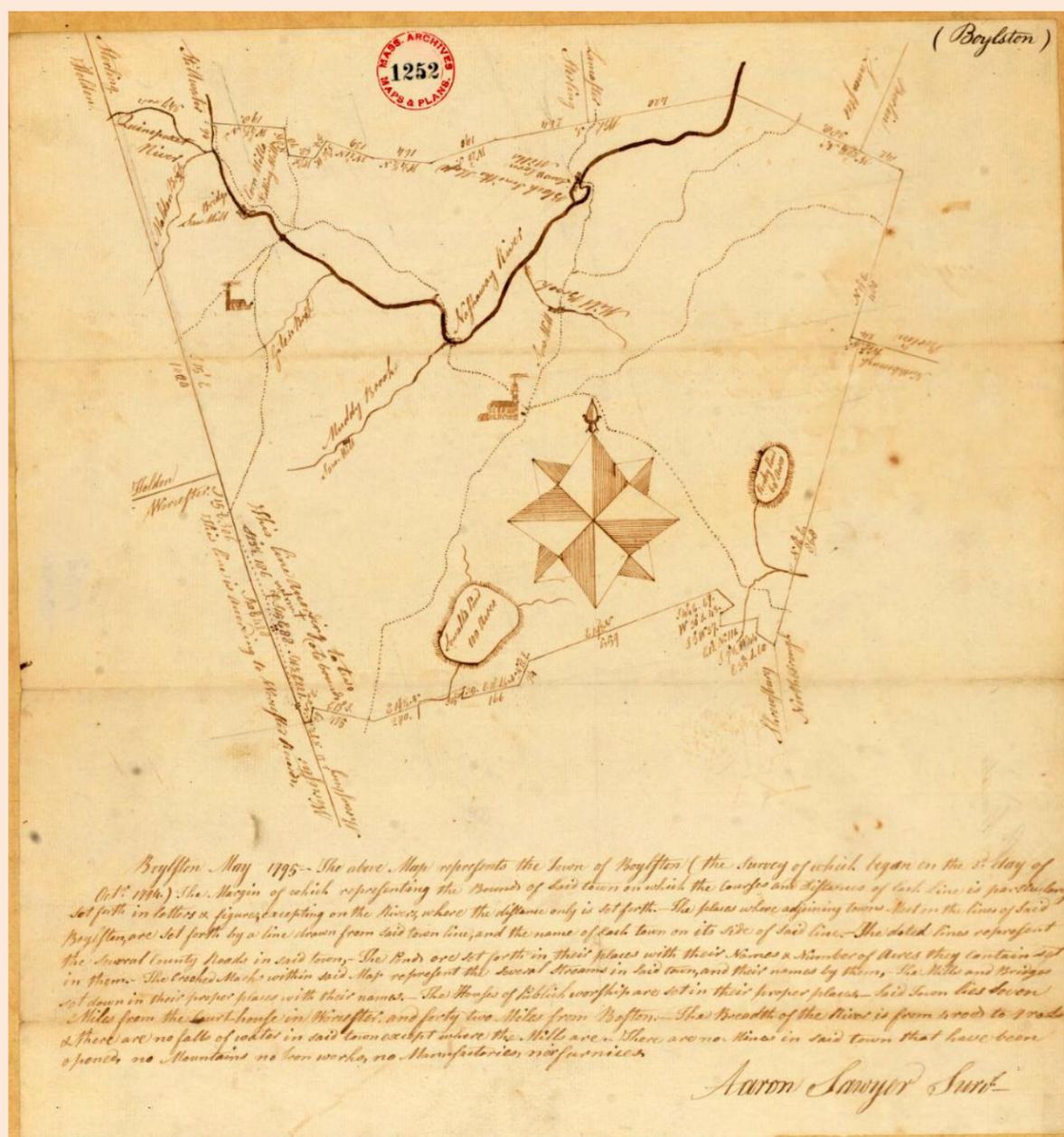
<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/boston-massacre.htm>

<sup>5</sup> *Boylston Historical Series* by Bruce Filgate, 2012, p.117

**MARCH 13<sup>TH</sup> FIRST TOWN OFFICERS ARE CHOSEN-1786**

Aaron Sawyer Jr. and some others who resided within the limits of Lancaster, Massachusetts, were part of the group who petitioned the town of Lancaster that they may be set off from that town and annexed to Shrewsbury. “The request was granted on June 1780 and confirmed by the General Court of Massachusetts.”<sup>6</sup> After the Second Precinct of Shrewsbury was incorporated as the Town of Boylston, Aaron Sawyer Jr. became the first Town Clerk on March 13<sup>th</sup> 1786. In later years he served the town as Selectman, Assessor and Land Surveyor. At this meeting Capt. Joseph Bigelow was chosen as Town Treasurer, and Jotham Bush as Tax Collector.



**PLAN OF BOYLSTON – MAY 1795**  
**Made by Aaron Sawyer, Jr.**  
 Massachusetts Town Plans  
 Digital Commonwealth  
 Blueline of Original Sepia in BHSM Collections

**MARCH 14<sup>TH</sup> LETTER WRITTEN BY WARD NICHOLAS BOYLSTON-1799**

According to William Dupuis, Ward Nicholas Boylston, the nephew of Nicholas Boylston whose fortune he had inherited, wrote a letter to the town of Boylston on this day. In it, Ward Nicholas Boylston acknowledged the honor he felt for the naming of the town after his family. He donated 40 pounds to Boylston, which was to be held in a trust until sufficient funds had been earned to erect a Town Hall. The letter also stated that he had two volumes of the Holy Bible printed in London. “The Bibles were to be sent to a Mr. Green, a Boston merchant, along with two silver, gold-lined Communion Cups. These gifts were to be delivered to the two churches in Boylston which included the Meeting House now in West Boylston.”<sup>7</sup>



**WARD NICHOLAS BOYLSTON**  
 1825 by Gilbert Stuart  
 Boylston Historical Series

**MARCH 23<sup>RD</sup> MR. MORSE ACCEPTS INVITATION TO BECOME MINISTER-1743**

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”<sup>8</sup> (old tenor refers to paper money issued by the Massachusetts Bay

<sup>6</sup> *Early Families of Boylston, Massachusetts* by Nancy Ann Filgate et al., 2022, p. 106

<sup>7</sup> *Boylston Historical Series* by Bruce Filgate, 2012, p.360

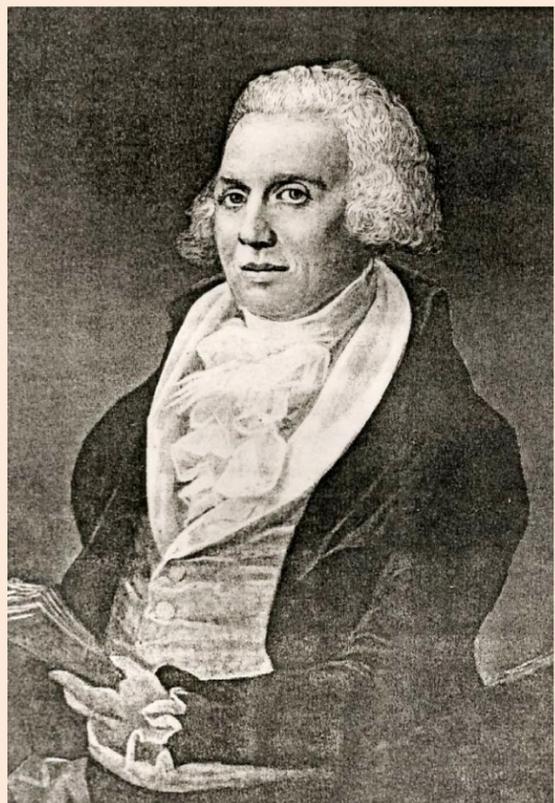
<sup>8</sup> *Boylston Historical Series* by Bruce Filgate, 2012, p.101

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.”<sup>9</sup>

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 23<sup>rd</sup> 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.”<sup>10</sup> It was then decided to invite Mr. Ebenezer Morse to negotiate the terms of his employment. After negotiations Mr. Morse accepted the invitation to become the Minister of the North Parish of Shrewsbury and was ordained on October 26, 1743.

Reverend Morse was born on March 2, 1717, the son of Joshua Morse and Mary Paine Morse in Medford, Norfolk County, Massachusetts.<sup>11</sup> He was a 1737 graduate of Harvard University, and he was a teacher, doctor and lawyer. He married Persis Bush, daughter of Ensign John Bush and Martha Temple Bush, in 1745. He purchased a large tract of land from his father-in-law and built a house on Main Street, next to the Hastings Tavern.<sup>12</sup> He guided the congregation which grew steadily from 31 members in 1743 to an impressive 228 members by 1774.

Over the years a political unrest grew in the colonies. Politically, Reverend Morse was a Tory who wished to remain loyal to the British Crown, the mother country of Colonial New England. “*The Minister, never a man to hide his opinions, was outspoken in his opposition to those [he considered to be] ‘rebels’, and even went so far as to lead his congregation in prayers for ‘the King, Queen, and Lords of the realm’.*”<sup>13</sup> After the Minutemen from the Second Precinct of Shrewsbury marched to Cambridge on April 19, 1775 the ‘issue’ of Reverend Morse’s political viewpoint being preached from the pulpit became more urgent. At a Town Meeting on May 23, 1775, it was decided to take actions against two Tories: Mr. William Crawford and Reverend Morse. “Mr. Morse and Mr. Crawford were forbidden to keep arms in their possession and, the minister was not allowed to go outside his parish, and Mr. Crawford was confined to his farm.”<sup>14</sup> “The debate raged for months, and because of his many friends, and his long record of faithful service, it required 18 church and precinct meetings, a Shrewsbury Town Meeting, and a three day Minister Council before he was removed from office.”<sup>15</sup> He was finally dismissed on November



**REVEREND EBENEZER MORSE**  
**FIRST MINISTER OF THE NORTH PARISH OF**  
**SHREWSBURY**  
*BHSM Photograph Collection*

10, 1775. Reverend Morse was unwilling to accept his dismissal, and continued to hold church services in his own home. Reverend Morse died on January 3, 1802; his grave is an above-ground sarcophagus in the Old Burial Ground in Boylston, Massachusetts.

### **MARCH 26<sup>TH</sup> GATHERING OF THE COUNCIL OF ORDINATION -1777**

On this day the “Council Ordination gathered in the Meeting House, only to be met by Rev. Morse, who argued all that day against the ‘illegal’ Ordination.”<sup>16</sup> His action was unsuccessful and the next day the ordination did take place.

### **MARCH 27<sup>TH</sup> REV. ELEAZER FAIRBANKS ORDAINED AS MINISTER-1777**

Reverend Eleazer Fairbanks succeeded Reverend Morse and was ordained as pastor of the church and congregation in Boylston on March 27, 1777. Eleazer Fairbanks was originally from Preston, Connecticut, and a graduate of Brown University in 1775. In 1780, he constructed his home at what is now 2 School Street.<sup>17</sup> He married Sarah Bigelow, daughter of Deacon Amariah Bigelow and Sarah Eveleth on 3 October 1781 in Shrewsbury.<sup>18</sup> At his request, he was dismissed on April 23, 1793 and became pastor of the church and congregation of Wilmington, Vermont on September 11, 1793.<sup>19</sup>



**HOME OF REVEREND ELEAZER FAIRBANK**  
**SECOND MINISTER OF THE NORTH PARISH OF SHREWSBURY**  
*BHSM Photograph Collection*

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p.102

<sup>10</sup> *Boylston Historical Series* by Bruce Filgate, 2012, p.102

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/8029748/ebenezer-morse>

<sup>12</sup> *Boylston Historical Series* by Bruce Filgate, 2012, p.104

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 119

<sup>14</sup> A Brief History of the First Congregational Church, Boylston Mass by Rev. Israel Ainsworth, 1887, p. 7

<sup>15</sup> *Boylston Historical Series* by Bruce Filgate, 2012, p.119

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 335

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 335

<sup>18</sup> Marriage Records, Shrewsbury, Worcester County, Massachusetts

<sup>19</sup> *Worcester County: America’s First Frontier* by Peter Whitney 1793, Introduction by Blaine E. Taylor, 1983, p.310

## **MARCH 28<sup>TH</sup> ARTICLE ADOPTED TO SEPARATE THE TWO PARISHES-1785**

At the Town meeting of the precinct on March 28, 1785 an article was adopted in the warrant to establish a committee to send a petition to the Selectmen to establish a joint committee to

*“...propose the terms on which the two parishes in the town of Shrewsbury shall be separated and chose Lieut. Jonas Temple, Capt. Joseph Bigelow and Mister Ephraim Beam for the committee.”<sup>20</sup>*

The Town of Shrewsbury passed this warrant in January 1786 without opposition which made the incorporation of the Town of Boylston on March 1, 1786 possible.

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### Acknowledgements:

*A Brief History of the First Congregational Church, Boylston Mass.* by Rev. Israel Ainsworth  
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*Early Families of Boylston, Massachusetts* by Nancy Ann Filgate, Nadine Ekstrom, Victoria Triolo, Patricia Kelleher Bartram, Nathan Rollins, 2022, Boylston Historical Collaborative, Boylston, Massachusetts.

*History of the Town of Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, From its Settlement in 1717 to 1829, with other matter relating thereto not before published, including an extensive Family Register* by Andrew H. Ward, Member of the New England Historic and Genealogical Society, 1847, Samuel G. Drake, Boston

*Worcester County: America's First Frontier* by Peter Whitney 1793, Introduction by Blaine E. Taylor, 1983, Isaiah Thomas Books & Prints, Worcester

[https://www.boylstonhistory.org/category/Historical\\_Phenomena/c89](https://www.boylstonhistory.org/category/Historical_Phenomena/c89)

<https://guides.bpl.org/c.php?g=800717&p=10389852>

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/8029759/aaron-sawyer>

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/boston-massacre.htm>

Photograph Collection, Archives of the Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc.

Editor, Nancy A. Filgate, Director, Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc., Boylston, Massachusetts

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<sup>20</sup> *Boylston Historical Series* by Bruce Filgate, 2012, p. 122