

**NOW!**



## Historic Town Hall

7 Central Street

Boylston, Massachusetts

*By Nancy A. Filgate*

*Stone edifice in the Historic District of Boylston, Massachusetts. The building was built in 1830 as the first Town Hall of Boylston and now is one of the oldest town halls in Massachusetts that has continued to serve the public. Its rich history unfolds in an amazing splendor through the many organizations and civic groups it has served over the years.*

- 1786 Boylston Incorporated, First Town Meeting is held**  
*All Public and Town Meetings held in First Meeting House*
- 1799 March 14<sup>th</sup> - Donation of 40 pounds by Ward Nicholas Boylston (born Ward Hallowell) in honor of his uncle, Thomas Boylston. Funds to be held in trust until sufficient funds had been earned to erect a Town Hall**
- 1805 All Public and Town Meetings were held in Second Meeting House**
- 1826 Upon the death of Ward Nicholas Boylston, an additional \$300 was willed to the Town of Boylston. Funds were added to the original gift when it had grown to \$1000 at this time.**  
*“To the inhabitants of the town of Boylston in the County of Worcester, I give and bequeath three hundred dollars to be added to the fund placed in the hands of the Selectmen of said town about 26 years since, which together with the accumulated interest now exceeds \$1,000.00 And I direct that the Selectmen of said town for the time being be the trustees of said funds and after the same by loaning and reloading shall amount to a sufficient sum, it shall be appropriated to the erection of a substantial stone edifice, 45 feet in length and 30 feet wide of 2 stories in height, to be finished in a plain and durable style, for the purpose of holding public meetings, for a schoolhouse, and for other municipal purposes and not to be let or occupied for any other purposes whatsoever...”*
- 1829 Annual Boylston Town Meeting held to accept the provisions of the will of their benefactor and it was decided to begin the construction process the following year.**
- 1830 March Meeting – Selectmen to acquire land and obtain plans for the Town Hall**
- 1830 April 5<sup>th</sup> -Town Hall Plan provided and debated; New committee formed consisting of Capt. John Howe, Capt. Stephen Flagg and Deacon Robert Andrews**
- 1830 May 3<sup>rd</sup>- Selectmen instructed to confer with Silas Hastings, for the possibility of purchasing a piece of land to erect the new building. They adjourned for a half hour and reconvened, reporting Mr. Hastings would sell a piece of land measuring 52 feet deep and 42 feet wide for \$125. Voters rejected the offer. New committee to see a site was formed: Lt. David Hartshorn, Capt. John Howe, Deacon Jotham Bush, Capt. Jason Abbott, Squire Aaron White, Robert Hudson, Jr., and Elmer Loring were duly appointed.**
- 1830 June - Committee recommended site near the Noon House on the Common. Proposal accepted. Committee to supervise the construction was named: Mathew Davenport, Esq., Lt. David Hartshorn, David Kendall, Aaron White, Esq., Jotham Andrews, Elmer Loring, and Samuel Kendall.**
- 1830 July 5<sup>th</sup> -Town rescinded the vote to accept the site on the Common. A new committee was selected to contact Hasting about his land: Aaron White, Lt. David Hartshorn, and Capt. John Howe. Meeting adjourned for one hour and Mr. Hastings agreed to sell the land measuring 45 feet by 55 feet for \$100 provided he be allowed to retain the topsoil. Offer accepted and construction moved forward.**
- 1830 August 21<sup>st</sup> - Cornerstone laid for Boylston Town Hall (contractors were Colonel Peter Kendall of Sterling, Silas Bailey of Worcester, Lt. Daniel Hartshorn and Thomas Brewer of Boylston.**
- 1831 Town Hall (opened in spring)**
- 1831 Public, Social, and Town meetings**
- 1831 Unitarian Society religious services under the spiritual direction of Rev. Ward Cotton, retired pastor of the Congregational Church  
Held public dances and dinners**
- 1840 Town voted to purchase a bell for the Town Hall. 1,000-pound bell was cast by the Holbrook Company in East Medway, brought by ox-driven cart & placed in a small belfry atop the Town Hall; called citizens to town meetings and patriotic celebrations**
- 1845 Held Methodist Religious services**
- 1852 High School classes began in lower level**



Figure 1 Class of 1852

**1880 April 5 – Annual Town Meeting voted to accept the Public Library as a gift to the Town of Boylston. The shareholders of the Social Library which had been established on 12 March 1792 had voted on 27 March 1880 to donate the Social Library to the Town of Boylston, thereby converting it to a Public Library for use of all of the town’s residents. The official transfer was made on the 21 June 1880 with the Public Library of 1110 catalogued books utilizing the Selectman’s room in the Town Hall. George L. Wright served as its first Librarian. Later a reading room was established on the first floor.**



*Figure 2 George L. Wright, Librarian*

**1881 Temperance Lectures  
Singing Classes**

**1889 Grange produced an operetta “Golden Hair and the Three Bears” and a drama “A Quiet Family,” each performance was followed by a baked bean supper.**

**1890 Bell cracked while being rung on 4<sup>th</sup> July**

**1893 Bell recast by the Blake Bell Co**

**1887 Branch Library established at Sawyer’s Mills by Lancaster Mills Company**

**1901 Boylston Dramatic Club performs its first stage production “Under Si” in Auditorium**

**1904 November 10<sup>th</sup> - Public Library moved from Town Hall to 695 Main Street.**

**1904 Dramatic Club purchased chandeliers for auditorium on second floor**

**1924 Congregational Church Services held in Town Hall after fire burned Third Meeting House**

**1938 Members of St. Mary’s Church held a card party in the Town Hall to raise funds for their chapel. Upon leaving they were met with a burning cross on the New Common.**

**1953 Schoolroom classes held in lower level**

**Housed Police Dept, Selectmen’s office & other municipal offices**

**1962 Bell removed to storage in the Town House pending repairs on the Town Hall belfry**

**1974 Municipal Offices moved to New Municipal Building**

**1975 Belfry restored & the bell returned from the Town House to its rightful place on the Town Hall.**

**1976-Present. Building is managed by the Historical Commission to serve the townspeople of Boylston, Massachusetts. It is one of the oldest Town Halls in constant use in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Over 200 years after the initial donation of Ward Nicholas Boylston, our Historic Town Hall is actively available for public use for our residents with these civic and private organizations currently making use of its function and beauty.**

- 1. The Boylston Historical Commission**
- 2. Appalachian Mountain Club. Local chapter**
- 3. The Hillside Restoration Group**
- 4. Home of the Boylston Historical Society & Museum**

