The 250th Anniversary of the Founding

Of

The Town of Southampton, Massachusetts

January 1, 2025

Prepared by William S. Bray

We are gathered today to begin the year-long celebration of the 250th anniversary of the founding of our town.

But first, let us acknowledge the indigenous peoples who were here long before it was called Southampton.

According to various experts, the town was established on Nonotuck and Woronoco land. Neighboring indigenous kin included the Nipmuc, Wampanoag, Mohegan, Pequot, Mohican, and Abenaki.

We respect these communities, past and present. We remember that we stand today on traditionally Native territory.

These Native people inhabited, traversed, and hunted this region for 10,000 years. They grew corn, beans and squash, and moved seasonally from inland areas in the summer to coastal areas in winter.

In the 1630s the Proprietors of the Massachusetts Bay Colony bought land from the Nonotuck and began settling Northampton. Colonists had come to the wider area that included today's Southampton by the 1680s. The new owners partnered with the Native Americans in a lucrative fur trade.

By 1730, formal colonial settlement was initiated on more of the lands originally purchased from the Nonotuck. In laying out the land, the plan was for each man to receive a house lot of 20 acres, 10 acres of Pine Plain and 50 acres of the best land "either on Pomeroy's little mountain, town-plot hill, or Wolf Hill, or on land adjoining said hills." Thus, each settler would hold a total of 80 acres, and a similar area was reserved for a future minister.

Thirty families drew land grants that required them to build and live in at least a one-room house within two years and till and fence 5 acres.

In 1741 the area that would become Southampton was established as the Second Precinct of Northampton under the name New Hampton. The southern boundary with Westfield was drawn in 1749 and the western boundary with Murrayfield (Norwich/Huntington) was established in1765. The northern boundary with Westhampton was set in 1778.

The plan of Southampton center was laid out in 1730 and survives largely intact, though the village grew somewhat differently than intended. Instead of County Road, by 1750 College Highway had become the main north-south route, with most of the houses and public buildings erected near its intersection with Maple and East Streets.

In 1743 a church was established on the land on which we are standing and which continues to this day.

In 1753, twelve years after becoming a Precinct, this area was incorporated as a District of Northampton, with nearly all town privileges. And, in 1773 at a town meeting, the name, “Southampton” was adopted, probably because this area was South of Northampton. Two years later, in 1775, the Town of Southampton officially separated from Northampton.

In 1743 the population of New Hampton was about 63 adults, and by 1776 it had grown to 740. The population in 1830 was 1,244.

Since its beginning, Southampton has continued to grow to a present population approaching 6,200. Please join us inside for a light lunch as we begin our celebration of the town we call home. And now, let the bell ring...250 times!

Source: Some material for this document is sourced from “ A Continuing Story 1743 – 1997” and, Historical resources of Southampton.org