

Boxford was part of the tract of land which was deeded to John Winthrop by Masconomet, Sachem of the Agawam tribe. By 1639m Reverend Ezekiel Rogers of Yorkshire, England, had arrived in Salem with a group of pilgrims to try “an experiment in Christian living” on a tract of this land for which they paid 800 pounds. They called their settlement Rowley, but the area contained what are now the towns of Rowley, Boxford, Bradford, Groveland and Georgetown.

Gradually the settlers spread out and pushed back the forests to the southwest until by 1685 about 45 families resided in Rowley Village, which is today the Town of Boxford. With the consent of the Selectmen of Rowley, the new Town of Boxford, probably named after the town in England from which some of the settlers and their minister came, was officially formed on August 12, 1685.

In 1735 West Boxford set up its own meeting house, and the General Court designated part of town as Precinct 2. At this point the town officially separated its affairs from church matters.

The Holyoke-French House was built in 1760 by Samuel Holyoke for his son Elizar, then minister of the First Church. Miss Gertrude French bequeathed the house to the Boxford Historical Society in 1942.

The first post office in town was in Deacon Spofford’s tavern on Ipswich Road, near Georgetown Road. It remained there from the early 1800s until 1826. When stagecoaches came through, mail was left for Deacon Spofford to distribute at church on Sunday.

In 1701 the first school master was hired to live and hold classes in various homes. By 1791 the town was divided into six school districts, each with its own schoolhouse for an itinerant schoolmaster. Before 1795 the Selectmen acted as the School Committee, but then a School Committee of seven was chosen. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century Boxford was part of several school unions with neighboring communities. In 1959 Boxford entered into a union with Topsfield for providing elementary education, and Masconomet Regional Junior (now Middle) and (Senior) High School opened for students in grades seven through twelve from Boxford, Topsfield and Middleton. In 1994, Middleton’s elementary schools joined the Boxford Topsfield School Union, forming the Tri-Town Elementary School Union.

Although farming was the mainstay of the early settlers, some pursued other crafts as well. Carpenters, millwrights, joiners, housewrights, blacksmiths and coopers were found among Boxford’s first townspeople. One of the first industries in town was a grist mill. A match factory thrived here in the late 1800s. A cider mill was operated at Herrick Farm from before the Civil War until after the turn of the century. Thousands of gallons of cider and vinegar were shipped from Boxford to locations all over the eastern United States. The cider mill has been converted to a dwelling and may still be seen from Herrick Road. The Kelsey-Highland Nursery was well known in horticultural circles for its hybridization work during the first half of the twentieth century. In 1875 the state census listed 125 farms. Today only a handful remain.

The population of Boxford reached a peak just before the Civil War when it stood at 1,020. Then a decline began until it was down to 625 in 1930. The construction of such roads as I-95 and 495 made the town more accessible to surrounding towns and to Boston and the population increased again. Today it stands at approximately 8,000.

Despite the increase in population and the change from essentially agrarian society to a town larely populated by commuters, Boxford retains its rural character.

The Town of Boxford has, over the years, passed through a process of legislative change common to many American communities. While only a few simple laws were necessary at the time of the establishment of the town, subsequent growth of the community, together with the complexity of modern life, has created the need for new and more detailed legislation for the proper function and government of the town. The recording of local law is an aspect of municipal history, and as the community develops and changes, review and revision of old laws and consideration of new laws, in the light of current trends, must keep pace. The orderly collection of these records is an important step in this ever-continuing process. Legislation must be more than mere chronological enactments reposing in the pages of old records. It must be available and logically arranged for convenient use and must be kept up-to-date. It was with thoughts such as these in mind that the town ordered the following codification of its bylaws and regulations.