

Historical Records of the Town of Westborough: Administrative Documents, 1724-1929

Finding Aid

Last Revised: January 10, 2018

Collection Summary

- Collection number:** OD.001 (formerly 2015.01)
- Collection title:** Historical Records of the Town of Westborough: Administrative Documents, 1724-1929
- Dates:** 1724-1929
- Size:** 3 linear feet (1 banker's box + one oversize box)
- Creator/Collector:** The Town of Westborough
- Acquisitions info.:** Transferred to the Westborough Public Library from the Town Clerk's Office, which retains official custody of the collection.
- Custodial history:** This artificial collection was among a group of historical records that were transferred from the Town Clerk's Office vault to the Westborough Public Library during the renovation of Town Hall starting in 2013. Some of the documents in the collection were originally housed in a wooden box labeled, "Town Documents, 1709-1831" and were subsequently organized by librarian Dorothy Cowern in 1975 and transferred into two cardboard boxes labeled, "Town Documents – Vol. 1" and "Town Documents – Vol. 2." The other part of the collection was housed in a cardboard box labeled, "Records Microfilmed Box, 1971" and were organized by Charles H. Reed and possibly others in 1929. Financial records have been pulled out from both collections to create a separate collection, "Historical Records of the Town of Westborough: Financial Documents." American Civil War documents from "Town Documents – Vol. 1 and Vol. 2" were also pulled out to create another separate collection, "Records of the Westborough Rifle Company, 1861-1870." There is no record of ownership or stewardship of any of the documents in these collections before or after this time.
- Language(s):** English
- Repository:** The Westborough Public Library
- Processed by:** Anthony T. Vaver, 2015

Rights and Access

Access restrictions: Collection is open for research

Physical access restrictions: None, although researchers are encouraged to use any available digital images from the collection

Publication rights: All records are in the public domain.

Organizational History

The Town of Westborough was incorporated as the hundredth town in Massachusetts on November 18, 1717, with twenty-seven families living within its borders. Before the official founding of the town, several families had settled around Lake Chauncy, and this area had become known as the “west borough” of Marlborough. In 1775, the “north borough” of Westborough split off from the town to become Northborough.

The first town meeting was held on January 15, 1718, when the new town voted to build a meetinghouse, employ a minister, and elect a town clerk, three selectmen, and a constable. At this time, every town in Massachusetts was required to hire a minister, and church membership was a requisite for participation in town politics. Today, Westborough continues to operate under the New England open town meeting system and is headed by an elected five-member Board of Selectmen.

Scope and Content Note

Most of the records in this collection fall between the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century. They document the administrative activities of the Town of Westborough, including town meetings, selectman activities, indenture servant contracts, church records, military records, and the layout of the town boundary, roads, and bridges. Genealogists will find valuable information in the Vital Records, Indentures, Military, and Church Records series.

Notable documents in the collection include divorce litigation between Persis Rice (Warren) Adams and Daniel Adams, Jr., a warrant to arrest the tax collector in 1801 for neglect of duties, relations of belief and confessions by church members, proclamations for days of Thanksgiving by Massachusetts governors (including John Hancock), and reports from a fair held in 1857 showcasing agricultural, industrial, and artistic activity in the town.

Since the original digitization of the collection by the Digital Commonwealth (<https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/collections/commonwealth:z316rj90c>), the Westborough Public Library has digitized some of the years from *Town Meeting Records*, Vol. I held at the Town Clerk’s Office. These files are only available in the Westborough Digital Repository (<http://repository.westborougharchive.org/>).

Collection Inventory

Series 1: Town Meetings

Box 1: Folder

DR = Digital Repository

- 1.01 Petition to Confirm “Acts of Town,” Since Original Warrants Were Lost, 1760
- 1.02 Town Meetings, 1729
- 1.03 Town Meetings, 1730

- 1.04 Town Meetings, 1754
- 1.05 Town Meetings, 1756
- 1.06 Town Meetings, 1758
- 1.07 Town Meetings, 1762
- 1.08 Town Meetings, 1767
- 1.09 Town Meetings, 1772
- DR Town Meetings, 1774
(<http://repository.westborougharchive.org/items/show/509>)
- DR Town Meetings, 1775
(<http://repository.westborougharchive.org/items/show/510>)
- 1.10 Town Meetings, 1775
- DR Town Meetings, 1776
(<http://repository.westborougharchive.org/items/show/511>)
- 1.11 Town Meetings, 1776
- DR Town Meetings, 1777
(<http://repository.westborougharchive.org/items/show/512>)
- 1.12 Town Meetings, 1785
- 1.13 Town Meetings, 1791
- 1.14 Town Meetings, 1802
- 1.15 Town Meetings, 1818
- 1.16 Town Meetings, 1820
- 1.17 Town Meetings, 1822
- 1.18 Town Meetings, 1823
- 1.19 Town Meetings, 1824
- 1.20 Town Meetings, 1825
- 1.21 Town Meetings, 1826
- 1.22 Town Meetings, 1828
- 1.23 Town Meetings, 1829
- 1.24 Town Meetings, 1830
- 1.25 Town Meetings, 1831
- 1.26 Town Meetings, 1832
- 1.27 Town Meetings, 1840
- 1.28 Town Meetings, 1847
- 1.29 Resolution at Town Meeting Re: Death of Sen. Charles Sumner, 1874
- Oversize Box: Folder
 - OS.01 Town Meetings, 1782
 - OS.02 Town Meetings, 1821
 - OS.03 Town Meetings, 1827
 - OS.04 Town Meetings, 1833
 - OS.05 Town Meetings, 1834
 - OS.06 Town Meetings, 1835
 - OS.07 Town Meetings, 1836
 - OS.08 Town Meetings, 1837
 - OS.09 Town Meetings, 1838
 - OS.10 Town Meetings, 1839
 - OS.11 Town Meetings, 1841

- OS.12 Town Meetings, 1842
- OS.13 Town Meetings, 1849
- OS.14 Town Meetings, 1857
- OS.15 Town Meetings, 1858
- OS.16 Town Meetings, 1859
- OS.17 Town Meetings, 1860
- OS.18 Town Meetings, 1861

Series 2: Town Correspondence and Administration

Box 1: Folder

- 1.30 Correspondence, 1811-1825, n.d.
- 1.31 Town Officer Bonds, 1791-1830
- 1.32 Deeds and Notes, 1793-1800
- 1.33 Warned Out of Town, 1756, 1782
- 1.34 Layout of First Telephone Lines, 1880

Series 3: Committees, Agencies, and Commissions

Box 1: Folder

- 1.35 Committees on the Town Pound, 1743, 1756, 1836
- 1.36 Committee on the Delivery of Grains, 1782
- 1.37 Committees on Hay Scales, 1830-1855
- 1.38 Committees Regarding the Town Clock, 1837-1839
- 1.39 Committee to Procure a Bell and Clock for the Townhouse, 1841-1843
- 1.40 Cemetery Committee, 1854-1868
- 1.41 Committee to Erect a "Soldiers of the Civil War" Monument, 1867-1869
- 1.42 Committee to Audit Town Accounts, 1870
- 1.43 Committees on Water, 1872, 1875, 1881, 1882, 1892

Oversize Box: Folder

- OS.19 Committee on Expenses Relating to Small Pox, 1832
- OS.20 Committee Reports on Roads, 1832-1885
- OS.21 Committees on the Common, 1835-1870
- OS.22 Town House Committees, 1839
- OS.23 Town House Committees, 1840-1849
- OS.24 Town House Committees, 1851-1870
- OS.25 Cemetery Committee, 1844-1849
- OS.26 Cemetery Committee, 1850-1852
- OS.27 Sale of Liquors: Reports, 1853-1867
- OS.28 Committees for the Fair for the Exhibition of Agriculture, Mechanical, and Artistical Productions in the Town of Westborough, 1857

Series 4: Town Boundary and Land Plots

Box 1: Folder

- 1.44 Perambulations of Town Boundary, 1730-1793
- 1.45 Perambulations of Town Boundary, 1810-1822
- 1.46 Perambulations of Town Boundary, 1826-1838
- 1.47 Perambulations of Town Boundary, 1841-1856

- 1.48 Perambulations of Town Boundary, 1861-1871
- 1.49 Perambulations of Town Boundary, 1881-1890
- 1.50 Copy of the Eaton Grant (1680), 1929

Oversize Box: Folder

- OS.29 Land Petitions, Plot Plans, and Land Leases, 1762-1874

Series 5: Roads and Bridges [See also Folder OS.20: Committee Reports on Roads, 1832-1885]

Box 1: Folder

- 1.51 Layout of Roads by Selectmen, 1729-1766
- 1.52 Layout of Roads by Selectmen, 1794-1828
- 1.53 Copies of Layout of Roads by Selectmen [1729, 1756], 1929
- 1.54 Surveyor's Books, 1827, 1845
- 1.55 Accounts of Labor for Roads, 1747-1860
- 1.56 Notice of Petitions for Roads from Worcester County, 1827-1867
- 1.57 Petitions for Sidewalks, 1846, n.d.

Oversize Box: Folder

- OS.30 Copies of Town Records Re: Roads [1729-1784], n.d. (19th cent.?)
- OS.31 Survey Maps, 1845-1853
- OS.32 Damages and Agreements for Town Roads and Bridges, 1766-1784
- OS.33 Damages and Agreements for Town Roads and Bridges, 1821-1849
- OS.34 Damages and Agreements for Town Roads and Bridges, 1852-1887
- OS.35 Petitions to Repair Roads, 1838-1875, n.d.
- OS.36 Petitions for New Roads, 1756-1845
- OS.37 Petitions for New Roads, 1851-1875
- OS.38 Railroad, 1848-1851

Series 6: Vital Records

Box 1: Folder

- 1.58 Vital Records, 1724, 1730-1733
- 1.59 List of Deaths, 1799-1823
- 1.60 Notifications of New Residents, 1735-1753
- 1.61 Notifications of New Residents, 1762-1763
- 1.62 Notifications of New Residents, 1764-1769
- 1.63 Notifications of New Residents, 1770-1792

Series 7: Legal

Box 1: Folder

- 1.64 Threat of John Blake to Aaron Hardy, 1740
- 1.65 Notices to Appear in Court, 1788-1824
- 1.66 Warrant for the Arrest of the Tax Collector, 1801
- 1.67 Divorce Litigation: Persis Rice (Warren) Adams vs. Daniel Adams, Jr., 1779-1787, n.d.
- 1.68 Writs of Attachment, 1836-1843

Series 8: Indentures

Box 1: Folder

- 1.69 Indentures, 1764-1789
- 1.70 Indentures, 1793-1798
- 1.71 Indentures, 1804-1820

Oversize Box: Folder

- OS.39 Indentures, 1821-1829

Series 9: Military

Box 1: Folder

- 1.72 Lists of Persons Liable for Enrollment in the Militia, 1841, 1842
- 1.73 Certification of Military Duty, 1830
- 1.74 Return of Military Stock to the State, 1822
- 1.75 Copy of 1794 Militia List, by Charles H. Reed, n.d.
- 1.95 Liable for Military Duty (Book), 1907

Oversize Box: Folder

- OS.40 Militia Pay Rolls, 1794-1868
- OS.41 Lists of Persons Liable for Enrollment in the Militia, 1840, 1843-1846
- OS.42 Lists of Persons Liable for Enrollment in the Militia, 1856-1859

Series 10: Church Records

Box 1: Folder

- 1.76 Relations of Belief and Confessions, 1763-1785, n.d.
- 1.77 Letters of Recommendation from Other Churches, 1786-1791
- 1.78 Certifications of Church Membership: Methodist, 1798-1814
- 1.79 Certifications of Church Membership: Baptist, 1811-1824
- 1.80 Certifications of Church Membership: Universalist, 1813, 1823
- 1.81 Certifications of Church Membership: Restoration, 1820-1824
- 1.82 Certifications of Church Membership: Congregational, 1824
- 1.83 Petition for a Church Meeting, n.d.
- 1.84 Charges Brought Against Samuel Chamberlain, n.d. [Excommunicated, 8/23/1842]

Series 11: Commonwealth and Boston

Box 1: Folder

- 1.85 Appeal from Boston for Aid After the Great Fire, 1794

Oversize Box: Folder

- OS.43 Proclamations for Days of Fasting and Thanksgiving, 1784-1787
- OS.44 Warrants from the Governor to Select Representatives to Congress, 1833-1846
- OS.45 Proclamations Re: Representation in State Government, 1837, 1840

Series 12: Miscellaneous

Box 1: Folder

- 1.86 Prescription to Treat a Sore Throat, n.d.
- 1.87 Dedication of New Town Hall Program, 1929
- 1.94 By-Laws of the Town of Westborough, 1896, 1917

- 1.88 Charles H. Reed's History of Cemeteries, 1925
- Oversize Box: Folder
- OS.46 Specimen Ballot, 1892

Series 13: Previous Labels, Folders, and Indexes

Box 1: Folder

- 1.89 Index to "Records Microfilmed Box, 1971"
- 1.90 Note from "Documents, 1709-1831" Wood Box re: "Town Documents – Vol. 1 and Vol. 2"
- 1.91 Envelopes and Labels from "Records Microfilmed Box, 1971"
- 1.92 Envelopes from "Town Documents – Vol. 1"
- 1.93 Envelopes from "Town Documents – Vol. 2"