

Historical Records of the Town of Westborough: Census and Tax Lists, 1756-1879

Finding Aid

Last Revised: January 5, 2018

Collection Summary

- Collection number:** OD.003 (formerly 2014.04)
Collection title: Historical Records of the Town of Westborough: Census and Tax Lists, 1756-1879
Dates: 1756-1879
Size: 4 linear feet (5 boxes + 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. The documents in the collection were housed in a wooden box labeled, "Tax Lists, 1756-1852" and had been minimally organized by Charles H. Reed in 1928. There is no record of ownership or stewardship of the documents before or after this time.
Language(s): English
Repository: The Westborough Public Library
Processed by: Anthony T. Vaver, 2014

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 8, 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 lists in this collection are tax related and fall between the late-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries. The tax lists provide important historical and genealogical information about the make-up of town residents in lieu of official census figures, although surviving lists for some years are more complete than others. Many of the lists divide the town into north and south, with the “Great Road” (now Route 9) serving as the dividing line.

The lists not only provide basic census and genealogical data, but also reveal the relative socio-economic standing of residents. The invoice books in particular offer a detailed picture of the population, with an accounting of the number of family members, carriages, cows, pigs, etc. in each household, as well as the number of acres devoted to various crops, the number of bushels produced for each crop, and their resulting value. Some tax lists include non-residents from towns as diverse as Southborough, Northborough, Shrewsbury, Hopkinton, Upton, Grafton, Worcester, Harvard, Boston, Cambridge, and Brookline.

A document relating to this collection—a “List of Males Over 16 Years Old, 1777”—can be found in Folder 1.02 in the collection, 2014-01 *Records of Westborough’s Involvement in the American Revolution, the Massachusetts Militia, and the Continental Army, 1774-1792*. Another document that was listed in the brief inventory attached to the box that originally held this collection—“Map of Westborough ordered by Act of General Court 1830, surveyed and drawn by Nahum Fisher (Showing location of houses)” —was not found during processing.

Collection Inventory

Series 1: Census, Voter, and Resident Lists

Box 1

Folder

- 1.01 Census Ordered By the Continental Congress, 1776 [See also “List of Males Over 16 Years Old, 1777,” Folder 1.02 in 2014-01 *Records of Westborough’s Involvement in the American Revolution, the Massachusetts Militia, and the Continental Army, 1774-1792*]
- 1.02 Census of the Town, 1837
- 1.03 Miscellaneous List of Residents, n.d. (1824?) [The list was originally stored among the 1824 Highway Tax lists.]

Oversize Box

Folder

- OS.01 Voter List, 1823
- OS.02 Voter List, 1825
- OS.03 Voter List, 1827

- OS.04 Voter List, 1828
- OS.05 Voter List, 1829
- OS.06 Voter List, 1831
- OS.07 Voter List, 1840

Series 2: State, County, Town, and Minister Tax Lists

Box 1

Folder

- 1.04 State Tax Bill and Town, County, and Minister Taxes, 1799
- 1.05 State, Town, and County Taxes, 1808
- 1.06 State, County, Town, and Minister Taxes, 1809-1810
- 1.07 County and Town Taxes, 1826

Series 3: Valuation Lists

Box 1

Folder

- 1.08 Valuation, 1756
- 1.09 Valuation, 1762
- 1.10 Valuation, 1779
- 1.11 Valuation, 1793-1794
- 1.12 Valuation, n.d. (ca. 1794)
- 1.13 Valuation, 1795
- 1.14 Valuation, 1797-1798
- 1.15 Valuation, North, 1799
- 1.16 Valuation, South, 1799
- 1.17 Valuation, 1800-1805
- 1.18 Valuation, 1806-1810
- 1.19 Valuation, 1811-1812
- 1.20 Valuation, 1822
- 1.27 General Valuation, 1831
- 1.28 Assessments, 1846

Box 6

Folder

- 6.01 Valuation (Book), 1853

Oversize Box

Folder

- OS.08 Valuation, 1756
- OS.09 Valuation, 1761
- OS.10 Valuation, 1762
- OS.11 Valuation, 1782
- OS.12 Valuation, 1793
- OS.13 Valuation, 1796
- OS.14 Valuation, 1796
- OS.15 Valuation, 1796
- OS.16 Valuation, 1797
- OS.17 Valuation, 1797

OS.18 Valuation, 1797

Series 4: Highway Tax Lists

Box 1

Folder

- 1.21 Highway Tax, 1762
- 1.22 Highway Tax, 1771, 1775
- 1.23 Highway Tax, 1793
- 1.24 Highway Tax, 1795
- 1.25 Highway Tax, 1796-1800
- 1.26 Highway Tax, (1801?) [Someone wrote "1805?" on the lists, but since lists were found for 1805, and no lists were found dated 1801, my guess is that these lists are from 1801.]

Box 2

Folder

- 2.27 Highway Tax, 1802-1805
- 2.28 Highway Tax, 1806
- 2.29 Highway Tax, 1807-1809
- 2.30 Highway Tax, 1811
- 2.31 Highway Tax, 1813
- 2.32 Highway Tax, 1816
- 2.33 Highway Tax, 1824
- 2.34 Highway Tax, 1826
- 2.35 Highway Tax, 1827
- 2.36 Highway Tax, Job Newton's assignment, 1827
- 2.37 Highway Tax, 1828
- 2.38 Highway Tax, 1829
- 2.39 Highway Tax, Abijah Wood's assignment, 1829
- 2.40 Highway Tax, 1830-1831
- 2.41 Highway Tax, 1832

Box 3

Folder

- 3.42 Highway Tax, 1833-1834
- 3.43 Highway Tax, 1835-1836
- 3.44 Highway Tax, 1837
- 3.45 Highway Tax, 1838
- 3.46 Highway Tax, 1839
- 3.47 Highway Tax, 1840
- 3.48 Highway Tax, 1841-1842
- 3.49 Highway Tax, 1843-1845
- 3.50 Highway Tax, 1846

Box 4

Folder

- 4.51 Highway Tax, 1847
- 4.52 Highway Tax, 1848
- 4.53 Highway Tax, 1849

- 4.54 Highway Tax, 1851
- 4.55 Highway Tax, 1852-1853
- 4.56 Highway Tax, 1856

Oversize Box

Folder

- OS.19 Highway Tax, 1808
- OS.20 Highway Tax, 1814
- OS.21 Highway Tax, 1814
- OS.22 Highway Tax, 1817
- OS.23 Highway Tax, 1818
- OS.24 Highway Tax, 1819
- OS.25 Highway Tax, 1821
- OS.26 Highway Tax, 1821
- OS.27 Highway Tax, 1822
- OS.28 Highway Tax, 1822
- OS.29 Highway Tax, 1823
- OS.30 Highway Tax, 1824
- OS.31 Highway Tax, 1825

Series 5: School District Tax Lists

Box 4

Folder

- 4.57 School District Tax, 1792-1831
- 4.58 School District Tax, 1832-1833
- 4.59 School District Tax, 1838-1846
- 4.60 School District Tax, 1847-1849
- 4.61 School District Tax, 1850-1853
- 4.62 School District Tax, 1854-1857
- 4.63 School District Tax, 1861

Oversize Box

Folder

- OS.32 School District Tax, 1835

Series 6: Invoice Books

Box 5

Folder

- 5.64 Invoice Books, 1822-1829
- 5.65 Invoice Books, 1832-1838
- 5.66 Invoice Books, 1839-1840
- 5.67 Invoice Books, 1844-1845
- 5.68 Invoice Book, 1846? [The contents of the invoice book and the cover were separated from each other in the original box that held the collection. Since the ink damage on the cover and the contents appear to coincide, my guess is that the date of the book is 1846.]
- 5.69 Invoice Books, 1847-1848
- 5.70 Invoice Books, 1852-1854

- 5.71 Invoice Book, 1865
- 5.72 Invoice Books, n.d.
- Oversize Box
- Folder
 - OS.33 Invoice Book, 1824-1825
 - OS.34 Invoice Books, 1855

Series 7: Miscellaneous

- Box 5
- Folder
 - 5.73 Assessment List, 1879
 - 5.74 Flat Rates, 1893, [1893?]
- Box 6
- Folder
 - 6.02 Tax Book (Book), 1835-1842

Series 8: Original Collection Labels by Charles H. Reed, 1928

- Box 5
- Folder
 - 5.75 Original Collection Labels by Charles H. Reed, 1928