

Two Hundredth Anniversary Celebration: Mendon's Birthday in 1867

Silas Dudley, Dr. John Metcalf, and Atty. Nathan George had good reason to be concerned. It was just two days before the big celebration, when an unthinkable event occurred. Two years of detailed planning and hundreds of hours of committee meetings had not anticipated this. A storm had come up, and high winds blew down and significantly damaged the enormous tent that had just been set up. It was to have provided covering for one thousand two hundred invited guests, dignitaries, regional and state officials, and descendants of Mendon's founding families. The bicentennial co-chairmen had to wonder if it were a sign of things to come, but by the morning of May 15, 1867, skies had cleared, the tent had been replaced, and festivities began that marked the two hundredth anniversary of Mendon's incorporation as a town.

The events of this special day were carried out with reverence and jubilation. The celebrants gathered at a designated field on North Avenue, just north of the current location of Clough School. (There are five houses located there now.) Included were delegations and bands from Bellingham, Milford, Uxbridge, Northbridge, Upton, and Blackstone. General William Draper, grand marshal and Civil War hero, assembled marching units and led a parade to the Unitarian Church for a religious service. The church was decorated with flowers, and there was a sign that read, "Welcome Home." Ceremonies included a welcoming address by Dr. Metcalf, musical selections by the choir and band, scripture readings, prayers, an address by Rev. Carlton Staples, and an original hymn written by Rev. Adin Ballou. The service ended with a prayer of benediction. The parade reassembled and celebrants marched back to the tent on North Avenue.

Afternoon festivities took place under the tent. Activities included music by the band, a blessing, dinner, a poem about Mendon's history by Honorable Henry Chapin, several toasts and speeches, and a closing benediction of the day.

The celebration of the two hundredth anniversary of the town's incorporation paid tribute to Mendon's founding families. They were brave pioneers who carved a new settlement out of a forested land that the Nipmuc Indians called Sqinshepaug. The new settlers called it Netmocke Plantation. The nearest town was Medfield, fifteen miles away. Life in the agrarian society was a daily challenge for survival. The storm that blew down the bicentennial tent two days before the celebration was a reminder of the many storms that the founding families had to endure in the settlement of our town. What took place on May 15, 1667 was made possible through the virtues and character of our founders: courage, a tireless work ethic, a dedication to farming, a belief in Puritan theology, and a willingness to live within a democracy in its simplest form. Silas Dudley, Dr. John Metcalf, Atty. Nathan George, and the people of Mendon let it be known that on the town's two hundredth anniversary in 1867, their ancestors were remembered with reverence, honor and gratitude. It was a special day, one to be remembered.

Richard Grady Mendon Historical Society August 4, 2015

Information for this article was obtained from [Annals of Mendon](#) by Dr. John Metcalf.