

## **Frequently Asked Questions about The Parson Barnard House**

### **Who built the house?**

The Reverend Thomas Barnard, third minister of the original church, built the house about 1715 on land formerly owned by Simon Bradstreet, one of Andover's first proprietors. The Reverend Barnard's previous house, the town parsonage, burned in 1707. He purchased the land and built this home for himself, although it would be occupied by ministers for the next three generations, approximately 90 years. When he died in 1718 he will left the house to his son the Reverend John Barnard with some rights to his widow Lydia Barnard.

### **Is any of the furniture original to the house?**

One item in the house was the property of Thomas Barnard, who built the house, which he passed onto his sons. The Concordance, or Guide to the Bible, in the 1715 room on the bookstand is signed inside by son Edward Barnard as the property of Thomas. All of the other furniture is period appropriate and was purchased for the house based on the inventory of his estate. You can see the list of what he owned at his death in the Thomas Barnard room.

### **Did Native Americans live in this area before European settlers arrived?**

Yes, the Great Pond, now known as Lake Cochichewick, was a great draw for seasonal camping, hunting and fishing. They were the Pennacook people, part of the Abenaki Nation. Plague struck the aboriginal people in New England in 1616- 1619 decimating their numbers by tens of thousands. Already weakened, smallpox swept through like wildfire in 1632 – 33. We know from the General Court Records of the Mass Bay Colony of 1646 that an individual named "Roger the Indian" was living with a contingent in the Andover area, as negotiations with local Sachem Cutshamache for additional land included an acknowledgement of Roger's pre-existing fishing rights. The fate of Roger is unknown.

### **Were any artifacts found when the house was renovated by the Historical Society during the 1950s?**

No, but later on when digging a drainage trench, or French Drain, some items were found. This caused much excitement and the State intervened with a stop work order. A full archaeological survey was done at that point and further discoveries included a well and a trash pit. Some of the finds are stored in cupboard to the right of the fireplace in the room on the first floor on the side closest to Osgood Street.

### **If the Reverend or Parson Barnard was the minister, where was his church?**

The first meeting house, which served as the gathering point (for matters both religious and secular) for the first village located here was constructed across the street on Academy Road. The first burial ground was laid out beside the structure. In 1711 the town raised a new church, so the view that the Parson Barnard had from his window was a brand new building. He certainly had a short commute to work! Later the church, now in its fifth incarnation, was moved to the other end of Academy Road to the present day site, and in time the second burial ground was laid out in 1817, when the first burial became cramped.

### **What was Andover like in 1715 when the house was built?**

In 1715 Andover had been in existence as a town for approximately 75 years when this house was built, so it was a settled area populated with the third and fourth generations of the founding families of the 1640s. The town of Andover split into two parishes in 1709, North Parish and South Parish. In 1714, 121 new proprietors were noted in the town minutes, it was a growing community with a mill for lumber, grist (flour), and Henry Gray had a mill for 'grinding scythes'. There were common grazing areas and a training field (for military duty). A school was opened about where Bertucci's restaurant is today. John Barnard was one of the early instructors at the schoolhouse, later moving to Boston to teach there, before returning to Andover after his father's death to take over as Minister.

There was no "downtown" as we have in North Andover (North Parish), or Andover (Parish) today. And the roads, noted historian Abiel Abbot in 1829, were crooked, and arose at first from the simple need to get from one homestead to the next, often they "were formerly closed by gates and passed through pastures and fields." People walked to get from destination to destination, rode horses, or took a ferry. The area was not considered completely safe – in 1704 four "blockhouses" were built along the Merrimack River to protect the fields and inhabitants from Indian raids.

In 1722 the town voted to build another blockhouse, and repair three of the existing ones. Israel Howe of Ipswich was offered a grant of land by the town in 1718 to induce him to move here for "the practice of physic". He was one of the town's first professional doctors, and he chose to settle in the South Parish. Dr. Nicholas Noyes followed in 1825 and took up residence in the North Parish.

### **What was Andover like in 1750 during the era of Rev John Barnard?**

Despite the progress that had been made by the generations of early settlers to the area, there continued to be hardships in New England, which affected Andover. The French and Indian Wars progressed through the 1740s and 50s. In 1755-57 many Andover men were called away to fight in Canada and at Lake George. The town population already had taken a hit in the 1730s when “throat distemper”, or diphtheria, claimed about 150 people. Abiel Abbot wrote “Captain James Stevens, his wife and three children died within a month. Nine families lost three children from each in a few days. Four families lost from each four children in 10 or 14 days. John Wilson lost eight children in seven days.” Around this time some Arcadian refugees were received in town, and across Essex County. Several schools were now necessary, and in 1755 the town voted “outskirt schools may be within a mile and a half of the Centre School”. By 1765 the population of Andover was 2,442. Noted surgeon John Kittredge settled in the North Parish about 1740.

### **What was Andover like in 1780 during the era of the Rev Symmes?**

The Reverend Timothy Dwight wrote of Andover (North Parish) around the 1790s, “This parish is a mere collection of plantations, without anything like a village... Upon the whole, Andover is one of the best farming towns in Eastern Massachusetts.” The road infrastructure began to see improvement as the town invested in a plan to straighten and widen the roads, although the first “turnpike” from Medford to Concord N.H. through Andover would not open until 1806. In 1775, dysentery came to Andover, and affected over 200 people, 56 of them died from it. In a time without clear models of hygiene and a lack of modern medicine, severe diarrhea could be fatal. George Washington elected first president in 1788. By 1790, when the first official census was taken in Massachusetts, the town population was reported as 2,863, only up 425 people from 1765. That is less than 1% growth per year, so years of war and disease had had an impact. Perhaps this explains the sleepy rural scene painted by the Rev. Dwight of a disparate group of farmsteads, but on the horizon, Andover was on route to flourish.

### **What was Andover like in 1830 during the era of Simeon Putnam, schoolmaster?**

Andover now had three parishes, the North (1645), the South (1709) and the West (1826). The population had nearly doubled to 4,530 people in 40 years. At this time it was the largest town in Massachusetts, comprising today’s towns of North Andover, Andover and South Lawrence. The industrial era was underway, the Schofield Mill (1802), Stevens Mill (1814) and Sutton Mill (1826) were operating with the Hodges Mill to soon follow in 1839. Andover had its first town map published by Moses Dorman (copies for sale in our gift shop). The Andover Free School, renamed the Franklin School in 1803, had opened its doors to both boys and girls in 1799, the first school of its kind to do so in Massachusetts. It was located just down the street on Academy Road. Abiel Abbot reports in his history of 1829 that the school at the time enjoyed a “reputation inferior to none, and has never been more flourishing”.

### **How long has this been a museum?**

The house was purchased by the Society in 1950 when it was still believed to be the home of Anne & Simon Bradstreet (A. Abbot's, History of Andover, 1829). Under the guidance of Abbot Lowell Cummings, a major restoration took place to bring the house to its current form.

### **Tell me about the furniture/contents in this room.**

We have made available as a resource an artifact list from our Past Perfect Museum software which summarizes the furniture in each room. Further questions can be answered by the Director.

### **The front of the house seems too modern for a house built in 1712-1715?**

Yes, the front of the house exhibits changes that occurred during the 18<sup>th</sup> century as the house was updated. We do not know for certain when it was 'improved', perhaps part of Susannah Powell's updates during the later 18<sup>th</sup> century, but there is not documentary evidence of that.

### **Is there an attic?**

Yes, there is a third floor. At the top of the stairs is a storage space which is flanked on either side by a room. In the past these rooms likely were for boarding students enrolled at Franklin Academy, or servants.

### **Does anybody live here now?**

Yes there is a resident caretaker who lives in the back of the house that is not part of the tour. The original kitchen with an oven is in this area.

### **Are there any ghosts?**

People, including the current caretaker, have reported hearing voices and feeling 'a presence' over the years. Speculation is they are former occupants, maybe slaves who lived here, or students that boarded, perhaps even former owners. People who feel connected to Anne Bradstreet have said they 'sense her' after walking the property where we do know she also walked, even if she did not live in the Parson Barnard House. Ask the caretaker.....

**Any other questions? Please let us know. [Director.nahistory@gmail.com](mailto:Director.nahistory@gmail.com)**

Visit our Website: [www.northandoverhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.northandoverhistoricalsociety.org)