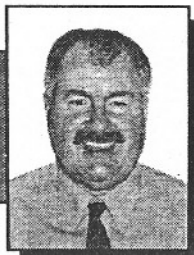


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14 ALBUM, the Chronicle, Saturday, January 13, 2001

History

Andover: far more than a commute to Hartford

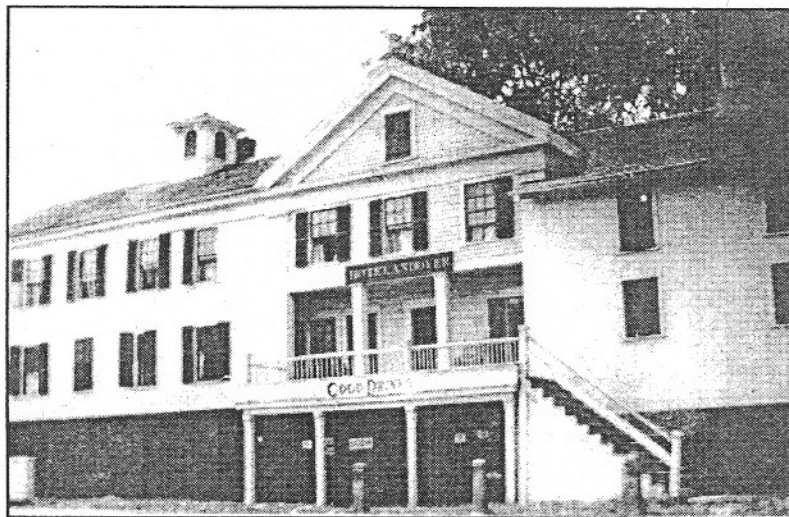


Tom
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Andover is one of the most attractive towns in this corner of Connecticut. Most of us merely commute through it en route to Manchester, Hartford and points west, and rarely bother to look around. Andover, however, has a rich history. It was originally a part of the ancient towns of Hebron (1708) and Coventry (1712).

Andover came into existence as an ecclesiastical society in 1747, in order to cut down on extensive traveling times to churches in Hebron and Coventry. In 1781 and 1782, Gen. Rochambeau's army encamped in the society en route to and from Yorktown, Va.

The chartering of the Hartford and Providence Railroad in 1847, which was planned to go through



The Hotel Andover, above, was originally a stage coaching post on the old turnpike.

Andover, helped the society to be incorporated as a town in 1848. How was Andover named? No one really knows, although it can be safely assumed that there is a connection with the town of Andover, in Hampshire, England.

When the railroad arrived in town in 1849, Andover boasted

five saw mills, five blacksmith shops, two shoe shops, three hat factories, two trip hammers, a grist mill, a paper mill, a shingle mill, a carriage factory, a miniature cabinet factory, an inn and two stores. The fast-flowing Hop River fired many of its small industries.

Andover was one of those rare

towns that was not rapidly expanded by the railroad.

It hardly grew during the ensuing generation. In fact Andover's population declined after the arrival of the railroad. The census recorded 500 Andover inhabitants in 1850, and by 1880 that was down to 428. In 1877, the Andover correspondent for the Willimantic Enterprise newspaper described the town to his readers:

"Andover is quite a business place for its size, and for the information of those who have never visited it, I will give it a slight description.

"The leading pursuit of the people is agriculture. Its meadows are watered by that beautiful stream called Hop River.

"It has two churches, four school houses, three hotels, three stores, three saw mills, three blacksmith shops, two grist mills, and less than one thousand inhabitants.

"Three ministers reside in the town, so we are not dependent upon outside preaching; one General and three Captains of whom

the young can learn military tactics if they choose; several gentlemen and lady teachers; one lawyer, and I hope he will pardon me for not speaking of him first, for in knowledge of law he is second to none. He is a perfect gentleman, and has just won a difficult case.

"He has the best wishes of all his acquaintances. We have no settled doctor, but as we are a very healthy people, we can find no fault."

The Hotel Andover (pictured) was originally a stage coaching post on the old turnpike. It stood opposite the railroad station, and was burnt down in October 1916.

The town's population declined to a low of 389 in 1920, but it has had post-World War II growth.

Many of its 2,540 modern-day residents commute to Hartford and the University of Connecticut and there's probably more than one lawyer in town.

If you would like more information about Andover's history, check out the Historical Society web site <http://andoverhistorical-society.ct.webjump.com>.