It is no wonder then that when Lincoln issued his call for volunteers to protect the Capital after the fall of Fort Sumter, men from Stoneham were among the first to respond. Assigned to the Massachusetts 6th Regiment, they were among the four units who were attacked by a mob in the Baltimore Riot of April 19th, 1861, the first blood shed in the Civil War.

Irish families began to arrive in Stoneham during the 1850s. While many were unskilled workers, about 1/3 of the men were cordwainers. Some, like Patrick Cogan, began by working in shoe factories and later opened up shops of their own. These newcomers brought a different culture and religion to the town. In 1868, Rev. William H. Fitzpatrick became the first pastor of St. Patrick Parish. By the time the present Church was dedicated in 1889, it had 984 members; most of whom were either Irish or Canadian. With the arrival of many Italian families in the 20th century, Stoneham’s Catholics today make up more than half of the town’s population.

During the 20th century, shoe manufacturing in Stoneham gave way to new types of industry. The E. L. Patch Pharmaceutical Company was a major employer of the town in the first half of the century. Other business enterprises, such as the Shawmut motor company, heralded the new age of the automobile, and cars would soon replace trains and trolleys as the preferred means of transportation. The extension of 1-93 during the 1960s completed Stoneham’s transformation into a residential suburb. Today, 85% of Stoneham’s residents spend an average of 25 min a day commuting to work.

### Stoneham: 20th Century Events

- **1905** – The Stone Zoo, formerly known as the Middlesex Fells Zoo, is founded.
- **1909** – The “Shawmut” wins the first U.S. transcontinental automobile race, but Henry Ford claims the victory for the Model T.
- **1925** – Stoneham celebrates its 200th birthday as a town with a parade and pageant.
- **1940** – Arsonists set fire to the Bell Block on Valentine’s Day during one of the worst blizzards to hit New England in many years.
- **1950s** – Many new homes are built in the Robin Hood neighborhood for returning veterans. The town’s population soars.
- **1978** – Stoneham is transported back to the 1950s when scenes for the movie “The Brinks Job” are filmed in Central Square.
- **1994** – Nancy Kerrigan wins a silver medal in figure skating at the Winter Olympics.
- **1997** – Stoneham taxpayers agree to spend $45 million to rebuild its elementary schools and create a new town common.

For more about Stoneham’s history, visit us at www.stonehamhistory.webs.com

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The Mass. Memories Road Show is an initiative of the Massachusetts Studies Project at UMass Boston and is cosponsored by the Joseph P. Healey Library and Mass Humanities.
Stoneham: 400 Years of History

The recorded history of Stoneham dates back 400 years, to a time when the only residents in the area were the Native People of the Pawtucket Nation. In the region around Farm Hill, and on the plains north of Spot Pond (Doleful Plain), they cleared fields and planted corn. Today, their impact on Stoneham remains in the meandering roads that cross town. Walk the route that runs along Marble-Summer-Bow-Green streets and you will be following a Native trail.

In 1629, Charlestown was established in order to secure title to Boston Harbor. As more settlers began to arrive, pressure to expand into the interior increased. On a cold day in February, 1632, Governor John Winthrop and several companions went to scout out the country northeast of the ford over the Mystic River in Medford. About three miles into their journey, they came upon a frozen sheet of water with rocks protruding through the ice. They named this "Spot Pond". Later, in 1634, William Wood would include this Stoneham landmark on the first map made of the colony.

In 1806, the Medford to Andover Turnpike (Main Street) was built, and the town’s center shifted from Pleasant and Summer Streets to its present location. Grocers, tavern owners, carpenters and shoemakers soon began to open shops in the area around Central Square. The next few decades would see Stoneham transformed from a rural farming community into a small manufacturing center recognized for its leather and shoe making industries. In 1837, Stoneham earned its reputation as a “Shoe Town” when its workforce of 297 men and 180 women produced 380,000 pairs of shoes, the largest output in the county.

Throughout the 19th century, Stoneham’s industrial base continued to expand. Hand labor in shoe factories was replaced by machinery in the large establishments such as that of John Hill & Co., the first manufacturers to use horse and then steam power to operate machinery. By 1850, more than half of the businesses in Stoneham were shoe making enterprises. Related businesses in the leather industry, such as the Tidd Tannery, also flourished.

The depression that followed the Panic of 1873 destabilized the shoemaking industry, which resulted in tension between management and labor. Earlier in the decade, strikes had been called by trade unions with little effect, leading some workers to organize in a different manner. They banded together to open their own worker-owned and operated shoe factories. The Stoneham Cooperative Shoe Co. was the first of four producer’s cooperatives established in Stoneham. Today, these companies continue to be studied by economists as examples of successful Cooperation.

The issue of African slavery divided the town in the 1830s, but by 1850, Stoneham had fully embraced the abolitionist cause. Members of the Congregational Church led the reform. In 1838, Deacon Abijah Bryant, Levi D. Smith and 60 others formed the Stoneham branch of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, and Bryant’s home on Main St. became a “station” on the Underground Railroad. When Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, Rev. William C. Whitcomb expressed his outrage in a sermon that was later published. In it, he urged the people to fight for their enslaved brethren, even if it meant suffering and death.