

Mother Mendon Sings Program w/Narration

Opening color

Joyce Firth, Jay Byer, song

Joyce Firth- Very brief welcome and introduction

As we begin our journey of Mendon from it's beginning in the 1600's, I'd like to point out that the piano selections you will hear being played during this narration were typical of the kinds of music that was "popular" at that time.

Color 1

Mendon's origins began in 1659, when the General Court gave permission to Moses Payne and Peter Brackett, residents of Braintree, to negotiate for the purchase of a new town. The land was called Sqinshepage, and it was inhabited and owned by the Nipmuc Indian tribe. The purchase became official in 1662 by the transaction known as the Mendon Indian Deed. The Indians were represented by Reverend John Elliot, the Apostle to the Indians. The land was eight miles by eight miles. Its new name was Netmocke Plantation. Within a year, in 1663, brave new families began the journey from Braintree and Weymouth to their new land to carve a new community out of the forested land of the Nipmucs. Their new homes would be isolated from civilization, as the nearest town was Medfield, separated by fifteen miles of wilderness.

The new settlers of Netmocke Plantation would need special qualities in order to endure the hardships for survival. They had to clear acres of woods to build their homes and farms. They had to make clearings for roads. They lived a life of agriculture from dawn to dusk. They grew their own food and hunted. They had to make their own clothing and chop firewood for heat. The howl of wolves in the night made them aware of dangers that lurked in the forest. The members of our founding families lived a life of courage and hard work.

The General Court granted incorporation to the plantation as a new town on May 15, 1667. It was given the name of Mendon, likely after Mendham, a town in England. Colonel William Crowne, Daniel Lovett, Benjamin Albee, John Thompson, and Ferdinando Thayer were elected as the first board of selectmen. William Crowne was appointed as the town clerk. A year later in 1668, the First Meetinghouse was built. It was 22 feet by 22 feet. It would serve as a place of worship for their Puritan theology and a base of democracy for their town meetings. The small, agrarian pioneer town benefitted in 1672, when King Charles II of England, ordered that a road be constructed for mail delivery that would link Mendon with New York, Hartford, and Boston. It would be known as Middle Post Road. The

new road created hope and optimism for trade with other colonies and make Mendon a stagecoach stopover. John Thompson built an inn in 1674.

New hopes for prosperity came to a sudden end on July 14, 1675, when an attack by Nipmuc Indians left five Mendon residents dead. The tragic attack took place on Providence Road, near the corner of Hartford Avenue East, not far from Muddy Brook. They were the first casualties of the King Philip War in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. In previous weeks, there had been casualties in Plymouth Colony. The new, isolated town, only eight years old, was left in terror. By fall, the town was abandoned, when the residents wisely sought safety in Braintree and Weymouth. The following February, Nipmuc Warriors returned and burned down the Meetinghouse and every house and barn in town. The town was left in charred ruins. By August, King Philip was killed. Without Indian leadership, the war soon ended. The once proud and noble Nipmucs, Wampanoags, and Narragansetts were depleted. The tribes were never the same.

By 1680, most of the Mendon families had moved back to their home town to rebuild their farms. Reverend Grindal Rawson provided spiritual strength as the residents recovered. A new meetinghouse was built. By 1690, the town had grown, and the meeting house was no longer large enough. The town's Third Meetinghouse was built on land we know as Founders' Park. By the end of the century, the recovery from the King Philip War was significant. The brave and hardworking citizens of Mendon had risen from the ashes.

SONG: Hallelujah, By George Fredrick Handel

Color 2

Enter the 1700's with that very famous choral work *Hallelujah* by George Frederick Handel which premiered 1742 in Dublin, Ireland

The first of the piano selections you will hear Rebecca playing during this narration, was written by William Billings as a hymn in the late 1700's. Billings was born in Boston and was considered to be the first American choral composer. He wrote a multitude of such hymns and titled them with the names of many Massachusetts towns. This one particular piece is titled "Mendon".

In the 1700's, Mendon was a town of local controversy and national spirit. The first controversy was about the need for a new meeting house, and if so, where would it be located. The first three had been located at Founders' Park. Reverend Joseph Dorr was the new minister. In 1728, a town meeting vote indicated that it was the voters' wish to build a Fourth Meeting House. As simple as this may sound, it ended up in much bitterness over its

size and location. About half the town wanted the proposed building to be located at the same site as the previous three. The other half wanted the new structure to be located at the west end of the burying ground, known as Old Cemetery. Several meetings were held that seemingly cancelled out votes from previous meetings. One vote approved a barrel of rum for the workers, which drew a cease and desist order from the state General Court. Finally, after eight years of bickering, and a nighttime attempt to chop down a corner post, the building was finished. Mendon's Fourth Meetinghouse was finished in 1736.

From 1738 through 1742, a change in religious philosophy was prevalent throughout Europe and the colonies. It promoted a personal, internalized relationship with God, and regarded rituals and doctrine as less important. In some congregations, it was a challenge for members of the clergy, but in Mendon, the highly respected Reverend Dorr prevailed for fifty- three years.

The French and Indian War took place in the 1750's. Several of Mendon's finest young men served with their fellow British soldiers in a battle for territory in North America. The war was a victory for the British, but it left their country in great debt. It was the issue of who was going to pay for the war that led to great discord between the colonies and Great Britain. For Parliament and King George, it was ordered that the colonists should pay for it through taxation. The members of the colonies replied that they should not be taxed because the colonies had no representation in Parliament. The issue simmered and escalated for twelve years until the most significant event in our history took place.

"By the rude bridge that arched the flood, their flag to April's breeze unfurled. Here once the embattled farmers stood, and fired the shot heard 'round the world." Ralph Waldo Emerson's words remind us of Paul Revere's ride, the Old North Church, and the battles of Lexington and Concord. The towns surrounding Boston had been eagerly awaiting in 1775 to avenge the Acts of Parliament that closed the port of Boston and shut down the Massachusetts state government and placed it under British rule. General Thomas Gage became the new governor. One of his rules was that no town could hold a town meeting without his permission. Many towns openly defied General Gage, and one of these towns was Mendon.

Many Mendon residents were closely aligned with Boston's Sons of Liberty. Cries for liberty from meetings at Faneuil Hall were echoed off the walls of our Fourth Meeting House in Mendon. Beginning in 1764, there were several town meeting votes to boycott British products, including tea, that were taxed without their consent. On March 1, 1773, Mendon voters approved nineteen resolves that addressed the injustices of Great Britain in which the colonists were denied their rights and freedoms. Colonial leaders took notice, as

much of the wording was reflected in Boston's Suffolk Resolves, and later, in Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence. Historian William Cullen Bryant wrote that the two most important documents that influenced Jefferson were Thomas Paine's "Common Sense" and Mendon's Resolves.

Mendon joined the Committee of Correspondence in 1774 and sent Joseph Dorr Jr. and Edward Rawson to meetings of the Provincial Congress. Mendon's patriots increased their stock of ammunition, weapons, and military supplies and stored them in the town's Ammunition Magazine up on a hill on Providence Road. The town's militia was made up of four companies that included one hundred sixty-four men. Many of them were Minute Men, ready to march on a minute's notice. They practiced military drills three times a week on training fields at Founders' Park, Hood Plaza, and a field on Gaskill Street. Our militia was well prepared.

In response to the shot heard 'round the world and the battles of Lexington and Concord, our militia assembled and mustered at Founders' Park and marched to Boston. The town supported the Revolutionary War with soldiers, military supplies, clothing, and finances. It quartered prisoners of war, and it provided housing at Ammidon Inn for thirty Charlestown residents left homeless after the Battle of Bunker Hill. It was a Post Road stopover for units of the Continental Army. Nathan Hale and his troops had breakfast at the inn months before he was hanged for treason. His final words were, "I regret that I have but one life to give for my country." Our most famous soldier born in Mendon was General Alexander Scammell. George Washington appointed him Adjutant General of the Continental Army at Valley Forge. He was mortally wounded at Yorktown, the last American general to die in the War for Independence.

Historian G.B. Williams wrote, "Through all the years of the great contest, all testimony goes to show that no community surpassed Mendon in devotion to liberty, influence in the colony, or patriotic service. Men of Mendon fought at Bunker Hill, Long Island, Valley Forge, Bennington, Saratoga, and Yorktown." Mendon's contributions to the birth of our nation during the American Revolution were significant and commendable.

In the midst of all that was going on in the 1700's, it was also a time of population expansion. People who were living in the outskirt parts of Mendon, far away from the Village Center, expressed their concern about the great distance they had to travel to attend town meetings and religious services. The distance to the remote villages, plus the conditions of the roads connecting them, led to requests for separation to become independent towns with their own meeting houses. From 1719 through 1780, Bellingham, Upton, Uxbridge, Northbridge, and Milford became children towns of Mother Mendon.

The Mother Mendon Chorus will now perform one of the choral works by Wm Billings titled CHESTER. It was written in 1770. During the Revolutionary War, this choral piece served as our national anthem until the Star Spangled Banner was written in 1814.

SONG: *Chester by William Billings*

Color 3

SONG: *My Banjo on My Knee: A Stephen Foster Festival*

The choral selection you have just heard is an appropriate introduction to Mendon of 1800's. Banjo on My Knee is a minstrel piece with connections to Lake Nipmuc Park, and was likely performed there at that time.

The Mendon of early 1800's was a time of social prominence and economic prosperity, but the second half of the century was a time of challenge in regards to the town's geography, economy, and population.

The marriage of Attorney Seth Hastings and Chloe Davenport in 1796 had great effect on Mendon for the first third of the 1800's. Their family was blessed with wealth, academic ability, professional sophistication, social grace, and political influence. Though they were well-to-do, they gave generously to their town and church. To the Hastings family, much had been given, and from themselves, much was expected. Much of the development of our village center was through their efforts.

The period from 1820 through 1845 was a special time for our Village Center. It was a time of economic prosperity, high social and professional status, and architectural grandeur. A triangular parcel that included Main Street, Maple Street, and Hastings Street was a center of affluence and culture rarely found in a rural New England neighborhood. It was Mendon's golden age. The people of the village were multitalented, highly educated, and professionally elite. Seth Hastings, for example, was chief justice of Worcester Superior Court, a congressman, lawyer, bank president, state senator, town official, Harvard graduate, and bakery owner. Both of his sons, William and Charles, were lawyers and Harvard graduates. William also served as a state representative, state senator, and Mendon's postmaster. His son in law, Caleb Hayward, was also a lawyer and a bank director. His friend, Jonathan Russell, had been ambassador to France, England, Norway, and Sweden. He was a signer of the Treaty of Ghent to end the War of 1812. He served in Congress and as Mendon town moderator. Dr. John Metcalf was a surgeon, vice president of Massachusetts Medical Society, historian, author of the Annals of Mendon, and state

senator. He was a graduate of Brown University and Harvard Medical School. Reverend Adin Ballou was the founder of the religious utopian community of Hopedale and a newspaper editor. Attorney Richard George was a graduate of Brown University. He was Mendon's town counsel for thirty-two years. Silas Dudley was a gentleman farmer and town official. Alexander Allen was an attorney and town official. As one can see, this was an amazingly talented group of people who lived in Mendon Village Center in the 1820's.

By the 1840's, the golden age had lost its luster. Mendon went into a period of decline. In 1845, Mendon's South Precinct, known as Blackstone, became an independent town. Whereas this was good for the new town, its separation was detrimental to the Mother Town. It had lost about half of its geographic property, a significant part of its population, and thousands of dollars in tax revenue from the booming factories powered by the Blackstone River. Three years later, in 1848, the Blackstone Canal closed down. The canal had served as an inland seaport market for Mendon farmers. Mendon produce had been sold from Worcester to Providence and beyond. The canal was replaced by the Providence and Worcester Railroad, which focused on industrial goods, not Mendon vegetables. The town was devastated by the Civil War. Twenty of its finest young men had been killed. President Lincoln was assassinated.

After the Civil War, the children towns grew and financially benefitted from the Industrial Age. Mother Mendon remained a farming town, serving as a food producer for the regional factory workers. One of the problems that the children towns endured was that the rivers that had powered their factories had become polluted with industrial wastes. In contrast, Mendon's waters remained pure.

By 1882, the clean and pristine Lake Nipmuc had become a recreation area, known as nature's beauty spot. Nipmuc Park opened on July 4, 1882, featuring swimming, boat rides, clam bakes, rocking chairs on a piazza and an orchestra. Every weekend drew hundreds of people from the children towns and beyond. Lake Nipmuc had become a resort.

By the end of the century, Mendon was drawing large crowds. It was on the verge of a new form of transportation that would jump start the town's economy and bring changes to how people would live their lives.

Meanwhile, Hopedale became an independent town in 1886, separating from Milford. It became a grandchild of Mother Mendon.

Mother Mendon and her children towns were active participants in the underground railroad and abolitionist movement in the 1850's. Dr. John Metcalf served two terms in the Massachusetts State Senate as an abolitionist candidate. The house at the corner of

Emerson Street and Route 16 served as a safe house for slaves. George Cunnabell Howard and his touring actors put on a presentation of Uncle Tom's Cabin at Mendon Town Hall on a summer evening in 1856. Abolitionists meetings were held throughout the local towns. Frederick Douglass and other leaders often came as guest speakers.

End of 1800's

SONG: *The Ballad of the Underground Railroad*

Color 4

SONG: *Shenandoah* .

Shenandoah is an American Folk song. It is said to have originated with French voyageurs traveling down the Missouri River. The lyrics tell the story of a trader who fell in love with the daughter of an Algonquian chief, Shenandoah. American sailors heading down the Mississippi River picked up the song and made it a capstan shanty that they sang while hauling in the anchor.

In the Mendon area during the early 1900's, The Milford- Uxbridge Electric Street Railway impacted the town of Mendon in many ways. Trolley cars ran every half hour on weekends to bring passengers to enjoy the lake and Nipmuc Park. Recreation and entertainment offerings had expanded to include vaudeville and electric rides. The park was a very popular place to be on weekends.

During the workweek, the trolley offered new occupational opportunities to people of Mendon. After generations of devotion to working on the family farm, new job choices became available for working out of town. The electric railway brought Mendon people to work in Milford, Hopedale, and Uxbridge to factories, mills, and shops. A trend developed that never reversed. The town's economy that had been based on agriculture was changing. Farmland was sold off for housing development. New homes replaced cornfields, and the population grew. The electric street railway ran from 1901 through 1928. It ceased operation because after World War I, the automobile had become popular and affordable. The family car replaced the trolley. Though there were still some family farms, Mendon's economy and way of life had gone through change.

Meanwhile, in 1916, Millville gained independence from Blackstone, making Millville a grandchild town of Mendon.

The 1930's through 1940's were one of the many times when Mendon people rose above the difficulties and hardships of their era. Living during the Great Depression and World War II required many sacrifices and courage. Our soldiers, sailors, and airmen responded to the call of Pearl Harbor in such a noble and patriotic manner. We are greatly

appreciative that the outstanding deeds of our parents and grandparents earned them their well- deserved reputation as the Greatest Generation.

The 1950's through 1990's were marked by rapid population growth. Farmland disappeared, more houses were built, and new school buildings were constructed. Mendon High School became Center School and later Henry P. Clough School. Nipmuc Regional High School was built in 1960. Double sessions and portable classrooms accommodated escalating growth until Miscoe Hill Middle School opened in 1980. A new Nipmuc Regional High School opened in Upton in 1997. Clough school was rebuilt and opened as a new school in 2004.

The 1900's featured several descendants of Mendon's founding fathers who reached national fame. President William Howard Taft, Senator Robert Taft, and Agriculture Secretary Ezra Taft Benson could trace their roots to the eastern shore of Lake Nipmuc on Millville Street. Nelson Aldrich Rockefeller and Senator Nelson Aldrich could trace their roots to George Street. Austin Barclay Fletcher, President of Tufts University, and known for the Fletcher School of Law was born on Millville Street. Gabby Hartnett, the Chicago Cubs National League Hall of Fame catcher, was born in Millville, Mendon's south precinct. Aerosmith's Joe Perry grew up in Hopedale, Mendon's east precinct. Grammy Award winner Ruth Pointer of the Pointer Sisters has lived in Mendon and Hopedale for several years. Football Hall of Famer, Howie Long, played his high school football career in Milford. These highly distinguished talented people all have a connection to our original boundaries of Netmocke Plantation.

Color 5

The final selection in the first half of our program is Simple Gifts, a Shaker song composed in 1848 by Elder Joseph Brackett. In the 1940's Simple Gifts was rediscovered by composer Aaron Copeland ever since has grown in popularity. The piece is a classic example of American folk music and was recently named by the National Music Educators Conference as one of a handful of songs every American should know.

The Shaker movement arose in the 1750's evolving from the early Quaker religion. Today many of the influences of Shaker movement live on in the present day Mennonite communities in Mendon. The Shakers were known for their use of song and dance to express their beliefs and Simple Gifts represents the core beliefs of the Shaker movement, those of community, simplicity, and humility.

As we close out the first half of our program this evening, we are reminded of those principles as we look back on Mendon's humble beginnings in 1667. Over the past three hundred and fifty years Mother Mendon has seen tremendous growth and change

including the incorporation of the eight towns of Bellingham, Upton, Uxbridge, Northbridge, Milford, Blackstone, Hopedale, and Millville. In celebration of this long and rich history we bring you the voices of Mendon and her children and grandchildren united as one in the Mother Mendon Sings Chorus.

SONG: *Simple Gifts*

Lights up

Joyce Firth-Intermission announcement

-INTERMISSION-

Opening Color

Joyce Firth-Good evening. Welcome to Mother Mendon Sings, a musical tribute to our town's 350th birthday. We give a special welcome to those of you who are here from our children towns, and we give special thanks to the many people who have worked so hard in putting this program together. This will be a special evening. It is an honor to pay tribute to the generations of great men and women who have lived in this wonderful town before us. Our history runs deep, as we were a town only forty-seven years after the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth. Many of the descendants of our founding families have left a mark, not just on our town, but on our culture and our nation. Little did the founders know that from within the boundaries of their pioneer town that future grandchildren would produce a President of the United States, a Vice President, a Secretary of Agriculture, two United States Senators, and a Governor of New York. Also, at one time living within the area of the boundaries of the Mendon that our founders knew were four generals, one of whom is on our 350th Committee, and another was the Adjutant General at Valley Forge, appointed by George Washington. This original town also spawned a national rock star, a Hall of Fame baseball catcher, a president of Tufts University, an international ambassador, a major league umpire, and currently, a legendary rhythm and blues singer who has won two Grammy Awards.

It is my pleasure to introduce the Mother Mendon Sings children's chorus.

SONG: *When I Close My Eyes* by Jim Papoulis (2003)

Color 7

Now, it's your turn. Please use the drop down screens to follow and sing along with us a few American folk songs of the past.

SONG MEDLEY (with text projection):

Clementine (American folk song)

On Top of Old Smoky (American folk song)

***I've Been Working on the Railroad/Someone's in the Kitchen with
Dinah (American folk song)***

Yankee Doodle (American folk song)

Lights up

The members of the Mother Mendon Sings Concert sub-committee intended this concert to be celebration of the Town of Mendon and her rich history. It was decided to hold a competition seeking a composer to create a new choral work to serve as a lasting tribute to the occasion. This piece was to consist of an historic text relating to Mendon to be set to music and performed by a children's choir. Almost by chance the committee stumbled onto the words of Putnam W. Taft which were given as a toast on May 15th 1867 at a celebration of Mendon's 200th Anniversary; printed in an old book, long forgotten in the Town's historic archives. When Rebecca Eland, a Mendon native, read this text, she heard a children's song. And so she wrote it down, and submitted it to the Mother Mendon Sings Composer Competition. Her piece, above 10 other pieces from around the globe, won the hearts of the judges. And the rest is history; Mendon's history. And so, I am very proud to introduce you to the winner of the Mother Mendon Sings Children's Composer Competition, Rebecca Eland.

Presentation of award to Rebecca Eland: Dan Byer, Joyce Firth, Simeon Morrow and Kevin Rudden (Jon Dudley?)

After some careful research the committee discovered several fascinating connections between Mendon and Putnam Taft, all of which serve to enhance the value of this composition and it's connection to Mendon history.

The text for this piece is excerpted from a toast given by Putnam William Taft. Putnam (who also went by William Putnam Taft) was born and grew up in Mendon in 1807. In his 20's he moved to Worcester following the death of his mother, leaving behind his half-sister, Susan Lee Huston, with whom he shared a great love of literature. In Worcester Putnam was a master builder as well as serving in many public positions including the city legislature, board of assessors, and school committee. In 1841, he was an early member of the Worcester County Mechanic's Association, the group that would later go on to build Mechanic's Hall in Worcester.

Putnam was also an avid musician serving for 10 years as the founding president of the Old Mozart Society and seeing them through a union with the Beethoven Society and the eventual formation of the Worcester Choral Union. In his later years, in 1872 Putnam was in the process of donating \$3,000 for the creation of a library for the town of his boyhood home (Mendon) when he suddenly passed away. The funds were inherited by his siblings and his half-sister, Susan donated her \$1,000 share to Mendon for the establishment of a library with the condition that it be named in Putnam's honor. In 1881 the Taft Public Library opened its doors in the small brick building at 3 Main St.

Putnam was born in Mendon and although he took up residence in Worcester he never forgot his boyhood home of Mendon. He was a dedicated public servant. His obituary describes him as "deeply interested in the practice and culture of music". It is truly fitting that his toast given to honor Mendon's 200th anniversary has been brought to life from the pages of a dusty old book and now lives on in this composition. His words, although now one hundred fifty years old, still ring true to this day.

SONG (with text projection): *Our Mendon* by Rebecca Eland, Winner of the Mendon 350th Anniversary Celebration Composer's Competition (2017)

It is with great pride that in this year of 2017, we celebrate our town's 350th birthday. We are proud of our founding families who carved our community out of a forested land of wilderness. It was with great courage that they started a new life in an isolated pioneer town, fifteen miles away from the closest neighboring town. It was with a great work ethic that they carried out the daily dawn to dusk agricultural tasks necessary for survival. We thank our founding families for laying the groundwork for the wonderful town that we enjoy today.

We honor and pay tribute to the noble Nipmuc Indian people who inhabited their beloved Squinshepage in an earlier time.

As Mother Mendon, we thank our children and grandchildren towns for their years of neighborliness and friendship. We thank you for being part of our shared history.

Please rise for our National Anthem.

SONG: *The Star Spangled Banner* by Francis Scott Key

SONG (with text projection): *God Bless America* by Irving Berlin (1938).