

Then & Now – Can You Find It ??? Scavenger Hunt

Instead of usual monthly historical locations write-up, the PHS is pleased to announce a family, small group and/or individual scavenger hunt activity called “Can You Find It”. This activity will begin on July 1st and is to commemorate the 250th Anniversary of the Town of Princeton’s Incorporation in 1771.

You might ask: “Why are there two dates on the town flag and town seal”?

This question was recently asked by Governor Charlie Baker when he visited the town to talk about broadband ...

The answer lies in the not-so-simple history of the founding of our community. Most who have some familiarity with our history know that the town celebrated its 250th

anniversary, a Semiquincentennial, in 2009. An even more elaborate Bicentennial had been held back in 1959. These events commemorated the first establishment of an organized civic entity: to wit a ‘District’.



The year was 1759 and by act of the General Court in Boston, the District of Prince Town was “erected” in October; comprising some 15,000 acres (2/3 of today’s Princeton). It was composed of the East Wing of Rutland and the various Watertown Farms. Having first been settled by Joshua Wilder in 1743, other settlers gradually took an interest and began to fulfill the goal of the Rutland Proprietors.

The Name: In the years before Wilder, a group of Proprietors entrusted the Reverend Thomas Prince of the Old South Church in Boston with arranging for a survey. The area of the East Wing of Rutland was platted. For his efforts, the Reverend Prince was granted a plot of un-farmable land in the center. Alas, the noted cleric shuffled off this mortal coil in the year preceding formal recognition of the District and is now remembered locally as the namesake.

A “District” did not have the same standing as a “Town”; Prince Town did not have a representative in the General Court of the Province (Colony) of Massachusetts Bay. Because of distance and the “badness of the Roads”, it was not convenient nor practical for the inhabitants to join with an adjacent Town to piggyback on that Town’s representative. Therefore, in April 1771, the inhabitants petitioned the General Court to “erect said place into a Town, with all the powers and privileges which are enjoyed in other towns in this province”. Petition was granted and Princeton gained municipal status.



Researched and written by Harry Pape in 2021

To join in the fun and learn about eight historical locations in Princeton, a **Game Card and Directions** can be either:

- Picked up at the Library Checkout Desk during its hours of operation starting **July 1st**.
- Or downloaded after **July 1st** off the PHS website at <https://www.princetonmahistory.org/can-you-find/>.

***** Our plan is to, over the next two years, add a minimum of eight new locations each year to this "Can You Find It" activity, which will bring the total locations to 24+, by the summer of 2023.**

Please if have any comments or insights, please share them by emailing princetonmahistory@gmail.com.