

19. Masonic Temple – Continue south on Concord Road to the Masonic Temple, located at 11 Concord Road.



The Masonic Temple is also called the Masonic Hall and is located next to the Billerica Public Library. It was named for Thomas Talbot who was also a Mason. The building has been a grocery store and general store and the Masonic Hall's second story could have previously been rented out to locals who were holding an event. Some of its owners included Dolan and Fred Morey. Throughout its history the building has changed little in appearance. The Clinton Lodge (named after NY Governor DeWitt Clinton), Billerica's original Masonic charter, was formed in 1826 when Zadok Howe petitioned for a charter, was located on Boston Road, south of the Common, near the present day Post Office. In 1828 the lodge burned down in a fire and could not be salvaged. By 1883 there were 25 Masons in Billerica but they were attending other lodges. In 1889 a group of these men petitioned to form the Talbot Lodge and were granted a charter.



20. Billerica Public Library- Continue south to the Billerica Public Library, located at 15 Concord Road. It is the last stop on the historical walking tour.



The Billerica Public Library

The public library was originally the town hall in 1895. At that time it was considered one of the nicest places in the town. The building at first measured about 102 by 60 feet, was built of red brick and gray sandstone trim. The inside was finished with cypress wood and didn't have any outdoor lights because the center had no electricity. The building has overall remained the same on the outside so it displays much of the styles popular in that time period. It continued to serve as a town hall until around 1989. On July 7th, 1993 the gold-leaved cupola, which was inspired by Christopher Wren an English architect, was struck by lightning and was set on fire. The fire was taken care of quickly and the structural integrity of the building was not harmed. The cupola itself had to be removed from the building and restored; it was eventually returned. The building was renovated and enlarged to become Billerica's public library in the year 2000.



This Walking Tour has been created by
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Billerica Center Historical Walking Tour

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By Mary Kate McCarron



1. Clara Sexton House – Start here at 36 Concord Road. Then walk north toward the intersection of Cummings Street and cross at the crosswalk to the Common.

The Clara Sexton House is home to the Billerica Historical Society and is located at 36 Concord Road. Reverend Henry Cumings, the fourth minister of the Unitarian Church and also a Harvard Graduate, had it remodeled in 1763. Cumings was a pastor for a total of 50 years; he was also a distinguished scholar and leading character in the American Revolution. He was the owner of the house for 60 years. After the Reverend died in 1823, he was buried in the South Cemetery in Billerica. The house was bought and bartered among traders for a bit until 1840. At that point the proud owner of the house was Joseph F. Hill, a local doctor. Those who followed him were also doctors which is why to the left of the main house, there is a small office, possibly for one of the physicians; this is known as a dependency. Some parts of the house may be from as early as 1723. In 1879 the building was owned by the Sexton family, in whose possession it remained in for quite some time. Clara was always ready to participate in town events and social gatherings. In total, the home has had 13 documented owners since its construction. It is a first period house, built before 1725. On April 10th, 1936 Clara E. Sexton passed away at the age of seventy-eight, and left the house to the Billerica Historical Society. In Clara's obituary, it is quoted that Clara was "one of the best known residents of Billerica." The land was left with a request that the house be kept as local historical landmark.



2. Town Meeting House Marker – Stop at this Marker on the Common.

Site of the first Meeting House

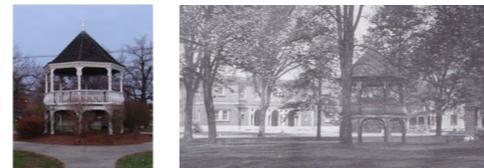
The marker located directly next to the Bandstand notes the general area where the first meeting house in Billerica stood. The first meeting house was completed in 1660. The house was 30 feet by 24 feet with a thatched roof. The building committee included Ralph Hill Sr., George Farley and Jonathan Danforth. Unfortunately, the meeting house was destroyed by a fire. The plaque, originally placed there in 1901, provides information about the meeting house and early Billerica. In 2001, the Billerica Historical Society restored and rededicated the plaque. The plaque below it discusses the town's origins. Billerica was at first called "Shawshin." In 1641 the area was granted to the City of Cambridge if 10 families would settle there within 3 years. In 1655 the original residents petitioned the court to incorporate and were allowed to change the town's name to Billerica. On the other side of the marker there is another plaque that remembers the 14 members of Billerica who had died in the American Revolutionary War. It used to be on a large boulder, but the plaque was placed on the marker and rededicated in 2002.



3. Band Stand – Directly behind you will be the Band Stand.

The Bandstand

Known by many as the Gazebo, the bandstand sits on the common and was completed in the 1890s. It is a trade mark of the town and is found on many postcards and paintings. Many local organizations hold events at the Bandstand. The structure was elevated so that music could travel farther when being used. It is used by music groups although they play in front of the bandstand, not on it. The reason for not performing on it is that the stairs are not handicapped accessible. The Bandstand's repairs were so great that a replica was completed in the year 2003. Despite many demolition plans in the past, the Bandstand is still used today.



4. Liberty Pole – You will look to your right on the Common and find the Liberty Pole.

Liberty Pole

You can see the Liberty Pole on the common near the bandstand. Often times, the pole may have a stocking cap on top. Long ago, this would signify that a town meeting was going to happen. They were used all throughout the colonies. The poles were built either before or during the Revolutionary War. The meetings that were held because of the liberty pole were about the townspeople's feelings and thoughts about the British Rule. Around the year 1976, the Billerica Colonial Minute Men erected the Liberty Pole in Billerica. In 2010 the Pole was refinished, had new stain put on it and a new red stocking cap.



5. Civil War Monument – You will walk north on the Common and come to the Civil War Monument.

The Civil War Monument

The Civil War Monument, made of Westerly granite, is found on the common very close to the Parrot Rifle. The structure stands 25 feet high. It was dedicated to the soldiers of Billerica who fought in the Civil War and has 20 names etched in stone of brave soldiers from Billerica who had lost their lives during the war. The memorial previously had a plaque with the quote "Billerica to her heroes, in grateful recognition of that steadfastness of purpose, devotion to principle, loyalty to country, and trust in God, which enabled men to die for Liberty and Union." It was dedicated on October 8th, 1873 and originally had cannon balls next to it that led a path to the Parrot Rifle. Some of the battles mentioned include New Bern, and Gettysburg.



6. Parrot Rifle - You will walk a short distance north on the Common to the Parrot Rifle.

The Parrot Rifle

The Parrot rifle is located on the common near Boston Road. It was placed on the common in 1907. It is rather deceiving because the rifle is actually large black cannon. Originally, the cannon had cannonballs and a pathway that led to the Civil War Monument. It was made in New York, purchased by a Billerica merchant, Sidney Bull, and eventually donated to the town. The cannon itself weighs 4,200 pounds and its base weighs 2 tons. The large weapon was cast at the West Point Foundry in Cold Spring New York, in 1865. It is from the Civil War era but it is believed that it was not actually used in the war.



7. **Center Cafe** – Walk eastward on the Common until you come to the crosswalk. Cross over Boston Road and walk south until you come to the Center Cafe, located at 432 Boston Road.

Jonathan Bowers' House (Center Cafe)

This house is one of the oldest commercially used buildings in Billerica today. The building is located at 432 Boston Road across from the common. To one side, there are buildings such as the brick building where BATV and Mangia Mangia are located at 430 Boston Road. Built in 1796, the building has changed over the years but still retains some of its old colonial characteristics. Jonathan Bowers was the first Postmaster in Billerica and his home served as the Post office for over 100 years. Many other organizations and committees have also been run out of the building. Some examples include the Billerica Trust Company and the Modern Food Shop both in 1930. Other groups such as the Order of the Odd Fellows have also used the upstairs of the building for meetings after their hall had burned down.



8. **Sabba Day House** – Head north on Boston Road and take a right at the intersection with Andover Road. Cross at the 3rd crosswalk on Andover Road. Arrive at 20 Andover Road.

Sabba Day House

The small house is currently located at 20 Andover Road. In the middle of the 18th century this building was constructed. In the year 1765 members of the town from the east such as Thomas Patten lived secluded and away from the church. They were known as “the proprietors” until 1818, when they purchased land adjacent to the church and built the house. They were mainly seeking warmth from the harsh conditions during Sabbath Day. The church held 4 hour sermons during the morning, and another 4 in the afternoon. Consistent attendance was expected if freemen wanted to vote in town affairs. The Sabba Day house still stands on Andover Road next to the First Congregational Church. The building ceased functioning as a place for church-goers to have a reprieve in 1818. Since then, it has been a house or private residence. The house's 2nd story dormers and its latter-clad entry were additions



9. **First Congregational Church** – Walk west on Andover Road. Arrive at 18 Andover Road.

The First Congregational Church

The First Congregational Church was also previously known as the Orthodox Church. The church is located at 18 Andover Road and was constructed in 1830. In 1843 the building was completed, and was led by John Starkweather. In 1843, Reverend Jesse G. D Stearns led the parish for a total of 20 years. The church began with just 25 members and was just 60 feet by 40 feet. From 1885-1889 Reverend Wilson led the congregation and expanded the building to its present-day size. Today it is a thriving congregation. The name changed to the First Congregational Church in 1929 when members voted to disband the First Orthodox Church. In 1820 Huldah Blake and Martha Bowers began to protest the doctrines and rules of the church and then requested dismissal. As a result of this protest, the Orthodox Congregational Church was formed in the year 1829.



10. **Thaddeus Brown House** – Walk west on Andover Road until you arrive at the Thaddeus Brown House, located at the intersection of Andover and Boston Roads.

Thaddeus Brown House

In 1832, Thaddeus Brown married Susannah Crosby and he then began building the new couple a house. The home is also referred to by another one its owners name at a later time period, Luther Faulkner. The house still stands on the corner of Andover and Boston Road. Brown, along with Zadoc Howe also used the house as a place to run a medical practice. Brown suddenly died in 1839, but Howe continued the two's work until he too passed away in 1851. Trustees of the home then sold the land to Luther Faulkner in 1855. At some time the official Billerica Fruit Store operated from the Faulkner house, it also sold cigars, tobacco, tonics, candies, ice cream as well as moxie. In addition, a tailor shop owned by Henry Waitz and Kose Kevitch's Shoe Store also ran businesses out of the Faulkner House. One of the few additions was bay windows on the house but much of the building remains the same.



11. **Howe School** – Take a right onto Boston Road. Walk north until you come to the Howe School.

Howe School

The Howe School was completed in 1852 after Dr. Zadock Howe died in the March of 1851. His will indicated that Howe had saved enough money for a school to be built. The school was placed on the “Everett Lot” and was bought from the Ichabod Everett Farm. The building's style is from the Greek Revival Period and was initially made up of one room downstairs and one room upstairs. Both were heated by wood stoves. It gave students a chance to obtain a good education as well as to prepare for college. The school was constructed by a Lowell architect named Daniel Bean. In 1914 the school was taken over by the town of Billerica. Except for the removal of four chimneys, the school remains virtually the same as it was when it was first opened for learning. In 1915, a new Howe High School was completed right across the street from the schoolhouse. In 1989 it was renovated in to the current Town Hall. The original Howe School stands on Boston Road.



12. **Washington Oak Marker** – Cross Boston Road at the crosswalk near the Town Hall. Walk south on Boston Road until you reach the Washington Oak Marker which is located near 373 Boston Road.

Washington Oak

The Washington Oak has always given locals a sense of pleasure, so much so that Billerica's flag includes a tree in the background as a symbol of the Washington Oak. The tree was here when George Washington stopped in Billerica on November 5th, 1789. He passed by Billerica on his way to Lexington. In an effort to help the tree survive in 1960, the tree's core was hollowed out and filled with cement and steel rods. Sadly, the tree was knocked down during Hurricane Gloria in 1985. A marker was put in its place where the tree used to stand and is at 373 Boston Road across from the Howe School. Billerica is mentioned in an entry of Washington's diary where he reflects about the towns in Massachusetts. Washington, unfortunately, misspelled Billerica spelling it Billerika. The tree was on Billerica's Bicentennial medal and is also the tree featured on the town's flag.



13. **Danforth House Marker** – Continue to walk south on Boston Road until you come to the Danforth House Marker.

The Danforth House

Around 1654, Jonathan Danforth came with other settlers to Billerica and was there when the town was founded. It is speculated that Danforth's house was the first built in town. He was known by many people as the father of Billerica because he was one of the first here and for the large amount of land he owned. Also, as a well-known surveyor, he drew the boundaries for many of the original land grants. He displayed great care in all the needs of the town and served in the town's first militia. The Danforth house was destroyed in a fire, but a sign now stands to memorialize where it once stood on Boston Road.



14. **Locke House** – Continue to walk south on Boston Road until you reach the Locke House.

Judge Joseph Locke House

This house was constructed by a local man named Reuben Duren around 1811. The house remained in the possession of the Stearns' family for many generations. In the early 20th century the house was transformed into a bed and breakfast hotel named the Hillhurst. The trees that flank the house were planted in 1859 by, then, Howe School's principal, Stephen Gilman. Although the house had been most noticeable because of its hip-roof, double chimneys and cupola these were actually additions that had been made to the house by Joel Dix, a previous owner, in the 1870s. A. Warren Stearns, another owner, removed these attributes after WWI, bringing the house back to its original look. It's most notable owner, Joseph Locke, was born in New Hampshire in 1772 and was a local judge for Billerica beginning in 1801. In 1833 Locke moved to Lowell and was then a judge for a police court.



15. **Kohlrausch Fountain** – Continue south on Boston Road, cross at the crosswalk at the intersection of Boston Road and River Street. Stop at the Island in this intersection at the Kohlrausch Fountain.

The Kohlrausch Fountain

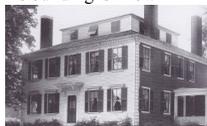
You will find this fountain on the River Street Island. It was donated to the town in 1912 by Charles H. Kohlrausch's family. During his life, Kohlrausch, a successful chemist in the Talbot Mills, also served as a town moderator, chairman of the Selectmen, water commissioner, State Representative and Superintendent of the Chemical Works in North Billerica. Kohlrausch was responsible for a large amount of the town's progress. After Charles Kohlrausch Jr. died, this fountain was installed. It was first located at the common at the intersection of Andover and Boston Roads until 1930 when it was moved to its current location. The fountain was sculpted by Daniel Chester French. He is most famous for his statues of the seated Abraham Lincoln at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. and for the Concord Minuteman.



16. **Bowers House** – Continue south on Boston Road crossing over the Boston Road and River Street intersection. Arrive at the Bowers House. The Bowers House is located at One Concord Road.

Dr. William Bowers House

Located at One Concord Road is Dr. William Bowers' House. Dr. William Bowers was born in Billerica in the year 1744. Bowers graduated from Harvard in 1769 and moved to Billerica to practice medicine. The doctor continued his profession until he died in 1820. He bought a plot of land on the corner of River Street that was previously part of Reverend Samuel Ruggles's estate. In 1804 the construction of his brick end mansion was completed. People have speculated that a hidden room exists in the house to hide occupants during the War of 1812. The house was owned by the Bowers family until 1871 when his last daughter Fanny passed away. William Bowers' daughters were unusual women who were also spinsters. They went on to establish the Bowers Fund and the same fund is still part of the Town's budget. Much of the building looks the same as it did under the ownership of the Bowers. This building is known in town for its iconic 4 chimney roof.



17. **Bennett Library** – Continue south on Boston Road until you come to the Bennett Library at 3 Concord Road.

Bennett Public Library

Built in 1881, the architect, George Tilden, built the structure during the height of the Victorian influence. Eleanor Bennett had this library built in memory of her husband, Joshua, and then donated it to the town. Eleanor had originally offered \$5,000 to fund the construction hoping that Billerica would match her grant. When the town declined, Eleanor, family and friends pooled enough money, after fund-raising, to complete the building and to open it to the public. In 1892 the elegant stained glass windows were a gift from Eleanor's daughter, Ellen Holden. An interior fireplace was donated by her other daughter, Rebecca Warren. The building was once smaller in size but was enlarged by the addition of a back room approximately 10 years after the original construction was finished. It was the first public library in Billerica. By 1893, the library owned over 1,700 books. Hitching posts still stand in front of the building. The building was retired as a library in 1980 and now serves as a cultural center for events, educational programs and classes and artistic productions.



18. **Unitarian Church** – Continue south on Concord Road to the Unitarian Church, located at 5 Concord Road.

The Unitarian Church

The First Parish Church was built in 1797 at the cost of \$8,504.50, which was defrayed by the sale of pews. The congregation was established around 1658 and its first minister was Reverend Samuel Whiting Jr. In 1808 the building's clock was installed as a gift for the town from Deacon Joshua Abbott. The value of the clock was \$500, and at this time the town was still the official owner of the church. The pulpit was bought from the Second Church of Boston. It was the pulpit that Ralph Waldo Emerson preached from it during his time there. Hooper, a successor of Paul Revere cast the bell in 1844. The building originally faced north but was turned 90 degrees east



by oxen so that it could face the Common in 1844. A cannon ball was used as a central fulcrum. Like many buildings of earlier times, it had its dangers with fire and was largely burnt down in 1968. The church was rebuilt very close to the original specification of the building. The church is in possession of a collection of silver from the colonial times. The 12 pieces are some of the most elite in New England. The collection is currently on loan to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

