

## **CHAPTER II**

### **BROOKLINE HISTORY**

Brookline was officially chartered on March 30, 1769 when the so-called “west-enders” from the Town of Hollis merged with the previously unaffiliated one mile wide tract of land called Mile Slip. The town was originally named the township of Raby in honor of one of the English peerages held by the Wentworths, the family that governed the colony for half of the 18th century. The new township was home to 70 settlers and included seventeen square miles of pine forest and hills as well as several tiny brooks funneling into numerous ponds and rivers. At this time only two framed houses had been erected in town, with the remaining settlers living in log cabins. Raby’s early days were filled with legal battles ranging from a border dispute with Hollis and an internal struggle over where to build a new meeting house.

It is believed the current name of Brookline, adopted in 1798, was most likely suggested by one of the town’s leading citizens, Benjamin Shattuck, who was from Brookline, MA. The impetus for the name change was reportedly that the town hoped to distance itself from a bad reputation developed as a result of an unscrupulous group of settlers residing in the southern end.

Farming was the town’s main industry until the late 1800’s, when lumbering and mills broadened the town’s business base. The magnificent forests were the principal source of its prosperity, as eleven sawmills would spring up by 1840. In the town’s early days they furnished large quantities of lumber for local use and later they were the cause of the establishment of the coopering business which for many years was the principal source of income for many inhabitants. At about the same time that lumbering became prevalent, the town’s plentiful waterways also spawned a booming ice business on the 350 acre Muscatanipus Pond where the Fresh Pond Ice Company built what was then the largest ice house contained under one roof. Other early town industries included tanneries, brick manufacture, granite quarrying, and blacksmithing.

Commercial activity in town was also enhanced by granting of a railroad charter to the Brookline railroad company by the state legislature in 1891. Operating under the name of the Brookline and Pepperell railroad, the fourteen-mile line extended from lake Potanipo to a point at or near the station on the Worcester, Nashua and Portland railroad in Pepperell, Massachusetts. The Brookline Station, one of three stations in town, soon became the center of commercial and social activity. At one point at the turn of century over seventy to eighty cars a day regularly left Brookline station for Boston loaded with ice, lumber and granite as well as passengers. Unfortunately, Brookline and other small rail stops became casualties of the decline of the railroad industry in the mid-20th century due to the rise in private truck transportation.

As a whole, the town’s growth was slow for over 200 years as the town essentially remained a quiet rural community. However, the pace of change quickened dramatically in the last 25 years, as the population growth rate soared. Brookline is now recognized as the fastest growing town in the state. This growth in population occasioned a rise in public services and community activities since the late 1960’s. The following chronology reflects some of the more significant events in recent town history:

- **1962:** New elementary school constructed.
- **1968:** Current fire house built. Structure was expanded in 1980.
- **1969:** Town enters into cooperative educational agreement with the Town of Hollis to send Brookline children in grades 7 through 12 to Hollis Junior and Senior High Schools. Town police department consists of six part-time officers. Brookline Recreation Commission formed. Lake Potanipo beach membership consists of 129 families.
- **1970:** New diamond constructed for men's softball and little league programs. Town recreational activities consist of five leagues.
- **1973:** Federal funds acquired to completed Babe Ruth baseball field. Way Off Broadway Players thespian group formed.
- **Early 1970's:** Town enters into regional agreement for emergency ambulance service with towns of Amherst, Hollis, Milford, Wilton and Lyndeborough.
- **1976:** Town residents vote to fund first town 24-hour, all volunteer ambulance service.
- **1979, 1980, 1984:** New fire truck purchased in each year.
- **1987:** Brookline Elementary School constructed. School has been expanded three times. New youth basketball league for over 180 children created.
- **1988:** Town hires two paid attendants for ambulance service. Fourth of July fireworks event started.
- **1989:** New Cooperative School District formed with the Town of Hollis.
- **1990:** October's Eve event begun.
- **1991:** Third town baseball field completed.
- **1992:** First 24-hour police coverage initiated after expansion of police headquarters at town hall. Former Methodist Church youth activity center purchased and renovated to house town library, offering expanded meeting rooms and a reading area. First Fishing Derby held. Renovations to Town Hall (Daniels Academy Building) started.
- **1993:** New youth soccer league formed. Brookline Public Library opened. Fire station and ambulance bay outfitted with a generator to serve as emergency shelters. Hi-band, multi-channel radio with paging capability installed to allow local control of emergency departments. New septic system and parking lot added to ambulance bay. Ambulance service enters into mutual aid agreement with the Town of Mason, to begin January 1994. Hollis-Brookline High School renovated.
- **1994:** Police department obtains 4-wheel drive pickup. Ambulance service establishes Paramedic Intercept program as well as cooperative education program for high school

students. Upgrade of computer infrastructure in Town offices begins. Local cable access channel begins operation.

- **1995:** Elementary school receives six-room addition. Fire department purchases new fire truck and breathing apparatus'. Enhanced 9-1-1 emergency phone system installed with master street address guide for every house location. Emergency Operation Center relocated to Town Hall providing radio capability. Conservation Commission purchases Whitcomb lot at the headwaters of the Nissitissit across from the "Grove", and adds 49 acres of land to the Palmer Wildlife Preserve. Ambulance bay renovations completed. Brookline World-Wide-Web home page established. Town participates in N.H. Department of Transportation low-salt pilot program on Route 130.
- **1996:** New Hollis-Brookline High School constructed on the 95-acre former Hackett Farm. Brookline school district explores new school sites and potential for a kindergarten program. New ambulance purchased. Library begins conversion of card catalog to computerized system. Town enters pilot program to retail electric power.
- **Today:** Fire department includes twenty five firemen, three fire engineers, three lieutenants and a captain. Ambulance staff comprised of two paid daytime attendants and 21 volunteers. Police department has grown to four full-time and ten part-time patrolmen. Brookline elementary school adds four portable classrooms to accommodate increased enrollment, which currently stands at 342 students. Lake Potanipo beach membership now consists of 242 families. Nineteen town recreational leagues in existence.

Sources: Brookline, New Hampshire: Two hundred twenty-five years 1769-1994, Brookline Historical Society, 1994.  
History of Brookline New Hampshire, Edward E. Parker, 1914.  
Gateways to Greater Nashua, Greater Nashua Chamber of Commerce, 1996.  
Brookline Annual Reports.