

## *The Training Field Historic District*

[Joshua Bayley's](#) April 21, 1731, [deed](#) giving the Town the Training Field in exchange for Baileys Lane marked our first open space acquisition, [creating the civic place perhaps most central to West Newbury's geography, history, and heart.](#)

Initially, this town green would have been used for training our [militia](#) and [the elite minutemen](#) among them. Sarah Anna Emery's [Reminiscences of a Nonagenarian](#) described the patriotic scene in April, 1775: "On the arrival of the 'courier' with news of the Lexington fight, the minute men of the upper parish quickly gathered at the training field on the main road. The company having been formed, boards were thrown over an ox-cart; from this hastily improvised rostrum, Parson Toppan spoke a few words of patriotism and encouragement, then invoked the Divine blessing upon the gallant band. Meantime individuals were going from house to house, collecting food and other necessaries. The news came at midnight, and soon after sunrise the company commenced its march; the rations, baggage, etc., being conveyed by two ox-teams."

Military training continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to Mrs. Ronald S. Gibbons' [History of the Training Field](#), "[i]t was also used during the War of 1812, the Civil War, and in World War II I saw my husband and other men of the Town drilling on the same field in a State Guard unit."

At various times, the Training Field has housed structures ranging from [stocks](#) to one of the Town's earliest post offices to a bandstand. In 1882, the Town voted to develop a well and pump, still visible today. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Town placed [memorials to our veterans](#) on the Training

Field: a boulder and plaque in honor of West Newbury's World War I soldiers was installed as part of the Town's [1919 Centennial celebrations](#), and a memorial for our veterans of World War II and the Korean War was erected in 1953.

The Training Field has always served as [West Newbury's open-air gathering place.](#) Today we think of the annual Christmas tree lighting and caroling, as well as the Garden Club's spring plant sale. Imagine a pleasant fall Wednesday in 1894, when horse-drawn streetcars could deliver merry fair goers to the West Newbury Farmers' Club all-day extravaganza, as reported in the [Newburyport Daily News](#): "West Newbury Sept. 12.—This is a holiday in the usually quiet town of West Newbury. The schools have closed and crowds of people are flocking to the training field, where the 19<sup>th</sup> exhibition of the West Newbury Farmers' Club is being held. The weather is all that could be desired and several hundred people are already on the grounds. . . . An excellent exhibit of poultry can be found in a small tent at the left of the [Town] hall and the pens for horses, cattle, sheep and pigs are on the green outside. . . . Howard Currier of Newburyport has pitched a large tent on the training field and laid plates for 400 and here dinner will be served at 1 o'clock. The tent will then be cleared for a promenade concert and dance this evening."

[In response to the threat of road widening on Main Street](#), the Training Field and its surrounds were made a protected local Historic District under Massachusetts law in 1976, and the 2018 [Historic Sites Survey](#) recommended it for an [additional listing in the National Register of Historic Districts.](#)

The Training Field Historic District



To all people to whom these presents shall come greeting. Know ye that I Joshua Bailey of Newbury in the County of Essex in his Majesty's Province of the Massachusetts Bay in New England for & in consideration of one acre & fifty rods of land granted me by the Towne of Newbury on the westerly side of my lands bounding way on the Easterly side of said way as the way was laid out by the select men in 1730 which is to my satisfaction & content have given granted bargained & sold & by these presents do fully freely & absolutely give grant bargain sell alien & confirm unto the Towne of Newbury forever one acre & twenty rods of land in Newbury aforesaid bounded southerly by Bradford Road westerly by Baileys Lane northerly by said Baileys Lane and Easterly by Mr. Sawyers land & said land is about six rods & an half wide at the westerly end & about nine rods & a half wide at the Easterly end & said land to laye common forever for any publick use for said Towne & not to be fenced in or built upon or granted to any person or persons whatsoever but it shall be & remain to the Towne of Newbury as common & unimprorated land forever to have and to hold said land as common to the Towne of Newbury forever. In witness whereof I Joshua Bailey for my self my Heirs Executors & Administrators do covenant promise & give to & with the said Towne of Newbury that I am the sole & lawful owner of the said granted & bargained premises & have in my self full power & lawful authority to make this sale & that the Towne of Newbury shall have hold possess & enjoy said granted premises with the appurtenances free & clear & free by & clearly acquired & discharged of from all former gifts grants bargains sales leases with mortgages mortgages Downes judgments Executions incumbrances & Extents further more I the said Joshua Bailey for my self my Heirs Executors & Administrators do covenant promise & give the above demised premises to the said Towne of Newbury against the lawful claims or demands of any person or persons whatsoever forever hereafter to warrant secure and defend in witness whereof the said Joshua Bailey have set to my hand & seal this fifteenth day of April Anno Domini one thousand seven hundred & thirty & in the fourth year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord George the Second by the grace of God of great Britain France & Ireland King defender of the faith etc.

Signed sealed & delivered  
in presence of us—

Joshua Bailey  
Essex & Newbury April the 21 1731  
Joshua Bailey personally acknowledged this instrument to be his free act and Deed Before me  
Richard Kent  
Justice of the peace

Benjamin Lunt  
Ballhanial Offm



TOWN PUMP in West Newbury common got a workout last night as Miss Rachel Adams, Rockport, and her grandfather, Richard S. Knight, 830 Main st., West Newbury, filled a jug with well water. (Gazette Staff Photo ... Crook)

Clippings from the Collection of Dot Cavanaugh; [Original deed](#) from Assessor's Office; [Transliteration](#) by Michael McCarron.

[Click here](#) for more images.



THE TRAINING FIELD Historic District in West Newbury has been formally established with the receipt of a letter of approval from the state attorney general's

office. The district encompasses the land on either side of Main Street (Rte. 113), from the orchard to the library, and the Training Field itself.

**Historic district official**

By LYNNE TOUHY  
WEST NEWBURY — The West Newbury Training Field Historic District was officially established this week with the receipt of a letter of approval from the state attorney general's office, according to Town Clerk Norman H. Hobson. Hobson said the only remaining step in formalizing the historic district was to post a copy of the warrant article and the letter of approval in five locations in town.

Townpeople voted their approval of the historic district when the proposal appeared as a warrant article at the special town meeting April 5. Since then, there has been "a lot of paperwork involved," according to Hobson, work which culminated in the receipt of the letter signed by Attorney

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Marker Location: 494-506 Main St., West Newbury, MA Latitude: 42.80580 Longitude: -70.97997

**•FIELD**

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General Francis Bellotti and Asst. Attorney General Henry F. O'Connell.

The historic district will include the Training Field area, 10 houses surrounding it, the GAR Memorial Library and the West

The name "Training Field" dates back to the revolutionary era, when soldiers were trained for the war on that location. It was similarly used during the Civil War.