



BOOMTOWN, NORTH ANDOVER

Development and Change in the 1950's and 1960's

In 1950 North Andover, Massachusetts had a population of a little above 8,000 residents. Over 20% of North Andover's 26.63 square miles were still devoted to active farming use. The nickname "Turkey Town" was appropriate. The Stevens Mill, Sutton Mills, and Davis and Furber were the large businesses in North Andover. Other commerce was primarily small, family-owned businesses located in the specific neighborhoods of the Old Center, Water Street, Sutton Street and Main Street. Many North Andover residents in 1950 did not anticipate the growth and changes their small town would experience during the next two decades.

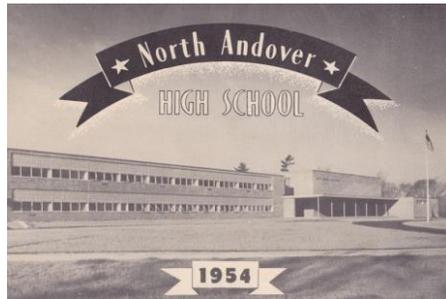
In the early 1950's Western Electric built a multi-million dollar industrial plant on Route 125 in North Andover



close to the Haverhill border. The two neighboring communities had competed aggressively for the Western Electric location and the town won over the city. The many technical and production jobs created by Western Electric brought new residents to North Andover and created a growing demand for homes, schools, and businesses. North Andover quickly began to grow and change.

Merrimack College, which opened in 1947, graduated its first class in 1951. In 1955, the year of the town's Centennial Celebration, the first class graduated from the new North Andover High School on Main Street. Johnson High had been demolished and the new North Andover Police Station was built on the site. Kittredge School was built on Osgood Street across from the new police station. Also in the 1950's houses were moved from Main Street across from Town Hall to create a shopping plaza and parking lot in the middle of town. Downtown North Andover became a shopping destination. In

1957 North Andover added a skiing destination when Boston Hill Skiing was opened on Route 114.



By 1960 North Andover had changed in many ways from its quiet small town identity. The population had increased by several thousands and the many people who lived and worked in North Andover were not "townies". However, it was the development of interstate Highway 495 that completed North Andover's metamorphosis into a suburban community. It was claimed that with the 495 connection Boston would be only 20 minutes away. The construction of the highway caused several neighborhoods by the Merrimack River to be demolished and many long-time North Andover residents had to relocate. The highway did create a demand for new housing in the town. Miles of undeveloped "out-country" began to be sold for housing and new neighborhoods were created. Raleigh Tavern Lane was one of the first areas of new home construction. In spite of some Town Meeting resistance housing complexes such as Village Green were built on Route 125. North Andover's population in the 1970 census was 15,500

Of course many other changes came to North Andover during the 1960's. The Franklin Elementary School was built right next to



Melamed's Turkey Farm. In 1964 the Atkinson Upper-Elementary School opened on Massachusetts Avenue. The Atkinson School was a controversial concept for North Andover since it was planned to educate all the seventh and eighth graders in town at one separate location, and thus changed the traditional model of the neighborhood Grammar, or grades one through eight, school. The government proposed to construct an ABM Missile site in the Sharpener's Road area. In 1968, during a blizzard, one thousand residents met to protest that idea. As it turned out, the site was never fully operational. The North Andover Mall on Turnpike Street was constructed. The Stevens Memorial Library welcomed a new addition in 1969. Many new industries and businesses along Route 114 began to create traffic problems, especially in the Old Center Area. New residents meant more schools and at the end of the 1960's there were plans for a new high school and talk of an out-country fire station.

By 1970 North Andover had changed almost completely from a small town to a thriving suburb. It was clear to everyone that change in North Andover would continue throughout the decades to come.