

1761-1804

1761 On July 4, Benning Wentworth, Royal Governor of New Hampshire, signs the charter, which establishes the 25,365 acre "Township of Norwich" in the Province of New Hampshire.



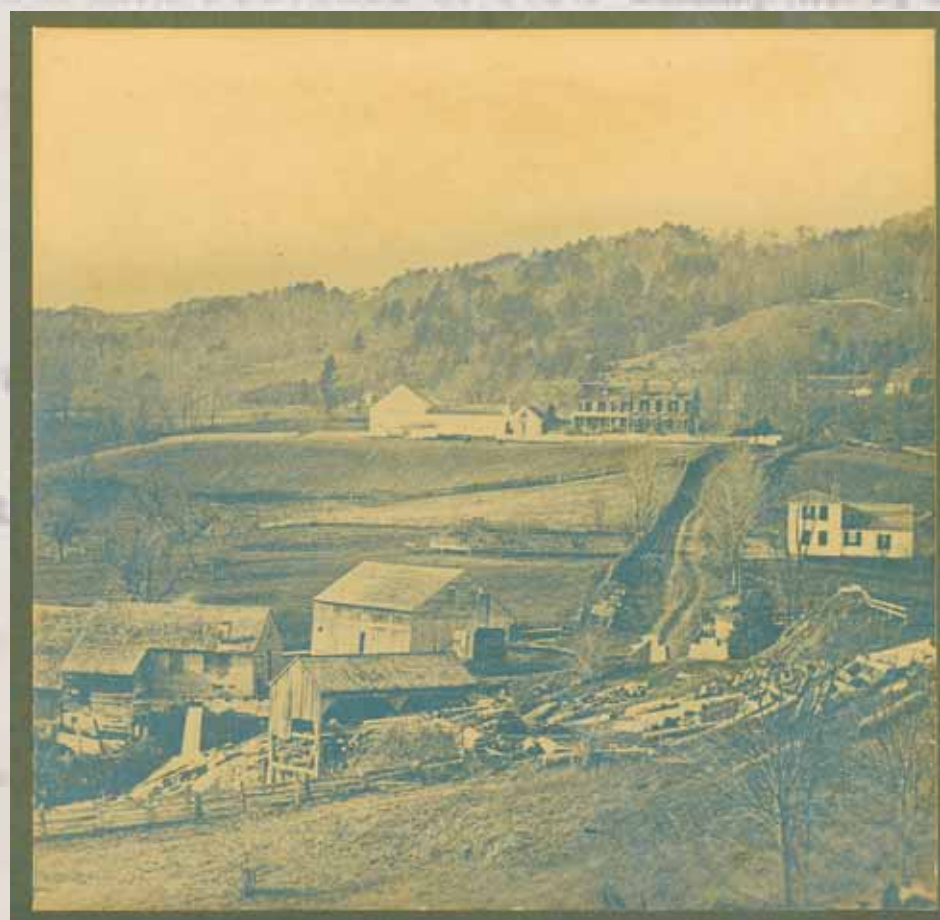
1765 The families of Nathan Messenger and Samuel Hutchinson are the first to winter in town in a log hut by the Ledyard Bridge.

1766 The first sawmill is built on Blood Brook by Jacob Burton, near the Elm Street bridge.

1767 Lydia Hutchinson is the first baby born in Norwich on October 6 to John and 'Polly' Wilson Hutchinson.

1768 The first town meeting is held in Norwich in Joseph Hatch's cabin, near the site of the house he built in 1773 at 236 Main Street. Hatch is one of the first settlers on the Plain.

1769 Eleazar Wheelock, a Congregational minister from Connecticut, establishes Dartmouth College in Hanover with the mission "to educate Native students, English youth and others." Norwich residents contribute land, money and building materials.



1770 The first ferry between Hanover and Norwich is kept by John Sargent at the site of the Ledyard Bridge.

Joseph Hatch and Oliver Babcock build the town's first grist mill near the mouth of Blood Brook.

1771 The census reports a population of 206 people—40 families—are living in Norwich.

1773 The site for a meeting house is chosen at the Center, known as Meeting House Hill, near the present intersection of Maple Hill and Union Village Road. Peter Olcott donates the land. Because of the Revolutionary War, it is not completed until 1784 at a cost of £694. A commemorative plaque at the top of Meeting House Hill marks this spot.

1774 Reverend Lyman Potter is installed as the first minister and remains for 25 years. His salary, voted upon at each annual Town Meeting, is funded by a special tax on members of his congregation.

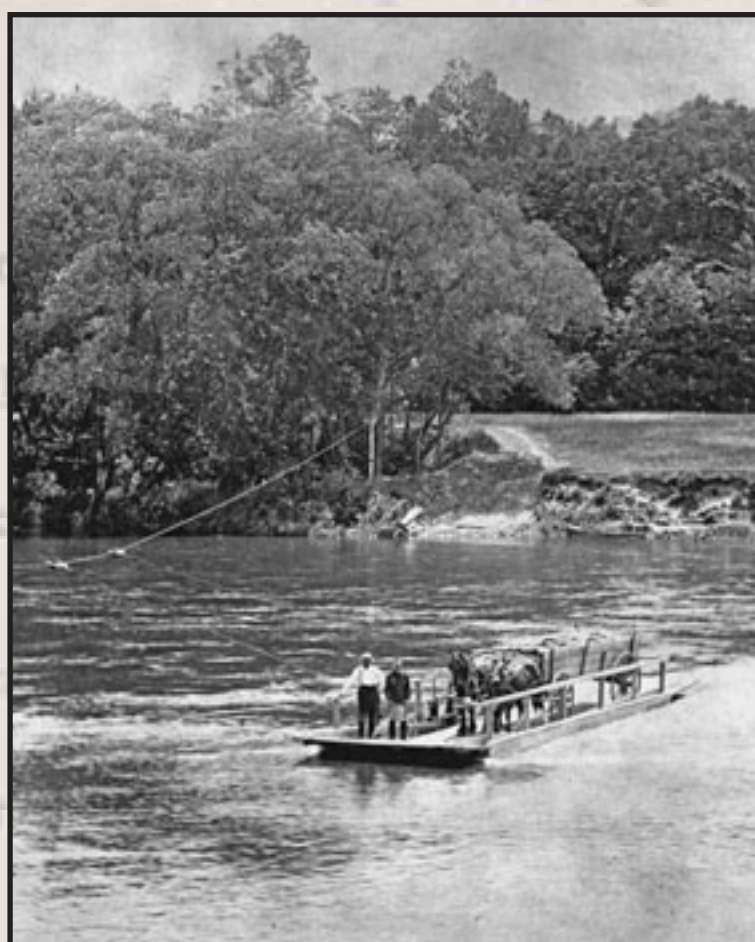
Dr. Joseph Lewis is the first physician in general practice and settles in the area now known as Lewiston. He is the grandfather of General William Enos Lewis, whose 277 Main Street home becomes the Norwich Historical Society in 2003.

1775 Windsor County organizes a regiment to serve in the Revolutionary War, with Peter Olcott chosen as Colonel. Olcott later becomes a County Court Judge and Lt. Governor of Vermont.



1776 On July 4, Congress adopts the Declaration of Independence.

A rope ferry across the Connecticut River is established between Norwich and Hanover, leading on the Dresden side (northern part of the township of Hanover) by Rope Ferry Road to the middle of Hanover. It may have been in existence as early as 1776 and was most probably in operation until at least 1806.



1777 The first constitution in America to prohibit slavery, allow men to vote without requiring property ownership and authorize a public school system is adopted in Windsor, Vermont.

Norwich joins the movement to create the State of Vermont. Jacob Burton works to draw up Vermont's Declaration of Independence from New York.

1778 Norwich and nine other towns formally withdraw from the legislature of the newly formed Vermont Republic in protest against its refusal to include more New Hampshire towns.

1785 Families pledge money, material and labor for the construction of the Red School House, located where the Congregational Church stands today. An historic marker marks the site.

The Vermont Legislature, which had not yet decided on a capital, convenes in Norwich June 2-17 at the new Center meeting house. They enact a law which designates "the place for keeping a County Grammar School in and for Windsor County, shall be at the house commonly known by the name the Red Schoolhouse in Norwich," initiating the provision of Vermont's First Constitution for schools of secondary learning.

1791 Vermont becomes the 14th state in the Union. School districts 1-12 established on March 4.

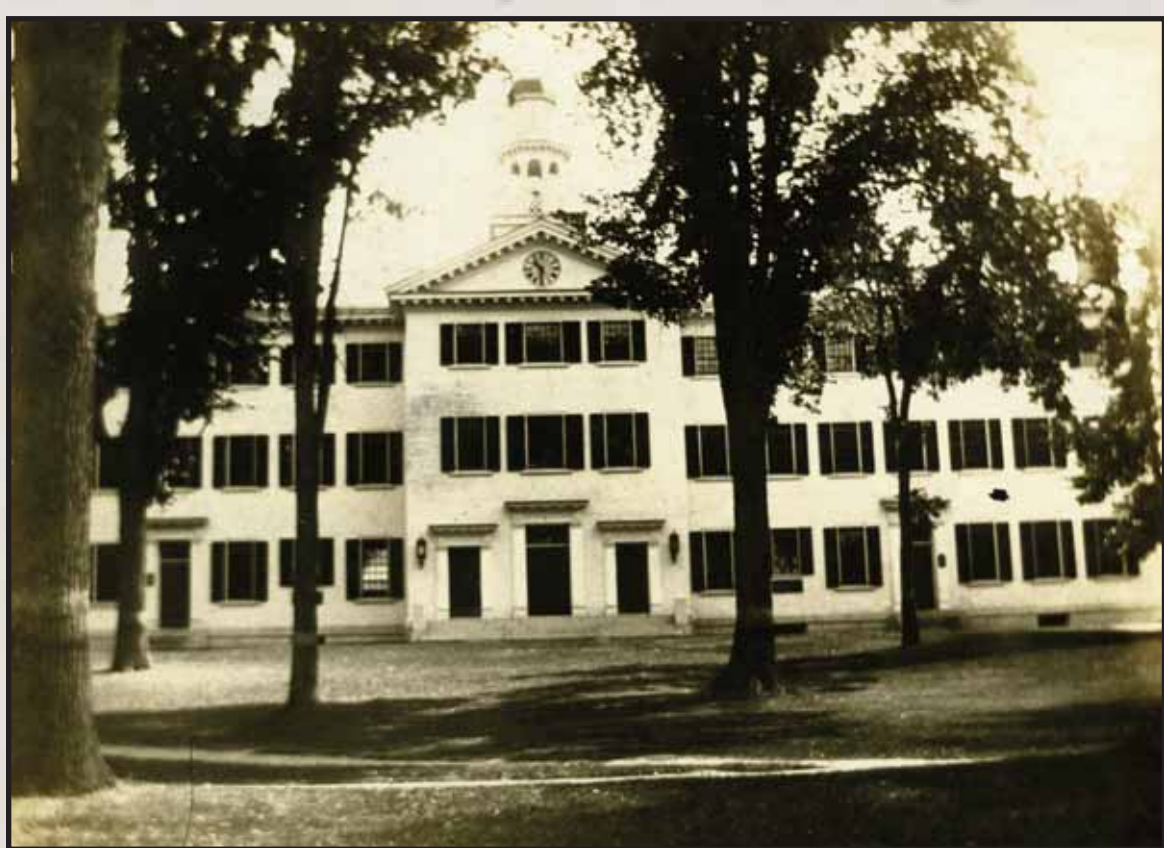
1793 Because of the friction between Hanover and Norwich about the fees charged for use of the ferry, Dr. Joseph Lewis purchases the Inn at the river bank on the Norwich side and operates the ferry without difficulty until the first bridge is built.

1796 The first toll bridge from Norwich to Hanover is built by the White River Falls Bridge Company. Norwich is hostile to the toll bridge.

1797 Colonel Jasper Murdock builds his home near the corner of what is now Main Street and Beaver Meadow Road. He operates it as a tavern and inn. It is later known as the Union Hotel, then the Newton Inn before finally becoming the Norwich Inn.



1804 The controversial toll bridge to Hanover built in 1796 falls into the river, collapsing from its own weight. A second bridge is completed at a cost of \$2,600.



1805-1901

By the Grace of God of Great-Britain,

France and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, &c.

To all Persons to whom these Presents shall come,

GREETING.

KNOW ye, that We of our said Majesty,



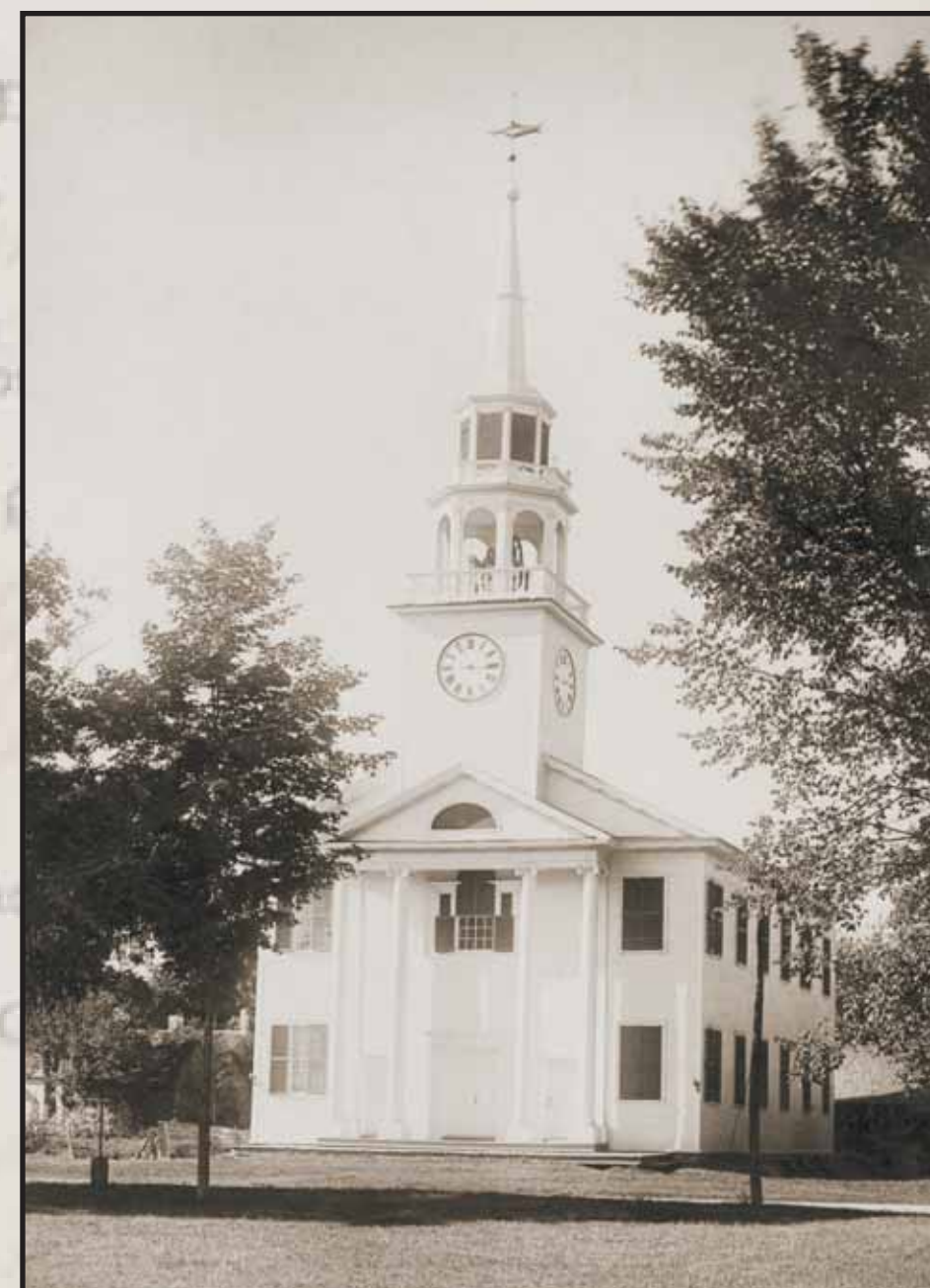
1805 A post office is established in town on July 1 on the Norwich Green in Joseph Burton's harness and saddle shop. Burton builds the Lewis House in 1807.

1807 A turnpike road is laid out through the town to Chelsea, where the county seat is located.

1817 Two meeting houses are built due to differences of opinion as to where they should be located. The North Church is built at the Center and the South Church on the Plain.

Of the eight church bells in Vermont made by Paul Revere, the oldest hangs in the steeple of the Norwich Congregational Church, marked "Revere and Sons, Boston, 1817." It is a gift of Thomas Emerson.

President James Monroe, while touring through New England, is formally received by Norwich, which is the first town in Vermont to welcome a sitting US President.



1820 After a contentious decade as Acting Superintendent at West Point, Norwich native and Dartmouth alumnus Captain Alden Partridge opens his American Literary, Scientific and Military Academy in Norwich. In 1834, the military academy becomes Norwich University.

1830 Norwich population reaches 2,316.

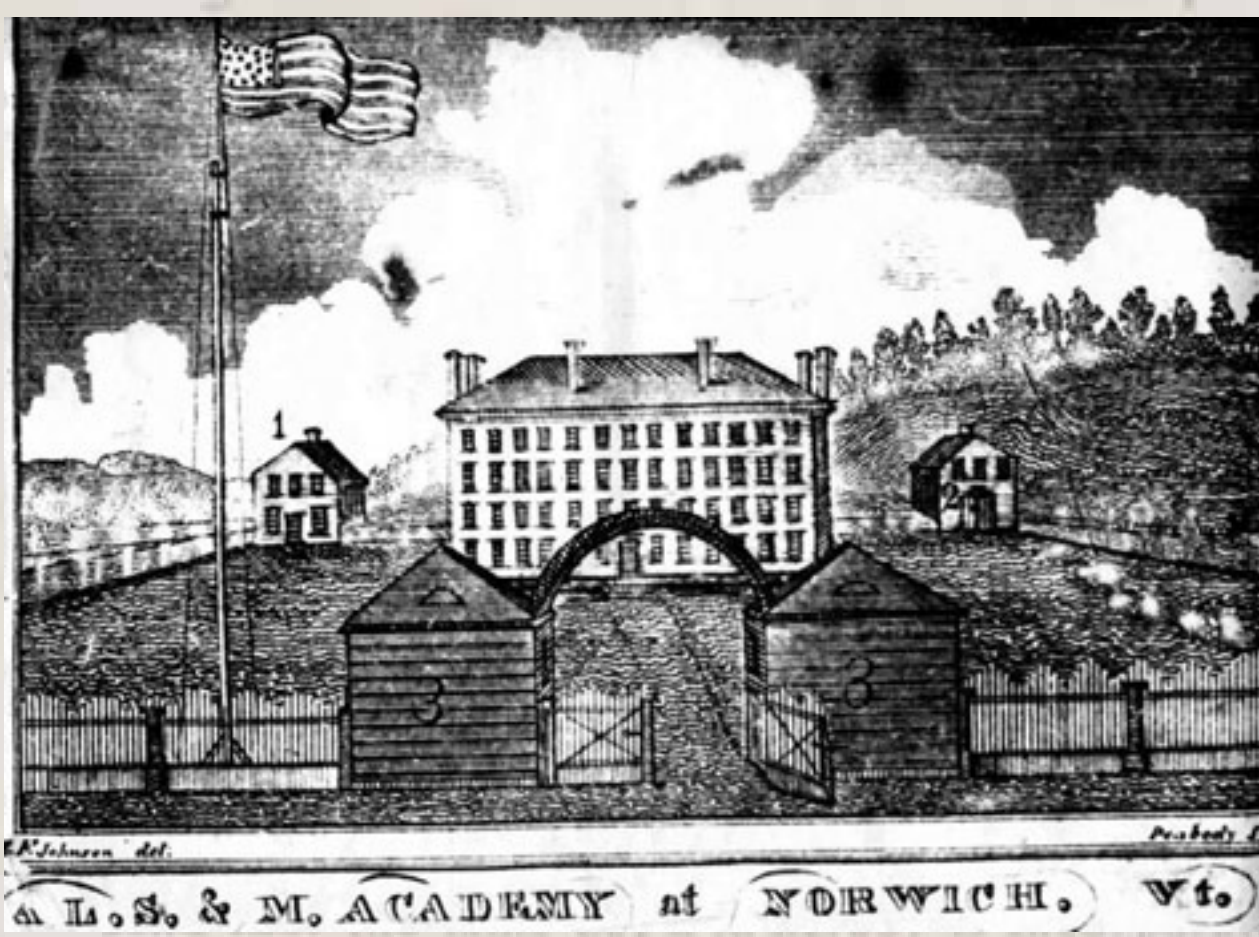
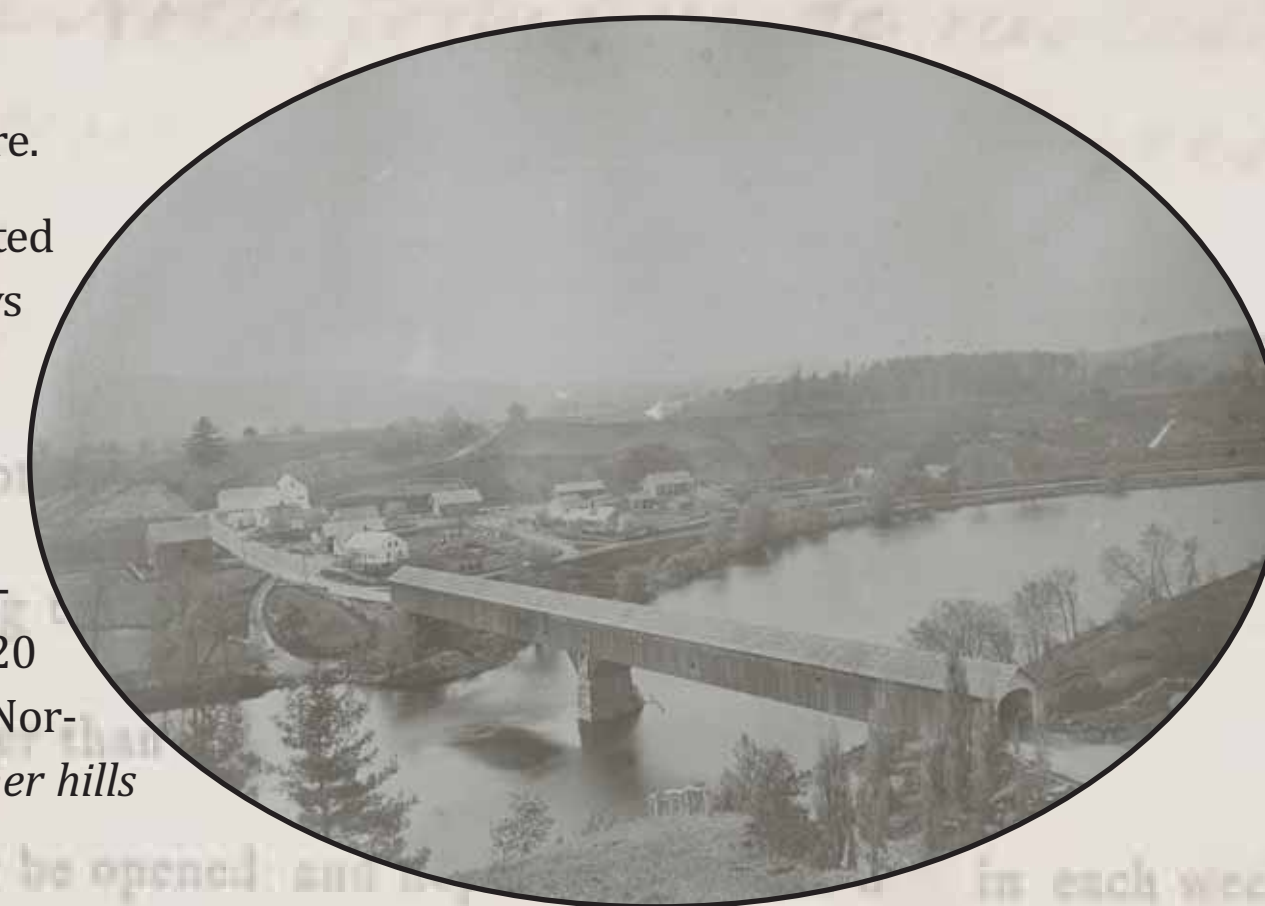
1839 The White River Falls Bridge Company builds a third toll bridge.

1843 The Norwich Female Abolition Society is founded.

1853 Last toll bridge between Hanover and Norwich is destroyed by fire.

1855 Union Hall, on the second floor of the store next to the Inn, is selected as the site for Town Meetings. On December 18, 1889 a fire destroys the store and the Inn, but the block is rebuilt.

1859 The Ledyard Free Bridge between Hanover and Norwich is built in the approximate location of today's bridge. This covered bridge is the first free bridge across the Connecticut River. Dartmouth College pays for all but 80 feet on the western shore. The remaining 20 feet are paid for by Norwich. At the dedication, the President of Norwich University invites Hanover to cross "where there are greener hills and pleasanter roads."



A. L. S. & M. ACADEMY at NORWICH, Vt.

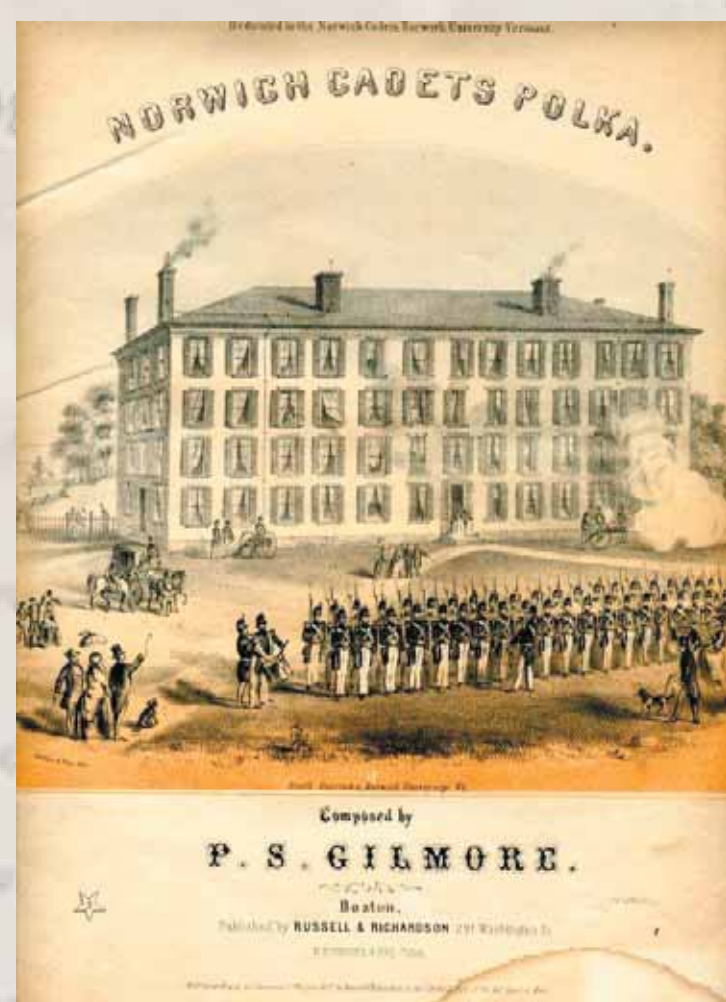
"To use all means sanctioned by law, humanity, and religion, for the entire and unconditional abolition of slavery in this country, for the elevation and condition of the people of color, and their admission to equal rights and privileges with the whites."

From the draft constitution, Norwich Female Abolition Society 1843-1850

1860 The first Norwich band is formed with Norwich University cadets. They play at all patriotic functions and parades in town until the school moves to Northfield.

1861 178 men from Norwich serve in the Civil War, and 27 die. They are memorialized on the monument ARMED FORCES IN THE TIME OF WAR 1776-1947 by Tracy Hall.

1863 The original St. Barnabas Church incorporates a 1797 meeting house from Orford NH, which was floated down the river to Norwich. Known as the "Orford Ark," the church faces the Norwich University parade ground, perhaps influenced by Edward Bourne, University President and rector from 1862-1866. The church is destroyed by fire in 1917.

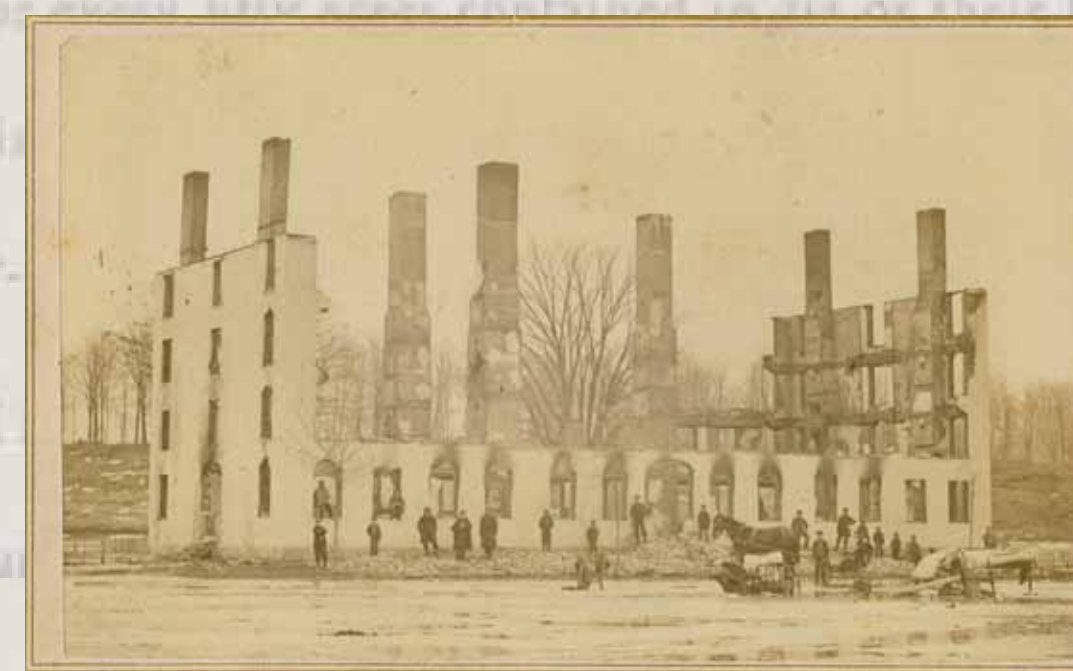


Composed by P. S. GILMORE.

1866 The South Barracks of Norwich University is destroyed by fire, and the University moves to Northfield, Vermont.

1867 The Norwich Classical and English Boarding School opens in the North Barracks, closing in 1878.

1880 The Norwich Public Library, founded as a membership organization, is established and operates out the Congregational Church vestry and Norwich University's North Barracks. In 1901 the library moves to its current Main Street location. Until 1920, it is a private book club with a 75-cent annual fee.



1884 A passenger rail station is built in Lewiston.

1888 Dissension between the two village school districts, which has gone on for 51 years, ends when both districts make the wise decision to merge, occupying the Norwich University's North Barracks. This ended the friction that had begun in 1837 when, in court papers filed by the south district, claims were made "that the north district has entered into the plaintiff's school house and then and there expelled, put out and moved the plaintiffs and their school master and scholars therein assembled."

1889 On December 18, the Norwich Hotel, E.W. Olds store and post office are destroyed by fire, which begins in the store. In 1890, Dr. W.S. Bowles erects the Newton Inn on the site.



1891 The Citizens Improvement Association, founded February 2, the mission of which "shall be the improvement of the town of Norwich in any way and the improvement of its members in the customs of deliberative assemblies and in the use of logical thought." Among their accomplishments is raising \$16.90 by subscription for the lighting of the village lights and the chartering of the Norwich Canning Company.

1898 A Norwich Village high school building is constructed at a cost of \$5,134.66 on the site of the former North Barracks and is still in use today as the Marion Cross School.

1901 The Norwich Old Home Week Association, led by Alden Partridge's son Henry, selected August 11-17 for the first annual Old Home Week. August 16 is chosen as Old Home Day. It is to be a day of public exercises on the Green to "promote the welfare of the town by increasing the interest in the town among former residents."



"The books are largely historical, biographical and travels, with just enough of fiction of a high order to season the weight of more solid matter, manifesting the judicious selecting of reading matters by the trustees."

Henry Partridge Library Dedication, 1902



High School, Norwich, Vt.

COME TO NORWICH, VERMONT
OLD HOME WEEKEND

1905-1950



1905 The University Grange, the 335th in Vermont, begins meeting in Union Hall until 1916 when they purchase the former Main Street harness shop. The grange movement is the oldest family, fraternal organization in the country and today still follows its mission of "legislation, education, and inspiration and community service for the betterment of mankind." Today, the Upper Valley Community Grange is a merger of the University Grange and Hartford's Cascadnac Grange.

1907 The Norwich Women's Club, originally the Woman's Literary Club, is founded with 8 charter members "to promote the cultural, charitable and social aspects of Norwich life." Early projects were the founding of the Village Improvement Society the Norwich School Library and a lunch program for the school. Today raising monies for community projects is as important as it was in the early days.

1907 The voters authorize the Selectmen "to provide some suitable place for a lock-up." However, it is not until 1913 at a special meeting, a motion passes to purchase the "lock-up." The newly-restored jail is now housed in the Historical Society's Barn.

1914 Norwich Y.M.C.A. Band is formed and is the first and only YMCA-sponsored band in Vermont. They play each summer for the town's Memorial Day and July 4 parades, as well as a summer concert series on the Green. The band era ended in the 1940s because of WWII but was reactivated in 1972 as the Hanover-Norwich Community Band, now the Upper Valley Community Band.

1915 Beaver Meadow Chapel is completed and overseen by the Beaver Meadow Union Chapel Association, a non-denominational organization. The Chapel building is designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1992.

The original Norwich Bandstand is built thanks to supplies and labor from town residents. The land, across the street from 383 Main Street, is donated by Captain Henry Partridge to the Town. The bandstand is later moved to the Green.

1920 The population in Norwich is 1,092; its lowest point since the 1780s.

An all-volunteer Norwich Fire Company is formed. In 1924, the Fire District purchases Thomas Hazen's barn, the site of the present fire station, for a Fire House. At Town Meeting, March 7, 1978, voters appropriate \$50,000 "for the Norwich Fire District for the purpose of replacing the present firehouse with a modern, fire-proof structure." The Norwich Fire District becomes the Norwich Fire Department in 1988.

1921 The 19th Amendment is ratified by 36 states, giving women the right to vote. The Vermont General Assembly passes this on February 8.

Norwich Water Company, a private organization, is founded to seek additional sources of water for an ever-growing town.

1922 Residents vote at the town meeting to allocate \$50 to the Norwich Library Association to help keep the library "free to all." This is the beginning of official Town support for its Library.

1923 American Legion, Lyman F. Pell Post 8, chartered with the State of Vermont, is named in memory of the Norwich soldier killed in action in WWI on October 23, 1918. The current building on Beaver Meadow Road is built in the early 1950s.

1925 Women's Christian Temperance Union donates the granite drinking fountain on the Green with the plaque, "Water is Life". The Norwich Water Supply Company agrees to supply water for the fountain free of charge.

Indoor plumbing installed in the 1898 Village School building followed by a heating system in 1942.

1927 The Great Flood of 1927 sees a record rainfall of 6.53 inches November 8 and 9. Twelve bridges wash away in Norwich alone.

1936 The John Ledyard Bridge is constructed at a cost of \$153,000 and paid for through the Works Project Administration and Hanover and Norwich.

1939 Ski school opened on Cemetery Hill with a portable tow that was able to be moved to other locations if snow conditions were better.

Tracy Memorial Hall is dedicated on June 14 thanks to a bequest from Norwich resident, James Tracy, the Works Progress Administration and Norwich taxpayers. Town meeting moves to Tracy Hall and is no longer held in Union Hall on the 2nd floor of the A.J. Merrill Store, now Dan & Whit's.

1943 Norwich Development Association formed to provide safe swimming and free lessons. The Norwich pool is dedicated in 1944. NDA went on to oversee all recreational programs, becoming the Norwich Recreation and Conservation Council in 1972.

1945 United Servicemen's Committee founded, sponsored by the Norwich churches, to write to servicemen, publish a newspaper with town news, be in contact with families and help prepare for their homecoming.

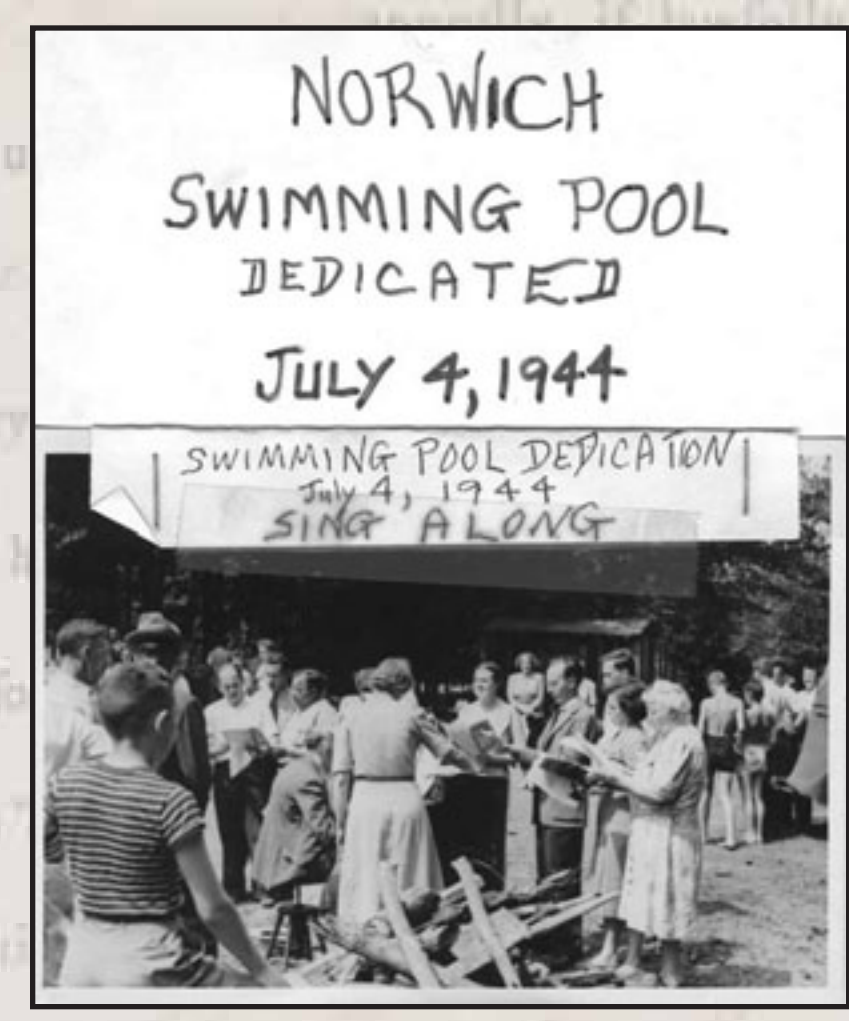
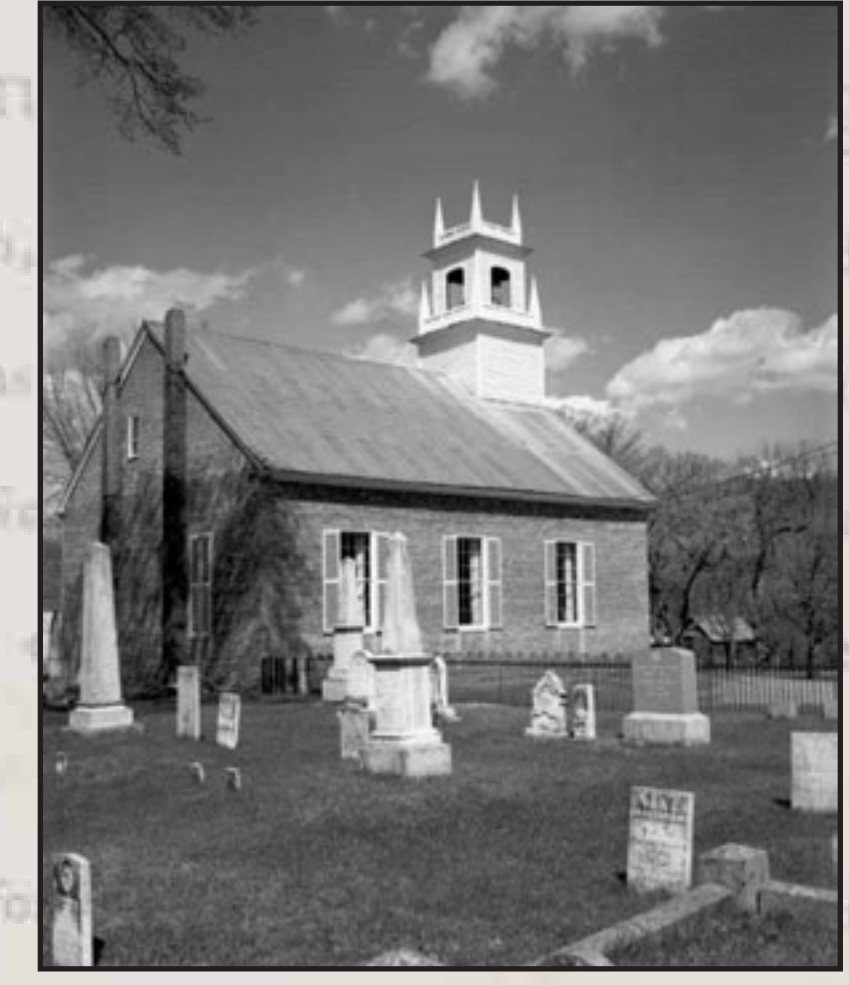
Paul Sample's painting of a proposed new school to replace the 1898 building is exhibited at Town Meeting. The committee makes recommendations in response to overcrowding and "deteriorated physical condition of nearly all the school facilities." The proposal is defeated.

1948 New England Power Co. begins building the Wilder Dam. Completed in 1950, it raises the water level 18 feet, impacting both Vermont and New Hampshire.

1949 The first Norwich Fair takes place on the Green, initially sponsored by the Norwich Congregational Church and later by all the local churches. In 1989, the Norwich Lions Club takes over sponsorship of the Fair and continues to raise money in support of community projects.

World War Mothers of New England, Norwich Chapter, No. 3, is founded on July 14, to support the mothers of the men and women who served in the "American Forces of the World War."

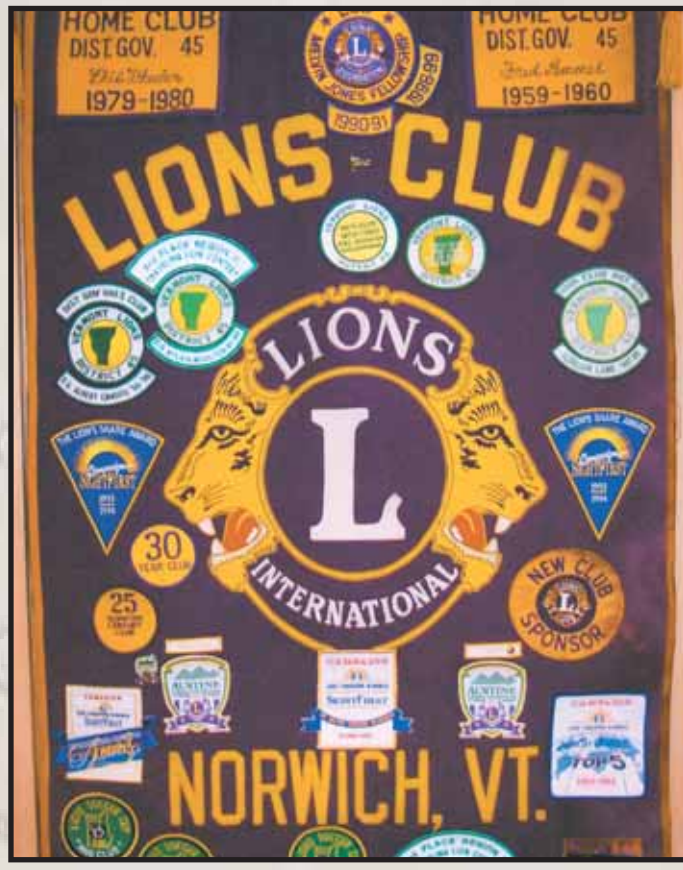
1950 At special Town and School District Meetings, the bids for renovations to the Village School exceed \$80,000. School Directors are authorized to seek additional sources.



"Encourage observance of all patriotic days; to instill at all times, lessons in good citizenship and a proper reverence for the flag of our country."
 excerpt from charter,
 World War Mothers of New England,
 Norwich Chapter, July 4, 1949

With a vice of Council,

1951-2011



1951 C.C. Hills, a Norwich resident, sends an invitation to all his neighbors and friends encouraging them to join "a friendly organization known as the Norwich Historical Society a pleasant and worthwhile place of meeting for those interested in the Town's past as well as its future."



From the collection, Norwich Historical Society

1954 The Norwich Lions Club, District 45, is chartered on June 4, under the sponsorship of the White River Lions Club and their motto "WE Serve" has guided the Lions projects and activities for over 55 years.



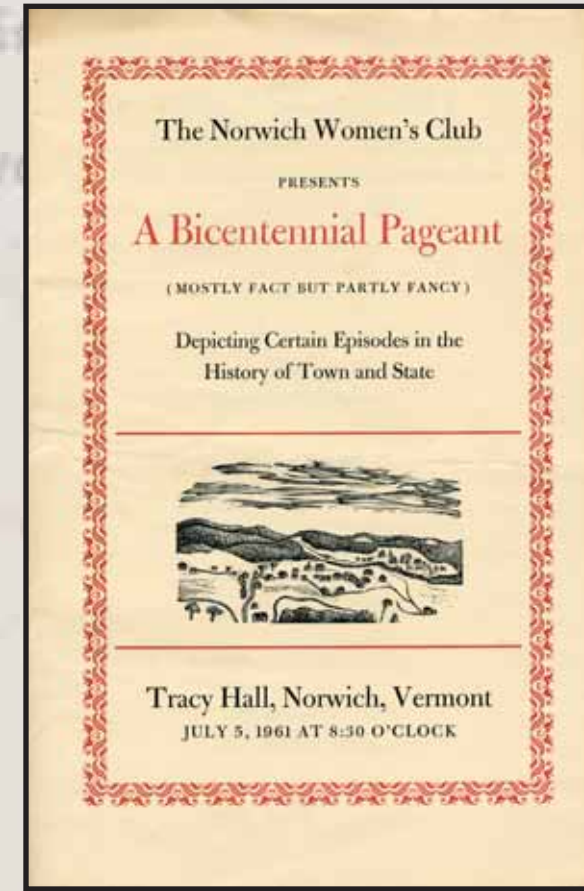
1955 The A.J. Merrill Store founded in 1891 becomes Dan & Whit's after it is purchased by Dan Fraser and Whit Hicks.



1960 Voters elect to build a 6-room addition to the Norwich Village School at a cost of \$122,586, remodeling the historic 1898 building rather than razing it and building a new school.

1961 Norwich celebrates its bi-centennial, the 200th anniversary of the signing of the Town's charter in 1761.

The first annual Norwich Christmas Pageant takes place organized by the Grange and other town organizations and churches to capture the spirit of a shared and rewarding experience for the holidays. To this day, the barn at 395 Main Street continues to be the site of the manger, a tradition that still passes through successive owners.



Norwich Industrial Committee and the churches commit to work together to develop "a large scale home for senior citizens." Ground-breaking on the project, however, does not happen until 1980. The committee changes its name to Norwich Planning Committee "since it will be their duty to protect us against things we do not want as well as to acquire things we do find desirable."



1963 Dresden School District is formed in June as the first interstate school district in the country, and President John F. Kennedy signs the bill.

1966 At a Special Town Meeting on August 16, in a very close vote (347-311) by secret ballot, it is decided that Exit 13 from I-91 will be located where planned; that is, through the community of Lewiston. On April 17, 1967 much of Lewiston is razed for Exit 13 at I-91.



Public kindergarten is established by vote at Town Meeting.

Norwich Development Association purchases 50 acres of land and the fire tower on Gile Mountain. Their mission now extends to land conservation in response to the appearance and completion of the Interstate.



1971 Norwich School Board develops a nature study area on land donated by the Archibald Peisch family.

1972 Norwich Development Association is renamed Norwich Recreation and Conservation Council and has jurisdiction over a town recreation program, land conservation and an ice rink on the Green.



1973 After 46 years at the Norwich Elementary School, Marion Cross retires as teacher and principal. The school is renamed the Marion W. Cross School in her honor. Police department has its first full-time police chief, Herbert Fellows, in response to more theft, speeding and parking violations.

1974 The Norwich School District rules that it cannot take responsibility for the maintenance of the Beaver Meadow School, the last of the six former one-room rural schools in Norwich to remain in public ownership.



1975 Bicentennial wing of the Norwich Public Library dedicated on October 5. The Library is now open 18 hours a week, compared with one afternoon a week until April 1971.

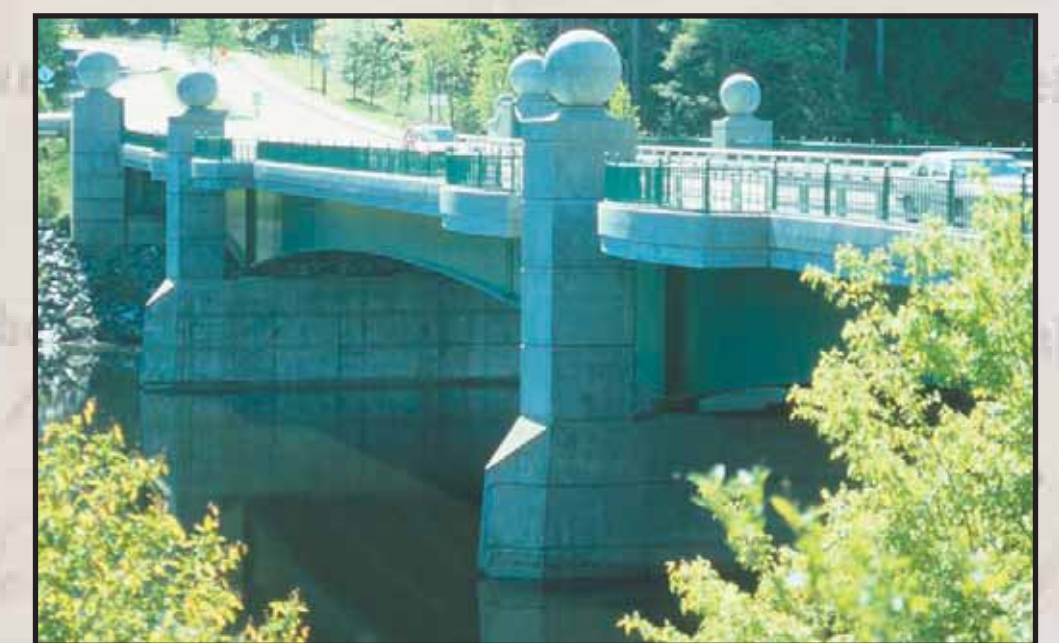
1978 Norwich Housing Corporation formed due to the efforts of all the churches to find an appropriate site to build housing for seniors. A groundbreaking ceremony for Norwich Senior Housing is held in 1980.

1980 Population: 2,398, surpassing for the first time the former high in 1830.

1989 The second addition to the Marion Cross School is completed.

1991 Village of Norwich placed on the National Register thanks to efforts by the Norwich Historical Society.

1995 A new Ledyard Bridge is proposed. Although work begins in 1997, the bridge is not completed until 2001. The controversial concrete "bridge balls" are the design of a Concord NH architect hired to give the bridge some aesthetic appeal.



1996 Long-time Marion Cross School principal, Milton Frye, retires and in his honor the Milton Frye Nature Preserve is established on the Peisch land.



Fiddleheads by James Sardonis

1997 Norwich Public Library raises \$600,000 making the library fully accessible with an elevator and expanded space for programs and more books.



2003 Norwich Historical Society purchases the Lewis House at 277 Main Street and launches a capital campaign, which concludes in 2008 raising more than \$600,000 to rehabilitate the house and make it accessible.

2010 Population is now 3,414.

Norwich native, Hannah Kearney, wins the first gold medal for the United States in Women's Mogul Skiing at the Vancouver Olympics and comes home to a "ticker tape" parade down Main Street.



2011 September 17 Norwich celebrates the 250th anniversary of the signing of its charter with a Color Guard from Norwich University and a presentation of the original Town Charter, signed 250 years ago.

