

About Dedham

Community Demographics

Dedham is a historic suburban town of 23,464 (2000 U.S. census) with approximately 30% of the 8,654 households having children under the age of 18. Dedham is located in eastern Massachusetts south of metropolitan Boston and also borders the towns of Needham, Canton and Westwood. The town is 10 miles south of Boston proper, 33 miles northeast of Providence, R.I. and 211 miles from New York City.

Dedham is a 10.64 sq. mile community. Principal highways affording access to Dedham are US route 1, State routes 109, 128 and Interstate Route 95. Commuter rail service is available to Boston. Amtrak passenger service to New York City is available in neighboring Westwood.

Historic Dedham

The Massachusetts General Court issued orders for the establishment of two inland towns in 1635, which could relieve the population pressures within the existing settlements along the Bay, as well as serve as a buffer zone between the Indians and the main colony. The first of these towns was Concord; the second was Dedham. Dedham received its grant as a town in 1636 from the Massachusetts Bay Colony making it one of the oldest communities in the state. The original Dedham Grant included all towns from Bellingham and Plainville in the south, to Natick and Wellesley on the northwest.

Dedham is the home of the first free, taxpayer-funded public school in the United States (not through private or church donations or rental property) opened in 1636 and fully tax funded by 1644. Horace Mann, a champion of public schools and the state's first secretary of education, once served on the Dedham school committee.

Dedham is home to historic Mother Brook, the first man-made canal dug through from the Charles River to East Brook in 1637, provided a connection with the Neponset River and a source of waterpower for the town's mills. It is the site of the earliest surviving wood-framed house in New England, the Fairbanks House originally built between 1636 and 1641. Dedham served as county seat (shire town) of Norfolk County since 1793.

For a more comprehensive history of Dedham visit the Dedham Historical Society website (<http://www.dedhamhistorical.org/history.php>)