

*Easthampton Revolution Freedom Liberty*

# **THE LONG WAY HOME**

**Easthampton, Massachusetts**

**& The American Revolution**

1775 — 2025 | USA 250

# Returning to Hard Ground

## Before There Was a Town



For centuries, the Norwottuck people fished the Manhan River, farmed the rich alluvial flats, and forged the trails that would become Easthampton's main streets.

By 1700, five English families had planted roots at Pascommuck near East Street, carving a life in the shadow of Mount Tom.



*That choice — to return to hard ground after catastrophe — is the first sentence of Easthampton's story.*

## Pascommuck, 1704

The fortified village was attacked and burned.



Nineteen people were killed.

The settlement was abandoned for a decade.



But they came back.



# An Economy in the Shadow (1715–1775)



## Mills on the Manhan

Sawmills and grist mills anchored the economy. The falls at the Manhan River served as Easthampton's first engine of growth.



## Wheat & Flax

Agriculture was the backbone. Families worked the Connecticut Valley's rich glacial soils to feed a community slowly becoming its own.



## Northampton's Shadow

Residents worshipped in, paid taxes to, and answered to Northampton—but they lived and died on Easthampton ground.

# The Call Reaches the Valley

**April 19, 1775 – The Shot Heard Round the World.**

Word traveled fast through the Connecticut Valley. Easthampton wasn't its own town yet—it was only a scattering of farms and mills.



**Easthampton**

**The men who worked those mills heard the call the same as everyone else.**

**Lexington & Concord**

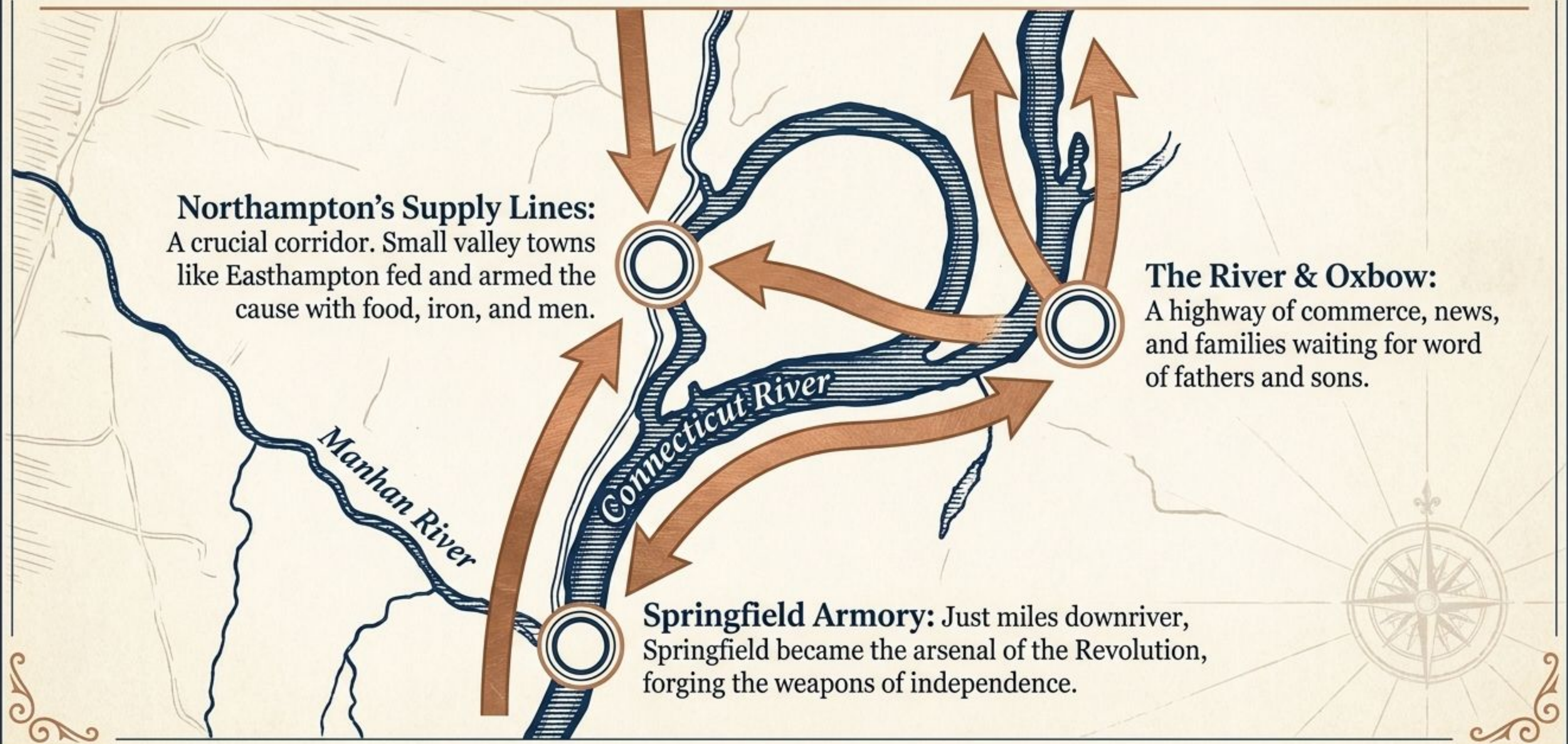
A large diagram on the right side of the page shows concentric circles representing the spread of news. At the center is a glowing orange circle labeled "Lexington & Concord". Several concentric circles of varying thickness radiate outwards from this center, filling the right half of the page. The circles are drawn in a light brown or gold color. In the bottom right corner, there is a faint, stylized map of a town or valley.

# The Valley Was Not a Battlefield. It Was the Backbone.

**Northampton's Supply Lines:**  
A crucial corridor. Small valley towns like Easthampton fed and armed the cause with food, iron, and men.

**The River & Oxbow:**  
A highway of commerce, news, and families waiting for word of fathers and sons.

**Springfield Armory:** Just miles downriver, Springfield became the arsenal of the Revolution, forging the weapons of independence.



## 1785: Easthampton Becomes Easthampton

Carved from Northampton and Southampton by an act of the new Commonwealth, the town finally had its own name, its own meetinghouse, and its own selectmen.



The Revolution didn't just win independence. In Easthampton's case—  
In Easthampton's case — it created the conditions for self-governance.



# The Civic Architecture of Self-Governance

## The Meetinghouse (1785)

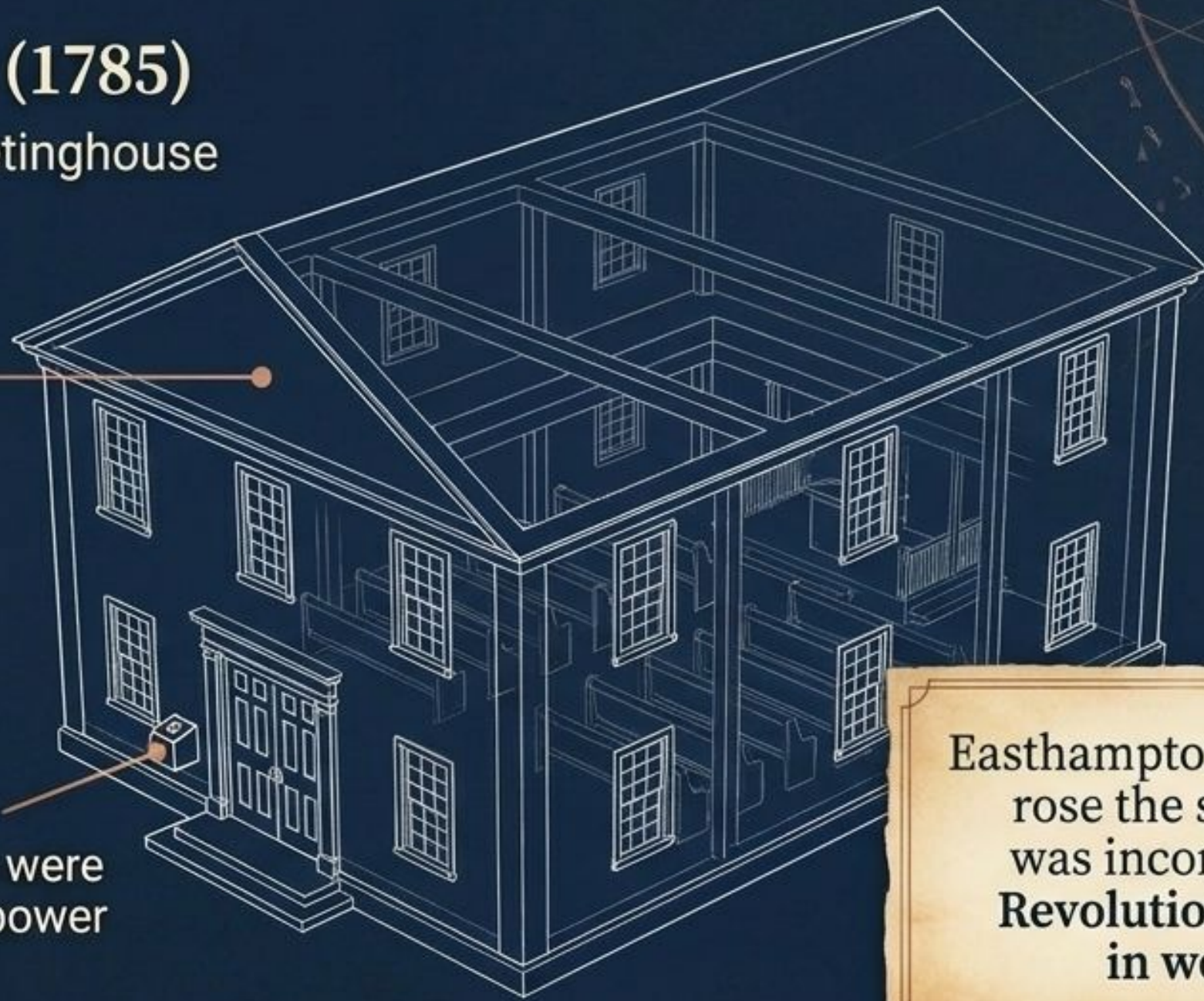
In Massachusetts, the meetinghouse was never just a church.

### The Assembly Space:

A civic hall and gathering place where free people exercised the right to assemble and debate.

### The Ballot Box:

Where decisions were made and local power was exercised.



Easthampton's first meetinghouse rose the same year the town was incorporated. It was the Revolution made permanent in wood and stone.

# The Evolution of Easthampton

	<b>Pre-1775</b>	<b>Post-1785</b>
<b>Identity</b>	A dependent settlement existing in Northampton's shadow	An independent, incorporated town with its own name
<b>Governance</b>	Taxed and governed from afar	Self-governing via the local meetinghouse and selectmen
<b>Economy</b>	Agrarian survival and foundational mills	Primed for an industrial explosion and global connectivity

## A Nation Builds. A Town Builds.

Within a generation of independence, Easthampton was on the move.

1847

Samuel Williston relocates his button factory to Easthampton, launching a local industrial revolution.

1856

The Westfield & Northampton Railroad arrives, connecting a small mill town to the world.

1859

Williston Mills opens—the first elastic web company in the United States. Born here.

# What the Revolution Left Behind

The Revolution didn't just change the map. It forged a character.

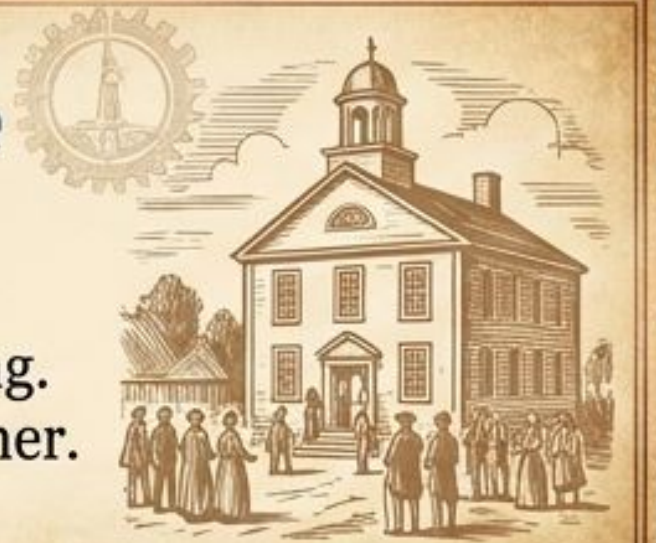
## Stubbornness

Pascommuck burned. They rebuilt. No ground worth keeping is ever kept easily.



## Self-Governance

The same spirit that filled Lexington's fields filled Easthampton's town meeting. Free people, deciding together.



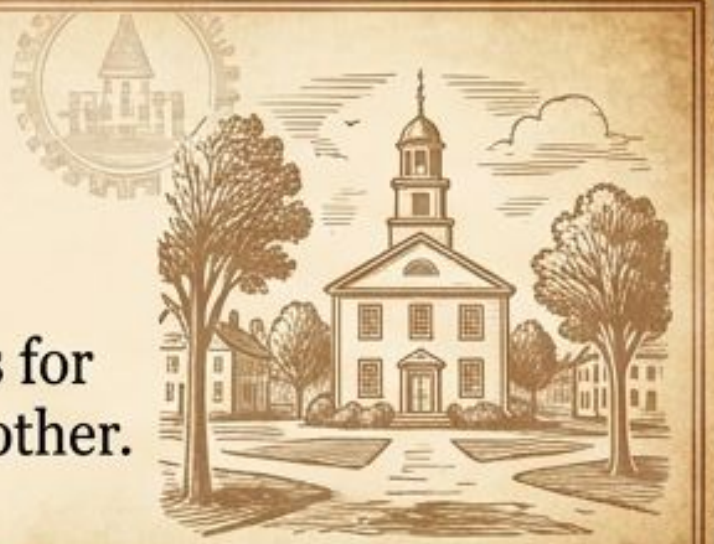
## Hard Work

From the Manhan mills to Williston's factories—this was always a town that made things.



## Community

The meetinghouse, the common, the green—Easthampton built spaces for people to belong to each other.



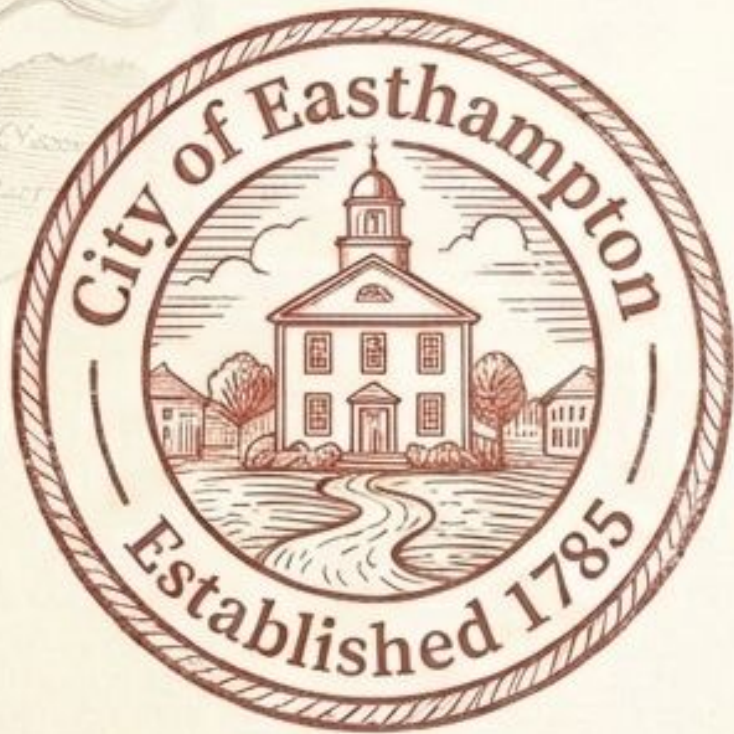
## 250 Years of the Same Essential Questions

- **Who governs?**
- **Who is welcome?**
- **What do we owe each other?**

Those aren't questions from 1775. They are the questions on the agenda at every town meeting, in every budget debate, on every ballot.

Easthampton has been answering them for 240 years.

# The Story Doesn't End



**Mayor Salem Derby | City of Easthampton, Massachusetts**

“ The same ground that was called Pascommuck, that was farmed by Norwottuck families, that sent men to Lexington, that incorporated itself in” in 1785 — is the same ground we govern today. We are the long way home. ”

**Happy 250th, America. Easthampton was here for all of it.**