

Biography Clifford Smith Wrigley Jr 1922 – 2004

“Clifford Wrigley doesn’t sleep much anymore,” wrote Neil Foster in the Andover Townsman newspaper in October of 1993. “I’ve been at this for over seven years and it’s been constantly, night and day,” said Mr. Wrigley. According to Foster, “Mr. Wrigley said he has research that suggests the first incorporation of an Andover settlement was in 1629, not in 1646 as stated on the town’s seal, documents, and in all the history books.” As Mr. Wrigley himself liked to say: “The 1646 thing NEVER HAPPENED. The 1629 thing DID HAPPEN.”

Early Years

Clifford Smith Wrigley Jr. was born in Andover, MA on March 22, 1922, son of Clifford Smith and Mae (Koch) Wrigley. They lived in a rented home of the American Woolen Co., Homestead Association, at 11 Shepley Rd., Shawsheen Village from 1926 to about 1935 and likely attended Shawsheen School. He had one sister Barbara Ann Wrigley born August 11, 1926.



During the 1930s Great Depression Wrigley’s parents moved to the Roxbury neighborhood of Boston. Wrigley graduated from high school there in 1940. In 1941, he was listed in the street directory as a sign painter, and in 1942 he was a clerk working for Paine Furniture Co. of Boston. In 1943 Clifford Jr. enlisted in the U.S. Army.

Wrigley attended art school in Boston in the early 1950s and then again in 1963-1965. In 1960 he was making his living as an artist. He later became a professor at Boston State College. In 1976, Wrigley returned to Andover and bought a home at 64 Red Spring Road for himself and his mother. His mother lived out her years there until she died in 1986. Wrigley lived in the home until he died December 19, 2004. He and his mother are interred in the family lot at Spring Grove Cemetery in Andover.

Andover Town Seal

In 1975, Wrigley submitted an entry in the Andover Bicentennial Committee’s logo contest. Jim Batchelder’s design won first place; Ed Parker’s design won second; Clifford Wrigley’s won third place. All three finalists are shown in the following 1975 photograph from the Andover Townsman.

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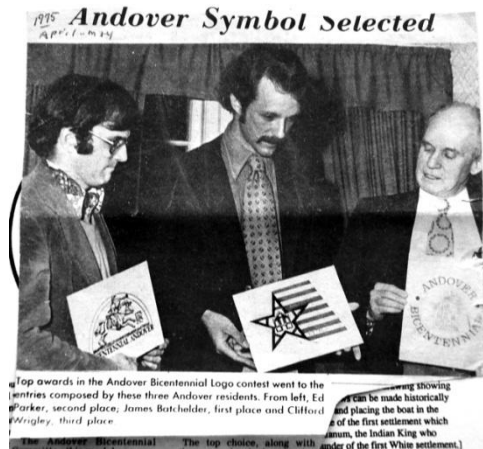


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Jim Batchelder, an Andover high school art teacher, was deeply involved with the Andover Historical Society in the 1970s. He and Wrigley met again in the 1980s when Batchelder was researching the history of Andover's town seal, which had been designed by a young local artist, William Harnden Foster, in 1896 in response to a state mandate that every town have an official seal. By coincidence, Wrigley was also researching the seal. He proposed that they combine their research and publish their findings together. The founding date on the 1896 town seal is 1646.



Batchelder later wrote

He (Wrigley) told me that the founding date of the town (on the seal) was not correct, but was earlier, and wanted the town to correct the error. I had no reason not to believe his idea, as we are always finding new material that debunks former material we took as fact. Clifford said he was working on a book that would prove his claim was indeed correct. I said "Make sure you can substantiate your claims," which he referred to as his "Proofs."



On June, 7, 1990, Clifford Wrigley met with me; Charlotte Smith, Director of the Andover Historical Society; Gratia Mahoney, President; and Barbara Thibault, Director of Education; and presented his documentation on the

Town Seal and also his opinion as to William Wood founding the Andover Plantation in 1629...I think Clifford was correct in his research on the seal.

Designer of the town seal, William Harden Foster, was in his teen years in 1896 when he won a contest to design a new town seal. Batchelder believes that he simply used the 1646 date from an earlier 1870s town seal, as he was too young to have conducted his own research into the founding date.

The 1990 meeting between Wrigley and members of the board and staff of the Andover Historical Society was the catalyst for Wrigley's research, writing, and presentations that followed.

Research, Writing, and Presentations

About his research and conclusions, Wrigley wrote of his conviction: "I believe in speaking out strongly and clearly when I believe I have discovered the truth." And, indeed, he was right about a critical point, there was activity and settlement before 1646 at Andover. For example, the village was included in

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1643 on the Massachusetts Bay Colony's list of settlements within a newly created Essex County. Given this evidence he was also right that celebrating 1646 as a "start date" is incorrect. Unfortunately not all of his "proofs" are grounded in contemporary documents and recorded facts.



Wrigley compiled his years of research into a slide show, available on the Clifford Wrigley Research website, along with two supporting booklets outlining his evidence or "proofs" of earlier villages, one in 1629, and a later one in 1634. He felt so strongly that he had stumbled upon a "hitherto unknown truth" that he neglected to acknowledge the copious points which comfortably disprove his idea of a 1629 settlement at Andover. For example, a 1634 guide to New England which explains that settlement in that area was outside the boundaries of the current legal patent for granting lands. It was not an oversight as Mr. Wrigley used that source in instances where he felt it helped prove his argument.

It was Wrigley's intention to publish a book with his findings, and while that never came to be, he did leave a generous legacy in his will to the local history community to continue to pursue his thesis.

In 2017 Jim Batchelder wrote, "Clifford really wanted this to be published. To have his stamp of approval from the Historical Society would have given his years of work credibility."

You are invited to read his presentations along with the point by point critique of his assertions. Despite Mr. Wrigley's lack of solid proof of a village at Andover before 1640, his efforts did succeed in drawing attention to this formative period in New England history.

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For more information please contact archives.nahistory@gmail.com.

A handwritten signature of Clifford Wrigley in cursive script on a light-colored background.

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