

2019

History of Belfast Maine

Town of Belfast

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mainehistory>



Part of the [History Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Belfast, Town of, "History of Belfast Maine" (2019). *Maine History Documents*. 158.
<https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mainehistory/158>

This Other is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in Maine History Documents by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact um.library.technical.services@maine.edu.



Related Links

- Attractions
- Belfast Poet Laureate
- Belfast Water Supply
- Studies and Statistics
- Employment Opportunities
- Events
- History of Belfast
- News
- Parks & Facilities
- Photo Gallery
- Schools
- Voting Information
- Weather
- Waldo County

[Agendas & Minutes](#)

[Staff Directory](#)

[Report a Concern](#)

You are here: [Home](#) > [Our Community](#) > [History of Belfast](#)

History of Belfast

Early History

In the spring of 1770, Belfast was settled by Scottish-Irish families from Londonderry, New Hampshire. Legend has it that the name Belfast, after the Northern Ireland city, was chosen by a coin-toss. Fear of British attack led these original proprietors to abandon the settlement during the American Revolution, but they returned in the 1780s to build a vibrant, prosperous outpost that would become the market center for the outlying area.

1800s

Abundant timber, a gently sloping waterfront, and proximity to varied agriculture gave rise to shipbuilding and maritime commerce. Hundreds of wooden sailing ships were built by local shipyards, and during the 19th century, as much as 30% of the male population was employed in the maritime trades. In 1868, construction began on the Belfast and Moosehead Lake Railroad, which connected Belfast to the Maine Central Railroad at Burnham Junction. Belfast merchants sold a variety of goods, and steamship operators who provided transportation between coastal towns advertised "shopping excursions" to Belfast. Prosperous shipbuilders and merchants constructed the architecturally significant houses that dominate our residential neighborhoods today.

Two disastrous fires consumed much of the downtown area in 1865 and 1873, but merchants rebuilt with brick, creating a pleasing and long-lasting commercial district. The Belfast Historic Districts, residential and commercial, are included on the [National Register of Historic Places](#).

1900s

The city's prosperity, built on shipbuilding and commerce in such unglamorous cargoes as hay, ice, apples, and fertilizer, began to fade as the 20th century unfolded. A four-story shoe factory dominated the industrial area, and Belfast became a blue-collar town. By the 1950s poultry, sardine, and potato companies had set up processing plants along the waterfront. Belfast called itself the Broiler Capital of the World, and each July, thousands came to eat barbecued chicken on Broiler Day.

In 1962, Route 1 was rerouted around the City and across a new bridge. The rerouting was seen by some as the

[Photo Gallery](#)
[Watch Meetings](#)

death knell for a once-vibrant shire town. In hindsight, the bypass preserved the City's heart and soul, and in the 1980s a rebirth began. The arts flourished, and the stately houses and commercial buildings were restored. In the early 1990s, USA Today named Belfast as one of America's culturally cool communities. Today, Belfast is that rare combination of quiet small town with an active social and cultural life that is attractive to residents and visitors alike.

Receive:
Email Alerts
Text Messages



Notify Me
Signup



www.cityofbelfast.org

Contact Your Government

131 Church St., Belfast, ME 04915
Ph: (207) 338-3370
Fx: (207) 338-6222
[Email Us](#)

Popular Links

[Home](#)
[Annual Reports](#)
[Employment Center](#)
[Bids / RFPs](#)

Belfast Everywhere

[Facebook](#) 
[Twitter](#) 
[Mobile](#) 
[Apps Download](#) 

Website Information

[Sitemap](#)
[Copyright & Credits](#)
[Accessibility](#)
Powered by CivicPlus