

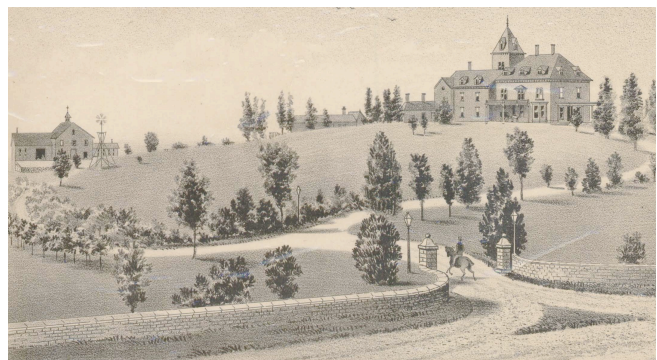
General Eben Sutton

Eben Sutton was by family legend, a reluctant first family of modern day North Andover. Plucked from a young and bright future in vibrant New York City and transported by family need to relatively back woods North Andover, he became a leading light in the development of the town and of the new mission of St Paul's.

Eben Sutton (1836-1890) was the grandson of William Sutton who bought out the interests of the foreclosed North Andover mill built by James Schofield on the Cochichewick Brook near the junction with the Merrimack. Beginning in 1826, William and later his two sons, modernized the mill and turned it into a profitable venture, and later in the 1840's built a larger, more modern mill at the "old stone mill" and lower High Street. These mills, and their interests in banking and business in South Danvers, plus their early investment in railroads, made the family fabulously wealthy. When his uncle, also named Eben, died in 1864 with no heir, he was tapped to operate the family business, and moved his wife and young family to North Andover.



General Eben Sutton, as he is most often styled, was trained in the mercantile business of his father, and moved to New York in 1857 and established the mercantile firm of Sutton, Smith and Co, handling woolen goods. On the death of his uncle Eben, he moved to North Andover and took over the family business. His service in the 2nd Brigade of militia resulted in his election as General in 1875—a title that he used for the rest of his life. As perhaps appeasement for his New York born wife who by family lore did not want to leave New York, he developed perhaps the finest estate in northern Massachusetts at that time, named Hill Crest—off current day Sutton Hill Road. The Sutton mills specialized in high quality flannel and is said to have had perfect labor harmony through the 19th century.



The Sutton family had a long Episcopal tradition. Eben Sutton was not at the first organizational meeting of St Paul's, but was noticeable in most every activity thereafter. Elected to the first Executive Committee, his short length of service had a profound impact. By May 1881 the new little mission was on its way to success... committees were formed to define a permanent working relationship with Grace Church, and a Committee on Subscriptions was organized to determine financing for a new chapel and General Eben Sutton was first on the list. By the end of the first month, about 3/4 of the target had been raised. Sutton's criteria on building the church was its location—near the new rising town around the lower mills, but not so close to exclude the old original farming village of the Old Center. He also stated "...that no steps should be taken towards the erection of a chapel until the sum of five thousand dollars had been subscribed..." At the same meeting the committee was appointed, again Sutton mentioned first, to see about developing plans for the new chapel. There was no doubt that the program would move forward.

Sutton also solved the problem of location. In June he contacted William Russell who owned all of the land on now upper Main Street and over to Osgood Street, and Russell agreed to sell a lot of 260 feet frontage for \$200. In a famous meeting of the Executive July 2, 1881, Sutton reported that he had bought the land, and donated it to the church. Basically he bought the site he would find acceptable and gave it to the church—problem solved. At that same meeting, which comprised a good representation of the wealthier families of North Andover, the hat was once more passed, and the funds to proceed were secured. It took a total of 6 weeks to raise the money to build the new church. Sutton, French, and Davis were the committee that developed the design for the new church. The cornerstone was laid in October 1881.

While Sutton was initially tough on raising the initial sum, the building phase was somewhat different. Sutton gave the stained glass windows that still dignify the front of the church, and most likely engaged the budding artist, Frederick Crowninshield, who added the still artistically significant mural in the apse, and likely other artistic touches. It is said, this and the fitting out of the church, increased the value of the church by more than 50% and certainly provided an increase in the dignity of the building.

Eben Sutton continued on the Executive during the early years of St Paul's and his strong hand is seen in the procurement of the first rectory in 1888. In late '85 Grace Church withdrew financial support for the St Paul's mission, and in April '86, the Executive took the position that St Paul's should move towards organizing as a parish. When the more experienced Rev George Walker of Peabody was called to St Paul's in early '88, it was obvious that a rectory would be needed to provide dignified housing in North Andover. A committee was appointed to consider funding, and within 2 months the stately Blanchard house, at 16 Elm Street, still standing, had been purchased and paid for. The

“liberality” (as it was styled in those days) of Mr. Sutton and Mr. French was acknowledged. Clearly they provided most of the funds.

Additionally, a number of civic structures benefited from his generosity. He donated the clock tower of the first Johnson High School in 1867. The downtown firehouse is named in his honor for his work in establishing the fire company in town.

Though perhaps lengthy by then current standards, his life was cut short at the age of 54. He died Jan 4, 1890. His family continued as strong supporters of St Paul’s for decades to come. The stained glass windows and the Crowninshield mural that we see each Sunday continue today as a lasting tribute to his “liberality”.

