

History of Newton

English settlement in the area now known as Newton goes back to the early 1600s. By the 1630s, Newton was part of "the newe towne", which was renamed Cambridge in 1638, and was known as "Cambridge Village." In 1688, Cambridge Village officially became an independent township known by several names: Cambridge Village, New Cambridge, Newtown, and New Town. On December 15, 1691, Newton became the official name and the area became a city on January 5, 1874.

History of the City Seal

When Newton became a city in 1874, "it retained, with appropriate additions to the inscriptions, the seal which had first appeared on the Annual Report of the town's officers in 1865." (*Mirror of Newton*, 1907, pages 28-29). Indeed, March 1865 minutes indicate that the Selectmen "voted that the design presented be adopted for Town Seal."

The seal depicts the scene of Rev. John Eliot proselytizing to Native Americans in 1646. Eliot was an English minister who felt called to convert indigenous people to Christianity, which aligned with the Massachusetts Bay Colony's charter mandate. The designer of the seal is not known but by the 1860s several depictions of John Eliot preaching to the area's Native Americans existed and would have been easily used as inspiration or even as a direct model for the seal design. The preaching scene is said to have occurred in what was then known as Nonantum Hill on the Newton-Brighton line. Not to be confused with today's village of Nonantum, this area is memorialized by the City-owned Eliot Memorial park at Eliot Memorial Road and Magnolia Street (near today's Newton Commonwealth Golf Course).

Almost certainly, one of the Native Americans depicted would have been Waban who became friendly with Eliot. Waban did not hold an official title but he, along with his wife Tassansquam, was the leader of a group of Massachusetts people who lived in this area. They began to acquiesce to Eliot's teachings, in part because they saw an opportunity gain status with and protection from the colonists. This was the first of what the English labeled a "Praying Town" inhabited by "Praying Indians." Eventually 14 were established in the Boston area. Thus, Rev. John Eliot and Waban were an integral part of Newton's founding story.

At this point, research has not shed light on the origins or rationale for the words "Liberty" and "Union."