

Mansfield Memories: Take a trip down Route 140 in Mansfield

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Kevin McNatt and Andrew Todesco

MANSFIELD - With automobile traffic rapidly increasing in the mid-1920s, Massachusetts began to map out numbered routes for drivers. One of the first was Route 140, which wound its way from New Bedford through Mansfield to Worcester and beyond.

The original course of Route 140 through Mansfield passed over existing roads. That changed in the 1950s with the construction of Copeland Drive. And the current 140 opened in the early 1980s.

Let's start with the original Route 140. If we were headed north out of Norton we would enter Mansfield by South Main Street, as we still do today. We would continue to the South Common then turn left onto West Street. Next we would turn right onto Central Street until we reached Foxborough.

The newly designated highway was described as being in "poor" condition in this area. In 1929, the state spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to resurface the road from Spring Street in Mansfield to the Norton Common.

The biggest problem for Route 140 was Central



Attorney General Clarence A. Barnes

Street. It was too narrow in most places to serve as a main highway despite attempts to widen it.

The intersection with Route 106 (Chauncy Street), known as "Paine's Corner," was busy and required a traffic light.

But the greatest danger was the Central Street railroad grade crossing, where drivers had to



Constructing of the third Route 140 in Mansfield began in the late 1970s. This is the four-lane highway we know today. It's official name in Mansfield is Attorney General Clarence A. Barnes Boulevard.

contend with passing trains at street level. A businessman from Milford reported that he and his wife were on the tracks when the gates came down around them. The car was trapped as a train began to approach.

“My wife was six months getting over the scare,” he said.

Then there was the traffic to and from Cape Cod which often snarled in the summer months. One August night in 1953 a freight train kept the Central Street grade crossing closed for 15 minutes, causing traffic to back up to the South Common.



Copeland Drive was named in honor of Mansfield historian Jennie Copeland, shown above.

“This is the fourth time this has happened to me this summer,” one driver from Rhode Island complained. “I’ll be darned if I go through this (blank) town again!”

The problem was solved in March 1957 when the newly built Copeland Drive was opened just a few hundred feet west of Central Street. Now designated as Route 140, it featured an underpass which eliminated

the grade crossing and allowed for the free flow of traffic. As a result Central Street was dead-ended on both sides of the railroad tracks.

Copeland Drive was named in honor of Mansfield historian Jennie Copeland. A connector was built to join this new Route 140 back to Central Street near the Foxborough line. No sooner had Copeland Drive opened than reports of another new Route 140 began to emerge.



The original course of Route 140 through Mansfield passed over existing roads. That changed in the 1950s with the construction of Copeland Drive and the current 140 opened in the early 1980s.

There was talk of two new super highways to be built in the coming years. One would be a “new Route 1” from New England to Florida. A second would be an “outer belt” that would surround greater Boston. In time these new roads would be known as Route 95 and 495 respectively. Another “new” Route 140 would help accommodate the heavy traffic that would come with the interchange of the new highways.



Accident on Route 140 in the 1950s



Above are signs for Route 140 located on the Foxborough Town Common. The original course of Route 140 through Mansfield passed over existing roads. That changed in the 1950s with the construction of Copeland Drive. And the

Construction of the third Route 140 began in the late 1970s. This is the four-lane highway we know today, with two lanes running north and two going south. The road is known as “Commercial Street” in Foxborough but is often misidentified on maps and GPS in Mansfield. It’s official name in Mansfield is Attorney General Clarence A. Barnes Boulevard, after Mansfield’s best known public servant.