

Billerica seeking designation as state's 'Yankee Doodle Town'

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BILLERICA — Yankee Doodle Homecoming Weekend is *the* event of the year for many in town.

And beyond that September weekend, Billerica is frequently referenced as the "Yankee Doodle Town." Even a Yankee Doodle Bike Path could be coming soon.

But Billerica as the Yankee Doodle Town is not official in the Statehouse chambers.

As a result, a selectman and his mother created a Town Meeting warrant article to change that in the Legislature.

Selectman Mike Rosa and his mother, Carol, crafted an article that passed the most recent



Billerica Selectman Mike Rosa and his mother, Carol. SUN/RICK SOBEY

Town Meeting. It asked representatives to authorize the Board of Selectmen to petition the Legislature, and designate Billerica as the Yankee Doodle Town.

Two months after the article passed 140-5, it's now moving onto the Statehouse.

"To give full credit, it was her idea and then she asked me how to go about completing it," Rosa said of his mother.

"I know we all consider ourselves it, with the Yankee Doodle Bike Path and Yankee Doodle Weekend and all that, but, technically, we are not officially the Yankee Doodle Town," he added. "If this passes, then it'd be official."

State Rep. Marc Lombardo, R-Billerica, said the legislation will be filed after the new year.

"It's a great piece of legislation. It's the pride of who we are as a community," Lombardo said.

As Rosa's mother, Carol, told Town Meeting,

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Thomas Ditson was a farmer during the Revolutionary War. One day he took a trip to Boston and bought firearms from a British soldier.

He was immediately captured, tarred and feathered, and paraded through the streets of Boston. The soldiers sang "Yankee Doodle," playing it on their fifes and drums, and singing a verse that ridiculed him.

The incident apparently

inspired outrage among the colonists, and "Yankee Doodle" was transformed into an anthem of Yankee pride during the war. Ditson, a month later, ended up fighting with the Billerica Minutemen in Concord at the Battle of Meriam's Corner.

The Yankee Doodle name has since come to Billerica, and in 1988, the Board of Selectmen adopted the title "America's Yankee Doodle Town."

However, when then-U.S. Rep. Marty Meehan submitted a reso-

lution to Congress in 2005 to recognize Billerica as "America's Yankee Doodle Town," it did not gain traction.

Rep. Michael McNulty of New York, had been trying for years to designate Rensselaer as the "official home" of the satirical song.

His upstate New York town, he claims, was the site at which Dr. Richard Shuckburgh, a British Army surgeon and one potential author of the song, wrote the lyrics in the 1750s.

"... other cities put a wrench in

that piece of federal legislation, but I'm not aware of any others across Massachusetts who would be a challenge," Lombardo said.

While it passed with almost 97 percent of the vote during Town Meeting, there were still a few people who were against it.

Wallace Lafayette said the name is "stupid."

"Yankee Doodle? Seriously?" he said. "It was coined by the British to insult the patriots, so the whole thing is an insult," Lafayette said.