Anne Bradstreet turns 400 next year.
Actually, she died in 1672 at the age of 60, but North Andover is ready to spend a year celebrating the 400th anniversary of the birth of its first heroine.

Born in England in 1612, Anne Dudley Bradstreet became America's first published poet.
She and her family came to America in 1630 on the Arabella, whose captain, the Rev. John Winthrop, would later become the governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

North Andover poet Karen Kline calls Bradstreet the “founding mother of both Boston and Cambridge,” since Bradstreet was the first person to set foot off the British ship.

“The settlers landed at the foot of Prince Street in the North End on Sept. 17, 1630 and founded Boston,” said Kline. “She would never see her beloved England again. In December they crossed the Charles River and founded New Towne, now known as Cambridge.”

Bradstreet, also named America's first Poet Laureate, will be honored during 2012 in a series of events sponsored by the Friends of Anne Bradstreet Foundation.

How did North Andover come to claim Bradstreet as its own?

Bradstreet and her husband, Simon, would move from Cambridge north to Ipswich in 1638, a settlement that reminded her of England.

“This was the best time of her life,” said Kline. “She enjoyed the environment and the community, and each home had its own library.”

She and Simon moved again, to Andover, where they remained until her death.
It was during her time in Andover - which then encompassed the area where North Andover is today - that she began to write poetry.

Bradstreet, a lover of books and knowledge in a time when women were not regularly educated nor expected to have their own opinions, did not live to see most of her work published.

As such, she might find it odd to have an entire year of events planned in her honor, including the creation of a North Andover High School Academic Hall of Fame, into which she will be the first inductee.

A large group of people has been collaborating on what Kline calls "the Anne Plan" for nearly two years, including Ed Wang, former Local Cultural Council chairman for North Andover and Anna Choi-Wright and Linda McDonald, both council members.

Merrimack College Vice President Linda Murphy, Professors Michael Bell, Gordon Mackenzie and Debra Michaels and School of Education Dean Dan Butin "have all been wonderfully supportive" said Kline, as have North Andover residents Laura Gifford, Nella Lush and Phil DeCologero.

Kline said planners will continue to come up with additional ways to honor Bradstreet in 2012.