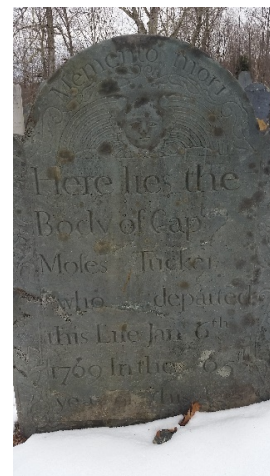


Beginning

As with many lifetime and often multi-generational residents of our town, I grew up and lived most of my life unaware of the rich history that was all around me. It wasn't until my mid-forties that I began to take an interest and now it has reshaped my view of New Ipswich. Whenever I'm taking a stroll through the woods it becomes a walk back in time. The stone walls and grown in cellar holes bear silent witness to those who went before. We have two great town history books available online as reprinted paperbacks, the first was co-written by Frederic Kidder and Augustus Gould in 1850 and the second by Charles Chandler and Sarah Fiske Lee in 1914. These two books are filled with the details of our towns' beginning and take us from the original Masonian land grant by King James in 1621 all the way to 1914. While much of the reading in these books is somewhat dry, there are some really interesting accounts of the founders and those who have shaped New Ipswich through the years that followed. Much of the following are taken from these two books.

The first known settlers were Abijah and Mary Foster and while it is not certain, they are believed to have arrived in the spring of 1738 and built the first house in New Ipswich just north of the Union Hall building on Main street. Within ten years there were a dozen or more homes established. One of these first settlers was Capt. Moses Tucker, who we learn had the type of character that this town has produced in so many of its residents. It was in the middle of the French and Indian wars in the summer of 1748, that a war party of about eighty Indians attacked the house of John Fitch in Ashby (then known as Lunenburg or Dorchester-Canada). Upon word of this, the residents of New Ipswich fled to Townsend where there was British protection. Capt. Tucker "boldly resolved to remain and make such defense as he could, or otherwise take his fate." This he did and single handedly held the home front for a month or two. By all accounts the town was never attacked by Indians and the townsfolk never had occasion to ask for protection again. Capt. Tucker died of smallpox at Crown Point, NY in 1759, while serving in the Army during the French Indian wars. His spirit however, lived on as the town moved towards the Revolutionary War.



The independent nature of New Ipswich is evident with the resolution voted on by the townsfolk on Dec 6, 1774 where they petitioned the royal Governor to address the injustice of taxation without representation. In January of 1775 the town voted to store powder and lead on the beams of the meeting

house in preparation for the expected uprising and began militia training as often as once a week. At about two o'clock in the afternoon April 19, 1775, the day that "the shot heard round the world" was fired, a messenger brought the news of the battle at Lexington and Concord. Three guns were fired in rapid succession and "within two hours a great proportion of the men in town had gathered at the common...and before the sun rose the next morning not less than 150 men, the very bone and muscle of the town" were marching to the fight. The total population of New Ipswich was 882 at that time. By the time the militia from Peterborough marched through town, most of the men were gone. Today you can stand at the old burial ground on Porter Hill and see the outlines of that common, formed by stone walls and now mostly grown in. A little to the north is where the original Town Hall sat (now private property) and a bit past the graveyard is the old town pound. After walking around the graveyard and familiarizing yourself with the characters buried there, it's not hard to imagine the scene of that day. This inspirational display of character serves as a reminder that there are times where we must forsake our daily lives and do what needs to be done.



Old town pound



Old town common