

Kingston Historic District Chronicles – April, 2011

Last month, Chronicles featured the historical legacy of the green grass in town known as "The Plains" the beloved bandstand and the formation of today's Historic District Commission. Surrounding The Plains are four prominent features: the Josiah Bartlett House, the Church on the Plains, the Nichols Memorial Library and the nearby Sanborn Seminary. These four unique structures, are quite different in architectural style, famous for either location, use or their original owners, but all are grandly displayed and proudly listed in the National Registry of Historic Places. We should pay tribute to the efforts of former residents in protecting these buildings for our continued enjoyment today.

Focusing this month on the Josiah Bartlett Home, I want to express my appreciation to Ruth Albert, a direct descendant of Josiah, for assisting me with this article and giving me a private tour of her "homestead". The HDC is hoping to organize a "Historic Home Tour" and looking for a December date. To make this a reality, we need at least 3-4 more homes to help with the inauguration of what we hope will be an annual event. Any resident of Kingston, with a historic home who may be willing to participate please contact the HDC for details: Chair Virginia Morse - 642-5950 or Vice Chair Judy Rubin 642-8228.

Josiah Bartlett, born in Amesbury, Massachusetts on November 21, 1729, moved to Kingston to open up a medical practice in 1750 after serving a five year apprenticeship with a relative, Dr. Ordway...he was only 21 years old. His fame encompasses three major areas - 1. Fatherhood, raising 12 children; three of his sons, Josiah, Ezra, Levi and several grandsons followed in his medical footsteps 2. His medical practice in Kingston which flourished, buoyed by two of his personal and successful trial remedies. He cured himself of a relentless fever - begging his caretaker to bring him some cooled cider. (The practice at the time was to confine the ailing patient in a hot room with hot liquids and a heating machine). Dr. Bartlett slowly sipped the cooled cider throughout the night and by morning, the fever broke. His personal lesson? Freedom to look beyond the normal inflexible regiment set in the everyday medical world. Two years later, as a devastating disease "canker" was claiming lives of young children through the town, Dr. Bartlett again broke away from traditional practices. He administered Peruvian Bark to his own children to prevent the disease from encroaching on his doorstep. 3. His patriotism as a politician. This career began in 1765 when he was first appointed the office of provincial legislature. He later served at the Second Continental Congress, where he signed the Declaration of Independence and cast the first vote for independence on July 4, 1776. He served as president of New Hampshire from 1790 to 1793 and when the title was changed to Governor, he became the "First Governor" of our state. Governor Bartlett left office in 1794, and died a year later on May 19, 1795.

The home you see on Kingston Plains, is not the original Josiah Bartlett Estate. In

1765, he fiercely opposed British policy and his staunch support of the American Patriots led to his dismissal by British Royal Governor Wentworth as Justice of the Peace. It is presumed that angry British loyalists may have burned down his beloved homestead in February, 1774. Undeterred, the massive two story 5x2 bay building with a gable roof and twin chimneys was constructed in its place before the end of the year. The home has a center hall passage which extends throughout the house, with two rooms on each side. The Bartlett complex and out-buildings, including the famous linden tree from Philadelphia which graces the front yard, are well documented with state commemorative signs of Kingston's most prominent leader. The home has remained in the Bartlett family for all this time, its present owner a direct descendant (seventh generation) of the politician, doctor and father. A show piece of Kingston's Historical homes, it stands today as a centerpiece of "our town's royalty" and serves as a reminder of our past and of the commitment to freedom of our forefathers.