

Kingston Historic District Chronicles

If you remember last time, we focused on the home of Josiah Bartlett, listed in the National Registry of Historic places and standing as a Main Street symbol of our rich past. At that time, we promised to continue his legacy by focusing on the man who brought such fame and fortune to the State of New Hampshire with his historical signature on the Declaration of Independence.

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 - family, medicine and politics. He and his wife raised 12 children; three of his sons, Josiah, Ezra, Levi and several grandsons followed in his medical footsteps. His medical practice in Kingston flourished and he was the family doctor to most of the residents.

His great reputation in this area was 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). He promised his caretaker that he could not hold him responsible...and the caretaker finally relented and granted the doctor his request. 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 throughout 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. His remedy worked!!!

And then, we learn of his service to the state and the country. This political career began in 1765 when he was first appointed the office of provincial legislature. At this time, he fiercely opposed the British policy and his staunch support of the American Patriots led to his dismissal by the British Royal Governor Wentworth as Justice of the Peace. It is presumed that angry British loyalists may have burned down his original home on the Kingston Plains. 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.

As mentioned before, the Kingston Historical Commission is hoping to have a Colonial House Tour in early December. Any homeowner who would be willing to open their home for a viewing audience, please contact the HDC members at 642-8228 or 642-5058. These historical Chronicles will keep you posted on this and other future

events. Look for the next of the Chronicles, where the feature article will be the Church on the Plains and the historical role it played for Kingston colonists.

Judy Rubin
642-8228