

EVERY town holds its fascinations for all who look close enough. Each has its own story of how it came to be and where it is heading. These signs tell some of the episodes in the story of Athol, Massachusetts. Our hometown glimpses make up the bigger picture of America.

The Athol Bicentennial Commission undertook the "Athol History Trail" project in 1975-1976 in the belief that the more one knows a town, the more he or she is likely to appreciate it and do things for it.

Most of these sites are on private property so please respect them and do not trespass.

A SUGGESTION

Athol's road system is complex because the town was born as twin villages, divided by a river. The trail mapped in this paper, therefore, is zigzag. There is no way to simplify it while taking in all 24 sites.

You may not want to tackle the entire route in one trip. You may prefer making your own simple route. One way is to stay on Pleasant St., Main St., and up No. Orange Rd.and add side trips later.

There's plenty to see.... Happy Exploring!

PLEASE DRIVE CAREFULLY

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...and suggested route of the
Athol History Trail

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Total Length: 16 Miles
Leisurely Driving Time: 1 Hour

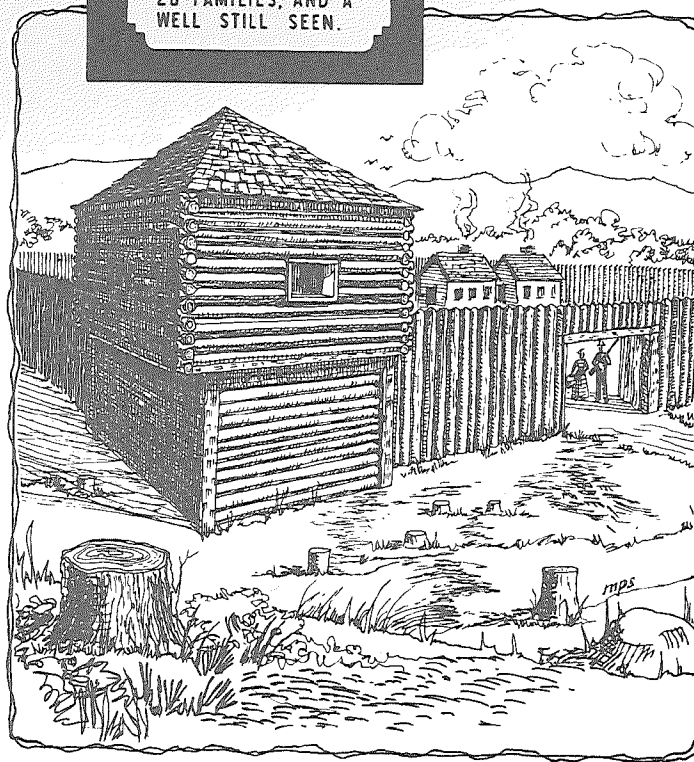
ATHOL
HISTORY TRAIL

EAST FORT 1736 - 1780

SITE OF THE FIRST
AND STRONGEST OF
THREE LOG FORTS
DEFENDING PEQUOIG
AGAINST INDIAN RAIDS.
IT WAS 100 FT. SQUARE,
MADE OF UPRIGHT LOGS,
WITH A BLOCKHOUSE,
HUTS WITHIN FOR
20 FAMILIES, AND A
WELL STILL SEEN.

1.

786 Pleasant St.



The settlers of Pequig, living in constant danger from Indian attack, built forts "in which, at the close of day, or at the alarm of danger, all the families in the vicinity gathered for mutual safety and protection."

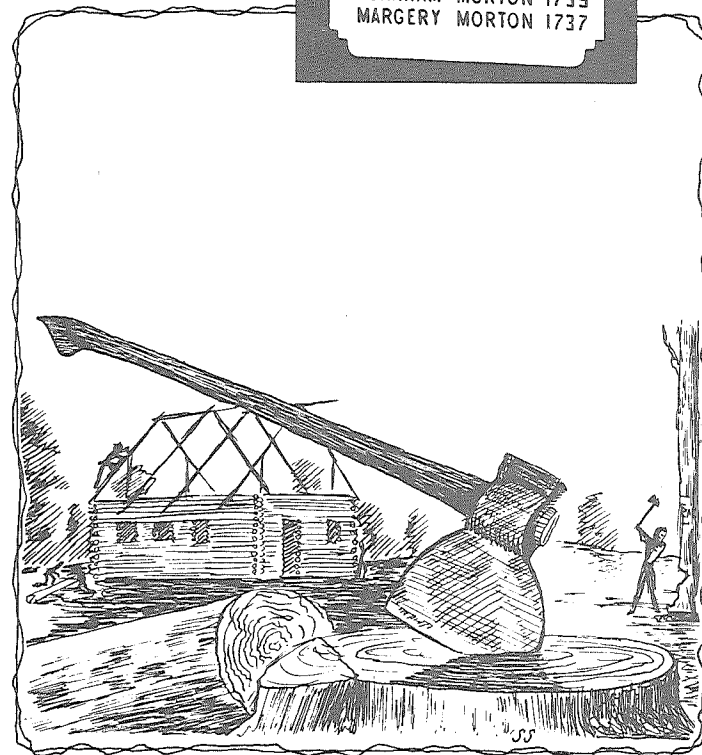
2.

813 Pleasant St.

ATHOL
HISTORY TRAIL

FIRST HOME

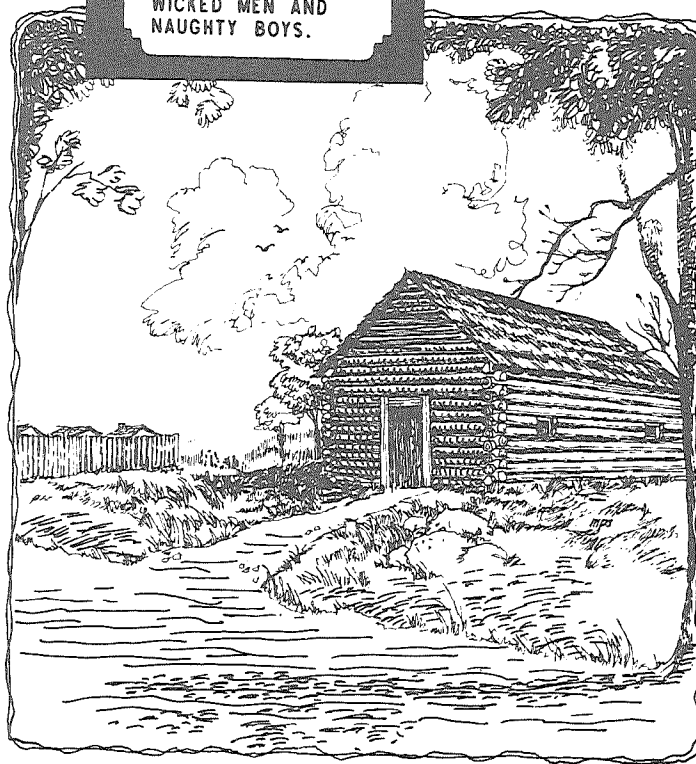
HERE IN 1735,
RICHARD MORTON
BUILT A LOG CABIN,
FIRST ONE AMONG
THE FIVE SETTLERS.
IT WAS THE BIRTHPLACE
OF OUR COMMUNITY'S
FIRST BOY AND GIRL,
ABRAHAM MORTON 1735
MARGERY MORTON 1737



The first pioneers of our town came here from Hatfield on Sept. 17, 1735, tracing their way through the wilderness by marked trees. They were the families of Richard Morton, Samuel Morton, Ephraim Smith, John Smeed, and Joseph Lord. From these first five families our community was born.

AHOZ
HISTORY TRAIL
3
2ND MEETINGHOUSE
1741 - 1772

PIONEERS WORSHIPPED
AND GOVERNED IN
A CRUDE CABIN HERE.
FEARING INDIANS,
THEY KEPT MUSKETS
AT THEIR SIDES. IN
THE YARD WERE A
WHIPPING POST AND
STOCKS TO PUNISH
WICKED MEN AND
NAUGHTY BOYS.



This meetinghouse was built 12 rods (198 feet) south of East Fort, after the first pioneer church on Naggood Street burned. There was only one pew, it being reserved for the preacher. The 20 families did their praying and singing on planks set up on wooden blocks. From this beginning, Pleasant Street was to remain the "center" of town for 100 yrs.

3

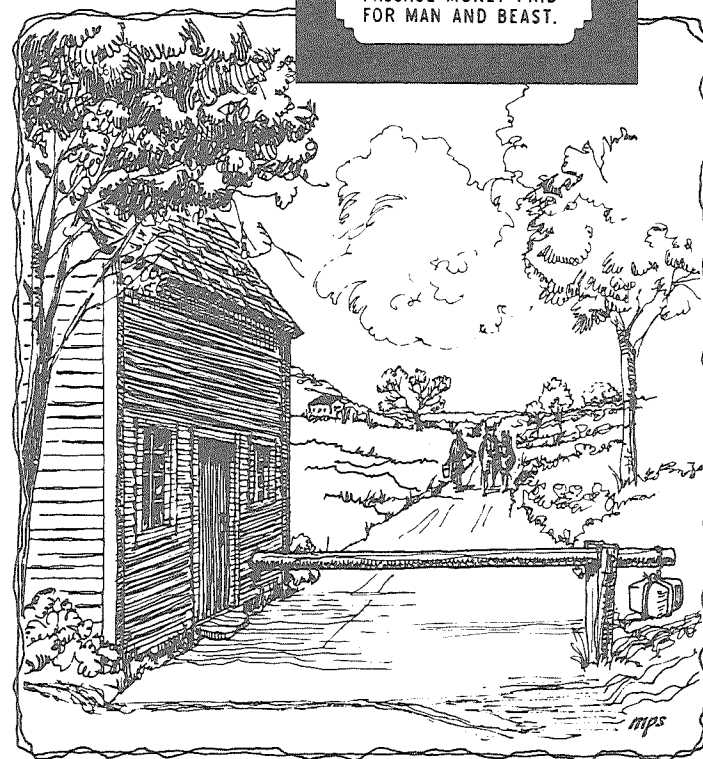
834 Pleasant St.

4

1665 Main St.

AHOZ
HISTORY TRAIL
4
OLD
TOLL GATE

FROM 1800 TO 1830,
TRAVELERS ON THIS
5TH MASS. TURNPIKE
PAID A FARE TO GET
PAST A TOLL GATE HERE.
IT SWUNG ACROSS
THE ROADWAY FROM
A TOLL HOUSE.
PASSAGE MONEY PAID
FOR MAN AND BEAST.



The 5th Massachusetts Turnpike coming out of Boston in the early 1800s was the first major highway built across the state. To pay for its upkeep toll houses were set up every few miles. Travelers paid a few cents to get to the next toll gate.

ATHOL
HISTORY TRAIL

**HIDING PLACE
FOR SLAVES**

IN THIS HOUSE,
BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR
ENDED SLAVERY,
DR. GEORGE HOYT HID AND
HELPED RUNAWAY SLAVES
WHO FLED THE SOUTH.
THIS "UNDERGROUND
RAILROAD" STATION
WAS A HAVEN ON
THEIR FREEDOM TRAIL
TO CANADA.

5.

1169 Chestnut St.



It was called the "Underground Railroad," a network of citizens who helped slaves escape from their southern masters. Under cover of darkness, "conductors" such as Dr. George Hoyt took these fugitives into their homes to feed and shelter them, and send them on to their next stop.

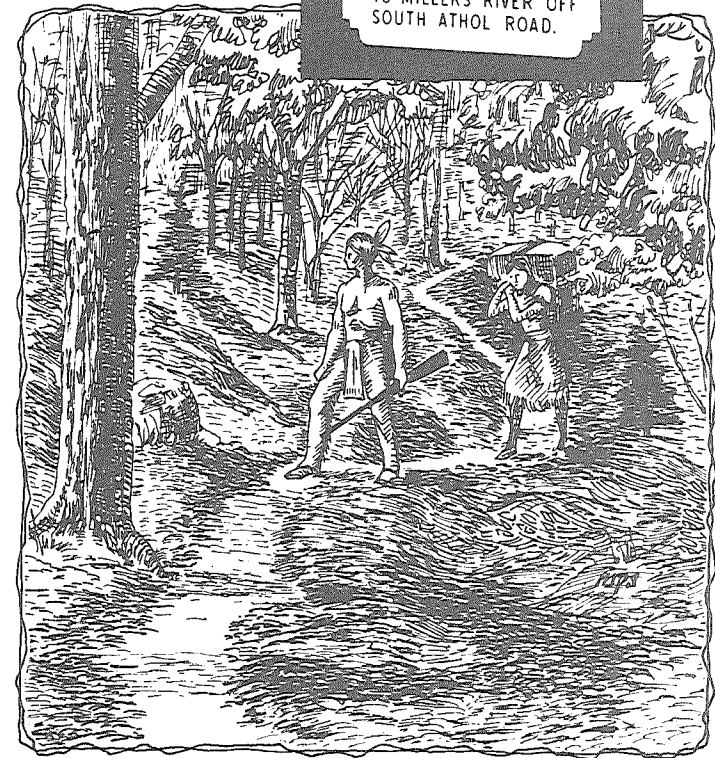
6.

Chestnut St.
at
Sanders St.
Playground

ATHOL
HISTORY TRAIL

INDIAN TRAIL

MANY INDIAN TRIBES
WALKED ALONG THIS
"GREAT TRAIL." IT
WAS 18 INCHES WIDE
AND HUNDREDS OF
MILES LONG, FROM
CONNECTICUT TO
CANADA. THE PATH
FOLLOWED PLEASANT
AND CHESTNUT STREETS
TO MILLERS RIVER OFF
SOUTH ATHOL ROAD.

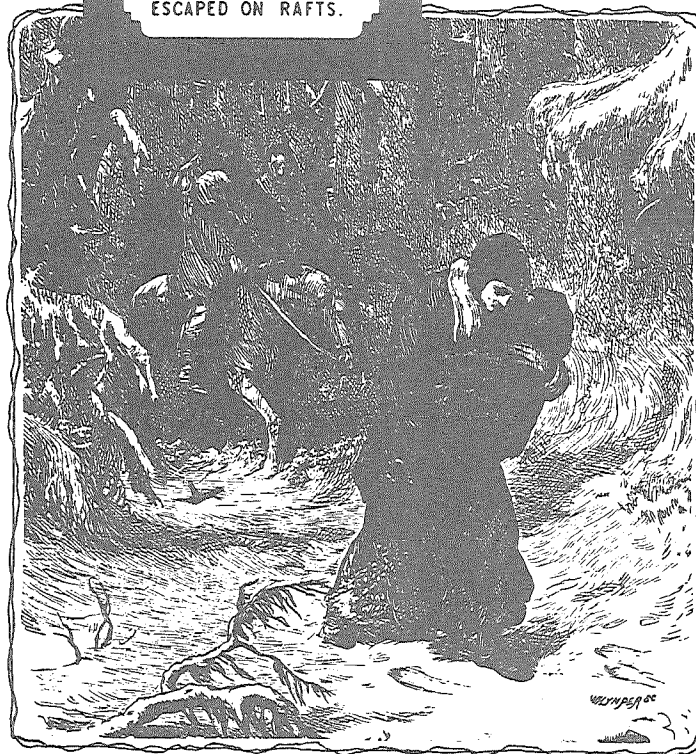


For the Indians of New England, this path formed the main "High Road" (mostly hill country) running from south to north. It began on the ocean shore in Connecticut, and blazed through this inland forest to their great hunting and trade regions of the far north. The Pequoig Indians welcomed these travelers.



INDIAN CROSSING

ON MARCH 3, 1676
MORE THAN 2000
INDIANS RETREATED
TO THIS RIVERSIDE
WITH THEIR CAPTIVE,
MARY ROWLANDSON OF
LANCASTER. CHASED
BY 400 FRONTIER
SOLDIERS, THEY
ESCAPED ON RAFTS.



After their bloody attack on Lancaster, the Indians marched 45 weary miles to this place with all of their women, children, aged, and captive. The large boulder in the Millers River here is called "Rowlandson Rock". It marks the place of crossing.

7.

*So. Athol Rd.
at Riverview*

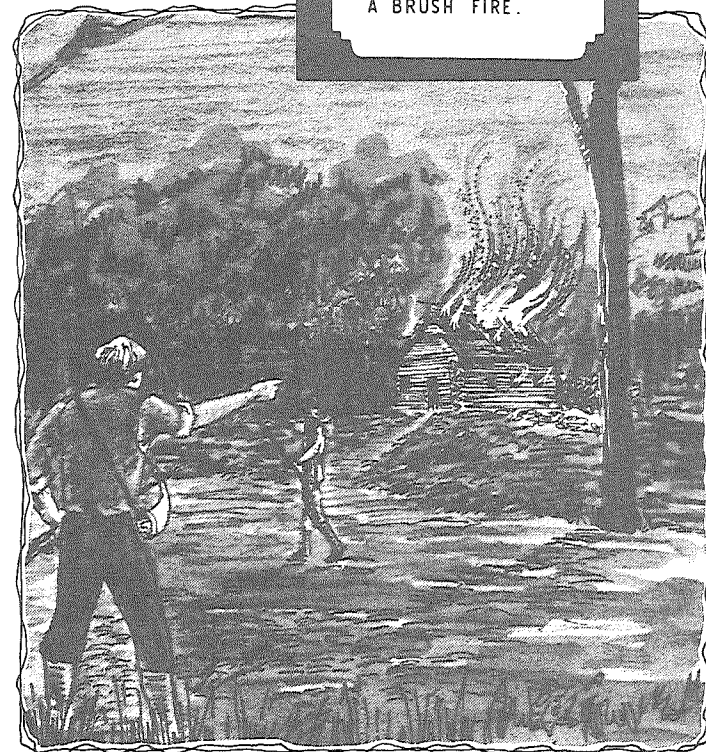
8.

*Napgood St.
near Cheney St.*



1ST MEETINGHOUSE SITE - 1741

PIONEERS ERECTED
A LOG CABIN FOR A
HOUSE OF WORSHIP
HALFWAY BETWEEN
THE EAST AND WEST
SETTLEMENTS. SOON
IT BURNED. SOME
SAID BY INDIANS,
BUT OTHERS BLAMED
A BRUSH FIRE.



One of the first public acts of the settlers of Pequig was to build a house of worship. They chose this hillside near Mill Brook for the site. Their first burial ground was nearby. This small and rough cabin was used only for a short time, and was not yet finished, when flames destroyed it.

10
★
OLD
BURIAL GROUND
1741-1777

HERE SLEEP THE
EARLY SETTLERS OF
PEQUOIG (ATHOL)
IN THEIR FIRST
BURIAL GROUND.
INDIANS WATCHED
FROM BEHIND TREES
AS MOURNERS ARMED
WITH MUSKETS CAME
IN SAD PROCESSION.

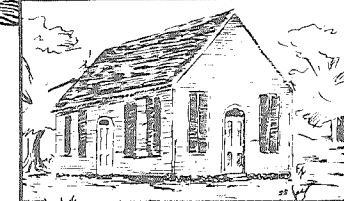
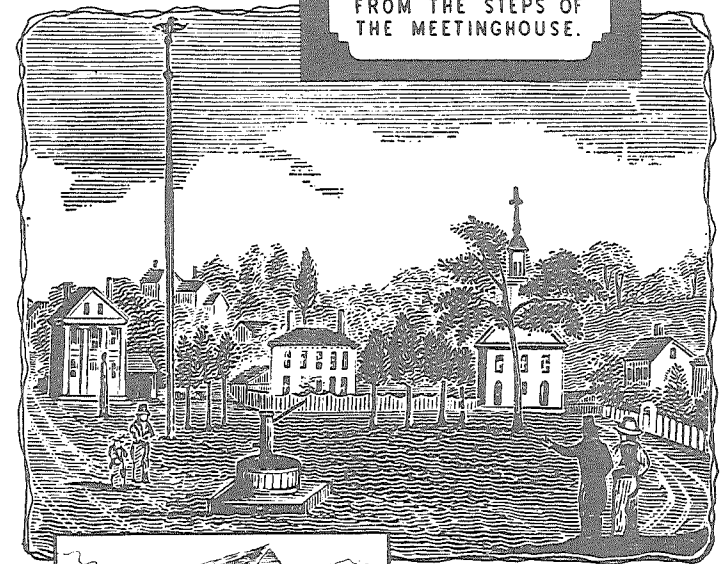


How many pioneers were buried here is not certain. At one time 40 graves could be clearly traced. A few of the names are known. Residents still debate whether Indians also were buried here, but there is no firm tradition or proof. In its center is seen the First Settlers' Monument, raised on July 4, 1859 by school children pulling on a rope.

9
415 Napgood St.

10.
Main St.
at Common

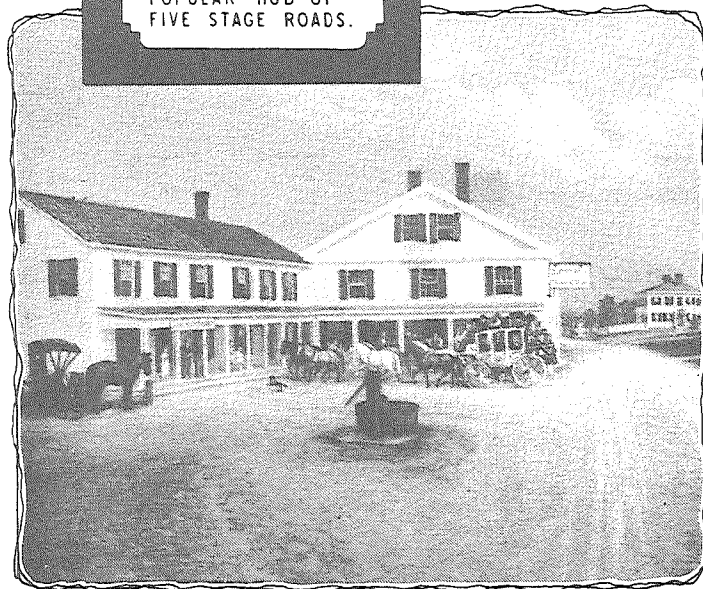
★
UPTOWN COMMON
DEEDED IN 1772 FOR
PUBLIC ENJOYMENT.
3RD MEETINGHOUSE
1773-1827
ON JULY 18, 1776 A
MESSENGER ARRIVED
WITH A COPY OF THE
NEW DECLARATION
OF INDEPENDENCE.
IT WAS READ TO ALL
FROM THE STEPS OF
THE MEETINGHOUSE.



Seth Kendall deeded this land to the town "for public assembly and enjoyment" on Feb. 10, 1772. The meetinghouse, built on it a year later where the bandstand now rests, became the rallying hall for the local patriots of the Revolution. During the War of 1812, ammunition was stored inside. From this green in 1861, Athol soldiers marched to Civil War battlefields. A "Liberty Pole" rose high above for many years.

★
**STAGECOACH
STOP**

DURING THE YEARS 1790 TO 1853 THIS CORNER WAS A BUSY STOPPING PLACE FOR STAGECOACHES FROM DISTANT POINTS. BROOKS TAVERN STOOD HERE AS THE POPULAR HUB OF FIVE STAGE ROADS.



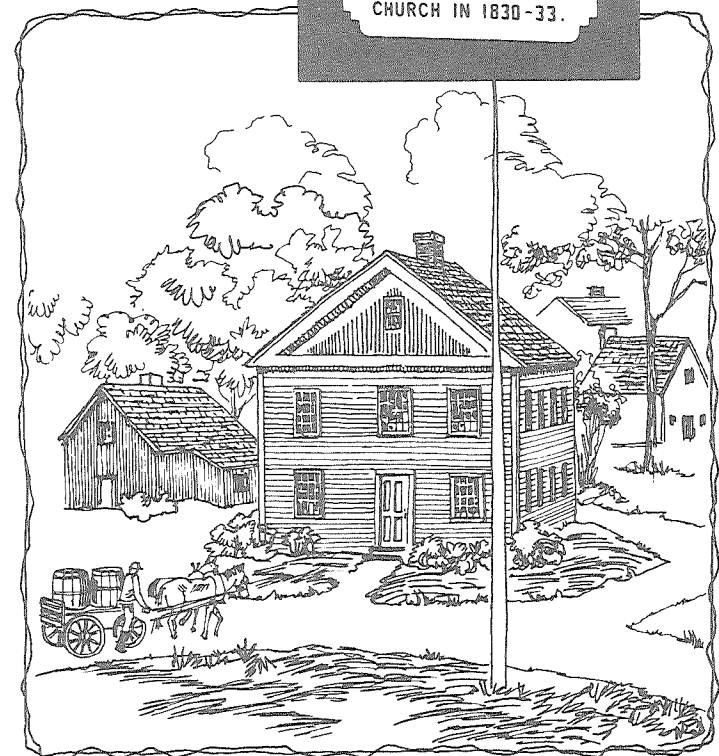
John Brooks' Tavern was a famous stage-coach stop between Boston and Brattleboro as the junction to five directions. Excited children watched the daily hustle of rattling coaches, foaming steeds, the transferring of passengers and mail, changing horses, and dust clouds heading 'round the bend.

11.
150½ Main St.

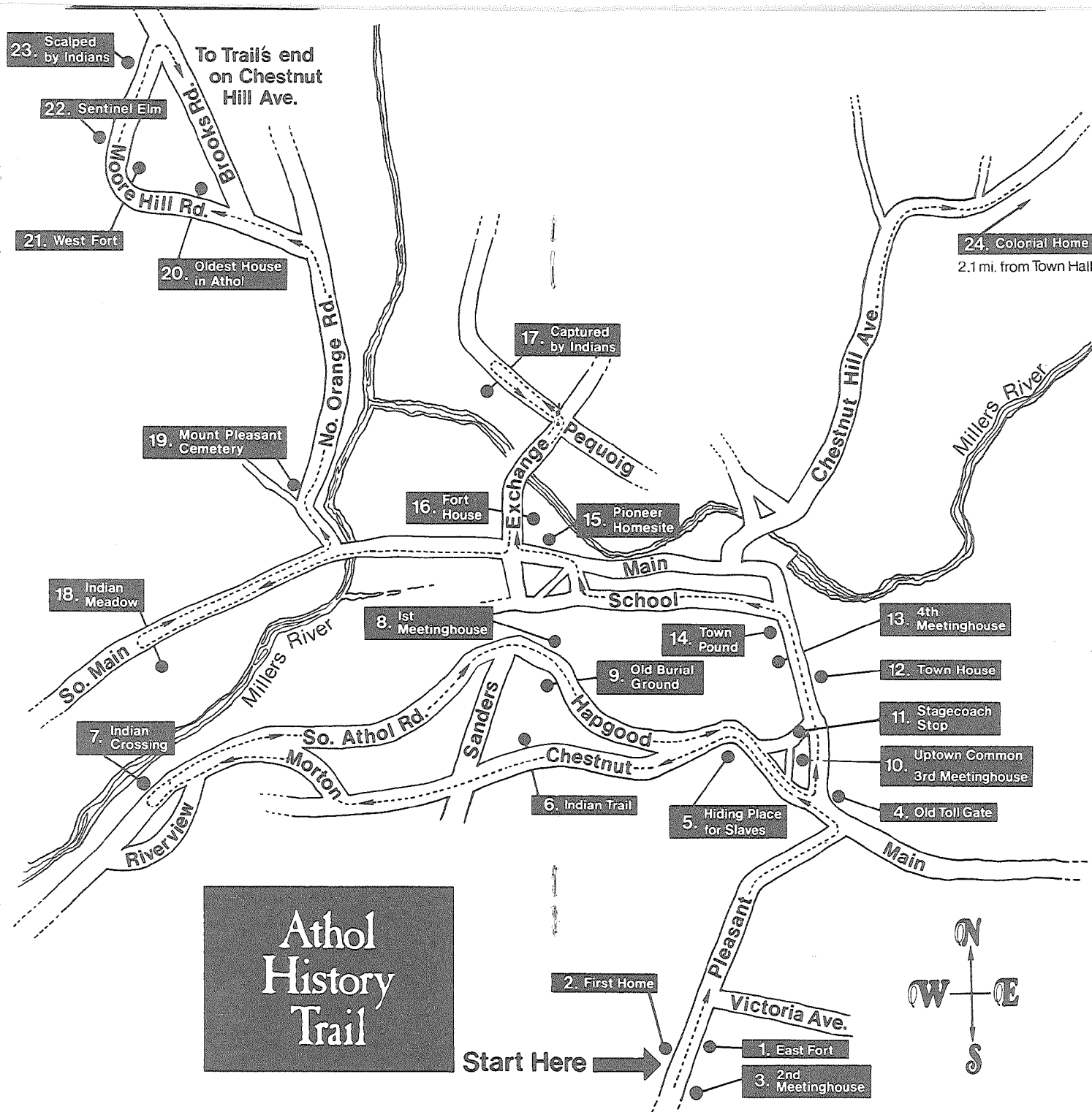
12.
147½ Main St.

★
TOWN HOUSE
1827 - 1847

ATHOL'S TOWN HALL FOR 20 YEARS. IT STOOD WEST OF THE COMMON UNTIL MOVED HERE IN 1850. IT ALSO SERVED AS "ATHOL ACADEMY" IN 1828, THEN AS A CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN 1830-33.



The town voted in 1827 to erect its first Town House, two stories high, for use both as a public hall and church. Town meetings were held on the lower floor. Upstairs, John Crosby conducted an informal high school called "Athol Academy." Congregationalists worshipped on the 2nd floor, until they built their own edifice three years later.





4TH MEETINGHOUSE

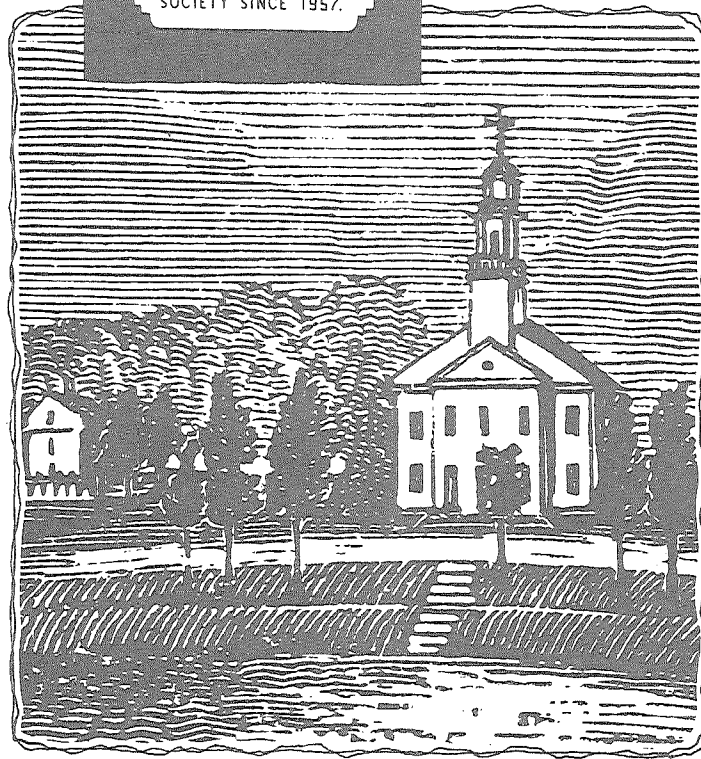
BUILT IN 1827-28
"FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP
OF GOD FOREVER."

OLD TOWN HALL

REMODELED IN 1847
FOR USE AS ATHOL'S
TOWN HALL UNTIL 1921.
OCCUPIED BY WOMAN'S
CLUB 1921-1957 AND
ATHOL HISTORICAL
SOCIETY SINCE 1957.

13.

1307 Main St.



Built on an acre of land donated by Samuel Sweetzer "for the public worship of God forever," this meetinghouse was used in its early days for religious services only. The town declared a holiday for its dedication on Dec. 3, 1828. Remodelled in 1847, it was Athol's seat of government until 1921.

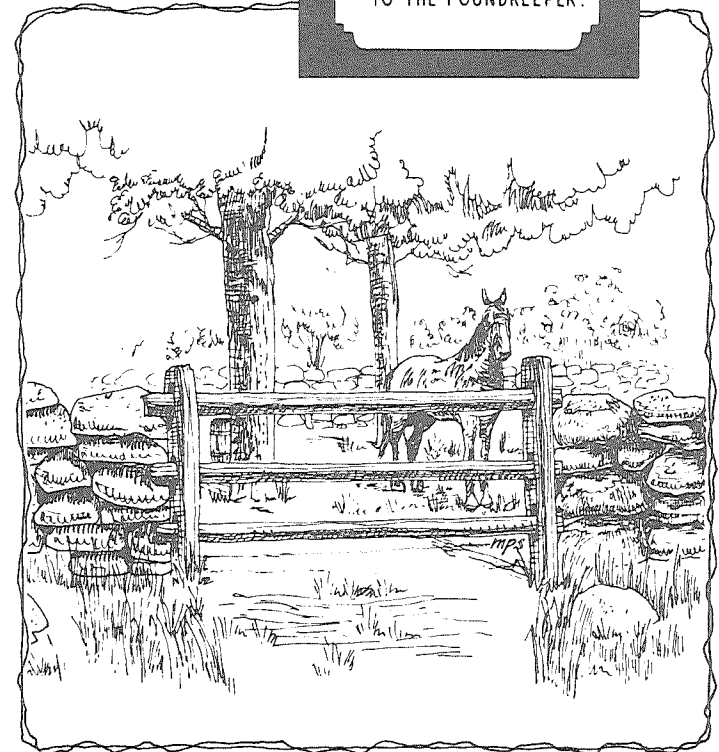


TOWN POUND

IN THE EARLY 1800'S
THERE WAS A SQUARE
ENCLOSURE OF STONE
WALLS HERE. BUILT
BY THE TOWN TO
HOLD STRAY CATTLE
AND OTHER ANIMALS.
THEIR OWNERS HAD
TO PAY A CLAIM FEE
TO THE POUNDKEEPER.

14.

1251 Main St.

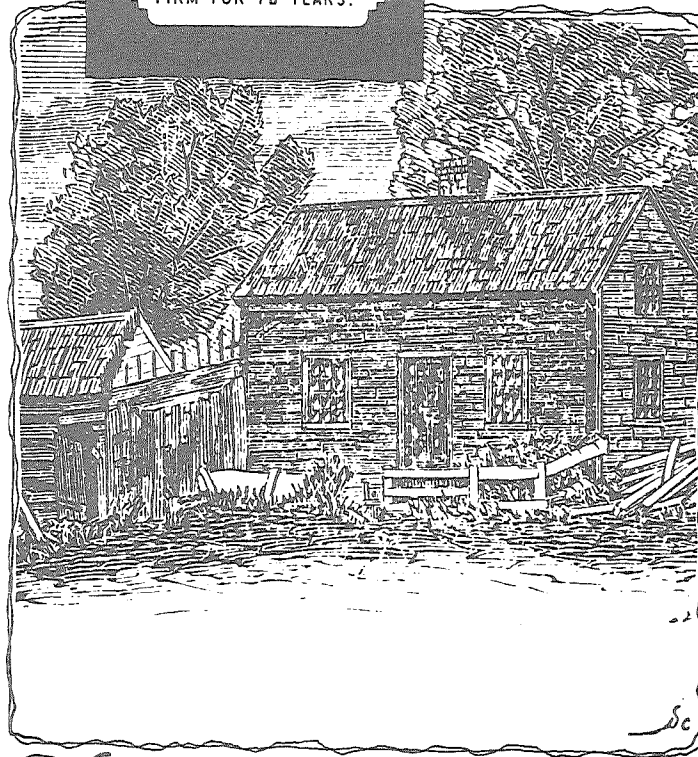


In early times all communities kept an animal pound. Field drivers caught and took into this stone enclosure any cow, horse, or swine found straying, especially if it were doing damage. If the owner was known he was notified; if not, a description of the animal was publicly posted.

★
PIONEER HOMESITE
1737-1815

THE DOWNTOWN AREA
BEGAN IN 1737 WHEN
JESSE KENDALL BUILT
A SMALL HOME IN
THE PRESENT MIDDLE
OF MAIN STREET.
INDIANS MENACED
THIS VALLEY, BUT
THE HOUSE STOOD
FIRM FOR 78 YEARS.

15.
416 Main St.

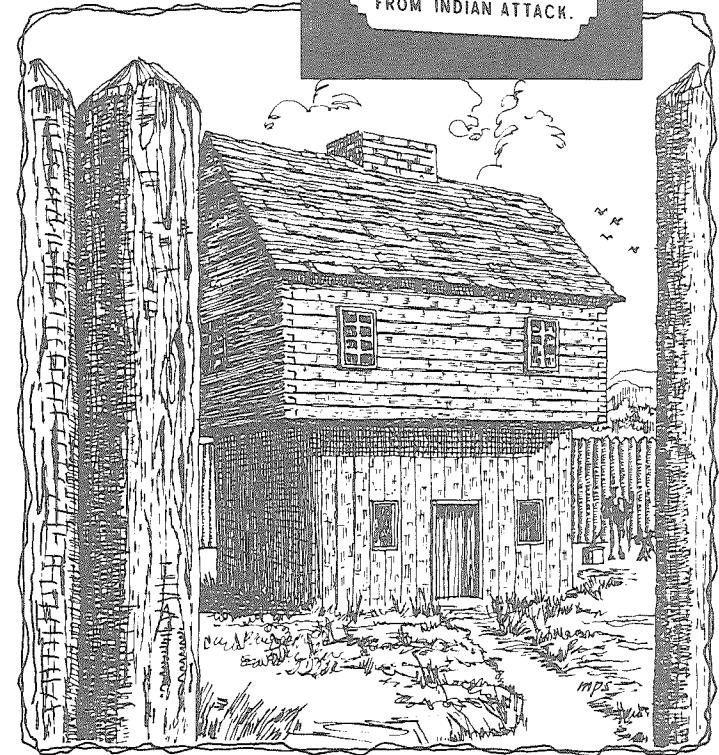


The pioneer Kendalls, Samuel and son Jesse, owned nearly all of the downtown area when it was hostile wilderness. Jesse built his home in 1737....When Main Street was laid out in 1815, the house was moved to 47 Freedom Street and stood until 1875. Jesse Kendall had sold these 80 prime acres in 1795 to Simeon Fish for 700 British pounds.

16.
Exchange St.
(North)

★
FORT HOUSE
1745 - 1755

ON A SMALL HILL
HERE THAT WAS
REMOVED IN 1929,
SAMUEL KENDALL
BUILT FOR ALL
"A GARRISON HOUSE,
PLANKED TO THE
FIRST STORY." IT
PROTECTED THE FEW
LOWLANDS SETTLERS
FROM INDIAN ATTACK.

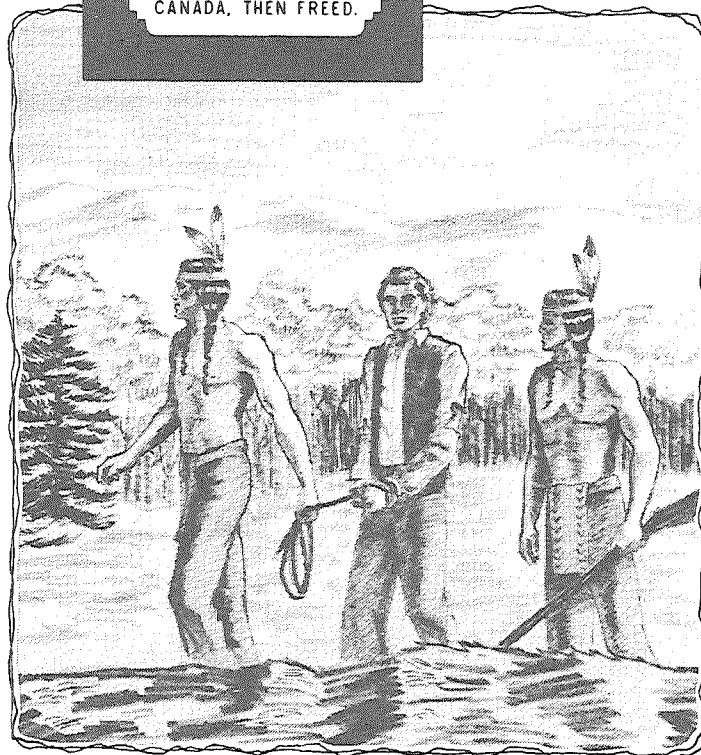


More pioneer homes began sprouting up in this lowland midway between the East Hill and West Hill settlements. A means of protection against Indian raids was needed for these isolated families. The garrison house was built on top of a knoll that gave a wide view of this valley.

17
151 Pequig Ave.

CAPTURED
BY INDIANS

YOUNG PIONEER
JASON BABCOCK
BUILT HIS LOG CABIN
HERE IN 1745. IN
THE SPRING OF 1747
HE WAS CAPTURED
BY INDIANS IN THIS
OPEN REAR MEADOW.
TAKEN PRISONER TO
CANADA, THEN FREED.

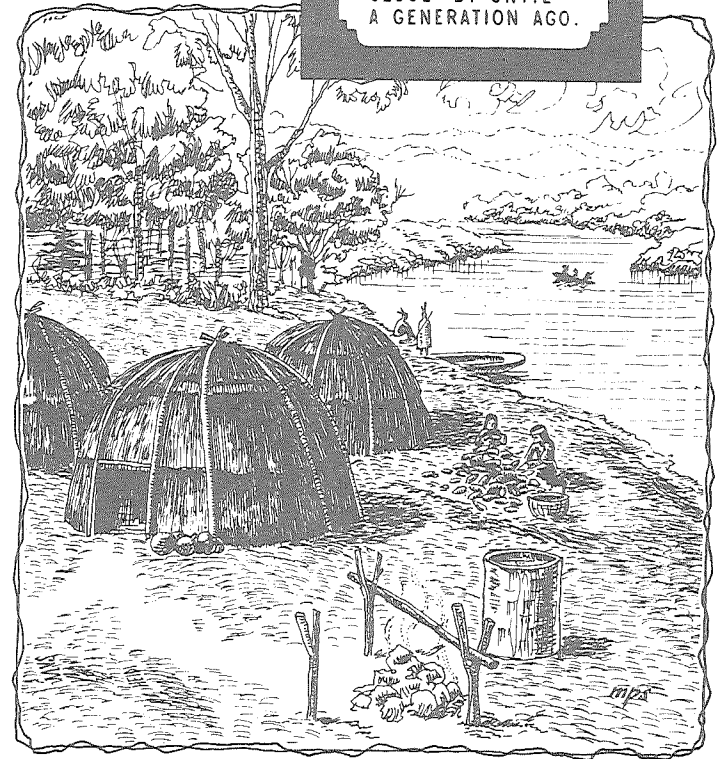


Jason Babcock came here at age 18, and bought most of this meadow and hillside. One day his cows strayed into the west side woods and he went to look for them. Suddenly shots rang out from Indians in hiding, and Babcock was slightly wounded. The war whoops were heard by men at the mill near the present YMCA. They ran to his rescue but he was already carried off.

18
488 So. Main St.

INDIAN
MEADOW

PEQUIG INDIANS OF
THE NIPMUCK TRIBE
BUILT WIGWAMS AND
PLANTED CORNFIELDS
ALL ALONG THIS
RIVERSIDE MEADOW.
INDIAN RELICS WERE
FOUND IN A FIELD
CLOSE BY UNTIL
A GENERATION AGO.



"...Konkeput was their chief. They built their council fires on these plains, gathered the wild grain on these meadows, hunted the deer on these hills. Here they gave their sons and daughters in marriage, and here they buried the bones of their fathers. Relics of these noble men yet remain. But that once happy tribe is gone, faded away..."

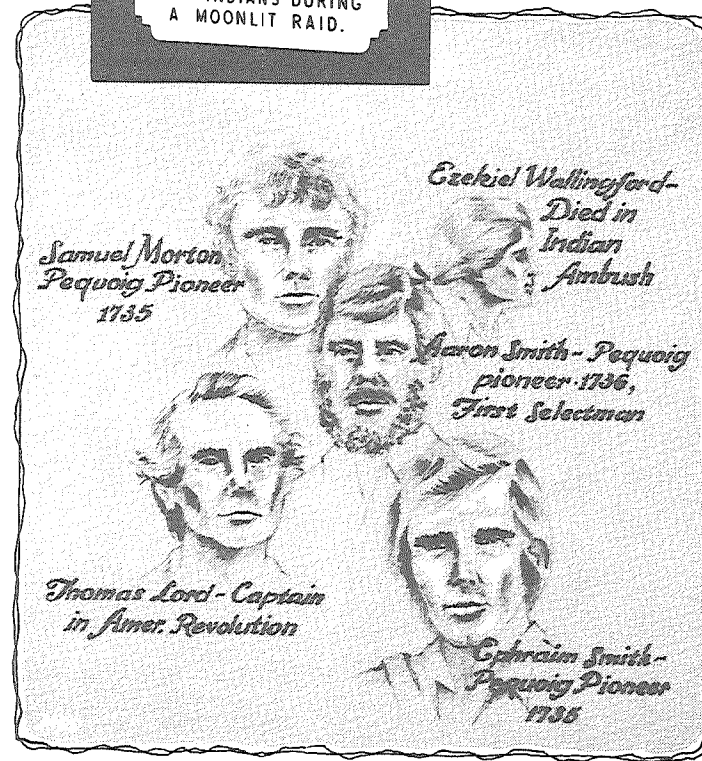
☆
MOUNT PLEASANT
CEMETERY

LAND DONATED BY
SAMUEL MORTON
BEFORE 1745. A
MEMORIAL TO MANY
TOWN FOUNDERS.

IT HAS A
MARKER TO EZEKIEL
WALLINGFORD, KILLED
BY INDIANS DURING
A MOONLIT RAID.

19.

No. Orange Rd.
at Mt.
Pleasant



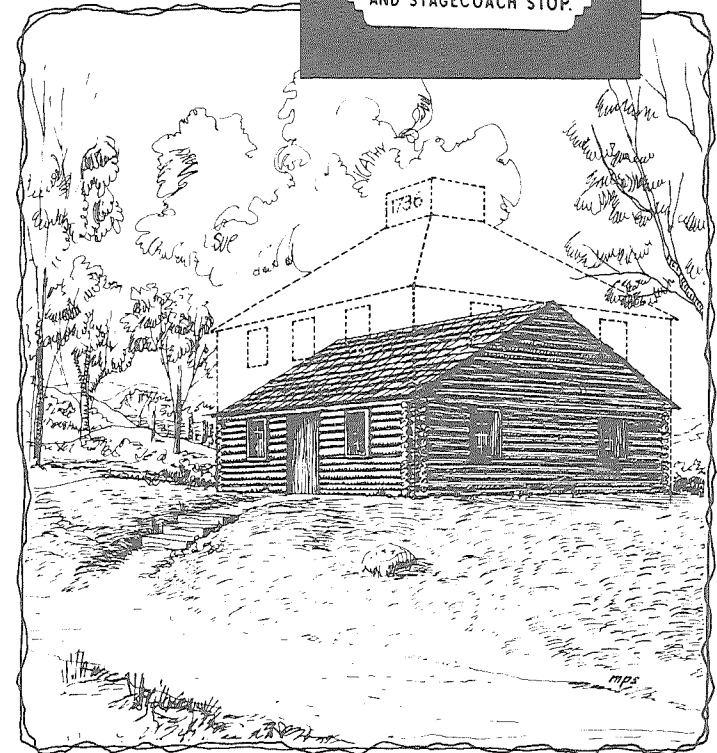
The East Hill and West Hill pioneers were separated by two miles of wilderness and a river crossed by foot at a fording place off No. Orange Rd. It became clear another burial place was needed for the settlers living north of the river. The land was donated by Samuel Morton.

20.

35 Moore
Hill Rd.

☆ HISTORY ☆
OLDEST HOUSE
IN ATHOL

BUILT IN 1736 BY
AARON SMITH AS A
LOG CABIN, LATER
ENLARGED. MENACED
BY INDIANS IN 1746
AND RAIDED OF FOOD
BY DANIEL SHAY'S
ARMY IN 1787. LATER
SERVED AS A TAVERN
AND STAGECOACH STOP.

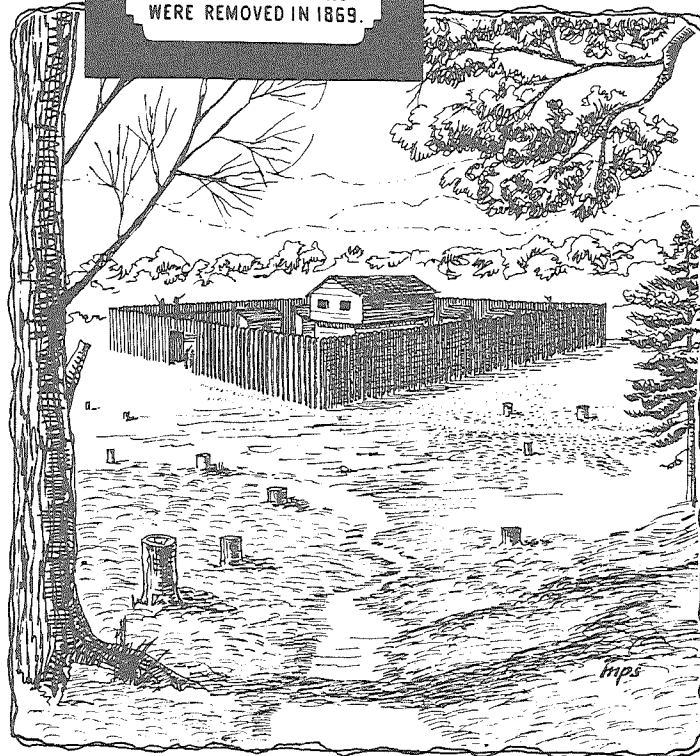


Its beginning was as a two-room log cabin. The timbers were dove-tailed together so that wooden pegs or nails were not needed. His descendants added a second floor, and a major restoration in 1969 gives the house its modern look, but much of the original interior structure remains.



WEST FORT 1741 - 1780

A STRONG DEFENSE AGAINST INDIANS, IT STOOD IN THIS LOWER FIELD. INSIDE THIS LOG STOCKADE WERE A SOLID BLOCKHOUSE, HUTS FOR FAMILIES AND TROOPS, AND A WELL. ITS REMAINS WERE REMOVED IN 1869.



"...Our ancestors relate how, as night spread its mantle of darkness over the forest and around their infant settlement, all would gather together in the garrison and sit silently without lights, listening with cautious ear to every external sound, querying if each uncommon noise might not be the signal of danger from the hostile Indians..."

21.

Moore Hill Rd.

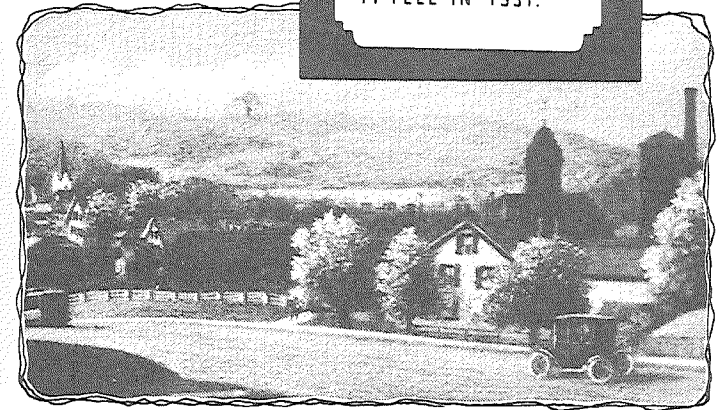
22.

Moore Hill Rd.



SENTINEL ELM

ON THE CREST OF THIS HILL STOOD A MAJESTIC ELM 93 FEET TALL. FROM ITS TOP BRANCHES INDIANS SIGNALLLED ACROSS THE VALLEY, AND LATER PIONEER LOOKOUTS WARNED OF HOSTILE RED MEN. IT FELL IN 1931.



The Sentinel Elm for more than 200 years created a dramatic silhouette on this hilltop. Used in early days as a "spy tree" by Indians

and pioneers alike, in later years it became a favorite picnic spot. The tree is preserved in story, poetry, photography, art, and song.

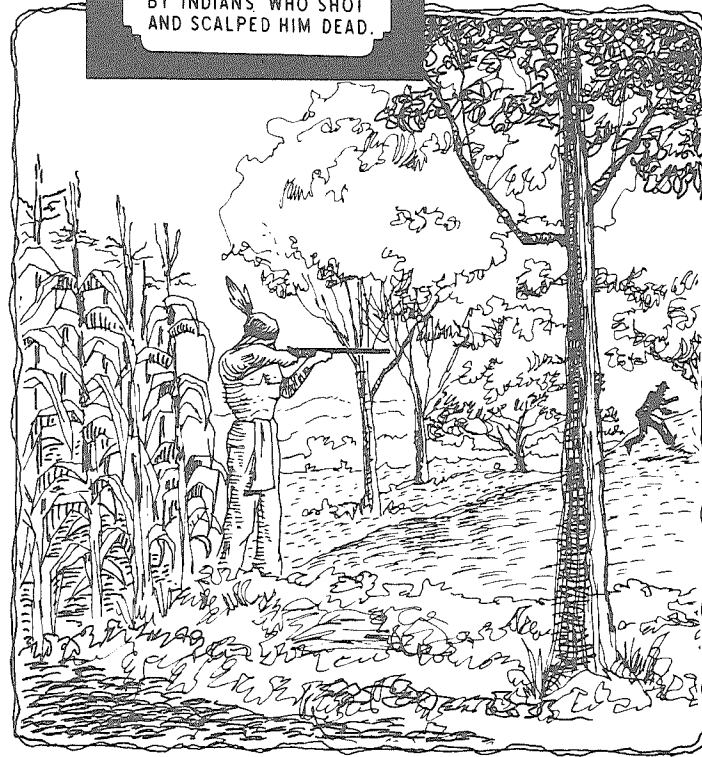
The elm was visible for twenty miles, and it was said that on a clear day Boston Harbor could be seen from its top branches. A bronze plaque marks where it stood.





SCALPED BY INDIANS

ON AUGUST 17, 1746
EZEKIEL WALLINGFORD,
THINKING HE HEARD
BEARS TRAMPLING HIS
CORNFIELD HERE,
LEFT THE FORT TO
INVESTIGATE. HE
WAS SOON SURROUNDED
BY INDIANS WHO SHOT
AND SCALPED HIM DEAD.



Indians lay in ambush here in Wallingford's cornfield and made noises like vandal bears to draw him out. A hundred yards from the fort, the Indians jumped from hiding and surrounded him. He turned and ran but in passing a fence was shot in the thigh and fell. Tomahawk and scalping knife ended his life.

23.

Moore Hill Rd.

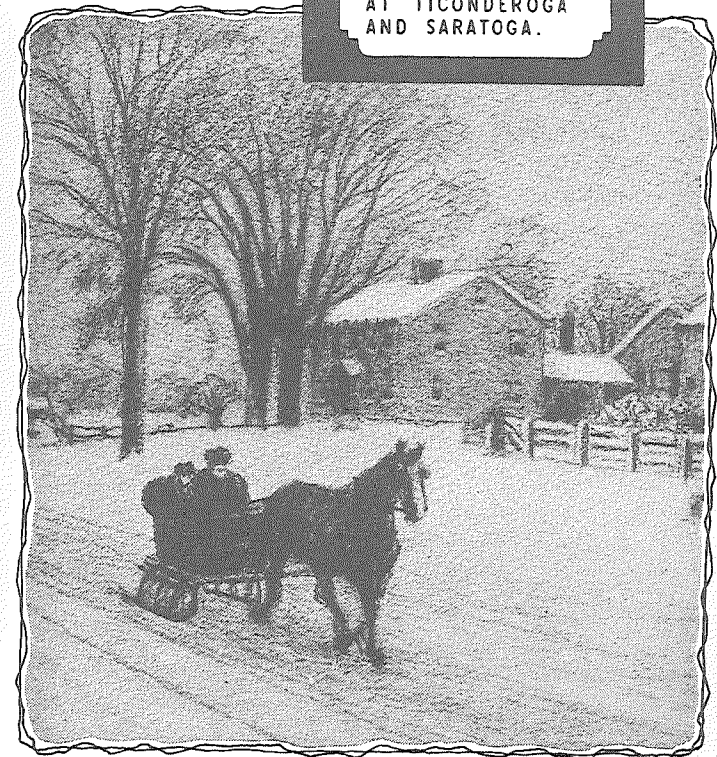
24.

*1777 Chestnut
Will Ave.*



COLONIAL HOME 1777

JOHN HAVEN, JR.,
A PRIVATE IN GENERAL
GEORGE WASHINGTON'S
ARMY, BUILT THIS
HOME DURING THE
REVOLUTION. HE HAD
FOUGHT IN THE
SIEGE OF BOSTON
AND THE VICTORIES
AT TICONDEROGA
AND SARATOGA.



A soldier of the War for Independence, John Haven Jr. was one of Ethan Allen's "Green Mountain Boys" who captured Fort Ticonderoga, on May 10, 1775. Two years later his military service was completed, the war moved into the south, and he came home and built this house. It stands as a model of colonial sturdiness and design.

APPRECIATION.....

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Mount Grace Region Business and Professional
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Margery Morton Chapter, Daughters of the
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Athol Historical Society
Athol Lions Club
Athol Masonic Charity and Educational Society
Athol Quota Club
Athol Exchange Club
Athol Rotary Club
Millers River Watershed Council
Athol Woman's Club
Mrs. Evelyn Merrifield
Judge and Mrs. C. Edward Rowe
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Athol Woman's Club
Cetto Real Estate
Friends of the Athol Public Library
Millers River Watershed Council
VonDy Rowe
Howard and Janet Wilson
In memory of Olive T. Taylor*

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