

Spurred into Action

By Cindy Cooper

“It was now evening, and I immediately dressed myself in the costume of an Indian, equipped with a small hatchet...after having painted my face and hands with coal dust in the shop of a blacksmith, I repaired to Griffin's wharf, where the ships lay that contained the tea. When I first appeared in the street after being thus disguised, I fell in with many who were dressed, equipped and painted as I was, and who fell in with me and marched in order to the place of our destination.” George Hewes provided this eyewitness account of preparing for the Boston Tea Party. It was a demonstration to protest taxing the colonists without allowing them to represent their own interests in British Parliament. That December 16, 1773 act became a major catalyst for the American Revolution.

Charlton may be miles from Boston Harbor, but fourteen-year-old resident John Spurr was among the groups of men who boarded the three ships and dumped opened chests of tea into the water that night. He later joined the Continental Army, serving as a Corporal on the day of the battle of Lexington and Concord. He eventually became a Major General in the militia.

Over the course of time, John Spurr owned many acres of land in Charlton. His former house is situated on the town common. Names of prominent citizens in the town's development are associated with his children. Daughter Sally married Salem Towne, Jr. Salem was a general in the militia and a state senator. Their house was moved to the common at Old Sturbridge Village. Another daughter, Louisa, married William Weld, who ran a tavern. He provided a location for the local Freemasons to meet. Son John became a Major in the militia. Serving at various times as a justice of the peace, State Representative, State Senator, storeowner in Charlton Center, and hotel manager, he was kept very busy.

A local resident who participated in a crucial protest when the country was forming, John Spurr left his legacy here in Charlton. Mrs. Evelyn D. Fincher provided a document containing his family genealogy to the Charlton Historical Society. Information on many other early residents is also available in the archives. Visit charltonhistoricalsociety.org or call 508-248-3202 to leave a message.