

Sunday worship @ site of
First Meeting-House
Sept 20, 2020

The committee has now arrived in May of 1726, the first worship was conducted in the plantation on Sugar Ball. The surveyors and chainmen continued laying out the 103 lots in their new settlement. During the autumn of 1726, the most direct route from Penny Cook to Haverhill Mass was cut out in the forest. Also, a road was cut through the woods from Horseshoe Pond southward for one half miles which became main street in the new community and to this day is still Main Street. Winter arrives, and according to history, many settlers stay and suffered greatly. In January of 1727 lots were assigned and throughout the year actual settlement was achieved. The settlers were few and even by 1730 included approximately thirty families.

A meeting-house was a prime necessity for the settlers. Before they even ventured out on their journey to settle Penny Cook, the proprietors held a meeting in Andover Mass in February of 1726 and voted to build a block-house twenty-five by forty feet, for the security of the expected settlers.

Within twelve months from the time that Rev. Coffin conducted the plantation's first religious devotion, the log house was built (prior to the saw-mill and grist-mill, two of the earliest and most important structures of the early New England towns). Out of necessity it was built of logs. It was one story, and rough walls were pierced with small square windows, sufficiently high from the ground to protect its occupants from the missiles of Indian foe. It was ready for occupancy on May 15, 1727 and was the sixteenth meeting-house in New Hampshire.

A main aisle ran from the center of the log house, with rows of benches on either side made of split logs, until boards could be obtained from the saw-mill. The men sat on one side and the women on the other. The pews came later, built at private expense for private use. For two and half years the preaching was shared by Enoch Coffin and Bezaliel Toppan.

Finally, in the spring of 1729, appropriations were made to lay a board floor in the meeting-house. In June, steps were taken to begin a search for a settled minister. However, the matter dragged on until March 30, 1730, when a committee was appointed and it was decided to call the Rev. Timothy Walker. Negotiations with Mr. Walker were deliberate, and it was not until October 14, 1730 that the settlers, voted to call Mr. Walker. On the same day of negotiations, Rev Walker accepted the call. On November 18, 1730 the ordination was conducted and the church was organized in the little log meeting house. Nine people were the constituent members of the church on that day.

In 1734 the plantation of Penny Cook was granted township status by the Massachusetts government and took the name of Rumford.

For twenty-five years, the little block-house beside the brook in the wilderness, crude and humble as it was, served the triple purpose of sanctuary, school-house and town hall, representing the three principles of early New England civilization – religious freedom, universal education, and self-government.

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