



Bedford Cemetery Views

A Public-Private Partnership

The mission of the Friends of Town of Bedford Cemeteries is to support the restoration and maintenance of the four cemeteries

January 2012

Friends of the Town of Bedford Cemeteries 4th Annual Recognition Meeting To an Outstanding Bedford Resident for 2011

Dave Danielson
2010



David C. Bailey



Doris Peck Spurway
2008



Ralph Wiggin
2009

Wednesday, January 18, 2012

7:30 pm

Bedford Town Hall

Please return this form with your check in the enclosed envelope to:

Friends of the Town of Bedford Cemeteries
24 North Amherst Road
Bedford, NH 03110

Type of Membership: () Family \$10.00 () Restorer \$25.00

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone (Optional): _____

Email (Optional) _____

We do not sell our membership lists

Friends of Town of Bedford Cemeteries is a 501(c)(3) organization under the Internal Revenue Code so your contributions are tax deductible.


Many Thanks...

Bedford Cemetery Spotlight

Reverend John Houston

Bedford's First Dissident

compiled by Julie Schappals



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John Houston was born in Londonderry, NH in 1723. He graduated with honors from College of New Jersey (later became Princeton) with a letter of merit from the College president, the father of Aaron Burr. He returned to Londonderry and became licensed as a Presbyterian minister in 1754. In 1757, after a year of negotiations, he became the first pastor of Bedford at a salary of “40 pounds sterling in Old Tenor” and some land for a farm. Things went well during the early years of his ministry. He assisted in overseeing the town’s several fractious “committees” for building the new meeting house for worship. He was regarded as a committed clergyman of high moral standards but of “stern and inflexible disposition.” He reputedly had a heated argument with at least one neighbor. A dispute with Matthew Patten led to a lawsuit (Mr. Patten prevailed). Nonetheless, his sermons were regarded as insightful and he had the professional respect of the community. Things changed in 1775 when Bedford decided he was a Tory and shut the doors of the church against him, stopped his salary and voted his dismissal as town minister. Reverend Houston claimed that his oath of allegiance to King George prevented him from supporting the cause of the rebels and independence. He was the only man in Bedford who refused the “oath of allegiance” to the cause of independence. Not one member of his church or the community supported him and he was spurned by former friends. He was arrested, required to post an expensive bond in order to remain in the county, his property was in danger of forfeiture as a Tory. Church officials in Londonderry stripped him of his credentials as a minister (but restored them a few years later). In 1778, he took the Oath of Allegiance to the new United States of America and although he still lived in Bedford, he was shunned. He became a minister in Salem NH in 1783 but was dismissed in 1785. So deep was the resentment against him that he never held another ministry position although he occasionally “guest preached” but not in Bedford. He lived the remainder of his life in Bedford, working his farm until his death in 1798. It was later said that his initial refusal to support independence “was an error of the head and not the heart.” Reverend Houston is buried in the Back River Road cemetery.

Membership has allowed us to complete many projects over the past few years.

Please don't forget to mail your membership fees to:
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24 North Amherst Road
Bedford, NH 03110