

A grandson of Rev. Tuck takes issue with the stories of how his grandfather was dismissed and how the McClary family is treated in history - the name of the grandson is not given.

# LIFE OF JOHN TUCKE, FIRST MINISTER OF EPSOM, NH

By his grandson

Owing to the inaccurate accounts of my grandfather given in Farmer and Moore's Historical Collections, I was induced to give a true and minute account of his life. It is there observed that he was dismissed from the ministry but without telling us why. As his removal from the ministry owing chiefly to the diabolical machinations of one person, whose true character had never been given to the world, it will be necessary to consider it here.

The same person also lost his line in the time of the Revolution and before him whom he had sought to destroy. Every reader of the history of the revolution well recollects the high encomiums lavished upon Capt. Andrew McClary whom every considerate person must acknowledge, cast away his life like a fool. Mr. Tucke was at first in favour with McClary and received some assistance from him in his settlement, tho no more then from any other citizen according to his property. The disposition and character of him was at most desperate, overbearing and arbitrary. It is well known that in new settlements it often happens that some ill natured, overbearing fellow or set of fellows go on regardless of all law and in time bring almost everyone to do as they say. This character was Andrew McClary. He swore implacable vengeance to all who would not join him in effecting his designs. His difficulties were frequent among his neighbors. After a long train of difficulties, in which many worthy members of society had suffered severely, some by his giant power (for he was an overgrown man) and others by his skill in gambling. (He being a professor in the black art) The Rev. Mr. Tucke, in performing such duties as every faithful minister should, fell under his displeasure.

It was a sermon delivered in June 1774, it is believed, in which he [implies] strongly against vices of every kind and endeavored to dissuade his people from joining in them. This coming to the ears of McClary, he supposed the whole force directed at him, knowing himself guilty of introducing the worst of vices. An uproar now commenced. His rugged voice, on which floated the most abominable oaths, like bubbles from the raging cataract, was soon heard in every part of the town, and vengeance was proclaimed against all, and in some instances, death to such as would not join with him in breaking up the ministry.

He next nailed up doors of the meetinghouse and threatened anyone with death that should attempt to open it. Some persons tried to reason with him but this only increased his rage and at one time he was heard to say 'I have shut the house and I defy God Almighty to open it,' at which his brother observed to him 'depend upon it brother as you have shut the doors of the house of God against our Godly minister, so I fear has God shut the doors of Heaven against you.'

On receiving the news of the battle of Lexington in 1775, McClary raised a company and marched to Charlestown, where after the battle of Bunker Hill, he was exposing himself, boasting of his courage in a place of imminent danger, when a cannonball thrown from a ship put an end to his life on the 17th June. Mr. [Moore] of Deerfield NH was near him when he was shot and repeatedly urged him to retire. Said he 'God damn them, the ball's not cast yet to kill me,' and from these words escaped his lips, a cannon ball shot from the Glasgow cut out his bowels and he had only time to say 'I am a dead man.'

This is the true account which has been kept in the dark, lest it should have some effect of the concerns of his relatives, but no one except the most suspicious would reflect anything there from, and says every fine historian, 'the truth must be told.'

Mr. Tucke now receiving an appointment in the army as chaplain and prepared for his departure. He set out from Epsom and after several days travel arrived at Danvers, here he was seized with a violent headache to which he had been always more or less accustomed through life, tho not to such an uncommon degree as at this time. A physician was called in, and some medicine administered which proved directly opposite to his complaint, or in their words greatly enraged it, for it proved to be the small pox, and he died Feb. 9th 1777, with all that composure or mind which arises from a rectitude of conduct and a consciousness of having committed no crime.

Mr. Tucke opposed, in his conversation, every measure of the British Parliament in its various attempts to force a tax on the American colonies, which he clearly foresaw would lead to an open [ ] political affairs however he never found [ ].

In a history of the town of Epsom by Rev. Mr. Curtis, slight notice is taken of the first minister, with an excuse for so doing that information could not be obtained, but he knew the family from whom I am descended and that my mother was his daughter from whom alone of course, he was to expect correct information about family particulars, more especially as chief of his papers, manuscripts and books fell into her hands. Particularly a manuscript entitled 'the Ecclesiastical Records of Epsom' which was exactly kept during his ministry there. How could Mr. Curtis dispense with the only true early accounts of the town, without even inquiring of a single descendant whether any such thing existed? Mr. Tucke was a son of the Rev. John Tucke who settled at Gosport (Smith's Isles) where he continued until his death 12 August 1773. A monument was erected over his grave with this inscription. (not included)

He had two brothers who immigrated to this country at the same time. One settled at Hampton and the other somewhere in the south. It is said in Maryland, descendants of the former are found in Brentwood, N.H. and in Massachusetts.

The subject of this history married a daughter of Rev. Samuel Parson of Rye by whom he had seven children. John, the elder of these, in the beginning of the war of Independence, sailed on a cruise in the ship American and was never heard from again. The whole crew was made up of promising young men. Richard died at [ ] in the West Indies. Joseph went out to Europe as super cargo and died in Liverpool. Samuel Jones, the only son now living is a merchant in Boston (it is true and mentioned in Farmer and Moore's Col. That he was a merchant of Baltimore, but not then because he removed back to Boston in 1822 whence he went in 1817). The three daughters are living. One married Thomas Rand of Rye, one Simeon Drake of Northwood, the other Samuel G. Bishop Esq. of Connecticut, no Columbia, N.H.

Mr. Tucke, though his fore mentioned death, must be lamented by all true friends of science and virtue, left ample monuments of his great [ ] and experience there in. He was eminent in the mathematics, as his manuscripts (now belonging to me) fully show and he wrote the banned languages with accuracy and ease.

The deplorable condition into which the family of Mr. Tucke was thrown on his being obliged to desist from preaching, cannot be described. His wife, a widow, of a delicate constitution, with several young children, was now left in a great measure to the will of his enemies, as will be explained.

The most frivolous law suit, and to Mr. Tuck the most fatal, were brought against him by or at the instigation of McClary. On being driven from the meetinghouse, Mr. Tuck preached in the hall of his own house, where his good friend would assemble for instruction on days of meetings. But the number was gradually lessened by the [madness] of McClary. He at length hit upon the most effective and perhaps the only means, utterly to destroy his victim. They were suits of law! Swayed by the will of the prosecutor!!

No cushion had been furnished to the meetinghouse, and after a time Mr. Tuck, at his own charge procured one and placed it in the pulpit. This was of course wrested from him when the church was nailed up. When it was found that the house was not again to be opened to Mr. Tucke, he caused it to be entered, and the cushion taken out. This he had a right to do because it belonged to him. This was no sooner known to McClary but he brought a suit against Mr. Tuck in which he was arraigned at thief.

I will not disgust my readers with the particulars of the trial, for they tend only to stamp with the blackest

infamy, the prosecutor, of which indeed they must have discovered too much in the very outset of this narrative. It will suffice here only to observe that although nothing was made out against the defendant, yet it caused him the greatest distress.

At another time he was tried for theft and with no better foundation than before, but with more success on the part of the prosecutor. Mr. Tucke had boards at a mill, his neighbors also had boards there. Mr. Tuck having occasion for some, went a man with directions which to take, but when he came to the mill, took boards from the wrong pile; in consequence of not understanding his instructions, or from the difficulty of distinguishing among piles of boards, where of course there was much sameness.

Thus are the circumstances stated that led to the destruction of the family, for the widow was swindled out of the rent of her farm for some years, which greatly increased their distresses.

James Gray who died in the winter of 1821, for a stipulated price per acre, improved her farm. After years he was requested to make payment, and after being put off for some time, she saw no other way of obtaining her right but by a recourse to the law. Accordingly a suit was commenced. At the day of trial, a woman much attend in person' at a great distance from home; (she had no male connection nearer than Rye) but this would have been trifling but for the acts of a villain. (all at the instigation of Gray) For eventually, she had with great fatigue, on horseback, arrived at the appointed place, or in its neighborhood, some one or more, under the greatest pretensions of friendship, waited upon her and informed her that the trial of her case would not come on until a future day. Thus disappointed she returned home. The trial immediately came on, and the result was, she lost her right. The loss, together with the cost of court, subjected her to still greater sufferings.

It was considered very remarkable at that time and is so at the present day by all old people who knew the circumstance; which was this; General Andrew McClary was killed near Bunker Hill just one year, on that very and to him fatal day, from the time he nailed up the meetinghouse at Epsom, before related.