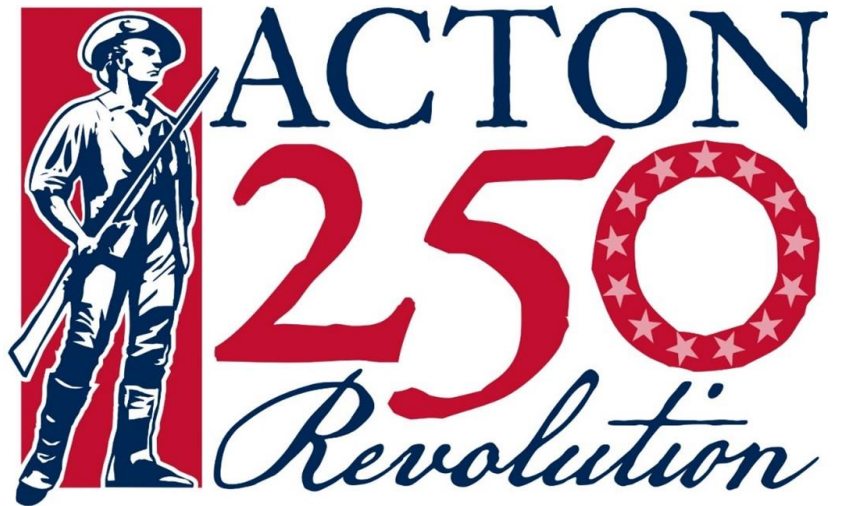


Daily Life in Colonial Acton

by Historian Mary Fuhrer

- Presented by the Acton 250 Committee
- More events of all kinds to follow well into 2025
- Acton has a lot of history to celebrate!

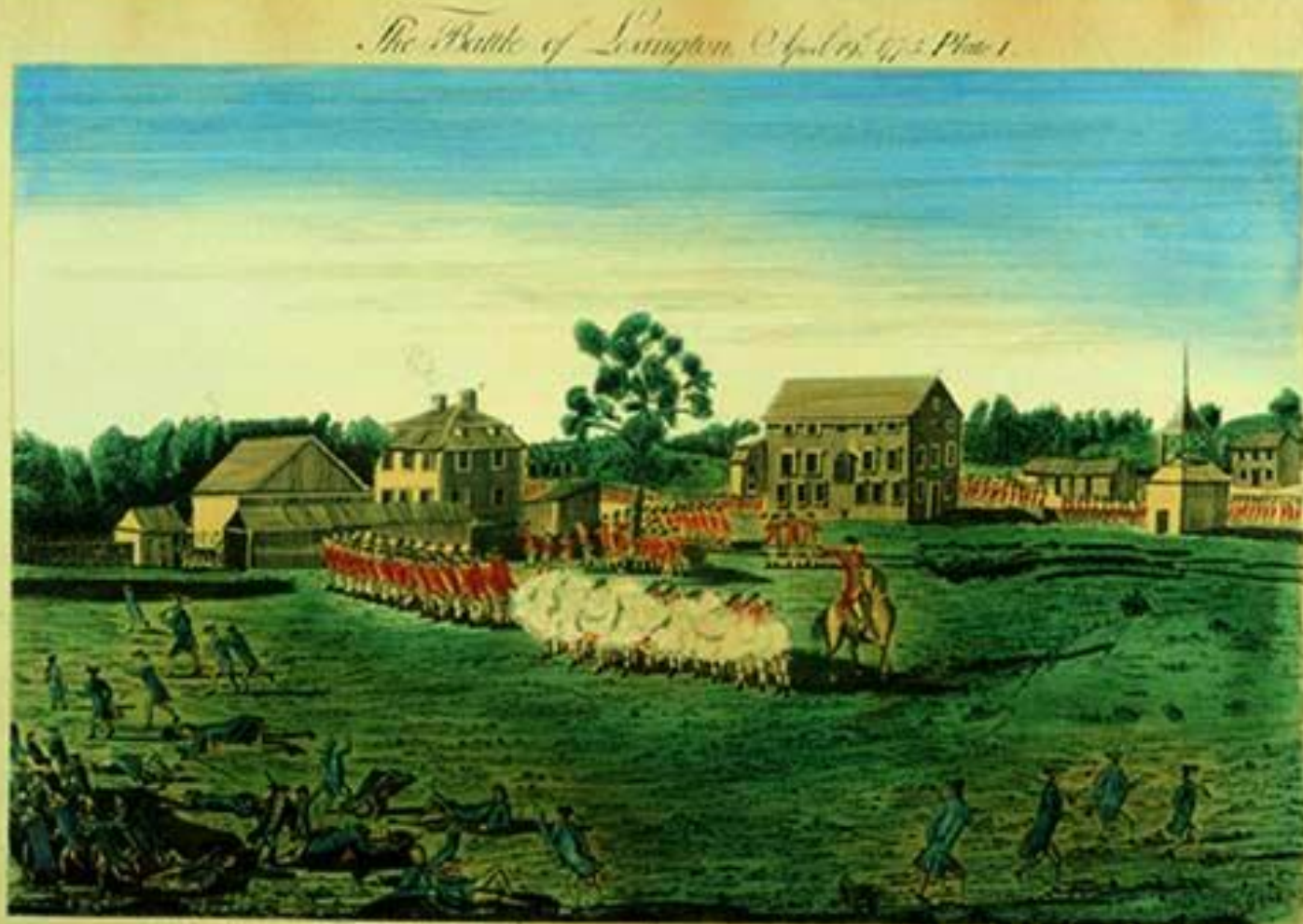


Daily Life in Acton on the Eve of the Revolution

Acton 250

November 2023

“The past is a foreign country.”



From the Collections of the Clements Library

First Peoples of this Area – Nipmuck

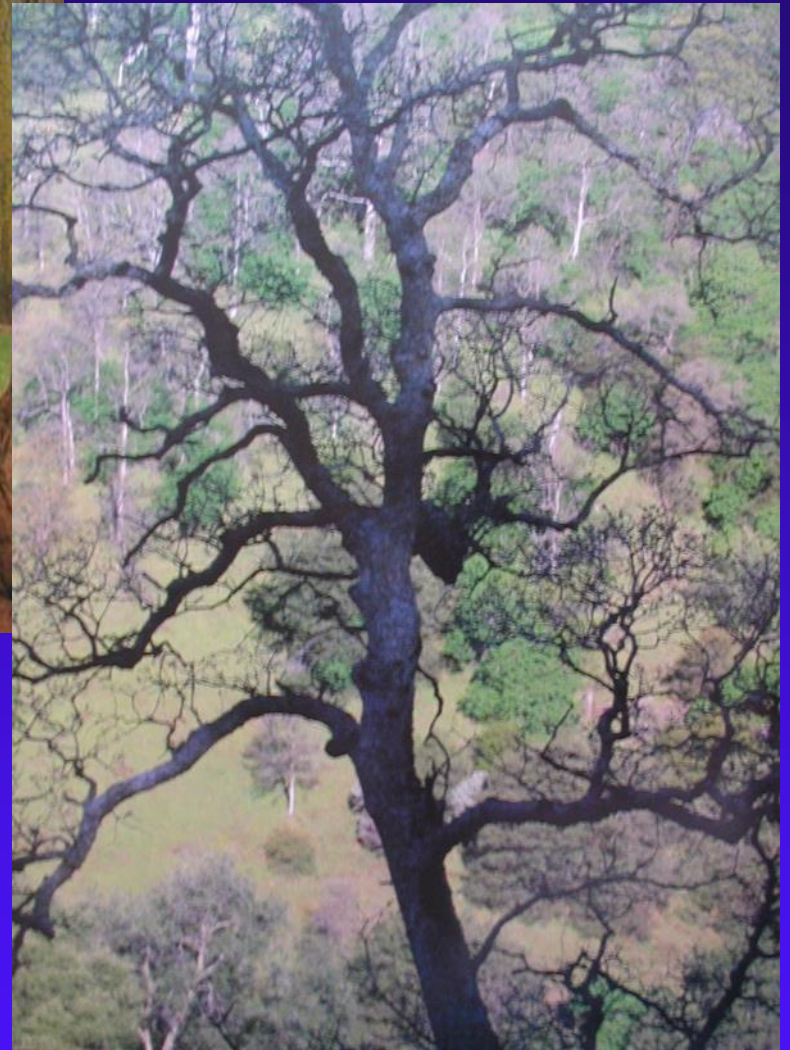


By Nikater; adapted to English by Hydrargyrum - Wikipedia Commons

The World of Late Colonial Acton

- Family & Household
 - House & Possessions
 - Farm
 - Neighborhood
 - Church
 - Town
-
- Two guides on tour: Simon Hunt & Lucy Davis

I. Families & Households



Families with deep roots
& broad branches

Simon Hunt Family

Simon Hunt b. 1734

Married Lucy Raymond 1754

Children (all born in Acton):

- Lucy 1755, d. 1755
- Simon 1756
- Lucy 1758
- Nathan 1760
- Mary 1762
- Paul 1764
- Elizabeth 1766
- Ruth 1769
- Tabitha 1771
- Sarah 1773
- Joanna 1779



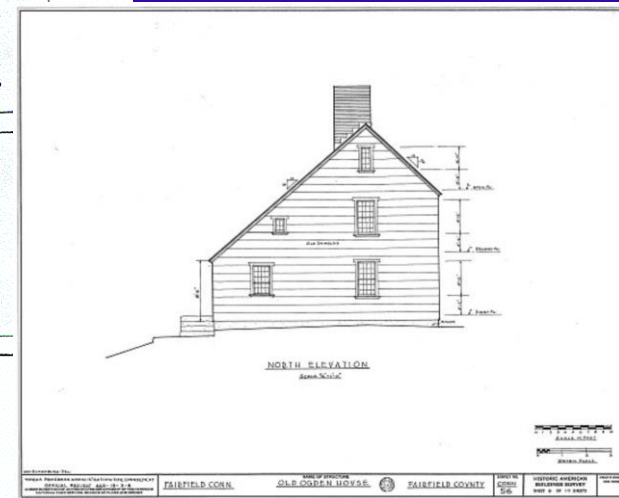
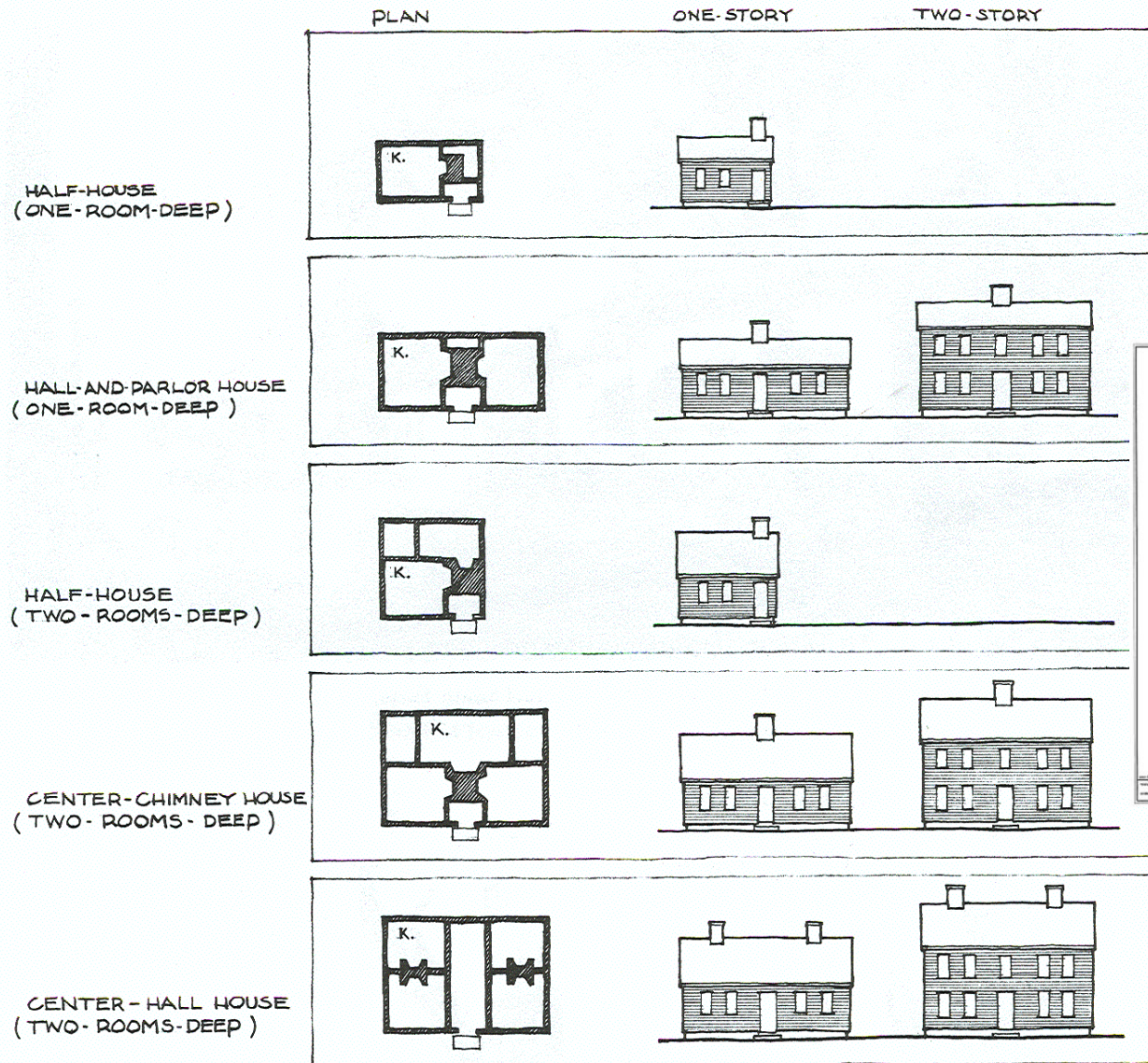
The Savage Family, c. 1799, by Edward Savage, Worcester Art Museum

All people lived under “family government.”
“Family” = Household

- husband & wife
- children (average 6-8 per family)
- grandparents
- unmarried siblings of husband/wife
- visiting relatives
- apprentices
- hired help
- boarders
- town poor
- slaves

II. House and Home

Colonial era house plans



Thomas Hubka, Big House, Little House, Back House, Barn

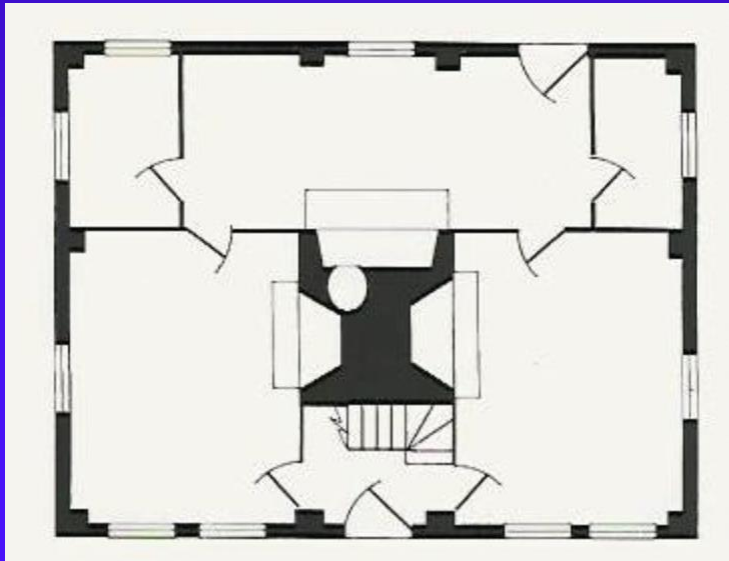
Household Goods

Probate Inventory of Isaac Davis, June 1775

The Inventory of the Movable Estate of Capt
Isaac Davis late of Acton Deced. which was Taken
June 27 9 1775 as it was Shown to us (viz)
Ephraim Haggood Joseph Robbins and James
Paulkner which did Price them

one Matt 29 1/2	one great Coat 12	one coat 6 1/2	£ 3: 11: 11
one Sack 6 1/2	one Coat 12	one Sack 6 1/2	1: 11: 0
one pair of Breeches 2	one coat 12	one Sack 6 1/2	0: 4: 0
one pair of Leather Breeches 1	another pair of Breeches 1 1/2		1: 1: 4
two Shirts 2 1/2	two pair of Stockings 1 1/2	three pair of Gloves 1 1/2	0: 16: 0
two pair of Stockings 2	the first Bed and Furniture 2 1/2		1: 11: 0
the second Bed and Furniture 3 1/2	the third Bed and Furniture 3 1/2		3: 12: 0
the fourth Bed 2 1/2	two Beds 2 1/2	two Sheets a Table Cloth 1 1/2	1: 14: 0
two pair of Trowsers 4 1/2	one winter Curtain 1 1/2	two Table Cloths 1 1/2	0: 6: 6
four Puter platters 1 1/2	four twelve puter plates 1 1/2	one old Puter Dish 1 1/2	1: 11: 4
one Puter Quart Pott	one pint Pott	one Spoon 3 1/2	0: 3: 6
one Case of Knives and Forks 3 1/2	two Skim-mers 2 1/2		0: 5: 6
one Brass Kettle and a Brass Skillet 3 1/2	a pair of Spectacles 1 1/2		1: 11: 4
a Iron Pott	a Kettle and Skillet 1 1/2	a pair of Silver Shoe Buckles 1 1/2	0: 15: 0
a pair of Silver Sheep Butters 2 1/2	a Gun Barrel 3 1/2		0: 5: 0
a pair of Brass Shoe Buckles 1 1/2	a pair of Steel Kneel Buckles 1 1/2		0: 1: 4
one Powder Horn	one Sward 2 1/2	a quarter of a pound of Powder 0: 2: 6	
one Gun 3 1/2	a Pistol 1 1/2	a Cartridge Box 1 1/2	a powder Flask 3 1/2
a pair of Scissors 1 1/2	one Crain 6 1/2	two flat Irons 3 1/2	0: 14: 0
one Goose and Pudding 1 1/2	one Boasting Iron 2 1/2	two Candle Sticks 1 1/2	0: 4: 0
one Worming Pan 1 1/2	one Hand Bellows 1 1/2	one Shovel and Spade 3 1/2	0: 8: 4
one Sheep Shears 1 1/2	one Chopping Knife 1 1/2	one Hand of Shinglenail 3 1/2	0: 4: 6
one Half Bushel 1 1/2	one sack 1 1/2	three old rails 1 1/2	0: 3: 0
one Bible and other Books 6 1/2	one Bullet mold 3 1/2	one Glassware 1 1/2	0: 10: 4
Earthenware 3 1/2	and old Earthenware 1 1/2	and a picketub 2 1/2	0: 6: 6
Twenty old River Barrels 26 1/2	two meet tubs 1 1/2	one Rope Tub 1 1/2	1: 10: 4
One Cask 6 1/2	one Gallon Bottle 1 1/2	one Pinnel 1 1/2	0: 8: 0
Wringing Pan 2 1/2	five yard and half of all wool Cloth 2 1/2		1: 4: 8
one pair of Shoes 1 1/2	two pair of old Shoes 2 1/2		0: 4: 0
one Crain 2 1/2	and twenty pound of Sheeps wool 2 1/2		1: 2: 11
Seven Pounds of Comb flax 1 1/2	one old Desk 1 1/2		0: 18: 0

Parlor, Hall, & Kitchen



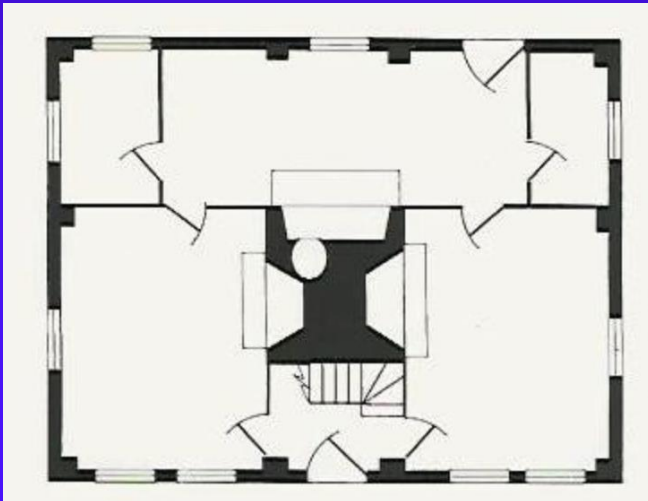
James L. Garvin, *A Building History of Northern New England*



Multi-use “Hall” & Kitchen



Scott Thorp 2013, scottthorpphoto.com



James L. Garvin, *A Building History of Northern New England*



Image: Carole Conn, "No Butter in the Buttery"

III. Farm

“Here once the embattled *farmers* stood . . .”



Yankee Yeoman Farm



Harvard Forest Diorama

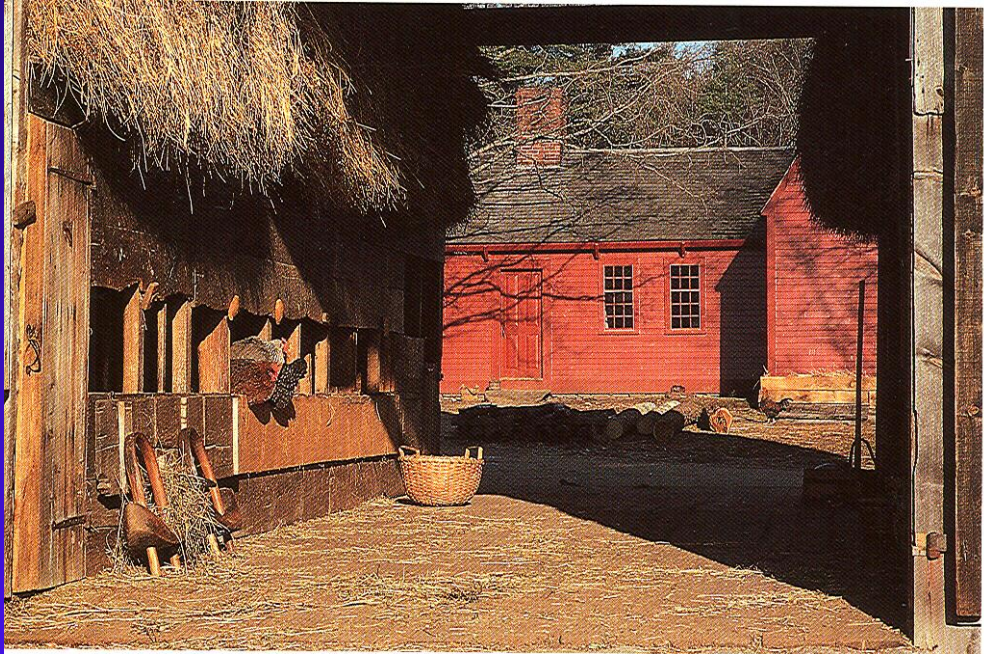
Land provided security, independence, and civic identity

In colonial New England, a farm that would *sustainably* produce the food, clothing, and fuel for an average household required about **60** acres.

**Ideal Mixed-Use Sustainable Family Farm
Freedom's Way Colonial Towns**

Woodlot 20 Acres	Meadow 15 Acres	Pasture 15 Acres
Tillage 6 Acres	Houselot 2 Acres	Orchard 2 Acres

Houselot – Dooryard, Barnyard, Garden



Orchard: Cider and Fruit



Photo: Old Sturbridge Village

Tillage: Grains and Flax



Photo: Old Sturbridge Village

Pasture: Grazing



Photo: Old Sturbridge Village

Meadow: Hay



Painting; Cutting the Hay by Martin Driscoll

Woodlot: Fuel and Timber



Image: Harvard Forest Dioramas

1735 Lexington Valuation

[illegible]

Simon Hunt's Land - 1771

Polls rateable – 1

House – 1	[2 acres]
Orchard	[2+ acres]
Tillage	7 acres
Pasture	10 acres*
Meadow	21 acres
Assumed woodlot	42 acres**
TOTAL ACRES	84

Required for Sustainable Farm

2 acres
1-2 acres
6 acres
15 acres
15 acres
20 acres
60 acres

Livestock

• Horse	1
• Oxen	2
• Cattle	5
• Goats/Sheep	10
• Swine	2
• Barrels cider	20

Essential Stock to Sustain Family:

1
2
6
3
2
10+

*Valuation says these 10 acres of a quality to feed 7 cows

**Rule of Thumb: double acreage to estimate woodlot

IV. Neighborhood

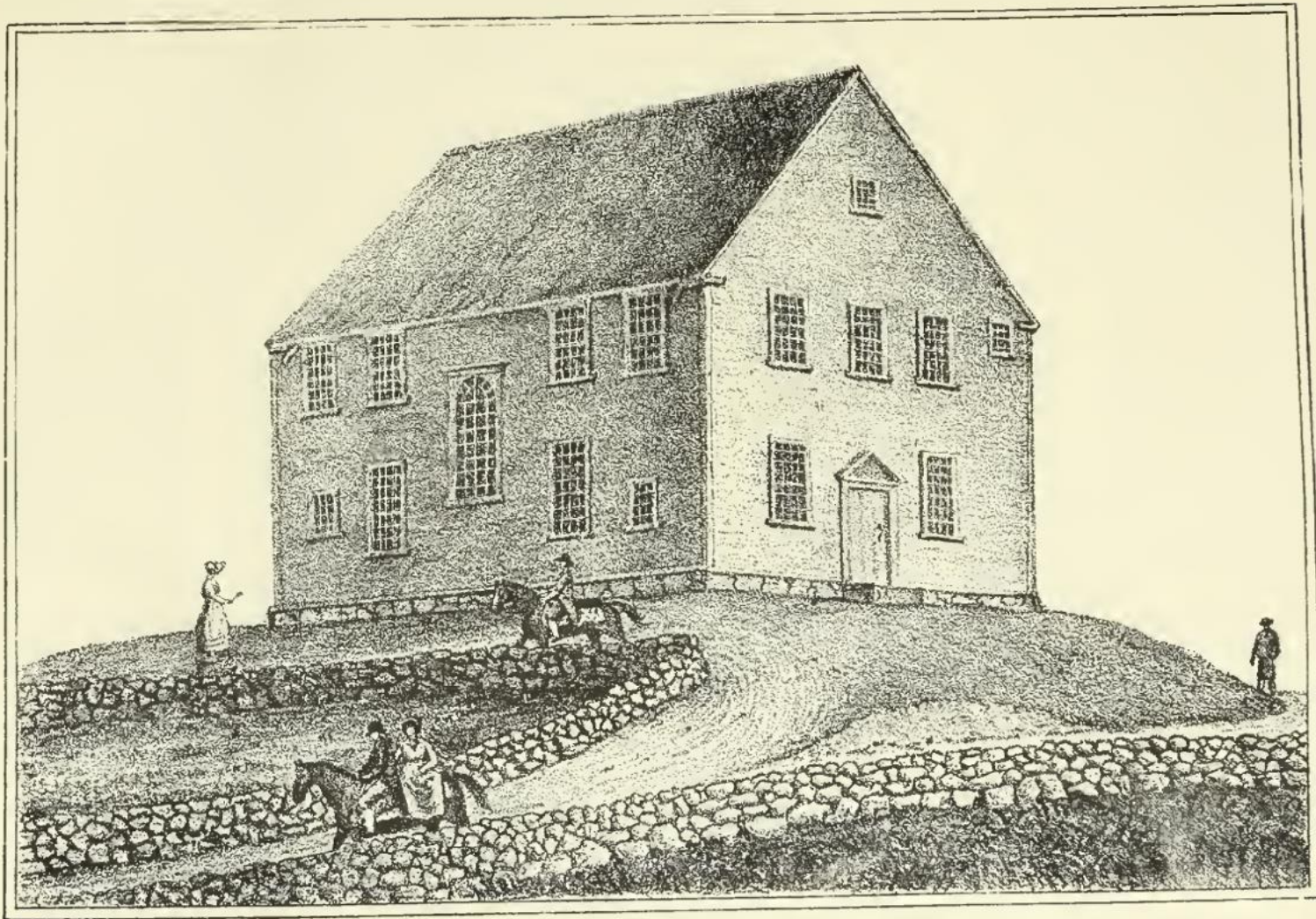
Map of Acton 1794



Farm Account Books

Oct 1745 Ens Peirce Deter		
to a Barril & $\frac{1}{2}$ a hundred of nail	—	0-17-03
to a Coffin & 8 Bows to ty Cattle	—	0-03-00
To a Brake	—	0-03-00
<hr/>		
Feb 20th 1746 then Reckoned with		
Ens Peirce and there is Due to me	—	3-2-3
to my oxen 1 Day & half & in ax & bwe	—	0-9-9
to making a tub & other things	—	0-5-6
May to my oxen half a day Plough	—	0-2-6
to a Chees mill	—	0-14-0
to my oxen half a day plowing & other thing	—	0-0-0
to my oxen to plough in your Rice	—	0-03-0
to mending your mill & setting hoops	—	0-04-6
to my oxen to get in your hay	—	1-05-0
to mending your Cart wheel & setting hoops	—	0-10-0
to making your oven	—	0-08-0
to Shuing your Shed	—	0-03-0
to mending your carriers	—	0-06-6
	2	8-6
	10	7-6
<hr/>		
January 31 1747 then Reckoned with		
Ens Peirce and there is Due to me	—	00-15-2
to making your leading Slaf	—	00-05-0
July 1st to 23 pound of Beal at 15 per 100	—	01-08-9
<hr/>		
Feb 1: 1748 then Reckoned with Ens Peirce		
& there is Due to him	—	4-14-10
Feb 3 to $\frac{1}{2}$ hundred of nail	—	0-03-00
April to my oxen one day & $\frac{1}{2}$	—	0-18-00
to $\frac{1}{2}$ Busshel of oats	—	0-06-00
to my oxen to Get in your hay	—	2-00-00
To four oxen & Joseph a day & half to Plough	—	1-16-00
to a foot wheel & mending another	—	1-02-06
<hr/>		
Feb 13: 1749 then Reckoned with Ens Peirce & Joseph		

V. Church



THE FIRST MEETING HOUSE. 1738.

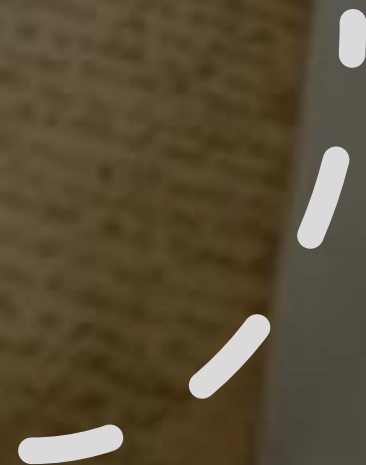
Seating the Meetinghouse

John Bull James Lock Sam ^l Doolley Thomas Sutton Major Chandler Joseph Bull	John Abajian Wm Arms Elisha Arms Rev. Norton	Reps Arms E. Church Childs D. Wright Esq W. Kase Esq	Col ^l Smith John Mellen Joseph Robbins Capt. Drury M ^{rs} Gibley W. Arms	Elephelt Dickinson James T. Dickinson Jas Gibley James Dabswell W. Bartlett Charles Gibley W. Rayette
Edward Jones Charles Mann David Jones Jun ^r W. Mann W. Ball W. Norton	Sam ^l Childs Sam ^l Childs Aaron Arms	May ^r Barnard Elisha Barnard David Hook W. Williams	Joseph Mitchell Nash Wright Sam ^l Barnard Jesse Smith Arms Wid ^{ow} Abigail Arms George Taylor	Nathan Collan Stephen Ash Asa Weeks George Taylor
William Gilbert John Norton John Ball Rev. Banks James Abajian John Chas Jones	Agarash Coley Jon ^s Garbriell Corni Wright Elisha Smith Sam ^l E. Childs K. Manselgar Jones Joseph Smith John Norton	May ^r Dickinson Sam ^l Barnard John Williams Lock Barnard W. Gibley	Elisha Arms Abner Mitchell John Dickinson Amos Childs	John Anderson Francis Mann William Robins Wm Jones Jesse Jones Amos Norton Eliason, Mackay Aaron Smith
Jon ^s Taylor Sam ^l Ballou George Cook James Logan John Ball Wm Ball	Comrose Mitchell Jon ^s Arms Elisha Smith Eliot Barnes	John Lock Charles Arms Eliot Arms Amel Arms Wm Fryer Eliot Arms	Jason Belknoch Thomas Smith Oliver Hadden Sam ^l Drury Major Arms Jun ^r W. Gibley Aaron Smith	Wm Arms David Hartung Wm Bull Solomon Williams
Abner Coley W. Leachbridge David Norton Eliot Arms Jon ^s Smith Jun ^r Sam ^l Gardner David Dickinson	Eliot Childs David Smith Joseph Chapman	Joseph Barnes David Hartung Jas Collan John Barnard David Smith Wife	Jon ^s Smith Zach ^{ary} Smith James Arms W. Childs Eliot Smith	Wm Jones Jesse Jones Eliot Smith Eliot Smith

VII. Town

An open, antique book with handwritten text in two columns. The paper is aged and yellowed. The text is written in a cursive script. The book is open to two pages, with the right page being slightly larger than the left page. The binding is visible in the center crease.

Town Meeting



Town Matters



Town Roads



Town Schools

March the 2 then put the widow Trow to the lowest bidder for 13 weeks and She was Struck off to Calvin Hayward at 5=9 per week for Said term



Town Pound

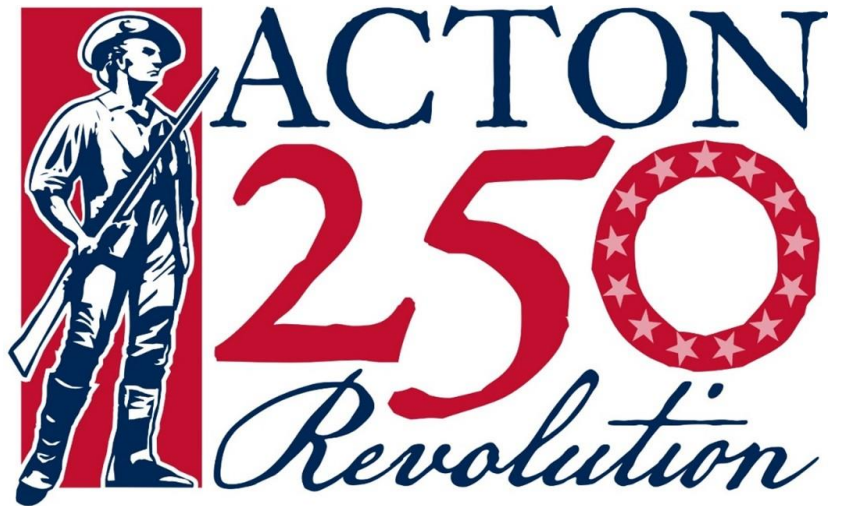
March ye 7: 1743 to an order to William Connant for his carreing [carrying] John Mallery out of town

Town Poor



Question and Answer Time!

- Please wait until called upon
- Please be respectful and save time for others



Thank You! ... and More to Come!

Next Up:

Sunday, December 10 2-4PM
Acton Center Tour – Amy Cole

Saturday, December 16 2-3PM

Steeped In Secrecy: The Boston Tea Party, 250 Years Later

