

Museum commemorates Colrain resident's role in Boston Tea Party



Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum Creative Manager Evan O'Brien and Colrain Selectboard member Thom Griffin give brief remarks on Tuesday as the museum commemorates the grave of Boston Tea Party participant David Lyons ahead of the event's 250th anniversary in 2023. STAFF PHOTO/CHRIS LARABEE » Buy this Image

By [CHRIS LARABEE](#) | Staff Writer | Published: 5/24/2022 4:45:49 PM

COLRAIN — Tucked in the back corner of Chandler Hill Cemetery lies an inconspicuous headstone marking the grave of David Lyons, the sole known Franklin County resident to have participated in the Boston Tea Party nearly 250 years ago.

That headstone was marked with a commemorative plaque Tuesday morning in a ceremony by the Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum and Revolution 250, which have embarked on a nationwide campaign to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the Boston Tea Party in 2023. Evan O'Brien, the museum's creative manager, said the two organizations are undergoing this project to recognize the efforts of the patriots who helped jumpstart the American Revolution.

"The majority of these names, like Mr. Lyons, are hardly ever mentioned during times of historical commemoration," O'Brien said. "This work we're doing today is important because David Lyons and others just like him are just as important to our region's history as the familiar names like Paul Revere, John Hancock and Samuel Adams."

The marker for Lyons in Colrain is one of more than 100 that will be placed in towns and cities across New England and even as far as Ohio and Virginia as the museum tries to track down the graves of all 125 known participants. O'Brien hopes to cover all of New England's participants by the end of the year and to finish off the far-reaching graves by the anniversary in 2023. The campaign will culminate in a series of commemorative programs throughout 2023 and a full-scale re-enactment of the Boston Tea Party on Dec. 16, 2023.

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The Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum and Revolution 250 commemorated the grave of Colrain resident David Lyons for his participation in the Boston Tea Party on Tuesday as the groups continue a campaign to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the event in 2023. STAFF PHOTO/CHRIS LARABEE» Buy this Image

Born in Roxbury in 1737, David Lyons — known at the time as David Lyon — served as the tax collector and constable of the town. Little more is known about Lyons’ life in Roxbury other than he joined the Boston branch of the Sons of Liberty on the night of Dec. 16, 1773 as more than 100 men disguised as Native Americans boarded three British East India Co. ships and destroyed 340 chests of tea before heaving 92,000 pounds of tea into the Boston Harbor in one of the pivotal events leading up to the American Revolution a few years later. Following the Boston Tea Party, Lyons and his family made their way to Colrain around 1784 where they lived until his death in 1803.



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O’Brien said the Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum and Revolution 250 have undertaken this project to commemorate the historic moment, which is not always properly portrayed, and how its ideals resonate today.

“Its principles and values speak through the generations,” O’Brien explained. “Ideas of protesting against injustice and tyranny are things we can all relate to, even 250 years later.”

Additionally, O’Brien said the museum is hoping the commemoration of the Boston Tea Party can dispel some of the false narratives people view “one of the most instantly recognizable” American history events through, especially of the Native American disguises used, which he said were simple outfits that were more symbolic than useful.

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The faded grave of Boston Tea Party participant David Lyons and his wife, Abigail, in Chandler Hill Cemetery in Colrain. STAFF PHOTO/CHRIS LARABEE» Buy this Image

“Everyone thinks the Sons of Liberty got drunk one night,” O’Brien said of how the plan came together. “It was a very carefully thought-out and planned event. ... It’s nothing like you see in the art.”

O’Brien was joined by Colrain Selectboard member Thom Griffin and Revolution 250 Coordinator Jonathan Lane, who both gave brief remarks.

After the ceremony, Lane recounted some of the historical context of Massachusetts’ and Franklin County’s involvement from the Boston Tea Party through the American Revolution. He noted at nearly every point of the war, Massachusetts had more men in the field than any other colony, and communities throughout the state were the “most fervent supporters of the cause” as Town Meeting votes sent funding and other forms of support to the war effort.

“In the Siege of Boston, Franklin County is amply represented,” Lane said of both manpower and strategic advantages. “This location is key to the movement of troops.”

While the nearest major battles were held in Saratoga, New York and Bennington, Vermont, Lane said there were some smaller skirmishes between British Loyalist and Patriot forces as the two groups worked to spread their influence. The most notable, he said, was the raising of a Liberty Pole — a sign of support for the revolution — in Deerfield that was later destroyed by Loyalist forces.

“It was direct action of stopping the spread of royal authority,” Lane said. “This back and forth, that’s the type of stuff you saw in small communities.”



Cathryn Philippe, of the Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum, places a commemorative marker on the grave of Boston Tea Party participant and Colrain resident David Lyons on Tuesday ahead of the event's 250th anniversary in 2023. STAFF PHOTO/CHRIS LARABEE » Buy this Image

For more information about the Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum's commemorative campaign, or more historical information about the Boston Tea Party and American Revolution, visit the museum's website at [BostonTeaPartyShip.com](https://www.boston-tea-party-ships.com).

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