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WEEKEND EDITION

\$3

'These were the patriots of Attleboro'



MARK STOCKWELL/THE SUN CHRONICLE

Rachel Killion, president of the Attleboro Historic Preservation Society, Brian French, center, and Jerry Turcotte, both members of the society, hold a reprint copy of the Solemn League and Covenant pledge at the First Congregational Church in North Attleboro. The document, in which the signers pledged not to buy British goods or do business with any merchant who sold them, was signed by 66 people, many of whom were church members. "These were early American patriots," Turcotte said. "These were the patriots of Attleboro and most of them served in the Revolutionary War."

On July 14, 1774, 66 brave local citizens signed a document called the Solemn League and Covenant, pledging not to buy British goods or do business with any merchant who sold them. Their contribution to history was important during the time period leading up to the Revolutionary War.

By **GEORGE W. RHODES** | grhodes@thesunchronicle.com

July 14, 1774 was a big day in the history of Attleboro.

That was the day dozens of brave local citizens, many with familiar names that now adorn street signs in Attleboro, signed a document called the Solemn League and Covenant.

All told, 66 in the community, bold patriots every one, signed it, pledging not to buy British goods or do business with any merchant who sold them.

They took that action because of measures passed in the British Parliament in retaliation for the Boston Tea Party in which colonists disguised as Native Americans

dumped a shipment of tea into Boston Harbor on Dec. 17, 1773.

The actions of the British Parliament were known in Massachusetts as the Intolerable Acts.

Those acts closed the port of Boston, revoked the colony's charter, and outlawed town meetings.

At the same time, British soldiers could occupy any home they chose, which of course was not popular among the populace.

History professor William Hanna at Bridgewater State University said the times were tough that summer politically and economically.

"I think the summer of 1774 is most noted for the hardening of

positions on both the British and American sides," Hanna said in an email to The Sun Chronicle. "The Boston Port Act threatened serious harm not only to Boston, but to the economic well being of all of Massachusetts."

British loyalists and others concerned about the mounting conflict came under increasing stress. At times, their lives were threatened.

"This was a summer of increasing pressure on loyalists, as conservatives in several area towns were forced to flee for their lives," Hanna said. "It was becoming increasingly

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Cloudy, showers.
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CITY & TOWN
Bicyclist hurt in Attleboro collision. **B1**

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HISTORY: Area's role in Solemn League and Covenant ahead of Revolution

FROM PAGE A1

difficult for other Americans who wanted to avoid taking a stand on one side or the other.”

But some were bolder than others.

Boston rambler and patriot Samuel Adams and his colleagues, members of the revolutionary group known as the Boston Committee of Correspondence, were outraged by the Intolerable Acts and they decided to take action.

They signed a document known as the Solemn League and Covenant.

This was a document that originated in Boston, but was eventually circulated to different towns throughout the state including Attleborough, which at the time encompassed the villages of North, East and South Attleborough.

In it, Adams declared Bostonians would not buy any British goods after Aug. 31, 1774, and that they would “stop dealing with those who did not sign.”

As could be expected, the document “was fiercely resisted by area merchants.”

And Bostonians, in general, were a little hesitant to sign on, according to one rendition of the events from a website titled “Westford Colonial Minutemen.”

“There was growing sentiment amongst Bostonians toward waiting for a more

comprehensive, inter-colony non-importation agreement,” it said. “Although Adams ultimately managed to find support at the Boston town meeting in late June, it did not come easily.”

It’s not known what kind of a debate raged in Attleboro over the document, but what is known is that 66 signed it.

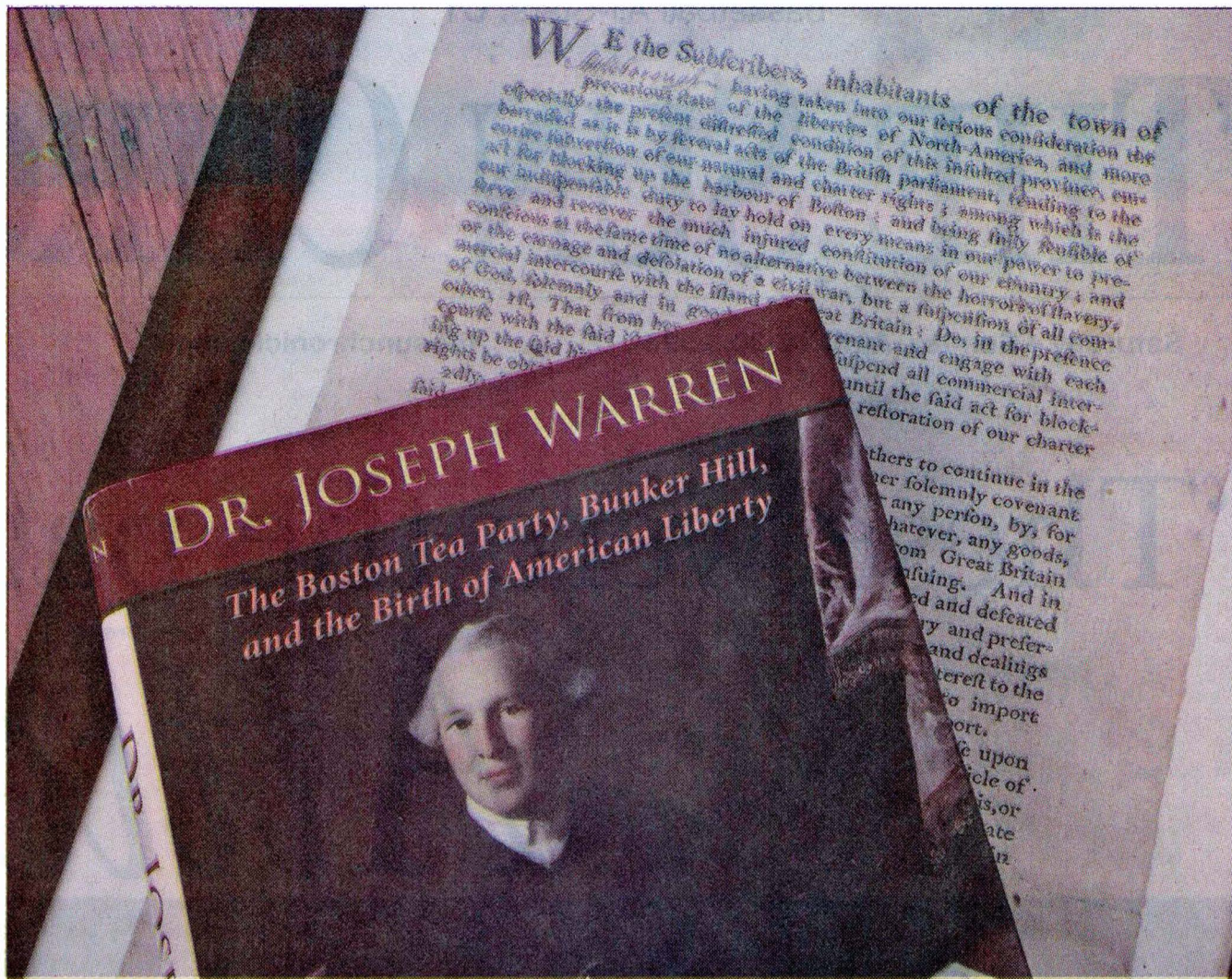
And many of those were members of the Oldtown Church (now known as First Congregational), at 675 Old Post Road in North Attleboro.

“These were early American patriots,” said Jerry Turcotte, a member of the Attleboro Historic Preservation Society. “These were the patriots of Attleboro and most of them served in the Revolutionary War. Most of them were on the rosters of different battles.”

Among them were Joseph Bacon, Amos Carpenter, Phineas Claflin, John Daggett, Joseph Foster, Caleb Richardson and Moses Wilmarth.

Their names are on street signs citywide and in the pages of Attleboro’s history.

According to a biography on Dr. Joseph Warren by Samuel A. Forman, a physician, Harvard University adjunct faculty member and historian, the Attleboro citizens were passionate about the issue.



MARK STOCKWELL/THE SUN CHRONICLE
Samuel A. Forman, a physician, historian and adjunct faculty member at Harvard, will speak on the “1774 Attleborough Solemn League and Covenant” at 2 p.m. Saturday, April 29, at First Congregational (Oldtown) Church, 672 Old Post Road, North Attleboro. Forman is the author of a biography on Dr. Joseph Warren, pictured with a reprint of the historic document. Warren was a founding figure in the U.S.

“The fervor of Attleboro patriots can be inferred by the way in which signatories adopted the covenant in solemn oath before God,” it said. “They made no changes other than the date to the pre-printed document supplied to them by the Boston Committee of Correspondence.”

Why did they sign? The explanation is rendered by the document itself, which appears here. Any words where an “s” represented an “s” were changed to “s” for clarity; no other changes or corrections were made.

Document's text

“WE the Subscribers, inhabitants of the town of Attleborough having taken into our serious consideration the precarious state of the liberties on North-America, and more especially the present distressed condition of this insulted province, embar-

assed as it is by several acts of the British parliament, tending to the entire subversion of our natural and charter rights; among which is the act for blocking up the harbour of Boston: and being fully sensible of our indispensable duty to lay hold on every means in our power to preserve and recover the much injured constitution of our country; and conscious at the same time of no alternative between the horrors of slavery; or the carnage and desolation of a civil war, but a suspension of all commercial intercourse with the island of Great Britain: Do, in the presence of God, solemnly and in good faith, covenant and engage with each other, 1st, That from henceforth we will suspend all commercial intercourse with the said island of Great Britain, until the said act for blocking up the said harbour be repealed, and a full restoration of our charter rights be obtained.

“And, 2dly, That there may be the less temptation to others to continue in the said, now dangerous commerce, we do in like manner solemnly covenant that we will not buy, purchase or consume, or suffer any person, by, for or under us to purchase or consume, in any manner whatever, any goods, wares or merchandize which shall arrive in America from Great Britain aforesaid, from and after the last day of August next ensuing.

“And in order as much as in us lies to prevent our being interrupted and defeated in this only peaceable

measure, entered into for the recovery and preservation of our rights, we agree to break off all trade, commerce and dealings whatever with all persons, who perfering their own private interest to the salvation of their now perishing country, shall still continue to import goods from Great Britain, or shall purchase of those who do import.

3dly, That such persons may not have it in their power to impose upon us by any pretence whatever, we further agree to purchase no article of merchandize from them, or any of them, who shall not have signed this, or a similar covenant, or will not produce an oath, certified by a magistrate to be by them taken to the following purpose: viz. I _____ of _____ in the county of _____ do solemnly swear that the goods I have now on hand, and propose for sale, have not, to the best of my knowledge, been imported from Great Britain, into any port of America since the last day of August, one thousand seven hundred and seventy four, and that I will not, contrary to the spirit of an agreement entering into through this province import or purchase of any person so importing any goods as aforesaid, until the port or harbour of Boston, shall be opened, and we are fully restored to the free use of our constitutional and charter rights.

“And, Lastly, we agree, that after this, or a similar covenant has been offered to any person and they refuse

“These were the patriots of Attleboro and most of them served in the Revolutionary War. Most of them were on the rosters of different battles.”

Jerry Turcotte
Attleboro Historic Preservation Society

sign it, or produce the oath, above said, we will consider them as contumacious importers, and withdraw all commercial connexions with them, so far as not to purchase of them, any article whatever, and publish their names to the world.

“Witness our hands, July, 14th 1774”

Talk on topic Saturday

While the original was sent to Boston, a copy was found in an Attleboro attic (when and where this occurred was not recorded) and was later bought by Forman, who is scheduled give a free talk sponsored by the Attleboro Historic Preservation Society about the seeds of the American Revolution and “Attleborough’s Solemn League and Covenant” on Saturday, April 29, at 2 p.m. at the First Congregational (Oldtown) Church.

The signings actually took place in the second church located on the site, which was constructed in 1728 after the congregation outgrew its first building.

That building lasted for 100 years until the current church was constructed. So the current church is descended from the first and second, and holds the history of the signings.

The action was not easy for many towns to adopt, according to the Westford Colonial Minutemen website. Attleboro stood up, however.

“Apparently, many towns found it difficult to support the action, and those who did usually made modifications to the language on the printed form they received from Boston,” it said. “In the end, the effort was eclipsed in the fall of ‘74 by similar actions taken by the Continental Congress in Philadelphia.”

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As a result, we must raise our print edition subscription price, beginning May 1, 2023. The cost of buying the newspaper at a store will increase as well. Subscribers will continue to receive access to our e-edition and website, thesunchronicle.com, as part of their subscription. If you haven’t signed up for access to our digital products, we urge you to do so, and if you need assistance, please contact our circulation department at 508-222-4091. They will be happy to help get you connected.

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Sincerely,
Craig Borges
Craig Borges
Executive Editor

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