JAMES CLOUGH
&
MOSES POOR
CELLAR HOLE

SALEM, NEW HAMPSHIRE

APRIL L. MURACO
DEDICATIONS

This research is dedicated to the men and women who founded Salem, New Hampshire. It has truly been an honor to study this property and get a glimpse into the lives of the fascinating people who lived within the "cellar hole" house’s walls.

This research is also dedicated to my one-year-old son, J.J., who I dragged along with me on many trips to old cemeteries and local historical societies. He’s a trooper!

I also want to thank the following people and organizations:

- The 6th grade students in my after-school “Cellar Hole” Club who helped me put this information together: Jordan Scott, Erin Reilly, Rachel Holliday, William Durant, Xiara Glickel, Cody Bemis, Brady Roux, Lauren Ross, Evan Desjardins, Dylan Rose, Corynn Clancey, and Jacob McLean
- Daryl Maxwell, fifth great-grandson of Moses Poor
- Becky Burns; New Hampshire Registry of Deeds
- Tanya Kracjik; Archaeologist through the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources
- The Atkinson Historical Society
- The Salem Historical Society
WHAT IS THE CELLAR HOLE?

The “cellar hole” that is mentioned throughout this report is all that remains of an early-to-mid eighteenth century home in Salem, New Hampshire. The house was built by either Isaac or James Clough in the days leading up to the American Revolution. If the house was built by Isaac, the cellar hole dates to 1728, but if the house was built by James, it dates to circa 1760.

The cellar hole is located just off of Geremonty Drive in Salem. The easiest way to access the cellar hole is to park at the Field of Dreams, a playground area directly off of Geremonty Drive. If you cross the bridge next to the playground, you can follow the path that leads you into the woods. This “path” is an old access road to the cellar hole house. The occupants of the cellar hole house certainly left us with plenty of physical evidence of their existence. As you approach the cellar hole, you will notice many other smaller paths and roads lined with rocks that date back to the same period as the cellar hole house. All of these structures (paths, roads, walls, etc.) were part of the homestead that was once there. Although the area is now wooded, the area would have been cleared for use as farmland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

When you visit the cellar hole, it can be hard to picture the house that once stood above it. Even more difficult is picturing the families who lived there and the joys and challenges that were faced within the home’s walls. With a bit of research, it is possible to take a glimpse inside the home and remember some of the events which took place inside this historic structure.
ISAAC CLOUGH AND THE CELLAR HOLE HOUSE?

The beginning of our “cellar hole” house story is a bit confusing as there are some discrepancies in the historic records of the property. The cellar hole sits on land that was once owned by a man named Isaac Clough in the early eighteenth century. There is some debate as to whether the house that Isaac Clough built in 1728 is the cellar hole house. The land on which the cellar hole sits was definitely Isaac’s land, but it is probable that Isaac’s home was on modern-day Cluff Road in Salem and the cellar hole house was built a few years later for Isaac’s son, James, and his family when Isaac’s land was split amongst his sons. Information about Isaac Clough’s house is included in this write-up, however, because there is some evidence that James inherited the original homestead from his father, so there is still the possibility that the cellar hole house was the house Isaac built.

In 1728, Isaac Clough finished building his two-story saltbox-style home in Salem, New Hampshire. At this time, Isaac had been married for eight years to Sarah (Swain) Clough. The couple had four children at the time the house was built: Josiah, Isaac Jr., Mary, and Wyman. Two other children would be born at the homestead: James and William. The home, as described by Isaac Clough himself, had a long sloping roof and frames made from white oak. In the finished rooms, there were huge exposed beams both in the walls and the ceilings. Clay mixed with straw was daubed on the walls or a plaster was made from ground clam shells. The clay was removed from clay pits that were accessible to the property on the banks of the Spickett River. The fireplace in the kitchen was enormous; it was so big, in fact, that the whole family was able to sit in the chimney corners on two benches, a common practice in colonial times in order to keep warm on frigid winter nights. There were also fireplaces in each of the smaller rooms in the house.


1 Sarah Swain Clough: born January 24, 1963; married January 25, 1720; died August 22, 1765
3 James: 1732-1798; William: 1734-1798
4 Description of Isaac Clough homestead from genealogical research: http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~laplante/PS37/PS37_014.HTM
Isaac Clough was truly a founding member of the community of Salem. When the Congregational Church was first organized in 1740, Isaac Clough was one of the first thirteen members. After the establishment of the church in 1749, he was on a three-man committee that was dedicated to dividing up the one hundred acres of parsonage land. He is listed on many of the petitions that were sent to the governor for various improvements that needed to be made for those living in town. One of the most notable petitions Isaac signed was in regards to the “Quit Claim Deed” of 1759 that would ensure that landowners in Salem were the actual legal owners of their properties. Isaac Clough passed away on March 24, 1762 and is buried at the Old Burial Ground in Salem. His gravestone can still be found, but is quite difficult to read due to its age. Isaac’s wife, Sarah, is buried near Isaac, but her stone can no longer be found.
JAMES CLOUGH AND THE CELLAR HOLE HOUSE

The story of the cellar hole becomes a bit clearer when Isaac Clough deeded the cellar hole property to his son, James, in 1760. Again, it is unclear whether James inherited the home Isaac built or if James inherited another piece of Isaac’s land and built his own home. Regardless, there is no doubt that the cellar hole house was the home of James Clough. Clough family documents state, “By tracing deeds the location of the home of James and [his wife] Ruth is definitely known... on the old road running north there is a little clearing with a cellar hole in the middle of it...”5

In 1763, James married Mehitable Secombe of Derryfield, New Hampshire6. Mehitable gave birth to a baby girl in August, 1764, presumably in the cellar hole house. Very shortly after the daughter’s birth, however, twenty-six year old Mehitable passed away. It is possible that she even passed as a direct result of her daughter’s birth, which was very common in Colonial America. Mehitable is buried in the Old Burial Ground in Salem, but the location of her gravestone is unknown, or at least is no longer visible. James brought his daughter to the church to be baptized on November 4, 1764 and named the baby after his deceased wife. In about 1769, he married Ruth Webster.7 Together, James and Ruth raised nine children8, including little Mehitable. Two of James and Ruth’s children (Elizabeth and Lydia) were likely born in the cellar hole house, as well.9 Like his father, James was certainly an active member of Salem’s community. He was a Covenanter of the First Church of Salem and a surveyor of highways from 1765-1766.

The Cloughs weren’t to live in their family’s house in Salem forever, however. They decided to sell their property in 1771 to a man named Moses Poor and his wife, Hannah.10 Following is the text of the deed of the first sale in its entirety11:

James Clough of Salem to Moses Poor of Atkinson; Sale: April 26 OR May 8, 1771
Know all men by these presents that I James Clough of Salem in the Province of New Hampshire Yeoman (?) in consideration of the sum of one hundred and six pounds thirteen shillings to me in hand before the Delivery hereof well and truly paid by Moses Poor of Atkinson in said Province consider the receipt whereof I do hereby acknowledge have given granted bargained and sold and by these presents do give grant bargain sell alien (?) convey and confirm unto the said Moses Poor and to his heirs and assigns forever. Two Parcels of land lying in Salem aforesaid. One parcel containing two acres and one half by measure of meadow land bounded northerly on land of Josiah Clough - about forty three rods and one half easterly six rods on my own land southerly on land of the Widow Hannah Clough about forty six rods westerly thirteen rods on land of William Clough, the other parcel containing forty six acres and one hundred rods be the same more or less with a dwelling house and barn on the same is bounded at the sou westerly corner at a stake and stones there running westerly by a ditch and land of Wyman Clough about thirty seven rods to a stake and stones then easterly about fourteen rods and one half to a stake and

5 “The Story of the John Clough Family of Salisbury, Massachusetts,” 1943.
6 Mehitable Secombe Clough: November 16, 1738-August 18, 1764
7 Ruth Webster Clough: June 14, 1744-February 7, 1825
8 Children of James and Ruth Clough: Elizabeth, Lydia, Stephen, William, Rebecca, Hannah, Phineas, and Ruth
9 Elizabeth Clough: Baptized August 16, 1772 in Salem, NH. Lydia Clough: Born March 1772, Baptized August 16, 1772 in Salem, NH.
10 John Clough Genealogical Society Documents
11 Where the reader sees a “(? drugs), the word that was written in its place is too difficult to read. Some of the documents are smudged or poorly copied, so the eighteenth-century handwriting is difficult to decipher.
stone then northerly all by land of William Clough about fifty one rods and one half to a stake and stone
then easterly or east one half a degree south as it appears by land of Ebenezer Page one hundred and
forty eight rods to a black oak tree marked about sixty rods west of Spiket River so called then sou
westerly forty four rods to a small maple and (?) marked with stones then westerly by land of said Wyman
about sixty four rods and one half to a small white oak tree marked then southerly and easterly and sou
westerly by land of said Wyman as the stone wall and other fence now stands about forty seven rods to a
stake and stones in low ground then westerly sixty one rods by land of said Wyman to the bound first
mentioned.  To have and to hold the said granted premises with all the privileges and (?) to the same
apportioning to him the said Moses Poor and to his heirs and assigns to his and their only proper use and
benefit forever - And the said James Clough for my self my heirs execution and administrators do hereby
covenant grant and agree to and with the said Moses Poor his heirs and assigns that until the delivery
hereof I the said James Clough am the lawful owner of the said premises and am lawfully seized and (?)
thereof in my own right in fee simple and have full power and lawful authority to grant and convey the
same in manner aforesaid, that the said premises are free and clear of all and every incumberance
whatsoever.  And that I the said James Clough for myself heirs executor and administrator shall and will
warrant the same to him the said Moses Poor and to his heirs and assigns against the lawful Claims and
demands of any person or persons whomsoever.  Likewise I Ruth Clough wife of the said James Clough do
hereby freely give up all my right in the said premises.
In witness whereof we have hereunto set our hands and seals this twenty sixth day of April and in the
eleventh year of his majesty's reign Anno Domini 1771.
Signed Sealed Delivered in the presence of us } James and Ruth Clough
William Clough and John Knight } Province of New Hampshire
Salem the 8th day of May 1771.  Then the above named James and Ruth Clough personally appearing
acknowledged the above written instrument to be their voluntary and act and deed.
Before me Timothy Ladd Justice of Peace.  Received and recorded 5th May 1773 12

Another deed dated from July 1771 states that James Clough sold an additional five and one-half acres
to the Poors. 13 The Cloughs then moved to Hopkinton, New Hampshire.  This is where the rest of James
and Ruth’s children were born.  James Clough did not return to live in Salem, and this is where the Poor
family’s story begins in the cellar hole house.

The signatures of James and Ruth Clough on the deed selling their land to Moses Poor.  Clough family documents mention this
deed, stating, “In 1771 James and Ruth Clough deeded their land in Salem to Moses Poor of Atkinson.  Ruth signed with a
cross.”

13 New Hampshire Registry of Deeds, Book 105, pg 375
MOSES AND HANNAH POOR AND THE CELLAR HOLE HOUSE

Moses Poor and Hannah St. Clair were both born in Newbury, Massachusetts\(^{14}\) and were married in Hampstead, New Hampshire on March 31, 1767\(^{15}\). At that point, Hannah moved to Plaistow, New Hampshire to join her new husband at the mill that he ran with his business partner, Joseph Chandler. “Poor’s Saw Mill,” as it came to be known, was located on Hog Hill Brook in modern-day Atkinson, New Hampshire.\(^{16}\) You can still see the ruins of the mill if you drive along Island Pond Road in Atkinson. The ruins are across the street from Chandler Drive (possibly named after Moses’ business partner, Joseph Chandler). Two of Moses and Hannah’s children were probably born on this property: their sons Moses Augustus\(^{17}\) and Enoch.\(^{18}\) After the western portion of Plaistow split from the main part of town and renamed itself “Atkinson” in 1767, Moses became very involved in the community and town politics. Moses was appointed as one of the “surveyors of lumber” for the town and also as a “surveyor of the highways”\(^{19}\) at the first legal town meeting for the town of Atkinson.

![The ruins of “Poor’s Saw Mill” in Atkinson, New Hampshire.](image)

---

\(^{14}\) Moses Poor: March 10, 1742 – June 17, 1775, Hannah St. Clair Poor: March 23, 1739 - 1815
\(^{15}\) See marriage record in “Historical Resources” section
\(^{16}\) Plaistow, New Hampshire split into two sections in 1767. The section that “split” from the town of Plaistow was named “Atkinson.”
\(^{17}\) Moses Augustus Poor: January 27, 1768-April 17, 1832
\(^{18}\) Enoch Poor: September 22, 1770-June, 1849
\(^{19}\) “Atkinson Then and Now,” Louise Noyes Barnum.
In 1771, Moses Poor decided to sell his half of the mill business and part of his Atkinson property to Jonathan Poor. Other pieces of the property were sold to Ithamar Emerson and Daniel Page. The mill continued to run for many years and was later called “Heald’s Black and White Smith.”

The “cellar hole” house became the Poor family home in April, 1771 after purchasing the property from James Clough. In 1773, Moses and Hannah welcomed their third child into the family, a little boy named George. There is little record of the Poor family during their early years in Salem. It can easily be assumed that Moses was busy working the land and Hannah had her hands full with three little boys and the upkeep of the house. Their quiet world was about to change on the morning of April 22, 1775.

On that spring morning, news reached the town of Salem that there had been a “skirmish” at Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts just three days earlier. A town meeting was announced that would be held on April 25 to “Raise a Proper Number of men for the Defense of the Country and also to make Some Provisions for their Pay if Called for.” Part of the purpose of the meeting was to encourage men to sign up for the military, but, perhaps a testimony to the character of Moses Poor, Moses did not wait for the town meeting to sign up to fight. He enlisted on April 23, just one day after the news of the skirmish reached the residents of Salem and two days before the official town meeting.

At the meeting on April 25, thirty men enlisted in Colonel John Stark’s regiment with Elisha Woodbury serving as their captain. It was decided that each man would receive between four and six pounds per month for their military service.

About two months went by before Moses was called into action. On June 17, 1775, however, everything would change; for the Poor family, for the cellar hole house, and for the Colonies. The men serving under Captain Elisha Woodbury arrived at Breed’s Hill in Boston, the site where the Battle of Bunker Hill was about to take place. Colonel John Stark’s regiment, including Moses Poor and other men from Salem and local New Hampshire towns, was to defend the left of the American line. After several brutal hours of fighting, the colonists ran out of ammunition and the Americans made “one last desperate resistance with bayonets and clubbed muskets, then beat a retreat, after suffering a loss of about four hundred and fifty men, while the British lost more than a thousand.”

20 George Poor: November 15, 1773-January, 1827
21 Gilbert, Edgar, “History of Salem, NH 1735-1907.” pg. 232
22 US Revolutionary War Rolls
23 Gilbert, Edgar, “History of Salem, NH 1735-1907.” pg. 234
mostly unscathed, except for Moses Poor, who was killed in battle. He was the only resident of Salem to
die in the Battle of Bunker Hill. He was thirty-three years old. His place of burial is unknown today, but
it is likely that he was buried with other fallen soldiers from the Battle of Bunker Hill in Boston Common.

The following months must have been unspeakably difficult for the thirty-six year old Widow Hannah
Poor who was left with three young boys at the homestead in Salem. She would not stay at the
homestead for long, however. Two-thirds of the Poors’ property was auctioned off at public auction on
January 15, 1777 to a man named Samuel White.\textsuperscript{24} The remaining one-third was kept in Widow Poor’s
possession, which was a custom at the time. Widows were entitled to their “right of dower” or “thirds”
which meant they could retain ownership of one-third of their late husband’s property. Following is the
complete text of the deed that records the details of the sale:

\textbf{Poor to Samuel White; Sale: January 15, 1777}

Know all men by these Presents that we Jonathan Tenny of Salem in the County of Rockingham and state
of New Hampshire Gentleman and Hannah Poor\textsuperscript{25} of Hampstead in the County aforesaid Spinster being as
appointed by the Judge of Probate of aforesaid County Administrators of the state of Moses Poor
late of said Salem cordwainer deceased. In Consideration of Fifty two pounds lawful money paid to us (?) said
Capacity of Administrators by Samuel White of Haverhill in the County of Essex and state of the
Massachusetts Bay Esquire the Receipt whereof we do hereby acknowledge do hereby give grant sell and
convey unto the said Samuel White Esquire his heirs and assigns forever, he being the highest bidder at a
publik auction (?) on the tenth Day of December last at the house on the premises hereafter mentioned at
one of the Clock in the afternoon legally advertised a certain piece of land, lying in Salem aforesaid
containing about thirty two acres and one half bounded as follows (?) beginning at a stake and stones for
the northwest angle the bounds of William Clough Ebenezer Page thence Southerly by the aforesaid
Clough land fifty four rods and one half to a stake of stones by the Widow Poor’s thirds (?) thirty four rods
to an apple tree marked thence southeasterly by (?) three rods and thence (?) thence westerly by the

\textsuperscript{24} New Hampshire Registry of Deeds, Book 108, pages 380-381

\textsuperscript{25} As confusing as this is, the Hannah Poor mentioned here was Moses’ sister. She is listed as a “spinsters” and must
have assisted in the sale. Later in the deed, the Widow Hannah Poor is mentioned, who was Moses’ wife.
back side of the barn two rods and twenty three links thence southwardly (?) barn and to the stone wall forwards, thence southwestwardly by a stake and stones (?) to a stake and stones thence eastwardly to the southeast corner of the house, three rods thence north westwardly by the west end of the aforesaid house to the back room one rod and eight links, thence eastwardly through the house by the back room one rod twenty one links thence southwardly by the east end of the house to aforesaid thirds five rods and one half to a stake of stones thence southeasterly by the stone wall as it now stands six rods and one quarter to a stake and stones a bound of Wimon Clough’s land then northeasterly (?) the path to the corner of a stone wall a bound of Wimon Clough’s land thence as the wall and hedge fence now that stand to a stake of stones fifty seven rods and one quarter, thence easterly by land of William Clough to a stake of stones thirty five rods thence southwardly to Widow’s thirds to a stake of stones by the land of Ebenezer Page, thirty nine rods thence westerly by land of aforesaid Ebenezer Page about one hundred and six rods to the bounds first mentioned together with all the remainder of the dwelling house and cellar not set off to the Widow Poor as her right of dower in said Estate. To have and to hold the granted premises to the aforementioned Samuel White and his heirs to his and their (?) forever. And we the aforementioned Jonathan Tenny and Hannah Poor in (?) capacity of Administrators for (?) our heirs (?) do covenant with the aforesaid White his heirs and assigns that we in aforesaid capacity are lawfully seized of the premises that they are free of all encumbrances in aforesaid capacity have good right to sell and convey the same to the aforesaid White to his (?) as aforesaid (?) Capacity will warrant the aforesaid (?) to the aforesaid White his heirs and assigns (?) the lawful claims and demands of all persons. In Witness (?) we have (?) our hands of sale this fifteenth day of January in the year of our Lord One Thousand Seven hundred Seventy Seven. Signed Sealed and Delivered in Presence of John Hall, John Shelly, Jonathan Tenny, Hannah Poor.  

According to Clough family documents, “a little more description is to be had in an order from the court, apportioning to the Widow Poor, her share of the estate. She was to have a third share of the land and buildings, ten feet in the east end of the barn, a privilege in the cellar, the well, and the brick oven, and two lower rooms in the south part of the house. The house and barn must have been quite spacious but all are gone today except the cellar, the driveways and the old well, now filled with stones.”  Between the deed that records the sale to Samuel White and the Clough family description of the house, it is possible to get some idea of the layout, size, and structure of the Poor homestead. Even today, just by viewing the cellar it is easy to see that the house must have been an impressive size. This observation is backed up by the documents that speak of the house containing several different rooms and even the description that explicitly states that the house “must have been quite spacious.” There is mention of apple trees in the deed, as well, which is interesting because even today there are apple trees on either side of the front steps.

It is unclear how long Widow Poor and her sons remained in Salem, but in 1796, the fifty-seven year old Widow Poor and her son, George, finally sold Hannah’s “thirds” back to the Clough family. The deed states that Hannah and George were both living in Candia, New Hampshire at the time of the sale. The home was sold to Timothy Clough, the man who had been renting the property from Widow Poor and living in the house. This would suggest that the remaining Poors (Hannah, Moses Augustus, Enoch, and

26 NH Registry of Deeds, Book 108, pages 380-381
27 “The Story of the Family of John Clough of Salisbury, Massachusetts” pg. 98
George) had not lived on this land for some time. Following is the text of the deed that proves that the Widow had sold the rest of her land in Salem:

**Poors to Timothy Clough; Sale: February 18, 1796**

Know all men by these presents that I Hannah Poor of Candia in the County of Rockingham State of New Hampshire Widow and George Poor of Town County and State aforesaid Yeoman for and in consideration of the sum of one hundred and fifty dollars in hand before the delivery hereof, well and truly paid by Timothy Clough of Salem in the County and State aforesaid Yeoman the receipt whereof do hereby acknowledge, have given, granted, bargained, sold, and by these presents do give, grant, bargain, sell, alien, (?), convey and confirm unto the said Timothy Clough his heirs and assigns forever a certain piece of land lying in Salem aforesaid containing about nine acres more or less beginning the (?) at the southeast corner of Wyman Clough’s land thence westerly by said Wyman’s land to Samuel White’s lands thence southerly by (?) White’s land as the fence now stands to the bound first mentioned. Also one other piece of land containing about six acres more or less beginning at the southwest corner at Wyman Clough’s land westerly by said Wyman’s land to Samuel White’s land, thence northerly by said White’s land to John Gage’s land, thence easterly by said Gage’s land to Josiah Clough’s land, thence southerly by said Josiah’s land to the bounds first mentioned, it being the whole of the sad Widow’s third of the Estate of Moses Poor late of Salem deceased. To have and to hold the said granted premises with all the privileges and appurtenances to the same belonging to him the said Timothy Clough his heirs and assigns to his and their only proper use and benefit forever. And we the said Hannah and George our heirs, executors, and administrators do hereby covenant, grant, and agree to and with the said Timothy Clough his heirs and assigns that until the delivery hereof of (?) the lawful owner of the said premises is ours seized and possessed thereof in our own right in fee simple and have full power and lawful authority to grant and convey the same in manner aforesaid that the said premises are free and clear of all and every encumbrance whatsoever and that we our heirs executors and Administrators shall and will warrant the same to him the aforesaid Timothy Clough his heirs and against the lawful claims and demands of any person or persons whomsoever. In witness whereof we have (?) our hands and seals this eighteenth day of February in the year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and ninety six Signed Sealed and Delivered in Presence of Wiman Clough Jr., Hannah Poor, Nathaniel Emerson, William Clough Jr., George Poor

The signatures of the Widow Hannah Poor and her son George on the deed that finally sold her “right of dower” to Timothy Clough in 1796, thus ending the Poors’ ownership of the cellar hole house.

---

28 NH Registry of Deeds, Book 171, page 250
THE CLOUGHS BUY BACK THE CELLAR HOLE HOUSE

In 1796, Timothy Clough bought the cellar hole house from the Widow Hannah Poor. Timothy then sold part of his property, including the cellar hole house, to his brother, Wyman Clough Jr. In 1824, Wyman Jr. gave his son, Levi, part of the land and buildings as part of a wedding gift. In 1850, a house on the Clough property burned down. Whether this was the cellar hole house or another house is not quite clear. The house that burned is recorded as the “old Isaac Clough place,” so if the cellar hole was Isaac’s cellar, then we know the cellar hole house was abandoned in 1850. If the cellar hole house was a home built by James Clough, then the date of abandonment is still a mystery. We do know, however, that the cellar hole was mentioned in Gilbert’s “History of Salem” in 1907, so it was definitely abandoned at that point. Also, there is a very large tree growing in the southwestern corner of the cellar hole. This tree is estimated to be approximately 150 years old and would also point to the fact that the home was abandoned quite a long time ago.

Melted glass found near the front steps of the “cellar hole.” Evidence of a house fire?
THE “CELLAR HOLE” TODAY AND THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The “cellar hole” now stands as a quiet reminder of life in early Salem. If you visit the cellar hole, there are many clues that, if examined correctly, can give you valuable information about the property’s past.

When I first visited the cellar hole in 2014 with my 6th grade students, I had no idea what the property was. The kids and I climbed into the mysterious hole in the ground and looked at the huge granite boulders that had fallen into its center and wondered what the structure was. One of my students, when walking around the perimeter of the structure, uncovered what he believed to be the front steps of a house (and he turned out to be right!). Another student found what looked like a boot scraper attached to a large granite slab. At this point, we were all hooked. We all really wanted to know what this structure was that had been silently sitting in the woods directly behind our middle school.
On the left are the cellar hole’s front steps that were discovered by a student in the fall of 2014. On the right is the mysterious metal object we refer to as “the boot scraper.”

After doing a little bit of research on the internet, I learned that there are hundreds, maybe even thousands, of similar cellar holes throughout New Hampshire’s woods. These cellar holes are all that is left of homesteads built by the early European settlers of New England. Almost anywhere you find a cellar hole, even if it is in the woods today, you can be sure that the land was cleared as use for farmland. Just like in the case of Moses Poor’s cellar hole, it can be difficult to imagine a house standing on a cleared piece of land since after the homesteads were abandoned, the forests quickly reclaimed the cleared farmland.

Once I discovered that the funny-looking structure was a cellar hole, I contacted the New Hampshire Registry of Deeds and researched the owners of the property. This was very time consuming and there were many dead-ends, but the effort was well worth it since I discovered that the property was owned by the Clough family and the Poor family. What I wasn’t prepared for was how interesting both of these families’ stories were and how crucial these families were to the founding of Salem and the early United States.

After I had the information about the owners of the property, I went through Ancestry.com to see if I could locate any more information about the people who lived in the cellar hole house. This is where I located texts like “The Story of the John Clough Family of Salisbury, Massachusetts” and other information compiled by the John Clough Genealogical Society. I was able to find descriptions of the property and the descriptions of the house that were included earlier in this report. I was also able to locate a fifth-great grandson of Moses Poor named Daryl Maxwell who lives in Austin, Texas who was
able to send me digital copies of the U.S. Revolutionary War Rolls and other information about Moses Poor and his sacrifice at the Battle of Bunker Hill.

Next, I created an after-school club for some of my students who were interested in learning more about the cellar hole. These students were interested in so many different aspects of this research project, especially the archaeological aspects of the site. When we went out to the cellar hole one afternoon, we noticed that there had been more vandalism to the site than there was previously. Since the cellar hole is located close to both the middle and high schools, it is often used as a hangout for teenagers, which results in some graffiti and trash being left behind. As we were surveying the new damage to the cellar hole, we noticed that one of the granite slabs that had been next to the threshold stone had now fallen into the cellar. About an inch beneath the soil where the missing granite slab had been, the kids found nails, broken pottery, pieces of bottle and window glass, and even a door hinge.

After two trips out to the cellar hole, we had accumulated quite a few historic artifacts that had belonged to the owners of the house. At this point, we contacted the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources and an archaeologist, Tanya Kracjik, came to investigate the site with us. She told us that we should not be digging for artifacts because that would disturb the historical integrity of the site, but she told us that we should catalogue the artifacts that we had found. She also asked our club to fill out a site survey form to submit to the NHDHR to get the cellar hole marked as an official historic site. Our cellar hole will then be officially “on the map,” so to speak.

The overall goal of this research project is to raise awareness of the history that is all around us. We often take for granted the clues to our past that are right at our fingertips. I’ve learned a few things through my work with the cellar hole. Maybe the most important lesson I learned is that a site like the cellar hole is an invaluable educational tool. I have never seen my students so engaged or excited about learning as they were when we worked on investigating the history and archaeology of the cellar hole. The real-life, hands-on experiences it provided for them definitely brought history to life. It also taught them the importance of respecting historical sites since we had many conversations about the vandalism the cellar hole has endured over the years. I also learned that if you have patience and don’t mind doing some figurative and literal “digging,” you can find information about almost anything. I can’t believe that there is such a wealth of information about James Clough and Moses Poor, two “regular guys” who lived over two hundred years ago. I am honored that I could put some of the pieces of this mystery back together!
HISTORICAL RESOURCES

Table of Contents

1. Moses and Hannah Poor Timeline
2. Archaeologist Site Overlay Map
3. James Clough to Moses Poor Deed, April, 1771
4. James Clough to Moses Poor Deed, July, 1771
5. Widow Hannah Poor to Samuel White Deed, January 1777
6. Hannah Poor and George Poor to Timothy Clough Deed, 1796
7. Moses Poor Birth Record
8. Moses Poor Marriage Record
9. United States Revolutionary War Rolls