

Deliverance: Rye Becomes a Parish and a Town

Today you can walk from Rye Center to Market Square in about an hour. Not so before 1725 when Rye folks had many obstacles to walk to church along the Sagamore Indian trail, the creek being the main one. If there was no vessel they would have to go above the creek (Peeverly Hill Rd. today) and then into Portsmouth. Rye's religious deprivation was strong and documents beseeching the General Court to grant Rye the status of parish were common. Deliverance came in 1726. The first church was not completed until 1729 and was replaced in 1755 by a 60x40 larger one on Meeting House Hill. Located directly across from Garland Tavern (1747), its steeple rose up the very front on the building. (see logo of Bicentennial and historical society.) After a long Sunday morning of worship, it was not uncommon to see one building empty while the one across the town common filled up as men gathered for victuals, gossip, politics and other assorted diversions in the tavern. Women would head straight for home to carry those 40 pound iron pots and other endless chores and then have to return to the tavern to collect their men. Some things never change. By 1785 Rye had become an independent town. But all communities needed each other; is interdependent a more accurate term?