Bibliography: Gunpowder Raid at Fort William & Mary, 1774. With special signage, weather, and events appendices.

by Jim Cerny
rev. 6, updated May 14, 2025. New entries marked with a triangle.

This bibliography cites the sources I have seen that describe the raid by local colonials from New Castle and Portsmouth, to seize the gunpowder at Fort William and Mary on December 14-15, 1774. The sources range from 1 page to over 40 pages. With a few exceptions, I've avoided citations to online sources. This list may be exhausting, but is not claimed to be exhaustive, as there are doubtless additional articles and book that I've not accessed.

This bibliography is the result of many discussions with my friend and neighbor, Mike Geanoulis, while he wrote a book on the events (q.v.). I was aware of the events from the two documents compiled by Thomas Kehr, one a chronology of the actions [Kehr, 2012a] and the other a compilation of the participants [Kehr, 2012b], over 60 pages combined. I consider them to be the definitive sources for their scholarship and clarity of presentation. In addition, Mike Geanoulis obtained copies of the 30 handwritten depositions taken at the time [British National Archives 1774-1775], which were known from work Wilderson did in 1975, but without the full contents available to us.

Other accounts of note:
- Belknap [1791] is the first account other than depositions and proclamations by the principals.
- Ballard Smith [1884] is an early and lengthy account that would have been accessible to a wide audience via *Harper's Monthly*.
- Parsons [1899] is a widely-known detailed account, reprinted several times.
- Tanner [1923] unique as a play.
- Copley [1974] contains much information but is not widely available.
- DeMitchell [2013] and Grant [1977] are fictional tellings for a juvenile audience.

The New Castle Historical Society has copies of many of these citations, as noted below.

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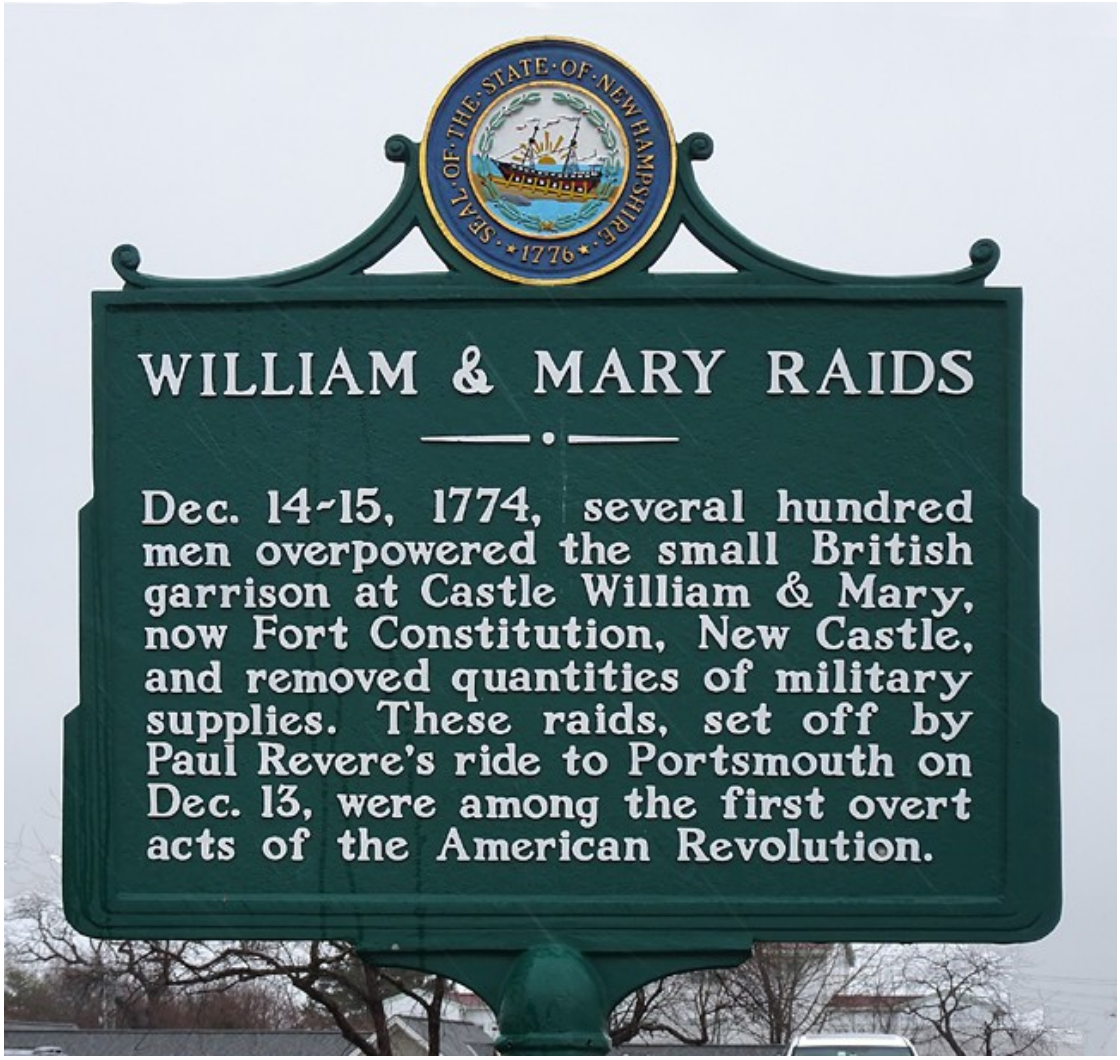
Raid: pp. 245-250.

Appendix: Raid Signage.

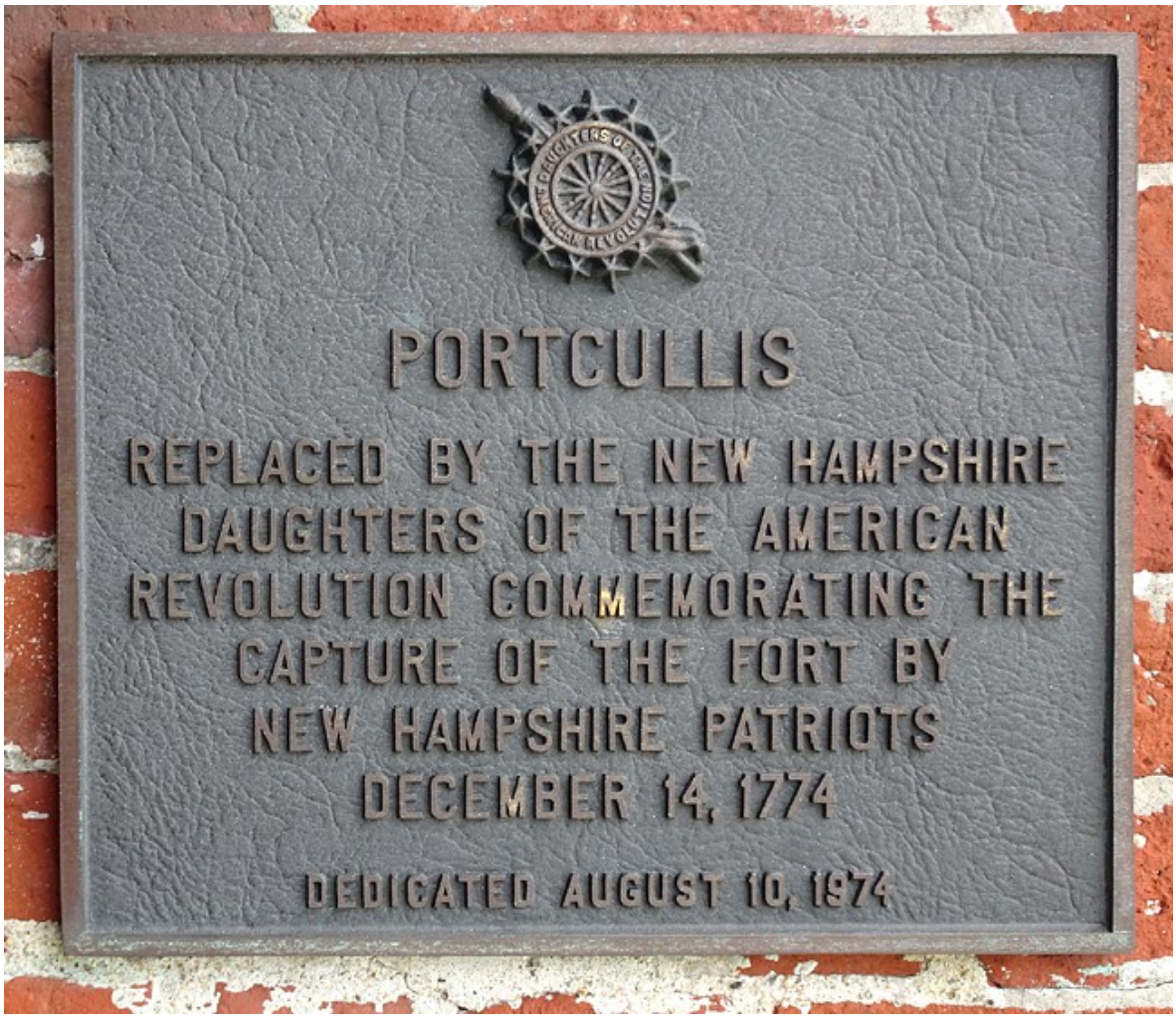
These are public signs/displays that reference the 1774 gunpowder raid.
Photography by Jim Cerny, except as indicated.



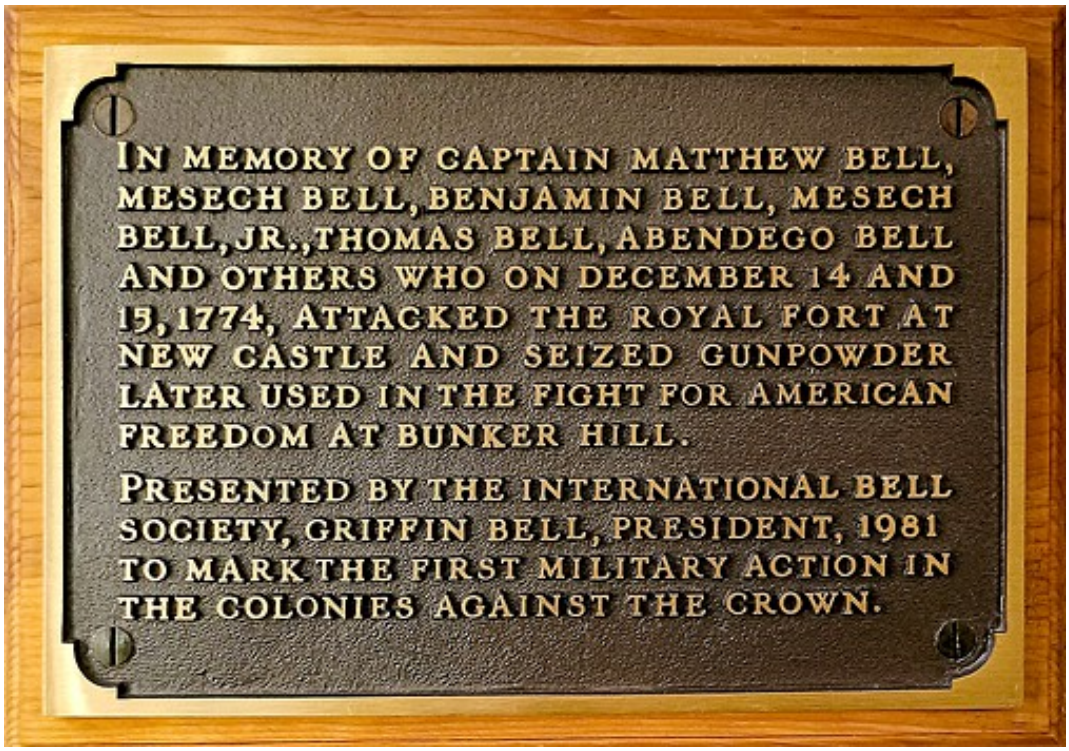
On Wentworth Road in New Castle, at the entrance to Sullivan Way, leading to Fort Constitution.
This is number 0004 in the state's Historical Highway Markers program.

https://www.nh.gov/nhdhr/markers/

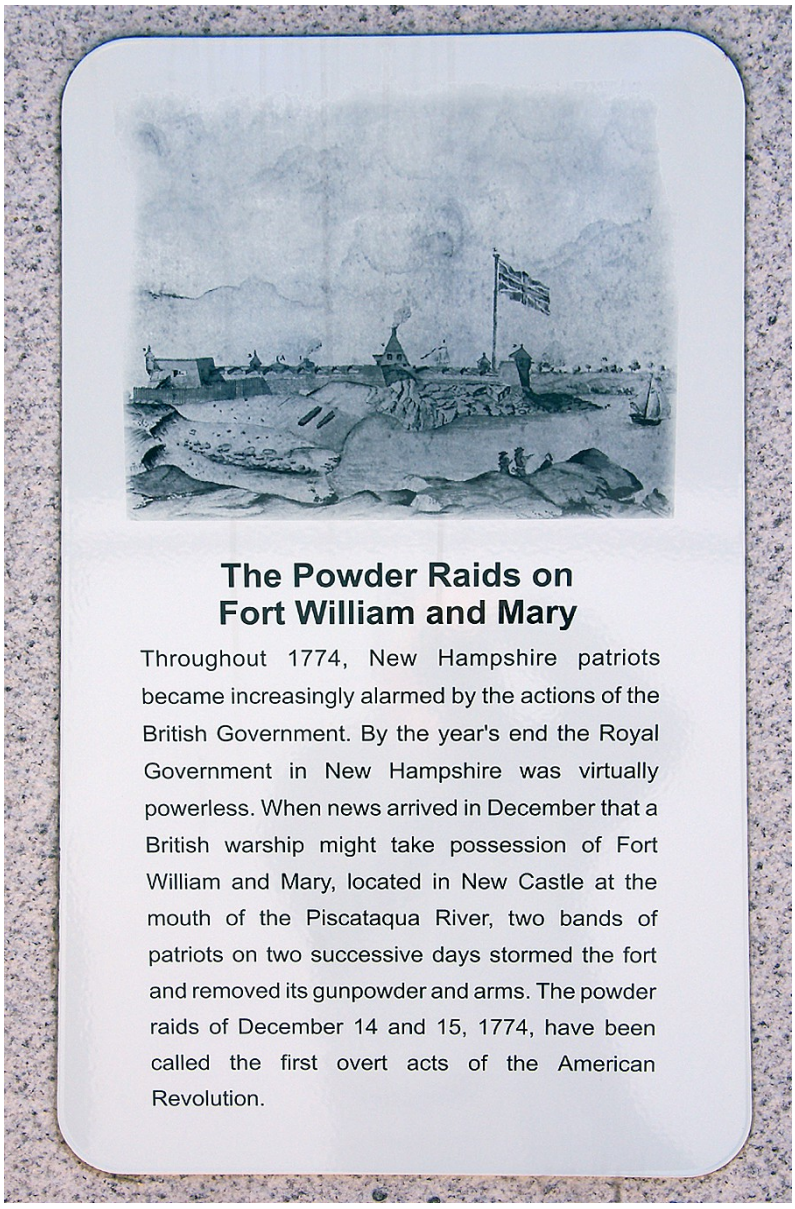
Marker on the bricks to the right of the portcullis entrance to Fort Constitution.



Marker on the bricks at the entrance to Fort Constitution.



Bell marker in the Macomber Room in the New Castle Rec building.
(Mike Geanoulis photo)



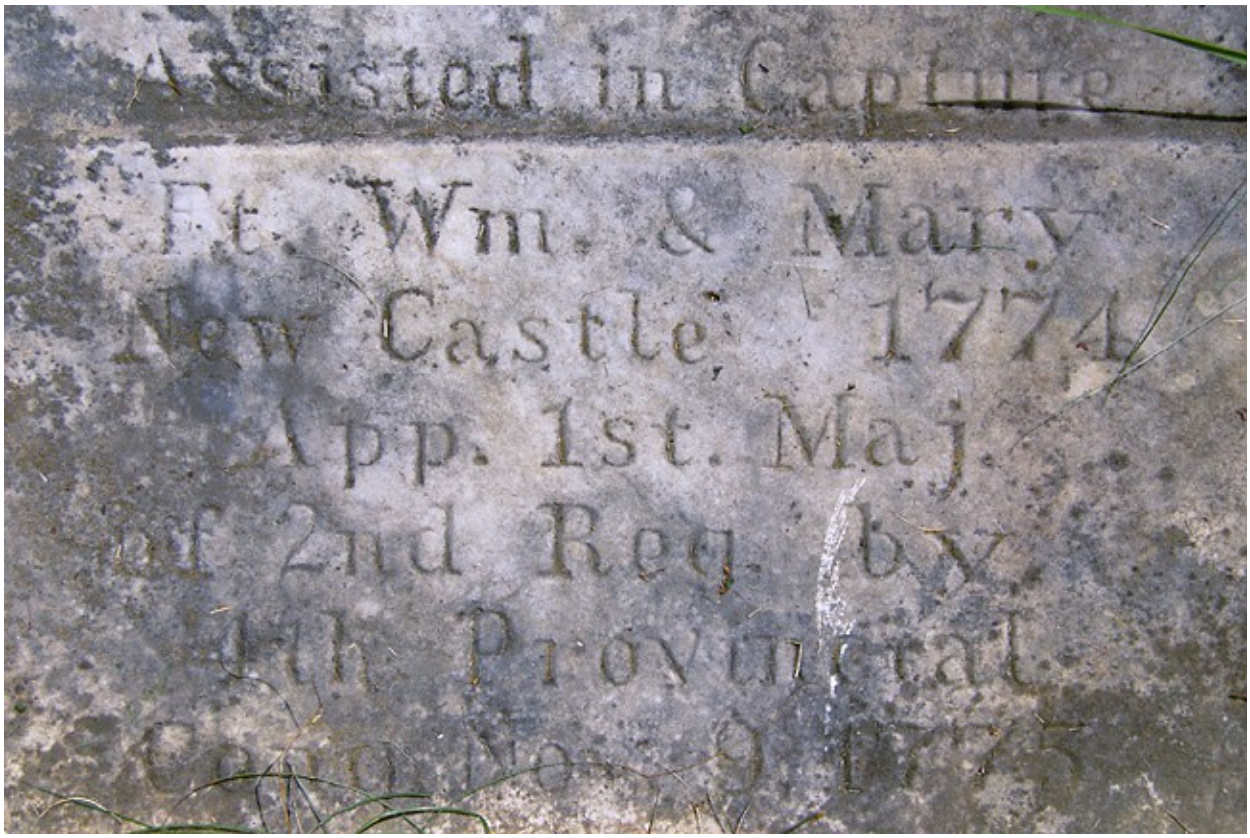
Marker in the New Hampshire Veterans Cemetery in Boscawen, NH. The view of the fort was drawn ca. 1705.

There are a series of vertical granite slabs that commemorate significant military events in New Hampshire history. There is also a marker for New Castle in the War of 1812.

The Powder Major's Farm is in Madbury, NH

Major John Demeritt (1728-1826) stored some of the gunpowder from the 1774 gunpowder raid at his farm. This sign is at the entrance, representing by tradition, transport of the gunpowder by ox cart to Bunker Hill.

The farm has been owned by just the Demeritt and Goss families. Chuck and Beth Goss live there, the fourth generation of their family, using their barn for special events. In 2017 the Forestry Society acquired 195 acres of the farm, becoming part of the Madbury Town Forest. Chuck Goss is a member of the Society of the Cincinnati, which owns the American Independence Museum in Exeter. Chuck and Beth gave several members of the New Castle Historical Society a tour back in 2009.



Part of John Demeritt's gravestone in a family cemetery at the Powder Major's Farm, reading:

Assisted in Capture
Ft. Wm. & Mary
New Castle 1774
App 1st Majr.
of 2nd Reg. by.
17th Provincial
Cong. Nov. 9, 1773

Diorama in the New Hampshire State House, depicting the gunpowder raid.
(photographer unknown)

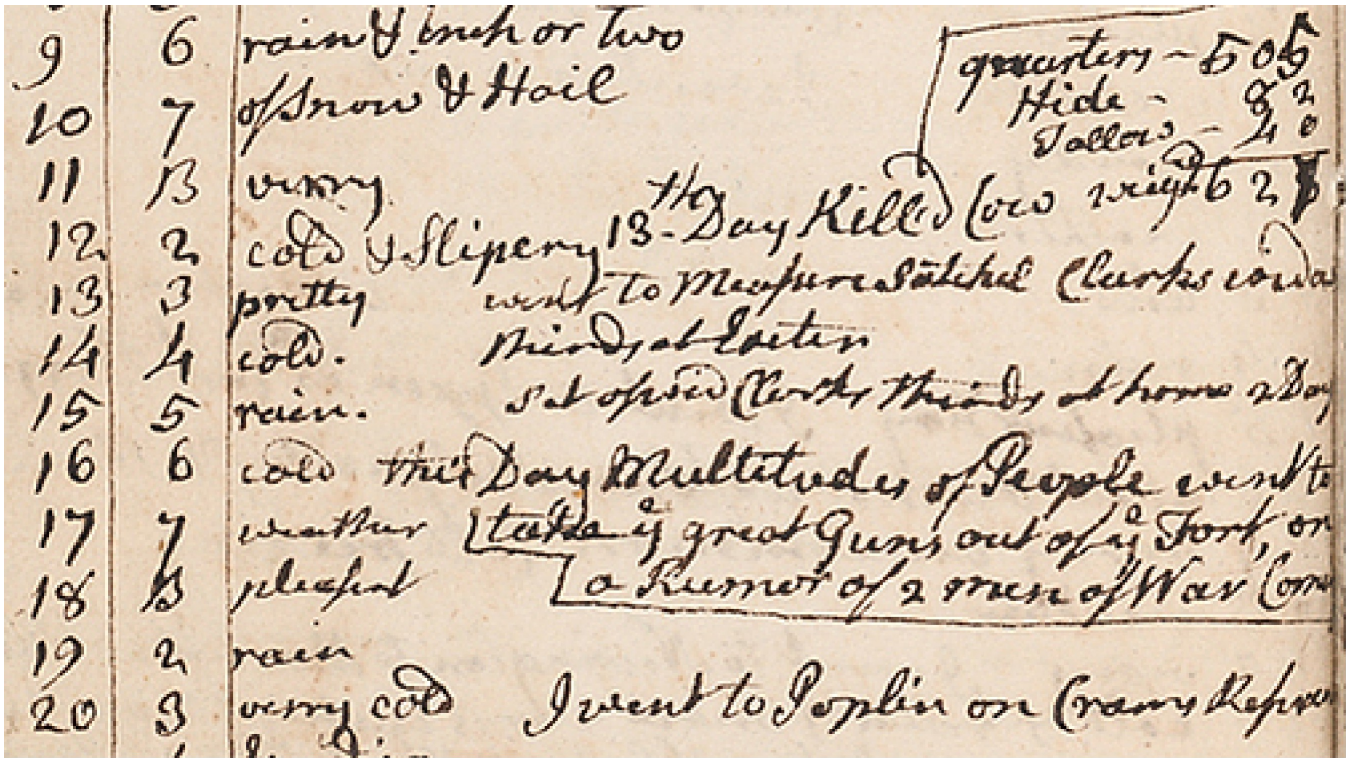
John Langdon from Portsmouth, later New Hampshire governor, was the leader from Portsmouth of the gunpowder raid. Tom Kehr gave a talk as John Langdon to the New Castle Historical Society in 2007, as shown here. The historical John Langdon is shown in the inset. Tom Kehr wrote two definitive documents on the raid, last updated in 2012.

Undated sign (woman shown born in 1924). Probably on Route 1B. Text reads:

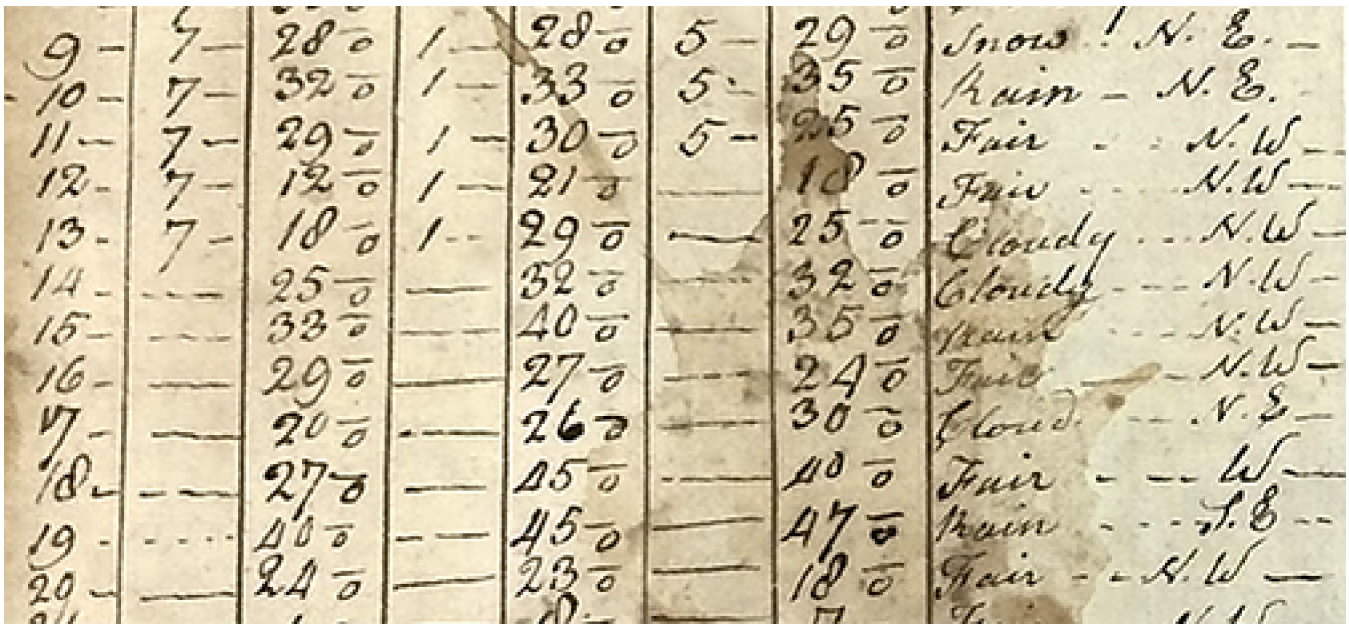
Fort William & Mary, [illegible] 1-1/4 M.
The most important (Nationally) historical spot in the Unite States. Being the site and scene on the night of Dec. 14, 1774 of the first act of war of the American Patriots against the flag of Great Britain in the war of the Revolution.

Appendix: Weather Diaries.

Two local diaries survive that record the weather for December 1774.



Samuel Lane, farmer and businessman in Stratham.
original in New Hampshire Historical Society.



Joshua Brackett, physician and judge in Portsmouth.
original in Portsmouth Athenaeum.

Appendix: Time Line.

This is a list of other overt acts in the period leading up to the Revolutionary War, of which the Fort William and Mary Gunpowder Raid was one. A variety of terms are used for these events: affair, raid, alarm, incident, and skirmish. Battle is applied for pitched battles between armed forces, such as at Lexington and Concord and at Bunker Hill.

Date	Description.
1770. Mar 05.	Boston Massacre, Boston, MA.
1772. Apr 14.	Pine Tree Riot, taking the King's pines, Weare, NH.
1772. Jun 09.	Burning of *HMS Gaspee*, Providence, RI.
1773. Dec 16.	Boston Tea Party, Boston, MA.
1774. Sep 01.	Powder Alarm, Gen. Gage orders removal of gunpowder, near Boston, MA.
1774. Dec14.	**Gunpowder Raid at Fort William and Mary, New Castle, NH.**
1775. Apr 19.	Battles of Lexington and Concord, MA.
1775. Apr 20.	Gunpowder Incident, British removal of gunpowder, Williamsburg, VA.
1775. May 09.	Thompson's War capture of *HMS Canceaux* captain (Mowat), Portland, ME.
1775. Jun 17.	Battle of Bunker Hill, Charlestown, MA.
1775. Oct 18.	Burning of Falmouth (Portland), ME, by Henry Mowat.