

**SKETCH OF THE LIFE  
AND CHARACTER OF  
HON. AMOS TUCK**

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Sketch of the Life and Character of Hon. Amos Tuck by J. W. Dearborn

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OF

HON. AMOS TUCK

Read before the Maine Historical Society,  
December, 1888,

BY

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OF

PARSONSFIELD, MAINE.

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# THE LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF

HON. AMOS TUCK.

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IN this brief monograph it is not proposed to present much that is new relative to the career of this noble man, but rather to collect, collate and put in form for preservation, the statements which have from time to time appeared, outlining in some degree the purity of life and nobility of character of one of the many worthy sons of grand old Parsonsfield, AMOS TUCK.

This is a delicate task, as he was to me an entire stranger, and therefore upon others I am obliged to depend for information and necessary data; there exists also a keen sense of my inability to do ample justice to the subject of this sketch. Again it becomes a delightful privilege to present this tribute

to one whose birth was in my native town, and whose ancestors were immigrants thither from the same neighborhood with my own.

ROBERT TUCK was the progenitor of all the families of that name in New England. Two hundred and fifty years ago he emigrated from England and settled in Winnacunnet, now Hampton, N. H.

The land granted him by the town continued in his possession and that of his male descendants one hundred and sixty years, and during five generations. He died in 1664, surviving his son Edward, who came from England with him, twelve years, and leaving the homestead to John, son of said Edward, who was deacon of the Congregational church, and who died in 1742, aged ninety years. After him his son Jonathan, also deacon, of the fourth generation, occupied, dying in 1781, aged eighty-three years. His son Jonathan, of the fifth generation lived and here died in 1780, aged forty-four years. His son John with his wife and their two oldest children came to Parsonsfield in 1807, where his brothers Josiah and Samuel had already settled. Amos, the son



of John and subject of this memoir, was born in Parsonsfield, Aug. 2, 1810. On his father's farm in the extreme southwestern portion of the town, and bordering on Province Lake, was passed his early life, inured to toil and hardship. It has been very truthfully said, that "It is not in great cities, nor in confined shops of trade, but principally in agriculture that the best stock or staple of men is grown."

At seventeen he commenced study at Effingham, [N. H.] academy, preparatory to entering college. There and at Hampton, he continued his studies, teaching a portion of the time until four years later, in 1831, he entered Dartmouth College, and graduated in 1835. He then commenced teaching at Pembroke academy, but soon left to go to the home of his fathers and take charge of Hampton academy. In 1838 he entered the law office of Hon. James Bell as student, removed to Exeter, was admitted to the bar in the autumn of the same year, and a few months later became the law partner of Mr. Bell, then at the head of his profession in the State, and afterward United States Senator.

This connection continued for over eight years, and the firm enjoyed a very large practice.

In 1842 Mr. Tuck was chosen Representative to the Legislature from Exeter. He was by early association and education a Democrat, and early became an active and acknowledged leader; his talents and position as a lawyer offering him brilliant prospects of political life with that party. But his convictions of duty relative to the subject of the extension of slavery led him into a position of antagonism to the party leaders, at the time when the proposed annexation of Texas brought this issue prominently before the country, and he acted true to those convictions, with the prospect of political disaster. Writing to his old home under date of February 4, 1845, he says: "I am of opinion that it is scarcely possible to be a leading politician in New Hampshire, and retain respect for one's self. I have often been told that I stand well for high office, and that I may reasonably expect it. But I cannot measure out my opinions by caucus resolutions, manufactured by unscrupulous and unsound men; consequently I certify you that I shall not

rise at present." This was not only expressive of his loyalty to conscience and duty, but was in some measure the outgrowth of the sorrow he had, that in a certain party vote, upon which course no reproach was then or afterward cast, he had been overpersuaded to yield his convictions. It was about this time that the great act of Mr. Tuck's life was recorded—engraved upon parchment well-nigh indestructible, and in characters of living light.

This was in January, 1845, when John P. Hale, then Democratic Representative in Congress from New Hampshire, wrote his celebrated letter, declaring that he could not vote for the annexation of Texas. The party was greatly excited in the Granite State because of this declaration.

The following extract from a memorial discourse on Mr. Tuck, delivered by Rev. Geo. E. Street, at Exeter, N. H., Jan. 11, 1880, gives an account of the participation of Mr. Tuck in that political movement known as the Free Soil party. Referring to the question of the annexation of Texas and the extension of slavery, Mr. Street says:—

"This great issue brings us to the most signifi-