

## Reuben Whitten: Good Deeds Spanning Generations

Reuben Whitten is a local Ashland legend. Reuben and his wife built their home above the Squam River on what was called Indian Hill, that strip of land lying between the Squam and Pemigewasset Rivers. The Whitten home is still standing, although it was moved into town long after Reuben's time to provide some workforce housing for the mills.

In 1816, a year after the volcanic eruption of Mt. Tambora, the northern hemisphere experienced "a year without a summer." Locally, snow or killing frost was recorded every month of the year.

During the summer of 1816, area farmers experienced repeated crop failures. However, the elevation of the Whitten's fields and their southfacing slope allowed the family to grow wheat and produce such as potatoes and apples. The family generously provided surrounding neighbors with precious food and wheat throughout the difficult year thus saving many lives.

Reuben's grandson immortalized the generosity of his grandfather with a stone that reads:



*Reuben Whitten – A pioneer of this town. Cold season of 1816 raised 40 bushels of wheat on this land which kept family and neighbours from starvation.*