



History of the Town Seal

Kingston commercial artist Helen Foster designed the Town Seal in 1950. The seal incorporates the brig *Independence*, built in Kingston; her anchors were forged in a Kingston foundry along the banks of the Jones River. The brig is all tied together within a rope formed at the Cordage in North Plymouth. The seal became the official seal when Selectmen approved the design at a Selectmen's meeting on August 8, 1950.

History of the Artist

Helen Foster was born on September 24, 1900 in her parent's Kingston home on Indian Pond Road. She grew up in Kingston attending the Faunce, the Patuxet, the Maple Avenue and Kingston High Schools. Graduating in 1918 as valedictorian, Helen entered the Massachusetts Normal Art School (now Mass. College of Art.)

Graduating in 1922, Helen became one of the first women to enter the male-dominated field of commercial art design and is today recognized as the first female commercial artist in the City of Boston. Although finding work was difficult, Helen persevered, eventually establishing her own design studio on Park Street to which she commuted daily until 1946 when she moved her studio to her family home here in Kingston.

In 1950 Helen was commissioned to design the Official Town Seal. The design, which incorporates the brig *Independence*, was drawn only after many hours of research, talking with sea captains about ships from the eighteenth-century – as no known sketches existed of the Brig.

In addition to her artwork, Helen left another legacy to the Town of Kingston – diaries that chronicled her daily life, beginning at age fourteen. Her diaries contain a wealth of information about life in Kingston spanning the twentieth century. In the 1980s, Helen also wrote a series of articles for a local newspaper that highlighted her observations on how the town has changed.

Helen retired in 1980 (at the age of 80), but continued her active role in the community. She was a member of the Jones River Village Historical Society, a charter member of the Kingston Council on Aging, she contributed to the Town Quilt, and with the aid of another local artist (Marshall Joyce) designed the color scheme for the new town flag in 1994. Helen's accomplishments also included her research into the history of the Baptist Church (for which she was a lifelong member), and lectures she gave to the residents of Evanswood on early 20th century life in Kingston.

Helen is remembered as a special woman who was gentle, modest, talented, and unassuming. Never expecting recognition, she was always generous in contributing her talents to civic and community efforts. Her artwork and diaries will long endure as part of her legacy, but those who knew her will remember her subtle smile, her gentle nature, her wit, and the twinkle in her eye.