

Telstar Regional High School

The Historical Importance Of Molly Ockett

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Knowledge of history grounds us in the present and helps guide us into the future.

History as a whole is vital to our identity as a human species, both on a global and on a local and regional level. Locally, in Bethel, Maine, Molly Ockett - a Native American woman of the Abenaki people - holds a very strong and influential role in our history. To fully understand the importance of Molly Ockett, history, both regionally and locally must be analyzed. Second, to truly comprehend who Molly Ockett was and what impact her life had, her accomplishments and achievements must be looked at. Finally, the traits that Molly Ockett had and the way she went about life on a daily basis truly show what significance she had on our history. Molly Ockett left an impact in regional and local history that truly shows her importance.

History, in comparison to other fields of study, is often forgotten and left behind. It is often treated as the least important of what the average American student considers to be the four core classes. The truth is that history is substantial and necessary for humans to understand, as it essentially roots us in the present. History, and an understanding of the past, grounds us in modern times. It allows us to understand what came before us, and with that knowledge we move forward into the future more secure and more prepared to face whatever may come. World history allows this to happen; it allows us to understand ourselves as a whole species. National history gives us a sense of our own personal culture, who we are, and what we aspire to be. Local and regional history is much more specified than the others. It can still offer people understanding, but often times it helps create a sense of community and connection amongst people who are potentially otherwise different. Local history gives people a sense of a common ground. The heritage of Native Americans and the legacy Molly Ockett left behind strengthens the region's history and consequently the connection felt by those who celebrate in remembrance

of the ways of old. Molly Ockett, as soon will be discussed, played a large role in the regional history of the Bethel, Maine area. Doing so, she has allowed for a sense of community and connection among thousands of people with the legacy she left behind.

The legacy and the history that Molly Ockett leaves us with today came largely from the various things she accomplished in her life. It is, however, the characteristics - who Molly Ockett was as a human - that drove her to do all of the meaningful and wonderful things she did. Molly Ockett possessed various virtuous characteristics that helped her become the well renowned Native that she is celebrated for being. She was a wondrous traveler, and throughout her life she visited various places in Maine and New Hampshire, from Poland, Maine to Umbagog Lake to Sudbury Canada (now named Bethel) in Maine and everywhere else in between. She also had a good sense of humor; on top of this, she was considered by many to be a good story teller. More importantly than these two traits, however, was her ability to help heal people through her advanced knowledge of medicinal herbs. She knew “the healing properties of roots, barks, berries, and herbs growing in Wabanaki Country” as well as “how to transform them into effective potions, salves, and poultices” (McBride). In an autobiography by Henry Tufts, an infamous 18th century thief, Molly Ockett was described as having a “generous nature.” This generosity played a role in her ability to heal others, as she often would help those who were ill, despite small feelings of vengeance or spite (she one time saved the wife of an Indian scalper). All of these good characteristics remind us, as we study and remember local history, what we should aim to be like.

On top of the historic aspect, and the various good qualities Molly Ockett possessed, there are also various examples of what Molly Ockett did that so greatly affected our local

history, and in some cases national history. One specific story states that Molly Ockett viewed the springs in Poland as having medicinal properties, which encouraged Wentworth Ricker to establish what would become Poland Springs, though official records of this company's foundation are vague. Another story, though not many citations exist for it, is the story of Trap Corner in West Paris, Maine. The story is complex within itself, but essentially during her travels, Molly Ockett hid treasure below a hanging trap, thus giving the area its name. This is not the only area named after Molly Ockett. Mollyockett Mountain in Woodstock, Molls Rock on Umbagog Lake, as well as Molly Ockett's Cave in Fryeburg all preserve her name. Because Molly Ockett traveled often, many places adopted her name in remembrance of her. These geographical connections alone shows the local and regional impact that Molly Ockett has had, but there is more nonetheless. The next part of Molly Ockett's life that has so influenced our history in very important ways is the healing qualities she seemed to possess. Because she traveled often, as previously alluded to, it was easy for her to stay with different people because she would help treat diseases in turn for a place to stay. This alone impacted so many people. On one foul weathered night, she looked for shelter. She was, according to legend, turned down in Snow Falls. She did, however, find shelter on Paris Hill in the house of Dr. Cyrus Hamlin. Hamlin's son was feeble, and so Molly Ockett naturally helped. She essentially saved the young baby's life - who grew up to become Hannibal Hamlin, the first vice president of Abraham Lincoln. This one treatment by Molly Ockett had a huge impact on the history of the United States, especially for Maine during the Civil War. Through her actions alone, which stemmed from her personality and her character qualities, she greatly influenced the history of the entire United States, and also many other components of our local and regional history in the Bethel,

Maine area. Through her humorous stories, her traveling, and her medicinal healings, Molly Ockett created a name for herself and showed her importance in the history books.

The importance of Molly Ockett in our history all relates to who she was as a person, how this inspired others, what she did, and how this all relates to modern times. Local and regional history helps us understand who we are, what we strive to be, and the legacy of Molly Ockett gives us insight of the past which helps us as we move towards the future. Molly Ockett was extremely influential to the history of various Maine and New Hampshire locations, and it is because of this that her story is important and will forever be cherished in local and regional history.

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