



In April of 1743 the House of Representatives granted the petition for 120 acres of land, which would be “given and granted the petitioner his heirs and assigns forever.” The grant required that Joshua Wilder to:

- Build a “good and convenient house for travelers” within one year.
- Have 10 acres cleared and brought to English Grass or plowed within four years.
- Continually occupy the home by his family.

Speaker of the House, T. Cushing signed the grant. That year Joshua and his wife established his house and tavern on Houghton Road.

Joshua and Sarah had a large number of children, one of whom was named Mary, who might have been the first child born in Princeton in 1744.

Joshua Wilder sold his property in 1755 and moved to Ware, Massachusetts. Benjamin Houghton, who owned the adjoining 169-acre farm, paid 176 pounds for the Wilder property. The estate was next passed to Peabody Houghton. There is little information about the Wilder house from 1743 to 1755. However, there are some references in diaries and local histories from people who stayed at the Joshua Wilder Tavern, but no information to confirm whether the tavern was ever used after 1755. We speculate that his tavern was competing with the Abijah Moore Tavern (1748) at Russell Corner, and because of the location and size of the Moore Tavern, he didn't get enough patrons to make his tavern viable [writer's comment].

The cellar hole identified as the remains of Joshua Wilder's Tavern is located on Houghton Road near the Norco Sportsman Club. It is located at the top of a small rise, which was built by Wilder.

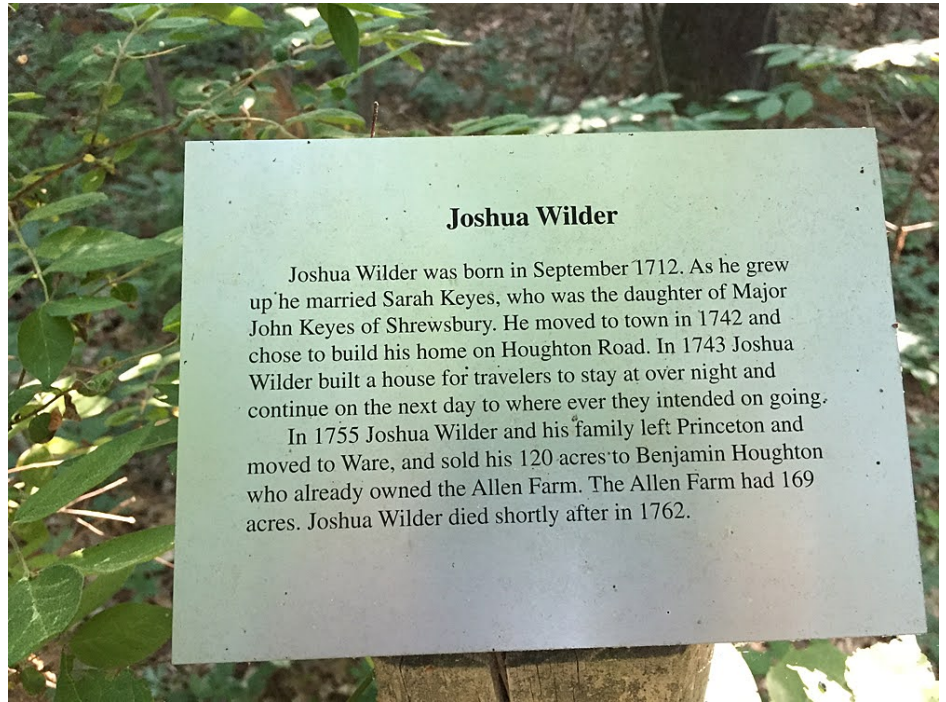
The site is now overgrown with trees, but you can imagine the view of Mount Wachusett to the northwest when the land had been cleared. Notice how small the foundation was; how they piled dirt up around the foundation to create a root cellar to store food, how primitively they lived all in a one room house, and how cramped it must have been to provide lodging for travelers as they passed through Princeton. Remnants of a hand dug well can be seen in the upper left-hand corner of this plot.



Although we have no picture or sketch of what he built, we do know that homes of this era included these attributes. Since we do know it was small, according to the description, it was most likely a Cape Cod style house similar to the one at the left.

- Asymmetrical small windows
- Center brick or stone chimney
- A batten front door
- Sill sitting at grade
- Steep roof pitch
- Cellar or pit under the floor in which to preserve food.

This location was excavated by school children in teacher Craig McCall's class in 1979-80 and used as part of the school's local history component.



It was then later cleared as part of an Eagle Scout project by Michael V. Keyes in 2001.

Today, in 2020, the Princeton Historical Society and friends with support from the NORCO Sportsman Club have cleaned up the site to make it accessible for visitors to visit.



Please visit [princetonmahistory.org](http://princetonmahistory.org) to learn more about Princeton's rich history.

Please feel free to write us, if you have any questions or information to offer at [princetonmahistory@gmail.com](mailto:princetonmahistory@gmail.com)



**Wilder Bicentennial Float**