



Dennis Historical Society

Newsletter

July 2023

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**The next Board Meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 11th, 2:00 pm at the Dennis Memorial Library
1020 Old Bass River Road, Dennis Village**

Members Welcome

Please send information & stories for the newsletter to Dave Talbott at the DHS Website email address: info@dennishistoricalsociety.org

Two Years to the 250th Anniversary

This announcement of an ambitious undertaking and a plea for help appeared in the August 2022 Newsletter - *The Dennis Historical Commission is looking for information. The 250th anniversary of the American Revolution will be observed in 2025. DHC is documenting a list of soldiers and sailors of the East Precinct of Yarmouth, now Dennis, who served in the Revolutionary War 1775 – 1783. So far, we have listed 60+ who are buried in Dennis cemeteries and others that were removed to other towns. Their service is documented by Massachusetts Soldiers & Sailors of the Revolutionary War, 17 volumes. The families are Baker, Bangs, Chapman, Chase, Crosby, Crowell, Hall, Hedge, Howes, Nickerson, Rogers, Sears, Tobey and Vincent. If anyone has personal history of Revolutionary War veterans of the East Precinct, please send it to Diane Rochelle, DHC Chair, whiskeyboo@comcast.net (508-394-7311). Family history, oral or written, strengthens the commitment and sacrifice of their service and emphasizes our memorial observance.*

The plea for information is still very much alive, and if you have contributions you can make, please contact Diane! Work on the project is underway. A link to some early articles researched and written by the *Yarmouth & Dennis Revolutionary War Recognition Committee* - <https://www.hsoy.org/revolution> - appears on the Home Page of the DHS Website. In addition to the articles online already, I asked and received permission to celebrate this July 4th with a sneak preview of what's in store for us in 2025.

First is an event for which we will celebrate the 250th anniversary on December 16th of this year. It was provided by DHS Board member and DHC Chair Diane Rochelle. Following it is a glimpse at the type of coverage Dennis' citizen soldiers and sailors will receive in the upcoming publication with illustrations by Howard Bonington.

The Boston Tea Party

The participants –

Sears, Edmund, Capt. (Yarmouth 8/6/1712 – Dennis 8/12/1796, age 84, Sears Cemetery, Brewster). Son of Paul Sears & Marcy Freeman; husband of Hannah Crowell. (Listed Tea Party Participant)

Service: participated in the Boston Tea Party; listed at the memorial in Boston; Boston Harbor, December 1773, helping to throw casks of tea, possibly from ship Dartmouth into the harbor. "Captain Edmund Sears sailed home from England, laden with Cargo, on December 16, 1773. Nearby, colonists dressed as Native American Indians were aboard British vessels throwing boxes of tea, owned by the East India Tea Company, into Boston Harbor. He joined them in tossing 342 tea boxes overboard and then rode his horse home to the East Precinct ed. note – now Dennis. Family history relates that he went straight to the "bowfat" (a corner or niche cupboard) and without saying a word to anyone, seized the teapot and caddy, throwing them into the garden with a crash. His astonished wife is said to have whispered to her children "your poor father has come home crazy." He then proclaimed that from that time henceforth none of his family were to drink tea or wear upon their persons any articles of British manufacture. His four sons served in Capt. Micah Chapman's Yarmouth Militia. A revolution was beginning." (Excerpt from Soldiers & Sailors book)

Matthews (Mathews), Elisha (Yarmouth 11/25/1750 – Sidney, ME 6/12/1803, age 53). Son of David Matthews (1727 – 1819) & Sarah Hedge; husband of Marcy "Mercy" Whelden (Yarmouth 10/11/1749 – Sidney, ME) daughter of John Whelden & Susanna Hallett, married 1/30/1722 in Yarmouth; brother of Thomas Matthews (1755-1802)

Bassett (Basset), Joseph, Jr., Capt. (Copps Hill Burying Ground, tomb 65 (xv)) moved to Hawley 9/17/1775.

Service: Yarmouth, Drummer, Capt. Elisha Hedge Co., Col. Nathaniel Freeman Regt. marched on a secret expedition to Rhode Island Sept. 27, 1777 service 1 mo. 4 days. (Listed Tea Party Participant) (MSSRW)

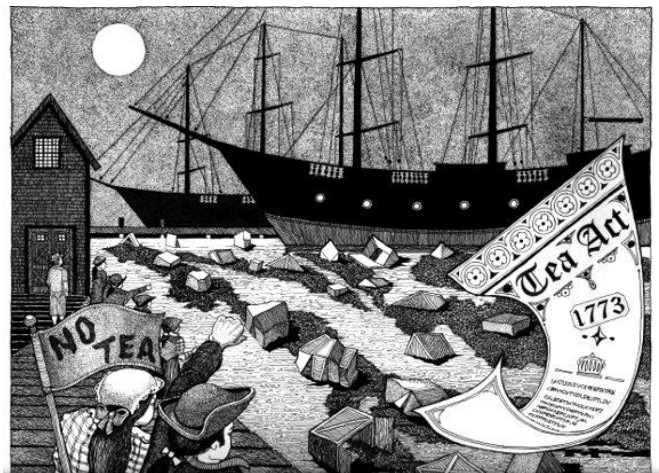
Smith, Ephraim (Truro 1751 – Gorham, ME 1/13/1835 age 84). *Son of Samuel Smith (Yarmouth 4/8/1718 – Wellfleet 11/30/1793) & Mary Hatch (Truro 5/5/1717 – Wellfleet 6/1799) married 1/20/1742 in Truro; husband of Elizabeth Harding. 22 year old sailor in 1773, became a ship's captain; retired to farm in Maine (Listed Tea Part Participant)*

Hall, Reuben (Yarmouth 4/5/1747 – Ashfield 4/4/1821 age 73 Hill Cemetery, died of consumption). *Son of David Hall (Yarmouth 3/6/1724 – Yarmouth 10/4/1778), age 54) & wife #1 Tamzen Sears (Harwich 9/5/1728 – Yarmouth 10/25/1753), age 25 Dennis Village Cemetery. married 1745 & wife #2 Rebecca Crosby (Yarmouth 8/19/1730 Hawley 1/23/1797), age 66 Pudding Hollow Cem. married 1761; husband of Sarah Howes (Yarmouth 10/27/1749 – Ashfield 11/10/1817 Hill Cem. married 8/1/1775, daughter of Thomas Howes & Deborah Sears; brother of David Hall, Jr., Seth Hall & Ruth Hall Bangs, wife of Zenas Bangs.*

Service: Pvt. Capt. Timothy Childs Co., Col. David Leonard Regt. at Ticonderoga 2/2/1777 (DAR Patriot #A049423)

The background –

On 5 March 1770, Parliament rescinded the Townshend duties on four of the five commodities that had been taxed; the duty on tea remained in force. Outraged patriots sought to shore up sagging efforts to boycott tea by appealing to merchants for (non-importation) and the citizenry for (non-consumption). But, people loved their tea, and their resolve weakened. In the spring of 1773, the East India Company had a large amount of surplus tea on hand. To aid the failing company, thwart the smuggling of Dutch tea, and reassert its authority to levy taxes on the colonies, Parliament authorized the Tea Act on 10 May 1773. Tea sold in America would carry no duty for the East India Company; instead, the tea would be taxed at the point of entry in colonial ports. Consignees, or special agents, were appointed in Boston, New York City, Philadelphia, and Charleston to receive and sell the tea.



Pen and Ink Rendering by Howard Bonington

In the fall of 1773, as newspapers publish the particulars of the East India Company plan, colonists learn that the tea is coming. Protests soon circulate. Writing out of Philadelphia, "Scaevola", Ed. note – the paper's name is a pseudonym for protest - rebukes the tea agents, calling them political bombardiers. Refusing a summons to resign their commissions, Boston's tea agents counter that they are the true sons of liberty. Demonstrating its decided disagreement, a patriot mob storms Richard Clarke's King Street shop on 3 November.

Boston's consignees petition the governor to safeguard the tea once it arrives, but with British forces confined to Castle William since the unfortunate events of the Boston Massacre, Hutchinson is powerless to oblige. The streets belong to the opposition.

On Sunday, 28 November, the Dartmouth, carrying 114 chests of tea, arrives in Boston Harbor. A meeting, open to all Bostonians and anyone from neighboring towns who chooses to attend (a group identified as the Body), is called at Faneuil Hall. When the crowd swells, it adjourns to Old South Meeting House. The Body speaks, demanding that the tea be returned, and the assembly appoints a watch of 25 men to guard Griffin's Wharf.

From Philadelphia and New York, news arrives that anyone attempting to land the tea in those ports should beware an unwelcome visit. By 2 December, consignees have resigned in three port towns, and the taunt goes forth: Will you shrink at Boston?

By 15 December, the Eleanor and the Beaver, also both laden with tea, arrive at Griffin's Wharf. The law is clear: if the duty on the Dartmouth's tea is not paid by 17 December, the customs officer is authorized to seize the ship and its cargo. The governor, the ships' owners, and the tea consignees all refuse to return the tea to England. Voting at a 16 December meeting at Old South, the Body resolves to prevent the East India tea from being landed, stored, sold, or consumed. At the conclusion of the meeting, the crowd streams out onto the street, chasing 30 to 60 men dressed as Indians down to Griffin's Wharf. In what John Adams calls an intrepid "exertion of popular power," the men proceed to dump 342 chests of tea into the sea.

Governor Hutchinson is incensed, calling the dumping of the tea high treason. Energized by their victory, boisterous patriots urge Bostonians, "keep up your courage." When news of the event arrives there, New York celebrates Boston's

Indians, as does Philadelphia. Boston, once suspect, is now praised for its steadfast opposition to tyrannical English policies.

Not all, however, applaud the Destruction of the Tea (later designated the Boston Tea Party). At the end of January, the town of Marshfield urges good and loyal subjects to speak up against the Bostonians' unlawful act. Still, in March, Indians are found destroying the tea—again. And in April, another episode raises questions whether the perpetrators are good Indians or bad Indians. <https://www.masshist.org/revolution/teaparty.php>

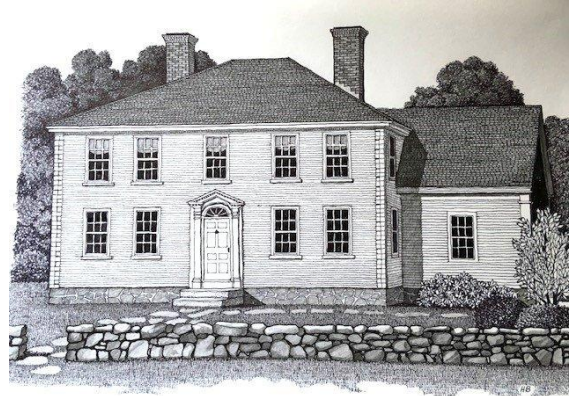
Captain Stephen Homer, II

The participant –

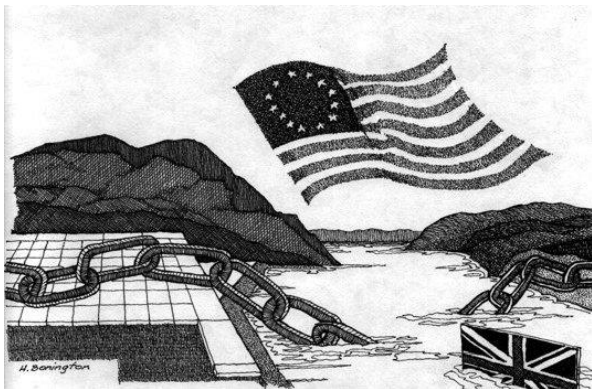
Stephen Homer II was born July 14, 1763. He died on April 6, 1840 at the age of 76, and is buried in the Red Top Cemetery in Brewster. Stephen was the son of Stephen Homer & Elizabeth Chapman and he was the husband of Thankful Chapman. They were married on May 3, 1792.

In 1780, Stephen Homer lived in Hockanum, Yarmouth Port/ Nobscussett. After the Revolution, he lived at 1888 Route 6A, Dennis in a federal style, circa 1798.

Captain Homer's active service included a tour of duty at Fort West Point during the Revolutionary War. At age seventeen, part of his responsibilities was to assist in raising and lowering a chain across the Hudson River to prevent enemy ships from going upriver. It was at the time Benedict Arnold tried to betray the installation to Major John Andre & the British.



1888 Route 6A, East Dennis by Howard Bonington



Chain across the Hudson by Howard Bonington

In 1832, he applied for & was granted a pension of \$20.00 for his service, and at his death it was reinstated for his wife Thankful. (Phyllis Horton 2015, Kevin Keegan, DAR Records)

The background –

In the spring of 1778, a heavy chain supported by huge log rafts was stretched across the Hudson from West Point to Constitution Island to impede the movement of British ships north of West Point. A second log boom (resembling a ladder in construction) spanned the river about 100 yards downstream to absorb the impact of any ship attempting to breach the barrier.

The Hudson River's changing tides, strong current, and frequently unfavorable winds created adverse sailing conditions at West Point.

Compounding this, the river's narrow width and sharp "S-Curve" there forced any large ship to tack in order to navigate it. Cannon were placed in forts and artillery batteries on both sides of the river to attack ships when they were slowed to a halt by the Patriot barrier placed there.

The chain was constructed over six weeks at the Sterling Iron Works in Warwick, Orange County, of chain links from Long Pond Iron Works in Ringwood, New Jersey. When completed, the 600-yard chain contained iron links two feet in length, weighing 140 to 180 pounds. The links were carted to New Windsor, where they were put together and floated down the river to West Point on logs late in April. Including swivels, clevises, and anchors, the chain weighed 65 tons. For buoyancy, logs were cut into 16-foot lengths, waterproofed, and joined by fours into rafts fastened to one another with 12-foot timbers. Short sections of chain (10 links, a swivel, and a clevis) were attached across each raft then joined to create a continuous boom of chains and rafts once afloat.

Captain Thomas Machin, the artillery officer and engineer who had installed the chain at Fort Montgomery, directed installation across the river on 30 April 1778. Both ends were anchored to log cribs filled with rocks, the southern at a small cove on the west bank and the northern at Constitution Island. The West Point side was protected by the Chain Battery and the Constitution Island side by the Marine Battery. A system of pulleys, rollers, ropes, and mid-stream anchors were used to adjust the chain's tension to overcome the effects of river current and changing tide. Until 1783, the chain was removed each winter and reinstalled each spring to avoid destruction by ice.

The British never attempted to run the chain, in spite of Benedict Arnold claiming in correspondence with them that "a well-loaded ship could break the chain." Ed. note – This information was condensed from a longer article which can be found online - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hudson_River_Chains

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Sea Captains' Cemetery Walk

FRIDAY, JULY 14, 10AM

Join guide Terri Fox for a free walking tour through South Dennis Congregational Church Cemetery, 234 Main Street, and learn about local history through stories of notable early residents buried in these hallowed grounds. Park on the street or behind Scargo School next door. Rain date: Sunday, July 16, at 2pm.

*Wishing Everyone
a very
Happy Independence
Day!*



GRAND REOPENING

1801 CAPTAIN THEOPHILUS BAKER HOUSE
& BARN AT JERICHO HISTORICAL CENTER



SATURDAY, JULY 22, 11 AM - 4 PM
90 OLD MAIN STREET, WEST DENNIS
FREE ADMISSION (Donations gladly accepted)