

## **Eben Sears : Sailor, Soldier, Tavern Keeper**

by Maureen Rukstalis

Ebenezer Sears was born in Harwich to Willard and Susanna Sears on October 11, 1755. Tragedy struck the family when Ebenezer was just 9 years old when his father died. Willard had earlier decided that Nathaniel Sears of East Yarmouth would be the guardian of the minor children: Mary, Ebenezer, Reuben, Edmund, and Willard. The family was uprooted and moved to Yarmouth's East Precinct to live with Nathaniel. As it was not unusual for the young lads in the area, Ebenezer was sent to sea. His training would serve him well later as he served his country on both land and sea.

When the conflict with England became inevitable, Ebenezer was ready to defend his country. On September 1, 1776, he served under the command of Captain John Grammis Company, Lieutenant James Blossom in the conflict at the Elizabeth Islands and remained in sea service there until November 24 in the defense of the seacoast. About that time he was also to serve under Captain Abijah Bangs Company, Colonel Dikes regiment, enlisting December 13, to February, 1777. There is a pay abstract for gun and blanket money dated Boston, February 24, 1777, for the same regiment and company, credited to the town of Yarmouth.

The town of Yarmouth was to pay the local soldiers according to a fragment of a document that was found. Yarmouth was to pay "his order or his legal representative 20 silver dollars or the value in gold per month from the time he shall pass muster until he shall return home allowing 20 miles per day."

Ebenezer was listed as a private in July, 1778, muster roll under Joshua Eddy's Company, Colonel Gamaliel Bradford's (12th) Regiment, White Plains, NY. His enlistment was for 8 months. The 12th Regiment also known as the 18th Continental Regiment and Phinney's Regiment saw action at Bunker Hill, Battle of Saratoga, and the Battle of Monmouth but did Ebenezer? Interestingly in this time frame, Ebenezer, a private in Captain Elisha Hedge's Company, was guarding prisoners belonging to the British ship "Somerset." Service 4 days.

Ebenezer went back to sea on a cruise with a privateer and returned in May, 1779, and was pressed into the service of the United States. Taken to Boston, he was under Commander Saltonstall who commanded the fleet that went to Penobscot in July. Ebenezer served on board the vessel "Active" commanded by Captain Allen Hallet. There was a severe battle and 100 men were killed and they were defeated. He told of traveling through the uninhabited forest for four months. He returned home having suffered greatly. Service 3 months 3 days., engaged May 29, 1779; discharged August 31, 1779. Paid £2 14 0.

Enlisting again on July 10, 1780 for six months, Ebenezer was sent to Springfield, New Jersey to reinforce the Northern Army. He was described as 18 years, stature 5 ft. 8 in.; complexion, ruddy. He marched to camp under Captain Clark, Major Trescott's Company, Jackson's 16th Mass. regiment. He was there in New Jersey for the Battle of Springfield. He was discharged from service January 18, 1781. Service 6 months, 22 days, including travel of 280 miles home. Wage £13 9 4.

During this latest enlistment, Ebenezer not only survived a major battle, but also a smallpox epidemic in the camps. He encountered many men from different backgrounds while serving in the Continental Army including Dr. Thacher, and was able to safely stable his horse and that of

the Colonel which later was proof of his service and eligible for pension. Sadly, he was witness to a historic event. Accounts differ but it was known that he was there at West Point for the execution of Major Andre. The Sears Genealogy says that he guarded Andre the night before his execution because he was known to be trustworthy.

What happened to Ebenezer when he returned home to Yarmouth? The sea called him back and in 1804, he sailed the sloop "Stork" to the Cape of Good Hope and it is said he was the first to hoist the American flag in the Indian Ocean. He returned to Yarmouth and bought a home and land on Summer Street. He married and raised his family and farmed there. He also owned a tavern and built an inn known as the Sears Hotel next door on his land. He and his family continued to prosper here in peace.