

# DOVER TIDINGS

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The Dover Historical Society, P.O. Box 534, Dover, Massachusetts 02030

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## *Dover's Revolutionaries*

*From Concord to the Crossing of the Delaware,  
Dover Soldiers Helped Free America*



*13 memorial stone markers*

**W**hen discussing the Revolutionary War we tend to focus on the major figures - the generals atop their steeds or the politicians making decisions in Congress - leading us to forget the ordinary individuals who formed the foundation of the cause for independence. The soldiers become just more statistics when in reality they were locals from their respective communities, each with their own story. Despite it not yet

being a town, the men of the Springfield Parish - what is today Dover - took up arms to support the revolution, namely, throughout the Boston Campaign and the Crossing of the Delaware. Many of these brave Dover soldiers are buried in our own Highland Cemetery.

Dover's Elias Haven and Jabez Baker were among the 49 Dover Minutemen who served under Capt. Ebenezer Battle in the Springfield Parish militia. They did not make it in time to combat the British at Concord but harassed the redcoats all the way to Menotomy, today known as Arlington. Haven and Baker took cover behind stone walls and buildings as they fought British troops. Haven was killed near the town meeting house, one of 22 men who perished in Menotomy. Baker survived and returned to Dover with a red coat from one of the deceased British soldiers. The coat was used as a scarecrow on Strawberry Hill until 1866.



*Col. Daniel Whiting headstone*

Captain Daniel Whiting, owner of a popular Dover tavern that served as a meeting spot for the “Sons of Liberty,” led a company of 56 Dover men in the Battle of Bunker Hill. This pivotal battle in Charlestown was fought to prevent the British from controlling Boston Harbor. Whiting and his Dover men defended Breed’s Hill, near Bunker Hill, and in the ensuing conflict seven men died and 11 were wounded. It was reported that his soldiers displayed great bravery in the chaos of the fighting. Though the Dover patriots had to eventually withdraw from the hills, they dealt heavy casualties to the British, proving the colonists could hold their own against a superior foe.

Dover soldiers were well represented in the final confrontation against the British. Throughout the winter while Boston was under siege, General Henry Knox had been moving artillery pieces from Fort Ticonderoga in New York to Washington’s army. Now having acquired cannons, Washington would be able to drive the British from the city. On March 4, 1776, troops including 44 Dover soldiers set up their largest cannons on Dorchester Heights. They

participated in the first great American victory of the war as British General Gage's army was forced to evacuate the city.

One Dover resident, Thomas Larrabee, was in the boat with General Washington during the 1776 Christmas Eve crossing of the Delaware, an iconic historical event popularized in the famous 1851 painting by Emanuel Leutze. Larrabee served General Washington directly as part of the Commander-in-Chief's Guard, or Washington's Life Guard. Larrabee's duty was to ensure the safety of Washington, official army documents, and military finances. Also, part of the Continental Army was Ebenezer Battle's company, including 29 men hailing from Dover.

The memory of Dover's revolutionary soldiers was immortalized on May 10th, 1911, when 13 memorial stone markers were unveiled in Highland Cemetery. We invite you to honor their contributions to town history by visiting the graves of Jeremiah Bacon, John Chickering, Josiah Draper and others. They are located near the mausoleum in the middle of the cemetery. Many more Revolutionary War soldiers are buried in the cemetery. There is a separate marker commemorating these soldiers. Although their names were forgotten, their legacies don't have to be. As Americans we should continue to share their tale and be inspired by the actions of ordinary citizens who put aside their own safety and wellbeing so millions could live free.

By Nathaniel Whalen

*Nathaniel Whalen is a freshman at Dover Sherborn High School*

## ***The Ebenezer Richards House***

### *A Suburban Survivor*

**W**e live in an age and a culture that places little value on the past. An increasingly transient population comes and goes, with few of us living in the places where we were born or expect to end our lives. There is little sense of the community that will remain when we have raised our families and moved on to Florida, or perhaps Cape Cod. Until the 20th Century, however, New England communities were bound not just by

common residency but by generations of kinship and marriage. While perhaps inevitable given an increasing population density, the results of this trend are culturally and aesthetically discouraging. Each year Dover loses an old house or two that defined the landscape of our community, with the buyers for the most part subdividing the land into the largest possible number of lots and filling them with soulless oversized boxes. When an interested homeowner asks about the history of one of our few surviving pre-Revolutionary houses, it is worth taking a closer look at the property's history.

Dover's onetime town historian, Frank Smith, wrote in 1914 that the house at 202 Dedham Street was built by Ebenezer Richards, Jr. in 1769.<sup>1</sup> It is likely that he acquired the property somewhat earlier by inheritance, as the land was a portion of his great-great-grandfather, Edward Richards' (1610-1684) extensive holdings. On 13 February 1751, James Richards sold to his son Ebenezer Richards, Sr. for 93 pounds, six shillings, and eight pence.

The farm was settled by Ebenezer Richards, Jr. probably around the time of his marriage to Hannah Wiswall of Newton in 1769. Born in Dedham on 16 July 1744, Richards was the second child and oldest son of Ebenezer Richards Sr. (1718-1799) and Thankful Stratton. In 1769 there were few houses along Dedham Street, possibly only the Ralph Day house (236 Dedham Street) at the foot of Strawberry Hill. The John Day house, now 216 Dedham Street, would not be built until 1786. What is now Strawberry Hill Street was populated largely by other members of the extended (and extensive) Richards family.

***The Revolutionary War had been over for less than a year,  
and the Town Clerk recorded his death with the notation  
that it was the first since the Town had been incorporated***

On 19 April 1775, 31-year-old Corporal Ebenezer Richards marched to Lexington and Concord with Captain Ebenezer Battelle's company of Minute Men, engaging the British at Menotomy (now Arlington) and serving a total of four days. The muster roll of Captain Battelle's company included six members of the extended Richards family. Both Ebenezer Richards and Ebenezer Battelle also served with Captain Aaron Guild's company of Minute Men at the Battle of Bunker Hill on 17 June 1775.

Sergeant Ebenezer Richards died in Dover on 11 August 1784 at the young age of 40. The Revolutionary War had been over for less than a year, and the Town Clerk recorded his death with the notation that it was the first since the Town had been incorporated. He was buried in Highland Cemetery, presumably beside his wife Hannah who died in 1787, but the location of their graves is lost to time. In 1911 the Town erected a cluster of marble headstones honoring those Revolutionary War veterans known to be buried in Highland Cemetery whose graves were unmarked. These are merely memorial stones and have no relationship to the veterans' actual resting places.



*Memorial Stone of Sergeant Ebenezer Richards, Highland Cemetery, Dover MA*

With Ebenezer Richards' death, the property passed to his son Ebenezer Richards III (1770-1834). On 31 March 1792, he sold the Dover farm to Abigail Richards, wife of his father's brother William.<sup>4</sup> Abigail Richards, in turn, bequeathed the farm to her nephew, William Richards II, whom she and her husband had taken in at a young age. Ownership passed out of the Richards family on 21 Dec 1836 when William sold the property to Henry Bodge, housewright of Boston. At the time it encompassed 53 acres on both sides of Dedham Street.<sup>5</sup>

Henry Bodge kept the house for less than three years, selling it to Calvin Bigelow (1790-1872) on 22 Oct 1839<sup>6</sup>. Some six months later his heirs sold the property to Mary C. Humphrey and Helen L. Campbell, both of Boston<sup>7</sup>. The property changed hands seven times over the remainder of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, ending up in the hands of Moses Williams of Brookline and Frederic S. Goodwin of Boston, who sold it on 14 December 1904 to Frederic Haines Curtiss.<sup>8</sup> At that point, the property encompassed 40.75 acres.





*Frederic Haines Curtiss (1869-1967)*

Frederic H. Curtiss was a Boston banker and author of several genealogy and travel books. Born in Yonkers, New York in 1869, he was a Director and Chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. Curtiss purchased the farm as a summer residence, spending the rest of the year at 63 Bay State Road in Boston, and on “*Lolita*”, a 43-foot steam yacht kept in East Boston. In 1909 Curtiss engaged the Boston architectural firm of Cummings & Howard to make renovations to his Dover home. As reported in the *Boston Evening Transcript* of 19 June 1909 the work included the

relocation of the house (presumably just a slight repositioning given its location on the 1831 Map), a new foundation, and an unusual staircase that passes through the chimney (presumably allowing access to second-floor bedrooms without passing through other bedrooms).

In November of 1967, Frederic Curtiss’ executors sold the property to neighboring property owners Charles Francis Adams, Charles C. Cabot, and Charles C. Cabot, Jr. Less than a year later Adams and the Cabots sold the land on the north side of Dedham Street to Samuel & Joan King. King, a Boston attorney, would occupy the house for 19 years and raise his family there. In 1986 the property was sold to Dover Farms Development and the land on the north side of Dedham Street was subdivided into three lots. The middle lot, encompassing 2.71 acres and identified as 202 Dedham Street, was acquired by a local veterinarian who lived there until 2022.

We are fortunate in that the Ebenezer Richards House was recently acquired by new owners with an interest in its long history and a commitment to its stewardship.



202 Dedham Street, Dover MA

(Reprinted from The Curious Yankee <https://curiouslyankee.substack.com>)

By Elisha Lee  
*Dover Historical Society Research Fellow*

## ***Taking Stock***

**T**he mission of the Dover Historical Society has not changed since 1895. From our website, “The Dover Historical Society, an all-volunteer association, was organized in 1895 and incorporated September 1, 1900 to collect, preserve, and exhibit such artifacts, information, and documents as will throw light on our local history.” Now, just as 127 years ago our society has relied on the generosity of the citizens of Dover and occasional grants to accomplish and sustain our mission.

Historical societies are hardly unique and most share a similar purpose to preserve, promote, and share artifacts and documents. According to a recent survey, there are more than 21,000 history organizations in the United States—more than all other museum types combined.



*Geoff Sauter*

My personal experience is that each artifact is the window to a greater story. Thomas Larrabee’s powder horn on display at the Sawin Museum is but a reminder of a true patriot and citizen. Larrabee fought at Fort Ticonderoga, later protected George Washington and is said to have rowed George Washington across the Delaware River on December 25, 1776 to the first major victory for the Continental Army. His homesite on Strawberry Hill was donated by his family to the town of Dover for the *aid of the worthy poor*. In reality, this undeveloped land which is known today as the Larrabee

Whiting Trust is one of the first examples of land preservation in Dover.

Looking beyond the Sawin Museum, the Benjamin Caryl Farm, or the historic district in Highland Cemetery, we can’t help but wonder what the future brings and how we as citizens will respond to challenges and change. Winston Churchill said, “Those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it”. The history of Dover that we preserve and display in fact may influence whether we follow the paths of our forefathers or go in another direction.

By Geoff Sauter  
*President and Director*

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