

Nothing But A Plain Old Soldier: Revolutionary War Veterans of Trumbull County, Part One

The American Revolution was not just a defining moment in the formation of our nation but also for the people that lived through it. To the men, women, and children that lived through seven long years of strife between the fledgling United States and Great Britain, the Revolution was the catalyst for how many a person thought, acted, and lived, even long after the muskets fell silent. While Connecticut had a long-standing colonial claim to the land that is now Northeast Ohio—the Western Reserve—it wouldn't be until the conclusion of the Revolution that settlement of this region would occur. Indeed, among the earliest settlers to come to the Western Reserve were veterans of this conflict, Trumbull County included. In fact, the very namesake of Trumbull County was borne out of the Revolution, named for Gov. Jonathan Trumbull of Lebanon, Connecticut, the only colonial governor to support the patriot cause and principal supplier of the Continental Army, coordinating shipments from his personal store to further supply lines. According to Katelyn Pfofus of the Trumbull County Historical Society, roughly 200 Revolutionary War veterans settled in Trumbull County, if counting the northern tier of Mahoning County, which was a part of Trumbull until 1846. By the 1840 Census of Pensioners, only 32 Revolutionary War veterans remained in Trumbull County, a dying breed. The first in a series of blogs written for the United States' 250th Anniversary, *'Nothing But A Plain Old Soldier: Revolutionary War Veterans of Trumbull County, Ohio'* not only examines the lives of some of Trumbull County's earliest settlers, but their military service during the United States' defining conflict.

Edmund Clarkson Burnett: Hubbard Township (1756-1838)

According to Rev. N. H. Dorhan, compiler of “*History of Hubbard, Ohio, From Early Settlement in 1798 to 1907*,” Edmund Burnett was a Welshman by birth; however, historical evidence places his origins to Morris County, New Jersey, where he was born on January 1st, 1756. The eldest out of eight children of Matthias and Dorcas (Conger) Burnett, Edmund’s father graduated from Princeton in 1769 with a doctorate of divinity and was soon installed as pastor of the Presbyterian church in Queens, New York. Unlike his father, Edmund did not follow his father into the ministry, but in June 1776, he enlisted as a private in Captain David Bates’ Company, Colonel Martin’s New Jersey Regiment. Enlisting for a term of five months, Burnett “marched to New York, and thence after about six weeks to Long Island,” where on August 27th, he fought at what would be known as the Battle of Long Island, or alternatively, the Battle of Brooklyn. Among the many men evacuated by Gen. Washington and returned back to Manhattan following the British entrapment at Brooklyn Heights, Burnett was stationed briefly at Fort Washington before marching to White Plains, where on October 28th, he fought in the Battle of White Plains. Much like the Battle of Long Island, this too resulted in a British victory and indeed almost the end of the Revolution itself, as Washington was forced to retreat from New York into neighboring New Jersey. From White Plains, Edmund was sent to Tarrytown Bay on the North River, where he was transferred to Newark, then Elizabethtown, and finally Brunswick. Discharged after five months of service in November, he returned to Morris County only briefly before being drafted again that December, marching with Capt. Obadiah Ritchel, Colonel Ford’s New Jersey Regiment, to Elizabethtown, where he’d be stationed for the better part of eight months. In July 1777, he was discharged and resumed life as a civilian, eventually marrying Sarah Smith, a fellow resident of Morris County. Residing in New Jersey for about twenty years following his service, in 1797, Edmund, his wife, seven children, and brother Enos removed to Washington County, Pennsylvania. Living there for six years, it would be in 1803 that the family moved to Hubbard, where they’d reside for the rest of their lives. On May 22nd, 1833, Edmund applied for a pension under the Revolutionary War Pension Act enacted the previous year and was granted one on the stipulation that he had more than six months of service. On February 12th, 1838, Edmund Burnett passed away at the age of 82 years and was buried in the Old North Cemetery beneath a small sandstone marker. At present heavily weathered, no indication is given that a Revolutionary soldier lies here, as the stone’s facade has almost entirely deteriorated and is void of any lettering. Luckily, the quaint set of verses championing Burnett’s service to his country was written down sometime prior to the stone’s current state, reading as follows:

***“I am an old revolutioner; the battles I fought
That victory won and freedom has bought
All honor and glory I leave on record
And march to heaven to reap my reward.”***



***Above: Heavily weathered, Edmund
Burnett’s stone is virtually devoid of any lettering, identifying this as his resting spot. (Photo by author)***

Ezra Rawdon: Warren Township (1762-1824)

Ezra Rawdon entered this world on March 11th, 1762, the second of eight children born of Thomas and Lydia (Bosworth) Rawdon, residents of Tolland, Tolland County, Connecticut. Marrying Sarah Lathrop, a fellow resident of Tolland on November 10th, 1783, who had “been acquainted with him” since youth, it is from her that we get a detailed record of his military service, told through her application for a widows’ pension dated February 4th, 1843. Enlisting at the “town of Tolland,” Ezra served for three years with Col. Elijah Robinson’s Regiment, with Sarah stating that she often heard Ezra say that he was “in the army” and “was present and near by the execution of Maj. Andre, and that he was also at a place called West Point.” Although only casually mentioned, Major Andre’s execution was the result of undoubtedly one of the most infamous treason plots of the Revolution: the selling of West Point to the British. Unfortunately, Sarah does not give a duration for her husband’s service; however, given that Maj. Andre was executed in 1780 and she states “were not married to him prior to leaving the service,” we can perhaps surmise he served from 1780 until 1783. Listed as residing in Tolland as of the 1810 census, it was sometime after then that Ezra, his wife, and three children, Jeduthan, Horace, and Lois, along with five brothers, came to Ohio. The five brothers went to Windsor, Ashtabula County, while Ezra and his family went to Warren. On September 16th, 1824, Ezra, then 64 years of age, met an untimely fate when he was “kill’d by a kick from a horse,” a fact recorded upon his gravestone for eternity.



Right: Rather than record his service in Col. Elijah Robinson’s Regiment during the Revolution, Ezra Rawdon’s fine sandstone marker at Old Mahoning Cemetery in Warren immortalizes the fact he was “kill’d by a kick from a horse” instead. (Photo by author).

Asa Andrews: Hartford Township (1756-1813)

The patriarch of the Andrews family of Hartford Township, Asa Andrews was born on October 25th, 1756, in East Haddam, Middlesex County, Connecticut, the tenth of thirteen children born to Capt. Nehemiah and Hannah (Borden) Andrews. Unlike other soldiers examined thus far, Asa Andrew's enlistment record does not come from pension files, but from the book "William Andrews of Hartford, Conn. and His Descendants in the Direct Line to Asa Andrews of Hartland, Conn. and Hartford, Ohio," published in 1938 by a descendant. Enlisting on January 25th, 1777 in Captain John Barnard's 3rd Connecticut Regiment, commanded by Capt. Samuel Wyllys, through the duration of the conflict, he worked his way up through the ranks, first being promoted to sergeant on July 10th, 1777, then to quartermaster sergeant on September 1st, 1780, and finally to provost marshal by July 19th, 1781 at Dobbs Ferry, Westchester County, New York. The only location to be listed in this report, it was from here that just four days after Andrews' appointment that George Washington and French general Jean Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur, comte de Rochambeau, launched the Reconnaissance of New York, intending to take back the city from the British. Soon finding that the combined Franco-American force would've been too small for such a feat, Washington and Rochambeau concentrated their efforts towards Yorktown, Virginia, where Lord Cornwallis was intent on resupplying his army. Thus, on September 28th, 1781, victory was gained when Cornwallis surrendered, bringing the Revolution to a close. While it isn't recorded if Asa Andrews participated in the Reconnaissance of New York (or any other battles for that matter), it is known that following the wars' conclusion, he was residing in Hartland, Hartford County, Connecticut, 50-some miles north of his birthplace of East Haddam. Here on November 27th, 1783, he wed Lucy Ackley, a fellow native of his hometown. Residing in Hartland until 1804, it was then that Asa,

his wife Lucy, and six sons relocated to Hartford Township, Trumbull County, Ohio. Accompanying them would be Thomas Bushnell, Andrew's brother-in-law, who had married his sister, Rebecca. On February 25th, 1813, Asa Andrews, aged 57 years, passed away during an "epidemic of sickness" that would ultimately claim 15 of the township's early residents. Buried at the Hartford Township Cemetery beneath a sandstone marker adorned with two weeping willows flanking a centrally placed obelisk, undoubtedly the work of gravestone carver Elijah Sikes from nearby Brookfield.



Above: Much like Ezra Rawdon's gravestone, Asa Andrews' marker makes no mention of his service to his country; however, a book published by a descendant in 1938 tells a very different story. (Photo by the author).

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Written, researched, photographed, and compiled by Gavin Esposito

