

## ***Nothing But A Plain Old Soldier Revolutionary War Veterans of Trumbull County, Part Two***

**T**he 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 Pfitus 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 second 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 also their military service during the United States' defining conflict.

## ***Abner C. Waters: Gustavus Township (1758-1838)***

A native of Hebron, Tolland County, Connecticut, Abner C. Waters was born on April 17th, 1758, as the third out of five children to Abner Sr. and Lydia (Root) Waters. Removing to Hartland, Hartford County, Connecticut, “when he was eight years of age,” as recalled in his pension application, Waters joined with Capt. Libbens Ball’s Company, Col. Lanard’s Massachusetts Regiment, as a private in early March 1776. First stationed at Roxbury, just outside of Boston, Waters arrived towards the end of the siege there, where 11,000 British soldiers were entrapped within the city of Boston by Patriot forces posted outside of town. Transferred to Dorchester Heights on March 4th, Waters “helped throw up a breastwork there” as Washington and Gen. John Thomas sought to fortify the heights overlooking Boston with cannons hauled from Fort Ticonderoga. Bombarding the city with cannon fire day and night over the next two weeks, finally on March 17th, the British evacuated, a feat Abner personally witnessed, having noted that he “saw the British ships leave Boston harbor.” Returning to Roxbury, he was stationed there for a month before proceeding to New York, where his company fell under the command of Col. William Shepard. Present at the Battles of Long Island, White Plains, Pelham (called Eastchester in his pension record), and Trenton, Waters’ pension record gives no details of these engagements, aside from Pelham, where he was “sick at the time & exempt from duty.” Having climbed a tree to better see the action, Waters witnessed Col. Shepard get wounded in the neck, and seeing the “blood flow freely,” exclaimed, “Col., you are badly wounded,” to which he replied, “the enemy are damned careless shooters.” Discharged following the Battle of Pelham, Waters removed to Granville, Hampden County, Massachusetts, before eventually returning back to Hartland. Evidently not staying here for long, Abner moved to nearby Granby, where on February 1st, 1782, he married Phebe Holcomb. Unfortunately, on June 28th, 1810, Phebe would pass away at only fifty-two years old, leaving Abner alone. It was perhaps her death that precipitated his removal to Gustavus, along with his ten children, in 1816. Three years after



settling in Gustavus, Abner’s youngest daughter, Laura, would marry a man named Joshua Reed Giddings from Wayne Township, Ashtabula County, who, in time, would become one of the most prominent voices of the antislavery movement to serve in Congress. A Presbyterian in faith, Abner was a founding member of the Gustavus Presbyterian Church and, on June 25th, 1825, was elected to the congregation’s standing committee along with two other individuals. On December 11th, 1838, Abner Waters passed away at the age of 80 years and was buried at the Old Gustavus Cemetery, then Gustavus’s main burying ground.

***Above: Abner Waters, a private in Capt. Libbens Ball’s Company, Col. Lanard’s Massachusetts Regiment, was present at the injuring of Col. William Shepard at the Battle of Pelham of October 18th, 1776. He personally witnessed the Col. get injured and exclaimed, “Col., you are badly wounded,” in which he replied “the enemy are damned careless shooters.” (Photo by the author).***

## ***Elihu Beach I: Vernon Township (1758-1832)***

**E**lihu Moses Beach entered this world on March 17th, 1758, in Litchfield, Litchfield County, Connecticut, the sixth out of seven children born to Zophar and Elizabeth (Wadhams) Beach. In March 1776, he enlisted as a private in Capt. Bezaliel Beebee's company, commanded by Col. Philip B. Bradley of the Connecticut Line. Immediately sent to New York, where he joined his regiment, he "thence marched with said regiment to Bergen Point" in New Jersey, where "they lay until the British took York Island," following the Battle of Brooklyn Heights—"York Island" being the British moniker for Manhattan. Continuing to "serve in said Army in said State of New Jersey till expiration of said term of nine months when he was honorably discharged from the service," Elihu records in his 1819 pension application that he "was in no battle, except a few small skirmishes," the details of which go frustratingly unrecorded. Heartbreakingly noting that he was in "indigent circumstances & stands in need of assistance from his Country for support," Beach had married Mercy Moses, a native of Hartford County, Connecticut, on December 7th, 1780, with the two settling in Hartland, Hartford County, where they remained until c. 1811. Coralynn Brownlee, a descendant of Elihu and Mercy, who had access to a great deal of letters belonging to Mercy during the 1940s, suggests that it was *her*; not Elihu, who felt "the call of the west" following their son's departure for Dryden, Tompkins County, New York. Removing to the west after 1811, the Beaches, then in their fifty-third and fifty-first years, respectively, "probably stopped for two or three years" in Dryden before arriving in Vernon by 1815. Here, they purchased "forty acres at the southeast corner of the Center of Vernon" from Jeremiah and Amelia Wilcox, the site of the old high school—now an empty field. On October 6th, 1819, Elihu Beach applied for a pension for his service in the Revolution under the Act of 1818, which granted servicemen a pension based upon nine months of service rather than just disability alone. Issued on September 2nd, 1821, interestingly enough, the grantee of the pension was none other than Joshua Reed Giddings, father-in-law of fellow Revolutionary War veteran Abner Waters (discussed above), then practicing as a country lawyer in Jefferson, Ashtabula County. At the age of 76, on August 9th, 1832, Elihu Beach passed away and was buried in the Vernon Center Cemetery beneath a fine sandstone marker carved and signed by local gravestone carver Obed King of Vernon.



***Above: Signed and dated by Vernon-based gravestone carver Obed King near the bottom, the stone of Revolutionary War private Elihu Beach I is topped by an abstract, umbrella-like weeping willow and billowing drapery. Though his epitaph makes no mention of his service, it does promise "bright climes forever blest," reading as follows: The wearied dust lies here at rest / The soul has fled through realms of space / To those bright climes forever blest / Where mortals sing of pardoning grace / By O. King 1834 (Photo by the author)***

## ***Dr. Jedediah Burnham: Kinsman Township (1755-1840)***

A leading resident of Kinsman, Jedediah Burnham was born April 3rd, 1755, in Norwich, New London County, Connecticut, the third of seven children to Capt. Benjamin and Jemima (Perkins) Burnham. Receiving both medical tuition and training from Dr. Joseph Perkins, a relative as a young man, Burnham opened his own practice in New London, becoming a successful physician. In June, 1776, Burnham enlisted under Col. Jedediah Huntington, Lieut. Jonathan Brewster's Company in June, 1775, "for the term of six months with the provision that (his) services should be in the medical line as an Assistant in the Hospital to administer to the sick." "Not thinking" himself "very well able to perform the duties of a Soldier," he "Accordingly went immediately to the Hospital and quartered there the Six Months in the duties of Hospital and Regiment as the first mate in the staff." Writing that he "fought no Battle," nor "mounted no guard," Burnham accompanied his regiment from Norwich to Roxbury, outside of Boston, where he was stationed until December 15th, 1775, a total of only five months and five days. Following his duration of service, Burnham returned to Norwich and resumed his practice as a physician and, on April 27th, 1779, wed Lydia Kent. In 1782, the couple was blessed with a child, a daughter named Lydia, followed by a son, Jedediah, in 1786, and lastly, another son, Thomas, in 1788. In about 1805, the younger Jedediah was induced by John Kinsman, a fellow resident of Norwich, to settle in his namesake township established eight years prior. Even loaning him his horse, Jedediah Jr. seized the opportunity and relocated to Kinsman Township promptly, where he helped John construct his homestead and teach the township's first school. Meanwhile, the elder Jedediah and his wife stayed back in Connecticut until 1816 at least, when they too emigrated to Ohio. Just as his son was, Jedediah too would become a leading citizen of Kinsman, as in 1828, he would be elected as a deacon of the united congregation of Hartford, Vernon, and Kinsman under Rev. Harvey Coe. Upon reorganization on February 7th,

1831, into the First Congregational & Presbyterian Church of Kinsman, Jedediah was among the congregation's fifty inaugural members. Sadly, Jedediah's pension was rejected on February 7th, 1832, under the criteria that he hadn't served for nine months. Eight years later on March 11th, 1840, Burnham passed away at the age of 85 and was buried in the Kinsman Presbyterian Cemetery next to his wife, Lydia, who predeceased him. Recently, his marble headstone, which had been badly deteriorating, was restored by Kinsman resident William Miller, as have other stones in the cemetery.



***Above: A simple marble tablet, the stone of Doctor Jedediah Burnham, who served with Col. Jedediah Huntington, Lieut. Jonathan Brewster's Company as a first mate in the hospital in Roxbury, Massachusetts, was lovingly restored by Kinsman resident William Miller, along with other stones in the cemetery (Photo by author).***

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