

IMAGES

...THEN AND NOW

From the Indian Hill Historical Society



**Buckingham Lodge
1861**

William Finch, Revolutionary War Veteran

Likely the oldest grave in Armstrong Chapel Cemetery is that of William Finch, which has a headstone and DAR marker. Located in Section 1, Row A, its inscription reads, “Pvt Webb’s Conn Regt, Revolutionary War.” This man’s storied past is worth recalling.

Records from the first census of the United States in 1790 list 30 Finches as household heads of family, 25 of which were in Fairfield County, Connecticut. Though nothing is known about his parents, William Finch vowed that he was born in 1759 in Greenwich, Connecticut. He married Rachel Banks Taylor in 1774, and together they had 6 children. Much of the information about William Finch, the patriarch of the Indian Hill Finches, is from his pension file.

When William was 17 years old in 1776, he volunteered for the Army of the Revolution and served in Captain Mead’s Company, the Ninth Connecticut Regiment. With that group of soldiers he marched to New York State, where he was stationed at Peck Slip, NY. This was during the early days of the War for Independence. The 13 colonies had declared themselves the “United States” - a separate country from Great Britain. King George sent troops to America to reign in “the colonists” and retain them as part of the British empire. After abandoning Boston, British soldiers turned their focus to New York in an attempt to crush the rebellion, capture the strategic port of New York City, and divide the colonies geographically. Peck Slip, a docking place for boats in eastern Manhattan, was just across the East River from Long Island. Finch stated that his company crossed over to Long Island and “remained there until the British army effected a landing... and then again crossed over to the City of New York”. The men then marched north to White Plains before the battle for New York city and the surrounding area began.

The Continental Army was defeated at the Battle of Long Island, and the British captured the port of New York, which they held for the duration of the war. The patriot army, commanded by General George Washington, went to White Plains where they were again defeated on October 28, 1776. Forced to retreat once more, Americans evacuated New York state and escaped to New Jersey. The British, under General William Howe, had hoped to end the rebellion by crushing Washington’s forces, however when the patriots fled, they later regrouped to fight another day. After the Battle of White Plains, William Finch was discharged and returned home in 1776. He soon reentered the fight for independence as a member of the Flying Camp.

The Flying Camp (authorized by the Continental Congress) was a mobile strategic reserve, with which Finch served until the end of the war. His duties were “to guard the lines and keep the disaffected from plundering”. William Finch mentioned some of the men he served with including Abraham Mead, Henry Wareing, Thomas Hobb, Gen. Gold Silliman, Col. Samuel Webb, Joe Knapp and Ebenezer Knapp.

After the Revolutionary War, Finch “followed the sea” for 17 years. Two of his sons, Henry and William Jr. moved to Ohio in 1814. Henry and his wife settled in Madisonville and later moved to Indian Hill where they raised five children. Henry was a shoemaker and later, a farmer. William Jr.’s profession is unknown. William Sr. migrated to Ohio later, perhaps to be near family members as he aged.

In 1832 William Sr., a resident of Columbia Township, Hamilton County, Ohio applied for a military pension. His application and the accompanying interrogatory provided details of his life. Of interest is the fact that he must have been illiterate, as the documents he signed were marked with an “X” and witnessed by other men. He was granted a pension of \$80 annually beginning in 1831. He received an initial payment of \$240 in 1834. The final payment was made in March 1849. William Finch died April 6, 1849 and was interred in Armstrong Chapel Cemetery. He is the only veteran of the War for Independence buried there. His grave site was dedicated by the Sons of the American Revolution in May 2023.

His family was one of the pioneer families of Indian Hill. Over 20 Finches are listed in the Armstrong Cemetery records. And there still are Finch descendants in the Village today. It is fascinating that William Finch Sr. played a role in the uprising which eventually led to the creation of the new nation, the USA.



William Finch’s headstone