

EBENEZER FOOTE

An American Patriot

A short life story compiled and written by
Charles Horace Foote

Father of David Foote who is person #24 on chart #1

During 1976 our nation celebrated its bicentennial as a nation. Today I would like to pay tribute to Ebenezer Foote, one of our ancestors who gave his life in this struggle for human freedom. Ebenezer was the father of David Foote, who was the father of Warren Foote, who was the father of Charles Lane Foote. He was the son of Moses Foote and Mary Byington and was the last of nine children born to this couple. The date of his birth is uncertain but it was probably during January 1740, (21 May 1740 - GHK) as that is the date given as his mother's death which may have been due to complications of child birth which was quite common in those days. Mary at that time was only thirty years old, having been born January 9, 1740 (8 Jan. 1709 or 1710 GHK) This is most likely the date widower Moses got around to having his baby boy christened or baptized. Moses later married Ruth Butler on November 5, 1740. His place of residence was Waterbury, New Haven County, Connecticut.

We do not know much about the youth of Ebenezer. Moses was a farmer as was most of our ancestors. Ebenezer probably had his chores to do as was common in all colonial households. Moses and Mary and later Ruth were Christian, church-going people who belonged to the Congregational Church. The children were probably taught Christian principles and were familiar with the Bible. We know they could read and write.

On July 1, 1761 at age 21, Ebenezer married Rebecca Barker, the daughter of Uzel Barker and Martha Munson of Waterbury, Connecticut. She was born on April 29, 1742. After their marriage they made their home in Harwinton, Litchfield County, Connecticut, a distance of 10 or 15 miles from the area of Waterbury where Moses lived. The Harwinton Town records, page 104, gives the names and birth dates of their children as follows: Darius, April 10, 1762; Simeon, September 22, 1764; Gideon, November 6, 1766; David, August 7, 1768; Usual, August 22, 1772; Lucy, August 19, 1774; and Lowly, January 19, 1778.

Ebenezer must have been fairly well off financially for their days. The Land and Property Records of Harwinton, Volume 2, page 517, under date of November 23, 1774 states the following, "Know ye that I, Ebenezer Foote, of Harwinton, in the County of Litchfield, for the consideration of sixteen pounds, ten shillings lawful money, received to my full satisfaction of Captain Nathaniel Barnes, of Waterbury, New Haven County, do give, grant, bargain, sell and confirm into Captain Nathaniel Barnes and to his heirs and assign forever fifteen acres of land taken off the west end of my Dwelling Farm, beginning at the Northwest corner of a heap of stones on a hill. . ." etc. Later in the deed he states the land is free of encumbrance.

In early New England colonial times it was required by law that all physically fit male persons 16 to 60 should "bear arms" and they were required to have a musket and at least 2 pounds of powder, 2 pounds of lead and a sufficient number of matches or other device to ignite the powder. They were also required to attend military training several days each year. This training in the early days was for protection against the Indians and other public enemies. Ebenezer and his brother were active in this program.

When the colonies rebelled against England and the Revolutionary War was on, all the sons of Moses and Mary were active in it. Moses Jr., born in 1734, was a captain of a company in the 27th Regiment of Connecticut. David, born in 1730, was killed by the British at Fairfield, Connecticut. David, the son of David was involved in the war most of the time. Aaron, son of Moses Sr., born 1738, was involved. He crossed the Delaware River with Washington's troops on December 25, 1776, and took part in the Battle of Trenton. Ebenezer's son, Simeon also served in the war.

It is no wonder that our ancestor, Ebenezer, caught the spirit of his older brothers. Up until 1777 it was customary for most of the colonial soldiers to go into military service for a few days or weeks and then return home. This meant a constant turnover of the men and they were no sooner trained into a semi-efficient fighting unit when the men would pull out and go home. It was decided that to win the war they would have to provide incentives for the trained men to stay on longer. So Connecticut and other colonies started to pay a bonus called "bounty" to men who signed up for longer periods of time such as 1 year, 2 years or for the "duration." Of course, the longer the period, the larger the bonus, which could amount to 10 to 15 pounds or more, colonial money.

On March 26, 1777, Ebenezer enlisted for military duty "for the duration" and he was assigned to Captain Theodore Woodbridge company of the Seventh Regiment "Connecticut Line." This is according to the Connecticut Military Records, page 222. Ebenezer at that time was 37 years old. He had a wife and 6 children and his youngest, Lowly, not yet born. Our great grandfather, David, was 8 years old.

At that time, the colonies were governed by a governor general and a general assembly somewhat like our governor and legislature. The local areas seemed to be governed by "select men" who were appointed. During the war it was the duty of these select men to raise men, materials and funds to keep in the war effort and to defend the local areas also. It was also their duty to see that care was taken of the wives and families of the men in military service.

Regarding the probable military service of Ebenezer, I quote from page 217, Connecticut Military Records, "Regiment (Seventh) raised from January 1, 1777 for the new 'Connecticut Line,' to continue through the war. Recruited in Fairfield and other counties. Went into the field, spring of '77, at camp Peekskill, New York, and in September was ordered, under General McDougall, to join Washington's army in Pennsylvania. Fought at Germantown, October 4, '77 and suffered some loss. Wintered at Valley Forge '77-'78 and on June 28 following present at Battle of Monmouth." This is as far as I quote.

We do not know what battles he fought in, if any, but since the regiment he belonged to fought in the Battle of Georgetown, we presume he was there. To me, it is doubtful if he went through the hardships at Valley Forge, which was a long distance in those days from the place where he died. The record states he died at Mud Fort, Horse Neck, Connecticut, June 1, 1778. Horse Neck was located near Greenwich, Connecticut and is across the Long Island Sound from Long Island, New York and not far from New York City. The history of Litchfield County, Connecticut, under Harwinton states that as far as is known no man from Harwinton was "killed in action." We presume our Ebenezer died of wounds or sickness which could have been small pox which took a heavy toll

among the soldiers. In fact, small pox was more feared among the colonies and soldiers than the British troops.

We have tried to find out a little about Mud Fort but so far we have found nothing from records here. We wrote to the Archives Department of the State of Connecticut but they had nothing. We plan to see if the War Department has any information about this place. About Horse Neck we have the following from "Other Days of Greenwich," page 37:

"Years before the Revolution all the territory between Horse Neck Brook and the extremity of the point was common land--a great horse pasture into which any of the inhabitants could turn their horses. The early records call it 'Horse Neck Field Point,' from which the original name of the village, Horse Neck, was derived."

Rest in peace Grandfather Ebenezer, father, husband, patriot, American. It is two hundred and one years, two months and three days today since you gave your life. We are glad to have learned a little about you and are looking forward to learning much more about you some future day.