

THE EARLY BLANCHARDS

As you enter the taproom, there's a mural over the fireplace showing Main Street in East Stoughton around 1831. In it, we see Blanchard's tavern and store. Who was this Blanchard and how did he come into association with this town and Tavern?

William Blanchard was a Braintree resident, living just up the Old Bridgewater Road in what is now Randolph. Born in 1747 to Samuel and Mary (Whitmarsh) Blanchard, he grew up on his father's farm and married a neighbor's daughter, Rachel Spear, in 1771. She bore him a son shortly afterwards.

It was during the Revolutionary War that Blanchard came into association with the tavern. After serving in the town militia, he was enlisted into the Continental Army for three years by his neighbor Jacob Wales, who had been granted a lieutenant's commission in Capt. Nathaniel Winslow's company of Col. Thomas Marshall's Tenth Massachusetts Regiment. Both William and his cousin Joseph probably were signed up at this tavern, since several other recruits also lived nearby.

As a Continental Army private, William Blanchard saw plenty of service, taking part in the two battles of Saratoga, suffering through the winter at Valley Forge, and fighting in the Battle of Monmouth, where cousin Joseph died at his side. In the spring of his last year of service, he was transferred to the elite Light Infantry company of Capt. Amasa Soper, and took part in the daring nighttime storming of Stony Point. After honorably serving his country, he was discharged on Groundhog Day, 1780.

The next few years were ones of rebuilding for Blanchard. A little over a year after he returned home, Rachel died, leaving ten year old William Jr. without a mother. William Sr. took a second wife, Betty Mann in 1782. Her family was large and influential locally. William and Betty were among the first members of Rev. Mr. Joel Brigg's Baptist Church, in which Betty's brother Benjamin was a deacon.

By 1784 William Blanchard had finally settled his back pay for army service, and became eligible for a small pension. With this money, he was able to purchase the tavern on the Old Bridgewater Road where he had enlisted seven years earlier. Blanchard's Tavern had been founded.

William Blanchard's store and tavern became a profitable enterprise which remained in the family until Henry Lawton Blanchard willed it to the town of Avon early in this century. At the time of William's death in 1804, he had a fairly comfortable estate, valued at nearly \$6000 (William and Betty, who died in 1833, are both buried in the historic Old Cemetery on East Main Street). It is interesting to note that in the inventory of his estate were included many of the things we find in the tavern today, including glass and crockery drinking vessels, rum, cheese, cider and mead, which remains a favorite drink of tavern patrons.

As you visit the tavern, enjoy the historic atmosphere and entertainment and join with us in raising a glass of mead to toast the continued prosperity of our kind host,
William Blanchard, Esq.