

ABRAHAM SKINNER

Pioneer Proprietor of Fairport Harbor

Captain Abraham Skinner was born October 18, 1755 in Glastonbury, Connecticut to Abraham and Phoebe Strong Skinner. The first of three actions during the Revolution saw him serve in the East Windsor, Connecticut company of Captain Amasa Loomis. He was among the men who marched from the Connecticut towns to provide relief for Boston in the Lexington Alarm of April, 1775. Abraham reenlisted in April, 1778, serving eight months in Captain Harrison's company. His final action was being elected Commissary of Prisoners in the 4th regiment, Connecticut Line, under the command of Colonel John Durke.

Abraham married Mary Ayers of Marlborough, Connecticut on October 13, 1788, then resided for a time in Mulberry, Connecticut and later in East Windsor, Connecticut. Abraham and Mary had five children, three sons and two daughters. In 1798, in the company of General Edward Paine, he came to the Western Reserve in search of land to purchase. Together with Colonel Eleazer Paine, Abraham bought Tract No. 4, which included the future Grandon/Fairport parcel and extended south along the Grand River to the present site of Painesville. Abraham then returned and remained in Connecticut until 1803. He returned to Ohio with Colonel Paine bringing horses, cattle, farming implements and young fruit trees. Both men contracted for the clearing of their lands, built log cabins to shelter the Paine family and another for the Skinner family, along with a warehouse to store supplies expected to arrive at a later date. Abraham made several more solo trips from Connecticut before bringing his family to Ohio in early 1805. The Skinner family left their Connecticut home in February and traveled through the state of New York as far as Buffalo. From Buffalo, their journey was continued on the frozen surface of Lake Erie. On the last day of their journey, one sleigh with a team of horses, along with a horse ridden by Abraham's daughter broke through the ice. Disaster was averted as all were rescued with some difficulty. The following day they completed their journey by land, reaching their new home on March 5, 1805.



As mentioned earlier, 1803 was a landmark year, Abraham and Colonel Paine plotted out the town of New Market (now Painesville). Abraham made strong efforts to have the county seat located at New Market. His home became the headquarters for many public gatherings. He built and maintained the first county jail on his property. The first county court proceedings were held in his barn. On May 16, 1812, Abraham plotted out the town of Grandon (now Fairport Harbor). He was a pioneer proprietor of Grandon and was active in gaining appropriations for the harbor. He owned three warehouses, stores, taverns, a distillery and many other local buildings.

Abraham was a man of significant financial means and his farm was always well stocked. His generosity supported and assisted many of the poorer settlers. It was said that he was "ever active in all enterprises tending to the development of the resources in the area and to speed its improvement". He was "polite to everybody and generous to the needy and suffering everywhere". A prominent figure in the settlement of Painesville and Fairport Harbor, Abraham occupied a prominent place among the people of his day. He died on January 14, 1826 and was buried with Masonic honors. He is interred at Painesville Evergreen Cemetery.



Today Abraham Skinner's legacy is still keenly recalled. He built the first frame house in the area, where lawyers, judges, members of congress and early governors met with free hospitality. His historic home, which is still occupied today, can be found at the corner of North State Street and Skinner Avenue in Painesville, Ohio. The Daughters of the American Revolution - New Connecticut Chapter have honored him with an inscribed brick located at the America 250 Patriots Marker at the Lake County Courthouse in Painesville, Ohio.

