

## Benjamin Carpenter

Literally written in stone, his marble epitaph boldly declares that Benjamin Carpenter, Esquire ...

Sacred to the memory of the  
Hon. Benjamine CARPENTER, Esq.  
Born in Rehoboth, Mass. A.D. 1726  
A magistrate in Rhode Island in 1764.  
A public teacher of righteousness  
An able--eble advocate to his last for Democracy  
And the equal rights of a man.  
Removed to this town A.D. 1770,  
Was a field officer in the Revolutionary War.  
A founder of the first constitution and government of Vermont.  
A councilor of censors in A.D. 1794.  
A member of the council, and Lieut. Governor of the state in A.D. 1779.  
A firm professor of Christianity in the Baptist church 50 years. Left  
this world and 146 persons of lineal posterity.  
March 29, 1804  
Aged 78 years, 10 months and 12 days  
with a strong  
Mind and a full faith of a more  
Glorious state hereafter.  
Stature about six feet--weight 200  
Death had no terror.

But on May 11, 1725 in the Providence of Massachusetts within the boundary of Bristol County and the 58 year old town of Swansea, a young male child was born to Edward Swanzey & Elizabeth Louise (Wilson) Carpenter. This child was their first son, a fourth generation Carpenter child born in America of an English immigrant named William Carpenter who came to America in 1638. The baby was named Benjamin, the name of both his paternal and maternal grandparents, two uncles and a few first cousins.

What caused this young Benjamin to stand out in history? Was it because at age 50, then a pillar of the decade old society of Guilford, New York that he became a revolutionary, a field officer in a revolution defying his King? Or was this six foot, well built man a traitor to the State of New York before, during and after the American Independence? But, one state's traitor was another's founding father, for in July 1777 he helps start the Vermont Republic.

Despite the Continental Congress refusal to recognize that that the Vermont Republic had declared its independence from New York and New Hampshire, the Green Mountain Boys, of the former New Hampshire Grants, supported and fought for American Independence. Despite serving in the revolution, helping to write the laws of Vermont, the New York authorities had issued several warrants for his arrest to face treason charges in 1783 before the actual fighting with the British was completed.

New York State authorities eventually sent out at least three different militia groups to arrest Carpenter and others to face treason charges. This because Thomas Chittenden the governor of the

Vermont Republic, Ethan Allen, his brother Ira Allen & Joseph Fay, who were supported by Carpenter and others, in the Haldimand Affair, aka the Vermont Negotiations that started in 1781. While the primary reason was to negotiate over the exchange of prisoners, the British purpose was to support the independence of Vermont under British protection (rule) to undermine the success of the American movement for Independence. This secret negotiation was leaked via letters from the British Governor of Quebec and by his Loyalist spy, Justus Sherwood of Vermont. Because these secret letters reached Congress, and for some New Yorkers, the drum beat call of treason was declared.

To be fair, Carpenter and others of Vermont had stopped shy of lethal force by refusing New York legal claims in the Green Mountains before the Revolution. New York appointed politicians, judges, surveyors, settlers and others were removed or denied in Vermont since the early to mid 1770s. The larger War of Independence may have stopped a civil war between Vermont and the states of New York & New Hampshire.

Come York or come Hampshire, come traitors or knaves,  
If ye rule o'er our land ye shall rule o'er our graves;  
Our vow is recorded—our banner unfurled,  
In the name of Vermont we defy all the world!

This was the last stanza of John Greenleaf Whittier's ballad poem: *The Song of the Vermonters*. And these words had been around for years in Vermont before it was printed in 1779. By 1783 and the coming conclusion of the war, New York was becoming demanding again while New Hampshire and even Massachusetts were making claims on Vermont land. Vermont had counter claims of land and efforts by New York encouraging Eastern Vermonters return to the fold were beginning to have an impact delaying the call of Vermont statehood.

Just after the Treaty of Paris ended the Revolution in September, in December of 1783 Carpenter "to his great damage" was taken prisoner by the "Yorkers" and carried away into prison. New York's third effort in calling out the militia to arrest Carpenter for treason finally worked by using Carpenter's own brother Hiram against him. Hiram was given money and land for his efforts in Vermont, while Vermont later fined him for his efforts.

Virginian James Madison, then a member of the Continental Congress, with William Samuel Johnson from Connecticut (but representing Vermont) secured the release of Carpenter and others by May of 1784. All charges of treason were eventually dropped. Carpenter and other Vermonters would get their state, but they had to wait until 1791.

Benjamin Carpenter met his future wife, his third cousin and within a few months of both being age 20, they married on October 2, 1745 in Providence, Rhode Island. Annie Carpenter, the daughter of Abial and Prudence (\_\_\_\_\_) Carpenter was born 26 Nov 1725, in Rehoboth, Bristol, Mass. She died 1 Jul 1803, in Guilford, Windham, VT. Benjamin died 29 Mar 1804 in Guilford, Windham, VT.

*Written by John L. Carpenter- Walpole, NH*

*special Thanks to John R. Carpenter- LaMesa, California*

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**Men of Vermont ,Famous Vermont residents**