

Elias Parker, Revolutionary War Officer and Mayor of Petersburg

2016 Gravemarking

Revolutionary War soldier Lieutenant Elias Parker was honored at a grave marking held by the Colonel John Banister Chapter, National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution at 2 p.m. on Saturday, April 16, 2016 at Blandford Cemetery in Petersburg, Virginia. The event honored the life and accomplishments of Parker and included the unveiling of a bronze marker detailing his military service to the United States.

Revolutionary War hero Elias Parker was born the son of Daniel and Margaret Parker on June 3, 1760 in Boston, Massachusetts. He resided in Boston during the Revolutionary War, where he began his services in America's revolution. Parker was reportedly present at the Battle of Bunker Hill with his brother Daniel. Following the battle, Parker continued his patriotic service in the Continental Army in the American Regiment of Artillery under Colonel and Chief Henry Knox, Colonel John Crane's Battalion of Artillery. He was listed as a Cadet on May 11, 1777 and then as a Matross, soldier of artillery, in August 1777. Parker was then promoted to 2nd Lieutenant on September 13, 1777.

Parker received a commission November 2, 1780 and transferred to Captain Francis Green's Company, First Massachusetts Regiment; Colonel Joseph Vose's Regiment. He served as a Lieutenant from 1781-1783. Parker also held membership in the Massachusetts Society of the Cincinnati.

After the war, in approximately 1783, Parker became a merchant in Petersburg, Virginia. On January 1, 1784, Parker acquired a 99 year lease on a building and land, Lot 30, on the Southside of Bollingbrook Street in town. In 1789, it appeared that Parker was interested in becoming a soldier once again! He sent two letters to Henry Knox, now Secretary of War for the United States, requesting his assistance in rejoining the ranks of the newly forming United States military. On March 3, 1789, Henry Knox certified that "Captain" Elias Parker served under him in the artillery and was a good officer on all occasions and that Parker had asked, on expectation of receiving a higher rank, transfer by the Commander in Chief to the Infantry of the line of Massachusetts during the war.

In his letter to Knox, dated August 25, 1789, Parker shared that he had been a merchant for nearly six years but he felt that while being a merchant was lucrative, it was not as respectable or as desirable as being a soldier. Parker stated he felt he was bred to be a soldier

under Knox's command. Parker asked for Knox's patronage to support an appointment if Congress decided to raise troops. Parker's last known official rank was that of Lieutenant, although he is often referred to as Captain in articles in local history as well as in the letter from Knox. Although listed as Captain Elias Parker of Petersburg in the 39th Regiment on September 5, 1793 in a statement when issued weapons at the Arsenal at Point of Fork, no record has been found of his official promotion to this status. He most likely received the title while in military service following the war, or the title may have been a term of respect from his community. Parker continued to serve others in the Petersburg community. On November 7, 1791, Parker was one of the individuals who agreed to form and pay a sum towards the Bolling Brook Fire Company. Additionally, Parker served as Mayor of Petersburg, Virginia from 1796-1797. Elias Parker married Mary Brown Parker at Trinity Church in Boston, Massachusetts on September 29, 1790 by Reverend Doctor Samuel Parker. His will dated May 25, 1798 bequeathed, to his beloved wife, Mary, all and every part of his estate at his death. Parker died December 8, 1799 in Petersburg, Virginia. His inventory of effects, reported July 28, 1800, was worth 1,031 pounds, 13 shillings, and 10 pence. Mary Parker moved to England following his death. She applied for his pension at 80 years old. It was eventually approved and "Inscribed on the Roll at the rate of 400 Dollars per annum, to commence on the 4th day of March, 1843."

Signature of Parker who served as Mayor of Petersburg, Virginia from 1796-1797, from minutes of the Petersburg Common Council.

A black and white photograph of a handwritten signature in cursive script. The signature is written on a light-colored, possibly aged, paper. The name "E. PARKER" is clearly legible, with the first letter of each word being capitalized and the rest in lowercase. The signature is written in a fluid, connected style typical of the late 18th or early 19th century.



Rarely used in the southern states, the death's head emblem was commonly used to mark the headstones of individuals from the New England area.

The headstone reads:

Sacred to the Memory,

Of ELIAS PARKER:

who departed this Life

Decr 8th, 1799,

Aged 39 Years.